The Great Gatsby, by F. Scott Fitzgerald

CHAPTER 4

On Sunday morning while church bells rang in the villages alongshore, the world and its mistress returned to Gatsby's house and twinkled hilariously on his lawn.

"He's a bootlegger," said the young ladies, moving somewhere between his cocktails and his flowers. "One time he killed a man who had found out that he was nephew to Von Hindenburg and second cousin to the devil. Reach me a rose, honey, and pour me a last drop into that there crystal glass."

Once I wrote down on the empty spaces of a time-table the names of those who came to Gatsby's house that summer. It is an old time-table now, disintegrating at its folds, and headed "This schedule in effect July 5th, 1922." But I can still read the gray names, and they will give you a better impression than my generalities of those who accepted Gatsby's hospitality and paid him the subtle tribute of knowing nothing whatever about him.

From East Egg, then, came the Chester Beckers and the Leeches, and a man named Bunsen, whom I knew at Yale, and Doctor Webster Civet, who was drowned last summer up in Maine. And the Hornbeams and the Willie Voltaires, and a whole clan named Blackbuck, who always gathered in a corner and flipped up their noses like goats at whosoever came near. And the Ismays and the Chrysties (or rather Hubert Auerbach and Mr. Chrystie's wife), and Edgar Beaver, whose hair, they say, turned cotton-white one winter afternoon for no good reason at all.

Clarence Endive was from East Egg, as I remember. He came only once, in white knickerbockers, and had a fight with a bum named Etty in the garden. From farther out on the Island came the Cheadles and the O. R. P. Schraeders, and the Stonewall Jackson Abrams of Georgia, and the Fishguards and the Ripley Snells. Snell was there three days before he went to the penitentiary, so drunk out on the gravel drive that Mrs. Ulysses Swett's automobile ran over his right hand. The Dancies came, too, and S. B. Whitebait, who was well over sixty, and Maurice A. Flink, and the Hammerheads, and Beluga the tobacco importer, and Beluga's girls.

Commented [1]:
All three of the major incidents in this chapter — Gatsby's disclosure in the car, the meeting with Wolfshiem, and Jordan's story about Daisy's soldier — all serve one common purpose: They all give a better understanding of Jay Gatsby's past and, in turn, his present. Gatsby, as if aware of the rumors flying about him, attempts to set the record straight, but doesn't touch on every aspect of his past, only what he wishes Nick to know. Later chapters will give more and more information, even after his death.

Commented [2]:
the world and its mistress This wordplay cliche'the world and his wife') implies that all the relationships in this novel are undermined by infidelity and might suggest that Gatsby's parties encourage or endorse infidelity - he later admits that he hoped to encounter the married Daisy at one of his parties.
The 'world' is illustrated by Nick's very long list of guests. Most of this list is respectable and often double-barrelled names ('Doctor Webster Civet' and 'the Chester Beckers'), suggesting the upper echelons of society. However, there are several examples of marital discord:
G. Earl Muldoon, brother to that Muldoon who afterwards strangled his wife.
Two of the guests (Beluga and Beny Clenahan) bring 'girls' who are described as interchangeable.

Commented [3]:
twinkled hilariously This phrase highlights the superficiality of the guests at Gatsby's house. It is all the more trivial when set against the religious observances clearly expected on Sunday morning ('church bells rang in the villages onshore').

Commented [4]:
He's a bootlegger… second cousin to the devil. The gossip surrounding Gatsby suggests illicit activity. During Prohibition, bootleggers made money by illegally transporting / trading alcohol.

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The opening paragraphs of the chapter read much like a Who's Who of 1922. Nick expands upon an idea brought out in the prior chapter: Gatsby's party guests. Nick recounts dozens and dozens of names, all of them supposedly recognizable. Clearly, everyone who was anyone wanted to be seen at Gatsby's lavish gatherings. Some of the people came from East Egg ...

Commented [6]:
accepted Gatsby's hospitality … knowing nothing whatever about him - Nick highlights the irony and hypocrisy of the gossipers as they indulge in wild rumour, while enjoying Gatsby's generosity.

Nirmala Silverajan
Why is Nick so meticulous about his list?

Commented [7]:
drowned last summer up in Maine - The tragic fate of one of Gatsby's guests foreshadows the demise of Gatsby. Nick's list of guests is also punctuated with examples of snobbery, eccentricity, infidelity, car accidents, murder and suicide. All together, they present a chaotic, dysfunctional society and a less than ideal view of American success.

From West Egg came the Poles and the Mulreadys and Cecil Roebuck and Cecil Schoen and Gulick the state senator and Newton Orchid, who controlled Films Par Excellence, and Eckhaust and Clyde Cohen and Don S. Schwartze (the son) and Arthur McCarty, all connected with the movies in one way or another. And the Catlips and the Bembergs and G. Earl Muldoon, brother to that Muldoon who afterward strangled his wife. Da Fontano the promoter came there, and Ed Legros and James B. ("Rot-Gut.") Ferret and the De Jongs and Ernest Lilly — they came to gamble, and when Ferret wandered into the garden it meant he was cleaned out and Associated Traction would have to fluctuate profitably next day.

A man named Klipspringer was there so often and so long that he became known as "the boarder."— I doubt if he had any other home. Of theatrical people there were Gus Waize and Horace O'donavan and Lester Meyer and George Duckweed and Francis Bull. Also from New York were the Chromes and the Backhyssons and the Dennickers and Russel Betty and the Corrigans and the Kellehers and the Dewars and the Scullys and S. W. Belcher and the Smirkes and the young Quinns, divorced now, and Henry L. Palmetto, who killed himself by jumping in front of a subway train in Times Square.

Benny McClenahan arrived always with four girls. They were never quite the same ones in physical person, but they were so identical one with another that it inevitably seemed they had been there before. I have forgotten their names — Jaqueline, I think, or else Consuela, or Gloria or Judy or June, and their last names were either the melodious names of flowers and months or the sterner ones of the great American capitalists whose cousins, if pressed, they would confess themselves to be.

In addition to all these I can remember that Faustina O'Brien came there at least once and the Baedeker girls and young Brewer, who had his nose shot off in the war, and Mr. Albrucksburger and Miss Haag, his fiancee, and Ardita Fitz-Peters and Mr. P. Jewett, once head of the American Legion, and Miss Claudia Hip, with a man reputed to be her chauffeur, and a prince of something, whom we called Duke, and whose name, if I ever knew it, I have forgotten.

All these people came to Gatsby's house in the summer.

At nine o'clock, one morning late in July, Gatsby's gorgeous car lurched up the rocky drive to my door and gave out a burst of melody from its three-noted horn. It was the first time he had called on me, though I had gone to two of his parties, mounted in his hydroplane, and, at his urgent invitation, made frequent use of his beach.

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What is the significance of this character later in the novel?

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Gatsby's gorgeous car - Nick's description of the car combines both positive and negative lexis, with the overall effect being 'disconcerting'.

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After the conspicuous cataloging of Gatsby's guests, Nick recounts another of his adventures — this time one that changes the course of his life forever. Gatsby, arriving at Nick's house for the first time, informs him that because they will be having lunch together, they may as well ride together. The real reason for Gatsby's visit, however, is to talk to Nick alone, and so the two men head to the city driving Gatsby's car — so big and excessive as to border on being gaudy. (How ironic it is that a car, a massive symbol of the American dream and here an outward manifestation of Gatsby's wealth, will ultimately lead to his undoing.)

“Good morning, old sport. You’re having lunch with me to-day and I thought we’d ride up together.”

He was balancing himself on the dashboard of his car with that resourcefulness of movement that is so peculiarly American — that comes, I suppose, with the absence of lifting work or rigid sitting in youth and, even more, with the formless grace of our nervous, sporadic games. This quality was continually breaking through his punctilious manner in the shape of restlessness. He was never quite still; there was always a tapping foot somewhere or the impatient opening and closing of a hand.

He saw me looking with admiration at his car.

“It’s pretty, isn’t it, old sport?” He jumped off to give me a better view. “Haven’t you ever seen it before?”

I’d seen it. Everybody had seen it. It was a rich cream color, bright with nickel, swollen here and there in its monstrous length with triumphant hat-boxes and supper-boxes and tool-boxes, and terraced with a labyrinth of wind-shields that mirrored a dozen suns. Sitting down behind many layers of glass in a sort of green leather conservatory, we started to town.

I had talked with him perhaps half a dozen times in the past month and found, to my disappointment, that he had little to say: So my first impression, that he was a person of some undefined consequence, had gradually faded and he had become simply the proprietor of an elaborate road-house next door.

And then came that disconcerting ride. We hadn’t reached West Egg village before Gatsby began leaving his elegant sentences unfinished and slapping himself indecisively on the knee of his caramel-colored suit.

“Look here, old sport,” he broke out surprisingly. “What’s your opinion of me, anyhow?” A little overwhelmed, I began the generalized evasions which that question deserves.

“Well, I’m going to tell you something about my life,” he interrupted. “I don’t want you to get a wrong idea of me from all these stories you hear.”

So he was aware of the bizarre accusations that flavored conversation in his halls.

“I’ll tell you God’s truth.” His right hand suddenly ordered divine retribution to stand by. “I am the son of some wealthy people in the Middle West — all dead now. I was brought up in America but educated at Oxford, because all my ancestors have been educated there for many years. It is a family tradition.”

Commented [11]:
restlessness - Gatsby is described as being in constant motion:
never quite still… always a tapping foot somewhere or the impatient opening and closing of a hand
This is connected with the spirit of the nation when Nick comments that this is ‘peculiarly American’ and exhibited in the ‘formless grace of our nervous sporadic games’.

Commented [12]:
he had little to say - Nick discovers this about Gatsby, and presents him as a two-dimensional character at this point. It is ironic, then, that immediately after this comment Gatsby embarks on the detailed revelation about his origins.

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Why is Gatsby concerned?

Commented [14]:
I’ll tell you God’s truth… his whole statement fell to pieces… Then it was all true. - Nick plays with the reader throughout this part of the narrative (delivered by Gatsby but mediated by Nick), as he alternates between believing and disbelieving what Gatsby has to say. The evidence to substantiate Gatsby’s claims is a medal and a photograph, both of which are uncritically accepted by Nick. The main features of Gatsby’s narrative are his rich family, his orphan status, education at Oxford, time spent in Europe, and military service for which he was awarded honours.

Commented [15]:
Sadly, Gatsby isn't even a good liar and he continues to tell his story, as if telling it will make it so. Fitzgerald later reveals that nearly everything (perhaps everything) he tells Nick during this ride, the candid self-disclosures he freely offers so that Nick doesn't get "a wrong idea" of him from the stories floating around, are themselves fictions created by Gatsby as part of his plan to reinvent himself. In fact, the past that Gatsby describes reads like an adventure tale, a romance in which the hero "lived like a young rajah," looking for treasures, dabbling in everything from the fine arts to big game hunting. Gatsby's past is highly unbelievable — a point not lost on Nick. When Gatsby informs Nick that his "family all died and [he] came into a good deal of money," it is wishful thinking at best, and Chapters 7 and 9 disclose that Gatsby's money came from a very different place.

He looked at me sideways — and I knew why Jordan Baker had believed he was lying. He hurried the phrase "educated at Oxford," or swallowed it, or choked on it, as though it had bothered him before. And with this doubt, his whole statement fell to pieces, and I wondered if there wasn't something a little sinister about him, after all.

"What part of the Middle West?" I inquired casually.

"San Francisco."

"I see."

"My family all died and I came into a good deal of money."

His voice was solemn, as if the memory of that sudden extinction of a clan still haunted him. For a moment I suspected that he was pulling my leg, but a glance at him convinced me otherwise.

"After that I lived like a young rajah in all the capitals of Europe — Paris, Venice, Rome — collecting jewels, chiefly rubies, hunting big game, painting a little, things for myself only, and trying to forget something very sad that had happened to me long ago."

With an effort I managed to restrain my incredulous laughter. The very phrases were worn so threadbare that they evoked no image except that of a turbaned "character" leaking sawdust at every pore as he pursued a tiger through the Bois de Boulogne.

"Then came the war, old sport. It was a great relief, and I tried very hard to die, but I seemed to bear an enchanted life. I accepted a commission as first lieutenant when it began. In the Argonne Forest I took two machine-gun detachments so far forward that there was a half mile gap on either side of us where the infantry couldn't advance. We stayed there two days and two nights, a hundred and thirty men with sixteen Lewis guns, and when the infantry came up at last they found the insignia of three German divisions among the piles of dead. I was promoted to be a major, and every Allied government gave me a decoration — even Montenegro, little Montenegro down on the Adriatic Sea!"

Little Montenegro! He lifted up the words and nodded at them — with his smile. The smile comprehended Montenegro's troubled history and sympathized with the brave struggles of the Montenegrin people. It appreciated fully the chain of national circumstances which had elicited this tribute from Montenegro's warm little heart. My incredulity was submerged in fascination now; it was like skimming hastily through a dozen magazines.

He reached in his pocket, and a piece of metal, slung on a ribbon, fell into my palm.

Commented [16]:
When the two men leave for town Nick, by his own disclosure, has little real knowledge of Gatsby, having "talked with him perhaps half a dozen times in the past month." All that soon changes, however, as Gatsby unfolds his story. The discussion is particularly important because it gives the first strong indication that Gatsby isn't quite what he presents himself to be. Up to now, there has been mystery and speculation, but Fitzgerald hasn't revealed enough of Gatsby to allow readers to figure him out. Gatsby tells Nick, "God's truth," that he comes from wealthy people in the Middle West and was "educated at Oxford." Gatsby's inability to deliver that phrase without difficulty alerts Nick that something may be amiss. When Nick questions him as to where in the Middle West he hails from, readers get their first clear indication that Gatsby is recounting an elaborate lie — "San Francisco" is hardly the Middle West, and Nick knows it.

Commented [17]:
something very sad that had happened to me long ago - Gatsby refers to his rejection by Daisy in this oblique manner, and Nick mocks this and the style of delivery in his comments to the reader: 'I managed to restrain my incredulous laughter'.

“That’s the one from Montenegro.”

To my astonishment, the thing had an authentic look.

“Orderi di Danilo,” ran the circular legend, “Montenegro, Nicolas Rex.”

“Turn it.”

“Major Jay Gatsby,” I read, “For Valour Extraordinary.”

“Here’s another thing I always carry. A souvenir of Oxford days. It was taken in Trinity Quad — the man on my left is now the Earl of Dorcaster.”

It was a photograph of half a dozen young men in blazers loafing in an archway through which were visible a host of spires. There was Gatsby, looking a little, not much, younger — with a cricket bat in his hand.

Then it was all true. I saw the skins of tigers flaming in his palace on the Grand Canal; I saw him opening a chest of rubies to ease, with their crimson-lighted depths, the gnawings of his broken heart.

“I’m going to make a big request of you to-day,” he said, pocketing his souvenirs with satisfaction, “so I thought you ought to know something about me. I didn’t want you to think I was just some nobody. You see, I usually find myself among strangers because I drift here and there trying to forget the sad thing that happened to me.” He hesitated. “You’ll hear about it this afternoon.”

“At lunch?”

“No, this afternoon. I happened to find out that you’re taking Miss Baker to tea.”

“Do you mean you’re in love with Miss Baker?”

“No, old sport, I’m not. But Miss Baker has kindly consented to speak to you about this matter.”

I hadn’t the faintest idea what “this matter” was, but I was more annoyed than interested. I hadn’t asked Jordan to tea in order to discuss Mr. Jay Gatsby. I was sure the request would be something utterly fantastic, and for a moment I was sorry I’d ever set foot upon his overpopulated lawn.

He wouldn’t say another word. His correctness grew on him as we neared the city. We passed Port Roosevelt, where there was a glimpse of red-belted ocean-going ships, and sped along a cobbled slum lined with the dark, undeserted saloons of the faded-gilt nineteen-hundreds. Then the valley of ashes opened out on both sides of us, and I had

Commented [18]:
The idea of the Real and unreal and the surreal in the novel. Link back to Owl Eyes

a glimpse of Mrs. Wilson straining at the garage pump with panting vitality as we went by.

With fenders spread like wings we scattered light through half Long Island City — only half, for as we twisted among the pillars of the elevated I heard the familiar "jug — jug — *spat*!" of a motorcycle, and a frantic policeman rode alongside.

"All right, old sport," called Gatsby. We slowed down. Taking a white card from his wallet, he waved it before the man's eyes.

"Right you are," agreed the policeman, tipping his cap. "Know you next time, Mr. Gatsby. Excuse *me*!"

"What was that?" I inquired.

"The picture of Oxford?"

"I was able to do the commissioner a favor once, and he sends me a Christmas card every year."

Over the great bridge, with the sunlight through the girders making a constant flicker upon the moving cars, with the city rising up across the river in white heaps and sugar lumps all built with a wish out of non-olfactory money. The city seen from the Queensboro Bridge is always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of all the mystery and the beauty in the world.

A dead man passed us in a hearse heaped with blooms, followed by two carriages with drawn blinds, and by more cheerful carriages for friends. The friends looked out at us with the tragic eyes and short upper lips of southeastern Europe, and I was glad that the sight of Gatsby's splendid car was included in their sombre holiday. As we crossed Blackwell's Island a limousine passed us, driven by a white chauffeur, in which sat three modish negroes, two bucks and a girl. I laughed aloud as the yolks of their eyeballs rolled toward us in haughty rivalry.

"Anything can happen now that we've slid over this bridge," I thought; "anything at all. . . . "

Even Gatsby could happen, without any particular wonder.

Roaring noon. In a well-fanned Forty-second Street cellar I met Gatsby for lunch. Blinking away the brightness of the street outside, my eyes picked him out obscurely in the anteroom, talking to another man.

"Mr. Carraway, this is my friend Mr. Wolfsheim."

Commented [19]:
As the two men head to the city, they pass through the valley of ashes, moving from a desolate gray world of dead-end dreams to the city, the place where anything at all can happen. When Gatsby is stopped for speeding, Gatsby need merely to wave a card before the officer and he is let go with a polite "Know you next time, Mr. Gatsby. Excuse me!" Apparently Gatsby once did a favor for the commissioner and receives his eternal thanks. Although Gatsby has just fed Nick an elaborate series of lies, this is the first piece that may well be true. Gatsby, through a business associate whom they are on their way to see, may likely have done a favor for the commissioner — and it is likely to have been something of a questionable nature.

Commented [20]:
The city seen from the Queensboro Bridge - This description of New York is extremely beautiful, being associated with sunlight, 'white heaps and sugar lumps' and offering an infinitely renewable sense of wonder: always the city seen for the first time, in its first wild promise of all the mystery and beauty in the world. Nevertheless, Fitzgerald emphasises the temporary and illusory nature of the city: it is built 'with a wish out of non-olfactory money' and the oxymoron of the 'constant flicker' suggests an optical effect which dazzles and confuses. The passing image of a dead man in a hearse and his tragic friends, further emphasises the idea that wealth is transitory, overshadowed by death.

Commented [21]:
More on Attitudes to race in 1920s America: Black people owning cars would have signified the reversal of social conventions in the '20s as most of America was still very segregated, with black Americans being generally too poor to buy cars. Nick responds to the 'rivalry' of the 'modish negroes' with mocking laughter, but recognises that Gatsby is similar in being a member of the underclass who has gained social status and wealth in post-war America.
The old-fashioned terms 'negroes' and 'bucks' have undergone semantic-derogation, as they are now regarded as offensive racial terms, the latter being more often used to denote a male animal. Today, they are taboo words and used for effect as such. Fitzgerald's use is probably more casual, in keeping with the linguistic habits of the time.

Commented [22]:
Anything can happen now that we've slid over this bridge - Nick makes this observation after he sees a limousine with a white chauffeur and black passengers.

Commented [23]:
my friend Mr. Wolfsheim - Meyer Wolfsheim is characterised firstly as a Jew, with particular facial features verging on caricature (he has a flat nose which is commented on in several ways, a large head and tiny eyes). His 'business' seems to involve threats and menace and he appears to inspect his environment in a paranoid manner. His cuff buttons are human molars, which introduces an air of gruesome horror to the characterisation, later hinted at by the 'ferocious delicacy' with which he eats his food. Later, Gatsby identifies him as a gambler, who fixed the baseball World's Series in 1919, as well as having close connections with the murder of Rosy Rosenthal at the ...

A small, flat-nosed Jew raised his large head and regarded me with two fine growths of hair which luxuriated in either nostril. After a moment I discovered his tiny eyes in the half-darkness.

"— So I took one look at him," said Mr. Wolfsheim, shaking my hand earnestly, "and what do you think I did?"

"What?" I inquired politely.

But evidently he was not addressing me, for he dropped my hand and covered Gatsby with his expressive nose.

"I handed the money to Katspaugh and I said: 'all right, Katspaugh, don't pay him a penny till he shuts his mouth.' He shut it then and there."

Gatsby took an arm of each of us and moved forward into the restaurant, whereupon Mr. Wolfsheim swallowed a new sentence he was starting and lapsed into a somnambulatory abstraction.

"Highballs?" asked the head waiter.

"This is a nice restaurant here," said Mr. Wolfsheim, looking at the Presbyterian nymphs on the ceiling. "But I like across the street better!"

"Yes, highballs," agreed Gatsby, and then to Mr. Wolfsheim: "It's too hot over there."

"Hot and small — yes," said Mr. Wolfsheim, "but full of memories."

"What place is that?" I asked.

"The old Metropole.

"The old Metropole," brooded Mr. Wolfsheim gloomily. "Filled with faces dead and gone. Filled with friends gone now forever. I can't forget so long as I live the night they shot Rosy Rosenthal there. It was six of us at the table, and Rosy had eat and drunk a lot all evening. When it was almost morning the waiter came up to him with a funny look and says somebody wants to speak to him outside. 'All right,' says Rosy, and begins to get up, and I pulled him down in his chair.

"'Let the bastards come in here if they want you, Rosy, but don't you, so help me, move outside this room.'

"It was four o'clock in the morning then, and if we'd of raised the blinds we'd of seen daylight."

"Did he go?" I asked innocently.

Commented [24]:
The luncheon with Gatsby is not remarkable, save for the character who is introduced: Meyer Wolfshiem, a notorious gambler who is rumored to have rigged the 1919 World Series, an unprecedented scandal that degraded America's Game. Mr. Wolfshiem, a business associate of Jay Gatsby, is everything his name suggests: He is a perfect combination of human and animal. He is wolf-like in his ways, and nowhere do we get better evidence of this than by the human molar cufflinks he sports proudly. Although Nick has begun to like Gatsby and wants to give him the benefit of the doubt, Gatsby's taste in business connections is not at all what a man who comes from the background Gatsby has just recounted would make. Wolfshiem is Gatsby's connection (or gonnection, as Wolfshiem would say) to the world of organized crime. Wolfshiem, as is later made known, has been instrumental in Gatsby's ability to accumulate wealth. Theirs is a partnership in which Gatsby feels some sort of indebtedness to Wolfshiem — although they are partners on some levels, they are not at all equals.

“Sure he went.” Mr. Wolfsheim’s nose flashed at me indignantly. “He turned around in the door and says: ‘Don’t let that waiter take away my coffee!’ Then he went out on the sidewalk, and they shot him three times in his full belly and drove away.”

“Four of them were electrocuted,” I said, remembering.

“Five, with Becker.” His nostrils turned to me in an interested way. “I understand you’re looking for a business gonnegtion.”

The juxtaposition of these two remarks was startling. Gatsby answered for me:

“Oh, no,” he exclaimed, “this isn’t the man.”

“No?” Mr. Wolfsheim seemed disappointed.

“This is just a friend. I told you we’d talk about that some other time.”

“I beg your pardon,” said Mr. Wolfsheim, “I had a wrong man.”

A succulent hash arrived, and Mr. Wolfsheim, forgetting the more sentimental atmosphere of the old Metropole, began to eat with ferocious delicacy. His eyes, meanwhile, roved very slowly all around the room — he completed the arc by turning to inspect the people directly behind. I think that, except for my presence, he would have taken one short glance beneath our own table.

“Look here, old sport,” said Gatsby, leaning toward me, “I’m afraid I made you a little angry this morning in the car.”

There was the smile again, but this time I held out against it.

“I don’t like mysteries,” I answered. “And I don’t understand why you won’t come out frankly and tell me what you want. Why has it all got to come through Miss Baker?”

“Oh, it’s nothing underhand,” he assured me. “Miss Baker’s a great sportswoman, you know, and she’d never do anything that wasn’t all right.”

Suddenly he looked at his watch, jumped up, and hurried from the room, leaving me with Mr. Wolfsheim at the table.

“He has to telephone,” said Mr. Wolfsheim, following him with his eyes. “Fine fellow, isn’t he? Handsome to look at and a perfect gentleman.”

“Yes.”

“He’s an Oggsford man.”

“Oh!”

“He went to Oggsford College in England. You know Oggsford College?”

“I’ve heard of it.”

Commented [25]:
a business gonnegtion – Wolfsheim’s flat nose may emphasise the heavy accent depicted by the spelling of ‘connection’ here.

Commented [26]:
Shady dealing?

“It’s one of the most famous colleges in the world.”

“Have you known Gatsby for a long time?” I inquired.

“Several years,” he answered in a gratified way. “I made the pleasure of his acquaintance just after the war. But I knew I had discovered a man of fine breeding after I talked with him an hour. I said to myself: ‘There’s the kind of man you’d like to take home and introduce to your mother and sister.’.” He paused. “I see you’re looking at my cuff buttons.” I hadn’t been looking at them, but I did now.

They were composed of oddly familiar pieces of ivory.

“Finest specimens of human molars,” he informed me.

“Well!” I inspected them. “That’s a very interesting idea.”

“Yeah.” He flipped his sleeves up under his coat. “Yeah, Gatsby’s very careful about women. He would never so much as look at a friend’s wife.”

When the subject of this instinctive trust returned to the table and sat down Mr. Wolfsheim drank his coffee with a jerk and got to his feet.

“I have enjoyed my lunch,” he said, “and I’m going to run off from you two young men before I outstay my welcome.”

“Don’t hurry, Meyer,” said Gatsby, without enthusiasm. Mr. Wolfsheim raised his hand in a sort of benediction.

“You’re very polite, but I belong to another generation,” he announced solemnly. “You sit here and discuss your sports and your young ladies and your ——” He supplied an imaginary noun with another wave of his hand. “As for me, I am fifty years old, and I won’t impose myself on you any longer.”

As he shook hands and turned away his tragic nose was trembling. I wondered if I had said anything to offend him.

“He becomes very sentimental sometimes,” explained Gatsby. “This is one of his sentimental days. He’s quite a character around New York — a denizen of Broadway.”

“Who is he, anyhow, an actor?”

“No.”

“A dentist?”

“Meyer Wolfsheim? No, he’s a gambler.” Gatsby hesitated, then added coolly: “He’s the man who fixed the World’s Series back in 1919.”

“Fixed the World’s Series?” I repeated.

The idea staggered me. I remembered, of course, that the World's Series had been fixed in 1919, but if I had thought of it at all I would have thought of it as a thing that merely *happened*, the end of some inevitable chain. It never occurred to me that one man could start to play with the faith of fifty million people — with the single-mindedness of a burglar blowing a safe.

"How did he happen to do that?" I asked after a minute.

"He just saw the opportunity."

"Why isn't he in jail?"

"They can't get him, old sport. He's a smart man."

I insisted on paying the check. As the waiter brought my change I caught sight of Tom Buchanan across the crowded room.

"Come along with me for a minute," I said; "I've got to say hello to some one." When he saw us Tom jumped up and took half a dozen steps in our direction.

"Where've you been?" he demanded eagerly. "Daisy's furious because you haven't called up."

"This is Mr. Gatsby, Mr. Buchanan."

They shook hands briefly, and a strained, unfamiliar look of embarrassment came over Gatsby's face.

"How've you been, anyhow?" demanded Tom of me. "How'd you happen to come up this far to eat?"

"I've been having lunch with Mr. Gatsby."

I turned toward Mr. Gatsby, but he was no longer there.

One October day in nineteen-seventeen ——

(said Jordan Baker that afternoon, sitting up very straight on a straight chair in the tea-garden at the Plaza Hotel)

— I was walking along from one place to another, half on the sidewalks and half on the lawns. I was happier on the lawns because I had on shoes from England with rubber nobs on the soles that bit into the soft ground. I had on a new plaid skirt also that blew a little in the wind, and whenever this happened the red, white, and blue banners in front of all the houses stretched out stiff and said *tut-tut-tut-tut*, in a disapproving way.

Commented [27]:
he was no longer there - Gatsby disappears twice in this chapter. His first departure is prompted by a business telephone call, and this time he is trying to avoid meeting Tom Buchanan. This elusive behaviour is also mirrored by the swift departure of Wolfsheim from the restaurant.

Commented [28]:
One October day in 1917… - This new narrative is given by Jordan, explaining to Nick the history of Daisy and Gatsby, from the point of view of Jordan as Daisy's friend. It complements the earlier allusions made by Gatsby to a 'very sad' event that had occurred in the past. The repetition of 'straight' in 'sitting up very straight on a straight chair' implies that this narrative is to be trusted, and the degree of detail adds to the verisimilitude, especially as the events are dated and located very precisely.
In this narrative, Daisy has a relationship with the young officer Gatsby in 1917 and almost elopes with him in the winter of 1917, but her family intervenes. She returns to socialising by autumn 1918, is engaged in February 1919 and marries Tom in June 1919. On the eve of her wedding, we are told that she almost cancels the wedding, rejecting Tom's expensive pearls and clinging to a letter. The use of contrast in
as lovely as the June night in her flowered dress – and as drunk as a monkey
emphasises Daisy's traumatic realisation that she wants to 'change' her mine'. The letter disintegrates 'like snow' when Daisy is forced to sober up, and she accepts Tom as a husband 'without so much as a shiver' the next day. It is implied that the mysterious letter came from Gatsby, as it causes such a profound shift in Daisy's intentions, but we should also note that Daisy conforms to society's expectations of her, and chooses the wealthy Tom and his status symbols over Gatsby: the pearls were around her neck and the incident was over.

Commented [29]:
That same afternoon, after hearing Gatsby's story and meeting his business contact, Nick has tea with Jordan Baker wherein he gets a more accurate reading of Gatsby. Jordan recounts the "amazing" story she learned the night of Gatsby's party. The story recalls Jordan's girlhood in Louisville and one of her memories of Daisy Fay (who would later become Daisy Buchanan; notice, too, "Fay" is a synonym for "faerie" — an appropriate name for someone of Daisy's ethereal nature). On one memorable day, she saw Daisy with a young officer, Jay Gatsby, who looked at Daisy "in a way that every young girl wants to be looked at." The memory stayed with Jordan "because it seemed romantic." However, she didn't put the Jay Gatsby in Daisy's car with the Jay Gatsby of West Egg until the night of the party.

The largest of the banners and the largest of the lawns belonged to Daisy Fay's house. She was just eighteen, two years older than me, and by far the most popular of all the young girls in Louisville. She dressed in white, and had a little white roadster, and all day long the telephone rang in her house and excited young officers from Camp Taylor demanded the privilege of monopolizing her that night. "Anyways, for an hour!"

When I came opposite her house that morning her white roadster was beside the curb, and she was sitting in it with a lieutenant I had never seen before. They were so engrossed in each other that she didn't see me until I was five feet away.

"Hello, Jordan," she called unexpectedly. "Please come here."

I was flattered that she wanted to speak to me, because of all the older girls I admired her most. She asked me if I was going to the Red Cross and make bandages. I was. Well, then, would I tell them that she couldn't come that day? The officer looked at Daisy while she was speaking, in a way that every young girl wants to be looked at sometime, and because it seemed romantic to me I have remembered the incident ever since. His name was Jay Gatsby, and I didn't lay eyes on him again for over four years — even after I'd met him on Long Island I didn't realize it was the same man.

That was nineteen-seventeen. By the next year I had a few beaux myself, and I began to play in tournaments, so I didn't see Daisy very often. She went with a slightly older crowd — when she went with anyone at all. Wild rumors were circulating about her — how her mother had found her packing her bag one winter night to go to New York and say good-by to a soldier who was going overseas. She was effectually prevented, but she wasn't on speaking terms with her family for several weeks. After that she didn't play around with the soldiers any more, but only with a few flat-footed, short-sighted young men in town, who couldn't get into the army at all.

By the next autumn she was gay again, gay as ever. She had a debut after the Armistice, and in February she was presumably engaged to a man from New Orleans. In June she married Tom Buchanan of Chicago, with more pomp and circumstance than Louisville ever knew before. He came down with a hundred people in four private cars, and hired a whole floor of the Muhlbach Hotel, and the day before the wedding he gave her a string of pearls valued at three hundred and fifty thousand dollars.

I was bridesmaid. I came into her room half an hour before the bridal dinner, and found her lying on her bed as lovely as the June night in her flowered dress — and as drunk as a monkey. She had a bottle of Sauterne in one hand and a letter in the other.

Commented [30]:
Through Jordan's story of Daisy right before her wedding, Fitzgerald gives a much better sense of Daisy. She loved the young officer (as Gatsby tells in Chapter 8), but was forcibly discouraged from entering into a permanent relationship with the young man — Gatsby's lack of money was his primary character deficit. After breaking off contact with Gatsby, Daisy began to resume her activities as usual. She meets Tom Buchanan and shortly becomes engaged to him. One the eve of her wedding Daisy has second thoughts, deciding while in a drunken stupor that perhaps marrying for love instead of money is what she should do. As she sobers up she seems to come to terms with herself and what is expected of her. She puts Gatsby behind her and marries Tom. Before long, however, Tom begins to have affairs. Daisy is aware of this from early on, but fails to do anything about it. One can only speculate why. Clearly Daisy is more dimensional than the initial impression of her suggests. She is aware of Tom's indiscretions, but appears not to care. Why? It's difficult to say with certainty, but one theory holds that she enjoys Tom's money and the status she has as a Buchananof East Egg. Challenging her husband's tomcat-like behavior would jeopardize her status and security — the things her entire life has revolved around.

"'Gratulate me," she muttered. "Never had a drink before, but oh how I do enjoy it."

"What's the matter, Daisy?"

I was scared, I can tell you; I'd never seen a girl like that before.

"Here, deares'." She groped around in a waste-basket she had with her on the bed and pulled out the string of pearls. "Take 'em down-stairs and give 'em back to whoever they belong to. Tell 'em all Daisy's change' her mine. Say: 'Daisy's change' her mine!'."

She began to cry — she cried and cried. I rushed out and found her mother's maid, and we locked the door and got her into a cold bath. She wouldn't let go of the letter. She took it into the tub with her and squeezed it up into a wet ball, and only let me leave it in the soap-dish when she saw that it was coming to pieces like snow.

But she didn't say another word. We gave her spirits of ammonia and put ice on her forehead and hooked her back into her dress, and half an hour later, when we walked out of the room, the pearls were around her neck and the incident was over. Next day at five o'clock she married Tom Buchanan without so much as a shiver, and started off on a three months' trip to the South Seas.

I saw them in Santa Barbara when they came back, and I thought I'd never seen a girl so mad about her husband. If he left the room for a minute she'd look around uneasily, and say: "Where's Tom gone?" and wear the most abstracted expression until she saw him coming in the door. She used to sit on the sand with his head in her lap by the hour, rubbing her fingers over his eyes and looking at him with unfathomable delight. It was touching to see them together — it made you laugh in a hushed, fascinated way. That was in August. A week after I left Santa Barbara Tom ran into a wagon on the Ventura road one night, and ripped a front wheel off his car. The girl who was with him got into the papers, too, because her arm was broken — she was one of the chambermaids in the Santa Barbara Hotel.

The next April Daisy had her little girl, and they went to France for a year. I saw them one spring in Cannes, and later in Deauville, and then they came back to Chicago to settle down. Daisy was popular in Chicago, as you know. They moved with a fast crowd, all of them young and rich and wild, but she came out with an absolutely perfect reputation. Perhaps because she doesn't drink. It's a great advantage not to drink among hard-drinking people. You can hold your tongue, and, moreover, you can time any little irregularity of your own so that everybody else is so blind that they don't see

Commented [31]:
How is this Daisy in 1917 different from the one in Chapter 1?

Commented [32]:
It was touching to see them together - Jordan initially presents the relationship as ideal, with Daisy engrossed in her new husband, but quickly undermines this idea with the understated comments on Tom's car crash: Tom ran into a wagon on the Ventura road one night, and ripped a front wheel off his car. The girl who was with him got into the papers, too, because her arm was broken – she was one of the chambermaids in the Santa Barbara Hotel.
Tom's implication in a car crash where a woman is seriously injured foreshadows the crash involving Myrtle. The juxtaposition of this story with the subsequent detail of Daisy's maternity further incriminates Tom.

Commented [33]:
More on Drinking in The Great Gatsby: Drinking in this novel is always associated with moral confusion and relaxing of standards, and the worst damage is done when people are drunk. Drunkenness seems to function as a metaphor for social irresponsibility, and should be considered against the contemporary ideas which underpinned the Prohibition era (that alcohol was the cause of social and moral corruption).

Commented [34]:
Vision and blindness in the novel

or care. Perhaps Daisy never went in for amour at all — and yet there's something in that voice of hers. . . .

Well, about six weeks ago, she heard the name Gatsby for the first time in years. It was when I asked you — do you remember? — if you knew Gatsby in West Egg. After you had gone home she came into my room and woke me up, and said: "What Gatsby?" and when I described him — I was half asleep — she said in the strangest voice that it must be the man she used to know. It wasn't until then that I connected this Gatsby with the officer in her white car.

When Jordan Baker had finished telling all this we had left the Plaza for half an hour and were driving in a victoria through Central Park. The sun had gone down behind the tall apartments of the movie stars in the West Fifties, and the clear voices of girls, already gathered like crickets on the grass, rose through the hot twilight:

"I'm the Sheik of Araby.

Your love belongs to me.

At night when you're are asleep

Into your tent I'll creep ——"

"It was a strange coincidence," I said.

"But it wasn't a coincidence at all."

"Why not?"

"Gatsby bought that house so that Daisy would be just across the bay."

Then it had not been merely the stars to which he had aspired on that June night. He came alive to me, delivered suddenly from the womb of his purposeless splendor.

"He wants to know," continued Jordan, "if you'll invite Daisy to your house some afternoon and then let him come over."

The modesty of the demand shook me. He had waited five years and bought a mansion where he dispensed starlight to casual moths — so that he could "come over" some afternoon to a stranger's garden.

"Did I have to know all this before he could ask such a little thing?"

"He's afraid, he's waited so long. He thought you might be offended. You see, he's a regular tough underneath it all."

Something worried me.

Commented [35]:
Daisy's voice has been mentioned several times in the novel by different characters.

Commented [36]:
Perhaps Daisy never went in for amour at all - Jordan speculates that Daisy would have been able to avoid scandal because she never drank. However, Jordan merely values Daisy's temperance as an opportunity for her to 'time any little irregularity of your own so that everybody else is so blind that they don't see or care', using the euphemism 'little irregularity' to refer to infidelity.

Commented [37]:
In five years!

Commented [38]:
The sun had gone down…. hot twilight - This short interlude in the narrative told by Jordan allows Fitzgerald to relocate Jordan and Nick, introducing an idyllic scene of innocence:
the clear voices of children, already gathered like crickets on the grass, rose through the hot twilight.
Their song has dark elements, however, with the theme of an alien figure, 'The Sheikh of Araby', whose possessiveness leads to the predatory pursuit of a lover:
At night when you're asleepInto your tent I'll creep –
This image is immediately followed with the revelation that Gatsby had deliberately chosen his mansion in order to pursue Daisy. Nick reflects a short while later, that:
There are only the pursued, the pursuing, the busy and the tired,
reducing society to an aggressive and primitive paradigm. Nick's role in relation to Gatsby and Daisy is to be a pander, perhaps fulfilling the 'busy' category.

“Why didn’t he ask you to arrange a meeting?”

“He wants her to see his house,” she explained. “And your house is right next door.”

“Oh!”

“I think he half expected her to wander into one of his parties, some night,” went on Jordan, “but she never did. Then he began asking people casually if they knew her, and I was the first one he found. It was that night he sent for me at his dance, and you should have heard the elaborate way he worked up to it. Of course, I immediately suggested a luncheon in New York — and I thought he’d go mad:

“‘I don’t want to do anything out of the way!’ he kept saying. ‘I want to see her right next door.’

“When I said you were a particular friend of Tom’s, he started to abandon the whole idea. He doesn’t know very much about Tom, though he says he’s read a Chicago paper for years just on the chance of catching a glimpse of Daisy’s name.”

It was dark now, and as we dipped under a little bridge I put my arm around Jordan’s golden shoulder and drew her toward me and asked her to dinner. Suddenly I wasn’t thinking of Daisy and Gatsby any more, but of this clean, hard, limited person, who dealt in universal scepticism, and who leaned back jauntily just within the circle of my arm. A phrase began to beat in my ears with a sort of heady excitement: “There are only the pursued, the pursuing, the busy and the tired.”

“And Daisy ought to have something in her life,” murmured Jordan to me.

“Does she want to see Gatsby?”

“She’s not to know about it. Gatsby doesn’t want her to know. You’re just supposed to invite her to tea.”

We passed a barrier of dark trees, and then the facade of Fifty-ninth Street, a block of delicate pale light, beamed down into the park. Unlike Gatsby and Tom Buchanan, I had no girl whose disembodied face floated along the dark cornices and blinding signs, and so I drew up the girl beside me, tightening my arms. Her wan, scornful mouth smiled, and so I drew her up again closer, this time to my face.

Commented [39]:
He throws the parties initially in the hope Daisy might attend. Later, he begins to ask his guests if they know her. When he finds that Jordan is a friend of Daisy's, he tells her portions of his story. When Jordan suggests a meeting in New York, Gatsby won't hear of it. "I want to see her right next door," Gatsby protests, with the intimation that he doesn't want to trouble Daisy or Jordan or have them go out of their way. What he really wants is to have Daisy see his house, his nearly ostentatious display of money. In his mind, if Daisy knows how much he is worth, she will have no reason to reject him a second time. As the conversation ends, Jordan brings up Gatsby's request: that Nick invite Daisy over for tea so Gatsby can happen by.

Commented [40]:
Why?

Commented [41]:
Really?

Commented [42]:
The chapter's end raises some interesting questions and complications, again harkening back to the idea of morality that permeates the book. Jordan, confiding in Nick, tells him "Daisy ought to have something in her life," and Nick, by implicitly agreeing to pander for Gatsby, is in accord. Nick is placing himself in a position in which he will have to come to terms with helping deceive Tom while bringing Gatsby's fantasy to life. Nick, too, is becoming more and more involved with Jordan and this, perhaps, clouds his judgment. (At the end of Chapter 3, he was determined to break off relations with a girl back home so that he could pursue Jordan, again showing his moral nature.) As Chapter 4 ends, Nick comes to the realization that both Tom and Gatsby are linked by their pursuit of their respective dreams. Each of the men, Nick realizes, is motivated by his desire to be loved by a "disembodied face float[ing] along the dark cornices." Nick, feeling empty at the realization he has no such dream, pulls Jordan closer to him, ending the chapter with a kiss.
If nothing else, this moment of desire makes Nick seem more human. He has needs and longings, just as everyone does. In addition, his agreeing to help Gatsby reunite with Daisy suggests he, too, has a bit of the romantic about him. His morality isn't as rigid as may have been initially supposed; these small acts of human nature help warm the reader to an otherwise aloof man. This release of passion, too, marks a turning point for Nick. From this time, he is open to change and susceptible to the feelings and emotions that many other characters (especially Tom, and to a large extent Daisy and Jordan) work diligently to keep out.