

The Great Gatsby, by F. Scott Fitzgerald

CHAPTER 8

I couldn't sleep all night; a fog-horn was groaning incessantly on the Sound, and I tossed half-sick between grotesque reality and savage, frightening dreams. Toward dawn I heard a taxi go up Gatsby's drive, and immediately I jumped out of bed and began to dress — I felt that I had something to tell him, something to warn him about, and morning would be too late.

Crossing his lawn, I saw that his front door was still open and he was leaning against a table in the hall, heavy with dejection or sleep.

"Nothing happened," he said wanly. "I waited, and about four o'clock she came to the window and stood there for a minute and then turned out the light."

His house had never seemed so enormous to me as it did that night when we hunted through the great rooms for cigarettes. We pushed aside curtains that were like pavilions, and felt over innumerable feet of dark wall for electric light switches — once I tumbled with a sort of splash upon the keys of a ghostly piano. There was an inexplicable amount of dust everywhere, and the rooms were musty, as though they hadn't been aired for many days. I found the humidor on an unfamiliar table, with two stale, dry cigarettes inside. Throwing open the French windows of the drawing-room, we sat smoking out into the darkness.

"You ought to go away," I said. "It's pretty certain they'll trace your car."

"Go away now, old sport?"

"Go to Atlantic City for a week, or up to Montreal."

He wouldn't consider it. He couldn't possibly leave Daisy until he knew what she was going to do. He was clutching at some last hope and I couldn't bear to shake him free.

It was this night that he told me the strange story of his youth with Dan Cody — told it to me because "Jay Gatsby." had broken up like glass against Tom's hard malice, and the long secret extravaganza was played out. I think that he would have acknowledged anything now, without reserve, but he wanted to talk about Daisy.

She was the first "nice" girl he had ever known. In various unrevealed capacities he had come in contact with such people, but always with indiscernible barbed wire

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Synopsis of Chapter 8

This chapter opens with Gatsby's rejection by Daisy, and Nick's visit to Gatsby's house, which is now dusty and musty with being unused.

From Gatsby, Nick hears the tale of Dan Cody (recounted in Chapter 6) as well as further details about Gatsby's first relationship with Daisy. He had come to see her as a 'grail' and 'felt married to her', but the war intervened and Tom Buchanan replaced Gatsby. Daisy sent a letter to Oxford to reject Gatsby.

The season is now turning to autumn, Nick comments, and Gatsby decides to use the pool before it is drained ready for the falling leaves. Nick tells Gatsby that he is 'worth the whole damn bunch put together' and then leaves to go to work. At his office, he speaks to Jordan on the telephone as they finish their relationship.

Nick then narrates what happened at the garage during the previous night as Wilson slowly came to the conclusion that Myrtle's lover deliberately killed her. The following morning an obsessed Wilson sets out to avenge his wife.

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tossed half-sick between grotesque reality and savage, frightening dreams - This dichotomy is notable for offering two equally unpleasant alternatives. The personification of the fog-horn 'groaning' (which keeps him awake) also conveys a sense of distress.

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turned out the light - This passage is similar to the opening of Chapter 7, where the lights 'failed to go on', except this is Daisy's extinction of her romantic associations with Gatsby. This non-communication is her final message to him, as she and Tom depart from their home on the same day. This is ironic as Nick's advice to Gatsby is to 'go away' but Gatsby is determined to wait for Daisy

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I found the humidor on an unfamiliar table, with two stale, dry cigarettes inside — A humidor is a box or cabinet designed to keep tobacco from drying out, but its function has failed here. As Nick and Gatsby look through each room to find cigarettes, every aspect of the house is described in the language of decay and alienation.

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the strange story of his youth with Dan Cody - This narrative was presented by Nick in Chapter 6 but chronologically is told on the final morning of Gatsby's life. It leads into the story of his relationship with Daisy, from Gatsby's point of view. This narrative has already been told from Jordan's point of view in Chapter 4.

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the first 'nice' girl he had ever known - This description of Daisy is ironic, given her brutality, selfishness and betrayals, but refers to her social class and difference from Gatsby. He is particularly impressed with her house and the endorsement of her that 'many men had already loved Daisy' as this 'increased her value in his eyes'.

between. He found her excitingly desirable. He went to her house, at first with other officers from Camp Taylor, then alone. It amazed him — he had never been in such a beautiful house before, but what gave it an air of breathless intensity, was that Daisy lived there — it was as casual a thing to her as his tent out at camp was to him. There was a ripe mystery about it, a hint of bedrooms up-stairs more beautiful and cool than other bedrooms, of gay and radiant activities taking place through its corridors, and of romances that were not musty and laid away already in lavender but fresh and breathing and redolent of this year's shining motor-cars and of dances whose flowers were scarcely withered. It excited him, too, that many men had already loved Daisy — it increased her value in his eyes. He felt their presence all about the house, pervading the air with the shades and echoes of still vibrant emotions.

But he knew that he was in Daisy's house by a colossal accident. However glorious might be his future as Jay Gatsby, he was at present a penniless young man without a past, and at any moment the invisible cloak of his uniform might slip from his shoulders. So he made the most of his time. He took what he could get, ravenously and unscrupulously — eventually he took Daisy one still October night, took her because he had no real right to touch her hand.

He might have despised himself, for he had certainly taken her under false pretenses. I don't mean that he had traded on his phantom millions, but he had deliberately given Daisy a sense of security; he let her believe that he was a person from much the same stratum as herself — that he was fully able to take care of her. As a matter of fact, he had no such facilities — he had no comfortable family standing behind him, and he was liable at the whim of an impersonal government to be blown anywhere about the world.

But he didn't despise himself and it didn't turn out as he had imagined. He had intended, probably, to take what he could and go — but now he found that he had committed himself to the following of a grail. He knew that Daisy was extraordinary, but he didn't realize just how extraordinary a "nice" girl could be. She vanished into her rich house, into her rich, full life, leaving Gatsby — nothing. He felt married to her, that was all.

When they met again, two days later, it was Gatsby who was breathless, who was, somehow, betrayed. Her porch was bright with the bought luxury of star-shine; the wicker of the settee squeaked fashionably as she turned toward him and he kissed her

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He felt married to her, that was all. - Gatsby unexpectedly finds himself emotionally committed to Daisy, once he 'took Daisy one still October night' (meaning that they had had sex). She becomes a 'grail' to him, and the convention that a 'fallen woman' would be the passive victim of a predatory man is reversed, placing Gatsby completely in Daisy's power.

curious and lovely mouth. She had caught a cold, and it made her voice huskier and more charming than ever, and Gatsby was overwhelmingly aware of the youth and mystery that wealth imprisons and preserves, of the freshness of many clothes, and of Daisy, gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor.

"I can't describe to you how surprised I was to find out I loved her, old sport. I even hoped for a while that she'd throw me over, but she didn't, because she was in love with me too. She thought I knew a lot because I knew different things from her. . . . Well, there I was, 'way off my ambitions, getting deeper in love every minute, and all of a sudden I didn't care. What was the use of doing great things if I could have a better time telling her what I was going to do?" On the last afternoon before he went abroad, he sat with Daisy in his arms for a long, silent time. It was a cold fall day, with fire in the room and her cheeks flushed. Now and then she moved and he changed his arm a little, and once he kissed her dark shining hair. The afternoon had made them tranquil for a while, as if to give them a deep memory for the long parting the next day promised. They had never been closer in their month of love, nor communicated more profoundly one with another, than when she brushed silent lips against his coat's shoulder or when he touched the end of her fingers, gently, as though she were asleep. He did extraordinarily well in the war. He was a captain before he went to the front, and following the Argonne battles he got his majority and the command of the divisional machine-guns. After the Armistice he tried frantically to get home, but some complication or misunderstanding sent him to Oxford instead. He was worried now — there was a quality of nervous despair in Daisy's letters. She didn't see why he couldn't come. She was feeling the pressure of the world outside, and she wanted to see him and feel his presence beside her and be reassured that she was doing the right thing after all.

For Daisy was young and her artificial world was redolent of orchids and pleasant, cheerful snobbery and orchestras which set the rhythm of the year, summing up the sadness and suggestiveness of life in new tunes. All night the saxophones wailed the hopeless comment of the *Beale Street Blues* while a hundred pairs of golden and silver slippers shuffled the shining dust. At the gray tea hour there were always rooms that throbbed incessantly with this low, sweet fever, while fresh faces drifted here and there like rose petals blown by the sad horns around the floor.

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Daisy, gleaming like silver, safe and proud above the hot struggles of the poor - It may be that Daisy avoids being a victim because of her wealth. The narrative has continually focussed on aspects of her material status as it dazzles him with 'radiance', 'shining', 'gleaming' and 'bright ... star-shine'. Her elevation above the poor also echoes Nick's comment that Daisy and Jordan were 'like silver idols' (in the previous chapter).

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'I can't describe to you how surprised I was to find out I loved her, old sport' - Nick's narrative shifts from reporting Gatsby's account to directly quoting him:

there I was, 'way off my ambitions, getting deeper in love every minute, and all of a sudden I didn't care.

Gatsby's words seem to contradict the emphasis on wealth which is evident in Nick's account. The description of their final afternoon together is one of tenderness and intimacy, 'profound' communication.

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some complication or misunderstanding sent him to Oxford instead - Here we are presented with yet another explanation of Gatsby being 'an Oxford man', contradicting his earlier statements. This would be the most ironic, since it is the reason he remains separated from Daisy while she succumbs to the 'pressure of the world outside'.

Through this twilight universe Daisy began to move again with the **season**; suddenly she was again keeping half a dozen dates a day with half a dozen men, and drowsing asleep at dawn with the beads and chiffon of an evening dress tangled among dying orchids on the floor beside her bed. And all the time something within her was crying for a decision. She wanted her life shaped now, immediately — and the decision must be made by some force — of love, of money, of unquestionable practicality — that was close at hand.

That force took shape in the middle of spring with the arrival of Tom Buchanan. There was a wholesome bulkiness about his person and his **position**, and Daisy was flattered. Doubtless there was a certain struggle and a certain relief. The letter reached Gatsby while he was still at Oxford.

It was dawn now on Long **Island** and we went about opening the rest of the windows down-stairs, filling the house with gray-turning, gold-turning light. The shadow of a tree fell abruptly across the dew and ghostly birds began to sing among the blue leaves. There was a slow, pleasant movement in the air, scarcely a wind, promising a cool, lovely day.

"I don't think she ever loved him." Gatsby turned around from a window and looked at me challengingly. "You must remember, old sport, she was very excited this afternoon. He told her those things in a way that frightened her — that made it look as if I was some kind of cheap sharper. And the result was she hardly knew what she was saying."

He sat down gloomily.

"Of course she might have loved him just for a minute, when they were first married — and loved me more even then, do you see?"

Suddenly he came out with a curious remark.

"In any case," he said, "it was just **personal."**

What could you make of that, except to suspect some intensity in his conception of the affair that couldn't be measured?

He came back from France when Tom and Daisy were still on their wedding trip, and made a miserable but irresistible journey to Louisville on the last of his army pay. He stayed there a week, walking the streets where their footsteps had clicked together through the November night and revisiting the out-of-the-way places to which they had driven in her white car. Just as Daisy's house had always seemed to him more

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waited for Gatsby to return, but her 'artificial world' slowly eclipses her commitment to Gatsby. The 'season' may be a reference to the social season for young women to be socially active and wooed. The language used to describe this process is elegiac and melancholic:

- 'sadness and suggestiveness'
- 'waited... hopeless'
- 'shuffled the shining dust'
- 'fresh faces drifted here and there like rose petals blown by the sad horns around the floor'
- 'drowsing'
- 'tangled'
- 'dying'.

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a wholesome bulkiness about his person and his position - Tom seems to represent crude reality in contrast to the dreamlike and insubstantial experiences of Daisy's life, including the relationship with Gatsby.

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It was dawn now on Long Island - Nick uses language associated with change and movement ('grey-turning, gold-turning', 'fell abruptly') to indicate forward progress in the narrative after several retrospective passages, although there will be more digressions and disruptions within this chapter. The language of this paragraph is also ominous:

The shadow of a tree fell abruptly across the dew and ghostly birds began to sing among the blue leaves.

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it was just personal - This is a highly enigmatic comment from Gatsby, as there is no clear referent for the pronoun 'it' and no clear meaning for 'personal'. Nick notes the difficulty of interpreting the comment: 'What could you make of that...?' and offers:

some intensity in his conception of the affair that couldn't be measured?

which is also unclear. Nick then resumes the retelling of Gatsby's narrative, covering Gatsby's actions after he 'came back from France' although we had last heard of him being in Oxford when he received the rejection letter from Daisy.

mysterious and gay than other houses, **so his idea of the city itself**, even though she was gone from it, **was pervaded with a melancholy beauty**.

He left feeling that if he had searched harder, he might have found her — that he was leaving her behind. The day-coach — he was penniless now — was hot. He went out to the open vestibule and sat down on a folding-chair, and the station slid away and the backs of unfamiliar buildings moved by. Then out into the spring fields, where a yellow trolley raced them for a minute with people in it who might once have seen the pale magic of her face along the casual street.

The track curved and now it was going away from the sun, which as it sank lower, seemed to spread itself in benediction over the vanishing city where she had drawn her breath. **He stretched out his hand desperately as if to snatch only a wisp of air, to save a fragment of the spot that she had made lovely for him. But it was all going by too fast now for his blurred eyes and he knew that he had lost that part of it, the freshest and the best, forever.**

It was nine o'clock when we finished breakfast and went out on the porch. The night had made a sharp difference in the weather and there was an autumn flavor in the **air**.

The gardener, the last one of Gatsby's former servants, came to the foot of the steps.

"I'm going to drain the pool to-day, Mr. Gatsby. Leaves'll start falling pretty soon, and then there's always trouble with the pipes."

"Don't do it to-day," Gatsby answered. He turned to me apologetically. "You know, old sport, I've never used that pool all summer?"

I looked at my watch and stood up.

"Twelve minutes to my train."

I didn't want to go to the city. I wasn't worth a decent stroke of work, but it was more than that — **I didn't want to leave Gatsby**. I missed that train, and then another, before I could get myself away.

"I'll call you up," I said finally.

"Do, old sport."

"I'll call you about noon."

We walked slowly down the steps.

"I suppose Daisy'll call too." He looked at me anxiously, as if he hoped I'd corroborate this.

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He stretched out his hand desperately ... she had made lovely for him. - This retrospective narrative deals with Gatsby's departure from Louisville, now that Daisy has married Tom, and his final thoughts and actions. The gesture is reminiscent of the first image of Gatsby in Chapter 1: he stretched out his arms towards the dark water in a curious way.

Here the image is directly associated with loss:

he knew he had lost that part of it, the freshest and the best, forever.

Gatsby is still hoping that Daisy will contact him, but Nick and the audience know that this is unlikely.

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an autumn flavour in the air - the sense of an ending is created by reference to the seasons and the image of falling leaves anticipates the death of Gatsby. The conversation about the pool is highly ironic, as the gardener is concerned about the effects of falling leaves, while Gatsby observes, 'I've never used that pool all summer.'

“I suppose so.”

“Well, good-by.”

We shook hands and I started away. Just before I reached the hedge I remembered something and turned around.

“They’re a rotten crowd,” I shouted across the lawn. “You’re worth the whole damn bunch put together.”

I’ve always been glad I said that. It was the only compliment I ever gave him, because I disapproved of him from beginning to end. First he nodded politely, and then his face broke into that radiant and understanding smile, as if we’d been in ecstatic cahoots on that fact all the time. His gorgeous pink rag of a suit made a bright spot of color against the white steps, and I thought of the night when I first came to his ancestral home, three months before. The lawn and drive had been crowded with the faces of those who guessed at his corruption — and he had stood on those steps, concealing his incorruptible dream, as he waved them good-by.

I thanked him for his hospitality. We were always thanking him for that — I and the others.

“Good-by,” I called. “I enjoyed breakfast, Gatsby.”

Up in the city, I tried for a while to list the quotations on an interminable amount of stock, then I fell asleep in my swivel-chair. Just before noon the phone woke me, and I started up with sweat breaking out on my forehead. It was Jordan Baker; she often called me up at this hour because the uncertainty of her own movements between hotels and clubs and private houses made her hard to find in any other way. Usually her voice came over the wire as something fresh and cool, as if a divot from a green golf-links had come sailing in at the office window, but this morning it seemed harsh and dry.

“I’ve left Daisy’s house,” she said. “I’m at Hempstead, and I’m going down to Southampton this afternoon.”

Probably it had been tactful to leave Daisy’s house, but the act annoyed me, and her next remark made me rigid.

“You weren’t so nice to me last night.”

“How could it have mattered then?”

Silence for a moment. Then:

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You’re worth the whole damn bunch put together - Nick’s misgivings about leaving Gatsby are also ominous, and his warm endorsement is like a premature eulogy.

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His gorgeous pink rag of a suit made a bright spot of colour against the white steps - Nick notes the details of the scene, linking this image also with a memory of the first party he attended. The colour symbolism could be said to have sacrificial connotations, and certainly foreshadows his death in the pool, marked by a ‘thin red circle in the water’.

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concealing his incorruptible dream - He contrasts the idea of a corrupt Gatsby with the idea of Gatsby’s dream being ‘incorruptible’, unperceived by the crowds who visited his home. Nick seems to reconcile his disapproval of Gatsby, which he says he felt from ‘beginning to end’, with his admiration and appreciation of Gatsby’s ability to pursue a dream.

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You weren’t so nice to me last night. - Jordan’s complaint about Nick’s treatment of her seems very trivial and self-centred, and he has no interest in mollifying her. She, Tom and Daisy are sharply distinguished from Nick and Gatsby because the three wealthier characters are self-interested and ruthless; they also leave town as if running away, although Jordan is trying to persuade Nick to see her before she leaves.

“However — I want to see you.”

“I want to see you, too.”

“Suppose I don’t go to Southampton, and come into town this afternoon?”

“No — I don’t think this afternoon.”

“Very well.”

“It’s impossible this afternoon. Various —”

We talked like that for a while, and then abruptly we weren’t talking any longer. I don’t know which of us hung up with a sharp click, but I know I didn’t care. I couldn’t have talked to her across a tea-table that day if I never talked to her again in this world.

I called Gatsby’s house a few minutes later, but the line was busy. I tried four times; finally an exasperated central told me the wire was being kept open for long distance from Detroit. Taking out my time-table, I drew a small circle around the three-fifty train. Then I leaned back in my chair and tried to think. It was just noon.

When I passed the ashheaps on the train that morning I had crossed deliberately to the other side of the car. I suppose there’d be a curious crowd around there all day with little boys searching for dark spots in the dust, and some garrulous man telling over and over what had happened, until it became less and less real even to him and he could tell it no longer, and Myrtle Wilson’s tragic achievement was forgotten. Now I want to go back a little and tell what happened at the garage after we left there the night before.

They had difficulty in locating the sister, Catherine. She must have broken her rule against drinking that night, for when she arrived she was stupid with liquor and unable to understand that the ambulance had already gone to Flushing. When they convinced her of this, she immediately fainted, as if that was the intolerable part of the affair. Some one, kind or curious, took her in his car and drove her in the wake of her sister’s body.

Until long after midnight a changing crowd lapped up against the front of the garage, while George Wilson rocked himself back and forth on the couch inside. For a while the door of the office was open, and every one who came into the garage glanced irresistibly through it. Finally someone said it was a shame, and closed the door. Michaelis and several other men were with him; first, four or five men, later two or three men. Still later Michaelis had to ask the last stranger to wait there fifteen minutes

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supposed there’d be a curious crowd - Nick’s narrative becomes even more complicated as he shifts into a reconstruction of the events at the garage, beginning with his own experience on the train and recounting what he imagines is happening there (‘little boys searching for dark spots in the dust’). His ‘garrulous man’ who narrates the events ‘until it became less and less real even to him’ is an ironic comment on his own narrative.

He shifts completely into someone else’s story (unattributed) with ‘Now I want to go back a little and tell what happened at the garage after we left there the night before.’ The audience knows that the source of information is Michaelis, with many details coming from his perspective:

He didn’t like to go into the garage.... so he moved uncomfortably around the office — he knew every object in it before morning...

longer, while he went back to his own place and made a pot of coffee. After that, he stayed there alone with Wilson until dawn.

About three o'clock the quality of Wilson's incoherent muttering changed — he grew quieter and began to talk about the yellow car. He announced that he had a way of finding out whom the yellow car belonged to, and then he blurted out that a couple of months ago his wife had come from the city with her face bruised and her nose swollen. But when he heard himself say this, he flinched and began to cry "Oh, my God!" again in his groaning voice. Michaelis made a clumsy attempt to distract him.

"How long have you been married, George? Come on there, try and sit still a minute and answer my question. **How long have you been married?**"

"Twelve years."

"Ever had any children? Come on, George, sit still — I asked you a question. Did you ever have any children?"

The hard brown beetles kept thudding against the dull light, and whenever Michaelis heard a car go tearing along the road outside it sounded to him like the car that hadn't stopped a few hours before. He didn't like to go into the garage, because the work bench was stained where the body had been lying, so he moved uncomfortably around the office — he knew every object in it before morning — and from time to time sat down beside Wilson trying to keep him more quiet.

"Have you got a church you go to sometimes, George? Maybe even if you haven't been there for a long time? Maybe I could call up the church and get a priest to come over and he could talk to you, see?"

"Don't belong to any."

"You ought to have a church, George, for times like this. You must have gone to church once. Didn't you get married in a church? Listen, George, listen to me. Didn't you get married in a church?"

"That was a long time ago."

The effort of answering broke the rhythm of his rocking — for a moment he was silent. Then the same half-knowing, half-bewildered look came back into his faded eyes.

"Look in the drawer there," he said, pointing at the desk.

"Which drawer?"

"That drawer — that one."

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You ought to have a church, George, for times like this.
- Michaelis highlights the secularisation of American society, as he seeks to comfort George Wilson over Myrtle's death. This passage can be compared with the lack of religious belief expressed in connection with Gatsby's death and his funeral, and is important in setting up the scene, recounted by George, where he confronts Myrtle with the idea that 'God sees everything' with reference to the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg. This shocks Michaelis, we're told, and he points out that it is an advertisement, but Wilson is not persuaded. Fitzgerald may be making an ironic comment about the replacement of religion with consumerism here, as well as highlighting Wilson's madness

Michaelis opened the drawer nearest his hand. There was nothing in it but a small, expensive dog-leash, made of leather and braided silver. It was apparently new.

"This?" he inquired, holding it up.

Wilson stared and nodded.

"I found it yesterday afternoon. She tried to tell me about it, but I knew it was something funny."

"You mean your wife bought it?"

"She had it wrapped in tissue paper on her bureau."

Michaelis didn't see anything odd in that, and he gave Wilson a dozen reasons why his wife might have bought the dog-leash. But conceivably Wilson had heard some of these same explanations before, from Myrtle, because he began saying "Oh, my God!" again in a whisper — his comforter left several explanations in the air.

"Then he killed her," said Wilson. His mouth dropped open suddenly.

"Who did?"

"I have a way of finding out."

"You're morbid, George," said his friend. "This has been a strain to you and you don't know what you're saying. You'd better try and sit quiet till morning."

"He murdered her."

"It was an accident, George."

Wilson shook his head. His eyes narrowed and his mouth widened slightly with the ghost of a superior "Hm!"

"I know," he said definitely, "I'm one of these trusting fellas and I don't think any harm to nobody, but when I get to know a thing I know it. It was the man in that car. She ran out to speak to him and he wouldn't stop."

Michaelis had seen this too, but it hadn't occurred to him that there was any special significance in it. He believed that Mrs. Wilson had been running away from her husband, rather than trying to stop any particular car.

"How could she of been like that?"

"She's a deep one," said Wilson, as if that answered the question. "Ah-h-h —"

He began to rock again, and Michaelis stood twisting the leash in his hand.

"Maybe you got some friend that I could telephone for, George?"

This was a forlorn hope — he was almost sure that Wilson had no friend: there was not enough of him for his wife. He was glad a little later when he noticed a change in the room, a blue quickening by the window, and realized that dawn wasn't far off. About five o'clock it was blue enough outside to snap off the light.

Wilson's glazed eyes turned out to the ashheaps, where small gray clouds took on fantastic shape and scurried here and there in the faint dawn wind.

"I spoke to her," he muttered, after a long silence. "I told her she might fool me but she couldn't fool God. I took her to the window." — with an effort he got up and walked to the rear window and leaned with his face pressed against it ——" and I said 'God knows what you've been doing, everything you've been doing. You may fool me, but you can't fool God!'"

Standing behind him, Michaelis saw with a shock that he was looking at the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, which had just emerged, pale and enormous, from the dissolving night.

"God sees everything," repeated Wilson.

"That's an advertisement," Michaelis assured him. Something made him turn away from the window and look back into the room. But Wilson stood there a long time, his face close to the window pane, nodding into the twilight.

By six o'clock Michaelis was worn out, and grateful for the sound of a car stopping outside. It was one of the watchers of the night before who had promised to come back, so he cooked breakfast for three, which he and the other man ate together. Wilson was quieter now, and Michaelis went home to sleep; when he awoke four hours later and hurried back to the garage, Wilson was gone.

His movements — he was on foot all the time — were afterward traced to Port Roosevelt and then to Gad's Hill, where he bought a sandwich that he didn't eat, and a cup of coffee. He must have been tired and walking slowly, for he didn't reach Gad's Hill until noon. Thus far there was no difficulty in accounting for his time — there were boys who had seen a man "acting sort of crazy," and motorists at whom he stared oddly from the side of the road. Then for three hours he disappeared from view. The police, on the strength of what he said to Michaelis, that he "had a way of finding out," supposed that he spent that time going from garage to garage thereabout, inquiring for a yellow car. On the other hand, no garage man who had seen him ever came forward, and perhaps he had an easier, surer way of finding out what he wanted to

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Wilson's glazed eyes turned out to the ash heaps - This scene fulfils the dismal ideas of Chapter 2, when the ash heaps are first introduced, echoing some of the language and images: 'small grey clouds took on fantastic shapes' and featuring the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, which now assume a more sinister role as they are used to intimidate Myrtle. The description of Wilson's eyes as 'glazed' may be ironic as this matches the advertisement (wearing glasses) but may also indicate his introspection and lack of clarity. Later, Wilson is described as an 'ashen, fantastic figure' himself and his movement of 'gliding' is disturbingly detached and pitiless.

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you can't fool God! — Wilson paraphrases from Galatians 6:7-8. These verses serve as a comment on much of the action of the novel:

Do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. People reap what they sow. Those who sow to please their sinful nature, from that nature will reap destruction; those who sow to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life.

know. By half-past two he was in West Egg, where he asked someone the way to Gatsby's house. So by that time he knew Gatsby's name.

At two o'clock Gatsby put on his bathing-suit and left word with the butler that if any one phoned word was to be brought to him at the pool. He stopped at the garage for a pneumatic mattress that had amused his guests during the summer, and the chauffeur helped him pump it up. Then he gave instructions that the open car wasn't to be taken out under any circumstances — and this was strange, because the front right fender needed repair.

Gatsby shouldered the mattress and started for the pool. Once he stopped and shifted it a little, and the chauffeur asked him if he needed help, but he shook his head and in a moment disappeared among the yellowing trees.

No telephone message arrived, but the butler went without his sleep and waited for it until four o'clock — until long after there was any one to give it to if it came. I have an idea that Gatsby himself didn't believe it would come, and perhaps he no longer cared.

If that was true he must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream. He must have looked up at an unfamiliar sky through frightening leaves and shivered as he found what a grotesque thing a rose is and how raw the sunlight was upon the scarcely created grass. A new world, material without being real, where poor ghosts, breathing dreams like air, drifted fortuitously about . . . like that ashen, fantastic figure gliding toward him through the amorphous trees.

The chauffeur — he was one of Wolfsheim's proteges — heard the shots — afterward he could only say that he hadn't thought anything much about them. I drove from the station directly to Gatsby's house and my rushing anxiously up the front steps was the first thing that alarmed any one. But they knew then, I firmly believe. With scarcely a word said, four of us, the chauffeur, butler, gardener, and I, hurried down to the pool.

There was a faint, barely perceptible movement of the water as the fresh flow from one end urged its way toward the drain at the other with little ripples that were hardly the shadows of waves, the laden mattress moved irregularly down the pool. A small gust of wind that scarcely corrugated the surface was enough to disturb its accidental course with its accidental burden. The touch of a cluster of leaves revolved it slowly, tracing, like the leg of compass, a thin red circle in the water.

Commented [24]:

Gatsby shouldered the mattress and started for the pool. - This image may be interpreted as Christ-like, referring to the carrying of the cross, upon which Jesus was killed. The additional detail of Gatsby stopping and repositioning it, and the chauffeur's offer of help (which is declined by Gatsby) may further support this idea.

Commented [25]:

the yellowing trees - the choices of language relating to nature are increasingly autumnal, emphasising decay and alienation. Here, Nick imagines Gatsby's last perceptions of the natural world, using words like 'raw', 'grotesque', 'frightening', 'unfamiliar' and 'amorphous'.

Commented [26]:

its accidental course with its accidental burden - Nick emphasises the role of fortune in determining events, as we have just seen Wilson determined to pursue the driver of the car which killed Myrtle, ignorant of the fact that the driver was Daisy rather than Gatsby. Nick presents Wilson's actions as born out of mistaken identity alongside a measure of self-delusion (Wilson sees Myrtle as trying to speak to the driver of the car, whereas Michaelis sees her as running away from Wilson).

Fortune has played a role throughout, in quite subtle ways, as Gatsby was sent to Oxford by accident, he says, and even fell in love with Daisy unexpectedly. Nevertheless, this is balanced by the inevitability of Daisy's rejection of Gatsby at every stage of their relationship, because their social standing is unequal.

Furthermore, the events of Chapter 9 undermine this tragic idea of Gatsby as the victim of chance events: Tom's conversation with Nick suggests that there may have been some deliberate deception and misleading on his part, intended to cause Gatsby harm. Tom certainly exploits the mistaken identity and may have concealed the truth and this leads to Wilson's murder of Gatsby.

It was after we started with Gatsby toward the house that the gardener saw Wilson's body a little way off in the grass, and the holocaust was complete.

Commented [27]:

the holocaust was complete - This final phrase includes Wilson in an image of dramatic death and sacrifice. (The novel was written before the Holocaust of Nazi Germany took place, so this word had different connotations from those it has now.) While Gatsby can be seen as sacrificing himself in order to save Daisy from punishment, the nature of Wilson's sacrifice is less clear. One possible interpretation is that Myrtle and Wilson, along with Gatsby, are all sacrificed in order to save the less worthy characters from any loss of status, wealth and freedom and to preserve their corrupt world. Wilson is certainly deranged and has been cruel to his wife, but his death is an expression of his pain, caused at least in part by Tom and then by Daisy.