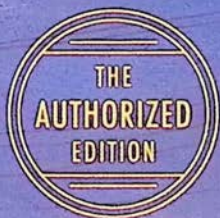
F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

INTRODUCTION BY JESMYN WARD

THE GREAT GATSBY



BY F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

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F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

THE GREAT GATSBY

Then wear the gold hat, if that will move her;
  If you can bounce high, bounce for her too,
Till she cry "Lover, gold-hatted, high-bouncing lover,
  I must have you!"

—THOMAS PARKE D'INVILLIERS

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ONCE AGAIN
TO
ZELDA

INTRODUCTION

by Jesmyn Ward

I first read *The Great Gatsby* as a teenager; I imagine this is when most Americans encounter F. Scott Fitzgerald's seminal work. Our teachers, rightly so, hail the novel as a masterpiece, so we read it under their influence, when we are young. We read it when we are bewildered and delighted at our changing bodies, flush with burgeoning sexuality, heady with the certainty of our ascendency, the prospect of our future greatness shining off in the distance like a great green star.

It is easy for young people to see themselves in Gatsby. His earnestness is familiar. His ambition, twinned with desperation, resonates with any teenager who wants to journey off to college or move states away for work, in a bid to escape the boundaries of their youthful life. Poverty made Gatsby ravenously desperate for difference, for possibility. Some, perhaps from similar circumstances, will recognize that and see themselves. Others will empathize because they feel driven away by parents who don't understand them, by peers who underestimate or limit them, by the larger culture

that ostracizes them for one reason or another. Their hearts will be, as Gatsby's was, "in a constant, turbulent riot." The "instinct toward . . . future glory" leads them out into the world. They burn to flee, to grow beyond their birth circumstances. In some ways, adolescence is one great flight.

Teen readers are especially understanding of Gatsby's fixation on re-creating that moment in his life when it was most open to possibility, when he could become and do anything. When he believed that if he worked hard enough, he could remake himself. He could ascend to a different social class, a class where life seemed to be an enchanted necklace, each moment a pearl on an endless string. It seems to be a universal sentiment of youth: the belief that one can become anything, given the luxury of time and focus. Young readers walk down tree-lined Louisville streets with Gatsby and Daisy as the leaves fall. They see a ladder "mounted to a secret place above the trees . . . once there he could suck on the pap of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder." The young know that golden moment when anything can happen, and they understand its allure because they are living it.

By the end of the book, the reader's empathy has burned to love. Young readers fall for Gatsby's passion, his insistence that life should be relished, should be executed well. They have fallen in love with the persistence of his devotion to Daisy. I imagine they like to think they are capable of such a great love, one that smolders, lasting from year to year. They adore him so much, they feel a quiet disdain for those who do not possess his virtues: perhaps most of all for Tom, who embodies the worst excesses of the moneyed elite, the misogynistic, the racist. They pity Nick, too, because they understand he has fallen in love with Gatsby; readers

understand that Nick doesn't deserve Gatsby. Even though he insists he is not carelessly violent like Tom or Daisy, the young understand Nick is as much a product of his social class as Tom, that its backwardness and insularity marks him as much as it does Tom and Daisy.

But the experience I had while reading *The Great Gatsby* as an adult was very different. I would argue my older reading was deeper, more emphatically felt. While most young people admire Gatsby's youthful love for Daisy—for the possibility associated with her economic and social class, and for who he was with Daisy too—in that shining moment in time, there is much subtext that becomes clearer with age, subtext Fitzgerald must have been acutely aware of at the time he wrote *The Great Gatsby.*

One of the first great lessons of my adulthood was this: I change. As I grow, my dreams change as do my ideas about who I can be and what I want during the short time I am alive. Gatsby has not learned this. It is a lesson he has closed himself to. From the moment he meets Daisy, his ideas about who he is and what he wants and what he can become are immutable. It's ironic that he is so in love with the moment of greatest possibility in his youth, the moment he kissed Daisy, but his love for that moment has rendered all other avenues of possibility impossible, has fossilized him, sealed him in amber, turned him to stone. Made it possible for him to see only one version of himself. After years of underhanded dealing and shady business, he is wealthy, popular, feared, respected. On West Egg, he hosts glittering parties where old money and new money engage in raucous revelry together. He owns the newest, most exquisite cars and he has mannerisms and a wardrobe to match his new social station. When we meet Gatsby, he has

worked furiously to make himself into the man, who, on the surface, high society would have deemed a good match for Daisy. And in the end, this immutability, this blindness to change, to the fact that Gatsby can only picture himself as one thing, limits him.

It is almost as if Gatsby's inability to recognize opportunities for change in himself means he can't acknowledge it in others, either. When he meets Daisy again, he only sees the girl he fell in love with. He cannot understand that she isn't the same person she was because so much has occurred in her life; she has been married for a number of years, and she has borne a child. The accumulation of days spent shaping herself to her husband and caring in her careless way for her child have changed her from the girl she was. Nick sees this in her, in the way she speaks, with "fluctuating, feverish warmth." But Gatsby's love for her girlhood means he can only hear the youth in her voice, and he is deaf to the age in her words. Adults understand this, intrinsically, marked as they are by the years, time wreathing them in layers: an onion growing round and waxy in the earth. Likewise, I think this is why Gatsby underestimates the extent of Tom's malice, and the perfidy of the social class he has fought to become a part of.

And that, perhaps, was the idea most invisible to me as a young reader: that the very social class that embodied the dream Gatsby wanted for himself was predicated on exclusion. That Gatsby was doomed from the start. He'd been born on the outside; he would die on the outside. Hungry as I was to escape my own little nowhere country town, my own poor beginnings, as a teen I could only see Gatsby's yearning. I was too young to know his wanting is wasted from the moment he feels it. The seasoned heart aches for

James Gatz, the perpetual child, the arrested romantic, bound by one perfect moment to failure.

This is a book that endures, generation after generation, because every time a reader returns to *The Great Gatsby*, we discover new revelations, new insights, new burning bits of language. Read and bear witness to the story's permanence, its robust heart. Read and bear witness to Jay Gatsby, who burned bright and bold and doomed as his creator. Read.

FOREWORD

It is my great honor, as F. Scott Fitzgerald's granddaughter, to crack some literary champagne over this edition of *The Great Gatsby* and launch this Great American Novel in its purest form, masterfully restored, and as close as possible to Scott's original intentions.

I never met my grandparents: Scott died young, in 1940 at the age of forty-four. I was born in 1948. Zelda wrote my mother from Highland Hospital in Asheville, North Carolina, "I long to see the baby," but she perished in a fire a couple of months later. Fortunately, both of my grandparents left such a trove of intimate letters and blazingly honest essays that I feel I have come to know them.

By the time Scott began to write *The Great Gatsby*, he had already produced two highly autobiographical novels. In 1923 he wrote his editor at Scribner's, Maxwell Perkins, that he wanted his third novel to be different. "I want to write something *new*—something extraordinary and beautiful and simple & intricately patterned." Although *Gatsby* is a work of his imagination, Scott's

experiences, along with those of family and friends, are elemental to the book.

My mother, Scott and Zelda's only child, appears early in the story. When Daisy gives birth she says, "I'm glad it's a girl. And I hope she'll be a fool—that's the best thing a girl can be in this world, a beautiful little fool." This is uncannily similar to what Zelda said in 1921 as she emerged from the ether of childbirth. "Isn't she smart—she has the hiccups. I hope it's beautiful and a fool—a beautiful little fool." Of course, my mother was no fool. She was christened Frances Scott Fitzgerald, and called Scottie.

"In my next incarnation," my mother wrote years later, "I may not choose again to be the daughter of a Famous Author. The pay is good, and there are fringe benefits, but the working conditions are too hazardous. . . . I suppose it is impossible [for writers] to form the habit of inventing people, building them up, tearing them down, and moving them around like paper dolls, without doing somewhat the same thing with live ones. Good writers are essentially nutcrackers, exposing the scandalous condition of the human soul."

Scott was a devoted and difficult father. He was virtually a single parent when my mother was a teenager. He tried to dictate what she read. He tried to supervise her manners, her interests, and her friends. Scottie wrote, "My father had a terrific sense of wasting his own life, his youth, and he was trying to prevent me from squandering my resources as he felt he had squandered his." She admitted that at Vassar College she sometimes didn't open his letters, but was wise enough to stash them in a drawer. "Isn't it odd," she continued, "that the letters he wrote me, so full of advice and wisdom, but to me, plain harassment, have taken their place alongside his more famous writings?"

As a teenager, my mother avoided talking about her father because his reputation was thoroughly tarnished by alcoholism. She ignored her parents' problems by forming a dramatic group at Vassar, immersing herself in a lively social life, and dating her future husband, Lt. Jack Lanahan. Scottie was twenty when Scott died suddenly in Hollywood. He was almost penniless, except for the seven hundred dollars hidden in his bookshelf, and a small veteran's pension for Zelda. *The Great Gatsby* was no longer available in bookstores.

The revival came slowly. His Princeton classmate, Edmund Wilson, edited Scott's notes for his partially completed novel, *The Last Tycoon*, and it sold respectably. The biggest boost for *The Great Gatsby* came when it was issued as an Armed Services Edition, a small pocket-size paperback, and given to one hundred fifty thousand soldiers during World War II. That introduced *The Great Gatsby* to all those young American men and their families.

By the mid-1960s Scott's books were being included in college curriculums. My mother hid from any reflected glory. We lived in Washington, D.C., where she wrote a column for the *Northern Virginia Sun* and later for *The Washington Post*. The only time Scottie allowed her identity as the "daughter of" to be disclosed was on the campaign trail, stumping for a favorite candidate, and knowing her father's name now opened doors. She claimed to have the hide of a rhinoceros when it came to hearing strangers' opinions about her parents' work or unsolicited diagnoses of her mother's mental illness, but she wanted to shield us children from any negative fallout of their legacy.

I wasn't encouraged to read *The Great Gatsby* and I don't think our mother wanted us to grow up feeling we were related to anybody special. When I was about nine, my

mother read us "The Curious Case of Benjamin Button," which I loved. A couple of years later *Life Magazine* ran a story, "The Spell of F. Scott Fitzgerald Grows Stronger." We four grandchildren were photographed in the attic, playing with Zelda's turquoise ostrich feather fan and arranging Scott's battalion of lead soldiers. For the camera, we held up Zelda's brilliant paper dolls, each with a costume appropriate to the court of Louis XIV, King Arthur's Round Table, or the extravagant finery of fairy godmothers.

Eventually it became embarrassing to know nothing about my grandparents. I was seventeen when a young writer asked if I agreed that *The Great Gatsby*, more than any other novel of its era, had essentially lost nothing with the passage of time. I had no idea. In my freshman year of college, in self-defense, I read all five of his novels, along with a few stories and Arthur Mizener's biography.

I was especially awed by Scott's pitch-perfect use of language, as when Gatsby kisses Daisy. "He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never romp again like the mind of God. So he waited, listening for a moment longer to the tuning-fork that had been struck upon a star. Then he kissed her."

I can't account for all the reasons people love *The Great Gatsby*: perhaps for its champagne parties and of course for its glitz, elegance, gorgeous cars, enormous estates, and Gatsby's vast collection of shirts. I remember my mother telling me she thought *The Great Gatsby* was popular with college students because it is a short book and an easy read. It was popular in Russia too; she speculated they liked to use it as an example of capitalism gone awry. My mother didn't live long enough to explain Gatsby's popularity in Japan,

where the Takarazuka Revue staged an all-female performance. *The Great Gatsby* has been adapted to ballet and to opera, its symbols have been anatomized, its themes have been explicated, but Gatsby remains timeless. He stands in the dark, watching the green light on a dock across the bay.

At the age of twenty-seven, at Zelda's death, my mother became the sole guardian of her parents' estate. Thanks to her gift of her parents' personal papers, photographs, and manuscripts, Princeton University now boasts an extensive archive. That collection has largely made this volume possible. Herewith is the best possible reading of this American classic. Professor James L. W. West III contributed years of scholarship to these judicious emendations. And now, it's time to let Scott speak for himself.

—Eleanor Lanahan

THE GREAT GATSBY

CHAPTER I

In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me some advice that I've been turning over in my mind ever since.

"Whenever you feel like criticizing anyone," he told me, "just remember that all the people in this world haven't had the advantages that you've had."

He didn't say any more, but we've always been unusually communicative in a reserved way, and I understood that he meant a great deal more than that. In consequence, I'm inclined to reserve all judgments, a habit that has opened up many curious natures to me and also made me the victim of not a few veteran bores. The abnormal mind is quick to detect and attach itself to this quality when it appears in a normal person, and so it came about that in college I was unjustly accused of being a politician, because I was privy to the secret griefs of wild, unknown men. Most of the confidences were unsought—frequently I have feigned sleep, preoccupation, or a hostile levity when I realized by some unmistakable sign that an intimate revelation was quivering on the horizon; for the

intimate revelations of young men, or at least the terms in which they express them, are usually plagiaristic and marred by obvious suppressions. Reserving judgments is a matter of infinite hope. I am still a little afraid of missing something if I forget that, as my father snobbishly suggested, and I snobbishly repeat, a sense of the fundamental decencies is parcelled out unequally at birth.

And, after boasting this way of my tolerance, I come to the admission that it has a limit. Conduct may be founded on the hard rock or the wet marshes, but after a certain point I don't care what it's founded on. When I came back from the East last autumn I felt that I wanted the world to be in uniform and at a sort of moral attention forever; I wanted no more riotous excursions with privileged glimpses into the human heart. Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was exempt from my reaction—Gatsby, who represented everything for which I have an unaffected scorn. If personality is an unbroken series of successful gestures, then there was something gorgeous about him, some heightened sensitivity to the promises of life, as if he were related to one of those intricate machines that register earthquakes ten thousand miles away. This responsiveness had nothing to do with that flabby impressionability which is dignified under the name of the "creative temperament"—it was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person and which it is not likely I shall ever find again. No—Gatsby turned out all right at the end; it is what preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men.

* * *

My family have been prominent, well-to-do people in this Middle Western city for three generations. The Carraways are something of a clan, and we have a tradition that we're descended from the Dukes of Buccleuch, but the actual founder of my line was my grandfather's brother, who came here in fifty-one, sent a substitute to the Civil War, and started the wholesale hardware business that my father carries on today.

I never saw this great-uncle, but I'm supposed to look like him—with special reference to the rather hard-boiled painting that hangs in father's office. I graduated from New Haven in 1915, just a quarter of a century after my father, and a little later I participated in that delayed Teutonic migration known as the Great War. I enjoyed the counter-raid so thoroughly that I came back restless. Instead of being the warm center of the world, the Middle West now seemed like the ragged edge of the universe—so I decided to go East and learn the bond business. Everybody I knew was in the bond business, so I supposed it could support one more single man. All my aunts and uncles talked it over as if they were choosing a prep school for me, and finally said, "Why—ye-es," with very grave, hesitant faces. Father agreed to finance me for a year, and after various delays I came East, permanently, I thought, in the spring of twenty-two.

The practical thing was to find rooms in the city, but it was a warm season, and I had just left a country of wide lawns and friendly trees, so when a young man at the office suggested that we take a house together in a commuting town, it sounded like a great idea. He found the house, a weather-beaten cardboard bungalow at eighty a month, but at the last minute the firm ordered him to Washington, and I went out to the country alone. I had a dog—at least I had him for a

few days until he ran away—and an old Dodge and a Finnish woman, who made my bed and cooked breakfast and muttered Finnish wisdom to herself over the electric stove.

It was lonely for a day or so until one morning some man, more recently arrived than I, stopped me on the road.

"How do you get to West Egg Village?" he asked helplessly.

I told him. And as I walked on I was lonely no longer. I was a guide, a pathfinder, an original settler. He had casually conferred on me the freedom of the neighborhood.

And so with the sunshine and the great bursts of leaves growing on the trees, just as things grow in fast movies, I had that familiar conviction that life was beginning over again with the summer.

There was so much to read, for one thing, and so much fine health to be pulled down out of the young breath-giving air. I bought a dozen volumes on banking and credit and investment securities, and they stood on my shelf in red and gold like new money from the mint, promising to unfold the shining secrets that only Midas and Morgan and Mæcenas knew. And I had the high intention of reading many other books besides. I was rather literary in college—one year I wrote a series of very solemn and obvious editorials for the Yale News—and now I was going to bring back all such things into my life and become again that most limited of all specialists, the "well-rounded man." This isn't just an epigram—life is much more successfully looked at from a single window, after all.

It was a matter of chance that I should have rented a house in one of the strangest communities in North America. It was on that slender riotous island which extends itself due east of New York—and where there are, among other natural curiosities, two unusual formations of land. Twenty miles

from the city a pair of enormous eggs, identical in contour and separated only by a courtesy bay, jut out into the most domesticated body of salt water in the Western hemisphere, the great wet barnyard of Long Island Sound. They are not perfect ovals—like the egg in the Columbus story, they are both crushed flat at the contact end—but their physical resemblance must be a source of perpetual confusion to the gulls that fly overhead. To the wingless a more arresting phenomenon is their dissimilarity in every particular except shape and size.

I lived at West Egg, the—well, the less fashionable of the two, though this is a most superficial tag to express the bizarre and not a little sinister contrast between them. My house was at the very tip of the egg, only fifty yards from the Sound, and squeezed between two huge places that rented for twelve or fifteen thousand a season. The one on my right was a colossal affair by any standard—it was a factual imitation of some Hôtel de Ville in Normandy, with a tower on one side, spanking new under a thin beard of raw ivy, and a marble swimming-pool, and more than forty acres of lawn and garden. It was Gatsby's mansion. Or, rather, as I didn't know Mr. Gatsby, it was a mansion inhabited by a gentleman of that name. My own house was an eyesore, but it was a small eyesore, and it had been overlooked, so I had a view of the water, a partial view of my neighbor's lawn, and the consoling proximity of millionaires—all for eighty dollars a month.

Across the courtesy bay the white palaces of fashionable East Egg glittered along the water, and the history of the summer really begins on the evening I drove over there to have dinner with the Tom Buchanans. Daisy was my second cousin once removed, and I'd known Tom in college. And just after the war I spent two days with them in Chicago.

Her husband, among various physical accomplishments, had been one of the most powerful ends that ever played football at New Haven—a national figure in a way, one of those men who reach such an acute limited excellence at twenty-one that everything afterward savors of anticlimax. His family were enormously wealthy—even in college his freedom with money was a matter for reproach—but now he'd left Chicago and come East in a fashion that rather took your breath away; for instance, he'd brought down a string of polo ponies from Lake Forest. It was hard to realize that a man in my own generation was wealthy enough to do that.

Why they came East I don't know. They had spent a year in France for no particular reason, and then drifted here and there unrestfully wherever people played polo and were rich together. This was a permanent move, said Daisy over the telephone, but I didn't believe it—I had no sight into Daisy's heart, but I felt that Tom would drift on forever seeking, a little wistfully, for the dramatic turbulence of some irrecoverable football game.

And so it happened that on a warm windy evening I drove over to East Egg to see two old friends whom I scarcely knew at all. Their house was even more elaborate than I expected, a cheerful red-and-white Georgian Colonial mansion, overlooking the bay. The lawn started at the beach and ran toward the front door for a quarter of a mile, jumping over sun-dials and brick walks and burning gardens—finally when it reached the house drifting up the side in bright vines as though from the momentum of its run. The front was broken by a line of French windows, glowing now with reflected gold and wide open to the warm windy afternoon, and Tom Buchanan in riding clothes was standing with his legs apart on the front porch.

He had changed since his New Haven years. Now he was a sturdy straw-haired man of thirty with a rather hard mouth and a supercilious manner. Two shining arrogant eyes had established dominance over his face and gave him the appearance of always leaning aggressively forward. Not even the effeminate swank of his riding clothes could hide the enormous power of that body—he seemed to fill those glistening boots until he strained the top lacing, and you could see a great pack of muscle shifting when his shoulder moved under his thin coat. It was a body capable of enormous leverage—a cruel body.

His speaking voice, a gruff husky tenor, added to the impression of fractiousness he conveyed. There was a touch of paternal contempt in it, even toward people he liked—and there were men at New Haven who had hated his guts.

"Now, don't think my opinion on these matters is final," he seemed to say, "just because I'm stronger and more of a man than you are." We were in the same senior society, and while we were never intimate I always had the impression that he approved of me and wanted me to like him with some harsh, defiant wistfulness of his own.

We talked for a few minutes on the sunny porch.

"I've got a nice place here," he said, his eyes flashing about restlessly.

Turning me around by one arm, he moved a broad flat hand along the front vista, including in its sweep a sunken Italian garden, a half-acre of deep, pungent roses, and a snub-nosed motor-boat that bumped the tide offshore.

"It belonged to Demaine, the oil man." He turned me around again, politely and abruptly. "We'll go inside."

We walked through a high hallway into a bright rosy-colored space, fragilely bound into the house by French

windows at either end. The windows were ajar and gleaming white against the fresh grass outside that seemed to grow a little way into the house. A breeze blew through the room, blew curtains in at one end and out the other like pale flags, twisting them up toward the frosted wedding-cake of the ceiling, and then rippled over the wine-colored rug, making a shadow on it as wind does on the sea.

The only completely stationary object in the room was an enormous couch on which two young women were buoyed up as though upon an anchored balloon. They were both in white, and their dresses were rippling and fluttering as if they had just been blown back in after a short flight around the house. I must have stood for a few moments listening to the whip and snap of the curtains and the groan of a picture on the wall. Then there was a boom as Tom Buchanan shut the rear windows and the caught wind died out about the room, and the curtains and the rugs and the two young women ballooned slowly to the floor.

The younger of the two was a stranger to me. She was extended full length at her end of the divan, completely motionless, and with her chin raised a little, as if she were balancing something on it which was quite likely to fall. If she saw me out of the corner of her eye she gave no hint of it—indeed, I was almost surprised into murmuring an apology for having disturbed her by coming in.

The other girl, Daisy, made an attempt to rise—she leaned slightly forward with a conscientious expression—then she laughed, an absurd, charming little laugh, and I laughed too and came forward into the room.

"I'm p-paralyzed with happiness."

She laughed again, as if she said something very witty, and held my hand for a moment, looking up into my face,

promising that there was no one in the world she so much wanted to see. That was a way she had. She hinted in a murmur that the surname of the balancing girl was Baker. (I've heard it said that Daisy's murmur was only to make people lean toward her; an irrelevant criticism that made it no less charming.)

At any rate, Miss Baker's lips fluttered, she nodded at me almost imperceptibly, and then quickly tipped her head back again—the object she was balancing had obviously tottered a little and given her something of a fright. Again a sort of apology arose to my lips. Almost any exhibition of complete self-sufficiency draws a stunned tribute from me.

I looked back at my cousin, who began to ask me questions in her low, thrilling voice. It was the kind of voice that the ear follows up and down, as if each speech is an arrangement of notes that will never be played again. Her face was sad and lovely with bright things in it, bright eyes and a bright passionate mouth, but there was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget: a singing compulsion, a whispered "Listen," a promise that she had done gay, exciting things just a while since and that there were gay, exciting things hovering in the next hour.

I told her how I had stopped off in Chicago for a day on my way East, and how a dozen people had sent their love through me.

"Do they miss me?" she cried ecstatically.

"The whole town is desolate. All the cars have the left rear wheel painted black as a mourning wreath, and there's a persistent wail all night along the North Shore."

"How gorgeous! Let's go back, Tom. Tomorrow!" Then she added irrelevantly: "You ought to see the baby."

"I'd like to."

"She's asleep. She's three years old. Haven't you ever seen her?"

"Never."

"Well, you ought to see her. She's——"

Tom Buchanan, who had been hovering restlessly about the room, stopped and rested his hand on my shoulder.

"What you doing, Nick?"

"I'm a bond man."

"Who with?"

I told him.

"Never heard of them," he remarked decisively.

This annoyed me.

"You will," I answered shortly. "You will if you stay in the East."

"Oh, I'll stay in the East, don't you worry," he said, glancing at Daisy and then back at me, as if he were alert for something more. "I'd be a God Damn fool to live anywhere else."

At this point Miss Baker said: "Absolutely!" with such suddenness that I started—it was the first word she had uttered since I came into the room. Evidently it surprised her as much as it did me, for she yawned and with a series of rapid, deft movements stood up into the room.

"I'm stiff," she complained. "I've been lying on that sofa for as long as I can remember."

"Don't look at me," Daisy retorted. "I've been trying to get you to New York all afternoon."

"No, thanks," said Miss Baker to the four cocktails just in from the pantry. "I'm absolutely in training."

Her host looked at her incredulously.

"You are!" He took down his drink as if it were a drop in the bottom of a glass. "How you ever get anything done is beyond me."

I looked at Miss Baker, wondering what it was she "got done." I enjoyed looking at her. She was a slender, small-breasted girl, with an erect carriage, which she accentuated by throwing her body backward at the shoulders like a young cadet. Her gray sun-strained eyes looked back at me with polite reciprocal curiosity out of a wan, charming, discontented face. It occurred to me now that I had seen her, or a picture of her, somewhere before.

"You live in West Egg," she remarked contemptuously. "I know somebody there."

"I don't know a single——"

"You must know Gatsby."

"Gatsby?" demanded Daisy. "What Gatsby?"

Before I could reply that he was my neighbor dinner was announced; wedging his tense arm imperatively under mine, Tom Buchanan compelled me from the room as though he were moving a checker to another square.

Slenderly, languidly, their hands set lightly on their hips, the two young women preceded us out onto a rosy-colored porch, open toward the sunset, where four candles flickered on the table in the diminished wind.

"Why *candles?*" objected Daisy, frowning. She snapped them out with her fingers. "In two weeks it'll be the longest day in the year." She looked at us all radiantly. "Do you always watch for the longest day of the year and then miss it? I always watch for the longest day in the year and then miss it."

"We ought to plan something," yawned Miss Baker, sitting down at the table as if she were getting into bed.

"All right," said Daisy. "What'll we plan?" She turned to me helplessly: "What do people plan?"

Before I could answer her eyes fastened with an awed expression on her little finger.

"Look!" she complained. "I hurt it."

We all looked—the knuckle was black and blue.

"You did it, Tom," she said accusingly. "I know you didn't mean to, but you *did* do it. That's what I get for marrying a brute of a man, a great, big, hulking physical specimen of a——"

"I hate that word hulking," objected Tom crossly, "even in kidding."

"Hulking," insisted Daisy.

Sometimes she and Miss Baker talked at once, unobtrusively and with a bantering inconsequence that was never quite chatter, that was as cool as their white dresses and their impersonal eyes in the absence of all desire. They were here, and they accepted Tom and me, making only a polite pleasant effort to entertain or to be entertained. They knew that presently dinner would be over and a little later the evening too would be over and casually put away. It was sharply different from the West, where an evening was hurried from phase to phase toward its close, in a continually disappointed anticipation or else in sheer nervous dread of the moment itself.

"You make me feel uncivilized, Daisy," I confessed on my second glass of corky but rather impressive claret. "Can't you talk about crops or something?"

I meant nothing in particular by this remark, but it was taken up in an unexpected way.

"Civilization's going to pieces," broke out Tom violently. "I've gotten to be a terrible pessimist about things. Have you read 'The Rise of the Coloured Empires' by this man Goddard?"

"Why, no," I answered, rather surprised by his tone.

"Well, it's a fine book, and everybody ought to read it. The

idea is if we don't look out the white race will be—will be utterly submerged. It's all scientific stuff; it's been proved."

"Tom's getting very profound," said Daisy, with an expression of unthoughtful sadness. "He reads deep books with long words in them. What was that word we——"

"Well, these books are all scientific," insisted Tom, glancing at her impatiently. "This fellow has worked out the whole thing. It's up to us, who are the dominant race, to watch out or these other races will have control of things."

"We've got to beat them down," whispered Daisy, winking ferociously toward the fervent sun.

"You ought to live in California—" began Miss Baker, but Tom interrupted her by shifting heavily in his chair.

"This idea is that we're Nordics. I am, and you are, and you are, and—" After an infinitesimal hesitation he included Daisy with a slight nod, and she winked at me again. "—And we've produced all the things that go to make civilization—oh, science and art, and all that. Do you see?"

There was something pathetic in his concentration, as if his complacency, more acute than of old, was not enough to him any more. When, almost immediately, the telephone rang inside and the butler left the porch Daisy seized upon the momentary interruption and leaned toward me.

"I'll tell you a family secret," she whispered enthusiastically. "It's about the butler's nose. Do you want to hear about the butler's nose?"

"That's why I came over tonight."

"Well, he wasn't always a butler; he used to be the silver polisher for some people in New York that had a silver service for two hundred people. He had to polish it from morning till night, until finally it began to affect his nose——"

"Things went from bad to worse," suggested Miss Baker.

"Yes. Things went from bad to worse, until finally he had to give up his position."

For a moment the last sunshine fell with romantic affection upon her glowing face; her voice compelled me forward breathlessly as I listened—then the glow faded, each light deserting her with lingering regret, like children leaving a pleasant street at dusk.

The butler came back and murmured something close to Tom's ear, whereupon Tom frowned, pushed back his chair, and without a word went inside. As if his absence quickened something within her, Daisy leaned forward again, her voice glowing and singing.

"I love to see you at my table, Nick. You remind me of a—of a rose, an absolute rose. Doesn't he?" She turned to Miss Baker for confirmation: "An absolute rose?"

This was untrue. I am not even faintly like a rose. She was only extemporizing, but a stirring warmth flowed from her, as if her heart was trying to come out to you concealed in one of those breathless, thrilling words. Then suddenly she threw her napkin on the table and excused herself and went into the house.

Miss Baker and I exchanged a short glance consciously devoid of meaning. I was about to speak when she sat up alertly and said "Sh!" in a warning voice. A subdued impassioned murmur was audible in the room beyond, and Miss Baker leaned forward unashamed, trying to hear. The murmur trembled on the verge of coherence, sank down, mounted excitedly, and then ceased altogether.

"This Mr. Gatsby you spoke of is my neighbor—" I said.

"Don't talk. I want to hear what happens."

"Is something happening?" I inquired innocently.

"You mean to say you don't know?" said Miss Baker, honestly surprised. "I thought everybody knew."

"I don't."

"Why—" she said hesitantly, "Tom's got some woman in New York."

"Got some woman?" I repeated blankly.

Miss Baker nodded.

"She might have the decency not to telephone him at dinner time. Don't you think?"

Almost before I had grasped her meaning there was the flutter of a dress and the crunch of leather boots, and Tom and Daisy were back at the table.

"It couldn't be helped!" cried Daisy with tense gayety.

She sat down, glanced searchingly at Miss Baker and then at me, and continued: "I looked outdoors for a minute, and it's very romantic outdoors. There's a bird on the lawn that I think must be a nightingale come over on the Cunard or White Star Line. He's singing away—" Her voice sang: "It's romantic, isn't it, Tom?"

"Very romantic," he said, and then miserably to me: "If it's light enough after dinner, I want to take you down to the stables."

The telephone rang inside, startlingly, and as Daisy shook her head decisively at Tom the subject of the stables, in fact all subjects, vanished into air. Among the broken fragments of the last five minutes at table I remember the candles being lit again, pointlessly, and I was conscious of wanting to look squarely at everyone, and yet to avoid all eyes. I couldn't guess what Daisy and Tom were thinking, but I doubt if even Miss Baker, who seemed to have mastered a certain hardy skepticism, was able utterly to put this fifth guest's shrill metal-

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