

ABRIDGED

B1

ADAPTED



F. Scott Fitzgerald

The Great Gatsby



Abridged & Adapted

Francis Fitzgerald

**The Great Gatsby. Адаптированная
книга для чтения на
английском языке. Уровень В1**

«Антология»

1925, 2020

УДК 821.111
ББК 81.2Англ

Fitzgerald F. S.

The Great Gatsby. Адаптированная книга для чтения на английском языке. Уровень B1 / F. S. Fitzgerald — «Антология», 1925, 2020 — (Abridged & Adapted)

ISBN 978-5-907097-88-9

Роман о воплощённой американской мечте, который в итоге звучит как приговор системе ценностей эпохи сухого закона в США. Главный герой романа Джей Гэтсби неслыханно богат. Его жизнь – постоянное покорение всё новых и новых высот ради одного-единственного человека – любимой женщины. Она, увы, предпочла ему другого, да и в целом мелочна, нерешительна и недостойна своего поклонника. Ложь, измены и большие деньги – вот смысл жизни людей, в чей круг так стремится попасть Гэтсби. Сильнейший контраст между ним и окружающими создаёт тотальное напряжение сюжета, которое неизбежно выльется в неожиданную и трагичную развязку. Текст сокращён и адаптирован. Уровень B1.

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F. Scott Fitzgerald
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Chapter 1

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

«Whenever you want to criticize any one», 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 I understood that he meant much more than that. So I usually reserve all judgments, a habit that has opened up many curious characters to me. Reserving judgments gives 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 given out unequally at birth.

And, after boasting this way of my tolerance, I have to admit that it has a limit. 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 excursions into the human heart. Only Gatsby, the man who gives his name to this book, was free from my reaction – Gatsby, who represented everything for which I have a sincere scorn. There was something gorgeous about him, some sharp sensitivity to the promises of life. It was an extraordinary gift for hope, a romantic readiness such as I have never found in any other person.

My family have been prominent, well-to-do people in this Middle Western city for three generations. The Carraways are something of a clan; the actual founder of my line was my grandfather's brother, who came here in fifty-one¹ and started the wholesale hardware business that my father carries on today.

I graduated from Yale University² in 1915, just a quarter of a century after my father, and a little later I participated in the Great War³. I came back restless. The Middle West was not the warm centre of the world any longer, now it seemed like the ragged edge of the universe – so I decided to go East and learn the bond business⁴. Everybody I knew was in the bond business, so I supposed it could support one more single man. Father agreed to finance me for a year, and after various delays I came East, permanently, I thought, in the spring of twenty-two⁵.

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 the country, it sounded like a great idea. He found the house, a bungalow at eighty dollars a month, but at the last minute the firm ordered him to go to Washington, and I went out to the country alone. I had an old Dodge⁶ and a Finnish woman, who made my bed and cooked breakfast.

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

There was so much to read. I bought a dozen volumes on banking and credit and investment securities⁷, and they stood on my shelf in red and gold like new money from the mint, promising to unfold their shining secrets. And I had the high intention of reading many other books besides. It was a matter of chance that I rented a house in one of the strangest communities in North America. It

¹ В 1851 году.

² Йельский университет, один из самых престижных частных американских университетов; находится в Нью-Хейвене, одном из старейших городов Новой Англии, в штате Коннектикут.

³ Первая мировая война (*устар.*).

⁴ Кредитное дело.

⁵ 1922.

⁶ Автомобиль «Додж».

⁷ Инвестиционные ценные бумаги.

was on that island which extends itself to the east of New York – and where there are two unusual formations of land looking like a pair of enormous eggs, identical in contour and separated only by a bay.

I lived at West Egg, the less fashionable of the two. My house was at the very tip of the egg, and squeezed between two huge villas rented for twelve or fifteen thousand dollars a season. The one on my right was a colossal thing by any standard, with a tower on one side, 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 ugly thing, but it was small, 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 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 cousin⁸, and I'd known Tom in college. And just after the war I spent two days with them in Chicago.

Daisy's husband had been a national figure in a way, one of those men who reach such an acute excellence at the age of twenty-one that everything afterward tastes like disappointment. His family were enormously wealthy, but now he'd left Chicago and come East in a fashion that rather took your breath away: for instance, he'd brought a number 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 wherever rich people got together to play polo. This was a permanent move⁹, said Daisy over the telephone.

And so it happened that on a warm windy evening I drove over to East Egg to see two old friends whom I hardly knew at all. Their house was even more elaborate than I expected, a cheerful red-and-white Georgian Colonial mansion¹⁰, overlooking the bay. The lawn started at the beach and ran toward the front door for a quarter of a mile, jumping over brick walks and gardens. The front was broken by a line of French windows¹¹, 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 strong straw-haired man of thirty with a rather hard mouth and a haughty manner. Two shining arrogant eyes gave him the appearance of always leaning aggressively forward. Not even his riding clothes could hide the enormous power of that body – a cruel body.

There was a touch of paternal contempt in his voice, even toward people he liked – and there were men at New Haven who had hated him.

«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.

We talked for a few minutes on the sunny porch and then walked through a high hallway into a bright rosy-colored space. The windows were partly open. A breeze blew through the room, blew curtains in at one end and out the other like pale flags, twisting them up toward the ceiling.

The only completely stationary object in the room was an enormous sofa on which two young women were lying. They were both in white, and their dresses were rippling and fluttering.

⁸ Троюродная сестра.

⁹ Это уже последний переезд.

¹⁰ Особняк в георгианско-колониальном стиле (дома в георгианско-колониальном стиле были преимущественно сдержанными по дизайну. всё в доме отличалось утончённостью – от роскошной резьбы до изгибов и отделки. ткани были подчёркнуто изысканными, с вышивкой шерстью и шёлком. осветительные приборы были шикарными, с обилием хрусталя.).

¹¹ Двустворчатые окна, доходящие до пола.

The younger of the two was a stranger to me. She was completely motionless, and with her chin raised a little, as if she were balancing something on it which could fall. If she saw me she gave no hint of it.

The other girl, Daisy, made an attempt to rise – she leaned slightly forward, then she laughed, and I laughed too and came 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 her manner. She murmured that the surname of the balancing girl was Baker.

Miss Baker barely nodded at me, and then quickly tipped her head back again – the object she was balancing had obviously given her something of a fright.

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. Her face was sad and lovely, she had bright eyes and a bright passionate mouth, and there was an excitement in her voice that men who had cared for her found difficult to forget.

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 suddenly added: «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 about the room, stopped and rested his hand on my shoulder.

«What are you doing, Nick?»

«I'm a bond man¹²».

«Who with?»

I told him.

«Never heard of them», he remarked decisively.

This annoyed me.

«You will¹³», I answered shortly. «You will if you stay in the East».

«Oh, I'll stay in the East, don't worry», he said, glancing at Daisy and then back at me. «I'd be a fool to live anywhere else».

At this point Miss Baker said: «Absolutely!» with such suddenness that I started – it was the first word she uttered since I came into the room. She yawned and stood up.

«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 said, «I've been trying to get you to New York all afternoon».

I enjoyed looking at Miss Baker. She was a slender, small breasted girl, keeping her back straight. Her gray eyes looked back at me with polite curiosity. 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...»

¹² Специалист по кредитным операциям.

¹³ Услышишь.

«You must know Gatsby».

«Gatsby?» asked Daisy. «What Gatsby?»

Before I could reply that he was my neighbor dinner was announced; Tom Buchanan compelled me from the room as if he were moving a checker to another square.

The two young women preceded us out onto a rosy-colored porch, open toward the sunset.

«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 she looked with a frightened expression at 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. «That's what I get for marrying a brute, a great, big, hulking physical specimen of a...»

«I hate that word hulking», objected Tom crossly, «even in kidding».¹⁴

«Hulking», insisted Daisy.

Sometimes she and Miss Baker talked at once, but it was an uneasy talk. 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.

«You make me feel uncivilized, Daisy», I confessed on my second glass of red wine. «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», said Tom. «I am a terrible pessimist about things now. Have you read 'The Rise of the Colored Empires' by 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 disappear. It's all scientific stuff; it's been proved».

«Tom's getting very thoughtful», said Daisy sadly. «He reads deep books with long words in them».

«Well, these books are all scientific», insisted Tom, glancing at her impatiently. «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.

«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 some hesitation he included Daisy with a slight nod, and she winked at me. «– 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. Then, almost immediately, the telephone rang inside and the butler left the porch.

Soon the butler came back and murmured something close to Tom's ear. Tom frowned, pushed back his chair, and without a word went inside.

Suddenly Daisy threw her napkin on the table and excused herself and went into the house.

Miss Baker and I exchanged a short glance. I was about to speak when she sat up alertly and said «Sh!» in a warning voice. A subdued passionate murmur was clear in the room beyond, and Miss Baker leaned forward unashamed, trying to hear.

¹⁴ Даже в шутку.

«This Mr. Gatsby is my neighbor», I said.

«Don't talk. I want to hear what happens».

«Is something happening?» I said 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.

Miss Baker nodded.

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

Almost at once Tom and Daisy were back at the table.

«It couldn't be helped!¹⁵» cried Daisy with tense gaiety.

She sat down, glanced 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. His song is so beautiful!» Her voice sang: «It's romantic, isn't it, Tom?»

«Very romantic», he said.

The telephone rang inside, and Daisy shook her head decisively at Tom. Among the broken fragments of the last five minutes at table I was conscious of wanting to look directly at every one, and yet to avoid all eyes.

Tom and Miss Baker, with several feet of twilight between them, strolled back into the library. Trying to look pleasantly interested and a little deaf, I followed Daisy around a chain of connecting verandas to the porch in front. In its deep gloom we sat down side by side on a bamboo bench.

Daisy took her face in her hands, and her eyes moved gradually out into the velvet dusk. I saw that turbulent emotions possessed her, so I asked what I thought would be some sedative questions about her little girl.

«We don't know each other very well, Nick», she said suddenly. «Even if we are cousins. You didn't come to my wedding».

«I wasn't back from the war».

«That's true». She hesitated. «Well, I've had a very bad time, Nick, and I'm pretty cynical about everything».

Obviously she had reason to be. I waited but she didn't say any more, and after a moment I returned to the subject of her daughter.

«I suppose she talks, and – eats, and everything».

«Oh, yes». She looked at me absently. «Listen, Nick; let me tell you what I said when she was born. Would you like to hear?»

«Very much».

«Well, she was less than an hour old and Tom was God knows where. I woke up out of the ether with an absolutely abandoned feeling, and asked the nurse if it was a boy or a girl. She told me it was a girl, and so I turned my head away and wept. 'All right,' I said, '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».

«You see I think everything's terrible», she went on in a convinced way. «Everybody thinks so – the most advanced people. And I KNOW. I've been everywhere and seen everything and done everything». She laughed with thrilling scorn. «Sophisticated – God, I'm sophisticated!»

The moment her voice stopped, I felt the basic insincerity of what she had said. It made me uneasy, as though the whole evening had been a trick of some sort to extract a contributory emotion from me. I waited, and sure enough, in a moment she looked at me with a grin on her lovely face,

¹⁵ НЕВОЗМОЖНО БЫЛО УСТОЯТЬ!

as if she had asserted her membership in a rather distinguished secret society to which she and Tom belonged.

Inside, the crimson room bloomed with light.

Tom and Miss Baker sat at either end of the long sofa and she read aloud to him from the SATURDAY EVENING POST.

When we came in she held us silent for a moment with a lifted hand.

«To be continued¹⁶», she said, putting the magazine on the table, «in our next issue».

She stood up.

«Ten o'clock», she remarked, apparently finding the time on the ceiling. «Time for this good girl to go to bed».

«Jordan's going to play in the tournament tomorrow», explained Daisy, «over at Westchester».

«Oh – you're Jordan BAKER».

I knew now why her face was familiar – its scornful expression had looked out at me from many pictures of the sporting life at Asheville and Hot Springs and Palm Beach. I had heard some story of her too, a critical, unpleasant story, but what it was I had forgotten long ago.

«Good night», she said softly. «Wake me at eight, won't you».

«If you'll get up».

«I will. Good night, Mr. Carraway. See you soon».

«Of course you will», confirmed Daisy. «In fact I think I'll arrange a marriage. Come over often, Nick, and I'll sort of – oh – fling you together. You know – lock you up accidentally in linen closets and push you out to sea in a boat, and all that sort of thing...»

«Good night», called Miss Baker from the stairs. «I haven't heard a word».

«She's a nice girl», said Tom after a moment. «They shouldn't let her run around the country this way».

«Who shouldn't to?» inquired Daisy coldly.

«Her family».

«Her family is one aunt about a thousand years old. Besides, Nick's going to look after her, aren't you, Nick? She's going to spend lots of week-ends out here this summer. I think the home influence will be very good for her».

Daisy and Tom looked at each other for a moment in silence.

«Is she from New York?» I asked quickly.

«From Louisville. Our girlhood was passed together there».

«Did you give Nick a little heart to heart talk¹⁷ on the veranda?» asked Tom suddenly.

«Did I?» She looked at me.

«I don't remember, but I think we talked about the Nordic race. Yes, I'm sure we did».

«Don't believe everything you hear, Nick», he advised me.

I said lightly that I had heard nothing at all, and a few minutes later I got up to go home. They came to the door with me and stood side by side in a cheerful square of light.

Their attention rather touched me and made them less remotely rich – nevertheless, I was confused as I drove away. It seemed to me that Daisy had to rush out of the house, with the child in arms – but apparently there were no such intentions in her head. As for Tom, the fact that he «had some woman in New York» was really less surprising than that he had been depressed by a book.

When I reached my estate at West Egg I sat for a while on a grass mower in the yard. The wind had blown off, the night was bright. Suddenly I saw that I was not alone – fifty feet away a figure had emerged from the shadow of my neighbor's mansion and was standing with his hands in his pockets looking at the silver pepper of the stars. Something in his leisurely movements and the secure position

¹⁶ Продолжение следует.

¹⁷ Разговор по душам.

of his feet upon the lawn suggested that it was Mr. Gatsby himself, come out to determine what share was his of our local heavens.

I decided to call to him. Miss Baker had mentioned him at dinner, and that could be an introduction. But I didn't call to him, for he showed that he wanted to be alone – he stretched out his arms toward the dark water in a curious way, and he was trembling. I glanced in the direction of the sea – and distinguished nothing except a single green light, tiny and far away, that might be the end of a dock. When I looked once more for Gatsby he had vanished, and I was alone again in the unquiet darkness.

Chapter 2

About half way between West Egg and New York the motor road joins the railroad and runs beside it for a quarter of a mile. This is a valley of ashes – a fantastic farm where ashes grow like wheat into hills and grotesque gardens; where ashes take the forms of houses and chimneys and rising smoke.

The valley of ashes is bounded on one side by a small dirty river, and, when the drawbridge is up to let barges through, the passengers on waiting trains can stare at the depressing scene for as long as half an hour. There is always a halt there of at least a minute, and it was because of this that I first met Tom Buchanan's mistress.

The fact that he had a mistress was well-known. He went to popular restaurants with her and, leaving her at a table, walked about, chatting with whoever he knew. Though I was curious to see her, I had no desire to meet her – but I did. I went up to New York with Tom on the train one afternoon, and when we stopped by the ash heaps he jumped to his feet and, taking me by my elbow, literally forced me from the car.

«We're getting off», he insisted. «I want you to meet my girl».

I followed him over a low railroad fence, and we walked back a hundred yards along the road. The only building in sight was a small block of yellow brick sitting on the edge of the waste land. One of the three shops it contained was for rent and another was an all-night restaurant; the third was a garage with a sign «Repairs. GEORGE B. WILSON. Cars bought and sold». And I followed Tom inside.

The interior was poor; the only car visible was the dust-covered wreck of a Ford in a dark corner. Soon the owner himself appeared in the door of an office, wiping his hands on a piece of cloth. He was a blond, sad man, pale, and slightly handsome. When he saw us a damp gleam of hope sprang into his light blue eyes.

«Hello, Wilson, old man», said Tom, slapping him in a friendly way on the shoulder. «How's business?»

«I can't complain», answered Wilson unconvincingly. «When are you going to sell me that car?»

«Next week; my man is working on it now».

«He works pretty slow, doesn't he?»

«No, he doesn't», said Tom coldly. «And if you feel that way about it, maybe I'd better sell it somewhere else after all».

«I don't mean that», explained Wilson quickly. «I just meant...»

His voice faded off and Tom glanced impatiently around the garage. Then I heard footsteps on the stairs, and in a moment the fleshy figure of a woman blocked out the light from the office door. She was in the middle thirties, and slightly stout, but she carried her body sensuously as some women can. Her face, above a spotted dress of dark blue crepe-de-chine¹⁸, contained no gleam of beauty, but there was an immediately perceptible vitality about her. She smiled slowly and, walking through her husband as if he were a ghost, shook hands with Tom, looking into his eyes. Then, without turning around, she spoke to her husband in a soft, coarse voice:

«Get some chairs, why don't you, so somebody can sit down».

«Oh, sure», agreed Wilson hurriedly, and went toward the little office. A white ashen dust covered his dark suit and his pale hair as it covered everything in the area – except his wife, who moved close to Tom.

«I want to see you», said Tom. «Get on the next train».

«All right».

¹⁸ Крепдешин.

«I'll meet you by the newsstand». She nodded and moved away from him just as George Wilson appeared with two chairs from his office door.

We waited for her down the road and out of sight.

«Terrible place, isn't it», said Tom.

«Awful».

«It's good for her to get away».

«Doesn't her husband object?»

«Wilson? He thinks she goes to see her sister in New York. He's so dumb».

So Tom Buchanan and his girl and I went up together to New York – or not quite together, for Mrs. Wilson sat in another car.

She had changed her dress to a brown figured muslin¹⁹, which stretched tight over her rather wide hips as Tom helped her to the platform in New York. Upstairs, in the echoing drive she let four taxicabs drive away before she selected a new one, lavender-colored with gray upholstery, and in this we got away from the station into the glowing sunshine. But immediately she turned sharply from the window and, leaning forward, tapped on the front glass.

«I want to get one of those dogs», she demanded. «I want to get one for the apartment. It's so nice to have a dog there».

We backed up to a gray old man who, ironically, looked much like John D. Rockefeller. In a basket swung from his neck there was a dozen puppies of an indeterminate breed.

«What kind are they?» asked Mrs. Wilson eagerly, as he came to the taxi-window.

«All kinds. What kind do you want, lady?»

«I'd like to get one of those police dogs; I don't suppose you have that kind?»

The man looked doubtfully into the basket and took out a puppy by the back of the neck.

«That's not a police dog», said Tom.

«No, it's not exactly a police dog», said the man with disappointment in his voice. «It's more of an Airedale²⁰. But that's a dog that'll never bother you with catching cold».

«I think it's cute», said Mrs. Wilson enthusiastically. «How much is it?»

«That dog?» He looked at it admiringly. «That dog will cost you ten dollars».

The Airedale – undoubtedly there was an Airedale concerned in it somewhere – changed hands and settled down into Mrs. Wilson's lap.

«Is it a boy or a girl?» she asked delicately.

«That dog? That dog's a boy».

«It's a bitch», said Tom decisively. «Here's your money. Go and buy ten more dogs with it».

We went on and soon, at 158th Street, the cab stopped at an apartment-house. Mrs. Wilson gathered up her dog and went haughtily in.

«I'm going to invite the McKees», she announced as we rose in the elevator. «And, of course, I have to call up my sister, Catherine, who is very beautiful».

The apartment was on the top floor – a small living-room, a small dining-room, a small bedroom, and a bath. The living-room was full to the doors with a set of furniture. Several copies of the small scandal magazines of Broadway lay on the table. Mrs. Wilson was first concerned with the dog. A reluctant elevator-boy went for a box full of straw and some milk. Meanwhile Tom brought out a bottle of whiskey from a locked bureau door.

I have been drunk just twice in my life, and the second time was that afternoon; so everything that happened has a hazy cover over it, although until after eight o'clock the apartment was full of cheerful sun. Sitting on Tom's lap Mrs. Wilson called up several people on the telephone; then there

¹⁹ Узорчатое платье из муслина.

²⁰ Эрдельтерьер.

were no cigarettes, and I went out to buy some at the drugstore on the corner. When I came back they had disappeared, so I sat down in the living-room and read a magazine.

Just as Tom and Myrtle (after the first drink Mrs. Wilson and I called each other by our first names) reappeared, company began to arrive at the apartment door.

The sister, Catherine, was a slender girl of about thirty, with red hair, and a complexion powdered milky white. Her eyebrows had been plucked and then drawn on again at a more stylish angle. When she moved about there was a continual clicking as innumerable ceramic bracelets jingled up and down upon her arms. She came in and looked around so possessively at the furniture that I wondered if she lived here. But when I asked her she laughed extravagantly, repeated my question aloud, and told me she lived with a girl friend at a hotel.

Mrs. Wilson had changed her costume some time before, and was now in an elaborate afternoon dress of cream-colored silk, which gave out a rustle as she swept about the room. With the influence of the dress her personality had also undergone a change. The intense vitality that had been so remarkable in the garage was converted into impressive arrogance.

«I like your dress», remarked Mrs. McKee, the neighbor, «I think it's adorable».

Mrs. Wilson rejected the compliment by raising her eyebrow in contempt.

«It's just a crazy old thing», she said. «I just put it on sometimes when I don't care what I look like».

«But it looks wonderful on you», insisted Mrs. McKee.

Myrtle looked at me and laughed pointlessly. Then she kissed the dog with ecstasy, and swept into the kitchen, implying that a dozen chefs awaited her orders there.

The sister Catherine sat down beside me on the sofa.

«Do you live down on Long Island?» she inquired.

«I live at West Egg».

«Really? I was down there at a party about a month ago. At a man named Gatsby's. Do you know him?»

«I live next door to him».

«Well, they say he's a nephew or a cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm's.

That's where all his money comes from».

«Really?»

She nodded.

This absorbing information about my neighbor was interrupted by Mrs. McKee who pointed suddenly at Catherine:

«Chester, I think you could do something with HER», she said, but Mr. McKee only nodded in a bored way, and turned his attention to Tom.

«I'd like to do more work on Long Island», said Mr. McKee, «if I could get the entry. All I ask is that they should give me a start».

«Ask Myrtle», said Tom, laughing, as Mrs. Wilson entered with a tray. «She'll give you a letter of introduction²¹, won't you Myrtle?»

«Do what?» she asked, startled.

«You'll give McKee a letter of introduction to your husband, so he can do some studies of him». His lips moved silently for a moment as he invented. «GEORGE B. WILSON AT THE GASOLINE PUMP, or something like that».

Catherine leaned close to me and whispered in my ear: «Neither of them can stand the person they're married to».

«Can't they?»

²¹ Рекомендательное письмо.

«Can't STAND them». She looked at Myrtle and then at Tom. «What I say is, why go on living with them if they can't stand them? If I were them I'd get a divorce and get married to each other right away».

«Doesn't she like Wilson either?»

The answer to this was unexpected. It came from Myrtle, who had overheard the question, and it was violent and obscene.

«You see», cried Catherine triumphantly. She lowered her voice again. «It's really his wife that's keeping them apart. She's a Catholic, and they don't believe in divorce».

Daisy was not a Catholic, and I was a little shocked at the lie.

«When they get married at last», continued Catherine, «they're going West to live for a while until it blows over²²».

«It'd be more sensible to go to Europe».

«Oh, do you like Europe?» she exclaimed surprisingly. «I just got back from Monte Carlo».

«Really».

«Just last year. I went over there with another girl».

«Did you stay there long?»

«No, we just went to Monte Carlo and back. We had over twelve hundred dollars when we started, but we lost it all in two days in the private rooms²³. We had an awful time getting back, I can tell you. God, how I hated that town!»

The late afternoon sky shone in the window for a moment like the blue honey of the Mediterranean – then the sharp voice of Mrs. McKee called me back into the room.

«I almost made a mistake, too», she declared enthusiastically. «I almost married a nonentity who'd been after me for years. I knew he was below me. Everybody kept saying to me: 'Lucille, that man's 'way below you!' But for Chester²⁴, I could marry him».

«Yes, but listen», said Myrtle Wilson, «at least you didn't marry him».

«I know I didn't».

«Well, I married him», said Myrtle, ambiguously. «And that's the difference between your case and mine».

«Why did you, Myrtle?» said Catherine. «Nobody forced you to».

«I married him because I thought he was a gentleman», Myrtle said finally. «I thought he knew something about manners, but he wasn't fit to lick my shoe».

«You were crazy about him for a while», said Catherine.

«Crazy about him!» cried Myrtle in disbelief. «Who said I was crazy about him? I never was any more crazy about him than I was about that man there».

She pointed suddenly at me, and every one looked at me accusingly. I tried to show by my expression that I had played no part in her past.

«I was crazy when I married him. I knew right away I made a mistake. He borrowed somebody's best suit to get married in, and never even told me about it, and the man came after it one day when he was out. 'Oh, is that your suit?' I said, 'this is the first time I ever heard about it.' But I gave it to him and then I lay down and cried all afternoon».

«She really ought to get away from him», resumed Catherine to me. «They've been living over that garage for eleven years. And Tom's the first love she ever had».

The bottle of whiskey – a second one – was now in constant demand by all, excepting Catherine, who «felt just as good without drinking at all». I wanted to get out and walk southward toward the

²² Пока всё не уладится.

²³ В частных игорных залах.

²⁴ Если бы не Честер.

park through the soft twilight, but each time I tried to go I became involved in some wild argument which pulled me back, as if with ropes, into my chair.

Myrtle pulled her chair close to mine, and suddenly her warm breath poured over me the story of her first meeting with Tom.

«It was on the two little seats facing each other that are always the last ones left on the train. I was going up to New York to see my sister and spend the night. He had on a suit and leather shoes, and I couldn't keep my eyes off him, but every time he looked at me I had to pretend to be looking at the advertisement over his head. When we came into the station he was next to me, and his white shirt-front pressed against my arm, and so I told him I'd have to call a policeman, but he knew I lied. I was so excited. All I kept thinking about, over and over, was 'You can't live forever; you can't live forever'».

She turned to Mrs. McKee and the room rang full of her artificial laughter.

«My dear», she cried, «I'm going to give you this dress. I've got to get another one tomorrow. I'm going to make a list of all the things I've got to get. A massage, and a collar for the dog, and one of those cute little ash-trays where you touch a spring, and a wreath with a black silk bow for mother's grave that'll last all summer. I have to write down a list so I won't forget all the things I have to do».

It was nine o'clock – almost immediately afterward I looked at my watch and found it was ten. Mr. McKee was asleep on a chair.

Some time toward midnight Tom Buchanan and Mrs. Wilson stood face to face discussing, in passionate voices, whether Mrs. Wilson had any right to mention Daisy's name.

«Daisy! Daisy! Daisy!» shouted Mrs. Wilson. «I'll say it whenever I want to! Daisy! Dal...»

Making a short movement, Tom Buchanan broke her nose with his open hand.

Then there were bloody towels upon the bathroom floor, and women's voices scolding, and a long wail of pain. Mr. McKee awoke from his sleep and started in surprise toward the door. When he had gone half way he turned around and stared at the scene – his wife and Catherine scolding and consoling as they stumbled here and there among the crowded furniture trying to help Myrtle, and her miserable figure on the sofa. Then Mr. McKee turned and continued on out the door. Taking my hat from the chandelier, I followed.

«Come to lunch some day», he suggested, as we were going down in the elevator.

«Where?»

«Anywhere».

«All right», I agreed, «I'll be glad to».

Then I was lying half asleep in the cold lower level of the Pennsylvania Station, waiting for the four o'clock train.

Chapter 3

There was music from my neighbor's house through the summer nights. In his blue gardens men and girls came and went like moths among the whisperings and the champagne and the stars. In the afternoon I watched his guests lying in the sun on his beach while his two motor-boats cut the waters, followed by aquaplanes. On week-ends his Rolls-Royce became a bus, bearing people to and from the city between nine in the morning and long past midnight. And on Mondays eight servants worked all day with mops and scrubbing-brushes and hammers, repairing the damage of the night before.

Every Friday five large boxes of oranges and lemons arrived from New York. There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour.

At least once a fortnight caterers came down with several hundred feet of canvas and enough colored lights to make a Christmas tree of Gatsby's enormous garden. On buffet tables, spiced baked hams crowded against salads and pigs and turkeys. In the main hall a bar was stocked with gins and liquors and other exquisite drinks.

By seven o'clock the orchestra has arrived. The last swimmers have come in from the beach now and are dressing upstairs; the cars from New York are parked in the drive; the bar is in full swing²⁵.

I believe that on the first night I went to Gatsby's house I was one of the few guests who had actually been invited. People were not invited – they went there. They got into automobiles which took them to Long Island, and somehow they ended up at Gatsby's door. There they were introduced by somebody who knew Gatsby. Sometimes they came and went and didn't meet Gatsby at all.

I had been actually invited. A chauffeur in a uniform crossed my lawn early that Saturday morning with a surprisingly formal invitation from his employer. It read²⁶, he had seen me several times, and had intended to visit me long before, but a peculiar combination of circumstances had prevented it. The paper was signed Jay Gatsby.

Dressed up in white suit I went over to his lawn a little after seven, and wandered around feeling rather uncomfortable among people I didn't know.

As soon as I arrived I made an attempt to find my host, but the two or three people of whom I asked about him stared at me in such an amazed way, that I moved in the direction of the cocktail table – the only place in the garden where a single man could remain without looking purposeless and alone.

I was going to get drunk because of embarrassment when Jordan Baker came out of the house and stood at the top of the marble steps, looking with contemptuous interest down into the garden.

«Hello!» I roared, moving toward her. My voice seemed unnaturally loud across the garden.

«I thought you might be here», she responded as I came up. «I remembered you lived next door to...» She held my hand, and turned to two girls in identical yellow dresses, who stopped at the foot of the steps.

«Hello!» they cried together. «Sorry you didn't win».

That was for the golf tournament. She had lost in the finals the week before.

«You don't know who we are», said one of the girls in yellow, «but we met you here about a month ago».

«Do you often come to these parties?» inquired Jordan of the girl beside her.

«The last one was when I met you», answered the girl, in a confident voice. She turned to her companion: «Were you there, too, Lucille?»

Lucille was there, too.

²⁵ Бар работает всюду.

²⁶ В приглашении говорилось.

«I like to come», Lucille said. «I never think about what I do, so I always have a good time. When I was here last I tore my dress on a chair, and he asked me my name and address. And soon I got a package with a new evening dress in it».

«Did you keep it?» asked Jordan.

«Sure I did. I was going to wear it tonight, but it had to be altered. It was blue with lavender beads. Two hundred and sixty- five dollars».

«There's something funny about a fellow that'll do a thing like that», said the other girl eagerly. «He doesn't want any trouble with ANYbody».

«Who doesn't?» I inquired.

«Gatsby. Somebody told me they thought he killed a man once».

«I don't think it's so much THAT», argued Lucille sceptically; «it's more that he was a German spy during the war».

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