

APPENDICES

SUMMARY OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD'S *THE GREAT GATSBY*

CHAPTER I

In the summer of 1922, Nick writes, he had just arrived in New York, where he moved to work in the bond business, and rented a house on a part of Long Island called West Egg. Unlike the conservative, aristocratic East Egg, West Egg is home to the “new rich,” those who, having made their fortunes recently, have neither the social connections nor the refinement to move among the East Egg set. West Egg is characterized by lavish displays of wealth and garish poor taste. Nick’s comparatively modest West Egg house is next door to Gatsby’s mansion, a sprawling Gothic monstrosity.

Nick is unlike his West Egg neighbors; whereas they lack social connections and aristocratic pedigrees, Nick graduated from Yale and has many connections on East Egg. One night, he drives out to East Egg to have dinner with his cousin Daisy and her husband, Tom Buchanan, a former member of Nick’s social club at Yale. Tom, a powerful figure dressed in riding clothes, greets Nick on the porch. Inside, Daisy lounges on a couch with her friend, Jordan Baker, a competitive golfer who yawns as though bored by her surroundings.

Tom tries to interest the others in a book called *The Rise of the Colored Empires* by a man named Goddard. The book espouses racist, white-supremacist attitudes that Tom seems to find convincing. Daisy teases Tom about the book but

is interrupted when Tom leaves the room to take a phone call. Daisy follows him hurriedly, and Jordan tells Nick that the call is from Tom's lover in New York. After an awkward dinner, the party breaks up. Jordan wants to go to bed because she has a golf tournament the next day. As Nick leaves, Tom and Daisy hint that they would like for him to take a romantic interest in Jordan.

When Nick arrives home, he sees Gatsby for the first time, a handsome young man standing on the lawn with his arms reaching out toward the dark water. Nick looks out at the water, but all he can see is a distant green light that might mark the end of a dock.

CHAPTER II

Halfway between West Egg and New York City sprawls a desolate plain, a gray valley where New York's ashes are dumped. The men who live here work at shoveling up the ashes. Overhead, two huge, blue, spectacle-rimmed eyes—the last vestige of an advertising gimmick by a long-vanished eye doctor—stare down from an enormous sign. These unblinking eyes, the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, watch over everything that happens in the valley of ashes.

The commuter train that runs between West Egg and New York passes through the valley, making several stops along the way. One day, as Nick and Tom are riding the train into the city, Tom forces Nick to follow him out of the train at one of these stops. Tom leads Nick to George Wilson's garage, which sits on the edge of the valley of ashes. Tom's lover Myrtle is Wilson's wife. Wilson is a lifeless yet handsome man, colored gray by the ashes in the air. In contrast,

Myrtle has a kind of desperate vitality; she strikes Nick as sensuous despite her stocky figure. Tom taunts Wilson and then orders Myrtle to follow him to the train. Tom takes Nick and Myrtle to New York City, to the Morningside Heights apartment he keeps for his affair. Here they have an impromptu party with Myrtle's sister, Catherine, and a couple named McKee. Catherine has bright red hair, wears a great deal of makeup, and tells Nick that she has heard that Jay Gatsby is the nephew or cousin of Kaiser Wilhelm, the ruler of Germany during World War I. The McKees, who live downstairs, are a horrid couple: Mr. McKee is pale and feminine, and Mrs. McKee is shrill. The group proceeds to drink excessively. Nick claims that he got drunk for only the second time in his life at this party.

The ostentatious behavior and conversation of the others at the party repulse Nick, and he tries to leave. At the same time, he finds himself fascinated by the lurid spectacle of the group. Myrtle grows louder and more obnoxious the more she drinks, and shortly after Tom gives her a new puppy as a gift, she begins to talk about Daisy. Tom sternly warns her never to mention his wife. Myrtle angrily says that she will talk about whatever she chooses and begins chanting Daisy's name. Tom responds by breaking her nose, bringing the party to an abrupt halt. Nick leaves, drunkenly, with Mr. McKee, and ends up taking the 4 A.M. train back to Long Island.

CHAPTER III

One of the reasons that Gatsby has become so famous around New York is that he throws elaborate parties every weekend at his mansion, lavish spectacles to which people long to be invited. One day, Gatsby's chauffeur brings Nick an invitation to one of these parties. At the appointed time, Nick makes the short walk to Gatsby's house and joins the festivities, feeling somewhat out of place amid the throng of jubilant strangers. Guests mill around exchanging rumors about their host—no one seems to know the truth about Gatsby's wealth or personal history. Nick runs into Jordan Baker, whose friend, Lucille, speculates that Gatsby was a German spy during the war. Nick also hears that Gatsby is a graduate of Oxford and that he once killed a man in cold blood.

Gatsby's party is almost unbelievably luxurious: guests marvel over his Rolls-Royce, his swimming pool, his beach, crates of fresh oranges and lemons, buffet tents in the gardens overflowing with a feast, and a live orchestra playing under the stars. Liquor flows freely, and the crowd grows rowdier and louder as more and more guests get drunk. In this atmosphere of opulence and revelry, Nick and Jordan, curious about their host, set out to find Gatsby. Instead, they run into a middle-aged man with huge, owl-eyed spectacles (whom Nick dubs Owl Eyes) who sits poring over the unread books in Gatsby's library.

At midnight, Nick and Jordan go outside to watch the entertainment. They sit at a table with a handsome young man who says that Nick looks familiar to him; they realize that they served in the same division during the war. The man introduces himself as none other than Jay Gatsby. Gatsby's speech is elaborate and formal, and he has a habit of calling everyone "old sport." As the party

progresses, Nick becomes increasingly fascinated with Gatsby. He notices that Gatsby does not drink and that he keeps himself separate from the party, standing alone on the marble steps, watching his guests in silence.

At two o'clock in the morning, as husbands and wives argue over whether to leave, a butler tells Jordan that Gatsby would like to see her. Jordan emerges from her meeting with Gatsby saying that she has just heard something extraordinary. Nick says goodbye to Gatsby, who goes inside to take a phone call from Philadelphia. Nick starts to walk home. On his way, he sees Owl Eyes struggling to get his car out of a ditch. Owl Eyes and another man climb out of the wrecked automobile, and Owl Eyes drunkenly declares that he washes his hands of the whole business.

Nick then proceeds to describe his everyday life, to prove that he does more with his time than simply attend parties. He works in New York City, through which he also takes long walks, and he meets women. After a brief relationship with a girl from Jersey City, Nick follows the advice of Daisy and Tom and begins seeing Jordan Baker. Nick says that Jordan is fundamentally a dishonest person; he even knows that she cheated in her first golf tournament. Nick feels attracted to her despite her dishonesty, even though he himself claims to be one of the few honest people he has ever known.

CHAPTER IV

Nick lists all of the people who attended Gatsby's parties that summer, a roll call of the nation's most wealthy and powerful people. He then describes a

trip that he took to New York with Gatsby to eat lunch. As they drive to the city, Gatsby tells Nick about his past, but his story seems highly improbable. He claims, for instance, to be the son of wealthy, deceased parents from the Midwest. When Nick asks which Midwestern city he is from, Gatsby replies, "San Francisco." Gatsby then lists a long and preposterously detailed set of accomplishments: he claims to have been educated at Oxford, to have collected jewels in the capitals of Europe, to have hunted big game, and to have been awarded medals in World War I by multiple European countries. Seeing Nick's skepticism, Gatsby produces a medal from Montenegro and a picture of himself playing cricket at Oxford.

Gatsby's car speeds through the valley of ashes and enters the city. When a policeman pulls Gatsby over for speeding, Gatsby shows him a white card and the policeman apologizes for bothering him. In the city, Gatsby takes Nick to lunch and introduces him to Meyer Wolfshiem, who, he claims, was responsible for fixing the 1919 World Series. Wolfshiem is a shady character with underground business connections. He gives Nick the impression that the source of Gatsby's wealth might be unsavory, and that Gatsby may even have ties to the sort of organized crime with which Wolfshiem is associated.

After the lunch in New York, Nick sees Jordan Bakerr, who finally tells him the details of her mysterious conversation with Gatsby at the party. She relates that Gatsby told her that he is in love with Daisy Buchanan, According to Jordan, during the war, before Daisy married Tom, she was a beautiful young girl in Louisville, Kentucky, and all the military officers in town were in love with

her. Daisy fell in love with Lieutenant Jay Gatsby, who was stationed at the base near her home. Though she chose to marry Tom after Gatsby left for the war, Daisy drank herself into numbness the night before her wedding, after she received a letter from Gatsby. Daisy has apparently remained faithful to her husband throughout their marriage, but Tom has not. Jordan adds that Gatsby bought his mansion in West Egg solely to be near Daisy. Nick remembers the night he saw Gatsby stretching his arms out to the water and realizes that the green light he saw was the light at the end of Daisy's dock. According to Jordan, Gatsby has asked her to convince Nick to arrange a reunion between Gatsby and Daisy. Because he is terrified that Daisy will refuse to see him, Gatsby wants Nick to invite Daisy to tea. Without Daisy's knowledge, Gatsby intends to come to the tea at Nick's house as well, surprising her and forcing her to see him.

CHAPTER V

That night, Nick comes home from the city after a date with Jordan. He is surprised to see Gatsby's mansion lit up brightly, but it seems to be unoccupied, as the house is totally silent. As Nick walks home, Gatsby startles him by approaching him from across the lawn. Gatsby seems agitated and almost desperate to make Nick happy—he invites him to Coney Island, then for a swim in his pool. Nick realizes that Gatsby is nervous because he wants Nick to agree to his plan of inviting Daisy over for tea. Nick tells Gatsby that he will help him with the plan. Overjoyed, Gatsby immediately offers to have someone cut Nick's grass. He also offers him the chance to make some money by joining him in some

business he does on the side—business that does not involve Meyer Wolfsheimer. Nick is slightly offended that Gatsby wants to pay him for arranging the meeting with Daisy and refuses Gatsby's offers, but he still agrees to call Daisy and invite her to his house.

It rains on the day of the meeting, and Gatsby becomes terribly nervous. Despite the rain, Gatsby sends a gardener over to cut Nick's grass and sends another man over with flowers. Gatsby worries that even if Daisy accepts his advances, things between them will not be the same as they were in Louisville. Daisy arrives, but when Nick brings her into the house, he finds that Gatsby has suddenly disappeared. There is a knock at the door. Gatsby enters, having returned from a walk around the house in the rain.

At first, Gatsby's reunion with Daisy is terribly awkward. Gatsby knocks Nick's clock over and tells Nick sorrowfully that the meeting was a mistake. After he leaves the two alone for half an hour, however, Nick returns to find them radiantly happy—Daisy shedding tears of joy and Gatsby glowing. Outside, the rain has stopped, and Gatsby invites Nick and Daisy over to his house, where he shows them his possessions. Daisy is overwhelmed by his luxurious lifestyle, and when he shows her his extensive collection of English shirts, she begins to cry. Gatsby tells Daisy about his long nights spent outside, staring at the green light at the end of her dock, dreaming about their future happiness.

Nick wonders whether Daisy can possibly live up to Gatsby's vision of her. Gatsby seems to have idealized Daisy in his mind to the extent that the real Daisy, charming as she is, will almost certainly fail to live up to his expectations.

For the moment, however, their romance seems fully rekindled. Gatsby calls in Klipspringer, a strange character who seems to live at Gatsby's mansion, and has him play the piano. Klipspringer plays a popular song called "Ain't We Got Fun?" Nick quickly realizes that Gatsby and Daisy have forgotten that he is there. Quietly, Nick gets up and leaves Gatsby and Daisy alone together.

CHAPTER VI

The rumors about Gatsby continue to circulate in New York—a reporter even travels to Gatsby's mansion hoping to interview him. Having learned the truth about Gatsby's early life sometime before writing his account, Nick now interrupts the story to relate Gatsby's personal history—not as it is rumored to have occurred, nor as Gatsby claimed it occurred, but as it really happened.

Gatsby was born James Gatz on a North Dakota farm, and though he attended college at St. Olaf's in Minnesota, he dropped out after two weeks, loathing the humiliating janitorial work by means of which he paid his tuition. He worked on Lake Superior the next summer fishing for salmon and digging for clams. One day, he saw a yacht owned by Dan Cody, a wealthy copper mogul, and rowed out to warn him about an impending storm. The grateful Cody took young Gatz, who gave his name as Jay Gatsby, on board his yacht as his personal assistant. Traveling with Cody to the Barbary Coast and the West Indies, Gatsby fell in love with wealth and luxury. Cody was a heavy drinker, and one of Gatsby's jobs was to look after him during his drunken binges. This gave Gatsby a healthy respect for the dangers of alcohol and convinced him not to become a

drinker himself. When Cody died, he left Gatsby \$25,000, but Cody's mistress prevented him from claiming his inheritance. Gatsby then dedicated himself to becoming a wealthy and successful man.

Nick sees neither Gatsby nor Daisy for several weeks after their reunion at Nick's house. Stopping by Gatsby's house one afternoon, he is alarmed to find Tom Buchanan there. Tom has stopped for a drink at Gatsby's house with Mr. and Mrs. Sloane, with whom he has been out riding. Gatsby seems nervous and agitated, and tells Tom awkwardly that he knows Daisy. Gatsby invites Tom and the Sloanes to stay for dinner, but they refuse. To be polite, they invite Gatsby to dine with them, and he accepts, not realizing the insincerity of the invitation. Tom is contemptuous of Gatsby's lack of social grace and highly critical of Daisy's habit of visiting Gatsby's house alone. He is suspicious, but he has not yet discovered Gatsby and Daisy's love.

The following Saturday night, Tom and Daisy go to a party at Gatsby's house. Though Tom has no interest in the party, his dislike for Gatsby causes him to want to keep an eye on Daisy. Gatsby's party strikes Nick much more unfavorably this time around—he finds the revelry oppressive and notices that even Daisy has a bad time. Tom upsets her by telling her that Gatsby's fortune comes from bootlegging. She angrily replies that Gatsby's wealth comes from a chain of drugstores that he owns.

Gatsby seeks out Nick after Tom and Daisy leave the party; he is unhappy because Daisy has had such an unpleasant time. Gatsby wants things to be exactly the same as they were before he left Louisville: he wants Daisy to leave Tom so

that he can be with her. Nick reminds Gatsby that he cannot re-create the past. Gatsby, distraught, protests that he can. He believes that his money can accomplish anything as far as Daisy is concerned. As he walks amid the debris from the party, Nick thinks about the first time Gatsby kissed Daisy, the moment when his dream of Daisy became the dominant force in his life. Now that he has her, Nick reflects, his dream is effectively over.

CHAPTER VII

Preoccupied by his love for Daisy, Gatsby calls off his parties, which were primarily a means to lure Daisy. He also fires his servants to prevent gossip and replaces them with shady individuals connected to Meyer Wolfshiem.

On the hottest day of the summer, Nick drives to East Egg for lunch at the house of Tom and Daisy. He finds Gatsby and Jordan Baker there as well. When the nurse brings in Daisy's baby girl, Gatsby is stunned and can hardly believe that the child is real. For her part, Daisy seems almost uninterested in her child. During the awkward afternoon, Gatsby and Daisy cannot hide their love for one another. Complaining of her boredom, Daisy asks Gatsby if he wants to go into the city. Gatsby stares at her passionately, and Tom becomes certain of their feelings for each other.

Itching for a confrontation, Tom seizes upon Daisy's suggestion that they should all go to New York together. Nick rides with Jordan and Tom in Gatsby's car, and Gatsby and Daisy ride together in Tom's car. Stopping for gas at Wilson's garage, Nick, Tom, and Jordan learn that Wilson has discovered his

wife's infidelity—though not the identity of her lover—and plans to move her to the West. Under the brooding eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, Nick perceives that Tom and Wilson are in the same position.

In the oppressive New York City heat, the group decides to take a suite at the Plaza Hotel. Tom initiates his planned confrontation with Gatsby by mocking his habit of calling people “old sport.” He accuses Gatsby of lying about having attended Oxford. Gatsby responds that he did attend Oxford—for five months, in an army program following the war. Tom asks Gatsby about his intentions for Daisy, and Gatsby replies that Daisy loves him, not Tom. Tom claims that he and Daisy have a history that Gatsby could not possibly understand. He then accuses Gatsby of running a bootlegging operation. Daisy, in love with Gatsby earlier in the afternoon, feels herself moving closer and closer to Tom as she observes the quarrel. Realizing he has bested Gatsby, Tom sends Daisy back to Long Island with Gatsby to prove Gatsby's inability to hurt him. As the row quiets down, Nick realizes that it is his thirtieth birthday.

Driving back to Long Island, Nick, Tom, and Jordan discover a frightening scene on the border of the valley of ashes. Someone has been fatally hit by an automobile. Michaelis, a Greek man who runs the restaurant next to Wilson's garage, tells them that Myrtle was the victim—a car coming from New York City struck her, paused, then sped away. Nick realizes that Myrtle must have been hit by Gatsby and Daisy, driving back from the city in Gatsby's big yellow automobile. Tom thinks that Wilson will remember the yellow car from that afternoon. He also assumes that Gatsby was the driver.

Back at Tom's house, Nick waits outside and finds Gatsby hiding in the bushes. Gatsby says that he has been waiting there in order to make sure that Tom did not hurt Daisy. He tells Nick that Daisy was driving when the car struck Myrtle, but that he himself will take the blame. Still worried about Daisy, Gatsby sends Nick to check on her. Nick finds Tom and Daisy eating cold fried chicken and talking. They have reconciled their differences, and Nick leaves Gatsby standing alone in the moonlight.

CHAPTER VIII

After the day's traumatic events, Nick passes a sleepless night. Before dawn, he rises restlessly and goes to visit Gatsby at his mansion. Gatsby tells him that he waited at Daisy's until four o'clock in the morning and that nothing happened—Tom did not try to hurt her and Daisy did not come outside. Nick suggests that Gatsby forget about Daisy and leave Long Island, but Gatsby refuses to consider leaving Daisy behind. Gatsby, melancholy, tells Nick about courting Daisy in Louisville in 1917. He says that he loved her for her youth and vitality, and idolized her social position, wealth, and popularity. He adds that she was the first girl to whom he ever felt close and that he lied about his background to make her believe that he was worthy of her. Eventually, he continues, he and Daisy made love, and he felt as though he had married her. She promised to wait for him when he left for the war, but then she married Tom, whose social position was solid and who had the approval of her parents.

Gatsby's gardener interrupts the story to tell Gatsby that he plans to drain the pool. The previous day was the hottest of the summer, but autumn is in the air this morning, and the gardener worries that falling leaves will clog the pool drains. Gatsby tells the gardener to wait a day; he has never used the pool, he says, and wants to go for a swim. Nick has stayed so long talking to Gatsby that he is very late for work. He finally says goodbye to Gatsby. As he walks away, he turns back and shouts that Gatsby is worth more than the Buchanans and all of their friends.

Nick goes to his office, but he feels too distracted to work, and even refuses to meet Jordan Baker for a date. The focus of his narrative then shifts to relate to the reader what happened at the garage after Myrtle was killed (the details of which Nick learns from Michaelis): George Wilson stays up all night talking to Michaelis about Myrtle. He tells him that before Myrtle died, he confronted her about her lover and told her that she could not hide her sin from the eyes of God. The morning after the accident, the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, illuminated by the dawn, overwhelm Wilson. He believes they are the eyes of God and leaps to the conclusion that whoever was driving the car that killed Myrtle must have been her lover. He decides that God demands revenge and leaves to track down the owner of the car. He looks for Tom, because he knows that Tom is familiar with the car's owner—he saw Tom driving the car earlier that day but knows Tom could not have been the driver since Tom arrived after the accident in a different car with Nick and Jordan. Wilson eventually goes to Gatsby's house, where he finds Gatsby lying on an air mattress in the pool,

floating in the water and looking up at the sky. Wilson shoots Gatsby, killing him instantly, then shoots himself.

Nick hurries back to West Egg and finds Gatsby floating dead in his pool. Nick imagines Gatsby's final thoughts, and pictures him disillusioned by the meaninglessness and emptiness of life without Daisy, without his dream.

CHAPTER IX

Writing two years after Gatsby's death, Nick describes the events that surrounded the funeral. Swarms of reporters, journalists, and gossipmongers descend on the mansion in the aftermath of the murder. Wild, untrue stories, more exaggerated than the rumors about Gatsby when he was throwing his parties, circulate about the nature of Gatsby's relationship to Myrtle and Wilson. Feeling that Gatsby would not want to go through a funeral alone, Nick tries to hold a large funeral for him, but all of Gatsby's former friends and acquaintances have either disappeared—Tom and Daisy, for instance, move away with no forwarding address—or refuse to come, like Meyer Wolfshiem and Klipspringer. The latter claims that he has a social engagement in Westport and asks Nick to send along his tennis shoes. Outraged, Nick hangs up on him. The only people to attend the funeral are Nick, Owl Eyes, a few servants, and Gatsby's father, Henry C. Gatz, who has come all the way from Minnesota. Henry Gatz is proud of his son and saves a picture of his house. He also fills Nick in on Gatsby's early life, showing him a book in which a young Gatsby had written a schedule for self-improvement.

Sick of the East and its empty values, Nick decides to move back to the Midwest. He breaks off his relationship with Jordan, who suddenly claims that she has become engaged to another man. Just before he leaves, Nick encounters Tom on Fifth Avenue in New York City. Nick initially refuses to shake Tom's hand but eventually accepts. Tom tells him that he was the one who told Wilson that Gatsby owned the car that killed Myrtle, and describes how greatly he suffered when he had to give up the apartment he kept in the city for his affair. He says that Gatsby deserved to die. Nick comes to the conclusion that Tom and Daisy are careless and uncaring people and that they destroy people and things, knowing that their money will shield them from ever having to face any negative consequences.

Nick muses that, in some ways, this story is a story of the West even though it has taken place entirely on the East Coast. Nick, Jordan, Tom, and Daisy are all from west of the Appalachians, and Nick believes that the reactions of each, himself included, to living the fast-paced, lurid lifestyle of the East has shaped his or her behavior. Nick remembers life in the Midwest, full of snow, trains, and Christmas wreaths, and thinks that the East seems grotesque and distorted by comparison.

On his last night in West Egg before moving back to Minnesota, Nick walks over to Gatsby's empty mansion and erases an obscene word that someone has written on the steps. He sprawls out on the beach behind Gatsby's house and looks up. As the moon rises, he imagines the island with no houses and considers what it must have looked like to the explorers who discovered the New World

centuries before. He imagines that America was once a goal for dreamers and explorers, just as Daisy was for Gatsby. He pictures the green land of America as the green light shining from Daisy's dock, and muses that Gatsby—whose wealth and success so closely echo the American dream—failed to realize that the dream had already ended, that his goals had become hollow and empty. Nick senses that people everywhere are motivated by similar dreams and by a desire to move forward into a future in which their dreams are realized. Nick envisions their struggles to create that future as boats moving in a body of water against a current that inevitably carries them back into the past.

