

The Great Gatsby

F. Scott Fitzgerald

Chapter 3 Excerpt

The Party: Illusion and Excess

p.39~40

In the opening paragraphs of Chapter 3 we have the first descriptions of Gatsby's legendary parties. The cost of such weekly bashes must be enormous. As we move forward, pay attention to how Gatsby's guests repay his hospitality.

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. At high tide in the afternoon I watched his guests diving from the tower of his raft or taking the sun on the hot sand of his beach while his two motor-boats slit the waters of the Sound, drawing ^{boards for riding behind a boat} aquaplanes over ^{casades} cataracts of foam. On week-ends his Rolls-Royce became an ^{bus} omnibus, bearing parties to and from the city, between nine in the morning and long past midnight, while his station wagon ^{doated} scampered like a brisk yellow bug to meet all trains. And on Mondays eight servants including an extra gardener ^{energetic} toiled all day with mops and scrubbing-brushes and hammers and garden-shears, repairing the ^{labored} ^{desecration} ravages of the night before.

Every Friday five crates of oranges and lemons arrived from a ^{fruit vendor} fruiterer in New York—every Monday these same oranges and lemons left his back door in a pyramid of pulpless halves. There was a machine in the kitchen which could extract the juice of two hundred oranges in half an hour, if a little button was pressed two hundred times by a butler's thumb.

At least once a fortnight a ^(names) corps of 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, garnished with glistening ^{colorful} ^{colorful} hors-d'oeuvre, spiced baked hams crowded against salads of harlequin designs and pastry pigs and turkeys bewitched to a dark gold. In the main hall a bar with a real brass rail was set up, and stocked with gins and liquors and with ^{sweet-liquors} cordials so long forgotten that most of his female guests were too young to know one from another.

Q> How does Fitzgerald use details like "whisperings," "stars," and "champagne," "stars," and "floating rounds of cocktails" to criticize this world?

A> He makes the party sound beautiful and exciting, but also excessive and shallow. The scene suggests a world full of pleasure, not real meaning.

Q. What does the phrase "like moths" suggest about Gatsby's guests?

A> It suggests that the guests are blindly drawn to glamour and excitement. They are attracted to the party without thinking deeply.

This highlights the historical context of Prohibition, when producing and selling alcohol was illegal, though drinking it was not. Despite this, Gatsby serves authentic, rare liquors—either imported illegally or preserved from before Prohibition—suggesting both the immense cost of his parties and his access to extraordinary resources.

By seven o'clock the orchestra has arrived—no thin five-piece affair but a whole pitful of oboes and trombones and saxophones and viols and cornets and piccolos and low and high drums. The last swimmers have come in from the beach now and are dressing upstairs; the cars from New York are parked five deep in the drive, and already the halls and ^{parlors} salons and verandas are ^{flashy} gaudy with primary colors and hair ^{cut} shorn in strange new ways and ^{scarves} shawls beyond the dreams of Castile. The bar is in full swing and ^{spread throughout} floating rounds of cocktails permeate the garden outside until the air is alive with chatter and laughter and casual ^{suggestion} innuendo and introductions forgotten on the spot and enthusiastic meetings between women who never knew each other's names.

The Kingdom of Castile was known for its wealth and power. This allusion hints at similar wealth and power among Gatsby's partygoers.

"Let's get out," whispered Jordan, after a somehow wasteful and inappropriate half hour; "this is much too polite for me."

We got up, and she explained that we were going to find the host—I had never met him, she said, and it was making me uneasy. The undergraduate nodded in a ^{sneering} cynical, ^{gloomy} melancholy way.

The bar, where we glanced first, was crowded but Gatsby was not there. She couldn't find him from the top of the steps, and he wasn't on the veranda. On a chance we tried an important-looking door, and walked into a high Gothic library, panelled with carved English oak, and probably transported complete from some ruin overseas.

^{heavyset} A stout, middle-aged man with enormous owl-eyed spectacles was sitting somewhat drunk on the edge of a great table, staring with unsteady concentration at the shelves of books. As we entered he wheeled excitedly around and examined Jordan from head to foot.

"What do you think?" he demanded ^{impulsively} impetuously.

"About what?"

He waved his hand toward the book-shelves.

"About that. As a matter of fact you needn't bother to ^{make certain} ascertain. I ascertained. They're real."

"The books?"

He nodded.

"Absolutely real—have pages and everything. I thought they'd be a nice durable cardboard. Matter of fact, they're absolutely real. Pages and—Here! Lemme show you."

Taking our ^{doubt} skepticism for granted, he rushed to the bookcases and returned with Volume One of the "Stoddard Lectures."

Gothic architecture is characterized by elaborate arches and windows. It was popular in Europe during the Middle Ages.

A series of travel books by John Lawson Stoddard. Some readers link Owl Eyes to Dr. T. J. Eckleburg because both figures "see" beneath appearances, though this may carry some irony. Regardless of authorial intent, Owl Eyes stands out at the party as one of the few guests genuinely interested in Gatsby as a person, not just as a host.

Q. Why are the phrases "have pages and everything" and "What realism!" so important here?

A>They show that Gatsby wants everything to look convincing and real. His world may be partly artificial, but he builds it very carefully.

Chains of vague connections

David Belasco was a theatre producer known for realism in his sets.

"See!" he cried triumphantly. "It's a ^{genuine} bona fide piece of printed matter. It fooled me. This fella's a regular Belasco. It's a triumph. What thoroughness! What realism! Knew when to stop too—didn't cut the pages. But what do you want? What do you expect?"

He snatched the book from me and replaced it ^{in a hurry} hastily on its shelf ^{rummaging} muttering that if one brick was removed the whole library was ^{likely} liable to collapse.

"Who brought you?" he demanded. "Or did you just come? I was brought. Most people were brought."

Jordan looked at him alertly, cheerfully without answering.

"I was brought by a woman named Roosevelt," he continued. "Mrs. Claud Roosevelt. Do you know her? I met her somewhere last night. I've been drunk for about a week now, and I thought it might sober me up to sit in a library."

"Has it?"

"A little bit, I think. I can't tell yet. I've only been here an hour. Did I tell you about the books? They're real. They're—"

"You told us."

We shook hands with him ^{seriously} gravely and went back outdoors.

Q. What does Owl Eyes mean when he says Gatsby "didn't cut the pages"?

A>It means the books are real, but they have probably not been read. This shows that Gatsby cares more about appearance than true use.

Q. What does "the whole library was liable to collapse" suggest?

A>It suggests the library is fragile. This reflects Gatsby's world—if one truth is revealed, his whole image could fall apart.

Q. What is the significance of the line "Most people were brought"?

A>It shows that people attend without real connections. The party is based on appearance, not genuine relationships.

The name "Roosevelt" echoes a famous American political family (like Theodore Roosevelt), but the man barely knows her.

He met her "somewhere last night."

People borrow prestige through names, not real connections.

The party culture is excessive and self-destructive. Traditional values (learning, reflection) are misused or emptied of meaning.

Here he is!
Our introduction to him is
Nick's awkward first
meeting too.

For a moment he looked at me as if he failed to understand.

"I'm Gatsby," he said suddenly.

"What!" I exclaimed. "Oh, I beg your pardon."

"I thought you knew, old sport. I'm afraid I'm not a very good host."

He smiled understandingly—much more than understandingly. It was one of those rare smiles with a quality of ^{constant} eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced—or seemed to face—the whole external world for an instant, and then concentrated on you with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just so far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey. Precisely at that point it vanished—and I was looking at an elegant young ^{tough guy} rough-neck, a year or two over thirty, whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd. Some time before he introduced himself I'd got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care.

Almost at the moment when Mr. Gatsby identified himself a butler hurried toward him with the information that Chicago was calling him on the wire. He excused himself with a small bow that included each of us in turn.

the wire = phone

"If you want anything just ask for it, old sport," he urged me. "Excuse me. I will rejoin you later."

When he was gone I turned immediately to Jordan—^{forced} constrained to assure her of my surprise. I had expected that Mr. Gatsby would be a ^{flamboyant} florid and ^{overweight} corpulent person in his middle years.

"Who is he?" I demanded. "Do you know?"

"He's just a man named Gatsby."

"Where is he from, I mean? And what does he do?"

"Now you're started on the subject," she answered with a ^{pale} wan smile. "Well,—he told me once he was an Oxford man."

A dim background started to take shape behind him but at her next remark it faded away.

Q. How do the phrases "eternal reassurance" and "irresistible prejudice in your favor" shape Gatsby's image?

A> They make Gatsby seem warm, confident, and almost magical. His smile makes people feel specially chosen and understood.

Q. Why does Fitzgerald shift from "the whole external world" to "you"?

A> The shift makes Gatsby seem larger than life at first, then suddenly very personal. It shows how powerfully he can focus on one person.

This is a great example of what Nick means by "elaborate formality of speech. Rather than saying, 'I'll be right back,' Gatsby says, 'I will rejoin you later.' Who talks like that? We'll see even more overblown examples of this trait in Chapter 4.

"However, I don't believe it."

"Why not?"

"I don't know," she insisted, "I just don't think he went there."

Something in her tone reminded me of the other girl's "I think he killed a man," and had the effect of stimulating my curiosity. I would have accepted without question the information that Gatsby sprang from the swamps of Louisiana or from the lower East Side of New York. That was ^{understandable} comprehensible. But young men didn't—at least in my ^{sophisticated} provincial inexperience I believed they didn't—drift coolly out of nowhere and buy a palace on Long Island Sound.

"Anyhow he gives large parties," said Jordan, changing the subject with an ^{sophisticated} urbane distaste for the ^{something solid} concrete. "And I like large parties. They're so intimate. At small parties there isn't any privacy."

There was the boom of a bass drum, and the voice of the orchestra leader rang out suddenly above the ^{repeated speech} echolalia of the garden.

"Ladies and gentlemen," he cried. "At the request of Mr. Gatsby we are going to play for you Mr. Vladimir Tostoff's latest work which attracted so much attention at Carnegie Hall last May. If you read the papers you know there was a big sensation." He smiled with ^{good-natured} jovial ^{from politeness} condescension and added "Some sensation!" whereupon everybody laughed.

"The piece is known," he concluded ^{suggestively} lustily, "as 'Vladimir Tostoff's Jazz History of the World.'"

The rumors about Gatsby are exaggerated and contradictory, making them unreliable—likely none are true. Nick recognizes this and searches for a believable story, finding Gatsby's claim of being "an Oxford man" somewhat credible, though Jordan doubts it. The real mystery is how someone so wealthy could seemingly come from nowhere.

The fictional song at Gatsby's party carries a sense of mystery, and F. Scott Fitzgerald himself struggled to describe Sprach version, possibly inspired by Richard Strauss's Also Sprach Zarathustra, which was met with much "sensation" when it was performed at Carnegie Hall in 1921. (as noted by scholar Darrel Mansell) However, Fitzgerald ultimately cut most of this material, leaving only the powerful effect the music has on the party guests.

Chapter 4 Excerpt

Gatsby's Identity: Truth or Performance?

p.65

Who asks a question like that?

"Look here, old sport," he broke out surprisingly. "What's your opinion of me, anyhow?"

Nick doesn't want to answer it. Who would?

A little overwhelmed, I began the generalized ^{avoidance} evasions which that question deserves.

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

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

"I'll tell you **God's truth.**" His right hand suddenly ordered divine ^{vengeance} retribution to stand by. "I am the son of some wealthy people in the middle-west—all dead now. I was brought up in America but educated at Oxford because all my ancestors have been educated there for many years. It is a family tradition."

Q. What is the effect of Gatsby saying "God's truth" at the beginning?

A> It sounds like he is trying hard to prove he is honest, which makes us question him more.

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

"What part of the middle-west?" I inquired casually.

"San Francisco."

"I see."

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

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

Q. How do phrases like "God's truth" and "trying to forget something very sad" shape Gatsby's story?

A> They make his story sound emotional and believable, but also slightly suspicious.

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

What Nick is telling us is that the story is rehearsed. That suggests that it's probably not true. The sideways glance Gatsby throws at Nick tells us he's checking to see whether Nick believes it. He doesn't. Though, as we'll see in the coming paragraphs, Gatsby is going to persist with the tall tale.

San Francisco (on the west coast) is not in the Midwest (like Illinois, Ohio, and Michigan)—Nick knows this, but Gatsby apparently does not. Rather than seeing this as Fitzgerald's mistake, it reveals Gatsby's inconsistency. Nick's "I see" signals polite attention, but also shows he recognizes the lie and chooses to let Gatsby continue instead of challenging him.

All of them. They all died. At once?

If it sounds like a comic book origin story, that's because it's absurd—no one really talks like this.

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

The Order of Prince Danilo I is an honor given for service to Montenegro. King Nikola was Montenegro's king until 1918.

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

"That's the one from Montenegro."

To my astonishment, the thing had an authentic look.

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

"Turn it."

Major Jay Gatsby, I read, For Valour Extraordinary.

"Here's another thing I always carry. A souvenir of Oxford days. It was taken in Trinity Quad—

the man on my left is now the Earl of Dorchester."

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

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

Q. Why does Gatsby show Nick the "medal" and the photograph?

A> He wants to prove his story is real by showing physical evidence.

One of the quadrangles or "quads" located at Trinity College, Oxford.

"Dorchester" isn't a real title—likely a confused mix of "Dorchester" and "Doncaster," which fits Gatsby's unreliable storytelling. If it were "Doncaster," that's also ironic, since it's tied to the Duke of Buccleuch—the same lineage the Carraways (falsely) claim.

Q. What is the effect of details like "loafing in an archway" and "a cricket bat in his hand"?

A> The short, simple claim sounds confident, but also feels slightly forced, so we still question him.

We should not take Nick at his word here. "Then it was all true" should be taken sarcastically. Still, Gatsby does have a medal from Montenegro and a photograph of himself at Oxford. There might be some truth to his tale.

A horse-drawn carriage

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

A popular song of 1921, "The Sheik of Araby" was a short tune about an exotic romance. Here the allusion suggests that Gatsby is the exotic Sheik, and Daisy is his love.

"I'm the Sheik of Araby,

Your love belongs to me.

At night when you're asleep,

Into your tent I'll creep—"

"It was a strange coincidence," I said.

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

"Why not?"

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

It means that Gatsby is no longer seen as just a rich and mysterious man. Instead, his real feelings and motivations become clear. Everything has been driven by a single purpose: 'Daisy.'

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

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

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

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

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

Something worried me.

"Why didn't he ask you to arrange a meeting?"

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

"Oh!"

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

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

If you're wondering why Gatsby throws such lavish parties for careless, ungrateful guests, the answer is simple: he does it for love—because love drives him to extreme, even irrational acts.

Q. Why does Gatsby want Daisy to "see his house"?

A> He wants to show his success and impress her.

Q. What does the repeated phrase "He wants" suggest about Gatsby?

A> It shows how focused and determined he is, almost like he is obsessed.

Chapter 5 Excerpt

Gatsby Before the Reunion: Nervous Hope

p.83~84

As the next sequence unfolds, pay attention to the number and frequency of words associated with time. There's a motif here that will have some thematic significance shortly.

The day agreed upon was pouring rain. At eleven o'clock a man in a raincoat dragging a lawn-mower tapped at my front door and said that Mr. Gatsby had sent him over to cut my grass. This reminded me that I had forgotten to tell my Finn to come back so I drove into West Egg Village to search for her among soggy white-washed alleys and to buy some cups and lemons and flowers.

The flowers were unnecessary, for at two o'clock a greenhouse arrived from Gatsby's, with ^{countless} innumerable ^{containers} receptacles to contain it. An hour later the front door opened nervously, and Gatsby in a white flannel suit, silver shirt and gold-colored tie hurried in. He was pale and there were dark signs of sleeplessness beneath his eyes.

"Is everything all right?" he asked immediately.

"The grass looks fine, if that's what you mean."

"What grass?" he inquired blankly. "Oh, the grass in the yard." He looked out the window at it, but judging from his expression I don't believe he saw a thing.

"Looks very good," he remarked vaguely. "One of the papers said they thought the rain would stop about four. I think it was 'The Journal.' Have you got everything you need in the shape of—of tea?"

I took him into the pantry where he looked a little ^{disappointingly} reproachfully at the Finn. Together we scrutinized the twelve lemon cakes from the delicatessen shop.

"Will they do?" I asked.

"Of course, of course! They're fine!" and he added hollowly, "...old sport."

The rain cooled about half-past three to a damp mist through which occasional thin drops swam like dew. Gatsby looked with vacant eyes through a copy of Clay's "Economics," starting at the Finnish ^{foot step} tread that shook the kitchen floor and peering toward the ^{blurred} windows from time to time as if a series of invisible but alarming happenings were taking place outside. Finally he got up and informed me in an uncertain voice that he was going home.

Q. Gatsby is described as "pale" with "dark signs of sleeplessness beneath his eyes." What do these details reveal about his emotional state before meeting Daisy?

A> They show Gatsby is extremely nervous and emotionally overwhelmed.

Q. Nick says Gatsby looked at the grass, "but judging from his expression I don't believe he saw a thing." What does this moment suggest about Gatsby's state of mind?

A> Gatsby is so consumed by his dream of Daisy that he cannot focus on reality.

"Why's that?"

"Nobody's coming to tea. It's too late!" He looked at his watch as if there was some pressing demand on his time elsewhere. "I can't wait all day."

Gatsby's nervousness can come across as very funny. He can't sit still!

"Don't be silly; it's just two minutes to four."

"We haven't met for many years," said Daisy, her voice as ^{casual} matter-of-fact as it could ever be.

"Five years next November."

The automatic quality of Gatsby's answer set us all back at least another minute. I had them both on their feet with the desperate suggestion that they help me make tea in the kitchen when the ^{outraged} demoniac Finn brought it in on a tray.

Amid the welcome confusion of cups and cakes a certain physical decency established itself. Gatsby got himself into a shadow and while Daisy and I talked looked ^{meticulously} conscientiously from one to the other of us **with tense unhappy eyes**. However, as calmness wasn't an end in itself I made an excuse at the first possible moment and got to my feet.

"Where are you going?" demanded Gatsby in immediate alarm.

"I'll be back."

"I've got to speak to you about something before you go."

He followed me wildly into the kitchen, closed the door and whispered: "Oh, God!" in a miserable way.

"What's the matter?"

"This is a terrible mistake," he said, shaking his head from side to side, "a terrible, terrible mistake."

"You're just embarrassed, that's all," and luckily I added: "Daisy's embarrassed too."

"She's embarrassed?" he repeated ^{disbelievingly} incredulously.

"Just as much as you are."

"Don't talk so loud."

It seems as if he has every moment carefully calculated.

Q. What do Gatsby's "tense unhappy eyes" reveal during the reunion?

A> They show Gatsby's anxiety and fear that reality may disappoint him.

Recovering himself in a minute he opened for us two hulking patent cabinets which held his massed suits and ^{robes} dressing-gowns and ties, and his shirts, piled like bricks in stacks a dozen high.

"I've got a man in England who buys me clothes. He sends over a selection of things at the beginning of each season, spring and fall."

He took out a pile of shirts and began throwing them, one by one before us, shirts of ^{fine fabric} sheer linen and thick silk and fine flannel which lost their folds as they fell and covered the table in many-colored ^{disorder} disarray. While we admired he brought more and the soft rich heap mounted higher—shirts with stripes and scrolls and plaids in coral and apple-green and lavender and faint orange with ^{embroidered initials} monograms of Indian blue. Suddenly with a strained sound, Daisy bent her head into the shirts and began to cry stormily.

"They're such beautiful shirts," she sobbed, her voice muffled in the thick folds. "It makes me sad because I've never seen such—such beautiful shirts before."

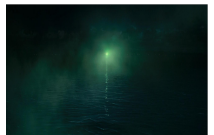
After the house, we were to see the grounds and the swimming pool, and the hydroplane and the midsummer flowers—but outside Gatsby's window it began to rain again so we stood in a row looking at the ^{wavy} corrugated surface of the Sound.

"If it wasn't for the mist we could see your home across the bay," said Gatsby. "You always have a green light that burns all night at the end of your dock."

Daisy put her arm through his abruptly but he seemed absorbed in what he had just said. Possibly it had occurred to him that the ^{massive} colossal significance of that light had now vanished forever. Compared to the great distance that had separated him from Daisy it had seemed very near to her, almost touching her. It had seemed as close as a star to the moon. Now it was again a green light on a dock. His count of enchanted objects had ^{diminished} diminished by one.

Q. Why is Daisy crying? Really astonished by beautiful shirts?

A> Daisy gives is just a dodge to avoid saying the truth. She sees that her life could have turned out as beautiful as the most vibrant colors of the world, if only she had waited for Gatsby instead of marrying Tom. (Some readers might be wondering why she didn't wait, while others might have it figured out. Tom can surely afford to buy any shirts he wants, but Tom is a hulking brute who cheats on Daisy. Gatsby would never do that. With Gatsby, Daisy could have had it all.)



Q. Why does the green light lose its "colossal significance" after Gatsby reunites with Daisy?

A> Once Daisy becomes real and present, Gatsby's dream loses some of its magical perfection.

Q. What does Nick mean by "a green light on a dock"?

A> The symbol loses some of its emotional power and becomes an ordinary object again.

It represents Gatsby's dream of Daisy and the future he hoped for.

"One thing's sure and nothing's surer.

The rich get richer and the poor get—children.

In the meantime,

In between time—"

This is another important passage. It reminds us that the dream is always better than the reality. Gatsby has spent five years chasing after a dream of reuniting with Daisy, letting his mind conjure up all the ways they could be happy together forever. But Daisy is only human, as is Gatsby. A dream can be perfect, but real life—even when it's beautiful—never quite measures up.

As I went over to say goodbye I saw that the expression of ^{confusion} **bewilderment** had come back into Gatsby's face, as though a faint doubt had occurred to him as to the quality of his present happiness. Almost five years! There must have been moments even that afternoon when Daisy tumbled short of his dreams—not through her own fault but because of **the colossal vitality of his illusion**. It had gone beyond her, beyond everything. He had thrown himself into it with a creative passion, adding to it all the time, ^{decorating} **decking** it out with every bright feather that drifted his way. **No amount of fire or freshness can challenge what a man will store up in his ghostly heart.**

Q. What does the phrase "the colossal vitality of his illusion" reveal about Gatsby's dream?

A> Gatsby's dream has become bigger and more perfect than reality.

If even Daisy's cousin, who has no romantic interest in her, can be moved by the captivating quality of her voice, just imagine how affected Gatsby is by it.

As I watched him he adjusted himself a little, visibly. His hand took hold of hers and as she said something low in his ear he turned toward her with a rush of emotion. **I think that voice held him most with its ^{shifting or changing} fluctuating, feverish warmth because it couldn't be over-dreamed—that voice was a deathless song.**

Obviously this isn't literal. They're just so wrapped up in one another that Nick is no longer on their radar, so to speak.

They had forgotten me, but Daisy glanced up and held out her hand; Gatsby didn't know me now at all. I looked once more at them and they looked back at me, remotely, possessed by intense life. Then I went out of the room and down the marble steps into the rain, leaving them there together.

Fitzgerald reveals that Gatsby completely recreated his identity. Gatsby represents the power and danger of the American Dream and self-invention.

This is not one of the rumors. This is a big reveal

Readers should recall the photograph of Dan Cody in Gatsby's home from Chapter 5. As it turns out, he was more teeeeejust a friend to Gatsby. He was a mentor, as we will see in the coming pages.

Dan Cody has named his yacht after Tuolumne, an area in the Sierra Nevada region of California, known for gold mining. Fitzgerald has changed the spelling.

Chapter 6 Excerpt

Gatsby's Reinvention of Himself

p.98

James Gatz—that was really, or at least legally, his name. He had changed it at the age of seventeen and at the specific moment that witnessed the beginning of his career—when he saw Dan Cody's yacht drop anchor over the most ^{treacherous} insidious flat on Lake Superior. It was James Gatz who had been ^{loitering} loafing along the beach that afternoon in a torn green jersey and a pair of canvas pants, but it was already Jay Gatsby who borrowed a row-boat, pulled out to the Tuolomee and informed Cody that a wind might catch him and break him up in half an hour.

I suppose he'd had the name ready for a long time, even then. His parents were ^{lazy} shiftless and unsuccessful farm people—his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all. The truth was that Jay Gatsby, of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself. He was a son of God—a phrase which, if it means anything, means just that—and he must be about His Father's Business, the service of a ^{expensive} vast, ^{outlandish} vulgar and ^{flashy} meretricious beauty. So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a ^{role or position} seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent, and to this conception he was faithful to the end.

For over a year he had been beating his way along the south shore of Lake Superior as a clam digger and a salmon fisher or in any other ^{role or position} capacity that brought him food and bed. His brown, hardening body lived naturally through the half fierce, half ^{brisk} lazy work of the bracing days. He knew women early and since they spoiled him he became ^{condescending} contemptuous of them, of young virgins because they were ignorant, of the others because they were ^{over-emotional} hysterical about things which in his overwhelming self-absorption he took for granted.

Q> What does "Platonic conception of himself" suggest about Gatsby's identity?

A> It suggests Gatsby created an ideal and perfected version of himself instead of accepting reality.

Q. Why does Fitzgerald describe Gatsby's self-created identity as something imagined by "a seventeen-year-old boy"?

A> The comparison shows that Gatsby's dream is ambitious but also immature and unrealistic.

This is why his concocted origin story sounds so far-fetched. He invented it when he was just a kid.

This moment reveals the growing failure of Gatsby's dream. Daisy may love Gatsby, but she cannot truly accept the world he created or the people connected to it.

Daisy Rejects Gatsby's World

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It was like that. Almost the last thing I remember was standing with Daisy and watching the moving picture director and his Star. They were still under the white plum tree and their faces were touching except for a pale thin ray of moonlight between. It occurred to me that he had been very slowly bending toward her all evening to ^{achieve} attain this ^{closeness} proximity, and even while I watched I saw him stoop one ultimate degree and kiss at her cheek.

"I like her," said Daisy, "I think she's lovely."

But the rest offended her—and inarguably, because it wasn't a gesture but an emotion. ^{disgusted} She was ^{extraordinary} appalled by West Egg, this ^{produced} unprecedented "place" that Broadway had ^{coiled, planning to capture the meaning of something unpleasant or inappropriate} begotten upon a Long Island fishing village—^{enthusiasm} appalled by its raw ^{felt annoyance} vigor that ^{conscious} chafed under the old euphemisms and by the too ^{obtrusive} fate that herded its inhabitants along a short cut from nothing to nothing. She saw something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand.

Remember a line from Chapter 3 when Nick tells us that Gatsby's guests "came for the party with a simplicity of heart that was its own ticket of admission." That's all you need to be welcome at Gatsby's parties.

But Daisy doesn't know parties like that. She was raised on the ballroom dancefloors of high society, where there was no simplicity at all. Rather, her social gatherings were highly structured and subject to strict rules of manners and discipline. This is simply not her world, and she sees it as vulgar.

Q. Why is Daisy "appalled" by West Egg??

A> Daisy is uncomfortable with the energy, vulgarity, and social culture of Gatsby's world.

Q. How does Daisy's reaction affect Gatsby's dream?

A> Her reaction shows that Gatsby's dream of fully winning Daisy is beginning to collapse.

"She didn't like it," he said immediately.

"Of course she did."

"She didn't like it," he insisted. "She didn't have a good time."

He was silent and I guessed at his ^{wispeakable} ~~unutterable~~ depression.

"I feel far away from her," he said. "It's hard to make her understand."

"You mean about the dance?"

"The dance?" He dismissed all the dances he had given with a snap of his fingers. "Old sport, the dance is unimportant."

He wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should go to Tom and say: "I never loved you."

After she had ^{wiped out} ~~obliterated~~ three years with that sentence they could decide upon the more practical measures to be taken.

One of them was that, after she was free, they were to go back to Louisville and be married from her house—just as if it were five years ago.

"And she doesn't understand," he said. "She used to be able to understand. We'd sit for hours—"

He broke off and began to walk up and down a ^{bleak} ~~desolate~~ path of fruit rinds and discarded favors and crushed flowers.

"I wouldn't ask too much of her," I ^{attempted} ~~ventured~~. "You can't repeat the past."

"Can't repeat the past?" he cried ^{disbelievingly} ~~incredulously~~. "Why of course you can!"

He looked around him wildly, as if the past were lurking here in the shadow of his house, just out of reach of his hand.

"I'm going to fix everything just the way it was before," he said, nodding determinedly. "She'll see."

He talked a lot about the past and I gathered that he wanted to recover something, some idea of himself perhaps, that had gone into loving Daisy. His life had been confused and

It's easy to imagine Daisy falling out of love with Tom, but to ask her to go further is asking a lot. "I don't love you anymore" is far easier than "I never loved you."

Everything about Gatsby is invented. He can't separate himself from GaGatztion that you can rewrite history and create your own story. This might be fine for James Gatz of North Dakota, but for Daisy Buchanan, it's a different story altogether.

Q. Why does Gatsby reject Nick's statement about the past?

A> Gatsby rejects it because his dream depends on restoring his past with Daisy.

Q. Why is Gatsby's belief tragic?

A> His belief is tragic because time and people have changed in ways he cannot control.

disordered since then, but if he could once return to a certain starting place and go over it all slowly, he could find out what that thing was...