

Gary Duehr
9 Oliver Street
Somerville, MA 02145
(617) 230-8102
gduehr@comcast.net
www.garyduehr.com

GATSBY REDUX

**A Full-Length Play in Verse
By Gary Duehr**

GATSBY REDUX

A Full-Length Play in Verse
By Gary Duehr

CAST

NICK CARRAWAY: late 20s, a Yale alumnus from the Midwest, an easy-going observer

TOM BUCHANAN: late 20s, an arrogant millionaire and former football star at Yale

(doubles as Boyfriend)

DAISY BUCHANAN: late 20s, former debutante from Louisville, pretty and self-absorbed

(doubles as Party Girl Two, Wife Two, Mrs. McKee)

JAY GATSBY: late 20s, a charming, mysterious millionaire and WWI vet

(doubles as Cop, Husband)

JORDAN BAKER: late 20s, a pro tennis player, sarcastic and aloof

ENSEMBLE

MALE, 50s: Mr. Gatz, Wolfsheim, Reporter, Owl Eyes, Salvino

MALE, 30s: Reporter Two, Wilson, Waiter, Servant, Driver,
 Mr. McKee

WOMAN, 30s: Secretary, Bossy Woman, Myrtle, Upset Wife

WOMAN, 20s: Housekeeper, Party Girl One, Young Woman, Girlfriend, Cath

SETTING

A bare stage, with a ghostly suggestion of Gatsby's mansion in the background.
 (The play takes place on Long Island and in New York City.)

SYNOPSIS

Adapted from the 1925 classic "The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald, "Gatsby Redux" tells Gatsby's story in reverse, starting with the last scene of the novel and working backwards. This structure echoes the main theme: a futile attempt to relive the past, as the famous last line suggests: "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past."

Written in iambic, rhymed couplets, the verse puts a crisp spin on the characters' clever exchanges. "Gatsby Redux" views the excess of Gatsby's Jazz Age through a contemporary lens: an America that's polarized along political and economic lines.

Like a murder mystery, the threads of plot unravel to their innocent beginnings. Nick discovers Jay's long-time obsession with Daisy, as well as Tom's infidelity with Myrtle, as he navigates his tricky relationship with Jordan and the others. Just as Gatsby refused to believe his dream, even as he tried to grasp it, "was already behind him," the fact that we know the ending in "Gatsby Redux" makes the backwards progression more poignant.

ACT ONE

NICK

*(To audience, in semidarkness.
In the distance, a green light flickers.)*

I think of Gatsby that first night,
 Standing on his lawn, when he picked out the light—
 Faint, greenish—on Daisy's dock. It shone
 Across Long Island Sound. I wonder how alone
 He must have felt, even as his vision
 Seemed close enough to grasp. But it was over, done.
 Still Gatsby didn't know it yet.
 His dream was in the past, behind him, a bet
 He'd made and lost. He'd tried to hold
 Onto that mirage, from coast to coast it rolled
 In vast obscurity
 From America's dark fields, beyond the shining city.
 I know that Gatsby's trust
 Was fixed on that green light, and how we must
 Stretch out our arms, run faster, to try and capture
 An orgiastic future
 Receding, year by year—so we beat on, like small boats cast
 Against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

(Bright daylight blinks on, along with the noise of city traffic.

*NICK stands reading a newspaper. TOM strides on and spots him, then goes over to shake his
 hand, which NICK refuses.)*

TOM

Hey, what's the matter, Nick? Too good
 To shake my hand?

NICK

I am.

TOM

I thought you'd left New York.

NICK

I should.

And I thought you and Daisy were still in Europe.

TOM

Daisy hated London. Too cooped up.
 No ritzy parties, no sprees with pals to break my wallet.
 And since last summer's trouble—

NICK

That's what you call it?
With two dead bodies, Myrtle and Gatsby? I'm sick
Of all your swagger.

TOM

You're crazy, Nick,
You're crazy as hell. I don't know what your problem is.

NICK

The problem's you, Tom. Here's a quiz.
Last August, after the accident, what'd you say
To Myrtle's husband George?

TOM

The truth. Either way
Wilson was out to kill someone, waving that gun,
Shouting he knows who did it, who's behind the hit-and-run.
He asked who owns the yellow Rolls.
So I told him. Who knows
What Wilson might do in that state?
Gatsby had it coming. It was fate.
He suckered you and Daisy but not me.
I saw right through that phony.
Running Myrtle over like a mutt
And never even stopping.

NICK

(Pats TOM on the shoulder.)
If you say so.

(TOM scowls and leaves. NICK addresses the audience.)

But, but—

The fact is, none of this was true.
Jay was innocent. My cousin Daisy and Tom each do
Exactly as they like: they smash
Everything within their reach, and humans too, then use their cash
To clean up any mess.
They were careless people. I confess:
I can't forgive what Tom had done
To my friend Gatsby, but he's not the only guilty one.

*(The traffic noise fades.
The chirping of birds is heard, and a plane flies over.)*

JORDAN

*(Who has quietly entered and overheard NICK's last lines.
She's dressed in a tennis outfit.)*

He isn't, is he?
You're the one, Nick Carraway, who made me dizzy
For a little while.

(She pecks him on the cheek.)

NICK

Don't make me smile,
Jordan Baker. You're too clever.

JORDAN

I wouldn't give a dime
For you now, I don't have the time.
I'm engaged. Check out this stone.

(Shows off her ring.)

NICK

Dazzling.

JORDAN

You threw me over on the telephone,
You rat.

NICK

I am. I'm sorry. I admit it.
I wanted us to quit
While we were still ahead, before we drifted apart.
I thought, why not be smart?

JORDAN

Well, mission accomplished, darling.

NICK

I knew that you could score a ring
From any of a dozen fellows, you just have to nod
That pretty head of yours.

JORDAN

Oh god,
Am I that shallow? Please don't answer, Nick.

NICK

I'm mum.

JORDAN

Of course you are. Tell me, just what makes you tick?
Remember that chat that we once had
About bad drivers?

NICK

Not quite.

JORDAN

You said, a driver who is bad—
That's me—is safe until they run into
Another reckless driver. That's you.
Poor Nick. You didn't know
What hit you. Once Daisy nabbed you as my beau
You didn't stand a chance. All that Louisville charm
From her and me. You did look good on my arm
At Gatsby's parties. I thought I knew exactly who you were:
A boy scout, honest, truthful. Now I'm not sure.

NICK

I'm 30 now. I'm done with lying.
To you or to myself. Why bother trying?

*(JORDAN playfully salutes him and leaves.
A clock starts to tick)*

NICK

I'm sorry, Gatsby. No one came
To the wake but your father. I suppose it's all the same.
We waited to start till after three.
But there was nobody else but me.

MR. GATZ

(Enters and takes a photo out of his wallet.)
My boy sent me this picture
Of his house here in West Egg. Sure does catch your
Eye, don't it?

NICK

It made a nice home.

MR. GATZ

Look at this fountain from Rome,
Pure marble, and this wrought iron fence
He picked up in Florence.
Even the roof tiles are real terra cotta,

Shipped straight from Spain. What a
Place he's got here, huh?

NICK

I have to agree.
Had you seen Jay recently?

MR. GATZ

(He puts the photo away.)

You mean Jimmy?
Jimmy Gatz is still my boy, isn't he.
He came back to Iowa two years ago
To buy me my own house. How could I know
When he run off at 16
The big future that lay in front of him? Now I seen
It for myself. He could have been a great man
And helped build up the country.

NICK

I understand.

MR. GATZ

He had so much personality.
(He wipes his nose with his sleeve.)

NICK

I'm very sorry.

MR. GATZ

Jimmy was always making lists to do—
Read books, lift weights, stop smoking—he knew who
He wanted to be. So much brain power.
But I was always too sour.
Once he told me I ate like a pig
And so I whupped him good. Then he got too big.

(He shrugs and walks off.

The ticking fades, as the sound of a train shuttles past.)

NICK

(He combs his hair, puts on a tie. To audience.)

The day before the funeral, I went to see Meyer Wolfsheim,
His New York business partner, one last time.
I knocked, but I didn't know how to begin.
His secretary shouted out.

SECRETARY

(Off.)

Nobody's in!

NICK

I'm here to see Mr. Wolfsheim.

SECRETARY

Mr. Wolfsheim's in Chicago.

NICK

My name is Carraway, I need to—

SECRETARY

(Off.)

Listen, Joe,

Or whoever you are, I can't go get him in Chicago.

NICK

I'm a friend of Gatsby.

SECRETARY

(Off.)

Oh. You shoulda said so.

Mr. Wolfsheim's just back from Chicago.

NICK

The door opened, and there inside his office
Wolfsheim magically appeared.

WOLFSHEIM

(Enters, smoking a cigar.)

A sad day for all of us.

Care for a Havana?

NICK

No thanks.

WOLFSHEIM

I'll take a puff

For both of us. To Gatsby!

(He salutes with his cigar.)

Ah well, enough

Sentiment.

NICK

Did you help Gatsby get a start
With his drugstore chain?

WOLFSHEIM

I did. He was smart
But didn't have a penny. Had to wear his uniform,
For chrissakes, to keep warm.

NICK

I heard about his medals from the war.

WOLFSHEIM

Medals? Ha! What he was useful for
Was his Oxford accent,
That perfect chin. The golden boy. It was an accident
Of luck that brought him here to me.
We were thick, like this—

(Holds up two fingers.)
—the two of us, you see?

NICK

Then you'll come to the funeral?
I phoned his so-called friends, their schedule
Was full: late lunch, a tennis game. One dame actually told me
He got what he deserved and scolded me.

WOLFSHEIM

I'd like to come—

NICK

Then come.

WOLFSHEIM

I can't, I'm sorry. That scum
From the daily papers will make a scene.
When there's trouble, see, I have to keep my nose clean.
I just can't get mixed up.

NICK

But it's all over now.

He's dead.

WOLFSHEIM

Listen, the why or how
Doesn't matter. It really breaks my heart.

(Swipes the corner of one eye.)

Ask any friend,

I stick with them to the very end.

(He leaves. The stage darkens, and red and blue police lights flash.)

NICK

(To audience.)

The night that Gatsby's body was found
 In his pool, I wasn't around.
 Shot once in the chest.
 I heard the sirens. I saw the rest
 Of the motley parade, the cops and news photographers
 Who filed through Gatsby's gate for hours.
 The next morning I called up Daisy.

(The flashing stops, and the light brightens to early morning.)

HOUSEKEEPER

(Off.)

She's gone.

NICK

How can that be?

HOUSEKEEPER

(Off.)

She left with Tom at dawn.
 They took their three-year-old and all their things.

NICK

Where to?

HOUSEKEEPER

(Off.)

I don't know. Abroad, she said.

NICK

(To audience.)

What could I do?

It all seemed unessential, remote.
 I found myself alone. The papers wanted a quote
 To juice things up.

REPORTER*(Off.)*

What about Gatsby's fling
With Myrtle, Wilson's wife?

NICK

There wasn't anything
Between them.

REPORTER TWO*(Off.)*

Should Wilson get the chair?
Or did his grief derange him?

NICK

I don't really care.
(He leaves.)

(The stage goes black. A single gunshot echoes.)

*(The lights come back up. The sound of cars going by.
WILSON enters in grease-stained overalls followed by SALVINO,
who wears a cook's white apron.)*

SALVINO

I told you, George. I saw it happen
From my diner across the way, I'd just rung in
A ham and egg. But I didn't see
Who was driving.

WILSON

Sal, help me out. Who could it be?
Who left my Myrtle to die beside the road?

SALVINO

You gotta let it go.
The cops will find him.

WILSON

All I wanna know
Is who that yellow car
Belongs to. It can't be very far
From my Texaco. I gotta find the sonofabitch
Who left her bleeding in a ditch.
(He breaks down, sobbing.)

SALVINO

Hey George, you got someone you
Can talk to? Maybe from church?

WILSON

I knew

Something was going on.

SALVINO

I could ask a priest

To stop by later.

WILSON

That's the least

Of my concerns.

(He pulls a bracelet from his pocket.)

Look here.

SALVINO

What for?

WILSON

It's a diamond bracelet. I found it in her drawer.
She tried to explain, but something sounded funny.

SALVINO

Maybe Myrtle bought it.

WILSON

With whose money?

I know what this is all about.
The same guy killed her. I'll find out.

SALVINO

Just wait another day or two—

WILSON

This guy's a murderer.

SALVINO

It was an accident.

WILSON

Look what he done to her.
I don't bear any ill will
Toward anyone. You know me. I take people

As they come. But when I know a fact
 I know it, and no one's fancy act
 Can trip me up. The guy who drove the car, the same guy
 Gave Myrtle the bracelet.

(He puts the bracelet away.)

SALVINO

But why?

How do you know?

WILSON

She ran right out in the road
 To talk to him, she knew him. He shoulda slowed,
 He shoulda stopped.

(Pulls a gun out and cradles it in both hands.)

I told her yesterday
 You might fool me, but there's no way
 To fool God. He knows everything. He sees
 What you do. I made her pray down on her knees.

*(They exit, and the highway sounds fade. Bright morning light. Birds chatter.
 GATSBY and NICK enter.)*

GATSBY

Couldn't you see, old sport, yesterday afternoon
 At the Plaza, the way Tom acted like a goon
 And tried to frighten Daisy?

NICK

Uh-huh.

GATSBY

Like I'm some kind

Of con man. She was confused, blind
 To what was going on.

NICK

She was pretty upset.

GATSBY

Daisy never loved him. Maybe at the onset
 When they first got married, but even then she loved me
 More, you see? I'd just got out of the army
 While they were on their wedding trip.
 I went straight back to Louisville. It tore me up
 To see her house.

NICK

I don't know what to say.

GATSBY

Don't worry, old sport. Another day
To fight again, all that.

NICK

(Checks his watch.)

Sorry, I've got to catch my train—

GATSBY

Don't go.

NICK

Believe me, Jay, I'd rather not, although
My desk in the city waits. Somebody's got
To push those bonds.

GATSBY

It's too hot
To go into the city. Stay here and help me drain
The swimming pool, it's full of leaves again.

NICK

I promise I'll call you right at noon.

GATSBY

Please do, old sport. I suppose that pretty soon
Daisy will be calling too.

NICK

Probably today.

GATSBY

Farewell, my friend!

NICK

(Walks away, then turns back.)

Listen to me, Jay.
Those people are a rotten crowd, they're all fair weather.
You're worth more than the whole damn bunch together!

*(He leaves. The rattle of a train fades up then out.
The light turns bluish, and crickets thrum.)*

GATSBY*(To audience.)*

I'd just come back from France
 To find them gone. I knew I'd lost my chance
 With Daisy. And yet I stayed
 In Louisville a week. I hadn't made
 My peace with her.
 Those chilly evenings in November
 I walked the empty streets, trying to find the ghost
 Of what we had together. I felt as if I almost
 Could have rescued her
 If only I had found a way to search harder.
 I knew that part of me, the freshest and the best,
 Was lost to me forever. I couldn't rest.

*(He leaves as Jordan walks on, talking into a phone.
 Morning light rakes the stage.)*

JORDAN

You weren't so nice to me last night
 At Daisy's, were you, Nicky, dear?

NICK*(Off.)*

You're right.

I wasn't. But do you really care?

JORDAN

I care enough. I have my pride.

NICK*(Off.)*

Is that a dare?

JORDAN

Okay, I give. I'd like to see you again.

NICK*(Off.)*

I want to see you too.

JORDAN

Terrific, but when?
 How about I skip the courts and come to town
 This afternoon?

NICK

(Off.)

I can't. I've got to drown
In paperwork.

JORDAN

Alright, fine!

(She bangs the phone down and leaves as Nick comes on.)

NICK

(To audience.)

The line went dead. I took it as a sign
That Jordan and I were through.
She could have been just any ingenue
In the whole wide world. I didn't care
If we ever talked again. I'd had my share
Of thrust and parry.
It wasn't in my plans to marry.

(The stage darkens, and moonlight filters in. He begins to pace.)

The night right after the hit-and-run
I couldn't get to sleep. I felt as if someone
Should try to do something. At three
I went next door to Gatsby's, to see
If he was doing okay.
I'd seen his yellow Rolls pull in the driveway.
I knew he'd take it hard.
He said he'd waited outside Daisy's in the yard
Until her light went out at two,
And there was nothing more for him to do.
Gatsby's house had never seemed so enormous
As we hunted in the dark, the two of us,
For some cigarettes.

(He calls off.)

Right here, Jay!

*(The yellow glow of lamplight fades up. GATSBY enters
and NICK hands him a cigarette and lights it.)*

GATSBY

Finally, thanks.

NICK

You ought to go away.

They'll trace your license plate.

GATSBY

Right now, old sport?

NICK

Yes, you can't wait.

Why not Atlantic City, or travel up to Montreal
For a week or two.

GATSBY

Who'll take the fall?

I can't leave now. Not until I know how Daisy—
What she's going to do—

NICK

I know it isn't easy.

*(The lamplight changes to the bluish tint of evening.
An owl hoots. GATSBY walks over into the shadows as JORDAN enters.)*

JORDAN

Daisy finally got calmed down.
Now she's in bed. What a scene that was in town!
I'll telephone a cab to take you back
To West Egg. Meanwhile, come grab a snack
From the kitchen while you wait.

NICK

No thanks. I'm tired, it's late.
I'll wait outside.

JORDAN

It's only half-past ten.

NICK

I've had plenty for one day.

JORDAN

Please yourself then,
Stay out here.

(She leaves. NICK finds GATSBY in the shadows.)

NICK

You want to tell me why
You're standing in the bushes?

GATSBY

I'm not a secret spy,
Old sport. Do you see Daisy's window light?
I want to make sure she's all right.

(He turns to face NICK.)

You rode in Tom's car, right behind
Me and Daisy in the Rolls. You notice any kind
Of trouble up ahead?

NICK

I wouldn't call it that.

GATSBY

Is the woman dead?

NICK

She is.

GATSBY

I thought so. Daisy was completely numb.
I told her that it's better for the shock to come
All at once. She took it pretty well.

NICK

I guess that's swell
For you and Daisy.

GATSBY

I left the Rolls
In my garage. Who knows
If anybody saw us. I can't be sure.

NICK

You should report this, Jay. That's your—

GATSBY

Who was she?

NICK

Myrtle Wilson. George, her husband,
Owns the Texaco. What really happened?

GATSBY

I tried to swing the wheel
To try and miss her— I heard the brakes squeal—

NICK

Stop. Tell me the truth. Was Daisy the one
Who was driving?

GATSBY

She was. Now that it's done,
I thought I'd say it's me.

NICK

Of course you would.

GATSBY

Daisy thought that driving would be good
For her, since she was still wound up. That woman rushed onto
The highway, out of nowhere, just as a blue
Car was passing us. It happened in a flash.
Right before the crash
The woman raised her arm, as if she tried
To talk to us. How strange. Why did
She do that?

NICK

Could be she thought she knew you.

GATSBY

The second I touched Daisy's arm, it threw
A jolt straight into me, the impact
Must have killed her instantly.

NICK

It cracked
Her skull wide open—

GATSBY

Don't tell me more, old
Sport, it's all too horrible. Daisy floored
The gas, I couldn't make her stop
Until I pulled the parking brake. She dropped
Into my lap, and then I drove her back
To her house.

NICK

She'll be fine.

GATSBY

Tom, that hack,
Had better not—

NICK

He won't.

GATSBY

She's had enough.
If he tries any rough stuff
Because we had a painful word or two
At the Plaza today—

NICK

He isn't thinking about you,
Or her for that matter.

GATSBY

I don't trust his kind.

NICK

How long you going to wait?

GATSBY

Until my mind
Is satisfied that Daisy is okay.

NICK

Alright, have it your way.

(He leaves.)

GATSBY

(He emerges from the shadows. To the audience.)

Until I met Daisy, there'd been a barbed wire
Between myself and others. My desire
For her was full.
Her family's house in Louisville
Possessed a kind of mystery
About it, an air of radiant intensity.
That Daisy lived there made it all the more unreal.
The cool hallways, the cut flowers, the feel
That anything was possible. I can still see the brilliant
Row of cars at dances. It was an accident
I was there at all
With other officers from base. That fall
I didn't have a cent. My biggest fear

Was that the aura of my uniform might disappear.
 And so I grabbed as much
 As I could get of Daisy—I was such
 A hungry thing, voracious even. That October night
 I took her, I took her though I had no right.

*(He leaves, as the COP and SALVINO enter.
 The light brightens. An occasional car rushes past.)*

COP

(Taking notes.)

What's this place called, ya know?

SALVINO

No name. Just Texaco.
 I was working at my diner there. I saw it happen.
 There was two cars, and one was comin
 And one was goin.

COP

Where to?

SALVINO

One each way. The car that was blue
 Was headed west, and she run
 Out into the road straight at the big new yellow one
 Comin from New York—it slammed right
 Into her, an awful sight.
 The yellow one that was headed east
 Was goin forty, fifty miles at least.

(TOM enters.)

COP

(To TOM.)

Hey pal, you want somethin?

TOM

I saw the commotion
 Beside the road. I'd like to know—

COP

A hit and run.

Killed instantly. A woman
 By the name of Myrtle.

TOM

Instantly?

SALVINO

A big yellow car knocked

Her flat, it never even stopped.

COP

Salvino, right? How d'you spell—

SALVINO

Like it sounds. S-A-L-V-I-N-O.

COP

Last name?

SALVINO

Caligari. C-A-L—

*(They leave. WILSON comes in, carrying Myrtle's body wrapped in a blanket.
He lays her on the floor. WILSON wails over her.)*

WILSON

Oh god, oh god, oh, oh...

(He sees TOM and stands up to face him.)

Hey you, Mr. Tom Buchanan, I know

What kind of car it was!

It was yours! You don't have to tell me, because

I know, I know!

TOM

(Grabs him by the shoulders.)

Pull yourself together.

WILSON

(Sobbing again.)

Myrtle, Myrtle...

TOM

Listen, I don't know whether

You can follow, but I just came by

From New York, see, that's why

I'm a little shaken up.

Remember I was bringing you my coupe?

The yellow car that I was driving before, it wasn't

Mine, you understand? It doesn't

Belong to me.

COP

(Comes back in.)

What's this about?

TOM

I'm a friend of Wilson's.

COP

Listen, scout,

What color's your car?

TOM

Light green, a Coupe DeVille. We just came back from town.
Give me a hand.

COP

Okay.

TOM

Let's get her off the ground.

(The COP and TOM carry off Myrtle's wrapped-up body, with WILSON trailing behind.

The lights dim to an interior glow. City traffic hums.

JORDAN comes on with DAISY.)

JORDAN

My oh my, what a smashing suite!

I'm just mad about the Plaza.

DAISY

Except for the heat.

I told y'all that we should hire five
Bathrooms—three for him and two for her—then dive
Into our ice-cold baths
With mint julips, and have ourselves some laughs.

TOM

(Entering with GATSBY and NICK. TOM carries a picnic basket.)

And didn't I tell you what a loony scheme
That is?

DAISY

Oh let me dream!
Before I die, would someone please crack open
Another window then?

NICK

There aren't any more.

JORDAN

I'll telephone
For an ax.

TOM

(To Daisy, as he unpacks a bottle of whiskey and glasses from the basket.)

No, leave the windows alone.
You can't allow the temperature
To get to you. The only cure
Is to ignore it. Your carping only makes the whole
Thing worse.

(He downs a shot.)

Skoal!

GATSBY

Why not leave her be,
Old sport?

JORDAN

(Spills her drink.)

Excuse me!

GATSBY

After all, you did agree to come
To town with us.

TOM

Why so glum,
Old sport? That's what you say
For everything, isn't it?

GATSBY

What is?

TOM

Which play
Did you steal it from?

DAISY

Oh Tom, be nice.
Call up for some ice
To chill our whiskey. If you get personal

I won't stay another minute.

(The sound of Mendelssohn's "Wedding March" floats up from the ballroom below.)

JORDAN

How inspirational!

Imagine getting married
In this weather.

DAISY

Well, we did,
Tom and me. Louisville in the middle of summer!
Who was it that fainted?

TOM

I can't remember.

DAISY

Wait, I do! Biloxi!
This fellow named Biloxi, who made boxes, see,
That's a fact. We called him Boxy Biloxi.
(Tosses back a shot.)
Yippee!
And he was from, god's truth, Biloxi, Mississippi.

JORDAN

They carried him to my Daddy's
Two doors down. And don't you know he's
Still there three weeks later—
Biloxi, the world-class procrastinator.

(A cheer erupts from the ballroom, and a jazz tune starts up.)

DAISY

(To NICK.)

Come on, cousin, let's go down and dance.

NICK

Me? No, not a chance.
Remember Biloxi.

JORDAN

(To Tom.)

Was he your friend?

TOM

Biloxi? I'd never seen him before that weekend.
He must have known the bride.

DAISY

No, not on my side.
I'd never laid eyes on him before.
All I know is, he was such a bore.

TOM

(To GATSBY)

Someone told me that you were
An Oxford man.

GATSBY

Not really.

TOM

You sure?

You went there, isn't that a fact?

GATSBY

I did.

TOM

Good, let's be exact.
You must have been there about the time
Nick and I were at Yale.

GATSBY

I suppose so. Listen, I'm—

TOM

I'd like to know the year.

GATSBY

1919. To be completely clear,
I only stayed five months. That's why
I'm not an Oxford man. I thought I'd try
Some classes after the war.

TOM

Why not tell us that before?

DAISY
(*To Tom.*)

Go on and have another whiskey
And stop this idiocy.
Then you won't seem so stupid
To yourself.

TOM

Not till this is all concluded.
I want to ask our new-found friend
One final question.

GATSBY

Go on.

TOM

Do you intend
To stir up any marital trouble
In my house?

DAISY
(*To GATSBY.*)

Don't pick a quarrel
When he's like this. He's drunk.

(*To TOM.*)

You're the only one
Who's causing trouble. This isn't fun.

TOM

Fun? I suppose the latest hobby
Is to sit back and let some Mr. Nobody
Put on airs and seduce your wife
In front of you. If that's called modern life—
With every civilized tradition going straight
To hell—then I'm an ingrate.

JORDAN
(*Quietly.*)

I'm sure everyone agrees.

TOM

I'm not the type to throw big parties.
I know I'm not that popular. Every weekend
I don't turn my house into a pigsty to pretend
That I have friends.

NICK
(Laughs.)

Don't be a snob!

DAISY

You don't get it, that's his job.

JORDAN
(Raises a toast.)

And mine too. Cheers!

GATSBY
(To Tom.)

I've got a word or two,
 Old sport, for *you*.

DAISY

Please don't! Let's all go back!
 Come on, I'll pack.

(She picks up some glasses.)

NICK

I'll help. Last call for drinks!

TOM

Not yet, before I hear what Gatsby thinks.

GATSBY

Daisy doesn't love you. She never
 Loved you. She loves me.

TOM

Whatever
 You say, old sport.

GATSBY

She never did, can't you see?
 She just got tired of waiting for me.
 I had nothing, while you were loaded. It was all a big
 Mistake.

JORDAN
(To NICK.)

I need a cig.
 Come with?

NICK

Yeah, sure.

GATSBY

No, stay.

TOM

Don't leave. Whatever there is to say
Everyone can hear.

(To DAISY.)

Settle down.
Now tell me what's been going on.

GATSBY

I told you. For five years, Daisy and I—

TOM

(To DAISY.)

You've been seeing that fraud? Why?

GATSBY

Not seeing, no. We couldn't meet.
But our love was complete
In other ways. I used to laugh at you, how you
Were blind.

TOM

That's it, you two?
Some kind of failed romance
That never had a chance?
I don't know about five years ago
But here's one thing I do know.
Daisy loved me on our wedding day.
And she still loves me, in her way.
All the rest is a goddam lie.
I have no notion why
You'd make it up.

GATSBY

You're wrong.

TOM

And I love Daisy too, the pair of us belong
Together.

(To DAISY.)

You know that once in a while

I go off on a spree, but I'll
 Come back every time. The problem is
 You get these weird ideas
 Stuck in your head.

DAISY
(To TOM.)

You disgust me.

(To NICK.)

You know why we had to flee
 Chicago? I'm surprised you didn't get the news
 About that little spree.

GATSBY
(To DAISY.)

You have to choose.

Just tell him how you feel.
 You never loved him. That's our deal,
 And everything's wiped out for good.

DAISY

Even back then? How could—

GATSBY

You never loved him. Say it.

DAISY
(She appeals to JORDAN and NICK.)

But I can't just—

NICK

You're on your own.

JORDAN
 Just lay it

On the line.

DAISY
(To TOM.)

I never loved you.

TOM
 Never?

DAISY
 No.

Not in Capri?
TOM

No.
DAISY

TOM
Not even on that day—

DAISY
Oh,
Tom!

TOM
Not when I carried you down the cliff
To keep your sandals dry?

DAISY
What if
It's true or not, it doesn't matter.
(To GATSBY.)
You want too much! I'd rather
Not say anything at all. I can't help what's past.
I love you now. I did what you asked.
Yes, I loved him then, but I loved you too.

GATSBY
Me, too?

TOM
Well, that one's new!
Don't make up things that don't exist.
There are feelings no one else can twist
Into something bad.

GATSBY
(To DAISY.)
I'd like to talk to you.

DAISY
(To GATSBY.)
I can't say it. It isn't true.
I can't say I never loved him.

TOM

Of course you can't.

GATSBY

She's too stirred up.

TOM

Oh, stop your rant!

DAISY

(To TOM.)

As if you really care.

TOM

I do. I promise I'll be there
From now on. I'll treat you better.

GATSBY

Listen, pal.

You're not going to treat her at all.

TOM

I'm not? Why's that?

GATSBY

Because Daisy

Is leaving you.

TOM

Nonsense. That's crazy.

DAISY

It's true.

TOM

She isn't leaving! Not if I don't
Say so! Not for a crook—

DAISY

Listen to me, why won't—

TOM

A crook who'd have to steal a ring for her
To wear. It's all over.
Who are you, anyhow?

You act so holier-than-thou
 But what about your gang? I've made some queries
 Into Meyer Wolfsheim's mysteries.

GATSBY

Suit yourself, old sport.

TOM

I will. I know your sort.
 I know how Wolfsheim's drugstores are a front
 For bootleg booze. It's just one stunt
 But there are plenty more.

GATSBY

What about
 Your banker pal, Bernard, how'd he make out?
 He got in on the ground floor.

TOM

And how much did he score
 For all his headaches? Tell me, where is he?
 Shut up in prison in New Jersey.
 You hung him out to dry.

GATSBY

He's a big boy, don't cry
 For Bernie Price. He was dead broke
 Before he came to us.

TOM

Don't joke.

GATSBY

If I recall, he was more than happy
 To make a little easy money,
 Old sport.

TOM

Don't call me that!
 Bernie could've been a rat
 Till Wolfsheim spooked him.

JORDAN

Come on, let's blow.

DAISY

Please, Tom, I can't stand this! Can't we go?

TOM

Why don't you head on home then?
You can go in Gatsby's car.

DAISY

With Jay? Since when—

TOM

I swear there won't be any provocation
From him *or* me. This little flirtation
Is over, and everybody knows it.

NICK

I wouldn't oppose it.

(GATSBY and DAISY leave.)

TOM

(Packing up the basket.)

Anybody want the final drop?

JORDAN

(Taking the whiskey bottle and draining it.)

That's the word

That I've been waiting for.

(TOM and JORDAN leave.)

NICK

I just remembered.

It's my birthday.

JORDAN

(Off.)

Happy birthday, birthday boy!

NICK

(Calling after her.)

I'm thirty years old today!

JORDAN

(Off.)

Enjoy!

NICK

(To audience.)

I can't forget how terrified
Daisy looked, as if someone had just died,
But who she couldn't say.
Maybe Gatsby. The harder that he tried to sway
His jury of one, the more
She withdrew into her inner core—
And that last bright hope of his slowly faded.
Who killed it? He did.

*(NICK leaves as TOM enters, shouting.
The light brightens. The sound of cars on the road)*

TOM

Hey Wilson, wake up! We need some gas!
My pals Nick and Jordan there want to see how fast
This thing can go. We're due
Downtown at the Plaza.

WILSON

(Comes on, coughing.)

Hold on! I don't care who
Is going where.

TOM

Are you all right?

WILSON

I'm sick. Been sick all day and night.
Just wait, I'll fill it up.
You still want to get rid of your coupe?

TOM

Listen, Wilson, how about this Rolls?
It's a beauty, isn't it, it goes
From zero up to fifty in a flash.

WILSON

I ain't got that kind of cash.
But I could make a few bucks on the other one.

TOM

Why the need for money, all of a sudden?

WILSON

Myrtle and myself, we'd like to go
Out West, but we ain't got the dough.

MYRTLE

(Off)

Hey Georgie, I can't get the fan to work!

WILSON

(To MYRTLE)

Take it easy!

MYRTLE

(Off)

Nice car, mister!

(TOM gives her a wave.)

WILSON

(To MYRTLE)

Give the plug a jerk!

TOM

(Taking out his wallet and hands a couple dollars.)

So how much do I owe?

WILSON

A dollar twenty.

(Hands him change.)

She's been pushing me to go
And now we're going, whether or not
She wants to anymore. I just got
My eyes opened. Something's going on behind my back.
I'd like to give that broad a good smack.

(He coughs and leaves.)

(The highway noise fades, the light softens, and some wind chimes tinkle.)

DAISY and JORDAN sweep in with drinks.)

DAISY

Come on, let's go to town
Instead of lying around!
Let's not waste the rest of the day,
The next day, or the next 30 years! So what d'you say?

JORDAN

I say, don't be so morbid, y'all.
You know that life starts over in the fall
When all the leaves turn gold.

DAISY

Oh, let's run off!

TOM

Right now?

DAISY

Come on, Tom, don't scoff.

TOM

We've got to have a plan.

GATSBY

(Enters, buttoning up his shirt.)

Count me in.

DAISY

You're like the man
In the Arrow collar ad, so cool.
You never seem to sweat.

JORDAN

Yes, he's a jewel!
Now can't we grab a cigarette
Before we go?

NICK

(Comes in.)

Don't fret.
You and Daisy just smoked all through lunch.

JORDAN

Aren't we a naughty bunch?

DAISY

(To TOM.)

Oh, Tom, come join us! It's too hot
To make a fuss.

TOM

Alright, I give. If that's what

You two want. But if we're going to Manhattan
We'd better start.

DAISY

(To TOM.)

Now that's a man with a plan!

(To JORDAN.)

Jordan, let's sneak a Lucky Strike
For the road.

(They leave.)

TOM

Those two are like
A pair of schoolgirls. I don't see the point
Of going into town to hang around some high-class joint.
Women get some oddball whimsy—

DAISY

(Off.)

Should we bring drinks?

TOM

I'll grab the whiskey.

(He leaves.)

GATSBY

I find that I'm completely mute
Inside his house.

NICK

He is a bit—

GATSBY

—of a brute?

NICK

She can be a little indiscreet.
And what is it about her voice?

GATSBY

It's sweet,

Just like the sound of money—
The jingly rise and fall of it, like golden honey.

TOM

*(Comes back in, wrapping a whiskey bottle in a towel.
To GATSBY.)*

Why don't you take my car
And let me drive your Rolls?

GATSBY

You won't get far.

It's almost out of gas.

TOM

I'll stop at Wilson's.

(DAISY and JORDAN enter.)

DAISY

Who's going to end up last?
It's time to hit the Plaza!

TOM

Come with me in Gatsby's heap.

DAISY

No, you take Nick and Jordan. The two of us will creep
Along in your old thing.

(Everyone leaves but TOM and NICK.)

TOM

You see that look
She gave him?

NICK

See what?

TOM

It took
A while, but I got wise
To what's been going on in front of my eyes.
You must think I'm dumb.
But I've been checking out that bum.

NICK

I heard that he's an Oxford man.

TOM

Like hell he is,

In that pink suit of his. So what if I'm a little jealous?
I've got his number now.

NICK

Then why ask him to town?

TOM

I didn't. Daisy did. That clown
Knows my Daisy from way back when.
God knows how.

NICK

Amen.

*(They leave. The wind chimes stop.
A SERVANT enters, on the phone.)*

SERVANT

Yeah, whaddya want?

NICK

(Off.)

Is Mr. Gatsby sick?

SERVANT

Nah, he's okay.

NICK

(Off.)

Please tell your boss that Nick—

SERVANT

Who's that?

NICK

(Off.)

Tell him Mr. Carraway would like to swing by.
I'm worried.

SERVANT

I'll tell him first thing. Bye.

(GATSBY enters, and the SERVANT hands the phone to him and leaves.)

GATSBY
(On the phone.)

Hey, old sport!

NICK
(Off.)

You planning to leave?

GATSBY
 Of course not, Nick. You shouldn't believe
 Everything you hear.

NICK
(Off.)

But didn't you just fire your servants?

GATSBY
 I need discretion, a little prudence
 When Daisy visits. These are Wolfsheim's boys.

NICK
(Off.)

They do lack a certain poise.

GATSBY
 Oh by the way, could you come by for lunch?
 Miss Baker will be there, the whole bunch.

*(GATSBY hands the phone to the THUG offstage.
 He stands alone in the center and closes his eyes.
 The boisterous sound of a party swells up around him: laughter and shouts
 along with a bouncy jazz tune. Colored lights come on.
 He reaches out as if to grasp something in front of him.)*

(NICK enters with DAISY and TOM.)

GATSBY
(Opens his eyes. To DAISY.)

I'm glad that you could finally make
 One of my salons. Come take
 A look around.

DAISY
 Oh, I will!

GATSBY
 Where's Jordan?

NICK

She's feeling ill.

DAISY

It's all too much! The sparkly lights, the vases
Of peonies, the gowns.

GATSBY

I bet you'll find a few faces
You've read about.

TOM

I'm afraid we don't get out
That much. There's not a single person here
I'd like to talk to.

GATSBY

(To DAISY.)

There's Dolores. You hear about the premiere
Of her latest film?

DAISY

She's like some kind of specter,
Isn't she? So pale, almost unreal.

GATSBY

That's her director,
The famous German auteur,
Who's drooling in her ear. I've heard a rumor
He's her lover.

DAISY

(Giggling, to NICK.)

Oh cous', it's pure bliss!
Just wink if would like a little kiss
From me tonight.

TOM

Hey, where's the booze?

DAISY

You go and start
Without me. I spy a redheaded tart
Who needs some company.

TOM

(Leaves.)

Cheers.

GATSBY

(To DAISY.)

This mean your card is free
For a spin around the floor?

(GATSBY takes her hand and leads her off.)

(There's a loud splash and some giggles.

*A YOUNG WOMAN trips in, the bottom of her dress soaked.
NICK steadies her shoulders.)*

NICK

You found the fountain?

YOUNG WOMAN

This party's such a bore,

It needs to pop!

You wanna help me pop it, Pop?

BOSSY WOMAN

(Enters.)

Oh stop!

Louise, you know that half a dozen
Gin rickeys is your limit.

(She starts to help YOUNG WOMAN off.)

YOUNG WOMAN

If it wasn't

For you, I'd have gone in for a dip!

BOSSY WOMAN

(To NICK.)

I tell you, one more sip

She starts to strip and make straight for the ocean.

YOUNG WOMAN

I'll stop it when I'm good and done,

You big fat cow!

I never wanted to come here anyhow.

*(They leave. The colored lights fade, and the music
dies down. The voices thin out.)*

(DAISY brings NICK a drink.)

DAISY

I've never seen so many famous people.
Like that columnist, the weasel
With the purple nose.

NICK

They're all delirious.

DAISY

You know what's curious?
I don't have any idea what Gatsby does.
Of course, I've heard the buzz
That he's a bootlegger.

NICK

He's not a criminal.

DAISY

If you say so. At least this party isn't dull—
They know how to have fun.

TOM

(Enters, overhearing her last line.)
You weren't so keen

Earlier tonight.

DAISY

I was too, Tom. Don't be mean.

TOM

How about the girl who passed out cold
Sitting on the toilet, they had to hold
Her head beneath the shower to wake up.

DAISY

All sorts of people make up
Stories to sneak in. They crash the gate
And Gatsby's too polite.

TOM

Let's get this straight.
I don't have time for all this fizz.
I want to know what Gatsby's business is.

NICK

I'll tell you then. He built a drugstore chain
Up from nothing.

TOM

That doesn't quite explain
His whole story. Something's not quite right.

DAISY

Stop arguing! It's time to say goodnight.

*(DAISY drags TOM off. The party goes dark and silent.
The buzzing of insects can be heard.)*

GATSBY

(Enters.)

Daisy didn't like it.

NICK

Of course she did.

GATSBY

I know she didn't. Half the night she hid
Behind a plant.

NICK

You're just depressed.

GATSBY

Well, can you blame me if I'm stressed?
She feels so far away. I've tried
To make her see.

NICK

She seemed excited.

GATSBY

It's more than just the party, that's trivial.
We have to go back to Louisville
To start again, rewind
The last five years. But first she has to remind
Her husband that she never loved him, ever.
Then she and I can be together
Like before, walking late at night,
The streets blanched white with moonlight.
It was like being inside the mind of God.

I know that must sound odd,
But still, you have to agree, that's—

NICK

You can't repeat the past.

GATSBY

Can't repeat, old sport? Of course you can!
If only I could make her understand.

*(NICK finishes his drink, hands it to GATSBY, and walks off.
GATSBY is left alone listening to the night sounds.)*

ACT II

GATSBY

(A strong wash of afternoon sunlight. The sound of waves. Some gulls cry out.

GATSBY enters with NICK following.)

See how the front porch catches the light?
Doesn't the house look good?

NICK

It's quite a sight.

GATSBY

So tell me all the details, old sport,
How was New York? Anything to report?

NICK

Not much, mostly trailing Jordan's ancient
Aunt around the city. I'm spent.

GATSBY

Take any rumors that you heard
With several grains of salt.

NICK

You have my word.

JORDAN

(Entering with TOM. They're both dressed in horse riding gear.)

Oh Jay, look who I've drug in.
This is Mr. Tom Buchanan.

GATSBY

How was your ride?

JORDAN

Fine, as long as you don't slide
Right off the shoulder.

TOM

(Shakes GATSBY's hand.)

I've heard a lot about you.
Nice spread you got here.

GATSBY

And you, too.
Unless I'm wrong, we've met before.

TOM

That right?

NICK

Down by the South Nagansett shore
A couple weeks ago.

TOM

Yes, I remember now.

GATSBY

I know your wife.

TOM

You know Daisy? How?

JORDAN

Jay, when is your next get-together?

GATSBY

This Saturday, depending on the weather.

NICK

(To TOM, they shake hands)

Hi, I'm Nick.

TOM

You live near here?

NICK

Next door, a worker's cottage. You could say that we're
Almost neighbors.

JORDAN

(To TOM.)

Let's go, my horse is tired.

TOM

Whatever you say.

(They wave goodbye and leave.)

NICK

And off they ride.

GATSBY

It took me three whole years to make the dough

To buy this house.

NICK

I didn't know.
I thought that you inherited—

GATSBY

You're right, I did.
But I lost my last dollar in the panic, old sport,
During the Great War. And then, in short,
I bought some drugstores on the downswing
And made myself a killing.
Now I'm into several businesses.

NICK

And your business is?

GATSBY

Look here, Nick, I'd have to guess
You don't make much.

NICK

Is this a test?

GATSBY

Please don't take offense.
I have a little project on the side, an expense
Write-off, really. Don't you work on Wall Street?

NICK

I try.

GATSBY

I've got an inside deal for you, it's sweet.
Tax-free, some easy cash.

NICK

Thanks, but my hands are tied.
I can't take on another—

GATSBY

I hope you don't think I implied—

(The sunlight fades to the soft glow of candlelight.)

DAISY

(Swoops in, holding a pile of shirts in her arms.)

It's silly to have so many shirts! They make me sad—
They're all so lovely.

GATSBY

(He starts tossing them into the air.)

Is that bad?
I don't think one can ever have too many.

NICK

Well, you have plenty.

GATSBY

Every spring, a custom batch
Is shipped from Saville Row in London.

(He tosses one to NICK.)

Catch!

DAISY

(Sweeping them up from the floor.)

They're like a rainbow!

(A SERVANT enters and hands GATSBY a phone.)

GATSBY

(Into the phone.)

I can't talk now. Calm down.
I said a small town. If Detroit is his idea of a small town
Then he's no use to us. That's right.
(Hands back the phone to the SERVANT, who leaves.)

DAISY

You see that greenish light?
It looks just like my pier
Right across the Sound from here.

GATSBY

It is. Otherwise you'd be completely lost
When the fog rolls in.

NICK

It must be a mile across.

DAISY

Look at all those puffy clouds, so pink!
You know what, I'd like to sink

Down into them, just sail along up there
Without a care.
All that pillowy foam.

NICK

I should be going home.

GATSBY

No, come with us to Coney Island.
We can catch a jazz band
And tango until two.

NICK

It's late.

GATSBY

Or how about a plunge in the pool?

NICK

That sounds great,

But I'm too tired.

GATSBY

I haven't done a lap
All summer long. At least stay for a nightcap.
(To DAISY.)

Why don't you go into the parlor and try out
The grand piano?

DAISY

Okay, but I doubt
I even remember how. Don't keep my cousin long.
(She leaves.)

GATSBY

This was such a terrible mistake.

NICK

You're wrong.

GATSBY

An awful, awful mistake. Oh god!

NICK

You're just embarrassed.

GATSBY

I'm a fraud.
She sees right through my little show.

NICK

Listen, Daisy's frightened too.

(The tentative piano melody of "All Alone" floats in.)

GATSBY

You think so?

NICK

I do. Now don't be rude
And leave her there alone.

GATSBY

But her whole mood
Is off, she won't—

NICK

You're acting like a scared boy.

GATSBY

You think she likes the house?

NICK

You should enjoy
This moment, Jay.

GATSBY

I had the candles lit, the roses
Are all for her.

NICK

Trust me, she knows.
There's enough for a funeral or two.
Now talk to her. It's up to you.

(GATSBY leaves. The piano fades.)

NICK

(Looking off, after him.)
At the piano, his hand

Had taken hold of hers. They were simply a man
 And woman now. Tears
 Smear'd her cheek. It had been five years.
 He whispered something low
 Into her ear. She was lit by candle glow.
 To him, her voice was like a deathless song
 Where no one else could belong.

*(Some thunder starts to rumble.
 NICK turns to the audience.)*

Outside you could hear some drops of rain.
 The Sound was dark. The last train
 Was slowly being drawn
 Along West Egg. The lights had all come on.
 You could feel this was the hour
 Of fervent human change, when the power
 Of excitement sparks the night air.
 In Gatsby's face, there was something there—
 A look of doubt—could any happiness last?
 He was living in the past.
 A past that he'd built up from every bright feather
 Drifting down, when they were still together.

(The thunder fades. The light brightens. JORDAN enters.)

JORDAN

Gatsby wants to know if you'll ask
 Daisy over for a visit. That's your task.
 Then afterward he'll join
 Both of you.

NICK

Why doesn't he—

JORDAN

Because the point
 Is that she see his place
 The first time from next door. He just can't face
 Her by himself.

NICK

That so?

JORDAN

He half expected her

Some night to wander
 Into one of his late-night debaucheries.
 She never did. So he began his inquiries
 To see who knew her too.
 He found me. And through me, you.

NICK

You know, her house is right across the bay
 From his.

JORDAN

That's why he bought it.

NICK

You mean to say
 That this is all because of her?

JORDAN

For years he read a Chicago paper
 Just to catch her name.

NICK

Does Daisy know about him?

JORDAN

She doesn't. Her life is so grim
 These days, she desperately needs something new.
 Gatsby wants to surprise her, and you—

NICK

I'm the fall guy.

JORDAN

But you are my
 Fall guy. Tell her, don't bring Tom. Let her think
 It's your idea. For just one drink.

(She gives him a peck on the cheek, and NICK leaves.)

JORDAN

(To audience.)

The afternoon of Daisy's wedding—
 I was her maid of honor—I found her lying
 On the bed, half drunk on
 Champagne, her eyes red and sunken.
 In her hand she had Jay's letter.

She told me that I'd better
 Go downstairs and say she'd had a change
 Of mind. She looked so strange.
 We dressed her, put an icepack on her forehead,
 And at five, she and Tom were wed.
 As far as I could tell, she was happy
 With Tom and the baby in Chicago, until he
 Ran his roadster off into a ditch
 With some cocktail waitress he'd picked up, which
 Made all the daily papers.
 She hadn't heard the Gatsby name in years
 Until last month. She said,
 I think I know him. Then I connected
 Gatsby to the officer I'd seen in her white car
 In Louisville. They each looked like a movie star
 In some romantic scene.
 That was back in 1917.

(She leaves. The sound of a bar fades up with clinking glasses and a jangly piano.
 Assisted by a WAITER, GATSBY and WOLFSHEIM bring on
 a small table, three chairs, and two drinks.
 GATSBY and WOLFSHEIM sit.)

WOLFSHEIM

So then I gave a look
 To Katz, that small-time crook—
 I said to him, not one more penny, pal,
 Until you shut your trap. It's lousy for morale.

(NICK enters.)

GATSBY

Hey Nick, over here.
 This is Mr. Wolfsheim—

WOLFSHEIM

Call me Meyer.

GATSBY

—My business partner. Want a highball?

NICK

(Shakes WOLFSHEIM's hand and sits down.)

Sure.

(GATSBY snaps his finger to catch the WAITER's eye.)

WOLFSHEIM

This ain't too bad a joint, but I prefer
The bar across the street.

GATSBY

That suffocating hole.

WOLFSHEIM

Every night we'd all meet there.

NICK

Where's that?

GATSBY

The Metropole.

WOLFSHEIM

Ah yes, the Metropole. Those faces dead and gone,
The friends who've all moved on.
I can't forget the night they shot
Poor Rosy Rosenthal. The waiter got
A worried look and said a couple guys outside
Would like a word with him. Rosy tried
To stand up, I pulled him back down in his chair.
I told him, stay right there.
If those apes want to have a blowout,
Let the bastards come in here.

NICK

Did he go out?

WOLFSHEIM

He did. He said, don't let the waiter
Take my whiskey. Bang bang bang. A week later
Those two turned up floating in the East River.
(To NICK.)
Jay tells me you'd like to invest with us.

GATSBY

This isn't the man I told you about. Let's discuss
This matter later.

WOLFSHEIM

He's not?

(The WAITER brings NICK a drink.)

GATSBY

Nick's just a friend.

WOLFSHEIM

(To NICK)

I beg your pardon.

GATSBY

Listen, Myer, I'll send
The other party at a later date.

WOLFSHEIM

I guess I misconstrued.

(He starts to get up.)

GATSBY

Please wait.
I've got to make a call.

(He leaves.)

WOLFSHEIM

He's just like someone in a book,
Isn't he?

NICK

He is.

WOLFSHEIM

You'd have to look
Far and wide for someone handsome as he is.
A perfect gentleman, prepared to please.

NICK

I suppose.

WOLFSHEIM

An Oxford man.

NICK

Oh really?

WOLFSHEIM

He got in

Like his old man did.

NICK

Have you and he been
In business long?

WOLFSHEIM

A little while.
We met right after the war. I liked his style.
In just one hour, I knew,
He's someone I could introduce my sister to,
Bring home to mother.

(Holds out his wrists.)

You like my cufflinks?
They're unique. Everyone thinks
They're ivory.

NICK

What are they?

WOLFSHEIM

Human molars.
They look like ivory, but there's
A difference.

(GATSBY returns and WOLFSHEIM gets up.)

WOLFSHEIM

I gotta run.

GATSBY

Don't hurry, Meyer.

WOLFSHEIM

You two have fun.
Talk about your sports and clothes
And your young lady friends. I won't impose
Any longer.

(He leaves.)

NICK

Quite a character.

GATSBY

He does get sentimental.

NICK

Is he an actor?

GATSBY

No, but all this territory is his.

NICK

A dentist?

GATSBY

Wolfsheim's a gambler. The story is,
He fixed the World Series
Back in 1919.

NICK

Chicago Black Sox? So he's
The one who made it happen?
I never thought of it as just one person.
How'd he manage to fool
The whole world?

GATSBY

It's like playing pool.
He saw an opening and took a shot.

NICK

Incredible. How come he's not
In prison?

GATSBY

He knows who holds the key.
(He takes a drink.)
Look here, Nick, what do you think of me?

NICK

It's hard to say.

GATSBY

Here is the God's own truth.
I spent an uneventful youth
Out West, the only son
Of wealthy parents, both deceased. Tradition
Next led me to Oxford, where I majored
In English Lit.

NICK

Why Oxford?

GATSBY

My family all went there.

NICK

The ones from, where?

GATSBY

The ones from San Francisco.

NICK

I see.

GATSBY

When my folks died, I came into some money.
I lived just like a rajah
In Paris, Venice, Rome—I learned to draw
A little, hunt big game, collect
Gemstones, mainly rubies. In retrospect
I think that I was trying to forget
Something sad from long ago.

NICK

(Stifling a laugh.)

And yet?

GATSBY

And then the war changed everything.
I tried my best to die, instead I suffered a string
Of good fortune. I led two machine-gun squads
Into the Argonne Forest. The odds
Were long. But we dug in.
Our boys took out a German division
And I was given a decoration
By every Allied country. Check out this ribbon.
(He takes out a medal and hands it to NICK.)

NICK

Montenegro.

GATSBY

Yes, even tiny Montenegro.
What's it say?

NICK
(Reads.)

"Oderi de Danilo."

GATSBY

Now turn it over.

NICK
(Reads.)

"Major Jay Gatsby. For Valour
Extraordinaire."

GATSBY

And if you're
Curious, here's another souvenir
I always carry with me. A photo from my first year
At Oxford.

(He hands NICK a small photo.)

Beside me that's the Duke
Of Wellington.

NICK

That's something.

GATSBY

(He pockets the souvenirs.)
Now look.

I'd like to make a big request.
I'm not some nobody, I'm someone, and all the rest
Is hearsay. You'll hear about it soon
From Miss Baker this afternoon.

NICK

So you're in love with her?

GATSBY

No, no, old sport. I defer
To you. Now let's go for a little ride.

NICK

In your yellow Rolls?

GATSBY

Yes, hop inside.

I'll show you how it takes
 The turns, with barely any brakes.
 See how the gold paint mirrors
 A score of tiny suns, their brilliant spheres?

*(The WAITER helps them clear the drinks, along with the table and chairs.
 The bar noise fades. GATSBY leaves.)*

NICK

(To audience. Takes out a list, penciled on an envelope.)

Years later I can still remember
 The names from that long summer
 Who dropped by Jay's festivities.
 From East Egg came:

CHORUS

(An ensemble of offstage voices.)

The Auerbachs, the Christies,
 The Chester Beckers—

NICK

—a fellow, Munson,
 I knew at Yale, and Webster, the one
 Who later drowned in Maine—

CHORUS

—the Hornbeams,
 The Willie Voltaires, the R.P. Schraeders—

NICK

—who, it seems,
 Always huddled in a corner and flipped
 Their noses up like goats when anybody tripped
 Across their feet—

CHORUS

—the Cheadles, the Lunts—

NICK

—And Clarence Fink, who came just once;
 He beaned a chap named Etty with a fishing pole.

CHORUS

—The Abramses, the Hammerheads—

NICK

—and just out on parole,
 Ripley Snell, who passed out on the gravel drive,
 Where Mrs. Ulysses Swett, the last guest to arrive,
 Ran over his left leg.

(Flips envelope over.)

And in attendance from West Egg:

CHORUS

The Donovans, the Mulreadys, the Cecil Roebucks,
 The Newton Smirkes—

NICK

—proprietors of Films Deluxe—

CHORUS

The Schwartzes, the Bernbergs—

NICK

—and G. Earl Muldoon,

Younger brother to the Muldoon who soon
 Strangled his wife—

CHORUS

—the Cohens, the Whitethornes,
 The Duckweeds, the Quinns—

NICK

—whose fortune's

All from poker, that's what they came for.
 Plus Klipspringer at the door
 So often we thought it was his only home.
 And Lester something always on the phone.

CHORUS

The Dennickers, the Corriganes, the Horsts,
 The S. W. Belchers—

(The bright lights and hubbub of a party slowly fade up.)

NICK

—who got divorced,
 And Henry L. Palmetto, who in Times Square
 Jumped in front of a subway train. Plus Benny, a millionaire,
 Who always came with four different dames.
 I can't recall their names.
 Months or flowers, June or May, Lilly or Rose?

If anyone wonders, the story goes
They're cousins of some great American capitalists.
And that's my final list.

JORDAN

(Enters with a glass of champagne.)

I thought you might be here.

NICK

I think everybody is. I fear
We've landed in the middle of an insurance
Convention.

JORDAN

Gatsby's insouciance
Is not just for the few.
You live next door, that right?

NICK

I do.

In fact, I've got to search for Jay
To say hello.

(He leaves as PARTY GIRL ONE and TWO in matching yellow dresses swirl on.)

PARTY GIRL ONE AND TWO

(To JORDAN.)

Sorry about today!

PARTY GIRL ONE

We thought you had her beat.

JORDAN

That last volley

Was murder. First time here?

PARTY GIRL TWO

Oh no, golly!

We never miss. Who cares what others think, we always
Dive in headfirst.

PARTY GIRL ONE

And go out in a blaze!

The last time we were here, I tore my dress
Right on a tiny nail. I was a mess.
But in a week I got a package from Fifth Avenue.

And guess what was inside? A brand new
Evening gown.

JORDAN

You keep it?

PARTY GIRL ONE

You bet!

It's satin, lavender, inset
With beads—two hundred sixty dollars.

PARTY GIRL TWO

If you ask me, money cures
A lot of hangovers. But who would do a thing
Like that? It's strange.

PARTY GIRL ONE

The kind of guy who'd spring
For a bash like this.

JORDAN

Gatsby?

PARTY GIRL ONE

Someone asked me, is he
A German spy?

PARTY GIRL TWO

I heard he killed someone
While he was on the run.

PARTY GIRL ONE

No, he's an international thief.
Just take a look at him, it's easy to believe,
He's so mysterious.

(They leave as NICK reenters with a glass of champagne.)

NICK

I couldn't find our host.

JORDAN

Sometimes I think that he's a ghost.
You have to use a Ouija board.
I'll take a spin.

(She leaves as OWL EYES enters, carrying some books.)

OWL EYES

What a hoard
Of books he has! You think they're real?

NICK

Why not?

OWL EYES

(Hands NICK a book.)

Here, have a feel.

NICK

Looks like a fancy leather binding.

OWL EYES

Exactly! And here's the thing,
They all have pages, actual pages, not fake.
They're bona-fide printed matter. For example, take
(Hands NICK another book.)

This one, see, the life and works of Mahler.

This guy's a regular scholar!

I couldn't believe my own eyes.

What thoroughness. What realism. A prize

Of verisimilitude.

But what would you expect? Something crude?

(Grabs the books back.)

Who brought you? Most people here were brought.

(JORDAN enters.)

NICK

(To JORDAN.)

Thank goodness, just in time. Looks like I've caught
A live one here.

JORDAN

Do tell.

OWL EYES

I myself was brought
By Mrs. Claude Beluga. You ought
To know her, she's in tobacco. We met last night.
I've been drunk a week.

NICK

That right?

OWL EYES

I thought that browsing through the library
Would help to sober me.

JORDAN

And has it?

OWL EYES

A little bit, I think.
I can't tell yet. Another drink
Might do the trick. Did I show you the books?

NICK

You did.

(OWL EYES shuffles off.)

JORDAN

What a bunch of kooks.

NICK

And Gatsby?

JORDAN

No luck. I'll try the grounds.

NICK

Send back word. I'll make the rounds.

(JORDAN leaves.)

GATSBY

(Enters and stands a distance away. He lights a cigarette.)
Excuse me, but you look familiar.

NICK

No, it's my first time here.

GATSBY

Oh wait, I know. Weren't you in the Third Division?

NICK

That's right, Ninth Battalion.

GATSBY

I was Seventh Infantry. Slogging through those damp gray villages
In France.

NICK

Vive "La Marseillaise"!

GATSBY

Hey, I've just bought a new sailboat,
A thirty footer. Want to go out
To do a test run in the morning?

NICK

You're on.

GATSBY

You find this party boring?

NICK

It is unusual. I haven't even met
The house's owner yet.
I'm Nick, I live next door
In a little cottage. He sent his chauffeur
Over with an invite.

GATSBY

So sorry,
I'm Gatsby. This is very hard for me.

SERVANT

(Enters.)

'Scuse me, boss, Chicago's
On the line.

GATSBY

(To SERVANT.)

I thought I told those
Flunkies not to bother me—

(To NICK.)

If you need anything

At all, old sport—

*(He leaves with the SERVANT.
An UPSET WIFE pulls her HUSBAND along by one elbow.)*

UPSET WIFE

Eva Turner's about to sing
Her "Turandot," come on!

HUSBAND

Stop your nagging,
Let me go!

(They leave as JORDAN appears.)

JORDAN

Somehow I get the feeling
Gatsby is avoiding me.

NICK

No, you just missed him.
Who is he, anyway?

JORDAN

Well, I haven't kissed him.
But from what I gather
He's a male like any other.

*(A lilting soprano begins an aria from Puccini's "Turandot," accompanied
by dramatic piano chords.)*

NICK

But where's he from? What's he do?

JORDAN

'Tis the question. Join the queue.

NICK

I'm in.

JORDAN

He said he went to Oxford, but—
I don't believe it.

NICK

Why not?

JORDAN

My gut.
The pieces just don't fit.

NICK

(Nodding toward the music.)

When will that screeching quit!

JORDAN

When the fat lady croaks.

(She leans in closer.)

Here's what

I know about our host. He's got
A big house, in which he gives big parties.
I like to go to big parties, and these
Parties are the very biggest.
They're so intimate. All the rest
Are too small for me, there isn't any privacy.

NICK

That's interesting. I think I see.

(The aria ends with a round of applause.)

SERVANT

(Entering.)

Hey Miss Baker, my boss is off the phone.
He'd like a word with you alone.

JORDAN

With me?

NICK

I guess your boat's come in.

JORDAN

As long as I'm not the one done in.

(She leaves with the SERVANT. NICK exits the other way.)

UPSET WIFE

(Strides through with WIFE TWO.)

Whenever I'm enjoying first-class culture
My hubby wants to leave.

WIFE TWO

I know, I've got an ulcer
From all the stress. They can be so narcissistic.

UPSET WIFE

You and me, we have to stick
Together, wife to wife. Until the party's bitter end.

WIFE TWO

Bitter is the word, my friend.

*(The noise of the party calms down.
A BOYFRIEND runs across, holding his shoes, followed by a GIRLFRIEND
in tears, shouting.)*

GIRLFRIEND

Don't give me that! You promised me, you egoist!

*(They exit. A horn blares, there's the sound of a car crash. NICK runs on.
Headlights flood across the stage. OWL EYES stumbles in, completely soused.)*

OWL EYES

Did you see that? The Bentley barely missed
The stone wall by an inch.
It went headfirst into the ditch.

NICK

You don't seem too upset.

OWL EYES

It's just a vehicle. That's what you get.

NICK

How'd it happen?

OWL EYES

Don't ask me. I'm as surprised
As you are. I don't know a thing about the mechanized
Workings of a car. I throw my fortune to the wind!
All I know is that it happened.

NICK

Well, then you shouldn't drive at night.

OWL EYES

You're not a highway cop.

NICK

You got that right.

(Some bystanders from the party wander in.)

OWL EYES

(He turns to the BYSTANDERS.)

You have to listen to me: I wasn't even trying!

I wasn't even trying!

UPSET WIFE

Oh, stop your whining!

You're lucky you're alive.

PARTY GIRL ONE

You trying to commit

Suicide or something?

OWL EYES

You just don't get it.

I wasn't driving. There was another man

Behind the wheel. You have to understand.

*(There's a collective gasp. Everyone turns to peer into the headlights.
The DRIVER enters, stunned, a hubcap dangling from one hand.)*

DRIVER

What happened? Did we run outta gas?

HUSBAND

(Points at the hubcap.)

The tire came off.

DRIVER

(Looks down.)

Oh, so that's it. I was trying to pass

Another car, and then a tree jumped up.

(Some car horns start beeping.)

HUSBAND

You gotta

Back it out. Put her in reverse.

UPSET WIFE

What a

Stupid idea. The car's a total wreck.

OWL EYES

Well, there's no harm

In trying.

(To DRIVER.)

Come on, give me your arm.

(The DRIVER lets the hubcap drop to the ground, and they exit.)

(Everyone follows but NICK.)

The headlights dim, and the car horns fade out.)

JORDAN

(Enters.)

Sorry I missed the hullabaloo.

NICK

Do all his parties end like this?

JORDAN

More than a few.

It's either smiles or frowns, comedy or tragedy.

NICK

And what's tonight?

JORDAN

Surrealist, I would say. Gatsby told me
About a girl that he once knew. They were quite a pair.

NICK

What's her name?

JORDAN

I gave a pinkie swear
I wouldn't tell. At least not now. Why don't you visit me?
We'll go out for a Sunday drive.

NICK

(Picks up the hubcap.)

I hope a tree

Won't decide to surprise us.

JORDAN

I'm very careful.

NICK

Is that so?

JORDAN

Well, other people are.

NICK

That's cheerful.

JORDAN

They keep out of my way. Remember it takes two
To have an accident.

NICK

I guess that's true.
But what if you meet someone who's
As reckless as you are?

JORDAN

I choose
My friends for their restraint. I despise
Careless people. That's why you get the prize.

(NICK leaves, and the light brightens to afternoon.)

JORDAN

(To audience.)

Every weekend, a whole corps of caterers
Would come down from New York for Jay's affairs:
Hors-d'oeuvres, hams and pastries, scores of colored lights.
Gatsby's garden, on those nights,
Looked like a Rockefeller Christmas tree.
And on the patio the booze was free:
A bar with real brass rails
Stocked with so much alcohol for cocktails
You'd land in jail—though most
Of his younger female guests don't know a toast
From a toaster. By seven
The orchestra would pull up, no pitiful dozen
But an entire pit-full of fiddles, snares, and horns to blow into.
At dusk, the last swimmers would come through
From the beach, the big cars from the city
Parked five deep in the drive. By now the pretty
Lights blink on, pastel drinks
Float around the fountain, and everyone thinks

Everybody's their best pal—
 And better looking too. And then some gal
 Who's very sure of herself, a gypsy
 With silver earrings and clinking bangles, a little tipsy,
 Downs a Singapore Sling for nerves
 And jumps up on the stage. She swerves
 Her scarves around the air like Isadora Duncan
 Doing the Paris can-can.

NICK
(Enters.)

Suddenly there comes a hush.
 The tom-tom beats a heartbeat. The crush
 Of frenzied laughter, the constant din
 Of babble halts.

JORDAN

The party can begin.

*(She exits. Multicolored lights fade up,
 along with the faint sound of music and laughter.)*

NICK

I recall those summer nights
 When music drifted from the strings of lights
 In Gatsby's garden.
 It looked to me like Eden.
 The men and women came and went
 Like moths, effervescent
 Among the champagne and the stars
 And long line of shiny cars.
 The first night, I actually had a written
 Invitation. Otherwise, the ticket for admission
 Was ambition. Most people never even met
 The host, without a second of regret.

*(The sound changes to distant traffic, honking horns.
 The light softens to an interior glow.)*

MYRTLE

(Staggers in with a drink, a scarf around her neck, held up by TOM.)

I'm out of ciggies! Which one of you could fetch
 A pack for me!

NICK

I'll go, I need a stretch.

(He leaves.)

MYRTLE

Where am I, anyway?

TOM

Take it easy, Myrtle, 58th and Park.
The place I got for you in town.

MYRTLE

It's so dark.

Would someone please throw on
Some lights! I need to telephone
My sister, Cath, and tell her to come over.
You know that she once got an offer
To pose for *Vogue*, no lie, she's so aesthetic.

TOM

You called her up already.

MYRTLE

Aren't you pathetic.

(The doorbell rings.)

MYRTLE

Don't stand there, come on in!

(MR. and MRS. MCKEE enter.)

MYRTLE

Mr. and Mrs. Mckee, this is Tom Buchanan.

MR. MCKEE

I'm an amateur photographer.
Mostly I take shots of *her*.

MRS. MCKEE

A hundred twenty seven black-and-whites since we
Got married! They're quite a thing to see.

MR. MCKEE

I've done some on Long Island too.

TOM

Like what?

MR. MCKEE

Two views

Of Montauk Point. "The Gulls" and "Evening Hues."

TOM

You're an educated chap. You ever read that book
By Goddard? You ought to take a look.
He argues how American culture's suffered defeat.

(NICK comes in and hands a pack to MYRTLE.)

TOM

How much I owe you?

NICK

Don't worry, my treat.

MYRTLE

(To NICK.)

Nick, these are the McKees, my neighbors.

NICK

My pleasure.

MYRTLE

They live downstairs.

MRS. MCKEE

(To NICK.)

You live out on Long Island too?

NICK

Yes, West Egg.

MRS. MCKEE

We were just out there at a big to-do

A couple of weeks ago.

Gatsby was the name of the fellow.

You know him?

NICK

I live next door.

MRS. MCKEE

They say that all his money's from the war.
That he's the Kaiser's nephew.

NICK

Don't be ridiculous.

MRS. MCKEE

I'm scared of him. He's treasonous.

MYRTLE

Tom, go and get our guests some ice
And something nice
For them to drink.

TOM

Sure, darling, on the double.
(He leaves.)

MR. MCKEE

(To MYRTLE, framing her face with his hand.)

Excuse me, if it isn't too much trouble,
Could you tilt your head? I'd like to catch the light.

MRS. MCKEE

Don't move a hair!

MR. MCKEE

Shhh!

MYRTLE

Is this alright?

MRS. MCKEE

(To MYRTLE.)

I like your dress. It's so adorable.

MYRTLE

Oh, this old rag? It's horrible.

MRS. MCKEE

Well, I think it looks keen.

CATH

(Bursts in.)

Hey boys and girls, what's the scene?
Sorry I'm a little late.

NICK

You live here too?

CATH

Just what do you insinuate?

"You live here too?" What a hoot!

I'm at the Roosevelt.

MYRTLE

It's very cute.

TOM

(Returns with drinks on a tray.)

Bottoms up.

MRS. MCKEE

(To MR. MCKEE, pointing at CATH.)

I'm sure that you could take

A pic or two of *her*.

MR. MCKEE

(To TOM.)

Actually, I'd like to make

Some more out on Long Island.

TOM

Myrtle here will introduce you to her husband.

Won't you, Myrtle?

MYRTLE

Won't I what?

TOM

Tell George about

Our artiste here. Why, it could be his breakout

Masterpiece: "George Wilson at the Pump."

MYRTLE

Ha ha. Don't be a chump.

Go put a record on.

*(TOM briefly leaves and returns. "Ain't We Got Fun" plays.
MYRTLE starts to dance with TOM, while the MCKEES watch.)*

CATH

(Quietly to NICK.)

Neither one of them can stand
The one they're married to.

NICK

Too bland?

CATH

Positively *can't stand*. The way I see it,
Why stay married? If it was me, I'd split.

(Louder, to MYRTLE.)

Why'd you marry George? It wasn't as if you were
Forced into it.

MYRTLE

Me, I was a sucker
For his good manners, what did I know?
He's not fit to lick my big toe.

CATH

You were mad about him for a while.

MYRTLE

For George? No. He's really not my style.
The only man who's ever made me crazy
Is that man over there. If only there wasn't Daisy—

TOM

You have no right to say—

MYRTLE

What? In front of all the ladies?
I'll say it all I want. Daisy, Daisy, Daisy, Daisy, Daisy!

*(TOM pops her in the nose and blood spurts down onto her dress.
TOM stalks off and everyone follows. The record fades.)*

MYRTLE

(To audience. Presses her scarf to her nose.)

I first met Tom on the train, I was on my way
To see my sister. His suit was light gray,
A Panama hat. Whenever he would glance at me,
I looked up at the ads. I could barely see.

The ride ended, and he put his arm
 Around my waist. It felt so warm. What's the harm,
 I told myself, you just live once, whatever
 Happens happens. And then we found ourselves together
 In the back seat of a taxi.

MRS. MCKEE

(Comes back with a towel.)

Let's have a look-see.

MYRTLE

(Cleans herself up.)

I'm going to give this dress to you
 Once it's been cleaned.

MRS. MCKEE

Oh, you don't have to—

MYRTLE

I'll get another one tomorrow.
 I'm going to make a list, right now,
 Of everything I've got to get:
 A long massage, a perm, a set
 Of ashtrays, the cute ones that flip open
 When you touch a button.
 And a black silk wreath for Mother
 At Forest Hill, one that will last all summer.

*(They leave as TOM and NICK come in. TOM jangles his car keys.
 The light brightens. Now and then, a car passes on the road.)*

TOM

Hey, Wilson! How's tricks?

(To NICK.)

Come meet my girl.

WILSON

(Enters.)

Could be worse. Who's this?

TOM

He's Nick, a friend.

WILSON

When you gonna leave your coupe to sell?

TOM

Next week, I promise.

WILSON

Oh, that's swell.

TOM

Listen, pal, if that's the way you feel—

WILSON

Keep your hat on. It's a deal.

MYRTLE

(Enters with two glasses on a tray.)

You boys want some lemonade
To cool you off? It's so hot out, there's no shade.

TOM

That sounds good.

MYRTLE

(To WILSON.)

Go get some chairs,
So they can rest their feet. They're right below the stairs.

WILSON

Alright, alright.

(He leaves.)

TOM

(To MYRTLE.)

Aren't you a pleasant sight
For tired eyes?

MYRTLE

Don't start that refrain.

TOM

Why don't you take the next train
To New York? I miss you, doll face.

MYRTLE

You do, do you?

TOM

We can meet at your place.

(WILSON brings in some folding chairs.)

TOM

Never mind, we've got to hit
The road.

(To MYRTLE.)

Thanks for the drinks.

(To NICK.)

Let's split.

MYRTLE

(To TOM.)

You're welcome, mister.

(TOM and NICK leave.)

MYRTLE

I've got to go and see my sister.

WILSON

You went last Saturday.

MYRTLE

It does me good to get away.
You wanna raise an objection
Now, for no good reason?
I can't stay another minute
In this godawful joint, with you in it.

WILSON

Then go, get out! Come back when you're through.

MYRTLE

I will, Pops, I'm gonna 23 skidoo!

(They leave.)

NICK

(Enters, to audience.)

The road from West Egg to New York
Meets the railroad at a fork
About halfway—a place I like to call
The Valley of the Ashes. There's a pall
Of smoke and dust
From factories, a land so bare it's just
A bonfire waiting to spark.

Above this purgatory, a landmark
 Watches over you:
 The eyes of Dr. T. J. Eckleburg, big and blue,
 Peering through his spectacles
 Down from a giant billboard, like tentacles
 Reaching out to kiss us
 From his Queens optometrist business.
 On the train, you can see the glare
 Of Dr. Eckleburg for half a mile, and stare
 Right back at him with an air of pure despair
 That says: you're nowhere.

*(Late afternoon sunlight streams across the stage. A bird whistles.
 In a tennis outfit, with racket and ball,
 JORDAN enters, ready to serve to DAISY offstage.)*

JORDAN

(Bouncing the ball to get ready.)

You ready, Daisy? 40-love!

*(She serves and they volley back and forth, until JORDAN
 rushes forward and smashes the ball down.)*

Take that!

NICK

You're merciless.

DAISY

(Enters and tosses her racket down, laughing.)

Ok, ok, I quit, you brat!

(To NICK.)

Have you missed me, cous'?

NICK

I do, and everybody in Chicago does.
 I stopped by on my way out East
 And the whole town is desolate, a veritable feast
 Of mourning—each car's left rear wheel
 Is painted black, you can feel
 Their sense of loss; at night along the North Shore
 Sirens give off persistent wails.

DAISY

Oh, gosh, tell me more!

Come on, Nick, let's go right now.
 You too, Jordan.

JORDAN

Sure thing. I'm tired anyhow.
Right after the finals.

DAISY

(To NICK.)

You have to see the baby.
She just went down for a nap.

NICK

How old is she?

DAISY

Three. I can't believe you haven't seen her yet.

TOM

(Enters with a drink.)

Welcome, Nick.

NICK

Nice place.

TOM

It's all ours, no debt.
An oil man built it. What is it you do?

NICK

The least

I possibly can. I'm in bonds.

TOM

Never heard of them.

NICK

If you stay out East

You will.

TOM

We're here to stay, don't worry!
At least it's civilized. We're in no hurry.

NICK

(Smiles at DAISY and JORDAN.)

And the scenery is pretty.

DAISY

Aren't you sweet?

Tomorrow, Jordan, let's give ourselves a treat
And hit the beach.

JORDAN

I can't. I have to train.

TOM

You do? How's that? By drinking champagne?
You girls just gossip and lie around.

DAISY

And all you do is run off into town.

TOM

You know what? That's a fine idea.

(He leaves.)

JORDAN

(To NICK.)

You live in West Egg?

I know somebody there.

NICK

Who?

JORDAN

Don't make me beg.

You know who.

NICK

Ah, Gatsby.

DAISY

Gatsby? Which Gatsby?

JORDAN

The only one, Jay Gatsby.

DAISY

But what could he possibly

Be doing here?

JORDAN

I'll fill you in. But first I have to win
Another set. You game?

DAISY

Sure thing. But I'm all out of gin.
Let me refill my cup.

(She leaves.)

JORDAN

You hear the latest?

NICK

No, what's up?

JORDAN

Are you completely deaf and dumb?
I thought everybody knew.

NICK

Toss me a crumb.

JORDAN

Tom's got some woman in the city.

NICK

A woman? What for?

JORDAN

Don't be witty.
Daisy here is still in shock.

DAISY

(Enters with a tray of drinks.)

Ok, you two. The little hand on the clock
Says it's cocktail hour.

(To JORDAN)

We'll have a rematch

Another time.

TOM

(Enters, raising his glass in the air.)

Let's start the party!

(He tosses a lime to NICK.)

Nick, catch!

(He grabs JORDAN's hand and gives her a quick spin,

singing the start to "Ain't We Got Fun.")
 "Every morning, every evening" —

JORDAN

(Flinching.)

Hey, watch it, ow!

DAISY

(To JORDAN.)

Are you okay?

JORDAN

(Looking down at her hand.)

I think my finger's sprained.

DAISY

(To TOM.)

Enough horseplay.

You don't know your strength.

(To JORDAN.)

Let me see. That's what I get for marrying

A great big lunk, a great big hulking —

TOM

Don't you dare toot

Your horn at me! I hate that word!

DAISY

(To TOM.)

You *are* a brute! A great big hulking brute!

(To JORDAN.)

Let's find some ointment.

(They leave.)

TOM

Civilization's getting out of joint,
 Know what I mean?

NICK

I guess.

TOM

The whole world's a holy mess.
 If we're not careful, the European way of life
 Will disappear. I know my wife
 May disagree, but it's up to us, the Nordics,

Who've created all the art, the culture, while critics
Call us extreme.

DAISY

(Enters with JORDAN. Laughing.)

We've got to beat
The heathens down!

JORDAN

You should retreat
To California, there's nothing there but sun and sand.

TOM

(To JORDAN)

I'm ready. Come show me your backhand.

(TOM and JORDAN leave.)

NICK

Jordan seems like fun.

DAISY

She's visiting this summer.
I plan to throw you two together—
You know, lock you in a closet, push you
Both into a boat, way out on the ocean blue.

NICK

She from New York?

DAISY

No, Louisville. The two of us
Were just like sisters, scandalous.
(She takes his hand.)
I'm glad to see you, Nick.
Why'd you miss the wedding?

NICK

I was sick,
Still stuck in France.

DAISY

Gee, I'm sorry.
I've gotten pretty cynical.

NICK

What's the story?

DAISY

You want to hear what happened the night
My daughter was born in Chicago?

NICK

Alright.

(As he listens, he fades into the shadows and leaves.)

DAISY

(To audience.)

Well, she was less than one hour old,
And Tom was god knows where. I was cold.
The ether had just worn off. I asked,
Is it a boy or girl? Please tell me. At last
A nurse said it's a baby girl.
A girl. That's when my whole world
Suddenly collapsed, except
For her. I turned my head away and wept.
All right, I said, I'm glad that it's a girl.
I hope she'll be a fool, a pretty swirl
Of emptiness. Since that's the only thing the rules
Allow: stupid, beautiful fools.

(Comes forward to the edge of the stage.)

I know that everything is terrible.
Everybody says so, that life's unbearable.
It's true. I've been so many places and done
So many things, as much as anyone.
How did I become the very thing I hated?
God, look at me, I'm so sophisticated!

(She breaks into sobs and leaves.)

The lights fade to black.

A single gunshot echoes on the empty stage.

In the distance, a faint green light starts to flicker.)

NICK

(Off.)

I think of Gatsby that first night,
Standing on his lawn, when he picked out the light—
Faint, greenish—on Daisy's dock. It shone
Across Long Island Sound. I wonder how alone
He must have felt, even as his vision
Seemed close enough to grasp. But it was over, done.
I know that Gatsby's trust

Was fixed on that green light, and how we must
Stretch out our arms, run faster, to try and capture
An orgiastic future
Receding, year by year—so we beat on, like small boats cast
Against the current, borne back ceaselessly into the past.

END