**The Great Gatsby**

**Summary**

Chapter One: The novel begins with a personal note by the narrator, Nick Carraway. He relates that he has a tendency to reserve all judgments against people and that he has been conditioned to be understanding toward those who haven't had his advantages. Carraway came from a prominent family from the Midwest, graduated from Yale and fought in the Great War. After the war and a period of restlessness, he decided to go East to learn the bond business. At the book's beginning, Carraway has just arrived in New York, living in West Egg village. He was going to have dinner with Tom Buchanan and his wife Daisy. Tom was an enormously wealthy man and a noted football player at Yale, and Daisy was Carraway's second cousin. Jordan mentions that, since Carraway lives in West Egg, he must know Gatsby. Another woman, Jordan Baker, is also there. She tells Nick that Tom is having an affair with some woman in New York. Tom discusses the book "The Rise of the Colored Empires," which claims that the colored races will submerge the white race eventually. Daisy talks to Carraway alone, and claims that she has become terribly cynical and sophisticated. After visiting with the Buchanans, Carraway goes home to West Egg, where he sees Gatsby come from his mansion alone, looking at the sea. He stretches out his arms toward the water, looking at a faraway green light.

Chapter Two: Fitzgerald begins this second chapter with the description of a road running between West Egg and New York City. A large, decaying billboard showing two eyes (advertising an optometrist's practice) overlooks the desolate area. It is here, at a gas station, where Tom Buchanan introduces Nick Carraway to Myrtle Wilson, the woman with whom he is having an affair. Myrtle herself is married to George B. Wilson, an auto mechanic. Tom has Myrtle meet them in the city, where Tom buys her a dog. They go to visit Myrtle's sister and also visit her neighbors, Catherine McKee and her husband, who is an artist. They gossip about Gatsby, and Myrtle discusses her husband, claiming that she was crazy to marry him, and how she met Tom. Later, Myrtle and Tom argue about whether or not she has a right to say Daisy's name, and he breaks Myrtle's nose.

Chapter Three: Nick Carraway describes the customs of Gatsby's weekly parties: the arrival of crates of oranges and lemons, a corps of caterers and a large orchestra. On the first night that Carraway visits Gatsby's house, he was one of the few guests who had actually been invited. When he arrives, he sees Jordan Baker, who had recently lost a golf tournament. They hear more gossip about Jay Gatsby he supposedly killed a man, or was a German spy. Jordan and Nick look through Gatsby's library, where she thinks that his books are not real. Later in the party, a man who recognized Nick from the war talks to him Nick does not know that it is Gatsby. Suddenly, after he identifies himself, Gatsby gets a phone call from Chicago. Afterwards, Gatsby asks to speak to Jordan Baker alone. When she finishes talking to Gatsby, she tells Nick that she heard the most amazing thing and says that she wishes to see him. Guests leaving the party have a car wreck in Gatsby's driveway. This was merely one event in a crowded summer. Carraway, who spent most of his time working, began to like New York. For a while he lost sight of Jordan Baker. He was not in love with her, but had some curiosity toward her.

Chapter Four: At a Sunday morning party at Gatsby's, young women gossip about Gatsby (he's a bootlegger who killed a man who found out that he was a nephew to Von Hindenburg and second cousin to the devil). One morning Gatsby comes to take Nick for lunch. He shows off his car: it had a rich cream color and was filled with boxes from Gatsby's purchases. Gatsby asks Nick what his opinion of him is, and Nick is evasive. Gatsby gives his story: he is the son of wealthy people in the Middle West, brought up in America and educated at Oxford. Carraway does not believe him, for he chokes on his words. Gatsby continues: he lived in the capitals of Europe, then enlisted in the war effort, where he was promoted to major and given a number of declarations (from every Allied government, even Montenegro). Gatsby admits that he usually finds himself among strangers because he drifts from here to there, and that something happened to him that Jordan Baker will tell Nick at lunch. They drive out past the valley of ashes and Nick even glimpses Myrtle Wilson. When Gatsby is stopped for speeding, he flashes a card to the policeman, who then does not give him a ticket.

At lunch, Gatsby introduces Carraway to Meyer Wolfsheim, a small, flat-nosed Jew. He talks of the days at the Metropole when they shot Rosy Rosenthal, and proudly mentions his cufflinks, which are made from human molars. Wolfsheim is a gambler, the man who fixed the 1919 World Series. Tom Buchanan is also there, and Nick introduces him to Gatsby, who appears quite uncomfortable and then suddenly disappears. Jordan Baker tells the story about Gatsby: Back in 1917, Daisy was eighteen and Jordan sixteen. They were volunteering with the Red Cross, making bandages, and Daisy asked Jordan to cover for her that day. She was meeting with Jay Gatsby, and there were wild rumors that she was going to run off to New York with him. On Daisy's wedding day to Tom, she nearly changes her mind, and goes into hysterics. According to Jordan, Gatsby bought his house just to be across the bay from Daisy. Nick becomes more drawn to Jordan, with her scornful and cynical manner. Jordan tells Nick that he is supposed to arrange a meeting between Gatsby and Daisy.

Chapter Five: Nick speaks with Gatsby about arranging a meeting with Daisy, and tries to make it as convenient for Nick as possible. Gatsby even offers him a job, a "confidential sort of thing," although he assures Nick that he would not have to work with Wolfsheim. On the day that Gatsby and Daisy are to meet, Gatsby has arranged everything to perfection. They start at Nick's home, where the conversation between the three (Nick, Gatsby, Daisy) is stilted and awkward. They are all embarrassed, and Nick tells Gatsby that he's behaving like a little boy. They go over to Gatsby's house, where Gatsby gives a tour. Nick asks Gatsby more questions about his business, and he snaps back "that's my affair," before giving a half-hearted explanation. Gatsby shows Daisy newspaper clippings about his exploits, and has Ewing Klipspringer, a boarder, play the piano for them. One of the notable mementos that Gatsby shows Daisy is a photograph of him with Dan Cody, his closest friend, on a yacht. As they leave, Carraway realizes that there must have been moments when Daisy disappointed Gatsby during the afternoon, for his dreams and illusions had been built up to such grandiose levels.

Chapter Six: On a vague hunch, a reporter comes to Gatsby's home asking him if he had a statement to give out. The actual story of Gatsby is revealed: he was born James Gatz in North Dakota. He had his named legally changed at the age of seventeen. His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people, and the young man was consumed by fancies of what he might achieve. His life changed when he rowed out to Dan Cody's yacht on Lake Superior. Cody was then fifty, a product of the Nevada silver fields and of the Yukon gold rush. Cody took Gatsby in and brought him to the West Indies and the Barbary Coast as a personal assistant. When Cody died, Gatsby inherited $25,000, but didn't get it because Cody's mistress, Ella Kaye, claimed all of it. Gatsby told Nick this much later.

Nick had not seen Gatsby for several weeks when he went over to his house. Tom Buchanan arrived there. He had been horseback riding with a woman and a Mr. Sloane. Gatsby invites the group to supper, but the lady counters with an offer of supper at her home. Mr. Sloane seems quite opposed to the idea, so Nick turns down the offer, but Gatsby accepts. Tom complains about the crazy people that Daisy meets, presumably meaning Gatsby. On the following Saturday Tom accompanies Daisy to Gatsby's party. Tom is unpleasant and rude during the evening. Tom suspects that Gatsby is a bootlegger, since he is one of the new rich. After the Buchanans leave, Gatsby is disappointed, thinking that Daisy surely did not enjoy herself. Nick realizes that Gatsby wanted nothing less of Daisy than that she should tell Tom that she never loved him. Nick tells Gatsby that he can't ask too much of Daisy, and that "you can't repeat the past," to which Gatsby replies: "Of course you can!"

Chapter Seven: It was when curiosity about Gatsby was at its highest that he failed to give a Saturday night party. Nick goes over to see if Gatsby is sick, and learns that Gatsby had dismissed every servant in his house and replaced them with a half dozen others who would not gossip, for Daisy had been visiting in the afternoons. Daisy invites Gatsby, Nick and Jordan to lunch. At the lunch, Tom is supposedly on the telephone with Myrtle Wilson. Daisy shows of her daughter, who is dressed in white, to her guests. Tom claims that he read that the sun is getting hotter and soon the earth will fall into it or rather that the sun is getting colder. Daisy makes an offhand remark that she loves Gatsby, which Tom overhears. When Tom goes inside to get a drink, Nick remarks that Daisy has an indiscreet voice. Gatsby says that her voice is "full of money." They all go to town: Nick and Jordan in Tom's car, Daisy in Gatsby's. On the way, Tom tells Nick that he has investigated Gatsby, who is certainly no Oxford man, as is rumored. They stop to get gas at Wilson's garage. Mr. Wilson wants to buy Tom's car, for he has financial troubles and he and Myrtle want to go west. Wilson tells Tom that he "just got wised up" to something recently, the reason why he and Myrtle want to get away.

While leaving the garage, they see Myrtle peering down at the car from her window. Her expression was one of jealous terror toward Jordan Baker, whom she took to be his wife.

Feeling that both his wife and mistress are slipping away from him, Tom feels panicked and impatient. To escape from the summer heat, they go to a suite at the Plaza Hotel. Tom begins to confront Gatsby, irritated at his constant use of the term "old sport." Tom attempts to expose Gatsby as a liar concerning Gatsby's experience at Oxford. Tom rambles on about the decline of civilization, and how there may even be intermarriage between races. Gatsby tells Tom that Daisy doesn't love him, and never loved him the only reason why she married him was because Gatsby was poor and Daisy was tired of waiting. Daisy hints that there has been trouble in her and Tom's past, and then tells Tom that she never loved him. However, she does concede that she did love Tom once. Gatsby tells Tom that he is not going to take care of Daisy anymore and that Daisy is leaving him. Tom calls Gatsby a "common swindler" and a bootlegger involved with Meyer Wolfsheim. Nick realizes that today is his thirtieth birthday.

The young Greek, Michaelis, who ran the coffee joint next to Wilson's garage was the principal witness at the inquest. While Wilson and his wife were fighting, she ran out in the road and was hit by a light green car. She was killed. Tom and Nick learn this when they drive past on their way back from the city. Tom realizes that it was Gatsby who hit Myrtle. When Nick returns home, he sees Gatsby, who explains what happened. Daisy was driving the car when they hit Myrtle.

Chapter Eight: Nick cannot sleep that night. Toward dawn he hears a taxi go up Gatsby's drive, and he immediately feels that he has something to warn Gatsby about. Gatsby is still there, watching Daisy's mansion across the bay. Nick warns him to get away for a week, since his car will inevitably be traced, but he refuses to consider it. He cannot leave Daisy until he knew what she would do. It was then when Gatsby told his entire history to Nick. Gatsby still refuses to believe that Daisy ever loved Tom. After the war Gatsby searched for Daisy, only to find that she had married Tom. Nick leaves reluctantly, having to go to work that morning. Before he leaves, Nick tells Gatsby that he's "worth the whole damn bunch put together." At work, Nick gets a call from Jordan, and they have a tense conversation.

That day Michaelis goes to comfort Wilson, who is convinced that his wife was murdered. He had found the dog collar that Tom had bought Myrtle hidden the day before, which prompted their sudden decision to move west. Wilson looks out at the eyes of T.J. Eckleburg and tells Michaelis that "God sees everything." Wilson left, "acting crazy" (according to witnesses), and found his way to Gatsby's house. Gatsby had gone out to the pool for one last swim before draining it for the fall. Wilson shot him, and then shot himself.

Chapter Nine: Most of the reports of the murder were grotesque and untrue. Nick finds himself alone on Gatsby's side. Tom and Daisy suddenly left town. Meyer Wolfsheim is difficult to contact, and offers assistance, but cannot become too involved because of current entanglements. Nick tracks down Gatsby's father, Henry C. Gatz, a solemn old man, helpless and dismayed by news of the murder. Gatz says that his son would have "helped build up the country." Klipspringer, the boarder, leaves suddenly and only returns to get his tennis shoes. Nick goes to see Wolfsheim, who claims that he made Gatsby. He tells Nick "let he learn to show our friendship for a man when he is alive and not after he is dead," and politely refuses to attend the funeral. Gatz shows Nick his son's daily schedule, in which he has practically every minute of his day planned. He had a continual interest in self-improvement. At the funeral, one of the few attendees is the Owl-Eyed man from Gatsby's first party. Nick thinks about the differences between the west and the east, and realizes that he, the Buchanans, Gatsby and Jordan are all Westerners who came east, perhaps possessing some deficiency which made them unadaptable to Eastern life. After Gatsby's death the East was haunted and distorted. He meets with Jordan Baker, who recalls their conversation about how bad drivers are dangerous only when two of them meet. She tells Nick that the two of them are both 'bad drivers.' Months later Nick saw Tom Buchanan, and Nick scorns him, knowing that he pointed Wilson toward Gatsby. Nick realizes that all of Tom's actions were, to him, justified. Nick leaves New York to return West.

Fitzgerald concludes the novel with a final note on Gatsby's beliefs. It is this particular aspect of his character his optimistic belief in achievement and the ability to attain one's dreams that defines Gatsby, in contrast to the compromising cynicism of his peers. Yet the final symbol contradicts and deflates the grand optimism that Gatsby held. Fitzgerald ends the book with the sentence "So we beat on, boats against the current, borne ceaselessly into the past," which contradicts Gatsby's fervent belief that one can escape his origins and rewrite his past.