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HE HAD COME A LONG WAY

"They're a rotten crowd...You're worth the whole damn bunch put together."

TO THIS BLUE LAWN, AND HIS

He must have felt that he had lost the old warm world, paid a high price for living too long with a single dream.

GATSBY BELIEVED IN THE GREEN LIGHT, THE ORGASTIC FUTURE THAT YEAR BY YEAR RECEDES BEFORE US.

DREAM MUST HAVE SEEMED

"I FOUND MYSELF ON GATSBY'S SIDE, AND ALONE."

So we beat on, boats against the current,
borne back ceaselessly into the past.

SO CLOSE THAT HE COULD

HARDLY FAIL TO GRASP IT.

Gatsby believed in the green light, the orgastic future that year by year recedes before us.

**"IT WAS ALL VERY CARELESS AND CONFUSED. THEY WERE CARELESS PEOPLE, TOM AND DAISY—
THEY SMASHED UP THINGS AND CREATURES AND THEN RETREATED BACK INTO THEIR MONEY..."**

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**HE HAD COME A LONG WAY TO THIS BLUE LAWN, AND HIS DREAM MUST
HAVE SEEMED SO CLOSE THAT HE COULD HARDLY FAIL TO GRASP IT.**

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**THE GREEN LIGHT
GOES OUT**



The silence in Gatsby's house was different now. It wasn't the expectant hush between frantic weekend revelries, nor the charged, shimmering quiet of the afternoon Daisy had finally come to tea. This was the silence of aftermath, heavy and stagnant, thick with the ghost of violence averted. It clung to the oversized furniture like dust covers and echoed in the cavernous halls. George Wilson had come and gone, a specter armed with grief and misinformation, leaving not a corpse cooling by the pool, but a tremor that ran deeper, unsettling the very foundations of the fantastic, improbable edifice Jay Gatsby had constructed.

I saw the doctor leaving as I pulled up the drive two days after the... confrontation, his expression carefully neutral as he stowed his bag. Inside, the air was cool and unnaturally still. Gatsby wasn't pacing his library like a caged creature. He sat in one of the monstrously ornate chairs, almost swallowed by it, a book open but unread on his lap. A faint, plum-colored bruise shadowed his temple, stark against his pallor, the only visible mark left

by Wilson's desperate struggle.

He looked up as I entered, the sound of my steps muffled by the thick rug. For a fleeting second, a flicker of the old, incandescent hope animated his face – the unwavering belief that could conjure mansions from mist. Then, just as quickly, it receded, leaving his features unguarded, strangely vulnerable. "Nick. Any word?"

His voice was hushed, lacking its usual resonant assurance. It sounded thin in the vast room. The gold-plated telephone beside him remained stubbornly mute, an idol refusing to answer.

"No, Gatsby. No word." The simplicity felt brutal.

He nodded slowly, a mechanical movement, his gaze drifting. "She'll call," he insisted, but the conviction sounded fragile, rehearsed. "It takes time, navigating these... complexities." He gestured vaguely. "Tom makes things difficult, I imagine. He's a brute, Nick."

“Perhaps,” I said, the word inadequate. Gatsby had survived the bullet, a fluke of timing and intervention. But Daisy’s silence was proving a more insidious threat, a slow bleeding of the hope that sustained him.

“She promised, Nick,” he whispered, leaning forward slightly, his eyes searching mine for confirmation. “You heard her. In the hotel. ‘I love you now – isn’t that enough?’ It has to be enough. What else is there?”

But it wasn’t enough, and I think, somewhere beneath the frantic insistence, he was beginning to know it. The air around him felt depleted.

The next day, driven by a grim sense of obligation that felt like scraping rust off my own soul, I visited him again. The fragile hope had curdled overnight into a sour anxiety. He met me near the library door; his eyes holding a sharp, almost clinical need for facts.

“You saw them, Nick. After... after the hotel. Tell me exactly. What did they do?”

I couldn’t lie. Not anymore. The whole tawdry spectacle had ground away any impulse towards polite fictions. “They were at home, Gatsby,” I began, choosing my words carefully. “At the kitchen table. Tom was talking, leaning forward. Daisy was listening.” I paused, picturing the scene – the

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intimacy of shared crisis, the undeniable solidity of their shared world. Then I added the detail that felt most damning, most final. “They were eating cold fried chicken. There were plates. They looked... comfortable. As comfortable as if discussing the weather. Like they were conspiring.”

He flinched visibly, as if struck. His hand rose unconsciously to the bruise on his temple. The image, so brutally mundane, so far removed from the high romance he constructed, seemed to pierce his shimmering shield more effectively than any shouted denial. Comfortable. Conspiring. Eating chicken while his world disintegrated. “Comfortable,” he repeated, the word tasting like ash. He turned abruptly and walked to the massive window overlooking the Sound, standing with his back stiffly to me. “Perhaps you should go, old sport,” he said, his voice tight, strained. “I believe I have some thinking to do.”

The use of “old sport” was jarring, hollow, a verbal tic persisting after its meaning had fled. I left him there, a solitary figure silhouetted against the graying afternoon light.

Meanwhile, across the bay, life prepared to continue elsewhere, insulated by inherited wealth. Tom summoned me – a curt phone call with an edge of command. I found them in their pristine white-and-gold drawing-room, maps and glossy travel brochures spread across a low table.

“Carraway,” Tom boomed, barely looking up from a map of the Riviera. “Just the man. Cannes or Biarritz first?” He radiated restless energy, tanned and vital, utterly untouched by the recent proximity of death.

Daisy sat curled on the sofa, tracing a coastline with a single, languid finger. She offered me a small, strained smile that didn’t reach her eyes. There was a brittle quality to her, like fine porcelain held together by will. “We’re planning a trip,” she said, her voice deliberately light, airy. “A long one. Weeks, perhaps months. To get away from all this... noise.” She waved a dismissive hand.

Tom snorted. “Noise. Yes. Good riddance. Heard your friend Gatsby had another spot of bother.” He glanced up, malicious amusement in his arrogant eyes. “Some people just land on their feet, I



suppose.” Then his expression hardened. “Doesn’t change a thing about who he is or what he did. Civilization’s got to hold firm, Carraway. Can’t let these upstarts drag everything down.” The hypocrisy was breathtaking, served with an arrogance that dared contradiction.

Daisy suddenly looked down at the map, her voice dropping to a murmur, almost too low to hear:

“SAFE... I SUPPOSE JUST SAFE.”

“What is the best thing a girl can be in this world?” she mused. Then, meeting my gaze with a flicker of something unreadable – defiance? Despair? – she added with brittle clarity, “Safe... I suppose just safe.” A chilling echo of her words about her daughter, now repurposed as the stark epitaph for her passionate affair:

I made my excuses quickly, the perfumed air of their entitlement suddenly suffocating. They were sealing themselves off, retreating behind the bulwark of their money, leaving the wreckage behind.

Gatsby, however, hadn’t completely surrendered. A day later, he called, his voice thin, strained. “Nick, old sport... one last thing. A favor. Could you... could you get a message to her?”

“Gatsby,” I started, weariness flooding me, “I don’t think—”

“Please, Nick. Just this.” It was a statement of exhausted necessity. Feeling like the worst kind



**“IT SEEMS THE PAST ISN’T ALWAYS
WITHIN REACH, OLD SPORT**



... NOT ALWAYS."





of fool, compromised beyond measure, I agreed. He sent over a single, heavy cream envelope via a solemn chauffeur. I drove back to East Egg, left it with Daisy's impassive maid, feeling like Judas delivering the kiss.

I waited. Gatsby waited. The phone remained silent. The mail brought nothing but circulars. When I saw Gatsby again two days later, summoned by a brief note, I didn't need to tell him. He knew. The silence was the reply, colder and more final than any written word.

He met me in the grand, empty ballroom, its vastness emphasizing his isolation. The frantic energy, the desperate hope – it was all gone. In its place was a strange, calm lucidity, a profound weariness settling in the lines around his eyes. "It seems the past isn't always within reach, old sport... not always." He smiled then, a brief, humorless twist of his lips. "Turns out you can't repeat it, after all."

That was the day I booked my train ticket. I decided definitively to go back West. The East felt

tainted, haunted by Gatsby's dead dream and the carelessness of those who had trampled it.

Before I left, I went to Gatsby's one last time, a final farewell. The change was palpable. Half the staff were gone, dismissed quietly. Packing crates stood in the marble foyer. Gatsby was in his library, overseeing the removal of older books – not his curated collection, but well-thumbed texts on business and self-improvement, relics from before "Jay Gatsby" eclipsed James Gatz. He paused, holding a faded photograph rescued from a box – not Daisy, but Dan Cody, the man who had launched his first transformation. He stared at it for a long moment.

"Leaving?" he asked, looking up as I entered, his voice quiet.

"Yes. Tomorrow morning. Back to Minnesota."

He nodded slowly, placing the photograph carefully back. "Good place. Solid." He looked around the emptying room, at the bare patches on the walls. "The parties are over, Nick." It wasn't regretful,



just a flat statement of fact. He seemed smaller; less luminous, as if the unmaking of his illusion was physically diminishing him. “Be careful, old sport,” he offered as I turned to leave, the phrase now undeniably, painfully ironic.

In that moment, looking at his still figure, I understood. The light hadn’t lost its vivid green color; but it had lost its meaning for him. It was no longer the “orgastic future,” the radiant symbol of his impossible desire, the beacon guiding him towards

PERHAPS DEATH WOULD HAVE BEEN A CLEANER ENDING

As I drove away down the long gravel drive, I saw the Buchanan’s car, gleaming and powerful, heading towards the city, likely towards their escape. They were leaving Gatsby alone in his emptying palace.

Later that evening, hours before my train, compelled by a final, morbid curiosity, I drove past his house one last time. The massive iron gates were closed. The house loomed dark against the twilight sky, immense and lifeless, save for a single light burning downstairs. And Gatsby himself was out on his dock, a solitary figure standing at the very edge, staring across the dark expanse of the Sound.

I stopped the car on the road above, hidden by the darkness, watching. The green light was burning at the end of the Buchanan dock across the bay, as steady and indifferent as a star. Gatsby stood motionless, his hands loose at his sides, his silhouette sharp against the darkening water. He wasn’t reaching out his arms. He wasn’t trembling with longing. He was simply watching it, a man observing a familiar landmark that no longer marked a destination.

Daisy. It was just a light, marking an empty house across the bay, signifying an absence, a final, silent punctuation mark on a dream that had guttered and finally died, leaving only cold wax behind.

He had survived the bullet, a physical threat born of misunderstanding. But he had only survived to face the slower, quieter, perhaps more devastating erosion of the dream itself. Perhaps death would have been a cleaner ending, a tragic but complete finale. Instead, he was left stranded on the shore of his own life, the tide having gone out. He had chased the green light until it consumed him, and now he was left adrift in its aftermath, alive but utterly, terrifyingly alone.

I put the car in gear and drove away, leaving Gatsby to his solitary vigil beneath the indifferent stars. I headed towards the train station, towards the West, towards a place where the echoes of shattered dreams might, eventually, fade into the solid reality of predictable seasons. The East glittered on behind me, a vast constellation of careless lights, a testament to lives built on shifting sands, forever reaching for something that had already slipped, irretrievably, through their careless fingers.

