CHAPTER Six
Gatsby's notoriety, spread about by the hundreds who had accepted his hospitality and so become authorities upon his past, had increased all summer until he fell just short of being news.

But he doesn't actually live in a house at all. He lives in a boat that looks like a house - it gets moved secretly up and down Long Island Shore!

And the underground pipeline to Canada? That's him too!
Just why these inventions were a source of satisfaction to James Gatz of North Dakota isn't easy to say.

James Gatz - that was really, or at least legaly, his name.
He had changed it at the age of seventeen and at the specific moment that witnessed the beginning of his career.

-when he saw Dan Cody's yacht drop anchor over the most insidious flat on Lake Superior.

For over a year he had been beating his way along the south shore of Lake Superior as a clam-digger and a salmon-fisher or in any other capacity that brought him food and bed.

But his heart was in a constant, turbulent riot.
The most grotesque and fantastic conceits haunted him in his bed at night...

A universe of ineffable gaudiness spun itself out in his brain while the clock ticked on the wash-stand and the moon soaked with wet light his tangled clothes upon the floor.

And for a while these reveries were a satisfactory hint of the unreality of reality.

A promise that the rock of the world was founded securely on a fairy's wing.
It was this James Gatz who had been loafing along the beach that afternoon...

but it was already Jay Gatsby who borrowed a rowboat...

and pulled out to the Tuolomee.
I suppose he'd had the name ready for a long time, even then.

His parents were shiftless and unsuccessful farm people - his imagination had never really accepted them as his parents at all.

The truth was that Jay Gatsby of West Egg, Long Island, sprang from his Platonic conception of himself...
He was a son of God, and he must be about His Father's business, in the service of a vast, vulgar and meretricious beauty.

So he invented just the sort of Jay Gatsby that a seventeen-year-old boy would be likely to invent...

and to this conception he was faithful to the end.
To young Gatz, that yacht represented all the beauty and glamour in the world.

Cody was then fifty years old, a product of the Nevada silver fields, of the Yukon, of every rush for metal since seventy-five.

Sir! There's a wind coming up. It could catch you and break you up in half an hour!

You never told me you had a pompadour - or a yacht!

I remember the portrait of Cody in Gatsby's bedroom - the pioneer debauchee who brought back to the Eastern seaboard the savage violence of the frontier brothel and saloon.
He had been coasting along all-too-hospitable shores for five years when he turned up as James Gatz's destiny in Little Girl Bay.

Cody found that Gatz was quick and extravagantly ambitious...

And when the Tucumcari left for the West Indies and the Barbary coast, Gatsby left too.

He was employed in a vague personal capacity...

in turn steward, mate, skipper, secretary and even jailor, for Dan Cody sober knew what lavish doings Dan Cody drunk might soon be about.

This arrangement lasted five years, during which the boat went three times around the Continent.
It might have lasted indefinitely except that Ella Kaye (the newspaper woman who played Madame de Maintenon to his weakness) came aboard one night in Boston...

and a week later Dan Cody inhospitably died.

Gatz never understood the legal device that was used against him, but what remained of the millions went intact to Ella Kaye.

He was left with his singularly appropriate education.

The vague contour of Jay Gatsby had filled out to the substantiality of a man.
He told me all this very much later, but I've put it down here with the idea of exploring those first wild rumours about his antecedents which weren't even faintly true. Moreover he told it to me at a time of confusion, when I had reached the point of believing everything and nothing about him.
So I take advantage of this short halt, while Gatsby, so to speak, caught his breath, to clear this set of misconceptions away...
Who is this Gatsby anyhow? Some big bootlegger?

Where'd you hear that?

I didn't hear it. I imagined it. A lot of these newly rich people are just big bootleggers, you know.

Not Gatsby.
I wonder where in the devil he met Daisy. By God, I may be old-fashioned in my ideas, but women run around too much these days to suit me. They meet all kinds of crazy fish.

Tom was evidently perturbed at Daisy's running around alone, for on the following Saturday night he came with her to Gatsby's party.

Perhaps his presence gave the evening its peculiar quality of oppressiveness - it stands out in my memory from Gatsby's other parties that summer...
There were the same people, or at least the same sort of people...

the same profusion of champagne...

the same many-coloured, many-keyed commotion.

But I felt an unpleasantness on the air, a pervading harshness that hadn't been there before.

Look around-

I'm looking around.
I'm having a marvellous-

You must see the faces of many people you've heard about.

We don't go around very much. In fact I was just thinking I don't know a soul here.

Daisy and Gatsby danced. I remember being surprised by his graceful, conservative foxtrot. I had never seen him dance before.
Tom appeared from his oblivion as we were sitting down to supper together...

Do you mind if I eat with some people over here? A fellow's getting off some funny stuff.

Go ahead, and if you want to take down any addresses here's my little gold pencil.

Well—this one's common but pretty.

We were at a particularly tipsy table—that was my fault.

I knew that she wasn't having a good time. How do you feel, Miss Baedeker?
I'd enjoyed these same people only two weeks before...

Oh, she's all right now. When she's had five or six cocktails she always starts screaming like that. I tell her she ought to leave it alone.

But what had amused me then turned septic on the air now.

I do leave it alone!

We heard you yelling, so I said to Doc Clyet here: 'There's somebody that needs your help, Doc.'

She's much obliged. I'm sure, but you got her dress all wet when you stuck her head in the pool.

Anything I hate is to get my head stuck in a pool. They almost drowned me once over in New Jersey.

Then you ought to leave it alone.

Speak for yourself! Your hand shakes. I wouldn't let you operate on me!

...It was like that.

And it offended Daisy - inarguably because it wasn't a gesture but an emotion.
She was appalled by West Egg, this unprecedented "place" that Broadway had begotten upon a Long Island fishing village...

appalled by its raw vigour that chased under the old euphemisms...

and by the too-obtrusive fate that herded its inhabitants along a short cut from nothing to nothing.

She saw something awful in the very simplicity she failed to understand.
I sat on the front steps with them while they waited for their car. It was dark here in front; only the bright door sent ten square feet of light volleying out into the soft black morning.
Well, he certainly must have strained himself to get this menagerie together.

At least they are more interesting than the people we know.

You didn't look so interested.

Well, I was.

Did you notice Daisy's face when that girl asked her to put her under a cold shower?

Lots of people come who haven't been invited. That girl hadn't been invited.

They simply force their way in and he's too polite to object.

I'd like to know who he is and what he does. And I think I'll make a point of finding out.

I can tell you right now. He owned some drug-stores, a lot of drug-stores. He built them up himself.
In the meantime, in between time.

Daisy began to sing with the music in a husky, rhythmic voice, bringing out a meaning in each word that it never had before and would never have again.

When the melody rose her voice broke up sweetly, following it, in a way contralto voices have, and each change tipped a little of her warm human magic upon the air.

ain't we got fun
What was it up there in the song that seemed to be calling her back inside?

What would happen now in the dim, incalculable hours?

Perhaps some unbelievable guest would arrive, a person infinitely rare and to be marveled at,

After all, in the very casualness of Gatsby's party there were romantic possibilities totally absent from her world.

some authentically radiant young girl who with one fresh glance at Gatsby, one moment of magical encounter, would blot out those five years of unwavering devotion...
I stayed late that night. Gatsby asked me to wait until he was free, and I lingered in the garden until the lights were extinguished in the guest rooms overhead.

When he came down the steps at last the tanned skin was drawn unusually tight on his face, and his eyes were bright and tired.

She didn’t like it.

Of course she did.

I feel far away from her. It’s hard to make her understand.

She didn’t like it. She didn’t have a good time.

I guessed at his unutterable depression.

He wanted nothing less than that she should go to Tom and say: ‘I never loved you.’
After she had obliterated four years with that sentence they could decide upon the more practical measures to be taken. One of them was that, after she was free, they were to go back to Louisville and be married from her house...

just as if it were five years ago.

One autumn night, five years before, they had been walking down the street when the leaves were falling...

It was a cool night, with that mysterious excitement in it which comes at the two changes of the year.
Out of the corner of his eye,

Gatsby saw that the blocks of the sidewalk really formed a ladder and mounted to a secret place above the trees...

He could climb to it, if he climbed alone

...and once there he could suck on the pap of life, gulp down the incomparable milk of wonder.

His heart beat faster as Daisy’s white face came up to his own. He knew that when he kissed this girl, and forever wed his unutterable visions to her perishable breath, his mind would never again romp like the mind of God.

So he waited, listening for a moment longer to the tuning fork that had been struck upon a star.
Then he kissed her.

At his lips' touch... she blossomed for him like a flower...

and the incarnation was complete.

But she doesn't understand... She used to be able to understand. We'd sit for hours...
I wouldn't ask too much of her. You can't repeat the past.

Can't repeat the past? Why of course you can!

I'm going to fix everything just the way it was before. She'll see....