

Chapter Eight Summary and Analysis

After the day's traumatic events, [Nick](#) passes a sleepless night. Before dawn, he rises restlessly and goes to visit [Gatsby](#) at his mansion. Gatsby tells him that he waited at [Daisy's](#) until four o'clock in the morning and that nothing happened—[Tom](#) did not try to hurt her and Daisy did not come outside. Nick suggests that Gatsby forget about Daisy and leave Long Island, but Gatsby refuses to consider leaving Daisy behind.

Gatsby, melancholy, tells Nick about courting Daisy in Louisville in 1917. He says that he loved her for her youth and vitality, and idolized her social position, wealth, and popularity. He adds that she was the first girl to whom he ever felt close and that he lied about his background to make her believe that he was worthy of her. Eventually, he continues, he and Daisy made love, and he felt as though he had married her. She promised to wait for him when he left for the war, but then she married Tom, whose social position was solid and who had the approval of her parents.

Gatsby's gardener interrupts the story to tell Gatsby that he plans to drain the pool. The previous day was the hottest of the summer, but autumn is in the air this morning, and the gardener worries that falling leaves will clog the pool drains. Gatsby tells the gardener to wait a day; he has never used the pool, he says, and wants to go for a swim. Nick has stayed so long talking to Gatsby that he is very late for work. He finally says goodbye to Gatsby. As he walks away, he turns back and shouts that Gatsby is worth more than the Buchanans and all of their friends.

Nick goes to his office, but he feels too distracted to work, and even refuses to meet [Jordan Baker](#) for a date. The focus of his narrative then shifts to relate to the reader what happened at the garage after [Myrtle](#) was killed (the details of which Nick learns from Michaelis): George Wilson stays up all night talking to Michaelis about Myrtle. He tells him that before Myrtle died, he confronted her about her lover and told her that she could not hide her sin from the eyes of God. The morning after the accident, the eyes of Doctor T. J. Eckleburg, illuminated by the dawn, overwhelm Wilson. He believes they are the

eyes of God and leaps to the conclusion that whoever was driving the car that killed Myrtle must have been her lover. Wilson decides that God demands revenge and leaves to track down the owner of the car.

Wilson looks for Tom, because he knows that Tom is familiar with the car's owner—he saw Tom driving the car earlier that day, but he knows Tom could not have been the driver since Tom arrived after the accident in a different car with Nick and Jordan. Wilson eventually goes to Gatsby's house, where he finds Gatsby lying on an air mattress in the pool, floating in the water and looking up at the sky. Wilson shoots Gatsby, killing him instantly, then shoots himself.

Nick hurries back to West Egg and finds Gatsby floating dead in his pool. Nick imagines Gatsby's final thoughts, and pictures him disillusioned by the meaninglessness and emptiness of life without Daisy, without his dream.

Analysis

Gatsby's recounting of his initial courting of Daisy provides Nick an opportunity to analyze Gatsby's love for her. Nick identifies Daisy's aura of wealth and privilege—her many clothes, perfect house, lack of fear or worry—as a central component of Gatsby's attraction to her. The reader has already seen that Gatsby idolizes both wealth and Daisy. Now it becomes clear that the two are intertwined in Gatsby's mind.

Nick implicitly suggests that by making the shallow, fickle Daisy the focus of his life, Gatsby surrenders his extraordinary power of visionary hope to the simple task of amassing wealth. Gatsby's dream is reduced to a motivation for material gain because the object of his dream is unworthy of his power of dreaming, the quality that makes him "great" in the first place.

In this way, Gatsby continues to function as a symbol of America in the 1920s, which, as Fitzgerald implies throughout the novel's exploration of wealth, has become vulgar and empty as a result of subjecting its sprawling vitality to the greedy pursuit of money. Just as the American dream—the pursuit of happiness—has degenerated into a quest for mere wealth, Gatsby's powerful dream of happiness with Daisy has become the motivation for lavish excesses and criminal activities.

Although the reader is able to perceive this degradation, Gatsby is not. For him, losing Daisy is like losing his entire world. He has longed to re-create his past with her and is now forced to talk to Nick about it in a desperate attempt to keep it alive. Even after the confrontation with Tom, Gatsby is unable to accept that his dream is dead. Though Nick implicitly understands that Daisy is not going to leave Tom for Gatsby under any circumstance, Gatsby continues to insist that she will call him.