

'The last one was the one I met you at,' answered the girl, in an alert confident voice. She turned to her companion: 'Wasn't it for you, Lucille?'

It was for Lucille, too.

'I like to come,' Lucille said. 'I never care what I do, so I always have a good time. When I was here last I tore my gown<sup>21</sup> on a chair, and he asked me my name and address – inside of a week I got a package from Croirier's with a new evening gown in it.'

'Did you keep it?' asked Jordan.

'Sure I did. I was going to wear it to-night, but it was too big in the bust<sup>22</sup> and had to be altered. It was gas blue with lavender beads<sup>23</sup>. Two hundred and sixty-five dollars.'

'There's something funny about a fellow that'll do a thing like that,' said the other girl eagerly<sup>24</sup>. 'He doesn't want any trouble with anybody.'

'Who doesn't?' I inquired.

'Gatsby. Somebody told me –'

The two girls and Jordan leaned together confidentially.

'Somebody told me they thought he killed a man once.'

A thrill passed over all of us. The three Mr Mumbles bent forward<sup>25</sup> and listened eagerly.

'I don't think it's so much *that*,' argued Lucille sceptically; 'it's more that he was a German spy during the war.'

One of the men nodded in confirmation.

'I heard that from a man who knew all about him, grew up with him in Germany,' he assured us positively.

'Oh, no,' said the first girl, 'it couldn't be that, because he was in the American army during the war.' As our credulity switched back<sup>26</sup> to her she leaned forward with enthusiasm. 'You look at him sometimes when he thinks nobody's looking at him. I'll bet<sup>27</sup> he killed a man.'

She narrowed her eyes and shivered<sup>28</sup>. Lucille shivered. We all turned and looked around for Gatsby. It was testimony to the romantic speculation he inspired that there were whispers<sup>29</sup> about him from those who found little that it was necessary to whisper about in this world. [...]

There was dancing now on the canvas<sup>30</sup> in the garden; old men pushing young girls backward in eternal graceless circles, superior<sup>31</sup> couples holding each other tortuously, fashionably, and keeping in the corners – and a great number of single girls dancing individualistically or relieving<sup>32</sup> the orchestra for a moment of the burden<sup>33</sup> of the banjo or the traps<sup>34</sup>. By midnight the hilarity had increased. A celebrated tenor had sung in Italian, and a notorious contralto had sung in jazz, and between the numbers people were doing 'stunts'<sup>35</sup> all over the garden, while happy, vacuous bursts of laughter<sup>36</sup> rose toward the summer sky. A pair of stage twins, who turned out to be the girls in yellow, did a baby act in costume, and champagne was served in glasses bigger than finger-bowls<sup>37</sup>. The moon had risen higher, and floating in the Sound<sup>38</sup> was a triangle of silver scales<sup>39</sup>, trembling a little to the stiff, tinny drip<sup>40</sup> of the banjoes on the lawn.

I was still with Jordan Baker. We were sitting at a table with a man of about my age and a rowdy<sup>41</sup> little girl, who gave way upon the slightest provocation to uncontrollable laughter. I was enjoying myself now. I had taken two finger-bowls of champagne, and the scene had changed before my eyes into something significant, elemental, and profound.

At a lull in the entertainment<sup>42</sup> the man looked at me and smiled.

'Your face is familiar,' he said, politely. 'Weren't you in the First Division during the war?'

'Why, yes. I was in the Twenty-eighth Infantry<sup>43</sup>.'

'I was in the Sixteenth until June nineteen-eighteen. I knew I'd seen you somewhere before.'

We talked for a moment about some wet, gray little villages in France. Evidently he lived in this vicinity, for he told me that he had just bought a hydroplane<sup>44</sup>, and was going to try it out in the morning.

21 I tore my gown. Mi strappai il vestito.

22 bust. Busto, corpetto.

23 lavender beads. Perline di colore lavanda.

24 eagerly. Con entusiasmo.

25 bent forward. Si curvarono in avanti.

26 switched back. Si spostava di nuovo.

27 I'll bet. Scommetto che.

28 shivered. Rabbrividi.

29 there were whispers. Si bisbigliava.

30 canvas. Tela.

31 superior. Di classe.

32 relieving. Sollevando.

33 burden. Onere.

34 the traps. La batteria.

35 stunts. Numeri, esibizioni.

36 vacuous burst of laughter. Superficiali scoppi di risa.

37 finger-bowls. Lavadito di vetro usate come coppe da champagne.

38 the Sound. Lo stretto.

39 scales. Scaglie.

40 stiff, tinny drip. Sgocciolio rigido e metallico.

41 rowdy. Scalmanata.

42 At a lull in the entertainment. In una pausa dell'intrattenimento.

43 Infantry. Fanteria.

44 hydroplane. Idrovolante.