The Great Gatsby: Chapter Three Key Points

Here, I have summarized key points from each page of the pdf copy of the novel.

- **Pages 43-44:** Parties at Gatsby's
  - Nick describes how Gatsby's house is always abuzz with a party. During the day, people are swimming and boating, and all weekend long, Gatsby's cars are chauffeuring people in from the city for parties at his house that last all day and all night.
  - He describes the hundreds of oranges and lemons that are juiced each weekend, all the lights put up to light up the garden, the many caterers, and the five-piece orchestra.
  - Remember, this story takes place during prohibition when alcohol was illegal, but it seems like the drinks are still flowing at Gatsby's parties.

- **Page 45:** Nick gets invited to a Gatsby party
  - An employee of Gatsby walks over to Nick's house and gives him a formal invitation to the party that evening. Nick says that he was one of the few people at the party who was actually invited; most people just showed up.

- **Pages 46-48:** Nick arrives at Gatsby's party and bumps into Jordan Baker
  - Nick gets to the party and wants to greet Gatsby, but nobody he asks seems to have any idea where Gatsby is.
  - While standing around alone and feeling awkward, Nick spots Jordan Baker, the young woman he met at Tom and Daisy's house.
  - Nick and Jordan make small talk with some girls, and one of them tells them how last time she was at a Gatsby party, she ripped her dress on a chair, and within a week, Gatsby had sent her a brand new expensive evening gown.
  - Then, the other girl says of Gatsby, "Somebody told me they thought he killed a man once." The other girl counters, "it's more that he was a German spy during the war." To which the first girl responds, "Oh, no...it couldn't be that, because he was in the American army during the war."

- **Page 49:** The party goes on
  - The first half of this page is a little confusing, but Nick is describing how Jordan has a crude college student as her date for this party who seems to be certain that she is going to sleep with him.
Then, Nick describes how all of the East Egg people at this party are behaving as though they are too good for West Egg and for this party. Because of this, Jordan and Nick find their company very boring, so they leave their table and go looking for Gatsby.

**Page 50: Owl Eyes and the library**

- On their quest to find Gatsby, Nick and Jordan enter the library and meet **Owl Eyes**, a middle-aged man with giant glasses.
  - **Owl Eyes** excited tells them about Gatsby's books, saying that they are “Absolutely real—have pages and everything. I thought they'd be a nice durable cardboard. Matter of fact, they're absolutely real...It's a triumph. What thoroughness! What realism! Knew when to stop too—didn't cut the pages. But what do you want? What do you expect?”
  - This is a very important scene, because Owl Eyes was expecting the books to be fake and was shocked and impressed to see that they were real. This is surprising to him because Owl Eyes sees how Gatsby makes such a show out of everything and would expect his library to be fake too, but it is actually real. However, he does note that Gatsby didn't cut the pages. This means that the books haven't actually been opened or read.

**Pages 51-53: The party rages on and Nick finally meets Gatsby**

- Midnight approaches, the party just keeps getting more wild. People are singing and dancing and acting rowdy, the champagne is flowing, and Nick and Jordan are still together.
- Nick and Jordan are seated at a table with a man and a young woman, and the man recognizes Nick from the war. They get talking, and the man invites Nick to try out his new hydroplane the next morning.
  - Nick agrees and tells the man how this is such a strange party, and that he hasn't even met the host yet. At this point, the man introduces himself and says that he is **Gatsby**, the host.
- Nick finds **Gatsby** enchanting, and describes his smile as "one of those rare smiles with a quality of eternal reassurance in it, that you may come across four or five times in life. It faced—or seemed to face—the whole external world for an instant, and then concentrated on YOU with an irresistible prejudice in your favor. It understood you just so far as you wanted to be understood, believed in you as you would like to believe in yourself and assured you that it had precisely the impression of you that, at your best, you hoped to convey."
• Nick continues his description of Gatsby, "I was looking at an elegant young rough-neck, a year or two over thirty, whose elaborate formality of speech just missed being absurd. Some time before he introduced himself I'd got a strong impression that he was picking his words with care."
• Shortly after their conversation started, Gatsby's butler hurries out to let him know that Chicago is on the wire. This means that someone in Chicago is on the phone line for him...it must be important business if he is getting called at midnight during his party about it, but at this point, we don't know what type of business.

• **Page 54: Nick and Jordan talk about Gatsby**
  - Nick is surprised that Gatsby is a young man much like him, as he was expecting someone middle-aged. He asks Jordan what she knows about Gatsby and she tells him, "Well,—he told me once he was an Oxford man." (Oxford was the best college in England at this time) but then Jordan goes on to say that she doesn't believe him.
  - Nick is desperate to know more about Gatsby and his background and is puzzled because, men "didn't—drift coolly out of nowhere and buy a palace on Long Island Sound."

• **Page 55: Gatsby, standing apart from the rest**
  - The band begins to play a popular song, and Nick notices Gatsby looking down on the party. He describes him as, "standing alone on the marble steps and looking from one group to another with approving eyes. His tanned skin was drawn attractively tight on his face and his short hair looked as though it were trimmed every day. I could see nothing sinister about him. I wondered if the fact that he was not drinking helped to set him off from his guests, for it seemed to me that he grew more correct as the fraternal hilarity increased."
    ■ Here, Gatsby is looking down on his party rather than being a part of it himself. To Nick, he appears so different from his guests, because he is so proper, rather than a rowdy mess like so many others are this late into the party.
    ■ Gatsby's butler appears and tells Jordan that Gatsby would like a word with her.

• **Pages 56-57: The end of the party**
  - It is nearly two in the morning. Separated from Jordan, Nick wanders around the party. He sees drunk girls crying and women fighting with their husbands. The orchestra has left and people are beginning to leave the party as well.
- **Page 58:** Gatsby tells Jordan a secret
  - Nick notices Gatsby and Jordan exiting the library. Gatsby appears to have let his guard down, but once in view of the public again, he puts it back up. Jordan tells Nick that Gatsby just told her the most amazing thing, but she swore that she wouldn’t tell Nick.
    - Jordan’s group is calling to her to leave with them, so she tells Nick to look her up in the phone book and come see her, then leaves.
  - Nick apologizes to Gatsby for not recognizing him earlier, and Gatsby tells him not to worry about it. He reminds Nick about their plans to try out his new plane the next morning.
    - Gatsby is interrupted again by his butler who tells him that Philadelphia is on the line now.

- **Pages 59-60:** Drunk drivers crash
  - Nick notices a car crashed in the ditch that is holding up the line of traffic leaving the party. It appears that Owl Eyes, who he met earlier that night, was in the car that crashed. Then, the driver of the car steps out and is so drunk that he has no idea what happened. He asks if they have run out of gas and wonders if there is a gas station nearby.

- **Pages 61-62:** Nick addresses the reader
  - Nick speaks directly to the reader and says that based on what he has written so far, it seems like the three days discussed in these chapters so far were all that his attention was focused on. But he says that during the summer this all happened, these were really just small events in a summer full of much more, and he did not realize their significance until much later.
    - This lets readers know that these events are all building up to some big event, but we don’t know yet what that will be.
  - Nick explains how he spent the rest of his summer going to work, having dinner at the Yale Club, and even briefly dating a girl.
    - Nick remembers how he would sometimes see attractive women and imagine what it would be like to be part of their lives. He goes on to say how he felt a “haunting loneliness sometimes,” and how he would often see others who seemed like they were as lonely as he was.

- **Pages 63-65:** Reconnecting with Jordan
  - Midway through the summer, Nick and Jordan start spending time together. He says that he wasn’t in love with her but felt some curiosity towards her. He describes her as, “The bored haughty face
that she turned to the world concealed something—most affectations conceal something eventually, even though they don’t in the beginning—and one day I found what it was.

- Nick feels like she is hiding something about herself.

- One day, Jordan leaves the top down on a borrowed car during a rainstorm and then lies about it. This reminds Nick of a story that Daisy told him about Jordan.
  - Jordan is a professional golfer, at her first big tournament, there was a scandal in which she was accused of moving a ball. She denied it and eventually the scandal died down.

- Through these moments, Nick has realized that Jordan is “incurably dishonest,” but he didn’t really mind it. He also says that Jordan typically avoided clever men who would be likely to catch her in her lies. Because she comes from the higher class, people rarely called her out on these lies.

- He describes another incident, where Nick tells her she is a bad driver and that she ought to be more careful. Jordan responds that it doesn’t matter, because other people are careful, and she says, “They’ll keep out of my way...It takes two to make an accident.”
  - This shows that Jordan doesn’t really take much accountability for her actions and just assumes that other people will do the right thing.

- Jordan tells Nick that she likes him and he has feelings for her as well, but first, he needs to completely break off the relationship that he left back home in the Midwest. He feels the need to do this first, because he says of himself, “I am one of the few honest people that I have ever known.”