

The dusk

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**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Norman Gatsby sits on a park bench at dusk, a time when, in his estimation, individuals who have experienced defeat in their lives can sojourn unrecognized. An elderly gentleman sits next to Gatsby, and Gatsby judges him to be a lonely person of no consequence. After a short time, the old man leaves, and his place is taken by a younger man, better dressed than his predecessor but equally downcast. The man tells Gatsby a sad story of having gone out to buy some soap, then not having been able to find his hotel.

Gatsby responds that he had once done the same thing, only in a foreign country, to which the man rejoins that in a foreign land, one could go to the Consul for help, but here at home, there is no help to be had, unless "some decent chap" would believe his story and lend him some money. Gatsby says he will lend the man some money if he can produce the soap as proof that his story is true, but the man cannot, and walks away.

Looking on the ground, Gatsby spies a new bar of soap, goes after the man, and lends him the money. When he returns to the park bench, however, the elderly gentleman who was sitting next to him originally is searching the ground for a lost bar of soap. Two elements of humor that the author uses in this story are comic irony and satire. Comic irony occurs when the reader knows something that a character does not, and in this story is evidenced when the young man drolly ends his sad tale with a veiled request for money.

The man obviously has told his story to make Gatsby feel sorry for him and lend him some money, but Gatsby does not know for sure that his story is a lie. Satire is the use of humor to expose a human frailty. Gatsby's inability to judge his counterparts correctly is comically pointed out in his unstated

chagrin when he discovers that, through his own miscalculation, he has allowed the young man to outwit him with his sad story of woe.