

Tom and Daisy

That spring, the sun shone every day. I was lonely at first in the East. But I felt that this was the real beginning of my life. I walked in the fresh air. I bought books. I worked hard. I was trying to make myself a successful businessman.

One evening, the phone rang. It was my cousin, Daisy.

'Hallo, Nick,' she said in her soft voice. 'Do you know we are neighbours? Tom and I are living across the bay⁶, in East Egg. I think we've settled down at last. Do come to dinner, Nick. I'd love to see you.'

Of course, I agreed. I wanted to see my cousin Daisy again. She had married Tom Buchanan, a man I had known at Yale University. Tom had been a famous football player at college. His family was very rich and Tom had spent money carelessly. Now he and Daisy had left Chicago, where I had last seen them. After the War, they had travelled around America and Europe. I did not believe they had really settled down. They were too rich and too restless⁷.

So, a few days later, I drove over to East Egg. The Buchanan's house was a big one, overlooking the bay. The lawns and gardens started at the house and went down to the sea. It was late afternoon and the weather was warm and windy. All the windows at the front of the house were wide open.

Tom Buchanan stood on the porch⁸, his legs wide apart. He was a fair-haired man of about thirty. He wore smart riding clothes⁹ and his body looked strong and cruel.

We talked for a few minutes on the sunny porch.

'I've got a nice place here,' Tom told me. He took hold of my arm and showed me the outside of the house. Then we looked at the rose garden and walked down to the sea. There was a big motorboat at the end of the dock¹⁰.

'Come inside now and see Daisy,' Tom said.

We walked into the house and into a high room with windows at either end. The windows were open and the wind blew the curtains up towards the ceiling, then down towards the thick carpet.

Two young women were sitting on an enormous couch¹¹. Their white dresses blew about in the wind until Tom shut the windows.

The younger girl on the couch was Miss Baker. The other girl was my cousin, Daisy. Daisy leant forward and gave a charming¹² little laugh.

'I'm so very happy to see you again,' Daisy said. Her eyes were bright and exciting, but her smile was sad. I told Daisy that I had stayed in Chicago on my way to New York. Lots of friends had sent her their love.

'That's wonderful,' Daisy cried. 'Let's go back, Tom. Tomorrow!'

'I'm staying here, in the East,' Tom said firmly. 'I'll never live anywhere else.'

At that moment, drinks were brought in. Miss Baker did not take one.

'No, thanks,' she said. 'I'm in training¹³.'

Tom looked at her in surprise.

'You are?' He took his drink and drank it quickly. 'I don't know how you get anything done.'

I looked at Miss Baker and wondered what she did. She was



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slim, with grey eyes and a pale, unhappy face. I was sure I had seen her before.

'You live in West Egg,' Miss Baker said to me. 'I know somebody there. Gatsby. You must know Gatsby.'

'Gatsby?' Daisy asked quickly. 'What Gatsby?'

Before I could answer, we were told that dinner was ready. Tom Buchanan led¹⁴ me from the room. We were dining outside, on the porch. Four candles were burning on the table.

'Why candles?' said Daisy, putting them out. 'It's not dark enough for candles.'

Miss Baker sat down at the table and yawned.

'We ought to do something,' she said in a tired voice.

'All right,' said Daisy. 'What shall we do? What do people do, Nick?' she asked me.

When dinner was nearly over, the phone rang in the house. The butler¹⁵ came out and said something quietly to Tom. Tom stood up without saying anything and went inside. Daisy smiled at me across the table. Then she suddenly stood up and walked quickly into the house. Miss Baker leant forward in her chair.

'Mr Gatsby is my neighbour,' I began.

'Shhh . . .! Don't talk. I want to see what happens,' Miss Baker said.

'Is something happening?' I asked.

'Don't you know?' Miss Baker said. 'Tom's got a woman in New York. I thought everyone knew. But she shouldn't phone him at home, should she?'

At that moment, Daisy and Tom came back together.

'So sorry we had to leave you,' Daisy said.

The candles were lit again. We sat for a while in silence, finishing our wine. Then Tom and Miss Baker walked back

into the house. Daisy put her elbows on the table and rested her head in her hands.

‘We don’t know each other very well, Nick,’ she said softly. ‘You didn’t come to my wedding.’

‘I wasn’t back from the War.’

‘That’s true. Well, Nick, I’ve had a very bad time. I don’t really care about anything any more. Shall I tell you what I said when my daughter was born?’

‘Do.’

‘Well, when I knew I had a girl – I cried. Then I was glad. I hope she’ll be a fool. That’s the best thing for a girl to be, a beautiful little fool. I think life’s terrible, Nick. I’ve been everywhere and done everything. And I hate it all!’

When Daisy was speaking, I believed her. I felt sorry for her, too. Then I saw an unpleasant little smile on her lovely face and I knew she had not been telling the truth.

Inside the house, Tom and Miss Baker were sitting on the long couch. She was reading aloud from a magazine and the light shone on her golden hair.

As Daisy and I came in, Miss Baker threw down the magazine and stood up.

‘It’s ten o’clock,’ she said. ‘Time for me to be in bed.’

‘Jordan’s playing in the big golf match tomorrow,’ Daisy explained.

‘Oh, you’re Jordan Baker,’ I said. I had seen her picture in the newspapers. I had heard a story about her, too – how she had behaved badly in a golf match.

‘Goodnight, Mr Carraway,’ Jordan said softly. ‘I’ll see you again sometime.’

‘Of course you will,’ said Daisy. ‘I think I’ll arrange your marriage. I’ll always invite you together and . . .’

‘Goodnight,’ Miss Baker called from the stairs. ‘I haven’t heard a word.’

‘She’s a nice girl,’ said Tom after a moment, ‘but she shouldn’t travel round the country alone.’

‘But Nick’s going to look after her now, aren’t you, Nick?’ said Daisy. ‘Jordan’s from my home town, Nick. We grew up together.’

Tom looked hard at Daisy.

‘Have you been telling Nick secrets?’ he asked.

‘Have I?’ said Daisy, smiling at me. ‘What did we talk about, Nick? I can’t remember.’

‘Don’t believe everything she tells you, Nick,’ Tom said.

A few minutes later, I went home. Tom and Daisy came to the door and stood there together. Two rich people, with everything they wanted. But Daisy had told me she was unhappy. And Tom had a woman in New York.

When I got back to West Egg, I sat for a while outside my house. In the bright moonlight, a cat moved silently across the garden. As I turned my head to watch it, I saw that I was not alone. Fifty feet away, someone was standing on the lawn of Gatsby’s house. The man stood very still, his hands in his pockets. I was sure it was Mr Gatsby himself.

I almost called out to him. But he seemed happy to be alone. He slowly stretched out his arms to the dark water. I looked out to sea, too. There was one green light, very small and far away.

When I looked back to Gatsby again, he had gone. I was alone now, in the dark night.