

# Analysis of the absence of a proper connection as described in f. scott fitzgerald...

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## **Another Bad Driver**

There are no truly functional relationships in *The Great Gatsby*, partially because none of the pairings provide both parties with what they want but mostly because in every relationship that we see in this book, one or both of the partners is in love with someone other than their significant other. It is interesting to see why these characters are drawn to each other and how this changes their functionality. The seemingly most functional couple might be the least successful and visa versa - begging the question of what quantifies a dysfunctional relationship. The most functional relationship is thought to be Jordan and Nick, but they still don't manage to be successful as a couple and the least functional appears to be Tom and Daisy, the only two who stay together after the end of the novel. Our idea of dysfunctionality is not what we might expect.

Nick says that he " had no girl whose disembodied face floated along the dark cornices and blinding signs" (85), not like Gatsby and Tom with their lovers. His girl, Jordan, was real in a way that Daisy and Myrtle weren't - Jordan was the sort of girl with a job and the very definition of new money, unlike most of the other residents of the Egg. She supported herself and therefore viewed money differently. This initially attracted Nick to her as he also worked for a living, unlike their rich neighbors. For both of them, money was something that they could control and therefore was not as much of an incentive as it was for Daisy, Gatsby, or Tom who couldn't imagine living without their luxuries. Jordan was more than just some girl and she is considered the most logical of the women in this book. Yet, despite Jordan

being someone who Nick said he “felt a sort of tender curiosity” for, he admits that he does not love her and despite claiming that he would break up with his girl back home so that they could be together honestly, he doesn’t do this throughout the whole book. His feelings for Jordan never seem to progress. She is a nice girl, but they are not a successful relationship because neither her nor Nick seem to get anything from each other. They are mundane and content with each other, but neither benefit. Later, their personality differences drive them apart. Nick continuously describes himself as being honest and she is extraordinarily dishonest – indeed, “[Nick] said a bad driver was only safe until she met another bad driver? Well, [Jordan] met another bad driver, didn’t [she]?” (186). Neither one wanted to see themselves as careless and they weren’t, not like Daisy and Tom perhaps, but they were careless with each other. Another reason that this relationship was doomed from the start was that over the course of the book, it becomes increasingly clear that while Nick is certainly infatuated with one resident of the Egg, this person is not Jordan but instead, his next-door neighbor.

Nick and Gatsby are inexplicably drawn to each other throughout the course of this book, despite Nick believing himself to be above the other residents of East and West Egg. He often talks about how honest he is and how dishonest they are, particularly Jordan and Gatsby, the two people that he has the closest relationship with. At the end of the book, Nick arranges Gatsby’s funeral the way that a spouse might do and perhaps this is the best way to describe them, the way that Nick cared for Gatsby in a soft way. Jay Gatsby,

as a whole, is not a good person, and yet Nick often defends him and truly believes that “[Gatsby’s] worth the whole damn bunch put together” (162). It is easy to read this novel as a love story gone wrong – not just between Daisy and Gatsby, but between these two men. The question that therefore follows is whether they are successful together or not, and the obvious answer is that they aren’t. Nick and Gatsby are the most dysfunctional relationship of the whole book – second only, perhaps, to Daisy and Gatsby. This is the romance that turned Nick, self-praised for his honesty, into a liar. It can be seen as very one-sided but Nick was deeply in love with Gatsby, spending all of his time with the other man from the first moment that he met him. While Gatsby may have been a bootlegger and a criminal, Nick still followed him around like a lost puppy, claiming that “ Gatsby turned out all right at the end; it is preyed on Gatsby, what foul dust floated in the wake of his dreams that temporarily closed out my interest in the abortive sorrows and short-winded elations of men” (6). Nick was an unreliable narrator because he believed that this was all Daisy’s fault and this is clear throughout the story, the way that he blamed her for everything that happened and refused to see it as Gatsby’s fault. If this is not the definition of dysfunction, refusing to see his loved one’s flaws – even ones as obvious and dangerous as Jay Gatsby’s – then I don’t know what is.

What might appear to be the most dysfunctional relationship, Daisy and Tom, is actually one of the best. Yes, both are having affairs with other people and don’t seem to care if their partner knows but despite seeming to be an almost platonic pair, Nick commented that he believed the two to

belong to a secret society. Despite the alleged implication that this could be about their monetary wealth, it seems likely that it also alludes to the hidden love that they have for each other. Daisy at least pretends that Myrtle doesn't exist but Tom seems to engage in competition with Gatsby, a challenge that he that he easily wins - both Daisy and Tom know that they won't ever get divorced, not because Daisy is Catholic but because they care for each other like no one else can and this makes them almost work as a pair. They are the only ones crazy enough to always come back to each other and "there're things between Daisy and [Tom] that [Gatsby]'ll never know, things that neither of [them] can ever forget" (140). Gatsby can't comprehend this because he is stuck in the past and is unable to truly see Daisy and Tom for what they are: perhaps not a passionate love story, but something safe and content.

Instead, Gatsby sees himself and Daisy as a perfect couple but they are not a love story - maybe it was five years ago but not now that the daze has worn off and they are forced to truly see each other. Gatsby focused too much on his dream, five years ago, and this dream was winning back Daisy. He loved her before he went to war and it was because of this love that he realized that he would have to change his life and become rich for her, even through illegal methods. As he told Nick, "What was the use of doing great things if I could have a better time telling her what I was going to do?" (157). It was as soon as he realized this and stopped doing great things, that he stopped living for himself and instead spent his time worrying about winning her back. Now, it is impossible for him to see her for who she really is and he

is too busy trying to impressing her to really live. However, he can't truly see her. It has never even crossed his mind that she could love her husband and everything about her is slightly hazy, like the green light. Only her "voice held him most with its fluctuating, feverish warmth because it couldn't be over-dreamed — that voice was a deathless song" (101) and this is the only real part of Daisy that he can see anymore. Perhaps it is because he does not truly understand Daisy that he asks Nick to spend time with them, because "perhaps [his] presence made them feel more satisfactorily alone" (99). Or, perhaps they didn't have anything in common and they needed Nick to alleviate the awkwardness. Daisy knew who she was supposed to be with and Gatsby was nothing more than a distraction or a game.

Tom and Daisy are the only stable relationship in the book and perhaps not even a romantic one. They were never seen doing anything more intimate than holding hands and even that seems like a mistake, "his hand had fallen upon and covered her own" (152). There was nothing deliberate about this and still, "there was an unmistakable air of natural intimacy about the picture and anybody would have said that they were conspiring together" (153). Gatsby was sitting and watching over nothing. They might not be what we would conventionally see as a perfect couple but they don't destroy people like Gatsby and Daisy do. There is a lot to be said for that. Daisy is Gatsby's American Dream, wealthy and happy and unattainable. He can't understand why she would choose a man who understands her over a man who idolizes her and Nick just thinks she's an idiot.

It's true that no relationship in *The Great Gatsby* is perfect, or even close, but it's also interesting to see that the couples that are said to be the most stable are actually the ones that break up before the end of the story - such as Nick and Jordan, and Daisy and Gatsby. Due to a lack of understanding between each member of these couples, or a longing for something more than the other partner can provide, they choose to break it off or are violently ripped from each other. Dysfunctionality is less about how they interact with each other and more about if their long-term goals and attitudes align. It would seem that every character in this novel is a bad driver.