

Fitzgerald's "winter dreams": chasing dreams



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F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Winter Dreams" is the story of Dexter Green and his pursuit of Judy Jones. Dexter wants Judy to be untouched by time, and his dream is the dream of being with her. Fitzgerald, through his writing, endorses the idea of the dream, and of pursuing the dream, but he does not seem to fully believe in it. The illusions seen in dreams are needed to keep people, especially Dexter, going because they give something to believe in and look forward to. However, such dreams are also impossible because they can never be achieved in a definitive or satisfying manner.

In the story, Judy Jones is the dream Dexter Green is chasing, and although it is impossible, it is what keeps him flourishing. Judy Jones is described as nothing more than a something, instead of a someone. She is held at an unreachable standard, and she is made cold because of the way she is treated as a trophy of some sort. Dexter sees vitality in her. He sees something he wishes to possess. Dexter describes her, "The color in her cheeks.... And the mobility of her mouth gave a continual impression of flux, of intense life, of passionate vitality - balanced only partially by the sad luxury of her eyes" (968). Vitality is what gives continuity of living. Dexter sees vitality in her because she is his dream. The dream of her is what gives him something worth living for, since he already has so much. At one point in the story, Dexter has almost everything he could wish for; "Dexter was twenty-four and he found himself increasingly in a position to do as he wished.... He could have gone out socially as much as he liked - he was an eligible young man, now..." (974). Since Dexter has so much, he hangs on to something he can look forward to - Judy. He makes it clear that his aspirations are now focused solely around her: "His confessed devotion to

Judy Jones had rather solidified his position.... He wanted to take Judy Jones with him. No disillusion as to the world in which she had grown up could cure his illusion as to her desirability" (974). No matter what, Dexter wanted Judy Jones. He did not care for anything else. Her being, and her being not with him, gave him something to reach for. Dexter's dream of having Judy Jones is important because it keeps him looking forward to something. The pursuit of his dream creates vitality in him, and in what he sees in her, and that is why the dream is important.

Dexter's pursuit of his dream is important, but the actually obtainment of it, or the end of it, causes his fantasy to fall apart, supporting the idea that dreams are impossible. Since the pursuit of the dream is where the vitality comes from, when the pursuit is over or disrupted, the vitality disappears. Dreams are impossible because they focus on what is in the past, and they never give room for reality to be seen. Dexter is living in his dream. He is chasing after Judy Jones for years, and he expects her to be the very same as when he first met her. He wants her to be untouched by time. Dexter's dream, as long as he follows it, blinds him from the reality of things.

Eighteen months after he had met Judy, Dexter is engaged to another woman. However, he ruins the engagement and the relationship because he cannot let go of the thing giving him vitality; " When autumn had come and gone again it occurred to him that he could not have Judy Jones. He had to beat this into his mind but he convinced himself at last.... Then he said to himself that he loved her..." (975). Even with his life being filled with money and a wife, he cannot let go of his impossible dream.

At the end of the story, years after Dexter's first meeting with Judy, he learns that she is married with kids. He is told that she used to be a pretty girl, but that her beauty has faded. When Dexter learns that Judy is no longer attainable, no longer his vision of the past, and no longer something he can chase, his dream is crushed. The narrator says, "The dream was gone. Something had been taken from him.... Her eyes plaintive with melancholy and her freshness like new fine linen in the morning. Why these things were no longer in the world. They had existed and they existed no more" (980). Dexter's dream was impossible, like most dreams are, because they grasp onto an image of the past and hope for it in the future. However, time moves along, and people, like Judy Jones, change. The grief of losing not Judy Jones but his dream, sends Dexter spiraling out of control. He says, "'Long ago, there was something in me, but now that thing is gone. Now that thing is gone, that thing is gone. I cannot cry. I cannot care. That thing will come back no more'" (980). Dexter's dream was keeping him going, giving him something to build his life off of, build his future on top of, and when his dream is ripped suddenly from him, his entire life crumbles around it. Dreams are impossible because although the pursuit of them provides vitality, they are hardly ever obtainable, and they usually end in chaos and devastation.

F. Scott Fitzgerald portrays both the importance and impossibility of dreams in his short story "Winter Dreams." As represented through Dexter Green's life, the pursuit of his dream of Judy Jones gives him vitality and gives him something to look forward to and build a fantasy around. However, like all dreams his is crushed by the truth of reality, and his entire life is turned into

shambles. Fitzgerald gives the idea that humans need illusions in order to keep going. He writes of the dream, but never fully endorses it. By creating a story of a man following his biggest dream and then having the dream crushed at the end by a single sentence, " Winter Dreams" explains how dreams are both important and clearly impossible.