

A Study of Fitzgerald's "Winter Dreams"

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When I first read F. Scott Fitzgerald's "Winter Dreams," it was the last scene that impressed me deeply. After Devlin has left, Dexter Green lies on his office lounge and cries: "'Long ago,' he said, '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'" (*Babylon Revisited and Other Stories*, p. 135). (I used Charles Scribner's Sons edition as text. All subsequent references to this story are to this edition. From now on, I will omit the name of the book.) Dexter says "Now that thing is gone" and "That thing will come back no more." In this essay, I would like to consider what the thing Dexter loses at the end of the story is. First of all I want to consider the plot.

Dexter Green is a son of a middle-class storekeeper and of a mother with a farm background. When he is fourteen, he caddies at an upper-class country club. While the country club is closed during fall and winter and it is covered with snow, he dreams of his future while skiing around. His mind fills with images of wealth, position, and privilege. These images become the substance of his winter dreams: "October filled him with hope which November raised to a sort of ecstatic triumph, and in this mood the fleeting brilliant impressions of the summer at Sherry Island were ready grist to his mill" (p. 115).

There is an episode which spurs his winter dreams. After the country club opens in spring, a little girl accompanied by a nurse comes to the country club. She is Judy Jones and she is eleven years old. She is "beautifully ugly as little girls are apt to be who are destined after a few years to be inexpressibly lovely and bring no end of misery to a great number of men" (p. 115). Dexter is charmed with her and he cannot take his eyes off her. When he is asked to caddy for her, he refuses to do so and quits his job. Dexter is "unconsciously dictated to by his winter dreams" (p. 118). Dexter longs for the world to which she belongs, and he cannot stand serving that world as a servant.

Though he longs for wealth, position, and privilege, he is not a snob: "The quality and seasonability of these winter dreams varied, but the stuff of them remained. . . . But do not get the impression, because his winter dreams happened to be concerned at first with musings on the rich, that there was anything merely snobbish in the boy. He wanted not association with glittering things and glittering people—he wanted the glittering things themselves. Often he reached out for the best without knowing why he wanted it. . . ." (p. 118). Dexter decides to enter the world which wealth offers him for himself. He wants to enter the world to which Judy

belongs. Judy becomes for Dexter one of the "glittering things" that form the stuff of his dreams, because he is completely charmed with Judy.

Dexter graduates from an old famous university in the East and when he is only twenty-three, he buys a partnership in a laundry in a city near his hometown. Before he becomes twenty-seven, he owns "the largest strings of laundries in his section of the country" (p. 118). When he is twenty-three, he is invited to the Sherry Island Golf Club where he caddied before. There Dexter meets with Judy who has grown up to be very beautiful: "She was arrestingly beautiful"(p. 120). In the evening of the same day, when he is swimming in the lake, he meets with Judy again. At that time she invites him to dinner on the following day. Then Dexter falls completely in love with Judy.

Dexter is charmed with Judy's smile. Her smile is very attractive: "There was a general ungodliness in the way her lips twisted down at the corners when she smiled, and in the—Heaven help us!—in the almost passionate quality of her eyes" (pp. 115–116). There is another description of her smile. "Whatever she smiled at—at him, at a chicken liver, at nothing—it disturbed him that her smile could have no root in mirth, or even in amusement. When the scarlet corners of her lips curved down, it was less a smile than an invitation to a kiss"(pp. 123–124). Kissing her for the first time, Dexter waits "breathless for the experiment, facing the unpredictable compound that would form mysteriously from the elements of their lips. Then he saw—she communicated her excitement to him, lavishly, deeply, with kisses that were not a promise but fulfilment"(p. 124). Before long, Dexter realizes "that he had wanted Judy Jones ever since he was a proud, desirous little boy," and he surrenders "a part of himself to the most direct and unprincipled personality with which he had ever come in contact"(p. 125).

Dexter loves Judy genuinely. Judy is a woman who makes "men conscious to the highest degree of her physical loveliness"(p. 125). The first night when Dexter meets her, she whispers, "I don't know what's the matter with me. Last night I thought I was in love with a man and to-night I think I'm in love with you"(p. 125), and it seems to him a beautiful and romantic thing to say. At first, there are "mornings when she was fresh as a dream"(p. 126), but soon Dexter becomes just another in the long line of those who have loved Judy only to lose her.

Judy is "entertained only by the gratification of her desires and by the direct exercise of her own charm" (p. 126). Men are playthings for Judy, and she wearies of them as soon as they become hers. Judy brings Dexter "ecstatic happiness and intolerable agony of spirit" until finally "it occurred to him that he could not have Judy Jones" (p. 127).

In time, Dexter meets Irene Scheerer and becomes engaged to her. But Judy, finding her discarded toy in the hands of someone else, re-claims it, only to throw it away again a month later. Dexter does not hesitate to break his engagement to Irene. After Dexter accepts the fact that Judy is beyond his grasp, he continues to

love her and no one else. In loving her he reaches out for the best. Judy is one of the "glittering things" he has dreamed of having. And no one else is as precious as Judy to Dexter.

The end of the story occurs seven years later. Now he is a wealthy Wall Street financier. He has realized all his winter dreams except Judy, and he has neither seen nor heard much about her during those years. Devlin, a business visitor from Detroit, mentions that the wife of his best friend had come from Dexter's hometown, and Dexter learns what has become of Judy Jones. When she first came to Detroit, Devlin says, she was "pretty"; now she is "fading" but "all right." She is "awfully nice," and people are "sorry for her"; she is "a little too old" for her husband, who drinks and is unfaithful to her. She loves him nevertheless and "stays at home with her kids"; and "when he's particularly outrageous she forgives him." Dexter's visitor "likes" her but cannot understand how his friend "could fall madly in love with her" (pp. 133-135). Dexter is stricken by this new incomprehensible image of Judy. Then, after Devlin has left, Dexter lies on his office lounge and cries.

What does Dexter lose then? I think that what Devlin says about Judy destroys the image of Judy which Dexter has in his mind: "He had thought that having nothing else to lose he was invulnerable at last—but he knew that he had just lost something more, as surely as if he had married Judy Jones and seen her fade away before his eyes" (p. 135). His love for Judy is not Platonic but sensuous and emotional. Dexter loves Judy's youthful beauty. After he accepts the loss of the real Judy Jones, he thinks himself safe from further hurt. With the real Judy out of his life, young and beautiful Judy, the girl he has dreamed of having, can remain alive in his imagination. As long as Dexter knows little or nothing new about Judy, she can remain alive in his imagination. The real past continues unchanged as the imaginative present. With the image of young and beautiful Judy in his mind, Dexter can continue to love her as he loved in the beginning. But when Devlin tells Dexter what has happened to Judy, he loses the image of young and beautiful Judy. The young and beautiful girl Dexter had loved disappears into the irredeemable past. The real present replaces the imaginative present and forces the past to become only the past. He cannot have the image of young and beautiful Judy any longer. Therefore, Dexter's tears are a bitter mourning for a total loss of Judy Jones.

要 約

「冬の夢」の主人公デクスターは中流階級の店主の息子である。彼は14歳の時に上流階級のカントリークラブのキャディーをするが、秋から冬にかけて閉鎖しているカントリークラブの雪におおわれた芝生の上をスキーで滑りながら将来の夢を心に描き、彼の心は富や地位や特権などのイメージで満たされる。春になってカントリークラブが開いた後、彼はジュディーという11歳の少女に出会うが、この出会いが彼の夢に拍車をかけ、彼は彼女の住む世界にあこが

れを持ち、彼女は彼の夢を形成する「きらめく物」の1つとなる。彼が有名大学を出て青年実業家となったある時、昔キャディーをしていたカントリークラブで、とても美しく成長したジュディーに再会し、彼女を恋してしまう。彼は純粋に彼女を愛するが、彼女は男性が自分のものになるとすぐあきてしまう女性で、彼女にとって男性はおもちゃみたいなものである。ジュディーと結ばれないと思った彼はアイリーンと出会い婚約する。それを知ったジュディーは、彼を再び自分のものにしようと彼に近づく。するとデクスターは何のためらいもなくアイリーンとの婚約を解消するが、1カ月後に彼は再びジュディーに捨てられる。しかし、たとえジュディーは彼の手の届かない存在だとわかって、彼はジュディーを愛し続けるのである。そして7年後、ジュディーを除いて彼の冬の夢は実現し、彼はウォール街の裕福な資本家になっている。彼は客の話から、ジュディーには今では酒飲みの主人や子供がいて、昔の美しさは色あせてしまっていることを知る。彼は客が帰った後、事務所のソファーに横たわり、何かを失った悲しみに泣きくずれる。以上のようなあらすじを考慮し、主人公デクスターが失ったものは何かと考えるとき、それは過ぎ去った過去のものであっても、常に彼の心の中にあった若くて美しいジュディーのイメージではないかと思われるのである。

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