

Winter Dreams



INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF F. SCOTT FITZGERALD

F. Scott Fitzgerald was born in St. Paul, Minnesota to Irish Catholic parents. After preparatory school, he enrolled at Princeton University in 1913, but never graduated. He entered the army as a second lieutenant in the summer of 1917. The following year, while stationed in Montgomery, Alabama, he met his future wife, Zelda Sayre. They married in 1920, the same year in which Fitzgerald published his first novel, *This Side of Paradise*. The marriage produced one child, Frances Scott Fitzgerald, known as “Scottie,” who was born in 1921. Already a literary success and a prolific writer of short stories, Fitzgerald moved to Paris, where he befriended other writers in the “the Lost Generation” with which he became associated, notably Ernest Hemingway. While in Europe, in 1925, he wrote and published his most successful work, [The Great Gatsby](#). Fitzgerald continued to publish other works in the 1930s, including *Tender is the Night*. He then made a living as a screenwriter until his death from a heart attack, induced by years of alcoholism, at the age of 44.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Dexter Green briefly mentions “the war [coming] to America in March.” The First World War began in 1914 (the United States entered in the Spring of 1917) and ended in 1918. The period after the war was marked by economic prosperity, partially due to more efficient manufacturing and increased consumerism, as well as a viable market in “bootlegging” (or, the illegal manufacture of alcohol). The Eighteenth Amendment, which banned the sale, manufacture, and transportation of alcohol, was passed in 1920. The Nineteenth Amendment, which granted women the right to vote, was ratified in the same year.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

In [The Great Gatsby](#), Fitzgerald tells the story of Jay Gatsby, an ambitious man from a poor, rural background who wants social prestige, much like Dexter in “Winter Dreams.” “The Rich Boy,” a story published in 1926, deals with the personally destructive effects of illusions. All of these works also exhibit Fitzgerald’s use of nostalgia as a theme (since each protagonist seeks to relive the past) and they address the seeming impossibility of true love. The stories also explore the nightmarish aspects of the American Dream, due to recurring plots in which rich, socially prominent people meet tragic or unhappy fates.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** Winter Dreams
- **When Written:** 1921-1922
- **Where Written:** St. Paul, Minnesota
- **When Published:** December 1922 in *Metropolitan* magazine; February 1926 in Fitzgerald’s third volume of stories, *All the Sad Young Men*
- **Literary Period:** Modernism
- **Genre:** Short Story
- **Setting:** Minnesota and New York City
- **Climax:** Devlin, a business associate from Detroit, tells Dexter that Judy is unhappily married and has lost her looks.
- **Point of View:** Third-person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

The Muse. In 1914, Fitzgerald met Ginerva King, a beautiful, alluring girl from an exclusive Chicago suburb. Though the teenaged Fitzgerald was quite enamored with her, he was one of many boyfriends and she married someone else. Ginerva was reputed to be the inspiration not only for Judy Jones, but also for Daisy Buchanan in [The Great Gatsby](#) and Isabelle in *This Side of Paradise*.

The Diver. Dexter fantasizes about giving “an exhibition of fancy diving” at the Sherry Island Golf Club to entertain wealthy elites. While vacationing with his wife, Zelda, in the south of France, Fitzgerald would accept her challenges to dive off of dangerously high cliffs while wealthy and famous friends watched.



PLOT SUMMARY

Fourteen-year-old Dexter Green is a caddie at the Sherry Island Golf Club, a popular summer destination for the wealthy citizens of Black Bear, Minnesota. Throughout the year, Dexter occupies himself with memories of previous summers at the club and looks forward to the next summer there. He is particularly lost in reverie during the Midwestern winters, which are long and dreary and leave the golf course covered in deep mounds of snow. His memories of summers at the club are often blended with “**winter dreams**,” including fantasies of being a man as prominent as Mr. Mortimer Jones, but even more wonderful, and an even better golfer than the club’s best athlete, T.A. Hedrick.

One day, Dexter has his first conversation with Mr. Jones, after Jones learns that Dexter will quit caddying at the club. What Mr. Jones does not know is that Dexter is quitting due to an incident on the course with Jones’s “beautifully ugly” eleven-

year-old daughter, Judy Jones, which left Dexter feeling insulted.

The narration skips ahead nearly a decade. Dexter has returned to the golf club, but he now is playing on the course. He left Black Bear to go to an “older and more famous university in the East,” instead of the state university where he had expected to take “a business course.” He returns home to open a small laundry, which he expands into a chain of laundries. This makes him, at twenty-seven years old, the owner of “the largest string of laundries in his section of the country.”

While on the golf course, he reunites with Judy who, according to Dexter, has grown into an “arrestingly beautiful” twenty-year-old woman. Through his golfing companion, T.A. Hedrick (with whom he is now unimpressed), he learns about Judy’s reputation for promiscuity. Later that evening, while swimming in the lake, she comes upon him in her motor-boat and introduces herself. She invites him to dinner at her house the next evening, and Dexter envisions Judy in a glamorous evening gown with a butler presenting cocktails, though neither of these things happens.

During dinner, Dexter talks about his years at university and his newly found wealth, which puts Judy at ease. She dismissed her last beau after finding out that he was poor. Judy decides rather quickly that she has fallen in love with Dexter and he returns her affections, but soon doubts her sincerity after seeing her go off with other men. Their relationship is characterized by moments of intense ardor followed by a cooling of affections. Dexter asks Judy to marry him. She half-heartedly accepts, then becomes involved with a New Yorker whom she promptly dumps.

After Judy leaves town to travel, Dexter becomes engaged to someone else, Irene Scheerer, a “light-haired...sweet and honorable” girl whose family welcomes him. Still, he persists in thinking about Judy who “had treated him with interest, with encouragement, with malice, with indifference, with contempt.”

A week before announcing his engagement to Irene, he sees Judy again at a dance at the University Club. Her absence had allowed Dexter to believe that he could move on, but once he sees her again he is “filled with a sudden excitement.” They leave the dance in her coupe and spend the night together. He quickly breaks his engagement to Irene to become engaged to Judy, a commitment that lasts only for one month.

After several years of entertaining the possibility, he decides to sell his laundries and move to New York. His plans are briefly interrupted by the First World War, which he enters as an officer, but he finally moves back East.

The narrative relates a final incident in Dexter’s life which occurs when he is thirty-two. He has a visitor from Detroit, Devlin, a business associate who knows Judy, as he is best friends with her husband, Lud Simms. Judy moved to Detroit to be with Simms who “drinks and runs around,” despite her and

their children. Dexter is surprised by the news and even more surprised by Devlin’s assessments of Judy – that she is too old for Simms and that her looks have faded. The knowledge is devastating and Dexter suddenly feels “[f]or the first time in his life...like getting very drunk.” The destruction of his illusion of Judy, whom he saw as an emblem of great beauty and a representation of the rarefied social world that he had strived to join, results in the evaporation of his winter dream. He watches **the sun** set and, with the loss of the day, feels the loss of his youthful ideals, which no longer seem to matter.



CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Dexter Green – Dexter Green, the story’s protagonist, begins the story as a class-conscious teenager in Black Bear, Minnesota, and Fitzgerald chronicles his maturation into a successful New York businessman. Despite this professional growth and achievement, Dexter doesn’t mature emotionally until the end of the story when he realizes that his youth is gone. At first, Dexter is the middle-class son of a grocer in Black Bear, Minnesota who spends his summers working as a caddie at the Sherry Island Golf Club where he learns to model himself after wealthy members of the community. Despite his modest origins, he is eager to achieve wealth and social prestige—not only wanting to become an equal to those at the golf club, but also the equal of the Eastern elites who belong to old, well-established families. His social climbing leads him to attend university in the East, then to settle in New York after selling the chain of laundries he opened and operated in Minnesota. Throughout this journey, Dexter lusts after and falls in love with Judy Jones, the beautiful daughter of a wealthy club member. The two have an on-again-off-again relationship; after one break-up, Dexter becomes engaged to Irene Scheerer, but he breaks the engagement due to his obsessive love for Judy. Dexter loves Judy less for who she is than for the status she can offer with her great beauty and her family’s wealth. When Dexter learns that Judy’s beauty has faded, his “**winter dream**”—his illusion that money and proximity to the right kind of people can offer him security and happiness—also fades.

Judy Jones – **Judy**, the beautiful daughter of the wealthy Mortimer Jones, is Dexter’s obsessive love interest throughout the story. She first appears as a “beautifully ugly” eleven-year-old girl who tries to order Dexter around on the golf course and she transforms, in Dexter’s eyes, into an “arrestingly beautiful” twenty-year-old woman. Judy, who has a reputation for promiscuity due to her serial dating of wealthy young men, begins dating Dexter (alongside many other men) after he becomes successful from his string of laundries. Though Dexter asks her to marry him and she agrees, Judy breaks her engagement and winds up marrying Lud Simms. Judy is carefree, direct, and self-possessed, which makes her

irresistible to Dexter, but it also makes her unattainable. With Simms, she has children and becomes a housewife, but by the end of the story she has supposedly lost her looks and is miserable due to her husband's alcoholism and carousing.

T.A. Hedrick – [Hedrick is one](#) of the wealthy people who plays on the Sherry Island Golf Course in the summers, and one of Dexter's winter dreams is to defeat Hedrick in a game of golf. According to Dexter, has a reputation as a "good golfer," but Dexter changes his mind about this after playing a game with him. As an adult with increasing wealth, Dexter feels a "tremendous superiority" over Hedrick and considers him "a bore." While the men are searching for a lost golf ball, Hedrick is hit in the abdomen by one of Judy's balls. He is annoyed by Judy's presence on the course, both because she is a woman and because of her reputation for promiscuity.

Mortimer Jones – A wealthy patron of the Sherry Island Golf Club and Judy's father. Jones takes particular interest in fourteen-year-old Dexter due to the boy's exceptional work as a caddie and he is upset to learn that Dexter intends to quit the job, though he does not know that his daughter was the cause of that decision. Dexter wants to be a man of Jones's caliber and he even has a fantasy of emerging "from a Pierce-Arrow automobile" and walking "frigidly into the lounge of the Sherry Island Golf Club" like Jones.

Devlin – A business associate who visits Dexter in New York. Devlin is friends with Judy (whom Dexter has not seen in years), because he is best friends with her husband, Lud Simms. He casually mentions that Judy's beauty has faded and that she is in an unhappy marriage with Simms who "drinks and runs around." Unlike Dexter, Devlin never found Judy's beauty remarkable and, despite thinking her "a nice girl," he believes that she is inferior to Simms.

Irene Scheerer – Dexter's fiancée whom Dexter describes as "light-haired and sweet and honorable, and a little stout." Unlike Judy, she quickly gives up her other suitors when Dexter asks her to marry him. Both she and her family are pleased with the engagement, which Dexter breaks off after sleeping with Judy. Though Irene is honorable, she is unexciting and Dexter feels that, while she offers security and domestic satisfaction, he does not feel for her the passion that he feels for Judy.

Hilda – The nurse who brings eleven-year-old Judy to the golf course the day she meets Dexter. She tries to enlist Dexter's help to teach Judy how to play golf, though he has already been assigned to another club member. Judy does not like that Hilda has told Dexter that she does not know how to play. In addition to her profession, Hilda's speech and absence of discretion reveal her to be of a lower social class. When they walk away from Dexter, Judy threatens to hit Hilda on the breast with a club.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Lud Simms – A wealthy man from Detroit who is Judy's husband and the father of her children. Simms is an alcoholic who spends periods away from home and runs around with other women. Despite his bad behavior, Devlin still believes that he is socially superior to Judy.

Mr. Sandwood – A member of the Sherry Island Golf Club. Dexter plays golf with him in a foursome that includes T.A. Hedrick and Mr. Hart. During the game, he remarks on how attractive Judy is.

Mr. Hart – A member of the Sherry Island Golf Club. He joins Dexter, T.A. Hedrick, and Mr. Sandwood in a game of golf. After he loses a ball, the men go searching for it and encounter Judy after she hits a ball directly into Hedrick's abdomen.



THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.



CLASS MOBILITY AND THE AMERICAN DREAM

"Winter Dreams" illustrates how social class defines people's lives, often with unfortunate results. Dexter Green, the story's protagonist, is a fourteen-year-old caddie and the son of a small-town Minnesota grocer. However, Dexter is determined to become one of the wealthy men for whom he works at the Sherry Island Golf Course. These ambitions are "dictated to [him] by his **winter dreams**." These "dreams" to possess "glittering things and glittering people" (the people and objects that he associates with being wealthy) are a metaphor for the American dream of economic success and social prestige. In the story, the American Dream, or the "winter dream," is an endless—and ultimately unfulfilling—pursuit based on external standards of success and happiness.

Dexter's pursuit of his "winter dreams" compels him to model himself after wealthy people: he views wealth as the only valid measure of success. Thus, it is significant that Fitzgerald begins the story by describing Dexter's position in the social hierarchy, indicating that this is the most important thing to know about him. Although Dexter is working as a caddie, he is careful to mention that the other caddies "were poor as sin and lived in one-room houses," whereas his father "owned the second best grocery-store" in Black Bear, Minnesota. Dexter provides this information because it is important to him that people know that his earnings are "pocket-money," and not a source of his family's income. Dexter notes that what separates his father's store from "The Hub"—the best grocery store in town—is that

the latter is “patronized by the wealthy people from Sherry Island.” Dexter’s opening thoughts on class suggest that this is a community that operates according to a strict class hierarchy, and that, at least according to Dexter, the “best” things are those desired by the wealthy.

This belief influences his decision to “pass up a business course at the State university” in favor of attending “an older and more famous university in the East” which costs much more. He associates the East with the world of “old money,” firmly entrenched in American enterprise. As the son of a bohemian in the “new money” Midwest, Dexter thinks that the “old money” culture will legitimize him. However, Dexter never overcomes his obsession with hierarchy. Just as he was aware of his father’s grocery being “the second best,” he notices his relative poverty at the elite university. Therefore, Dexter’s new experiences encourage him to “[reach] out for the best” or, to fit in among even wealthier people than those in Black Bear.

Despite Dexter’s notion that wealth makes one person better than another, Fitzgerald demonstrates that class affiliation has little to do with one’s true nature and more to do with the self-image that person projects. For example, Dexter tries very hard to appear wealthy. He wears clothes from “the best tailors in America” because he is not yet confident enough in his social position not to worry about sending the wrong message to other members of his class. His projection of the image of a perfectly-tailored man is meant to disguise his mother’s lowly, foreign origins.

Furthermore, it is only Dexter’s own inflating sense of superiority—rather than the vapidness of his performance of wealth—that gives him insight into the ways in which other wealthy people might not be as fabulous as he once thought. After achieving success with his laundry, Dexter recognizes T.A. Hedrick, the most prominent golfer on the Sherry Island Golf Course and a wealthy citizen, as rather mediocre at the sport and a “bore.” Though he is not yet as wealthy as the others, Dexter feels a “tremendous superiority” over Hedrick who, due to Dexter’s recent success, seems less impressive than before. However, Dexter’s newfound ability to see through T.A. Hedrick does not make him question whether the more rarified forms of wealth and status that he seeks might be similarly vapid—Dexter’s class obsession only allows him insight that puffs his ego, not insight that might readjust his priorities.

Dexter’s lack of self-awareness regarding his conflation of wealth with desirability is perhaps clearest when Judy Jones, Dexter’s love interest, breaks up with a man because she finds out that he is poor. Instead of making Dexter wary of Judy or aware of his own shallowness, he only desires her more. He “frankly” informs her that he is “probably making more money than any man [his] age in the Northwest.” This news “brought her closer to him, looking up into his eyes.” Dexter’s value is, thus, confirmed by Judy’s willingness to look at him and to be pleased with him because she knows he is rich. Dexter is

unbothered by her fickle relationships with other men, perhaps because they are all wealthy, which places him in good company. He has become someone Judy would desire—one of the “glittering people.”

In the end, like “the snow that hid the fairways of the golf course,” Dexter’s “winter dream” evaporates. After he learns that Judy’s youth has faded and that she entered an unhappy marriage, he realizes that the “glittering things and glittering people” cannot sustain him. He can no longer retreat to them or to their memory to find something to care about. Thus, he cries for the first time in years, but only for himself and for the “thing” that was in him which “will come back no more.” Fitzgerald’s characterization of the dream and its loss suggests that Dexter never had a self-defined motivation, nothing outside of Judy and materialism, to give him purpose.



GENDER AND AMBITION

Judy Jones, the daughter of the wealthy Mortimer Jones, is introduced as an eleven-year-old with a “passionate quality” and a perceptible “spark” that Dexter immediately finds bewitching. However, her imperiousness on the golf course leads Dexter to quit his caddying job. His “**winter dreams**” remind him that he should not be taking orders from someone so young. After making his fortune in the laundry business, Dexter sees Judy again; she is now “arrestingly beautiful,” but not known for much else. Interestingly, the reader knows nothing of Dexter’s appearance, but only about his class background and his ambition. On the other hand, Judy is defined solely by her looks and how she uses them to her advantage. Fitzgerald’s characterizations of Judy and Dexter illustrate the limitations of gender. While Dexter is able to channel his vitality into his business ventures, Judy’s only hope is to use her allure to find a suitable husband.

T.A. Hedrick, however, is contemptuous of Judy’s tendency to turn her “big cow-eyes on every calf in town,” a metaphor that overlooks the deliberateness of her actions. She turns her gaze on men to make them consider her for marriage—though she isn’t quite sincere about her interest in them, having many suitors (and therefore many options for her future) makes tactical sense. It’s clear, then, that Judy is planning for her future as deliberately (and some might say as cynically) as Dexter; however, Judy is criticized for this while Dexter is praised.

Dexter hears about Judy’s lover from New York—“the son of the president of a great trust company”—whom she jilts in favor of “a local beau” who does not bore her. Just as Judy is flighty and indifferent to her suitors, Dexter acknowledges that Irene Scheerer will not bring him happiness, but a “bushel of content.” She offers domestic comfort—a prospect that he eschews in favor of another month of Judy’s fickle passion. Like Judy’s indifference for her “mournful” New York lover, Dexter, after

telling Irene about his infidelity, recalls nothing “sufficiently pictorial about Irene’s grief to stamp itself on his mind.” Both consume people like objects, picking them up then discarding them at their whim. Fitzgerald shows that both Dexter and Judy share a “hard-minded” attitude borne from their respective ambitions for wealth and influence.

When Judy marries Lud Simms, a prominent man from Detroit, she becomes a housewife who is treated carelessly by a man whom she loves. There is a cruel irony in this fate: Judy has secured the wealthy man whom she wanted, but is now treated with the indifference she had once inflicted on her beaux. When Devlin, a business associate, tells Dexter about Judy’s marriage, Dexter seems both surprised and disappointed by the report that Judy “[s]tays at home with her kids” while her husband runs around. He is surprised because he had associated that careless behavior with Judy. Devlin insists that, despite Simms’s running around, “they’re not going to get divorced or anything” and that “she forgives him” when he’s “particularly outrageous.” This forgiveness mirrors Dexter’s own habit of returning to Judy every time she treated him poorly. Her vulnerability reminds him of his own—not just that which he felt in the past, but also the vulnerability he still feels, despite all of his material acquisitions. The difference is that Judy has no other recourse than to be a wife and mother. While Dexter had the option to discard Irene, and then put his failed engagement with Judy out of his mind to focus on his business pursuits, Judy’s business was to marry a man who could bring her wealth and prestige.



DREAMS, HAPPINESS, AND REALITY

Dexter pursues his “**winter dreams**” as though they will come true exactly as he envisioned them at fourteen. While the dreams provide him with the drive to become successful, they never bring him happiness—if they come true, he is dissatisfied, and if they fail to materialize, he is unfulfilled. Therefore, for Dexter, happiness is always just out of reach. His inflexibility and his fixation on illusions of perfection prevent him from being satisfied with any aspect of his life.

Over the course of the story, several of Dexter’s winter dreams do come true. For example, he defeats T.A. Hedrick—the Sherry Island Golf Club’s best athlete—during a game of golf, which he had fantasized about since he was fourteen. However, the win is less satisfying than he had imagined, since his very ability to defeat Hedrick seems to signal to Dexter that Hedrick was not a worthy opponent. Instead of relishing his victory, Dexter dismisses Hedrick as a poor golfer and begins looking towards his next challenge that he thinks will satisfy him by proving his worth. Dexter’s constant reaching for the next rung of prestige and success is also evident in his college experience. His winter dreams dictate that he should go to a more famous university in the East instead of enrolling at a business course at the state

university, as he originally intended. He is accepted to the school, which enables his dream of living among northeastern elites, but it’s not enough—once there, he cannot help but compare himself to other students who are wealthier than he. Though his father’s business is prospering and he is living a life about which he could once only fantasize, he is “bothered by his scanty funds.”

Despite that, time and time again, Dexter is dissatisfied by his dreams coming true, he never comes to understand that realizing his next goal might also leave him unfulfilled. In other words, Dexter is possessed by the dreams that remain unattained, obsessing over them rather than acknowledging reality and finding satisfaction with what is available to him. This is clearest in his relationship to Judy. Dexter wants to marry Judy because he thinks that she is the most beautiful girl in Black Bear. In his imagination, she is one of the “glittering people” he wants to become, and he thinks that, if he marries her, he will be happy. This erroneous belief causes Dexter to chase after her for most of his twenties, believing—despite all evidence to the contrary—that one day she will change her ways and commit to him. The destructive nature of this behavior is apparent when he breaks up with his fiancée, Irene, who is kind, wealthy, and stable. Though he finds Irene less exciting than Judy, he feels a “tranquility” with her that he knows could lead to domestic contentment. Despite this life being available to him, he throws it away to take one more chance with Judy, who then breaks up with him after a month.

Dexter’s inability to link his constant dissatisfaction with the pursuit of his winter dreams seems rooted in his fundamental inability to recognize happiness. During dinner at Judy’s home, for instance, he is “disturbed” to find on her face a smile that has “no root in mirth, or even amusement.” However, instead of understanding that this is a sign that something is wrong, her false smile only makes him want to kiss her. If Judy’s own happiness is only a front, then it’s delusional to think that marrying her would make Dexter happy. However, Dexter doesn’t seem to distinguish between genuine happiness and the achievement of his dreams—he never considers what it would take to make himself, or anyone else, feel satisfied or fulfilled. Dexter’s struggle to reconcile his illusions to reality, therefore, is a result of his dreams preventing him from noticing and appreciating reality. No wonder he is so shocked and broken at the end of the story when he learns that Judy is in an unhappy marriage and that her beauty has faded—he has always expected the world to conform to his vision, and when he learns that this expectation has always been a fantasy, he realizes how little he has.



TIME, PROGRESS, AND REPETITION

Time in “Winter Dreams” moves according to two competing models: Fitzgerald juxtaposes a linear concept of time with a cyclical one. In the linear

narrative, Dexter moves from Minnesota to the East Coast and becomes wealthy—his career progress, which occurs in tandem with his aging, is straightforward. However, Fitzgerald also uses the cyclical nature of time, depicted through the seasons, to tell the story of Dexter’s lack of emotional maturation. From the moment he is introduced as an eager, ambitious teenager, Fitzgerald presents Dexter as someone in a perpetual cycle of hope and melancholy, nurtured by his “fleeting brilliant impressions of the summer at Sherry Island.” This cycle is associated with Dexter’s “**winter dreams**,” which, like the winter season itself, are recurrent and cannot be captured or sustained. While Dexter’s business career makes a linear progression, his psychological state is cyclical. He regularly returns to the island, both physically and in his imagination, until he “awakens” from his dream at the end of the story and realizes that he can no longer return.

Winter is important to the narrative both structurally and symbolically. The story begins and ends in winter, which suggests that Dexter’s journey from being an ambitious youth in Minnesota to a successful East Coast businessman (who is realizing the emptiness of his life) forms a natural cycle. When the story begins, Dexter describes “the long Minnesota winter” as something that “[shuts] down like the white lid of a box,” leaving everything, particularly the golf course, covered in snow. Though it offends Dexter to see a site of so much activity become so “desolate,” he eagerly skis over the course, which he can usually access only for work. At this moment, he feels a part of the rarefied world that the golf course represents, even though that world only truly exists in summer. Dexter’s winter dreams, just like his relationship to the golf course in winter, seem delusional.

Indeed, at the end of the story (which occurs during another winter), Dexter must reckon with the fact that even though he has achieved tremendous success, his life will never be the one he imagined. He will always, in some sense, be skiing on the golf course in winter—that is, imagining himself to be a part of something that only exists in his imagination. This revelation that his winter dreams will not be fulfilled comes after he learns, once and for all, that he will never marry Judy. This is fitting, as Judy is associated with summer, which is the season when the members of the glamorous Sherry Island Golf Club flaunt their wealth, and also the season that first inspired Dexter’s winter dreams.

The first time Dexter sees Judy is during the summer, and he notices “a sort of glow...shining through her thin frame,” as well as a “feverish warmth.” Their subsequent romantic encounters occur only during the summer—when the weather cools, so do her passions, and when the warmth inevitably returns, so does she. When Dexter last sees Judy, he describes her as a “slender enameled doll in cloth of gold.” Years later, while contemplating the news of her decline, Dexter watches the evening **sun** “[sink] in dull lovely shades of pink and gold.” The pink that he had seen

in Judy’s “feverish” cheeks and the “gold color” he had noticed on “her neck’s soft down” have faded just like the day’s sun, which parallels Dexter’s acknowledgement that those summers have truly ended and his winter dreams are dead.

Dexter cries then, not only because his realization marks the end of something warm and beautiful, but also because his awareness that he can never return to those summers—just as one cannot relive a day—means that time must march forward, toward eventual darkness. The sun, like Judy, had faded, leaving only the closed gates and “the gray beauty of steel that withstands all time.” The gates refer to those that enclosed the golf club, but they also evoke images of the gates of cemeteries, as well as those which mark the entry to the after-life. Fitzgerald leaves the reader, then, with the awareness that time must move forward, while dreams are cyclical illusions—just as winter and summer cannot coexist, Dexter’s winter dreams can never be his reality.



SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.



WINTER DREAMS

Throughout the story, Dexter is “dictated to by his winter dreams,” which are his fantasies of grandeur that motivate his choices and ambitions. Though these dreams drive him to great professional success, his single-minded focus on status leaves him emotionally hollow. Therefore, his winter dreams represent the brittle nature of the American dream, whose pursuit can bring status, but not fulfillment. Dexter’s winter dreams affect every aspect of his life, large and small—he dreams of petty victories, such as defeating T.A. Hedrick in a game of golf, and of ambitious long-term goals, such as belonging among old-money East Coast elites. Each time Dexter makes an important decision (quitting his job at the club, attending an East Coast university, selling his laundries and moving to New York, trying to marry Judy) Fitzgerald invokes winter dreams, but each time one of those dreams is fulfilled, Dexter remains dissatisfied. This dissatisfaction is unsurprising, since Dexter’s single-minded focus on achieving the traditional markers of wealth and success causes him to forget to ask himself what he truly wants or needs to be happy. When, at the end of the story, he realizes that Judy’s beauty has faded and her marriage is unhappy, he realizes that his winter dreams—like Judy herself—are hollow and dissipating. As he has never focused on anything else, his winter dreams maroon him—he is left with a feeling of being alone and having lost something that he can never recapture.



THE SUN

In “Winter Dreams,” Fitzgerald’s descriptions of the sun reflect Dexter’s state of mind. At the beginning of the story, Dexter “squints” up at the sun’s “hard dimensionless glare”—the sun is bright and glorious, not unlike Dexter’s vision of his own future. Later, after his illusion of Judy’s eternal beauty is broken, the sun takes on a dull aspect (“sinking in dull lovely shades of pink and gold”) before disappearing altogether, leaving only “the gray beauty of steel.” This reflects Dexter’s dawning realization that his vision for his future has been misguided and has left him unfulfilled. Furthermore, Dexter’s observation that the setting sun is “pink and gold” is reminiscent of the colors he had associated with Judy—“her bathing suit, which consisted apparently of pink rompers,” and the gold she wears when they reunite at the university club (“cloth of gold,” “gold in a band at her head, gold in two slipper points at her dress’s hem”). Dexter’s conflation of the sun and Judy underscores that, whenever Dexter notices the sun, he inflects his description of it with whatever is on his mind.

Whereas the other caddies are poor and more rooted in the rural traditions of the Midwest, his family is entrepreneurial. Recognition of Dexter’s father’s grocery store as “second best” identifies Dexter’s middle position, one with which he is not satisfied. His class ambitions are to move up the class hierarchy he sees around him, with the poor caddies ranking lowest and the wealthy club members representing—at this point in his life—his highest potential.

The name of the best grocery store in town likens it to the golf club as a locus of interaction for the most prominent members of the community. Dexter does not only distinguish between himself and the other caddies by saying that he works only for “pocket money,” but he also suggests a similarity between himself and the wealthy class by making it clear that, like them, he does not *have to* work.

●● He became a golf champion and defeated T.A. Hedrick in a marvelous match played a hundred times over the fairways of his imagination, a match each detail of which he changed about untiringly—sometimes he won with almost laughable ease, sometimes he came up magnificently from behind. Again, stepping from a Pierce-Arrow automobile, like Mr. Mortimer Jones, he strolled frigidly into the lounge of the Sherry Island Golf Club—or perhaps, surrounded by an admiring crowd, he gave an exhibition of fancy diving from the spring-board of the club raft....

Related Characters: Mortimer Jones, T.A. Hedrick, Dexter Green

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: N/A

Explanation and Analysis

This is one of the fantasies that Dexter creates to motivate him in the fall, based on memories of what he learned and experienced during summers at the golf club. Because Dexter defines success according to wealth and social prominence, he seeks role models at the club, primarily T.A. Hedrick and Mortimer Jones who, respectively, offer lessons on athleticism and social comportment. These men replace Dexter’s father as masculine role models.

In his imagination, he can either equal or surpass Mr. Hedrick easily, which is underscored by him being on the “fairways,” areas with no obstruction. However, even in



QUOTES


Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Dover Thrift Editions edition of *The Early Stories of F. Scott Fitzgerald* published in 2015.

Section 1 Quotes

●● Some of the caddies were poor as sin and lived in one-room houses with a neurasthenic cow in the front yard, but Dexter Green’s father owned the second best grocery-store in Black Bear—the best one was “The Hub,” patronized by the wealthy people from Sherry Island—and Dexter caddied only for pocket-money.

Related Characters: Dexter Green

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: N/A

Explanation and Analysis


This passage opens the story and introduces Dexter Green, an ambitious and class-conscious teenager who works as a caddie at the Sherry Island Golf Club during the summers. The narrative establishes him as someone who evaluates himself in relation to others and seeks to be superior.

Dexter's fantasies, his sense of himself as athletic and socially distinguished will always be determined by the opinions of others who would surround him in admiration.

“I think I'll quit.” The enormity of his decision frightened him. He was a favorite caddy, and the thirty dollars a month he earned through the summer were not to be made elsewhere around the lake. But he had received a strong emotional shock, and his perturbation required a violent and immediate outlet. It is not so simple as that, either. As so frequently would be the case in the future, Dexter was unconsciously dictated to by his winter dreams.

Related Characters: Judy Jones, Dexter Green

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: N/A

Explanation and Analysis


Dexter decides that he would rather quit his job than take orders from eleven-year-old Judy. His desire to earn money is overridden by his offense over being treated like an underling by a young girl. Though Judy has behaved toward him in the way in which many people of her social class behave toward caddies, Dexter does not see himself as one of the other caddies. His pride, and his sense of himself as one day being a man in the molds of Hedrick and Judy's father, prevent him from accepting her haughty behavior. It's notable that his decision to quit is fueled by his winter dreams—this is not presented, then, as a rational decision, but rather one influenced by vanity and whim.

Section 2 Quotes

Now, the quality and the seasonability of these winter dreams varied, but the stuff of them remained. They persuaded Dexter several years later to pass up a business course at the State university—his father, prospering now, would have paid his way—for the precarious advantage of attending an older and more famous university in the East, where he was bothered by his scanty funds.... 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—and sometimes he ran up against the mysterious denials and prohibitions in which life indulges. It is with one of those denials and not with his career as a whole that this story deals.

Related Characters: Dexter Green

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: N/A

Explanation and Analysis


Here, it becomes clear that Dexter often makes decisions based on his illusions of grandeur. Dexter's "winter dreams" seem to control him, rather than the other way around, instructing him on what he should aspire to have and what he ought to reject. He is so committed to his aspiration that he eschews the benefit of attending a school where he would have appeared to be a prosperous member of the student body for the riskier venture of going East and distinguishing himself among those who are far more prosperous.

The narrative prepares us for the fact that, despite his professional success and wealth, Dexter might not succeed in obtaining everything he wanted. However, the elusive character of certain "glittering" objects and people only made them seem more appealing.

He did not consider it necessary to remark that he had once carried Mr. Hart's bag over the same links, and that he knew every trap and gully with his eyes shut—but he found himself glancing at the four caddies who trailed them, trying to catch a gleam or gesture that would remind him of himself, that would lessen the gap which lay between his present and his past.

Related Characters: Mr. Hart , Dexter Green

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 



Page Number: N/A


Explanation and Analysis

Mr. Hart has invited Dexter to the Sherry Island Golf Course for the weekend. Though he is now on the course as Mr. Hart's guest, he had once, not long ago, been his caddie. Dexter looks at the four caddies behind them and senses himself as being somewhere between the ambitious boy he once was and the established men who now accompany him. Ironically, though he had once looked at the wealthy men at the golf club for cues to instruct him on his future identity, he looks to the caddies to help him understand his past identity. This suggests that Dexter is distant from both of his identities—that of an ambitious, young caddie and that of a wealthy businessman—and needs the examples set by others to understand who he is.

☞ One minute he had the sense of being a trespasser—in the next he was impressed by the tremendous superiority he felt toward Mr. T.A. Hedrick, who was a bore and not even a good golfer anymore.

Related Characters: T.A. Hedrick , Dexter Green

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number:

Explanation and Analysis

Dexter is playing golf with Mr. Hart and T.A. Hedrick, men for whom he had formerly caddied. For Dexter, there is a bit of cognitive dissonance in the experience, for he still feels that his class origins separate him from Mr. Hart and Mr. Hedrick, but he has achieved economic success with his laundries, making him nearly equal in wealth. Because he is no longer in awe of men like Hedrick on the basis of their money, he is better able to see who they are. In this instance, he is able to see that Mr. Hedrick is not as remarkable as he had once thought. It's worth noting, though, that this realization does not make Dexter reconsider his aspirations to become even wealthier and

more elite—not once does he think that perhaps if T.A. Hedrick is less impressive than he once thought, the elites he aspires to be might also be less than he believes. This shows how his winter dreams blind him to reality and keep him so obsessed with striving for the next step that he cannot evaluate if it's a good path for him to be on.

☞ “Good looking!” cried Mr. Hedrick contemptuously. “She always looks as if she wanted to be kissed! Turning those big cow-eyes on every calf in town!”

Related Characters: T.A. Hedrick (speaker), Judy Jones

Related Themes: 

Page Number: N/A



Explanation and Analysis


Mr. Sandwood, a fellow golfer in his thirties, has remarked on how attractive Judy is. Hedrick disagrees—not on the basis of Judy's physical appearance, but on the basis of her promiscuity. Because Judy does not adhere to traditional modes of femininity, Hedrick considers her less attractive, and even worthy of contempt.

Judy's need to seek approval from young men in town is not unlike Dexter's need to gain the approval of the wealthy members of the Black Bear community. His method of gaining power is through business acumen. That avenue is not available to Judy, so she relies, instead, on her looks.

☞ Next evening while he waited for her to come down-stairs, Dexter peopled the soft deep summer room and the sun-porch that opened from it with the men who had already loved Judy Jones. He knew the sort of men they were—the men who when he first went to college had entered from the great prep schools with graceful clothes and the deep tan of healthy summers. He had seen that, in one sense, he was better than these men. He was newer and stronger. Yet in acknowledging to himself that he wished his children to be like them he was admitting that he was but the rough, strong stuff from which they eternally sprang.

Related Characters: Judy Jones, Dexter Green

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: N/A

Explanation and Analysis


Judy has invited Dexter to her home for dinner. This is one day after they met at the lake. Dexter imagines Judy's former lovers—wealthy, prestigious young men. As usual, he imagines himself in relation to them. He imagines, with certainty, that they must have gone to the best schools, wear the best clothes, and are wealthy enough to spend summers in warm locales. They are the men whom he would like to become, but he would also like to surpass them. As the child of an immigrant, he is “newer and stronger,” more ambitious than they, but his ambition—just like that of their ancestors—will ensure the social positions of his children whom he would like to be the equals of such men.

Section 3 Quotes

☞ He could have gone out socially as much as he liked.... His confessed devotion to Judy Jones had rather solidified his position.... Already he was playing with the idea of going East to New York. 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.

Related Characters: Judy Jones, Dexter Green

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols: 

Page Number: N/A

Explanation and Analysis

Dexter has been accepted by wealthy society in Black Bear, partly due to his connection to Judy. Having conquered his hometown, he is now thinking about going back East to establish himself as a member of the nation's old elite. His love for Judy, as well as his belief that she represents the best that he can have or want, inspires him to want her to accompany him there. His belief in her elevated status is untarnished, despite his closer proximity to her world. He is less impressed by the members of high society, but no less impressed by her.

☞ Summer, fall, winter, spring, another summer, another fall—so much he had given of his active life to the incorrigible lips of Judy Jones. She had treated him with interest, with encouragement, with malice, with indifference, with contempt.... She had insulted him, and she had ridden over him, and she had played his interest in her against his interest in his work—for fun. She had done everything to him except criticise him—this she had not done—it seemed to him only because it might have sullied the utter indifference she manifested and sincerely felt toward him.

Related Characters: Judy Jones, Dexter Green

Related Themes:  

Page Number: N/A

Explanation and Analysis

The seasons and years progress, but Judy and Dexter's relationship remains in a kind of stasis—nothing really changes between them. Judy's behavior toward Dexter suggests strife, both between them and within her. Her tendency to use his interest in her to distract him from his work suggests jealousy of his ambitions and of his ability, as a man, to fulfill those ambitions. Otherwise, Judy is indifferent to him and committed to her indifference, while insisting that Dexter remain interested in her as a desirable object. This is how she asserts her power and diminishes his.

☞ He knew that Irene would be no more than a curtain spread behind him, a hand moving among gleaming teacups, a voice calling to children...fire and loveliness were gone, the magic of nights and the wonder of the varying hours and seasons...slender lips, down-turning, dropping to his lips and bearing him up into the heaven of eyes.... The thing was deep in him.

Related Characters: Irene Scheerer, Dexter Green

Related Themes:  

Page Number: N/A

Explanation and Analysis

Dexter has become engaged to Irene, but he acknowledges that he does not feel the passion for her that he feels for Judy. Instead, Irene will merely offer domestic contentment. His realization coincides with a sense that he had known pleasure in his youth, but that his life as a married man would be characterized by duties to a wife and children.



In his juxtaposition of Irene and Judy, Dexter express a view of women that categorizes them as either sources of domestic comfort or sources of pleasure, rather than full people with inner lives who are meaningful in and of themselves, rather than simply in relation to Dexter. Because they are the only women to appear in Dexter's life, his ideas about Irene and Judy suggest that he only sees women through the lens of what they can offer him—ecstasy or stability.

Section 4 Quotes

☹☹ A sort of dullness settled down upon Dexter. For the first time in his life he felt like getting very drunk. He knew that he was laughing loudly at something Devlin had said, but he did not know what it was or why it was funny. When, in a few minutes, Devlin went he lay down on his lounge and looked out the window at the New York sky-line into which the sun was sinking in dull lovely shades of pink and gold.

Related Characters: Judy Jones, Devlin , Dexter Green

Related Themes:   

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: N/A



Explanation and Analysis



Dexter has just learned, from his business associate Devlin—a friend of Judy's husband from Detroit—that she is in a miserable marriage and that her beauty has faded. Worse, Devlin is unconvinced by Dexter's opinion that Judy was once "a great beauty." The dullness that he feels in response to this news, as well as Devlin's underwhelming response to Judy contrasts with his understanding of Judy as one of the "glittering people" or, rather, as a "glittering object" that he once coveted.

When he looks at the sun setting over the New York skyline, its dull loveliness mirrors his sense of what has happened to Judy's faded beauty. The pink and gold colors left in the sky are reminiscent of her pink, flushed cheeks and her golden hair when he first saw her as an adult. It is reminiscent, too, of how she reappeared to him dressed in gold.

☹☹ The dream was gone. Something had been taken from him. In a sort of panic he pushed the palms of his hands into his eyes and tried to bring up a picture of the waters lapping on Sherry Island and the moonlit veranda, and gingham on the golf-links and the dry sun and the gold color of her neck's soft down. And her mouth damp to his kisses and 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 longer.

Related Characters: Judy Jones, Dexter Green

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: N/A

Explanation and Analysis


In coming to terms with what has happened to Judy, Dexter realizes that his ideas about her were merely illusions and that they can no longer hold. Judy has aged, and they will never again reunite and relive the moments of passion they had shared during the summers of their youth.

However, Dexter has been beholden to his illusions for so long that he begins to fear living without them. Devlin has inadvertently taken something from Dexter—that is, his false belief that his past was never far behind him. While this belief had motivated him in one sense, such as when he looks at the caddies and realizes that he will never again be what they are, it has also kept him from progressing emotionally and from seeing his relationship with Judy for the elusive fantasy it truly was.

☹☹ For the first time in years, there were tears streaming down his face. But they were for himself now.... The gates were closed, the sun was gone down, and there was no beauty but the gray beauty of steel that withstands all time. Even the grief he could have borne was left behind in the country of illusion, of youth, of the richness of life, where his winter dreams had flourished.

Related Characters: Dexter Green

Related Themes:  

Related Symbols:  

Page Number: N/A

Explanation and Analysis

Dexter realizes, alas, that he can no longer return to his old life in Black Bear and can no longer hold out hope that Judy will change her mind once more and return to him. Furthermore, her looks have faded, which means that she is no longer what she once was. He cries for the loss of his nostalgic illusion, which motivated him to want what others had, but which also instilled him with hope. His grief, too, he realizes, is an expression of sadness for things that could

never hold—youth and fleeting passion.

In his mind's eye, he can no longer recover past images of the golf club, so he recreates it now as a place that is closed to him to forever. The inaccessibility of the club parallels how it is described at the beginning of the story, as a white lid shut on a box. Though, at that time, Dexter could rely on the snow melting and revealing, yet again, the green of the golf course, he knows that such expectations are hopeless now.



SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

SECTION 1

While some of the other caddies at the Sherry Island Golf Club are poor, Dexter Green's father owns the second-best grocery store in Black Bear, MN. Dexter, therefore, caddies every summer for the wealthy patrons of the Sherry Island Golf Club not because his family needs the income, but rather because Dexter wants pocket money. In the winters, he skis over the desolate course and spends the remaining seasons fantasizing about returning to the course one day as a glamorous, wealthy patron.

Dexter fantasizes about defeating T.A. Hedrick (an elite member of the golf club) in a golf game and becoming a champion. He also imagines himself stepping from "a Pierce-Arrow automobile, like Mr. Mortimer Jones," another wealthy club member, and "[strolling] frigidly into the lounge of the Sherry Island Golf Club."

One day, Dexter meets Mr. Jones who, "with tears in his eyes," tells him that he is sorry to hear that Dexter will no longer be caddying at the club. Dexter claims to Mr. Jones that his decision is based on his being too old to caddy, but in fact his decision is based on an interaction that he had with Judy Jones, Mr. Jones's daughter, earlier that morning.

Eleven-year-old Judy Jones had arrived on the course with her nurse, Hilda, at 9:00 AM. Though she comes with "a white linen nurse" and "five small new golf-clubs in a white canvas bag," Dexter notices that she appears "ill at ease."

Judy calls to Dexter to inquire about the whereabouts of the golf teacher and the caddy-master, neither of whom are present. Hilda reveals that Judy's mother sent them out to play golf, but that they do not know how without a caddy. This indiscretion upsets Judy who gives her nurse "an ominous glance." While walking away from Dexter, Judy attempts to hit Hilda with a golf club, a sight that amuses Dexter.

Dexter is introduced as someone concerned with rank and status. His father's business is the only mention of his family background, suggesting that Dexter's familial connection is defined by how it positions him socially. The desolation he feels during winter is relieved by his fantasy of upward social mobility.



In his fantasies, Dexter does not merely associate with the wealthy patrons of the club—he usurps their identities. He does this by studying their mannerisms, and by embracing the things that matter to people like Hedrick and Mortimer: golf and expensive cars.



Dexter does not want to upset Mr. Jones by mentioning the true cause of his decision. However, his excuse of being "too old" is partially right, for he thinks that he is too old to take orders from Judy.



Judy has learned how to maintain the appearance of her social class. She travels with a servant and carries white objects, a color associated with the wealthy leisure class.



Judy is angry with her nurse for revealing to Dexter, someone of a lower social class, that she does not know how to play golf. Judy's abusiveness foreshadows her haughty behavior toward Dexter. However, because she directs her abuse toward someone beneath Dexter's class, he is amused rather than affronted.



When the caddy-master appears, Hilda tells him that Dexter was unable to take them out on the course because he had to await the caddy-master's arrival. The caddy-master's return prompts Judy to drop her clubs for Dexter to pick up, since she assumes that Dexter can now help her. The caddy-master agrees that Dexter is free to help them, but Dexter refuses to caddy for them and simultaneously quits his job. He worries about losing the money—thirty dollars per week, which could not be made elsewhere around Black Bear Lake. However, in this instance, as in so many others, he was “dictated to by his **winter dreams**.”

Dexter's pride, influenced by his dream of social prestige, prevents him from taking orders from Judy. She is younger than he and female, which makes him feel that it would be inappropriate to take orders from her, though he would take them from her father. However, his pride comes into conflict with his desire to make money and to achieve economic success. In the end, he decides that he cannot achieve social prestige without maintaining social principles.



SECTION 2

Several years later, Dexter's **winter dreams** convince him to “pass up a business course at the State university” to “[attend] an older and more famous university in the East.” Though he is bothered by his lack of wealth compared to the other students, his winter dreams convince him that he cannot merely have an “association with glittering things and glittering people”—he also wants to become one of the glittering people and own the glittering things.

A state university does not meet Dexter's standard of social prestige. To become a member of society's upper echelon, he insists on learning at their institutions. Still, his social anxiety impacts him, for he cannot be among wealthier students without thinking about all of the things he does not yet have.



After college, Dexter returns to Minnesota and goes “to the city from which Black Bear Lake draws its wealthy patrons.” Only twenty-three, he develops a reputation for business acumen. He opens a small laundry, which specializes in washing “fine woolen golf-stockings,” and becomes so successful that he opens the “largest string of laundries in his section of the country” before turning 27.

Dexter starts a business that caters specifically to the wealthy. He uses his experience as a caddie, as well as his observations of the wealthy patrons at the golf club, to cater to the tastes of social elites and to distinguish himself from his competitors – just as he had distinguished himself as a caddie.



One day, when Dexter is still 23, Mr. Hart—one of the club's “gray-haired” patrons who admires him—gives him a weekend guest pass to the club. This leads to him spending an afternoon playing golf with Mr. Hart, Mr. Sandwood, and T.A. Hedrick. He remembers having once carried Mr. Hart's bag and he glances at the four caddies “who trailed them,” checking to see if he recognizes himself in them, which would forge a link with his past.

The invitation indicates that he is finally welcome as a member (rather than an employee), not only of the club, but as a part of the exclusive social group to which the three men belong. However, Dexter suddenly feels distant from his identity, uncertain about whether he belongs among the wealthy members or among the caddies who trail behind.



Dexter's feelings about being a guest at the club shift throughout the day. At one moment, he feels that he does not belong. In another moment, he feels superior to T.A. Hedrick and remarks on his being “a bore” and “not even a good golfer anymore.”

One of Dexter's “winter dreams”—the pleasure of defeating Hedrick at golf—comes true, but it's unfulfilling. T.A. Hedrick doesn't even seem like a worthy opponent anymore, since Dexter has set his sights much higher.



Mr. Hart loses a ball on the course, prompting the men to search for it. Suddenly, “a bright new ball” comes over the hill and hits T.A. Hedrick in the stomach. Judy Jones claims it as hers, which prompts Hedrick to complain about her presence—and that of women in general—at the club.

Judy’s “bright new ball” evokes the memory of how she first appeared on the golf course, surrounded by crisp white. Judy is the sole woman in a male-dominated space and occupies it just as confidently as she did when she was a girl.



Dexter finds Judy “arrestingly beautiful,” a sentiment that is shared by Mr. Sandwood. Mr. Hedrick, however, seems to think that Judy is not good-looking because she “always looks as if she wanted to be kissed! Turning those big cow-eyes on every calf in town.”

Judy is unimpressive to Hedrick because her promiscuity does not adhere to traditional standards of female conduct. Hedrick’s “cow and calf” analogy suggests that she preys on the naivete of young men with her sexual knowledge.



Later in the afternoon, Dexter meets Judy while he is out swimming in the lake and she is out on her motor-boat. She introduces herself with an “absurd smirk” that he finds “merely beautiful” and asks if he knows how to drive a motor-boat because she wants to “ride on the surf-board behind.” After listening to her explain how to drive the boat, he takes it over and she swims out “to the floating surf-board with a sinuous crawl.” Dexter watches her and notices the burned butternut color of her arms and how they “moved sinuously among the dull platinum ripples.” While swimming, she asks him for his name, then invites him to dinner at her house for the following evening.

Judy’s “absurd smirk” is an attempt to make a mockery of her beauty, but Dexter cannot see that because he is so entranced by her appearance. He notices not only her beauty, but also her graceful movements and easy manner. She expresses a comfort with herself that he does not yet have. Her skin color is the result of a tan. In the 1920s, tanned skin was a social marker—an indication of someone’s ability to afford a vacation to a warm locale.



At Judy’s house the next evening, Dexter imagines the wealthy young guests she has probably entertained in her summer room. When she appears downstairs for dinner, he is slightly disappointed in her simple dress and is surprised that there is no butler to announce dinner.

Dexter’s illusions disrupt his ability to enjoy an evening alone with a woman he desires. His relationship with Judy is both determined by and spoiled by his class pretensions.



During dinner, they talk about his university, “which she had visited frequently during the past two years.” Then, Judy’s mood sours and she reveals that she has just broken up with a young man for not telling her that he was poor. This prompts her to ask Dexter about his class background. He reveals that he is wealthy, which pleases her.

Whereas Dexter had the opportunity to study at an elite university, Judy is only able to visit, probably in the interest of finding a suitable husband among the student body. Her search for a husband has had its disappointments, including a match who was unsuitable because he was poor. Judy decides on which men belong in her life based on how much money they have. Dexter qualifies only because of his recent wealth.



SECTION 3

Dexter and Judy embark on a romance. She reveals that she thinks that she loves him, but a week later, during a picnic supper, she disappears with another man in her roadster. Dexter is upset and unconvinced by Judy's assurances that she did not kiss the other man, but he appreciates her courtesy in attempting to protect his feelings.

Before the summer ends, Dexter learns that there are still other men. Furthermore, he realizes that Judy's habit is to maintain a favorite suitor for a short time and then neglect him in favor of a new man in town. When the old suitor threatens to stop seeing her altogether, she allows for a brief reconciliation, which encourages him to continue to seek her affection "for a year or so longer."

During three days in August, Dexter and Judy spend long evenings on her veranda. Between "strange wan kisses," he asks her to marry him. Her initial response is ambiguous. Then, she accepts his proposal. Soon thereafter, she distances herself from him and, in September, becomes involved with a man from New York whom she dumps by the end of the month in favor of a local suitor.

When the summer ends, Dexter is 24-years-old and remains socially active, but, due to his "confessed devotion" to Judy, he takes no interest in local women. He begins thinking of moving to New York and taking Judy with him. She remains the most desirable woman he has ever known.

The following fall, when Dexter is twenty-five, he becomes engaged to Irene Scheerer, a nice, honorable young woman who is less attractive than Judy. Dexter feels no passion for her and he continues to ruminate on all of the ways in which Judy insulted his dignity by beckoning him, then growing bored with him. By fall, he convinces himself that he cannot have Judy.

At the end of the week, Dexter goes to a dance where Judy is also present. He dances with her once, but does not engage her in conversation or compliment her appearance. Judy seems indifferent to his lack of sociability, which wounds him, though he is not jealous to see her with another man. Instead, he talks with Irene about books and music. Though he knows "very little about either," he decides that, given his youth and new class status, he "should know more about such things."

Judy's non-committal behavior is a way of asserting her power. She is aware of herself as a coveted object and aware of Dexter's love, but also seeks her own pleasure.



Judy's objectification of her lovers mirrors Dexter's objectification of people. She is only interested in the "new man in town," just as Dexter is only interested in the "glittering people." However, because her identity is reliant on her desirability, she encourages men's affections even after she loses interest.



Judy's affections are weakening ("wan kisses"), but she still feels the pressure to marry. When a new man comes to town, he offers her a distraction from Dexter, but she loses interest in him as well, suggesting that Judy is bored by many of the men in her social class.



Dexter fantasizes about living out his "winter dream" of marrying Judy and becoming an Eastern elite. For him, she is the standard bearer of beauty and social elitism.



Dexter's engagement to Irene is marred by his sense that she is second-best, just like his father's grocery store was second-best. He thinks that he can be content with her, but he struggles to overcome the sting of Judy's rejection. Judy remains a "glittering object" out of his reach.



Dexter is disappointed to realize that Judy does not rely on his attention. Conversely, he is less interested in paying attention to Irene, but does find her useful in making him appear more cultivated. Dexter is not interested in arts and culture, but wants to appear as though he is to fit in better with members of the upper-class who appreciate such things.



SECTION 4

By May, Judy has gone traveling and Dexter is busy with Irene. The relationship brings him tranquility, compared to the “turbulence” he had felt the previous May with Judy. Despite his “tranquility of spirit,” he worries that his life with Irene will offer domestic security, but neither the “fire and loveliness” nor “the wonder of the varying hours and seasons” that he had experienced with Judy.

One evening, in mid-May, Dexter and Irene plan to go to the University Club’s lounge to watch the dancers. However, Irene’s mother informs Dexter that she has a “splitting headache,” prompting Mrs. Scheerer to send her to bed. Dexter returns to the University Club alone, but finds himself bored with the dancers. In the midst of a yawn, he hears a familiar voice greeting him: it is Judy, dressed in gold from head to toe, who has left her date alone across the room so that she can reunite with Dexter. She prompts him to leave with her, this time in his car, and he gladly goes along. He is enchanted by her once again.

Together, Dexter and Judy drive downtown, then back toward the University Club. He wonders if she is aware of his engagement to Irene, and he is confused by her sudden desire to marry him. Judy insists that he could never love anyone in the way that he loved her and expresses a wish to repeat their past, though Dexter is skeptical.

Judy acknowledges Dexter’s engagement to Irene and the mention of Irene’s name causes a feeling of shame in Dexter. Judy asks that he drive her home, then she begins to cry, wondering why her beauty has not brought her happiness. She makes a final appeal to Dexter for marriage, which inspires a wave of feelings in him. He settles on accepting her as “his own, his beautiful, his pride.” He decides to take Judy back.

Judy then invites Dexter into her house. He accepts and spends the night with her. The decision leads him to break his engagement with Irene and to become engaged to Judy, whose “flare for him endured just one month.” After their final breakup, Dexter accepts that he will go on loving her, but he tells himself again that “he could not have her.”

Dexter cannot let go of his past with Judy and seeks to relive his past summers with her. His obsession with memories from his youth prevents him from progressing into an adult relationship with Irene.



Dexter’s yawn is a sign of his boredom with his current life, which becomes reinvigorated once Judy reenters it. She appears to him in gold, like the “glittering object” he had always desired. Whereas she had expressed indifference toward him during their last meeting, she refocuses her attention on him once again. As they had once before, they leave together in a car.



Judy wants Dexter back because he is promised to someone else. Judy’s mention of his desperate love for her is an attempt to lure him away from Irene and to possess his love as her own. Her ego, which relies on her desirability, cannot tolerate Dexter choosing another woman.



Judy is eager for Dexter to accept her as a beautiful object. His decision confirms the value of her beauty which, for a woman of her time and social class, is supposed to offer her comfort and security in the way in which Dexter thinks economic success will offer him comfort and security. Judy’s failure to find satisfaction in her beauty, however, casts a pall over Dexter’s own attempts to find happiness in social status.



Judy cannot reconcile her need to be wanted with the fact that she does not really want Dexter. Her fickleness does not diminish his love but rather renders her, once again, an object that he cannot have.



Dexter soon enters World War I as a first officer and, ironically, views the war as a welcome distraction from his emotional turmoil. After the war, he sells his laundries and settles in New York, as he had long planned.

One day, seven years later, a business associate from Detroit, a man named Devlin, comes to visit Dexter. Devlin mentions that “the wife of one of his best friends,” Lud Simms, comes from Dexter’s town. Dexter acknowledges having known Judy, but is surprised to hear that Devlin feels sorry for her, due to her husband drinking and carousing while she “stays at home with her kids.” He is even more appalled to hear that Devlin thinks that Judy is too old for Simms and has lost her looks.

The news causes Dexter to feel like rushing out and getting a train to Detroit. He feels disoriented by Devlin’s underwhelming response to Judy. Devlin remembers that Judy was “a pretty girl” when she first arrived in Detroit, while Dexter remembers her as “a great beauty.” He studies Devlin, wondering if there is some “insensitivity” or “private malice” in him that explains his assessment. Devlin, however, attributes the loss of Judy’s looks to the inevitable tendency of women’s beauty to fade, nothing more.

For the first time in his life, Dexter feels like getting drunk to rid himself of the dullness that overwhelms him. He lays down and watches the **sun** set over the New York skyline, realizing that his wealth had not rid him of the feeling of having nothing to lose. The news of Judy causes the loss of his **winter dreams**, or his youthful fantasies of grandeur. Suddenly, his memories of Sherry Island and summer evenings on Judy’s veranda fade from his mind. He realizes that he cannot recover the past, and he cannot retrieve what he felt when he was young.

The war—an annihilating force—gives Dexter an excuse to start over, to overcome his obsession with Judy and to start a new life in New York, but one still aligned with his dream of social prestige.



There is a cruel irony in Judy—one of the “glittering people”—meeting such a degrading fate. In Dexter’s imagination, Judy’s beauty and wealth were supposed to have protected her from vulnerability. At twenty-seven, it is absurd that Judy is too old for Lud Simms, but recognition of her age also makes Dexter aware of his growing older.



Dexter is overwhelmed by a romantic desire to rescue Judy, but also confused by how Devlin could view Judy, “a great beauty” in Dexter’s eyes, as ordinary. Devlin is attuned to the fact that people age—though, his sexism makes him think that this only applies to women—while Dexter’s illusion convinces him that Judy will always be as he remembered her.



The “dullness” that Dexter feels contrasts with the brightness (“glittering”) and warmth he had envisioned and felt in Judy’s presence. With Judy’s beauty gone, Dexter must confront that his pursuit of status has not brought him any happiness, either. The setting sun signals, not only the end of the day, but also the end of his dream. For the first time, he realizes that he cannot go back and that he will not re-live his past experiences with Judy.





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