



Spadework

Timothy Findley

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Lust. Infidelity. Betrayal. Murder. On a summer evening in Stratford, Ontario, the errant thrust of a gardener's spade slices a telephone cable into instant silence. The resulting disconnection is devastating. With the failure of one call to reach a house, an ambitious young actor becomes the victim of sexual blackmail. The blocking of a second call leads tragically to murder. And when a Bell Canada repairman arrives to mend the broken line, his innocent yet irresistible male beauty has explosive consequences.

In *Spadework*, Timothy Findley, master storyteller and playwright, has created an electric wordplay of infidelity and morality set on the stage of Canada's preeminent theater town. In this fictional portrait, intrigue, passion, and ambition are always waiting in the wings. Findley peoples the town with theater folk, artists, writers, and visitors (both welcome and unwelcome), and with lives that are immediately recognizable as "Findley-esque" -- the lonely, the dispossessed, and the sexually troubled.

A story that ripples with ever-widening repercussions, a sensual, witty, and completely absorbing novel, *Spadework* is another Timothy Findley winner.

Spadework Details

Date : Published December 24th 2002 by Harper Perennial (first published January 1st 2001)

ISBN : 9780060932626

Author : Timothy Findley

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From Reader Review Spadework for online ebook

Yolanda Decot says

Okay this book was a pain to read. I couldn't get behind any of the characters. I felt like they all needed a good hard slap. Jane is just messed up but you don't know why. I guess being rich makes you crazy. They never go into detail about how her and Griff met, their having Will, nothing about THEIR story. Troy being inserted into the story was just confusing and a waste. Okay, Jane. She is a woman who drinks too much, smokes too much, talks to herself too much, wants another child although she barely spends time with the one she has. She has sexual fantasies about a stranger though from the talk with her therapist I got the notion that she ISN'T sexual at all. Confusing.

Mercy's story and Luke & Runner's stories were a big waste to me. I didn't care about their characters and their fucked up lives. Point blank.

The ONLY part of this book that was even mildly interesting but STILL managed to lack any dept or character development was the affair Griff had with Jonathan. Why did Griff just avoid Will and Jane? Did Jonathan make him or was it his own shame that kept him away? Why did Jonathan leave his wife? Why didn't the author give us more dialog, more of what Griff was thinking, feeling? Would Griff have left Jonathan if he hadn't been told that story about Jonathan's son dying?

There were so many things the author could have expanded on that he didn't. That he wasted on FLUFF and meaningless characters.

Caleigh says

Horrible, ghastly, stiff, contrived and a total letdown from one of my favourite authors. What was he thinking?

Maksym Karpovets says

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Lindsie says

(While reading)

I'm reading "Spadework" by Timothy Findley. My first of his. At first it seemed a boring book, it's in the prose of mundane American fiction. And then everything seemed too perfect: a woman and her family living and working in Stratford, Ontario, the man an actor, the woman an artist/props maker. The child precocious. Being me, I just waited for something to break the normalness of it, like you do in a suspense film (which I don't like, by the way). Slowly, the normal routine of the family is altered, elements sneaking in. Also, the perspectives of the peripheral characters are sneaking in as well. The easy prose, the extra details that so far seem only to be filler where I would rather they contribute to something, as foreshadowing maybe, or is the subtext -all the details of the setting, for example- I hope they all add up to something in the end. I think it's a sneaky book. I think the simpleness of the writing and the normalness of the family is a trick and both are going to fall away in the end into a clever resolution.

(After I finished)

It was a really thick book but it didn't take me long to read. Deceiving. The font was large and there weren't many words on each page. I like that in a book because I feel speedy. I also like finishing books because then I feel accomplished.

The end of the book came about pretty much with what I was hoping for. Clever-ish. Actually I'm the one who's clever. I was thinking to myself during the last few pages that this was the story of a bunch of people who just go about in an ordinary way, living their lives, routine, and that the novel catches them just when the routine is broken, and less-than-ordinary things start to happen to them. I don't want to say "exciting" or "extraordinary" things because they aren't. But given the context, things go astray. The image I had in my mind was that of a string, that we live our lives along a string and then at some times that string frays, or in the case of "Spadework" breaks apart with a *pop* (this is just the picture in my head). But then all those bits of fible that make up the string start to heal, and grow back together into a single string again, and routine is restored, and if it's a novel then the characters are left with a suggestion that things are going to be OK.

What makes me clever is that the author had the same image in mind, pretty much. The last image of the book is that of a river, obstructed at a dam, and then flowing on unchallenged. And that's what the whole novel is. People overcoming obstacles that aren't your run of the mill everyday obstacles, but nothing overly dramatic. And at the end I was pretty sure that everything was going to be alright.

I was also thinking as I read that this was little more than a perfectly crafted work. That's fine, I just like when novelists go a little wacky with their structure.

Wisewebwoman says

Full of promise and poor performance would be my summary.

Riddled with meaningless italics and product placements would be another: wine, soups, cigarettes. Over and over again.

And clichés.

None of the characters seemed real. I felt lodged in a 1940's melodrama. And not a delicious Noel Coward play either.

The main character, Griffin, was unlikeable, selfish and a complete cad to his small son.

Jane was a la Scarlett O'Hara and her "affair" - if I could call it that - felt forced to counterbalance the activities of her husband.

Characters were under developed to put it kindly. There really was no evolution at all by the end of the book. Just these tied up ends and a reader left hanging: baffled and unsatisfied.

And all that drinking and smoking. Holy Hannah! Non-stop. Between the lack of hacking and falling down in drunken stupors I wonder about their constitutions.

And those murders? Hello? A significant thread was dropped there. Forever.

And keeping track of all the named characters - down to waiters and servers, seriously, even the chauffeur who had a sentence? Pointless. 520 pages of names, italics and product placements.

Frank says

SPOILERS:

Although I valued the theatrical setting, this particular novel was not up to Findlay's best in my opinion. After setting up strong characters and conflicts, he resolves the main plot line with a "dead son ex machine" ending, and suddenly all is better. Is Jane so desperate to get her husband back she never questions his

leaving or his motives? Does Griff get to cheat and come back with no reparations just because she strayed, too? And given Griff's near hysteria over submitting to his director's advances, how does he fall into living with him so easily afterwards? Findlay's eye for character and setting are still strong. I particularly loved the depiction of the child caught in the middle when his parents temporarily split. But this one just refused to jell for me.

Kate says

The opening chapter is utterly fantastic. I haven't been to Stratford since I was eleven but that magic of the festival and the magic of the play watching itself. Chills, I tell you. I was so hoping the rest of the book would hold up to that promise, but alas it didn't. I think I was hoping for a lot more intrigue and mystery so much than this erotic thing. The sexual desire and blackmail going on here is really all that drives the plot here than anything else and I think if I had expected that going to him I might have appreciated the book more.

That's really about it here.

Carol says

The actor/director relationship was just dumb.

Peter says

Murder, infidelity, a diverse cast of characters, both on-stage and off. Set in Stratford, Ontario, home of the Shakespeare Festival, in the summer of 1998. Local colour and history as well as insight into the roles actors play and how they get 'into' the role. And all is set off by the innocent work of a gardener as he cuts a telephone cable and a call can't be made while another can't be received. Excellent

Marilyn says

I haven't read any Findlay for some time and was surprised every page I turned in this book because it wasn't very good...poor characterization, too many subplots that didn't come to much, and a terrible and too pat ending where the wandering husband returns and life goes on as usual. My guess is that the author doesn't know much about women, though he attempts to get in the head of one here, and by the terrible dialog, fails miserably. If you are a fan of theatre, know the industry and know Stratford, you may be slightly more inclined to give this a read. Otherwise it's a bit of a bore, full of cliches, shallow characters and unfinished business. It would make a much better play than a read in fact.

Deb says

Glad that's over with!

Lois Ann says

I have read a lot of Timothy Findley and greatly looked forward to reading this but it is not on par with his other books. I would not recommend this book. I finished it hoping that his true talent would reveal itself-- it did not. Findley is a great writer but this is definitely not his best work. Pilgrim, Piano Man's Daughter, Not Wanted on the Voyage--pretty much anything else is highly recommended.

Charles says

Started this book with the best intentions to get to know the work of this "great" author. How did this author become so famous and receive awards besides? So banal apart from the too many silly titillating bits. The characters are not so much developed as they are lifted as flat surfaces rising from a mundane swelling and deflating tableau. I don't care about what happens with the Bell repair man. I managed to swallow about 50 pages and left it right there.

Steve Wilson says

Very much liked the theme of how the decisions we make impact on our lives and the lives of others and the fact that life goes on regardless of these decisions. I found it difficult to relate to, or empathize with, any of the characters within the book. This is particularly true with the two main characters Griffin and Jane which makes the resolution of the events that took place during the book (their moving apart from each other) sort of anti-climatic. I really did not care what happened to these two. Still totally confused by the scene when Jane is visited by an old boyfriend from Louisiana.

Lisa says

No, I wasn't imagining it. The repeated references to a certain brand of a rather ordinary Australian wine, and later on, a brand of soup, are intrusive examples of 'product placement' in this book. It's listed amongst a roll call of other books that have succumbed to this shabby practice on Library Thing. I'm appalled because Timothy Findley (1930-2002) is a favourite of mine, and I cannot imagine what it was that possessed him to do it.

For the rest of this review see
<http://anzlitlovers.wordpress.com/200...>

Neil Mudde says

Did not like the first chapter, once I got into it the story improved, it is a light fluffy farce about theatre persons, in Stratford Ontario, wealthy wife, who guzzles the wine like water, a son, actor husband, the latter

"is forced"? into a homosexual relationship with a producer in order to get good roles, all's well that end's well. Somewhat disappointing from a good Canadian Author.

Melissa says

Very interesting.... until the end. She made the **WRONG** decision.

Brian says

Inconsistent. That is the best way to describe this novel. As a person who loves the town of Stratford Ontario, and its Shakespeare Festival, I was intrigued and amused by the set up for the novel. Many of the text's characters are in some way affiliated with the Festival, and the little details about daily life in Stratford are fun reading for anyone who has an affinity for the town.

However, the book's plot and most of its dialogue feels cinematic, and not at all in a good way. There are moments (alas only moments) of brilliance in this novel, but they are quickly replaced by soap opera scenarios, and scenes out of left field. Too many times while reading this text, I found myself at a complete loss as to what the purpose was. If Findley's goal was to create a domestic drama, it was simply too unrealistic. The ending reeks of being contrived, and only the most ludicrously optimistic people will find it even the tiniest bit plausible.

I really wanted to love this text. It did not happen. Not my fault, I was predisposed to like it. Findley simply did not provide any reason for me to do so.

Valerie says

After starting this book, I realized I had tried to read this before. After getting more than halfway through, I gave up again. Timothy is a great writer and I enjoy his style, but the subject matter and the characters and the plot were not interesting to me.

Kris - My Novelesque Life says

4 STARS

"On a summer evening in Stratford, Ontario, the errant thrust of a gardener's spade slices a telephone cable into instant silence. The resulting disconnection is devastating. With the failure of one call to reach a house, an ambitious young actor becomes the victim of sexual blackmail. The blocking of a second call leads tragically to murder. And when a Bell Canada repairman arrives to mend the broken line, his innocent yet irresistible male beauty has explosive cons" (From Amazon)

A great novel...my first introduction to Findley and definitely not my last. Very well-written but is a bit dark.
