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On an extended holiday in London, Dr. Tom Sutherland befriends a mysterious surgeon named Nordhagen and begins a wild affair with the doctor's exotic assistant, Lina. Seduced and completely enthralled by Lina, Tom can think only of being with her, following her deeper into forbidden fantasies and dark pleasures. But fantasy turns to nightmare when Tom discovers the basement laboratory of Dr. Nordhagen, a secret chamber where cruelty, desire and madness combine to form the ultimate evil.

Finishing Touches Details

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Author : Thomas Tessier

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From Reader Review Finishing Touches for online ebook

Jonathan Oliver says

Usually thought as a man of 'quiet horror' Tessier here delivers gothic melodrama seen through a literary lens. It feels very much a novel of the 80s, focusing on greed and desire and a London diseased behind its flashy exterior. Effective and genuinely disturbing. The novella that follows it, Father Panic's Macabre Opera seems to be gothic erotica until it screams into something utterly horrific. Worse is when you read the notes at the end and find out that the horrors are not imaginary. Incredibly brutal and genuinely shocking. Tessier is a fascinating writer and one who deserves much more recognition.

Kerry Cahill says

Weirdly good!

A lot of strange goings on in this book... I laughed, cringed and enjoyed this macabre dark novel! Mad characters, had me hooked from the start, in grotesque kind of way!
3 people, whiskey, death and half humans!! Ha ha ha read it and weep

Kelly says

I'm just going to come right out and say it: this tale depends solely on the understanding that women, and their special "treasures", are the root of all evil. That's right, girls. Apparently, when a man has the most amazing sexual experience with a beautiful woman he is instantly at her mercy and no longer in control of his morality, emotions, or life. Oh believe me, if that were true, half the men in the country would be, at this very moment, watching where they aim, flushing, and putting the seat back down. As it stands, this book is not only darker than dark, but it's crappier than crap. Harsh, I know, but let me explain.

After inheriting money from a dead Aunt, Tom decides to take some time for himself, you know, because being a doctor for all of a year or so is hard work. Plus, he might as well be frivolous before it's too late. Too bad frivolous, in this case, seems to mean becoming a slothful drunk in the achievement of visiting every club and bar in the slums of London. From the start of the book, Tom is a melancholic, immature drunk who couldn't stir up empathy if he had 2nd degree burns from saving orphaned children in a fire. Now you want to know the really sad part? This story relies upon grotesque constructions of depravity in order to win the reader's support for Tom who would otherwise be too repellant to win anyone's sympathy. Hey, guess what? It didn't work.

The other character, Lina, is just as repugnant, if not morally reprehensible. But, hey, don't blame her, she was just written that way. Used for the sole purpose to lure Tom into his decent of bloody debauchery, Tessier contrives a female player that is sexualized precisely because of her perceived power over Tom. Now, while I understand the author wanted to show how Tom became tainted, I am sick to death of the portrayal of women as emasculating temptresses that entice men into doing evil things and, naturally, can only be controlled through a man's sexual dominance. Call me crazy, but isn't it possible the man had a little bit of crazy or homicidal tendencies before he met the woman? If a man has a fantasy about raping and

killing a woman, and I lead him to a room with a woman, is it my fault if he fulfills his fantasy? Did I make him rape and kill? I didn't think so.

Also, as much as I love adding to my ever-growing vocabulary of naughty words, after chapter 9 I had enough of the sex talk. Not because it made me uncomfortable or embarrassed, but because there are only so many ways you can describe sexual tension, aggression, and release. Also, after awhile, not only was I desensitized to the atmosphere Tessier was trying to create, but by chapter five I was downright bored. How sad is that? Not as sad as the narrative. Told from Tom's perspective, you soon begin to realize that not only is Tom uninteresting, but he's dismal and narrow-minded. Good times.

Now add to all of that the fact that the pace was slow, and by slow I mean motionless. Seriously, the action –aside from the sex- doesn't really start until you've read two-thirds of the book, and believe me, only the strong-willed and job-appointed will be able to reach that point. In fact, in a matter of three weeks I put this book down at least four times every day. I absolutely did not want to read it, but, well, Wench is a tyrant, so I had to. But, since I was technically only supposed to read *Finishing Touches*, I did not have to read Tessier's novella, *Father Panic's Opera Macabre*, and no one's going to make me.

-As posted on Horror-Web.com

Steve says

Thomas Tessier has been called a master of "quiet" horror. Maybe so. He certainly is a smooth writer, good with pacing, dialogue and description. But when it comes to horror, he certainly yields no ground to any other writer. Actually his brand of horror is far worse. It gets into the mind, because there is a philosophy behind it. No better example of this is his short novel "Finishing Touches."

"Finishing Touches" tells the story of doctor to be Tom Sutherland. Sutherland has inherited a bit of money, and feeling he's lived in an educational "cocoon" for so many years, he's anxious to experience life before settling down to the suburban existence of a general practitioner. Events unfold in such a way however as to have him residing in London for a 6 month stay. It is there he soon meets Dr. Roger Nordhagen, who is of course insane. But the good (evil) doctor recognizes a like soul when he sees one, perhaps even one who can take his vision of "Now" to the next post modern level. Before long Tom and Dr. Nordhagen are crawling through the more exotic English clubs, and Tom soon meets Nordhagen's assistant, Lina. There is sex, which is the initial bait for Tom. And there is lots of it, but it's the kind of sex you might find in a Kubrick film. Detached, part of a larger Power game, that Tom senses the outlines of. And the game is one that is removed from any morality. Indeed, Nordhagen's whole philosophy is based upon immediate experience. And in a world where you have your Jeffrey Dahmers and Bin Ladens, who, he would say, can fault him? He just wants his piece of the Terror pie.

This is grim, unrelenting and poison filled stuff, wrapped in well-written prose. On a technical level Tessier succeeds brilliantly, which is why I'm giving this 4 stars. But if you allow for a human factor, you might want to give this a zero. Tessier is a superb connoisseur of atrocity, but for any serious follower of current events - isn't that more of the same? At some time Dr. Sutherland and Lina will encounter that question when the kicks of killing become endless reruns. And at that point, hopefully, they too will "return their tickets" to God.

Bark says

This is one disturbingly creepy book! It's about Tom, a young-ish American guy, fresh out of medical school and somewhat unsatisfied with the "general practice" position he fell into by default when nothing else grabbed him. He decides to drop everything and take a trip to London. There he meets an older guy, a plastic surgeon, who begins to show him the seedier, hidden side of London nightlife.

One night the Tom is supposed to meet the old doc for a night out on the town. When Tom shows up at the old doc's office he's told by Lina, a gorgeous woman with flowing black locks, that the doc can't make it and she will entertain him instead. Tom can't believe his good fortune. It gets better. Lina is apparently attracted to Tom and they have wild erotic sex (but that isn't detailed all that much, darn). Tom is in love immediately and Lina, though a little aloof and a tad secretive, seems to feel the same. When Tom is completely under Lina's spell he'll soon do anything (and I do mean anything) to keep her in his life. After a completely disturbing episode involving Tom, Lina and an Asian woman whose name we never know Tom fears Lina may be a tad, ah, off her nut. But shoot, he's in Love, and can't seem to stay away from her for any length of time. . . Yeah, Tom is a bit of a pansy. The book tells the story from Tom's point of view and really gets into his head. We watch a normal, boring, self-centered guy play out his deepest, darkest fantasies and see how these episodes change him.

This book is really got under my skin in a "Last House on the left" nightmarish-slash-realism sort of way. You know, when you don't want to watch (read) but you almost can't help yourself? This is stuff that could possibly happen to any weak willed guy with murderous tendencies swayed by lust which makes it all the more creepier. The ending escalates into madness and is thoroughly horrible.

There is actually an additional 100 or so page novella inside this book as well as Finishing Touches. I don't have the book handy but it had the word "Opera" "Panic" and possibly "Maniac" in the title. Whatever it was called I really didn't like it. The whole thing seemed like a poor excuse to throw in a whole bunch extremely hideous torture and rape scenes and it didn't make any sense at all. A dopey man stumbles into a modern day concentration camp where thousands of people are killed daily. He's led into it by a gorgeous (but of course) silky haired woman who gives him a lot of sex before subjecting him to the horrors of her life. It was disturbing and very odd and I could have done without reading it. I'd give it a 3 but won't mark down the entire book because of it.

The Literary Chick says

I'm going to give this a 3 because there are some that would love this type of thing. I'm not one of them. Would rather watch American Horror Story, you know, the episode with Chloe Sevigny in it?

Jamie Rose says

I got this for sort of free via kindle unlimited. Yet again I'm utterly baffled by the glut of praise and high star ratings for this story.

I didn't think it was particularly good, took about an hour to read, it's going for horror but it didn't quite make it, mainly because it's too busy with details of housing and over excitedly getting into the knickers of Lina. The so called erotic element is on a equally boring par as the so called horror.

Randolph says

One of those "slippery-slope" books where the main character gets sucked into a nightmare by seemingly small sinful steps that keep edging just a little further into the dark side each time. By the time the sucker gets the idea of what's really going on, he's already too deep to not keep going, but he usually really wanted to go there anyway, he just didn't know or imagine it. Sex, torture, and death are the driving forces, as they are for most things in life. Creepy as hell story enhanced by a very literary writing style. The one flaw is a seemingly sort of tacked-on ending. It looked like Tessier just didn't know where to go to ramp up the horror at the end so he picked a sorta dumb unimaginative trope to finish the story (its still a creepy ending).

There is actually a second novella in the book entitled "Father Panic's Opera Macabre" that is also excellent. Another sex driven horror involving the Croatian Nazi's during WWII (and you thought the Germans were bad!). Pretty nice creepy build-up that 2/3 of the way through just goes berserk with (true) horror.

Both these stories are pretty erotic. As a male I can see how the fish get reeled in. They are both guys pretty bored with their pretty good, but mundane, lives; looking for a thrill they don't know they are looking for but the devil is right there to provide it anyway.

Randy Money says

One of the most chilling novels I've read, tracing a man's decent into depravity. Some of the writing reminds me of Ramsey Campbell in its restraint and Tessier's ability to imply rather than describe makes many passages all the more effective.

Rajeev Singh says

[Tom Sutherland finding the chained Asian girl, killing her in a frenzy, then making love to Lina in a melange of freshly-shed blood and violent, perverted lust - it could have been the highlight of the book. Lina looking up to her lover with her face a mask of blood and semen - entirely devoid of feeling for me. It was as if the author was holding b

Nancy says

Posted at Shelf Inflicted

I first came across Thomas Tessier's writing in the *Hot Blood* series, edited by Jeff Gelb and Michael Garrett. Eager for more of his creepy and erotic stories, I was thrilled to find a cheap used copy of *Finishing Touches*. This story is about a young American doctor, Tom Sutherland, who takes a few months off from his practice

to travel, and meets up with an unusual cosmetic surgeon while drinking at a local pub. As Tom slowly gets drawn into the surgeon's dark and mysterious world, and becomes enchanted with the doctor's lovely assistant, he discovers a whole new world of dark, sensual, and sadistic pleasures that at first repels then fascinates him.

The story is competently written, suspenseful and disturbing. It started off slowly and built up tension, but I couldn't help but be let down by the "ultimate evil" Tom was supposed to confront towards the end.

Father Panic's Opera Macabre is a strange and unsettling little story about a historic novelist who becomes stranded in rural Italy after his car breaks down. Neil comes across an old mansion that is inhabited by a beautiful and lonely woman and her eccentric family.

This is a very atmospheric, erotic and disturbing story that builds to a horrific ending in which Neil is confronted with atrocities committed by Croats during World War II. While I enjoyed the setting, the creepy house and its strange inhabitants, and the slow build up, the story's gaping plot holes left me vaguely unsatisfied.

John Bruni says

This is kind of an interesting book. Tessier makes a lot of choices as an author that I would never have made, yet my interest never faded. A lot of things that shouldn't have worked did, and I had a good time watching the descent into sociopathy of the protagonist. I'm not sure why it's called FINISHING TOUCHES, though.

There's also a novella in the back called FATHER PANIC'S OPERA MACABRE. It's got a lot going for it. I particularly enjoyed the erotic scenes and how uncomfortable the mask made me. I also enjoyed the battle scene, which is full of the kind of thing the Crossed would do . . . except these guys are human beings, so they have no excuse for this sort of behavior. But ultimately the story means nothing. A lot of bad things happen for no reason at all. It lacks substance.

Aside from these quibbles, I'd recommend this one.

Erin *Proud Book Hoarder* says

Tom Sutherland graduated med school in America, yet decided to take a break from the academic part of life to enjoy a long-term vacation while he still had the chance. In London he pairs up with a rounded, prosperous doctor who soon becomes his drinking buddy. Bemused by the strange man at first, he of course tires of the company, instead turning his infatuation toward the doctors' lovely assistant, Lina. The two begins a hot, morbid love affair, testing the limits of sanity when she asks him to prove his love to her - and his loyalty the doctor - by participating in a condemning act based on survival. When the ultimate secret he's been waiting for is revealed by Dr. Nordhagen, the cellar of horrors is almost too much to bear, until he feels a piece of him dying and sacrifices it all for the alluring Lina.

To tell more of the plot would damper things too much for potential readers. Finishing touches is a disturbing book which holds a sociopathic tone, written in a dark and serious manner that makes it even worse. The

pacing is slow and atmosphere is drenched with disturbing imagery. Not much is predictable here, and while it does keep you reading, it doesn't deliver all the goods in the end. Instead I was left with a bewildering tangle that didn't make me feel too good. Usually horror isn't supposed to dress one with hearts and purple bubbles, but the utter depression delivered here wasn't something I'd recommend to many.

Characterization was the largest killer for me here. I found it impossible to empathize with anyone in the book, least of all the major characters. The only people who aroused even the slightest inkling of sympathy from me were victims. Tom's obsession with his lady love, Lina, went way above the normal heights and I didn't dismiss his actions with her at all. If anything, his bizarre weakness annoyed me. Lina came across only as cruel and perverse, not even sharing the bizarre love Tom showed her. Their actions were purely selfish, and belong in other novels to the enemies, not the central characters. I had more empathy for Hannibal Lecter than these people, and that's pretty bad. They simply didn't make sense, weren't as interesting, and were psychologically shallow.

The only compliment I can lend Tessier with this piece is that he was awfully daring in his voyage. Even Ramsey Campbell himself said he wouldn't have dared written it in such a taboo manner. In the end though, the book is slower than it should be, with a mountitude of build-up and promise, but it never picks up and it never fully satisfies. Primarily it stands as a sex-filled, violent - and, sadly - pointless novel that doesn't create many more emotions than that.

Eric says

Overall, I liked it but the final sections had some serious pacing issues and lots of "telling rather than showing" problems. The overall arc of the narrator was somewhat believable but fell prey to large chunks of "then this happens" whereas in earlier chapters, we would have gotten full scenes out of these segments which would have further fleshed out the self-justification for his behavioral shift.

The first half of the book contains a few sequences which really got under my skin and affected me for a day or so, but unfortunately these moments weren't sustained though to the end, again because we are told rather than shown.

Timothy Mayer says

Will Errikson at Too Much Horror Fiction turned me onto this book recently. I'd heard a lot about the writings of Thomas Tessier, just never had the opportunity to read anything by him. He seems to consistantly make everyone's "top ten" list.

Originally published in 1986, *Finishing Touches* was recently republished with another of Tessier's writings, *Father Panic's Opera Macabre*. *Touches* is the story of Tom Sutherland, a recent medical school graduate who's slumming in London from an inheritance. One night he runs into Roger Nordhagen, a successful cosmetic surgeon, at a pub. Roger takes a liking to the younger man and begins inviting him to carouse the seedy side of London. Soon, Tom meets Lena, Nordhagen's beautiful assistant and embarks on a wild affair of debauchery. It almost comes to a quick end when Lena arranges an escapade which nearly gets Tom killed. But Tom decides to stick it out and soon finds what Nordhagen's real life work is all about. At times, *Touches* reminded me of a shudder pulp from the 1930's. Dr. Roger Nordhagen isn't too far removed from Dr. Rance Mandarin and his "maggots of madness". But Tessier is a very literate writer and

can twist a paragraph into a deadly shape. Furthermore, Tessier didn't have any reservations about holding back on the descriptive sex and gore scenes.

Father Panic is a shorter work and seems to be a sketch for a longer novel. Traveling through Italy, a writer named Neil finds an isolated house in the mountains when his car brakes down. He approaches the house for assistance and meets Marisa Panic. She lives there with her extended family. They live in the house in the manner of medieval feudal lords, taking care of their tenant farmers. Although Marisa speaks eloquent English and Italian, she converses in another language with her family and field hands. Neil decides to stay on for a few days when Marisa makes a play for him, and this proves to be the beginning of his undoing. After an erotic opening, the novella suddenly shifts gears and Neil is thrown backwards in time to a genocidal massacre in Croatia during WW2. The book ends all too quick, making me think it was intended to be a much longer piece.

Definitely a good a scary set of reads, but not for those with weak constitutions.
