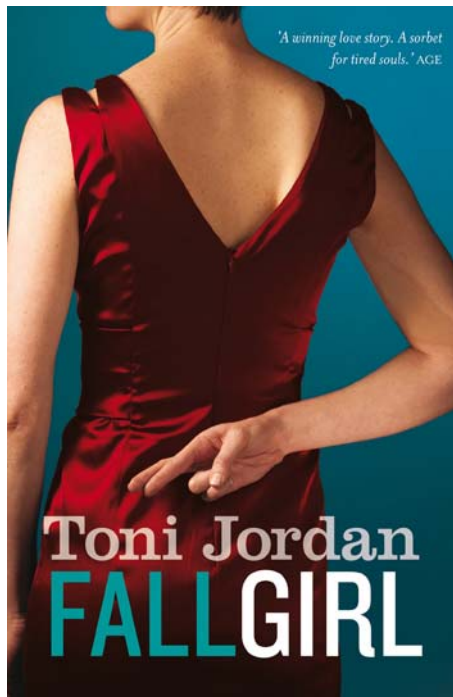


Fall Girl



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Toni Jordan

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Following a successful debut novel with a second one can be daunting for a writer. With *Fall Girl*, Toni Jordan has come up with a worthy, well-crafted follow-up to *Addition*, showing that she has it in her to keep on entertaining us.

Fall Girl is different from *Additions* in almost every aspect. It explores that part of a young woman's life in which she is confronted with perhaps her greatest challenges and probably her greatest opportunity for radical change. Della, who narrates the story, has been brought up from before she was six, as part of the extended family team, to lead the life of a grifter – taking money from people who don't deserve it because they made no effort to attain it (unless dishonestly) or because they are too stupid to hold on to it. Her 'mark' for the bulk of the book fits both criteria. Or does he?

Toni Jordan has an eye for the ludicrous and in this book it is epitomised by Timothy, Della's would-be boyfriend. His ineptness and stupidity play a role in Della's unravelling and she should, perhaps, thank him for it. The one who acts the clown, after all, is often the wise person.

Toni Jordan presents us with what at first appears to be a simple tale of subterfuge, smoke and mirrors, good and evil. But as the reader is enticed from page to page and chapter to chapter, ostensibly to learn the truth behind the masks and façades, s/he becomes engrossed in Della's mental and emotional ebbs and flows, certainties and doubts and her gradually deeper self-examination.

Della is really the only character we care about, the others more or less forming part of her environment. This could be seen as a fault in the novel (lack of development of any other than the central character) but actually made it easier for me to follow and enjoy the story (I often have difficulty keeping up with too many characters whom I am asked to care about). What we do learn about the other characters, all relates to the impact they have on Della.

It is also possible to read *Fall Girl* purely as a jolly good romp through the setting up and execution of a sting, with a potential romance running alongside it. That is one of Toni Jordan's strengths as a writer, which she also demonstrated in *Addition* – read it superficially or allow yourself to become engrossed in the all-too-human concerns of the central character. And the central characters in both books are well observed and real; it is hard not to see in these women something of ourselves or someone we know.

Toni Jordan has a wicked sense of humour and knows how to tell a good story and to tell it well. In *Fall Girl* she throws in enough tension, crazy situations, sex and romance to satisfy anyone. And it all works wonderfully at many levels.