


That Which Gives Life Takes It Away

I am not one for searching out a play and just reading it for the sake of reading it. Funny that... I love theatre, I am on a play-reading committee at my local theatre, but yet I find reading plays a chore. However, give me a script to memorize or audition for and... ZAP... I'm right there. Plays are meant to be performed anyway... not read for leisure.

In my efforts to help the theatre choose a season for the 2010-2011 season, I came across a remarkable play full of symbolism and allegory. Entitled *The Diviners* by Jim Leonard, Jr., it tells the events of a backwater Indiana hicktown (Zion, population...40) one fateful summer. The lead character is Buddy Layman (age 14 or 17 according to the script). He is a mentally challenged boy who also is abundantly curious in all things. He has only one fear (that I could gather from the script). Ironically, this fear is also his greatest gift to the town.

One of the other major players is C.C. Showers. He is a 30-year old preacher who has abandoned his congregation in favor of finding a new way of life... in midwest America during the Great Depression. It is never specifically stated in the script, but I found myself reading more into the plot than was actually there. But I think there are some moments in which my summation could be proven (as my playscript analysis professor instructed the class to do several times). But Mr. Showers and Buddy form a bond that ultimately leads the young man to overcome his fear.

I was totally engaged in all of the symbolism in the play. It had me from the very first page until the very end. In one sitting, I was able to read, laugh, and believe in the play. I find it really tragic that I had never heard of the play

until recently and definitely will put it on my list for suggestions for the upcoming season. On a footnote, *The Diviners* had its professional debut in **1980** and starred [Robert MacNaughton](#) as Buddy. Who is Robert MacNaughton? He played Elliott's older brother Michael in [E.T. – The Extra-Terrestrial](#) . Oddly enough, I did remember the character's name although it was probably said no more than five times the entire movie.