



Dancing in the Dark

Bob Strauss

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Those with a fine appreciation for intricate characters and exceptional attention to detail will enjoy this introspective novel.

Comprehending and learning to overcome the type of psychological pain that penetrates the soul sets the tone in Bob Strauss's contemporary romance, *Dancing in the Dark*. This journey of the spirit, involving both the loss of love and the gift of love, takes one on an exploration of human motivation and biological need.

Two couples embark on the confusing and often obstructed path to a fulfilling relationship in this dual story line, featuring four separate yet deeply connected individuals. At the helm is Harry Salinger, a successful psychotherapist grieving the death of his wife while opening his vulnerable core to a colleague. He realizes that he must move on with his life: "Memories don't keep you warm at night. Living in the past doesn't make you happy."

No longer just friends with this colleague, the doctor is disconcerted by their growing affection and delves into his own psyche, as well as into the minds of his clients, looking for answers. Interwoven into this fascinating plot is another romantic adventure centering on Jacques and Jennifer—both consulting with Salinger without the other's knowledge. It is a vibrant entanglement.

In this scene, Harry contemplates Jacques's ambivalence toward Jennifer. "Of greater weight was his sense that he was more into her than she was into him. He pondered the imbalance in their mutual affections and was disquieted. He persuaded himself that in time that would change for the better. He need only be patient and continue to love her. Thus, despite this daunting litany of complaints, the poor love-besotted man remained intractably benign."

Those with a fine appreciation for intricate characters as opposed to plot-driven stories will enjoy the exceptional attention to detail in this introspective novel. Unlike action fiction, *Dancing in the Dark* glides to its conclusion like a well-orchestrated ballroom dance. Focusing on the dynamics of sharing and intimacy in all their beauty and ugliness—an educational experience that may inform those seeking information about the psychotherapeutic profession—this is a behind-the-scenes look at an accomplished doctor immersed in a complicated situation.

A trite depiction of a couple dancing in a stiff, formal posture on the book's cover conveys the underlying theme—one of distancing within a contrived interlude typical of dating among all age groups. Scrupulous editing can be seen behind this casual and humorously candid story, for every word makes the desired impact.

Strauss is a practicing psychotherapist, based in Manhattan, who specializes in relationship problems. *Dancing in the Dark* is his debut novel, a work enriched by his knowledge and experience. Fans of daytime drama and connoisseurs of confessional fiction will love his sophisticated take on a popular stylistic technique—revelation of the heart.

JULIA ANN CHARPENTIER (February 19, 2014)

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