



Tap-Dancing on Quicksand

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FriesenPress (Aug 30, 2016)

Softcover \$23.49 (492pp)

978-1-4602-7872-7

This is the perfect novel for a leisurely afternoon spent exploring the private lives of the rich and glamorous.

Mrs. Jessica Bothwell is more than a little disenchanted with her fairy-tale life. Although she has it all—a husband, money, her looks, and more charm than you can shake a stick at—she wonders what's left for her after thirty-five. Then, following a shocking crime, Jessica sees that there's more to life than Botox and bubble baths. *Tap-Dancing on Quicksand* is a lavish page-turner of a novel.

On the surface, it seems as though Jessica has it made. She's married to a wealthy man and lives in splendor—no more day-to-day and disappointing dates. “She, in her past, had always managed to link up with the losers: the men who were Peter Pan,” the novel says, and so “she always ended up hurt, damaged, and scarred.” Julian pops up like a white knight in a fairy tale. But has Jessica found her handsome prince, or just another stinker? *Tap-Dancing* presents Jessica as a woman who is disordered in her thoughts. She's not able to make up her mind and is pulled in many directions.

Prose is passionate, with an eye for detail and strong dialogue that makes *Tap-Dancing on Quicksand* a luscious, enjoyable novel. From the first page, the scene is carefully set, right down to the sunlight reflecting off a cut glass bottle of perfume.

Although the time period isn't immediately apparent—Jessica would be as much at home in the Roaring Twenties as in the dot-com boom—small details make the novel timely and relatable. Jessica herself seems old-fashioned at times, and her social set, which includes all the usual characters, from a constantly pregnant socialite to a dowdy housekeeper, makes *Tap-Dancing* sound less like a contemporary novel than a throwback to more innocent times. Jessica's shooting lessons, even, are a bit contrived.

Through the novel's dips and dives, Jessica's reluctance to take action in her own life escalates from frustrating to frightening. Her husband transforms from a drunken boor into an abusive ogre; Jessica's solution is to accept his apology, with a flute of champagne. She submits to his unwanted overtures: “No preliminaries, no words of love, no kisses. She thanked Providence, or whatever might be responsible, for his having relieved himself so quickly.” Is this the beautiful life she wanted? Probably not, and her indecisiveness sets the novel going in circles for several chapters.

By the time Jessica makes up her mind, *Tap-Dancing on Quicksand* has picked up speed again. A fast-paced romp this is not, but it's the perfect novel for a leisurely afternoon, exploring the private lives of the rich and glamorous.

CLAIRE FOSTER (November 15, 2016)

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