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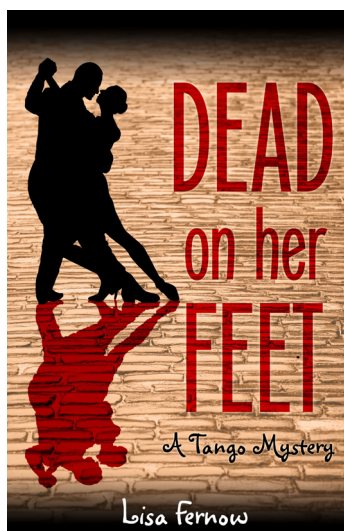
DEAD on her FEET

A TANGO MYSTERY

by Lisa Fernow

“Murder, mayhem and milongas. *Dead on Her Feet* is a smart, stylish debut. The backdrop may be a tango studio but Lisa Fernow knows her stuff off the dance floor as well, creating interesting, well-defined characters and a clever plot. ”

—Rosemary Harris, Author of *The Bitches of Brooklyn* and *Pushing Up Daisies*



For those who dedicate their lives to “chasing the ghost,” searching for that elusive moment of perfect connection on the dance floor, tango is a drug. A drug that proves fatal.

When a much-hated member of the Atlanta tango community is stabbed in the middle of a dance, the last thing tango instructor Antonia “Ant” Blakeley wants to do is help the police work out how someone could have struck the fatal blow unseen. Her troubled nephew is first on the list of suspects, and she’ll do anything to protect him. Unfortunately for her, she’s up against Detective Sam Morrow, a former marine who will do anything to get to the truth. Only one of them will get what they want.

Praise for *Dead on Her Feet*

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—Rosemary Harris, Author of *The Bitches of Brooklyn* and *Pushing Up Daisies*

Tango never felt so primal, so sexy, so treacherous. The devil's own choreographer must have inspired the danza de la muerte in Lisa Fernow's terrific debut novel.

—Skye Moody, Bestselling Author and Mystery Novelist

Dead on Her Feet seduces you into the world of tango and then plunges you into a tantalizing mystery. Sharp, witty, and clever by turns, tango instructor Antonia Blakeley and her intriguing friends will keep you reading relentlessly. *Dancing with the Stars* move over; author Lisa Fernow clearly has all the right moves.

—Chapple Langemack, Originator of King County Library System's Readers Services Program

About Lisa Fernow



Lisa Fernow grew up on the classic mysteries of Ngaio Marsh and Elizabeth Peters, and is the author of *Dead on Her Feet*, the first mystery in a planned series set in the tango world. Her short story, *Death of a Tango Dancer*, was featured in King County Library System's Take Time to Read program in 2010.

Lisa has danced Argentine tango since 1996, studying with legendary masters Cacho Dante, Susana Miller, Brigitta Winkler, and other inspiring instructors throughout the US.

She holds a BA in English and Theatre from Cornell University and a certificate in commercial fiction writing from the University of Washington. As a former PepsiCo and Time Warner global marketing executive Lisa bowled with Michael Jordan, got sweat on by Cindy Crawford, taught capitalism to Hungarians and helped launch Scooby Doo merchandise into 150 countries.

Now living in Seattle, Lisa runs a consulting practice focused on innovation and loves toggling between business and mystery writing, as both require creativity and strong storytelling.

Visit www.lisafernnow.com for behind the scenes extras and to learn more about the tango world.

Twitter: twitter.com/LisaFernow

Ordering Information

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By Lisa Fernow

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An Interview with Lisa Fernow, Author of *Dead on Her Feet*

Q: You're a marketing consultant by day, and *Dead on Her Feet* is your debut novel. Was there a memorable moment where you decided that you just had to start writing; that you couldn't keep the book inside your head any longer? What inspired you to write *Dead on Her Feet*, specifically?

A: I've wanted to be a mystery writer ever since the third grade, but put that dream aside to pursue a marketing career with PepsiCo and Time Warner. While on a business trip to Argentina I saw some tango dancers in San Telmo and realized I just had, had, had to learn this dance. So I went back to Atlanta, where I was living at the time, and started taking lessons with Rick and Lynda Wilson, and going to dances. At one of these *milongas* a woman, who shall remain forever nameless, "stole" one of my favorite dance partners right out from under me. I remember thinking, wouldn't it be nice if she died ;) And the idea for *Dead on Her Feet* was born. I moved to Seattle, started a marketing consulting practice, and started writing.

Q: You've said that one of your favorite mystery authors is Ngaio Marsh. Did her writing inspire or influence any part of *Dead on Her Feet*? What's your favorite mystery book or series?

A: Ngaio Marsh is my all time favorite mystery author, and I love re-reading her series. She was one of the great golden age mystery writers, but what her readers might not know is that she was also a doyenne of the theatre. She set many of her books in the theatre world, which I greatly enjoyed, as I'd been an English and Theatre major at Cornell. I wanted to use tango in my books the way she used theatre in hers, and pay homage to some of the conventions of the golden age era: the locked room mystery, the pairing of an amateur sleuth with a professional, and the use of character profiles and floor plans of the murder scene being a few examples. If I have succeeded at following in her tradition in any small way, I'll be thrilled.

Q: You have a background in Argentine tango, and it really shows through in your writing. How long have you been dancing, and how important was it for you to accurately portray the art of tango in *Dead on Her Feet*?

A: I started dancing tango in 1996, and studied with some amazing masters: Cacho Dante, Susanna Miller and Brigitta Winkler being some of the most well known. I was starved for material about tango – what it looked like, how to learn it, how to behave – so I could get out on the floor and be accepted in the community. I watched Carlos Saura's *Tango*, Sally Potter's *The Tango Lesson*, and Robert Duvall's *Assassination Tango*, scouring these movies for cues. However, most of what you see in film is performance tango which is meant to be enjoyed by the viewer. Social tango is completely different. It doesn't look like much but it feels amazing and is really addictive. People arrange their lives to be able to dance tango socially. I wanted to show more of this aspect of the dance, and I hope I have done it justice. Everyone who dances tango will have a different opinion on this!

Q: How much research did you have to do for writing the book? What was the most interesting fact you discovered or surprising story you experienced while researching?

A: I researched the book, off and on, for about ten years, if you can believe it. This is while I was writing, and rewriting, the various drafts of the book.

The most surprising story came as I was researching the back-stories for my characters. Professor Bobby Glass is a new dancer with bad eyesight, no rhythm, and no confidence. Contrast him with Eduardo Sanchez Jaury, an Argentine *milonguero* who has been dancing his entire life. When it comes to tango they are on opposite ends of the spectrum. In the back of my mind I always hoped Bobby and Eduardo would become friends.

As I started to build out their histories I decided that one of the professor's hobbies, since he's a geologist, would be to help track down and authenticate gems the Nazis stole from the Jews in WWII. Don't ask me where that idea came from. Meanwhile I decided Eduardo needed a dark past, and made him a Montonero, a member of an Argentine leftist group that carried out bombings, kidnappings and assassinations against the government. As I continued to research their fictitious histories, I discovered that while the former Argentine President Juan Peron was in power he had protected the Nazis and turned on the Montoneros he'd once supported. So Bobby and Eduardo, both hating Peron, had a reason to become *great* friends.

Q: Even though all of the suspects are united by their love of tango, that seems to be the only thing they have in common. I love each character's unique personality and quirks; it was so fun to follow their antics as the mystery unfolds. Was there any particular character that was the most fun to write?

A: I have a soft spot for Bobby Glass. He's such a bad dancer but tries so hard.

Q: Antonia and Morrow have a bit of a flirtation going on. Can we expect to see more of that in future books? Maybe even a romance?

A: Flirtation? What flirtation?

Q: Did you uncover any other surprises while you were writing? Anything that didn't end up how you'd expect?

A: I originally intended the book to be light, like an Agatha Christie mystery. But whenever tango is involved you can't help but go deeper. So the book turned out to be a little more visceral and intense than I expected. The dance requires it, really.

Q: After I read *Dead on Her Feet*, I wanted to go out and start learning to dance tango myself! Any tips on breaking into tango or where people can start learning the dance?

A: Yes! If you live anywhere near a city, there is almost certainly a tango community. Google will get you started, and I'll be posting about some of my favorite teachers on my website. Best advice? Go in with the expectation that learning tango is a life long pursuit, like golf. You'll get out of it what you invest.

Q: I heard you've bowled with Michael Jordan and got sweat on by Cindy Crawford. Tell me the full story behind those!

A: Both Michael and Cindy are true class acts, I have to say.

I was working for Frito-Lay in the Chicago office and we were hosting a sales event at a bowling alley. The idea was to give our best retailer customers the opportunity to bowl with the Chicago Bulls, who were at the height of their fame. Everyone was in a high fever, clearly thrilled to be there. Me, I know nothing about basketball. I'm just there to help. I notice this one player bowling gutter balls so, being a smart ass, I say to him, "You can't bowl worth shit can you?" and he says, "Nope," grinning this huge smile, and I realize I have just messed with Michael Jordan.

A few years later when I was at Pepsi Cola International we hosted a big marketing conference in Bermuda. Everyone at the meeting gets to have his picture taken with Cindy Crawford. There must be two hundred guys lining up to slip their arms around this supermodel's waist. The heat's in the high 90's. By the time it's my turn I'm drenched in sweat. I can't touch this lovely person. I'll damage her. But Cindy smiles as if to say, No problem, I'm used to this, and throws her arm around me. My mom still has the photo on her piano.

Q: Do you know when the next book's coming out? Is there any hint or spoiler you can tell us about the story? Please?

A: The next book is expected out sometime in 2015, depending on how fast I write!!! I can tell you it's set in Seattle, and Antonia will run into someone she's not sure she ever wants to see again.

Suggested Reading Group Guide

1. What other books would you compare this book to and why? How is it similar to or different from other novels you've read in this genre?
2. Most scenes are told from Antonia's or Morrow's point of view, but others are not. Take a minor character and discuss why you think the author made that choice. What could the character see or not see? How might that help or hinder the reader from understanding what's really going on in the scene? What other reasons might there be for writing a scene from that character's point of view?
3. Each character comes to tango for his or her own reasons. What do you think they are? What can you learn about each character from this? What can you learn about the dance?
4. Antonia and Morrow have no problem lying to get the result they need. However, if you read carefully, while the murderer certainly omits various facts, the murderer actually never tells an outright lie. Discuss how various characters approach telling the truth (or not).
5. Nathalie dies because she violates the codes of the tango community. Do you agree or disagree? Why?
6. When you were reading, who did you think did it? What clues tipped you off? Did you ever doubt your choice, or change your mind? If so, at what point in the book? Why? Discuss whether you were suckered in by any red herrings, and if you were, how they worked.
7. How did knowing something about the tango world help you in solving the crime? Could Morrow have cleared this case without Antonia's help? How?
8. By the end of the book, Antonia thinks Morrow set her up to do his dirty work for him. Do you think she's right? Why/why not? Where in the book do you see this happening (or not)?
9. How do you think the relationship between Antonia and Morrow should evolve in the next book?