



Dancing Lessons

R. Cooper

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Two years of living with his controlling boyfriend left Chico worn down long before that boyfriend revealed he'd been seeing someone else. With no other choice, Chico moves in above his cousin's garage in a small town in the redwoods, where he merely goes through the motions. To get him out of the house, his cousin pushes him to volunteer at a local dance studio to help with their annual show.

He's not expecting to end up in a dance class, or to start feeling alive again in the arms of his dance instructor. Rafael is the studio owners' son and was once a well-known dancer in his own right, but now enjoys being a teacher. Although Chico likes him, he's afraid of taking a chance. But Rafael is determined, and it only takes one dance for Chico to start to realize he might still have something to learn.

Dancing Lessons Details

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From Reader Review Dancing Lessons for online ebook

Love Bytes Reviews says

4.5 Heart Review by Kat

This is a new-to-me author and, if this is any kind of an accurate example of their work, I believe that they will soon become a favorite. I must have become somewhat “jaded” by the rash of insta-romance/sex books I have been reading of late because, at first, I was thinking “why are they moving so slow?” Then I realized my self-fault and was like “Wow...an author is actually writing a complete plot with full character development and not rush to sex and instant gratification and love!” I have to say, for me at least, this has been fairly rare lately and I loved this. In real life, a person who has been so “wronged” and hurt by their significant other as Chico was, would not normally let it roll off their backs and dive into their next relationship. I was so pleased that the author let him experience his hurt and react to it accordingly. It was refreshing to see a character who wasn’t “perfect” and to forge on through their problem along side them. Add in Rafael, a world-class dancer, who had come back to his small town in the California Redwoods to teach at his family’s dance studio. His caring and flirtation with Chico was wonderful. I also loved Chico’s cousin Davi. His concern for Chico and prodding of his dear cousin to get out of bed and return to life was fabulous. I saw it, not only as a caring family member, but in some ways, a way to pay it forward to Chico and his parents for the love that they gave to Davi when he needed it earlier in life.

I love dance in all forms so this ballet, that the dance studio students preform, was quite intriguing to me. The story that unfolds in the ballet is explained to Chico, who is volunteering to redo previous costumes to be used for the ballet, by Rafael. It was a very touching and poignant story within a story. I searched the Internet to see if it was a real ballet based on a real story. Although it is a type of ballet that was preformed during the AIDS pandemic of the 1980’s, to try to demolish homophobia, I could not locate either the ballet or the story. I could, however, see this leading to a ballet to be written and preformed.

This was a wonderful story with believable characters that engages you and has you hoping and cheering for their Happily Ever After that they so completely deserve.

Gigi says

4.4 stars rounded up because **EMOTIONAL SEX!**

There are two books I have read in my life that contained a sex scene that made me cry. Where the emotion and passion was *so* intense that I wept because I was so touched. The first one was The Final Line by Kendall McKenna. The second one is Dancing Lessons by R. Cooper.

The actual story of Chico (pronounce "Sheeco" for its Portuguese, not Spanish, origin) and the sudden re-planting of his life was good. Not *great*, but it was good and held my interest. Chico has been mistreated emotionally and is extremely depressed. That's a personal hard read for me since I also suffer from

depression. His self-esteem is shot and he is sleeping too much, isolating himself and not eating enough. His shot-in-the-arm is his cousin, Davi, who encourages him to volunteer at a local dance studio. Chico reluctantly accepts the volunteer position and meets beautiful, posed, graceful, charming dance teacher Rafael. With his self-esteem so low, he doesn't believe he has a chance in hell of catching Raf's eye.

But catch Raf's eye he does. Raf is the epitome of kindness and patience and he is adorably smitten with sad, lonely Chico. (He is *prime* book-boyfriend material.)

The burn between Chico and Raf is excruciatingly slow but delicious at the same time. The sexual tension between the men is outrageous and palpable. I enjoyed every minute of these two together.

But, again, the actual story itself wasn't *that* big of a deal for me. The thing is, you have to read the whole book to understand and feel the emotion of the final scene. So, I **HIGHLY recommended** you read this book. The *whole* book. If you are bored and feel like DNF, **DON'T**. The payoff at the end is worth every minute of your time.

One more thing: We do **not** get a HEA here but **do** get a HFN with speculation that these men will walk off into the sunset together. I would have given my eye teeth for an epilogue.

But I still fucking loved this.

Galley copy of Dancing Lessons provided by Dreamspinner Press in exchange of an honest review.

This review is also posted at Gay Book Reviews

Chris Kottner-Kirschner says

Obwohl sein Exfreund John echt die Pest und ein Kontrollfreak war, tut Chico die Trennung weh und lässt ihn verloren zurück. Ein Tapetenwechsel ist nötig und nachdem er aus der Wohnung geflogen ist, kommt er bei seinem Cousin Davi unter. Dieser kümmert sich und will Chico wieder unter Menschen bringen. Doch Chico hat so gar keine Lust auf Menschen, Interaktionen und zieht sich scheu zurück. Seinen Alltag managt er nur schwerlich und eigentlich verlässt er das Apartement nur um halbtags zu arbeiten. Doch in der örtlichen Tanzschule, die von einem Freund Davis geführt wird, werden ehrenamtliche Helfer gebraucht und Davi drängt Chico dazu sich dort zu zeigen und zu engagieren.

Anders als seine Geschwister ist Rafael kein Profitänzer geworden. Und er ist höchst zufrieden damit die Tanzschule seiner Eltern fortzuführen und zu unterrichten. Und in einem seiner Tanzkurse taucht plötzlich Chico auf. Jedoch versehentlich, auch wenn Rafael ihn gleich zu Demonstrationszwecken aufs Parkett führt. Doch Chico ist mehr als ein scheues Reh und Rafael begreift sehr schnell, dass hier viel Fingerspitzengefühl und Geduld gefragt ist.

Der Grundplot ist jetzt nichts Besonderes und auch nicht neu. Doch irgendwie hat er mich angesprochen und ich habe mich auf eine fluffige Geschichte gefreut. Leider konnte ich mit den Helden so gar nicht warm werdne. Chicos Unsicherheit und Vorsicht sind allgegenwärtig und bestimmen den Plot und die Entwicklung ihrer Beziehung. Das wäre an sich kein Problem, aber Chico wird irgendwann nur noch nervig. Und auch Rafael kann das nicht ausgleichen. Obwohl er von Chicos Schwierigkeiten weiß, reagiert er oft sehr unverständlich und macht es damit noch komplizierter.

Drama ist ja gut und schön. Aber für mich war es meist nur eine Aneinanderreihung von Mißverständnissen und Schweigen. Der Plot hätte doch viel mehr hergegeben. Zudem werden immer nur vage Andeutungen über die Vergangenheit von Rafael und Chico gemacht. Das frustriert irgendwann. Deswegen konnte mich die Geschichte nicht wirklich überzeugen. Die Übersetzung an sich ist in Ordnung, auch wenn ein paar Wortspielereien darin vorkommen, die doch sehr großzügig eingebaut wurden und für mich nicht in die Geschichte gepasst haben.

Sara says

I am in love with this book. Totally and completely in love. In fact I am so in love with it I would marry it.

Let's see if I can review this and make sense of the feelings I am having. Oh boy.

We meet Chico as he is trying to get his life back. After being dumped by his ex-boyfriend two years ago in a horrible way, he is living above his cousin Davi's garage in the Northern California Redwood tourist town of Brandywine. Chico is doing the minimal human functions needed when we meet him; he goes to work and comes home, he maybe eats something other than ice cream and he sleeps. He hides in his apartment and thinks about where his life was with John, where it is now and if there is something worth it in the future. Upon the encouragement and basic demands of Davi, Chico agrees to volunteer at the Winters Dance Studio and help with the prop preparations for the upcoming recital. When he gets to the studio, one push of the wrong door lands him literally in the arms of Rafael Winters... dance teacher, keeper of moments and swoonster extraordinaire.

Wow. This book has major feels and major moments and moments are everything. This is the first book from this author from me and I need a big old V8 style smack in the head for that grievous fault alone. I can't even think about how many times I got choked up with Chico (pronounced Sheeco, with a soft Ch...) so many times. I mean, just the pronunciation of his name is vital to who he is. That softness of the Ch to say his name, it's everything and it's so simple. The way he talks to himself, the chatter in Chico's head is heartbreaking and then something happens to him, he feels Rafael's hands on him leading him through a Waltz. Again, a simple dance that builds into much more that I can't take it. I can't take the feels. Who am I kidding, I can take them and I want more. Gimme more!

...trust can't be rushed, or forced, it must grow. We watch it grow.

It's hard to deal when life changes. When you've been with someone, lived in a city, worked and just been who you were for so long to have your life suddenly change, it's tough. I got that Chico wanted to hide, he wanted to not deal with people and I totally got his rambling about himself, spilling his guts whenever he talked because sometimes, when you spend so much time alone... you forget how to not talk about yourself when you're the only companion you have. So yeah, I got all of that with Chico and I found it endearing as

all heck.

And then there is Rafael. Good lord that man. Not only is he sexy with his dancing but the man can flirt his tight butt and muscled thighs off! OMG! I have a list of MC's who are masters at the swoony phrases and yeah, who would think telling someone they are skittish as a deer would make you melt? Rafael can because it's not what he says but how he says it and the why of it all... he's so good. SO good at it. Sigh.

I can't forget the secondary characters of Davi, Chico's parents, Mr. and Mrs. Winters who added depth, guidance and acceptance to both Rafael and Chico in oh so many ways. Ugh. So good.

That's the fun part about ballet or any kind of storytelling. It means whatever you want it to mean and can become whatever you want it to become. It's personal to everyone.

And that is exactly what this story does. Not only does Chico see personal connections to The Clockwork Dancer, the recital the dance studio is putting on, but as the reader you see it and this reader made a few personal connections to both stories. Goodness. This book, it was so much. It has so much emotion and I am a mess as I write this. A total mess and I have am losing my ability to form proper sentences to describe how much I needed this book.

I could go on and on about this but doing so would lead to me spoiling it and I don't do that.

Nope. Nuh-uh.

But this book... Le sigh. The dancing in this is amazing and it's metaphorical to the relationship, per the title. They say life is a dance and when you find that person who will not only lead you, but accept your lead, it's magical, it's romantic, it's so very lovely and at the end, at this end, it's pure perfection.

Dancing Lessons was a fantastic, heartwarming story of loss and love. Of rebuilding yourself and accepting that things change but that change is good. It's about having the bravery to go for what you want and not be locked to someone's expectations of you. It's about lessons of dance, life and love. It's just... gorgeous.

Meep says

Somewhere between 2* and 3* rounding up as I usually like Cooper's writing.

Chico is exhausting. He's suffering depression and recovering from a controlling relationship that's broken him. While he's sweet and you sympathise it's hard to see why the ever so perfect Rafael would be so instantly smitten. The story progresses with a series of Chico random rambles and Rafael's encouragements.

On top of this there's a musical being preformed and for me that was where this started feeling like a school book -and I've left school a long way behind me!- parallels being drawn between the plot of the show and their lives were about as subtle as a lead pipe to the noggin.

There is cuteness, Rafeal is patience and supportive and perfect. The reason for his chosen career path was refreshing. I liked the conversation with the baker. But Chico is SO insecure and SO broken it's too much for a little novella to handle adequately. While certain moments charmed me overall the story left me tired.

Elsa Bravante says

DNF en el 25%, lo dejo sin rating para no ser injusta. Ufff, nope.

Susan says

Books by R. Cooper are ones that make me wonder "what's wrong with me?". (don't answer that! ha!)

I like the stories. I like'ish the characters. But I haven't, to date, really gotten on with the writing.

Dancing Lessons was no different.

Liked the story about a down-on-his-luck guy meeting a dance instructor and the slow-burn attraction between them.

Liked'ish the characters...though I didn't feel connected enough with Rafael. And Chico's woe-is-me started to wear me down.

It just...was the writing...that didn't really do it for me. The dialogue felt almost amateurish and I struggled figured out the flow...there were times I was lost.

All in all, it wasn't awful. It was actually ok. But I didn't love it.

Heller says

4.5

What a beautiful story. Chico so hidden but fighting to get back to himself and smitten kitten Rafael who sees the man he's trying to get back to being.

I loved it. It ended HFN and that worked for me but I want more of these characters. More of Chico and Rafael. More of Davi and even maybe more of Jase.

Rachel Emily says

Oh Chico <3 <3 <3 I just wanted to give him a hug and tell him he's important and worthy of a great guy like Raf.

This book was just adorable, was very well written, had a great slow burn for the 2 MCs, and was so emotional! I just loved Rafael, he was so patient, sweet, and kind to Chico. And Chico, I loved him too...he had been beaten down emotionally after a bad breakup with his ex, and was working on rebuilding his life and figure out what he wanted for himself.

All in all, if you're looking for an emotional story with great characters and a wonderful slow burn romance, then give this a try. The only thing that would have made it even better is if there had been an epilogue! I just wanted a bit more for these two!

Sandra says

5 big fat huge stars. I was blown away by the emotions on the pages of this book.

The story itself has a sad beginning - Chico, brow-beaten and emotionally abused by his former boyfriend and depressed because of being left/kicked out by his former boyfriend, has started over in his cousin's garage apartment and a low-end job, and spends much of his time sleeping. His depression is extreme, and you can't help but feel that Chico's self-esteem has taken a hard beating and is fundamentally broken.

At the nudging/badgering of his cousin Ravi, Chico begins to volunteer at a dance studio and meets super-hot, super-sexy Rafael, a former ballet dancer and son of the owners, who now runs dance classes.

It's a testament to this author's talent at having established his characters so early into the book that I completely believed Chico would think he had absolutely no chance to even catch the hot, sexy dancer's eye. He's just Chico, who's not worthy of love, and therefore Rafael cannot possibly want him. Even if Rafael is kind and charming toward him, and even flirts with him.

Surely, Chico is mistaken the flirting, right?

Chico's sweet, unassuming, and shy nature does catch the eye (and more) of the famous ex-dancer. Their mutual attraction was believable and the UST throughout the book is strong.

Rafael is enamored with the sweet young man who volunteers at the studio, but as Chico's walls are thick, he has to steadily chip away at the brick and mortar surrounding Chico's heart.

But "Just Chico" has trouble believing Rafael is interested, and their mating dance is a sight to behold. Rafael sees Chico, really "sees" him, even when Chico is full of self-doubt and thinks himself worthless.

I loved how the author told a story within a story, that of the Clockwork Dancer, a dance/play being prepared for its first show, and drew similar images between the play and the love story that is unfolding. While Chico works on the costumes, a talent he kept hidden because former boyfriend made him think it's a worthless talent, the similarities between himself and a character in the play become obvious to the reader over time, as he and Rafael slowly but surely get closer. Especially trust plays a big role here in both the play and the romance. As the doll maker slowly wins the ballerina's trust, so does Rafael win Chico's. Even the King in the play had a matching character in the story, who was obsessed with outward beauty and appearances, and cared nothing for what lies beneath, only wanting to own and possess, with disregard to the feelings of the other person.

I was mostly impressed how emotional this book made me, to the point of crying with joy at the ending. While we don't get a huge HEA, we do get that ever so satisfying HFN. And I have no doubt that were the author to revisit this couple in a future book, we'd see them still happily together. The characters were so well suited to each other.

Fantastic writing, high on the emotions, and a sweet love story made this a wonderful book, deserving of the 5 stars it received.

***** I obtained a free copy of this book from its publisher. A positive review was not promised in return. *****

.Lili. says

Emotional

Sweet

Melancholy but uplifting

Flawless writing

Highly recommend. 4 Stars ♥

Vallie says

Oh my sweet sweet book...! I want to hold you and keep safe forever and everrrrrrr. I absolutely adored this little novel. It brought me back to the simple recipe romances that got me into this mess -reading like a maniac.

Chico is an adorable little kid at heart who is sort of failing...at life. He's out of his apartment because of his cheating ex and currently living with his very loving cousin Davi. Davi is trying his best to motivate Chico but Chico looks like he's going through a depression that's kicking his ass, understandably so, and can't motivate himself to do much of anything other than work retail part time. From selling high end suits to selling shoes...oh how the mighty have fallen, or so he thinks. After a lot of harassment from Davi, Chico agrees to volunteer his free time to the local dance studio and help prepare the big shindig they're putting together. Lo and behold, Rafael is the hot teacher whose parents own the studio and the game is on.

There's so much flirting here! And let's note that it's not flirting as a precursor to making out or hooking up or anything. Flirting for the sake of flirting. Because it just can't be helped on either side. Rafael is sort of seeing someone else –just a date, no relationship and no sex either as far as we know. And Chico...well he's pretty much decided that he won't even entertain the idea of getting involved with anyone simply because he can't trust himself to make the right decisions when it comes to these things. See, history has shown that he tends to lose himself in a relationship and let himself be doormatized. Shut up. I can make up words, didn't ya know?

So. Back and forth they go and it's soooooo delicious!!!!!! I tend to get impatient when it comes to my characters getting some action but honestly, I was so swept by the longing, the intensity, oh my god, they both had it so bad! And the writing style captured that intensity in such an original way –I'm so impressed with this author.

“The way you stare at me sometimes. You kill me and you're not even trying.’ Rafael sighed deeply. ‘You have all these feelings, and you show them like it's nothing.’ He briefly took his hands off the steering wheel to gesture helplessly. ‘Everyone around me is about passion for the art, passion through the art, and there you are, wounded by my ballet and curled up in my car and gazing at me. God. How you look at me makes it hard to remember where I'm standing. Do you even realize?’”

If, **THAT** is not a freaking love confession, I don't know what is.

The relationship doesn't really happen until the very end. And dear lord that scene. Such pure romance right there. I was smiling so freaking wide reading it. It took a while, yes, but the way there...I am so in love with this book and the way it was written, and how fragile Chico is, and how madly in love Rafael fell with him and EVERYTHING!

But, the end was way too abrupt -HFN, at best, without any serious resolving of Chico's main issues, living situation, career etc. I wonder if there's more in store for these two? I hope so. I would love to read more about this couple. Highly recommend this amazing piece of romance to all fans of mm.

ARC of Dancing Lessons was provided by the author in exchange for an honest review. See this review at Gay Book Reviews.

Truuss says

It was a chaotic read. Sometimes I had to read a line five times.

There were some really nice parts, parts that made my heart squeeze. And there were parts I really didn't understand a fuck. The interactions were sometimes really bad.

It made me feel stupid....that is not okay.

I don't think and will not believe this was the author's intention.

Let's just saywe did not connect.

Leanne says

4.5 stars

Fans of R. Cooper will love this one. The quintessential whimsy and charm with a generous dollop of UST and a long, delicious slow burn- nobody does it better.

Ann says

4.5 Stars

You know what this story had that I f'ing love?

MOMENTS. It had MOMENTS.

Anyone who reads any flavor of romance knows what I'm talking about here. I can only imagine how difficult it can be to write one successfully. There can't be too much verbiage or it will kill it and the description of the physical happenings between characters has to be enough to picture but not too much so that the beauty gets lost in the detail.

Chico has escaped from the city to the small mountain town of Brandywine to lick his wounds and try to figure out just who the hell he is. His relationship with his ex has wrecked his self-confidence. The author did a really good job of showing the past without giving me a laundry list of events to make sure I understood. The details came out organically as they were relevant to what was happening in the story.

One thing I really loved about Chico was how real he read. He could have easily become "pathetic" but he didn't because he knew what his problems were and anyone who has been cheated on and dumped will know exactly the struggles Chico is facing in his own head. The author didn't rely on magic peen to solve all Chico's problems either. Chico truly did not understand how Raf could be attracted to him and instead of getting frustrated with Chico it just made me so sad for him. He's a realist and he's been through the wringer so any other reaction would not have been anywhere near realistic.

Soooo, speaking of Raf. DAYUM. I could stop there, BUT I won't. He's charming, confident and remarkably humble considering the package he comes wrapped in.

"The dance teacher was some kind of sexy dancer whisperer."

He really could not have been better for Chico, and vice versa. The author described Chico's feelings in one interlude between the characters as "twitterpated".

"Chico stopped to heave a breath. 'And now you're flirting with me, and it's so nice I don't know what to do.'"

For one, that word does not get used enough in general and secondly, it was the perfect description. Chico is really so charming when he's lost like that and Raf falls for that reaction and Chico's Bambi eyes hard.

The story and the relationship between Chico and Raf evolved at the same pace as Chico found his footing again. He would apologize for not being the man he once was and for not being on top of all the adult things he thinks he should have a handle on. Slowly he realized that how skewed his perspective was with all the BS his ex had fed him. I loved reading his revelations and respected the hell out of him for not falling into old habits. He knew he had to be strong Chico for himself before he could be any good for anyone else. That buried strength and self-awareness is present throughout and as glimpses of it came out I could sense Raf falling for him harder and harder. Those little glimpses showed Chico's true personality and sense of humor

and he was so proud of himself when he could make Raf laugh.

I would be remiss if I didn't talk about the secondary characters. Chico is living above his cousin Davi's garage and Davi is just so amazing. He's supportive without being sappy and he has no problem giving Chico a kick in the ass when needed. Davi has a story I would love to read. Chico's parents are charmingly traditional and wholly supportive of Chico and Davi. They were there for Davi when Davi's parents failed. I could sense their closeness even if Davi didn't have tons of page time. Raf's parents were a total kick. His tiny little mother as the grande dame of the dance school was both intimidating and wise as she spoke to Chico and always knew exactly what to say to him. She fed his new found confidence without coddling him. While Raf's dad didn't have a lot of dialog, his actions and place in the family couldn't be overlooked. It speaks to the strength of his character in that he didn't need to have a huge time presence to have that much of an impact on other characters.

Moving back to the MOMENTS. Dancing and the upcoming recital played a big part of the story and so were a vehicle for the relationship between Chico and Raf. The author didn't bury the characters in obvious dancing metaphors or overkill the mechanics of dance and Raf's history. Instead she used it in such a smart way, to show me the connection between Chico and Raf. Raf's hands were a big deal for Chico and the thought of Raf's hands on him made him melt. When Raf would reach his hand out to Chico, there was no denying the importance of the gesture throughout the story. At 78% the big MOMENT that slayed me happened. There was very little actual dialog but the UST pouring off the pages was palpable. In a short 2 pages there were revelations, acknowledgements, happiness and heat. Good Lord, so much happiness and heat. I read it three times.

Because it's imperative to some readers I do have to say the story ends on an incredibly optimistic HFN. It really was completely fine for the story and where the characters were in their fledgling relationship. That would be my only complaint, that isn't even really a complaint, I just plain want more. I don't think an epilogue would have been enough, but I can hope that the author would be willing to revisit Brandywine and continue Chico and Raf's story.
