



Shadowdance

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Paralyzed since birth, a young man named Innowen happens upon a sorceress along the road. She grants him the ability to walk, but there are two conditions: he can only walk between dusk and dawn and, to keep this ability to walk, he must dance each night. What at first seems harmless comes with a sinister price. Anyone who witnesses Innowen's dance is soon compelled to act out his or her darkest, most horrific desires. Eased of his physical affliction only to be burdened with a moral one, Innowen sets out on a quest to find the nameless with in order to lift the curse. What he finds instead are long-protected secrets that threaten to bring down an entire kingdom.

Shadowdance Details

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Author : Robin Wayne Bailey

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From Reader Review Shadowdance for online ebook

Aynaarah says

Terrible misleading - dance the world away...

Magical, promising, wish upon a whispering stone.. begging for help Innowen "saw the narrow road stretching before him and the trees on either side that loomed like mighty soldiers of an era before the Age of Man."

.. that must have been the Age of Demons, a never ending lesson about their kind.. and if the main purpose was to emphasize that deals with demons can't turn otherwise but sour.. the book deserves a better rating..

But aside the glorious beginning everything else went creepy. Just too many promises veiled in wonder and sweetness that turn out with a certain degree of certitude poisonous, fake, nonetheless creepy.. and set within cycle repeating horrors of a stubborn immutable fate, who's strings are pulled by a puppeteer with bad humor..

so why dance away the world? this idea is just too precious here..

Well along the way aside from demons I could also discover good mortals.. .."What could anyone say to a child when it first realized its parents were made of clay, like everyone else, and clay, when wet, was as slimy as the mud under their feet? (!!suicide, a bit too much I would say) And didn't every child make that discovery sooner or later, that father and mother were not gods at all, not pillars of strength, or founts of wisdom, but just clay?"...

the cherry was at the end.. a familiar happy pattern..

All in all, my opinion: very hard to digest.

Amanda says

Innowen is cursed. And blessed. And cursed.

Born crippled, one night his life is changed forever when his caretaker is bitten by a snake. The beautiful witch who comes to his calls for help not only saves his caretaker's life, but gives Innnowen back the use of his legs, for a price. Every night he can walk -- but he must dance. Once the sun rises, his legs are useless once again.

But worse; if anyone sees Innnowen dance, they are forced to enact their deepest, darkest desire. And that leads to tremendous consequences, not only for Innnowen, but for his closest friends, and for his nation.[return][return]Raised up out of the mud and adopted by a lord with a past of his own, he sets out on a quest to once again find that beautiful witch who saved his life, and discovers that little of his life is exactly as it has seemed to be.

A dark fantasy in the truest sense, Shadowdance is a bronze aged exploration of the meaning of love, life and the essence of what is good or evil. Honestly, there is very little magic involved in this book – what is there, aside from the beginning of the book and Innowen's salvation, is subtle, and only used by the witch.

Shadowdance is the very definition of a character-driven fantasy novel. The plot in this book is thin and sometimes very secondary, while Innowen's own self-discovery remains paramount. But that's okay, because if the plot was more dominant, the book simply wouldn't work.

The plot itself is based on Innowen's search for the witch, a quest that was inspired by his love. This leads to a number of different questions about love, as Innowen attempts to discover what love truly is. The search for the meaning of love covers a number of different areas, and doesn't shy away from some of the darker topics, including that of rape, and the feelings of guilt and feelings of self-blame that follow it. Bailey also explores homosexual love, and how it can grow out of the extremes of friendship and loyalty; in the time period he chose to base his book, love between two men was not ethically questionable, which allowed him to talk about it without any of the ensuing baggage that might accompany it in any other setting. For his treatment of it, I applaud him.

I must admit that I don't tend to like Robin Wayne Bailey's books. A lot of them tend to come across as really shallow to me, but this one is worth a look. I've always enjoyed the absolute uniqueness of this storyline. So, if you are looking for a book to torment your soul, pass this one by. If you're looking for epic fantasy, don't bother. If you really like character-driven fantasy and/or enjoyed Lynn Flewelling's *The Bone Doll's Twin*, or the definitely take a look at this book. It's dark, but not too much so, and definitely asks an interesting question. It reminds me a lot of a thought experiment more than a fantasy novel, and it works very well for what it is.

'S just my opinion says

I had bought and read this book some years ago but didn't keep it--a sure sign that it wasn't "good enough." Recently I ran across a cheap copy and decided to reread because the premise was interesting. Unfortunately, 174 pages in, I am giving up.

While the cover is amazing and some of the descriptions in the interior are quite lovely, I have issues with many other things. For instance: for a crippled child raised in the remote cottage of a woodcutter, Innowen is remarkably knowledgeable about local politics and academia ("Scholars say..."), as well as blindly confident enough to argue with--and at times be downright rude to--complete strangers, many of which happen to be holding weapons.

No characters are fleshed out well. I don't get a clear sense of why they're doing the things they do, except as demanded by the plot. Many times these actions come as a complete shock: Drushen did what? Minarik did what? Where did Razkili come from and why is he so devoted?

And how can there be only two named females in this story?

And why are all these fellows always feeling the cool wind on their nipples, petting shoulders, random hugging, and sliding into bed naked with someone else? It seems like there's A LOT of suggestion, so are they really not lovers? Sadly I don't care enough to find out.

Anne Monteith says

This book had so much potential, but it falls flat due to weak dialogue and even weaker sexual scenes in the book, what should have taken a couple a days to read became a chore to finish. What started off to be a good story started dragging and all I wanted was for the book to be over and the ending left much to be desired.

1/5 STARS: **I want to thank the author and/or publisher for providing me with a copy of this book via NetGalley in exchange for an honest review; all opinions are mine.**

Andune says

Shadowdance captivated me from the first paragraph of the book. The writing in this novel is exceptionally fluid and sensual (which I found quite compelling) and the descriptions are rich and innovative. At the same time I liked the air of darkness and mystery surrounding the story.

The story itself is a unique perspective from a crippled boy, Innowen, whom acquires the ability to walk and dance at night through the strange and malevolent workings of a woman known as a fearful witch. No gift as generous as this one comes without a price.

I enjoyed all of the meanings the author allows you to interpret from the story almost as much as what is actually said. The subtext is enticing and sinuous. The main characters are interesting and complex. I loved this book, it was definitely worthwhile read.

B. says

Overall I enjoyed this book, and found the language and descriptions very beautiful, often in a dark and haunting way. I do feel, however, that too much time was given to the imagery that could have been better invested in developing the character and their relationships. So many interesting characters and complex relationships are presented but never really seem to grow. Things are revealed to us about them, but the reader is never really given the chance to discover with the characters - which, in the end, makes it hard to really care. And I really WANTED to care. The concept was so intriguing to me, I love the idea of Innowen's curse, but I feel like everything that happened after the first quarter of the story was just... Half hearted. Rushed.

I really wish we could have seen Razkili and Innowen's relationship develop as well, probably more than anything else. Because Razkili was kind of just thrown in after an unexpected time jump, and then suddenly they're lovers. While I had the sense from the beginning that Razkili loved, was devoted to and in love with Innowen, I never felt that Innowen's feelings matched his, even at the end. It seemed to me he always had more of a connection (romantically, physically, even emotionally at times..) with Dyan. Which is a shame. Because I think Razkili's character in general and his relationship with Innowen had so much potential.

Eve says

Innowen grew up crippled below the waist and in the primitive society he lives in, there are no wheelchairs or other tools, so he's spent his life helplessly reliant on others to carry him around or having to drag himself

along the ground. So when a witch comes along and gives him the power to walk every night, as long as he dances some part of the night, he is overjoyed. However, he soon finds out there's a dark side to the witch's magic...whoever sees him dance is compelled to act out their darkest desires. The story explores whether Innowen can find the witch again, whether he can break the curse, whether there are deities involved, the mystery to Innowen's origins and whether he has a fate to fulfill. The book answers all these questions, and nicely. But the path to the answers is a little too meandering for me, and there were long swatches without any urgency in the plot where I was able to put this book down for other reading.

I think I would have given this 4 stars if it had been half its length. Although this was very well written, and the idea of this story is fantastic, for me there was just not enough story to carry almost a thousand pages (on the epub version on nook). So, I got some enjoyment out of this book, but I guess my feeling is that for the amount of reading time I invested, I wanted a lot more enjoyment.

A.L. Davroe says

This book wasn't quite what I expected, but I still enjoyed it. It had some squicky bits that I had to challenge myself to continue with (rape, incest, homo-erotic undertones) Clarification: I'm not against gay content, I'm just not used to reading it yet and when I picked up the book, I didn't realize it would have homosexual undertones so it kind of surprised me. That's more of a reflection on the fact that more books like this one need to exist. Anyway, besides the aspects that made me uncomfortable, it's a beautifully written, engaging story. Bailey has a beautiful way with words. The reason I picked this book up is because the first few pages drew me in so well. Our hero is dragging himself through a storm and the way the storm is described made me want to read more. And I got my reward! Bailey does best describing Minnowee's storms and Innowen's dancing; and I think that works well considering the supernatural power contained in both. I loved Innowen from cover to cover. His passions and pains are easy to relate to and you come to love those in his life as much as he does. I also really love Rascal for his unwavering loyalty and love for Innowen. It's not often you find a character who is as selfless as he. Overall, it was a little predictable. I knew what was going to happen with Drushen and I figured Innowen's heritage before it was fully revealed, but both may have been intended by Bailey -- it does add a certain dread factor. Overall, I'd recommend it. :)

Stephen Poltz says

Every now and then I get a book that's meh, not bad but not very good. This is one of them. Shadowdance seems like it should be better than it is. The publisher's summary is really good, but the execution is just not that great. The prose is good, but somehow it doesn't convey the angst and the occasional horror all that well. I found this book by perusing some LGBTQ-themed book lists. It wasn't nominated for anything, which I think is a good thing. It's an okay novel, but really nothing worth recommending.

Come visit my blog for the full review...
<https://itstartedwiththehugos.blogspot...>

Sheryl says

I couldn't finish this book. Too much was about half naked men caressing each other, which wouldn't have been so bad if there was a decent story to go with it. For example, when the guy sweated, he didn't just sweat, the sweat "ran down his groin." Who ever says that?

gabe says

this book wasn't terrible, but it certainly wasn't amazing, either.

firstly, the character development in Shadowdance is less than spectacular. Innowen remains the same more or less throughout the whole book, and he never comes to terms with his disability, like one might expect out of a book about a character with disabilities. i was looking forward to the ending, thinking, innowen will finally realize that you can still be a valid human being while also being disabled, but that moment never came.

speaking of which, i was less than impressed by the ending. innowen rides off with razkili into the sunset, completely abandoning his war-stricken and drought-riddled homeland... he is totally aware of his country's plights and totally uncaring of them. i thought he might assume the throne and step up to the responsibility of ruling ispor, but apparently not.

furthermore, Shadowdance is terribly lacking in its portrayal of women. i know that its set in a time similar to classical antiquity and that women are second-class in isporan society and all but that doesn't excuse bailey's complete and total lack of female representation. there are two female characters, one of whom is a virginal ~innocent~ princess who literally has no negative thoughts apparently?? and the other is a power-hungry bloodthirsty murderer who likes to fuck her immediate family members in her free time. and there's no in-between. furthermore, after dyan gets with innowen and after she sees him dance that last time she suddenly turns from absolute angel to satan-serving murderous despot???? like what??

i mean i know that it's the power of khoom and innowen's dance and all that change her but it just feels like such a cop-out. innowen gets no development whatsoever and then dyan gets a ton of "development" but nothing solid that fuels that development. it all feels like a poorly concealed excuse for turning her into another version of minowee

also one part sticks out in my mind: right before dyan and innowen fuck, he tries to explain his relationship with razkili and she hits the nail on its head. she says that innowen loves razkili, and innowen replies by saying, "no, i simply belong with him and he belongs with me, and men can have relationships as deep and complex as any two women's." which i agree with, except for the part where 1. innowen does love razkili even if it wasn't romantically at that time, and it felt like a very big and unnecessary excuse for him to sleep with dyan and 2. bailey doesn't portray deep and complex relationships between women, he doesn't even portray relationships between women at all??? that line felt so out of place, especially considering that while bailey doesn't say that innowen is a sexist woman-hater, he doesn't exactly prove that innowen disagrees with the treatment of women in ispor. in fact, innowen only ever describes their plight; he very tactfully never describes his own opinion on their situation.

that whole conversation was weird. i suppose bailey was just trying to show that innowen wasn't in love with

razkili at the time in order to remove the blame from innowen when he has sex with dyan, which isn't a very good reason to include commentary on double standards in a fantasy world anyway.

at the same time, despite all of its flaws, i suppose there is some merit in the fact that it kept me reading to the end. i was a big fan of razkili and taelyn (didn't really care for basically every other character) so that's probably the biggest reason why. the writing was very poignant at parts, although i could have done with less nipple descriptions and a lot less sweat/blood/bodily fluid licking (which for some reason everyone did?? was there even a single chapter in which at least one character didn't "taste their own salt"?).

all in all this book was a disappointment.

Juxian says

[Innowen who's spent all his life in the c

Mat says

Great little book from an author that was unknown to me. I picked this one up because out the title/cover/description combo and it proved to be a great little story. I loved the idea based on magic which gave him the ability to walk yet was a curse. Throughout the book though I was certain that Robin the author was female because of how HE depicted the scenes between rascal and Innowen. I wasn't expecting such a homo-erotic touch to the book but it did make some sense in the end. The ending however I wish was just a little different, I wish that rascal had died in the final battle and that Dyan still took innowen's curse. That being said I wish that without rascal and the still need for Dyan to flee that Innowen would become Dyans carer. Innowen although not ready to accept the wind god would have reluctantly followed him again - maybe out of a condition that he nor Dyan would have to kill or make others kill in his name?

Overall I thought this book was great and the author was quiet efficient at keeping things a surprise even when you should of maybe guessed what was going to happen. I for one am usually great at figuring out the plots and this book kept me reading at a pace where I didn't have time to guess! I LOVED how the wind and shadows are described through the book especially when related to dance - this was extremely well done and I applaud the author for being able to connect the three so efficiently! If I could give half stars this one would definitely be a 4.5 but hence goodreads isn't that advanced yet and I must give a 4.

Furio says

I have mixed impressions on this most peculiar book: the five-star rating is a homage to the writer's skill and originality.

Set in a pre-historical, probably mycenaean, Greece -a hypothesis supported by garments' descriptions, warfares' strategies and proper names-, this book stands out from the many historical novels available because of the supernatural touch in it.

The plot is not particularly interesting in itself: the main character, a crippled boy healed by a mysterious witch, is on a quest to look for his past and for his true self. As other reviewers have pointed out, the plot

twists are such as to shame any soap opera writer and this flaw taints the novel so much as to make it very slow at times.

On the other hand we are faced with a most talented writer: his descriptions are minute, detailed to the point of being fastidious. His use of the language is simply beautiful: night and shadow are a constant background but every description he conceives is lyrical. Mr Bailey pays much attention to everyday aspects of life but in a way he manages to sublimate them into poetical images.

His treatment of characters is understated: in a most dark, ambiguous, grim atmosphere which dims even the most gruesome deaths (and there is a lot of violence in this book, only muted) Innowen and the others slide silently as if afraid to stir the wrath of the rarely mentioned but omnipresent gods of their land.

Only in time we are explicitly told that the deep attachment of Innowen and Razkili is love: though we understand this love to be an extremely passionate one, we watch it on tip toe, fearful of disturbing the hero while he discovers he does not love the witch as he believed before and he slowly comes to admit he cares for his friend and companion of five years. By the way here is a major contradiction: in this world homosexuality is no issue for anyone and still Innowen seems ashamed to love his companion: I guess Mr Bailey wanted this to be a fear to love in general but he omitted any explanation and it looks like Innowen fears his love of men.

Luckily enough he does not forget anything else and though sex between the two is never graphic, well it is never mentioned as such, actually, we look with pleasure at the growing intimacy of their touching.

This is an original, interesting read suited for anyone (gay or straight) who is at least 16 y.o. provided he has some superficial knowledge of ancient history and a love for beautiful writing.

Andrew Peters says

The premise of the book - that a crippled, young man is cursed with the ability to dance at the cost of evoking shameful desires in anyone who sees him - is ambitious, in that I imagined a million ways that it could go down a melodramatic route, or a gay-stereotypical route, or just awful, unintended comedy. By and large, I thought that Bailey handled it well, and the gender-bending aspect of this fairytale-like story was refreshing and surprising. I liked the fact that in Innowen's "world," his frailty and sensitivity were not traits to hide or overcome among his male peers. In fact, those characteristics endear him to just about everyone he meets on his journey, which is a nice twist in a fantasy story with a largely martial cast of characters. It's not a coming out story. Innowen knows who he is, and he is who he is from start to finish. A nice rendering of a gay fantasy hero.
