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At Kellerman's holiday camp, Baby Houseman, the idealistic teenager, and Johnny Castle, the handsome dance instructor, meet and fall in love. Dancing unites them. Accompanied by the hit songs of the time, they dance to the beat of their hearts. This book retells the sensual story with over 150 original pictures.

Dirty Dancing Details

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From Reader Review Dirty Dancing for online ebook

Terri Ivory says

I love this movie

Paul Riches says

Dirty Dancing. A Decision Is Made.

SPOILERS!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!!

For many years the classic movie Dirty Dancing has inhabited my radar. Because of my beautiful wife I have experienced this film multiple times on dvd, enjoyed it once in the theatre, and was entertained three times by the story on stage. We also became conversant with all the minutia involved having immersed ourselves in both of the commentaries and all the extras on both versions of the dvd's we treasure.

To say this has transformed into a major pre-occupation for us is an understatement.

For the uninitiated to the Dirty Dancing movement, the movie starring Jennifer Grey and Patrick Swayze was released in 1987 and immediately became a smash hit. Written by Eleanor Bergstein, and very loosely based on her life, this story intergrated itself into the popular culture. It seems like a rite of passage for all teen girls to devour this movie. Just like Titanic years later, a chord was struck causing me to wonder what was in the DNA of these tales which birthed such devotion? A SPOILER FILLED synopsis is next.

This love story of change starts in the summer of 1963 when the main character, called Baby, is 16 and is on a family vacation to a large resort. She is a liberal idealist with a large Kennedy streak and a hero worship of her dad. Very shortly after arriving (7 minutes into the movie) she glimpses rebel dance instructor Johnny, and gets a first taste of the behind the scene politics at the resort. Growing bored with supposed monotony of the activities, she seeks something different and one night wanders into the off limits Staff Quarters area. Here is her first shocking exposure to the "Dirty Dancing" of the title.

The next night she disdainfully hangs out with the resort owners grandson and finds Penny, Johnny's old friend, in much distress. Instead of going to the grandson, she runs to tell Johnny. At this point, the plot really kicks into gear. Penny is pregnant by Robbie, the jerk waiter, and he refuses to help. Baby manages to get money for the abortion from her dad (by lying) but the only time the doctor is available is when Penny has to do a dance routine. Baby volunteers to train and learn the dance moves in order to fill in for Penny. And along the way Baby and Johnny grow closer and closer. After the routine, they return to the resort only to find Penny in distress from the botched abortion. Baby runs to get her dad, who is also a doctor, and after he saves the day, she is told off. Baby discusses this with Johnny, and after admitting their feelings, the two make love and she is no longer a virgin.

As their relationship progresses, a problem arises when Johnny is falsely accused of theft. Baby was with Johnny the night of the crime, and has to come forward in order clear him. This admission causes even more problems with her dad, and Johnny is fired for fraternizing with her. After the tearful goodbye Baby is depressed, even on the night of the final show of the year at the resort. At this point Baby's dad finds out it was Robbie who got Penny pregnant, and realizes he was wrong about Johnny. Then the unthinkable happens. Johnny comes back, says the immortal line "Nobody Puts Baby In A Corner" and takes Baby by her hand onto the stage. After a brief speech praising her, Baby and Johnny do a final spectacular dance number which culminates with a lift and a rousing ovation from the crowd. Baby's dad apologizes to Johnny and everyone lives happily ever after.

Whew! I should have just said they met, they fell in love, and they danced a lot!

For a long time my thoughts tried to zero in on the why of this tale and finally I came up with a hypothesis. Armed with this idea, we re-watched Dirty Dancing yet again, constantly pausing to debate points and take copious notes. And the conclusion I reached some time ago bear fruit.

Baby wants to make her own decisions.

Despite the support of her father and their mutual desire to change the world, Baby does not not feel like she is fully in control of her destiny. Taking part in the Kennedy revolution, joining the Peace Corp, saving South East Asia (Viet Nam), and bringing equality to the south are all on the agenda for her future. Also if she cozied up and wed the owners grandson Neal, all the better. He is a Kennedy liberal as well, all set to join the Freedom Riders, and seems like a perfect match. But Baby is not interested, and is put off when Neal becomes a bit of a condescending jerk. He treats her like an equal, then like a child.

Right after this scene is when Penny is found by Baby, with Neal being left in the dark as to what is happening. He is standing right beside her. But she does not tell him. Some intuition kicked in. She wants to, has to, help Penny. But somehow she realizes Neal is not the answer. Instead of being her fellow idealist, he would become the owners grandson. She knows this. So Baby does what her soul tells her to do, help. But how?

She makes a decision. To get Johnny.

At this point, 25 minutes into Dirty Dancing, all dialogue ceases to exist for a minute, and as a waltz plays Baby runs to get Johnny. He can become an ally to solve whatever the crisis is. This is a monumental turning point in which everything else in Dirty Dancing hinges on. To Baby, she is simply living what was taught by her parents. Help people. Do no harm. Give everyone fairness. But she knows her father would never approve of this course of action. Let the proper authorities (resort management) handle this. She is conflicted but trying to do her best.

The problem gets worse when she meets the evil of Robbie who refuses any entreaties to do the right thing.

He is the antithesis to all Baby is. And he justifies it with sickening logic. This causes her next decision to again bring conflict onto conflict. Penny needs \$200 for the abortion which Robbie is refusing, so Baby goes to her father. And lies. For the greater good she lies. At the 30 minute mark (of a 105 minute long movie) she tells her father the money is not going to anything illegal (abortion was at the time). And her dad apologizes for even asking! Baby is trying to chart her way through these moral conundrums and keep her soul intact. It's not always easy to help people.

Her next turning point is actually quite easy, to volunteer to substitute for Penny in the dance routine. Under the tutelage of Johnny and Penny, she quickly absorbs the moves. This part causes no qualms for Baby, since dancing is not against the law, or something her father would disprove of. Despite some of the bickering during training, Baby is really enjoying this part. Helping people and having fun, isn't this how it is supposed to be? And what shocks Baby is when Penny thanks her. Why would she do this? Baby is just doing what should be done. It is simply natural.

What follows is another easy choice. When Penny is in pain from the operation, Baby runs and gets her father, the doctor. Again, this brings no hesitation to her thoughts. She just acts. And her father saves the day. Working under the assumption that her father will view it the same way as she does, that someone needs help you help, Baby is instead sternly told off. Realizing it is not about Penny's situation, but rather Baby's closeness to Johnny. In the aftermath of this, the couple talk about the father's disapproval. Will Johnny take her away from destiny? For he is not Neal the approved. This causes Johnny to yearn for acceptance and love. Baby responds by realizing Johnny awakens her idealism and gives her purpose. All those lofty causes become reality around him. Textbook into practice. And this understanding brings forth her true emotions, which is love for Johnny. Leading to Baby's second major decision, to make love to Johnny. First time sex is always a milestone for young women, even more so in 1963.

Knowing of the consequences, she keeps the relationship secret, only revealing it's existence under duress. An impossible situation with Johnny wrongfully accused of a crime. His alibi is her. But he keeps her secret. So Baby is faced with the decision and she does what she always does. The right thing. Admitting she was with Johnny the night of the crime. In front of her entire family. Whether it is 1963 or today, what young woman would be comfortable discussing her sex life like this? This brings to a head the issues with her dad. And to her credit, Baby stands up to him and his double standards. She is sorry for having to lie to him, but he caused this occurrence with his attitude. She practiced what he preached. Her clearing of Johnny still gets him fired, which upsets Baby and depresses her. And she shouted "We did it all for nothing!"

The ending finally brings validation to Baby and her choices when Johnny publicly praises her on stage. Calling Baby by her real name, Frances, he talks about idealism and her living example. His real world problems may have brought focus to her thoughts, but her faith in him showed possibilities unending to Johnny. She gave him a hand up, not a hand out. And then they danced to celebrate their love.

I would seriously love to see Baby explain everything to her father the next day. That must have been quite a conversation!

So many decisions, large and small, transform Baby into Frances. From deciding whom to contact, to lying,

to admitting to sex, Frances breaks free and becomes her own woman. She still shares so much with her father, a common viewpoint and love of humankind, but is now plotting her own destiny. For so many young women, this is a turning point in life. Whether it is choosing who you wish to date, voting your own opinion, or having a similar goal but with different paths to achieve it, these moments are never easy. Multitudes saw Dirty Dancing and had it speak this universal truth to them. Love and honour your parents but chart your own future. This theme runs in all sorts of movies that have captured females hearts. Titanic has the same flavour with Rose's character, but with no sympathetic parental figure to play against.

Dirty Dancing on stage majorly expanded the story, and increased the amount of decisions Baby had to endure. Johnny becomes a bit of a jerk while Neal less so, especially in the second act. Some of these additions are welcome but most just felt like padding. The main part of the stage show we remember is meeting Eleanor Bergstein in the lobby. That made our day. And Dirty Dancing 2 is filled with choices as well (and a cameo by Patrick Swayze), but is mostly forgettable. Replication of greatness is not easy.

My wife does fully agree with all of my assessments about Dirty Dancing, causing many discussions of Baby's motives at all times. But we both agree the true starting point on the journey to Frances is the dialogue free waltz sequence. Baby finds Penny. But Frances tells Johnny. And who cannot identify with that?

Scoopriches

P.S. This post is dedicated to my lovely wife. For today is her birthday. XOXO

P.P.S. This post is also dedicated to the memory of Patrick Swayze. RIP

Dark-Draco says

I bought this book in a WH Smith, next to Windsor Castle, when I was about 11 years old - it sticks with me because we were on a school trip and I hadn't enough money to get this, but my teacher lent me the couple of quid I needed!! Loved the film and this book was almost as good. However, this just goes to show how memory and tastes change - I found this book awful when I re-read it as a 30 something. The stills from the film are still as great as ever and the appendices at the back contain some interesting info, but the rest of it is awful! No-one has obviously told the author that it should be show, not tell! The captions below each still and some of the sentences used in the back, are badly written and unbelievably bad - at least it gave me a bit of a giggle.

Read2review says

One of my ALL TIME favourite movies. The story of Baby and Johnny who meet and fall in love at Kellerman's summer retreat. The film has topped many of the "favourite" charts since its release in the 80's. I came across this book while Christmas shopping and I couldn't resist.

The book is split into 4 different sections:

- * The story of the film
- * Colour Photograph Section of the climax to the film
- * The background to the film
- * Trivia

The story of the film is very basic with black and white photographs from the film. I have to say that for me this was the let-down of the book. I felt that a lot more could be done with this section that wasn't. Also the story was told in its most basic form.

The colour photographs for the final dance (climax of the film) are really a nostalgic section where, those who have seen the film can remember the magic that was this dance. Hands up who cried when watching the film for the first time during this dance? Ok, phew, not just me then!

The background to the film was my favourite section to the book. It goes into detail about the time the film was set, the place in which it is set, the music, the dances, the main characters and the stars of the film. I have owned the film and soundtrack for many years now and it was really nice to be able to read how and why certain pieces were used. Also the in-depth look at the characters was very interesting.

Finally the trivia section was fun. I knew some of the information supplied in this section and didn't know other bits of information. For example did you know that Val Kilmer was offered the role of Johnny originally? I am so glad Patrick Swayze took the role. I for one can't imagine anyone else in the role of Johnny.

This book is a definite one for any fan of Dirty Dancing and as a nice book to accompany the film I did enjoy it. However I felt that more could be done with the first section and maybe more could have been added through the book in whole.

I give Dirty Dancing 3.5/5.
