

Ballroom: A Novel

Alice Simpson

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Told in interconnecting stories, *Ballroom* is a beautifully crafted debut novel—reminiscent of the works of Elizabeth Strout and Jennifer Haigh—about a group of strangers united by a desire to escape their complicated lives, if only for a few hours each week, in a faded New York City dance hall.

Time has eroded the glamour of the Ballroom, but at the end of the 1990s, a small crowd of loyal patrons still makes its way past the floor-to-ceiling columns which frame the once grand hall each Sunday evening. Sweeping across the worn parquet floor under a peeling indigo ceiling, these men and women succumb to the magic of the music, looking for love and connection, eager to erase the drab reality of their complicated lives.

Nearly forty and still single, Sarah Dreyfus is desperate for love and sure she'll find it with debonair Gabriel Katz, a dazzling peacock who dances to distract himself from his crumbling marriage. Tired of the bachelor life, Joseph believes that his yearning for a wife and family will be fulfilled—if only he can get Sarah to notice him. Besotted with beautiful young Maria Rodriguez, elderly dance instructor Harry Korn knows they can find happiness together. Maria, one of the Ballroom's stars, has a dream of her own, a passion her broken-hearted father refuses to accept or understand.

As the rhythms of the Ballroom ebb and flow through these characters' hearts, their fates come together in touching, unexpected ways.



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