



**Dancing out of the night**  
**Interviewee: Maria Finn**  
**Duration: 5 minutes, 53 seconds**

### About this transcript

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### Introduction

Who would think that anything good could come from a philandering husband?

In this episode of Bookpod, travel writer Maria Finn talks about *Hold Me Tight and Tango Me Home*, the memoir she wrote about learning how to dance tango – and how to turn adversity into fortune.

### Presentation

My memoir, *Hold me Tight and Tango Me Home*, is really about how I had my heart broken. And at that time I didn't know you could feel so bad, in every way, not just emotionally feeling betrayed and how could this person do this. Physically I couldn't eat. I couldn't digest food. I was clumsier. I tripped more when I walked. I couldn't remember things. You know, I would drive over bridges with no money on me, or, things like that.

And I thought, well, what do I do now? This whole future I thought I had with this man – having a child, buying a home – was gone.

We were supposed to go to a wedding together in Uruguay, in the city of Montevideo. And we were talking about going to Buenos Aires first. And so this happened, and I thought, you know, I'm still going to go. And it would be more fun if I learned tango, which was kind of naive of me because I had three months to get ready.

The very first time I went and a man took me in the tango embrace, I could feel his heart pressing against mine, and this kind of warmth washed through me. And I felt the good intentions of the human heart, which I really needed at that time.

The only time I didn't feel bad is when I was dancing the tango. So I started doing it all the time. I took classes. I went to practices. I probably was more ambitious than I should have been as



far as going to the social dances as a beginner. But this dance in every way, mentally, physically, emotionally, was the perfect remedy for this heartache I was going through.

It's considered one of the hardest dances to learn, which is odd, because it's simple. But the posture and the way of walking, you're always learning. You're always going back to this basic element.

I've been dancing four-and-a-half years, and I take private classes. And I say I just want to work on walking, just want to work on the essentials, because the steps aren't the hard part. You know, a guy leads those, and, you know. But when you see somebody who is a beautiful dancer versus somebody who is a beginning dancer, the difference is the quality of their walk. It's not the steps they know.

It's also kind of psychologically difficult because a woman is following in it. A lot of times, you're a follower in salsa or swing or two-step, but it's not as intimate and you're not as one-hundred percent dependent on the leader. And so for a lot of people that makes them uncomfortable.

Tango is like life in so many ways. And there's so many things tango teachers said to me that became these profound metaphors in life. I had one teacher who told me a man saw her dance. He was an actor. He was in a play. He had to die in this play. He saw her dance the tango and came to her and said I need to learn tango so I want to be able to die convincingly.

So, when I talk about the tango walk, it was actually learning a whole new way of walking and a whole new way of being in the world. Because in tango, the ultimate goal is that between the partners, it's fifty-fifty. And when you're dancing and you're following, you have no idea of what the outcome will be, what the next step will be.

So, what I really learned about life is living in the moment. Taking this moment, and whether you're feeling joy, whether the music is making you feel sorrow, whatever it is, entering that moment, being there, and having no control over what happens next, what the outcome is, or any kind of expectations down the line. Because I think in relationships, like had I been paying attention to what was going on in my marriage, instead of thinking about a child and saving money and that kind of stuff, either would I have caught him much sooner or it would have maintained the relationship better.

I had another wonderful teacher in Buenos Aires, and she was teaching a woman's workshop for styling. Her name was Laleiona. Or, that's her tango name. She said the women in Buenos Aires start



getting ready for the *milonga* at home. They start developing their attitudes while they get ready. They walk in the room with an attitude. She said, "Women! You need to love yourself enough to say 'no' to bad dancers."

And that's difficult. I don't want to hurt somebody's feelings, you know. So I will constantly put his experience over mine. But this idea of, okay, well, love yourself enough to say 'no' to the job you don't want, 'no' to the date you don't want to go out with again, you know, 'no' to friends who aren't good to you. And so this is also this kind of constant lesson that you're taught in life.

And ultimately, from tango, the goal is to live in harmony and balance with another person. And really feel what's best about them and expose what's best about you.

So it really makes you more open to humanity, to seeing the good in people no matter what they look like, no matter what you might want to prejudge, because you never know who is going to be a great tango dancer. You never know by looking at them and you never know when who you're going to have chemistry with.

And so, you know, you see all these people on the subway, and nobody makes eye contact. But at night you're in these stranger's arms, and it feels like you're falling in love. And it changes how you go out in the world and approach people.

### **Valedictory**

Maria Finn is also the author of *A Little Piece of Earth: How to Grow Your Own Food in Small Spaces*. It came out the same week as "Tango." For information about all of her work, visit [www.mariafinn.com](http://www.mariafinn.com).

Bookpod producer is Barbara Finkelstein. Music is by Kevin MacLeod.

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### **Related links**

Author website

<http://www.mariafinn.com/>

Maria Finn's tango (YouTube)

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=wTWCALoiXJM>

Hold Me Tight and Tango Me Home (YouTube)

[http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-j\\_oUxJdE&feature=related](http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=D-j_oUxJdE&feature=related)



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