

The Dance

Shortly after I finished the manuscript for *The Invitation*, three things happened in my life: I discovered that the man with whom I had fallen in love and begun a relationship two months earlier was an alcoholic; I had a mild heart attack brought on by exhaustion; and I told my eldest son Brendan that he had to move out of my home. Having just passionately articulated my soul's longing in *The Invitation*-the heartfelt desire to love myself, others and the world well-I was stunned and discouraged by how consistently I was failing to live this sincere intent.

So, in a somewhat desperate attempt to find the wisdom and knowledge to live consistent with my deepest desires, I began to write *The Dance* (Harper San Francisco, Fall 2001). Ready to face the truth about myself I plunged in, asking as I wrote, "Why am I so infrequently the person I really want to be?" I was willing to change, prepared to live in a different way in order to narrow the gap I feared was an abyss between my deepest intentions and my daily actions. I just wanted to know how.

The Dance is the story of how we can live soulfully on a daily basis. It is the story of my discovery that the question is not "Why are we so infrequently the people we want to be?" but rather "Why do we so infrequently want to be the people we really are?" It is the story of discovering why our quest for self-improvement does not lead to happiness or better lives or a more peaceful, just world. It is the story of finding who we really are, becoming all we are and knowing it is enough. It is the story of our struggles with those things that make it hard to remember who and what we really are, the places where it is easy to become afraid-in our culture, the places where we deal with sex and death and money and power.

The stories, reflections and meditations in *The Dance* ask us to go further than we did in *The Invitation*-beyond the longing to the living, beneath the desire to the deeper ache and the knowledge that guides us in living true to what we are. It is the story of my human struggle to live with the shock of being awake, if only for intermittent moments, guided by the spirit of those wonderful lines by Rumi as translated by Coleman Barks:

*There are lovers content with longing.
I'm not one of them.*