

Hanneke de Jong

Salsa Girl

Young-adult story about the discovery of womanhood and an unwanted pregnancy

A recognizable, moving and frank story about a girl who discovers her femininity, falls in love, loses herself and gets into trouble before at last finding herself again. Awakening sexuality, unwanted pregnancy, shame and uncertainty, and learning to accept responsibility: *Salsa Girl* ought to be required reading for adolescents and their parents.

It's holiday time and fourteen-year-old Freya goes to Curacao with her parents and her little brother. There they visit Freya's older brother, who is doing voluntary work on the island.

It is a time of rest and recuperation. After the death of Freya's grandpa the family is in need of a bit of distraction. Despite the presence of her irritating younger brother, her apathetic father and a mother who reads self-help books all the time, Freya hugely enjoys the heat, the sea, the beach, the being away from home. And to top it all there is Guido, the wildly attractive friend of her brother. He teaches Freya salsa dancing, not the sedate steps she knows from dancing school but the real salsa, which is all about unadulterated passion and seduction.

Freya loses her heart to the dance and to Guido. She wants to be more than his salsa girl and she decides to do all she can to make him fall in love with her. Back in the Netherlands she discovers that her impetuous holiday love has not been without consequences. What should she do and whom can she trust?

An adolescent girl, who feels like a real woman for the first time, allows herself to be carried away until she loses sight of her own limitations and thereby gets into trouble: it is a subject that can all too easily lead to stories that wag moralistic fingers. Hanneke de Jong skilfully avoids that trap. Without frills, sentimentality or sensationalism, and with accessible, clear sentences and a subtle sense of humour, she gives a familiar theme a fresh, contemporary feel. The clever structure – with chapters set in the present in which Freya needs to come to a decision and looks back at exactly what happened on Curacao – creates sustained tension.

The convincing characters and the author's perceptible empathy make Freya's struggle with her conscience a story with which any adolescent and any parent can identify.



Publishing details

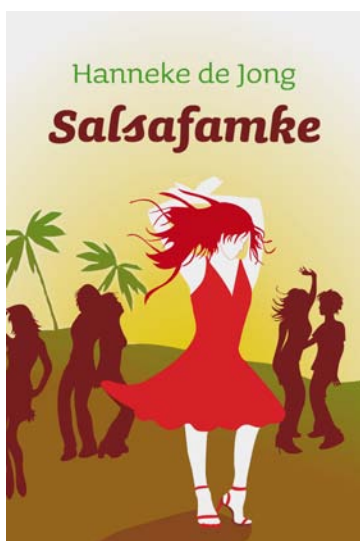
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Translation

Salsameisje (Salsafamke,
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Hanneke de Jong (b. 1952) has written ten children's books, four young adult titles and seven plays. She was twice awarded the Simke Kloosterman Prize for the best Frisian young adult book, in 2010 for *Salsafamke* (Salsa Girl) and in 2016. Her young adult novel *De lêste brief* (The Last Letter) was awarded a Silver Pin in 2000 by the Frisian Children's Book Jury and the Dutch translation, published by Van Goor, won her a Golden Kiss. Her young adult novel *Sterke skouders* (Strong Shoulders) gained a place in the 2006 IBBY List of Honour.

'Direct style, contemporary language and warm atmosphere.'
– Jury Report, *Simke Kloosterman Prize*

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