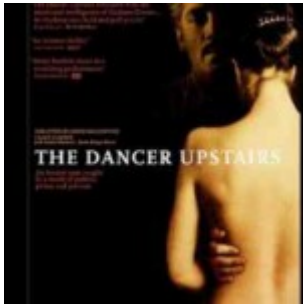


'The Dancer Upstairs' delves into Peru's past

By Kathryn Reed

Anyone who has read anything about Peru knows it is a country that has a history of corruption and violence.

Author Nicholas Shakespeare tapped into that history in "The Dancer Upstairs", a novel that was published in 1995. While it is fiction, Shakespeare finds inspiration from the notorious Shining Path guerrilla group.



Having lived in South America and being a journalist adds to Shakespeare's ability to capture what it was like during this turbulent, violent time in Peru.

Shakespeare based the novel on what really happened with Abimael Guzmán, the leader of Shining Path – right down to the dance studio.

"The Dancer Upstairs" was turned into a movie in 2001, which I have not seen.

The book is full of suspense, drama and tangled relationships.

I'm not sure if it was my spells of not picking up the book or the author not writing clearly, but at times I was confused about what was going on. I'm guessing the reader and not the writer was the problem.

The book goes back and forth between real time and the cop telling a journalist about how the notorious crime leader was caught.

I pushed forward with reading because the plot was intriguing. And even though the story isn't true, I'm sure having been to Peru had something to do with the book captivating me on a deeper level.