

Waltzing

by Savva

In a waltz, just like in love, the right partner is everything.

Chapter One

Chapter 1 of 1

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Waltzing

One day you'll meet a stranger

And all the noise is silenced in the room

You'll feel that you're close to some mystery

In the moonlight and everything shatters

You feel as if you've known her all your life

The world's oldest lesson in history

(Sting/Until)

Prologue

Wiltshire, Malfoy Manor, Yule 1964

A distant sound of music woke Lucius, and he sat up in his bed, listening, and looking at the window. The night was quiet, and the fluffy snowflakes floated lazily, reluctantly obeying the law of gravity. After a while, bored with the serene sight and unable to identify the source of the sound, he let his curiosity get the better of him and crawled out of bed. He opened the door and shivered as the Manor draught gusted under his batiste nightshirt, running its chilly fingers over his lanky form. Tightly wrapping the flimsy material around his body, Lucius sneaked from the room, and trying his best to keep quiet, moved cautiously toward the music. The moon that shone through the windows provided enough light to guide him through the labyrinth of hallways.

Following the sound, he slowly crept down the stairs. Once on the first floor, he looked around and noticed that the door to the grand hall had been left ajar, and the soft melody was streaming from inside. He tiptoed to the entrance and peeked in the room. There were no candles, and the ballroom, suffused in the amber glow of the moonlight, appeared enchanted. His parents, unaware of his presence, were dancing in the centre of the room. Moving in unison, they gracefully followed the music,

pirouetting with practised effortlessness. It seemed that the snowflakes outside the window also sped up, mirroring their movements and making the scene even more surreal.

It was a waltz. Lucius recognised the rhythm and automatically began to count,

"One, two, three,

One, two, three..."

His eyes fixed on the waltzing couple, he watched as his father whispered something into his mother's ear, while skilfully spinning her around the ballroom. His mother's eyelids fluttered and closed, and a subtle smile appeared on her lips. She held her shoulders with the refinement Lucius knew so well, and her light-brown curls coiled freely around her face. There was something extremely intimate in the way his father's arm was wound tightly around her narrow waist, and when his father tilted his head and skimmed his lips over his mother's slightly arched neck, Lucius shivered, though not from cold. His mother's face flushed a delicate pink and she laughed, probably at the words his father was murmuring against her skin. The sight made Lucius oddly hot inside, and he awkwardly shifted from one foot to another.

He was violating their privacy, he knew, and yet he couldn't find the strength to stop staring. Fascinated, he watched them glide over the parquet floor in flawless harmony with the music and each other. To him, it seemed more than just a dance, much more. In his overactive mind, they were performing some kind of secret ritual, and he was sure it was something daring, perhaps even forbidden. That was why it looked so strikingly beautiful.

This is what love looks like dashed through his head, and he let out a shaky breath. As he continued starrng, the sense of time escaped him. His bare feet were freezing, and his toes turned numb, but he didn't feel anything. Only when his father steered his mother into the dark alcove, caught her hands in one of his, as his other hand fiddled with the hem of her dress, and pressed his lips against hers, did Lucius gasp and, with his cheeks flaming, run to his room.

He couldn't sleep that night. Something had changed in him. Hot waves of unfamiliar yearning raked through his still boyishly thin body, leaving him sweaty, needy and bewildered. The rising sun found him utterly exhausted, but with the assurance that some day, somehow, he too would find a perfect partner to hold, to waltz, and to love. Then he too would be able to perform the ritual that he had witnessed the previous night.

Watching and Waiting

Wiltshire, Malfoy Manor, Samhain 2005

She was dancing with Potter. Again. They moved awkwardly around the ballroom, and he noticed that she was whispering something into her friend's ear. He was certain that she was counting,

"One, two, three,

One, two, three..."

Alas, that didn't help Potter much. The legend of the Wizarding World couldn't dance to save his life. Still, despite the possibility of looking daft, he once again was there for her, and that was reason enough for Lucius to respect the boy.

Standing in the dark alcove, hidden from prying eyes, Lucius observed them, his grey eyes following Miss Granger's every move. He had been doing that for the last four years ... watching her. Or, to be precise, watching and waiting. He had lost count how many functions he had arranged just to be able to have her at the Manor.

Since they didn't work together and had no friends in common, the only chances for him to see her up close came from organising these soirées. It was easy for him to come up with pseudo-reasons; he hadn't been sorted into Slytherin for nothing. He had given Charity Balls and Remembrance Galas and had honoured every possible pagan holiday with a lavish celebration. He had spent a fortune on those functions, but at least he had been told that the orphans and war veterans had benefited greatly, and he had succeeded in having Miss Granger at the Manor on an almost regular basis. Was it a kind of madness? Perhaps. He didn't care. At this point, being single and fully reinstated, he could afford any level of insanity he liked.

When it had started, however, he hadn't been that secure about his position in Wizarding society. Notwithstanding the fact that he, Narcissa and Draco had been exempted from Azkaban thanks to Potter's efforts people still treated him with a certain level of mistrust, quite rightly so, of course. To add insult to injury, a year after the war, Narcissa had announced that she had decided to leave him. It had been a heavy blow for him. They had never been madly in love with each other, yet they had been friends, and it had been painful to lose her friendship. He realised that she hadn't been able to forgive him for his folly during the war folly that had cost them all dearly and he loathed himself for that.

After Narcissa's departure, he had felt bereft and unsure how to proceed with his life. Thus, when Kingsley Shacklebolt had pressured him into organising the first Charity Gala, he had been quick to agree, and he'd never regretted his decision. The hassle of arranging the function dissipated the melancholy that had swallowed him, and on the night of the Gala, an epiphany struck him at the sight of Hermione Granger on the dance floor. The moment the music had started, and she had begun to twirl to a rhythm well known to him, Lucius had remembered something important, something long-forgotten. As he'd watched her waltzing, a sudden understanding had come to him. Here she was, the woman he had been waiting for, his perfect partner, his witch.

Now, thinking about it, he suspected that it had been fated to happen that way. Perhaps he had needed to live through the war, shame and remorse, to be able to appreciate fate's gift to him. To be worthy of that gift. To be worthy of her.

She had still been with that Weasley boy then. Lucius chuckled at the remembrance. Poor chap, he had tried, and Merlin, had he tried his best. For two years, Lucius had watched him suffer, and even though he didn't like him at all, he had to give him credit for being persistent. Unfortunately for Ron Weasley, he simply wasn't destined for Hermione Granger. Despite all his efforts, it had been painfully obvious that they didn't fit. Her fire frightened him. Metaphorically speaking, it burned his ginger eyelashes and singed his poor heart, and yet he bravely tried and tried again, struggling not to get burnt. Maybe it was his Weasley stubbornness. Lucius remembered how relentlessly Arthur Weasley had besieged Molly Prewett back in his Hogwarts days. Fortunately for Lucius, it seemed that this time, history wouldn't repeat itself. Had it been one of the other Weasleys, the dragon-handler or the curse-breaker, things might have been different. Luckily, the others hadn't even considered courting Hermione Granger. For them, she had been off limits, reserved for their youngest brother, just because Molly had said so. Thank goodness for life's small favours.

Still, that disaster of a relationship had lasted for quite a long time. As a result, when, after two years of rather bumpy ons and offs (according to *The Daily Prophet*), Hermione Granger and Ron Weasley had finally called it quits, Lucius had been surprised as well as delighted. Bizarrely, their last altercation had taken place during one of the functions at the Manor. Lucius remembered the incident vividly, of course. That night, Ron Weasley had lasted only two dances before they started arguing. Eventually, he had stormed out of the ballroom, leaving Miss Granger to fume in the middle of the dance floor.

That moment should have been Lucius' cue to step in, but, alas, he couldn't. His divorce with Narcissa hadn't been finalised yet, and he had nothing to offer Miss Granger at that point. Thus, with his fists clenched, his teeth gritted and the coppery taste of blood on his tongue, he was forced to watch Potter calming Miss Granger before she burned down the Manor in her fury. Potter had succeeded, and Lucius, his blood drumming violently in his temples, watched them dance with each other for the rest of the evening. According to Draco, Potter's love interests lay elsewhere, but that fact hadn't stopped Lucius from destroying half the Manor that night out of frustration. In the morning, he vowed that by the next soirée, he would be a free man.

It took four months for him to settle his divorce and organise another function. Alas, when he welcomed his guests to the Samhain Ball, he had been blindsided by the sight of Hermione Granger being escorted by none other than that infamous, cantankerous git (who also happened to be Lucius' best friend), Severus Snape.

His best friend! Lucius had been livid. But there was nothing he could do, and so, with a feeling of betrayal, he had to watch Hermione once again whirl around the ballroom in another wizard's arms. Thank Merlin, he'd had enough self-control to keep himself in check, though it hadn't been easy. Lucius knew Severus far too well, and while he had no doubt that Severus (unlike the Weasley boy) could satisfy Hermione in bed, he also knew that his friend was an absolute shite when it came to relationships. In the

long run, Severus couldn't make her happy; of that Lucius was absolutely certain. He was far too cold, too reserved for her. He might as well have been a bucket of ice-water. Again and again, during the months that followed, Lucius saw how deeply Severus wounded her with his offhanded remarks and sneers, killing the affection that burned inside her bit by little bit.

Mind you, Severus hadn't done it on purpose. The notion of constant companionship was foreign, and perhaps even bothersome, to him. He had lived alone his whole life, and, unlike Lucius, he didn't need company or family. An occasional rendezvous without lasting attachment was enough for him. His passion had burned out decades ago, and there was nothing left that could sustain someone like Hermione Granger.

Lucius could predict that, one day, Severus would find the whole affair too tiresome, and that would be the end of it. Alas, Hermione hadn't known what was good for her, and stubbornly kept trying to thaw the feelings of her former professor, succeeding only in smashing her poor heart on his callous soul time and time again. Had it been anyone else, Lucius would have killed the blasted git long ago, but it was Severus, his only friend, and thus he had to clench his jaw ... and watch ... and wait, counting under his breath,

"One, two, three,

One, two, three ..."

Until now. Because tonight, Miss Granger had arrived with Potter, and that could mean only one thing her affair with Severus had come to its conclusion. At last.

She looked ... divine. A dress of mauve Venetian lace lined with flesh-coloured silk hugged her soft curves, highlighting the peach undertone of her skin. Lucius himself had suggested that Gertrude put that dress on display when he was picking up new cravats a few weeks ago. Knowing that Miss Granger frequented Madam Malkin's atelier, he had hoped that the dress would catch her eye. It had, and it looked exquisite on her.

To his delight, she had left her hair untamed, and her mahogany curls coiled around her face in a halo of wild ringlets, then cascaded down her bare shoulders in a lustrous mass. She moved, perhaps not very skilfully, but with unmistakable natural grace, and his eyes devoured the sight of her hungrily, taking in every succulent curve and anticipating just how sublime it would feel to have her in his arms.

This was the night; he knew it. Soon, the music would stop, and he would ask her to dance with him. They would dance that night, and many nights after that. He would court her for months. They would dine in the best restaurants of Europe, and he would take her to the Opéra de Paris and the Bolshoi.

Oh, and he would tease her relentlessly with that slow burning seduction he was so dexterous at until, impatient as ever, she would demand that he take her to bed. He knew she would she was a creature of passion. He had watched her for years, after all. Naturally, he would oblige, but not before she went berserk with desire and was ready to succumb to him completely, without backward glances, second thoughts or regrets. Only then would he make her his.

Watching her now, he could envision how magnificent she would look on the silk sheets of his bed, her chest heaving and her curls wild. He pictured her body: the smoothness of her sun-kissed skin, the heaviness of her full breasts, the delicateness of her pale-pink nipples and soft, chocolate curls covering the plump, glistening flesh between her thighs. Vivid images flashed in Lucius' head, and he groaned impatiently, his eagerness getting the better of him. He wanted to touch her, feel her wetness, taste her essence on his tongue ...

Their first time would be slow and gentle...if the fiery witch did not request otherwise, of course. He would take his time with her, and satisfy his hunger ... many, many times. He would find her every pleasure spot, learn how to make her limbs tremble and how to take her to the highest point of ecstasy. And, eternally the bastard, he would make her want more, always want more. He would become her addiction, her guilty pleasure. He would teach her to trust him, and eventually, all his fantasies and his desires would come true, and he would lose himself in her completely. She would become his goddess, his salvation, his new beginning, and he would finally find himself: in her desire, in her trust, in her love for him. Reborn, free of remorse and shame, he would put the Mafloy ring on her finger and throw the most splendid ball of all to celebrate their marriage.

The violins hit a high note, interrupting his musings. *Yes, everything will work out splendidly*, he thought, as his eyes found Potter, who was still regularly stepping on Hermione's feet. *If only she agrees to dance with me*. Lucius drew a calming breath, and as if on cue, the music stopped. Placing his cane in the corner and unconsciously fixing his emerald-green cravat, he stepped into the light and sauntered toward her.

"Will you honour me with this dance, Miss Granger?" he murmured as soon as he reached them, ignoring the scowl on Potter's face.

She glanced at him in surprise. "You want to dance with me?" she said, eyeing him with disbelief.

"It would be an honour." Lucius confirmed with a gallant bow, offering her his arm.

She contemplated him for a few long moments, looking unsure, and he began to worry. But, eventually, she shrugged and said, "Of course."

Potter shifted uneasily, and locking his wary eyes on Lucius, asked quietly, "Are you sure, Hermione?"

She smiled at him reassuringly, said, "Yes," and bravely put her little hand into Lucius'.

Lucius nodded to the orchestra, and they started to play a slow waltz. He wrapped his arm around her waist and pressed her to him. Her breath caught short, and she whispered, "I'm not very good at waltzing."

He chuckled. "Don't fret, Miss Granger. You are in good hands now," he whispered in her ear, lightly brushing his lips over her warm skin.

She blushed, and yet, true to her character, boldly peered into his eyes. "Am I, Mister Mafloy?" she said, and challenging sparks came to life in her brown eyes.

"Indeed you are," he replied, and pressed her even more tightly to him. "The waltz is easy, my dear. You need only trust me and, perhaps, count: one, two, three, one, two, three."

She snorted. "I just tried that with Harry, and it didn't quite work."

With practised ease, Lucius led her into a daring pirouette, and when she sighed in amazement, he said, looking at her intently, "In a waltz, Miss Granger, as in love, the right partner is everything."

She drew back, and gazing into his eyes with a slight, pensive frown, breathed out, "Hmm ... indeed. Maybe I have to give it another try."

Twenty minutes later, she was laughing with abandon as he whirled her around the ballroom. His heart was filled with elation, and unwilling to contain himself, he laughed as well ... for the first time in years.

Here she was, in his arms at last, and he had no intention of letting her go. Ever.

Epilogue

Sixty-seven years later, they danced their last waltz. He couldn't make it to the ballroom, and they danced in their bedroom, relishing each other's embrace. And as their breaths mingled and their hearts thumped in unison, they slowly counted their steps.

"One, two, three,

One, two, three,

One ... two ... three ...

One "

Fin