

Like a Dance

by Alison

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Complete short story

Chapter 1 of 1

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Like a Dance

By Alison Venugoban

"So, how's your love life?"

I'd answered Hermione's question with some inane comment or other while grinning at the face Ron pulled. But now, riding home on my broom this warm summer evening has made me introspective.

Perhaps it was seeing the baby that made me think about it. Brand new life and all that, the responsibility of becoming a godfather.

The kid looks like any other sprog, not noticeably like Ron or Hermione, bald as a billiard ball still so hair colour's no indication of the Weasley heritage. The way Ron carries on though, you'd think no other baby had ever been born before, the prat. It's like he'd invented fatherhood!

Still, I'm pleased for them both, and I have to admit, Ron's finally achieved something none of the other Weasley children have managed yet: a granddaughter for Molly. She's got four other grandchildren: one each from Bill and Fred and two from Ginny and Neville, but they're all boys. Molly and Arthur are acting like all their Christmases have come at once, and the kid (Patricia Rose, Harry, remember her name, your new goddaughter Patricia Rose Weasley!) is going to be one spoilt little girl if Molly gets her way.

It was while I was holding the baby (very nervously – she's so tiny!) that Hermione sprung her question on me. She was watching my reaction closely. Smart girl, that Hermione, she knows my relationship is unconventional, to say the least. Certainly after the war nobody expected Severus and I to get together, least of all me.

I guess you could say that in the two years between Dumbledore's death and the defeat of Voldemort, I grew up. I put aside childish hatreds and moved on. Of course, if it hadn't been for the information provided by Dumbledore's portrait, backed up by the memories in the Pensieve showing his loyalty was to the Order all along, I'd have been going after Severus too, just as I went after so many other Death Eaters both before and after Voldemort's fall.

How to describe our relationship? It's certainly unusual, there's no great romance or outpourings of love between us. And after the generally loveless upbringing I had, I wouldn't know how to deal with that anyway; I'd probably get embarrassed and back off.

No, I'd have to say it's more like ... a dance. We revolve around each other, always slightly wary, always watching each other's footwork, but each unwilling to leave the other, even enjoying the maneuverings.

They say opposites attract, and there might be something to that. We're as unlike as any couple you're ever going to meet. I know I unsettle Severus in that I'm impulsive, whereas he loves routine. I like being in the centre of things, but if he had his way, Severus would have as little as possible to do with anybody, the unsociable git. I wear my emotions on my sleeve, whereas Severus becomes extremely uncomfortable at the mere mention of feelings, and would probably prefer to hex their bollocks off if they show themselves! I love sport, particularly Quidditch, while Severus is the archetypal nerd; I've known him to come watch Quidditch matches I've played in with my Auror's team at socials, and he'll read a book the whole time and ask me afterwards who won, as if he's trying to sound polite rather than really interested in the result.

Our careers are wildly different, as well – Severus is content in his current job as an Unspeakable working at the Ministry, an oddly fitting job given his love of the Dark Arts. And I now teach young Aurors and curse-breakers, coaching them on how not to get killed, which is kind of ironic when you think how many times I came close to snuffing it during my years of chasing Voldemort.

I know Hermione was probing oh-so-subtly to find out if we still argue as much as we did when we were both at Hogwarts. Well, the simple answer, and one I'd never tell her, is that yes, we do. We still snark and snap at each other and generally act like a couple of prats a lot of the time.

It makes it sound like our relationship is totally stuffed, but I know better. All my life, so many people I've loved have died. My parents first, then Sirius, Dumbledore, Lupin, Hagrid, all gone. It was only with the greatest of good luck that Ron survived the various poisonings and other life-threatening things that have happened due to his friendship with me, and Hermione came very close to dying when she came up against a Dark Magic ambush before the final battle, when she was trying to destroy one of Voldemort's Horcruxes. It was Severus who managed to save her life then, with his knowledge of arcane magic.

With Severus, we don't acknowledge anything so complicated as love between us. There's something there, and I value it more than anything I've ever felt before. The hatred I used to feel for him has somehow turned to respect, however grudging, but it's more than that. It's unquantifiable. I just feel confident, safer somehow, that he won't suddenly die on me, because of his relationship with me. Stupid, I know, but I never claimed to be analytical and human feelings are a tangle anyway.

For instance, one time not long after we'd started our relationship, our "dance", I admitted to him how confused I felt about the whole business. I mean, I've had girlfriends, or at least, Ginny was. And I'd felt attraction to Cho. But I'd never told anybody about my feelings concerning Cedric. They were confused anyway. I felt guilty and responsible for his death, and that was a convenient cop-out to not examining the emotions any further. But it was pretty obvious to me that my obsession with Draco Malfoy in sixth year was unusual, to say the least, and I only began to examine it closely and recognize the physical attraction that was lurking there much later.

Severus didn't coddle me. He just sneered as usual, and said, "So you've had girlfriends. What do you want, a medal?"

And then he kissed me, followed by the hottest sex we'd had so far. See? Straightforward and uncomplicated, no hidden meanings. I don't need him to understand my emotions or talk about how we feel about each other all night. I don't want declarations of undying devotion or gifts of silver jewellery as a token. Such things are better left unexamined. I only need to know that he'll be there for me when I need him, unquestioning. As he's always been since I was eleven years old, even though, as a headstrong teenager, I was too arrogant to see it.

And so we'll have one of our frequent arguments where we shout ourselves hoarse and call each other every foul thing we can think of, and I'll leave the house and go flying to vent my anger. And the whole time, all I can think of is him. Then after a couple of hours when I've cooled down, I'll land back by our house and go inside to find him sitting in his armchair, probably reading.

And we don't need to say a word; the understanding is there between us. I'll sit beside him on the floor and lay my head in his lap. And with one long-fingered hand he strokes my hair. And so our dance continues...

The End

Author's note: If you liked this story, please have a read of my original story "Love Inhuman" at this link:

<http://www.thepetulantpoetess.com/viewstory.php?sid=11932>

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