

# So She Dances

*by CharmedForce*

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## One-Shot

*Chapter 1 of 1*

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She walked through the room with a grace so natural, so innate, that one cannot help but stare. Her hair was loosely bound at the nape of her neck with her curls spilling down her back. The deep green of her plunging dress gave her an earthly vibe. The smile lit her face as she flitted from group to group, greeting her friends and making polite conversation with those who called her by name. Her fame was surpassed only by that of her closest friends, and that fame attracted many people's attentions during this ball.

As she socialised at the edge of the dance floor, he moved in the shadows directly across the room from her. As he had often before, he did so again, and watched her closely in the crush of the crowd that always surrounded her. The light from the candles floating overhead flickered delicately across her face. She laughed at a comment the young man made before noticing a friend a little further away. She excused herself and walked away, the man in the shadows matching her movements.

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*"Are you sure you don't want to go with me this evening?" her soft voice pleaded with him.*

*"Hermione, you know how I hate these affairs. If I go, I have to put up with the gossip, stares, and hexes flung at my back. Besides, I would hate having to see you across the room and be unable to claim you as my own."*

*"Then claim me! It's been years since Voldemort fell, Severus! The only reason the gossip has kept up is because you are never seen in public. You are still a mystery to them. Our friends and family support us, so there is no reason to keep this hidden anymore. It isn't like the beginning, when people didn't know. They know what happened that night on the Tower, and they know what Dumbledore did. No one blames you."*

*"Yes, they do, Hermione. Take off those rose-tinted spectacles. No one would dare be contrary in front of you, the Heroine of the Wizarding World. But the moment you turn away, people let their true feelings come out, and all the dark thoughts and doubts they have about me surface. I won't drag you through the mud with me!"*

*"You've proved my point for me. You said it yourself: 'No one would dare be contrary in front of me.' I will not let you be dragged through the mud and dirt again. You are so sure that you are going to bring me down in the public's eyes. Why can't you even entertain the thought that I might lift you up?"*

*"I entertain that thought constantly. I wish and hope that you are right, but I couldn't bear the disappointment if you were wrong. It is best this way, for now. As more time passes, people will be more forgiving, more receptive. Trust me, Hermione!"*

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"Have you seen what the Ice Queen is wearing tonight?" a female voice snipped at her companion.

"Ice Queen? Not tonight, my dear. She looks far too carnal in that dress," the companion spoke. "My son calls her the Virgin Queen. Apparently it is a reference to some Muggle royalty or some rot. A Queen who never married, or showed any proper interest. Quite fitting for the Gryffindor Princess herself, don't you agree?"

The shadowed man moved closer to listen to the two women gossiping. It was not the first time he had heard such sobriquets. All were but pieces of the whole, mere fragments of the woman in green.

"She may be one of the heroes of the last war, but she has never shown interest in any man, even your own precious son."

"My son would not dare to be seen with her. She is a great actress, but one cannot fake true class. Her Mudblood will always show through. It is no wonder the Minister's son threw her aside and would not marry her. It is one thing to sport with Muggles, another to marry and procreate."

"We all saw her turn your son down, my dear. No need to be embarrassed and spout such venom. My own nephew told me that she is actually quite pleasant in her rejections."

"Your nephew is as much a fool as my son. The younger generation has failed to heed the lessons and traditions we tried to instill in them. Why else would a young single witch be allowed to consort with all of those men in such an indecent gown, with no male to look over her?"

He bit back a snort of laughter at the woman's double speech. One moment she was lambasting the girl for not showing any interest, the next she was angry that the witch showed too much interest. His ears perked at the next comment though.

"She told my nephew that she wouldn't dance with him because she had already promised all her dances. When he pointed out that she has never once danced at these Ministry affairs, she simply smiled and told him that the one she loves isn't able to dance with her, and she is waiting for him."

"Hmph. Unlikely. Why, every appropriate boy has asked her to dance, and she has refused them all. I think waiting for her true love is just an excuse."

The man watched the woman closer now. He had never noticed that she failed to dance. He had never noticed the way her eyes constantly scanned the room, as if she was looking for someone. It was a slight movement, easily missed, but now that he had seen it, he wondered how long she had done so.

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*"I can't do this much longer."*

*"You can't do what, Hermione?"*

*"This. The hiding. The denial. We are not shameful, Severus. I am not ashamed or embarrassed of us."*

*"What would you have me do, take an advert out in the Daily Prophet? 'Traitor to All Sides Shagging Privileged Princess.' I'm sure that headline would sell plenty of papers, don't you agree?"*

*"That was uncalled for. I only want us to be seen together in public, occasionally. No adverts needed. Just you and me, unashamed of who we are."*

*"I don't go out in public. You knew that when we started. You said you wouldn't change me, so don't try."*

*"I would never change you. I simply want you to acknowledge that something isn't working and compromise on a solution."*

*"The only solution would be for you to leave me alone! I will not be paraded in public like some pet. I won't be one of your bloody causes. What we have is good and is working just fine the way it is. If I am not enough for you, then say it now. You know where the door is."*

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He kept close to the shadows as he moved around the room toward her. The crowd was heavier as he got closer. She was in esteemed company now, speaking with the Minister of Magic and the Boy Who Lived Again. As he stepped up behind her, he saw Arthur Weasley flinch with surprise.

"Minister Weasley, good evening. Good evening Mr. Potter," he said, watching her back stiffen. She turned slowly to look at him.

"Why, Severus, good of you to join us tonight. I didn't think you came to these events," the Minister declared.

"I didn't. I've made it a point to be present at the last few socials."

"The last few? I haven't seen you at any," snarled the blasted boy.

"Then I obviously chose not to let you know I was here, didn't I, Potter?"

"It seems very silly to come to a social event and not socialise with those who know you," he responded.

"It seems rather silly to come to an event designed to introduce the Wizarding World to those who saved it and spend the entire time speaking with people I know, rather than those who came just to speak to said heroes."

"Perhaps you should have spoken to those you know, those who considered you a friend, rather than strangers who don't care about you," the boy said between gritted teeth.

"Perhaps you should learn to mind your own business and leave me be."

"Maybe I would if you weren't so intent on completely destroying the last bit of good in your life and making everyone else suffer for it!"

"Maybe I should make you suffer for daring to speak to me so disrespectfully, boy!"

"I'd like to see you try!" the boy cried, stepping forward. He was cut off by a firm hand on his chest, pushing him back.

"Harry," she said quietly. "Your wife looks a little parched. Why don't you go get her a glass of pumpkin juice?"

After several tense moments, Harry stepped back with a brief nod. As he turned his back and walked away, Severus thought of the last time the boy had done so.

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*"Hermione! You won't believe it... I think I did it. Hermione! Where are you?"*

*"She left."*

*"Potter? What's going on? What do you mean 'she left'?"*

*"I mean, she left you. She asked me to come back and get a few of her things. She didn't want to come back in the house while you were here."*

*"I don't understand."*

*"You hurt her. You kept denying her. Was it really that awful, that horrible of a thought to admit you care for her? For some reason she loves you; she honestly, genuinely loves you. Yet you won't even attend the same party as her. Would one dance with her kill you?"*

*"I... I don't know what to..."*

*"Exactly. You don't know. And if you don't know, then you obviously don't care for her as much as she does you. Be reasonable. Let her go now before you destroy what's left of her."*

*The blasted Boy Who Lived Again turned his back and walked out the door with the last few things she had left behind.*

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Her back was still toward him, though her shoulders were slightly slumped. As she straightened her spine and took a deep breath, he stepped forward. His fingers brushed her bare arm so lightly she wondered if she was imagining it. The slight exhale of air against her hair made her realise how close he was.

"Dance with me," he said quietly. He lowered his hand to hers and pulled her around to face him. "Dance with me."

She nodded gently and allowed him to lead her to the dance floor. A soft melody was filling the air as he took her in his arms again. They were so focused on each other they failed to notice the crowd around them, staring openly. As the song progressed, he pulled her closer to him until she rested her head against his chest and his own chin lay across the top of her head.

"When you are away from me, I would give anything to be close to you once more. And when you are here, how could I ask for more?" he whispered. "But I want more. I want it all. I've felt you calling me in the weeks you've been away, and I've seen you at all of these damn balls. But I can't keep on watching forever. I have to be here with you, dancing in the light."

"Severus..."

"Give me another chance, Hermione. Come home to me," he pleaded.

She pulled her head away from his chest and looked at him. "I love you, you know. And that isn't always a good thing. My life is awkward without you there. I feel like I've lost my rhythm."

"I don't say it nearly enough, but I love you too." He lowered his head and kissed her. Clearing his throat, he stood up straight. "There, you have used your month's allotment of public displays of affection."

"Good thing it is the last day of the month," she teased. "Let's go home now."

He smiled and they began to walk off the dance floor, pausing when they realised everyone was staring. With a quick scowl to the crowd in front of him, they stepped back and allowed them room to walk. The Boy Who Lived Again was standing nearby with a grin and Hermione's coat. He handed the coat to Severus, who helped Hermione slip into it.

"See you in a week or two!" he winked at Hermione. He gave Severus a hard stare before holding out his hand. "Don't be such an idiot next time she leaves. You could have come for her that very day."

"But then I wouldn't have learnt my lesson. And there won't be a next time. Now, get out of my way."

The boy stepped aside and waved cheekily as the couple walked passed him. Preparing to Disapparate, he sighed deeply and muttered, "One party down. How many more of these horrid things do I have to attend?"

"We will have to negotiate on a case-by-case basis. Now let's go. I want to dance with you in private."

"How can I ask for more?" he said as they left with a pop.