The Dance

(A Spells-R-Us Story)

Bob came out of the Walden Books with a look of exasperation on his face and 2 books in a bag. "Frack! None of those books on dancing made any sense," he mumbled to his friend Tom as he headed for the Nature of Things store. "I'll catch you later Bob," his friend said as he took off the other way. "I gotta see if Cindy has forgiven me yet," he added. Bob watched Tom walk off and absent-mindedly wondered why Tom hung out with him. Tom was one of those tall, blond, GQ-wearing, muscle-bound guys that all the girls seem to go for. Like one of those guys they put on the cover of those "Love at the Edge of Pain" books that his mother was always reading. Of course, Cindy was a cheerleader and treated Tom like crap, but at least he had someone to treat him like crap. He looked over and saw his reflection and noted the gut, army surplus ensemble, short brown hair, and a face only his mother seemed to love. "Man do I hate my life," he thought to himself as he wandered, alone, into the Nature store.

The New Age/Celtic music in the store did nothing to improve his mood. After digging through the $1.50 crystal box and coming up with one decent-looking crystal, he moved to the counter to pay for it. This was a payday ritual for him, a new crystal for his fish tank, a new piece of software for his PC, more complaints from his mom about not getting out enough. All the usual payday routine except for the ultimatum his mother had laid down before he left this morning. His mom wanted him out of the house; "You're 18 and going to college, move to the dorms and find a life for Heaven's sake!" seemed to be her mantra.

"Will that be all?" the chunky brunette behind the counter asked as she put the crystal in a small bag, breaking Bob out of his reverie.

"Uh, yeah. Thanks," he stammered in reply.

"Now, where am I going to find something that will teach me to dance before that stupid spring fling tomorrow," he said to himself as he walked. This drew stares from several of the people he passed. Being stared at didn't bother him anymore. He had accepted that he was different from the rest of the world. They could stare all they liked as far as Bob was concerned. He knew he wasn't deformed or anything like that. He was just off in a world of his own most of the time. That kind of behavior does not exactly make you the most popular kid in school.

He turned down the side corridor remembering that there used to be a bookshop down here next to the Orange Julius. As he looked, he saw that it had closed and the store stood empty. What caught his attention next was that the Orange Julius wasn't there anymore either. In its place was a store called "Spells - R - Us". "That's different," he thought. "I might as well check it out, since I'm here."

He passed through the shop door and felt a sudden chill. Even with the fluorescent lights overhead everything in the store had a muted appearance. Like the lights from above weren't actually illuminating them. A glass case was at the front of the store and in it were various trinkets, jewelry, and such. The far wall was covered with assorted bottles, cans, and boxes. Some of them had labels that were obviously designed to match the store name. After all, who would believe they actually had love potions and "Were-Cat-Nip" in those containers. Then he saw a rack in the back spilling over with old books, magazines, and record albums.

Just as he started for the rack an old guy in what looked like some kind of bathrobe stepped out of the back. "Hi Bob, I was wondering when you would show up here," the old man said as he made his way around the display case.

"Hi, I was looking ... Hey! Wait a minute how did you know my name?" he replied starting to back away from the old man.

"You were looking for a way to learn to 'trip the light fandango' without tripping over your own feet by tomorrow because your mother said that if you don't go to the dance you won't get the money for the cable modem hookup you want," he replied putting his arm across Bob's shoulder and directing him back toward the bookrack in the back. "Am I close?" he finished with a wink.

"Look, I don't know how you know all this, but I'm not about to go into the back room with you," he said trying to pull away from the old man's grip.

"Chill, kid. I just want to show you something to help you out," he said gesturing toward the back of the store.

"I've read stories on the Net about guys like you. How do I know I won't end up in a pair of dancing shoes that won't stop or something?"

"Oh, nothing like that, besides I sold my last pair of those to some guy who said he was headed for Broadway. He should be there by now," he chuckled. He released Bob and started to dig through the pile of old records on one side of the rack.

"I don't want to be a bother, I can learn to live with my 56K connection."

"Don't be silly, after all do you think your mother will give up on her, what did you call it, 'Crusade to get you hitched and out of her hair', if you don't go to this dance and at least make an effort to meet other people?" he asked looking at Bob with a look like he knew what he was talking about.

"No, but this is ridiculous, there is no way I can possibly learn to dance in one night."

"Ah here it is, Darn where is the album cover." The old man pulled out an old record then continued digging through the mess.

"Don't worry about it. I will take it as is," Bob said, desperate to get out of the weird store and away from the even weirder man.

"Hmm, no cover. Well, Bob I should advise you that the cover is important when you are buying an album. You never know what kind of important information you will find on the cover that isn't mentioned on the album," the old man said handing him the album.

The record was pressed in some kind of off red color, only had a label on one side and that was partially missing. The remnants of the label read "Get Your Perfect Partner and Learn to Dance in One Night for...." Nothing after that but Bob figured it was most likely beginners. The other label was completely missing.

"You have to be kidding me, this record must be 20 years old and looks like Hell. I would be afraid to put under my needle!" Bob replied blowing dust out of the grooves. "How much are you planning to stick me for this?"

The old man started to look a little ticked off by this point. "Look kid I'll sell it to you for $10.00 and if it doesn't do exactly what it says it will do, just bring it back and I will refund all of the money. How's that? I don't usually offer anything like that so I suggest you take it," he said moving over toward the cash register.

"All my money if it doesn't work? Alright, but I want a receipt," Bob replied pulling the $10 bill from his pocket and handing it to the old man. Bob thought he could hear the old guy chuckling as he left.

Bob put all the items he had picked up in the large bag he had been given at the bookstore and headed home. In the back of his mind he tried to remember where he had heard about a place like that before. He knew there was something familiar about the store, but couldn't quite put his finger on it. When he arrived home he found a note from his mom telling him that his aunt Lucy had fallen off her porch again and that she and his father would be up there the rest of the week putting a new railing on the porch and helping her out. She, of course, finished with "Have fun at the dance. I want to hear all about it when we get home." Her, "Mom's Way", of saying she still expects him to go and will check him out when she gets back to make sure he went.

Bob thought to himself, "Well at least there won't be anyone around to see me making a fool out of myself with this stupid record." He emptied the contents of his bag on the bed and just for an instant it looked like the crystal he had bought from the Nature store was glowing as it lay there next to the album in the bag. After thinking about it for a moment he decided it must be a trick of the light.

He took the album over to the record player and cleaned it thoroughly. He had a nice collection of vintage vinyl and didn't want to ruin the needle on this old piece of crap. As he cleaned the record, he read the title again. "Get Your Perfect Partner? What am I supposed to do for a partner? Oh, Hell, I may as well try it anyway." He then put the album on the turntable and went and changed clothes. He figured a pair of sweat pants and a T-shirt would be best for this experiment. He then moved the eight-year-old bunk and other furniture back against the walls to provide him the maximum amount of room to stumble around in without injuring himself.

Scratchy static and popping filled the air as the needle eased slowly into the groove. Bob fought his natural instinct to immediately lift the tone arm again to protect his needle. After a few seconds the static faded and then disappeared replaced by a man's voice.

"Welcome to lesson one, side one. Please proceed to the center of the room and stand straight with your arms at your side and wait for the music and further instructions," the voice on the record instructed in a pleasant tone.

Bob complied and moved to the center of the room. Standing there at attention waiting as he heard what sounded like chamber music coming up in the background.

"For this first lesson you will need to close your eyes and keep them closed. You should now hear the music in the background. Do not attempt to dance at this time, just listen to the rhythm and the melody. Listen to the music with your ears, but feel it with your whole body."

"What kind of crap is this? Zen dancing?" he said as stood there and the ancient music drifted around him. Slowly he started to understand what the voice had told him. He could feel the rhythm. It seemed to match his heartbeat and move into and around him. He stood there with his eyes closed. His body swaying with the tune.

"By now you should start to have a feel for the rhythm. Start to move around with the music. Move in small circles and do not open your eyes. Don't worry whether or not you are doing anything right or wrong. Just enjoy the music and the way your body feels as it moves with it."

Bob started to move around in clumsy circles. Thinking that he must look really stupid right now. As he moved he began to let his arms start to sway like a drunk after a weeklong binge. Although he knew that his movements were far from graceful he found that he was starting to enjoy this.

"We will now work on improving your grace, posture and other aspects of your appearance. You must not stop till the music stops and keep your eyes closed till you are told to open them."

Bob wondered why it kept telling him to keep his eyes closed, but didn't worry about it too much at this point he was enjoying this. He waited for further instructions, but all that happened was that the music changed. He adjusted his movements to match it. The new music had a strong forceful beat, like one of those old tunes you hear in the old sword fighting movies when the men are all marching out to war. He quickly began to work up a sweat. Soon he could feel dampness under his arms and wet slap of other things inside his boxers. He started to wonder if the record had skipped an instruction or something.

The music changed again, a different song, more lilting and ballet-like now playing in the background of the more forceful piece. The background tune was, at this point, barely audible, but could be made out.

Bob decided to move with the first song since the other tune sounded like crossover from another channel or something. As he moved with the military tune he could feel his now sweat dampened clothes starting to cling to his body. His clothes were feeling larger on him somehow. "Maybe I have finally found a way to lose weight," he mused as he continued to circle around the middle of the floor.

Slowly the ballet tune seemed to gain in strength and the military tune grew steadily quieter. He found it interesting how two such different tunes could sound right together and yet be discernible as separate pieces of music. He continued to stumble in loose circles in the middle of the room with his arms now moving in various patterns that seemed to "feel" like the right thing to do.

Spinning there in the center of the room he began to feel something strange. At first he wasn't sure what it was. He suddenly realized that he no longer felt the soft slapping of his equipment against his thighs.

"That isn't right," he thought to himself. "I should feel something down there." He immediately tried to stop, only to find that he couldn't. He tried to open his eyes, also to no avail. He tried to trip himself up and fall to the floor, but only kept moving with the music. "Damned old man!" he attempted to say, only to find the words trapped behind lips that wouldn't move. Still the music played and he moved around the room.

His mind raced. What had that old man done? What was happening to him?

There was a sudden sensation of something pushing up into him. No pain, no pleasure just the feel of a foreign, moving thing forcing its way into his body. As it pushed up it seemed to expand filling his abdomen. A strange warm tingling sensation began to slowly radiate out into his body. He felt the muscles in his legs start to twitch and shift. For a moment he thought they would give out and he could stop this at last, but he kept spinning, kept moving with the music. The sensation moved up into his hips causing his pants to fit strangely. His pelvis seemed to spread, the muscles and organs rearranging themselves. He could feel his balance shifting, his feet and legs now moved smoothly across the floor.

"What is happening to me?" his now panicking mind screamed.

The music changed again ... the ballet music growing stronger and faster ... his body increasing its pace to match the ballet and no longer following the military music. He felt the changes shoot up his spine stopping and then oozing across the shoulders and down the arms.

He wanted to stop this, to open his eyes, to run out of the house and not stop till he was miles from this damn record. He could feel his body changing each detail modified creating a new sensation. He tried to calm down and think the situation through. It had started with his abdomen and then his legs, it had felt like it was creating an opening in him. There had to be an explanation, an opening in his abdomen meant ... meant ... No, he couldn't be right. He tried to get a better feel of the changes that had occurred. The new sway of his hips as he moved the feel of the fabric of his clothes across the inside of his thighs. He was changing into a girl? This didn't make any sense, he couldn't just change into a girl. He tried to put the thought out of his head ... to fight this insanity. Still the music surrounding him, guiding him, changing him.

His arms began to feel lighter now, still moving with the music. Now instead of the sluggish flapping he had done before he could feel his arms tracing delicate gestures and arcs. The alien sensation began to move slowly out from the spine. He could feel it changing and shifting his organs as it moved out toward his gut. He felt his T-shirt suddenly loosen, then dangle as his belly, a victim of too many tacos and burgers, seemed to dissolve away. The energy then moved up to his chest. He felt his T-shirt tighten around his chest, felt a new sensitivity from the ends reacting to the shifting of flesh against fabric as his body continued to sway to the music. He screamed in his mind. "Wait! No! Not that! Not breasts! This has got to stop!"

The music changed again ... the ballet tune now equal to, almost indistinguishable from the military tune or was it that the military tune was getting lost in the ballet? He felt his growingly more graceful body spin and slide with the new tune. He felt the weight of his newly formed breasts shift and sway with the movements. The slight jiggle of his newly formed buttocks as he changed directions caught him off guard. His clothes began to feel strange, getting tighter. Not like he was changing this time but like they were shrinking, becoming more form fitting. "What form?" he asked himself. He still couldn't stop, still couldn't open his eyes.

The music changed again the ballet now strong and moving, the military music now quieter and less distinct. The sensation began to move up his neck, spreading out across his face and scalp. He could feel his 3-day growth of beard draw back into his face. The muscles in his face started to twitch and jerk. The bones of his jaw shrank while his cheekbones seemed to move up and out. Then he felt a tingling in his throat. He tried to speak, but all he could manage was a soft, high-pitched moan. He could feel his hair, always kept short, now dropping down past his shoulders and still growing. He could feel the energy moving through his skull, reshaping it. He wondered what would happen when it started on his brain. The music changed for the last time ... now the ballet tune was clear and strong while the military music had faded to a shadow of its original volume and presence. He / she felt the music enter His / Her mind. It flashed with colors and images. Memories flashed by repeatedly and with each pass they were altered a little. Soon He / She couldn't tell what was being changed. The new memories now seemed to be the right ones and the ones that didn't match them started to feel alien. She / He tried to fight it, tried to save Her / His past from being erased, to hold onto who She / He was to hold onto.... Trying to stop the flood of energy only to be washed clean.

The music stopped.... Bobbi opened her eyes and looked around the room. She always seemed to get lost in the music. She walked over to the record player and flipped the ancient record over. She looked into the mirror, pulled her long auburn hair back over her shoulder and readjusted the unitard she was wearing. She walked over to the lacey four poster bed that she had begged her mother for last year and stretched out for a moment catching her breath before the next lesson. She felt the weight of her bosoms shift under the Lycra Spandex then reached up and pushed them back into place. "Why did I have to take after dad's side of the family for these things? It would be a lot easier to dance without D-cup knockers getting in the way," she mused. Her voice, sounding strange to her for a fleeting moment.

The music started again ... she rose up off of the bed and moved back out to the center of the floor ready to begin the next lesson.

"Welcome to side 2, lesson 2. You and your partner will now learn to dance as one. When the lesson is complete you will understand that all things are a dance, work, play, sports, and making love. All of these have movements, steps, and timing. Now turn to your perfect partner and begin moving with the music."

Bobbi turned and there before her stood Thomas. Something inside of her head said this wasn't right, he shouldn't, couldn't be here. She reached up and put her hands on his shoulders as his arms slid around her waist pulling her against him, gently but firmly. They began to sway and circle with the music. The pressure of Thomas's body against her now was sending thrilling new sensations all through her body.

A small voice deep inside fading to nothingness as the music changed again. As the introduction music now disappeared, a new song took its place. A love song, growing slowly with each new change of the tune its melody soft, warm and welcoming. Bobbi soon lost herself in the music, the magic and her lover's arms.

Prolog

An old man in some sort of bathrobe is straightening up after closing his shop for the day. He bumps his arm against the magazine rack and a record album cover falls out. He picks it up, reads it, then tossing it into the trash he chuckles to himself. "Hmmm, Bob won't have to worry about going to the dance now. I guess he should have waited for me to find the album cover. Heh heh heh."

The title on the cover read "Get Your Perfect Partner and Learn to Dance in One Night for Girls."

In bold lettering under it was the warning "Not to Be Used by Males Under Any Circumstances."

END