i'd like for you and i to go romancing

by dollsome

Summary

In which people keep mistaking Crowley and Aziraphale for a couple, and Aziraphale starts to wonder if there might be something to it.

Notes

Ahhh, wondrous Good Omens! I have never been an expert superfan of the book -- I’ve read it a few times and enjoyed it immensely, especially our beloved angel/demon romcom, but I definitely am not super aware of every nuance, so my apologies if any of this contradicts canon!

I sped through the miniseries adaptation all in a rush and enjoyed it tremendously, especially (of course) the wonderful Aziraphale and Crowley of it all; yesterday, I found myself hankering for just a little more time with them, and so this fic was born and then -- as fics often do -- grew way more gigantic than I had anticipated! God bless Michael Sheen and David Tennant for their totally wonderful performances, and also for rhapsodizing over shipping it hard in all the behind-the-scenes interviews. This was definitely written with their particular incarnations of the characters in mind.

I’m sure that a ton of debate has gone on re: sexual experience and the ineffable husbands for the many years this fine fandom has blessed our world: the energy I got from the adaptation was that that was part of the human-y experience that hadn’t really been on the radar for either of them before, so that is the approach that this particular story takes! But of course, now that they’ve chosen a side (the world’s side, specifically), they’ve got all those pesky human feelings fully kicking in ...

Thanks to -- of course -- Queen for the title, which is from “Good Old-Fashioned Lover Boy.” I HAD TO.

This is the first of five chapters. I originally meant for it to be a one-shot but decided to divvy
it up for organization's sake. The rest of the installments are already written and just need a little more polishing up, so fortunately, there won't be much of a wait!
Aziraphale never would have asked it once. But the world hasn’t ended, and he’s a free agent now, in a manner of speaking. So for the first time in his long life, this angel is experimenting with bravery, by golly. Not the save-the-world sort. The quiet everyday sort.

“Are we, do you think?” he asks Crowley when he’s visiting his flat, inspecting the little indoor forest of magnificent plants. He’s been visiting Crowley more than usual lately. At first, he recoiled a little from the sparse, sleek darkness of his dear friend’s home, but he’s beginning to appreciate it; it feels like Crowley. Even though it’s dark, it’s not cold or cruel. And he does like plants.

And asking big questions.

*Are we a couple?* is what he means. Everyone seems to think so, if you can believe it. Bookshop customers and chatty ex-nuns of Satan and random passersby on the street. It isn’t entirely new. A lot of knowing looks flashed at them over the past many centuries have begun to make sense in retrospect. It’s just that it hadn’t occurred to him to imagine himself as someone who could be half of a couple. Angels don’t have significant others, demon or otherwise.

But now that he’s no longer your typical angel -- well.

The most recent culprit was Adam Young’s mother Deirdre, who called to invite them to Adam’s upcoming twelfth birthday party. She still doesn’t seem entirely sure *why* Adam knows two grown men from London, but she’s very friendly anyway. “Do bring your husband with the cool sunglasses. Adam was very insistent about that. He would love to see both of you.”

‘I can’t bring my husband because I don’t have a husband’ would have been the technically correct response, but Aziraphale knew what she meant and wasn’t one to nitpick a polite invitation to death.

Then he told Crowley about it, for a reason he still isn’t quite certain of. He just wanted to watch whatever happened on Crowley’s face at the news.

Now, Crowley is quiet for a moment that sings with uncertainty. Aziraphale does wish he would take off the sunglasses and show his eyes for once. Then he sputters into Crowley-ness. “Lord, no. Not in the way they mean it, at least. You and me against the world? Yeah. Always. But in the way they mean it, it’s all wandering hands and nether-bits and expensive jewelry and rapid disillusionment and divorce attorneys.”

Aziraphale doesn’t know how to untangle any of that, so he picks out the easiest part of the reply. “‘Lord.’ That’s very pious language.”

“Not necessarily. Could mean anybody. Could be ‘Lord Byron.’ In fact, from this point on, it’s always Lord Byron.”

“Lord Byron,” Aziraphale says with a little nostalgic sigh.

Crowley chuckles. “That was a time, wasn’t it?”

“It truly was. Such great poetry.”

“Such great parties,” Crowley rhapsodizes in the same tone. Then he adds in a joking mutter, “Talk about someone obsessed with wandering hands and nether-bits.”
Aziraphale blushes, thinking briefly of the time he and Crowley had spent a weekend politely declining, and then haphazardly evading, Lord Byron’s many invitations to, er, join in with him and his paramours. As a fan of literature, it was extraordinary to socialize with Byron. As a celestial being with no interest in carnal delights, well, you were liable to find yourself climbing out a villa window in the middle of the night and then swimming to less lusty ground for safety.

That had turned out to be one of his funner adventures with Crowley, in the end.

Life is usually fun with Crowley.

“So we’re not a couple, then,” he says, clearing his throat.

“No, no,” says Crowley nonchalantly.

“Should we start telling people that? When they mistake us for one?”

“And explain that we’re an angel and a demon who’ve been cast out of our respective realms to form an eternal alliance of two? Doesn’t seem worth the bother, really.”

“Well,” says Aziraphale, feeling unaccountably pleased, “all right, then.”

“Humans will think what they think,” Crowley concludes.

“They always do,” Aziraphale says fondly.

That settled, Aziraphale returns his attention to the plants, murmuring little encouragements to them. Crowley had lectured him once about not going soft on them (“they’ve got to learn, angel”), but soft -- Aziraphale has decided -- isn’t always a bad thing.

He compliments one of them for looking especially verdant today, then glances up to see Crowley watching him with a little smile. The smile disappears as soon as he realizes Aziraphale’s caught him, but that can’t change the fact that it was there.

The especially verdant plant bursts into pink blooms not at all consistent with its genus.

“Oh dear,” Aziraphale sputters. “Can’t--can’t imagine how that happened.”

“What have you done to my plant??” Crowley whooshes over.

“Made it prettier,” Aziraphale says defensively.

Crowley considers the plant’s makeover.

“Yeah, all right,” he capitulates.

“You’re welcome,” Aziraphale says, hopefully with the self-possessed air of someone who spontaneously transforms plants all the time.

“What do you get for the antichrist who has everything?” Crowley muses. They’re standing in the middle of a toy shop, seriously contemplating birthday presents for the first time in their long, long existences.
“A nice hula hoop?” Aziraphale ventures.

Crowley snorts.

“Can I help you, gentlemen?” the clerk asks, coming over.

“We’re looking for something for our godson,” Aziraphale says. “He’s turning twelve.”

“And before you ask,” Crowley adds dryly, “he’s already got a hellhound.”

Half hour later, they’ve got a formidable beast of a squirt gun with all the terrifying bells and whistles imaginable, a drone, a handsome hardcover set of Great Books (“Couldn’t you just give him some from your shop? You know, where you’re supposed to be selling the books.” “Bite your once-forked tongue!”), and one hula hoop. There’s something to be said for classic entertainment, Aziraphale maintains.

The clerk bids them farewell and declares that the birthday boy is lucky to have such a nice couple for godparents.

“You see,” Aziraphale says as they step outside, “that’s precisely what I’m talking about. Everyone thinks we’re an item.”

“Not everyone,” Crowley protests as they shove their bags into the back seat of the Bentley.

They climb in. As soon as it’s switched on, the car’s speakers blare out:

*Ooh let me feel your heartbeat (grow faster, faster)*
*Ooh ooh can you feel my love heat*
*Come on and sit on my hot-seat of love*
*And tell me how do you feel right after-all*
*I’d like for you and I to go romancing*
*Say the word, your wish is my command*

Aziraphale clears his throat awkwardly.

“It’s a car,” Crowley says defensively. “Cars don’t speculate over relationship statuses.”

“Of course not,” says Aziraphale.

*When I'm not with you*
*Think of me always*
*Love you, love you*

“Bentley Rule Number One: don’t ever read into the Queen.”

“Right-o,” says Aziraphale as Crowley steers them haphazardly out into the street.

*Dining at the Ritz, we'll meet at nine precisely*
*(One two three four five six seven eight nine o’ clock)*
*I will pay the bill, you taste the wine*
*Driving back in style, in my saloon will do quite nicely*
*Just take me back to yours, that will be fine*
*(Come on and get it!)*
When the time comes, they drive out to Tadfield for Adam’s birthday party with the back seat full of resplendently wrapped presents. To Aziraphale, the drive is almost as delightful as the prospect of a party; he’s always liked riding around with Crowley, underneath the bubble of nervousness inspired by the demon’s disdain for speed limits and turn signals.

(Underneath the endless, staccato refrain of *You should not be doing this, you should not be liking this, you should not be doing this, you should not be liking this* that the ever-blaring speakers could never quite drown out. That bit has finally, finally gone silent for good.)

It’s especially nice when they’re not bogged down in otherworldly business, and can simply enjoy each other’s company.

Crowley spends most of the journey trying to educate Aziraphale on the virtues of The Smiths.

“Listen to this bit, this bit’s the best--”

“I’m listening!”

Crowley yowls along, “*And if a double-decker bus Crashes into us To die by your side Is such a heavenly way to die, And if a ten-ton truck Kills the both of us To die by your side Well, the pleasure - the privilege is mine.*”

“That’s morbid!”

“That’s beautiful! ‘Heavenly’ -- that’s your lot.”

“It doesn’t sound the least bit heavenly.” Well, perhaps it does and that's the problem. "To live by your side, that’s the really heavenly thing. Er. Someone’s side. For the sake of this argument.”

“Come on, man. Have you no heart? Those *lyrics*: that’s love.”

By the time they arrive, Aziraphale thinks himself pretty well persuaded. He still calls it ‘be-bop’ one last time, because he quite likes the effect that has.

“I swear you’re just doing it to torture me at this point,” Crowley moans, pinching the bridge of his nose.

“Maybe a little,” Aziraphale says angelically.

Aziraphale can see the serpentine gleam of appreciation even through Crowley’s dark lenses, and feels unaccountably pleased with himself.

The party takes place in the Youngs’ back garden, and it’s an absolutely sublime gathering. All of Adam’s best mates are there, wearing paper crowns and chattering happily, forever fascinated by each other’s company. The grownups include Anathema Device and Newton Pulsifer in addition to Adam’s parents and some neighborhood folks, and it’s very nice indeed to see ordinary people (if
there’s any such thing) and apocalypse fighters all blended together. It makes one feel as if they might have a real place in the world after all.

“Now, how did you two meet?” Mrs. Young asks, kindly bringing Aziraphale a slice of cake. Crowley is watching Mr. Young man the grill, and keeps subtly adjusting the flames with little twitches of his fingers. (Crowley has great moral objections to overcooked meat. “Almost as big a waste as the fourteenth century.”)

Aziraphale is taken aback by the inquiry. No one has ever actually asked that question before.

“We happened across each other one day in a garden -- public garden, that is -- and fell into a very interesting philosophical conversation,” he says after a moment, watching Crowley, “and then, er, it started raining, so I covered him with my w-- umbrella. And, well, we just seemed to keep crossing paths after that, and finally decided we might as well start doing it on purpose.”

“How sweet,” Mrs. Young says.

“I suppose it was rather,” Aziraphale agrees as Crowley catches his eye.

“How long have you been together now?” Mrs. Young asks.

“Oh,” Crowley says, breezing over and putting an arm around Aziraphale, “forever.”

Aziraphale smiles at him. Crowley grins back until he notices that Mr. Young is overcooking the hamburgers. He swears and darts across the garden, trying to coax the flames down with hand movements that must be perplexing to the normal human eye.

“Bless him,” Aziraphale says fondly.

The party carries on. Aziraphale is quite overcome by the festive atmosphere, and, after his third slice of cake, decides there’s only one way to properly honor such a significant occasion. He must have a telling look on his face, because a certain demon is onto him at once.

“No,” says Crowley with dawning horror, dropping his fork mid-bite of cake.

“Yes,” says Aziraphale joyfully.

“NO MAGIC,” Crowley snarls. The blue sky is suddenly overtaken by clouds.

“I like magic,” says Adam, coming over. The firmament clears.

“Not this magic, you don’t,” Crowley says darkly.

“Go on,” Adam urges Aziraphale, his eyes bright with encouragement.

And, well, you can’t very well disappoint the birthday boy/former antichrist.

“Come on,” Aziraphale says, heading back to the Bentley, where he always keeps his magic act supplies stashed in case of party emergencies. “Pencil my magician’s moustache on for me.”

“I am not penciling your bloody magician’s moustache on,” Crowley protests, stalking after him.
“But you always do it so nicely.”

“Not this time. I’m putting my foot down. I mean it. Right down to the earth’s core. Shoes-melted-by-lava style. You owe me new shoes.”

Aziraphale gives him an imploring look largely inspired by Dog the dog.

Crowley holds out for seven and a half seconds. Then: “Aughhhh! Fine. But I’m drawing it crooked.”

A quick inspection in the Bentley’s side mirror a few minutes later informs Aziraphale that Crowley’s drawn it perfectly.

Fifteen minutes later, Aziraphale is performing his magic act.

He likes to think he’s gotten much better than last time around, too. When he pulls a coin out of Wensleydale’s ear, the boy gasps while his friends tease him about needing to wash up more often.

When he moves on to Adam, an absolute bucket's worth of coins falls from both of his ears, which Aziraphale strongly suspects has to do more with Adam than anything he’s done. Still, everyone laughs uproariously, and Mr. Young says that he ought to be paying Aziraphale for this level of quality entertainment, so might as well count that as a win.

Made a little too bold by success and cake, Aziraphale attempts the trick on a less receptive audience member.

Crowley catches his wrist before Aziraphale can put his hand anywhere ear-adjacent. “I can’t sit idly by and watch this happen.”

“Then get up here with me,” Aziraphale says, “for I’m certainly not stopping.”

“These children helped avert the apocalypse. They deserve a proper show.”

“Fine then,” Aziraphale huffs, pulling Crowley out of his seat. “Good audience, may I present ... my dashing assistant.”

Crowley gives him a look of such deep loathing that it makes Aziraphale cackle aloud. Not his usual style, but it really can’t be helped under the circumstances.

To his surprise, Crowley is a natural. He cheats and uses real magic, the sort you can’t learn from Magic for Dummies, but considering what a spoilsport he’s been in the past on this matter, Aziraphale is happy to accept any effort at all. In no time, the back garden is full of fireworks and doves and rabbits and one accidental toad, not to mention an endless supply of confetti falling from the sky. Dog barks at the new animal arrivals and chases them around with mad glee. Aziraphale sees to it that no actual harm can befall the dear creatures. It’s the chasing, anyway, that’s the joyful thing.

Adam and the other children laugh their heads off (Crowley’s saw-himself-in-half trick is pretty good, in a grisly way) and the adults are chuckling too, and all this combined merriment seems to elevate this ordinary back garden into some small paradise.
At the end of their performance, Crowley grabs Aziraphale’s hand and they bow again and again to their cheering audience, a perfect double act.

“We could take this on the road,” Aziraphale can’t resist saying.

“Oh, that was our first and last show ever,” Crowley says from between grinning teeth. He tightens his grip on Aziraphale’s hand in a way that’s somehow not at all unpleasant.

“We’ll see,” says Aziraphale, smiling triumphantly. “It was an impeccably drawn magician’s moustache, by the way.”

“Yeah, well. I’m a demon, not a monster.”
Chapter Notes

I apologize for having so many damn lyrics in this thing. I blame the show’s impeccably great soundtrack for kindling that mood!!

There’s an outdoor Sondheim revue a few weeks later. Aziraphale finds the tickets waiting for him on the desk in the bookshop one morning, alongside a note that says, Next time we’ll see The Sound of Music, but don’t dust off your lederhosen just yet. At the bottom of the note is a familiar symbol of a twisting serpent, the sight of which really shouldn’t make an angel’s heart leap with gladness like one of Pavlov’s dogs salivating at the sound of a bell.

There’s a little black mark in front of the serpent that might be a meaningless curve or might be an x. Aziraphale spends what some might call an inordinate amount of time trying to decide.

The revue is in the park in the evening, and Crowley scored them seats close to the front. The buzz of excitement in the air is delicious, so many people keen to come together and celebrate something human-made and beautiful. Aziraphale can’t imagine for one second wanting to trade all this just to win a war. He feels a renewed wave of gratitude for being just where he is, in one folding chair of many underneath dozens of golden glowing paper lanterns, slightly uncomfortable for the sake of good music with the person he loves most by his side.

“Simply stunning,” he murmurs to Crowley as the music starts, meaning all of it. The orchestra and the singers, the dimming murmur of the audience and the birds in the trees. What symphonies the world spins every hour.

“Musical theatre,” Crowley mutters, slouching back in his seat. “Pretty sure that’s one of mine.”

“Oh, hush.”

Mother said "Straight ahead,"  
Not to delay or be misled.  
I should have heeded her advice,  
But he seemed so nice.

As the concert veers to Into the Woods, Aziraphale tries with all his might to look like someone who is not overidentifying with Little Red Riding Hood. There’s no basis for it. Wolves and serpents: very different. Beastly apples and oranges, really.
And he showed me things,
Many beautiful things
That I hadn’t thought to explore.
They were off my path,
So I never had dared.

Aziraphale very deliberately doesn’t look at Crowley.

I had been so careful,
I never had cared.
And he made me feel excited--
Well, excited and scared.

Until he does. By accident.

Crowley wriggles his eyebrows at Aziraphale devilishly. Well, Crowley is always devilish. But in this particular moment, he’s devilish plus a little extra. Aziraphale huffs and looks back up at the stage.

Later, when the night has darkened just perfectly for *A Little Night Music*, Aziraphale is pulled out of his own emotional reverie during “Send in the Clowns” by a sound uncannily like sniffling.

Just when I’d stopped opening doors,
Finally knowing the one that I wanted was yours,
Making my entrance again with my usual flair,
Sure of my lines, no one is there.

He looks over to see a tear sliding past Crowley’s sunglasses down his cheek, gleaming in the mingled light of the paper lanterns and the moon above.

Ordinarily, Aziraphale would think for a moment -- draw up a mental list of pros and cons (marvelous invention, the pro/con list) and then err on the side of *Better not*. But just this once, his fingers decide for him.

He reaches over, unthinking, and presses a fingertip very gently to Crowley’s face. The tear is warm, and Crowley’s cheek is cool and smooth. What a thing it is, to touch someone on purpose. The smallest point of contact, yet it dances in the rest of you, scalp to toes.

Crowley stays very still, and doesn’t say a thing for once. It would be rude to, of course, in the middle of a concert, but Crowley has never worried much about rudeness before.

Then he wraps his fingers around Aziraphale’s wrist, slow and careful like you would with an animal you don’t want to frighten away. Ordinarily, Aziraphale *would* move away. Moving away from the demon, he had staunchly believed for centuries upon centuries, was the rules. No matter how much you wanted to stay put instead.

This time, he stays put, lacing his fingers through Crowley’s.

They carefully hold hands, neither daring to look at the other, until they have to let go to applaud. When they leave, they don’t say a thing about it, slipping instead into banter about how next time,
they’re going to something that Crowley chooses (never mind that Crowley got the tickets) and that it will most definitely be something with a beat and ideally an electric guitar.

At home alone in the bookshop that night, Aziraphale stares down at his fingers and wonders where on earth it’s coming from, this feeling like waking up.
I would like to thank Jason Mendoza from The Good Place for a phrase that I somehow just couldn’t resist borrowing, because truly, even after much contemplation, I could not conceive of a better one.

The next time they’re assumed to be a couple, it’s on the invitation that arrives in the mail announcing Newt and Anathema’s wedding. Aziraphale checks off beef for Crowley and fish for himself on the RSVP and sends it back with a smiley face drawn beside the checked ‘Yes.’

Crowley insists that they get Aziraphale some new clothes for the occasion. He takes him to a fancy shop full of lofty employees that Aziraphale finds slightly terrifying and Crowley commands with the unbothered grace of an emperor. Crowley picks out a number of things with swift efficiency and then sends Aziraphale into a changing room, saying he’ll be just outside playing some ridiculous game about cupcakes on his mobile phone.

(Crowley had been especially proud of his invention of mobile phone games, the demonic reasoning behind them being that people would never get anything done with the promise of mindless fun forever at their fingertips. He then promptly got addicted to mobile phone games. When Aziraphale had chastened him for it, Crowley had protested, “But I didn’t expect them to be so shiny! Look!” Aziraphale, wisely, had not looked.)

It feels strange to be locked up in this little room. Changing clothes at all is really a very human thing. He catches his own eye in the mirror and makes a “well, old boy, we’re in it now” face. He’s never really understood the mortal anxiety about reflections. Appraising your body like a thing you’ve bought instead of a thing you are. Wanting to take pride in it, hoping that someone else will love all its intricacies and imperfections. It all seems like so much unnecessary bother.

Though maybe it would be nice to have someone love the sight of you. That isn’t so very hard to understand, when you think about it.

After a few sartorial misfires that make him wince at his reflection, he finds something he quite likes. It’s a cream-colored suit not so different from his usual shade, but much suaver. More debonair super spy, less librarian. (One could argue there are no people more debonair than librarians, but that’s probably a debate for another time.)

When he steps out of the dressing room, Crowley looks up at him. The game on the mobile phone makes a bunch of irritated beeps, but miraculously, Crowley seems to have forgotten it exists.

“Is it ridiculous?” Aziraphale asks nervously, glancing down at the suit.

“No, no,” Crowley says, his mouth forgetting to entirely close itself. “It’s … good. It’s good.”

“Oh, good,” Aziraphale says, relieved, and goes back into the dressing room to shake off the new clothes and the new feeling. Thou shalt not like it when someone looks at you like you’re a delicious ice cream sundae with a cherry on top, and all that.
It goes without saying that the wedding doesn’t take place in a church.

Instead, it’s in a field in the country on a cloudy day with some sheep nearby (as perfect a wedding setting as you can have without God on the guest list, if you ask Aziraphale), officiated by the lovely Madame Tracy, a woman of many talents indeed. Dog the dog, wearing a handsome blue bowtie and surely the most respectable-looking hellhound in history, serves as ring-bearer. Adam, Pepper, Brian, and Wensleydale are responsible for throwing fistfuls of flower petals at particularly celebratory moments, and they rise to the occasion beautifully. Anathema wears a resplendent gown of golden yellow and her usual thick-rimmed spectacles, and she and Newt stare at each other with all the world’s mushy devotion. It’s quite an impulsive thing, to marry a little over a year after you’ve met, but Aziraphale can’t fault them for it. You never know when life will take a turn for the much shorter than you’d anticipated; might as well love with all your heart while you can.

He sneaks a glance to his left at Crowley, who’s somehow managed to sit in his folding chair like it’s a chaise lounge.

There isn’t a church threshold for the newly-wed couple to walk out of once they’ve said “I do”, so the wedding party pelts cheers and handfuls of rice at them on the stroll to the pavilion where the reception will be held. Aziraphale tosses a few doves in as well. It’s never a wedding or a magic show without doves.

“Risky move, doves,” Crowley says to him. “I’m pretty sure getting shat on is on no bride’s wedding day to-do list.”

“Obviously, these are the non-shitting variety of dove. I’m not a novice, thank you.”

Crowley’s mouth quirks. With a swish of his hand, he fills the air with golden sparks that dance behind the couple in between grains of rice and wings of dove.

“Fire?” Aziraphale says indignantly.

“If you ask me, any sensible bride would take being set on fire over being shat on. No question.”

“Honestly! You can’t just go around setting fires at weddings; this is the twenty-first century, people spend a lot of money on nuptials these days,” Aziraphale says, bustling forward to try to snuff out the nearest sparks.

Crowley grabs his arm. “Relax. They’re non-flammable. All for show.”

Sure enough, Aziraphale catches one of the sparks on his fingertip and it melts away like a glowing snowflake.

“They are rather pretty,” he admits.

“All for you,” Crowley says, certainly joking, and then saunters away toward the bar.
“Thank you so much for having us,” Aziraphale says to Anathema, drinking in the lovely decor inside the pavilion, once the reception’s begun.

“Of course. You were there for our first very special day. It didn’t seem right to have you and your Mr. Crowley miss this one.”

“We’re not, er, a couple, you know. Not in the ‘til death do us part way.” He gestures vaguely toward the little figurines on the towering wedding cake. “Although, well, let death try! It tried a bit, in point of fact. Didn’t get very far. A ha ha!” The awkward laugh reverberates in his ears. He has to kill it somehow. “You know. Friendly friends. That’s us.” Well, that hasn’t fixed anything. Blast it.

Anathema just stares at him.

“What?” he goes on, possessed by the ghost of social faux pas. “Is there a--an Agnes Nutter prophecy that says different? The angel and the demon shall maketh with the smoochies, or something like that?”

“I’m taking a break from prophecies for now,” Anathema says, an amused little smile playing at her mouth.

“Ah,” Aziraphale replies weakly.

They stare at each other. Aziraphale contemplates finding the largest nearby body of water and hurling himself in. He wonders if maybe Percy Bysshe Shelley had just said something incredibly stupid the night of that fateful swim.

“I’ve still got basic powers of observation, though,” Anathema adds innocently.

“How lovely. Me too,” Aziraphale says absently. Then he registers the remark. “Wait. Was that meant to imply something?”

By that point, though, Anathema’s woven away from him to chat with other guests.

There’s no staying glum over that disastrous conversation for long. The reception is a wonderful time. Aziraphale gets lots of compliments on his new suit, which Crowley -- dressed to the nines, or maybe even the elevens, in a slim dark grey suit that gleams purple in a certain light -- takes all the credit for. Everyone is in bright spirits through the cutting of the cake and the tossing of the bouquet (Aziraphale catches it by accident, but hands it to the nearest mopey-looking young woman he sees), and after the bride and groom share their first dance, they make an announcement that turns Aziraphale’s whole world on itself.

“We wanted to do something especially festive to celebrate this day,” Newt says, “and a certain someone recommended a dance that’s fallen unjustly out of fashion over the years.”

“Please join us now,” Anathema says grandly, “for a wedding day gavotte.”

Aziraphale looks at Crowley in awe. “You didn’t!”

“I might’ve.” Crowley tries, not quite successfully, to hide his grin. “Get dancing, then.”

“You’re coming with me.”
“Fine. But only because I’m an incredible dancer.”

Aziraphale has seen Crowley dance before, but decides not to argue the point.

It’s an impeccable gavotte; clearly everyone practiced beforehand, perhaps nobody more than Sergeant Shadwell. Madame Tracy is beside herself with joy. Aziraphale is pleased to discover that he himself remembers every step. Those days in the gentlemen’s club in the late nineteenth century really paid off. (Such friendly chaps, too.)

The dance involves a great deal of prancing about and swishing one’s arms gracefully and switching partners, a lot of touching and a lot of letting go. Every time he and Crowley come face to face with each other, Crowley bungles the steps horribly -- too much sashaying, which works well when he walks but abysmally here -- but Aziraphale is glad to dance with him anyway.

When the gavotte comes to a close at last, all the happy dancers applaud and bow to each other. The music slips into a modern slow song. People begin to pair off. Aziraphale, it will come as no surprise, has never slow danced, and suspects it’s time for him to shuffle off the floor. The buffet is beginning to call his name anyway.

“Oh, come on then,” Crowley says like a mindreader, catching Aziraphale’s hand in his. “You can’t not dance at a wedding.”

“Modern dancing has no complexity to it,” Aziraphale laments as they begin to sway, mostly to distract himself from the way their fingers fold perfectly into each other’s.

Crowley scoffs. “Clearly you haven’t seen flossing yet.”

“That’s for teeth.”

“You’re extremely uncool, do you know that? But you’re right. Modern dancing: no style.”

“Cozy, though,” Aziraphale adds tentatively after a moment.

“Yeah,” Crowley agrees, “cozy.”

Aziraphale leans in closer, resting his head against Crowley’s. As they sway around the room, he spots Anathema smiling at them like she’s just watched a prophecy prove itself true.

The cloudy weather eventually gives way to rain. It isn’t so bad, really; the sound of it falling onto the pavilion roof is sweet as a lullaby (as Crowley’s voice, maybe, without all the lyrics about blood and brains that he’d made up for poor young Warlock and then insisted on reenacting for Aziraphale). It’s a wonderful thing, to be warm and dry in a very nice suit and pulled close in someone special’s arms, staring out at the sky and grass and increasingly sodden sheep. For so many years, hiding in the bookshop had seemed the only way to endure this very long life; keeping his nose in a book and his head in the sand, hoping heaven wouldn’t ask too much of him.

Now heaven is done asking, for now at least, and earth keeps giving. All it takes is being brave enough to reach out and say yes.

Listening to the rain, he remembers lifting one wing over Crowley’s head to shelter him from the first storm, the easiest thing he had done at that point in his comparatively young life. Simple instinct: I’ll take care of you.

Aziraphale only realizes he’s closed his eyes when he opens them. Crowley’s fingers are still twined with his, his other hand resting lightly on Aziraphale’s back. Little golden sparks float around them
as they dance, a quiet celebration long overdue.
“I don’t know about this.”

“Oh, come on now. It’s time.”

“Is it, though?”

“It’s a modern world. Everyone does it.”

“But the risks involved … I don’t think they should be underestimated.”


And so Aziraphale agrees to let Crowley teach him to drive.

They go out to the country, on the rationale that a) Aziraphale would like to shuffle off this mortal coil in a picturesque location, and b) Crowley would like to practice where there’s nobody to hear Aziraphale scream in the event that he destroys Crowley’s beloved Bentley.

Crowley explains how everything works. Aziraphale has always been a fast learner when it comes to things that don’t involve questioning deeply ingrained ideological structures, so he picks it up without any trouble. It’s a very simple process, really. Clever of humans to think it up. He always felt quite guilty for inconveniencing horses back in the day.

Still, with his hands on the wheel, staring out at the winding road that stretches in front of them, he feels nervous.

“If I wreck your car, I’ll understand if you’re not in the mood to speak to me for fifty years or so,” Aziraphale says grimly. “I shall miss your company, but I understand.”

“You won’t wreck it, you big worrywart,” Crowley replies, exasperated. Then, kinder: “I trust you.”

Aziraphale takes a deep breath and puts his foot down on the gas pedal, thinking (though he won’t admit it for the life of him), What the hell. Here we go.

They zoom down the narrow, loopy road; it's the closest thing to flying that isn't the thing itself. Who knew that humans had found a way to capture such a feeling, make it as ordinary a part of their everyday lives as breathing? Well, Crowley. Crowley always knows, always finds the beauty in this sad, sweet, aching, delightful world and grabs it for himself.

Each slight turn feels like a dip on a rollercoaster, or what he imagines a rollercoaster would be like. (Should he and Crowley go to Disneyland? Food for thought.) The scenery flies by in a festival of green ground and cloud-kissed blue sky. They finally come to a stop at the end of the road, pausing
instead of turning onto the next one. It seems over in a flash, but endless too.

“Why, that was … that was so fun,” Aziraphale says, unable to stop grinning.

Crowley beams back at him, and Aziraphale feels a surge of such love that he thinks he might combust. What is one supposed to do with all this feeling? He’s really starting to understand why humans are so set on touching each other. Reaching across the space and saying with their hands and lips and who knows what else, This. This is what I feel for you.

And so, quite out of his mind, he ventures, “What if we kissed?”

“Kissed?” Crowley repeats blankly.

Might as well stick to it now. “You know, like couples do. Since we’re more or less a couple, when you stop to really think about it. Couples dance at weddings. We’re a couple, mostly.”

“We are, aren’t we,” Crowley says faintly.

“I think,” Aziraphale goes on, cautious, “there could be certain advantages. I could put together a pro/con list--”

“You don’t do a pro/con list when you want to snog somebody,” Crowley interrupts. “You just snog them.”

In that case … “Shall I, then?”

“I don’t know!” Crowley says, distressed. “Snogging’s for humans, not demons. The closest demons generally get is eating somebody alive starting with the lips.”

“Well, if it’s not for demons, then it’s certainly not for angels.”

They stare at each other in hopeless confusion.

Right away, something begins to bubble up beneath the confusion, like freshly poured champagne dancing in a glass.

“Then again,” says Crowley, “what are we if not rule-breakers?”

“Defiers of convention,” Aziraphale agrees, since it sounds better behaved.

“I don’t quite know how to do it,” Crowley admits, grimacing. “Do you?”

“Of course I don’t!” Aziraphale says, scandalized.

“Of course you don’t,” Crowley mutters.

“Wait. You don’t?” Aziraphale has never asked -- it’s not very angelic to inquire about such things -- but he’s certainly assumed. “You always seem so … well, sexy.”

“Damned right I do. That’s the demon swagger, thank you very much.” Crowley looks a little flushed, Aziraphale notes with affection. “But I was demoning about, not going on dates with mortals. And I wasn’t about to kiss another demon. Filthy buggers. If they haven’t got a swarm of bugs around their head, there’s a reptile sitting there. Imagine that: a reptile just sitting up there, watching the whole snog session. Sticking its tail in your nostrils. Not bloody likely.”

“Oh dear,” Aziraphale says faintly.
“I’ve got standards.”

“Of course,” Aziraphale says, wondering if he should take the hint.

“I meant that at them,” Crowley adds hastily. “Not at you. You’re gorgeous, obviously.”

“Obviously?”

“In a very nerdy way, that is. In a way with a very stupid bowtie.”

“I’ll take it,” Aziraphale says, pleased.

Crowley drums his fingers on the dashboard, a thing he does when he means to look casual, then says, “I suppose there’s a first time for everything.”

“And first times tend to go quite successfully,” Aziraphale points out, “when it’s the two of us.”

“It would be totally unprecedented.”

“Our specialty, really.”

It’s going to happen. It can do nothing except happen. It feels as terrifyingly momentous as standing against hell at the end of the world, and somehow equally impossible to back down from.

Then he takes in the look on Crowley’s face: less like metaphorical champagne sparkling and more like he’s just taken a swig from a bottle of rancid milk.

“What is it?”

“It’s just that,” Crowley says rather stiffly, “I think I might have fancied you for the past six thousand years without ever thinking it’d come to anything, and that fact is really hitting home now, and I think I might be petrified. Literally, I mean. Actually frozen.”

Six thousand years. Golly.

“Six-- six thousand?” Aziraphale can’t help asking.

“From the time you admitted to giving away the flaming sword. ‘I love that,’ I thought. ‘I love this one; he’s different.’ That was it. Settled.”

“Dear Lord--”

“Byron,” Crowley croaks tragically.

“--that was so fast of you. Then again, you are usually quick, aren’t you? I really think it took me until the 1940s. And even then, I buried it straight away in a lot of denial.”

“Believe me. I know.”

“You look a bit green.”

“I feel a bit bloody green.”

“Should we put a pin in it, then?” Aziraphale asks, careful to hide his disappointment. “Try it next … century?”

Crowley shakes his head barely.
Right then.

Aziraphale, quite possibly braver than any other angel in history, leans over the seat divide and carefully takes off Crowley’s sunglasses. Crowley stares intently at him, his eyes -- eyes that once seemed eerie and inaccessible -- so beautiful in their exact Crowley-ness, and full of a feeling that Aziraphale recognizes completely.

Aziraphale folds the sunglasses up and sets them aside. He knows how upset Crowley gets about his glasses getting damaged, never mind his stash of backup pairs.

Once the glasses are safe, he leans in and presses his lips to Crowley’s. For a moment, it’s chaste and simple, the way people always used to greet one another before they turned so shy and germaphobic. Then -- extraordinarily, exquisitely, blessedly -- Crowley sparks to life and kisses back.

“Oh!” Aziraphale says, smiling against Crowley’s mouth. “It’s a miracle.”

“Shut up, angel,” Crowley growls fondly, unfrozen now, and cups Aziraphale’s face in his hands with all the world’s reverence to pull him back in.

There’s a knock on the window some ten minutes later. The angel and demon disentangle enough to roll down the rather foggy driver’s side window.

“Why yes,” Aziraphale says triumphantly, a little rumpled and incandescently gleeful, “we are a couple. And I think we’ve just cracked French kissing.”

“That’s very nice,” says the woman who’s gotten out of her car to confront them, “but do you have to be snogging in the middle of the road?”

“As a matter of fact--” begins Crowley, with an edge to his voice that Aziraphale knows usually means he’s going to shapeshift for a second into a terrifying hell beast.

“No, no, no,” Aziraphale says hastily. “So sorry, madam. We’ll be on our way.”

“Madam?” the woman says, frowning, as the car zooms off.

“Can you believe that?” Crowley complains as Aziraphale steers the Bentley down the lane. “Can’t even have a snog in the middle of the road without being interrupted.”

“People these days,” Aziraphale says, smiling as he shakes his head in mock dismay.

“The worst,” Crowley declares, the corner of his mouth curling up.

And with that, Aziraphale drives them home.

Well, to the next spot where they can pull over. They have quite a few years to make up for, after all, and there’s no time like the present.

The End
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