Put Your Best Foot Forward

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Summary

Louis loses a bet and has to go learn waltz. Harry is the guy who won’t stop stepping on his foot.

Notes

I cannot believe I finished it, just in the nick of time and posted it unbeta-ed and without editing it for the third time. I am never pushing something so close to the deadline again, I swear. (I'm probably gonna do it again for the next week's word, I know it.)
So this idea is actually more than two years old, that I had stowed away in the document on which I have plenty summaries of fics I would never ever finish. But I pulled it out of there and shuffled things around a little until this fic happened and I'm so happy about it. It was supposed to go in a different direction but ended up a lot fluffier than I intended. I don't apologise for that.
I'll warn you, I know absolutely nothing about ballroom dancing, waltz and dance lessons. I have purely going according to the information I found on the internet and hope I did it justice.
This fic would have never happened without the help of my very awesome beta Helena, whose knowledge helped me out of overthinking and scraping the fic out whole. She's my rock. And I would also like to thank Angelina, who looked over the fic at such a last minute and fixed the many mistakes I had made, which I hadn't spotted before I posted so anyone who read that version, I profusely apologise.
“You have got to be kidding me,” Louis deadpanned, looking at his friend leaning against the doorframe, holding up a pair of grey trousers and a button-up. A black, gaudy button-up with geometric prints on it. Niall lowered the clothes to grin at Louis, looking as if he was having fun. And he was having fun, making Louis look like a fool. “There is no way you expect me to ever wear that, right?”

“Oh, but you are wearing this,” Niall said and his grin widened, blue eyes twinkling with amusement and mischief, behind his thick rimmed glasses. He was wearing a similarly printed black shirt, which looked well enough on him because he was pairing it with skinny jeans. He looked like a rich white hipster, which was fine because he was one. Louis though, not so much. His clothes consisted more of ripped skinny jeans and band tees, tank tops in summer, at times. Anything that showed off the ample tattoos on his arms and torso, which he was quite proud of. Covering himself with a full sleeved, loose shirt was right out of his worst nightmare. Which Niall surely knew, and it explained why he was insistent. “This is part of the bet. Remember, how you always say that you honour your bets? There you go then, put it on.”

“I’m very much considering breaking that rule,” Louis grumbled under his breath, making no moves to take the proffered clothes. Niall must have thought the best course of action would be to throw them, aiming for his head. Louis protested about it from under the hideous shirt. “I am going to get you back for this. You don’t even play fair. You never told me I would have to dress ridiculously. I hate you.”

“Well then, you shouldn’t have accepted to do whatever the winner says,” Niall replied, winking with both eyes because he was an idiot, who couldn’t actually wink. Louis glowered back, considering balling up the shirt and throwing it back, but refrained from it. He didn’t want it to get wrinkled, so he merely threw it on his bed.

“Actually, you shouldn’t make bets in the first place. Especially with me. I tend to win more often than I lose,” Niall said proudly.

“Remind me that next time I make an ill-advised bet then,” Louis grumbled, glowering at the offending clothes. It was just an evening, he told himself, just around two hours and he could tear them apart after that. Or not tear them, just stuff it deep into his wardrobe and never let them see the light. Niall couldn’t force them on him again. Louis would make sure of it. He glanced at the said friend, who was still leaning against the doorframe, as if he had nowhere to be. “Are you going to watch me take off my clothes or...?”

“Well, if you’re offering...”

“No!” Louis yelled, moving to physically push Niall out. The latter found it all amusing, as he
backed out of the room laughing, even as the door was shut in his face. He ran his palm over his
face, resigning himself to his fate. It was a few weeks ago that Louis had made that god awful bet,
drunk on the victory of his favourite football team. He had betted his team would win, to which Niall
had said it wouldn’t even reach the quarterfinals. Niall’s prediction rang out to be true, and what was
worse, was that Niall’s favourite team won the league.

If the defeat hadn’t been bad enough for Louis, he was forced into joining fancy ballroom dancing
lessons. Apparently, Niall had gift certificates lying around and he didn’t want to waste them. It was
an odd punishment, Louis had thought. All kids with rich parents had an eccentric flair to them, so he
didn’t question the choice of dancing much. It could have been worse, he told himself. It could have
been something embarrassing that would haunt him for the years to come. His assumption had been
true in the end, but that was due to the clothes.

At first, Louis had assumed that he was given Niall’s clothes. So, he was surprised when he found
the shirt was in his size, not quite flowy but ridiculous all the same. The slacks were fitting and could
have been comfortable, if not for how unused to the material he was. He frowned, quite sure that he
looked ridiculous in his outfit. There was no full-length mirror in Louis’ room, but there was one in
Niall’s, but going to that would mean facing the man first. And oh, how daunting that was!

Taking in a deep breath, Louis braced himself as he opened the door to his bedroom. He was greeted
with a flash in his eyes and he slapped a palm over his face in surprise. What the fuck?

“Oh sorry, forgot the flash was on,” Niall said, smiling gleefully at his camera as he did so. Louis
made an offended sound.

“What the fuck, Niall! What if I was naked?”

“Are you naked?” Niall asked, one eyebrow arched as he pocketed his phone. “Besides, there is an
option to delete, you know. It wasn’t as if I was live streaming this on Instagram. Oh wait, why
didn’t I think of that before? That would have been fun!”

Flipping Niall over his shoulder, Louis went into the former’s room. There were way too many
lamps in his room, he always thought, too many sources of light. He never understood it, since no
one could possibly have a use for all of those light sources. Rich people weirdness, he muttered
under his breath, as he made his way towards the mirror. He fiddled with his fringe as he gave
himself a onceover and... It wasn’t as bad as he had thought. Sure, he would never pick these clothes
in this lifetime, but they looked good on him. He praised his mother for his genes and winked at his
reflection. A little satisfied with himself, he walked into the living room, finding his flatmate in an
animated discussion with Perrie.

Perrie was their next door neighbour who had moved in a few months earlier and struck an easy
friendship with Niall. She was nice, bubbly enough to match Louis’ personality and easy-going
enough to fit right into Niall and Louis’ odd dynamics. She had jumped at the opportunity to take the
lessons when Niall had offered her the gift certificate. It was to make sure Louis adhered to the
punishment and not slack off. His words. It was a little rude that Niall had so little faith in him but the
company was nice, so Louis refrained from complaining.

“Hey, no fair, why does she get to wear better, less formal clothes,” Louis complained loudly,
garnering the attention of his two friends, who turned their head towards him simultaneously. They
had matching grins on their faces, glasses of wine in their hands. If he wasn’t used to the coordinated
reactions, he would be creeped out.

“Well ‘she’ is wearing better clothes because ‘she’ didn’t lose a bet,” Perrie retorted without missing
a beat. Taking a pointed sip of wine, she winked playfully at him. Louis smiled in spite of the jab,
running his fingers through his hair. “Oh, don’t mess up your hair now. It looks fine as it is.”

Louis dropped his hand immediately and sighed. Fiddling with his hair was a nervous habit, which was why he preferred to use as little hair products as possible. So, if not that, then he could use a drink himself, now that he could see he was allowed to. After all, how was he supposed to deal with an hour and then some, of learning ballroom dancing, whatever that consisted of. Niall had explained that there were four dances that were considered ballroom, but it was a beginner's class, so there was no surety all of them would be taught. Louis was about to slip into the kitchen, to pour himself some wine as well, when he found a glass waiting on the table. He grinned, taking an enthusiastic sip. He was not forgotten.

“By the way,” Perrie started again, blue eyes twinkling with mirth as they raked over him. Her eyebrows arched as they landed back on his face, lips quirked up. “You look great. I didn’t expect it. Truly, I’m jealous you can pull off those horrid prints.”

“Hey, they’re fun prints!” Niall objected, but was ignored by Louis and Perrie, as they laughed.

Niall further protested, “They’re fashionable! And I look great in them too.”

“Sure, Niall,” Louis teased, tipping the glass towards him with a smirk. He glanced at Perrie, who was giggling behind her palm. It was nice, having her along. At least there was someone in his corner, Louis thought. Maybe, it wouldn’t be as horrid.

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Louis cuffed the sleeves of his shirt, feeling ridiculously overdressed as they walked to the destination. The studio was nearby, Niall claimed and Perrie suggested they walked as a form of warm-up. Louis was pretty sure they didn’t need warm-up, but he didn’t protest then, not wanting to dissuade the blonde’s enthusiasm. Now though, he felt anxious and uncomfortable. Just because he didn’t look completely ridiculous, didn’t mean that people couldn’t be laughing at him.

“I am going to get back at him for this, you know,” Louis whispered, leaning conspiring towards his companion, who replied with a non-committal hum. He absently rubbed his knuckles, right over his tattoo. “It is a Friday afternoon that I am wasting, wearing clothes like him and doing the activities he might. If Lottie knew what I was doing, she would make fun of me and call me boring.”

“And she wouldn’t be lying,” Perrie said, knocking into him as they walked. And he was sure it wasn’t accidental. She raised her eyebrows, raising a hand to cut him off before he protested. “Be honest. What do you do on Friday nights when you’re not working?”

“Well I...” Louis started before he shut his mouth immediately. They weren’t wrong. He was boring. “That’s not the point. This isn’t voluntary and I’m not entirely sure if I wasn’t coaxed into making that bet. It wasn’t a sound decision and it doesn’t sound like something I would do. Now, he has the opportunity to dress me in dreadful clothes and – do you know he actually bought five of these hideous shirts for me? I haven’t seen them, but I know he has and I will have to wear those for the next four lessons as well. God, I would look like an absolute clown.”

“Oh, don’t be such a baby,” Perrie grumbled, smacking his arm. She rolled her eyes, when he clutched the said arm. “I didn’t hit you that hard, don’t be so melodramatic. You can’t wear skinny jeans to ballroom dancing because they will restrict your foot movements and none of your shirts are classy. Admit it. He is saving you from embarrassment, when at the same time, he’s embarrassing you for a completely different reason. Besides, you don’t look ridiculous. How many times do I have to tell you? Believe me, Lou, you look great.”
She poked him on his stomach, giving him a megawatt smile that made him smile as well. Maybe she was right. Maybe she wasn’t complimenting him to make him feel better. Maybe he was just feeling out of place, unused to these clothes. Maybe his anxiety was irrational.

“If you say so. But I don’t love this.”

“You don’t have to,” Perrie said, flipping her blonde hair over her shoulder. “Whether you admit it or not, knowing how to dance is attractive. Holding someone close, your bodies moving in sync to the beat. That’s sexy. There is a reason ballroom dancing has been popular for ages. And tell me you aren’t captivated by salsa or waltz. Ooh, do you think they’ll teach us waltz? That will be fun!”

Louis snorted, shaking his head. He ignored the latter part of her speech. Or most of it, really, since she had that dreamy look on her face. “I can dance. I don’t need to learn it.”

Perrie scoffed as her dream expression vanished. She looked at Louis in disbelief, eyebrows arched. “Oh, that’s not dancing Louis, it’s grinding. And grinding is not something you boast about. It’s not an art and doesn’t take practise. You can’t boast about it as a skill.”

“Sure I can,” Louis countered, pouting. Perrie gave him a pointed look that he understood all too well. “Fine, I’ll stop whining about a great opportunity to learn sensual dances, without spending money. Happy?”

Perrie grinned, slapping his shoulder. “Very happy. Now slap a smile on your face, roll down your sleeves and get ready to learn, because we’re here.”

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Louis smoothed his hand down the front of his shirt, unnaturally anxious. Maybe it was something about the fancy establishment or the ‘fish out of water’ feeling. Whatever it was, it made him jittery and since he couldn’t mess his hair, he had taken to bite his nails. It was not a good alternative, but it was one, he told himself, as he placed one foot in front of the other. He was glad he had worn the clothes picked for him. With his clothes, he would have stood out and not in a good way. Niall had been right about one thing though, in hindsight, that Louis would have surely ducked out of the lessons.

Perrie’s enthusiasm had merely gone up tenfold, as she vibrated where she stood. She kept one step ahead of him, taking everything with awestruck eyes and dragged Louis behind her. She was the one who talked, asking about their lessons and the room and pulled him in that direction. The studio, however, was much less glamorous and made him feel at ease. The warm brown colour scheme was soothing and the chatter from the others, who had arrived before them for the lesson, put him at ease. There were large mirrors on the walls, or rather in place of it and Louis drifted towards it without thinking twice. He ran his fingers through his hair, trying to get them in a state of artful dishevel as he worried his lip. He could see Perrie approaching him in the mirror a few minutes later, eyes full of wonder and wide with excitement. A smile tugged at his lips seeing her. Her enthusiasm was contagious, he supposed.

“I am so excited to learn waltz,” Perrie whispered, leaning in conspiringly. She looped her arm through his and rested her head upon his shoulder, smile widening further. Her eyes were on the mirror, at the door through which two ladies entered. “This place is nice, you know what I mean? Way out of what I can afford, but that makes everything more exciting. Don’t you think? I’m so glad you lost that bet. It gave me this opportunity that I will cherish for a lifetime.”

Louis’ eyebrows furrowed but his lips twitched in amusement. “You’re welcome? I guess. But in that case I think you owe –”
“Hold that thought,” Perrie hissed as she clamped a hand over his mouth, leaving the sentence unfinished. At first, he thought she didn’t want him to say she owed him. But then, he caught a glimpse of a new person, dressed in all black and then Louis was spun. Rather, Perrie had turned around abruptly, which caused Louis to stumble since their arms were still looped. He wanted to protest, but he couldn’t on the account of the hand. “He’s the hottest guy I have seen. Oh my.”

Louis huffed in offense before licking her palm she was holding over his mouth, making her withdraw it with a grimace and a glare. He shrugged. She should have expected it. He looked ahead, at the man wearing black trousers and a fitted black button up, a wide grin on his face. He naturally commandeered the attention of the room, as the chatter died down slowly, when everyone turned to face him. Louis could allow it. The man was fit. Also, he had no doubt that he was their instructor.

The man clapped his hands together as his gaze swept over the room. He also vaguely looked like a teddy bear, probably due to the warm brown eyes. “Hello class, it is so nice to see you all here. My name is Liam and I will be the one teaching you all to dance. Well, not really because I’m sure all of you are great dancers, but I will refine your skills and teach you some new steps. If everyone could draw just a little closer that would be great. It is just so you can all hear me better.”

Louis’ grip around Perrie’s arm tightened, instinctively sensing she was going to follow through. She turned around to pout at him, to convince him, but they had an agreement beforehand. They were staying at the back, garnering as little attention as they could and not fraternising with anyone else. She was trying to break all of them. He knew it.

“But Lou!”

“I don’t care if the instructor is hot,” Louis hissed, waggling his finger. “I don’t care if you want to impress him. We are not going to the front. It’s because of me that we’re here, so my rules apply. Stay inconspicuous.”

She huffed, stomping her foot like a kid. “I take it all back. I hate you.”

“And I don’t care,” Louis said in a sing-song way, as they remained at the back of the group.

The Liam guy began to chatter once more as he introduced himself, probably why he got into dancing. Louis could only assume, since the minute the instructor opened his mouth, he zoned out. He had never been the most attentive, especially when it concerned something he had no interest in. Perrie beside him was listening raptly, so she could explain if he missed anything important. All the other eager learners were watching Liam with rapt attention, and Louis wondered if they knew that they looked utterly stupid with those expressions. Nothing against them, really. Most men were wearing trousers with better, one-coloured shirts and he could spot a jeans clad man. So he wouldn’t have been the odd one with that. Speaking odd, he counted thirteen heads, excluding the two of them, which made the total unequal. He would have thought that they would specifically keep the number even, since all ballroom dances revolved around pairs.

“Oh no, not again,” came a voice before there was a loud crash as someone fell through. Loud gasps filled the room and Louis’ eyebrows rose as he scoured the room, until his eyes landed upon the source of the noise. There was a man sprawled on the floor, halfway through the open door with his hands spread in front of him. It was as if he tried to brace himself but failed, and he was making no moves to get up either. There was a groan that echoed through the room, which no doubt, was from the fallen man. He could be the person who made the number even then.

For a terse minute, no one moved until Liam rushed towards the door, ready to help the man up. It was only then that everyone spoke sympathetic words and even a few chuckles. Louis stood on his tiptoes to get a better view of the fallen man. The first thing he took notice of, was his shirt, which
had pink flamingos on it. It was atrocious, disastrous but before he could curse it further, Louis’ eyes slid up to his face and the words died on his tongue. The bloke, fashion choices aside, was gorgeous. Tall, fit with brown hair curling around his ears. He was also blushing prettily as he thanked Liam, giving the room a sheepish, bi-dimpled smile.

“Sorry for the disruption I caused,” he mumbled, biting on his plush lower lip as he ran his fingers through his hair. He had the same nervous habit then, Louis thought as he let his gaze slid down, past the ugly shirt. His eyes widened when his gaze snagged onto his long legs which were clad by –

“Is he wearing jeans?” Louis whispered, leaning in Perrie’s direction. He glanced at her from the corner of his eye, and found her nodding. “Skinny jeans? Wouldn’t that –”

“Be a bitch to bend your legs in?” she finished, corner of her lips tilting up. “Yes, most definitely.”

Their conversation was abruptly halted when the gorgeous stranger started moving, making his way through the throng towards the back. He stood right beside Louis, shoulders hunched as if he was trying to make himself as inconspicuous as possible. It was difficult though, since he was tall, handsome and had the entrance he did. Also there were mirrors, so everyone could see everyone else. And Louis realised everyone was looking up ahead at Liam, who had begun speaking once more, palms pressed together and face animated. He tried this time, to listen to the words but he couldn’t. Instead, he was hyper aware of the man beside him, standing close enough for their arms to brush. Louis ran his tongue across his lower lip, feeling as if he might spontaneously combust.

Perrie’s elbow jabbed into his side, making him wince and he snapped out of his thoughts. He was nervous to see the pairs of expectant eyes on him and was rendered speechless. Introductions. They were doing introductions, weren’t they? At least Liam had been.

“Introduce yourself,” Perrie hissed helpfully, and her whisper was loud enough in the hush of the studio.

“Oh right, sorry,” he started, a winsome smile on his face as he glanced at everyone. He hoped he wasn’t flushed right then. “My name is Louis.”

Everyone was still watching, as if expecting him to speak more. The hush lasted for a few seconds and then the bloke beside him cleared his throat, drawing all the attention. Thankfully.

Usually, Louis charmed the room. Usually, his people’s skills weren’t so lacking. But then, he wasn’t caught off guard during those times, so . . .

He blamed it on Niall.

“Hello,” said the gravelly voice of the pretty stranger beside him as he waved. Louis saw as endearing smiles spread on everyone’s faces, including his own. The mirrors revealed everything. “My name is Harry. I’m from Cheshire, originally. I’m twenty four, clumsy and I guess, I’m here to surprise someone by not being so clumsy at dancing?”

There were a few chuckles, the rest smiled before they looked ahead. Liam’s eyes were squinted due to the intensity of his smile. He clapped his hands together, something he did quite often. They were the last people to introduce themselves, it seemed and Louis vowed to not zone out again. He couldn’t afford to anymore, not after what had just happened.

“...I hope it was clear,” Liam was saying, eyes bright and Louis groaned softly. He had yet again, skipped out on Liam’s words. In fact, he wasn’t even aware he had been speaking. So Louis narrowed his eyes with newfound determination. “So now, class, I will show you all the easiest,
most basic sequence which is called the Waltz Box Step. It is named after the pattern it creates on the floor. It forms the foundation, guys, so it is very important. Pay attention when I show it to you. For that, I will need someone to assist me. Why don’t I... oh you, the lady in the back with the beautiful blonde hair. Would you like to be my partner?”

Louis realised with a sinking feeling that Liam had called out Perrie, for there was no other blonde lady in the back. He glanced at his companion, who was excited to be called and strode ahead without a backward glance. Louis raised his eyebrows in pleasant surprise and scoffed lightly, when she vehemently refused to meet his eyes. Betrayal, all too soon. How fun.

“Thank you,” Liam said, beaming as he extended his palm which Perrie grabbed. He then led her further ahead, asking the crowd to spread out so everyone could see them well. Louis, once again, rose up on his tiptoes, alert and attentive. Liam stressed on the importance of posture, of the hold as he explained the position of hands. “Now, the positioning of hands is very important. See the follower – who is mostly a female but not necessarily – will put their palm right here, above my bicep see? While the leader’s, which means my hand, will be placed on her shoulder blade right there. Once you get that right, you have to step closer to one another, mould your bodies. Your shoulders should not slouch and your arms should be held up high. Just like this. Is it clear?”

There was a chorus of agreement and Louis reluctantly joined in. He had understood but just a little, having most of the explanation previously. He had missed the explanation about the leader and follower and their roles. He just knew one stepped forward, while the other stepped back. Liam was a good instructor but Louis, being a poor learner, was screwed. He should have listened properly. Because the steps Liam and Perrie were doing looked hard and he was very nervous.

“Alright?” Liam asked after he showed the steps three times, eyes sweeping over everyone. Louis nodded. He understood little and he was sure that if he tried, he would get it wrong anyway. Despite Liam’s assurances that it took time to learn the box step, even if it looked easy, Louis was anxious.

“That’s great. So pair up now, please, so you can practise the Box Step for yourself.”

Louis chewed on his bottom lip as he watched Perrie grin and let go of Liam’s hand. Instead of making her way back to Louis like a good friend, she stopped to talk to a handsome man. He then grabbed her hand and led her to the side, an indication that she had agreed to be his partner. She turned around once to Louis giving him a guilty smile and he rolled his eyes in return. He should have expected no better. And he was not annoyed with her, no matter how much he was going to pretend later. He found himself in a problem at that moment, since he was alone, with no idea how to perform the steps. On top of that, he would have to approach someone. As it were, there were fewer females than males in the class, so Louis might as well ask a guy. One specific guy, because there were no other options.

“Hey, clumsy lad,” Louis chirped as he spun around to face the bloke beside him. The latter was startled to be addressed and turned slowly, eyes wide with anxiety. His lips parted slightly as he gestured to himself and frowned. Louis’ confidence had returned from whatever hole it had disappeared into before, and he grinned, charmingly. “As you can see, everyone has to pair up. And I don’t know about you, but I don’t see myself dancing with a female any time soon. Feel free to say no, but would you like to be my partner?”

“I, um – me?” the man asked as his eyebrows furrowed. He looked utterly confused, the poor thing. As if it was unbelievable that someone was asking him to dance, as if it was completely bewildering. Harry looked around him, as if there was anyone there but him. “Are you sure? I mean I don’t have a problem but –”

“Great, it’s settled then,” Louis interjected, his grin widening as he tilted his head to the side. He
grabbed Harry’s hand and tugged him to tone of the corners, closer to the mirror. The latter stumbled, startled by the motion and a pretty shade of pink tinged his cheeks. This might not be so bad, Louis supposed. “But the first time we practise I lead. You can lead the second time, if you want but I was rather focused on learning the leader’s movements so.”

Harry nodded quickly and pulled his lower lip between his teeth. Without meaning to, Louis’ gaze dropped down before he forced himself to meet his partner’s eyes again. Those green, green eyes. “I don’t have a problem at all. But I have to warn you that I am clumsy and will definitely step on your toes.”

Louis laughed, shaking his head. “Well, who wouldn’t, with complicated steps like those. I could barely keep up. It’s like the learners are just begging to get their feet stomped on. But we can just be careful, right?”

“Right,” Harry murmured, unconvinced as he nodded. He ran his fingers through his hair, tucking a few stray strands behind his ear only for them to fall back onto his face. “Right, okay, careful, yes, that I can be. But the warning stands. I truly am terrible, which was why I joined these classes in the first place. My sister says I have two left feet.”

“It was quite apparent from your grand entrance there,” Louis teased, lips quirked up as he saw Harry blush harder. He glanced around them, where the pairs had already started on the dancing. Harry’s gaze followed his and his pursed his lips. “Uh, so shall we start dancing as well?”

“Yes, yeah we should,” Harry murmured, almost to himself as he raised his hands and let them hover in the air. He stared at Louis anxiously. “I’m going to place my palm on your bicep now.”

Louis smiled, taking a step closer as Harry placed his palm slowly on his bicep. Gingerly, he placed his own palm atop his partner’s shoulder blade, remembering that bit from when Liam explained. He looked around, finding that the other couples were standing quite close and immediately remedied that. The air was knocked right out of him as he looked ahead, back at Harry and found his lips parted and way too close. Even up this close, Louis couldn’t find a single fault on him. The tiny freckles on his nose were cute, the little stubble lining his top lip was adorable and his eyes were more intense. He was mesmerised and suddenly realised that they weren’t moving. Right.

“So, as the leader, I have to go forward right?” Louis murmured under his breath and Harry nodded, pursing his lips. Perrie was right. Waltz is sensual and intimate. Before he could take a step forward, his partner did and ended up stepping right over his foot. “Fucking hell.”

“Shit, I am so sorry,” Harry said as he quickly stepped back, hands raised in front of him and eyes wide with worry. Louis gave him a small smile, even as his toes were throbbing with pain. He glanced down, at his borrowed dress shoes, and noticing for the first time that Harry was not wearing the same kind. He was wearing silver, sparkling boots with a noticeable heel. No wonder he appeared to be much taller than Louis. Of course it was the heels. “I forgot that you were supposed to be the one leading. I don’t know how, I mean you just said you will move forward and I just – I am – sorry.”

“It’s quite alright,” Louis lied, stepping closer to Harry. “Anyway. I will place my left foot ahead so your right one will go back.”

And that they executed well, a bright smile flitting over Harry’s face as they succeeded and it was mirrored on Louis’. The second step of the sequence was sideways and as he had feared, his partner misjudged and ended up stepping on Louis’ foot again.

“Why does this keep happening?” Harry moaned between apologies which Louis waved off. His
foot was fine; they were fine. But he soon realised that they were not. As warned, Harry was clumsy
and born with two left shoes which ended up more on top of Louis’ than they ended on the floor.
“This was a bad idea. I should not have tried dancing.”

“Don’t be silly,” Louis assured as he clutched his foot, face reflecting the pain after a long time of
suppressing it. The two of them were easily the worst pair. Louis was glad that he had taken the lead.
Harry, while stepping back most of the time, managed to stomp on his foot. It would be excruciating
if he was the leader. He could see the distress on Harry’s face at each wrong step he took. And Louis
had always been the kind of person to lift someone up, the one who assured and motivated and he
was not stepping back this time. “You’re getting better now. The first time, you stomped on my foot
on the first move now you did it on the third. So surely, your footing is getting better. I’m willing to
sacrifice a foot, if it means making you a better dancer.”

“You don’t have to do that,” Harry mumbled, eyes downcast. Louis could tell that he only half-
meant it. “You can ask for a different partner. I wouldn’t mind.”

“Nope,” Louis said simply and put his foot down. It was symbolic as well. “I am not giving up on
you.”

“Is there a problem here, lads?” asked Liam, who had sneaked up on them while they were talking.
Louis did not flinch, but he was taken aback by how unobservant he had been. Or how quiet Liam’s
footsteps were. “I mean, I know there is a problem because I have been watching you for so long
and you never finished the sequence so. What seems to be going wrong here?”

“I can’t dance,” Harry said before Louis could answer, lips turned down in a frown. “It’s not his
fault. I keep stepping on his foot and delay the completion.”

Liam was still smiling, looking at Louis. “And I take that you’re leading?”

“Yes,” Louis said a touch defiantly. He puffed his chest, eyebrows drawing. He was ready to argue
if the instructor asked them to switch, owing to their height differences. To his surprise though, Liam
laughed.

“You know, you remind me of my husband,” he said, eyes crinkling.

“Husband?” Louis asked before he could help himself. “Aren’t you...”

“A little young to be married? Sure.” Liam shrugged and brushed it off quick. “My husband is a little
shorter than I am but insists on leading when we dance, just as you do. I can give you two some
pointers though, to improve. And Harry, wasn’t it? Count out loud as you move so that you don’t
confuse yourself with the wrong steps.”

Liam gave them some helpful pointers and Louis listened attentively. He then left them to help
another pair out and they tried again. This time, due to Liam’s help, they ended up finishing the
sequence in its entirety.

“We did it!” Harry exclaimed with wonder in his eyes and Louis laughed. “Louis, we did it!”

“Yes we did, love,” Louis repeated, fondness lacing his words. “Told you you’d get better. I’m
never wrong.”

Harry giggled, an adorable sound and Louis’ nose twitched with fondness. God, was he whipped!

*~**~*
The rest of the lesson flew by without Louis realising it. Before he knew, Liam was announcing the end of their lesson for the day, congratulating everyone and promised to see them the next time. He winked in Louis and Harry’s direction before someone grabbed his attention.

Louis just stood there, glancing at his reflection in the mirror and observing Harry’s side profile at the same time. Truth be told, he didn’t want to leave his new found friend’s side just yet. There was a connection between them, something he would like to explore, but he didn’t know how. They have had small conversations while they danced, once they didn’t need to count under their breaths and it had only left Louis curious.

“Um, Louis?” Harry mumbled, his voice barely above a whisper and Louis’ head snapped towards him, eager. “You remember that time I said before, while introducing myself that I wanted to surprise someone?”

Louis’ heart sank, the hope extinguishing quickly as he nodded. Of course, someone like him was taken. He was letting Louis down gently, not asking him out.

“Well, I wanted to surprise my mother,” Harry continued and Louis’ eyebrows shot up in surprise. So, was he single? Louis really couldn’t tell. “She’s getting married next month and I wanted to do something nice for her. My sister suggested that I should take dance lessons, so that I could surprise her by not stepping on her foot. She said it was a good deed too.”

A laugh startled out of Louis and Harry chuckled along. “Your sister sounds nice.”

“Oh, she is not.” Harry shook his head, a smile dancing on his lips. His gaze was intense, expectant and Louis turned uncharacteristically shy. “Um, but that wasn’t what I wanted to say. First of all, I want to apologise to you. For all those times I stepped on your foot today.”

Louis twisted his fingers together, waving off his concerns. “Like I said earlier, I don’t mind that.”

“Even so, I would like to apologise properly to you, by taking you out to coffee,” Harry said, flashing him a charming smile. He was confident, saying exactly what Louis wanted him to and yet, the latter was speechless. Doubt seeped onto Harry’s face. “That is, if you want to?”

“Yes, of course, I want to,” Louis said hurriedly, laughing at his own shyness. He shook his head to clear his head, fingers fiddling with his fringe as he glanced around the room. He found Perrie chatting with the handsome man she had been dancing with earlier. He hesitated just a second before coming to a decision that he wouldn’t be wrong to ditch her. She had ditched him first, so this would make them even. “I wouldn’t be doing anything else. Let’s go.”

Harry’s answering grin was luminous and Louis’ stomach swooped. He was already smitten, confounded. And he did not mind it one bit.

“But I’m warning you,” Harry said as they walked out of the studio, an imitation from earlier. His face was impassive, unreadable. But his lips were twitching, so Louis was assured it was nothing serious. The taller boy glanced at him from the corner of his eye. “I am footing the bill.”

Louis halted suddenly, levelling him a blank look and Harry’s face fell. And then Louis started chortling, the laughter more due to Harry’s face than at the pun itself. “That was just bad, Harry. Promise me you won’t make puns again.”

“No can do,” Harry chirped as he shook his head. “You agreed to go to coffee with me, you have to deal with the puns.”

As he spoke, his foot caught on something unseen and he stumbled. His cheeks flushed but he
looked straight ahead, as if he wasn’t about to crash onto the floor mere seconds ago.

Louis’ grin widened, his heart inflating with fondness.

Maybe losing a bet wasn’t the worst thing in the world, if it procured him a man like this.

End Notes

See. Fluffy ending. And addition information but Harry ends up asking Louis to go to his mum's wedding as his date and they show off the moves they learn in the classes. Everyone is very impressed.
Kudos and comments are appreciated.
I am on twitter come and say hi (oops!)
Rebloggable tumblr post can be found here

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