

First Dance

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A dimpled finger points; impatient grunts plead:

Music, Mommy.

Laughing, I turn on his favorite.

Bobbing and swaying side to side; part robot, part rooster,
he dances.

My little Frankenstein.

Eyes bright with mischief, cheeks flushed with joy,
he wraps sticky fingers around mine and pulls me in:

Dance with me, Mommy.

We dance,

squealing and giggling, until he hiccups and I stagger into the kitchen table.

Breathless, I flash forward.

A young man, tall and dark-haired and dashing in a tuxedo,
just like his father.

His hand beckons:

Dance with me, Mom.

The smiling crowd parts for me.

Those same twinkling eyes draw me in, still with their secret joke.

His hand—manly and strong and sticky with icing—swallows mine.

We dance.

Graceful, athletic, he sweeps me in a circle until the crowd blurs;
twirling, remembering, we wipe tears from our eyes.

Mostly my eyes.

I flash back to a dance with a nearly-two-year-old,
the memory so thick I cannot breathe.

We float past a white wisp—

a beautiful young woman, waiting her turn.

And now it will always be her turn.

The music fades, he kisses my cheek,

my hand lingers on his, and I pass the torch.

Eyes clouded with tears,

I sweep him up into my arms,

spin him around and smother him with kisses until he squirms:

Let me go, Mommy.

I will. But not today.