

Dancing Barefoot Forever

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I had originally thought that my "Dancing Barefoot" series would consist of just two stories, but as it turns out, it's become a trilogy. In this story, Jessica and Seth discover a new kind of freedom as they dance barefoot - the freedom to love each other as they celebrate their marriage. Just one take on the happily-ever-after that might have and should have been.

Cheers and laughter echoed into the night sky as the entire populace of Cabot Cove celebrated. The inhabitants of the tiny fishing town were throwing a party, and well they should. Not that the town didn't see any excitement; on the contrary, every time a dead body was found, the community was up in arms. No, this was the good kind of excitement. A wedding had just taken place, and not just any wedding. This was the wedding of the century to all of them, the wedding that many had previously thought would never happen because two people were too afraid to admit their true feelings for each other. Now, their worries were over, for today had been the day when Jessica Fletcher said yes to Seth Hazlitt.

It had been a small ceremony in the local church, no frills and no fuss, but then all of the town came out of the woodwork to share in the couple's joy – and to tell them that it was about time. No longer was "When are Seth and Jessica getting together" the burning question on their minds. Rather, the question now was "Where are Jessica's shoes?"

Indeed, Jessica had chosen to walk barefoot down the aisle, and now, at the wedding reception, she was dancing with her new husband with nothing on her feet but toenail polish. Normally, a woman danced barefoot if her feet hurt from umpteen previous rounds of hoofing it, but Jessica had gone barefoot right from the beginning. Why she had chosen to do so, nobody knew... nobody but the man who was now her husband.

"Were you planning on making one last bid for freedom, Jess?" Seth asked as they waltzed around the dance floor, the chorus of "A Whole New World" carrying them along as though they were weightless.

"Of course not! What made you say that?"

"Well, you told me once that going barefoot made you feel free. I didn't know if you were planning on running back up the aisle to freedom after you reached the altar."

"Seth Hazlitt, how can you even say such a thing?"

"I'm only kidding, Jess! I know you wouldn't have run away. Besides, even if you did run, I'd catch you."

"Oh, you just try and keep up with me!"

"I thought that's what I was doing. It's a heck of a lot easier now that my feet aren't crammed into those sardine cans called loafers."

"As I told you once before, dancing barefoot can make you feel free if you just let yourself go."

"Believe you me, I do feel free now that I'm with you. Free to dance with you, free to kiss you..." He put his lips close to her ear and whispered teasingly, "Free to do plenty of other things."

Jessica's cheeks flushed a brilliant pink, but her eyes sparkled with mischief, love, and a freshly kindled ember of desire. "I'm looking forward to it. After all, we'll be dancing again, and this time, it won't be just our feet that are bare."

Their laughter resounded into the night air as they danced on... and later, when the entire town was quiet once more and the newlyweds were safe at home, a new kind of dance began. It was the dance of two people who had vowed to spend their lives together; of kisses, caresses, and touches; of two bodies and souls becoming one. And as moonlight poured down over Cabot Cove, it shone through the bedroom window and bathed Jessica and Seth in a silver glow. The beam illuminated skin that was flushed from love, lips that were tasting each other in tender kisses, arms wrapped around one another, and legs tangled together, bare feet touching beneath the sheets.

Whispered *I love yous* floated out of the window and onto the breeze as the dance began again. It was truly a dance of freedom for both of them – the

freedom to revel in each other's company at last, to explore each other's bodies as they had so longed to do, to love each other without fear. Jessica and Seth had only just begun to dance barefoot, secure in the love that would keep them dancing... forever.