

DANCE LESSONS
PARTS 1-4

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Compass Cinema
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PART 1 - POSITIONS, PLEASE

FADE IN:

1.1 INT. BALLROOM, DANCE SCHOOL - DAY

1.1

Snazzy, uptempo dance music begins. We open on a ballroom in a dancing school with an expert couple doing the tango.

PIERRE
(strong French accent)
Dancing is the most magnificent art
form that exists between a man and
a woman.

Pierre, a slim, muscular Frenchman in his 40's, stands like a drill instructor in front of a group of seven people: three couples and one pretty Hispanic lady in her mid-30's. This is LUCINDA. She is standing awkwardly by herself.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
It requires focus... attention...
practice...

INTERCUT shots: heads, hands, legs in perfect unison.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
Done well, it is heaven itself.

Shot of second expert couple doing a waltz.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
Done poorly, it is a train wreck:

Shot of an awkward couple tripping and falling down.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
Painful to endure...

Shot of second awkward couple hurting their arms in a spin.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
Painful to observe...

Shot of third awkward couple doing a clunky, weird turn.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
And - let us be honest - painful
for all involved.

Shot of fourth awkward couple accidentally running into a fifth couple and knocking them down. Music ends with fall.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

For the next four sessions, I will teach you the basics of ballroom dance. You have chosen to make your lives more beautiful, and I applaud your decision.

(claps)

Please, clap too-

1.2 The group claps half-heartedly. During Pierre's talk, 1.2 a man in his mid-30's enters the dance hall talking on his phone. This is LUIS. He pauses at the entrance to finish. Lucinda motions to him but he holds up one finger. She does it again more urgently, so he turns his back on her.

LUIS

No, don't call him: I told you the GM is an old friend of mine-

Pierre sees Lucinda motioning then notices Luis.

PIERRE

You! What are you doing?

Luis realizes he is being spoken to.

LUIS

Hold on-

(to Pierre)

I'm supposed to be meeting my wife.

PIERRE

Ah! So you are the delinquent husband of this most beautiful lady. If you had not come, I was to dance with her all night. C'est dommage! Come! Join us!

LUIS

I gotta go - I'll call you on my way down tomorrow.

Snaps the phone on his belt and uncomfortably walks out to the group. There is an awkward moment as everyone watches him. He spots Lucinda and heads toward her.

PIERRE

You must come here. You and your wife - ma charie, what is your name?

LUCINDA

Lucinda.

PIERRE
Lucinda. C'est tres belle. And
your husband?

LUCINDA
Luis.
(pronounced Louis)

PIERRE
So - Louie, you and Lucinda are to
be my example for our first dance:
the waltz.

LUIS
Oh we don't know how to waltz.

PIERRE
Of course you do not - that is why
you are here!

1.3 They talk low as Pierre continues to explain about the waltz. 1.3

PIERRE (CONT'D)
So - I love the waltz. It always
reminds me of a very pretty girl I
met in Vienna...

LUIS
Sorry - I tried to get out of there
early. Roger had a few last minute
tweaks to the proposal.

LUCINDA
He is a control freak.

LUIS
He's just nervous. It's a big
sale. I'll buy you something great
when it closes.

LUCINDA
What? Like dance lessons?

LUIS
Better.

A beep and Luis pulls out his phone to check a text.

LUCINDA
This is all I wanted. The idea was
for us to spend some time together.

LUIS

We are.

Luis puts his phone back.

PIERRE

So - Let us begin! Marie! Vien!

1.4 A beautiful 20-something glides up in a dancing skirt. 1.4

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Marie is my beautiful and very talented assistant. She is quite beautiful, is she not?

Marie blushes lightly and smiles.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

To begin with, you must know your position. Position is everything! Without the right position, it is pointless to try to dance: you cannot do it. For the waltz, then, the man must stand like this, back straight, his hand here, his arm here. The woman must stand like this, her arm here, her hand here. Now, you two!

Luis and Lucinda look at Pierre and Marie and try to get in position: he is too relaxed and she too aggressive.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

No, no, no! This is always the problem with you Americans. The women want to take charge and the men just let them. Dancing cannot work that way. There is a lead and there is a follow. A lead! A follow! So -

Pierre pushes Luis' back in and makes him stand taller by pulling up his shoulders.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Straight! You must stand tall, shoulders back - hand here, yes, firmer! You look like a very strong Latin man - now be one!

Luis pulls himself up like a matador, smiles broadly, and the class chuckles. Lucinda is embarrassed, but Pierre pleased.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Yes, exactly! There is a great danzador inside you wanting to come out. Now you, you must relax and hold onto him. See, like this - no, no, too rigid. If you try to control, he cannot lead. See, waist here, hand here - yes, exactly. Relax, feel for his lead. Now, the rest of you...

1.5 He and Marie go around checking everyone.

1.5

LUCINDA

What time are you getting home?

LUIS

Around 3.

LUCINDA

We're meeting Rob's math teacher at 4.

LUIS

I know.

LUCINDA

We can't be late. You should get home earlier.

LUIS

We'll have an hour.

LUCINDA

We should be there early.

LUIS

Okay! Relax.

1.6 Pierre goes back to Marie and they get in position.

1.6

PIERRE

The waltz is built off a simple box step. You start in one corner of the box, step through the other three, and end up where you began. Like this: left first, right across, left joins. Then the opposite: right back, left across, right joins. ONE-two-three, ONE-two-three. ONE-two-three, ONE-two-three.

He demonstrates with Marie.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Now you. Left first, right across,
left joins. Right back, left
across, right joins. ONE-two-
three. ONE-two-three. Slowly,
slowly - no need to rush. Feel the
rhythm of my words. ONE-two-three,
ONE-two-three. Yes, yes, that is
very nice.

1.7 He walks up to a young couple in the back. This is 1.7
TERRY and ELAINE, in their early 20's.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Everyone else look - no, do not
stop - see, the man is strong,
guiding well. She is a willow in
his hands, pliable, perfect. You've
done this before, no?

They stop and the man smiles.

TERRY

Cotillion in grade school, but it's
been a few years.

PIERRE

If you learn correctly at first, it
is always easier. Positions,
please! Marie, help them... ONE-
two-three, ONE-two-three.

1.8 He pauses in front of a couple in their forties: RANDALL 1.8
and GINNY. Ginny wears thick glasses.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

No, no - you have the opposite
problem: she is not a sack of
potatoes - you cannot jerk her
along like that!

RANDALL

She's not following my lead - he
said you have to follow.

GINNY

I'm trying to.

PIERRE

I am watching the way you touch.
You do not know each other?

RANDALL

No, we do.

GINNY

Well, it is our first date.

RANDALL

Hey, we've been emailing for over a month! Met through matchme.com.

PIERRE

Ok: none of that matters. You are here to dance and you cannot jerk her along like that - it is not dancing, it is some kind of torture for her and for us. You must lead kindly, gently, waiting on her, otherwise...

Lucinda pauses to listen, but Luis continues to step. They suddenly lose their balance and fall over.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Otherwise, that will happen to you.

(beat)

Positions, please!

FADE OUT.

PART 2 - LEARNING TO LEAD

2.1 INT. BALLROOM, DANCE SCHOOL - DAY

2.1

Open on Pierre teaching Lucinda the rumba. Other couples are practicing around them.

PIERRE

Slow..., quick, quick, slow...
Slow..., quick, quick, slow...
The motion must be in the hips, you must slide your feet this way.

Luis hurries into the room. She sees him and her face hardens. Pierre notices, then glances at Luis.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

Everyone is looking magnificent.
The rumba: it makes you want to (shakes himself), you know? Ok: take five minutes to rest and then we will work on the left turn.

Luis loiters at the tables to one side of the dance floor.

PIERRE (CONT'D)

I told you someone would dance with this beautiful lady if you were not here. Marie, please help Louie catch up before we start again.

2.2 The others peel off as Lucinda heads for a table. Luis 2.2
intercepts her.

LUIS

Luce, please, please forgive me. I just lost track of time.

She is silent. He looks in her face, waiting. She nods. Luis' phone beeps a text, but as he reaches to get it he stops himself.

LUCINDA

But it's going to take me a while to cool off.

Marie is waiting at a safe distance.

LUCINDA (CONT'D)

She's waiting.

2.3 Luis nods and walks off a bit hesitantly. Lucinda sits 2.3
down as Wanda walks up.

WANDA

May I?

LUCINDA

Yes, of course.

At the next table, Bart finishes talking to Randall and makes a motion to Wanda that he's going outside to smoke.

LUCINDA (CONT'D)

It's Wanda?

WANDA

Yes.

LUCINDA

I apologize about that-

WANDA

Oh don't!

LUCINDA

He's been traveling a lot lately. A new position at work. Three regions became one and he got it.

WANDA

He must be good at what he does.

LUCINDA

He his. He's just busy and has to travel a lot.

WANDA

That's what happened to my husband. Got a promotion. Started traveling more. Soon he was gone every week. Ended up having an affair with a stewardess.

LUCINDA

(motioning outside)

You mean-

WANDA

Oh, no - that's just Bart. We're old friends that do things like this to keep from being lonely. Finished a cooking class last month. My husband and I divorced about three years ago. Your husband's looks like he's a dancer.

LUCINDA

If he tries - we used to do a lot of line dancing in school. The class was my idea: I thought it would give us some time together. But I'm not sure it matters.

2.4 They look out at Luis and Marie.

2.4

MARIE

Smooth, that's good -

Luis makes a misstep and steps on her foot.

LUIS

I'm sorry -

MARIE

That's nothing. I have to dance with some real gorillas out here.

LUIS

I'm just an orangutang.

MARIE

No, not you - You've got the right feel for it. You could be very good.

LUIS

So... a chimpanzee.

MARIE

No! To be a good dancer, you need to be confident, but gentle. It's kind of a loving touch. You lead, but don't overlead. See him: a classic gorilla.

2.5 They look at Randall and Ginny trying to work on their 2.5 moves. He steps on her feet regularly, but she laughs and they try again. Next to them Terry and Elaine start practicing: they look great. Bart walks in and we follow him up to the table.

WANDA

That's what I always wanted. Look at them. You know they're engaged?

LUCINDA

Really?

WANDA

Getting married in June. Kindof romantic, isn't it?

Lucinda nods.

BART

Check back in five years and we'll see how romantic it is.

Bart laughs and Wanda belts him in the stomach, then stands. He takes her arm.

WANDA

Bart is an anti-romantic.

BART

That's why you like me, isn't it?

Wanda shakes her head and they walk back to the dance floor. Lucinda watches Terry and Elaine dance, a slight longing in her eyes. There is a tap on her shoulder.

LUIS

Muchacha bonita, may I have this dance?

2.6 Lucinda blushes and stands up. They walk to the dance floor. 2.6

LUCINDA
Do you still love me?

Luis stops and takes her by the shoulder.

LUIS
Of course! Why do you say that?

LUCINDA
I don't know. You show up late for this even when you know it's important to me. You're spending more time with your job than with us and you're going to start traveling more and we'll see you even less than we do now and then you'll run off with a stewardess and leave me.

LUIS
I'll what? That's impossible. You know how I hate flying.

LUCINDA
See! You don't even take me seriously anymore.

She starts to walk away. He takes her arm again.

LUIS
That wasn't nice - I'm sorry. Luce, of course I love you. I'm going to start spending more time at home when I'm not traveling - and there won't be any more traveling than this: I already have the largest region in the company.

Lucinda looks away. He strokes her hair.

LUIS (CONT'D)
I promise.

As she looks away, her eyes wander over the other three couples dancing, esp. Terry and Elaine.

FADE OUT.

PART 3 - LEARNING TO FOLLOW

3.1 INT. BALLROOM, DANCE SCHOOL - DAY

3.1

In the back of the room, Pierre is teaching another small class. Randall and Ginny are at one of the tables: he has something on his shirt and she is trying to get it out. He's uncomfortable by her proximity, and protests, but she is hyperfocused and ignores him. Luis and Lucinda walk in.

LUCINDA

I saw we take away his bike.

LUIS

It won't matter. He needs something to shoot for.

LUCINDA

You want to bribe our son to get good grades? I don't like the message it sends.

GINNY

(interrupting)

Excuse me: a piece of pizza fell on Randall's shirt. Do you have a stain pen or clothing wipe?

RANDALL

No, please - that's not necessary.

GINNY

It is - you don't want it to set.

RANDALL

(laughs uncomfortably)

It's just a shirt.

Lucinda takes a second to get her bearings.

LUCINDA

Um, I think I have something.

Lucinda looks in her purse.

LUIS

You know I was never great at math myself. Remember that night you were trying to help me study for a test and we got those two cartons of ice cream...

Lucinda blushes and smiles.

LUCINDA

Luis. You never intended to study.

Finds wipe and hands it to her. Ginny reads label.

RANDALL

I was always great at math. I got a 780 on my SAT. Only missed one.

GINNY

I didn't miss any.

RANDALL

You got an 800?

GINNY

This should have Tetradecine-1 in it.

RANDALL

Is it going to burn me? I have very sensitive skin.

Ginny shushes him and starts in on the shirt. Randall is ignored in the following exchange.

LUCINDA

Ok, Mr. chocolate ice cream: what do you suggest?

LUIS

We tell him we'll buy him a new computer if he gets a B or higher. Then we let him figure out how to make the grade.

RANDALL

What kind of a computer?

LUCINDA

I don't know... Isn't that rewarding failure?

LUIS

Trust me. It's about motivation.

RANDALL

I think it's a good idea. You know computers have a lot to do with math.

LUCINDA

It still feels like a bribe to me.

LUIS
It's an incentive. Everyone
responds to incentives.

LUCINDA
Oh, they do?

Lucinda pushes him on the chest with her finger.

LUIS
They do.

He tries to hug her to him and she playfully pulls away.

3.2 LATER

3.2

The four couples are frozen in the middle of a turn on the
Lindy Hop.

PIERRE
This is where everyone makes a
mistake. Always start smooth, hit
that spot, and you will be fine.
Now continue...

The couples finish the movement. Randall and Ginny struggle
a bit.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
The Lindy Hop may seem like fun,
but danger lurks around the corner.
I once saw a shoulder come out of
joint.

A few grimace.

PIERRE (CONT'D)
Yes, it was not pretty (shudders).
But I am telling you this because
in the turn, the man must be
gentle, and the woman must follow.
If not, you can hurt yourself. You
in particular (points to Randall)
need to be careful. Positions,
please! Music!

Lindy Hop music begins. The couples start to dance - they
all seem to be doing it pretty well.

LUCINDA
Thank you for doing this.

LUIS
Don't thank me - I like dancing
with you.

LUCINDA
You're not tired of me?

LUIS
I'll never be tired of you.

LUCINDA
I'm trying to control Rob too much.

LUIS
Boys sometimes respond better to
gentle encouragement.

LUCINDA
They do, don't they?

LUIS
They do.

They continue to dance affectionately.

FADE OUT.

PART 4 - MISSTEPS WILL COME

4.1 INT. BALLROOM, DANCE SCHOOL - DAY 4.1

Everyone is dancing the tango. Terry and Elaine are doing a great job and the others have stopped, watching as they dance.

ELAINE
I told Terry that what I really
wanted was to dance different kinds
of ballroom dances at the reception
- and especially the tango.

4.2 The four couples are sitting around and on the tables. Elaine and Terry are standing in the middle. 4.2

ELAINE (CONT'D)
He thought I was joking at first -
but here we are!

GINNY
How did you two meet? You seem so
natural with each other.

TERRY

In a train station in Paris. She was so beautiful I followed her onto a train and ended up in Amsterdam. We spent the day walking around the canals and-

ELAINE

Terry! We met in a homeschool group when we were like 11 or 12.

TERRY

Ok. Actually she taught me how to read and write.

ELAINE

Don't listen to him. He's the writer - and he's brilliant. He's almost finished with his first novel: it's about the Russian revolution and how the communists infiltrated all these different world governments. It's really great.

TERRY

Nyet, moe dorogoe.

ELAINE

Stop it- He used to help me with my essays: I'm a little dyslexic.

TERRY

Thankfully, it doesn't translate to her feet.

WANDA

You two are great dancers - I love watching you.

TERRY

It's all her - I just try not to step on her toes too much.

Terry starts stepping on her toes and she pulls her feet away, laughing. The other couples have different reactions, but Lucinda puts her arm around Luis' arm. From across the room, Pierre claps:

PIERRE

Ok, you have rested enough. This is the final time you can have heaven on earth dancing the tango - that is, unless you sign up for the next level class beginning in three-

MARIE

Two-

PIERRE

Two weeks - Merci, ma charie.

MARIE

De rien.

As they get up to go, Randall approaches Terry.

RANDALL

So how was Amsterdam? I've always wanted to go there.

4.3 LATER

4.3

All four couples are dancing the tango nicely as Pierre encourages them along.

PIERRE

You are all looking very professional. Very accomplished. You have had a very good teacher, I think.

As Luis and Lucinda turn, she comes down wrong on her foot and twists it. Luis catches her and helps her limp to a table. Pierre hurries over.

LUIS

There you go- Easy.

Lucinda smiles up at him.

PIERRE

Ah, non! C'est terrible! You are ok, I hope?

He hovers as Luis eases her into a chair then props up her leg. He begins to touch her ankle with expert hands.

LUCINDA

I think so - I just tried to go a little fast.

PIERRE

The tango can be very exciting - you twirl and spin and then, well - this can happen. I hope you are not unhappy with-

LUIS

No; it was just an accident. Feels like a grade 1 sprain.

PIERRE

Ah, I do not know what that means, but it sounds like he does. You undoubtedly are in good hands, so je m'excuse.

He returns to the dance floor.

LUIS

We need to get some ice on it. Let me get your purse.

Luis picks up her purse as Marie approaches the table.

MARIE

I'm so sorry - are you ok?

LUCINDA

Yes - just a sprain.

MARIE

Pierre gets very distraught when people are hurt. He thinks they will blame him and not come back for other classes.

LUCINDA

Tell him it's not his fault; I just stepped wrong. But we can't do the next class because Luis' is very busy with work-

LUIS

No, we can do it.

LUCINDA

Luis! He is joking.

LUIS

I'm not - I'd like us to take the next class.

LUCINDA

But you have all those clients from the new regions.

LUIS

Let me worry about that.

LUCINDA

Luis, you are crazy - he has too much work to do. He has a very good job-

LUIS

Starts in two weeks, right?

MARIE

Yes.

LUIS

Sign us up and we'll be here.

MARIE

Great! Pierre will be thrilled - he liked both of you a lot.

LUCINDA

You don't need to do this.

LUIS

I know. I want to. Come on, we need to get you some ice.

Helps Lucinda to her feet; she leans on him and hobbles out.

LUCINDA

We have ice at home. Let's just go home. I think I will feel better lying down.

LUIS

I'm sure you will.

LUCINDA

You have had a long day. I think you will feel better lying down, too.

LUIS

Oh. You think so?

LUCINDA

We can even pickup some ice cream on the way home.

LUIS
I like ice cream.

Lucinda suddenly steps on her bad foot and winces in pain, crumpling into him. He catches her and lifts her up.

LUIS (CONT'D)
Hey, easy there - you gotta hold onto me.

LUCINDA
I will, I will - that really hurt.

LUIS
I'm sure it did.

LUCINDA
It's a stage 1 sprain.

LUIS
Grade 1.

LUCINDA
Right. Grade 1.

She leans on him as they hobble across the dance floor while the other couples dance off to one side.

FADE TO BLACK.