

An excerpt from

Last Dance

by John E. Miller

“Can he get out? Was it him? God, I don’t want to go in there, but I must find out,” Amber started to raise herself off the couch.

“This just in. Police have determined that the murder of Miss Karen Spelling was committed by the Shadow Dancer Killer and what we know...”

“It’s been going on for years and years... blah...blah...blah. You sound like a broken record,” Amber thought to herself, as she made her way to the double doors. As she got closer, she could hear the old phonograph snapping and popping. She opened the double doors and smelled the aroma of flowers mixed with a man’s cologne. She stepped into the large ballroom. The floor shone brightly in the afternoon light, not a scuff mark anywhere. He was nowhere in sight. Amber walked across the ballroom floor toward the old phonograph.

“How is the ankle? That was quite a spill you took.”

Amber froze in midstride. She turned to her left and saw a striking man with close-shaven dark hair, graying at the temples. He wore a dance tux and his haircut was not modern. His deep brown eyes locked on hers, pulling her toward him. She tried to shake it off.

“Did you leave the house?” she asked.

“No, why?”

“Just asking. May I turn off the music?”

The man stood in silence for a moment. Amber started to worry that he might try something.

At last he nodded, “Please do, with your ankle the way it is, there is no way for us to practice today.”

Amber felt relief come over her. She hobbled over to the phonograph and shut it off, lifting the disc out gently and storing it away.

“Did something happen?” he asked.

“No.. No I was wondering... I thought I saw you walking in the garden,” she lied.

“No, it wasn’t me. Should I watch for a prowler?”

“Not as of yet.”

“Again, how is the ankle?”

“It hurts, no thanks to you.”

“I’m sorry. I guess I did twirl you a bit hard, but I get so caught up in the music, I forget who I’m dancing with.”

“I don’t know how you danced in the past, but we don’t throw people around like a rag doll.”

The man gave her an unsettling smile. “Again, I’m sorry. I just want you to do your best. By the way, did you do what I asked?”

Amber’s eyes widened as she remembered the broken glass on the new carpet. Did he use his charm and make her do something she didn’t want to?

“What did you ask for?” Amber asked carefully.

“That you put some ice on the ankle to get the swelling down.”

“No, I put ointment on it and wrapped it up,” Amber hoped the relief didn't show in her voice. “It's better that way.”

“Good. I'm glad to see that medicine has come a long way. The sooner you get healed, the sooner we can get back to work. I will see you in a couple of days.”

The man slowly faded away.