

Ragen felt like a little dancing would do him good so he relocated to the ballroom. In fact he didn't know what the real purpose of the room had been since there'd not been any furniture and nothing on the walls. Large windows and French doors provided decent light and the wooden floor was slightly sprung. Probably it *had* been a ballroom back in the day. So, attired in sweatpants and loose t-shirt, Ragen spent a half hour stretching. He hadn't danced in two months, not since he'd cracked his hip. Not dance related and he hadn't thought it serious but it was enough for the company director to put him on rest and then the house thing had popped up and he'd taken leave of the company to sort things out.

Ragen had kept up his fitness but he hadn't danced and now he stood in the bright room and felt the pull strongly. Firstly, he went through part of a simple routine from the Dance, Man show to let his body remember the moves and the muscles required for those moves. Then Ragen drew breath; he had a solo in the Dance, Man and thought he might as well try it out.

The routine lasted only six or seven minutes, like most of the numbers in the show, but at full speed and full manoeuvres it was a technical and energetic powerhouse and, seconds after completing an outrageously silly bow to his imaginary audience, Ragen lay flat on his back, one knee drawn up, hand on his hip, breath shuddering in and out. Keeping fit was one thing, keeping *dance* fit entirely another. God, he'd probably ache more after this than he had from Monday and Tuesday's horticultural hard labour. But he grinned up at the ceiling, pleased despite the effort and the slight pain in his hip. He rubbed it, decided the pain came only from dis-use.

'That was impressive.'

Ragen yelled in surprise, scrambled sideways from the voice and then yelled at the sudden flash of pain in the hip. He didn't try to stand right then, and his breathing shuddered as he looked at Arcady standing near the main door. Ragen's immediate feeling was relief that the ghost had returned, and then insult. 'Don't laugh at me, dancing's not just for girls.' As an afterthought he growled at the ghost for sneaking up on him.

Arcady came forward a couple of steps. 'I wasn't laughing at you, Ragen,' he said. 'It really was impressive.'

Ragen felt sceptical.

'Surprising, yes,' the ghost continued. 'There weren't many male dancers in my day.'

Now Ragen felt his face heat. And he realised he was still on his knees. He got up, yep hip sore alright.

'You're hurt,' Arcady said, noting the shift on feet.

'Old injury,' Ragen mumbled. 'I haven't danced since I did it.' He rubbed the offending joint. 'Probably I won't be indulging myself again for a while.'

'Do you dance for a living?'

Ragen suddenly grinned. 'If you asked a girl that she would be fully insulted.'

Arcady looked blank. Ragen didn't explain and the ghost asked if *he* was insulted. 'I didn't mean it as such.'

'I'm not insulted,' Ragen told him. 'I do dance for a living. Well, did... I've taken some time off.'

'Because of your leg?'

'Yeah, and then this house,' Ragen said. 'I haven't had time off in ages.' He looked around. 'It's been nice but I miss performing.'

'You dance for others?' And at Ragen's grin Arcady thought he'd again said something off. He was puzzled.

'I'm part of a dance group,' Ragen explained. 'We do a combination of classical and modern dance, and we tour, dance for people.' He chuckled, saying it like that did make things sound dodgy. He grinned when saw that the ghost didn't get it.

'I haven't seen dancing like that before,' Arcady said, 'though I did recognise *some* of it.'

'Ballet's old,' Ragen heard himself say, 'but it's easy to turn it into something modern.' He shrugged. Then he said, 'do you mind if we carry on this chat in the salon? I need to sit.'

Arcady gave a nod and disappeared. 'Show off,' Ragen muttered as he limped forward, wishing he could transport too.