

Dancing Barefoot

—MinervaDeannaBond

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This one-shot was inspired by a section in one of my previous stories. In that story, I mentioned Jessica dancing around the house when nobody's watching... and that got my creative juices flowing. Just a snapshot of her at home, I give you Jessica Fletcher, dancing barefoot.

One of these days, this New Wave is gonna drown us.

As she listened to the radio while drying the dinner dishes, Jessica Fletcher couldn't help reflecting on the latest grouchy observation from her friend Seth Hazlitt. It was no secret that he thought music had gone to hell in a handbasket, particularly the songs that were done in the modern 80s style. Synthesizer bass, drum machines, and technopop were in, and were going to permeate the airwaves for a long time, much to Seth's chagrin. Every time a current song came on, he griped about "that dad-blasted artificial music. No heart in it at all."

Although Jessica was not a fanatic about much of the new music hitting the radio nowadays, she had to admit that there were certain songs that were downright catchy. After all, she considered herself a modern woman. Why shouldn't she like some modern songs – like the one that was currently playing on her radio?

*Seth would have a heart attack if he knew I liked one of Madonna's songs, she thought to herself, a giggle escaping her lips as she hummed along to "Open Your Heart." Her feet tapped the floor and she worked a groove through her shoulders while she wiped the dishes clean, but her rhythm came to a halt when the song faded and the DJ's voice filled the kitchen. "That was Madonna with her current single off the *True Blue* album, 'Open Your Heart.' And speaking of true blue, this next artist has true-blue talent for sure, taking a Motown classic and making it her own. Off her self-titled debut album, here's Kylie Minogue with her dance-ready remake of "Loco-Motion."*

The title caught Jessica's attention faster than a prospective mystery. "Loco-Motion" was a blast from the past indeed – she had driven Frank crazy playing it over and over again on their record player back in the 60s. At the time, she couldn't help it. The song was absolutely irresistible, lyrically and musically, and the dance woven into its lyrics was easy and fun to perform. Of course, Jessica had added a few dance moves of her own, which never failed to make Frank laugh and join in the fun. She hadn't heard the song in ages, not since Frank had passed, but to hear a fresh and upbeat remake of it now... it was almost as though he were saying hello, reminding her that he was always with her.

Smiling, she raised her eyes heavenward. "This is your way of saying you want me to dance, isn't it?" she asked, sending the question up to her beloved husband. "I would have anyway, it's that catchy. But I'll do it for you, my darling. I know you're watching."

The song, loaded up with enough drum programming, synth bass, and cheesy technopop goodness to give Seth a coronary, began to play in full 80s glory and sent a wave of rhythm coursing through Jessica's body. Grabbing a water-soaked glass, she began to wipe it to the beat of the song, her feet tapping again as though they were itching to dance... which, Jessica reminded herself, they were. It was a warm summer night and she had eschewed shoes and socks, so it was her bare feet that were tapping the polished wooden floor... and her bare feet that began to carry her around the kitchen while she put the dishes away, dancing to her heart's content.

Jump forward to open cabinets and put dishes and glasses inside... jump back to the sink to collect more and repeat the process... swing her hips and kick her feet out like a flamenco dancer, swaying her arms to the beat and spinning with her skirt swirling around her... Jessica imagined it must be a sight for anyone who happened to catch a glimpse of her through the windows. J.B. Fletcher, renowned mystery writer, dancing barefoot in her kitchen like a fool to a slice of pure 80s cheese? A sight indeed.

Let them watch, Jessica thought, too busy enjoying herself to care. *I hope they enjoy the show if they do.* Normally, she cared a great deal about what people thought about her – as a writer, she had a good reputation to maintain. But here and now, in the privacy of her own home, she didn't care what anybody thought. Dancing around her kitchen, and barefoot at that, gave her a delicious feeling of freedom that she didn't get to taste while

seated at her typewriter. Besides that, it was just plain *fun* to let loose like this and have a fine old time. Murder investigations always carried an atmosphere of foreboding, and every single muscle in Jessica's body tensed up and would not uncoil until the killer was caught. Sometimes, the tenseness didn't go away for a while – the aftershock of the investigation, she guessed. Dancing was her stress relief, and sweet relief it was. Relief and, in this particular instance, a source of great joy, for Jessica knew that her husband was still looking out for her... and was healing her by sending her an old favorite song in a new package to dance to. *Thank you, Frank.*

The moon shone brightly over Cabot Cove, bathing the town in light and shining down on Jessica Fletcher, who danced as though nobody was watching, laughing and smiling, her eyes sparkling like the stars in the night sky. She danced because she was happy, because she was free, and because she knew that, no matter what, she would always be loved.