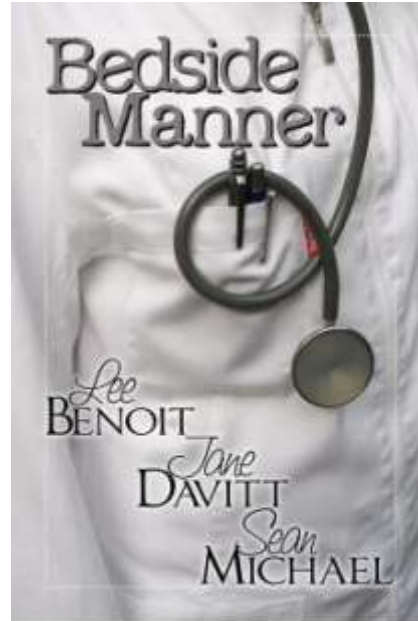


**HAVEN** by Lee Benoit

**Chapter 1**  
**In which Haven**  
**attends the**  
**ballet**



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"You're making a spectacle of yourself, Tucker."

I make a show of inspecting my ornate, antique opera glasses. The Love Doctor must be peeved to hiss in my ear during a performance. I'd have thought that was a breach of propriety worse than my using opera glasses. I shrug, grin as charmingly as I can at my date, and go back to watching the Buenos Aires Ballet's staging of Carmina Burana.

With my opera glasses covering my face, I shut out the Love Doctor and resume slaving over the male principal.

The Love Doctor, predictably, raises another objection. "No one uses opera glasses at the ballet." There's a definite, disapproving 'hrmmf' in his voice.

Just because he's sponsoring me in his new nurse practitioner program doesn't mean he can boss me around when we're out playing "mentor and protégé." I may be new to town, but the Love Doctor knows I have connections, or I wouldn't be working as a nurse outside the VA. My newly minted LPN isn't enough, and we both know it, but if he pulls this high and mighty shit too often I'll pull some of my own that'll leave his bourgeois, white-bread head spinning.

I indulge a smirk and picture myself as the female principal, spun this way and that by the lean, male dancer, lifted, turned, and brought up snug against his taut, delicious body again and again.

Alberta at the hospital would have laughed at me for being faggy, and believe me she's the only person alive --besides Daddy, maybe --who could do so and keep all her teeth. My army buddies? They'd have needled me for my stupid, romantic fantasies right before pushing me to my knees. We all knew way too much about each other in 'Nam. Hell, they'd have had a field day at the sight of me all gussied up. The Love Doctor had hinted about buying me a tux, but I'm fine --more than fine, and I know it --in my dove-gray Nehru jacket and snug, black trousers.

Half of those mugs had never heard of the ballet anyway. Which was why I was here with the Love Doctor. Who wouldn't shut up.

"We're in the fourth row, Tucker. For God's sake!" He's pissed because I'm being low-class, not because I'm telegraphing queen vibes. That particular danger never occurs to him; he's untouchable by public opinion, or so he thinks.

I wrap my fingers more tightly around the brass barrels of my opera glasses and sink back into my fantasy, banishing Alberta, my army buds, and most emphatically the Love Doctor, who has another think coming if he expects his customary good-night blowjob.

The male principal spins alone now, My mouth goes dry as the man's dark red tights flash basket-ass-basket-ass in eye-watering, cock-hardening, heart-pounding repetition until I have to squirm just a little to readjust things down below.

I watch for the same dancer in each of the scenes that follow and get such a deep fantasy going that I hardly taste the wine the Love Doctor buys me at intermission. As we take our seats for the second half, he yammers about how just as we were celebrating our Bicentennial last year, Argentina experienced a military coup, and now these dancers were part of a repressed population. I've

heard of the Dirty War, sure, but it doesn't seem too different from other wars. I shrug him off as the curtain rises, looking for my dancer. Watching him is better than listening to the Love Doctor any day, and I'm so aroused by the time the curtain falls I forget my promise to punish the Love Doctor for being a bossy old priss.

If there's one thing I hate about living in Boston, it's knowing where I can be out. Nowhere, that's where. In New York, I know the score, and at least there's a game to play. Bars like the Ramrod have their uses, but after New York they don't really appeal. I've found two bath houses since coming here, one of which is too skanky for words, and that's saying a lot considering some of the places I've sucked cock. So, one bath house and one doctor's in-town flat. That's the sum total of la vida homosexual in my new hometown. Still beats Coal Ridge to hell and back, though, so I guess it'll do for now.

I'm a world class sucker of cock and seldom pass up an opportunity to show off my hard-won skills. Having given up on punishing the Love Doctor by the time we're back in his downtown pied á terre, I coax his pale, reluctant prick to enthusiastic stiffness using only my tongue, all the while reminding myself that the Love Doctor has a name: Stephen. I mentally chant it over and over so I won't forget to use it after I swallow. The Love Doctor --Stephen, Stephen, Stephen - likes to believe what we do is a different animal from anonymous, back room gloryholing because we work at the same hospital and attend cultural events together. Idiot.

Now me, I don't mind back room sex or cultural events. Both have their place. But I was beginning to think that maybe I minded Stephen.

I put the thought out of my mind, for now, with that mental shrug I perfected in the army, and haul my own prick out of my pants. Stephen finds handjobs distasteful and probably won't offer to finish me off. As it happens, I come before Stephen; the image of tonight's dancer leaping and extending, arching and bending, is all I need to blast to the finish. It's only after I swallow, dust off the knees of my good trousers, and catch a cab home --the Love Doctor never invites

me to stay the night --that I realize I forgot to grab the program from the performance. There were pictures of the principal dancers in it, and their names, too. I'll admit it: I wanted to know the name of the dancer who'd captured my...imagination.

The next night, I go back to the ballet, alone, same Nehru jacket, but over jeans this time. I bring my trusty opera glasses and my student ID. The latter gets me a night-of-performance seat in the nosebleed section, and the former would give me a glimpse of the object of my desire. I'm betting I can even finagle my way backstage if I set my mind to it.

Except the man isn't there.

The ballet is as sensual and beautifully staged as before, but without Tadeo Neyen --even a student ticket gets you a program --the whole thing's flat. I'm almost relieved when intermission comes. I leave the theater, hop on the train, and head home to jerk off to the grainy picture beside the name.

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