



# Este Momento

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*He whispers, No te preocupes.  
It's always more than the dance.*

**I**HAVE THE VOLUME UP HIGH. THE SINGER calls out *Salseros Vayamos!* The rhythm of the *clave* calls me while I dress for my weekly private salsa lesson. I practice some steps. The sultry sounds inspire me to choose a red top that clings to my torso revealing the curves of my breasts, leggings that show the lean line of my legs. I put on mascara, deep red lipstick, and Moroccan hair oil. I say goodbye to my husband and son.

I arrive early. While sitting on the bench outside the studio door, I put on my gold Italian leather dance shoes, then practice more steps in the hallway.

Carlos, the instructor, wears blue and white wing tip shoes, black tight pants and a long sleeve stretch cotton shirt hugging his well defined arms, chest, and abdominal muscles. He had his own dance company in El Salvador and is an exacting choreographer and teacher. Nothing sloppy or casual. I am nervous about dancing with him, even now, after two months of classes.

At first we stand side-by-side so we can see ourselves in the mirror. He begins with the footwork. *Ahora, the basic step: 1,2,3, 5,6,7.* We repeat several times to warm-up. *Now the Susie-Q.* Eager to learn quickly, I watch his feet and hips and follow a split second after his lead. He reminds me again and again: *Keep it simple. Dance the steps. Add flavor! Sabor!*

He corrects the angle of my foot, ankle, and pelvis. I copy the way he turns one knee in toward the other, leans weight into his back foot, accents his right hip. Next he adjusts my hand, my wrist, and the bend of my elbow. He models a coquettish arm movement he wants me to incorporate on the 6,7. *Keep the contact of your hand onto your own body. Intencion!*

I learn to listen with my eyes and hands, learn to interpret his cues, grateful they are strong and clear, yet light and fluid.

Carlos demonstrates the right way to walk, then the wrong way, like a person limping with only one high heel on. We laugh. *Finish the steps,* he says. *Don't rush. Don't stop the body. Easy. Grounded.* I copy his movements again and again until my moves get sharper, my intention more clear. He approves with a deep-throated *A-ha!*

He cues me to watch him closely by tapping his index finger to his eye. He leads his arm up along the side of his torso with the back of his wrist, then brushes the back of his head and caresses his clavicle bones. I imitate his moves on my own body. He smiles. *Eso!*

Next we dance as partners: *Breathe in, breathe out, 1,2,3, 5,6,7.* He teaches me the *single, the double turn, the cross-body lead, 1,2,3, 5,6,7.* I am sweating. Now *the 360, the check, the coppa, breathe in, breathe out,* the rhythm gets faster, I get hotter, *1,2,3, 5,6,7.*

*1,2,3, 5,6,7,* his cologne, my sweat, his steady gaze, my swaying hips, *breathe in, breathe out.*

I am lost in the music, in the mirroring, in the give and take, *breathe in, breathe out.* I am light-headed, we are so close, the heat between us, as he guides, as I yield, and turn and turn and turn . . .

When the song ends, we freeze. His chest to my back, his arms crossed around my torso, my hands held in his. I feel his breath on my cheek as we hold a silent count together: *1,2,3, 5,6,7.* He releases me and steps away.

Then without warning, a deep ache and sense of something missing or lost arises within me. I am confused and embarrassed. Tears are falling down my cheeks.

Carlos places a tissue in my hand. He brings me my water bottle, then gently tells me not to worry. He whispers, *No te preocupes. It's always more than the dance.* ♦