



HOT SALSA

I met him at the 50's restaurant where I waitressed. When I wasn't serving customers, I danced on top of tables in my beehive wig and tight-fitting uniform. He bussed the dishes, wiped the crumbs off tables, swept the floor, and mopped up spills. There was nothing theatrical about his job.

I used to stare at him from behind a coffee cup, when I had a couple of minutes. I loved his curly, brown hair and high cheekbones. As he moved easily between tables, I couldn't help noticing his broad shoulders, narrow waist and cute ass. He was Guatemalan, with an uncommonly fair complexion -- almost pearlescent. I wondered how old he was; his face was young, but it wasn't the face of a boy. There was something very seductive about him; maybe it was his eyes, dark and piercing. I often caught a sarcastic smile passing over his lips as he watched the waitresses do their dance routines, but he never smiled that way at me. Not after he found out my love for salsa dancing.

I was practicing one day in the back dining room, which had been cleared of tables for a party later that evening. My shift hadn't started yet. I was moving my hips and feet, counting, "1,2,3,4,5,6, -1,2,3,4,5,6.," when he walked into the room, started laughing, came up behind me, grabbed my hips, and mimicked my steps. I was somewhat startled and I remember blushing, but I let him continue. He pushed my right hip forward and then my left. He started humming a song I found vaguely familiar, maybe from salsa class, and turned me around to face him. He smiled, as if to say, "Well?" I smiled back, nodded yes, and we started dancing.

I closed my eyes so I wouldn't lose his rhythm. I let him lead me across the floor. His fingers felt hot against my waist, and he continued to hum into my ear. His hips pressed against mine, I gasped and he tightened his hold. His heat was contagious. We moved

gracefully across the green linoleum floor. He knew all the moves; I just followed as he twirled me under his arm, circled me, dipped me, returned to the basic move facing me, and pushed me forward then backward. We were moving fast. I began to get dizzy. I lost my footing and he pulled away, gripping my arms to steady me. We slowed down, and as I focused on his face to stop spinning, he drew me close and kissed me on my lips. I started to lose my balance again. I grabbed his shoulders, and as he pulled me up, I pulled him into me. He cradled my head, and put his cheek against mine. It was wet. I was shaking.

It was dark in the dining room. We sat down, unnoticed in a corner booth, as one of the managers walked through on his way to the main room whistling Mr. Sandman, one of those 50's tunes people played on the jukeboxes constantly. We sat for a while, not knowing what to do or say to each other. Finally he stood up and mumbled, "We should go out dancing sometime, just you and me."

I nodded yes, but knew we never would. He had a wife and two small children, and I had -- well, I had my ambitions.

From that night on, if we spoke to each other, it was only about work, nothing more. Sometimes I'd pass him in the back parking lot smoking a cigarette, and he'd smile at me. I'd smile back and keep on walking.

I dreamt about him recently. In my dream he picks me up and takes me to his favorite salsa club, Guatalindas. It's fancy. The lights are low. The walls are black velvet. There is a red rose on each table. We're all dressed up. He's in a dark suit and white shirt, no tie. I wear high heels, a silk shirt, and a short leather skirt. We dance. Our breathing gets heavy. Our hearts begin to race. I run my fingers through his hair. He touches my cheek, we lock eyes, lock hips, and dance the night away... 1,2,3,4,5,6, . . . 1,2,3,4,5,6, . . . 1,2,3,4,5,6