

# The Solo Salsa

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The oil paints play in steady rhythm: the repeated chorus of the western cliff, the dazzling rifts of the valley, the bold intro of the lower left mesa, the long stretches of instrumental sky, the flitting splotches of staccato cacti. And the sides of the canyon dance together, anchoring each other like partners in a song.

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Listen to the music—the plucky percussion juxtaposed with syrupy jazz horns. To dance salsa is to dance boldly. Smooth, full-bodied twists. Arms and hips swaying in steady rhythm. Carry the swing low, then high. Smooth the sway at your belly.

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There they stand: the flowing figures draped in flaming crimson and carmine. Each dancer a strong force, challenging the other. He anchors on the left, leaned forward with anticipation. He's painted in bold lines of sandy yellows, stoic oranges, inspiring greens. His foundation, unshakeable. His steady rhythm, invincible.

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Remember that salsa ineluctably flows from an eight-count rhythm.

So work that rhythm up through your torso. Roll your right shoulder back. And again, in quick succession. Smooth the left back as well. Lift your arms like slow-working gears above your head. Closed fists, elbows out. Above your head, your wrists twist outward, palms open, snaking against your hips' rhythm.

Remember that the down beats come on two and six.

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His upright body remains smooth, barely moving. He must accessorize, not distract from her curving spins. He leads with hidden strength, unnoticed, as if every dip is her lengthening her own body, paralleling the ground, subverting gravity. Yet, her weightlessness is his design and he seamlessly guides her every move.

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She answers his gentle call with countless, dizzying twirls.

She twists to his hand's command upon her waist. Her skirt flows in alluring circles, complementing his stoicism. The beauty of the dance manifests in her movements—from her head, to her arms, to her waist, to her legs.

Each body part dances to a rhythm found in some deep, painted lyrics of the song.

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Only when looking at his feet, do you see his involvement. His footwork parallels the quick rotations of her upper body. Back and forth. Swinging in a rhythm that both anchors and excites her. Passion surges between them.

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Move your feet forward, right, left. And quick-step back.

...right...left. Quick-step-back...

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His sturdy breath anchors her flowing right, his sanguine partner, adorned in endless valley curves. They are entwined in red-hot salsa, a perpetual dance frozen in a moment of intensity.

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But when the Spanish beat drops, I'm alone. I close the blue drapes hanging in my living room and play a sequence of YouTube videos through dull laptop speakers, praying that the noise cancels out the thud of awkward feet and any internal reproves of my clumsiness. I push the computer screen away, stretch tall, scrunch my eyes closed just to feel the bass.

The rhythm sinks into my body and I begin to dance, intuitively guided into every flowing spin, smooth step. The opening *doo-dum Bah!* leads my feet forward on two, back on six. Repeat on eight. I imagine the snakelike contortions of my hips and my arms.

Vitalizing. Beautiful. *Anchorless*.