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An Affair to Remember *White Lights, City Nights...*

I do not live close to New York City. I live in a land where dancing was once heady, heavy, sexy and close knit. But it's not anymore. It's energetic, it's unique, it's socially connected... but it's not the dance Mecca that it once was. People drive less to dance less. People dance maybe once a week now, and if more, it's for other dances... a salsa night here, a tango night there, a swing night in between. Gone are the euphorically addicting dances that kept me up nights and left me enamored and spinning with music and movement in my head... so much so that I made myself go to church on Saturday nights *before* dancing instead of Sunday mornings *after* dancing. After a night of dancing Sundays just didn't work. I just couldn't sit still. I couldn't listen... my feet were doing syncopations while the words of the sermon fought with the music and the leads and the dancing in my mind...

Now the word 'syncopation' is hardly used. And my dances have been slowly whittled away by poor leads... no, not poor leads... no leads. Or terrifying yanking at any random point. So I stay on the sides and watch the floor, waiting for the miraculous moment when I will see an opportunity for 1. a real swing song and 2. a real swing dancer, to actually become available at that one fine, glorious and golden moment. I don't care if they're a novice. I just want a darn dance. I get four a night if I'm incredibly lucky, but honestly, it's really down to one when I don't count my husband.

And then someone whispered in my ear: *Hudson Swing Affair!* Hudson Swing Affair? The one in New York? The one with the girls and tuxes and glamour? So I emailed Festa. And he told me the glorious news... no non-swing songs. Pure swing. And no competitions, which means the people there... must be there... for the dancing? only? Hmm... sounds a little too good to be true. But it's Festa. And he's already too fabulous to be true. So. We prayed. We bought our tickets. We started to prepare as best we could. Gown and suit for the Black and White Ball? Check. Sturdy luggage? Check. Plenty of light clothing? Check. Curiosity in crazy amounts? Double check.

I'm so glad we went.

In fact, it hurt our hearts to leave. We left family behind. We left our hearts on the dance floor. Nick took me in his arms on the plane home and started to slow dance with me... suddenly I was back at the Pier Dance, with white lights surrounding me, a fabulous melody playing in my ears and the wind blowing gently through our hair. And I wish it was next year.

If you ever traveled great distances to an event for the dances you could have, then you will be able to relate. My dances with Festa, Ramiro and Mark will stay with me forever, just as dances with them, Mark Eckstein, Demetre, Carlito, Mario and more, have stayed in my veins for years. They are the sustenance on which I live. They are health food I crave. I never even missed the competitions. And I felt like I had a new home, like the Camelback Inn used to be for me. The sights and the heady and the sexy and the power and the strength of swing came crashing back upon me. People watched. People studied. People admired and they respected. They learned and they were inspired and they grew.

I don't know what the key ingredient is. Is it the lack of competitions? Is it the quality of staff? Is it the music? Is it the location? Is it Festa?

I suspect it's Festa. Because he maintains all the others. And his fans are loyal. And he treats them like the kings and the queens that they are. He is a lover of beauty. And beauty is everywhere you go at the Hudson Swing Affair.

And despite a bad flight there... a weak arrival at 2 am on Friday... and through a terrific scare with a supposed lost wallet... and needing to switch rooms at 5 am... even so... we ended up having the time of our lives.

My husband wasn't there when Kenny was around. My husband never went to the Camelback with me. My husband never saw the late night dancing sessions I still dream about... when I could trade off for four hours straight between dancers of such champion skill and control that I still shiver with edification, joy, expansion, growth and... 'yum' factors. Oh, the challenge and the dancing that occurred then!

And oh the dances I had at Hudson... with the exception of one single dancer there (from where I live, I guessed and of course, confirmed)... oh the dances I had... they were marvelous! And I'm glad beauty, goodness and swing are not gone forever... they are nestled in the bosom of the starry night that is... and I suspect will always be...

The Hudson Swing Affair.