

## *Seduction War with Giordano*

**F**rom day one, Giordano — one of my dance teachers — kept forgetting that this was a class and started seducing me for real. This is normal for Cubans; he couldn't help himself. In Cuba, this is not considered unprofessional. Boundaries are flexible and loose, and almost everything is possible and permitted. It's the most promiscuous place I've ever been to.

One evening while in Havana, I went with a friend to see a live show. At the next table, a man was shoving his hands inside his woman's dress and touching her breasts in front of everyone ... no big deal. No big deal? Huge deal! I couldn't help but be shocked. It doesn't matter how many times I've been to Cuba; nothing ceases to amaze me.

Havana, to me, is Sin City. A friend of mine jokes that this is the one place God never visits. But while people think of a Sin City as a dark place full of criminals — the sort of metropolis Batman needs to save — Havana is different. It's a place where anything can happen because the boundaries are loose, yet it's a colourful city full of rhythm, interesting people, passion and seduction.

Which brings me back to Giordano, who spent half the class teaching me and the other half trying to seduce me. One day, he asked me, “¿Tienes miedo?” [Are you afraid?] after he got into my personal space on purpose, up close and tight, making me nervous.



Giordano is a hot, young black guy with the perfect, toned body of a dancer, every muscle in his body defined, and with the sweat dripping off his body, he looked delicious. He has Ochún as his Santería mother, and his Santería father is Changó. For those who know the orishas, that says a lot. He is proud like Ochún, and as manly, strong and stubborn like Changó.





When I say “*rico*” about something he teaches me in class that I like, he responds with, “*¿Te gusta, mami?*” [You like it, mami?], showing off his body and looking at me teasingly. And I just hit him with the bandana and tell him, “Giordano, focus!”

He plays these little games all the time, these tiny little things that crack me up. His tricks aim for my heart, but they don’t get to it. I can see through them, and I’ve been around Cubans long enough to know that there is usually a wife somewhere. I simply don’t get involved.

So when Giordano asked me if I was afraid, it was because I ignored his attempts at seduction. But he couldn’t let me avoid it altogether, and since he stepped into my personal space like that, I declared a seduction war on him. Because goddamn it, if he could push my buttons, so could I. That day, I went into the ring with my sleeves pulled up, ready for a fight.

Half an hour into class, right after demonstrating how a guy dances with a woman, using his body to seduce her, he suddenly looked at me in a sweet and sexy way and murmured, “*Dame un beso, mami*” [Give me a kiss, mami].



I looked back at him seductively, walked towards him slowly, and then, at the last minute, turned to Zuyima, the other dance teacher standing beside him, and gave her two kisses, one on each cheek, and gave him a teasing look back.

“Sorry. I ran out of kisses. Zuyima got them all,” I said, smiling my most innocent of smiles. He gave me a heart-wrenching, miserable puppy-dog look. I walked toward Giordano and gave him a big teddy-bear hug. He wasn’t thrilled, but what else could he do? Round one was over — one for Chen.

No worries, though; rounds two, three and four were coming. Seduction doesn’t rest for long in Cuba, and I had two more weeks to go. The seduction war with Giordano kept me on my feet all week, and when he saw I was fighting back, he stepped up his game.

Welcome to Cuba! As for what happened with Giordano, we’ll come back to that subject later.

