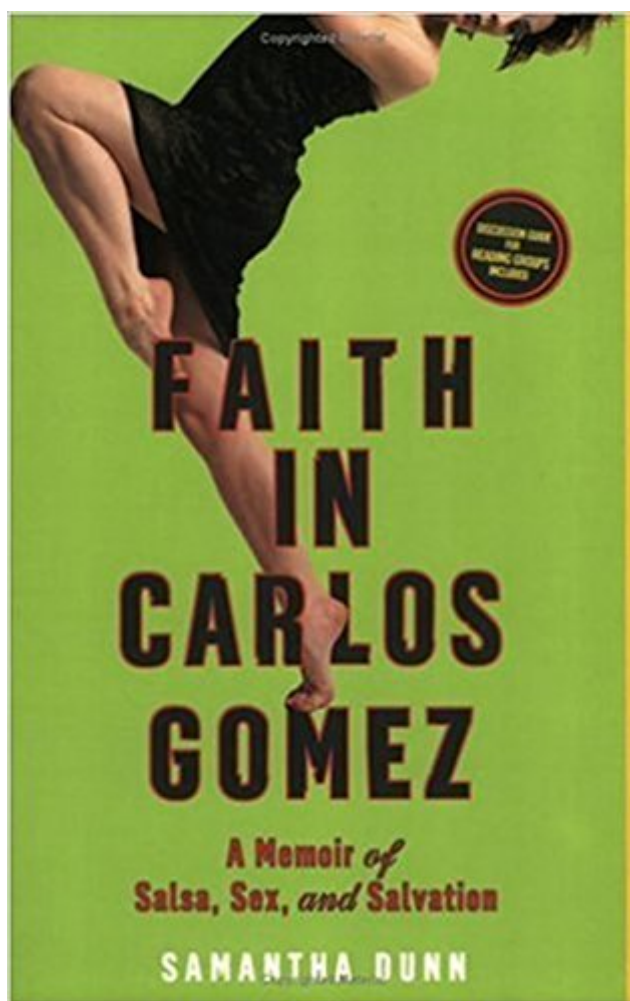


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Faith In Carlos Gomez: A Memoir Of Salsa, Sex, And Salvation



Synopsis

A writer's all-consuming passion for salsa opens the door to an unexpected world in a nonfiction tale with all the sexiness and humor of the best chick lit. Samantha Dunn is a horsewoman who's not exactly graceful—more comfortable in a barn than in a ballroom. Her introduction to salsa dancing happens by chance in a kitchen during a dinner with a blacksmith from South America. To impress this handsome man on their next date, she decides to take a dance lesson. But then the unpredictable happens: from the first steps, something about the movement and the exotic, sliding music takes hold of her. From that point on, Dunn throws herself into the salsa culture. She soaks up the Spanish language—an easy feat in her home city of Los Angeles—and begins a peculiar relationship with her dance instructor, a local salsa celebrity. What started off as a lark becomes a quest that reframes her life, changing the way she thinks about her body, her relationships with men and women, her personal history, and even her country. She is hearing tropical rhythms in her head, taking lessons, buying Lycra, and cruising unexplored sections of the vast Southern California metropolis on weeknights in search of the sweaty, packed salsa clubs. And as Latino culture becomes ever more influential in California, she is recognizing the changes in her own life mirrored in the city she thought she knew. Faith in Carlos Gomez is a story of a woman discovering love—for salsa dancing, for music, for a culture, and for Carlos Gomez—and determined to learn whatever steps she'll need to keep up.

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Customer Reviews

If your heart beats to the rhythm of salsa or tango or waltz, for that matter you'll empathize with Dunn's sudden passion for the Cuban dance, despite her preternatural clumsiness, and one can particularly admire her courage in dancing despite having a metal rod in one leg, the legacy of a horse-riding accident. But this memoir is not for devotees: they already know the nightly routine of following the salsa trail from club to club, the complexities of the rhythm and movement, the subtleties of leading and following all a revelation to Dunn. And frankly, Dunn's constant self-deprecations about her lack of dancing ability and her

I'm-just-a-cowgirl-and-don't-know-how-to-attract-a-man pose are more annoying than charming, particularly after two desirable men leap into bed with her in the opening sections. Yet this fairly typical tale of the search for love and happiness has beautiful patches of writing (Dunn's novel *Failing Paris* was a PEN/West award finalist), especially when she captures the magic of, and the longing for, the dance ("I watch serious salseras, and I ache to know that kind of movement within my own body," as if it might "unearth something long buried") or elegizing the true love of her life, her Thoroughbred, Harley. Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Horsewoman Samantha Dunn (*Failing Paris, Not by Accident*) has always thought of herself as one of the guys--more comfortable in blue jeans and cowboy boots than designer dresses and high-heeled shoes. But a dance lesson with Los Angeles salsa celebrity Raul Santiago brings out her feminine side and something else, too--lust. Physically speaking, Samantha and Raul are far from a perfect match (on a tall day, the top of his head reaches her armpits). During her lessons, she envisions scenes from the movie, *Dirty Dancing*. "I have the proportions of Patrick Swayze," she says, "and he of Jennifer Grey." But Samantha admires Raul's joie de vivre, a quality sorely lacking in her own humdrum life. She becomes enveloped by the pulsating rhythms of the city's salsa scene--uncharted territory for a middle-class white girl from the tony Westside. Samantha, who battled to walk again after a traumatic riding accident, now savors newfound feelings of sensuality and grace. A droll tale of cultural immersion that, unlike the mambo, loses momentum toward the end. Allison Block Copyright © American Library Association. All rights reserved --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Sequel to "Not by Accident." Samantha Dunn is a brilliant writer. Valuable life lessons and lots of humor...some sadness that is overwhelming at times but important to live through. I highly recommend Ms. Dunn's books.

What a joy to read Sam Dunn's wonderful memoir FAITH IN CARLOS GOMEZ!!! The book arrived from on Saturday and by Saturday evening, my wife had devoured it cover to cover and by the end of the day on Monday, I'd enjoyed every twist, twirl and turn of Sam's adventure. I couldn't put it down!! really enjoyed the clever way she wove so many elements from her life into the storyline of becoming totally caught up in the Latin culture and salsa dance scene. Great fun to read! Needless to say, I love the way Sam Dunn writes. I've read her other two books, FAILING PARIS and NOT BY ACCIDENT and after reading this one, all I can say is her stuff gets better and better.

Hilarious quick read especially for those just starting salsa

This is a great memoir I had read before but keep losing copies to "friends." My advice: if you share it, expect to need your own copy soon as everyone else seems to want to share it too!!

Great book especially if you like salsa!

Interesting writing and funny!

I am a non reader for the most part, but I read this book in two days; I was sorry when it ended. Taking a few Salsa lessons in the Los Angeles area, I attended a Salsa "practice" party where class members practice their newly acquired skills in a less threatening environment. Here is where I met Ms. Dunn. She was so good on the dance floor I wondered who she was. A co-Salsera told me about the book. I, like Samantha never danced - just wasn't interested. Until Salsa. My heart races whenever I even think Salsa, and this book was right on target. I totally enjoyed this writing and suggest than anyone interested in Salsa, Sex, and Salvation pick it up!

Samantha Dunn is addicting. The voluptuous, red-headed journalist --- labeled a combination of Sophia Loren and Dale Evans --- from the sagebrush of the Southwest writes what may be described as the "country" alternative to Candace Bushnell's SEX AND THE CITY. Yet there is a rich, genuine leather to Dunn's narrative that propels and inspires. Dunn has been alluring from her first book, the novel FAILING PARIS, to her first memoir, NOT BY ACCIDENT, when she hilariously and bravely chronicled her recovery from a near-fatal horse-riding accident. This third offering, FAITH IN CARLOS GOMEZ, takes up where NOT BY ACCIDENT left off. A fully recovered Dunn

becomes obsessed with, of all things, salsa music and "the dance." The leap from the stables to the big city dance floors is not so broad considering Dunn's first post-accident conversation with the man who saved her life. Edward Albert Jr. reminds her: "When we were waiting for the paramedics to find us, all of a sudden you asked me why you didn't dance. Do you remember that?" And the dance begins. On the lookout for the next freelance magazine article, Dunn spots her opportunity when she falls for a South American man. She takes dancing lessons to impress him and to fit in with his crowd, but salsa, she quickly learns, is not square dancing. For the novice, salsa is a struggle. For the committed, salsa is a way of life, a celebration of freedom, a journey toward enlightenment. Like a new lover, salsa takes over. Dunn writes that it is inside the Conga Room on Wilshire, surrounded outside by the phoniness of Hollywood, watching her partner dance, that: "there seems to hang an acceptance for what we are, this human thing. It comes on me like a religious conversion, the instant of satori talked about in Zen, the line between what came before and all that is possible after, the moment I know I want to inhabit this Los Angeles forever." While Dunn's highly charged romances with a few Spanish and Latino men are fleeting and unfulfilling (one man even comments: "Women start sleeping with me, and they start thinking they can dance."), it is the dance itself that helps Dunn move into a new stage in her life. The dance is a dramatic though positive addiction; the dance floor is open to self-realization, especially for Dunn, who, in her quest to understand her own origins, learns that it was the dance that flung her mother and her estranged father together for the brief union that brought the author into this world. A passionate invitation to the world Dunn has discovered, *FAITH IN CARLOS GOMEZ* is another spectacular chapter in the ongoing memoir Dunn weaves of self-discovery and spirituality. So who is Carlos Gomez? He is an ideal and a mystery, as elusive as a clear definition of the purpose of life. He is a myriad of ideals that make one perfect man. The first Carlos Gomez is an ideal Dunn seeks until she meets the real Carlos Gomez, a C-list actor who foolishly shows little interest in Dunn after their first date. Though he has yet to hold her hand or dance her dance, the perfect Carlos Gomez becomes the salvation for Dunn when one of her closest friends leaves this world of canyons, dances, embraces, sadness and love for that other great mystery we all one day get to solve. ---

Reviewed by Brandon M. Stickney

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