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Folklorico: Freestyle

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after inhaling salsa-drenched adobada tacos
(sin cebolla) with a side of Tio Raul's piña
colada and a shot of tequila, marinating in
the savory serenade, fermenting my glee;

after mariachis, coated in charro, set up
in the corner, amp-checking and accordion-
stretching, tuning and testing instruments
for the right ratio of party-to-polish;

after the tíos carve out a makeshift stage
by pushing mesas cluttered with red cups
to margins, building borders for bailando,
already requesting *El Mariachi Loco*;

after the tías have coaxed each other into
another dance and another drink, belting
Besos y Copas diaphragm-deep, inviting
me as they hand over a sweating Tecate;

after even primos with two left feet stagger
out to demonstrate their shaken and stirred
stage-hobbling, pattering constellations
of beer-heavy steps across the dancefloor;

after Dad's Bacardi loosens his two-step and
Cousin Jelly lulls into midnight boredom,
after Tita yanks me center "stage" among
arrhythmic couples and beckons me to flaunt,

my folklorico, ours, finally unbridles—this is

¡Pachanga! where learned routine collapses
into a medley of half-lucid movements—
a liberating freestyle, the biggest lesson in dance:

I muster scraps of memorized zapateados
stormy with horse-trot, carretillas scattered
esquina to esquina like huracán, any move I can
recall to richly wring out my adrenaline buzz

before I swallow another can of courage, two
more shots, prove my roots are wet with folklore