



# When Hope Is Gone: The Story of Papo Salsa

*Pedro E. Acevedo*

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Eduardo Torres is a forty-five-year-old recovering drug addict, down on his luck, trying to survive on the streets of New York's South Bronx. Living in a homeless shelter, he spends his days begging for handouts and doing odd jobs for neighborhood merchants. But he wasn't always like this. In his dashing youth, Eduardo was known and loved for his love of salsa music and his natural dancing ability. Once revered as "Papo Salsa" in his neighborhood, Eduardo is now a different man—broken and hopeless. He's one of many victims of the turbulent times of the late sixties and early seventies, when the Vietnam War shattered lives, tortured families, and stole innocence from even the most well-intentioned individuals. One day, Papo Salsa encounters José Antonio Rivera, an educated professional from the same neighborhood as Papo. Though a few years younger, José remembers Papo as a heartthrob to girls of all ages, a guy the neighborhood boys looked up to. But Papo does not immediately recognize José. He begins telling a story of bad breaks and wrong decisions, in an attempt to explain why he is where he is now. *When Hope Is Gone* is a graphic yet moving story of love found and lost, set in the volatile environments of urban life, war, and drug addiction. Throughout the years and the fears, the hypnotic rhythms of salsa music—the soundtrack of the times—is the one thing these wounded souls could always turn to for inspiration.

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