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2/20/07

We felt like we were dying. Out of breath and dripping with sweat we collapsed on the dirty, but cool floor.

“Two more times and you can leave.” Maria announced. Moans, groans, whines and some wheezes followed. Miss Maria was our hip-hop dance coach. Maria believed in working hard, dancing full out, many times through, and whatever else makes you think of 15 girls lying on the filthy floor drenched in sweat. She pushed us past our limits and to her expectations.

By the 50<sup>th</sup> time through with music you ALMOST hate her. Then she’d give you a twenty second drink break and you were back at it again, full out. (And ALMOST hate her more).

In March of 2006, Maria announced that she was pregnant. But in September dance started as usual. Maria was just a little lazier. Maria took her maternity leave in November. While she was gone Teresa, one of the older girls, took over the teaching responsibilities of most of Maria’s classes.

Those weeks without Maria were uneventful and boring for me. Yes, Teresa did push us, but it wasn’t the same. I knew Teresa had authority over us but it didn’t feel like it. Her voice, when counting out loud during the dance and whatnot was not as loud and strong as Maria’s. It was friendlier.

The day Maria came back was a glorious day for me.

“Look up, and down. No center! Look right and left, No center!” Maria’s powerful voice called over the blaring warm up music. That day she pushed us and

pushed us until my hair was falling out of my pony tail and I looked like I was a hurricane survivor. But I loved it!

“I miss looking like a mess,” I told my teammate Kendal.

“And that’s exactly what you look like!” she observed.

Many of the girls enjoyed having Teresa teaching and not being pushed as hard as they would have with Maria. But I didn’t. While Maria was teaching, before she left, I guess I didn’t realize how much I enjoyed, no, how much I appreciated her teaching and pushing us. Which just goes to show you that the saying: “You don’t know what you got till it’s gone” proved to be true. Thankfully, what was gone came back to me.