



The Red Doors

By William Harcourt

I have to say that I am pleased that the guys who invented Google are rich. They deserve to be. Almost all of us find what we need today by using their search engine technology, which is astounding. That's where I found these red doors. I love doors: interior, exterior, wood and metal, English, Scandinavian, European, Indian, Asian, Chinese, Japanese, Polynesian, South American; they are recognized by their cultural design and carving. These doors are from Colombia where, as in most Latin countries, doors are painted with vibrant colors. What was I doing on Google looking at Colombian doors? Well, I'll tell you. It started after I got fired from my last job in 2009.

I was excused from my executive sales position for making too much money which was, for me, a first. I had been fired from jobs before when I was young. By the time I was twenty-four years-old I came to the conclusion that I should be self-employed and I was for most of my adult life, but in early 2006 I took a job with a small company that was in deep trouble and, over three-and-a-half years, I led them out of the woods and into a very profitable working model. But once I started collecting five and then six figure commission checks, the owner forgot that I had actually earned the money and deemed me an unnecessary expense, so, off I went. This was the jumping-off point for an extended, ugly, flaming downward spiral. Self-pity grabbed me in a headlock and dragged me to my favorite bar where I stayed for the next year; seething, drinking...searching for a way to avoid any further heartbreak in this life. Then, while wandering the internet late one night in my apartment, the synapses of my tequila saturated right brain began firing. I still had some cash and it needed to last indefinitely. My mission was to flee society for protection and preservation and write the novel that I'd been avoiding forever. So, the logical question was, where could a drunken, rebellious, renegade American run to stretch his money and fulfill his destiny? Bang! Bang! The answer: Cartagena, Colombia.

Cartagena had everything going for it. The many years of cocaine violence had moved to Mexico, the conversion rate was fourteen pesos for every dollar, the history and the architecture was alluring; a

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forted port city with good beaches and great little beach villages to the north. With nearly a million pesos I could live quite sufficiently in old city Cartagena: Drinking tequila in the late morning and aguardiente until late at night, I would become Guillermo: the proud champion of men, women, children, the elderly, crippled dogs or cats and birds and lizards alike! Eventually I would meet a beautiful young prostitute with shining dark hair and almond eyes and save her from the streets. Maria Elisa would then look after me, doing my shopping, cleaning and laundry for a healthy wage while I wrote at a metal mosaic table on my balcony overlooking the limestone fountain where lovers and the lonely gather in the square below.

As I studied image after image of the city, I happened upon these villa doors facing the sea. They were old and battered...as was I. They were a faded, peeling, blistered bloody red...as was I. They were locked from the outside...as was I. Waiting for me behind these doors was an empty, forgotten, cold stone palace desperately in need of a King who, like the dusty rooms and decrepit furniture, yearned for a fresh start. These would be the doors to my future...if I could only get to Cartagena and open them. I created this graphic and set it as my laptop background as a daily inspiration to gather the courage to change my life forever. I actually told some friends of my plan. They ignored it as they did with most things I said during those dark days but, as it came to pass, I never went to Colombia or wrote the novel and I have yet to rescue a prostitute. I went to California instead and after a few dangerously deranged months in LA, I came back to the east coast and checked into a rehabilitation center.

Today I have far more than Cartagena could have provided. When I go there now it will not be to run away, but to enjoy the freedom that is securely mine; not just from an obsession with alcohol, but the freedom that comes from a true liberation that affects every aspect of your psyche, soul and spirit. Every door is open to me now, but I still really like the old ones. Time and events do take their toll, but the character that's created is breathtaking, especially to like survivors of the storms that these red doors have seen. I wouldn't change them at all.