

# I Am a Fiesta

D. E. Percy

I am a Fiesta. I just love those words. If you say them out loud enough times, with feeling, the magical is summoned and marvellous things happen. There's something spirited in the words that call up a love of life and dance and celebration; all the rhythm and charm of living to reconnect with life's cycles, seasons, and spirals, with love and libido.

I am a Fiesta. I heard these words in many years gone by and I can tell you it's been a long time since I last felt like a Fiesta. It must be over thirty years since I felt a promising Fiesta approach to life. There have been highs and happy times since and flows of energy and inspiration ... but not a Fiesta. Not until a few years ago.

By way of setting the mood, let's revisit my fortieth birthday for a moment, a much younger Fiesta lifetime when we had a wonderful gathering of friends and family. There were friends of all sorts: work mates, academics, tradies, journos, artists, old family elders, indigenous elders, and kids, all together in my Brunswick backyard with seven Latin American musos playing pan flutes, drums, and guitars. Back then, that band played every Saturday morning in the Victoria Market and luckily for me agreed to play at my milestone birthday. Everyone dressed up in South American clothes with outrageous headdresses and flowers. My amazing daughter, Kim, orchestrated it all and made a paper mache ball that I ceremoniously whacked blindfolded with a stick. We all drank too much, danced, laughed, sang, and celebrated being alive in an unlikely company of friends on a beautiful November afternoon, celebrating well into the evening.

In those days there was no tabu about smoking, and all sorts of smoke could be detected in the air. After a big outdoor meal mid-afternoon, there was cleaning up inside to do and plenty of bins around for rubbish. Next thing, one of the indoor bins was on fire from an ashtray that must have had a live cigarette. My dear friend who took it upon herself to look after me rushed over with the announcement, "The bin's on fire!" and being in a Fiesta frame of mind, I simply pulled the outdoor hose inside and doused the flames. Anyone would have done the same, as long as they were in their own agency—their Fiesta—and not caught up in the way panic can render us helpless.

That was a long time ago. Since then, there have been no Fiestas that created that free-flowing joy, inventiveness, and appreciation of friends in all their glory and weirdness. Instead, I entered another kind of life-passage that took me into territory that did not indulge spirited, light-heartedness. While there were significant losses and deaths during the last thirty-something years, that isn't what the lost Fiesta was about, but rather explorations of the inner self and shadow lands. I wouldn't have missed it for the world. For today, it is enough to say that for over four 7-year cycles, I was without my Fiesta. Now I've turned an internal corner and somehow, without looking for it I'm again touched by the Fiesta spirit, and this time with a bit more psychological dexterity.

Do you know what I'm talking about? It's not unusual to lose that lightness of being as we age. As a counsellor I have privileged information about how widespread this is, and how natural to spend serious time attending to the inner world pathways.

I continue to be amazed at the power of words and how easy it is to underestimate the way we use them, or not even notice how we use them to shape our life. The wicked Latin American author, Edvardo Galeano, said it all in his book *Walking Words*: he said,

“The church says: The body is a sin. Science says: The body is a machine. Advertising says: The body is a business. The body says: I am a Fiesta.”

These brilliant words evoke a spirit, no matter our age, a personal spirit rich in body memory as well as the spirit of the Earth and all the wonderful creatures and humans within it. Try saying it often, out loud, and be surprised:

I am a Fiesta.

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