



the carnival's
first Marimonda

COLOMBIA CO



This story took place in northern Colombia, specifically in the city of Barranquilla, many years ago, when steam-powered boats crossed the Magdalena River, sending blasts of smoke into the air. Airplanes did not exist yet. In a little house on the outskirts of the city lived a young man from Barranquilla, who loved nothing better than to fish and dance.

When February came around and the

Carnival of Barranquilla was close, Ramon's dark lips would curl up into a smile, and his brown eyes would shine like the wakes of boats on the sea at noon.

But that year Ramon was not smiling. He spent his afternoons walking aimlessly around the streets near the city's gutters.

"What's the matter?" His friends at the port would ask.

"Nothing", Ramon would reply, hands in his pockets and his head in the clouds.

No one but Ramon knew the cause of his sadness. He had no money to buy a costume that year at carnival time. He

wouldn't be able to buy a new silk shirt, or a pair of pants, or even a hat. What little money he had put away in a wooden box was not enough for what he wanted.

The night before the carnival, Ramon tossed and turned in his bed, anxious and worried. Suddenly, in the still of night, his eyes lit up and he yelled:

"I have an idea!"

He got out of bed and started taking out wrinkled garments from an old leather trunk, making a pile on the floor.

"Not this one, this one I'll use" he repeated as he laid out the clothes on the floor.



He tried on some really comical combinations. A scarf on the head, a pair of mismatched socks tied to his waist, a moth-eaten old blouse that had been his grandmother's. Finally, he put on a pair of pants covered in patches that had belonged to his brother, a jacket that he wore inside out, and a pair of colorful socks on his elbows like long gloves.

Inspired by his creation, he made a mask from a flour sack and decorated it with rings that formed two holes for his eyes and a gaping mouth. Finally, he used another piece of cloth as a long trunk on the mask which reached down to his chest.

Since he did not have a mirror, Ramon ran outside to the pond and got a good look at his new creation. The final touch was a wrinkled tie he put around his neck.

The next day, Barranquilla was brightly illuminated by the color of the carnival parades and costumes. Streamers criss-crossed the city, which smelled of flowers, amidst the sounds of cymbals, drums and trumpets.

And there, amidst the throngs of people, some dressed in silk, others in royal costumes, some wearing beads and rhinestones, was a hitherto unknown character. Mockingly, he would point at people with his finger and then run away.



The joy of that character with the long trump of a nose and patched up pants was infectious. On that day, Ramon created what would become one of the most famous carnival characters: the marimonda. On that day, he also learned that the best costume is not necessarily the most expensive one, but rather the most creative one. It was the happiest carnival of his life. After that, he always dressed up as a marimonda for the carnival.

Today, this carnival is an Intangible World Heritage, and every year the marimondas parade with their colorful costumes, shaking their knees and jiggling, as if bewitched by the rhythm of the music.

Fact Sheet:

<http://revistadiners.com.co/articuloespecial.php%3Fide%3D14%26id%3D29>

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The end



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