

## A STRANGE THING

‘The strangest things happen. Do you see that lady who’s headed toward the Church of the Holy Cross? She just stopped in the churchyard to give alms.’

‘The woman dressed in black?’

‘Precisely. There, she’s entering now.’

‘Say no more. The look on your face tells me she’s an old flame, and not so old as that, judging from her figure. She’s really a beauty.’

‘She’s about forty-six now.’

‘Ah, and well-preserved! Come on, stop staring at the ground and tell me everything. Is she a widow?’

‘No.’

‘Then her husband’s still living. Is he old?’

‘She’s not married.’

‘Single?’

‘In manner of speaking. I think she’s called Dona Maria now. In 1860 she was known by the familiar name of Marocas. She wasn’t a seamstress, shopkeeper, or schoolmistress – just keep eliminating the professions and you will get there. When she lived on Sacramento Street she was narrow-waisted and, of course, much prettier than she is now. Her behaviour and speech were refined and beyond reproach. Although she dressed most properly and unostentatiously, many men fell for her.’

‘You, for example?’

‘No, but Andrade, a friend of mine from Alagoas, went for her. At the time he was twenty-six, half lawyer and half politician. He was married in Bahia and came here in 1859. His wife was beautiful, gracious, gentle and resigned. When I met them they had a little two-year-old daughter.’

‘You mean to tell me he had all that, and Marocas was still able to...?’

‘That’s right, she bewitched him. Look, if you’re not in a hurry, I’ll tell you an interesting story.’

‘Please do.’

*Versão de Jack Schmitt and Lorie Ishimatsu de trecho do conto “Singular Ocorrência” de Machado de Assis*

## SINGULAR OCORRÊNCIA

– HÁ OCORRÊNCIAS bem singulares. Está vendo aquela dama que vai entrando na igreja da Cruz? Parou agora no adro para dar uma esmola.

– De preto?

– Justamente; lá vai entrando; entrou.

– Não ponha mais na carta.

Esse olhar está dizendo que a dama é uma sua recordação de outro tempo, e não há de ser de muito tempo, a julgar pelo corpo: é moça de truz.

– Deve ter quarenta e seis anos.

– Ah! conservada. Vamos lá; deixe de olhar para o chão, e conte-me tudo. Está viúva, naturalmente?’

– Não.

– Bem; o marido ainda vive. É velho?

– Não é casada.

– Solteira?

– Assim, assim. Deve chamar-se hoje D. Maria de tal. Em 1860 florescia com o nome familiar de Marocas. Não era costureira, nem proprietária, nem mestra de meninas; vá excluindo as profissões e lá chegará. Morava na Rua do Sacramento. Já então era esbelta, e, seguramente, mais linda do que hoje; modos sérios, linguagem limpa.

Na rua, com o vestido afogado, escorrido, sem espavento, arrastava a muitos, ainda assim.

– Por exemplo, ao senhor.

– Não, mas ao Andrade, um amigo meu, de vinte e seis anos, meio advogado, meio político, nascido nas Alagoas, e casado na Bahia, donde viera em 1859. Era bonita a mulher dele, afetuosa, meiga e resignada; quando os conheci, tinham uma filhinha de dois anos.

– Apesar disso, a Marocas...?

– É verdade, dominou-o. Olhe, se não tem pressa, conto-lhe uma coisa interessante.

– Diga.

*Trecho do conto “Singular Ocorrência” de Machado de Assis*

## A SINGULAR OCCURRENCE

‘Some really strange things happen. See that lady over there, going into the Holy Cross Church? She’s just stopped in the porch to give a beggar some money.’

‘The one in black?’

‘That’s right: she’s just going in. She’s gone.’

‘Say no more. I can see the lady brings back memories, and recent ones, judging by her figure; she’s a fine-looking young woman.’

‘She must be forty-six.’

‘Oh! Well-preserved, then.

Come on, stop staring at the ground and tell me everything. She’s a widow, of course?’

‘No.’

‘All right, her husband’s still alive. Old, I suppose?’

‘She’s not married.’

‘A spinster?’

‘Sort of. She must be called Dona Maria something or other. In 1860 she was commonly known as Marocas. She wasn’t a seamstress, she didn’t own property, she didn’t run a school for girls; you’ll get there, by process of elimination. She lived in the Rua do Sacramento. In those days too she was slim, and certainly lovelier than she is today; she had quiet manners, and never swore.

In the street, modest as she was, with her faded dress buttoned up to the neck, she still had a lot of admirers.’

‘You, for instance.’

‘No, but a friend of mine, Andrade, twenty-six, part-lawyer, part-politician, born in Alagoas and married in Bahia – he came from there in 1859. His wife was pretty, affectionate, gentle and resigned; when I got to know them, they already had a two-year old daughter.’

‘But in spite of that, Marocas...?’

‘That’s right. She swept him off his feet. Look, if you’re not in a hurry, I’ll tell you something interesting.’

‘Go ahead.’

*Versão preliminar de John Gledson de trecho do conto “Singular Ocorrência” de Machado de Assis*