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THE ENCOUNTER

Seville stories



Francisco

Anacaona

Crystal

Edward

Francisco Niño

Seville, 1494

My name is Francisco Niño, and by the time I was fifteen I already knew the sea better than most grown men.

In Moguer, where I was raised, sailing was not a dream. It was work. My family had worked ships for generations. I learned to read stars before I learned to read scripture properly. I could judge wind by smell, clouds by shape. Men listened to me when I spoke about currents, even if they did not listen to me about anything else.

So when my brothers sailed with Cristobal Colon and returned with stories of lands across the ocean, I was not frightened. I was impatient.

The Second Voyage was not like the first. This time, there were many ships, many men, animals, tools, priests, and soldiers. This was not exploration. Even I could tell that. This was settlement.

I was assigned real responsibility. I was trusted with navigation, with watching the coastlines, with helping guide vessels safely through unfamiliar waters. I was proud of that. At sea, I knew who I was.



Land was different.

When we reached Santiago in 1494, the men spoke as if the island had been waiting for us. It belonged to us simply because we believed we were the only ones who had travelled there. They talked about fertile ground, good harbours, and usefulness. I listened, but something about the place resisted that language.

We came ashore at what would be called Sevilla la Nueva. The land was thick with green and heat. Nothing about it felt empty or undecided.

The Taíno were already there. It was theirs and they met us, strangers on their shore.

I had expected fear or excitement. What I saw instead was attention. They watched us closely, not hiding, not approaching too quickly. They did not behave like people meeting something new. They behaved like people assessing something intrusive.

That confused me.

I noticed a girl near my age standing with others slightly behind her. She did not speak, but her eyes followed everything. When she looked at me, it did not feel like curiosity. It felt like evaluation. "Anacaona!" An older gentleman called, pulling her by the arm. She disappeared amongst the crowd. Her eyes stayed with me.

I had crossed an ocean guided by stars, but I had never been looked at like that before.

We were ordered to unload supplies, to clear land, and to begin building. Animals were brought ashore. Crops were planned. Priests spoke of conversion. Soldiers spoke of order.

Everything moved quickly, as if speed itself could make this place submit.

I did what I was told. I always had.

But I began to notice things that did not match what we said aloud. The Taíno did not rush to obey. They did not argue either. They adapted around us, quietly, watching, remembering.

Some of the men called that cooperation.

It did not feel like cooperation.

It felt like patience.

I was young, but not foolish. I understood that ships need discipline, that survival requires command. What I did not understand was why conquest required forgetting that the people before us were people at all.

No one explained that part. I did not like it.

At night, when I recorded routes and distances, I found my thoughts drifting back to the shore. To how confidently we spoke of ownership. To how little the land seemed to care. I did not resist with loud speech or demonstrations. A boy who resists openly does not last long. But I rebelled in smaller ways. The system was designed for everyone to forget what we saw and what some did. So, I listened when others dismissed. I remembered faces when names were not written down. I remembered Anacaona. I looked for her amongst the others. Her presence meant hope existed in a place that often seemed God forsaken. I questioned language quietly, in my own mind, before repeating it.

I had believed that skill and knowledge made a man prepared for anything.

Seville taught me otherwise.

The sea had trained me for danger, for uncertainty, for survival.

But nothing had trained me for what happens when power arrives convinced it is right.

Standing there, watching settlement take shape, I understood something.

We were not just crossing oceans.

We were crossing lines that could not easily be uncrossed.

And I sensed, even then, that the land would remember long after we claimed not to.

Anacaona

Xaymaca, 1494

Anacaona is my name.

It means golden flower, though I am still young enough that the name feels like something I am growing into rather than something I already am.

I was born into a world that already knew itself. The land did not need explaining to us. The rivers told us when to move. The sea told us when to wait. The place the strangers would later call Seville was known to us long before it carried that name. It was a place of meeting, of trade, of story. A place where the ground remembered footsteps.

When the canoes with white wings appeared on the horizon, we did not call them gods. We called them unfamiliar.

Our elders watched carefully. We listened.

The men who came ashore spoke loudly and often. They touched the land as if touching made it theirs. They brought animals that cut the earth with their hooves and tools that bit deeper than stone ever needed to.

They called the island Santiago.



We still called it Xaymaca.

They called our home Sevilla la Nueva.

We still called it Maima.

At the edge of their activity, I stood with others my age. We were told not to interfere, but to observe. Observation is not passiveness in our way of living. It is preparation.

Among the newcomers, I noticed a boy not much older than I was. He moved differently from the others. Not cautiously, but attentively. He watched the land the way someone watches water, alert for changes.

He carried responsibility in his posture.

When our eyes met, he did not look away quickly, nor did he stare. He looked as if he were trying to understand something he had not expected to find.

That made me curious.

I learnt the boy's name, Francisco. The elders spoke with the strangers. Gifts were exchanged. Words were weighed carefully. We did not show fear. Fear invites control. Instead, we showed dignity.

Still, I could feel the imbalance beginning.

The strangers spoke of permanence almost immediately. Of building. Of naming. Of claiming. These were not words that fit our way of being. And I sensed, even then, that the land would remember long after we claimed not to. The Land does not belong to us. We belong to it.

I resisted not by refusing to stand there, but by remembering everything.

I watched how they measured space. How they ignored paths that already existed. How they spoke of usefulness as if usefulness were the same as value.

I watched how some of my people grew quiet, not because they were weak, but because silence was safer than misunderstanding.

When the demands grew heavier, I left. Not forever, but long enough to remind myself that I still could. I disappeared into the bush for days at a time, following paths my elders had shown me, eating what the land offered and sleeping where the ground was still kind. Others had already gone deeper inland, away from Maima, when they understood that the Spaniards did not come to live beside us but to take. I could not fight them alone, and I would not surrender myself to their order. So, I watched.

I returned when I chose to. I learned what they were doing to the land, and I carried that knowledge back to my people. My resistance was not open battle. It was refusal. It was survival. It was remembering that the land still knew my name, even when the strangers did not.

The boy from the ships, Francisco, worked hard. He followed orders. I could see that obedience had been taught into him the way swimming is taught to a child. For survival.

But he also noticed things.

He noticed when our people moved aside rather than confront. He noticed when our elders paused before answering questions that demanded more than courtesy should allow. He noticed me noticing him.

That, too, is resistance. To refuse invisibility.

I did not yet know what the strangers would take from us. Not fully. But I knew they would try to take more than land. They would try to take meaning.

So I held onto it carefully.

In my mind. In our stories. In the way we continued to speak to the land as if it were alive, because it was.

Xaymaca did not reject them.

It endured them. And I understood, even then, that endurance would outlast arrival.

Crystal

Seville Estate, 1700s

I do not remember the name my mother gave me.

I remember the sound of her voice saying it, though. I remember that it belonged to me in a way nothing else ever has since. The name I carry now was given by someone else. It is shorter. Easier. It does not fit my mouth properly, but it is the one I answer to.

I was taken from my home before I understood what the sea was. I learned its cruelty before I learned its beauty. The ship was cold, dark, crowded, and full of fear that had no language I could understand. People cried out in tongues that sounded like mine and others that did not. I learned quickly that silence kept me safer than speech.

When I arrived in Jamaica, I was already changed.

At Seville Estate, they taught me how to work before they taught me any words. I learned the rhythm of the place by watching. When to rise. When to lower my eyes. When to move quickly and when to become invisible. English came



slowly. Enough to obey.

Not enough to explain myself.

The land was wide and green. It reminded me, painfully, of home. That hurt more than the work.

Others laboured beside me. Some had been here longer. Some still whispered their original names at night as if afraid they would forget them. There were older people too, quieter ones, who moved as though they belonged to the land rather than to the estate. A woman once traced a shape into the dirt near the provision grounds. I did not know what it meant, but I knew it was not meant for the overseer's eyes.

I learned that resistance did not always shout.

Sometimes it survived quietly.

I found the crystal one afternoon near the edge of the field. It was small, clear, and cool in my palm. I did not know where it came from. I only knew that when I held it, my breathing slowed. I hid it beneath my clothing and took it out only when I was alone.

It became mine.

There was a boy who watched the estate sometimes. Edward. He was close to my age. He did not work the fields. He walked them as if they were his. They were his. I saw that brutality did not make him flinch. It was a part of this life and it did not bother him. He stared and I knew I was not safe. Girls are not safe here. We are owned, like animals, used like animals, bred like animals.

I did not expect him to help me.

I did not expect anything from him at all.

My body grew tired long before my mind did. The heat became heavier. My chest burned. Some days I could not keep food down. I worked anyway. Stopping was not an option given to me.

At night, I held the crystal and thought of the sea that had taken me away. I wondered if it ever returned anything it stole. I knew I was sick. I did not know how sick. No one explained such things to girls like me. I only knew that each morning it became harder to rise, and each night it felt less certain that I would wake again.

Still, I remembered.

I remembered songs without singing them. I remembered faces without names. I remembered myself, even when the world around me insisted I was only property.

If I was to leave this place, I wanted to leave something behind. So I held onto what was mine.

And I trusted the land to remember me, even if no one else did.



Edward Hemming

Seville Estate, 1700s

I was born into ownership.

Not land alone, but people. That was explained to me early, as if it were a fact of nature rather than a choice made by men. My family spoke of England as home, but Seville was where our wealth lived and breathed. Sugar. Ledgers. Bodies turned into profit. By the time I was old enough to walk the grounds alone, I understood that this estate would one day be mine.

At Seville Estate, order was everything. I was taught that discipline kept the world from collapsing. That punishment, when applied correctly, preserved peace. That the enslaved population outnumbered us greatly and that fear, not kindness, kept rebellion at bay. These lessons were delivered calmly, rationally, as instruction rather than cruelty.

I accepted them.

I was not an abolitionist. I did not question whether slavery itself was wrong. I questioned only whether it was being managed properly. I believed myself reasonable. I did not strike without cause. I did not shout unnecessarily. But I believed,

firmly, that correction was required to maintain control.

The fear was always present.

We were few. They were many. Every planter boy learned that arithmetic early. We were warned about uprisings, about whispers in the night, about fire and machetes and vengeance. I slept in a house built to withstand attack. That too was called order.

The enslaved moved through my world constantly. They cooked. They cleaned. They cut cane under the sun. I knew their assigned names. I knew their monetary value. I believed that knowing these things meant I understood them.

Crystal was one of them.

She was young. Younger than most in the fields. Quiet. She spoke little English, just enough to follow instruction. I noticed her because she did not draw attention to herself. That seemed wise. Wisdom, I thought, could be cultivated even in people born into bondage.

I owned her fully. Her labour. Her time. Her body. That fact was not questioned by anyone around me, least of all me. Sometimes I saw her pause at the edge of the field, her hand pressed briefly to her chest as if steadying herself. I assumed fatigue. Illness was common. Replaceable. The estate had survived many losses before her.

I noticed she grew thinner. Slower.

I did not intervene.

That was not my role.

When she fell ill, it was spoken of quietly. Work still needed

to be done. The cane did not wait. I was told she would either recover or be accounted for in the books. I accepted that explanation as I had accepted all the others.

When she died, it was not marked in any way that lasted. No stone. No entry worth remembering. She was buried on the estate grounds. Someone mentioned that she had been clutching a small crystal, clear and ordinary. It was left with her. It did not matter enough to remove.

I did not attend.

Years later, when I walk the grounds alone, I sometimes think of her. Not with guilt that unsettles me, but with a discomfort I do not name. I remind myself that I upheld the system as it was given to me. That I did not invent it. That I was young and obedient and cautious.

Still, I know this.

I inherited power without earning it. I benefited from suffering without witnessing most of it directly. I learned how easy it is to call compliance morality when the world has been arranged in your favour.

At Seville, I learned how a person can grow up believing himself ordinary while standing firmly inside injustice.

And how history remembers people like me clearly, while those I owned disappear unless someone chooses to tell their story.

Final word

The stories of Anacaona and Crystal are imagined, shaped from history but not recorded in it. They stand in for the many young people who lived, resisted, and endured without leaving written traces behind. Crystal, though real, left no documents we can verify, not even her original name. Francisco Niño, however, was a real historical figure whose family, training, and voyages are known because records exist and because he wrote. History remembers him not because his life mattered more, but because his voice was preserved. Edward Heming's name is also pulled from history. Birth records exist of a Richard Samuel Edward Heming born in Seville around 1766. Records of him are few, but they were written down for us to see today. These stories remind us that if we want our lives, thoughts, and experiences to be remembered accurately, we must tell them ourselves. Journaling is one way to do that. It is a space where your voice matters, where your story can be recorded in your own words, rather than explained by someone else later.

Hard Word Search Puzzle – Caribbean History

Find all the words hidden in the grid below. Words may be horizontal, vertical, diagonal, and may also appear backwards.

Q	Y	V	I	E	G	A	T	I	R	E	H	U	M	P	V	O	J	D	J	W	B
J	K	J	C	H	R	O	B	E	Y	T	I	N	A	F	R	I	C	A	N	S	R
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Words to Find:

BRITISH, HISTORY, RESISTANCE, YOUTH, SEVILLE, SLAVERY, JOURNAL, SPANIARDS, MEMORY, IDENTITY, HERITAGE, XAYMACA, SPAIN, LAND, TAINO, MAIMA, AFRICANS, CONQUEST, SEA, ENGLAND

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