

The Legend of Zamarrilla, the bandit.

Cristobal Ruiz Bermúdez, the more fearsome and bloodthirsty bandit that is recalls, was born in 1796 in Igualeja, a small town hidden among the multiple mountains and hills that make the "Serranía de Ronda", the dorsal spine of the province of Malaga.

The "Zamarrilla" was the captain of a gang of bandits well-armed with harquebuses, pistols and knives, who lived stealing from all those who dare to travel the roads of that time, in the most absolute impunity. It is said that the "Zamarrilla" robbed the owners of large villas in order to give its profit to the more poor people.



But in 1844 the Field Marshal Duke of Ahumada is in charge of organizing the Civil Guard, a new body created to combat the crime. With the creation of this new institution to combat the banditry, Zamarrilla's band was little by little annihilated. The bandit was abandoned by all and started wandering in solitude. When the hunger urged him, he felt pushed towards the nearby Malaga, in whose neighborhood of "La Trinidad" he had a bride, who at night supplied him with some food.

Certain day under the protection of the shadows of a dark night, the Zamarrilla came trustfully to his necessary interview with his bride. This night she gave him a white rose as a symbol of her loyalty to him. He was delighted because he wanted to hide deep in the mountains for a few weeks because of the pressure the police had over him.

But the commander of the Civil Guard of Malaga was warned and sent a well-armed patrol under the command of a lieutenant. Our bandit was soon cornered at the narrow streets of "La Trinidad". The situation was so desperate that the fatal outcome seemed inevitable. There was no exit for the "Zamarrilla". He ran away using a shortcut that leads to the hermitage of the Virgen de la Amargura".



He took refuge in the hermit and hid where it's still venerated the sacred image of the virgin. It was the first time in his life that he put a foot in a sacred place. But he prostrate before the venerated image of the virgin and asked for, supplicant and fearful, being save from his persecutors.

But there was no place to hide not even a window or a back door. It's then when our bandit decided to hide below the cloak of the Mother of God.

In that moment, the agents of the Civil Guard hastily broke into the hermitage and meticulously and under all class of precautions inspected the place, including the cloak of the image of the virgin. The surprise of the representatives of the law was ineffable: they were completely sure that the "Zamarrilla" had entered in the hermitage, but they don't managed to find him in any place. He has just disappeared, vanished in the air. «¡It cannot be! ¡It's impossible! », shouted at the same time the agents and the official. Tired already of its fruitless search and sure of the impossibility of that the bandit is hidden in that saint place, the official in command gave the order to leave the hermitage.



After the agents left the place the "Zamarrilla", all moved and trembling, came out from his hidden place. He looked carefully the sacred image and, with the hands united and tears in the eyes but without any word, he gave thanks to the Virgen from the most intimate place in his heart. And because he was a grateful person, took his dagger in order to sink its blade into the white rose that he was wearing and then thrust it smoothly in the chest of the image, exactly where the heart is.

With his heart full of emotion and gratitude, he felt a deep sensation of peace as never in his life. The "Zamarrilla" experienced a deep fresh breeze of purification that made him decide as a priority to change his life. He needed to be better and a new man. It's at that exact moment that the rose started to change its color from white to a red as intense as blood!

Overwhelmed for what he is seeing, it is said that the "Zamarrilla" came to the firm conviction that the virgin had changed the color white of the rose for a spectacular red in order to make him participant of the Pardon of the Sins by the death of Christ in the cross. That red color was the symbol of his redemption of the blood shed for his victims.

The tradition adds that the "Zamarrilla" surrendered to the justice and that he fully assumed all his penalties until he was freed before time because he was an example of good behavior for all his inmates during the time of his imprisonment.

After leaving the penitentiary he entered into seclusion in a convent for the rest of his days, dedicated to pray and taking care of the poor and sick.