RANDOM HOUSE eBOOKS

Garrincha

Ruy Castro

Contents

About the Book

The World Cup Finals, Sweden 1958. Brazil vs the fearsome USSR. In the opening three minutes – ‘the greatest three minutes in the history of football’ – one man wrote himself into the record books alongside the game’s greatest players, men like Pele, Di Stefano, Puskas and Maradona. Brazil went on to win the cup, and, in Garrincha, a star was born.

Garrincha was the unlikeliest of footballers – with a right leg that turned inwards and a left that turned out, he looked as if he could barely walk, but with a ball at his feet he had the poise of an angel. He played for the love of the game, uninterested in money, and ignoring tactical advice. And he was as wild off the pitch as he was mesmerising on it – mischievous, audacious and dripping with sex appeal. It was his affair and subsequent marriage to the singer Elza Soares that caught the imagination of a nation – their mouth-watering combination of soccer and samba made them the toast of 1960s Rio. But by the age of forty-nine, Garrincha was dead, destroyed by the excesses that made him so compelling.

Ruy Castro’s wonderful biography charts the extraordinary rise and fall of a flawed sporting legend, and a tragically human hero.

About the Author

Ruy Castro is the author of several biographies and collections of quotations. His most recent works include *Bossa Nova: The Story of the Brazilian Music that Seduced the World* and *Rio de Janeiro: Carnival under Fire*. He is currently working on a biography of Carmen Miranda. He lives in Rio de Janeiro.

GARRINCHA

The Triumph and Tragedy of Brazil's Forgotten Footballing Hero

Ruy Castro

Translated by Andrew Downie

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Introduction

AT THE START of 2000, just a few months after arriving in Brazil, I went to a party at the British vice-consul's house. Like many parties that take place in Rio de Janeiro it was both a chic and a laid-back affair, much of which took place on a terrace that boasted stunning views of Christ the Redeemer and the lagoon at his feet. It was one of the first real parties I had been to in my new home town and I still had that dazed look of someone who can't quite believe they are living in a city where everything revolves around beer, football and sex.

Halfway through the night I turned around and saw a woman sitting quietly in the corner of the terrace. It was a startling moment. She looked twice the age of anyone else at the party and almost half the size. But it was her face that most surprised me. It looked as if it had been pulled back and stapled to her skull.

When I asked the Brazilians who she was, they all said the same thing, 'That's Elza Soares, Garrincha's lover.'

That description did Soares, famed as a classic beauty, one of the best Brazilian singers of all time and a remarkable character in a country filled with people who are larger than life, a great disservice. But it made it abundantly clear to me where Garrincha stood in the pantheon of Brazilian legends.

I had heard of Garrincha before coming to Brazil but I never knew much about him, largely because he played at a time before the marriage of football and television. I resolved there and then to find out more about the man who

could relegate a woman as talented as Soares to his mere consort.

All my Brazilian friends knew of Garrincha and all of them had an amazing anecdote about him but detailed information was hard to find and footage even harder. And then a few months later I was in a bar when I saw someone who could only be Garrincha appear on the screen. He stood by the touchline dressed in the familiar black and white stripes of Botafogo football club with the ball at his feet, his opponent standing opposite him. In a flash he bolted to his right and with the defender in hot pursuit he started to sprint down the wing. Two or three steps later he ran back. He had jumped over the ball and left it behind.

Garrincha stood dead still over the ball for a few seconds and then bolted down the wing again. Once more the defender followed him and once more Garrincha had left the ball exactly where it was. He took two or three quick paces towards the byline and then jauntily jogged back to the ball. He was obviously enjoying himself and the defender was just as obviously bemused and embarrassed.

Garrincha stood with the ball at his feet for a second or two and then darted off down the wing once again, this time with the ball. The defender didn’t move a muscle.

I roared with laughter. It was the funniest thing I had seen on a football field since George Best took a slug from a beer can thrown at him by a Rangers fan at Easter Road. I began to understand why Brazilians loved Garrincha so much. Why they called him ‘Joy of the People’.

It is no coincidence that Garrincha reminded me of Best, although if I had been born in another continent or another era, the opposite would have been true. When Brits ask me who Garrincha was I usually tell them he was an exaggerated version of Bestie, more Best than Best ever was. They look at me as if I am being ridiculous. How can that be? they ask. Both on and off the field Best’s exploits

were legendary and he remains perhaps the greatest footballer ever to come from these isles.

The answer is easy. No disrespect to Best, who even when I saw him playing for Hibs in the twilight of his career, was head and shoulders above everyone else on the pitch. But next to Garrincha, his achievements, if that is the word, are strictly second division.

Let me spell it out. Best never played in the World Cup finals, Garrincha went there three times, and twice came home with a winner's medal (the second of which, in Chile in 1962, he is to said have won almost single-handedly). Best may have dated some of the most beautiful women on the planet, but when it comes to womanising he could not compare with Garrincha who fathered 14 children by five different women (and those are just the ones we know about). Sadly, even when it came to drinking, he outdid the great Irishman. Garrincha drank himself into an early grave at the age of 49.

Like Best, Garrincha was beloved not only for his genius with a football but for his frailties without it. Garrincha was the kind of free spirit that people are instinctively drawn to. In a country like Brazil, where at least a third of the people live in poverty, people admire and respect Pelé, an impoverished black man who turned his unparalleled talent with a football into great riches off it, but they identify with Garrincha. As Pelé became more and more famous the gap between who he had been, or at least the perception of who he had been, and who he had become, widened to the point where he ceased to be a mere mortal. Pelé became not only 'the king' but also a deity, at one point even good-naturedly joking that he was better known than God because his fame reached across Asia, where they worshipped Buddha.

Garrincha, on the other hand, rarely went on business trips, he seldom donned a suit and tie and he had neither the inclination nor the aptitude for schmoozing with politicians or captains of industry. He didn't hide out behind

the gates of a palatial home and he never lost touch with the friends he had had since childhood.

Moreover, he played football like Brazilians were meant to play football. People who saw Garrincha play at his peak say his exploits often had them doubled over with laughter. He was talented and inspiring but most of all he was fun. Football was a game to him and not much else. As Ruy Castro puts it, perfectly, he was ‘the most amateur footballer professional football ever produced’. Garrincha played for the love of the game and if he brought joy to others in doing so – and he won his famous nickname for a very good reason – then great. Anyone who has seen that footage of him bamboozling the defender can see a man in his element.

If that was not enough to endear him to his countrymen and women, then there was also the string of tragedies that seemed to throw themselves at him with all the wrath of a malevolent full-back. Garrincha was born half crippled, he was taken advantage of by club directors, he suffered from alcoholism, he attempted suicide on several occasions, and he killed his mother-in-law in a car crash. And that was only when he was alive. Even after he died, the curse continued. His two Brazilians sons both died in car crashes: Garrinchinha, the boy he had with Soares, perished when he was nine on the same road as his grandmother had decades earlier; and Neném, his son with an earlier girlfriend, died in an accident in Switzerland at the age of 28. Two of the eight daughters he had with his wife Nair were dead from cancer before they were 50.

Such tragedies do not happen to superstars, they happen to ordinary people and when Brazilians saw someone as gifted as Garrincha suffer it was one more reason to see him as one of them. Perversely, the lows were as crucial in creating his legend as were the highs.

Nowhere was that more poignantly evident than when he passed away in 1983. Garrincha died in a Rio hospital but he

had demanded to be buried in his home village of Pau Grande and from the moment the fire engine carrying his body left the Maracanã, where thousands of fans, friends, and former players had gathered to pay their respects, it was swept along by a wave of emotion. So many people wanted to go to Pau Grande to attend the funeral that traffic on the Avenida Brasil, the main road leading out of the city, came to a standstill. All along the sides of the bleak, grey highway and on the pedestrian bridges crossing it, weeping fans gathered to watch the cortege go by. The bottleneck was so concentrated on the edge of Pau Grande that some people abandoned their cars and walked into town. It took the fire engine two hours to travel 65 kilometres.

At the funeral itself the scenes were every bit as dramatic. More than 3,000 people fought for one of the 500 seats inside the town's church, forcing hundreds to wait outside. The tension was such that the priest thought it too dangerous to say mass and instead merely blessed the body and let the mourners take it to the town's cemetery, where another 8,000 people had been waiting for hours. Botafogo fans surrounded the plot in a bid to keep fans from other teams out and Garrincha's family never made it to the graveside to see him buried. Even when the coffin finally did make it through the throngs of people it was too big for the grave and more chaos ensued while mourners tried to fit the deluxe coffin into the undersize plot. In short, it was a death entirely in keeping with his life. Colourful, chaotic and perversely entertaining.

Ruy Castro brings alive the incredible events of the life that led so many people to grieve that day. His studious reporting and obvious love for his subject enables him to capture the essence of the man they gathered to honour. Reading it in Portuguese, I at last began to understand the reverence I had sensed in those Brazilians at the party that February night. Without it, I would always have wondered

who Garrincha really was. Thanks to this book I know. With this translation you will too.

Andrew Downie, March 2004, Rio de Janeiro

Chapter 1

1865–1933: The Fulniô Arrow

IT WASN'T EVEN necessary to tie them up – and this was 1865. They just needed a bit of coaxing. The small group of Indians came out of their hiding place in the forest of the Barriga mountains in Alagoas, a state in north-eastern Brazil, and approached the white men who were waving to them. The Fulniôs knew they should advance with caution. Three hundred years of history had taught them that white men were crooks, liars and more treacherous than snakes. Since arriving in Brazil in 1500, the Portuguese had decimated the Indian population. But some temptations were impossible to resist. And sure enough, when the Indians' curiosity got the better of them, the white men pounced. There and then they were bound to one another, whipped across the back and ordered to march towards civilisation.

In more heroic times, their captors would have chased them through the forest of brazilwood trees, risking the disgrace of being left behind by the Indians' quick-footedness. But by the middle of the nineteenth century it seemed as if the art of the mazy dribble – that jinking run that humiliates the pursuer and leaves him beaten and dejected – had already been lost by Garrincha's great-grandparents. Had it not, they wouldn't have let the region's ranchers and sugar-cane producers tie them by the neck and take them so easily.

Theoretically, enslaving Indians was a *démodé* practice in Brazil by 1865. Not to mention forbidden by law: Indians were forced to stay in the government-appointed areas or reservations where they were free to paint their bodies without having to worry about scaring anyone. However, no one was naive enough to believe that the ban on enslaving them was totally respected, especially not by the oligarchs of the country's impoverished north-east. Still, one of the reasons the colonisers preferred black slaves to those seized locally – in addition to the easy profits made in the slave trade – was the belief that the natives were layabouts who were interested only in drinking and sex.

They were right about the drinking and sex. The first Portuguese to arrive in Brazil at the dawn of the sixteenth century were shocked at the naked barbarians who happily indulged in all the sexual deviations then known to man: polygamy, incest, sodomy and homosexuality. And they did indeed produce a highly alcoholic fizzy drink fermented from fruit and the roots of the cassava plant that the men of the tribes drank during the days and nights of festivals.

But when it came to work the Indians were not in the least bit lazy or incompetent. They might not have aced the psychometric tests – had they existed back then – but they were good at what they did. Had the first explorers taken advantage of their specialist skills – hunting, fishing, exploring forests, cutting trails, acting as guides and building huts – the young Brazil would have been a tropical picnic and a lot of bloodshed would have been avoided. But the colonisers tried to force them to work the land, a pursuit the Indian warriors understandably found boring. And if that were not enough, the Jesuits insisted on clothing them, teaching them how to read and write, and saving their souls, without first asking their souls if they wanted to be saved. Naturally, there were uprisings, massacres and wars, and the Indians came off worse.

A few hundred years later, at the start of the nineteenth century, there were more Indians in a Pedro Américo painting than in the whole of Brazil. Only a few tribes were available for the census and almost all of them were confined to reservations, close to the cities and the ranches of the white people and far from their homes in the forest. But even in the reservations the Indians got no peace. All they had to do was take a step outside the boundary, to catch a deer or kill a *tatupeba* for lunch, and the white men would move in to slaughter or banish them. Some of the Indians fled to escape the massacre. But as soon as they were spotted wandering in the forest they were captured again. Some were forced to join the circus as freaks, and the young females were sold to randy men or, more or less as today, straight into prostitution.

During the 49 years under Dom Pedro II that led to Brazil's transition to a republic in 1889, the end of slavery from Africa began to seem inevitable and the price of Indians rose. They were rounded up again. In the north-east they were put to work cutting sugar cane, preparing firewood on the plantations and herding animals on ranches. It was nothing like the old days, when they had spent their time hunting bears or fighting bloody wars with their neighbours. But they had no choice. This was the nineteenth century, and that was what happened to Garrincha's great-grandparents in the state of Pernambuco. Expelled from their land, the Fulniôs went in search of something new.

Since the eighteenth century, the Fulniôs had lived on a reserve in Águas Belas in the backwoods of Pernambuco, a few miles from the state border with Alagoas. They were one of the last tribes in the region. There was not one member of the Caeté tribe left in either state to tell of how their predecessors had eaten Bishop Sardinha in 1556; nor one wild Tupinambá to recount how they had decimated and eaten the Caetés before they themselves were exterminated even more ferociously by the Portuguese. The

life of a Brazilian Indian was often worth little more than an animal. It was a miracle that any of them lived long enough to see the nineteenth century.

The Fulniôs were among those that did, although under the permanently vigilant eye of the white man they lost many of their old customs. One of them was endocannibalism – the practice whereby the first-born child was killed, flavoured with honey caught by the father, grilled over an open fire, and eaten by the grandparents. The Fulniôs believed that this would strengthen the race. Some other customs survived, including one that said when they ran into a stone they must take revenge by biting into it. And the children never lost their extraordinary ability to hunt. They were brilliant at throwing stones – they hunted without slings or catapults or any other weapons – and when they got small animals such as monkeys or birds in their sights, they were dead meat.

In 1860 there were close to 700 Fulniôs living in Águas Belas on land the white men had long coveted. In that year, with the collusion of the authorities, the invasions began. The white men came early in the morning and set fire to the Indians' humble homes. Whole villages were burned to the ground; if the local families wanted to live they either had to flee or succumb to their new masters. There was no way to fight back or resist. To add insult to injury, more than a hundred Fulniôs were recruited to fight in the War of the Triple Alliance against Solano Lopez, a Paraguayan they had never heard of. The first ones were 'volunteers for the motherland'; the others had to be dragged away in chains. When the women in the tribe heard that military recruiters were on their way, they dressed their boys in women's jewellery so they would not be taken from them. But many of them were, and few returned. As a result, almost 500 of the 700-strong Fulniô population had been forced from their land by the end of the decade. Many of them were taken so far from Águas Belas that they would never find their way

back. But it hardly mattered as they would have had nowhere to go back to: in 1870 the reserve was closed down.

The Fulniô diaspora spread their mestizo roots across Brazil. Garrincha's great-grandparents, who were probably among the first to leave Águas Belas in around 1865, followed the Ipanema river for 28 miles and tried to set up home in Santana do Ipanema, just across the state border in Alagoas. They managed to set up a village but, perhaps because they were forced to run again, many moved on, took a left turn and ended up in the Barriga mountains on the outskirts of a town called União dos Palmares. It was there they were finally captured, strung together and taken to a nearby town called Quebrangulo and the plantations and ranches from which they never left.

The running wouldn't end until nearly half a century later, in 1914, when the Pernambuco state government gave the last remaining Fulniôs part of their land in Águas Belas. However, most of the area's original inhabitants had died by then. And their children – one of whom, José Francisco dos Santos, would become Garrincha's grandfather – were middle-aged, born on ranches, far from their origins. And in the case of José Francisco dos Santos and his children, much further than the mere 100 kilometres that separated Quebrangulo from Águas Belas.

José was probably born sometime between 1865 and 1875, perhaps even in Quebrangulo, the son of the first batch of Fulniôs chased from the Barriga mountains. There is no birth certificate, and the names of his parents are unknown. The custom of the time was to give the Indians the name of their captor, for easy identification if they went missing, and those Fulniôs took the name of the man who had seized them, Francisco dos Santos. That he bore a white man's name was just one of the factors that would make José forget he was an Indian.

José would have been between 18 and 28 years old in 1893, when he married Antonia, the daughter of a black slave and an Indian woman. It was not a good time to marry and start a family. The years following the fall of the monarchy and the declaration of the republic in 1889 were particularly hard for the north-east. Its three main sources of wealth – slavery, monarchy and sugar – had suddenly disappeared. Brazil, or rather southern Brazil, had become a country of immigrants, republicans and coffee. In Alagoas, the refineries and ranches were going bankrupt one after another and their owners, who had recently been so powerful, were selling their pianos in order to keep their horse-drawn carriages on the road.

Until then, José and Antonia, like millions of other poor north-easterners, had been the servants of rich men; the changes meant they were now the servants of poor men. While the children of ranchers and plantation owners went to the capital to become doctors, lawyers and even writers, the former slaves, without any prospects, stayed right where they had grown up, struggling to keep their heads above water at the abandoned refineries around Quebrangulo. If they were lucky, the rancher gave them a plot of land on the condition they shared their harvest with him. What was left would not have filled a saucepan.

And so it was for José and Antonia. On the eve of the twentieth century, as they looked towards the horizon from the top of Quebrangulo’s hills, the future did not appear to hold much in store.

Quebrangulo was a district of Palmeira dos Índios between the sea and the backwoods of rural Alagoas. Back then it was almost deserted; José and Antonia were among fewer than 5,000 inhabitants spread out across more than 300 square kilometres. In 1889, with the clamour for a republic growing, gangs of bandits took advantage of the political crisis and turned the region into their own little fiefdom. They looted the ranches, stole cattle and horses, broke into

homes and shops, started riots, and generally made life a nightmare for all and sundry.

José and Antonia, like everyone else in Quebrangulo, lived in permanent fear. But they were determined to start a family, and the presence of bandits and an uncertain future did not stop them. Their first child was Manuel, born in 1894. Three years later came Amaro, then Maria, José, Isabel and João – all baptised with the surname Francisco dos Santos. None of them would call themselves Fulniôs, or even Indians. Their own mother was a *cafuza*, half Indian and half black, and they were *cafuzos* too. In truth, though, they were simply dark-skinned Brazilians born during tough times, and therefore obvious candidates to be illiterate, ignorant and backward. Brazil did not let them down.

That was until Manuel, the oldest and cleverest child, began to look for ways to invent a future. In 1909, aged around 15, he left home and went to work as an odd-job man in the city. Quebrangulo had nothing to offer, but Manuel did anything and everything he could. He learned to read, discovered he was good with numbers and, smarter than most ambitious young men, began to cultivate friendships. One of them was with José Peixoto da Silva, a Pernambucan who fancied himself as a poet and a journalist, and his daughter Adelaide, who was pretty and of marrying age. In 1915 or 1916, Peixoto and his daughter moved from the north-east to Rio de Janeiro, bringing Manuel with them as their lodger.

With a hand from Peixoto, Manuel got a job as a cook in the São Sebastião tuberculosis hospital in Caju, a small neighbourhood near Rio’s docks. He did his job the best he could, but he soon saw that his future lay elsewhere. He studied at night and got as far as primary-school level. At the same time, Manuel was secretly courting Peixoto’s daughter. Adelaide’s father, a descendant of Dutch settlers, liked Manuel but he did not see him as a potential son-in-law – he was too dark-skinned for a start. Manuel was not

allowed to get too close to Adelaide, to touch her hand, or to address her by anything but the formal term *senhorita*. But when Peixoto travelled north on a trip, Manuel and Adelaide took advantage and secretly tied the knot.

Arriving back in Rio to the sound of wedding bells, Peixoto almost turned his house upside down. He disowned his daughter, new husband and all. Manuel was shocked at his reaction. He had not counted on such a radical response. The bright future he had sought to build for himself appeared to be fading fast. Then he heard about a place a few miles away called Magé. The English had built textile factories there and Manuel was confident that a creative and hardworking man would have no trouble finding a job in such a place. So he and his new wife set off for Raiz da Serra and Pau Grande, two small towns in the municipality of Magé.

Manuel was a natural leader, and as soon as he arrived he rolled up his sleeves and got to work. He was a focal point for the other immigrants in the region, and he organised them into shifts. One of the shifts cleaned the rivers and fields for América Fabril, the enormous textile factory based in Pau Grande, while the other chopped wood to feed the factory’s huge boilers. If he caught one of the men shirking his responsibilities, Manuel rolled up his sleeves, got hold of the axe, and without any further ado set about turning the tree into a pile of logs himself. Then he set about the slacker. No one dared say a word.

At 5'11'' and almost 20 stone, Manuel stood out from the crowd. Some people hated him for being harsh and arrogant, and he might have unwittingly stood on a few toes, even if it was only because he was so big. The Englishmen who ran América Fabril, however, liked him. Mr Smith, the mill director, Mr Hall, the manager, and Mr Lindsay, the industrial director, all trusted him, and they adopted him as their man.

In Pau Grande, Manuel set up a pottery firm alongside the textile factory and became América Fabril's principal supplier of tiles. Because of the pottery concern, everyone forgot the name Manuel and started calling him Mané Caieira, after the oven where the tiles were baked. But he didn't stop there. He soon diversified, becoming first the man in charge of keeping Pau Grande's streets clean, and then assuming responsibility for maintaining the railway lines built by the English. In fewer than four years he had an army of men working under him and had become indispensable to América Fabril – without ever being an employee. When he felt he had established himself, and at around the same time he found out that his parents had died in Alagoas, Manuel decided it was time to fetch his brothers and sisters to come and work for him. All of them came except Amaro.

Amaro was not in Quebrangulo when Manuel put the rest of the family on the steam train to Rio. In 1923, at the age of 26, he had gone to try his luck as a cobbler in Olinda, one of Pernambuco's most beautiful colonial towns. Amaro was said to be a good cobbler, but history has tended not to smile on people who mend shoes. Unlike Manuel, Amaro had never learned how to read or write or even to do simple arithmetic; he therefore didn't have many career options available to him. The best thing he did in Olinda was to get married in 1924 to Maria Carolina, a thin, light-skinned Pernambucan girl. When he received Manuel's telegram in December that same year asking him to come and join the family in Rio, Amaro had to ask the Western telegram official to read it to him. He responded, saying he wanted to come but that his wife was about to have a baby. Manuel wrote back, telling him to have the baby and then to travel down afterwards.

Twenty days after their daughter was born, with Rosa stuck firmly to her mother's breast, Amaro and Maria Carolina boarded the train south. Manuel met them at the

station in Rio and took them to Pau Grande where he gave them a place to stay at the back of his tile workshop. At first, Amaro worked as a cobbler in a small workshop Manuel set up for him in the neighbouring town of Raiz da Serra. Later, he helped Manuel in the workshop making tiles. Finally, he found his true vocation: as the man whose eagle eye and gruff voice kept workers on their toes.

With Maria Carolina also earning money by cooking for the contractors they soon had enough to move into their own house on rua Chiqueiro. At the edge of a river and close to a waterfall, it was a pleasant enough place to live. Maria Carolina raised goats, pigs and chickens in the yard at the back of the house, and it was in that relatively happy home that she added to her brood: José, Cicero, Maria de Lourdes and, in 1933, another son, this one baptised Manuel after her brother-in-law and protector.

Or Garrincha, as everyone in Pau Grande would soon be calling him.

In the 1930s, if you'd asked anyone from Pau Grande where they wanted to go when they died, there was a good chance they would have answered Pau Grande. Mother Nature had been exceptionally generous. There was honey flowing in abundance, the villagers lived and worked in peace and freedom. Heaven was at hand, and the people of Pau Grande didn't even have to die to get there. That is, as long as they didn't mind giving their body and soul to a higher power: the English. Or to be more precise, the América Fabril company.

In 1871, when the English first arrived in Magé, a lush green region cut by rivers and waterfalls snuggled in at the foot of the Órgão hills north-east of Rio, much of the area was still untouched by human hands. They built roads, constructed dams and installed textile factories in the small towns of Andorinhas, Santo Aleixo and Estrela, as well as in Magé, the seat of the municipality itself. The factories all

made money but the most successful of them was built in Pau Grande, despite the fact that the English had got off to an inauspicious start in the town, cutting down a tree that had grown there for centuries. The tree was gigantic: 50 metres high and so wide that 30 men could not join their hands around it. This was the Pau Grande, or big stick, that gave the town its name. The English used its wood to build the workshops that manufactured the fan belts that were indispensable to the workings of the big factory.

Everything in Pau Grande belonged to the factory – in truth, everything in Pau Grande *was* the factory. The factory built houses and gave them rent-free to the 1,200 workers and their families who had come from all over Rio and the north-east to work there. It laid roads and put in place water, electricity and sewage systems; it built schools and health centres. Medicine was free at the purpose-built chemist, as was the milk, the school dinners and the students' books. Once a week the factory gave each house a pile of wood for their fires. If an employee's daughter was to be married, the factory would be informed and a team would set off immediately to get their house ready for its new arrivals – it was automatically assumed the new couple would move in with the bride's family. Their children would enjoy the same benefits as their parents, their destinies would be mapped out for them: when they reached seven they would go to school, and when they got to 14 they would get a job at América Fabril. At 44 they could retire.

Football came to the town in 1908 when the first English visitors brought balls, taught the locals how to play, and founded the Sport Club Pau Grande. It was a sport for everyone; there was no fence around the pitch, and no one had to pay to watch the matches. The players were amateurs and would continue to be long after professional football was introduced to Brazil in 1933.

Any leisure time not filled by football, carnival or the town's one picture house was spent enjoying the area's

natural beauty. Adults and children alike swam, or went fishing and hunting in the rivers and forests that surrounded the town. Because everything belonged to the factory there were no barbed-wire fences and no Keep Out signs. Until at least 1940 the rivers were awash with fish, the skies were filled with birds, and one could hardly take a step without tripping over armadillos, monkeys and other exotic animals.

The influence of the English extended far beyond the factory. The people of Pau Grande were imbued with a sense of traditional British superiority; they were made to feel as if they were a class above their colleagues in the company's other factories. Although the other employees went on strike – textile workers seemed to find it extraordinarily easy to learn the words to 'The Internationale' – no serious stoppages ever hit the Pau Grande factory. The strikes that did take place were always short-lived.

The townspeople lived together like a family. Life was trouble-free; muggings, robberies and violence were only read about in newspapers. Perhaps once a year someone's chicken went missing. Had it not been for the insects no one would have bothered closing their doors and windows at night. Which, conveniently, helped the English bosses keep control. The guards who patrolled the town at night kept their superiors up to date with all the important gossip. They monitored things so closely that the patrician Englishmen had no qualms about telling off the locals, even on matters such as basic hygiene. Mothers were called to be given lectures in Oxford-accented Portuguese: 'You must wipe your child's bottom! We will not have children with dirty bottoms running about here!' If a couple had an argument, the factory manager invited them to drop by his office the next morning to patch things up. If it was discovered that an employee was beating his wife, he was sanctioned; if he was caught doing it again the most lenient punishment he could expect to face was suspension. The English managers even caned repeat offenders. Grown men extended their hands to

receive corporal punishment as if they were at an English public school – and in many ways that is exactly how it was in Pau Grande. Or at América Fabril. Where the boss was the judge and the jury.

Mané Caieira knew how to make his presence felt in the little town. He was one of the first people in Pau Grande to own a car, a radio and all sorts of other mod cons that were then coming into vogue. But no matter how hard he tried, he was unable to give his brothers the push they needed to take the same steps forward. They were content to reproduce the life they had had in Alagoas, perhaps because the setting was so similar: in Quebrangulo, the Barriga hills were on the horizon; in Pau Grande, it was the Órgãos. The bags they brought from the north-east might have held only leather sandals and a few old shirts, but they also brought the undying customs of the region: superstitions, competitions between guitarists, hammocks to sleep in, the unquestioned ease with which they produced children outside marriage, and bottles of *cachimbo*, a mixture of *cachaça* (fermented sugar cane), honey and sticks of cinnamon that was given medicinally to everyone from pregnant mothers to children with colds. Amaro had been brought up in Alagoas drinking *cachimbo* and his offspring, including Garrincha, would grow up the same way.

Amaro was small and strong. His skin was as tough as the bark on a tree, and he had a squashed nose and thick, wavy hair. He loved making and setting off fireworks and singing his own verses to the tunes he played on his little guitar. He was talented at killing goats and he would regularly slaughter up to 30 in a weekend for his neighbours, each animal sent crashing to the floor with a well-aimed blow to the forehead. As payment he kept the tripe, which he cooked and shared with his friends.

In spite of appearances he was a religious man, and he had a special devotion to St George, perhaps because of

their common love of horses. Amaro had his own horse, named Champion after Gene Autry's famous steed, but when he went out he didn't hunt down dragons. Amaro's target was altogether different: he went after women.

Married or single, to Amaro they were all *comadres*, a Portuguese word that literally means 'godmother' or 'mother of one's godchild', but which back then also meant a bit on the side. That may just have been Amaro's way of referring to the occasional objects of his affection, but it could also have been because many of them asked him to serve as godfather to their children – children who in some cases were actually his. Amaro is believed to have fathered at least 25 children in and around Pau Grande, not including the nine he had with Maria Carolina.

His performance with the ladies had to be short and sweet. He would ride off on his horse, neckerchief at his throat and knife on his belt, and make his way out into the country. He would stop at the house of a married couple and clap his hands. When the lady of the house appeared he would ask if her husband was around. If he was, they exchanged greetings and he rode on. But if he wasn't, Amaro accepted her invitation to come inside and have a coffee, and – nine times out of ten, according to the legend – he gave her something extra special in return. It was always quick. They didn't even have to take their clothes off, she just lifted her skirt and he unbuckled his trousers. Even a bed was a luxury; they did it standing up, against the stove or on the kitchen floor. For those friends who asked him if he wasn't ashamed to be screwing *comadres*, he had an answer prepared: 'A *comadre* is only a *comadre* from the waist up.'

Many husbands feared that Amaro was carrying on with their wives but no one acted on their suspicions. When he got a new job at the factory at the end of the 1930s the possibility of retribution became even more unlikely. For, as a guard at América Fabril, Amaro had a position that gave

him almost military power. Dressed in a yellow uniform, he patrolled the city making sure everything was in order. His tasks included breaking up arguments in bars and houses and pulling apart those couples getting amorous at the back of the S.C. Pau Grande.

There was nothing hypocritical about his behaviour. Amaro was a moral man, and had one of his sons got a girl into trouble he would have forced him to marry her. Adults, though, were old enough to know what they were doing, and he was not going to be the one to castigate them. In addition, Amaro did not use his new position as a way to woo the ladies. In his own primitive way he would have been considered a bit of a charmer; in his deep voice, he complimented them on their hair, waist or backside, especially if it was nice and round, the way he liked it. He flirted in such a way that if he was rejected he could claim he was merely joking around. If the husbands were afraid of him because he was Mané Caieira's brother (and, later, Garrincha's father), then it was hardly his fault.

Even though the impunity he enjoyed allowed him the pick of the women of Pau Grande, Amaro was not in the slightest bit choosy and he made no distinction because of colour, looks or age. 'As long as they are breathing' was his motto, and he might even have dispensed with that formality: at more than one wake he was heard to ask, half seriously, 'Is the *comadre* cold yet?'

Women were not his only vice. Like all his brothers (except Mané Caieira), Amaro was an alcoholic. Having been raised on *cachimbo*, he had a high tolerance to alcohol and plenty of opportunities to show that no matter how many *cachaças* he had, he never seemed to get drunk. He was philosophical about it: *cachaça* was there to cheer people up, not to degrade them. He had no respect for those who drank in local bars or who threw back so much they could hardly stand. The place to drink was at home or at friends' houses, and he took his own advice – all day, every day.

Amaro drank *cachaça* straight, or mixed it with gooseberry juice. He would tie the bottle to a string and lower it into the cistern or the river to keep it cool. He used any excuse to take it out and have a slug, but it was rare to see him drunk at any time other than at local feasts or during singalongs – occasions when anything was acceptable. And he never complained about hangovers the morning after.

When Garrincha was born in 1933, Amaro was 36 years old and at his sexual and alcoholic prime. But the massive quantities of alcohol he kept sticking away eventually took their toll, and there are stories of how by the end of the 1940s he was being carried home. Other tales told of his walking the streets naked without the slightest idea what he was doing. It is almost certain he was impotent by the time he was 60. The once formidable Amaro, a man whose sexual exploits shocked and delighted the people of Pau Grande, had withered almost visibly.

Bit by bit, he disappeared. But in his place came someone who would surpass him in everything he had been good at, and whose star contained its own brilliance.

CHAPTER 2

1933–1952: Childhood in Shangri-la

WHEN MANUEL WAS born, the midwife was the first person to notice that his legs were crooked. The left leg bent out and the right leg bent in, as if a gust of wind had blown them out of position. Manuel inherited his legs not from Amaro but from Maria Carolina, his mother, although hers were not as badly distorted as her son's. A calliper would have put them right in no time, but no one thought of that in Pau Grande in 1933.

It took Amaro a while to get round to completing his son's birth certificate, and when he did he made a mess of it. He finally made it to the registrar's office in Raiz da Serra in the first week of November, and then he mixed up the dates, giving Garrincha's birthday as 18 October when it should have been 28 October. The registrar, a local bigwig who was always three sheets to the wind, wasn't much of a stickler for detail either. When Amaro gave his son's name as Manuel, he simply wrote down Manuel.

Such mistakes were not uncommon. In Brazil, where people use both their mother's and their father's last names, Garrincha should have been given the surnames Francisco and dos Santos, Francisco being the surname of his father and dos Santos the surname of his mother. But because Francisco was also a first name it was mistakenly left off the certificate, and in all future official documents Garrincha's full name was recorded as Manuel dos Santos.