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## A Town Named Cariño

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My surname often invites a smile or a smirk, but every now and then someone will start to rave about a little fishing village in Galicia.

My heart skipped a beat when I saw the first baby-blue sign saying Concello de Cariño. The municipality of Cariño comprises five parishes named Cariño, A Pedra, Sismundi, Feás, and Landoi, having in 1987 separated from Ortigueira, yearly venue of a famous festival of fusion Celtic music.

Cariño and Ortigueira guard either side of one of the Miño's northern estuaries (Rías Altas). That is, where the river flows out to the sea. Cariño is on the left bank and seaward, northward. Ortigueira is on the right bank and slightly more inland, southward. In a fluvial procession held every July 16, a statue of Our Lady of Carmen is rowed from Cariño to Ortigueira and back.

The town center of Cariño is a crescent of low red-roofed white buildings facing Cariño Bay. It is not pretty compared to other whitewashed towns elsewhere in Spain. Don't go to Cariño if what you want is quaint

folklore and frills. Cariño gives an impression of near-Cartesian rationality, tidy sparseness, and modest grace. Think of a girl without make-up but no pimples either, no blemishes to hide with foundation. Transparency is the word that comes to me and this applies to Cariño as a whole. You take in urban cluster and rural sprawl, beach and marina and port, fresh water and salt water, meadow and hills and paper-supplying eucalyptus-covered mountains, all in a single sweep.

In a very ordinary-looking restaurant facing Port Cariño, over a very fresh octopus dish prepared the local way, I play detective. The waiter brings me the town-by-town phone directory for A Coruña province. There is no Cariño in Cariño. I start to plan a visit to the town cemetery but the seafood placed before me is too good to be true. By the time dessert comes it no longer disappoints me that I cannot reinvent myself with a story about a fisherman named Suso Cariño who lived on the Rua Carrasqueiro until his boat went adrift to the Philippine Deep.

Cariño ends seaward in the form of a cape with three eagle-shaped cliffs. Face north. To the right of you is Bay of Biscay. To the left of you is already full open Atlantic. So, I may not be able to boast an ancestor from Cariño, but I can say that a town named like me marks the demarcation line between a sea and an ocean.

*Now it's your turn. Is there a place somewhere whose name is your name?*