“Play it again Sancho”

The Bar La Casa Devante is accessed from the Village Square which is to the very north of Alqueria. The owner is one Horacio Stranglardeganso publican and erstwhile adventurer. Horacio has a Humphrey Bogart fixation and has taken to wearing a trilby and trench coat on every possible occasion. In the Winter this isn't too bad but come the height of Summer and Horacio is suffering. With sweat pouring down his neck he tries his best to mimic the coolness of Bogart. Not that Horacio thinks it is an impersonation. Horacio is convinced he is the persona of Bogart, however “Here's looking at you kid” doesn't quite work in Spanish.

Wartime Casablanca has very little in common with the Alqueria of the twenty-first century however Horacio had done his best to recreate Rick's Café Américain in the Bar La Casa Devante. He even built a casino with a large roulette table in the centre. In an attempt to rig the wheel so selected individuals could win, the mechanism jammed. The same number came up every third spin, it almost ruined Horacio financially.

His pianist, Sancho was so bad there was a surcharge on all bills paying him not to play. If anyone questioned it Horacio would allow Sancho to let rip with his full repertoire of three tunes. The chastened customer soon paid up. A treat for Saturday night's entertainment was Ernesto Muyinestable Alqueria's very own one legged flamenco dancer. People who hadn't seen his act wondered how a monoped could possibly dance the flamenco. The answer is quite simple, he couldn't he falls over a great deal. The audience are always very sympathetic and applaud which encourages Ernesto to perform more and more complicated routines. Which means he falls over even more. Eventually bruised and dented Ernesto takes his bow and hops back to his dressing-room delighted with his reception.

As there are virtually no laws in the village republic of Alqueria goods and services which would be described as black-market elsewhere are exchanged quite openly in

the Pueblo. The place to come to buy anything from a barrel of Remitroot Whisky to an aircraft-carrier is the Bar La Casa Devante. Spivs mingle with their potential customers conversing in hushed tones, lurking in corners as deals are struck. A group from the British Ministry of Defence, indistinguishable from the spivs huddle around a bottle filled table. They are negotiating the price of some piece of military hardware or other. It has been rumoured that the 7th Armoured Brigade was kitted out from the Bar La Casa Devante. When the news was leaked and questions asked in the house the British prime minister stated “It is a good deal for Britain”.

I was an even better deal for Alqueria.