37°C

When the temperature reaches 37 degrees people start behaving very oddly. Above and below this point they are fine but when 37°C is reached people become strange, an inverse to the norm.

Odd behaviour is not alien to Alqueria and its people, in fact some argue it is normality itself. As the mercury crept towards body heat the people of the Pueblo started agreeing with one another. A concept as alien as the truth is to a politician. This harmony was nerve-racking, it only increased tension. It was so incompatible with the ambience of the Pueblo, it simply didn't work in Alqueria.

All this bonhomie was unfortunate as the first riot of Summer was due to 'kick off' mid-morning. Rioting is important to Alqueria. It establishes a pecking order, it strengthens barrio bonds and reaffirms the hatred that one section of the population feels for the other. With the heat of the day now at blood temperature an unnatural quiet descended on the Village. People waved, cars stopped to let children and dogs cross roads, young ladies smiled at old men and vice a versa. It was scary. Normally it only took the merest glimpse of a person from the opposing barrio and everyone started oiling their respective metaphoric rifles.

A problem in logistics was looming. If the riot didn't take place it would throw the whole carefully crafted schedule of civil unrest out for the year. Fortunately Manuela's soul was so dark and sinister she alone was unaffected by the 37° glitch. Determined not to let her arsenal of cobblestones, carefully selected rocks and specially broken bottles go to waste, she devised a plan.

Manuela knew the people of Alqueria and she knew what would make their blood run cold. She let it be known that the Prattsborough Morris Men would give daily performances in the Village Plaza every evening for a month. This information was whispered and spread through the Village like the flu virus in a bordello. Loco Paco

hid his Saharan Dung Beetle Benjy for fear of it being trodden to death during one of their performances. Antonio Poyato wept openly and took to the bottle. The Village was a chill place. Alqueria was suddenly very calm once more, a fundamental silence fell on the Pueblo, it was almost tangible.

The first projectiles struck a minute or so later. The Hill People attacked the Newcomers who resisted and then counter-attacked. Windows shattered and plumes of smoke spiralled into the evening air. Manuela surveyed the scene with a warm satisfaction.

That warm glow one gets from normality and the familiar returned, comforting no matter how hideous.