Stranger on the Shore

He, she, or perhaps even it appeared one fine Winter morning. Wrapped in a long black frock-coat to keep the early chills at bay the apparition stalked the byways of Alqueria. People watched through half open shutters as the spectral figure sauntered to and fro. It appeared to be looking for something or worse, at least to the culpable minds of Alquerians, someone. Whether the figure had powers of arrest or censure it was impossible to tell. From its easy movement and upright stance however an age of thirty to forty would have been appropriate.

For whom had it come?
For whom had the bell tolled?

The younger folk examined their consciences and the older their diaries. Manuela's first thought was that of a jilted lover. She tried to remember the suitors she had wronged but they were so numerous it would have taken a bookkeeper of some renown to recall all the petty details such as names etc. If the figure is female then it is perhaps a wife bent on revenge or it could still be a jilted lover of course. Manuela decided on discretion and took a supply of food, three bottles of Cava and the Village's senior firefighter into the sanctuary of her roof-space.

Rodriquez was quite beside himself, his enemies were more numerous than a politician's evasions and he feared for his very life. Suppose the stranger was armed or worse, suppose he wanted money? Rodriquez disguised himself with false elbows and joined a band of itinerant donkey-thratchers.

Antonio Poyato had never paid a cent in customs duty or any other form of tax on his international Remitroot sales. Was this an evidence gathering operation on the part of some fiscal bureau? Officials had always turned a blind eye in exchange for some of the precious Remitroot liquid. Suppose the blind eye had suddenly regained sight.

Poyato made a mental calculation of the customs duty he could possibly owe. He packed a suitcase and headed for Morocco.

Blythe Gruntmore thought it might be his Spanish teacher from Newcastle. The last time he had seen him he was a gibbering wreck crouched in a corner cowering in the fetal position after listening to some gem of pronunciation from Blythe. The teacher had sworn revenge over Gruntmore's systematic destruction of the poetic Spanish language. Blythe could contain himself no more and confronted the intruder.

The stranger was Loco Paco's brother, Daft Diego. He intended to pay a surprise visit on Paco but had unfortunately lost his address. He had resigned himself to a life of aimlessly wandering the streets of Alqueria.