The Creature from the Greeny-Black Lagoon

The Río Verde flows or rather struggles past the eastern barrio of Alqueria. The point at which it flows into the Mediterranean had for years been treated as an illegal effluent outlet. The *Junta de Andalucía* had spent tens of thousands in numerous unsuccessful clean-up attempts before discovering their mistake.

The River is a strange mix of water from the high sierra, the outflow from the bad drainage of Alqueria itself and the last resting place of defunct plant and animal life from the adjacent valley. From its depths many strange creatures have evolved. These range from the Alquerian Trout, inedible and hideous to the strange Fifteen Toed Newt which produces a hallucinogenic toxin and emits a strangled barking sound when cornered. The River's ability to mutate life is staggering. It was the first place that Enrique Stenchio, the minister responsible for flora and fauna of Alqueria, looked the day the strange footprints appeared.

With seven toes, all webbed, the footprints led from the river and into the village. Sightings from villagers included one from Rodriquez. Rodriquez reported seeing a figure with bulging bloodshot eyes, green scaly skin and large pointed ears through his kitchen window. This sighting was immediately dismissed as being Rodriquez's own reflection in the glass.

Suspicion was then thrown onto Loco Paco who had a history of keeping rather strange pets, of the animal variety that is. Enrique found him on his patio happily throwing a stick for his pet Saharan Dung Beetle which he had reared from a pup. A check of his cages and enclosures saw them all occupied or their occupants accounted for.

When pressed other inhabitants came forward with sightings. The sight of hideous individuals wandering the streets of Alqueria was not that unusual. On this occasion

many thought the apparition was simply a visiting politician of which there had been many since the village's declaration of independence.

A bait was laid, rotting fish, raw steak, a saucer of Remitroot Beer and a well thumbed copy of NiceBits the magazine for men. All things to all creatures. The next morning the fish was still rotting and the steak browning in the early sun however the beer and magazine were nowhere to be seen. A tracking device cunningly hidden between the pages of the glossy publication led the brave Enrique to a dwelling in the Calle Horno.

There in a dimly lit living-room turning the pages of NiceBits and sipping Remitroot Beer from a saucer was Blythe Gruntmore, the village's resident Englishman. Rubber seven toed boots lay at his feet. Gruntmore's explanation lay in the celebration of Hanging Monkey Day. A tradition from the north east of England where participants wander abroad in comic monkey costumes. The rubber seven toed boots bought from a fancy dress outfitter in Almería were the closest Gruntmore could manage.

Enrique didn't doubt his story just his sanity.