Hace Calor

Channelled as it is through the valleys of the Sierra Alhamilla the light northerly breeze never caresses Alqueria. It leaves the village breathless in the searing cauldron of the Alquerian valley. This climatic anomaly is known locally as *La Sartén*, The Fryingpan. Several of the village boys demonstrated the suitability of the name by frying an egg on the bonnet of Rodriquez's white Mercedes. This was much to the annoyance of the mill owner and the delight of the village scamps. The scallywags hastily dispersed as the ranting, puffing Rodriquez appeared.

With temperatures in the mid-forties there was no relief from the oppressive heat. Houses remained shuttered while air conditioning units whirred and rattled. Alqueria was too exhausted to squabble. Overheated dogs slept restlessly in whatever shade they could find, panting, tongues lolling. The village was quiet, calm holding its breath until evening. The stillness of the day emphasised the smallest sound sending a slammed door or a dog's bark resonating through the streets. The brightness of the day hurt the eyes while cooking odours hung in the still air.

Inside the dwellings of Alqueria a struggle to stay cool was being waged. Inside or out it was too hot to move, too hot to talk, even too hot to think. This is just as well as the thinking process eludes most of Alqueria's inhabitants at the best of times. The young men thought the answer lay in consuming vast quantities of cold lager. The young ladies used the opportunity to wear their skimpiest outfits, which caused the young men to drink even more lager. The older and wiser stayed near the stone flagged ground floors, inanimate and semi-conscious. The affluent Newcomers however, splashed in their pools, luxuriating in the cool chlorinated water.

One group of youngsters enjoyed the air conditioning of an emergency ambulance after swimming in the Río Verde. Not only did they contract the usual foot fungus but also a strange puce tint to the skin which emitted a faint glow. Antonio Poyato, in

order to keep his precious Remitroot crop irrigated, diverted the Hill People's water supply. All the taps ran dry and beer was drunk as an alternative.

As the sun sets, so Alqueria begins to cool. Pigeons return to the rooftops and the canine population becomes animated in their evening search for food. Voices are heard in the streets as the village comes to life once more. Invigorated by their enforced inactivity, the people of Alqueria return to their belligerent selves with renewed determination.