The Beauty Pageant
(Part two, the contest)

News of the Beauty Pageant and the possibility of another Alquerian free-for-all had spread through the surrounding area. On the day of the contest a sizeable crowd had gathered including a coach load of tourists from Málaga. They had a choice between the bullfight or the Beauty Pageant. They opted for the one which promised the most gore and gorging.

The pageant was anxiously awaited by the residents of Alqueria but for varying reasons. While the organisers set up stages, catwalks and seating the citizens of Alqueria taped up windows, secured doors and removed anything throwable, burnable or nickable. To everyone's surprise the Pageant started on time and progressed in a reasonably civilised manner.

The girls first appeared in their swimsuits, each more skimpy than the last. As the last girls paraded the more elderly of the men were visibly disturbed. Some had to seek the solitude of the olive grove, lost in the memories of their youth. The game show host Ricardo Trueno interviewed the contestants, he was completely impartial. The only person he found alluring was himself. The girls' hobbies seemed to include caring for the old and infirm, looking after sick and stray animals and helping the destitute. Each girl's claim became more fantastic than the last. One girl gave her hobby to be donating organs to the chronically ill. When pressed she admitted to handing over, three kidneys, two spleens and a her left buttock.

The 'evening wear' section was rather spoilt when 102 year old Amalia got her dress's long and convoluted train caught in the steering mechanism of her wheelchair. She lost control and ended up hurtling headlong into the Town's fountain. Despite this minor setback the event was progressing in a civilised and controlled manner. A cloud was about to descend on the contest. The girls began to demonstrate their special talents and abilities.

Tap dancing, singing and playing the spoons were well represented. The problem occurred when Manuela took the stage. Manuela demonstrated what she was good at and was immediately disqualified. This almost caused a riot. Half of the audience thought it was a Newcomer plot to nobble the competition. The other half had specifically come to see the display of Manuela's legendary bodily dexterity.

There was uproar. The favourite had been disqualified. A winner for any of the two factions in the village would now cause full scale civil unrest. The answer was to award the crown to a non-partisan contestant. There was only one, who turned out to be a man. The one-legged flamenco dancer Ernesto Muyinestable who entered for a bet.

The mistake was soon noticed but for the sake of public order she or he was duly crowned. The village swore never to mention the Beauty Pageant again.