The New Bridge
(Part one)

Matas eased himself back into the cave. His midnight sortie into Alqueria had been successful. He had 'liberated' a cask of Remitroot liquor a small barrel of olives and a copy of 'Maxim en Español'. Matas still lurked in his cave overlooking the village. Believing the Civil War still to be on he did what he could for the Republic with his limited resources.

Buoyed by a belief in his cause and half a cask of Remitroot liquor he foraged through his meagre arsenal of weapons. After discarding some corroding cartridges, a collection of highly unstable pyrotechnics he came across an innocuous looking brown canvas parcel. Cleaning the accumulated dirt of decades from the package he examined the label. 'Demolition block-D7. RDX. TNT'. Further rummaging brought to light a detonator, a reel of wire and an old but functional car battery. He had all the prerequisites for making a nuisance of himself and wasn't going to let the opportunity pass.

Waiting until nightfall our erstwhile commando slipped down the easy slope from his cave and into the Río Verde. Up to his waist in the stinking green water he made for the bridge leading from the Huella Vieja, the northerly route into Alqueria. He forced the explosive between the stonework of the structure and ran the wire back to the entrance of his cave.

Rodriquez was in jovial mood. He was returning from Alicante where he had just collected his new gleaming white Mercedes S-Class Roadster. He decided to take the northerly route into Alqueria. The bridge was narrow and he made a mental note to drive carefully he didn't want to scratch his new machine.

Matas touched the bare wires to the battery terminals. The explosion wasn't overly loud nor was it overly dramatic. A lot of smoke and debris and the bridge had no

centre. He thought he heard a scream and wondered what the white object was disappearing into the river. Matas danced around the living chamber of his cave in a state of high glee. Around and around he danced before the combination of over exuberance and over indulgence in the juice of the Remitroot caused him to collapse in an untidy pile on the dirt floor.

The sight of a white Mercedes floating down river with an obese mill owner leaping about in a blind rage on its roof attracted little attention. This is Alqueria after all. Rodriquez shouted for a line to be thrown. Blythe Gruntmore, the only one in earshot was confused. His bad Spanish had construed the shouted request as something to-do with Rodriquez's loins. Blythe had suspicions about Rodriquez's loins for sometime and pretended not to hear. Rodriquez and his Mercedes drifted down river and into the Mediterranean. He was detained by the *Servicio Marítimo de la Guardia Civil* as an illegal immigrant.

Alqueria needed a new bridge.