The non-partisan
(Matas)

During the turbulent year of 1938 the International Brigades pulled out and the Second Spanish Republic was forced back on its dwindling resonances. Like other towns and villages, Alqueria also suffered trauma.

Roque Rodriquez, father of the present day mill owner Fernando supported those whom offered financial reward. The Nationalists. He had nothing but guile and cunning and a desire for the Olive Mill. The mill was then owned by one Adán Matas a mild mannered and good tempered Republican. Adán feared Nationalist reprisals and went into hiding. He hid in a cave just above the Alqueria. A cave supplied by Roque in return for the Olivarera de Alqueria. The Rodriquez family now had the mill and Matas brought up his only son in the cold damp cave.
Believing the Civil War to be still on, Galeno Matas to this day lurks in the dark, dank lair. The cave his Father had so unwisely traded for the Olive Mill.

April the 15th is a day of religious celebration in Alqueria. The womenfolk assemble at the church and particularly its gable-end where they count the strange impact craters. A new one appears every 14th of April. This is believed to be a sign of divine protection. The womenfolk in response leave a veritable banquet of fresh bread, sticky cakes, wine and the local sheeps' cheeses at the village shrine. An offering worthy of such spiritual piety.

The 14th of April is the anniversary of the instigation of the Second Spanish Republic and Matas always celebrates the occasion. He loads his old smooth bore Mauser from his diminishing stock of ammunition and fires a shot for the Republic. This projectile is always aimed at the gable-end of the church where it impacts with a satisfying puff of whitewash. He has struck his blow, a blow which he knows is welcomed by those in the village who hide their allegiances and still live in fear.

If his shot for freedom against the state church isn't welcomed then why do they leave him such a feast at the village shrine? His yearly banquet never fails to materialise.

The womenfolk of the village walk the two kilometres to their stone shrine where they give thanks. Their offering has been accepted, completely de-materialised with the plates and crockery scrupulously washed and dried.

Faith is such a wonderful thing.

So the life of Alqueria continues in it complex merry-go-round of intrigue and misunderstanding.

No-one is more misunderstood than Blythe Gruntmore the village's obligatory Englishman.

More of him later.