To Manuela a daughter?

Alqueria was calm, peaceful and serene. It was very worrying. This high power inertia usually meant a period of suppuration. Time to renew the rivalry between the barrios, to allow mutual disdain to fester and grow. The Village held its collective breath waiting for the inevitable resumption of hostilities.

Manuela's absence from the village had left the Hill People leaderless requiring them to keep a low profile. They spent their time planning and plotting ready for her reappearance. When she did return from vacation she caused quite a stir, for she had with her a little seven year old raven haired girl.

The Pueblo's very efficient rumour generation and broadcast network soon had her down as Manuela's erstwhile fostered daughter. Men throughout the Village checked old diaries and a dozen or so started packing ready to make themselves scarce. They began unpacking again when the little girl was registered under the name of Izar Expósita at the local school. Whether the child was a foundling or whether Manuela was simply muddying the water is still hotly debated but at least the male population was 'off the hook'.

The Village Elders, in search of evidence to validate their gossip began comparing the physical attributes of the two. The raven hair, olive skin and those deep brown eyes which can dissolve a man's heart at two-hundred paces were wonderfully common in this part of the Iberian Peninsular. A close examination of the eyes however may have given a clue. Izar's carried a fire reminiscent of Manuela's, gateways to smouldering souls?

The Elders then looked for similarities in behaviour and Izar didn't disappoint. On her first day at school a badly advised boy of nine decided to challenge Izar's authority in the playground. Izar reduced him to a quivering heap in no time at all. The simple promise of setting fire to his house and burning it and all in it to the ground did the

trick. Her teacher wasn't impressed however and demanded she made an apology. The venom with which she issued her threat was in stark contrast to the engineered angelic pose adopted for the issuing of the apology. On hearing of the fracas the Elders nodded wisely and set about perpetuating their gossip with a new found zeal.

Whether little Izar will impact on Alquerian politics as much as Manuela has, only time will tell. The Newcomers however may have had a glimpse of what is in store.