

## **Alqueria: The Fairy Tale**

### **Chapter one**

A long long time ago in a far off land lived a handsome Pri..... well he wasn't a prince as he believed that heads of state should be elected by universal suffrage and not because of accidents at birth, but that's enough of politics. He was moderately handsome, some say his nose was slightly too large while others cited a nervous twitch as his major defect, but we digress, his name was Antonio Poyato. Antonio was good, there is no other word for it, he was 'good'. He visited the lonely, nursed the sick and befriended the homeless, he never swore no matter what the provocation and loved his enemies. His mere appearance in the garden would cause the sun to shine and the birds to sing, however on his return indoors the clouds would gather and the rain would pour in torrents. It annoyed his neighbours to distraction and depressed property prices for miles around. Everywhere he went he would gush goodwill and contentment, to all he met he would advise and counsel, he was of course universally hated. All apart from his life partner Manuela she loved Antonio and was a close second on the scales of righteousness. They lived in a lovely cottage with roses around the door and surrounded by fields of plush green Remitroot plants. Manuela liked the drink made form the Remitroot plant, some said, rather harshly perhaps that she liked it a little too much. All was gaiety and joy, but as all cinema goers will know where there is gaiety and joy trouble is bound to follow. Gaiety and joy are usually the precursors to misfortune and heartbreak. There should be a government health warning on 'gaiety and joy'.

One day not long after gaiety and joy had reached it's peak Antonio returned home from a busy day doing good, but he was not alone.

“Antonio who's that sinister lady in black with you? Why have you brought her home, are you starting a collection?”

“No Manuela it is not a sinister lady in black it is my Evil Stepmother”.

“Antonio, we need to talk, your Mother lives not twenty kilometres from here, she is eighty years old and is the pole dancing instructor at the institute, so Antonio WHO IS SHE?”.

“My Evil Stepmother, she wouldn't lie would she Manuela?”.

“Antonio! Her first name is 'Evil', join the dots”.

“Oh Manuela you are too suspicious”.

“Sometimes Antonio I am not sure if your single neuron has been switched on or not, GET HER OUT OF HERE”.

So Antonio returned his Evil Stepmother to the Village and her room in the Bar La Casa Devante. She was not a happy Evil Stepmother and for some inexplicable reason she addressed the wardrobe mirror. “Mirror, mirror on the wall who's the fairest of them all” she inquired. The mirror of course remained silent, mirrors aren't noted for their conversational skills. But she knew Manuela was far, far fairer than she and that made our Evil Stepmother even more unhappy, she plotted the demise of poor Manuela.

The very next day as the sun warmed the Remitroot crop and Manuela prepared a damson and blueberry pie in the sunny little kitchen there was a knock at their front door. 'Rat a tat tat'

“I'll get it” shouted Antonio. “Ohh it's a parcel for you Manuela”.

“Oh Antonio I do love surprises.....it's from your Evil Stepmother Antonio, you bloody open it, I'm not touching it ”.

“Oh Manuela you're so suspicious, ohhhhhhh look it's a lovely clock, see she does like you”.

“Antonio! This is a time bomb”.

“Don't be silly, a time bomb indeed it's an alarm clock”

“Antonio! There is an RDX demolition block in here with a detonator in it, it is connected by a tamper proof wire matrix to an electronic trigger controlled by a timing device. ANTONIO!! I DO

KNOW WHAT A BLOODY TIME BOMB LOOKS LIKE”.

“It's just a clock Manuela, Manuela don't throw it out of the window.....Ohhh that was a big bang , I wonder what made it?”.

“OHHHHH Antonio!!!! Your bloody Evil Stepmother is trying to kill me, why Antonio?”.

“Perhaps it's her way of showing love Manuela”.

“Go and talk to her tomorrow Antonio, I need a drink where's the Remitroot jar”.

“Manuela can I have some damson and blueberry pie”.

Manuela's reply was never recorded but Antonio went to bed hungry and Manuela spent the night in the kitchen sipping Remitroot Liquor from a green bottle in a brown paper bag. (The green bottle was in the bag and the liquor in the bottle).

The very next day Antonio rose joyous from his bed and found Manuela still in the kitchen slumped over the table, surrounded by numerous empty green bottles and brown paper bags.

“Manuela wake up I am going into the Village to help needy souls and to counsel the unfortunate ones. I will then go and have afternoon tea with my Evil Stepmother, oh how she will laugh when I tell her that you think she is trying to kill you”.

“ Antonio why don't you just fffffffuu..... clear off”.

“Manuela you have learned many new words these last few days. Bye Manuela”.

So our gallant but very stupid hero set off with love in his heart and a song on his lips, he really was quite unbearable. To say the Villagers looked forward to his visits would be an overstatement, most simply hid, those who couldn't for one reason or another sobbed, cried or curled themselves up into little balls, others threw bricks at Antonio. But Antonio saw everything through 'rose coloured glasses', Manuela was constantly telling him not to wear them, and his enthusiasm for doing good was never in the slightest ever dented.

On his return he found the lovely Manuela digging in the garden, her clothes torn and ripped, hair

dishevelled and muttering many more bad words!

“Manuela, what are you doing?”.

“I am burying a bloody lion Antonio”.

“Oh! That's nice, is there any of that damson and blueberry pie left Manuela?”.

“Antonio, I am burying a dead lion, don't you think that is a little unusual. I shot it and killed it. Aren't you going to ask why?”.

“Alright Manuela if it will please you”.

“IT WILL please me Antonio. Your Evil Stepmother adopted a lion in my name”.

“Oh that's nice Manuela, helping to preserve a species which is.....”.

“SHUT UP Antonio! Your Evil Stepmother adopted a lion in my name, she really adopted it, it arrived by taxi, it was very, very unpleasant and I am very upset”.

“Why Manuela did it try to eat you?”

“It was a male lion and it was feeling frisky, it wasn't trying to EAT me, I have claw marks on my shoulders Antonio, I had to shoot it with your old service revolver”.

“I don't have an old service revolver Manuela”.

“Shut up Antonio. I need a drink”.

That night our two heroes sat pondering the days events while Antonio caressed Manuela's ..... well let's just say he caressed Manuela while breathing hopefully in her ear.

“Antonio if you don't move your hand I'll bury you in the garden as well, MOVE IT ANTONIO MOVE IT.....NOT LIKE THAT ANTONIO.....move it AWAY from me you useless, do-gooding bas.....”

“Manuela your are so hard and distant lately and say many bad words, why only last week we tried to save that little butterfly, we tried to repair its poor broken wing, you cried”.

“Yes Antonio but it died didn't it?”

“Yes Manuela I think we had the flame on the blow torch too high, but you still cared”.

“THAT Antonio was before someone, someone who claims to be a relation of yours I might add, tried to blow me into little pieces and sent an oversexed carnivore to ravish me”.

“Perhaps my Evil Stepmother thought you needed a pet Manuela, wasn't that thoughtful of her?”.

“She was trying to kill me Antonio! We must kill her first. We will shoot her with your old service revolver”.

“I don't have an old service revolver Manuela”.

“LOOK, LOOK Antonio here it is”.

“Ahhhhhhhh but that's not an old service revolver Manuela, that's an old 9mm Browning semi automatic pistol, a revolver is so called because the chamber.....”

“Antonio! YOU'RE GETTING ON MY TITS if you don't concentrate I'll use the bloody thing on you, now go into the Village and shoot the BITCH”.

“OK Manuela but can I have some damson and blueberry pie first”.

“On second thoughts come with me I'll do it, I'll show you how to shoot someone”.

So Manuela and the reluctant Antonio Poyato made their way to the Bar La Casa Devante and sneaked stealthily up to the Evil Stepmother's room.

“Knock Antonio!”.

'Rat a tat tat'

The door slowly opened revealing Antonio's Evil Stepmother, a broad smile broke on her radiant face as she recognised her stepson. Gun shots rang out and the Evil Stepmother fell to the floor like a sack of gravel.

“You can stop shooting now.....I SAID YOU CAN STOP SHOOTING NOW SHE'S DEAD”.

“That's how it done Antonio, fourteen shots to the head”.

“That's strange Manuela that magazine only holds thirteen”.

“Antonio SHUT UP”.

“We must escape before someone comes to investigate”.

“Not to worry Antonio they are drinking Remitroot Liquor in the bar downstairs, when drinking Remitroot Liquor people hear and see many strange things”.

## Chapter two

Manuela and Antonio sat before a roaring log fire in their cosy little cottage in the middle of the Remitroot plantation, they cuddled close. Manuela looked deep into Antonio's big brown eyes, she parted her sensual full lips and whispered sweetly. “Antonio why do we have a fire burning it's August and it's thirty four degrees outside”.

Things were now back to normal, Antonio's Evil Stepmother had been neutralised and as the above dialogue shows Manuela had stopped swearing, oh and she was also seeing someone about her drinking. The Remitroot crop thrived bringing prosperity to our two heroes, everything was gaiety and joy, but what has previously been said by gaiety and joy. So let us return to the cottage and listen to their conversation.

“The log fire is cheaper than the air-conditioning Manuela”

“It may be but air-conditioning and log fires aren't ..... Antonio did you ever go for that brain scan I arranged for you”

“No Manuela I couldn't find the hospital”

“Antonio it's across the road, you can see it if you look out of the window, it's the place where you were supposed to have your ears syringed last week”

“What did you say Manuela?”

“DON'T PROVOKE ME ANTONIO, I'm not on the medication any more and I have killed”.

“Yes Manuela. Oh did I tell you I met a man in the Village who had much interest in you, he asked many questions”

“What questions and what did you tell him Antonio?”.

“Ohhhhhh nothing Manuela.....nothing, shall I put another log on the fire?”.

“WHAT DID YOU TELL HIM?”.

“Ahhh I gave him your telephone number, mobile and landline, you full address including postcode, your primary and secondary email addresses and oh yes a link to your social media page”

“Ohhhhh ANTONIO you bloody idiot and what was his name”.

“Manuela you are swearing again”.

“I bloody know now WHAT WAS HIS NAME”.

“It was a funny name, very funny, Mr. Arch Villain he was called, a name like that makes you laugh doesn't it Manuela”.

“I AM NOT LAUGHING ANTONIO, you bloody idiot I need a drink”.

“Manuela I thought you were seeing somewhat about your drinking?”.

“I am the bloody barman at the Bar La Casa Devante”.

Who is this mysterious Arch Villain, why is he interesting in Manuela, will she keep Antonio's old service revolver in her handbag?

“I don't have an old service revolver”.

Shut up Antonio. These questions are soon to be answered as the very next day Antonio set out intent of a spot of 'do-gooding' in the village while Manuela supped her first Remitroot Martini of the day. As the mentally challenged Antonio disappeared from view a sinister black limousine pulled up outside the cottage.

“That sounds like a sinister black limousine pulling up outside the cottage, I wonder who that could be?”.

'Rat a tat tat'

“Ahh the door that will be the driver of the sinister black limousine, I'll go and see what he wants”.

Manuela may be excused for this ridiculous behaviour for between Antonio leaving the cottage and the sinister black car arriving she had time for another three Remitroot Martinis, she was feeling no

pain and would have believed a politician's promise. Manuela opened the door and surveyed an apparition in black, including a wide brimmed top hat with a handle bar moustache (the apparition had the moustache not the hat) and black cape.

“Hello, have you come to read my meter?” said Manuela.

The apparition declared himself to be one Mr. Arch Villain and further declared his undying love for Manuela, he wanted her to be his.

“No, no a thousand times no” slurred Manuela as she poured herself another Martini from a rather nifty belt mounted cocktail shaker which doubled as a garlic press, she bought it off 'CrapRus' a popular TV shopping channel with a rather ungrammatical name, but we digress. Mr. Arch Villain indicated that if she didn't say yes he would become rather upset.

“No I would rather die than say yes” retorted Manuela.

Mr. Arch Villain suggested that this could be arranged and bundled her into his sinister black limousine, her untouched Martini glass falling to the ground spilling it's contents onto the doormat with the mocking inscription 'Welcome'.

“Bugger!” said Manuela.

What will become of Manuela? Will she ever be reunited with Antonio? Does she even want to be reunited with Antonio?

Antonio returned home some hours later from his do-gooding expedition into the Village. There was something strange about the cottage the he couldn't quite put his finger on. The fire was still warm in the grate, empty Remitroot Gin bottles littered the kitchen, dishes languished grease ridden in the sink. Everything was as it should be, so what bothered Antonio? What was wrong?

Antonio stoked the fire into life and settled himself in from of the TV intent on watching the finals of the International All-comers Abyssinian Goat Shirling Championship. As Perturbed Pedro was about to shirl his eleventh goat it struck him. 'Where's Manuela?' he looked about the room as if he

expected her to pop-out of thin air.

“ANTONIO, YOU USELESS, BLOODY HALF WITTED SON OF A .....” shouted Manuela as she slammed the front door behind her. Manuela's appearance was interesting to say the least. Her dress was torn, her wrists red and from which dangled lengths of severed rope, her ankles were in the same condition, her face was black with coal dust and with a train timetable stuffed between her ample breasts. Oh and worst of all her hair was slightly out of place.

“Well say something Antonio. BLOODY WELL SAY SOMETHING”.

“Had a good day darling” inquired our slow witted worthy.

“No Antonio I have not had a good day. I was propositioned by a man in black who subsequently kidnapped me and tied me to a railway line. He then left me there to be cut in two by the 09:30 Madrid to Murcia express”.

“Manuela if he wanted to do away with you why didn't he just knock you on the head, and why did he leave you so you could be rescued?”.

“Antonio he name is Arch Villain and that's what arch villain's do, don't ask me why”.

“How did you escape Manuela?”.

“A troop of Boy Scouts came along and saw me Antonio”.

“Ahhhh and they set you free?”.

“Not immediately Antonio no. They were inquisitive Boy Scouts and they had just reached puberty. It was some time before they released me. Now I assume that the man in black or Mr. Arch Villain that abducted me is the same gentleman you passed my contacts details to yesterday?”.

“Shall I put another log on the fire”.

“No Antonio it's bloody thirty-four degrees outside, it was the same man wasn't it? I don't know what he has planned for me next but there was a great big circular saw in the back of his car Antonio”.

“That will make you eyes water Manuela”.

“SHUT UP ANTONIO. We must kill him before he uses it on me, but not your old service revolver we must think of something more creative”.

“I haven't got an old service revolver Manuela”.

“SHUT UP: We will run him over Antonio with the Remitroot delivery truck”.

“That's not very creative, couldn't you get your friends the Boys Scouts to kill him”.

“THAY ARE NOT MY FRIENDS ANTONIO. No we will use the truck”.

The Remitroot delivery truck was duly pressed into service and with Manuela at the wheel they set off in search of one Mr. Arch Villain. After some time driving around the Village and at the same time making complete nuisances of themselves they finally spot their quarry.

“Look there he is, quick follow him, hit the gas Manuela”.

“How very poetic Antonio, right hold on”.

Manuela put her foot down and the truck hurtled after the unsuspecting arch villain. Looking over his shoulder he became aware of his impending extinction and accelerated the best he could in theatrical zip-up boots.

“Why doesn't he just go up an alley Manuela where we can't follow in the truck”

“I don't know Antonio but you've seen the films they all do it that way, if he was a woman he would have fallen over by now”.

“But this isn't a film Manuela”.

“No, but it is a fairy tale, you don't think I would be your partner if this was reality do you?”.

“Yes Manuela that did puzzle me”.

“GOT HIM, right reverse over him, by the feel of that bump that was his head, right forward again.....now reverse.....now forward.....now reverse.....”.

“MANUELA STOP! HE'S DEAD! You really are a cold blooded bitch”.

“If this was reality you wouldn't have called me that would you Antonio?”.

“No Manuela. You are certain this isn't reality aren't you Manuela?”.

“You still live don't you?..... right, job done now back to the cottage before anyone sees us”.

### Chapter three

Manuela and Antonio Poyato sat before their blazing log fire roasting chestnuts and drinking mulled wine, just why we are not certain as it was mid Summer and thirty eight-degrees outside. They had peace once more. Both the Evil Stepmother and the Arch Villain were disposed of. Manuela had once more stopped using profanities and was seeing a professional about her drinking. All was sweetness and light, one may even say gaiety and joy prevailed.

'Rat a tat tat'

“What's that Manuela?”.

“It's someone knocking on the front door Antonio, you've heard it a thousand time, we really must rebook that brain scan for you..... and get your ears syringed”.

“What did you say Manuela?”.

“Antonio you are really the most annoying little man I have ever met.... now answer the door”.

“But it's midnight. Who could it be?”.

“In films Antonio bad news is always delivered at twelve o'clock at night”.

“But this is a fairy tale Manuela”.

“The same rules apply Antonio.....Answer the door and let's get it over with”.

“Manuela it's a man of seventy eight, tall, thin wearing a tailed coat and side-whiskers (the man had side-whiskers not the tailed coat) he is carrying a dusty briefcase”.

“Oh bugger! It's the theatrical lawyer, this isn't going to end well”.

The lawyer represented the firm of 'Seeit, Grabit and Leggit' of Old London Town. He was acting (very badly) on the behalf of one Mr. Arch Villain who was now the legal owner of the cottage

which he required them to vacate by Friday. He would however give up his claim on the property if Manuela agreed to be his. It all appeared to be legal and a document signing over the cottage was duly produced bearing Antonio's signature. This was a surprise to Manuela for many reasons as she didn't know Antonio could write, also as Mr. Arch Villain was dead, run over and over by Manuela, see the last chapter for details.

“Has he gone Antonio? Now I think it's time we had a little chat”.

“Shall I put a log .....”.

“LEAVE THE BLOODY FIRE ALONE ANTONIO.....now sit down and answer my questions of which there will be many”.

During the lengthy and emotion filled interrogation Antonio slowly revealed the events of the day before. It appears he had played cards with a sinister man in black, Antonio didn't recognise him as Mr. Arch Villain due to the tyre marks on his face and clothes.

Antonio takes up the story.

“.....we played Chase the Lady Manuela, sometimes called Hunt the.....”.

“I DON'T BLOODY CARE WHAT THE CARD GAME WAS CALLED ANTONIO, you lost and signed over the cottage, I get the story”.

“Manuela, if the bad guys don't die at the first attempt, does that also apply to Evil Stepmothers?”.

'Rat a tat tat'

“Oh bugger!.....I forgot about her. Answer the bloody door Antonio, let's see what the bitch wants”.

“It's the emergency 24hr fruit and veg. delivery Manuela. A present from my Evil Stepmother, she lives Manuela isn't that wonderful! She says she forgives you for shooting her fourteen times. She says she is alright now but had a bit of a headache for a while. She sent you this apple to show there aren't any hard feelings, oh isn't that nice”.

“Let me see Antonio.....Antonio this apple has a smells of Potassium Cyanide and there is a label

on the box saying danger hazardous substance”.

“No Manuela, you are mistaken she is just a gentle soul”.

“Gentle soul my culito!.....Feed it to the parrot go on Antonio, give to the parrot, put it in his cage”.

“I will Manuela just prove you wrong. Here pretty Polly, pretty Polly....Oooooooooo he's fallen off his perch, he is an x-parrot, perhaps it was old age Manuela?”.

“It was the bloody Potassium Cyanide Antonio and don't plagiarise comedy sketches of the late sixties.....So let's take stock of our situation. There are two psychopaths trying to kill me, one who claims to be your Stepmother, we have nowhere to live after Friday and you are a bloody idiot, what the FFFFflip happened to gaiety and joy Antonio?”.

“It's not that bad Manuela”.

“IT BLOODY IS ANTONIO, I'm going for a drink”.

“I though you were seeing a professional about your drinking Manuela?”.

“I am, the barman has a degree”, shouted Manuela as she stormed out of the cottage.

Friday arrived with Manuela and Antonio preparing to leave the cottage for the last time.

“As soon as we leave the house it will start snowing even though it has never snowed here in living memory and what will become of the baby Antonio?”.

“We haven't got a baby Manuela, the psychiatrist advised us not to”.

“That was YOUR fault Antonio! I told you not to tell her about THAT dream”.

It did indeed snow as they left the house but only in a radius of two metres around the pair and harder over poor Manuela.

“Bloody fairy tales it always snows on the heroine as she is thrown out into the cold”.

“Heroines don't swear, drink or, or, errr do the other THINGS you do”.

“SHUT UP ANTONIO and keep walking.....Look on the mountainside a cave, it will be dry and we can light a fire”.

Manuela and Antonio made their way to the cave entrance and took shelter in the surprisingly

comfortable interior.

“The interior of this cave is surprisingly comfortable Antonio”, Commented Manuela.

It was so comfortable that it was soon obvious it was already occupied.

“Manuela this cave is so comfortable it is obvious it is already occupied”, replied the usually slow witted Antonio.

“Who is that! An old man holding a rifle Ohhhh he has a rifle Antonio”.

“Everyone in the mountains have rifles Manuela”.

“But he is poking me with his”.

“Everyone pokes you Manuela”.

“I know Antonio and it's getting bloody annoying”.

The mysterious old man was one Matas, he hid in the cave believing the War to be still on. He had taken a liking to Manuela.

“Manuela, he has taken a liking to you”

“I can see that, tell him to put his trousers back on Antonio I preferred being prodded by his rifle. I am not staying in this cave to be sexually assaulted by geriatric Casanova or to have my intelligence insulted by a cretin like you, I am going to sort things out. Meet me back at the cottage at midnight”.

“Midnight Manuela?”.

“Yes Antonio, it's a bloody fairy tale everything happens at midnight”.

So saying the lovely Manuela nimbly scuttled down the mountain side and back into the Village.

As the clock struck twelve Antonio stood in the lounge of the Cottage waiting her return. Shortly after twelve a sinister black limousine stopped by the Cottage door and Manuela emerged smiling.

“Antonio, I have some bad news and some good news for you. Firstly the Cottage is once more yours, here are the deeds, secondly I am leaving you and going to live abroad with Mr Arch Villain, he is cleverer than you, more handsome, if you forget the tyre marks on his face, and he makes me

laugh and not weep like you”.

“I see Manuela, but which is the bad news and which is the good?”.

“Ha bloody ha Antonio, GOODBYE”, Manuela climbed back in the limousine and disappeared from Antonio's life. As Antonio stared after his fast disappearing erstwhile partner he heard a soft sweet voice behind him.

“Evil Stepmother it is you have you come to comfort me?”

“I am not your evil Stepmother Antonio, it was a ruse to get rid of Manuela. I have loved you from afar. Let me be yours, to look after you, to care for you, to love you like no other woman can, to hold you in the night, to be next to you when you wake. What do you say kind Antonio?”.

“OK” said Antonio, and they all lived happily ever after.

**The End**