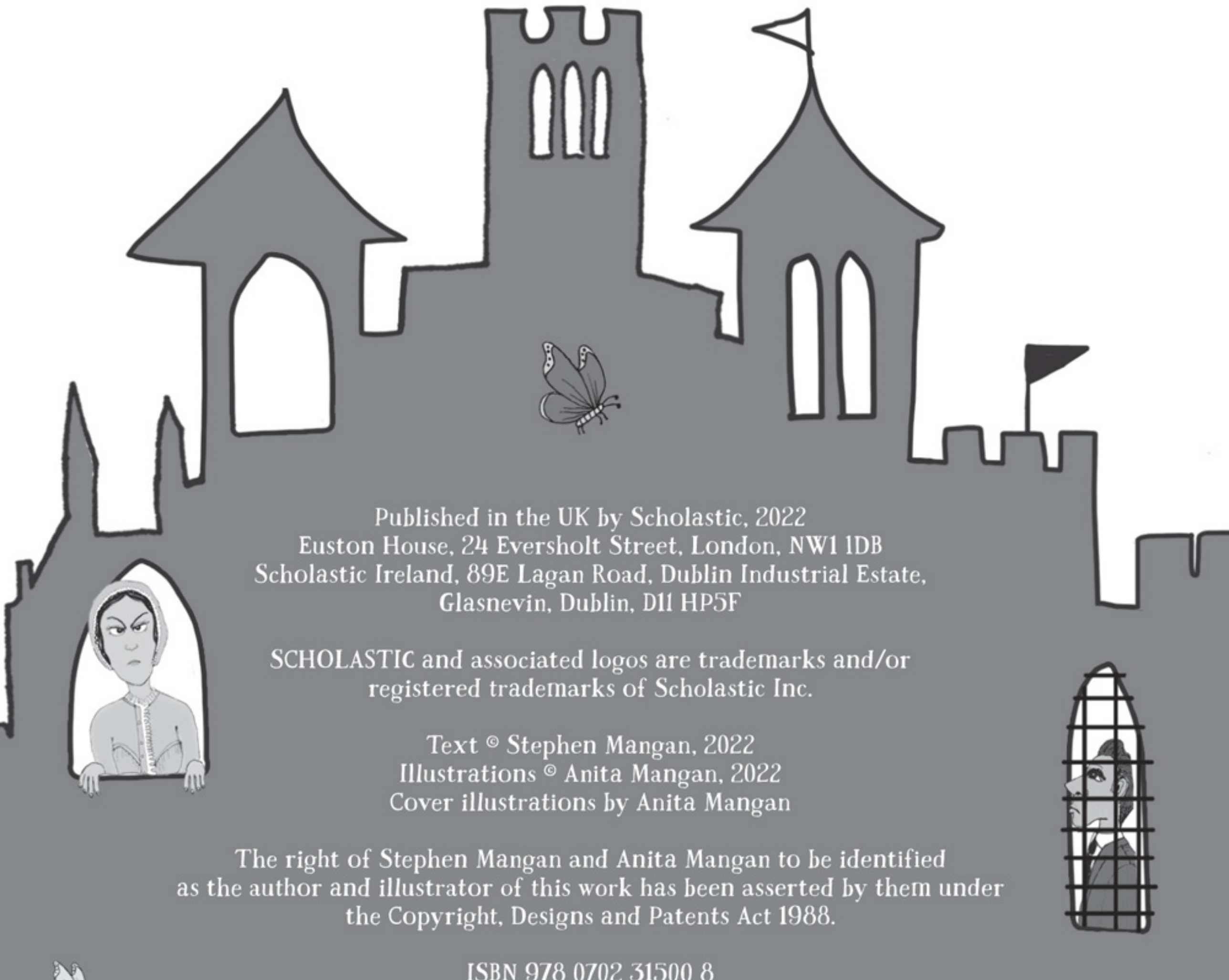


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THE FART THAT CHANGED THE WORLD

STEPHEN MANGAN

ILLUSTRATED BY ANITA MANGAN

SCHOLASTIC

For Louise, who
changed my world.

CHAPTER ONE

King Fabian III, the first-born child of King Fabian II and Old Queen Grace, ruler of the kingdom of Gabsland, Grand Master and First Knight of the Ancient Order of the Thistle, Defender of the Faith, Sovereign of the House of Gadsby, Lord Commander of the Army, First Admiral of the Fleet and Custodian of the Holy City, opened his eyes, swung his legs out of bed, stood up, stretched and farted.

He hadn't meant to fart but there it was



– tight and high-pitched like a short, sharp note from a bugle.

This was a fart like no other in history.

This was a fart with *consequences*.

This, the inadvertent fart, one summer's morning, from the rear of King Fabian III, was a fart that changed the world.



CHAPTER TWO

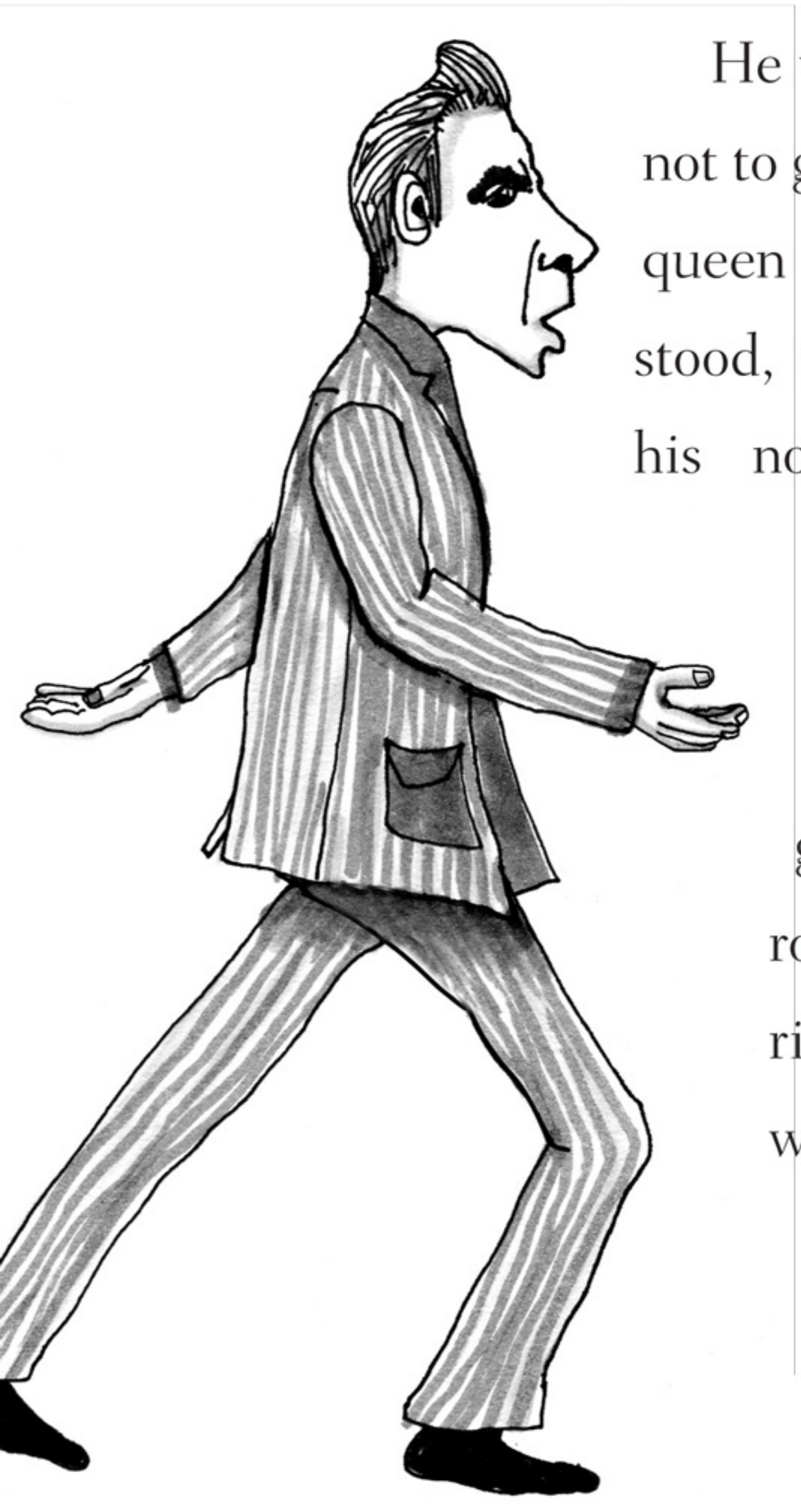
Each morning, King Fabian was gently roused from his slumber by his faithful butler, Dimmock.

At precisely 7.23 a.m. Dimmock would leave his shoes outside the royal bedroom and push open the door – well-oiled so that there would be no squeaking hinges.

He would creep across the wooden floor to the large window that looked over the highly-manicured royal garden.

Dimmock was not a small man, but he was able to glide across the floor in total silence. He placed each foot as delicately and lightly as a butterfly with a broken toe.

At the window he checked the time again and waited silently until 7.28 a.m.



He was discreet enough not to gawp at the king and queen as they slept, but stood, facing the curtains, his nose lightly pressed against the fabric.

At the right time he began, oh so gently, to pull on the rope hanging to his right and the curtains would begin to open.

So skilled was Dimmock that he could take *exactly* two minutes to open the curtains fully. No more. No less.

As morning light started to filter into the room, brightening it smoothly and slowly, Dimmock would, oh so quietly, begin to make bird noises. His favourite was a wood thrush, not a bird native to the region, but one with a beautiful, melodious sound. At other times he would imitate the fabled song of the nightingale.

Dimmock would start these expert impressions so quietly that they were barely audible and built them in tandem with the curtain opening so that they reached their loudest as the curtain was parted to its fullest.

This was all normally enough to wake the king without startling him, but not always.



If the king still slept, Dimmock would glide over to the royal bed, kneel, and ever so gently blow on the king's royal face. This was a last resort.

Once, maybe twenty years ago, even this had not worked. Dimmock had come up with the idea of tickling the king's exposed right foot with a feather. When the king woke to find Dimmock at the end of the bed stroking the royal foot, he made it clear to Dimmock that this was never to happen again.

Why such an elaborate routine to wake the king each morning? Two reasons.

The king was of a nervous disposition and frightened easily. And, once startled, it could take him a long time to recover. There was the time King Fabian had opened the door to the royal library to find the Bishop of Gabsland



unexpectedly standing on the other side of it. King Fabian had screamed for forty minutes and did not stop shaking for twenty-four hours. Another time, the king, startled by someone unexpectedly dropping a plate behind him, ran and hid on the middle shelf of a large fridge. He came out two hours later, shivering and covered in yogurt.

The other reason was that the queen liked to wake up, in her words, "naturally". She could get irritated, if not downright angry, if she was jolted out of her sleep before she was ready.

Dimmock's routine managed to tread the fine line between waking the king and not disturbing the queen.

And today it was important that everything went smoothly. Today the king was hosting the rulers of Gabsland's two neighbouring





countries, Spamon and Hipnia.

The kingdom of Gabsland was a small country compared to the countries which surrounded it. Spamon to the west had a harsh, mountainous landscape and, like its people, was tough and rugged. Hipnia to the east was green and lush and, like its people, appeared soft and gentle.

Appearances, though, can be deceptive.

The Spams and the Hipneys were bitter rivals and had been for as long as anyone could remember. They *hated* each other.