

The
Fabulous
Fanshaws

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PART ONE

CHAPTER ONE

THE FANSHAWS HAVE A SURPRISE

Sir Waldron de Montaigne Lancelot Rodriguez Fanshaw was a very grand person indeed, or at least he thought so. With a name like that it must be true. He was of medium height but with a good noble rotund body, a rather ruddy complexion, and a very large but drooping moustache, above which sat an aristocratic nose, as he called it. Actually it was a rather red and large addition to the chubby cheeks around it, mostly encouraged by ample quantities of gin and tonic. He could trace his ancestors back through the centuries, and his many names provided evidence of those past glorious days. He should have been living in a grand seventeenth century castle in Cornwall, surrounded by acres of countryside, and served by humble staff who were ever grateful for his generosity once a year on special occasions.

Unfortunately, due to the fact that most of his ancestors regularly went off to war and promptly died in defence of their various countries, leaving their wives to



protect their dwindling fortunes and estates, plus the more than frequent adventures into money-making schemes that always appeared to be fool proof but invariably ended up in disaster, the current Knight of the Realm lived in a semi-detached council house in Clapham. His wife, Lady Gertrude, had met him on holiday in Torremolinos, Spain, where she had been a waitress in the local fish and chip shop. However our Knight preferred to tell those who enquired about her background that she was, of course, descended from the Spanish line of some of his ancestors and had worked hard to perfect her South London accent in order to blend into the community. They had two children, now aged 13 and 15, a boy and a girl named Rupert and Geraldine.

Sir Waldron worked as a petrol pump attendant at the local garage where he was known as Walter Fanshaw. His wife was a check-out assistant at the local supermarket. Walter was convinced that he soon would be able to recoup the family fortunes with an amazing scheme and spent most of the day dreaming of ways to achieve this delightful goal. He also dreamed of being a knight in shining armour leading his armies to battle.

It was a rather cloudy and dismal wet day. Walter was at the garage and, trying to be helpful, he started to clean the windscreen of a car that had just been filled with petrol. As he leaned across the windscreen, he looked at the face of the driver, which was a bit weird. The driver had very pointed ears and a bald head. But what was more extraordinary, were the eyes, which kept changing colour as he looked at them. First green, then blue, then orange, and even yellow. They changed colour like traffic lights, and as he stared, the eyes stared back. All of a sudden, he felt as though an electric current had surged through his body. It was not painful but very



strange, and he felt himself shaking so much that he dropped the cloth he was using and simply stood back from the car. Another surge of electricity coursed through him. Before he could gather his senses, the car started and slowly drew away from him.

Meanwhile, at exactly the same time, which was 2.45 in the afternoon, Gertrude was at her check-out desk swiping the purchases as usual when she looked up to greet the next customer, a quite good looking but elderly lady. She was well dressed but, in the next moment, she completely changed and became an old hag with pointed ears and no hair. As Gertrude stared in astonishment, the woman's eyes flashed and changed colour from green to orange and then yellow, followed by a flashing red before

returning to blue. At the same time, Gertrude also felt the surge of electricity through her body and, in her state, she found herself swiping a box of cornflakes time after time. The whole experience only lasted about a minute or less but it seemed an age. Then the old hag turned back to the smiling elderly lady who said how kind Gertrude had been and moved on and out of sight. It was 2.45 pm when this happened.

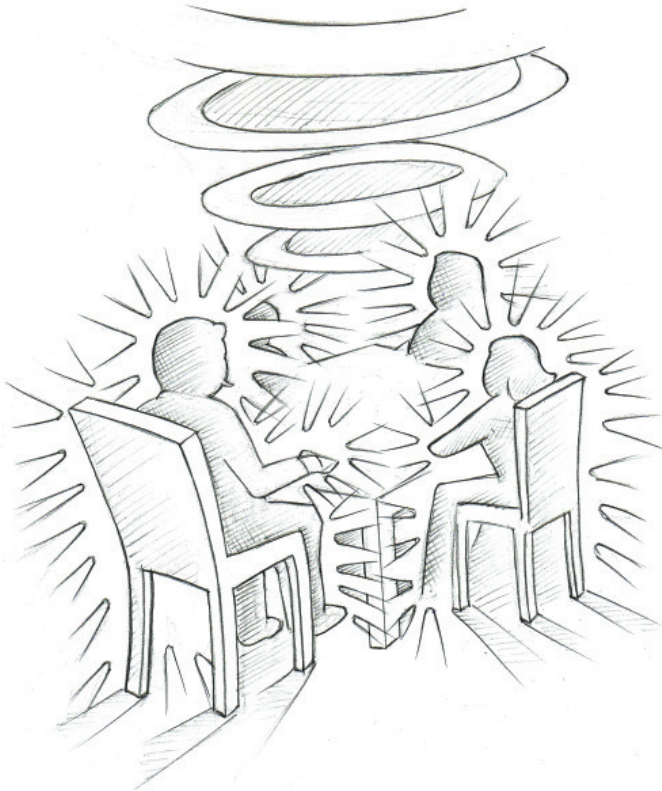
Again, at exactly the same time, Geraldine was in a pottery class at school. Miss Tamaris was moving around the class checking on their work. Geraldine was making a vase on the turntable and stroking it into shape. She wanted it to be a present for her mother. As she looked up, Miss Tamaris suddenly changed into a bald-headed, pointy-eared old hag, and her eyes changed colours, just as the others had done to her parents, though of course she did not know that at the time. Then came the electric surge. Again, after a minute or less, the apparition reverted to the nice Miss Tamaris. Geraldine thought she must have been day dreaming.

In another classroom, Rupert was in a woodworking class, and the exact same thing happened to him at exactly the same time, only this time it was his male teacher, Mr. Minton.

That evening, as the family sat round the dinner table, everyone was very quiet. No one wanted to admit to having had these strange experiences, and of course they had no idea that each had experienced the same event at the same time. After a short while, Rupert decided to venture forward and told his parents about what had happened to him. To his complete surprise, the others all gasped with astonishment and started talking at the same time, each relating what had been experienced. It all seemed

impossible, but yet it had happened, and they had no idea what it meant.

When all had calmed down, they sat quietly for a moment, but after a few moments the lights started to flicker on and off and little flashes of blue light began jumping from each of them, creating an eerie glow in the room. The blue streams of light rippled around the table where they were sitting, and pools of blue light settled in the centre, growing by the second, and twirling around on the table, becoming taller and larger all the time. A dull booming sound filled the room and everything started to vibrate. The blue light began to take the shape of a body. Soon it was clearly that of a bald-headed and pointy-eared man with a strange crooked mouth and long spindly legs and arms.



The table and chairs, with the family still seated, started to move and, slowly at first, began to revolve in a slow circle, and all the while the blue creature stared at them with eyes changing colours. Then the revolving picked up speed and, like a ride at an amusement park, revolved faster and faster.

With a great whooshing sound, the family found themselves whisked into a kind of bubble which soared upwards and through the ceiling and roof of their house, as if there were no walls or anything in the way. Upwards, twisting and turning, with a strange musical but very deep sound, this strange bubble gathered speed and shot far into space carrying its bewildered and very frightened passengers with it.

Soon they were in darkest space and around them were myriads of stars. Then they seemed to enter a vast tunnel of light, which sped them even faster, deeper and deeper. Eventually they emerged and saw in front of them a huge planet which looked very like their own Earth, except it seemed much bigger. The bubble sped them towards this new world and, in a microsecond, surged them into the atmosphere and through clouds that were coloured green and red. Down below lay some beautiful fields and mountains with villages dotted around, but on the side of one of the mountains was something quite amazing. It was exactly like one of the castles in which Walter's ancestors had once lived—large stone walls, a moat around the castle with a drawbridge across, and huge towering turrets at each side of the castle.

In an instant the bubble flew through one of the walls and landed in an enormous banquet room with a large fire burning at one end and many trestle-type wooden tables, around which sat

many people all dressed as though they were in sixteenth century England. There were men in light chain-mail armour suits with swords at their sides, women dressed in glamorous clothes, and dogs and other animals running loose around the floor. Some musicians were playing lutes and drums, and some of the people were dancing in an old-fashioned style. Men were dancing in lines and women in other lines.

The odd thing was that nobody seemed in the slightest bit surprised to see Walter and his family emerge from the bubble. Even more strange was that, as they emerged, they also were dressed in the same style as everyone else. Walter looked very grand indeed with his suit of gleaming chain mail armour and helmet at his side. They saw an empty table at the top of the hall with a wonderful array of food laden on top of it. It seemed natural to just sit down and join in the fun. So they did just that. However, everything was not as natural as it seemed at first glance. Looking closer at the people, Walter saw that they all had those funny pointed ears and both men and women had eyes that flashed in different colours.

The servants offering food and drink were the same. Some had different coloured skin as well—green, purple, and orange seemed to be the main ones.

Suddenly a trumpet sounded, and everyone stopped eating and dancing and the whole place became very quiet. The huge wooden door at the end of the hall opened, and three large Knights in shining armour strode into the room and began to slowly march towards Walter and his family, staring deeply into their eyes with those multi-coloured flashes. The middle Knight then spoke in a booming, but rather quaint old-fashioned style. Walter was very

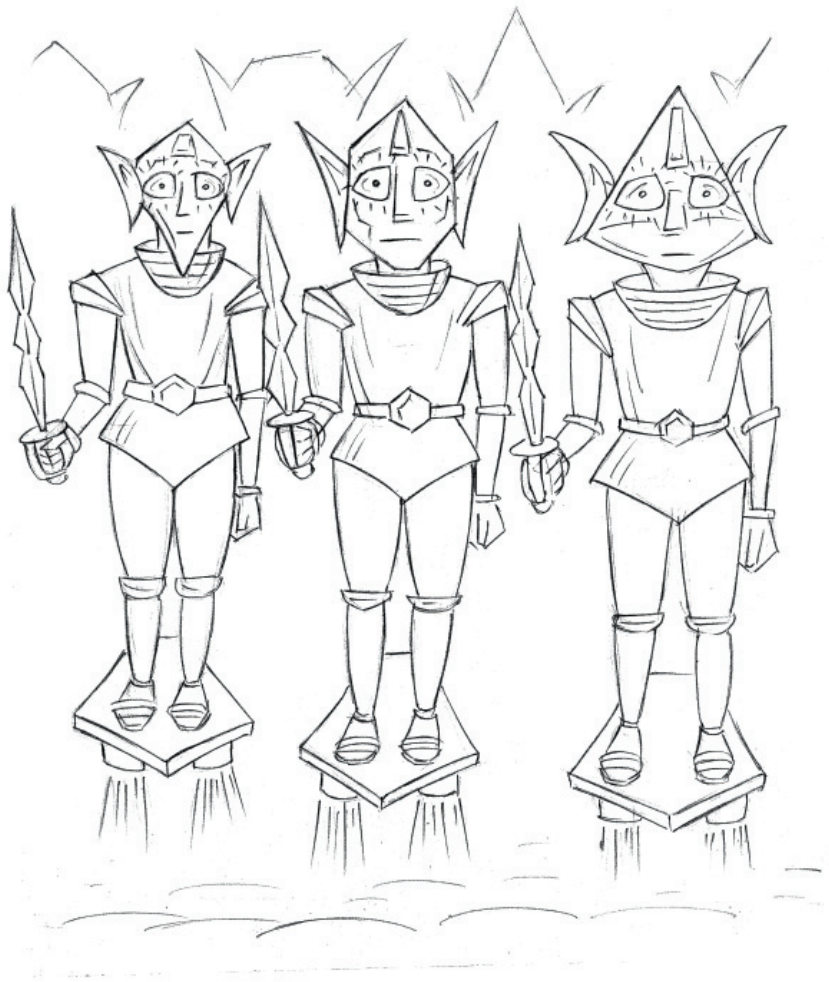
surprised and quite impressed to be addressed as Sir Waldron, since nobody had ever called him that before, even though it was his proper title.

“Sir Waldron, we bring news of some troubles and disturbances at the edge of your domain. Armies of our enemies are even now gathering to attack, and we need you to gather our troops and prepare to defend the castle and surrounding villages.”

Lady Gertrude was more than a little worried about all these events. However, Rupert and Geraldine were very excited by it all. Rupert was too young to fight in the battle, but he begged his father to allow him to help, maybe with the supplies for the soldiers.

Sir Waldron now realised that he was expected to command and lead the soldiers into battle. Actually, on the one hand, he was very proud and stimulated by the idea, but at the same time completely terrified. He was not even sure he knew how to hold his sword, let alone use it in battle. He stood up, looking as much in control as he could. As he did so, his hand seemed to automatically reach for his sword and draw it from its scabbard. He held it aloft and swung it in the air as though he had been doing this all his life. The sword gleamed gold and silver in the light, and he shouted to the hall that he would lead them to victory and drive the enemies from the land. The whole room erupted in cheers and all the men raised their swords in unison.

Sir Waldron said goodbye to Gertrude and led the men outside. Rupert joined the many helpers at the back of the assembled army. Then things started to become very weird indeed.



Walter, or Sir Waldron as he was now known, looked more closely at his army. He saw that they all had these funny pointed ears and flashy eyes, but also most were standing on what looked like skate boards, except that these boards were hovering about a half meter from the ground. Some had horses, but these were no ordinary horses—they had wings and also were hovering above the ground. The lances and swords carried by the troops were multi-coloured and seemed to extend and shrink from long to short at a flick of the wrist. Sir Waldron's own sword did the same and, after a little practice, he could control it very well.

At that moment a figure glided on a skate board alongside him. It was none other than the man he had first seen when cleaning the windscreen of the car at the beginning of this strange adventure. He spoke in a kind of sing-song voice. “While you were cleaning my windscreen, you were thinking very hard about your ancestors and how good it would be to experience the many adventures they had embarked upon. Your thoughts reached us, and we wanted to see how you humans would manage in a different world, so we decided to bring you into our world and let you find out yourself. My job is to observe you but also to protect you and your family. I must warn you that danger lies ahead, and I may not succeed in saving you, even though I will try.”

CHAPTER TWO

PREPARING FOR BATTLE

Sir Waldron was now seated on a very large winged horse, which also had flashing eyes. He found that he could manage quite well on this animal, even though he had never ridden a horse before. He wondered if he should have a seat belt actually!!

