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# **The Eye of Zoltar**

Written by Jasper Fforde

Published by Hodder & Stoughton

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*The Eye of Loltar*



*'Hanging on to the Leviathan for dear life, the small Australopithecine was soon thousands of feet in the air . . . ?'*

# *The Eye of Zoltar*

JASPER FFORDE

*Book Three of The Last Dragonslayer Series*

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HODDER &  
STOUGHTON

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The Fourth Bear

Shades of Grey

*The Eye of Loltar*



'I don't do refunds'

*The Mighty Shandar*

## *Where we are now*

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The first thing we had to do was catch the Tralfamosaur. The obvious question aside from ‘What’s a Tralfamosaur?’ was: ‘Why us?’. The answer to the first question was that this was a *Magical Beast*, created by some long-forgotten wizard when conjuring up weird and exotic creatures was briefly fashionable. The Tralfamosaur was about the size and weight of an elephant, had a brain no bigger than a ping-pong ball and a turn of speed that allowed it to outrun a human. More pertinent for anyone trying to catch one, Tralfamosaurs weren’t particularly fussy over what they ate. And when they were hungry – which was much of the time – they were even *less* fussy. A sheep, cow, rubber tyre, garden shed, antelope, smallish automobile or human would go down equally well. In short, the Tralfamosaur was a lot like a Tyrannosaurus Rex, but without the sunny disposition and winning personality.

And we had to capture it. Oh, and the answer to the ‘Why us?’ question was that it was our fault the rotten thing escaped.

Perhaps I should explain a bit about who I am and

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what I do, just in case you're new to my life. Firstly, I'm sixteen, a girl, and an orphan – hey, no biggie, lots of kids don't have parents here in the Kingdoms because of the huge number of people lost in the endless Troll Wars that have been going on these past sixty years. With lots of orphans around, there's plenty of cheap labour. I got lucky. Instead of being sold into the garment, fast-food or hotel industries, I got to spend my six years of indentured servitude with a company named Kazam, a registered House of Enchantment run by the Great Zambini. Kazam did what all Houses of Enchantment used to do: hire out wizards to perform magical feats. The problem was that in the past half-century magic had faded, so we were really down to finding lost shoes, rewiring houses, unblocking drains and getting cats out of trees. It was a bit demeaning for the once-mighty sorcerers who worked for us, but at least it was paid work.

At Kazam I found out that magic had not much to do with black cats, cauldrons, wands, pointy hats and broomsticks. No, those were only in the movies. Real life was somewhat different. Magic is weird and mysterious and a fusion between science and faith, and the practical way of looking at it is this: magic swirls about us like an invisible fog of emotional energy that can be tapped by those skilled in the Mystical Arts, and then channelled into a concentrated burst of energy from the tips of the index fingers.

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The technical name for magic was ‘the variable electro-gravitational mutable subatomic force’, but the more more usual term was ‘wizidrical energy’, or, more simply, ‘crackle’.

So there I was, assistant to the Great Zambini, learning well and working hard, when Zambini disappeared – quite literally – in a puff of smoke. He didn’t return, or at least, not for anything but a few minutes at a time and often in random locations, so I took over the running of the company, aged fifteen. Okay, that *was* a biggie, but I coped and, long story short, I saved dragons from extinction, averted war between the nations of Snodd and Brecon and helped the power of magic begin to re-establish itself. And that’s when the trouble *really* started. King Snodd thought using the power of magic for corporate profit would be a seriously good wheeze, something we at Kazam weren’t that happy about. Even longer story short, we held a magic contest to decide who controls magic, and after a lot of cheating by the King to try to have us lose, he failed – and we are now a House of Enchantment free from royal meddling, and can concentrate on rebuilding magic into a noble craft one can be proud of.

I now look after forty-five barely sane sorcerers at Kazam, only six of whom have a legal permit to perform magic. If you think wizards are all wise, sage-like purveyors of the Mystical Arts with sparkling

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wizidrical energy streaming from their fingertips, think again. They are for the most part undisciplined, infantile, argumentative and infuriating, and their magic only works when they *really* concentrate, which isn't that often, and misspellings are common. But when it works, a well-spelled feat of magic is the most wondrous thing to behold, like your favourite book, painting, music and movie all at the same time, with chocolate and a meaningful hug from someone you love thrown in for good measure. So despite everything, it's a good business in which to work. Besides, there's rarely a dull moment.

So that's me, really. I have an orphaned assistant named Tiger Prawns to help me, I am Dragon Ambassador to the world – of which more later – and I also have a pet Quarkbeast, which is at least nine times as frightening as the most frightening thing you've ever seen.

My name is Jennifer Strange. Welcome to my world.

Now: let's find that Tralfamosaur.