



## The Song of the Quarkbeast

*Jasper Fforde*

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Long ago, magic began to fade, and the underemployed magicians of Kazam Mystical Arts Management have been forced to take any work their sixteen-year-old acting manager, Jennifer Strange, can scare up. But things are about to change. Magical power is finally on the rise, and King Snodd IV, of the Ununited Kingdoms knows that he who controls magic controls everything. Only one person stands between Snodd and his plans for a magic-grab--and that's Jennifer.

Yet even smart and sensible Jennifer would have trouble against these powers-that-be. The king and his cronies will do anything to succeed--including ordering a just-might-be-rigged contest between Kazam and iMagic, Kazam's only competitor in the magic business. With underhanded shenanigans afoot, how can Kazam possibly win?

Whatever happens, one this is certain: Jennifer Strange will not relinquish the noble powers of magic without a fight.

## **The Song of the Quarkbeast Details**

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Author : Jasper Fforde

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## From Reader Review The Song of the Quarkbeast for online ebook

### Drew says

Definitely an improvement from the already quite satisfactory first book in the series. There are a lot of dominoes set up for the third and final book, due out this fall in the UK and (presumably) next fall in the US - as, I realize, this book isn't due out in the states til September. I'm excited to see where they fall and what happens in this quirky land where magic is the unit of energy, marzipan an addictive drug, and certain other things (which I'll leave to you to discover - more fun that way) are just-the-right-amount of off-kilter.

The plot is a little more multifaceted (but, to my mind, better for it) and the character development stronger all around. Things are a little heavier for some younger readers but nothing ever soars above the first-book's audience's heads. It's a delightful book that builds on the strengths of the first and is all the better for it. And you never leave a Fforde book feeling like you haven't had fun, I'll certainly say that.

More at RB: <http://wp.me/pGVzJ-KF>

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### Tina says

#### Original post at One More Page

*The Last Dragonslayer* was one of my favorite reads in 2011, and I'm not just saying that because Jasper Fforde is my favorite author. I absolutely loved Jasper Fforde's YA debut, and I thought it was a hilarious and smart read. Silly me, though, that I didn't know there was going to be a sequel to this. It totally took me by surprise, but I'm not complaining. A new Jasper Fforde? Of course I want that!

Jennifer Strange, the last dragonslayer in the Ununited Kingdom, is back, but she's no longer the dragonslayer. She's back to being the manager of Kazam, the magical placement industry where their sorcerers are hired to do various tasks in the kingdom for some moolah. The story opens with Jennifer, together with her apprentice Tiger Prawns, and the Kazam sorcerers, trying to find a missing ring for a whole wad of moolah. Jennifer thought this was good practice for their bridge building job due for the weekend, which could really put Kazam in the map. The job was a success, but it didn't mean the bridge building gig was supposed to go smoothly. A magic license test later, Jennifer finds herself facing the possibility of Kazam being taken over by iMagic, their rival, arrested sorcerers, sorcerers turned to stone, and a prediction that the Great Zambini would return. For a while. And a Quarkbeast on the loose.

Okay, I just reread the previous paragraph and I realized that it doesn't make any sense. Until you read this book, anyway. There's the usual fun chaos and hilarity in *The Song of the Quarkbeast* that is also present in all Jasper Fforde books. It takes a while to immerse oneself in any Fforde world, but it was kind of easy to get back into this, perhaps because the previous book was still fresh in my mind. Sort of. But it was fun seeing the familiar characters that I liked in the first book, as well as new characters. We see more of how magic works in the world. Reading only specific passages may sound absolutely absurd, but trust me, once you're inside, it all just makes sense. Case in point (not spoilery, don't worry):

Do I have to go down a well upside down while being sarcastic with a shoe tied around my neck? (p.39)

The scene: Tiger Prawns has to go down the well to retrieve the missing ring, and he carries a ball that lights up when he's being sarcastic and he has a toddler's shoe around his neck as a communication device so he can talk to the ones outside of the well. Did that make sense now? I hope so.

My favorite part in this book? The return of the Quarkbeasts! The Quarkbeast is my favorite character in the previous book, and since this is basically a book about those them, we find out more about it in this book. Who knew there were Quarkbeast flavors? (Up, Down, Charm, Strange, Top, Bottom) And that they're still very scary and yet they're friendly (well, it seems like it in the book). Here's a passage about how important Quarkbeasts are:

"There can only be thirty six completely unique yet identical Quarkbeasts, and soon as the combinations are fulfilled, they will come together and merge into a single Quota of fully Quorumed Quarkbeasts."

"What will happen then?"

"Something **wonderful**. All the great questions of the world will be answered...a Quarkbeast is more than an animal, it's an **oracle** to assist mankind's illusive search for meaning, truth and fulfillment." (p. 172-173)

I know. It doesn't make sense. But trust me, it's hilarious.

However. As fun and enjoyable *The Song of the Quarkbeast* was, it didn't feel as engaging as the first book was. Yes, there's the usual fun, usual chaos and all the crazy things that sprung from the endless imagination of Jasper Fforde...but it just felt like there could have been more. I never had a clear picture of the story up until I was 2/3 in. Which may have been done on purpose, now that I think of it. Which is still good, okay, but I think it just pales a bit in comparison to *The Last Dragonslayer*.

Nevertheless, I still liked this. And of course I'm looking forward to the third book coming out this year, *The Return of the Shandar*. I still stand by what I said in my review for the previous book: if you've always thought of trying a Fforde but not sure where to start, or you feel intimidated with his adult books, then his Jennifer Strange books are a good ones to get your feet wet.

Oh, and after reading this book, I want my own Transient Moose.

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### **Patrick says**

Liked this one as much as the first.

While not as mythically rich as YA books by some of my other favorite authors, (Tiffany Aching books from Pratchett, Coraline and Graveyard book by Gaiman.) this book has a playfulness that those books don't.

There's some genuine silliness here, and I can appreciate that.

Simply said, I would be happy to read this to my little boy. And I would be happy to see him reading it himself when he gets old enough for that.

I'll probably wait until he's six or seven though. Some of the humor would be over his head at this point.

My one quibble would be the final chapter/epilogue which felt like a rushed attempt to end the series, and felt like a tacked-on summary of future events. It baffled me a bit, given that there's a third book scheduled to come out later this year....

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### **Selvianty Selvianty says**

What a fun book! \*still laughing\* I like Tiger, he should be a comedian. Jennifer was still as dependable as always. The sorcerers were still quirky, eccentrics, and unique. The plot was great! Full of action, tactics, and no fillers! The book is only 290 pages but took quite a while to read because it was packed. You cannot skim through it because you'll missed important plot and hints. And it was funny! Oh I love this book!

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### **Melissa McShane says**

This follow-up to *The Last Dragonslayer* has all the charm and randomness of its predecessor. Jasper Fforde seems to have made a career out of...well, interesting prose and clever ideas, but I was thinking more along the lines of "completely random throwaway items you can't believe are part of the story." It mixes up what would otherwise be an interesting but not mind-blowingly original story.

I still say Jennifer Strange doesn't sound or act like a teenager, though Fforde makes an effort (okay, not an effort, more like a two-line exchange of dialogue) to establish that she's mature for her age because of her upbringing and her having been thrown into a position of responsibility so young. Aside from her age and the greater simplicity of the prose, I see no reason to class this book as a YA novel--and since simplicity of prose is not necessarily a marker of YA fiction, that classification stands on even shakier ground. Having said that, I figure the earlier one is introduced to Jasper Fforde, the better, so if his publisher wants to market it as YA, I say go for it.

The contest of magic at the heart of the story is quite tense, and Conrad Blix as villain is exactly the sort of person it's easiest to hate, someone who abuses rules and laws to give himself an unfair advantage. As Jennifer's support is whittled away, she's forced to reach out beyond her usual sources, so we get to meet characters like the Magnificent Boo (and the truth behind her story was both simple and horrifying) and, at last, the long-missing Zambini. The book sets up a different villain for the future and ultimately gives Kazam back some of its lost glory.

It's that last bit that leaves me dissatisfied with the final chapter, in which Fforde wraps everything up so neatly that it seemed as though he was trying to wrap up the series itself, which confused me because there's certainly a third book in the works (and supposedly available any day now). Unless he is Messing With Us, which I would not put past him. At any rate, this was an enjoyable read. I'm looking forward to the (possibly nonexistent, thank you very much Mister Fforde) next book in the series.

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## Elwen says

Genauso witzig und verschroben wie Teil 1 :-)

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## Book Concierge says

Audiobook performed Elizabeth Jasicki

From the dust jacket - Long ago, magic began to fade, and the underemployed magicians of Kazam Mystical Arts management have been forced to take any work their sixteen-year-old acting manager, Jennifer Strange, can scare up. But things are about to change. Magical power is finally on the rise, and King Snodd IV of the Ununited Kingdoms knows that he who controls magic controls everything. Only one person stands between Snodd and his plans for a magic grab – and that's Jennifer.

### My reactions

Fforde entertains with another flight of fancy and fantasy. The plot has been written before – evil geniuses out to control the world, thwarted by an honest, morally upright young person with right on her side. The cast of characters includes several doddering old magicians, one charming young apprentice, the king's useless brother, and the Transient Moose. The action features a magic carpet ride at the speed of light, a visit to Trollvania, a brief appearance by the Great Zambini himself, and a bridge-building contest between rival teams of sorcerers. Of course, there's also the quarkbeast and its lonely song: "*A song of resignation, of poetry given and received.*"

I like that Jasper's heroine is a strong, intelligent, resourceful young woman who uses wit and intelligence rather than might to best her enemies. In fact, there are several strong women in the roster of characters from Lady Mawgon to the Once Magnificent Boo.

On the whole, however, I think this is a book best enjoyed by a younger audience; ages 10-15 seems to be the target group.

Elizabeth Jasicki does a marvelous job performing the audiobook. She has a gift for voices that brings all these colorful characters to life. And her enthusiasm for the work helped me suspend disbelief and enjoy the ride (even without a magic carpet).

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## Martine says

Really, really fantabulous book that contained everything I expect a Fforde book to have. A lovely, quirky world, a special sense of humor (which might not be everyone's taste, I admit that) and social commentary. It may have one flaw but I rated five stars anyway because I enjoyed every single word. That one flaw is that it's quite similar to the Thursday Next series and so, the construction of the plot is somewhat predictable. Fforde adds all these details little details that become very important in the end and his protagonist has to face more and more problems until it seems that there is hardly any way this book could end good but it does. It requires a lot of skill to unravel everything and that makes up for it.

Also, we get amazing descriptions like these:

*„She was sitting in an armchair in front of a fire, her gnarled fingers resting on top of her cane, and her face so suffused with wrinkles that lost infant tortoises often followed her home.“*

And we get Quarkbeasts because that's the name of the book and also Quarkbeasts are like the best thing ever. Plus, there are interesting characters with interesting opinions who are not just black and white:

*„[...] Maybe magic shouldn't be regulated at all. Maybe it should take its own path, like the Quarkbeast, unfettered by our meddling. Perhaps magic needs to be used for evil before it can take the right course for good and if so, Zambini's need to control it is as damaging as Blix's. The only thing that separates the pair of them is their viewpoint and dress sense.*

Jasper Fforde is the author I turn to when I lose hope, when I've read just one bad book too many. He hasn't disappointed me one single time so far.

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### **Molokov says**

Fforde's books are always very readable, and enjoyable, but when you've seen an author's best work, you want the next book to improve one what's come before. This is the second 'Last Dragonslayer' book, Fforde's series aimed at kids/teens, following the further adventures of Jennifer Strange. However, she's no longer the Last Dragonslayer (and dragons don't feature at all), so perhaps naming the series after the first book in it was a bad move.

All of Fforde's books so far - the Thursday Next set, the Nursery Crimes, Shades of Grey[1], and Last Dragonslayer - involve Earths unlike our own, with societies, norms, and creatures that seem unusual, curious, fantastical and funny to us, the readers, but are accepted as every day and familiar to the characters living in these worlds. The stories usually involve a large array of different plot threads which are all relevant to the main character and somehow tie together to make for an exciting and satisfactory climax.

The Last Dragonslayer series (including Song of the Quarkbeast) are aimed at a child/teen market, and this just means that there's fewer of these tangential plot threads, and the logic required to tie them together is clearer, and many explanations are given to the reader in the narration (whereas in the adult books, sometimes you have to work it out for yourself).

On the whole, I did enjoy the book, but it didn't quite live up to my memory of Last Dragonslayer, and is not nearly as satisfying as the early Thursday Next books, the Nursery Crimes, or Shades of Grey (which I consider to be Fforde's best work so far).

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[1] Please note there is no number in front of this title. Fforde's Shades of Grey is a BRILLIANT book and is about a curious future where class is based on the colours you can see. I eagerly await the sequel, and wish he would get around to writing it instead of more Thursday Next, which has seriously gone down hill since book 4.

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### **Stacey says**

Fun. The first book was also fun, but the story was a little bit disjointed. This one had better pacing and hung together a little bit better. Not enough Quarkbeast and no dragons though.

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### **Cherie says**

A much more compelling story than the first one. No loose ends and it made sense.

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### **Nan says**

Jasper Fforde is an incredible writer. He's among that very small crowd of adult writers that can also effectively write for a younger audience. The secret, which causes so many other writers to stumble, is that children are people. The characters must have feelings and motivations, and the reader must be treated with respect as well. Failing in either regard will create a bad book; failing in both will sink it utterly. Fforde, thankfully, knows how to do both well.

In this series, he created a magical world that operates on a very strange set of rules, but the rules stay consistent throughout. Characters may be bizarre, but there is a logic to their behavior that remains internally sound.

In addition to these craft issues, Fforde is able to tell a story that's just plain good fun. I highly recommend his books.

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### **Chantal Daigneault says**

A bit slow and repetitive but entertaining

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### **Kereesa says**

Loved this one even more than the first.

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### **Krista says**

Like talking to a long lost friend.

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### **Jenny says**

I think I have just found another new favorite author. I really liked The Last Dragonslayer, and the Song of the Quarkbeast was even better. (PS I really would like to have a Quarkbeast.) I can't wait to read Jasper

Fforde's other novels!

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## The Captain says

Ahoy there me mateys! Yesterday I shared me second reflections of the last dragonslayer and discovered there was a book three in the series that I haven't read! So I decided to remedy that. But of course that meant taking a second look at book two first and giving me crew me second reflections, as it were, upon visitin' it again . . .

This be a fun second foray into the Ununited Kingdoms. Magic is on the rise but there be a fight to see who will control it. And what better way to come up with a winner then a duel! In this case it is Jennifer and the Kazam agency versus their competition, the iMagic agency. There is a bridge that needs to be repaired and each has a half of it to fix. Whoever finishes their part of the bridge first wins? Easy right?

Well maybe not when yer magicians keep disappearing, a quarkbeast is on the run, and silly politics are getting in the way. This was filled with more delightful shenanigans, quirky characters, and absolutely silly situations. I loved to see Jennifer back in action.

While I do think book one is the stronger book, this is still fun if not quite as good. It is just fluffy fun with no bigger purpose. But I enjoyed it and want more. Onto book three! Arrr!

Check out me other reviews at <https://thecaptainsquartersblog.wordpress.com>...

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## Neil says

This was the 2nd book in Fforde YA series, 'The Chronicles of Kazam'. Once again this was a fun read, maybe even a bit silly in places, but in a parallel world perhaps that's normal. The characters from the 1st book are all there, or in the case of the Great Zambini he isn't, along with various fantastical beasts.

The story once again follows Jennifer Strange, a 16 year old foundling, who is in temporary charge of one of the only 2 mystical houses of magic in Hereford.

Somewhere along the lines Jennifer ends up involving the House of Kazam in a magical contest with their rivals at iMagic. There are various bits of skulduggery going on, but can Jennifer and the House of Kazam emerge triumphant. In the background there is a Quarkbeast on the loose within the neighbourhood, which is in danger of becoming hunted.

The plot seems closer woven this time, and not so prone to going off at random tangents, which makes it a more enjoyable read.

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## David says

What did I think? I think it grossly unfair that the Hodder territories have had this book for some time, whilst the colonies have been and are yet deprived until September, 2013 of this second installment of **The Chronicles of Kazam**. Having obtained an ARC through the good graces of my daughter making pilgrimage to BEA, I did not waste a moment in devouring every page like a Quarkbeast ravening the nearest galvanized container.

I refuse to share any part of this book, not from any sense of greediness, but with a proper desire to allow said reader to enjoy every scintilla of the experience.

I, along with many fans, have been stymied by the location of the Quarkbeast monument. This volume sent me back to Google maps, having taken me on a romp through Kippen some time ago in anticipation of this book. For those of you who may not be familiar with Jasper Fforde's many layered web presence, you could do well to begin with the particular layer devoted to the Kazam series, or as he identifies it, the Dragonslayer series, though there are no dragons appearing in this second installment.

<http://www.jasperfforde.com/dragon/dr...> is the location, and the sleuthing competition is a particular piece of fun. Beware, if you are new to Fforde's work, you may find yourself sidetracked in a most delightful way and forget to get back to reading the books for a considerable amount of time.

Oh, so what did I think of the book. Well, I enjoyed it, and I do believe it will prove more than satisfactory to anyone who likes a few Eureka moments of thinking "So that is what is going on here?"

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## **Twila says**

***"Strange by name, Strange by nature."***

This book wasn't quite as enjoyable as the first one was. It just wasn't as hilarious but the plot was just as interesting.

Kazam and iMagic (their only competitors) compete it out to gain control over magic. iMagic isn't nearly as good as Kazam, so there's a lot of underhanded shenanigans going as they try to sabotage Kazam. This led to some very interesting and silly moments throughout the book.

King Snood and his Gracious Useless Brother were my favourite parts of this book. They were extremely funny and anytime their names came unto a page, everything just immediately turned better :D

I was kind of disappointed that no dragons was in this one. How can you have a series titled '*The Last Dragonslayer*' when you have no dragons?!

Besides that and the fact that it wasn't *quite* as funny, still a very enjoyable read.

Overall: 3.7 stars

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