

Darf Spline Verses the Stupid Zobmis

A Novel

Intrepid adventurer Darf Spline journeys across space, time, and alternate dimensions in his quest to vanquish the rhyme-averse Stupid Zobmis. Enter a world where things are not as they seem, except for the stuff that is as it seems just because some stuff has to be ordinary or it is too hard to keep the story straight.

Darf's most fearsome weapon (to the rhyme-averse Zobmis, but not to anyone else or the story would not work very well) is the rhyming couplet, kinda like Richard Wilbur's translation of Moliere's Tartuffe, or like The Rape of the Lock or An Essay on Man by Alexander Pope. Maybe not REAL rhyming couplets for Darf, which are kind of a lot of work, but you know, two lines that rhyme. Or pretty much rhyme. Enough to annoy the Stupid Zobmis.

Chapter 1

Darf Spline, intrepid adventurer, stood at the bar in a seedy, rundown, road house.

“Gimme a beer, barkeep!” He pushed a crumpled five glandnitch bill toward the bartender. “Keep the change!”

Thumping Darf Spline’s sudsy delight onto the nicked and scratched surface, the bartender, Sir Rudolph Fremppkin, fallen on hard times as a result of the crash in wheat futures and the slowness of his purple ponies and now tending bar in this godforsaken dump to eke out a meager living, eyed the bill, nodded, knowing that it was legal tender in a universe just two or three stops over and accessible through the mysterious door marked NOT AN EXIT around the corner from his bartending station, and slid the bill into the cash drawer.

Darf Spline grasped the frosty mug in both manly yet manicured hands, raised it to his quivering lips, and sloshed the tangy foaming contents down in one long, gusto-laden draft, in the process dribbling a few drops down his graying and somewhat unkempt beard and onto his orange and green plaid vest, a gift from his color-blind yet thoughtful former girlfriend, lost in a battle of wits against the Stupid Zobmis two years ago this last Tuesday, on account of having entered the battle only half armed, a loss to which Darf Spline had responded by sinking into a Slough of Despond, taking up heavy drinking,

warbling spontaneous rap songs in inappropriate places, and cutting paper dolls out of those throwaway placemats used in cheap Chinese restaurants, the placemats with the Chinese astrology symbols explained and the years listed, from which he knew that he was a rat. Or a horse. One of those.

Out of one corner of his right eye, his eyes being triangular and therefore having actual corners, and his eyes anyway moving independently to the consternation of anyone attempting to carry on a conversation with Darf Spline and noticing the mercurial gaze sometimes simultaneously turning in two directions at once, he spotted current girlfriend Kitty Katz gliding through the front entrance to the roadhouse, a place called The Roadhouse, by the way, because it was . . . oh, never mind that . . . anyway, gliding through and espying Darf Spline at the bar signalling the bartender for another round and tossing down another bill of which he had a lot on account of he had shorted wheat futures a while back and made a killing on the deal after which he took the other side of Sir Rudolph Fremppkin's disastrous bets on slow color-defective ponies and then she sidled up to him and planted a big wet kiss right on his succulent yet beardedly mouth.

Sir Rudolph Fremppkin did not hold it against Darf Spline, well, not actually very much, maybe a little bit, possibly, though, as he was

secretly in communication with a particularly egregious sect of Stupid Zobmis who at this very moment, thanks to an interdimensional spy thingy device secretly placed on the bar by Sir Rudolph Fremppkin observed Darf Spline and counted how many beers he was ingesting, thinking that a drunken Darf Spline will be an easier mark than a sober Darf Spline, but mistakenly not counting on the fabulous capacity of alcohol to loosen up the imagination and set it free to rhyme at will thus grating on the sensitive yet prosaic natures of the Stupid Zobmis.

Darf Spline grabbed Kitty Katz by her rugged shoulders, held her at arm's length, and spluttered, "Imagine seeing you **here!** Would you care for a **beer?** This place ain't no **florist!** Let the man you a beer **pourest!**"

Darf Spline treated his leather-clad sweetie to a brewski and contemplated his next move, which he thought would be to creep unobtrusively around the corner, turn himself one-eleventh sideways, evanesce through the door that is NOT AN EXIT and begin a new adventure in his quest to verse the Stupid Zobmis into submission.

Chapter 2