

**Colin goes to Zobeland**  
**by**  
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“What the hell’s happening?” yelled Colin. At least it felt like it ought to have been a yell and he could sort of hear it, but wasn’t entirely sure that any sound had been generated in the process.

“Welcome to Zobeland,” said Ted inside his head. That is, the communication appeared to originate inside Colin’s head, rather than Ted himself being there. In fact, Colin hadn’t the faintest idea where he, Ted, anyone, or anything else was.

Zobeland appeared to be a sort of pale blue; in just the way that Big Bill Broonzy might have done on one of his better days. There was no discernable ground, sky, geographical features, buildings, temperature, or apparent life forms. However, hundreds of amorphous blobs drifted around him. As Colin studied the shapes he started to notice some sort of pattern in them. They seemed to move around in small groups of half a dozen or so, each group being a particular uniform and soothing colour. A soft fuchsia coloured group of shapes wafted in front of him and he was able to see that it comprised a larger central blob with six smaller ones drifting around it, but never straying too far away.

“How does it feel to be a Zobelander?” said the fuchsia blobs in front of him, using Ted’s voice inside his head.

Colin bypassed the extreme confusion and disorientation he’d been attempting to suppress since his bizarre departure from the Eye and moved straight on to blind panic. “Oh my God, oh my God, OH MY GOD!” he yelled. Colin paused to examine whether or not his outburst had helped calm him down and establish some semblance of normality. It hadn’t of course. “Aaaaaaaarrgggghhh!” he screamed. Nothing changed.

Then Colin had a brainwave. He would run away. At first nothing appeared to happen and then he was aware that what felt like his arms and legs seemed to be moving away from where the rest of him still seemed to be. Next, the rest of him shot off after what he assumed to be the advanced party of limbs, with nauseating acceleration. The fuchsia blobs with the ability to project Ted’s voice disappeared as Colin rocketed away, but a small collection of pastel green ones came in to view and then managed to keep up with him.

“Where do you think you’re off to Colin?” The fuchsia blobs were back. They drifted in front of him as he slowly came to a halt. “You need to understand a few things before you go off exploring.”

“What do you mean, ‘How does it feel to be a Zobelander?’” said Colin, fearing the worst. “Well,” said Ted (who was of course the fuchsia blobs) “to start with, we’re in a different universe.”

“Well, I didn’t think we were in the Soldier’s Eye”, replied Colin a little fractiously.

“Technically we are actually.” Ted started to drift around a bit. “We’re occupying the same spacetime, but in a different universe”.

“Should that make me feel any better?” Colin was preparing himself for more shocks, which was just as well.

Ted continued, “Here in Zobeland, we have a very different corporeal form.” He paused for a response, but none was forthcoming. “As you’ve probably gathered, I’m this collection of coloured cells.”

“Oh, you *are* the blobs,” replied Colin, “I thought so.”

“That’s very insulting around these parts. You’ll think differently, once you get a feel for how your own corporeal cells interrelate.”

“My own what? You mean *I’m* now a load of coloured blobs too?”

“Cells, please. Yes you are. And a very fetching soft green too.”  
Colin shivered and noticed that the green blobs around him flickered for a moment, as though they were TV screens displaying a little interference.

“Get me back home.”

“Colin, you must pay attention.”

“Get me back right now.”

“I can’t until Jimmy farts again.”

“What?”

The colour of Ted’s cells dulled briefly. “I’m sorry but that’s the truth. He has to be sitting on his usual bar stool when he does it too.”

“I don’t believe I’m hearing this.” Colin’s fear and anguish were finally beginning to give way to righteous indignation.

“Look Colin, I know it’s a lot for you to take in, particularly given the shock of being dragged off to Zobeland...”

“You’re telling *me!*”

“But I need you to understand what’s going on and why we need your help.”

“We?”

“Yes, the future of all Zobeland depends on you.”

“That’s it Ted, keep piling it on. There’s no point in pausing to consider my feelings or mental state now.”

“I’m sorry Colin, but time is of the essence. I’ll explain as much as I can before Jimmy lets off again.”

“How will you know?”

“I’ve got a detector.”

“Of course you have. A trans-dimensional fart detector. If I’d realised, I’d have brought one with me.”

“In other circumstances you’d make a very successful Zobeland comedian. Sarcasm is the highest form of wit here.”

“Really?”

“No. Now shut up and listen.”

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Colin was progressing from indignant to petulant. “What’s all this got to do with me?”

“Good question Colin and easy to answer. There is an evil faction of Zobelanders called the Pupe...”

“You *are* kidding.”

“I’m deadly serious. The Pupe have discovered that your universe contains the necessary elements to create a device for controlling passage between it and Zobeland. They have also discovered that they could use such a device to change the state of the Zobe itself and they believe that by so doing they could...”

“Rule the Universe?”

“How did you know?”

“Oh come ON!”

“Look Colin, this is for real and...” At that moment, Colin and Ted became aware of a shrill rising and falling note being detected by their auditory cells and transmitted via the Zobe to their central corporeal cells. “Hang on, that’s the detector. Jimmy’s building up pressure.”

A long thin strip of a black substance, looking not unlike a mains flex seemed to separate itself from Ted’s central cell and encircle the two of them. As soon as the loop was complete Zobeland folded in on itself and the two were in the back room of the Soldier’s Eye once more.

An overwhelming sense of relief helped Colin regain his composure quickly. “You didn’t say what all this has to do with me.”

“I believe you possess the secret both we and the Pupe seek.”

“Who is ‘We’ Ted?” asked Colin as he disentangled himself from the toaster’s mains cord.

“I work for the Zobelander government...”

“Which is called the Tripe, or the Shite, or something similar right?”

“No, it’s called the Government. Come on, you need to get back. We don’t want to arouse any suspicions. Take those.” Ted indicated two cheese and pickle sandwiches on plates next to the microwave. Colin was sure they hadn’t been there when he’d walked in less than ten minutes earlier. He raised an eyebrow at Ted who responded, “Lesley. She’s one of us.”

Colin and Ted returned to the bar area, where Lesley had taken over serving and Tonto was pouring another White Shield.

Nobody seemed in the slightest bit interested in where Colin and Ted had been or why it had taken two grown men so long to produce two cheese and pickle sandwiches.

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