

Fifth Elephant

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Terry Pratchett has a seemingly endless capacity for generating inventively comic novels about the Discworld and its inhabitants, but there is in the hearts of most of his admirers a particular place for those novels that feature the hard-bitten captain of the Ankh-Morpork City Watch, Samuel Vimes. Sent as ambassador to the Northern principality of Uberwald where they mine gold, iron, and fat--but never silver--he is caught up in an uneasy truce between dwarfs, werewolves, and vampires in the theft of the Scone of Stone (a particularly important piece of dwarf bread) and in the old werewolf custom of giving humans a short start in the hunt and then cheating.

Pratchett is always at his best when the comedy is combined with a real sense of jeopardy that even favorite characters might be hurt if there was a good joke in it. As always, the most unlikely things crop up as the subjects of gags--Chekhov, grand opera, the Caine Mutiny--and as always there are remorselessly funny gags about the inevitability of story:

<blockquote>They say that the fifth elephant came screaming and trumpeting through the atmosphere of the young world all those years ago and landed hard enough to split continents and raise mountains.

No one actually saw it land, which raised the interesting philosophical question: when millions of tons of angry elephant come spinning through the sky, and there is no one to hear it, does it--philosophically speaking--make a noise?

As for the dwarfs, whose legend it is, and who mine a lot deeper than other people, they say that there is a grain of truth in it.

</blockquote>

All this, the usual guest appearances, and Gaspode the Wonder Dog. --Roz Kaveney, Amazon.co.uk

Terry Pratchett is one of the most popular authors writing today. He lives behind a keyboard in Wilt shire and says he 'doesn't want to get a life, because it feels as though he's trying to lead three already'. He was appointed OBE in 1998. He is the author of the phenomenally successful Discworld series and his trilogy for young readers, The Bromeliad, is scheduled to be adapted into a spectacular animated movie. His latest book, The Truth, is the 25th novel in the Discworld series.

Other Books

Ancient Natural History. Ancient Natural History surveys the ways in which people in the ancient world thought about nature. The writings of Aristotle, Theophrastus, Strabo, Pliny are examined, as well as the popular beliefs of their contemporaries. Roger French finds that the same natural-historical material was used to serve the purposes of both the Greek philosopher and the Christian allegorist, or of a taxonomist like Theophrastus and a collector of curiosa like Pliny. He argues convincingly that the motives of ancient writers on nature were rarely 'scientific' and, indeed, that there was not really any science at all in the ancient world. This book will make fascinating reading for students, academics and anyone

who is interested in the history of science, or in the ancient history of ideas.

⌘ ⌘ ⌘ ⌘ ⌘ . Elephants had other Roman virtues too, and Pliny would have been glad if every Roman citizen had the elephant's ... translates as 'on tightropes', carrying a litter containing a fifth elephant pretending to be a female in labour."