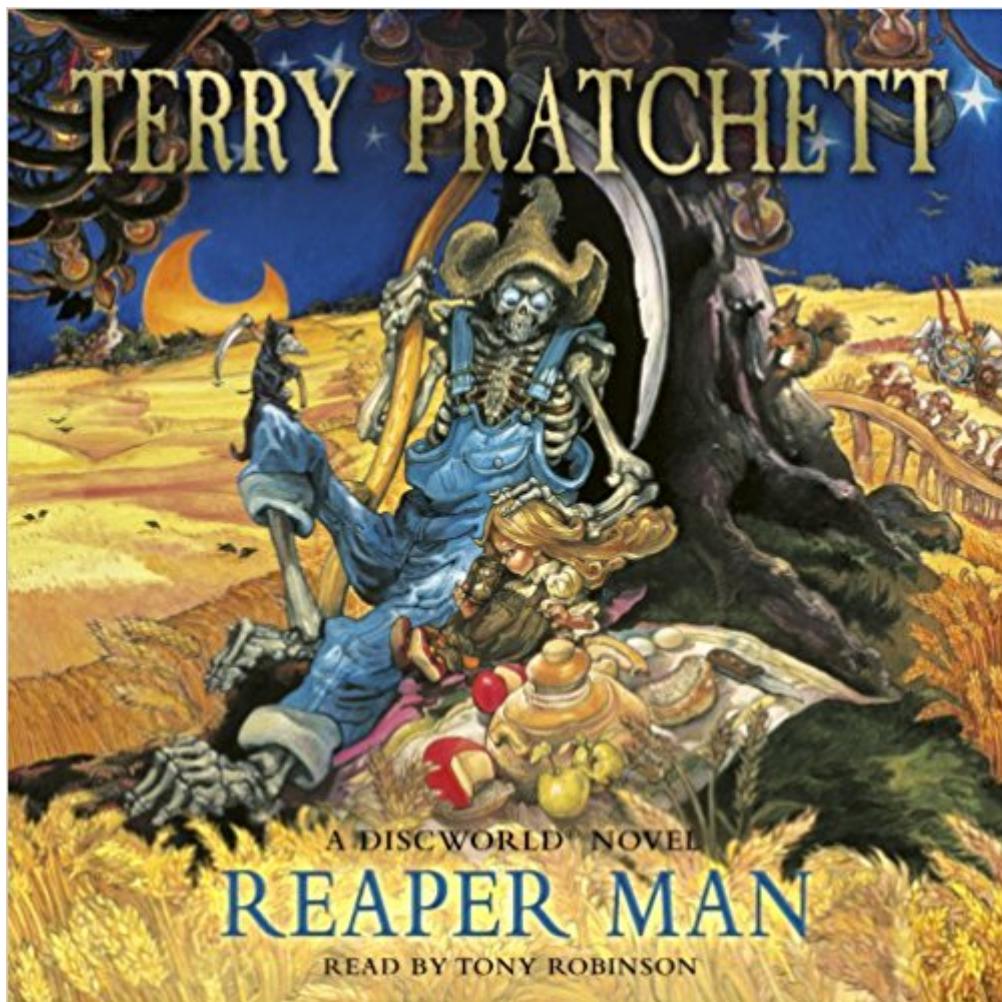


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Reaper Man



Synopsis

"Death has to happen. That's what being alive is all about. You're alive, and then you're dead. It can't just stop happening." But it can. And it has. So what happens after death is now less of a philosophical question than a question of actual reality. On the disc, as here, they need Death. If Death doesn't come for you, then what are you supposed to do in the meantime? You can't have the undead wandering about like lost souls. There's no telling what might happen, particularly when they discover that life really is only for the living.

Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: Corgi Audio; Abridged edition edition (October 1, 2006)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 055215301X

ISBN-13: 978-0552153010

Product Dimensions: 6 x 0.9 x 9 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars 289 customer reviews

Best Sellers Rank: #1,699,270 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #15 in Books > Books on CD > Authors, A-Z > (P) > Pratchett, Terry #489 in Books > Books on CD > Children's Fiction > Fantasy #776 in Books > Books on CD > Science Fiction & Fantasy > Science Fiction

Customer Reviews

"One taste, and you'll scour bookstores for more" Daily Mail "If you're an established fan, you'll enjoy this as much as the others; if you're new to Pratchett, what the hell took you so long?" Time Out "Pratchett's humour takes logic past the point of absurdity and round again, but it is his unexpected insights into the human morality that make the Discworld series stand out" The Times Literary Supplement

In the eleventh Discworld novel, Death is missing - presumed . . . er . . . gone. Which leads to the kind of chaos you always get when an important public service is withdrawn. Meanwhile, on a little farm far, far away, a tall dark stranger is turning out to be really good with a scythe. There's a harvest to be gathered in.

"Reaper Man" is by far my absolute favorite Terry Pratchett novel. I've just re-read this for the 5th

time and Pratchett still brings me both to tears and laughter in this Discworld novel. Pratchett has transformed Death (tall skeletal guy dressed in black, carries a scythe, etc.) into a likeable character to whom it's easy to relate -- that alone is a stunning accomplishment! But in this Discworld installment, Death loses his job (as a result of some cosmic scheming) and takes a holiday, becoming the likeable Bill Door. I won't be a spoiler; you'll have to read this impeccably crafted novel for yourself. The wizards of Unseen University try to cope with one of their own who's become a zombie; and we get to spend some time with Reg Shoe as well as a middle-class vampire and his social-climber wife, 'Countess' Notfaroutoe. It's Pratchett's dry wit and satire at its best, while simultaneously succeeding on all levels from the poignant to the heroic. If you haven't yet read this Discworld novel, you simply must!

The last few weeks, my reading has been monopolized by the mind of Terry Pratchett. I have been sucked into the Discworld, and I am just fine with that. I sought out experts on which order to read the books, since there is no one straight linear way to read the books. I read the entire sequence centered on Death (and his extended family) first, since my introduction to the world of the Disc was the movie version of *Hogfather*. I bought the first one, *Mort*, just to see if I would like it. I liked it well enough; I bought the next two books in the series on the Death story-arc. A quarter of the way through the second book, I bought the final two books of the arc. I neared the end of one of those books and I bought the first three books from the "Guards" story-arc. At this point, I have only read one of those books, the first *Guards, Guards*. I was pleased, since I have to admit that I was a bit worried about the continuity of quality between story-arcs. Was I just interested in the character of Death, or did I like the world as a whole? It turns out that I like the world as a whole, and this is a huge strength of Pratchett. I want to learn about all the inhabitants and read all the stories, no matter how tangential. I don't usually keep many books in my wish list, but it is now filled up with Discworld books. He builds a world like Vonnegut did. There are many familiar elements of the world we inhabit but there is the magic element that rips from genre fiction: what Vonnegut did with science-fiction, Pratchett does with fantasy elements. There are a couple of things about the series generally that I really enjoyed. The first is what you try to develop as a writer, a unique voice. I've been struggling on finding the right word to really describe what I would characterize as Pratchett's voice. It is arch and tongue-in-cheek and just fun if you've read enough. He's a post-modern Tolkien, but that's a little off. Secondly, he is funny, and he's not afraid to go for the easy joke. There are puns-galore, if you like that sort of thing. I happen to. There is one very memorable one that he just sort of sneaks in during *Soul Music*. He takes the reader 90% of the way to the pay-off but

allows the slow dawning to set on the reader, so that a bad pun feels like it was done masterfully. Which it is, it really is. If I had to make a critique of the books in the series that I have read so far is that I have read them too fast. My wife often tells me to slow down and enjoy the books you like, but I seldom listen to her. I should have here. There have been a couple of times that I enjoyed the ride so much, I didn't even bother to remember what I had just read. I had to go and reread the last 50 pages of Guards, Guards because of this. I enjoyed it too much. Otherwise, this is an unqualified recommendation for the Discworld books. Spend some time there, you won't regret it.

One of my favourite Discworld books. Death is being terminated. He has become too involved with his customers and the middle management of the Universe is looking for a suitable replacement. Of course there is a certain amount of discontinuity between regimes. The oldest wizard in the world, Windle Poons, finds himself at a loss when his carefully planned going away party goes on past the appointed hour. After the senior wizards make an (un)-rousing effort to try to de-animate him, he eventually finds himself engaging with the Ankh-Morpork undead community. Pent up life forces find strange outlets, as urban renewal takes on a sinister new meaning. Death finds a refuge of sorts in work as a literal (but less grim) reaper and is caught up in a love story of an unusual variety with his employer. The ending of the book is quite touching, and one is reminded that Death does not know the limits of time or space, and does on occasion, bend the rules. The recently undead, activist undead, nouveau vampires, moonstruck lupine lovers with crossed identity crises, animated refuse heaps, and a timid banshee that presents his wails on slips of paper. What more could you ask for?

Pratchett is a good antidote for life's sorrows. Too much death and the all too real possibility of more, I needed this comic romantic story of anthropological personification of a mythic demigod. "And I believe it has done me good."

Anyone who is going to die should read this! It is the "owners manual" for secure comfort and competent driving through this phase of, well, life! And I guarantee that whenever you see one of those stray shopping carts in your neighborhood, miles from any grocery, you will never look at them the same!! All of Terry's works are elevations from the unresolved "normal" frustrations of our lives, to a "comparable magnitude" (i.e. Discworld) where the laws of thought and fantasy work more correctly if differently than the laws of our physics, our "reality". The humor flows like a river. Because it is possible - beyond all doubt - to be heavy and still be funny -as Pratchett ceaselessly practices this. Wanna be a genius? Hang around long enough, get the joke (s), spread the joy!

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