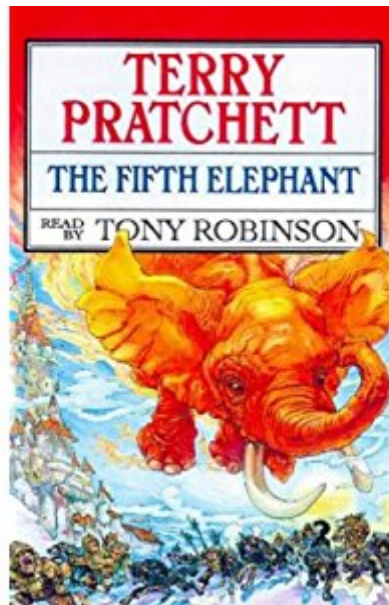


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The Fifth Elephant: Discworld #24



Synopsis

Everyone knows that the world is flat, and supported on the backs of four elephants. But weren't there supposed to be five? Indeed there were. So where is it?...When duty calls. Commander Vimes of the Ankh-Morpork constabulary answers. Even when he doesn't want to. He's been "invited" to attend a royal function as both detective and diplomat. The one role he relishes; the other requires, well, ruby tights. Of course where cops (even those clad in tights) go, alas, crime follows. An attempted assassination and a theft soon lead to a desperate chase from the low halls of Discworld royalty to the legendary fat mines of Uberwald, where lard is found in underground seams along with tusks and teeth and other precious ivory artifacts. It's up to the dauntless Vimes -- bothered as usual by a familiar cast of Discworld inhabitants (you know, trolls, dwarfs, werewolves, vampires and such) -- to solve the puzzle of the missing pachyderm. Which of course he does. After all, solving mysteries is his job. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

It turns out that Angua's brother isn't very nice, even for an undead. You know it is inevitable from the time you first meet him - doing one-handed handstand pushups - that Sir Samuel is on a collision course with one Bad Dog. It's also true that while you can take Duke Vimes out of Ankh Morpork, you can't take the cop out of Sam Vimes, even by making him the ambassador to Uberwald. It's a little hard to relate the Sam Vimes of "Guards, Guards!" to the man here. Sam Vimes seems infected with Clint Eastwood, but the cynicism is still there. More than any recent Terry Pratchett story, this one is a novel, with the comic bits fewer and the plot intensity ratcheted up to a

new level. The Game isn't even slightly funny, and dwarves are much more complicated than the axe-swinging, quaffing half wits (sorry) we've seen in other books. There are amusing moments, but for the first time I think Terry has a plot carrying the story instead of gags strung together by a plot. If you compare it with the thin shards of a plot in "Color of Magic" and "Light Fantastic," you can see how far he has come. I think some of the negative reviews - except for the accurate comments on the lamentably incompetent proofreading - are a result of his shift in focus. This is a very good book. Not the funniest. Not the cleverest. But it's the closest thing there is likely to be to a "mainstream" Discworld (™) novel. I enjoyed it very much. And when Sam Vimes heads to the plaza to confront Angua's brother, armed only with the leavings from the raided clacks tower, puffing on his cigar; well, you can practically see the dirty serape swirling in the wind. Fetch.

I am a diehard Pratchett fan, but even I hesitated to fork over the money for the new Fifth Elephant. I had been disappointed by his last several offerings, even Carpe Jugulum, which everyone said was his comeback book. Recently, it seems that his books have suffered from a lack of all that made Moving Pictures and the books of its time the best in the series. And I'm a big fan of the Guards storyline, and the last Guards book had been Jingo (don't even talk to me about it). Then I read The Fifth Elephant. And I experienced true joy. This is a Pratchett book in the classic style- a darkish story with an impressive set of points to make (satirical and otherwise). At the same time, it is also the funniest one he's done in the last several years, full of humor from the extremely un-complex to the kind you have to stare at for a few moments to understand (and then then laugh hysterically.) I have in particular to mention the excellent characterization of such recurring characters as Vimes, Lady Sybil and Carrot. When you compare Elephant to their debut storyline, Guards! Guards!, you can see that they're all far more subtle now, and that all of them have grown very convincingly as well. Vimes is my favorite Pratchett character of all time, and in addition to other changes, has been mysteriously reborn as a man of action. I don't know why he's suddenly leaping tall buildings in a single bound like this, but... The person above is correct about the irritating typesetting mistakes, and this day-glo cover probably could light up in the dark, but by all means buy this book and ignore both of 'em. It was easy for me.

As the other reviews have said, this book is Terry at his near-best. It's funnier than the last couple I read (Jingo and Hogfather). I was afraid he'd gone into a decline, but now I know he hasn't. I think the members of the Watch are among his best, and it was thoroughly entertaining to watch the character development of Vimes, Cheery, Detritus, Colon, and Carrot as they are put into new

situations. HOWEVER, the state of the proofreading was APPALLING, to the point where I want to return the book. The typos and misplaced words were so frequent that they diminished my enjoyment of the story. If you care about value for your money, buy the paperback. I'm very resentful of having to shell out so much money for a hardcover book, only to see it so poorly put together. Grrrr! BAD Harper Collins!

I was blown away by this novel. I haven't read a lot of Pratchett, two books and a couple of short stories, but I wasn't overly impressed. Sure he's good (I particularly enjoyed his 'Troll Bridge' story) but I've always preferred Douglas Adams or Tom Holt. This book changes everything. With 'The Fifth Elephant', Pratchett creates a comic masterpiece. He flawlessly weaves humor, both subtle and laugh-out-loud funny, into the framework of an engaging story. City Watch overlord Sam Vimes travels into a dark and mysterious country to attend the coronation of a new Low King. He discovers that the dwarf's hallowed Stone of Scone has been stolen by unknown nefarious persons. Vimes strives, amidst interference from disingenuous vampires, bloodthirsty werewolves and loyal Igors, to find the sacred Stone. If that's not enough, Pratchett throws in Fred Colon, Vimes temporary replacement on the Watch, panicking in his new authority. There's the traveling clerk with distinctly un-clerklike skills and the tangled love story between straight-arrow watchman Carrot and werewolf Angua. After reading through reviews for recent Pratchett books I received the impression that they were steadily declining in quality. If so, this one is a major comeback. An excellent, excellent book. A recent magazine reviewer for F&SF calls this the best Discworld book in a long time. I'll go a step further and call this the best book I've read in months. Pratchett now holds a solid place on my must-read list. Don't miss this one.

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