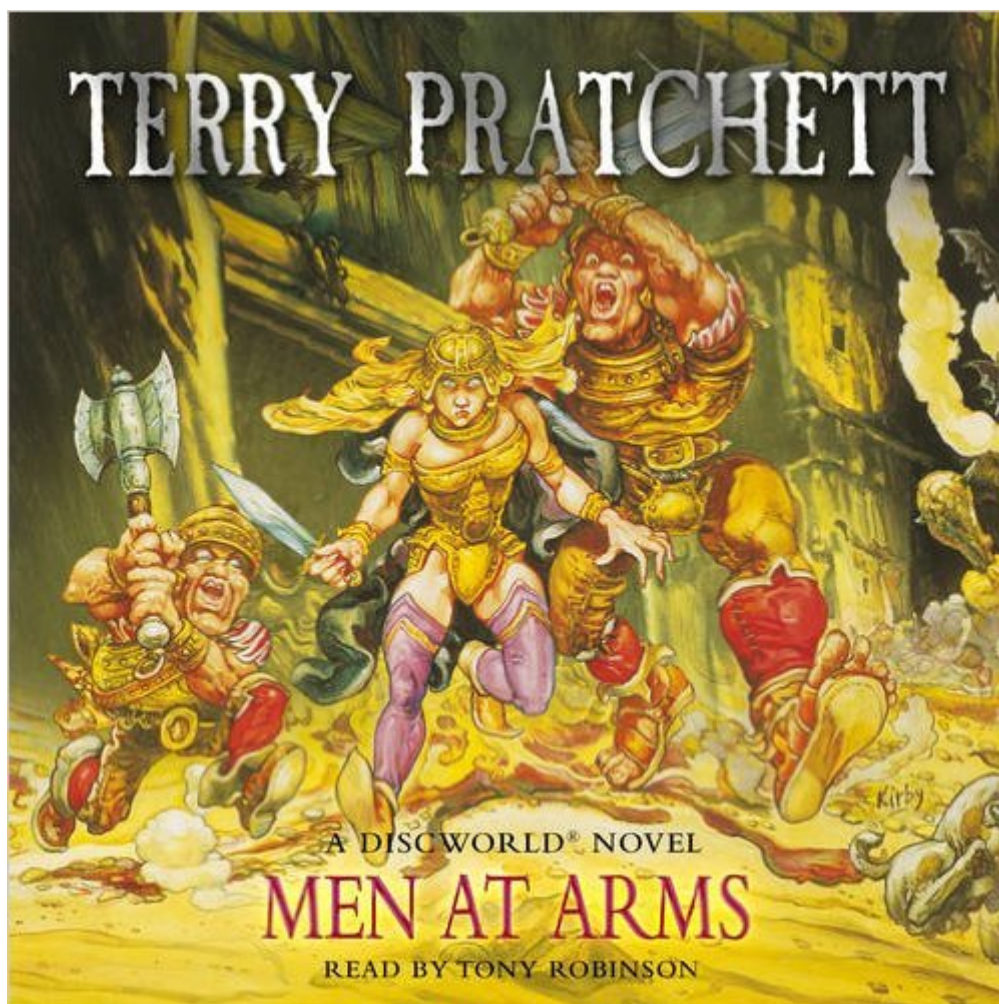


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Men At Arms



Synopsis

Be a MAN in the City Watch! The City Watch needs MEN! And they need all the help they can get, because they only have twenty-four hours to clean up the town and this is Ankh-Morpork we're talking about . . .

Book Information

Audio CD

Publisher: Corgi Audio; Abridged edition (September 27, 2005)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0552153176

ISBN-13: 978-0552153171

Product Dimensions: 4.9 x 0.9 x 5.6 inches

Shipping Weight: 5.6 ounces

Average Customer Review: 4.6 out of 5 stars See all reviews (224 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #302,017 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #4 in Books > Books on CD >

Authors, A-Z > (P) > Pratchett, Terry #112 in Books > Books on CD > Science Fiction & Fantasy

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Customer Reviews

This is the Discworld novel wherein Captain Sam Vimes of Ankh-Morpork's Night Watch retires and gets married, the Night Watch itself becomes an equal species organization, and Gaspode the Talking Dog falls in love with new recruit, Angua, the werewolf. She has just joined the Night Watch under the Equal Species Act, along with Detritus the Troll and Cuddy the Dwarf. No wonder Sam, who is a bit of a male chauvinist speciesist is going to retire. Not since Stephen King's "It" have clowns gotten such bad press as in "Men at Arms." They seem to be the saddest creatures on Discworld. One of them, Beano is murdered and ends up playing 'Knock Knock - Who's There?' with Death, who is trying to develop a sense of humor. Humor will never be the strong suite of a hooded, seven-foot skeleton with glowing blue eyes, but Death does get in one inadvertently funny line. He tells Beano to think of his newly deceased state as being 'DIMENSIONALLY DISADVANTAGED.' Meanwhile back in the world of the living and undead, Captain Sam Vimes and his command investigate the circumstances of Beano's death. Sam is also under orders from his wife-to-be to find a missing swamp dragon, which is likely to explode if it comes under stress. When a large hole is blown in the headquarters of the Assassin's Guild, Sam has a pretty good notion of what caused the explosion. What he really wants to know is whether this latest calamity has

something to do the Beano's death. After all, the Assassins are right next door to the Guild of Fools and Clowns.

Of all Pratchett's brilliantly drawn characters, Samuel Vimes stands unique in providing a realistic role model for the rest of us. He's honest, forthright, deeply suspicious of aristocracy, and best of all, despises the idea of kings. The last is important here, for someone wishes the return of the Ankh-Morpork monarchy. And Sam Vimes' remote ancestor, Old Stoneface, executed the last one. Edward d'Eath [how does PTerry come up with these names?!], an impoverished aristocrat, seeks fulfillment of his destiny by restoring the monarchy. Recruiting fellow lords to his cause proves difficult. It's been a long time since the last king, and the Patrician runs the city with commendable, if frightening, efficiency. So Edward embarks on a solitary campaign. Pratchett's inventive mind takes us from the "fantasy" genre into the murder mystery domain. Murder isn't a common event on the Discworld, and its occurrence here creates an intensity of feeling rarely evoked by Pratchett's works. Vimes is particularly irritated by such abhorrent events as murder. Assassination is bad enough, although carefully regulated by its Guild. For Vimes, murder is too arbitrary. It reflects the one aspect of society he resents the most, the exercise of absolute power. He's affronted both as a copper and a man. Partly inspired by Corporal Carrot, Vimes is no longer content having the Watch "let things lie anymore". Forces that used to push a drunken Vimes into the gutter are forces he now resists, even struggles to overcome. It's an inspiring read watching Pratchett give Vimes a new sense of dedication. Vimes has always sought justice, and his recent rise in society and the Watch has given him fresh impetus, and clout, to gain it. However, first he must survive.

I've decided he's too good and too prolific for me to write a brand new review every single time I read one of his books. Discworld currently has 34 titles and every one of them will probably knock your socks off. His mind bubbles and flashes like a boiling pot of electric eels, and I simply can't get enough of his writing. A reviewer has compared him to Geoffrey Chaucer. He reminds me more of Douglas Adams, or perhaps S Morgenstern. Great company, isn't it? He's an extremely skillful and imaginative writer, damn funny, clever and observant to boot. He's also very easy to read. A master of characterization, and if there's anything else you like about reading that I didn't mention here, assume I simply forgot. He's awesome. Another reviewer mentioned Jonathan Swift and PG Wodehouse. Why such hallowed company? Because Pratchett belongs there! Truly, I'm enjoying my quest to read every book in the series. You should do the same, and begin your quest at the library because he's got to be there. He's awesome! Yet another reviewer said Jerome K Jerome

meets Lord of the Rings. Yeah, that works too. Why do we, as reviewers, compare authors to other authors? Because it's easier than thinking. In the case of Terry Pratchett, it's probably because we'd otherwise wind up quoting the guy. He's so unique that we just don't know how else to cope with his greatness. Even this paragraph sounds like foamy drool raving, doesn't it? That's how all readers react to Pratchett. Reviewers simply don't have the good sense to keep it to themselves. I could call his writing fantasy, but I could likewise call what Douglas Adams wrote science fiction. In both cases, I wouldn't be wrong, but I'd be neglecting so much and just totally missing the point.

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