



Small Gods: A Discworld Novel

Author: Terry Pratchett
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Ever wondered what it would be like to live on a planet the shape of a coin, sitting on the back of four elephants who were themselves perched on the back of a giant 'space turtle'?

The place I refer to is known as the Discworld, an environment about which beloved author and Knight of the Realm (Sir) Terry Pratchett has written dozens of books over the last few decades. Each story, with comedy being used as the weapon of choice to captivate the reader(s), concentrates on one individual character (or small group) who live on Discworld, with other familiar faces from other Discworld stories popping up for a cameo or two. There are the *Rinsewind* books, about the worst wizard ever to go to Unseen University, the *Guards* books about Commander Vimes (who just wants a quiet life) and the group of trolls, dwarves, vampires and various other monsters and people who make up the body charged with policing Discworld's capital: *Ankh-Morpork*. My favourite sets of books, though, are the ones about Death, the grim reaper who rides on his white horse with his scythe helping people depart this world for the next, though he manages to go on many adventures along the way.

Small Gods is about a very clever tortoise, and a very stupid monk. While on one level it is a satire, taking a swipe at all those who claim to act in the name of a maker in whom they profess to believe (while actually serving their own ends), at a basic, brain-in-neutral-gear kind of level, it's just pure comedy and good writing. It takes in all kinds of historical echoes, from the Inquisition, to the ancient legends of the Greek Gods, to the myths of the Egyptians and squashes them all into a story where God's powers have become weak because nobody really believes in him any more... he only has the power to take the form of a tortoise. Only Brutha a young (and not very bright monk) truly believes in him. But that, is about to change, and all those false worshipping types and inquisitors had better watch out!

And ultimately it's the multi-faceted approach that for me makes this (and the other books in the series) such a cool read. When I read them the first time, I took them at face value, but when I looked at them the second time (after reading the source material during my degree), I realised just what a well-read and intelligent writer Sir Terry actually is. From an academic adult with letters after their name right down to an 8 year old, everyone can get something from *Small Gods*, where history is re-told with a uniquely British tongue-in-cheek.

9 sausages out of 10

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