



Equal Rites

Terry Pratchett

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On Discworld, a dying wizard tries to pass on his powers to an eighth son of an eighth son, who is just at that moment being born. The fact that the son is actually a daughter is discovered just a little too late. The town witch insists on turning the baby into a perfectly normal witch, thus mending the magical damage of the wizard's mistake. But now the young girl will be forced to penetrate the inner sanctum of the Unseen University--and attempt to save the world with one well-placed kick in some enchanted shins! Reissue.

Equal Rites Details

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From Reader Review Equal Rites for online ebook

Manny says

The problem with Terry Pratchett is that you keep wanting to read the good bits out loud.

In this particular case, I'd just reached the line "Her dress would have been both clinging and revealing, if it had had anything to cling to or reveal." Too late, I realized that not all the people around me were going to find this equally funny. I'm still embarrassed. Damn.

Rob says

Executive Summary: Not as funny or as quotable as The Light Fantastic, but very enjoyable for other reasons.

Full Review

I had to double check the year this was written. This book still feels very relevant today.

Wizards can only be men. Witches can only be women. Their magic is different and shouldn't be mixed. A women has no place learning to be a wizard. Witches "have their place". Does any of this sound familiar?

As someone who works in a field that is far too lacking in women the idea that certain disciplines are more suited for men or women is still a stigma we seem to be fighting today.

That isn't to say this book is preachy or in your face about it. It simply that the satire is definitely more directed at real world issues than fantasy tropes like the first two books. It sounds like this sort of thing is more common in later books, so I find it interesting that he changed up the style so early on in the series.

And while it wasn't quite as funny to me as The Light Fantastic, there were more than a few laugh out loud moments and quotes that I highlighted for later.

Plus, Granny Weatherwax is a great character. I've read that she changes quite a bit in the Wyrd Sisters and beyond, but I'm glad I can see how she started out before I jump into that.

Overall this book had to do something right, because I pretty much tore through it in a weekend, which despite it's short length is still rather fast for me.

I already jumped right into Mort as Discworld seems to have its hooks into me right now.

Bradley says

The Great Pratchett Re-Read Continues!

The third book begins the "real" development of the whole Discworld mythos, and rather than focusing on setting, it goes whole-hog (or Witch) into character and a rather deep social issue.

It is, at its core, a novel about breaking down the walls that the sexes tend to put up to keep the other side out. Witches can be wizards and vice-versa. :)

I didn't appreciate this as much the first time although I got the whole social bit perfectly... and mainly that was because I hadn't quite gotten as invested in the characters that would soon become the main driving force of the novels.

But now that I've had the pleasure of reading every novel, I'm fine. Just fine.

But Weatherwax seems to be not quite fully formed here. Isn't that odd? Or perhaps it isn't. This is the first time we see her and I have nothing but fond memories of the woman she reveals herself to be later. BUT, of course, such things always come with time. Thankfully, the wizard/witch battle was still brilliant. :)

Standing out was the Head Librarian, again, and Simon. And of course, our little witch was fun to follow but, unfortunately, she's not Tiffany.

Even so, I'm so glad to be revisiting all this! :)

Kai says

"A little knowledge is a dangerous thing, but it's not one half so bad as a lot of ignorance."

This was hilarious. I enjoyed every single page of it. If you saw me reading it, chances are high that you will have caught me cackling and giggling throughout most of the book. I never thought that I would pick up any Discworld novel but the more I read of them, the more I'm inclined to pick up another Pratchett book. They are light, fast-paced and highly entertaining.

I skipped *The Light Fantastic* because a friend of mine recommended I read the Witches series first. He is quite the fan. I cannot wait to read *Wyrd Sisters*, the second instalment of the Witches series, next. I am also looking forward to reading *Mort*. Any more Discworld recommendations? Let me know!

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Lyn says

If I was not already a Terry Pratchet fan, I would be after reading this exceptional book.

Equal Rites, Sir Terry's third installment in the Discworld series is a peach of practical magic. Telling the story of a young girl's conflicting talents for wizardry and / or witchery.

In the Discworld, men are wizards and women are witches – at least that is how it has been up to the point when young Eskarina Smith sort of becomes – both. Pratchett spins a deliciously tangled web about the age-old contest between the men and the ladies.

"I'm not a lady, I'm a witch," said Granny.

Eskarina may be the protagonist but there is no doubt that Granny Weatherwax stole the show. Filling the witch role in the small village of Bad Ass and always appearing in serviceable black, Granny kicks ass and takes names throughout the fun narrative. I am very pleased to learn that my favorite witch will make many more appearances in Pratchett's series – nine more to be sure.

A good witching time atop Great A'Tuin, Equal Rites is one of his best. This would be a great introduction for new Discworld readers.

Lindsay says

I'm fairly sure that this is only my second time reading this book since I first devoured the early books of the series back in the late 80s. Like The Light Fantastic it's forced a re-evaluation of my opinion of the early Discworld books and in a positive way.

A dying wizard passes his staff to a destined wizard, the eighth son of an eighth son. Only he was a little careless and the eighth son is actually a daughter. Eskarina Smith grows into her magic young under the watchful eye of the witch Granny Weatherwax who tries to teach her witchery, but it becomes apparent that Esk's magic is of a different and potentially more dangerous type. Lacking other options Granny takes Esk to be admitted to the male-only Unseen University in the city of Ankh-Morpork and hijinks ensue.

This is the Discworld's introduction to Granny Weatherwax, one of Pratchett's most beloved and enduring characters. She is much more fully realized as herself in this book than I had recalled, but some of her best characterization won't come until she gets Nanny Ogg to bounce off of in Wyrd Sisters in a few books time. The nine-year old Eskarina is pretty wonderful here as well, but I still have Tiffany Aching stuck in my head for contrast. Pratchett writing a nine year old in 2003 was a lot better than he was writing one in 1987, which is only to be expected. Mild spoiler regarding Esk: (view spoiler)

Melki says

Similar in spirit to the first two books in the Discworld series, once again we have a delightful duo on a journey, encountering many a merry mishap on the way. This book is not as funny as its predecessors, though the plot seems more cohesive and a little less meandering.

Despite the distinct lack of trolls, this is probably my favorite so far. I really enjoyed the "Girl Power" theme to the book. At least I think I did. It could just be those darned witches using their "headology" on me.

Patrick says

I just recently re-visited this book after a couple years away from it. What's more, I've just recent re-read

several of the more recent Witch novels from Pratchett, so they're fresh in my head.

Granny Weatherwax is one of my favorite characters of Pratchett's, and as an author, it does me good to see how she began as a character.

This book has some rough edges. There's nothing wrong with it, mind you, but it was still very early on in Pratchett's career, and it doesn't have the smoothness of his later work. Discworld is not nearly as developed, and neither is his writing style.

Granny doesn't have her friend Nanny Ogg as conversational foil and counterpoint in this book, and it's surprising how much that limits her character. What's more, while you can see elements of the character Granny eventually becomes, there's a surprising streak of country bumpkin in here here. In later books she loses most of that (which is for the best) and while she may not be worldly, she is still self-possessed and wise.

Another interesting echo is the relationship between Granny and Esk. Twenty years later, Pratchett brought a similar relationship to beautiful fruition with Tiffany Aching.

As a result, this book is merely great rather than utterly brilliant. Even rough-hewn early Pratchett is better than 75% of all books out there.

As a side note, this is not a bad entry point into reading Discworld. Normally I advise people begin at the beginning of the series, but despite this being the third book of Discworld, it makes for a better start than either of the first two books....

Phryne says

This was a reread for me but it is years since my first read and I did not remember much of it!

Loved that Death popped up right at the beginning and then Granny Weatherwax made her first appearance. Of course this book is vintage Discworld and these two, along with others, appear again and again later in the series and develop into much more rounded characters. Nevertheless Pratchett's humour is here in full force along with his wonderful descriptions and clever stories.

These early books are light reading - I polished this one off in a few hours -but they are still so good!

seak says

For some reason I thought I wouldn't like this book all that much. It's one of the first in the series, so for many people I talk to that's already a point against it, and I had it in my head that I will like other sets of characters better than the witches.

So far, of the 3 discworld books I've now read, this was easily my favorite. Granny Weatherwax is amazing and I had some great fun with this book. I'm glad to hear this series only gets better (as it has already) and this is why I'm glad I'm going through this series (ever so slowly) in publication order. I'm already enjoying

the series and I have some high expectations for the rest.

The story is straight-forward enough, but how it gets there was far from any of my expectations. Looking forward to more and more witches!

4 out of 5 Stars (Best so far)

Olga Godim says

A mediocre novel, at least for this writer. He's still stretching his wings, and it shows: this earlier tale contains too much verbal clutter but almost no humor, which is abundant in his later novels. I like the idea of this one – a female should be allowed to be a wizard. Oh, yeah, I'm all for equal rights. I dislike the execution though.

Why did the author make Esk, the protagonist, an 8-year-old girl? She is too young to behave the way she does and to know everything she is supposed to know. She should've been at least 15. The book definitely targets adult readers, so such a young protagonist doesn't make sense.

On the other hand, Granny Weatherwax, the second protagonist and Esk's mentor, is her usual grumpy and resourceful self, a champion of headology, which is a philosophy invented by Pratchett (I think). I like Granny's lectures to Esk:

“Listen,” said Granny. “If you give someone a bottle of red jollop for their wind it may work, right, but if you want it to work for sure then you let their mind *make* it work for them. Tell ’hem it’s moonbeams bottled in fairy wine or something. Mumble over it a bit...”

Despite her formidable magical abilities, Granny uses headology most of the time, and it always works for her and her clients. She is one of the best literary witches of the genre, and the more I read about her the more I like her.

Overall impression: for Pratchett's purist – a necessary read. For the rest – you can skip it. There are much better books in the Discworld series.

Murat S. Dural says

40'ın üzerinde kitaptan oluşan bir "Fantastik Seri" denilince "Diskdünya" bana okunmasının zor, birbirine bağlığını, içine girdiğim zaman çok kamayacağının bir evrenimi izlenimi vermişti. Bu önyargıdan sadece sondaki önerme, "içinden çok kamayacağının" kısmının gerçek oldu. Seve seve kaldığının bir diyar oldu. Fikrine çok güvenmişim dostlarım (Özellikle Ozancan Demir'in ve Hazal Çamur) bazının kitaplarının başının msız olduğunu, istedim imden başılayabileceğimi, muhakkak okumam gerektiğini söylediğinde Terry Pratchett ile tanımak istedim. İlk olarak "Mort'u okudum ve hayran kaldığım. Kinci kitabı "Faust / Eric" olmustu. Çok daha zorlu bir kitaptı (kötü anlamda değil, daha derindi). "Eğer Haklar" ise yine ve yeniden "Mort" tadını verdi. Harika bir kitap. Terry Pratchett fantastiğe sarmaladığını günümüz ile, inanılmaz dili, akınlığı, espri anlayışını ile muazzam bir adam/yazar. Kitaplarım beni hem istedim diyalarla götürürken hicvi, taşlamaları, göndermeleri ile gülmekten yerkere yararlıyordu. Muhteşem bir hayal gücü. Bence muhakkak okunması gereken bir yazar. Ek ve faydalı olabileceğini düşündürmek bir bilgi olarak; "Diskdünya" serisini hangi sırayla okumak gerektiğini merak ediyorsanız FRP.NET'in (Aynı zamanda Deli Dolu Yayınları'nın) çok

güzel, bilgilendirici bir grafiği var. Oradan istediginiz seride (evet "Diskdünya'da başlamak için çoklu seçenekler mevcut) başlayabilirsiniz. Bulamazsanız, benimle iletişime geçerseniz size özelden bildirim yaparım. :)

Trish says

This was a blast!

Introducing:

Witch supreme (or that's what I'm calling her) - and that only because of her stare, to say nothing of her actual magical talents. And yes, I can totally see Maggie Smith playing her in a movie!

Esk, 8th "son" of an 8th son (on the Discworld, 8 is the most magical number), who inherits the staff of a pretty powerful wizard because - instead of listening to Granny - he is eager to pass on his wizard's staff before he dies and assumes that Esk is going to be a boy.

The Unseen University, wizarding school that is not actually located on the Discworld but has a few access points there, one of which is in Ankh Morpork.

The Librarian

He used to be human, but due to a magical incident during Rincewind's adventure, he was turned into an Orang-Utan and decided to stay an ape because that was easier (and he likes the bananas).

It's the first book about the witch called Granny Weatherwax. She is, amongst other things, a midwife in the Ramptops (the area where she lives) and is therefore present during the birth of Esk when the dying wizard makes his fatal mistake. Since girls can't become wizards any more than boys can become witches, Granny Weatherwax wants to teach Esk witchery. She soon discovers however that it isn't enough - Esk's magic continues to burst forth and since Esk's staff is quite cheeky too, all Granny can do is get Esk to the Unseen University.

There, naturally, there is even more ignorance and prejudice about girls and wizardry so a bit of headology (trickery to get people to do what you want without really using magic) is needed.

At the university, the librarian seems the only one smart enough to see Esk and see her for what she is - and to be kind to her (granted, only after she gave him bananas but still).

And then there is the magical incident, first in the library itself and then ... but you should discover that for yourself, it's quite bad-ass.

I was quite surprised that there was so much world-building and we only got to Ankh Morpork and the UU so late in the book because that didn't leave much room for the final problem to arise and then get sorted out, but it turns out that it was just the right amount of everything, mixed together perfectly for the optimal outcome.

Generally, the book is about gender roles and inequality. What I admire most of all is that Terry Pratchett never lays it on too thick. He was never preaching. On top of that, if we simplify the parties (men vs. women), both sides are almost equally ignorant. Sure, Granny makes allowances for Esk at some point, but she never

stops having prejudiced opinions about everything.

There is quite a lot of magic too (I particularly loved (view spoiler)), along with wonderful descriptions of the Discworld, Ankh Morpork, and the Unseen University including the library. Everything is just so quirky *thinks of the ad for the Guild of Thieves* and, as far as I know, unique.

The previous two volumes had been fun but definitely weren't as funny as this one. I sat in the bookstore's café yesterday and burst out laughing on several occasions (like when Esk is REALLY dense about sex) and I also love how Pratchett seemlessly incorporates popculture references such as Steven Spielberg!

The star, to me, was the staff at first. The fact that it can't speak and how Pratchett found a way to still give it so much character (even more than Luggage from the previous two volumes) is simply amazing! It didn't take long though for Granny to steal the spotlight even from the staff. Her dry sense of humour, her sharp observations of the world (despite being quite prejudiced against all manner of things), her goodness concealed by grumpiness make her my new favourite character (she might even surpass Death) - she often didn't even need words, actions or her famous stare were enough! Just look at some of the quotes I liked that showcase her verbal and behavioral badassery. :D

Add to that the fact that the narrator of this audiobook, Celia Imrie, is a genius in giving each character here an individual voice, but being most perfect for Granny herself.

In short, I can't wait to read more books with Granny (read by this narrator).

BrokenTune says

"There are storms that are frankly theatrical, all sheet lightning and metallic thunder rolls. There are storms that are tropical and sultry, and incline to hot winds and fireballs. But this was a storm of the Circle Sea plains, and its main ambition was to hit the ground with as much rain as possible. It was the kind of storm that suggests that the whole sky has swallowed a diuretic. The thunder and lightning hung around in the background, supplying a sort of chorus, but the rain was the star of the show. It tap-danced across the land."

Equal Rites is not a perfect book. There were some gaps in the narrative of the story of Esk, the first female wizard of Discworld, which made me jump back to previous paragraphs only to find that there really was no explanation.

Equal Rites was also a book of two halves: while the first half was a slow-paced introduction to the village of Bad Ass (yes, I love that name, too) and its inhabitants, the second half was full of racy action and adventure. However, while the book was not perfect, it had one aspect that made up for any points of criticism I might find: Granny Weatherwax.

'Nonono, it's against the lore, you must go away now. Ladies are not allowed in here!'

'I'm not a lady, I'm a witch,' said Granny.

Tough as nails...

'Excuse me, my good woman, but would you be so kind as to move, please?'

Granny stepped aside, affronted by this display of downright politeness and particularly upset at being thought of as anyone's good woman, and the driver saw Esk.

Confident...

Granny, meanwhile, was two streets away. She was also, by the standards of other people, lost. She would not see it like that. She knew where she was, it was just that everywhere else didn't.

Adventurous...

'You don't know anything about boats!' Cutangle protested.

'I shall have to learn quickly, then,' replied Granny calmly.

'But I haven't been in a boat since I was a boy!'

'I wasn't actually asking you to come. Does the pointy bit go in front?'

Cutangle moaned.

Granny Weatherwax who has her own sense of style...

Granny wasn't sure she approved of silk, she'd heard it came out of a caterpillar's bottom, but black velvet had a powerful attraction.

and class....

Granny had the chance to become one of the very few women to learn what it really is that wizards wear under their robes, but modestly averted her eyes and followed the girl across the flagstones and down a wide flight of steps.

even in the most, erm..., "romantic" of circumstances...

'Mr Wizard.'

'Hallo?'

'When I said hold on—'

'Yes?'

'I didn't mean there.' There was a pause.

'Oh. Yes. I see. I'm terribly sorry.'

'That's all right.'

'My memory isn't what it was . . . I assure you . . . no offence meant.'

'None taken.' They flew in silence for a moment. 'Nevertheless,' said Granny thoughtfully, 'I think that, on the whole, I would prefer you to move your hands.'

Granny is brilliant and not to be trifled with, but she has her soft sides, too, which just adds to her brilliance as a character. So, when her ward Esk is rejected by the wizards, she steps up to console her and take on the established guild like only Granny can...

She stood up. 'Let's find this Great Hall then. No time to waste.'

'Um, women aren't allowed in,' said Esk.

Granny stopped in the doorway. Her shoulders rose. She turned around very slowly. 'What did you say?' she said. 'Did these old ears deceive me, and don't say they did because they didn't.'

'Sorry,' said Esk. 'Force of habit.'

'I can see you've been getting ideas below your station,' said Granny coldly. 'Go and find someone to watch over the lad, and let's see what's so great about this hall that I mustn't set foot in it.'

Once Granny got going this was a brilliant read, but as I said, it took a while to get going.

Veronique says

4.5

"...it is well known that a vital ingredient of success is not knowing that what you're attempting can't be

done.”

I started this book yesterday and found myself snatching any time I could to get back to it, even staying up late to finish it.

This was a surprise. I'm always a little reluctant when starting what is branded as a funny book, worried that it wouldn't work on me, which is why I usually go for the audiobook version - the performance and intonations of the voice artists being invaluable. Celia Imrie does an amazing job here, breathing life to Pratchett's words.

Equal Rites follows Esk, who is bestowed wizard power (and a very stubborn staff) at birth by mistake, which creates a whole world of trouble because of course girls cannot be wizards. Or can they? We see her first steps in this magical world, helped by witch Granny Weatherwax, who literally steals the show with her legendary stare. She is a brilliant character, which I hear returns often in the Discworld books, with her strengths and weaknesses, and a very particular way of seeing the world. Yes, I'm totally joining her fan group.

Pratchett delivers a great story that questions gender roles and inequality in a light and humouristic way, especially highlighting the ridicule, while throwing tons of clever play on words and clichés.
