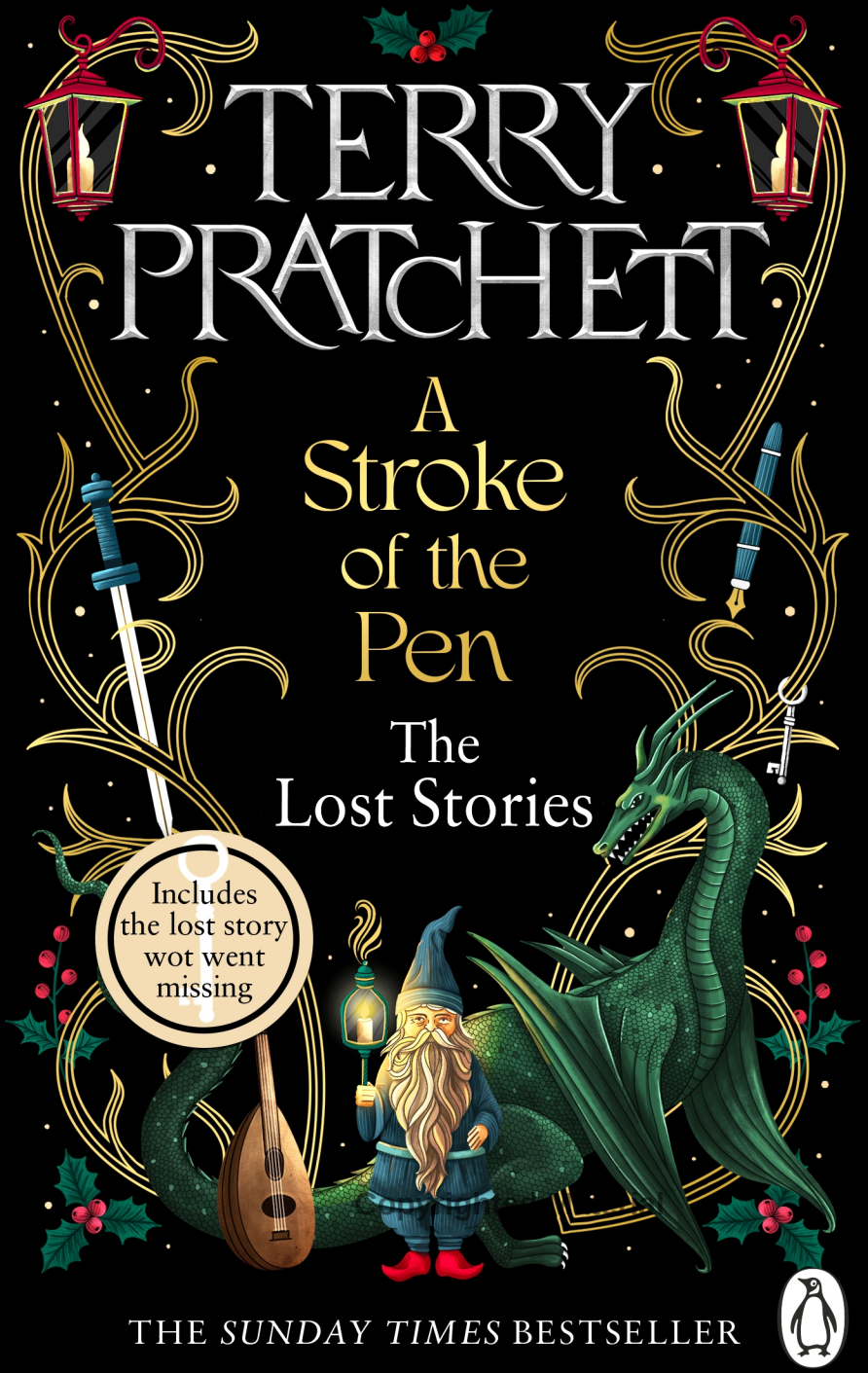
TERRY PRATCHETT

A Stroke of the Pen

The Lost Stories



THE *SUNDAY TIMES* BESTSELLER

A Stroke of the Pen

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Praise for *A Stroke of the Pen*

'Terry Pratchett's short tales from the 70s and 80s reveal a young talent bursting with invention and wit . . . there's much here to delight the open-minded, the fantasy aficionado and the Pratchett completist.'
Observer

'You always feel the push of the inimitable Pratchett behind them – funny, sharp, warm, wise and always so, so readable.'
Daily Mail

'Funny, fantastical and slyly smart.'
Mail on Sunday

'A new Pratchett! Clear the bestseller decks: this book is heading for the top.'
Guardian

'*A Stroke of the Pen* shows [Pratchett] at a stage when he was stopping at the first or second tree. Soon he would plunge into the forest.'
Sunday Times

'A fun read . . . The wit, wisdom and intelligence are interspersed with a lively dose of naivete, with entertaining results.'
Independent

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'A treasure trove glittering with lost gems.'
Financial Times

'One for the completists.'
SFX

'This delightful collection is inventive, entertaining and a little quirky, often with a twisty end.'
Press Association

'Enjoyable literary bonbons.'
i Paper

'Delicious, bite-sized stories.'
My Weekly

'Shows the beginnings of one of the UK's best fantasy writers . . . A treat for seasoned fans and newcomers.'
Sun

'A collection of excellent, often laugh-out-loud early works . . . Pratchett devotees will be moved and gratified by this unexpected gift and even casual readers will be utterly charmed. There isn't a bad story in the bunch.'
Publishers Weekly

'These early stories show Pratchett's remarkable ability to poke fun at the absurdity of the real world through fantasy full of irreverent wordplay, silly authority figures, and subverted endings . . . Pratchett's legion of fans will relish the view through this almost-overlooked window into the author's evolution, finding much to love in these clever, funny, and tightly written tales.'
Booklist

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FEET OF CLAY • HOGFATHER • JINGO • THE LAST CONTINENT
CARPE JUGULUM • THE FIFTH ELEPHANT • THE TRUTH
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THE AMAZING MAURICE & HIS EDUCATED
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MAKING MONEY • UNSEEN ACADEMICALS
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THE SCIENCE OF DISCWORLD II: THE GLOBE
THE SCIENCE OF DISCWORLD III: DARWIN'S WATCH
THE SCIENCE OF DISCWORLD IV: JUDGEMENT DAY
(with Ian Stewart and Jack Cohen)
TURTLE RECALL: THE DISCWORLD COMPANION . . . SO FAR
(with Stephen Briggs)
NANNY OGG'S COOKBOOK
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THE PRATCHETT PORTFOLIO
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THE DISCWORLD ALMANAK
(with Bernard Pearson)
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WHERE'S MY COW?
(illustrated by Melvyn Grant)
THE ART OF DISCWORLD
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THE WIT AND WISDOM OF DISCWORLD
(compiled by Stephen Briggs)
THE FOLKLORE OF DISCWORLD
(with Jacqueline Simpson)
THE WORLD OF POO
(with the Discworld Emporium)
MRS BRADSHAW'S HANDBOOK
(with the Discworld Emporium)
THE COMPLEAT ANKH-MORPORK
(with the Discworld Emporium)
THE STREETS OF ANKH-MORPORK
(with Stephen Briggs, painted by Stephen Player)
THE DISCWORLD MAPP
(with Stephen Briggs, painted by Stephen Player)
A TOURIST GUIDE TO LANCRE – A DISCWORLD MAPP
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DEATH'S DOMAIN (with Paul Kidby)
THE DISCWORLD ATLAS
(with the Discworld Emporium)

Non-Discworld books

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STRATA
THE UNADULTERATED CAT (illustrated by Gray Jolliffe)
GOOD OMENS (with Neil Gaiman)

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A SLIP OF THE KEYBOARD
SHAKING HANDS WITH DEATH

With Stephen Baxter

THE LONG EARTH
THE LONG WAR
THE LONG MARS
THE LONG UTOPIA
THE LONG COSMOS

Non-Discworld books for young adults

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TRUCKERS • DIGGERS • WINGS
ONLY YOU CAN SAVE MANKIND
JOHNNY AND THE DEAD
JOHNNY AND THE BOMB
NATION
DODGER
JACK DODGER'S GUIDE TO LONDON
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THE TIME-TRAVELLING CAVEMAN

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About the Author

Terry Pratchett was the acclaimed creator of the global best-selling Discworld series, the first of which, *The Colour of Magic*, was published in 1983. In all, he was the author of over fifty bestselling books which have sold over 100 million copies worldwide. His novels have been widely adapted for stage and screen, and he was the winner of multiple prizes, including the Carnegie Medal. He was awarded a knighthood for services to literature in 2009, although he always wryly maintained that his greatest service to literature was to avoid writing any.

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The Lost Stories

TERRY PRATCHETT



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This volume is dedicated to Pat and Jan Harkin who have spent countless hours in the British Newspaper Archive in Boston Spa, Yorkshire, establishing the dates when the episodes of the story 'The Quest for the Keys' were actually published. As Rob Wilkins and I did not initially know when they appeared, Pat and Jan had to check through thousands of issues of the *Western Daily Press* and, while doing so, discovered stories written by Terry under the pseudonym Patrick Kearns, which are republished here for the first time.

And to Chris Lawrence who at the age of fifteen was so impressed with Terry's story 'The Quest for the Keys' that he tore out the pages from the *Western Daily Press* in which it appeared and kept them for forty years before he cut out the columns, removing their dates, with happy consequences. Had he not done so, the Harkins would not have gone on their search and thus unearthed all the rest of the stories in this book.

We are deeply in their debt.

Colin Smythe

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Foreword by Neil Gaiman

Terry Pratchett being now these eight years dead, I have watched at first hand as the living person I knew has become a legend of sorts. Terry is, in the popular mind, as far as I can tell, a beaming, gentle, wise soul of twinkling eye and noble mien, a sensible old comforter, able to be enlisted by people of widely differing beliefs into their camps because of course their Terry would have agreed with them, they love his books, don't they? And I cannot help but feel that this semi-mythical Terry, like Merlin but with a witty quip instead of a wand and a slightly shorter beard, might as well exist in the popular mind as any other Terry Pratchett.

He is merrier than the Terry I remember, significantly less irascible, much less likely to hold opinions you disagree with (whoever you are reading this, whatever it is you believe, I promise that the real Terry held at least one opinion that would have made you curl your toes and go 'Oh, come on, you don't really think that!'); he is levelheaded and always lovable. The real Terry Pratchett was certainly lovable, but not always. He had, as he would have been the first to tell you, his days. Even I, and I still miss the real person I remember, am occasionally grateful for the new revised semi-legendary Terry Pratchett: we rarely disagree about what's happening when I'm making *Good Omens*, for example, and that Terry mostly gives me his

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blessing to do as I think fit. (Having said that, we do disagree sometimes, or at least there are times when the Terry in my head is very clear on what we should be doing, and it's not what I would have wanted to do, and then I sigh and do what I'm pretty sure Terry would have wanted instead of doing what I would probably have done.)

Sometimes, when I think of Terry, I miss the bits of the stories Terry would tell me – or even show me – that were never published. They would have been, I am sure, on the hard disk that was crushed by a steamroller after his death. The fragment of the story about Rincewind's mother, for example. Or the Dunnikin Diver section of the novel *Moving Pictures*. They existed once but they are all gone now, crushed into fragments, bits and bytes reduced to bits and fragments of metal and silicon and glass.

When Rob Wilkins, Terry's representative on Earth, called me and told me that a trove of Terry Pratchett stories had been unearthed by brilliant and dogged detectorists hunting through newspaper archives, I was unsure what to think.

And then I read the stories. And I smiled.

I wondered, though, as I read them, what Terry would have thought of these stories being found and presented to the world. And then I realized, because people are complicated, even when they aren't being semi-legendary, it would probably depend which Terry, and at what point in his career.

The young Terry Pratchett who wrote them would have been proud of them, that's for certain. He's obviously working hard on them. He once told me that a journalist should think like a ram-raider – smash through the plate glass, grab

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what you can, and disappear into the night. These are ram-raider stories: he has a certain amount of space on the newspaper page, which means a certain number of words to fill it, no less and no more, and he's going to start, build and finish his story to the word-count. He's going to hook you as quickly as he can and drag you through to the end.

He's not a humorist, not yet, and he's definitely not the blazing satirist he would become. The Terry Pratchett who wrote these stories is a journalist who thinks that he is, in his soul, a science fiction writer, even if that's not what he's currently writing. (He told me when we first met that he was a science fiction writer. I believed him.) This Terry is the man who has written *The Dark Side of the Sun* and *Strata*, mashing up his favourite tropes by Larry Niven and Isaac Asimov, determined in each book to build his own universe from scratch but as yet unsure what he will do with it.

The stories in this book are, on the other hand and for the most part, set in the here and now. Or at least the hereish and the nowish. And they are, also for the most part, funny and fantasies. They feel more like the precursors of Discworld (or even the world of *Good Omens*) than either of Terry's two early SF novels do.

It's one of the hardest parts of being a writer, the growing up in public bit. Terry needed to be published. He didn't have the time to spend polishing his skills in private. The Patrick Kearns identity allowed him to write fiction, to hone his craft, to discover, I suspect, what kind of thing he enjoyed making up and writing down. During these twenty tales he tries out a number of techniques – 'How It All Began . . .' uses the Cave People as Us, Inventing Things, for example, which Terry had

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encountered in one of his favourite books, Roy Lewis's *The Evolution Man*, while the Blackbury stories utilize a particular British Humour Style I tend to attribute to Norman Hunter, creator of *Professor Branestawm*, that is knowing and accessible for children, but with raisins of wit tossed in for adults. And through all of these stories we watch young Terry Pratchett becoming Terry Pratchett. There will be familiar turns of phrase, familiar names, there will be many moments where we see the mind of the Terry Pratchett that was still to come at play.

When does a young writer become the writer you love? Certainly 'The Quest for the Keys' is absolute proto-Discworld Pratchett, even if Morpork had not yet found its Ankh, and reading it made me feel the same way I do when an art scholar unearths an early version of a famous painting I'm familiar with and love. Change a couple of variables and 'The Quest for the Keys' might have been the template for *The Colour of Magic*.

I suspect that the Terry Pratchett of the middle years, building Discworld and honing his craft, would have been slightly embarrassed by the rediscovery of these stories. The Patrick Kearns stories would have been a distraction to him.

And Sir Terry Pratchett, the writer in his final years? What would he think about these stories being found and published?

I think he would have been happy that they were there to delight fans, and to intrigue the Pratchett scholars. (I don't think he was ever comfortable with the existence of the Pratchett scholars, mind.)

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I think he would have been proud of the young journalist who wrote them, and that, when he reread them, he might even have chuckled, amused or inspired by something a younger him had written, hidden behind an impenetrable pseudonym and buried in the dusty archives of the *Western Daily Press* for, the young Terry was certain, ever and ever and ever.

Neil Gaiman
May 2023

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Introduction by Colin Smythe

It had always puzzled me that Terry's inspiration for writing his *Bucks Free Press*-style short stories had dried up during parts of the 1970s.

I was wrong: I just had not looked carefully enough. At the time of his writing *The Dark Side of the Sun*, *Strata*, and his first Discworld novel *The Colour of Magic*, he was also writing short stories for the *Western Daily Press* pseudonymously, and later under his own name.

So we welcome 'Patrick Kearns' to the Pratchett canon: we guessed that Patrick sounds close enough to Pratchett, and Kearns was his mother's maiden name. And who else would have used Gritshire, Blackbury, Even Moor, and the Ministry of Nuisances in their stories, or an academic institute whose name, the Blackbury Institute of Applied Nonsense, sounds suspiciously like something from the future Discworld's Unseen University? I suspect that honourable practice among newspaper staff prevented him from writing in two papers at the same time under his real name, as at that time he was an employee of the *Bath and West Evening Chronicle*. But they have the unique hallmarks of tales by Terry Pratchett.

If it had not been for Chris Lawrence, who had torn out the relevant pages of the *Western Daily Press*, we would not have known of Terry's 1984 story 'The Quest for the Keys', before

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January 2022. As Chris had not kept their publication dates, uber-fans Pat and Jan Harkin started going through the issues from the 1970s and the 1980s in the British Newspaper Archive in Boston Spa, Yorkshire, until they found them, and in the process also discovered the Kearns stories.

For all the years I was Terry's publisher and then agent he never ever gave me any help in finding his shorter writings – but as he wrote in his dedication to me in *Dragons at Crumbling Castle*, there were stories he had 'carefully hidden away and very deliberately forgot all about'. Just how true these words were, I had no idea. Maybe he really had forgotten about them. Certainly, neither Rob Wilkins nor I had ever heard of them.

So, it is with the greatest pleasure that we can now share Terry's lost stories with you.

Colin Smythe

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How It All Began …



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