



LoveReading4kids.co.uk
is a book website
created for parents and
children to make
choosing books easy
and fun

Opening extract from
The Shepherd's Crown

Written by
Terry Pratchett

Published by
**Corgi Children's an imprint of
Random House Children's
Publishers UK**

All Text is Copyright © of the Author and/or Illustrator

Please print off and read at your leisure.

CORGI BOOKS

UK | USA | Canada | Ireland | Australia
India | New Zealand | South Africa

Corgi Books is part of the Penguin Random House group of companies
whose addresses can be found at global.penguinrandomhouse.com.

www.penguin.co.uk
www.puffin.co.uk
www.ladybird.co.uk



Penguin
Random House
UK

First published 2015
This edition published 2016

001

Text copyright © Terry and Lyn Pratchett, 2015
Illustrations copyright © Paul Kidby, 2015
Terry Pratchett®, Discworld®, Wee Free Men® and
Unseen University® are registered trademarks.

The moral right of the author has been asserted

Set in 12/14.5 pt Minion by Falcon Oast Graphic Art Ltd.
Printed in Great Britain by CPI Bookmarque, Croydon, CR0 4TD

A CIP catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library

ISBN: 978-0-552-57447-1

All correspondence to:
Corgi Books
Penguin Random House Children's
80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL



Penguin Random House is committed to a sustainable future for our business, our readers and our planet. This book is made from Forest Stewardship Council® certified paper.



PROLOGUE

A Crown in the Chalk

It was born in the darkness of the Circle Sea; at first just a soft floating thing, washed back and forth by tide after tide. It grew a shell, but in its rolling, tumbling world there were huge creatures which could have cracked it open in an instant. Nevertheless, it survived. Its little life might have gone on like this for ever until the dangers of the surf and other floating things brought an end, were it not for the pool.

It was a warm pool, high on a beach, replenished by occasional storms blown in from the Hub, and there the creature lived on things even smaller than itself and grew until it became king. It would have got even bigger if it were not for the hot summer when the water evaporated under the glare of the sun.

And so the little creature died, but its carapace remained, carrying within itself the seed of something

sharp. On the next stormy tide it was washed away onto the littoral, where it lodged, rolling back and forth with the pebbles and other detritus of the storms.

The sea rolled down the ages until it dried and withdrew from the land, and the spiky shell of the long-dead creature sank beneath layers of the shells of other small creatures which had not survived. And there it lay, with the sharp core growing slowly inside, until the day when it was found by a shepherd minding his flock on the hills that had become known as the Chalk.

He picked up the strange object which had caught his eye, held it in his hand and turned it over and over. Lumpy, but not lumpy, and it fitted in the palm of his hand. Too regular a shape to be a flint, and yet it had flint in its heart. The surface was grey, like stone, but with a hint of gold beneath the grey. There were five distinct ridges spaced evenly, almost like stripes, rising from a flattish base to its top. He had seen things like this before. But this one seemed different – it had almost jumped into his hand.

The little piece tumbled as he turned it around and about, and he had a feeling that it was trying to tell him something. It was silly, he knew, and he hadn't had a beer yet, but the strange object seemed to fill his world. Then he cursed himself as an idiot but nevertheless kept it and took it to show his mates in the pub.

'Look,' he said, 'it looks like a crown.'

Of course, one of his mates laughed and said, 'A crown? What would you want with one of them? You're no king, Daniel Aching.'

THE SHEPHERD'S CROWN

But the shepherd took his find home and placed it carefully on the shelf in his kitchen where he kept the things he liked.

And there, eventually, it was forgotten and was lost to history.

But not to the Achings, who handed it down, generation to generation . . .



CHAPTER 1

Where the Wind Blows

It was one of those days that you put away and remember. High on the downs, above her parents' farm, Tiffany Aching felt as though she could see to the end of the world. The air was as clear as crystal, and in the brisk wind the dead leaves from the autumn swirled around the ash trees as they rattled their branches to make way for the new spring growth.

She had always wondered why the trees grew there. Granny Aching had told her there were old tracks up here, made in the days when the valley below had been a swamp. Granny said that was why the ancient people had made their homes high up – away from the swamp, and away from other people who would like to raid their livestock.

Perhaps they had found a sense of refuge near the

old circles of stones they found there. Perhaps they had been the ones who built them? No one knew for certain where they had come from . . . but even though they didn't really believe it, everyone knew that they were the kind of thing it was probably better to leave alone. Just in case. After all, even if a circle did hide some old secrets or treasure, well, what use was *that* when it came to sheep? And although many of the stones had fallen down, what if the person buried underneath didn't want to be dug up? Being dead didn't mean you couldn't get angry, oh no.

But Tiffany herself had once used one particular set of stones to pass through an arch to Fairyland – a Fairyland most decidedly not like the one she had read about in *The Goode Childe's Booke of Faerie Tales* – and she knew the dangers were real.

Today, for some reason, she had felt the *need* to come up to the stones. Like any sensible witch, she wore strong boots that could march through anything – good, sensible boots. But they did not stop her feeling her land, feeling what it told her. It had begun with a tickle, an itch that crept into her feet and demanded to be heard, urging her to tramp over the downs, to visit the circle, even while she was sticking her hand up a sheep's bottom to try and sort out a nasty case of colic. Why she had to go to the stones, Tiffany did not know, but no witch ignored what could be a summons. And the circles stood as protection. Protection for her land – protection from what could come through . . .

She had headed up there immediately, a slight

frown on her face. But somehow, up there, on top of the Chalk, everything was right. It always was. Even today.

Or was it? For, to Tiffany's surprise, she had not been the only one drawn to the old circle that day. As she spun in the crisp, clean air, listening to the wind, the leaves dancing across her feet, she recognized the flash of red hair, a glimpse of tattooed blue skin – and heard a muttered 'Crivens' as a particularly joyful surge of leaves got caught on the horns of a rabbit's-skull helmet.

'The kelda hersel' sent me here to keep an eye on these stones,' said Rob Anybody from his vantage point on a rocky outcrop close by. He was surveying the landscape as if he were watching for raiders. Wherever they came from. *Particularly* if they came through a circle.

'And if any of them scuggans wants to come back and try again, we're always ready for them, ye ken,' he added hopefully. 'I'm sure we can give them oor best Feegle hospitality.' He drew his wiry blue frame up to its full six inches and brandished his claymore at an invisible enemy.

The effect, Tiffany thought, not for the first time, was quite impressive.

'Those ancient raiders are all long dead,' she said before she could stop herself, even though her Second Thoughts were telling her to listen properly. If Jeannie – Rob's wife and the kelda of the Feegle clan – had seen trouble a-brewing, well, it was likely that trouble was on the way.