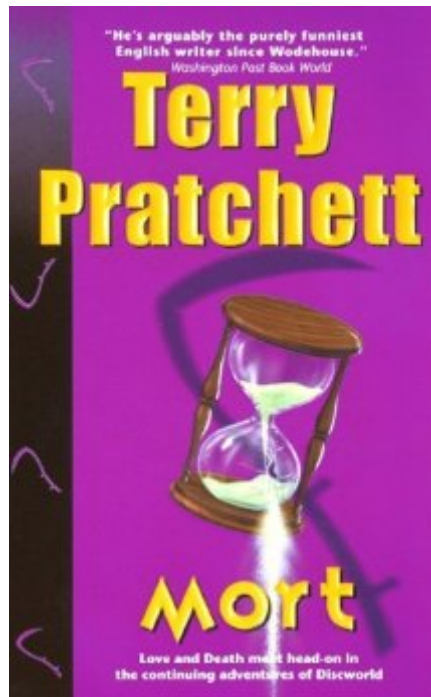


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Mort: A Novel Of Discworld



Synopsis

Terry Pratchett's profoundly irreverent novels are consistent number one bestseller in England, where they have catapulted him into the highest echelons of parody next to Mark Twain, Kurt Vonnegut, Douglas Adams, and Carl Hiaasen. In this Discworld installment, Death comes to Mort with an offer he can't refuse -- especially since being, well, dead isn't compulsory. As Death's apprentice, he'll have free board and lodging, use of the company horse, and he won't need time off for family funerals. The position is everything Mort thought he'd ever wanted, until he discovers that this perfect job can be a killer on his love life.

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Customer Reviews

When we mere male mortals reach a certain age we sometimes, aware that we are closer to our future death than our past birth, start to act up. We trade the 1981 Honda Civic in for a Corvette convertible, quit our old job to write a great novel, and have even been known to trade in our wives or significant others for a younger, newer model. It's known on Earth as a mid-life crisis. But on Discworld, and in the hands of the master Terry Pratchett, a banal mid-life crisis is turned into another one of his hilarious and thought filled romps. Through Pratchett's hilariously skewed prism

this crisis is not being experienced by a mortal but rather by the harbinger of death, the aptly named DEATH. What we have is a mid-death crisis. Death may, like an ever-rolling stream, bear all its sons away but DEATH seems more than a bit tired of doing all the bearing away. Terry Pratchett's *Mort* tells a rather simple tale. DEATH is looking for an apprentice. Young Mortimer, one of life's simple trusting souls is a young man with little career prospects. He is ungainly and spends a bit too much time thinking random thoughts. Mort's dad and relatives find him to be a well-intentioned but generally useless young man. Dad has been told that becoming an apprentice will get Mort off his hands and teach him a trade. So off to town they go for 'apprentice day' in the market square. As luck would have it, DEATH arrives and takes Mort on as his apprentice. Mort develops in the expected Pratchett manner. The relationship between Mort and DEATH, and the chores Mort performs to learn his trade, seem very similar to that in the movie *Karate Kid*. Shoveling poop is not immediately relevant to learning how to become the messenger of death yet Mort takes to his tasks well.

This fourth book in the Discworld series is the first to achieve truly classic status, in my opinion. Its predecessors were great reads, but *Mort* is a real riot. The skeleton of the plot has a few cracked bones and seems to be missing whatever connects the setup bone with the conclusion bone, but the humor is more than a saving grace for the awkward ending. Poor Mort is a gangly, clumsy lad seemingly made out of all knees; his father is fond of him but decides to apprentice him to someone else. That someone else turns out to be Death himself (although the father sees him as an undertaker). Mort is whisked off to Death's abode to be trained as Death's apprentice. On his first solo mission, he rips a big hole in the fabric of time by saving a princess from assassination. Death is off trying to experience living, so Mort attempts to make things right with the help of Death's adopted daughter Ysabell (who has been sixteen for thirty five years already), the young wizard Cutwell, the princess, and--with great reluctance--Death's manservant Albert. This is a riotously funny novel. I can truly say that Death has never been funnier. Being the reaper of souls for untold years does wear a guy down, and Death goes out into the real world to try and discover what life is all about. We find him dancing in a kind of conga line at a party for the Patrician, asking the guy in front of him why dancing around and kicking things over is fun; we see him getting boozed up at a bar and telling his troubles to the bartender, we find him seeking employment and dealing with a normal human customer, and we ultimately find him happily serving as the cook at Harga's House of Ribs.

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