

# An awfully big adventure.

On the death of Terry Pratchett

Peter Fox March 2015  
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He was a very old man. Not in years perhaps but in percentages. Soon the last few least-significant bits of his life would count down to all zeroes. His dry skin like museum papyrus, his toes as remote as the icy Pole Star, his hands as useless as Rhinoceroses at a christening, his shut eyes playing three dimensional cinema on his imagination. In cartoon colour Snow White and the Wicked Witch broke out of their simple-skirted stories and began rearranging the world where Dwarves and poison and legends and songs grew legs. A song with legs! How would it go? Backwards and forwards and backwards. Anything with legs would need another thing with legs, otherwise it would just be baggage. High-kicking two-legs and fast-sleuthing four-legs.

A bedroom is a quiet place. A funnel of introspection, extrospection and fear. Numbers don't matter but the islands of times spent together disappear under rising sea of time spent alone. Abuse from the neighbour, the too-curious boss, the concerned mother, the air-head girlfriend who isn't for you. All these nocturnes slice sleep into shreds to be reshredded into a horrible cold quiche.

Our man is at peace. He found peace from his high vantage point years ago. He climbed-up seeing the steps were there to take. To be taken by any writer who could read. To lead wherever they led. He shared the panorama of looking over the World of Men as many other Greats had before him. He saw folly, he saw hope, he saw comedy, he saw women living in a man's world. And he read Bacon's '*Men fear death as children fear to go in the dark.*' And he read its continuation '*...and as that natural fear in children is increased by tales, so is the other.*' and understood it. Then he started telling the tales he wanted to tell.

Lots of people live in China. Perhaps they are the same as us or perhaps not? Some of them stitched together a tiger out of nylon fur and polyester filling with a symbol printed on a tag indicating don't wash during a full moon. This tiger, born in the dingy sweatshops of Hangzhou where the sewing machines took their chatter from dangling cables twisted to the overhead wires, went around the world in his clear plastic body-bag first to Shanghai then, still in a mass grave with others took a container ship to Southampton. Now he shared the view of the garden, watched the bobbing heads of next door's trampolining children, listened to the sparrows arguing in their parliament's question time, and puzzled over the patterns of their footprints in the snow across the patio. He also kept an ever-present welcome in the bedroom, a face to recognise.

There was some sun this March afternoon and a few of those nodding yellow trumpet flowers on dull green stalks, but nothing to go outside for. Like all tigers he spoke with his tail.

"SHA  
LL  
WE  
GO  
OUT  
SIDE"

"You're the boss. I don't need to smell the Daffodils but I don't want to not smell them here."

"LET'S  
SEE  
WH  
AT  
WE  
CAN  
SM  
ELL"

"There's nothing interesting left for me inside. Let's go outside."

"AREN'T  
YOU  
GO  
ING  
TO  
GO  
EE  
EK  
OR  
SOME  
THING?"

"No. I'm dead. I don't do comedy sound effects."

"OH  
GO  
ON.  
JUST  
FOR ME.  
OLD FRI  
WE'RE  
NDS."

"Alright. But only once mind you. Then we're done OK?... Eeek."

"THE END."