

Quotes from Night Watch by Terry Pratchett

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This cemetery of Small Gods was for the people who didn't know what happened next. They didn't know what they believed in or if there was life after death and, often, they didn't know what hit them. They'd gone through life being amiably uncertain, until the ultimate certainty had claimed them at the last. Among the city's bone orchards, the cemetery was the equivalent of the drawer marked MISC, where people were interred in the glorious expectation of nothing very much. (p. 16)

"I've always wondered about his name," said Nobby, turning and waving. "I mean...Legitimate?" "Can't blame a mother for being proud, Nobby," said Colon. (p. 21)

"Mostly human, sir." "Do you mean that most of them will be human, or that each individual will be mostly human?" said Vimes. After a while in Ankh-Morpork, you learned to phrase that kind of question. "Er, apart from humans the only species I'd heard of there in any numbers are the kvetch, sir. They live in the deep woods and are covered in hair." (p. 23)

Like many people of limited intellectual scope, Snouty did take what he could do very seriously. He'd shown a refreshing lack of compunction about pulling that trigger, for one thing. (p. 62)

"But what is it you do?" said Vimes. "We see that things happen." "Don't things happen anyway?" "Depends what things you want. We're the Monks of History, Mister Vimes. We see that it happens." "I've never heard of you, and I know this city like the back of my hand." "Right. And how often do you really look at the back of your hand, Mister Vimes? We're in Clay Lane, to stop you wondering." (p. 72)

“I’ve met a few incorruptible men,” said Madam Meserole. “They tend to die horrible deaths. The world balances out, you see. A corrupt man in a good world, or a good man in a corrupt one...the equation comes out the same way. The world does not deal well with those who don’t pick a side.” “I like the middle,” said Vimes. “That gives you two enemies. I’m amazed that you can afford so many, on a sergeant’s pay. Please think of what you could be giving up.” “I am. And I’m not going to help people to die just to replace one fool with another.” (p. 205)

One of the hardest lessons of young Sam’s life had been finding out that the people in charge weren’t in charge. It had been finding out that governments were not, on the whole, staffed by people who had a grip, and that plans were what people made instead of thinking. (p. 237)

Coppers liked to say that people shouldn’t take the law into their own hands, and they thought they knew what they meant. But they were thinking about peaceful times, and men who went around to sort out a neighbor with a club because his dog had crapped once too often on their doorstep. But at times like these, who did the law belong to? If it shouldn’t be in the hands of the people, where the hell should it be? People who knew better? Then you got Winder and his pals, and how good was that? (p. 244)

“Tom?” “Yes, Clive?” “Have you ever sung the national anthem?” “Oh, lots of times, sir.” “I don’t mean officially.” “You mean just to show I’m patriotic? Good gods, no. That would be a rather odd thing to do,” said the captain. “And how about the flag?” “Well, obviously I salute it every day, sir.” “But you don’t wave it, at all?” the major enquired. “I think I waved a paper one a few times when I was a little boy. Patrician’s birthday or something. We stood in the streets as he rode by and we shouted ‘Hurrah!’ ” “Never since then?” “Well, no, Clive,” said the captain, looking embarrassed. “I’d be very worried if I saw a man singing the national anthem and waving the flag, sir. It’s really a thing foreigners do.” “Really? Why?” “We don’t need to show we’re patriotic, sir. I mean, this is Ankh-Morpork. We don’t have to make a big fuss about being the best, sir. We just know.” (p. 290)

People are content to wait a long time for salvation, but prefer dinner to turn up inside an hour. (p. 316)