

The Last Continent: A Discworld Novel Study Guide

**The Last Continent: A Discworld Novel by Terry
Pratchett**

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Plot Summary

In a broad parody of Australian culture, Terry Pratchett's *The Last Continent* follows the hapless wizard Rincewind around Fourecks, fulfilling the quest assigned him by the Creator—to bring back The Wet—while his colleagues from Unseen University enter a time/space anomaly to search for him.

Marooned on parched, barren Fourecks at the close of the novel *Interesting Times*, hapless Rincewind the Wizzard manages to nourish himself in the waterholes into which he regularly stumbles. He assumes that he is just lucky, but is, in fact, being watched over by the local Creator through the efforts of The Trickster. The Creator wants Rincewind to return The Wet to the continent, ending a drought that is threatening all life. The Trickster comes and goes via primitive paintings on rock walls, most often appearing as Scrappy, a talking kangaroo, who says that the drawings are 30,000 old, yet had not existed the week before.

Meanwhile, Rincewind's colleagues at Unseen University (UU) need his knowledge of the Librarian's well-hidden name in order magically to cure his dangerous illness. The quarrelsome senior faculty, led by the obtuse Archchancellor Mustrum Ridcully, discover a window into the same time/space anomaly that holds Rincewind, to looking to recover him. They become stranded. It takes them first to Mono Island, where the local God of Evolution is hand-making creatures. When informed about sexual reproduction, he sets out to retool his operation. The wizards leave aboard a Melon Boat that forms overnight, but intense magic offshore Fourecks sinks the boat and maroons them. They observe its Creator drawing creatures on rock walls and marvel at how the images spring to life.

Rincewind has seen such drawings, including ones of pointy-headed men: wizards. He suffers many comic misadventures across the outback, which become the stuff of legend among people given to ballad-writing. He is nearly hanged for sheep-stealing but escapes with help from a troupe of female impersonators—one of them actually female. In the course of his adventures, Rincewind invents or introduces to Ecksian culture many quintessential features, drawn from life in Australia, the model for Fourecks. In the end, Rincewind stumbles upon the key to reuniting past and present and ends the drought but nearly drowns the continent. Asked to remain, Rincewind sails home to the unexciting life of UU.



The Last Planet, pp. 1-41

The Last Planet, pp. 1-41 Summary

As Discworld moves through space on the back of a turtle bearing four elephants, snow falls on its foremost school of magic, Unseen University (UU) where the senior faculty worry about their Librarian's health. Every time he sneezes, he morphs into a new shape, each time retaining the red fur of an orangutan. Archchancellor Mustrum Ridcully and the Dean quarrel sharply and all of the aged wizards look down on their practical, young colleague, Ponder Stibbons. Meanwhile, elsewhere on Discworld, Rincewind the Wizzard awakens in a hot, silent red land and, 1,000 miles away, an opal miner discovers a hollow object with wriggling toes.

Deprived of the Librarian, the books have turned dangerous, and no magical cure is possible without knowing the Librarian's name. Stibbons suggests that they retrieve Rincewind, a former Deputy Librarian, from the continent of Fourecks. Bringing him back by magic as he had been sent could be risky and take months. Meanwhile, in the outback, the strange box wreaks havoc and runs away, and Rincewind, frightened by noises and inept at survival, has somehow lasted for weeks by falling into waterholes that yield nourishment. Ridcully leads the others to the office of the colleague most likely to know about Fourecks. His cluttered office offers no clues, but the bathroom window opens onto a beach.

The Last Planet, pp. 1-41 Analysis

The first section of *The Last Continent* introduces the cosmology of the flat planet of Discworld, mentions a myth of an old man carrying around the universe in a leather bag, which is expanded at the end of the novel, and asserts that all tribal myths are to some extent true, depending on how one defines true. The substance slood is described as the playful gods' way of measuring their creatures' intelligence. Mention of the platypus suggests that the story will be set in an Australia-like environment. It is clear that *The Last Continent* will deal with the mystery of creation, setting evolution and creationism at odds. Time travel will also be central.

The major characters are introduced, largely through bickering among themselves. They are magicians and teachers of magic in Unseen University (UU) in the city of Ankh-Morpork. Most are elderly and set in their ways. They naturally look down on their youngest colleague, Ponder Stibbons, who alone possesses a spirit of scientific examination. The head of UU, the Archchancellor Mustrum Ridcully and his jealous rival, the unnamed Dean, quarrel sharply and all of the wizards indulge in unkind remarks. This is a step up from the former atmosphere at UU, where promotion had been obtained by assassination.



Stibbons, inventor of the Hex machine, which in *Interesting Times*, the novel set just before *The Last Continent*, transported the hapless Rincewind the Wizzard to misadventures on another continent, and then, thanks to a "trivial error in bilocal thaumaturgy" (pg. 29), lost him on a largely-mythical continent, Fourecks. Stibbons is currently studying L-Space, wherein books in all of the libraries on Discworld communicate with one another. This is related to fragile time/space situations, areas of intense magic, such as the Library and, as it turns out, the last continent. Magic, it is noted in passing, can wreak havoc on the temporal gland, a somewhat incorporeal organ that may be the key to immortality. Vague at this point, the nature of magic proves crucial to the wizards' survival later in the novel.

Note Stibbons' interest since youth in fossils and current fascination with why most animals conform to a few basic body plans, with rather minor adaptations to fit their environments. He finds this unimaginative, but none of his colleagues notices or cares. Some are actively hostile to pursuing this phenomenon. This becomes a major theme going forward in the novel.

These factors come together practically as the divisive and generally inept faculty seeks to bring Rincewind home. They have a definite purpose. The Librarian, once a human, has long ago been magically transformed into an orangutan, and has fallen now gravely ill. Every sneeze causes a new transformation into something that is appropriate to his surroundings. To cure him by magic, they must know his name, and he has carefully removed all references to it in the archives. The faculty hopes that his former Deputy Librarian, Rincewind, might know the secret. Retrieving Rincewind by Hex would be too dangerous (graphically described; readers of *Interesting Times* will recall other gory examples of mistakes) and time-consuming, so the wizards logically seek guidance from someone who ought to know the location of Fourecks: the Egregious Professor of Cruel and Unusual Geography. He has curiously gone missing from his office. A window in his bathroom opens on a tropical beach.

Parallel with this rather frantic activity, the novel examines Rincewind trying to survive not in the dead of winter but in a burning red-soiled desert. He is mad with hunger and thirst, tormented by flies and incapable of survival on his own. Several of his close encounters with death are described, tongue in cheek. Some 1,000 miles away, an opal miner named Strewth discovers something that he is sure will make him rich, but it turns out to be a strange box with many legs that scares them and flees into the wilderness. Readers familiar with the Discworld universe will recognize *The Luggage*, which is Rincewind's constant companion and frequently fierce protector. Others will be mystified for a while. The author regularly toys with readers using this enigmatic character. At this point Rincewind has also not been named but merely characterized.



The Last Planet, pp. 41-82

The Last Planet, pp. 41-82 Summary

Rincewind crafts sandals from wood and creepers to replace the ones he runs out of whenever frightened. Typical days find him falling into waterholes, being plagued by flies, and, oddly, being chased off by humans whenever he mentions rain. One waterhole erupts and from it concentric ripples spread 1,000 miles and black and white figures appear on a rock wall. In his own abode, Death focuses attention on Rincewind, a man who has been so often exposed to magic that Death does not know when he will die. This is professionally frustrating, but it is against the rules to slay him. Death's butler, Albert, explains the peculiar geography of the barren red continent, Fourecks, where Rincewind lives and a reference book suggests that, given all of the lethal animals there, it is worth paying a visit.

Rincewind awakens to find a well-armed aborigine watching him. The man silently packs up a leather sack and walks away, but a disembodied voice offers Rincewind delicious food. Its chant disorients him. Rincewind finds a chicken sandwich under a rock as the rock drawing that had just appeared vanishes. Meanwhile, in another desert world, a crude drawing of an old man with a leather bag steps out of a rock and orders Trickster to treat the unheroic Rincewind as though he were a hero, because heroes are necessary.

Rincewind continues finding tasty dishes, quite unlike what the aborigines have been feeding him. He wonders why someone is being nice to him. When a bird painting steps out of a stone and heads for the mountains, Rincewind follows blindly. The ground has for days been shaking, although this is not volcanic territory. Rincewind becomes aware of a kangaroo stalking him but pretends to be unafraid until it announces that Rincewind is called to a quest. Rincewind flees, but the kangaroo easily keeps up. Rincewind falls into a deep waterhole that contains a refreshing oasis. He is disgusted to see the walls covered with graffiti—alien paintings of animals that somehow reveal their entire being and purpose. The kangaroo, who calls himself Scrappy, emerges from a drawing and reveals that he has been leading Rincewind to the waterholes that have kept him alive. Scrappy leads Rincewind to other drawings that he claims are 30,000 old, yet had not existed the week before.

Meanwhile, the wizards discuss the phenomenon of holes between time/space continua and for various reasons—strictly excluding their own pleasure—they step through the window. Overcoming self-consciousness over wearing swimsuits, they frolic in the surf and, while the Librarian seems to thrive, he senses that something is wrong with the island. Ridcully leaves a note on the window not to dislodge the block holding it open. Walking about, the wizards discover that they are on a tiny island whose position cannot be determined until the stars come out. They have found the Egregious Professor's campsite and a weathered notebook, which identifies this as Mono Island.



Mrs. Whitlow, UU's prim, authoritative housekeeper, deliver snacks. The wizards, who normally live in fear of her, compete to help her. Inadvertently she dislodges the block and the window vanishes, marooning them. Stibbons diverts the wizards from mutual incriminations towards finding a solution. Mrs. Whitlow is confident that the wizards will soon get them home, but Ridcully is inwardly doubtful. The wizards huddle and the Dean is put in charge of building a boat, while the others gather provisions. Plants begin growing rapidly at the Dean's mention of needing a smoke.

The Last Planet, pp. 41-82 Analysis

The second section of *The Last Continent* skips back and forth between the Egregious Professor's bathroom with its vista of a tropical beach—and then the wizards stepping through onto it—and Rincewind's meeting a talking kangaroo named Scrappy, who begins explaining to him the nature of his quest. Rincewind, of course, tries to run away from it but cannot escape the strange, swift-jumping and kind animal. The transitions between locations are often jolting, but both deal generally with accommodation.

Fourecks has a creator—emphatically not a god, but someone who undertakes the hard task of creating places—who possesses his own particular domain outside of Discworld. He carries the weaponry of an Australian aborigine on Earth, helping to suggest where Rincewind is. Death personified is also introduced stepping between domains. A frequent character in Discworld novels. Death finds the last continent interesting because of its many poisonous creatures and keeps close tabs on Rincewind, an old acquaintance who is so suffused by magic that Death cannot tell when his end will come. Death's interest in the continent allows many basic facts about the continent to be revealed in compact fashion.

The creator keeps secret why he has appointed Rincewind to serve as his land's undying, ever-renewing hero, a function that all cultures seem to require and to possess. Having just finished a dangerous quest in the Agatean Empire, Rincewind is anxious to avoid any missions, but as fleet-footed as he is, he cannot escape Scrappy. He sees many alien painted animal figures and sometimes notices fleetingly that they move. One looks curiously familiar. Only late in the novel will it be revealed that wizards in pointed hats from long ago are portrayed and hold the secret to the continent's time/space enigma.

The wizards' characters continue to emerge as they argue about their situation, both before and after stepping through the bathroom window onto a warm tropical beach. They suspect that something like a black hole may be in operation, the wizards recalling when a colleague builds an outhouse over one but finds that the black hole breaks back into the universe upstairs. Most of the wizards are genuinely concerned about the Librarian's health, which a tropical environment ought to serve far better than a bitter winter, and most of them see opportunities for study in their own specializations. They are careful to specify that they are not simply enjoying a holiday.



Early in the novel it had been noted that wizards are incapable of obeying Do Not Disturb signs, yet the Archchancellor sees fit to post one by the window. It is not a curious wizard but the encumbered housekeeper who dislodges the block holding open the wizards' only contact point with their world. Mrs. Whitlow becomes an important character because of the effect she has on these elderly celibates, simply by being female. The sexist old men fawn over her and worry about maintaining her dignity and virtue. This continues to build in the next section of the novel.



The Last Planet, pp. 82-122

The Last Planet, pp. 82-122 Summary

Scrappy informs Rincewind that this continent is made 30,000 years ago but appears over a million. It is glued together differently from the rest of Discworld. Rincewind's coming has altered the past and he must find the key to fixing things. Looking again at the wall paintings, Rincewind clearly makes out UU wizards (called Pointy-Heads locally), although UU had not existed 30,000 years ago. Other hand prints superimposed on some figures seem to be holding them in the rock. Rincewind is aghast to see The Luggage depicted, but Scrappy declares that it belongs. There are places here where several things occur at the same time, as Rincewind will learn on his journey. Having already saved this continent, he must do so again, relying entirely on his native wit without weapons or charms. He will know that he has succeeded when The Wet comes back: it will rain. When Rincewind claims to have met the Creator while he had been making the world, Scrappy assures him that the lost continent was created long after the rest of Discworld. An old man carrying the universe in a leather sack routinely fills empty ocean space this way on various worlds. Kangaroos are his signature item. As Rincewind naps, Scrappy reverts to being a smiling, eight-dimensional rock painting before vanishing. Expanding circles spread out around them.

Rincewind finds a road rutted by wheels and assumes that it must lead to somewhere with a harbor and ships. He is not anxious to save this world personally. He flags down a speeding cart pulled by eight horses. Both horses and the driver, Mad, are heavily armored. Mad is a ferocious dwarf fleeing a road gang that is chasing him for his cargo. He orders Rincewind, a pacifist, to shoot at the pursuers while he prepares the nosebags, which he calls superchargers. The pursuers ride a variety of vehicles pulled by various kinds of animals, including a huge, swift chicken (an emu). Rincewind loses his cherished hat, which the man on the emu snatches up and taunts him. As the supercharger takes effect (secret recipe) Mad's cart pulls away. A stray arrow brings down the emu and most of the road gang piles up. Mad assumes that Rincewind's magic is responsible. He circles back to collect loot. Rincewind does not see The Luggage attack Mad and chase him away.

Meanwhile, Mrs. Whitlow unintentionally stirs the wizards' passions (particularly the Senior Wrangler's), the foraging wizards gather what appear to be coconuts and pods but which contain choice sweets, cheeses and even filtered cigarettes. Beetles of every sort swarm around. Accommodating Mrs. Whitlow, who never dines informally, the wizards build her a driftwood table but eat alone, because she refuses to rise above her station. They compete to bring her delicacies that grow on the plants: pasta, custard and plum pudding. The Senior Wrangler hypothesizes that the lost Egregious Professor (whose boots they find) has been experimenting with simple magic.

The Librarian wonders why no two of the bananas that he is eating are alike in size or color. The same goes for the fish and seashells. His Ooks cannot make the others



understand that there is only one of every species. When the same truth dawns on Stibbons, the prudish elders reject the idea that normally in nature it takes a male and a female of any given species to reproduce. The presence of Mrs. Whitlow inhibits their discussion. Stibbons argues against a cigarette bush evolving in the absence of anyone to smoke them. The wizards have been on the island for too short a time for evolution to fill the niche. Ridcully, to whom evolution is a fairy story, contends that lemmings ought to sprout wings while dropping to their deaths if the theory is true. A roar in the forest interrupts them. A huge reptile emerges, charges, stumbles, and turns into a small chicken, which Ridcully roasts with a fireball to avoid wasting good food. It cannot be studied.

Stibbons' protests about not studying the creature give the others a laugh and they make remarks about how fast is the only sensible speed for evolution to proceed; otherwise there would be useless intermediate creatures. Ponder contemplates how his careful studies always provide the old men an opening for a stupid, unanswerable question. UU has too many counterproductive traditions, too little love of learning, and too much remembering of the good old days and childish bickering.

The Last Planet, pp. 82-122 Analysis

The third section deals in both locales with cosmology and evolution. The last continent appears to be millions of years old but is created a mere 30,000 ago, while wall drawings that appear 30,000 years old, had not existed the week before. They show remarkable detail in eight dimensions, down to the intricate cap of typical UU staffs. Rincewind tells Scrappy about meeting the Creator once upon a time, but is informed that the lost continent is not part of Discworld's original formation. Instead it is the work of the now-familiar old man with the leather sack, who is another creator distinct from the Creator. He apparently wanders from world to world filling in oceans with new construction. Rincewind omits that he had accidentally dropped food into a waterhole and hopes that it did not evolve into something. He observes that the Creator constructs every snowflake individually, which coincides with what the wizards begin to observe on Mono Island: every creature is hand-made. The wizards as yet have no one to explain the phenomenon and are incredulous when Stibbons points to the facts. Ridcully is openly skeptical of evolution and suggests that if it occurs it ought to put wings on lemmings as they fall to their deaths.

As he deals with Rincewind's profound density (no greater than his colleagues far away), Scrappy asks if he is "coming the raw prawn." This common Australian idiom, warning one member in a conversation not try to put something over on the other, brings back the Senior Wrangler's life-long aversion to eating or touching prawns. Rincewind takes the saying literally. Before what sounds like a Tyrannosaurus Rex attacks, its roar makes the Senior Wrangler fear ferocious prawns. The wizards consider hurling fireballs at it, even though it might be an endangered species. Ridcully says sarcastically that it should have evolved fire-proof skin.



Scrappy tells Rincewind that this is the last continent, made 30,000 years ago but appearing over a million. It is glued together differently from the rest of Discworld. Since Rincewind's coming has changed the past, he is responsible for fixing everything. He has already performed this feat in the past so repeating it is possible. The wizards will also later debate what unsuspected effects time travelers can have on history. The theme is only beginning, but it establishes that cowardly Rincewind must undertake another quest. He is more interested in reaching a port and a ship to return to Ankh-Morpork. It is a long and dangerous trek. Scrappy informs him that the continent is drying up and he will know that he has achieved his mission when The Wet—rain—returns.

Rincewind's quest begins with his meeting a ferocious dwarf driving an armored cart pursued by a road gang intent on stealing his cargo. The wild, violent chase evokes the first Mad Max film, a classic of Australian movie-making, down to the use of a humorous supercharger for the horses. There is a great pile-up for which Mad credits Rincewind's magic (which Rincewind disclaims). It appears that The Luggage, which Rincewind does not see, is responsible. This chase becomes one of the foundations of Rincewind's legend, which proves crucial when he reaches so-called civilization and is nearly hanged for sheep stealing.

The celibate wizards, particularly the Senior Wrangler, are discomfited by Mrs. Whitlow's presence. There is plenty of adolescent prattling and embarrassing fawning over her. It is emphasized that she is a perfect lady and not particularly alluring, but they are unhinged. When Stibbings tries to explain to them how sexual reproduction normally works in the world, they appear never to have heard of it and are embarrassed to have Mrs. Whitlow hear it mentioned. Eventually she will be tasked with discussing the matter with the island's local god, who is overworked producing all creatures from scratch. After they leave the island she goes back in years to when she had been a shapely woman who knows how to dress to entice, further inflaming the wizards' passions. Sex in this section of the novel is thus handled both for science and for titillation.



The Last Planet, pp. 122-171

The Last Planet, pp. 122-171 Summary

Mad reveals that his family being marooned here as a child saves him from a terrible life in the mines. His grandfather has told tales about something called rain, but Mad believes that that was beer-talk. Water, being heavy, exists only underground. Rivers are, of course, dry, because water flowing into the sea would be pointless. Mad delivers Rincewind to the town of Dijabringabeeralong, where in a pub owned by Crocodile Dongo he drinks too much clear Roo Beer. Its logo, a grinning kangaroo, seems familiar. The bar patrons are sheep and kangaroos who behave as humans. Rincewind cannot bring himself to ask sensitive questions. A large, angry, drunken wombat warns him not to make jokes about drinking beer, fighting, and talking funny and insists that they produce quality wines. When Mad intervenes, pulling a knife, the wombat pulls a sword, which Mad counters with a crossbow. Outside the pub, Scrappy kicks Rincewind awake. After driving an enormous spider from the outhouse, Rincewind uses it and sees pointy-hatted drawings that Scrappy informs him can be seen everywhere. They prove that Rincewind cannot avoid his destiny—because he is the cause. Determined to reach Bugarup and catch a boat home, Rincewind rejects offers of further help. A scorpion promptly stings him.

Meanwhile, on Mono Island, while he stands night guard, Stibbons observes that driftwood is all natural, with no shipping debris, and that the stars are not in their familiar places. The Small Boring Group of Faint Stars appears where it should have been thousands of years ago. This suggests that they have gone backwards in time. Remarkably, the wizards take this outrageous idea in stride but do not catch his warning against doing anything to alter history. Ridcully misses the metaphor about cause-and-effect in the so-called grandfather paradox. The elders cannot see why one would want to kill one's grandfather. Ridcully warns against applying too much logic. History might depend on their treading on ants to reach its correct place.

As the wizards return to sleep, a patch of burning marsh gas becomes a small, omnipresent god, who curses himself for letting the obvious cigarette tree grow. It has these people asking questions about an island where he has lost control. He is a rare deity, who generally encourages freethinking and wants not to attract believers. After briefly considering making more thunder lizards to eat the nosy intruders, the god sets in motion the flowering of a boat to allow them to escape. In the morning the wizards enjoy a fine breakfast growing on trees but decide to escape before becoming something else's breakfast. Although there is no library on the island, it seems that people as intelligent as they ought to be able to build a boat. On their own they invent a sodden, hollow log seating one and hope to advance to a raft.

Trying to avoid loud, obnoxious Ridcully, the Bursar wanders into the jungle, where the god has been watching the boat-making and these odd creatures. The Bursar stumbles upon a one-sail boat with the figurehead of a naked lady. The Dean feels stimulated.



Mrs. Whitlow emerges from her hut in a two-piece garment and a flower in her hair. The Senior Wrangler is speechless. All fawn over her as she prepares to bathe. Still distracted, they examine the god's boat, the result of many plants' efforts. Ridcully is dubious about setting out, but Stibbons warns of carnivorous plants. Just then the god appears with orders that they leave or face his wrath. Gradually he admits that wearing a white robe and long beard and spouting threats is not his style. Depressed and disenchanted by the practice of crude religion elsewhere, he has retreated to this tiny island to perfect godliness and form creatures that can change their own instructions as needed. He agrees that evolution is a good term for this, but laments that the plants lack discipline. As they talk about the advantages of paired creatures and competition for survival, the god gets an idea and vanishes. Upset that the wizards would abandon this research opportunity, Stibbons declares that he will remain on the island.

The Last Planet, pp. 122-171 Analysis

Rincewind is little in focus in the next section. It is limited to an extended movie parody, combining the famous you-call-that-a-knife scene in *Crocodile Dundee* with Indiana Jones' pulling a gun to defeat the sword-flashing Egyptian in the *Raiders of the Lost Ark*. A bartender, Crocodile Dongo, dressed in bush fashion and a hulking wallaby, resents the way outsiders mock local ways and brags about the continent's fine wines. Australians are reputed to be culturally defensive in this way. More significantly later in the novel, Dongo and Rincewind discuss the impractical myth of rain, with no explanation for why there would be dry riverbeds. Rincewind vaguely recognizes the kangaroo that smiles out of the Roo Beer logo, a brand that is featured as the novel reaches its climax.

On Mono Island, Stibbons calculates from a misplaced constellation that they have traveled back in time and struggles to convince the others that they must not inadvertently change the course of history by their actions. In a rather long aside, background is provided on how in the past wizards have risen to positions of authority by murdering their predecessors. Ridcully has ended the fear by refusing to be killed. Despite all appearances, he is a progressive force at UU. Still, he misunderstands Stibbons' talk about time travel and orders that they leave the island, abandoning all of its research potential.

Against the background of the wizards' failure to build a boat, the island's god appears, disenchanted with religion and the acts of awe that seem to be expected in the rest of Discworld's gods. He describes himself as an atheist. He caricatures religions that require blood sacrifice and are dominated by impractical rules. Throwing lightning bolts is difficult and generally makes the innocent suffer. Priests take advantage of every opening to expand their power. The god wants on this isolated island to create species that can react to their environment. He learns from Stibbons about how pairs of creatures serve his purpose, through sexual reproduction and the survival of the fittest. He also learns, usefully, how to blow his nose. The boat that he has set growing appears seaworthy. Its figurehead of a naked green woman titillates the wizards and gets them in a tizzy about Mrs. Whitlow, who has made herself more alluring in a

newzelande garment (two pieces, but substantial, unlike the bikini). Sex per se has not been discussed, but the grounds for it are being set.



The Last Planet, pp. 171-227

The Last Planet, pp. 171-227 Summary

Crocodile Dongo tells Rincewind about drinking 20 pints but retaining few, singing a song about tying his kangaroo up, losing all of his money on coin tosses, and challenging Daggy's gang to a sheep-shearing contest. They have heard that he is a famous wizard who can kill people by pointing at them; they want to see this. Rincewind notices that the kangaroo in the Roo Beer poster keeps coming and going. Only the swarming flies remain constant and Rincewind strings corks to his hat to keep them away from his face. Meanwhile, The Luggage, feeling as though he has been buried for a million years (but also for just five minutes), lets himself be picked up by a purple cart and filled with heavy ladies' shoes. It is "Petunia, The Desert Princess."

Rincewind knows little about sheep, a meek but delicious animal that can fast turn nasty. Allowed a trial run at shearing, he uses proper haircutting equipment and chit-chat on an aged sheep that knows this is not how shearing ought to go, but does not struggle. The shearers admire the beautiful results, but say that the normal rate is 50 sheep an hour. Meanwhile, a kangaroo's form appears on the back of the shearing shed and steps out as a great ram. In private the ram tells Rincewind simply to hold the shears and let the sheep do the rest. They spin and cartwheel against the shears, leaving Rincewind waist-deep in fleece—30 sheep in two minutes. The shearers cannot cover their bet; Rincewind uses the phrase, "No worries," which seems to cover all occasions here, and asks only directions to Bugarup.

Daggy offers him Snowy, a saggy, short-legged horse, whom he claims is sure-footed. Snowy moves slowly at an odd gait that painfully bounces around Rincewind's innards. Stopping at a billybong (watering hole), Rincewind is attacked by a drop-bear (a large, fierce koala) that impales itself on his pointed hat. As its companions drop in amazement at the failure of the usually lethal attack, Rincewind and Snowy flee. Budgerigars (parakeets), offended at being called pretty birds, pursue them, twittering "Bug'roff!" Rincewind sleeps briefly, awakening to the screech of thirsty sheep and a dry windmill. Himself thirsty, Rincewind has mercy on the beasts and begins digging for underground water. He digs down until he needs a ladder, but produces only a few hats' full. Moving on, Rincewind finds the road heavier traveled and, stopping at another groaning windmill, is overtaken by a line of riders. They seek a mob of horses on which Remorse has placed a bounty.

The riders thunder past several times, never answering if Rincewind is on the right road. At a sheer-walled canyon, Snowy trots forward rather than plunging, crosses the bottom and climbs the far wall, even negotiating the overhang. Rincewind can only hang on and scream. He suspects magic and thinks that he catches Snowy snickering. At the next canyon, Snowy slides down, causing a landslide that pens in the lost horses. The horsemen, impressed, ask to buy Snowy and a shaky Rincewind happily parts with him. The men struggle to find the most fitting idiom for fall-down tired and terrified, poke fun



when Rincewind mentions drop-bears and mock his cork-bobbling hat. They see him off, hoping that he will not meet up with any bush rangers, which Rincewind does not recognize as dangerous. Remorse sends to town for corks for his hat. Snowy turns into a rock painting, which morphs into a kangaroo drawing before fading away.

Meanwhile, on Mono Island, bathed and relaxed, Mrs. Whitlow is sure that the wizards will soon have her home. As the Melon Boat is provisioned, the wizards realize that Stibbons, whom they need to sail her, is missing. In the face of danger, UU wizards argue about options rather than dispelling it by magic, as Stibbons has always imagined they would. Animals in the forest remind him of a favorite childhood flip-book where pictures of animal body parts could be mixed-and-matched. A path leads him to the mountain top, from whence he sees a glowing cave, which opens into a noisy, misty cavern. He sees two halves of a living elephant yards apart, under construction, alongside a shark and whale. It flicks its ears and stands on wheels. The God of Evolution appears to greet Stibbons. His workroom swarms with beetles, no two alike, which the god assembles from boxes of components whenever he is depressed. He strives to diversify the results, but can conceive of no higher lifeforms that contemplate the purpose of the universe. Six legs yields optimal brain size. As he switches beaks on a bird, the god complains about their not evolving as designed. Too much hand-work is required. Feeling too constricted at UU and realizing that the god is very wizard-like in how he fails to listen, Stibbons volunteers to become his assistant.

The wizards arrive, prattling and touching everything. Stibbons explains that elephants are not normally assembled from parts, but result from sex. On Mono Island, however, there are no male/female pairs. The god makes every creature, observes until they wear out, and then makes an improved replacement. Plants have been misbehaving and he does not understand why they form seeds, which have no clear purpose. When Stibbons claims that they are inventing sex, the god sees considerable labor savings. Elephants are particularly tricky to get functioning. The god objects, however, that if smaller versions form inside, soon elephants will be the size of rabbits. Stibbons explains growth after birth. When asked how it works in humans, Ridcully declares that wizards focus on higher things and take cold baths. After a Faculty meeting, Ridcully declares that they do not speak about sex.

As the god demands a practical demonstration, Mrs. Whitlow arrives. She is introduced as a female, and also primly declines to discuss sex. Vexed, the god fires off a small lightning bolt. Gods are not used to being defied. To avoid being incinerated, Mrs. Whitlow takes the god aside for a private explanation, from which they return, laughing. The wizards disapprovingly consider myths of gods and humans mating. The god happily dismisses the wizards to their boat, as he contemplates the numerous ways in which sex can solve problems. Stibbons asks to stay behind to do research and the god overcomes objections that Stibbons is needed to navigate. The boat will find a proper new continent automatically. Stibbons is excited at finally finding his place in the world.



The Last Planet, pp. 171-227 Analysis

The next section finds Rincewind still firmly under The Trickster's protection and confused by the locals' most extended run of local jargon, while the wizards meet the God of Evolution, who is introduced to the benefits of sex. Both situations are heavily played for slapstick humor.

Rincewind invents cork-bobbing hats that ward off flies. The Trickster, helps Rincewind shear sheep at a record rate, after he goes through the motions of giving one a haircut in the manner he recalls receiving, complete with cologne behind the ears. The animal is baffled. Trickster as a ram instructs the others essentially to shear themselves by doing gymnastic moves against Rincewind's shears. They then send him on his way to Bugarup sitting on another incarnation of The Trickster, a horse named Snowy, a most unlikely nickname in this climate. Snowy is so short-legged that it walks out from under Rincewind if he puts his feet down, and walks so oddly that it rearranges Rincewind's innards. Still, he is an incredibly untemperamental beast, in Rincewind's experience.

They stop at a billybong, Australian for a for a dead-end stream. This one has water, but generally streams and rivers are dry. Rincewind is attacked by a drop-bear, which in Australian legend is a large, carnivorous koala. Locals tease visitors with stories of them dropping from trees on unsuspecting travelers. Afterwards, when Rincewind talks about the attack other outbackers are sure that he is joking with them. As Rincewind rides on, Snowy impossibly carries him down a sheer cliff and up another, leaving him panicky. For the first time he suspects magic. Their climbing traps some lost horses, much to the amazement of the men searching for them. This dramatic event is added to Rincewind's growing legend, along with the sheep-shearing. This is soon to become a crucial feature in his survival. Note how several times Rincewind, out of compassion for thirsty animals, digs for water. Recall that his destiny is to restore The Wet to Fouerecks. His next digging puts him in danger of his life. The riders indulge in pages of Australian idioms that confuse Rincewind, some of it made up on the spot to confuse. This whole section of the novel is full of gratuitous slurs against homosexuals.

On Mono Island, Stibbons discovers the God of Evolution's workshop, where he assembles plants and animals from boxes of parts (antennae, wings, legs, for example). He is also experimenting with elephants, sharks, and whales. He considers beetles the apex of creation. When the other wizards wander in, following Stibbons' trail, they no less than the god are ignorant of how life forms normally result from sexual union. Stibbons tries to explain, as the wizards resume their sophomoric behavior about the subject. The passages are rife with sexual innuendo. This grows worse when Mrs. Whitlow arrives. The god grows angry at being able to get no clear explanation, throwing lightning bolts, as gods are wont to do. Mrs. Whitlow, after demurring on the subject, takes charge and explains to the god in private. He sees that sex could solve many of his problems, and Stibbons, whose work at UU has always been held up by the old-fashioned wizards, asks to become his assistant. He is excited at finally finding his place in the world.



Finally, and very briefly, The Luggage, is picked up by "Petunia, The Desert Princess." The Luggage feels as though he has been buried for a million years—but also for just five minutes. This reinforces the space/time dilemma that has several times been mentioned in the novel. Meeting these women, whom he, with unusual patience, allows to load him aboard their cart and fill with shoes, sets up a reunion with Rincewind, at a time when he desperately needs a deliverer. Note that the women's shoes are very large. Why they are will in time be explained.



The Last Planet, pp. 227-269

The Last Planet, pp. 227-269 Summary

At a dry waterhole, Rincewind is frustrated that some idiot has put beer in hard-to-open tin cans. He is happy that there is no sign of Scrappy in this utterly dry country, where nothing is as it seems. He is also happy to have a potato to eat, something that had always passed him by at UU and, by inspiration, combines it with other items that Remorse has provided him: carrots, onion and salt. In the absence of water he uses beer to make stew and, considering the medicinal value of salt, adds quite a lot. After a nap he finds sheep trying to open beer cans, desperate to drink. The brown, gooey soup does not quench his own fierce thirst and he cannot bear to kill a sheep for food. Flattening a beer can, he digs feverishly for water. The sheep watch him, trying to make him feel guilty for his lack of progress. Working in the hole he hears someone whistling and sees him stuff a sheep into a sack. A voice drives the man away, warning against stealing. As Rincewind tries to free the sheep, four armed watchmen ride up and he tries to act innocent.

In jail, Rincewind insists that he had been rescuing a sheep, not stealing it, and demands a trial. The warden notes that Rincewind's supposed witness has not come forward and his hanging is scheduled for the morning. Sheep-stealers always claim innocence before being hung and become legends after death. Rincewind contemplates the evils of civilization. He has been in much nastier places and always been rescued. The warden assures Rincewind that he will not escape by any standard bit of trickery and recommends that he plan his last words for the gallows: short and catchy. That is essential to having the song writers write a proper ballad. Daring escapes are also celebrated—but there has never been one. The illustrious Tinhead Ned, who occupied the same cell, escaped often but in the end was hanged. The warden prompts Rincewind for details to use in his song.

Later, the warden returns with a special dinner, a regional specialty: meat pie floating in pea soup. Rincewind is then clapped in irons—a special distinction, last shared by Tinhead Ned. They have to take the irons' weight into consideration or the head pops off and they can search for it for days. They admire Rincewind's firm intention to escape and leave him to his planning. Death pays a visit, admits that Rincewind has many times eluded him, and surprises him by announcing that he has just passing through to to pick up someone else. Death recommends that Rincewind visit the Opera House. As he again lies on his bed, Rincewind sees a scrawled message to examine the hinges. They look invincible, but the heavy door lifts off easily and Rincewind flees.

On Mono Island, as they walk away, puzzling why Stibbons would want to remain, the Wizards speculate about having altered history. They are proud that Stibbons is now sitting on the right hand of a god, which is normally reserved to angels and saints, and hope that he can make baboons' rear ends more attractive. How can creatures be induced to engage in nuptial activities rather than do more useful things? Sex is too old-



fashioned, tasteless and energetic for their tastes. Bridge or croquet are preferable pastimes. Considering these as euphemisms, the wizards cannot face one another.

Meanwhile, in the gods' workshop, Stibbons is anxious to get to work and the delighted god suggests that he start with something simple, like slime; higher lifeforms are likely to be complex. Creatures must be freed from limited habitats that frequently cause them to go extinct. That is a terrible waste. They need to be adaptable and resourceful. As the god leads him up a pyramid that reveals the future, Stibbons rejects the idea of not meddling with history; the future is meant for progress, particularly when one has the ear of a god. He yearns to create intelligence. When they reach the pinnacle, however, Stibbons realizes that the god's idea of perfection is the cockroach, guided by a few simple instructions. Stibbons flees.

Preparing to sail, the boat responds by growing a sail. Not naturally adventurous, the wizards are afraid. Mrs. Whitlow relines beneath an awning that they have competed to make for her. They serve her drinks and dainty snacks. As the boat moves offshore, Stibbons swims out, fully attired as a wizard, and comes aboard, claiming that he cannot deprive UU of his services. Mrs. Whitlow enjoys a separate section of deck for sunbathing, her privacy being assured by the wizards' mutual jealousy. Stibbons spots dark clouds ahead, forming an everlasting storm one mile wide and 7,000 miles long, encircling the last continent. It is more like an endless, hateful, high-voltage battle than a mere storm.

Without a rudder, they are sucked towards land. Ponder detects high levels of background magic, which typically makes the wizards act out of character. Stibbons finds himself vocalizing thoughts. The Dean is nice and reasonable. Planets orbit the Bursar's head. UU exists not to further magic but creatively to suppress it. Otherwise, magic produces wars. The wizards have learned to snipe at one another rather than hurl fireballs. Under such conditions the wizards cannot control themselves. They hit the full fury of the storm.

The Last Planet, pp. 227-269 Analysis

In this next section, both story lines reach high levels of anxiety as innocent Rincewind is jailed for sheep-stealing, a capital offense, and awaits being hanged in the morning, and the wizards leave Mono Island in the freshly grown Melon Boat. They promptly run into a violent storm at sea whose magical strength endangers them more than the wind and rain.

At another dry waterhole, Rincewind cooks himself some beer soup that thickens into a gooey brown paste whose flavor grows on him. It is the Vegemite, widely used in Australian cooking. As he has twice before, Rincewind takes pity on sheep dying of thirst, digs for water, and is put in a situation where it appears that he is stealing sheep, which is a capital offense in the outback. The mysterious voices and figures perhaps suggest involvement of The Trickster, but this is more sinister than his usual operations.



In jail, Rincewind insists on his innocence, just as every other man hanged for sheep-stealing has. These criminals are Fourecks' foremost heroes, and ballad-writers complete ballads to sing of their lives and deaths. The kindly jailer appears to be a bit of a song-writer himself and collects details for his catchy jingle, which appears to be the famous Waltzing Matilda. Rincewind learns about the infamous Tinhead Ned, who occupied the same cell, escaped often, but ultimately (supposedly) was hanged. Continuing the cuisine motif, Rincewind's last supper is a regional specialty: meat pie floating in pea soup. Later he will meet the Ecksian relative of a familiar character in Discworld novels, who is preparing to sell these on the street at his hanging. An extended footnote treats humorously what usually is meant by regional specialties: things that the natives would never eat but serve to visitors. Another Discworld regular, Death, pays a visit, which appears to mark Rincewind's end but turns out to be a friendly call en route elsewhere (probably Dijabringabeeralong, where a crocodile has swallowed the deceased). Rincewind is left hanging (so to speak) a long while before being told that he will certainly escape. A scribbled message tells him how. Death recommends that Rincewind visit the Opera House, where he will invent yet another famous dish.

The sections on Mono Island are nearly entirely about sex. The sophomoric spirit still prevails and indeed deepens as the wizards using euphemisms talk about one another's habits. The Dean, who had been jabbed earlier about a stained sheet, realizes that things are going to get much worse. The wizards contemplate Stibbons sitting on the right hand of a god, a position normally reserved to angels and saints. They misunderstand the quotation from ancient Christian creeds, taking the "on" literally. This is in keeping with the sophomoric mood. Ascending a pyramid to see the future, Stibbons decides that the future is meant for progress and yearns to help create intelligence. He is disappointed to learn that the god sees the ultimate survivalist, the cockroach, as the crown of creation and returns to the departing ship. Arriving after a long swim, Stibbons realizes that the Archchancellor sees through his transparent claim of altruistic loyalty to UU and is puzzled.

It soon appears that a vast storm encircles Fourecks, the last continent, and that magic is a major component of the chaos. It turns the wizards, who have amusingly taken to nautical talk, into the opposites of their normal selves. Even greater transformations are in the offing. The thaumometer, an instrument for measuring background magic (from the Greek *thauma*, meaning "wonder," but adopted in these novels to mean magic) melts, encountering more magic than on the whole of Discworld. There is a brief discourse on the purpose of UU, which is ultimately to restrict the use of magic to safe levels. Otherwise, it causes war. That assassination had been a routine method of gaining high office at UU before Rincully has already been mentioned. The wizards and Mrs. Whitlow are in a situation far more dangerous than mere high winds, rain, waves, and lightning. They are approaching a true tempest.



The Last Planet, pp. 269-309

The Last Planet, pp. 269-309 Summary

Outside the jail in a generally friendly city, Rincewind sees a huge smirking kangaroo outlined in the sky and is relieved that it is only an advertisement. He is offered an obviously counterfeit souvenir hanging rope at "Dibbler's Café de Feet," by Fair-Go Dibbler, the local member of the famous street vending family that operates across Discworld. Rincewind nearly turns himself in to the Watch to escape the fast talker. In the midst of an anti-immigration lecture, Rincewind assures Dibbler that he wants to return home. Learning that the would-be hanging victim has escaped without fanfare, a disappointed Dibbler sells Rincewind a meat pie floating in pea soup with tomato sauce over the top. Having eaten items sold by other Dibblers in many places and survived, Rincewind takes a bite and understands why Ecksians drink so much beer. Looking up, Rincewind sees the Warden and several watchmen and runs away, leaving his sandals behind.

Rincewind generally finds cities easy places to avoid capture. He races against the current of people gathering for the hanging as whistles blow behind him. He heads downhill, assuming that the docks will be there. Seeing a building that looks like a huge, open box of tissues, he ducks in a back way. By the sound of it, it is the Opera House, and Rincewind has found the kitchen, where he is taken for a temporary worker needed to create a dessert in honor of the prima dona, Dame Nellie Butt. The assistant cooks argue about ingredients while the drunken head chef, Charlie, worries about naming the dish. Rincewind, who takes charge, suggests Peach Nellie, adds extra brandy, and asks about other exits. The cooks talk about the wizard who was to have been hanged. Rincewind modestly discounts the legends as they realize that he wears wizard attire.

As the warden and members of the Watch swarm in, Rincewind grabs for a weapon (a ladle) and flees. The Watch, happy to take part in a Famous Last Run, give Rincewind a count-of-ten head start. Racing down the waterfront, he runs into Scrappy, who declares that because Ecksians need heroes, even unintentional ones, Rincewind is now so famous that he is unlikely to be hanged before noon. Rincewind stops bragging about his survival skills when Scrappy points out that storms surrounding Fourecks make it a virtual prison. No ships get out and no Ecksians see any point in leaving. Scrappy vanishes as the pursuit gets under way and Rincewind ducks into a pink and lavender cart taking part in the local Galah (gala) about which he has been hearing.

The cart's owner, Letitia, is a husky, understanding woman. Darleen, also a big girl in spangles, and the less gaudy Neilette climb into the cart. Women have never been essential to Rincewind's life, but something tells him that these are unusual. Darleen cannot believe his naiveté as she withholds the truth that they are a troupe of female impersonators. Through a peep hole, it looks like a typical carnival to Rincewind, who has been all over Discworld. When onlookers get out of line, Darleen delivers savage punches and kicks, which drive the crowd wild. The Watch spots Rincewind and moves



in, but he escapes, walking on the shoulders and heads of of the packed and cheering crowd. The alley in which he lands is a cul-de-sac where watchmen are sneaking a smoke. Rincewind is saved by something ferocious in an evening dress running on tiny high-heeled feet.

Meanwhile, at sea, the storm grows so ferocious that the Dean wants to die. When they awaken to clearing skies and a red wall of land ahead, beneath thunder clouds, the wizards argue over who is in charge of whom and hash over conflicts from their student days, 40 years before. While they refrain from using magic as a weapon, such hostility attracts magic and the air crackles with it. A spontaneous fireball hits the Dean, who nearly retaliates full-force against Ridcully, but Stibbons warns everyone to stand down. Everything changes as the boat disintegrates. The wizards cling to seed pods while Mrs. Whitlow swims for shore with sharks pursuing her, but the Librarian turns into a hairy red dolphin to defend her, savagely. As he then nudges the wizards toward shore, they notice that the pods have become flatter. As they hear surf ahead, Stibbons recalls that water is not necessarily soft. Mrs. Whitlow has joined a number of animals holding onto a tree trunk. Suddenly they are sliding down a tall mountain of green water.

The Last Planet, pp. 269-309 Analysis

In Bugarup Rincewind makes another of his famous escapes, inventing yet another concoction destined to be famous, and meeting up with Neilette, who becomes his guide and companion through the rest of the novel. Out at sea, the wizards continue battling in a highly charged atmosphere of magic that could erupt into disaster.

A long passage sees Rincewind talking with Fair-Go Dibbler, a street merchant. Most Discworld novels contain one, hawking meat products that are generally dangerous to consume. A long passage reviews the ones that Rincewind has met. Veteran Discworld readers will recognize many and appreciate the brief descriptions. Others will not be diverted from the ongoing story. Fair-Go tries to sell Rincewind the rope with which (ostensibly) he was to be hanged. The locals are in a festive mood over the hanging and the Watch (police) are out in force against pickpockets. This rather effectively establishes the medieval milieu in which the novels are set. Dibbler is responsible for the meat pie in pea soup that Rincewind has eaten in prison and will eat again. While not immediately palatable, its taste grows on Rincewind. Seeing the Warden, Rincewind runs out of his sandals, as an earlier scene had said that he is wont to do at the first sign of danger.

The unique shape of the Sydney Opera House is evoked in Bugarup and in its kitchen Rincewind concocts Peach Nellie, a stand-in for the famous Peach Melba, invented in honor of an opera star. Rincewind convinces the chef that this is a better name than Peach Butt, which incorporates the diva's last name. As Rincewind moves on, just ahead of the law, he runs into Scrappy, who in an inspirational speech about needing heroes conveniently reviews for the reader Rincewind's major exploits to this point. As he contemplates catching a ship out of Bugarup, Scrappy points out that the last continent is a virtual prison, thanks to the terrible storms that surround it. These are



menacing the wizards at this very point, as they sail in from the opposite direction. Note that many of the earliest Westerners in Australia, the model for Fourecks, were convicts.

Three new characters are introduced: Letitia, Darleen and Neilette. The narrator emphasizes that women have never figured large in Rincewind's life and proceeds to show him incapable of figuring out that Letitia and Darleen are female impersonators. He wonders at the large size of their fancy shoes and impressive strength, and refers to the colors of their wagon using "gay" in its former sense. The women are coy about the truth, which eventually comes out. The anti-homosexual bias revealed earlier in the novel is present here, albeit rather more mildly. There is popular ambiguity about these strapping men dressing as women but behaving as men when not in character. Beer both heightens and flattens emotions during the parade. Rincewind hides with them as long as he can before running away in another take-off on the film *Crocodile Dundee*: the famous subway scene. Rincewind winds up in a dead-end but is rescued by what appears to be a small table wearing an evening dress and running on tiny high-heeled feet. Recall that The Luggage had been picked up in the outback in a gaily-painted wagon. The Luggage and Rincewind are about to be reunited.

Meanwhile, at sea, the intense magic embedded in the storm has the wizards at odds over events forty years old. The level of magic is so high that fireballs fire accidentally and no one is in the mood to be placated. It takes the breaking up of the Melon Boat in shark-infested waters to refocus the old men and unite them for the common defense. The Librarian, who aboard ship had been a deck chair, turns into a dolphin, a creature known to defend humans against shark attack, and then pushes the survivors toward shore. They float on seed pods that evolve into surf boards, while Mrs. Whitlow clings to a log, which somehow picks up other passengers including a camel. Camels coming ashore on driftwood is a standing gag in the novel, because Australia (and thus Fourecks) is home to huge herds.



The Last Planet, pp. 309-342

The Last Planet, pp. 309-342 Summary

The Luggage eliminates the watchmen's threat and gives Rincewind a clean set of underwear. Neilette climbs out of what she calls Trunkie, where she had hidden from the fighting. She is giving up on show business, having only filled in for her brother, Noelene. Rincewind finally realizes that these are female impersonators but misunderstands the concept. Having made clear that she is truly female, Neilette leads Rincewind into the old brewery. Her family has lost money on a new brewery whose beer is always flat, although it is not built on a sacred site. An earthquake brings down the glass ceiling and the big kangaroo sign falls, but Neilette and Rincewind take refuge inside Luggage/Trunkie. Seeing in the swirling three-dimensional ghostly forms of wizards, Rincewind knows that they are involved in his mission to restore The Wet. Outside, people are trying to fight fires without water. Neilette knows that Rincewind is a wizard (from his hat) and tells of a local magic university. Rincewind feels a Famous Last Stand coming on.

Rain batters the beach where the wizards have been cast up. As Stibbons awakens, his head full of water, he vaguely remembers gliding through a tunnel of water before being smashed. He is sure that the others are drowned until he hears their feeble voices. They watch in horror as the Bursar rides a wave upright on his pod-board all the way to the sand, sticks the board in the ground triumphantly, and wanders away. The red ground looks barren as it stretches back to distant blue mountains. As the wizards debate the inevitability of finding food, Ridcully causes a great explosion in the magic-charged atmosphere. Stibbons warns that they are dealing with fossil magic, leftover from the creation of the last continent. Any changes could be disastrous for the future. The land is unfinished, void of plants and animals except those that wash ashore. To be safe, they should wait for Rincewind to arrive in a few millennia.

The wizards begin experiencing temporal discontinuity, a resetting of the body clock (specifically the temporal glands) that makes their adult forms disappear, replaced by themselves as children crying for their mothers. Ridcully tells them not to accept this reality and fight off panic as they wait to revert to their proper ages. Young Stibbons instead turns into a doddering old man, a stage in life that he does not want to repeat but will (unless he commits suicide). The Dean spends a few minutes as a sex-obsessed teen. A young red-haired woman in a sarong sways provocatively towards them: Mrs. Whitlow, carrying the Librarian, who in baby form resembles a coconut. The swim has buoyed her spirits, but the wizards warn her to expect an unpleasant change soon.

Walking the beach, the Bursar watches trees go through their full life cycle in seconds. An old black man with deep-set eyes watches him across a campfire before picking up his leather bag and walking away. The Bursar follows to an overhung cliff on which is drawn a simple tree in a way that captures its complex essence. When the old man



draws a flattened V, it turns into a bird and flies away. The Bursar laughs, recalling how a fellow student (Rubber Houser) at UU had built 256-line Graphical Device to ease the punishment of students on detention. The Bursar laughs more, seeing drawings come to life. The peace is shattered by the noisy wizards arriving. They are amazed to see the drawing of a kangaroo scratch its ears and debate whether to trust this dark little artist about what this odd creature is. They wonder if he might be Rincewind. Admiring how alive the simple art is, they presumptuously join in drawing, even though this seems to offend the artist. As they criticize the primitives' ignorance of perspective and argue about their own technique, their drawing of a duck somehow comes to lack wings.

The Last Planet, pp. 309-342 Analysis

In coastal Bugarup Rincewind and Neilette, the female female impersonator, who finds the role difficult, befriends naïve Rincewind and hides him away in the Old Brewery. Although she claims to be from somewhere rimward, Neilette also claims that her family owns the New Brewery, which has always lost money because the beer is always flat. Magic is suspected but the natives deny it. Letitia and Darleen have been laughing at Rincewind's ignorance of the ways of the world and even less-jaded Neilette finds his naïveté unbelievable. She goes on record with him as being truly female. What he describes as female impersonation is rather not what the act does. Noelene is actively gay since childhood. Neilette does not counter her father's disapproval of Noelene's sexual orientation but talks of their childhood playtime as sisters with affection. It is all lost on Rincewind.

Rincewind is reunited with The Luggage, whom the ladies call Trunkie. He has gotten them out of a few scrapes. He helps them break into the Old Brewery and descend into the basement where revelations about Rincewind's mission await: three-dimensional forms of wizards formed in blown dust and smoke. He does not recognize individuals, but knows they are the key to restoring The Wet. The countryside is in dire need. When the Old Brewery bursts into flame there is not underground water with which to fight it. While denying the possibility of rain in the natural world, Neilette recognizes that Rincewind is a wizard and after some opposition agrees to take him to the local magic school.

The merging of the story lines is approaching. The wizards reach the shore of Fourecks and watch an old aborigine—previously identified as the Creator of Fourecks—draw trees and animals that spontaneously come alive. One of them wonders if this might be Rincewind, deeply tanned in the time that he has been missing. The wizards suffer the indignity of temporal discontinuity as their temporal glands, mentioned at the start of the novel, react to the heavy magic and perceptible shift in time by returning them to infancy. Young Stibbons's mutation is briefly to experience old age. They agree that neither puberty or senility has anything to offer. The humorous sexual innuendo continues as Mrs. Whitlow becomes a provocative young woman and the Dean a teen. The theme of fatally harming the future by what they do in the past is revived. The danger is greater than ever, for they are standing on the archaic stones of an unfinished continent. They are at the very root of future problems. They conclude that the safest

thing is enduring a presumably millennia-long wait for Rincewind to arrive. They seem to have no inkling that he will be on a sacred mission when he arrives.



The Last Planet, pp. 343-390

The Last Planet, pp. 343-390 Summary

Stibbons sits beside Mrs. Whitlow and the Librarian, who is still an infant. The wizards, unable not to interfere, are teaching an old man about Art. The Librarian finds a flat, oval wooden object attached to a string in the old man's leather bag, a bullroarer. It makes a funny noise as he spins it. Rincewind wonders why the old man is drawing creatures for such a barren landscape. Painting pointy-hatted figures seems to complete the old man's work and he departs. A platypus slides into a river. Stibbons' thinking slows and mellows.

Meanwhile, Rincewind finds that Bugarup's university (BU) is built not of stone like UU but of corrugated iron sheets. Although the gates are nailed shut, Rincewind knows that there must be a back entrance. Rincewind is not impressed by the 20-foot tower, which shines with octarine, the color of magic. When he knocks, half a dozen wizards appear in attire modified for a hot climate. Having been expecting a demon to deal with the problem of drought, they find Rincewind disappointing. When Rincewind mentions rainmaking spells, they mock the idea of big white bags of water in the sky. He counters that BU's tower is stubby. From the top, however, half a mile up, the view stretches for miles. BU's Archchancellor (first name: Bill) is also a Rincewind. They must produce water before riots break out. Drinking beer, UU's Rincewind grows tongue-tied and no one will believe him that clouds are fluffy, soft, cold steam or smoke, but not dangerous. When he reports seeing drawings of pointy hats in the brewery, Bill leads them to town.

The citizens have formed bucket brigades from the harbor to the brewery. Rincewind is the first down into the cellar to investigate. Oddly, he craves Dibbler's floating meat pies, which make the others doubt his sanity. Rincewind comes upon old graffiti and his Luggage, who begins digging at the random direction that Rincewind indicates. This leads to a bricked-off cave newer than the brewery above. UU's Rincewind senses that history is rubbery here but cannot explain the origin of stalactites and stalagmites that are both ancient and new. After dawn UU's Rincewind calls for paint and brush—and more beer. Observing that the rock is warm, he wonders what the land would do about intruders. He is proud of three crude smiling wizards that he draws. They seem to move, but so does the earth, as past and present crash together. The two faculties face one another and begin bickering. As the walls close in, UU's Rincewind and The Baggage flee, while the rest are vomited into the cellar.

Visiting BU, Ridcully is disdainful, but his counterpart is unaware. UU Faculty members do not recognize their Rincewind until the other archchancellor's name seems vaguely familiar. They agree that the only chance of getting back to UU is for Rincewind to produce rain. As Rincewind toys with the bullroarer, the wizards climb to the top of the tin tower, where the Librarian changes shape and things happen very quickly. No rain falls. There are no rainclouds on which to work magic. Death pays a brief social call. As Rincewind swings the bullroarer at Death, the scent of rain rises. The faster he swings



it, the stronger the scent gets. As the line plays out and the spiral gets larger, a great thunderclap breaks over the city. Out at sea, the storm reverses its spin and churns inland. The string slips from Rincewind's fingers and sails away.

In the outback, Remorse the stockman is ready to give up, slaughter his herd and eat them, when clouds boil in and drop water, instantly turning the red dust to mud. The Wet has arrived. In Didjabringabeeralong, the annual dry-river regatta is washed out. Outside BU a mob surprises the wizards, who are searching through books frantically for water spells. They are happy about water flowing in sheets from the tin roof. The clouds pile higher and, unable to part around the tower, disintegrate it with balls of blue lightning. The rains continue, dry water holes flood, dormant shrimp hatch and fish cope with living in fresh water. It continues raining.

Weeks later, the UU wizards board a ship for NoThingfjord. The hold is filled with the products to sell to the rest of Discworld. The lightning has stabilized the Librarian's condition. Rincewind looks forward to being back at work in the UU Library. He is ready to leave excitement to others. He resents local entrepreneurs singing about his adventures. One after another, the locals come to ask him to stay in Bugarup, but he declines: Neilette, Letitia, and Darleen are reopening the brewery, the chefs must invent a dessert for a new diva, Bill Rincewind has permission to recruit him. The warden delivers a pardon signed by the prime minister and a souvenir rope, and congratulates him on a great escape. Rincewind and The Luggage are the last to climb the gangplank.

Rain continues to fall on the last continent, forming great waterfalls and waist-deep flooding. An old man with a leather sack wades out to rescue a small, naked boy stranded in a tree. When the bullroarer soars towards him, he catches it and the rain ends. The boy laughs. The old man hurls a boomerang that grows as it flies and becomes nailed to the sky. As the clouds drift, it shines with many colors. The old man remembers the word that his forefathers for thousands of years have preserved for the time when it would be needed: the smell after rain. It has been worth waiting for.

The Last Planet, pp. 343-390 Analysis

The concluding section of the novel sees The Wet dramatically appear on Fourecks and the wizards of UU emerge from their long captivity in primitive wall paintings. The intertwined story lines consolidate as past and present crash back together. The key is the old aborigine's bullroarer, which the Librarian, still an infant, finds in the leather sack that is his trademark throughout the novel. Rincewind has used these yo-yo-like toys as a boy. The old man vanishes after painting pointy-hatted figures. From his smile it appears that his work of creation is finished. Barren Fourecks now must be made to blossom. Completing the comic motif of the wizards' arrogantly joining in the Creator's painting project, a platypus comes to life. They are often said to typify the results of committee work.



Bugarup's university (BU) compares badly with impressive UU, and when the two faculties get together, the UU wizards are arrogant. That the BU people are true wizards is shown by their propensity for bickering. Two Latin phrases emphasize that the institution is indigenous to Fouerecks: "Nullus anxietas" (no worries) and "Nulli Sheilaie sanguinaea" (no bloody women). Rincewind, of course, takes Neilette inside, because her name is not Sheila. He has throughout the novel battled with Ecksian (Australian) slang; Sheila means woman and bloody is the all-purpose adjective on the last continent. It appears that BU's wizards have been waiting for someone to deal with the drought. They dare dig no deeper for water lest they wound the elephants supporting Discworld. Nevertheless, they reject Rincewind's attempts at describing how in normal parts of Discworld water collects in clouds and falls harmlessly from the sky. Rincewind earlier observes how the local clear beer is much more palatable than Ankh-Morpork's thick ale, and he drinks large amounts. The wizards gage his sobriety by his willingness to eat meat pies. They need him drunk enough to function without risking brain damage.

Pointy imagery is everywhere as the wizards explore a large cave that is younger than the building above it. Stalactites and stalagmites take millennia to form, but these are less than a month old. Rincewind describes history as being rubbery here and wonders what the land would do to invaders. The dramatic answer is: it vomits them out. Pratchett pokes fun at novelists who have dark spaces suddenly glow with mysterious powers; he merely has the sun come up. Death pays another social call, infuriating Rincewind, who swings the bullroarer at him as he vanishes. This makes the smell of rain rise for the first time. As he swings it harder, the line plays out until it generates thunder clouds. The writing rises to powerful, evocative levels as scenes around Fouerecks illustrate the results of rain—and then disastrous flooding. Humor is, of course, injected, as Pratchett parodies Australia's dry-river boat races and the wizards failing to realize that the townspeople could gather outside the walls to celebrate deliverance as well as to demand the impossible from them. Ball lightning dramatically disintegrates the BU tower, apparently curing the Librarian.

The final pages parade minor characters past Rincewind as he prepares to sail home. Everyone wants him to stay and help him or her, but he looks forward to unexciting work in the UU library and being bad at magic. Once the UU wizards have sailed and the BU wizards begin rebuilding their school, the Creator reappears with his leather sack. Regaining control of the bullroarer, he ends the rain and, as flood stories require, creates the rainbow (out of a boomerang to fit the locale). He concludes that being able to use the word for the smell after rain that eluded Rincewind during his quest as been worth waiting for. Oral tradition has preserved it.

Characters

Rincewind the Wizzard

A recurrent character in Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels, Rincewind (no first name given; indeed, Rincewind doubts if he has one) has just survived harrowing adventures on the Counterweight Continent of Discworld in the novel *Interesting Times* and, rather than being plucked back to Unseen University (UU) in Ankh-Morpork by the Hex computer, he is, through a glitch deposited on Discworld's last continent, Fourecks. This is an unknown continent near the edge of the disc that resembles, geographically and culturally, Earth's Australia.

Rincewind is a failed UU student who has served for a while as deputy Librarian. He is loath to be seen anywhere without his faded red wizard's hat, which is labeled "WIZZARD." Always a cowardly pessimist, Rincewind's primary survival skill is sprinting over long distances. It does not matter where Rincewind is going as much as where he is leaving. He has been pursued over much of the surface of Discworld and this pattern continues on the last continent where, utterly incompetent to survive, he does so, miraculously, by falling into waterholes whenever he heeds sustenance. At first he finds only things that do not wriggle and taste rather like chicken. Later he finds delectable dishes. Still he does not suspect that he is being watched over by some benevolent force. He thinks that he has gotten lucky.

Rincewind's protector is The Trickster, the companion of the continent's Creator. The Trickster incarnates himself in various ways, primarily as Scrappy, a magical, speaking kangaroo who informs him that his task is bringing back "The Wet" to the parched and arid land. Only when the drought ends, Scrappy claims, will the time/space anomaly that has captured Rincewind (and, unbeknownst to him, his colleagues from UU) end. Hearing that he is specially called to yet another quest, Rincewind flees, but Scrappy keeps up with him, providing waterholes for him to fall into and find food.

Rincewind meets people who endanger his life. The first is Mad, a psychotic dwarf who rides around the outback in a heavily-armored cart. Chased by marauders, Rincewind shoots while Mad supercharges the horses. Mad attributes the huge pile-up that kills the pursuers to Rincewind's magical powers. Although Rincewind vehemently denies having such powers, this exploit becomes part of his legend. The legend grows in Didjabringabeer, where Rincewind with help from another incarnation of The Trickster, as a Ram, wins a sheep-shearing contest and sets a local record. He leaves town aback a short-legged horse, Snowy, bound for Bugarup, where he intends to book passage home to Ankh-Morpork, but en route is carried down and up vertical canyon walls by the sure-footed animal—another incarnation of The Trickster. He continues on foot.

Drunk again, Rincewind puts himself innocently in a compromising position, digging for water to benefit suffering livestock. He is arrested as a sheep thief, taken to Bugarup,



and placed in a comfortable jail cell pending his hanging at dawn. The friendly warden advises Rincewind to spend his time preparing brief, pithy, and obscenity-free final words for the gallows. Balladeers will vie to immortalize his dramatic life and death. Instead, Rincewind follows instructions scrawled on the ceiling and escapes. On the street Rincewind runs into Fair-Go Dibbler selling food to the festive crowd gathering for the hanging, hides in the Opera House kitchens, where he invents a dessert named in honor of the diva, and is cornered by the Guard (police). When they sportingly give him a count of ten to escape, Rincewind falls in with a troupe of female impersonators and is reunited with The Luggage, which easily subdues the Watch.

Rincewind and Neilette (the only actual female in the troupe) find their way beneath the Old Brewery. When an earthquake shakes the building apart, Rincewind sees on the subterranean walls a painting of pointy hats. On a hunch, he paints wizards in this same style and past and present instantly merge. He is reunited with his UU colleagues, who have been searching for him, enduring misadventures of their own. They need his help to cure the ailing Librarian. During a visit to the local magic university, Rincewind fails to explain to the local wizards the unknown phenomenon of clouds and rain, but when he twirls the Creator's bullroarer, it unleashes an enormous storm, which ultimately floods the last continent, ending the drought. Although many of the characters whom he has met along the way want him to remain, Rincewind decides to sail home. He is vexed that people are singing his praises in a ditty that sounds like the quintessentially Australian song "Waltzing Matilda." He has succeeded, unintentionally, in inventing and/or introducing a number of things that typify life in Australia: beer soup (Vegemite), hats with corks that ward off flies and Peach Melba.

Ponder Stibbons

The youngest and keenest member of the faculty of Unseen University (UU) in Ankh-Morpork, Ponder is the inventor of Hex, the complex mechanism that transports Rincewind to the Counterweight Continent in the novel of Interesting Times. It then misdirects him to the last continent on Discworld, Fourecks, rather than home. Needing Rincewind's services to heal the ailing Librarian, the faculty in the present novel decides against using Hex again for safety's sake, but stumbles through time and space, eventually to meet up with Rincewind on Fourecks.

At age twenty-four, Stibbons stands out from the older wizards who make this voyage by his acceptance of reality and his dislike of rhetoric for rhetoric's sake. His current research involves invisible writing, consistent with his motto, "How do you know it's not possible until you've tried?" (pp. 14-15). Stibbons is entranced when a window into a tropical island is found. His skeptical elders know from experience that such things are usually more trouble than they are worth, but give in because the beach looks inviting in winter. The ailing Librarian and Ponder alone sense that something is wrong on Mono Island and only Ponder has the verbal skills to explain it: the local God of Evolution does not understand sexual reproduction. Everything is, as it were, custom-made and evolves to meet the wizards' needs. Set straight, the much excited god sets out to redesign his creatures to incorporate the idea and Stibbons is tempted to remain as his



assistant when the others sail away. Stibbons cannot in good conscience miss such a priceless opportunity for scientific research. He abandons this view, however, and catches up with the ship when he realizes that the god considers the cockroach as the summit of creation.

Stibbons correctly hypothesizes that the wizards have been transported back in time 30,000 years ago, based on the position of a familiar constellation that occupies the wrong place in the sky. He is surprised that the normally argumentative wizards accept this on faith. He runs into difficulty, however, pointing out to them the danger of making the slightest action that could cause dramatic changes in the ongoing flow of history. He refers to this as the "treading on an ant/shooting your own grandfather" theory. Marooned on the beach after a hazardous swim ashore from the Melon Boat, Stibbons perceives the danger of using magic in this charged atmosphere. While his colleagues briefly revert to childhood when their temporal glands are disrupted, young Stibbons briefly experiences old age and is appalled.

The Librarian

A recurrent character in Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels, the Librarian has long been an orangutan. A former human, born on Moon Pond Lane, Ankh-Morpork, is changed by an accident of magic and finds life as an ape far superior. He resists all attempts to turn him back (some faculty members find it embarrassing to have an orangutan Librarian) and is in a position to remove all traces of his name from the archives. Without it, no spells can be cast on him. Years of working with books (shelving with four hands) has exposed him to a high degree of unstable magic.

In the present novel, the Librarian falls critically ill and, to cure him, his colleagues need his name. They decide to bring back his former assistant, the hapless Rincewind, from wherever he is marooned on the last continent of Fourecks. The Librarian's major symptom is sneezing, which each time causes his shape to morph into something appropriate to its current environment: book, chair, table, or other animal. In every case he remains covered in red fur and has a dark, leathery face, hands, and feet. His single word as an orangutan, "Ook," is modified to something appropriate to the new species. The Librarian is an intelligent person. He is the first wizard to figure out on Mono Island that the God of Evolution creates only one exemplar per species because he is ignorant of sexual reproduction. The Librarian cannot, however, communicate this to the wizards. It is up to young Ponder Stibbons to get the point across.

During the wizards' perilous swim to shore as the Melon Boat breaks up in violent weather, the Librarian, who had been a deck chair, transforms into a dolphin and attacks the pursuing sharks. Intense magic on the beach briefly affects all of the survivors' temporal glands, returning the aged wizards, including the Librarian, to infancy. The Librarian is not restored to his normal age as quickly as the others, so as a baby orangutan, he is naturally curious about everything. He finds a yo-yo-like bullroarer, which he appropriates as a toy, but he cannot get the hang of swinging it. Rincewind, who has used them before, takes over and the accelerating loops generate massive



storms that return The Wet to Fourecks. When ball lightning destroys a tower in which he is sitting, the Librarian is cured of whatever malady had been afflicting him.

The Bursar

One of the faculty members of Unseen University (UU) who in their search for their colleague Rincewind enter a tropical island thousands of years in the past and make their way to the continent of Fourecks. The unnamed Bursar is severely mentally unstable and takes no part in his colleagues' preoccupation with Mrs. Whitlow's sexuality. He hums randomly and recalls irrelevant facts. Badly in need of dried frog pills, which cause him to hallucinate that he is sane, the Bursar wanders off into the jungle and follows a trail marked by a strange throbbing stem. He discovers a seaworthy ship made of vegetable matter on which they sail away. As the ship approaches the vast storm that is encircling Fourecks, planets begin orbiting the Bursar's head (Mugroop's Syndrome), showing that magic has run amok. While his colleagues come ashore clinging to seed pods shed by the sinking ship, the Bursar surfs in, standing upright, plants his board in the sand, and wanders off to encounter the Creator of this lost continent and watch him work. Whenever someone does something crazy, he is said to "bursar" (as a verb). In earlier Discworld novels the Bursar is named A.A. Dinwiddie

The Chair of Indefinite Studies

One of the faculty members of Unseen University (UU) who in their search for colleague Rincewind enter a tropical island thousands of years in the past and make their way to the last continent of Fourecks. The unnamed Chair of Indefinite Studies recalls reading a book about someone who is shipwrecked on an island. He contributes to the general squabbling among the colleagues but does not particularly stand out.

The Creator of the Last Continent, and The Trickster

Responsible for finishing the last continent on Discworld, Fourecks, the Creator works in concert with an eternal companion, the Trickster. They operate out of another desert world, coming and going by means of primitive paintings on rock walls. It is stated explicitly that "Creators aren't gods. They make places, which is quite hard. It's men that make gods" (p. 61). The Creator of the Last Continent first appears to the hapless protagonist, Rincewind the Wizzard, as an aged aborigine on a continent that closely resembles Earth's Australia. He observes Rincewind closely, offers him food, and performs a chant that enables him to find prepared meals under stones, on demand. The Creator, who always carries a leather sack, then assigns the reluctant Trickster to treat Rincewind as a hero and help him to accomplish his mission of returning The Wet. The Trickster incarnates himself in several helpful forms, most often as a talking kangaroo, Scrappy. He also takes the form of a Ram that enables Rincewind to break records for sheep-shearing, and as Snowy, a short-legged horse with remarkable climbing abilities.



When senior wizards from Unseen University (UU) first reach Fourecks, they meet the Creator, who captures them in wall paintings for 30,000 years. These are found in a number of locales. Watching the Creator paint, they try their hand and produce the duck-billed platypus. When the UU Librarian in the form of a baby orangutan borrows the Creator's bullroarer as a toy, Rincewind, who has played with yo-yos as a child, spins it faster and faster, unable to stop and generates massive rain and electrical storms. The bullroarer flies away and the storms continue until there is serious flooding. While rescuing a little boy from a tree, the Creator catches his returning bullroarer and the rains end. He tosses his boomerang into the sky and it becomes the rainbow that is a fitting ending to any flood myth.

Crocodile Crocodile (Dongo)

The ruler of Dijabringabeeralong, a tiny town on the last continent of Fourecks, Crocodile (nicknamed Dongo) walks and behaves like a human being. He wears a grubby shirt and short pants tailored for his anatomy. The citizens of his town are humanoid animals of various types. Crocodile, who speaks with a lisp, runs the only pub in town, where the hapless protagonist, Rincewind the Wizzard, gets drunk on clear beer (the beer in his homeland, Ankh-Morpork, has texture and he cannot drink as much) and passes out. First, however, he loses all of his money and brags that he can shear more sheep than anyone in town. Crocodile insists that Rincewind make good on his bet. In his character can be seen traits of outback folk in the first Crocodile Dundee movie.

Daggy and Snowy

A gang boss in Dijabringabeeralong, a tiny town on the last continent of Fourecks, Daggy prepares the hapless protagonist, Rincewind the Wizzard, for a sheep-shearing contest with the experienced locals. In a drunken stupor, Rincewind has issued a challenge and is sure to lose. He is saved from failure by an incarnation of The Trickster as a talking Ram, who convinces the sheep to cooperate. When Rincewind wins, he is sent out of town by the terrified locals. Daggy provides him transportation: Snowy, a low-slung horse, whom Daggy has owned for years, but for only half an hour before the demonstration. Snowy is another incarnation of The Trickster, who has been caring for Rincewind. Snowy disappears when his mission is complete. The mission is to carry Rincewind across the outback, down and up the sheer sides of a canyon. It is so harrowing a ride that Rincewind happily sells the sure-footed, snickering animal and continues his misadventures on foot.

Darleen, Letitia, and Neilette

A troupe of female impersonators—with Neilette being an actual female, filling in for her brother, who has quit the act—the so-called "ladies" find protagonist Rincewind's Luggage along the roadside and rename it Trunkie. It gets them out of several close



scrapes. In the town of Bugarup, as he flees the Watch (police), Rincewind hides in the ladies' wagon. Darleen and Letitia manfully fight off assailants, while The Luggage disables watchmen in an alley. Neilette, who hails from Worrallorrasurfa, is a former banana-bending factory worker who takes a try at show business when her brother Noelene drops out of the act. Realizing that she has no talent, she is heading home when Rincewind takes her on as a guide and friend. Making clear that she is really female, in case he is unsure, Neilette leads Rincewind into the Old Brewery, which her family owns, and is briefly trapped with him inside The Luggage. After an earthquake collapses the building and starts a fire, Rincewind sees on the walls of the cellar primitive paintings that resemble wizards. Realizing from his robe and hat (labeled "Wizzard") his profession, Neilette takes Rincewind to BU, where he succeeds in his quest to restore The Wet to the parched continent. Neilette wants Rincewind to remain with her, but he is anxious to return to a life of non-adventure and sails home.

The Dean

One of the faculty members of Unseen University (UU) who in a search for a colleague, Rincewind, enter a tropical island thousands of years in the past and make their way to the last continent, Fourecks. The Dean is a bitter rival of Archchancellor Mustrum Ridcully. They have been rivals since their student days some forty years ago. They bicker constantly throughout the novel. While accidentally marooned on Mono Island, the Dean is embarrassed when the housekeeper, Mrs. Whitlow, mentions that she must get back to UU to scrub some difficult stains out of his bedsheets. He pleads that he has merely dribbled tomato sauce on them while snacking in bed. His colleagues tease him. When the Dean rallies to declare that boat-building ought not to be too difficult, he is put in charge and makes a mess of it. When he declares that he is dying for a smoke, the plants in the forest begin growing rapidly, producing among other things filtered cigarettes. All of the wizards' wishes are then fulfilled. When they land on the beach at Fourecks and are magically turned back into babies, the Dean experiences a brief period of adolescence before coming back to the present. He admits that he thinks mainly about sex at the time. He nearly rivals the Senior Wrangler in the degree that he is smitten by Mrs. Whitlow and blathers sexual innuendos.

Death

A recurrent character in Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels, Death is a tall figure draped in a black robe, sometimes carrying a scythe. His speech is always set in SMALL CAPS. He carries about large hour glasses measuring the last moments of people's lives. He has many times been frustrated when Rincewind the hapless Wizzard, the protagonist in *The Last Continent*, evades him. Death's butler, Albert, explains the peculiarities of the arid continent of Fourecks on which Rincewind has been marooned. In his library Death and his companion, the cowed skeleton, Death of Rats, read up on the deadly creatures there. Intrigued, Death visits Rincewind several times just to chat, while en route to fetch other freshly-dead people. This, of course, unnerves Rincewind,



particularly the night before he is scheduled to be hanged. Rincewind has been so exposed to magic that he is unreadable.

Fair-Go Dibbler

In the capital city of Bugarup on the last continent of Discworld, Fourecks, the hapless protagonist Rincewind the Wizzard meets a relative of the famous (and infamous) Throat Dibbler of Ankh-Morpork. Wearing a sign, "Dibbler's Café de Feet," Fair-Go is out early hawking authentic rope from the festive hanging at which Rincewind is to be the centerpiece. The rope is clearly a length of clothesline. Dibbler next tries to sell Rincewind a painting of fish and chips and a local delicacy, meat pies floating in pea soup with tomato sauce over the top. Rincewind has already tasted this in jail. Rincewind does not mention that he is the intended victim and is on the run from the police.

The Dibblers as a family appear in many Discworld novels as street vendors of dubious products, generally meat by-products, to gullible passers-by. These cause reactions ranging from severe intestinal trouble to sudden death. The Last Continent characterizes in rapid-fire fashion a variety of the Dibblers whom Rincewind has met on his travels around Discworld. Fair-Go claims to be a fourth-generation Ecksian, born in Bludgerree, on Treacle Street. He vigorously opposes ongoing immigration, because this threatens jobs. Fair-Go's offering is part of regional Australian cuisine. Having oddly acquired a taste for the pies, late in the novel Rincewind sends someone for a take-out order. They are palatable when he has drunk enough beer, so his ability to consider eating one serves as a measure of his sobriety.

The Egregious Professor of Cruel and Unusual Geography

An unnamed member of the faculty of Unseen University (UU), the Egregious Professor has an office with a window looking out onto Mono Island, a tropical paradise that exists 30,000 years in the past. His colleagues vaguely remember him as young, well-tanned, and having large ears. He seems never to be around. His book-lined office is crammed with piles of yellowing paperwork, categorized boxes of rocks and odd vestiges of the sea. Senior faculty members visit, hoping that he might know the location of the mythical last continent of Fourecks, where another colleague, Rincewind the Wizzard, is marooned. Stepping through the window and getting themselves marooned, the wizards find traces of the Egregious Professor's explorations: an empty set of boots, an abandoned campsite and notebooks. When they encounter an enormous, ferocious lizard, they assume that it has consumed the Egregious Professor.



The God of Evolution

The deity responsible for creating and inhabiting Mono Island, the tropical paradise on which senior faculty members from Unseen University (UU) step into a different dimension of time, the God of Evolution is utterly ignorant of sexual reproduction. Instead he creates one-of-a-kind examples of plants and animals. These mutate at high speed to fill various environmental niches. When he creates a plant that produces filtered cigarettes, the wizards begin to ask questions. He is one of the few deities that encourages questioning. He hates superstition and prejudice and admires freethinkers. His goal is to make creatures that can change their own instructions as needed. He agrees that Evolution is a good term for this, but laments that the plants are all quite willful.

The god lives in a sacred cave on the island and floats about as burning marsh gas. He does not want to attract believers, After briefly considering scaring off the intruders, the god sets the vegetation to building a seaworthy boat to let them escape. When Mrs. Whitlow, head housekeeper at UU, explains sex, the god undertakes a major redesign to incorporate this labor-saving idea. The youngest wizard, Ponder Stibbons, decides to remain as his assistant until he realizes that the pinnacle of the god's creation is to be not humanity but the cockroach.

The god appears as a white-robed, long-bearded patriarchal figure spouting threats of boils and other sufferings, but then admits that this is not his style. Depressed, he is glad when Stibbons teaches him to blow his nose. He is a bit of an atheist and finds religion offensive. Having tired of performing "basic general godding" (p. 163) on the main continent of Discworld, he is concentrating on this tiny island, trying to perfect godliness. Godly anger had grown old and, when he dropped it, worshipers defected to tougher deities. The priests had all preyed on divine anger to enrich themselves and followers of various gods had slaughtered one another.

The Lecturer in Recent Runes

One of the faculty members of Unseen University (UU) who in their search for colleague Rincewind enter a tropical island thousands of years in the past and make their way to the last continent, Fourecks. The Lecturer in Recent Runes makes the suggestion that they interrogate Rincewind, who probably knows more about the ailing Librarian than anyone. Still a smirking fellow disliked by his colleagues, the Lecturer recalls from his student days when Old "Bogeyboy" Swallett took them on an expedition to find the Lost Reading Room. They had to eat their boots to survive. The Lecturer denies that there is any mystery about fossils. On Mono Island the Lecturer passes time by reading. His book, Principles of Thaumic Propagation transforms into The Omega Conspiracy.



Mad

A psychotic dwarf who rides around the outback of the last continent, Fourecks, in a heavily-armored cart pulled by a team of armored horses, Mad gives protagonist Rincewind the Wizzard a ride to civilization in Didjabringabeeralong. When Mad mentions a coastal city, Bugarup, Rincewind sets his mind on booking passage thence for home. As a gang of marauders chase them, Mad orders Rincewind to shoot at them with a crossbow while Mad supercharges his horses. A huge pile-up that kills the pursuers convinces Mad that Rincewind possesses great powers—something that Rincewind strenuously denies. Mad delivers Rincewind to Didjabringabeeralong and rescues him after drinking heavily gets him in trouble.

Mad explains to Rincewind that all of the humans on the last continent come from elsewhere on Discworld, victims of shipwrecks. His family is thus marooned when he is a child. They come from NoThingfjord. Had he stayed home he would have had a terrible life in the mines. On Fourecks he can stand tall, as it were. He remembers his grandfather's tales about something called rain, but Mad believes that had been beer talking. In the character Mad and the pursuit motif one sees clear references the popular Australian film Mad Max.

Remorse

The leader of a gang of herdsmen searching the outback of Fourecks for a pack of lost racehorses, Remorse encounters the hapless protagonist, Rincewind the Wizzard, riding on a remarkable, short-legged horse, Snowy. Rincewind is en route from Didjabringabeeralong to Bugarup, but is somewhat lost. Seeing the horse climb the vertical walls of a canyon, down and up again, Remorse asks to buy Snowy and Rincewind, terrified by the ride, agrees. Snowy vanishes, however, leaving behind a wall painting of himself. Remorse warns Rincewind that Bugarup is full of "wowers and pooftahs" (p. 200), but Rincewind, thinking that this means parrots, continues ahead on foot. Late in the novel, Remorse is shown despairing for his herd during the drought, but is saved when Rincewind finds The Wet.

Mustrum Ridcully

A recurrent character in Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels, Ridcully is Archchancellor of Unseen University (UU) in Ankh-Morpork on Discworld. He is an abrasive character in his seventies, who greatly annoys the Dean and the Bursar, former classmates, whom he narrowly edges out for the top office long ago. To his credit, Ridcully has done away with the traditional means of job advancement—assassination. He brags of having an open-door policy but arranges never to be in his office. He is a master of illogic and nearly impossible to convince of the reality to which facts point. He tries not to understand anything that someone else could do for him. He makes tasteless jokes.



Ridcully is responsible for having sent Rincewind to the Agatean Empire in the novel of Interesting Times and then losing him on Fourecks, where he is happy to let him rest. This benign policy is reversed when his help is needed in curing the Librarian, whom he appears sincerely to like. On Mono Island, Ridcully cannot accept that sexual reproduction is the norm in nature, rather than hand-crafting of creatures. When an enormous and ferocious lizard-like creature charges out of the jungle and suddenly morphs into a harmless chicken, Ridcully roasts it with a fireball that he has been creating. He then insists on leaving the impossibly strange island. He appears to keep his wits better than his colleagues as rampant magic briefly returns the wizards to infancy. When past and present crash back together and the wizards find not only Rincewind but also the faculty of a local school of magic, Ridcully is condescending towards his fellow archchancellor.

Bill Rincewind

Archchancellor of BU, a school for wizards located in the capital city of the last continent, Fourecks, Bill Rincewind is a distant relative of the protagonist, Rincewind the Wizzard. When the Archchancellor of Unseen University (UU) on Ankh-Morpork meets him, he treats Bill as a decidedly inferior wizard and administrator, pronouncing his title in such a way as to indicate it is written without a capital letter.

Scrappy

A magical, talking kangaroo on the last continent on Discworld, Fourecks, Scrappy is one of several incarnations of The Trickster, the eternal companion of the unfinished land's Creator. His task is to guide hapless Rincewind the Wizzard in his quest to bring back "The Wet" to a parched and arid land. Only when the drought ends, Scrappy explains, will the time/space anomaly end. Scrappy appears to Rincewind and departs from him through primitive cave paintings. Scrappy also comes and goes from Roo Beer posters. He finds it hard to believe that hapless Rincewind is not aware that he would not survive in the outback without being led to waterholes and provided delicious meals under rocks.

Tinhead Ned

Never seen but highly praised in popular folklore, Tinhead Ned is a sheep-stealer jailed in Bugarup in the same cell as protagonist Rincewind the Wizzard years later. Rincewind learns about Tinhead Ned from the friendly warden of the jail, the night before he is to hang. Tinhead Ned repeatedly escapes from the jail and is recaptured. He leaves notes on the ceiling of his cell, however, that tell Rincewind how to escape and he successfully follows them.



The Senior Wrangler

One of the faculty members of Unseen University (UU) who in their search for colleague Rincewind enter a tropical island thousands of years in the past and make their way to the last continent, Fourecks. The unnamed Senior Wrangler denies that humans and apes are related. Although he has given up on the Librarian's survival and is worried about ferocious wild animals, he goes along. On Mono Island, he is attracted to the aging housekeeper, Mrs. Whitlow, who accidentally traps them there, finding himself unable to speak or function in her presence. Nearly everything he hears or says bears sophomoric sexual innuendo.

Strewth

An opal miner in the outback of the last continent on Discworld, Fourecks, Strewth discovers something that gleams like frosty green fire. After a celebratory beer, Strewth and his coworkers unearth a hollow object whose walls are the thickness of a plate and that has tiny toes. It is The Luggage, which has followed protagonist Rincewind the Wizzard to this barren, arid land.

Mrs. Whitlow

The head housekeeper at Unseen University (UU), Mrs. Whitlow is known for nourishing soups that either cure or kill and for fine needle work that takes little account of the wearers' dimensions. She is quite prim and proper and speaks in a broad accent suggested by writing the pronoun "I" as "Ai." The wizards are normally afraid of her but find themselves thrown together with her in unusual conditions when she delivers snacks to them on a tropical island reached by stepping through a window in time. She inadvertently strands them by dislodging a wooden block. Mrs. Whitlow greatly flusters the elderly, celibate wizards. They do not know how to behave around her and compete to protect her virtue. They are so uncomfortable about the subject of sex that Mrs. Whitlow must explain it to the island's god, to enable him to substitute sexual reproduction for the inefficient forming of single examples of species. When the company escapes the island in the Melon Boat, it breaks apart short of the beach and Mrs. Whitlow rides in on a log alongside a camel. Intense magic briefly affects the castaways' temporal glands, returning the aged wizards to infancy, advancing young Ponder Stibbons to old age, and turning Mrs. Whitlow into a shapely, alluring figure.



Objects/Places

Ankh-Morpork

The largest city on Discworld, Ankh-Morpork is located on the coast of the central Unknown Continent. It is divided in two by the shallow, polluted River Ankh. It is home to Unseen University (UU), Discworld's premier school of magic, where some of the early action in the novel is set. Ankh-Morpork plays a minimal role in this novel.

Bugarup

The rough-and-ready capital city of the last continent of Fourecks, Bugarup becomes the setting for the novel's most dramatic moments. Protagonist Rincewind the Wizzard is repeatedly warned against going to Bugarup, but is determined to book passage aboard a ship for Ankh-Morpork. It is said to be full only of "wowsers and pooftahs" (p. 200), which is Australian slang for puritans and male homosexuals. Prominent features of Bugarup include: the harbor; the Opera House said to resemble an open box of tissues; a prison where the Prime Minister resides, because prime ministers are assumed upon election to be corrupt; an Old Brewery, where Roo Beer (actually lager) is produced; and an haunted and abandoned New Brewery. It also has a school of magic, BU. Rincewind arrives in Bugarup under arrest for sheep-stealing and is due to be hanged in the morning, before he effects an escape. The annual festival is underway, crowding the streets. Rincewind hides in a wagon belonging to a troupe of female impersonators, whom the locals seem both to enjoy and despise. A great fire breaks out in the brewery at a time when all ground water has dried up. In a deep cave Rincewind brings past and present crashing back together and at BU brings on The Wet, which inundates the last continent. Several of these features suggest parallels in Sydney, the capital of Australia, the continent on which Fourecks is based.

Djabringabeeralong

A town in the outback of the last continent of Fourecks, Djabringabeeralong is considered a big town because it has a street and a pub. It is dominated by a huge, squeaking windmill. A sign warns that visitors must check their weapons as they cross the bridge across the dry Lassitude River. Camels tow small boats along its bed. Protagonist Rincewind the Wizzard is brought there by Mad, a psychotic dwarf whom Rincewind meets in the outback. The town is ruled by a humanoid crocodile, named Crocodile Crocodile, and the population are humanoid animals. The raucous pub suggests the one in the film Crocodile Dundee. There Rincewind drinks himself into oblivion and challenges a gang of sheep shearers to a contest. With magic help Rincewind wins handsomely and sets out for Bugarup aback a short-legged horse, Snowy. At then end of the novel, Djabringabeeralong's annual dry-riverbed regatta is washed out by heavy rains as Rincewind restores The Wet.



Discworld

A flat world that rides on the back of four giant elephants who in turn stand on the shell of an enormous star turtle named Great A'Tuin, Discworld is a medieval planet. By this twenty-second novel in the series, author Terry Pratchett downplays physical descriptions of his imaginary world. He mentions that light travels at variable speeds over its terrain, resulting in different time zones. The wizards of Unseen University (UU) at one point observe that one constellation in the sky appears to be out of place and muse about whether this could result from the turtle changing course or even reversing itself. In fact, it indicates an anomaly in time and space that is corrected late in the novel. Most of the action of the novel takes place on last continent Fourecks, where the protagonist, Rincewind the Wizzard, had landed in the final pages of *Interesting Times*.

Fourecks

Also referred to as Terror [sic] Incognita, XXXX, and EcksEcksEcksEcks, Fourecks is an unexplored desert continent on Discworld that has mysteriously been left unfinished by its Creator. It is called the last continent because it springs up after all of the other lands are in place and finished. Books at Unseen University (UU) say that Fourecks is "girt by sea" (p. 37), a phrase that the faculty does not comprehend. Death's butler, Albert, explains the peculiarities of the arid continent and books in Death's library say that except for some sheep all of the creatures of Fourecks are lethal. One reference book claims that the continent has few poisonous snakes because they have been killed by the spiders. The renowned scholar Sir Roderick Purdeigh has emphatically concluded that the continent does not exist.

Fourecks exists, but is effectively isolated from the rest of Discworld by the ring of anti-cyclones that permanently rage around it. When the wizards reach the continent, they find that it is lousy with magic, particularly on the beaches. Human beings on the continent all come from other parts of Discworld, victims of shipwrecks. A few animals, notably the camel, arrive the same way, clinging to driftwood. Otherwise, the last continent is filled with weird-looking creatures formed as the local Creator makes primitive wall paintings that come to life. It is renowned for beer in the few rumors that have reached the rest of Discworld. Ecksians are sensitive about stereotypes.

At the end of *Interesting Times*, hapless Rincewind the Wizzard is transported to Fourecks by the Hex magic computer rather than back to Unseen University (UU) in Ankh-Morpork. He meets painted aborigines who seem about to set him on a new adventure, but he is knocked unconscious before he can flee. The Last Continent takes up Rincewind's story a short time later. The lion's share of this novel is set on the last continent, which is constructed from leftovers of another god's work. Fourecks is essentially unstable. It is only 30,000 years ago but appears to be millions of years old. Rain never falls from the cloudless skies and abundant underground sources of water are drying up. Rincewind is tasked by the local god with bringing back "The Wet." He is told that only when the drought ends will the time/space anomaly that has captured him



(and, unbeknownst to him, his colleagues from UU) end. Hearing that he is specially called, Rincewind flees, but inevitably fulfills his mission through a long series of misadventures in the outback and in two named population centers: tiny Didjabringabeeralong and the capital city of Bugarup.

Hex

A magic-powered computer developed by the young wizard Ponder Stibbons at Unseen University (UU) in Ankh-Morpork, Hex is intended to aid the study of magic. He is very clever and very stupid at the same time, needing facts to be fed into it in bite-sized pieces and to be allowed no chance for misunderstanding. In the previous novel, *Interesting Times*, Hex transports Rincewind the Wizzard to Agatea on the Counterweight Continent for a series of misadventures. Then, through a "trivial error in bilocal thaumaturgy" (p. 29), it deposits him on an arid, semi-mythical continent, Fourecks, rather than returning him to UU. At first the UU faculty leaves Rincewind in peace but, in this novel, needs his services but decides against risking the use of Hex again. This leads the senior members on a personal quest to find Rincewind.

The Luggage / Trunkie

A recurrent object in Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels, The Luggage is a large trunk that accompanies the hapless Rincewind the Wizzard on his travels and misadventures. It is made of sapient pearwood that grows primarily in the Agatean Empire. The Luggage has hundreds of tiny legs and the personality of a homicidal maniac. It lacks sense organs but is aware of its environment. The Luggage takes a while to catch up with Rincewind when he is deposited on the last continent of Fourecks. It lands hard enough to be buried in the outback, where a party of miners is shocked when it digs him up. Rincewind is amazed to see The Luggage depicted along with wizards on ancient rock paintings. He fails to notice The Luggage in the pile-up of a road gang that chases Mad's armored wagon on which Rincewind is riding. The Luggage then falls in among the belongings of a troupe of female impersonators, who rename it Trunkie. The Luggage is reunited with Rincewind just in time to save him from the hands of the law and a sentence of death. It then transports Rincewind and his new friend and guide, Neilette, to an old beer factory. As an earthquake collapses the structure, The Luggage smashes through walls and digs through solid rock to bring them into a cave where past and future are reunited.

L-Space

The mysterious region that tenuously connects all books ever written—or to be written—L-Space allows one to deduce the content of future writings. At Unseen University (UU), young Ponder Stibbons studies the phenomenon using invisible writings, an advancement over earlier, primitive techniques.



The Melon Boat

A proper ship that the God of Evolution sets in motion on Mono Island to allow the marooned wizards of Unseen University (UU) to escape, the Melon Boat, like other vegetation on the island springs up from the earth and takes precisely the forms that the travelers need. It is the unique fruit of the Argo nauticae uniuquo flower. Some distance offshore of the last continent of Fourecks, the Melon Boat begins to break up in a huge storm of wind, rain, lightning, and intense magic. The wizards abandon ship in shark-infested waters but, clinging to the plant's giant seed pods, which form themselves into surf boards, make it safely to shore.

Mono Island

A small place featuring a fringe of sandy beach, forests and a mountain at the center, Mono Island first presents itself as an appealing vista through a wizard's bathroom window. The window turns out to be a portal to another part of time and space. It is lushly filled with plants and animals, each of which is hand made by the local god, who hopes that they can come to adapt to the environment on their own. When a group of faculty members at Unseen University (UU) venture through the window, they find the abandoned campsite of their colleague, the Egregious Professor of Cruel and Unusual Geography, and his notebook. When the housekeeper, Mrs. Whitlow, inadvertently closes the window, they are stranded. The God of Evolution, who is perfecting this tiny region that he creates after the rest of Discworld is completed, learns from them about sexual reproduction as a less labor-intensive means of stocking species. Although he is more open to questioning than most gods, he is happy to see them leave before they ask too many questions. He sets in motion the growth of a seaworthy Melon Boat that will automatically navigate towards a new continent, Fourecks. Young wizard Ponder Stibbons, who is attracted to the god's work, decides against staying as assistant when he learns that the cockroach is the crown of the god's universe.

Slood

A part of the cosmology and mythology of Disworld, slood is a naturally occurring substance that is easier than fire but harder than water to discover. As such, it serves as a rough means whereby the creators and/or gods can distinguish intelligent and unintelligent beings. Notably, humans on Earth do not know slood.

Unseen University (UU)

Discworld's premier school of wizardry, Unseen University (UU) is located in the city of Ankh-Morpork. Its current head, the Archchancellor, is Mustrum Ridcully; its Dean, Bursar (treasurer) and Librarian are unnamed. The first two are humans and the latter a human magically turned into an orangutan long ago. The senior faculty members, primarily the Dean, the Chair of Indefinite Studies, the Lecturer in Recent Runes and the



Senior Wangler, bicker through the Discworld novels; it seems to be a function of dealing with magic.

Their current project is curing the Librarian of a deadly illness. Doing so by magic requires knowing his name, a detail that the Librarian has carefully hidden. Their best hope is to find the former Library Assistant, Rincewind, who in the novel *Interesting Times* has been deposited on the last continent, Fourecks. Young Ponder Stibbons, inventor of the Hex machine that has misplaced Rincewind, is the only dedicated scholar on the faculty. Needing guidance on how to find Fourecks, the senior members visit the office of the Egregious Professor of Cruel and Unusual Geography, find a window opening on a tropical island, and step through. When it closes behind them, they are marooned in a time/space anomaly on Fourecks. Late in the novel the wizards meet colleagues at the last continent's more primitive magic school, Bugarup University. Its layout resembles BU, but on a lower scale. BU's two-story tower is dwarfed by UU's when viewed from below, but soars half a mile when one stands on the pinnacle. It is destroyed by lightning when *The Wet* returns to Fourecks.



Themes

Sex

Terry Pratchett's *The Last Continent* deals with Sex on two levels: biologically, as the agent of reproduction in plants and higher animals, and as the inspiration for sophomoric humor among celibate and repressed old men. The latter is given much more attention, because it fits the general tone of the novel and helps portray the characters involved.

The senior faculty of Unseen University (UU) finds themselves marooned on a lush tropical island along with the middle-aged head housekeeper, Mrs. Whitlow, who is described as quite prim and proper and hardly an alluring figure. Thrown together accidentally, the wizards are flustered by her very presence and compete with one another to protect her virtue. Every word they speak is taken as a euphemism for something sexual and, having been together since their student days, they have material for teasing one another. The Dean and the Senior Wrangler are infected so badly with suppressed lust that they babble, run to hide, or simply fall unconscious on their faces. When the party becomes shipwrecked on a magic-charged beach and briefly return to childhood, the Dean stops briefly at adolescence on his way back to his true age and admits that all he thinks about as a teen is sex. They are far less honest in real time. The transformation leaves Mrs. Whitlow alluring in revealing tropical attire.

So uncomfortable about sex are the wizards that when the God of Creation on Mono Island wants to understand it, Mrs. Whitlow has to do the explaining, while the wizards fantasize about the gods of myths mating with human women. They, of course, must declare the myths disgusting but are aroused. The god has been creating things the hard way: one at a time from boxes of parts (legs, wings, for example). He creates an organism, observes it throughout its life span, and then produces an improved model. He has never heard about male and female distinctions or of how in most of nature males and females mate to produce offspring. He quickly sees the labor savings for himself and plans to reinvent his methodology. The wizards have also heard about it and find it sloppy, energy-wasting, and entirely less entertaining than cards or croquet. Both activities then become sexual euphemisms as they joke self-consciously with one another. The plants on Mono Island spontaneously put out seed pods in their search for a more independent existence.

A minor plot features a troupe of female impersonators, one of whom is an actual female, Neilette, filling in for her brother, who has quit the act. The people of Bugarup (itself a sexually charged name) are ambivalent towards the ladies as they take part in an annual parade. They cheer but also throw beer. Neilette's father obviously looks down on her brother's orientation. The naïve protagonist, Rincewind, takes so long to catch on that the impersonators claim that he is blind and Neilette as she grows closer to him makes clear to Rincewind that she is a woman. Several times in the novel characters disparage homosexuality using popular Australian jabs (Australian being the



model for the last continent of Fourecks). The purpose might be to showcase slang, but the prejudice adds nothing to the novel.

Religion

In Terry Pratchett's novel, *The Last Continent*, Religion is a basic theme. Most of it is set on the last continent of Fourecks and nearby Mono Island, both created long after the rest of Discworld is formed by a separate, unnamed deity. The Creator of Fourecks, portrayed as an Australian aborigine, is said to go about the universe planting land masses wherever he finds too much ocean. He carries the universe around in a leather sack. On Discworld, he uses leftover materials and has put little order into it. He creates new species by drawing them on rock walls. They spring to life and go about their business. The Creator works through a companion, The Trickster, who incarnates himself in various ways to guide and protect the protagonist, Rincewind the Wizzard. Incarnate is, of course, a charged theological word. When The Wet (rain) returns to Fourecks—and indeed reaches catastrophic flood proportions—the Creator reappears in person and throws his boomerang into the sky to become a rainbow, seemingly a necessary element in flood myths.

Pratchett specifies that "Creators aren't gods. They make places, which is quite hard. It's men that makes gods" (p. 61). He adds parenthetically that this explains a lot, but fails to elaborate. He then portrays Mono Island as having a Creator God who also fills his world with flora and fauna. The god appears as a white-robed, long-bearded patriarchal figure spouting threats of boils and other sufferings, but then admits that this is not his style. He is a bit of an atheist and finds religion offensive. Having tired of performing "basic general godding" (p. 163) on the main continent of Discworld, he is concentrating on a single, tiny island, trying to perfect godliness. Godly anger had grown passé to him. When he dropped it in the old world, worshipers had defected to tougher deities. The priests had all preyed on divine anger to enrich themselves and followers of various gods had slaughtered one another.

This god is a bit of a simpleton, not knowing how to blow his nose until taught by the young wizard Ponder Stibbons and, more importantly, having no concept of sexual reproduction. He hand makes one-of-a-kind examples of animals, observes their life span, and replaces them with improved models. It consumes all of his time. He wants his creatures to be better able to survive by adapting to biological niches. His plants mutate at high speed to produce whatever the visiting wizards want. This god is one of the few deities that encourages questioning, but worries about it getting out of hand. He hates superstition and prejudice and admires freethinkers. When told about sex, he agrees that Evolution is a good term for this, but sees the cockroach as the apex of creation.



Time Travel

In Terry Pratchett's novel, *The Last Continent*, everything is predicated on the reality of Time Travel. Protagonist Rincewind the Wizzard finds himself at the end of the preceding novel, *Interesting Times*, marooned by magic on a parched, barren continent, where the natives promptly knock him unconscious. Some months later, he is still alive on Fourecks, thanks to the care of its Creator. The unfinished land is suffering severe drought, which is drying up the underground reservoirs, threatening all life. Rincewind is shown drawings on rock walls that look 40,000 years old, but which have not existed a month before. The land looks millions of years old but is mere thousands.

How any of this is possible is left a mystery until Rincewind's former teachers at Unseen University (UU) in Ankh-Morpork come looking for him, hoping that he will know the Librarian's name, that they might cure him with a magic spell. They turn to the Egregious Professor of Cruel and Unusual Geography in hopes that he will know where this last continent is located and find in his bathroom a window opening onto a lush tropical island. Stepping through to look for their colleague, they get marooned when the window is accidentally closed and vanishes. The only scientifically-minded wizard among them, Ponder Stibbons, notices that a major constellation is out of place and calculates that they have gone back in time 4,000 years. Both on Mono Island and on Fourecks they are at the stage at which life is beginning to form on ancient rock.

Stibbons struggles to convince his colleagues that they must exercise extreme care not to change the course of history. He uses the image of how someone stepping on an ant could snowball into catastrophic events. The older wizards wonder if the ant had not been meant to be stepped on to bring about current events. When Stibbons uses the classical argument that if one accidentally killed or prevented the birth of one's own grandfather, one would not exist. The wizards take the image literally and get bogged down over why anyone would want to kill his kindly grandfather.

In fact, the wizards of 4,000 years ago have, somehow, brought about the current-day drought that endangers Fourecks and the Creator of Fourecks tasks Rincewind with restoring *The Wet*. He gives him no guidance but says that he will know that he has succeeded when it rains. Rincewind runs from the quest but ends up fulfilling it in spite of himself. He discovers wall drawings like those that the marooned wizards see, some including pointy-hat figures and puts together the mystery. Past and present crash back together, united in the present, Rincewind meets the other wizards and, playing with a toy, generates torrential rain. The wizards return to UU before seeing what current-day reality on the continent might be like, after the flood waters recede.

Style

Point of View

An impersonal but thoroughly bemused and opinionated and omniscient narrator tells the story of *The Last Continent* in the third person past tense, with frequent extended runs of lively first person dialog interspersed. This being the twenty-second Discworld novel, author Terry Pratchett is rather sparse with details about his flat, magical world, except to describe the colorful details about Discworld as a whole and at the outset describe Fourecks in misty terms derived from stories by the few mariners who have made it back to the civilized parts of Discworld.

Paragraphs of narration free of similes, metaphors, hyperbole and other figures of speech are rare. Most of the characters share the narrator's wry sense of humor. Rincewind, the novel's protagonist, knows himself to be a terrible magician but is still proud to have studied wizardry and is loath to lose his identity as a wizard. He has landed on this strange, barren continent, when the magical Hex computer sends him there rather than to Unseen University (UU). There are many references to Rincewind's harrowing misadventures during the preceding novel, *Interesting Times*. When the local Creator puts him on a quest to return "The Wet" and thus end a time/space anomaly, he tries to flee, unsuccessfully, of course. Until the very end of the novel, he is unaware that the senior faculty members of UU have stepped into the same anomaly to find him and bring him home.

The overall tone of the novel is slapstick, but there are serious passages that debate evolution versus a Bible-free creationism. It also treats classical themes in time travel literature. All of the wizards have arrived 4,000 years before their own time and interfered with the flow of history. They—Rincewind in particular—are responsible for making everything right. Only at the end, when past and present crash back together and everyone is reunited, are the the two closely interwoven story lines resolved.

Setting

The Last Continent by Terry Pratchett takes place on Discworld, a flat world that rides in space on the back of four giant elephants that stand on the shell of an enormous star turtle. By this twenty-second novel in the series, Pratchett gives little attention to the basic mythology, but concentrates on what is happening of Fourecks, the last continent, built from leftovers from another god's creation of Discworld, Fourecks is essentially unstable. It is only 30,000 years old but appears to be millions of years old. Rain never falls from the cloudless skies and abundant underground sources of water are drying up. The protagonist, Rincewind the Wizzard, has been deposited there in a previous novel and left, supposedly in peace, by his colleagues at Ankh-Morpork's renowned



Unseen University (UU). When they find that they need his unique knowledge, they set out to find him. Meanwhile, he is tasked by the local Creator with bringing back "The Wet" and is told that only when the drought ends will the time/space anomaly that has captured him (and, unbeknownst to him, his UU colleagues) end. Hearing that he is specially called, Rincewind flees, but inevitably fulfills his mission. He suffers many misadventures in the bush, which provide much detail about the land and in two cities: tiny Didjabringabeeralong and Bugarup, a parody of Sydney, Australia.

Some early scenes are set at UU, but the wizards soon come upon a window onto an alluring tropical beach. When they step through and the window is inadvertently shut, they must deal with life on a strange and potentially dangerous new world. From misplaced constellations, they determine that they have stepped back 4,000 years into a space/time anomaly. While on Mono Island they meet the local God of Evolution and see his workshop, where he creates plants and animals individually, from boxes of parts. Plants hear the wizard's needs and evolve swiftly to provide them. A seaworthy Melon Boat evolves and bears them away to mysterious Fourecks (also designated XXXX and EcksEcksEcksEcks), where Rincewind, unbeknownst, is wandering and in trouble.

Fourecks is a substantial continent surrounded by such ferocious storms that many souls exploring the edge of the disc have been shipwrecked and very few have escaped to spread outlandish stories about it. The magicians are shipwrecked and briefly revert to childhood under the influence of intense magic. Rincewind, meanwhile, discovers ancient (but recent) wall paintings of pointy-hatted beings and by drawing some himself, brings past and present crashing back together. By swinging the Creator's bullroarer, he unleashes an enormous storm, which ultimately floods the last continent, ending the drought. The Creator's boomerang becomes the rainbow that flood myths seem to require.

Language and Meaning

In *The Last Continent*, British author Terry Pratchett lampoons popular Australian culture, particularly elements made popular in the mass media, like the films *Crocodile Dundee* and *Mad Max*, and songs like *Waltzing Matilda* and *Tie Me Kangaroo Down, Sport*. The narrator, Rincewind the Wizzard, is singularly unable to understand the colorful local idioms and needs a translator as he unenthusiastically follows the quest that is thrust on him by the Creator. He readily adopts two ubiquitous phrases, "No worries" and "Good on yer." At one point, "No worries" is rendered into Latin as "Nullus anxietas," while the inscription "Nulli Sheilaie sanguinaea," rendering no bloody women, incorporating the favorite all-purpose Australian adjective and the noun for women, slips by Rincewind's comprehension. The woman he is bringing to the all-male school of magic is not named Sheila. The impersonal but bemused narrator keeps his tongue firmly in cheek, commenting on the foibles of individuals, groups and society as a whole. Few narrative paragraphs are void of figurative language and more extended analogies abound.



There are a number of running gags that amuse with each re-occurrence. The most extended deals with the elderly wizards' puritanical mindset. They blush at any intimation of sexuality, but it is permanently on their minds, thanks to the accidental presence among them of a rather unsexy woman. They vie to attend to her needs and protect her modesty. Sophomoric innuendo pervades many pages. The wizards are naturally argumentative and talk past one another constantly. They look down on the only true scholar among them. When sex shifts from being a bawdy topic to one of science, the elders have no concept for how sexual reproduction operates and, when told, find it a messy waste of time. The God of Evolution working on Mono Island also has not heard about it and wastes much time hand-making creatures out of boxes of parts. It falls to supposedly innocent Mrs. Whitlock to explain to him the facts of life. This only increases the wizards' suppressed lust. The wizards also debate time travel, failing to see how stepping on an ant could change the course of history. Again, the serious and the slapstick are intertwined.

Structure

As with all of Terry Pratchett's Discworld novels, there are no chapter breaks in *The Last Continent*. The several story lines blend into one another, generally smoothly, with major transitions being specified by added space after the concluding paragraph and occasionally a line of dots. In a few cases Pratchett adopts a staccato pace, switching between short snippets of story line, causing some confusion. This is generally not the case, however. The story flows along with little variation in the tone or mood. At the very end the two story lines come together as past and present crash back together.

The novel opens with the hapless protagonist, Rincewind the Wizzard, stranded on the last continent, Fourecks. Little is known of it except wild stories from the few mariners who have managed to escape it. Rincewind is accidentally stranded there at the end of *Interesting Times*. When it seems possible that he might know the Librarian's name, needed for a magic spell to heal his puzzling illness, the senior faculty go in search of Fourecks. They step through a window into a time/space anomaly that takes them first to Mono Island, where the local God of Evolution is hand-making creatures from boxes of parts. When informed about sexual reproduction, he sets out to retool his operation. The wizards leave the island in a Melon Boat that grows up overnight. Intense magic offshore Fourecks breaks up the boat and maroons them on the last continent. They observe its Creator drawing creatures on rock walls and marvel how they come to life.

Rincewind, meanwhile, has seen many such drawings, including ones of pointy-headed men: wizards. The Creator of Fourecks tasks Rincewind with returning *The Wet*, to end the devastating drought that threatens all life. Although he tries to flee, Rincewind is guided by *The Trickster* in various forms to fulfill his destiny. The most common form is a talking kangaroo, *Scrappy*. Rincewind suffers many comic misadventures across the outback and in town before stumbling upon the key to bringing back together past and present and ending the drought. In the course of his adventures, Rincewind invents or introduces to Ecksian culture many quintessential features, drawn from actual life in Australia, the model for Fourecks.



Quotes

"Paleontology and archaeology and other skulduggery were not subjects that interested wizards. Things are buried for a reason, they considered. There's no point in wondering what it was. Don't go digging things up in case they won't let you bury them again." *The Last Continent*, p. 18.

"It sounded as though the unseen voice then began to chant very quietly through an unseen nose.

"Rincewind was, after all, a wizard. Not a good one, but he was sensitive to magic. And the chant was doing strange things.

"The hairs on the back of his hands tried to crawl up his arms, and the back of his neck began to sweat. His ears popped and, very gently, the landscape began to spin around him." *The Last Continent*, pp. 58-59.

" 'It's your fault. You arrived here and suddenly things had always been wrong.'"

"Rincewind looked back towards the wall. The earth trembled again.

" 'Can you hop that past me again?' he said.

" 'Something went wrong in the past.'"

"The kangaroo looked at Rincewind's blank, jam-smearing expression, and tried again.

" 'Your arrival caused a wrong note,' it ventured.

" 'What in?'

"The creature waved a paw vaguely.

" 'All this,' it said. 'You could call it a bloody multi-dimensional knuckle of localized phase space, or maybe you could just call it the song.'" *The Last Continent*, pp. 84-85.

" 'One of anything doesn't work, sir,' said Ponder. 'It can't breed.'"

" 'Yes, but they're only trees, Stibbons.'"

" 'Trees need males and females too, sir.'"

" 'They do?'

" 'Yes, sir. Sometimes they're different bits of the same tree, sir.'"

" 'What? You sure?'

" 'Yes, sir. My uncle grew nuts, sir.'"

" 'Keep it down, boy, keep it down! Mrs. Whitlow might hear you.'" *The Last Continent*, p. 105.

"They never bothered to learn anything, they never bothered to remember anything apart from how much better things used to be, they bickered like a lot of children and the only one who ever said anything sensible said it in orangutan. *The Last Continent*, p. 122.

"In the fetid fleapit of Rincewind's brain the projections of memory put on reel two. Recollection began to flicker. He shuddered.

" 'Was I ... singing a song?' he said.

" 'Too right. You kept pointing to the Roo Beer pofter and finging...' Crocodile's huge



jaws moved as he tried to remember, 'Tie my kangaroo up.' Bloody good fong.'" The Last Continent, p. 172.

"The god scribbled industriously for a few seconds, and then stopped and chewed the end of his pencil thoughtfully.

" 'And all this, er, this sex is done by unskilled labor?' he said.

" 'Oh, yes.'

" 'No quality control of any description?'

" 'Er, no.'

" 'How does your species go about it?' said the god. He looked questioningly at Ponder.

" 'It ... er ... we ... er ...' Ponder stuttered.

" 'We avoid it,' said Ridcully. 'Nasty cough you've got there, Dean.'" The Last Continent, pp. 217-218.

" 'So what's going to happen to me?'

"The warder scratched his nose. 'Gonna hang you by the neck until you're dead, mate. Tomorrow morno.'

" 'You couldn't perhaps just hang me by the neck until I'm sorry?'

" 'No, mate. Got to be dead.'

" 'Good grief, it was only a sheep when all' said and done!'

"The warden grinned widely. 'Ah, a lot of men have gone to the gallows sayin' that in the past,' he said. 's'matterofact, you're the first sheep-stealer we've had here for years. All our big heroes have been sheep-stealers. You're gonna get a big crowd.'" The Last Continent, p. 248.

" 'And I'm going to be shot full of arrows!'

" 'So? You can dodge arrows. This place needs a hero. Champion shearer, road warrior, bush ranger, sheep-stealer, horse rider ... all you need now is to be good at some damn silly bat and ball game that no one's invented yet and maybe build a few tall buildings with borrowed money and you'd have a full house. They ain't gonna kill you in a hurry.'

" 'That's not much comfort! Anyway, I didn't do any of that stuff— Well, I mean I did, but —'

" 'It's what people think that matters. Now they believe you waltzed out of a locked cell.'" The Last Continent, pp. 299-300.

"A little red mud colored a complex curve and there, as if it had always been there, was a creature with the body of a giant rabbit, the expression of a camel and a tail that a lizard would be proud of. The wizards appeared around the rock just in time to see it scratch its ears." The Last Continent, p. 339.

"Contrary to the usual procedures it began to grow lighter, although the proliferation of luminous fungi or iridescent crystals in deep caves where the torchlessly improvident hero needs to see is one of the most obvious intrusions of narrative causality into the physical universe. In this case, the rocks were glowing, not from some mysterious inner light but simply as though the sun were shining on them, just after dawn." The Last Continent, pp. 362-363.



"The ability to ask questions like 'Where am I and who is the "I" that is asking?' is one of the things that distinguishes mankind from, say, cuttlefish.

"The wizards from Unseen University, being perhaps the intellectual cream or certainly the cerebral yogurt of their generation, passed through this stage within minutes.

Wizards are very adept at certain ideas." *The Last Continent*, p. 369.

"In the meantime, he looked down at the water and tried out the word he'd been taught by his grandfather, who'd been taught it by his grandfather, and which had been kept for thousands of years for when it would be needed.

"It meant the smell after rain.

"It had, he thought, been well worth waiting for." *The Last Continent*, p. 390.



Topics for Discussion

By what methods does *The Last Continent* evoke life in Australia? How effectively is it done? Select one element of parody and discuss it in detail.

Discuss the work and attitudes of the Creator of Fourecks and the God of Evolution on Mono Island. How do they differ and how do they coincide? Select one element and treat it in detail.

What is Mrs. Whitlock's function in the novel? Is she a well-rounded character (no pun intended)? Would you add anything to her depiction?

Discuss the function of Unseen University vis-a-vis magic. What are its inherent dangers and how do the wizards contain it?

How does the wizards' creation of the duckbill platypus typify their attitudes and add to the saga of the creation of Fourecks?

What is Death's function in the novel?

How is time travel and the danger of making unexpected changes to history handled in the novel?