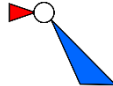


1562 GC

bncdoc.id	HTH
bncdoc.author	Pratchett, Terry
bncdoc.year	1990
bncdoc.title	Diggers.
bncdoc.info	Diggers. Sample containing about 36187 words from a book (domain: imaginative)
Text availability	Worldwide rights cleared
Publication date	1985-1993
Text type	Written books and periodicals
David Lee's classification	W_fict_prose

<p><1562/c></p>  <p>Key:</p> <p><u>Footprint</u> <u>ConEn1</u> <u>Footprint</u> <u>ConEn2</u> <u>Footprint</u> <u>ConEn3</u></p>	<p>is probably seven years old and feeling a bit creaky, I've got to admit I'd find it sort of comforting to have a few of the good old signs around the place. Amazing Reductions, perhaps, or just a little sign saying, Mammoth Sale Starts Tomorrow. It wouldn't hurt, and I'm sure I'd feel happier. Which is, of course, totally ridiculous, when you look at it rationally. It's just like Arnold Bros (est. 1905), he thought sadly. I'm pretty sure he doesn't exist in the way I was taught he did, when I was young. But when you saw things like If You Do Not See What You Require, Please Ask on the walls, you felt that everything was somehow all right. He thought: these are very wrong thoughts for a rational thinking nome. There was a crack in the woodwork by the door of the manager's office. Dorcas slipped into the familiar gloom under the floor and padded along until he found the switch. He was rather proud of this idea. There was a big red bell on the outside wall of the office, presumably so that humans could hear the telephone ring when the quarry was noisy. Dorcas had changed the wiring so that he could make it ring whenever he liked. He pressed the switch. Nomes came running from all corners of the quarry. Dorcas waited as the underfloor space filled up, and then dragged up an empty matchbox to stand on. 'The human has been back,' he announced. 'It didn't get in, but it'll keep trying.' 'What about your wire?' said one of the nomes. 'I'm afraid there are such things as wire cutters.' 'So much for your theory about, um, humans being intelligent. An intelligent human would know enough not to go, um, where it wasn't wanted,' said Nisodemus sourly. Dorcas liked to see eagerness in a young nome, but Nisodemus vibrated with a peculiarly hungry kind of eagerness that was unpleasant to see. He gave him as sharp a look as he dared. 'Humans out here might be different from the ones in the Store,' he snapped. 'Anyway -' 'Order must have sent it,' said Nisodemus. 'It's a judgement, um, on us!' 'None of that. It's just a human,' said Dorcas. Nisodemus glared at him as he went on, 'Now, we really should be sending some of the women and children to the -' There was</p> <p>the sound of running feet</p> <p>outside and <u>the gate guards</u> piled in through the crack. 'It's back! It's back!' panted Sacco. 'The human's back!' 'All right, all right,' said Dorcas. 'Don't worry about it, it can't -' 'No! No! No!' yelled Sacco, jumping up and down. 'It's got a pair of cutter things! It's cut the wire and the chain that holds the gates shut and it They didn't hear the rest of it. They didn't need to. The sound of an engine coming closer said it all. It grew so loud that the shed shook, and then it stopped suddenly, leaving a nasty kind of silence that was worse than the noise. There was the crump of a metal door slamming. Then the rattle and squeak of the shed door. Then footsteps. The boards overhead buckled and dropped little clouds of dust as great thumping steps wandered around the office. The nomes stood in absolute silence. They moved nothing except their eyes, but they moved in perfect time to the footsteps, marking the position, flicking backwards and forwards as the human crossed the room above. A baby started to whimper. There was some clicking, and then the muffled sound of a human voice making its usual incomprehensible noises. This went on for some</p>
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	<p>time. Then the footsteps left the office again. The nomes could hear them crunching around outside, and then more noises. Nasty, clinking metal noises. A small nome said, 'Mum, I want the lavatory, Mum -' 'Shh!' 'I really mean it, Mum!' 'Will you be quiet!' All the nomes stood stock still as the noises went on around them. Well, nearly all. One small nome hopped from one foot to the other, going very red in the face. Eventually the noise stopped. There was the thunk of a truck door closing, the growl of its engine, and the motor noise died away. Dorcas said, very quietly, 'I think perhaps we can relax now.' Hundred of nomes breathed a sigh of relief. 'Mum!' 'Yes, all right, off you go.' And after the sigh of relief, the outbreak of babble. One voice rose above the rest. 'It was never like this in the Store!' said Nisodemus, climbing on to a half-brick. 'I ask you, fellow nomes, is this what we were led, um, to expect?' There was a mumble</p>
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