



The Apocalypse Codex

Charles Stross

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For outstanding heroism in the field (despite himself), computational demonologist Bob Howard is on the fast track for promotion to management within the Laundry, the supersecret British government agency tasked with defending the realm from occult threats. Assigned to External Assets, Bob discovers the company (unofficially) employs freelance agents to deal with sensitive situations that may embarrass Queen and Country.

So when Ray Schiller—an American televangelist with the uncanny ability to miraculously heal the ill—becomes uncomfortably close to the Prime Minister, External Assets dispatches the brilliant, beautiful, and entirely unpredictable Persephone Hazard to infiltrate the Golden Promise Ministries and discover why the preacher is so interested in British politics. And it's Bob's job to make sure Persephone doesn't cause an international incident.

But it's a supernatural incident that Bob needs to worry about—a global threat even the Laundry may be unable to clean up...

The Apocalypse Codex Details

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From Reader Review The Apocalypse Codex for online ebook

Chris says

Good paranormal horror thriller in which Bob, our computational demonologist, heads to America to check out an evangelist who's taken an interest in the British Prime Minister.

Jason says

3.5 Stars

Awesome science fiction thriller / horror / mystery. I loved the start of this series it is tailor made to my likes. This is my first Stross novel even though he has been on my to read list for a very long time.

Great characters.

Great world.

Great science fiction.

Lovecraft!

Gadgets.

And more.

I really liked it.

The first third of this book was a drag and nothing happened. This was the weakest of the series but the ending somewhat made up for it.

Otherworld says

I picked this one up at random from the library because I have only read one of this author's book previously and was interested in trying more. I'm glad I did, because it was a really good book.

Everyman Bob Howard works for the Laundry, the part of the British Secret Service that deals with occult threats to the nation. Sent on a mission to investigate an American church that is taking far too much interest in certain British ministers, he soon finds himself in way over his head. Aided and abetted by two independent operators with a few tricks of their own, he has to stop an apocalypse armed only with a couple of chicken feet, a camera that takes more than photos, and his own wit and ingenuity. We may all be doomed...

I didn't realise that this was part 4 of a series when I picked this book up, but it didn't seem to matter that much as the author helpfully provided a brief précis of previous events whenever they came up (basically amounting to "I went on this mission and bad things happened") which kept me nicely on track with the story. I would certainly go back and read the previous books in this series now.

The idea behind an occult department combined with the tedium of local or central government (or a

business environment) is nothing new (Tom Holt did a similar thing a few years ago I recall), but this is done in a smart and entertaining way. It's witty and snarky, funny when it needs to be, but with an undercurrent of horror that occasionally rises to the surface to remind us that an apocalypse is on its way. The bizarre world of American evangelists gets a bit of a hammering here but that is no bad thing in my mind, though I suspect this story may play better with cynical Brits than it would with Americans who may take offence with the some elements of this story.

I liked the characters a lot - Bob may have a few tricks up his sleeve but he is basically one of us (even if he is an IT geek). Persephone Hazard (not sure if I love or hate that name!) is sometimes a bit too good to be true but is still interesting, and her sidekick McTavish has some intriguing hidden depths that warrant further exploration. There are some good supporting characters on the side of the good guys. The bad guys on the other hand are rather more deluded than evil, especially as many of them have been possessed by something rather nasty than pushed them in a direction they might not have otherwise gone in.

If I were in the situation that Bob finds himself, I think I would rather battle eldritch horrors from beyond the veil than have to participate in a week-long management training course that includes *shudder* role-play. Such is the kind of choice that you face when you're a public servant.

Trish says

Wow, this has easily been the best of Stross' books about the Laundry so far.

Bob is slowly recovering from the events of the previous book when Angleton (our favourite intimidating boss) calls him so send him to some executive training at a business school. *shudders* Talk about unspeakable horrors!

He goes, not very enthusiastically of course, and is soon lent to a very secretive part of The Laundry that needs to investigate an American televangelist who has gotten his hooks in the British Prime Minister. So Bob is teamed up with a witch called Persephone Hazard / Duchess and her right-hand man Johnny. Naturally, the covert mission gets blown very soon and then the shit hits the proverbial fan immediately, leading to Bob and his friends being stranded in the US and trying to stop the awakening of a slumbering deity that could even start case Nightmare Green!

Although I've liked all of Bob's books very much so far, this was different. The action was there from the start, so was the puzzle of who had what agenda and who the actual enemy was, the bad guys were very creepy indeed, and Stross suffused it all with his trademark humour - this time not only about the corporate world, but also religion of any kind, cults, how gullible people are no matter what topic we're talking about, family affairs (like whether or not you want kids and why or why not).

Mo only had a brief appearance but it was a strong one, the author managing to flesh her out even more in a few short sentences / scenes, making her a strong but still human female MC (I like that immensely about her). He did the same with Persephone and Johnny whom I quickly became attached to.

It was a wild chase on two different continents and in two different dimensions (if not more), with emotional horror that was just the right kind of dark despite the humorous undertone of this series, as well as a healthy blend of believable action and silliness. We got some more information on some organisations we had encountered in previous books and know even more about the end game. It really is a bit like Norse mythology's Ragnarok with The Laundry knowing we're licked but preparing and being willing to fight

anyway.

As far as I know, this book's style was entirely the author's, no reference or homage to any other writer (I could be wrong though). Either way, I liked it very much as it was fast and yet the characters still were at the forefront. I can't imagine anyone not liking Bob (except for Mo if he doesn't get permission to tell her what happened maybe ;P). Welcome to Mahogany Row indeed!

Robert says

Another of Stross's maths = magic and Cthulhu is just waiting to eat your soul for a light snack before dinner novels in which an out-of-his-depth secret agent tries to save us all from the horrors on the other side of reality. Except that this is book four and playing the whole plucky reluctant hero who normally hides in the office card once again wouldn't really work. So instead Stross and our protagonist admit to reasonable competence as a bunch of cultists attempt to summon Christ to Earth but don't know what they will really let loose isn't really into peace and love...can they be stopped?

This book is as good as any other in the series but Stross spends much of it setting the groundwork for a bit of a shake-up in the inevitable prospective next volume. This means one of those developments that increase the powers of the protagonist. This is similar to the arc that the protagonist of the Night Watch goes through and happens quite a bit in various types of fantasy. The potential problem is that if you do that you must also make the antagonists more powerful in order to maintain the threat level and this can lead to what I call threat-inflation which, at it's most extreme and ridiculous leads to the sort of nonsense found in the First Lensman books. Hopefully this series, which is a heap of fun, won't descend into that brand of unintentional silliness (which gets plain dull after a while). Creativity can postpone this problem but ultimately, the solution is to end the series before it's too late. In this case it's not - yet.

Carol. says

Review and links are permanently at: <https://clsiewert.wordpress.com/2015/...>

I'm thinking 2013 was a weak year for the Locus Awards. Don't get me wrong: I enjoyed *he Apocalypse Codex*, and there was a lot there that made me smile and snicker. But it didn't contain the ideas that challenge, or writing that mesmerizes, or even characters that intrigue. It mostly just seems a high-level spoof, full of witticisms and social commentary, oft applied with heavy instrument.

I mean, yes, a phrase like: **"Fucking netbooks; you can't even use one to beat an alien brain parasite to death without it breaking"** is going to make me pause, then giggle (reminding me of *"[it] hung in the sky much the same way that bricks don't"*). There's a great deal of that incidental humor, demonstrated again in a throw-away conversation while ordering coffee:

” ‘Mocha venti with an extra shot for me, no cream,’ I add.

‘Anything else?’

I shake my head and she wanders off. Johnny looks suspicious. ‘Since when do you speak Starbucks?’ I shrug. ‘It’s not as if I can help it; they’ve got our office surrounded, and they don’t like it if you try and order in English.’ “

I laughed, no doubt; I've purposely ordered a "medium," curious to see if the barristas speak English.

Poor Bob; he seems destined to re-confront the scary forces that inhabit the deep. This seemed a re-tread of earlier adventures, particularly *The Atrocity Archives*, so it didn't really engage me. It was pretty clear to absolutely everyone but Bob what was going on: portentous conversation with new manager, bureaucratic training, travel (to America), sacrificial goat, confront evil, portal to a wasteland, yada yada. This time, Bob meets with a man in charge of External Assets, and Bob is told that his job is to maintain contact with a free-lance witch-bodyguard team while maintaining official plausible deniability ("your mission, should you choose to accept it..."). It's a chance for him to show managerial skills, and Bob's willing to take the bait opportunity as the team investigate an American evangelist who is getting suspiciously close to the British PM. Arriving in Colorado under deep cover, each member of the team soon discovers their opponents are more than they appear.

Stross' writing seemed particularly choppy this book. The introduction warns that Bob will be narrating bits alternating with reconstructed third-person view. Other perspectives include the evangelist, each member of the free-lance team, the administrator who gives Bob the mission and even an opposing operative. Considering this is book four, there is also a lot of world-building/back-story in the beginning chapters. It had two effects: one, it added to the sense of choppiness. A section covering a caper by the witch-bodyguard team showcased their skills but did little for story development. Two, the repeat world-building added to the feeling of re-creating the same story. We're told a number of times how the Big Bad is coming, which will then proceed to eat humanity like a bag of fish and chips—otherwise known as How Bob Lost his Atheism. Then there is the routine: Bob has dinner with his wife; he trudges into the office and is surprised by visitors; he drinks coffee; he complains about management training; he accepts compliments telling him how talented he is, he has dinner with friends. I have to say, this is one book where I didn't wonder how the protagonist managed the minutiae of daily life. In other series, authors often use the orientation time to develop other aspects of the protagonist's life in order to create the feeling of a well-rounded character. Here, not so much.

Once we got to America, action was steady, always escalating, and if there were narrative changeovers, at least it tended to further the plot. I enjoyed some of the devices the team used to manage problems, particularly the tattoos and the paper chain. Persephone, the witch, gave insight into using power differently than in the technological world. Unfortunately, the ending was no less choppy than the beginning: it culminated in a chaotic action scene with a vague sense of resolution and then closed with a "classified" type file that explained events from another point of view. With an epilogue to boot, so while I feel satisfied by knowing the events, it's the kind of satisfaction that comes from a debriefing, not from a build-climax-finish.

Writing is smart (see above quotes) with above average vocabulary and plenty of ideas bouncing around and references. I understand this isn't the kind of style where I'll get that artistic word-smithing that makes me sigh in awe. Stross does a decent job of evoking the otherworldly horror, so points for that. It just seemed like the same otherworldly horror, so no chills or anxiety. Really, they are clever works but mostly seem like a smart upgrade of the Robert Asprin I read when I was younger.

So, kudos and all for entertaining me, but really—is this the best they could come up with? Might have well been the 2015 Hugos.

Three and a half ~~snarks~~ stars

John Carter McKnight says

Another good Laundry novel, better in some ways than its predecessor, in others a bit flatter. The core drawback is, to write good satire or good horror, you have to write from inside the system. Stross was spot-on with bureaucratic IT departments and the Lovecraft and Bond mythos. Here he takes on American evangelism, and it falls a bit flat: Stross' knowledge isn't nearly as immediate, and at core, he clearly lacks the visceral reaction that makes for first rate comedy or horror: the British-atheist condescension pulls its fangs.

That said, there are some deeply creepy moments ("quiverfull," shudder), but the book's strengths are in plot and characterization, which rank this among Stross's best. We're introduced to a new, and new sort of agent, an off-the-books intuitive mage, in contrast to Bob's paperclipped computational demonology, and the contrast is fun. The mythos of the Laundry and the larger paranormal operations community is built out convincingly, as the scope of Bob's actions widens.

And, finally, Stross has figured out how to nail an ending: gone is (most of) the abrupt infodump that severed and packaged complex plotlines. Here we're almost brought in for a smooth landing, explanations are organic and tantalizingly open, and the coda is absolutely hilarious, leaving me wishing I could start the next volume right now.

I just hope that Stross chooses a subject next time out that *he* finds truly horrifying.

Andrew says

Bob Howard goes forth.

This series has turned a corner and become more serious, with this volume. Or the author has decided to take it more seriously. I don't mean it's stopped being funny; it's still Bob's irate-nerd edge-of-over-clever voice narrating, and that still turns the pages nicely. Nor do I refer to the escalation of the story arc, which is indeed escalating (The Stars Are Right, more or less now, as of this volume).

No, I mean that the early volumes were *gonzo* horror, starting with Nazis From Space, more or less literally. The set pieces were genuinely spooky, but shallowly so; monsters and mind-invading demons from beyond space and time.

This time, the on-stage threat is an American televangelist. There are of course monsters and mind-invading demons lurking behind the plot curtains -- but the televangelist and his thoroughly-human brand of evil grounds the story, in a way that I don't think previous volumes managed. We start to see what occult threats mean to civilians, to *us*; not as a hypothetical future catastrophe, not as cinematic heroes-vs-goons bloodbath, but in lives ruined and destroyed.

(Well, I should say, as that *and* the looming planetary catastrophe *and* the cinematic fight scenes. Each at appropriate times in the story.)

Also: the author has some words for American fundamentalism. He's not saying that the real-life Christian megachurches want to summon Cthulhu and destroy civilization... but Lovecraftian horror is big on religious

cults, and Stross isn't shy about pointing out how close some *popular* religious movements are to cult-land. The repressive, controlling, (...sexist, anti-intellectual, power-hungry, self-righteous...) elements of the religious right are the explicit villain here. The monsters, to some degree, are just reification.

(Just last month I was reading -- thank you, Fred Clark -- about the five points of Calvinist theology. But it had *not* occurred to me that if you start with a classic Lovecraftian cult story, all over people going hopelessly insane and corrupt bloodlines coming out to overwhelm them... well, those five points wouldn't seem even a little bit out of place, would they? No, they wouldn't. Thank you, Charlie.)

I don't want to give the impression that this is a Message Book. It's the same thriller ride it's always been, with plots and horrors and spies and stuff. I'm saying that the tone-tension used to be between cosmic horror and petty bureaucracy. But the petty bureaucracy is slowly revealing itself as the high-stakes game-playing of serious espionage; the tension is now between cosmic horror and real-life horror. I don't know if Stross intended this curveball from the beginning (I doubt it, really); but I like it.

Tjic says

Charlie Stross was one of my favorite science fiction authors a while back - Iron Sunrise, the first few books in the Laundry Files universe, and more.

I'm not sure if his style is changing or if my preferences are, but recently I've been less and less able to tolerate his writing. It strikes me as smug, self-righteous, and very VERY pleased with itself. The less clever he's actually being, the more self-regard his fiction seems to exude.

I'd pre-ordered this book months ago, and it arrived yesterday on release date.

I forced myself to read to page 100 before giving up on the novel and throwing it on the "donate to library" pile.

I know from his blog that Stross is active in attendance at science fiction conventions, and I've got a theory that the first habit that bugs me (more on this in a moment) comes from that. He seems to think that in-jokes and witt-less witicisms are the soul of cleverness. This is now the second - third? - novel in which his characters use the oh-so au-courant [for 2009] phrase "Jesus Phone" to refer to iPhones. He re-uses and re-uses and re-uses science-fiction nerd-dom catch phrases [example dialogue: "any sufficiently advanced lingerie is indistinguishable from a weapon"] that are intended to be funny, but fall utterly flat. In a single word, the nerd-to-nerd dialogue is embarrassing, and it's embarrassing on two different levels: if I worked with a self-described nerd who thought he was being clever issuing the lines that Stross' characters deploy with regularity, I'd cringe for his or her sake. ...and given that this is not actual dialogue, but written fictional dialogue that rings so false and so flat, I cringe for Stross' sake.

The final thing that made me realize that this is not a novel to be tossed aside lightly [see the Dorothy Parker quote for the rest of that thought] is the self-righteous smug condemnation he, through his characters, hands out to all of the mouth-breathing evil Jesus freaks from the snake handling continent of North America.

Stross' unconstrained hostility to Christianity is normally present in his blog, but it usually doesn't impact his fiction ... but in this book it's hard to go a page without being hit over the head with Stross' opinions being

mouthpieced through either the characters or the plot. The villain is a cartoonish two dimensional televangelist (a totally up-to-the-minute target of hate...if this was 1982 and the 700 Club was on the air) of a TV megachurch. The preacher is a horrible man, engaging in gluttony and lust towards his daughter. Because he is a sexual pervert [I think, having read only to page 100] he's castrated himself...but none-the-less he forces his daughter to mortify his flesh, as holy punishment, which involves something unspecified off in the direction of painful oral sex.

All of Stross' sympathetic characters roll their eyes in all the right places, and violently agree with each other on how evil and stupid those who don't share their sophisticated opinions are. At one point a teacher notes approvingly the de-Christianization of England (in that there are Hindus, Muslims, etc. in her class) but mention her big problem with the religious: fanatic parents - not Muslims, mind you, but Christians - take their children out of religion class. There can be no explanation for this other than the one presented - the small minded Christian parents are afraid that their children learn FACTS.

It is during this same coversation that one of the good left-wing anti-Christian characters that we are meant to identify with "sips his wine thoughtfully" in the between explaining that Christians are fanatics and, after the sip, explaining that Christians are fanatics.

Moving off of the utterly arrogant and snide tone to a new topic of critique: one of Stross' pitfalls as a writer is that he often throws a barrage of word-salad at the reader in - I believe - an attempt to come off as more knowledgeable than I suspect he actually is. In some of his science fiction the phrase "time-like curves" appears far more often than is defensible, and the context fails to provide any example that Stross actually knows what he's talking about. In this, his horror fiction, it's a barrage of theological terms. "Dispensationalism" gets used as if it's just a synonym for "fundamentalist", "prosperity theology" gets used in a similar way. The "quiverful" movement of some Christian religions teaching that large families are good is denounced as a plot because the people who adopt such opinions are seeking to either indoctrinate their children or use them for unwholesome purposes.

Despite the fact that most of the oxes that Stross is goring are not my own, I finally got SO annoyed at how he stacked the deck so strongly against his ideological enemies, so that every character sympathetic to his own point of view is wise, patient, sophisticated and urbane, and every character with the other opinions is a snake-handling con-man, I couldn't even stay with the book up to the point where - I presume - the fairly entertaining Chtulian plot begins.

It's a shame - Stross used to be a good writer.

Like Heinlein in his late period, though, writing good fiction and entertaining the reader now takes a backseat to the author's own tired rants.

Matt says

Stross continues to churn out nerd flavored popcorn, but its beginning to taste a bit stale. When a work becomes this long, it either has to grow or become stagnant. So far the work isn't maturing.

On the good side, Stross does for the most part manage to actually give this story an exciting and not anticlimactic ending. And Stross's RPG sensibilities, and the intersection of information technology, secret services, with Cthulhu Mythos continues to charm on a basic level. I just wish the stories still felt like they

belonged in the Cthulhu Mythos. Stross is bordering on committing travesties on par with Brian Lumley attempting to insert benevolent deities in to the canon, though obviously this would be far from Stross's own instincts.

In this adventure, our fearless IT professional/computational demonologist/Her Majesty's Secret Servant is once again involved in trying to stop a plot organized by the mind of the thing slumbering in the Black Pyramid on the Leng Plateau. This time the mind has hijacked a darkly comical band of evangelicals from America, who in the name of the false Christ proceed to act out various nightmare scenarios on the poor benighted populace of Colorado. Once again we have all sorts of geek name dropping, so that with a little research you could probably figure out the specific articles and blogs Stross has been reading over the last year. But all that techno-babble – even if it is real world technobabble – more and more feels like dull exposition that we really should have been over with by now. Even more so, the story is departing further and further from its Delta Green roots, and with it from its Lovecraftian roots. The story is becoming noticeably less dark and less like a horror story, and more and more like a comic book or superhero caper with a bit of non-comic book code approved violence and adult themes. Stross is mainstreaming his story, but in the process he's losing the numinous horror that makes a Lovecraftian story work.

One of the rules of a Lovecraftian story is that the human mind simply can't handle the universe. The more knowledge you gain, the less stable you become. Humanity has no choice but sheltering in helpless ignorance. Lovecraftian heroes are doomed. They may save the world, but always at the cost of themselves. Bob however is increasingly sane and resilient. Faced with cosmic horrors beyond imagination, Bob is unflinching and increasingly treats his horrorshow world as normal, relatable, and even controllable. The unknowable fear becomes known. Ultimately, the high point of the series was way back in the Atrocity archives, with the young Bob running like heck to escape from a monster that threatens to eat the entire universe. The human villain of the Apocalypse Codex by contrast is a laughable sad trope TV Evangelist with a Guy Smiley grin, who never quite manages to get past chewing up the scenery and for me never got passed the really bad image on the cover.

Far from being a horror story, the novels are beginning to boil down to geek wish fulfillment. There is a lot of having your cake and eating it going on here. It's not enough to impose your will on the cyberspace universe, wouldn't it be great if you could hack and program the real world too? Bob is devotedly married to a hot loving wife, but he keeps being forced – forced mind you – into these situations where he has to be intimate with some hot geek spy. She even had to full tongue kiss him, entirely for his own good and against his will naturally. There is lip service given to doom and gloom about the future, but not the real existential fear of it. Bob is not even faced with as much doom and gloom as your average civil service zombie, or corporate code monkey in a cubical farm for crying out loud. Nothing threatens to overturn or undermine Bob's basic belief systems. There are no hard choices. His hands can stay clean of the blood of innocents – and even for the most part enemies - even in the middle of a potential megadeath event with the existence of humanity on the line and everyone out to kill him while working for an agency run by Lovecraftian sorcerers. There is no life of meaningless drudgery. Life has a purpose – even if it is only fighting back the alien horrors from the dungeon dimensions (that now even get to have some dialogue). In villains, it is increasingly less Nyarthalotep and more Dr. Doom. The sidekicks have more to do with Modesty Blaise than Robert Olmstead or Henry Armitage. Bob has to deal with the fact that he sorta kinda has to give up his atheism, but not in any way that causes him real pain or difficulty. Rather, Bob gets to give up the religion he doesn't want in an exchange for a life filled with meaning and purpose that he does want.

It's all so far from the weighty consciousness burning all consuming horror that is found in the originals. Everyone gets their action hero shining moments of awesome, including now our affable put upon IT nerd. Indeed, it's hard not to believe that the writer is having so much fun that he is deliberately taking steps to

distance himself from all of that horror stuff. The only problem with all of that is that it makes the series far less original and far from introspective. Where Lovecraft was channeling everything from his fear of miscegenation to a phobia of fish, Stross is channeling what? Fear of Americans and organized religion? You think he could do better than that. Bertrand Russell channels Lovecraft most potently when writes, "Brief and powerless is Man's life; on him and all his race the slow, sure doom falls pitiless and dark. Blind to good and evil, reckless of destruction, omnipotent matter rolls on its relentless way." Now that is someone channeling the fear of mankind in the face of the faceless Azathoth. Stross is more and more just channeling his geek cred.

Bradley says

Re-Read with buddies! 4/27/18

A more sober read of this novel has made me realize something: I love this shit. Like, hands-down LOVE it. :)

Mahogany Row, the track for upper management, Bob's predilection for honesty and loyalty, even the enormous tongue-in-cheek bashing of American Religious Behavior. It's all fun, funny, and gloriously genre-mashed. I could read this stuff forever.

And the way things are going, I might keep re-reading these books for just that reason. I may never get tired of them. So much wry humor, so many Lovecraftian horrors, so much excellent plotting. What's not to love?

Original Review:

And whatever god you choose to believe in have mercy on your soul, indeed! I've been loving these books from the start, and while it took me a little time to get into yet another spy-fiction style since Mr. Stross has consciously been imitating the greats up till now, I did indeed get into it. In a few ways, it's even greater than some of the previous Laundry files.

Fascinating character developments for Howard. I think I like the new standard characters as well. I can't wait for a new novel!

Viva la gibbering horrors!

Wanda says

*****2018 Summer of Spies*****

Anyone who's been sent on a management training opportunity and gone to it against their better judgement will be able to relate to Bob Howard's predicament in this installment of *The Laundry Files*. Especially since he's sent on a mission to America to accompany two "external assets" who don't really want his "management."

It turns out that's not really why Bob was sent along—his previous experience and partial transformation into an Eater of Souls turns out to be just the thing to get all three of the agents out of the soup. In the meantime, there is witty dialog about things like the “coffee speak” one must use at Starbucks and the nature of occult tools (a pigeon foot for use as a Hand of Glory, for example). There are also wonderful brain parasites which reminded me strongly of the Ceti Eels used in the *Star Trek : The Wrath of Khan* movie.

A great combination of the spy and urban fantasy genres.

Wing Kee says

Praise the Lord for he has awoken!

World: The world building is fantastic. This is one of the best thing in Stross' books his nonchalance in world building. It's a conversation and a remark and not info dumping which I like. The tone of the world is set beautifully by Howard and his point of view, it's great. The pieces of the world we see this time around is fun, it's very contained but a trip to the USA is always fun. That being said there is not enough Americana in it to really set it apart from any other locale, but oh well, minor irk.

Story: The story is great, it's small, it's self contained but the greater story of Bob and his career is also explored. I love it when books like these take on televangelist head on and a UK perspective was fun. I don't really have much to say about this story, it's expected, it's fits the world and for a forth book readers know what they are getting into. It's dry and fun, it's ridiculous and very British, I like it.

Characters: Bob is always great, his sense of humor and personality really sets the tone for the book. It's dry, it's matter of fact and when you pair that with the Lovecraftian and computer nature of the world and story it gives a very different and unique tone to a cosmic horror book. The rest of the characters are just as interesting. I don't want to spoil them but they are both cliched but also a little bit different from the genre giving us interesting and fun characters to get to know, the villain especially.

I liked it, it's what I expected and what I wanted, this is safely in the comfort zone of this series.

Onward to the next book!

? Irena ? says

0.5

Well, at least I enjoyed the first three books. I won't bother writing too much about it. I did not enjoy this book.

From the jumps from one character to another to constant repetitions of past events and some other things (which I'll mark in my private notes so as not to forget the whys), it came close to cause a huge book slump.

I'll remove the rest of the series from my to-read list for now.

Will says

Poor Bob. He just keeps getting in the shit.

This book's a little rushed, and there are some segments which it would have been impossible for Bob to know about from his perspective. The new characters are flat (Persephone Hazard isn't so much Tara Chase as Catwoman) and the introduction ("Sketchy Preacher comes to Downing Street") turns out to have very little to do with the main plot. And Moe barely gets an appearance, which is a pity.

Which is the major failing of this book; there's no Laundry. No senseless bureaucracy, no rules, no red-tape. No middle management. No zombie librarians or memex machines. Even the Auditors have been turned into something human and likable.

However, Bob is showing decent signs of plot development, if only because his long suffering IT support guy mask is wearing thin, and he's starting to realize that far from depending on the Laundry for backup, the Laundry is increasingly depending on him to save them. And the existential horror of the Old Ones pales beside Bob's slow realization of his minor personal problem.

EDIT: After further review, it's clear that Persephone Hazard is a stand-in for Modesty Blaise. Big mistake; I don't think she mixes well with the Laundryverse at all.
