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The Apocalypse Codex (Laundry Files Book 4)



Synopsis

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.

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Customer Reviews

Even when this book is easily the worst in the series, it is still a great book. If you have been following my reviews on this series, you know I prefer the times when Stross is making satire or spoofing workplaces. The second book, Jennifer Morgue, wasn't as good because it was just a typical action book with a great protagonist. This book returns to the template of Jennifer Morgue. There is just action in this book and effectively only a nod to his asinine workplace. Actually, as I write this I'm more and more frustrated with The Apocalypse Codex. I enjoyed it, but there were just so many dull parts. The first book was 100% first person following Bob. After that, multiple perspectives have been creeping in, and they reached a peak in this novel. The Bob parts are an oasis in a vast desert that spanned the spectrum from boring and pointless to frustrating and insulting. So a solid quarter or so of the book I zoned out on. Humor is still here, I laughed a good amount and looked forward to continuing the book when I had put it down. As such, I recommend you continue this series, especially since the next one is supposed to return it to its glory. The series as a whole is still an easy recommend to anyone, but frankly this book is a very low 4 stars.

Another fun addition to the Laundry series. We get to follow Bob as he takes the next (unwitting) step up what passes for a promotion ladder at the Laundry, with a lot of sinister twists, of course, and not without serious sacrifices -- literal, metaphorical, and material ;-). Stross is a very good storyteller: simple prose, wielded to good effect, with an excellent sense of rhythm -- he is a master at slowing things way down to increase the sense of impending doom, build a really good description of the peripheral setting for a scene, and then ripping the curtain off and revealing the scene itself to be another gorgeous mix of Lovecraft, Bosch, and English police procedural... Highly recommended, but best enjoyed after reading the previous Laundry novels, as much of this novel, from the very beginning, relies on the established nature of personalities and relationships established in previous novels.

Although Cody Goodfellow's Radiant Dawn / Ravenous Dusk books are more hands-on, contemporary Mythos novels, still can't get enough of The Laundry Files. This entry follows a great story and did a lot of character development pertaining to Howard's leadership abilities. Howard always reminded me a bit of Mr Bean (Rowan Atkins) because of his bumbling wit, resourcefulness and stoic British calmness in the face of mind obliterating doom. After this novel, he has been upgraded from a computer geek with some cool tech to more of a Johnny English (still Rowan Atkins) with Necroscope capabilities. Nice upgrade but does change the overall flavor a bit. Living in Denver also made this an interesting read as a good portion of the action takes place within a few

miles of Denver. Guess that it is poetic license when some of the cross streets do not exist... Be prepared for Bob's new career path; but, there is no skimping on the Mythos conspiracies.

Here we are back in the Laundry. Everything is fine, and it feels like the series is into a solid middle. If you are interested in these books, start at the beginning. For those who are just wondering, is this series any good? My ranking should make my opinion obvious enough. This is such a fun genre, and Stross has it mastered. Others have done modern Cthulhu, but Stross does it best. His mix of computer tech and eldritch signs is perfect. It never feels like cheesy spellpunk. The frozen alternate world destroyed by nazi-summoned eldritch horrors remains one of my all-time favourite moments, but here we revisit Stross' favourite, the pyramid of the sleeper. It doesn't take a genius to see that we'll be seeing more of that enigmatic sleeper later. I can't wait. The mix of Harry Palmer style spy thriller and Lovecraftian horror is just right. This one also has some witchy-poo-stuff, but it's alright, it turns out not to be bad (I feared it might). It will be interesting to see where things are headed with those characters in the future, but after Rhesus Chart it seems likely we'll be seeing them again, with Bob on a more even footing.

The Laundry novels are a series of engaging riffs on the various espionage genres of the 20th century, when they collide with the Cthulhu mythos. The first "The Atrocity Archive" introduced us to the main POV character Bob Howard, (not his real name), in a British Civil service department that Callan or Robert Ludlum characters (or Dilbert) could recognise, (grimy, replete with endless paperwork, boring meetings, ISO9000 compliance, budget discussions) though the opponents would leave their brains dribbling out their ears. "The Jennifer Morgue" used James Bond as the jump-off point, "The Fuller Memorandum" was a mole hunt of the sort John leCarre did so well. "The Apocalypse Codex" puts Bob into the world of Peter O'Donnell's Modesty Blaize (a nicely judged agent designator 'Bashful Incendiary', Stross has a great sense of humour). We learn a bit more about the American opposite numbers, the Black Chamber (in theory they are on our side). By the end of the story, Bob has also learned rather more about his own organisation than he'd previously suspected. The whole Laundry series does a wonderful job of integrating real history, spy novels and Lovecraftian menace into real page turners.

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