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The Rhesus Chart (Laundry Files Book 5)



Synopsis

The Hugo Award-winning author of *The Delirium Brief* reveals the secrets of *The Laundry Files* in an adventure of Lovecraftian horror and espionage hi-jinks...As a newly appointed junior manager within the Laundry—the clandestine organization responsible for protecting Britain against supernatural threats—Bob Howard is expected to show some initiative to help the agency battle the forces of darkness. But shining a light on what's best left in the shadows is the last thing Bob wants to do—especially when those shadows hide an occult parasite spreading a deadly virus. Traders employed by a merchant bank in London are showing signs of infection—an array of unusual symptoms such as super-strength and -speed, an uncanny talent for mind control, an extreme allergic reaction to sunlight, and an unquenchable thirst for blood. While his department is tangled up in bureaucratic red tape (and *Buffy* reruns) debating how to stop the rash of vampirism, Bob digs deeper into the bank's history—only to uncover a blood-curdling conspiracy between men and monsters...

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Customer Reviews

THE RHESUS CHART, the fifth LAUNDRY FILES novel by Charlie Stross maintains the same sense of Lovecraftian horror and spookiness, coupled with extremely tongue-in cheek, computer-physics geek insider laugh-out-loud humor and excellent pacing and writing that characterizes all the previous LAUNDRY novels and short stories and novellas. It's a winner. Somehow I missed it when it first came out last July, but I found it 3 days ago and just finished it and ordered the next one, THE ANNIHILATION SCORE due to be published July 7, 2015. In the RHESUS CHART, we find our intrepid computational demonologist and apprentice (to Angleton) soul-eater once again hip deep in Laundry bureaucracy and mindless paperwork when he stumbles on an outbreak of Krantzberg Syndrome, a sort of Mad Cow Disease that affects certain practitioners of the secret arts that are the bread and butter of the Laundry. Things go from bad to much worse pretty quickly and before you can say "Bob's your uncle", Bob and the rest of the Laundry are in bed with computationally induced vampires. And then the fun really starts. Bob has come a long way since THE ATROCITY ARCHIVES and is now Angleton's (the 102 year old body that has for the past 80 years been inhabited by a who-knows-how-old soul eater from beyond space and time who has elected to throw his (its?) lot in with humanity and the Laundry) apprentice and is on the fast track to becoming one of the most powerful computational field agents in the Laundry. So no surprise that he is front and center in this latest catastrophe that, while not involving the end of the world as we know it, is still an interesting mystery as to what is actually happening, who is behind it and why. There are two huge twists at the end that will have every Laundry fan, including me, hooked for the next one and waiting with bated breath. Bring it on Charlie! Highly Recommended. JM Tepper

The latest Laundry Files novel takes Bob Howard into the world of vampires — even though it's common knowledge among the agents at the Laundry that vampires can't exist. While it's true that vampires à la Stoker can't, people with very similar characteristics in most ways can indeed exist, and in fact have existed for a long time. I won't go into the details, but the fact is that they've been infiltrated into the Laundry from early days, and Bob and some of his closer allies have the dubious honor of being assigned to root them out. And the book is the usual blend of horror and wry humor; these are my favorites of the Stross books.

Probably my favorite aspect of the Laundry series, as told through the eyes of Bob Howard, is that even as the sequels pile up and he deals with one looming catastrophe after another, he remains

(for the most part) the lovable character that we got to know way back in the Atrocity Archives. Despite having matured into an accomplished necromancer, even the fairly routine dangers never fail to worry him. Even though he's been a part of this cadre of thaumaturgic spies for a decade now, he's no James Bond; he's a little better trained than before, but that only serves to elucidate his limits. And despite the horrors he's witnessed, Stross has done an excellent job of not turning our paperwork-addled protagonist into a superhero, which serves to always enhance the stakes for the reader. It's a refreshing change from most long series' main characters, and makes for an enjoyable read. The Rhesus Chart captures a slightly different tone than the previous novels - I still can't put my finger on it, but despite it being a self-contained story, it feels like the first part of an arc, which may be the case. The conflict at hand is a newly-converted nest of vampires, and it's enjoyable to see Stross' horrors-from-beyond-spacetime version turn most typical vampire-legend tropes on their head. It starts off with "there's no such thing as vampires", which inevitably is proven false, but once the nest is exposed, the real danger turns out to be what's behind most people's insistence that vampires don't exist. And of course, it's not only the public that's in danger, but the Laundry itself. As usual in a story about spies, even when you think you're a step ahead of the narrator, you're probably a step behind the story. The only complaint I have is that his wife's character seemed only to show up to remind us she was still there. If you've enjoyed the series so far, this one's a solid entry.

I suppose there had to be a vampire story in the Laundry series somewhere, and here it is. Maybe we're supposed to feel this is topical stuff due to the last few years of vampire overload. The problem is that the last few years have been vampire overload. There's nothing wrong with the story here, it's just that it sits in that context where it's almost impossible to do anything with vampires in it without thinking of the four hundred other ways they've been done. While there's a tongue in cheek reference to Necroscope here, there isn't any of that atmosphere, and it's in that respect that the story isn't quite as good as some of the others. The ending is strong, but I often thought the story was about to lose its way. It didn't lose its way, but I found myself worrying about it. The Laundry series is at a point where the reader is just too invested in it, and with each new book there's everything to lose and not so much to gain. There are some changes for Bob in this book that suggest a fresh new phase is coming in the next Laundry book, but this one marks the end of something, and that's a little unsettling for the reader, and not in a scary horror story way. I had genuine fears that Bob's character would be undermined or take some self-contradictory suspension of disbelief-destroying turn here. I don't think I should have been worrying about that,

and so there is something a little off in the writing. I should have been worrying about events in the story, not whether the story was consistent. For this reason, I've not given this my usual Stross-love-in five stars. The end is great, but the first three-quarters gave me some doubts.

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