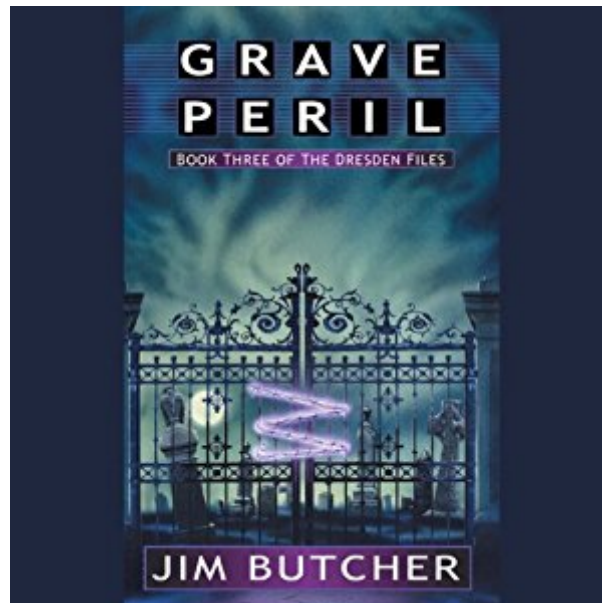


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Grave Peril: The Dresden Files, Book 3



Synopsis

In all his years of supernatural sleuthing, Harry Dresden has never faced anything like this: the spirit world's gone postal. These ghosts are tormented, violent, and deadly. Someone-or something-is purposely stirring them up to wreak unearthly havoc. But why? If Harry doesn't figure it out soon, he could wind up a ghost himself. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

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Customer Reviews

The book starts right in the middle of the action as Harry Dresden and a Knight of the Cross named Michael Carpenter are in pursuit of dangerous ghost that is loose in a Chicago hospital. It seems that the city has been suffering a significant increase in spectral activity as of late and Harry and Michael have few clues as to what is going on. The pursuit of this particular ghost requires them to cross over temporarily into the magical realm of the Never Never, and there we discover that Harry has been evading his godmother Leanansidhe, given he has broken a promise to her. But this creature of faerie isn't their primary concern. Around the same time, Harry receives a formal invitation from the Red Court of the Vampires. Harry knows this is potentially a trap, but he also has an obligation to represent the White Council in this matter. Harry defers from making an immediate decision on the matter, although his reporter girlfriend Susan is pretty eager to attend given the stories she could gather while there. Things take a turn for the worse when Harry is attacked through his dreams, thus diminishing his powers just when he needs them most. This story reveals an interesting tidbit about Harry Dresden's past - the fact that he literally has a faerie godmother,

plus one he owes a promise. And if you know your traditional lore related to the Fair Folk and how much importance they put in promises. So this was a serious little reveal indeed and one that had some really bad prospects for Harry. Michael Carpenter is a really interesting character and he really shines in this book. Sure, Harry seems to imply that his power is derived more from his belief in this Holy mission without making any sort of determination related to how real or not his divine power might be. Somehow the strength of his belief alone is capable of great feats, but admittedly Michael's character is enough to make you believe that someone must be helping him out when he prays. And all this makes for quite the compelling character. The vampire politics got messy really quickly, and I suppose that's largely intentional. We're talking about immortal supernatural creatures who have established a strange hierarchy of their own and this something that can interact with the Wizard's White Council. The book largely tells us that these factions exist and stress this a lot, but true details are a little scarce at this point. This isn't a bad thing - Butcher has clearly established that he likes to tease such tidbits here and there and saves the bigger reveals for later in the book series. Patience for now. A large part of the story focuses initially on the whole ghost aspect to the story with occasional vampire interludes here and there. And we've seen this narrative format before - how Harry always seems to juggle a minor case alongside the main one. In time the two story arcs are bound to come together, typically closer to the end. And that certainly happened. I think I miss Harry Dresden being totally awesome given his magical abilities. He's been pretty crippled in recent books due to exhaustion and this time due to the ghost attack on his dream self. I understand the value of telling the story from this perspective and Harry makes for quite the underdog, but it is getting a little tiring. I think we can trust fully powered Harry - he understands the value of restraint and so we shouldn't be afraid of him being ridiculously powerful or something. And I just want to see how far he can go. On the whole, Grave Peril is an interesting exploration of the spiritual realm of the Harry Dresden fictional universe and a good demonstration of just how much he can get done even largely without his powers. There are some major shifts to his status quo, but then I think every book in the series has made sure to shake things up as Harry's world is always in flux.

After book two, I hesitated to read any more. It's not that I didn't like the second book so much as it just didn't feel all that exciting. A friend of mine convinced me to get this third book and I'm glad I did. One of the things I really wanted to start seeing in the first two books was some sort of evolution of Harry as a wizard. I wanted to see some display of his self-proclaimed greatness. I didn't feel like I got that in the first two books. But I definitely did in this book. In this book you see Harry evolve as a human being and you see the raw power of his fury unleashed. I'm intrigued to see how Harry

evolves and improves in book four.

Harry's back, and true to form, he manages to get himself in loads of trouble. I've enjoyed every book in this series, but upon going back and rereading, I'm seeing how much improvement there is in the writing of each book. I love Butcher's characters and book 3 gives us a couple more to enjoy, Knight of the Cross, Michael and White Court Vampire, Thomas. While Harry's trying to figure out the Nightmare and how to stop it, he also has to contend with the Red Court and Bianca. As usual, he has his hands full and gets into more trouble saving damsels in distress. It's hard to pick a favorite in this series, but Grave Peril is among the top on my list.

For me, this is where the Dresden Files novels really start to pick up. I think this -- of the four I've read so far -- had the best climax, and we also started to see some better character development over previous novels in the series. We get a few more supernatural elements introduced in this volume; while we've seen vampires before, we get a look at their internal politics here. We also see the introduction of faith or religious magic/power in the character of Michael, Harry's sidekick for most of this book. We encounter ghosts. And, we interact with Harry's godmother, the fae Lea, extensively. It bordered on information overload at times, and I don't necessarily feel that I got the best understanding of the faery realm, but have patience, because that will be remedied in book four. I do find myself wanting to see Lea come back because I am curious about her relationship with Harry's mother, so I'm fine with putting up with her idiosyncrasies for now. I'm not necessarily thrilled with the non-linearity of the storyline in this book. Early on, a lot of references are made to a past battle between a demon and Harry/his allies (including some cops and Michael). At first, I wondered if I'd mistakenly opened book four of the Dresden Files instead of book 3; there was definitely missing background information. On the plus side, you're able to get up to speed with Michael's story pretty quickly, and it may be that the author didn't feel he had enough material for an entire novel leading up to the demon battle. In which case he made exactly the right decision, to start this book with something exciting that introduces the new character (i.e., Michael) and gives some hints as to what will come. There's not a lot I can say about the setting or writing style that hasn't already been said. I think the first-person POV is particularly important here, because we're finally seeing more emotions from Harry, not just action, and we can really get inside his head. This improvement in characterization is a welcome change. Chicago is still Chicago, although a lot of this book takes place in rather otherworldly locations (the "Nevernever," which is actually not in this world, and vampire Bianca's home which is in Chicago but which has so many supernatural visitors

it might as well be somewhere else). I like that not a lot of time is wasted on description of Bianca's place, with the exception of features that will figure prominently later on. Reporter Susan Rodriguez and police officer Karrin Murphy are back, although Murphy doesn't figure as prominently as she has in some of the other books. Harry and Susan are an item now, although I could never quite shake the feeling that they wouldn't be together if they weren't in their respective lines of work (Harry being a wizard detective and Susan working at a paranormal, tabloid-type newspaper). I suppose there had to be some shared connection to draw them to one another. I'm honestly a little indifferent to both Karrin and Susan at this point. Perhaps because I read the first three books in this series in a week or two, I don't have much of a sense (in my head) of time passing, so the relationship between Harry and Susan seems rushed. However, I probably wouldn't feel that way if I'd read these when they were first published, with months or years between books. Considering the fact that there are numerous other volumes in this series, we know from the beginning that Harry Dresden is going to make it out alive. That being said, I still worried about him during the final confrontation, and I definitely think there were serious consequences to his actions -- he felt a great deal of guilt, even though he didn't perceive himself as having a lot of choice in the matter. (His reaction to these consequences spills over to the fourth book.) It was really the events of this book that made me start to relate to Harry a lot more; it was this book where the character development picked up. That was one thing that made me like this book a little better than the previous two. I'm of two minds on a second aspect of this book that seemed different to me compared to the previous volumes. Harry displays a huge amount of power near the end of this book. On the one hand, it seems a little too convenient. On the other hand, a foundation was laid in the story for Dresden to get back some power he had lost, and he was in peril at the end. One thing we've learned from past books is that extremes of emotion can be sources of energy for magical workings. And Harry's situation near the end of the book was, indeed, dire, which would logically lead to extreme emotions. I liked that events of the previous two books (the sorcerer and the drug he was making, as well as the werewolves) were mentioned in the context of something larger. Something was hinted at that I think will become more apparent and important in future books. I think the slow build-up is pretty good; after all, it's a long series. Enough of this book is taken up by characterization and connecting to a larger story arc that it's almost easy to forget that this book includes a self-contained story, as well. At the beginning of the book, malicious ghosts are terrorizing the city (including a hospital nursery), and the dreams of certain characters are haunted by a demon called a Nightmare. This, too, is resolved, and there is a mystery aspect to it as there was in previous volumes, although, by the end of the book, this kind of takes a back seat to worries about impending future

events. In the end, there was a lot going on in this book, but I really feel like we're starting to get somewhere. We get inside Harry's head a little more, we learn a little bit about his past, we're able to connect past events to an overall story arc, and there was a good deal of action. I think Butcher started to find his voice with this novel and I see a marked improvement in quality. Looking forward to reading more in this series.

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