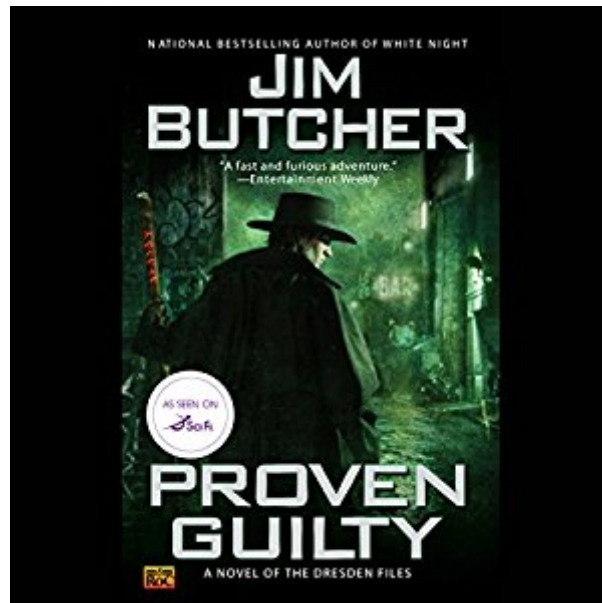




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Proven Guilty: The Dresden Files, Book 8



Synopsis

Unabridged CDs ? 13 CDs, 16 hours
The White Council of Wizards has drafted Harry Dresden as a Warden and assigned him to look into rumors of black magic in Chicago. Malevolent entities that feed on fear are loose in the Windy City, but it's all in a day's work for a wizard, his faithful dog, and a talking skull named Bob.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I finished the Dresden Files books I got on promo and so now I'm working my way through the rest (at regular price). I'd be hard pressed to say anything too negative about the series because I've been enjoying it a lot. But here are my thoughts, a few days after finishing the latest installment. This book opens with an execution -- of a teenager who'd stumbled into his magical abilities (without proper supervision) and used them to control the minds of others. Despite the severity of the teen's crimes, Harry is upset by the punishment. He can see a bit of himself in the executed boy, I think. And his reaction to this scene will affect his actions throughout the rest of the book. Once again, I'd say this is NOT the place to start the series. While there is (as with previous books), a self-contained mystery, there are many, many events depicted that relate to the overall series arc of war between vampires and wizards, and quite a few recurring characters make appearances (Maeve, Lily, Fix, Charity, Michael, Molly, Murphy, Father Forthill, Lloyd Slate, Thomas, Lasciel, Morgan, Mouse, Mister, Bob the Skull, and several members of the wizards' White Council, just to name a few) and others are referenced (Butters, Kincaid, Nicodemus, the Archive, Billy the

werewolf, etc.). Some of these characters get brief re-introductions, but you'd be missing out on a lot of depth by only relying on those introductions (as opposed to reading all the background material from previous books). Even a building (from Fool Moon) is re-used. (If it's been awhile since you've read the earlier ones, try the Wikipedia summaries. They're usually enough to jog my memory. And there are character lists floating around online, too, if you forget who someone is.) The mystery in this volume is introduced early on -- Harry gets a message that there have been incidents of black magic in town and, acting in his capacity as Warden, he should investigate them and figure out what is going on. Further, attendees at a horror convention are being attacked in a violent and gruesome manner and Molly (Michael's and Charity's oldest daughter) asks Harry to help solve those crimes, as well. Once again, Harry has to accept help from others. At various points, Detective Rawlins of the Chicago police department assists him. Murphy, Charity, and Thomas accompany Harry on a particularly dangerous mission. It's not surprising that Murphy and Thomas go along and are prepared to do battle -- they've helped Harry before. But we learn a lot about Charity in this book. I like the trend of meeting a character in a previous book and then learning more about him or her later on. For example, in the last book, it was Butters. This time, it's Charity. We begin to understand her animosity towards Harry (exhibited in previous volumes) and we learn some important information about her past. But everything flows logically. We've gotten hints that she was capable before, but now we see her in action. I hadn't cared a lot for her before (she seemed to be mean with no reason), but now it all makes sense, and I've got a lot more sympathy for her as a character. Harry's driven to protect Michael's family, and his experience at the beginning of this book has an impact on him, throughout, as well. He also still struggles with Lasciel, but sometimes accepts her help -- grudgingly. His relationship with Lasciel is rather like his relationship with John Marcone, especially in the earliest books in the series -- frequent refusals to associate followed by teaming up out of necessity/self-preservation. Harry doesn't grow as a character so much in this book, but it's difficult to show development of a character in EVERY book in a long series, when it's a first-person POV sort of series as this one is. He still has something of a hero complex, but I've often found that first-person POV characters come off like this; it's not unique to these books. As with past books, a new supernatural element is introduced -- the phobophage, a species from the Nevernever that feeds on fear. It fits in well with the self-contained mystery aspect while also expanding our view of the world Jim Butcher has created. I don't know if we'll see these guys again (would be a bit repetitive for them to reappear). The characteristic humor is present, once again. There are some of the standard one-liners, but there's situational humor, as well. In one (very early) scene, Harry is preparing for a ritual. He's bathed, he's meditated, he's gotten his mind just

right -- and he's taken two hours to do it. Then the telephone rings and all his preparations are wasted. I don't have much to say about the setting that I haven't already said in past reviews. All the action is, as usual, in Chicago. It's summer but we're not beaten over the head with that fact. We get little reminders periodically (Harry is wearing shorts, or the air conditioning is blasting in a building). The writing style is similar to what has come before, as well. There's a lot of violence in this one, and some references to teen pregnancy and drug use, as well as some 4-letter words. Not an issue for me, and not surprising considering what we've seen in past books, but I thought I'd throw that information out there for anyone who cared. Overall, I think all the individual elements are brought together into a cohesive whole. I found this to be an enjoyable read. Though the ending was not nearly as fun as the ending of *Dead Beat*, I think this volume marks an important turning point in the series. Looking forward to the next one!

After a bit of hiatus from *The Dresden Files*, I found this book to be a little bit of a letdown. The plot didn't seem as well organized to me as the ones from past books, and the stakes, while high, didn't really surpass those of previous books. *Proven Guilty*, from my point of view, read more like a lead-in to another stage of the series which isn't necessarily bad. I do know what happens in the rest of the series -cough- so I can see how this book might fall into the equation perfectly. It just didn't quite suit my tastes. Didn't quite have what I wanted there wasn't enough "punch" to the plot. It sets up a lot of important relationships though. And the characters, like usual, were all very well characterized. Their personalities were great, they developed, and I particularly liked the exploration of side characters like Charity Carpenter. Butcher seems to have put a lot of time and effort into making much of his cast well-rounded and complex. Which makes for a very enjoyable story overall. Watching characters and relationships develop is one of my favorite parts of reading. I think what I liked most about *Proven Guilty*, though, was how much it hinted at. The reason I felt this book was a bit of a lull is because Butcher used it to foreshadow a lot. And I mean a lot. If you pay attention, the sheer number of things you catch that I know (because I cheat) become relevant later in the series is astounding. This was a book full of complex set-ups, the machinery behind major plot twists that occur in the succeeding installments. I thoroughly enjoyed finding them all. A bit of a fun reading challenge. So, I mean, there was nothing especially "bad" about *Proven Guilty*. There's plenty of action and snark; it builds on the previous books very well and sets the stage for what comes next. I just felt this one was a bit less polished and cohesive than Butcher's usual work.

This book is a tremendous read. It displays all the qualities Jim Butcher's works have: good characterization, great pacing, interesting twists, and great action sequences. Butcher, with this book, turns down the road from fledgling author who can tell a good story to a Veteran author comfortably able to weave a fantastic tale. He is far more confident in this stage of his career. He is comfortable taking risks in his storytelling because he is confident he can deliver the story that will meet his elevated expectations. He invites us into the story and never lets go. Slight Spoilers ahead. Butcher uses this book to really set up the second arc of his vision for the Dresden Files. He is less private eye and more magical protector. He extends himself and really does things that he wasn't able to do in the first several books. This story also sets up the Harry and Molly relationship that will carry on for several more novels. Lots of foreshadowing with Michael as well. Bottom line: it's a great read and I highly recommend it.

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