

home to roost” setup, where Mo has to figure out how to work with both Mhari and Ramona. Poor Bob — for him, it seems like *that* is a terrifying setup for an urban horror novel!

I’m not going to say that Stross is *great* at writing a female character — Mo is no Molly Bloom — but it’s clear Stross worked hard at it, and he’s done, I think, a good job. I get the feeling that he isn’t quite in Mo’s head the way he’s in Bob’s head, but even so, he writes rings around a lot of other genre authors.

If I had to pick one series from the “urban fantasy” genre to keep and the rest to discard, I wouldn’t, because I wouldn’t give up Kat Richardson and Jim Dresden or even Simon Green or Thomas Sniegowski. But the Laundry Files books would definitely remain on my short list. When a new one comes out, I actually hesitate to buy it, because I know I will be pretty much unable to do anything else, neglecting work, family, personal hygiene and nutrition, and everything else, until I’ve finished reading it. So I try to wait until I have a suitable weekend.

This novel is a great addition to the Laundry Files. If this novel had a downside for me, it would be that I miss Bob and his endearing nerdiness. Mo is just not as much of a gadget freak as Bob, and doesn’t rattle on at length about the details of the magic and technology that this world mixes together. She has her own things she’s nerdy about, especially violin and classical music, but I feel like Stross did not know her subjects well enough to write a lot about them. Or maybe he just had to make cuts for length; this is quite a long Laundry novel.

I would be happy to read another Laundry Files novel told from Mo’s perspective. At the end of this novel she’s in the same kind of rough shape that Bob was in, at the end of *The Jennifer Morgue*. But I’ve known Bob for a lot longer. If his success at saving the world, and his new assignment as host to the Eater of Souls, means he has to lose his wife, well — I’ll be very sad for him. Let’s hope it doesn’t come to that. Bob, are you OK?

Can We Get Consistent Covers, Please?

I have one last comment on the book. I understand that when a series changes publishers, the graphic design continuity is often lost. But there has been a nice graphic consistency in the Laundry Files novels, particularly the last three, including some nice typographical consistency. This book discards that continuity for some cover art that does feature a violin case, which is relevant to the story, but is mostly just vague and ugly. I guess it makes sense given that it has a different narrator, but it probably has more to do with Stross’s change of editor at Ace. It’s a shame and a disappointment. Take a look at this cover, and this cover, and this cover. The other current editions for the Laundry Files novel are slightly less consistent in the way they lay out text blocks on the cover, but they have similar artwork and use the same typeface. Now look at the new one. Not only does it not look like it belongs to the same series, but it’s just plain ugly. Ace, what the hell were you thinking?

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