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Paranormal investigations are Harry Dresden's business and Chicago is his beat, as he tries to bring law and order to a world of wizards and monsters that exists alongside everyday life. And though most inhabitants of the Windy City don't believe in magic, the Special Investigations Department of the Chicago PD knows better.

Karrin Murphy is the head of S. I. and Harry's good friend. So when a killer vampire threatens to destroy Murphy's reputation unless Harry does her bidding, he has no choice. The vampire wants the Word of Kemmler (whatever that is) and all the power that comes with it. Now, Harry is in a race against time—and six merciless necromancers—to find the Word before Chicago experiences a Halloween night to wake the dead...

Dead Beat Details

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Author : Jim Butcher

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From Reader Review Dead Beat for online ebook

Carol. says

The one where it really starts to get good. Has several priceless scenes, especially in the last third, that had me re-reading this book. Best dinosaur scene ever.

Wanda says

Best Dresden book so far! I approve of the zombie T. rex Sue and all the mayhem that she causes!

Harry, like any good noir detective, is a bit soft-headed when it comes to a dame. This gets him in trouble in every book and this one is no exception. His wry sense of humour helps him deal with the situations that his instinctive responses get him embroiled in.

At least in this installment, Harry gets to know members of the White Council better (and vice versa), finds out that he has fans among the younger wizards, and gets to communicate with an important person from his past.

He also becomes a personal coach for a new friend, Butters. Polka will never die!!

Audrey says

3.5 stars

It took me over two months to get this from the library; some punk had it and returned it over a month late.

"In the action business, when you don't want to say you ran like a mouse, you call it 'taking cover.' It's more heroic."

The book begins on my birthday (cool, eh?) and ends on Halloween night: Harry has three days to prevent competing necromancers from using an obscure book to summon immense power that would kill thousands in the process, etc.

With necromancers comes ...

... zombies!

Meanwhile, the coin Harry picked up a couple books back is starting to stir up trouble, and Harry is adjusting to having Thomas as a roommate. The biggest walk-on sidekick for this book is the ME, Waldo Butters. He's a good character.

Harry sure meets a lot of gorgeous women in his line of work. It's just as well he doesn't get to do much more than look; he'd be insufferable then.

James Marsters has gotten so good at narrating the books! He does different voices of all kinds convincingly, and he doesn't try to go super high-pitched for women's voices.

P.S. This is the second book I've read in which (view spoiler). Of all the things to happen twice ...

Israt Zaman Disha says

“Son. Everyone dies alone. That's what it is. It's a door. It's one person wide. When you go through it, you do it alone. But it doesn't mean you've got to be alone before you go through the door. And believe me, you aren't alone on the other side.”

About this book, it's like any other book of Dresden Files just nastier. When you think things cannot get any worse, all hell break loose something happens to worsen everything. And I cannot help but be surprised at how much will Harry has and how far can he go with it.

Dresden never fails to entertain me. He also never fails to take me on a ride in the train of excitements. But apart from everything I have taken a serious liking for this guy and it really pains me to see him fighting while he is hurt and all of his limbs are not fully functional. Hopefully when I meet him next I will see him hale and hearty.

Heather K (dentist in my spare time) says

Harry Dresden fans, do you know you can get special Dresden character tea blends like this Butters one?? Just food, er, drink for thought.

Wonder what he tastes like. Corpses??

I'm 100% in love with the audiobooks for this series. James Marsters gets better and better with each book, and I'm addicted to listening to him narrate. His character vocal differentiation is improving with each story, and his inflections are spot on. He is amazing, really amazing.

In terms of plot, this one was pretty freaking convoluted. There were dozens of bad guys and insurmountable odds, but Jim Butcher pulled it off in the end. It wasn't my favorite of the series thus far, but I had an excellent time listening. The storyline was unlike any that I've heard before, and it was somewhat brilliant in it's level of complexity.

Bring on more Harry Dresden and more polka, please!

Chris says

Book Twenty-five

Dead Beat by Jim Butcher

"Hell's Bells" count - 13

While I was on my long commute to work (not so bad, as it affords me more reading time), I wondered what the Harry Dresden from *Storm Front* would have made of the Harry Dresden from this book. I imagine he probably would have been scared. And to be honest, I don't think I would be able to blame him.

There's necromancy afoot in Chicago, and as much as he doesn't want to be, Harry is in the middle of all of it. He's been charged by one of the most dangerous vampires in the world, Mavra of the Black Court, to find the missing volume of a series written by one of the most notorious necromancers in human history. When the necromancer Kemmler was alive, it took nearly the entire fighting force of the White Council of Wizards to stop him. Now his disciples are all hunting for the book, trying to be the first one to kill everyone in Chicago and become a god.

It's a mission he can't refuse. If he should do so, Mavra has evidence in her possession that would destroy the career of one of the people closest to Harry - Lt. Karrin Murphy of the Chicago Police Department. In the previous book, Murphy helped Harry take out a nest of Black Court vampires, killing several humans who had been enthralled to the vamps. These Renfields were human only by technicality, but a photograph of Murphy blowing one's head off would still be damning evidence. Should Harry not do what Mavra wants, the pictures would be released, and the one things that Murphy truly loves would be gone.

The point of this book, broadly, is Harry discovering that past actions still have present consequences, and that the choices he has to make are not always good ones. While Harry does save the day, he does so at a cost.

Harry has become legitimately scary by this book. His friends and his allies aren't sure about him anymore, either his motives or his sanity. The people who have stood steadfastly by him now find themselves afraid of him, and what he might do. And for good reason, really. Harry's been through a lot in the last few books. He's lost the woman he loves to the Red Court vampires, he very nearly lost his hand fighting Mavra and he's now absolutely terrified of using fire magic as a result. On top of all that, he's discovered that being someone's brother doesn't automatically mean you get to understand them. Or like them. Or be able to live with them.

So yeah, Harry's had it rough. With most humans, it's hard to see change from the inside, and I'm sure Harry doesn't think he's changed all that much. He knows he's gotten a little angrier, maybe a little more solitary, but from his point of view it's a logical progression. For people who aren't with him all the time - Billy the Werewolf, Mac the World's Best Tavern Owner, for example, the changes are drastic. And truly frightening. Harry's still a good guy, don't worry about that.

He's just not a *nice* guy.

This book is awash in general awesomeness, and introduces a lot of good new characters, both on the good and bad sides. My favorite is Waldo Butters, the Medical Examiner for the Chicago PD. He goes from being a slightly quirky ME who kind of believes in the weird and unusual (he spent 90 days under psychiatric evaluation when he refused to classify vampire remains as human). By the end of the book, he becomes

positively heroic, and is a very good avatar for The Reader. We all like to believe that we would take the world of the supernatural, if it existed, in stride, but we probably would have reacted just like Butters did when he first saw things he was not prepared for - denial, disbelief and then abject terror. He comes around, though, as I'm sure all of us would.

We also get to meet a few of the remaining Wardens of the White Council. The war has gone very hard on their numbers, and there are very, very few available to fight a group of mad necromancers in Chicago. The Red Court has dealt them such heavy blows that it's not unreasonable to think that there's a mole in the White Council somewhere. Who it is, though, will have to wait for another book. Their numbers have been slashed, and they need every able-bodied magic user they can get. The deal they offer Harry for their assistance is a surprising one, but makes perfect sense. And it will play heavily into the books that follow.

There's also one genuine "Holy Shit" moment in this book. I won't tell you what it is, because that would just spoil the whole thing. All I can say is that it's at the end of chapter 38. You can't miss it.

From here on out, this is going to be a very different series. Bigger, darker, as if that were possible, building on the foundation of the previous books to make something far more elaborate and interesting. I can't wait to see what it ends up being.

"Polka will never die!"
- Waldo Butters, *Dead Beat*

Lyn says

Dr. Peter Venkman, Dr. Egon Spengler, Dr. Ray Stantz, Winston Zeddmore and Dana Barrett all sit watching *The Big Lebowski* and discussing Jim Butcher's 2005 Harry Dresden novel *Dead Beat* – the seventh novel in the series.

Venkman: We have to drink every time we hear an F-Bomb.

All drink.

Egon: Butcher has done another outstanding job explaining and expounding upon his paranormal universe, this time returning to many of the themes he explored in his third Dresden novel *Grave Peril* involving ghosts and the undead.

Dana: Also interesting was the turn that Harry's relationship with Karrin Murphy took, did not see that coming.

Winston: Neither did Harry.

All drink.

Ray: OK, so let's break it down – *Storm Front* was about wizardry in general, setting up the storyline; *Fool Moon* was about lycanthropy, *Grave Peril* was ghosts, *Summer Knight* was about fairies, *Death Masks* was with vampires; *Blood Rites*, more vampires, especially the succubae white court and now we're back to ghosts.

Dana: Though all of the novels have been liberally interspersed with mention of the arcane, building the Dresden universe.

Winston: And they're just fun to read.

All drink.

Venkman: Was it me or did this one have a greater than normal Lovecraftian influence?

Egon: You're correct, Peter, the old ones or a variation on that theme was brought up.

All drink.

Winston: Anyway, another very entertaining visit to the Dresden files and the storyline just keeps getting better.

All drink.

Meg says

10/30/13: The one with lots of necromancers. Also the one where the series really solidly shifts into higher gear, in my opinion.

8/25/11: I noticed something about this character last night that I think speaks well of Butcher as a writer: he's managed to write a somewhat sexist character but not sexist books. It's not just because the character admits to being somewhat sexist, but because it's just the main character who has those views. The narrative and development of the supporting characters is actually perfectly decent. It's a fine line, but it's there, and instead of being insulting, it just makes the character deeper.

As an example, I read a review here complaining about how the author always comments on women's boobs. But the author never does that - the character does. The dude clearly has a thing about boobs. And that's not the end of the world, because even the characters who look good in tight shirts are rarely depicted as two-dimensional bimbos. Hell, even the bimbos are fairly three dimensional. It's not that uncommon to find books where the entire thing treats women as window dressing, or where everyone (except maybe the bad guys) are wonderfully gender enlightened, but it's kind of interesting to find something more in the middle. It feels real. Thankfully, I find Dresden to be an interesting enough character that his somewhat obnoxious, teenage boy traits don't bother me. I could imagine being friends with him in real life and making fun of him for being a chivalrous ass sometimes, but still liking him.

And like I said at the beginning, I think this speaks well of the author.

David - proud Gleeman in Branwen's adventuring party says

*The chaotic events in his life may have Harry Dresden feeling **Dead Beat**...but his books have never been more energized!*

As an accountant, when I have a bad day at work, it often means I spent hours poring through various mind-numbingly dull spreadsheets trying to rectify a discrepancy. Now here's Harry Dresden's version of a bad day at work. One of his most dangerous enemies has pictures that could destroy the life of Harry's closest friend and ally. In order to stop the evil vampire-sorceress Mavra from releasing the incriminating photos of Special Investigations director Karrin Murphy, Harry must bring Mavra something called "The Word of Kemmler". Harry has no idea what The Word of Kemmler looks like or even what it is, all he knows is that he's not the only one trying to find it. Three dark wizards who are more powerful than anything Harry has ever faced before are also seeking The Word and are more than willing to kill Harry if he gets in their way (in fact, at least two of them welcome the opportunity)! Add to that an ongoing war between the wizards' council and the vampire court, and a fallen angel trying desperately to ensnare Harry in her web, and you have the makings of a *really* bad day at work! Y'know, suddenly being an accountant doesn't seem so bad...

I was very excited going into this book, as I knew that "Dead Beat" is where the larger story that was threaded throughout the earlier Dresden Files books really begins to unfold. The first novels of the Dresden Files were more stand-alone stories, with larger themes being introduced as the series went on, but "Dead Beat" is where many of those subplots begin to come together to make Harry's adventures one continuing epic drama! The war with the vampiric Red Court that began in "Ghost Peril", the debt Harry owes the Faerie courts from "Summer Knight", the bond with fallen angel Lasciel from "Death Masks", and the revelation of who Thomas is to Harry from "Blood Rites", all these events play a major role in this book, and it was a lot of fun to watch something that began as simple supernatural mysteries evolve into something so much more complex.

If you read any of the previous six books in the Harry Dresden series, you already know that you can count on plenty of excitement and humor, but this time around it's become apparent that Jim Butcher is truly growing as a writer. His fight sequences are now so beautifully detailed, they rival even R.A. Salvatore's! Also, Butcher really ups the ante in terms of action and suspense. The battles are larger in scale than ever before, including one involving zombies dueling with specters, and the grand finale features what may just be Harry's most epic moment to date. Also, the odds have never been more stacked up against Harry before, which made for a gripping tale. In addition, I noticed even Butcher's prose has matured. One sequence in which Harry describes seeing through the point of view of both predator and prey is so masterfully written, it's actually poetic. And then there's the twist...many an author has stumbled and fallen trying to yank the rug out from under the reader, but Butcher manages to come up with a moment that not only shocked me, but made complete sense when I thought back on previous events. Yes, almost everything I love about the Dresden books was bigger and better...*almost*...

As much as I enjoyed reading "Dead Beat", I found myself rolling my eyes far too many times to give the book a perfect score. For one thing, there's Butcher's annoying habit of turning Harry Dresden into...

You know who I'm talking about...**that guy!** The one who got a laugh once doing a weak Austin Powers impression and now feels the need to incorporate it into just about every conversation! In all fairness, a lot of Harry's witticisms work, but Butcher has a tendency to overdo it to the point where Harry stops being funny and starts getting annoying, and this book was no exception. Even Butcher himself seems to acknowledge this when he has another character tell Harry, "You're not nearly as funny as you think you are." I'm not trying to bash Butcher, as I really do think most of his humor works, but it does get tiresome when Harry has to be a complete wise-ass in every single situation (even in ones where he should be focusing on trying to save lives)!

I had some other minor grievances with this particular story. One was that Karrin Murphy was almost completely absent this time around. Murphy has always been one of my favorite characters, and her chemistry with Dresden worked brilliantly in previous novels, so I thought it was a rather odd choice by Butcher to leave her out of the book...especially considering Harry's whole reason for originally entering into the search for The Word is to protect Murphy's career! With so many things other things going on, Mavra's

blackmailing of Murphy becomes little more than an afterthought, and I can't help but feel that this plot point would have been far more effective had Murphy and Mavra actually been in the book for more than a few pages. Instead of Dresden teaming up with Murphy, we get a "bromance" between him and medical examiner Butters, but Butters isn't nearly as charismatic as Murphy. Harry's half-brother Thomas is along for the ride as well, but as he doesn't really have much to do with the story and even disappears without a mention for several parts of the book, he doesn't really serve much more purpose than giving Harry a chance to get out a few more quips. Another minor grievance was one too many *James Bond* moments, where the villains have Harry completely at their mercy but inexplicably give him more than enough time to escape instead of just killing him when they get the chance...

Still, even with its minor faults, I would recommend this book to just about anyone who enjoys urban fantasy. If Butcher continues to grow as a writer, I see a lot of five-star reviews for the Dresden books in the future!

One last thing, I have a question I want to ask anyone who's read this book...if you haven't read "Dead Beat" yet, I urge you not to click on the spoiler, as it could potentially ruin the big twist for you...
(view spoiler)

Faye, la Patata says

Did I say the last book was the best installment yet? I WAS OBVIOUSLY KIDDING. **No, THIS books is the best installment yet.** What is it about this series that just keeps getting better and better and better and better? I just adore how the stakes keep getting higher, and how our dear wizard Harry is always overcome with hurdles that even I am biting my nails in suspense, unsure if he'll even come out of it in one piece. And when he does overcome them in unconventional means, I can't help but sigh in relief and go, "Damn it, Harry! Stop trying to give me a heart attack!"

I absolutely love this series. There's so much to love about it - from the characters to the little story arcs in every installment, and to the even bigger story that's happening behind the scenes if you take a look at all of the books' stories as a whole. I can't wait for book 8!!! :D

Lindsey Rey says

This had one of the most creative and fun uses of magic I've ever seen without creating an entirely original magic system! Also some serious character development and story progression!! You rock, Jim Butcher!

Heidi The Hippie Reader says

This entry in *The Dresden Files* has wizard Harry Dresden fighting necromancers to protect his friends and contemplating his own mortality. We also get to hang out with a few side characters and see a fascinating new side of Bob, who just happens to be one of my favorite characters in the whole series.

"Because that Kemmler was a certifiable nightmare," Bob said. ... That got my attention. Bob the skull was

an air spirit, a being that existed in a world of knowledge without morality. He was fairly fuzzy on the whole good-evil conflict..." pg 39, ebook.

There's some ridiculousness and danger to the story, but mainly Harry-angst and the perpetual struggle against darkness.

"And despite every religious faith, the testimony of near-death eyewitnesses, and the imaginations of storytellers throughout history, death remains the ultimate mystery. No one truly, definitely knows what happens after." pg 30, ebook.

And a few old enemies, of course: *"She laughed harder, and the sound of it spooked the hell out of me. ... There was no warmth in it, no humanity, no kindness, no joy. It was like Mavra herself..."* pg 33, ebook.

Harry is still dealing with his disabled hand, which he burnt the heck out of in the last book. *"I had a responsibility to keep that destructive strength in check; to use it to help people, to protect them. It didn't matter that I still felt terrified. It didn't matter that my hand was screaming with pain."* pg 65, ebook.

Also, some of Harry's previous decisions about vampires and the Wizard Counsel have some serious consequences. But, anybody who's been reading this series for awhile, knew that that was only a matter of time.

And there's the small matter of a certain silver coin that Harry picked up a few books ago and buried under the concrete in his lab. But whatever is in the coin can't get out of the circle he put it in... right?

"I just keep getting more wounded and tired. ... I'm not some kind of superhero. I'm just me. And I didn't want any of this." pg 131, ebook.

If you haven't read this series, I highly recommend you start with the first book. The stories build on each other and become quite satisfying, in my opinion.

The ending of this one contains some ridiculousness that I was not prepared for, but after some thought about the series, I've decided that it doesn't matter.

There is very little Jim Butcher could write in here that I wouldn't like. Somewhere along the line, I've become quite a fan of *The Dresden Files*.

I didn't expect it. But that's the truth.

Luffy says

This seventh book in the Dresden Files series, took me on a roller coaster ride tread by many of the fans, yet managed to make the experience nearly pristine and virginal. The book was at first a slow starter, then became a precocious child, then became an overachiever, then, a late bloomer. The entire novel was the work of a workaholic, of that I'm sure.

The series follow a formula only in the broadest sense of the word. I wish to tell Jim Butcher to ditch his cliffhangers. I mean, by that, his tendency to put Dresden in a dead end and have him rescued by a providential arrival - here, once, by a Deus Ex Mafia. Not all such rescues are humdrum, though. When the hero is saved by Butters, it made for inspired writing. But I leave the benefit of the doubt to the author, who knows about his audience, more than I do, and knows on which side his bread is buttered.

Dead Beat is startlingly different in raw ideas, from its precedents. The vampires set the ball rolling, and referee the majority of the death counts, but they are mostly off screen. The one vampire in the book, Thomas, is there, is interesting, but does not help much. There are new and newish characters to make up for that. The Book Of Kemmler is a book within a book. The entire show runs round it. And one of the characters is fiction within a fiction.

The best thing about book seven is that the layers that form part of the novel are available at first reading. I took great enjoyment from it. Dresden's hero complex is dealt with, with care, restraint, artfulness, and thoughtfulness. The plot coupons and twists in the book are well timed. I think the reveals, which are different and self sufficient (not depending on previous ones), enhance the craftsmanship of the author, who, in retrospect, I'm seeing growing alongside his main character. All of the annoying twinges of previous books have been erased, at least in my book. If this book were a brochure, I'd buy everything in it. It's that good.

Steven says

Polka will never die!

#ilovebutters

Patrick says

"Polka will never die!"
