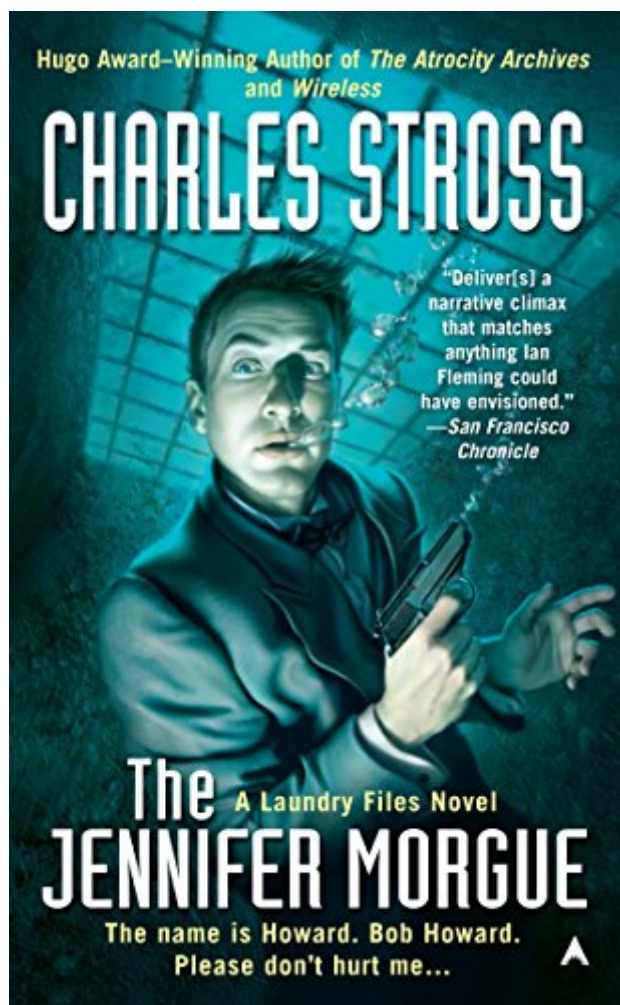


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The Jennifer Morgue (Laundry Files Book 2)



Synopsis

Bob Howard, geekish demonology hacker extraordinaire for "The Laundry," must stop ruthless billionaire Ellis Billington from unleashing an eldritch horror, codenamed "Jennifer Morgue," from the ocean's depths for the purpose of ruling the world...

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Lighter on the satire, heavier on the adventure, still a fun ride. If you read the first book in this series, then honestly this book is probably better written than that one. That said, I liked the first one more. However, in terms of a Did-I-Enjoy-This-Book scale, it remains equal. The Atrocity Archives and The Jennifer Morgue are just two different books. Where the first book was a satire of office culture and adventure mystery novels with a Lovecraftian spin, this one purposely plays a dashing British Spy story straight with the formula, but all the while it taps its nose and winks at you. So yeah, there is still satire here, but it is more of a clever adventure novel that plays with the tried and true stereotypes and cliches. As for this book more specifically, Bob is back! I was actually afraid each book would have a different character, which would have made me sad. But he is back and remains the

main character. Also back are Pinky and Brains with a more active role. They are hilarious, Q eat your heart out. New to this book is a drop dead gorgeous mysterious woman and a maniacal bad guy. You'll like them, I promise. Given the archetype this book is spoofing, you can count on a lot more scenes of poor Bob having to wing it MacGyver style (with tentacles). When he isn't doing this, he is usually being screwed over by whatever heinous and unmentionable events he's been railroaded into. I mean, he is just some poor cubical rat that gets sent out on dangerous missions occasionally. So while this book has less, or maybe just more subtle, satire and fewer Eldritch horrors, it is a great example of what someone with a creative mind can do with a novel. I recommend it to anyone who liked the first book, and I for one plan on starting the third book before long - maybe tomorrow.

Charles Stross, whose protagonist, Bob Howard, is an underpaid British civil servant (redundant, I know) working for the Laundry-- an organization with a remit very similar to that of the better known MI6. However, where MI6 is responsible for the U.K.'s security against international threats, the Laundry works to protect Britain from inter-dimensional and extraterrestrial threats. The Laundry's work is made yet more difficult, as it must protect Britons not only from incursions by those beings pressing to invade our dimension, but must also try to keep hidden the very knowledge of the eldritch Cthulhoid monstrosities lurking beyond this dimension, below the earth's mantle, and at the depths of our seas. If Stross' first Laundry book, *The Atrocity Archives*, was reminiscent of a 21st Century thaumaturgic Len Deighton, this second novel is an unlikely mash-up of Ian Fleming's James Bond (both books and especially films), and the works of H. P. Lovecraft. Our protagonist finds himself in a mind-meld with a beautiful female spy from the very darkest depths-- the CIA. Yes, and she's also a mer-creature, complete with gills. And has a daemon, a succubus, riding her, which creates some rather awkward situations. The villain is very much an evil construct from the Blofeld/Dr. No school of villainy, with a mind set on world domination. Well, that's one of the villains. There is also the Total Quality Management-obsessed, paperclip counting bureaucrats for whom he works. And he can't even shoot them. The book, although light-hearted, must be read carefully to get the full impact of Stross' cheerfully perverse humor. Not only are there multiple Bond and Lovecraftian references (and send-ups!), but there are computer hacker jokes, the comic and unlikely tricking out of a Smart Car with gadgetry even less likely than it is illegal, and a beautiful, deadly violinist. At the end of the novel there is an added on, delightful short story, plus three or four essays of the author's musings on Ian Fleming and the Bond adventures, on the morphing of villainy from nation-state to the corporate world, on espionage post-World War II. Don't skip them because

they're not fiction-- they are worth reading, even if they're somewhat dated by having been written before either Brexit or the most recent U.S. elections. I'd love to see him update them! Recommended.

**** spoiler alert **** It's always a challenge when reviewing a book (or any creative piece, really) not to fault the author because they didn't write the book you wished that they had. I don't think that that's what's happened in this case, but I might be blind to it. I give this book as written three stars. It would get fewer were it not for the fact that it does have a great deal going for it. But there are also serious problems that almost made me give it only two stars. I'll discuss these next, and there will be SPOILERS. There are two main problems with "The Jennifer Morgue." First, and most importantly, is that we as readers haven't been given enough exposure to the Monique O'Brien character to care all that much about her and the relationship between Bob and her. While it's made clear that time has passed (although it wasn't until near the end of the novel that we surprisingly learn that she and Bob have been together for "years.), we as readers don't really have much invested in her or in their relationship. This is made abundantly clear as matters progress in the relationship between Bob and Ramona Random. Ramona is a wonderful character: intriguing, interesting, sympathetic, and sexy. She and Bob have abundant chemistry that goes beyond the occult tie between them. While I could never root for a cheater (I was very glad that Bob and Ramona did not have sex), I was definitely rooting for the two of them to be together (not that I wanted anything bad to happen to Mo). Now this is clearly me veering into criticizing the author for not writing the story I wanted. But it also leads into my second complaint, which I think is a fairer accusation. The fact that there is no last scene between Bob and Ramona is quite simply ridiculous. Now, I haven't read any more of the Laundry novels, so maybe Ramona will return. But if not, then it was shocking that Strauss did not have a final scene between them. After reading the first two Laundry novels, I see that Strauss enjoys having codes of both a fictional and non-fictional type. But this is no excuse for leaving the readers hanging with regard to Bob and Ramona either saying their goodbyes, or reconciling themselves to a platonic relationship. I don't think that this is another instance of my criticizing Strauss for not telling the story I wanted to hear. I think that it was bad -- or at least weak -- writing not to include such a scene. Again, perhaps this will take place in one of the following novels. But I think that it was a major flaw in this one.

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