

Storm Front Study Guide

Storm Front by Jim Butcher

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Plot Summary

Storm Front by Jim Butcher is his debut novel of the Dresden Files. Someone in modern day Chicago is practicing magic—really bad magic that is killing people by ripping their hearts out using the power of electrical storms. Furthermore, they are making a drug called ThreeEye that is highly addictive and gives the user the dubious pleasure of being able to see like a wizard. Harry Dresden is a real wizard and he is not very happy that someone out there is giving wizards a bad name. Lieutenant Karrin Murphy, homicide detective in charge of Special Investigations, calls on Harry as a friend and as a wizard because she can tell that the homicides cannot have been caused by anything in the normal world. Harry agrees to help because Karrin is his friend. He also needs the money.

Harry believes that using his power as a wizard for good will help him to clear his name with the White Council, the governing entity over all things magical. Because Harry once killed a man with magic in self defense, the White Council has placed the Doom of Damocles over his head. If Harry ever gets caught violating one of the Seven Laws of Magic, he will be sentenced to instantaneous execution by sword. Because Harry wants to clear his name with the White Council, he has to be very, very careful in how he tries to track down the killer who is using bad magic because Dresden will have to experiment with dubious magic in order to unveil him.

About the same time Harry is hired by the police department to help solve the double homicide, he gets a missing persons case. Monica Sells comes to Harry for help in finding her missing husband, Victor. This is not his favorite type of case, but money is money, and Dresden figures it will be a pretty simple case to solve. At first Harry believes that he has discovered that Victor was having a really bad case of male menopause, and having lost his job was drowning his sorrows in orgies at his lake house. Soon, however, Dresden realizes that Victor is connected to the homicide cases he is working on. What he just can't seem to figure out is what the connection means.

In the meantime, Dresden tangles with Johnny Marcone, Chicago's crime boss. Marcone tries to bribe Harry to sit by and do nothing to help Lieutenant Murphy. Harry knows that it is probably not good business to offend the city's highest ranking mobster, but his word to Karrin means more to him, so he refuses. Harry might be struggling for money, but he does have a code of honor that he lives by. Dresden is also curious at Marcone's request because one of the victims of the original double homicide was Marcone's body guard. There is much more to this case than meets the eye, and Dresden is nothing if not very curious.

As if Harry does not have enough trouble on his plate with the warden of the White Council breathing down his neck, a police lieutenant friend demanding answers, and a killer using magic to kill people, life is further complicated by the femme fatale reporter for Chicago's paranormal magazine, and a vampiress Madame from the Velvet Room Escort Service.

Harry must work within the constraints of both the law of his world, and the law of Nevernever, the world of magic. In order to solve the case, Dresden bends the rules of both worlds in order to keep his word, maintain his integrity, and reach the killer before the killer reaches him. In a world where normality meets magic, Dresden fights demons, battles scorpions the size of a small dog, and faces a powerful evil wizard intent on killing him. In the end, Harry manages to defeat the would-be wizard at his own game, but not before more people die or are injured in the line of duty during the investigation. It is really hard convincing people you are really a good guy when the world seems to be overpopulated with bad ones.

Chapters 1 - 3

Chapters 1 - 3 Summary

Chapter 1 - Storm Front is the story of the wizard, Harry Dresden. He struggles to maintain the laws of two conflicting worlds, his own human life in present-day Chicago, and the laws of the White Council in Nevernever, the realm of witches, wizards, faeries, demons, and more. Harry works to help his friend Lieutenant Karrin Murphy with a strange double homicide that has overtones of magic while staying out of the way of Morgan, the Warden of the White Council who is just waiting for Dresden to cross the line and break one of the Seven Laws of Magic. Being under the Doom of Damocles, Harry Dresden risks execution by sword for even a minor infraction. Trying to keep everyone happy and still stay alive becomes increasingly difficult for Harry Dresden.

Harry Blackstone Copperfield Dresden whiles away his time reading paperback books in his mid-town Chicago office while he waits for work. The mail delivery of a registered letter is another late payment notice from his landlord. As the only practicing professional wizard in the country, it seems that Harry might have a monopoly on all cases requiring the services of a wizard. Unfortunately for Harry, his last job was a bust. Dresden works by a code of honor and will not take money for work he does not do. He will not take work just for the money, though at times he is very tempted. Perhaps that is why he agrees to a free missing husband consultation when he could really use the money. After he makes the appointment to meet the woman who calls herself "Monica," Harry gets a call from Karrin Murphy, homicide detective with the Chicago police department. As the head of the Special Investigations Unit, Karrin is Harry's most consistent client and even she does not really believe in his abilities as a wizard. However, when she encounters a case that defies explanation, she routinely turns to Harry for advice. This time there are two bodies in the Madison Hotel and the summons is urgent.

Chapter 2 - At the Madison Hotel, Dresden and Murphy head up to the seventh floor. The outer room of the suite, done in red and gold, reminds Harry of a thirties movie. Inside the bedroom is another story. A man and a woman are locked in a sexual embrace, the woman on top. Both have gaping holes in their chest where their hearts had once been, ribs broken outward as if exploded from inside of their bodies. For being a wizard, Dresden's sensitivities threaten to shut down. Quickly he surveys the room for details. The woman was in her 20s and very physically fit with recently dyed hair. The man was in his forties with a tattoo of a winged dagger on his right bicep and a long-ago healed abdominal knife wound. Carmichael, Murphy's partner, scoffs at Murphy's question if magic somehow played a role in the deaths. As Harry vomits, recoiling from the violence of the scene, he knows magic was used; the kind of magic that violates the First Law by wreaking harm on another. This is a premeditated and deliberate act of a sorcerer or wizard. Harry believes this to have been accomplished by evocation, but not by an evocator because it can only be done by line of sight, meaning the perpetrator would have to be in the room. He presents a theory of thaumaturgy, the idea of creating

a scenario on a small scale and adding enough energy to make it happen on a larger scale. Carmichael is openly skeptical.

Chapter 3 - Harry allows Cujo Hendricks, Marcone's driver to drive him back to his office. While Dresden and Marcone talk, Harry's attitude is flippant toward Cujo and this surprises Marcone. Harry Dresden's surprise matches this when Marcone offers to pay Dresden full price for two weeks worth of work at twelve-hundred dollars a day simply to do nothing. Marcone even offers to double Dresden's usual fee. This intrigues Dresden who wonders why the head of Chicago's mob wishes to not have Murphy investigate Tommy Tomm's murder, and especially not to have Dresden assist the homicide detective. Harry subjects Marcone to a soul gaze. Most people avoid a soul gaze with a wizard. Marcone is not afraid. Rather, Dresden believes he has more to be afraid of from Marcone. Despite this fear, Dresden turns down Marcone's offer and returns to his office just in time to keep his meeting with Monica.

Chapters 1 - 3 Analysis

Harry Blackstone Copperfield Dresden is a real-life wizard, struggling to make ends meet by offering his magical services to the general public. Because Dresden is the only wizard listed in the phone book, most people believe that he is a crack-pot, or at best, a novelty act to be hired for a party. The thing about Harry Dresden is that his powers are very real and he takes the power and the responsibility that goes with it very seriously. He is also painfully honest. When an unnamed country singer from Branson, Missouri hired Dresden to identify the source of his home's haunting, Harry finds no evidence of the paranormal and only charges for travel expenses and one hour's pay. Dissatisfied, the country singer turns to another wizard, a charlatan, who gives the entertainer what he wants. Because he is so honest, Harry appears to be chronically short of funds. The opening scene has a skeptical postman delivering a registered late payment notice from Harry's landlord. A call from a woman named "Monica" disappoints Dresden because she is looking for her missing husband. Harry does not usually do missing persons cases, but offers the woman a free consultation.

The next call is from homicide detective Karrin Murphy. She orders Dresden to a death scene at a nearby hotel where Harry senses immediately the presence of evil magic perpetrated by a powerful practitioner, probably female. This part is a red herring. The dead woman is associated with Bianca, a vampiress who runs an escort service. The dead man is Johnny Marcone's body guard. Dresden would prefer not to tangle with either Bianca or Marcone, but because Karrin Murphy is his friend he agrees to help. This may put Dresden in a very difficult position with the White Council; the governing body over all magical practices. For Harry to locate the murderer, he will have to practice bad magic and it sounds as though Harry is already in a great deal of trouble with the White council. Harry's determination to help Murphy increases when Marcone tries to bribe Dresden with money to not investigate the double homicide.

Chapters 4 - 6

Chapters 4 - 6 Summary

Chapter 4 - Monica keeps her appointment with Dresden. The reason she gives Harry for coming to him rather than going to the police is that her husband has been interested in magic recently. He has also been upset because he recently lost his job. As a result, her husband packed a bag and left without telling Monica where he was going. The police would merely assume he wishes to remain missing to his wife. Harry has to pressure Monica to reveal her husband's real name and Dresden really does need the money from this case for his rent. Monica relents and provides her husband's name, Victor Sells. Harry gets information about Victor, where he worked, family or friends, ideas on where he might have gone and then requests a retainer. Monica gives him an envelope with five hundred dollars in cash, another envelope with a current picture of Victor, and a third envelope with some of Victor's magic props. Overall, Monica is nervous throughout the entire interview. Once she leaves, Dresden begins the investigation, evaluating some of the items Monica brought to him in the envelope of magic props; one of which is a dried-up dead scorpion which Dresden puts in his desk drawer.

Chapter 5 - After his preliminary investigation, Harry treats himself to dinner at McAnally's Pub run by Mac. The pub is a gathering place for real magic types, and Mac knows not to keep anything high-tech in the area, sticking only with a player piano. This is a welcoming place for Dresden and he orders a steak sandwich and a home-brew. Mac warns Harry that he was followed. Even before he spots her, Dresden smells her. Miss Susan Rodriguez is a reporter for the Chicago Arcane, a magazine that covers events of the paranormal. Susan makes a habit of tracking Dresden's activities and covered the charlatan's exorcism in Branson. She now wants to know about the double homicide at the hotel and uses their mutual attraction to persuade Dresden, but Harry knows that Detective Murphy would have his head on a platter if he revealed anything to a reporter. Susan does trick Harry into agreeing to have dinner with her on Saturday. Initially Harry had planned to drive to Victor Sells' lake house on Saturday night, but his date plans with Susan force him to go immediately.

Chapter 6 - Back home before his visit to Victor Sells' lake home, Harry gathers some necessary supplies for his nocturnal excursion; preservative-free bread, honey, milk and an apple. Harry drives his Blue Beetle out to the lake. The car is old enough and basic enough that it does not give Harry the usual problems that other technology does. Out at the Lake Providence community, where the Sells' lake house is, Dresden finds a small modern house made of a lot of glass and wood. Harry tries to get a feeling from the property around the house, but senses nothing. The house is locked and Harry respects that symbol. He does sense a presence in the house, but no one comes to the door when he knocks and rings the bell. Out by the lake, Harry summons faeries with a circle, a thimbleful of milk, and a bit of honey in a bowl. Baiting a piece of bread with a drop of his blood, the trap is set. Faeries are attracted especially to honey, milk, and

bread and Toot, the faerie, falls for Harry's trap. If anyone has seen Victor Sells, it will be Toot.

Chapters 4 - 6 Analysis

Harry Dresden wants very badly to help Murphy with the homicide investigation, yet he also needs some quick money to pay his back rent. Monica's request really does seem easy enough, so Harry decides to make quick work of finding Victor Sells so that he can pay his rent, and then he will focus on the homicide that involves magic. Monica's behavior during the interview could be that of a lay-person in the presence of a wizard, but Harry senses that she is nervous for other reasons, but she does not divulge them. He has to be content with the cash retainer, the picture of her husband, and the envelope of magic paraphernalia that Victor left behind at his home when he took off. One of the items is a dead scorpion. At one point, out of the corner of his eye, Harry thinks he sees the scorpion move, but when he examines it again, it is just as dry and dead as it had seemed previously. He puts it back into the envelope and puts it in his desk drawer. Right now he has no use for it. Note this action for the purposes of foreshadowing.

Taking some of the money from Monica's retainer, Harry treats himself to dinner at McAnally's Pub where the taciturn pub owner, Mac, warns Harry that he had been followed into the pub. As soon as he smells her perfume, Harry knows that reporter Susan Rodriguez is onto the case of the homicide Murphy wants him working on. As sexually attractive as Susan is, Harry knows that Murphy will never forgive him for giving the story to a paranormal reporter. Instead, Harry agrees to have dinner with Susan on Saturday evening. Once he has eaten, he prepares to go out to the lake house to find Victor Sells for Monica. It seems like such an easy task. What Harry does not realize is just how intertwined everything will become sooner than later. Once out at the lake house, Harry casts a circle and uses the honey, milk, and preservative free bread to catch a faerie who might have information about the occupant of the lake house. After getting the information, Harry heads back to his car intending to go home only to be confronted by a man with an unsheathed sword, proclaiming that he is to carry out Dresden's execution by sword immediately for the violation of the Fourth Law of Magic. One really great story-telling technique is the cliff-hanger and Butcher uses this very skillfully. Finishing Chapter 6 on such a note makes it nearly impossible for the reader to end a reading session.

Chapters 7 - 9

Chapters 7 - 9 Summary

Chapter 7 - Morgan is a Warden of the White council and he would like nothing better than to lop Dresden's head off immediately. Dresden reminds Morgan that the Laws of Magic apply to mortals and that Toot had been given a choice. The warden reminds Dresden that his job is to oversee Dresden's every move to ensure that no abuse of power takes place. Dresden points out the inconvenience of convening the White Council over something so trivial and Morgan backs down. What Dresden discovers is that Morgan believes Harry is responsible for the double homicide. Even worse, if that is what Morgan believes, the White council believes it too. It is revealed that Dresden is under the Doom of Damocles because he did once kill with magic and that it was self defense means nothing to the Council. In his youth, Dresden's mentor tried to turn Dresden to the Black wizard arts and when Dresden refused, tried to kill him. Dresden admits it was mostly luck, but his mentor died from sorcery at Harry's hand. Dresden finds himself in a really difficult position; continue to help Murphy and Dresden puts his life at risk. Not help Murphy and Morgan might decide to execute Dresden on principle.

Chapter 8 - Harry gets home at two in the morning and because he cannot sleep, decides to do magic. Really, he is the magic counterpart to a computer geek. Dresden admits he really needs to get a life. Harry lives in the basement of an old house, and underneath is a sub-basement where he practices magic. Harry has electricity, but rarely uses it because it usually malfunctions in his presence. In his sub-basement lab, Dresden wakes up Bob, a skull that talks. Actually, Bob is a spirit of the air who has been in residence in the skull for a couple hundred years. His job is to remember things. Bob functions as Dresden's computer. Bob and Dresden banter then get down to work after Dresden agrees to grant Bob's request for a love potion. Bob becomes very obstinate, and refuses to do something until he gets something in return.

Chapter 9 - The next night, Friday, Dresden plans to visit Bianca. Before he goes, Murphy calls and is angry that Dresden has no answers for her. City Police Commissioner, Howard Fairweather, is pressuring Murphy for answers in the mistaken belief that if he makes Murphy look bad it will save his own job. Dresden promises to try and have an answer by Monday. Murphy orders Dresden to steer clear of Bianca. Dresden lies to Murphy by agreeing. As he prepares to visit Bianca, Harry gathers his cane, his silver knife, the escape potion, and his favorite talisman, a silver pentacle that had once been his mothers. Lastly, he brings a small folded piece of white cloth. At the gate, Dresden is relieved of his cane and his knife before he is allowed in to see Bianca. Their initial encounter is cordial enough, though Bianca avoids meeting Dresden's eyes. As soon as Dresden mentions Jennifer Stanton's name, Bianca leaps across the table at him and scratches at his throat, preparing to bite him. Dresden unfurls the folded white handkerchief where he stored an image of the sun and repels Bianca's attack. He watches her metamorphosis into a vampire and knows he will have time to be frightened later. Holding her at bay with his pentacle talisman, he tells Bianca that he

only wants to talk, but Bianca, too, believes that Dresden is responsible for Jennifer's death. A truce is established and Bianca returns to her beautiful womanly form, but she resents Dresden for tricking her into revealing her hideous vampire form. She does give Dresden the name of a woman Jennifer would spend time with, Linda Randall, and then orders Harry to leave. She promises not to forget this night, nor will she forgive Harry Dresden. As he leaves, Dresden witnesses Bianca feeding of Paula, the beautiful hostess who guided Dresden to Bianca.

Chapters 7 - 9 Analysis

The investigation into the double homicide becomes more and more difficult for Harry. His promise to help Karrin Murphy requires that he figure out how the evil wizard is accomplishing his murders. In order to figure anything out, Dresden must walk a very fine line between breaking and not breaking the Laws of Magic. This activity puts Harry at very great risk of dying at Morgan's hand. To not help Murphy puts her in danger as well as countless other people. Harry's experience puts him in an untenable position. In order to do the right thing he must break some rules. For him there is no such thing as entirely black or white. Morgan and the White council believe him to be responsible for the deaths of Jennifer Stanton and Tommy Tamm and at first Bianca believes it too. It is becoming a matter of principle for Dresden to clear his name and to do that he puts himself in direct conflict with Murphy. She wants answers right now and Harry cannot give anything to her yet. He even has to lie to her about going to see Bianca because Murphy knows it will be dangerous for him. Both Dresden and Murphy handicap each other, each believing that they are protecting the other.

Chapters 10 - 12

Chapters 10 - 12 Summary

Chapter 10 - As soon as Harry leaves Bianca's, he phones Linda Randall, but she refuses to talk to him. Harry recognized the sounds in the background during the call as coming from O'Hare airport. Knowing her to be a driver for the Beckitts, he rightly assumes she is picking them up at the airport, tracks her down and confronts her. As he questions her about Jennifer Stanton he realizes she is trying to distract him, to avoid telling him something. She refuses to give in. Then the Beckitts emerge from the terminal. A tall, good looking couple, the Beckitts have all the outward appearances of success, but their eyes are dead, like those of war prisoners. Linda lies to Mr. Beckitt and says that Dresden is an old boyfriend of hers. This makes Dresden even more curious and he palms one of his business cards for her to take. On a whim Dresden then calls the pizza place that delivered to the Sells' lake house and does discover that someone had been outside the house taking pictures with an orgy going on inside. When Harry returns home with more questions than answers, a goon with a baseball bat uses it on the wizard's head with the warning to stop sticking his nose into business that does not belong to him. The rest of the night Dresden works on how someone can rip a human heart out from fifty miles away.

Chapter 11 - Having worked through the night, and part of the next morning, Dresden has figured out just how someone could kill as Tommy Tamm and Jennifer Stanton had been killed. The problem is that it seems virtually impossible; which means that the killer is very, very dangerous. This information Dresden takes to Murphy at her office. While in the special Investigations waiting room, a prisoner runs toward Dresden, having broken free from the arresting officers. Dresden stops him, re-injuring his head in the process. The man is high on ThreeEye and claims to know Dresden is a wizard; he sees what Dresden knows is true about his past. Yet, Dresden senses immediately that the junkie is not a magical practitioner. If the drug, ThreeEye, is real, the danger becomes more intense. By being able to see beyond the mortal shells, users of ThreeEye may cause non-mortals to react out of fear of being revealed. Murphy unplugs her computer before letting Dresden into her office. He reinforces his original theory of thaumaturgy and claims he is powerful enough that he could do it to one person who had caused him to be extremely angry, but to do it to two people at once seems impossible. Dresden tells Murphy it would be easier to create a small earthquake. Dresden believes the killer has help, a team, working together, focusing their energies. It is the equivalent of a magical gang war; magic against Marcone, ThreeEye versus traditional street drugs. Whoever is manufacturing ThreeEye is the killer. At this point Murphy refuses to let Harry any further into the investigation. She does not want him to get hurt.

Chapter 12 - Harry is already hurt; and the effects of no sleep with a head injury make Harry sick. Murphy drives him home, puts him to bed, uses cold compressed on his aching head, and leaves him what money she is carrying because she knows he's broke. Before he passes out, Harry receives a call from Linda Randall making an



appointment for later in the evening. Then Harry calls Monica Sells to update her on his progress in finding her missing husband. This call does not go as Harry expects. Monica's voice has forced cheerfulness as she asks Dresden to discontinue the service, that she no longer requires the order. The conversation borders on the bizarre, but Harry is in no condition to evaluate it. He needs sleep.

Chapters 10 - 12 Analysis

Meeting with Bianca had been a huge risk for Dresden, and he is not certain that he gained anything by it but making an enemy of a vampire. Linda Randall refuses to give him any information and he feels like it is some kind of a dead end. Strangely enough, the surprise greeting by the thug with the baseball bat gives Dresden even more determination to figure out whose business he is supposed to leave alone. His discovery leaves him with even more questions than answers, but he feels compelled to give Murphy what he has. While at the police station, Harry encounters a junkie high on ThreeEye and realizes that the drug is much more dangerous than he first realized. It mimics a wizard's Third Eye vision, only with the drug the vision cannot be turned off. It allows a mortal to see the world as it really is, and allows the user to see through the skins non-mortals wear in order to blend in with society. Imagine if everyone could see just what Bianca really looks like. "Even if a user didn't go mad from seeing too many horrible or otherworldly things, he might see through the illusions and disguises of any of a number of beings that passed among mankind regularly, unseen—which could compel such creatures to act in defense, for fear of being revealed." Pg. 147, Ch. 11.

The fragile balance between the world of mortals and magical beings could be destroyed. Harry's determination to stop whoever is producing the ThreeEye drug increases. His belief is that magic should be used for good and spreading the drug around will hurt a great many people. He knows he must help Murphy. Being non-magical herself, Murphy really cannot understand Harry's world. Her superiors barely believe that the Special Investigations Unit is even necessary. The cheapness of the materials of her outer office and the paper sign on it with Murphy's name speaks of how insecure her position as Director of Special Investigations really is. The only way she will succeed is with Harry's help, and he is willing to go to great lengths to help someone as morally sound as Murphy. Again, more and more questions arise. When Harry calls Monica Sells to report, she acts as though she no longer wants his help, but it does not seem authentic to Harry. Had Harry not been suffering from fatigue and a head injury, he may have realized this sooner. Butcher makes it very clear that the world of magic has its own rules, and those rules cannot be violated. Dresden is a wizard, but is a mortal as well. As a mortal, Dresden is bound by the laws of nature, and cannot shake off injury, illness, or fatigue.

Chapters 13 - 15

Chapters 13 - 15 Summary

Chapter 13 - Harry wakes up later that evening with a thunderstorm brewing outside. Harry wonders then about the storms and whether someone might be using the unstable energy source of the storms to evoke their rotten magic. The knocking at his door heralds the arrival of Susan Rodriguez with whom he had forgotten that he had a date and not Linda Randall whom he expected. Susan's outfit plays with Dresden's hormones while she continues to try to extract information on the double homicide. Harry prevaricates by going in to get a shower and hopefully clear his head. He needs to think fast because Linda Randall should arrive soon and a threesome makes for an uncomfortable date. A shadow moves past the bathroom window and thinking to avert a crisis of two women meeting for a date with the same man, Dresden jumps out of the shower and clad only in a towel he rushes to avert disaster. However, it is not Linda Randall at the door. It is a demon, called forth by the evil wizard; the demon is a toad-like creature in a trench-coat who spews acid. Harry gets Susan into his sub-basement lab and instructs her to drink the escape potion on the table. Unfortunately, she drinks the wrong potion. Seeking shelter in the protective circle Harry had previously embedded in the floor of the basement is not as easy as it should have been because all Susan wants now is to relieve her need brought on by the consumption of Harry's love potion.

Chapter 14 - The situation is dire and yet Butcher manages to insert a believable amount of humor into it. Harry needs help and the only help available is Bob. Bob refuses to throw Dresden the escape potion still on the lab table unless Harry grants him a twenty-four hour leave from the skull. An agreement is reached. The potion transports both Harry and Susan into the rain-covered street just outside the apartment. Susan is sick from the mixing of the two potions and Harry is still naked. To evade the demon they really need to get a water-covered road between themselves and the demon, but Susan is incapacitated. Harry cannot carry her. The evil wizard appears as a shadow image to taunt Harry, crowing that soon both Harry and Susan will be dead. Harry uses the energy of the storm, the same the evil wizard has been using, to battle the demon. He channels the power of the storm through his staff, then his body and directs it at the demon through a pointed finger. The strain on Harry nearly bows him, but he figures it is better than dying. Unfortunately for Dresden, Morgan witnesses Harry's use of the storm's power and believes Harry summoned the demon to use against the White Council's Warden. He informs Harry that the Council convenes in two days to hear Morgan's charges against Dresden. The only way to avoid this death sentence is to uncover the real killer.

Chapter 15 - Linda Randall's death kept her from meeting Harry when Susan arrived at his apartment. Harry accompanies the officers that Murphy sent to get him because his phone is out again. Murphy knows nothing of the demon attack and Harry chooses not to enlighten her. The appearance of the demon and Linda Randall's death on the same



night make it clear to Dresden that the killer is using the storms; for Linda died the same way Jennifer and Tommy Tamm had. Linda had called the police to tell them she knew who had killed Tommy and Jennifer and she knew she was next. Murphy tells Harry about Linda's employers, Greg and Helen Beckitt, and how their daughter died in the crossfire between Marcone's men and a Jamaican gang. Then Murphy shows Harry the business card he had given to Linda earlier. Murphy gives Dresden this one chance to tell her what he knows before it is put into evidence. Harry understands what Karrin is asking of him, but he also knows that Karrin will be next if he does. Karrin's anger at Dresden hurts, but he has no choice. Any of the information he could give Murphy would either condemn him further in her eyes, or it would put Karrin directly into the evil wizard's line of fire.

Chapters 13 - 15 Analysis

Things are only getting more confusing and complicated for Harry. He must fight against an evil wizard and is hindered by the beliefs of the White Council, the police and Murphy, vampires, concussions, junkies high on ThreeEye, mob bosses, and thugs with baseball bats. What Butcher wants the reader to understand at this point is that mortals give non-mortals credit for powers they do not actually have. Magical types do not have ubiquitous omniscient powers. They do not know everything. They must learn facts just as humans do. This is why the White Council and Morgan do not see that Harry is on their side, that he is fighting against evil. This makes Harry incredibly believable in the eyes of the reader. He is struggling to right certain wrongs, and must comply with the laws of both worlds; the human world and the magical world. As a wizard, Dresden is uniquely qualified to pursue the evil wizard who is killing those in his way. Karrin Murphy believes that she is uniquely qualified because she is an officer of the law and has a great belief in maintaining law and order. Both Karrin and Harry are handicapped by one another, because they both handicap each other. Karrin believes her job as a law enforcement officer gives her the right to keep information from Dresden that might put him in harm's way. Harry knows that evil can be without limit, and that if the killer realizes that Karrin is on his trail, she will be the next paranormal victim. Because Harry cares about Karrin, he is willing to lose her friendship in order to keep her safe.

Chapters 16 - 18

Chapters 16 - 18 Summary

Chapter 16 - Harry leaves the scene of the last murder in a great deal of despair. Just then a man comes by and punches Dresden in the gut several times; the same man who had jumped Dresden the night before. This time, though, the man clips off some of Dresden's hair. Dresden fights the man, one of Marcone's men. Then some good Samaritans break them apart and though Harry claims his wallet has been stolen, his derelict appearance makes them disbelieve him. Harry uses a basic tracking spell with the blood left under his fingernails from the encounter. With that he could find the man who had stolen his hair.

Chapter 17 - The spell takes Dresden to the Varsity, a club owned by Marcone. With his talisman, Harry blows the doors to the club off their hinges and Marcone's quiet order empties the club. Dresden accuses Marcone's man named Gimpy of taking his hair. He further accuses Gimpy of playing both sides of the street. Gimpy's reaction after denial fails is to bring out a .38, but Cujo Hendricks ends the stand-off with three direct hits from his compact semiautomatic. Dresden regrets Gimpy's death, he did not intend for anyone to die, he just wanted to know where his hair is. Gimpy does not have it on his body. The lock of hair had to have been passed off to someone else before Gimpy arrived at the Varsity Club. Marcone tells Dresden that he will not help find Dresden's enemy; but that if Dresden does succeed in killing the evil wizard, Marcone will tell everyone that he sanctioned it. He further informs Dresden that it is not anything personal. It is business.

Chapter 18 - At this point, Dresden feels total despair. At such low points he thinks of his father, a good man, generous and a loser. The feeling upon Harry tonight is that of loss., much as he felt when his father died. Harry's feet carry him back to Linda Randall's apartment where Dresden spends the night on the floor. In the sunlight the next morning, Dresden discovers a film canister under Linda's bed; undeveloped film. Harry is not sure what it might reveal, but at least now it is a start. Just as Harry intends to leave the apartment a key turns in the lock and the door swings open.

Chapters 16 - 18 Analysis

For Harry, the worst part of the entire day is not the concussion, or the demon attack, or even Linda Randall's death. It is losing Murphy's trust. "It didn't matter that I had done what I had to to protect both her and myself. Noble intentions mean nothing." Pg. 206, Ch. 16. This feeling puts Harry in a very low spot emotionally and he fails to be watchful. Right then he is attacked again, but the purpose of the attack is to cut off a lock of his hair. This very act makes Dresden a marked man. Using part of a person's body; hair, blood, or fingernails, is a magical way of tracking that person and making sure the spell reaches the proper target. Harry knows that unless he gets his hair back, he will be the

next victim once the next storm hits the Chicago area. He uses his own tracking spell with the blood underneath his fingernails left from the attacker. This leads him to Marcone's club and at first Harry thinks that Marcone might be responsible, but this does not make sense. The only idea that makes sense is that one of Marcone's men has turned bad and is playing both sides. Harry hopes to get Marcone's help, but figures without the twisted but firm moral code of the crime boss. Marcone will not help Dresden find the killer, but if Dresden is successful, he will put the word out that he contracted Dresden to do it. This is one of the lowest emotional points for Dresden. He is in trouble with the White Council and with Murphy, Marcone will not help him, and he is out of leads. All the killer needs is a strong storm and Dresden will die. Time is running short and Harry is running out of ideas. An excellent story-telling technique is to put the protagonist into an impossible position, and then make it even worse. This maintains the tension of the story and keeps the reader involved; having a very vested interest in the protagonist succeeding.

Chapters 19 - 21

Chapters 19 - 21 Summary

Chapter 19 - There is no time for Harry to flee, so he hides as best he can behind the door. The man does not see Dresden; instead he looks under the bed. Instantly Dresden realizes this must be the photographer, the one who left the roll of film he had just found. Deciding to brazen it out, Harry confronts the man, using his police ID as cover. The man gives his name as Donny Wise and he admits to having taken photographs of the orgy from outside Victor Sells' house in Lake Providence. The participants included Linda, another woman and three men. Dresden decides that it is time to have a face-to-face discussion with Monica Sells.

Chapter 20 - At the Sells' residence, Dresden has to be forceful to gain entrance to Monica's home. Monica attempts to use a stun gun against Harry, but his aura around technological items causes it to malfunction. Harry has no intention of harming Monica, but her threat to kill him if he harms her children reminds him what she has at stake. Dresden accidentally accomplishes a brief soul gaze and sees Monica's fear, recognizes why she looks familiar and countless other details about her that he never wanted or even needed to now. He confronts Monica with his needs; why she came to him for help, where his hair is, and who killed Tommy Tamm, Jennifer Stanton, and Linda Randall. The storm outside grows louder and Dresden knows he is running very short on time. Finally Monica agrees to give him as much information as she has.

Chapter 21 - Monica leads Dresden to her kitchen, an obvious place of sanctuary for her. Here Harry discovers that Jennifer is Monica's younger sister, a rebel one who stood up for her and the children against Victor. This act of defiance is what got Jennifer killed. From this point on, Monica Sells describes her husband's gradual decline from a good man, father, and husband into an evil, paranoid, drug pushing wizard. She describes how Victor discovers that the use of anger made him more productive and as a result he would look for reasons to be angry. The he realized that lust worked even better than anger. Victor found the Beckitts and promised them retribution against Marcone in return for money and their bodies in ceremonial rituals he uses to create ThreeEye. For a while, Monica allows Victor to use her for his rituals, it kept him happy, and brought in money. But once Victor turned an eye toward their children, he crossed a line Monica could not allow. She wanted to leave Victor and Jennifer had pleaded her case with him. Victor's answer was to kill Monica's sister and Tommy Tamm was an incidental death due to proximity. As Dresden leaves, Monica's young daughter, Jenny asks Dresden if he will help them, then goes on to say that she hopes Harry is one of the good guys. That is when Harry decides to use the scorpion in his office to track Victor Sells. Unfortunately, Murphy beats him to his office, serving a search warrant on him because he failed to show up for questioning. As he had feared, the scorpion is alive, by magic and Murphy is in dire danger.

Chapters 19 - 21 Analysis

Harry wishes he could just turn the entire matter over to the White Council, but because of his situation with them, it is not an option. He must continue to rely on his abilities to bring a killer to justice. After he gets the information from the photographer in Linda Randall's apartment, Dresden finally makes the connection between Monica Sells and the paranormal killings. There is a connection and he needs to know why she did not just tell him. Monica feared not being believed, either by the police or by Dresden. Harry understands this because neither Murphy nor the White Council's warden will believe him right now. Butcher uses these reflective techniques throughout the story to lend greater credence to the story line and its characters. Once Harry manages to get Monica Sells to tell him the full story, Harry realizes just how much really is at stake. Monica is defending her innocent children. Harry must defend all other innocent people in Chicago. Again Butcher uses a reflective storytelling technique. Just as Harry figures out how to track Victor, Murphy interferes again, still trying to uphold the law as she knows it. Only this time, she puts herself in great danger, and Harry Dresden must rescue her.

Chapters 22 - 24

Chapters 22 - 24 Summary

Chapter 22 - Dresden rushes up the five flights of stairs of his office building to find Murphy collapsed and nearly incoherent in his office. She is not so incoherent she forgets why she is there and attaches a handcuff to Dresden and the other to her own wrist while Dresden is calling 911. Just then the scorpion appears and is the size of a small dog. While fighting the scorpion, hindered by Murphy's weight, Harry loses his blasting rod and staff, knocking them away from him. Knowing he cannot fight the scorpion down all the flights of stairs, Harry opts for the elevator, which the scorpion proceeds to open from the top like a tin can. A magic spell forces the elevator to the top of the elevator shaft, crushing the ever larger scorpion before plummeting back down to earth. Another spell cushions their fall and the elevator doors open onto the astonished faces of the EMT's.

Chapter 23 - The storm is coming closer and Harry is running out of time. Harry slips Murphy's smaller hand out of the handcuff and leaves her to the care of the emergency personnel. All Harry has left to do battle with the wizard is his mother's pentacle talisman. Dresden goes to McAnally's to borrow Mac's TransAm. Morgan, the warden, arrives and commands Harry to sit down and wait out the storm. Morgan accuses Dresden of using the power of the storms to effect the killings and he wants to keep Harry in his sight so on one else dies. Harry tries to reason with Morgan, telling the Warden that he really does know who the killer is and that if they just wait out the storm, Harry is the next to die. Morgan refuses to believe Dresden. Being left with no choice, Harry incapacitates Morgan with a chair, leaving him in a heap on the floor of the pub; unconscious, but alive.

Chapter 24 - Mac's TansAm races the storm at speeds exceeding 130 miles per hour. Harry arrives at Lake Providence just before the storm. Once at Victor Sells' lake house, Harry opens his Third Eye. This expands all one's senses and can be very draining. "The only thing I can say is that I felt as though a veil of thick cloth had been lifted away from me as I opened my eyes again—and not only from my eyes, but from all of my senses. I could abruptly smell the mud and fish odor of the lake, the trees around the house, the fresh scent of the coming rain preceding the storm on the smoke-stained wind." Pg. 288, Ch 24. However, magic comes from life and how one practices magic defines his or her character. One's character is defined by one's use of power. Harry puts his anger at the injustices leveled against him away. He faces the evil power of Victor Sells only with his skill, his wit, and his experience.

Chapters 22 - 24 Analysis

Harry realizes that in order to do what is right in his eyes, he will have to violate laws and rules held by others. Their laws and rules are right for them, and certainly from their



perspective. However, none of them have the full understanding of the entire picture as Harry does. In order to save himself and the lives of many innocent people, Harry must leave Karrin in the hands of the emergency medical personnel and hope that they do their job as well as he is trying to do. "I hated myself with every step. I hated leaving before I knew if Murphy would survive the scorpion's venomous sting. I hated that my apartment and my office building had been trashed, torn to pieces by demons and giant insects and my own clumsy power. I hated to close my eyes and see the twisted, mangled bodies of Jennifer Stanton and Tommy Tamm and Linda Randall. I hated the sick twisting fear in my guts when I imagined my own spare frame torn asunder by the same forces. And, most of all, I hated the one responsible for all of it. Victor Sells." Pg. 279 - 280, Ch. 23. Harry battles the forces of evil and so far his reward has been a spiritual slap in the face. "And what had been my reward for turning that power aside thus far? Suspicion and contempt from the very wizards I had acted to support and protect, condemnation from the White Council whose Law I clung to when all the world had been laid at my feet." Pg. 290, Ch. 24. This is a theme that runs through the entire story, that doing what is right can be seen as wrong by others who have a different perspective. This is considered to be a form of a code of honor, and Butcher makes it pretty clear that each world has rules and laws that must be kept and honored so that there is order in those worlds. Staying true to that code of honor is one of the most difficult things Harry does, but he never sways from what he knows in his heart to be right.

Chapters 25 - 27

Chapters 25 - 27 Summary

Chapter 25 - Harry's sight of Victor Sells' lake house through his Third Eye reveals the abomination of power of an evil man. It also reveals that Sells practices powerful evil magic, but fails to practice more mundane things like not locking his door and not having an alarm system. Dresden is able to get into the house without any effort. Sells and the Beckitts are in the middle of a ceremony with a rabbit, around whose head is tied Harry's black hair. Harry breaks through Victor's magic circle with a mere film canister. It being a mortal thing, thrown by a real person; has the power to break the shielding circle of magic. The power of the spell roars freely through the room rather than being focused on killing Harry. Dresden's experience and training give him an advantage. Victor can only think of using magic; Harry uses everything he can, including his body with which he tackles Sells and drives a knee into his groin. Victor calls forth more scorpions and the Beckitts bring out automatic guns. Harry receives a round in his hip.

Chapter 26 - Harry has no weapons and is trapped in the kitchen with a mad wizard, two followers with guns and a roomful of rapidly growing scorpions. The broom that had fallen on him seems a laughable weapon until Dresden releases it with a spell to sweep up the scorpions. It seems like such a simple spell, but effectively sweeps the scorpions out of the way. Dresden and Sells exchange taunting insults and Dresden taunts Sells with the news he has informed the police about the illegal drug production, the White Council about the evil uses of magic, and even Johnny Marcone for interfering with the crime boss's business. Victor wants to know who told on him, but Dresden realizes that if he tells and Sells survives that he would kill Monica and his children. Sells makes the mistake of calling forth the demon, using the demon's name. Names are power in magic. Dresden can now release the demon from Victor's bondage. He figures he may die, but he intends to take Sells with him. The house is on fire, scorpions teaming below, and a hungry demon stalking them. Dresden clips the free end of the handcuffs around the railing to keep him from falling and this saves Dresden as Victor falls down into the hell of his own creation. Just then Morgan appears over Dresden and raises his sword.

Chapter 27 - Harry wakes up coughing. He did not die. Morgan actually saves Dresden's life because he finally sees who was responsible for the perpetration of evil magic. As much as Morgan hates Dresden, he is totally fair and will report Harry's good deeds to the White Council, which will lift the Doom of Damocles from him. The Beckitts are arrested for being naked, then later prosecuted for the production and distribution of ThreeEye. Murphy forgives Dresden and their professional relationship returns to normal, but their friendship remains permanently altered. Monica Sells and her kids vanish into the witness protection program. Dresden remains dedicated to using his powers of magic to make the world a better place.

Chapters 25 - 27 Analysis

Harry knows that he really is the only one who can stop Sells. He has no weapons but his wits, his skills, his training, and his belief in right. He also knows that he will likely die in this battle, but Harry's moral code will allow him no other choice. He uses Sells' lack of formal training against him. Sells' learned magic, but he did not learn to be logical, to use magic for the purposes of good. Instead, he uses magic for power and perversion. This is what Dresden uses against Sells. Because Sells violated the Laws of Magic, Dresden is able to reverse some of the spells, like sweeping the scorpions off the upper balcony, and releasing the demon. This suddenly makes Sells afraid, for now he does not know how to control the evil that he has released. Dresden cannot control it either, but he did not create it, so it balances the playing field a little bit. Just when Dresden believes he might survive, Morgan turns up and raises his sword. Again, that code of honor comes into play because Morgan cannot execute Dresden. What Morgan has seen proves that Dresden is not responsible for the killings or for calling forth the demons.

While Morgan hates Dresden, he cannot carry out an execution based on his personal feelings. Harry is removed from the Doom of Damocles. He reestablishes his professional relationship with Murphy, but he has lost her friendship. Trust violated is trust lost. Dresden understands, but he still feels the loss. Even that loss will not keep Harry Dresden from continuing to make his part of the world a better place. "But in my part of the country, I'm trying to nail things down. I don't want to live in Victor's jungle, even if it did eventually devour him. I don't want to live in a world where the strong rule and the weak cower. I'd rather make a place where things are a little quieter. Where trolls stay the hell under their bridges and where elves don't come swooping out to snatch children from their cradles. Where vampires respect the limits and where the faeries mind their p's and q's." Page 322, Chapter 27. In Harry's case, he hoped the White Council would see that he uses magic for good. While they are still suspicious of him, they do reward his good behavior by lifting the Doom of Damocles. This is a small reward, but it is a reward.

Characters

Harry Dresden

Full name: Harry Blackstone Copperfield Dresden. Harry is a practicing wizard, the only professional one in the country, and certainly the only one in the Chicago phone book. One thing Harry really believes in is Magic; it is the only thing that has never let him down. He practices magic the way computer nerds work on computers. He works out of an office in mid-town Chicago and is seemingly always out of money. Harry, as with all wizards, has trouble around anything technological, and as a rule avoids such devices. His basement apartment with its subbasement is run without much electricity. He relies on candles, fire, and fuel lanterns. He showers with cold water because the water heater never works when he is around. Harry avoids elevators whenever possible, and drives a Blue Beetle because it is a basic enough car that his aura will not interfere with the way it functions. Harry is an orphan. His mother died when he was very young and his father tried to do the best he could taking care of him, but as a mediocre magician at best, was not a good provider.

After Dresden's father dies, Harry lives with a mentor who recognizes his powers, but tries to get Harry to practice the Dark wizard arts. In self-defense Harry kills his mentor with magic, which demands an immediate ruling from the White Council to place the Doom of Damocles over Harry's head, meaning that if he breaks even one of the Seven Rules of Magic, he is to be executed immediately by sword. This sentence means that Dresden always has a Warden of the White Council, Morgan, watching his activities. Morgan makes life very difficult for Dresden, not because Harry is doing anything wrong, but because in attempting to find out who is causing the paranormal homicides, Harry walks a very thin line between breaking and not breaking the rules. Not only is Harry at risk of breaking the Rules of Magic, he risks breaking the rules of normal society and friendship. In his efforts to protect Karrin, Harry must lie to her on several occasions. These lies nearly destroy their friendship, and for much of the case Harry feels desperately alone. In trying to do the right thing, he ends up hurting the very people he is trying to protect.

Karrin Murphy

A Chicago homicide detective and in charge of Special Investigations, meaning she investigates anything that seems out of the ordinary. When Karrin gets cases such as these, she usually solicits the help of her friend, and wizard, Harry Dresden. Karrin does not look like a homicide cop. She looks more like someone's beloved aunt. Make no mistake, she is as tough as they come, and she is willing to give Harry Dresden the benefit of the doubt, at least initially. At one point in the story, Karrin reacts with great compassion when Dresden is injured and suffering from a concussion. She takes him home and even gives him some money, with the expectation that he will pay her back. Karrin has very strong ideas about what it means to be a friend, and when those rules



are violated, she reacts with strength and determination. At one point, she even believes that Harry could possibly be responsible for the paranormal murders taking place in Chicago, and despite their friendship, she puts him under arrest because that is what the law requires of her. For Karrin, the world is black and white. She will sometimes give Dresden a little more leeway that she might give others, but once she believes that he has deliberately betrayed her, she puts all personal feelings aside and does what she believes is right.

Victor Sells

Initially he is a missing husband and intrigued by magic. Victor Sells discovers he has some magical abilities and proceeds to teach himself the rudiments of magic. Unfortunately, he works without a mentor, and he knows nothing of the White Council. Without this guidance, Victor uses magic to gain money and power. He discovers the Third Eye vision of the wizard and creates a drug in the same way Dresden creates potions to mimic the effects of this vision. The drug is called ThreeEye and becomes one of the hottest new illegal drugs on the streets of Chicago. Sells discovers that anger gives him greater power. This dark wizard discovers that he can use anger to make him more powerful, and he uses this against his wife and children, getting more and more out of control. Then he discovers that better than anger is lust. Not content with how quickly he can create the drug, Sells uses first his wife, Monica, and then her sister, Jennifer Stanton. Because Jennifer is in the business of carnal pleasures, Victor uses her connections. More sex means more drugs means more money. Victor loses all sense of propriety. He will stop at nothing to become the most powerful of men, the most powerful of wizards. He learns to use the power of the storms over Lake Michigan along Chicago's shoreline to effect his spells in calling forth demons and causing the hearts of his enemies to explode out of their chests. His belief in his abilities grows far beyond actual fact. His character becomes one of desiring total domination over everything.

Monica Sells

Monica first comes to Harry telling him that she needs to locate her missing husband. In reality, Monica knows that her husband caused the death of her sister, Jennifer Stanton, and she hopes that because Harry is a wizard, he might actually be able to stop Victor. However, Monica is unwilling to divulge everything to Dresden because she is ashamed of what her husband has become and his role in the production and sale of ThreeEye. She is also ashamed of her role as a sex slave that assured the creation of the drug because once Victor started looking around for new participants, he settled on his two young children. For Monica, this was the line that cannot be crossed. She wants to leave Victor and take the children with her, but knows that Victor will never allow her to leave. Once he kills Jennifer, Monica really begins to fear for her life. Her motivation for not telling Dresden everything is unclear. She does seem to expect that Dresden, being a wizard, should be able to stop Victor. When it becomes apparent that Dresden is unable to stop Victor, Monica loses all hope. She fears for her children and she grieves

for her sister. She knows that her husband is a monster, but having tried Dresden and believing him to have failed, she loses all hope.

Bianca

Vampiress and proprietor of the Velvet Room Escort Service. Bianca's human form is that of a beautiful, seductive woman and it is very important to her that everyone view her in this manner. When Harry first comes to see her, Bianca pretends that it is a surprise, yet when Harry mentions Jennifer Stanton's name, Bianca loses control of herself and reverts to her vampire form, ugly and frightening. She scratches Dresden's neck and only because he repels her with his handkerchief holding the sun, does she not feed on him. Bianca initially believes that Dresden is responsible for Jennifer's death and she is extremely angry with him. Believing Harry to be responsible gives Bianca some feeling of control over the situation. Discovering that Harry is not responsible causes great fear because an unknown wizard is perpetrating the paranormal killings, and there is no way of knowing who might be next. She gives Dresden the name of Linda Randall, a friend of Jennifer's, who works as a driver for the Beckitt's. This is all she is willing to do for Dresden. Bianca's desire to be seen as beautiful causes her to be very angry with Dresden because she believes he tricked her into showing her true self, and for this she will never forgive him. She takes her frustration out on Paula, her hostess, by feeding on Paula as Dresden leaves.

Susan Rodriguez

Reporter for the Chicago Arcane, a paranormal magazine. Tries to seduce Dresden into giving information about the deaths of Stanton and Tamm. She's very interested in news of the paranormal, having covered the events in Branson, Missouri. She even teases Dresden that he should have fleeced the country singer and at least pretended that there was a haunting. Susan is a beautiful and sexy woman, one who Dresden finds very attractive. Susan is frustrated at Harry's refusal to give in to her sexual advances, but her first job is that of a reporter. Even after she faces a demon intent on killing her and Dresden, she is of the opinion that it will make a terrific story.

Bob

Is a spirit entity who resides inside a human skull in Dresden's sub-basement laboratory. Bob is the ancient equivalent of a high speed computer. Without Bob, Harry would be unable to call up information that he needs in order to put together spells and potions. One thing about Bob is that he has a very intense interest in the opposite sex. The only way he is allowed out of the skull is if Dresden gives him permission. At one point in the story, Bob manages to coerce Harry into giving him 24 hours off, and the resulting rumors about the events at a party at the University of Chicago wisely remain merely rumors.



Gentleman Johnny Marcone

Johnny Marcone is the head of Chicago's crime syndicate. He gives all the appearances of being a gentleman, and in a strangely perverse way, he has a code of honor. He respects Dresden for being honest, and yet he continues to try to bribe Dresden. Most of his men are loyal, but when he finds out that one is not, then he turns on the man without emotion. To Johnny, most things are simply business, nothing personal. His soul gaze with Dresden frightens Dresden more than it does Marcone; an unusual occurrence. He is a man to be feared.

Morgan

Warden of the White Council who is responsible for watching over the activities of Harry Dresden, ensuring that he does not violate the conditions of the Doom of Damocles over Dresden's head. Morgan would really like to find Dresden guilty, for he truly hates Harry. In his favor, Morgan is painfully honest and must report to the White Council that Harry has no responsibility in the paranormal deaths. As much as it pains Morgan to tell the White Council, he must admit that Harry Dresden unmasked the evil wizard responsible for the deaths.

Cujo Hendricks

Driver for Johnny Marcone. He is a huge man with really big hands. He is not very smart.

Gimpy Lawrence

One of Johnny Marcone's men who turns traitor and reports Marcone's activities to Victor Sells.

Jennifer Stanton

Deceased. She is formerly an escort of the Velvet Room and employee of Bianca. She was also the sister of Monica Sells. Jennifer worked as a call girl and enjoyed sex. Initially she did not mind her brother-in-law, Victor, using her contacts to further his business. Only when she discovers how afraid Monica is, does she confront Victor; threatening to go to Johnny Marcone with the information that Victor is selling ThreeEye, cutting into Marcone's business. As a result of this confrontation with Victor, Jennifer dies.



Detective Ron Carmichael

Karrin Murphy's partner who works very hard to track down killers and bring them to justice. What he really has a hard time with is the hiring of Harry Dresden, because Carmichael does not believe in magic and feels that Harry's "insights" are bogus and a waste of the department's money. Because of his regard for Murphy, Carmichael tolerates Dresden, but not much more than that.

Tommy Tomm

Deceased. Formerly Johnny Marcone's bodyguard. His death is secondary to Jennifer Stanton's and only occurs because they are together at the time Victor Sells casts his spell.

Mac

Owner of McAnally's Pub. Knows how to get along with magic types without getting involved.

Toot-Toot

Fairy from the land of Nevernever who forgets to watch out for Harry Dresden's tricks, and is usually caught by him. Toot also loves pizza

Linda Randall

Driver for the Beckitt's and former lover of both Jennifer Stanton and Tommy Tomms. She used to work for Bianca at the escort service. She is the third paranormal death, because she agrees to give Dresden information.

Donny Wise

Photographer of sexually explicit photos. He takes photos of Victor Sells' orgies at Linda Randall's request and is caught by Dresden at the scene of Linda's crime.

Howard Fairweather

City Police Commissioner who pushes Murphy for answers, believing that by making her look bad, he makes himself look good.

Paula

Bianca's hostess and lover who is addicted to the narcotic in the saliva of a vampire.

Mr. and Mrs. Beckitt

Parents of a very young girl who died as a result of being in the cross-fire of Marcone's men and a rival group. In their desire to get vengeance against Marcone, they join forces with Victor Sells, giving both their money and their bodies to the cause. They have nothing else to live for.

Jenny Sells

The young daughter of Monica and Victor Sells.

Billy Sells

The young son of Monica and Victor Sells.

Johnny Marcone

The head of Chicago's crime syndicate. He gives all the appearances of being a gentleman, and in a strangely perverse way, he has a code of honor. He respects Dresden for being honest, and yet he continues to try to bribe Dresden. Most of his men are loyal, but when he finds out that one is not, then he turns on the man without emotion. To Johnny, most things are simply business, nothing personal. His soul gaze with Dresden frightens Dresden more than it does Marcone; an unusual occurrence. He is a man to be feared.



Objects/Places

Harry Desden's Office

Located in mid-town Chicago, on an upper floor, and devoid of any modern technological equipment.

The Madison Hotel

Scene of the double homicide.

Black Duster

Harry's signature coat that Murphy believes belongs on the set of El Dorado.

Thaumaturgy

The act of creating something on a small scale and then giving it enough energy to happen on a large scale. The perpetrator only needs hair, fingernails, or blood to create a voodoo doll type scenario.

Nevernever

The parallel world that is not of the modern world. It is the world of the vampire, the faerie, the sorcerer.

White Council

The ruling entity over all that is magic. Harry fears them because they would like to destroy him, they do not trust Harry.

Scorpion

Dried and seemingly harmless, left by "Monica" Sells to help Harry find her missing husband.

Mister

Dresden's pet cat who weighs in at thirty pounds.



McAnally's Pub

The comfortable den for magic-types comprised of thirteen stools, tables, and pillars, designed to diminish fields of excited wizards.

Blue Beetle

Harry Dresden's car is named the Blue Beetle, but it is no longer blue because it has been replaced with parts from other colored cars, but he still calls it the Blue Beetle.

TransAm

The car Mac allows Harry to borrow in order to outrun the storm. This is one of the few times Harry's aura does not interfere with the functioning of a car.

Third Eye

The wizard's ability to look at things with the veil removed, it opens and expands all senses to see things as they really are. Wizards use this rarely, and can open and close it at will.

ThreeEye

A poison, a drug created by magic that mimics the wizard Third Eye, but once the drug has been consumed, the person cannot control how long they are under its effect, and it can alter their mind. It is highly addictive and works with a person's fears and emotions.

Talisman

A magical and powerful symbol. For Harry, his talisman is his mother's silver pentacle.

Doom of Damocles

The threat of a death sentence should the afflicted one violate a law of magic.

Themes

Most People Live by a Code of Honor

Usually when discussing integrity and a code of honor, most people believe that only the "good guys" live by a code of honor. A good hard look at most people will reveal that nearly all of them live by a code of honor. In *Storm Front*, Jim Butcher introduces Harry Dresden, a wizard. Harry lives under the Doom of Damocles because he killed his mentor, however it was in self-defense. Since that time Harry has struggled to prove to the White Council that all he is doing is trying to make a living by following the Laws of Magic while using his talents. His experience with the paranormal homicides makes it very difficult to always do the right thing in the eyes of everyone, but he follows his own Code of Honor, even when it means that he may lose the friendship of one of his very few friends. Similarly, Monica follows her own code of honor. She is willing to put up with Victor's perversions until it comes to her own children and the death of her sister.

Bianca, a vampire, reacts with fear and anger because she believes Dresden to be responsible for Jennifer's death, but when she realizes that he had nothing to do with it, she backs off and gives him what little help she can. Murphy can only do what she believes is right, and that is strongly defined by the law that she is sworn to uphold. Even when she wants to look the other way, when the evidence mounts against Dresden, she realizes that she must put him under arrest. Johnny Marcone, the mob king of Chicago, also follows his own code of honor. Being the head of the crime syndicate, he is a crook, and yet he respects Dresden for being honest. He also tells Dresden that he will not interfere with the events set into place. In direct contrast, Victor Sells violates every type of code of honor. He has no conscience and lives only to fulfill his wants and needs. Evil is the only thing that will not follow the Code of Honor.

Protection Can Be Inhibiting

Harry Dresden and Karrin Murphy have an interesting relationship. They both respect one another, and for Karrin this is especially important because Harry is a wizard and she does not understand the first thing about magic. What she does believe is that Harry is who he claims to be and that he has the ability to help her investigate anything that appears to be paranormal. This is especially important to Karrin because she is in charge of Special Investigations, which encompasses anything that has the appearance of paranormal. For Harry, this is a mixed blessing. The more Karrin needs his help, the more money he makes on a fairly consistent basis. However, there are times when Karrin investigates a paranormal homicide and as in *Storm Front*, she puts herself in harm's way. Knowing that this is a possibility, Dresden begins to withhold information from Karrin. He does it for the best of reasons. Unfortunately, Karrin does not give him a chance to explain his reasons. What she does know is that he is holding back on her and she feels betrayed by a friend. Harry's protection of her inhibits her investigation into the three paranormal murders she is required to solve. Conversely, Karrin feels

protective of Harry. She knows about Bianca and the danger she could present to Dresden. Because of this, Karrin forbids Dresden from seeing Bianca. Dresden knows that he must talk to Bianca, because Bianca will never talk openly to the police. Karrin also refuses to allow Harry any further into the investigation than she absolutely must.

"Not a chance. I am ass deep in alligators already without you getting difficult on me. You're already hurt, and don't ask me to buy some line about falling down the stairs. I don't want to have to scape you off the concrete. Whoever did Tommy Tamm is going to get nasty when someone comes poking around, and it isn't your job to do it. It's mine." Pg. 152, Ch. 11. Karrin's concern for Dresden as well as her strict adherence to right and wrong inhibit Dresden's ability to do what Karrin needs most, find the killer.

Perseverance Brings Results

The theme of perseverance is often found in literature and it is what keeps the reader turning the pages of the story. Without perseverance, there is no forward progress, there is no story. What does make the story is the degree to which the protagonist perseveres. In *Storm Front*, Harry Dresden not only has to battle mortal bad guys, he has to put up with some really awful paranormal opponents as well. In *Storm Front*, Harry faces a furious vampiress who promises to never forget how he forced her to reveal her true self. He escapes the bite of a vampire only to be hit over the head with a baseball bat. Suffering the ill effects of a probably concussion, Harry then deals with a mortal druggie high on ThreeEye and a demon who absolutely refuses to give up. By this time, Harry understands just how dangerous this case is and recognizes that he cannot give up. Giving up will put Karrin Murphy in direct line of sight of the killer and he cannot allow that to happen. The stakes just keep getting higher and higher as Harry realizes that allowing the evil wizard killer to continue his activities unabated. Harry also knows that Karrin cannot stop a paranormal killer like Victor Sells and that he is the only one who can. He must work in such a way that the White Council does not discover his research because they already believe that he may be responsible for the killings. The difficulty Harry faces would deter even the most determined of mortals, including Karrin Murphy, for she succumbs to the bite of a giant scorpion. There is nothing for Harry to do but to persevere and find the killer; then he must stop the wizard's activities permanently.

Style

Point of View

The point of view of *Storm Front* by Jim Butcher is first person, with periodic second person asides to the reader as: "Please, do you think wizards just give information like that away? You don't know what I went through to get it." Pg. 68, Ch. 6. Because the story is in today's era and time, everything is told in a humorous manner giving the reader the understanding that comedy is Harry Dresden's main way of handling things, especially stress. When Harry views the dead and mutilated bodies, his first response is a joke, but deeper down inside himself, he's screaming at the horror of the scene and takes advantage of the bucket outside the room when he vomits in reaction. Even when Harry meets with the Chicago crime syndicate's leader, Johnny Marcone, he responds to this stressful situation with sardonic humor as well.

Telling the story in first person gives the reader an immediacy that is absent in third person storytelling formats. Because the reader experiences the story as the main character does, the tendency is to race from page to page to keep up with the events of the book. Because Harry is such a likable character, the reader easily identifies with him, even though he is a wizard and has an ease of familiarity with vampires and faeries that elude most readers. Harry also speaks directly to the reader from time to time, giving a real sense of intimacy that can be very appealing. As Harry experiences the difficulties of maintaining standards both in his world and in the world of magic, he realizes just how lonely his existence really is. There is no one in his life who can understand everything that he knows and experiences. Initially he believes that Karrin Murphy might be that person, but he discovers that she is really bound by the constraints of the law. He is attracted to Susan Rodriguez, but her line of work, reporter for a paranormal magazine, makes her a difficult person to get close to as well. This information makes Harry appear very vulnerable to the reader, and if it were not told in first person, it would lack power. There is nothing in the first-person point of view in this story to indicate that the narrator is unreliable.

Setting

The setting is in modern-day Chicago, mostly in the mid-town area. Harry's office is in an older building, on the fifth floor, and virtually all of the time Harry uses the stairs rather than the elevator. Both the stairs and the elevator become important later in the story when Harry needs to come to the rescue of Karrin Murphy when she is attacked by a dog-sized scorpion. Harry's lungs protest the sprint up the five stories' worth of stairs, and then because of Karrin's comatose condition, he must relent and use the elevator on the way down. True to his fears, the elevator becomes a prison, with the scorpion attacking them from above, cutting the top of the elevator open like a tin can. Harry's home is another scene, a basement apartment in a very old house, complete with a sub-basement where Harry keeps his laboratory. It is messy, but comfortable. It is



lighted with candles, fuel lanterns and a fireplace due to Harry's aura interfering with mundane things like electricity. In the sub-basement are all Harry's books, and the skull that houses his spirit entity computer. Harry's home and office complement his character and make him eminently believable.

Other settings in the story similarly reflect a character and their makeup. This includes the Velvet Room, Bianca's place of business for her escort service. It reflects her desire to be seen as beautiful and appealing. Lieutenant Karrin Murphy's office is businesslike, but does display her aikido trophies reflecting her competitive nature. Monica Sells loves her kitchen and even Dresden can sense that her kitchen is her den, her refuge from the ugly things of the world. Butcher uses settings as a complement to the characters in this story.

Language and Meaning

The language of the story is familiar, easy-going, and yet filled with the elements of magic. Harry Dresden's entire character is made up of magic and as a result the entire story is surrounded by elements of magic, both good and bad. Butcher makes a commentary on magic through the use of language in *Storm Front*. As with all things, there are good and bad in every entity, and magic is neither good nor bad. How magic is used defines it. Butcher has Dresden thinking as one would think, using common and modern language both in his speech and his thoughts. He also makes very good use of dialogue and showing the reader a scene rather than always describing it. Using common colloquial language Dresden's character becomes very authentic to the reader. His vocabulary only becomes technical when it comes to magical terms. When he is not speaking of magic, Dresden's language paints him as a common man, an everyday guy who is having a tough time in life. The words of magic that Dresden uses are Latin, and because it is essentially a dead language, the use of them brings to mind days of long ago, days of fire and brimstone, superstition, and lack of understanding. This is exactly what Dresden believes is wrong with the modern world. Not enough people in it have the respect for what they cannot see or understand even while they might even be looking for it.

"And even though they were once again starting to open their eyes to the world of magic and the arcane that had been with them all the while, they still thought I must be some kind of joke." Pg. 3, Chapter 1. The language used in the story relates to the common man, and draws him into the world of magic, because that really is what man is looking for; some way to understand the world around them that defies explanation. That which man does not understand causes fear. By having his characters speak as clearly as possible, Butcher creates a world that is as magical as it is believable.

Structure

Jim Butcher uses the most common storytelling structure there is, that of bringing the reader along for the ride as the protagonist experiences the events of the story. By

opening the story with a man who seems down and out, needing money, being ridiculed for his chosen profession, and then a caller whose very reluctance discredits him, the reader is drawn into Harry Dresden's life. No sooner does he get off the phone with the reluctant caller, does Harry get summoned to the Madison Hotel by the police to give his opinion on a seemingly paranormal double homicide. This event functions as a character witness for Harry as the reader might be dubious about the narrator's reliability, but if the police want his opinion, then it might be worth considering. Each event in the story is met by the protagonist without forewarning, giving the reader as much of a surprise as Dresden gets. The story is fast-paced, chronological, and intimate. The reader knows exactly what Harry is thinking, and Butcher is quite skilled at showing the reader what is happening rather than relying too much on prose. The dialogue is quick, fast paced, and interesting. Very rarely does the pace of the book drop, once all the main characters of the story have been introduced. The reader becomes emotionally involved immediately, and by using sardonic jokes or cliff-hanger chapter endings, the author guides the reader through the story with very few places to stop and rest. From time to time the only logical place to pause in the story is right in the middle of a chapter.

Quotes

"The end of the twentieth century and the dawn of a new millennium had seen something of a renaissance in the public awareness of the paranormal. Psychics, haunts, vampires—you name it. People still don't take them seriously, but all the things Science has promised us hadn't come to pass. Disease was still a problem. Starvation was still a problem. Violence and crime and war were still problems. In spite of the advance of technology, things just hadn't changed the way everyone had hoped and thought they would." Page 3, Chapter 1.

"Most magic involves a circle of one kind or another. Drawing a circle sets a local limit in what a wizard is trying to do. It helps him refine his magic, focus and direct it more clearly. It does this by creating a sort of screen, defined by the perimeter of the circle that keeps random magical energy from going past it, containing it within the circle so that it can be used." Page 67, Chapter 6

"It had a bat-like face horrid and ugly, the head too big for its body. Gaping, hungry jaws. Its shoulders were hunched and powerful. Membranous wings stretched between the joints of its almost skeletal arms. Flabby black breasts hung before it, spilling out of the black dress that no longer looked feminine. Its eyes were wide, black, and staring, and a kind of leathery, slimy hide covered its flesh, like an inner tube lathered with Vaseline, though there were tiny holes corroded in it by the sunlight I had brought with me.." Page 111, Chapter 9.

"I'd made the vampire cry. Great, I felt like a real superhero. Harry Dresden, breaker of monsters' hearts." Page 118, Chapter 9.

"The hair on the back of my neck prickled. The man running toward me kept on screaming, high and terrified, his voice a long and uninterrupted peal of . . . something. Terror, panic, lust, rage, all rolled up into a ball and sent spewing out into the air through his vocal cords." Page 143, Chapter 11.

"There is a reason I'll go out on a limb to help Murphy. She's good people. One of the best." Pg. 146, Ch. 12.

"I could sense, waiting, the walls of the house above. I could sense, waiting, the fire of the deadly lightning, leaping from cloud to cloud above and seeking a path of least resistance to the patient, timeless earth that bore the brunt of the storm's attack. All four elements interacting, moving, energy flashing from place to place in each of its forms. There was a lot of potential in storms, that a sorcerer could tap into if he was desperate or stupid enough. A lot of energy to be used, up there, where the forces of ancient nature brawled and tumbled." Page 163, Chapter 13.

"It rattled them, shook them to their cores, this sudden, violent, and bloody evidence that three hundred years of science and research was no match for the things that were still, even after all this time, lurking in the dark." Pg. 198, Ch. 15.



"I took deep breaths, struggling to see clear of the anger, the hate, the deep lust that burned within me for vengeance and retribution. That wasn't what magic was for. That wasn't what magic did. Magic came from life itself, from the interaction of nature and the elements, from the energy of all living beings, and especially of people. A man's magic demonstrates what sort of person he is, what is held most deeply inside of him. There is no truer gauge of a man's character than the way in which he employs his strength, his power." Page 291, Chapter 24.

"Ingredients for potions. This is how Victor was making the ThreeEye. He was doing the same thing I did when I made my little potions, but on a grander scale, using energy he stole from other places, other people. He used absinthe as the base, and moved out from there. Victor was mass-producing what amounted to a magical poison, one that probably remained inert until it was inside someone, interacting with their emotions and desires." Page 296, Chapter 25.

Topics for Discussion

Discuss the concept of Science as a religion.

Why don't people feel comfortable giving their real name to a wizard? In Harry's case is this justified?

Describe a soul gaze. Give three examples of Harry's experience with soul-gazing.

Describe McAnally's bar and Mac. Why does Harry feel comfortable here? What is the basis of Harry's trust in Mac?

What is the White Council and why does Harry fear them so much?

Describe Karrin Murphy's relationship with Harry Dresden. Why does she feel betrayed by him?

Describe the relationship between Susan Rodriguez and Harry Dresden

Discuss Monica Sells' behavior throughout the story. Do you find her believable? What finally prompts her to act?

Describe Bianca, her human appearance, her place of business, and her vampire appearance. What does she hold against Harry?

Why does Harry not trust the White Council enough to try to explain what he is trying to do in uncovering the evil wizard? Do you agree with his actions? Why or why not?

Who is Morgan? What are his motivations for his behavior? Is he true to his character?

Harry believes that he has hurt a number of people, and let them down. Talk about this and explain why Harry believes as he does. Is he right or wrong?