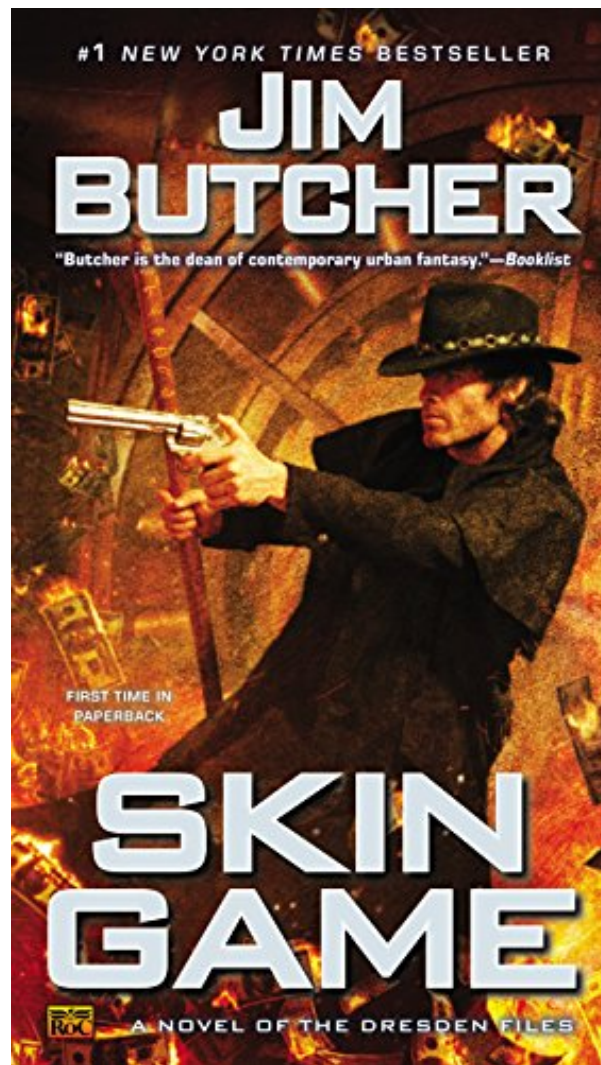


# SKIN GAME: A NOVEL OF THE DRESDEN FILES BY JIM BUTCHER



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#1 NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER

# JIM BUTCHER

"Butcher is the dean of contemporary urban fantasy."—*Booklist*

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# SKIN GAME



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From Jim Butcher comes the newest novel in the #1 New York Times bestselling Dresden Files...

Harry Dresden, Chicago's only professional wizard, is about to have a very bad day. Because as Winter Knight to the Queen of Air and Darkness, Harry never knows what the scheming Mab might want him to do. Usually, it's something awful.

Mab has traded Harry's skills to pay off a debt. And now he must help a group of villains led by Harry's most despised enemy, Nicodemus Archleone, to break into a high-security vault so that they can then access a vault in the Nevernever.

Problem is, the vault belongs to Hades, Lord of the freaking Underworld. And Dresden is dead certain that Nicodemus has no intention of allowing any of his crew to survive the experience. Dresden's always been tricky, but he's going to have to up his backstabbing game to survive this mess....

From the Paperback edition.

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#### Most helpful customer reviews

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"Dear God in Heaven, Harry."

By Tom Shutt

An ex-cop, a Denarian, a mercenary sorcerer, a wanted warlock, a shapeshifter, and a Warden of the White Council all walk into a slaughterhouse...

Alright, that joke isn't really set up to elicit a lot of laughs, but this book does have plenty of laugh-out-loud moments. *Skin Game* is the fifteenth book in Jim Butcher's fantastic Dresden Files series, and this review is going to assume that you have already read the first fourteen books. If not, you should get on that.

Since this novel is the 15th out of a proposed series of about 20 books, you can expect this number to hold a certain degree of significance in the life of Harry Dresden. Much like in the 10th book, *Small Favor*, Queen Mab wants Harry to do something despicable for her, and he doesn't really have a choice in the matter. In this case, he's robbing the Lord of the Underworld for some of the Church's most powerful artifacts--and he is allied with Nicodemus Archleone, the baddest of the Denarians and Harry's greatest archenemy.

Harry Dresden has had a rough time of it so far, and the books thus far have had their ups and downs; lots of fist-in-the-air moments juxtaposed with some cringe-worthy scenes of forced, awkward dialogue. *Skin Game* is a return to some of Butcher's best characters, and it is easily one of the better books in the series.

I loved this book for many reasons, but the greatest one is this: Harry is back.

While the last few books have been weighed down pretty heavily by the established lore of Dresden's world, *Skin Game* introduces some fresh faces to bring back Harry's dry wit and light-heartedness that have been so notably absent. He is less mopey about being the Winter Knight, or at least less vocal about it, and he is just as affably awkward around beautiful women as he was at the start of the series. After having dated Susan Rodriguez, resisted the advances of Lara Raith, and thoroughly sexed the Queen of Air and Darkness, you'd think Harry would be able to cope with alluring fun bags and shapely thighs. Nevertheless, this lack of character development was actually a bonus, because it made him more like the Dresden of old, the young renegade wizard who didn't carry the weight of the world on his shoulders.

Still, that doesn't mean that we're wiping the slate clean. Harry has been a pretty awful friend for the past couple books, and that karmic justice is catching up to him now. He can't keep up the lone-wolf protector routine forever, and Butcher brings some of these issues to the fore here.

In addition, Harry has been the Winter Knight for a while now, and it shows in this book. It isn't always explicitly shown, but the kinds of injuries he sustains and ignores, the kinds of comments he makes without realizing, all indicate a deeper dependence on the mantle. Several of these moments gave me chills (pun intended), because like it or not, Harry Dresden the gumshoe private investigator is disappearing on us, slowly being replaced by something colder and darker.

Harry is also considerably cleverer than in previous books; he's no longer the fire-slinging brute who stumbles upon victory by sheer luck. A wizard can overcome almost any obstacle given proper time to plan, and Harry finally seems to be following his own advice, devising plans that make his contract suicide after Chichén Itzá look like child's play.

While Dresden still cracks off plenty of Star Wars references, *Skin Game* adds a slew of new fandoms to his repertoire, so be on the lookout for some Monty Python and Lord of the Rings as well, to name a couple.

I did not receive an ARC of this book. I didn't even pre-order it and wait to read it after a good night's rest. I stayed up until midnight, and then until 3 a.m. (because apparently midnight on EST isn't good enough for Amazon), just so I could start as soon as possible. Then I stayed up until sleep sucker-punched me into unconsciousness; and when I woke up, I started reading again. And you know what?

It was worth it.

After more than fifteen months of waiting, Jim Butcher has provided me with a book that improves upon the best aspects of past Dresden stories. Am I biased for being a long-time fan of the series? Probably. But fifteen books in, this story isn't really for newcomers, is it? This review is for all of those readers who, like me, have questioned whether Harry Dresden was worth following for another six years or more, whether Jim Butcher had lost interest in his flagship character after more than a decade and a half of writing about him.

I like to think this book is a tribute to the fans. It has pulpy fight scenes and distractingly beautiful women, and the build-up to the heist of Hades is something to behold. Harry is becoming more aware of the community of allies that he has created, and he is becoming wise in his years. Dresden makes up for a lot of debts he has accumulated over the years, and it feels like we finally get some closure to things that have bothered Harry for ages now.

If you've read this far, you're good people. I like good people, and I liked this book. You can do the math.

5/5 stars.

153 of 169 people found the following review helpful.

PARKOUR!!

By VampireNovelFan

I'll kick this off with my favorite quotes:

"I can't tell you how many jobs I've done without a hitch since the last time I saw you, Dresden. You walk through the door and everything goes to hell."

"That's embroidered on my towels, actually," I said.

"What you are telling me," she said, "is that you have never shared your life with another over the long term. The closest you have come to it is providing a home and affection for a being which is entirely your subject and in your control."

"Well, not at bath time..."

"I know you've been aching to have your hands on my staff," I said to Ascher, as Nicodemus examined the altar for himself. I held out my hand. "But I'd rather be the one fondling my tool. Wizards are weird like that."

PARKOUR! Because Harry Dresden says so.

Cold Days was easily one of the best entries of the Dresden series. It's probably my favorite. And it definitely left big shoes to fill for any book that would follow it. Well, Skin Game does it wonderfully. I was hanging on to every word. The tension between Harry and Nicodemus was beyond palpable and I kept waiting for the shoe to drop! And boy does it drop.

This book was really exciting, gripping, and a true nail biter. I wasn't sure where Butcher planned to go with this one putting Nicodemus front and center. Either we'd finish the book with a better understanding of the character (potentially liking him more) or we'd see Harry do away with him once and for all. He is definitely a character you love to hate.

The heist plot was great and we got to see more focus on potential future players in the series. I liked that everyone was out for themselves. It kept things unpredictable.

I did miss Thomas in this entry as well as Molly, but the story is still fantastic. We get a great deal of Murphy, Michael, and Butters to make up for it so that's good enough for me. There were some really great twists and turns and several characters get upgrades in power. One of my favorite aspects of any series are the strength of the relationships. Harry never has it easy, ever. You really feel for the guy. While Cold Days certainly had emotional moments, there are some pivotal developments here too that make his journey even more special to me.

I am a newer fan of these books having marathoned the entire series back to back this year. Admittedly a lot of the story blurs together for me so it's difficult to distinguish one book from the next (save for books like Changes and Cold Days). Of course that stops now since I'm finally caught up with everyone else. But I will say that I am glad it happened with this book because it was a particularly satisfying read!

Harry juggles plenty of hats as it is, but I'm looking forward to how he handles just a few more in the next entry. Fans will definitely love this one.

Oh, and...PARKOUR!!!

\*Review copy provided by the publisher.

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful.

Another great Dresden novel.

By Ron Peterson

Changes – the fall and decline of Harry Dresden as we know him.

Ghost Story – a few days as Harry, the Ghost.

Cold Days – Harry comes back to life, and is quickly involved in Fae politics.

Skin Game:

Out of touch, living on Demonreach for the past year, while getting back into better shape (Parkour!, baby.)

Then, he gets a visit from Mab, his Fae boss. She needs him to help out Nicodemus Archleone, a sworn enemy of Dresden's. Yet, he has no choice but to follow Mab's orders, or die a slow and painful death. And what does ole Nick have planned? He wants to break into Hades' (yes, the Greek god of the underworld) vault in Nevernever. Is Nick planning to play Harry? Is Mab playing Harry? Can Harry survive this, alive? And like Butters still is trying to figure out, is Harry still human or has he become something else? Something Harry wonders too.

A few points about the end, (major spoilers.)

The interactions between Harry and Maggie are too precious.

It was good to see Uriel, again.

Mouse continues to be a scene stealer.

Harry and Murph's relationship evolves nicely.

I don't think Butcher dealt enough with "parasite's" aftermath enough, in my opinion.

Now, bring on Peace Talks, already,,,,,,,,,,

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