



The book blurb promises a lot before you've even turned a page - devils, demons, detectives, and more - and you can immediately sense there's a rollercoaster ahead.

The initial premise is simple enough: a human detective tasked by the devil to track down a demon. The opening scene, where the devil explains the mission, is played with humour, staying firmly on the tongue-in-cheek, sarcastic side of things. It has that blend of disbelief and total acceptance you'd find in *Buffy*: protagonist Tom believes what he's being told because, really, why would someone lie about such things? Yet he still ends the conversation wondering what on earth just happened.

There's a smooth transition into backstory before we return to the main plot. The story effortlessly combines a recognisable detective-agency setting with the supernatural, grounding the reader in familiar territory while allowing plenty of playful ideas. The supernatural elements aren't over-explained. They simply happen, giving the reader space to wonder.

As the story continues, that disbelief/acceptance dynamic remains strong. A priest knows the hidden truths of the church; characters treat devils and demons as part of the world's fabric. By letting characters behave as though much of this is normal, with a few checkpoints along the way, the reader is able to immerse themselves immediately. It's a simple device on the surface, but it works superbly.

The writing leans confidently on dialogue, using character interactions to drive the story. The assured calm of John and the suggestive tone of demonic assistant Laura-Luss are great examples. The verbal sparring between Laura-Luss and Tom is especially rich - natural, witty, and full of lore without ever feeling like an exposition dump. This approach, present throughout, makes the book very easy to keep turning the pages.

As the story bowls along, the relationship between Tom and Laura-Luss really develops. They become an oddball crime-caper duo that shouldn't work but absolutely does, the heart of the story.

There are lots of nice touches along the way such as John, a holy version of Q from *James Bond*, who offers up all sorts of tools to help Tom on his quest. The story escalates cleanly, shifting locations as the heroes close in on the case and the peril increases. Just when you think you've got the measure of the plot, it moves again.

At its core, this is a detective-trail story, but it's significantly enhanced by its play with religious ideas and supernatural concepts. Laura-Luss, our demon sidekick, is full of charm, and her exchanges with Tom are consistently rich. I had feared their paths might diverge, but it's not a spoiler to say they remain together for many scenes as the story moves from New York to Montreal to Rome and back again - and to Hell.

The book also benefits from a climactic ending that leads into a prolonged pre-epilogue. This isn't a simple wrap-up; it's an extension of the main tale, pulling everything together before the true epilogue sets up the sequel.

There's a lot of pace, driven by dialogue, and most of the lore is delivered that way. It makes for a very readable experience. I was surprised by my page count at the end of the first reading session. Each chapter delivers with intent, concluding its beat while setting up the next superbly.

The fusion of urban fantasy, religion, demons, and more gives the author a powerful palette, and the characters all have distinct identities. Tom's family dynamic is intriguing at the start and complex by the end, offering plenty of potential for future stories.

Now... what was that about a vampire who's had their coffin stolen?

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