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I Left My Haunt in San Francisco

Mark Everett Stone
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"Can you imagine the panic and religious hysteria if John Q. Public found that vampires, werewolves and demons were really out to get them?" That is the very situation that Kal Hakela and his team of commandos and magicians from the Bureau of Supernatural Investigation face every day, and on every page of Mark Everett Stone's *I Left My Haunt in San Francisco*.

Part *Men in Black*, part *Ghostbusters*, and with a nod to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Stone's book is a hoot and a howl—literally. From the mostly friendly ghost of Joshua Norton, self-crowned emperor of the United States and protector of Mexico, to a devilish fairy prince of the underworld, Stone's hero and his team encounter and must deal with all manner of supernatural beings and beasties. Fortunately, Kal Hakela and his plucky crew have spell bombs and other magic-enhanced weapons. But the best tools in their arsenal are, of course, their own cunning and courage.

The third in a series, *I Left My Haunt in San Francisco* is lively and smart. It is packed with action and just enough goop and gore to please fans of the genre without turning away newcomers to this subset of modern fantasy demon-busting. Stone's characters deliver the requisite quips about having to fight "a wasp the size of a Buick" or how an enemy's lair "looks like it's been designed by a gay Rastafarian pastry chef on Quaaludes."

The good guys must battle monsters and zombies, evil fairies, serial-rapist-murdering magicians, iron-munching nannies, and nasty magical knights made of glass (black, of course) just to name a few among the host of creatures and creations Stone has called up to harry the City by the Bay. Thankfully, Kal Hakela has powerful allies, among them a mystical Apache and Ileana, "a buff version of Audrey Hepburn." It is all written in good fun, tongue firmly planted in cheek, and with the gruesome bits lightened by such whimsical characters as the tiny elfish brownies Hakela carries about in a toy Winnebago to play rock music and take care of his dry cleaning.

Stone's book moves fast and reads quickly. It is well-written and nicely paced, with a few short rest stops built in to allow the reader to catch his breath, all to better appreciate the at-times purple but always entertaining prose. "Money may be the root of all evil," as one such passage goes, "but it is good root to have when you fight Supernatural."

In Stone's world, large amounts of magic are measured in "gigamerlins," and on that scale, *I Left My Haunt in San Francisco* rates a full "teramerlin." It is just great, grand fun.
MARK MCLAUGHLIN (March 15, 2013)

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