



Liberation: The Beginning

Eric J. Munson

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Old-school vampire fans rejoice! Eric Munson's *Liberation: The Beginning* steals the vampire genre from the prepubescent and adolescent politically correct romance sect. He brings it back home to horror, science fiction, and fantasy adventure fiction where it belongs. There are no descriptions of vampires glistening in the sunlight. The inane ramblings of doe-eyed, love-sick teenage girls are avoided. Instead, the author has written a novel with a ferocity, intensity, and grittiness that will satisfy readers of hardcore horror. Munson's protagonist, known as "J," has the toughness and strategic skills of Lee Child's Jack Reacher, the fighting prowess and spirituality of Warren Murphy and Richard Sapir's Remo Williams, and the presence and intelligence of Anne Rice's Lestat.

Liberation: The Beginning begins when a young man named Santino (Tino) Mutolo, who eventually becomes J, and his friend Edwin are kidnapped by a group in Germany that specializes in the kidnapping, torture, and murder of American tourists. Believing Edwin and Santino to be easy targets, the group is taken by surprise when Santino not only fights back, but also defeats them and acquires "intelligence" about their organization through his own torture techniques. Munson writes:

The pain was instantaneous and extreme. The nail was driven through Tino's hand between the bones of the middle and index finger... Tino slid his punctured hand up the nail to the end, stopping at the head. He jerked his hand forward a bit to loosen it, then jerked back to pry the nail from the table... Tino closed his fingers into a fist, slipping his ring and middle finger around the nail to stabilize it, thus transforming the tool of torture into a weapon.

The above scene, much like the opening gambit in a James Bond film, sets the relentless, action-packed pace of Munson's novel. The author continues this pace as Tino evolves into his alter ego J, which occurs after he has his first vampire encounter and trains himself mentally and physically to become an effectual methodical killer of the undead. Eventually, J forms a team to assist him as a guardian of the innocent. His team consists of an ex-cop, his adopted daughter, and a vampire indebted and loyal only to him.

Further editing would have helped Munson to tighten up his narrative, without it the overall power and impact of an otherwise amazing novel has been decreased. The problems are not grammatical but stylistic with expositional material which slows the reader down. Some of the grammar and sentence structure is awkward, and it adulterates the shine of Munson's prose and the strength of his narrative.

Although Munson rockets the reader through an incredible world of vampires and other supernatural creatures, the essence of the story is grounded in a Yin and Yang model, where there is good and evil in everyone, human and preternatural beings alike. The author does not revert to typical gratuitous blood and gore found in many hardcore vampire novels. He provides both escapist entertainment and ethical and moral life lessons.

LEE GOODEN (May / June 2011)

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