



Soul Remains

Sam Hooker

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Even sinister cults need accountants. *Soul Remains*, the second book in the *Terribly Serious Darkness* series by Sam Hooker, finds Slood neck-deep in necromantic trouble. This whimsical, wry novel sends Slood deeper into a magical world where the only fate worse than death is taxes.

After a harrowing adventure in *Peril in the Old Country*, Slood wakes up dead. Already prone to fits of angst, Slood is racked with anxiety, inappropriate metaphors, and a dubious grasp on how he entered the Hereafter. Slood's discomfort intensifies as he learns how to be a ghost in the blood-drinking, spirit-summoning, surprisingly dangerous world of the dead. Characters from *Peril* recur, in somewhat altered states—dead, decayed, or demonic—and are seeded through the plot, keeping *Soul Remains* from getting bogged down in backstory: there's just enough explanation to sustain the novel's pace and keep the jokes flowing.

As usual, Hooker's satirical style saturates each scene. *Soul Remains* is rich with self-conscious word play that exposes and comments on Slood's inner thoughts in a comic, running monologue. Whatever sorcerers or vampires Slood encounters, nothing is as frightening as his own fear. As a fish-out-of-water character, his perspective makes even the land of the dead come to life. Slood discovers, for example, that a groan is the "spiritual equivalent of stretching a sore muscle"—it feels good—though he can't quite get the hang of levitation.

Once again, Slood's luck goes from bad to laugh-out-loud worse. *Soul Remains* is full of surprises. Slood, a bean-counter in life, learns that blood is the currency of the Hereafter. Zombies keep their parts intact with the help of "adhesive applicationists peddling everything from glues to splints to giant staples." The Hereafter is packed with imaginary delights and dangers, and poor Slood stumbles on them all.

Sam Hooker continues to create rollicking tales of woe with *Soul Remains*.

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