



Unfinished Business

Tim Susman

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Unfinished Business is an exciting urban LGBTQ+ fantasy novel with a diverse and lively cast.

In Tim Susman's exhilarating urban fantasy novel *Unfinished Business*, a private investigator's world of werewolves and ghosts is complicated by a lethal request.

Jae is a private investigator in Chicago who pines for his werewolf ex-boyfriend, Czoltan, and who fends off his Korean American mother's matchmaking attempts in his spare time. His assistant, Sergei, is a ghost—a deceased bear who shapeshifts, and who accompanies Jae on routine jobs, serving up dour quips even as he intimidates their suspects.

Then Jae accepts a job in Detroit at the bequest of an old army friend, Richard. The investigation is based in Wolftown, a Detroit neighborhood where Jae is bound to run into Czoltan. But reconciliation is the last thing on Jae's mind. In Wolftown, people shoot at Jae; he learns that there's a warrant out for his arrest. In the chases and tense moments that ensue, Jae learns that the past doesn't always stay dead, and neither do ghosts.

In the book's alternate reality world, extrahumans, or extras, live in their own walled-off neighborhoods, though some wonder if integration is a better answer. But this separate living is for the extras' own protection: ghosts have become untethered from reality, and they often behave in malevolent ways. In contrast, Sergei is bound to Jae through an artifact and a ritual, making him a safe presence—if one who also gives Jae unsolicited advice about his stagnant love life.

The book's world building is extensive and innovative; strict rules abound, and they are well-defined throughout. These relate to who can bind a ghost and how—though Jae discovers that there is much at stake when ghosts become fixated on their unfinished business. Further, human-extra relationships are not as benign as they appear. When Jae is forced on the run, he encounters tensions between species that threaten to result in added violence. There are also sophisticated surveillance systems and chemical weapons at play; these are also detailed in an engaging manner.

The book's relationships are also realistic and evolving: Jae is reluctant to tell his meddling mother about his love interest, but that's because Czoltan is a werewolf, not because he's a man. This accepting framework is refreshing, allowing Jae to face his supernatural and emotional challenges without the distractions of bigotry holding him back. And in the end, Jae's ability to face his own demons determines whether he is able to help others tame theirs.

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JEANA JORGENSEN (April 4, 2022)

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