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ZEUS IS DEAD

A MONSTROUSLY INCONVENIENT ADVENTURE

by Michael G. Munz

"A hilarious mythological tale of god-like proportions. Munz has crafted a tale of bizarro comic fantasy that sits comfortably among the ilk of Gaiman and Pratchett."

—Andrew Buckley, author of *Death, the Devil, and the Goldfish*

THE GODS ARE BACK. DID YOU MYTH THEM?

You probably saw the press conference. Nine months ago, Zeus's murder catapulted the Greek gods back into our world. Now they revel in their new temples, casinos, and media empires—well, all except Apollo. A compulsive overachiever with a bursting portfolio of godly duties, the amount of email alone that he receives from rapacious mortals turns each of his days into a living hell.

Yet there may be hope, if only he can return Zeus to life! With the aid of Thalia, the muse of comedy and science fiction, Apollo will risk his very godhood to help sarcastic TV producer Tracy Wallace and a gamer-geek named Leif—two mortals who hold the key to Zeus's resurrection. (Well, probably. Prophecies are tricky buggers.)

Soon an overflowing inbox will be the least of Apollo's troubles. Whoever murdered Zeus will certainly kill again to prevent his return, and avoiding them would be far easier if Apollo could possibly figure out who they are.

Even worse, the muse is starting to get *cranky*.

Discover a world where reality TV heroes slay actual monsters and the gods have their own Twitter feeds: *Zeus Is Dead: A Monstrously Inconvenient Adventure!*

About Michael G. Munz



An award-winning writer of speculative fiction, Michael G. Munz was born in Pennsylvania but moved to Washington State in 1977 at the age of three. Unable to escape the state's gravity, he has spent most of his life there and studied writing at the University of Washington.

Michael developed his creative bug in college, writing and filming four exceedingly amateur films before setting his sights on becoming a novelist. Driving this goal is the desire to tell entertaining stories that give to others the same pleasure as other writers have given to him. He enjoys writing tales that combine the modern world with the futuristic or fantastic.

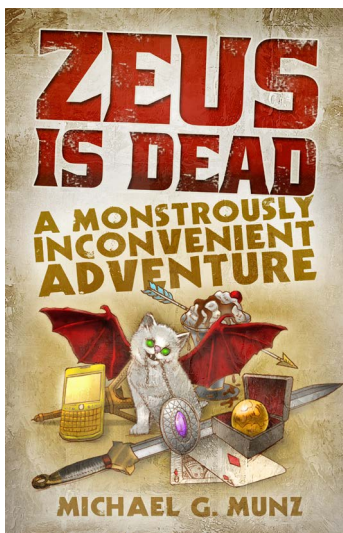
Michael has traveled to three continents and has an interest in Celtic and Classical mythology. He also possesses what most "normal" people would likely deem far too much familiarity with a wide range of geek culture, though Michael prefers the term geek-bard: a jack of all geek-trades, but master of none—except possibly *Farscape* and *Twin Peaks*.

Michael dwells in Seattle where he continues his quest to write the most entertaining novel known to humankind and find a really fantastic clam linguine. Find out more about him at michaelgmunz.com.

About Booktrope

Booktrope is a new type of publishing company, founded in 2009 in Seattle, WA. We are pioneering a new type of book development process called team publishing. We are committed to the creation of quality books and to our unique marketing methods, which include offering all of our books online to read for free.

Ordering Information



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By Michael G. Munz

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Praise for *Zeus is Dead*: A Monstrously Inconvenient Adventure

“Zeus Is Dead is full of laugh-out-loud moments, lashings of sly wit, moan-worthy puns, and a complex, fast-paced storyline. There aren’t very many humorous fantasy murder mysteries out there, especially not as intricately constructed as this one. Michael G. Munz takes a ‘What if,’ and runs with it like a toddler with Mom’s smart phone. He evokes a pantheon of characters including, well, the actual Pantheon, plus modern characters who will ring the bell of familiarity without being trite or clichéd. Munz knows his craft as well as his Greek mythology, pop culture, and dysfunctional family dynamics. The guffaw-worthy throwaway bits (stay tuned for the battle sundae) will remind you of Douglas Adams. A very enjoyable read.”

—Jody Lynn Nye, author of *View from the Imperium* and co-author of the *Myth Adventures of Aahz and Skeeve*

“Not since the people of Atlantis predicted ‘low humidity’ has there been such an original twist in Greek Mythology. This book is also far more amusing.”

—Brian Rathbone, creator of the bestselling *Godsland* Fantasy Series

“Zeus Is Dead is a book about the return of old gods, but Cthulhu is not in evidence, and it did not drive me to the very edge of madness. Instead it is a hilarious, satirical, page-turning romp through a world beset by plagues of monsters, egotistical gods, and reality television shows. I highly recommend this book to those who value both their sanity and a hearty guffaw.”

—Seamus Cooper, author of *The Mall of Cthulhu*

*“Delivering us from a sea of endlessly morose and self-important supernatural fiction, *Zeus Is Dead* understands that Greek mythology is more than a little bit insane and—rather than ignore the unseemly aspects—embraces them with the appropriate level of snark and style. Munz’s tale echoes the bureaucratic insanity of Douglas Adam’s creations, the banter of Grant and Naylor’s *Red Dwarf*, and the cynicism of Ben Croshaw in order to bring us a clever, hilarious tale of adventure and grudging heroism.*

I guess what I’m saying is that unless you really like your supernatural fiction all mopey and dull, you’ll find something to love here.”

—Jonathan Charles Bruce, author of *Project Northwoods*

“A hilarious mythological tale of god-like proportions. Munz has crafted a tale of bizarro comic fantasy that sits comfortably among the ilk of Gaiman and Pratchett.”

—Andrew Buckley, author of *Death, the Devil, and the Goldfish*

An Interview with Michael G. Munz, Author of *Zeus is Dead: A Monstrously Inconvenient Adventure*

Q: Was there a memorable moment when you decided that you just had to start writing; that you were going to pursue becoming a published author?

A: I had that particular epiphany when I was nineteen during the summer after my freshman year of college. I was staying at my parents' place and feeling pretty isolated and depressed. (I should mention that it wasn't some sort of Harry Potter-esque forced-to-live-in-a-closet-all-summer sort of deal. My parents are great people, and even if I had been forced to live in a closet, I'm sure it would have been a very comfortable one. I was just having trouble dealing with being away from everyone that I'd gotten know that year.) Reading was one of my refuges against my late-teen/early-adult angst. I can very clearly remember lying on my bed eating popcorn while in the middle of reading Terry Brooks's *Elfstones of Shannara* for the first time. When I took a moment to reflect on how much I was enjoying it, I had this watershed moment and realized how fulfilling it would be to give others the same enjoyment via my own writing the way Brooks's writing was giving me.

I'm pretty sure it had nothing at all to do with the popcorn.

Q: When, or how, did you get the idea for *Zeus Is Dead*?

A: It's come in little chunks ever since the mid-1990s. I knew I wanted to write a new myth with characters from Greek mythology, but I wanted to develop my abilities for a while in order to do it justice. In 2002, when I first wrote the short story "Playing With Hubris,"—in which a modern man meets two people in a café claiming to be Apollo and Thalia—I realized the potential that lay in putting mythological characters into our modern world. I played with the concept in a couple more short stories until, trying to decide what to write after finishing *A Memory in the Black* a number of years ago, I decided it was time to use the concept as novel fodder.

Once I realized that Apollo, who seemed to have far more things to keep track of than the other gods, would have so much more to do with so many more mortals in the world, everything just fell into place after that.

Q: How much mythology research did you do? Did you have any ground rules for how much you could stretch the source material? If so, what were they?

A: While a childhood of reading Greek mythology, coupled with a few Classics courses in college, gave me a solid enough foundation in the source material for me to come up with the general premise of *Zeus Is Dead*, the process of figuring out specifics involved reacquainting myself with it. I (re)read myths, thumbed through old textbooks (especially *Mythology* by Edith Hamilton), and looked for inspiration in articles about some of the gods whom I knew I wanted to include.

One thing about Classical mythology is how many different versions there are—and that's even before you take into account the Roman take on the Greeks' myths. This alone gave me a lot of freedom.

Who's to say what the "real" story behind some of the myths are? Surely such egotistical beings would have encouraged changing some of the stories in a way that made them look better, after all. Still, for the sake of both retaining the mythological feel of the story as well as certain opportunities for humor, I did want to follow as many of the generally agreed-upon aspects as much as possible. Apollo would not be Hermes's son, for example. I mean, not unless I came up with a really good reason.

Q: Can readers who know nothing about Greek mythology still enjoy the book?

A: Definitely! Keep in mind that *Zeus Is Dead* takes place soon after the Greek gods have returned to the modern world, and when they did so, much of the world knew little to nothing about them, either. So in addition to the narrative itself helping readers along (inspired by the style of Douglas Adams), there are (fictional) excerpts at the beginning of each chapter from various in-world publications that give additional background in a way that both informs the reader of anything they need to know and (I hope) makes them chuckle. Some examples of those fictional publications are *The Gods Are Back and How It Affects Your 401(k)*, *A Mortal's Guidebook to the Olympians' Return*, and snippets from the individual gods' blogs and press interviews.

Granted, those who do know about Greek mythology going in will find some additional humor tucked away in places, but this is done in such a way as to be transparent to a reader with less knowledge of the source mythology.

Q: You've been described by readers as "shattering the fourth wall to dust." Did you have any limits to that; for how far you could take things, or for how many cracks you could put in the wall?

A: Officially, no limits. My goal was to write a book that both told an epic adventure of the Greek myth-bus crashing into the modern world and did NOT take itself seriously. Unofficially, I wanted that epic to be fully functional, with a complete narrative that pays off. I promised myself that I wouldn't go so far as the ending of, say, Monty Python's *Holy Grail* or *Blazing Saddles* where things just break down into complete and utter chaos. This is not to say those sorts of endings aren't fun, it's just not what I wanted to do for *Zeus Is Dead*.

Q: What was your favorite scene to write?

A: Oh, my *favorite* scene to write I don't want to discuss here, since it's something of a spoiler for the end of the book. (But when you run into the term "phlegmatic field," you've found it...) That said, the bit in the Nevada wilderness where Tracy encounters Thad made me snicker a lot.

Q: Even though the book is a comedy, all of the characters have a very familiar quality to them—like I've met them in real life. Was there any particular character that was the most fun to write? Who?

A: Thalia (the Muse of Comedy and Science Fiction) jumps to mind immediately. She's smart, geeky, utterly chipper, and she's the conversational equivalent of a caffeinated hummingbird. She's got practically no filter—or, at least, not one that can keep up with the words that come out of her mouth—so much of writing her involved taking my goofy side and just letting it go full stream. (Of course, Thalia's vocabulary is greater than mine, so there was some tweaking of word choice after the fact.)

Q: What's the most interesting or surprising story about writing the book?

A: There's always the story of the time I nearly had a heart attack! (Er, figuratively speaking.) I was a quarter of the way through writing the first draft. Every chance I got to work on the manuscript was a thrill. I had an idea that I was passionate about, a solid idea of how to pull it off, and I was working with characters that excited me. Even the "voice" of the narrative, which was different from my other books and incredibly freeing to write because of its irreverence, felt great. In other words, I was in love. Things were fantastic. And then...

It was in the evening. I'd just left the Barnes & Noble café in which I used to write and was on the second floor of the bookstore where the restrooms were located. (Many caffeinated beverages were consumed in the writing of *Zeus Is Dead*.) Spirits were high, when I spotted a display for a book series I'd previously never heard of: *Percy Jackson and the Olympians*.

Oh, *hell*, no.

It was a punch to the gut. Someone else had my idea before I did! I couldn't even look at it. I went home, grumbling, telling myself it was okay, that if another book with similar elements did well, there'd be more of a market for my book. Yet I hated the idea that people might think I was writing *Zeus Is Dead* in reaction to whoever this Percy Jackson guy was—or worse, think an idea that I'd had independently was merely a derivative rip-off. Finally, I found the courage to learn more about *Percy Jackson*.

Relief. Rick Riordan's work was not, I learned, in the same vein as mine. Percy Jackson is geared toward readers under 18, and was a more serious adventure book. *Zeus Is Dead* is for a slightly older audience (I've since pitched it as geared toward *Percy Jackson* readers who've reached adulthood) and, while an adventure, is anything but serious.

I still haven't actually read any of Riordan's work. I enjoyed *Harry Potter*, and I'm intrigued by the concept of a similar tale with Greek gods instead of wizards, but I didn't want to be influenced when I was writing *Zeus Is Dead*, and in the couple of years since finishing the manuscript and finally getting it published, I haven't quite gotten around to it. (I should probably fix that.) All I know for the moment is that Nathan Fillion was cast as Hermes in the second movie, which I feel is a mistake.

Everyone knows that David Tennant should be Hermes. (Hermes is, after all, the one with the UK accent!) Fillion is Dionysus, and I refuse to think otherwise.

Q: You also write a series of near-future sci fi books called *The New Aeneid Cycle* that have comedic elements, but are more serious in tone overall. For fans of those novels, or just sci fi in general, why should they read *Zeus Is Dead*?

A: Well obviously because if *Zeus Is Dead* does well, I'll be able to quit my day job, write full time, and get them the third book in *The New Aeneid Cycle* (*A Dragon at the Gate*) sooner, of course!

But on a less self-serving note, I've heard from so many people who tell me that Felix is their favorite character in that series, and Felix and I have very similar senses of humor. So, imagine that Felix wrote a comedy. Wouldn't you want to read it? (Felix would want you to read it. Do you want to disappoint Felix? Especially after all he's got to deal with?)

As for fans of sci-fi in general, while the book is a fantasy, one of the mortal main characters is a sci-fi fan who tends to see the book's events through genre-savvy glasses. Besides, the book also features the Muse of Science Fiction and the real reason behind the building of the Large Hadron Collider at CERN. Interested yet?

Q: You call yourself a geek-bard (which is an awesome term, by the way), and all the fun content on your website shows that you have a lot of knowledge and love for geek culture. If you had to pick your top five favorite geek media—movies, tv shows, video games, books, performance art, etc—what would they be?

A: Oh, I'm so bad at picking favorites. (I secretly worry that listing a favorite will somehow summon an evil djinni who will force me to never be able to watch anything else. Yeah, I'm strange.) But if I have to...

TV: *Farscape*

Book: The *Hyperion* series (by Dan Simmons)

Game: *Deus Ex*... Or *Baldur's Gate 2*. Or *TIE Fighter*!

Movie: *The Lord of the Rings* trilogy (it's not without its flaws, but it's still well-crafted)

Comic strip: *Calvin & Hobbes*

And there's so many more I want to list. *looks around for djinni*

Q: Ok, you don't like picking favorites, but just a few more? Favorite author? Do you have a favorite fantasy book or series? Any author you look to for inspiration?

A: Well, like I said, picking favorites is not my strength. At the moment I'm really excited about Scott Lynch's *Gentleman Bastard* series. (Imagine if George R. R. Martin wrote *Ocean's 11*.) Neil Gaiman's *Neverwhere* is my favorite stand-alone fantasy novel. And I've always had a soft spot for Terry Brooks, though I haven't had a chance to keep up with his most recent stuff.

I've drawn on Brooks and Dan Simmons for general inspiration as a storyteller. In terms of *Zeus Is Dead*, inspirations include Douglas Adams, Dave Barry, Rich Burlew's *Order of the Stick*, and just a *little* Terry Pratchett in the editing, as—believe it or not—I hadn't been exposed to him when I was writing the first draft.

Q: Any chance of a sequel to *Zeus Is Dead*? More books set in the same world? Or even just more comedic books?

A: I had an absolute blast writing *Zeus Is Dead*. So if people enjoy it as much as I hope, you can absolutely count on a sequel. I already have a few ideas. I won't say too much on that just now, but it's mentioned in *ZID* that Hecate is adopted. The question to ask is, "Adopted from where?"

For the moment, however, I'm doing my best to finish *A Dragon at the Gate*, the third and final book in *The New Aeneid Cycle*.