

## Monsterland Reanimated

**Michael Okon**

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*A coming-of-age page-turner, Monsterland Reanimated puts a whole new spin on the world of good and evil.*

What started as an act of altruism turns into a horror of monstrous proportions in Michael Okon's *Monsterland Reanimated*.

A mass exodus of zombies, werewolves, and vampires from the Monsterland theme parks results in global chaos. Multitudes are dead, including creatures and world leaders; cities have morphed into ghost towns. Wyatt Baldwin, who witnessed the rebellion at the Copper Valley, California, location, teams up with his friends to investigate the causes behind mysterious deaths in his area, unaware of their sinister worldwide underpinnings.

Carryovers from Okon's *Monsterland* include Howard Drucker, a science nerd; Keisha, Howard's soon-to-be girlfriend; and Jade, Wyatt's crush. They are but a small portion of the novel's colorfully vibrant and well-defined cast of humans, changelings, hybrids, mummies, and more.

Themes of fighting against the odds and internal struggles are front and center in this good-versus-evil read. Most often, they are addressed concurrently. While Wyatt and his motley teen crew struggle to survive malevolent forces like a purplish blob called The Glob and mummies, they deal with personal conflicts, too, from Wyatt's relationship with his stepfather to one character's issues with another, Lily, and her Native American background.

Igor—who reflects stereotypes of the hunchback and of Frankenstein's sidekick—is a sympathetic outcast, kept underground because of his grotesque disfigurement and collaborating with the philanthropic-turned-evil Vincent Konrad. The novel reveals the human side of his sad and skewed existence; he sacrifices everything he has so that his only son can have a chance to live a full life.

Comedic and romantic moments are a nice reprieve from the incessant nail-biting action. Most memorable are hilarious attempts to reanimate the dead and a fitting word tattooed on the fingers of a local butcher. Romance builds as Howard Drucker and Keisha become a pair, while Wyatt struggles with his growing feelings toward Lily and his longtime crush on Jade.

The text's descriptions are strong, and scenes are replete with effective literary techniques. The dialogue is punctuated by sarcasm and tension. Chapters are short and close on cliffhangers; they alternate between Wyatt's crew's attempts to fight evil and the behind-the-scenes machinations perpetuating the evil. Narrative twists and turns hold interest through action-packed scenes. Pop culture references—from *Frankenstein* to *Back to the Future*—provide additional humor; references to their characters and catchphrases are incorporated into the text.

Though this book works as a stand alone, starting from the beginning of the series will result in a fuller reading experience, especially since *Monsterland Reanimated* closes on a riveting cliffhanger. A coming-of-age page-turner, *Monsterland Reanimated* puts a whole new spin on the world of good and evil.

ANITA LOCK (September 28, 2018)

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