

## INTERVIEW WITH BRYCE MOORE CUNDICK

Question:

**Tell us about your new book, *Vodník*.**

Answer:

It's a young adult fantasy book that takes place in Slovakia. An American boy moves to the country, where he soon finds out he can see and interact with creatures from Slovak folklore. Oh yeah--and some of those creatures want to kill him. It's a blend of humor, action, and adventure, aimed mainly at teenage boys. And anyone else who likes awesome books.

Question:

**What exactly is a *Vodník*?**

Answer:

Vodniks are as recognizable to Slovaks as vampires are to us. They're basically water spirits. They hang around near streams, rivers, wells and the like, waiting for humans to come by. At that point, they drown the human, steal his or her soul, and store it in a lidded teacup. Why do they do this? Well, why do vampires sleep in coffins? Why are werewolves weak against silver bullets? Vodniks steal souls because that's what Vodniks do.

Question:

**If you could choose to be one mythological creature, which would you choose? Why?**

Answer:

I've always been a sucker for centaurs, but I think it'd be a real pain to actually be one. Driving a car would be pretty much impossible, and I can't imagine modern toilet facilities would work too well for you, either. Vampires have the whole eternal life thing going for them, but I like my meat at least medium rare. I suppose if I had to go with one, it would be a dragon. Because

being able to burn everything you see to a crisp would make up for most things.

Question:

**What made you choose to base your book on the folklore of Slovakia?**

Answer:

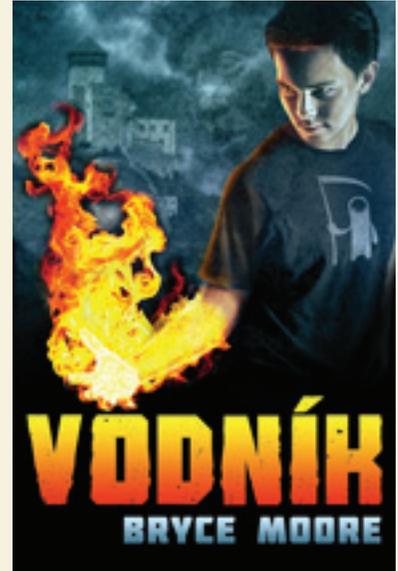
My wife of eleven years is Slovak. When I first went to the country after our marriage, I was blown away. It's so gorgeous and rich in history--and almost no one from the US has been exposed to it. The more I learned about it, the more I knew that it was something I just had to write about. I wanted more people to see this great place and get to know its culture and heritage. Folklore is a huge part of that. Too often in our fantasy books, we keep reading about the same folklore over and over. Werewolves. Vampires. Ghosts. Demons. There's so much more out there to explore.

Question:

**You've lived all over the United States, ranging from Utah, Maine and the East Coast. Are there any bits of local folklore that have captured your interest and maybe sparked a story or two?**

Answer:

Some of my formative years were spent near Tarrytown, New York--known to more people as Sleepy Hollow. Americans don't have much in the way of real folklore, but the stories of Washington Irving managed to make it in. I always loved the Headless Horseman growing up, and one of my books (as yet unpublished) is a retelling of the tale (with a post modern twist). I took a trip back to the area for research. It's a fantastic place.



Question:

**Your book deals with all sorts of creatures ranging from sea monsters, spirits and soul stealers. Every culture has stories about monsters. Is it safe to say that humans need stories about monsters? If so, why?**

Answer:

I'm not a cultural expert, but I think I'd agree with that statement. I think humans need monster stories because it lets us think about evil in a very hands-on way. We like to think that people aren't monstrous. That we aren't evil. But the more you read the news each day, the more you see that humans are far more monstrous than any vampire or demon could be. We do much more evil to ourselves than you see in the worst horror novel. Monster stories let us look at that evil and really see it up close--without trying to push it away with a "humans would never do that sort of thing" mentality, if that makes sense. My book does have a lot of fantastical creatures, but the ones who are really, truly evil are all human.

## OREM PUBLIC LIBRARY AUTHOR INTERVIEW

Question:

**Your novel focuses on themes such as adapting to new cultures and dealing with otherness such as racial, national, and cultural differences. Did you set out to explore these themes when you started writing? If so, why did you choose mythological settings and characters to examine these real world issues?**

Answer:

When I started *Vodnik*, I wanted to focus on the setting and the folklore of Slovakia. The Roma elements (the main character is 1/4 Roma, which causes him a great deal of difficulty when he moves to Slovakia, where Roma are the minority to the extreme) rose naturally out of that. I'm not a big fan of setting out to write a book to explore a Theme. My main goal is to write something people will love to read. I want to entertain. This isn't to say I don't want to have my books mean something, too--but the meaning should grow out of the plot, not the plot out of the meaning.

Question:

**You are a librarian and a writer. What books inspire your own writing and imagination?**

Answer:

I have a Masters in English from BYU, where I studied American Literature. I love Mark Twain and Edgar Allen Poe. But I also love Stephen King, JK Rowling, CS Lewis, Lloyd Alexander, Susan Cooper. I grew up on Prydain, *Dark is Rising*, *Narnia*, *Earthsea*, and *Middle Earth*. I'm a librarian and a writer--I just plain love books. :-)

Question:

**I really want to write and publish a book. What do I need to do?**

Answer:

The first thing to do is to tell the difference between wanting to write and actually writing. I know a lot of people who want to write. Actually writing is difficult stuff. I get up an hour early every day and write 1,000 words. Sometimes it's a real trial to get that 1,000 words in. Sometimes it's not as bad (usually once I'm well into a new book). But it's a daily consistent effort. Once you have that down, then you need to move on to the publishing stage. You don't write to get published. You write because you love to write. Just like you don't play the piano because you want to make a living as a piano player. You play because you love to play. Writing should be fun. The process itself needs to be enjoyable--because once you're writing for an editor and a deadline, it gets much more intense and stressful. If you didn't adore it to begin with, I think that would do you in right there.

In the end, write write write. It's the only part you have complete control over. The publication part is out of your hands. Submit to editors and agents, but keep writing. New stuff. Always. If you'd like to know more about how I personally got published, I have a series on it over on my website and blog. You can check that out here: <http://brycemoore.com/writing/vodnik/i-get-an-agent-and-publisher/>



Bryce Moore Cundick is a librarian in the University of Maine system, but he got his start as a librarian at BYU and here at the Orem Public Library. He is the author of two novels, *Cavern of Babel* and *Vodnik*.