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Austen in sea monster mash-up

Following the success of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, publisher unleashes creatures from the deep on *Sense and Sensibility*

Alison Flood

guardian.co.uk, Wednesday 15 July 2009 14.27 BST

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Jane-sploitation ... *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters*. Photograph: PR

Sea monsters are the new zombies, at least according to Quirk Books, the publisher of this year's surprise hit *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*. Quirk, whose remix of Jane Austen pitted the Bennet sisters against hordes of flesh-eating undead, has announced that the new title in its series will be *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters*.

The book, which Quirk said would be 60% Austen and 40% tentacled chaos, sees Elinor and Marianne Dashwood contending with giant lobsters, rampaging octopi, two-headed serpents and other ferocious sea monsters as they set out on their quest for love. As in Austen's original, Marianne first meets Mr Willoughby when he rescues her, but instead of being saved from bad weather and a sprained ankle, this time it's from a giant octopus.

"As she lay gasping on the bank, soaked by the fetid water and the foul juices of the monster, spitting small bits of brain and gore from the corners of her mouth, a gentleman clad in a diving costume and helmet, and carrying a harpoon gun, ran to her assistance," write Austen and her new co-author, Brooklyn writer Ben H Winters. "The gentleman, opening the circular, hinged portcullis on the front of his helmet, offered his services; and perceiving that her modesty declined what her situation rendered necessary, took her up in his arms without further delay and carried her down the hill."

Quirk is so sure of the book's appeal that it is going head-to-head with Dan Brown's much-anticipated new novel *The Lost Symbol*, publishing *Sense and Sensibility and Sea Monsters* in the UK and the US on the same day: 15 September.

Pride and Prejudice and Zombies has sold over 50,000 copies in the UK and 600,000 in the US since publication in April, sparking a new trend for what Quirk has dubbed the "literary monster mash-up". Other publishers have rushed to jump onto the bandwagon, and this autumn will see publication of both *Queen Victoria: Demon Hunter* – subtitled *She Loved Her Country; She Hated Demons* – and *I am Scrooge: A Zombie Story for Christmas*. "Marley was dead. Again," says its publisher Orion. "Will the ghosts of Christmas Past, Present and Future be able to stop the world from drowning under a top-hatted and crinolined zombie horde?"

Seth Grahame-Smith, meanwhile, the author of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, signed a deal worth a rumoured \$500,000 (£300,000) in April with Grand Central to write the life of Abraham Lincoln, vampire hunter.

But vampires and zombies are old news, according to Quirk. "A couple of publishers are crashing Jane Austen vampire novels that will no doubt capitalise on the success of *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies*, and there were certainly plenty of people who urged me to do the same," said editorial director Jason Rekulak. "But I think *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* fans are counting on us to deliver something original, and I don't think they will be disappointed."

Rekulak said earlier this week that he had always wanted to do a mash-up of a famous literary novel. "I thought it would be funny to do a 'new and improved' version of a classic that kids are forced to read in high school," he told *Publishers Weekly*. "So I made a list of classic novels and a second list of elements that could enhance these novels—pirates, robots, ninjas, monkeys and so forth. When I drew a line between *Pride and Prejudice* and zombies, I knew I had my title and it was easy to envision how the book would work."

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