



Apollo's Curse

Brad Vance

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All Dane Gale ever wanted was to be a successful writer. After a few sessions with his new friends Rose and Sherry at a romance book club, well, the more romances they read, the more they're convinced they can do better. And do they ever! They join their creative forces to become "Pamela Clarice," self-published romance novelist. When they look for a cover model for their first book, Dane sees the photos that will change his life.

Paul Musegetes is the world's most popular romance cover model, and the most secretive. Dane soon finds himself obsessed with this supernaturally handsome man, and when he meets Paul at the Romance Writers' Ball on the Summer Solstice, he and Paul connect for one night of passion...

After that night, Dane's a writing machine. He can't stop writing romances, and every story he touches turns to gold. But he also finds that he can't write anything but romances. And soon he's spending every waking moment of every day writing another after another...

Then Dane finds out that this Midas touch has a heavy price. When the year is over, he'll never write again. Not a romance, not a serious novel. Nothing. Not even a grocery list. And that leaves him with only one option - find Paul, and get him to break the curse. But before he can do that, he'll have to track down Paul's equally mysterious photographer, Jackson da Vinci...

Apollo's Curse Details

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From Reader Review Apollo's Curse for online ebook

315 says

Book has no sex

Parts 1 & 2 were awesome and part 3 it just lost me completely.

Okay, read this yesterday and it just occurred to me why I had such issues... It isn't the third went paranorm on me... It was the whole Greek mythology who's who... And TOO much story in a story filler. Way too much.

"Oh right, sorry to get your hopes up. No, he's not a fireman. He's a fire inspector. Yeah, not quite as glamorous, I know. He gets to wear a uniform, though."

Taya says

*** I received this book in exchange for an honest review.*

I was expecting sex... no I was expecting HOT sex and what I got is a honest to god romance novel. There is something about Brad Vance's books that just after few sentences get me hook into the story. Nothing felt drag on and everything that happened had a purpose. This story was thought out and it showed. I want to say congratulation to you, Mr. Vance and whatever light bulb went off in your head to come up with this story and for simply beginning to write romance novel. I also love the simple fact that each chapter had a title. Titling each chapter is like a little mystery that needs to be discover not a lot of people do that nowadays and I appreciate that simple addition. It was also such a eye opening experience for me a reader to know the possible struggle a self- published author face. That simply publishing your story on Amazon is really the beginning of the journey.

Overall I love this story. I love Dane " I'm going to be a serious author" and the many character that he meets on his journey of self discovery. I'm absolutely fascinated about mythology and glad it was woven into the story without making it cheesy and unbelievable. This is definitely yet another book by Mr. Vance I will be recommending.

?♥? Michaelle ♥? says

4 Stars

This reminded me very much of a Grimm-style fairy tale (the only ones I like) with a bit of a soul-seeking allegory. Which made it into a pretty fucking smart book, actually. Especially that ending; I saw it coming - but still, brilliantly concluded.

It took a while to get comfortable with BV's writing style but once I did I really enjoyed this book! So much shade thrown at the industry while still being enamored of the whole writing, editing & publishing process. I also appreciated the relatively detailed passages of "administrative" duties that come with being a published author! Plus, the Greek island's inhabitants...so very much like their mythological namesakes. And the stories within the story. I almost didn't want it to end.

Jewel says

This was an odd book. Not really what I expected, in that it was a romance novel that didn't have much in the way of romance in it and there was no sex. But, I really enjoyed reading it. A lot.

Dane is a writer that has a dream of writing something really worthy. Something that will stand the test of time. Trouble is, though his book is good, no one is reading it. On the advice of a publisher rep, he joins a book club and they're reading romance novels. He figures, why not? One thing leads to another and the three of them (the members of this book club) decide to write a romance novel together. And that is when he first sees a picture of Paul. Paul is gorgeous (you might recognize him on the cover of this book and about a gazillion others) and Dane cannot seem to stop obsessing over him. The trio put out a few novels and Dane finds pictures of Paul for all of them.

And that starts Dane on a grand adventure. Well, sort of.

I loved the way his story was told. We get to see Dane change quite a lot from the first page to the last, and though the romance aspect of the story comes pretty late in the book, it works here. Watching him figure out what his story really is is very cool.

So, in spite of the fact this book has no actual sex and the fact that the romance aspect is pretty unconventional (hell, maybe because of the second thing, rather than in spite of it), I would recommend this book. The story telling is pretty great and it left me with a smile.

Britta ★ Nachteule ★ says

Different. Unique. OK.

No on page smexy times.

I liked the mythology part a lot.

It has a very long and at times dragging beginning but around 50% it's becoming better.

Mark says

Have you ever opened a book and been completely broadsided by it in a positive way? Well, this definitely was the case for me when I started to read Apollo's Curse by Brad Vance.

It was seriously not what I was expecting in any shape or form, especially going by the cover (more about that later), but it caught my interest from the word go, drew me in deeper and deeper, until I couldn't put my Kindle aside for five minutes. I was addicted to this book, a magical read that took me to romantic places, introduced me to romantic characters and sent me on a journey of human caring and love.

First let this be said, it isn't a typical M/M erotic romance with hot sex in every chapter, well to be honest there is no sex in it at all to speak of, only once is it eluded to but is a great plot device which we only discover later in the book. So is it an M/M romance? Not at all in the "what you expect today" sense, but the romance is there which comes later in the book, well to be more specific right at the very end, just like the first kiss where everything is well at the end and we all go skipping off into the sunset. Sounds a little clichéd, right? But let me tell you this book was neither clichéd nor schmalzy. When it happens, it is heartfelt, beautifully timed and yes, very romantic!!! The book just left me with a big happy, soppy sigh!

The book is in four parts each part having its own particular plot and setting. All thought out exceptionally well in my opinion. The first part is a little like a book that has been written by an author, about authors for authors. BUT you don't have to be an author to thoroughly enjoy this read. Confused? Don't be, it is an excellent story. Brad in my own personal view of his work, which has always been good, has surpassed himself with this story. Has knocked me for six with a work that I just wasn't expecting. Just loved the whole idea, concept and writing style in this book ~ Apollo's Curse.

First we have Dane the author of the story, it's in first person so you're reading his story. He'd spent years writing a book and when it was published, self-published to be exact, it never did anything so you can imagine the disappointment and disillusion when you have spent so long creating and forging a work of art and it does nothing. This is Dane's story. Dane has also never been in a successful relationship or ever really truly been in love, which is quite sad really. So how can he write about something that he has truly never experienced first hand. He just has Ryder, a friend with benefits arrangement, and that suits him just fine. When it comes to love, he seems to be a bit of a cynic.

He joins a book club, well more like two wine drinking women who talk about romance novels. Why he does this is another story. However, I loved the characters of Rose and Sherry, it was like a gang of three romance musketeers that develop, Thelma and Louise +1. As you can imagine, gay or not, it isn't really Dane's thing but he goes and meets Rose and Sherry and discovers he gets along with them famously. I loved this little clique and what starts out as a joke turns into a moderate success. So the pseudonym Pamela Clarice is born for three people who write romance novels. What they discover is with the right marketing and when you write for the market, then you can sell almost anything. Well, I'm sure it still isn't as easy as that, it still needs to be edited, honed and refined, but together they are strong. A little like a witch's coven. So obviously the dilemma here for any author is, do I prostitute my art and write what the market wants and sell books or do I stick to my creative muse write what I want and don't sell anything. I guess many an author has asked themselves this question in the past and have faced that dilemma. I loved the banter and conversations this band of three have with each other. Especially when they're brainstorming all the ideas for their next romance story with all its sub-genres, shifters, cavemen, etc. a little bit of a comical dig at the romance industry, but I LOVED it!!!! There were times for me where it was laugh out loud funny. The dialogues remained realistic and fluid, never stilted or fake.

So here is the lesson no. 1 in self-publishing ~ with all the plethora of self-published books out there today an author has to be up on social media and get the word out there otherwise it isn't going to do anything and this was the case for Dane. You can't expect the book to speak for itself. Authors today have to treat marketing their work as a business too. I could Dane's despondency over the whole matter. It is a dream of his to be a successful writer, but totally disappointed after the end result goes live. I guess it must be horrible

writing something, after all it is your baby, and then..... and then..... it doesn't even get past first post.

This whole idea and concept really caught my imagination, why not? I mean this is something that a lot of authors know only too well and I'm sure can really appreciate. For me it was like having a peek into the world of writing and the trials and tribulations that go along with it. Excellent. Seriously well written, paced and plotted. I feel when you write about something you know well, it brings a new dimension into the words.

Now we come to lesson no. 2 in self-publishing ~ cover art or more specifically cover models. The girls and Dane need a cover for their book and after googling hundreds of pictures land on a gorgeous cover model called Paul. Paul does everything, Paul the fireman, Paul the cop, Paul the doctor, so this is now their cover guy. However, they fall into the same trap I feel that a lot of self-published authors do too when they choose a model or picture that has been used a hundred times. It's OK I reckon if this cover model has appeared nowhere else on your books, but once s/he starts turning up on everyone else's books, then time to find a new one in my opinion. I loved the way Brad develops the relationship that Dane has with this online model. Almost to a point of obsession where it is even affecting the sex with Ryder. Here for me was another stroke of genius. The actual cover photo / picture for this very book I have personally seen like a hundred other times used as a cover in M/M romance. It may have been cropped, rotated, turned, etc. but always the same guy. No idea if this was Brad's intention but I thought, yes, perfect cover for this book.

Dane develops what I can only describe as an intensive online crush on this guy and by pure luck, or so Dane thinks, meets him at a writer's ball which takes place every solstice. Paul gives him a gift but there is a price to pay. This we only realise later, so another excellent bit of subtle writing that gets the reader wondering and definitely raises the question marks, but never enough to give the whole game away yet. What ensues after this is absolutely brilliant. Pure genius. We now have a supernatural-mystery element that enters the story, connects with Greek legend and leads to what I must say was a riveting read. Nothing is revealed at first, everything normal we think, but as the story develops we realise that something more is at work here. Dane now can't stop writing, Paul becomes his creative muse and when he sees something, smells something, hears something, it turns into a story in his head immediately and is published. Up until now Dane has never really been able to write a sex scene, no problem now though after the encounter with Paul. Well, Dane goes from rags to riches overnight. I loved the way that Brad got this idea across of the the author and what's going on in his head. When we read about the idea for Dane's next story, we get it more like a list of ideas and in note form to distinguish it from the real narrative of the story. Again I felt this was a great piece of writing, to do this and not to confuse the reader.

Anyway, this gift that has been given to Dane takes him across to Europe, Venice to be more precise, where he meets Paul's photographer. Welcome to part two of the book. Why does he do this? Well, that's giving too much away, but suffice to say they first become friends and decid to try and find the elusive Paul. This takes them to a small island in Greece. Here Dane finds something and more importantly discovers something about himself and his writing. From here on in things become seriously intriguing to say the least. This was the point at which I could no longer put the book down and was looking for excuses to continue reading, even if it meant taking a longer coffee break at work than normal - ahem! The part on the Greek island was beautiful, Dane discovers his story telling has power and shows through this the basic nature of human caring as it should be and that everyone needs to be loved in someway. The imagery of people sat around a fire listening to someone tell a story is romantic enough in itself. this whole idea that Brad creates is gorgeous. I sometimes ask myself whether with all the high-tech entertainment we have today maybe we are missing out on something truly wonderful in its simplicity. *sigh*

I just loved the character of the Greek Orthodox Priest Father Herc. He was great, a real caring paternalistic father figure, but also funny and upbeat at the same time. However, a very wise man indeed. I loved their

conversation about Dane's writing, where he has ended up being a successful romance writer, even though that was never the original plan and he feels that romance is below his station a little as a writer.

"Never underestimate the power of fluff. The power to make someone smile, to get them away from their cares for a moment. Maybe later, you'll have helped them feel stronger, maybe later they will read Ulysses, yes?"

On the island Dane discovers the power of writing romances and decides that it is really, actually OK. However, there is one problem and that is Jackson, Paul's photographer who Dane has now developed feelings for which go way beyond friendship. We now have your typical case of unrequited love ~ beautiful! How does Dane get together with Paul or does he even? Then you'll have to read the book.

I have read a number of books from Brad, but this one is by far the best one I have personally read to date. The writing is concise, dialogues are entertaining, realistic and seriously funny at times, the story develops at a nice pace and always leads the reader on. When I think there is absolutely no erotica or steamy sex in this book at all, it just goes to show that a romance doesn't need this if the writing and the story are heartfelt, has something interesting to say and brings across a message of love and caring. The ending for me was just perfect!

Lisa The Novel Approach says

Apollo's Curse is a light-hearted poke in the ribs of art, romance, and real life — a book that can be appreciated rather wryly by authors who've found themselves caught in the same infuriating crossroads Dane finds himself in. The problem of creating art and living off it is an issue that dogs our hero, a writer who's absolutely passionate about his dreams and works extremely hard to fulfill them. Unfortunately, mainstream tastes don't necessarily align with what he considers to be serious art, and this is something we constantly see not only in publishing, but in general entertainment as well (see: the inexplicable success of Michael Bay movies).

Loneliness (with a generous dollop of lust) forces a vulnerable Dane into making a rather foggy, Faustian deal with Paul (Apollo), and as the saying goes, be careful what you wish for.

"Pandering to the lowest common denominator" is a prickly cosmic law that inevitably convinces Dane to experiment with friends and "lower" himself to writing heterosexual romances – complete with clichés up the wazoo, not to mention pen names that make my kidneys shrivel. I admit to sniggering my way through those early chapters involving his and his friends' attempts at cobbling together romances under a pen name. Dane might at first turn a few readers off with his patronizing attitude toward romance, but the plot gradually unfolds, revealing more layers to his character than what's pretty obvious.

In fact, the book itself is almost sneaky in the way it presents a complex story. At first glance, my conclusion was that Dane simply needed to choose which course is best for him: success as an artist or for him to become the man who's able to live his life to the fullest by allowing himself to love and be loved back. In fact, it's a choice that's constantly posed to him, whether overtly or otherwise. But the more I sat back and reflected on what I've read, the more I noticed other little issues popping up here and there. Like the nature of art — what is it, really? How about success? How would one define it? Are art and life mutually

exclusive? How about art and monetary success? Would writing something that “panders to the lowest common denominator” in order to supplement an artist’s true calling be an acceptable compromise?

In the end, there were a lot of questions raised — at least in me — and for that, I ended up appreciating this book even more. I like stories that raise questions but not necessarily answers them. I don’t want to have my own conclusions dictated to me and am not particularly keen on too much predictability. I want to ponder and analyze, think about what I’ve just read even well after I’m done with it. In that regard, Brad Vance’s novel succeeds, whether or not those questions I’ve raised were part of the author’s purpose.

The plot moves at a pretty casual pace — maybe a tad slow for some readers, but I like the summer-like idleness of the way the story unfolded. The characters, including the side ones, are nicely developed, though perhaps the one who suffers the most fogginess is Jackson. Yes, we know about his background and so on, but his relationship with Paul as the latter’s personal photographer remains somewhat murky. Unless I missed something along the way, I was left with a hint, based on a brief conversation between Jackson and Paul in the end, regarding another Faustian deal made between the two prior to Dane’s experience with Paul. Of course, I’m teetering on the edge of spoilers here, so that’s all I’m able to share. I’m not sure if what I got was what Vance intended, but suffice it to say, Jackson’s side of the story left me a little dissatisfied by the book’s end.

There are fantasy elements in this book, which was why I requested it for review. But they’re presented to us almost allegorically, with no overtly mythological figures strutting around, using their powers. Those familiar names in Greek mythology are there, though, and I fondly refer to them as mortal-immortals, and they play a pretty significant role in opening Dane’s eyes to what he really needs. Dane might find the answers to his questions in an infuriatingly roundabout way, but like all those great adventures from legend and myth, the hero here is forced to figure things out on his own. And not only that — he’s also forced to face so many truths about himself in order to find the courage to make that final choice and take that fateful step forward.

Perhaps the only issues that bogged things down for me are the info-dumping and the name-dropping that’re quite liberally sprinkled throughout the book. The process of self-publishing, for instance, or the descriptions of Venetian streets, campi, etc., could’ve used a bit of pruning. The constant ID-ing of book titles, authors, or even other details such as wine labels is useful in grounding the story in the present, but for me, anyway, too much of that can also tear me out of the book. After a certain point, it almost becomes a laundry list of real-life things the author knows and has worked into the book. A subtler handling of those details would’ve been more effective in maintaining a good balance of escapism and realism.

In the end, I really enjoyed this book. Though I found that I had to sit on it for a few days to mull over things before writing this review, I still appreciated Vance’s good-natured take on art. It only goes to show that humor shouldn’t be dismissed as frivolous and can, in fact, be used to pose questions that leave us either enlightened or mystified, our reading experience all the richer for it. Yes, even when it’s “only” a romance, as viewed through Dane’s jaundiced eyes.

Kora Knight says

Haha! This book was soooo not what I expected! I went through so many internal conflicts while reading it,

its kind of mind-boggling! Because here's the deal: I started out thinking it was m/m romance! Which, to be fair, was my own fault. I should have paid closer attention to the description. *sheepish wince* Anyhoo, once i got passed the initial "Wait.. where's all the lovin?" stage and allowed myself to simply immerse my brain in the exquisite fantabulousness that is BRAD FREAKING VANCE, I was immediately engulfed in the coolest freaking story ever! Nevermind that it had freaking GREEK MYTHOLOGY in there, too, my all time freaking favorite story embellishment! Seriously, this adventure he takes the reader on is beyond creative. Beyond fantastical. I truly can't say enough. And the fact that it's written SO DAMN WELL by a true literary pro who's clearly been doing this for years (and perfected his craft something fierce... No joke, he's literally like reading NY Times Best Seller quality fiction) was just the icing on the cake. As always, well done, Mr. Vance. You continue to spoil us with your masterful brain candy, earning you, in my opinion, the title as best m/m writer on the market today. Brava. May you continue to go far... so we maybe continue to reap the rewards. hehe *wink*

A.B. Gayle says

This was a book of very different parts, yet they all added up to a whole.

I think some readers don't know what to make of this story because it is not your typical romance. Underneath Man meets Man and falls in love is a book about writing: the love of writing, the frustrations of writing, the underlying desire for recognition as a writer, both in critical praise and sales. It is also about inspiration and the hard work that goes into creating the finished product.

As such it's possibly better appreciated by someone who has been there and done that.

Sound heavy? No. It's not.

We're talking Brad Vance here. One of our most under-appreciated writers. Probably because he's self published. After reading his blogs for a year or so, I know that over the course of his life Brad (like the book's hero) has put in hundreds of thousands of words onto paper. He knows exactly what he's doing when he puts pen to paper, so this theme about writing is woven into the story of a man (who happens to be a writer) searching for success and finding instead love.

The first section is the set up. Creating a situation where a writer is struggling to get his work seen. I enjoyed the scenes where he meets and gets to know the members of his book club. They form a collaboration as each has different skills. Once they do, they begin to write books that are modest best sellers. I liked that he created two interesting female secondary characters without falling into stereotypes. Friends.

Backed by this success, they head off to a writers' convention where the model they used on a number of their covers is making a guest appearance. After one fantastic night in bed with a god of a man, the words start pouring out of our hero's fingertips, almost turning to gold as they hit the page. Under a new pseudonym, he becomes a worldwide sensation.

However every gift comes with a price. Once he identifies past recipients, he realizes there is a time limit. Come the summer solstice, he won't even be able to write anything. Not even sign his name on a cheque.

He panics. Writing is what he wants to do. Success is wonderful, and if it comes in the form of writing het romances he can cope with that because it's what the market wants, but deep down he wants to write what

really matters. Important books. He resolves to find the cover model that set everything into motion and see if there is some way to break the curse. He doesn't care if he can't write bestsellers when his time is up, but he just wants to write.

Finding the cover model proves impossible, so he heads off to Venice to chase down the man who photographed the god of a man on the cover. He finds him and the story continues in a totally different vein as he negotiates the twists and turns of a foreign city.

The plot takes a further twist as they travel to a difficult to reach Greek island. Here the gods of old or their successors roam the land and their love and arguments inspire him to tell more tales. Here the romance author has morphed into the tale teller of old. The one who weaves tales whose words have a message for those who hear them.

This section alone is worth reading the rest of the book for.

But the book isn't over yet. His twelve months are up and the situation still needs to be resolved.

I loved the way Brad wrapped up the story. The hero found his love.

I'd like to think that this book helps more readers fall in love with Brad's writing. In a way this *is* Brad's story. Not the surface romance but the love that lies underneath. The desire to write. The yearning for success. The learning that eventually it will come if the story touches the heart of those who read it.

There's humor, hotness and words that make you think.

B says

This was not my cup of tea, it lost me at 45% it got to winding for my taste. I got the idea of it but it took too long and It drag way to much for my taste, I felt like I was reading two different storys. Any way it was interesting but Not great.

And it was not sexy at all.

It has a HEA.

Debra says

Do you recognize these men Most Overused Cover Models? If you spend any time on Goodreads or browsing the shelves of your favorite ebook seller you've probably seen them. Ever wonder why "guy in wife beater" or "gray t-shirt guy" grace so many covers? Sure they are good looking and the images can easily be used to convey any number of professions, but what if there was more to it? What if that muse was actually the key to an author's overnight success? In *Apollo's Curse*, serious writer Dane, who spent years writing and self-publishing his book *The Doldrums* only to sell a measly eight copies, finds himself

becoming an overnight success as a romance writer. The success, a "gift" from the cover model Dane has obsessed over, brings Dane plenty of money, but the inability to do little more than write book after book with Paul as his model and muse. Dane soon finds out his "gift" will soon end and with it any chance to write again and he becomes determined to find the elusive Paul and change his fate. With the help of Jackson, Paul's photographer, Dane finds himself on a Greek Island that seems to hold mysteries and mythological magic of its own. With time running out, Dane's life is about to change again, but will it be for better or worse and can he do anything to stop it?

The book starts off with a somewhat humorous, but interesting look at what an author must do in the age of ebooks in order to get a story out there to the masses and then follows Dane as his expectations of himself start to shift. With the threat of never really living out his dream of writing a successful serious book, he has to reevaluate what he really wants out of his life.

What I didn't expect from Brad Vance in this book was an old school romance. If you've read any of his previous books, you need to put away the expectations of raunchy sex, but you will still get humor, interesting characters and a unique love story as Dane and Jackson both confront futures they never planned on.

Sue says

The blurb for this book covers about the first 15%, then the plot takes off: becoming romance, mystery, adventure, and travelogue with just a dash of magical realism.

I was wowed and touched by the deep feelings the author evokes: all while pretending to be tongue-in-cheek. This book covers a lot of territory, from the meaning of love to the obsession for creativity. With a generous heart, the MC goes gayly spreading HEA's around the world before he finally realizes he must grasp his own or lose it.

This cheerful story is totally worth the read.

Nick Pageant says

Another BR with my soulmate, Mishy!

This was a frustrating read for me. I loved parts of it, but some of it didn't work for me at all.

There was some very good stuff here concerning the writing process, although I felt it got a bit too detailed.

There was some very good stuff here concerning the MC getting writing superpowers via a hot-beef injection from his muse, this was definitely original (and I would love it if my muse would...)

Anyway, the rest would be spoilers so, that's all I'm saying.

I think a lot of folks will really enjoy this one. There is a fairy tale quality to it that is a lot of fun and it is definitely different from the m/m I usually read.

Kathleen says

This book was chosen for me in a challenge this month. I made it through about 120 pages before I gave up. The main character felt very disingenuous and was an asshole for a lot of the story. He was really unlikeable and because there was no counterpoint of seeing him through his love interests eyes, that is all we got to see. And by page 120, there was still no discernable plot surrounding his love interest. It was like a 120 page treatise on how to succeed at publishing eBooks without trying. Others may find this book interesting as the writing was not bad and it seemed well edited but it was just not at all for me.

Hpstrangelove says

I've been making my way through Brad Vance's books when I saw his offer of receiving this book for free in return for a review.

I really did enjoy this book very much, the humor especially, poking fun at the entire ebook industry. But humor aside, there are some interesting issues that get brought up. When we start out in the working world, we have such lofty dreams about what we want to be doing. Then the reality of making a living forces us to compromise and do things that make us feel like we're selling out.

This story is such a change from some of the earlier works by this author that I've read, but I can't say I mind. Even I can enjoy some cute romance when it's as well written as this story it.

And I absolutely love the ending.
