



## Odd Thomas

By Dean Koontz

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### Odd Thomas By Dean Koontz

“The dead don't talk. I don't know why.” But they do try to communicate, with a short-order cook in a small desert town serving as their reluctant confidant. Odd Thomas thinks of himself as an ordinary guy, if possessed of a certain measure of talent at the Pico Mundo Grill and rapturously in love with the most beautiful girl in the world, Stormy Llewellyn. Maybe he has a gift, maybe it's a curse, Odd has never been sure, but he tries to do his best by the silent souls who seek him out. Sometimes they want justice, and Odd's otherworldly tips to Pico Mundo's sympathetic police chief, Wyatt Porter, can solve a crime. Occasionally they can prevent one. But this time it's different.

A mysterious man comes to town with a voracious appetite, a filing cabinet stuffed with information on the world's worst killers, and a pack of hyena-like shades following him wherever he goes. Who the man is and what he wants, not even Odd's deceased informants can tell him. His most ominous clue is a page ripped from a day-by-day calendar for August 15.

Today is August 14.

In less than twenty-four hours, Pico Mundo will awaken to a day of catastrophe. As evil coils under the searing desert sun, Odd travels through the shifting prisms of his world, struggling to avert a looming cataclysm with the aid of his soul mate and an unlikely community of allies that includes the King of Rock 'n' Roll. His account of two shattering days when past and present, fate and destiny converge is the stuff of our worst nightmares—and a testament by which to live: sanely if not safely, with courage, humor, and a full heart that even in the darkness must persevere.

*From the Hardcover edition.*

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### Editorial Review

From Publishers Weekly

Once in a very great while, an author does everything right-as Koontz has in this marvelous novel. Odd Thomas, who narrates, is odd indeed: only 20, he works contentedly as a fry cook in a small fictional California town, despite a talent for writing. The reason for his lack of ambition? A much rarer talent: Odd sees and converses with ghosts, the lingering dead who have yet to pass on, a secret he has kept from nearly everyone but his girlfriend, an eccentric author friend and the local police chief, whom he occasionally helps solve terrible crimes. Odd also has the ability to see bodachs, malevolent spirits that feast on pain and whose presence signifies a likelihood of imminent violence. The proximity of bodachs to a weird-looking stranger in town, whom Odd dubs "Fungus Man," alerts Odd that trouble is brewing; breaking into Fungus Man's house, Odd discovers not only hundreds of bodachs but a shrine to serial killers that helps him deduce that somehow Fungus Man will wreak widespread havoc very soon-so Odd is caught in a classic race against time to deter catastrophe. As with Koontz's best novels, this one features electrifying tension and suspense, plus a few walloping surprises. But Koontz fans know that the author has recently added humor to his arsenal of effects, and this thriller also stands out for its brilliant tightrope walk between the amusing and the macabre; one of the dead with whom Odd interacts frequently, for instance, is Elvis, still pining for his long-dead mother, Gladys. Above all, the story, like most great stories, runs on character-and here Koontz has created a hero whose honest, humble voice will resonate with many. In some recent books, Koontz has tended to overwrite, but not here: the narrative is as simple and clear as a newborn's gaze. This is Koontz working at his pinnacle, providing terrific entertainment that deals seriously with some of the deepest themes of human existence: the nature of evil, the grip of fate and the power of love.

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From School Library Journal

Adult/High School-*Odd Thomas* is just that. He works as a fry cook in the fictional California town of Pico Mundo. Should he ever leave that position, he sees a future in selling tires or shoes. What he lacks in ambition, he makes up for with a special gift. He communes with and sees the dead, some of whom enlist his help in avenging their deaths from foul play. His gift is a secret from everyone except his beautiful girlfriend and the Chief of Police, who never questions Odd's tips, advice, or presence at a murder scene. The man sees "bodachs" as well, small, evil creatures, fluid in shape, that feed upon horrific acts of carnage. He is horrified to see hordes of them gathering in his town. He spots a weird looking stranger in whom the bodachs appear very interested, nicknames him Fungus Man, and rightly assumes that he is involved in the impending disaster. Breaking into the man's house, Odd finds a mysterious black room, a shrine to serial killers, and a page from a calendar that tells him the date of the planned event. Now it's a race against time to foil the plot. The rapid pace, eerie circumstances, and bizarre characters will keep readers turning pages. Just when the suspense is almost unbearable, Koontz exhibits his wry sense of humor to break the tension. The last chapters are so powerful and heartrending that they should be read several times.

*Katherine Fitch, Rachel Carson Middle School, Fairfax, VA*

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From [Booklist](#)

His name really is Odd, but many would call anyone odd who sees ghosts and harbingers of mayhem called *bodachs*, and who homes in on mass murderers by means of PMS--that's psychic magnetism syndrome, according to his luscious girlfriend, Stormy (*not* her real name). Few others, however, know of his capabilities, which suits the Pico Mundo (California) Grille's 20-year-old short-order cook just fine. He would be better off without his gift, for, as he says, when he sees dead people, he does something about it.

That gets him, and nearly all his fellow Pico Mundians, in deep, hot water after a big, pasty creep Odd at first dubs Fungus Man comes into the Grille. Borachs teem around the guy, whom Odd connects immediately to his recurrent, seemingly premonitory nightmare about mass murder. Odd has to follow him, and his pursuit occupies the rest of Koontz's corker of a new thriller, his best since *Intensity* (1996) and *Dark Rivers of the Heart* (1994). We are at Odd's elbow throughout, for Koontz adopts, rather unusually for him, first-person narration, and Odd is the kind of instantly and persistently likable narrator that Fredric Brown used in such detective classics as the Ed and Am mysteries (collected in *Hunter and Hunted*, 2002), though the pace of a Brown novel is relaxed in comparison. Also like Brown, Koontz employs dry, goofy humor, often in daring counterpoint to the story's spikes in tension and horror. Koontz also waxes as honorably sentimental as Ray Bradbury, and writes in breathy, two-line paragraphs, recalling the punchy manner of Robert Bloch.

Obviously, then, this is a book worthy of any of the great three Bs of pop fiction. *Ray Olson*

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#### **Patricia Kirby:**

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#### **James Hibner:**

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