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Dear Booksellers,

I have always been fascinated by two things: the fantastic and the sea. Well, actually make that three: of course I loved books, too. I read all the classic high-sea adventures, like Stevenson's *Treasure Island* and Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. And I loved movies like *The Sea Hawk* with Errol Flynn and *Moby Dick* with Gregory Peck as Ahab, fighting his ultimate nemesis—the white whale.

This last one especially stuck with me, because as a kid I only saw the adventure, the danger of hunting such enormous beasts. Later I realized that the beast is actually the victim, that there is a disgusting brutality in hunting these wondrous creatures—especially today when some whale species are endangered.

As I did my research for a new fantasy novel I stumbled across *Moby Dick* again, and I immediately wanted to tell a story about the dangers and atrocities of whale hunting—well, sort of. As I said, I love the fantastic, so I thought about using dragons instead of whales. That is not entirely new stuff, I know, but my imagination ran wild. If dragons are whales, then the ships of their hunters had to be able to fly. Their ocean had to be the sky, islands had to be floating rocks high up in the air...

Imagine sitting on a plane on a bright sunny day. Below you is a thick layer of clouds, a seemingly endless ocean of white stretching in every direction to the horizon. Now imagine it dotted with small islands, floating rocks with lush greenery and brimming with life. Imagine flying lizards and dragons of all shapes and colors, some small and playful, some huge majestic creatures, titans of the sky. It feels like being in the Caribbean sea—except 20,000 feet above the ground. You might be tempted to take a swim, but if you do, you will fall into the dark, cloudy depth below to never be seen again. The cloudy depths where the true monsters lurk.

Welcome to the Cloudmere—the fantastic setting of my new novel. It's a story about Lian, a young man forced to flee his hometown on the shore of the cloud sea. So he hires aboard the next best of the dragon-hunting ships in the harbor. Soon he learns that he made a big mistake, because its captain is on a fanatic mission of vengeance. Adaron once lost his love to the great old dragon Gargantuan, and he's willing to sail to the end of the world to get his revenge—to kill the black leviathan...

So that's the story behind *Black Leviathan*, my first novel translated for the US book market. I really hope you enjoy reading it as much as German readers already enjoyed it and as much as I enjoyed writing it.



Bernd Perplies  
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# BLACK LEVIATHAN

BERND PERPLIES