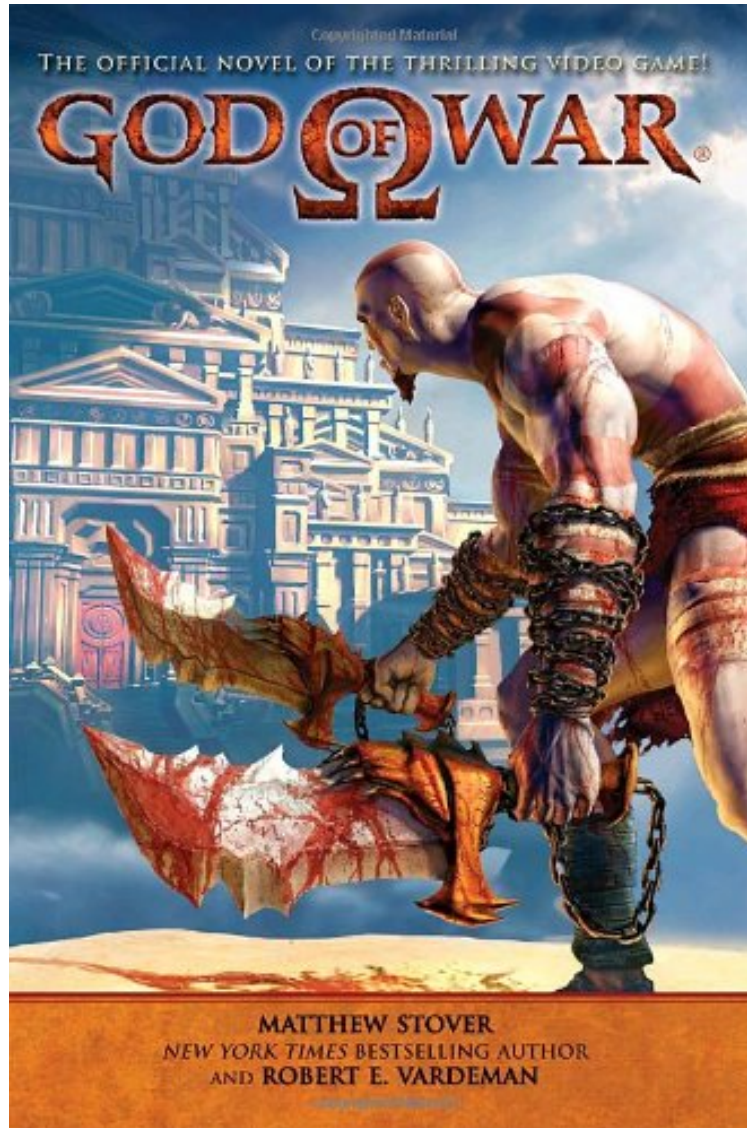


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God of War

Matthew Stover, Robert E. Vardeman

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Matthew Stover, Robert E. Vardeman : God of War before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised God of War:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Bloody slaughter, start to endBy CustomerIts a book that inspires video games, or the other way round. Fast paced, hardly a page goes by without action - ridiculous. Very basic character development. If you start it you will probably want to finish it but it does not compare to the excellent Caine books in any remote way. In fact I cannot believe its the same author. Read it only if you have no choice.0 of 0 people

found the following review helpful. If you like plot line and dialogueBy TaylorBeing based off a video game you really should expect nothing besides fight scenes. If you haven't played the game- it feels confusing and a bit pointless. If you like plot line and dialogue, this book is not for you; however if you like strictly fighting its highly recommended.0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. God of WarBy SuperpatriotGreat twist on Greek Mythology! Love how almost all the mythical creatures are included. Would like to see a fight between Kratos and Talos (from the movie "Jason and the Argonauts"). Yeah, I know Talos was only 8 feet tall in the real story, but this book has no problems taking liberties with original narratives.

Offering deeper insights into the critically acclaimed God of War franchise, this novel returns us to the dark world of ancient Greek mythology explored in the heart-pounding action of God of War I, the bestselling video game. A brutal warrior, Kratos is a slave to the gods of Olympus. Plagued by the nightmares of his past and yearning for freedom, the Ghost of Sparta would do anything to be free of his debt to the gods. He is on the verge of losing all hope when the gods give him one last task to end his servitude.He must destroy Ares, the god of war.But what chance does a mere mortal have against a god? Armed with the deadly chained Blades of Chaos, guided by the goddess Athena, and driven by his own insatiable thirst for vengeance, Kratos seeks the only relic powerful enough to slay Ares . . . a quest that will take him deep into the mysterious temple borne by the Titan Cronos!From the black depths of Hades to the war-torn city of Athens to the lost desert beyond, God of War sheds a brutal new light on the bestselling video game and on the legend of Kratos.

"* "God of War II may in fact be the best action game ever made." - IGN.com"About the AuthorMatthew Stover is the New York Times bestselling author of the Star Wars novels Revenge of the Sith, Shatterpoint, and The New Jedi Order: Traitor, as well as Caine Black Knife, The Blade of Tyshalle, and Heroes Die. He is an expert in several martial arts. Stover lives outside Chicago.Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved.Chapter OneThe entire ship groaned and shuddered, lurching upward into the fierce winter squall as though it had struck unexpected shoals here in the Aegean's deepest reach. Kratos threw his arms around the statue of Athena at the prow of his battered ship, lips peeling from his teeth in an animal snarl. Above, on the mainmast, the last of the ship's square sails boomed and cracked in the gale like the detonation of a nearby thunderbolt. A huge flock of filthy, emaciated creatures like hideous women with the wings of bats swooped and wheeled above the mast, screaming rage and lust for the blood of men."Harpies," Kratos growled. He hated harpies.A pair of the winged monsters shrieked above the wind's howl as they dove to slash at the sail with their blood-crusted talons. The sail boomed once more, then it finally shredded, whipping over the deck and slapping the harpies from the air. One vanished into the spray of the storm; the other managed to right herself by tangling viciously sharp talons into the hair of an oarsman. She dragged the unfortunate sailor screaming and flailing into the sky, twisting to sink her fangs into his neck and feast upon his blood, which spewed downward in a gory shower.The harpy saw Kratos watching and screamed her eternal rage. She ripped away the sailor's head and hurled it at Kratos; when he slapped this grisly missile away with a contemptuous backhand, she flung the sailor's body with enough force to kill an ordinary man.Her target, however, was nothing resembling ordinary.Kratos slipped aside and snatched the decapitated sailor's rope belt as the corpse plummeted. A savage yank snapped the rope and sent the corpse over the rail into the churning sea. Kratos measured the dive of the harpy as she swooped on him like a falcon, knifelike talons extended to rip out his eyes.Kratos reached back over his shoulders instinctively, his hands seeking the twin enormous, wickedly curved, and preternaturally sharp chopping swords that nestled against his back: His signature weapons, the Blades of Chaos, had been forged by the smith god Hephaestus in the furnaces of Hades itself. Chains from their hafts looped about his wrists and burned through his flesh until they fused with his very bones-but at the last instant he left the twin weapons where they were.A harpy wasn't worth drawing on.He cracked the slain sailor's belt like a whip. It spun out to meet the harpy's dive and looped around her neck. He leaped from the statue to the deck below, his sudden weight wrenching the creature from the sky. He pinned her to the deck with one sandal while he hauled upward on the rope with a fraction of his full strength. That fraction was enough: The harpy's head tore free of her body and flipped into the air.He snatched the head with his free hand, shook it at the wheeling, screeching flock above, and roared, "Come down here again! See what you get!"He punctuated his challenge by hurling the severed head at the nearest of the harpies with deadly accuracy and incredible force. It struck her full in the face, cutting off her screech like the blow of an ax. She flipped ass over fangs as she tumbled from the sky to crash into the storm churn, three spans off the port sweeps.Kratos only glowered. Killing those vile creatures wasn't even fun.No challenge.Kratos's glower deepened as the storm gave him a glimpse of the merchantman he'd been pursuing. The big ship still had two sails up and was pulling away, running before the wind. Another instant showed him why his ship was falling behind. His oarsmen were cowering in fear of the harpies, pressing themselves into whatever space they might find below their benches or shielded by the thicket of oars. With a wordless snarl, Kratos seized a panicked oarsman by the scruff of his neck and, one-handed, lifted the man up over his head."The only monster you should fear is me!" A quick, effortless snap of his wrist cast the coward into the waves. "Now row!"The surviving crew applied themselves to their oars with frantic energy. The only thing Kratos hated more

than harpies was a coward. "And you!" He shook a massive fist at the steersman. "If I have to come back there to steer, I'll feed you to the harpies!" "Do you have the ship in sight?" His bull-throated roar caused the steersman to cringe. "Do you?" "A quarter league off the starboard bow," the steersman called. "But he still has sail! We'll never catch him!" "We'll catch him." Kratos had pursued the merchant ship for days. The other captain was a shrewd and able sailor. He'd tried every trick Kratos knew, and even a few new ones, but with every passing day, Kratos's sleek galley had herded the merchantman ineluctably toward the one hazard no vessel could survive: the Grave of Ships. Kratos knew his quarry had to come about. To enter that cursed strait was the last mistake any captain would ever make. Ahead, looming like jagged rocks amid the narrow strait, lay shattered hulks of ships beyond number that had, through misfortune or miscalculation, found their way into the grave. No one knew how many there might be—hundreds, perhaps, or thousands, listing in the tides and the treacherous crosscurrents, grinding their hulls against one another until finally they either broke apart into splintered flotsam or took on enough water to sink. But even that was not the end of their hazard. So many wrecks rested on the seabed below that they had built themselves nearly back up to the Aegean's surface in artificial reefs, waiting to rip out the hull of any unlucky ship above. These reefs could never be mapped, for no ship that entered the grave ever left it. So many sailors had perished here that the sea itself had taken on a foul reek of rotting meat. Kratos nodded to himself as the merchantman dropped its sails and unshipped its oars for the turn. Escape was close—or would have been, in any other region of the sea. But the ship was too near already to the Grave of Ships. Even as the merchantman began to reverse course, a colossal head rose from the depths and crashed down on the ship's deck; then its sinewy neck curled about and tried to break the mast. Whenever the wind quieted for a moment, Kratos heard plainly the screams and battle cries of the merchantman's crew as they frantically hacked at the Hydra's neck with short swords and fire axes. More heads curled upward from the depths below. Kratos signaled the steersman to make straight for them. No point in waiting for them to get free; they were too busy fighting the Hydra to notice that they were being pulled into the grave. All around floated the deserted, destroyed husks of ships either lacking the protection of the gods or bearing the fate of their condemnation. The closest vessel they passed had clearly arrived not long before Kratos and his quarry. A dozen or so sailors were pinned to the mast—impaled by a single immense spear. Harpies had picked at the bodies. Most of the sailors were mere shreds of flesh hanging on bloody skeletons—but the one closest to the mast was still alive. The sailor caught sight of Kratos and began to kick feebly, stretching out his hands in a silent plea for mercy. Kratos was more interested in that immense spear—its presence hinted that a Cyclops might be nearby. He stepped to block the steersman's view of the death ship. "Pay heed to your course." "Lord Ares opposes us," the sailor said in a choked voice. "The harpies—the Hydra—these are now his own creatures! All of them. Would you defy the God of War?" Kratos cuffed the steersman hard enough to knock him to the deck. "That merchantman has fresh water. We have to take her before she sinks, or we'll all die swilling the sea. Forget Ares. Worry about Poseidon." He hauled the man back to his feet and set him at the tiller. "And if Poseidon doesn't worry you, there is always me." For two days they had been without water. His mouth was drier than the Desert of Lost Souls, and his tongue had swollen. Kratos would gladly have traded for the water, but before the deal could be made, the captain of the merchantman had caught a glimpse of him and had decided a wiser course was to flee as though all the hounds of Hades bayed at his heels. Kratos would teach this captain the consequences of such wisdom. He tugged at his short, pointed beard, combing from it thick clots of blood—harpies or human, he neither knew nor cared. He checked himself for wounds; in the heat of battle, one can be mortally injured without even noticing. Finding none, his fingers unconsciously traced the red tattoo that swept up across his face and shaved head before descending along his back. The red contrasted sharply with the bone white of his skin. Blood and death. Those were Kratos's stock in trade. No one who'd ever seen him in battle, no one who'd even heard the tales of his legendary exploits, could mistake him for any other man. Another impact knocked Kratos into his steersman. The ship shuddered and squealed, and the grinding shriek went on and on. The sailor fell to the deck, and Kratos grabbed the tiller—but it swung freely in his hands. "The rudder!" the steersman gasped. "The rudder's sheared away!" Kratos released the useless tiller and peered over the stern. One of the derelict hulks of the ship reefs had speared his galley like a fish-spar as thick as his body had been driven up through the hull and had sliced away the entire rudder as it had penetrated the stern from inside and below. "Starboard sweeps! Backwater! Now!" Kratos roared. "Port sweeps! Pull for your useless lives!" With a tooth-grinding shriek, the galley ripped clear of the spar. As its bow swung toward the struggling merchantman, Kratos ordered the starboard sweeps to full ahead. He twisted and snarled at the steersman. "Beat the cadence. Make it fast!" "But-but we're sinking!" "Do it!" Kratos turned back to the oarsmen. "The first craven worm to take his hands off his sweep will die where he sits!" The crew stared at him as if he had been driven mad by the gods. "Now! Pull!" Even as the stern sank lower and lower into the water, the galley surged ahead. The merchantman was only a couple of hundred paces away, then a hundred fifty, then—An enormous swell driven by the Grave of Ships' treacherous crosscurrents heeled the galley half over—and instead of righting itself, it crashed down upon a rotting hulk and stuck fast. His ship had nowhere left to go except down. "If you can, follow," Kratos told his crew. If they couldn't, they weren't worth saving. He vaulted the rail and landed cat-footed on a sea-slimed plank. He skidded along it, wheeling his arms for balance. The sea foamed among the jagged drifting planks, and every swell set derelict hulls grinding against one another like wooden millstones. To fall into these waters would be certain death. Fifty feet ahead

bobbed another ship. Its mast had been lopped off, and from the look of the encrusted barnacles and rot-blackened seaweed that festooned the hull, the ship had been a prisoner in the Grave of Ships for many years. Anything that still floated was better than his own galley, which was surrendering to the sea with a vast sucking sound and a chorus of screams from sailors too slow to leap away. A moment later, the only sounds were the crash of waves and the thin whistle of the slackening gale. Walking quickly across the broken remnants of perished ships, Kratos reached the abandoned hulk. The high curve of slimy hull looked impossible to climb, even for him. He paused and glanced back to see if any of his crew had followed. Only a handful had avoided being sucked under with the galley—a Hydra's head rose up from the depths and snapped savagely, taking more of the crew by cutting them into bloody halves. In silence, Kratos watched them die. He was used to being alone. The spar on which he balanced rolled unexpectedly beneath him. Without hesitation he leaped, fingers scrabbling for the hulk's encrusted anchor chain. Barnacles slashed his fingers, but he only snarled and gripped so much the harder. His feet met the curve of the hull, and he carefully walked his way up, pulling himself along the chain. He swung himself up onto the deck. This ship had been abandoned for years. The mast had broken off and left jagged splinters, now dulled by storm and wave. He turned and looked back to where his ship had been. He found naught but steel-gray chop and foam nearly as white as his ash-stained skin. The stench of black decay was his first warning. His second was the sudden red-hot sear from the chains fused to the bones of his wrists. Ares had been a cruel master; Kratos hated even the thought of him, save for one single act. Ares had joined to his arms the Blades of Chaos. The embedded chains burned now as though they hung in a bonfire. Flame dripped from the blades on his back, but again he didn't bother to draw. He turned and dropped into a fighting stance, hands wide to grapple and rip. The stench gained putrid strength as its source climbed into view. That source was three of Ares's soldiers—rotting corpses of undead legionnaires. These were the only soldiers the God of War could now command. Their eyes burned with a cold green fire. Decomposing flesh hung in rags from their bones. Without a sound, they rushed him. Undead though they might be, they moved with uncanny speed. One thrust a spear at his head, thinking to force him to dodge, as another swung a length of chain at his legs. He snatched the spear haft with both hands, driving it down to tangle the whipping chains—then Kratos released the spear and drove his hand into the slimy guts of the nearest legionnaire, his fingers ripping through the decayed flesh to seize its hipbone from the inside. Kratos squeezed with inhuman force; the legionnaire's hip joint shattered, and the creature fell. Kratos moved on without looking back. When the legionnaire with the chain swung it again, Kratos let it whip around his arms. He wasn't worried; he had chains of his own. As the undead leaped for him, Kratos slipped a loop of the blade chain around its neck. A twitch of his massive arms tore the legionnaire's head from its shoulders. The third he dispatched with a simple blow of his fist, crushing its skull. He looked for more creatures to destroy but saw nothing. He knew better than to believe all the monsters had disappeared. Kratos wisely used the time he had bought himself to hunt for a pathway between the wrecked ships that might take him the last fifty-odd paces to the merchantman. A wooden statue bobbing some distance away caught his eye.