

# A CORAL PILLOW



FATA MARE

G. WELLS TAYLOR

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G. Wells Taylor

(eBook Sample)

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Edited by Katherine Tomlinson

Cover art by G. Wells Taylor

Website: [GWellsTaylor.com](http://GWellsTaylor.com)

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**1.**

When Carl paused in his long and dangerous descent to wave, he almost lost his footing on the crumbled shale slope. A scatter of stones clattered and drew his eyes to the sharp rocks below where the wild waves chewed the shoreline with foaming teeth. Risking another scare, he cocked his head from side to side, peering through a tangle of sea wrack for another glimpse of her. He'd seen her swimming just before.

Yes, there on the salted sea breeze, he saw a golden coil of hair. It danced in the air and beckoned, but he could see nothing more. She had moved behind a wayward boulder that had crashed down the slope in a reckless bid for the deep

—years or even centuries past.

Urgently, he resumed his climb, weathered boots scuffing at the loose rocks for purchase, and more small avalanches rattled. He hugged his pack tight to his chest so the iron tins of ham bit into his flesh. His free hand clutched at the air for balance.

A cave worn by water and wind gaped before him. Reflected light sent spangled ghosts into its depths. The waves rolled in along a stony trench and to either side ran a shelf of rock where the footing grew more sure. Echoes of daylight and breakers filled the cave's mouth. Carl searched for signs of her.

“Carl?”

His name floated up from the shallows of the sea cave, the syllable buoyed by emotion. Carl stepped a few more yards beneath the arch of frowning stone. Beside him, the waves were slowing. The trough of lime green water showed visions of colored fish and coral.

“Lhasa?” he whispered. The name sparked on the dancing water before trailing off to burbling echoes.

“Here.” Her voice again, this time followed by a lighthearted giggle and playful splash.

“Lhasa,” Carl breathed, face widening around a grin as he rushed forward.

The cave broadened out at the end

where the trough spilled its contents in a pond. To either side the rock swept up and cradled a beach of fine, dark sand. Time had cut holes in the vaulted ceiling so beams of amber pierced the briny air.

Lhasa sat on the sand, her smile dancing. She raised her smooth, strong hands and beckoned—long fingers flickered anxiously.

Carl hurried and then paused a moment over her, breathing deeply, always disbelieving. It was magic.

Her pale irises held the color of driftwood shot through with pupils darker than the deepest shadow of the wave-worn cave. Her skin shone with the tan of endless summer, and jeweled

her arms with gilded bands. Golden hair fell in ringlets by her shoulders, hid her breasts in playful tangles.

“Carl, my love.” She stretched her arms toward him.

He dropped his pack, fell to his knees, and swept her into his arms. Her face he covered in kisses.

“I have missed you so!” Carl gasped, tears growing hot in his eyes. His voice was heavy.

“It is more difficult to meet you, love,” Lhasa sang, her accented tones an enchantment. “My family grows suspicious.”

“Damn them!” Carl blurted boldly, then softening, kissed her closed eyelids.

“We must be together, we must. The hours in the lighthouse grow long and as each passes, the memory of your face grows stronger. It grows, my love, until I feel you with me. We must find a way.”

Lhasa's eyes dropped and her full lips formed a frown. “I fear there is no way. My family will not approve,” she sighed, her strong hands kneading his shoulders. “Already they seek a suitor.”

“We must find a way!” A pang of envy made his voice so sharp she flinched. “I am paid well for my lighthouse work; my carpentry earns me money from the shipwrights on the shore. We can have a life together ...”

“But, we differ so ...”

“No.” He grasped her hands and brought them down between their chests. “In here we are alike. The same God set these hearts to beating.” He rubbed the knot of fingers on their breasts. “We are one, my love. We have seen the round moon many times and watched the stars whirl in the inky black. Lhasa, we know each other’s heart.”

“Just that you do.” Lhasa smiled, pulled his hands up, and kissed his heavy knuckles. “For this will sit unwell with your people, too.”

“Damn them! They are fools and cannot know!” He glared out toward the sea cave door. “They do not love each other!”

“Outcasts would we be.”

“Two stars in our own night,” he said without hesitation. “King and Queen of heaven.”

“But ...” She glanced at the pond, then back to him.

“Enough.” Carl set a finger to her lips. “Remember the night we met.”

Lhasa nodded and smiled.

“Then you know the fate we share.” He grinned. “Out of the darkness came the light—from the end a beginning. You know what we are.”

Lhasa leaned forward and kissed his smile. “Then we must leave.” Her breath brushed his whiskers. “We will go from these shores to another, and start this

new life together.”

Carl’s hands slipped to her strong hips and pulled her close. The salt air filled his nostrils.

“Tomorrow night,” he promised, and kissed the soft skin on her cheeks.

They made love in the sand while the warm sea lapped at their bodies.

Outside, the rocks that made their cave with lines of shadow formed a grimace. The sea was black, as it grew cold.

## 2.

Forty years had passed, but Carl’s broad shoulders held the years well.

Many kegs of oil had he hauled up the turning steps to the lanterns atop the lighthouse.

Then all that changed.

A heavy limp in his left leg spoke for that part of the tale. Twenty years before, falling down those steps had shattered his thigh, and two weeks awaiting help near killed him with poison and pain. When he had returned from his mainland sickbed, and his replacement relieved, he found noisy engines powering electric lights.

Still, his broad shoulders held the years well.

He stood atop the slope he traveled every day, and like each day before he

held the same debate.

*She won't be here.*

A cloud of darkness filled his mind, but through it came a voice to the surface wafting like some cruel angel of the deep.

*She promised.*

He limped down the slope, face set and grim. His mind did the things it did at this time always. Pain and acceptance struggled to dominate. Like a widow hugging the tattered nightshirt of a cruel husband for warmth, Carl held the memory of Lhasa.

His thoughts straggled back to their meeting.

He remembered the first time he saw the bleak black island: barely two miles long, all of dark rock and sparsely grown. The lighthouse jutted from a rise at one end, a mast of the same material looming over him like a gravestone. Youthful passion and remorse had driven him there: sick of life, sick of people, and sick of love.

Not four months passed before he drank himself numb and foolish in a lonely fit. Driven by pretty ghosts to a momentary need for company, he set out for *town* in a twelve-foot launch. *Town* was a village on the mainland shore ten miles across a cold and choppy channel. The rough sea sank his boat.

He hit the water, and great blackness pressed him round. Like death, it kissed his fingers and numb spirit with frozen lips. A gasp of air, and he dropped beneath the waves without a sound.

He had no strength to fight the dark current dragging him down.

Why live to another lonely day?

Then, the hands. Glowing, they fluttered toward him like ivory doves in a sky of shadow. They flapped from the dark to perch upon his arms and breast and squeeze the heavy muscle there. Warmth brought life to his heart, and power to his legs. Something in their touch made him fight.

Carl shook off the numbing ache of

death as he was lifted upward, carried, towed, and dragged to land, where he fell unconscious before laying eyes on his redeemer.

End of this eBook sample

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[books@gwellstaylor.com](mailto:books@gwellstaylor.com).

**ABOUT THE AUTHOR**

G. WELLS TAYLOR was born in Oakville, Ontario, Canada in 1962, but spent most of his early life north of there in Owen Sound where he went on to study Design Arts at a local college. He later traveled to North Bay, Ontario to complete Canadore College's Journalism program before receiving a degree in English from Nipissing University. Taylor worked as a freelance writer for small market newspapers and later wrote, designed and edited for several Canadian niche magazines.

He joined the digital publishing revolution early with an eBook version of his first novel *When Graveyards*

*Yawn* that has been available online since 2000. Taylor published and edited the *Wildclown Chronicle* e-zine from 2001-2003 that showcased his novels, book trailer animations and illustrations, short story writing and book reviews alongside titles from other up-and-coming horror, fantasy and science fiction writers.

Still based in Canada, Taylor continues with his publishing plans that include additions to his *Vampires of the Kind* books, the *Wildclown Mysteries*, and sequels to the popular *Variant Effect* series.