

THE CORPSE: HARBINGER
Adventures of a Long-Dead Detective
G. Wells Taylor

Copyright 2009 by G. Wells Taylor. All rights reserved. No part of this book may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means, electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording, or by any information storage and retrieval system, without the written consent of the author, except where permitted by law.

Edited by Julia C. Moulton

Cover Design by G. Wells Taylor

More titles at GWellsTaylor.com.

For Creech, Hanna & Max
Such a welcome at such a time!

The Adventures:
Secret of the Severed Skull
Case of the Cursed Cathedral
Harbinger

Introduction by Julian Pachs, Esq.

So low had I been brought by this thing people call the Change, that I considered chronicling the exploits of a long dead detective to be a rise in station.

My duties included the exigencies of caring for his very dead body, ills brought about by its exanimate state and damage received during its application in the normal course of detective work.

Add to that the careful management of his business affairs and action as proficient if unremarkable chauffeur, the sum total of which was my position as reluctant if ruthlessly efficient aid, and personal secretary to Ryerson Stone, the Corpse.

Being the product of a misspent youth, and poorly cared for as a child, I found little sympathy for my employer's clients—victims all. Directly or indirectly, that's what they were. As my father used to say before or after my many beatings—*we are all victims*.

Like a litany he said it, like an excuse and I considered all lessons taught me by that brutal man to be harshly, if well learned. It caused in me, as I approached manhood in the years before the Change, a detached viewpoint that allowed me to build upon a short stint as pathologist's assistant or *diener*, by briefly entering into the profession of funereal director.

I found the social aspects to be more agreeable than my former employment without overtaxing my otherwise awkward and self-conscious persona. Likewise, my diener's duties well prepared me for the limited viewing and handling of human remains demanded by my new position.

I truly would have stayed a funeral director for the remainder of my years—doling out sad faces and rehearsed platitudes had I not been arrested and charged on several counts of fraud, theft, and committing indignities to the dead. I had developed a healthy appetite for painkillers and alcohol during my teenaged years that frequently led me to depend upon more powerful and expensive pharmaceuticals.

And so, the removal of luxury items and valuables from the dead I administered to during their final hours on the earth's surface became a necessary part of doing business. This was soon followed by the removal of gold teeth, body piercings and similar adornments, which led inevitably to the confiscation of prosthetic devices and dental appliances.

All of this culminated in a sting operation that was funded by a reality television show of the day which completely illuminated my relatively new practice of removing clothing from the dearly departed—and switching expensive caskets for pauper's pine boxes. Slating the former for resale seemed to my deluded mind to be a sensible business decision.

I was out on bail awaiting trial when the Change came. The authorities extant at the time were completely overwhelmed by the phenomena's many developing challenges, chief among them the rapidly rising sea levels, and the rising of the dead.

After a few tactically timed telephone calls from my lawyer to the besieged legal representatives and law enforcement officials representing the state, I was given the opportunity to slip between the cracks. Later I was to question whether I could consider that a fortuitous spin of the wheel.

The following tumultuous social turnings accompanied by myriad religious and spiritual upheavals started post-Change society on a downward spiral in which I found my own life inexplicably tangled and dragged low.

These currents deposited me at the bottom of the world where I was able to indulge every self-destructive impulse that was in me. I was soon hopelessly addicted to several powerful intravenous drugs. Heroin chief among them.

Their effects upon my body were just slightly worse than the spiritual damage I caused myself by the questionable means I employed to procure them. This malodorous turning of life left me near madness and on the brink of walking death from a drug overdose when the Corpse found me.

The Corpse does no more than shrug when he sees me at my entertainment now, fitfully filling the pages of numerous journals and diaries illuminating the days and nights we've since spent as partners. To say he shrugs is misleading.

His necrotic state does not allow for such wanton use of motion. Instead his shrug is rather more a look that comes into his eye that suggests tacit comprehension, as if to say that no more will come of it than what he sees. *Julian scratches in his notepad. Nothing more.*

The Corpse asked once, and asked no more when I answered as if to confirm my suspicions that he truly did not care for things that were not mysteries, nor for the fame and recognition that my recounting of his adventures in the City Times could give him.

He was a dead detective who followed some ancient pattern or code and cared only for the balance that his deductive abilities could bring. The resulting restoration of law in some small way to answer to the Chaos that the Change represented. This I had long suspected because of the manner of our meeting and later suggested more. That his need to bring law to order hinted at a desire for atonement.

I say this with some confidence for whom better to discuss the character of sin than a sinner? But these narratives are not a discourse in modern post-Change philosophy or ethics of the Apocalypse. They are entertainment at their worst and engaging enlightenment at their best—or so I hope.

The Corpse, I always think of him as such, for such he is, but the Corpse was known in life as Ryerson Stone. What he was called before the Change, I cannot divine, and I have tried.

I have through surreptitious means discovered only that he held great wealth before the cataclysm that drove the world insane, and after that he used these monies in part to hide his true identity. And so Ryerson Stone was born with the age of insanity and died inside its confines. Rising from the ashes, his revenant, the dead detective, held little with his living persona, though he allowed me the familiarity of calling him Stone when the need arose.

As in all drama the story will say better with action and words than my literate navel gazing ever could and so it is also with my relationship to the Corpse, our individual origins, and that which we share—our partnership. These I feel will be illuminated by the description of our actions in these dark tales.

The Corpse advertises himself as a consulting detective. I am his partner, receiving accommodation and small wage for my various heretofore mentioned efforts. I am of the family Pachs (pronounced Pox) of a very noble European line; I'm told, with rumored roots in the Bulgarian monarchy.

I stand five foot six, have a lean frame, softening at the waist and bear a round head on narrow shoulders. I wear long sideburns, as is the fashion of the day, that are red-tinged in defiance of the curtain of dark brown hair that circles the exposed crown of my skull. I have large green eyes, narrow nose, and high cheekbones.

My moustache is razor sharp and deftly follows the contour of my full upper lip. Outstanding to my appearance is my pale complexion strangely devoid of hue in a living man. Even with the near absence of light that comes with the sheltered streets of the City in the near constant downpour that came with the Change most men have more color in their cheeks than I.

My meager wages are enough to keep me in dark wool suits of blue shades and gray, which have the effect of accentuating the paleness of my skin, though the early days saw me, abashed, pull them from the rack.

The Corpse maintains an office and lodging on Butcher Street an otherwise unremarkable lane that runs north and south for one full block on Level One in the City of Light.

Butcher Street received its name from a man on the City's last democratically elected council famous for instituting the Dead Authority. This group of lawmakers and enforcers were conscripted from the ranks of City Authority Officers who had fallen in the line of duty.

The Dead Authority was a mirror to the Living version differing only in the breadth of its power and its eventual mandate. Where the Living served to protect, the Dead Authority served to control. The Corpse has remarked on more than one occasion that this controlling power would one day be open incarceration for the dead.

###

End of this **eBook** Sample

Purchase **The Corpse: HARBINGER** and other **G. Wells Taylor** eBook titles for **\$3.99** or less at: [Amazon](#), [Barnes and Noble](#), [Kobobooks](#), [Smashwords](#) and [iBookstore](#).

Email Questions or comments to: books@gwellstaylor.com

Click [HERE](#) for **G. Wells Taylor BLOG** & Publishing Updates
FREE eBooks, Title Catalogue and Sample Chapters.

Find G. Wells Taylor on [Facebook](#) and [Twitter](#).

Titles by [G. Wells Taylor](#)

[The Apocalypse Trilogy](#)

When Graveyards Yawn – A Wildclown Novel (**FREE eBook**)

The Forsaken

The Fifth Horseman

[Wildclown Mysteries](#)

When Graveyards Yawn

Wildclown Hard-Boiled

Wildclown Hijacked

Menagerie – A Wildclown Novel

The Corpse: Harbinger

The Variant Effect Series

Skin Eaters – Book One (**FREE eBook**)

GreenMourning – Book Two

Painkiller (**FREE NOVELLA**)

Dracula of the Apes Trilogy

The Urn – Book One (**FREE eBook**)

The Ape – Book Two

The Curse – Book Three

Horror Fiction

Bent Steeple

Mother's Boy

Memory Lane

Gene Spiral Stories

6 – Portrait of a 21st Century Snuff Fighter

Check GWellsTaylor.com for more.

Email Questions or comments to: books@gwellstaylor.com