

---

# BODIES IN REVOLT

---

C. G. DURRANT



---

## Foreword

---

This sample chapter of *Bodies in Revolt* is available in a limited format. However, the full story is available in multiple formats and on a wide variety of devices.

Get stuck in below and I hope you enjoy this sample.

Best regards,



---

## Chapter 1

### THE VISION

---

**F**ather Jennings gazed from his pulpit as the heads of the congregation lifted, faces glowing with reverence. “Jesus asked him, saying, ‘What is your name?’ And he said, ‘Legion,’ because many demons had entered him.” A flutter of overlapping voices echoed his words. “I would now like to sing hymn number forty-seven Angels from the Realm of Glory.”

The sound of ruffling pages swept through the chancel to him, reminding him to open his hymn book. His love of the hymn had ingrained his memory with those lyrics. He followed suit anyway. Melodious rapture filled the church and the minutes that followed. Voices, high and low, bellowed in time with Mrs Shale’s piano playing. She hammered the keys with chubby fingers, it seemed to him almost randomly; any coherence resulted from either luck or divine influence.

He grinned, impressed by the turnout of a midweek service. Here and there just a few feet of polished pew remained. The church was a shoe box compared to the one he’d left, and even though the *church* was larger than

the building it served, he had noticed dwindling numbers during his ministry.

Some joined the church to escape regrets and a world rife with war, famine and natural disaster; gloom impressed upon them by the media in its many forms. Some became disillusioned by the power they hoped would free them of their stresses - the Bible which prophesied greater calamities. For others, a faith in God, even the wavering kind, was too high a price for membership.

Most of his congregation comprised retired folk, happy to slip in a couple of hours of worship between solving crosswords and pruning roses. It made no difference; if there were those who wanted to learn, then he was always willing to teach.

The singing died, followed by the piano playing.

Those who were standing resumed their seats.

"That was sung beautifully." Alex clasped his hands, feeling like a school teacher, imbuing his year-sevens with confidence. "Sung with the same warmth and spirit with which I've been welcomed to the village." He pointed to a small, elderly woman. "Mrs..." He hesitated, recalling the events of the last few days and the villagers who had swamped him with gifts. Some were sincere in their offerings while others used that imparting as an excuse to get close to their new vicar. He smiled. "Mrs Jenkins," he said.

"Call me Alice." The old lady yelled from the front pew.

"Well, Alice, thank you for the cookies."

She curled her lip. "The double-layered chocolate cake."

"Of course." He ignored her disappointment. He turned to another woman who told him *she was responsible* for the cookies as though she were confessing a wrongdoing. *But God knew.* "Well, I'd like to thank you *all* for your

gifts. For those who don't know me, I am father Alexandra Jennings. I wish I could have made your acquaintance in less distressing circumstances." Heads lowered in silent prayer. "Some of you may not know the reason for Father Hammond's departure."

"Son in a car crash, Vicar." The hand of a tubby man shot into the air.

Alex nodded. "Father Hammond returned to his parish in London to be with him. I would like us to join in prayer now for them both." He waited until he could see the tops of heads before continuing.

Alex followed a prayer by a sermon of the Psalms, declaring that fear was redundant in the kingdom of God, for even when we walk through the darkest valley, we will not be afraid, for God was close beside them. He reckoned only a handful of the flock was old enough to have lived—and to remember having lived—during the tail-end of the last world war.

But all seemed old enough to have been raised in a post-war apocalypse of devastation and deprivation, where the suffering of friends and relatives had exploited the fertility of dreams, turning them into nightmares. They instilled the promise and dread that their lives were to become the vagabond ancestry of their descendants. He felt fraudulent, preaching fortitude as life's requisite to surmount sorrow when most here knew more about it than he did.

Fifteen years of ministry had honed his skill to identify churchgoing types. Most of these people were not hardcore followers. They were far from the frenzied evangelist who stood on his pulpit of a shopping-precinct bench scaring the crap out of shoppers with threats of damnation for the unrepentant. Neither were they part-time attendees looking for a quick fix in the vastness of religion where the

ambiguity of secular interpretation offered any answer they wished for.

They were the *in-betweeners*, the low-key but devout believers who sat quietly—or *relatively* quietly—worshipping and accepting. They were the old-timers with such die-hard principals as loyalty, honour and monogamy. Even those who had not digested the scriptures in bite-sized doses found they were already living their lives according to principals of Christianity.

A parishioner read from the lectionary then conveyed the message of the passage using a peculiar metaphor of rhubarb and harsh winters. Somewhere between the resulting laughter, Alex felt that tingling behind his eyes that was always the prelude to that reoccurring vision: *the boy... the flames... the bare bones of men... alive but not*. It had been more of a single vision of disparate elements. From its birth several weeks earlier, it had grown from incipiency and infrequency. Now, the fire burned, and the faces stared at him, demanding and questioning. They consumed his consciousness.

He fell from the pulpit and was out before he hit the ground.



ALEX CAME to on a bench in the vestry. He looked up into downcast eyes, wide with concern, mouths agape with shock.

“The doc says you’ll be okay, Rev.” A woman with hair curls tighter than a poodle’s coat placed a hand on his shoulder.

Alex sat up, hearing voices around him: *you’re not a doctor*, came one voice. *I’ve got certificates that prove otherwise*, came another, belonging to a tubby man whose fingers

were probing the Vicar's wrists. *You're retired*, blurted a skinny brunette.

The Doctor cranked his head in her direction. "I'm still a doctor. You take a chicken out of a coup, and it's still a bloody chicken." He turned to Alex. "Sorry, Vicar."

"You're forgiven," Alex grunted. "How long have I been out?"

"About ten minutes." The retired doctor peered into his eyes. "You dizzy now?"

Alex shook his head. "I'm fine."

A lay reader barged into the room, arms swinging, a breaststroke swimmer in a sea of people. "Give him air, give him air." He shouted as though the crowd's proximity would breathe away his oxygen.

Alex felt like an alien cornered by this mesmerised group. "I'm fine, seriously." A barrage of questions and answers followed: have you fainted before? No. Are you on drugs? No. How many fingers was the man in the leather jacket holding up? Three. Are you possessed? Definitely not. Is the moon made of cheese? Only in fairy tales. Was God an astronaut? No, no and no again.

"Enough." A lay reader stepped in, ushering the congregation from the room.

Alex overheard the speculation that the holy spirit had overwhelmed him. Then came the assumption that the pressure of his calling had gotten to him. If Alex had been ignorant of the cause of his collapse, then he would have attributed it to exhaustion. He felt a hand on his shoulder as another lay reader told him to rest and that he would take over the service.



ALEX WORKED up a thirst walking back to the vicarage.

He paused at the kitchen to pour a whiskey before sauntering to the lounge where he sat on an old armchair. It had belonged to the rector before him and probably the one before that. He stared at the boxes from the move. Some were open and empty; others were full and sealed. They testified to his new life and the old one he could not escape. He was foolish to believe moving hundreds of miles from a suburban parish to a rural one would allow him to leave those visions behind.

He was convinced that the source of those visions had nothing to do with geography. Alex had wanted to escape memories, and that opportunity revealed itself on the church-grapevine. The move brought him closer to his parents by another hundred miles, which was still forty from their little house in Bedfordshire. Perhaps his next parish in five years from now, or ten, or fifteen, would deliver him right to their doorstep, allowing him to be with them before they grew too old and infirm to remember who he was.

During the last few days, he had unpacked according to requirement: an iron, a toaster, a kettle... and his bottle of half-malt whiskey, which had been sitting at the bottom of his box marked *essentials*. Alex felt he had dug to the middle of the earth for that, past his worn copy of *Paradise Lost* and a framed copy of a Medieval painting of Christ's ascension. He had removed a fork, a knife, a spoon, a bowl and a plate only to find that the cupboards already contained a few pieces of crockery and cutlery along with a frying pan and a dented saucepan. He wondered if Father Hammond had left them - either in haste or in good will. Perhaps the dioceses had provided them, a subtle acknowledgement of his now single status.

His marriage had been as farcical toward the end as it had been honest at the beginning. What he assumed was a

profound love that had settled into a maturity based upon respect and trust and which had superseded infatuation and lust had in fact been a deep, numbing indifference. One night, as they lay in bed together, but miles apart, she had told him his relationship with God was so strong that when they made love she felt *he* was being unfaithful.

Then came the awkward silences. They passed in the hallway with the apologetic glances of strangers who had strayed too close to one another. Her whispers in their marital bed were for him to turn out the light. Her passion under the sheets came in bursts of anger: *stop snoring. Stop taking the duvet. Just stop... stop.*

They exchanged perfunctory smiles across the kitchen table. The signs had been there. He had ignored them as a man might ignore a lump on his testicle, not wanting to accept the obvious truth. But eventually and inevitably that acceptance came. One night over a dinner of haddock, minted potatoes and under-cooked broccoli, they declared the end of their marriage with a sadness no greater than that with which they had lamented their over-cooked fish.

And so the dismantling of their life together began: they placed their respective bits and bobs into *his* and *hers* boxes and sacks.

He had prayed for her and for himself. However, he had noticed that he had prayed for the members of his parish with a greater fervency and sincerity that was borne of more than obligation. He had prayed for the woman whose husband had been lost to a heart attack, to the man whose house had been lost to repossession and most recently to the bereaved of those who had fallen victim to the *Butcher*.

The media had assigned the killer that *tag* for dramatic effect, revealing a brazen disregard for the victims' families

who would suffer under the horrific imagery of that word alone.

Several weeks ago while on his knees at the sanctuary rails, praying that this murderer would be brought to justice, he realised his vision was connected to the killings. He knew his imagination hadn't conjured images to suit the reported stories. In the last three weeks, the authorities had found the remains of two bodies, flesh and guts... no bones. A dog walker found one body in a trench on the outskirts of Northampton, just twenty miles from this village of Trenton; the other had been found in a back alley only ten miles away.

And now here he was, sitting in the armchair in the vicarage belonging to the parish whose pulsing heart of a thirteenth-century church was at the centre of Trenton village. A small part of him felt the significance of these *coincidences* and the inability to understand their relevance.

The vision had only ever been a minor inconvenience: he had stumbled over his lines during his sermons. On the way up here he had stopped off at a motorway cafe and ordered a hamburger instead of a cheeseburger. On his first night here he had locked himself out of the vicarage; he had clambered through an open window. These were vision-induced mistakes and lapses of concentration he felt he could live with. But, he had *never* fainted during a service. *Never...* until now.

During the weeks leading to his move to Trenton, the vision became detailed, but no less fragmented, taunting him. The vision had now passed, but the evoked apprehension lingered.

Alex willed himself from the chair and into the kitchen. He grabbed the box of salvation from the cupboard and popped a few Aspirin tablets.

He spent the next few hours receiving visitors, feeling

awkward, accepting their counselling, taking comfort in their closeness when normally he would be the one offering solace. Jock, the Scot, Jake the local butcher, Janice the florist, Terry, Jon, Lucy - he welcomed them all. He shared tea and his best shortcake he kept aside for himself whilst watching re-runs of Perry Mason.

Alex read a little from the book of Revelation before eating a meagre meal of bacon and eggs. He washed the plate then settled down to an old movie called *The Truth* starring Brigit Bardot. A courtroom drama played out on the small, flickering screen. He watched only half before turning in, making a mental note to broach the subject of updating the vicarage's entertainment system at his next meeting with the bishop. And while he was about it, he would champion the cause of the local publican to raise money to have satellite TV installed in the Dog and Rascal.



WITH THE DUVET pulled up around him, Alex stared at his bedroom ceiling. For all the darkness before him it may as well not have been there; it was like a dead, starless sky in which even the might of the heavens somehow dwindled to impotence. He rolled over, gazing across the room. The glow from an outside light drifted through the gap of the heavy drapes, diluting the darkness, making demons and monsters of the shadows. “ ‘He discoverer deep things out of darkness... and bringeth out to light the shadow of death’.” His words found volume greater than the embodiment of his whisper.

In a small, quaint village like Trenton the dead of the night was conducive to silence. The echoes of his words had shaken that silence. The power of that verse, of God,

sped up the course of time, turning the world to bring the light of the sun upon it many hours earlier than nature intended. He had also been plucked from his bed and from the vicarage and probably the village too, he couldn't be sure.

Alex saw himself running through the woods, unafraid... un... *everything*. He could not feel the ground beneath his feet or the air in his lungs. His mind, free of the body, swept through the trees. He saw—if the faculty of sight still granted that perception—someone between the trees: a woman... a man. It was the beginning of a man... or the ending of one.

It was a skeleton.

Eyeless sockets, ribs and joints revealed tendrils of tenacious flesh, not decayed, and insect-ridden, but fresh and raw, bones glistening with blood yet to blacken and congeal. He assumed that without the mechanics of muscle and tendon, the bones must have been animated by something else. A *power*. God's own? He didn't think so. He sensed malice in the *whatever* that controlled it and although God was often wrathful and retributive Alex had to believe he was never hateful.

Alex drifted with the thing, not in a deliberate pursuit but in a manner of a child following the call of an adult. He, *they*, reached a clearing.

It paused. It knew it would be vulnerable in the world beyond the cover of the trees. Its need to push forward coupled with wisdom enough not to generate an almost unbearable impatience in Alex that translated to the skeleton in jittery movements.

The vision disappeared: one, two, three... he was back in the room. The vision differed from the first, but was connected to it, a different chapter of the same story. As with the first, this vision had its foundation in either his

mind or in his reality and a part of him hoped it *was* real. If it existed only in his mind, then the hallucinatory nature of that experience signalled the onset of madness.

During his ministry, he had heard the claims of others that religion was nothing more than a humble insanity contained by fear, hope and of the religious ethos. The last thing he wanted was to give greater voice to those Darwinians. If there was any truth to what he had seen then it had to be symbolic.

The killer had taken the bones of this victim and Alex had seen that, *taking*, in the form this macabre animation. Not knowing the identity of the killer, he had left that face and torso bare... perhaps he'd fill in the blanks later. The vision had revealed more than death and a calculating purpose that was more concerning than that death.

He closed his eyes again, and for the first time in weeks he intentionally revived the last few moments of his life that these oddities had dominated. The bones, the trees and past the perimeter of its haven, he saw gulls circling a panorama of expansive white plains and mounds, most becoming islands in a clear body of water. The place looked like a quarry of some kind ... salt... chalk.

He left the bed, and returned to the living room. He grabbed his laptop and powered it on. The internet was dead, displaying errors. After several minutes of head-scratching, he saw the router was off at the mains. He brushed off the dust and booted it up. After some tinkering with codes, he pulled up a search engine and typed in the word *quarry*. The letter *y* was missing from the keyboard, ripped away several months ago by a bad-tempered demon child who gained access to his personal chambers to tamper with his belongings. But he could produce the letter if he pushed hard enough.

The search had been too generic; the results were in

their thousands. He refined his search, querying only those within a fifteen-mile radius. There was a disused salt quarry on the outskirts of a small town whose councillors were tied up in some legal wrangle that opposed their intentions to turn the place into a new landfill. Some quarries belonged to an abandoned cement works, others were protected by The Wildlife Trust as the surrounding areas were home to dwindling numbers of protected birds.

He jumped from one article to another, from websites lecturing the role of essential minerals—silica sand, plastic clay. He read reports on limestone, slate and stone merchants, articles talked of quarrying and cutting and supplying Ham stone and White Lisa for private commission and architectural services. Maps and ordinance surveys—he viewed them all.

As he clicked away again and again, his results seemed to move more from the specific to the general; he even pulled up an article on the benefits of laying quarry tile over stone for domestic use. He viewed a dozen accompanying photos. Some quarries looked as barren and as forbidding as the war zones of the middle east; others beckoned with their clear waters and chalky embankments, their sand-like vistas offering the illusion of coastal views.

Just over an hour later, he found what he was looking for. There were no ifs and maybes; as soon as his eyes fell upon *that* photo and its linked article his mind screamed at him to *stop!* The disused quarry that had been utilised decades earlier for chalk extraction for the building trade was located twelve miles away. Its north and west banks introduced woodlands that extended a mile or so, separating a neighbouring town from the quarry.

Weeds and bushes colonised the south bank, subduing the heavy slopes, their milky whiteness given a more subtle exposure. Water filled most of the area, clear and blue,

with interruptions of humped land that sprouted the occasional tree and bush. The scene looked like a miniature mock-up of the Caribbean Islands. Other parts were expansive flats of mud. The article even referred to the drained lagoons being a favourite feeding spot for gulls.

He decided it was time for a break. He walked into the kitchen, put the kettle on and grabbed a mug, spooning coffee into it. It was then the significance of what he had seen struck him. He had never been to the quarry before, had never even *seen* it before and yet his mind had displayed it with all the clarity of a recent memory. It was real and that had to mean that at least part of what he was seeing was real too. He had seen something that had happened or something that was about to happen.

He didn't believe, *couldn't* believe, that the skeleton was anything other than representative of the suffering that a victim had endured or was about to. But the nature of the vision came to him in a wave of adrenalin and fear. It was a calling. It had to be. *That* quarry was the nearest to him. The visions had been with him even in Southampton, over a hundred miles away.

As much as he thought his move here had been to be closer to his parents, he couldn't help thinking that in truth it was to be closer to the source of these killings. If he had not been conscious of that reason until now then something else had been driving him. He had prayed that this killer would be brought to justice, but had never believed he would be chosen for that deliverance.

God had built his kingdom upon earth from the sand up, through blood, sacrifice, hate, faith and love. He exercised his presence through prophets and ministers, his miracles not so overtly executed as they once were, manifested now in the guise of medicine and science, brought to

fruition by the technological prowess of the twenty-first century.

God's words, penned by the hands of the prophets, had secured their own persecution and that of others to come when they warned of false prophets dressed in wolf's clothing, declaring that they will rise to show signs and wonders to seduce and deceive.

*Even* if the man upstairs had granted him this gift to find this killer that did not make him a prophet in the traditional sense of being the proclaimer of God's will; he was a tool to execute it and to do so with whispers and quiet action. God's covenant with man demanded obedience and worship, but as with any good relationship, its survival needed trust and *communication*. He'd always believed communication was akin to reciprocation. God, through his only begotten son and the gift of the holy spirit, existed in all things, in every shadow and every instance of light that cast it, in every wisp of wind and everything it moved.

But whether it was through psalms, prayer, prophecy or scripture, the almighty *did* communicate. And yet, a part of him found it difficult to believe God, whose word was the source of life, had filled his head with these prophetic visions. Such a direct communication was the testimony of either a prophet or a schizophrenic. If he had already decided that he was not the former then...

Alex kept what he knew to himself for the time being. He walked to the living room and grabbed his leather-bound diary. He had two home visits in the morning: the first to talk with a young couple who wished to baptise their son; the second was with a middle-aged couple who needed to bury one. There was an early afternoon meeting with several parish members and the local council

committee to discuss an event to raise money and awareness for cerebral palsy.

He earmarked the rest of the afternoon to visit the local hospital hoping to bring comfort to the terminally ill. It was a tight schedule that would not permit its juggling without dropping a few balls.

He peered behind the curtains of the bay window. Darkness was still rampant; dawn was several hours away. He turned back to his PC and re-visited the bookmarked website for the quarry, getting the address before planning his route with the aid of an online map. He sat and waited. Sometime later, he looked up into the room, fresh with the morning light. It seemed to come in an instant. He guessed he'd drifted off to sleep, a dreamless, forbidding nothingness.



## BODIES IN REVOLT

*If you enjoyed this sample chapter of *Bodies in Revolt* then you can grab the full story from the link below.*

*Best Regards*

<http://www.cgdurrant.com/bodiesinrevolt>

This book is available on a variety of platforms and devices.

Learn more about Colin's work at [www.cgdurrant.com](http://www.cgdurrant.com)

