



HARROWED VALLEY HAUNTINGS: BOOK I

# The Hand of GLORY

STEPHEN CARTER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY GALEN DARA



SALT LAKE CITY

Preview: © 2013

Duplication in whole or in part prohibited

Available at [LeicesterBayBooks.com](http://LeicesterBayBooks.com)

This is a work of fiction. The events described herein are imaginary; the settings are used fictitiously; the characters are representations of the author's imagination, none are intended to represent specific living or dead persons.

© 2013 by Stephen Carter  
ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

No part of this book may be reproduced in any form, printed, electronic, or otherwise, by means of graphic representation, film, microfilm, recording, digital, or any other means without the prior written permission of the publisher, except in the case of brief passages embodied in critical reviews and articles.

Paperbound Edition(CS) 2013 by Leicester Bay Books  
ISBN—978-1482021622

Paperbound Edition 2013 by Leicester Bay Books  
Kindle Edition 2013 by Leicester Bay Books

Leicester Bay Books  
3877 Leicester Bay  
South Jordan, UT 84095

[www.leicesterbaybooks.com](http://www.leicesterbaybooks.com)

Printed in the United States of America

Cover art by Galen Dara  
Cover layout and design by Heather Ackley

Preview: © 2013  
Duplication in whole or in part prohibited  
Available at [LeicesterBayBooks.com](http://LeicesterBayBooks.com)

For John Bellairs. Even though he is dead.

## ALSO BY STEPHEN CARTER

What of the Night? (*Zarahemla Books*)

iPlates: Volume I (*Leicester Bay Books*)

iPlates: Volume II (*Leicester Bay Books*)  
*Due Summer 2013*

# CONTENTS

Chapter One	1
Chapter Two	6
Chapter Three	9
Chapter Four	16
Chapter Five	24
Chapter Six	33
Chapter Seven	44
Chapter Eight	56
Chapter Nine	62
Chapter Ten	72
Chapter Eleven	77
Chapter Twelve	85
Chapter Thirteen	97
Chapter Fourteen	105
Chapter Fifteen	112
Chapter Sixteen	121
Chapter Seventeen	127
Chapter Eighteen	142
Chapter Nineteen	151
Chapter Twenty	162
Chapter Twenty-one	169
Chapter Twenty-two	178
Chapter Twenty-three	187



## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Greater love hath no man than that he read the first draft of a friend's novel. Paul Allen hath this kind of love. Thanks also to Lisa Torcasso Downing for adding a touch of finesse to so many passages. Alane Ferguson wisely advised me that my first chapter sucked. You will not find it here. And finally, thanks to my wife's 4th grade class—this book's guinea pigs. May their sleepless nights be restored to them seven fold.





## CHAPTER ONE

PAUL HAD EXPECTED to die of a gunshot wound through the chest, at high noon, in slow motion. Or to be trampled to death by a herd of rabid cows as he carried a beautiful cowgirl to safety. Because, if you're forced to die in Wyoming, you should have the inalienable right to do so with a bit of Old West dignity; you should be allowed a John Wayne drawl in your final words, snakeskin boots on your feet, and a harmonica wailing plaintively in the distance. Or at least a Maverik gas station nearby.

But apparently Paul was going to watch his 14-year life end in a dusty alley between a hardware store and City Hall. And he was going to die not as a man dies but as a squeaky toy crushed beneath the treads of a dump truck dies.

The day had started out only somewhat ominously. A line of cows, chewing cud behind a barbed wire fence, had watched Paul silently as he made his way to the front door

of the school. Then a line of students, chewing gum in front of their lockers, had watched him silently as he tried to find his first class. But that was to be expected; it was his first day in school, and cows rarely have anything pressing in their schedule.

Paul couldn't help but notice that Harrowed Valley Middle School was nothing like the Acorn Academy for Young People in Seattle, where "the child flourishes in a non-structured environment filled with intellectual stimulation and attentive mentors." For one thing, the teachers here wore pointy, steel-toed cowboy boots instead of soft, hand-beaded moccasins. And they never once asked him how the lessons "made him feel."

But things had stayed quiet until social studies class, when a little mechanism inside Paul's gut started blinking nervously to itself. He knew this was the mechanism that detects the possibility of severe bodily harm or death. It goes off when you step in front of a bus, or when the ladder you're perched atop starts to tip, or when Mom confronts you with the report card you thought you had hidden. What he didn't understand was *why* his Survive-O-Tron was going off right then.

The answer revealed itself later that afternoon at the local 7-Eleven. As Paul walked in to the store, the door he was pushing hit something, and that something grunted. Paul turned to see a big, muscular kid about his age—the type of kid young bulldozers want to be like when they grow up—looking precisely as if he had just dumped thirty-two ounces of cherry slush down the front of his shirt, a Slurpee cup still clutched in one gorilla-sized hand. Paul recognized him from social studies class: Cody.

## THE HAND OF GLORY

Cody gave Paul a long, hard look and crushed the cup meaningfully, as if it might be a particular person's neck. Paul's Survive-O-Tron popped a few light bulbs and blew a fuse for good measure.

But it was too late. Cody's hand had already dropped the cup and grabbed the front of Paul's T-shirt. He pushed Paul out the door and up against a telephone booth.

Cody looked straight into Paul's eyes and studied him a moment. "Think you're funny?" Cody asked.

Paul knew this was a rhetorical question. But he wasn't sure how to answer rhetorical questions. If only he had spent less time contemplating his teachers' nose hair and more time listening to their lectures.

"If you think you're funny, you should be laughing right now," Cody continued in a reasonable voice.

The Survive-O-Tron flopped around in Paul's gut like a landed fish.

"So laugh," Cody smiled. "Laugh."

The Survive-O-Tron collapsed into a quivering heap.

"Don't worry," Cody soothed. "You're the new kid here. I'll help you out."

A knuckle dug itself deep between two of Paul's favorite ribs. He gasped at the pain, tears springing to his eyes.

"Now we've both begun to share in the humor of this moment," Cody said. "Shall we continue?"

But the front door swung open and a man stormed out.

"Hey!" he shouted. "What's going on?"

As Cody let go of Paul's shirt and turned around, Paul decided that his career as a long-distance sprinter would begin immediately.



Cody started tracking Paul immediately, even deputizing a couple of other kids—the kind who look like they torture small animals for fun. The kind who look like they don’t bother to make distinctions between small animals and small humans. Feeling them getting closer, Paul had abruptly rounded a corner and run for all he was worth before ducking into this alley. The one where he would die.

He briefly considered running home, but at the thought, a dark feeling filled his chest. He didn’t want to go back there. Not before Mom or Dad got home. Something about that place.

It watched. That was the only way Paul could describe it.

Paul poked his head out of the alley and looked up and down Main Street, his ears on high alert. The street was deserted, so, gathering up his nerve, he crept out.

Behind him to his left stood a huge warehouse. Painted on it were the words, “Doc’s Den” and then, in smaller print, “If you can’t find it here, you haven’t looked hard enough.” Inside the display window, on top of a carpeted shelf, stood a mob of small figures peering out at Paul, some wooden, some porcelain, some—he wasn’t sure what they were made of. They obviously hadn’t been dusted since the Great Depression. Paul felt like he was being stared at by a clutch of mummified gnomes. The more he

looked, the more the hollow little eyes reminded him of the dark windows of his house—the windows he didn't look into because he was afraid he'd see something other than his own reflection.

Suddenly rough voices broke into Paul's thoughts. They were echoing toward him from the alley and he was positive his name was being sprinkled into the conversation along with an abundance of other four-letter words.

Paul didn't have a fight or flight instinct, his was flee or pee. And the second option was about to assert itself. He cast around for an escape route, but no more alleys stood within running distance, and the empty street offered no protection.

The little gnomes stared at him. "Come into *our* house," they seemed to whine in little Munchkin voices.

The voices from the alley came close enough to become very distinct. It was now or never. Paul shoved the door to Doc's Den open and skittered inside.