



Interview Transcript:

Watch It Here:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=NAYWErEqfd8>

I'm George Kovacik and I'm here in the Birch Room today speaking with author George Wright Padgett. He's just released his second novel, *Cruel Devices*, and we're going to talk him about that today. So George, what can you tell me about *Cruel Devices*?

It's a horror novel which takes place over three days at a resort in Connecticut. The main character is a horror writer himself who unwittingly triggers paranormal turmoil by stealing a cursed object from a Hungarian mystic of sorts.

***Spindown* was a great success for you in the sci-fi genre. Why did you choose to write a suspenseful horror novel?**

Let me begin by saying that I love science fiction and I'm so very grateful that *Spindown* has been well-received by the sci-fi community, but I felt it important to avoid being cast as only a writer of that genre. I know it can be risky to genre hop, but I wanted to establish early on to any readers that may follow me that I intend to do stuff that may or may not involve outer space or robots.

I'm hopeful that someone that enjoys reading George Wright Padgett novels are reading them because the stories are well-crafted and require them to think about aspects of life while going on an adventure. Gotta have a good dose of adventure and entertainment in there or what's the point? So after *Spindown*, I chose a story topic and setting that was as far removed from it as I could get. *Cruel Devices* takes place on modern day Earth (no alternate universe or anything like that). Just a normal guy around normal people... but exposed to extraordinary circumstances.

So are you daring your readers to follow you into the mundane world of the present?

Oh, wait a minute—I never used the term 'mundane.' I've always enjoyed how Michael Crichton would write something like *Andromeda Strain* (which is hard sci-fi if there ever was one) and then he'd jump the fence to do something like *Jurassic Park*, or *Rising Sun*, or tackle time travel with a story like *Timeline*.

Or look at H.G. Wells, he delivered *The Invisible Man*, *The Time Machine*, *War of the Worlds*, *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and all those other great tales. They're wonderfully different stories (none of which did he write any sequels to), but they can't be confined to a single genre other than they're all speculative fiction – to use a modern term for it.

So you chose to do *Cruel Devices* to avoid being pigeonholed?

Yes, in a manner of speaking. But the most important thing was I really, really wanted to tell this story.

What did you do to prepare for the horror genre?

Even before *Spindown* made it to market, I was already immersed in every horror book and movie that I could get my hands on. I made of study of it; not just reading for pleasure, but examining what made the good stories tick, and where the not-so-good stories fell apart.

I don't mean to imply that I'm an expert, by any stretch, but after studying for a bit I began to notice structural differences between sci-fi and the horror genre - - - The rhythms are slightly different for the rise and falls. It's like how a symphony has very different components to the song structure than that of jazz. Sure, both are forms of music but the differences (however minor) are different enough to make them something distinctive from the other. Sorry, that's my musical background showing.

What inspired you to write *Cruel Devices*?

A peculiar thing happened to me as I began to write *Spindown*; the introduction of the main character, Fowler opens with his morning routines. The system requires a daily health status check to ensure that workers are fit to go to work in the mines. So we see him wake up and perform these diagnostic tests on his body before doing anything else. Within a week of writing that scene, I was diagnosed with diabetes and like Fowler, became forced to measure my blood each morning before going off to work.

It was a moment when life imitates art. At the same time I was writing a theater play in which one of the characters, a young child drowns. The boy was the same age of my son at the time and it creeped me out a bit to write that scene. Though the idea was ridiculous, I found myself thinking what if in some weird way, I was causing something tragic to happen to my son just because I'd written it. Though it was a silly fleeting idea, but the concept of an author's writings bringing something into reality stuck with me.

I'm aware that it's been done before, even Stephen King has a short story called *Word Processor of the Gods*, L. Ron Hubbard dabbles with the concept in *Typewriter in the Sky* and there's the video game, *Alan Wake*, has a writer near a mystical lake that turns everything he writes into existence. I took a different approach for how and why something like this would be happening. That's all that I can say without giving spoilers, sorry.

Okay then, what did you learn and what was different this time around?

My experiences from the first novel helped me know what to pack for the journey so to speak. Having gone through the process before, I knew to expect there would be times when things would get tough, but I had the confidence to get through because eventually you come out the other side.

I also learned to trust my instincts more on this book – to recognize and allow ideas in that maybe were not in the original blueprint outline for the story. Permitting that flexibility resulted in a much more 'organic' story than if I'd remained rigid to concepts that snuck aboard later in revisions.

I know from your writing for the stage and theater that your stories have a central theme. What will readers encounter in *Cruel Devices*?

Oh, you noticed that, huh? Well, *Spindown* asked the question of what it means to be human, and through the course of the story, the characters discover part of the answer is freedom and our relationship to others.

For *Cruel Devices* I wanted to explore the idea of control and examine how someone accustomed to being in control has it suddenly stripped away from them. One of my favorite scenes from the book is when the character of Gavin Curtis (who is the quintessential control freak) gives an impromptu lecture about what makes a great horror story; the speech appears in the first chapter in which he declares that horror is the byproduct of a person experiencing an unexpected and prolonged loss of control. His words quickly become self-fulfilling, a prophetic statement of his impending complete loss of control and his attempts to regain that control from malevolent entities for the remainder of the novel.

[Break in interview to watch promotional teaser video]

What's next?

A steampunk detective novel set in 1901 entitled *Addleton Heights*.

Wow, you really are hopping around.

Yes, and I'm having the time of my life doing it

Anything else?

Yes... buy the book . If you like your horror with a measure of psychological suspense I think you'll be pleased. It's on sale now from my publisher at Grey Gecko Press.com, also Amazon.com, Barnes and Noble.com in all formats – Hardback, Paperback, eBook varieties, and soon to be audiobook - just like the previous novel.

