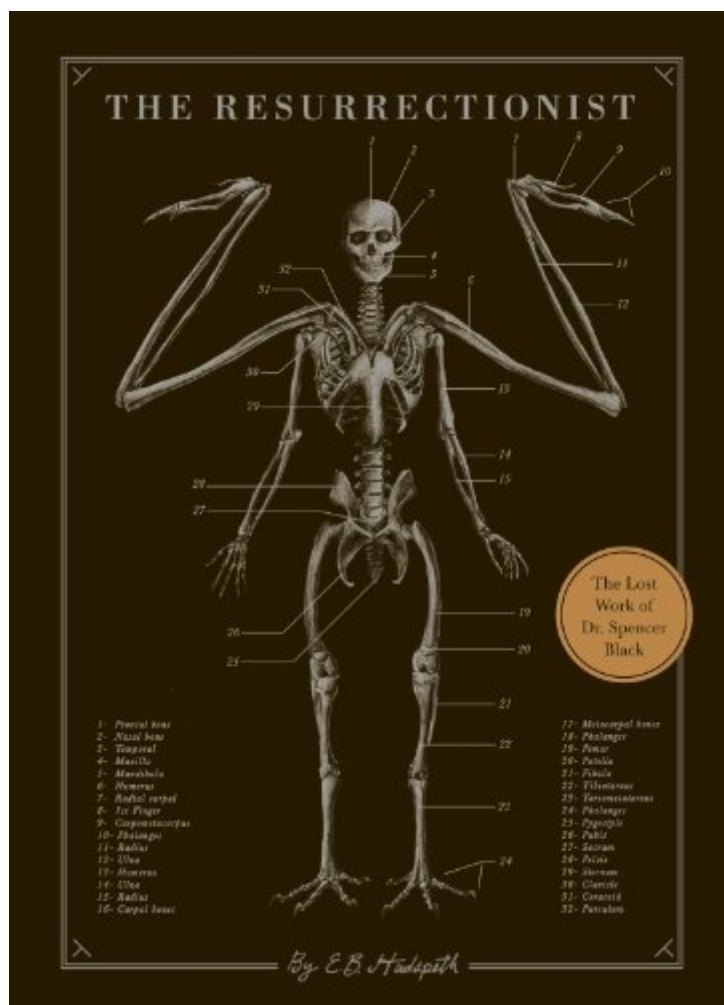


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The Resurrectionist: The Lost Work Of Dr. Spencer Black



Synopsis

Philadelphia, the late 1870s. A city of gas lamps, cobblestone streets, and horse-drawn carriages—and home to the controversial surgeon Dr. Spencer Black. The son of a grave robber, young Dr. Black studies at Philadelphia's esteemed Academy of Medicine, where he develops an unconventional hypothesis: What if the world's most celebrated mythological beasts—mermaids, minotaurs, and satyrs—were in fact the evolutionary ancestors of humankind? The *Resurrectionist* offers two extraordinary books in one. The first is a fictional biography of Dr. Spencer Black, from a childhood spent exhuming corpses through his medical training, his travels with carnivals, and the mysterious disappearance at the end of his life. The second book is Black's magnum opus: *The Codex Extinct Animalia*, a Gray's Anatomy for mythological beasts—dragons, centaurs, Pegasus, Cerberus—all rendered in meticulously detailed anatomical illustrations. You need only look at these images to realize they are the work of a madman. *The Resurrectionist* tells his story.

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Customer Reviews

The first 65 pages of *The Resurrectionist: The Lost Work of Dr. Spencer Black* by E.B. Hudspeth is

a fascinating *œbiography* of the titular doctor, a man who believed that the creatures of mythology actually existed at one time and could be reborn into our world with the proper surgical technique. It's a tragic tale of a medical prodigy who had already completed medical school with high honors at the age of 20. Black was a man of intense curiosity who reveled in dissecting every type of animal, including humans (which he had dug up from their graves for his father's scientific work when he was a child, hence the *œresurrectionist* label). But his curiosity took a tragic turn when he began his work of recreating mythological creatures, starting with the grafting of wings onto his beagle. His brother describes the scene in his journal, making one remarkable note that passes without acknowledgement: "The animal flinched in response to Spencer's voice; its wings flapped as it tried to stand." The wings were functional? Wow. I could have used much more of this story, in much greater detail; that is, I'd have loved a fully-fledged novel. But Hudspeth's imagination apparently tends more toward images than the written word. The bulk of this book is a copy of a fictional *Codex Extinct Animalia*, allegedly written and drawn by Black. Only six copies were ever printed, Black's *œbiography* explains, because for some reason Black withdrew it at that point. This is a copy of one of those six extant volumes, we are told. It is full of remarkable artwork, with drawings of the bones and musculature of various types of mythological creatures, from the sphinx to the harpy. I would have liked more explanation of how the animals worked, anatomically.

"The Resurrectionist: The Lost Work of Dr. Spencer Black" opens with a dense, interesting narrative: the biography of the dark protagonist. Readers tend to get bored with extended narratives, so this introduction is appropriately short. It is a compelling setup, of course, for the illustrations (the latter 2/3rds of book). The author sets the horrific tenor here, enticing the reader to share the excitement that Spencer feels for defining the human condition. Only sensitive readers will cringe at the horror since author E.B. Hudspeth is tactful in his delivery of the macabre. He, like his character Spencer, merely wants to set the readers "free." True to the role of speculative fiction, he presents art that appears real...then lets the reader ponder the boundary between fact/fiction. The below quote from Spencer seems to echo Hudspeth's motivation: "I hear them marvel at my work--my indignant science. I hear them call out in fear of what they see. And there are some gentlemen who doubt what I will tell them. They call me a liar and a charlatan or a quack. But in time the methods of science that I now employ to convince people will surely set them free--alas, this I cannot explain to the angry fools." The setting is ideal for redefining the nature of "man." The turn of the 19th century was rich with advances in evolutionary theory, science, and even speculative fiction. Anatomists,

philosophers, and scientists ruminated on how far to extrapolate Darwin's assertions. Most understood that all vertebrates shared a common skeletal structure; but if animals and man were connected in their development, was it not reasonable to reconsider the existence of creatures termed mythological? Were centaurs real? Harpies? Demons? Spencer Black needed to know.

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