

SCARY SHIT

True stories. Darker memories.
And the kind of fiction that makes you
nervous to **laugh**.

SOME
STORIES
NEVER
LEAVE

— RECOLLECTIONS BY **MIKE GROBLER** —

— FICTION BY **GARY JAMES GROBLER** —

Stories that stay with you.

FREE PREVIEW

Copyright © Mike Grobler & Gary James Grobler 2026

ISBN 978-1-0483-7198-7

Preview supplied for personal reading only. No part may be reproduced or distributed without permission.

Scary Shit

**Mike Grobler
&
Gary James Grobler**

Contents

Whites Run 1

 Before Whites Run.....2

 How We Ended Up There 6

 The Chain in the Ceiling.....10

Mostly True. Probably.

Before you go any further, I should probably clear something up.

The first five stories in this book are true.

Or, at least, as true as anything can be when you are trying to remember events that happened roughly sixty years ago.

Memory is a wonderfully unreliable thing.

It remembers the important bits, forgets where you put your glasses, improves certain conversations, removes inconvenient details and occasionally inserts something that may have happened to somebody else entirely.

So when I say these stories are factual, I mean that the events are recounted as I remember them, or as they were told to me by the people involved.

I have not deliberately added ghosts where there were none.

I have not invented mysterious footsteps, moving chairs, men in graveyards or small boys fleeing across the Karoo from dead brothers.

Those things were part of the stories long before this book existed.

Whether they happened exactly as remembered is another matter.

Sixty years is a long time.

People change.

Places change.

Stories change.

And memory has been known to polish the furniture when nobody is looking.

What I can say is this:

Whites Run happened to me.

Houses Don't Forget comes from something I experienced as a child and from what the adults involved told me.

The Man at the Gate was one of Uncle Alf's stories, told often enough that parts of it have probably become permanently embedded in the family DNA.

And Seven Gates came from Oom Jan Grobbelaar, who was one of the finest storytellers I ever knew and freely admitted that courage was not one of his stronger qualities.

So are they absolutely, scientifically, legally provable facts?

Probably not.

Are they true as I remember them?

Yes.

That is good enough for me.

The final stories are different.

A matter of Belief and Astronomical Odds are two of my fiction stories. I'll let them speak for themselves

Bad Day and Swipe Right, written by Gary James Grobler —my son — are fiction.

Completely made up.

At least, that is what he tells me.

After reading them, I have decided not to ask too many questions.

So the arrangement is simple.

The first part of the book contains things that may have happened.

The last part contains things that definitely did not happen.

Probably.

You are welcome to decide for yourself which is more disturbing. And remember—the troublesome thing about scary stories is that sometimes the ones that sound impossible are the true ones.

Scary shit.

Mike Grobler

Now, take a deep breath, get comfortable, and read on.

Whites Run

Mike Grobler

Ghost stories.

Everyone has one.

Or at least everyone seems to know somebody who knows somebody whose cousin once saw something standing at the bottom of the bed at three in the morning.

The problem with ghost stories is that they usually improve with age. Every time they are retold, another door slams shut, another candle mysteriously goes out and the ghost moves a little closer.

So let me get something straight right at the beginning.

I have never, in my entire life, seen a ghost.

Not once.

No transparent woman floating down a passage. No headless horseman galloping across a field. No pale face staring at me through a window. Nothing that I could point at and say, with absolute certainty, There. That is a ghost.

Yet.

I add the yet because life has taught me not to tempt fate.

That does not mean I have never experienced one.

I have.

More than once.

Forrest Gump famously said, "Shit happens".

He was right.

And every now and then, some seriously scary shit happens.

But wait.

I'm getting ahead of myself.

Before I tell you what happened to me, you need to know something about the place where it happened, because Whites Run was not simply an old farm somewhere outside Bulawayo.

It had history.

And history, particularly the bloody kind, has an irritating habit of refusing to stay buried.

Before Whites Run

The Matabele, or Ndebele, as they were properly known, did not simply appear out of the African dust one morning.

Like most things in history, they arrived because somebody else didn't want them around anymore.

In the early 1800s, a Zulu commander named Mzilikazi fell out with King Shaka.

Falling out with Shaka was not the same as unfriending somebody on Facebook.

In Zulu politics at the time, disagreements tended to have very permanent consequences.

Mzilikazi therefore faced a fairly simple choice.

Run.

Or die trying not to.

He chose to run.

He gathered his followers, took their cattle, their weapons and probably a respectable collection of grudges, and headed north.

Over time, his followers became a powerful nation in their own right.

The Matabele.

They established themselves in the country that would later become Rhodesia and built a disciplined, militarised kingdom.

The nineteenth century was not a particularly gentle time in southern Africa.

Nobody sent strongly worded letters.

Arguments tended to involve assegais.

Mzilikazi ruled until his death in 1868. His son, Lobengula, succeeded him.

Unfortunately for Lobengula, the world beyond Matabeleland was changing very quickly.

White traders came.

Then missionaries.

Then prospectors.

Then businessmen.

Then men carrying documents.

The men carrying documents were probably the most dangerous of the lot.

Eventually the British South Africa Company, under Cecil John Rhodes, began pushing north.

Rhodes had ambitions.

Large ones.

He was not the sort of man who looked at an enormous stretch of Africa and thought, That looks perfectly fine belonging to somebody else.

By the 1890s confrontation had become inevitable.

The Matabele were brave warriors.

Unfortunately, bravery is not particularly effective against a Maxim gun.

The kingdom collapsed.

Lobengula fled.

Further fighting followed during the uprisings of 1896 and 1897, leaving behind enough blood and bitterness to keep historians arguing for generations.

New farms appeared.

New boundaries.

New owners.

New laws.

And new graves.

Many of them unmarked.

Blood has a peculiar relationship with soil.

It disappears surprisingly quickly.

But perhaps some things do not disappear with it.

Which brings us to a family called White.

And eventually to a farm called Whites Run.

The White Family

The Whites were not famous people.

That is important.

There are no statues of them that I know of. No schoolchildren memorise their names. Their lives were not important enough to become chapters in history books.

They were simply a family.

A man.

His wife.

Children.

People trying to build a life in a country where building a life often involved pretending that the people who had been there before you were no longer particularly important.

They established themselves on the land.

They built a homestead.

They farmed.

And for a while, presumably, life went on.

People do ordinary things even when history is waiting outside.

Meals have to be cooked.

Children have to be put to bed.

Animals have to be fed.

Fences have to be repaired.

You wake up one morning believing that tomorrow will probably be much like today.

Until it isn't.

During the unrest, the White family found themselves caught in something far larger than themselves.

The Matabele had not forgotten the loss of land, cattle, authority and independence.

Eventually violence reached the farm.

The White family tried to escape.

They did not succeed.

They were killed.

Later, people would refer to the place as Whites Run.

Perhaps because White had tried to run.

Perhaps because names attach themselves to places and refuse to leave.

Whatever the exact reason, the name survived longer than the people who gave it meaning.

Whites Run.

There is something unsettling about the name when you know the story behind it.

The family disappeared into history.

The farm remained.

And according to some people, something else remained with it.

Stories began.

Workers spoke about strange things.

Animals supposedly became restless.

Sounds were heard.

People felt uncomfortable in certain places.

You know the sort of stories.

The sort everyone laughs about during daylight.

Night-time is less forgiving.

I knew some of those stories.

They interested me.

But I wasn't frightened of them.

Not really.

You can be very brave about ghosts when the sun is shining.

How We Ended Up There

My parents emigrated to Rhodesia in 1965 from the thriving metropolis of Upington in the Northern Cape.

I was eleven years old.

Being an obedient child, I naturally went with them.

My younger sister and brother displayed similar good judgement.

To be fair, none of us was given much opportunity to object.

My grandmother (my mother's mother) was already living in Rhodesia.

We called her Ouma.

She was a widow and had met and married a fantastic gentleman whom we children called Old Dad.

Old Dad had a son and two daughters.

My mother's brother, Uncle Ernie, then fell in love with one of Old Dad's daughters, Auntie Ruth, and married her.

They had four children.

My cousins.

At least, I think they were my cousins.

This is where the family tree becomes less of a tree and more of a bowl of spaghetti.

I have always had this gift—or irritating habit, depending on whom you ask—of questioning everything.

My reasoning went something like this:

Old Dad was Uncle Ernie's stepfather.

But because Uncle Ernie married Old Dad's daughter, Old Dad was also Uncle Ernie's father-in-law.

Which meant that Uncle Ernie had technically married his stepsister.

Which meant their children were simultaneously...

You know what?

Forget it.

I've tried working it out before and usually end up needing a drink.

The point is that we were family.

A somewhat complicated family, admittedly, but family nevertheless.

And almost none of this has anything whatsoever to do with ghosts.

Almost.

Because Uncle Ernie will become important shortly.

In 1968, Old Dad sold some shares he had in a gold mine and bought a farm in Matabeleland Province, roughly seventy kilometres outside Bulawayo.

The farm was called Whites Run.

Yes.

That Whites Run.

The farm where the White family had died.

The place with the stories.

The place where the scary shit eventually happened.

But not yet.

Stop being impatient.

Life on the Farm

As a teenager, I spent practically every school holiday I could on Whites Run.

And I loved it.

Absolutely loved it.

For a boy of fourteen, the farm was freedom.

Real freedom.

Not the modern version where someone gives you a mobile phone and tells you to phone if anything happens.

We didn't have mobile phones. If something happened, you dealt with it.

Or shouted. Very loudly.

I helped provide meat for the farm workers by shooting buck and rabbits.

I learned to drive there.

Not in a neat little driving-school car with dual controls and an instructor telling me to check my mirrors. I drove tractors.

If you can control a tractor across a farm without destroying a fence, killing anybody or reversing into something expensive, you are well on your way to understanding vehicles.

At least that was my theory.

Early in the mornings I helped weigh the milk.

Then I delivered it to the collection point in the Toyota truck.

Farm mornings began ridiculously early. Long before any sensible teenager should have been expected to function.

But there was something about those mornings I loved.

The farm had its own rhythm. People got up because animals did not care whether you felt like sleeping late.

Cows had no respect for school holidays.

Nor, for that matter, did grandparents.

There were jobs to do. There was always something happening.

And then there was the generator.

Ah yes.

The generator.

Electricity on the farm came from a diesel generator located at the dairy, roughly eight hundred metres from the main house.

Eight hundred metres does not sound particularly far.

In daylight.

At night, on a farm, eight hundred metres can become a remarkably long distance.

When I was staying there, one of my jobs was to start the generator when darkness came and then switch it off at about eight o'clock.

Even then fuel was expensive.

The generator had a crank handle. It also had the compression of a small locomotive and the temperament of a rabid rhinoceros.

Starting it required technique, determination and a willingness to sacrifice various body parts.

If you didn't get yourself out of the way quickly enough when the engine kicked over, the crank handle could fly off with sufficient enthusiasm to remind you of your mistake for several days.

I collected bruises.

Lots of bruises.

Eventually I gave the generator a name.

The Bitch.

I don't know whether machinery can develop personal grudges.

That generator did.

It hated me. I am convinced of it.

If machines ever rise against humanity, somewhere in the afterlife that generator will be telling the others: "I started with him in 1968."

Despite The Bitch, I looked forward to every holiday on Whites Run.

It was a wonderful place for a teenager.

During the day there were tractors, animals, hunting, vehicles and endless things to do.

At night it was different.

Once the generator was switched off, the farm changed.

This is something people who have always lived with electricity may not fully understand.

One moment there is light.

There is the hum of machinery.

There is activity.

Then the generator stops.

And suddenly ... silence.

Not true silence, of course.

The bush is never silent.

You hear insects. Animals. The wind.

The occasional distant call of something you cannot identify.

But the human sounds disappear.

The farm seems to grow larger.

The darkness becomes deeper.

And if somebody has recently told you that an entire family was murdered somewhere on that same farm, your imagination suddenly becomes a very enthusiastic employee.

At least once a year my whole family would visit Whites Run together.

Those were good times.

Lots of people.

Lots of noise.

Food.

Stories.

Laughter.

And my father was a particularly good storyteller.

He had a wonderful sense of humour.

He understood something every good storyteller understands:

Timing.

He could take an ordinary event and stretch it just long enough for everyone to become completely absorbed.

Which brings me to one particular evening.

The first haunting at Whites Run.

Although, as it turned out, the ghosts had absolutely nothing to do with it.

The Chain in the Ceiling

It was around eight o'clock in the evening.

The generator had already been shut down.

We were sitting in the dining room with a candle burning in the centre of the table.

All the adults were around the table.

On that particular visit, my parents had brought some of our friends with us.

The children—or teenagers, because at that age being called a child is a serious insult—were sitting in a row against the wall.

From left to right there was my cousin George, then my brother Gary (not my son) my sister Lyn, Martin (Lyn's boyfriend. and my best friend at school) then me, and finally Gail, who was, and still is, my friend and Lyn's best friend.

Everyone had coffee.

In cups.

With saucers.

That's right.

Saucers.

Only little children drank coffee out of mugs in those days.

Civilisation has clearly declined since then.

I should mention something about Lyn and Gail.

It has virtually nothing to do with the ghost story, which of course means I have to tell you.

They had travelled to the farm by train.

The train from Salisbury left at about nine in the evening and arrived in Bulawayo at seven the following morning.

Lyn and Gail apparently had a wonderful trip.

Passengers in the neighbouring compartments probably considered throwing themselves off the train.

The song *Patches* had recently been released.

Lyn and Gail liked it.

A lot.

They sang it.

Repeatedly.

All night.

Non-stop.

I suspect some of those passengers may still wake screaming.

Anyway...

Back to the scary shit.

The dining room was dark except for the candle.

Its flame flickered occasionally, throwing shadows across the walls and ceiling.

My father was telling us about the massacre at Whites Run.

Now remember, we were sitting in the actual farmhouse on the actual farm where these people had supposedly been killed.

There is a difference between hearing a ghost story in suburbia and hearing one while sitting in the place where it happened.

We were hooked.

Every one of us.

My father lowered his voice.

We leaned closer.

He built the story slowly.

Outside, the farm was dark.

The generator was silent.

The candle flickered.

He was reaching the climax.

His voice rose.

And then ...

BANG!

Something crashed violently above our heads.

It sounded as though the entire ceiling had collapsed.

There was a fraction of a second of complete silence.

Then all hell broke loose.

Someone screamed.

Someone screamed.

And that is where the preview ends.

To find out what crashed above the ceiling - and to read the rest of the true, probably true, and completely fictional scary stories - purchase the complete book by clicking below.

PURCHASE THE FULL BOOK