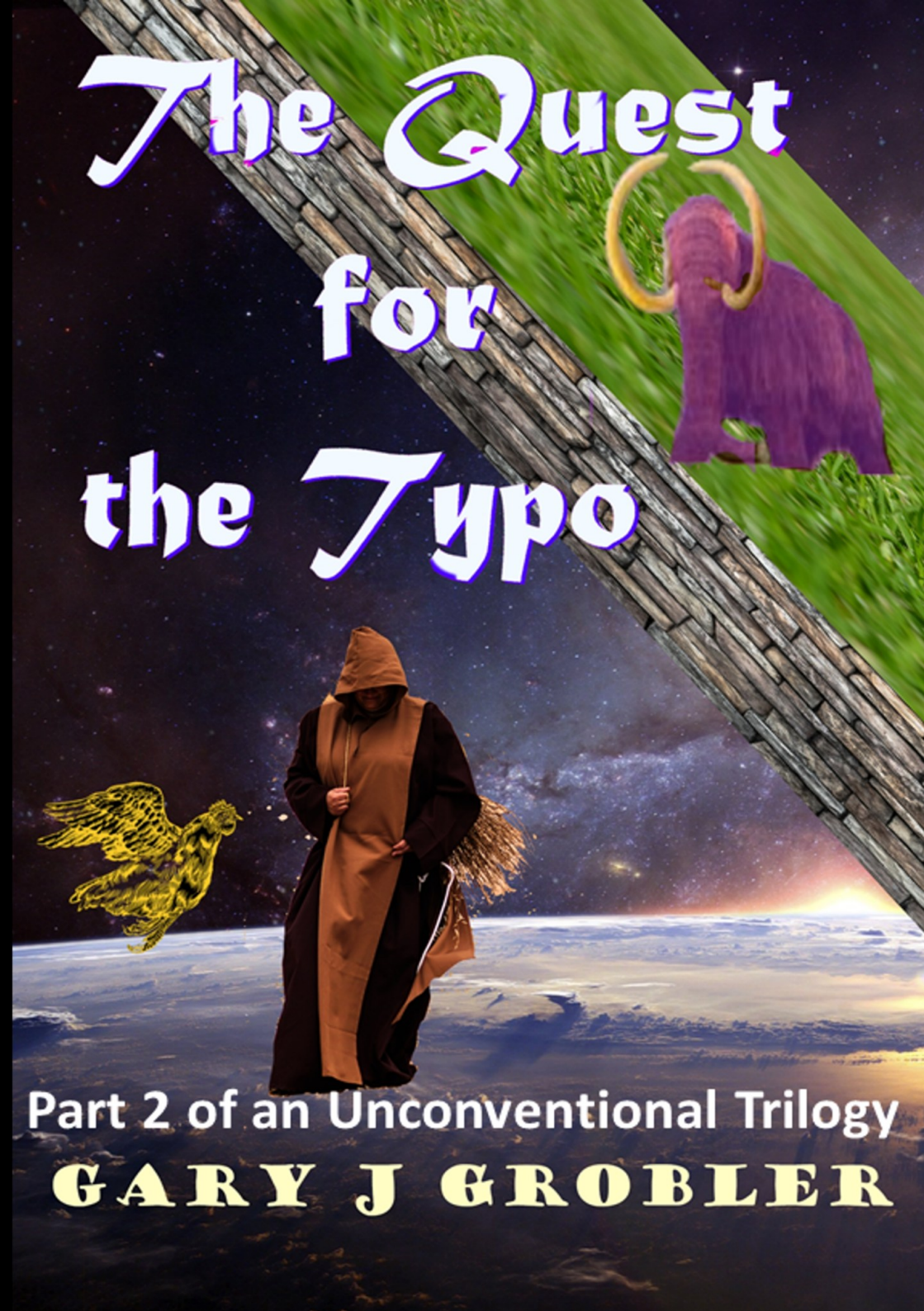


The Quest for the Typo



Part 2 of an Unconventional Trilogy
GARY J GROBLER

FREE PREVIEW

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ISBN 978-1-928415-12-1

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Gary J Grobler

Author: Gary J Grobler

Cover Design: Mike Grobler

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ISBN 978-1-928515-81-4

First edition 2021

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Preface

As with all my writing, I have decided to do this preface in my own unique way. Typically one would expect a short piece telling the reader how the book came into being and what to expect from the story they are about to start reading.

I on the other hand will only briefly touch on those topics but use this as a space to hopefully fire a spark of memory in any that have failed in regards to the first instalment in this series, and in the case of any newcomers; to confuse you with a couple of odd sounding references to my first book.

The Quest for the Typo came into being when I was thinking about book titles. I wanted my second attempt at a book to really shine, and let's face it; we all judge a book by its cover and thus the title. So, after some long thought and wonderfully sleep filled nights I settled on the title you saw when you picked up this book. The funny thing is though, I didn't have a story.

The way in which I came up with the story was a bit different to how I normally go about things. Normally there is an idea that I take and develop first in my head and then in a notebook. Once I have something I feel I can work with, I then go about putting pixel to screen and I write something. In this case though, I already had a cast of characters from my first book, so I asked myself: *What are they all up to now?*

Taking them all one at a time I gave them a place in the book and saw where the story went to from there. This series of books sort of writes itself and much like you as the reader, I am pretty much just here for the ride.

Now, I would just like to take a moment to tell everyone about more or less what to expect from this book. Most of our favourite characters from the first book show up again.

We have Khyran – the not so young anymore – assassin that lost his family when he was very young. We have Bolgoroath, a character from another much-loved series of books that was transported to my first novel and had to change his name slightly due to copyright laws, who decided he liked his new book so he chose to stay. Then there is Dretar, a feisty female assassin who never seems to back down. There are a few others but I am going to change the direction we are going in now.

A few of the fan favourites, unfortunately, don't appear in this book, partly because I couldn't find anything for them to do in the story, but mostly because I have some great stuff planned for them in the third book. We do however get a cameo appearance from one of them, but you'll need to read on to find out who it is.

Lastly I would like to mention that while the first book focused more on the individual characters' personal stories – a brother hiring an entire army to settle a grudge with his twin, Khyran learning the ropes as an assassin and one of the characters raising an army of the dead because he was unhappy with a law that was passed. This book works more in a bigger scheme of things kind of way, where the fate of the world, and probably more importantly, the universe, hangs in the balance.

I had a lot of fun writing this story and I really hope that you enjoy reading it. I learned a lot from writing the first book and I personally think it shows, but then again that is just my own opinion and yours is probably more important in this case.

Happy reading.

Sincerely,

Gary J Grobler

Dedications

I would firstly like to dedicate this to my number one fan, Liza. Thank you for listening to all my ranting and raving about what I've been writing. Then, secondly, to my children Mason and Willow-Ann, you two keep your Father's imagination going strong – which helps with the writing. Then lastly to my own Father for all his help with the publishing of my work – without you I would literally not be in print.

Chapter 1

There are in all likelihood a few people out there who have read at least some of the books that I as an Author have read – reading is a great pastime and anyone who argues that point should be shot.

Of all the books I have read there is a certain author that I enjoy the most, and I'm sure many of you have read at least one of his books – in fact having a vague idea of how many books this individual has sold I would say it's safe to say that millions of people have read multiple books written by this Author.

Bearing this in mind I would like to bring to the attention of all my readers how utterly unfair the creative writing process can be for certain characters that feature in works of fiction; or more to the point for characters that don't end up featuring in works of fiction. The poor characters get thought up and then cast aside, in many instances due to their inability to play out one role or another. In other words, due to the authors' inability to use their imagination to find a role for them to play. I would like to bring the readers attention to a specific character now.

This character's name is Happy. Throughout his life he has had two major injustices occur of the afore mentioned casting-aside variety. The first of these two injustices was his failure to get a part in the aforementioned Author's books. The reasons for him being passed up for the position, in place of a giant Space-turtle, will forever be known only to the Author. In Happys' defense let me just say that he was, in actual, fact perfect for the job of carrying a world that's shaped like a flattish something on his back – oh and let's not forget about some oversized pachyderms to boot.

The second of the injustices was when his fictional agent (real people – or creatures – have real agents as fictional

people – or creatures – have fictional agents) failed to land him a job as the host and central character of a once popular show for children. Regardless of the fact that Happy is a vegetarian he has gone out of his way to eat as many steaks that came from purple dinosaurs as he could get hold of because of this, but that is another story altogether that doesn't merit getting into (for now).

Fortunately for Happy I am a fair person and try my best to accommodate the fictional beings that from time to time invade my imagination. Happy has finally landed a role in a book – obviously the one you are currently reading.

Happy is a Not-so-giant-purple-mastodon with a love for space exploration and children. He doesn't love children – or space for that matter – in the same way a popular pop singer (MJ) did though. More in the way, that by loving them he can make a decent living. We can and will go into more detail about this underappreciated prehistoric purple pachyderm at a later stage though.

Now I would imagine that many readers have no idea what I am on about (as usual) and if you as the reader are unhappy with this fact or with the fact that I am obviously mocking other Authors in my not so subtle way, then I am sure that if you move over nine letters in the alphabet to the letter P you will find another Author who knows a thing or two about being funny. Read his books if you haven't already, otherwise stop complaining and enjoy this book.

In any event let's get back to poor old underappreciated Happy. If I were to go into heavy detail about his origins I would probably confuse many of my readers. So, for your sake – not mine – I will explain them to you in layman's terms. You will need to bear with me though because I might seem to be rambling a bit here, but in the end I hope it will all make sense.

In previous writings of mine I have mentioned The Great Philosopher of Yurgarah. This great man sat one day and pondered what might be at the end of the universe – like many a man before him. Thus he inevitably came to an answer that he thought would fit the bill satisfactorily. The answer he came up with was an answer that many a man had given in jest to the purposed question. What these jokers didn't know when they made their little jokes was that they were actually spot on. The answer to the question, *what is at the end of the universe*, is in fact: A brick wall.

To stray from the topic at hand (*I did mention it might seem as though I am rambling*), you might be wondering what this has to do with Happy? Well, I will get to that in a moment.

There is an old English adage that goes: The grass is always greener on the other side...

The true completion of this sentence ... in the eyes of the Gods (and their eyes matter more than most) was in fact: ...*of the brick wall* – The grass is always greener on the other side of the brick wall.

Thus, where the universe ends, a great big field of grass takes over – with a brick wall between the two.

Now I would like you to ask yourself what would happen if the grass on the other side of this brick wall at the end of the universe were left to grow unchecked. Like me, you probably shudder at the very thought of it – much like I shuddered when I realized Justin Bieber was a “*young man*”.

When the Gods decided to end the creation of the universe in this fashion, they thought of just this problem and came up with a suitable solution. They put Happy there. Being a not-so-giant purple mastodon, Happy happens to be a grazer and not a browser like other pachyderms and thus was more than happy – pardon that pun if you will – to eat the grass and thus

prevent it from doing unspeakable things to the universe on the not so green side of the wall at the end of the universe.

Happy eventually left his grassy domain though – for reasons we will cover at a later stage – and went on a journey. On one of his many travels, he came across a traveling companion. Yet again we will cover how Happy came across his companion at a later stage but for now I would just like to let it be known that this companion of his was a Chinese Space Chicken.

Chapter 2

In a little wooden cottage in the woods sat a Little Old Man. The cottage was older than he was – it had been passed down to him from his father who had settled in the forest with his mother just before her death, almost a hundred years before. To the Little Old Man the cottage was everything. Well, that's not exactly a hundred percent accurate. His possessions inside the cottage were part of his *everything-equation*. With that in mind it would be safe to say that The Little Old Man would have been devastated if he were ever to lose his possessions and his little cottage.

The little wooden cottage was very sparsely furnished and he had few personal effects. The Little Old Man loved all of these – including the cottage – with just as much love – if not more – then any parent would bestow upon their children (we are talking about the kind of parent that doesn't eat their children like some parents in Papua New Guinea would).

Many people reading this will now probably assume that I as the Author am going to take everything away from the poor Little Old Man for some reason or another – well you would be wrong, if that was what you thought, I'm sadistic at times, but even I have a soft spot for the elderly (just next to my left nipple is more or less where it is located).

In any case, The Little Old Man had never married and thus had never had any children, but even so he was content with what he did have – his little cottage and the items inside it. The reason he had never married wasn't due to the fact that he had never wanted to or because he believed that no one would have him or anything remotely like that. It was due to the fact that his little cottage was in an enormously large forest. This alone had not resigned the little old man to a life without marriage or children or the love of something that wasn't classified as furniture. The little cottage was in the

center of a clearing directly in the center of the enormous forest – and yet again this alone didn't force him into a life of solitude. The nearest settlement with regards to the location of the cottage was a hundred leagues from the cottage as the crow flies and if you happened to be A Little Old Man – or even A Little Young Man as The Little Old Man had once been – then the distance was far greater because of obvious landmarks and changes in the gradient of the ground within the forest and all that topographical jazz.

If you were to take all the above-mentioned facts into account, then – and only then – could you start to understand The Little Old Man's isolation.

But – and there is always a “*but*” – these weren't the reasons for it. The real reason was because during a harsh winter in which The Little Old Man's father had passed away, due to the extreme cold, The Little Old Man had burned his only map in his attempt to remain warm.

As tragic as this was, The Little Old Man still felt it was for the best and he had lived happily throughout many lonesome years after that.

Now The Little Old Man sat at his hand made kitchen table drinking a warm brew of assorted herbs from the surrounding land in the form of a homemade tea. The cold winter months were just about at an end and most of the snow in the area had already melted to give the new shoots of plants and the seeds of other plants a nice fresh drink just like The Little Old Man had his tea to drink – *cute, I know*.

That was when it happened. The Little Old Man didn't at first know what it was that had happened but it hadn't surprised him, regardless. In an odd way, he had known all his life that it would happen, and now was obviously as good a time as any for it to happen.

As with any Author who is writing a novel, I am not going to tell my readers just yet what it was that had happened because that takes an aspect of suspense – if not all – away from the book and might tempt you to put the book down and read no further. Because now you would have found out what it is that you wanted to know. So instead of telling you what it was that happened I will instead tell you that The Little Old Man packed a few items of clothing, and some food that would not go bad, into a small homemade backpack, and set out to start a journey that would put him in touch with more people than he had ever dreamed existed (seeing as the only other people he had ever met, seen or known was his father and mother, I would like you to assume it will be more than two).

And so, off he went.

Chapter 3

In a lot of fantasy universes that I have read about – and even some mythology – Hell is said to have many different levels. A few of them that I have come across say that the exact number is nine. The truth, in actual fact, is that Hell has only one and a half levels.

You might ask yourself how I ended up with this notion. Well, it is simple. An inside source told me – I think it might have been a catholic priest (they all end up *down there* don't they?). He went on to elaborate and told me that the reason for this is due to the fact that the Ruler of Hell was in the process of building the second level of his domain when at the same time that the Gods were putting the finishing touches on the universe. When he found out that the Gods had put a brick wall at the end of the universe, he immediately ordered a brick wall built because he thought that this was now the fashionable thing to do.

Ever since then he has been kind of stuck with it.

Unlike the wall at the end of the universe though, there is no grass on the other side of Hell's wall. This isn't because the old English adage is wrong or doesn't apply down there but because if you were to think about it clearly you would realize that considering the fact that Hell is a fiery pit of damnation, you would clearly realize that all the grass got burned up – which gives that brilliant ash-floating-in-the-air effect one would imagine Hell to have.

The Ruler of Hell had a thriving business operating down in his one and a half levels of Hell. His name was Justin (that might not seem all that devilish to most people but wait until you meet enough Justin's to form a generalization – they can be scary people, and normally ginger). Though Justin didn't have what many would consider a very demonic name he did for all intents and purposes look demonic. Standing seven foot

tall, with a large muscular humanoid body, a very red complexion, a long spear tipped tale, a black goatee and two horns poking out of the unruly black hair on his head, he looked just like what the Ruler of Hell should look like, if, of course, you avoided looking at his name badge.

Justin blamed the Gods for his inability to expand his domain due to the wall. If they hadn't always tried to outdo him then he would never have tried to do the same to them by building it. And so, he had, over many years, come up with a way to get back at them. This was where his business came into the picture.

Justin's business had many different aspects to it. From giving people what they wanted in exchange for their souls to inspiring little old grannies to make knitwear for the grandchildren. He had even come up with the concept of law – and thus lawyers (*now it makes sense, right?*). After Justin got his hands on a persons' soul, he would torture it and then destroy it or employ it, depending on his mood at the time. He knew this infuriated the Gods because the souls he did this to were their creations and they loved them, as Gods should. Thus Justin got his revenge one soul and one Zoo themed jersey at a time.

Another of the ways in which Justin's business took peoples souls was his escort agency. Here he employed Incubi and Succubae. The Incubus is the male of the species and the Succubus the female. They are humanoid demons with all the sex appeal required for doing their job. All they need to do in order to steal your soul is to have sex with you and then steel it through your genitals – *sounds excruciatingly pleasant doesn't it?* The headquarters for the escort agency sits in the middle of the first level of Hell. On its left is a fountain of blood and on the right is a small copse of trees with human skin for bark – this isn't important information, but it does help set the scene.

Justin – as with most employers – didn't know most of his employees' names, or care what they were for that matter. One of these many employees whose names he didn't know, was Dixon. Dixon was a middle ranking Incubus that unfortunately had a bit of a problem. He had asked for an audience with Justin because of this problem and been denied.

He had been told that Justin was too busy to hold an audience with anyone of such a low level within Hells ranks and the only way to gain an audience with him would be to get promoted several times and thus rise in rank. To Dixon this wasn't a solution at all. He felt that three thousand years of hard work wasn't the right way to go about sorting it out. He felt that he needed to bring immediate attention to his little problem, and it was now up to him to find a way to do this.

The big question now was: *How?*

As the reader you probably want to know right now what the problem was but I feel that yet again I need to build some mystery and suspense. So all you can do now is wait and see, or read, or whatever.

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