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[Reviewed by: toddwordell](#)

This is a short novella by Bards and Sages Publishing. Written by Peter Balaskas, *The Grandmaster* follows the life of Dr. Johann Wagner, the elderly head of a paranormal research center. When we meet Wagner, he is writing in his journal regarding a strange nightmare. The entire novella is told through his journal entries. We learn that he is keeping the journal to ensure that whomever takes over the research center after his death will have the whole truth about the founding of the center. We get the feeling that Wagner feels his life is near the end, and he's concerned that this nightmare is a foreshadowing of his death.

The journal format was an interesting idea, and when it works it works really well. The author has really identified Wagner's voice in the story, and as you read you get the feeling that this is a man who is trying to not only battle old demons out to destroy him, but also battle his personal demons regarding things he had done in the past. At times, the journal format slows things down, and there are parts of the novella that are more exposition than action. Fortunately, the strength of the story itself and the strength of the main character drive the story forward.

Much of the story revolves around Wagner's captivity in a Nazi concentration camp. Here, he tries to use his paranormal powers to help relieve some of the pain of his fellow Jews. When the Commander of the camp, a man who also possesses extraordinary abilities, learns of Wagner's gifts, he attempts to force Wagner to either help him support Hitler's quest for domination, or watch helplessly as his fellow captives are supernaturally tortured. Wagner is backed into a corner, and must somehow figure out a way to outwit his nemesis.

*The Grandmaster* is a remarkable story that illustrates both the terrible depths of depravity humanity is capable of, as well as the boundless strength of the human spirit.