

The Grandmaster
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Bards and Sages
ISBN: 978-0-6151-4743-7

Peter Balaskas writes a pivoting novel, *The Grandmaster*, and creates a world encompassing the paranormal, supernatural, and normal realms. The main character chronicles through a harrowing period of his life, the Holocaust, and reveals the horror which once beckoned him to near surrender of his gifts. In his novel, Balaskas creates a storyline that battles good and evil, love and hate, and heralding justice throughout the world. He takes his readers on a lifelong journey; one man's triumph against physical and psychological adversity.

The main character, only known to the reader as J.S.W. in the beginning of the story, begins his first entry with "The eyes of the demon have returned! I cannot believe it. I thought they were finally eradicated from my life, and they had been for many years." Balaskas intentionally chooses the journaling style of writing to tell his story because he wants to create credibility and intimacy between his character and his readers. The journaling method is more honest and raw. Throughout the novel, J.S.W. writes short entries describing his life experiences without embellishment. The readers quickly trust his words as truth. Channeling his inner most details, J.S.W. entries serve as a portal to a horrific time in world history. His honesty shines through.

Half way through, readers learn that J.S.W. is actually the director of the Wagner Institute for Mental Treatment and Investigations. Founded in 1966, the institute is comprised of personnel who possess extraordinary powers such as ESP and other gifts. Throughout the novel, J.S.W. writes about his colleagues' powers, their histories, and even their sanity. He begins to question if they are losing control and how this may affect the effectiveness of the institute. The only person he has yet to write about is himself.

Thus, he writes about his past and his findings in great detail. To make up for lost time, he journals a concise version of an autobiography which focuses on his powers, his past, and his ancestry. He begins with his birth in 1920 in Berlin, Germany and talks about his father who was a physician with paranormal powers. He used his powers to heal the sick and was given the moniker, "Der Hoffnung Engle"-Angel of Hope. His father taught him these same powers, which included telepathy, empathy, and astral projection (a specific type of telekinesis). These powers helped J.S.W. survive in the concentration camps. In one of his entries, he eventually tells who the haunting red eyes are which terrorized him during the war and continued afterward. J.S.W. vividly recounts his experiences with a Nazi Colonel Reinhardt who tried to influence him to use his powers for evil. He also remembers his famous ancestor, the German composer Wagner whose music he loves but influence he despised.

The Grandmaster is a richly intertwining tale of the paranormal, supernatural, and normal worlds that collide into one universe. The author champions the human spirit with a brilliant stroke of the pen. In the most dismal situation, Balaskas demonstrates that hope and kindness lead the way against extraordinary inhumanity.

Balaskas' delicate writing talent distinguishes his novel from the rest challenging the reader to a Shakespearean delight. He artistically constructs a mosaic symbolizing life, loss, survival, and hope.