



Oxen and Morons

Book II of "A Wonderful Week for a Quest"

Michael D. Young

THE SECOND QUEST BEGINS

Oxen and Morons

Book Two by Michael D. Young



**The prophecy has another side.
It takes hot sauce to read it.**

Bellissimo wakes from his taco coma just as Jackdaw discovers new words on the Uppercase Prophecy. Now a mysterious bell must sound, moronic oxen must be slain, and the world may once again depend on heroes who are spectacularly unprepared.

THIS SAMPLE INCLUDES

**Chapter 1
The Hot Sauce Prophecy**

New to the quest? Book Two follows A Wonderful Day for a Quest—but Jackdaw will happily explain more than anyone asked him to.

TURN THE PAGE. THE HOT SAUCE HAS ALREADY BEEN SPILLED.

“Oxen and Morons”

Book 2 of the Wonderful Week for a Quest Series

A Novella (with humorous historical footnotes by Jackdaw the Wizard)

By Michael D. Young

Chapter 1: The Hot Sauce Prophecy

“Look at her over there, sleeping off her taco coma, blissfully unaware of the kind of news I’m bringing her. I bet she’s dreaming of a peaceful life full of carefree days and delicious yet portable snacks. It seems almost a shame to break that spell. I bet she didn’t even think there would be a part II to this story. She’s not the only one who’s surprised.”

Roddy Squires, who hadn’t yet settled on a fancy new title for himself, came upon the snoozing damsel and the monologing wizard. “Uh, Mr. Pointy Hat. What are you doing? She can’t hear you...she’s asleep.”

Jackdaw spun about, waving his arms as though he were casting an intricate spell. “It’s called prologue, goat brain. I’m setting the stage for the next chapter of the story.”

Squires looked about, ostensibly to see if there was anyone else he could have been talking to, and then shrugged. “That’s Sir Goat Brain to you,” Squires said. “I just saved the whole kingdom, and I think I’m due a little more respect around here.”

“Yes, yes, fine. It’s called a prologue, Sir Goat Brain. For your sake, you better hope that one doesn’t catch on.”

“Might not be too bad. It’s better than something things I’ve been called.” With a final shrug, Squires went on his merry way, humming a tune as he went.

Jackdaw shook his head and fumbled in his robes for the scroll that contained the Uppercase Prophecy. “I suppose he might cameo later,” he mumbled. “You never know with bumpkins like that. My powers of prognostication grow hazy when he’s about.”

Smoothing down his robes and straightening his beard, Jackdaw cleared his throat and bellowed. “Bellissimo! This is no time for sleeping!”

The newly undistressed damsel opened her eyes, looking for all the kingdom like a Cernebog dragon. "I think it's the perfect time for sleeping. This sleep is pulling double duty-- beauty sleep and taco sleep. You better have a good reason for disturbing my taco sleep."

Jackdaw held out the scroll, which had taken on a piquant aroma. Dark splotches covered the scroll that had not been there the day before. Belissimo squinted as she studied it. "I can't read that, remember? I don't speak pig-ancient. And aren't we done with the Uppercase Prophecy? Squires accidentally saved the kingdom, and all is well, right?"

Jackdaw paused, giving it sufficient dramatic length.

Belissimo leaned in, her features becoming even more dragon-like. "Right?"

Staring down the dragon-damsel, Jackdaw almost lost his composure. But then again, he had stared down dragons before. "Um, not right." He turned the scroll over. "You see, I was using this as a napkin last night at the celebration."

"What?" Belissimo asked. "Do you often use ancient prophecies like that?"

"No, no, no," Jackdaw lied through his teeth. "But I thought we were all done with that one. I placed it over my beard to keep it clean, and, of course, I spilled hot sauce on it. But look! That was actually a fortunate development. Behold!"

He produced the desecrated prophecy, flecked with not only hot sauce, but liberal remnants of guacamole and nacho cheese. "Are you sure you didn't use it as a tortilla?" She asked.

At first, Belissimo recoiled, but then leaned forward when she saw what he meant. Where the scroll had been stained, new text had appeared in the same ancient gibberish as the rest. "Huh," she said, chewing the edge of her lip. "Have you already deciphered that too?"

Jackdaw looked away, fiddling with his robe. "Well, I've started to. But I think I might actually need some more hot sauce. You know, to spill on the other parts that are still blank." He looked around as though a hobgoblin might spring out of the bushes and provide him a bucket of their famous Hobdob sauce.

Scolding herself for abetting this kind of desecration, Belissimo rummaged in her satchel and withdrew a tall, slender bottle. "Here, take mine," she said, offering it.

The wizard stared wide-eyed. "You...you carry hot sauce with you?"

"Yeah. That and chocolate. Are you gonna take it or not?"

Jackdaw snatched the bottle, recognizing it as an elven brand. "You are full of surprises, dearie. What else do you have in there?"

She shook her head. "Just do it. And try not to waste the whole bottle. That stuff's expensive. It's got to last me until next Trollmas."

With only the slightest of appreciative nods, Jackdaw uncapped the sauce, filling the air with a pleasant spicy aroma that tingled the nostrils. Lying the scroll on the ground and securing the corners for small stones, he gingerly poured drops of the sauce onto the Kandyce before smearing them around with his fingers like an avant-garde painter.

Belissimo leaned in, squinting to see whether her sauce sacrifice was worth it. Sure enough, the rest of the letters appeared where he applied the sauce. Soon, the entire scroll was coded with the stuff, and Jackdaw leaned in to read. He recoiled almost at once, blinking rapidly. "Merlin's toe jam! I can see why you keep that in your satchel. It could double as a weapon."

She snatched back the sauce and screwed the lid on tight. "Just read it. If it turns out to be an ancient shopping list, I'm going to be seriously steamed."

Squinting, Jackdaw approached the scroll again, adopting his best epic prophecy-reading voice.

"When hoardes attack, and flags are furled,

A bell must sound to save the world.

Moronic oxen must be slain,

Or all the world will end in pain."

He set the scroll down, rubbing his eyes. “My, my, my, that is ominous. One wonders why they hid such an important prophecy in an inconvenient place. Well, no matter. I think I’ve got this one in the bag.”

“You do?” Bellissimo asked.

“Indeed!” he replied, pointing a finger in the air. “The DPS should be delivering the new bell for my tower any day now. How serendipitous that I already ordered it last week. Maybe my own powers of prognostication are growing.”

Bellissimo sat back down on her bed, resting her face on one hand. She didn’t want to say it out loud, but the old coot hadn’t exactly gone 10 for 10 in prophecy interpretation. Her doubts shouted so loudly in her head, however, that she couldn’t help but say something. “Maybe. But the last prophecy had to do with a name—Roddy’s. What if this one is based on a name, too?”

Jackdaw blew out his mustache with a chuckle. “Perhaps. But the bell I’m ordering is no ordinary bell. It’s the Kleinmacher 2000, the best giant deterrent on the market. If anything over seven feet hears the bell, it will shrink to the size of a pixie. Of all the things that could end all the world in pain, giants would be at the top of the list.” (Comment about Chekov’s Bell)

Though it was a perfectly reasonable conclusion, something still didn’t sit right. She would sleep better knowing they had some giant defenses, but his explanation didn’t cover most of the rest of the prophecy. What was with the “oxen and morons” bit? Her mind kept coming back to the name thing.

“Hm, I wonder whose name might be in the prophecy.”

Scratching his chin, Jackdaw considered the scroll again. “Well, I suppose I do know a troll named ‘Moron’, but I think he pronounces it “Mar-rohn.”

Bellissimo jumped up from her bed and mimicked, slapping Jackdaw upside the head. “Hey, dingdong! It’s talking about a bell. ‘Bell’ is my nickname. Why couldn’t the prophecy be about me?”

Though the wizard smiled back at her, his squinting eyes told a different story. “I suppose we can’t rule it out completely. We’ll have to see. For now, I’m going to install the bell, and be on the lookout for giants. You can look for oxen and morons if you like.” He glanced out the window and then back at her. “Around here, I don’t think that will be too difficult.”

But instead of leaving, jackdaw waved his arms in the air in a random pattern. “What in Merlin’s name are you doing? You look ridiculous.”

“Just give it a moment. It’s a spell to make a dramatic exit!”

Belissimo crossed her arms, her foot tapping in time with his flailing arms. She cleared her throat.

“One moment more...”

A pitiful plume of smoke puffed into existence between them and fizzled out before you could say, “Brandersandercanderwollstenstein.”

Belissimo locked eyes with Jackdaw, who stood completely frozen for an unbelievably awkward moment. Without a word, he turned and ran, beard and robes trailing in the breeze.

THE PROPHECY HAS SPOKEN. SORT OF.

Ready to face the oxymorons?



Bellissimo and his companions must survive Little Giant, Jumbo Shrimp, the Living Dead, and one very literal Moronic Ox before the next piece of the quest can be claimed.

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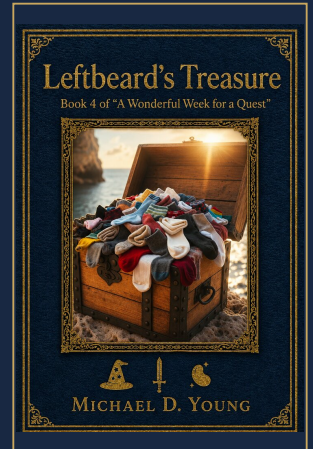
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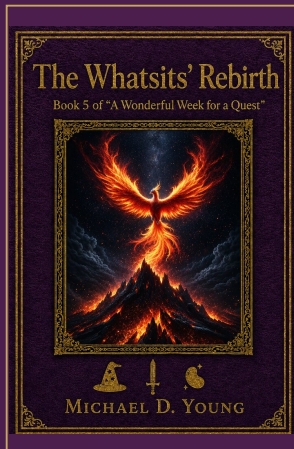
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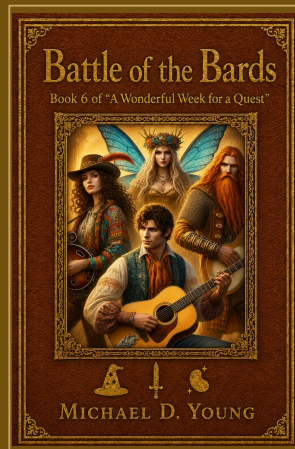
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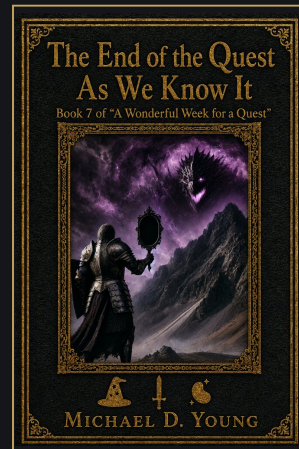
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