

Unremembered Loss

For all the news and information from the world of Rathrae, and for the story Unremembered Loss.

Issue 24

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Welcome to another issue of the newsletter. Don't forget to forward this newsletter on to your friends and help me build a following that will one day lead to Unremembered Loss being published. Sign up for the newsletter at <http://www.douglasgclarke.com/lists/?p=subscribe>

Doug

Rewrites

I've been focusing on doing revisions of my novel this last month. I would like to share with you the life of its first paragraph.

First paragraphs of course are very important because they set the tone for the whole book, need to grab the reader so they will read the next paragraph, and start to build expectations.

The original first paragraph was intended to jump into the action – to get the reader's heart pumping and keep them reading until they learned enough to want to keep reading.

"Julie!" cried out Cadmon, "Run up ahead and see if you can find a defensible spot!" Cadmon spun on his toes and brought up his sword to block a mighty blow from the foetur running up to him. Having blocked the blow Cadmon spun around again on his toes, this time leaving his sword out and slamming it into the side of the foetur as he finished the spin. The foetur grabbed at its side and Cadmon quickly backed away.

This first paragraph has lots of issues. From the first 'cried out' to the last 'and' it needed lots of work.

First of all the paragraph was too long for an action paragraph. Not only is its sheer size too big, it contains a bunch of unrelated

things in it - yelling, fighting, and the aftermath.

It also has too much spinning – spun on his toes, spun again, finished the spin. It also introduces two characters and a foetur, whatever that is.

The paragraph also introduces Julie and she is given an order, but we do not see her reaction.

The paragraph was split in two and Julie's reaction was added to the first. Resulting in this much shorter first paragraph.

"Julie!" Cadmon yelled over the thunder of the battle. "Run up ahead and see if you can find a defensible spot!" Without a reply, Julie sprinted off into the darkness.

Great! This is shorter and is more focused. There is still the tension of the battle, but we get to focus on the characters a bit.

Cadmon is now 'yelling' instead of 'crying out' and the sentence structure is better. The last line is a bit awkward with the 'without a reply' and could be fixed up.

But wait. There is a more important question. Who are Julie and Cadmon anyway? Is the story

about one of them? Well as it turns out, they are supporting characters. The main character is Annay and she is not mentioned for almost another page.

The other big issue here is POV (point of view) – how the story is going to be told. In the first version of the paragraph, the story is being told from Cadmon's POV. That continued in the second version's first two paragraphs.

The big change from the second to the third revision was not fixing things up, it was a complete rewrite.

Several people pointed out that if Annay is the main character then the story should be focused on her. With that in mind I rewrote the story focusing on Annay. It starts off a bit slower, but now the reader has a better sense of where the story is going.

Annay struggled to keep her footing as she quickly made her way down the floor of the ravine she was in carrying the sword and papers she had taken from the war chief's hut. Ahead of her Julie seemed to dance along the bolder tops. Beside her she could hear Red Beard's heavy breaths, as the dwarf forged steadily onward. The sound of Hector's voice yelling, "Julie! Run up ahead and see if you can find a defensible spot!" from behind her, forced her to steal a look over her shoulder.

Now we have a brand new paragraph - well sort of. As it turns out, I added a lot of stuff in front of the that first command.

The resulting paragraph is full of information. Too much information. I introduce Annay, Julie, Red Beard, and Hector. We having Julie dancing on boulders, Red Beard being a slow moving dwarf, Annay

being quick, and Hector yelling.

The sentence structure is also off. In the first sentence, which is very long, is wordy and the transition from "... ravine she was in" to "carrying the sword ..." is missing some connector words.

It was also brought up that several paragraphs later we find out that

Annay is hurt and that should be brought up sooner. Also since she is a magic user in the heat of battle, why isn't she using her magic?

After some thought another rewrite was in order. This time the first paragraph focuses on Annay and leaves the introduction of the other characters to later paragraphs.

Annay struggled to keep her footing as she made her way down the ravine. She wished she could use her hands to help steady herself, but they grasped the sword and papers she had taken from the war chief's hut. Each step magnified pain in her head. A drop of blood rolled down her neck. The magic she had already used that night had taken its toll on her.

The reviewers agreed that this paragraph is much better, but they still had suggestions.

Instead of saying "but they grasped the sword and papers..." I would say something like "but then she would have to let go of the papers and ..." This way it would be showing, as opposed to telling.

I want more description about the toll it has taken on her. Don't tell me it, describe it..

The sword and papers she had taken from the war chief's hut in her hands - this is missing something or maybe it should be turned around.

Think about dropping "had already." = "had already" and "had taken" echo a bit and "had already" isn't really needed.

With that input here is the current version of the first paragraph. What do you think?

Annay's foot slipped on one of the muddy rocks that lined the ravine sending her shoulder slamming painfully into a boulder. She struggled to hold onto the war chief's sword and papers as she stumbled forward. Because of the magic she had used during their escape, her head now pounded and each new step magnified her agony. She fought to focus her mind, trying to build the power needed to cast another spell, while a fresh drop of blood fell from her ear and rolled down her neck.

So ends the 24th issue of the *Unremembered Loss* newsletter and 20 months of revisions. It was a bit disheartening last month to realize I've spend a month working on the first 6 chapters of the book and that there are 104 more to go.

At this rate I will not finish, but perhaps the journey is the point. I am making new friends and working through my own personal struggles. Who knows, maybe I got better as I wrote and I can revise the later chapters in less time.

I hope that you are enjoying this journey with me. I know that it has been an important journey for me, even if it was one that I would not have chosen to start.

Till next month,

Doug