

# Unremembered Loss

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

Issue 6

February 2010

Welcome to the sixth issue of the *Unremembered Loss* newsletter. As I have started the revision process, one of the things that has caught my attention are the journal entries. My original outline didn't include journal entries, but they have become one of the elements in the book that has given power to the story, so I thought I would share some of their background with you. Don't forget to forward this newsletter on to your friends, and if you're not getting the newsletter automatically sign up at <http://DouglasGClarke.com/lists/>

Douglas G. Clarke

## Journals

One of the things that makes *Unremembered Loss* different than other fantasy novels is the use of journals throughout the story.

When I started writing the story I had just spent twelve months dumping my soul into my own journal as I tried to make sense of the loss of my son. So it just seemed natural for me to include Annay's journal entries as she was dealing with loss.

The use of a journal within this context allowed me to present a very personal first person view of events, while allowing me to write the rest of the story from the third person point of view. Having the freedom to explore both points of view without confusing the reader was very freeing.

The use of journal entries did pose a few writing challenges. The first was how to write a personal view of the preceding scene without repeating information. I had to be very careful that I wasn't just rehashing the scene.

The second issue was keeping the voices straight. A few times I started writing journal entries in the

past tense. Other times I caught myself writing the non-journal entries in the present tense.

A third issue that I had to watch was making sure the entries didn't become preachy. The entries are private and not meant for others to read and so shouldn't be written as if they were for someone else. A few of the entries ended up preachy, but only because Annay was wrestling with herself.

The real joy of using journal entries was my ability to share the deep feelings that Annay was going through. Things she would never say to anyone, that would have been hard to see in her actions, and that would seem out of place as internal thoughts in the middle of the story. The journal gives Annay a safe and familiar place to explore the feelings she really doesn't understand.

A journal can be a window into the subconscious. I know that as I wrote about my loss, words ended up on the page exploring things I didn't realize I was dealing with. But as I read the words I wrote, I knew that each was true, that the struggle within me was deeper than I knew or wanted to admit.

A part of the journal writing experience that I have only touched on so far in writing the book is how free-formed it can be. A journal entry can be a story, but it doesn't have to be. It can be a flow of thought, the exploration of an idea, or the wrestling with ones self. A journal entry can also be a drawing, a collection of words, or a prayer. It can start somewhere and then in mid-stream, go somewhere else.

The challenge of course in working with such a free-form way of writing is making sure that the result is both readable and enjoyable. Like most real dialog, most of what is written in a journal, while useful to the person writing it, wouldn't interest most other people.

So just like in dialog, the real challenge is how to strip out the boring parts without losing the feel and flow of the form, while at the same time making sure that the journal entries are not just an indulgences of the author, but are critical to the flow of the story.

As I revise the first draft of the story, the journal entries will be one of my focuses - how to make them matter, and to be more diverse in their forms.