

Unremembered Loss

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

Issue 89

January 2017

First or Third Person

As I've been writing, I find myself writing in first person a lot. Much of my novel, *Unremembered Loss*, is written in the form of journal entries, however, the story is written in third person.

I've tried to be very good at making sure that each chapter is from only one character's point of view (POV). As I was going through my editors notes last week I found one, which I'm sure I read before, struck me a little harder this time.

He suggested that I try writing all of the chapters from the first person POV. Considering that represents about 100,000 words, it's not a thing I would decide on lightly.

In my effort to fill in the story arc for one of my minor characters, I decided to try writing a chapter in first person. I've also recently read an article about writing stories using MRUs (Motivation-Reaction Units) at the low level. The idea is to write something that is external and objective, followed

by something that is internal and subjective. This pattern is then repeated.

The article also said to write the scene using an overall pattern of Goal, Conflict and Disaster, followed by Reaction, Dilemma and Decision

I wrote the following scene, which is when Latem, one monster antagonist, is attacking a city.

Having finished the scene, I decided to rewrite it in third person. The two version are below. Which do you like better?

Taking the City

First Person

The wall came dumping down, turpes and humans mixed with the stone. The sound hit us just before the air and dust.

I had just enough time to brace myself. The stupid turpes with me didn't and all fell down. I yelled at them, "On your feet. Through the breach before I start throwing you through."

My troops scrambled forward, apparently more afraid of me than the falling stone. They disappeared into the dust.

I took a deep breath, closed my eyes and followed them into the city.

Our goal lay in front of us. Human archers crushed beneath the fallen wall. My troops quickly dispatching the ones that were not dead. Before us the human's houses spread out like a feast.

Taking the City

Third Person

The wall came dumping down, turpes and humans mixed with the stone. The sound hit Latem and his troops just before the air and dust.

Latem had just enough time to brace himself. His stupid turpes didn't, and all fell down. He yelled at them, "On your feet. Through the breach before I start throwing you through."

The troops scrambled forward, apparently more afraid of him than the falling stone. They disappeared into the dust.

Latem took a deep breath, closed his eyes and followed them into the city.

Their goal lay in front of them. Human archers crushed beneath the fallen wall. His troops quickly dispatching the ones that were not dead. Before them the human's houses spread out like a feast.

“Two into each house. Kill all you find,” I yelled above the screams of the dying.

My troops disappeared into the buildings.

I waited. It felt good to be winning, to have troops following my orders.

Two by two my grunts came out of the buildings, fire visible through the doorways. Soon two dozen wooden buildings added to the chaos of the night.

My heart was racing. I could feel the blood lust raising. Having my grunts kill was fine, but I needed to feel blood on my hands. “Death to all,” I yelled, even louder.

We continued through the human’s houses. We left a hundred bonfires behind us. Then we came to the inner wall.

I stopped.

Arrows rained down on my troops. Some fell.

I was frozen. My mind was overwhelmed by the size of the wall. It was four or five time higher than the wall that had just be destroyed.

More of my grunts fell.

“Retreat. Retreat.” Repeating the command was a waste of time, the turpes had already turned and started running while I had stood and watched.

We ran back towards the burning buildings, and soon their screams filled the air. The heat hit us as surly as the arrows did. More of my grunts fell and died.

“We must take the wall, there is no retreat.”

We turned and faced the humans again; the fires behind us continuing to grow. The heat pushed us forward. We ran to the wall and started climbing.

I was amazed. My troops climbed the wall like it was a tree.

Three hundred strong. A few fell from the arrows. A few fell from lost hand holds. Then a tree trunk took a dozen off the wall.

“Faster,” I yelled.

We climbed faster, but more tree trunks fell down the wall, then burning oil. The arrows started flying again.

I glanced to each side. My three hundred were less than a hundred.

“Two into each house. Kill all you find,” Latem yelled above the screams of the dying.

His troops disappeared into the buildings.

He waited. It felt good to be winning, to have his troops following his orders.

Two by two the grunts came out of the buildings, fire visible through the doorways. Soon two dozen wooden buildings added to the chaos of the night.

Latem’s heart was racing. He could feel the blood lust raising. Having grunts kill was fine, but he needed to feel blood on his hands. “Death to all,” he yelled, even louder.

They continued through the human’s houses. Leaving a hundred bonfires behind them. Then they came to the inner wall.

Latem stopped.

Arrows rained down on his troops. Some fell.

He was frozen. His mind was overwhelmed by the size of the wall. It was four or five time higher than the wall that had just been destroyed.

More of the grunts fell.

“Retreat. Retreat.” Repeating the command was a waste of time, the turpes had already turned and started running while Latem had stood and watched.

They ran back towards the burning buildings, and soon their screams filled the air. The heat hit them as surly as the arrows did. More of his grunts fell and died.

“We must take the wall, there is no retreat.”

They turned and faced the humans again. The fires behind them continued to grow. The heat pushed them forward. They ran to the wall and started climbing.

Latem was amazed. His troops climbed the wall like it was a tree.

Three hundred strong. A few fell from the arrows. A few fell from lost hand holds. Then a tree trunk took a dozen off the wall.

“Faster,” Latem yelled.

They climbed faster, but more tree trunks fell down the wall, then burning oil. The arrows started flying again.

Latem glanced to each side. His three hundred were less than a hundred.

Flames licked up the wall from the oil that lay at its base. More tree trunks fell.

Pain shot through my body as a tree hit me. I felt myself being knocked from the wall, falling through the air. "Kill them all," I ordered as I rushed through the air

I reached the ground quickly. I couldn't breathe. I lay there as the last of the turpes were covered with burning out and fell, screaming.

My troops. My command. The chief had been right, power is fleeting.

Light. Pain.

The darkness took me again.

Pain. Smoke burned my lungs.

I tried not to breath, but I couldn't. I breathed deeper. I coughed.

I opened my eyes. Day light. The sky was blue. Birds flew overhead. The wall.

I shook. I felt the weight of three turpes laying on me. I struggled for breath.

I looked at the turpes. They looked like porcupines. A dozen arrows stuck out of my legs, two dozen out of each turpis.

I pushed the turpes off and pulled out the arrows.

A new arrow hit me.

I rolled. I felt the new arrow snap off. I jumped up and started to scramble over the bodies of my fallen troops. I ran to the burned out remains of a building.

I laid in its ashes.

I wanted to die. To end the pain, the disgrace. But I couldn't, I felt the chief's power commanding me to take the town.

The arrows stopped. The warmth of the ashes felt good to my chilled body.

I stood, knowing the only way to 'take the city' was to return to my chief and get more troops.

I walked through the day, but my heart felt like night.

Flames licked up the wall from the oil that lay at its base. More tree trunks fell.

Pain shot through Latem's body as a tree hit him. He felt himself being knocked from the wall, falling through the air. "Kill them all," he ordered as he rushed through the air

Latem reached the ground quickly. He couldn't breathe. He lay there as the last of the turpes were covered with burning out and fell, screaming.

My troops. My command. The chief had been right, power is fleeting.

Light. Pain.

The darkness took him again.

Pain. Smoke burned his lungs.

Latem tried not to breath, but he couldn't. He breathed deeper. He coughed.

He opened his eyes. Day light. The sky was blue. Birds flew overhead. The wall.

He shook. He felt the weight of three turpes laying on Him. He struggled for breath.

He looked at the turpes. They looked like porcupines. A dozen arrows stuck out of his legs, two dozen out of each turpis.

He pushed the turpes off and pulled out the arrows.

A new arrow hit him.

Latem rolled. He felt the new arrow snap off. He jumped up and started to scramble over the bodies of his fallen troops. He ran to the burned out remains of a building.

He laid in its ashes.

Latem wanted to die. To end the pain, the disgrace. But he couldn't, he felt the chief's power commanding him to take the town.

The arrows stopped. The warmth of the ashes felt good to his chilled body.

He stood, knowing the only way to 'take the city' was to return to his chief and get more troops.

Latem walked through the day, but his heart felt like night.

So, what do you think? Here are some questions.

First person or third or it doesn't really matter?

Did you feel the Goal, Conflict and Disaster?

Did it make you want to turn the page to see would happens?

How about the flow? Did it feel to jerky going back and

forth between the external and the internal?

The article said to cut out all the filler and fluff. Motivation and reaction and nothing else. As you read it did you want more filler and fluff?

Does it feel too focused on Latem or is the clarity good?

Knowing that it was going to be Goal, Conflict and then

Disaster, did it feel to predictable or did it build to where it should have? Were you ready for the Reaction, Dilemma and Decision?

So for fun I decided to write it one more time – since this is an exercise – to see how it might have come out if I wasn't trying to follow these rules.

Better or worse with more fluff?

Latem and his troops, which he liked to think of as his grunt, were thirty feet from the city wall when it came crashing down.

The sight was amazing, turpes and humans, mixed with the stone, tumbling together in a waterfall of chaos.

The sound hit Latem and his troops just before the air and dust. Latem had just enough time to brace himself. His stupid turpes didn't, and all fell down.

He yelled at them, "On your feet. Through the breach before I start throwing you through."

The troops scrambled forward, apparently more afraid of him than the falling stone and disappeared into the dust.

Latem took a deep breath, closed his eyes and followed them into the city.

They scrambled over the rocks and reached the human archers pinned beneath the fallen wall. The turpes quickly dispatched the ones that were not dead.

The human's houses spread out before them like a feast of wood and stone.

"Two into each house. Kill all you find," Latem yelled above the screams of the dying.

His troops disappeared into the buildings while he waited. It felt good to be winning, to have his troops following his orders.

Two by two the grunts came out of the buildings, fire visible through the doorways behind them. Soon two dozen wooden buildings added to the chaos of the night.

Latem's heart was racing. He could feel the blood lust raising. Having grunts kill was fine, but he needed to feel blood on his hands.

"Death to all," he yelled, even louder.

They continued through the human's houses. Leaving a hundred bonfires behind them. Then they came to the inner wall.

Latem stopped.

Arrows rained down on his troops. Some fell.

He was frozen. His mind was overwhelmed by the size of the wall. It was four or five times higher than the wall that had just been destroyed. Made of stones the size of the houses they had just burned.

Dozens of humans stood on the top of the wall, faces red in the light of the burning buildings behind Latem.

The arrows continued and more of the grunts fell.

"Retreat. Retreat." But Latem's command was a waste of time, the turpes had already turned and started running away while Latem had stood and watched.

They ran back towards the burning buildings, and soon their screams filled the air. The heat hit them as surly as the arrows did. More of his grunts fell and died.

They bunched together, between the rising flames of the town and the arrows from the walls, those on either side slowly dying.

"We must take the wall, there is no retreat," Latem commanded

He turned and faced the humans again, his troops turned with him. As one they ran to the wall and started climbing.

Latem was amazed. His troops climbed the wall like it was a tree. Where he had thought it was only stone, his grunts found holds. He joined them on the wall and his

much greater reached served him well.

Three hundred strong, Lamem and his troops scaled the wall. In the first thirty feet, a few fell from arrows and a few fell from lost hand holds.

Then a tree trunk took a dozen off the wall.

“Faster,” Latem yelled.

They climbed faster, but in the next thirty feet more tree trunks fell down the wall taking dozens of turpes with them. At sixty feet, burning oil joined the trees, and the arrows continued flying.

As they past one hundred feet, Latem glanced to either side. His three hundred were less than a hundred now, but only thirty feet to go.

Flames licked up the wall from the oil that lay at its base and coated its face. More tree trunks fell.

With ten feet to go, pain shot through Latem’s arms as a tree hit him. He felt himself being knocked from the wall, falling through the air. “Kill them all,” he ordered as he rushed through the air.

Latem reached the ground quickly. The impact knocked the air out of him, he couldn’t breath. But his fall had been broken by the turpes that had beaten him to the ground.

He lay there, watching, gasping for air, as the last of the turpes were covered with burning oil and fell, screaming.

My troops. My command. The chief had been right, power is fleeting.

Latem felt the bodies land on him, felt what little air he had been able go gasp leave him, and was over taken by darkness

Light. Pain.

The darkness took him again.

Pain. Smoke burned his lungs. Latem tried not to breath, but he couldn’t. He breathed deeper. He coughed.

He opened his eyes. Day light. *Where had the night gone.* The sky was blue. Birds flew overhead. Then there was the wall, stretching above him like a brutal mistress.

He shook. He felt the weight of three turpes laying on him. He struggled for breath.

He looked at the turpes. They looked like porcupines. A dozen arrows stuck out of his own legs, but two dozen out of each of the turpis.

He pushed the turpes off and pulled out the arrows from his legs. He grunted with the pain. Then a

new arrow hit him. He looked up and saw an archer nocking another arrow.

Latem rolled. He felt the new arrow snap off, he screamed, but he didn’t stop. He jumped up and started to scramble over the bodies of his fallen troops. He ran to the burned out remains of the nearest building.

He fell into the ashes, his body not wanting to move, the pain threatening to take him back into darkness. He laid in the ashes, wanting to die. To end the pain, the disgrace. But he couldn’t, he felt the chief’s power commanding him to take the town.

His will, the chief’s will, was stronger than his body’s need to lay in the warmth of the ashes, which felt so good to his chilled body.

He stood, knowing the only way to ‘take the city’ was to return to his chief and get more troops.

Latem walked through the day, through the burned out remains of the houses he had raised, through what should have been his glorious victory, but his heart felt like night.

So goes the writing of my novel. **Goal:** map out the missing chapters the first week. **Conflict:** work, Instagram posting, tiredness, life. **Disaster:** I see the holes, but don’t see how to fill them, see the character’s needs, but don’t know how to fit that into the story. Another week passes.

Reaction: failure, hopelessness, distraction. **Dilemma:** do I write, do I design things to cut from wood, do I do everything and get nothing done or do nothing? **Decision:** I keep writing, I make some progress, I keep doing other things too, I allow myself to go slower, but I keep pushing myself forward.

And so I make new goals, knowing that the cycle will continue. Knowing that there will be conflict and disaster. Know that I will recover and start again. And I thank you for joining me on this journey and want you to know how important your companionship is.

Douglas G Clarke