

This Plague of Days

by Robert Chazz Chute

Proofreading and copyediting notes document. (12/2013)

One thing I've noticed is that a lot of (self-published) authors aren't doing very thorough character descriptions. Generally, ideally, ('imo') the first time you encounter a character (even if it is a recurring character from a previous book in a series, because the person might have picked THIS book up, or who knows how long ago it was since they read the last novel), you want to DESCRIBE the character well-enough to BURN the image into the reader's mind.

This would include mentioning facial features, eye color (or more -- bright, wide, hooded, etc.), perhaps bone structure (chin, nose, round face, long face, etc.), identifying marks (like scars), hair color, what they're wearing and how they tend to dress, etc... Maybe the way they move, walk, nervous ticks, mannerisms, etc.... And any 'implements' they tend to have on their person, or use, or carry around.

Before the reader gets too far along after encountering the character, they should be able to describe them to YOU, with relative accuracy. I think that is what should be attempted. Writers like Dean Koontz and Stephen King tend to go a little overboard with their descriptions. So something short of what they do should suffice. (that is, don't spend a paragraph describing the bougainvillea bush in the back yard)

You do okay, sometimes better than others, but I couldn't really describe any of the characters to you in any real "detail", which I think is not good. (except maybe Jaimie) I could describe the Spencers' and Oliver's houses better than any of the characters. And I don't know if it's an American/cultural thing, or what, but also partly "your fault", but you do better with the American characters than the British. Also, I don't know if it would make a difference if the character names were "Arnie" and "Joy" instead of "Aavi" and "Dayo". It might. So that may (partly) be on me.

It's something to think about and take under consideration.

Your writing style uses the "fewer commas the better" format for BUT and AND, which seems to be more popular these days. So I let it go and only mention occasional places where they are probably better-used.

You also use many "SAIDs" for question mark-ended sentences, instead of "ASKED", some or most of which I would agree, or not mind, if only as a writing style. I mention a few that probably should be "asked", sometimes partly to 'break it up'.

- 1) notion of Paris, as if (IT) wasn't
[MISSING WORD]
- 2) farmer, or a foreigner (COMMA)
- 3) Tibet(AN?) monastery
[better as an adjective?]
- 4) was blind, which interested Jaimie (COMMA) since
- 5) traffic on his ONCE BUSY (=ONCE-BUSY?)
- 6) EXUENT (=EXEUNT?!)
[there are two instances of this -- Latina Lingua is a minor hobby of mine, and I liked that you included so much of it, and the way you did it -- unless you are using a form I've never seen or heard about, I believe this is a MISSPELLING -- I didn't notice any other Latin misspellings elsewhere]
- 7) and we'll (COMMA) of course (COMMA) continue
- 8) North American (COMMA) though (COMMA) as was
- 9) by our news team, Germany
[at the comma, this should probably be either a SEMI-COLON, or a PERIOD and end of sentence with a new sentence start]

- 10) kept watching (COMMA) but when a long
- 11) He('S /or/ =HE IS) on the wrestling team.
[MISSING VERB]
- 12) One afternoon (COMMA?) soon after
- 13) make dinner (COMMA) so Anna heated
- 14) Emergency Services Bureau (COMMA) is
- 15) to do exactly?" Theo SAID (=ASKED)
- 16) used filter and grind(S?) from
[unless its a usage, and/or slang-ish, and/or writing style choice]
- 17) ambulance or something?" Anna SAID (=ASKED)
- 18) make you feel better?" Anna SAID (=ASKED)
- 19) the police, or a funeral home (COMMA) or...
- 20) the Buddha (COMMA) or Vishnu (COMMA) or
- 21) in his old church (COMMA) so golf
- 22) waiting for applause (COMMA) like
- 23) were those PIGS (=PIG'S /or/ PIGS') ears
[POSSESSIVE]
- 24) They sent a truck?" Theo SAID (=ASKED)
- 25) [somewhat out of sequence:: In the chapter "Roast together: Ugly, Good and Bad",
Jaimie doesn't make any mention of Oliver's aura when we first meet him,
whereas he pretty much mentions everyone's aura with whom he comes into contact --
there might be a few other places that happens (doesn't occur) -- I don't
remember if he ever mentions Oliver's aura later -- I think he does]
- 26) called out to WHOEVER (=WHOMEVER?) might be
[OBJECTIVE CASE usage?]
- 27) van's driver WERE (=WAS?) working
- 28) but ON (=ONE?) long board
[this didn't read right, so I thought you meant 'one']
- 29) turned it off when THEM (=THEY)
- 30) I-told-you-sos
[this is a pet peeve of mind -- I usually like to use an apostrophe in most
cases like this because it reads better and doesn't look as odd -- that may not
be technically correct (?), but I would write it: I-told-you-so's, which I find
MUCH more readable (and stops me from hesitating to make sure I'm reading it
correctly, which tends to take me out of the story)]
- 31) slow and theoretical (COMMA?) and now...
- 32) Pakistan and India (COMMA) and Israel
- 33) Eighteen (COMMA?) and your father's
- 34) you're gay?" Anna SAID (=ASKED)
- 35) looking for?" Anna SAID (=ASKED)
- 36) Otherwise, clothes (REMOVE COMMA?) would be
- 37) Him who?" Oliver SAID (=ASKED)
- 38) machines," Oliver said. (")He flips
[MISSING continued dialogue starting quote]
- 39) Anna was WIDE EYED (=WIDE-EYED?)
- 40) empty house," Theo SAID (=ASKED)
- 41) (")Besides," Oliver shrugged,
[MISSING dialogue starting quote]
- 42) ADVANCED NOTICE
[='advance notice'?? there are three instances of this usage]
- 43) "Yes?" Jack SAID (=ASKED)
- 44) you proposing?" Theo SAID (=ASKED)
- 45) someday make you happy.
[better ended with a QUESTION MARK?]
- 46) possibly even worse, sir?" "We suffer, but we...
[I think this is just a formatting error -- this should be split into a new
paragraph between the first and the second person continuing talking]
- 47) Already (REMOVE COMMA) done, mate
- 48) this can go on?" Jack SAID (=ASKED)
- 49) it was A REALLY (=REALLY A??) social job
- 50) to remove FRON (=FROM) the
- 51) corners much, Thanksgiving probably
[probably better a SEMI-COLON instead of a comma]

- 52) a farmhouse in THE CORNERS
[there are one or more instances of this written as 'the Corners' and 'The Corners' -- I assume the lowercase 'the' instances are incorrect]
- 53) was a BREAK IN (BREAK-IN?) anywhere (IN? /or/ AROUND?) Black Water Lake
[potential hyphenation and MISSING WORD]
- 54) handed it back (TO) his friend
[MISSING WORD]
- 55) (`)Jaimie's obsession with words
[there seems to be a weird character at the beginning of this sentence]
- 56) A thin (COMMA?) bearded man
[unless I suppose you want it read as: "thin BEARDED MAN"; or "THIN-BEARDED man" ;o)]
- 57) the LONG DEAD (LONG-DEAD?) live
- 58) And so hungry. AND so angry.
[I thought this would read better if you removed the AND on the second sentence; you could change the punctuation, too, like: And so hungry -- so angry.]
- 59) 'Beware the Jabberwock, my son! The jaws that bite, the claws that catch! Callooh-effin'-Callay!' She chortled in her joy!' Well...
[I think you either need to remove the single ending quote at: Callay!' OR add a beginning single quote before 'She' (probably the former)]
- 60) dangerous chemicals (COMMA?) so if you
- 61) "Mom. Stop talking." Anna said.
[final PERIOD should be a COMMA -- although it could stylistically be this way]
- 62) I wish it would EITHER get it over with, whatever it's going to do.
[no OR clause; OR: REMOVE 'either']
- 63) tall wooden fence (COMMA) they could
- 64) to run to not TO be welcomed.
[DOUBLE 'to'?]
- 65) "I'm sorry to hear of Theo's loss
[in the Kindle e-book, there is a blank line above this sentence ... might be a Kindle formatting issue if it's not this way in the source text]
- 66) Find it?" Oliver SAID (=ASKED)
- 67) leave now?" Jack SAID (=ASKED)
- 68) except with fewer people (COMMA?) and
- 69) Some people with new gas masks had (NEARLY?) suffocated because they didn't know they had to take the plastic cap off the filter.
[has this ever happened??? is sounds impossible that someone would just suffocate rather than simply taking the mask off -- so this seemed HIGHLY implausible -- could be 'fixed' by adding 'nearly'??]
- 70) focussed
[there are four instances of the use of this word spelling -- it is generally the British English spelling -- two of the instances are in the American story and two are in the British story -- so it's probably okay as an alternate spelling, or you could anglicize the American story spellings]
- 71) destroying the Internet (COMMA) or burning down the library at Alexandria (COMMA) or
- 72) sure it's SPREADS (=SPREAD) through
OR: sure it's (=IT) spreads through
- 73) cans of food (COMMA?) rolling on the
- 74) but the RESERVES (=RESERVATIONS) had been
[although 'reserves' is probably technically correct, as an alternate usage, the usual use is 'reservations' for Native American areas -- there are two usages of this word]
- 75) INDIANS on reserves than
[although it's probably okay, the use of "indian(s)" to refer to Native Americans is considered pejorative, demeaning, and (politically) incorrect]
- 76) protect the INDIAN population
[see note #75]
- 77) though perhaps (REMOVE COMMA?) they weren't
- 78) [I think the following references to written graffiti on the walls would probably better be shown in ITALICS? And ALSO the other written messages?]
Repent!
Lord have mercy!
Stay out of the X!

Beware the Wolves!

Obviously, God don't care.

[NOTE: it seemed odd that they used correct punctuation for this graffito, but maybe they were an English major? ;o]

- 79) as A (=AN) orange-yellow wave
- 80) feral dogs (COMMA?) and the current
- 81) A good (COMMA) thick (REMOVE COMMA) steak
- 82) a healthy, PRETTY18 (=PRETTY 18?) and Trent's
[MISSING SPACE?]
- 83) condoms SHE (=SHE'D?) handed her
[should be past tense as used in the context of the sentence?]
- 84) A bank of CHANGE (=CHANGING?) rooms
[I've never heard of them being referred to as 'change rooms', just 'changing rooms' -- could be colloquial, conversational, or informal usage; or perhaps a dialectal usage]
- 85) checked the CHANGE (=CHANGING?) rooms
[see note #84 -- there might be other references and usages that I won't dup]
- 86) Jack reflexively held her mask tighter to her mouth
[I don't think there was any prior mention that they were wearing masks, so this revelation was 'jarring']
- 87) bear RETARDANT (REPELLENT?)
[although 'retardant' is technically correct (?), I have always seen it called 'repellent' -- Google search shows 206 of the former and 50K of the latter]
- 88) the girl answered, "Retard,"
[PERIOD instead of final comma]
- 89) too long, sweetie.(SPACE)We know each
[could be a Kindle formatting issue, but it looked like there was no spacing]
- 90) Well, I assume he's safe, CAME THE UGLY THOUGHT UNBIDDEN.
[shouldn't the non-thought portion NOT be ITALICIZED?]
- 91) "Sh!" (=Shh?)
[one 'h' doesn't look right]
- 92) taking a shot in the JAW (=HEAD?)
[I didn't actually go back and check this, but I 'remembered' Bently being hit in the head, and I thought causing a cut on his forehead, so then seeing a reference to "taking a shot in the jaw" sounded wrong]
- 93) HE'S [=HE'D] long thought of anger
[present tense used that should be past tense along with the rest]
- 94) etcetera
[I guess this is a valid spelling and usage, but it rubs me the wrong way -- I would never write it this way and would always use the more proper (imo) 'Latinized' (?) 'et cetera']
- 95) "Four!" he SAID (=YELLED?)
- 96) flew back and (THE) van's tires
[MISSING WORD]
- 97) HUSH HUSH (=HUSH-HUSH??)
[better or proper HYPHENATED?]
- 98) SCENARIA (=SCENARIOS)
[as far as I know this isn't a real (English) word??? I suppose if you are using the Latin version of scenarium meaning scenarios (neuter nom pl), that may be correct]
- 99) head of them. WHERE'S THAT?
[seems like this should be 'Where are they?']
- 100) But that's where they are (COMMA) aren't they?
- 101) When did he ever talk to us before his trip to the hospital(.) (=?)
[I suppose it depends if it's intended as a statement or a question??]
- 102) He's (A??) bad burrito
[MISSING WORD?]
- 103) [Spencer's /OR/ Spencers' --- both are used -- I think the latter is actually correct --- I would think you would stick with one, unless the former is referring to a single Spencer]
- 104) quite flammable.(SPACE)The thing was
[check that there is spacing there]
- 105) Tires screeched as they rocked forward. The van's nose dipping toward

[probably okay as is -- OR: ...rocked forward (COMMA) the van's nose...;
OR: ...rocked forward. The van's nosed DIPPED toward]

106) Parabellum

[you use this as a noun, but I know of no gun actually called that (except a WWI machine gun, or an old Luger pistol) -- it's usually referred to as the type of bullet round (9mm parabellum) -- only a gun enthusiast would pick up on that -- unless it's something with which I am unfamiliar]

107) sometimes the way Jaimie looks at me sideways SOMETIMES when he
[doubled word?!]

- end-