

From Lohgan Nash.

A Review of Mortlock by Jon [Mayhew](#)

The sister, Josie, is a knife-thrower in a magician's stage act, the brother Alfie, an undertaker's assistant. Neither orphan knows of each other's existence. ~~U~~ until three terrible Aunts descend on the girl's house and imprison her guardian, the Great Cardamom. His dying act is to pass the girl a note with clues to the secret he carries to his grave. Cardamom was one of three explorers on an expedition to locate the legendary Amarant, a plant with power over life and death.

Now, pursued by flesh-eating crow-like ghuls, brother and sister must decode the message and save themselves from its sinister legacy. This is a stunning story and, ~~eliehed~~ elichéd thought this may sound, you really will not want to put it down. With cursed circuses's, raven infested mansions, wet dark marshes and graveyards, there is no escape from the grasp of Lord Corvis, a hungry, greedy man looking for the Amarant, and Mortlock, a dark evil man whose location is a mystery. The secrets that Josie's guardian has kept from her, will unleash a vengeance determined to in her to get what he wished for, the amarant to be destroyed!

The book will have you hooked, with surprises on every page. You won't wait until you get to pick the book back up, if you put it down, that is. I recommend you put this on your 'books to read' pile because it is a must read for readers that love thrilling page-turners and supernatural horror. I hope Jon Mayhew will release many more of these great novels.

Sandy says: I really couldn't add anything to this review with the exception of a few minor grammar corrections and the reword of one sentence which was a little confusing. You are an excellent reviewer. You have a strong vice that shines through your writing – which makes your reviews not only sincere and informative but entertaining to read. I definitely want you to review my next book!!

From Tegan:

Before you walk through the sleek dark doors of the Chang High restaurant, you walk over a wooden bridge, running your hand along the smooth timber. You can feel the soft breeze blowing against your face, and the tickle of leaves and flowers running against your hand.

When you open the doors, a mountain of smells hits you in the face. Spices, herbs, and the delicious smell of roasting fish and lamb. A row of beautifully polished tables and chairs stand before you, and a black leather sofa on the side. Sliding into a chair, you can feel the smooth, cool leather against your skin, and the shiny table in front of you. Running your hand along the dark wood, it seems to you as if it's made of glass because it is so smooth.

At last a plate of steaming dumplings ~~are-is~~ put in front of you, and you can hear the clang as cooking utensils drop on the bench. When you go to dump a dumpling in your r mouth, you hear the chef holding his breath. Out of the corner of your eye, you see him peeking out from behind the door that goes to

the kitchen. When the dumpling pops into your mouth, the delicious tastes burn your tongue, and you put two thumbs up to the anxious chef. “Good work!” you say, and he breathes a sigh of relief.

Sandy says: I love the sensory input and that I can feel as if I am there as well as see a picture in my mind. There’s excellent humour ‘dump a dumpling in your mouth’ and the anxious chef waiting for the thumbs up. A small thing to watch is consecutive sentences that begin with present participles (sliding, running). This is something I too have had to learn to avoid. They have an awkward rhythm and never sound right one after the other so if you read your work aloud, they will jump out at you.

From Tanaya:

I felt the coldness as the shade came over me. I was standing under an archway with vines wreathing in and out of the branches. Birds over head were chirping away, not at all worrying by the wind that was blowing a harmless breeze. Up ahead, I could see a beautiful building with a creamy coat. Red railings led to it. As I stepped into the sun, I could smell the sweetness in the air. I felt warm now, like the sun was never hidden by the vines. I stepped towards the building.

Sandy says: When I am demonstrating how to write setting I always talk about the five senses – that time and place is more than what we see – it is also what we hear, smell, touch and taste. Your setting description is rich with sensory detail and I love that bit about the building having ‘a creamy coat’. The last line has atmosphere as well. The only thing I would suggest is to keep an eye out for how many sentences start with “I” as you already have quite a few. I wouldn’t change anything in this piece, just be mindful in the paragraph to follow.

From Tegan:

It. Was. Awake.

I could hear its gentle sigh as it sat up, and the crunching of gravel underneath its giant, scaly butt. It yawned, most probably stretching its massive wings out wide, although I don’t really know, ‘cause I’m hiding underneath a bush of very nasty carnivorous spickleweed, ~~who are~~ which is trying to chew my ears off. The problem is, I can’t flick them away, because then I would make a noise, and then something even bigger will chew my whole head off!

The creature’s tail suddenly flew past the spickleweed bush, and the sharp quills in the end sliced my lip. ~~I just couldn’t help it.~~

“Owwww, that HURT!” my hand flew to my mouth. Instantly a spickleweed started chewing on it, but who cares? I just had to stop myself from screaming, stop the blood from pumping out of my lip, and just hope that the giant thing in front of me is deaf. Half a millisecond later, I found out it wasn’t.

A very, very BIG claw ripped the spickleweed bush out of the ground, throwing it to the other side of the cave. I looked up and saw this creature for what it was...a very beautiful, MASSIVE, silver bird, with a long neck, and bloodstained quills on the end of its reptilian tail. Actually, the only thing bird-like about it was that it had feathers, and two legs with fierce looking talons on the end of them. The head was very civic like, and it looked very similar to my own thorncivic at home, with a long snout, and razor sharp teeth. They were even black, which made them look even more terrifying. And the eyes. Where the pupil should off been was just white. It was blind, and that could just be my trick to survival.

It stared down at me, and I saw those long ears and large nostrils, which meant that this creature was definitely a civic. But what kind? Before I could ponder about it, the civic roared at me, then cocked its head. Its nostrils were flaring, and its tail flicked back and fourth impatiently.

“Okay, you want some...worms?” I rolled a tub of squirming worms towards the monster, but it just piffed the tub back. “Bread?” No. “Butter?” Nope. “Jam?” No way. It just kicked them aside or piffed them at my head.

“Arrrrrrccccc!” It demanded, so I gave it the last of the food that were stuffed inside my pocket. “Do you want some brownfish?”

The civic’s nostrils flared excitedly, and it pinned the fish with it tail quills. Lifting them to its mouth, it blew bright blue flames on the fish until they were charcoal black, and munched happily on them.

I slipped past it and out off the cave into the bright sunlight, but not before I picked up a silver feather off the ground.

Sandy says: What a marvellous first paragraph. A real attention grabber and with humour too. That spickleweed is brilliant. You have a wonderful imagination and are definitely a fantasy writer in the making. I removed an extraneous sentence – you don’t need to say ‘I couldn’t help it’ – it’s obvious because you have told the reader how hard you are trying not to make a noise (or you will get chomped on!) – keep the dialogue and action happening. You have got to finish this story. You already have one reader who wants to know more *grin* Me!

From Tanaya:

Imagine having 2-two sisters that are so irritating that you wish the earth would open up and swallow you, well stop imagining, because its happened to me.

My sisters have this attitude that is so annoying it is hard to ignore. And its not just once a week, probably narrow it down to once or twice a day. I can’t help myself but yell back at them or say something nasty ~~back~~. Mum always complains about it ‘Can’t you guys ever get along’. It’s always me that’s fighting with Chelsea, or me that’s fighting with Katya. I’m trying everyday to ignore them, but it is so hard. Half the time I feel like yelling and swearing at them, or crying.

Living with it everyday is just the hardest thing in the world. I wish hi was deaf at times, just to hear peace and quiet and not to hear them yelling at me. I wish a genie would appear and grant me a wish. It's obvious ~~to~~ what I would wish for, to make my sisters nicer, and hi mean heaps nicer. Sometimes I ~~would~~ hit one of them slightly, then they ~~would~~ hit me back harder, and that will keep going and going and going. I still love them, but at times that love hides and hi can't handle it. I feel so sorry for my Mum because she has to put up with it. We haven't even hit the mid-teens yet and I have a feeling it's gonna get worse. As hi said i~~m~~lm trying to ignore them.

Sandy says: This is wonderful emotional writing. I feel like I know this character and how she feels. You have quickly established empathy between the character and the reader. The description of how 'love hides' is very beautiful. I tidied up some troublesome apostrophes and removed a word ('back') where it was used twice close together. I also change 2 to two because numbers under ten are always written as words – in books anyway! I would love to see more of your work, Tanaya. You could easily turn this piece into a full story – it has lots of story potential.