

Memo

To: Paulina Minnebo, Editor

From: Caitlin Vander Meulen

Date: November 3, 2017

Re: Copy edit of “Chapter 4: Hello! My Name Is Officer Miller,” C. G. Smith

OVERVIEW

The purpose of this memo is to provide a detailed description and explanation of revisions that I have made in the chapter. For a light to medium copy edit, I focused on sentence-level issues and any issues with clarity. I also ensured the text followed the guidelines in the provided style guide. Attached is a copy of the manuscript with my edits marked as well as a copy of the manuscript with edits inputted as recommended for revision.

REVISIONS MADE

Grammar & Usage

Within the chapter there are some issues with verb tenses. While mostly written in past tense, the text occasionally switches to present tense. I corrected this to maintain a consistent narrative time, but please see the query below (Q2) in reference to narration time. Some words in the text were combined as compound words, per *Merriam-Webster*. There were also some run-on sentences which I corrected in order to avoid any confusion for readers.

Punctuation

I extensively revised for punctuation throughout the chapter. One of my top priorities was to correct misplaced quotation marks and clarify the different speakers of dialogue. In addition to differentiating between different speakers of dialogue, I broke dialogue sections into new paragraphs for each change in speaker. The changes to dialogue are meant to help readers follow the dialogue and not have to search through large blocks of text to find who is speaking.

In addition, I added in commas for serial lists as well as for compound sentences with coordinating conjunctions. I also followed the style guide in correcting abbreviations (such as “mph” to “miles per hour”) and spelling out numbers. I added hyphens to compound adjectives.

Language & Word Choice

Another issue was a switch in point of view. I reworded the sentences which were written from the perspective of secondary characters to keep point of view consistent throughout the chapter. For instance, on page 5, the point of view shifts to the perspective of Bill and Ida; I reworded the sentence to be in the point of view of the narrator. Since the whole narrative is written in first-person point of view, it is vital not to break the voice; otherwise, readers might be distracted.

Concerning the capitalization of “California Highway Patrol Man,” I decided to change all occurrences of this term to “patrol officer” or “officer.” I made this change to ensure consistency across the text and also to reduce redundancy by saying the full phrase “California highway patrol officer” only one time.

Formatting

For typography purposes, all instances of double spaces after periods and commas were removed. Paragraphs were also indented and equally spaced. Per the style guide, I italicized Spanish words and removed the quotation marks around them.

SUGGESTIONS:

- The dialogue is written in overly long quotes. For instance, the patrol officer has especially long speaking paragraphs. This can be distracting for readers and slow down their reading too much. Dialogue is usually better if it is presented with many breaks. Break up large chunks of dialogue more or consider cutting down on long quotes in order to simulate real conversation. One way to accomplish this would be to add in details of movement or setting to interrupt the speaker.
- Another suggestion for dialogue would be to make the voice of each speaker more casual. As of now, the dialogue comes across as very formal and unrealistic. It is also difficult to differentiate the voices of each character from each other. A rewrite using more contractions and shorter monologues would be helpful to make dialogue more real to life.
- Check text for repetition and wordiness. Because I was focusing on larger issues of sentence structure and clarity, I was unable to work through these other issues. For instance, on page 5, the author uses the word “doll” three times in one sentence. This reads as repetitive and distracting from the meaning of the sentence. A rewrite with a focus on diction could help reduce repetitiveness.

AUTHOR QUERIES

Q1: This passage is unclear as it seems to equate “humble assessment” with “bunch of suburbs.” It is difficult to find a literal meaning in this, and it seems like there are missing words. Perhaps it would be clearer to simply describe the suburbs without beginning with “my time spent.” Can the author reword this passage to make it clearer?

Q2: These are phrases and sentences throughout the chapter which seem to imply that the narrator is speaking from a time in the future. Is this made clear in previous chapters by presenting the narrator as a character in the future? Without clarification, the change in time of narration might be disrupting for the reader.

Q3: This simile is ambiguous; with the current sentence structure, it seems like the narrator is compared to a mother, but from the sentence context, it would be the friends who are acting like a mother. Can we reword this to make the simile clearer? For instance, one option would be to reword the sentence in this way: “They wanted to know all about what had happened, and like good parents who never had any children, they adopted me.”

Q4: Is this the narrator speaking to himself? Or, is this the future narrator (see Q2) speaking to his former self? Should we use italics to signify internal thoughts?