

been murdered, has more inherently dramatic qualities than a plot about how a young man won a bicycle race to Peoria. It's true that by introducing a lengthy set of circumstances into the story, showing that he must win the race in order to save the old homestead, the plot will take on dramatic importance. But think of the precious space required to acquaint the reader with all these conditions. Such things as winning (or losing) the right girl (or man), murder, suicide, loss of liberty and the pursuit of happiness are the best bets for story source material.

2—Don't, however, write a story about a thrilling rescue from a burning building just for the sake of the gymnastics and thrills involved. Remember, a story is a story because some individual makes it one. And your leading actor must have character, good or bad. Your thrilling encounter with the flames will be nothing more than an incident unless it is related in a very direct way to your main character. The drama that makes a story interesting may be supplied by conflict between man and man, man and nature, man and the beasts of the field, to name a few, but not by any struggle in which the man has no significant characterization.

3—Your story must have a plot that easily becomes a short short story. "You have enough material here for a novel," is not a compliment in this case. It means your material has not been unified and selected. You have not chosen with a view to producing a dominant emotional reaction in your reader. The short short moves to tears, laughter, dismay, or horror, but not to all of them at once. That is, not as *dominant* effects. If it does so, it is taking on weight it cannot carry. Stories that tell all sorts of interesting things about the hero, merely for the sake of showing the author's knowledge of certain things, lack that essential short story unity. Give us only those points about the characters that furnish us with *necessary* information.

You may tell us all the interesting things you can think of about your hero in the way of good looks, strength, virtue and so on, as long as those things are necessary to a clear-cut, but not over-burdened, picture of him. Tell us that his taste for clothes tends toward the conservative if later on his taste is to play a part in the development of the plot.

4—Choose characters who are easily developed, not necessarily broad types, but certainly not people with subtle and contradictory