



Notions

Karl Roeseler

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Faint, illegible text below the author's name, likely bleed-through from the reverse side.

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Originally published in the UK in the magazine *Tank*, volume 2, issue 2,
January 2001

a (cul de sac) unspoken word action

NOTION: The first sentence must dare to be different.

NOTION: Write a story in three pieces. Part One: a complete little tale in which one character dies. Part Two: titled "Recycle Character Here" resurrects the dead character. Part Three: a re-telling of Part One that ends with the recycled character fully intact.

NOTION: Invent a narrative structure for each day of the trip.

NOTION: A story in which the narrative begins by following one character, then will shift to follow the third person the first character comes into contact with—this pattern is repeated until the last character meets the first.

NOTION: One character goes out with two friends (perhaps a couple) and they meet someone. Then all four go out. The someone meets another friend. Now all five go out. The story is propelled forward by each new person meeting someone else

he or she knows. Meanwhile, the original group begins losing members, one by one, then more frequently—so that at the end of the story the first character is alone with two new friends (perhaps a couple).

NOTION: A story in which, in the opening, two characters tell a story that lasts one paragraph. Then these two characters go off stage, perhaps after greeting a third character. The rest of the story is an expanded version of the initial paragraph except that the narrative features the third character.

NOTION: Write a story in which the last word of every paragraph is repeated somewhere within the text of the next paragraph.

NOTION: Take three characters, and whatever one character does, another character undoes, and then the third character does again. This repetition and inversion pattern occurs three times, once for each character. The characters are a husband, a

wife and an adult daughter. The title of the story is: "Wednesday Afternoon."

NOTION: Within a collection of stories, repeat the same line of dialogue three times, in three different stories, in radically different situations, and so subtly that only one reader gets it.

NOTION: A story in which a character asks everyone in a small bar the same question and writes down all of their answers. The question: What are you most afraid of?

NOTION: A story in which Z leaves his apartment to go shopping—on the way to the market he meets a friend, M, who tells him about a horrible thing which has happened to their friend, Q. Z is quite moved by this. [Z might meet another character who tells him a second horrible thing that has happened to Q.] Later, at the market, Z runs into Q. Z goes to extreme lengths to entertain Q. This takes them both on a grand adventure, the result of which is that Z has not completed his shop-

ping but Q has been entertained. Before parting, Q wants to know why Z was so insistent about providing this distraction—Z repeats the things he has heard and Q tells him that they are not true.

NOTION: A Story in which the opening paragraph is also the closing paragraph, except that the order of the sentences is reversed.

NOTION: The telling of a story that is narrated by a group (at a café or bar or perhaps on the foredeck of a schooner) which is told in the following way: A begins, B interrupts & adds, C interrupts & adds, A also interrupts & B also interrupts, C continues, D interrupts & adds—A, B and C interrupt, D continues, E interrupts—this process goes on until the complete story is told.

NOTION: A story in which one character approaches another character for a simple bit of help—and the other character

immediately agrees. In doing so, the second character tells the first a story which has nothing to do with the situation in which the two characters find themselves.

NOTION: A story which is told in a specific number of parts (say seven) and written chronologically—but then the order is shuffled by some sort of chance operation. All parts are written before the shuffle.

VARIATION: Decide on the number of events first, then do the random selection, then do the writing. The difference between the original notion and the variation is the difference between overt and covert structure.

NOTION: For a short noir: use three sentence paragraphs:

first sentence = action;

second sentence = observation or interior monologue;

third sentence = reaction.

Adhere to this structure strictly except for dialogue and the

first sentence of each chapter.

NOTION: A story in which a couple is sitting at a café and a stranger approaches them, asks to join them. This stranger is unknown to the couple or anyone else in the café. There are open tables. The stranger is charming, has money, buys the couple a round or two of drinks, then demands that each of them tell him something about themselves that they have never told the other. This embarrasses them, but they do it.

NOTION: For a collection of short stories: create simple framing device for a story that gets inverted by the next story in such a way that it is not apparent—and then inverted once more in a way that reveals all.

NOTION: The Eric Rohmer trick—tell a story in three scenes:

- 1) a typical work day;
- 2) an outrageous vacation day;
- 3) another typical work day.

NOTION: Find a way to combine a line from a poem with a story—or a line from a story with a poem—or to create both at the same time and present them on the same page:

[Insert drawing of square]

[within the square = dense typed prose]

[outside the square = loose cursive sprawl]

NOTION: A series of interlocking sentences that describe one block of a city in the following way: one paragraph for each house—one sentence for each person in the house. The title could be something like the “400 Block of Green Street.”

NOTION: Within a collection of stories: a character will walk through a story making no effect, and will reappear in another story doing the same activity and have no effect, and will again reappear in a third story doing precisely the same thing—this time an enormous consequence occurs and the course of the story is altered.

NOTION: A story in which one character acts cruelly toward another. This is the first section of three. The second section shows unrelated characters invoking an inversion of the first section (the victim rebels successfully against the cruel character). In the last section, we have the characters from the first section again and the reader's expectation should be that there will be a inversion of their situation following the model of the second section. What happens, however, is that they behave in exactly the same way as in the first section, with the same character acting cruelly toward the other.

NOTION: Three characters sit at a café and tell stories—small simple but entertaining stories for the first two, a complete non-sequitur for the last. And the last line of the last story will be the title of the piece.

NOTION: Write a story in which every section has the name of a current San Francisco rock band as its title: Blues Circus, Mellow Drunk, The Giraffe Had a Voice...

NOTION: Employ the following method: Write the first sentence, then write the first sentence again followed by a new sentence (the second). Then write the first and second sentences again, followed by a new sentence (the third). Continue in this fashion until the end.

NOTION: A story in which the first sentence of every paragraph is also contained within the first paragraph (i.e. the first sentence of the first paragraph is, of course, the first sentence of the first paragraph. But the second sentence of the first paragraph is also the first sentence of the second paragraph. And the third sentence of the first paragraph is also the first sentence of the third paragraph, and so on).

NOTION: A story in which the last paragraph contains the first sentence of every paragraph previous to it, in its original order of appearance (i.e. the first sentence of the last paragraph is also the first sentence of the first paragraph; the second sentence of the last paragraph is also the first sentence of

the second paragraph.)

VARIATION: A story in which the last paragraph is composed of a sentence from each of the preceding paragraphs, but in the following order: the first sentence of the first paragraph is also the first sentence of the last paragraph; the second sentence of the second paragraph is the same as the same second sentence in the last paragraph; the third sentence of the third paragraph is also the third sentence of the last paragraph.

NOTION: Rewrite an old story from another character's point of view.

NOTION: Write a pair of stories about two lovers—as they do things, perhaps the same things (attend an opening, celebrate an anniversary), over time—but in such a way that the “two halves” do not make a whole—they make instead two distinct and separate stories.

NOTION: A story in which one sentence from each narrative paragraph is later spoken as a line of dialogue.

INVERSE NOTION: A story in which one line from every bit of dialogue (bit = an utterance, partial speech or monologue, or one speaker's portion of a dialogue exchange) is later used as a sentence within a paragraph of narrative.

NOTION: Write a story which is in fact a series of post cards written by one character to five others: the recipients meet at a pub, as requested, to read their post cards to the other recipients. The one who wrote to them does not attend this meeting. All the others do. The narrative consists of their meeting and reading their cards to each other. The end could be: the last reader finishes and one of the others says, "_____?"

NOTION: Fashion a series of short stories so that the titles themselves create a small story when listed in the table of contents.

NOTION: Within a collection of short stories: the last story uses all of the titles of the previous stories as section titles (and ends with a section that has the same title as the story itself).

NOTES: These notions were written during the trip the Schooner Constance made in the summer of 1998, up from Lunenburg, Nova Scotia, to Cape Breton, to Prince Edward Island, to the Isles de la Madeleine, then down through the Bras d'Or and back home to Lunenburg. My shipmates during the trip were Freddy and Patty Rhineland, Marcus Rhineland, Alex Rhineland and Catherine McKinnon. Catherine is a Caper (people from Cape Breton refer to themselves as Capers) and a musician. Not infrequently did she play the bodhrán or the fiddle as we sailed. Sometimes she was joined by Patty on the recorder. Incidental percussion was provided by other members of the crew banging on the gunnel, shaking the peppermill or simply howling like sailors. Freddy, at the time of the trip, was the Captain and owner of

the Constance. The Constance is a traditional gaff-rigged wooden schooner, about forty-five feet long (fifty if you count the bowsprit), with a deep green hull and a thin bright yellow stripe just below her gunnel. The trip lasted a month and, it must be said, the wind was kind to us.

NOTION: Write about sailing.

NOTION: Here's a first sentence: Sometimes you tell a story simply because you're tired of hearing other people get it wrong.

The Performance on May 14, 2004 is part of Archipelago Words and Sounds.

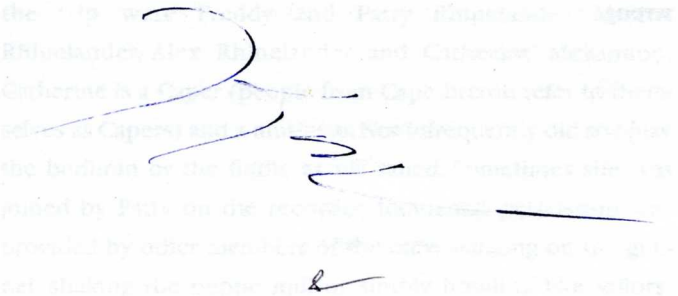
Music: Thermal

Readers: Hongli Chen, Dan Thomas, Tamara Huggins, James Carrigan and Karl Roeseler.

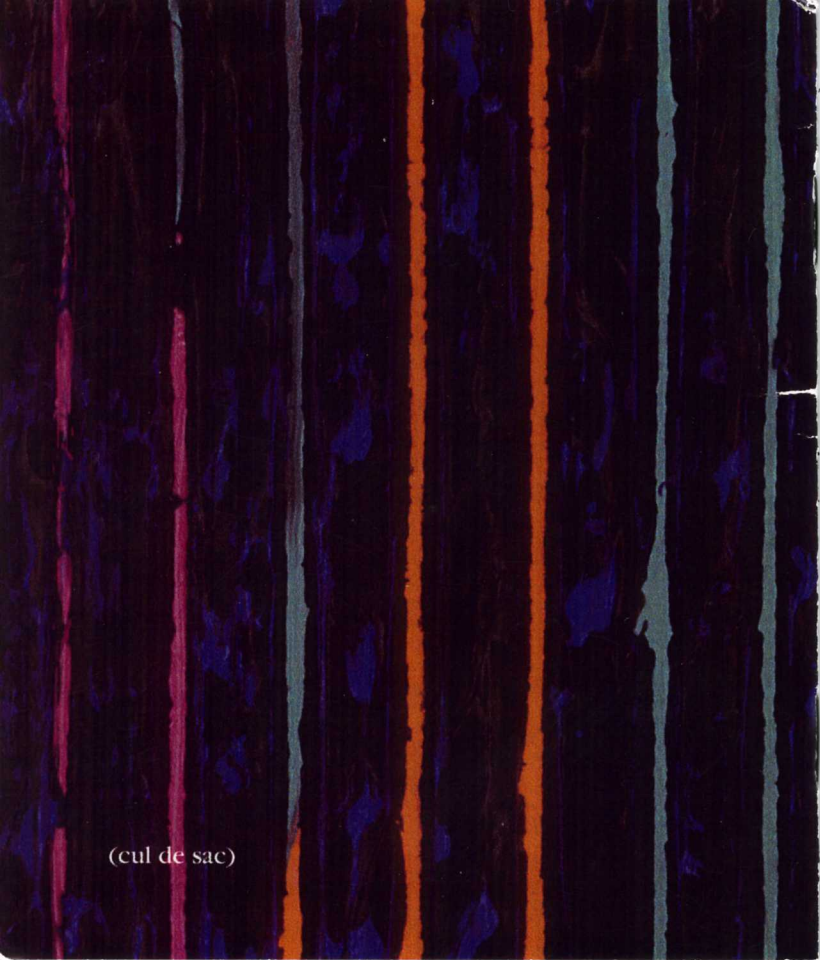
Incidentals: Daphne Stannard, Beau Simon and Dylan Stannard Simon.

The text was recorded in various locations in SoMa, San Francisco, mostly in or near Yerba Buena Gardens and Rincon Hill.

Cover art: "8 logos 2" and "8 logos 3" by Karl Roeseler (2004).



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(cul de sac)