The Elements of Fiction Writing: PLOT

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On Plot:

…Plot is built of significant events in a given story – significant because they have important consequences. Taking a shower isn't necessarily plot, or braiding one's hair, or opening a door. Let's call them incidents. They happen, but they don't lead to anything much. No important consequences.

But if the character is Rapunzel, and the hair is what's going to let the prince climb to her window, braiding her hair is a crucial action. If the character is Bluebeard's newest wife, opening the forbidden door which reveals the corpses of her predecessors, is a pivotal point. Taking a shower is, in *Psycho*, considerably more dramatic and shocking than the theft of a large sum of money, both in itself and in terms of its later repercussions. By the way they're weighted and presented, by what they lead to; these events are transformed from incident to plot.

…Plot is the things characters do, feel, think, or say, that make a difference to what comes afterward.

Thought or emotion crosses the line into plot when it becomes action and causes reactions. Until then, attitudes, however interesting in themselves, are just potential, just cloudy possibilities. They're static. They're not going anywhere. Nothing comes of them.

No thought, in and of itself, is plot. No action, however dramatic, is plot if the story would have been about the same if it hadn't happened at all. Any action, however seemingly trivial, can be vital and memorable if it has significant consequences and changes the story's outcome.

Plotting is a way of looking at things. It's a way of deciding what's important and then *showing* it to be important through the way you construct and connect the major events of your story. It's the way you show things mattering.