

## A Reflection on the Process of Writing Flash Fiction

David Sinclair

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### A Eutectic Relationship

Peter wants to kiss Charlotte.

Peter wants to move in with Charlotte.

Charlotte needs a flatmate to

help pay her rent.

Charlotte does not like coming  
home to her empty flat.

Peter holds Charlotte's hand when they go  
to the cinema.

Peter asks Charlotte if she is lonely.

Charlotte says she does not  
know if she is lonely.

Charlotte takes Peter to the park,  
and they feed the ducks.

Peter throws breadcrumbs while Charlotte  
watches.

Peter asks Charlotte if he can cook her  
supper that night.

Charlotte does not like fish, but  
Peter cooks her fishcakes.

Charlotte wonders if ducks  
would like fishcakes.

Peter kisses the soft dimple at the base of  
Charlotte's neck.

Peter licks the fat flesh at the base of  
Charlotte's thumb.

Charlotte says it tickles when  
Peter nibbles her ear lobe.

Charlotte says yes, yes, yes but  
she wishes she had not.

Peter meets Charlotte in the coffee shop  
later that week.

Peter asks Charlotte if he can move in.

Charlotte tells Peter, she has got  
a promotion.

Charlotte tells Peter she has  
bought a chinchilla.

Charlotte walks home.

Peter walks home.

(186 words)

## Reflection

When making a part for my 1953 Morgan sports car I had to look into the process of selecting the right carbon content for a particular steel alloy. This involved looking at metallurgical phase diagrams which show the way that the properties of an alloy changes according to the relative mix of its constituents. A particular point of interest in such diagrams is the *eutectic* point. This point is where *the proportion of a mix of substances having the lowest freezing point of all possible mixtures of those substances*. It struck me that human relationships could also be said to have an eutectic point – where the passion of the relationship has cooled to the point where the relationship is over. This was the stimulus to write a story about a failed relationship in which the failure was the inability of the participants to understand, agree on or even express what they wanted from that relationship. I liked the idea of using an unusual, but meaningful relevant word in the title as a puzzle for the reader to solve. (I hoped the reader would be able to deduce the meaning of eutectic from the context of the story, but I – so there is no absolute need for them to look it up in a dictionary). I decided that I would try and signify the lack of fluidity and warmth in the relationship by using a rather stark, formal layout and a rigid framework, in which the general syntax of each sentence was repeated throughout the story. So, each sentence starts with a proper noun, followed by a simple verb. Initially, pairs of sentences focus on a single character. Later, as the relationship accelerates towards its end, the sentences alternate between characters. I was hoping the reader would interpret it as an increase in pace, a bit as if they were running down a steepening slope. Each character is given one side of the page (exactly like the two alloys in a metallurgy phase diagram). This symbolises the fact that the characters never form a proper couple, and indeed by the final line, they are separated and ideally, the reader should read the left and right sides of the story concurrently. (I've no idea how to notate this though – in a play, I would have the two characters speaking over one another). Having completed the

story, I did have some concerns that this story does not quite meet the criteria for Flash Fiction specified in Week 1. While the story does have a plot and location, I was a little uneasy that it did not show much character development. Perhaps Charlotte changes over the story arc, as she seems to realise Peter is not the one and drops her interest in him for a less demanding pet. But I think Peter is pretty much unchanged – and to be honest, that I think is the point – Peter tries hard, but never does understand Charlotte. (Is this a cliché statement – men can never understand women, and perhaps are not that motivated to try?). There is little use of figurative devices (e.g. alliteration etc). I felt I had already explored a lot of those techniques in other stories in the course. And I quite liked the stark, simplicity of the prose. There is a great deal of telling and not much showing, so perhaps the piece could be said to lack narrative depth. Finally, the layout of the story makes it look somewhat like a concrete poem. I don't mind that but maybe it is a bit off-putting for a reader expecting a traditional story. I'm not at all sure the boundaries of prose and poetry are very clear anyway, at least in modern works. In fact, on reflection, maybe this piece could also be written in script form – I think it would work well with two actors reading it as a radio or audio piece. Is flash drama an accepted form?

(656 words)