

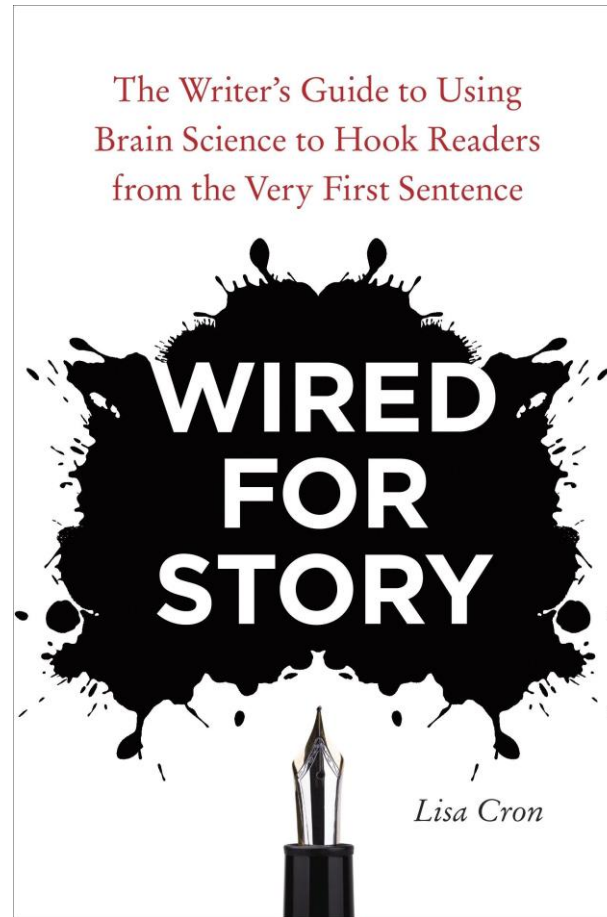
How to Show Emotion in the Details

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JudithStarkston@gmail.com

JudithStarkston.com

Lisa Cron



This:

In October 2006, nearly six thousand people worldwide perished in hurricane-induced floods.

Or this:

A wall of water comes straight toward a small boy, who clings desperately to his frantic mother. Trying to soothe him, she whispers, “Don’t worry baby, I’m here, I won’t let you go.” She feels him relax in the moment of deafening calm just before the water rips him from her arms. The sound of his cry above the cacophony of destruction—trees ripped from the ground, houses smashed to splinters—will haunt her for the rest of her life. That, and his look of utter surprise as he was swept away. *I trusted you*, it seemed to say, *and you let me go*.



Pilk arched his neck. “No, I know exactly whom to send. I’ve been meaning to find an assignment like this for him—and the only other griffin who tolerates him. Just the right pair for this mission.”

An assignment like this? Just the right pair? Pilk’s plan sunk in. Bolthar knew, suddenly, exactly who the fool was for whom it would all go wrong. Surging tension crushed Bolthar’s head. Searing light flashed behind his eyes, blinding and crippling him and illuminating the king’s mocking blow. For so long, Bolthar had requested an opportunity to excel. For so long, Bolthar had been ignored and shunted aside. Now the king granted him his wish—and sent him into an unsolvable crisis. Bolthar’s failure would coat him in guilt and the blood of untold numbers of griffins. Pilk had found his perfect means to banish Bolthar in a disgrace so profound he could never challenge Pilk’s superiority.

The griffin standing next to the king caught Bolthar's attention. Her posture ceded nothing to the king. No hint of subservience. And her beauty—her coat shimmered in the sunlight, as though she generated her own light. He didn't remember seeing her before, which meant she was probably a strong-blood. Someone the rules would have kept very separate from him. He'd certainly never before caught her scent. *That* he would have remembered. It was lighting a fire in his chest unlike anything he'd ever experienced.

Stepping toward her, he swept his head back and forth to fill his scent holes with that alluring aroma. It filled him with the clean air of a spring dawn and every green thing budding forth, driving him to get closer to the source of this rapture and get as much of his body in contact with her as he could.

Calia bumped him with her folded wing. "What are you doing? We do *not* want to draw attention..."

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judithstarkston.com

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DANDY GILVER

AND A

**BOTHERSOME
NUMBER**

OF

CORPSES

A MYSTERY

Catriona McPherson

“It was three o’clock in the morning and the moon was a sliver of ice in an ink-blue sky; not a stroke of light in the west to show that the sun had ever set there, not a hint of dawn in the east where a bank of clouds was gathering, so the darkness was as perfect as midwinter.”

-Catriona McPherson, *Dandy Gilver and a Bothersome Number of Corpses*

1. Lex Sakai paused on the threshold of the Chinese restaurant, suddenly surrounded by the scents of nutty sesame oil, salty-sweet oyster sauce, pungent soy sauce. Asian party guests mingled in a sea of black and dark-brown and gray heads. They were all dressed up for the party, men in dress shirts and women in short dresses.

2. Eat and leave. That's all she had to do.

If Grandma didn't kill her first for being late.

Lex Sakai raced through the open doorway to the Chinese restaurant and was immediately immersed in conversation, babies' wails, clashing perfumes, and stale sesame oil. She tripped over the threshold and almost turned her ankle. Stupid pumps. Man, she hated wearing heels.

3. Andrea O'Malley paused on the threshold of the Chinese restaurant. She wasn't sure if she liked the exotic smells that teased her nose—spices she couldn't name, as well as nutty sesame oil, salty-sweet oyster sauce, pungent soy sauce. She patted her French twist, which didn't need fiddling with. She couldn't help it—she was a golden-haired alien in the midst of these black-haired party guests. At least she wasn't dressed inappropriately—the other guests stood talking in clusters, the women in short silk dresses like her own.

Example from a lesson on Nuts and Bolts: “Thought” Verbs, by Chuck Palahniuk, author of *Fight Club*, post on LitReactor <http://bit.ly/2EYhie1>

Instead of saying: “Adam knew Gwen liked him.”

You’ll have to say: “Between classes, Gwen was always leaned on his locker when he’d go to open it. She’d roll her eyes and shove off with one foot, leaving a black-heel mark on the painted metal, but she also left the smell of her perfume. The combination lock would still be warm from her ass. And the next break, Gwen would be leaned there, again.”

(Also from Nuts and Bolts: “Thought” Verbs, by Chuck Palahniuk)

Don’t tell your reader: “Lisa hated Tom.”

Instead, make your case like a lawyer in court, detail by detail. Present each piece of evidence. For example:

“During role call, in the breath after the teacher said Tom’s name, in that moment before he could answer, right then, Lisa would whisper-shout: ‘Butt Wipe,’ just as Tom was saying, ‘Here’.”

From: Sarah wondered why he wanted to see her. She was only the housemaid, not a member of the family, and Lord Griffith hated her. (She already knows this info, so she wouldn't tell it to herself. Author telling reader, not in pov)

To: Why would Lord Griffith want her, of all people? To further humiliate the housemaid? She had a fleeting memory of his spit flying in her face, his gaze blacker than the coat of his prize-winning horse, and her gut involuntarily heaved.

Hearing her name down the telephone line twitched me away into the past as swiftly as the hook in the cheek of a trout will pluck it out of water into air and leave it gasping. Fleur Lipscott, sweet little Fleur. Husband, children, decades of humdrum adult life were quite gone and there I was again in that first golden summer at Pereford where for ten long lazy weeks the sun rose over the hills, smiled down upon us all day and then sank with a sigh into the warm sea each evening. We paddled and bathed at the little cove, drifted around the lake in a little boat, meandered the cloistered Somerset lanes behind a slow, clopping pony of gentle nature in a cart full of cushions. I could smell the lavender scent of the linen cushion-slips still.

-Dandy Gilver and A Bothersome Number of Corpses, Catriona McPherson

Questions?

