

Friday 7/19: Session 5 - Blurting the truth

What's the opposite of lying? Telling the truth, of course. And most of our characters are operating in a truthful mode for most of the time.

Those characters can take great leaps forward (or backward), however, when they tell each other things they never meant to reveal. If we've written those characters well, our readers will have known the truth all along. Nothing engages a writer faster than being in on the plot ahead of the characters—we want our readers to have that “I knew it!” moment when a character blurts out a truth. Why? Because we know unplanned admissions are raw, honest glimpses into how our characters truly feel.

Your character can blurt several kinds of truths. A villain can show his true colors, letting it slip that he means harm to your protagonist. A key character can reveal motives different than what we've assumed. Or someone can blurt out a secret during times of stress or pressure. If you need your heroine to discover a critical piece of information, consider placing the character “in the know” in a position where the facts slip out. That “gotcha” moment is always satisfying to readers.

Of course, as a romance writer, that moment when a character finally breaks down and shows their heart is a pivotal point in my plots. As such, the inadvertent admission of love is one of my favorites. Here's one from my book *My So-Called Love Life*:

**“I have every right to be nervous.”**

**“You don't have every right to take it out on me.”**

**“Why not? You don't get to make me fall for you and then be the guy to take my job away.”** Yikes! I did not mean to say that just now. I'm standing in the middle of my living room, cringing, and punching myself in the head. This is definitely not how I wanted this moment to go. There's a gaping silence on Leo's end of the phone. **“Leo...say something.”**

**“I'm coming over there.”**

**“No!”** I cry out, twirling around. **“I'm a wreck already, don't make me botch this face to face when I've stuck my foot in my mouth over the phone.”**

The first person point of view in this book allows me to have some real fun with Lindy's admission of her feelings for Leo. The reaction of the other characters in any blurting scene is fertile ground for character and plot development.

A related strategy is for the admission of a powerful truth to be so badly executed that it feels like a blurt, even if it's planned. The definitive example of this is Mr. Darcy's declaration of love from *Pride and Prejudice*:

**...she saw Mr. Darcy walk into the room. In an hurried manner he immediately began an inquiry after her health, imputing his visit to a wish of hearing that she were better. She answered him with cold civility. He sat down for a few moments, and then getting up, walked about the room. Elizabeth was surprised, but said not a word. After a silence of several minutes, he came towards her in an agitated manner, and thus began:**

**“In vain I have struggled. It will not do. My feelings will not be repressed. You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you.”**

The above is from the Jane Austen literary masterpiece, but if you'd like to see Colin Firth in the role that made him a star (plus the fallout from Darcy's worst-ever proposal), here's the link from the BBC series:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=f1Uq5ZAscVg>

alternate:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IGr8QbWY19s>

Darcy's action and his "agitated manner" is completely at odds with the nature of his "confession." He's acting like a man who never intended to reveal his feelings, seemingly tormented by them, but now they "will not be repressed." And why do we love it? Because we've known he's in love with Elizabeth all along. So while it is planned—and as such not a true blurt—it still feels like one of those wonderful "I knew it!" moments.

**Homework:** Where can you apply these techniques to your work in progress? Find a scene where some information (known to a character) must be discovered by another character. How can you craft circumstances where pressures, nerves, or dangers can push that character to blurt what they never intended?