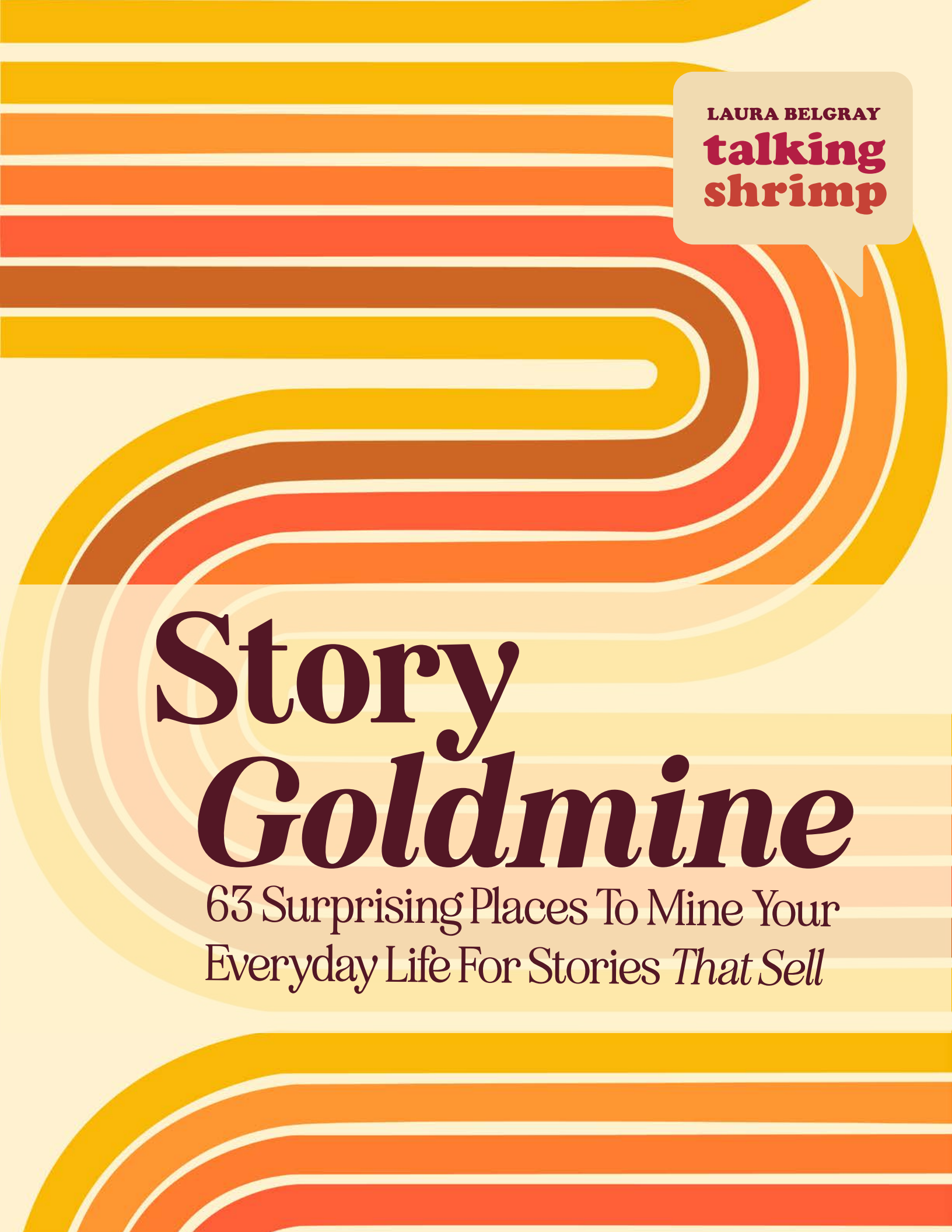




LAURA BELGRAY  
**talking  
shrimp**

# Story *Goldmine*

63 Surprising Places To Mine Your  
Everyday Life For Stories *That Sell*

## *You've heard the advice:*

Humans are wired for story! Tell stories in your emails and all your marketing, and your audience will **pay attention.**



## *And it's true.*

Having created millions of dollars in revenue from story-based emails to a relatively small list, and heard over and over, “Yours are the only emails I open—I love your stories!”...

...I can vouch for the power of storytelling.

### **The good news? Your stories don't have to be epic.**

They don't have to be sweeping tales of courage, of victory, of triumph over tragedy.

They don't even have to be your stories.

They can be about your clients and customers. (And, sometimes, should.)

They can be borrowed from someone else's life or business. You'll see plenty of marketers sum up stories they've read about, say, Michael Jordan. Or Steve Jobs.

But if you want a bottomless well of stories that never dries up, one that supplies endless lessons and entertainment for your audience and makes you real and relatable to them (so they feel connected with you and want to buy from you)...

...Your own life can't be beat—even if you think you live a boring one!

It's the richest source of stories you've got, if you know where to dig.

*Here are 12 places to start, with 63 examples of the kind of story you might tell.  
(Some are from my own life and emails, many I made up.)*

## **1. Anything you've changed in your life recently (or otherwise):**

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- A new habit or practice:  
*I started getting up an hour earlier*
- A word or phrase you've adopted or dropped:  
*I stopped saying the F-word ("Freelancer")*
- A "mindset shift":  
*I decided to love vacuuming*
- Something you decided to try:  
*I started taking Tango*
- A big purchase you made or shopped for:  
*We started looking at houses...and it turns out, people \*do\* want to be sold to.*

## **2. Something that changed in your life (not necessarily your doing)**

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- A neighbor's new smells or noises:  
*Upstairs neighbors built a drum room for their 4-year-old above my office.*
- A policy, staff, or price change at your favorite store, restaurant or coffee shop:  
*My iced coffee is now seven bucks including tip!*
- Health events:  
*My whole family has Covid...again. And I broke a toe.*
- A new daily obstacle or inconvenience:  
*Refrigerator door handle came off and we have to open the freezer drawer every time we want to open the fridge.*
- Change in someone else's behavior:  
*My kid will only wear a Batman costume.*



### 3. Observations around you (or about yourself)

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- A conversation you overheard:  
*What a complainer at the next table!*
- Something a local business is doing wrong or right:  
*My local CVS is letting people walk out with stolen deodorants and face wipes.*
- Human behavior:  
*Why was this cashier being such a jerk?*
- Nature:  
*The tree in my yard doesn't flower until September. It's a literal late bloomer. And it's not trying to catch up!*
- Trends (IRL or on social media):  
*Why does everyone now say "humans" instead of "people"??*
- Something everyone loves that you hate:  
*Truffles make me gag and I never got into Game of Thrones.*

### 4. Recent experiences

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- A pattern you don't know what to make of:  
*I keep finding 20-dollar bills on the street!*
- Something bizarre or unsettling that happened to you:  
*I got punched by a stranger in front of CVS.*
- A small mistake:  
*I forgot to get basil for the pasta and discovered it after the store was closed.*
- A big mistake:  
*I loaned all my savings to a friend so they could join a dodgy multi-level-marketing scheme and they still haven't sold a single tub of protein powder.*
- Minor disasters (little everyday fails):  
*New puppy ate the most expensive shoes I ever bought.*

## 5. Travel

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- Observations of people in airports, on planes, on buses:  
*Why did everyone boarding the bus want me to move my stuff so they could sit in the seat next to me, but walked right past a dude hogging two seats every time?*
- Service glitches:  
*They kept us on the grounded plane for 5 hours with no air.*
- Service highlights:  
*One flight attendant made the whole trip better.*
- Different cultures:  
*I want to move to this country! Everyone's so nice.*
- Changes in daily routine:  
*In a different city, I'm a different me! Can I replicate this at home?*

## 6. Past experiences

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- Something you weren't allowed to do as a kid:  
*My mom said I could only have Lick 'em Aid every 7 years...here's what that did to me.*
- A fear you used to have:  
*I used to be terrified of speaking up in meetings.*
- A thought you used to have that you now know isn't true:  
*I thought I was shitty at selling.*
- Toughest time in school as a kid:  
*I was incredibly uncool in middle school, which makes it even better that this piece I just wrote is...wait for it...POPULAR!*
- A phase you went through:  
*I joined a cult.*

## 6. Past experiences

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- Worst job you ever had:  
*The time I was thrilled to get fired.*
- Best job you ever had:  
*Easiest money I ever made (and a tip-off to what I was meant to do).*
- Any workplace upheaval:  
*Scenes from a very 90s company re-org.*

## 7. Media

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- A recommendation:  
*(streaming series, movie, book, article, podcast, album, playlist)*
- A lesson:  
*How I got better at sales from watching “Better Call Saul”.*
- A discovery about culture:  
*I finally get why people like The Kardashians!*
- A discovery about yourself:  
*I realized all the business podcasts I listened to were keeping me in an anxiety spiral*
- Scenes or lines you remember from TV, a movie, or a book and why:  
*There’s an episode of Happy Days where Fonzie can’t get out the words “I was wrong” and I thought of it at this restaurant where the server couldn’t admit they were wrong, either.*
- Why you love or hate a show or trope:  
*I can’t watch this show because of the expository dialogue — “C’mon, you can tell me. I’m your big sister...and we hid a dead body together.”*
- A character you identify with:  
*This crew member on Below Deck Med has the worst work ethic, and I’m afraid I’m exactly like her.*

## 8. Confessions

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- Something you're embarrassed about:  
*I let my kids have their screens whenever they ask because it's too exhausting to say no.*
- A secret you've been keeping:  
*I hide my "woo" side from my husband.*
- Thoughts or beliefs you don't like to admit to:  
*No matter how successful I am in my business, I constantly feel behind.*

## 9. Pet Peeves

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- Client or customer behavior:  
*It's always the same kind of person who tells me to change how I run things.*
- Other people's habits:  
*What's with people who don't put their hand out to catch the door and act like you let it slam on them?*
- Industry trends you love or think should go away now:  
*Why I never need to hear the word "Value" again.*
- Fashions:  
*Oh no, low-rise jeans are back.*

## 10. Interior Life

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- Unlocked memories from one of your 5 senses:  
*One sip of kombucha reminds me of changing out the spoiled citrus during my shitty bartending job.*
- Stories about yourself:  
*I consider myself lazy, but am I?*
- Phobias, neuroses:  
*I sometimes google my name + "annoying" to see if there are people talking shit about me on the internet.*
- Desires:  
*I want success, but I also want to be lying down all day watching Real Housewives.*



## 11. Risks, Fears, Challenges

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- A difficult conversation:  
*I broke up with my hairdresser.*
- Something you were nervous to say or talk about:  
*I said “ballsack” in my father’s eulogy.*
- Something you were apprehensive about or scared to do:  
*I wanted to back out of giving a talk but didn’t.*
- A personal challenge you’re always working on:  
*How I (partially) stopped procrastinating.*
- A bold move you made.  
*Why I quit my secure, fancy 9-5.*

## 12. Other People’s Stories

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- How your parents grew up:  
*At my dad’s summer camp, they sang a song called “One Meatball” that was about war rations and how little you got to eat.*
- Your parents’ work stories:  
*My mom was literally chased around the desk by her male bosses.*
- A problem your friend, colleague, or acquaintance has:  
*My friend is the best at what she does but thinks it’s “annoying” to promote herself.*
- Someone who inspires you:  
*This person lost everything but is now doing better than all of us.*
- Client or buyer success stories:  
*In 20 years, Katie had never once invited friends over for dinner, because she was convinced she was the world’s worst host and it would be a disaster. But then, she bought my book...*
- Client or buyer feedback:  
*One of my favorite customers, Chuck, wrote me today with an interesting question...*

Those are by no means all the places to mine your life for stories to tell in your newsletters, marketing emails, and posts. But they're a start.

*OK, bye!*

Kidding. Though I'm not with you in person, I can hear your big "but" from miles (maybe continents) away.

"But how do I tie the stories to a point, or use them to sell? How do I make them satisfying and not random?"

*I've got you.*



## BONUS SECTION: TYING IT IN

### *How To Tie Your Everyday Stories To A Point, An Offer, Or Some Other CTA (Call To Action)*

*This art takes practice. It'll help to observe other writers you like, who you think do it well. You're on my email list, so—assuming you like my style—you're in good hands.*

*I have two main methods.*

## BONUS SECTION: TYING IT IN

### Method 1: Reverse engineer it *(start with point, find story)*

*This is when you start with the objective or point you want to illustrate, and come up with a story to fit.*

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#### Example: Dish Towels

*This one's a hypothetical. I don't sell dish towels. But say you do, and you want to promote your latest, hand-woven, Mediterranean-inspired line of them.*

#### **Step 1: Brainstorm benefits and selling points.**

What are some benefits of having beautiful things, even for cleaning? Does it make you actually want to clean?

- Owning beautiful cleaning supplies makes you want to clean
- A truly beautiful home is one where normally overlooked details are given thought and care
- Being surrounded by beauty enriches your life

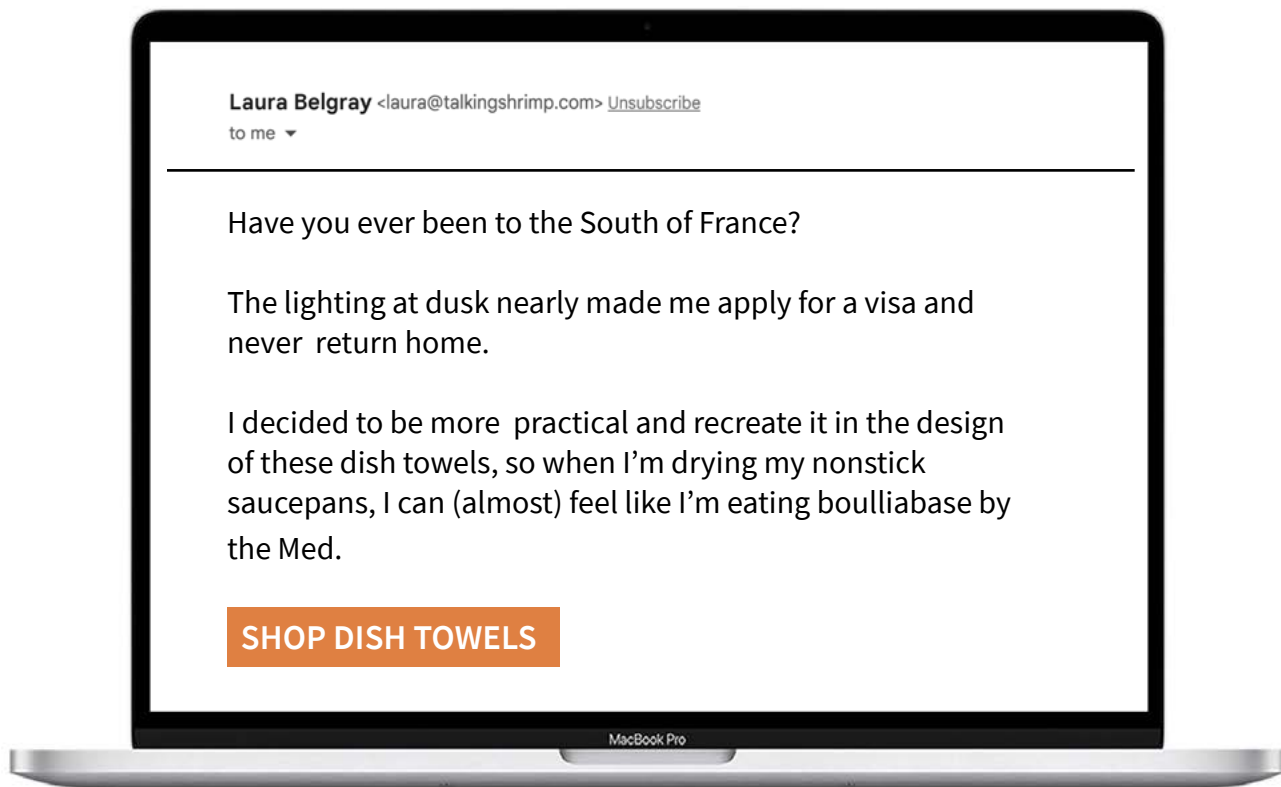
## Step 2: Brainstorm stories that illustrate those points.

Maybe you have a story about getting your spouse, who usually does anything to avoid cleaning, to love cleaning the dishes by putting out beautiful dish towels.

Or maybe it's a story about visiting some home or hotel where every detail was beautiful, and you were inspired to recreate that experience in your own home.

Maybe it's about a place you traveled, or a painting you saw, that inspired the pattern.

Note: a story doesn't have to be long, with a beginning, middle, and end. It can be a single sentence, or just a few.



# How Talking Shrimp uses Method 1, Reverse Engineering

*When I'm promoting my course with Marie Forleo, The Copy Cure, I brainstorm the ideas I need to convey, and then dig around for stories that illustrate them.*

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**Examples (some I've used, some I haven't but could):**

- [IDEA] The importance of good copy → [STORY] *a time the right words got me a raise*
- [IDEA] What goes into good copy → [STORY] *an ad that made me buy, and why*
- [IDEA] The independence and freedom from having solid copywriting skills → [STORY] *how when the toilet backed up (horror show) we had to wait for the plumber, whereas when you know how to write words that connect and convert, you don't have to wait around for anyone to rescue you in your business*
- [IDEA] The urgency of signing up before the program's doors close → [STORY] *the time I made it just under the wire to renew my driver's license, which I'd probably never pass a test for again*

When I'm promoting my mini-courses, usually in a Friday "sales" email, I (likewise) brainstorm around the benefits and work backwards to find a story that segues nicely:

- [IDEA] 60 Minute Makeovers helps you write copy in relatable, conversational language → [STORY] *the attorney who emailed that my conversational language was grammatically incorrect and undermined my credibility*
- [IDEA] About Page and Professional Mini-Bio Builder helps you write a sweat-free "about me" → [STORY] *Ciao from a heat wave, here's how hot and sweaty it is*



**TIP:** Any time you think of a story and know how you'll connect it to a point or CTA, WRITE IT DOWN!

When I'm smart, I open Evernote and jot down a note about the story and how I'll connect it. When I'm cocky and not smart, I think, "I'll remember that later." Not so much.

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## Method 2: Start with the story, find the point

*Often, I'll have a story I want to tell or a topic I want to talk about, and I'll start out wondering, "WTF is the point of this?" Even though I don't know, I'll take the risk\* of writing it. I almost always find the point or CTA as I write.*

**\*TIP:** There's no actual risk in writing something you might not end up using. Writing, even when you think it turns out awful or useless, is never a waste of time.

**Writing garbage warms up your brain to write gold.**

And if you write gold you have no use for in the moment? Stash it away. Keep an ongoing google doc, evernote, or notebook in your notes app of "copy orphans."

These bits of writing will come in handy one day—much like the gift-wrapping bits I've saved in a crammed drawer over the years until, last-minute on someone's birthday, I finally get to say "Aha! I have tissue paper and some ribbon!"

## Example 1: Cucumber Guy

When I wrote this email, I'd watched a man at the next table outside the grocery store Citarella just after they closed for the day. He was slicing himself a cucumber, and looked so managerial in his white shirt and khakis, people kept begging him to let them in. It turned out, not only did he not work there, he didn't even know it was a grocery store.

I didn't know the conclusion, the "why" of the story, when I started writing it. I found the point on the page. It was: *Look how desperate people are for leadership. If you act with authority, people will treat you like one.*

Salt your cucumber, be a boss (time sensitive)

Hey [FIRST NAME GOES HERE],

So, it's 7:31 pm Saturday in the Hamptons.

I've made it to Citarella, the fancy grocery store in town, just before they closed. (7:30 on the dot.)

Now outside at a picnic table, I'm sitting with two heavy bags and waiting for my husband, Steven, to pull up in the car on his way back from work.

I kill time watching tan, desperate Hamptons people, who've been sent out for some corn or margarita mix, try to get in.

At the next table, a white-haired guy in khakis and white shirt sits salting a cucumber.

He tells everyone who tries the door, "Mañana, mañana, closed!"

They all beg him to let them in for "just one thing."

"I know exactly what I want," one woman pleads. "I just have to grab it and have them ring it up, two seconds."

The guy shrugs and eats his cucumber, feeding slices to his mouth from a pro-looking kitchen knife and repeating "Sorry, closed. Mañana! Come back tomorrow!"

He gets up to toss a napkin in the trash, sees me with my Citarella bags, gestures his head at the store, and asks the last thing I expected:

"What's this place, a supermarket?"

*What?* Like everyone else, I'd thought he was the manager or owner. Yes, I tell him.

"I thought a restaurant," he laughs. "I thought, that's so early to close for a restaurant!"

A couple of bros rattle the door and yell "DUDE! FUCK!!!!"

"You're too late! Mañana!" the guy says and wanders off as the bros yell, "Aw, come on, man! Yo!"

**See how easy it is to have authority?**

All you have to do is sit there salting your cucumber, giving people information. This guy didn't work there or have any sway to open the door for anyone, but they all thought he did just because he told them what he knew: *Mañana, they're*

***read the full email at:***

***<https://www.talkingshrimp.com/handpicked-emails>***

# The trick: tying the parts together

*Q: OK, I get how to find angles and takeaways to my stories, or how to find stories that go with the angles and takeaways I start with. But how do I connect the two parts?*

Sometimes, you'll find a way to transition seamlessly from the story to the point.

Example: How to ask for things (AKA "The Basil Email")

I started with a story from the night before, about forgetting to buy basil for the pasta and not knowing our neighbors well enough to ask for some.

I wrote it not knowing at first what it would drive to. But by the time I got to the height of the story, I knew the point: this is what happens when you don't build relationships, and the same happens in business.

And...the way to build those relationships is through storytelling, which I happen to teach in [Story Hero](#).

**read the full email at:**

<https://www.talkingshrimp.com/hand-picked-emails>

Hey ,

Apparently, it was my fault.

My husband, Steven, is positive he told me as I was leaving for the store for ricotta salata, "also get basil." I don't think so, but that didn't matter.

We had no basil for the tomato sauce, and the store was now closed.

**Unfortunately, we still haven't introduced ourselves to any of our neighbors.**

We bought the house at the start of the pandemic. It's been a weird time to knock on people's doors and say *Hi, we live here now! Want to exchange keys?* Also, aren't neighbors supposed to welcome *you*?

But again, pandemic.

"This is going to be the most expensive, so-so pasta ever made," Steven said, looking at the two boxes of pricey Sungold tomatoes he'd planned to use for the sauce.

**"Well, let's ask around." I threw out a couple of names of friends in the area.**

Too far, he said, not worth it. The pasta would be fine. Not great, but fine.

**What about our chef friend, I suggested, who always has what we need?**

Clams, oysters, scallops, garlic scapes...you hint for it, he's got it.

"All I do is ask him for stuff," Steven said. "I can't do it."

I said we should invite him over.

"Well I've been meaning to, but what—I'm going to text him at 8:30 at night, "Hey, we'd love to have you over this week but right now, do you have any basil?" Anyway, don't worry about it, it's fine."

"You sure it's fine? It'll be good without?"

**"It'll be OK. It just won't taste like summer."**

Fucking kill me, why don't you? The spaghetti would not taste like summer, and it would be my fault.

## Example 2: The Kardashians

When Hulu released the series The Kardashians, I wanted to write about my first experience watching anything Kardashians.

When I started the email, all I had in my mind was, “I’m going to write about information I’m finally up to speed on: why people like Kim so much; the difference between Travis Barker and Machine Gun Kelly.”

As I wrote how watching the show even led me to check out Kim’s fashion line, Skimms, and consider buying, I got an idea for a point and CTA, which I’ll paraphrase:

*For connecting with your audience, showing your personality and the details of your life beats plain old “actionable tips” all day long. That’s the secret sauce to my emails, and will be hugely valuable in yours if you learn the art from me. And that’s just what I teach you...in Inbox Hero.*

**CTA: Click to sign up for the first-to-know interest list.**

**Sometimes a simple, explicit segue will do the trick:**

- Why am I telling you this? To show you how easily we fall into the trap of...
- What’s the point of this story? Well, there are a few...
- Can you relate? If so, you’ll love [product/offer], because this is the exact problem it solves.

**And, finally, when it’s simply too much of a stretch to connect your story to your offer, you can:**

- Put the offer in an unrelated PS:  
*PS - Here are some ways I can help you: [available offers]*
- Be blatant about it having zero connection:  
*Zero to do with the above: my horse therapy certification program closes for enrollment tomorrow! If you want in, now’s the time.*

***And there you go. Go forth and mine for stories!***

# *Hi, I'm Laura Belgray - and here's my story:*

I'm founder of Talking Shrimp, co-creator of The Copy Cure, and—brag alert—source of the best emails around. How do I know they're the best? People tell me so. (With me by your side, they'll soon tell you that about yours, too.)

My emails—which have been read aloud on podcasts, cited in “best of” lists, and mentioned in Forbes, Money, Business Insider, and more—have brought in over \$1M revenue in a year.

Without webinars, sales calls, or even ads to any sales page, emails have done the work of selling my (now retired) services, my courses, and my high-ticket mastermind. Master the art of emails, and yours can be the profit engine of your business, too.

...Even without a big list. (Mine is 1/10th the size, or even 1/100th the size, of some of my peers'.)

Not to mention, they'll delight, entertain, inspire, comfort, and enlighten your subscribers—and endear them to you for life.

That kind of loyalty will never come from a great IG feed or a Facebook ad. It's all about emails. You'll see. Best way to start learning?

Get my emails in your inbox.

**In case you didn't sign up for them you can do that here.**

