The Crime Story Master Class

Pages & Platforms

Happily Ever Author Club

storypath.me

Developmental Editors

&

Rachelle Ramirez

Anne Hawley

Are you writing a Crime story?

Grappling with:

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- Story structure?

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- Scattered scenes that don’t hang together?

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- What exactly a constitutes a Crime story?

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- Scattered scenes that don’t hang together?
- What exactly a constitutes a Crime story?
- Crime as a supporting Story Type?

You're in the right place.

Today you'll learn:

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1. What Crime stories are *for*.

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2. The many subtypes of Crime.
3. Crime story essentials.
4. Building Crime essentials into your story.

Before we start...

Tools

Tools,
not
rules.

What are Crime stories *for*?

We are storytellers.

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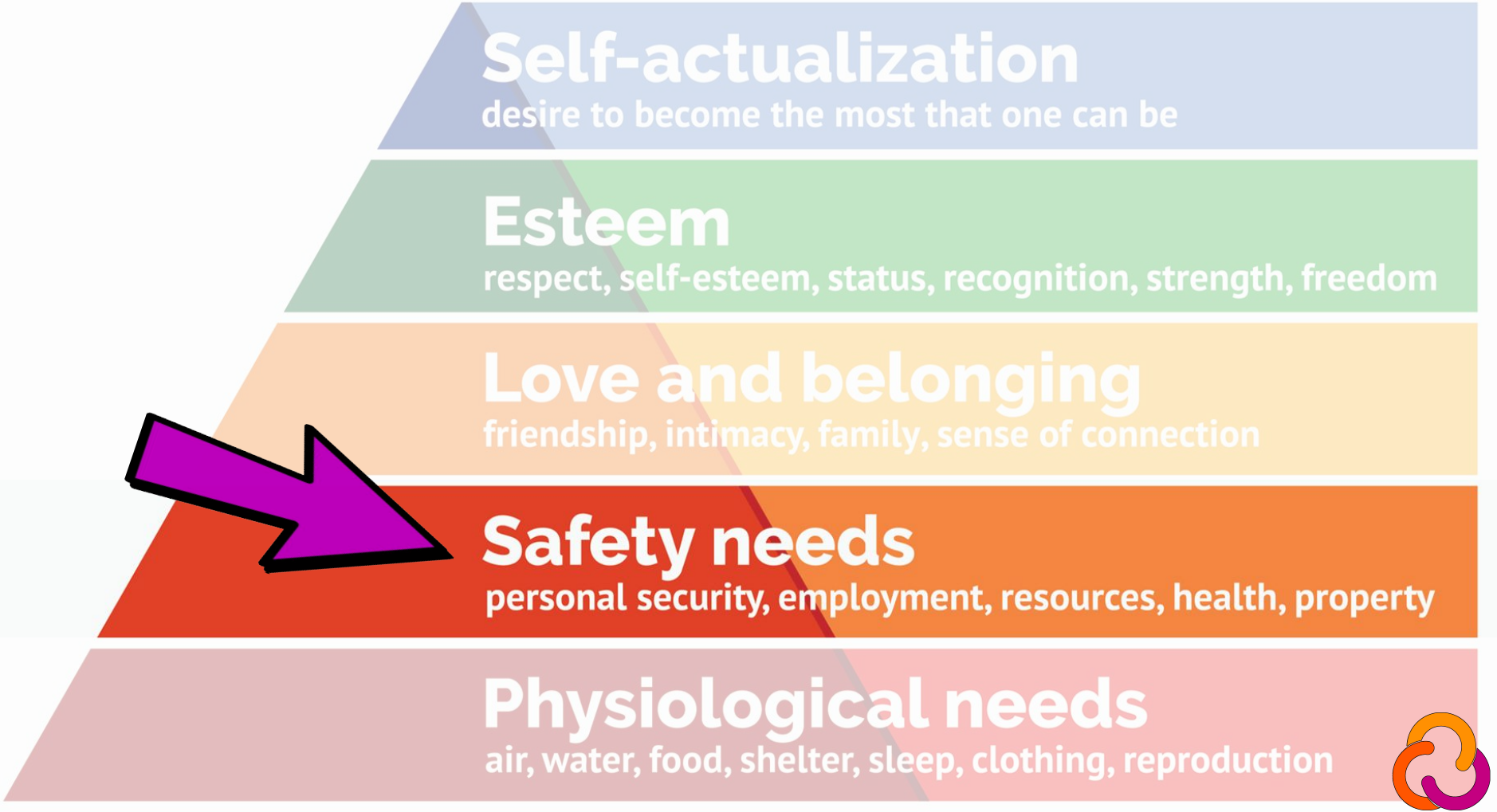
But why tell stories about crime?


Self-actualization
desire to become the most that one can be
Esteem
respect, self-esteem, status, recognition, strength, freedom
Love and belonging
friendship, intimacy, family, sense of connection
Safety needs
personal security, employment, resources, health, property
Physiological needs
air, water, food, shelter, sleep, clothing, reproduction

vivint.

Hands up
Don't Shoot

What are Crime Stories *for*?

- Remind us that where humans are, there's crime.

IDENTITY THEFT
PASSWORD
HACKER
INTERNET
PASSWORD
DATA
VIRUS
INTERNET
SECURITY BREACH

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- Reinforce cultural norms of justice & injustice.

FORENSICS

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- Give a sense of order and security.

RCB12
1000 pack
Plastic Coated Bowls

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- Give a sense of order and security.
- Address wrongdoing where laws fail.

CHASE!
Give us our
MONEY BACK
92.7 Billion
POLICE

What are Crime Stories *for*?

- Remind us that where humans are, there's crime.
- Reinforce cultural norms of justice & injustice.
- Give a sense of order and security.
- Address wrongdoing where laws fail.
- Teach us that cleverness and diligence can solve the puzzle.

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  - An unsolved mystery that's simply personal to the protagonist.

How do the Crime subgenres differ?

They vary by:

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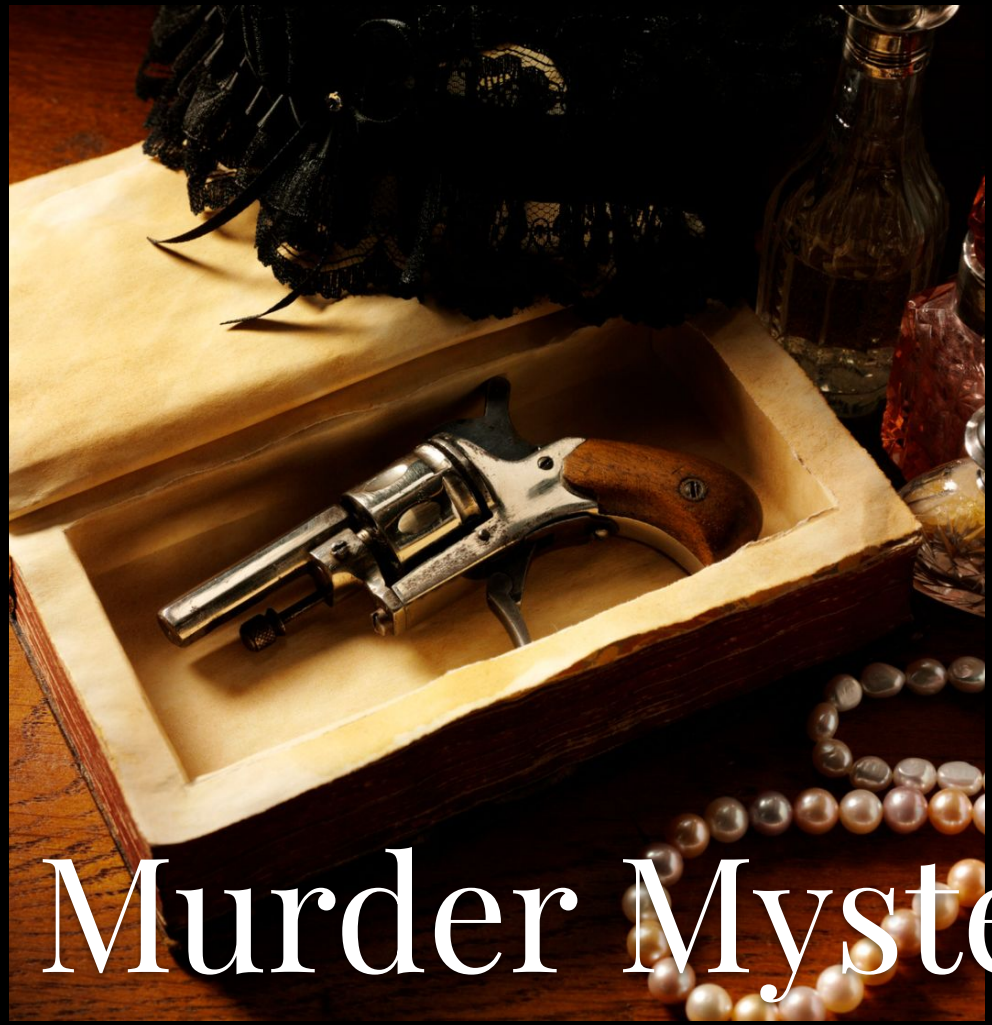
- Type of crime and criminal (murderer, serial killer, "white collar").
- Setting (real-world, fantasy, science fiction, historical).

Crime subtypes



Murder Mystery

- Protagonist is a private citizen.

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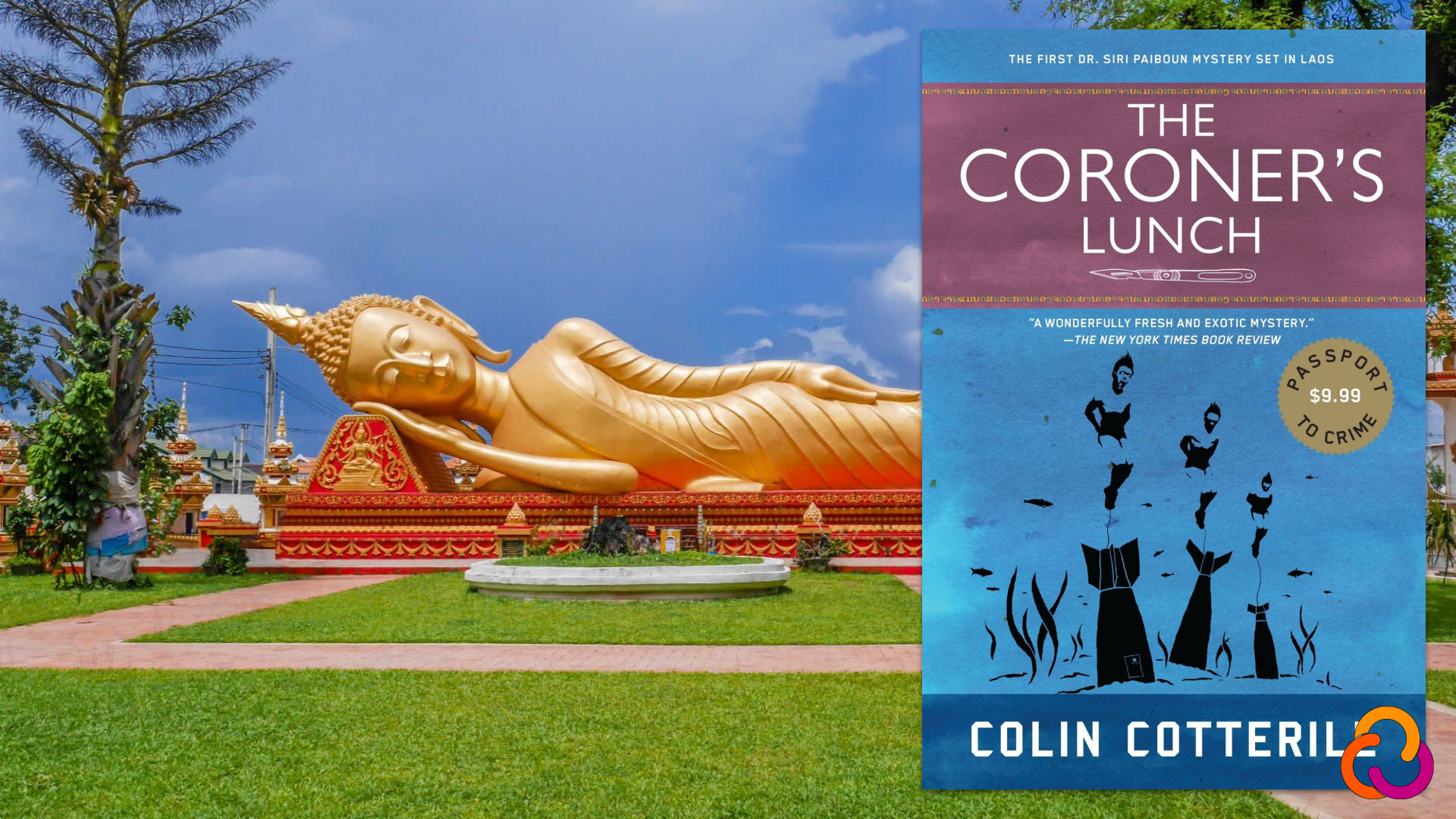
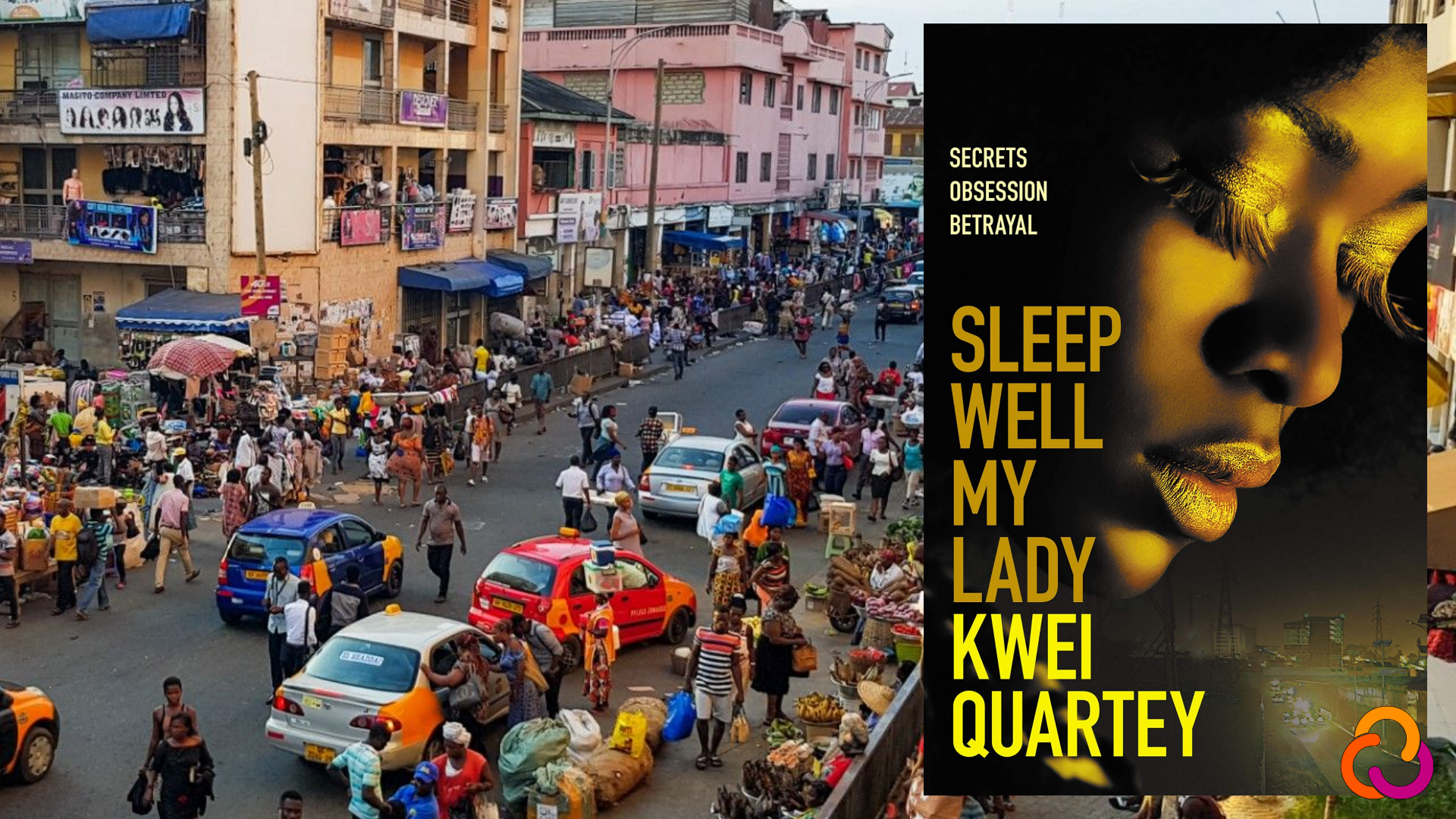
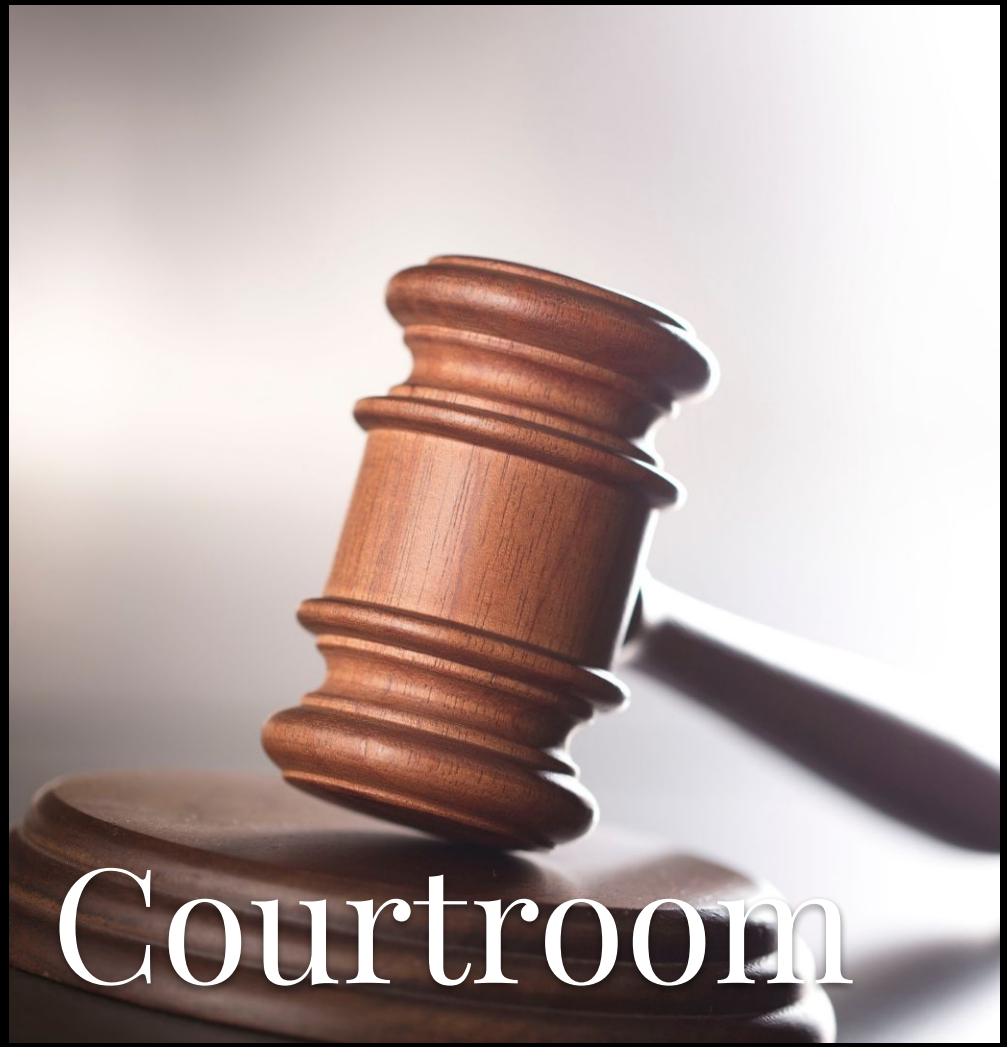
- Story is focused on the puzzle.
- Usually takes place in a small crucible.
- Goal is restoration of community order.


THE FIRST DR. SIRI PAIBOUN MYSTERY SET IN LAOS
THE CORONER'S LUNCH
"A WONDERFULLY FRESH AND EXOTIC MYSTERY."
—THE NEW YORK TIMES BOOK REVIEW
PASSPORT TO CRIME
$9.99
COLIN COTTERILL


MAGITO COMPANY LIMITED
SECRETS
OBSESSION
BETRAYAL
SLEEP
WELL
MY
LADY
KWEI
QUARTEY



Courtroom

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- May be defending the wrongly accused.
- Criminal may be a corporate entity.
- Goal is social justice.

全民的焦点 全盘的骗局 9.13 引爆真相
余男
孙红雷
郭富城
SILENT WITNESS
全民目击
非行导演作品

Journalism

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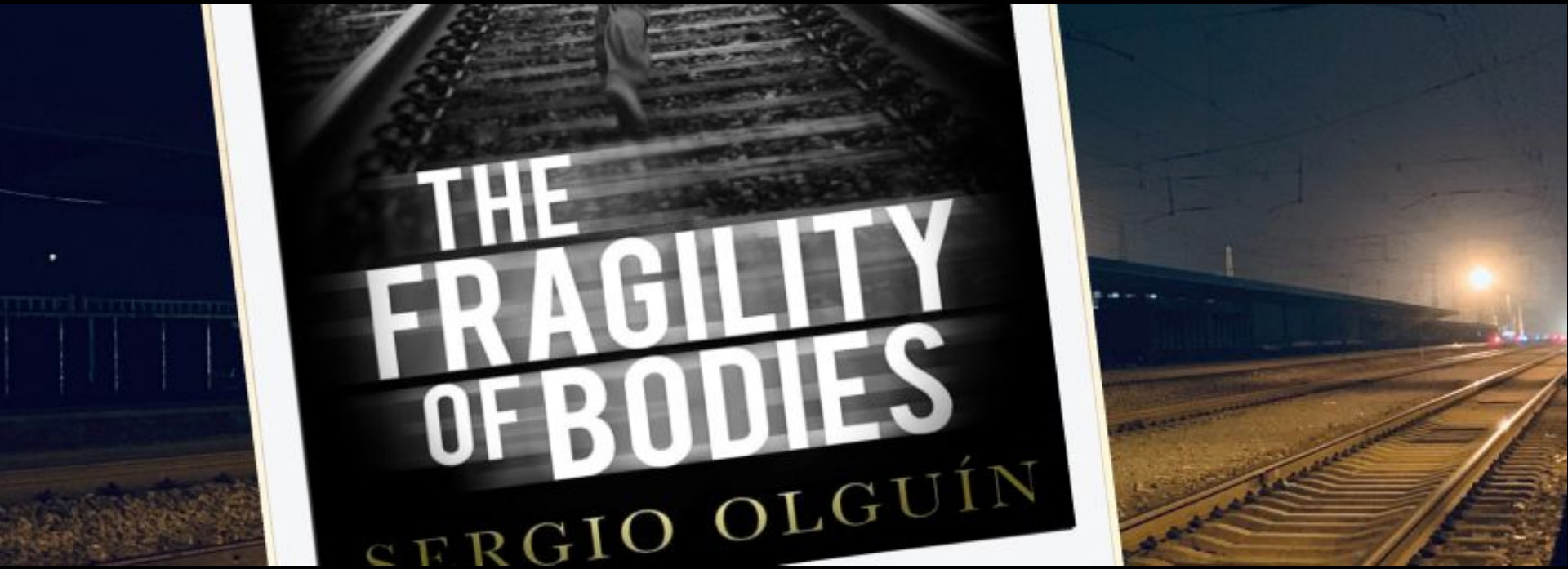
- Goal is to expose crime *and* rise in status.
- Crime is often scandalous (corruption, sex offenses).
- Many true crime stories in this category.


THE
FRAGILITY
OF BODIES
SERGIO OLGUÍN

STIEG LARSSON'S
THE GIRL WITH THE
DRAGON TATTOO

Police Procedural

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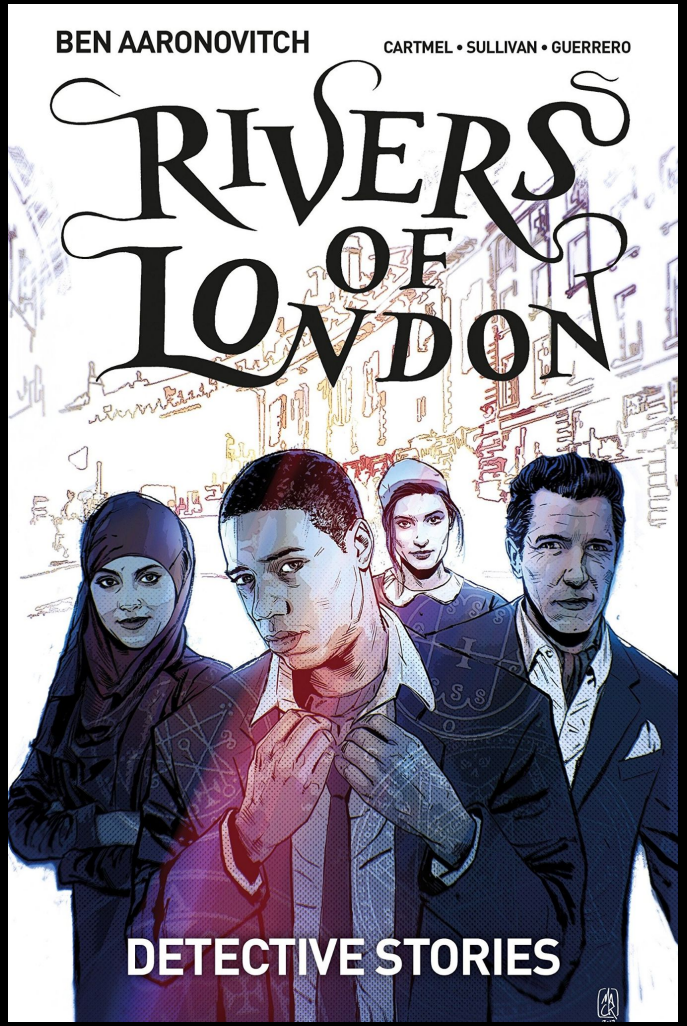
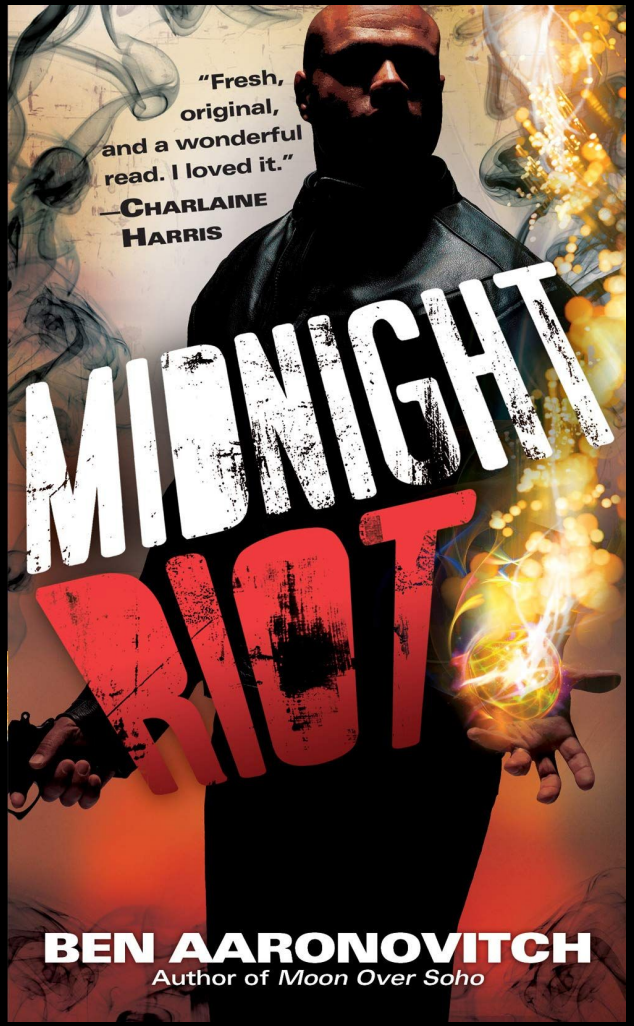
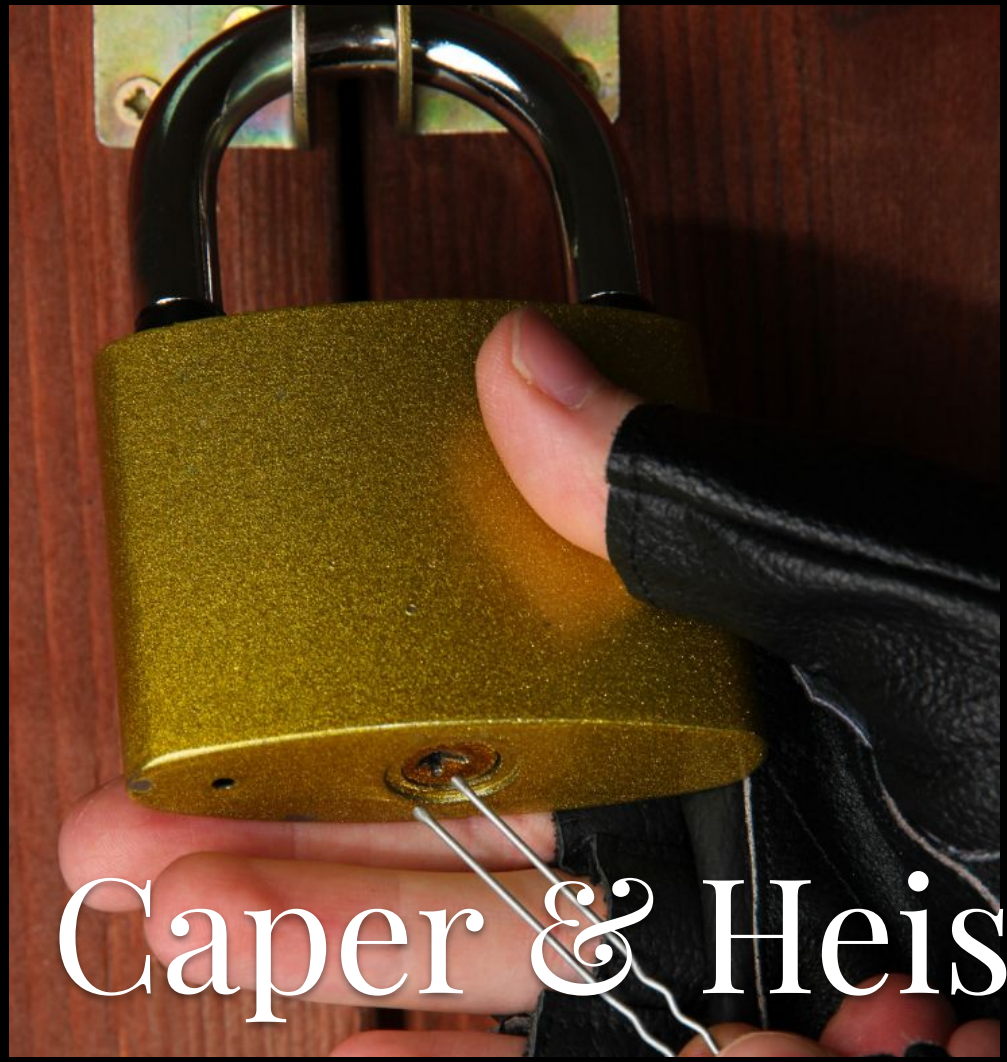
- Driven by desire to get wrongdoers off the street.
- Usually part of a team with public resources.
- Crime is usually a violent felony.

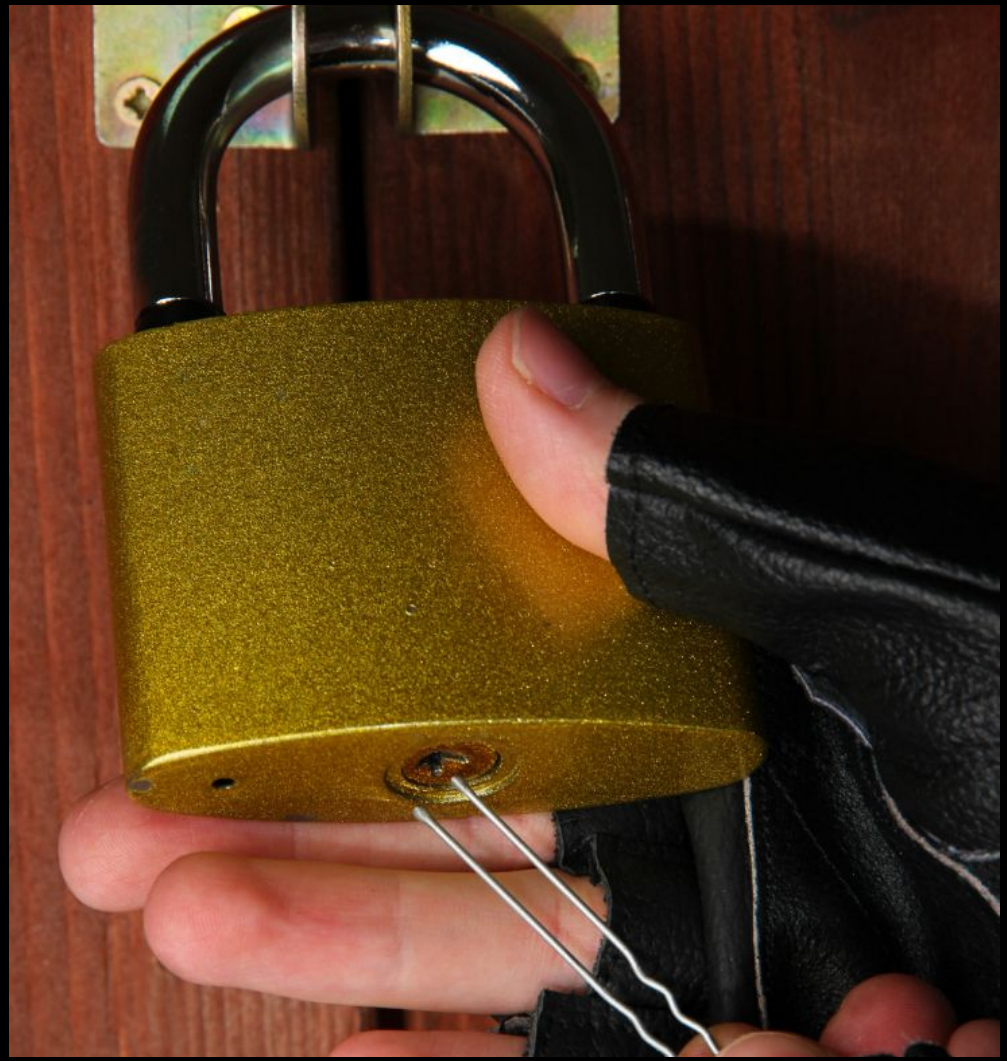
视频 VIP
DETECTIVE
神探
你捉我捉
今晚开工


BEN AARONOVITCH
CARTMEL • SULLIVAN • GUERRERO
RIVERS OF LONDON
DETECTIVE STORIES

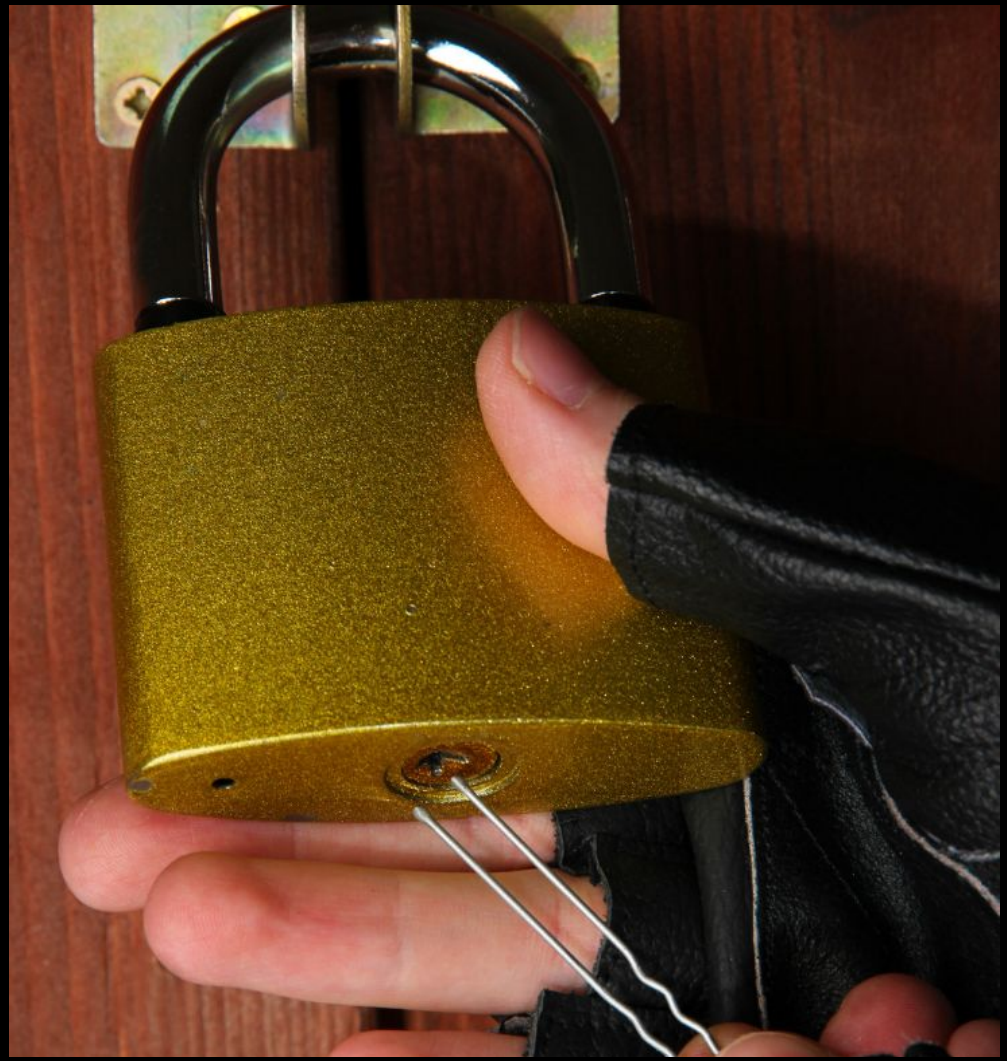

"Fresh, original, and a wonderful read. I loved it."
—CHARLAINE HARRIS
MIDNIGHT RIOT
BEN AARONOVITCH
Author of Moon Over Soho



Caper & Heist



- Protagonist is or becomes a criminal.



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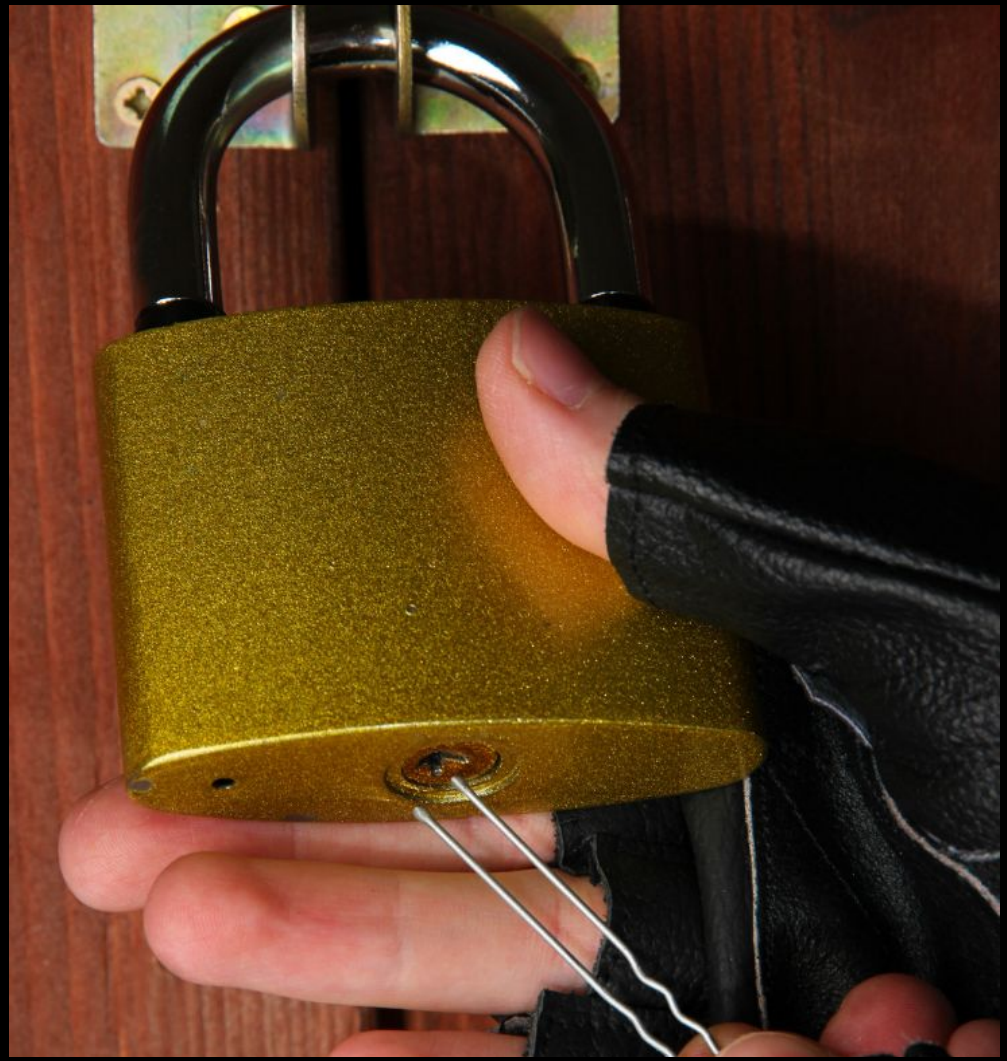

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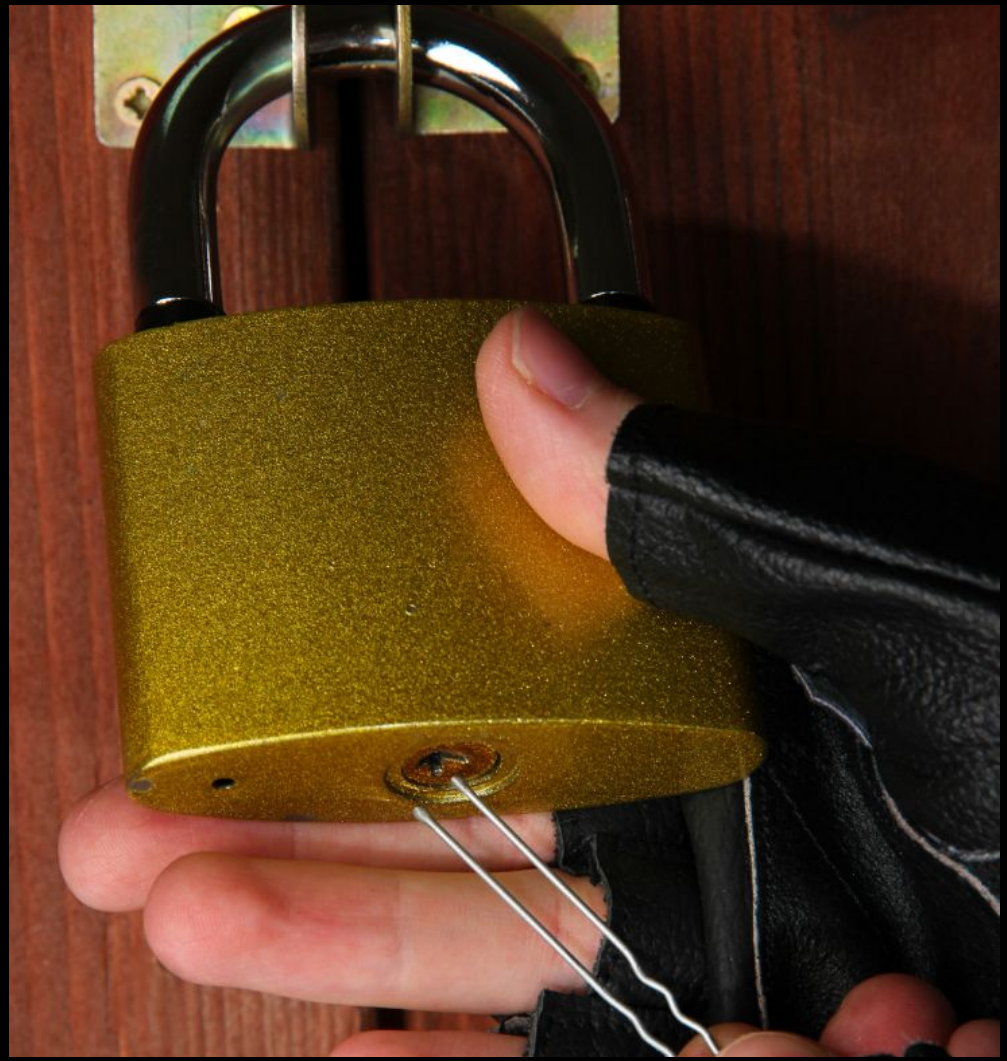

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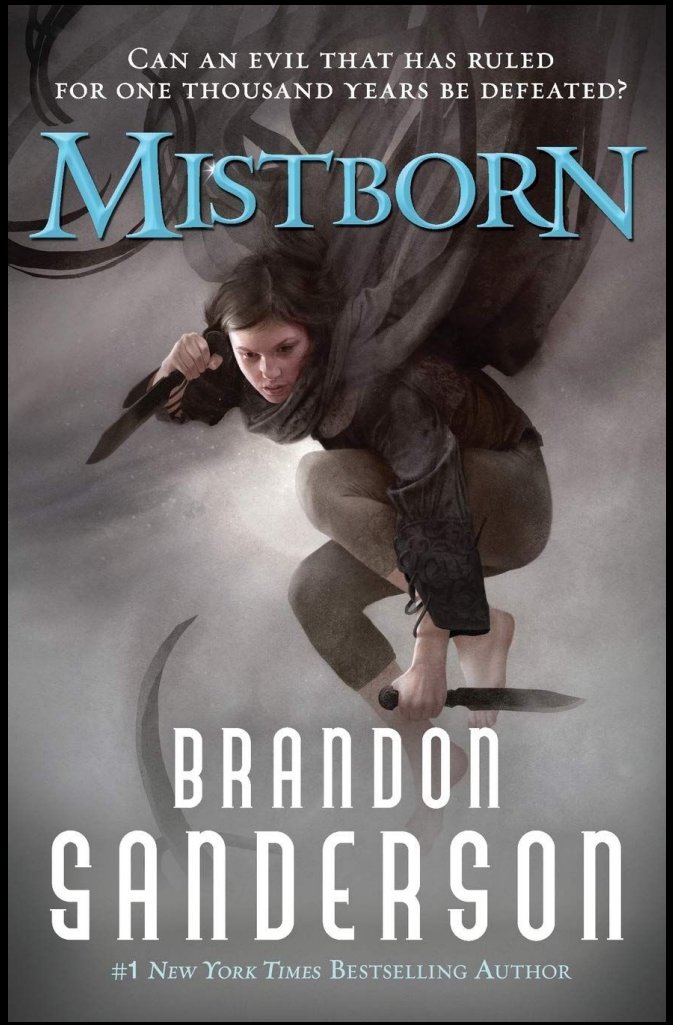
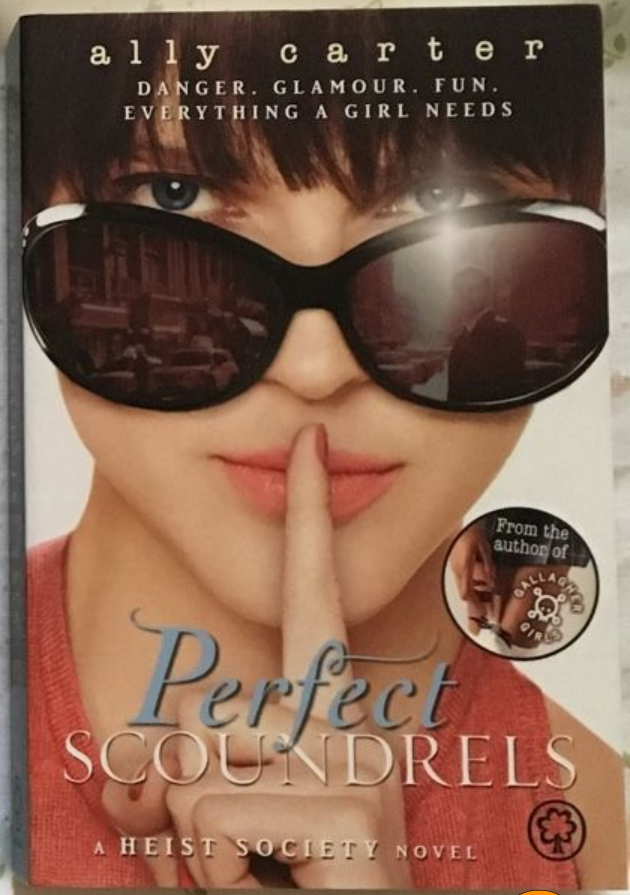
- Forms a team with private resources.
- Crime is nonviolent white-collar.


Can an evil that has ruled
for one thousand years be defeated?
MISTBORN
BRANDON
SANDERSON
#1 New York Times Bestselling Author

Djamila Kimpf

ally carter
THE NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLING AUTHOR OF THE GALLAGHER GIRLS SERIES
Heist SOCIETY
KAT'S NO ORDINARY THIEF...

ally carter
A NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
From the author of GALLAGHER GIRLS
Uncommon CRIMINALS
A HEIST SOCIETY NOVEL


ally carter
DANGER. GLAMOUR. FUN. EVERYTHING A GIRL NEEDS
From the author of GALLAGHER GIRLS
Perfect SCOUNDRELS
A HEIST SOCIETY NOVEL

Crime Thriller

- Protagonist may be LEO, lawyer, other.

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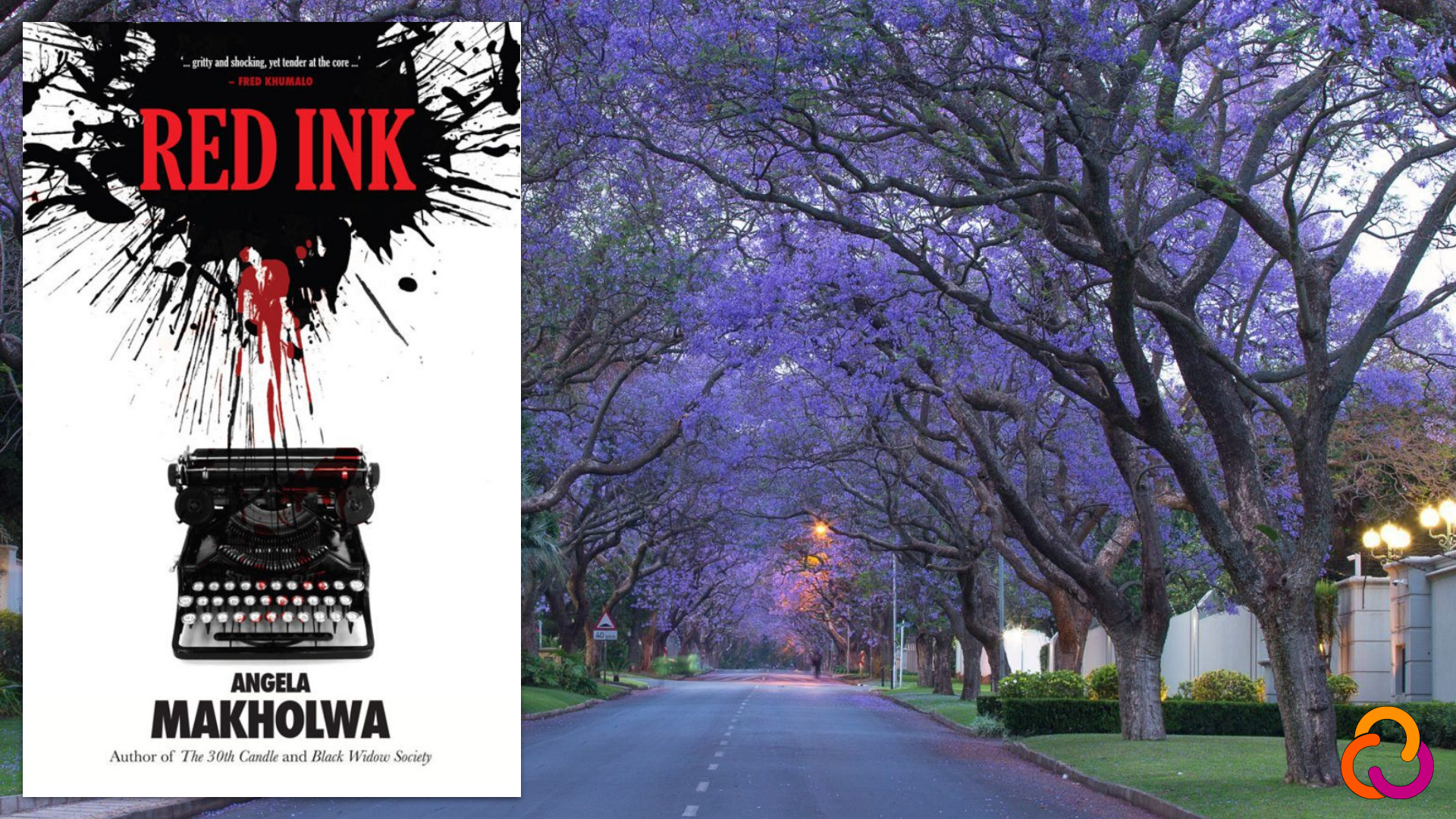
- Crime is usually a violent felony.
- Goal is to save future victims.

NEW YORK TIMES BESTSELLER
THE
ALIENIST
"A high-spirited, charged-up and unfailingly smart thriller."
—Los Angeles Times
NOW A MAJOR TV SERIES
CALEB CARR


'... gritty and shocking, yet tender at the core ...'
– FRED KHUMALO
RED INK
ANGELA
MAKHOLWA
Author of *The 30th Candle* and *Black Widow Society*

Crime-like supporting story

- Protagonist’s goal is to uncover a hidden truth.

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- Antagonist is not an actual criminal.

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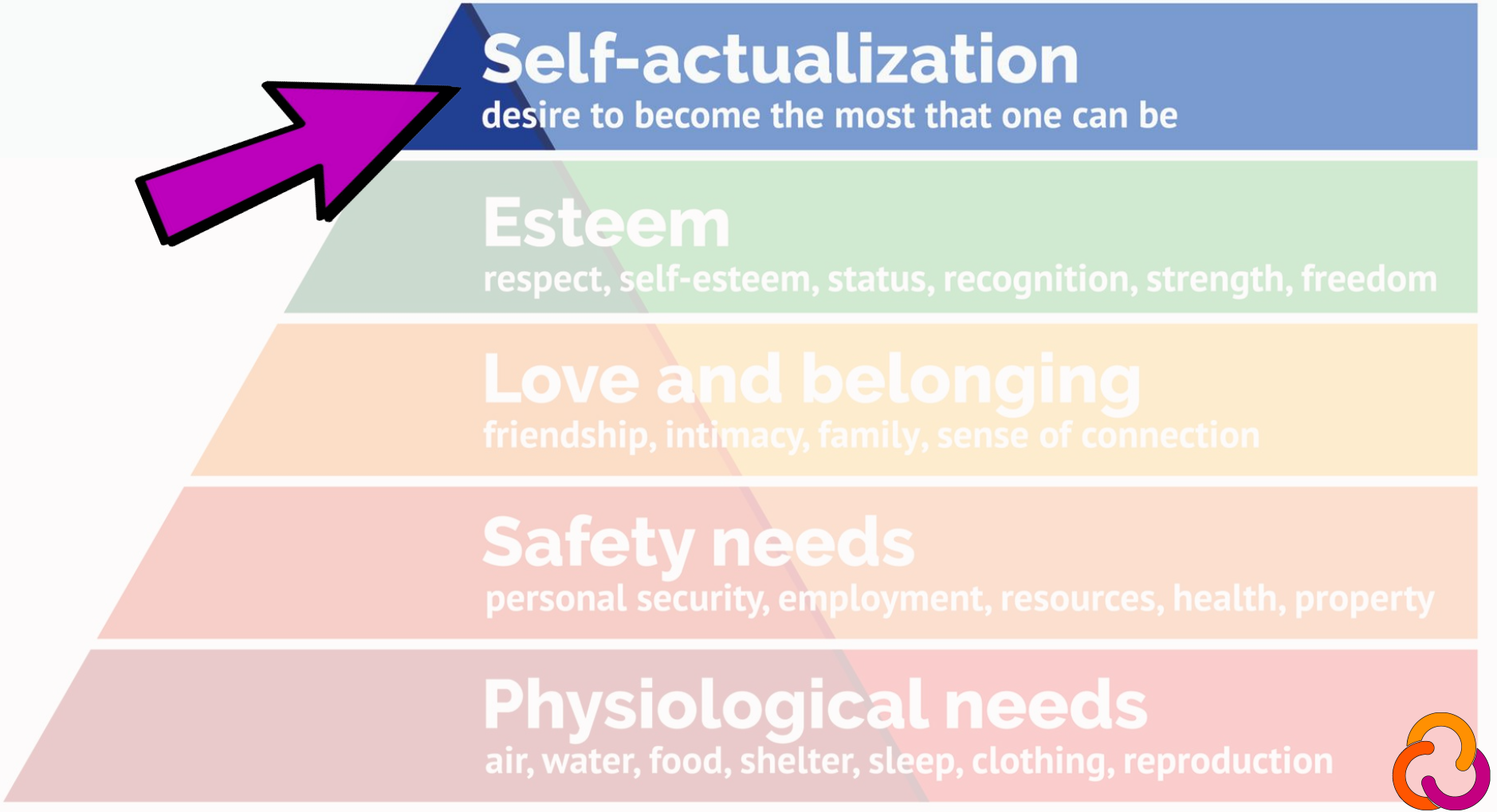
- Solution restores “order” to protagonist’s mind.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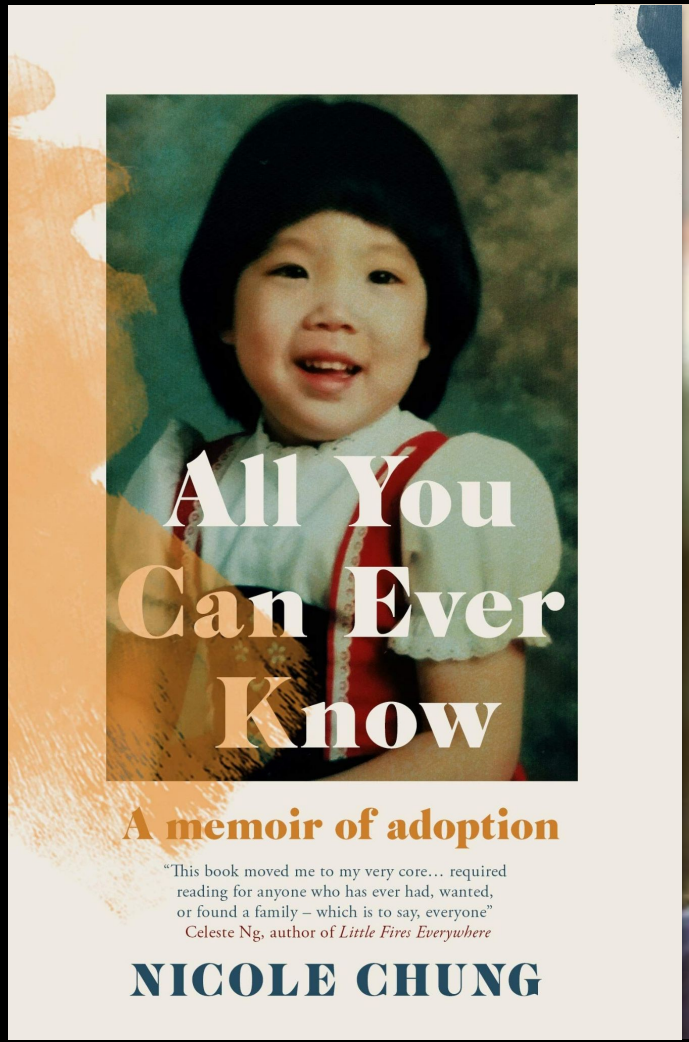
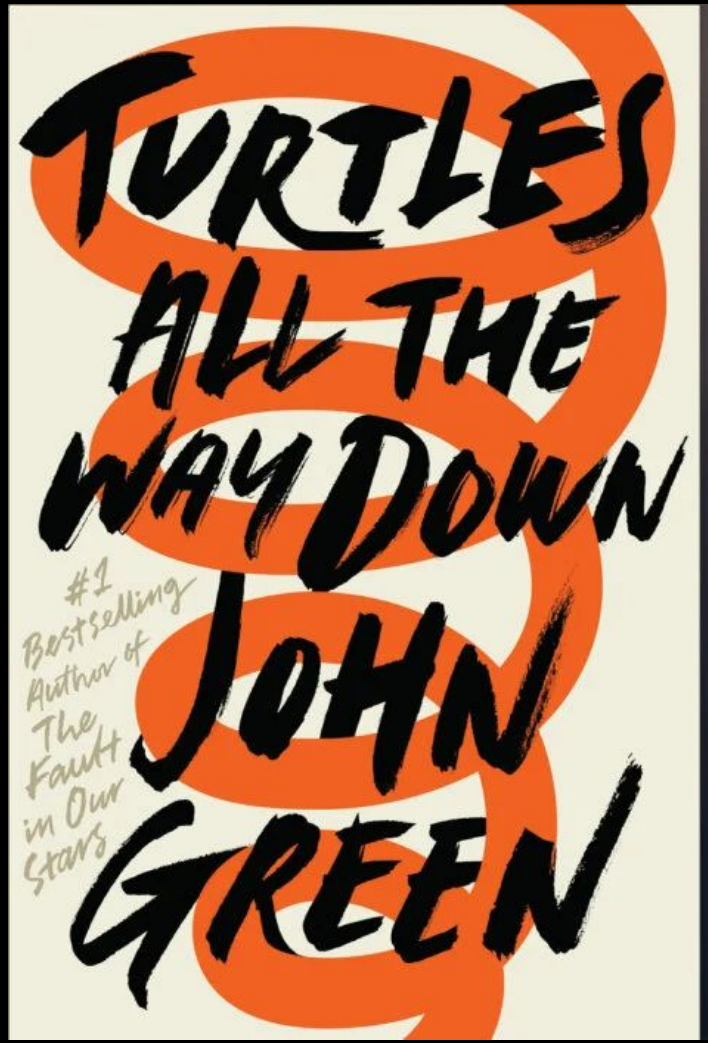

All You Can Ever Know
A memoir of adoption
"This book moved me to my very core… required reading for anyone who has ever had, wanted, or found a family – which is to say, everyone"
Celeste Ng, author of *Little Fires Everywhere*
NICOLE CHUNG


TURTLES ALL THE WAY DOWN
#1 Bestselling Author of The Fault in Our Stars
JOHN GREEN

Subtypes are important.

They may greatly influence a reader's decision to read your story.

Know your subtypes.

- Know the trends.
- Read widely & deeply.
- Know what readers expect.
- Do your research.

They have a structure in common.

Every good working story:

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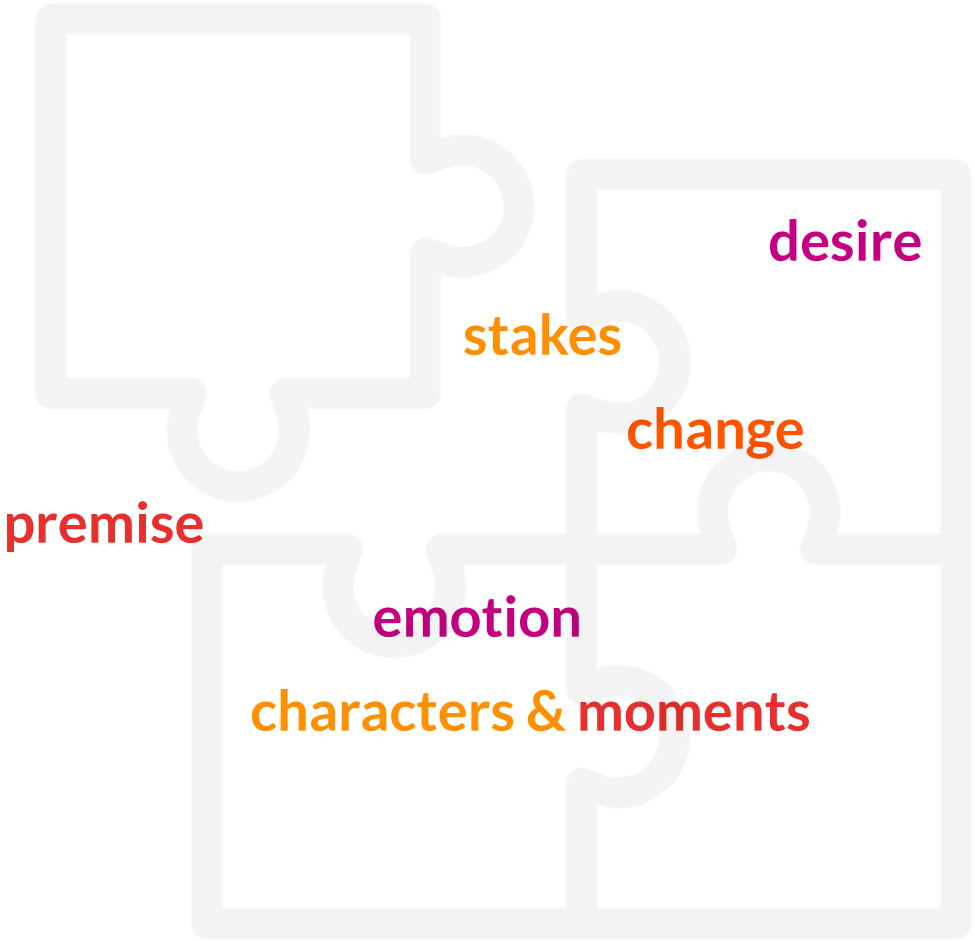
- Has the specific **characters & moments** the audience for your Story Type expects.


desire
stakes
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Desire
Stakes
Change
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Emotion
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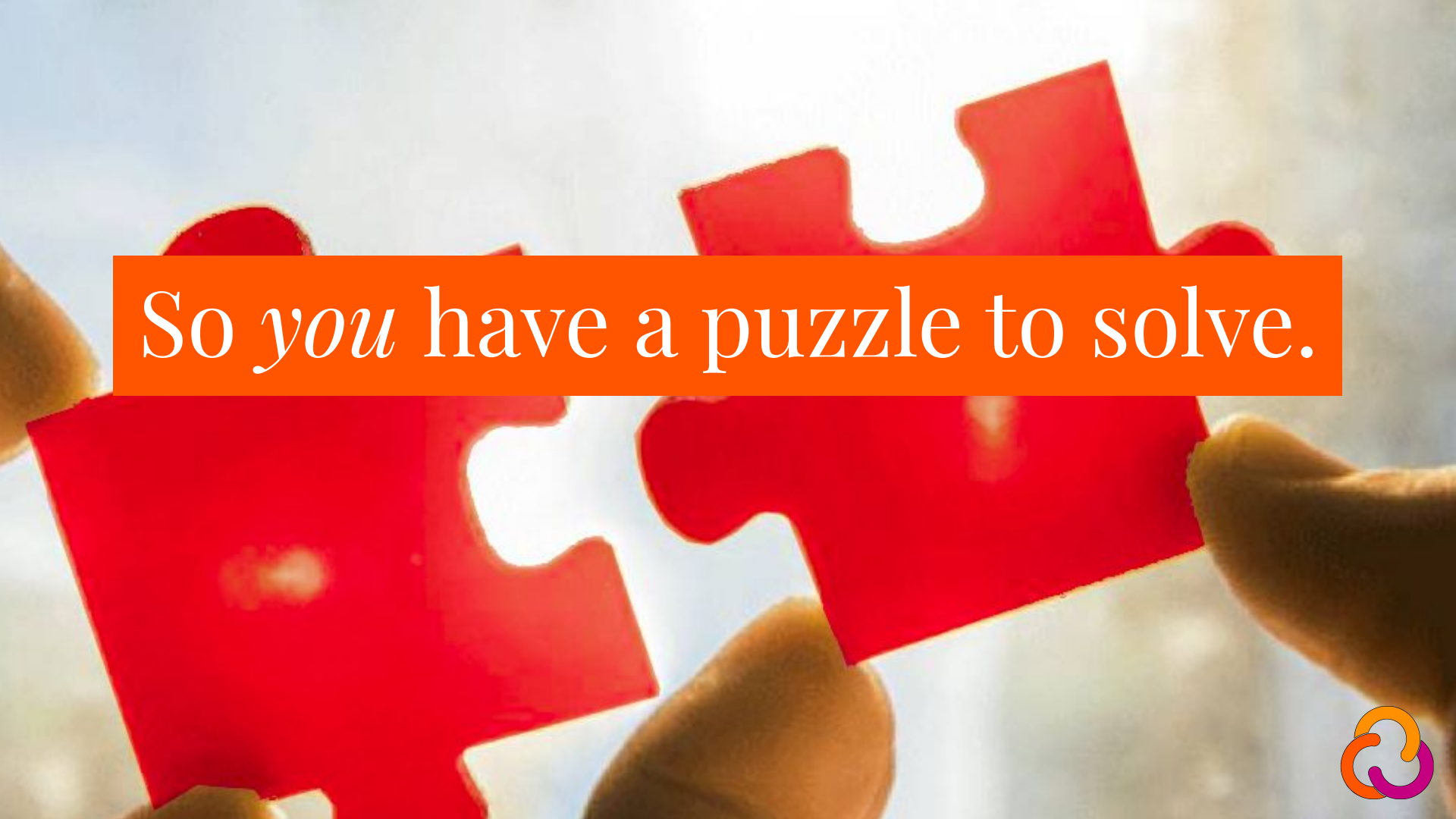
Your story will be on the right track.


So *you* have a puzzle to solve.

So *you* have a puzzle to solve.
What are the pieces of a Crime story?

So *you* have a puzzle to solve.

- What are the pieces of a Crime story?
- How do you put them together?

Crime Essentials

WIDOWS

Desire (Want & Need):

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- The protagonist **wants** to restore Justice and Order.
- Their **need** depends on the supporting Story Type, e.g., to gain knowledge, redemption, or social status.

Stakes:

Stakes:

- **Gain?** Social order, the belief that justice will prevail.
- **Lose?** Restoration of justice, social order, satisfaction of solving the puzzle.

Stakes Continuum:

Justice→Fairness→Unfairness→Injustice→False Justice

Order→Chaos

Change:

Change:

- Result of the pressures faced in the story.

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- Different from the beginning to the end.

Change:

- Result of the pressures faced in the story.
- Different from the beginning to the end.
- Determined by your supporting Story Type.

Premise:

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- The central idea of your story in a cause/effect sentence.

Crime Premise ideas:

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- The rule of law moves society toward justice.
- Crime pays when people team up to cheat the system but not each other.

Premise statement for *Widows*:

Cheating other criminals with a clever heist restores justice and order.

Emotion:

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- What the reader wants to feel, the reason they choose your type of story.

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- Crime readers want to feel the security of seeing justice done and safety restored; **OR**

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- Crime readers want to feel the security of seeing justice done and safety restored; **OR**
- The intrigue of solving a puzzle and feeling more intelligent than the protagonist.

Essential Characters & Moments

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- Single character may play multiple roles.

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- Less powerful than antagonist.
- In caper & heist, becomes the criminal.

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- Motives must be complex & believable.
- If a force or group, must be embodied in a character (politician, hench, or CEO)

Victim:

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- At least one victim of injustice (character or environment).

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- In heist & caper, victim is the antagonist.

CRIME SCENE DO NOT CROSS

Essential Moments:

Crime Essential Moment 1: Setup

An Investigator or Mastermind protagonist is involved in their normal activities, either solving or planning crime.

Crime Essential Moment 2: Inciting Incident

Protagonist is alerted to a crime or crime opportunity, changing their state from business-as-usual to inspired to restore justice.

Crime Essential Moment 3: Act One Peak

The Investigator sees objections to investigating the crime; mastermind may see flaws in the proposed caper.

Crime Essential Moment 4: Act Two Complications

The investigator begins their investigation. The mastermind starts forming a team and planning the heist.

Crime Essential Moment 5: Midpoint Shift

The protagonist realizes they must change their approach to solving the mystery or completing a crime.

Crime Essential Moment 6: Global Peak

Investigator confronts the criminal directly; **OR**

Mastermind faces the antagonist alone to protect the team.

Crime Essential Moment 7: Resolution

Resolution: The investigator brings the criminal to justice, restoring the legal social order; **OR**

The mastermind and the team get away with the loot for poetic justice.

Putting the elements together.

Tent poles supporting a four-act structure.

Each act is *about* 25% of the story.

ACT 1 | **ACT 2** | **ACT 3** | **ACT 4**

MIDPOINT SHIFT

ACT 1

ACT 2

MIDPOINT SHIFT

ACT 3

ACT 4

ACT 1

MIDPOINT SHIFT

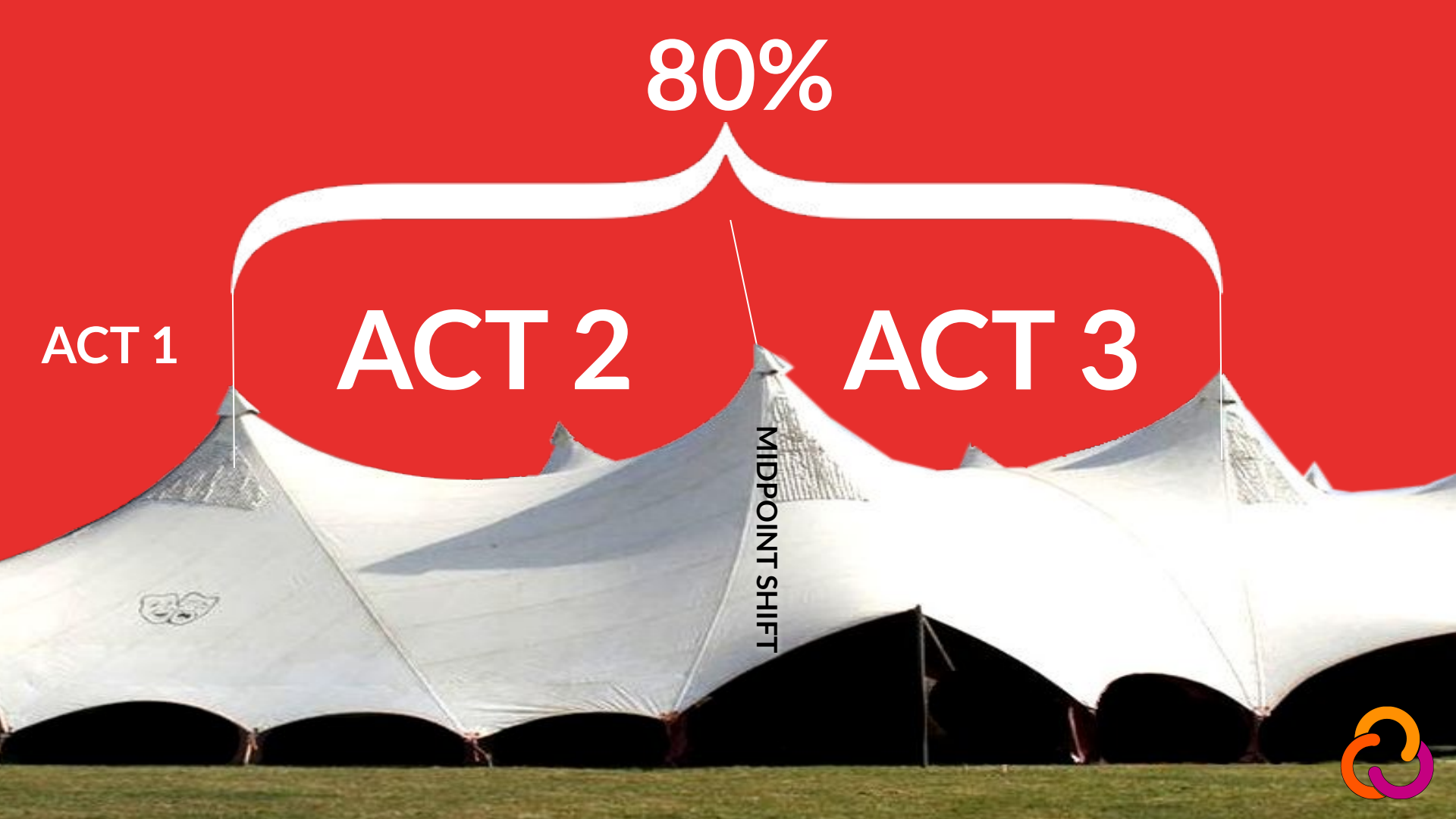
80%

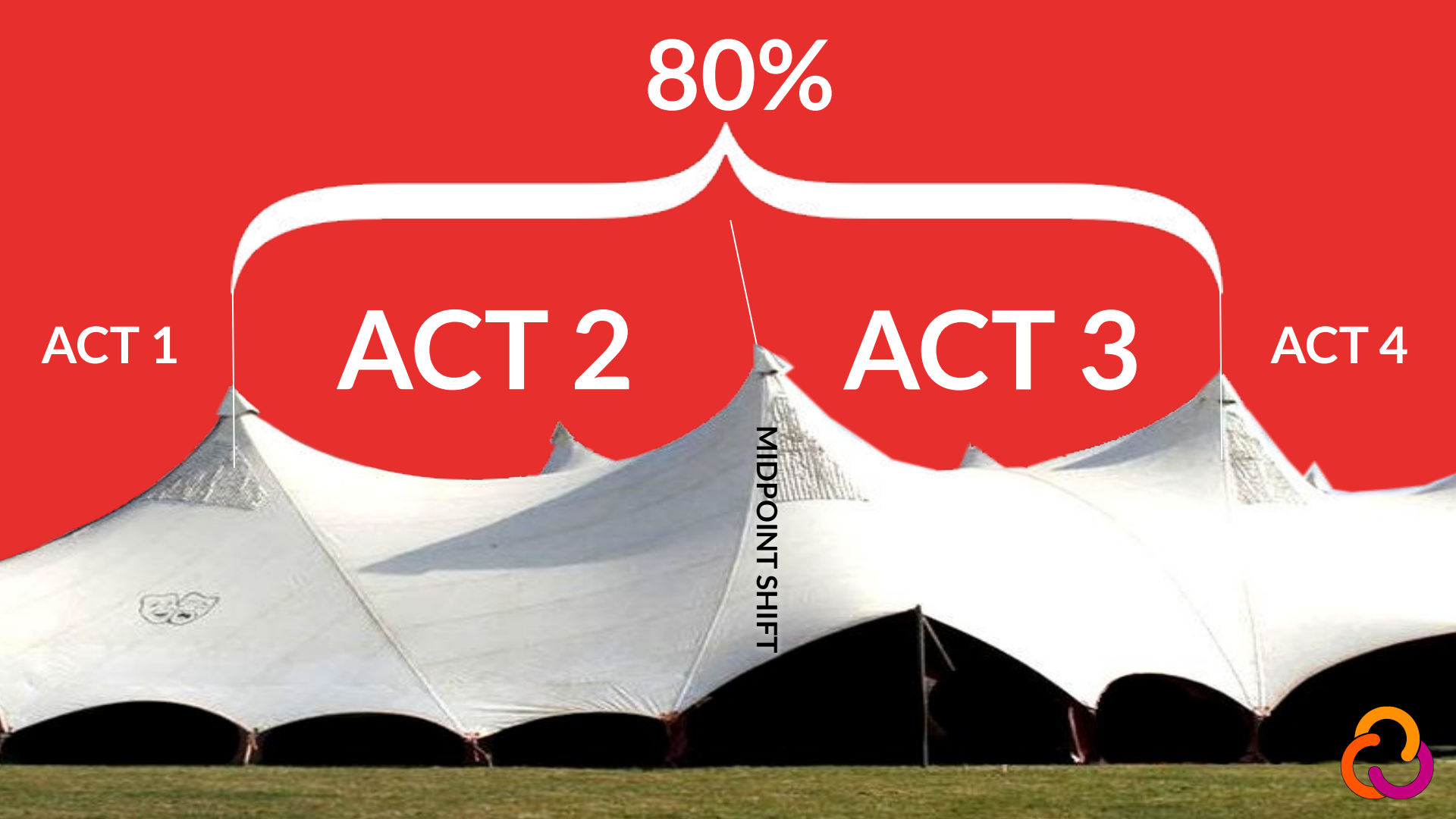
ACT 1

ACT 2

ACT 3

MIDPOINT SHIFT




80%
ACT 1
ACT 2
ACT 3
ACT 4
MIDPOINT SHIFT

There are key events in each act.

Beginning Hook (Act 1):

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- Introduce the protagonist’s ordinary world.

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- Demonstrate their fear or flaw.
- Demonstrate the injustice, the inciting crime or opportunity to commit a crime.
- Introduce interesting supporting characters.
- Demonstrate what the protagonist wants and needs.
- Make the stakes clear.

Middle Build A (Act 2):

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- Put clues, red herrings, and obstacles between the protagonist and their goal.
- Make sure the obstacles escalate.
- Create a midpoint shift: protagonist goes from reactive to proactive, changes tactics.

Middle Build B (Act 3):

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- Continue to escalate the complications and raise the stakes.

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- Continue to escalate the complications and raise the stakes.
- Remove the protagonist's hope of restoring justice in an all-is-lost moment.

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- Write a climax: protagonist confronts antagonist.
- Show the protagonist facing their fear or flaw.
- Show the protagonist outwitting the antagonist (+) OR the antagonist outwitting the protagonist (-).
- Create a resolution showing justice restored, or continued injustice or chaos.

And that is the Crime story structure.

This is a lot to absorb.

So let’s recap.

Today you've learned:

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- The purposes Crime stories serve in human culture.

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- The purposes Crime stories serve in human culture.
- Some popular Crime subtypes
- All the essential elements of a Crime story.
- How to build those essentials into your story.

Now you have:

Now you have:

- The basics of the Crime story.

Now you have:

- The basics of the Crime story.
- A structural framework for a Crime story.

Now you have:

- The basics of the Crime story.
- A structural framework for a Crime story.
- A plan to finish *your* Crime story.

Congratulations!

THE

Happily Ever Author Club

Build the author career
you've been dreaming about.

Before the Q&A:

Visit *www.storypath.me* to get our
guide to the Seven Essential Story Types.
(Crime is just one of them.)

www.storypath.me

Questions & Responses

Before we go:

Visit *www.storypath.me* to watch our webinar guide to the Seven Essential Story Types. (Crime is only one of them.)

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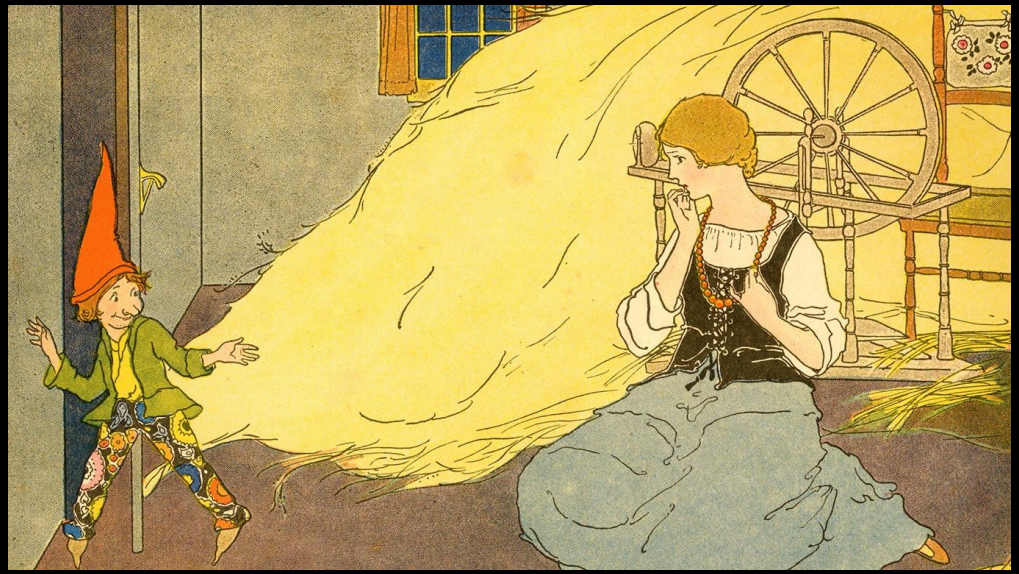
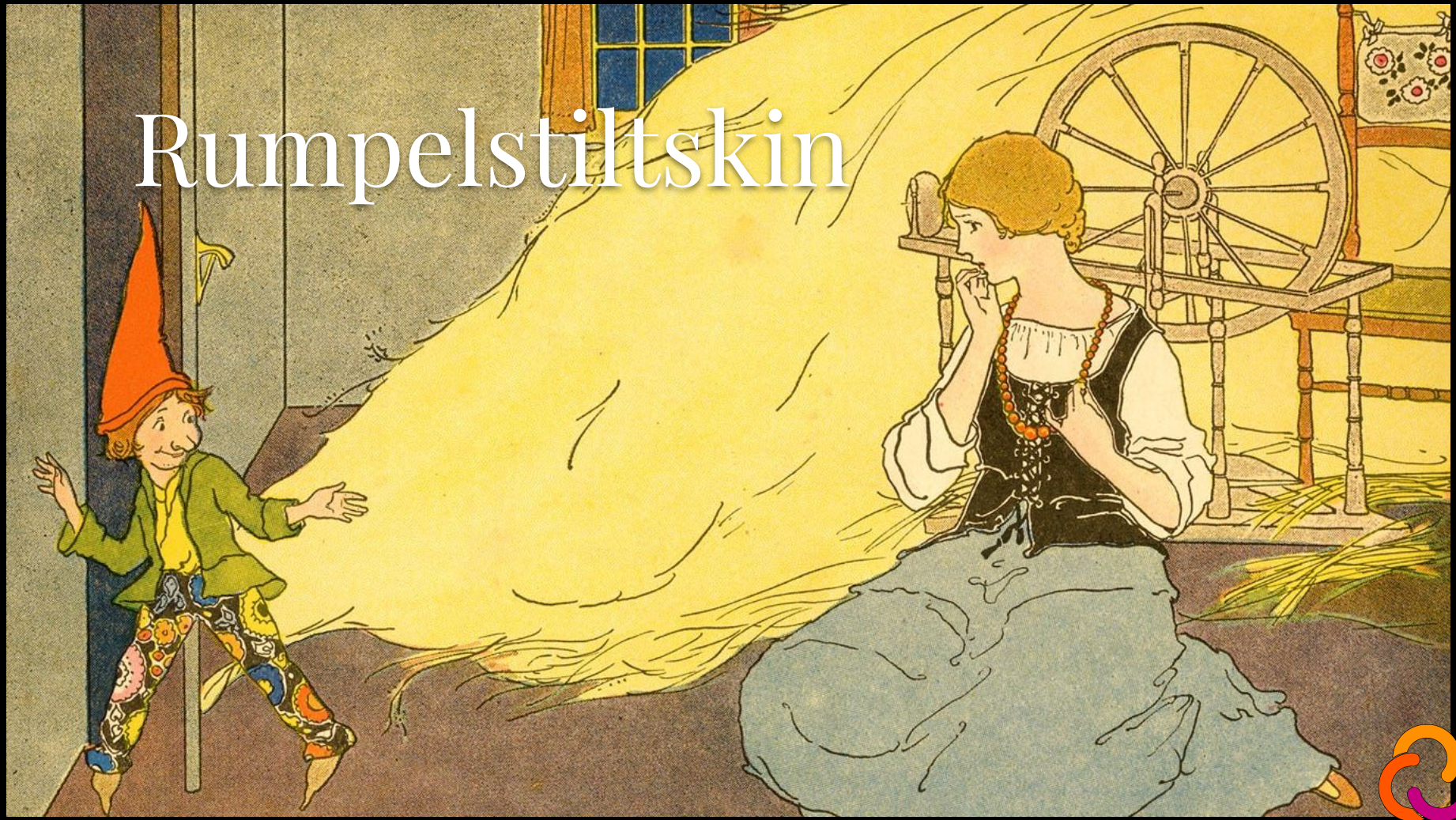


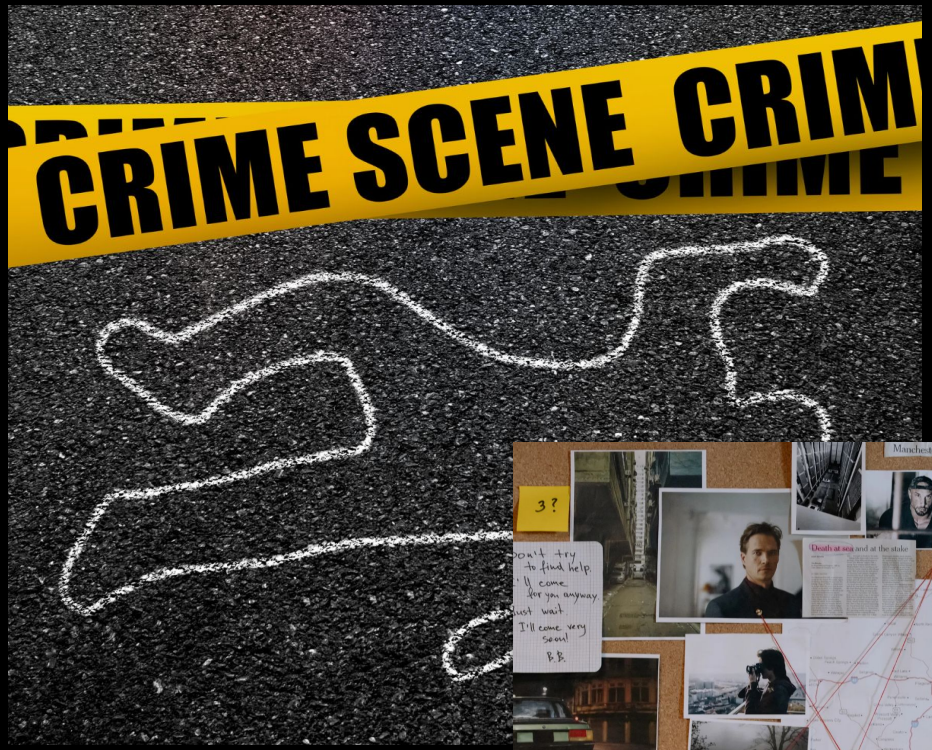
Rumpelstiltskin

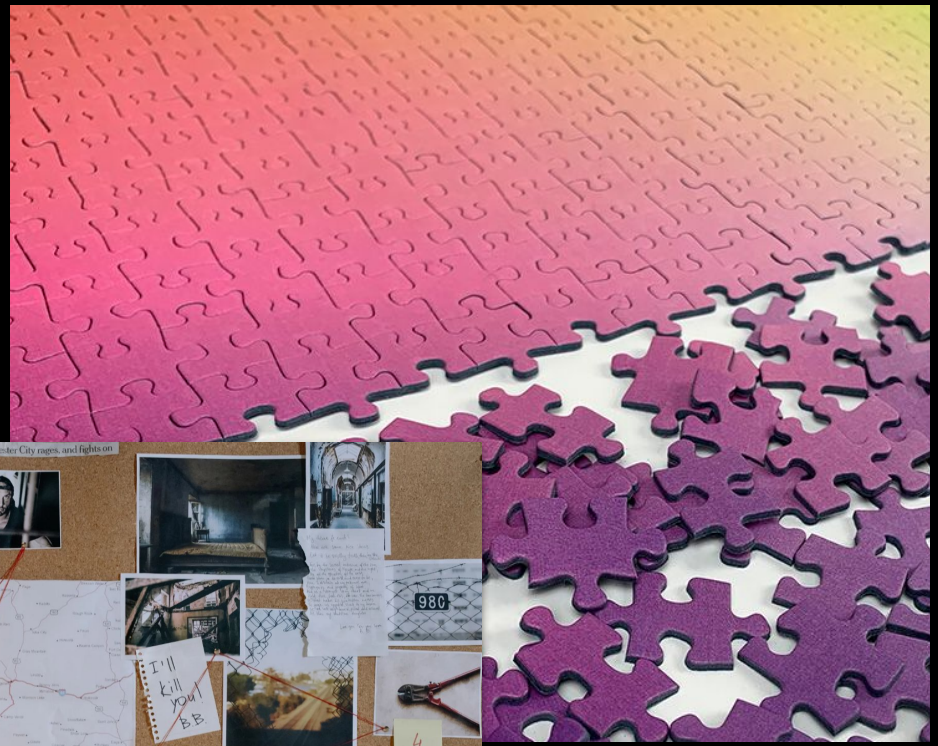


Prometheus

Essential Characters, Situations, & Moments

A word about “Crime.”


CRIME SCENE



3?
Manchester City rages, and fights on
Deaths at sea and at the stake
I'll kill you! B.B.
98¢
4
1