

The Plot Machine: Crime

Graphics and Lists

"The Plot Machine: Crime," contains numerous graphics and lists illustrating plot structure and components.

As it may be difficult to study these graphics in e-book and audio versions of "The Plot Machine: Crime," I have created this PDF file. I hope it makes the concepts in the book more easily comprehensible.

Happy plotting.

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Part 1: The Crime Genre

Traditional Three-Act Structure

Act I

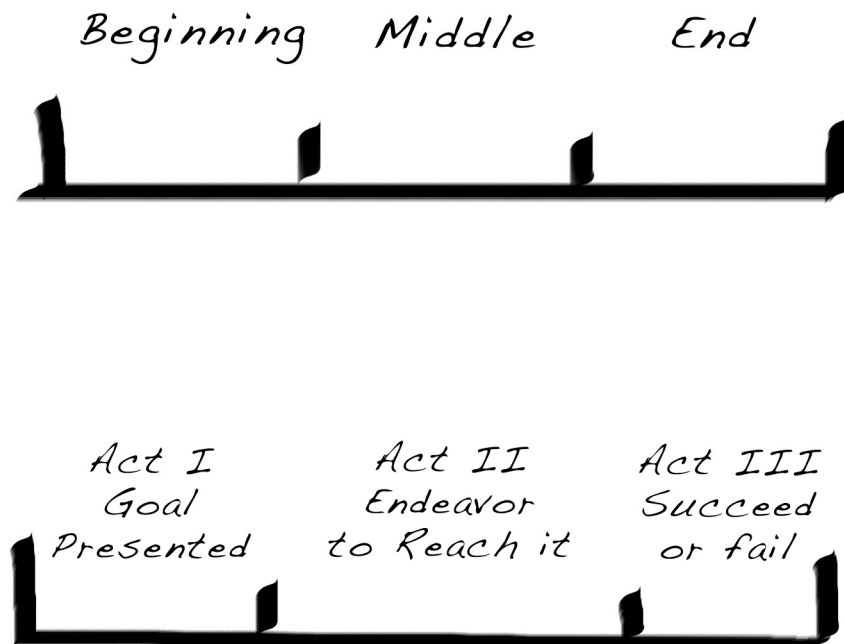
In which the hero is introduced
and a compelling need established.

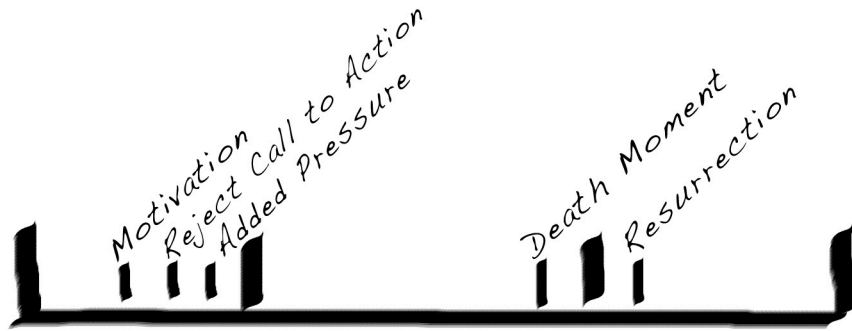
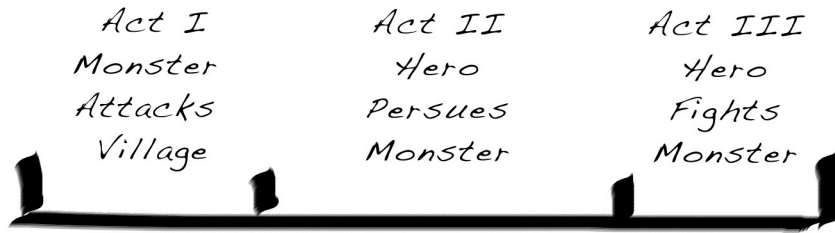
Act II

In which the hero undertakes a unique
endeavor to achieve their goal.

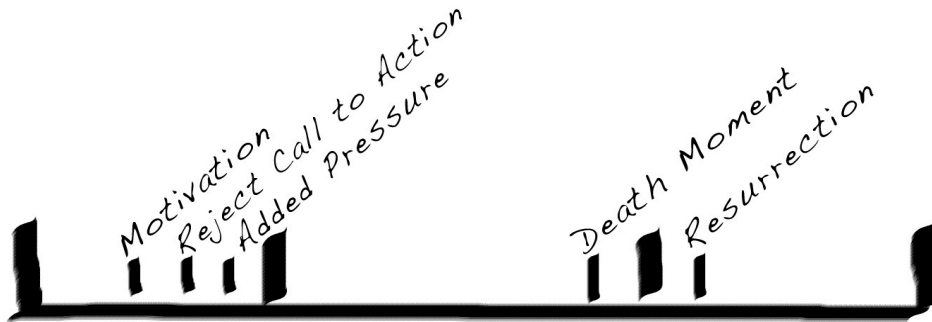
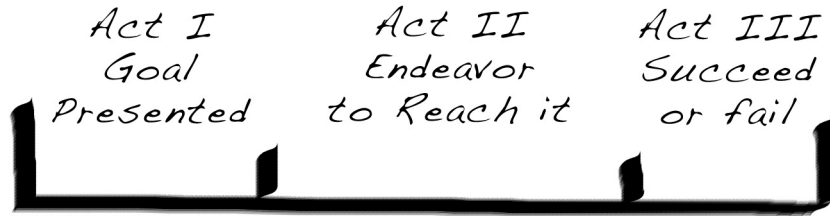
Act III

In which the hero fails or succeeds.





Part II: Crime





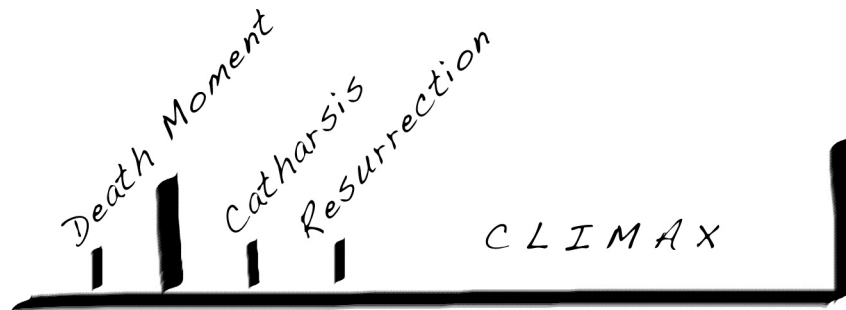


Act 1 to Act 2



ACT I

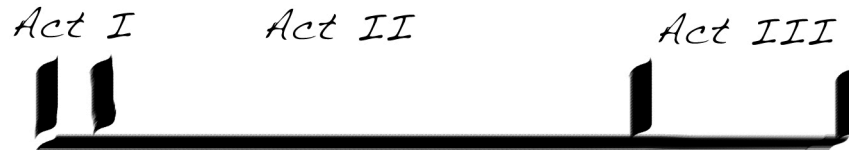
Act 2 to Act 3



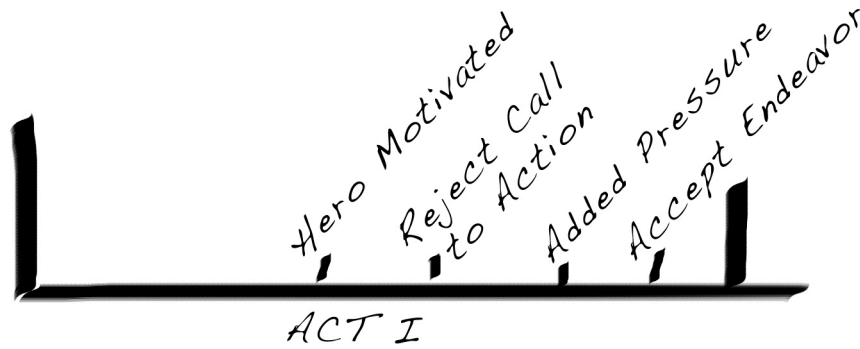
ACT III

Part III: Investigation

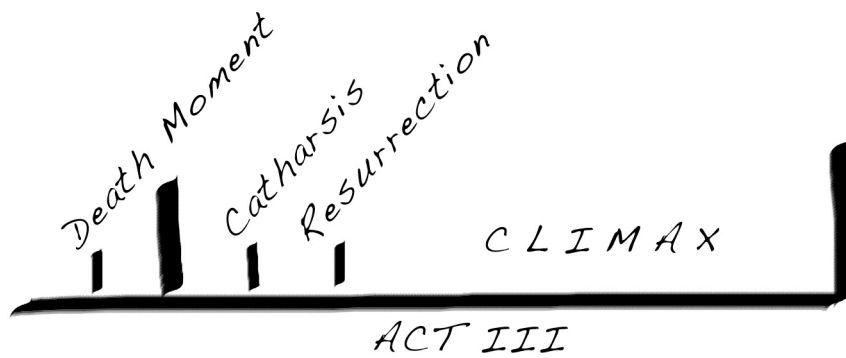
Truncated Act 1



Act I to Act 2

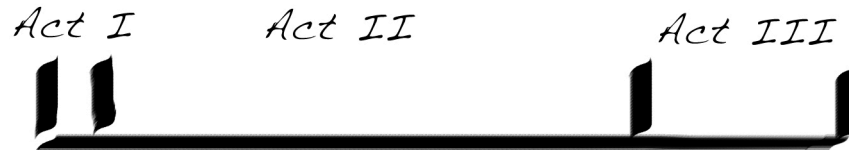


Act II to Act III

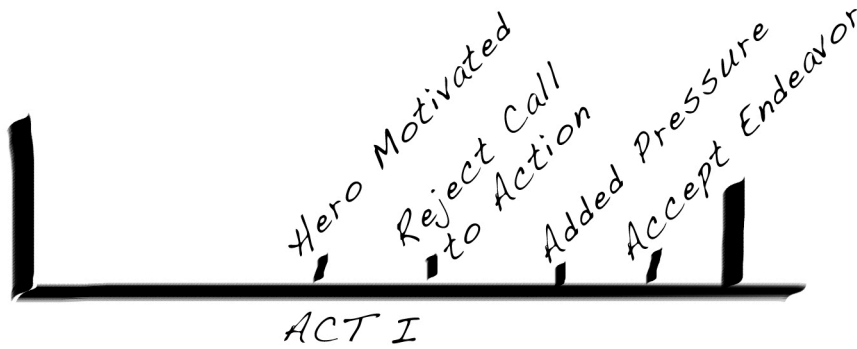


Part 4: Prosecution

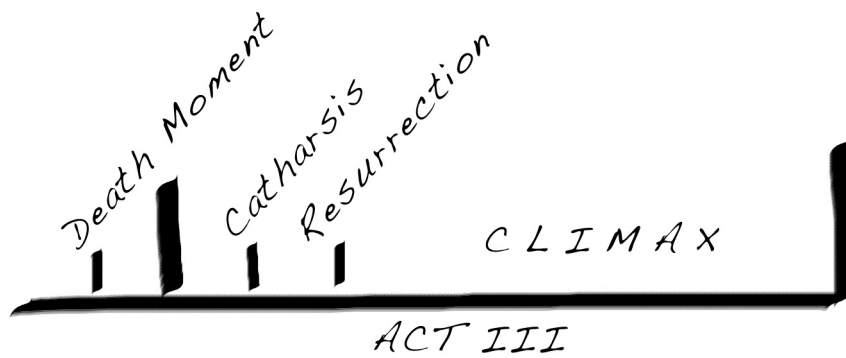
Truncated Framework



Act I to Act 2

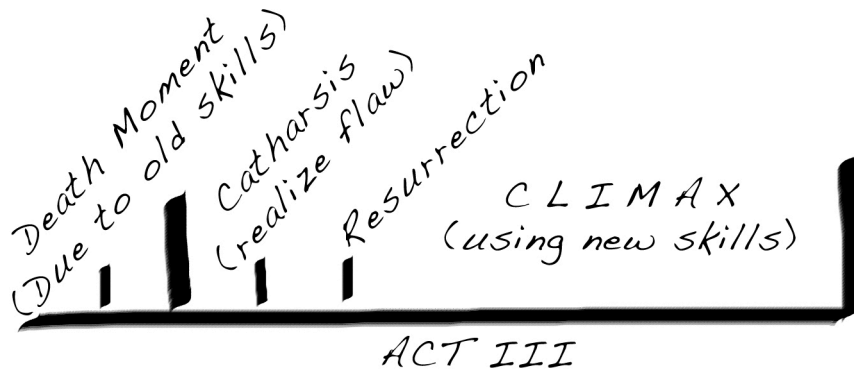


Act II to Act III

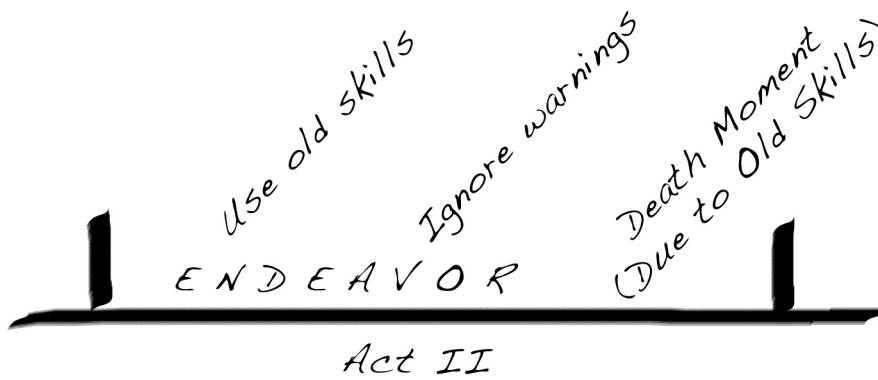


Part 5: Sequences

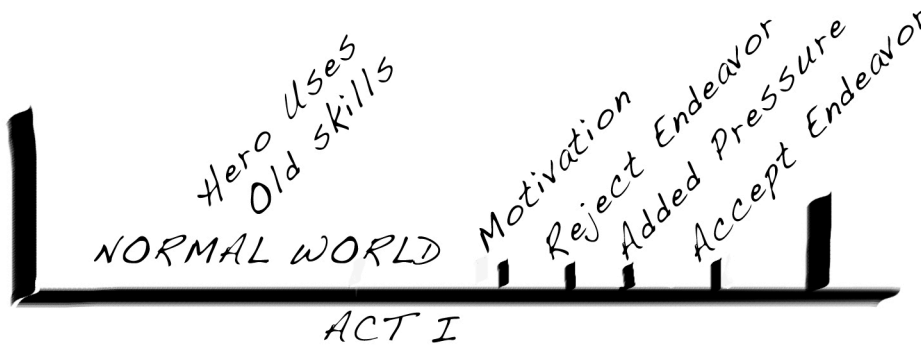
Defeat to Resolution



Progress to Failure



Normal World to Endeavor



Part 6: The Plot Machine

Crime Stories

Items to Steal

- Money
- Gold
- Jewels
- Buried treasure
- Secret formula
- Important documents
- Incriminating evidence
- Valuable Art
- Artifacts with mystical powers
- The cure for an illness
- A new mechanical invention
- The plans or components of a super weapon
- A person with unique knowledge or abilities
- A witness to a crime
- A soldier with strategic information

Places to Break Into

- Art Museum
- Bank Vault
- Mansion or Castle
- Federal Facility
- Science Lab
- Corporate Headquarters
- Military Base

Entertainment Value

- Action and mayhem
- Clever trickery
- Technical wizardry

Defense Systems

Guards or dogs
Motion sensors
Laser grids
Fences, Walls, Moats
Retina scans
Voice print scans
Locked vault doors
Natural barriers: cliffs, mountains, etc.

Criminal Archetypes

Debonair Thief
Street-wise thug
International Spy
Military commando
Jaded ex-con
Eager rookie

Crime Motivation

To finance retirement
To finance a legitimate career path
To pay off an old debt
A sick loved one
Blackmailed
A tempting score
Revenge on a past foe
An offer of a greater prize (i.e. release from jail)
Driven to crime by an unjust society
Taking one last job before going legit
Hired by a government agency for a patriotic duty
Stealing to uncover corruption
To aid law enforcement
Setting a trap for the villain’s arrest
Greed

Types of Death Moments

Loss of retirement nest egg
A sick loved one dies
Embarrassing secrets are exposed
Loss of safe status
The foe wins
Country/tribe suffers
The greater prize is retracted
Double-crossed by a traitor
Wounded and left to die
Fired from job
A romance ends
The *goal* has been moved
Plans must be changed
Preparations must be improvised
A traitor rats the hero out
Hero arrested
A traitor steals the *goal*
The hero is wounded
A member of the team is kidnapped
A member of the team is wounded or killed

Crime Themes

Crime does not pay
You can't escape your past
There is good in everyone
There is bad in everyone
No person is an island
Sometimes you have to break the rules
Sometimes you have to follow the rules

Types of Resurrections

Saved by allies
A henchman has a change of heart
Discovering reserves previously untapped
Toss out the rule book
Accept the advice of others
Devise a new *goal*/strategy
An ally treats hero's injuries
Reveal the *death moment* was a ruse
Find a clue the villain left behind

Hero's Normal World Issue

Fired from a job
Turned down for a promotion
Interviewing for a new job
Tormented by a tyrannical boss
Getting married
Breaking up with a lover
Going on a first date
Having a crisis of religious faith
Having a nervous breakdown

Crime Inciting Incidents

Hero learns about a treasure
A criminal opportunity is presented
A valuable item is vulnerable
The *goal* fills a void in their life
A just cause is served

Reasons to Reject the Endeavor

The odds of success are slim
Risk of jail
Desire to live a straight life
Fear of past misdeeds being exposed
Faded or outdated skills
To honor a vow

Types of Added Pressure

They are blackmailed
Their sick loved one gets sicker
They lose their job
Bills pile up
They want to provide for their family
Their country/community is suffering
A villain is abusing loved ones

Caper Preparation

Assemble a team of collaborators
Reconnaissance
Secure needed tools/weapons
Research defense systems
Recruit experts
Go undercover
Build needed devices

Caper Execution

Guards change their schedule
Motion sensors are more sensitive
Laser grids are more advanced
Fences and walls are taller
Moats are deeper and filled with sharks
Retina scanner requires a different eye
The weather is lousy

Revenge Stories

Entertainment Value

Violent mayhem
Clever manipulation
Stealth and technology

Revenge Goals

Kill a murderer
Retrieve a stolen item/kidnap victim
Achieve a *goal* that has been denied them
Unmask a villain’s on-going injustice
Have a criminal arrested
Destroy the villain’s finances
Smear the villain’s reputation

Revenge Motivations

A loved one killed
A loved one kidnapped
A meaningful item stolen
Reputation ruined
Double-crossed by villain
Framed for a crime
Denied what’s rightfully theirs
To put long-time nemesis behind bars

Revenge Heroes

The wronged former military operative
The little guy tired of being stepped on
An assault victim
The parent of a murdered child
A company man passed over for promotion
A cop or lawyer tired of seeing the guilty go free

Revenge Death Moments

Hero is wounded
An ally is wounded or killed
The hero's reputation is ruined
The hero is arrested
The hero is captured
The hero's covert acts are revealed
The hero is fired
A lover dumps the hero
The Villain's plan succeeds
Villain leaves hero to a fate worse than death

Revenge Themes

Crime does not pay
You can't escape your past
There is good in everyone
There is bad in everyone
No person is an island
Sometimes you have to break the rules
Sometimes you have to follow the rules

Types of Resurrection

Saved and encouraged by allies
Healed/cured by allies
Villain's henchman has a change of heart
Tossing out the rule book
Accepting the advice of others
Capture was ruse to infiltrate enemy base
Betrayal was ruse to unmask traitor
Showing mercy
Villain's greedy acts help hero
Devising a more honorable *goal*

Hero's Real World

Deserving of a promotion
Celebrating an occasion with loved ones
Being honored for an achievement
Grasping the rewards of a long labor

Reasons to Reject the Endeavor

The odds of success are slim
Risk of jail
Desire to live a straight life
Fear of past misdeeds being exposed
Self-doubt, low self-esteem

Types of Added Pressure

Blackmail
A sick loved one gets sicker
The loss of their job
Bills pile up
Their shame/embarrassment is magnified
Peer pressure
The villain flaunts their power

Revenge Preparation

Assemble a team of collaborators
Reconnaissance
Secure needed tools/weapons
Research the defense systems
Seek advice of experts
Go undercover

Revenge Execution

Guards change their schedule
Motion sensors are more sensitive
Laser grids are more advanced
Fences and walls are taller
Moats are deeper and filled with sharks
Retina scanner requires a different eye
The weather is lousy

Thriller Stories

Entertainment Value

Violent mayhem
Psychological manipulation
Disintegration of civilized society
Natural disaster

Thriller Torments

Physical attack
Psychological attack
Natural disaster
A stretch of apparent bad luck
Damage to reputation
Framed for a crime

Thriller Settings

The big city
A typical suburban world
A privileged class
Lost in the wilderness
Adrift at sea

Thriller Goals

Physical safety
Psychological safety
To get help
To identify the source of torment
Identify the reason they’ve been targeted
To appease the villain
To destroy the villain

Thriller Archetypes

Physically strong

Physically weak

Mentally/emotionally weak

Someone living a lie

An entitled character

A leader

A follower

Thriller Heroes

Farmer beset by drought, fire, and locusts

Sailor stalked by a terrifying sea creature

Hunter stalked by a bear

Bureaucrat targeted by mysterious operatives

Retired spy targeted by former enemies

Average person targeted for no apparent reason

Retired criminal threatened by past cohorts

Thriller Death Moments

An ally is wounded

Caught by villain

Exhausted and accepting fate

Reputation is ruined

Past misdeeds are revealed

Loss of social status

Loved one breaks off relationship

The safe destination is no longer safe

A natural disaster is about to strike

Thriller Themes

Substance trumps image

You can't escape your past

Don't build on a foundation of lies

True character is revealed by combat

Brains over brawn

Thriller Resurrections

Hero adopts more primitive methods

Hero uses wits instead of brawn

Allies help the hero

Hero employs tactics learned from allies

Hero devises a new form of safety

Hero's Normal World

A prosperous business or occupation

Respected by community

A loving family

An unimpeachable reputation

Loyal participant in a community

Reactive Response

Seek temporary safety

Seek help of authorities

Attempt various coping mechanisms

Attempt to hide and wait out danger

Try to sweep things under the rug

Engage in more lies

Bargaining and pleading

Types of Added Pressure

A loved one is hurt

Coping mechanisms fail

The villain raises the stakes

Loss of job or demotion

Financial concerns

Peer pressure

Proactive Response

Learn the identity of the villain

Learn the villain's motivation

Go after a weapon

Locate evidence that proves your innocence

Construct a safe location

Devise a new means to reach safety

Make a stand and fight

Investigation Stories

Investigative Sub-Genres

Mystery
Cozy Mystery
Procedural
Hard-Boiled

Investigative Tone

Gory
Comedic
Light-hearted
Noir
Macabre

Investigative Settings

Urban and Gritty
Rural and Quaint
Historical and Gothic
Paranormal
Reality based

Investigative Archetypes

The intellectual
The brawler
The dogged professional
The eccentric and underestimated amateur
The deductive genius
The handicapped sleuth
The comical fussy budget

Entertainment Value

- Car chases
- Fist fights
- Gun battles
- Comedic characters
- Eccentric behavior
- Deductive Logic
- Tricks and double-crosses
- Scientific procedures
- Legal maneuvers

Investigative Goals

- Apprehend a killer
- Retrieve a stolen item
- Rescue a kidnap victim
- Cover up an embarrassing incident
- Prove someone innocent
- Uncover corruption
- Find a bomb or other weapon

Investigative Motivations

- Job assignment
- A paying customer
- An ongoing public threat
- A long unsolved case
- A sanctimonious villain
- Wanting to retire with a win
- Avenging a crime on a loved one
- Proving corruption
- Proving naysayers wrong
- To put a long-time nemesis behind bars
- To avenge a past victim
- To prove validity of a new investigative technique
- To earn a promotion
- To earn respect of peers/family

Investigative Death Moments

Hero arrests the wrong man
Accused has an alibi
Evidence proves faulty
Evidence is lost
Witness goes missing
Witness recants
Evidence tossed out by court
Hero’s methods/reputation questioned
Hero wounded
An ally killed or wounded
Hero removed from case
Hero’s reputation is ruined
Hero is physically wounded or disabled
A key witness is killed
A partner or ally is killed
The suspect is set free
The villain escapes from jail

Investigative Resurrections

Find a new witness
Find new evidence
Locate missing evidence/murder weapon
Rival villain cuts a deal to testify
Appeal to higher court
Utilize an obscure legal precedent
Hero reinstated to case
Hero’s approach vindicated
Allies nurse hero back to health
Proves villain committed another crime
Discover traitor on the police force

Reasons to Reject the Endeavor

It may harm your career
It could mar a perfect record
Close to retirement
Powerful forces involved
Resting on laurels
Going on vacation

Added Pressure

- More money is offered
- Bills are piling up
- Pressure from a superior officer
- Peer pressure
- The criminal has struck again
- To prove their reputation is justified
- The community is in danger/terrified

Reactive Steps

- Evidence on victim’s body
 - Manner of death
 - Time of death
 - Cause of death
 - Identity of victim
- Reconstructing events that led to death
 - Murder weapon
 - List of missing items
 - Means of entry
 - Method of escape
 - Physical evidence
 - Witnesses

Proactive Steps

- Dusting for fingerprints
- Taking shoe or tire tracks
- Scientific analysis of fiber samples
- Coroners report on victim
- Victim’s history, possible enemies
- Locate stolen items
- Check alibis

Building a Case

- Question suspects
- Question suspect’s associates
- Reconstructing suspects whereabouts
- Seeking print or DNA evidence
- Finding the crime weapon
- Confirming motive
- Disproving alibi

Prosecution Stories

Judicial Goals

Convict the guilty
Exonerate the innocent

Judicial Tone

Serious and gritty
Light-hearted and quaint
Social justice oriented

Judicial Entertainment Value

Investigative skills
Knowledge of legal maneuvering
Dramatic cross-examinations
Courtroom theatrics
Championing the underdog
Bringing down the entitled

Judicial Heroes

The crusader
The legal genius
The dogged grinder
The quirky eccentric
The slick ambitious all star
The courtly elder statesman
The washed up lawyer with a booze problem
The passionate, but cash-strapped defense attorney
The bleeding heart liberal defense attorney
The small-town folksy attorney
The scion of a legal dynasty
The city-college educated minority lawyer
A physically impaired lawyer
A lawyer with super powers

Judicial Motivations

- Job assignment
- A paying customer
- A case that could advance the hero's career
- A chance to bring down a powerful villain
 - Wanting to retire with a win
 - Avenging a crime on a loved one
- Overcoming personal fears/demons
- To best a long-time rival attorney

Judicial Death Moments

- A killer is about to go free
- An innocent man has been convicted
 - A witness changes their story
- Judge rules testimony/evidence inadmissible
 - A witness vanishes or dies
 - Evidence is lost or tainted
- Hero is sanctioned for judicial misconduct
 - Hero or ally wounded
 - Hero's reputation sullied
 - A mistrial declared

Judicial Resurrections

- Convince a witness to come forward
 - Locate new evidence
- Discover misconduct by the opposing counsel
- Prove bias by police, coroner, or evidence examiners
 - Appeal to higher court
- Utilize an obscure legal precedent
- Convince the accused to testify
 - Hero reinstated to case
 - Hero's approach vindicated

Rejecting the Call to Action

- Recognize the case is not a slam-dunk
- Realize the case could harm their promising career
 - Wanting to retire with a spotless record
 - Wanting to avoid political mine-fields
- Try to reach settlement with opposing counsel
 - Convince client to take a deal
 - Tempted to settle and take the money

Added Motivation

- Client swears they are innocent
 - Hero needs the money
 - Pressure from a superior
 - Peer pressure
 - Loved ones threatened
 - To uphold their reputation

The Prosecution’s Case

- The facts of the crime
- Investigator testimony
- Coroner or Crime Lab testimony
- Presentation of physical exhibits
 - Witness testimony
- Statements made by the accused

The Defense’s Case

- Impugn the crime scene investigation
- Present conflicting independent lab evaluations
- Independent examiner disputes coroner findings
 - Impugn the processing of physical evidence
 - Present supporting witnesses
- Accuse detectives of coercing a confession
 - Present other possible perpetrators
 - Accuse investigators of bias