



Tobi's draw...note that I arrange things differently than Sheila. The beauty of Story Magic is it works with all different types of brains. Organize this anyway you want to!

- CHARACTER: Cheating Lover
- BAGGAGE: Life threatening accident

- CHARACTER: High powered executive
- BAGGAGE: Being trapped with a dead body

- CRIME: Vandalism
- CONFLICT: having unwanted powers

- CRIME: Swindling
- CONFLICT: forced attendance

- CRIME: Extortion/blackmail
- CONFLICT: being assigned an undesirable partner

- CHARACTER: Absent minded professor
- BAGGAGE: sibling's betrayal

At first glance, I wanted to use all three crimes and go straight to creating a story and using those as plot points, but that's not what this exercise is. What we're trying to do is to show you the difference between mystery, suspense, and thriller by looking at each level of crime as being a different genre.

For my mystery, the crime is swindling. I've drawn cheating lover with a life threatening accident as baggage and I believe that would make my character more likely to live each moment to the fullest. My high-powered executive has been trapped with a dead body. I'm not going to go for the low hanging fruit like he was in a car accident and his dad died there with him until he was rescued. Nope. I'm thinking that his dad was a horrible businessmen, and took their amazing family business and nearly ran it into the ground until he was able to take over after college. So, that dead body that he's been dragging around is the stink of his dad's poor decisions.

Their conflict is having unwanted powers. Of course, I could make this a paranormal, but instead I think that my cheating lover is the assistant to the high-powered executive. Their unwanted powers is knowing his schedule, who calls him, everything about his life, and knowing his dirty secrets. And why is that an issue you ask? Because she knows that he found someone swindling from the business and killed them.

I also like the idea that the high-powered executive is mad that his business he's worked so hard to make successful was screwed by somebody who worked at the company taking money from him. He's got motivation tied into making this business perform, bringing back respectability to the family name/business. Also, if I think of being trapped with a dead body as being his dad who was horrible at the business, I think he'd also want to get rid of the dead weight of the swindler. It also makes sense to me that he would be willing to have the swindler murdered for their disloyalty. Unfortunately the cheating lover knows this.

Now, if I want to make it a suspense, then the crime is happening NOW. The swindle happened in the past, but the blackmail is happening now! We already know that our high-powered executive has killed someone because they swindled from the company. If the high powered executive is being blackmailed, he may believe it is the cheating lover/assistant. The conflict for the suspense is being forced to attend. Our cheating lover/assistant is being forced to attend all of the business meetings knowing he's a murderer. She's trying to get out of the relationship and find another job. But he knows where she lives, he's the one providing her paycheck, it's not easy to just disentangle her life from his. If they had a good relationship with the understanding that she was the side chick, than maybe she does feel like she's safe with him. But having to attend all of these meetings, going to work, that's stressful for the cheating lover. And she's had a life threatening accident in the past and knows that she should bail from this because

life is too short. So, for suspense, the mystery part is going to find who is actually the extortionist, because in fact it is not our cheating lover! And is the high-powered executive going to kill her because he thinks she is the blackmailer? That makes for a pretty good suspense.

OK, now I'm going to make this a thriller which is the future crime. The final crime card is kidnapping and the conflict is being assigned an undesirable partner. We have an additional character who is the absent minded professor who has baggage of being betrayed by a sibling in the past. The professor may feel strongly about loyalty, or he may never trust anyone. I like the idea that he is the neighbor of our cheating lover/assistant and he's the blackmailer! Maybe he's seen the high-powered executive coming over to her condo, he knows who he is, and he's got pictures of the two of them canoodling. When he sends the blackmail note he thinks he's threatening him about exposing their affair to his wife, not the fact that the man has killed someone! It's about the executive being disloyal to his wife. The professor just wants the executive to end the affair, but he's gotten into something much larger!

Meanwhile, the cheating lover is getting quite nervous about the high-powered executive's mood swings. The blackmail, the murder, it's all starting to wear on him. Then one night after work, the absent minded professor sees the cheating lover being forced into a car. She's being kidnapped! He must help because he realizes that maybe his blackmail letter is part of the problem. He goes to rescue her, and the two of them go into hiding. The conflict is being assigned an undesirable partner, which works for me. Our absent minded professor considers having an affair with a married man to be an undesirable trait. They are now on the run, needing to prove the executive's responsible for a murder before they get murdered! That's got a thriller vibe to it.

This will probably be a romantic suspense because that's where my brain goes. I kind of see the two of them being somewhat neighborly, and then this period of being on the run, having people chase them, hiding from the high-powered executive who seems to have a lot more money to spend on hitman than anyone should, will give them time to actually get to know each other. And as it turns out our cheating lover who had the life threatening accident is not just living life for the moment, but she's terrified to make plans. Maybe during that life threatening accident someone she loved deeply died. She knows people leave. Having an affair with a married man is easier for her because she knows he'll never be her's completely—she's not risking her heart. She needs to get over that in order to learn that she is worthy of love. Meanwhile our absent minded professor whose sibling's betrayal makes him a loyal friend, but also someone who does not have many friends. He doesn't let people get close. He's got to work on that baggage, learning to trust someone, in order to find love.

I like this example because to swindle someone could ruin their life and have some reasonable motivation (literally - as in a novel, not in real life, people).

I think my high-powered executive who has worked so hard after being trapped by his father's horrible business acumen would feel like it's his right to fix the situation and punish the swindler. I think his goals, motivation, and conflict work well. I like the fact that my cheating lover, at first glance, seems like she's just the fun girl who doesn't want to get too serious. And I really like the idea that having unwanted powers is more about knowing too much about someone. She's living life, but not deeply connecting with anyone. That's why she's a cheating lover. So that baggage is part of the reason why she is nervous about knowing everything about this guy because she really didn't want to in the first place. She probably does not have a good bead on what his reaction is going to be or even why he's telling her these secret things.

Finally, I like my absent minded professor just being there in and out of the story. It makes sense that he would be a neighbor. I like the twist that he's blackmailing what he thinks is something small but actually is murder. I think it makes it believable that the high-powered executive not wanting to go to prison would find a way to try to get rid of the two people who know everything about him. For me this works.

From here as a plotter I would sit on this idea for some time. I'd talk to friends and sketch out the story idea. I'd bring the story idea to friends again and see how to make things worse. But I'm not going to write this story. Although, it'll probably sit in my noodle and marinate. Who knows, maybe in a few years I will write this story.