

“Crime Crackers”

A Romantic-Comedy-Thriller
Series

A story of two middle-aged strangers who fall in love when they get dragged into an online-amateur-crime-solving community...

...just as that group provokes a cold-case serial killer to hunt them down.

It’s a screwball comedy, darkened by murder:

When Harry Met...Mare Of Easttown.

Structure

Each season of eight hour-long episodes tells a complete mystery-suspense story.

The central characters (with a few losses or additions each season) return each time to take on a new “case” -- and will have ongoing story-arcs that develop over several seasons.

Models For Tone & Style

Fargo (series)

Charade

North By Northwest

Midnight Run

Slither (1973, not the horror movie!)

Insomnia

Blood Simple

Story - Season 1

In the pilot we meet **Madelyn & Norman**: two strangers who are brought together when Madelyn’s ex-husband, an unsuccessful true-crime-

podcaster, is murdered -- apparently by "The Chemistry Set Killer (CSK)" a cold-case serial poisoner.

Though Madelyn -- a former-punk-rocker now turned data-analyst in her early 50s who loves her safe, routine corporate life -- has not spoken to her ex in thirty years, she is his next-of-kin and inherits his ramshackle home...which may hold crucial evidence identifying CSK.

Desperate to obtain that evidence, the "Crime Crackers" -- an online community of amateur detectives ("websleuths"), led by ambitious young influencer and wanna-be true-crime podcaster **Zena** -- converge ominously on Madelyn at her ex's home.

Other members of the Crime Crackers include:

Ted, a conspiracy theorist;

Dickerson, a bored nurse;

McLean, a brilliant young Wall Street drone;

Cameron, a gender-fluid high school student;

Dundoski, a meth dealer with a noble sense of justice --

-- and **Norman**: a journalist in his late 50s, coping with the decline of newspapers and end of his career by writing a book condemning online culture. He's only in the group to study them.

Norman privately tries to warn Madelyn about the oddball, potentially-dangerous "detectives" -- which becomes a clumsy, absurd "rescue" when one Crime Cracker tries to break in.

That night, Madelyn & Norman end up impulsively sleeping together. The next morning, they begin to get to know each other.

While they are out on a "first date" breakfast -- Zena breaks into the house and discovers Madelyn's ex did not actually have new evidence about CSK: he was just trying to stir the killer out of hiding, using himself as bait.

Zena tells this to Madelyn and Norman, and explains she wants the Crime Crackers to continue the plan, taking over the podcast. Madelyn thinks this

is an idiotic, dangerous idea.

But just as Madelyn confronts Zena and the Crime Crackers, refusing to help them stir up a serial killer...the serial killer calls on the house phone.

His name is **Elmore Deakins**: in his 70s, living quietly in a New England tourist-town, owner of an artisanal soap-and-candle shop.

He wants Madelyn to know he's been framed: he didn't kill her ex. She urges him to tell the police, but since Deakins did kill people a while back, that's not an option. He just wants her to know.

After a brief, strangely human conversation (they are both are victims of the real murderer), Deakins disconnects, intending to vanish back into obscurity.

But then both Deakins and the Crime Crackers realize his call is not just a clue in the mystery of who killed her ex the podcaster...it's also a time-bomb: by reaching out, Deakins has opened up new leads on his identity. He needs to silence anyone involved in the call.

In other words: if they don't get him, he's gonna get them.

So Madelyn and Norman must reluctantly join Zena and her oddball crew, hunting a cold-case serial killer, armed with nothing but an insignificant podcast and false claims of new evidence.

As Zena puts it in the last line of the pilot: "We're all Crime Crackers now."

The Rest Of Season 1

Madelyn tries to tell the police about CSK's call -- but they believe she's just trying to get publicity for the podcast. When Zena unearths evidence suggesting George actually killed himself, the cops declare the case closed.

So Madelyn & Norman help Zena & the Crime Crackers use the podcast to provoke Deakins to contact them again, and they convince him to (cautiously) join in the effort to find the real killer.

But this bizarre "detective dream-team" is also a deadly game of cat-and-mouse, in which both Deakins and the Crackers fear the other side will

suddenly turn on them.

That escalates as Ted is wounded in an attack, and then Dundoski is killed.

At that point, Madelyn and Norman decide to just run away. But while an escapist road trip is romantic and even fun for a while -- it soon becomes clear that they must eventually face what they fear.

They come up with a plan to confront and capture Deakins. But it will require Zena's help.

At the end of the second-to-last episode, they have set up a meeting with Deakins in a desolate location, and are waiting to spring the trap...

...when they discover that it was Zena who actually poisoned Madelyn's ex. She intended to gain fame by taking over the now-notorious podcast. She attacked Ted and killed Dundoski in order to cover up her initial crime and keep escalating the frame on Deakins.

So the desolate-location trap for Deakins suddenly becomes a to-the-death showdown between Madelyn & Norman and Zena.

Zena is younger and more vicious, and just when it looks like she's going to murder them -- Deakins arrives. He steps in to save Madelyn and Norman.

Zena and Deakins kill each other.

Madelyn & Norman can just walk away, get back to their own lives.

But Norman is, still, a journalist -- and the story they've just survived is the perfect hook around which to organize his book attacking online culture.

So while Madelyn would like to just live a routine, mundane life...she's in love with the guy who's about to write a bestseller -- about the murder of her ex.

They're not done with the world of True Crime yet, and the end of the season hints at a new case starting...

CHARACTERS

Madelyn Morrison

Coming-of-age at 52 years old. Shaken out of her comfort-zone by tragedy, mayhem and love, she finds her new (actually, long-buried) self.

Madelyn is a data-analysis supervisor for a giant financial services company in New Jersey. She's careful, capable, corporate and reliably routine.

Madelyn has not had a serious relationship since her divorce. She has shut a lot of herself away in her safe, solitary life. She needs to get a little wild.

The events of this story (re)open her soul to chance and feeling -- and into that openness run a bunch of crazies and weirdos.

In the 2nd Season, she decides to change her life and begins training to be EMT or therapist. That arc continues through the series.

Norman Murch

An old man who has to give up on scolding the world and learn to live in the foolish, failed present -- in order to save the woman he, unexpectedly, loves.

Norman is a recently-laid-off Akron, Ohio newspaper reporter in his late 50s. He's working through his resentment at being sidelined by a changing world, writing a book analyzing what's gone wrong with the 21st Century.

Norman fears criticism so he finds fault with others and has only short, shallow relationships. He needs to learn to commit, trust and support.

He has grown far too comfortable with critiquing everyone else as a way to avoid committing to doing better himself.

But when he meets Madelyn, he falls in love -- possibly for the first time -- and because she sees through his defensive posture, he must begin to act like the hero he could be.

Zena Morano

The secret villain. She kills for attention.

A 20-year-old aspiring influencer from Orange County, CA. Lives with, and off, her wealthy, indulgent, clueless parents. She is all about attention, being seen, “mattering”.

Zena always finds a way to be the “confidante”: eager, supportive, naive, idealistic. With Madelyn & Norman, she plays the “rom-com sidekick.”

She murdered George so she could take over his podcast, hype her “investigation” and then solve that murder with everyone watching.

But soon she needs to kill again to cover for mistakes -- and before she knows it the violence is spiraling and she is coming apart at the seams.

Elmore Deakins

A retired serial killer, struggling against outside influences pressuring him to kill again.

In the 1980s he poisoned 11 people and was known to the FBI as “The Chemistry Set Killer.” Then he fell in love, and stopped. For decades he has devoted himself to being good.

But now, framed for George’s murder, he must team up with the Crime Crackers to prove someone else did it.

Which means he’s working with people who might suddenly turn and try to catch him. If they do...will he be forced to kill again?

An old man with a dark past, whose story raises questions about change, forgiveness and justice.

Arvin McLean

An outsider, finding his worth in a group of misfits with a mission.

An entry-level trader at a big Wall Street firm whose real gift is that he sees

things and puts them together: a natural, brilliant detective -- a compulsive puzzler, analyst, observer.

He's lonely and way-too-smart, so plunging into this real-time, real-life "case" with the Crime Crackers is a blessing. Supported by the group of oddballs, he flourishes.

Carol Dickerson

*The most grounded of the Crime Crackers,
their voice of common-sense reality.*

She websleuths to take her mind off her job as a chemotherapy nurse, where very bad stuff happens every day with no supervillain to blame or fight.

But when the "game" becomes real, she quits -- helping the Crime Crackers later only when one needs medical assistance. She never gives up being a voice of reason amid the chaotic enthusiasm for hunting killers.

Detective Elmes

A good cop whose noble values blow the case.

A professional whose experience with real crime makes him despise -- and dismiss -- people who find murder entertaining.

Because he's so pissed-off at the Crime Crackers, he fails to fully investigate the clues they bring him, which forces them to confront and solve the case on their own.

Carl Dundoski

*Scary, yet noble: a criminal and an addict, but with a deep passion for justice,
a protective feeling for victims and underdogs.*

A biker-styled meth dealer from Baltimore who loves being an "online detective" in his free time.

The most dangerous, violent person in the story, yet he is murdered by The

Killer...which shows us how badass The Killer is.

Ted Zsigmond

A conspiracy theorist, a raving nutjob barely-tethered to functioning in reality...but a nice guy.

He always thinks there is some bigger, organized sinister force behind bad things happening -- and he's simply never right. It's always small, messy, foolish human beings.

But he is also always supportive, kind and a team player. And when he gets wounded by the unseen killer (actually Zena) -- the others band together and save him, care for him.

Some Ideas For Storylines In Other Seasons

In Season 2, Norman's book (based on Season 1) becomes a bestseller -- while Madelyn leaves her job to train as an EMT. But fresh "true crimes" complicate these new life paths...

Ideally, each season would involve at least two plot-lines from this list, to keep the twists-and-turns jumpin':

Norman becomes the target of a stalker.

Someone wants to discredit their first big-hit case.

Someone from Madelyn's old job needs help with a cold-case (or looming threat).

A fan commits crimes to give them something to solve.

Madelyn or Norman are framed for a crime.

Madelyn & Norman are haunted by (what seems to be) the ghost of Zena or Deakins

Zena's parents put out a hit hit on them

One of Norman's ex's needs help (OR is trying to get back with him because now he's well-off)

Ted comes across a REAL conspiracy

In Addition, there will be “non-mystery” storylines about these characters’ lives:

Norman tries to move out of true-crime, into social-history journalism. But someone wants to make a TV series out of their first case, and he gets pulled further from his real goals.

Norman accidentally becomes an Influencer...for old people.

Madelyn gets a little too wild: starting to use drugs to survive training as an EMT, and eventually realizing that high-stress job is not for her.

Madelyn becomes a therapist.

Themes

Though it never stops being a dark-comedy-thriller, **CRIME CRACKERS** will also explore very real questions of our time, including:

- our culture's strange love of serial killer stories
- the magic and danger of online communities
- finding love when you're no longer young
- the need for acceptance vs the need for justice
- the many uses of a lava lamp