

**Subject:** [Fwd: Women and Violence on TV]

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----- Original Message -----

**Subject:** Women and Violence on TV

**Date:** Mon, 26 Sep 2005 11:36:47 -0700

**From:** M E Craver <mecraver@shaw.ca>

**To:** Councillor Ernie Crist <ecrist@dnv.org>

**CC:** "FONVCA (E-mail)" <fonvca@fonvca.org>

Dear Councillor Crist: This article, with some revisions was found in today's Vancouver Sun newspaper in the Arts and Life section, pages 01 and 13 under the titles -- "New television shows riddled with violence against female characters" (page 01) and "Elusive male market responds to shows with dead young women" (page 03). Very disturbing and very sad. I had to go to the original source to print the article for copyright reasons. What is our world coming to? I am watching much less television as the shows are going down in quality and content. Sick sick sick. And so "dark", even some of the new "comedies". What are they teaching the present generation? Hollywood is becoming seriously disconnected from morals and reality.

--Monica Craver--

## [washingtonpost.com](http://www.washingtonpost.com) **Female Characters, Made To Suffer for Our 'Art'**

By Lisa de Moraes  
Washington Post Staff Writer  
Sunday, September 18, 2005; N01

Women play an enormous role in the new television season.

They're paralyzed by venomous bites of exotic spiders that crawl under their front doors, after which they can put up no struggle as they're raped and murdered.

They're locked in the house for a couple of years by a husband who chains them in the basement in a dog collar.

They're impaled on the ceiling, where they spontaneously combust.

They have strange unnamed things done to them by aliens during a hurricane and wind up, in shock and naked (naturally), in a swamp.

They are abducted while test-driving a vintage sports car they saw for sale on the Internet, have their mouths and eyes covered with duct tape, and are tossed into cages at a remote shipyard, where their terror is monitored and recorded via video camera for about a week before they're murdered.

And the pregnant ones get pulled out of the shower at night by huge, hideous, wolflike creatures who rip the fetuses out of their wombs.

Yes, there's lots and lots of work -- albeit short gigs -- for actresses on new series this TV season.

And these great roles were created by -- two guesses -- men, the little dears.

Trying to get them to discuss the Season of Die, Women, Die! can be difficult. Because the men who made the shows, and the suits who ordered them, while not timid about slicing and dicing up the female characters in these drama series, go shy all over when asked about the trend.

"Is it a bad thing to be a woman on this show?" one television critic asked the panel of creative minds behind WB's "Supernatural" at the summer TV Press Tour in Beverly Hills.

(That's the one in which Mom goes in to check on little baby Sam and winds up stuck to the nursery ceiling oozing blood -- a spectacular feat she then trumps by bursting into flame. Fast-forward 20 years; Sam's live-in girlfriend suffers the same fate. Sam is not good for a woman's health.)

"It's certainly dangerous, apparently," executive producer Eric Kripke replied. Then, remembering his prepping from the network before the Q&A session, he did a hasty 180 to get back on-message with "No, not at all, not at all.

"It's -- you know, we're going to be -- you know, every -- we just -- you know, this show to me is, there's kind of this mythic, you know, purity,"

continued Kripke, who is one of the writers (I know, hard to believe) on this series.

Jeff Davis had much the same reaction during a Q&A session for the show he created for CBS, "Criminal Minds."

(That's the one in which the would-be used-car buyer winds up in a cage with her eyes and mouth duct-taped, awaiting execution.)

Specifically, the question Davis took was: "One of the things we've noticed this season in all the pilots we've seen is the level of violence, particularly against women, has been ratcheted up to some really gruesome levels. You have the woman in the cage before she's raped and murdered. . . . Has that become necessary now, with so many shows on the air, that to become noticed, you've got to think up a crime that's so heinous that it's almost beyond imagination?"

"Actually, I don't think so," Davis responded, bravely ignoring the obvious.

"The most gruesome scene that we see [in the pilot episode] is this woman in the cage getting her fingernails clipped . . . . And when I wrote that scene, everybody told me I was sick. But it's just a woman getting her nails clipped."

Then the rest of the team jumped in and noted that the show's crimes are based on real ones.

Hey, It's Not Us, It's Reality was one of the first lines of defense tossed out by show creators and network suits; critics already had heard it several times before "Criminal Minds" had its news conference.

"That's something we've been hearing," one weary critic responded. "It's just that . . . we've seen about seven of [these types of shows] and to see them all in one season you have to wonder . . . is this what it takes to get noticed?"

"There was actually a mandate from the network saying we want only shows that perpetrate violence against women," executive producer Mark Gordon quipped. "We're just trying to get on the air. We're doing the best we can."

"Well, I don't find it as funny as you do," the critic shot back.

Series star Mandy Patinkin, sensing the lack of love, jumped in.

"If this show isn't fair to women, it won't make me happy, either. I don't think anybody is being funny up here," said Patinkin, an accomplished actor and singer, who has the voice of an angel but apparently hearing that leaves something to be desired.

"I hope what is osmosized through this piece is a moral code somehow, in our behavior," Patinkin continued. "I hope there's a message of ending suffering in our behavior, for the victim. . . . I hope a show like this heightens your awareness . . . that the next time you go online to buy something, you might be a little more aware. . . . The next time you're washing your dishes at a kitchen window and your 4-year-old is in the yard, before you go answer the phone you'll consider who might be able to get into that yard and take your child, et cetera. . . . And yes, we're doing it through an example of an explosive, neon-sign kind of behavior of serial violence."

The old We're Doing It for the Women ploy. Critics heard a lot of that, too.

Patinkin who, while having the voice of an angel, sometimes does wander when speaking at these Q&A sessions, informed critics that the FBI is grateful for shows like "CSI." The bureau has told him it has "absolutely changed the criminal justice system, in terms of people's attitudes towards DNA. It has convicted a number of killers because the juries understand this system better."

Which is interesting, because what we've heard is that prosecutors hate "CSI" because it has given juries unrealistic expectations about the quality, quantity and patness of evidence they'll be presented with in trials.

But Patinkin does bring up a good point. Almost all of these new crime dramas celebrating their debuts by doing heinous things to women are chasing "CSI," the Holy Grail of Broadcast.

What does "CSI" have that other shows lack? Besides a preponderance of story lines about kinky killings of lovely young women, that is.

Young men.

The entire television industry these days is obsessed with the pursuit of young male viewers. Young male viewers are the most elusive viewers. It's because they're so busy doing other things: playing Xbox, downloading music on their iPods, playing Internet poker, pimping their rides. Advertisers pay top dollar for ad time in a show that attracts more males 18 to 34 years old because it's so hard for advertisers to reach them.

And did you know that last season's highest-rated scripted, live-action series among males ages 18 to 34 were "Desperate Housewives," an ABC prime-time soap about a bunch of forty-something hotties on suburban Wisteria Lane, and "CSI"?

Surprising, huh?

From which, we conclude, young men like their older women in teddies having sex with teenagers who cut their grass (or, in the case of Teri Hatcher, naked and in the bushes), but they like their younger women -- well, dead.

Which explains why, on all of these new Die, Women, Die! series, the victims are pretty young women. Mostly white, too -- just like on the cable news networks.

Is it any wonder that CBS Entertainment President Nina Tassler, when asked about the trend after one of her network's Q&A sessions, responded, "Perhaps we should take a look at the society as a whole.

"We're particularly sensitive," said Tassler, whose network boasts all three "CSIs" as well as the new "Close to Home," in which a boy sets the family house on fire with him, his little sister and his mom inside, in hopes the fire department will come and save them from Dad, who's kept them locked up there for a couple of years -- some of which time Mom has spent wearing a dog collar, leashed up in the basement.

"We look to programming practices [department], we look to our producers to be responsible. In future stories we're going to try to monitor things like that," she said.

"About 98 percent of this is about 'CSI' and its spinoffs, which also worked," notes Fort Lauderdale Sun-Sentinel TV critic Tom Jicha, who was asking most of the Die, Women, Die! questions at the press tour.

At least once during a Die, Women, Die! show Q&A session, someone promised critics that in the course of the TV season, they'd show crimes perpetrated against men as well. But, as Jicha noted, "When they're looking to sell the show, they always put the women in chains."

It's true, in the pilot of "Invasion" -- that's the one in which unseen alien-things swoop into a Florida town during a hurricane and do unnamed things that leave some of the citizens, including the sheriff's wife and the local minister, smelling different -- it's the sheriff's wife who's found naked in the swamp, not the pudgy male minister. Wonder why that was?

Interestingly, other network suits didn't do much better than the show creators at answering the Die, Women, Die! questions.

Fox programming chief Peter Liguori was specifically asked about the opening episode of his new series "Killer Instinct" (formerly called "The Gate"), which was created by one of the guys who used to work on "CSI." (That's the one in which a guy sends big hairy spiders under the door of a woman's home so they can bite and paralyze her, so he can then rape and kill her.) Jicha noted that a trend is "emerging -- and it's happened on a Fox show in particular" in which "crimes are getting a little more grotesque" and he wondered, "Is that necessary to distinguish yourself from the crowd?"

"I think the goal should be to . . . expand the envelope with taste; it should be to expand the envelope with creativity," Liguori began.

"When you look to something like that, you know -- again, we're gearing those crimes to almost be popcornish. Suffering from arachnophobia myself, yes, I cringed also when I saw it. But the intent there is actually to create creative, fun crimes as opposed to attempting for -- "

"Would you like to reconsider that phrasing, talking about spiders and then getting raped and murdered?" the critic interrupted.

"Well, I was referring to the spider more than -- more than the aftermath of what occurs," Liguori said.

Aftermath?

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