

Many years ago, in the beginning of Beauty and the Beast fandom, George Martin, one of the show's producers and writers, was a member of an on-line BatB discussion group. He had a lot of very interesting info to share about his experiences behind the scenes - an explodes a lot of persistent fandom myths about the series.

(Many thanks to Marina for sharing this discussion)

These are comments by George RR Martin, in response to some fan questions which were part of a complex discussion among participants between January 30, 1993 and May 7, 1995. Questions can usually be inferred from the answers.

Sat Jan 30, 1993

Certainly all of us on the show knew that Catherine's death would be hard for many people to accept. We certainly never just shrugged and said, "Okay, she dies, we'll get another one." CBS might have liked us to, I will admit -- once it was clear that Linda was leaving, and we had made the decision not to recast, the network strongly urged us to "get it over with and move on."

Instead, we produced the arc. Say what you want about the arc, but it was in no sense a "getting it over with." Catherine may have been dead, but her memory and her presence DRENCHED the third season, impacting on every character, shaping their dialogue, their actions, their very look on life. Never in the entire history of television has a dead character been mourned so long and so grievously by so many. Compare, if you will, REASONABLE DOUBTS. A fine show in its own life. The character who played Mark Harmon's girlfriend on the show was killed in the season premiere, and avenged in the same two hour film, and has hardly been referred to since. Life there has moved on. That was what CBS wanted us to do with Catherine. That was what made no emotional or artistic sense to us. Instead, we wrought a produced a kind of extended ten-hour dirge for Catherine Chandler.

Artistically, I remain very proud of the third season arc. At the end of "Invictus," when Diana shoots Gabriel and says, "This was Catherine Chandler's gun," it still sends shivers down my spine... even though I wrote those words myself.

Commercially, CBS may have been correct. In doing the "right thing," we may have killed the show we all loved. Viewers come to television to be entertained... perhaps they were simply not ready to accept the levels of rage and pain and despair and grief that we served them up that year. We served them up because we felt it was true, that this was what WOULD happen to Vincent and his world if Catherine died... but that did not make it any more fun to watch. Don't read me wrong here. I am all in favor of art dealing with hard, tough issues and emotions. Tears are as much a part of life as are laughter, and a good show includes them all. But in TV you need a balance. In the previous seasons, we could do "Orphans" or "Chamber Music" one week, and "When the Bluebird Sings" or "Everything IS Everything" the next.

The third season was "Orphans" every week, and I think that is why it failed.

Sun Jan 31, 1993

There are always plenty of things that one can blame the network for, but the “darkness” of B&B is not one of them. We -- the writers and producers -- probably have to take the blame for that. CBS, like all the networks, abhors dark shows, and that was probably the last thing they wanted for B&B. To be sure, after the ratings begin to slip second season, the network did insist on “more action,” and it was that dictate that got episodes like “The Outsiders” and “The Hollow Men” rushed into production (indeed, the latter was an aborted first season script called “Thrill” that had been rewritten several times, but never into anything ‘that anyone wanted to produce’)... but what you have to understand was that, for the networks, action/violence and “darkness” are two different things. The networks love actions show like THE A-TEAM or THE INCREDIBLE HULK, where there’s lots of shooting and punching, but no real emotional impact to any of it. Clean, “sanitized” violence is the TV way.

On B&B, however, our artistic integrity got in the way. We were perfectly willing to do non-violent shows, on the lines of “Bluebird” and “Brothers,” but if we were going to be forced to include “action,” we damn well INSISTED that we were going to be real about it. Death would have consequences. Killing would be followed by remorse and grief. We would examine both sides of violence -- its horrors, and its dark allure.

I think we did that, perhaps better than any show in television history. I also think it may have helped hasten our demise.

But I don’t regret the choice we made, nor would I do it differently. Only a cretin would trade the two-and-a-half years of B&B we produced for ten or twenty of THE INCREDIBLE HULK.

Sat Feb 20, 1993

Television viewers have seldom demonstrated any desire for “realism.” Although what you’re actually talking about here is less realism than naturalism, as these terms are usually defined.

Are you folks seriously suggesting you wanted to see Catherine drenched in blood, with lots of graphic detail about the on-camera disposition of the afterbirth? Not that we would ever have gotten that filmed ever if we’d written it. It scarcely fits the network definitions of entertainment.

Television -- like virtually ALL art -- operates on the assumption of the implied ellipsis. That is to say, we assume that you know or can infer that certain things took place, even if they are not shown on the screen or referred to in dialogue. Vincent was never shown eating, for example, because Ron Koslow felt that a scene of him wolfing down cookies and milk, or making a grilled cheese sandwich, rather undermined the mythic grandeur of the character. Nonetheless, it was never our intent to imply that he did NOT eat. We simply chose not to show it.

Most TV shows treat childbirth scenes with the device of the implied ellipsis, showing only those portions that advance the plot. This is not intended to imply that the rest never happens.

Thu Feb 25, 1993

The third season arc was originally intended to fill all twelve of the hours that CBS had ordered. We were partway into it when several of us decided that things were being drawn out too much, and campaigned to wrap up the arc at ten hours, leaving the last two hours for unconnected post-arc episodes. I was one of those who wanted to truncate the arc; I wanted to get to “Invictus,” which I was scheduled to write, and I simply did not feel we had enough plot for twelve hours.

Had I known the the two hours we freed up would be used for “Legacies” and “The Reckoning” (or whatever they were called, I may have a block against remembering those titles), I would have been on the other side. I’m proud of the third season... but not of those two final episodes, which I think rank down among our worst.

There was never any plan for a 22-hour arc. If I understand Pat’s posts correctly, she is suggesting that the first “half” of the arc implied the second, or that this completion somehow existed in our creative sub-conscious, but it certainly was never anything we ever talked about. The arc was over.

We did have -- or maybe I should say, “I” did have, since Alex and Howard were leaving the show -- some great plans for future episodes, including the solution to the mystery of the rings and a major new villain (we had hopes of getting James Earl Jones), but the “second half” of the arc that Pat describes so eloquently was in no way part of those plans. Sorry.

Wed Mar 17, 1993

The bestiality thing was a concern with certain network execs, and some crazed viewers out there, but it was not the reason for the “no-kissing” rule. Koslow, Witt-Thomas, and CBS were all afraid of going too fast and losing the sexual tension.

Many of us felt there should have been a real kiss at the end of “A Happy Life,” but we lost that fight. Howard and Alex finally got a kiss into “Orphans,” of course... but actually, I never felt that was the best place for it. I desperately wanted a kiss for the end of the chess scene in “A Kingdom by the Sea,” after Catherine tells Vincent that she wished it had been him instead of Elliott, but Ron wouldn’t hear of it.

You’d be surprised how many scripts had kisses in them early on.

The thing you have to remember, however, is that right up through the trilogy, all of us on the show were quite confident that B&B would run four or five seasons, minimum. The day that Tony Thomas phoned me and said CBS had only picked us up as a 12-episode mid-season, instead of giving us a full order for 22 and a place on the fall schedule, I was shocked. I really never saw it coming. Then we had the bombshell of Linda leaving us, which everyone knows about, and the less-heralded but equally crucial replacement of Kim LeMasters by Jeff Sagansky, and... well, you all know how the story ends.

The famous lava and roses sequence and the whole cave/pregnancy thing was the writers desperately vamping. We never expected to have to go that far so fast, after having proceeded

at a glacial pace up to then. Left to a more natural progression, Catherine and Vincent's romance would have gone very slowly indeed, stretched out over a full five seasons.

But this is television. "Hey, Will Baby, the actress who plays Juliet is gone. Now it's Romeo and Henrietta. Write it." --

Fri Mar 19, 1993

Every writer and artist wants to have his work taken seriously, and it is certainly flattering to be analysed in such depth and detail... but as Kiloran has stated numerous times, sometimes a cigar is just a cigar.

A television show in active production is a huge on-rushing monster that must be fed. Yes, those of us who worked on B&B did our damndest to make it a good show, and tried to put all sorts of wonderful things into the episodes; literary allusions, foreshadowing, symbolism, you name it. But we also had deadlines, and we were doing a television show, and sometimes things happened for much for, ah, practical reasons.

As I've said before, the arc existed because Linda left the show, and we decided to kill Catherine. The trilogy was NEVER designed to lead into the arc, into a pregnancy, into Catherine's death. The final scream you hear at the end of "The Rest is Silence" was supposed to signify Catherine finding VINCENT dead (think of that TITLE, for chrissakes), which would have set things up for the "Land of the Dead" trilogy that we hoped to open season three with.

The writing staff on B&B was as good as any I ever worked with, and I appreciate all these compliments, but thinking that we could plan out this profound super-arc... we were never that well coordinated. We were all stubborn, strong-minded individuals with our own vision about where the show would go. Ever wonder why so much is made of the rose bush in "Snow" and "Beggar's Comet," and then nothing in a "A Time to Heal"? That's 'cause the rose-bush had been mine, all the way back to "Kingdom by the Sea." Alex had always hated it, and refused to include it in his episodes. Similarly, ever notice that Diana only types on her computer in episodes that Alex & Howard either wrote or supervised? I thought that computer diary was straight out of "Doogie Howser" and had no place on our show.

The business of Father being buried and resurrected in "The Reckoning" did not represent any effort to make a profound statement about death and resurrection, to comment on the arc that went before. It was just a way to build jeopardy... and the two post-arcs episodes themselves represented an in-house victory of Steve Kurzfeld, Alex, and especially Tony Thomas, who wanted to continue in a high-tension action mode, over Howard and me, who wanted to do a couple of gentle, quiet, character pieces after the violence of the arc. These in-house struggles and disagreements take place every day on every TV show ever made... and they certainly took place on B&B.

If Catherine and Vincent had ever married, it would have been in the final episode of the show after a ten-year run, a la M*A*S*H. Our show was a mythic adventure/romance, not a domestic drama. No doubt there are any many misadventures and challenges after marriage, but that was not what we were about. BEAST KNOWS BEST is a whole different show.

Wed May 26, 1993

The Rolley episode -- "In the Forests of the Night" -- was indeed broadcast in the wrong order. When CBS cancelled the show, they told us they could only program nine of the twelve hours we'd filmed. It was an easy call to drop the last two episodes ("Legacy" and "The Reckoning," which in the opinion of almost everyone connected with B&B represented our absolute nadir), but we also had to yank one episode out of the ten-hour Gabriel arc. "Forests" got yanked.

The three episodes were finally broadcast that summer, months after the show had been pulled from the air, when the other networks were doing reruns. It didn't help.

In the correct sequence, "In the Forests of the Night" should follow "A Time to Heal" and precede "The Chimes at Midnight" (I think... I'm relying strictly on memory here, and may have an episode switched).

As for those last two episodes... don't remind me... they were the final product of a compromise. Having finally wound up the arc, the writing staff was deeply divided as where to go next. Koslow and Linda & Shelley were pretty much out of it by then. Howard wanted to do a gentle, character-oriented episode built around the naming ceremony and Father falling in love and Vincent and Diana trying to get their lives back in order. I supported him strongly, although I thought we should also include a subplot with Diana dealing with the consequences of shooting Gabriel (I was all alone there, and lost). Alex and Steve Kurzfeld and the network and the studio all wanted the serial killer plotline, lots of strong jeopardy, policework, danger, etc. We still had hopes of getting more episodes ordered then, and the studio in particular was afraid of "soft" shows. As Witt-Thomas saw it, it was all our "soft" second season shows ("Orphans" and "Brothers" and "Bluebird" and "A Gentle Rain," etc.) that had gotten us into trouble; they preferred the action rescue scenarios of season one.

So we argued. They won, mostly, and the last two shows were built around the serial killer, but they threw in the naming ceremony and the Father/Jessica subplot to keep Howard and me happy. In hindsight, it was the worst of all possible compromises. The two storylines simply did not mesh. An episode about Father falling in love and leaving the tunnels could have been very moving and powerful, as Howard had originally envisioned it, but it made absolutely no f*cking sense when a serial killer was going around offing helpers.

If someone told me I could remake two episodes of B&B, those would be the two I'd pick...

Fri Oct 01, 1993

The first eight episodes are also available on laserdisc. I'd recommend that format strongly to anyone who is serious about wanting to keep the shows in pristine viewing condition for a long time. The discs also do a much better job of capturing the gorgeous look our cinematographers, art directors, set designers, costume designers, makeup people, etc. worked so hard to achieve.

Sun Oct 03, 1993

Characters get killed off on a television show for a number of reasons. Sometimes it is dictated strictly by the storyline. That was the case with Cleon Manning. We were building the arc, getting Elliott in more and more trouble, taking away all his resources, his money, his empire. Building the jeopardy. Manning's death was another way to screw up the tension. It had nothing to do with the actor, who was great, and it CERTAINLY had nothing to do with the character being black.

Some times characters are killed -- or otherwise written out -- because of the actors who portray them, the death of Catherine Chandler being the obvious and notorious example. Catherine was killed because Linda insisted on leaving the show. Edie was another case partially along these lines. Ren Woods was simply not happy with her part, as it existed. She kept telling us she was tired of sitting at the computer and giving all the exposition on Cathy's cases, the "shoe leather" as we called it. Well, the character she played had been created to do precisely that -- it was an economical way to get that necessary plot-advancing shoe leather across without having to have Cathy do it all herself. Ren wanted more scenes out of the office, more growth for her character, wanted to get into Edie's home life and personality and relationship/friendship with Cathy. Well, all actors want their characters to grow and change and become more important, but that was simply NOT what our show was about. Also, by dropping Edie, we had more time to expand Cathy's relationship with Joe, which most of us felt was more interesting than the one with Edie. With two important characters in the DA's office, it was hard to service both of them and still find time for Vincent and the underground. With only Joe to take care of, we were able to give a lot more to Jay Acovone.

One thing fans never take into account is the economics of television production. The economics of time and the economics of money. You only have so many scenes each week, and you only have so much money to pay your actors. The fans who are so vocal about how we should have kept Edie should realize that, if Ren had stayed with the show, there would have been less screen time for Jay Acovone, and less money to develop new recurring characters like Mouse, Pascal, and William. A lot of TV production is about making choices. WE put our money on the underground and developed new characters to fit down there; if we stayed with the format of the early shows, which heavily emphasized the DA's office/cop stuff, and had a lot less underworld, then it would have made more sense to retain Ren Woods as a regular.

Winslow was killed because Alex and Howard wanted a "significant death" for their quest script. All quests have a significant death, they argued. I argued against it -- I had invented the Winslow character, and I'd loved James Avery's portrayal of him -- but I lost. It so happened that James Avery demanded a big raise just about the time this argument was taking place (unbeknownst to him), which may have sealed his fate. Incidentally, if Winslow had not been killed, Pascal probably would have been. It was that close.

Isaac Stubbs was never killed and/or deliberately written out. We simply did not have any stories to tell that included him, but we kept trying. As late as the end of the second season, we still had a script in development that featured Isaac as the major guest star, but we could never quite make it work.

None of these characters was killed because they were black, and to suggest that this was the

case was ludicrous. We were constantly trying to add new minority characters. Cleon Manning was a late second season addition. Rita Escobar, the young Hispanic woman in the DA's office who worked with Cathy in some second season episodes like "Bluebird" and "Ashes, Ashes," was actually portrayed by a young black actress. In the final episodes of the third season, when Joe Maxwell became D.A., we gave him a black secretary who we planned to build.

Again, though, you have only so much screen time and so much money, and you need to make hard choices.

Sun Oct 03, 1993

"Elderly" now equates to "ethnic?" We had elderly characters through all three seasons. The characters in SIEGE were guest stars, never meant to reoccur. Not to mention that the primary male guest star... whatsiname, the guy from FAME... turned out to be truly terrible actor, very one note, and David Peckinpah had to rewrite the script even as it was filming to give a lot of his lines to the woman playing his wife, who was much better. In the inside history of B&B, he was one of Three Great Casting Disasters.

Mon Oct 04, 1993

Oh, you could probably pry it out of me, but I'd rather hear what you folks thought first. Which guest stars did you particularly like, and want to see recur. Which did you hate.

Obviously a guest star who DID recur is someone we liked... at least well enough to bring them back. The reverse is not true, however. Some guest stars we liked quite a bit were never seen again because (1) the actor became unavailable, (2) the actor wanted too much money, or (3) there was never a logical story role for that particular character again.

Someone could probably do a very interesting article about day players who recurred in B&B. There were more of them than you might think. There were also a couple who appeared twice during the run of the show, playing different characters -- both actors we liked very much, one of whom has gone on to be a major character in a popular sitcom.

Tue Oct 05, 1993

You nailed our two "double role" players, Becky. Congrats.

I liked all the guest stars you mentioned. Harewood had trouble remembering his lines, which annoyed Linda (she was always a professional and she had a great memory and she HATED people who forgot their lines), but you can't tell that from his performance, which cut together fine. Franc Luz and Dan Shor were terrific.

Thu Oct 07, 1993

Interesting post, Sandra. Obviously, those of us on the show did not agree vis a vis Joe and Edie, but you make your case well.

Jenny Aronson -- as portrayed by Terri Hanauer -- was not the girlfriend in "A Happy Life." That was... ah, I'm forgetting the character name now, but the actress was Betsy Brantley, I believe. She was excellent and we always wanted to use her again, but she worked quite a lot on movies and other shows, and was seldom available to us.

We did try to introduce other candidates for the role of "Catherine's girlfriend." Jenny Aronson was the one that worked best, and you would no doubt have seen more of her had the show continued. Rita Escobar, the young black attorney who joined the office, was another try, but the actress just wasn't strong enough. There was also the new computer operator with the tough NYC accent seen in "Ozymandias," who was actually a real-life friend of Linda Hamilton's. I liked her quite a lot, but the studio and the network did not, alas.

Sun Oct 10, 1993

Well, some of those actors being mentioned were okay, and some we liked a lot. So far no one has hit on either of the other guest star performances that we considered our other two great casting disasters.

Hint: they were both villains.

Sat Nov 27, 1993

Nope, neither John Amos nor the actor who played Mitch Denton were among our casting disasters. Amos didn't have much of a role, but he played it fine, and we were actually thinking about bringing back Mitch. In fact, David Peckinpah wrote a second Mitch Denton script, "The Prodigal," just before he left the show. It was never produced.

Mon Nov 01, 1993

Violence was very much an issue at the time of "Siege" and "No Way Down" and "Masques." It was an issue between us and the network. The network wanted lots of "action" but no "violence," since they still saw B&B as a kid's show. My first notion for "Masques" was entirely a story of romance and character, with nobody trying to kill anyone. It would have been a picaresque adventure on the streets of New York, from dusk till dawn, magical and maybe whimsical. Kim LeMasters vetoed the whole thing as too soft and insisted we add guys with guns; my original idea found up being compressed into a minute-long montage at the end.

OTOH, CBS also did not want Vincent killing people and we fought that fight over and over and over again in the early days of the show. If the network had gotten its way, Vincent would have been the Hairy Hulk, picking up the bad guys and flinging them away in slow motion, leaving them unconscious, or scaring them into running off, after which no one would have believed their crazy stories. We finally wore them down and won that one, and got to do The Beast as we all thought The Beast had to be done... but if the early episodes display some inconsistencies on that point, that's why.

Fri Nov 05, 1993

During the second season, CBS did give B&B a brief two-week tryout in their Monday night 10:00 p.m. slot. Like you, Sandra, we did not think B&B was an eight o'clock show and we had been campaigning almost since the beginning to be moved to a better slot. The Monday night slot had prime female demographics, since it followed on four CBS sitcoms -- MAJOR DAD, THE NEWHART SHOW, DESIGNING WOMEN, and I forget what else -- that drew a predominantly female audience. It was also a strong drama slot; in past years, LOU GRANT and then CAGNEY & LACEY had both been hits in that time period, and lasted for years.

All of us on the show felt that this was B&B's big chance. We were certain the show would do very, very well Monday at 10:00.

In fact, it did poorly, and CBS pulled us after the second week and moved us back to the kiddie slot Fridays at 8:00.

That may have been the most crucial two weeks in the history of BEAUTY AND THE BEAST. Alas, it did not come out the way we wanted.

I think part of the failure was our own fault. We realized just how crucial the move was, and we desperately wanted to succeed. All of us, Koslow, Tony Thomas, CBS, everybody. Unfortunately, I believe we rather overanalyzed the situation. As the great experiment neared, there was meeting after meeting about which two episodes should be moved into the Monday night slots. The schedule was shuffled and shuffled again, and finally we gave them (I believe, my memory might be faulty), "Orphans" and "Arabesque." It cost us tens of thousands of extra dollars to do so, because it meant accelerating post-production on those shows, doing overtime, rushing effects, etc.

If we had left the schedule untouched, and presented the episodes in the order in which they were originally conceived, we would have saved a lot of money and "The Outsiders" and "When the Bluebird Sings" would have fallen into the Monday slots. Ultimately, that would have served us much better, I believe.

I do know why the change was made. The network, the studio, and Ron were all afraid that "The Outsiders", an extremely violent episode that represented the second season's "return to action" (at network request), would send the DESIGNING WOMEN/MAJOR DAD audience running from the room. Don't start this huge new female audience on one of our hardest, meanest, most in-your-face shows, they'll choke on it, that was the theory.

Instead, it was decided to start them on "Orphans," which was generally felt to be the strongest episode of those we could conceivably offer on that first Monday night. And, indeed, "Orphans" was a moving and powerful and evocative hour of television... yet, in its own way, I think it was just as unsuitable as "The Outsiders." The audience that had just watched four sitcoms in a row was not necessarily an audience that was eager to cry and grieve for an hour. "Orphans" was beautiful, but it was also very sad, and perhaps a bit too slow to capture a new viewership.

The error, IMO, was compounded the second week when we presented (I think) "Arabesque," an

episode that was adequate at best.

I know I'm prejudiced here, but I felt then, and I feel now, that we would be best off if we had presented "When the Bluebird Sings" in that first Monday slot. Of all the possible choices, "Bluebird" seemed to me most likely to strike a chord with the DESIGNING WOMEN/NEWHART fans. It was upbeat, magical, funny, with romance and whimsy and... well, you guys know it.

"When the Bluebird Sings" was pushed back and telecast on the first Friday after the failure of the Great Monday Experiment, alas.

Maybe it wouldn't have made any difference... but I'll always wonder.

Mon Dec 06, 1993

CHILDREN'S STORY was indeed filmed first, but turned out so badly -- in the view of most of the writers and producers, anyway -- that Ron Koslow elected to bury it midseason. TERRIBLE SAVIOR, which was filmed third and felt to be a much stronger episode, was bumped up to first to replace it. SIEGE, which was filmed second, was shown second.

Wed Feb 02, 1994

Koslow did indeed write "Children's Story." The Writers Guild allows each member to register two official pseudonyms. "B.F. Barnett" is one of Ron's. The pseudonyms are used, most commonly, on scripts that have been so heavily rewritten by others, that the original writer no longer wants his name on them... but still wants a credit, to protect his residual. No one rewrote Ron, of course, but he was very unhappy with the way this episode came out, as were the rest of us. The direction, in particular, was mundane; you will note that B&B never used Gabrielle Beaumont on another episode.

"A Children's Story" was supposed to be the second show, following immediately after the pilot. It was the first series episode we filmed. After we saw it, however, Ron and the studio and the network were all sufficiently dismayed so that we changed the screening order, dropping this one down to around Christmas, when viewership was down, and moving up stronger episodes like "Terrible Savior" and "Siege."

It was part of this same process that motivated Ron to invoke his pseudonym, no doubt. A writer's name is his trademark, his most valuable possession; you don't want it associated with shoddy goods.

Sun Feb 06, 1994

Yes, that is a shame about McHattie... and the fans who threatened to boycott ought to be ashamed of themselves. Regardless of their views on the third season, McHattie is only an actor. He said the lines he was paid to say.

If the fans want to boycott cons that invite the people responsible for the third season, they

ought to boycott any con that invites me, Howard and Alex, Linda or Shelly, P.K. Symonds, Ron Koslow, and/or... especially... Linda Hamilton. We were the ones who killed Catherine, not Stephen McHattie.

Tue Feb 08, 1994

Actually, it is a fairly common mistake, and not just among B&B fans. All too many TV and film viewers confuse the character with the actor, and vice versa.

This tends to be very hard on actors who play villains.

It is part of the folklore of Hollywood that the veterans heavies, the twisted psychos and sadists and on-screen maniacs, are almost always extremely sweet guys in real life, while the actors who make a career out of being loveable tend to be sonsob*tches in person. If rumor is believed, for instance, Boris Karloff and Vincent Price and Peter Lorre were all sweethearts, kind and gentle and considerate men, while Danny Kaye was a real-life monster.

Sat Feb 19, 1994

Interesting to see the list of episodes the Sci-Fiers felt to be most romantic. It wouldn't be my list either.

Violence... well, needless to say, I can't agree with the absurd notion that the writers were sadists, but we did have a philosophy on violence that set us apart from most shows on TV. We were determined that if we were going to depict violence (or "action" as the network likes to call it), we were going to show it as it really is -- nasty, ugly, painful, with consequences to its victims and perpetrators alike. Too much TV violence is bloodless in all senses of the word; not only don't you see any blood, you don't feel anything. The violence is sanitized, cheap, easy; death is reduced to an act break.

Yes, we fell into that trap too from time to time, but for the most part, we tried to show violence as ugly, gut-wrenching, painful.

We did try to move away from "action" (over loud network protests) in the first half of the second season, presenting shows that were more character-driven. "Orphans" and "Brothers" and "Labyrinths" and "A Fair and Perfect King" and "A Gentle Rain" and "Arabesque" and "When the Bluebird Sings" were all part of this effort. Alas, our ratings plummeted during this period, and increasing network pressure forced us to return to action in a big way with "The Outsiders" and the shows that followed. --

Sat Feb 19, 1994

Yes. The CBS revival of TZ (1985-86) was my first experience in scriptwriting, and launched my career in television.

With the benefit of hindsight, I can say that B&B would probably have benefitted most from a healthy mix of shows and moods and genres; an action piece one week, character drama the

next, a light humorous fantasy the third. We did all those genres, but we never mixed them up very well; the show tended to swing violently one way or the other, in response to ratings and network pressure.

Thu Feb 24, 1994

Armin is a very gifted actor, and was a joy to work with on B&B.

Fri Feb 25, 1994

To tell the truth, I never much cared for "A Distant Shore." The whole time we were doing that one, I kept walking about muttering, "It's only three days, what the hell is the big fuss all about." And the Evil Record Producers were not among our more inspired villains.

The cast and crew loved this episode, however. They finally got off that smokey stage in scenic Vermin, and got to hang out at the beach for a week, even Perlman. Whoo boy.

I did write one scene of "Distant Shore." Kos came to me and said we were short, needed an extra scene quick, so I sat down and whipped out the bit between Mouse and Vincent where Vincent is waxing poetic about the sand that Catherine has sent him, all the way from the Pacific, and Mouse observes that it looks a lot like "our sand."

Sat Feb 26, 1994

We tried to be very careful about continuity, but slips did happen, and sometimes our best laid plans went badly aglay because of scheduling changes. "Bluebird" was originally supposed to follow "Outsiders." In "Outsiders," the episode ends with Vincent telling Catherine to leave him. Not an argument per se, but... certainly something close. As I was revisiting Guttke's "Bluebird" script, I worked off the assumption that Catherine had given Vincent some time, in fact hadn't seen each other for a while, and the book was supposed to be a gesture from her to bring them back together.

So the continuity was perfect... until the Great Monday Night experiment happened, the schedule was juggled, "Outsiders" was pushed up and "Bluebird" was pushed back and "Arabesque" and "Orphans" were dumped in between them.

A similar thing happened much earlier. Ron Koslow wrote "A Children's Story", intending it to be the first regular episode, following the pilot. It came out so weakly it was shoved back and stronger episodes moved up... but if you listen carefully to the dialogue of the first Catherine/Vincent scene in "Children's Story," it is very clear that it was composed with the idea that this was the first time they had seen each other after the events of the pilot, and that considerable time had passed. When "Children" was dumped in the middle of the run, by which time it was established that C & V saw each other regularly, the exchange made a lot less sense.

Mon Feb 28, 1994

Yes, white and red together on the same bush. The language of flowers; that was a careful plant. (no pun intended). Diana explains it much later, during season three, but we knew what it meant all along.

Tue Mar 01, 1994

In the first draft of "A Kingdom by the Sea," I wrote in a kiss. I felt the scene demanded it, and it was about time. Alas, Kos insisted it come out. Not unexpected. There were other kisses in other episodes -- some times we writers got carried away too -- but Ron was the boss, and he always yanked them. Part of it was the network; not just the bestiality concern, although that was there, but the fear of dissipating the sexual/ romantic tension and seeing the show go the way of MOONLIGHTING and REMINGTON STEELE after they consummated their relationship. Ron and the network both wanted the relationship to progress V*E*R*Y slowly. Also, I think Ron wanted to save The First Kiss for (a) a season ending finale, and (b) one of his own episodes.

No doubt, had we known how things were going to go, these decisions might have been made differently. It's crucial to remember that at the time we were writing and producing "Kingdom" and the Trilogy, all of us fully expected that there would be a full 22-episode third season, and that Linda Hamilton would be part of it.

Tue Mar 08, 1994

I go to LA for less than a week and return to find -80- new messages! You folks have certainly kicked this topic back into vibrant life. Some 'fascinating posts, too. It's nice to know that you can all still care so much, after so long a time... and that the episodes still have the power to affect people seeing them for the first time.

A lot of questions raised here. I will try and answer a few of them.

We were very proud of the Trilogy as well... and, no, it was not intended to lead into TLBL and/or Catherine's death. At the time we wrote it, we fully expected to be back for a third season. Our ratings were down, but not that badly; we were still finishing second in our time slot; CBS had not had a particularly strong development season with new pilots; and we were a "prestige" show for them, high profile, quality, a regular Emmy contender year after year. We thought we might be shifted to a new time slot, perhaps. We anticipated increasing pressure for heavy "action" shows, which had indeed already begun the previous season. But none of us had the faintest notion that we would be taken off the air. It just did not seem to make sense (and, indeed, it did not make sense, and ultimately proved to be a very bad move for CBS, which has yet to match B&B's ratings in that time slot).

The end-of-second-season trilogy was intended to lead into a beginning-of-third-season trilogy that we've referred to as the "Land of the Dead" storyline. I have discussed this in some detail in a long-ago STARLOG interview, so it's hardly a secret. Catherine supposedly screams in the final moment of the second season because she finds Vincent dead in the cave. In the third season,

Vincent would have been interred in the catacombs, a grieving Catherine would have tried to get on with her life, and we would have followed Vincent through a bizarre, haunted streets of a city of darkness, where he would have faced many of the men he had killed. Thematically, this was meant to be the resolution of the Trilogy and its themes.

We wanted to use actors from previous episodes, playing characters that Vincent had killed... but he would also meet friends there. We hoped to bring back James Avery as Winslow. Ultimately, he would come face to face with the King of the Dead, who would of course be Paracelsus... again, resolving the Trilogy. And meanwhile his bond with Catherine would reach him even beyond the boundaries of life, and ultimately pull him back to the world of the living. He would wake up and burst free of his crypt, alive again, and we would never know if he had really been dead or not, if the adventure in the Land of the Dead had been true or just a very vivid dream.

This was more than just one idea among many, as was said uptopic. It had been discussed in some detail, and we were definitely going to go with a version of it. Maybe only one episode, maybe three... but some thing on that order. Perlman was absolutely crazy about the notion.

Then... well... then came what you call Black Thursday, and Linda, and you know the rest. We never got to do it.

Tue Mar 08, 1994

On the subject of the cancellation, Black Thursday, and Linda's departure, a few points....

I don't know who the mysterious Kiloran is. She certainly seems to have a source for inside information, with her references to early drafts of scripts, happenings on the set, and so on. Most of this is right on; she must have had some connection to the show, since she seems to know what she is talking about.

Generally... but (IMO, anyway) not always... in particular, as I've said before, her version of the events on Black Thursday do not agree with anything that I know about what happened.

I was at home in New Mexico when the bombshell fell. Tony Thomas and Paul Junger Witt were in NYC at the network meetings. Tony called me with the news that we would not be on the fall schedule. This whole business about how the show was cancelled, and Kos told the fans, and an avalanche of phone calls and telegrams made CBS change their mind and order 12 shows is a myth, as far as I'm concerned. Touching, gallant, dramatic; I'd like to say it was true; alas, it wasn't. The show was never cancelled. CBS wanted to juggle its schedule around, try some new shows, try something else at Friday at 8 in hopes to knocking off PERFECT STRANGERS and FULL HOUSE. By then it was clear we weren't going to do it. So they moved us out, and then found they had no place to put us. They offered Tony and Paul a full third season renewal, 22 episodes, with a Saturday slot opposite GOLDEN GIRLS. Paul and Tony refused (GOLDEN GIRLS was also a Witt Thomas show, their biggest hit, with huge female demographics that led CBS to think maybe B&B could hurt GG, which is exactly why Paul and Tony wouldn't take the time slot). CBS told Paul and Tony that if they didn't take the Saturday slot there was no room for B&B on the schedule; Paul and Tony called their bluff; and whattaya know, it wasn't a bluff. So B&B was not on the fall schedule, anyway... but the network knew that many of their new

shows would fail, and quickly, and right then and there CBS ordered 12 episodes as midseason backups. All this Tony Thomas told me in one single phone call. There was no cancellation. The decision had been made in one long session of corporate gamesmanship, network versus studio, and the battle was over, the decision made, long before the first fan sent the first telegram.

Tue Mar 08, 1994

Anyway, that was how the 12-episode third-season came about... alas, what neither the network nor Witt-Thomas realized, as they argued over episode orders and time slots, was that the compromise finally reached would cost us Linda Hamilton.

Linda -- for those of you who have never heard this before -- was never especially happy on B&B. She was a feature actress. She did not want to work in television. She found the 121-hour-a-day schedule of a one-hour dramatic series to be grueling. She had accepted the role of Catherine in the pilot because (1) it was a brilliant script, and (2) nobody in Hollywood thought B&B had a prayer in hell of being picked up to series. When the pilot tested through the roof and the series WAS picked up, suddenly Linda found herself contractually committed for five years when what she really wanted to do was make movies.

Also, she very badly wanted to get pregnant. She had been trying for years. Having a child was very important to her, and -- for obvious reasons -- it was not something easily fit into the B&B plotline.

The 12-episode order gave Linda a way out. Once past their first season, network TV shows tend to get picked up for a full season or not at all; the contracts reflected that. Witt-Thomas had the contractual right to hold Linda for three more years, but only by paying her for a full season's 22-episode order. The network, however, was only going to pay Paul and Tony for 12 episodes. To hold Linda, they would have needed to pay her for 10 episodes they did not film. And of course, if they did it for Linda, then Ron and Roy and Jay Acovone would have been well within their rights in demanding the same thing. Linda, in short, had the studio over a barrel. They had no way to compel her to come back... and by then she was pregnant, further complicating the situation.

After intense and sometimes acrimonious negotiations to which I was not party, it was finally decided to let Linda leave as she wished. In return, she agreed to give us ten days of filming to allow us to write her out of the show. That was it; ten days of work, no more. That schedule helped to dictate the plotline of TLBL.

The decision to kill the character of Catherine rather than recast was, of course, ours. I have spoken about that before and I will not go over it all again. Perhaps it was a mistake... but I doubt that a new actress in the Catherine role would have worked either. I think perhaps we were doomed from the moment CBS ordered 12 instead of 22.

Tue Mar 08, 1994

Lastly... sure, Kiloran, go ahead and post the rosebush scene if you like. It will be interesting to read it again after all these years.

I think the scene played pretty well myself, but it would not surprise me if it read better than it filmed. That happened to me a lot. I am, first, foremost, and always, a novelist and prose writer. I bring that to my teleplays and screenplays, even after all these years. The result is often that my scripts read smashing, but don't come across quite as well on film as they did on paper. That's a weakness of mine as a scriptwriter, no doubt.

Ron Koslow was just the reverse. Sometime Howard and Alex and David and I would read one of his first drafts and look at each other, wondering who was going to tell the boss that there was just nothing there. Then they'd shoot the scene, and the scenes that had not seemed like much of anything on the page just ripped your goddamn heart out up on the screen. That's a strength. Ron is a screenwriter's screenwriter.

Tue Mar 08, 1994

Yes, I did appear in two episodes. Very prominently in one, in the background in a second. Howard Gordon also appeared on screen in an episode.

Tue Mar 08, 1994

No, not "Terrible Savior." Try "Bluebird." The coffee house scene. Look sharply, I'm not easy to spot.

Tue Jun 21, 1994

Last night I went to see WOLF, the new werewolf movie starring Jack Nicholson and Michelle Pfeiffer. A very good film, IMO... and there were certain aspects of it that reminded me strongly of B&B. The love story has a definite 'beauty and the beast' flavor (I use lower case there because I'm referring to the original tale, not necessarily just to our show), and there is one scene, where Pfeiffer holds Nicholson's hairy, clawed, bloody hands in her own that echoed the famous "These are my hands" balcony scene between Vincent and Catherine. Nicholson's struggle against his growing bestial side also strongly evoked the similar struggle that Vincent went through... though of course it also harkened back to earlier werewolf stories, like Lon Chaney's WOLFMAN.

And the makeup was done by Rick Baker, too.

Couldn't help thinking, as I watched it, what a terrific Catherine Michelle Pfeiffer would make. A very fine actress and a very beautiful woman, IMO.

I'd urge all B&B fans to go see WOLF. You might like it as much as I did, and in any case, your thoughts would no doubt be interesting.

Tue Jun 21, 1994

WOLF is less gory than BRAM STOKER'S DRACULA, but more gory than the B&B TV series, of course. I'd say it is just about as gory as I'd want the B&B movie to be, if there ever is one. The network censors prevented us from ever showing any blood on TV, yet some blood would be essential to a feature, I think... as it is essential to the myth. Cocteau in his day suggested blood poetically by making the beast's hands smoke when he kills, but in a more realistic telling, as ours was, I don't think that option is open, and the CBS censors blunted some of the heart of what Vincent and Catherine were going through with their insistence on bloodless deaths.

There is a scene in WOLF where Nicholson is taken over by his wolfen side one night. He leaves Michelle Pfeiffer's cabin, goes out, hunts down, and kills a deer. The next morning, he wakes in the woods covered with blood, with only the vaguest dreamlike memory of how he got there or what he did.

I think it is interesting to look at that scene from the standpoint of B&B. I think variants of this scene happened to Vincent all the time through the run of the series, but of course we were never allowed to show them on camera. When Vincent killed, he ripped out men's throats, he disemboweled them, he bit them with those terrible teeth even as Nicholson bites that deer. You can't kill cleanly or bloodlessly if those are your weapons. Vincent would have known what it was like to come back to himself with his hair matted and sticky with human blood, with gore under his nails, with his clothes stained and ruined, with the taste of blood in the back of his mouth. Only -- unlike Nicholson -- he would also REMEMBER.

I think this never-seen scene is a key to any true understanding of Vincent, and particularly to the events of the trilogy and the third season. The constraints of TV meant we could only suggest this moment, as I tried to do in the scene in "Kingdom by the Sea" where Vincent washes the blood off his hands. WOLF has the advantage of being able to dramatize where we could only hint.

Mon Jun 13, 1994

I think that B&B's exploration of the nature and morality of violence begins much earlier than some of you are acknowledging, although I will agree that it was not until late second season and third that these themes were explored in depth. The seeds were always there, however.

Look at the pilot, at the look on Catherine's face as she watches Vincent rip the bad guys to pieces, and at the look on Vincent's face when he sees her watching him. They are, respectively, looks of horror and shame. Now tell me another action show where the hero was ashamed to kill bad guys. We were never HUNTER, not even from the first.

Look at the second show: TERRIBLE SAVIOR. That's one of my own, and I know damn well that the heart of it is an examination of morality of violence. In many ways, Jason Walker is a precursor to the Dark Vincent of later episodes. He too is killing bad guys, but it is scarcely presented as a unquestioned good. The extent to which it is good or bad, the extent to which Jace is like or unlike Vincent... these are precisely what that episode is about.

Wed Jul 27, 1994

Crossovers may be great funs in zines (if any zines existed, which of course they don't), but in the real world of TV and film they are next to impossible to do. Sometimes, very infrequently, if the same studio and same network are doing both shows, you may get something like the classic MAGNUM/SIMON & SIMON crossover, but otherwise you are dealing with negotiations that make the Paris Peace Talks look simple. And that doesn't even involve the actors! Talk about a billing problem!

Never happen. Sorry. I wish it could. That MAGNUM/SIMON & SIMON crossover was great television.

Various people have asked me about appearing at cons. Well, there are no B&B cons on my schedule right now. I don't have anything against them; just haven't been invited in a while. The last B&B con to make me a guest was that one on the cruise ship, a year and a half ago, whenever it was... and they cancelled me (but not the cruise!) when they did not get enough registrants. The truth is, and I try to be realistic about this, that most cons have limited budgets and can afford only so many guests, and the people who run them know damn well that the attendees would rather see actors than writers.

I do have a full schedule of SF cons coming up, however. August 5-7, I'll be at VikingCon in Bellingham, Washington. September 1-5, I'll be in Winnipeg at ConAdian, the World SF convention. And over Halloween weekend, I will be Toastmaster at the World Fantasy Convention in New Orleans. I'm always willing to talk about B&B, wherever I am.

Sat Nov 12, 1994

CHINA MOON was what we call a "gang bang." The writer, a freelancer named Cynthia Benjamin, turned in a weak script that needed (in our judgment, at least) to be overhauled from top to bottom, but we had nothing else to shoot and the start of production was looming ahead of us, so we divided up the script among the staff writers, and everyone rewrote one act, and did it in record time. Howard, Alex, and David Peckinpah did the first three acts; I don't remember who did what at this point. I drew act four, so all the action stuff in the tunnels is mine. I know most of you hardcore B&B fans have never liked that part, but I did think it turned out to be one of our more effective action sequences, with the darkness and the mist and all.

Kos and I had a (ahem) disagreement about the ending, which was in some ways to foreshadow the much bigger disagreement we had later over FEVER. In my first draft, after the Tong leader taunts Vincent about his being unable to kill an unarmed man, and how he's going to come back with more men and all, Vincent just rips his liver out <slight exaggeration there>. I always hated the dying-ninja-kills-the-old-guy-with-throwing-star-when-Vincent-ducks bit. Kill the old man or don't kill the old man, but the way it was done was a cheat.

The guy who played Lin's grandfather... Victor Wong, I think his name was... was the most memorable part of that episode. A wonderful weird character actor (he has great bits in THE LAST EMPEROR and TREMORS), but he showed up on the set declaring that he hadn't been paid yet and he wasn't acting until he was paid. They had to cut him his check before he'd say a

line. David Peckinpah quipped that someone should bring him a bag of nickles, and the phrase caught on, so that years later, if we had a difficult guest star, someone would always say that maybe he wanted his bag of nickles.

Sun Nov 13, 1994

The issue of whether the tunnel community could or should defend themselves against attack, or just leave it all up to Vincent, was one that continually divided the writing staff. I agreed with those here who felt they should; Ron Koslow and Alex Gansa felt strongly that they should not. I forget where Howard stood. I recall the issue came to a head over THE OUTSIDERS. There's a point toward the end when all the tunnel people were huddled together in the Great Hall for safety, they have been driven from their homes, the children are being evacuated... well, I just thought it was absurd. What kind of people wouldn't fight for their own homes and children? I argued for a big action sequence where the tunnel dwellers _join_ Vincent in the defense, maybe even rescue him for a change. I wanted scenes of Outsiders falling into Mouse's traps, of Jamie nailing a couple with her crossbow, of William pouring boiling soup over some of them (okay, I'm a bloodthirsty guy, what can I say). I probably went too far with William and the boiling soup; Alex really went to town on that one and how silly it would look, how it would undermine the suspense and get the audience laughing at us when they should have been on the edge of their seats. And Ron was concerned about undermining Vincent's heroic stature, and felt that having him fight alongside of Mouse and Jamie would somehow make him less mythic and more just "one of the gang."

Anyway, I lost that one too.

Believe it or not, I did win a few of these arguments, but it's the ones you lose that stick in the memory. It all seemed so _important_ at the time. Whatever our differences, we really cared about the show and the characters, and sometimes passions would run very hot indeed over points that now seem, well, sort of trivial when you look back on them.

Fri Mar 11, 1994

Yes, FEVER is the second episode. Tom Wright started the shot with a close up on me, dollying away to find Linda and the guest star (Stan Ivor, the third of our Casting Disasters, if anyone cares or recalls that discussion). I was eating a cheeseburger. We did a number of takes, so I had to take bites out of a number of cheeseburgers. Every time Tom said to do it again, a fresh burger would be slapped down in front of me. Finally we wrapped the scene... and broke for lunch.

I ragged Alex and Howard mercilessly about that damned notebook and the way it just vanishes in TLBL. Another argument I lost. Koslow came down hard on the other side. His argument was that by the time Catherine is being held by Gabriel, with her life and baby in danger, no one would give a damn about the stupid notebook and what was in it. Maybe so, but it drove _me_ crazy.

Some interesting posts uptopic, but some of them touch an old nerve that is still surprisingly raw for me... this business about Catherine being "tortured." Rumors got out before TLBL was broadcast that Catherine would be tortured, Ron denied them in TV GUIDE, and then when

the episode ran we got all kinds of abusive letters and phone call about how we were liars and Catherine had been tortured.

All I can say is the people who thought Ron lied either (a) saw a different version of TLBL than I did, or (b) don't know what "torture" means.

Early on, Gabriel gave Catherine drugs to make her tell what she knew about the notebook. After Vincent, when he wanted the baby, she was moved to a spartan yet comfortable room, given plenty of food, and watched after by a doctor and a nurse. When she was killed, she was killed in the most painless way Howard and Alex could think of, an overdose of a pain-killing drug.

None of this was fun, mind you, nor would I want it to happen to me... but neither was it torture by any reasonable standard. On my last trip to LA, I read a fascinating book about the Knights Templar, their role in the Crusades, and their ultimate destruction by Philip the Fair and the Inquisition. If you want to know what torture REALLY means, try reading that book, and any decent volume about the Middle Ages. Or join Amnesty International and read their newsletters about the very real torture going on today in various ugly places around the world.

I could give you cases, but some of it is just too ugly.

The odd thing is, none of the people who screamed at us about Gabriel "torturing" Catherine ever said a word about Paracelsus. Paracelsus tried to burn her to death! Given the choice between burning and a fatal overdose of morphine, I know which one I'd pick.

I will concede that it might have been better had Cathy's death been more heroic... but it could not have been much more painless.

Fri Mar 11, 1994

I agree that "Walk Slowly" was a powerful episode -- much stronger, IMO, than TLBL. Linda and Shelley were mourning themselves, and did a brilliant job of conveying everyone's grief. Ron's eulogy was powerful, and the acting... Jay Acovone's portrayal of Joe Maxwell is often lost as people talk about the consummate skills of Ron Perlman, Roy Dotrice, and Linda Hamilton, but it shouldn't be. Jay brought Joe very vividly to life. He had a sure hand for comedy -- I love his performance in "Bluebird," especially the scene where he's trying to warn Catherine about posing nude -- and in WS he proved that he could break your heart too.

But while I'm proud of this episode as a work of art, its very power may have helped kill the series. Once the decision had been made to write out Catherine, the network wanted us just to kill her and move on as quickly as possible into "new stories." They would have preferred if we hadn't dwelled so much on pain and grief.

This is one of the ironies -- the sad ironies, IMO -- of television. The audience out there seems to have no problem with death, but they have a BIG problem with pain and grief. They want sanitized, painless death, and this would not give them.

B&B was as violent as any drama on television, but we went far beyond the rest in showing

the consequences of that violence. It drove the network crazy. We had more funerals than any other show you can name. The funeral for Catherine in WS was just one. Over the years of the show, we'd also shown grieving for Winslow, for Catherine's father, and later, in SNOW, for the two victims of his invasion of the tunnels. I wrote the last one, with WS very much in mind... I wanted to show that even the death of minor characters, in its own way, causes as much grief as Catherine's did ... that all of us are loved by someone... that Brooke's grief for Stephen was no less real or no less devastating than Vincent's for Catherine.

Commercially, though, it was probably a mistake. TLBL got the highest ratings B&B had ever received as millions of new viewers tuned in to see Catherine die. But the next day, WS began a rating free fall from which the show never recovered. The viewers seem to like watching violent death... but they don't want grief in their living rooms.

I think that's very sad.

Thu Mar 17, 1994

The Great Casting Disasters did NOT include Dorian Harewood. It is true that Harewood had trouble with his lines and that made Linda mad... but the performance we got on on film, his portrayal of Jason Walker, was fine, everything we could have asked for.

The third casting disaster -- besides Stan Ivor in FEVER and Cliff di Young in DARK SPIRIT -- was the fellow (Hague, I think his name was) who played the Holocaust survivor in SIEGE. He had previously starred in FAME for years, but he was no actor. He was so wooden in dailies that David and Ron started rewriting as we shot, giving much of his lines to the actress who played his wife. What you see on screen is about half the part he started out with.

As for Stan Ivor... we were always looking for great continuing villains in B&B, and we thought we had one with the character in FEVER. A very fun, offbeat villain, kind of a rogue Indiana Jones, a wisecracking, unpredictable, bad-guy-you-love-to-hate. A lot of his lines, if you look at them on paper, are very dry, sardonic, and self-deprecating. He was supposed to be a villain with a twisted black sense of humor, a bad guy who relished playing the cad. He was also supposed to be sexy, a very dashing romantic sort of fellow, albeit utterly amoral.

Alas, the actor we cast had NO dash, NO sense of humor, and no feel for the lines. He played the villain so straight and flat and boring that we had to give up on the notion of ever bringing him back.

We had plans for those rings, but the show was cancelled before we could pay off that plot thread, alas. If there's ever a movie, maybe...

Susie Plakson was indeed great, and would have been a recurring character as Diana's sister if the show had continued.

As for Ron's change of title, he got a huge deal from ABC in between the second and third season, to develop new shows for them. The deal paid ... ah, PAID... him a lot more than B&B, so he stepped down as Exec to accept that offer. He was writing LIFE AND TIMES at the same

time he was consulting on the third season B&B

Fri Mar 18, 1994

Point of correction. Albert Hague, who played the teacher in FAME for so many years, appeared on B&B as the elderly holocaust survivor in SIEGE. The actor who portrayed Mr. Smythe the bookstore owner in WHEN THE BLUEBIRD SINGS was Severn Darden, an entirely different person. Those of us on the show hated Hague's performance, but quite liked Darden's, by and large... although I recall that James Doohan was also up for the role of bookstore owner, and would have made a good choice.

Thu Apr 28, 1994

I've been away in Los Angeles for a week, doing lunches and taking meetings on various TV and film projects, and now that I'm back I've nearly gone blind reading the staggering number of messages you folks have left in this topic. Long, thoughtful messages too...

I would gladly answer any of the various questions posed for me, but I find that most of them have already been answered.

Still, for the record:

-- I made my on-screen appearances in "Fever" and "Bluebird." I was not in "Terrible Savior," -- I wrote "Ozymandias," not Ron,

-- Vincent is intentionally paraphrasing in the scene in "Kingdom by the Sea" where he talks about the grave being a fine, safe place, not misquoting. He knows the line, but he is replying to Father, who is talking about wanting to keep them "safe," so his reply plays on that word, -- yes, the "fever dream" reference was a deliberate little play on my novel FEVRE DREAM for those in the know, -- the book I did with Lisa Tuttle is called WINDHAVEN.

Did I miss anything?

Thu Apr 28, 1994

The list of my episodes posted uptopic was correct. Like everyone else on the staff, I also did considerable work rewriting various freelance episode without taking any credit -- but those shows listed were my credited work.

THE WATCHER was by no means the only show with an alternate ending. Almost all our episodes were rewritten and polished times beyond counting; if you get your hands on an early draft, you may get very different ends... or middles... or beginnings.

FEVER, for example, originally ended with the treasure being thrown into the abyss (an ending I still prefer, although Ron Koslow did not).

Actual honest-to-god Vincent-and-Catherine kisses also showed up in more earlier drafts than one would think. They never survived to the film cut, alas.

Sat Apr 30, 1994

A few quick replies to points raised and questions asked in this latest amazing round of posts.

Lena was played by a young actress named Katy Boyer. She is very talented. I've read her for another part -- one she did not get, alas -- and seen her range. She created a vivid characterization completely unlike Lena.

Yes, Ron Koslow DID win pretty much all the fights about scripts and story points; it was his show after all. Sometimes he could be talked into compromise, however. And sometimes BOTH endings made it to the screen. In FEVER you see the original Cassutt ending (which was also the ending I favored) in the truncated dump-the-treasure-into-the-abyss scene, which Vincent then interrupts to take us into the Koslow ending, the give-the-treasure-to-the-nuns ending. That was a real hard fought battle where Ron got his way at the very last moment, even after all the money for cast and sets have run out. The nuns have no set, just a door; one nun was my secretary, the other an A.D.

In THE WATCHER both endings survive, intact. The "Hold me tighter" ending was Linda and Shelley; they wanted to go out on the romance of that moment and those words. The candlelighting postscript is Ron's.

All these battles seemed MUCH more important back then than they do now, in hindsight, with passions well cooled. I came about that close to quitting the show over the end of FEVER; in hindsight, I'm glad I didn't.

Sat Jan 14, 1995

My understanding is that Witt-Thomas Productions controls only the television rights to BEAUTY AND THE BEAST. If this is true, a letter-writing campaign intended to convince them to make a theatrical motion picture of B&B would be a total waste of time and effort for all concerned. Witt-Thomas could presumably make a TV movie if they choose, or revive the series in some form for basic cable or first-run syndie, but they cannot make a feature film no much how much mail they get.

The theatrical motion picture rights are, I believe, controlled by Ron Koslow and Republic Pictures. Republic was bought out by Aaron Spelling, I think, and then Spelling was bought out by Blockbuster, and Blockbuster may have been bought out by somebody... so I'm not really sure who could make a movie this week, but it's not Republic.

On a practical level, the true key factors here are:

- 1) Ron Koslow,
- 2) Linda Hamilton,

3) the Catherine Controversy.

My perception is that financing a movie (always the big hurdle) would be easy, given B&B's proven appeal, if Republic was given a strong script and a commitment from the series stars to reprise their roles. The problem is, given the fate of the third season, that commitment would need to include Linda. Linda has said she will never play Catherine Chandler again, as all of you are well aware. Perhaps she might change her mind if she was given a script she liked with a big juicy part for Catherine and a guarantee of a hefty number of millions of others (what is called a "pay or play" commitment in H'wood), but she is unlikely to give any kind of indication of interest without a script or a deal on the table. No studio will put a deal on the table without a script. So it all comes back to Ron. His problem is, well, say it takes him six months to a year to write the script (a reasonable estimate), and he's doing it on spec, that is, without pay. So he writes a Catherine script, but then Linda reads it and says no, the studio says no movie, and Ron has wasted a year doing work for which he will never be paid.

That's the roadblock.

I would hate to plunge all Beastdom into war again, but I'll tell you the truth as I perceive it. If a letter-writing campaign is to do any good at all, the letters will need to say what kind of B&B film the fans would be willing to support:

(1) only a "classic" Vincent/Catherine story, starring Ron and Linda, (2) a Vincent/Catherine story with Ron, but with another actress as Catherine if necessary, or, (3) a Vincent/Diana film with Ron and Jo.

Quite frankly, if what most fans want is (1) and only (1), accept no substitutes, I do not think there will ever be a B&B movie.

If enough people write to convince Republic that a (2) or a (3) would be sufficiently supported by the fans so as to make money, I think the chances of a movie are much, much better.

Tue Mar 14, 1995

When Alex and Howard wrote the first drafts of TO REIGN IN HELL, the Jamie role was played by Mouse. It was supposed to be Mouse who wanted to go along and was ordered back, who built a crossbow, who followed anyway and showed up to save the day. When the time came to film, however, David Greenlee wasn't available; he had accepted a guest star role in 21 JUMP STREET and was on his way to Canada to shoot it. So Alex & Howard hurriedly rewrote, turning Mouse into Jamie.

I never liked the killing of Winslow myself. Alex & Howard felt that TRIH was a "quest" story and that all great quests have what they called a "meaningful death," and nothing I could say could dissuade them. They were backed both by Koslow and by Tony Thomas, who never liked the underground characters much and welcomed the opportunity to kill one of them (Tony hated FEVER especially, since it was so much about the underground, and ripped into Ron one day after dailies, saying "Is this the Mouse & Winslow Hour now?," after seeing some rushes from FEVER in which M&W had more scenes than C&V. From first season to third, Tony wanted

more cop stuff, more DA's office, more of Joe Maxwell and the Case of the Week, and less underworld). After it was clear that someone was going to die, I made a last-ditch argument that it should be Pascal rather than Winslow, no doubt influenced by the fact that Pascal was Alex & Howard's character, and Winslow was mine... but since Alex & Howard were writing the episode, I did not get far with that either. Armin and I have subsequently joked about what a close call he had. And the final nail in the Winslow's coffin came when James Avery, with absolutely no notion that any of this was going on, chose the worst possible moment to demand a raise. He got it, too... for the one episode.

I think hindsight has proved me right. We needed Winslow, or a character like him. I devised William partially to replace him, and Ritch Brinkley was excellent in his own way, but he never had the special chemistry that James Avery had developed, in a very short time, with both Mouse and Pascal.

Wed Mar 15, 1995

Ummm... LORD OF THE RINGS actually has two "meaningful deaths," as Alex and Howard meant the term. Gandalf's death fighting the Balrog has the most impact on the reader, although of course it turns out to be a cheat. Boromir, on the other hand, dies for good, and he was a member of the Fellowship in good standing.

As for what scripts I worked on... I believe I am credited on thirteen or fourteen of the fifty-six episodes (I have a shared story credit with Alex & Howard on "What Rough Beast" and they share my story credit on "Ceremony of Innocence," since we plotted those two episodes together).

All of the staff writers worked on many more episodes than they were given onscreen credit for. That is SOP. A staff writer is paid a very handsome salary, and the main thing he is paid for is to do rewrites on scripts by freelancers, as necessary. It is, however, considered borderline unethical to take a credit for those rewrites (freelancers call that "credit jumping") and we never did. Still, every freelance script that we filmed had a staff "godfather" who did some work on it.

I was indeed the godfather and in-house champion of FEVER, but the credit was rightfully given to Mark & Michael Cassutt. I did some polishing, no more. So FEVER is not one of "my" thirteen episodes.

There were numerous other scripts on which I did uncredited writing. The fourth act of CHINA MOON. One of third season's lost episodes, IN THE FORESTS OF THE NIGHT. A bit here and there on THE OUTSIDERS. Alex and Howard, and David Peckinpah, godfathered a lot more freelance scripts than I did, since I was never completely comfortable with rewriting other writers, and preferred to do my own stuff. Still, sometimes I was pressed into service.

And sometimes you get called upon to make a very small and very specific contribution to a script, like a relief pitcher being called in to get a single batter out. For instance, I wrote the Mouse scene in A DISTANT SHORE, at Ron's request, but otherwise had nothing to do with that script.

Sun May 07, 1995

For the record, neither Ron, Linda, nor Witt-Thomas ever gave us crew jackets. What we were given were -order forms- and the same opportunity to buy the jackets that you guys now have... probably at pretty much the same price, too.

Witt-Thomas did give presents to cast, crew, and even writers at their annual gala Christmas Party. The first year we got tote bags. The second year we got... tote bags. I don't think we got anything the third year.

The only cast member who gave gifts to the writers was Roy Dotrice, who always gave each of us a couple of nice bottles of wine. In return, we always gave him a couple of nice juicy scenes <g>. Ron and Linda may have given Christmas gifts to the crew they worked with every day, but none of them ever made their way over to the writers' offices.

END

