This week's episode of "24" started off with the fallout of a nuclear bomb being exploded just outside of Los Angeles. Thousands of Americans dead, and the rest of the country thrown into a panic. After retiring from CTU for five minutes after shooting Curtis, Jack Is Back, and is severely pissed off. This weeks episode was heavy on plot developments, setting the stage for what looks to be the best season yet. Mitch recaps this past Monday's episode. And updates The Bauer Death Count and his "Who's The Traitor" and "Character Life Expectancy" charts.

There are three leading causes of death among terrorists. The first two are Jack Bauer, and the third one is heart attack from hearing that Jack Bauer is coming for them..

A suitcase nuclear bomb has just went off. Jack has just quit CTU after shooting Curtis, loosing his lunch, and then crying (Crying?!! There's no crying in CTU!?!)...Those Chinese Bastards!!™ All is lost!

OK, I'll give the writers some credit on this one. Last week I expressed some major concerns that Fayed would have some problems with detonating the other bombs given the fact that his trigger and his scientist are now just Dust In The Wind. Looks like Fayed was actually aware of that fact, and working on a solution.

My prediction of the casualties being far below the 200,000 figure first mentioned last week also turned out to be true. Still unsure on my prediction that either Walid, Tom, or Morris is a traitor. Right now it's looking like it's not going to be Walid.

Before I pat myself too hard on the back, I must remember that I can go from Nostradamus to Nostra-dumbass in under one hour.

Case in point: no way in hell did I see the twist this thing took when Graem's connection to Jack was revealed (also note the spelling change on his name, courtesy of the Fox web site). One thing I will say for this season so far: there have been some amazing and completely out-of-the-blue shocks every single show. Which is good, because out of necessity there are going to be episodes where there is not much action. Tonight's show was a case in point. You had a big explosion, and now it's logical for people to just take a step back to evaluate what's happening and figure out the next move.

Recap.

As we open up tonight's episode, everyone in the White House is looking at video of the mushroom cloud forming over Valencia. The shock and utter horror of the situation comes across very well from all of the actors...kudos to them. Karen gets some almost simultaneous analyses regarding the bomb, and tells everyone that the casualty estimates from a bomb wiping out one square mile would only be about 12,000...and that the wind is blowing in such a way as to not endanger most of Los Angeles. But if you happen to live northeast of the city, bend over and kiss your soon-to-be radioactive ass goodbye. That line of thought was interrupted by the Secret Service coming in and telling everyone that under the circumstances, it was time to make like Dick Cheney and head towards the secured bunker.

By the way, what were the chances that all those different news teams would be filming in that direction when the bomb went off? Now video footage of the mushroom cloud lingering could be filmed by almost anyone in the area, but I was “surprised” at how many different stations had pictures of the explosion a second or two after it happened. They probably all swiped it from YouTube. The only thing that would have made the “news broadcasts” better would have been having Pat Robertson on one station blaming it on the gays, Ann Coulter on a second one blaming it on Liberals, and Rosie O’Donnell on a third blaming on Donald Trump.

Pretty decent depiction as well of the people back at Grenada Hills totally freaking out. Widespread panic, mass hysteria, dogs and cats living together!...and Jack stoically standing right in the middle of it getting really pissed off. He calls Buchanan asking for a car to pick him up. “I thought you quit”, Bill responds. “Not after this”, Jack coldly states. Hoo-Ahh! Take that, you Chinese Bastards!!™, Jack’s getting his mojo back despite all you did to him.

And the first thing Jack needs to do is to rescue a man trapped in a helicopter that had crashed on a roof. Here’s the part that confuses me...falling hundreds of feet after the electromagnetic pulse from a nuke wasn’t that bad (it only killed one out of three in the copter), but that fall from the roof of a two story building would be devastating?

Be that as it may, Jack is soon up on the roof, passing by a satellite dish that is still in perfectly good working order, picking up a broken antenna, and prying the door open in time to rescue the co-pilot and getting them all to safety right before it crashes the last horrible 15 feet, going up in a huge fireball. I guess there was still a few pounds of C4 left over from last week and the chopper was carrying it. I personally loved the subliminal message shown here that satellite TV can withstand anything, and that antennas suck.

During this same time, Fayed is making his escape with the four remaining nukes, and makes a call to the obligatory English accented, morally bankrupt “Mr. Fix-It” to try to scrounge up more triggers, and someone that can make them work. Fayed offers McCarthy “double his usual rate”, and the slimy Brit replies that he may have someone he can get, and would know within an hour. McCarthy then picks up his totally trashy-slut girlfriend and starts working the phones.

Back at CTU, Assad meets up with Bill Buchanan...and Bill totally plays Bill Belichick to Assad’s Peyton Manning by refusing to shake his hand when he states that he is truly working towards peace. Not quite the “double loogey to the face” Claudia gave Sevilia on “Rome” the other night, but man, that was still cold. Assad pretty much shrugs it off and gets down to Supplying Vital Information. After learning that Fayed has four more nukes, Assad tells Buchanan that six months earlier (when Assad was a bad guy), he sent Fayed to talk to a Russian general named Gredenko about securing some nukes...but nothing came from it. Oopsy! Guess again, Assad.

So Chloe and Morris do a quick check on people in the U.S. who have had business with Gredenko, and guess whose name stands out like a sore, scarred thumb? Jack’s daddy Phillip, a man Jack hasn’t talked to in nine years. Ruh Ro, Reorge! So Jack rings up the old family mansion, where faithful butler Alfred...er...Sam tells him that he unexpectedly took off the day

before, not even taking his cell phone. Double Ruh Ro! Sam says that he tried to located him through his brother, but to no avail. “Where is Gray?” Jack asks. Who the hell is Gray? Nothing I’ve heard has given us any indication Jack had a brother...we knew about James Cromwell playing Jack’s dad, but this is something out of left field.

Make that something out of the dugout on the left field side, as some flunky has listened in on the phone call, and makes a call to Jack’s brother...who is freaking Graem, the bluetooth wearing little gnome that headed the power brokers manipulating President Logan last year on the whole Syntex poison gas deal last year! Tricksy, tricksy writers...I never saw that one coming. Graem learns that Jack is looking for dear old Dad, and laments that he wasn’t able to kill him when they had the chance...poor baby was deprived of his opportunity to play Cain by those Chinese Bastards!!™, and now Jack’s back in town mucking up his Dr. Evil plans once again.

OK, I have officially decided that the Walid side story will NOT be classified as “Boring”. However, Sandra Palmer is the most likely candidate for this year’s “Kim Bauer Award”, which goes to the self centered idiot who fouls things up the most with their twisted versions of “good intentions”. Sandra’s constant whining about legalities just needs to stop. Great bit from the FBI agent telling her that “she doesn’t have a problem bending the rules when it benefits her as the President’s sister”. Heh.

For Walid himself, he becomes the latest in a long line of “innocent bystanders” that suddenly get drug into Spook World after he reported last week about the Arabic phrase used inside the compound that ended up tipping the Good Guys off about the other four suitcase nukes. For his reward, he gets to risk his life wearing a transmitter/wire and ingratiating himself into the Inner Circle of Evil Henchmen already incarcerated. To “help” Walid, the FBI agents stage a little show in the men’s room, dragging Walid in, quietly telling him the details in between staged threats and accusations. They plant the wire on him...and then tap dance a bit on his face to give it some more “street cred”. Thanks a lot, guys...next time why don’t you just bring in some of that fancy makeup they use on “Mission Impossible”, OK?

At Casa de Scumbucket, Graem greats his teenaged son Josh, who is not short, pudgy, and balding, but tall, athletic, and blonde...sorta like Uncle Jack, eh? Graem also informs his wife Marilyn that Jack might be trying to contact them...and after seeing a look in her eyes that he doesn’t like, accuses her of still having feelings for him. I guess we’re supposed to assume that they dated before Jack married Terri...but you never know.

Ding-Dong...Oh, Hi, Jack! We were just talking about you.

A couple of minutes of awkward chit chat, and Jack is right to business. Graem lies about knowing anything about Dad’s disappearance, and Jack knows he’s lying, so he just gets right to the point and knocks him out with a nasty right cross to the jaw. When Graem wakes up, he’s tied to a chair and Jack gets to work on him. Looks like Graem is not going to be cooperative, so Jack gets straight to the good stuff, pulling a plastic bag over his head to suffocate him. Look! It’s the scene out of Pink Floyd, the Wall with the screaming face!

Final Thoughts.

First political backstabbing to commence next week with Tom trying to neutralize Karen Hayes. And for the umpteenth time we'll have a high ranking official being a pain in the ass as well; this time being the Vice President. How do I know this? Because he's being played by Powers Boothe, and it is a Hollywood Law that he must always be a shifty, bad person.

Who is McCarthy's "expert"? My guess right now is that it is Morris. Because he's also got the suspicious accent, and given his earlier dealings with the rogue satellite, I think he's had dealings with McCarthy in the past. The only question will be if Morris does it willingly, or does it due to Chloe being taken hostage.

I see that once again, the Politically Correct contingent is crying like a stuck pig about how mean the producers/writers of "24" are by making the bad guys Islamic terrorists. Someone call the Wah-bulance! Well guess what, you hyper sensitive wussies? It's going to end up that once again the main bad guys are going to be Russian/Soviet renegades pissed off about something or another...so just take a big swig of STFU juice, OK?

Best Scene: Family Feud! So is Josh actually Jack's son?

Jack's Current Body Count: 3. No additions to the Body Count this week. Jack is still getting up to speed on his intel, and he needs to find out WHO all he needs to kill before he can actually go out there and cut them all down like the dirty dogs they are. Much like Showtime's Dexter, Jack must do research, and can only kill bad people.

Who's the Traitor?: Current "Favorites" in order of probability:

1. Morris. They've already brought up his connection with shady characters.

2. Nadia. That look she shared with Assad seemed a little bizarre to me.

3. Tom. Damn the Constitution and full Police State ahead!

4. Milo. Was he even in this episode?

5. Chloe. Methinks the ubergeekess might be cracking up.

Life Expectancy: Unscientific wild assed guesses on how much longer certain people will still be breathing. Only 19 hours to go.

Graem – 3 more hours. I've also just noticed that from recaps of last year that FOX spelled his name "Graham". I'm not sure why the spelling change, but it doesn't really matter. Within a couple of hours, it will be spelled "bullet-ridden-corpse".

McCarthy – 4 more hours. These types of middle men are always killed off after their usefulness has expired.

Phillip Bauer – 6 more hours. Jack's dad may be trying to get out of the lifestyle his short, bald, ugly son got him into, but his past will catch up with him (after he repents, of course).

Walid – 8 more hours. Stupid noble moves by amateur James Bond wannabees are always appreciated by the CTU people they help. Unfortunately, they tend to have the life expectancies of a Mayfly. Been nice knowing you, Walid.

Morris – 10 hours. Since I'm sticking my neck out by predicting Morris as the latest bomb expert, this would be about the right time for him to go. Hopefully Chloe will shoot him, because Chloe going off with a machine gun in the past has always been sexy (at least for her).

Fayed – 12 hours. That's about the usual time frame when the guy you thought was the main baddie buys the farm, only to find out there is someone worse pulling the strings. (as mentioned...Gredenko would be the current leader in the clubhouse).

Mike Doyle (Rick Schroder) – 15 more hours. All I know of his character is that he is a CTU agent that hooks up with Jack later in the year. They never seem to make it through the day.

President Logan – 17 more hours. In a reversal of the last episode of season 2 of "Deadwood", Powers Boothe gut stabs Logan while saying "you shall NOT mock David Milch".

General Gredenko – 18 hours, 40 minutes. As mentioned above, Fayed will be dispatched at some point which will leave Gredenko as the main bad guy...and they always get it in the end.

Audrey Rains – 18 hours, 50 minutes. Sorry, Audrey, but you shouldn't have signed on to do that idiotic show "The Nine". So she gets TerriBauered in the end.

Falling off the list:

Assad. "24" always has characters who appear in the early episodes, and then fade into the back ground never to be seen again. I think Assad's part in this may be done with his information about Gredenko and his final handshake with Buchanan. I reserve the right to change my mind again next week.