Jack Bauer sleeps with a night light because The Dark is afraid of Jack Bauer.

Time to start speculating about where this show might be going.

At least for this season.

I'm really hoping they wrap up the nuclear threat soon, as the "first crisis" normally is solved between the 12th and 14th hours, leading to something completely different. My belief at this time is that it'll turn into a Jihad of sorts against Omar Hassan as a result of his heavy handed response to the assassination attempt.

Recap

President Taylor actually believes the British Delegate when he says "you can trust me", so she blabs about the nuclear materials. My motormouthed daughter was better at keeping "secrets" when she was eight years old...as she once kept a 'secret' for 15 minutes (it took her that long to find someone to tell). Not ONLY does she tell Mr. I'mObviouslyASpy about the materials, she also spills her guts about CTU running an operation "as we speak". Brilliant!!

While CTU is trying to track down anything about the only Vlad goon Cole left alive (now operating as Jack's chauffeur), Dana has to take her 20th break from National Security to talk to

KevinBob. She tells him that she's busy, and that they have 30 minutes before "the next security pass"...which means I have 30 minutes before I have to go back to making derisive comments about all of them. Arlo, the "creepy stalker who's about to get fired", thinks Dana is having an affair, and is contemplating telling Cole. And I'm already contemplating my second double, just six minutes into the show.

Ernst, meet Vlad. Vlad, meet Ernst's gun. Jack wants to talk to Renee. Actually, Jack wants to pull Renee out of there, and she's having nothing to do with it.

Not fair! Three minutes after I was PROMISED to not have to deal with the World's Stupidest Robbers, we're back there again, as Dana decides to skip out of a mandatory meeting with BubbaHastings to help commit a little Grand Larceny. She's also watching them through the security cameras, and I'm sure there is no way that Arlo (or Chloe) could hack in and watch the same things.

In any case, it seems that both of the KevinBobbsie Twins are too stupid to remember numbers, so they almost screw things up a couple of times. JimRay even whines once "man, that's too many numbers". So how do these numbers work for you: 9mm or 20-30 years? Cause that's pretty much the only two options for these two. JimRay decides to stick around for awhile to see what else he can plunder. Remember all those reality shows with the guy from the original "Cops" program showing stupid criminals caught on tape? Those people were Einstein and Oppenheimer compared to these two.

Vlad's busy checking out Craig's List for "Weapons Grade Nuclear Materials", but isn't having much luck. During the down time Jack is sizing Vlad up...and he's quickly realized that Vlad considers Renee his property. It's about all Jack could do to not rip his jugular vein out there as he stands.

Back at the Borscht Garden Restaurant, Corleonovich coerces a Russian Eastern Orthodox priest to oversee a burial of Oleg in the back yard of his restaurant...pure genius on that move...not that Vitaly is going to live long enough to be arrested once they dig up the body, so I guess it doesn't matter. Josef is still pouting in the pantry, so Vitaly gives him an inspirational speech that is probably about as effective as the halftime speech given by Rich Rodriguez to the Wolverines before they went out and got even more humiliated by Ohio State. I realize now that when they were younger and Oleg would whine to his brother, "Daddy always loved you best!", he wasn't exaggerating.

They are interrupted as Vlad finally Googled "Russian Mobster in New York City with Uranium For Sale". In the conversation, it appears as if Vitaly might actually be one of the few people we've met here this season who ISN'T a total freaking moron...as he seems to understand that if someone is actually calling around inquiring about nuclear rods, those "someones" might be connected to law enforcement. So while Vlad is calling the next person on his Google list, Vitaly is sending over the hit squad.

At the UN, Hassan is looking over his photographs, and wondering "Who Would Mohammad Torture?" Hassan's security chief Tarin tells Omar that he had tortured the delegate Jamaad, and that he thinks he was telling the truth. Omar responds by telling him to have his people arrest Jamaad's wife and kids, and torture them, too. Tarin calls Omar out on it...which inspires Omar to get all melancholy...

"You're right. Without my wife here there is no one to talk sense to me anymore. Perhaps you're right. Perhaps I have been a power-mad despot going on a blood orgy. Perhaps I need to see the light and be the shining beacon the people believed me to be when they elected me. Perhaps I'm now a changed man."

Naaahhhhhhhh. "Tarin's now out the door? And he actually bought that B.S.? You! Second-in-Command Flunky! Go make me and Dick Cheney proud!"

I shall now make a little change. Omar has went off the reservation, and he now reminds me of Achmed, the Dead Terrorist
. Therefore, for the duration of the show, he shall be known as Achmed, the Dead President. "I KEEEEELL YOU!!!"

Personal Observation: Can they just go ahead and KEEEELL everyone other than Jack, Renee, Chloe, and Cole? It would be the only thing right now that would truly make me happy.

Back at Dumbasses-R-Us, Short-Bus and Shorter-Bus have screwed around for too long, and are now in danger of being caught, so of course KevinBob calls Dana, who once again leaves her post (BTW, wouldn't an extremely secure government facility have a policy AGAINST

personal cell phones in the work place?). Dana once again gets online to help them escape...and then JimRay beats a cop with a baseball bat (after the cop calls it in). The next Interesting or Unique thing that happens with this subplot will be its first.

Tarin goes to Kayla and tells her that he knows that her daddy was lying to him. Kayla doesn't believe it, until Achmed's lower level goons come there and arrest Tarin. While this subplot isn't even close to the level of stupid as KevinBob's, it is completely lame and useless, and taking valuable screen time away from our heroes.

Speaking of which, it's time to FINALLY enjoy this episode tonight!

Vlad has completed his goose chase, and wants to take the $5 million consolation prize, along with his newfound bootycall. Renee pushes him to call everyone back, so he does what any manly-man (read; low life piece of pond scum) would do and punches her twice in the face. Conveniently, she lands near a kitchen knife, which fits just perfectly in Vlad's left eye. SQUISH!! (nice sound effect...pass the barf bag, please). And his neck. And his ear. And his chest. And I'm pretty damn sure she landed a crotch shot as well.

She may be batshit crazy, but I still love her.

That is, until Jack comes in, and without thinking she stabs Jack in the gut.

Now, as any long time fan of "24" knows...gut stabs are ALWAYS fatal. Get shot in the chest? You'll probably live (see also Taylor, Henry). But if you get stabbed in the gut, you're usually dead before you hit the floor. The over/under for any given season of people who died within five seconds of being stabbed in the gut is around seven.

Unless you're Jack Bauer, as Renee actually did Jack a favor as he was able to pull the knife out, and perform a perfect No Look Tracheotomy (copyright Pup, 2010) on Hugo as he was pulling out a gun. Seriously, that was even cooler than Renee going Ralphie Parker and stabbing Vlad's eye out. Jack then grabs a gun and pops the other Russian goon before running over to comfort Renee.

Jack puts a butterfly bandage on this midsection, and is good to go (of course), as he tells BubbaHastings the news. Bubba looks as if his shrimp net just came up empty after hearing about Renee making Vlad into a knife-cushion...and takes it out by snapping at Dana. Meanwhile, Renee is finally breaking down. Jack comforts Renee with a nice little bonding scene (that induced nausea in some of the more macho on the TCF boards).

Jack hears something outside, and thinks that Cole and his forensic team have gotten there fast, but no, it's Vitaly's crew. Jack hides Renee, and offers himself up to the Russians, who of course oblige and take him away to the next group of Dead Russians Walking. Cole's team naturally arrives 60 seconds later. And it looks like they weren't able to monitor the Russians...since they used some tunnels to take him out of sight. Those tricksy, tricksy, Ruskies!

Final Thoughts

10 minutes of excellence. 10 minutes of commercials. 40 minutes of total, mind-numbing crap.

A good post from our owner and editor-in-chief Rich Swerbinski, who asks, "*What's more annoying? The hilljack ex-boyfriend story line in general? The contorted facial expressions when Dana Walsh is talking on the phone to Billy Bob? Or the peering glances in the background every time she darts off to field one of that farkin hilljacks phone calls? I can't take it anymore. The storyline fills me with rage. I want to find out where the executive producer lives, abduct him, then perform a "best of Jack Bauer" series of torture activities on him and his family members".*

My opinion is that if this series doesn't get back on track by the time March Madness begins, then its Nielsen ratings are going to be approaching levels where an executive of the CW Network would say, "man, that really sucks".

One thing to perhaps look forward to, and that is that the previews seem to indicate that Dana Tells Cole next week. Let's hope she does so because the KevinBobbsie Twins have been killed/arrested, and she knows the jig is up. And then let's hope that Cole immediately shoots

her.

Speaking of Cole...one last Swerb quote:

"Keanu Reeves thinks Freddie Prinze Jr is a bad actor"

(And you thought that I was brutal).

Bauer Body Count

Five. Still a little low, but I believe he's pacing himself so that he can finish up strong.

Expiration Dates / Chances of Survival

Anticipated Time of Remaining Life for Key 24 Characters, and the odds that they will survive the "day".

Escorted Feet-First off the Island: Vlad. Expired two hours early than my "sell by date". But he did go out in a memorable manner.

KevinBob's Hilljack Friend JimRay - Dead by 12 AM. Chances of survival: 0% Had to push this one back an hour (DAMMIT!)

KevinBob - Also Dead by 12 AM. About to be the next contestant on the FOX game show "Are You Smarter Than a Box of Rocks" (answer: no). I get this baaaaad feeling that he's going to get captured, and not killed, in order to piss me off even longer. Chances of survival: 25%

Fredo Hassan - Dead by 12 AM. Spent ANOTHER hour happily contracting venereal diseases that have no known cure. Might be getting shot next week by Vitaly IF the Russian mobster is convinced that "Ernst" is legit . Chances of survival: 10%.

Vitaly Corleonovich - Dead by 4 AM. Sadly, I have to push this date back by three hours, as I think this will drag out a bit longer. Chances of survival: 5%

Josef - Dead by 6 AM. Turning on his father is now a 100% probablility. Chances of survival: 50%

Ethan Kanin - Dead by 8 AM. Last week I was talking about the heart problems. I think now he'll just die of boredom being around President Taylor. Chances of survival: 20%

Achmed the Dead President - Dead by 9 AM. Stabbed in the right eye by his daughter. Chance of survival: 67%.

BubbaHastings - Dead by 3 PM. He might even be dead now...no one would notice. Chances of survival: 75%

Dana Starbuck - Dead by 4 PM. I WISH she was dead right now. Chances of survival: 50%

Renee Walker - Dead by 4 PM. Teri Bauer Karma is waiting for her now that Jack said "you have me" to her. Chances of survival: 40%