

WHO'LL SURVIVE THIS EXPLOSIVE

by Stephen Battaglio



EPISODE?

All hell breaks loose when the people of Jericho come to New Bern (above); Emily comforts Jake



Someone on *Jericho* will die this week so that the show may live on.

It sounds heartless. But the producers of the CBS drama about life in a small Kansas town after a nuclear catastrophe are sacrificing one of the series' regulars in the battle-fueled finale as part of a long-term plan to take

the story in a new direction. Executive producer Carol Barbee will only describe the victim as "somebody who had a deal to be here for the next five years."

Is it bad boy-turned-local hero Jake Green (Skeet Ulrich)? His father, ex-mayor Johnston Green (Gerald McRaney)? Or suspected

terrorist/CIA agent Robert Hawkins (Lennie James)? To keep the identity secret, Barbee and other producers referred to the death as "The Great Unpleasantness." They even shot a fake ending so no extras would leak the victim's name.

Barbee says the death sets up a new story line that will get past who dropped the bombs and focus on the rebuilding of the country. "It helps activate certain characters in a way that could never have happened otherwise," she says. "It's like burning off the big tree so that new growth could happen."

The roots of this looming conflict run deep. New Bern, the neighboring town to Jericho, needs food. Jericho has food. New Bern has a munitions factory. Do the math. "The residents of New Bern decide they are so desperate, they'll choose war," Barbee says. A flashback to six years earlier will show folks from both towns at the wedding of Jake's brother, Eric (Kenneth Mitchell), and his now-deceased wife, April. She was from New Bern, so this war could get personal.

With its sluggish ratings, *Jericho* needs a strong finish to win renewal for the fall. Barbee says there'll be enough resolution in the finale so that viewers will be satisfied if it's the last episode of the show. "From the very beginning," she says, "we arced out Season 1 as the first chapter of this novel and it has an explosive ending." As if *Jericho* hasn't had enough explosions.

Jericho WEDNESDAY, 5/9, 8/7c, CBS
(also online at amazon.com/unbox, cbs.com/innertube and iTunes)