

'Jericho' back as life goes on after nuclear attacks

By Mike Hughes
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Last fall, CBS' "Jericho" accomplished the near-impossible.

It introduced a fictional Kansas town coping with life after nuclear blasts had hit cities. It made viewers care about quiet people with fuzzy pasts.

And then it took a long break. Fans fussed; bloggers buzzed.

"They love the mystery of 'Who is Robert Hawkins?' and 'Where has Jake been?'" says producer Carol Barbee. "And then (there are) people who just blog about who's sleeping with who."

Questions answered

Now, after a 10-week break, they will find out. "Jericho" recaps the first half of the season on 8 p.m. Wednesday on Channels 12 and 7; a week later, it starts the second half, which has 11 episodes.

And that first new episode Feb. 21 will tell Hawkins' back story.

"It's a doozy," says Lennie James, who plays him. James is British, with a background in Shakespeare, theater and short TV series.

"Back home in England, a season is six episodes," he says. "So this is already the longest I've played a character."

At first, James tried to do it without knowing Hawkins' story. "I thought it would make the producers think I was a really deep actor," he jokes.

He knew only what viewers know: Hawkins reached Jericho shortly be-



CBS

On "Jericho," Jake Green (played by Skeet Ulrich) and Emily Sullivan (Ashley Scott) have a complicated romantic relationship.

fore the explosions, with his estranged wife and their kids. He bought a house with cash and seemed to know a lot; he had monitoring equipment in the basement.

The Feb. 21 episode – showing the days before the crash – will explain the basics of Hawkins, leaving room for more.

It will also start to explain Jake Green, the prodigal who returned home after five years and has acted heroically since the explosions.

"He's not a hero, necessarily," says Skeet Ulrich, who plays him. "I think the guilt of his past doesn't allow him to think in that way."

He is, however, at the core of the town of Jericho.

His father, Johnston Green (Gerald McRaney) is the mayor, a hard-edged guy whose political opponent, Gray Anderson (Michael Gaston) is even harder. Jake's mom, Gail, (Pamela Reed) is solid; his brother Eric (Kenneth Mitchell) is a sturdy sort who has left his wife for an-

other woman.

Jake's own love life is complicated. By all logic, he should have married Emily Sullivan, a beauty who savors their hometown.

"I think she's always been in love with Jake," says Ashley Scott, who plays her. "Jake went away and she had to kind of start a life again ... and found Roger. He was 'that stable, good guy.'"

Roger was gone during the explosions and was presumed dead. Jake rescued kids on a school bus and befriended their teacher, Heather Lisinski (Sprague Gordon). He was also drawn to Emily, creating a romantic triangle.

Survivors return

That became complicated in the final moments of the Nov. 29 cliffhanger: Tattered survivors wandered into town, including Roger.

"She really struggles with that," Scott says, "but what do you do? ... Emily was engaged to him and loves him very much and is there to ... nurse him

back to health. He saw a lot of really bad things."

There have been complications. Gracie Leigh, the store owner, was killed; the teen who worked for her shot someone in revenge. Stanley Richmond, the young farmer, saw townspeople help bring in the corn crop.

Then there is Jonah Prowse (James Remar), Emily's estranged father. He has an outlaw enterprise nearby.

Emily has stood up to him once and Barbee promises more. "You'll see that she is Jonah's daughter and I think you'll see her activated in a way that is very cool."

Questions will be answered, Barbee promises. "By the end of the season, you will know where Jake's been for the past five years. You will know ... who was behind the bombings, who did it."

That will leave more questions. Life is rarely simple in Jericho, Kan.

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