

Episode by episode notes

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- Sheets

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- “If nobody can catch her frankly it’s not my job to care who she kills”
- “Drinking from a tiny cup doesn’t make you intimidating by the way”
- Banalities interrupt all conversations (ADD)

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- Eve is already obsessed by the way she’s talking about Villanelle. Opening scene is basically a love letter to her
 - “So is that like a square face or an oval face?” humor undercuts the tension
- “They are really nice.” “Oh, I hope not.”
- She likes watching the life leave their eyes, almost like she’s looking for something
- Talking about two different things (risky job vs ricky egg)
- Two-way obsession begins, Villanelle gives Eve’s name
- “Do you smoke? No. Shame. Now would be a good time.” - great dry humor
- “Now I am going to hide and you are going to find me” so weird
- Villanelle is obsessed with Eve in a “cute” way.
- She’s annoying like Constantine’s kid
- “That was massively poignant”
- Bickering over pronunciation
- Fat panda anecdote
- Nobody seems that concerned with their actual jobs, it’s just their job, except for Eve and Villanelle which highlights their connection
- Gives the belt, it feels like she’s stalking Eve but I never feel like Eve is in danger, why?
 - Maybe because while she doesn’t have an explicit code of ethics, it’s clear that she’ll only kill as a contract, to defend herself, or for revenge
- She’s luring him and killing bill reminds us that she is incredibly dangerous, there are real stakes, this isn’t fun and games

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- Villanelle returning to the same prison, returning to past to kill a part of her distant and recent past
- The twelve is not something I’m particularly interested in, like it’s interesting but I’m most interested in this cat and mouse game
- Is she doing this for revenge? Because it’s right? Or because obsession?
 - Is that the real title? Like what’s eating Gilbert grape
- Tit for tat scene is peak Waller bridge
- We all die in the end anyway so don’t worry about Niko hahaha

- Does she know already about the twelve? Is she one of them? Is she sending Eve on this wild goose chase?
- Villanelle can't get out of her own way
- Why doesn't Carolyn want to know about oxana?
- Carolyn "I'm bordering on the profound" "It's always those I love most that I like least"
- "Very Russian"
- "One of them is a little prick and she's keeping me up at night"

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- How efficient things are when you're a dick to everybody
- Villanelle and the kid is so good
 - Is it hard to be bad? Not if you practice

Article/Interview Notes

[Difficult Men Interview](#)

- *Difficult Men*, really refers to this new kind of hero — or anti-hero — what [James] Gandolfini brought to Tony Soprano, making him, not just sort of a monster, which he is in many ways, but a person that we rooted for and cared for despite his monstrosity. That became the model for the next 10 years of television and beyond, right to where we are now ... so you started to have Tony Sopranos all across the dial, whether it was narcissistic adulterer on *Mad Men*, the serial killer on *Dexter*, and so on."
- "You know, originally, the common wisdom had been that Americans might appreciate, or viewers might be able to accept difficult characters, complicated characters when they went out to the movies. But that there was some magical thing that happened when you came home, that you didn't want these men in your living room; that it was too intimate. And that turned out to not be true because, you know, we invited AI in every day. We invited Tony in every day."
- "By the time we get to "Breaking Bad," the stated project of that show is to take, at every stage, Walter White down this rabbit hole and making him worse and worse and taking away every possible justification that the audience would have for continuing to root for him, and then, by implication, asking the audience, well, why are you still rooting for him?"

Difficult Men Excerpt

- "Gandolfini understood this dynamic and sometimes used it to his advantage; the heavy bathrobe that became Tony's signature, transforming him into a kind of domesticated bear, was murder under the lights in mid-summer, but Gandolfini insisted on wearing it between takes."
- "Andrew Schneider, who wrote for The Sopranos in its final season, had cut his teeth writing or TV's version of 'The Incredible Hulk', in which each episode, by rule, featured at least two instances of mild-mannered, regretful David Banner "hulking out" and

morphing into a giant, senseless green id. This would turn out to be good preparation for writing a serialized cable drama twenty years later.”

- “They were so, in part, because these were also men in recognizable struggle. They belonged to a species you might call Man Beset or Man Harried—badgered and bothered and thwarted by the modern world. If there was a signature prop of the era, it was the cell phone, always ringing, rarely at an opportune time and even more rarely with good news. Tony Soprano’s jaunty ring tone still provokes a visceral response in anyone who watched the show. When the period prohibited the literal use of cell phone technology, you could see it nonetheless—in the German butler trailing an old-fashioned phone after the gangster boss in *Boardwalk Empire*, or in the poor lackeys charged with delivering news to Al Swearengen, these unfortunate human proxies often bearing the consequences of the same violent wishes Tony seemed to direct to his ever-bleating phone.”
- “In other words, middle-aged men predominated because middle-aged men had the power to create them. And certainly the autocratic power of the showrunner-auteur scratches a peculiarly masculine itch. The auteur theory, Pauline Kael wrote in one of her attacks on that orthodoxy, “is an attempt by adult males to justify staying inside the small range of experience of their boyhood and adolescence—that period when masculinity looked so great and important . . .” Or as Barbara Hall, herself a showrunner, said of her male counterparts: “Big money, big toys, and a kind of warfare. What’s not to like?”

<https://www.theringer.com/tv/2018/5/17/17364388/killing-eve-barry-anti-heroes-assassin-shows>

- “the defining innovation of TV’s so-called Golden Age was the recognition that the natural bond between audience and protagonist sets up a series of ethical flytraps when a hero stops acting like one. Tony Soprano strangled a man in the fifth episode of his show; Carrie Bradshaw hurled a pair of McDonald’s sandwiches at a wall during an argument in the second season of hers. Often, there’s a boiling frog component to these reversals, all the better to lure us into a false sense of security. Walter White underwent a slow-motion metamorphosis before he became Heisenberg”
- “These people aren’t even antiheroes. They’re villains we spend a lot of time with and develop affection for—the former by necessity, the latter by design. Both shows turn that affection back on the viewer almost as soon as it’s formed, raising the harrowing possibility that Barry isn’t the only one who’s wrongly convinced he’s on the side of the angels, nor Eve the only one allowing herself to be seduced by the dark side.”
- “Villanelle doesn’t have emotions so much as she tries them on, and guilt isn’t nearly as fun to play with as malice or joy.”
- “Without any internal struggle between Villanelle and her conscience, *Killing Eve* exports much of its conflict to Eve and the push-pull between the spy and her target. Like many cops-and-criminals sagas, *Killing Eve* is a story about obsession; more specifically, it’s a story about being obsessed with someone you have no power to change or influence.”
- “*Killing Eve* is well aware we’re just as drawn to Villanelle as Eve is. She’s liberated, carefree, fun, funny, and bewitchingly beautiful. Eve’s attitude toward her is equal parts envy and admiration, with fear and disgust as distant thirds. But because Eve is well

acquainted with Villanelle's body count, her enchantment comes with a compulsion to rationalize. This puts her squarely in the shoes of the viewer, vainly searching for redeeming qualities in an objectively irredeemable person to justify her fascination. "I know something happened to you," she tells Villanelle in their first extended face-to-face encounter, a tense dinner Eve hosts against her will in her own kitchen. "What did he do to you?" She's referring to Villanelle's first-ever casualty, a murder-castration committed back when she was known as Oksana. Eve is looking for an explanation—an origin story to clarify Villanelle's behavior, and therefore at least partially excuse it. Villanelle knows it, too: "I need someone to help me," she sobs. "I don't want to do this anymore." Eve doesn't fall for it, which is what makes her a worthy adversary for Villanelle and not just another hapless spook. Still, you can see her fight against the temptation."

- J Note: Of course, Villanelle's origin is fairly bland, and not at all something that would make her more sympathetic. Perhaps this comments on how far we're all willing to go to justify characters we fall in love with (Boiling frog again)
- Much of it also comes from a tendency to place ourselves in the perspective we're presented with, encouraged by a lifetime's worth of film and TV. It's a hard habit to break, enough so that the shows have led to some jarring dissonance in real life. Bill Hader has expressed discomfort at being told his character gunning down strangers without remorse "was straight-up *hot*" when it was "supposed to be crazy disturbing." Over the past few weeks, Tumblr has turned into a Villanelle fan club. We're so used to leading roles being aspirational ones that we continue to act like that's still the case, even when it manifestly isn't.
 - J Note: I think this does overthink one key point - Villanelle is straight-up intoxicating and likable. I would argue that the real question isn't "Should we like Villanelle?" but rather "*Why?*"

<https://www.newyorker.com/magazine/2014/04/07/the-great-divide-emily-nussbaum>

- "As anyone who has ever read the comments on a recap can tell you, there has always been a less ambivalent way of regarding an antihero: as a hero. Some of the most passionate fans of "The Sopranos" fast-forwarded through Carmela and Dr. Melfi to freeze-frame Tony strangling a snitch with electrical wire."
- Truthfully, my haters had a point: who wants to hear that they're watching something *wrong*?
- "Perhaps it's not so odd that, around the time the digital revolution began, another Archie-like figure rose up, as if from TV's unconscious: the rancorous middle-aged white male antihero, nostalgic for a past when he was powerful—and often conceived by a middle-aged white male showrunner, the demographic with the greatest economic ability to shake things up. As with "All in the Family," the best of these dramas shoved TV forward with a rough charisma, blasting through piety and formula, frightening us and turning us on—and, often, dividing the audience in two. Then this genre, too, became a pious formula."

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Aq1871YNaWA>

- SM: The kill scenes on the show - I know this again makes me sound like a sociopath - they're delightful. But there's something really nice - I mean, I feel like we've seen so many portrayals of assassins. Pretty much, when Villanelle - when people ask if she's there to kill them, she just gives it right up and she just says, 'Yeah.' That must be so fun to play.
- JC: It is. I mean, the best part was getting a new episode through and I was just thinking, 'What on earth has Phoebe Waller-Bridge got me doing now? But it was always just something so bizarre and random, which - again I think keeps the show quite fresh because it's not quite what you expect.

TV Tropes

- Black Humor
 - To sum it up, black humor is a type of comedy that deals with negative aspects of life, deriving humour due to it being shocking and unexpected, and in part because it many time reflects a truth that might be too grim to state seriously, something quite common for example in Soviet Russia, and quite abundant in political humor.
- Affably Evil
 - There is absolutely nothing separating them from being normal, polite people except for the fact that they want to Take Over the World or use human souls to power their Artifact of Doom. They're not the Stepford Smiler or the Bitch in Sheep's Clothing— their affability is a genuine part of their personality, not a mask. If they have underlings, expect them to be a Benevolent Boss. In one way, they're the opposite of an Anti-Hero. They may Pet the Dog on occasion, but won't hesitate to kick it with steel-toed boots the next second if it helps them accomplish their Evil Plan. They may well be a Villain with Good Publicity because, after all, being evil doesn't mean you have to be *anti-social*.

American Dark Comedy

- "Black humor is a genre of comic irreverence that flippantly attacks what are normally society's most sacredly serious subjects - especially death"
- "Going beyond satire, black humor's message is that there is no message, so audience members had best steal a laugh before they are too dead to do even that"
- "In black comedy, however, absurdity has become predator"
- "There is nothing inherently new about dark humor; it can be found in the work of Aristophanes (448-385 BC)"
- "Freud believed man was largely motivated by his dark side, which is the basic premise of black humor"

Recap Notes

[AV Club Recaps by Lisa Weidenfeld](#)

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- In our first moments with Villanelle, we know something is deeply wrong with her. She doesn't know how to relate to a little girl, but on some level she's curious about what she could do differently.
- The show is both following a few pop culture tropes and also overturning them. The lawman obsessed with his subject is nothing new, but the fact that cat and mouse here are both women comes into play immediately. Villanelle is successful in part because she's a woman, as Eve points out. The first man we find out about her killing would never have seen her as a threat, and her beauty acts as a shield in Tuscany until she's ready to strike.
- Eve's encounters with being underestimated end much more poorly for her. She's not getting away with anything. Instead, her work is so boring, and so beneath her abilities, that as soon as she gets caught doing an off-the-records investigation, her boss tries to get fired, too.
- [Eve] spends her free time building murder conspiracies and coming up with elaborate ways to fake kill her husband. And Villanelle is obviously experimenting with how far she can take her kills before she gets caught. They're both also partnered with an older man who endeavors unsuccessfully to rein in their more dangerous impulses.
 - Eve and Bill squabble affectionately over croissants
 - Villanelle's idea of a fun with her handler Konstantin is either watch a movie or stage a death scene for him.

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- "She is outsmarting the smartest of us," says Eve, "and for that she deserves to do or kill whoever the hell she wants."
- If no one is smart enough to stop her, Villanelle has earned her kills. It's been clear that Eve admires her, and now she's just put into words exactly why that is. For someone like Eve, who has been unfulfilled, who knows she's smarter than what she's done so far in life, Villanelle represents someone living to the utmost of her abilities.
- She knows how a normal young woman should behave, and she doesn't care. That information is useful only insofar as it helps her get what she wants, particularly from men.
 - Hugging Konstantin gets her her next target
 - Uses menstruation to discourage men from questioning her
- She is interested in peering into people's eyes when they transform (death, orgasm)
- Eve/Bill vs Villanelle/Konstantin
 - Eve negotiates her new position of authority over Bill, who's being sulky about reporting to her
 - Villanelle takes a knife to Konstantin's throat to remind him that her skill set is more important than his
- "Letting yourself into my apartment and drinking from a tiny cup doesn't make you intimidating, by the way. It's just rude." It's really, really hard to remember that Villanelle is the bad guy.

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- The whole concept of the murderer and the detective who understand each other all too well works best if you believe that not only are they equals, but that they're two people who recognize something vital and unique in each other.
- It's also hard to imagine Eve being as blasé about the people Villanelle has killed now that someone close to her has been taken. Villanelle never suffers any consequences, but there's a lot of potential for her to regret this move.
- Music always so clearly announces itself as Spy Music, in the same clever way the show comments on other tropes of the genre.

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- Re: assassination buddies - Their lack of guile brings to mind Eve's earlier declaration that Villanelle deserves to kill whoever she wants because she's smarter than everyone else. As soon as Nadia makes the choice to trust Villanelle, all because Villanelle says some sweet, romantic things to her, you know Nadia is doomed. There's just no way the Villanelle we know would sincerely mean those things.
- The whole plotline serves as an important reminder of the way *Killing Eve* toys with how you feel about Villanelle. In one episode, it's possible to feel concerned for her safety, pleased she's gentle with someone from her past, and scared of her, as she's basically as relentless as the Terminator.
- [Eve] is still acting as though this is a normal investigation, even though it isn't
- Villanelle's puckish sense of humor results in both the fanny joke and the non-birthday prank, which is a very elaborate way of establishing for Konstantin that she knows he's going to be mad at her, but he'd better be very, very careful about what he does about it.

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- Part of what makes the central relationship so fascinating on this show is that it is permanently tense. Whatever else happens between them, there's no looking past the fact that Villanelle is an incredibly dangerous person. And the writing and directing are so good that it's perfectly possible to have scenes with Villanelle where you know no one is really in danger (i.e., when she talks to Konstantin) and still have her be a terrifying person any time she interacts with anyone else (i.e., Eve and Frank).
- Eve, armed with the information about her early penchant for violence, knows full well that Villanelle would be a killer even if she wasn't paid to be one.
- It's hard to know when to trust the emotions that you see on Villanelle's face. When she looks upset, is she? When she looks surprised, overwhelmed, is she?
- One of the things *Killing Eve* has done extraordinarily well so far is to make you really look at people. The characters on this show are so often framed in ways that force you to examine them, when there's no dialogue occurring, and you're forced to wonder if someone is watching them. Or to wonder how aware they are of the effect they're having, like Carolyn Martens' habit of appearing to be perpetually hanging out alone in rooms, waiting for Eve to enter. She somehow manages to make a dramatic entrance each time, even though Eve is the one entering.

- This is the type of show that features both complex psychological warfare and also a line about someone's knob being cut off followed by a scene of someone frying sausages.

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- Both Eve and Villanelle are currently doing what they love. It's thrilling and yet completely unsustainable, in part because both of them are dependent on handlers whose motives they don't know
- Handler relationship
 - Villanelle overestimates her usefulness to Konstantin, never questions her mission or target
 - Eve is totally dependent on Carolyn for resources, connections, and her entire job
- Villanelle is not interested in getting rescued, just sustaining her current situation
 - One she will later refer to as nice life, fun job
- It is very easy to watch this episode of *Killing Eve* hoping Villanelle gets out soon while also simultaneously knowing that this is a person who belongs in prison. She is in the place that Eve is trying to put her, and if you want Eve to emerge the victor on this show, you should want her to be there. And yet, here we are again, hoping this magnetic and charming psychopath escapes her circumstances, even though we know she's just going to kill again. It's that lick on Konstantin that does it.

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- So what happens when both your law enforcement figure and your criminal can't trust their bosses?
- Even for a contract killer, the way she kills the woman sent to kill her is incredibly gruesome. And she's the type of person who pauses in the midst of her own prison getaway to admire the gore of innocent passersby killed during her rescue. She's like a chef admiring a really well-made meal at a new restaurant.
- Villanelle wants Eve to love her more than her family (Nico)
- Loved also the parallel between her saying "Go back to London. Traveling makes you rude" and Konstantin saying "I advise you to have a sausage and go home." The adults are really trying to create the sense that they're in charge, despite all evidence that no one will listen to them.

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- *Fleabag* was so deeply humane, so profound, and so darkly funny. What was a writer like that doing with a show about a government worker hunting down a cosmopolitan assassin? The answer, apparently, was making a show every bit as humane and funny as *Fleabag*.
- In the brief time that we've known her, she's become such a specific portrait of a woman so deeply bored by her life that she wants to burn it all down.
- Eve wants to be Villanelle, or kill her, or study her, or maybe have sex with her. Her fascination has so much to do with what Villanelle's life is like, and it's not even clear if she knows what she wants from Villanelle.

- Her world may not have morals in the way that most of ours do, but it's fairly orderly, all the same.

Stray Observations

- This show is such a brilliant fan of what it's making. She's not breaking any ground story wise really, it's a fairly typical plot structure for a spy thriller, but what is fascinating is how much fun it has along the way in dirtying up the polish. Eve is brought into mi6 hq with martens line about a rat drinking coke,
- It seems to be asking us why we love villanelle and are obsessed with people like her since she's obviously atrocious, and then offering its answer: she's just so *different*.
- The show focuses on the central couple/relationship. Eve and Villanelle help define each other
- How is this different than mindhunter/other serial killer focused shows?
 - Female
 - Unconventional angle
 - Her targets are given to her as opposed to a man preying on society
 - Gives us a [slight](#) moral out for rooting for her
 - Above all else, it's funny

Structural Notes

Titles to try:

- Can We Love a Villain? | KILLING EVE
- What Villanelle So Fascinating? | KILLING EVE
- Can You Root For a Villain? | KILLING EVE
- Love, Obsession, and Blurry Lines in KILLING EVE
- KILLING EVE's Relatable Psychopath | Why You Should Watch
- KILLING EVE: Drama is Funny | Why You Should Watch

Things to definitely address:

- Humor
- Feminine angle
- We love to watch
- Konstantin/Villanelle vs Bill & Carolyn/Eve
- Villanelle's underwhelming backstory
 - Commentary on us as viewers wanting to sympathize with her

Thesis Brainstorm

- Villanelle is so fascinating because she shares so many parallels with Eve, and lures the audience in by playing on our expectations

- Where many shows toggle between humor and drama, Killing Eve intrinsically combines them
- Where's the conversation here? What are you adding to the conversation? Lots of shows toggle back and forth, some better than others (Girls). Psychopath angle is stronger

Outline

Outline 1

- I. Introduction
 - A. Difficult Men
 - B. Killing Eve yada yada
 - C. Big question: Why do we love Villanelle and how is she different than other psychopaths?
 1. Thesis: Villanelle is so intoxicating because she lures Eve, and the audience in with humor, femininity, and expectations
- II. Eccentricity/voice/humor/charisma
 - A. Place to start is how peculiar Villanelle is
 1. Lick scene
 2. Ruining a kid's gelato
 3. Faking her own death for fun
 4. This is a product of the show at large
 - a) "This is the type of show that features both complex psychological warfare and also a line about someone's knob being cut off followed by a scene of someone frying sausages." - Weidenfeld
 - B. The way she talks/Humor
 1. ADD, hard to take her too seriously
 - a) "That was massively poignant"
 - b) Asks about sheets
 - c) Why are you doing this? I don't know!
 - d) Makes you think that she's just concerned with the simple things in life
 - (1) I just want a good life, fun job
 - (2) Everybody is kind of like this in reference to their jobs, it's just what they do
 2. Her mind seems like such an interesting (and fun) place that we want to understand it. We want to go to there, to live inside of it.
 - a) The best shows make you feel a place, offer a transporative experience, putting you inside a place
 - (1) Killing Eve does this with Villanelle's mind
 - b) That makes it really hard to remember that she's the bad guy
- III. Femininity
 - A. Villanelle uses her femininity to slide under the radar
 1. Her first kill is because her target was a misogynist

2. She uses her beauty to go where she wants
3. She uses feminine excuses like tampons to divert men
- B. She doesn't feel like a stalker/predator, even though she is
 1. Show rides this internal conflict
 - a) We get used to her not being menacing and then she does something explicitly evil

IV. Eve/Villanelle Relationship/Expectations

A. Obsession

1. Eve is the audience surrogate for the story
 - a) Obsession links us to Eve and then us to Villanelle
 - (1) "She deserves to kill whoever the hell she wants"
2. We are obsessed with watching murderers/psychopaths/sociopaths on TV. Why?
 - a) Because they're good at what they do, and above all else I think we want to see people doing things expertly.
 - b) Hypnotized by violence
3. Eve wants to believe that Villanelle has a tragic backstory that will explain everything: she doesn't, and it wouldn't matter if she did
 - a) The show is full of these little nods to the audience that comment on our willingness to sympathize with the villain

B. Eve's parallels to Villanelle

1. Handler relationships
2. Women in male worlds which is to their strength
 - a) Eve's opinion is discarded in the pilot
 - b) We generally think of serial killers as men
3. Both Villanelle and Eve are doing what they love
4. This showcase of their similarities intentionally blurs the lines between hero and villain, even when we keep getting confirmation that Villanelle is a monster
 - a) "In one episode, it's possible to feel concerned for [Villanelle's] safety, pleased she's gentle with someone from her past, and scared of her, as she's basically as relentless as the Terminator." - Weidenfeld

V. Conclusion

- A. Killing Eve finds new angles to work on the difficult man convention and those new angles show us what works so well about it in the first place. For whatever reason, we want to root for these characters. We'll make excuses for them. We'll look the other way on obvious points of concern. We'll even hide our infatuation with them behind an interrogation.
 1. Are we bad fans for falling into these honeypots? Maybe, but that ignores the simple fact that these characters are intoxicating

- B. Villanelle is no different, and in fact, the fresh new angles of humor, eccentricity, femininity, and obsession make her an important new pillar in the long TV history of psychopaths that are just too cool to ignore