

Coroner: Noelle Carbone and Sean Reycraft Talk "All's Well"

[Bridget Liszewski](#)



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***** Warning: This article contains spoilers for the Coroner episode "All's Well" *****

It's been clear from the start that *Coroner* is a series about Jenny Cooper (Serinda Swan). Yes, there may be cases to solve and murderers to be caught, but at its core, the CBC drama is about one woman's journey. This fact was abundantly clear as Jenny and her family gathered for the Thanksgiving holiday on this week's episode, "All's Well," written by [Noelle Carbone](#) and directed by [Winnifred Jong](#). She hosted a group of people that included her dad (Nicholas Campbell) and mother-in-law (Arsinee Khanjian), but took quite a turn after a plumbing issue caused her work life and personal life to collide in the worst possible way.

Breaking from format a bit, given what we've seen on the series to date, this

episode focused less on the case Jenny was trying to solve, and instead on her having to have some long overdue discussions. One such discussion happened when Ross (Ehren Kassam) finally learned the truth about Jenny and Liam (Éric Bruneau). Elsewhere, a discussion with her father about the mysterious black dog that's been plaguing Jenny preceded a panic attack that revealed he may not have been telling her the truth.

Normally we take all our *Coroner* related questions each week to showrunner Morwyn Brebner and executive producer Adrienne Mitchell, but this week we're breaking format a bit. Instead, *The TV Junkies* spoke to this episode's writer Carbone, as well as fellow co-executive producer and writer Sean Reycraft. They provided insight into some pivotal decisions and scenes from this week's episode and previewed what still may be to come this season.

The TV Junkies: You have both worked on some of Canada's most popular TV series. What was it about *Coroner* that really appealed to you and made you want to be a part of it?

Noelle Carbone: Morwyn, first and foremost. I've never worked with a showrunner who is so open to everyone's weirdest, wackiest, but also most human idea. I knew it wasn't going to be a straight ahead procedural because I've done a lot of that, and it's fun, but it can be a bit repetitive. In reading the pilot I could tell it'd be something extra, and having worked with Morwyn before that, I knew if anyone tried to say 'we ordered this pilot, but we'd like you to make a straight ahead procedural' once the room got going, that Morwyn would be able to get everybody on board with making something different. That's what did it for me.

I think Sean just wanted to work with me.

Sean Reycraft: Yep, that's what did it. Noelle's on the show? I'm there! We did *Rookie Blue* together years ago and it was a lot of fun.

I had a meeting with Adrienne down in LA and had heard from a mutual friend, Aaron Martin, that Morwyn was working on *Coroner*. I always wanted to do something like that because I've always had a weird relationship with death. I told Adrienne this story about how when I started dating my husband 20 years ago, I went to an auction and actually won a tour of the Toronto Coroner office. Our first Christmas together that was my gift to him. I just wanted something unique! [laughs] We got to see the autopsy lab, watch a slideshow and the man couldn't have been nicer. It was just such a weird juxtaposition between the death world and the guys that do this. The pilot script was great too, and I know Morwyn from the theater world but we've never worked together. She's a very nice lady and it all worked out.



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TTVJ: Let's talk about the decision to center the episode around a family holiday. Where did that come from and couldn't Jenny just wait until the next day to investigate the man in the well? He's already been down there long enough.

SR: Well, Bridget you found the plot hole!

NC: Way to point it out on your second question!

SR: After the events of Episode 4, which are freaky and frantic, the mood — both in terms of storytelling and budget — was to slow things down and really focus on the characters and their interactions. That's where a lot of that focus came from.

NC: In Episodes 3 and 4 the body count was really high, and you need that to call it a spree killing, so in Episode 5 it afforded us the opportunity to tell a more personal story about Jenny. By that point we had earned it in our investment in Jenny. If we had all the time in world per episode, we'd have seen more of Jenny, her dad, Jenny and Ross. We're also keeping her husband alive by bringing in her mother in law, Muna. It's a way of reminding the audience that she made a series of really drastic decisions after her husband died, and now, here we are at a family holiday sitting with it. Everyone knows family holidays are the best time to get into it with your family.

TTVJ: Noelle, did you get the well idea from your time on *Wyonna Earp*?

NC: Well, I knew it was possible. They did almost a whole season with one guy stuck there and is definitely possible production-wise. Because Jenny lives out in the country, we were trying to think of a different way she could find a body that fundamentally messes up the family Thanksgiving, because the water is contaminated. Then interestingly enough, the coroner we were talking to said he had a country home, a well and could 100 per cent see this happening. Of all the coroners in all the world ... we found the one with a murder well! [laughs]

SR: It also was a chance for us, as some people online have pointed out, that every episode so far has been a murder mystery, and so this was a way for us to show that's not the coroner's sole job. The mystery is in how did this person die? I thought Noelle took it to a very lovely, very emotional resolution that comes out at the end. It's kind of the anti-Episode 4, to actually take death and explore it and how Jenny can catch criminals, but

can also do her job and give someone peace and resolution.

TTVJ: But did he have to have the snake coming out of his mouth? That was gross!

NC: [laughs] Yes! 100 percent! And to answer your previous question, couldn't she just let the body alone in the well for the day? Probably, but the point is that Jenny can't. She has to know for her own reasons. and we try to expand on her own history with her sister and dealing with death in her life. She can't let it go and leave the body there. She has to know what happened to this guy. That's what is interesting and so great about her, the fact that if she can juggle both then she's going to juggle both.

When it turns out that she can't juggle both and the family is there, we needed something spectacular to happen as they are coming out. So, you know? Mouth snake. [laughs] Then we had to figure out how they were going to find out what happened to the guy, so we talked about different kinds of snakes and where they are from. We thought if we could put something in the body that they could pinpoint to a location then it helps us solve the case.

TTVJ: Your work days are so much more fun than mine.

NC: [laughs] Credit to the crew too and Winnie, our director. We had several meetings where we thought there was no way that snake was coming out of that prosthetic, and Morwyn just kept saying "the snake stays. The snake stays. The snake stays." And sure enough!



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TTVJ: Let's discuss the director, Winnie, a bit though. This was her first time directing a one hour episode.

SR: I worked with her before on *Slings and Arrows*. She spent so many years [as a script supervisor] standing beside the director on set, so to see her move into the director's chair is amazing. Winnie was so great with continuity, always right and able to keep track of everything. I'm so impressed with the job she did.

NC: Exactly! We didn't give her an easy one either because Serinda has to go into a giant well, it's filled with water and there's a giant snake, big emotional stuff with the family and it's a slower episode in terms of the body count so you have to shoot it so the audience stays engaged. She did a tremendous job.

It's also a testament to Adrienne and Morwyn putting their money where their mouth is about diversity. This is the first time I've ever been on a show that had a woman of colour directing at all. The network always wants to bank on somebody that has experience, and usually with block shooting you're shooting two episodes at a time. If the network isn't convinced that a newcomer can do two episodes block shooting, and I don't know if that's

true, but Adrienne was basically like here's what we're going to do: Winnie will direct Episode 5 and then we're going to have Sherren Lee, another woman of colour, direct Episode 6 and they'll go to all the same meetings and share the same resources. Who says one person has to do both episodes? It was incredible because I'm sitting in production meetings, for the first time in my life, with two women of colour running these meetings. I thought "this is awesome." Adrienne is a very smart lady.

TTVJ: In both of your episodes this season, we have gotten to see a lot of Tamara Podemski's Alison. She's such a fun character and I love her dynamic with Jenny. What's fun for you guys as writers about that relationship and please tell me what happened when Sabine (Jeananne Goosen) drove Alison home?

SR: Oh yes, that's Noelle with her lesbian agenda!

NC: That's right! Come hell or high water, my agenda will be met. [laughs] Although I will say that the turkey baster joke was all Morwyn. That was not my joke and it goes to show how collaborative our room was.

SR: I love Alison and find her very funny. It's really a testament to Morwyn's voice in how grounded the show is but with a quirky sense of humor. It's a relief and specific kind of humor that's just left of center. It's a different way of looking at things. I love it because it is so specific. It's an odd, different take on life and Alison has that.

NC: She's been there longer than anybody and seen it all. As soon as we saw Tamara audition we knew she was it. She's not worried about what anybody thinks about her and is 100 percent who she is. It's a nice counterpoint to Jenny who is feeling the pressure in this new job, balancing a lot on the side, and that whenever Alison comes onto the screen, you know you're going to laugh and smile. The choices that Tamara makes always give you something that's like 'wow.' It's a tonal shift, which is really important because as much as the show is about death, it's also about life.

There's no other character that's as full of life as Alison. And she's pregnant! I don't know if we did that on purpose, the old "full of life" pun. I would do a web series with just Jenny and Alison because I find the two of them so hilarious together.

TTVJ: There's a lot of characters I would watch in a web series. That's my only complaint about the show is that it's not long enough and we don't get to spend enough time with them.

NC: There's so much great stuff, especially with the ensemble, that we unfortunately couldn't fit in. All of the actors brought something unexpected and interesting to the characters that we created together, and we would've loved to spend more time with all of them. I'm hoping if there's a Season 2 that there will be time to dig into those characters. When you're doing an ensemble you take your lead and think "what are the other kinds of dynamics that we need to entertain, but also tell the story we want to tell?" That's not just the procedural, but also Jenny's personal story, and Alison was born out of that.

TTVJ: Ross found out about Liam and Jenny and he wasn't too happy about it. That scene with the fight between them was really powerful. Can you talk a little about writing that scene and what does this mean for Jenny and Ross' relationship?

NC: The thing is, Ross isn't wrong. That's the key to writing any kind of argument, both people should have a point of view that the audience can get behind. I think we all were a little worried when we knew there was going to be a blow up because the emo teenager that yells at his parents is something I don't like watching. Jenny is trying so hard, and the audience knows she's trying so hard, so we didn't want him to beat up on her. But at the same time, she has made some questionable decisions and she didn't tell him about Liam, and that felt like a betrayal. Ultimately, the ghost of David is lingering around the entire episode and ultimately, he's a kid that lost his dad not so long ago, and she's a woman in mourning, but who has a

lot of other complicated emotions wrapped up in her grief.

I tried to write it as honestly as possible, and the line “Dad is dead, you’re supposed to be lonely,” felt real to me. Whether or not that’s justified, I think it cut her to the quick, and to have a fight where your kid says something to you, and you think deep down they are right, is what we needed to turn the scene. It was important to all of us that it wasn’t a “I hate you. I’m leaving” moment. I think the episode, and that scene in particular, is better for that ambiguity. Ehren and Serinda were wonderful, and not to sound self congratulatory, but I cried when I watched it because of them.



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TTVJ: Jenny also has a powerful and emotional scene with her father, and I particularly loved when he said “You’re in no way messed up, my girl. In fact, you’re exceptional and you make me so proud.” Can we discuss that relationship a bit? Also, Adrienne and Morwyn never tell me about the dog. Will you tell me more about the dog? [laughs]

NC: Here’s what I can tell you about the dog: the dog is real and named after Seneca’s [Aaron, *Coroner* writer] childhood dog. That’s the only two things I can tell you about the dog.

SR: All will be revealed about the dog by the end of the season.

TTVJ: Will we see more of Nick Campbell back?

SR: Oh yea! He did some great stuff at the end.

NC: He was so great with her and I thought those scenes were really well directed. You're balancing the fact that Jenny has been through the ringer, and with this man, probably even more than Ross, she's most allowed to be herself. All those big questions of why Jenny does this job, and what the show is fundamentally about with this life and death balance, and putting that on screen so our characters can react to those stories being asked — what was fun about this episode is that we had the room for it. Instead of normally when someone has been murdered, or you're trying to find Amanda, you don't have time to check in with Jenny in the same way. This episode instead is more about Jenny and the tornado that's around her.

TTVJ: Serinda was so phenomenal in that scene where Jenny has the panic attack at the end. That's probably something you guys write on the page as "Jenny has a panic attack," but then really have to put the faith in the actor to pull that off.

SR: I thought it was a great episode out and really hooked us. We're learning in Season 1 what works and what doesn't, and I think that's one of the best cliffhangers we've had. It's so nice that she's by herself, and we just see that actress alone.

I love too that her dealing with anxiety is getting traction and being talked about. It's funny because as a writer you're just fleshing out the world and try to ground it as much as possible with real life stuff. So seeing what starts to land as the show airs is fun and I love that people are picking up on that.

NC: It's also great that the people at the top understand what the vision was

for the show. It's the same thing with her panic attack in the alley. Everyone is behind telling the story as truthfully as possible, even if it means we have less procedure and less dead bodies. We are invested in Jenny and her journey, and I agree with Sean that people have really responded to those struggles and are starting to share their own struggles.

SR: She's a strong character. I mean she's flawed and has struggles, but to see such a strong character on screen is great.

NC: What you said about her being alone is really what we were going for. She has this great scene with her dad, and then, this bomb goes off where she starts to remember the mystery with the dog. It seems like maybe her dad isn't being truthful with her and everything just spirals from there. I thought Serinda did a wonderful job, and Winnie did a great job of directing that scene of her lying on the floor, her face and then reaching for the phone, putting it on speaker because she can't even hold it up. Trying to sound like she's not having a panic attack, while taking a work call, is just an extension of her going into the well because she didn't have to when her family is there. It's really important to her to be good at her job. She's incredible at her job, even at these moments.

TTVJ: Finally we saw McAvoy working with a woman named Greer (Grace Lynn Kung) looking into some possible murders that Gerald Henry Jones committed. Will we learn more about his history with this case?

NC: Yes, Gerald Henry Jones becomes a big part of the next few episodes and McAvoy is featured prominently in the next episode. We get to learn a bit more about him and get to the heart of why he does what he does. We were all really excited to see what Roger do with that episode, it was a tough one to write and is very timely, politically and we were all on board with telling that story. Can we say anything else?

SR: I fear we've seen the last of Erin Martin. [laughs]

NC: We named the woman who smashes Liam's truck, Erin Martin, as a tribute to one of our favorite people, Aaron Martin.

SR: He co-ran *Saving Hope* Season 1 with Morwyn. It seems like a fitting tribute to be a jealous barmaid. [laughs]

NC: We better stop talking before this gets worse!

What do you think of this week's *Coroner*? Add your thoughts below!

Coroner airs Mondays at 9 p.m. ET on CBC and is available on [CBC Gem](#).



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