

Shoot the Messenger follows sex and violence playbook

Everybody on new CBC show is either banging someone, selling them drugs or shooting at them.



In the opening seconds, an intercut: Our hero, Daisy (Elyse Levesque), a reporter for the (fictional) Toronto Gazette, has sex with her cop boyfriend Kevin (Lyriq Bent). Meanwhile, Daisy's source on a story, Hassan (Araya Mengesha), gets beaten up. "Ah," Daisy moans. "Ow," Hassan moans. Sex and violence, coiled together.

In the final seconds, another intercut: Three quick scenes from the next episode pop in and out of the closing credits. In the first, Muslim men chant threats and shoot guns. In the second, a cop witnesses a troubling handshake. In the third, Daisy purrs to co-worker Simon (Lucas Bryant), "You should check out my bedroom."

Kablam! Somebody at the CBC has been studying whatever TV writing playbooks instruct that the quickest way to grab eyeballs is to mix sex and violence, and the easiest way to keep them is to rinse and repeat. This new drama from married showrunners Jennifer Holness and Sudz Sutherland follows those rules like they're written on a shampoo bottle.

Like *Scandal*, the series that this series would love to be, one messy, multicultural, multi-class story is unravelled throughout the season. Everybody's either banging someone — Daisy's editor Mary (Alex Kingston) and hotshot reporter Simon; Daisy's sister Chloe (Hannah Emily Anderson), a lawyer, and her DA boss (Ari Cohen); Hassan and a hot model — selling them drugs, or shooting at them.

The story is involving. The characters have potential. But I wish there was more real Toronto and less Hollywood-North-market-research-whoops-time-to-unzip-another-dress-or-stab-another-gang-banger Toronto. Put down the playbook and back away slowly.