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Envy Awards 2023: Cockroaches, electric shock, murderous gays -- TV's top moments



Jennifer Coolidge in "White Lotus," cockroach at the Met Gala, eyeball from "The Peripheral" and "The Diplomat's" hairbrush. (Chris Morris / For The Times)

BY RANDEE DAWN

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This much television means that every series is trying — in one way or the other — to top every other series, which means things can get seriously weird, fast. It also means

that some perfectly award-worthy moments can go overlooked in the rush to Emmy season. Well, don't worry that you've missed the best of the best, or the strangest of the strange, because we've sifted through thousands of hours of TV and hundreds of series to bring to your attention just a few of the incidents, scenes and off-the-wall moments that we suspect are not going to end up with actual honors other than the purely fictional 2023 Envy Awards!

SHOCK OF THE OLD AWARD

Tie

“George & Tammy” (Paramount+)

“Yellowjackets” (Showtime)

Electroconvulsive treatment was used in at least two shows, revealed as an unwanted, painful treatment that put women in their places. In “Yellowjackets,” Lottie’s (Courtney Eaton) face contorted as she thrashed around while restrained on a bed as the treatment was administered; in “George & Tammy,” Jessica Chastain’s Tammy Wynette also underwent forced ECT sessions — while she was *pregnant*.

MOST NEEDED COSMETIC TOOL

“The Diplomat” (Netflix)

Amid the intrigue, explosions and exhausted sex scenes of “The Diplomat,” it takes until Episode 7 for a true hero to arrive: a hairbrush, left by an assistant on the desk of the eternally disheveled ambassador Kate Wyler (Keri Russell). Much has been made of Russell’s locks over the years, so it’s unfortunate to pile on her yet again (especially since she’s terrific in “Diplomat”). But the choice to give Kate aggressively lank, greasy, unkempt hair makes her a lot less watchable. It may fit her character (she’s whip-smart but lives a personal life in disarray) but ... have a care for the audience, producers: You’ve already stripped us of the pleasure of Rufus Sewell’s

curly locks with a close cut. We — and Russell — deserve better.

EPIC BATTLE OF THE YEAR

“The Sandman”

Dream (Tom Sturridge) faced off with Lucifer (Gwendoline Christie) — and their sharp weapons were wits, not devices. When so many fights on TV (and in movies) “prove” domination with blades and bullets, it was both subversive and refreshing to watch these two creatures fight a pitched battle with words. Lucifer seemed likely to trounce broody hero Dream initially — until he asked, “What kills hope?” The question left Lucifer without an answer, which handed Dream the victory (and his much-missed helm). Still, we suspect this battle isn’t over; Lucifer is likely to want a rematch in Season 2.

MAXIMUM GROSS-OUT AWARD

“The Peripheral” (Prime Video)

These days, TV creators seem most interested in a race to the finish line for the most stomach-turning scenes of all time, and thanks to incredible makeup and CGI advances, it’s not unusual to have to put down your snack item in the middle of a favorite episode. From the tampon discussion future king and queen of England Charles (Dominic West) and Camilla (Emerald Fennell) had on “The Crown” (Netflix) to Viserys’ (Paddy Considine) ongoing skin disease treatments (and lingering death) in “House of the Dragon” (Max), there’s no orifice or viscous substance that isn’t fair game in storytelling these days. Still, the *extraction of an eyeball* on “The Peripheral” complete with close-up on the optic nerve, gave us quite literally a sight for sore eyes. We see you, “Peripheral,” but kind of wish we hadn’t seen that scene.

ICONIC LINE READING OF THE YEAR

Jennifer Coolidge, “The White Lotus” (Max)

We’re gonna miss Tanya (Coolidge) on “The White Lotus,” who didn’t deserve the fate she got — an ignominious trip-and-fall from a boat into the ocean — despite her narcissistic tendencies. But we loved her, thanks to Coolidge’s incredible performance — and never more so than in her penultimate scenes, because it turned out that when threatened, she was a crack shot with a gun. But what might win Coolidge her second Emmy for the role all comes down to her *cri de coeur* shortly before her demise: “Please, these gays, they’re trying to murder me!” The “gays” didn’t end up getting her — Tanya got herself — but that line was a pure chef’s kiss.

SHORTEST-LIVED STARDOM

The cockroach at the Met Gala

Technically, the Met art gala held in New York City every year isn’t exactly *television*, but the antics of the celebrities and their wild, wonderful outfits are covered extensively on TV. That’s why it’s important to immortalize one of the most memorable gate-crashers of the night, a star who simply came as he was and took no questions, who raced down the red carpet without heed for anyone else — and was promptly squashed by an unidentified guest. But even before that last, final breath, the cockroach that crawled on the Met’s red carpet in May was a true smash.