

FOR MATURE AUDIENCES

C.B. Anderson

The warning on the screen: The following presentation may contain adult themes. If this unsettles you, stop swallowing every baited hook—you've been warned, it seems,

of sex and violence to come, along with partial nudity and here and there authentic foul locutions much too strong for children's ears. While rooted to your chair,

you must determine whether all those graphic depictions are gratuitous or just what's needed to convey the fright of traffic fatalities and rapes and bloody lust

for mayhem, murder, torture and the rest. Are you affected, one way or another? If you're not sure, there is a simple test: Imagine watching it beside your mother.

So far, so good—we're all adults who know the power of the clicker; make your choice without complaint, and view whichever show befits your taste, but don't forget the voice

you have to drive the ratings up or down. One other thing, a slight concern that will perhaps require some thought (Now, why the frown?): How is it, themes once thought adult should fill

old wicker hampers meant for musty clothing unfit to wear because already worn? It's difficult accounting for the loathing so many people have for values born

in other, former times. In any case, the since-demoted themes are these: a sense of honor; duty; courage to embrace the truth despite the cost; a life that's dense

with thoughtfulness, which scorns a text reduced

to sound bites; measured aid for drowsy souls
who gather nothing else than what is sluiced
through large economies to beggars' bowls;

and simple kindness—gentle words to ease
a frightened child, or helping hands to lift
the broken and the weak. Such themes as these
are still available, though one must sift

and winnow through the troughs that brim with swill
by popular demand. This will not go
away, for lofty topics tend to kill
the slightest chance for decent ratings. Slow

enough, most family shows... but even slower,
the jaded louts who rarely dare to scoff
but, growing bored, set sights a little lower
and with a lifted finger tune them off.

What does it mean to truly be adult?
The few who care may simply bite their tongue
(full knowing much that's aired is the result
of short attention spans) and guard their young.

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