# Review: Killing Eve returns with a solid S3 premiere and an unexpected loss

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Sandra Oh and Jodie Comer return for third season of BBC America's *Killing Eve*.
The sexually charged cat-and-mouse game between a serial killer and an MI6 agent picks up anew in the S3 premiere of *Killing Eve*, as Jodie Comer's Villanelle and Sandra Oh's titular Eve regroup from the fallout of their last brutal encounter. There's probably only so much drama you can milk out of their dysfunctional obsession with each other after this season, but judging by the premiere episode, we're in for another wild ride.

**(Spoilers for first two seasons below; mild spoilers for first S3 episode.)**

Based on Luke Jennings' series of thriller novellas, *Codename Villanelle*, *Killing Eve* features a self-described psychopathic killer for hire named Villanelle (Comer), who is so good at her job that she frankly starts to be a bit reckless with her assassinations, much to the consternation of her handler, Konstantin (Kim Bodnia). Her string of corpses catches the attention of an MI5 officer named Eve Polastri (Oh), who is obsessed with female killers and correctly guesses there is a

new player among their ranks. Eve's insight earns her a spot on a top-secret MI6 team led by Carolyn Martens (Fiona Shaw).

The strangely perverse attraction the two women feel toward each other drives the dramatic tension in *Killing Eve*, leading to a sexually charged cat-and-mouse game where it's not entirely clear who is the predator and who is the prey. Each sees a bit of herself in the other—and that naturally causes serious conflict between Eve and her long-suffering husband, Niko (Owen McDonnell). The first season ended with a bona fide cliffhanger: when the two women finally meet, they curl up on Villanelle's bed for what the killer thinks will be a romantic interlude. Eve stabs her with a knife and flees, leaving Villanelle to bleed out (or so she thinks).

The second-season opener finds Villanelle in a Paris hospital as Eve unsuccessfully tries to find her, before being called back to London to rejoin her MI6 team to track a new female serial killer, nicknamed the Ghost. Eventually, Villanelle and Eve join forces to find out what tech-company heir Aaron Peel (Henry Lloyd-Hughes) has to do with the string of assassinations. And in the season finale, Villanelle manipulates Eve into making her first kill. When Eve is horrified rather than elated by the act—they are not, as Villanelle believes, entirely "the same"—the assassin takes her revenge, shooting Eve amid Roman ruins and leaving her for dead.

- One of these clowns is a serial killer/assassin in disguise.
  YouTube/BBC America
- This child is about to feel genuine terror.
  YouTube/BBC America
- Let it out, Villanelle. Breakups are hard.
- At least she has palatial new digs.
  YouTube/BBC America
- Dasha (Harriet Walter) is Villanelle's former Russian

mentor.
YouTube/BBC America

- A tense standoff.
  YouTube/BBC America
- Hahaha! Just kidding!
  YouTube/BBC America
- Villanelle has lost none of her kooky-chic style
  YouTube/BBC America
- Posing as a piano tuner, perhaps?
  YouTube/BBC America
- Nobody notices lowly maintenance workers.
  YouTube/BBC America
- Posing as law enforcement to make a quick getaway.
  YouTube/BBC America
- The perfect bad breakup outfit.
  YouTube/BBC America
- Konstantin (Kim Bodnia) tells Villanelle that Eve is still alive.
  YouTube/BBC America
- Carolyn (Fiona Shaw) tells Eve that Villanelle is back.
  YouTube/BBC America
- Taking in the news.
  YouTube/BBC America
- Definitely time to change that shirt, Eve.
  YouTube/BBC America
- Eve’s husband Niko (Owen McDonnell) survived the S2 bloodbath. But for how much longer?
  YouTube/BBC America
- Carolyn’s son, Kenny (Sean Delaney), comforts Eve in her isolation. He’s a former hacker now working as an investigative journalist.
  YouTube/BBC America
- Carolyn does a bit of spring cleaning.
  YouTube/BBC America
- “Admit it, Eve. You wish I was here.”
  YouTube/BBC America

S2 opened right after Eve stabbed Villanelle and dealt with the immediate aftermath for both women. S3 jumps ahead by what appears to be several months. Eve is alive—how could she not be?—but it's unclear how she survived, other than being told she was lucky somebody found her among those Roman ruins when they did. Eve is now working in the kitchen of a dumpling eatery in London (the better to keep a low profile) and living on a shocking amount of junk food in her dismal flat. Her long-suffering math teacher husband Niko survived his encounter with Villanelle in S2 (although his fellow teacher, Gemma, did not). He is now an in-patient being treated for PTSD.

Meanwhile, Villanelle is living the high life in a lavish Spanish villa, having latched onto a wealthy heiress. We first see her on their wedding day. Watching her try (and fail) to convey genuine emotion during the traditional wedding reception speeches—and the reactions of the puzzled guests, who sense something is off but can't quite pinpoint what that might be—is a high point of the episode. Villanelle's plans for a life of semi-retired luxury are upended by the appearance of Dasha (Harriet Walter), her former mentor from Russia. Konstantin is also back in the picture; he might just be Villanelle's longest relationship, to his continued peril.

The official S3 synopsis referred to "a shocking and personal death" that serves to set Eve and Villanelle on another collision course. That demise occurs at the end of the premiere episode. While it's certainly going to have major repercussions for several main characters, I'm not sure one could consider it shocking—certainly not by *Killing Eve* standards.

The inability to shock is, frankly, the main challenge the show now faces. S1 was stellar, and it constantly shocked and astonished us, precisely because the twisted Eve/Villanelle dynamic was so surprising and fresh. S2 was very strong but not quite as unpredictably exhilarating, despite some very

clever plot twists in the final few episodes. By now we've been conditioned to expect those kinds of shocks, which paradoxically makes them less effective.

Don't get me wrong—this first S3 episode has all the elements we've loved about the series from the start, including even more spectacular outfits for Villanelle. She is just as outrageously unpredictable and charming (in a deadly psychopath way) as ever, thanks to a brilliant performance by Comer. You never want to take your eyes off her; no wonder Eve remains obsessed. I trust that the writers and new showrunner Suzanne Heathcote have plenty of exciting twists and suspenseful moments in store for us. But at some point, the basic premise—already wearing a bit thin—will run out of steam altogether. And then the real question becomes, where does the series go from there?

*Listing image by BBC America*

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