

GH misses mark with Michael; AMC finally gets it right with Angie and Jesse's reunion

### **{mosimage}BUSTED ~ GH MISSES AN OPPORTUNITY**

General Hospital recently teetered on the brink of a controversial and timely storyline, only to wimp out at the last minute and play it safe. Of course I'm referring to the plot that had Sonny and Carly's son, Michael, following in the footsteps of his mobster father and flirting with guns.

Michael is around 11 or 12, so his growing interest in his father's business and protecting his mother makes perfect sense. Especially given the following facts: Carly abandoned him right after he was born to be raised for a time by then mobster-in-training Jason; he was taught to hate his biological father AJ (and for a time was a suspect in AJ's murder until GH took the easy way out there as well); and has grown up surrounded by bodyguards and an always looming threat of violence.

Granted, it was disturbing to watch a kid's quest to buy a gun and bullets off the street, but in this highly desensitized-to-violence society that we live in, it was a wake-up call to a new reality. Kids in this country have more access to guns than they've ever had before, hence the outbreak of school shootings. Some experts even worry that first person shooter video games further desensitize kids to the consequences of trigger-pulling. Michael's natural curiosity and misguided belief that what he was doing was okay in the name of protection, wasn't so far fetched.

GH opted to go over-the-top by playing rap music every time Michael was onscreen though. The point certainly could have been driven home without that element. In fact, just watching this little boy hide a gun under his bed in a box was powerful enough and didn't need any words or heavy handed music.

If GH had continued along the path of making Michael determined to follow in his father's footsteps (after all he has been raised with the notion that Sonny and Jason are heroic good guys and that everyone else is a bad guy), one could understand the temporary gratuitousness of seeing a child with a gun.

However, GH must have gotten scared by the publicity this particular twist was generating, and backed off. For the longest time, it looked like Michael was going to accidentally shoot his little brother or himself while trying to protect his mother. Imagine the drama that could have come from little Morgan being wounded or even killed at the hands of his brother. Sonny would have lost his sole biological son because of the choices he made in raising his adopted son. That's good stuff and would have been great soap opera. It also could have served as a PSA to parents about the message they send to their kids about the safety of guns.

Instead, GH opted to take the easy way out. After weeks of teasing us with scenes of Michael and his gun, the show copped out by having Michael decide to dispose the gun after all. In the process, it fell to the ground and accidentally discharged. Granted, the stray bullet hit Sonny's love interest Kate, but it didn't have the impact it could have if Michael himself had pulled the trigger. The whole seed not falling far from the tree thing with Michael emulating Sonny, the father he idolizes, could have been explored further instead of being reigned in in its infancy.

This could have led the show down a whole other path as Sonny would be forced to confront his lifestyle and possibly abandon it. In its place, we have more of the same – Sonny thinking his rival mob family is responsible for shooting his girlfriend – and violence begetting more violence as he plans his payback. Meanwhile, poor Michael was so afraid of Sonny's wrath, he stowed away on a ship and Sonny thinks he's been kidnapped! An impetus for Sonny to commit more violence for sure.

I'm not usually an advocate for shows exploiting children and violence, but in this instance, it would have been the correct choice for the show to make given the characters' history. GH squandered a perfect opportunity to take its leading male character in an entirely different direction, and explore the impact violence can have on a kid.

### **{mosimage}BLISSFUL~ AMC FINALLY GETS IT RIGHT**

After botching the return of the "Real Greenlee" All My Children had something extra to prove when it reintroduced the love story and characters of Angie and Jesse after 21 years.

Everything about their reunion was textbook soap opera – in a good way. One couldn't have asked for a more perfect setting than the remote location of the Pine Valley train station. When Angie first arrived and saw Jesse in the train window as the train whizzed by, and then collapsed in grief on the tracks, you knew something big was about to happen. Sure enough, as Angie turned to walk away, the train crept back into the station, and the fog parted ever so slowly to reveal Jesse. As he and Angie ran in slow-mo for each other and then speeded up to embrace, I'm sure there wasn't a single viewer with dry eyes.

As someone who doesn't remember the glory days of Angie and Jesse ( I came to AMC about the time of Chuck and Angie) the show did a masterful job of getting me hooked on their love story through the use of flashbacks. Debbi Morgan and Darnell Williams have barely aged in 21 years, and seeing them as kids really helped set the stage for their adult reunion. I loved the idea of using flashbacks from the night of their teenage wedding and subsequent lovemaking as the characters made love in the present.

Morgan and Williams' chemistry hasn't missed a beat, and if anything, appears to have deepened in their intervening years off the show and away from each other. I also love the fact that the show didn't have Angie punish Jesse for his prolonged absence. It was a different take on the soap staple lover-coming-back-from-the-dead storyline that Angie didn't want to know the circumstances of his supposed death, but instead wanted to savor their reunion and bask in the

moment.

I'm sure Angie has anger (how could she not) but hopefully the show will continue to play this couple in such a way that her anger helps bring them together in understanding what he went through, and not as an obstacle to keep them apart.

After so many years, this couple and their fans - old and new alike - deserve a great story and a happy ending. After all, that's what makes for great soap opera, and AMC has proven it still knows how to deliver when it counts.

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*{mosimage}Lesleyann Coker is the co-author of Boob Tube, a forthcoming novel that goes behind the scenes of the soap opera industry. She was previously a reporter for Soap Opera Weekly Magazine.*