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10 times 'The Americans' tied our stomachs in knots

by Wendy Hathaway, Community Contributor @WisWendy
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The Americans has mastered the art of the cringe. Week after stressful week, the moments that make us grimace and clutch our couch cushions come out of nowhere, and shock like nothing else on TV today. The surprising and staggeringly visceral scenes physically bind us to what's happening to the characters, whether friend or foe.

Here are some of the most gut-wrenching, fingernail-biting, take-your-breath-away scenes from season three.

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Baggage (Episode 2)

The snapping sound of breaking bones, crunching and cracking in ways no human ears should ever hear. Entire limbs reshaped and contorted into grotesque postures.

The husband-and-wife teamwork it took to fit Annelise's dead body into a suitcase was almost unbearable to watch, yet it was impossible to look away.

DIY dental (Episode 3)

Elizabeth, suffering with a busted tooth from a fight with FBI agents, can't see a licensed dentist without risking

her cover. So Philip does what any good husband would do: He leads her into the basement with a bottle of booze and a sturdy pair of pliers.

Say "ah!" Our stomachs turn as his wrist twists in her mouth. Our eyes fill with tears as hers do, silently begging for the job to be over soon. The sounds of the tool on her teeth, their breath, her restrained sobs, and even the silence of the basement in the middle of the night make this all the more agonizing.

Father figure (Episodes 4-6)

Philip has been given orders to do whatever it takes to gather intelligence from the CIA's Afghan group, even if that means cozying up to the agent's teenage daughter. Realizing this is quickly veering into *Lolita* territory, he tries a few tricks to cool things down, playing dorky uncle and born-again Christian.

Thank God for Matthew Rhys' ability to channel our icky feelings onto the screen and convey his understanding that this is super-not-okay. Otherwise we might be turning the channel after the next Love's Baby Soft commercial.

Mechanical failure (Episode 5)

What do you do when you want to help your friend get a promotion? Just drop a car on her totally innocent colleague while he's underneath it doing repairs in his own driveway (and be sure to make it look like an accident!). The casual violence of this murder elevates its cringeworthy status.



What's bugging martha? (Episode 7)

Martha Hanson sure is one cool lady, even when she's absolutely panicking on the inside. From the discovery of the bug in Gaad's pen, through her frantic disposal of the receiver, to her confrontation with Philip/Clark at his shadow apartment, Martha keeps her composure, while the rest of us lose our shit.

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Chain of events (Episode 7)

Three minutes and 30 seconds of nail-biting insanity, set to the tune of Fleetwood Mac. The operation to nab Venter hits a few snags, but by the time everyone's crammed into the van, we feel just like Hans, looking on in pure amazement, and breathing a sigh of relief.

Tire fire (Episode 8)

Eugene Venter not only won't give up any info, but spews hate speech about the anti-apartheid movement. So Reuben traps Venter in a tire, douses him with gas, and lights the match. Even the Jennings look away as the man burns alive, howling in agony until his last breath.

Blown cover (Episode 9)

Hans wants to stay in the spy game, which means Todd has got to go. But it takes a few tries for the rookie Hans to get it right. First, he shoots Todd in the face, but only grazes him. Then the gun jams, so they take off on a foot chase, leaving behind a trail of blood. Hans catches up and finally, mercifully, strangles the poor kid to death.



Heartbreaker (Episode 9)

At first, it seems Elizabeth might show mercy to Betty, after finding the older woman working late at the mail-robot repair shop.

But Phillip gives the order to leave no witnesses. So when Elizabeth starts to talk about her personal life, we feel a cold dread creep up, realizing along with Betty that her story is over. And death does not come quickly; she drifts in and out as she slowly downs one heart pill after another until she finally slips away, leaving Elizabeth surprised by her guilt.

Family secrets spilled (Episode 10)

There is a very long pause following Paige's angry demands for answers from her parents, wherein some doubt remains as to whether they'll come clean or continue with the lies.

From that moment on—through the silence, the accusations, and the shock of hearing a truth Paige probably never imagined—it felt like we were (re)discovering what we already knew about the bizarre lives they've been living for two decades. We waited with bated breath to see how the confrontation would end.

What was your favorite can't-breathe/can't-look-away moment so far this season?

- ☐ Stuffing Annelise in a suitcase
- ☐ Elizabeth's trip to the "dentist"
- ☐ Philip's relationship with Kimmy
- ☐ Elizabeth kills a man with a car
- ☐ Martha and the bugged pen
- ☐ Venter's kidnapping
- ☐ Venter's murder
- ☐ Hans kills Todd
- ☐ Elizabeth kills Betty
- ☐ Paige finds out

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The Americans airs Wednesdays at 10/9C on FX.



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Wendy Hathaway, Community Contributor
Wendy's DVR is often full to the brim of automatic deletion with a wide range of television programs—from the fiery, violent romances of *The Vampire Diaries* to the fiery, violent romances of *Deadliest Catch*.

@WisWendy



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