

THE CROW
Stairway to Heaven

THE TV SERIES BIBLE: NEW TESTAMENT

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THE CROW : Stairway To Heaven

WHAT TV GUIDE WILL SAY

A murdered rock-and-roll musician returns to Earth exactly one year after his death to take revenge on his killers.

THE BIGGER PICTURE

Although the driving force behind the feature films was clearly violent revenge, the series picks up the secondary threads of those pictures: redemption, the afterlife, the power of love.

Our concept has some ideas embedded inside it that have the power to dig in your soul and change the way you see life.

For starters, this character, ERIC DRAVEN, exists at Ground Zero of a special universe where life and death get the special attention they deserve. He has a shattering effect on people, good and bad. A quick example:

We all take for granted the inevitability of death. It forms a rigid line from which we construct our view of "the way things are." Along comes a man who proves that the line can be crossed. His very presence gives faith, and it takes it away.

Our series replaces the rigid line with a semi-permeable membrane between these worlds. In our construct, death is not an absolute. It is a transition.

Big ideas, big action. *THE CROW: STAIRWAY TO HEAVEN* is about justice, and redemption, and how hard it is to play by the rules in a world where both evil and good seem about evenly matched.

Draven (and that's what we call him because since his demise and return, it's hard to see him as just Eric) comes back, uncertain of his mission, and finds that his old life keeps grabbing at him.

Some people do, in fact, recognize him, pulling him unwillingly into parts of his past life, which included the underground music culture.

Shockingly, the police detective who investigated his death, now considers Draven a prime suspect in his own murder. After all,

here's a murder victim who survived and has no alibi for the year he's been gone. At least not one that will be believed.

Even more mind-bending, his human side must struggle constantly against an emerging Crow persona now resident within him which craves revenge against evil.

His prime ally in understanding the mystery of what has happened to him is his dead lover, who refuses to move on to her ultimate destination until he can come with her.

So, you see, returning to Earth, is just the first part of the story.

THE CROW: KEY CHARACTERS

ERIC DRAVEN ... He's our modern *Pale Rider* – a rock-and-roll angel who is Jim Morrison and Kurt Cobain by way of Richard Kimble. Only this guy is more of everything: angry, empathic, violent, and powerful. Before his death, Draven was lucky enough to find a "soul mate", an attraction which binds him forever to:

SHELLY WEBSTER ... In life she was a struggling artist, passionately involved with Draven. Now she is a soul whose progress has stopped at the "Land of the Dead" while her spirit haunts the earthly reincarnation of Eric Draven.

We have two crows in the series. Big C and Little C. Both manifestations of the same persona...

THE CROW ... Draven's alter-ego. The archetypal revenge seeking entity supernaturally returned from the "Land of the Dead."

the crow... The bird, also thought of as the hand of God. What the crow sees can be seen by The Crow as *crowvision*, implying some kind of symbiotic link. Also called the spirit crow in our scripts.

DETECTIVE DARYL ALBRECHT ... Seen it all, trying to keep a good heart in a bad time. Not about to give up a hard fought detective's commission by admitting he believes dead guys are walking around his city.

SARAH ... The 15-year-old street kid, re-united by the Crow with her mother, now starting high school as the series begins. Tough,

vulnerable and, incidentally, the only person prepared to believe Draven's weird journey.

INDIA REYES ... The public admires her hard charging, youth targeted approach to business. In reality, much of her success owes from having given over her soul to the forces of darkness in exchange for earthly power and influence. She represents the scariest kind of evil – the kind which passes for good.

WHAT WE WILL DELIVER EVERY HOUR...

Each episode has a strong beginning, middle and end in terms of the introduction and conclusion of the central crime and/or supernatural "event."

The relationships of the characters, however, are not static. They are changing and growing, rewarding our viewers and fans for their interest.

A typical episode has more than enough places to inbound stories without looking predictable. Shelly, the spirit crow, Sarah, Albrecht, Draven himself – they all can steer the Crow to action.

As the action unfolds, our death dysfunctional family of characters will all make their own contributions to justice.

Two other elements should be integrated into the storyline of every episode:

MUSIC

It's always been a key element in the development of *The Crow*.

Initially, the graphic novels relied on, for example, the music and lyrics of Joy Division for their inspiration.

The feature films were known for their successful music soundtracks. From the haunting theme from composer Graeme Revell to the rock of Hole, White Zombie and Korn.

The TV series continues the tradition. Every episode should feature at least two musical sequences. This begins in our first episode with an original Stone Temple Pilots song, "Only Dyin'."

MARTIAL ARTS ACTION

The first Crow, Brandon Lee, set the standard of high-octane action.

Now his TV successor is another established film actor, Mark Dacascos.

The Crow may be a force of good, but every episode shows off his awesome power with at least one, fully-choreographed, fight sequence.

GENERAL OVERVIEW

All the classics have origins which are flexible enough to accommodate growing embellishments and modifications without sacrificing the essential character: i.e. Superman, Batman, the Hulk, Spider-Man. Inconsistencies between the myriad tellings of these other character's legends never seem to undermine the legends themselves but, rather, lead to increased fan appreciation and expanded audiences. The same is true of THE CROW.

Remember that Eric Draven was supposed to be a construction worker in the original comics. No one thinks so today.

In other words, as we grow THE CROW from features to TV, change is not only inevitable, it's also okay. As long as the bottom line is interesting story-telling with great characters.

MISSION STATEMENT

First, loyal fans read the graphic novel. Then, the feature film introduced far more people to the Crow. Now, it's the perfect time for *The Crow* to fly on television. Our goal is as simple as it is ambitious:

**TO MAKE THE TV SERIES THE MOST POPULAR EXPRESSION
OF THE CROW...**

We're going for a break-out hit here, going for the long ball. In order to get there, the series must be interesting and compelling enough to not only keep the hardcore fans, but to expand our audience to the larger science fiction audience and eventually to the general audience.

We start with a lot of things in our favor.

- First, there's a general sense in the movie-going community that, whether or not they saw it, THE CROW WAS A MOVIE THAT WORKED.
- We've got the expectation that the music associated with the project involves a GREAT SOUNDTRACK PACKAGE. This jacks us straight into high school and college culture.
- The CHARACTER IS JUST DAMN COOL.

Eric Draven's the key here. He has to stay mysterious and interesting. Nobody wants to watch "Touched by an Angel" with a guy in face paint. They want to see a guy who's been bent bad by what happened to him.

The character of the Crow has always cared for people. That won't change. We give this aspect of the character our warm embrace. Still, *The Crow* can't lose its edge on the way to the television screen.

The goal is accessibility. In order to even get aired, the series must go beyond cult audiences to appeal to TV programmers who will have to schedule it.

Although there are legitimate concerns to be addressed in this transition, remember this -- this latest incarnation of *The Crow* is going to be more viewer friendly simply because it is a TV series, and that is a friendlier, more intimate medium.

The key to the transition to television is really about two concepts. They are:

1. *The darkness must be lightened.*
2. *The action must not be graphic.*

Let's take these one at a time:

DARKNESS

This is a writing question which is basically a tone note. It is always going to be a balancing act. We will know it when we read it. The series does not have to be stupid, or cute, or warm and fuzzy. It simply needs to incorporate relief from the unrelenting darkness of the feature. This can be done without sacrificing intelligence, fun, mystery, suspense and edge.

GRAPHIC VIOLENCE

We will apply the same standards of violence to THE CROW as were applied, for example, to "DARK SKIES" (an *NBC 8 o'clock* show) and "M.A.N.T.I.S." (an *FBC 8 o'clock* show). In both of these series, the network had an on-going interest in high action content while their "Standards and Practices" departments allowed producers to go to the edge but not over it. We will police ourselves with the responsibility that goes with a series that can air at any hour of the day or night, and may be viewed by kids. Clearly, a TV series can't afford to have the sheer action quotient of the movie, and, in any case, the graphic nature has to be tamed – suggested rather than put completely on-camera.

STILL...

Since everyone hopes for a success, financial and artistic, we have to state this clearly:

The show must be changed to appeal to a broader audience, yet it must not break the faith with the feature audience.

The answer to growing the audience beyond the core feature audience actually comes from our sales materials which promised buyers that the series would:

- *Challenge beliefs,*
- *Question faith,*
- *Rock worlds...*

We can keep the material compelling (albeit less violent) by adding mystery and suspense on top of the current concept. They provide the unexplored middle ground for us. We can't be just a tamer version of the movies, we have to be a bolder vision of what the movies were actually about. Here's an example:

THE LAND OF THE DEAD

It's referred to in the film voice-over: "People once believed that when someone dies, a crow carries their soul to the Land of the Dead..."

The thing is, the film never showed us the "Land of the Dead." The TV series will.

Our thoughts on the matter are evolving but it is clearly a way-station: a place between our world and a soul's ultimate destination. It's not a fiery Hell, probably more of a place without time, crushingly lonely and isolated. A place where you are alone in a construct created from your own worldly experiences.

How do we show it? The empty city construct may work for us. This makes it a production target of opportunity for us --no extras, shooting most often wherever other scenes dictate.

THE SPIRIT CROW

This concept doesn't come from the over-imaginative mind of a writer. In mythology, birds are often used as symbols for the souls of the dead and as carriers of the souls to the otherworld.

Birds are also portrayed as death omens, and sometimes as messengers to the gods. As dream symbols, birds may represent angels, supernatural aid, and spirits. In Western folklore, a bird that flies into one's home is taken as a harbinger of some important news, often death. Black birds are especially taken to presage death, particularly if they gather near a house.

THEMES

Ours resonate with everyone, and several should be touched upon in any given episode. They are:

- The power of love
- The mystery of Death
- The quest for Redemption
- The nature of Evil
-

WHAT THE SALES GUYS SOLD...

The sales materials which took us to this day called for the following:

- Climb a metaphorical "Stairway to Heaven"...
- Hitch a ride with the Angels...
- Keep the characters from the film in play...

THE STAIRWAY

We're not going to get literal here. This simply means that there are levels to the afterlife which, hopefully, we can spend at least five seasons exploring. We don't believe our characters know the ultimate truth anymore than we do. They are going to try to make sense of this by pooling information.

ANGELS

The clever catch-phrase was ... "Prepare to be rocked by an angel." Presumably, Draven's the angel (albeit, a butt-kicking, angry version).

Okay. Angels (from the Greek *angelos*, messengers) are intermediary spiritual beings between God and humanity. They're often depicted as delivering messages to mortals or carrying out God's will in other ways. In Western religions, angels refer exclusively to good beings. They are opposed by evil spirits (devils or demons) who are sometimes "fallen angels." Angels are traditionally pictured as cohabiting heaven with deceased human beings.

Here's how Eric Draven fits in as an angel carrying out God's will. It's pretty simple: in order to stop Hitler, we had to raise an army. Evil is always ready to fight dirty, so good has to get tough to stop it. Draven is a foot-soldier doing God's will through unconventional means.

CHARACTER

More important than ever. The theme for our transition to series is simple:

Even a dead man needs to get a life...

By this, we mean that Eric Draven must become a character who can interact with the world around him in a non-Crow mode. We propose to do this not so much by changing his appearances as the Crow, but by expanding his presence as Draven. We can debate the where's and how's of this issue, but it must happen somehow.

That's because we can't build a series around a main character who avoids all interaction, except in his alter-ego status. Draven absolutely must be pushed and pulled back into picking up some pieces of his old life, whether he wants to or not. In some cases, the old life does tempt him. Music, for example, still speaks to him and is still a framework he uses to make sense of his predicament.

Basically, though, Draven still lives in this city, and a few people he used to know are going to recognize that he's back. There is no need to write around this reality. In fact, it gives us that much more complex and compelling character material to get into.

Understand that Draven has changed into a very unusual person. He doesn't eat, or drink, or sleep. He has the powers of an empath, able to sense emotions and to transfer them to others. He has physical skills of attack which he never knew while living.

Even a dead man needs to get a life...

It's just not quite the same life he used to have. But it's better than the alternative.

THE BACKSTORY

ERIC DRAVEN and SHELLY WEBSTER were lovers the way it's supposed to be. Merged completely in spirit, two people lucky enough to find each other while they were very young. *Soul mates.*

Always unconventional, they planned a "commitment ceremony" instead of a wedding. Each would write a vow of lifetime loyalty to the other. They would record the whole thing on videotape and it would be their bond forever.

What they didn't know was that Eric Draven had been targeted for murder. Based on something he had done in the past (still TBA) a contract murder had been ordered. A gang of low-lives with names like Funboy and Skank, working for a guy named Top-Dollar, had taken the assignment.

Draven went first, picking up his guitar and singing a series trademark song (think "Tears in Heaven"). *Will you always know me? Will you always care? I will come to you... I will come to you...* He's a lead guitarist in Hangman's Joke, but not a vocalist. It's the first song he's written the words to and performed. Shelly is touched beyond belief by the emotion in his raw performance.

Shelly goes next, with a poem she has written: *I will be with you forever, and when my body is no longer of this Earth, my spirit will fly on the wind to be with yours.*

We know what happened next because, like the ceremony itself, it's all on videotape. That precious moment was interrupted by the tribe of bad-ass assassins who, for reasons Draven and Shelly could not fathom at the time, murdered them both. Eric died from injuries sustained after being thrown from their loft apartment to the cement below. He never regained consciousness.

Shelly was less fortunate. She endured her own physical pain, and the pain of his death, for over two hours before succumbing herself. Worse still, she was killed only because of her association with Draven.

One of the investigating officers on the scene was Detective DARYL ALBRECHT. The murder has remained unsolved. What always bothered Albrecht is the videocamera found in the apartment, tape ejected, that his experts told him had been used that night.

The street kid who first identified the mangled body of Eric Draven was a tough 14-year-old named SARAH. She knew Eric and Shelly in life, and will know them again in death.

THE ORIGIN EPISODES

Episode #1 ("The Soul Can't Rest, Part One") and Episode #2 ("The Soul Can't Rest, Part Two") will be stand-alone episodes which will fit together as a full-length film.

It is exactly one year later.

Establish Eric Draven in the "Land of the Dead." Finally, something catches our eye. A crow in flight. It lands, head darting about. Think of our feathered friend here as the "hand of God." Draven hasn't seen anything move since finding himself here.

The spirit crow leads him from the empty city to the eternal forest. Finally, to a long suspension bridge spanning a gorge far below.

DRAVEN JUMPS FROM THE MIDDLE OF THE BRIDGE!

And then it happens...

A SPECIAL EFFECTS sequence brings together some kind of ENERGY CYCLONE which seems to be emerging not only from the heavens above but from the ground below. We are witnessing, for the first time, THE BIRTH OF A CROW – not the bird, but the dead person being re-animated back to Earth.

As with most births, it's enormously painful. The person slammed to the ground in front of us is recognizable as Eric Draven. He is as naked as the first day he was born.

The first image Draven sees is that of the Crow make-up familiar from the films. The man wearing it is speaking Spanish. Draven has been deposited directly into a Mexican "Day of the Dead" celebration – a time when it is believed the spirits can more easily pass back and forth between the two worlds.

The townspeople believe they have witnessed a miracle. They give Draven some clothes and a ride into town. Draven is disoriented and, apparently, amnesic – he has no memory of who he is or why he’s there. All he knows is that the spirit crow seems to be flying north, and that is where he must go.

While hitchhiking with a couple of low-rent four-wheeling thrill-seekers heading back to the states, he hears the song he recorded the night he died. The song has been completely altered through the addition of studio musicians, and the singer is not Draven. Instead of a haunting refrain, it is an amped up distortion of everything it was supposed to be. Draven is disturbed by the recording, but he doesn’t know why.

Meanwhile, back in our fictional megalopolis of Port Columbia, there are others reflecting on the events of a year ago.

SIDEBAR: Since Detroit doesn’t allow us to use our new production location to its full advantage, the thought is to create a fictional metropolis that is credible to shoot in Vancouver. It will rarely be referred to, but it will be necessary to call our city something from time-to-time.

For starters, we see the videotape of the night Draven and Shelly died. It’s being watched by the sick psychos who murdered them. Their own personal snuff film. As they watch Draven sing to Shelly, they fast forward to “get to the good part.”

Meanwhile, Detective Albrecht has found Sarah on the streets, skipping school. She just can’t go on the anniversary of the murders and Albrecht, compassionate man that he is, allows her to blow it off – *just this once*. Albrecht has always thought of himself as Sarah’s “Guardian Angel.”

Days later, Draven shows up in Port Columbia himself. He may even end up at a shelter, talking with an overworked counselor wondering whether to commit him to the state hospital or not. The truth is Draven seems classically crazy. He’s hearing voices, and having delusions.

The crow (as opposed to Draven, later, as The Crow) leads Draven to the loft apartment he shared with Shelly. In FLASH-CUTS, Draven comes face-to-face with the pain of that terrible night.

In some manner TBA, this triggers our initial transformation to the Crow.

- ALTERNATIVE #1: As in the feature, Draven puts on Shelly's theater make-up, and becomes The Crow as a madman's DISGUISE.
- ALTERNATIVE #2: It's a PSYCHOLOGICAL STATE. The Crow persona asserts itself as an archetype on someone's consciousness. The Native Americans may have had Crows, too, who applied warpaint like this.
- ALTERNATIVE #3: There is no Crow mask to be applied. Becoming the Crow is not only a psychological state, it is also PHYSIOLOGICAL. As the Crow persona asserts itself, his skin drains of color and takes on a more realistic version of the film's make-up.

Draven goes out after his killers, confronts one (who probably dies, but not from an outright execution but through his fear of the Crow causing him to take a risk which results in his own death.)

Draven, however, is surprised by the rest of the gang members who take him apart with gunfire, and leave him for dead.

Like an injured bird, Draven goes back to the Crow's Nest (the rooftop of his former apartment), to be alone again, to re-generate his tissues and his energy. Although the dead cannot be literally killed again, the bodies they inhabit can still suffer physical consequences.

Guess who also goes to this place, to be alone, to escape? Sarah. She has found Draven because Gabriel, the white cat, has led her to him. Sarah adopted the cat after the murders.

Sarah is repelled by Draven and his injuries, yes, but she's a kid who can handle seriously weird shit, and that's exactly what she does here. Since Eric and Shelly's death, Sarah has been in a downward spiral, something that hasn't been helped by her absentee, drug-addicted mother, Darla.

As in the feature, we are telling the story now of Eric Draven's return from the "Land of the Dead," with a few twists thrown in. Here's where the biggest one comes in.

Eric Draven – our dead man – gets a life. He does get recognized. First, by Shelly who finds him in the Crow’s nest. Then by Detective Albrecht. Ultimately, by others who know him, including India Reyes, the record promoter who tries to promote herself now as Draven’s new best friend.

Albrecht follows Sarah and finds Draven. This time Albrecht is not there to understand Draven’s predicament. He’s there to solve an unsolved double homicide. *If you’re who you say you are...if you’re Eric Draven, then you’re the number one suspect in the death of Shelly Webster.*

Albrecht thinks Draven might have been a jealous boyfriend who caught Shelly with another man the night before their wedding and killed them both. What Albrecht can’t figure out is why Draven would show up back in town a year later with zero alibi. Without sufficient evidence to indict Draven, Albrecht becomes more interested than ever in finding the missing videotape from the night of the murders.

Draven’s past seems to be crashing in on him. This includes a re-acquaintance with INDIA REYES, the flashy entrepreneur behind RESURRECTION RECORDS. *Eric, you look like you’ve been to hell and back...* She’s the woman who had nearly signed Draven’s band, only to be on the verge of losing them to a rival record company shortly before his death.

Although Reyes is not seen by Draven for what she really is at the beginning, the seeds will be planted here.

The first big clue is that India Reyes is the master-mind behind the recently released “Back to You” – the over-blown version of Draven’s vows to Shelly, lifted from the tape recorder and embellished heavily in studio by Draven’s former band, Hangman’s Joke.

Draven confronts his former bandmates in our opener as to where they got his song. This confrontation takes place at the warehouse rock club where they played most of their gigs. The spirit crow refuses to go here for unknown reasons.

Also, during this time, Albrecht manages to get a court order to exhume the body of Eric Draven. He’s going to find out the real identity of the body that was buried, and start looking for clues from there. Surprise! There’s nothing in the casket.

Draven's simple quest to find the ring he gave Shelly on the night she died leads him to discover his murderers.

Also in this opener, Draven makes initial contact with Shelly Webster. She was the only woman in Draven's life, and she has followed him into their deaths as well. The vows they took, turn out to be real. He came back. She can't quite leave. Draven: *I love you enough to let go.* Shelly: *I love you enough not to.*

Shelly is a spirit that cannot move on because she wants to be with Draven. *Think of her as a haunting angel who simply cannot let go.*

Draven, apparently, is a spirit that cannot move on because he has unfinished business on Earth. *Think of him as an avenging angel who has work to do.*

Shelly, too, still exists in the "Land of the Dead." Think of it as a way station for spirits in transition. As we stated, the rules of time and space don't apply here. Draven may have been gone for an Earth year, but he has no concept of the time passage when he returns. He also never saw Shelly when he was there.

Basically, Draven and Shelly's spirits are locked together. He wants her to "go on" but she won't go anywhere without him. Together they manage to state their mission statement for the series. To determine what it is that it will take to re-unite them in the face of this cosmic mystery, and to stay together in immortality.

During our two-hour launch, Draven/the Crow manages to give Sarah and her mother a second chance. By the end, Darla is in rehab, and Sarah is living temporarily under the custody of Albrecht. Sarah now wears the Shelly's ring around her neck.

Albrecht stops Draven from killing the remaining gang members and Top-Dollar by arresting them first. He has the videotape. *Let the state kill them. Don't put yourself in this.* He tells Draven that he's always been an open-minded man, but even his mind can't open this far this soon. *So I got my eye on you, hotshot. The line you better not cross is that girl, Sarah. She's got enough problems. You keep your distance...*

As we end the first two-hours, Albrecht has filed a report saying that there is insufficient evidence to charge Eric Draven with a crime.

Still, the murder remains under investigation, and the case is not closed.

Draven watches the spirit crow take off from the Crow's Nest...

As the crow flies through the streets of the city...

Prepare to be rocked by an angel...

This is just the beginning...

THE SEASON #1 ARC

Bottom line? *The Crow* is about Eric Draven's quest for redemption and the healing power of spiritual love. What makes it interesting and compelling for viewers is that there is no road map to redemption. There is no literal stairway, and God hasn't told Draven or Shelly exactly how it's supposed to work. Everyone's like that stranger on the bus, just trying to find his way home...

DRAVEN

The cosmic mystery part is further complicated by the down-to-Earth fact that Eric Draven's return has placed him – as they said of the Ramsey parents – “under an umbrella of suspicion.” Imagine if Kurt Cobain had come back to Seattle a year after his death, and had been implicated in the death of Courtney Love.

Therefore, Eric Draven is part-pariah and part man of mystery. People who never knew him before treat him as a murderer. Former friends won't talk to him. And yet...

He is also an underground legend in the music sub-culture. The local version of Cobain or Morrison coming back to life. To some of these people, he's like a Rock God.

What he is, more than anything, is a man who lost everything he had. His consciousness exists in a different place than it used to.

Still, Draven must find himself pulled into relationships with others because, ultimately, the characters and relationships are the only things which put real jeopardy on the screen. You can't do it with just a car chase, or a knife fight. You have to put people you know at risk. Let's talk about them:

SHELLY

Although Shelly is the reason behind what has happened to Draven, her presence is more often felt than literal. We see her in flashbacks invoking their former life and, occasionally, we will see her as a spirit which is temporarily manifested in our world.

However, we would like to take her presence a step further, to make her a little more proactive and create a scenario where she can actually be in a scene from time-to-time without Draven.

That's where the "Land of the Dead" concept comes in. This existential plane will be conceived with our production designer but will serve as a place where Shelly could actually get a story going for us. It's mysterious, a place where the ordinary rules don't apply, and anything can happen.

Here's an example of how we can use it to inbound a story from the headlines. She meets Jon-Benet Ramsey (the fictional version) who is very much like Shelly. She refuses to move on until certain business on Earth is finished for her. Namely, she was abused by her father and murdered by her mother, and she's worried about her sister.

Under this scenario, Shelly can occasionally be a direct conduit to Draven's attempts to help the other murdered dead like himself seek justice. We may, from time-to-time, let her be a "walk-in" spirit who can dominate the soul momentarily in another persons body.

Also, interesting as it is for Shelly's spirit to have the ability to briefly penetrate into our plane of existence, it may be equally interesting to see Draven able to do the same to the "Land of the Dead" on a limited basis. This won't be easy, and will require some creepy, "Flatliners" type of jeopardy and physical ordeal.

SARAH

At least at the very beginning, only Sarah believes that Eric Draven died, and has come back to Earth. She, above all others, will be steadfast in her support and understanding, or at least as much as a young girl starting high school can be.

That's the key to using this character. The pain of adolescence seen through the prism of other-worldly brushes with evil and death.

In the early episodes, Draven (as the Crow) scores a major victory putting Sarah back together with her newly clean junkie mom, Darla. This also affects Albrecht, who had taken to watching over Sarah. Let's grow the relationship a while so that when Darla is killed, it's going to grab us by the throats emotionally.

ALBRECHT

Remember the stages Albrecht went through in the feature? The idea here is that each one of them is rich with character and we ought to enjoy them more. Let's give this character his own journey, too. It goes roughly like this:

In the first two episodes, Albrecht starts by suspecting Draven of murder. The idea being that Albrecht knows two people were killed. The body thought to be Draven's was almost unrecognizable from the fall. Albrecht's working theory is the "Jealous Boyfriend." Shelly had another guy. Draven killed them both, made it look like he was killed and split town.

As the series progresses, he suspects Draven of being the Crow vigilante.

Finally, he can't ignore the ultimate truth. Draven really is returned from the dead, weird as that may sound.

Ultimately, Albrecht's relationship with Draven evolves to a form of respect and friendship. This is a 22-episode arc we're talking about. We want to take the journey with these two men, and watch a credible relationship come out of it.

Part of the reason we need to take our time getting here is that Draven already has a lot of help engineered into the series concept:

from the spirit crow to Shelly's otherworldly knowledge to Sarah's street smarts. If he's also got a friendly cop, it's too much to start with.

Besides, it'll be more fun to build a friend out of an adversary.

DRAVEN / ALBRECHT / SARAH

Again, rather than start with everything neat and tidy, let's watch these people slowly knit together into our life/death dysfunctional family.

Sarah ends up letting Albrecht adopt her, but only after a wrenching episode where these two battered souls decide to join forces.

This moment also coincides roughly with Albrecht's pursuit of the Port Columbia vigilante and the revelation that Draven actually is back from the dead.

This puts a *seen-it-all black cop* –
an *emotionally battered street kid* –
a *re-animated rock-and-roller* –
and a *marooned spiritual entity* –
basically sharing the same stage space.

Here are some quick answers to some of the bigger questions we'll be involved with in the first season:

HOW DOES THE CROW GET HIS NAME?

Unlike the feature where Draven simply tells people he's Eric Draven while in the Crow make-up, we believe that Draven is not eager to share this information while in Crow mode.

When he needs a name, he looks no further than the ever-present spirit crow which both leads and follows him. *People want to know who did this to you, you tell them it was the Crow.*

It catches on. The Crow takes up less space on a newspaper headline than "Nighttime Vigilante."

DOES DRAVEN HAVE A CONTINUING PRESENCE WITH HIS ROCK BAND, HANGMAN'S JOKE?

Let's put it this way. These were guys he used to hang with a lot, and they – as much as anyone – will want to know what really happened to Draven. Will they play together again? Probably not. They will probably try to re-unite with him, but he's changed so very much they will split violently apart. If Draven is Lennon, there is another member who's McCartney who kept the group going and resents Draven's return.

Draven will, however, use his guitar and his music as a way to express his feelings about what's happening to him. Usually alone, in moody circumstances. And, possibly – every once in a while – he may play at the Resurrection club, backed by members of other groups, who let him sit in for a few songs.

HOW DO WE DEAL WITH THE JEOPARDY FACTOR IF HE'S A DEAD GUY WHO CAN'T BE STOPPED?

Important question. Truly, we have a problem unless PHYSICAL BATTLES HAVE CONSEQUENCES.

It's like Superman. After he started flying at the speed of light instead of leaping tall buildings in a single bound, it was necessary for Kryptonite to be invented.

In our own case, rather than the Crow being someone who can't be killed, or even slowed down by a bullet, we need to see some effect. This will increase our sense of jeopardy and suspense.

Think of Draven's body – under the guidance of the Crow – as a powerful CHARGED BATTERY. It can do miraculous things, but it can't do them forever, and occasionally it's necessary to re-generate the energy field.

This means we still get the cool effects shots where a bullet goes through his hand and heals spontaneously in front of us.

Yet, it also means that rather than wade right into weapons, he'll want to avoid them. If he's expended massive energy on fighting or re-generation, something that might seem able to kill an ordinary human may also be able to kill him.

So, as in our first episode, the bad guys may "leave him for dead." Yet, by the time the cops have arrived, he may be long gone. In reality, his body will have re-generated itself in time to escape.

Ultimately, we will learn that the complete loss of the Crow's energy field is not exactly a new death, but the end of his union with the Crow spirit guide. At that point, Draven will be doomed to wander the Earth, a lost soul with no chance of re-joining Shelly. He'll learn this in a mid-season episode where he meets the SKULL COWBOY, another such doomed soul.

THE RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN ERIC DRAVEN AND SHELLY WEBSTER...

Let's start with what it is not. It is not Master/Pupil.

Shelly has not suddenly been given complete Enlightenment any more than Eric has. They've both moved beyond their previous life together, but both are still searching for answers.

Each week Shelly will come to Draven in some metaphysically inspired manner. But we won't forget that she's his lover, not his fairy godmother.

She could go on to the next level (or at least feels that she could) but refuses to out of her love for Draven. So, she's scared of her fate, but resolute in her love.

They can only guess that a mission must be fulfilled. All they know is they will try to do it together.

The Stairway to Heaven metaphor. It's not just Eric's. It's Shelly's, too. She's on that stairway – one step up from the material world, but still shut out of pure Heaven. She can't complete her journey until Eric's fate is decided, one way or the other.

In order to give Eric that second chance he was brought back as a Crow. *The Crow's* persona is not Eric, but it is so powerful and supernatural that he finds Eric Draven being submerged. He is

struggling against his nature, and also against the nature of *The Crow*. Maybe being a Crow isn't such a great thing, but it's the only way for Draven to even have a chance.

Rather than Shelly the guru laying down the rules for Eric, let the EXACT nature of their dilemma be part of their quest (and part of the reason the audience tries to watch every episode, to get more clues).

If she's lower level, too, then together, they try to find their way to each other in the dark.

WHY DIDN'T ERIC DRAVEN AT LEAST END UP IN THE SAME PLACE AS SHELLY WEBSTER?

The truth is that Eric Draven has been given a second chance only because of Shelly.

God (or the Ultimate Power) wants their two spirits to travel together, but it's not that simple. For starters, if Shelly hadn't been in the picture, Eric Draven's soul would probably have been cast down to Hell already.

That's because there is something in Draven's past that is pretty bad stuff. Nominations open on this one. The point is Eric Draven ain't no angel.

He did change his life, though. Got straight, found a good woman, tried to set things right. What he never did is tell anyone. Not even Shelly. That secret would have to wait until they were both dead before being shared.

So, when the cosmic equation was totaled, Shelly put the balance of Eric's soul on the good side. By a shade. He was a perfect candidate to come back as the Crow.

The problem for both of them should be that neither one can complete the journey without the other.

TO KILL OR NOT TO KILL?

The Crow of feature films kills people. Really, really bad people who really, really deserve it ... but, yeah, he still kills them. Judge and jury and executioner all rolled into one stylized package.

What about our TV Crow? Well, for starters, we're going to put more inner conflict to work with the yin/yang of Draven's humanity battling the Crow's thirst for revenge.

So, yeah, he might actually kill someone someday – in full Crow mode that Draven later can distance himself from. He won't do this often, he'll feel bad about it, and the people it happens to will be really, really bad people who really, really deserve it.

What we can do that is very appropriate and consistent with the film version is to use the Crow's empath powers. The Crow uses fighting skills to defeat our villains then uses his mental powers to give them back the pain they caused. This can lead to the taking of their own life out of guilt, submitting to arrest or working toward a changed life.

Other options are that the person is publicly exposed for their evil, or they receive a little poetic justice custom tailored for them.

Finally, however, the debate over lethal punishment is appropriate to this series as it gives Draven and Shelly something to grapple with. Even assuming the stairway's just a metaphor, they have to believe that taking life never should be rewarded, especially in a cosmic sense.

Ultimately, the Crow, despite being a dead guy, still has to come down as pretty much pro-life, in the least-political sense of the word there is...

WHO REALLY MURDERED ERIC DRAVEN AND SHELLY WEBSTER?

We know the actual deaths were caused by Top Dollar and his gang. But somebody gave them the order, and that someone was India Reyes.

People around town may admire Reyes for her successes, but they came with a price. What you've heard about selling your soul to the Devil? Well, it's not quite that simple but, let's just say, deals were struck. Instead of being a Dark Angel who can fight violence with violence in the cause of good, Reyes went to the Other Side.

DON'T FORGET ... THE MILLENNIUM IS ONLY TWO SEASONS AWAY ...

Good and Evil are going to take it to the limit, that much is sure.

Reyes seems fated to command the legions of darkness...

Draven will fight fire with fire to keep the lights burning...

The series will regularly, and directly, invoke the Millennium, and the notion of an epic battle, predicted many centuries ago.

We will wind the legend of the Crow straight into the literature of the New Age – from the Tibetan Book of the Dead to predictions by Nostradamus.

The Crow – long-term – is about a big concept. Imagine – the battle between good versus evil could be decided in our time.

Just another reason why "The Crow" 1998 rocks...

Be there...

THE CROW: Stairway to Heaven