

## 24 in 24

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This is a piece I wrote about the "24" phenomenon. It really doesn't fit in as a Short Story or a Flash Fiction or even an essay.

It's just a short little anecdote that I hope you'll find worth a chuckle or two. And I hope that on a larger scale, it will force you to think about our society because underneath the story lies a subtext that strikes a cord with me.

I NEVER WATCHED the show 24. I didn't want to get caught up in a TV show I had to watch from week to week. That was too much commitment. If I missed an episode, I'd be lost when I tried to watch the next one. So I deprived myself altogether of the 24 phenomenon.

It was all everybody talked about at work on Tuesday mornings. I'd be in a conversation with a coworker about the weather or the stock market and it never failed, somebody else would walk by and ask if we saw Jack last night. Then the discussion inevitably steered toward the show and I'd excuse myself. I had nothing to add.

This went on for several years until one day, I decided I had enough. I had to know. The show had become part of American pop culture and I was missing out. How could I tell my kids years from now that, no, I never watched the show? That would be like my parents having never seen I Love Lucy, like being the one schmuck in the room that didn't know who Colonel Steve Austin was.

This is what was going through my mind when I stopped in front of the store shelf displaying Season 1 on DVD. As I stood there gazing at the pretty packaging and slick graphics, a brilliant idea struck me like a truckload of C-4. I would lay out of work the next day and watch all 24 episodes of 24, back-to-back.

If you think about it, each episode is only 42 minutes long without commercials. That would give me enough time to eat, shower, go to the bathroom, walk the dog and do anything else that absolutely has to be done during the course of a day. And I could still watch all 24 episodes one right after another in 24 straight hours.

It was a monumental day. I prepared meticulously, making sure that nothing could interrupt me. I unplugged the phone, turned off my mobile, closed the blinds. I had plenty of frozen pizzas and caffeine, enough to last well over 24 hours.

So at midnight, I began my 24 marathon. I popped in the first DVD, slouched back on the couch with a frosty Mountain Dew and prepared to be wowed. I shouted, I laughed, I cried. I pumped my fist, I cursed and gave the bad guys the finger, I pleaded with Jack to save the day.

And throughout the emotional whirlwind of the entire 24 hours, he did just that. Jack Bauer became my hero that day. He saved America from certain doom and managed to do the impossible in 24 short hours.

Move over Superman. Step to the back of the line, Dark Knight. All the rest of you imposters, scram. There's a new guy in town.

I learned a lot from watching 24. Cell phones and PDAs are amazing versatile inventions. Presidents are people too. And most of all, twenty-four hours is a long time. A very long time.