There was a panic in the fan community of THE WALKING DEAD when it was revealed showrunner Frank Darabont and several writers were not going to be continuing on the show. Would it rise or fall without them? Five episodes into season three and I think the question has definitively been answered.

The show hasn't simply risen, it has soared. This doesn't mean the exodus was a factor, it just indicates the fears were unfounded. After less than half the season, we've gotten some of the most compelling horror entertainment ever put on the small screen. "Say the Word" offers us a continuing look into the psyches of two men and how they are grappling with the horror around them. Rick Grimes, after losing his Lori, descends into hellish madness screaming bloody vengeance through the blood-spattered halls of the prison. He's clearly hit his breaking point and is now lashing out blindly, like an animal. He nearly takes Glenn out just for trying to talk him down, his eyes glazed over and seemingly not even recognizing him.

By contrast, the Governor is outwardly stable and seeming to thrive on the challenges of the grim new world. The cracks in his armour are much more subtle, but we see them. In the opening, we discover another of his dark secrets: what appears to be a zombie daughter he' keeping in a nice little summer dress. It's gruesome and yet at the same time humanizing; a sign that under his cool veneer, there is a seething darkness.

Later in the episode, we're treated to good old Woodbury entertainment in the form of a zombie pit fight with Merle and another fine citizen. It's the blood and circuses that soothed the masses of ancient Rome and another point in the favor of the Governor-as-dictator theory. When Andrea is sickened by it, he uses the opportunity to continue his "ends justify the means" rationalizing and gets his seductive hooks deeper into her. It's hard to imagine the horror of using former human beings as fodder for bloodsport and a chilling look at how close we are to barbarism. Even as zombies, it seems undignified to use them like that.

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