



# Alexandra Zarowny

## Digging deep for story bones

By Mark Dillon

**A**s a screenwriter, Alexandra Zarowny likens herself to a serial monogamist. She meets a show, falls in love, then sticks around. The Edmonton native has had relationships with various genres, starting in youth drama (*Radio Free Roscoe*, *Degrassi: The Next Generation*) before co-developing period procedural *Murdoch Mysteries* and story-editing serialized crime drama *Bellevue*. She calls Emily Andras her “work wife,” having written for the showrunner on fantasies *Lost Girl* and, most recently, *Wynonna Earp*, on which she’s also a co-executive producer. Alexandra also won the Best Script from a Rookie Series award at the 2017 WGC Screenwriting Awards for her *Wynonna Earp* script, *Bury Me with My Guns On*. This story was written before the awards night.

***Wynonna Earp*’s season two writers’ room was populated by Emily, you, Brendon Yorke, Caitlin D. Fryers and John Callaghan. How would you describe the culture?**

Emily’s a genuine leader, but if you’ve come up with an idea she thinks is better for the show or a joke that’s better for the character she’s not afraid to pluck that off the table and use it. There isn’t a lot of ego in the room. And it’s

refreshing to have a showrunner who will tear up while pitching you an idea because she’s very emotionally connected to the characters, as we all are. Her rooms tend to be fast-talking and fast-thinking, so there’s pressure to keep up, which challenges us to dig deep.

**What does your typical writing day look like?**

My inner editor is lazy, so if I get up early enough, I can get the jump on her. I dive in and focus and beat myself over the head so I can get something out. I pace and think and speak the dialogue so it becomes more of a real animal and I can feel whether it’s true or not. Then I sit down and write out scenes longhand on a pad of yellow, lined paper. That’s when I feel free. It can be messy, and I don’t have to get exactly the right word, and I can really let the characters speak. Then I story edit on the computer.

***Wynonna Earp* is a rare series that depicts a lesbian relationship. What’s your approach to those scenes?**

The story of Waverly (Dominique Provost-Chalkley) and Nicole (Katherine Barrell) is not about two lesbians; it’s about two women in love with each other, and that’s different. We’re not trying on

labels like fashion. We’re trying to be true to their characters, and fans and friends tell me they appreciate that. It’s not that gentle “Hee hee, giggling behind our hands, look at us being lesbians” thing. It’s two women falling in love, making eyes at each other and tearing each other’s clothes off. It’s really quite delicious.

**You were nominated (and won!) for a 2017 WGC Screenwriting Award for Best Script from a Rookie Series for the *Wynonna Earp* episode “Bury Me with My Guns On.” It’s quite gory!**

It’s flamethrowers and Tommy Guns and taking the bones of a long-dead demonic son and bringing him to life. It’s just insanity and I love it. I’m absolutely not like that in person. I get to put all my dirt on the screen. If I did in real life what I’ve written, I’d be in prison, but I do it on the screen and get nominated for an award. It’s amazing.

**Now that you’ve wrapped season two, what’s next?**

I need to write a spec script and focus on my own voice, because I’m realizing I’m writing a lot in other people’s voices, which is a joy and I’m fairly good at it. But I need to dig deep, find my voice, get it on the page and see if that’s something people want to hear. ■