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In the Spotlight

By Anna Malpas

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This week, someone planted explosive devices on the set of the long-running reality show "Dom-2" in a bizarre incident that was the most serious in the show's seven-year history.

Contestants are supposed to "build their love" on the show by getting together with each other. At the same time, they are halfheartedly building a house that will be the main prize. The show is routinely condemned by State Duma deputies and conservative groups as a corrosive influence on the nation's youth.

Early on Sunday morning, security guards found a backpack filled with explosives on the set's perimeter fence. It went off, seriously injuring one of the guards. Police later found a second unexploded device.

The show continues to air, albeit with heightened security precautions. Despite the cameras filming the contestants day and night, no one has yet been charged with the attack.

The tabloids soon named as a suspect a man from Novokuznetsk in Siberia, theorizing that he was obsessed with the show and had been turned down as a contestant.

Komsomolskaya Pravda wrote that the man, Sergei Lyapin, 38, was a junkie "hooked" on the show. It said he auditioned for the show in the winter but was rejected.

Lifenews.ru quoted a Novokuznetsk police spokeswoman speculating that Lyapin "got mad" after being turned away.

But after his reputation had been shredded by the tabloids, investigators said Lyapin was only being questioned as a witness.

More complex theories floating around involved two current contestants on the show: a "black" wizard and a diet guru.

Moskovsky Komsomolets surmised that Lyapin may have been in love with Inna Volovicheva, a contestant since 2009, who has written a book on her dramatic weight loss.

In an extraordinary synopsis, "Dom-2's" web site says Volovicheva went into the show hoping that a contestant who is a "white wizard" could lift a spell jinxing her love life. But then she began an affair with another contestant, who is a "black wizard" called Vladislav Kadoni. Their on-and-off relationship hit a rough patch recently after he had cosmetic surgery to increase his penis to 30 centimeters long.

Other rumors discussed on the Internet included a possible gay relationship between Lyapin and the black wizard, Lenta.ru news web site wrote, citing a forum for fans.

In a more banal explanation, journalists found a letter posted on a forum in which Lyapin apparently complained of ill-treatment by "Dom-2's" security guards.

With its grainy footage and endless discussions of relationships, "Dom-2" is an acquired taste, although its fans say it is soothing and an escape from politics.

In 2009, "Dom-2" lost a court case brought by a group of conservative viewers who said it had "erotic" content and should be aired only after 11 p.m. Its already high ratings reportedly went up.

Not surprisingly given the enormous stream of contestants passing through — some only for days — the show has been involved in numerous crime investigations over the years.

In 2005, a fraudster wanted for a real estate scam went on the show as a contestant, only to be recognized by the victim and arrested.

In more grim incidents, in 2008 a former contestant was found strangled on a roadside outside Moscow. Last year one ex-contestant was stabbed to death and another was arrested after allegedly trying to sell African women as prostitutes.

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