

One of the reasons why I've come to love this show is its sense of daring. Even when it does the predictable thing, Arrow can take the story into exciting, unexpected directions just by skewing the timing. It will take something you expect to come towards the end and drag it to the top of the episode, devoting most of its time to the fallout instead of merely the prelude. Best of all, the show will replace the original cliffhanger with an even bigger one, making the next episode that much harder to resist. You can easily see the average show saving Thea's confession of Sara's murder until the last possible second, to squeeze out its maximum drama. And while you do experience a bit of anticlimax when Thea tells Dinah and Dinah takes it in stride, the resulting chain of events quickly picks up thrust until even pure dialogue takes on a force of its own. Still fresh and raw from hearing the truth about her sister's death, Dinah's confrontation with Ollie feels that much more powerful and his instinctive lies that much more of a betrayal, when both are really par for the course. But it's the League of Assassins' sudden capture of Merlyn that really makes things interesting. You're thinking, Okay—problem solved! The bastard's out of the picture and so, seemingly, is Ra's. That's the attitude most of the characters take, anyway, except Ollie. As always, he sees things from a different angle, this time arguing that he can't let Merlyn die lest it stain the soul of his sister, who essentially doomed her father by calling the League on him. It's a more defensible position than letting Merlyn just walk free in the first place, especially once Thea herself realizes what she's done. All of a sudden, we have Ollie versus Ra's, round two, in itself an event you expected to come way later in the season, perhaps in its finale, not just six episodes after their first bout. The show justifies his haste not only with saving Thea, but also by his confession that he still feels the sting of his defeat. Luckily, he has Diggle with him to frame it not as ego, but as a mental block to his ability to do what he needs to do. This would be more convincing if we had actually seen Ollie struggle with anything like that since he came back, but as is, you feel like he's making up this trauma out of whole cloth. Some surprises are actually worthwhile, however. [Spoiler alert!] I'm pretty sure few people, if anybody, could have predicted that instead of destroying Ollie for defying their sacred duel and invading his home, Ra's would reward Ollie with the offer to take his place. It's not the first time my head nearly exploded watching this show, but it's probably the closest I've come to making it literal. Suddenly, Ollie has an opportunity to reform a dark institution (or be corrupted by it) or further stoke the enmity of Ra's—and Nyssa, should she discover her father just handing out inheritances to supposed nemeses. It might sound like the episode's strengths are loaded onto both of its ends, but honestly, it's one of the smarter scripts the show's produced in some time. It's rare that everyone gets something notable to do in a single episode, but everyone does, even Diggle and Roy. By empathizing with Thea, Roy's more emotionally present than he's ever been, proving he may be, oddly enough, the most well-adjusted of Team Arrow. Diggle, who's always been at risk of getting lost in everyone else's assertiveness, pushes his way to becoming Ollie's sole back-up in Nanda Parbat. In that context, his readiness to follow rather than lead makes him the perfect partner for a suicide mission, although you get a hint of desperation in his blunt reminder that he knows Ollie better than he knows himself. The episode has also finally sold me on the whole Felicity (Raylicity?) fling, and all it took was reversing their usual roles. Ray's incessant invasions of Felicity's life, home, and choices have always felt borderline creepy, partly because he's a man asserting dominance over a woman, which is always risky, partly because she was often pressured into doing things she didn't want to do, which is downright dangerous. When Felicity turns the tables, however, your shoulders relax and you can enjoy the rom-com material because you know he's enjoying relinquishing control as much as she does exercising it. Some Musings:- I'm

on the fence about the A.T.O.M. suit. Besides being kind of an Iron Man rip-off, it's also bulkier than I'd like. On the other hand, this Ray Palmer has the musculature to support it. The post Arrow: Nanda Parbat appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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