

Even with the short time-frame for resurrections in the superhero genre, Ollie's came pretty fast (though to be fair, he wasn't actually dead—I think). You'd think that would be cause for celebration, not disappointment, but you can't help feeling the speed of his return cut off the rise of his partners and allies, right at their moment of glory. He doesn't exactly steal their thunder, but he does shift the focus from their hard-won victory to himself in a way that would be annoying if they weren't so glad to see him back. Team Arrow nevertheless has reason to pat themselves on the back. Though hopelessly outgunned and outnumbered, they manage to keep hope alive in the Glades by holding off the worst of Brick's reign. They're the ones who find Brick and conceive a plan to overthrow him. Instead of sticking to guerilla tactics and fighting the long defeat, they summon the guts to go all in and "end this...one way or the other." Is it the most tactically sound plan? Maybe not, but it's scrappy as hell, and that's something. Even more impressive is they do so without damning themselves by questionable means. As temptingly logical as it is to disgustedly shake Merlyn's hand and let him do the dirty work for them, ultimately they—well, except for Roy, apparently—reject his offer. In the end, their refusal doesn't matter; it's not as if their saying no can stop him from doing whatever the hell he wants anyway, as his repeated invasions of their HQ prove. But heroism, especially superheroism, is more about the victory of ideals, and turning down Merlyn is a definite win. So what does it say when Ollie comes back and immediately does what his team refused to do? Certainly, his new partnership with Merlyn puts a big dampener on the reunion, especially with Felicity, who blew off Merlyn expressly because she believed that's what Ollie would've done. Any hope that his return would restart the Ollicity is put to rest when Felicity brutally says it like it is: "Before you left, the last thing you said to me was that you loved me. Now you're back and the first thing you tell me is that you're working with the man who turned your sister, a woman you're supposed to love, into a killer, who killed a woman you used to love. I don't want to be a woman that you love." Already, Tatsu's warnings about the cost of defeating Ra's Al Ghul on his own terms is coming true, and you have to wonder if Felicity is the most precious thing Ollie will lose in the endeavor, or if she's just the beginning. Actually, forget that question. This is Arrow; of course it's the latter. But Ollie's timing is pretty good in that he makes his deal with Merlyn right when the villain is at his most sympathetic. The flashbacks are put to good use showing us Merlyn in better days, someone who might have had a happier and more stable family life than the Queens if fate (read: Brick) didn't intervene. In that sense, he does have something in common with Ollie, but with one major difference: Ollie was driven by circumstance to his first kill; Merlyn sought it out. Thea may be right that Merlyn's monstrousness comes from a good place, however distant, but he has a killer's instincts, all the same. The show can have fun giving Merlyn a redemptive period, but it's naïve to think years of refining his murderous techniques can be conditioned out by Thea's affection and Ollie's overtures. Still, if Arrow has anything close to an overarching theme, it's how love can drive people towards and away from death, sometimes within the same person. Ollie is the most obvious example, and given the parallels this episode makes between him and Merlyn it wouldn't be surprising if the ex-assassin cycled through both before his story comes to whatever end the writers deem fit. Arrow may be a colder show than The Flash, but it always holds out redemption as an option. Some Musings:- Hey, Dinah, here's a good tip for breaking into this vigilante business. Try not to say people's real names out loud when wearing the mask. Set a bad precedent.- A.V. Club's Alasdair Wilkins calls Merlyn's flashback haircut "heroically '90s". I concur.- The Team Arrow name is official! Felicity: "We call ourselves Team Arrow. Well, actually, that's just me, but..." As far as I'm concerned, that's enough. The post Arrow: Uprising appeared first on Weekly Comic Book

Review.

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