

Folks, I think we're going to have to face the hard truth that The Flash has a severe case of Ross and Rachel Syndrome.* I'm pretty sure I didn't coin that, and I'm positive I'm not the first to recognize it, because you all know what I'm talking about: when a TV show takes a guy and girl who have actual chemistry together, and does everything possible to keep them apart. These shows also like to do the reverse, stubbornly forcing characters who have little to no spark between them together for the sake of some dearly held, preconceived idea. It's easy to see where the Barry-Iris thing lands. Iris herself adds little to the show, but as a passionless object for Barry's affections, she may actually drag the show down. She's a pleasant, likable enough presence—and it's encouraging that she, too, would like to be “more than the Flash PR flak”—but the moment Barry eagerly leaps in to win her favor, she reverts to obliviousness and he to pathetic sap. His confession in “The Man in the Yellow Suit” seemed like it would end that rut, but apparently not. The good thing is Barry sees himself getting dragged into that non-starter of a plotline and decides enough is enough. The bad thing is he breaks out towards the wrong direction, entangling himself in a relationship that from the onset feels like it won't go anywhere. His encounter with Linda Park has a few kilowatts more mutual attraction than the average Barry-Iris encounter, and she has enough spunk and personality to work as a believable partner for Barry. But nothing in their light, easy banter suggests a genuine romance in the making. She's the Julie in this Ross-Rachel scenario.**Comparing her to Julie is even more appropriate because (and pardon my racial recklessness here) like Julie, Linda is a lovely Asian gal unintentionally getting in the way of two white kids who are just meant for each other. That's right; I'm on Team Caitlyn. As The Flash's resident geek girl with winsome humor, she's a fitting stand-in for Felicity, the real love of Barry's life, but rather than just replicate Felicity's particular chemistry with Barry, Caitlyn generates her own. Their commiseration over their equally stunted social lives has all the warmth that Barry's scenes with Linda and Iris lack, and it's no coincidence the episode cuts off their karaoke duet of “Summer Lovin'” to introduce Linda. If Caitlyn and Barry had managed to get through the entire chorus, it'd have been way too late for you to support any other romantic interest. I don't mean to make the episode sound like a rom-com, but our supervillain of the week is as flat and forgettable as Rainbow Raider (with an equally lame codename, if we end up sticking with Peek-a-Boo)*** You can drum up a modicum of sympathy for Shawna Baez's loyalty to bad boy Clay Parker—that is, if you can swallow your disgust at her totally missing the red flag of his silence when she coyly asks if he'd do the same for her after she breaks him out of prison. But feeling a little sorry for a character isn't the same as being impressed, especially when the key to defeating her powers is broadcasted so loudly by her reliance on sight. It's up to Rathaway's gleeful douchiness (and Andy Mientus savoring each and every condescending line) to pick up Baez's slack. You're actually sorry to see him go by the end of the episode, seeing how he brings out the best in another character who's struggled to flesh out his identity on the show. Up until now, Cisco's been a semi-reliable source of semi-entertaining humor, but by competing his intellect with Rathaway's, he reveals the headstrong, compassionate, and physically capable**** self he's hidden all along. One plotline that gets sort of lost in the midst of all this is Henry Allen's attempt to help Barry and Joe investigate Parker's prison break from the inside. Seeing the Allens enjoy the fleeting gift of being so physically close to each other is undeniably sweet (nearly rivaling a host of Joe to Barry speeches), but this was a clear opportunity for Henry to develop into more than a tragic victim of Barry's origin story, and the episode takes a pass, not even bothering to show Henry talking up his fellow inmates and getting stabbed as a result. For shame; the past live-action Flash deserves better. Some Musings:* For those of you too young to know, Ross and Rachel

and their unexpectedly compelling romance was one of the staying attractions of Friends, a fact the producers exploited for ten years by repeatedly bringing them together then keeping them apart.** In the second season, just when Rachel had finally wised up to Ross' flame and decided to reciprocate, Ross hooked up with Julie, a perfectly nice, unremarkable girl who existed solely to torture shippers.*** Caitlyn named both, interestingly enough, even though she suggests that "Peek-a-Boo" is her first. We're not actually going to call Rainbow Raider "Prism," are we?**** His fighting skills are shockingly impressive for someone who claimed to have been a victim of swirlies as a kid.- Grodd is coming!!!The post The Flash: Crazy for You appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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