

Oh. Oh my. That was a very good episode.

See, many a review ago, I glowed over (<https://mcuexchange.com/review-shield-episode-505/>) how Fitz was my favorite character not just in *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*, but in the MCU as a whole. So you can certainly imagine why I felt that this episode felt almost tailor-made for myself.

We knew from that previous buddy adventure episode with Hunter that Fitz would have to face, and perhaps embrace his dark side—"The Doctor," or Framework Fitz, as I like to call him instead. What I didn't expect was this overt, visual and direct interpretation of Fitz facing his inner demons, his dark side, the devil on his shoulder.

It seemed entirely believable—through the dimensional rift/crack that opens up to the fear dimension (a phrase which I still find to be utterly ridiculous), we've seen not only monsters, but sentient apparitions appear to the characters (i.e. Mike Peterson, Deke's mother). So at first, using this plot device to bring back The Doctor appeared to be a gimmick, but one that I was 100% ready to forgive, as it gave **Iain de Caestecker** the opportunity to really flex his acting muscles.

It's so heartbreaking to watch Fitz undergo through all of this stress; remember that Ward-enduced panic attack from early season 2? Poor Fitz seems to be going through this frequently in one episode below. With the team, and possibly the entire world's fate on his shoulders, not even a wholesome conversation about wishes with his now-wife Jemma Simmons could ground him back. But at the same time, it's a wonder watching de Caestecker literally acting against himself. Framework Fitz was the top highlight of the previous season's final pod, and that was a plot arc that had tons of gems to highlight. It's amazing how a different hairstyle, a suit and just a facial expression tweak can create an entirely different character.

Although... at the same time, the point of the episode was to demonstrate that it **is** the same character. Perhaps smarter people than myself realized the plot twist before the reveal, but I was left shocked and awed by the revelation that all of the devious machinations committed in the Lighthouse were all at the hands of Fitz proper, who is talking to himself in a sort of Smeagol/Gollum dynamic. But what was even more amazing was that Simmons still kept her undying devotion to her husband, despite these obscene actions. No one understands Fitz more than she does—except for Fitz himself, who even while completely lucid realizes that what he did—forcefully giving Daisy her powers back and manipulating events to the point that Deke and more seriously, Mack, are injured—is what he truly needed to do.

We get some "Deke knows that Fitz/Simmons are his grandparents" gags in, but it all pays off in an emotional beat at the end of the episode, where Deke imparts this knowledge to Simmons to let her know that their relationship will last. A lesser show would have kept these gags and close calls dragging on to the very end of the season, but this revelation not only comes at the perfect time, but it is executed expertly. And a lesser show would not have one of its major characters cross such a major line, because Fitz has clearly crossed a point of no return.

Television shows generally make incremental steps when it comes to plot progression and character development. This episode was a massive leap, even by *S.H.I.E.L.D.*'s usual brutal and efficient standards.

And I now realize that I neglected to mention everything else that happened in this episode. Coulson and crew work to intercept General Hale, who enacts the "I planned to get caught" trope that we're too familiar from movies already. The Russian and Absorbing Man are back into play, mere chess pieces for what we find out at the end to be... another damn branch of HYDRA. Now, I was hoping during the Coulson/Hale scenes that we would FINALLY get some damn answers on what this lady's deal is, and I guess I got my wish. HYDRA had an unceremonious end in season 3 just in time for *Captain America: Civil War*, and I excused the organization's return for season 4 as it was just a mere simulation. This time around, I'm hoping for something different, and I'm already digging this dark, underground secret society look that the end stinger gave us a peek of.

I believe that this season can really stick the landing.

VERDICT

5 scalpels in the neck out of 5. Maybe it's not a perfect episode entirely, but Fitz's storyline and de Caestacker's acting are such powerhouses that I found it impossible to not find immense enjoyment and satisfaction from this excellent hour of television.

ONE-SHOTS

- Big thanks to Joseph Aberl for taking *S.H.I.E.L.D.* reviews for the second half of the season on account of my lazy ass. As Joseph is out this weekend, I was happy enough to cover him for this episode.
- I am now adding "hobnob" to my regular vocabulary.
- "Have faith, or Xanax."
- MORE 360 SHOTS.
- I love Yo-Yo and all, but I need more story from her than "I'm tired of lying in this bed and I wanna do stuff."
- Man, I thought Creel was done with this shit, but here he is strapped with C4 on his body. Great career choices, my dude.
- May, be nice to Piper. I love her.
- Fun "cool origin story, bro" reference, but Coulson's repeated uses of "bro" was slightly grating.
- Fitz is good at knots, it looks like.
- Hmm. Maybe I misinterpreted Mack and Yo-Yo's last conversation in this episode, but it had me thinking that someone will kill themselves (someone who isn't supposed to be dead in the future) to break the time loop.

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My mission in life is convincing the world that "The Winter Soldier" is one of greatest movies of all time. I studied screenwriting at Carnegie Mellon University, and taught a class about the MCU and its creative influences. I write opinion features and record podcasts about popular culture for my website @BadHaircutProd, I interned for Paste Magazine, and am also writing for Flixist. Secretly hoping to be the next famous "Chris" in the MCU.

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AoS continues to be the best thing Marvel are doing.

4 [^](#) [v](#) • [Reply](#) • [Share](#)**LoveWaffle** • 2 years ago

Not mentioned in the review: General Hale's mysterious superior gave her the same substance Kasius drank before he fought Mack and gave to one of his underlings to fight Daisy. Even gave her the same instructions Kasius gave, too. I wonder how they're connected?

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So this Confederacy is apparently a Kree/Hydra thing. That really caught me off guard.

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Hobnobs are delicious. Especially the chocolate coated ones.

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So, that was a Skrull at the end saying "Hail Hydra", right?

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I was thinking either a Kree or another Chthonian.

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There's not point in hiding him unless he's a species we don't know or a character we're already familiar with

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Likely a Kree

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I don't know, I distinctly remember a pointed ear.

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I really don't think they'll do Skrulls before the movies, I'd love it if they do though.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ·



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It's possible I'm wrong, but when he gets close to Hale, out of the shadows, I swear I can see a pointed ear. I guess we'll have to see what happens.

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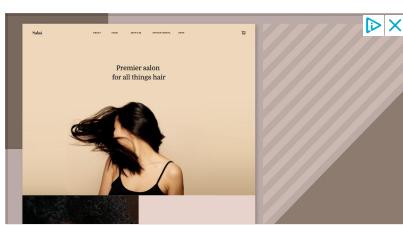
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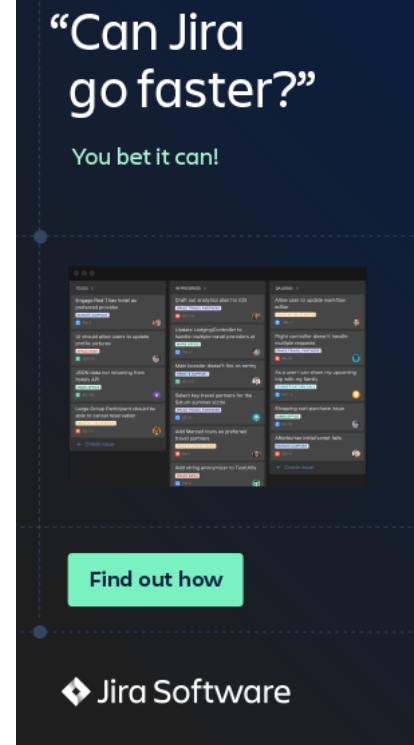
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