



REVIEW: 'Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.' Season 5 Episode 10 – Past Life

⌚ February 4, 2018

👤 Chris Compendio (<https://mcuexchange.com/author/chriscompendio/>)

Our agents of S.H.I.E.L.D. sure know how to make a mess of things. In their weeks stuck in the future Lighthouse, they've left a trail of destruction that includes human and Kree bodies, and essentially brought an end to the oppressive society that they briefly inhabited. And ten episodes in, we're finally leaving all of this behind.

Well, sort of.

I've been questioning why S.H.I.E.L.D. *had* to come to the future—and it seems like the only answer (that we know of) is because Robin said that it would happen. The future was written (or drawn, in Robin's case) and it cannot be changed. These are the *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* rules of time travel, and we've established by now that our agents are in a time loop. We are reminded by Fitz (in that timey-wimey episode (<https://mcuexchange.com/review-shield-episode-508/>)) and convinced by future, armless Yo-Yo in this episode that their efforts will be futile.

Speaking of which, future Yo-Yo is Kasius's seer, eh? That... actually makes a whole lot of sense. We wondered why Kasius was more familiar with Elena more so than the other characters, and I appreciate that S.H.I.E.L.D. continued its habit of answering mysterious questions in a brutally quick fashion. Her entire sequence with present Yo-Yo again displayed why S.H.I.E.L.D. is one of the superior shows amongst its superhero television contemporaries. It's a crazy and absurd scenario, but works so much from a dramatic and emotional level, with this planting the seeds for the cynical Elena that will eventually come. Not to mention, as always, this was well edited with the confrontation at the elevator between Coulson, May and Daisy.

So it's not so much Daisy's fault of the impending apocalypse, but rather the path that Coulson leads the team on—and we get a dramatic reveal that Coulson has been poisoned during his brief bout with the Inhuman trainer in berzerk mode from Kasius's black goo. We are led to believe by future Yo-Yo that for the Earth to be saved, Coulson must be allowed to die. But... as we know from our implied time travel rules, this doesn't happen at any point in the loop. "Loyalty" will bring the team (and the Earth down), from the team's loyalty to their leader, to Coulson's loyalty to leaving no agent behind.

The show is going to have to cheat somehow. It's going to have to work around some of the rules it established and surprise not only the audience, but characters like Fitz who are so concretely sure that whatever happens, happens. There has to be an anomaly that takes them out of the loop. This show is not known to play any dirty tricks on the audience (a la *The Walking Dead*), but it does love yanking our chain—

remember the "Fallen Agent" arc at the end of season 3, with the game of hot potato with the necklace? Remember every annoying commercial reminding us that someone would die? Then remember when it was just Lincoln?

I wonder if it actually will be the end of Coulson—that would actually be a greater plot twist than Coulson (and the Earth too both) being saved. Coulson *IS* S.H.I.E.L.D., to both the characters and the show's fans. We've come to love all of the other characters in this show, but Coulson is the man who kept not only the Avengers together in the first film, but this ragtag team of agents that we learned to appreciate through the last several years.

So that's it for space, right? As poetic as Kasius's end with Simmons was, getting impaled by a shotgun axe felt a bit abrupt for someone who's been gnawing at the scenery for nearly ten episodes straight. Same goes for our last look at Enoch and Deke—we get a (very) brief pep talk from Fitz to Enoch through walkie talkie, and Deke and Daisy get to have one more antagonistic (but begrudgingly respectful) exchange, but I guess they're all blown up now. At least Flint and Tess have a slightly happier ending, but now all they can really do is wait for the agents to do their job in the past.

But... if the agents succeed, might Flint and Tess and so many other people not even exist? Wouldn't none of this have ever happened anyway? I'm confused. I'm hurting my own brain thinking about this.

Whatever. We got a month off for the show. Watch the Super Bowl tonight. Fawn over *Black Panther*.

VERDICT

4 decapitated Krees out of 5. A quick, brutal and intriguing end to what I guess was the “space and future” pod, though I wish we got better exits(?) from some of the newer characters we’ve grown to like.

ONE-SHOTS

- Someone answer me this: if Kasius actually stopped S.H.I.E.L.D. in the future, wouldn't that render his present null and void if the Earth is never destroyed? Did he ever realize this? Why am I making my head hurt more?
 - The CGI is still baller.
 - Enoch was being a real *Arrested Development* Milford Man hiding in the Zephyr.
 - I really thought that it was Ben being brought back to life, after we got Tess back. Not sure if the misdirection was intentional, or if I'm just stupid (probably the latter).
 - Simmons teaching Flint how to utilize his powers was a very nice character development callback to her helping the phasing Inhuman from earlier in the season.
 - Future Yo-Yo standing up to reveal her lack of arms was an excellent beat.
 - The inner shot of Flint in his space helmet looked very, very, very much like Iron Man. Not sure why I need to point this out, when it was probably obvious to everyone.
 - I'm glad Mack at least acknowledged it, but Flint blowing the Kree dudes out into space after the last episode made such a big deal about killing was... weird.
 - Kasius with his black goo seemed very WWE. ("I'm gonna beat you to death with your own skull!")
 - Goddamn it, ABC. That ending was classic suspenseful *S.H.I.E.L.D.*, but the preview for the next episode pretty much spoiled it.

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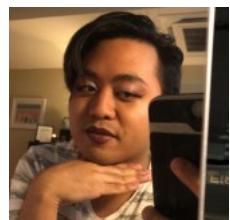
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My mission in life is convincing the world that "The Winter Soldier" is one of greatest movies of all time. I studied screenwriting at Carnegie Mellon University, and taught a class about the MCU and its creative influences. I write opinion features 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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Farhan Ahmer 2 years ago

Flint's decision made sense. He grew up at lighthouse. He knew Tess much better than he knew any of SHIELD agents. Also, he and Tess saved many people from Lighthouse who were probably known to him.



Wynne Richport → Guest · 2 years ago

With the reveal that Yo-Yo and other Inhumans were being harvested for DNA for the Inhuman baby farm, I'm 99% sure Flint actually is Yo-Yo's son. Maybe not Mack's, though. How would the Kree have his DNA?

^ | v · Reply · Share ·



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Wynne Richport → Guest · 2 years ago

Vijay and Ellen Nadeer proved that you can be bred from Inhumans and not necessarily end up being Inhuman yourself. So Yo-Yo's children have a 50-50 chance of not being Inhuman. Even then, some Inhumans, like Maximus, lose all powers upon Terrigenesis.

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Wynne Richport → Guest · 2 years ago

Future Yo-Yo was harvested. As were all of the other dead Inhumans. This was confirmed. They wanted to breed Inhumans, but regular humans were also byproducts of this. So of course if they want Inhumans, they'd breed DNA samples from two different Inhumans and not some random human. Also, Mack was killed before Yo-Yo ever went to fight the Kree. And we don't even know how, so it's likely that they never had his corpse.

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Tom Bacon · 2 years ago

To me, I think the important thing to remember is that Robin is the one who has *created* the time loop in order to save the Earth. The loop exists purely to rewrite history, and could have run thousands of times - with each time getting closer to her succeeding. This, of course, will be the time the loop is finally broken.

5 ^ | v 1 · Reply · Share ·



Phil Ticknor · 2 years ago

AOS has now twice established that prophecies/future can't be broken and that attempting to do so is exactly what results in it happening - first Lincoln's death and now this. It would actually be a narrative letdown to have them break the loop, though it seems they have to.

3 ^ | v · Reply · Share ·



Chris · 2 years ago

To be honest, I wouldn't be upset if they let Coulson die. But only if he got to die on his own terms, unlike when Loki killed and Fury brought him back.

Also, narratively, I feel like they don't know where to go with him anymore. Like how many times can he rebuild SHIELD or go all parental on Daisy.

His death could also move the show forward in so many different ways, and to be frank with him gone, potentially make crossovers with the film side less troublesome.

We know the 100th will be crazy emotional, so this could be the moment we lose Coulson. And I am saying all of this as big fan of what Clark and Coulson have brought to the table.

Only other things about this episode I want to point out quick are: 1. Loved the comic book easter egg with future Yo-yo. 2. Enoch isn't dead in the present ya'll. 3. So Kasius' dad has something to do with the Earth breaking apart, good to know!

2 ^ | v · Reply · Share ·



LoveWaffle → Chris · 2 years ago

I'm fully expecting this series to end with Coulson's death, like a mirror of how it began.

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Farhan Ahmer → LoveWaffle · 2 years ago

As much as I love Coulson, I would like this ending. It will be a good send off to Coulson and AoS show

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SNKN → Chris · 2 years ago · edited

I felt like Kasius' dad had different plans for Earth. In 2022 flashback (or flashforward), there's no mention of Krees which showed up. They probably came years later Earth's destruction (which is 2018), and took control what remained of it, although the original plan was different.

^ | v · Reply · Share ·



Jake Bennett · 2 years ago

I'll have to rewatch it, but I don't think Coulson's dying from being poisoned by that odium stuff. It's almost assuredly from his deal with Ghost Rider.

1 ^ | v · Reply · Share ·



Farhan Ahmer · 2 years ago · edited

"I've been questioning why S.H.I.E.L.D. had to come to the future"

Remember, our Agents are in a loop but not people like Flint and Tess. I see it as Robin's plan to save as many Humans as she could. So she brought the agents from past and saved the people on lighthouse who are now on their way to rebuild human civilization on earth.

However our Agents who have now seen their horrible future will plan to break free of the loop. We'll see how that goes..

Essentially, this confirms multiple timelines theory. Flint and Tess are now in an alternate reality where earth was once shattered. Our agents are in another timeline where earth CAN be saved.

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Farhan Ahmer · 2 years ago

Kasius explains his motivations to stop shield in this episode. He wants to stop them so that when his father attacks Earth shield is not around to stop him, and

Kasius explains his motivations to stop SHIELD in this episode. He wants to stop them so that when his father attacks Earth SHIELD is not around to stop him, and leave a partially destroyed earth for Kasius to get banished to.

(I hope I'm making sense)

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LoveWaffle · 2 years ago

Once more, for the heck of it.



1 ^ | v · Reply · Share



Craig · 2 years ago

Great episode. I see that Eric Laneuville has only directed one episode before, but he can come back any time. This ep felt very cinematic.

That gun control "joke" was totally awful. *gag*

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Ian Fleming · 2 years ago · edited

Fantastic episode. I've loved every minute of this "future" arc. The third episode might have been the only one that I found to be merely "good". I am very glad that the writers didn't do the cliched thing by having Flint come back with the team. Not everything needs to be tied up in a nice neat little bow. BTW, I'm sure that I remember similar grumblings when Ghost Rider went to hell with Uncle Eli in episode eight of season four. More than likely "a thing" will happen and Flint (maybe even Tess) will appear in a rousing moment to help save the day. Give the writers some credit. As for why it was "necessary" to abduct Team SHIELD and transport them 74 years to an horrific dystopian future... You'd need to ask Robin Hinton about that one. You know, the character who had been driven mad by her Inhuman power of seeing past, present and future all at the same time.

^ | v · Reply · Share



SNKN · 2 years ago

"I've been questioning why S.H.I.E.L.D. had to come to the future"

Only someone (or a group of someone) who has seen the Earth in such a shape would definitely believe this would be the consequence.

Seeing Earth like that should be a huge motivator to try to change time.

Besides, The Destroyer of the Worlds is in the group, so...

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