

It's a rite of passage of sorts for every superhero to lose their powers and start questioning their whole purpose in life. Can they still be a hero without their special abilities? It's a rhetorical question because the answer is always: of course they can; what makes them a hero comes from their hearts, not from their powers! As with all superhero clichés, there's no suspense to be had in the end result. It's really all about the self-discovery that happens along the way. For Barry, his discovery is without his powers, "I'm not the best version of me. I love being the Flash." It's about the closest thing to a dark side Barry has. The cold open shows that his attachment to the speed is practically habitual, as he uses it for the mundane as well as the heroic—although who wouldn't want the power to blast through the morning coffee line? He's obviously getting high on the power, as seen when he spends several minutes taunting his mugger before leaving him disarmed, pantless, and in the presence of a cop.\* Barry later confesses to Caitlin that he's not sure he can live without his power, which at first sounds pretty extreme, but it's hard to imagine him going back to life as a geeky, lovelorn CSI after months of putting supervillains in their place. In cases like these, it's traditional for the hero to save the day without his powers, but that's not really practical with an opponent like Farooq Gibran\*\* (a.k.a. Blackout). In fact, that's probably not an option for any of the metahumans we've encountered to date, but for someone with Gibran's power, even another metahuman won't cut it, as proven by Woodward's defeat. Woodward's too flat a character for his death to elicit much sympathy, and telling Barry to run doesn't exactly settle the conflict between them, but it's a redemptive moment for him nonetheless.\*\*\* You can hope he'll be back to act on it. There's also the suggestion that Woodward, who could resist Gibran's attacks, failed to defeat the villain because he lacks Barry's heroic conviction. That would tie in with the purpose of this whole ordeal, which is to remind Barry that if he got his powers for a reason, as he and everyone else insists, then they're not just for him to blunt the consequences of oversleeping, but to protect the people he cares about. After all, he only regains his powers and kicks them up to the next level after making that realization. Wells, however, isn't moved by the touchy-feeliness of this development as much as he's interested in the fact that Barry's attachment to others is key to working his powers. That's a dangerous discovery for Wells, who by releasing Woodward to get in Gibran's way proves that he's not above sacrificing others for his needs. It's not that he doesn't care about people at all, as Barry accuses after learning what Wells did. He definitely cares about Barry (or, more specifically, the Flash), as his enraged screaming at harassed A.I. Gideon shows. But everyone else is probably expendable if it will get Barry where Wells wants him to be. Fortunately, we're also seeing that Barry's loved ones can take care of themselves. That's especially important for Iris, who's most in danger of becoming a vestigial organ to the show, showing up only to make things awkward for everyone else as she does when Barry's in the middle of explaining his loss of power to Joe. Thank goodness for William Tockman, who takes advantage of Gibran's blackout to terrorize the CCPD station. It's not the finest moment for Central City's finest, especially when both Joe and Eddie are shut down on their own turf, but at least Iris learns she can't always depend on the Flash to bail her out of trouble. I expect she'll go back to being the snoopy damsel in distress now that Barry's back and running, but she'll be armed with her Tockman victory now. Some Musings: \* Although without his gun, the mugger just looks like some poor slob in boxers staring confusedly at a brick wall. \*\* When it rains, it pours. I've met two Gibrans in the last month, and here's another. Perhaps it's a fad? \*\*\* Also, this neatly takes care of the problem of Woodward spilling the beans on Barry's identity after he stupidly flaunted it last episode. - High Eddie is best Eddie. We all know that now. The post The Flash appeared first on Weekly Comic Book Review.

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