

Absolute Power Corrupting Absolutely

There have been various interpretations on the old theme of superhuman powers being transferred to another person. Last night, I revisited one of those in a season 1 episode of *Smallville*. During a freak accident during a lightning storm, Clark Kent's powers are passed to one of his high school classmates. Clark gets to discover what it is like to be a "normal" teenager while "Eric" comes to discover that being the world's most powerful adolescent is not all it is cracked up to be. Looking at the show, I realized that it is a spin on the old classic adage of Nature vs. Nurture.

Clark's initial reaction to his loss is one of confusion and fear. Being able to lift the family truck out of the mud, driving a stake into the ground with his bare hands, and other tasks that would be impossible for mortal men were a snap for the Boy of Steel. However, the sight of his own blood sends him into near shock. Over time, he learns to embrace his "normalcy" and not be afraid to engage in a game of two-on-two without fear of accidentally using his powers to injure one of his friends... even if one of them is Lana Lang's quarterback boyfriend. One of my favorite moments from the episode is Lana's observation that Clark doesn't seem to "have the weight of the world on his shoulders."

On the other hand, Eric takes a totally different approach to his new-found gifts. He flaunts them in front of people on the street. He flirts with a girl right in front of her boyfriend and flings him across the school parking lot smashing him on top of a parked car. When a powerless Clark attempts to intervene (his nature or is his nurturing), he receives a few bruised ribs and a cut to the head. Eric's parents are terrified of the "freak" he has become and determine to send him away to be studied and to find out what happened to him.

Overnight, the teenager has acquired strength and abilities he could only dream of before but is totally unprepared to handle them.

Nurture: Jonathan and Martha Kent discovered a toddler inside a rocket ship in the middle of a field and raised that child with morals and responsibilities. Clark was not meant to score touchdowns with his power but for something more. As his powers advanced over time, the Kent's were determined to hide these gifts and use them when necessary and secretly in order to protect their adopted son.

On the flip side, Eric was an awkward kid and constantly degraded by his parents; particularly his father. It may seem cliché to paint Clark in the best possible light and to show his counterpart in shadow. But I think the point here was to show how two different people from different backgrounds deal with extraordinary circumstances. A very good episode from the beginning of the series.

OK... nerdy sidebar: Shawn Ashmore who played Eric also was in the X-Men films as Bobby Drake/Iceman. His twin brother, Aaron played a certain cub reporter for the Daily Planet in the past two seasons of *Smallville*. Such a nerd!

Man Of Steel Stolen; Report At Eleven

While in the process of changing from his garb as "Clark Kent, a mild-mannered reporter for a great metropolitan newspaper" the Man of Steel was abducted from a red 1940s London-style phone booth. Apparently, one of the Last Son of Krypton's vile enemies discovered his alter ego and tracked him to the

town of Steamboat Springs, Colorado. I take you now to the report filed by *The Steamboat Pilot and Today* newsman Jack Weinstein:

Steamboat Springs – The Man of Steel is missing.

A mannequin dressed as Superman – complete with blue tights, the familiar “S” logo on the chest and red cape – was reported missing Monday. Superman dutifully greeted customers in front of the My Wireless location at 675 S. Lincoln Ave.

Superman was taken from a locked 1940s London-style red phone booth. It appeared someone had broken the lock with a rock, said Andy Brown, founder of the Steamboat Springs-based Verizon Wireless retailer.

Brown said the Superman mannequin and phone booth were placed outside the store shortly after the company opened its second Steamboat location there, about 1 1/2 years ago. He said it reflects the way My Wireless operates.

“We kind of have a light-hearted approach to everything,” he said. “We want everyone to smile.”

An employee noticed that the 6-foot-tall, 40-pound Superman had been taken and reported it missing. Steamboat Springs Police Department Capt. Joel Rae said Tuesday that the incident is under investigation.

Aside from some scratched paint to the exterior of the phone booth and a broken light bulb inside, there was no other damage. There was also no damage reported to the store.

Because the store’s first location at 1755 Central Park Drive is open Sundays, the South Lincoln Avenue location is not. Brown said Superman could have been taken anytime after closing Saturday to when the store opened Monday morning.

Brown suspects the incident was just a prank and doesn’t want anyone to get in trouble. But for a prank to be a prank, he

said, Superman would have to be returned.

“Hopefully someone will get their jollies in and bring it back,” he said.

My Wireless is offering a \$100 store credit, free cell phone upgrade or accessories for the safe return of Superman, Brown said.

Which of Superman’s dastardly villains perpetrated such an act of villainy and who will follow the clues to his whereabouts. Could it be the evil Metallo, the trickster Mr. Myxyzptlk, the sinister Darkseid, or perhaps the “greatest criminal mind of our age”: Lex Luthor. Only time will tell. Curse you evil doers!

Doomsday In Smallville

I can accept most things concerning the long, tedious 8 year run of Smallville... For example, character introductions much earlier than acceptable for the sake of increasing ratings. For another, the Incredible Hulk meets Superman interpretation of Doomsday HOWEVER, when viewers have been waiting all season long for what is supposed to be the much-anticipated knockout/dragout battle of Clark Kent’s life (still just Clark, no suit, no secret identity except for his moniker of The Red-Blue Blur) and they get next to nothing... well. All season long, the arrival of Doomsday has been announced... even going back to the finale of Season 7. And we get two minutes of less than thrilling spectacle. This creature was supposed to be the end of Superman and it was handled poorly. Sure there was a super catch of a flying automobile, rescuing a small child, a few big explosions, but that was about it...

LAME! I had been waiting all season for that.

Oh, yeah. For two years, one of the comics mainstay characters has been a part of the show (even if he was once again one of those aforementioned too early to come to the canvas characters). Jimmy Olsen was killed by Doomsday. At his funeral, we find out that the characters name was Henry James Olsen. The character's younger brother is given his camera. The new character's name? James Bartholomew Olsen: the cub reporter of the Daily Planet. UGH!

Next season, the show is moving to Friday nights which is typically the graveyard of network television. Will I watch? I have my doubts. I enjoy Elsewhere stories as much as anyone, but I see this turn of events as an insult. And on Thursday nights in the 8PM time slot... some teenage angst drama featuring vampires. At least my other favorite show is still looking bright.