

TV Review: Game of Thrones Season 4 Episode 2: 'The Lion and the Rose'

Gods save the King. [George Wood](#) reviews

Monday 14 April 2014



Rating: ★★★★★

Warning: this article contains spoilers.

"Killing a man at a wedding? Horrid. What sort of monster would do such a thing? As if men need more reasons to fear marriage" – Lady Olenna

[Last week I mentioned](#) how no one, not even a Lannister, is safe in *Game of Thrones*. 'The Lion and the Rose' saw one of the most hated TV characters to grace our screens finally receive his comeuppance. Joffrey is a little shit played to perfection by Jack Gleeson, whose portrayal of a petulant, cruel, megalomaniac king has continued to delight/disgust across the series run. There's very few successful villains on television that can remain compelling for so long without giving into some kind of redeeming quality, yet Joffrey is simply impossible to sympathise with. And that's why he had to die.

What I love about *Game of Thrones* is its reluctance to kill off antagonistic characters simply to satisfy the viewers' thirst for revenge. Joffrey's death has been called for ever since he clocked off Ned's head back in season one, but, true to the books, he's been allowed to continue his psychotic power play right until he's pissed off every character in Westeros.

Only now does it make logical sense for him to die. 'Two Swords' alluded to the instability of power, and it's interesting to see how placing the most psychopathic member of the Lannister family on the Iron Throne has finally paid off. As the individual reaction shots to his "entertainment" proved, almost everyone was thinking the same thing - Joffrey's gone too far.

Leave it to George R. R. Martin to give him the most gruesome death possible then. The scene of Joffrey's death was messy and disgusting, and played out until the very end; it served as a reminder that this show is never one to give into cheap thrills and resolutions.

Where we might have been cheery at the thought of Joffrey being stabbed by a Stark (or pretty much anyone really), this visceral alternative (along with the prospect of Tyrion's likely imprisonment) means we can't quite be satisfied - to do so would be as bad as Joffrey himself. Much has already been said about *Game of Thrones'* depiction of violence, but it's brilliant in the way it exploits and subverts the basic bloodthirsty instincts humans have a capacity for.

Elsewhere the episode simmered and boiled as the Purple Wedding reached its finale. Scenes that involved Tyrion having to diplomatically counter Joffrey's constant abuse - from the abrupt slashing of his gift to every painful interaction during the feast - just oozed tension. Lovers' envy between the Lannister twins as well as the meeting between Oberyn and Tywin kept the episode bubbling away.

The wedding context also made great pairings of Cersei and Brienne, Jaime and Loras, Olenna and Tywin, and Jaime and Bronn; we're used to seeing these characters separately, so seeing them side-by-side on screen was fresh and interesting.

Once again, the action was focused in King's Landing, but Theon, Stannis and Bran also resurfaced for the first time since last season. I've always felt these characters had the weakest plot lines, but what we saw here was equally disturbing and intriguing in good measure. Ramsay's complete control over Theon/Reek was almost as horrifying as the hunt at the start, while Melisandre's brainwashing over Dragonstone's inhabitants to the point of burning nonbelievers on the stake evoked scenes from *The Wicker Man* (the disturbing original, not the Cage remake). Bran's segment was kept short but sweet with the development of his abilities as a Warg, and his vision at the weirwood tree.

'The Lion and the Rose' perhaps represents everything great about *Game of Thrones*: cutting dialogue, brilliant filmmaking, and a shocking twist that pushes the narrative in a rapidly different direction. However, it's the chaotic fallout from events like these that keep us gripped to the series. Joffrey's death raises a massive whodunnit, and judging from Cersei's accusations at the end of the episode, blame seems to be placed on Tyrion (who, after sending Shae away and being humiliated by Joffrey, is not looking particularly innocent).

But in the mean time, goodbye Joffrey; long rot the King.



One comment

Alex

14 Apr '14 at 10:20 pm

Never before have I been so happy to see a main character die

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