

[There Is No Third Impact: Episode Eight](#)

written by edward j rathke | March 3, 2016



This year at Entropy we'll be rewatching the legendary *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. Join us on this tremendous journey through one of the best television series ever made.

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We'll be watching the subtitled versions and discussing them here every week without spoilers for future episodes.

Insane but not impossible.

Another brilliant Misato sentence that sums up humanity's fight against the Angels.

This episode is all about Soryu Asuka Langley, who we'll just refer to as Asuka from now on. This is also, I think, the most standard episode of the show thus far, despite being a very important one.

Up until this point, each episode has been pretty dire and difficult and unconventional in either structure or theme or narrative. We've been wandering in the darkness with few guideposts as to where this is all heading. It's a dark and difficult show, to be sure, but there's been little relief up until this point.

This episode is, in many ways, structured like a monster of the week episode.

The Sixth Angel shows up, but the sense of danger isn't as existential as the previous Angel attacks. We barely even fear for Asuka and Shinji, who're in the most danger. But we definitely aren't fearing for humanity's survival either.

This episode is really about introducing Asuka, who brings some lightness to the drab and dreary and cataclysmic world of *Neon Genesis Evangelion*. She's loud and brash and confrontational and prideful, which is the exact opposite of Shinji.

We also meet Kaji, who's pretty mysterious.

But let's go back a bit.



Commander Ikari's in that weird room he's always in. It makes for some amazing visuals despite it being the strangest place for a military official to be. As is usual for his scenes, we have no idea what he's talking about, but some cargo is crossing the Pacific Ocean. From there, we cut to Shinji, Toji, Aida, and Misato flying in a helicopter to naval ships.

Aida, military nerd that he is, is losing it with all the tech and gear around. He's recording every minute of it.

And then we meet Asuka, the Second Child and pilot of Unit 02, who makes a statement the moment she's on screen. Almost immediately, she's slapping people and shouting out orders and accusations.

It really is a great contrast to the rest of the cast, who tend to be pretty reserved and quiet and withholding. Asuka's pretty much on the surface.

We also meet Kaji, which throws Misato on guard and off balance right away, hinting at a deeper relationship there.



Hideaki Anno captures these new relationships so economically and perfectly with this image on the left. Misato and Kaji's body language say so much. He's so under her skin already and she's trying desperately not to show it. Asuka has a teenage crush on Kaji in much the same way that Toji's pining for Misato.

They're attractive adults shoved into close proximity with hormone-filled teenagers. It's bound to happen.

Kaji pushes things further by revealing that he and Misato have been lovers, scandalising the teens and mortifying Misato.

Misato who's all set to be the most capable version of herself today runs into Kaji, a former lover, who spirals her off balance and embarrasses her in front of her charges, which also undermines her authority.

It's messy and it's funny and it feels so real and right.

Despite how interesting that relationship promises to be, we shift back to Asuka, who's really the center of this episode. In every scene, she's framed in such a way that puts her in a position of power. Especially with relation to Shinji. She's always standing over him, sometimes physically but more often mentally. She puts him off balance with her bravado.

We learn that Shinji's a bit of a celebrity from his exploits in Unit 01 and that his sync rate was ridiculously high for an untrained pilot. We also learn that Unit 00 and 01 are largely considered prototypes, with 02 being the first designed for battle. All that data being recorded by NERV definitely went into constructing 02 and the other future iterations mentioned in the previous episode.



This is a true Evangelion, the first on Earth to be built for actual combat. The final model.

And Asuka takes great pride in having the perfected EVA to pilot. She makes sure Shinji knows that she stands above him. She's the best pilot. The best trained. The best suited for the job. Her EVA is the best designed and best equipped to fight Angels, or anything else.

Asuka's an interesting character right away because of how she pushes against what our expectations are for an EVA pilot. So far we've only met Rei and Shinji, two broken kids. Hurt and abandoned, so withdrawn and anxious they can barely function.

And then Asuka bursts on screen with so much swagger.

Some other things are happening on the ship.

Kaji's the one talking to Commander Ikari, though we still don't know what that's all about.

Misato runs into authority barriers from the Admiral. Rather than push back, she gently reminds him that NERV has the authority to take over, if necessary.

This again shows how far reaching NERV's power is. Every branch of the military, government, and media are seemingly tools for them to play with, if they so choose.

The Admiral is insistent about his power, which, of course, means he's about to lose it, which he does once the Sixth Angel shows up.

Interestingly, Misato doesn't take it from him.

Asuka does.

After forcing Shinji into her extra plugsuit, which is clearly made for her body type, she also forces him into Unit 02 with her. A lot of this is played for comedy. Shinji looks feminine and embarrassed in her suit and he's messing the sync by not knowing German, which seems to be Asuka's native language. She literally makes him watch as she pilots the EVA to prove that she's the better pilot.

Shinji doesn't really care about that though.

We know Shinji. He just wants people to be proud of him, to be kind to him,

but he doesn't really care if he wins or loses or is considered the best. He craves kindness and affection, but not recognition or attention.

Asuka seems to crave those, though, which maybe tells us some more about her.



Anyrate, the Angel is smashing up the ships and the Admiral is refusing to ask Misato—and by extension, NERV—for help, and then Asuka takes things into her own hands by starting up Unit 02.

The Angel is a leviathan of sorts. A gigantic swimming monster with huge sharp teeth. Kind of like a whale spun into the territory of nightmares. While it's smashing the ships, Misato believes it's looking for Unit 02, which is an interesting observation.

If that is what it's doing, it shows that the Angels are pretty intelligent, and that their grudge seems to be primarily with NERV. Why this may be true is difficult to pin down. But it could be that the EVAs themselves attract Angels or that the Angels have a real goal—the elimination of NERV.

Whatever the case may be, Asuka brings Unit 02 into position just in time for the Angel to pull it under.



Interestingly, we discover that this stretch of the ocean wasn't always an ocean. Beneath the ocean, we see the wreckage of a city. Skyscrapers and so on stretch from the ocean bed.

It's never stated, mind, but this is certainly a result of the Second Impact. The poles melted and the seas rose high enough to swallow entire regions of the world, including former sizable cities.

Once underwater, the EVA becomes somewhat useless. We learn that it needs B

equipment for underwater fighting, though we don't really know what that is. Suffice it to say, Asuka and Shinji don't have it and so they're hopelessly pulled along by the Angel.

Misato comes up with another insane plan to stop the current Angel, which they decide to make work, because there's really no other option.

During this time, Kaji leaves, frustrating and disappointing Misato, who briefly shows real affection for him.



Shinji and Asuka manage to fall into sync at the possibility of their failure and snap open the Angel's jaws, allowing the sinking battleships to crash through its teeth and unload its full arsenal into its core, which causes the monster to explode.

It's all surprisingly easy, especially when put next to the cataclysmic danger from the previous Angel battles.

The first Angel fight, all the forces of Japan fail along with Shinji, who nearly dies. Unit 01 goes berserk to save the day.

The second Angel fight is much the same. The only thing that saves them is Shinji goes berserk.

The third fight begins with Shinji nearly dying and results in a hole being drilled through the Geofront while NERV execute an insane plan to kill it, which nearly results in the death of Rei.

But this battle—it's all quite simple. It feels like any other anime in that way. Where the heroes face sequences of challenges which become routine.

This episode feels routine.

It's effective in presenting Asuka and in adding more depth to some of the mysteries at the core of *Evangelion*, but from a narrative and structural standpoint, this is a very by the numbers kind of episode.

Anyrate, when the battle's over, Ritsuko looks over the results and sees that Asuka, Shinji, and Unit 02 had the highest sync rate they've ever seen. We also learn that Asuka's now at Shinji's school, much to the horror of Toji.

Most importantly, and most opaquely, we discover what the cargo was that Commander Ikari mentioned at the start of the episode. Kaji delivers it to

him and we get a glimpse of...something. Commander Ikari calls it the first human being, ADAM, and Kaji says it must be related to Ikari's primary project.

It all means something. But what does it mean?

It's too early to tell, but it certainly adds an interesting spice to this rather standard episode.

Anno bookends what may be the most standard episode thus far with something that we desperately want to sink our teeth into, even though we have no idea what it's made of.

And that's what we've come to expect from *Neon Genesis Evangelion*, yeah? Mysteries pile and the battle with the Angels becomes a backdrop to the relationships of the characters. Often this is focused on their shared psychological pain, but today, it's shining on a new spark that's entering the cast: Asuka.

She adds a much needed liveliness to the cast. She may be one of my favorites on the show, actually, if only because of how she drives these relationships which have started to solidify.

