

There Is No Third Impact: Episode Five

written by edward j rathke | February 11, 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.

Since the very first episode, we've seen Rei wrapped in bandages and in some amount of pain. Now we find out why.

During a previous test, one that took place just prior to the events of the first episode, Rei's Unit 00 didn't sync with her. Not only did the sync not work, it completely severed ties with Rei and NERV control.



It went berserk, and it's first

action was ripping itself free from its binding. It's second action seemed to be an attack on Commander Ikari. This reinforces the idea that the EVAs are more than simple mecha. They're flesh and blood who do have some amount of agency. So what are the pilots to the EVA? A parasite that controls their actions?

Whatever the case may be, EVA 00 wants free. Free of its binding, free of its cage in NERV, and it may even recognise Commander Ikari as its captor, and so it strikes directly at him.

Or it could just be a caged animal lashing out at a perceived weak point in the cage.

We don't know and we can't know, but, to me, it feels like there's some recognition of Ikari and who he is and what he represents. Just as, in the first episode, we see EVA 01 freely act to protect Shinji from falling debris. It could have been that the EVA was recognising its symbiotic pilot, or it could have simply wanted to protect a human from random acts of violence.

Questions and mysteries!

Regardless, in subduing the EVA, the automatic emergency eject is activated and Rei's cockpit is shot into the walls before falling maybe 100 feet or more to the ground. Commander Ikari rushes to her cockpit and, with no regard for his own safety, he burns his hands in freeing her from the cockpit to make sure she's okay.

The same Commander Ikari who seems to have no regard or time for his own son.

We learn next that Rei, the First Child from the Marduk Report, exhibits some mental instability, and this led to the disaster in the test. Ritsuko describes her as more disturbed than they initially thought, but no explanation is given. Her records are sealed, so whoever she was before is unknowable. But, like Shinji, she seems to be alone. Without family or friends. As we've seen in previous episodes, she's always by herself at school and rarely shows up in the company of others.

We also learn a bit more about the Angels. NERV is studying the Fourth Angel, the last one Shinji killed. Ritsuko describes them like this:

The Angel is composed of matter which has the properties of both particle and wave, like light.

In addition, their wave pattern has a 99.89% similarity to humans.

What does that mean?

Hard to say. But the fact that the Angels are made of something similar to light but they process information in a way that's similar to humans. This shows their intelligence and also explains why they seem to appear as if from

nowhere, without warning, and exhibiting such power.

While this explanation is going on, Shinji notices his father's burns and Ritsuko tells him how Commander Ikari risked his safety to save and protect Rei.

Shinji doesn't make a strong reaction but this has to be both strange and incredibly hurtful. His father—who sees him merely as a weapon or tool, who sent him out to fight Angels without training, who seems to have no regard for Shinji as a person—acted with care towards another child.

The abandoned boy who's so broken must now know that his father is capable of emotion and care and tenderness. Just not for him.

Back at school, the female students are swimming and Aida and Toji take time to leer and generally perv out.

While this is pretty normal behavior for teenage boys, this gets at something that's generally pretty upsetting about a lot of anime. Female characters are often incredibly sexualised and, for some of its fans, that's certainly part of the appeal. We've already seen it in the way Misato's drawn and discussed, but it will continue to pop up. As things go, this moment isn't really too bad. And, like videogames and western animation, and all media, in general, women are sexualised and judged based on unrealistic aesthetic expectations.

But that's a different discussion, and maybe one we'll have later.

Aida and Toji tease Shinji about Rei, which flusters him, because he's a fourteen year old boy who's never had friends before. But his response is interesting:

Well, I was wondering why she's always alone.

Shinji concern is about her emotional health, rather than her physical appearance. Toji describes her as probably having a bad attitude and that she's unapproachable, which is also a gendered attack on her, but it's hard for Shinji to feel differently. This girl who shares the very peculiar job of piloting EVAs with him has never said more than a few words to him at a time.

Back at NERV, more tests are being done with Shinji in Unit 01. While Ritsuko rattles off orders about sending the data to Balthazar and Melchior—names that currently have no meaning for us, beyond their allusions to the Three Wise Men from the Bible—Shinji watches Rei and his father interact.

They smile. Rei's body language is sprightly, her face animated. Commander Ikari smiles back at her.

We can almost hear Shinji's heart breaking.



At dinner, the topic of Rei comes up again, but only after Misato's cooking is mocked and her eating habits are seen as a bit boorish. Even Pen Pen is disgusted by the meal she prepared! But Ritsuko gives Shinji the task of bringing Rei her new NERV ID.

And then they tease him for staring so longingly at the picture of Rei.

Despite the strangeness of his living arrangement, all of this feels good for Shinji. When he's put with Aida and Toji or with Misato, we feel that they're making him more human. He's connecting with people and expressing himself. Even when he becomes the butt of a joke, it's healthy and it brings him closer into the fold of normal human behavior and understanding.

Then Ritsuko describes Rei.

Ritsuko: She's a good girl, and like your father, she isn't good at it, though.

Shinji: She isn't good at...what?

Ritsuko: Living.

Which is an interesting way to describe both Commander Ikari and Rei, since it could also easily apply to Shinji. But we see, here, a clear line of connection between Commander Ikari and Rei. At least from the perspective of Ritsuko, who's spent time with both of them. Commander Ikari is a severe man and Rei is a girl who seems so utterly disconnected from those around her, but they find something in each other that they don't seem to find in others.

Shinji goes to Rei's apartment and finds it dirty and dark and barren. The signs of depression and detachment seem obvious. A teenage girl living alone with very few possessions, no ornamentation, garbage piled and clothes strewn about. Perhaps this is who Shinji would be had Misato not taken him in. But these are the signs of someone who cares very little for anything. But

Commander Ikari's glasses are visible. The same glasses he dropped in trying to save Rei from the disaster that began the episode.



Rei comes out of the shower, seemingly oblivious to her own nakedness or just uncaring, and her only action is to take the glasses back from Shinji.

Because Shinji is who he is, he becomes terrified and flustered and he stumbles, knocking her over with him landing on top, holding her breast.

Mortified, Shinji can barely speak while Rei puts Ikari's glasses in a case and gets dressed and then leaves him alone in her room. Shinji follows her, always at a distance, even when they take the train to NERV. Anno uses a lot of space in these shots. Rather than show the interior of the train, he shows us from the outside how far away they are. When they take the long escalator down through NERV, he keeps the distance. An extremely long shot while they move in silence and even as they begin to have a personal conversation. The space is enormous, like the distances between them. The distances between Rei and the world. The distances between Shinji and that same world.

They're two teenagers. Abandoned and alone. And they're humanity's only hope.

The whole time they never speak. The silence compounds the distance and Rei completely ignores Shinji until he hands her the ID card that will let her into NERV. She says nothing, only snaps it away from him.

Shinji finally breaks the barrier on that long escalator.

Shinji: Say, aren't you afraid of getting into Unit 00 again?

Rei: Why?

Shinji: I heard that you were injured during the last experiment, so I wondered if you felt alright.

Rei: You're Commander Ikari's son, aren't you?

Shinji: Yes.

Rei: Don't you trust your father's work?

Shinji: Of course not. Not from a father like him.

This is the first thing he does or says that really gets a reaction from Rei and she hits him. Slaps him into silence.

But this conversation is interesting in the way Rei takes control of it. From the start, Shinji's off balance. Both from the nakedness, the accidental groping, and from the silence since then. He tries to have a conversation with her and she immediately takes the power and the lead in the conversation. She doesn't really respond or answer his questions, but puts her own to him. And his answers are failing in her eyes.

We discover that Unit 00 is the EVA prototype, built in 2014. We also see that Ikari instructs Rei, whereas Misato is the one who handles and instructs and talks to Shinji when he's in the EVA. Commander Ikari, who's in charge of all of NERV, takes special time and gives special attention to Rei, leaving Shinji to Misato and others.

Rei keeps Ikari's glasses in the cockpit with her.

Their bond is an obscure one right now. Some love and understanding is between them. Whether it's the kind a father has for a daughter isn't really important. It exists and Shinji sees it. He sees how Ikari is worried about this test. But Rei successfully activates the EVA just as they discover the Fifth Angel approaches.

Ikari shuts down the test and chooses to send Shinji out to fight, saying that Unit 00 isn't ready yet.

But we were there for episode one. We saw Ikari send Shinji out to fight a giant monster with no training or testing. We saw how he threw his son out into danger.

The Fifth Angel is a floating blue octahedron, which is distinct from the Angels we've seen so far. Immediately, we know this Angel is different.

And when Shinji emerges in EVA 01, he's immediately struck by an energy blast of incredible force.

And that's where Anno leaves us. With Shinji in peril, a blast of energy burning through his EVA, and the echo of his screams.

While the previous episodes have largely focused on Shinji, this is the first that takes a hard look at another character, and it takes a look at a character we don't yet know, though she's been with us from the beginning. This is certainly Rei's episode, even though we experience it through Shinji's eyes. Because Rei remains as inscrutable to him as she was the day he met her.

So who is Rei?

What is her connection to Ikari?

Shinji doesn't know and neither do we. And right now, there's only the sound of Shinji screaming.

Until next week.

