



SHARAR CHOWDHURY

**This review contains spoilers for the series*

Look up *Invincible* right now, glance at the thumbnail, and you would be forgiven for filing it away as another animated superhero series for kids. I am here to tell you that that is wrong and to talk you into watching it.

Invincible plays it straight for about 20 minutes. Superhero team, world in danger, the usual. Then the first episode ends, and Nolan, the most powerful man on the planet, kills every member of his own team. It turns out he is an alien sent to soften Earth up for an empire that conquers planets. Debbie, the wife he built a life with, and Mark, the son he raised, were part of the cover. On paper, Mark is the main character, and he is. But Nolan is the one I find hardest to look away from. Here is a man who spends 20 years on Earth posing as a husband and father to facilitate

planetary conquest, only to ironically develop the one thing his upbringing had no use for: feelings.

By the end of season one, Mark has powers of his own and stands between his father and the planet. Nolan beats him almost to death, then asks what he will have left after 500 years when everyone he loves is gone. Mark, barely conscious, says, "You, Dad." Nolan looks at his bloodied hands and flies away.

None of this makes Nolan a good person. He kills a horrifying number of people on Earth, partly to make a point to his son, and the show never lets him off the hook for it. What it does is make you feel something for him anyway. That is a very human trap to fall into. We look for the good in people.

The show is just as interested in the damage Nolan leaves behind. Think about what it would do to you to have your role model, the person you measured yourself

against, nearly kill you, and to still love him while he is doing it. That is Mark's whole arc to carry. And then, there is Debbie, who has to sit with the fact that her marriage and her ordinary domestic life were built on a mission to end her species. The show gives her grief room to breathe.

Many mainstream superhero films treat destruction as spectacle. Cities come down, the fight looks great, and somehow nobody you care about really bleeds. *Invincible* refuses that. It shows you the bodies. It shows you who has to clean up, who does not get back up, and who is still shaking weeks later. So, watch *Invincible* for the story and the human relationships, it even asks for some patience.

Sharar Chowdhury is learning how to be a manager and believes "I'm confused" is not a complete sentence. Send him emails at: sharar672@gmail.com

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