



AWARDS

These episodes earned Emmy nominations. The writers explain why.



Butcher (Karl Urban) wrestles with former wife Becca's (Shantel VanSanten) final request: to protect her superpowered son from Homelander, a superhero gone very wrong in "The Boys." (Amazon Studios)

BY RANDEE DAWN

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Not all TV scenes are created equal. The moment when a character finds her purpose, a show achieves its tone, a plot turns a corner — those are what we consider “key” scenes, the ones that turn a typical episode into an award-winner. So The Envelope sat down with the writers and producers from 12 Emmy-nominated episodes to talk about that one, very special moment that sings just a little louder than all the others. Here’s what they had to say:

“The Handmaid’s Tale”

Episode: “Home”



June (Elisabeth Moss) confronts her nemesis, Serena (Yvonne Strahovski). (Sophie Giraud/HULU)

Here’s the key: Having been treated like a conquering hero in Canada, [June is crushed by trauma](#) and takes everything out on her former tormentor, Serena.

The big deal: “The episode’s called ‘Home,’ because she needs to find a home, so where can she find a home with her rage?” asks writer Yahlin Chang. “With Serena. Ironically, Serena is her home, when she comes home to who she is — that rage monster from Gilead. I wanted that scene to be cathartic, and it’s incredibly satisfying.”

“Lovecraft Country”

Episode: “Sundown”



Leti (Jurnee Smollett), Atticus (Jonathan Majors), and Uncle George (Courtney B. Vance) leave their car after having been forced to drive under the speed limit as a Sheriff chases them out of a sundown town. (Eli Joshua Ade/HBO)

Here’s the key: [Atticus](#), [Leti](#) and Uncle George must drive under the speed limit while being chased by a sheriff out of a sundown town.

The big deal: “In Matt Ruff’s novel, this was just an anecdote told by Uncle George about one of his employees traveling to create the Safe Negro Travel Guide,” says writer Misha Green. “Thematically, it sums up the story of being Black in America — the simplest thing, driving through a town, can turn into a horror story.”

“The Boys”

Episode: “What I Know”

Butcher (Karl Urban) agrees to former wife Becca's (Shantel VanSanten) final request: to protect her son Homelander.
(Amazon Studios)

Here's the key: After young Ryan uses a [burst of superhuman strength](#) to save his mother — accidentally killing her in the process — Butcher wrestles with Becca's final request: to protect Ryan from Homelander.

The big deal: “After Butcher comes so close to getting Becca back, she dies in his arms. And at the hands of his wife's child by another man,” says writer Rebecca Sonnenshine. “What will he do in this moment? Unleash his rage on this kid, or dig deep for his last bit of goodness?”

“Pose”

Episode: “Series Finale”

Mj Rodriguez as Blanca, Billy Porter as Pray Tell. (Eric Liebowitz/FX)

Here’s the key: After [Pray Tell](#) dies, everyone realizes that he was giving his medication away to Ricky so his ex could survive.

The big deal: “He made a sacrifice so his former lover could have a shot at life and hopefully achieve all the things he wasn’t able to in his own life,” says writer Steven Canals, nominated with Ryan Murphy, *Our Lady J*, Brad Falchuk and Janet Mock. “It speaks to what our show has always been about: Black and Latin and queer and trans people have had to be our own heroes.”

“The Crown”

Episode: “War”

Tobias Menzies and Emma Corrin in as Prince Phillip and Princess Diana in "The Crown." (Netflix)

Here's the key: Prince Philip explains the challenges of being a member of the royals to [Princess Diana](#), who decides to become a true member of the royal family.

The big deal: "This scene is history repeating itself," says executive producer Suzanne Mackie about nominated writer Peter Morgan's script. "Just as his father-in-law [King George VI] once did, Philip entreats Diana to observe duty. As this new Princess Diana looks out toward us, we sense her mythological status is only just beginning."

"The Mandalorian"

Episode: "Chapter 13: The Jedi"

The Child's back story and name are revealed during a conversation between Ahsoka (Rosario Dawson) and the Mandalorian (Pedro Pascal). (Disney +)

Here's the key: The Child's back story and name are revealed during a conversation between Ahsoka and the Mandalorian.

The big deal: "Ahsoka's casual mention of [the Child's] name, Grogu, is meant to surprise the audience and the Mandalorian, bringing them together ... so that when Mando repeats the name, the Child's ears perking up for joy is felt as a long-awaited connection between our two main characters," says writer Dave Filoni.

"The Mandalorian"

Episode: "Chapter 16: The Rescue"

A young Luke Skywalker (Mark Hamill) appears in “The Mandalorian.” (Lucasfilm Ltd.)

Here’s the key: Young Luke Skywalker appears to save the day, and an emotional story between the Mandalorian and Grogu is resolved.

The big deal: “After two seasons [together, the Mandalorian and Grogu] defeat the A-story enemy,” says writer Jon Favreau. “Having multiple story lines conclude in one scene adds to the importance of the moment.”

“Ted Lasso”

Episode: “Pilot”

After an eventful, if inhospitable first day in London, Ted (Jason Sudeikis) calls his wife and son back in Kansas. (Apple TV)

Here's the key: After an eventful, if inhospitable first day in London, Ted calls his wife and son back in Kansas.

The big deal: “This version of Ted is far removed from the character’s advertising-based origins,” says story writer Brendan Hunt, nominated with story writer Joe Kelly and teleplay/story writers Jason Sudeikis and Bill Lawrence. “It cements the tone for the entire series going forward.”

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Jason Sudeikis embraces teamwork and fights cynicism. ‘I believe in Believe.’

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“Ted Lasso”

Episode: “Make Rebecca Great Again”

Assistant coach Nate (Nick Mohammed) gives the team a talk before a difficult game on “Ted Lasso.” (Apple TV)

Here’s the key: Assistant coach and closet tactical football genius Nate is prodded by Ted into giving the team a talk before a difficult away game.

The big deal: “Nick Mohammed [Nate] is a singular combination of exemplary comic technique and a grounded soul. He more than deserves the floor that the show finally gives him,” says story writer Brendan Hunt, nominated with Joe Kelly and teleplay writer/star Jason Sudeikis.

“The Flight Attendant”

Episode: “In Case of Emergency”

When Cassie (Kaley Cuoco) wakes up to find Alex (Michiel Huisman) dead in bed, it signals “The Flight Attendant” will be a dark comedy. (HBO)

Here’s the key: Cassie wakes up to find Alex next to her in bed — dead, and bloody.

The big deal: “Up until this point, the episode is a rom-com, but it takes a hard left with the reveal of Alex’s corpse,” says writer Steve Yockey. Then Cassie’s phone alarm goes off, playing a song by Wham! “It lets viewers know they’re still watching a comedy, just a really dark one.”

“Hacks”

Episode: “There Is No Line (Pilot)”

Aspiring comic Ava (Hannah Einbinder) and veteran Deborah (Jean Smart) try to find common ground on “Hacks.” (Jake Giles Netter/HBO)

Here’s the key: Comic Deborah and aspiring writer Ava, two women who don’t think they need each other, meet in a showdown and find they have more in common than they realize.

The big deal: “This show is about two women of different generations and their complicated relationship, and this is the first time both the characters and audience experience that dynamic,” nominated writers [Lucia Aniello, Jen Statsky and Paul W. Downs](#) say in an email. “The spark between these two women in this scene is the basis upon which the entire show is built.”

“Girls5Eva”

Episode: “Pilot”

Sara Bareilles as Dawn and Renée Elise Goldsberry as Wickie in “Girls5Eva” (Virginia Sherwood/Peacock)

Here’s the key: Dawn confronts Wickie after [the group’s triumphant performance](#) after “The Tonight Show,” and Dawn says she’ll step into the shoes of their missing member.

The big deal: “This is the catalyst that brings them back together and makes them want to do all this again,” says writer Meredith Scardino. “There’s all this tension and posturing coming to a head.”

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