

Scandal and Aristotle

In Shonda Rhimes' *Scandal*, one of the things we hear Olivia Pope talk about in the pilot is that "We are gladiators in suits... We do not cry, ever." So if a character gets too emotionally caught up in their work or brings that into the office, that is an absolute rule that's set in stone: We do not cry at Olivia Pope and Associates.

Later in the episode we see that Olivia, although on the surface is composed and together, is a mess. Her emotional life is in upheaval. She's having an affair with the President of the United States (played by Tony Goldwyn). Inevitably, Olivia's emotions bubble up, and she can't contain them anymore. And she breaks her own rule and starts crying. She's out of control.

Up until this point, Olivia seems cold, calculating, manipulative, and somebody who is not tolerant of other people's weaknesses. But as the audience see how vulnerable she is, it's where we start to relate to and fall in love with her. It's a relationship we sustain for many seasons. And it grows out of one moment where her words, "We do not cry," do not jibe with her emotions, which cause

the tears to come flooding out. Just as Aristotle explains in his *Poetics*, Olivia's character is defined by what she does, not what she says.