

Not Your Mother's Library Transcript

Episode 9: Comics & Capes

(Brief intro music)

Melody: Hi, and welcome to Not Your Mother's Library, a readers' advisory podcast from the Oak Creek Public Library. I'm Melody.

Rachel: And I'm Rachel.

Melody: And today we're going to be talking about comics and other things like them, like capes, maybe.

Rachel: (laughs)

Melody: If you looked at the title. (laughs)

Rachel: Hint-hint.

Melody: But before we start jumping into the episode, we wanted to let you know a couple things. We're going to be taking a short break for the holidays, so there will not be a new episode in December. We'll be back sometime in the new year. And then the other sad news is that this is going to be my last episode.

Sound effect: (crowd saying 'aw')

Melody: I'm moving to the North Shore Library to take a position in the adult reference department, so...

Sound effect: (crowd cheering 'hooray')

Melody: It's not a bad change per se, it's just, you know, a move in my career, but I will miss doing this, and I'll miss you, Rachel, and I'll miss you guys listening.

Rachel: Everyone here is going to miss you, Melody. We're already very upset about it, you betrayer!

Melody: (laughs)

Rachel: But it's understandable why you have done so. (laughs)

Melody: Yeah. It's, you know...it's...it's kind of sad because it's been, kind of, my baby, but...

Rachel: Yeah. And plus, while you're here, I get to lord it over your head and guilt trip you day in and day out. So, it's been fun! (laughs)

Melody: (laughs) Yeah, it has been, and I will...I'll be listening. So, if you want to shout out to me... (laughs) For the rest of the...

Rachel: (laughs) Every single episode. You'll have to listen for that.

Melody: Every episode, yes. Somewhere.

Rachel: It'll be a test to see if you're actually listening. 'So, Melody, what timestamp did we say your name?'

Melody: (laughs) Good, it's a deal. I will do that. (laughs)

Rachel: Sounds good.

Melody: Okay, so we're going to start off. I'm going to talk about a book called "The Sandman" by Neil Gaiman. The subtitle is "Preludes & Nocturnes." So, this is volume one in a... "The Sandman"—sorry, "The Sandman" series by Neil Gaiman which you recommended to me.

Rachel: Yes. I did. It is one of my all-time favorite series.

Melody: So, I'm a little scared to talk to you about it. (laughs)

Rachel: (laughs) You'll do fine, I'm sure.

Melody: I have really mixed feelings about this book. Just to give you kind of the general premise...so, an occultist—which I learned how to pronounce about five minutes ago. (laughs)

Rachel: (laughs)

Melody: In this story, an occultist is trying to capture Death and he ends up capturing an imprisoning Dream—Death's brother—for 70 years...instead of Death. Dream also goes by another name—Morpheus—just in case you weren't already confused. And finally, years later he is able to trick his captors into setting him free, and once he's free he has to go on this quest to find his objects of power that were taken from him. So, he's looking for a bag of sand, a helmet, and a magical, powerful stone which...we were trying to figure out what it was called earlier and I don't remember.

Rachel: Melody thought it might be an Infinity Stone.

Melody: Yeah, but I don't think this is Marvel.

Rachel: No, it's not. (laughs) But a good guess.

Melody: (laughs) So, yeah. So, on his quest he ends up encountering Lucifer, John Constantine, and an all-powerful madman who is quite terrifying. Yes. So, reading this was my first introduction to any Neil Gaiman graphic novel—by the way, this is a graphic novel.

Rachel: Sure. (laughs)

Melody: I should have mentioned that.

Rachel: It's in the title.

Melody: Is it? I don't think it is.

Rachel: Well, 'comics'. Graphic novels. Interchangeable.

Melody: Oh, that's right. Sorry, I was thinking the book title.

Rachel: We're... (laughs) We're on our A-game today, listeners.

Melody: Yeah, we're...yeah. It's been a long day already. So anyway, this is really a combination of a lot of different genres in my mind. So, there's mythology, fantasy. At one point they start talking about Gotham and Batman, and I was like...

Rachel: Do they? I don't remember that.

Melody: What? Mind blown.

Rachel: Well, it is Vertigo, right? Which is an imprint of DC, so that makes sense, I guess.

Melody: And after reading this book I read a little background, and I think The Sandman is a much lesser-known DC character who doesn't appear very much. So, this is in the DC world.

Rachel: Right.

Melody: But it was so weird to be in this, like, myth...mythological world with Dream and Death and all this other, 'Oh, by the way, Batman!'

Rachel: Yeah. (laughs)

Melody: What?

Rachel: By the way: Batman.

Melody: (laughs) Yeah. So, I found it kind of confusing. There's a lot of content in each and every page. There's...each page has multiple pictures. There's lots of text, lots of little text boxes.

Rachel: Mhm, it's very wordy for a graphic novel.

Melody: It's very wordy. So, it's not an easy read which I think maybe is why I wasn't completely thrilled by it. Because in my mind, when I think about reading a comic, I think 'Oh, easy reading!'

Rachel: Yeah, kind of in it for the art, you know.

Melody: Yeah. But this...this isn't...it's not easy reading. It's pretty involved. It's a very well-told story and really interesting, and a lot of completely new concepts and plot points—very interesting but pretty in-depth. One of the things that really stuck out to me at...it's also a little graphic.

Rachel: Oh, for sure. (laughs) I warned you when I recommended this: 'How intense do you want to go, Melody?' (laughs)

Melody: Right, yeah. It's a little graphic. There's a scene towards the end where this madman using this powerful stone kind of takes over this café and starts controlling people.

Rachel: It's very Watchmen-esque where it turns to brutality very quickly and things go very dark. Yeah.

Melody: Yes. So, it's...it's heavy but it's good.

Rachel: Yay!

Melody: So, I think on a second read I would enjoy it more, and I did start reading book two which is one of my readalikes. So, it's "The Sandman: The Doll's House," and in book two Morpheus—now that he has his objects of power—he finds out that some of the dreams that he created have escaped into reality and he has to go reclaim those dreams, and during that process he discovers a woman named Rose who has inadvertently become a dream vortex that threatens to rip apart the world.

Rachel: Which, if I were to have a superpower...

Melody and Rachel: (laughs)

Rachel: That would be it!

Melody: A dream vortex. Yeah, and then...so, Morpheus has to deal with that situation. So, I just...just kind of started book two, and I think having been introduced to most of the characters in book one I will enjoy book two more so than book one. Because there's a lot of characters and storylines, so it just took me a while to acclimate to the story. I think when we were talking about it, Rachel, you said by the end of book one you were in.

Rachel: Yeah.

Melody: But it took a while.

Rachel: Yeah, I remember reading this as an undergrad in college, and I think I told you this already, but I would read it before my classes, and I'd want to finish it before the classes, but you can't because they're so thick and there're so many words to get through on each page! But really, if you stick with it...and by the end I think it's a 13-volume arc? I can't remember.

Melody: I think it might be 10.

Rachel: 10? Okay, yeah. By the end of that, the story and how everything connects together—it's so well done. It's kind of like...you know when you're reading something and by the end of the book you're like, 'Whoever wrote this is a genius'. (laughs) 'I don't know how they pulled it off', but Neil Gaiman definitely did.

Melody: I think that's sort of a similar theme in comics in general. I'm thinking about Marvel—we're going to talk about a Marvel movie later on in this episode, and that's similar. There's a lot of storylines and characters, but once you get to the end and you see how everything is woven together.

Rachel: Yeah, the culmination is what makes it worth it.

Melody: Yeah. So, my other readalike that this kind of reminded me of is also by Neil Gaiman. It's called "Neverwhere."

Rachel: Ooo!

Melody: (laughs) And my recommendation is the dramatized audio version of this story. Not the audiobook, but it's a BBC drama, full-cast dramatization.

Rachel: And famous British cast members incoming! (laughs)

Melody: Oh yes! Here we go! You guys ready?

Rachel: Yes.

Melody: So, James McAvoy.

Rachel: Whew!

Melody: Benedict Cumberbatch.

Rachel: Whew!

Melody: Natalie Dormer.

Rachel: Whew!

Melody: Anthony Head.

Rachel: Just going to get more...higher and higher pitched!

Melody: (laughs) And Christopher Lee.

Rachel: Christopher freaking Lee.

Melody: Yeah, so there's a huge, amazing, impressive cast for this audiobook. Sorry—I already said it's not an audiobook!

Rachel: (laughs) It's really well done, and it's so...it adheres so closely to the original text it almost feels like an audiobook.

Melody: It does, yeah. It is very well done. So, the basic premise is after a simple act of kindness throws Richard Mayhew into a world below London, he encounters beasts, royalty, and—my personal favorite—an angel called Islington. Which...guess who plays Islington, guys! Benedict Cumberbatch. (laughs)

Rachel: And I would like to note that we're actually pronouncing his name properly. We were told after the last few episodes that his name is not 'Bandicoot Slumberhatch' but actually 'Benedict Cumberbatch'!

Melody: (laughs) Or 'Crumblebumpkin' or whatever it was.

Rachel: (laughs) Yeah! I mean, who knew?

Melody: Yes, sorry guys. Let's correct that. So when...when Richard—the character in this story—encounters London Below, he discovers this strange new world of new creatures and also finds a new destiny in life. So...

Rachel: Which is all we really want, I think. He's a very relatable character.

Melody: Yeah, he really is.

Rachel: He's just an ordinary bloke.

Melody: Yeah, he is, and it's just a really fascinating story. Also slightly dark—not as bad as "The Sandman," but with Gaiman you're going to get some dark things.

Rachel: Yeah, and I think because it's a graphic novel—or a comic—you have the added level of visuals which can make things a bit more visceral.

Melody: Yes, the visuals in "Sandman" are quite intense. (laughs) I was kind of worried when I was reading it out in public.

Rachel: (laughs) You know, it's...you've got to be careful what you're reading out in public...transit, you know? I remember reading a "Hellblazer" on the bus once, and it was an early volume, and I opened this

page and there's just, like, this seven-headed monster and it's got naked bits, and the lady behind me on the bus goes, 'Oh, that's interesting!'

Melody: Oh my gosh. Oh no! (laughs)

Rachel: Yes...yes it is interesting. (laughs) So, you've got to be careful.

Melody: Yeah you do. If you're reading this, just keep it real close to your face.

Rachel: (laughs)

Melody: So, yeah. Those are...that's my first book. Yeah. So, Rachel, what do you want to talk about?

Rachel: I would love to talk about "Preacher" which...this is also a Vertigo comic book series. This one's written by Garth Ennis with art by Steve Dillon, and it ran from '95 to 2000, which I guess was considered a pretty volatile time in comic book history. I don't know. I wasn't even 10 by the time 2000 hit, but history has told us thus! The characters, plotlines, and crossovers were pretty excessive, and it's my understanding that the industry was on shaky ground. Even giants like Marvel were having issues just with funding, and everything was up in the air.

Melody: That's interesting. I didn't even realize that.

Rachel: I didn't either, but I guess you could say "Preacher" itself is pretty wild, so I don't know if that's a reflection of the time or if that's just how it was always going to be given the writer and artist, but yeah.

Melody: Hm. Cool.

Rachel: It follows preacher Jesse Custer, his girlfriend Tulip O'Hare—who is one of the best characters in the world—and also their best friend Cassidy who happens to be Irish, and a vampire, and a drug addict, and awesome. (laughs) So, these three characters are the meat of a delicious sandwich flavored by, uh, others.

Melody and Rachel: (laughs)

Rachel: There is Genesis which, in a nutshell, it's Jesse's superpower. Genesis is this entity that inhabits him and gives him the power to make others do whatever he says. Kind of like Kilgrave in Jessica Jones. So, if he tells you to do something while he's using this power the person has to do it. And that's the crux of the comics.

Melody: Interesting! That's a dangerous superpower.

Rachel: Right? So many villains could be made. (laughs) And there's also the character of God who abdicated the throne after Genesis escaped Heaven and inhabited Jesse.

Melody: (pauses) Okay. Wow.

Rachel: (laughs) Yeah.

Melody: So, does that make Genesis...God was using Genesis to...to control things?

Rachel: I don't want to spoil it, but no. God is his own power, as you would expect. The Almighty, right? He can do whatever the crap he wants because he's God.

Melody: (laughs) Okay. Wow, that is fascinating.

Rachel: Yeah. So, the story is kind of about Jessie trying to track God down and be like, 'Yo, what's up?'. (laughs) The line is 'hold him to account' but I prefer 'Yo, what's up'.

Melody: Okay, good. (laughs)

Rachel: And again, Jesse's a preacher, so he's been raised to be godly and religious, you know.

Melody: Yeah—respect God as this being.

Rachel: Yeah, so he's trying to figure out what's going on, but at the same time he's human. He's not perfect, so he kind of misuses Genesis.

Melody: Yeah, I can imagine.

Rachel: Yeah. I mean, sure, you're just testing things out. You have this sudden new superpower and you're going to go kind of crazy with it, but...he's a very layered individual. There's also the Grail which is this kind of...it's kind of like the Illuminati, but they're this group of religious guys. (laughs) I mean...

Melody: Religious guys, okay.

Rachel: Yeah, and they are trying to... (pauses) ...take over the world, I guess?

Melody and Rachel: (laughs)

Rachel: For their own means. They believe in this one guy called 'The Messiah'. A group of guys who follow this guy. (laughs) He's called 'The Messiah' who is a direct descent of Jesus Christ, but he's...they've kept the bloodline pure, so he's severely inbred and mentally handicapped.

Melody: Oh, ew. Okay.

Rachel: (laughs) Yeah, that's the appropriate reaction to have there.

Melody: Ugh. No.

Rachel: I love your reaction to this. It's making my day.

Melody and Rachel: (laughs)

Rachel: There's also a character called the Saint of Killers who is this unstoppable, soulless, cowboy murderer who is hired to track down Jesse, who is trying to track down God, so it's like a Conga line! (laughs)

Melody: Oh, great! So, not only is he hunting for somebody, he is being hunted. Okay.

Rachel: Mhm, yeah, and it is propelling him ever-forward. There's also Jesse's evil Gran'ma, who's kind of, like, a Voodoo witch, but she's also just repellent as a human being. There's her...I want to say 'bodyguard'. His name's Jody, and he's the man who actually killed Jesse's father when he was a child, so.

Melody: There's so much!

Rachel: I know! There's a lot.

Melody: The more you tell me the deeper it gets.

Rachel: And I'm only touching the tip of the iceberg, here! But with Gran'ma and Jody there's also this guy named T.C who kind of, like...he helps out on their plantation, I guess, and he really likes goats. Like, too much? And the goats do not like him back.

Melody: Oh my gosh. No! No! (gasps)

Rachel: Yeah. (laughs)

Melody: Oh, no.

Rachel: Ah, I love this comic. There's also serial killers, a pair of sex pest detectives, pedophiles, hillbilly cannibals, a group of wannabe vampires, torturers, a kid named Arseface.

Melody and Rachel: (laughs)

Rachel: In addition to many more, so like I said: it's a flavorful sandwich—like horseradish and stuff you wouldn't put on a sandwich, but yeah. (laughs) It was originally projected—well, after the comics came out—it was projected as a film, but it was abandoned for being “too religiously controversial,” go figure.

Melody: Why would anyone think that? (laughs)

Rachel: Psh, I don't know. It was then tested as a series for HBO, so, you know...kind of more 'rated R' stuff. But that was also stopped for being “too religiously controversial” and—get this—“too stylistically dark.” For HBO!

Melody: Wow.

Rachel: So, yeah. It was tried as a film again, but (laughs) nah. They decided 'no' until finally—finally—it went to AMC who was like, 'Hell yes, please!'

Melody: (laughs) I love that you put this in your notes.

Rachel: (laughs) Yeah.

Melody: So, we make notes ahead of time and she literally wrote that.

Rachel: I wrote down 'Hell yes, please' and it's...

Melody and Rachel: 'Plz'.

Melody: Yeah.

Rachel: (laughs) You're giving away my secrets, Melody!

Melody: I'm sorry, Rachel, I just...I was just reading the notes a couple days ago and was like, 'Oh, my gosh'.

Rachel: Well, I'm glad someone enjoys it. So, the show for AMC is developed by Sam Catlin, Seth Rogen, and Evan Goldberd. There are four ser...seasons, and the finale was in September, so I am still upset over it coming to an end.

Melody: Is that why you've been crying at your desk?

Rachel: Well, that and between you leaving us, what choice do I have?

Melody: (laughs) Just every time I walk past.

Rachel: (laughs then cries dramatically) So ,the TV series is great, and the comic is great. It all makes me happy to be alive.

Melody and Rachel: (laughs)

Rachel: The comic is actually ranked pretty high on the list of Vertigo comics, right around Alan Moore's "Swamp Thing" and Neil Gaiman's "Sandman," so I...if anyone has read either of those give this one a try. It's pretty good. Even if the characters have thrown you off you might like it for the story. (laughs) Who am I to judge? With both the comic and the show, the situations are pretty outlandish and hilarious, but it also gets very real very fast, and the characters are what make the story what it is. And I think that's often the case with comics, isn't it? It's the characters who make or break?

Melody: Yes, yeah. I mean, plotlines and powers and all that stuff can just become insane in comics, and I think that strong characters really hold the foundation.

Rachel: Yeah, it can...and there's also the art style, obviously, and Steve Dillon's art style is pretty unique. I like it. It's almost photorealistic, I want to say. At least on the covers, and the inside is pretty similar. And it plays a huge role in the development of the comic. Unfortunately, Dillon passed away in 2016 just a few months after season one of the show came out.

Melody: Oh, so he didn't even get to see the final seasons.

Rachel: Right, mhm. It did turn out well, so. At least, in my opinion!

Melody: That's good. Are there any actors that I would know who are in it?

Rachel: Um...there's Joseph Gilgun who plays Cassidy. If you've ever seen "This is England?"

Melody: No.

Rachel: Okay. Or "Misfits?"

Melody: No. (laughs)

Rachel: Okay. I'm trying to think of British shows. And then there's the guy who was in Agent Carter. He played Tony [sic] Stark.

Melody: Oh! Um...

Rachel: You can hear me typing away trying to find it.

Melody: Yeah, he...

Rachel: Dominic Cooper!

Melody: Yes!

Rachel: And then Ruth Negga plays Tulip O'Hare, and she is a phenomenal actress! Holy crap.

Melody: Okay.

Rachel: And there's Pip Torrens who plays one of these guys (laughs) who's the head of the guys! The head of the Grail. (laughs)

Melody: The head of the guys: the guy.

Rachel: This is why I majored in English, guys.

Melody and Rachel: (laughs)

Melody: We are on our game today.

Rachel: (laughs) Clearly. And none of this is getting cut. I'm keeping it all in.

Melody: Okay, sounds good. It's a deal.

Rachel: Yep. I will say most people who have gripes with the TV series highlight the differences between the show and the comic. For some reason people are really upset with season four. I tend to be pretty oblivious to what other people say about the show as it's going on, but I like this show enough where I wanted more behind-the-scenes stuff and to see what other people had to say about it, and people...they don't like season four! I can sort of see why, because I think it probably could have used another season or two to make things play out. They were probably told, 'Yo, your series is ending! Wrap it up', you know?

Melody: Yeah, get all of your ends tied.

Rachel: So, it did feel rushed, which is unfortunate, but there's still the gratuitous violence that we all love. I say 'we'...I look at Melody's face, and she's like, 'We do not'. (laughs)

Melody: Yeah, because it's my favorite thing about movies...is the gratuitous violence. (laughs)

Rachel: Well, the showrunners were really faithful to the comic, at least with the violence and the characters and the major plot points. And I...again, I think all the characters were played by the appropriate actors. They were...I don't know who did the casting, but...

Melody: That's really important.

Rachel: You look at Dominic Cooper and Ruth Negga and Joseph Gilgun and you're like, 'They are those characters.' Again, I'm just very sad to see it go.

Melody: Yeah. Well, you can rewatch it.

Rachel: Yeah. That's true. Get it on DVD. Stream it, as the kids do these days.

Melody: (laughs) As the kids do. I stream things.

Rachel: I'm 26. I don't know why I'm saying 'these kids'.

Melody: I'm older than you and I'm not...

Rachel: (laughs) Okay. Onto our readalikes!

Melody and Rachel: (laughs)

Rachel: There's "Hellblazer," which I mentioned briefly earlier, and it was originally headed by Jamie Delano and artist John Ridgway with original character John Constantine by Neil Gaiman. You mentioned him as being in the first volume of "Sandman," right? This precedes "Preacher" by quite a while in comic-book years. It originally came out in 1988, but the dark tone is very similar to "Preacher," plus I feel that Constantine and Jesse are a bit similar in that they both try to do the right thing but they often stumble along the way. I would also recommend "Lucifer" by Mike Carey with—again—original character by Neil Gaiman.

Melody: That was almost one of my readalikes for "Sandman," so I'm glad I didn't choose that. (laughs)

Rachel: There you go. He first appeared in '89—again, in an issue of "Sandman"—and eventually got his own series. This is in the same Universe—or, at least, multiverse—as "Hellblazer." And also, as we learned, Batman.

Melody: Apparently!

Rachel: I chose it as a readalike mostly because of the religious aspects, as you can imagine. But the tone is completely different. It's...I mean, if you think about it, Lucifer has been around since the beginning times, so he definitely acts his age. He is inhuman. It's hard to relate.

Melody: Yeah. Right. It is.

Rachel: Yeah. And my final recommendation is actually another TV series based on comic books. It's called "Legion," and this was done by FX. It concluded in August, so I am also broken up about that one ending. Why do all my shows and all my friends leave me, Melody?

Melody: I think it's just the summer timing? (laughs)

Rachel: Possibly that. It's not personal, you're saying?

Melody: No, I don't think so.

Rachel: This one is pretty different to the other readalikes, because it's technically Marvel, but it's so unique that it doesn't quite fit with the MCU, or the "X-Men" Marvel movies, or even the Netflix-Marvel original series like "Daredevil" or "Punisher." "Legion" is probably my favorite TV series not just to do with comics but as a story in its own right. It's about a mutant who maybe-maybe-not suffers from mental illness. Just watch it whether you like comics or not. Every episode is a work of art.

Melody: So, you just saying that...I don't know if you've seen "Joker" yet?

Rachel: I keep meaning to, but I'm afraid to watch it in theaters because it looks (whispers) so crazy. (laughs)

Melody: Yeah, so you mentioned mental illness. "Joker" is, like, pretty much 99% about mental illness.

Rachel: The epitome, right?

Melody: Yeah. My...there are mixed reviews. I am on the negative side of the reviewing scale.

Rachel: Oh! Okay!

Melody: Yeah, I...it was very slow going for me.

Rachel: Hm. The trailers doth deceive.

Melody: Yeah! Well, it's...you go in expecting him to look and act like the Joker that we know, and he...following Heath Ledger is very difficult.

Rachel: Yeah, I feel similarly. I mean, Heath Ledger was so good in that role. How do you follow it up? Even with Joaquin! Phoenix, whose name I love to say.

Melody and Rachel: (laughs)

Melody: I just noticed you said that very...'Joaquin'!

Rachel: With a crazy face? (laughs)

Melody: But that...I would say that the last 20 minutes of the movie, I felt like, 'Okay, we have finally gotten there. This is the joker that I was expecting', but the movie is—I think—two hours? So, the first hour and a half I was just looking at the clock like, 'Okay, are we going to get to...?'

Rachel: Origin stories can be so difficult.

Melody: Yes. People...some people loved it, so, you know.

Rachel: Well, we tend to love a character as you know them. You may not be as concerned with how they got that way? And, again, it's covered so thoroughly in the comics. I don't...I don't know. That's a tough one.

Melody: Yeah. Well, it also felt like, really, a study on mental illness more so than a comic movie.

Rachel: Okay. That would explain why it did so well at Sundance. (laughs)

Melody: Yeah. Uh-huh. (laughs) So, I think that's also why I...I personally wasn't enjoying it, because it wasn't...it wasn't a superhero movie.

Rachel: Not entertaining in that way.

Melody: No, no. Yeah. So, anyway. Side note! Moving on.

Rachel: Come on, DC! You're really...you're really slippin'! (laughs)

Melody: So, I also wanted to talk about another graphic novel that I read. It's called "Captain America Vol. 1: Castaway in Dimension Z."

Rachel: Ooo, it's a very comic-book name!

Melody: Yes, it is. So, I wanted to read a second comic just to kind of get a feel for the superhero genre, because I'm a big, big fan of the Marvel movies but ashamed to say I haven't read the comics.

Rachel: Yeah, same here. I love the MCU but the comics I haven't gotten as into. I don't know if because they've been around for so long and there are so many arcs I'm intimidated by that?

Melody: Yeah, it's a lot. That's why I chose this one. So, I chose this particular one first of all because I love Captain America. He's my favorite.

Rachel: Who doesn't? (laughs)

Melody: And second of all because this is the...this story is kind of a read-on-its-own type of story. So, it's...takes place after some—this is just what I read—after something happened in the timeline where there's sort of an alternate timeline. So, essentially, it is if Captain America had a different timeline than what we all know now.

Rachel: Sure, yeah.

Melody: So, the premise of the story is Steve, or Captain America, gets trapped...

Rachel: Are you on first-name basis?

Melody: Yes: me and Steve. (laughs) He gets trapped on a subway train, and he has just been talking to his girlfriend Sharon—who you may know as a S.H.I.E.L.D. agent—and gets trapped on this train...wakes up in this place called Dimension Z, and he's been injected with this disease quote-unquote, not really a disease, which essentially places the conscious of the ruler of this dimension in Steve's body and mind.

Rachel: Whoa.

Melody: And the ruler's name is Zola.

Rachel: (laughs) Of course it is.

Melody: (laughs) And Zola's ultimate purpose in life is to infect and infiltrate all life with his conscious, of course.

Rachel: Classic bad guy material, yeah!

Melody: The funny thing is he appears in Steven's brain not constantly but sometimes, and in the comics there's this big square on Steve's chest where you see Zola's face, which is weird.

Rachel: (laughs)

Melody: But Steve can cover him up and hide things from him.

Rachel: Oh. That's an interesting concept.

Melody: Yes, it is. So, he can, like, talk to Steve but he can't—unless Steve talks back to him—he can't infiltrate his mind and see what's going on. So, Steve—or Captain America, or Cap—he escapes this lab with Zola in his chest, and...

Rachel: I'm just trying to picture it. (laughs)

Melody: (laughs) Yeah, it's real fun. It's a blue...it's a blue square. I don't know if that helps. With this big face in it. He also finds and takes with him a little baby that Zola has created who Captain America raises as his own son.

Rachel: Aw. He's not suspicious that Zola created this baby?

Melody: The baby hasn't been brainwashed yet, so the baby's okay. He'll be safe for now.

Rachel: Oh, okay. That's good to know. Baby's okay.

Melody: Yeah, so that's...was a really intriguing concept for me, too, because Captain America now has this son and he's raising him. He's stuck in this place for 11 years.

Rachel: He seems like great dad material.

Melody: He does, doesn't he? Yeah. It...he also...this story is peppered with flashbacks to Steve's childhood and how his dad left his mom and left home, and his mom really struggled to take care of the family, and then she got sick, and then Steve joined a gang and started stealing.

Rachel: (gasps) Steve Rogers!

Melody: Captain America! To pay rent and take care of his mom, and his mom has this really strong moral conscience, and he already was battling that inner morality as a child. So, it's all really fascinating.

Rachel: It sounds good, yeah.

Melody: It's...it's a good read. So I recommend that for sure, and I also read book two. So, same title: "Captain America: Castaway in Dimension Z" book two!

Rachel and Melody: (laughs)

Melody: And the author—which I think I forgot to mention—is Rick Remender and John Romita, Jr. of both of those...and in book two Ian has been captured by who he discovers is his sister who he didn't know he had. Ian is the boy.

Rachel: I was going to be like...yeah, that's his son, right? Or, pseudo-son.

Melody: Yeah, yes. (laughs) 11-year-old Ian has been captured and finds out he has a sister, and the sister is totally brainwashed by Zola. She's ready to infiltrate the world and Captain America has to save him. So then there's also a huge, big twist at the end that just gutted me.

Rachel: (gasps)

Melody: If you're looking for emotional meaning...

Rachel and melody: (laughs)

Melody: ...in a book, read this! So, I recommend both of those. And then, a readalike that I had is called "New Avengers: Everything Dies." Dun, dun, dun!

Rachel: (laughs) There it is!

Melody: By Jonathan Hickman. So, again, it's slightly kind of an alternate timeline. So, there are these newer comics coming out that are...have new story material without straying from the original material. So, this one is a new group of Avengers who reassemble to form the Illuminati.

Rachel: This is the second time they're mentioned during this podcast. Something's going on here.

Melody: Yes. It's not the same Illuminati that you were talking about before.

Rachel: Mhm. Mhm.

Melody: (laughs) As far as I know. And this group has Black Panther, Iron Man, Doctor Strange—who are familiar names—and then Black Bolt, Mr. Fantastic, and Namor the Submariner, and the Beast.

Rachel: Isn't Namor Marvel's answer to Aquaman, kind of?

Melody: I have no idea.

Rachel: (laughs)

Melody: I...sure! (laughs)

Rachel: Again, I don't know much about these guys, but I think...

Melody: Submariner?

Rachel: Yeah, Namor the Submariner. Yeah.

Melody: Okay. Sure.

Rachel: They copy each other all the time. We know, guys. We know what's going on.

Melody: Right. All the time. So, this team, they have to use the six Infinity Stones to plan for the death of everything, and that's all I've got to say.

Rachel: Is that like the snap?

Melody: I don't...I really don't know. (laughs)

Rachel: It sounds as intimidating.

Melody: I read the summary of this book, that's all. I haven't read it. Yeah, so that's...if you like the "Dimension Z" books with Captain America, "New Avengers" is a good place to go. Speaking of Avengers...

Rachel: Yes.

Melody: I wanted to talk to you about "Avengers: Endgame" because it was amazing.

Rachel and Melody: (laughs)

Rachel: Agreed.

Melody: So, if you haven't seen it yet, and you're a Marvel fan, I will give you a spoiler alert. I don't plan to spoil anything. I don't think we will. But...so, I went and saw this when it first came out. How long has it been? It's been a couple months.

Rachel: More than a couple months. Yeah.

Melody: It's been...I've seen it out on our new DVD shelf, so that means it's been a few months. And before I saw this, I ended up marathoning all 20 Marvel movies.

Rachel: Wewph! Dedication!

Melody: The month preceding the opening of this new movie.

Rachel: That's how much time you need, yeah. (laughs)

Melody: I...really, it is. And that was probably the best decision I could have made to watch this movie. It's...I can't even...like, I just loved it. It's probably the best movie experience I've ever had in a theater. Again, I had watched all these movies leading up to it, so I was highly emotional.

Rachel: Had you seen the movies before and you were just rewatching?

Melody: Yes, just rewatching, but it was just good to get that refresher. And all of these storylines are kind of wrapping up, and you're seeing these arcs and characters. It was just really an amazing movie. And I found a quote which I'm afraid I don't remember where I found it, but it said "Unlike some possible Marvel movies," it says—or superhero movies—"this movie exists not to exploit fans but to reward them for their love, patience, and undying adoration," which I felt is very true of this movie. Have you seen it, Rachel?

Rachel: Oh yeah, of course I have. (nerdy voice) I've seen all of the Marvel movies. I've seen most of the Marvel shows.

Melody: (laughs) What are your thoughts about "Endgame?"

Rachel: I thought it was a fitting end to the main story. I know they're still continuing it in some offshoots. I never really disliked a Marvel movie. I mean, you kind of go in knowing what it is. It's going to be a superhero movie. It's going to be fun. It's going to be awesome—that's what you expect, you know? And it's always met that standard for me. I mean, I'd say there are very few exclusions where maybe some movies go off in some directions that they maybe shouldn't have, but those are few and far between. And, again, it's based on comics, so it's always going to be a mix. But I...I really enjoyed it. Yeah. It's very emotional.

Melody: Yes! The first five minutes I was crying.

Rachel: (laughs)

Melody: I mean, I had goosebumps, I was crying, I was laughing, I experienced all emotion...emotions. Yeah.

Rachel: Mhm, which is what you want from entertainment media, you know? No matter what form it takes.

Melody: Even if it's not cinema? (laughs)

Rachel: So, we were talking the other day, guys. We had this email chain going. It came out in the news that...let's see.

Melody: Martin Scorsese.

Rachel: Yeah, and Coppola. Who are some very well-known...

Melody: ...and respected...

Rachel: ...movie makers, right?

Melody: As they should be.

Rachel: Or should we say 'film makers', because that's fancier?

Melody: 'Cinema makers'.

Rachel: Yeah, whatever. They were talkin' shade 'bout Marvel. (laughs)

Melody: Yeah, little bit.

Rachel: And I let Melody know, and she was not having it.

Melody: Yeah, I sent a reply in all caps in my email. (laughs) Yeah, they said—we're summarizing, this is not word for word.

Rachel: Yeah, you can look up the news article.

Melody: So, they said that Marvel comic book movies...? Or Marvel? I think it's Marvel.

Rachel: Marvel, yeah.

Melody: Marvel movies were not, quote-unquote, 'cinema'—and that's what Scorsese said—and then...what's the other guy's name?

Rachel: Francis Ford Coppola, isn't it?

Melody: Yeah, sure.

Rachel: (laughs) See, we sound like such millennials for not knowing their full names. Sorry, guys!

Melody: Sorry, yeah. And the other one said that...what did he say? Oh, it was "despicable cinema." Yes, and it...so, they made the point that it...he didn't want to rewatch the movie and over again, and also that he wanted movies to have meaning and give emotional meaning. I think that's what he said? Something like that.

Rachel: I'm making a face right now, because that is so ridiculous. (laughs)

Melody: I mean, I just told you I cried in "Endgame."

Rachel: Yeah. Everyone's going to react differently to different things. Movies, I think, no matter what the movie is, it's a form of art whether you want to define that as 'cinema' or not. All these people came together to make something, and no matter your personal reaction to it, it's a reaction, and it's kind of succeeded in what it's meant to do. And sure, these guys can have their opinions just like the rest of us, but why should it matter just because they happen to be filmmakers, you know? (laughs) It doesn't mean they're right.

Melody: I mean, I think part of the argument is 'high art' versus 'low art'. I mean...

Rachel: Right, which...that's so hard to define, you know?

Melody: Right, but if you compare—for example—"Joker" versus "Endgame," "Joker" is probably high art.

Rachel: Sure. Yeah.

Melody: I did not enjoy “Joker.” “Endgame” is probably low art, which I enjoy. So, you know, maybe Marvel reaches the masses more than the highfalutin.

Rachel: And I... (laughs) ...I suspect there’s a fair amount of bitterness felt by certain filmmakers, and I can understand that. Where possibly it’s harder for them to get traction with projects they want to do because of these big blockbuster films. But also...you’re literally Scorsese. You can do what you want, you know?

Melody: I just...it just irks me that he says it’s not cinema. I mean, you can say ‘I think it’s bad art’, and I’ll be like ‘Okay, that’s fair’.

Rachel: Yeah, sure.

Melody: But to say it’s not cinema? Like, cinema is...

Rachel and Melody: Movies.

Melody: And I think it’s a movie! (laughs) Yeah, so anyway. That’s how we feel.

Rachel: That was our rant on the matter. We like things, and we think that you should let other people like things, too, no matter your personal bitterness.

Melody: If you don’t like things, it’s okay if someone else does.

Rachel: Yeah. Yeah! No need to be put out by it.

Melody: So, the last thing—to bring things to a higher note—that we wanted to talk about was a show called “The Boys.”

Rachel: (whispers) Yas!

Melody: On Amazon Prime. Rachel, you want to take it away?

Rachel: Yeah, so “The Boys” is based on a comic book series by Garth Ennis, who also did “Preacher.”

Melody: Surprise, surprise.

Rachel: As soon as the show came off the air, this came on and I started watching it. It’s been a nice filler, I think. It’s on Amazon Prime. It’s kind of based around the idea that if superheroes were the bad guys, right? Which I’m sure other people have done, but maybe not to this degree.

Melody: It’s...so, the question, I guess, is if superheroes did exist in our real world, like the more powerful people in our society—politicians, celebrities, celebrity athletes—wouldn’t they be managed in the same way? So, things like...how does a superhero make money? By selling merchandise, making movies, advertising, appearing at events, making deals and partnerships with people! And that leads to some sketchy behavior.

Rachel: Super sketchy.

Melody: Yes. Super sketchy? Pun intended?

Rachel: Oh, my gosh. (sighs then laughs)

Melody: Sorry. It's been a long day.

Rachel: You know what? I think it's great.

Melody and Rachel: (laughs)

Rachel: The show is super graphic and violent, and there is a nudity warning.

Melody: Be aware.

Rachel: Yeah, but hey—I love that sort of thing, so if you do too, give it a try!

Melody: (laughs) Yeah, it's a...it's a really great show. The storyline is really fascinating. It starts off with a main character—just an average guy who works in a...um.

Rachel: It's like a Circuit City, almost.

Melody: Yeah, I was going to say RadioShack, but that is way...long time ago.

Rachel: Same difference.

Melody: He ends up encountering this superhero world because something happens to somebody he cares about by mistake, and they start discovering some...some of the real truth behind the façade of these perfect superheroes.

Rachel: And we're following them, so we're kind of given an insider's look into that world.

Melody: Yeah. There's some really great characters in this show. I'm going to...his name is not 'Preacher', but that's what I...

Rachel: Butcher! (laughs)

Melody: Butcher! Yes, Butcher, who's played by the guy in "Star Trek."

Rachel: Keith Urban? Is that his name?

Melody: Yes, Keith Urban. Yes, that's right.

Rachel: I'm terrible with names. I'm sorry, Keith Urban. You are very memorable and you're a great actor! It's no reflection. (laughs)

Melody: Yes, you are. I am so thankful that you're listening to this podcast.

Rachel: Yes! (laughs) Who wouldn't be? I expect everyone we talk about to be listening.

Melody: Yes. So, he's a really great character because he's kind of been burned by the superhero world, but he also kind of has a heart. He's a really gruff guy. There's this young, new superhero—Starlight—who I think is maybe one of the more likable and moral characters?

Rachel: Yeah, she's very optimistic and genuine, and she kind of gets roped into this world and sees it for what it is but...

Melody: But is maybe a little stuck before it's too late. So yeah, it's a really good show. Have you finished it yet?

Rachel: I did! I finished it over the weekend, finally. (whispers) Finally.

Melody: Good show. So, we recommend that, too.

Rachel: Yeah, and on that I think we're going to call this episode, because we're already gettin' up there. So, be sure that you check the show notes where we're going to put all the titles for things we've talked about as well as any important links like for our website and Facebook page. Be sure to subscribe, and you can always contact us through social media with #notyourmotherslibrary. We will be back in the new year. Melody, we're going to miss you!

Melody: I know. I'll miss you, too.

Rachel: But happy reading, guys. Happy holidays.

Melody and Rachel: Bye!

(Brief outro music)