

Not Your Mother's Library Transcript

Episode 23: Graphic Novels

(Brief intro music)

Rachel: Hello, and welcome to Not Your Mother's Library, a readers' advisory podcast from the Oak Creek Public Library. I'm one of your hosts, Rachel. This month, we are lucky enough to be collaborating with another podcast! Long-time listeners might remember our original host, Melody, who has since gone on to become a member of the team at North Shore Library. They have their own podcast called 'Book Chat', which is similar to this in that they discuss books, authors, and all that other fun stuff. Right now, I am joined Melody so that we can talk about graphic novels for adults. Thanks for being here with us, Melody!

Melody: Thank you for having me! I'm super excited. (laughs)

Rachel: Same here. Could you tell our listeners a little bit about yourself so that we can get reacquainted?

Melody: Yes. So, it's been a while since I've been over at Not Your Mother's Library.

Rachel: Mhm.

Melody: Um, and Oak Creek. Uh, so I am the head of Adult Services at the North Shore Library. I have been a public librarian for...I think three years? Uh, it might be four, actually, we might be coming up on four. And I love doing this podcast, like I loved doing it with you, Rachel.

Rachel: Same. (laughs)

Melody: And I do one over at my library. It's one of my favorite parts of the job. Uh, so yeah! Super excited to be doing this.

Rachel: I cannot wait to get started. As voracious comic fans, we have plenty of material to discuss. Before we get started, I do want to encourage our listeners to visit the Book Chat at North Shore Library channel. Just like this podcast, you can listen in a variety of ways. Visit soundcloud.com/northshorelibrary, find their feed using your favorite podcast site or app, or

check the show notes here for a direct link. You'll never be left wanting for recommendations if you follow both of our channels. And now, without further ado, let's dive into the episode.

Melody: So, um, yeah, this month we're going to be talking about graphic novels. I had fun reading for this...this month's episode.

Rachel: Same.

Melody: We've got...yeah, we've got a hefty list, so I think we should probably jump in. And I think, Rachel, you have our first title.

Rachel: Yes, absolutely. In fact, a few months ago, I read this book. It's an indie graphic novel called "Suncatcher," written by José Pimienta. It is a modern take on the classic deal-with-the-devil plot. So, a teenager named Beatriz is balancing school life with leading an up-and-coming band that aims to revolutionize the Mexicali music scene—which I know absolutely nothing about. (laughs) We soon find out that she is also doing her utmost to create the perfect song so that she can free her grandfather's soul from where it's been imprisoned inside of a guitar. And I bet you didn't see that coming! (laughs) Um, the deal is that he will be released if Beatriz can finish writing her grandfather's—quote—killer song—unquote. No pressure, right? (laughs) Turns out, too much pressure, actually. Because Beatriz is so focused on helping her grandfather, she starts to slip at school, and the friendships she's made over the years with members of her band also suffer. She exhibits a lot of obsessive-compulsive behaviors. It's to the point where her mental health is definitely taking some serious damage, as are her emotional ties and even her personal hygiene after a point. In striving for perfection, she wrests control away from everyone else in the band. Now, I am not a musician, but I do know that people who pursue it seriously are incredibly dedicated. I think that Pimienta is making the point that perfection is impossible. Writing music should be about developing and improving with the eventual goal of releasing your songs into the world. Sometimes, if you're lucky, that goal can be achieved through collaboration, but in no way should you sacrifice everything for a moving target. Beatriz suffers for her art, literally, but she does emerge from her crisis as someone who is eventually able to heal and properly mourn her grandfather, a relative who was clearly very close to her. Now, I would categorize this work as magical realism, although it

could be argued that whole ‘play the perfect song to set your loved one free mwahahahaha!’...that could be more of a grief-based thing than anything else. Uh, maybe the man’s soul really is trapped. Or, maybe, Beatriz just wants to hang onto him a little bit longer. Ultimately, that is up to the reader to decide. Uh, it has to be said that my favorite part of this graphic novel is the art style. It has bold, black linework offset by muted yellows and oranges, hazy purples and blues, and only the occasional bright pop of red...and this gives the work a hot, dry aesthetic. You can always tell when it’s night versus day with these visual cues alone. The art is why I picked up “Suncatcher” to begin with, and I highly recommend it.

Melody: Cool. So, you...this book...

Rachel: Mmhm.

Melody: ...brought up, um, something that we talked a little bit about in our last episode. Um, kind of, like, what makes art good.

Rachel: Okay.

Melody: Which is an easy question to answer, obviously. (laughs)

Rachel: Oh, definitely. And, also—obviously—why I brought it up. Because I always listen to your episodes of the podcast without fail! (laughs)

Melody: (laughs) No, so last month we talked about, um, “Milk and Honey,” the book of poetry, um—

Rachel: By...(laughs) Rupi Kaur, I believe? Yes.

Melody: Yes. And the controversy and criticism around her works.

Rachel: Mmhm.

Melody: How she’s really loved and really hated, and the style versus emotion choices, um, that she makes.

Rachel: Sure.

Melody: So, this reminds me of that, because it's kind of...this seems to be asking, does art become good when it's perfect?

Rachel: Right, yeah.

Melody: Or, is it about something else? Like, is the style the most important?

Rachel: Mmhm.

Melody: Um, and I think it's interesting, 'cause this sort of tends to hint that even...even if you make it as perfect as possible, it needs something 'more'.

Rachel: Mmhm.

Melody: To be 'good'.

Rachel: Yeah. I think with art there's never really an end point. It's always evolving, and it's up to the creator to decide, okay, now it's ready to be put out into the world—take it or leave it!
(laughs)

Melody: Okay, so, I'm going to be devil's advocate here. Apparently, I'm in an arguing mood.
(laughs)

Rachel: As per usual.

Melody: So, that...that does mean that artists who paint a canvas a solid color—just a blue rectangle—

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Melody: —can say, like, 'I felt like it was ready for the world'.

Rachel: Yeah. I think...yeah, I think it's...there are two aspects to this. So, there's the artist deciding it's ready, and there's the audience deciding not so much if it's 'good' but if they like it or not or...or deem it art themselves. Does that make sense?

Melody: Yeah.

Rachel: Yeah.

Melody: I think, yeah, I think the audience is an important piece of it.

Rachel: Mmhm.

Melody: Um, and it raises the question of 'does art have to have meaning to be meaningful'?

Rachel: Mmm. Yeah, I don't have an answer to that one. It's a good question!

Melody: (laughs)

Rachel: Maybe our listeners will know. (laughs)

Melody: Maybe. (laughs) Yeah, just some food for thought for you, for later. Um, but I do think my favorite...my...the favorite...my favorite time when artists break the rules is when, like, they know them and they can execute them well.

Rachel: Mmhm.

Melody: So, when artists are extremely talented—or musicians—and they can play beautiful pieces, that's when they can break the rules on purpose, and it's 'good'.

Rachel: Mmhm. Yeah, it's kind of something that has to be earned. You have to put in all that effort to get to that point to then do with it whatever you will.

Melody: Yeah. Yeah. Cool, all right! Put that one on the list!

Rachel: Absolutely, and I can't wait to hear what you have read, because I did look at your notes, and I'm very excited to talk about it. (laughs)

Melody: (laughs) Yeah! So, um, the first book I'm going to talk about is called "The Underwater Welder" by Jeff Lemire. This is a stand-alone. So, a lot of graphic novel options are part of a series, so if you want, um, something shorter—you can just read one book and be done—this is a good option. Um, it's also all in greyscale, so just black and white pieces of art, nothing in color. And, um, the themes of this graphic novels are kind of equal parts blue-collar character study and, um, a mystery that's very confusing and you want to know the answers. Um, this also really heavily themes on fathers and sons, um, birth and death, and memory and reality.

So, “The Underwater Welder” is about Jack Joseph, who is—no surprise—an underwater welder.

Rachel: (laughs)

Melody: He works on an oil rig off the coast of Nova Scotia, which I did not read about until after I read the...the graphic novel. But I think there was a hint in there, at some point, that they were Canadian.

Rachel: Okay.

Melody: Um, and, he...his young wife is expecting a baby, so he’s got impending fatherhood looming upon him. Um, and, the more he...you see him diving in the water, you really see him pulling away from his wife and unborn son. And, um, realize that there are a lot of pieces involving his history and past that are coming into play with his distancing himself from his new family. Um, on top of all that, one night, a very mysterious and supernatural encounter on the ocean floor changes everything. And that’s all I’m going to say to you.

Rachel: Oh, dang it! (laughs)

Melody: (laughs) You have to read the rest to find that out. But this...this read is kind of melancholy, but also very mysterious. Um, there’s a lot of themes of trauma and memory, and contemplating life. Um, the main character Jack is, like, not very present in his own world, his...he’s really in his own head and own memories. Um, and very...it’s a very thought-provoking graphic novel. It had me thinking for a while, even just for being one graphic novel. So, that’s my recommendation.

Rachel: I definitely want to read that one...Jeff Lemire, uh, isn’t he the comic book...I can’t remember if he’s the writer or the artist for the “Descender” series—

Melody: Oh.

Rachel: —which is a comic book series we actually talked about...I think it was maybe the first episode of Not Your Mother’s Library? Way back in the day.

Melody: It’s so long ago I don’t remember! (laughs)

Rachel: Yeah! Um, but if it...if he is the artist for that, he has a very interesting style.

Melody: He does...this book does have an interesting art style.

Rachel: Mmhm.

Melody: Um, it's very line heavy because it is in greyscale.

Rachel: Mmhm.

Melody: Um, and the way he draws character's faces is pretty...uh, unforgiving?

Rachel: Okay. (laughs)

Melody: (laughs) Uh...

Rachel: I would not want him to do my portrait, then. (laughs)

Melody: (laughs) I mean, it's not that bad. But it is...

Rachel: Sure.

Melody: Like, you can see their worry and their trauma and their pain on their faces. Um, and then the images of, um, Jack diving into the ocean are really beautiful. Um, and I also liked...he...so, you know most graphic novels will have lines of squares or rectangles that you kind of read from left to right, top to bottom.

Rachel: Mmhm, yeah.

Melody: So, he...occasionally, some pages will have, like, the first two lines of the page will be those two rectangles. So, you...you're reading the story, like, square by square.

Rachel: Mmhm.

Melody: And then, the bottom half of the page—which has, I don't know, like...nine rectangles altogether, those in total make up one image.

Rachel: Oh, wow. Yeah.

Melody: That are, like, spaced out between the white spaces. So, I like the variety and the art style. Um, it's really interesting, and it's useful to the storytelling purpose.

Rachel: Sure. Yeah, I...I love it when comic book artists...I don't want to say 'mess with' the format, but kind of 'make it their own'.

Melody: Braking the rules?

Rachel: Yeah, breakin' the rules! (laughs)

Melody: (laughs) 'cause they've mastered their craft they can now break it.

Rachel: Ah, it all ties in, guys! It's a conspiracy! (laughs)

Melody: (laughs) I wasn't even planning for this to happen.

Rachel: Oh, of course you weren't. Wink-wink. (laughs)

Melody: (laughs)

Rachel: Yeah, that's definitely on my to-read list. Um, if it's okay I want to talk about my next series.

Melody: Yes!

Rachel: Um, I want to talk about the latest run on the mature-audience graphic novel series entitled "Lucifer." So, just right there you know it's for adults only, right? (laughs)

Melody: Mmhm.

Rachel: This series started coming out in 2018 and is written by Dan Watters. It tells the tale of the devil introduced in Neil Gaiman's famed comic series, "The Sandman." And Melody, when you co-hosted Not Your Mother's Library, we did an episode called "Comics and Capes," and I believe you read the first volume of "Sandman" for that episode, didn't you?

Melody: I did!

Rachel: Yeah.

Melody: I also almost put it on my list for this episode. (laughs)

Rachel: Oooh! (laughs)

Melody: So, I was like, what have I read that I can talk about? And then remembered that I have talked about it on an episode with you, So, yeah.

Rachel: Well, there you go. Both “Sandman” and this new run on “Lucifer”...they’re incredible series. Uh, and “Sandman” especially. It’s a huge influencer in the scene. It was published during the early ’90s. Uh, so, be sure to look into that if you are interested and can handle darker themes. As I mentioned, the character Lucifer Morningstar was introduced there. This fella decided that he was tired of ruling over hell, so he abandoned his post in favor of opening a piano bar in Los Angeles. As you do, when you’re the Prince of Lies. (laughs) This particular version of the character became popular enough that there was an eponymous off-shoot series written by Mike Carey in the early 2000s. So, we’ve got “Sandman” in the ’90s, (laughs) the first run of “Lucifer” in the 2000s, and then this one—that I’m going to talk about in a minute—all the way in 2018. And I’ve read Mike Carey’s run. It’s not bad, by any means, but Carey’s idea of Lucifer seems to have little in common with the one established in “Sandman.” He acts ‘holier than thou’, as can be expected from the First of the Fallen, but it comes across in an almost...flat, 2-dimensional way, I guess? He isn’t what I would describe as ‘sly’ or even ‘charming’. Truth be told, this Luci does not hold a candle to the colorful character that burst out of the pages of that long-ago issue of “Sandman.” They even look different to one another, which could be attributed to the varying art styles, but I personally think that it goes well beyond that. Um, now, I only mention all of this because this new series of “Lucifer” that came out in 2018—as I’ve said—sees the character return to his roots as Gaiman probably intended. That’s the feeling I get, anyway. You can just tell it’s the same, cocksure fallen angel who said ‘eff it’ to lording over hell and caring what other people think about him, not whatever stony-faced version took over for a while in the other series. This guy has the original physicality, too, and the art style is also very similar to that seen in “The Sandman,” which obviously helps. This run is actually a direct continuation of Mike Carey’s but, like I said, it is a lot closer to the source material. In fact, I don’t even recommend reading Carey’s series first in order to enjoy Watters’

version. You can easily take them as two separate units. So, in the first volume of Watters' series, we open with Lucifer having no idea who he is or what he's capable of. He's been banished to a sort of in-between world and needs to get out before time's up. The next volume deals primarily with his son, Caliban—and yes, that is the same Caliban depicted in Shakespeare's "The Tempest". Gaiman really likes playing around with, uh, Shakespearean characters.

Melody: Which one is Caliban, again?

Rachel: So, he's kind of like the...I guess I'd describe him as the 'Frankenstein monster' that Prospero, I guess creates? I don't remember if Prospero creates him or if...yeah, I think he does, 'cause Prospero's the wizard character, right?

Melody: Yeah, yeah.

Rachel: And then Caliban is with them on the island. He's, like, that humongous beast of a man.

Melody: Okay. I don't remember him, but, I believe you. (laugh)

Rachel: (scoffs) How dare you. (laughs)

Melody: (laughs)

Rachel: He's great. (laughs) Um, in the third volume of "Lucifer," it ties in the Wild Hunt, which is a story straight out of European folklore. And a fourth and probably final volume released not too long ago, and though I have not dived into it yet myself, it proclaims to bring long-time readers full-circle. So, in "The Sandman," there is this guy called 'Dream'. He and his brothers and sisters are known as the Endless, who are an undying group of beings with all these sorts of powers that helped shape life as we know it. Lucifer is not a fan of the Endless, and his power actually rivals theirs. So, in this final volume, he decides to visit Destiny of the Endless—and Destiny is the oldest of them all. That should be an interesting confrontation. All right. We have Neil Gaiman to thank for all these incredible characters, and his work has spawned a whole lot of stories. Right around the time that the new "Lucifer" came out, DC Comics published a slew of other limited-run series all set within the Sandman Universe. The one that I want to

highlight—apart from “Lucifer,” obviously—is called “The Dreaming.” It’s about the many creatures that inhabit the world made by Dream of the Endless, who I just mentioned. And, for reasons that I won’t spoil, the place starts to decay. Now, because the inhabitants are an intrinsic part of that world, they, too, start to fall apart. It is bonkers. (laughs) So, whether you are already a “Sandman” fan or have never picked up a volume in your life, you can check out “The Dreaming” to get swept away to a crazy, crazy place. If you enjoy it, you can always read more with other series like “House of Whispers” and “Books of Magic,” both of which exist in the same comic-verse. Yeah.

Melody: So, the...um, I haven’t read any of the “Lucifer” series. Um, I am aware that there is a TV show—

Rachel: Yes. (laughs)

Melody: —on Netflix called “Lucifer.” (laughs)

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Melody: Is that related in any way?

Rachel: Very loosely. I will say that is one of...it used to be one of my guilty-pleasure shows. Um, recent seasons haven’t been so great, but it’s still good for eye-candy. Um, I’ll be honest with you.

Melody: (laughs)

Rachel: But yeah, I mean, it is based on the character created by Neil Gaiman...um, apart from that it’s very different. It’s like a buddy-cop, detective drama...

Melody: Oh.

Rachel: Kind of...’weekly crime’ show.

Melody: Okay.

Rachel: Um, and it’s also a comedy. So, there’s that. (laughs) Yeah.

Melody: Okay. Um, so, I have noticed recently in a lot of the content I've been consuming that there is a heavy theme of, like, the angry, disgruntled, but charming-and-likable main character.

Rachel: Mhm.

Melody: Does Lucifer fit this bill?

Rachel: Um...it's...I suppose, in a way, yes, 'cause he's obviously not happy with his daddy.

(laughs) So to speak. But, um, he isn't human, so he isn't your typical character in that, uh, you can't relate to him in most ways. Just because he is one of 'the fallen', and he has very different preconceptions about the way the universe works and he is, I would say, 'ageless'. So, he's been around a long time, and he does not view things in the same way that we would. Uh, so just that alone, I think, kind of sets him apart. Now, the T.V. show Lucifer...yeah, he's very much what you described. (laughs) Yeah.

Melody: (laughs) Nice.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Melody: Cool.

Rachel: Mhm.

Melody: Well, this sounds good. Is this a...um, if one were to read book one, would they be dedicating a lot of their time to the rest of the series?

Rachel: No. Um, so this is a limited run series, so there are only the four volumes. Like I said, I'm pretty sure this fourth one is going to be the last. And a lot of that has to do with, ah, popularity, and seeing if...they...they'll test these out kind of as 'one-shots' a lot of the time, but if they're popular enough they'll keep them running. But also, I think, um...from the get-go I think this series in particular was just decided to be a very closed story. Um, each volume kind of has its own little thing going on, but then there is an overarching tale. Um, so no. If...If you wanted to get in and you've never read "Sandman" or anything, this is a great place to start. And if you don't like it, then you don't have to carry on with the other series, you know?

Melody: You have permission to quite reading. Do you hear that?

Rachel: Yes, I specifically give you permission, which you need from me! (laughs)

Melody: Great! So, um, to transition. Speaking of things disintegrating and other things disintegrating with them, I'm going to talk about the Marvel Universe. (laughs)

Rachel: Woo! (laughs)

Melody: (laughs) And if you get that really bad reference, then you know what I'm talking about. And if you don't, then watch Marvel. So, um, I read, um, "The Vision" graphic novel by Tom King, um, and the artists are Gabriel Hernandez Walta and Michael Walsh, um, and then Jordie Bellaire is the colorist. There are other people cited in the description. It's a lot of names to read, so I apologize to all of the creators. You are all wonderful.

Rachel: That is often the case when it comes to comics. It takes a whole team of people to get it done.

Melody: Yes. But I...I did write down the biggest names on the front page, so... (laughs)

Rachel: (laughs) You did your due diligence, then.

Melody: I...I did. So, um, "The Vision" is a two-volume series, um, and it was published in 2016. And the reason this caught my eye—and it may catch your ear as you're listening—is, uh, because "WandaVision" is a pretty popular show on Disney+. I have seen it. Have you seen it?

Rachel: I have, indeed.

Melody: Okay. Have you finished it?

Rachel: Yes, yes!

Melody: Okay, me too. Um, so, if you liked "WandaVision," this graphic novel is a really good readalike, I would recommend it. Um, and, I also wanted to mention, um...as far as we know, as far as the date of this recording, we don't know if "WandaVision" will be renewed for another season. I would be pretty surprised if it wasn't.

Rachel: Yeah. Mmhm.

Melody: It was received very well. But, you know, if we hear that it doesn't, then maybe this graphic novel can comfort you in some way.

Rachel: (laughs)

Melody: (laughs) Um, I also would recommend, um...if you want to learn more about Wanda and Vision's story before you start this comic book—which, if that sounds interesting to you before you read this graphic novel—I would recommend you do that. There are spoilers, obviously. It's a summary of their love story. Um, so that is...you can find that on [Marvel.com](#). It's an article called "The Love Story of Scarlet Witch and Vision," um, and I'll put that link in the show notes. Again, this contains spoilers about Wanda and Vision's stories, but I found it very, uh, useful to have that information having read "The Vision" graphic novel series. So, back to Vision. Um, so, this is a surreal, suburban comic book drama, which is basically the description of "WandaVision."

Rachel: Yeah, it really is.

Melody: (laughs) So, um, looking to start a family of his own, Vision builds himself a wife, called Virginia, and teenage twins, Viv and Vin. And they all look like him. They have powers. But they share his desire—or obsession—to be ordinary. Um, and then I wanted to quote part of the, you know, the little blurb that you see when you're reading about books, 'cause I just thought it was really fun. So, it says, "Behold the Visions! They're the family next door, and they have the power to kill us all. What could possibly go wrong?"

Rachel: (laughs) That is excellent. (laughs)

Melody: Yeah, it's really good. (laughs) So, um, this...I loved reading it. It was really interesting. Um, it's got that classic, like, 'Frankenstein's Monster' theme of, like, what makes you a human being, or what makes you have a soul? What is a soul?

Rachel: Sure.

Melody: Um, can you have a soul if you're not a human being? Um, and, like, what...what do you have to do to fit in? Or do you even find that comfort and peace when you do fit in with

other people? Very interesting themes that I...I enjoy reading about a lot. Um, this graphic novels series is also very colorful, the visual are really fun. Um, and then the content is a little bit dark, and it does have that surrealism that you see, um, in “WandaVision,” as well. So, highly recommend.

Rachel: Nice. I remember when watching “WandaVision,” I said to my husband, “This might actually be a horror show. I’m not sure!” (laughs) ‘cause it has those really dark moments where that mystery of...you’re not quite sure what’s going on, but something is not...is not good. You just don’t know what it is right now. (laughs)

Melody: Yeah, yeah. Mmhm. Yeah, yeah. And it also has, like, themes of grief, which—

Rachel: Mmhm.

Melody: —this graphic novel series does, too. Um, but it’s interesting that they don’t...it’s not black and white clear-cut that this is grief that’s causing these characters to do these things. But, um, I think it is in a lot of ways. That’s a heavy theme in “WandaVision” for sure.

Rachel: Definitely.

Melody: So, highly recommend this, and if you don’t mind a few spoilers I would also recommend that you read that summary before you come to this comic book.

Rachel: Good idea. It always pays to do research. (laughs)

Melody: It does, it does.

Rachel: Um, I actually...to talk about another kind of dark comic book, I recently picked up a copy of something called “Bury the Lede”, which is a one-shot by Gaby Dunn. It’s a very ‘neo-noir’ meets “Zodiac Killer” kind of graphic novel. So, right up my alley! (laughs) We have our protagonist, Madison, who is a journalistic intern, and she really, really wants to make a name for herself. She’s thrown into a mystery involving the maybe/maybe-not killer named Dahlia Kennedy, and she has been accused of brutally murdering her own husband and infant child. So yes—‘adult graphic novels’ for a reason. (laughs) Um, in fact, Dahlia outright confesses to the crime. Luckily for Madison and her aspirations, though, Dahlia decides she is only going to talk

to her about what really happened. Dahlia doles out tantalizing bits of evidence while Madison begins to figure out that there is a larger conspiracy at hand, one involving corruption and some other dark, twisted things that I will not spoil. The one drawback is that Madison herself isn't what I would call a likable character. In her pursuit of a story she often backstabs and betrays the sources closest to her, including her fellow journalists and a detective at the precinct. Which, honestly, seems kind of short-sighted, and just flat-out dumb. 'cause you kind of want to foster those relationships, don't you? (laughs) If that's your job.

Melody: Yeah.

Rachel: Yeah, mmm.

Melody: If you want to get promoted, or a raise someday.

Rachel: Mmhm. Or write any other stories in your career, maybe? (laughs)

Melody: Yeah, yeah. (laughs)

Rachel: Um, I do enjoy her complexity, though, and most of the other characters are also realistic. Best of all, there's good representation of the LGBTQ community, which we are seeing happen a lot more and more in this format. Other than that, the artwork is great. Illustrator Claire Roe has worked on graphic novel series like "Welcome Back," "Batgirl and the Birds of Prey," and "Nebula." She is a rising star, so keep your eye out for more of her stuff. And then the author, Gaby Dunn, is also an actress, journalist, comedian, activist, podcaster, and someone who would probably be pretty cool to hang out with, if I'm being honest. (laughs)

Melody: (laughs) Cool.

Rachel: Yeah.

Melody: That sounds, uh...I don't want to ask a question that would give spoilers.

Rachel: I can try to avoid it.

Melody: Okay. Um, were you satisfied?

Rachel: Mmm...there were some things left open at the end that I wish, um, I knew more about.
Um...

Melody: Okay.

Rachel: (laughs) Potentially there might be a sequel. I...I think it's just going to be left at the one volume, but they did leave it open in case, you know, people are interested enough. So, check it out and, um... (laughs) that might spur the author on to write more. Yeah.

Melody: (laughs) I like...I like your answer.

Rachel: (laughs)

Melody: Like, 'just go read it'. (laughs)

Rachel: (laughing) Does that answer your question?

Melody: Yeah...I mean, no. But yes.

Rachel: (laughs)

Melody: Um, is Dahlia a likable character? Is there anything, that like, keeps you enjoying the reading?

Rachel: Yeah, well, the...the mystery itself is the main thing, because I am a big fan of mystery and figuring out whodunit. And even though Dahlia confesses, we're not really sure if she actually committed the crime or not. So, she's very intriguing. Yeah.

Melody: Okay. All right. So, I think we are onto our final book.

Rachel: Mmhm.

Melody: Um, and, as we warned in the beginning, I will just say it again so you have a chance—this book does, uh, contain some mature adult content and themes that we will be discussing. And, um, this graphic novel is called "Sex Criminals" by Matt Fraction and Chip Zdarsky.

Rachel: I did not just giggle at the name. (laughs)

Melody: Um, yes, "Sex Criminals." Say it with me, Rachel. You can do it.

Rachel: (takes a breath and sighs) “Sex Criminals.” (laughs)

Melody: (laughs) If I can say it, you can say it.

Rachel: Yeah.

Melody: (laughs) Anyway, so...um, this is an ongoing monthly comic book, uh, labeled as a ‘sex comedy’, which...who knew that that would be a genre? (laughs) And I’m not...I did some research to try to see if this is still an ongoing series, um, ‘cause I’ve just...I’ve started the series, I have not finished it, um, and I’m not sure if they’re still publishing every month. Right now, there are six volumes available. Um, you can get them through the Milwaukee County Library System. Um, but the most recent volume was published in November of 2020. So, I think it’s still ongoing and that there will probably be more—maybe a new volume published, um, fall of this year in 2021. So, this was first published in September of 2013, um...which is...I guess it’s not that far away. It’s interesting, ‘cause this is, like, really heavy on the...the sex content and the comedy content.

Rachel: Mhm.

Melody: And it’s pretty irreverent. Um, which I think is more accepted now, but I don’t know how well it was accepted in 2013. I think it has more of a cult following than, um, a pop culture following. So, the um...plot of the story is—and you will appreciate this—uh, our main character is a librarian.

Rachel: Hey! (laughs)

Melody: Her name is Suzie, and her library’s in trouble. And she meets Jon, an actor, at a party, and of course they hit it off and sleep together. And, after sleeping together, they discover that they have this amazing ability to freeze time when they reach completion.

Rachel: Okay. That’s a power! (laughs)

Melody: Yup!

Rachel: It certainly qualifies.

Melody: (laughs) So, um, they continue their relationship, they get to know one another. Um, they start to explore their sexual histories and realize that they've both had this...power? I guess?

Rachel: Question mark. (laughs)

Melody: (laughs) So, they've both had it separately, and never knew anyone else who did. And can you imagine, like, growing up in your...you know, that adolescent time where you're learning about sex, and no one talking to you about, like, 'Well what about when time stops? Like, doesn't that happen to you, too?'. (laughs)

Rachel: Ah, I see! So, I thought...when you first said it, I thought you meant that together—their powers combined!—they can freeze time, but it's actually something they've both individually been able to do.

Melody: Yes.

Rachel: And so, after...post-coital, they realize they are both still, what? Like, 'aware', and can move around when time is frozen?

Melody: Yeah, they're both still in the, like, time-freezing space.

Rachel: Uh-huh.

Melody: Which...they also have created names for that time, separately. On their own, And...so, I did...I described the summary that way because that's how the book's summary is described.

Rachel: Sure, sure.

Melody: And then you learn that they both have it separately.

Rachel: 'kay.

Melody: So, Suzie—who I find much more relatable than Jon—calls it the 'quiet'. (laughs) So, like, she has this quiet time after. You know.

Rachel: Mmhm. If you know, you know. (laughs)

Melody: (laughs) And, um, Jon has another name for it. Read the book if you want to know. So, now they've discovered that they have this, like, super-power that they can use together. (laughs) And, as we know, Suzie's library is in trouble, and Jon gets this idea that they can freeze time together and start robbing banks to be able to save the library.

Rachel: I have questions.

Melody: Yeah, (laughs)

Rachel: How long does, um...the 'quiet' last?

Melody: Oh, this is interesting! Apparently, they've discovered it lasts until...oh no, I'm going to get it wrong! Either it's until you're ready to...I think it's until you're ready to, like, be turned on again?

Rachel: Okay. Okay. So, is it longer for Suzie than it is for Jon, in that case?

Melody: That is an interesting question that I don't have an answer to yet.

Rachel: Sure.

Melody: I don't know. I'm not sure how that works.

Rachel: Mhm.

Melody: Um...

Rachel: I could be basing that assumption on faux science, but...

Melody: Right, no, it is an excellent question. Um, 'cause, in the...my other question was how—and this was not addressed—how does the timing work out?

Rachel: Right.

Melody: You know, it's not always guaranteed that both people are going to be at that place at the same time.

Rachel: Mhm. Right, yeah.

Melody: You know? I don't have an answer to that, either. Um, and the book doesn't really address it. At least, I'm in the first volume. That hasn't really been addressed yet, that they both kind of end up in this space.

Rachel: Interesting.

Melody: Mmhm.

Rachel: Yeah.

Melody: Um, so they...they set out on this mission, this Robin Hood mission to save the library. Um, which means they're, like, going into public bathrooms and (laughs) creating the 'quiet'.

Rachel: That is why I asked about the timeframe. (laughs)

Melody: (laughs) Yep! They pull off the robbery and go home, and time continues as normal. So, it's really—clearly—very irreverent.

Rachel: Mmhm.

Melody: But quite funny. And fast-paced; I got through it very quickly. Um, the ends are not tied up. So, this is a continuing series and, um, some other people get involved, and we get to learn that this is, um...there's more to this super-power—question mark?—than even appears in the first volume.

Rachel: Sure.

Melody: Um, yes. So, if this description didn't make you cringe or feel awkward, you might enjoy this graphic novel. (laughs)

Rachel: (laughs)

Melody: Yeah, I...I was hesitant to even talk about it, but it's so funny.

Rachel: Yeah, I think I...that's why I would read it—for the comedic aspect.

Melody: Mmhm.

Rachel: 'cause otherwise it's a difficult thing to pitch, if you take it too seriously.

Melody: Oh, whoa. Yeah. I mean, we both have questions.

Rachel: (laughs) So many questions.

Melody: Um, yeah. (laughs) Yeah, so that's my final graphic novel.

Rachel: (laughs) Excellent, good place to end it on.

Melody: Yes. Yep! I apologize to everyone.

Rachel: (laughs) No apologies needed.

Melody: Thank you. I mean, I didn't write it, so...

Rachel: Right, yeah.

Melody: Yeah.

Rachel: All right, please remember to subscribe and rate us if you like what you hear so that more listeners can find out about our shows. Um, remember to check the show notes to learn more about everything we just talked about and find links to each other's feeds. I wanted to thank you, Melody, for joining us today. It has been a lot of fun.

Melody: You're welcome. Any time you want me to talk about an uncomfortable book, just let me know. (laughs)

Rachel: (laughs) You'll be the first person I call. Until next time listeners, happy reading. Bye!

Melody: Bye!

(Brief outro music)