

EGSM 7: Living deliciously (Villains)

Content Warnings

- Spoilers for: Loki, Lucifer, The Good Place, The Witch, Game of Thrones
- Occasional beeping
- Discussions of: murder & serial killers, the Devil and Christianity, guns & gun violence
- Mentions of: child death, Nazis, panic attacks, police, food, spiders, blood, emetophobia

HELEN

...yes he wants a lot of money, and he can only get that by killing the Baudelaire children, but he also really wants to be a respected actor...

(group laughter)

...and that's such a strange combination of traits!

(group laughter)

HANNAH

As a theatre person, that's not that strange of a combination...

(laughter)

[Show Theme - Intro]

HELEN

Hello friends and fans and welcome to Enthusigasm. This is our show where we talk about a few of our favourite things. I am your host, Helen Gould, one of the best Rusty Quillers and today we're talking about my absolute favourite damn subject, and it's villains, the hot hot evil ones! Excellent! Woo! And I am excited and delighted to be joined by Cathy, Gabriel, Hannah, and Lex. We will as always go round alphabetically, so Cathy can you give us your pronouns and tell us what you do?

CATHY

Hi, I am Cathy. I am she/her and I am audio masterer at Rusty Quill.

HELEN

Wonderful, and next up Gabriel.

GABRIEL

Hi, I am Gabriel. He/him and I am tech support assistant at Rusty Quill.

HELEN

Fab. Hannah you're next.

HANNAH

Hello, I am Hannah P, I am one of the producers for Rusty Quill. I work on Rusty Quill Gaming and our Patreon. And pronouns she/her.

HELEN

And last but absolutely not least, Lex please do introduce yourself, what are your pronouns and what do you do?

LEX

I'm Lex, he/him. I made The Deca Tapes, and I'm currently working on my first novel.

HANNAH

Ooh!

HELEN

Ooh exciting, what's it about?

LEX

It's about a non-existent Soviet state where people are fighting a war of fake news.

HELEN

Oh.

HANNAH

Ooh, that's intense.

HELEN

We wouldn't know anything about that would we?

LEX

Yes.

(laughter)

GABRIEL

Not at all.

(laughter)

HELEN

Ooh, oof, close to the bone, close to the bone.

HANNAH

Everyone laughs nervously.

(laughter)

CATHY

Not pulled out of reality at all.

(laughter)

HELEN

Well, good luck with it, I hope that goes well. Okay, we're going to jump in with our first question which is basically, why are villains interesting? I think my thoughts on it are I find villains interesting because I always have a morbid

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curiosity for why bad stuff happens, because I mean I think of myself as a good person. I don't think I would ever turn into a serial killer or anything like that, and so figuring out why other people might do that is interesting to me because it's something I cannot imagine doing.

HANNAH

That's just what a serial killer would say...

(laughter)

HELEN

A serial killer would definitely say 'I am not a serial killer', except for the ones who do say that.

HANNAH

Yeah.

CATHY

I knew Helen was the one to look out for. I knew it!

(laughter)

HELEN

Yeah. I listen to a lot of true crime. I know a lot of horrible things.

(laughter)

Does anyone else want to give me their take on why you're interested in villains?

CATHY

This is going to sound weird, but maybe it will be kinship to what Helen said, I find them kind of relatable.

HELEN

Mm.

CATHY

In the sense that especially a lot of like modern-day villains they all... there's this pattern of having a backstory that led them to where they are now...

HELEN

Mm.

CATHY

...and it's usually something that we can all see ourselves in...

HELEN

Mm.

CATHY

...but it's just something, whether it was events or a way of life that just kind of turned things in a different direction that led them down this path. I think it is kind of like what you said Helen, you kind of see yourself in like, well if I had done x, y, and z and followed that path, I wonder how things would have gone out.

HELEN

Mm.

LEX

Yeah, I would say a good hero is someone you would hope to be...

HELEN

Mm.

LEX

...and a good villain is someone you are afraid to become right?

GABRIEL

Yeah absolutely.

HELEN, CATHY AND HANNAH

Oooh.

HELEN

That's a good way of putting it Lex, yeah.

HANNAH

Yes, good line.

LEX

Both sides should be, should be really relatable and of course once you became that person...

(laughs)

...you were afraid of becoming, you are going to make the best of it and become a charismatic version of that fear, right, so...

(laughter)

You should have fun with it.

(laughter)

HELEN

I wonder if there's also something about how heroes are often presented as making the difficult choice over and over again, because doing the right thing and the good thing is often much more difficult...

GABRIEL

Mm.

HELEN

...and so, being a hero feels less attainable...

GABRIEL

Right.

HELEN

...and less relatable.

HANNAH

Yeah.

LEX

Have you guys seen Unbreakable with Bruce Willis?

HELEN

Yes.

GABRIEL

Yeah, absolutely.

LEX

So, I am going to have to spoil stuff to make my point...

HELEN

Go for it!

HANNAH

Do your worst, Lex.

LEX

Yeah, but I love how in that movie, basically the villain is someone looking for meaning...

GABRIEL

Mm hm.

LEX

...and by doing that he needs Bruce Willis...

HELEN

Mm.

LEX

...and in that way, he gives meaning to Bruce Willis' life. I'm calling him Bruce Willis because I don't remember what the character's name is...

(laughter)

GABRIEL

Oh my god, I also don't remember.

HELEN

Is it David?

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HANNAH

His character is Bruce Willis, let's be real...

(laughter)

LEX

His character is always Bruce Willis...

(laughs)

HELEN

Yeah.

LEX

...but basically, they are both like trying to project meaning right...

HELEN AND GABRIEL

Mm.

LEX

...and I thought it was such a genius, genius plot...

HELEN

Yeah, I think some of the best heroes versus villains are when they are essentially the same person but just, they took some crucial different decisions.

LEX

Yeah.

HELEN

Gabriel, what do you think? What interests you about villains?

GABRIEL

I do agree with what's been said in that, you know, well I mean there are kind of two paths right? There's the villains that you relate to, that it's just you know, are the one bad day kind of villains that you can really see yourself like, like 'I could maybe snap one day and go down that path'. But then there's also the, you know the flip side...

(laughter)

...and those are the ones that are a little bit more fascinating to me personally, because it's just like, you look at this person and what they're doing and, and they're just you know, enjoying whatever horrible acts that they're committing and it's like I will never, my brain will you know 100 per cent never work like that person's, and that is absolutely fascinating to me.

HELEN

So that's where we're talking about like, sort of something that you cannot comprehend?

GABRIEL

Right.

HELEN

Like say, um, what's he called from Halloween? Jason Voorhees.

HANNAH

Ah, Jason.

GABRIEL

Jason's from Friday, so Michael Myers is from Halloween.

HELEN

Oh, Michael Myers. I get them mixed up all the time! Halloween and Friday the 13th are like the same thing in my head and I don't know why.

GABRIEL

Oh yeah, Michael Myers is a good example of just like an evil that you just can't understand, and that makes him scarier, I think.

HELEN

And he doesn't stop!

GABRIEL

Right.

HELEN

And I think that's the scariest thing, yeah. Hannah, what about you, what do you think?

HANNAH

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Well, you guys have definitely touched on some of my answers for sure, the you know, 'there but for the grace of god go I' kind of a deal is always fascinating to think about, as well as the things that are just morbid fascination of like 'I can't fathom how this would happen, but I must look and understand it'.

(laughter)

I also think it's interesting that both heroes and villains, at least the good ones, have like a cause, they have a reason that they're doing what they're doing...

HELEN

Yeah.

HANNAH

...and a lot of the best villains, sort of see themselves as the good guys? I think that got mentioned as well, and it's very interesting to examine it from that perspective and think about, like, if I were in that situation, would I also see myself as the good guy and view, you know, the hero as the villain, basically.

HELEN

Mm, yeah.

HANNAH

So yeah, perspectives and motivations it's, yeah, that's one of the best places to examine them is in our lovely, and as Helen said often times rather

attractive and charismatic antagonists...

(laughter)

...because dammit it's true.

(laughter)

HELEN

Let's talk about our favourite villains.

HANNAH

Oooh, okay.

HELEN

You can choose more than one because there are lots of different characteristics that make up a good villain, which is something that maybe we'll talk about later. I would love to hear from some of you about that.

CATHY

Well, first would be Alex.

(laughter)

HELEN

Oh, our Alex!

(group laughter)

HANNAH

Wait a minute!

CATHY

I've heard enough Rusty Quill Gaming episodes now...

(laughter and clapping)

...to see where Alex being a villain has become a regular thing.

HANNAH

But we respect his craft Cathy!

CATHY

And I appreciate that! One of my favourites.

(laughs)

I respect it. I admire it. I think he's misunderstood.

(laughter)

HANNAH

Oh, that's amazing. That's really great.

(laughter)

HELEN

The true big bad was Alex Newall all along...

CATHY

And maybe this is just the part of me that loves musicals speaking up...Dr
Horrible's Sing-Along Blog...

HELEN AND GABRIEL

Yes!

CATHY

...Dr Horrible himself, just such a wonderfully unique and quirky character, and
I love the fact that you can see everything that he goes through from his
perspective it's perfectly logical...

HELEN

Mm.

CATHY

...but just with that tweak of 'well all of this is wrong, so I just have to fix it
because nobody else is...'

HELEN

Mm hm.

CATHY

...and then we get musical numbers thrown in and we get Nathan Fillion thrown in and we get...

(laughter)

...you know all these wonderful extras on top...

HELEN

Just yeet Nathan Fillion!

GABRIEL

Yeah, he's a really interesting one, because you know he's a villain, but he is the hero of that story and we root for him the majority of the time, which you know makes the transformation at the end all the more bittersweet...

CATHY

Right.

GABRIEL

...as aware of it.

HELEN

Mm.

CATHY

We saw the villain - spoilers! We saw the villain succeed.

GABRIEL

Right.

HELEN

Mm hm.

CATHY

...and it's not what anybody, including the viewer, actually ended up wanting...

GABRIEL

Right.

CATHY

...but we got it anyways.

HANNAH

Yup.

HELEN

I haven't seen Dr Horrible's Sing-Along thing...

CATHY, HANNAH AND GABRIEL

(collective gasping)

GABRIEL

Oh my god.

HANNAH

Helen!

HELEN

...for! For a very long time.

CATHY, HANNAH AND GABRIEL

Okay. Okay.

(laughter)

GABRIEL

Can we just like pause the episode and just give it a quick watch?

(laughter)

HANNAH

Alright, stop everything!

(laughter)

HELEN

I've forgotten everything that happens in it.

GABRIEL

It's only 45 minutes.

LEX

I'm going to one up you, and say that I have no idea what you guys are talking about right now.

(general exclamations of surprise)

HELEN

Oh! Okay!

HANNAH

Lex!

HELEN

Let's explain, let's explain to Lex.

CATHY

So, back when – do you remember the writer's strike?

LEX

Yeah, yeah.

CATHY

In the US?

LEX

Yeah of course.

CATHY

So, back in that time since there were nothing but like reruns going on cable TV and the idea of internet content still hadn't quite taken off as a full viable medium, Joss Whedon got together with a few actors and close friends and they wrote a musical that was made just for internet viewing.

HELEN

Mm hm.

CATHY

Just for streaming and YouTube, and it took off. It took off in a big way...

GABRIEL

Mm hm.

CATHY

...and it became a proof that that kind of medium could work...

LEX

Oh, wow!

CATHY

...in the entertainment space. So, it's basically about this guy who calls himself Dr Horrible.

(laughter)

He wants to essentially take over the world because he wants to fix it. He sees a lot wrong with the world, a lot of people being mistreated.

HELEN

Mm.

CATHY

He sees heroes not being heroic, but rather using their machismo to kind of, do things to their own advantage and take advantage of their position. And so he keeps trying to foil the plans of the heroes and trying to create chaos and anarchy, and keeps getting thwarted by the local hero who is Captain Hammer.

LEX

(laughs)

Captain Hammer.

CATHY

And you follow through this short little storyline of, like, you see him both in his villain persona of making a blog online, trying to talk to his fans like, 'this is

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what I'm gonna do next'...

(laughter)

...and 'this is how I get admitted to the...'

HANNAH

The Evil League of Evil?

(laughs)

CATHY

Thank you! The Evil League of Evil...

(laughter)

...and at the same time, you also get cuts of his day-to-day where he's infatuated with this girl, who's doing so much good in the community but ends up falling in with the hero, and his internal struggle...

LEX

And you said this is a musical?

HANNAH

It is.

CATHY AND GABRIEL

Yes, it's a musical!

(laughter)

CATHY

It's a five episode musical and there are songs all over it, it's wonderful...

(laughter)

LEX

Okay.

HANNAH

It's an experience, would recommend.

LEX

Definitely checking this out.

HELEN

What you mentioned, that brought to mind, is Count Olaf from the Unfortunate Series of...

COLLECTIVELY

Oh yes.

HANNAH

A Series of Unfortunate Events, oh yeah.

GABRIEL

Interesting.

HELEN

I think because what's-his-face plays Count Olaf in one of the versions of that as well. I am so sorry, we're just forgetting people's names all over the place – what's his name?

GABRIEL

Neil Patrick Harris.

HELEN

Ne- Yes!

(laughter)

That guy, that guy. He's a very good Count Olaf. But Count Olaf is like, one of the quintessential villains for like children's fiction...

LEX

Because he does this?

(group laughter)

HANNAH

Basically!

HELEN

Yees!

HANNAH

Does the villain fingers!

HELEN

For the audience, we all simultaneously did the hand...

LEX

Yes.

(laughs)

HELEN

...hand rubbing thing that villains do when a plan is going very well. What's interesting to me I think about him is that, yes he wants a lot of money, and he can only get that by killing the Baudelaire children, but he also really wants to be a respected actor...

(laughter)

...and that's such a strange combination of traits!

(laughter)

HANNAH

That's not that str- as a theatre person, that's not that strange of a combination...

(group laughter)

GABRIEL

No. That's pretty typical actually.

(group laughter)

HELEN

I mean hopefully people wouldn't try and murder children to do that.

(laughter)

HANNAH

No, no, I kid, I kid...probably.

(laughter)

GABRIEL

Yeah, and that's a good example to bring up, because that's probably like one of the first villains that this generation was exposed to.

HELEN

Mm.

GABRIEL

I know it was one of my first real series that I went through.

LEX

Yeah, for sure.

GABRIEL

Yeah absolutely. And I remember he was pretty terrifying.

HELEN

Yeah. He's what I would class, one of those ones who I can, I can on a very base level I understand the thought 'I would like some money please.'

(laughter)

HANNAH

We've all been there.

HELEN

I don't understand anything else about him!

(laughter)

And like the other thing is like he has such elaborate schemes.

HANNAH

Mm hm.

HELEN

It's ludicrous the stuff he comes up with. Gabriel, who's your favourite?

GABRIEL

I have been trying to think and I think I have actually narrowed it down to two...

(laughs)

HELEN

Oh yeah?

GABRIEL

I think for sympathetic villains speaking of antagonists that a lot of people start off with, and that I certainly grew up watching, Prince Zuko from Avatar.

HANNAH

Ah...

HELEN

Ooh.

HANNAH

...I wondered if we were going to talk about Zuko...

(laughter)

HELEN

Very good.

GABRIEL

Yeah. He is easily, easily one of my favourite...I don't even know if I can call him a villain? But definitely antagonist.

HELEN

I think he's a villain at the start...

CATHY AND GABRIEL

Mm.

HELEN

...and he's just a villain who gets a redemption arc.

GABRIEL

Yeah, that's true. Yeah, I am a sucker for villains turned friends...

HELEN

Mm.

GABRIEL

...and that's probably the quintessential bad guy to good guy story in my mind. However, on the other end of the spectrum, one of my favourite villains that has come out in the past decade I would say, I don't know if you guys have watched other Marvel Netflix series at all? Kilgrave from the Jessica Jones series.

HELEN

Mm.

CATHY

Oh yes.

HELEN

Yeah, I've heard a lot about him. David Tennant, right?

HANNAH

Yeah.

GABRIEL

It's David Tennant and it's uncomfortable David Tennant, yeah.

HANNAH

It's a lot.

(laughter)

HELEN

I love it when David Tennant is uncomfortable.

(laughter)

GABRIEL

Yeah.

(group laughter)

Those are my, I would say that those are my current two favourite, on, you know on either end of the...

HELEN

Mm.

GABRIEL

...of the redemption spectrum.

HELEN

Yeah. David Tennant plays an excellent villain, honestly.

GABRIEL

Yeah, it is absolutely fantastic. I went from watching Dr Who for the first time to watching that, and it was...

HANNAH

Oh god.
(laughter)

CATHY

What a total whiplash, oh my god...

GABRIEL

Yeah.
(laughter)

CATHY

Wow.
(laughter)

HELEN

Lex, what about you? Do you have a fave?

LEX

Yeah so, we talked about Unbreakable earlier...

HELEN

Mm hmm.

LEX

I love, I love Mr Glass.

GABRIEL

Mm hmm.

LEX

Like picking one is so hard but, one of my favourite scenes ever is the opening scene from Inglourious Basterds.

COLLECTIVELY

Yes.

LEX

Where Hans Landa does like the ultimate cat playing with his food scene.

HELEN

Mm.

LEX

I don't know how long it actually is, but it feels like a movie, feels like an hour goes by before like you know everything goes down.

HELEN

Yeah.

HANNAH

Mm hm.

GABRIEL

Right.

LEX

It's so...and the thing with that movie is, that it's a brilliant movie but the opening scene is so brilliant, like for me, it never gets back to that point after that.

HELEN

Yeah.

GABRIEL

Right.

LEX

Because the tension is just...I saw it in the cinema and a week later I just went again, just to see that part again you know? To me, nothing gets close to that opening scene...

HELEN

Yeah, that's fair.

GABRIEL

No, yeah.

LEX

...with the huge, he takes, he smokes this huge pipe...

HELEN

Yeah, it's massive!

(laughter)

LEX

...like everything's so odd!

(laughs)

GABRIEL

It's so ridiculous.

HANNAH

It's such a villain pipe, it's great.

(laughter)

LEX

But it gets ridiculous. Every time you think 'okay now, now it's about to get dark...'

GABRIEL

Right.

LEX

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...and then something ridiculous, like, he pours some more milk, you know something ridiculous happens...

HELEN

Mm.

LEX

...which makes it even more dark.

GABRIEL

And somehow it makes it, yeah, yeah...

LEX

Yeah.

GABRIEL

...it makes it scarier somehow like...

(laughs)

HELEN

Yeah, I seem to remember that with the pipe thing, it's because the guy who's hiding Shosanna and her family pulls out a pipe, and then Hans Landa pulls out a bigger pipe.

(laughter)

I think that's what happens!

(laughs)

LEX

Yeah.

CATHY

Of course.

(laughs)

HELEN

Yeah, that's a real good choice.

LEX

And I love how they change languages at some point...

HELEN

Mm.

LEX

...and he says it's because it's easier for him. But then it turns out it's actually because he doesn't want the people beneath the floorboards to understand what he's saying.

HELEN

Yeah.

LEX

Which is just so...

HANNAH

Oh.

LEX

...it's so simple but so, you know...

HELEN

Very, very creepy.

LEX

...that's the stuff that gives me, that gives me panic attacks when I'm trying to write a scene...

(laughter)

...that someone wrote that scene you know?

HELEN AND CATHY

Yeah.

LEX

(laughs)

What am I supposed to do now?

(group laughter)

When we were talking about villains with no morale or that are just impenetrable...

HELEN

Mm.

LEX

...it made me think of the artificial intelligence in Space Odyssey...

HELEN

Oh! HAL?

LEX

...I think it's called HAL?

GABRIEL

Yeah.

HANNAH

Yeah.

CATHY

Yeah.

HELEN

I can't do that Dave.

(laughter)

LEX

I think it's called HAL and then a number, like 6,000 or something?

GABRIEL

HAL 9,000, I believe.

LEX

Yeah, yeah, exactly.

CATHY

Mm, yeah.

LEX

So, and it's just this ominous red dot...

HELEN

Mm.

LEX

...and from the beginning you just feel like with HAL, they won't be friends for long, but it just works because the voice is so soothing.

GABRIEL

Right.

HELEN

Yeah.

HANNAH

Mm hmm.

LEX

Yeah, and right up to the point where he is like pulling out the mainframes or whatever to make it stop, it's still scary...

HELEN

Mm.

LEX

...because it's so abstract right?

GABRIEL

Right.

LEX

...and there's such a...there's no human connection at all, and it makes it really scary. So I guess that's like the ultimate, like non-relatable villain kind of...

(laughs)

HELEN

Mm.

GABRIEL

Right, just entirely like unfeeling...

LEX

Yeah, yeah unfeeling, yeah, yeah that's a nice word.

CATHY

Pure logic.

LEX

Yeah.

GABRIEL

Yeah, it does not care, like...

LEX

Yeah, it's almost like an insect, right? It's just, it's just listening to its programming and yeah, yeah.

GABRIEL

Right.

HELEN

Mm hmm. Lex, have you played Portal?

HANNAH

I was just about to...

(laughter)

CATHY

(gasps) Oh, yes!

GABRIEL

Oh, here we go...

(laughter)

CATHY

Here we go, here we go!

(laughter)

LEX

I was actually, my brother got kind of upset with me two weeks ago that I hadn't played it yet, so...

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(someone gasps)

...I've literally installed it three days ago.

CATHY

Oh...

LEX

So don't spoil it, don't spoil it.

HELEN

It's okay.

HANNAH

No.

HELEN

I think it's obvious from the beginning isn't it?

HANNAH

What, Portal One or Portal Two?

LEX

I'm starting with one.

GABRIEL

Portal One, it's pretty obvious from the beginning.

HANNAH

Portal One, it's pretty obvious and it's good...

HELEN

Okay.

HANNAH

...to start with one and then Portal Two is a little, a little more involved but er...

GABRIEL

Yeah, there's more nuance to Portal Two.

HELEN

I love Portal Two.

HANNAH

Yeah, you'll have fun. You'll have fun with those.

LEX

Great.

(laughter)

So much to do.

HELEN

Yeah, keep an ear out.

LEX

Okay.

(laughter)

HELEN

Just because when you said about the calming voice, I thought, I know...

CATHY

We know who that is...

(laughter)

HELEN

...a robot that does that sound.

(laughter)

HANNAH

Hooray.

HELEN

Hannah, who's your favourite?

HANNAH

Ooh, well, I think I am going to have to be a total nerd and go for some old material...

HELEN

Oooh.

CATHY

Do it.

HANNAH

Shakespeare, Richard the Third.

HELEN

(gasps)

Oooh!

CATHY

Ooh!

GABRIEL

Interesting, okay.

HANNAH

Just, like the opening monologue and he's the main character, but he is clearly such a villain, and his opening monologue is basically 'here's why I am such a villain, and I am going to do terrible things' and he proceeds to just do a bunch

of terrible things!

(laughter)

But you still kind of root for him because he's just so good at talking, and like he's not even, you know it's interesting playing with the hot villain trope because he's like, physically deformed and everyone goes around saying like 'ah, you're just such a...like miserable...I hate looking at you' blah, blah, blah, blah...

(laughter)

...but he's really good at talking and he's really charismatic and when you see good portrayals of this character, like, the audience is absolutely on his side. And then he goes and like, has children murdered!

(laughter)

HELEN

Mm.

HANNAH

Just purely because he wants to get power and it's... it just messes with your head, so I got to put that one out there. And then, of course, both the modern interpretation and the original interpretation, we need to talk about Loki because it's gotta happen eventually...

(laughter)

HELEN

Mm. Yes! Tell me about Loki Hannah.

HANNAH

Oh gosh, I'll tell you about Loki Helen...

(laughter)

HELEN

Settle in everybody.

(laughter)

HANNAH

Yeah, so this is very interesting to me because the modern, like Marvel interpretation of Loki clearly, especially with the new series, very much the sympathetic villain like 'here's why he's doing what he's doing' and 'don't you just kind of feel bad for him and doesn't it all make sense' and...

HELEN

Mm.

HANNAH

...and they do a pretty good job of that, I think. In like the original mythology from you know, thousands of years ago Iceland or whatever, it's so much more in the other direction? And this could just be because like we don't have a lot of

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source material to draw from, so there's a lot we don't know about this character. But it really just seems like he just shows up and decides to wreck shit, and then he does, and there's never a reason, it's just that he was bored and then like, the world almost ends. But he also often times is the one who fixes the problem, after he has caused it, so...

HELEN

Mm.

HANNAH

...that's interesting, and yeah, it's really fun to me that, first of all that this character is like still being talked about and well loved...

HELEN

Mm.

HANNAH

...that many years later, I just, I always think that's cool, but yeah, the different variations that exist now of the original version which is so, just, chaotic and random and no one really knows why he's doing anything to the modern version which has this whole big emotional backstory and you feel bad for him and yeah, it's one of my favourites for sure.

HELEN

Mm. Does anyone else want to talk about Loki?

GABRIEL

I am not very well versed in Marvel in general...

(laughs)

LEX

Me neither I'm afraid.

HELEN

That's fair.

CATHY

Yeah, I actually have not watched that series yet, and I feel so ashamed.

(laughter)

HELEN

That's okay. Hannah? Hannah, I understand.

(laughter)

HANNAH

Thank you Helen, I appreciate that.

(group laughter)

HELEN

I think that the Marvel Loki is...I think he has one of the...he has a very interesting character arc. I think that the Loki TV series I have really mixed feelings about it in terms of how believable it seems to me.

HANNAH

Mm.

HELEN

...that the Loki of the first Avengers film would go on to do everything that the Loki in the TV show does...

HANNAH

Yeah.

HELEN

...because I feel it would take more than what he goes through to change him that much?

HANNAH

That was my sort of one hang up on that as well...

HELEN

Yeah.

HANNAH

...that I had to suspend my disbelief...

HELEN

Yes.

HANNAH

...about as like, I feel like it would take more than you know like a couple of hours basically...

(laughter)

...to have that drastic of a change, but okay, alright.

HELEN

Yes, we'll have to move on from that because my instinct was then to start talking about the other villains of the Loki TV show, because Loki is not...

HANNAH

Mm.

HELEN

...the villain in that show!

(laughs)

HANNAH

Yeah.

HELEN

...but, but not everyone has seen it, so.

LEX

Oh, that's interesting. He's the good guy?

HANNAH

Yep.

HELEN

Theoretically.

(laughter)

HANNAH

Well...yes.

LEX

Oh cool.

(laughter)

HANNAH

Mostly yes.

HELEN

I feel like most people in that show are morally grey.

HANNAH

Yeah, that's just a very morally grey show...

(laughter)

HELEN

Everyone is doing what they think is best, we'll put it that way.

(laughs)

HANNAH

Yeah, yeah.

HELEN

I think we're going to take a break there on our little discussion of Loki, and we'll be back in a minute with, I think we'll talk about the most villainous villain next.

(laughter)

And welcome back. So, before we talk about who we think is the most evil villain we have come across, since we've been talking about Loki and he is, you know, a God, I would like to talk about the Devil who I think is probably the most famous villain in like western society...

HANNAH

Mm hmm.

HELEN

...and is sometimes referred to as 'The Enemy'.

HANNAH

Yeah, capital 'E'!

HELEN

Yes! Because there have been lots and lots of different portrayals of the Devil and of demons throughout the ages. I haven't seen Lucifer...

LEX

Me neither.

CATHY

I have.

HELEN

In that, the Devil is a guy sort of helping investigate crimes, I think?

CATHY

Basically, yeah. Like he decides he's kind of done running Hell, and just goes to Los Angeles and has a nightclub, and ends up becoming friends with this police detective who's investigating murders and it's an interesting take on like, you know, the whole point of the Devil being in Hell is to punish people who do bad stuff.

GABRIEL

Right.

CATHY

That's what he's interested in doing, so he starts doing that on Earth by helping to track down murderers and stuff.

GABRIEL

Yeah, there's been an interesting like surge of shows and movies that take the Devil and make like an almost endearing, relatable, you know, kind of character, like Lucifer, even like anime, like The Devil Is A Part-Timer.

CATHY

Oh, that's right! I forgot about that one.

GABRIEL

I don't think it has a specific devil, but like just demons in general, The Good Place...

HELEN AND HANNAH

Mm hmm.

GABRIEL

...I would say also falls in that category of just taking this historically like, ultra-evil, you know like the ultimate evil archetype...

HELEN

Mm.

GABRIEL

...and just somehow making it relatable and it's...and yeah, I don't know, it's been a really interesting trend lately that I've noticed.

HELEN

The Good Place is interesting because it's quite explicitly not intended to be Christian theology...

GABRIEL

Right.

HELEN

...and yet, it's pretty clear that there are demons.

(group laughter)

GABRIEL

Yeah, it's not supposed to be like explicitly that, but I mean...there's some one-off jokes that are very clearly pointed.

HELEN

Michael learning empathy is some of the best TV.

(laughter)

LEX

Yes.

GABRIEL

Yep.

(laughs)

LEX

But to me from the Middle Ages like the Devil was always this invisible force right...

HELEN

Mm.

GABRIEL

Right.

LEX

So of course, once you get to Hell, it's flames and demons and the whole shebang, but on Earth like his ways are hidden beneath symbolism and numerology, and that's the only way you can see his proverbial footprints...

HELEN AND GABRIEL

Mm hmm.

LEX

...but he's basically...it's really easy to get in line on the wrong side. So, I think that's why making him like an approachable human figure is actually like a

modern pop culture way of doing exactly the same thing that mythology has always been doing like...

GABRIEL

Mm hmm.

LEX

...like the scary thing about him is that he's the ultimate evil, but it's...

HELEN

Mm.

LEX

...so easy to like get really close to him or it or whatever you want to call it right?

GABRIEL

Right.

LEX

And that's what, at least to me, especially as like when you're really young and you're learning...like I haven't been raised religious or anything, but when you learn about these ideas, like the scary thing is that you can't really...almost like HAL 9,000...

(laughter)

...there's only this dot and you don't understand what's going on, but you know it's bad and you're not really sure how to avoid becoming bad also.

HELEN

Mm hmm.

LEX

...and I think that's what makes him such a strong figure like as an enemy, like how do you fight that, right?

GABRIEL

Right.

LEX

So, you have to go, you have to go inwards and not be sinful.

(laughs)

HELEN

Yeah.

LEX

Which is again, very complex. But that's why I really like what you said Gabriel, like turning him into a relatable human kind of feels the same...

GABRIEL

Right.

LEX

...to me? You're like 'ooh I want to go shake your hand, but I shouldn't, right?'

HELEN

Mm hmm.

GABRIEL

Right.

LEX

...it's such a weird juxtaposition...

HELEN

Mmm.

LEX

...but it makes the character so interesting because you never see his true face.

HANNAH

The notion of always having to be vigilant and you never know what, you know the big bad thing is going to look like, it could be anything, you could be doing, you could already...

HELEN

Mm.

HANNAH

...be doing terrible things and you don't even know...

LEX

Yeah.

HANNAH

...is definitely, yeah, a scary aspect to the whole thing and like you mentioned yeah like in the Middle Ages it was just, you know, everything...

(laughter)

...everywhere, was probably...

GABRIEL

Right.

HANNAH

...the Devil somehow...

(laughter)

...and you gotta be super careful!

(laughter)

CATHY

In a way, not only the evil incarnate idea, but also the misunderstood villain.

HELEN

Mm.

HANNAH

Oh yeah.

LEX

Mm hmm.

CATHY

From its origin story of Lucifer disagreeing with God or going against God and being cast out of Heaven...

GABRIEL AND HELEN

Mm hmm.

CATHY

...to land in Hell, he did one thing wrong...

GABRIEL

Right.

CATHY

...and now he's forever in charge...

HANNAH AND HELEN

Yeah.

CATHY

...of Hell kind of thing, like, I could see where some of that sympathy story that we have now in modern times kind of like bleeds out of that origin story.

GABRIEL

One of my favourite recent interpretations of the Devil comes from The Witch.

(several people gasp)

HANNAH

Oh yes!

HELEN

Yes! Yes! One of my favourite films.

GABRIEL

Yeah, and I think that interpretation very much goes along with what we were saying with like, the Devil is just like an ever present like...

HELEN

Mm.

GABRIEL

...just evil, just around, and it's just, it's always tempting you and it's always like...it's interesting to say like a lot of the times you know like Helen was saying with the original story of Adam of Eve. The thing that you are being tempted with isn't necessarily inherently evil, you know, but in the case of The Witch it is.

HELEN

Yeah.

(laughter)

GABRIEL

It is just an interesting look about how villains...I think just to the psychology of villains in that, you know, it's wanting something more. It's wanting that chaos in the world, and I think in The Witch that that interpretation of the Devil is just a very good representation of that, just the chaos of temptation, I guess.

(laughs)

HELEN

I mean what Black Philip says is...sorry, for those who haven't seen it, Black Philip is a black goat in the film that turns out to have been...

GABRIEL

Oh yeah, we should say that the interpretation of the Devil in this movie is a goat!

(laughter)

HANNAH

It's a literal goat.

GABRIEL

Yeah.

HELEN

What he says to poor, what's her name, I do know her name...

GABRIEL

I forget the character name, but it's Anya Taylor-Joy.

HELEN

It's Anya Taylor-Joy.

GABRIEL

Yeah.

HELEN

Yeah. What he says to her character, after stripping everything away from her, like killing her entire family.

GABRIEL

Mm hm.

HELEN

What he says is, would you like to taste butter? Do you want a pretty dress?

GABRIEL

Mm hm.

HELEN

‘Wouldst thou like to live deliciously?’

HANNAH

Mm.

HELEN

I was like of course you say yes!

(group laughter)

Do we not all want to live deliciously?!

HANNAH

And eat butter?!

GABRIEL

Right, especially after, especially after all that. It's like what Lex was saying, it's like what happens when all of you has been torn apart and broken down, like...

HELEN

Yeah.

GABRIEL

...and you're just...yeah.

HELEN

I love that film so much. I could do an entire podcast about how much I love The Witch.

GABRIEL

Oh, it's beautiful, yeah. It's such a good film.

HELEN

Okay, so now I want to ask the question, who do you think is like the most villainous villain? Like what, who is the villain that you've read or seen in media and you think, that's the most evil person or thing that I can think of? They don't have to be your favourite, but they have to be like...I'm thinking of villains that are actually scary.

HANNAH

Mm.

GABRIEL

Yeah, for me personally, these aren't like supernatural villains, I personally don't find those scary, but the most like, just like got under my skin villains I have to go over to Game of Thrones...

HANNAH

Mm.

HELEN

Oooh.

GABRIEL

...and Joffrey Baratheon and Ramsay Snow...

LEX

Wow, yeah.

HELEN

Oh, very good.

GABRIEL

...are two of the just like, most despicable characters. Their actors play them so well and I respect them for it, I respect them for it, but oh man!

(laughs)

LEX

Yeah.

HELEN

I was trying to remember Ramsay Snow's name today...

GABRIEL

Mm.

HELEN

...because I was, we were talking about Game of Thrones, and I think I said 'he's the bastard with the sausage...'

(group laughter)

I couldn't remember his name!

HANNAH

Well fair enough.

LEX

Yeah.

GABRIEL

That's not incorrect.

HELEN

But that's the scene I remember most!

(laughter)

LEX

Probably true.

(laughs)

HELEN

Him waggling the sausage! But yeah, those are really good picks actually Gabriel.

LEX

Yeah. Because you forget, it's so well done that you forget that they're not actually that those people.

HELEN

Mm.

GABRIEL

I don't know how spoilery we should get on this, but when those two finally meet their, you know, to their respective ends...

HELEN

Mm.

GABRIEL

...they were probably the two most satisfying moments in that entire show.

HELEN

Mm.

LEX

Yes.

GABRIEL

Because I think that's what, you know, a good villain is really just leading up to a good villain death right, like...

(laughter)

The point of a good villain is to look at a character and be like I cannot wait...

(group laughter)

...to see you like...

CATHY

Yes.

HANNAH

This is gonna be awesome, yeah.

GABRIEL

Yeah, yeah and both of those characters for me just really, just like, urgh, I want to see you gone.

(laughs)

HELEN

Yeah, the love to hate the villain, yeah.

GABRIEL

Right.

HELEN

I think for me one of the most evil villains I can think of is the Mayor from Buffy.

GABRIEL

Oh!

LEX

Oh wow!

(laughs)

HANNAH

Oh, that's a great one!

HELEN

And I think that's specifically because he's so affable, and so nice, and you can see how he could be a really nice, good person in another life. Like, the way he treats Faith.

GABRIEL AND HANNAH

Mm hmm.

HELEN

Like he is the first like vaguely positive influence in, in Faith's life that she feels she can really trust, because she trusts Buffy and the others at first, and then she feels like they betray her...

HANNAH

Right.

HELEN

And she feels, and I think crucially, she feels like the Mayor won't judge her, and that's very important for Faith at that time. I think that season three is one of my favourite seasons of Buffy purely because the Mayor is in it; and like, the guy like eats massive live spiders!

(laughs)

CATHY

Yup.

HELEN

He's determined! I think, yeah, I think he's really up there for me for like most evil slash terrifying villain. Do we have any other takers?

HANNAH

I'll throw in another Buffy villain actually...

HELEN

Ooh.

HANNAH

...because what I want to answer is some vague statement about like real life people doing terrible things, but I am not going to go there.

(laughter)

So in terms of fictional villains...

(laughs)

HELEN

Yeah, let's try and talk about fictional stuff!

(laughs)

HANNAH

I am going to throw in Glory from season...

HELEN

Ooooooh!

HANNAH

...five I think it is, because she is really not sympathetic. Like there's no backstory, she's just a force of evil...

HELEN

Mm.

HANNAH

...and she's completely for a very long time, you just can't do anything about her.

HELEN

Yeah, she's a God.

HANNAH

Like all of the other villains, at least if Buffy got close enough, she could punch 'em in the face and they'd you know, stagger back and it was like, well okay, at least we can punch them in the face but...

HELEN

Mm.

HANNAH

...she just doesn't react! She's just like 'oh well that was rude' and like breaks her arm or something...

HELEN

Yeah.

HANNAH

...and that was a scary moment to encounter after a whole show.

HELEN

Yeah, because Buffy runs away from her, doesn't she?

HANNAH

Yeah! She gets her ass kicked by Glory, like over and over again. And then of course the whole, spoilers...

(laughter)

...of course, the whole plot line of, you know, 'oh damn she's basically trying to come after my sister, and if, and I can't do anything to stop it', just that inevitability is really striking to me.

HELEN

Mm.

GABRIEL

Mm.

HELEN

Cathy, Lex. Who do you think is the most evil villain you know of?

LEX

This last example made me think of, I don't know his full name, it's Anton something from No Country for Old Men?

GABRIEL

Anton Chigurh, I believe.

LEX

Yeah, yeah, yeah. So, this completely... you couldn't gauge this guy, and wherever he went...

GABRIEL

Mm hm.

LEX

...people kind of, were confused by him, and then they...he murdered them.
(laughter)

HELEN

Oh!
(laughter)

GABRIEL

That is one that I would also compare to HAL 9,000, in that, yeah, just unfeeling...

HELEN

Mm hm.

LEX

Yes, there's a pattern arising.

GABRIEL

Yeah.

LEX

You're being my therapist right now, we're getting...

(group laughter)

...closer to some kind of primal fear!

(laughter continues)

Yeah. Yeah, it's true, he also has this kind of insect quality where he just keeps going...

GABRIEL

Mm hm.

LEX

...and it's like nobody can stop him, for some reason, er yeah, and he scared me.

(laughs)

GABRIEL

Yeah, and he just like doesn't see anyone...he just doesn't see people as people, like they are all just like...

LEX

Yeah.

GABRIEL

...a thing that's in the way, like...

HELEN

Mm.

LEX

Yeah, well put.

GABRIEL

I think that's...he uses specifically as a weapon the cattle gun...

LEX

Yes.

HELEN

Ooh.

GABRIEL

...and I think that's extremely telling...

LEX

Yeah.

GABRIEL

...that he uses that as a, as a reoccurring weapon.

LEX

Yeah, yeah. And he looks at people like almost, like from a distance right, he's like, he's like...

GABRIEL

Mm hmm.

LEX

...a little bit confused, like observing...

GABRIEL

Right.

LEX

...'what are you trying to do?' Yeah.

HELEN

Mm.

GABRIEL

It's almost like a person looking at an ant...

LEX

Yes.

GABRIEL

...the way that he looks at another person.

HELEN

Yeah.

LEX

Yeah, yeah, I thought it was really well done.

GABRIEL

Absolutely.

HELEN

Alright Cathy, how about you?

CATHY

Oh, I've been waiting because it's so hard to think!

(laughter)

I don't know if he's the most villainous villain, but if we go back to Gabriel's point of, like, the villain you would love to see, be rid of, or you know die, whatever. I'm trying to remember the name of the priest in the Hunchback of Notre Dame...

HELEN, LEX, HANNAH AND GABRIEL

Frollo!

CATHY

Frollo.

HELEN

Ohh, yes, excellent choice!

CATHY

(laughs)

I mean that is just...

HANNAH

Urgh!

CATHY

The portrayal of pious yet pompous yet slimy, and you see it like continue to degrade throughout the movie.

HELEN

Mm hm.

CATHY

I remember watching...the first time I watched it I was surprised that it was a Disney movie because I didn't expect to see a villain that intense...

GABRIEL

Right.

HELEN

Mm.

CATHY

...on the screen...

LEX

Yeah.

CATHY

Rusty Quill Enthusiasm – Villains Patreon Cut VC1.0

...for an animated movie, but just seeing him warp throughout to the point where it's like, he's this religious figure who basically looks like he's turning into the Devil himself...

HELEN

Mm.

LEX

Yes.

CATHY

...you know, halfway through the movie. It's just...yeah, get rid of him! No, not good, no, no!

(laughter)

HANNAH

None of that.

(laughter)

HELEN

That is such a good choice! Frodo is absolutely terrifying, yeah.

GABRIEL

Rusty Quill Enthusiasm – Villains Patreon Cut VC1.0

Yeah, absolutely. I just...before we move on like, to the next question, I feel like we are gonna get so many comments if we don't mention Gus from Breaking Bad in this little section here.

HELEN

Oooh, that's an interesting one!

HANNAH

Mm.

CATHY

Ahhh.

HELEN

Because I don't see Gus as a villain villain. I see him as an antagonist to Walter White, who himself is becoming a villain.

GABRIEL

Right.

LEX

I very much agree.

HELEN

But he is very good. He's so smart.

GABRIEL

And just extremely cold and calculated...

HELEN

Mm.

GABRIEL

...and, just, a very matter of fact villain.

HELEN

Yeah.

GABRIEL

I like that, you know.

LEX

Yes.

HANNAH

Mm hm.

LEX

It's such a genius character.

GABRIEL

It's very, this is what's going to happen, like yeah...

(laughter)

HANNAH

Ooh, that's made me think of another one. Oh no! We could just keep doing this.

(laughter)

HELEN

Yeah, we could, yeah!

(laughter)

HANNAH

Okay, just to quick, to quick throw it in since we're talking about genius villains, Moriarty from Sherlock Holmes...

GABRIEL

Oh!

CATHY

Oh yes, of course.

LEX

Yeah, yeah.

GABRIEL

All versions.

CATHY

All versions yes.

GABRIEL

And we are watching Elementary right now...

LEX

Oh yeah.

GABRIEL

...and that's maybe my favourite.

HANNAH

Nice.

CATHY

Oh, nice.

HELEN

I'd also like to mention, not for being scary just for being notable, Samuel L Jackson's character from the first Kingsman movie.

HANNAH

Ooh.

GABRIEL

Oh okay, yeah.

CATHY

(gasps)

Yes!

HELEN

He's evil, like he's a villain who like, is trying to get control of the world, but he hates the sight of blood?

CATHY

Yeah.

(laughs)

GABRIEL

His thing with blood throughout that movie is so funny.

HELEN

(laughs)

It's so good.

GABRIEL

He gets grossed out when like he gets cut, like...

(laughter)

HELEN

Yeah.

GABRIEL

Oh my god, it's great.

HELEN

And he shoots someone in the head and then he turns aside and throws up and he's like 'oh, that was awful!'

(group laughter)

'I hated that, urgh!'

(group laughter)

HANNAH

Yeah, yeah.

HELEN

Oh.

LEX

What about Hannibal Lecter?

HANNAH

Oh Hannibal Lecter! Oh damn.

GABRIEL

Oh Hannibal Lecter, yeah.

CATHY

Oh of course, Hannibal.

HANNAH

Urgh, there's so many good ones, you guys!

(laughter)

LEX

Yeah. There's too many good ones. This whole podcast is just us shouting characters.

(laughter)

GABRIEL

Yep.

CATHY

It's just us yelling names.

(laughter)

HANNAH

Yeah, yeah.

(laughter)

HELEN

I think we're gonna draw this episode to an end. I think this has been the most...the one I've had the most fun on!

(laughter)

CATHY

Yay, we win! Woo!

LEX

We win.

(laughs)

HELEN

But don't tell the other episodes that!

(laughter)

Thank you all so, so much for talking about this with me. I am always fascinated with antagonists, villains, monsters, scary evil things, and I am glad to be able to share that fascination with you all. And thank you, listener, for coming with us along the journey, and we'll see you next time. But for now it's goodbye from me, and it's also goodbye from them. Do you want to say goodbye everyone?

EVERYONE

Goodbye!

[Show Theme - Outro]

HELEN

Enthusiasm is a podcast distributed by Rusty Quill and licensed under a creative commons attribution, non-commercial share alike 4.0 international license. It is directed by Helen Gould, produced by Lowri Ann Davies with executive producers, Alexander J Newall and April Sumner and edited by Marisa Ewing, Tessa Vroom, Jeffrey Nils Gardner and Catherine Rinella. Thanks for listening.