



Villains Are More Fun

by James Seidler

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There's no doubt that heroes play a range of important roles in society. From blowing up the Death Star to foiling Skeletor's latest nefarious plot, heroes have always been there when people needed them. They save the day with panache, offer a bit of advice about the importance of flossing properly, and are then off to new locales to fight evil wherever it may raise its ugly head.

None of this, however, hides the fact that most of these guys are as dull as a *C-SPAN* marathon. While heroes are good to have around to thwart the odd megalomaniacal plan for world domination, usually involving lasers, it's hard to find anyone who'd want to hang out with them the rest of the time. The truth of the matter is it's just more fun to hang out with the bad guys.

A look at the private lives of the average hero proves this point. Take Superman for instance: while he has been successful at using his amazing powers to protect the planet Earth, he's done a terrible job using his powers in pursuit of hedonism. The man has X-Ray vision. X-Ray vision! He has the ability to see through locker-room walls and even the thickest layers of clothing, and what does he do with it? He foils bank robberies.

Now, nobody's saying that Superman should dedicate himself to becoming some sort of super-pervert, but the fact that he hasn't even moved in next door to an attractive lesbian couple just shows he's not the kind of guy I want to invite over when I have a twelve pack of beer and an afternoon to kill.

The superhero ranks are filled with these types of guys. Batman lives with "The Boy Wonder" and his elderly butler, which isn't exactly a party anyone's dying to crash. Hanging out with Aquaman could be cool, except for the fact that I can't breathe underwater and all of his best friends are fish. Spider-Man lives in a dump somewhere in Manhattan which, because of the cockroaches that are probably crawling through the place, makes one hope his name isn't too accurate.

Finally there's the Hulk. Anyone who has a tendency to rip out of his clothes and yell "Hulk Smash!" when he gets pissed off probably isn't the ideal guy to have over for a game of poker and a few stogies.

Even outside the comic book medium, the lameness of heroes remains constant. Trying to get plastered with Saturday-morning-cartoon heroes, like Lion-O or one of the Care Bears, would be like going to party with a group of Mormon missionaries: everything fun would have a lecture attached.

"How would you feel if someone was throwing beer cans at your car?"

"What would your mother say if she saw you stuffing singles into that G-string?"

The only reason these guys would be worth hanging out with at all is that they don't mind always being the designated driver. Still, I'd prefer picking up a cab to having to sit through a homily.

While most heroes are content with simply being boring, there's a specific subset that does their damndest to make sure their friends get killed: the war heroes. To be fair, most of these guys, like William Wallace in *Braveheart* or Maximus in *Gladiator*, do a hell of a job getting the guys fired up for stuff. If Spartacus was put in charge at spring break central, there's a good chance that even The Incredible Shrinking Man would get laid. The problem with hanging out with them, though, is that they always eventually get everyone fired up to charge a machine-gun nest, or rebel against the Roman Empire. That stuff isn't only not fun, it's dangerous.

In contrast, villains always have a good time surrounding them, for several reasons. The first is that they're usually filthy rich. It takes a lot of cash to put a satellite into orbit that will exert a gravitational force on the earth strong enough to disrupt its orbit, sending it crashing into the sun. That's eight figures, easy, and because of this, a roll call of supervillains usually corresponds pretty well with "Who's Who in America." Lex Luthor probably so busy dating supermodels and sitting front-row at Lakers games that getting kryptonite is an afterthought.

The average Bond villain has his own private island, complete with a shark tank and blonde bikini-team ninja defense force. The fees for talent scouts alone on that one have to be astronomical.

Even relatively indigent villains, like The Penguin or Mumm-ra, at least own their secret hideouts, and it's doubtful they pay any property tax. All in all, villains have loads of cash, meaning they probably don't mind picking up the kegs and big screen TV for the Super Bowl party at their place.

In addition to cash, villains have babes. And not just any babes, but babes in skin-tight cleavage gear, a la the blonde bikini-team ninja defense force mentioned earlier. It's a common known fact that girls dig bad boys, and how much worse can a guy get than trying to poison Gotham City's water supply? At Tony Montana's place, the lady bringing out drinks was probably Miss April 1999. The fact that she's hanging out with a coke lord means her judgment's probably bad enough to sleep with anybody. Not a bad place to try to pick up castoffs.

An extreme example of the babe-drawing power of villains is the fact that Jabba the Hut has beautiful women in metal bikinis dancing around his throne, despite the fact that he's an immobile slug-thing that snacks on live frogs. Can Admiral Ackbar say the same?

Even better than hanging out with supervillain groupie babes is hanging out with a villain who's a babe herself. After all, who would be more fun to take home from a bar, Wonder Woman or Catwoman? Sure, Catwoman's gentleman suitor might wake up the next morning to discover that his apartment's been cleaned out and he's covered with claw marks, but it would be worth it. Wonder Woman probably wouldn't even pull out her magic lasso.

Another factor working in villains' favor is that they're incredibly good-natured. They're always laughing, even when ordering the execution of stoolpigeons or fending off an attack from the agents of *U.N.C.L.E.* If a guy can laugh under these circumstances it's fair to assume he's not going to wig out over little stuff, like spilling a rum and Coke on the carpet or getting his sister pregnant. Batman, on the other hand, hasn't cracked a smile since 1937.

Finally, the fact that most villains' plots are clearly designed not to work is just one more reason to hang out with them. Captured heroes are always asking, "Did you really think you could get away with this?" If the villains were honest, they'd answer, "No, of course I didn't think I'd get away with it, you idiot! I'm trying to broadcast via satellite a mind control ray that will convince everyone on earth who owns a television to transfer their life savings into my checking account. That's pretty goddamn tricky to pull off."

Deep down most villains are decent guys who just have some problems with authority. The reason they develop plots that don't have a chance of working is because they don't want to hurt anybody. In fact, I would argue the main reason they come up with these things is to make heroes happy, which just shows how considerate they are.

Still, just because villains are fun guys to hang out with doesn't mean it's not worth taking some precautions. First, at all costs, it's best to avoid henchman status. Sure, it sounds glamorous to play a part in an extortion plot threatening to blow California off the rest of the continent if the U.N. doesn't cough up a billion dollars. It might even seem that becoming a henchman would only result in a deeper villain-toady relationship. The reality of being a henchman though, is that you spend all of your time being bossed around and/or hijacking things, which severely cuts into the benefits already mentioned. Even worse, henchmen have a tendency to fall into vats of acid, which on the fun scale ends up rating slightly below a weekend in Vegas with Shazam.

Another thing to be aware of when hanging out with villains is the importance of accurately gauging how evil they really are. Some villains are just too evil to hang out with, no matter how fun their

parties may be. No matter how many times Hannibal Lector says he's a changed man, he's always going to end up eating someone.

A gang of particularly despicable villains is the Nazis from the *Indiana Jones* movies. Hanging out with these guys is like hanging out with the Roofie frat on campus—it's just not right. In addition to the fact that they're Nazis, with all of the intolerance and hatred that entails, they have a disturbing tendency of ending up with their skin being melted off by supernatural forces.

It's important to look for villains with some sort of Evil Code of Conduct, as they're less likely to pressure their friends towards persecuting minorities or practicing cannibalism.

If a careful selection process is observed, hanging out with villains is bound to be a good time. After all, whose bachelor party would be more fun to go to—Superman's or the Joker's? Sure, the Joker might start shooting people when he gets hammered, but the people who end up getting shot are almost always failed henchmen anyway, which only highlights why it's important to avoid that position.

In the end, while it's important to recognize heroes for all that they do for us, it's also important not to forget that if everyone was a hero, the world would be a pretty boring place. So as we hoist a slice of pizza for the Teenage Mutant Ninja Turtles, let's also lift a snifter of brandy for Dr. No. After all, he's the one who can set you up with the blonde bikini force.