

She-Hulk:

A Meta Commentary

An episode-by-episode reflection on the TV series



by
MIN SEAH

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Foreword

She-Hulk first popped onto my radar during John Byrne's run on my favourite comic book at the time, *Fantastic Four*. Jennifer Walters temporarily stood in for Ben Grimm's Thing, who was on hiatus following the events of the first *Secret Wars* mini-series.

It was Byrne's *She-Hulk* solo series, however, that truly cemented the character for me. Here was Marvel's first genuine fourth-wall breaker — one who not only took her own writers to task for shoddy plotting but also gave artists licence to openly experiment with (and occasionally break) comic-book conventions of panel design and sequencing, all while commenting on industry norms, audience expectations, and authorial freedom itself.

I expected nothing less from the *She-Hulk: Attorney at Law* television series when it aired on Disney+ and was not in the least disappointed. The show was so unapologetically meta that I felt compelled, from the very first episode, to start taking notes — which I am now sharing with you. (*Knocks on screen.*) “Hello, reader!”

What follows is an episode-by-episode breakdown of the series. Each piece was written before the next episode aired, in real time, so some predictions may not have materialised. That, too, is part of the pleasure of engaging with serialised storytelling as it unfolds.

Unfortunately, *She-Hulk* disappointed a significant portion of the fanbase who were expecting a more conventional Marvel experience — a tightly wound plot driven by escalating stakes and over-the-top action. That is not the show they got. My hope is that this meta episode guide might encourage sceptical viewers to give the series a second chance on a rewatch or help first-time viewers approach it with clearer expectations.

I had a great deal of fun with the series. I wish more people had too.

Introduction

This mini e-book is a deep dive into *She-Hulk: Attorney at Law* — not as a superhero spectacle, but as a meta-text about power, identity, and control. Episode by episode, it examines how the series uses humour, discomfort, and narrative self-awareness to challenge what audiences expect a Marvel protagonist to be.

At the centre of it all is Jen Walters: a competent, career-driven human woman whose unasked-for transformation into She-Hulk complicates rather than empowers her ambitions. This is not a story about becoming extraordinary. It is about learning to live with disruption.

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Chapter 1

She-Hulk Strong, Meta Narrative Stronger

(Episode 1)

A few hours remaining before the 2nd episode of *She-Hulk: Attorney at Law* drops. I thought the 1st episode was highly amusing, thoughtful, nostalgic, and complemented with some low-stakes violence, setting the tone for a series that is more light-hearted than usual, and relatable more on a human scale. I'm also very interested in the meta story, and how it shapes the narrative as told by Tatiana Maslany's Jennifer Walters (or Jen) who desperately wants her series to be a "fun lawyer show" rather than a superhero flick.

Jen is probably the first character in the MCU who rejects and denies her powers. Her concerns are entirely human. It's all about job, and recognition for her competence. Friends, and work rivals. And maybe in later episodes, her insecurities dealing with relationships. Perhaps her obsession with Captain America suggests some projection on her own love life – but I'm speculating here.

As such, when she recaps her origin story to the audience, breaking the 4th wall as she does so, she is a terribly unreliable narrator. Afraid the audience will be distracted from her amazing lawyer superpower, she hastily acknowledges her Hulk-ness, reassuring us that she is coping well, and that her condition will not be a further distraction from the courtroom drama she wants to tell.

Her origin tale is perfunctory and rushed. Accusations that she is a "Mary-Sue" are entirely warranted, because that IS the tale she wants to tell. In the training montage with Cousin Bruce, she passes all her tests with flying colours because she refuses to tell us every painful detail of her learning journey – just enough to justify her return to her law firm and the case she is working on.

Her flashback also features cartoonish characters, like the overly helpful bathroom ladies and the pervy males she meets at the 'Ideal Sports Bar' (which sounds exactly like a placeholder name for a narrator who can't remember specific details). These people are told from her subjective point of view, and once again, she skims over the details that might have added more nuance to those encounters, while exercising her prerogative to be the hero of her own story. After her recap she reminds us once again that we are watching a "lawyer show".

The "lawyer show" however quickly degenerates into a pile of utter nonsense. Before Jen can even commence her closing arguments on a nondescript case, Jamila Jamil's Titania randomly bursts through a wall like the Kool-Aid Man, causing havoc. Her ridiculous outfit gives no indication of her identity, her motivation is undefined, and she attacks the biggest, greenest thing she sees, after it declares itself as "Jennifer Walters:

Attorney at Law". The whole attack ends with a single punch from Jen, and that's it. Jen reverts to lawyer form, and in her dishevelled state announces that she is ready to deliver her closing arguments... immediately cut to black. The "lawyer show" never once gives Jen a chance to shine as a lawyer.

Who is Titania? (If you didn't already know who she was, you would never have known who she was). What does she want? Who does she work for? How evil can she be? None of these questions are answered and the main antagonist in this episode is summarily dispatched with ease. It doesn't matter. In this establishing episode, whomever she was, she is not the most significant villain Jen is facing. Torn between the lawyer that she wants to be and She-Hulk who keeps getting in the way of her lawyering, Jen's true conflict is against her own narrative.

Is Jen a good lawyer? Her interactions with Bruce suggest that she has impressive skills. She keeps getting the better of him not because she is a better Hulk, but because she is a "better lawyer than she is a Hulk". Unfortunately for her, her narrative, her story, is equally determined to prove her wrong.

Chapter 2

Ability vs Agency

(Episode 2)

Just because you can, doesn't mean you, uh, can.

Jen's hubris hits her hard with the greenest of fists to the face. Everything she had chided Bruce for in the previous episode happens to her in this one. Her life as Jennifer Walters has been taken away, though she is still fortunate enough to have family.

The name, "She-Hulk", derives from a quippy newscaster's sound bite, as her new green giant persona begins to take over. Everyone wants She-Hulk at Jen's usual bar, so she must enter as She-Hulk. But her boss is too intimidated to fire She-Hulk, so he asks her to revert so he can fire Jen. Holliway, from GLK and H offers Jen a job, but while he wants Jen's lawyer skills, he wants them hidden behind the physical presence of She-Hulk. She-Hulk attempts to do her job by meeting Emil Blonsky, but the Damage Control guard insists she can proceed only as Jen in human form. Even the post-credits scene shows Jen back in She-Hulk form helping her dad with chores around the house. While Jen demonstrated to Bruce how ably she could change forms at will in Ep 1, in Ep 2 every transformation she makes is not her choice, but due to another man's whims.

Although in Ep 1 Jen gleefully departs from Bruce's multi-year Hulk training regime fully confident of her control over the Hulk in her, by this episode, her office and business cards are gone when she gets fired from the DA's office. After multiple rejections, Jen has given up hope of finding another job as a lawyer as she browses through BuzzFeed-like listicles of unusual jobs like Swiss village mascot. The only lifeline that opens for her via GLK and H is based less on Jen's merit, and more on She-Hulk being the "face" (rather than the Head) of the firm's new superhuman division. Because of the She-Hulk, Jen has lost control over her "Jennifer Walters: Attorney at Law" narrative.

Talking in the meta, Round 2 clearly goes to the superhero narrative putting the kibosh on Jen's "lawyer show". The former puts Jen through what she acknowledges Bruce had gone through as the Hulk. She has no agency over her transformations and has lost control of the normal life she was desperately holding on to. But at least she hasn't destroyed a city yet.

And the superhero narrative goes a step further by informing us the audience that Bruce has gone off-world, taking away the only person who knows what she is going through and can mentor her through it. This is knowledge that Jen is not privy to, and although she will suddenly find herself abandoned by her mentor, she may never know why.

Chapter 3

Controlling the Narrative

(Episode 3)

Episode 3's linchpin moments are when Jen no longer insists on having her "lawyer show" but instead just tries to remind us that despite several notable characters who keep reappearing, it's still Jen's show. Ever supportive, in a later scene, bestie Nikki underscores that Jen needs to "take control of her narrative".

Easier said than done. She-Hulk has become a media sensation, and everyone is running with She-Hulk, while Jen's story goes on the backburner. Despite securing Blonsky's parole release, the media cares nothing of Jen's triumph, but instead presses her on rumors about her Avengers status and her origin story (the "Mafia hit" being a callback to She-Hulk's actual origin story from the comic books). When Jen takes Nikki's advice to control her narrative on a TV news channel, all she is asked about is She-Hulk's diet and exercise regimen. At this point, is this show still about Jennifer Walters?

In her first 4th wall break of the episode, Jen is in her car but suddenly takes her hands off the wheel to talk to the audience. By now, she knows she is symbolically and literally not in control, and despite being in the driver's seat, she really is just a passenger on her own show. Jen is also somewhat resigned about her story branching off into Dennis Bukowski's lawsuit, breaking the 4th wall once again at her favourite bar to observe that both story threads are reintegrating. When Pug asks her to testify on Dennis' behalf, she gladly agrees as she has a story to tell about Dennis that she does have control over. This story will have an impact but, ironically, Jen will be telling it not as a lawyer, but as a character witness.

But many other characters in this episode too have lost control of their narratives. After all, everyone is the hero of their own story. Dennis was "delusional" enough to believe he was dating Megan Thee Stallion. He regains control by suing Runa, shapeshifting Light Elf from New Asgard for impersonating the latter, hoping to get back the money he had spent on her. Megan Thee Stallion makes an appearance in the courtroom, a victim of identity theft, hoping to see justice done. Runa, believes she has "diplomatic immunity", defends her actions as "role play", and impersonates both Dennis and the Judge in a desperate attempt to overturn an unfavourable outcome when the case clearly turns against her. And Wong's story to save Blonsky at his parole hearing inadvertently gets Wong in trouble with the law.

Which brings us to the Wrecking Crew, a gormless quartet of criminals themed as construction workers, wielding powered weapons of some kind. Believing they have a chance to rob Jen on a dark street, they meet She-Hulk instead, much to their regret, 'nuff said. We'll circle back to them in a bit.

Like Jen, none of these characters' narratives they tell themselves lead them to their desired outcome. That's because their narratives are incongruous with their realities. Jen lies to herself that she will regain her "normal, anonymous" life once "this is over". Dennis lies to himself that he is "a NY 10 and an LA 11". Megan Thee Stallion is a victim of Runa's lies, while Runa flat out lies. But the Wrecking Crew are lied to! Clearly, some mystery villain knows the power of Hulk blood and wants to get hold of some as part of perhaps a grand scheme to control the overarching narrative, but that's a story for another time.

If there is one narrative that does result in a desired outcome, it's Blonsky's. Blonsky claims to be reformed and has his Abomination self well under control. The parole board, seeing a demonstration of such control approves his release. Could it be that Blonsky told the truth, and so got the outcome he wanted? And would that mean Wong somehow lied, seeing as his story backfired?

Perhaps there is one more winner in this episode: the meta narrative. It pre-empted the IRL She-Hulk internet hate, giving the audience a laugh at the toxic comments aired and posted on the in-show interviews of, uh, persons with a beef against female versions of superheroes. Remember the rumor that She-Hulk got her powers after a botched Mafia hit which was the story in the comics? The TV show reminds us that it's a very different entity from the comics, and what the traditionalist fandom wants, they're not going to get. Reflecting negativity and hate back at itself is really an effective way to control the narrative.

Chapter 4

Dennis Bukowski Is All of Us

(Episode 4)

There's a repeating pattern in the first four episodes of *She-Hulk*. Whomever is made the butt of the joke in the odd numbered episodes, Jen becomes in the subsequent episode.

In the first cycle, Jen makes fun of Bruce, then becomes Bruce in the next episode. In the second and current cycle, Jen gleefully takes a huge dump on Dennis for believing that Megan Thee Stallion would date him, but Jen Walters can't even pull herself a mediocre date when she uses a similar dating app in episode 4. Not only that, but the date she does get is too interested in his phone to pay attention to the woman in front of him and even skips out on paying for their drinks when he cuts their date short. While Dennis rates himself a "New York 10, and an LA 11" Jen gets an impersonal, in her face (though not to her face) rating of "6, maybe".

The point episode 4 raises is that everyone is as ridiculously self-entitled and delusional as Dennis, and this fantasy disappoints us when we wake up and see reality for what it is. Let's start with Jen. Seeing as she is having no joy matching anyone at all, she tries her luck using *She-Hulk* as her profile. Instant success! So many men think they have a shot at dating this fantasy woman, and the ones who do are treated with Jen/*She-Hulk*'s subjective disdain. No one except this hunk of a doctor, who listens to her more than talks about himself piques her interest.

The rest of this episode's cast are living a fantasy too. Failing magician, Donny Blaze, aspires to create real magic. His meagre stint at Kamar-Taj has given him enough magic and a sling ring to do parlour tricks, though he is messing with powers he has no comprehension of. He unwittingly unleashes a demonic infestation, and only when confronted with the reality of how dangerous his powers are does he agree to at least abide by the terms of the injunction brought against him by Wong.

Wong's fantasy is more mundane. He wants to use American law to put an end to Donny Blaze's irresponsible use of real magic. Here we see the first indications that current laws that govern human behaviour are inadequate when governing superhuman activity. Actually, no. We already saw that in shapeshifter Runa's chaotic mockery of the legal process in the previous episode. And in any case, is Wong even entitled to bring a lawsuit against an American citizen? Because 1) is Wong an American citizen himself? and 2) isn't Wong a fugitive from the law for admitting to breaking Blonsky out of his secure facility? There's a difference between real entitlement and self-presumed entitlement.

As for *She-Hulk*'s dream date, he is unbelievably patient when she is suddenly called to an emergency just when they are about to *She-Hulk* smash! He reads feminist literature

while he waits. Such a dream. But when he wakes up and is confronted with the reality of the very human Jen Walters who has kindly made him breakfast, he's outta there. "Hot doctor" turns out to be just a fantasy for Jen, as She-Hulk is for him.

It's possible that this fantasy theme extends to She-Hulk haters as well. Everyone thinks they understand She-Hulk (and Hulk) better. Everyone knows they can write a better screenplay, keeping better faith with the bi-syllabic monstrosity we all know and love. Everyone knows that they can write more compelling, even more "rousing" courtroom drama than showrunner, Jessica Gao and her team can, and they even have their fanfics pinned to their refrigerator doors to prove it. But the reality is that it's not their scripts but Gao, et. al.'s they get to watch on Disney+, which proves to be the most galling. This idea is summed up in the closing scene of this episode in which Titania is suing She-Hulk for the use of the 'She-Hulk' moniker as Titania claimed legal copyright over the name first. It's a way for the writers to break the 4th wall from our side to say that they may not be better writers, but Marvel picked their pitch first. Sorry, everyone else!

Madisynn brings quite a contrast to the other characters in this episode. She may be stoned and drunk out of her mind, but she is tuned into reality like no one else, having no fantasies of her own. Donny Blaze unintentionally sends her on this fantastic journey via the portal he opens, not caring what's on the other side, but she just goes along for the ride accepting the reality of all the bizarreness around her, even treating the pact she made with a demon so that she can go home as matter of fact. That she Netflix and chills with Wong later is oddly sweet. She makes no judgements about the company she keeps, and though she annoys him, Wong gives us a glimpse of his human side watching TV with a date. They are the only couple in this episode who are really together, while the others, including Jen, are really only in it for themselves.

Chapter 5

Own the Name

(Episode 5)

It's taken 5 episodes and the exact halfway mark of a 9-episode series for its title to truly be *She-Hulk: Attorney at Law*. Jennifer Walters had previously insisted that her human persona would be the main interest, and it's taken up till now for that persona to finally relinquish control of the narrative and let the rightful titular character, She-Hulk, take over.

Over five episodes, we have watched Jen's human persona being systematically destroyed, at least as far as the "Attorney at Law" title goes. By episode 5, Jen Walters is a client of the law firm she works for and not even representing herself is the smart move. From prospective DA, to defence lawyer, to character witness, to client making a countersuit over her own identity, the normal human being she wants to be is visibly shrinking smaller and smaller, just as the character is disappearing into the bland, oversized, corporate suit that She-Hulk wears to work.

To win her case, Jen must prove that she had consistently used the name "She-Hulk" to identify herself before Titania trademarked it for her cosmetics line. In the previous episode, Jen had used the name She-Hulk to get dates on her dating app and suffered some very awkward encounters. But despite how badly their dates ended, the guys prove decent enough to testify on her behalf. Their testimonies make it painfully clear that the dates only happened because she presented herself as She-Hulk in name and appearance, meaning that Jen's human self would not have been as successful. The way Jen humiliated Dennis in court in episode 3, she suffers the same humiliation fourfold here, the undertext being that Jen couldn't get a date to save her life.

Sidenote: Just because we, the TV audience, see human Jen portrayed by the delightfully lovable Tatiana Maslany, the people of Earth 616 probably see a different person, perhaps somewhat more akin to a mousy corporate drone with zero charisma and no appeal. Anyway...

The 'B' story involves Nikki and Pug embarking on a hilarious and embarrassing quest to find She-Hulk a tailor who makes apparel for an exclusive superhero clientele, further underscoring that Jen Walters doesn't dress herself well, either for work, or her social life. It takes some convincing, but Luke (MCU version of Edna Mode) is intrigued by the challenge of making a suit that fits both Jen's tiny frame and She-Hulk's statuesque one. The secret isn't superhero Spandex, but stretch wool, just lots of it. When both 'A' and 'B' stories connect, it's when Jen has won her case and her name, She-Hulk, back from Titania, and is fully prepared to embrace her She-Hulk persona instead of constantly denying and rejecting it. Her new outfit will fit both personas as needed, and hopefully

make her look good, whichever persona is wearing it. Luke's genius will only be revealed in the next episode, presumably, so we can only speculate at this point.

Human Jen isn't gone. She, after all, comes up with the winning legal strategy, and is brave enough to character assassinate herself so that She-Hulk can come to life and have agency – rather than be treated like “a thing that happened” to her – and the show's title can make sense moving forward. Episode 5 is likewise brave enough to endure fan backlash by 1) having no fan-favourite cameos, and 2) no end credits sequence, suggesting that the show is now confident enough to stand on its own.

Still, we are teased with Luke hastily covering up a familiar horned helmet that's been negligently left exposed. Perhaps the highly anticipated cameo from the trailer is on his way at last!

Chapter 6

Mid-Season Review

(Episodes 1–5 reflection)

The true persistent villain in *She-Hulk: Attorney at Law* has been literally in our face for the first 5 episodes of Season 1. Her name is *Jennifer Walters*.

Until the end of Episode 5, She-Hulk is denied by Jen, repressed by Jen, and emerges only to be taken advantage of by Jen, whether it's for her new job, or for protection from thugs, or to get dates. Because Jen fears the destructive potential that She-Hulk represents, Jen adamantly controls She-Hulk, an ability she is so proud of and throws in Bruce's face right in the beginning, in Episode 1. But control over "the other guy" is not what Bruce is teaching her to do. Jen's training montage begins on Hulk's beach resort, but it continues all the way through to episode 5 once she learns Bruce's main lesson: to integrate both halves into a singular being he calls, "Smart Hulk". It's a name other people called him, and it stuck, so now he proudly owns it.

Smug Jen, however, believes control over her Hulk self is enough, and so the first half of the series focuses not on the rise of She-Hulk, but on the complete and utter destruction of Jennifer Walters as an Attorney at Law, gradually degrading her courtroom status episode by episode from confident Assistant DA to an intimidated plaintiff who can't even speak at her own countersuit against Titania for a frivolous trademark infringement. Even 'genius' Cousin Ched gets to "explain her own area of expertise", trademark law, to her, and she knows she deserves it for her rookie mistake.

Simultaneously fighting Titania to regain her She-Hulk name and accepting to wear the same clothes that 'suit' both personas in episode 5 is a huge step in reconciling Jen and She-Hulk. When a severely humbled Jen acknowledges she and She-Hulk are one and the same, she finally relinquishes the "Jennifer Walters: Attorney at Law" title – which she insists on calling her "lawyer show" – and comes to terms with the "She-Hulk: Attorney at Law" title, which is the actual title of the series.

Just as Donny Blaze in episode 4 uses "cheap human tricks" to bamboozle his unimpressed audience, this show revels in using similar tricks of misdirection, such as the Wrecking Crew, their mysterious boss and Titania, to hide the chief antagonist in plain sight. Jen Walters, a.k.a. She-Hulk is her own worst enemy.

This show has picked up a lot of largely undeserved negative comments from a section of its viewing audience. They view it as episodic, and lacking in a clear direction as each episode seems to deal with inconsequential issues with no major overarching threat that needs to be dealt with. But they are missing the woods for the trees. Perhaps this show is simply too clever for its own good, but under the hood, it's one of the most consistently and tightly-written pieces of meta-fiction I've ever watched on TV. Really

looking forward to the remaining 4 episodes in which, I expect, the real superhero-lawyer show begins.

Chapter 7

The Clothes Maketh the Woman

(Episode 6)

People watching *She Hulk: Attorney at Law* are disappointed that the show hasn't featured huge, monumental showdowns with the fate of worlds in the balance. There have been no jaw-dropping set-pieces, no inspirational moments, no stakes worth beating people up for. True. It's not that kind of show. So far, the series has dealt with internal conflict within the body and mind of Jennifer Walters as to who is in control of that very same body and mind. But now that that conflict has been largely resolved, we expect that we would be moving on to larger, more consequential conflicts within the MCU environment... but it was still not to be in this episode. Episode 6, aptly entitled "Just Jen", takes us on a much deeper dive into the person of Jennifer Walters -- who Jen is at the very core of her being.

Jen is whisked away from courtroom drama and into a wedding celebration. Jen reluctantly accepts the invitation to be a bridesmaid at her high school friend's nuptials, not because she wants to, but because she doesn't know how to say 'no'. She arrives like a superstar in her glamorous Luke Jacobson designed party outfit and takes everyone's breath away. Lulu the bride, is of course pissed and makes Jen promise to revert to just Jen for the wedding. Feeling bad, Jen doesn't say 'no'. When Lulu's wedding planning staff quit on her for being a Bridezilla, she imposes all the staff chores to Jen -- general cleaning duties and ironing the groomsmen's shirts -- while everyone else continues to enjoy the party. Jen is even assigned the humiliation of walking a canine partner down the aisle, while everyone else has a human partner. This story piles on aggravation after aggravation to make Jen Hulk out, but Jen resolutely stays Just Jen. Even when her courtroom nemesis, Titania, makes an appearance as a wedding guest, Jen simmers internally, but doesn't boil over.

Bruce is wrong about what triggers the Hulk in Jen. Rage and fear may trigger his "other guy" to come out, but Jen's trigger is different. It's not that she has more control, it's that she's a pushover. She avoids conflict and making a scene. She sucks it all up because she is submissive and compliant. We'll revisit this point later.

Having changed out of her Luke Jacobson, she wears the uniform of the other bridesmaids, which seems like she is one of them, but because the cut is She-Hulk sized, Jen once again looks puny and bully-able. It's likely that this was also the type of relationship she had with Lulu and her entourage all through high school. Jen may have been taken advantage of, but at least she had friends.

Not being able to stand up for herself is probably the reason she wants to be a lawyer. In this profession, she can stand up for others who can't stand up for themselves. Her business suits are armour that give her the confidence that Lawyer Jen has, that Just Jen

does not. This motivation is also why Jen is so reluctant to give up being a lawyer to train as a Hulk, on Hulk beach with Bruce. Jen is invested in the totality of being 'Jennifer Walters: Attorney at Law' and becoming 'She-Hulk: Attorney at Law' challenges her self-identity irrevocably. If the show hasn't been interesting for some viewers, it's probably because Jen avoids that conflict until the last straw culminating in episode 5. There is no superhero show if there is no conflict to resolve.

The 'B' story strongly parallels the 'A' story. It gives Nikki the opportunity to truly shine as a negotiator. We've already seen her negotiate with Pug, and the boba cafe barista in episode 5, but in episode 6, she negotiates a complex divorce case involving Mr Immortal, who has run out of several marriages by faking his own death, thus getting away from unpleasantness and alimony. Like Jen, Mr Immortal also pathologically avoids conflict, but by unliving himself, then resurrecting and taking on a new identity once the messy paperwork has been settled.

In reviewing a video posted online of Mr Immortal's latest attempt to self-delete, Mallory and Nikki discover Intelligencia, a website dedicated exclusively to cancelling She-Hulk. Some posts on this site even go so far as to target her with death threats. This group is likely to be her new antagonist, taking her conflict from internal to external, moving forward.

The slap fight Jen has with Titania is a bridge between these two conflicts. Titania provokes Jen to become She-Hulk at the wedding. We learn that Titania has no quarrel with Jen personally, but she views She-Hulk as competition for the attention of her 'Titaniacs'. The fight is for very low stakes, and it's quickly over when Titania accidentally faceplants and literally 'loses face' in front of an Instagramming crowd. What we learn about Just Jen is that her transformation into She-Hulk is not as seamless as confident Lawyer Jen's. Just Jen has to put in some effort to make that transformation, even "forgetting" how to do it on her first attempt. It's not that she is in that much control over her "other guy", but rather that her threshold for engaging in conflict is so high that it takes a lot of energy to work herself up that much.

Edit: Another way we could read Jen "forgetting" how to turn is strategic. She manipulates Titania into standing in front of her so that when She-Hulk does her ground-stomp, the shockwave hurls Titania onto the dance floor into full view of everyone. Since Titania wants to destroy She-Hulk in public, She-Hulk brings the fight to the public instead of keeping the battle outside where no one's watching. It's a tactical move showing how much meek Just Jen needs to wear her She-Hulk persona when she has to literally put her foot down.

The episode ends with an organisation that is active on Intelligencia, putting a plan in motion to kill She-Hulk, or at least steal her blood with a huge-bore needle... probably made of vibranium? Todd was asking some very suspicious questions before calling her

a “specimen” in episode 4. But if this needle is the next phase, what could the previous phase be? It’s heartwarming that after Jen’s Kamikaze courtroom session in episode 5, someone called ‘Josh’ would be equally interested in both just Jen and She-Hulk. But who else would have better access to Jen’s entirely penetrable human skin? But unlike Mr Immortal, Jen/She-Hulk won’t be resurrecting if this group of “hateful man babies”, as Mallory describes them, if they are really out to kill her.

And in the meta, this show, unlike Just Jen, is clearly spoiling for a confrontation with the real world’s She-Hulk hating mob. In making them an antagonistic character for She-Hulk to fight, the show not only breaks the 4th wall, but drags them in, potentially provoking a war both on-screen and off. It’s the show saying “we know you’re trolling us on social media out there. You want to cancel us? Bring it, bros!” That is some meta-sh*t!

Chapter 8

Laying It Bare

(Episode 7)

I wonder how many items of clothing Luke Jacobson made for Jen? Nikki mentioned a business suit and a supersuit in the previous episode. In this episode, Jen for the most part seems to be wearing a casual ensemble comprising a light top and capris. Jen is called on by Blonski's parole officer to check on Blonski's inhibitor which has malfunctioned. Jen goes as Blonski's lawyer and also as the parole officer's muscle, so it's the perfect opportunity to showcase an outfit that caters to both contingencies.

Jen is still exploring her duality in this episode. She may have embraced her inner Hulk, but it's still not yet a comfortable fit. Her trip to Blonski's meditation retreat plays around with this discomfort as we know from the previous episode that there are elements that wish to do her harm. On the premises there is neither phone nor WiFi connection to the outside world, suggesting that she is cut off with no backup if something untoward should happen to her. The parole officer makes no effort to hide his paranoia and flees immediately after his mission is easily completed.

Jen wants to leave too, but two superpowered brawlers wreck her car while they are working out their issues with each other. With no signal and no transport Jen is trapped under suspicious circumstances. What if the whole visit was set up by the Intelligencia as phase two of their plan? Could Jen possibly fight off a handful of low-grade powered villains led by the Abomination if that is their plan? When the Wrecker shows up unexpectedly, Jen recalls him as the leader of the Wrecking Crew which attacked her in episode 3, and as She-Hulk proceeds to do some wrecking of her own. Blonski is able to calm her down and gets her to sit in on their group therapy session before too much damage is done.

Within the circle, the men share their vulnerabilities openly. Blonski maintains an atmosphere of trust which eventually allows the only masked member of the group, Porcupine, to remove his mask to reveal... no one we know. In this safe space, Jen feels comfortable to open up about her insecurities with her She-Hulk persona, saying that it "feels like cheating" as she has the ability to whip out this huge advantage over other people to get ahead. She also opens up about Josh whom she had been dating for a week, slowly building enough trust to finally be intimate with him and immediately after he ghosts her. Saracen, the wannabe vampire blurts out that perhaps Josh was only after her blood – an innocent statement that should set off alarm bells for us.

When the tow truck finally arrives, Jen is able to leave Blonski's retreat unharmed and has made some new friends. The obvious threat has proven to be not only harmless but also enriching for her. But in a flashback to Josh and Jen's last night together, Josh carries out phase ONE and reports his success to @hulking. The person Jen was most

openly vulnerable with turns out to be her biggest betrayal. Which leaves phase two open: if not for piercing She-Hulk's impenetrable skin, then the gigantic needle from the previous episode is for whom? Since Bruce is off planet, my guess would be the Abomination.

A note about the recent lack of post-credit scenes: The post-credit scenes in the first four episodes were frivolous fun moments that had little to do with plot advancement. These final scenes have since become incorporated into the main storyline and serve as a clear transition to the next episode.

Finally, going by the pattern of Jen's Luke Jacobson wardrobe, I'd expect to see her in her business suit next. It won't be until the final episode of this season that Jen is fully incorporated enough, mind and body, to wear her supersuit, and in so doing bear the mantle of a superhero at last. Which probably means no Matt Murdoch appearance next week either. I'm fine with that. I'm here to watch She-Hulk, not Daredevil. I know whose show this is.

Chapter 9

A Deeper Dive into Episode 7

(Episode 7 extended analysis)

The show has been criticized for being ‘man-hating’, and of pushing a ‘female’ agenda, but episode 7 clarifies that it is doing neither. It’s not because of a simple inclusion of a few identifiable ‘good’ guys whom we’ll probably never see again. There’s a much stronger undercurrent, the foundations of which have become more apparent since the previous ‘wedding’ episode.

First, this show is very good at manipulating the audience through misdirection, and pushing, not an agenda, but emotional buttons. Episode 6 looks like it’s a wedding. It is, rather, a look at Jennifer Walters as a high school student, but without breaking the timeline via a clumsy flashback to over a decade ago. No offence to Tatiana Maslany, but she would not pass off as a high school student if she were surrounded by a teenage cast.

A high school reunion would have been too obvious, but a wedding is the perfect occasion to bring all her high school friends back together and treat Jen like they used to way back then. Lulu is the queen bee who doesn’t want anyone else to steal attention from her, while her ‘mean girls’ entourage continue to dump on Jen, who back then would have been happy to get any attention at all. Despite their age, Lulu and friends are written as high schoolers, with their obsession over boys (Lulu only wants to know about Jen’s dating status), and her friends still talk about Team Edward or Jacob, which is what they would have been talking about a decade or so ago. Titania shows up as the school bully, and the fight is as juvenile as the characters they are symbolically playing. At the end, the bully defeats herself, which is usually how it plays out. And worst of all, no Daredevil in sight! Audience response: the wedding episode sucks. It’s a horrible time-wasting filler because it doesn’t feel important to the MCU storyline, and why tease DD when he’s not going to show up? Rawr!

The show also occasionally brings up online sh*tposts from supposedly “hateful man babies”, which are roughly analogous to people in our real world who identify themselves as incels. The impression is that the show is making fun of its own of insecure, comic book reading, male fanbase, and that is a fantastic misdirection that draws the ire of the audience. Yes, the show is baiting the audience to hate it. In that red mist, what we overlook is that Jen, too, experiences life as a female incel, though she doesn’t necessarily identify herself as such. Jen is unpopular, nerdy, and bullied in school. In adult life, she is insecure, unable to get a date, and seemingly defines herself by the lack of men in her life. The few who do date her put her down, none interested in a second time. These traits resonate with people who identify as ‘incel’.

Jen is plausibly about to give up dating when she meets Josh who likes Jen for Jen, and not for She-Hulk. But after a few dates, Jen, um, opens herself up to him, and he ghosts her immediately after. Jen's experience at Blonsky's Summer Twilights retreat in episode 7 explains much of this show's philosophy, showing us how meta it gets. The emotional state that Jen is in when she joins the therapy group mirrors ours by this time. Like Jen who ignores the group to look for a phone signal, we've also got better things to do than watch this boring show, but since it's on we'll just leave it in the background. We've been promised an MCU fest, but we got an awful "lawyer show" which has little 'lawyering' and a lot of one whiny woman griping about how unfair life has been for her. When Jen identifies the Wrecker in the group, she feels as attacked by him as we feel attacked by whatever agenda this show's been pushing that isn't to our liking. We feel as betrayed by the 'M-she-U' for making us watch this garbage as Jen feels betrayed by Josh ghosting her.

So what do we do? Do we, like Jen, instinctively Hulk out and immediately rage on the Internet, pouring out our hate and disappointment at this poorly written TV show? Do we make personal attacks on the presumably female writers who care nothing for the source material and are themselves probably drunk, depressed, and are pushing a 'woke' agenda? Or do we sit in the "calming chair" and work through our personal issues, and the real issues that this show raises for us to think about?

Like, can we spend time to listen to what another human being has to say about their pain, instead of valuing them only for how much they entertain us, make us laugh, or enact our revenge fantasies on our behalf? Can we empathise with them, accept them for themselves, and support them, instead of wishing She-Hulk would hurry up and punch something, but ignore Jen because her life is uninteresting?

And speaking to those in the audience who are feeling as lonely as Jen, She-Hulk is to Jen what Josh is to, well, someone who identifies as not-Josh. Josh is attractive, confident, successful, able to strike up and continue a conversation with his target, even from a cheesy pick-up line. But in the closing flashback, the show asks if we really want to be that guy, to use another human being and leave them confused and emotionally devastated once we've got what we want from them? Instead, the show assures us that there are people who will accept us for who we are, even if they look weird, or smell, or may even have attacked us once before. They may be awkward in how they express themselves to us, but their support is heartwarmingly genuine, if we, in return, accept them for who they are.

The huge MacGuffin in the room is Hulk blood, which @hulking is after. This group, I believe, is hiding behind a "hateful man baby" mask. Their agenda is probably not against women, but against super-powered individuals, and it's just that She-Hulk is coincidentally a woman whom they are targeting. We don't know yet if this group wants to create more Hulks with Jen's sample, but this show has been hugely successful at

making a lot of its audience Hulk out at their keyboards. How better to create an immersive narrative that encourages mass audience participation illustrating IRL the very themes it wants to raise for discussion? It can't get more meta than this.

Chapter 10

She Who Wears the Suit

(Episode 8)

It's taken 7 painful episodes getting to know Jen Walters, slowly peeling away at her character and discovering what makes her tick. The human Jen Walters, that is, who up until now has carried her special ability like it was a terrible disability, although she occasionally found ways to use it to her advantage.

But honestly, who needs roughly three and a half hours of runtime to get to know a person? In the Spider-Man movies, how long did we need to get to know Peter Parker? Less than an hour, maybe? Then he's already off in his costume fighting the big bad guy.

Getting to know Jen in *She-Hulk: Attorney at Law* was an arduous journey. It was like watching Peter Parker using his new powers to show off, make money, and pick up girls while never having to face his Uncle Ben moment, at least not for a long while. And for Jen, it has taken a very long time, and she still has yet to learn that 'with great power, comes great responsibility', but she is just starting to.

Episode 8 features three costumed main characters, all connected by a common thread, Luke Jacobson, who has made each of their outfits.

The first is the character of Leap-frog, who is essentially a straw-man inhabiting an empty suit. He is a relatively unknown entity in the MCU so he comes with little baggage. He has no skill, generally embarrasses himself, and the only thing special about him is his suit. We see him as a nobody, no backstory, no motivation. We first see him fighting a couple of burglars. Is he a hero? He styles himself as a crime-fighter, so maybe. But because he is really just an ego in a costume, when he makes his heel turn later, we don't question the sudden twist. When it happens, we're like, whatever. We have no investment in him whatsoever.

The second is Matt Murdock, who makes his long-awaited appearance. His courtroom attire makes him a confident professional both in the courtroom, and in Legal Ease, all the lawyers' favourite bar. His transformation into Daredevil is eagerly anticipated, and it feels so rewarding when we are treated to his signature Netflix hallway fight sequence after the show has delayed our gratification for 8 weeks. Matt is clearly a hero, whether he is in a business suit, or in his "mustard and ketchup" devil suit. We also remember how much of a ladies' man Matt is when he gets out of it. This character needs no introduction. He has had a long history in the comic books, and a number of seasons on Netflix (but now on Disney+), so we know who we're getting, and despite some expected artistic licence, is still the same person we know and love. He represents the constant we measure a hero by, and Leap-frog doesn't make the grade.

But it's Jen's show. By Episode 7, Jen has finally learned to embrace She-Hulk as part of herself. She has now earned the confidence to don her super suit which she does. She-Hulk, the superhero, runs off to rescue her client, Leap-frog, from an unknown assailant. But She-Hulk's first ever attempt at being a superhero is embarrassing. She picks a fight with the wrong person, causing much collateral damage in the process. Jen underestimates her control over her She-Hulk persona. For She-Hulk in fight mode, the ends justify the means. She tears up a parking lot, hurls an expensive car and wrecks several others while fighting Daredevil. Par for the course for a Hulk, but irresponsible and wilful property damage for a lawyer. Which is why Jen chooses to talk Leap-frog out of breaking any more laws, while Daredevil fights off the goons.

Needless to say, Jen's most special ability is to invoke Murphy's Law upon herself. She attends a gala for 'Female Lawyer of the Year' hosted by... the organiser's name is never mentioned, but it is a shady operation. The host makes some backhanded compliments about the recipients, and the award is condescendingly handed out like participation trophies to a number of notable female lawyers. Jen is, of course, a recipient though as far as we've seen, she hasn't won a single case yet this entire season. Very sus. It's a trap! Intelligencia makes its move, publicly exposing the cloned contents of Jen's phone along with revenge porn of her and Josh, provoking her to Hulk out in view of her family and her legal fraternity, thus fulfilling another of Bruce's predictions that the world will see her as a monster. Compared to the Matt Murdock hero constant, She-Hulk falls off the charts at this point. But it's because we've seen Jen deconstructed and reconstructed as a person over several episodes that this new transformation into monster Hulk is devastating.

This season started with Jen on the outside of Blonsky's cell as his lawyer. It has taken Jen on a journey in which her credibility as a lawyer diminishes step by step until, inevitably, she will see life from the inside of a Hulk-proof cell. Will this be Jen's Uncle Ben moment? I don't know, but one prediction of Bruce's remains unfulfilled: being a Hulk puts a target on those she loves. Perhaps episode 9 could end in tragedy, and no one will be laughing then.

Chapter 11

They Went There

(Episode 9)

Episode 9 is the finale to *She-Hulk: Attorney at Law*. It presents an unexpected, yet perfectly on-point conclusion to a show that has consistently kept its focus on the human aspect of life in the MCU, superpowers notwithstanding. This episode centers on a key argument that Jen has with Nikki. Given what Intelligencia had done to Jen in betraying her trust, violating her privacy, making her look like a monster to everyone she loves and respects, and legally depriving her the use of her She-Hulk power, Jen has a very strong revenge motive that, regardless, she insists on seeking a legal resolution for. Nikki, however, wants to punish the group “by any and all means”, though she defers to Jen with a wry “boring”.

“Boring” sums up the entire season and is the whole point of the show. In a universe that boasts an ever-increasing menagerie of people – including the protagonist – who possess a diversity of incredible powers, this show wants us to see life from the normal, non-powered perspective. The real heroes of this show are Nikki and Pug who represent the power of friendship at all costs; and Jen’s dad who wields the formidable power of family acceptance and support. Mallory, and to some extent, Emil, help Jen with perspective and balance. These are powers that are easily taken for granted, but they are real and accessible to us since there’s no way in our universe that we can get hold of any conceit (like She-Hulk blood) that will grant us superhuman ones.

So, when the big showdown between Intelligencia and She-Hulk occurs, and the scene degenerates into unintelligible chaos, reminiscent of Titania bursting into the courtroom for no reason in episode 1, which she does again here, along with Nikki, Pug and Bruce to face off against Abomination and Todd-Hulk, Jen has had enough. Jen invokes another superpower unique to She-Hulk that she used in her John Byrne comic book run c.1985: her ability to crossover from her universe into her writers’ and artists’ workplace to complain about their crappy writing and editorial choices.

One thing Marvel is not shy about is how it parodies itself. Here, Jen confronts her writers portrayed as a bunch of noodle-heads discussing a cringey plotline for “season two”, all beholden to Kevin, or K.E.V.I.N. as they reverently refer to him. K.E.V.I.N. possesses the algorithm that churns out “near-perfect” Marvel properties, though it leaves quality ratings to the Internet. K.E.V.I.N. knows that the fans want big action, high stakes, satisfying conclusions, and spectacle. The problem, Jen points out, is that while the formula been highly profitable so far, it has become worn and transparent. For the narrative she wants to tell, the formula shoehorns in a lot of extraneous elements that distract from the key narrative: that of a normal person learning to live with and incorporate a physical disability into a normal existence. Boring.

That K.E.V.I.N. relents and renders the Hulk blood plotline into a red herring is good news. This move suggests that future Marvel projects could rely less on crowd-pleasing formula, and support more original, more creative stories, yet remain resolutely focused on the human element, which is the core of how Marvel has always Distinguished itself from its Competition.

“Whose show is this?” It’s Jen’s. Having regained control of the narrative, Jen resolves her issue with Todd and his hate group in a normal human way. “I’ll see you in court”. There is no resolution in this outcome. Given Jen’s track record in the courtroom as a lawyer, Todd and company could still win and get off scot-free. We don’t know as the season ends just before the trial begins. This ending is unsatisfactory to us, but it is non-formulaic. It is also very human in that Justice is never a foregone conclusion, but a process that we make our best effort to pursue. Justice is attained not on a battlefield, but in a boring court of law.

I’ve always held the notion that comic books aren’t just for kids. It’s interesting then, that this TV series based on a comic book has seen lots of kids leaping to their feet, flailing their hands, and screaming, “*yer tellin’ it wrong!!!*” To which I respond, ok. I’m sure y’all’ve had fun doing that too.

Epilogue

After nine episodes and quite a few words on the topic, I've come to realise that Imagination is our superpower. When we look forward in time and see opportunity and hope, that's Imagination imbuing us with the power to make it happen. The radioactive spider bite, the cosmic ray bombardment, the mutant X-gene, and even the Gamma-infused blood transfusion are all metaphors that help us envision possibility overcoming ever-present adversity in life.

Once in a while, though, we tire of the same 'good vs evil' stories told over and over. Having served their purpose, they become stories we no longer believe, like Santa Claus or the Easter Bunny. Looking for fresh inspiration, Imagination turns inward, inverting the superhero story. In *She-Hulk's* TV show, we vicariously experience the impracticalities of being super when the rest of our world – our friends, family and career ambitions – are still very human. Sometimes, we need to be reminded that even without fantastic abilities, humans are in themselves very special beings too.

Yet audiences are conditioned to expect grand spectacle, epic clashes of will and universe-shattering stakes – especially from a franchise that consistently delivers such mind-blowing content. But how can such stories be told on a greatly reduced screen and a more modest budget via a medium that is designed for use in an environment full of real-life distractions instead of an IMAXed, THXed cocoon in which the only ambient noise is the quiet crunch of popcorn... shhh!

Amazingly, for *She-Hulk*, the narrative is equally mind blowing – by upsetting the entire apple cart of audience expectations to trigger not dopamine as per usual, but rage-inducing cortisol. Promise superhero, deliver mousy, angsty pipsqueak in a tale as interesting as Tuesday. But that was the point. If the protagonist won't Hulk-out, then the audience will.

Enraging an audience is a huge risk and the show paid dearly for it. It was so widely panned that the studio might never try another narrative like that again.

Paradoxically, the show's failure to connect was its ultimate triumph. Closely paralleling John Byrne's meta storytelling technique, the showrunners consistently needled the audience and succeeded in making them participate in the greatest themed mass Hulk out TV has ever seen, through angry social media posts across all platforms. Wow!

Jennifer Walters only wants to be human in a universe of superheroes. She treats her superpower like a disability. She fumbles and stumbles the way a suddenly disabled person does as they learn to accept and adapt to their new reality. This narrative is the heart of *She-Hulk: Attorney at Law*. Becoming one with *She-Hulk* takes much patience but that is her ultimate victory – winning the fight against herself.

In daring to experiment with crazy, risky ideas like this one Marvel Studios gives me hope that it's a franchise that refuses to get stuck in formulaic hell. Enough with the "daddy issues", K.E.V.I.N., this is one moment when an ordinary woman upon whom extraordinary luck befell got a chance to shine emerald – if only so briefly – on an MCU set.

Normally, when I have fun it's all about switching off the brain and immersing myself in a euphoric moment. She-Hulk was different. It offered a weird puzzle of writing choices that kept my brain engaged for days after an episode ended. When the pieces fell together and I could finally see the bigger picture, the payoff was intensely gratifying. Sometimes, what I saw inspired the writing; other times the writing helped me see. Fun in the moments, fun in the process. With She-Hulk, I got to enjoy both.
