

## Episode #2: “Moonwalk Into Hell”

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Run time: 1 Hour and 20 minutes (sorry)

EMILY: Okay, here’s what I learned from editing our last podcast. You know, our last episode. One: we pause too much when we talk. [laughing] We’re just so damn thoughtful when we speak

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Why can’t we just plow through, like soldiers? Like the soldiers we are in our hearts

SALLY: You’re a soldier in your heart. I am not

EMILY: I’m not. I’m a construction worker in my heart

SALLY, *singing basically*: oh my fucking GOD [laughs]

EMILY: I am! I like lifting things

SALLY: You like lifting things. You probably would really appreciate a good pair of shoes.

EMILY: Yeah that’s true I do really love them, too

SALLY: You’d probably look great in the color orange

EMILY: I don’t, actually

SALLY: I disagree. There’s an orange behind your head so –

EMILY: *what?*

SALLY: It’s on the counter. It’s not actually behind your head

EMILY: It’s an actual orange, listeners. Not the color orange

SALLY: I bought them today at the Stop and Shop. They were each one dollar. It was ten for ten dollars, but I restrained. I did not buy ten, though I wanted to

EMILY: If you had rolled in here with ten oranges [both laugh]...I would have had to slay you on the spot

SALLY: Rude

EMILY, *laughing*: I would have gone and fetched my Katana that I keep in my closet

SALLY: I would not be surprised

EMILY: Number two that I learned is that I hate my voice. And I know everybody says that. Everyone who hears their recorded voice played back to them is like, “God do I really sound like that?” But *Do I really sound like that?* [laughs]

SALLY: You sound lovely

EMILY: You say that

SALLY: Well, you should not hate your voice. It’s my favorite sound in the whole world

EMILY: I was like, gosh, sure would be nice if I could listen to Sally talk all day. It’s so nice and soothing [sighs]

SALLY: I hate my voice, too.

EMILY: But then I kept talking and I was like, “mmm stop.”

SALLY: No, I have a terrible voice

EMILY: You don’t. It’s super soothing.

SALLY: I was also sick that day so it might have been a little huskier

EMILY: Don’t reveal that. I edited that all out

SALLY: [laughs] The secrets behind Everybody Hates Rand

EMILY, *laughing*: That’s behind the curtain

SALLY: Behind the green curtain

EMILY: That’s it. Those are the only two things I learned

SALLY: Okay. Well I will attempt to pause less...in my speech

EMILY: You just paused!

SALLY: I know. I’m sorry. I will attempt to pause less in my speech but no guarantees. It is a bad speech habit of mine

EMILY: [sighs] By the way this is the podcast Everybody Hates Rand. It’s about the *Wheel of Time* book series by Robert Jordan and Brandon Sanderson. I’m Emily Juchau. I hate my voice. I don’t know – what do I contribute to this?

SALLY: A lot. Most of it, really

EMILY: I read *The Wheel of Time* when I was 12, and I would like to say I haven’t regretted it, but I have. Many times. But at the moment it seems like a good thing, because I get to talk about it with my best friend

SALLY, *enthusiastically*: I’m that best friend! I’m Sally Goodger. I’m –

EMILY: Your nails look really nice today, by the way

SALLY: Oh thank you. They are painted a Tiffany blue that came in an OPI set

EMILY: What the – you just said a series of words that made no sense to me

[both laugh]

SALLY: And therein lies the difference

[both laugh again]

SALLY: They're not exactly Tiffany – actually no they're pretty much Tiffany Blue. Anyways, my nails currently are Tiffany Blue. I picked up *The Wheel of Time* series, because Emily always talked to me about how much she loved it, and would always say really interesting things about it. And it took me three months to read the first book –

EMILY: So that's a sign [laughs]

SALLY: But I did it, listeners, for you and for her. Not very much for myself. No, I really have grown to like it. I didn't actually, confession, like it until book three, but book three is a *masterwork*

EMILY: Wow, I never would have guessed

SALLY: And then I was like “*YES* this is some *good shit*.” And then I read book four and was like, “Mmm, maybe not.” But we're plowing on. I actually liked book four except for the Perrin parts...but I will not talk about that every episode

[both laugh]

EMILY: I think you have to talk about that every episode

SALLY: They were so bad. 'Kay – that's me.

EMILY: Yeah so, um...

[*Theme song plays* – It's “Tubthumping” by Chumbawamba”]

SALLY: This will change America

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Those are my goals and I will accept nothing less

EMILY: I was going to make a joke about “Make America Read Again,” but then I was like nothing is less likely to make America read than *The Wheel of Time* series.

SALLY: True

EMILY: All you have to do is look at the covers

SALLY: They're bad

EMILY: Just look at *Eye of the World*. We haven't even talked about how the book is titled *The Eye of the World*. I think we should, but the cover itself is like. Picture this: 1985. Illustrator is sent a manuscript and is like, "Gotta make a cover for this book. I gotta pull – I gotta take a scene from this book and make a tapestry of it –" [laughs]

SALLY: Tapestry. Running theme

EMILY: Tapestry is a running theme. I'm still not convinced there is a tapestry in the prologue

SALLY: 'kay well – [laughs]

EMILY, *laughing*: We'll get it – we don't actually, either one of us, have a copy of *The Eye of the World* on hand

SALLY: Which is troubling

EMILY: So I'm making this description from memory. But *The Eye of the World* cover it's like the illustrator sat down and was like, "Gotta put the most important character front and center. Obviously that's Lady Gandalf."

SALLY: Yep. Obviously

EMILY, *speaking as the illustrator*: "I'm going to portray her riding side saddle on her tiny white horse. Looming in the background will be Lan who –" unless I'm mistaken, is wearing some very weird helmet

SALLY: Yeah, it's got horns I feel like?

EMILY: Yeah, which – I don't feel like Lan is described as wearing headgear in the entire *Wheel of Time* series. He's very like...

SALLY, *in a deep voice, imitating Lan*: My head is hard enough

EMILY: Yeah. Anyway, you have the rest of the party trailing behind them. The number of people behind Moiraine and Lan doesn't actually match the number of people that leave the Two Rivers, which just goes to show you where the illustrator's interest lay: with Moiraine

SALLY: Also, I like to imagine the illustrator didn't read very far into the book

EMILY: [laughs] He got bored with Rand

SALLY: [laughs] Because while that captures the gist of the first book – on a quest – it is by no means representative of the title or really anything important about the book [laughs]

EMILY: I think he was like, "Here's a scene where all of the characters are together, and it's a considerable main cast." So, maybe he had to do that, but then again, there are other scenes where the whole cast is together. I wish he would have done one from later in the book where Loial comes along

SALLY: Yeah! My boy

EMILY: Anyway, *The Eye of the World* as a title is pretty...I don't know. It strikes me as strange. I don't ever think of Book One as *The Eye of the World*.

SALLY: I just always think of it as the first book in *The Wheel of Time*

EMILY: Frankly I just think of it as *The Lord of the Rings* [laughs]

SALLY: Yeah. *Lord of the Rings*. Or as I called it the entire time I read it: Third Eye Blind [laughs]

EMILY: Ah yeah! [laughs] I forgot. [sings] *I want something else*

SALLY: I don't know why I could not call it *The Eye of the World*. I always called it Third Eye Blind. On accident. Not on purpose as a joke

EMILY: I think at some point you must have switched to being a joke

[both laugh]

SALLY: Yeah after a month and a half of me being like "Ah yes, Third Eye Blind."

EMILY: That's somehow more accurate, because we aren't even introduced to *The Eye of the World* as a concept until very late in the game.

SALLY: Very, very late in the game. The climax of book one, and I've only read four of the fourteen *Wheel of Time* books, so take this for what you will, but the climax of that book has so far made the least sense and been the most out there. I guess to a certain extent it has to, because it's our first interact with the deep mythology of the books.

EMILY: Well, it's weird because the first three books are very quest-based. They each have very serious endgames. There's an actual, physical object that we're searching for. In book two obviously it's the horn. In book one it ends up being *The Eye of the World*. In book three it kind of ends up being Rand himself, and Rand is going for the Stone of Tear

SALLY: Going for the sword there

EMILY: It's after that it all devolves and we get such obscure titles as *The Shadow Rising*, which is, like, such a *Batman* title. Like, come on. Commit, Robert Jordan

SALLY: [laughs] He's just like "Oh, fuck it I don't know"

EMILY: He's like, "I don't give a shit what you call any of these."

SALLY: Doesn't give a shit what you call any of them [laughs]

EMILY: I've prepared a list of alternate titles for *The Eye of the World*

SALLY, laughing: OH MY GOD. Oh my god

EMILY: From each character's point of view. Considering that *The Eye of the World* I think it's implied these books are all supposed to be through Loial's like greater omniscient point of view. Since he's a writer and he's interested in recording the history of it, he spends a lot of his plotlines walking around with a book in his pocket, which is so endearing, and trying to interview people

SALLY: Loial is the best character

EMILY: Loial is a really good boy. Anyway, if you could just [laughs]

SALLY: Do I have to read these?

EMILY: You just need to read these off.

SALLY, laughing: Oh noooooo. Okay [laughs]. Okay, the first one is. Rand - *Adoption Gone Wrong: The Rand al'Thor Story* [laughs] Moiraine is - *The Babysitter's Club. I don't Get Paid Enough for This Shit*. Lan [laughs] *Eyes of Ice, Heart of Storn* - sorry

EMILY, yelling: Take this seriously, Sally!

SALLY: [laughs] I'm sorry. Okay

EMILY: It's supposed to be a tongue twister

SALLY: Lan - *Eyes of Ice, Heart of Stone: A Grimdark Novel*

[both laugh]

SALLY: Thom - *The Bard Always Dies First*. The bard always dies first. Perrin, in alternating caps: *WoLvEs ReAd MiNdS????* Egwene - *Building Campfires for Dummies* [both laugh]. Nynaeve [laughs] this one's my favorite - *I Saved the World to Prove I Could. And also for the diiiiiiiick*. [both laugh] Mat - *Dude, Where's My Badger?* [laughs] And then there's Padan Fain - *Extreme Makeover, Gollum Edition*

[both laugh]

EMILY: I almost gave that last one to Mat, but then I was like, "Does that really encompass his storyline?"

SALLY: No

EMILY: No, it doesn't

SALLY, laughing: I saved the world to prove I could. I don't know if anyone's ever described Nynaeve better

EMILY: Yeah Nynaeve does get a little dick crazy at the end there

SALLY: I know. It's a little bit troubling

EMILY: [laughs] So there's that for you

SALLY: That was amazing. Thank you

EMILY: Those were just – I feel like I would have been more willing to pick up a book that read, you know, *WoLvEs ReAd MiNdS???*

[both laugh]

SALLY: I would absolutely read that book

EMILY: Let's get back to [sings] Fantasy Christmas

SALLY, *singing to the tune of Fantasy Costco from the Adventure Zone: Balance arc*: Fantasy Christmas. That is a riff on the McElroy Brother's Fantasy Costco

EMILY: Where all your dreams come true

SALLY: Where all your dreams come true

EMILY: Copyright. Patent

SALLY: Copyright Griffin McElroy. All rights reserved. So, we're at fantasy Christmas back in –

EMILY: Still in Emond's Field

SALLY: Still in Emond's Field. And I have some things to say about Emond's Field, which is more academic trash, so apologies to those of you who don't like it, 'cause I do. Okay, so talking about Emond's Field and how it functions in the general arc of this fantasy novel, at least to my eyeballs. Is that – this is also more from the *Encyclopedia of Fantasy* written by John Clute, and there's another author, but I do not have his name here. I think it's also John, so

EMILY: good enough

SALLY: yeah that's about all you need to know. It's by a man named John Clute and another man named John so

EMILY: John the Second

SALLY: Sure

EMILY: What if his name was also John Clute?

SALLY: [laughs] It's John Clute and John Cluute with two u's

EMILY: [laughs] or like with a...

SALLY: With an umlaut [laughs] yeah with an umlaut. So in this, in their introduction to fantasy they talk about how "*A fantasy text may be described as a story of an earned passage from bondage – via a central recognition of what has been revealed and what is about to happen, and which may involve a profound metamorphosis of protagonist or world {or both} into the eucatastrophe.*" And we can talk about eucatastrophe more, because it doesn't really apply until the end of a fantasy arc, if it even applies to *Wheel of Time* at all, which I have a sneaking suspicion it might, but I have not read the end so –

EMILY: [makes some noncommittal noises]

SALLY: What the heck do I know! So, talking about the arc of fantasy moving from what they call bondage, which they mean in a “*reality-distorting constriction*” which means that there is a wrongness that is happening in the world and the “*world as a whole has gone askew and stories have been occluded*” from the general story vault. Disney’s story vault has been occluded. And what it also signifies is that when you begin a story like this you know that the world is about to undergo a dangerous thinning, the term thinning refers to either one or a multitude of the following: “*A loss of magic, or the slow death of the gods, or a transformation of the land into desert, a blockage of metamorphosis so nothing can change or grow, an amnesia {the protagonist’s or the world’s} about the true nature of the self or the history of the secondary world, or of any of the consequences of the rule of a dark lord, who’s diktats almost inevitably represent an estranging parody of just governance.*”

So we see a lot of these “thinings” happening at the beginning of *Wheel of Time* with the notion of the, what’s it called, the Myrddraal appearing in Emond’s Field

EMILY: Who they haven’t identified as a Myrddraal yet. He’s just kind of like a creepy stranger, and there’s lots of theories off the bat about what he might be. I don’t think anyone ever mentions...

SALLY: Yeah because they also – the notion here is that Myrddraal and Trollocs are part of a cannon of stories more than any sort of reality

EMILY: They’re fantasy

SALLY: Yeah, they’re fantasy to this world, and so there you have the notion of stories being omitted –

EMILY: Which is fun, just, sorry, by the way, it’s fun to then progress through *The Wheel of Time* series and then meet characters who are at this point. You know, when they’re later on in the books. When the Seanchan come in and they start hearing about Myrddraal and Trollocs and they’re like, “Well, that’s a load of bullshit.” And you get it from Mat’s point of who’s like, “I’ve literally almost died!”

SALLY, *as Mat*: “I’ve literally almost stabbed one with my own human hands.”

EMILY: Mat’s like, “How many have I killed? Wanna see my scars?”

SALLY: “Want to see my *scurs*?” Yes, I do, Mat. Get naked. [Emily laughs] That would be i-deal. So anyway [Emily continues to laugh], at the beginning of a fantasy, um, a fantasy extravaganza as you will, the world is experiencing this state of bondage or thinning, which is what makes Two Rivers, or Emond’s Field, particularly interesting because in this scenario it functions, much like the Shire does in *The Lord of the Rings*, as what is known as a polder. P-O-L-D-E-R. And a polder is a section of artificial land which is manufactured to keep the outside out and the inside in

EMILY: Ooooooh

SALLY: So in Emond’s Field, again much like the Shire, it’s very separated from the rest of society. Again it’s in the freaking backwoods of wherever, and the citizens there don’t even really recognize themselves as citizens of the larger kingdom of Andor, which comes out in a large plot later from what I understand

EMILY: Oh, it’s hilarious. Wait until you get Elayne and Perrin negotiating over the rights of the Two Rivers



SALLY: [laughs] The rights of the Two Rivers. And so they just exist really separate from the rest of society [for SOME REASON I start laughing really hard here? I couldn't tell you why]. I'm sorry. And the function of this is that the beginning of *The Wheel of Time* series we see the boundaries of the Two Rivers becoming more permeable. So you are supposed – before story proper, the boundaries are really strict and the Trollocs are supposedly a part of a fantasy and there's no shadow or darkness that comes into the Two Rivers. But once that *darkness* begins to appear, that shadow begins to rise as it were –

EMILY, *whispers*: Stop it

[both laugh]

SALLY: The shadow that's been impacting other parts of the world, like up in the Blight I think it's called? Where Lan is?

EMILY: Yeah, well it's the Blight and then there's kind of mountainous terrain and then it's the Borderlands

SALLY: Yeah. Thank you. The Borderlands

EMILY: Where are the lands that are totally used to Trollocs and Myrddraal because they're fighting them off on a daily basis. So for poor Lan, coming into these people, who are like, "Trollocs aren't real!" He's like "Motherfucker, Trollocs [voice drops] killed my people."

SALLY: Basically. Lan is very drama. So you have all that coming in and creeping in to these distant, untouchable parts of the world, which gives us this sense that the danger that is impending – impending? The danger that is *impending*, it can't be delayed any longer. So we have to be thrust into this arc of good versus evil on this massive scale. And it's a pretty typical plot structure for a lot of epic fantasy just because I think it works in that way. I think it makes the world seem really deep. First of all in the fact that there are places – there's enough land and enough things happening that there can be places where little information reaches, and in the fact that there has been enough passage of time, in this case multiple ages, there has been enough time for the shadow to rise once again. Now that we've talked about the title I'm not going to be able to stop saying that the shadow has risen

EMILY: It's also just making me think of the Susan Cooper series which has the title "The Dark is Rising," which has a lot of parallels to *The Eye of the World* because it also takes place at Christmas time, so I don't know. It's just a funny thing. I'm interested in how Christmas somehow operates as

SALLY: The Fellowship of the Ring also gets to Rivendell on December 25<sup>th</sup>. Or they leave Rivendell on December 25<sup>th</sup>

EMILY: Oh yeah! And they do start – technically the Fellowship of the Ring starts on Bilbo's birthday so there's just, like, a sort of... I don't know why celebrations are always the impetus for this sort of thing? I think it just might just be a storytelling excuse to get all your characters in one place right off the bat, but it is pretty interesting

SALLY: It is very fascinating, and I think there are a lot of – I think also another reason is that, like, as a writer, it's nice to have your characters in a place where a lot of happy things are happening before you like plunge them into the dark – the rising shadows

EMILY: Yeah this would be a bit of a different book if it started out with Rand and Tam walking into town on just normal business, as opposed to Rand sort of turning over in his mind all the things he's excited about. He's excited to dance

SALLY: And be a lad

EMILY: Hang out with his girlfriend whose only sort of his girlfriend. He's a teenager. A lot of hormones. A lot. A lot. A lot

SALLY: it's very teenager. And I also think the notion of this academic jargon nonsense that I've been walking you through, especially in *The Wheel of Time* because Rand, as it unveiled throughout the course of the series, is the subject of prophecy and is the reincarnation of someone. So we get a further underpinning of the fact that fate is controlling this story in really important and large ways. So, yeah. That's the end of my rant

EMILY: I have two thoughts that are sort of connected. One is that, you were talking about borders earlier and how the Two Rivers is such an isolated society, and I think it's really interesting to track the borders exist within the characters, and how they continue to relate to the Two Rivers. Because with some characters, like Mat and Egwene, they let go almost instantly. Egwene is out of there. She isn't interested in having it anymore, and she retains – a lot of what makes Egwene the strong character that she is with her capacity for leadership is her background. She comes from a place where she's worked hard all her life and she fully anticipated being in a leadership position she was anticipating taking over for Nynaeve. So that's really important, but she doesn't let it limit her worldview. Mat similarly basically never has second thoughts about going back to the Two Rivers, especially after book three when his mind gets wiped. He's like, "I'm out." As opposed to Nynaeve and Perrin who take way longer to let go of home as it exists for them. One of the interesting things about that, is that in this book we can see Egwene and Mat specifically as the characters who seem to have some of the old blood of Manetheren, which we'll talk about later when Moiraine talks about it, but there's this idea that they're coming from a place that has a really rich history and heritage of people who are fighters, specifically against the dark. And Mat's the one that's always screaming in the old tongue, and Egwene is the one who always sort of understands it. So it's sort of given that they're the ones that are the most deeply connected to that, but they're also the ones that are the least interested in returning home.

The other thing is that one of the functions of this book is that it's trying to cause confusion as to who the chosen one is. Immediately we're given Rand's point of view, and he sees the creepy figure on the road. So we're like, "Great. Rand's the subject of this book. He's gonna be the chosen one." Since we get to see all the fantasy hallmarks we know that there *is* going to be a chosen one, and obviously we assume it's Rand. But then we're introduced to his friends and they're like, "I also saw that." And throughout the book Moraine doesn't know, Lan doesn't know, nobody knows which of the three it is until the very end. And I'm unsure whether Robert Jordan was just trying to create confusion amongst his characters or amongst his audience as well, because personally I never questioned that it was Rand. He's the point of view character

SALLY: And I feel like Perrin is taken out of it pretty early when he has his whole wolf thing

EMILY: Yeah Perrin's taken out of commission as wolf man. And Mat is sort of like –

SALLY, *laughing*: Mat is physically taken out of commission

EMILY, *laughing*: Mat because Gollum

SALLY: Mat becomes Gollum, and Rand's like, "That's fine." [both laugh]. It's my favorite scene in the entire book

EMILY: Well, Mat is coded as being the weakest link in a really interesting way because Mat's the most hyper-competent character in the entire series

SALLY: Literally

EMILY: But in books one and two for some reason he's the weakest. He doesn't have a special weapon for those first couple of books. I don't know. He doesn't have any specific markers. He's a very fluid character.

SALLY: Fluid is a good term. A very good term for Mat

EMILY: But, Rand is always coded as the Chosen One. So you'd have to be a complete dingus about reading fantasy to think [in a mocking voice] "Maybe Perrin's the Chosen One."

SALLY, *in the same mocking voice*: "Maybe it's Perrin." It's definitely not Perrin. Yeah that's interesting – It does raise really interesting questions about what Robert Jordan was attempting, and as we know the author is dead and so intention is only mildly interesting

EMILY: Well intention – you subscribe particularly to Reader Response Theory, which is the theory that authors intentions don't matter, it's just what's canonical is what has been written

SALLY: Yeeess....

EMILY: Basically. You might have a better way of saying that

SALLY: Finish what you were going to say and I'll think about it

EMILY: Just basically what we're given is what we need to analyze

SALLY: Yeah! Absolutely

EMILY: Like the author making statements – the classic example is [laughs] Sally just mimed putting a gun in her mouth because she knows what I'm going to say. The classic example is J.K Rowling stating after the fact that Dumbledore is gay, and certainly you could argue that he's coded queer

SALLY: Yeah. For sure

EMILY: For sure, but the fact that she said it after the fact, by Reader Response Theory, doesn't make it anything you need to respond to

SALLY: Yeah, which is why it's such garbage, and like a really big part of representation is just coming out, literally, and being, like, on the page Dumbledore is gay

EMILY: Yeah it doesn't count. Basically it doesn't count unless she said it in the books

SALLY: In the books. Yeah

EMILY: I forgot where I was going with that. But Reader Response Theory – just going by Reader Response Theory it doesn't matter what Jordan intended. If he wanted us to be confused, what happened is that we're not confused. We know it's Rand

SALLY: We're not confused. We know it's Rand, Rob. And obviously I don't describe – mm?

EMILY: Subscribe?

SALLY: Subscribe, thank you! Whoop! Exclusively to Reader Response Theory because I think that Reader Response Theory does have it's failings, but –

EMILY: They all do

SALLY: Surprise, theory has failings

[Emily laughs]

SALLY: Who knew?

EMILY: Shocking

SALLY: [makes a weird grunting noise] That was an attractive noise

EMILY, *muttering*: It was beautiful

SALLY: But, yeah. I am a big believer in analyzing what we've been given, and going back to the point at hand. Robert Jordan gave us three lads and, yeah, and I really don't know if you're supposed to – and I feel like I'm at a disadvantage because we had, before I read the first book, talked about how Rand becomes the chosen [sings] the Chosen One! Because we talked about the Prophecies, which do become really interesting later on, like how he responds to that. So I'm at a huge disadvantage there because I was like, "Yeah. This tol ginger lad is my hero."

EMILY: Yeah Rand is coded different from the start, and it just gets worst when we find out in about twenty pages that surprise!

EMILY and SALLY together: He's adopted!

[both laugh]

SALLY: He's a ginger, He's adopted, his mom is dead. Like what did you want me to think, Robert? Like, of course it's him [laughs]

EMILY: God yeah.

SALLY: I wonder – when was the first one released? Like I wonder if we're also just a product of our time, and that there's just been so much epic fantasy along these lines that we're just like, "Dummy."

EMILY: Okay, apologies for the obnoxious keyboard sounds

[sounds of Emily typing on her keyboard]

SALLY: I find them very soothing

EMILY: Yeah but they come across on the recording really... *The Eye of the World* release date. It came out on January 15, 1990. Three years before I was even born [laughs]

SALLY: Daaaaang. Five years before I was born. Fun fact, lads

EMILY: Damn, bruh

SALLY: I know I'm so wee

EMILY, *in a mock Irish/Scottish accent*: a wee lad

SALLY, *in a TERRIBLE Irish accent*: a wee little babe in the world

EMILY: Ummmm oh, this is actually interesting. He really pumped them out for the first five books or so

SALLY: Oh, yeah. Wow

EMILY: He had come out with *The Dragon Reborn*, the first one [she means the third one] by October 15, 1991. That's only 18 months later, and a year later came out with the fourth one

SALLY: Dang

EMILY: But he must have hit a road block somewhere along I'm guessing book siiiiix

[both laugh]

EMILY: Because they start coming out at a much slower rate, but all of that is of lesser interest to us. Returning to the Two Rivers

SALLY: The Two Rivers!

EMILY: So we've talked about the purpose of Emond's Field kind of on a...

SALLY: On a structural level

EMILY: Yeah on a structural level. In story, we're still being introduced to our main cast of characters. We've met our three main lads. We've met the two girls, Nynaeve and Egwene, although it's not immediately apparent that Nynaeve is going to be a part of it

SALLY: Yeah because she's very interestingly like seven years older than the rest of them

EMILY: Yeah she's much older than the rest of them, and, although she's very omnipresent in Rand's mind. Much like the rest of them. She doesn't go with them when they leave. She's kind of a... I don't want to say a secondary addition, because that's how it's structured, but she is very much an important part of the story. We've met Moiraine and Lan, and the last member of our fellowship to be introduced in the Two Rivers – last two members technically if you count Padan Fain, who's sort of an antagonist throughout. He gets introduced pretty quickly as the peddler. He comes to the Two Rivers so frequently, so he doesn't actually count as an intrusion I think?

SALLY: Umm maybe not. Maybe like a repeated intrusion. Like I think it would definitely have a different aesthetic – I think it would count in this instance just because we – because Gandalf, who arrives in the Shire – I’m sorry everything I have comes from *Lord of the Rings* as a basis

EMILY: Well, this book is very similar to *Lord of the Rings* so

SALLY: Gandalf arrives at the Shire. He does it repeatedly, but when he arrives at the beginning of *Lord of the Rings* with the...uh fireworks! for Bilbo’s birthday he counts as a type of intrusion. So I would argue that Padan Fain counts as an intrusion

EMILY: And yeah, they’re used to Gandalf, too, on a certain level

SALLY: Yeah they are. Yeah and he comes so infrequently. Isn’t it like once a year or?

EMILY: Yeah, something like that. It’s kind of like...it’s still a big deal. People immediately go up to him, and want to – A, they want to make their purchases and B, they want to hear the news.

SALLY: So when you have this intrusion, it’s really interesting that he becomes the villain because I didn’t suspect that, but it also took me three months to read it so...But typically intrusions are meant to be accompanied by a sense of dread like the Black Rider. Like the Myrddraal, who’s not identified as a Myrddraal. And this guy comes in and he’s just like the jolly go lucky peddler, who people seem to like

EMILY: He is, if I recall correctly, coded a little bit slimy

SALLY: He might be

EMILY: I can’t remember

SALLY: No I think you’re right. I think we’ve learned not to trust my memory, or summary of these books in any way, shape, or form

[Emily laughs]

EMILY: I know you say – I know what you’re saying though, because he does – He’s very jovial. He’s not like a...

SALLY: He’s not like Littlefinger or

EMILY: Yeah he’s not coming in like a creep, like, “Let me hit on your daughter or whatever the hell.”

SALLY: Who am I think of from *Lord of the Rings*? The slimy guy who wants to marry Eowyn?

EMILY: Oh, Wormtongue

SALLY: Wormtongue! Thank you. It’s not like he comes in like Wormtongue

EMILY: Although he does serve a very Wormtongue function later in the series

SALLY: He do

EMILY : Isn't he...He might actually have...One of his codenames is, one of his aliases is Wormwood, I think or something like that

SALLY: Oh yeah...he's so gross

EMILY: But no from the beginning he's like oh yeah we know this guy, and if he's a little slimy that's just kind of like...it's sort of supposed to be like, "Oh that's how all the people outside are."

SALLY: Yeah that's how all the people outside are. Fuck those people. Two Rivers is life

EMILY: But he gives them news. He tells them about – Oh! He's the one who dispenses the news about there being false dragons abroad. He specifically says there's a False Dragon in Ghealdan, which is fairly geographically close to the Two Rivers, close enough that everyone is kind of like, "Oh that might be a threat later on. If it spreads." I don't know if it's Moiraine who reassures them. Someone basically says, "Oh don't worry about it, because we're so protected just geographically we are surrounded by mountains and swamps." Basically the Two Rivers is West Virginia

[both laugh]

SALLY: Ph, wow. You heard it here first West Virginia

EMILY: It's very Appalachian!

SALLY: It is very Appalachian, including the farming communities

EMILY: Including the farming communities. Including the sort of feuding villages. No one likes, what's that one village...the. Uh, I can't remember

SALLY: Where they're like, "You'll get cheated out of everything."

EMILY: oh, Taren Ferry. [laughs]

SALLY: Yeah! Taren Ferry. They're all like, "Fuck Taren Ferry."

EMILY: "Those skanks."

SALLY: Yeah, literally. A bunch of skanks and skeezes up there at Taren Ferry.

EMILY: But I think Padan Fain, he might mention the one in Saldaea at that point. That's Mazrim Taim.

SALLY: That's right, which is Logain?

EMILY: Logain is the one in Ghealdan

SALLY: Okay

EMILY: Basically all he says is it's come to war already. People are up in arms about it. Which A, introduced the theory, the concept of False Dragons to us as these men who can Channel, which is innately a threat, but they are going so far as to claim they are the one man who should be able to Channel. Which is one of the more interesting concepts in *Wheel of Time*, the idea of a false Chosen One. The idea that you can convince yourself, or use that as an out, to sort of deal with the trauma that you're

coming up against. The idea of being able to Channel is such a dreaded thing for men. We get to see how different societies deal with it. The Aiel just send their men out to go into the Waste and fight things and die basically

SALLY: It be like that sometimes

[Emily laughs]

EMILY: Sometimes it be like that. The Sea Folk just ditch their men on an island

SALLY: [laughs] iI be like that sometimes, too

EMILY, *laughing*: so we're just like, "Great. There's some island full of crazy dudes." It be like that sometimes.

SALLY: It be like that sometimes

EMILY: America

[both laugh]

EMILY: But here in sort of the main continent, I guess we're going to say, these men are just disposed of quietly by Aes Sedai or by themselves or they go this route which is to proclaim themselves and try to get power out of it. Which is interesting because clearly they gain followers. Also classically in the Bible, in Revelations, false prophets are a sign of the apocalypse. And it's noted that there's been an increase of false prophets in this continent. False Dragons excuse me, although, same thing basically

SALLY: Speaking of Biblical references. You probably know this. I didn't. But in the Wheel of Time series, the Dark One is often referred to as Shai'tan, which is the Muslim – or similar to the Muslim name for the devil

EMILY: Yeah a lot of – there's a scene later, actually we'll get to this later. Remind me to talk about this when we talk about Trollocs. Moving on here a little bit. We also get to meet...you're writing it down. You're so cute

SALLY: I aaaam.

EMILY: We also get to meet Thom here, who is yet another intrusion

SALLY: Si

EMILY: Thom is a gleeman. He's got his classic coat of many colors, which is pretty interesting

SALLY: His classic motley

EMILY: He basically just pounces out of the inn [laughs]. He's a delight right from the get go, and I think everyone turns to him and sort of ditches Padan Fain, which makes Padan Fain mad. But Thom is like, "Listen, I can do everything he's doing and also juggle."

SALLY, *as Thom*: "Aren't you seduced?"



EMILY: And everyone's like, "Wow."

SALLY: And I think that becomes a plot point later? [laughs]

EMILY: Gross. Gross. Thom is so old

SALLY: Thom Merrill, daddy af [laughs]

EMILY: EWWWWW

SALLY, *laughing*: I'm sorry. I'm sorry

EMILY, *in a rasping voice*: *Why the fuck would you say that?*

SALLY, *still laughing*: The fruit was so low, but I just had to pick it

EMILY: [groans] I hate this

SALLY: Actually Thom is not like that, because he's described as having a lot of mustache action, which is not acceptable to me

EMILY: He's also very lean. He's not exactly a bear [laughs]

SALLY: [choking noises, but then starts laughing] See? You! See, you met me at my low hanging fruit, so don't even

EMILY: [groans again] I've got, like, just the shudders. Thom is not a sexual character to me at all and it's very confusing that he's constantly sexualized. SO

SALLY: I know, and the fact that he, like – what is it in book two where's he got that young lady?

EMILY: Yeah he's got a hot young twenty something

SALLY: And I'm like, girl, no. Go have sex with Mat, wherever he is

EMILY: Honestly. He's in the same city. Actually, he's very sickly at that point

SALLY: Okay, don't have sex with him. Heal him, then have sex with him, because of that, like, Nightingale Syndrome or whatever, where the person that you heal wants to, like, bone down on you real hard.

EMILY: Which...Did Florence Nightingale ever really do that?

SALLY: I mean

EMILY: I think it's kind of cruel that we've named that after her

SALLY: Yeah...after Florence Nightingale. Yeah why don't we...I don't know other doctors throughout history, but we could just name it Bone Down Syndrome

[both laugh]

SALLY: Because if you're sick your bones, your actual skeletons, are down for the count, and then later you want to bone down. Look! I've solved all of our problems

EMILY: Rewrite the medical textbooks, everyone. Sally's solved it [laughs]

SALLY: As the child of two medical professionals I feel qualified to do so

EMILY: Bone Down Syndrome

SALLY, *laughing*: Bone Down Syndrome

EMILY: Well, Mat isn't in the best shape at the point, but Perrin is by far the most eligible bachelor in Cairhien

SALLY, *muttering*: True. Before Perrin becomes annoying. What?

EMILY: Heh true

[both laugh]

EMILY: Staying focused. While Padan Fain kind of gives everyone the present day action, which is really funny because he's like, "This is all old news" and everyone is like, "We haven't heard fuck about this."

[both laugh]

SALLY: "We haven't heard fuck all about fuck all since fuck all o'clock."

EMILY: And he's like, "That's because y'all are the backwoods West Virginia. Nothing reaches you except flies and mosquitos."

SALLY: And sheep. Nothing but sheep for two thousand years

EMILY: Literally I think he says that

[both laugh]

SALLY: I thought Mat said that

EMILY: Aw yeah. But I think also –

SALLY: Ain't had nothing to eat but maggoty bread for three stinking days

[both laugh]

EMILY, *in a much better impersonation of those orcs from The Two Towers*: We ain't had nothing but maggoty bread for three stinking days. *Yeaah*.

SALLY: *yeeeah*. 'kay. I'm really bad at staying focused

EMILY: Oh no, we're terrible. Anyway, Padan Fain gives present day news whereas Thom is sort of our figure of the past. A, because the gleeman slash bard is sort of a – I don't know. It's sort of a very anti-modern persona, as opposed to the peddler who's sort of a merchant. That's sort of classic. But a *bard* is, like, oh that's very fantasy. That's very Dungeons and Dragons, someone's playing this guy. Thom also comes in and everyone immediately says, "Oh, we want to hear your stories. Our classic stories." This is one of those interesting parts of *Wheel of Time*, to me, anyway, that of course time is a wheel. So this world could very well be our world in the distant past or the distant future. And that's in this scene. Which, I don't have the actual scene pulled up in front of me, but you can read – characters ask for stories and they ask for them by name and Thom also references a few of them by name such as: Elsbet, Queen of All. Anla the Wise Counselor. Matrese the Healer. Egwene says, "Tell us about Len, how he flew to the moon in the belly of an eagle and made a fire. Tell about his daughter Salya walking among the stars." Respectively, Elsbet, Queen of All, is a reference to Queen Elizabeth of England. Anla the Wise Counselor is a reference to Ann Landers. Matrese, which is maybe the most obvious one, is Mother Teresea, and the Len and Salya walking among the stars is about John Glen and Sally Ride. Some astronauts there. There's also a cool part where, this is my favorite, where someone says talk about Mosc the Giant – I think it's Mosc and Merc the Giant and the fight with spears of fire, and that's like Moscow and America in the fucking Cold War

SALLY: Daaaamn, Robert! You coming in real hot with those

EMILY: Like how cool is that?

SALLY: That's so cool. Fuck

EMILY: And there are some other things that are just like classic fantasy world, like we frequently throughout *The Wheel of Time* get referenced to Mara from Mara and the Three Foolish Kings and that's some story that exist in this fantasy world. Later on we'll hear about Jain Farstrider, who is sort of a mythical figure and the subject of many stories, but all of that's really cool to me

SALLY: And structurally – structurally, me coming in hot with that – we have...I've taken notes here, dear listeners so that I try to sound somewhat intelligent

EMILY: It's so cute

SALLY: Within the world of literary theory you have the concept of Reality Effect. Reality *Effect*, which was outlined by Roland Barthes I believe, which is the goal of every novel, which is to have enough details and depth and history and things going on to resemble a world unto itself. Versus the classic Chekov's Gun, which is the short story theory everyone knows. If there's a shogun over the fireplace in the first act it has to fire by the third act, because there should be no extraneous details. But in fantasy it's more interesting to think of Reality Effect versus what my professor talked to us about in the term of broken references. The Reality Effect of having all these stories makes our world feel, makes the world of *The Wheel of Time* feel really deep, and contributes to the thematic notion that time is a wheel, and that the world that they occupy is affected by the past. You have ruins and stories to represent that, but also affected by the future, and the notion of these prophecies that have played such a huge deal throughout time. And is also affected by the possibility of other worlds, which we get to in book two when they go through the, um...

EMILY: Portal stones

SALLY: Portal stones. Almost called them yhe Ways, but that is something different

EMILY: Very similar, though [laughs]

SALLY: Very similar, but different. What you were – all of those are very real possibilities in this world and the notion of a broken reference is something possibly like, what is it? The foolish queen? Alma, whatever her name is? You just said that

EMILY: Mara and the Foolish Kings

SALLY: Yes, yes. I have a great memory. Where that may not necessarily amount to anything. It probably won't – I don't know. I haven't read far enough to give this an accurate description – but it probably will not become a huge plot point later on

EMILY: It is also, as I'm thinking about it, Mara sounds like Mary. And the Three Foolish Kings sounds like the Three Wise Men. So it's just a reference, but turned upside down

SALLY: Yeah! Which is super interesting

EMILY: Yeah, and *Wheel of Time* does lots of this. You referenced ruins, and it's really fun whenever we come up against ruins sometimes our characters provide stories surrounding the ruins. That's what makes traveling with characters like Thom and Moiraine, who are the most knowledgeable, fun. Later Mat who has a bunch of memories of dead generals

SALLY: And Loial, who's really well read.

EMILY: Yeah. They're incredible for that, but often we'll come across some ruins that we have no idea what it's supposed to be. And that's really nice, because you get that suspended moment of "Huh, I wonder what that could be." He must have put it in there for a reason. There's lots of little throwaway items that reference our world. There's a really great moment in book four where Egwene goes dream walking at the museum in where is it? Is it Tarabon? The Panarch's Palace in Tarabon, which will be kind of the climactic scenery for Nynaeve and Elayne later in the book, but for the moment Egwene is just wandering around in her dreams sort of picking up items in this museum, and she sees the skeleton of what's implied to be a giraffe, but that's an animal that doesn't exist in this world. Kind of like dinosaurs are viewed for us. And she has a great moment where she picks up, and it's described as this metal circle that has three lines in it. She picks it up and she associates it with wealth and power and when you really think about it it's [drawing noises as Emily sketches this for Sally] the symbol of a Mercedes Benz [laughs]

SALLY: WHAT?

EMILY: It's like the hood ornament. How fucking cool is that?

SALLY: That's amazing

EMILY: I know. Damn Robert

SALLY: It's so refreshing to just have a fantasy novel that addresses that. The whole entire notion of a secondary world is that it doesn't take place in our world, but, and a lot of people take that to be like, "That means there's no connection to this world at all." But inherently readers are going to make connections like that, so to have an author that A, it deals with a lot of really interesting non-Western ideologies and with science. The notion of alternate realities and with string theory, which is just absolute insanity. But to just know that readers are going to – like I didn't pick up on that but if a reader can pick

up and put together, “Oh, that’s a Mercedes Benz.” Like that’s so fun for a reader. Just at the base level, it is super fun. Like when Egwene was describing a giraffe I was like [in a weird voice], “Ah! It’s a giraffe!” [Emily laughs] “AHHHH!” It’s just so fun, and just the fact that Robert Jordan had – I bet he had a great time doing that. I would.

EMILY: He’s like, “Honey, what’s some weird ass animal I could put the bones of in this scene?” And she was like “Giraffe.”

SALLY: “A giraffe, those things are fucking weird.”

EMILY: And he’s like, “Brilliant, Harriet.”

[both laugh]

SALLY, *in an sort of English accent*: “Harriet, my darling. Light of my life.”

[Emily laughs]

SALLY, *whispers*: What were we talking about?

EMILY: We were talking about Thom, who’s a great character. I think Thom is one of our – Thom functions also as a voice of suspicion. Rand and Mat and Perrin sort of inherently trust Moiraine because they don’t know better. Thom has experience with Aes Sedai. He specifically, as we come to find out, has experience with Aes Sedai and their relationship with young men. Which is usually because these are young men who can channel. So Thom, with very little context, sort of guesses what is going on. He’s like, “Well this is weird. I’m going to keep my eye on this.” And you don’t really get that in your first read. I think just in read-throughs you start picking up on Thom’s little reactions to what’s going on. And he – I can’t remember at all. God, we should [laughs] actually get a copy of the book. So, that introduces us to every member of our fellowship. And that being completed, Rand gets to go home. So it’s kind of like he and Dad are going to go back to the farm, take care of their farm chores, then come back in the morning to join in the village –

SALLY, *whispers*: fantasy Christmas

EMILY: Yeah celebrating fantasy Christmas.

SALLY: What is it actually called?

EMILY: Bel Tine. At some point Rand has a conversation with his dad about the whole stranger thing, and Tam is like, “Oh, yeah. I told and it turns out that other people are seeing the same thing. It’s weird. Just keep your eye out.” So there’s still a lingering sense of something weird is going on as we return to the farm and Rand goes about his chores. And they kind of settle in for the night in the al’Thor Bachelor Pad. When, uh, this is such classic fantasy. They’re hanging out at home, chores complete, basically about to eat dinner, and Rand this entire time has basically been like psycho-analyzing himself like, “Maybe I’m overreacting to this whole black rider thing. Maybe I shouldn’t be freaked out.” But he’s also feeling very validated because Tam is also being cautious, which, great parenting Tam. And there’s a moment here where Tam says [laughs], “Hey, kiddo. Run upstairs and get the fucking huge sword that’s under my bed.” [laughs] And Rand’s like, “What now, dad?”

SALLY: Beg Pardon? Bacon Powder?

EMILY, *laughing*: And Tam's like, "Yeah go get it." And Rand goes upstairs and opens a box and is like, "Well, my dad has a giant ass sword." And it turns out to be a very special sword. It's a heron-marked blade

SALLY: Which is another reason like why do you expect me to not believe Rand is the Chosen One? He has a special sword

EMILY, *laughing*: Yeah he finds a special sword

SALLY: And everyone's like, "Look at your fucking sword!"

EMILY: God, Robert. Ugh. Yeah, sure it's gonna be brown-haired, brown eyed Mat who has his fucking bow and arrow

SALLY: Yeah who probably has, I don't know, a slingshot [both laugh] It's gonna be Mat. For sure

EMILY, *laughing*: I think probably literally does

SALLY: I think he literally does have a sling shot

[Emily laughs]

SALLY: So yeah it's really gonna be him who's gonna fight the Dark One. That would be amazing, first of all. If at the end of the book –

EMILY: Mat would fight the Dark One. Walk into Hell. Backwards. With his sling shot

SALLY, *laughing*: Being like "Whoo!" Finger guns. Sling shot in his teeth. Mat is ready for that encounter

[Emily laughs]

EMILY: Moonwalk into Hell. Face the Devil

[Sally laughs]

SALLY: Moonwalk into Hell. Face the Devil

EMILY, *laughing*: Honestly the person who, in read-throughs, I'm most confused isn't the Chosen One is Egwene, because she's the only competent one among them

SALLY: Egwene would also – no. Egwene would walk face first into Hell and pull the Dark One out to fight him

EMILY: By his ear

SALLY: Yeah, by his ear. Being like, "You wool-headed ninny."

EMILY: She'd be like, "Fucking fist fight me, and I'll fucking win."

SALLY: "I'll win. Because I'm Egwene."

EMILY: "I'll wreck your ass."

SALLY: "I'll wreck *you*. I've done so much worse than this."

EMILY: Ugh, God. She has. Aes Sedai are terrible. Anyway, so Rand gets the sword and conveniently that's the moment when the door enters and a bunch of Trollocs enter the house

SALLY: DUN DUN DUN DUN

EMILY: Dun dun dun dun! And Trollocs are the classic fantasy monster animal-human hybrid. Be real, Robert, I know they're orcs. You can't fool me

SALLY: You can't fool me. They are ug-ly, although classical notions of ugliness and monstrosity being connected is troubling, but

EMILY: Yeah, go on, Sally

[Sally laughs]

EMILY: This is one of Sally's pet projects [laughs]

SALLY: No, we do not have to go on [laughs]

EMILY: There is a lot, though, to talk about regarding monstrosity in *The Wheel of Time* and regarding the monsters. Because here in book one we get the two least interesting monsters: the Trollocs, who are basically just cannon fodder, somewhat literally when Mat invents cannons [laughs] later in the series. They're kind of our least threatening monster. Next up on the ladder are the Myddraal, who are our Ring Wraiths, but later in book two we get introduced to the, what are they, the Draghkar, the like kind of flying animals. I think one of them attacks Moiraine and it can paralyze you and suck your soul out or some shit

SALLY: Yeah, so it's a Dementor

EMILY: Yeah, it's a Dementor. We also get introduced, in book two or three, to the concept of Grey Men, who are these assassins who are so average that they just blend in to their surroundings

SALLY: Which is hilarious to me

EMILY: They're great. Especially when you realize, come to find out, that a lot of these were scientifically manufactured by one of the Forsaken. I think it's Aginor, who, spoiler alert, dies in this book one and will be later regenerated as a different dude.

SALLY: Whaaat?

EMILY: Let your baddies die, Robert [laughs]

SALLY: Yeah. Kill your darlings?

[both laugh]

EMILY: kill your devil darlings

SALLY: Kill your devil...arlings. Devilarlings.

EMILY: Anyway, so Trollocs are literally the products of a mad scientist, and though later in the series they're going to be the least threatening right now it's like [in a frightened voice] "There's a wolf man in my doorway."

SALLY: Yeah, let me use this huge sword

EMILY: Yeah, conveniently I've got this huge sword in my hand

SALLY: And a dad who is conveniently a sword master

EMILY: Yeah I don't actually remember if Rand is holding the sword of it – there's a bit of a melee. Can't remember what happens

SALLY: They fight!

EMILY: I feel like it's literally like he comes downstairs and there's a fucking Trolloc standing there. And he's like, "Shit."

SALLY: And he's like "Well, fuck." Exit, pursued by a Trolloc

EMILY: I think they kill one or two Trollocs, and then Tam might be still fighting one and he's like, "Get the fuck out. Go through the back door." And Rand is like, "Ohhh-kay."

SALLY: Doesn't he have a conversation with one of them?

EMILY: Ah! Yeah, and it's like the one and only time a Trolloc speaks. There's like a creepy convo where one of the Trollocs is like [laughs] basically like, "Are you the Chosen One?!" And Rand's like, "That's a no from me, dog."

SALLY: "That's gonna be a no from me, dog." But all of us are like, "That's gonna be yes. Correct."

EMILY: That's gonna be a yes, dog

SALLY: Raise the –

EMILY: Red flag

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: Red flag: has a mythical monster asked you recently if you are the Chosen One? That's a red flag!

SALLY: That's a red flag!

EMILY: Is your hair a different color from everyone else's?

SALLY: That's another red flag!



EMILY, *laughing*: Are you very tall?

SALLY: Another one!

EMILY, *laughing*: Are you adopted?

SALLY: Another one! [laughs] Terrific!

EMILY: Terr-iffic! [laughs] So, there's sort of this very scary scene, as I remember it.

SALLY: It's pretty frightening

EMILY: Yeah it's pretty intense for Rand

SALLY: The idea of being on a sheep farm and being attacked by monsters is fucking terrifying

EMILY: Yeah, they're super isolated. It's dark. There's no electricity. Like, Rand goes out there and is in pitch black. He doesn't know how many fucking things are out there. I think he goes to the barn, and – yeah he runs to the barn and I think there's a moment where he puts his hand on a sheep that's been killed

SALLY: Yeah and it's bloody – ugh

EMILY: And it's freaky because it's bloody and wooly and he doesn't know if it's a Trolloc or a poor little sheepy

SALLY: Yeaah [crying noises] RIP to the sheep

EMILY: It's really freaky. Anyway, he runs off, goes to the woods, and is gathering his courage to go back and see if his dad's okay, when I think Tam comes and finds him. Only Tam, of course, is wounded, because that's my dad. Dads always get wounded

SALLY: Dads always get wounded. Moms always die. Dads always get wounded

EMILY: Yeah, dads always suffer debilitating injuries, moms just die brutally in front of you. Classic

SALLY: Classic! That didn't happen to your parents?

[Emily laughs]

EMILY: Yet another red flag.

SALLY: Yet another red flag. [laughs] Has your dad been mortally wounded by a monster these days?

EMILY: Anyway, so Rand's dad wounded. Luckily has the sword, but it's cold outside and Rand is not aware that he has to get his wounded dad to the village

SALLY: To heal him

EMILY: Yeah to get him some help. He's actually really focused on getting him to Nynaeve, I think. Which is a really interesting thing. He's not – oh, he does say this. "I have to get him to a Wisdom." Which is so cute. I love Rand and Nynaeve's relationship

SALLY: I do too

EMILY: It's really good

SALLY: It's really – of all the boys and Nynaeve, like, I don't really care about any of them except Rand and Nynaeve

EMILY: I cared very deeply about Rand and Nynaeve and Mat and Egwene

SALLY: Mat and Egwene is the most relationship important relationship written in fiction, possibly

EMILY: Perrin and Egwene also have a very good relationship, too. But yeah, agree

SALLY: It's so good

EMILY: So Rand has another scary sequence where he has to go back to the house to get supplies. He thinks his dad managed to kill them all, or run them all off, but he's not sure. And I think this is actually when the Trolloc talks to him, because he runs in and one isn't dead yet

SALLY: Doesn't he run in and it grabs his ankle? Maybe I just imagined that because that would be my nightmare scenario

EMILY: No it fucking grabs him. I don't know if it's his ankle or if it just gets up behind him and Rand turns around and it's there. Like that's the horror scenario. But Rand took Tam's sword and this is his, the class loss of innocence. Whoop! I accidentally stabbed something

SALLY: Yep. Accidentally did a murder

[both laugh]

EMILY: For the record, accidental stabbings aren't that common, because it's pretty dang hard to stab someone

SALLY: A lot of intent...also just a lot of meat to just like go through?

EMILY: Yeah and the Trollocs are usually armored, so?

SALLY: Would you like to know a fun fact about the way I picture a *Wheel of Time* Trolloc?

EMILY: Yeah, tell me.

SALLY: Are you familiar with the Pokémon Lucario? [laughs] Because I don't know, but for whatever reason whenever I hear the word Trolloc or read it I image a bunch of bipedal –

EMILY: Spell that out for me

[Sally laughs]

SALLY: It's L-u-c-a-r-i-o

[sounds of Emily typing]

[a pause while Emily looks at Google Images]

EMILY: Oh my god

[Sally laughs very loudly]

SALLY: I don't know, but I imagine bipedal, blue, wolf-like creatures, which I don't think is at all how they are described

EMILY: Does it have a bone as a weapon? What the hell?

SALLY: Yeah I think, like, spikes come out of its arms

EMILY: Jesus. Um, I mean, not blue, but yeah they are definitely animal hybrids so some are wolfish. Some are bearish. Some are, I don't know, feline-ish. Actually, I don't know if we get a lot of feline ones

SALLY: I understand that on a cerebral level, but you said "The Trolloc grabbed him" and I imagined that giant blue Pokémon grabbing Rand al'Thor from behind

EMILY: Alright, going back

[Sally laughs]

EMILY: Get that in our minds.

SALLY: Don't forget, kiddos. There's also something I'm supposed to remind you of when we talk about the Trollocs

EMILY: Yeah, we'll get to it. Anyway, Rand kills a Trolloc. Rand: One. Trolloc: Zero [laughs]

SALLY: Heck yeah

EMILY: Gets some supplies. Enough to make a makeshift, um...

SALLY: Sled, basically

EMILY: Sled, basically. Yeah. To get Tam to the village. This is also classic loss of innocence. He has to get – he has to care for the parent figure. And it's very freaky. This was really well-written. Like it made me think what I would do if I was in a disaster and I had to tote my dad.

SALLY: You're very tol dad

EMILY: Yeah my tall – although Chris is very thin. I could probably pick Chris up and throw him over my shoulder. God bless him

SALLY: And be fine, yeah [laughs] just got a lot of bone mostly.

EMILY: But like in the middle of winter, exhausted, adrenaline now –

SALLY: Frightened

EMILY: Yeah. Not knowing what is on the road. Which I think happens several times. Like Rand is like, “Is it safe enough to go on the road?” And he keeps deciding against it. And it’s just this harrowing night journey back to Emond’s Field, with his dad, who of course starts mumbling incoherently about how Rand is adopted.

SALLY: Yeah, so, naturally.

EMILY: Tam’s whole story is it’s although he’s talking to his wife, Kari, who’s dead. He’s like, “Yeah, honey, I just was fighting in the middle of, you know, that war over on Dragonmount. The classical death mountain, and I found this pregnant Aiel lady. Only she’d just given birth and there was this baby and miraculously it was still alive. And I just picked it up and I thought, “You know who wants a baby? My wife.” Didn’t report it to anyone. Didn’t sign any papers.” [laughs]

SALLY: We just picked up this baby

EMILY: This is how adoption works in fantasy land

SALLY: In fantasy, you pick up babies on mountains

EMILY: You find a baby it’s yours

SALLY: Not a bad model, really. Considering adoption these days costs like a billion dollars

EMILY: Fair. At least Tam can provide for the baby. So he, so Rand, while going through the physical and mental torture of toting his dad’s wounded body through the woods he’s like, “Fuck, I’m adopted?”

SALLY, *as Rand*: “Dad! Dad!”

EMILY: This is not one of Rand’s finer moments. Like, you’re the only tall redheaded dude for miles

SALLY: Like what did you think, dummy?

EMILY: Did it never occur to you that you might not be biologically related to you dad?

SALLY: Who, from what I gather is a short, generally brown colored man of hair and eyes

EMILY: Does Kari have red hair, maybe?

SALLY: I don’t remember

EMILY: I don’t remember, either

SALLY: But it’s like Tam, who is basically just like a barrel. Thick chested, brown hair, brown eyes, nondescript. And then Rand who is like a willowing match. A lit match

EMILY: Yep, so Rand gets Tam to Emond's Field, where he is immediately hit with the realization that Emond's Field isn't safe. Or wasn't – like, they got attacked the same as his farm did. And this is very cute, I think the first person he asks about is Mat. He's like, "Where's my boy?"

SALLY: Same. Relatable content from Rand al'Thor

EMILY: Where's Mat? And someone says, "Oh the Cauthon house or farm or whatever it is got burned down." Along with, conveniently, he learns early on the only either place that got burned down were the Aybara farm, Perrin's family, and the blacksmith's shop, which is where Perrin lives

SALLY, *at the same time*: Lives and works right now, yeah

EMILY: So that's supposed to be another element of confusion. We're supposed to think, "Oh, Mat and Perrin just had other similar traumatizing nights." But hey, Mat and Perrin aren't adopted

SALLY: Mat and Perrin aren't adopted so they're excluded from this narrative. Mat might as well be adopted

EMILY: Yeah, you meet his siblings later on, his sisters, and they're like, "We barely know him."

SALLY: [laughs] Who is she?

EMILY: [laughs] Rand does get Tam to Nynaeve looks at Tam and says, "That's a no from me. Nothing I can do." It's that bad, which is pretty freaky for Rand, obviously. His parent's dying

SALLY: Yeah, and the notion that the power that he's always looked up to in his life has limits?

EMILY: Yeah, Nynaeve is like this emblem of safety and security for him, which ties her to Emond's Field in a really interesting way. It makes it even more interesting when she comes after them, and sort of, just really sweet that he looks up to her in that way, but ultimately she can't do anything. And so sort of as a last resort, I don't know if someone suggests it or if he thinks of it on his own, but he goes to find Moiraine, who I think is out in a field with Lan, basically collecting dead bodies

SALLY: It be like that sometimes

EMILY: [laughs] It be like that sometimes. I think she's collecting Trolloc bodies, and this is what I was going to talk about. Lan lists off some of the Trolloc clans and they're all very, uh, basically Satanic names. Like there's one that's D-h-a-apostrophe-v-o-l. Dha'vol. There's a bunch. Not a very interesting thing to talk about

SALLY: No that is very interesting. Talking about *Satan*.

EMILY: Are the Trollocs are given these classically –

SALLY: Satanic names

EMILY: Yeah, across cultures. Or they're connected to other monsters

SALLY: What is... the one you just mentioned?

EMILY: Dha'vol?

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: As in devil

SALLY: Oh wow. Point for my idiocy. Let's chalk it up on the board

[sound of keystrokes as Emily types]

EMILY: Like let's look up some other ones. Trolloc clan names. We've got the Dha'vols. We've got the Dhai'mons. We've got the uh, Dhji... [stumbles over the pronunciation]

SALLY: The Dhjin'nen

EMILY: Dhjin'nen, yeah. Ghar'gheal. Gargoyle.

SALLY: Ghob – this one is literally Ghob'hlin

EMILY: Gho'hlem. Ghraem'lan. Ko'bal. Like, Bhan'sheen. It's all just very, like, "Hey look!" freaky monsters

SALLY, *singing sort of*: freaky monnnsterrrs

EMILY: So anyway, this is a classic moment where Rand walks up to Moiraine and she's basically just sitting on a pile of corpses exhausted because she's been healing and using the Power all night. And he's like, "We'll you please fix my dad?"

SALLY: "Please sir."

EMILY: And she, uh, Lan is like, "How dare you, you woolly sheepherder, ask her, human perfection, to even look at your father."

[both laugh]

EMILY: Lan, drama queen

SALLY: Lan is a drama queen

EMILY: And Moiraine is like, "Step off, Lan. I'm gonna go look at this Chosen One's father."

SALLY: "Gotta go make sure I don't kill the Chosen One's dad." Plus Tam is the best dad.

EMILY: "Gotta get on his good side somehow." So Moiraine goes to look at Tam. And around that time is when Rand begins getting the info that the only other places attacked were Mat and Perrin's locales. These were the origins of the attacks. It's possible that if Moiraine and Lan hadn't been there all three places would have been attacked without anyone really noticing. Because this was kind of like a stealth operation. But Moiraine and Lan, because they're Aes Sedai and Warder can sense shadowspawn is the overarching name for monsters in this universe. They can sense shadowspawn so, you know, one o' clock in the morning last night they came out running like, "Hey yo. Troll in the dungeon!"

[both laugh ]

EMILY: And sort of like started this fight. And it's actually lovely because we get to see the villagers walking around with their makeshift weapons. The blacksmith's wife, what's her name? She's an icon

SALLY: OH Mistress Luhhan or whatever.

EMILY: Mistress Luhhan is like, "I killed three Trollocs with a frying pan."

SALLY: Because she's literally the most iconic woman of all time

EMILY: She's the baddest bitch that ever walked the planet

SALLY, *with enthusiasm*: It's – honestly? Yeah

EMILY: And Perrin's like, "That's my mom figure. Love heeer!"

SALLY: "Yeah, since my other mom later dies for no reason but that she's extraneous."

EMILY, *laughing*: Yep. Perrin is given a huge family that is then immediately killed off

SALLY: That is immediately *slaughtered* [laughs] for basically no reason. I read that and I was like "What?"

EMILY: [is clapping while she laughs]

EMILY: Presumably Mat's family survives only because we find out early on that there's very few of them

SALLY: Yeah, and Tam survives because literally only one.

EMILY: Yeah, and because he plays a vital role later on

SALLY: And he's a good dad. The best dad

EMILY: Anyway, Moiraine heals, well, she kind of works on Tam and is like, "Okay, he's gonna survive" which I think, oh! This is also our introduction to *angreal*. She takes out her little statue and Rand is like, "What's that a magic figure?" [laughs] and she's like, "No, you idiot. It's just a way for me to embrace more of the Power." It's literally just a...

SALLY: A battery. Of sorts [laughs]

EMILY: Yeah sort of a battery. It's just

[Sally laughs a lot]

SALLY: Some extra juice. D Battery

[Emily laughs]

EMILY: She's like, "It's like drinking a 5-Hour Energy"

[Both laugh]

SALLY, *laughing*: That's a much better way to put it. It's like a 5-Hour Energy. Red Bull you wings!

[Both laugh; Emily's clapping]

EMILY: I can't. Umm

SALLY: So she downs her 5-Hour Energy

EMILY: She downs her 5-Hour Energy. Heals Tam, and I swear to god, I'm swiftly losing what the structure of this, these chapters are, but at some point she says to Rand, "I'm worried that you and your two friends are the reason this happened, and I think you should leave and come with me. I'm a – I've been tracking these Trollocs basically across the world. I know that they've been looking for someone special. I don't really know what you guys are, but it's clear that you're a threat in some way." And Rand's like, "Me, a threat?"

SALLY: Me no less

EMILY, *laughing*: Me no less. Not to mention Mat Cauthon, Badger King of the Two Rivers

SALLY, *laughing*: Badger King of the Two Rivers, and more importantly, Perrin Aybara, who is a puppy on two legs

EMILY: Perrin at least has muscles. Rand at least is tall

SALLY: Mat I imagine is just like gangly

EMILY: Mat's a human noodle, I imagine

SALLY: Probably like very pointy features

EMILY: God I love him

SALLY: I do, too. I would die for him

EMILY, *laughing*: I would take a bullet for Mat Cauthon

SALLY: I would take a bullet for Mat Cauthon

EMILY: He'd hate me for it.

SALLY: He'd be like, "How dare you? I love getting shot."

EMILY: "How dare you? I wanted to die!"

SALLY, *laughing*: "I wanted to die! It's all I've wanted for years!"

EMILY, *laughing*: Mat truly has the most millennial sense of humor. He's like, "Just take me. I'm ready. Run me over."



SALLY: Yeah, again, as we were referencing earlier: Moonwalk into Hell. Mat Cauthon is the first millennial

EMILY: Moonwalk Into Hell is gonna be the title of this episode

[both laugh]

EMILY: Anyway, this introduces to Rand the notion of leaving home, and he makes his decision really quickly, I think. He's pretty much like, "Cool. I'm in." Especially after he talks to Tam. Tam regains consciousness kind of around the time that Rand is planning on leaving. Moiraine is like [drops her voice, Batman style] "Meet me in the stable at the darkest part of the night."

SALLY: On the second day look to the East

EMILY: [laughs] actually I don't know if Rand knows Mat and Perrin are going at first. I think they're a surprise.

SALLY: I think that might be true, and then he's like, "My boys!"

EMILY: "Yay! Company!"

SALLY: "Company!"

EMILY: Anyway, he talks to Tam and he's like, "I think I'm gonna do this," which turns out to be a mistake. Moiraine's like, "You told him?"

SALLY, *in a deep, affected voice*: "You told your father."

[both laugh]

EMILY: What's this Moiraine voice we've got going on?"

SALLY: It's...distinguished [laughs]

EMILY: She is French nobility

SALLY, *in the Moiraine voice*: "You told your father."

EMILY: "You told your father you were [in a very high pitch] *LEAVING?*"

SALLY: "You were leaving. The audacity."

[both laugh]

EMILY: It went from distinguished nobility to gay man

SALLY: Is there a difference?

EMILY: Honestly, now. Queer history. Gay and aristocratic. Coded the same. But that's another story

SALLY: That's a thing for another time. When we get to some nobility

EMILY: Ah, God! I should have researched this better. Note to self. Rand I think talks to Tam and is like, “Am I adopted?” And Tam is like, “You’re still my son.” Basically

SALLY: Which is a good moment

EMILY: Yeah, classic adopted parent moment. And Rand’s like – actually I don’t know if he does ask him ?

SALLY: I don’t think he does. I think he’s afraid of it

EMILY: Yeah, I really think – this is classic Rand. Rand is in denial for most of book one

SALLY, *muttering*: Rand is in denial for a long time

EMILY: Yeah he is. It’s not really until book three that he accepts things, and acceptance for Rand is akin to going to war. That’s why after he accepts he starts developing symptoms of posttraumatic stress disorder. But throughout this book Rand displays classic signs of Channeling, that we recognize throughout the series with other characters that can Channel. Rand has stressor moments, and there are lots of moments where supernatural things happen and Rand writes them off as freak accidents. And then at the end of the book he’s like, “Me? A Channeler?”

SALLY: Me? Me no less?

EMILY: Me no less?

SALLY: Again. The story of Rand al’Thor

EMILY: And Moiraine is like, “How much of a dipshit could you possibly be?” And this is how much of a dipshit he could possibly be. He doesn’t want to ask his dad if he’s adopted, which is a scary conversation, of course, but also really important if you’re about to leave home

SALLY: Yeah, I feel like leaving home would be an impetus. As a person who is, like, chronically afraid of speaking to her parents about anything difficult. Like I have avoided it at all costs even when given the opportunity [Emily laughs] so I admire Robert Jordan’s commitment to that type of fear, but also...yeah – there I go with the pauses – there is a total impetus for Rand to be like, “I’m leaving home, possibly forever I –” Because it bothers him so much for the rest of this book and the second book

EMILY: Basically the entire series. Well, until he gets confirmation. Anyway, yeah, Rand has some major communication issues, especially regarding his identity, which is – duh, identity is so much a component of the Hero’s Journey. I just read a Joseph Campbell book, that you leant me, basically Joseph Campbell’s inspirational speeches, where he’s like, “The Hero’s Journey, everyone has one. It’s basically the journey of self-discovery. If you distill it to its most basic parts.” And you can track Rand’s Hero’s Journey by his self-discovery. So he decides to leave and he decides to go with Moiraine, mysterious witch lady

SALLY: I would

EMILY: I would, but also, like, it’s so fascinating that he does. Given what we know about the general male attitude toward Aes Sedai. I keep trying to think of an equivalent for me. You know, me being in Highland, Utah. Something freaky happens, and suddenly, I don’t know, a wandering priest is like –

SALLY: [laughs] A wandering Catholic priest

EMILY: “I can take you to safety.” [laughing] I’d be like, “Fuck no.”

SALLY: I’d be like, “Nah, dog. I’m gonna risk it on my own.”

EMILY: I’d be like, “I’m gonna take this bitch to safety on my own.”

SALLY: I’m in charge of this bitch and I’ll take her to safety

EMILY: Good luck. You can follow if you please. I can’t stop you

SALLY: You can follow I guess. I can’t stop you, but I’d prefer if you just disappeared

EMILY: Yeah, so I don’t know if that stretches plausibility or if I’m just applying hindsight to something that makes total sense in the moment

SALLY: Yeah, I didn’t question it because it’s like –

EMILY: You don’t question it because it’s such a part of the Hero’s Journey

SALLY: It’s such a part of the Hero’s Journey where you just leave

EMILY: But the mentor is usually a trusted figure, and Moiraine is very much not

SALLY: Which is really interesting. Rand’s relationship to Moiraine as mentor is very interesting because

EMILY: She basically has to fight him to be his mentor

SALLY: Yeah. It’s so antagonistic, and usually it’s the mentor – it’s the mentee pushing, being like, “Will you please teach me the way of the sword.”

EMILY: Exactly

SALLY: And Moiraine is like, “You fucking – ”

EMILY: Obi-Wan will you come out of retirement to teach me what a lightsaber is

SALLY, laughing: Yeah let me drive to your cave and be like, “Obi-wan plz.” [both laugh] But Moiraine is like, “Listen up here, you fucking ginger dip. I need to teach you how to not go crazy or die.” And Rand’s like, “Mmmmmmm, no.”

EMILY: Which, to give credit to Robert Jordan, is most likely how it would go for a female mentor. No teenage boy is gonna be like, “Hey, lady. Will you teach me what you know?” There is some indication, given by how Rand reacts to Lan that if Moiraine were male, he’d be much more willing to trust her

SALLY: Which is so frustrating

EMILY: Yeah, which is so sad and so irritating

SALLY: Yeah because when Lan is like [in a mocking masculine voice], “I’ll teach you the way of the sword,” Rand’s like, “Yes, my dick just got hard.”

[both laugh]

EMILY: Anyway, next time we can get to the race out of the Two Rivers. The classic pursuit chase scene.

SALLY: Flee!

EMILY: Flee! Flee for your lives. Do you have anything else to – ?

SALLY: Umm, I don’t. I’ve basically run out of interesting things to say in general, but especially academic wise, so hopefully next episode I don’t bore you all with structural tidbits that I think are interesting

EMILY: I think I just slaughtered – I have my mouth full of candy – classic

SALLY: Emily is eating Hershey’s Hugs

EMILY: Which is my classic snack

SALLY: Her favorite candy. So, if you’re going to send packages include the following: Hershey’s Hugs, Nestle Buncha Cruch, two Diet Cokes or more. No, two for Emily – three for Emily and one for me [both laugh] A blanket, love blankets, and just whatever miscellaneous items you can find at your local Target

EMILY: I’m gonna sent a package to us, claiming to be a listener just to delight you

[Sally laughs]

SALLY: and I will cry hysterically, but now that she’s told me this, I’ll never believe it. No matter who sends us packages in the future I’ll never believe it, and for that I’m sorry

EMILY: “It’s Emily pulling a trick on me!” [laughs]

SALLY: As a child of divorce, I have deep entrenched trust issues

[both laugh]

EMILY: I hate when you pull that on me

SALLY: It’s the only trump card I’ve got

EMILY, *laughing*: Every time. [In a mocking voice] “I’m a child of divorce.”

[Sally laughs]

EMILY: So anyway, trailing off

SALLY: So anyway, trailing off with some general shenanigans. I think we’ve covered a lot today. We’ve had a journey before the journey, which isn’t that the most important journey of all?

EMILY: What the fuck?

[Sally laughs]

EMILY: This was just – this sequence in the book is just pre-game for all the shenanigans and tomfoolery that will follow. Thom-foolery. Thom is about to join the party. Spoiler alert

SALLY: Thom Merrill Foolery. Yeah that's all folks. It's pretty boring. I remember reading this section in the book and being like, "If I tugged my eyeballs out of my head it might be a more enjoyable experience. [Emily laughs] Although admittedly, I think that I liked Rand a lot in this sequence because he just seems like a pretty – a scared but fairly competent farmer boy and then he starts acting like a total fucking idiot

EMILY: Yeah he's a solid, relatable character up until this – I can't say up until this point because we haven't reached that point. It will be interesting to try and track the moment where stops being interesting [laughs]

SALLY: Yeah because he's totally fine. He's a little bit annoying, but, true tea, I will – there are very few teenage boy protagonists that can hold my interest. It's just not a generally interesting demographic to me. Apologies to all teenage boys out there [laughs]

EMILY: No just generally it's just not pretty interesting demographic. Get off twitter, boys. No one wants you.

SALLY: It's just like teenagers, but especially of the male variety. So, but up until then he's just like a boy who wants to protect his dad and loves his friends and is an idiot

EMILY: It might be – I think I can track it based on his entire relationship to Egwene.

SALLY: Yeah! That's a good

EMILY: When he starts getting...

SALLY: Weird about it?

EMILY: Yeah. I don't even know if he gets weird about it. It's a pretty natural relationship of two teens who basically get told their entire lives that they're gonna get married

SALLY: And they're like, "I actually don't want to dick that down." No Bone Down Syndrome over here."

EMILY: Actually, not interested.

SALLY: No Bone Down Syndrome over here.

EMILY, *laughing*: fuck you

SALLY: Not interested in that at all, which is, like, good for you Egwene. He is lame, though your other love interest is more lame?

EMILY: Somehow lamer

SALLY: So unfortunately, Egwene, you fucked up, girl

EMILY: Aw it's not her fault. Constrained by hetero-normativity

SALLY: If only you and Aviendha could fall in love as you deserve

[Emily makes some indistinct shouting noises]

EMILY: The book we could have had

SALLY: The book we could have had

EMILY: If Robert Jordan only lived twenty years in the future. Imagine if he were publishing this in 2010. [In an announcer voice] EVERYONE'S GAAAAAAY

SALLY, *in the same voice*: Everyone is GAAAAAAY. And it's amaaazing. So, uh, Rand is just – we don't like him. In case you couldn't tell from the title

EMILY: Everybody hates him

SALLY: Goodbye

[Emily laughs]