

Episode #3: “Don’t Do It In the Murky Pond Water”

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Run Time: 1 Hour and 10 minutes

EMILY: I was super cute, anyway *Wheel of Time* is connected to my childhood soooo [laughs]

SALLY: It is connected to her childhood and it explains a lot about her as a person

EMILY: [sighs] Troubling

SALLY: It’s not troubling

EMILY: It is a little bit, who wants their childhood to be shaped by the fourteen book *Wheel of Time* series

SALLY: I mean most people’s childhoods are shaped by *Harry Potter* or whatever so you’re not

EMILY: Yeah, but, like, weirdly my sexuality was shaped by *Wheel of Time*, in that I remember distinctly – you know how PG-13 the sex scenes in here are. Actually, they’re almost PG because they’re so innocuous. But when I was reading this at, like, 13, which a very conservatives upbringing I was like, “Oh my god. The word ‘breasts’ has been used on this page *twice*. I can’t let anyone in my family see this or they’ll think I’m Satan.”

[both laugh]

SALLY: *Scandalous*

EMILY: Like, I stopped reading after book four because A, that’s when Rand starts having sex dreams [gagging noises]

SALLY: And book four just as a whole

[both laugh]

EMILY: I stopped reading after book four because I was like, “This is too grown up for me.”

SALLY, *laughing*: Oh my god, Emily

EMILY, *laughing*: And like two years later I went back to it and was like, “This is not too grown up for me.”

SALLY: “This is not too grown up for anybody.”

EMILY, *laughing*: “This is fine!”

SALLY: This is totally fine. Rand’s sex dreams are *awful*, though.

EMILY: That’s more to do with Rand and the fact that he’s having sex dreams than Robert Jordan’s writing of sex dreams

SALLY: No, Robert Jordan's writing of sex dreams is very – honestly you could read them and not even know they were sex dreams if you weren't thinking about it, because they're just like, "Oh and then I had a dream about Aviendha and teaching her to swim." And I'm like, "Okay," but then you're like no she def – they naked and then fucked in that pond and probably giardia or something. I don't know.

EMILY: Eww what

SALLY: I don't know. I think you have to drink the water in order to get giardia, but I don't –

EMILY, *laughing*: We don't know what they did in the water

SALLY: We don't know what they did in the water. Do not have sex in murky ponds, kids

EMILY: God, I'm gonna have so much fun editing this later

[Sally laughs]

A RARE APPEARANCE OF OUR ROOMMATE LEE: You haven't fucking summarized shit

SALLY: I'm just saying. There are places to have sex and murky ponds are not one of them

EMILY: That'll be the title of this episode

[both laugh]

EMILY: We haven't even introduced ourselves

SALLY: wW haven't even introduced– oh no

[Emily mutters something]

EMILY, *laughing*: Hi, this is Everybody Hates Rand

[Sally laughs]

SALLY: Welcome

EMILY: Our podcast about *The Wheel of Time* series by Robert Jordan and Brandon Sanderson. I'm Emily Juchau, not to be confused with my cousin-in-law whose name is also Emily Juchau and lives a very respectable adult life

SALLY: Um, I'm Sally Goodger, not to be confused with my actual mother [Emily laughs] whose name is also Sally Goodger and who also lives a very respectable adult life

EMILY, *laughing*: And here's where we put the theme song

[both laugh]

[THEM SONG PLAYS. It's "Tubthumping" by Chumbawamba]

SALLY: Exciting news, kids. I've started the fifth *Wheel of Time* book and I am 416 pages in

EMILY: Which means, she's one-fifth the way through it

SALLY: I am not even half the way finished with it. Emily would know if I was half finished with it because whenever I get to the half point in a *Wheel of Time* book I send her a screenshot of my Goodreads along with Bon Jovi quote, "Oh oh we're halfway there."

EMILY: Yeah that's a really fun time in my life. Whenever that happens

SALLY, *laughing*: And she's – every time she's like, "I don't care."

EMILY: I do care

SALLY: "I wish Sally would stop speaking to me"

EMILY: I am more – it more confuses my every time that your Goodreads app knows when you're halfway there

SALLY: You update your page count

EMILY: What the fuck?

SALLY: Have you never used Goodreads?

EMILY: First of all, no I have not. I just read [laughs]

SALLY: Ooh. 'Kay. I just came out here to have a good time –

EMILY, *laughing*: are we fighting?

SALLY: – and I feel personally attacked. I'm sorry that I like knowing how many pages I read in a year and that I'm inherently built to set goals and achieve them and Goodreads lets me do that

EMILY: Okay, I'm very glad for you. I'm glad Goodreads –

SALLY: Yeah, okay. I'm being fucking destroyed right now [laughs]

EMILY, *laughing*: – does that for you. And I do neurotically check page counts, it just hadn't occurred to me, ever, to go electronic with that

SALLY: I'm being demolished right now about my life choices. This is very tense. We've never had this type of fight [laughs]

EMILY, *laughing*: We're having a fight right now. Our first marital spat

[both laugh]

EMILY: I apologize for how I made you feel about the Goodreads app

SALLY: Thank you

EMILY, *muttering*: You're welcome

SALLY: Apology accepted

[both laugh]

SALLY: In other exciting news, we have finally acquired –

EMILY: YOOOOOOOOOO

SALLY, *laughing*: – a physical copy of *The Eye of the World* by Robert Jordan, which we have been talking about for many hours of our lives and your lives now.

EMILY: Please explain where you found it

SALLY: I found it – yesterday I attended the NYC Women's March, which was lovely

EMILY: Hell yeah

SALLY: And then afterwards I went to –

EMILY: I took a sleeping pill so I was ASLEEP through it

SALLY: Yeah Emily was unconscious

EMILY: Feminism

SALLY: I found it at local Housing Works bookstore for one dollar. In fact one dollar and nine cents with tax. Which I did not have, so my roommate Elise bought that for me – [Emily laughs] I mean I could have used my card, but who uses a card to buy a one dollar book? That would be so savage. And I didn't have any cash because I'd just given my change as a tip at the restaurant where we'd just eaten, because tipping is very important. So anyways, I found it on the dollar book rack between what appeared to be a barbarian romance novel –

EMILY: It wasn't *Conan the Barbarian*?

SALLY: It wasn't *Conan the Barbarian*

EMILY: Okay, because you know he wrote those

SALLY: Yeah, Robert Jordan did write some of those, but now –

EMILY: I know. Troubling [laughs]

SALLY: – I will not believe that it wasn't *Conan*, and even if someone corrects me I will not believe that *Conan the Barbarian* is not a barbarian romance novel

EMILY: I know nothing about *Conan*

SALLY: I don't either. What I know about *Conan* I learned from *Sense8*

EMILY: Really?

SALLY: Yeah, because Wolfgang and what's his fuck?

EMILY: Oh yeah!

SALLY: Felix. Are obsessed with it

EMILY: Yeah Felix

SALLY: So it was sandwiched between some sort of barbarian novel and *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen

[both laugh]

EMILY: I have a distinct memory – sorry to trail of *Wheel of Time* here – but I have a memory of Adam reading – Adam's my little brother – reading *Hatchet* when he was, I don't know, twelve, and I age eighteen picked it up and thought to myself, "I know this is a book that most people read when they're eleven or whatever, and I'm sure that in some of my classes there have been kids that have read it. But I've never read it, and I wanna find out what all the hype is about." I read it all in one sitting and I was like [laughing], "What the hell just happened? That was a book about a twelve-year-old surviving the woods?"

SALLY: I read it when I was twelve, and interestingly in that book he gets some sort of disease from the water akin to giardia –

EMILY: Yooooo [snaps]

SALLY: – and has violent diarrhea on the beach. So again, kids, don't drink the water

EMILY: That's your take away memory from *Hatchet*?

SALLY: That's my take away, because I was horrified as a child reading these violent descriptions of projectile vomiting and diarrhea. I was like, "I'm reading this in a school book." Also, okay, *Hatchet* is aggressively masculine, which I feel like all –

EMILY: Oh, it so is

SALLY: – books you have to read in elementary school are. And there's also a weird obsession with teaching eleven year olds how to survive, like that Jack London story.

EMILY: Which one?

SALLY: The one where the guy dies of frostbite

EMILY: "To Build a Fire?"

SALLY: Yeah "To Build a Fire."

EMILY: YO that's –

SALLY: That story is whack-a-doodle

EMILY: That story scarred me for life and I still think about every time I'm out in the cold

SALLY: We're gonna read it. I'm gonna read it to you. Romantically

EMILY: Don't. No. [both laugh] It's not romantic

SALLY: And then *Hatchet* and then you read like *Where the Red Fern Grows*, which isn't exactly in the wilderness but don't the dogs, like don't they live in the woods?

EMILY: Yeah I think they live in like the Appalachian Mountains or something like that. So it's all a little bit frontier-y

SALLY: Nonsense. Nonsense.

EMILY: Here's what I remember from *Hatchet*, and this is pretty much it, I just remember the scene – didn't the plane crash land in the same lake that he's at? So at one point he swims to the plane for supplies and the dead pilot is still in there. I remember that. It was very creepy

SALLY: Horrifying

EMILY, *laughing*: and I was like, "This a children's book? I'm sorry what?"

SALLY: Interesting about children's literature and the notion of what type of violence is acceptable in children's literature

EMILY: That is true

SALLY: Yeah. Thought about that a lot when I was writing my thesis. There's this weird notion of innocence lost, obviously, it's a huge part of children's literature. And what type of violence we'll allow children to interact with. Apparently a dead pilot and crash landing in the woods is totally fine

EMILY: Well, going back to me reading *The Wheel of Time* when I was twelve. Book one is pretty fine, but in book two there are some pretty graphic descriptions of some violent acts. Like when they're on the trail of the guys who took the Horn of Valere there's a – I know...isn't there like a guy or two whose left and they've been flayed alive basically? And as a twelve year old that was deeply disturbing to me. And it was another reason that I –

SALLY: It was deeply disturbing to me as a twenty two year old

EMILY: Yeah not just as – so, but I also think I would have been disturbed if I'd read *Hatchet*.

SALLY: I was. I think about it so much

EMILY: Sorry

SALLY: I'm like, "Damn that fucking diarrhea on the beach. [both laugh] I'm serious it was so traumatizing. I cannot. It was so weird. It was so much.

EMILY: Okay, well

SALLY: Okay, but the point of this story is that we now have a physical copy of *The Eye of the World*. I did not buy it. Our roommate did. I have to pay her back [laughs] One dollar and nine cents, but, um, so she's the real MVP of this week.

EMILY: We can now verify, looking at the cover, and I realize we could have looked on Google Images, but that's how lazy we are [laughs]. We can now verify on the cover that Lan is wearing a very weird helmet. He also for some reason has two swords? Moiraine is literally two feet tall.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah Moiraine is small, but she's like a doll on the front of this cover. Yep. On the front of this cover.

EMILY: Yeah, we can also verify that the number of people is incorrect. Thom is missing, but also there's some – like you've got Lan and Moiraine on the cover, then there's another dude who's [laughs] it's like he's looking at the camera like this

SALLY: Yeah, and I'm like, "Is that Rand? Is it Mat? Is it Perrin?" It's not Perrin, I don't think

EMILY: Then behind them is a guy in a Robin Hood hat, with a little feather

SALLY: Actually Robin Hood

EMILY: Actually Robin Hood. It could be Mat. Mat is coded very Robin Hood. Then there's a girl, who I assume is Egwene, then there's another dude, then in the very distance there's two more dudes. Neither of whom look like Thom in his coat of many colors

SALLY: So, again, more evidence that the illustrator did not actually read this book. Just read a couple of pages and was just like –

EMILY: Look how big the moon is

SALLY: The moon is...supermoon. That's what it is. That's Perrin. Perrin is the moon. Wolf stuff. There you go. Figured it out.

[Emily laughs]

EMILY: Umm, oh. On Hannah's suggestion we should say... We should give you a disclaimer about spoilers in this podcast. Whoops. We're going to be talking about pretty much everything that takes place in the books, except for, because Sally hasn't read them all, I'm not ever going to talk about anything that happens in the last book. *A Memory of Light*. That said we will bounce around quite a bit in talking about characters in general. Like if they get married who they get married to. Whether or not characters die in the last book, totally not going to talk about until we get there

SALLY: Yes, which I appreciate. I hope you do too, dear listeners. Otherwise, we do play pretty fast and loose with the events of these books. Because A, we just do that but B, it's also really interesting, because it is such a sprawling epic, to see how the books are in conversation with one another.

EMILY: And because it's hard to take a character, any of the characters really, and look at how the first book presents them without looking at the greater – their greater character arc. It's hard to talk about, I don't know, Egwene, without realizing that her ambition as a young woman will lead to her becoming the Amyrlin Seat in later books. That's such a big deal and so important to her narrative

SALLY: Exactly, and everyone's super weird in the first book. Now that we have a physical copy, I flipped through it a little bit. A little bit of it, and all the characters are so –

[Emily laughs]

SALLY: I mean I've read it. Don't judge me

EMILY: No I'm laughing because we should go through some points of order. First of all, there is in fact a mention of tapestries in the prologue

SALLY: YEEEEEEAAAAAH. Suck it.

EMILY: Here's what the mentions of tapestries is: "In odd counterpoint" – this is after describing all the bodies that are strewn about the floor. "In odd counterpoint colorful tapestries and paintings, masterworks all, hung undisturbed, except for bulging walls had pushed them awry." So there's your tapestry, I have no idea why you hung up – got hung up on that

SALLY: Um, it's an important detail. And it's thematic

EMILY: It's a very beautiful detail

SALLY: The notion of insanity versus what is still functioning in the world is a very important part of *Wheel of Time*. So I think I picked up on a very key detail in the prologue

EMILY: Sally picked up on the theme of the story on page one

SALLY: Yeah, and I don't need to read the rest of it. I've figured – I've got it. Nailed it

EMILY: You're done. Just stop midway through book five

SALLY: I can't, though because there's some –

EMILY: Because what about the Goodreads app [laughs]

SALLY: Yeah what about the Goodreads app!? How will it record that I've finished the book? [Emily laughs] I can't lie!

EMILY: Some other things we got totally wrong

[both laugh]

SALLY: Surprise, kiddos

EMILY: Shocking. First of all, the Myrddraal we see at the very beginning is, in fact, on a horse [Sally snaps]. I don't know why I thought he wasn't on a horse. But he has a horse. He's referred to as a rider. Blah blah blah

SALLY: So what really Emily's saying is that I have a mind like a steel trap

EMILY: Yep, she does

[Sally laughs]

SALLY: We got some other things wrong that I was thinking about earlier

EMILY: Yeah, we didn't talk about how they initially don't know Moiraine is an Aes Sedai. Rand doesn't find that out until he's – until after the whole events of Christmas Eve. Winter's Night. When their farm's been attacked and Tam's been injured. Until he gets back to the village and they're like, "Oh, well, she's an Aes Sedai."

SALLY: and he's like, "Schwat?"

EMILY: There is the hilarious moment where [laughs] Mat and Rand are carrying stuff into the kitchen, but they kind of have to convince Mat to do that because he hates work, which is very relatable. And Mat's basically selling point is "Maybe Egwene is around, because it's hilarious to watch you around her because you act so damn stupid." Which, relatable Mat's the greatest best friend of all time

SALLY: Yeah, Mat likes to watch his friend be really bad at flirting. Which, admittedly, Rand is terrible, and continues to be bad at flirting, through all of time and existence

EMILY: Rand is terrible at flirting. We also get introduced to the concept, that will be kind of more explored later on, of carrion birds, like ravens, being the beast of the Dark One

SALLY: Yeah it's like the eyes and ears of the Dark One.

EMILY: Basically they're spies, and Moiraine talks about like, "Oh I should have known the Trollocs might have come because there was a few creepy Ravens hanging about."

SALLY: Gosh, Moiraine. Why didn't you see that?

EMILY: Which has pervaded the local superstition. They first see the raven and Mat immediately throws a rock at it

[Sally laughs]

SALLY: Mat continues to be the most relatable character

EMILY, *laughing*: First of all because he's Mat. Second of all because it's symbolic. Mat will later be deeply entrenched with the Seanchan and one of their symbols is ravens

SALLY: Mat also has a lot of Odin parallels

EMILY: Odin parallels. And trickster parallels, and crows and ravens are also tricksters.

SALLY: And Odin has two ravens. Thought and Memory

EMILY: Huginn and Munnin

SALLY: Whoa

EMILY: Bruh

SALLY: Emily speaks...that language

EMILY, *laughing*: I have read *Magnus Chase* as much as the next kid

SALLY, *laughing*: *Magnus Chase* admittedly has the best interpretation of Odin. He's a motivational speaker obsessed with PowerPoints and it was life changing. Continues to chance my life on a daily basis

EMILY: I love Rick Riordan

SALLY: I know. Bless him. Okay! So let's actually start talking about the book

EMILY: Yeah, sure

SALLY: So we left, last episode, we left off with them leaving the Two Rivers and they're being chased

EMILY: We do have, sorry, a couple things before that. I know you've got notes there

SALLY: No no no. We, whatever you need to say go ahead, we also, I don't think, talked about Moiraine talked about Manetheren, which is maybe worth discussing? Or maybe we can save that until later

EMILY: It is interesting. There's – when Rand and the others are getting ready to leave the Inn, which is where they've been staying while Tam's wounded, kind of an angry crowd with torches and pitchforks has gathered and they're upset about Moiraine being there. Kind of like, period. Because they're all really suspicious because they think Aes Sedai are all connected to the Dark One. In fact, explicitly, the first few mentions of Aes Sedai, in the book before we know Moiraine is one, is all the boys being like, "Well Aes Sedai broke the world." Which is technically true. Aes Sedai did break the world. The male Aes Sedai broke the world. But that's been conflated and now the woman are blamed for it, even though they're very different. They're very different organizations than they were in the Age of Legends when the breaking happened. Anyway, so Moiraine kind of holds off these villagers, although the innkeeper has it pretty well-handled. Egwene's dad. He's a good one. Moiraine kind of shames them by talking about their ancestry. I only skimmed this part. It's basically like where the Two Rivers is used to be a kingdom, which is called Manetheren. First of all, that's an interesting concept: that this is a world that has changed so much since the events of the prologue that nations have risen and fallen. And we get reference to a lot of wars and a lot of different...basically different landscapes that this world has taken. Manetheren was, I can't remember what the time frame actually is, but basically it was a kingdom of people who, in the Trolloc Wars – didn't Trollocs attack and basically – basically they held them off. But all died in the process. And there's a romantic element to it with the queen staying in the city and the king went off to fight. He died and she was like, "Oh he's dead" and Channeled or something.

SALLY: Yeah, the events of the war are maybe important, but I think more interesting is the fact, like you already said, that there used to be this proud nation there before. And it's a hallmark of immersive fantasy that there are things long past, things long dead, and the world has changed so much that they exist only in memory or ruin or in story. It's just interesting to talk about Manetheren because it comes out – like the blood of Manetheren is particularly important for Mat and Egwene, which we talked about last episode so

EMILY: Yeah, and it's particularly important for Perrin's storyline, not because he seems to have the blood of Manetheren particularly the way Mat and Egwene do with their tendencies toward the Old Tongue. Whatever that means. But Perrin is most involved with going back to the Two Rivers – your least favorite storyline in book four – but he's going to be the one who shapes the Two Rivers, well really his wife does most of it, but into a forward thinking society that we kind of get the sense might be headed

towards becoming a major city at some point in the future. The distant future. Like, this could be a crossroads for society and civilization once the world, presumably, gets over what happens at the end of the series. And that's all supposed to be built on Manetheren. There's a really hilarious thing where they raise the flag of Manetheren. That happens at the end of book four right? And Perrin is really not into it, because he is like, "This is basically an act of rebellion. We are technically a part of a kingdom. Andor. I know the queen. She's crazy. She wants to bone Rand. That's how crazy she is." So he's like, "This isn't a good idea." And the people are like, "We love you, but fuck you. We're gonna do this."

SALLY: Which is iconic

EMILY: Eventually it will be construed, not necessarily as an act of rebellion it never gets violent, but Elayne will be like, "So we need to talk about how you started a nation within my nation." [laughs]

SALLY: And Perrin's like, "Yeah. Whoops."

EMILY: "Whoops"

SALLY: "Whoopsies!"

EMILY: "So I did that. Didn't mean to"

SALLY: "Oops." We can talk about this in book five, but something interesting with the Two Rivers rebellion happens with Morgase, which was fascinating to me

EMILY: What happens? We can talk about it now

SALLY: Just that – hard spoiler – just saying. Morgase is being held captive, her mind is being held captive by one of the Forsaken. Rahvin, I think? I don't remember their names and I don't really care to

EMILY: That's fine

[both laugh]

SALLY: Those guys. And her loyal, ferocious guard Tallanvor [different pronunciation] Tallanvor, whatever

EMILY: Who will be deeply annoying in the next few books

SALLY: He's already annoying he's just like...

EMILY: Just, just bracing you. He gets worse

SALLY: He is super duper my least favorite trope which is, like, honor and loyalty in the Queen's Guard

EMILY: Young man, romantically interested in his queen

SALLY: Yeah, I literally could not care less about that

EMILY: Like I want to throw up all over him

SALLY: Yeah, just like stop. Comes to her and he's like, "There's rebellion in the Two Rivers, and Rahvin has done this" and that's ultimately [snaps] the impetus for Morgase going to confront him, and realizing that things are happening.

EMILY: Yeah it is really cool

SALLY: So, has large reaching political implications, which I don't think means anything it's just interesting

EMILY: I mean, it does tie back to the basic theme of *Wheel of Time*, which is what our three main lads do, whatever they do, is going to have far reaching consequences. It's interesting – I don't often think of what Perrin's doing as affecting the greater world. I guess it just doesn't occur to me when we have Rand as counterpoint, who, basically, whenever he walks into a city, shit starts happening.

SALLY: Yeah people just get married, which is hilarious

EMILY: People get married or people die. People die in terrible ways. And Mat's got a more focused power as *ta'veren*, which is that he warps fate and luck, which is really cool. But Perrin really does, all of his actions, however little he wants them to, have far reaching political and worldwide implications. So it's like Perrin let some people raise some flag and that's going to lead to Morgase realizing that she's being held captive by a Forsaken and all the events thereafter

SALLY: So very cool

EMILY: Yooo Robert Jordan

SALLY: I know. That plot doe

EMILY: Anyway, so we get to here about Manetheren right before they leave. And initially it's just gonna be Moiraine, Lan, and the three boys. Then Egwene comes in and is like, "Hey, I realized what you're doing, because I'm not an idiot. Saw Mat running around, trying not to be noticed. Perrin's got a huge axe on his belt. You're all very obvious and I'm going to come along." Which is great. Like, I would die for Egwene. I would take a bullet for her. I love that our very first interaction with her in these books, and I just realized this as I was skimming them again, is her expressing her ambitions and her desires to get out of the Two Rivers and be a part of the bigger world. And because she has a really limited worldview at first, because she's from such a small place, that first takes the shape of, "Well I'm going to be a Wisdom in a different village. Not necessarily this one. I can go somewhere else." And that really freaks Rand out of course. The idea of her moving. She also says, "I'm maybe not going to get married." Which is so good. Because she's also directly flirting with Rand when she says it. [laughs]. She's so cool

SALLY: She's so cool

EMILY: So anyway, she's like, "I'm coming with you." Moiraine is like, "Okay," because I think it's implied that Moiraine can tell she can Channel and knows that she needs to learn. And then Thom pops out and is like, "Hi."

SALLY: Literally pops out

EMILY: Out of the hayloft. He's like, "Hey. I'm here. I'm also going to come along."

SALLY: Wheee!

EMILY: And that's what happens. Do you have notes about more stuff? Or do you just want to keep going with synopsis?

SALLY: I mean, it's just notes on the synopsis because as we learned from the tapestry incident I don't retain anything that happens in this books [Emily laughs] unless I found them personally amusing or annoying. The fellowship [laughs a bit] the fellowship – yeah. The fellowship

OUR ROOMMATE LEE: The Fellowship of the Wheel

SALLY: Yeah, more or less

EMILY: Yeah

SALLY: The Fellowship of Rand, basically, which is unfortunate.

EMILY: I was thinking that it makes sense that there's only eight of them to start out with as opposed to the nine in the Fellowship, because as we already discussed [laughing] Mat fills the rolls of both Merry and Pippin

SALLY: Merry and Pippin. Yeah Mat wears many hats. Literally he does wear a hat, much to my chagrin

EMILY: Yeah, you hate it

SALLY: I do. I don't like hats. Much like dads I will never be on board with hats

EMILY: Dads and hats

SALLY: Dads and hats. Two things I hate. So the squad leaves the Two Rivers, and they are being chased by a Draghkar, I think it's called

EMILY: Yeah, which is the third monster we're introduced to. Although this one, spoiler, never gets within close range in this book

SALLY: It's just at a distance, lurking and being creepy. And basically for the next, like, rest of the book it's characterized by them being chased, and then episodes of them being settled and not being chased. Which is an interesting storytelling technique. It happens in a lot of books because it just moves the plot along, obviously, if you're being chased by something

EMILY: Yeah, I mean there's not really – sorry to interrupt – there's not really a quest. There's not – until we get to...Caemlyn, if I'm not mistaken, there's not a quest purpose. In Caemlyn I think they decide to go through the Ways to the Eye of the World?

SALLY: Because right now the impetus for them leaving is just that Moiraine wants to get the three boys to Tar Valon to see what they can figure out about why they're being targeted. Because Moiraine, as we discover in later books, and the current Amyrlin Siuan Sanche, have been searching for the Dragon Reborn since, basically since Rand was born. They knew that something was going on

EMILY: That's the events of the prequel book. *New Spring*, I think it's called. Which you haven't read. I've read it only once, and it's pretty – it's pretty good. Moiraine as a young'un. Siuan Sanche as a young'un. But basically the point is that Moiraine already knows one of these boys is the Dragon Reborn

and she's very anxious to get them to Suan, and to the Aes Sedai. But obviously she can't tell them that, because imagine.

SALLY: Imagine telling these three *dummies* that one of them is the Dragon Reborn

EMILY: Wouldn't go over well

SALLY: Wouldn't go over well at all. Rand would probably throw everyone into the river in a...temper tantrum

EMILY: In a fit of –

SALLY: In a fit of boyish rage. Blegh

EMILY, *laughing*: Partly because, just as Aes Sedai are conflated with the Breaking of the World in this little town, the Dragon is directly conflated with – basically he's the anti-Christ. He's not viewed as a savior image in this world. At least not in this very particular rural location in this world. It seems to be, for a long time, only Moiraine and a few Aes Sedai who are really like, "Oh, the Dragon Reborn is going to save us. He's going to be the Christ figure, not the embodiment of Satan basically."

SALLY: Yeah, so nobody wants to be the Dragon Reborn.

EMILY: Except these randos who are like, "I can Channel. Therefore, I'm the Dragon Reborn

SALLY: "Therefore I'm the Dragon Reborn. Don't kill me, plz." Basically [laughs] is what's happening there. In summary. There's a lot going on. I'm paraphrasing, but not really. And so, they run from the Two Rivers upon horseback in a classic chase sequence, but it's really interesting – we talked a little bit about how throughout this book if we didn't have enough clues that Rand is the Chosen One [Emily snorts] there are instances of him displaying Channeling. Or like stressor moments that people do when they're Channeling. I don't know if this is just me maybe reading into this or not, but that's what's interesting about liminal fantasy. There's a lot of uncertainty and hesitancy that happens there, and I think this is one of those moments. Throughout their fleeing from the Two Rivers, particularly on the road to Taren Ferry, which is the name of the chapter that I just opened, a big thing is that they're riding the horses really hard in order to get them to go faster. That's how riding works [both laugh.] So, at certain times Moiraine will heal – do some type of Aes Sedai shenanigans to get the horses back up to energy, to heal them, and she does the same with – not heal them, but take away their tiredness, which maybe is a form of healing. She does that to the horses and she does it to the people. And so, an important member of the Fellowship that we have skipped over is Bela the Horse.

EMILY: I was going to talk about her because I had – it hadn't occurred to me that she's introduced basically on the first page. Bela – this is a bit of a spoiler – Bela will last through the entire series.

SALLY: [sighs with relief]

EMILY: She's an icon

SALLY: And I will cry

EMILY: She's a beautiful and trusty farm horse

SALLY: Beautiful, trusty farm horse that they give to Egwene because she doesn't have her own horse

EMILY: She'll be Siuan Sanche's horse for a while

SALLY: Which is the best

EMILY: Because she's the nicest horse and Siuan's terrified of horses

SALLY: Siuan can't ride

EMILY: Which is hilarious

[both laugh]

EMILY: She's like, "It's boats for me, laddie."

SALLY: "It's boats for me!" And all she does is make fishing metaphors and I love Siuan Sanche, and we'll probably have a whole episode of me talking about why I love her. So they give Egwene this horse, but Bela is not meant for running. She's a plow horse. She's good, over – you know, good over short, sturdy distances

EMILY: I picture her as the horse from *Hercules*. Who's actually I think a donkey, right?

SALLY: Yes

EMILY, *laughing*: Who, at the very beginning, when they ride into the town. Hercules and his adopted dad – very similar circumstances. Hercules is also ginger, you'll notice

SALLY: And tall

EMILY: Yeah. There's the great part where Hercules lifts the entire bales of hay out of the cart and hid dad's like, "No no no. Just leave them there." And he drops them and the horse – [laughs]

SALLY, *laughing*: the poor donkey is like WHAH [that's supposed to be a donkey noise]

EMILY, *laughing*: RWAH and goes flying. I love *Hercules*

SALLY: *Hercules* is an incredible movie. So anyways, Bela is not meant for this, and Rand, because he is so obsessively worried about Egwene is like, "If Bela's not going to be fast enough, Lan doesn't want Egwene here, I wonder if he will leave Egwene behind." As if Lan would just be like, "Sure, leave this farm girl to the Draghkar. I don't give a shit." [laughing] that's not what would happen at all, but apparently Rand has just a lot of trust issues going on in this moment

EMILY: I mean, yeeeeeah. Lan is pretty freaky

SALLY: I guess. Anyways, so Rand says, he's basically just – Here it is. Look I'm using actual quotes my English professors would be so proud

EMILY: yooo. Bro

OUR ROOMATE LEE: Oh my god, explicate your claim, bro

SALLY: So – this is Rand’s point of view and he says, “If Bela fell back, he would fall back, too, whatever Moiraine and Lan had to say about it. Back where the Fade and the Trollocs were. Back where the Draghkar was. With all his heart and desperation he silently shouted at Bela to run like the wind, silently tried to will strength into her. *Run!* His skin prickled, and his bones felt as if they were freezing, ready to split open. *The Light help her. Run!* And Bela Ran.” And it says right here, “His skin prickled and his bones felt as if they were freezing,” and I never pay attention when Rand talks about Channeling because I don’t particularly care, so maybe this is not exactly the right language, but kind of along the lines – seems like something supernatural is happening there

EMILY: That’s like – I think it’s explicitly mentioned later in the book when Moiraine is trying to convince Rand in the last few pages that he has been Channeling all along. She’s like, “How do you think your sweet plow horse Bela was able to last that entire midnight gallop. You wanted that to happen and it happened.”

SALLY: And it happened. And a couple pages later Moiraine is like, ““You were right about your Bela, Rand,” Moiraine said from where she stood by the mare. “She has a good heart and as much stubbornness as the rest of you Two Rivers folks. Strange as it seems, she may be the least weary of all.”

EMILY: So Rand is unconsciously mirroring what Moiraine is doing. Taking away –

SALLY: Taking away Bela’s weariness. So, just a really interesting moment in this chase sequence. Yeah, I totally forgot she brought it up in the end

EMILY: I don’t know why I hung on to that tidbit

SALLY: Well, tapestries, right?

EMILY: Yo

[both laugh]

SALLY: So just a very interesting moment where, like, I didn’t pick up on that during my first read. I was just like, “Oh, Bela. What a fucking champion. Is just out here blowing us all away.”

EMILY: Bela is a fucking champion

SALLY: Bela is a fucking champion

EMILY: On the topic of Rand Channeling. We haven’t talked about this, though it’s also one of the very first things in the book, but Rand has basically an inherent knowledge of how to Channel because his dad taught him a meditation exercise. And for Tam, and for Lan, this is seen as a technique to use when you’re fighting. It’s a sword master’s technique. Of course, the whole flame and the void thing is an actual literal meditation technique. I think for Buddhists?

SALLY: I believe so, yes

EMILY: Yeah, I was just reading about it in that Joseph Campbell book. But the idea that you take the – you visualize the flame and you put all your emotions and your external stressors into it and are left with nothingness, which is the purpose of meditation, but also in this universe, I guess, I don’t know if it’s real, but it enables you to do stuff. For Rand, that happens to be fighting and Channeling. And it’s similar to

the techniques that then Egwene and Nynaeve are taught when they're Novices learning how to Channel. They're like, "Visualize a flower" [laughs].

SALLY: "Visualize it blooming." So we have flower for the women and flame for the men, which is very annoying to me, but whatever. The difference of growth, which the female Aes Sedai are attached to growth and healing, although they can also totally kick ass

EMILY: Egwene especially

SALLY: Egwene especially did not come to fucking play games [Emily laughs]. And then the flame connected to the male Aes Sedai, who are known for their destructive tendencies. So also, very symbolic

EMILY: Well, and I think you can connect...a lot of Rand's character development has to do, absurd as it may be, with his relationship to this weird meditation technique. As the books go on, it begins to get more and more toxic for him. The idea that Rand begins to cope with all the stressors in his life and with being the savior incarnation – reincarnation – he begins to shut out all emotions. He begins to think, basically, "If I can just be in the void permanently, then that's how I'll deal with it." And it's really interesting because much later in the series Rand has, I think it's in book, the book I'm about to read, book twelve, he has sort of an apotheosis moment, where he basically, like the Buddha, reaches enlightenment. His whole perspective – it's just a perspective shift, which I will be really excited to talk about once we get there because I think it's a really interesting form of the Hero's Journey peaking. But, basically the idea that Rand has taken a meditation technique and made it toxic, and it's not until he can come to it in the way that it's meant to be used that he's actually able to achieve inner and outer peace

SALLY: Which is super fascinating. I just read a moment, in book five, where he's having stupid stuff happen with Aviendha. They're fighting all the time

EMILY: UGH

SALLY: But he's outside in his nightclothes basically, because they just got attacked. And he's really cold and he's really angry and Moiraine comes up to talk to him, and he's just like, "I can't deal with this," so he embraces *saidin* again and is like, "I just want to be in the void for this." And you're like that's not – and constantly there's a running refrain, especially for the women, where they're always warned don't Channel too often because you will learn, you will – it's basically like an addiction. You'll gain a dependency on Channeling. You won't be able to let it go, and that's how Aes Sedai destroy themselves. So there's that constant refrain in the Tower, from Moiraine, from Egwene to herself, from Egwene to Aviendha. Don't Channel too often you'll start to develop a dependency

EMILY: Or too much

SALLY: Or too much. So just very, very interesting. Because going back to the summary, once they have – there's not really much to talk about with Taren Ferry. They just cross a river, which is very mythic

EMILY: Yeah, of course

SALLY: They pay the Ferryman, and they cross a river

EMILY: Rivers are often symbolic of safety, literally in this book. Because there's the shadow spawn don't like running water. Which is very mythological. Often, in the world of fantasy and in fairy tales running water is like a safe zone

SALLY: Then the goblins, or whatever, can't get you

EMILY: If you're across water

SALLY: So very mythic, very entrenched in a lot of archetypes. Rivers are very archetypal.

EMILY: That is the first instance that we see Moiraine use Channeling in a destructive way

SALLY: Yeah! She creates a whirlpool and sinks the ferry and it's so awesome [laughs]

EMILY, *laughing*: All the boys are so fucked up about it

SALLY: Whereas Egwene is like, "YES"

EMILY: Egwene's like "That's the coolest shit I ever saw"

SALLY: Yeah Egwene's like, "Teach me. Right now."

EMILY: And Rand's like, "We're gonna die."

SALLY: Yeah, literally, it's so funny. [laughs]. Because everyone's like, "Where's the ferry?" And Moiraine is like, "Oh a whirlpool," and all the ferrymen are like, "They are no whirlpools on this river," and she's like, "Meh!"

EMILY: She's like, "Bitch you thought."

SALLY: Bitch you thought, and just runs away on her tiny white pony. It's incredible and iconic and the moment I fell in love with her is when she just sinks a ferry. No fucks given

EMILY: Moiraine is so cool

SALLY: Moiraine is so iconic. God damn. And so then they, once she sinks the ferry [laughs] and they feel safe from their pursuer for the time being, they begin their On the Road chapters, so to speak. They're sort of summarized chapters of them riding, plus you learn a lot about the world in those chapters. Egwene begins her Aes Sedai lessons with Moiraine

EMILY: Yeah, they all begin their little lessons. Egwene has these little nightly lessons with Moiraine, which, of course, is like a moment of – there's that moment where Rand basically eavesdrops and then walks in on Moiraine explaining to Egwene that she can Channel. And Egwene of course – Rand is like, "Oh my God, this is the worst thing I've ever heard." And Egwene is like, "This is the best thing I've ever heard! This is awesome. This is a way for my dreams to come true. I can go to Tar Valon and be an Aes Sedai. I have so much ambition." Which, major foreshadowing, I think in that chapter Moiraine is basically like, "With your level of power you could be the Amyrlin Seat one day." Not realizing [laughs]

SALLY: Not realizing that literally happens. There is a ton of foreshadowing in those chapters. Nothing, I think, as fun...as fun. Yep. Nailed it. Nothing as fun as Moiraine being like, "You're so powerful you could literally be the Amyrlin." Which is an incredible thing for Moiraine to say having been deep, close childhood friends with the current Amyrlin and understanding what that level of power means.

EMILY: There is the iconic throwaway line early on when they're talking about the False Dragons in Ghealdan and Saldaea, and the possibility of war. Mat has the line, "Battles interest me."

SALLY: Yeah, there's so much! Mat does that and then there's something where Perrin is like, "I'm glad it wasn't wolves, which Perrin, three hundred pages later, has made a deep connection with wolves

EMILY: It's just every little throwaway line is so...and it's amazing reading these books and realizing – I think it's literally more interesting when you reread it.

SALLY: Yeah, it's definitely a book made for rereading, which in and of itself is interesting because I think a lot of – I think fantasy probably has a higher re-readability than most genres because –

EMILY: It's escapism, yeah

SALLY: – a lot of it is world-based. The notion that you can return again and again to a world, as opposed to returning again and again to a story I think lends itself a lot to fantasy and to why people are like, "Oh, I've read *Harry Potter* a hundred thousand times. I've read *Wheel of Time* what, in your case four times?"

EMILY: I think I'm on fourth, yeah

SALLY: Really just great – lots of things come up. Even in this chapter, in much less interesting foreshadowing, Thom is constantly telling them the story about the Great Hunt for the Horn, which is the main plot of book two, and at one point they're talking about False Dragons and Thom tells Rand, in particularly, "One of the hallmarks of that prophecy will be the Breaking of the Stone of Tear. May the Stone stand until I die." Or something like that, which in book three the climax is the Breaking of the Stone of Tear

EMILY: And Thom will be directly involved

SALLY: And Thom is just like, "Son of a Bitch."

[both laugh]

Sally: So just a lot of interesting things are going on there, and plus the boys – Lan starts to give the boys their weapons lessons

EMILY: He basically starts teaching Rand the basics of sword usage, which, like, blegh, boring. He teaches Perrin a little bit about axes, I think

SALLY: Yeah, and he also helps Mat with his bow, though I'm not convinced Mat needs that help

EMILY: Yeah, I think they all carry bows. Mat's just the only one without a special weapon from the get go. Mat makes fun of Rand and Perrin mercilessly for having a sword and axe. He's like, "What are you?"

SALLY: Because at one point Rand like throws his cloak back with his sword and Mat's like "Pffft! [laughs] Who do you think you are, blademaster?" Mat is constantly mocking his friends into the grave

EMILY, laughing: He's really the voice of the audience.

SALLY: He's really the voice of the audience.

EMILY: No, there is the whole idea that, through Lan's perspective, we're introduced to the idea that the Two River's people have incredibly mastery over bows. Which is a hallmark of Robin Hood's story. We don't – probably people do know – but I don't know when the traditional English long bow was introduced, but it's conflated with legends of Robin Hood. In one of my favorite books about Robin Hood, it's just that Robin Hood's band of outlaws, a lot of their power comes from being people who really use a longbow. If you know anything about [laughs] if you know anything about longbows, they're one of the main weapons that won one of the main battles that's in Henry the...Fifth. There's a battle between the English and the French. The English are pretty badly outnumbered but they win basically through use of the longbow. The longbow being a bow that's about as tall as a man is, which is about six feet, so much harder to draw back the string. It would take incredible muscles in your back and your arms to be able to do that, but that just means the range is hugely longer. And more powerful. And the people in the Two Rivers are basically Nottinghamshire in this way that they have the longbows and they are basically trained to use them from when they are kids. And Lan's over here like, "This is a really powerful weapon. It's got a tactical advantage, and for some reason all these kids know how to use them really well. They're all really good shooters."

SALLY: Which is super cool! No, I didn't know any of that about longbows or bows or Henry V or England

EMILY: [laughs] That's it. Perrin does use the longbows to tactical advantage when the Two Rivers folks start getting involved in actual pitched battles, but for now it's just this weird advantage that the boys have that they have these big bows that they're able to use and they're able to shoot accurately. So it's kind of like, rather than our boys getting thrown into fantasy world with absolutely zero training, they do have some weapons' training. They're able to use ranged weapons. Although Mat doesn't really demonstrate it in this book, but in book three. They also have an inherent knowledge of close range weapons. Mat's really good with a quarterstaff. And kind of the implication is that any of them could use a quarterstaff efficiently. Mat just happens to pick it up as his weapon, because it's the most innocuous

SALLY: Which is hilarious. All these farm lads training with quarterstaves. I don't know

EMILY: For like their little village competitions

SALLY: Yeah, it's just really charming to me the idea that all these lads just know weird skills. They're all just really charming farm boys basically. And these chapters are really fun in the notion of really charming farm boys, because when I was skimming it, I'd forgotten how like – and it's because they're nervous and afraid of Moiraine – but Mat and Perrin in particular are just really jumpy yes men, basically, in these chapters. They do not want to upset Moiraine or Lan, whereas Rand is a little bit more petulant, which is...that holds forever. But [laughs]

EMILY: We did have, sorry, thinking of liminal fantasy. I forgot. When I was skimming through, I saw this bit. The chapter that they leave. Rand has gone to sleep at Tam's bedside. Tam's been healed, and Rand immediately launches into one of these creepy dreams that are going to be a hallmark of this book. Later, they're all going to have shared dreams

SALLY: Yep, that's in my notes. The dreams in Baerlon. Are really interesting g

EMILY: They're really interesting, but before that we get Rand's creepy dream, which is basically...it's like your average nightmare. He's running from stuff and the landscape keeps changing so that he never gets anywhere. That's pretty typical. I have that dream all the time. But his is particularly freaky because there is a whole sequence where he's in Tar Valon, trying to get to the White Tower, but also a little bit afraid of the White Tower. Eventually the crowds get really excited and carry him there. Basically, he

gets to the White Tower and there's a Myrddraal standing on the steps and it's like, "Oh, we've been waiting for you." And I thought for the first time – it's implied that Ba'alzamon, who's Ishamael, can reach into these dumb boys' dreams, and pull them into the world of dreams or give them dreams, basically. So there's an idea there that Ba'alzamon sort of instilled in Rand, really early on, a distrust of the White Tower. For the rest of the book, Rand is anxious about being tied to Aes Sedai and the White Tower. Like, yeah you can trace that back to the suspiciousness of Emond's Field and everything, but it's also, like, in his dreams

SALLY: Yeah, which I hadn't even thought about, which is super fascinating that that is a latent fear that the Forsaken have given him, that he probably doesn't even recognize might have come from there, but it comes out in huge, world-altering ways that Rand is like, "I won't deal with Aes Sedai."

EMILY: To be fair, once we get to the White Tower, we see that there is some major trouble going on there, and it's probably safest that he doesn't go there, so it ends up being kind of funny. If the Forsaken did instill that in him, but it just makes it harder for Moiraine to deal with him. And to, I don't want to say control him, because I don't think Moiraine's intention is ever to completely control him. Just to guide him, but

SALLY: But Rand thinks of it as a form of control

EMILY: Which is so masculine

SALLY: Which is super masculine...And speaking of masculinity! [Emily laughs] This is an actual perfect transition, because once they have their, like, on the road moment. Nonsense. It's not nonsense it's just kind of, like, whatever

EMILY: It's a montage

SALLY: Yeah, it's a montage. They get to Baerlon. I hope I'm saying that right. They get to Baerlon, which is their first city and hilariously Mat is like, "Oh my god. A city." And Thom is like, "HAHA, you bumble fuck hick this is not a city."

[Both laugh]

EMILY: Mat, I think, visits every single one of the major cities in this entire fantasy series

SALLY: And he comes to love them, which is super endearing

EMILY: Yeah, Mat in a few books is going to be, like, "I'm never leaving the cities."

SALLY: "I can earn so much money here." But they get to Baerlon, and Lan and Moiraine, who have aliases here...it's like Mistress Alys and then I don't remember what Lan's is.

EMILY: Some dumb thing

SALLY: Arda. No that's the name of Middle-earth. [Emily laughs] Not important. They're talking to the gatekeeper and he starts to talk about the Children of the Light, or the Whitecloaks.

EMILY: Ah, yes.

SALLY: Our first introduction to them. They are an extremist religious group that sort of pervades this continent. Is that a good summary?

EMILY: Yeah I think so. I mean they're coded pretty Catholic. Sorry if you're Catholic. There are lots of religious codings in this series, but their use of referring to each other as "Children," stuff like that. They use a lot of similarly biblical language. So maybe they're just coded Christian. But they're kind of related to the Spanish Inquisition, basically. In fact there is a whole group of them called Inquistors.

SALLY: Questioners

EMILY: The idea being that these guys – oh yeah, Questioners. Excuse me – the idea being that these guys just torture people until they say whatever they want, which was also the Spanish Inquisition [chuckles awkwardly]

SALLY: They call themselves the Hand of the Light, but everyone else calls them Questioners. Because they... The Hand of the Light –

EMILY: Sounds more impressive

SALLY: Obviously when you're in an extremist society you believe the work you're doing is super important and that's why you do it. And everyone is like, "No these people just torture." Even the other Whitecloaks are like, "These guys are fucking crazy."

EMILY: Are not into them

SALLY: It's pretty gnarly

EMILY: But the Whitecloaks are kind of set up as a counterpoint to Tar Valon. They view all the Aes Sedai as witches. They're really anti- Tar Valon, anti- Aes Sedai, really anti- anything involving the Aes Sedai. The country that they're based in basically doesn't allow Aes Sedai in its borders at all. Which is freaky when we our girls travel through it and have to disguise the fact that they're Aes Sedai.

SALLY: I just read about that in book five. Plus Galad is there and he has a whole Whitecloaks thing that' he was doing

EMILY: But the Whitecloaks represent the more superstitious facet of this world, that Aes Sedai can't be trusted, and the fact that it's like a whole religious things. We don't get a lot of organized religion in *The Wheel of Time* books. People don't really go to church

SALLY: Which is so interesting for epic fantasy to not deal with that. Or at least like, I don't know. But in *Game of Thrones*, for instance, church is a huge deal

EMILY: No, yeah. There's the whole war between church and state that happens in *Game of Thrones*

SALLY: Well *Game of Thrones* is just copying English history so maybe I shouldn't give it too much credit there [Emily laughs]. But just the notion that creating a new world, and Robert Jordan didn't feel the need to put churches in every village. Really interesting.

EMILY: And they don't even really have any religious rites. Their holidays aren't necessarily connected to religion. It's all very fascinating, and I wonder if it has to do with the fact that this world has so recently dealt with a man made apocalypse?

SALLY: No, it's just really fascinating now that I think about it. The fact that religion is not a huge deal. Because it seems like culture and cultural differences are bigger, especially with the Tinkers, who Perrin will meet in the next couple hundred pages. They're what could be seen as a religious ideal, the fact that they don't do any violence and would never lay a hand on a sword. That feels very, like, I can't think of the religion that I'm looking for, but

EMILY: Uh, Jainist? Buddhist?

SALLY: Yeah, like Jainist, Buddhist. There are, I think, certain sects of Amish society that would do the same thing. They don't believe in violence, and there are people who get out of military service by being like, "This is my religion. I don't believe in violence." And that is coded into the culture and their [lots of stumbling over words here] oh my god, their culture's honor system. And a big thing with the Aiel is not religion as much as an honor system and history and culture. So it's just a very fascinating – and even in Tar Valon, which in so many other societies could be a type of priesthood, and so many other workings of it could be at type of priesthood and a type of saint worship. It doesn't function that way at all. It's just very interesting.

EMILY: Well, I think it's the idea that, in this world, there is a single religion. Everyone accepts it. I don't even know if we can call it a religion, but their idea of God or a God figure is very concrete. There's the Light and there's the Dark One, and everyone knows it and no one doubts it. So basically there's one religion and we're just mapping how people react to it, how different cultures have come to value it and come to shape their cultures around it. Whereas, I do think this is very interesting in *Game of Thrones*, the idea that there's the old gods and the new. That's a really fascinating thing, mapping the transition from polytheism to monotheism. Or, polytheism to polytheism

SALLY: It's polytheism to polytheism is exactly what it is, but it's like wild polytheism to civilized polytheism

EMILY: So mapping changes in religion is a really interesting thing. It's sort of a hallmark of fantasy. If you're going to set the fantasy across a wide history, which *Wheel of Time* does, but *Wheel of Time* comes at it with the assumption that if I'm going to have a battle between the Light and the Dark, then I'm just going to have to have everyone believe in the Light and the Dark

SALLY: It's just really, really interesting. Because, yeah, you're right, there is only one religion. And I think that's why it was jarring to me to realize that there were not religious practices happening everywhere. If everyone believed the same thing it wouldn't be – like would you even need a church if everybody believed the same thing?

EMILY: No, I think that...yeah, religious practices are almost as much for society as they are for yourself. Not to diminish religious practices, I mean

SALLY: No of course not, but one of the main reasons to go to church – I say this as a not really religious person – is, especially from the societal viewpoint, is to go and establish yourself as part of that group and not part of another group

EMILY: Yeah, it's as much a social activity as it is anything else

SALLY: So, super interesting. Just – very interesting stuff

EMILY: So *Wheel of Time* is whack [laughs]

SALLY: *Wheel of Time* is whack. The notion that they can have this entire continent, and even into the Waste, and

EMILY: And the Seanchan. The Seanchan have the exact same religion

SALLY: Across the ocean, into the desert, up, down, left, right. Everyone is just like, “Oh, yeah. This one god and this one dark one. That’s fine.” That’s wild to me. That’s just insane.

EMILY: Especially because we get the idea of history being warped by time. How is it that basically the monomyth of *Wheel of Time* has survived for, what is it, two thousand years?

SALLY: I think it’s three thousand years after the Breaking is what this is. That’s insanity. That’s just absolutely insanity

EMILY: Like...I hadn’t even thought about that [laughs]

SALLY: I’m serious. My entire world is shook right now. Just, like, so weird to me

EMILY: And yeah, you’re right, a lot of people get coded as religious. The Tinkers are coded really Amish as well as Jainist. The Whitecloaks are coded as extremists, any type of extremists, but especially Catholics in the Middle Ages. We’ve got a group of people later who are going to be coded as a cult, which cults are sort of religious. We barely interact with them, but there’s basically when Rand, spoiler, cleanses *saidin* it’s going to – he does it through the use of these giant *sangreal*, which you see in book two

SALLY: Yeah, and he thinks about a lot in the book I’m reading

EMILY: He thinks about them a lot, yeah. There’s the one in Cairhien, and there’s one on this island called Tremalking, and there’s just kind of this very isolated society on Tremalking that we never visit. Until Rand cleanses *saidin* and those giant statues melt. The people on Tremalking have, for whatever reason, these prophecies that say that when the statue melts or when something happens to it, then the time of illusion is ended and that’s when we need to wake up. Which is a very cultish phrase, by the way, and what happens next is very cultish. The people commit mass suicide

SALLY: Daaaamn

EMILY: Which is really freaky [laughs awkwardly] of course, and it’s hugely reacted to in *The Wheel of Time* series, which I appreciate. The Sea Folk go into mass mourning because these were just like these cute island people that they visited and who were super peaceful

SALLY: yeah. God. That’s whack

EMILY: Isn’t it? But also I really appreciate it. Religious extremists go both ways. Violence towards other people and violence towards yourself, and not comprehending it as violence toward yourself

SALLY: It’s a very religious, transcendent type of weird thing. Not weird thing...well, it is pretty weird

EMILY: No it is. The Aiel also think of death as waking up from the dream. Aiel just don’t, like, uhhhh run toward it. They’re just super accepting of it

SALLY: They're just like you die

EMILY: You die and then you wake up

SALLY: You wake up and then you dream again basically is the reference to a reincarnation type of thing. So, oh man Religion, air quotes, in *Wheel of Time* is super weird

EMILY, *laughing*: It's just whack

SALLY: It's just a lot going on there, Rob

EMILY: Uh, we should probably stop before we get too far into Baerlon [different pronunciation] Baerlon? I can't say that word. Bay-er-lon?

SALLY: [just a bunch of different pronunciations of Baerlon]

EMILY: But basically they enter Baerlon with the threat of the Whitecloaks hanging over them, because they're aware how the Whitecloaks treat Aes Sedai, and they're aware how Whitecloaks [laughs] Whitecloaks. How Whitecloaks view anything that has ties to the Dark One. Real or imagined

SALLY: So very troubling for the boys who are having weird interactions with monsters and are having weird dreams

EMILY: And have been told by Moiraine explicitly, "The Dark One wants something with one of you."

SALLY: They've got an Aes Sedai with them, and it's just a very stressful situation, but also they are really excited to go sleep in a bed

EMILY: Have a bath

SALLY: And have a bath. The bath scene, real quick before we go [Emily laughs] is really fascinating to me only because there is a very striking parallel in – there are so many striking parallels – but there is a very striking parallel to the *Fellowship of the Ring* when they get Tom Bombadil's house they have a really jovial, jolly bath scene where they're all just so excited. Hobbits, in particular, it's a very homely thing to bathe and get in your dressing robe and eat, basically.

EMILY: Hobbits are all of us

SALLY: Hobbits are the best. But it's not as – at Tom Bombadil's they sing a song about bathing and it's this huge celebratory thing for them and it's a key scene for the Hobbit's journey. And it's less so a big deal for the lads here in terms of the relishing of bathing, but there's still that sense of them being really excited about it. So I'm fascinated by the parallel of this bathing scene because it does something really key for fantasy – [in a weird voice] fantasy. Fantasy. Fantasy, which is the notion of recovery. In JRR Tolkien's defense, basically, of fantasy which is called "On Fairy-Stories" he outlines three things that fantasy does which is Escape, Recovery, and Consolation. Consolation is pretty linked to the eucatasrophe, I believe. I need to reread "On Fairy-Stories," so we will talk about Consolation way down the line if it even applies here. But the notion of Escape. Fantasy is often called escapist, but the way that Tolkien outlines it is that we're not escaping from our problems, we're escaping to somewhere else. He uses the metaphor of a prisoner, saying, "Would you fault a prisoner for trying to escape from prison." No you wouldn't. So the notion that our world is a prison and we're escaping to a different way of seeing things. Which is just really interesting and Neil Gaiman

EMILY: and beautiful

SALLY: And absolutely beautiful. Neil Gaiman has a really interesting speech that he gave. The notion of you go into a fantasy world and you see how things are done there, and you come back into your world with a renewed sense of “Is this how I want things to be done?” And I can post that on our social media, because we now have social media. You should follow us on Twitter at @EHR_Podcast. We also have a Tumblr, which has the first episode posted, and an Instagram which has nothing posted so don’t follow us [both laugh] but the other key thing that I want to talk about with the bath, is what I’m getting at, is the notion of Recovery and that when you go inside a fantasy world and see something done differently, which is what Gaiman is talking about, you recovery it in that you’re asked to see it again. It’s very similar to the Russian Formalist notion of defamiliarization. Tolkien talks about going into a world where the sun is green. Then you come back and you’re like, “Oh my sun isn’t green.” It makes you for, that moment, really think about the sun and recover it. Tolkien is really big on the notion of being connected with the world around you. So the notion of these lads bathing, it’s a recovery of water and being clean, and being in a home space as opposed to being in the Wilderness. Again, not as important for *The Wheel of Time* scene, where I think the actual important part of that scene is Mat running his big ass mouth

[both laugh]

EMILY: classic

SALLY: Classic Mat, and Lan comes in and is like, “I will stab you right here in your birthday suit.” And Mat is like, “Excuse me? I was just sharing war stories.”

EMILY: I know JRR Tolkien is talking about escape and recovery as part of the fantasy effect and what fantasy is as a genre, but it is also part of the fantasy –I think...those words apply differently as part of the fantasy structure, of course. It’s all about escaping. This is exactly what our lads are doing here. They’re escaping a dangerous situation and then recovering. That’s how pacing in stories is supposed to work, especially in fantasy, I think. I think that’s what, not to criticize, any certain genre of books, but a lot of YA these days, that’s fantasy based – or adventure based is often the term that’s used – doesn’t have enough recovery period, which makes them feel exhausting. Which is often why I, at least, find them unpleasant to read. Because you need moments where there’s stillness, where our characters are both symbolically and literally recovering from their ordeal. It’s also why Rand, I think, gets more exhausting to read as the story goes on

SALLY: There’s no recovery from insanity, for instance. Yeah, the professor that I had where I studied all of this, would refer to them as periods of stress and recovery. That’s the uh – again, always drawing on *Lord of the Rings*. Frodo before he gets to Rivendell has to be drawn, physically by some sort of thing, out of five homely houses. So it’s like the Shire, he’s got another house, than Tom Bombadil’s, and then Bree, and then Rivendell. There’s always those periods of rest at a time that is incredibly stressful for the Hobbits. Obviously once they leave Rivendell and begin out on their fellowship, of course stressful things happen, but then they are accompanied by a lot of competent people and feel more safe. But that period between the Shire and Rivendell is so stressful for the Hobbits, because Frodo gets stabbed and crazy things are happening and they’re basically by themselves until Aragorn

EMILY: And he has to leave his house and his house is gonna get sold

SALLY: His house is gonna get sold to his weird cousins. And they don’t want to be away from home. Hobbits don’t like being in danger. So those periods of recovery are really important for the characters, and for the readers. The same kind of thing happens in *Wheel of Time*, with them being in these cities

where they have an instance to bathe and eat and sleep in a bed and go to the common room and Thom's telling stories and they're just with other people. They get that sense of recovery after running from literal monsters. That happens in Baerlon. It happens again in Camelyn, but they always have to be driven out of those places back into periods of stress. So I agree with you that a lot of these YA books that are just: inciting incident, stress, stress, stress, stress, stress, stress, romantic interlude, climax, denouement. It's so exhausting to read. There's no sense of recovery, and therefore no sense to really get to know your characters. It's your period of recovery where you pick up a lot of – what your characters do in their down time is a good indicator of who your character is, almost as much as how your character responds in instances of stress.

EMILY: Exactly. So, if you're an up and coming writer be sure to include your bath scenes [laughs]

SALLY: Really include your bath scenes, because they are really interesting. And you can just get a bunch of people naked in a room together, which is always good content

EMILY: Hell yeah [laughs]

SALLY, *laughing*: just saying. It's always going to be interesting

EMILY: We should make a list next time of iconic bath scenes

SALLY: Iconic bath scenes. One: *Sabriel*. Oh my god

EMILY: Hell yeeeeeeah

SALLY: Where she thinks her love interest is fucking the maid in the next room [laughs] hilarious

EMILY: He's not

SALLY: He's not. So, um.

EMILY: Sign us off, Sally

SALLY: So sign. You. Off. [laughs] okay, um, um, um, uh, I can't...nothing's going to come, dear readers so I've been holding this one. Food for thought for the week, and you can email me your answers at everybodyhatesrand@gmail.com and I will read them on next week's episode is: What natural disaster are you in the bedroom?

[both laugh]

EMILY: fuck

[both laugh]