

## **Episode #9 – The Philosopher’s Stone? It’s Emotional Damage**

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Run Time: 57 Minutes

Emily: Well, we’re recording, so.

Sally: Okay.

Emily: How are you?

Sally: [laugh]

Emily: We never ask each other!

Sally: [laugh]

Emily: Shouldn’t we have some pleasantries? I know we live together, but they don’t know how you are!

Sally: Um. [laugh] My life is in shambles a little bit.

Emily: That’s not true, she just got a job.

Sally: That’s why my life is in shambles. I’m just adjusting to a new schedule. The job is fine. The job itself is fine, but it’s just – surprise, you have to put slacks on every morning and make conversation with your co-workers while you look for the tea kettle.

Emily: That’s honestly my nightmare. I mean – the wearing slacks part is what I was thinking of. I can’t imagine a world in which I have to wake up and decide between dress pants, which are, for women, inherently uncomfortable, or a skirt, which are, for me specifically, inherently uncomfortable.

Sally: Yes. Dress pants are not made for human women’s bodies. Except somehow I have miraculously found one very good pair of dress slacks that I got at Nordstrom –

Emily: Ooh, really?

Sally: Yeah, I love them. They are what I was wearing today. You didn’t see me because I –

Emily: Yeah, you rushed past.

Sally: I immediately took them off because I knew I was going to come stuff my face and I didn’t want to get things on them.

Emily: It’s dinner time . . . Anyway, wanna talk about book news?

Sally: I sure – well, how are you doing?

Emily: Mmmm. Okay, I guess. For book news, which I prepared for once –

Sally: I’m so proud of her.

Emily: Look at me. It’s only because Sally has a job with a salary so I felt like I needed to pick up some –

Sally: [laugh]

Emily: I felt like I needed to do my fair share of work here. Okay, so for book news, a book that's coming out this week is "Children of Blood and Bone" by – and I might mispronounce this – Tomi Adeyemi. It actually came out – yeah, all books go on sale on Tuesdays, I think that's the –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So I think it was already published. I don't know if anyone's read it, but this book is interesting because it basically, before it was even published, had already garnered a movie deal and had created this big bidding war in the major publishing houses. And we don't really know what it's about, or at least, I don't, it's . . . it is West African-inspired, so it's sort of in the vein of "Akata Warrior" and "Akata Witch," it sounds like, a little bit, but . . . yeah, the synopsis is basically that it's like, "Dark magic. Danger. Fantasy. There's a girl, and there's a rouge princess, and a ruthless king, and the crown prince." So just like a lot of your stereotypical young adult fantasy characters.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And basically it's just hyped as hell, which I don't ever trust anything that has any sort of hype attached to it. We both just read – I think I edited this out the last time we talked about – but we both just read "The Power" by . . . who is . . .

Sally: Naomi Alderman.

Emily: Naomi Alderman. Which is also a much-hyped book. And we . . .

Sally: [laugh]

Emily: . . . hated it.

Sally: And also awful.

Emily: It was so shitty. And obviously I don't wanna pass judgment on this book. Just because it's hyped doesn't mean it's bad. I just – I think books, especially when they're hyped within the publishing industry – they're being hyped because they are something that is going to sell.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Like, the reason this sparked a bidding war and is already attached to a movie deal is because the people within the publishing industry probably assume it's going to make them a lot of money.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: That's the only reason they'd ever be willing to pay for it. Which isn't to say that the sorts of things that will bring a lot of money are bad, because there are a lot of really good trends right now.

Sally: Yeah, for sure.

Emily: Especially in young adult fiction, and it's really cool that they think that – it's interesting that they're predicting that a book by a Nigerian-American author that's set in a Nigerian-esque setting is going to be popular, and that's really positive, because it's a move away from the more Westernized dystopia and fiction and fantasy that we have been fed – force-fed for the last twenty-years.

Sally: Force-fed is a good term.

Emily: But also, if this tells you anything, the people who are making the movie are the same ones who made – what was it? “The Fault in Our Stars,” “The Maze Runner” . . .

Sally: “Twilight.”

Emily: “Twilight.”

Sally: Like, every shitty –

Emily: All successful movies, I’ll warrant.

Sally: Unfortunately.

Emily: But, like, should they have been?

Sally: Should they have been? “The Fault in Our Stars.” Did I actually see that movie? I can’t remember. I don’t think so.

Emily: It was bad.

Sally: “Twilight” movies? Shitty.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: “The Maze Runner” movies? Entertaining. Subjectively entertaining, objectively shitty. I also don’t want to pass judgment on it because I haven’t read it.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And there is a possibility that it is both very good and going to make a lot of money, but I just super doubt it.

Emily: Usually that’s a Venn Diagram with a very slim intersection.

Sally: Yeah, like what would even be in there?

Emily: Things that are actually good and make a lot of money?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. I was going to say “Harry Potter,” but “Harry Potter” is on a downward spiral these days.

Sally: Oh my god, speaking of which, I am reading “Harry Potter and the Cursed Child” right now, and it is fucking wild. I didn’t know anything about it, and it is an experience and a half. That’s irrelevant, though. I’m not inclined to pass – like, I don’t want to pass judgment, but I am inclined to believe that it is not going to be a particularly good novel, just – in the way that “The Fault in Our Stars” isn’t a particularly good novel and “The Maze Runner” is a very bad novel. Like, things that are popular.

Emily: It also puts my hackles up – sorry to interrupt you – that it is named with the exact naming convention as every young adult book these days, which is “Blank of blank and blank.”

Sally: I know.

Emily: “Noun of noun and noun.” Usually the last two nouns are something grim. Like blood, or bone, or dust, or ash.

Sally: City of Bones. City of Ash.

Emily: Exactly. And the first noun is something totally irrelevant. Children? Who are the children?  
[laugh]

Sally: But that being said – like you said, we’ve been force-fed so much shitty fantasy that I’m happy that shitty fantasy is at least transitioning to being not Eurocentric.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: Because I would much rather – like I read a lot of shitty YA when I was younger –

Emily: Of course.

Sally: And it was in the vein of “The Fault in Our Stars,” “the Maze Runner” . . . I read all of the “City of Ash” and whatever books.

Emily: White people doing white things.

Sally: White people doing things. And that affected me in a lot of ways, that was the type of media I consumed, and I had to unlearn a lot of that as I got older, and I think it would be really good – it will be really good, like I’m really excited to think about my niece growing up in a world where the popular media is people who don’t look like her and don’t live a life like she does. So yes, it may not be “good” – and that raises a whole conversation about what we qualify as “good” just because we think it’s socially, politically correct or socially relevant or like it’s going to hit a bunch of affirmative action boxes – that’s a whole other conversation that we cannot unpack in our brief section of book news, which has already gone way too long. I am bitter and not hopeful about the publishing industry ever getting better. I want it to and I hope that it does, but I just don’t think that it will.

Emily: Well, it’s so based on nepotism.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It’s become impossible for outsiders to break in and change it.

Sally: Yeah, exactly. It’s why we really need to focus on small presses, like just off the top of my head, Lee and Low Books, they do mostly younger children, but they have a lot of diversity initiatives, and I think they mostly publish books by diverse – whatever that word even means – authors. But they’re doing a really great job, and they have a lot of fun titles, so if anybody – you can keep that in there if anybody wants to look at that. But super exciting that at least our mainstream media is going to get diverse.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Okay, that went on for a really long time.

Emily: Who cares? It’s not like we have anything to say about Wheel of Time.

Sally: [humming incoherently]

Emily: Is that our theme song?

Sally: I don’t know what that was.

Emily: Okay, well.

Sally: “I get knocked down.”

Emily: "I get up again."

Sally: "Ain't never gonna keep me down."

[clip of "Tubthumping" by Chumbawamba plays]

Emily: I was about to just launch into our podcast without –

Sally: We should introduce ourselves.

[laugh]

Emily: At about twenty minutes in, I'd be like . . . "Oh."

Sally: "And also, welcome to the podcast."

Emily: "Oh. Also, if you didn't know, this is Everybody Hates Rand. If you want to know why we hate Rand, listen to the last episode, because we ranted about it in detail for way too long." Um, I'm Emily Juchau, your friendly neighborhood – I don't know, your friendly neighborhood . . . not Spider-man because I hate spiders. What are you? Who are you?

Sally: [laugh]

Emily: Who are we all?

Sally: Who are we all? Who am I? Central identity question. Of many works of literature, including "Hamlet" by William Shakespeare. I wrote an essay about that my junior year of high school.

Emily: About how "Hamlet" is about identity crisis?

Sally: Yeah, I mean, I was seventeen, so I was like, "Look at how smart I am." My professor was like, "Fine, she's better than the rest of the class." My professor. My teacher.

Emily: I wrote when I was like nineteen – my freshman year – I took a Shakespeare class, and I wrote the most stereotypical paper about how "Romeo and Juliet" is about passion and how passion can be violence but also, like, love. And I turned it in and was like, "That was the shittiest thing I've ever written in my entire life." And my professor agreed.

Sally: Disa?

Emily: Yeah. You bet it was.

Sally: [laugh] What a lunatic. I love her. Um, okay, I am Sally Goodger.

Emily: Oh, good.

Sally: Yes, that's me. I am Sally Goodger, like badger. I've been doing a lot of that at work lately: "Goodger, like badger." And I am very tired today because I have joined the corporate workforce.

Emily: Capitalism is killing us all.

Sally: I would say that I've sold out, but I'm actually doing nonprofit work, so it's like a little bit different. [laugh]

Emily: [laugh] It's actually, "*You* all have sold out."

Sally: Actually, no, the nonprofit industry has many problems. Okay. Reintroducing myself: I'm Sally Goodger, and I'm tired today.

Emily: I'm leaving all that stuff in.

Sally: [laugh] No! The people I work with are going to listen to it. They're not. Okay, welcome to the podcast.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: This is Everybody Hates Rand, um –

Emily: I said that already, stop getting – stop stealing my lines.

Sally: Oookay.

Emily: We're both tired, so we're going to keep this a little short. We did, however, last time completely skip over Rand's dream sequence. I don't know why – we just didn't talk about it.

Sally: Oh yeah! I had something to say about that too.

Emily: Sorry, what did you have to say about it?

Sally: Okay, so this chapter opens with resident ginger, Rand al'Thor, having one of his infamous dream sequences, and it's really interesting because the chapter doesn't frame it. It's not like, "Rand is sleeping and he had this dream." You're just thrown, *in medea res*, into the dream sequence, which is interesting. So it's one of those moments. I remember – okay, admittedly I was skimming it, so whatever – but I read it for a while and I was like, "Oh." It took me a minute to realize it was a dream sequence, which is cool.

Emily: Yeah, especially because there's like a whole level of – the whole paradox of this dream sequence – which, this dream sequence is very paradoxical, it's like basically Rand is running up the Penrose Steps of a labyrinth, being chased but also he's conscious that he's dreaming but he's not allowed to be conscious that he's dreaming or it begins to warp this world. And I don't know why that is. It's again, this sort of dream logic that applies throughout "The Eye of the World" and sort of "The Great Hunt" where it felt like Robert Jordan didn't really know what he was doing with it. But, yeah. I'm sorry I interrupted you.

Sally: That's okay. That is fine. Interrupt me as much as you want, I don't mind. So yeah, that is interesting in and of itself, but this dream sequence – inevitably all dream sequences or all of these periods that are so infamous in fantasy for – I keep, I want to use the word "liminal," because it is kind of liminal, you get in this – it's either fever dreams, hallucinations, actual dreams, like a lot of warped logic happens in fantasy for some reason.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And inevitably that will take us to a maze of some sort. It always happens. And I was thinking about this, and I was like, "Why is it always a maze?" And I am, I think I mentioned before, taking about seven years to read this Encyclopedia of World Mythology, and there are – there's a section on labyrinths, obviously, and it talks about Daedalus and stuff, but it mentions labyrinths in reference to a mandala. And a mandala is very specific to Hindu and Buddhist mythology, of course, but in a more generalized understanding, in mythology studies, mandala has meant some type of sacred circle of some sort that has to do with oneness and truth – I think, I don't have my book in front of me. I could go get it, but I'm not gonna – about, about destiny and eternity and stuff like that. So just kind of interesting . . .

Emily: Religious stuff. Spiritual stuff.

Sally: Religious stuff, mythic stuff. I'm not doing a very good job as resident academic here at Everybody Hates Rand, but.

Emily: Nah, I feel you. I was also just reading about how mazes are one of the archetypes in mythology.

Sally: Good word.

Emily: So Campbell and Carl Jung studied them as part of this overarching story that the world is sort of obsessed with. These little things like floods and virgin births that are in every, sort of crop up in every mythology, and labyrinths are one of those. Mazes, or some representation of the maze. Being trapped somewhere, where you just can't find your way out, so. Like all of Wheel of Time, it's all very arche—arche-ty-pal. That's a hard word.

Sally: Yes. On the note of archetypes, my favorite professor – who I reference all the time – talked about archetypes like – I just really like the phrasing that he used – which is that they are “grooves in the collective human conscious—“

Emily: Ooh, yeah, that's cool.

Sally: “Conscience? Consciousness.” They're like grooves in our consciousness. I just really like that phrasing.

Emily: Yeah, so for some reason we're obsessed with mazes.

Sally: Yeah. Which, they're cool, but.

Emily: They're really cool. Just like a really neat setting generally. Also they play somehow on this – Campbell talked about how there're the two – he borrowed this from Freud, who I mostly think is bullshit, but there is some truth to the idea that we're either motivated by fear or desire. Either aversion or attraction, like magnets basically. And so with mazes there is something in us that is both attracted to them and afraid of them.

Sally: Yeah, it's like frightening to think – because I can see the appeal, it's frightening to go into a place where you might not be able to find your way out, but there's also such a delicious challenge in going into a maze and solving it, so I can see the appeal.

Emily: Yeah, and it's fun here where Rand does the – he's in the maze, and he's like, “Oh, I'll just use that trick where you only turn the one way,” and as soon as he starts applying real-world logic to this dream-logic place, he immediately runs into Ba'alzamon.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And that's sort of what almost sparks the confrontation.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Which isn't much of a confrontation. Ba'alzamon just yells at him indecipherably about The Eye of the World and the Great Serpent.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Rand says, “This is a dream!” And Ba’alzamon goes – turns into ash, and Rand is Ba’alzamon in another maze of mirrors. Also there’s a whole thing where Rand gets pricked by a thorn and it’s real in the real world too, and it’s all just – this is all just such a stereotypical fantasy dream sequence.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: I don’t know – I can’t even – it’s so typical that I can’t even think of everything that it’s referencing.

Sally: I know, it’s just like – there’s so much. And it’s like very fairy tale too. Like you get pricked by a thorn in the maze . . . there’s always something about thorns.

Emily: Yeah. I don’t know why that is. Well, it’s archetypal too. Um, anyway, so that’s the dream sequence, and we’ll kind of skim over what we already talked about with the ship and pirates and get over to Whitebridge.

Sally: Dun, dun . . . I was going to sing a Whitebridge song, but then I was like, “What would Whitebridge’s song be?”

Emily: I don’t know.

Sally: Um. “Immigrant Song” by Led Zeppelin.

Emily: [laugh]

Both: [imitate the opening chords of “Immigrant Song,” badly]

Sally: That’s Bayle Domon coming into Whitebridge every time. Tell me that I’m wrong, though. Tell me that I’m wrong.

Eally: I think you’re right if we apply it to almost any other setting besides this fairly rural, weird . . .

Sally: Okay, fine. Tar Valon.

Emily: Bayle Domon going into Illian. I don’t know, or some shit.

Sally: [makes “Immigrant Song” sound again] Yeah, that’s true. Bayle Domon fighting the Seanchan, outside of—

Emily: Ah, yeah. Cool.

Sally: Yeah. Pretty badass, right? Bayle Domon is the coolest character.

Emily: I love Bayle Domon, he’s totally a Led Zeppelin type of character.

Sally: Totally.

Emily: You know he’s got a mixtape. [laugh]

Sally: That he’s like “Alright, lads. Put it on.”

Emily: Of sweet-ass pirate songs.

Sally: Then he holds up his stolen Trolloc weapons. It’s pretty – it’s cool. There you go. End scene.

Emily: Yeah. Love him.

Sally: Okay. Whitebridge.

Emily: Whitebridge. Yeah. Fairly – not a huge city. Rand compares it to Baerlon in terms of size. Its one signifying feature is that it's built, it's surrounding the end of this one bridge that goes over the river, so kind of like – um, we're in New York, kind of like Dumbo at the end of the Brooklyn Bridge.

Sally: [laugh] You heard it here first. Whitebridge is Dumbo.

Emily: Well, actually I think Whitebridge is more exciting. Dumbo is a trash place.

Sally: I – okay, I like being in Dumbo for like ten minutes. When I had some friends in town we went and ate cake by the river front.

Emily: Oh, that's nice.

Sally: And that was super lovely, and we were there for like twenty minutes.

Emily: I remember when I took you there and we were wandering around for an hour because we didn't know how to get on the train.

Sally: Yeah. That was a little . . . but I did pee in Dumbo.

Emily: Yeah, we also all needed to go to the bathroom.

Sally: And so we found like this weird little park. My first experience in Dumbo was confusing. But enjoyable.

Emily: Yeah, I'm glad you were courageous enough to go back.

Sally: Well, I'll take you there some day. We also saw jet skiers.

Emily: What the fuck.

Sally: I know, and I was like, "Is it even legal to jet ski here?" [laugh] They were doing it. There were four of them. Okay, that's off-topic.

Emily: It's New York. Who cares.

Sally: Yeah, the law doesn't exist. Everything's legal in – no, that's New Jersey.

Emily: [laugh] Anyway, so this bridge that goes over the river – obviously it's white, and no one really knows what it's made of? It's like sort of glass-looking, but it's not glass. It all looks like it's made out of one piece, and it's kind of – looks too delicate to really be supporting the weight. So that's all – that's all very paradoxical and sort of indicative of Age of Legends architecture. Robert Jordan has these two types of ruins that he's playing with – which, we talked about ruins extensively in the last episode – where it's sort of like old statues that are crumbling and sort of things that are more signifiers of our world, almost. Statues crumbling, old animal bones, stuff like that. It's either super ancient or a little more recent than the Age of Legends. And then there's the Age of Legends stuff, that's a little more futuristic and sort of gives you a different vibe because, unlike the stone ruins, it doesn't plunge you into the past so much as plunge you into this future – that is also the past.

Sally: It's like this – it's like the – because it is the past but it's an alternate future past.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like it bends the notions of future and past really interestingly. In terms of aesthetic.

Emily: Which, like, duh. That's the title of the book. Wheel of Time.

Sally: [old man voice] Wheel of Time. Time is a wheel. Time passes, past is future, future's past. [normal voice] Yep. Okay. The Wheel weaves as the Wheel wills, my dude.

Emily: [laugh]

Sally: Do you think Robert Jordan was like, "Look at how hilarious this tongue-twister is" and flipped off everybody who ever read his book? And was like [struggling], "The Wheel weaves as the Wheel wills."

Emily: I'm gonna bet you ten dollars that Robert Jordan never said that sentence out loud –

Sally: [laugh]

Emily: Until he was already like four books in.

Sally: [chokes]

Emily: Don't die!

Sally: I'm dying. [clears throat] So, yeah.

Emily: And only then did his wife say, "You know it's really tough to say your whole little catchphrase thing?" And he was like, "Is it? The Wheel weaves as the Wh. . . . oh."

Sally: The Wheel wheels as the weave wools.

Emily: What the fuck.

Sally: [laugh] "Who let me write this?"

Emily: "I just fucked up." Anyway, so yeah – Age of Legends architecture. There's some other stuff that we come across throughout the rest of the series, like the Stone of Tear – our fortress that doesn't – cannot be penetrated until, spoiler alert, it is.

Sally: Mat does it. I guess all the boys do it, but Mat . . .

Emily: No, Perrin doesn't.

Sally: Okay, fine, Perrin's too much of a loser to penetrate the fortress.

Emily: No, yeah, literally. Perrin's off doing some shit.

Sally: He's with Faile, isn't he?

Emily: Yeah, he's like rescuing her in Tel'aran'rhiod or something.

Sally: He's falling in love or some shit.

Emily: He's having a romantic arc.

Sally: Oh, yeah! I totally forgot about what happens to Faile at the end of book three.

Emily: Yeah, because no one gives a shit.

Sally: Yeah, literally I would read that and was like, “Am I supposed to care? Moving on. Where’s Mat blowing up a wall?” [laugh]

Emily: Yeah, literally I can’t wait to get to the Stone of Tear –

Sally: Okay, okay! We are in book one!

Emily: Rrrgh.

Sally: But the Stone of Tear sequence is the best hundred pages of fantasy ever written, probably.

Emily: I concur.

Sally: It’s so good. I’ve – okay, I read like ten pages of Wheel of Time at a time—

Emily: Sure.

Sally: But I read all of the Stone of Tear in one sitting.

Emily: Because you can’t not.

Sally: I was like, “Tattoo this on my eyeballs. I want to read it permanently.”

Emily: It’s so good.

Sally: Hrrrgh.

Emily: Anyway. Whitebridge. There’s another city they go to, I think it’s Far Madding . . . um, Far Madding has a ter’angreal of some sort that basically stops channeling from occurring within the city.

Sally: Weird.

Emily: Sort of like what happens in the steddings with the Ogi—ogie—I don’t know why I just went to pronounce that French. Oh-gee-ay.

Sally: [French accent] Ogier. Loial of the Ogier.

Emily: How do you pronounce it. Oh-geer?

Sally: I thought it was Oh-geer, but I like Oh-gee-ay now, we’re saying it Oh-gee-ay.

Emily: Fuck. I’ve been avoiding French pronunciations. Read: Mwah-raine.

Sally: Mwah-raine.

Emily: So I’m not going to get caught up in this . . . bullshit . . .

Sally: Oh-gee-ay is going to be my alias.

Emily: Ogier isn’t even in the glossary! What the fuck. Did he think it was so easy we could all pronounce it?

Sally: Just, what about the OG?

Emily: [loudly, agitated] The word “fist” is in the glossary!

Sally: Are you fucking joking?

Emily: Okay, it's talking about a military unit of Trollocs, but AS IF I CARE.

Sally: Yeah, I need to know how to pronounce Ogier. I know about fisting.

[laugh]

Sally: This isn't Urban Dictionary, Robert.

Emily: I've had the sex talk, Robert! Not about fisting, I'll admit, but I've seen Game of Thrones! [laugh]  
I know what fisting is.

Sally: [laugh]

Emily: If there's a sex thing, it has been done on Game of Thrones and therefore I know about it.

Sally: True. Or – okay, no, I can't make that comparison.

Emily: What?

Sally: [laugh] Doesn't matter.

Emily: [laugh]

Sally: I was gonna say “or Outlander,” but Outlander is actually pretty vanilla. And SHITTY.

Emily: [laugh] Speaking of hyped books.

Sally: Honestly! [pause] Okay. Fisting.

[laugh]

Emily: Okay, like the Ogier steddings, there's a ter'angreal that prevents people from channeling. Although it's like a little bit of a different feeling. Our protagonists will go there at some point in the series and will describe it as being different from the steddings. But the point is there are all these relics from the Age of Legends that influence these various settings in really interesting ways. Whitebridge is sort of – bleh, it's sort of a visual thing, but it lends this aura of history and intrigue. And of course it's sort of – this, this little interlude in Whitebridge is sort of a threshold to Rand and Mat's, you know, sort of splinter-off journey.

Sally: Mm-hmm. It's the so-called “Death of the Mentor.”

Emily: Death of the Mentor. Which is sort of fun because you'd expect as the series begins that the death of the mentor would be Moiraine, but of course Robert Jordan manages to give us two mentor deaths in this series. First Thom, which is a fake death, and Moiraine, later on. Which is also a fake death.

Sally: You done pulled the wool over my eyes twice, Robert.

Emily: Are there any mentors that actually die in Wheel of Time?

Sally: Well, so – like I would know.

Emily: [laugh] I'm thinking.

Sally: Um . . .

Emily: Tough to say.

Sally: Has anyone . . . died yet?

Emily: Has anyone died in Wheel of Time?

Sally: Okay, I mean like significant, where I am.

Emily: No, yeah, I see.

Sally: Like a lot of people die all the time. Robert Jordan just killed Perrin's entire family because he was like, "Too many names to remember."

Emily: [snort]

Sally: He was like, "Fuckin' slaughter 'em, I guess. Firing squad. Line 'em up."

Emily: Yeah, true, though. Robert Jordan, for having the immense cast of characters that he does, doesn't really kill anyone off.

Sally: Yeah. Very interesting.

Emily: Until, obviously the Last Battle when some people will die. Hope that's not a spoiler.

Sally: [sarcastically] People will die in the battle?

Emily: People will die in the big end-of-the-world battle? People will die in Tarmon Gai'don, which I didn't figure out until five years ago sounds like Armageddon?

Sally: Armageddon, yeah.

Emily: [laugh] I'm so stupid.

Sally: You are not.

Emily: I am, a little bit.

Sally: We're all a little bit stupid.

Emily: Whatever. So they get to Whitebridge. Brief convo with Bayle Domon, who basically offers them a gig. He gives them back their money that he took from them, although not the coins that Moiraine gave them—

Sally: [snort] Yeah.

Emily: He did a whole money-change switcheroo in the back.

Sally: Who knows what he's doing.

Emily: But basically he gives them back their money and is like, "You basically earned your fare because you were entertaining my crew, my semi-mutinous crew through this entire, terrible river voyage." And he says, "You are welcome to come with me to Illian, which is gonna be my next stop." And Thom is really interested in that, so much so that he gets severely distracted thinking about it. But Rand is really set on moving on to Caemlyn, which is where they agreed they're going to meet Moiraine, basically. Although I don't know – do they ever actually have a conversation with Moiraine that's like –

Sally: Now that you mention it, I don't think so?

Emily: I think they all just sort of know the plan.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is, “We’re gonna be ending – we’re going to Tar Valon by way of Caemlyn.”

Sally: By way of Caemlyn. So they know.

Emily: And so they just sort of figured, “We’ll get to Caemlyn, and Moiraine will do the rest,” which, to be honest, that’s what happens.

Sally: Yeah. But it’s also like a pretty big assumption.

Emily: I know.

Sally: Being like, you know, traveling from Ely, Nevada to New York City by way of Chicago? Sure, I guess.

Emily: Imagine rolling up to New York City and you’re like, “My mentor figure will find me.”

Sally: “My mentor figure will find me.”

Emily: “I have trust. I’m going to check into this Best Western.”

Sally: [snort] Okay. I love a Best Western, don’t hate on Best Western.

Emily: I’m not hating on Best Western, I’m comparing Best Western to the greatest inn in the series. Actually, no, that’s the Nine-Horse Hitch, let’s be honest.

Sally: AAAAHH. [laugh] The Good Night’s Ride.

Emily: Oooh. Ooh!

Sally: Very sexy. Fill in the blanks for yourselves, kids.

Emily: There’s also a little interlude where – what’s his name? The guy who –

Sally: Gelb.

Emily: Gelb, some – whatever his name is, Rand stepped on him and that’s his defining characteristic.

Sally: Hilarious.

Emily: That he got stepped on and is angry about it. But also he’s like a lazy skunk who was always –

Sally: [laugh] Lazy skunk? Oh my god.

Emily: What?

Sally: That was so good.

Emily: I could call him a rat fink. That’s my mom’s favorite, uh –

Sally: “Rat fink.” He’s a lazy skunk, that rat fink.

Emily: “He’s a rat fink.”

Sally: What does that even mean?

Emily: Rat fink?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don't know . . . let's Google it.

Sally: Don't Google it.

Emily: I have to know. It's a fictional – uh, fictional character? “Rat fink is one of the several Hot Rod characters created by artist Ed ‘Big Daddy’ Roth.”

Sally: Kill me.

Emily: “He’s an anti-hero answer to Mickey Mouse.”

Sally: What the shit.

Emily: So.

Sally: Did you ever watch “Biker Mice from Mars”?

Emily: Why the fuck would I have ever watched that?

Sally: [laugh]

Emily: This is genuinely –

Sally: He’s frightening.

Emily: This is genuinely upsetting.

Sally: Yeah, I really don't like this.

Emily: I don't like him. I'm closing the tab.

Sally: Just send one of those pictures to your mom, no context.

Emily: [laugh] The amount of times my mother has used “rat fink” as a derogatory term is hilarious.

Sally: Now you know she’s calling you a fucking demon.

Emily: I don't think she knows. I think she just thinks it's a funny combination of words.

Sally: Okay.

Emily: I guess we'll find out, though. I should ask her. Um. Yeah. Gelb, this treacherous rat –

Sally: Lazy skunk.

Emily: --fink, lazy skunk, any number of bad adjectives –

Sally: He’s a fuckin' bitch.

Emily: O-kay.

Sally: [laugh]

Emily: That was going a little far.

Sally: Is it?

Emily: He's just a side character.

Sally: Floran Gelb. Fucking goober.

Emily: Whatever. He's upset and Domon has him arrested, basically. Or he just kicks him off the boat, I think is what happens.

Sally: Yeah. He does. He's like, "You can't work here anymore."

Emily: He's like, "Get off," and has some of his guys escort him off the ship. And Thom and co. are like, "Huh, well, that was dramatic, but we don't have anything to do with this man's livelihood, so peace out." And they go looking for an inn to regroup. Thom chooses the grossest inn around, which they enter, and we meet our first unpleasant innkeeper, who's kind of like this gross guy, who immediately – when Thom asks him what the town gossip is, he sits down and is like, "Let me tell you about my bunions."

Sally: Yeah, it's super nasty.

Emily: Like, "My feet hurt."

Sally: Everybody's feet hurt. Don't tell me about your feet.

Emily: Yeah, everybody's feet are in pain all the time, you weirdo.

Sally: He's super gross.

Emily: He's gross, the inn is kind of gross, but Thom, in one of his many lessons about not just gleeman-ing but spying, is like, "This is at the very, in the very center of town, so anyone who passes through here is going to be known by this guy." So Thom asks about, basically in a really roundabout way – oh, no. He starts asking, trying to get at it, and then Rand basically is like, "Have you seen our friends? It's a woman who's tiny and a lesbian witch, and there's a man who is really mean and tall, and then there's two young ladies, one of whom has a braid and could probably kill you, and the other one . . . less could kill you."

Sally: "And the other one is my girlfriend and I don't let her make any of her own decisions because I'm a piece of garbage."

Emily: "Yeah, and also Perrin." I forgot he was missing too.

Sally: Yeah, and he's like, "And this puppy. Our curly-haired dog."

Emily: "And there's a big boy. Just a real—"

Sally: "There's a BIG BOY."

Emily: "Just a real BIG boy."

Sally: [laugh]

Emily: He's got an axe.

Sally: He's a big boy with an axe.

Emily: Yeah. Anyway. Innkeeper's like, "Nah, haven't seen them. But some other people have been asking about them, and that said, I don't really want you here anymore because the people who were asking about them were weird-looking." [laugh]

Sally: [laugh] Which is hilarious, because –

Emily: I'm really good at synopsis.

Sally: You're incredible at synopsis. One time, Emily, uh – synopsisized? What's the verb of that?

Emily: Synopsisized? Yeah, sure.

Sally: Synopsisized an entire book for me, just standing in the doorway of her room, and it was a life-changing experience. It was so funny.

Emily: Which book?

Sally: What was it, like, The Beasts of Night . . . and Dark . . .

Emily: Oh, that one. That was an easy book to synopsisize because it was FULL OF SHIT.

Sally: [laugh] Okay. Whitebridge. So then the innkeeper's like, "You can't be here anymore, my dudes, because the creepy people are looking for your friends." And then he walks away, is like, "Get outta my inn."

Emily: He's really like, "Finish your drinks and leave."

Sally: "Finish your drinks and – you don't have to go home but you can't stay here."

Emily: Ooh. What accent was that?

Sally: I don't know. [laugh] And then they get up to leave, but then Floran Gelb, lazy skunk, is in the common room spreading lies about everybody's favorite pirate uncle Bayle Domon, because he's like "Bayle Domon's going to talk shit about me, but fuck you, I'm gonna talk shit about you first."

Emily: Pirates are the most gossipy bitches.

Sally: [laugh] He's like, "Imma make sure Bayle Domon doesn't work anymore in this town." And Bayle Domon's like, "No, I'm gonna make sure YOU don't work anymore in this town." It's very dramatic.

Emily: And these boys are just in the middle of this pirate drama.

Sally: Just the middle of this pirate drama in four acts.

Emily: And there's this – there's a whole conflict going on because Rand just wants to go to Caemlyn, but Thom's like, "You know what? Illian sounds like a pretty sweet deal right about now because we've got Trollocs on our asses."

Sally: Yeah, let's fuckin' leave – he's like, "They're about to announce the Great Hunt for the Horn."

Emily: Yeah, boys. You guys aren't going to be good gleemen, but –

Sally: But we're gonna do our best.

Emily: Yeah – I mean, it'll get you away. From it all.

Sally: There's an alternate timeline where Mat Cauthon became Thom Merrilin two.

Emily: Thom Merrilin two point oh? Boyz in the House?

Sally: [laugh] Thom Merrilin 2: Boyz in the House. Yeah.

Emily: And Rand . . .

Sally: Rand became . . .

Emily: Yeah, what's Rand's destiny?

Sally: [simultaneously] Dead, hopefully.

Emily: Okay. [laugh]

Sally: Rand's destiny – in this alternate timeline where Mat is Thom, Rand would be – uh, I wanted to say Rhuarc, but that's too good.

Emily: Yeah, no. Don't they – in book two they do that whole special stone where they get to see all their alternate timelines. Sadly this one doesn't come up.

Sally: Yeah, this one doesn't come up. The one where Rand is a gleeman.

Emily: Here's what I think would happen in the Illian timeline. Obviously the world would end in a few years because the Dragon Reborn wouldn't – you know.

Sally: Do his Dragon-ing instead of juggling.

Emily: Do his shit. This is all assuming, of course, that the boys make it to Illian and successfully evade the Dark One until the world ends. Which, like – I don't know, there's something there about how if the Dark One had just left Rand alone, maybe he – if he hadn't sent Trollocs, then it would've been pretty tough to uproot Rand and company from the Two Rivers, and maybe he would've just stayed there.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And the world fucking would've ended anyway. But no. He had to send Trollocs after them.

Sally: Well, that's just like the thing in myth, it's like the self-fulfilling prophecy.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Where it's like, Oedipus' dad is like, "My son's gonna kill me," so he fucking binds his feet and sends his baby out into the wilderness, and then he's adopted and then eventually ends up killing his dad cause he didn't know it's actually his dad!

Emily: That was a jump.

Sally: Okay, there's like stuff that happens in the middle –

Emily: I know.

Sally: Do you want me to summarize the entire Oedipus trilogy by Sophocles: One: Oedipus at – what, Oedipus Rex. Two: Oedipus at Colonus. Three: Antigone. Self-fulfilling prophecies.

Emily: And if they had managed to not get killed by the Dark One immediately, then I guess they would've been in Illian when Sammael takes over, and if he didn't kill them, then yeah – Mat would have already become a master gleeman, based on juggling alone.

Sally: And dick-sucking.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Illian is where Mat learns how to suck dick.

Emily: [snort] Okay. And Rand, I like to imagine, becomes a sailor. He really liked being on that boat.

Sally: He did like being on that boat.

Emily: He could stay with Bayle Domon's crew, or he could start his own rival crew and die in a storm tragically.

Sally: Amazing. So . . .

Emily: He could become Ahab and look for a great white whale.

Sally: Okay. Yes, I was going to go with a Black Sails parallel.

Emily: Oooh. No.

Sally: Bayle Domon is our main. Who would Rand be? Charles Vane?

Emily: Rand's . . . okay, well, wait. Rand's ginger, so you'd think it would be Flint, but Flint's way too good a complicated –

Sally: Competent.

Emily: Complicated, competent gay character.

Sally: Plus Rand is so aggressively heterosexual.

Emily: UGH. And that's the problem. There aren't very many aggressively heterosexual Black Sails characters.

Sally: Which is good.

Emily: He could be the creepy governor who comes in in season three and marries Eleanor.

Sally: Yeah. Oh, he totally would be that guy. I hate that guy. He's nasty.

Emily: Yeah. Especially because Eleanor's a lot like Elayne. White feminist.

Sally: White feminist nonsense. Eleanor's the worst. Okay. There we go. Rand becomes a sailor, yes. A good – or –

Emily: Rand becomes a sailor, somehow manages to evade all the gayness that comes with sailors because he's just that stupid. Mat, meanwhile, gays the hell out of being a bard. [laugh]

Sally: Hell, yeah. Gayest bard you ever saw.

Emily: And Thom . . .

Sally: Retires peacefully.

Emily: Retires peacefully at the age of ninety and dies in his sleep.

Sally: Yeah. Dies in his sleep.

Emily: Instead, what we get . . .

Sally: Instead, what we get – Rand becomes Jesus? Mat becomes Alexander the Great? I don't know. That's just what I've gathered.

Emily: Yeah, sort of.

Sally: And Thom . . . suffers. Does that sound about right? Were those good predictions?

Emily: Um. Alexander the Great is more attached to Rand.

Sally: Okay, that's fair.

Emily: Sorry.

Sally: No, that's fair, I don't know war.

Emily: Mat has more of a – Mat doesn't have a lot of conquering, like – a lot of the people that we think of as great generals are great conquerors, like Alexander the Great and Genghis Khan and Napoleon, who just conquered huge swathes of territory, but that's more of a Rand vibe because Rand actually takes over these places and starts governing them. Mat actually just – is a brilliant general who doesn't have anything to do with conquering any territories. Yeah. He actually is more of a defender. Guerilla – sorry, now I'm thinking about warfare. Guerilla warfare.

Sally: So . . . George Washington?

Emily: Yeah, he's got more of a George Washington vibe.

Sally: Hell yeah.

Emily: Glad we got there eventually.

Sally: Hell yeah. Can't believe I made a military connection.

Emily: [laugh]

Sally: Been friends with Emily for three years, this is what you get.

Emily: [laugh]

Sally: Make one good military reference every three years of friendship.

Emily: Oh my God.

Sally: That is the three-to-one ratio.

Emily: Hey, we passed our three-year anniversary and we didn't even . . .

Sally: No, we didn't. It's in June.

Emily: What? What month is it? [laugh]

Sally: It is March. [laugh]

Emily: [laugh] I really thought it was May for a second.

Sally: Why? [laugh] You're right, it is in May. Anniversary of our meeting: May fifteenth, or sixteenth.

Emily: God, okay. What's our actual anniversary?

Sally: Well, that depends on how we quantify it.

Emily: Yeah. Anyway.

Sally: Anyway. Food for thought.

Emily: Food for thought. Something to think about – when is our anniversary?

Sally: Every day.

Emily: [sigh] Oh-kay.

Sally: [laugh] And in this alternate timeline, Perrin never leaves the forest and just –

Emily: Yeah, Perrin just chills with the wolf people, and then Egwene ditches him and is like, “I’m still gonna go become the Amyrlin Seat” because that’s the only plotline I truly approve of.

Sally: Yeah, true. And she definitely doesn’t date Gaul – or, Gawyn.

Emily: Can you imagine if Egwene and Gaul dated?

Sally: Gaul would be the only man I would approve of Egwene dating.

Emily: Can you imagine the power couple that that would be?

Sally: It’d be incredible.

Emily: She’d have an actually competent Warder.

Sally: The dream, really.

Emily: Can you imagine?

Sally: That’d be incredible.

Emily: God, I’d love an Aiel Warder.

Sally: [whisper] I know.

Emily: They’d be incredible. Because they wouldn’t be like the subservient nonsense that most of the Aiel – the Aes Sedai expect from their Warders.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They’d just be like, “Fuck you, I do what I want.”

Sally: “But I’m still going to protect you because I respect you as a woman and as a witch.”

Emily: “Because I’m fucking cool. As a woman and as a witch, I respect you.”

Sally: So then, in the middle of pirate crew beef plus the insertion of a new timeline into the string theory universe, the Illian timeline, Thom’s like, “We can’t go out there because Gelb’s gonna see us,” so instead they crawl out the fucking window. [laugh]

Emily: Yeah. Wait, do they really crawl out the window?

Sally: They fucking crawl out the window!

Emily: I thought they just went through a side door.

Sally: I feel like they crawled out the window. That may be wishful thinking.

Emily: I love that. They totally do go out a window. Oh my God. They go out a window to an alley, and Thom separates the money that they just got back from Domon, and is like, “In case we get separated,” because Thom’s a cool uncle who’s savvy as hell, and then he goes to scout out what he’s doing, which leaves Rand and Mat alone for a little bit to argue about where they’re gonna go. Rand is all for Caemlyn still. Mat’s kinda like, “I think everyone’s dead because I’m depressed as hell because this dagger is fucking with my mind.”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: God, I want the – I want the rewrite of this where Mat doesn’t have the dagger.

Sally: Yeah, what would that be like?

Emily: Yeah, because he’d be a totally different support system for Rand, going forward. He’d just be like, “Yeah.”

Sally: “Yeah. Caemlyn, my dude.”

Emily: Caemlyn, my dude.

Sally: Or would Mat want to go to Illian?

Emily: He might also want to go to Illian because it would get him away from the Aes Sedai, but I also like to think he’d be really worried about Perrin and Egwene and Nynaeve.

Sally: Specifically Egwene.

Emily: Specifically Egwene, because he loves Egwene.

Sally: Yeah, but not in an overbearing way. He’s just like, “I hope Egwene’s okay.”

Emily: One of my favorite moments in the entire series is at the end of book three when Mat’s talking to that old lady about the girls that he needs to rescue from the Stone, and she says, like, “Oh, you love one of them,” and he just totally is like, “Yeah.”

Sally: “Yeah, I do.”

Emily: In a totally platonic way, I love all of them. Except Elayne.

Sally: Mat’s like, “Fuck Elayne.”

Emily: Mat’s like, “Honestly, Elayne can die. But Egwene and Nynaeve –“

Sally: “Egwene and Nynaeve – I do need to save them.”

Emily: “—are my girls.” Yeah.

Sally: Yeah. Egwene—Elayne can die.

Emily: But anyway, after the alleyway, Thom goes and gets a new cloak and is like, “Here, take my gleeman’s cloak with my barden – my harp and flute in it. Here you go.”

Sally: Barden like burden. It’s like his bard’s burden. [near laughter] It’s full of his bard’s stuff so it’s a barden.

Emily: I – what?

Sally: [laugh] You said barden, which is like bard—

Emily: I know what I said, Sally. [laugh]

Sally: But do you get the joke that you made?

Emily: The joke? The JOKE?

Sally: [laugh] It was funny.

Emily: No.

Sally: [laugh] It was.

Emily: You're so tired.

Sally: Don't judge me.

Emily: Only God can judge me.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Only —

Sally: Only Michelle Obama can judge me.

Emily: [snort] True, though.

Sally: Okay, so after Thom passes off his barden to Rand, because there's like — changing pocket, things, which I just think is a really lovely scene of like, pulling things out of one cloak and stuffing them in his new cloak —

Emily: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sally: Which is hilarious.

Emily: Rand is like, "This cloak is endless."

Sally: Yeah, it is like Mary Poppins' bag. Thom just pulls out a dog and is like [indecipherable noises] basically.

Emily: "Here's a Chihuahua."

Sally: "Here's a Chihuahua."

Emily: "I forgot I had this in here."

Sally: It's Mat's new support animal.

Emily: He needs one desperately.

Sally: He needs one super bad.

Emily: Um but then, basically, they are about to leave, walking in the square and what should they see but a Myrddraal.

Sally: First we have Thom's tragic nephew back story.

Emily: Oh, fuck, I totally forgot. Uh, yeah. They're like, "Hey, why are you helping us?" And Thom's like, "Because one of my nephews got into some trouble with the Aes Sedai and I wasn't around and he died." And here's the, uh, not-Cliffnotes version: One of Thom's nephews could channel, but Thom was busy fucking the Queen of Andor—

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And couldn't be bothered to go help his nephew. So when he did finally find out about his nephew he broke up with the Queen of Andor and became a rogue bard.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, grief is weird like that.

Emily: Grief's weird like that. So – that's the story of both the royal court of Andor and how Thom's poor nephew – who I know has a weird spelling but is derivative of "Owen" –

Sally: Yeah. It's like O, W . . .

Emily: Oh-wayne or something.

Sally: Y, N . . .

Emily: I don't give a fuck. Owen.

Sally: There's like six As or something. Who knows.

Emily: Yeah. Anyway, Owen died. RIP Owen.

Sally: I know, I feel like Owen would be a sweetie.

Emily: I know.

Sally: Just like – I want that to be his truth.

Emily: It's actually – it's actually a kind of interesting scene because it's the first time we get the idea of men channeling becoming a tragic thing instead of something to be feared.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Because the boys are so afraid of it. Especially in that rural setting of the Two Rivers, everyone's so afraid of witchcraft and so terrified of men being able to channel, and here Thom's saying, like, "Oh, it was someone I knew and someone I was related to and I can't even talk about it freely because people are so freaked out about it." But he was a sweetie and he died because being gentled kills you.

Sally: Yeah.

[pause]

Sally: Ugh. And what – this is like a total random thing, but Thom's story is super masculine, like, "I was too busy fucking someone to care about my children—"

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Okay, surrogate children, and then "I therefore have now gone on a weird mission of – not vengeance, but kind of?" But I'm also super into that even though it has a lot of hallmarkers of stupid storylines.

Emily: Well, I think it helps that it's his nephew, not one of his actual children or a wife or something.

Sally: Could you imagine Thom as a dad? An actual dad.

Emily: Eugh. Don't like it.

Sally: Weird. Okay.

Emily: It also helps that he doesn't tell us he was fucking the Queen of Andor right now.

Sally: [snort]

Emily: He's just like, "I was busy."

Sally: Parentheses: Fucking the Queen of Andor.

Emily: Parentheses: Fucking the Queen of Andor. [laugh]

Sally: Period. Footnote.

Emily: Can you imagine, though, if they'd known?

Sally: [laugh]

Emily: Because Rand meets Morgase later in this book, and he would have looked at her and been like, "You fucked Thom Merrilin. And I have SO many questions."

Sally: Yeah. Honestly.

Emily: I mean, we all do. It was a very confusing time.

Sally: It is a very confusing – it's also just a confusing pairing. Because again – we've talked about this – Thom is such a hypersexualized character, but to me it's like –

Emily: He's a granddad.

Sally: Even as like a young person, when he was younger –

Emily: Even when he was younger, he's still, what? Morgase is, what, forty-five. Thom's supposed to be like sixty-five.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: That's gross. Yeah. Super gross.

Sally: First of all.

Emily: Eugh.

Sally: And then Morgase goes the other way, with her guard –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I don't know if they actually fuck, but she's like –

Emily: Oh. Don't get me started.

Sally: Do they? Ew. Gross. I hate that.

Emily: I can't with Morgase's entire plotline. I'm sorry, but it's gonna get bad.

Sally: I've only read like four pages of it. And it was decent, but . . .

Emily: It was decent, but it's gonna get worse.

Sally: Christ. Okay, so Thom Merrilin gives us his tragic backstory. In passing. They go—

Emily: And immediately, because this is a hallmark, once you give someone your tragic backstory you're immediately then allowed to die.

Sally: True. It's like —

Emily: That's how it goes.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is why you should never unlock your tragic backstory. Keep that all bottled up inside your chest. Bring it to your goddamn grave. Oh wait, you're never gonna get to the grave because no one can kill you, you're immortal.

Sally: Oh.

Emily: That's what I'm saying.

Sally: Emily has discovered the secrets of immortality.

Emily: Philosopher's Stone who?

Sally: True.

Emily: The Philosopher's Stone? It's emotional damage.

Sally: So Edward Elric was there all along.

Emily: Yeah. [laugh] The real Philosopher's Stone was in him all along.

Sally: The emotional damage we all carry along inside us.

Emily: Okay, but actually it was. Because — you know, he had the power — y'know, okay, never mind.

Sally: [sings] I've got the power!

Emily: We need to stop talking about Fullmetal Alchemist on this show.

Sally: I can't. It's so good. Okay. Thom Merrilin. Killed immediately because he gives out his tragic backstory and then it's like, "Oh, no."

Emily: Yeah, literally gives — like signs off his fucking symbols of identity, his harp, flute and cloak —

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is like, "Hold these, I'm going to go fucking stab this villainous —

Sally: Demon. Monster.

Emily: Demon-monster. Faceless thing.

Sally: Marshmallow thing, yeah.

Emily: Marshmallow?

Sally: I don't know.

Emily: Because it has no face?

Sally: Yeah. Like a white face.

Emily: It has bones. [laugh]

Sally: I don't know. [laugh] Marshmallow just seemed like a good word. I realize now it's not. So Thom Merrill goes to fight this Myrdraal.

Emily: Dramatic AF. Like, twirls his knives, charges it, basically screams [terrible British accent], "For Narnia! And for Aslan!"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: While the boys just turn tail and run.

Sally: And what – okay, this is not relevant, but one of my favorite things that ever happens is Thom says to Rand, he says, "You're too goddamn tall, can't you slouch?" And so while they're running Rand is like Muppet-running through Whitebridge because he's like, "I'm so tall!"

Emily: [laugh] Rand, halfway through running, is like, "Oh uh, Thom told me I need to stop drawing attention to myself with my height," so—

Sally: Yeah. [laugh]

Emily: Crouches down, and Mat is like, "Goddamn."

Sally: Like, "Bitch, you're running." [laugh] "Everybody is looking. Now you just look like—"

Emily: Mat's like, "Can you be normal for ONCE?"

Sally: [laugh]

Emily: "In your fucking life."

Sally: Yeah. Mat's like, "You look so stupid. Everybody's looking now because you—"

Emily? "I'M the crazy one?"

Sally: Yeah. Mat's just talking to his dagger like, "You see this bitch?"

Emily: [laugh] Anyway, okay, so Thom's dead. Fuck.

Sally: Dead. In quotes.

Emily: Yeah, "dead," in quotes because oh-ho-ho, the bard dies first but the bard also never dies.

Sally: The bard can't – you can't kill a bard. "I'm a bad bitch, you can't kill me." Thom Merrill.

Emily: Yeah. Thom is only like unconscious. He makes a – a really good death-saving throw. In the – the off-screen, I guess.

Sally: Yeah, he Nat twenties plus some type of modifier. You don't do modifiers on death-saving rolls, but.

Emily: You don't?

Sally: No.

Emily: Okay. Again, have never played.

Sally: At least I don't think. Now I [indiscernible; Emily talks over her]

Emily: Now I really want to know everybody's D&D stats. Because Thom's would just be through the roof.

Sally: Weirdly, yeah.

Emily: Yeah, because – he –

Sally: Thom is multi-class as a bard, a wizard, a barbarian, a rogue.

Emily: But he's like sixty. He's just – by – because he's been alive longer than everyone else he's just leveled up way more than everyone else.

Sally: Yeah, Thom is level fifty multi-class bard and rogue.

Emily: Damn.

Sally: I figured it out.

Emily: What's everyone – okay, no.

Sally: We can't do this.

Emily: We can't talk about this right now.

Sally: We'll have a spin-off – we'll have another episode.

Emily: [laugh]

Sally: Um. So then – I am really interested in the fact that you give someone your tragic backstory, usually it's like the mentor, and then they die and, yeah, Thom has literally passed off symbols of his identity to Mat and Rand, which, yes, Mat and Rand are then physically able to inhabit a part of Thom's identity, which is the gleeman aspect that allows him to live.

Emily: Yeah, it's like, "These are literally the tools you need to survive."

Sally: Yeah, so that's very interesting. But it's just a very interesting notion that you hand off your emotional labor to somebody.

Emily: Mm.

Sally: And then they have to carry it, also along with the guilt that you died for them.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It's just like – no wonder all heroes have such goddamn complexes. You know? It's just weird. And I don't . . .

Emily: Well, it's funny because you'd think that would be immediately undone by Thom then – them finding out that Thom isn't dead in book two—

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Rand, of course, runs into Thom in Cairhien and is so relieved, he's so happy, and he's like, "I fucking have your heart and flute." Like, "I've been carrying it with me. Here you go." And Thom's like, "God, my precious."

Sally: This tall boy.

Emily: But actually he gives Thom back his harp and just keeps the flute. And that's kind of interesting because even when Thom's returned to them that's sort of symbolic of Rand keeping some of the emotional guilt attached to what happened.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And so, yeah, you're right, he just becomes weighed down, literally, symbolically—

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: With other people dying for him. Which, I know we've talked about, is really annoying when he applies it specifically to women, as women dying for him—

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But yeah, of course, if people were dying for you, people, regardless of gender, whatever, were going into battle for you based on a prophecy, that would be really upsetting.

Sally: It would be super upsetting. But it's just – yeah, again, I haven't unpacked why it's annoying, specifically—

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: So yeah, I'm just very interested in that. Of course it would be troubling to Rand to be like, "Thom died for me. And, I guess, Mat." [laugh]

Emily: [laugh] Mat was only semi-present at the time.

Sally: Mat was only semi-present. [laugh] But – yeah, and so then it's like, now Mat and Rand are on their own. They've been severed from the entire party, anybody who's competent, basically. And this is a very particularly – what we're entering into – is a particularly important sequence for Rand.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Because Mat, while physically there, very quickly becomes mentally not-there.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And I was having a really interesting conversation with a co-worker today, for various reasons, about stuff that happened, and she was talking about, like, "It's super scary when people start acting really agitated, like that's really very frightening, but at least you can interact with them, so there's like a level of – it's still a similar, still similar to a human reaction, but as soon as people vacate the present and stop becoming responsive, it's way more frightening because there's no way to reach that person. And that's what happens with Mat. He does get angry and agitated, but eventually he just goes completely internal.

Emily: Yeah. So Rand basically has a dependent.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is Mat. And just is dragging him through this stretch of road – this stretch of straight road to Caemlyn.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And it's really terrifying.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I mean, Mat will have his back a couple of times, but – God, it's just fucked up.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And really important for his hero's journey, and blah blah blah blah blah.

Sally: Yeah, because this is the moment when Rand, as a hero, is quote unquote made. Because he is entirely alone, more or less.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And he has to do something by himself.

Emily: And it's interesting that he doesn't do anything particularly heroic or selfless in this time period.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's just going to survive.

Sally: Rand – yeah, Rand, like you mentioned last episode, specific iteration of the Hero's Journey is in many ways very interesting, because yes, he's doing these world-altering battles, but a lot of the key stuff that he does is very much attached to survival.

Emily: And trying to survive intact.

Sally: Yeah, just getting through.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: So.

Emily: So on that note.

Sally: Very interesting.

Emily: Vaguely positive stuff about Rand.

Sally: Yeah, vaguely positive.

Emily: Um, yeah, let's be done. [laugh]

Sally: House-keeping. You should, hopefully, if you've made it to episode nine, know all our socials, but: Everybody Hates Rand, find us on Twitter, Tumblr, Instagram. And our gmail is

[everybodyhatesrand@gmail.com](mailto:everybodyhatesrand@gmail.com). We are getting like – okay, not like super close, but fairly close to the end of the Eye of the World.

Emily: We're at about the midway point.

Sally: About the midway point. That means we're, you know, getting along there, and as Emily has mentioned in the past episodes, we're going to do a Q&A type thing in between this book and the next book, so if you have questions, send them to us. They can be Wheel of Time related, ideally, or literature-related, or – I don't know how willing Emily is to answer personal questions – but you can ask me what my favorite color is and I'll super answer.

Emily: I just told you that the secret to immortality is keeping your—

Sally: It's why I'm already dead.

[laugh]

Emily: I will not answer personal questions truthfully, but I will make up a thrilling tale.

Sally: Okay, I'm not talking about personal questions, like, "Tell me your childhood trauma—"

Emily: You tell them your childhood trauma every episode!

Sally: Okay, but not like the real ones.

Emily: Okay, well.

Sally: But if you're just like, "Hey, lads, what do you think of dinosaurs?" And I will tell you, in detail, why I love them.

Emily: She's wearing a brontosaurus necklace right now. That I gave her.

Sally: That Emily gave me. Yeah.

Emily: Okay, you need to go watch RuPaul, and I need to do anything but this. So.

Sally: Um, okay.

Emily: Sign us off.

Sally: Um. [sighs] There's multiple traumas to talk about. Um.

Emily: [laugh]

Sally: But, in a bit of divine irony, the – literally five minutes after I got my driver's permit, I walked outside, opened the car door, and hit myself so hard in the face that I started bleeding and have a scar on my forehead.

Emily: [laugh] That's what that's from?!

Sally: Yeah, that's what that's from. I opened my mother's car door and hit myself so hard in the face. Like this little tiny scar over my eyebrow. And I was bleeding profusely, because the head bleeds a lot, there's a lot of blood vessels there. And my mom was just in the car, and I was like, cupping blood in my hands, and she was like, "I think we should go to Target." And I was like, "Maybe we should go to the hospital." [laugh] I didn't need stitches or anything, it actually wasn't that bad, but she looked over like, "Why would we—Oh my god." So. [laugh]

Emily: [laugh] “I think we should go to Target.”

Sally: [laugh] Bye!