



Episode 22 – “Hand al’Thor”

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SALLY: I don't know what to say. You definitely are not Spider-Man. I wish you were

EMILY: I don't, because that would involve getting bit by a spider, and I hate spiders. You know what's great about *Wheel of Time*? No giant spiders

SALLY: No giant spiders

EMILY: It steals all the other fantasy tropes, but leaves giant spiders alone for whatever reason

SALLY: Excellent

EMILY: So thanks, Robert Jordan, for that.

SALLY: We had a really interesting - not, like, super interesting, but we had a conversation about giant spiders in my *Lord of the Rings* class, because there's like a - there's some, like, funny anecdote... "funny" anecdote how JRR Tolkien being bit by a spider when he was a kid and so everyone is like [bro voice], "Oh it's that the reason?" I don't even know

EMILY: Is that the reason and he's like, "NO, it's not. I just think spiders are freaky and whatever"

SALLY: Who knows. And then Tor wrote an article about it

EMILY: Yeah, I remember that vaguely saw and was like, "I can't look at this because it'll have pictures of spiders, which is something I can't get behind, personally. Anyway, so this has been a super fun intro. Do we have book new book news?"

SALLY: I do have book news! Um - da da da da - so our book news this week is yet another award. So, I guess it's just book award season, but it's significant because it was the Lambda Literary Awards. And Lambda Literary is, like, "A leading organization in United States for the promotion of LGBTQ+ plus literature."

EMILY: Oh, so Pride

SALLY: Yeah so it's Pride, which is why it's coming out

EMILY: Great!

SALLY: Coming out, heh heh

EMILY: Heh!

[Sally laughs]

EMILY: [singing] I'm coming out

BOTH: [singing flatly] I want the world to know

SALLY: So, umm, now I've totally lost my train of thought. But it's interesting because they um - it's interesting in general, of course, to have organizations dedicated to the promotion of LGBTQ+ voices, but they also honored Roxanne Gay last night

EMILY: Aww, that's great

SALLY: Who - I hope you guys know who Roxane Gay is. She's the bomb

EMILY: She's a delight

SALLY: She is a delight. Where is the this is... "Roxane Gay is an African American, bisexual writer, professor, editor, and commentator." So that's what, um - She got their trustee award. So super exciting, and she gave a speech. I mean, I didn't - I don't know if it's posted anywhere. But Lambda tweeted some of it and Roxane tweeted some of it. Just about queer creators putting the stories that they want to in the world, whether or not they're going to be popular. So super lovely and super important, but also a nugget of contra-ver-see - as always with the word shows - is that one of the books, another one of the books that won - and these words are really interesting because it like really divides things out. So, like, I'm looking at an article written by the book blog Book Riot who - another segment, another little nugget of book news. They're doing a giveaway right now, where if you sign up for their science fiction and fantasy newsletter, you are entered to win a \$500 gift card to the bookstore of your choice. So if you're interested in that

EMILY: Ah dunk! I gotta do that.

SALLY: Yeah! And Book Riot's got, I think, really interesting articles so totally would be worth it in my opinion. But they separate the articles out, and it's like lesbian fiction, gay fiction, bisexual fiction, transgender fiction, transgender non-fiction, like

EMILY: I see

SALLY: Lesbian poetry, and so they get really, like...

EMILY: Specific

SALLY: Specific. Which is good, I think, just that it highlights specific things that are happening, but they also give away a Romance Award. And the book that one for gay romance is called *Love and Other Hot Beverages* by Laurie Loft, who is a woman writing -

EMILY: I just was reading about this

SALLY: Yeah? What did you read about it?

EMILY: I just saw a Tumblr post or something, and I wouldn't even have known what the book was called, except I looked in the tags. Just something about how in...the two men...I can't remember. Just there was something gross

SALLY: Yeah, so I saw probably something similar based off a tweet that I saw on our timeline. Somebody that we follow liked it, which linked me to a book blogger - who their [giggles] blog URL is Small Queer, Big Opinions, which is incredible

EMILY: I know [laughs]. Same

SALLY: [laughs]. Yeah. And they were talking - they read the book, and they didn't finish it - good for them. But they were talking about how it's just, like, there's a lot of super gross stuff that happens, but, like, in particular, there's this one moment where the main character is like, "I like my current love interest better than my ex because his skin is unblemished"

EMILY: Ooooh

SALLY: "Like he doesn't have any scars. And my ex was like, covered in scars." Which is just like super disgusting. So...so...super - and I've read a bunch of other reviews of the book that are, like, in addition to that, there's some really unsettling things about consent in one of the scenes, and there's, like, really poor handling of, like, one of the characters is mixed race and there's really poor handling of that. And - because it's written by white woman - and there's some, like, unfortunate mentions of pedophilia, from what I understand. And just a lot of really terrible gay stereotypes, and like things that sort of get grouped into the stories of gay men

EMILY: Is this a straight white woman?

SALLY: I have no idea. I - let me see if I can find out more about her. But I'm not entirely sure it - I don't want to make assumptions because she's never make assumptions about anybody, but it, like, reads very much like that

EMILY: More damage, I think, is being done to the, you know, perception of gay men, particularly, as seen in fiction, like, no one's doing more to damage that, then straightway women

SALLY: Oh I agree with you. I absolutely agree with you

EMILY: JK Rowling comes to mind

SALLY: JK Rowling [makes a gagging noise.] Hmm, so I'm not gonna - I don't know about her sexual orientation, and I don't want to make those assumptions. I will look it up and maybe we can talk about it next week. Clarify

EMILY: I mean it's not like a huge

SALLY: It's not a huge deal. Like, even if she's queer, it's still like, you're doing injustice like identities that you don't occupy. That you don't, you know, yourself possess. You just have to be more aware

EMILY: Yeah there's always going to be more -

SALLY: There's just more work and more research needs to be put involved - put into that, um, because I don't - a lot of people say like, "Write what you know, da da duh da." But it's, like, I think that's really limiting

EMILY: That's reductive

SALLY: Yeah, it's reductive and that creates a culture in which you cannot empathize. Like when we constantly harbor this idea of, like, I will never understand what you're going through. I will never understand what it's like to be XYZ it's, like yes, that's true. But it's like when you try -

EMILY: You still have to try

SALLY: Yeah when you say that so frequently it lets people with privilege off the hook for not trying to emphasize and not educating themselves, and, like, relying on other people to explain it to them they'll be like, "Well I'll just never understand you have to explain it to me," and it's like no, the emotional and intellectual labor of empathy should not be put on the people you should be emphasizing with all the time. So ,whatever that's like a totally different conversation, but um, so it's just, again, the more like the good and the bad of awards and it honestly makes me wonder if this is, in their opinion, the best they could find, I wonder what that speaks to then, to what is in the market right now of, like, what's being published?

EMILY: But that can't be true, you know

SALLY: Yeah, I would hope not. And so I don't - I don't know. I don't, again, I don't trust any type of awards. Probably conversation for another time

EMILY: Yeah we're already -

SALLY: We can't, tragically, spend our entire episode talking about this

EMILY: We can't do this. We have to talk about...[sighs]

SALLY: *Wheel of Time*! So that's your several thousand nuggets of book news -

[Emily laughs]

SALLY: Were kind of packed into that, but -

EMILY: There's a lot going on

SALLY: - it was a really interesting conversation. Weigh in. Tweet us if you have any thoughts. I'd be curious to know

EMILY: Yeah, and I will get the notification that's for sure

SALLY: She sure will

EMILY: I sure will

SALLY: She. Sure. Will.

EMILY: WHAH!

[THEME SONG - "Tubthumping" by Chumbawamba plays]

SALLY: Whah

EMILY: WHAH!

SALLY: This is where the theme song went

EMILY: This Everybody Hates Rand. I'm Emily Juchau

SALLY: And I'm Sally Goodger

EMILY: We're here, very low energy at the kitchen table tonight. I think it's partly because of the dim lighting because one of our light bulbs went out, and I have yet to replace it. I was going to today, but I locked myself out of our building for an hour and a half. So

SALLY: But we're not going to use low energy as an excuse. I'm getting fucking HYPED

EMILY: I going to [laughs]

SALLY: No I'm getting hyped. I've been super low energy the past two episodes, and that was not an appropriate podcasting excuse

EMILY: You haven't. Have you? You might have felt that way, but it didn't come across

SALLY: Well, I sure hope not, kiddos.

EMILY: At least not when I was editing

SALLY: WHAH!

EMILY: Yeah, help, scream. Um, anyWAAAAY

SALLY: Anyway, this is Everybody Hate Rand - Hates Rand

EMILY: Everybody hate Rand

SALLY: Everybody hate Rand

EMILY: Everybody, comma, hate Rand

SALLY: Yeah, it's actually command

EMILY: It's a COMMAND. No, it's not, actually. It's a joke. So if you take it too seriously, we're going to block you

SALLY: Yeah. But last week, we didn't do our requisite spoiler alert. So here is your spoiler alert

EMILY: Oh, my bad

SALLY: We play pretty fast and loose with the books of all books up until book 14. So if that's a problem for you, not the podcast for you my dudes

EMILY: If you want things in the context of book 14 spoilers, you can go to our Patreon. I write a blog about the last three books and I talk about book 14 a lot. But anyway, we

are still in book one Chapter 43 page 646. Follow along, dear readers [laughing]. Are you okay?

SALLY: It is just, like, so exhausting

EMILY: I know

SALLY: I feel like we've been doing this for 100 years and it's just like running through mud, running through tar

EMILY: It's the book one specifically, because I don't really feel that way in books two and three, and it happens again, I guess. I know that hasn't been your experience. You tend to get exhausted

[Sally laughs]

EMILY: Around page 500 of every book if not before, but are you okay ?

SALLY: Um, um. Yeah, we are - but we're talking about book one. We are not talking about my *Wheel of Time* malaise. But it's okay. It's a good thing, because then I always feel like I'm letting the book win, so soon as I hit that malaise then I have to fucking conquer the book and then -

EMILY: [laughing] She legitimately just got crazy eyes

SALLY: [laughs] No, and then we're going to battle. It usually happens so much earlier than page 500, and then I'm like "God I've been reading this book and, in case of book - what am I on? Six? - for like a month and I'm 130 pages in, and I'm about to get pissed

EMILY: That's pretty good

SALLY: Because I'm letting the book win

EMILY: [high pitched voice] You got through the prologue at least

SALLY: Can't talk about that

EMILY: I can't remember how many of the books...Okay, we're talking about book -

SALLY: Currently Mat is dancing with someone. It's very weird. We're talking about book one

EMILY: Oh 'cause he's, like, out with his army. They're going somewhere

SALLY: He's with Talmanes and some other fuckers

EMILY: God I love Talmanes

SALLY: They're talking about how Mat always steals their money in gambling

EMILY: And it's like, but you're the ones who keep gambling with him, you know? Like, what the fuck?

SALLY: I know, you stupid idiot. And Talmanes is like, "I just like, love him so much."

EMILY: Talmanes is like, "This is my illiterate [laughs] - "

SALLY: This is my illiterate...

EMILY: Best friend

SALLY: Best friend person

EMILY: Crazy

SALLY: Okay

EMILY: I'm going to keep saying we're reading chapter 43 until we actually start talking about chapter 43. We are talking about chapter 43. In this fucking chapter Loial explains The Ways, which is the method by which our protagonists are about to travel to the other side of the continent so that they can rescue the Eye of the World, a thing we haven't heard of, until this point [laughs] basically

SALLY: I still don't know what the fuck it is

EMILY: It's, like, just this pool of energy. And, I swear to God, the Eye of the World is not relevant in the rest of the series at all. In fact, I don't even know if it's mentioned, basically, throughout the rest of the series. It's very frustrating, because clearly, like, what Robert Jordan was doing here was trying to force Rand into a situation where he would have to learn that he was the Dragon Reborn, but he couldn't find an actually series appropriate method of doing so. You know? Like, this book reads like he wanted it to be a standalone book, but still wanted to have the option of expanding the series. Yeah, which is why he gives the Eye of the World this vibe that it's like the big bad, you know, and he lets Ba'alzamon occupy this space as the Dark One instead of correcting us. And that's really annoying. It's sometimes the thing authors have to do in order to get published, because sometimes publishers don't want to sign on to a book that definitely has to be a series when they don't even know if first book's going to make any money. But here is just super annoying for the readers because, like, imagine this book if it actually was just, like, made sense in the plot of the series

SALLY: What a wild ride that would be. I still hold to the theory that these books were not edited enough

EMILY: Yeah, that's true

SALLY: I hold to the theory of that, like - while I think yes, you are correct, especially in something that Robert Jordan probably walked in was like, "I want to write 14 books" and they were like, "Pump the brakes, James"

EMILY: I think he - I was reading - he would - he was this nutjob who kept expanding the series, you know? First he was like "It's a trilogy. And they were like, "Okay, great." And he got halfway through book 2 and was like, "Just kidding. It has to be 7 books." And they were like, "Great," and who like, "Just kidding. 12." And it's just like -

SALLY: So that is just support for my theory that it was not - that he just, like, let it happen. And that is - that's the way that I write as I just like, write into something and, like, weird stuff happens. And then you like, go back and edit for cohesion

EMILY: Yeah, but it was like - you try and figure out the end game before you...

SALLY: I mean... [laughs]

EMILY: You know, like he didn't know the end game exactly. Which is surprising given the amount of foreshadowing in this book. But it's like - I don't know. It just - this is the one - maybe not the one book - but this is the worst offender in this series in terms of having a narrative climax that doesn't really mean jack to the rest of the series. Like everything else - the reason Robert Jordan's so good at climaxes throughout the rest of these books is that they are really good for tying together everything that's going on in the series. This one is like, "Who the fuck knows?"

SALLY: And admittedly, like I think you said this earlier in another episode, but this feels like it doesn't even - this entire book feels like it doesn't even connect to the rest of the story. There's a huge gap tonally, thematically, in characterization, in plot, even kind of in structure. Like, it just doesn't super connect, which is probably just because he thought it was going to be something different. But so it just occupies like a really weird space in all 14 of the books

EMILY: I continue to believe that book three is the actual start of the series

SALLY: You're [whispers] correct.

EMILY: Books one and two are merely prologue. Merely, you know, 1400 pages of prologue

SALLY: Yeah I will not believe that this series doesn't actually start with Mat Cauthon's first point of view because it does

EMILY: Right? [laughing] Everything prior to

SALLY: [laughing] Doesn't matter. It's Mat's backstory, motherfuckers

EMILY: Okay we have to actually talk about this. Okay everyone knows - you're listening to a *Wheel of Time* podcast you know what The Ways are. They were created by men who could channel right after the Breaking of the World when the - kind of as a gift the Ogier, who offered them a sanctuary in the *stedding*. There's sort of an interesting aside here about whether or not offering the men sanctuary, like, made the Breaking of the World worse because, like, according to Moiraine, the Red Ajah think that they should have all just been like - they should have been denied sanctuary, because when they were given the sanctuary and returned to the world, could channel again, and went mad, that prolonged the breaking. Moiraine and the Blue Ajah think that sanctuary helped save what could be saved quote unquote

SALLY: Which is - that is like -

EMILY: Just an interesting like little historical tidbit. I always like things where it's like, "Oh and there's just like little argument among historians," because that, I don't know, it just feels very real world to me

SALLY: Yeah no it totally - that's what happens. Like that happens in history and myth and religion and, like, the idea of whether or not the Christian Fall was preordained. And just questions like that. It's all super interesting, and so whether or not we save or broke the world by harboring these fugitives or whatever. They're not really fugitives

EMILY: Yeah basically. They are fugitives at that point

SALLY: It's, yeah, interesting

EMILY: Anyway, so the men did this, but of course, because they were using their portion of the One Power, which was tainted, The Ways themselves actually grew tainted and they're sort of a - I don't know. Of course Robert Jordan does a ton in this series to talk about how power becomes corrupted and The Ways are just, like, this corrupted force. Same with Shadar Logoth, where it's just like - just been occupied by this malevolent evil force that doesn't really, isn't really human, but just sort of, like, this thing. And Machin Shin, the black wind, is sort of the embodiment of the male half the source. The part that went crazy I guess. Which is all just really interesting. Like, I find it really, I don't know, I just think it's really cool

SALLY: The, like, physical corruption of the magic?

EMILY: Yeah

SALLY: I agree with you. Sorry. I went off, my brain went off a little

EMILY: [laughs] Okay. Sorry. I know I went off a little

SALLY: Now, I was listening I'm sorry. 'kay. It is very interesting. And the - because, as we've talked about the One Power as a magic system is really fascinating, especially because it seems to be like, like a physical thing. Like, it almost seems to occupy physical space, where as opposed to being this like ethereal, ephemeral thing that people tap into - even though it is called channeling. The One Power reads so much as a physical...thing that you can touch

EMILY: Yeah because the way it's described is that you're weaving, basically and it's not - I think maybe not mentioned enough, but once you start realizing that a lot of the people who are using the Power are actually doing the hand motions of, like, actually weaving various threads. That's really interesting and it just becomes this way more physical thing in your mind's eye. Of course you don't necessarily have to do this, but a lot of people learn the motions. Anyway, I just think it's really cool

SALLY: Yeah and so the idea that it got tainted - I - my brain and off on this weird thing about how strange it is that things get tainted at all? Like food goes bad. Magic goes bad. It's just a weird thing that happens. Anyway

EMILY: Well, that's something that crops up more and more in this series. Like, as the Last Battle approaches in the last few books, not only does the weather get whacked, but, like, food can't stay preserved. Food starts rotting more and more often

SALLY: Hmm, that's interesting

EMILY: And like it just becomes this theme that whenever a character's eating or whatever, you know, they will mention offhandedly, "Oh you know with this tea [Emily laughs], we have to, like, mint it out of its life to make sure that it tastes sour, basically. Or with - we can meat anymore and all the bread has weevils." And shit like that

SALLY: Disgusting

EMILY: Yeah it's all disgusting, but it's also just like interesting

SALLY: Yeah. I'm so much more interested in the idea of evil as decay, than evil as darkness

EMILY: I agree. Yeah that's interesting way to think of it

Sally: Because darkness is, like, A) over done and B) really problematic, especially when it starts to be applied to bodies, like. physical bodies and the evil that the white colonialists wanted to put onto black bodies. But even just, like, decay is much more active and like, it has so much more -

EMILY: And much more frightening, I think. Like, The Ways when they get into them are freaky as hell. [laughing] Like nothing, nothing's freakier than, like this, like not

darkness, but, like, dimness, where you can't see beyond this certain edge. And what you can see defies logic, and everywhere you're stepping it feels like the ground is going to give way, because it's on the verge of that

SALLY: No, we'll get to it later, but, like, the scariest part of this chapter, the chapter in The Ways for me, is not that it's like super dark, because, like, yes, that's, like, super frightening, but

EMILY: There are ways to solve it

SALLY: There are ways to solve it. So like, they have light. They're saying together. Like, they kind of have the idea of the path. But it's like, when they get to the end of a bridge that's just, like, broken, and there's nowhere else to go. Because the rocks have crumbled, and the idea of just being trapped and the world around you falling apart under your feet is so terrifying

EMILY: It's so cool, and in the larger context of the series, we already talked about the food rotting, but like, you know, we see these - as early as book three and maybe even book two - we see these little bubbles of evil, as characters call them. They're just like little reality warps where, like, basically the dark one bursts through the seams of the physical world. And they'll start happening more and more frequently as the series progresses, and it just becomes this thing of, like, I don't know, Mat will be walking down the road and he'll look over and see a fucking ghost town that's just occupied by dead people. And someone who's apparently really physical will try and travel through it, and then just sink into it and disappear

SALLY: Yeesh

EMILY: Yeah, it's all terrifying. Like imagine you can't go about your life without knowing the ground is literally about to sink from beneath your feet. That's really terrifying and really cool [laughs]

SALLY: No, the the bubbles of evil are the most interesting part of the story to me. Which is again why book three is - or no, it's the beginning of book four. Just kidding. Book four, which I hate. The beginning of book four, when each one - when Mat, Rand, and Perrin - has their own little bubble of evil thing which we'll talk about when we get there

EMILY: But, yeah. They're all really cool. We'll talk about them all as we get to them. Okay, but back to explaining The Ways. That's basically it, and Moiraine is like "We're going to use them if Loial will agree to guide us."

SALLY: [laughs] Loial's basically like, "You wanna go WHERE?"

EMILY: Loial's like, "I'm sorry, whomst? This sounds terrible."

SALLY: He's like, "People don't do that." It's kind of cute because he's like, "The elders have forbidden it," and even though he's a teenage rebel, he's not, like, a teenager delinquent

EMILY: He's like [wavering voice], "I don't want to do thaaat."

[both laugh]

EMILY: He's like, "No, you're not supposed to ride between the subway cars. It's bad."

SALLY: "It's bad. You can't lean against the doors."

EMILY: "You'll die."

SALLY: "You'll die."

EMILY: But Moiraine is like, "This is all true, but [laughing] literally the world is at stake here, my boy."

SALLY: [laughs] Moiraine's like, "You're not wrong but we have no other choice."

EMILY: Yeah, because they can't like just leave the city, basically. This is - of course they've been like forced into this corner

SALLY: Which is like another thing. So we come, of course, to the ever present *Lord of the Rings* parallel, of them going into the Mines of Moria, which we've already had in *Wheel of Time*

EMILY: But this also feels even more like the Mines of Moria

SALLY: Oh, because they're underground, in the dark, Moria is a place of decay, The Ways are a place of decay, etc. But like, with Shadar Logoth they've already been forced to go to a place that they otherwise would not go. And that's happening here, too, which is -we talked a lot about it when we talked about Shadar Logoth. It's just, like, such an interesting, like, plot...device. Because it's like - in a way, it's lazy and like it's kind of really - like, it is kind of frustrating because, yes, characters in stories have to make decisions because pressure is placed on them. But it would also be kind of interesting for them to be like, "What if we went in The Ways just because it'd be quicker, like, not because we have to, or like –"

EMILY: Yeah, Moiraine is clear about saying "Oh, you all have a choice in this matter." And you're like, it's not really a choice though, because the pressure that you're putting on these teens, basically, is insurmountable. Like who would be like, "No, I'll let the world burn. Based on what you've told me I'd rather stick around." I really like the end of - I really like the end of The Adventure Zone - which, spoilers if you haven't listened to all of the Adventures Zone Arc. But there's that great moment where they're about to have

their final boss battle basically, and it's like you either stay or you bow out. And Justin's character, Taako, is like, "I'm out, because I want to go be with my sister." And checks in on her and like, ends up going back to the boss battle. But it was like A) very characteristic choice, but also B) like, I love the idea that Griffin was going to let him do that. Like, I don't know

SALLY: Taako is a master work in character development. It -

EMILY: Despite being named Taako, I know [laughs]

SALLY: It's a thing. But yeah, and so the pressure that they put on - the pressure that Moiraine puts on these teens is super insurmountable. I'm also really annoyed with this- I'm promise I'm not just going to say that I'm annoyed with everything that happens in the next hundred or so pages because I'm not - but because she's talking so much like "You three are *ta'veren*, and like you are going to do this x, y, and z, but you still have a choice." And all three of the boys are like well, "We definitely don't have a choice as *ta'veren*. Like we have to go and do this," and Moiraine then offers like the choice to Egwene and Nynaeve and Egwene's like, "Well Min said that we're still a part of it despite not being *ta'veren*. And it just is both so good that Egwene and Nynaeve are allowed to be important without being, like, the prophecy kids, because so much we have to deal with the prophecy kids in fantasy. When it's, like, there are people who make history who aren't, you know, Jesus, like, there are a lot of other people doing important things. But it's also so annoying because it's, like, this male/female division in our fellowship, where all the boys are important. And then like, our girls are important to, like, not so much. And the idea that like the female side of history is important and significant, and like without it, we wouldn't have gotten where we got but like, it's not our main narrative, like driving thread and that just annoys me

EMILY: Yeah, it always constantly places Egwene and Nynaeve, and later Elayne as she kind of becomes the third of the girls trio, in the secondary position plot wise. Which is really annoying, because, I mean, you could argue that Elayne isn't really doing anything that isn't - that she wasn't going to do, you know? But Egwene and especially Nynaeve are doing these incredible things for the sake of the world, and aren't any less important in driving the world toward the Last Battle. Like Perrin just fucks around the countryside for, like, nine books for God's sake.

SALLY: So it's just super annoying to me that - because then we get into, like, a discussion of fate versus the choices that we make. Like Egwene is a very choice and ambition driven character, and so it's - that is kind of interesting. But just the gender divide in it is really so blatantly obvious and in a book that - in a series that usually does a lot to mix up male and female balances of power it's really just very ridiculous to me that one of the girls wasn't *ta'veren* instead of, like, Perrin. It being Egwene or being like x, y and, z

EMILY: And it's like, yeah, with the three boys they all fit really neatly into these, like I don't know, mythological patterns of triads and stuff - stuff like that. But it's also on you

could - you could argue that it's more to the girls credit, you know, because the vibe I always get from Rand, Mat, and Perrin is that they wouldn't be doing these things unless forced to do so. Whereas Egwene and Nynaeve - well particularly Egwene and later Nynaeve - I think would do these things, you know, without really thinking about it. Like their heroism is innate not forced. But because of the particular framework of fantasy where you - the chosen one is deemed the more powerful person, like, that's not what ends up happening. So you really have to, like, I don't know, exercise critical thinking in order to argue for the girls. And that's not how I want to have to read fantasy. Like, I want power to be handed to the girls naturally by the rules that have already been written

SALLY: By the rules of that world. And also like, this is another problem that I have with "Wheel of Time," is that while it is in terms of what we have in the fantasy cannon a very feminist series in the fact that there are, like, baseline, there are more than, like, three speaking female characters. So in fact - the fact that that's our baseline is ridiculous. But also just the idea that so much more, basically, is expected of the girls because it's like their heroism is innate, their choices have to be made. Whereas like, the boys get so much of the plot and basically do nothing for it. And it's - so it's really frustrating that it's the girls who have to try so hard in this series to matter. And that's supposed to be like a form of power for them, but it is actually just this storyline that women constantly get where it's like you're so much better because of this, because of your choices. Because of what's innate to you. Ugh. I seriously have no idea how to just form this thought that's burning in my chest! But I'll see if it comes out later

EMILY: I feel you

SALLY: I'm just super heated about this in particular, where it's like the men - like the three boys in particular don't have to try very hard and Robert Jordan thinks he's giving a type of power to these girls by saying that their heroism is innate, and it's because of their choices. But it's really just like the ugh! The like emotional labor and the intellectual labor and political labor of, like, holding this world together, falls on the shoulders of the women. That's my problem with *Wheel of Time*. There it is. Is that so much emotional labor falls on women. And Robert Jordan, like, thinks in ways that like emotional and political and intellectual labor, like, these are active women. And yes, they are agents and that's like, super cool, but men are allowed to get off by not doing any of that because they're forced into it by prophecy. Okay, I think that's what I was getting at. I talked for like, five whole minutes done. Exit. I got super heated about that.

EMILY: That was great

SALLY: No. 'kay. Sorry. Feel free to delete all that rambling

EMILY: I'm not going to delete that. Jesus

SALLY: Makes me super annoyed. Okay, we know what The Ways are. We're going to move into the dream sequence

EMILY: Yeah, the point is: the boys are all in, and the girls are in. Yeah, there's a dream sequence. Rand's, I think, third [high pitched] interaction with Ba'alzamon? Maybe fourth? Can't remember. For some reason the mantra here is Rand saying, "I deny you." I can't remember if Moiraine was like "You just need to deny him," or something

SALLY: Yeah I don't remember

EMILY: I'm seriously - I'm like whatever. But it's a very childish thing to do, you know, in a sort of sweet way. You know that there's like - I can defeat evil by saying no

SALLY: [laughing] Say no to drugs kids

EMILY: [laughs] Hugs not drugs. And that's, like, not necessarily true

SALLY: [laughs] I deny you!

EMILY: You can still you can still be murdered even if you say no.

SALLY: Ah! serial killer I deny thee!

EMILY: I'd rather not

SALLY: I'd rather not

EMILY: I'd rather not go to a second location? Too bad

SALLY: Too bad kids

EMILY: It's your typical dream sequence with Ba'alzamon. He's saying vaguely threatening things. Rand calls him a liar. He has these little, I don't know fucking like, voodoo dolls of the three boys

SALLY: Yeah really...because Mat picks his up and then it's has this face perfectly rendered and it's super spooky and gross

EMILY: Rand gets a splinter.

SALLY: Yeah, and I think this is really interesting, because we've had a scene earlier where he gets pricked by a thorn and he come wakes up and he still bleeding. But I think this scene is really interesting to see. He gets a splinter in the middle of his palm - or more or less. And then he's in the dark trying to fiddle with it and scratch at something. And so it's both a very, like, Jesus symbolism because he's been pierced through the middle of his palm but also a very, like, Macbeth symbolism where he's scratching at blood that he can't really see because it's dark. Like out dammed spot

EMILY: The thorn scratches, I think, his hands, too So yeah, that's more Jesus symbolism

SALLY: Some more of the same

EMILY: Which, of course, Rand then gets marked with the heron brand on the palms of his hand

SALLY: I wonder if you look back it's, like, one's on the left and one's on the right. I'd be curious to see that

EMILY: Oh, yeah. I don't know. Yeah, I don't know if Robert Jordan was actually planning that when he did that

SALLY: I'm very curious about Rand being marked on the palms. With his herons

EMILY: As well as his forearms. Yeah, I know you get - the dragons get mentioned a lot because I guess they're shimmery or some shit but

SALLY: [laughs] Rand's got glitter his arms

EMILY: Rand's bedazzled

SALLY: I don't understand the herons as much though,

EMILY: Yeah they're not mentioned as frequently, although you think they'd be more of a, like, nuisance?

SALLY: Yeah, like I feel like it'd be more present to have these things on your - these brands on the palms of your hands

EMILY: Who knows?

SALLY: Anyway, Rand and his hand

EMILY: All our boys are scarred

SALLY: Hand boy. Hand al'Thor [laughs for a long time]. Sorry

EMILY: You know he loses a hand later?

SALLY: [laughing] No, I didn't know that actually! Now I feel really bad!

EMILY: Now, I think it's really - [laughing] I think that makes it even better

SALLY: I didn't know he loses a hand

EMILY: Yeah he loses a hand in book...eleven? I think? [laughs] The last one that Robert Jordan wrote

SALLY: Oh, I feel really bad. Sorry.

EMILY: Don't feel bad, because it is not very good disability politics

SALLY: Well, Robert Jordan has a lot of people who *become* disabled which is

EMILY: Yeah, and then are magically cured of that in whatever way. BUT

SALLY: But

EMILY: Onward. We don't have time to talk about that right now. Anyway, they wake up at like, 3am, so [laughs]

SALLY: Disgusting

EMILY: Fuck me, right? Moiraine's like, "Come on. We have to go," and Mat's like, "We've been asleep for an hour." She's like, "You've had four hours."

SALLY: [laughs] I know!

EMILY: Like, that's a full night's sleep. And Mat's like, "Bitch I was just possessed for like three weeks. I need 19 hours of sleep. Please and thank you."

SALLY: Seriously. Please let me die!

EMILY: Jesus. Anyway, they exit the inn, and they just sort of make their way through Caemlyn with Loial guiding them - sort of like spidy senses - to the Waygate, which turns out to be just in the basement of this random building. That they break and enter

EMILY: Let me die!

SALLY: [laughs]

SALLY: Yeah, it's super weird

EMILY: Uh whatever

SALLY: [laughing] This is one of favorite moments in this series, for some reason, because they have to lead the horses underground. And Mat's like, "Horses don't go in houses!" basically or like something. It's like, "I feel super uncomfortable leading a horse inside the house."

EMILY: Yeah, Rand's just like, "Oh, my poor horse-o." Horse-o? Horsey

SALLY: Horse-o

EMILYL: Anyway, so they end up in this basement, find a Waygate, which is basically just a wall intricately carved, and you pull a leaf out of it and put the leaf in another place. And then...BAM. The wall is no longer a wall, but like a...

SALLY: Door. Going back to our *Lord of the Rings* parallel which I didn't talk about -

EMILY: Yeah, very...

SALLY: Because I got on a tangent. You might have noticed. Um, [laughs] but in our famous Moria scene, which is so good. I love everything about the Mines of Moria, but especially the scene - especially just like so beautifully done in the movies. "The Lord of the Rings," movies are so good -where Gandalf, like, can't remember the password [laughs], and so they're just, like, sitting there while Gandalf is just, like smoking

EMILY: I can't describe how funny that sequence is to me. Like Gandalf is basically an angel and -

SALLY: [cracking up in the background]

EMILY: - he's like, "That doesn't mean I'm not a little bit senile, bitch. There's a lot of magic to remember. I can't keep it all in this cranium of mine."

SALLY: So funny. And the fact that this low level Angel and he's fatal flaws is his memory. Like, how good is that?

EMILY: He's like, "I got nothing."

SALLY: So yeah, Merry and Pippin are, like, throwing rocks into the lake, and [laughs] everybody's causing a ruckus.

EMILY: [laughing, quoting a Tumblr post] I didn't know what the big deal with hobbits was, but I've only known Merry and Pippin for three days. If anything happened to them I would kill everyone in this room and then myself

SALLY: And as Emily pointed out to me earlier this week, when Boromir does lose me and Pippin, he immediately does kill everyone, and then dies. So yeah, so spoiler alert, if you've never seen or read *Lord of the Rings*

EMILY: Fuck YOU, honestly

SALLY: Yeah, but so there we also have a secret doorway that Gandalf then remembers how to enter, and here we have a secret doorway that Moiraine can pluck open with the secret leaf

EMILY: And it's just like a very similar visual to me, I guess

SALLY: Yeah, the idea of, like, a crack appearing in a wall

EMILY: and it's sort of opaque and whenever

SALLY: I am curious about this parallel. So often we talk about how this book and *Lord of the Rings* are very similar, although we don't really talk about why. And I mean I don't really have an answer for that, but this idea in particular, like, secret portals and this knowledge that has to come about to open them. I just think it's very interesting. And very thematic in fantasy. I feel like there's always a knowledge - like Loial a couple chapters ago being like, "I feel there's suddenly something that I have to say," and then they get this like secret knowledge that then drives them forward. And here we have secret knowledge that will literally drive them forward

EMILY: It just makes me think of how in Dungeons and Dragons there's an arcana check, you know?

SALLY: What is up with you and Dungeons and Dragons, my dude?

EMILY: I don't know. I've been listening to The Adventure Zone or something

SALLY: [laughs] Okay, we've arcana checked the room, go ahead

EMILY: No, but it's just like I always - whenever that comes up, I'm like, "WHY is this coming up? You have the dungeon master right there. Like, why -why is this even a skill check. You know, like, what's the point?" and I think it comes from this tradition of, like, literally characters need to have arcane knowledge in order to move forward. Like they need to know specific things in order to drive the plot forward or in order to solve a problem. And it's just that sort of null and void when you're in a game playing scenario where you have the guy right there who can tell you. Although, I guess that depends on how strict your DM is, but like - yeah in this situation you really do need someone like Moiraine and someone like Loial, who their primary weapon is knowledge

SALLY: Yeah. I'm sorry I didn't mean to be - I'm sorry if I got snappy about Dungeons and Dragons. It was supposed to be a joke

EMILY: What? No, it was funny [laughs]

SALLY: So yeah, I wish I had more answers about all the weird things that fantasy does because it's such a weird genre. The idea that we're gonna pull up this arcana check and, like, do the do

EMILY: Yeah, like, once, you know, you can do it

SALLY: Once, you know...you know

EMILY: Um, anyway, so they go into the Ways, and I don't feel the need to describe the Ways to you guys other - beyond what we already have. But they're just moving through this super weird space that's like lightless, and basically timeless because once you move into the Ways it's sort of like - this has always been described really well, to me, the way that, like, time seems to move more slowly on the other side so when you're looking out through the Waygate, the way you came, everyone's moving in slow motion. Exaggerated motion, like a dream. I don't know. It's just really cool. But I was trying to figure out if there's like, anything like this in other fantasy books, in terms of - I think, with - my theory is that in high fantasy, you get two forms of travel. The long travel sequences that are super physical and, I don't know, require a lot of time. And everything's sort of dependent on if your horse remains healthy and if you have enough food, and if the mountain doesn't come crashing down on you. And, like, stuff like that. And then there's like the portal thing where you just instantly go from one place to another through magical means, which of course comes up more and more - like we move toward that through this series. We get to the portal stones in the next book that can teleport you from place to place, often at a high cost as we find. And then eventually traveling is rediscovered, which is literally just teleportation. Which is badass, by the way

SALLY: It's so cool

EMILY: It's so cool. But, like, this is just this weird space in between where you enter a labyrinth and once you solve it you get out on the other end, but at a totally different place

SALLY: And time

EMILY: Yeah, it's just like another one of those dream logic scenarios

SALLY: Um [long pause] yes. Sorry, I was trying to pull something up. Um, so it's - yeah, I agree. Your hypothesis that you posited is totally...a thing. Because you either have like these long travel sequence or these teleportation sequences. And it's super interesting in fantasy to see it come out because it's either travel rendered in hyper realistic detail, like what they ate for dinner. Or you go immediately to super fantastical like you've walked into a portal, and then you came out in the tundra, or whatever. Super interesting. And so much a fantasy is embedded in travel. And so I pulled up this quote from Ursula K Le Guin in this essay called "From Elfland to Poughkeepsie," which is very interesting. It's all about language, and - if I remember correctly, I haven't read it in forever. But it's about how fantasy as a genre comes about through the language that's used more than anything else. I'll re-read and maybe I'll have something interesting to say. This is not going to be an earth shattering quote, you're going to be like, "Why did you even quote this?" But she just said in like, this brief little sentence, like "A fantasy is

a journey." And yeah, that sounds super basic, but just this idea that embedded into everything, even on this level, as she mentions, like a language, everything about fantasy is meant to take you on a journey. And so there's just so much of it that is about travel. It's so interesting. Like every - like, I can't imagine a fantasy book that stays in one place

EMILY: Yeah, exactly

SALLY: Like even, I think of *Bitterblue*, one of my favorite books of all time, which is more or less very stationary because she's in her palace, but even that book doesn't begin until she goes through a portal, which is to go outside of the palace into the city

EMILY: Yeah, and even inside the house she begins discovering doors

SALLY: That's right

EMILY: And secrets within the palace. And of course, you know, there's the emotional journey aspect and intellectual journeys, but yeah. Fantasy books tend to be very physically travel based. I think to goes back to "the Odyssey." I'm sure there's more even prior to that. Like, yeah, you always have to get from point A to point B, and the rest is what happens in between

SALLY: Lagniappe

EMILY: Yeah, every fantasy is a road trip. That's my theory

SALLY: No, I had a creative writing professor in college - who I mostly hated

EMILY: [laughs] This dick

SALLY: Not mostly - definitely hate. But he said - you know, he was like - he's one of those assholes who was like, "I believe there's only two plots and that's either a road trip or a stranger comes to town." And so, it's either you're going somewhere or somebody intrudes into your life. And so interesting in terms of these categories of fantasy that we're always talking about, which is the portal quest or the intrusion. And so literally in this book a stranger came to town - Moiraine - and then they went on a road trip to the Eye of the World

EMILY: Yeah, it's pretty reductive

SALLY: It's super reductive and I hate statements like that just because there are a ton of other plots

EMILY: Yeah, you're just like, "Look how smart I am"

SALLY: And those aren't even really plots, those are more just, like, instances of things that can happen in plots? Like a road trip can be your plot, but like, it doesn't have to be. Whatever

EMILY: Yeah it's just like structures that could have it, yeah

SALLY: Yeah, structures. That's the world I was looking for thank you. And so - but fantasy is a road trip. You're right

EMILY: Yep, that's all

SALLY: Fantasy's a road trip. Fantasy's an acid trip. Whoa

EMILY: [laughs] Die

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Um, so yeah, I don't know. We already talked about the decay of the Ways, which I just find super fascinating. Oh, I was gonna say something about how structurally the Ways begin to feel like you're actually moving through a broken mind. Like the way that bridges connect one, you know, basically signposts to another it just feels like synapses firing and the fact that they're beginning to decay, and some cases bring entirely. It's just this really cool visual when you consider the literal madness of the power that went into this

SALLY: You're so good with these visuals. Like you killed it last episode. It's like I think was last episode or the episode before that, like bleeding sanity, and like now this, like, when the waves are decaying mind? Ugh she's so smart, you guys

EMILY: I have very little to do think so I think about these things

SALLY: What? You have? That's a good thing to do

EMILY: Okay

SALLY: This is what happens. I tried to love Emily so unabashedly -

EMILY: I don't know how to respond to positive reinforcement

SALLY: Yeah and then she just is like - it's okay though because - because! - you should love people the way that they want to be loved not the way that you want to love them

EMILY: I still haven't figured out how I want to be loved

SALLY: That's okay. Then you should go on that journey with them

EMILY: Five love languages who? None of those work for me

SALLY: Mine is food and compliments. I love giving people food, and I love giving compliments

EMILY: So affirmation and gifts?

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: Copy

SALLY: I mean, I think. I don't know. Tell me if I'm wrong

EMILY: I can't respond well to any of those

SALLY: Okay

EMILY: Yeah sorry. Okay, okay we need to be done. We've been recording for too long

SALLY: I'm sorry! I got really rambling this episode guys, so thanks for coming along on the ride

EMILY: We were all - we are all rambling

SALLY: We are Griffin [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] We are Griffin

SALLY: [laughs then cuts off suddenly] Stop this podcast and watch MBMBAM's show on Seeso. That's what you should be doing. That shows fucking hilarious

EMILY: You know the meme of the guy in the We are all Africa shirt?

EMILY: [laughing] For a long time one of the UNIQLO memes was We Are All Want to Fucking Die. Mariana would just come up and whisper that to me. We are all want to fucking die. Okay, next week we're going to conclude the Ways segment. Hopefully we'll get to Fal Dara and introduce the one or two characters that we meet there. But I don't really know. I don't really want to say how far we're going to get anymore because we're in the end game, so it's just kind of -

SALLY: Yeah

SALLY: Who knows?

EMILY: Yeah, who knows? But we're gonna be back in the Ways. Um look us up on all our social medias. We would love to hear from you on Twitter is a good platform, also

Tumblr. Tumblr is everybodyhatesrand.tumblr.com. Twitter is EHR underscore - at EHR underscore podcast. And if you get lost, you can find us on WordPress that's ehrpodcast.wordpress.com. I'm fucking struggling - whatever

[police sirens in the background because this is before we got real microphones]

SALLY: And we just added a new \$5 reward on our Patreon. So if you are a \$5 donator - \$5 a month - we will send you one single graffitied book of "Wheel of Time," we don't know which "Wheel of Time" book and neither will you until you open the box

EMILY: That's if you're comfortable giving us your address

SALLY: Yes, of course

EMILY: If you don't want to, you totally don't have to

SALLY: Obviously. Because I get it. There's some kooks out there

EMILY: If it makes you feel better, you give us your address and we'll write on the package and then immediately forget it. We don't the brain space for that

SALLY: I literally don't have anything in my brain anymore

EMILY: Yeah, but that's it,

SALLY: That's it

EMILY: So sign us off

SALLY: Sorry your computer just glitched

EMILY: Oh it does that when we get to long recordings

SALLY: Sorry. Um, so I'm sure you guys remember because you hang on my every word [laughs]

EMILY: Fuck [laughs]

SALLY: But a couple of weeks ago I talked about how I bought some bagels at Target and then lost on the way home from work. That has happened again

Emily: Did this happen today?!

SALLY: No, it didn't happen today. But not with bagels, and it happened like a month ago. But it happened with the new under eye concealer that I bought at the Target by my work because we had a big event the next day. And you guys also don't know this

because you've never seen my face, presumably, but I have like the worse black circles under my eyes, like, they are just like deeper than the Marianas Trench

SALLY: Like it is bad. I am a [laughing] pallid, anxious insomniac - like of course - with a poor immune system. Like I just - they're so bad but I bought it the day before the gala and then just, like, disappeared?

EMILY: [laughing]

EMILY: What the fuck?

SALLY: I have no idea because I was gonna pack it in my bag the next day, and it was just like gone out of the place that I put it. Super weird right? And I was like - I am not a clean person - so I'm like oh it's just because I lost in my messy room no big deal. I've cleaned that room like six times since this event, and so it's like bad because I'm not in like financial space or the energy to just rebuy things that I've bought recently. So now I just like don't really have any concealer to have except lthe little bit that was left and my last tube. So I've been walking around like a zombie because some type of extra paranormal person thing has stolen things out of my target bag! UGH i's very rude. I don't know why I personally am being targeted by this malevolent -

EMILY: By Target? [laughs] By the Target ghost?

SALLY: I've been Target-ed

EMILY: I'm gonna die. Editing this podcast

SALLY: [creepily] Goodbye

EMILY: Oh my god. [creepily] Goodbye

SALLY: [laughs]

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