



## Episode 26 – “BIG BATTLE LADY”

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SALLY: I can’t believe we didn’t open this episode with “Are you ready to climax?” [laughs]

EMILY: I’ll just edit that in the beginning

SALLY: [laughs louder]

[THEME SONG – “Tubthumping” by Chumbawamba plays, chorus]

EMILY: I was about to say, “Let’s make this short,” but let’s be honest

SALLY: We can’t!

EMILY: We won’t make this short. And also because it’s the climax, and I know it’s only three chapters, and they’re short chapters

SALLY: But some shit goes down

EMILY: Yeah, shit gets cosmic and weird

SALLY: I was thinking about that, too. We can talk about that. It moves from the fantasy level into a divine and mythical level

EMILY: Yeah, which is kind of the point of – honestly I read this and I was like, “I feel like I can’t understand the significance of this unless I am fully cognizant of what happens at the end of the series”

SALLY: Yeah, which is something

EMILY: Yeah, because I was like, “There has to be some significance in what is going on here, and I just needed to review,” so I basically just read the Wikipedia chapter by chapter summary of the last few chapters of *A Memory of Light*. And basically that entire book is, like, theological and cosmic on a whole other level, and I don’t know if that’s good or bad. I guess we’ll talk about it when we get there in... seven years?

SALLY: Yeah, if we are doing one book every six months, it will be seven years

EMILY: It will probably be more than that because Book 1 is one of the shortest

SALLY: Oh yeah! When we get to Book 6, which I just finished, which is literally almost a thousand pages

EMILY: You think at some point we’ll run out of things to talk about. We’ll be like, “Okay, we’ve complained enough about Perrin, like, is there something else?”

SALLY: That’s true. Will we run out of things to talk about?

EMILY: I don’t know. Stick with us on this journey and find out

SALLY: Okay, welcome

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: To your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* podcast! This is our season one finale

EMILY: Of Everybody Hates Rand. We’re your co-hosts. I’m Emily Juchau

SALLY: And I’m Sally Goodger!

EMILY: If you don’t know our voices by now, then I guess there’s no hope for you. [sighs] I’m so sweaty still

SALLY: That’s because it is nine *thousand* degrees in New York City. New York City is actively trying to kill all eight million people who live here

EMILY: I was walking a dog today and I was like, “Is this how Mat Cauthon felt in all of Books 6 through 10, or whatever the hell it is?”

SALLY: Yeah and you’re like, “I too wish that I could – ”

EMILY: 6 through 8?

SALLY: “ – exposing my entire chest right now.”

EMILY: I know, right? I basically was

SALLY: Good

EMILY: I am basically nude when I'm in New York in this heat. It's just, like, whatever

SALLY: Because it's disgusting

EMILY: UGHHH. Okay, we're gonna *talk*

SALLY: About *Wheel of Time*

EMILY: About the fucking book

SALLY: So, we're here at the end. The End, capital T, capital E

EMILY: Obviously spoilers abound. It will be a little tougher for me this time around to not talk about *A Memory of Light*, but we're gonna avoid it

SALLY: That's fine. I will read *A Memory of Light* in... nine thousand years, so I won't remember any of

EMILY: You're almost on Book 7, which I'm predicting you're gonna blaze through

SALLY: I'm actually getting – this is the first time where I'm like – usually I finish a *Wheel of Time* book and

EMILY: You need a break

SALLY: I could go three months without reading it, and I'd be fine. But after finishing Book 6 this is the first time where I was like, "I'm interested in what happens next"

EMILY: Okay. Took us six book s

SALLY: [laughs loudly] So, um

EMILY: [laughing] Breaking news! Sally is finally interested in the series which we've sculpted a portion of our lives around

SALLY: [laughing] I've been interested in it all along

EMILY: More at ten

SALLY: [laughing] I hate you

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: I've been interested all along!

EMILY: Academically. Now you're finally emotionally invested

SALLY: That's fair. That's fair to say

EMILY: Which is funny, in a way, because usually you're the one who gets emotionally invested in things before I

SALLY: And then I'm always let down

EMILY: Yeah?

SALLY: In, like, everything I've been excited about in the year 2018 it has disappointed me [laughs]

EMILY: I'm fundamentally broken and don't get excited about things. Except, I saw Kelly Ripa today and that was, like... I'm still speechless. Guys, she's so beautiful and tiny

SALLY: Just – is she – I seriously just imagine her as, like, pocket size

EMILY: She's literally just pint size. You know Ryan Seacrest is pretty short?

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: She's like half a foot shorter than him

SALLY: She's so *LITTLE*

EMILY: She's so tiny I could pick her up with one hand

SALLY: And just be like, "Hello, Kelly Ripa"

EMILY: And it was like my entire – all my instincts were to run across the street, and dart in front of the cameras and just take her face between my hands and be like, "I love you, and my mom loves you. I used to watch your show when I was staying home sick from school, and also sometimes when I wasn't sick, just because I delight in your show and you had some lovely actors on"

SALLY: Yeah. She's delightful

EMILY: "And I think you're great and pure and just stay you, even though you've had a string of shitty co-hosts, including your current one"

SALLY: Ryan Seacrest

EMILY: Ryan fucking Seacrest. And then I'd flip him off while standing thirty inches away from him

SALLY: And then punch him in the balls?

EMILY: Yeah, and then run away

SALLY: Obviously, you and

EMILY: It was Henry so I wouldn't actually run away, because he would stop

SALLY: Henry would be like, "A camera?"

EMILY: Yeah, Henry's

SALLY: Just luckily it wasn't Beau

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: "A camera!" [laughs]

EMILY: Beau would probably get me on *Live with Kelly and Ryan*

SALLY: He's a beautiful dog

EMILY: They'd see him and be like, "Can we have a camera?" And I'd be like standing there, literally dripping sweat, and be like, "Sure"

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Who cares? Okay, okay, okay [laughs]

SALLY: Another tiny woman who is significant, is Moiraine

EMILY: Moiraine! Who's like – I guess we didn't actually talk about the end of the last chapter

SALLY: Moiraine is having –

EMILY: We just kind of introduced the Forsaken

SALLY: – a moment!

EMILY: Okay, shit's going down when we exit the Eye of the World, and Moraine's like [Moiraine voice], "Here's what your fate has led you to, standing in this cave at this moment. [weird noise] Lan"

SALLY: [Moiraine voice] “Lan, oh no.” Yeah, Moiraine’s being cosmic and

EMILY: Moiraine’s being cosmic and cryptic as usual

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: She’s like, “Let’s just exit the cave and, I guess, see what happens”

SALLY: Quite literally

EMILY: Yeah and, tellingly enough, they exit the cave and DER DER DER there’s two Forsaken there. We introduced them last time, Aginor and Balthamel. Aginor looking gross and old. I imagine – who’s the guy who owned the Playhouse? The Play – ? I don’t know. Play? Playboy Mansion?

SALLY: Oh, Hugh Hefner?

EMILY: Yeah, I imagine him like Hugh Hefner

SALLY: Ew, gross

EMILY: Exactly

SALLY: Disgusting

EMILY: Just kind of gross. And before you get on my case about how Hugh Hefner was an activist or whatever, he’s also Playboy Mansion guy so fuck you

SALLY: I’m sorry. An activist?

EMILY: What? Yeah, they’re like, “He did civil rights stuff.” Ugh

SALLY: ‘kay. There –

EMILY: You know who else did civil rights stuff? Gandhi. He was also a shitty person

SALLY: He was also a pervert

EMILY: So

SALLY: Umm, there’s a reason that justice is a balance scale

EMILY: Oh yeaahh

SALLY: So [laughs] you don’t get off the hook by doing one good thing if you also do a lot of really shitty other things

EMILY: Okay on that – off that tangent. Hugh Hefner is standing there with – this is ironic because personality wise Balthamel is more Hugh Hefner

SALLY: Ew

EMILY: Who's a good – who's a good Balthamel? He's in a leather mask. He's basically, um, [clapping as she thinks] who's that guy in *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre*? Doesn't he wear like a leather mask

SALLY: I have no idea

EMILY: Give me a minute

SALLY: Are you Googling that, too? Is Aginor the chop chop one? The one who chopped people up and made monsters? Is he our Frankenstein –

EMILY: The chop chop one

SALLY: [laughs] Is he our Frankenstein guy?

EMILY: Aginor is, ostensibly, our mad scientist character

SALLY: Got it

EMILY: He's responsible for creating most of the, um

SALLY: Monterz?

EMILY: Yeah, the Shadowspawn, shall we say

SALLY: Okay, and Balthamel is our...?

EMILY: Pervert

SALLY: Pervert. Okay, cool. [laughs] So we have a mad scientist and a pervert in a mask

EMILY: Uh-huh. Leatherface [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs, snorts]

EMILY: [laughing] So Hugh Hefner and Leatherface. How come I couldn't think of that one? [laughing] It was right there!

SALLY: Right on the tip of my tongue!

EMILY: Um, yeah Balthamel's like, "Der, der, der, der I love women and I'm a slut," and you're like, "Okay, sure? You know who else is a slut? Mat Cauthon, but he doesn't – he's not evil, so"

SALLY: He's not gross about it. And he also doesn't believe – he doesn't worship Satan

EMILY: [laughs] Mat Cauthon would be such a shitty Satanist

SALLY: Again, he hates witchcraft and authority

EMILY: Exactly. Well? Okay, I'm not even gonna get into Satanism

SALLY: Yeah, are we gonna, like, compare Satan to anarchy? Are we gonna get into that?

EMILY: Well, like modern Satanism is pretty good for whatever, for one reason or another, but there's the Satanic Panic of the '60s, which – let's just [claps], let's stay on track for once in our goddamn lives. Hugh Hefner. Leatherface. Are there. And they're like, "Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." Say some threatening shit. They're like, "We've been here. For the last five minutes. Because we're so close to the Dark One's – like we were so close – " Like, I can think of this visually and metaphorically, but I have no understanding of what this means physically, you know? Moiraine, later in this segment, talks about how there was a – what Lews Therin and his dudes did was basically put a *patch* over the hole in the prison. And so then you can kind of think of it as they're near the seam, and so more stuff was leaking in and out. But physically I have no idea what that means

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: And why are they here? Did they travel here from wherever they were? Because, I mean, they're male channelers they can do that. Traveling isn't lost to them

SALLY: It's weird. The whole concept of how, physically, the Dark One's prison works is really abstract to me

EMILY: It is. And it gets even weirder when you get into Book 14, and Rand has to physically go to where the Dark One supposedly is in Shayol Ghul, but the Dark one isn't even part of the universe, really? He's just, like, he's a divine power. He's like – like God isn't physical, unless you are a Mormon, so I don't know. We're not gonna get into that

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] Um, for more on Mormon theology – just kidding don't ask me any questions

SALLY: She's not your Mormon ambassador. Google it

EMILY: Yeah, well. I'd rather you ask me than Google it. I feel I'd do better at it



SALLY: Okay

EMILY: Um, okay so – god I can't even remember this

SALLY: It doesn't make any sense –

EMILY: I should have read this scene

SALLY: – why they're there, but this entire, like... the fact that it doesn't make sense, like, I hate it? And I'm so annoyed how abstract this is. This is kind of our first – as soon as we come out of the Eye of the World [claps] the logic of the book is ascending from epic fantasy towards a more mythological understanding of how events can happen

EMILY: Even really once they entered the Blight

SALLY: Yeah, we're on that trajectory

EMILY: Everything got really shitty and weird once we enter the Blight

SALLY: We're on that trajectory, basically as soon as Rand steps from one place into the Garden of Eden it's mythological in the fact that need comes to you out of the desert, or whatever

EMILY: And it's so jarring because while Rand is having this weird mythological experience where he's the champion of god basically

SALLY: It's whack

EMILY: He's Jesus and Buddha and every other thing, there's also Mat and Perrin and Egwene and Nynaeve here, who are having their still very grounded physical experiences

SALLY: Who are just having a fight

EMILY: Yeah

SALLY: Whereas Rand is having a semi-apotheosis moment

EMILY: Yeah

SALLY: I don't know if I would call this his apotheosis, or if I would call Rhuidean his apotheosis

EMILY: He has multiple. I argue that he has multiple apotheosis moments throughout the series

SALLY: Which, I guess is fine because he functions as a Jesus figure for multiple cultures

EMILY: He has another apotheosis moment at the end of the book I'm reading, Book 12. Which is more of a, like, enlightenment moment

SALLY: Right. And apotheosis is, I think literally the Greek words translate into "god making"

EMILY: Mmmhmm

SALLY: We have "poesis" again is that root word, and poesis means making. And it's a significant part of the Hero's Journey as outlined by Joseph Campbell, where all of our heroes have an ascension or an elevation from the human to the divine in some way. Like, the way it was taught to me is at the end of the second original *Star Wars* you have Luke and he's fallen off of the thing and he's literally spread out on an upside down – on an inverted cross, and so it's like he's been crucified, sort of

EMILY: Notably that's right after Luke has his confrontation with Darth Vader, who is revealed to be his father. So also tied in with the apotheosis moment are these moments of meeting with "the father," whether archetypal or your actual father. Which is why it's interesting that we have this moment here where Rand ostensibly hears the voice of god, later in all caps. [laughing] And there's a lot of theories about that, but whatever. Also, Book 12 when he has his enlightenment moment he literally has, right before that, a conversation with his actual father, Tam

SALLY: Yeah, and in

EMILY: And in Rhuidean he's literally going along the path of his ancestors

SALLY: His biological father

EMILY: Yes

SALLY: So yeah, he's always having these encounters with the father

EMILY: It's very weird and Rand is the only one, basically, having these moments

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: So, sort of, something interesting there

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: It would be interesting to try and dissect the nuances of everyone's different Hero's Journey. Like how does Mat's Hero's Journey track onto the Joseph Campbell cycle?

SALLY: Yeah. It would be interesting

EMILY: How – can you argue that Mat ever has an apotheosis moment?

SALLY: I don't know I haven't read all –

EMILY: Unless it's super abstract

SALLY: – of Mat's arc. Maybe when we run out of content after all these books, we'll just do abstract shit like that

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Um

EMILY: Well, we'll get there

SALLY: But yeah, Rand is having a very weird

EMILY: Rand is in a very weird headspace for this entire time and it totally defines the reading experience

SALLY: Yeah, because you are with Rand, you're stuck in Rand's point of view these last however many chapters, and so you're also being like, "I guess that was..." At this point you're like, "Who's talking to Rand? Is it God?" And then the next person you meet who talks in all caps in the series is the Dark One

EMILY: Talking to Demandred

SALLY: Yeah, so then you're like, "Who is he talking to?" It's so wild!

EMILY: Well, that's the theory. Maybe it was the Dark One. Like, ugh. We'll get there in a minute

SALLY: It's so wild

EMILY: Yeah, Rand is in this very weird headspace, and throughout the book we've had Rand in weird headspaces before, usually right when he's about to channel. Of course, Rand's in close proximity to this huge well of saidin, and he is about to channel or actively channeling throughout most of this climax. So, it's sort of given that he's in this weird headspace. And I sort of think it's a good thing, because literally contact with saidin drives you insane

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: So, I don't know, it's pretty interesting. But it just makes for really weird reading

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: I was reading, um...

SALLY: Emily's really good at drawing in secondary material

EMILY: No, I'm not

SALLY: Don't – [sighs]

EMILY: Right now I have – let's look at the tabs I have open [laughs]. I have *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* on Wikipedia, I have the Eames Lounge Chair on Wikipedia, I have the taijitu, also on Wikipedia, which is the symbol of the Dark One's prison. You know, the yin yang

SALLY: Mm. Yeah

EMILY: Taijitu. And then I have on Google '*The Eye of the World* climax.' So... Anyway, I was reading this blog, literally it's called somethingshortandsnappy.blogspot.com, the author of this particular segment is Will Wildman, and this was written a few years ago. But, yeah, 2015. So anyway I'm drawing from that, and also, I also read this *Wheel of Time* re-read by Leigh Butler, whose on tor.com, and she's really great. Leigh Butler talks about how this climax is really good, but it's also – here's her exact quote, "It is definitely something. Awesome? Yes, of course, but also something else. Esoteric? Confusing? Idiosyncratic? Weird?"<sup>1</sup> Um, and she talks about how, basically, it's just this suspended moment of supernatural logic. Kind of what we were talking about in Shadar Logoth and the Blight. Like, we've already been saying, everything is at such a different level here

SALLY: Mmhmm

EMILY: And, um, Rand's headspace just reflects that basically

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: She talks about, let's see. Here's another quote. "I'm not saying there's anything wrong with that kind of ambiguity; I'm just saying it stands out because that's not the case consistently throughout the series. Cleansing the taint in *Winter's Heart*, just for an example, was practically a laboratory experiment compared with this."<sup>2</sup> She's saying everything in *Wheel of Time*, like we've already talked about, has a very defined logic to it. Channeling has rules, even *tel'aran'rhioid*, the literally dreamworld, has rules. But what's happened – what's happens at this climax has no rules

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: does Rand actually teleport to Tarwin's Gap? How does he teleport, when all we know about is chan – traveling? Which is a totally different thing? Does he actually talk to Ba'alzamon? Where? Does he go to Ba'alzamon? Does he get back?

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.tor.com/2009/02/06/the-wheel-of-time-re-read-the-eye-of-the-world-part-7/>

<sup>2</sup> *ibid*

SALLY: Is his mom actually there?

EMILY: Is his mom actually there? Is his mom dead? Is his mom alive?

SALLY: [clears throat] No, it's very – and this is – I was reading a tumblr post today that talked about how Rand is consistently such an unreliable narrator

EMILY: Mmhmm

SALLY: And part of it is because, as we've talked about before, Rand is not always super self-aware, but he's also almost a victim of being an unreliable narrator because the logic in his headspace and the logic in his chapters are almost always off-kilter

EMILY: Yeah, my overwhelming sense while reading these chapters is that it's so hard to keep track of the physical action when Jordan and Rand are constantly reminding you of what Rand is experience via saidin

SALLY: Mmhmm

EMILY: He's constantly like, "My skin feels like it's about to crawl off. And everything is hot. I feel like I'm about to burn up." Everything is so stilted

SALLY: Yeah, and it reminds me of, um, you know – I think I'm thinking of Mohammed and his night journey where his body is still, but his mind is going on this crazy

EMILY: Journey

SALLY: Journey. And so, it's like, is Rand actually doing this or are these the things that he is seeing? And has his body moved at all? Or are things being affected because of what's happening internally, and his spiritual ascension? Like, it's

EMILY: Yeah, it's all super spiritual. You can draw on Jesus, too. Jesus has the moment of translation, it's literally called, on the mount where he talks to various spirits of old dead dudes

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] Sorry

SALLY: The Bible – like, the religious texts are so whack

EMILY: It's all whack!

SALLY: It's so

EMILY: And this is no less whack. It reads like a religious text. And I don't know if I like it or hate it. It kind of, at this point, just is what it is

SALLY: Yeah, it doesn't matter at this point

EMILY: Yeah, I don't even have the energy to summon an opinion about it

SALLY: No, because the fatigue with *The Eye of the World* is so crazy

EMILY: And so real

SALLY: Yeah, because I – I mean, I'm a special case I think, but you don't feel this fatigue – when you get to the climactic sequences of the other books you're not feeling this fatigued

EMILY: You feel excited

SALLY: You feel ready, yeah. Let's fucking blow the Horn of Valere, let's storm the Stone of Tear, let's... I don't know. Asha'man kill or whatever the fuck is going on

EMILY: You get to the climactic sequence of *A Memory of Light* – literally there's a hugely long chapter called "The Last Battle," and you're like, "FuuUUUck me running. I'm ready for this. Because I've been ready for this for the last fourteen books"

SALLY: Let's do it. But in this one you're just like

EMILY: Who cares?

SALLY: Who cares? Let it end. Let me know

EMILY: [laughs] Let me die! That is what it is I guess

SALLY: Yeah, it's just – [laughs] it's really frustrating to not be able to analyze it beyond 'it exists in a different space'

EMILY: Mmhmm

SALLY: And I know there's stuff going on, the religious imagery, but it's really frustrating to have a climax that slips through your fingers so easily

EMILY: Let's try and go through the physical action in this sequence, and as the cosmic moments happen we'll try and talk about them I guess?

SALLY: I guess. We're doing our best, kiddos

EMILY: Ugh. But physically we first have this confrontation with the two Forsaken, which shortly becomes the one Forsaken because Balthamel, um, [laughs] I think he grabs Nynaeve?

Something like that. Lan has a moment of dumb hesitance where he's like [deep voice], "Which woman should I protect?" And he gets knocked aside by, he's out of the game. Nynaeve rushes Balthamel, who easily also tosses her aside, which severely traumatic for Nynaeve which we find out in the next book when she goes through her test to become the Accepted. She has that whole weird dream sequence where she's running through a maze and Balthamel is the one following here

SALLY: Yeah [clears throat]

EMILY: Which I think is really significant that, even though this is a moment that's such a throwaway moment for, like, Rand

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: Who, of course, is concerned and all the Emond's Fielders are like, [laughs], "Protect fucking Nynaeve!"

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: "We fucking love her! The Wisdom!"

SALLY: "That's our mom"

EMILY: "That's our mom!" You know, but it goes away from them. But for Nynaeve, it's still omnipresent in her mind. But she's out of commission. Rand tackles Egwene so she doesn't get killed next, and then the Green Man sort of takes over and kills Balthamel

SALLY: Which is lit as hell

EMILY: Yeah, in a really cool sequence where Balthamel burns him and then, just, green starts sprouting out of him like between the seams of his leather

SALLY: Which is also, like, my nightmare

EMILY: Of course it's a total nightmare, but the description is weirdly beautiful. Like, about all the things that grow in dark places

SALLY: Yeah, and also it's Balthamel so, like,

EMILY: So also like, fuck him

SALLY: Die, bitch. And also, the Green Man, who I love

EMILY: I know. So the Green Man dies

SALLY: [crying noise]

EMILY: Balthamel dies

SALLY: [clears throat]

EMILY: Now it's left Aginor and everyone else

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: There's a little bit of a channeling sequence where he kind of attacks and Moiraine's holding him off and tells everyone else to run, which they do – all in separate directions

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] Of course

SALLY: Scatter

EMILY: Scatter! [laughs] SCATTER! What's that John Mulaney thing?

SALLY: Oh yeah

EMILY: [laughing] Where he just throws the beer bottle? And yells

BOTH, high pitched: SCATTER!

EMILY: Fuck the police!

SALLY: Yeah! Oh my god that sequence where he talks about a bunch of white kids

EMILY: Yeah John Mulaney has had a weird life

SALLY: John Mulaney has had [laughing] a *wild life*

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Anyway [clears throat] they all scatter

EMILY: They all go running, and sort of the last thing Rand hears of this is Moiraine beginning to scream, which I don't know why she's screaming. I think that was a little bit of a, like, dumb thing for Jordan to do, because Moiraine doesn't characteristically...scream when bad things happen to her

SALLY: Yeah and so it's

EMILY: She's pretty stoic



SALLY: Yeah, what am – like, what, is she being tortured? Like what pain is she feeling? What's happening?

EMILY: Especially because when we get back it seems like all that happened was that they sort of faced off for a minute

SALLY: Yeah, and so I'm like, "Why are you yelling?"

EMILY: And we don't know what happened to her exactly because he didn't linger with her. He immediately goes after Rand, which, like, Rand's running from him and there's this totally cliché moment where he gets to the edge of a cliff

SALLY: [chuckles]

EMILY: He's like, "What am I going to do?"

SALLY: [laughing] He's caught between a rock and a hard place. Caught between a Forsaken and a void

EMILY: Like literally with his back to the cliff, and I was like, "Is this every movie ever?"

SALLY: [laughing] Is this the roadrunner? Like?

EMILY: Is this the roadrunner?

SALLY: [laughs] It's really hilarious

EMILY: Is this every marvel movie? Like?

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: You're always at the edge of something. Is the Ironman suit gonna pop up and

SALLY: It just seems like there are – like, fantasy encounters a lot more cliffs than I have encountered in my life [laughs]

EMILY: Right?! Like, I'm from Utah. I've been out in the wilderness

SALLY: I've been to Arches National Park

EMILY: Still, rarely see cliffs

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: Don't know

SALLY: Seen a few. Maybe – maybe under ten [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] And they're not usually like where you least expect them to be, like you can see them

SALLY: You can usually tell

EMILY: Predict. Of course, Rand's running up a hill

SALLY: Yeah and Rand, I think he says something like he expected it but he keeps running anyway because he doesn't

EMILY: He's a stupid dummy

SALLY: He's like, "I don't know where else to go?" And I'm like you could

EMILY: Turn?

SALLY: Turn left or right?

EMILY: Turn?

SALLY: [laughs] It's a thought. I don't know

EMILY: You're not stuck in an action movie where if something's about to fall on you, you're only recourse is to move forward

SALLY: Yeah you could

EMILY: You *can* turn

SALLY: You can pivot [laughs] on an axis

EMILY: Jesus

SALLY: [laughing] Dumb boy. Not great in a crisis

EMILY: Yeah

SALLY: Rand al'Thor

EMILY: Anyway, Aginor catches up to him and pretty much immediately Rand is backed – hasn't even draw his sword or anything

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: And he just sort of notices, “Oh,” – he’s at this moment of his skin crawling and everything’s fiery. And he’s like – we, the reader are like, “Oh, he’s channeling”

SALLY: [singsong] “He’s doing something crazy!”

EMILY: [singsong] “He’s magic!”

SALLY: Magic boy

EMILY: And he sees this vein of light extending out from Aginor

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: Which I believe is just supposed to be him drawing straight from the Eye of World

SALLY: Yeah. So it’s like...largo

EMILY: Yeah, because we never see really – hmm. Rarely do we ever see anything like this ever again in terms of channeling. Like, people don’t really notice threads of light coming off of each other

SALLY: Yeah...Yeah. Because they’re always talking about the weaves that you can see, but it’s almost – it’s always like people are glowing when they use it

EMILY: Yeah you don’t see this connected to the power source

SALLY: So yeah. I guess it’s because they’re drawing from a specific source that I buy it. I’m not, like, oh this is a weird thing that Jordan changed. It feels very integrated

EMILY: Certainly the women never see it

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: Rand I think sees it a couple more times. Not this white light but later in this chapter he’s going to describe seeing Ba’alzamon with this dark thread? Connection?

SALLY: Yeah this thick, dark thread

EMILY: And I think that’s supposed to be your connection to the Dark One, and it’s also a source of power

SALLY: Mmm

EMILY: That's a whole other thing that's introduced later in the game. I think you're about to get there. But the idea that the Forsaken can channel this power that sort of comes directly from the Dark One, and it's called the True Power because bler bler bler. We're boring

SALLY: They're super into themselves

EMILY: Yeah [mumbles]. But whatever. So the idea that Rand cuts Ba'alzamon off from this, and there's a sort of whiplash involved. He does the same thing, I think, to Asmodean a couple books from now

SALLY: I think so?

EMILY: That whole trippy sequence

SALLY: Doesn't he bind Asmodean or whatever?

EMILY: Yeah. Because Lanfear does the actual binding but Rand I think just cuts him off from the Dark One

SALLY: Yeah...That is another weird sequence

EMILY: Yeah, yeah. Okay now I remember

[distant sirens in the background]

EMILY: Because when he cuts him off from the Dark One, Asmodean has no choice but to channel *saidin*, which is gonna drive him crazy

SALLY: That's right

EMILY: The idea is that the male Forsaken can be using this other power source

SALLY: Which is why they're all still

EMILY: And not going crazy, basically

SALLY: Got it

EMILY: Whoo. Glad we figured that out [laughs]

SALLY: So but what is – what makes – what makes – don't they call it the Dark One's taint on *saidin*? Or is it just a taint on *saidin*?

EMILY: It's the Dark One's taint on *saidin*. I don't know what the difference is. I think there's some form of malevolence there?

SALLY: Mm

EMILY: The idea that the Dark One has this power source that he's letting his chosen few use, I assume then he can pick and choose the consequences of that

SALLY: That's fair

EMILY: Like, they do form an addiction to it. Stuff like that that's bad

SALLY: Yeah, okay

EMILY: Yeah, but I don't know

SALLY: Just interesting

EMILY: Yeah

SALLY: The taint on *saidin* is just really fascinating

EMILY: It's super fascinating. I wish we could get – I don't wish instead of *New Spring*, you know the whole prologue with Moiraine and Lan, I wish we could have a novel length featurette of what happened with, at the end of the War of Power

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: Because that would be really cool. Just see where everyone's...head was

SALLY: What the fuck was happening. Yeah

EMILY: What was Lews Therin doing. Who're the other major players that we never get introduced to

SALLY: [laughs] What was Lews Therin doing?

EMILY: What *was* Lews Therin doing? Just shenanigans

SALLY: Just up to some shenanigans

EMILY: His weird shit

SALLY: Little weird

BOTH: So

EMILY: Rand notices this and, I think, starts drawing form it

SALLY: Yeah and starts drawing from it. And then Aginor flips out

EMILY: Aginor flips out because he's like, "No, it's all mine. Fuck you," and starts drawing more on it? And Ba'alzamon tells us later in this sequence, he's like, "Oh, I knew Aginor's greed would be his undoing." So the idea's that Aginor draws too much on *saidin* and just burns himself out. And literally burns himself up

SALLY: Yeah, he's all fiery

EMILY: Which doesn't usually happen to people who burn themselves out. It's a constant threat for anyone who is a channeler that you can draw too much and burn yourself out. But this is sort of a super violent thing that happens

SALLY: Yeah, I guess 'cause it's like pure magic?

EMILY: Yeah

SALLY: TM

EMILY: And it's the climax, anything goes

SALLY: [laughs] That's fair, across most things anyways. You get to the climax and you're like, "Oh, I guess it makes sense"

EMILY: Yeah, what happens next is that Rand just wakes up and he's in Tarwin's Gap, and he's like, "Cool." There are horses everywhere, there's this big battle, and he's still feeling that whole channeling shit going down. And lightening comes down from the sky, and that's pretty sweet because, as we've already noted, there's a significance of channeling using lightning. That's one of the first things Rand sees Moiraine doing

SALLY: I was reading another tumblr post where somebody pointed out his last name is al'*Thor*

EMILY: DUH

SALLY: Thor, the god of thunder

EMILY: That's funny because I was just about to say "Immigrant Song" by Led Zeppelin starts playing, and I wouldn't have made the connection

SALLY: I didn't either. I read it and I literally just stared at my screen for, like – I think the tumblr was notadarkfriend, who was just like, "Oh, Thor dah dah dah" and I was like [just sorta bellows]

EMILY: Jesus

SALLY: [laughs] I never made that connection

EMILY: It just goes to show you, there are so many references in *Wheel of Time* that you just skim right over them

SALLY: Yeah, because I was like [mumbles] lightning. But yeah, Rand al'Thor calling down lightning like the god of thunder

EMILY: Yeah

SALLY: While, quite literally, Im – this is very similar to the scene [laughing] at the end of *Thor: Ragnarok*

EMILY: [vocalizing the beginning of “Immigrant Song”]

SALLY: Stop this podcast and watch *Thor: Ragnarok*

EMILY: Yeah, obviously

SALLY: A fucking masterpiece. But yeah while Thor just starts –

EMILY: Go search the YouTube clip of that scene in *Thor: Ragnarok*, but while “Holding out for a Hero” is playing, because it matches up eerily well. And also it’s really good

SALLY: Very good

EMILY: Um, yeah, so he’s like lightning. He’s setting Shadowspawn on fire. At one point he just pounds his fists into the ground and it’s like starting mini earthquakes everywhere. Basically, he just decimates this army

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: Which, as we know from later in the series, he shouldn’t be able to do without the use of a heavy duty *sa’angreal* like *Callandor*, the sword in the Stone of Tear. And even then there’s usually, like, some mean side effects to that

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: Like, we learn that *Callandor* doesn’t have a safeguard to prevent the user from channeling too much

SALLY: *Callandor* is out to kill you

EMILY: *Callandor* is literally out to kill you

SALLY: What a cool sword

EMILY: I know

BOTH: I love swords

EMILY: I know. I love swords that are, like, mean

SALLY: I love swords that are like, “Fuck you! [Emily laughs] I’ve been in a stone for eons. I don’t give a shit”

EMILY: UGH. So, sort of the only logical explanation for this is that Rand is literally pulling on pure magic

SALLY: Yeah, again

EMILY: Climax stuff

SALLY: It’s the climax, anything goes. Like the fact that he’s just thinking before this, before he moves “I need to get away. I need to get away” and then he’s, quite literally, just magically transported away

EMILY: And happens to be where he’s needed

SALLY: It’s that coincidence that fantasy runs on

EMILY: This whole sequence of him being in Tarwin’s Gap reads so much to me like Robert Jordan wanted us to feel the looming threat of this being like Helm’s Deep or, uh, what’s the sequence right in front of the Black Gate? Also in *Lord of the Rings*

SALLY: Oh yeah, I know what you’re talking about

EMILY: But he refers to the Borderlanders as “humankind” at one point. And you’re like, “Not to...burst your bubble, RJ, but these are the soldiers of one country out of, I don’t know, fifteen in this one continent

SALLY: [whispers] yeah

EMILY: And it’s not that [laughs] – it doesn’t feel like that big of a deal for us, like we already talked about

SALLY: No! And again when [laughs] – at the end when – after this happens when everyone’s like, “Oh man, he just decimated so many Trollocs,” I don’t understand...how many there was supposed to be. Like, why are you expecting me to understand that this incredibly crazy battle is happening. Where are the Trollocs and Darkfriends coming from? Why are they coming?

EMILY: But the like



SALLY: [laughing] It doesn't make any sense!

EMILY: What's happening!

SALLY: I don't understand!

EMILY: But that's the feeling you get that Robert Jordan wants you to feel, and you're left wondering if that's because – he wants you to feel because he wants you to know this trope is being turned on its head? Of this climactic moment that isn't the climax? But has all the signals pointing to it that say that it is, and he's telling you, "No, it's not." Or if he was just writing badly

SALLY: Or, like, what? He wants you to think this is the Last Battle?

EMILY: Yeah was he writing this book and was like, "Well"

SALLY: But haha, fuckos! There's thirteen more books [laughs]

EMILY: But that can't be it because pretty much immediately Moiraine's like, "Nope. That wasn't it"

SALLY: Moiraine's like, "Nah, everybody chill out. That was a minor battle"

EMILY: "That was a small battle for your folks"

SALLY: And everyone's like, "That was...a lot of battle"

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: That was a thousand—

EMILY: Agelmar was like, "That was...battle"

SALLY: "That was...significant battle"

EMILY: "That was significant...big battle"

SALLY: [laughs] "Big battle just happened"

EMILY: [laughing] "Big battle just saw. Big battle just fought. Big battle scare me!"

SALLY: [laughing] Agelmar's like

EMILY: "I got PTSD from that battle"

SALLY: "That was quite big battle"

EMILY: [laughing] “Quite big battle, Aes Sedai”

SALLY: And she was like, “[mumbling]. That was not the big battle”

EMILY: “The wheel weaves”

SALLY: “The wheel is weaving as it...waves”

EMILY: Drunkenly

[both laugh]

SALLY: Yeah drunkenly she’s like, [slurred] “The weave is willing”

EMILY: And sips another mimosa

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah

EMILY: [laughing] Okay, but Rand does this and is like, “Cool I did that. Now they’re only outnumbered two to one, which I guess are FINE ODDS”

SALLY: What was it before? A thousand to one?

EMILY: I don’t know

SALLY: How many did he kill?

EMILY: Was it SIX to one?

SALLY: The numbers are confusing. [laughs] The plot is confusing

EMILY: [laughs] We’re all just confused

SALLY: I don’t understand. What’s going on. [laughs]. Yeah, and then all of the Borderlanders are like, “Ah, much better odds” and run in

EMILY: And then God’s like, “Something cryptic in your head in all caps”

SALLY: Yeah and God’s like – what does he? – what does God say?

EMILY: He says, “It is not here,” and you’re like, “What is not here, God?”

SALLY: Not the Last Battle? Not?

EMILY: Not the Last Battle? My sense of –

SALLY: My sense of sanity? Because that's gone

EMILY: My sense of satisfaction?

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: Your father? Rand?

SALLY: Rand? Is Rand here? "It is not here. I will take no part. Only the Chosen One can do what must be done, if he will"<sup>3</sup>. Not here. I will take no part

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Really? [laughs]

EMILY: I mean [laughs]. That's a pretty stereotypical fantasy thing to have –

SALLY: I know

EMILY: – a god figure, but who's sort of doing this deist thing of "Gone Fishing." You know, I created the world, I created the pattern, but now things are set in motion, free will exists. It's yours to do with as you will

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: And he explicitly says here, you know, "It's up to my Chosen One, *IF* he does it"

SALLY: If he will

EMILY: If he will. Like, Rand's free choice – Rand's choice in the matter is, as always, he has a choice

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: Although it feels sometimes like this series – like this entire moment of Rand running up a hill and being at an edge of a cliff – it's like, he has no choice

SALLY: He doesn't

EMILY: You feel like he doesn't have a choice, and yet this entire series is about how people have choices

SALLY: Yeah

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<sup>3</sup> From Chapter 51 in *The Eye of The World*. Not in all caps because Sally isn't the Creator

EMILY: So

SALLY: I feel like that's always part of the hero narrative, too. Like, you can do it if you have a choice. But, like, the choice is either I do this, or significant shit happens

EMILY: Sure

SALLY: That's not really a choice

EMILY: One of the things I like about *Wheel of Time*, though, is that the minutiae that defines what this world is going to be like after the Last Battle is totally dependent on the little choices that they make

SALLY: Yeah, which is great

EMILY: Like, it's not just Rand's choices that matter. It's Mat's choices, and Perrin's choices, and Egwene's choices. And those are choices that don't feel cosmic and significant

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: But are going to set the world toward a certain trajectory. Rand's choices often feel like they aren't choices at all. Sometimes they're not choices at all, because Rand, despite all his flaws, is a good person with a moral compass, who doesn't want to watch the world burn. So, I don't know. Thanks, God?

SALLY: Thanks

EMILY: For the encouragement? For the enthusiastic high five you gave this seventeen year old farm boy before sending him off to his doom?

SALLY: Yeah, it's very [sighs]

EMILY: [laughing] Can you just imagine?

SALLY: Yeah, slaps him on the butt and is like, "You're gonna do great!"

EMILY: Dumps some Gatorade on him [laughs]

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: After

SALLY: "You're gonna do EXCELLENT"

EMILY: [laughing] Rand defeats the Dark One, God's waiting to dump some Gatorade on him. "Good job!"

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Dumps some mimosas on Moiraine [laughs]

SALLY: Oh my god. Gatorade in one hand. Mimosa in the other. And is like, “The chosen drink of each of my warriors”

EMILY: [laughs] Exactly

SALLY: Gatorade and mimosas

EMILY: Rand would drink Gatorade

SALLY: Rand absolutely would. Rand is very jock

EMILY: Rand would drink Gatorade and he would refer to it by flavor instead of color. Like a heathen [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] I can’t even think of a Gatorade flavor

EMILY: EXACTLY! [laughing]

SALLY: I guess fruit punch is a flavor. There’s a grape flavor. Rand would be like, “Hand me that lemon-lime twist Gatorade”

EMILY: You know what Rand would drink? Mountain Dew [laughs]

SALLY: You right

EMILY: [laughing] What are the chosen drinks of everyone?

SALLY: Rand: Gatorade and/or Mountain Dew

EMILY: Yeah, we’re eliminating alcohol

SALLY: Oh

EMILY: It has to be soft drinks or...you know

SALLY: Adjacent?

EMILY: Soft drink adjacent

SALLY: Okay

EMILY: Juice

SALLY: Perrin: milk

[both laugh]

EMILY: I was gonna say orange juice but milk is good

SALLY: [laughs] I just feel like Perrin would drink milk

EMILY: I feel like Egwene would drink Diet Coke

SALLY: Absolutely

EMILY: Just nonstop

SALLY: Like all power women

EMILY: Yeah. Myself included [laughs]

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: Nynaeve would drink, uh, let's see [laughs]. I just thought of a funny one for Mat

SALLY: What is it?

EMILY: [laughing] Just Otter Pops. Non-stop

SALLY: Oh. My god. Not even frozen, just the juice? Well, Mat canonically has said that he doesn't drink water

EMILY: [laughing] Beer sharp. Mat's just does shots

SALLY: Or five-hour energy

EMILY: Oh my god! Yeah, Mat would drink a lot of five-hour energy. Or just energy drinks

SALLY: Red bull

EMILY: Yeah, Monster

SALLY: [laughing] Monsters are so gross

EMILY: Yeah and then crush the can on his forehead [yells]

SALLY: I feel like Nynaeve would just drink water

EMILY: Yeah

SALLY: I feel like Nynaeve is not...

EMILY: Would just drink like artisanal water

SALLY: Sparkling water. La Croix [pronounced La cwa in a bad French accent]

EMILY: [laughing] LA CWA

SALLY: La Cwa

EMILY: No, she's not that – Elayne would drink La Cwa

SALLY: Elayne is absolutely La Cwa

EMILY: Okay, now we've got that settled [laughs]

SALLY: Not that we've got that settled

EMILY: Back to the climax. So Rand, conversation with God

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Then he does this, "Oh I have to go confront...onward to go confront Ba'alzamon"

SALLY: Excelsior!

EMILY: And he does – yeah. Literally goes on and up this set of stairs that just sort of appears. It feels like the skimming that they do later in the series. You know, where Rand will open a gateway and there will just be this void of blackness and a platform?

SALLY: Oh. Yeah, yeah

EMILY: Sometimes, as in the sequence at the end of Book 4 when he's chasing Asmodean, there's stairs and things

SALLY: Oh

EMILY: I know, that's also a trippy climax

SALLY: I don't – all I remember about the climax about the climax of book 4 is that Mat punches Rand in the kidneys

EMILY: [whispers] I love that

SALLY: And then Asmodean dies [laughs]

EMILY: That's book five?!

SALLY: Oh, that's right. That is book five. Sorry, see? No room for plot

EMILY: I was totally ready to buy that Mat punched Rand in the kidneys in book 4

SALLY: I don't remember what happens at the end of book 4

EMILY: Uh, yeah. He chases Asmodean

SALLY: Well

EMILY: There's that whole thing with the Aiel [groans]. Okay

SALLY: Rand climbs up some fantasy magic stairs

EMILY: Yeah and then suddenly he's back in Ba'alzamon's dream palace

SALLY: And his mom is there?

EMILY: Well Ba'alzamon is like, "Fool. You're a worm"

SALLY: [laughs] "You fool!"

EMILY: "You cockroach." Calls him multiple insect names. "You can't do this." And Rand's like, "Fuck you. I deny you"

SALLY: [chuckles]

EMILY: And Ba'alzamon is like, "Okay, well here are some *women* to motivate your sense of heroism"

SALLY: [gagging noises]

EMILY: BLECGH

SALLY: Exaclty

EMILY: Kill. Me.

SALLY: So. And basically he's like, "Look, here's your mom. I'm gonna kill your mom"



EMILY: “Here’s Egwene and Nynaeve and your mom.” And Rand’s like, “They’re not even here!” And Egwene and Nynaeve disappear

SALLY: But his mom

EMILY: Point for Rand. But his mom’s still there because it’s ambiguous whether or not his mom is actually there? Der der der der der. She’s dead, obviously. But it’s like

SALLY: Yeah. And it just like especially doesn’t make any sense. Like, never using someone’s mom – like, I don’t ever want to – I can’t get this sentence out right now

EMILY: I never want to see someone’s mom tortured in front of them to empower a sense of male protectiveness

SALLY: Yeah! Like, did you guys – I’m hoping the answer is no, but did you guys ever see *Batman v. Superman*?

EMILY: [groaning] Oh my god. Martha

SALLY: And how the entire conflict of the movie is that – is resolved because both of their mothers’ name is Martha?

EMILY: Sally and I saw that on accident

SALLY: It was because I had free tickets

EMILY: Yeah, we had free tickets, and we were like, “What the hell?”

SALLY: We’ll go

EMILY: We’ll go. We went with our friend Kaitlin. We went to

Both: Smashburger

EMILY: Before. And then we were somehow on the front row, which made no sense

SALLY: Which was fine. Yeah, because I didn’t want to see the movie anyway

EMILY: Yeah and then it was – I think I just laughed through the entire movie

SALLY: Because it’s so bad

EMILY: It’s so bad. But, yeah, that’s the apex of trying to use women to manipulate the emotions of men. Men, you are mature adults. You can have emotions

SALLY: That are not related to your mom

EMILY: That are not related to women. Or your mom. And that don't – your mom doesn't have to be hurt in front of you before you feel like you want to kill a bad guy, you know?

SALLY: Yeah, you should just maybe kill a bad guy

EMILY: Just kill a bad guy

SALLY: And it just especially doesn't make any sense to me because Rand's mom is not really an emotional thread throughout this

EMILY: She's *barely* mentioned

SALLY: Yeah, or throughout the series at all. The only reason she comes up is for Rand to be like, "No, my mom was Kari al'Thor," and we're all like, "No, your mom was..."

EMILY: That princess chick

SALLY: That other princess lady. And so it's just like

EMILY: Like his whole has been about "my dad is my dad"

SALLY: Yeah and his mom doesn't even cross his mind. It would be honestly be a more interesting series if Tam was a single parent

EMILY: Right?

SALLY: And he just didn't ever have a mom

EMILY: Right

SALLY: Because she dies anyway when he's little, so what's the point? He's got

EMILY: Why is she even mentioned? And that almost would be the vibe of Tam being a single parent if Kari weren't, for some reason, brought out here

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: Like what? What's the point?

SALLY: It doesn't – it's literally just because it's, like, that's what you do in situations like this

EMILY: Yeah, Robert Jordan is like, "Oh, I need Rand to feel something, better throw in a woman and have her be in pain"

SALLY: Yeah, and that's Rand's thing all the time. Is Robert Jordan, whenever there's a crux of something significant, there's always a threat to a woman

EMILY: Exactly

SALLY: When Rand needs to go after Rahvin, Moiraine – that's when she dies. In quotes

EMILY: And then Aviendha dies, too

SALLY: And then Aviendha

EMILY: And he has to go on a murderous rampage of Rahvin

SALLY: Yeah, would he have done that if only Mat died?

EMILY: Heh! Who knows?

SALLY: Who knows?

EMILY: We'll never know

SALLY: We'll never know

EMILY: What if it had just been Asmodean that died? That would have been hilarious. And Rand was like, "Fuck you!"

SALLY: "Fuck, I needed that guy"

EMILY: "I needed him! He was very entertaining"

SALLY: "Very entertaining. Very gay"

EMILY: [laughs] "He's very slutty"

SALLY: I feel like we don't talk about that enough

EMILY: We don't, enough. But yeah it's like – and the same thing... [sighs] It's just so frustrating because you know he can do better

SALLY: Right!

EMILY: That doesn't happen with Mat

SALLY: I've seen him do better in this book already

EMILY: Yes!

SALLY: So, it's like why? [laughs] It's like Robert Jordan also got to this climax and was like, "I don't know"

EMILY: [mumbling] "There's a mom there"

SALLY: "Put his mom there? Nobody knows what's happening"

EMILY: Robert Jordan was also drunk on mimosas and was writing this sequence –

SALLY: [laughs, snorts]

EMILY: – and was like, "I have no idea what to do. I guess I'll throw his mom in there"

SALLY: Yeah, it's seriously – this, maybe if this happened in Rhuidean where Rand is having some anxieties about who his parents are and is still trying to hold – like, having more anxiety about who his parents are

EMILY: Mmhmm

SALLY: Like maybe I would be a little bit more on board? I'm never on board with torturing moms

EMILY: Obviously!

SALLY: To make their idiot sons, but it would make more sense narratively at least. But here I just – it doesn't – it doesn't track at all. It's so weird

EMILY: So dumb

SALLY: And later when Rand's like, "He had my mom! He had my mom!" I just like UGH

EMILY: Who –

SALLY: Rand

EMILY: No offense Rand

SALLY: I don't believe that you care

EMILY: Yeah!

SALLY: About your mom!

EMILY: You never mentioned her before

SALLY: Except, like, once or twice to ask if she had red hair or some shit like that

EMILY: It's like exactly what happens in *Batman v. Superman*. We have no narrative threat to support that Batman really cares about his mom, except that the fact that Batman is this character that's defined by trauma

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: But all of that is separate from this one movie. The movie hasn't done any of the work. It's relying on the history of the comics

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: It's exactly what's happening here. Rand has no history with his mom. It's relying on the archetype of heroes caring about their moms

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: And it's boring

SALLY: It's so boring. It's just like... [claps]

EMILY: Okay

SALLY: Ugh

EMILY: Moving on

SALLY: Moving on from that bullshit

EMILY: That sucks

SALLY: Rand and Ba'alzamon

BOTH: Fight

SALLY: Or some shit

EMILY: Basically he cuts Ba'alzamon's connection to the Dark One

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: And Ba'alzamon gets whiplashed the hell out of there

SALLY: [coughs]

EMILY: He also gets kind of burned up. We don't know what happens to him. I think he appears in Book 2 and he's kind of scarred, burned? Who cares? This is Ishamael. Rand still thinks it's the Dark One for some reason

SALLY: Yeah, and then we have weird moment with Moiraine later who's – again, we've talked about this earlier – but he's like, "Shaitan is dead," and she's like, "No, call him Ba'alzamon"

EMILY: And it's just, like, [groaning] no

SALLY: What is happening?

EMILY: Yeah, basically that's it. Rand then wakes up back on the cliff

SALLY: Yeah he's next to [laughing] Aginor's charred corpse

EMILY: He's literally laying on Aginor's charred corpse, which is horrifying

SALLY: [laughing] Which is like, "Gross"

EMILY: I know gross

SALLY: RIP Rand

EMILY: Take a shower, ugh

SALLY: Ugh

EMILY: UUH that's giving me shivers

SALLY: So gross

EMILY: But he sort of drunkenly stumbles back to where everyone else is, and he's like, "I killed –"

SALLY: Oh! Because he wakes up and he doesn't know what the fuck is going on

EMILY: He doesn't remember!

SALLY: But he remembers Egwene!

EMILY: Fuck him. He doesn't even remember Egwene. He's like, "Egwene's someone important." He sees her and is like, "Is that her? I don't know"

SALLY: So, so weird

EMILY: God

SALLY: Anyway, “I killed the Dark One” and all of us are like, “Cute”

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah he’s like, “I killed Satan!” And Moiraine’s like, “I don’t think so”

SALLY: Moiraine’s like, “You?”

EMILY: “You? Doubtful”

SALLY: “Doubtful. Mat? Maybe I’d believe that. Egwene? I’d believe it”

EMILY: [laughs] “Egwene? Competent as hell.” Um, but then this is just revelation after revelation. Rand realizes, “Oh, what I just did was channeling.” Moiraine’s like, “Yeess,” and Nynaeve and Egwene are there and they’re like, “Ooof. Gross. Horrifying. We still love you, Rand”

SALLY: Which is sad, yeah

EMILY: Yeah. And Rand’s like, “Where are the boys?” And Moiraine’s like, “I send them spelunking in the cave.” [laughs] Because all the Power’s gone and duh duh duh, there was some stuff at the bottom

SALLY: Yeah... [laughs]. Yeah, it’s like at the end of a video game

EMILY: Yeah! It’s literally, yeah

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: You defeat the bad guy and suddenly there’s treasure. Very archetypal. Only, the treasure turns out to be kind of grim. There’s the Horn of Valere – great. That sets up Book 2. Gotta get it to Illian, except the Horn of Valere –

SALLY: Never gets to Illian

EMILY: Never even goes in the vicinity of Illian

SALLY: [laughs] It doesn’t go any further south than Tar Valon, I don’t think

EMILY: Exactly. Yeah

SALLY: Maybe a little bit, but

EMILY: Cairhien I guess

SALLY: Yeah, I guess it goes to Cairhien. [laughing] It does not go to Ilia is the point

EMILY: Everyone – Moiraine is like, “It must go to Illian” and it’s like –

SALLY: Why?

EMILY: Where? Why?

SALLY: I don’t understand

EMILY: Clearly there’s no reason except she’s like, “Well I guess they want it”

SALLY: Yeah she’s like, “They want it bad enough.” Does it, like, hail from Illian?

EMILY: [whispers] I don’t know

SALLY: Because –

EMILY: It can’t hail from Illian. Illian wasn’t a country when it was made

SALLY: Okay, but that geographical area?

EMILY: It’s just ‘cause Illian is where the Hunt of the Horn happens

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: And then it’s like, “What? Boring.” I’m kind of like, “Moiraine, let the hunters have their fun, you know? Just hide the Horn”

SALLY: Just tie it on the back of a wolf and let it go

EMILY: Exac – [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Honestly?! Consider though

SALLY: “Hey, Hopper”

EMILY: If Perrin was like, “Hey, guys, you gotta guard this” the wolves would do fucking fantastic

SALLY: The wolves would do better that, who? Mat does? [laughs]

EMILY: Mat? Mat’s just like, “Forget about this” and leaves

SALLY: Throws the Horn in the ocean [laughs]



EMILY: [laughing] Honestly

SALLY: Mat's like, "I don't want it"

EMILY: Um

SALLY: The wolves would do a fantastic job. At everything

EMILY: [laughs] So there's the Horn of Valere, there's also a broken, uh

SALLY: Seal

EMILY: Seal that's made of *cuendillar*, I think is how it's pronounced

SALLY: *Cuendillar!*

EMILY: Heartstone? Heartstone?

SALLY: Sure

EMILY: Moiraine's like, "No one's been able to make this shit since the Age of Legends," and Egwene's like, "Give me ten books" [laughs] "And I'll be there." Also Mat's sister, weirdly

SALLY: Really?

EMILY: Yeah, she's good at it

SALLY: I like his sister

EMILY: I love Mat's sister. Bode

SALLY: I don't understand why they are related

EMILY: They...barely are

SALLY: They don't really need to be [laughs], but it's fine

EMILY: I think it's funny that Mat has this entire family that he has no emotional attachment to whatsoever

SALLY: Because he loses his memory

EMILY: Exactly

SALLY: And also probably Mat has a little bit – I feel like Mat is a little bit on the sociopath scale where he doesn't totally empathize –

EMILY: [SCREAMS]

SALLY: – with people. I just feel like the empathy isn't always there [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] I'm gonna die

SALLY: [laughing] I'm just saying

EMILY: [wheezes] The only thing keeping Mat from being Ted Bundy is that it's not a lucrative enough career

SALLY: [laughing] Okay that's not the *only* thing keeping Mat from being Ted Bundy. I just feel like he's on that spectrum

EMILY: Okay

SALLY: Just a little bit

EMILY: [laughing] Fine

SALLY: Tell me he's an empathetic character and I'll take it back

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Let's get to his points of view and I'll show you where he's empathetic

SALLY: I'm not saying he's not empathetic!

EMILY: He's not as empathetic as Perrin, who feels everything

SALLY: He's not as empathetic as maybe he should be, is [laughing] all that I'm saying

EMILY: [coughs] Okay, copy that. 10-4. So there's that, it's broken. It's one of seven seals, and tracking those sons of bitches is gonna be a whole fucking fourteen book thing

SALLY: It's kind of really the only...touchstone throughout the series. Is where are the seals going?

EMILY: Yeah, except you can't remember them because one's on Bayle Domon's ship, but then I don't remember where that one goes

SALLY: Which is hilarious

EMILY: I can't remember. Um...is one in Rhuidean? Who fucking knows!

SALLY: Anyway, there's seven of them

EMILY: And that's one down

SALLY: They're not supposed to be broken, but apparently they're just getting weaker and weaker

EMILY: They disintegrating. And, uh, it's not really a spoiler because it will come up by the end of Book 13, but eventually it will be like, "Oh, not all of them are broken, and to defeat the Dark One he has to be present in the Pattern for us to kill or whatever the hell happens. So we might have to actually physically break them ourselves."

SALLY: Mmm

EMILY: So that's an interesting thought. But then there's also the banner of Lews Therin

SALLY: Yeah, Lord of the Morning

EMILY: Lord of the Morning. And I think it's the two banners? There's the one that's the big Aes Sedai symbol, and then there's the one that has the actual dragon. And that's freaky for these people who think of Lews Therin as, I don't know

SALLY: Lucifer?

EMILY: Genghis Khan. Yeah, a bad guy

SALLY: A bad guy. A. Bad. Guy.

EMILY: A. Bad. Guy.

SALLY: Caligula

EMILY: Caligula. Ooh, Little Boots. What else happens?

SALLY: Anyway, Mat and company come stumbling out. They reveal their treasure, and Mat, the entire Moiraine is saying these things is just like, "Fuck me! No, fuck me, right?" [laughs] the entire time over and over again

EMILY: [laughing] And they're all ignoring him. No one even tells him to watch his language. It's great

SALLY: [laughing] It's great

EMILY: Because they're all thinking it, too

SALLY: “That’s right. Fuck us”

EMILY: Anyway, these are all ominous things. There’s sort of the omnipresent idea that everyone except Mat, Perrin, and Loial are aware now that Rand is a channeler

SALLY: Yeah, because Rand concocts some bullshit story about how he fell down a fucking hill

EMILY: “I just fell. I just fell. The Dark One’s dead now”

SALLY: And everyone’s like, [mumbling] “He must have done something”

EMILY: I don’t know. Magic stuff. Mat’s like, “Are we done here?” And Moiraine’s like, “Yep, you did it.” And Mat’s like, “What did we do, bitch?”

SALLY: Yeah, seriously. I have no idea what happened

EMILY: Literally. He’s like, “I just ran...a little bit. Nothing happened”

SALLY: “And then I retrieved a chest”

EMILY: “Yeah, and then I went and got this thing.” Moiraine has an interesting line here about how she...she postulates that maybe the point of the Eye of the World isn’t even for people to use its power, it’s just to protect these things. So, again, that’s sort of hinting at the idea that maybe Robert Jordan just put in this entire confrontation as a sort of red herring climax. But whatever, we’ve talked about that enough. And, uh

SALLY: And then they start heading back

EMILY: Yeah, and then they go back. There’s a sweet scene where the Blight is sort of taking over the Garden of Eden, and Loial says, “I don’t want anything bad to happen to the Green Man’s tree,” so he sings to it, and it’s very lovely. And sort of the idea is now there’s going to be this ever

SALLY: Present

EMILY: Present, good healthy tree in the Blight. Which is also sort of archetypal. Tree of life sort of shit. Although the actual tree of life is in Rhuidean, and Mat’s going to hang from it. Der der der!

SALLY: Because he is Odin

EMILY: Yep [clears throat]. But they go back to Fal Dara, and they’re greeted by men who give them flower crowns, which is adorable

SALLY: Very tender

EMILY: They're like, "We won a big battle!" And Moiraine's like, "It wasn't that big of a battle." And they're like, "Bitch. It was a big battle for us"

SALLY: "It was a BIG BATTLE"

EMILY: "I lost an arm. BIG BATTLE, LADY"

SALLY: "BIG BATTLE, LADY. Hey, lady!"

EMILY: "Hey, lady! Stop drinking that mimosa. It was a big battle!" Anyway, then they meet Ingtar and he's like, "I didn't even get there in time." And if you're not at that point like "Ingtar's a Darkfriend," I don't know what to tell you. What a...piece of shit

SALLY: He's like, "I wanted to fight big battle"

EMILY: "I wanted to fight big battle" and they're like, "Well, you didn't so – "

SALLY: Sorry! The world does not revolve around you, Ingtar

EMILY: It's just some hyper-masculine bullshit that he just

SALLY: Glory! Glory!

EMILY: [sighs] I was gonna say RIP Ingtar, but honestly he never redeems himself for me. Fuck him

SALLY: I don't even remember Ingtar

EMILY: Exactly. Forgettable

SALLY: When I read his name in this book I was like, "Whomst?"

EMILY: He's gonna do his thing in the next book and we'll talk about him then. Basically he's boring

SALLY: Bored

EMILY: But then they go to Agelmar and are like, "Look at what we got," and Agelmar's like, "The Horn of Valere!" and Moiraine is like, "Not for you. No touchy." And he's like, "Dang."

SALLY: He's like, "But I wanna touchy." He's like

EMILY: "But touchy. I wanna." And she's like, "No."

SALLY: "No touchy" [laughs]

EMILY: He does that thing that I do when I want to touch something in a museum

SALLY: Yeah, Emily pinches her fingers together like Salt Bae

EMILY: [laughs] I just need to gesture to Sally that I want to touch it, and the only reason I'm not touching it is because of the Do Not Touch sign

SALLY: The Met has very sensitive do not touch signals

EMILY: I know!

SALLY: You, like, breathe on something and it's like *bing! Bing! Bing! Bing! Bing!* [laughs]

EMILY: It makes you even more impressed that the ladies in *Ocean's 8* stole jewels and shit

SALLY: Yeah, but they stole it off somebody not – stop this podcast and go see *Ocean's 8*

EMILY: Go see *Ocean's 8* and re-watch *Thor: Ragnarok*

SALLY: Okay, um

EMILY: And then there's some montage shit

SALLY: Yeah, like Rand training – also, the – we haven't talked about how the Horn of Valere is transcribed with the coolest fucking slogan

EMILY: The grave is no bar to my call. So cool

SALLY: So lit

EMILY: It's like iambic pentameter and everything

SALLY: Oh you're right it is

EMILY: The grave [claps] – no

SALLY: I can't scansion worth fuck

EMILY: It's the GRAVE is no BAR to my CALL. Yeah, there's a weird – what's that called? If Disa were here she'd skin me

SALLY: Yeah, we took an entire class on sonnets, a large part of which was learning how to scan poetry, and I still can't do it. I've had no fewer than six different professors try to teach me how to do scansion, and I can't do it

EMILY: I just can't remember. Is it, like, trochee? What's the other? Ims something? Anyway, yeah it's a really cool slogan

SALLY: Yeah, Mat always gets the best ones. The brave is no bar to my call. It's time to toss the dice

EMILY: Yeah, damn. How does Mat get all the cool?

SALLY: [laughs] It's because he's a sociopath

EMILY: It's time to toss the dice is iambic pentameter. Hell yeah. Figured it out

SALLY: And then Rand is training. Sword stuff yada yada yada

EMILY: Sword stuff. And Lan's like, "You don't need to learn all this in two weeks," and Rand's like, "Yeah I do, because I'm gonna go wander the world as a hobo, and never touch the Power again." And we're all like, "Sure. That'll work"

SALLY: Sure, Jan

EMILY: That'll work

SALLY: Good luck

EMILY: And then he talks to Egwene, because of course he talks to Egwene, and she's like, "We're all gonna go to Tar Valon"

SALLY: Including Perrin, which is so funny

EMILY: Including Perrin

SALLY: Like Perrin just wants to see it

EMILY: Perrin's just sightseeing. And you're like, "Okay, great."

SALLY: And Mat's dying

EMILY: And Rand's like, "No! I'm gonna be a hobo," and she's like, "Okay, fine"

SALLY: Goodbye

EMILY: And then we cut to Moiraine who's been eavesdropping on this, and smiles creepily and is like, "The Dragon is reborn"

SALLY: Yeah, Rand talks about how Moiraine won't even talk to him when he's in the room speaking with her

EMILY: It's so weird

SALLY: [laughing] Which I find...hard to believe

EMILY: I guess in Book 2 Moiraine sort of is like, "That's my whole strategy for dealing with him. The new hands off approach"

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: And then she realizes that that sucks

SALLY: That also isn't working

EMILY: Yeah

SALLY: He's basically impossible to deal with or live with or be around

EMILY: Exactly

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Can't blame her. But this is our first – this last sentence is our first, not first, really, but it's our first canonical indication that Rand is the Dragon Reborn

SALLY: Yeah, not just a man who can channel

EMILY: Yeah, the big revelation is that Rand can channel. But now we're saying, he's not just – it's sort of tying all these threads together. Oh, he's a man who can channel. Oh, he's been called the Chosen One by God himself, and here is Moiraine saying, "Oh, you're actually the Dragon Reborn"

SALLY: Yeah, and then –

EMILY: Especially because Rand is like, "I'm not gonna let you use me the way Ba'alzamon said you were going to use me like all these False Dragons," and Moiraine's like, "Bitch, I'm not going to use you like those False Dragons because they were false. You are the real Dragon and I'm going to use you as such"

SALLY: You are a real dragon. Yeah and he's like, "I'm not going to let you use you." Yep, nailed it. Moiraine's like, "There's nothing wrong with being a tool that's used for its purpose," or some other cosmic bullshit [laughs]

EMILY: Except you're not the one – you don't want to be a tool, you want to be a person using a tool



SALLY: Who saves the world

EMILY: Let Rand be not just a hammer, but also the carpenter holding it

SALLY: Exactly. Let Rand be a carpenter

EMILY: Exactly

SALLY: A carpenter boy. A sheepherding boy

EMILY: What else do we have to say

SALLY: It's just weird

EMILY: Final Book 1 thoughts? It's weird

SALLY: It's weird. It does not match with the rest of the series at all

EMILY: Especially those last hundred pages or so

SALLY: Super wild

EMILY: It makes total sense to me why many people would stop reading the series after this

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: That isn't a climax that, uh, prompts further questioning, really, or further interest

SALLY: Yeah, it's also just kind of like, "Okay." But yeah! We made it. On this journey

EMILY: We made it!

SALLY: Into the Blight and back

EMILY: I'm so tired

SALLY: Yeah that's how I felt when I finished the book for the first time, too

EMILY: Yeah

SALLY: Do you guys feel tired after listening to us talk about it for so long?

EMILY: [laughs] Hopefully you didn't binge watch – binge watch? Binge listen to the last twenty-six episodes

SALLY: Oh gosh

EMILY: ooooug

SALLY: You might die

EMILY: You. Might. Die

SALLY: Direct contact might kill you

EMILY: Like a man channeling, it might kill you. Der der der

SALLY: [*Psycho* knife noises]

EMILY: We've run out of steam so I guess we'll sign off here

SALLY: Yeah! Is there anything you want to say as we come to this, the end of our first season?

EMILY: Ummmmmm no. Thanks

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] Okay. Are you laughing because I said no? Or because I said no with my hands behind my head while just wearing a bra?

SALLY: I don't know. All of the above I guess

EMILY: [laughs] It's the whole visual

SALLY: [laughing] It's the whole visual that you guys are really missing out on

EMILY: Okay, I want to turn the AC back on so

SALLY: Okay well I guess – we're coming back! For season 2. After a brief hiatus, which will include a week off, next week; a Q&A episode; and a special episode if we're still doing that

EMILY: I need to talk to the parties involved about it

SALLY: [laughs] If not, we'll think of something else

EMILY: Maybe another week off, but

SALLY: We can edit a best of or something

EMILY: Bear with us, we're in the middle of a move and that's not really going to be over until late July, so, early August

SALLY: Early August, so it'll be a bit of a crazy time. But we're still around. We'll still be on social media, [laughs] chronicling our journeys across the country

EMILY: Whoo!

SALLY: And of course our content on Patreon is still there, so if you're just *really* missing us, for one dollar a month you can listen to our blooper reel and read Emily's blog where she re-reads *The Gathering Storm*. There's a pretty hefty backlog of that, so it can keep you occupied in the time while we are away

EMILY: And we'll be back for season 2 in August. I feel like it's the season finale so I have to play "How to Save a Life" by the Fray or something

SALLY: [sings] how to save a life

EMILY: What's another season finale song?

SALLY: What's another season finale song? I mean, we opened with "Tubthumping" by Chumbawamba so how do we get better than that?

EMILY: Yeah how do you – how do you?

SALLY: I guess we could play "Emotion" by Carly Rae Jepsen

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: "Cut to the Feeling" by Carly Rae Jepsen. "I Didn't Just Come Here to Dance" by Carly Rae Jepsen [laughing]

EMILY: Listen!