



Episode 125: The Jon Hamm Bubble

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Sally: Everybody Hates Rand is a Wheel of Time podcast that will contain spoilers for all 14 books. So if you're anti-spoiler, pause this, read all 14 books, and come back. We'll be here. Waiting.

Emily: Our title is a joke and is meant to be taken as such. In the context of this podcast, "everybody" refers to us and our cat. You are free to feel however you want about Rand, who is a fictional character. Don't DM us.

(theme song by Glynn MacKenzie plays)

Emily: Ready to talk about cults or whatever? (laugh)

Sally: Did you prepare notes?

Emily: I did not prepare notes. I just have, um, multiple years of knowledge stored in my brain from listening to various true crime podcasts on cults. That's all I've got.

Sally: I should not -- uh, yeah. Let's -- let's do it.

Emily: OK.

Sally: Sorry, I'm really low energy today.

Emily: That's OK.

Sally: My uterus hurts quite a bit.

Emily: Do you wanna get your stuffed Shiba Inu?

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Sally got a package yesterday --

Sally: No, it's OK.

Emily: And I was like, I don't know what this is -- it was kind of crinkly and shaped like a throw pillow. And Tybalt kept trying to eat it, so I had to hide it in my closet. And then she got back and was like, "(gasp) I know what this is!"

Sally: (alugh)

Emily: and pulled out two stuffed, identical -- what I thought were pigs, 'cause they were pink, but they're actually stuffed, like, little Shiba Inu doggies.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And you put a -- they come with one of those little heat things?

Sally: Yeah, like little seed bags that you heat up.

Emily: Little seed bags that you put in the microwave and then you can put it on your body or whatever hurts, and it makes it feel better.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So that was a pretty -- (laugh) And then she came in -- I was in the kitchen today, making a quesadilla or something --

Sally: (laugh) This is so rude.

Emily: And she came in, holding the Shiba Inu, but, like, it was a muppet, with her hand inside.

Sally: It was warm inside! (laugh) Emily's so mean to me.

Emily: It was so funny. Mmm. Risking the crunching in the background, this is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I am Sally Goodger.

Emily: And today we are here to talk about, um -- well, luckily, the last two chapters of the Nynaeve and Elayne saga for a little while. We get to go to the exciting events happening over at

Cairhien next week, including telescopes and Mat Cauthon's first forays into, uh, military leadership, I guess?

Sally: I do find telescopes very exciting.

Emily: But anyway, we pick up where we left off, with Uno and Nynaeve about to enter Samara, which is a city that we now know is sort of being controlled by the Prophet, a.k.a., Masema, who we last saw at the beginning of book three, already developing his, um, troubling tendencies, um, towards cult leadership. But mostly when we knew him in book two, he was just kind of a -- an emo guy who had a lot of really unfortunate racism toward the Aiel --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Because he'd fought in the Aiel War, and he was just an all-around unpleasant dude hanging out with the Shienarans and disliking Rand because Rand looks Aiel. And oh, how the turntables.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um, but, uh, Nynaeve -- there's continuing -- there's continuing rhetoric about Nynaeve's bosom being exposed. That's, like, a whole thing throughout these chapters that I sort of wish we could just forget.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Although, I mean, I guess if you're not used to wearing low-cut stuff, it -- you would also be really hyper-aware of it, or, at least, I have been in the past if I wear something that exposes more of my body than I'm used to. But it's also just, like, the whole set-up is silly.

Sally: Yeah, well, it's supposed to be, like, funny when it is obviously a situation that makes Nynaeve extremely uncomfortable. And, like, it isn't --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Actually charming or amusing to watch women be put in sexual or sexual-adjacent situations that they are uncomfortable in, so.

Emily: Yeah, and it's, like, meant to expose or to make light of Nynaeve's hypocrisy because then she -- when Masema comments on it, she, of course, rightfully, is like, "You don't have any right to comment on the way I dress or to govern the way I dress; it's not up to you. That's totally my choice." Um, which is true, but because it's Nynaeve saying it and because she's been uncomfortable this entire time, we're sort of, like -- it's sort of meant to be taken with a grain of salt in some way. So it's just Robert Jordan being like, "Look how stupid women are" yet again.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, great, thanks, RJ. So yeah, that's great. But Uno is there, and after, um -- as they get further into the city, soon -- I'm gonna pronounce it Ragan, I guess?

Sally: I was thinking, like, Ragan.

Emily: Ragan? That's nicer-sounding.

Sally: I dunno.

Emily: No, I like that better because when I say Ragan, I, like, know too many people named "Reagan." Ragan, who's got a fun triangle scar on his face and, I guess, is younger and hotter than Uno. Or, at least, that's the -- (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: That's what I've been led to believe.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That's my fantasy, anyway.

Sally: I mean, it's not hard for Nynaeve to consider anyone hotter than Uno. She is, like, so --

Emily: She's very rude to Uno.

Sally: Yeah, and she's also, like, really upsetting about his eyepatch and the fact that sometimes he, like, fiddles with it?

Emily: Yeah, and she's like, "I'm gonna puke," constantly --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, dude's missing an eye. I've come close to missing an eye. (laugh) Like --

Sally: Yeah, like, it's not, like -- I -- just, Robert Jordan's disability politics suck ass.

Emily: Yeah. It's -- yeah. We don't -- Uno's one eyed-ness is also, like, the butt of a joke frequently because he's -- it, like, contributes to this mythologizing of him as this scary figure, you know? 'Cause he's got an eye patch that has, like, a red eye drawn on it, and he's this big, buff, armed guy. But it's also just, like, interesting because Uno's one of the few men we've seen who continues to be, um -- who continues to pursue a career in the military and in fighting while also having a -- navigating a disability. And you'd think that would be especially relevant considering that Mat will eventually lose an eye, but of course, um, Mat's disability is immediately negated by his superpowers as a *ta'veren*, so it's just like, who's more impressive? Mat's magic luck powers or the fact that Uno has saved -- stayed alive this entire goddamn time, like, into his late forties, it would appear --

Sally: Yeah. But he also, like, shouldn't have to be impressive. You know, like, Robert Jordan sets him up as pretty much one of the only people, like you said, that we see with any type of disability. And the idea -- (sigh)

Emily: I can -- do you want me to lock him away?

Sally: Tybalt, just, what are you doing? What's happening? It's a piece of dust. It's not a bug. (laugh)

Emily: He's really obsessed with bugs right now, 'cause a lot have gotten into our apartment.

Sally: (laugh) I hate you.

Emily: And pest control isn't coming for a week. (laugh)

Sally: You are the fucking devil. You're a demon from hell. Um. (sigh) But Uno, like, shouldn't have to be impressive. Like, in a way -- like, the disabilities that we do see in Wheel of Time, which I think are, like, Uno, Rand, Mat ...

Emily: I can't think of any others. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) These three boys.

Emily: Two of whom, as we've said --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Don't really have disabilities.

Sally: Yeah, because everything about them is negated by the fact that they are, like, special and can control fate and, like, when Rand eventually loses a hand, he doesn't necessarily, quote unquote, need two hands in order to function because he can channel. And, like --

Emily: Did you know I was high-key convinced for a while that Perrin would lose a leg just because -- (laugh) I was like --

Sally: (laugh) Eye, hand, leg.

Emily: Yeah. I was like, what's happening here? It's all happening in the last, like, two books.

Sally: Yeah. Um, at least in terms of physical disability. Rand's narrative with his, um, mental illnesses is a little bit of a different story. Tybalt is being put in prison. But then -- so we have Uno kind of standing as our lone figure -- lone normal, quote unquote, proletarian figure with a disability --

Emily: Workers' rights --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Says Uno.

Sally: (laugh) Unionize.

Emily: Commie flag. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. Unionize the Shienaran soldiers.

Emily: I mean, they deserve it. Fuck. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. Um, and he's basically supposed to be like, look at how badass this dude is with everything that he can do with, like, just one eye. So he sort of veers into, like, the territory of inspiration porn.

Emily: Yeah. Of course you're right.

Sally: Um, anyway.

Emily: Yeah. But yeah, Nynaeve is very gross --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: About all of it.

Sally: Sorry that took me so long. Tybalt just really --

Emily: Tybalt was just like --

Sally: Punctuates the trains of thought.

Emily: "Hey, I'm gonna freak out over this mote of dust."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Or, "Hey, I'm gonna stand on the washer now and just, like, try to, like, pull down the bleach so I can eat it."

Sally: Ahhhh! He is --

Emily: And it's like, you're so stupid.

Sally: Tybalt is on a mission to harm himself. Not because he's, you know, in any sort of mental distress; just because he wants to torture us.

Emily: He's just like, "Ugh, they're not paying attention to me --"

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "At this moment. They're looking at a computer." Tybalt -- computers, like, trigger Tybalt, I swear to God.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He gets way more upset when we're both working on our computers.

Sally: Yeah, he's -- it's like he knows the computers are the enemy for our attention because we've been -- like, both of us work computer-based jobs. Like, we're on our computers all day.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I mean, everybody is, now that they're working from home. But we also have a lot of, like, computer-based extracurricular activities, like the podcast and the fact that both of us write. And Tybalt is just like, "This is the enemy." (laugh)

Emily: I'm like, Tybalt, you don't even want my attention --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Half the time. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: You get so angry when I pay attention to you.

Sally: He just needs to know that there's no other option. We either pay attention to him, or we suffer.

Emily: Or we're in a coma.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Stupid. (laugh)

Sally: He -- I hate him so much. Tybalt and I need a break.

Emily: Tybalt is like the manifestation of how, um, people in -- on -- in the early history of the Earth were like, "Everything revolves around us."

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Tybalt is like -- it's a Tybalt-centric universe, baby. (laugh) These are just my servants.

Sally: I hate him. (laugh) Fucking hate that little monster.

Emily: Ugh.

Sally: Ahhhh!

Emily: It really makes you think about how the Egyptians were like, "Cats equal gods."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I'm like, what a horrifying view of deities. (laugh) But also -- you know?

Sally: Look at the way he acts.

Emily: He's just the worst. OK.

Sally: He's got so much self-righteousness.

Emily: Ugh. So Uno and, uh, Ragan take -- well, I mean, they sort of chat with Nynaeve, I guess -- and then take her to, through increasingly confusing, um, cities -- which, it's like, the closeness of it all sort of contributes to this claustrophobic feeling that prevails throughout, um --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: This chapter, as does the physical discomfort that Nynaeve feels in a dress, however stupid that plot point may be. It's also just -- there's just, like -- everything is horrible.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, but Nynaeve -- they get to this house, which Nynaeve describes as, like, a fairly nice house. It's got multiple stories, it's got garben -- uh, garden. A garben.

Sally: (laugh) It's a garden full of garbage.

Emily: I -- it essentially is, though. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Nynaeve walks in and immediately, like, puts on her Property Brothers voice and is like, "This place is disgusting."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She's like, "Could really use some interior decorating tips." She's like, "I've developed something of an eye for interior decorating, since I've been around fucking rich people in the last year."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And this place is garbage." Um, but, like, there isn't -- there aren't very many possessions. It's sort of, like, this shell of a house.



Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And she only sees two servants, both of whom are described as, um, elderly and sort of, like, impoverished-looking. They're both kind of wearing flimsy clothing. Um -- and, you know, this woman's just stewing a soup or something that Nynaeve is like, "It smells like cabbage." My cabbages! (laugh)

Sally: My cabbages.

Emily: Um, but they go up, I guess, to Masema's office or whatever, and he's already in conference with, uh, this woman who will later join Perrin's coterie, so --

Sally: What?

Emily: Yeah, she swears fealty to Perrin.

Sally: Ew.

Emily: Alliandre. Alliandre?

Sally: Alejandro.

Emily: (laugh) Alejandro.

Sally: (singing) Alejandro, Alejandro. (normal voice) Like the Lady Gaga song. That music video is very good. I would recommend watching it or rewatching it.

Emily: We should post it alongside this episode.

Sally: OK.

Emily: (laugh) Um, Allie -- whatever her name is --

Sally: Allie.

Emily: Allie. Cutie. She's like a cheerleader. That's what the name "Allie" makes me think of, I guess.

Sally: My name is quite close to that name.

Emily: Yeah, but it's different. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) OK.

Emily: Um, Alliandre -- Alliandre -- whatever her fucking name is -- Nynaeve overhears this conversation between, uh, Alliandre, who she assumes is just sort of, like, a noble lady, and Masema, where Masema's like -- Alliandre's, like, bringing up these very, um, relevant and

prevalent problems that, uh, Ghealdan and the city in particular is facing. She's like, "There's poverty everywhere; there's no justice system."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "Your followers just feel like they can take whatever they want."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Masema's like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, you're right. Let's do this. We'll have, um -- if a dude commits a robbery, then he loses a hand, and if he does murder or sexual assault or any type of thing like that, we'll just kill him. And if women do anything, we'll flog them. And, you know, you just need to find 12 people to back you up, and then they're judged guilty, and the sentence is carried out." And Alliandre's like, "Uhhhhh." (laugh)

Sally: "That isn't quite what I was looking for."

Emily: "Sounds suspiciously like the U.S., uh, court system."

Sally: Yeah. Twelve people.

Emily: Which means: broken.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, but -- and also just, like, in this case, all you need is 12 friends --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To back you up when you accuse anyone of anything.

Sally: Yeah. Or just, like, that makes it so easy to frame people.

Emily: Yeah. Just get -- you can get rid of anyone you want.

Sally: Yeah. It's like, this is a shitty court system, my dude.

Emily: (sigh) But he does not care. And she's like, "There's a problem with poverty," and he's like, "Well, we're giving money to poor people," and she's like, "That doesn't really solve the systemic issues that we're facing."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's like, "There should be -- there's tons of money, so there should be plenty of food," and she's like, "It's more of a problem of people not wanting to deliver food to this hell city --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Where your crazy cult is in charge."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “No one wants to get sucked into your vortex of --”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Horror.” And he’s like, “Sounds like a you problem, lady.” (laugh)

Sally: Seriously.

Emily: She’s like, great. He’s like, “Well, why don’t you start with giving me your jewelry?” And she’s like, “Fine,” strips off all her jewelry.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, and later, we learn, when Nynaeve is disparaging this woman to Uno and Ragan, that she’s the queen of Ghealdan, that she came into power after, uh, three of her predecessors fell, very quickly --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: In the span of, like, two months.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And, I mean, it’s been, like, what? Since we last saw Masema? That was at the end of winter, and it is now late summer. Um, so it’s been, like, six, seven months, tops?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And in that time, apparently, uh, we’ve had four rulers of, uh, Ghealdan and Masema himself coming to power. Alliandre seems to have been, um, uh -- seems to have contributed to the last woman being ousted from power and just sort of marrying off some nobleman. But, uh, Uno and Ragan are like, “That was smart of her,” essentially, because every one of her predecessors tried to fight against Masema and ultimately failed. Alliandre is just sort of trying to go with the flow in the hopes that she can salvage, um, her people.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That she can save lives. Um, and as we meet Alliandre later in the series because she joins up with Perrin throughout the whole Faile kidnapping escapade, um, we get to know her a little bit, and she is a kind, smart, lovely woman.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She’s just sort of in the background as a more competent ruler than Elayne and literally anyone else we see --

Sally: (laugh) And Robert Jordan's like, "No need for her."

Emily: "No need for her. She'll just swear fealty to Perrin." She's a little bit young and naive, therefore -- like, I mean, we've talked before about how Elayne was handed commander-in-chief powers over the fucking armies of the Light at the Last Battle, when Alliandre was right there.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Girl had to deal with Masema for, like, seven months.

Sally: That is better than dealing with the Dark One. She's got the resume.

Emily: She has the resume. (laugh) She's got the CV all spelled out.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Have you met Masema? He's the worst.

Sally: Mm. Even the Dark One's like, "Girl, no."

Emily: The Dark One's like, "Yeah, I mean, I didn't even, like, orchestrate that, but boy howdy, he really helped -- helped me along." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um.

Sally: Uhh.

Emily: But Allinadre leaves, and Nynaeve is free to enter with Uno and Ragan, um, who greet Masema, and he's like, basically, "Have you finally decided to join my crazy religion?" And they're like, "No. We're cool out here, bro." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, we're fine.

Emily: And he's like, "Ugh. Who's this whore?"

Sally: Basically!

Emily: (laugh) And they're like, "Well, this is, um, Nynaeve. She supervised Randa as a child," essentially.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "The Dragon -- the Lord Dragon. Um, she was there when he was reared," or whatever. And he's like, "Ah," and immediately slips into all of the Biblical, uh, text usually surrounding Mary, mother of Jesus.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, I think he calls her “blessed among women,” which is the term the angel Gabriel used on Mary in the Bible when he was like, “Hey, do you wanna get preggers with the spawn of the Lord or whatever?” (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And she was like, “Sure,” and he was like, “Great, you’re top-tier womanhood,” or whatever, which is gross.

Sally: Which is just great.

Emily: Yeah. Great rhetoric for women. (sing-song) Thank you, Bible.

Sally: Get pregnant or die.

Emily: Um, but, uh, the conversation -- Nynaeve snaps at Masema. She’s like, “Fuck you,” and the conversation slowly builds back up from there, with him saying, “Well, that’s great. You can tell us all about, uh, the miracles that Rand produced when he was a child,” and Nynaeve’s like, “Literally the only wisdom I ever heard from that kid was, after he got spanked for doing some shit, he was like, ‘I’m not gonna do it again.’”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She’s like, “After that, it was all bullshit.” (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Just like every other child --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In the world. Um, she’s like, “Oh, well, that’s not gonna go great.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She’s like, “Well, actually, I’ve been summoned by the Lord Dragon to return to Tear, which is where he’s at,” she says, lying through her teeth --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: “Um, and we need to make a -- I need to get there speedily, so it would really help me out if you would look out for a riverboat,” and he’s like, “(sigh) Alright.”

Sally: I know. He’s the fucking worst. I hate him.

Emily: yeah. Masema is, um, not great. I mean. It's just -- how -- how do you say it? Nynaeve comments -- and everyone who meets Masema comments frequently -- on the glint of madness or whatever in his eye, the notion that he, essentially, isn't right in the head. Um, which isn't, uh, inaccurate when it comes to the history of cults. A lot of, uh, cult leaders are really charismatic individuals who, uh, might be struggling with mental illnesses themselves. Certainly, they have to have some levels of narcissism --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: To get involved with that sort of thing. But also, a lot of, quote unquote, cult leaders are totally with it people who are manipulating people to their own ends.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: The, like, weird thing we see with Masema as a cult is that, um -- usually, when we see cults, it's pretty easy to trace everything that the cult does to some sort of power, wealth, privilege, all circling back to, like, this one guy --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Or woman, in some cases. With Masema, it's a little bit tougher to do that because he's been positioned as this sort of, like, Gandhi-esque figure who is, um -- I can't -- abstaining from all forms of, like, uh, luxury.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: He only eats his weird cabbage soup. He has totally shaved his head, so he's kind of got this, like, Gandhi-esque figure, um, going on. And it's just, like, a little bit weird to reconcile those two things.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Because almost inevitably, cult leaders are in it for themselves.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, so I guess it's a little bit weird that Robert Jordan didn't do that, but then again, you know, he clearly didn't know everything.

Sally: Yeah, well, there's also, like, this weird intersection of, like, cult-like behavior and then Masema's just, like, incredible fundamentalism. So you see, like, um -- like -- mmm. What is -- what are the words that I'm looking for? 'Cause, like, the example I wanna reach for in modern-day understanding is, like, uh, some of the Islamic states in the Middle East, where you see, like, um, a religion sweeping its way into, like, the politics of people because it's got a, you know, fundamentalist leader --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: But it is just interesting to have it come down to this also, like -- usually if there's, like, a fundamentalism, it's, like, a larger group of people. Like, the Whitecloaks, perhaps, are a better example of what, quote unquote, like, fundamentalism might look like in this world.

Emily: Right.

Sally: So you have this, like, fringe group, cult thing. But all -- at the -- and, like, there's probably people who are just, like, in it to be violent and weird or whatever.

Emily: Yeah, certainly.

Sally: And then you've got Masema, who's just, like -- all hints indicate that he is just, like, really believing everything that he is telling people. It's just, like, a very odd positioning.

Emily: Yeah, we see all of Masema's followers who actually, like, believe his whole schtick or claim to believe his whole schtick --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Are a lot like his servants in the house. They're --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: People who are in bad situations, and that's really typical of cults. There are some cults that have started as, like, um, uh, narcotics recovery groups --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And other things like that. So you have these people in really bad positions, and we know that they've been put in these really bad positions by upheaval in the world -- is Ghealdan the same place where, uh, Logain --

Sally: I think --

Emily: Sort of had his uprising?

Sally: I think that's right.

Emily: I wanna say it is. Or, like, maybe it was Murandy. But this realm of the world --

Sally: (laugh) I can get a map, I guess.

Emily: I don't -- yeah, I don't want to know. This realm of the world hasn't been, like, in a great position.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: There's -- they're right next to Whitecloak country, where, um, the primo terrorist group resides. And Ghealdan, sort of like Murandy, just sort of shifts its rulers constantly, which doesn't indicate a lot of stability --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: For the people. So, the fact that Masema can just, like, come sweeping through here and accumulate people who are in really bad, um, physical and mental and emotional straits, is pretty indicative of both cults and a lot of religions.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Although, of course, religions and cults share a lot of similarities. If you're in a -- if you're religious at all, your religion probably shares many of the, uh -- what are the -- they have, like -- every article -- every news outlet is like, "Here are the seven signs you're in a cult."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And they're all different. (laugh)

Sally: Ooh, let's read one.

Emily: OK. I grew up in the LDS Church, which has frequently been accused of being a cult, and I'm like, "Every religion is a cult." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don't know what to tell you.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Signs you're in a cult." Uh, Google dot com. "The seven signs that you're in a cult," from the Atlantic. OK. Here are the signs: "Number one: opposing critical thinking." Every religion that I am aware of, uh --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Does this to some extent.

Sally: They do not like people who, uh -- sorry.

Emily: You're fine.

Sally: Um, who think for themselves.



Emily: Um, "Isolating members and penalizing them for leaving."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, "Emphasizing special doctrines outside scripture." So, like, you could maybe have, like, here's what the particular cult leader says.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: And what Masema says wouldn't be, quote unquote, scripture to this group of people -- to this group, it might be whatever Rand says.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um.

Sally: There we go.

Emily: But they, of course, do whatever Masema tells them. "Number four: Seeking inappropriate loyalty to their leaders." Dur dur dur. Number five is, uh -- might sound bizarre, but it's "Dishonoring the family unit," and the greatest example of this, Masema -- uh, Uno, actually, tells us that Masema just, like, grabbed 300 women and 300 men or whatever and just married them off.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which, actually, a cult famously did. I can't remember which cult it was, but -- yeah.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And a lot of cults rearrange, um, family units, uh, in order to, usually, provide access to women and often children for the cult leaders.

Sally: Eww. It's also a, like, destabilizing tactic. Like, if you are removed --

Emily: Yes.

Sally: From the family unit -- unit, you do not have support and therefore are more reliant upon the cult leader.

Emily: Yeah, a lot cults talk about how -- a lot of things talk about how cults use the same tactics, uh, for brainwashing --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which has a lot to do with, like, destabilizing you from your home, taking you out of your home, taking you away from your support system.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, putting you on any sort of drugs, anything like that to put you out of your right mind --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And just, like, going from there.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: Depriving you of sleep.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Et cetera, et cetera. "Number six: Crossing Biblical boundaries of behavior, versus --" In parentheses, it says, "Versus sexual purity and personal ownership." I don't really get that one.

Sally: Is it, like --

Emily: Or, at least, I don't understand what it's saying.

Sally: This is my interpretation.

Emily: OK, I'd love to hear it.

Sally: Let me know what you think. (laugh)

Emily: OK. (laugh)

Sally: Um, I think when we're comparing, like, what we consider traditional religions, there is some emphasis upon, like, sexual purity and that, like, most religions do not condone sex before marriage or, like, quote unquote, promiscuous sexual behaviors, whatever they might consider that to be. And from, like, what I know of cults, there's often an -- like, an emphasis upon this, quote unquote, promiscuous sexual behavior, like group sex, polygamy, um, pedophilia --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Apparently.

Emily: Oh, hell.

Sally: So, um, that would be my guess.

Emily: Yeah, I think you're totally right. That makes sense.

Sally: Not -- I don't -- I don't like calling pedophilia a form of promiscuity. That's why I'm trying to say, like, so-called promiscuity.

Emily: Yeah. It's --

Sally: Like, I don't really like when people put pedophilia anywhere in, really, the range of, like, other words to describe normal sexual behaviors.

Emily: Yeah, we're talking about -- when we talk about religion, um, and religious control over bodies and, um, sexual behavior, we're usually talking about, we hope, and obviously many religions cross the line, people's, um, choices on what to do with their bodies in regards to how and when they have sex.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: With cults, you're saying, it's crossing the line into criminal behavior.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: With, uh, pedophilia, um, women who aren't -- not just women -- people who aren't necessarily consenting --

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Or they aren't enough in their right minds to consent --

Sally: Yeah, there's just, like, real ...

Emily: And, yeah, lots of drugs, lots of alcohol, all situations where people aren't necessarily able to consent.

Sally: Yes. That's the much better word than promiscuity. You're so smart.

Emily: Well, but promiscuity also is, like, a huge part of it.

Sally: I feel like that's the word people want to put on those types of behaviors.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I think promiscuous is a very fascinating word.

Emily: Me too. Because I'm like, I think it would be cool to be promiscuous.

Sally: I know. But nobody wants to have sex with me.

Emily: Ahhh! (laugh)

Sally: Gosh. Fucking Covid. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Making it so hard to be promiscuous.

Emily: Ugh. “Fergalicious, definition --”

Sally: (simultaneously) “Make the boys go loco.”

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: “They want my treasure so they get their pleasures from my photo.” (laugh)

Emily: It makes me so happy that you know the lyrics. (laugh)

Sally: I can sing the whole song.

Emily: I remember being in seventh grade and everyone around me knowing all the lyrics to that song, and I was just so befuddled because I’d, like -- at that stage in my life, didn’t have any access to music --

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Except what I heard occasionally on the radio.

Sally: Yeah. So you were like, “Fergalicious?”

Emily: I was like, “What are they talking about?”

Sally: “Make the boys go crazy.”

Emily: And everyone was like, “You’re dumb,” and I was like, “I know.” (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) No, you’re not dumb. You might -- I think it’s a bigger indicator of my stupidity that I know all the lyrics to “Fergalicious.” (laugh)

Emily: Did you -- (laugh)

Sally: Like, that song lives rent-free in my head. (laugh)

Emily: Aaron texted -- not just me, the other day, but the entire group chat --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And was like, “I’m listening to Emily’s podcast in -- from June 2018, and Sally had to explain to her what ‘Save the cheerleader, save the world,’ meant.”

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: He’s like, “I do not understand how you lived through the world without getting the, like, Heroes tagline.” And I’m like, “I don’t know what to tell you, man.” (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) I'm gonna die. Aaron. It's so funny.

Emily: Ahhh.

Sally: I am sorry that Aaron put you on blast publicly.

Emily: I was like, "How was I supposed to know?" (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) I don't know.

Emily: I was afraid to watch live action TV at home.

Sally: In case there was, like, a titty?

Emily: Yeah, in case there was, like, you know, a fucking G-rated sex scene flashing on the screen --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: When my parents would walk in and accuse me of watching pornography or something.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Very militant atmosphere --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: At the Juchau -- in most Mormon households.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Except Kate's. That's where I went to watch CSI. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Anyway, talking about militant behaviors, circling back from Fergalicious --

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: To the cults. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Really, it's all --

Sally: It's all connected!

Emily: It's all coming together. Galaxy brain. (laugh) Ahh.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Number seven is "Separation from the church," which, I guess, just means that a lot of, like, cults are offshoots of more established religions.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which happens a lot in the LDS church.

Sally: Yeah, like, the fundamentalist group that got --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: A lot of attention a couple years ago when their compound was, like, raided or whatever.

Emily: Yeah, I think -- was that -- that wasn't Waco. It was some other thing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Anyway.

Sally: But -- yeah.

Emily: I'd say that one of the best indicators we have of cults in, like, the modern day -- the separation between a lot of cults and, like, religious groups -- is that cults are inherently destructive in some way. They implode.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Either through external forces of violence or through internal forces of violence. Like, you get Jonestown --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: These mass suicides, or you get murders or, um, you know, mass murders.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Thanks, Charlie Manson. Whatever. Gross. Um, and so it is sort of inevitable that we have Masema's group here, full of criminals -- (laugh) essentially.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um, just people who are like, "Whatever, I'm going -- I'm gonna do this, hang out, see what I can get away with, and --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Eventually, you know --

Sally: Implode.

Emily: Implode.

Sally: Yeah, this -- basically, like Emily was talking about -- there's so much about this city -- what is it? Samara? That just feels like a pressure cooker.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: And a lot of that, of course, comes from Masema's influence, where he is just letting this type of behavior, like, run rampant. Whereas, like, most religions usually try to have -- like, this is a -- like, a toxic way of putting it, but kind of more of a, like, handle on their people. (laugh)

Emily: Well, yeah. A lot of things are, um -- a lot of religions and a lot of cults, in some cases, are, uh -- they have a lot of control over --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: You know, their denominations. Whatever.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Masema, as we learn, doesn't really have -- he has incredible control in that people -- the people nearest him will do whatever he wants, but he's also a little bit nuts, so he can't remember what he's --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Going to do. He'll -- he says he's going to do something and then forgets to do it.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And he's just sort of, like, easily maneuvered, in a way.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and we'll see that a little bit with Perrin as -- it's really tragic that Perrin's whole thing in the later books -- Rand sends him off, 'cause he's like, "OK, I finally maybe have to do something about this huge fucking cult --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "That's growing in my name in the, uh, southwest --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Corner of the continent," I guess.

Sally: That tracks. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. You got me there. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Like --

Emily: He's like, "Perrin, could you please go take care of this?" and Perrin's like, "Sure, sure, sure," but then his wife gets kidnapped, and he's like, "Never mind, Rand, fuck you." But it's really a little bit tragic because the most interesting parts of that storyline -- although as with everything, they go on too long -- are, like, Perrin's pretty much sane group interacting with Masema's totally off the rails group.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And, like, trying to intersect those and, like, the control that Perrin exerts by being like, "I'm the friend of Rand --"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "And I came here on his orders, but also, like, I have no control over this situation at all."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which just -- again, Robert Jordan set up a really cool scenario here, but it's just, like ...

Sally: Then he's like --

Emily: Fizzle out.

Sally: Yeah. Ew, Perrin. (laugh)

Emily: Ew, Perrin -- (laugh) Which, same.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Imagine if Mat was the one sent to wrangle Masema. (laugh)

Sally: I know! I was just gonna say --

Emily: Mat would have been, "Easy. Assassination."

Sally: He'd be like, "He's dead. We're fine."

Emily: "I'll just kill him."

Sally: And Perrin's like, "Morals. Bleh."

Emily: Perrin's, like -- ugh. I mean, even Perrin, by the end of it, is like, "Maybe I should just kill Masema," and Faile's like -- (whisper) "I got you."

Sally: Good.



Emily: And kills Masema. (laugh)

Sally: Excellent. Fucking excellent.

Emily: I know. Faile gets out of being kidnapped and is like, "Time to do a murder." And it's like, girl, same.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: It's the most relatable you've ever been.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. So Nynaeve secures this promise from Masema that he'll look out for a ship.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And then she and Uno and Ragan leave and are on their way back to the circus when Uno is like, "There's a Whitecloak following us." And Nynaeve, of course, is like, "I -- oh, I know who that is." It would've been hilarious, though, if Nynaeve had been like, "Please describe him," and Uno was like, "The hottest man I've ever seen." (laugh)

Sally: Uno's like, "He's super banging."

Emily: "He's very good-looking." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Instead, there's, like, this weird stand-off in an alley --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Where Galad is like, "I need to talk to you, Nynaeve," and she's like, "You have to get through my two bodyguards first." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And he's like, "I don't wanna." And she's like, "Fine." But the essential parts of this conversation are that Galad is like, "I don't know what the fuck you're doing here. Um, I don't know if anyone's told you, but your hair makes you stand out more than it does help you blend in --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "So I don't really know what the deal is there. It's weird that you're with the circus. Um, but can you please leave because this place is terrible?" And she's like, "So you're not gonna

turn us in to the Whitecloaks?” and he’s like, “No.” (laugh) “What the hell? Why would I do that?”

Sally: I know.

Emily: And she’s like, “I mean, you are part of a terrorist group that just goes around lynching innocent people.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The only reason we don’t see Aes Sedai get, like, fucking murdered every time they interact with Whitecloaks is because they have that handy “can use the Power in case of life-threatening scenarios --”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Thing, otherwise Whitecloaks would just be like, “Huh, a woman who does witchcraft, we think?”

Sally: Dead.

Emily: I mean, they do that already.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But usually it’s just not real Aes Sedai. It’s just women who --

Sally: Do, like, herbs and shit.

Emily: Who are like, “Oh, I have a basic, um, understanding of medicine.”

Sally: And they’re like, “Witchcraft.”

Emily: And they’re like, “Witchcraft. Fucking drown.” (laugh) Um. But he’s like, “Well, I joined the hate group against people, um, ‘cause I felt like they victimized you guys by sending you out of the Tower, like, untrained to just go fight bad guys,” and Nynaeve’s like, “I mean, yeah, but you realize we are still also, like, part of that group?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And he’s like, “Didn’t really think the whole thing through.”

Sally: It’s like, oh, no shit.

Emily: Oh, no shit, Robert Jordan. Maybe you should have given us a little bit of context for Galad.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It becomes more and more frustrating to me. I wrote a whole blog about it the other week. It's just, like, so stupid.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Having Galad interact with the Whitecloaks in order to give them some sort of, like, redeeming quality, but the truth is that Galad is such a bland character --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: When we step away from his hotness, that it's like, if all the Whitecloaks had just gone to war against Masema and they'd all just died --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: All of them, I would've been like, "Great."

Sally: Yeah. Galad isn't, like, an actually good character. He's just sort of got, like, really strong comedic timing.

Emily: Yeah. He's funny.

Sally: Showing up as -- and everyone just being like, "This is the hottest person alive, but he's also kind of stupid." (laugh)

Emily: "But he's also a dick." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) And so he just, like, creates some amusement, but he's not, like -- it's not like Robert Jordan took, like, Egg --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: A very interesting moral character and was like, "The -- she joined the Whitecloaks." (laugh)

Emily: No, he just was like, "Here's this kid with literally the height of privilege."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It reminds me of the 30 Rock storyline where Liz is dating Jon Hamm briefly --

Sally: (laugh) Oh, yeah.

Emily: And she has to break up with him because she realizes that he lives in a bubble where his good looks --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just influence everyone to, like, treat him --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like he can do anything.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, he always bypasses the line at restaurants. He stumbled his way into a medical career but can't actually do medicine.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That's, like, Galad --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To a "T."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's so hyper-incompetent, except apparently he's good at swinging a sword. But I'm also like, you got your ass handed to you by a kid with a stick who was recovering from --

Sally: Yeah. Demonic possession. (laugh)

Emily: A life-threatening illness. (laugh) So how good can you be, really?

Sally: Yeah, seriously.

Emily: I don't know, man.

Sally: But anyway --

Emily: Fuck Galad, is what I'm saying.

Sally: Yeah. He's just -- whatever.

Emily: But anyway, yeah. Nynaeve is like, "Yeah, please look out for a ship for us. What can it hurt to have two guys looking out for a ship, especially because Masema might forget?" Which is --

Sally: Yeah. Which is completely reasonable.

Emily: Yeah. Uh, then, of course, it will --

Sally: How would Nynaeve know it would --

Emily: Spiral -- (laugh)

Sally: Spark a civil war? (laugh)

Emily: Spirals so fucking bad.

Sally: Two men looking for a boat. (laugh) So stupid.

Emily: Jesus Christ. But they get away. Galad's like, "Why don't I put you in an inn instead of the dumb circus?" and she's like, "Why don't we stay in the circus because we made a pretty, you know, well-reasoned choice there."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And you don't get to boss me around."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And he's like, "Fine." She's like -- middle fingers in the air as she leaves.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Girl's got her gumption back.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's -- this is the storyline of her -- Nynaeve regaining -- (laugh)

Sally: Her anger.

Emily: Her self-confidence. Um. But they go back to the circus. Uno and Ragan are like, "Why don't we hang out with you? We'll go with you." And Nynaeve's like, "I mean, it would be more mouths to feed, but I do like the idea of having my own personal army of Shienaran soldiers." (laugh)

Sally: And, like, same.

Emily: I know, that'd be great. And she's like, "Don't you have things to do?" and they're like, "No, we literally have nothing to do. Are you kidding?" (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "We'd rather go with you." And she's like, "OK." I don't know why they didn't leave already, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Maybe, like, personal responsibility for, like, the terror that their comrade has become, but it's like, just leave, dude.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Can't control him anymore.

Sally: Yeah. Just --

Emily: Get out.

Sally: Fuck off.

Emily: But, whatever. They're here when Nynaeve and Elayne need them, contributing, of course, to the idea that Nynaeve and Egg should be ta'veren.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: Like, how funny would it be if Nynaeve was ta'veren and sparked a civil war accidentally. (laugh)

Sally: She's like, "Fuck."

Emily: It's almost funnier that she isn't and just did --

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) As a totally normal person.

Sally: "Oh, no!" (laugh)

Emily: "Whoopsie!"

Sally: "Whoopsie doopsie."

Emily: "Whoopsie doopsie." God, watch Middleditch and -- (laugh)

Sally: I know, it's so funny. We should watch it again. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, let's. Um, but she's like, "OK, if you're gonna stick with us, then you have to let me boss you around," and they're like, "Whatever, we'll find a loophole in this."

Sally: "You're gonna do that anyways, so." (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. (laugh) Uh, but she gets back to the circus. Elayne and Birgitte are like, "Where have you been? Everyone's out looking for you. They saw you get dragged away by a very tall Shienaran man."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: and she's like, "I mean, I guess I did. But also, it's fine."

Sally: "It's just Uno." (laugh)

Emily: "It's fine. It was just Uno. I went to see Masema. By the way, Galad says 'hello.'"

(laugh) And Elayne's like, "Was the fucking queen there?" And Nynaeve's like, "I mean, yes."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And Elayne's like, "Ahhhh!" And Birgitte's like, "Great. I'm gonna shoot arrows at you now." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And, you know, just descends into the usual circus madness from there.

Sally: Yeah. Nynaeve gets arrows shot at her.

Emily: The end.

Sally: Then she goes to sleep.

Emily: Then she's like, "Good night. I can't wait to get out of this stupid fucking town."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Nighty night. So that's that.

Sally: That's that.

Emily: Setting up some, uh, plotlines in the southwestern portion of the continent, which is where all of our most boring plotlines will take place. Don't worry about it. Also, Nynaeve remembered, duh duh duh, Salidar is where they need to go.

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: So they do have a destination now.

Sally: (cough) Excuse me.

Emily: Um, but that's that. As previously forecasted, we'll return next week with the history of telescopes, I guess. Um, as we get --

Sally: I'd love to talk about the history of telescopes.

Emily: I know. Me too. And glass. As we get into, uh, Rand and co. retaking Cairhien from the Shaido. I guess not retaking it, 'cause it hasn't fallen yet. Whatever. Stupid.

Sally: I guess taking Cairhien from the Cairhienin. (laugh)

Emily: From the Cairhienin. (laugh) They're like, "I guess it was between you and the other terrible people."

(phone ringing)

Emily: Is that fucking --

Sally: Oh my God, this is my boss. I'm sorry, you guys.

Emily: You're fine.

Sally: You can end the podcast.

(pause)

Sally: OK, I am back.

Emily: Sorry. Um. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our beautiful theme song. Thank you to all of you for listening. If you need some more EHR content, you should check us out on Patreon, where we have things like our blooper reel, my read-along A Memory of Light blog, which will be going on until the year 2050.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um, our side podcast, "We Don't Watch Outlander." We are currently watching Watchmen on HBO, which has just been nominated for a record-breaking number of Emmys, uh, and we're only two episodes in, but so far, well-deserved.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, or, on the five dollar or up tier, you can watch our video series, In An Hour or Less, where we discuss mythology, um, history, literary theory. This month Sally's going to be covering Greek monsters, which is gonna be super fun. I'm very excited to learn about it. Um, or, of course, at our ten dollar tier, you can get a personalized Wheel of Time book. Uh, recently, um, received by Sarah McClintock, who said it was good. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. So.

Emily: Said it was worth the wait, we hope. Um, by the time you're listening to this, uh, I should have finished playing Windwaker. I'm about to take on the boss this Friday and hopefully will not die repeatedly. There's a good chance, but I will stay until the end, and Windwaker will be over one way or another. But we will continue doing our livestream, so please tune in this Friday on my Twitch channel, twitch.tv/emilyjuchau, and we'll be doing something. We don't know what yet, but something. We really enjoyed talking to you on Friday nights --



Sally: Yes.

Emily: During quarantine.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Um, so that's that. That's our round-up. Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: I don't have a sign-off except that I got called twice by my boss two and a half hours after clocking out.

Emily: Yeah. Pretty typical.

Sally: In the middle of this fucking recording.

Emily: My sign-off is that Aaron --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Was like, "You don't know about Heroes?" and I'm like, "I don't know what to tell you, man." (laugh)

Sally: I just feel like "Save the cheerleader, save the world," was, like, literally everywhere.

Emily: That's what he said too, and I'm like -- (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I don't know what to tell you. I was in this bubble.

Sally: It's very funny.

Emily: Sad bubble. I didn't even --

Sally: She was in a Jon Hamm bubble. She was just too beautiful.

Emily: The first pop music I remember hearing is "How to Save a Life" by the Fray.

Sally: Would one call that pop music? (laugh)

Emily: Alt-pop?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Pop, like it was on the radio, and my dad's best friend Ben Knowlton did karaoke into a little thing of broccoli at our New Year's Eve party.

Sally: Oh my God.

Emily: Ta da. (laugh)

Sally: Ben Knowlton is the funniest man alive.

Emily: There was a sign-off in there somewhere. Thanks for listening, everyone! Don't do war crimes. Goodbye!

Sally: Bye!