



Episode 129: Analysis Juice

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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 Glynna MacKenzie plays)

Emily: I felt like they were pretty boring, didn't you?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I felt like there wasn't much to talk about, so if we run out of things to talk about, I'll just do shitty Tarot readings --

Sally: Oh, that sounds fun!

Emily: For characters. (laugh)

Sally: OK.

Emily: 'Cause I couldn't think of any -- guys. It's just the same old stuff we've kind of already talked about.

Sally: Yeah, I mean, I feel like we have squeezed the plot in Samara -- Samara? -- for about all the analysis juice that it's worth.

Emily: Yeah, like -- I mean, for one thing, Nynaeve referenced, in this chapter, something about the forkroot tea that they got, and I was like, I can't believe that this was in this book, because --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It feels like cons that I've been --

Sally: Yes.

Emily: With Nynaeve and Elayne, essentially just reading the same chapter over and over again.

Sally: Yeah, like Groundhog Day, but worse.

Emily: Do you have any fun things that we could talk about in the opening?

Sally: Um ... I was gonna say, we could talk about the book I'm reading, but it's about alcoholism, so it's a little bit of a downer. Um, Emily and I both have a set of Tarot cards now.

Emily: That's true. We can each do Tarot -- shitty Tarot readings.

Sally: I -- but I -- (laugh) don't know what any of the cards mean.

Emily: I don't either; that's what makes it so shitty. (laugh) I'm going purely off of visual --

Sally: OK.

Emily: Um, analysis, and just sort of, like, what I feel --

Sally: OK.

Emily: When I look at the cards.

Sally: I really -- like, I have a deck of, um, Tarot cards that are, like, roller skaters --

Emily: The six of -- uh, cups, and it's a child handing a cup full of more flowers to another child, so I feel that it symbolizes innocence and generosity -- (laugh)

Sally: OK.

Emily: And nostalgia.

Sally: OK.

Emily: See? (laugh)

Sally: Great. (laugh)

Emily: Anyone can read Tarot cards.

Sally: I don't think any of those things are correct. (laugh)

Emily: Oh, yeah?!

Sally: Um --

Emily: Keep going. (laugh)

Sally: While she looks that up, I was saying, I have -- my deck of Tarot cards is, uh, they're roller -- all the cards are roller skating-themed because, though I have not roller skated in over a month because my roller skates broke -- (laugh)

Emily: Which was so sad.

Sally: Yeah, it was -- a really devastating -- of course, Tybalt is eating.

Emily: I know.

Sally: (laugh) I hate you.

Emily: We can't set the tone -- (laugh) without Tybalt crunching in the background.

Sally: Um, but I really like them visually, and I think, like, a -- 'cause I don't -- like, I think, like, it's been a pretty common trend over the past few years for artists to, like, do their own Tarot decks as, like, a --

Emily: Yeah, I think so.

Sally: A way to, uh, a) make money, but also, like, do really interesting things stylistically, and they're so beautiful, and the images are so evocative. I think it would be fun to, like, write short pieces based off of, like, Tarot deck.

Emily: That would be really cool.

Sally: Like, fiction. It's just one of --

Emily: As, like, a writing prompt?

Sally: Those projects -- yeah.

Emily: Yeah, that would be really neat.

Sally: Just, like, whenever my brain runs out of other stuff, I think -- maybe we'll -- yeah. One day.

Emily: I was expressing to Devin how difficult I find it to, um, work writing on things that aren't connected to a larger plot.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I was like, Sally said I should -- Sally suggested that I try doing writing prompts, but -- and I was like, I think I should, 'cause I really do think I should, and I have been meaning to do it. I was like, but I'm afraid that once I do a writing prompt, then I'll get really mad and want to, like, squeeze it into the plot. He was like, you need to create a character like, um, Mad Max who just sort of goes around into plots --

Sally: There we go.

Emily: And I was like, but then I'll want to bring that character into the greater plot. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You don't understand. It's, like, a whole thing. But yeah, I think that would be a really fun writing prompt, to figure out --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Little things for each of the Tarot cards.

Sally: Yeah, and just, like, I think it would be a good character exercise -- character-building exercise.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Anyway, it was just one of the things I was thinking about, 'cause I'm having -- I'm having, like, a really hard time with my, uh, writing project at the moment. I just am feeling very emotionally disconnected from it and that it's just, like, never going to be good and it's never going to be what I want it to be because it just -- like, I do not have the skill to bring it to where I want it to go. But that's, you know, my own issue. Nobody needs to comment on that if this remains in the podcast. So I've just been, like, brainstorming some other things that could maybe, uh, revitalize my belief in the fact that I'm a capable writer.

Emily: (laugh) I think you are a capable writer. Um. Do you think the listeners are curious when we mention our writing projects?

Sally: Probably.

Emily: That we're so oblique and mysterious about it?

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Like, what do they mean? Well, we have lots of writing projects. Letters to Hozier.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Give it a listen.

Sally: Yeah, you -- that's -- (laugh) Yeah. Now you guys actually do have a place you can go and check out our writing. And though we're not writing, um, fiction, necessarily, on that podcast, I think that stylistically, like, we are both very in tune with the ways that we write fiction on that podcast. If that makes sense.

Emily: Do you think? Do I sound like my -- all my first-person narrators? (laugh)

Sally: Just, like -- yeah, there's just a, like, way that Emily typically writes in first person. This is a weird cold open. The -- Emily --

Emily: I don't care. (laugh) Who cares?!

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Get me out of Samara!

Sally: Emily typically writes in first person, and there's a lot of, like, uh, personality, for lack of a better word, in her narrators. Like, they have a lot of presence, and they just, like, compose their own thoughts in really beautiful ways, and I feel like that's the way that Emily writes in Letters to Hozier. Like, it's -- she's inhabiting her own voice but is -- still has a lot of presence and is composing her own thoughts in very interesting and beautiful ways. I typically write in the third person, um, and I usually do not write in full sentences. (laugh) Um, and there's a lot more, uh -- I dunno, I just feel like I go on these weird, like, image-based things a lot more than you do.

Emily: What I've been struck by in your letters to Hozier are some really incredibly images but also, you are so much more, like, casual and amiable --

Sally: Oh. (laugh)

Emily: As though Hozier's really there. Which I really love. (laugh)

Sally: Gosh, thanks. (laugh)

Emily: It makes me so happy, 'cause you'll just, like, kind of say -- I dunno, like, you'll end sentences as questions --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Like, the little interrogatives. Where as I'm, like, waxing poetic --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: About, like, whatever bullshit in my sad childhood. And you're like, "Hey, Hozier," and I'm like, this is so nice. But --

Sally: I dunno, I --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Well, thanks. I think your Letters to Hozier pieces are really beautiful, as I told you.

Emily: Thanks. I really struggle to not write in the first person. My whole last project was in the third person, and it made me angry every day.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: 'Cause I was like, this is so frustrating. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um.

Sally: That's how I feel about writing in the first person.

Emily: Yeah, we're very different that way.

Sally: I, like, hate writing in the first person. (laugh) Like, even about myself. I'm like, I hate this bitch. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Take her away. Where are my she/her/they pronouns?

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: She/he/they, sorry, not she/her/they.

Emily: I mean, I think I -- I hope I learned a little about writing in third person, but.

Sally: Well, it is on my to-do list this weekend --

Emily: Oh, please don't.

Sally: To finally start reading it, so I will let you know.

Emily: Oh my God, yester -- I should have -- I thought of this late at night. Last night, we were sitting in our separate rooms, and Sally texted me something like, "I hate this book I'm reading."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And I should've been like, "My book?"

Sally: (laugh) No!

Emily: (laugh) It would've been so funny.

Sally: I would've been so mad at you. (laugh)

Emily: Well, I hate it, so.

Sally: I mean, that's -- I hate mine a lot right now, so I get it.

Emily: Yeah, that's the trouble with being a writer, is that you automatically hate your own work. I wonder, do artists feel that way? Like, visual artists?

Sally: Visual -- I dunno. Visual artists, weigh in. I hate literally every sentence I've ever composed, so.

Emily: I'm just like, "I hate you," every -- every time I --

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: I'm like, "Why'd you write this? Why'd you fucking write this?"

Sally: Yeah. I'm like --

Emily: You're so stupid. (laugh)

Sally: Shut up. (laugh)

Emily: Ahh!

Sally: I was rereading -- I'm -- was trying to write a chapter before we started this, and it was, like -- because I'm writing from multiple character perspectives, sometimes -- you know, when you're trying to get back into that voice, I was reading an old chapter from this character's point of view, and I'm like, "She's annoying." (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: "Who made her up?" (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) That was a cold open at some point. Maybe if I cut it down to three minutes; who knows. Uh, this is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast, where we also maybe do shitty Tarot readings and talk about our own work, because nothing is -- nothing matters.

Sally: Nothing matters. I dunno. The people -- one time, someone asked us a question in one of our Q&As to talk about our own writing, so there, we just did it. You're welcome.

Emily: Years later.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: (inaudible)

Sally: Probably not in the detail to which you were hoping, but.

Emily: Oh, yeah. Like, they want, like, a plot summary or something.

Sally: Well.

Emily: No.

Sally: (laugh) You are shit out of luck. We don't deal in plot over here. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) That's one hundred percent true. It's all character, baby.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That's why we love the Umbrella Academy so much. (laugh)

Sally: What is plot? There's no point.

Emily: By the way, I was semi-right about that weird child card.

Sally: (laugh) I hate you. Shut up.

Emily: It says, "A card of memories and of the past. For example, reflecting on childhood, happiness, enjoyment. But coming rather from the past, things that have vanished." So what I'm interpreting it is that it's the card connecting to the song "Children's Work" by Dessa.

Sally: Oh, OK.

Emily: Which, I assume, is autobiographical for her and is semi-biographical for me, personally.

Sally: OK. (laugh)

Emily: Thank you for coming to my TED talk. (sigh) Umm. Did we say our names? Do I do that every time? I think I'm --

Sally: I'm pretty sure we said our names.

Emily: I'm gonna have to listen to this back -- (laugh) And if we didn't say our names, I'm gonna be so --

Sally: I'm pretty sure you said your name, at least.

Emily: OK. Whatever.

Sally: I dunno.

Emily: Like I said, we're in Samara. We're with the girls again. It is literally just the same bullshit that we've been dealing with in terms of interpersonal conflict relationships. Their inexplicable, um, inability to act like mature human beings around each other.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and, I mean, to a certain extent, Elayne is, what? Seventeen, eighteen? So there's some small amount of leeway there, but Nynaeve is a full-ass adult, and so is Birgitte.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So.

Sally: It's, like -- I have spent extended periods of time in close quarters with people that I hate. You know, or even just people that I like but I just can't be in close quarters with them for a long, extended period of time. Like, I get it. But this has been played out over the course of the Fires of Heaven for too long.

Emily: Yeah, this feels like I'm watching the tenth season of fucking the Desperate Housewives of --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Wherever. Like, there is no -- whatever was interesting about it in the first few seasons has long since vanished.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And at this point, I'm reading only to get to the next chapter --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is not a state you should ever be in when you're reading.

Sally: No, especially 'cause this particular instance of it is so drawn out. Like, this first chapter that we're reading -- I can't even remember what it's called -- the second one is "Leavetakings," 'cause there's a "Leavetakings --"

Emily: There's always a "Leavetakings" chapter.

Sally: In every Wheel of Time book. Um.

Emily: Sometimes multiple, I'm sure.

Sally: (laugh) Multiple leaves have been taken.

Emily: (laugh) Make like Robert Jordan, and take your leave.

Sally: Yeah. But it's -- just goes on for, like, so long before, like, Uno or whoever even shows up to be like, "There's a boat." Nynaeve and Elayne are together in the wagon for, like, six pages.

Emily: Yeah, just --

Sally: And it's, again, an inefficient use of page space, Robert Jordan.

Emily: Yeah, why -- why are we still here? And all we learn from those six pages is that it's been three days, and everyone's impatient and wants to leave.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And that the circus routine has been going on, as it has been.

Sally: Which is things you could've told me in exactly the amount of time it took Emily to say them.

Emily: (laugh) And then, like, maybe another paragraph devoted to how Nynaeve is nervous about going into Tel'aran'rhiod.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Elayne wants to keep going back -- though I do not comprehend why they are at all interested in going back to Tel'aran'rhiod --

Sally: I know. I'm like, Elayne, a scary serial killing murder lady wants to kill you.

Emily: Yeah, Elayne's like, "We have to go back there because there's so much more to learn," and no one really says, like, "But Moghedien --" (laugh) "But one of the Forsaken, you know, just kicked our asses --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "The last time we went there. Like, she just found us and kicked our asses."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: What -- and now surely she'll be on the lookout more for it.

Sally: Yeah, like, excuse me?

Emily: There's no healthy sense of, like, being cautious at all.

Sally: Yeah. And it's just like, it's so stupid, but it's also, like, very insensitive to Nynaeve, who was the one who experienced this trauma directly, you know?

Emily: Yeah, and who, of course, is acting like there's nothing wrong, it's fine, we're just being -

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know. Whatever.

Sally: Um. We do also learn via the girls' dreams that, uh, Egg told them Rand won a big battle in Cairhien.

Emily: Yeah, that Egg manage -- managed to break into their dreams, which is an important skill for her to have, but that goes pretty underutilized throughout the series, like a lot of Egg's Tel'aran'rhiad shit later.

Sally: Like a lot of Egg, I would say.

Emily: Yeah. Egg is a character with so much potential and so many interesting things going on, and she is sort of stuffed into this box --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Much like Rand, physically stuffed into a box at the end of book six --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Egg is sort of trapped as the Amyrlin, which is a thing that I don't think is talked about enough. It just limits her.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: A bit, into this one space with a bunch of bickering women.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which, you know, Robert Jordan loves his bickering women. You're right, though, I have, like, hung out with people I've hated and been totally -- and have managed to not level the town with the -- my sheer amount of passive-aggressiveness.

Sally: Yeah, it's like, of course people get snappy with each other; that's just human nature. But also, uh, most people can be civil with one another --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Because they're people.

Emily: Yeah. 'Cause you have to work together.

Sally: Yeah. You have to work together, or you're on vacation together, or you are roommates. Like, it's just like having a bad roommate. Everyone's had a bad roommate.

Emily: Yeah, and you still are just like, it's fine. I'm not a dick to them --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To their faces.

Sally: It's very frustrating, but --

Emily: Because then you're the bad roommate. And most people have the self-awareness to recognize that.

Sally: Yeah. If you think you've never had a bad roommate, I have unfortunate news for you. (laugh)

Emily: You are the bad roommate. (laugh) Whoopsie. "I've never had a bad roommate; they've all done my dishes for me."

Sally: Jesus Christ. (laugh) Um, but yeah, Birgitte comes in, does not make it any better, and then all of a sudden, we're out -- she's like, "Thom and Juilin are back," and they're like, "Back?"

Emily: "Back? Where'd they go?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Ah, well, Thom and Juilin went into town to be useful, I guess. Uh, and are here to report that a riverboat made it, uh, into the docks and immediately, as one might have predicted, uh, the Whitecloaks and the Prophet's forces came to blows over this ship. Now, Nynaeve and Elayne and maybe Birgitte are the only ones here who know --

Sally: Yeah, why, exactly. Yeah.

Emily: Why this is happening. Uh, but do not bother to explain that. I mean, I don't know. I think my first instinct would be to be like, "Oh, I fucked up." (laugh)

Sally: Be like, "Ah, well."

Emily: "I did fuck up. Whoops." But I don't know, taking ownership of your mistakes is a mature thing to do, and --

Sally: As we just previously discussed.

Emily: Robert Jordan would have us believe that these are just six-year-olds running around with tits.

Sally: (laugh) Hated that sentence.

Emily: That's what it feels like, though!

Sally: I know. I know.

Emily: The only time I have ever behaved like this or anyone I know has ever behaved like this is, like, me and my siblings on a road trip when we were ten.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, small children.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: (sigh)

Sally: Like, the only person who tells me they are annoyed at my presence is my niece, who is four. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, and that's the only people who are socially allowed to do that. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Like, come on.

Emily: The only person who's allowed to tell me to put on a shirt is my two-year-old nephew.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: If anyone else did, I'd kick them.

Sally: Yeah, if anyone else was like, "Go away, Sally," I'd be like, you're being so rude, but my niece is four.

Emily: (laugh) They can't help it.

Sally: So he just, like, doesn't have the understanding that you can't say those things to people.

Emily: Oh my Christ.

Sally: So, like, it's funny when children do it.

Emily: It's not funny or cute or charming or even interesting when adults are doing it for paragraphs on end.

Sally: And it's so frustrating 'cause it, like -- yeah, Elayne is eighteen-ish, but, like, Nyaneve is, like, what? Twenty-six? Twenty-seven?

Emily: Yeah. Our age.

Sally: Juilin is a 40-year-old man, Thom is, like, a 60-year-old man, and they're all behaving like this. It's just, like, all horrible. (laugh)

Emily: Like, there's a way -- I -- I don't know why -- and we've talked about this before, but it becomes starker and starker the deeper we get into the Fires of Heaven in particular. But there's a way to write people who are, like, um, affectionate of each other and also a little bit at each other's throats.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, people tease each other. People -- you know.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's the way the Umbrella Academy functions.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Sorry to reference it twice in one episode.

Sally: But it's just got this dynamic.

Emily: Yeah, it's a very sibling dynamic, but it's the sort of dynamic that grows when you've been through a lot of shit together with people. It's just, like, this capacity to, you know, snipe at each other without --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Having to renegotiate the ground you're on with each other --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Every five minutes. Then Robert Jordan was like, "But that would mean having characters who essentially like each other, and I'd rather just have characters who are on their own little islands, wandering through space," which seems to sort of negate the whole, um, thematic thing of this series, which is that it's all a tapestry woven together. We're all connected.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: He's like, no, everyone's an isolationist who hates each other. (laugh) Whatever, though. Um, but yeah, Thom and Juilin are back to report that the Whitecloaks and Masema's people are fighting over this boat, and it has descended into full-on violence and chaos in a very short

amount of time. They -- he's like, "Yeah, shit's on fire now." And they look over to the city and there's just, like, plumes of smoke coming out. And it's like --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: What the fuck.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, and just about then, Uno rolls up and is like, "OK, got -- I mean, gotta go; that's our boat." Like -- (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Time to head out." And the ladies are -- for some reason, they all stand around talking about it for another six pages --

Sally: Yeah, just to give Galad time to show up.

Emily: Yeah, Galad eventually shows up and is like, "Are we ready?" And they're like, "What the?" Galad's not in his uniform.

Sally: I know. He's in disguise. (laugh)

Emily: He's in disguise. And everyone's staring at him.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: The only funny part is that lady who's like -- does a double take when she sees him --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And her husband is like, "What the fuck?" (laugh)

Sally: And she, like, hugs his head to her boobs.

Emily: She's like, "Put your face in my tits," but over his head is like, "Oh my God." (laugh)

Sally: I know. Get you a man like that. Get you a woman like that.

Emily: They stay together for the whole series, as far as we know.

Sally: Yeah, they're cute.

Emily: They're cute.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um --

Sally: What's it like when people like each other?

Emily: Ahh! The circus! But, uh, they're all sort of like, "OK, we need to get ready to go," when Luca walks up and is like, "OK, we really have to go; the circus is also leaving," um, because various circuses have already been attacked and caught up in the violence. He's like, "We need to get out of dodge." And the girls are like, "Well, we are parting ways, then. We're leaving." And he's just like, "Well, then I have to talk to you alone, Nynaeve." Drags her off, waxes poetic for a little bit, and is basically like, "I want you to stay; I want you to be my lover; I want you to have my children," and Nynaeve's like, "You wanna get married?" and he's like, ".... Yeah, I wanna get married." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) It's such a weird conversation.

Emily: It's, like, the inverse of Rand being like, "We had sex; we have to get married." Nynaeve, like, can't comprehend a world in which she would just be fucking this random dude.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is like, fair, why would you fuck Valan Luca? Look at him.

Sally: Yeah, I don't know. (laugh)

Emily: I don't really see the appeal.

Sally: But, I mean, like, good for him for having such a liberal worldview.

Emily: I know. He's just like, "What?" (laugh)

Sally: Like, "M-marriage?"

Emily: "Marriage? We're in the circus, lady. We just, you know --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Go around, doing circus things. We don't care about the ties of the law."

Sally: (laugh) I wish you guys could've seen the hand motions Emily did --

Emily: It was a sort of shimmy. (laugh)

Sally: For "circus things."

Emily: "Circus things." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) It was very funny.

Emily: Like jazz hands meets shimmy. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. It was very good. (laugh) But anyway, then the ladies -- after Nynaeve is like, "No, I'm engaged to someone else, and he would, like, kick your ass," even though she and Lan are not officially engaged. (laugh)

Emily: She's like, "I know this isn't an official engagement, but I consider it an engagement," and it's like, talk to Lan, you dick. (laugh)

Sally: Engagement requires two consenting parties. (laugh)

Emily: Given, literally the next time she sees Lan, they will get married, which is, like, its whole other thing.

Sally: Right after she almost drowns.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: (laugh) The ideal, uh, wedding day is almost drowning --

Emily: (laugh) Getting attacked by Moghedien, almost drowning --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Ending up on a boat --

Sally: Yeah, which you hate.

Emily: Which you hate and get seasick on all the time --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Get married, fuck --

Sally: Yeah, it's your something old --

Emily: Go back home.

Sally: Something new -- (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Something borrowed, something blue.

Emily: Something blue is the ocean. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: The water coming out of your lungs.

Sally: Yeah. Something old is fighting Moghedien.

Emily: Something old is Lan, let's be honest. (laugh)

Sally: Oh. Er. (laugh)

Emily: (sing-song) La da da da ...

Sally: It's true. Something borrowed is fighting Moghedien, and something new is the boat. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Ideal wedding day.

Emily: Something new. Sex. I dunno. Um.

Sally: Sex with Lan sounds horrible.

Emily: I know.

Sally: He just grosses me out on, like, a primal level. (laugh)

Emily: He's just so old. Like, I think Keanu Reeves is one of the most attractive men alive, but if I was ever in a situation where it was like, do you want to fuck Keanu Reeves? I'd be like, he is twice my age.

Sally: Yeah. No, I don't.

Emily: No, I don't. I want him to -- like he does, actually -- have an age-appropriate partner. God, Keanu Reeves is such a fuckin' legend.

Sally: I know. What a unit. OK, the ladies take, like, six years to pack their bags.

Emily: Oh, Elayne also goes to that Seanchan lady --

Sally: Oh, yeah. (laugh, snort)

Emily: And essentially is like, "Listen, we're heading out. You're coming with us, um, because you need to be interrogated." It's like going to an undocumented immigrant --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And being like, "I need you to accompany me to the ICE offices."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Don't worry; you'll be fine."

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, and she's, like, shocked when the lady's like, "I'm not gonna do that."

Emily: The Seanchan woman is like, “I’m not abandoning my elephants, I’m not abandoning the circus.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “I like my life here. Fuck off.” And Elayne’s like, “You’re coming with us,” and this woman, like, kick-flips her into the dust while Birgitte stands there, laughing.

Sally: Yeah, ‘cause Elayne is like, “I’m the Daughter-Heir of Andor,” and the woman’s like, “Sure, you are.” (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Sure, Jan!

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: She’s essentially like, “I’m sure you could sleep your way to the top eventually.”

Sally: Yeah, and Elayne is, like, so offended.

Emily: It’s like --

Sally: And it’s like, this is the only instance of this, like, interpersonal bickering that I can actually get on board with, ‘cause afterwards, Elayne’s like, “Birgitte, why didn’t you help me? You’re my Warder.” And Birgitte’s like, “You were not in physical danger. You were just being an asshole.”

Emily: Yeah, Birgitte’s like, “If someone -- if you do something stupid and someone is gonna teach you a lesson for it, then --”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: “It’s my call on whether you learn that lesson or not. So yeah, I’m not gonna stand up for you when you’re just being a dick.”

Sally: Yeah, and Elayne just starts screaming. (laugh)

Emily: Elayne’s like, “Ahhhh! I’m so frustrated!” and Nynaeve’s like, “Do you want me to get you your bottle, baby?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “You want your b-blanket?”

Sally: “Can I call you a waa-mbulance?”

Emily: “What the fuck? Somebody call a waa-mbulance.” (sigh) Then they take six years to pack.

Sally: Yeah. And it's like, oh my God.

Emily: Oh my Christ. Nynaeve is like, "I'm gonna divide up the money," which I guess is a big thing for her 'cause usually she's just had the money --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But she's like, "Fine, I'll give Elayne half, and if she wants to spend it all, then, you know."

Sally: Good for her.

Emily: Hashtag character growth on Nynaeve's part, I guess, but also, like, I don't know why you didn't just do that before. You have so -- like, you have so much money, that if you're the, like, frugal one, you would know that, like, having half of it in your possession is probably enough --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: To take care of you guys even if your other person spends all their shit.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Whatever. I mean, it's all just --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just pointing out the obvious over and over and over again. But, um, they pack up, roll out. We are reminded of the various things in their possessions, such as the seal on the Dark One's prison and a couple of extra dream ter'angreal.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which I think will come into play a little bit later, but not right now. So they pack up their things, get ready to go, um, and are escorted by Thom, Juilin, Uno, and Galad out of the circus. All the circus people wave them off. Very sweet.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: I don't know why anyone would want to wave these people off. They've just been dicks the whole time.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It would be hilarious if everyone was like, "Bye, Juilin!"

Sally: (laugh) "Bye, Juilin, we'll miss you!"

Emily: (laugh) 'Cause he's been the only normal --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And nice one. Um. They leave, uh, and, like, walk around the corner and all the Shienaran soldiers are just, like, chilling. They're like, "Hello. Phalanx formation."

Sally: Yeah, I also love it -- specifically, they're -- like, the Shienaran soldiers are, like, covered in water bottles. They are, like, ready to travel.

Emily: Oh, are they?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I love them.

Sally: It's like, they've got water. One dude's carrying a kettle. They are prepared, like a bunch of --

Emily: For, like, Samwise Gamgee.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In Lord of the Rings.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And they're all gonna fight, too. Like --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In the urban setting, carrying, like, kettles and shit on their backs. I just love the Shienarans.

Sally: I know. We go into the city. There are bodies, and things are on fire, and it's very gross.

Emily: Yeah, it's legitimately horrifying that this is happening. Like --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, I don't love detailed descriptions of corpses, as I think we've already discussed in this episode; I think there are ways to build up violence and the horror of violence without just being like, "And then someone died in a gruesome way." Y'know?

Sally: Yeah. Guts.

Emily: Guts falling out. But, um -- mm. I feel like this chapter sort of walks the line in, like, it is very horrifying, but I feel like, in a way, our characters are enough horrified by it?

Sally: Yeah. I remember -- I was thinking about it when I was reading it this morning -- I remember being a lot more horrified by this the first time I read it.

Emily: Mm.

Sally: And I don't know if it was just 'cause I, like, knew it was coming, but reading it again, I'm like, I thought they had more, like, physical altercations, but they only have, like, the one fight, and it's pretty big, and, like, a lot of people die in it, but, like, also they're just casually like, "There is a pitchfork with two heads on it," and it's just like, hmm.

Emily: Gross.

Sally: Yeah. It's very odd. It's an odd little scene.

Emily: Yeah. I guess it's, like -- I don't know. We're just seeing a lot of, like, violence come to cities more in these --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: In this book, the Fires of Heaven. We're seeing it here, obviously, but we've also seen Rand and company pass through those cities --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: On either end of the pass that'd just been ravaged.

Sally: God, was that also in the Fires of Heaven?

Emily: That was also in this book. I know. Are you kidding me? (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) These books are too long.

Emily: Um. And moving into Cairhien, which has also been ravaged by war and then moving into very, like, urban violence within Caemlyn.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Um, and I dunno. You know, it's just sort of, thematically, what's going on in this book. But it feels like we're just seeing larger and larger groups of people be affected.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Feels like the sort of pinnacle of this is when the Seanchan invade Ebou Dar at the end of book seven, and we have Rand -- not Rand, excuse me -- Mat running through the streets while it is actively being attacked --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And then just getting a building dropped on him. Which, by the way, is just such a good scene.

Sally: I know. It -- I am still very slowly reading my way through the Path of Daggers, but every succeeding chapter, I get angrier and angrier that Nynaeve and Elayne are just like, "Mat's somewhere in Ebou Dar."

Emily: They're like --

Sally: "Bye!"

Emily: Yeah, they're, like, standing on a hill watching Ebou Dar get set on fire --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And they're just like, "Well. Off we go."

Sally: "Sorry, Mat. That blows."

Emily: I know! After he spent so much fucking time saving their lives. (laugh)

Sally: And it's like, I know they have to do their Bowl of the Winds shit or whatever, but they're like, "Mm. Bye. Good luck."

Emily: Yeah, I think there's, like, one paragraph where Nynaeve is like "Oh, Mat." And it's like, girl. Not enough.

Sally: Yeah. Be nicer to Mat, everyone.

Emily: Be nicer to Mat, 2k20. (laugh)

Sally: It seriously is making me so angry that they're just like, "La da da da da, Mat's out there somewhere, but we have to deal with these interpersonal dynamics between yet another group of bickering ladies."

Emily: Again, it's like, if characters liked each other, then the stakes would be much higher.

Sally: Yeah. Like, nobody seems to give a single shit that they're just leaving Mat in this strange city.

Emily: I know. Like, the only shits they give are out of, like, sense of duty. You know? Elayne's like, "Well, he's my subject," or whatever, and Nynaeve's like, "He's my boy that I helped raise."

Sally: (laugh) "He's my boy."

Emily: And it's like -- it's like, he's also your friend.

Sally: Also, Elayne, he's not your subject.

Emily: Like, it's shocking that Birgitte isn't like, "Well, I'm packing up and going back for Mat. Fuck you, Elayne." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like --

Sally: It's just, like, so upsetting to me. (laugh)

Emily: Ah! That's not even in this book. Three --

Sally: I know. I mean, we're -- that's like three books from now.

Emily: God.

Sally: But it's just, like, very upsetting. Anyway. Yeah, the -- going back to the, like, concept of urban-based violence, is there something, like -- I don't want to say more unnatural about, like, violence in an urban setting, because all violence is unnatural, and it doesn't matter whether someone's getting beheaded in an open field or in a city street, but there's just something, like -- I think it's just, like, a little bit more frightening.

Emily: I think it's a little more real-world to us.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I think when a lot of the violent encounters that, uh, our characters have in the first few books are, like, running into Trollocs, or, like --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Being in a field and suddenly there are Whitecloaks, and they're all, like, a lynch mob and whatever. And it's like, these are sort of Dungeons and Dragons-esque fantasy encounters.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They feel very contrived.

Sally: Yeah, like, you've suddenly sprung upon a party. Roll initiative.

Emily: Yeah. Whereas with these, it's like, these feel like situations, a) that we could've talked ourselves out of or --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Manipulated better or whatever, and they're also just, like, scenes we're familiar with.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We know what it's like for people to be running through the streets, afraid of things.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We know what it's like for people to get shot in the head, protesting --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: By white nationalists. Like, yikes.

Sally: Yeah. That's a good point. But we have a fight, and of course Galad takes down, like, thirty men.

Emily: Galad takes down one thousand men, and the Shienaran soldiers are like, "So ... can we marry you as a group or what?" (laugh)

Sally: That -- what a funny twist that would have been, if Uno and Ragan were like, "Husband." (laugh) And Galad's like, "OK."

Emily: (laugh) Galad's like, "I will leave the terrorist group and join this group of soldiers --"

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: "Who are all my lovers."

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Like, what an excellent plot twist that would be.

Emily: Like, I'd love that for Galaad.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Oh, Galad.

Sally: Yeah, but and it's just like -- Nynaeve is like, "He was so graceful, it was like he was dancing. And he didn't get a single drop of blood on his little velvet suit or whatever."

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: And it's like --

Emily: Isn't he wearing a hat? Like, a little --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Cap.

Sally: He's got a little, like, cap on, and it's like --

Emily: God bless.

Sally: It's not attractive for men to be very good at violence.

Emily: I know, it's actually deeply unsettling.

Sally: Yeah. Because just, like, the equation of, like, Galad is the sexiest -- canonically, the sexiest character we ever meet -- but he is also, like, beyond good at violence. Just, like, the way those two things go hand in hand, it's like, no. Galad is sexy because he is, like, physically appealing. He's not sexy because he's good with his knives.

Emily: Well, I also find it fascinating the way that Galad's violence in particular has to be sanitized and, like --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Bleached, in a way. And I know that's, like, a -- a -- I know that's a really big word, bleached, when he's a Whitecloak, literally.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: But it's like, typically in action movies, you see men, when they're doing violence, even if they're doing violence really well, they're getting very dirty.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Very bloody. I mean, you have to admire the verisimilitude of John Wick, even though it isn't verisimilitude -- a guy can't, you know, fight twelve other guys with guns and win.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That just doesn't happen. But there's a certain dedication to being like, John Wick's not going to get out of this scrape-free.

Sally: Yeah. He's gonna have to deal with stitches for the rest of the movie or whatever.

Emily: Yeah. And, like, it's sort of overdone in a almost comedic way in, like, Die Hard when he starts the movie in a white tank top and by the end of the movie, it's just, like, brown.

Sally: It's so gross.

Emily: It's so nasty. But it's just, like --

Sally: At least there's a commitment, yeah.

Emily: Yeah. 'Cause he's been bleeding, he's been walking on broken glass, he's been sweating his fucking head off. Like. You just can't have Galad be, like, walking off like he did the fucking ballet, not --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just murdered a bunch of peasants.

Sally: Yeah. It's not like Galad is out here killing trained soldiers. Like, the people in the mob, especially, like, those from the Prophet's mob are, uh -- yeah, just peasants. People working in the city going up against literal trained soldiers in the --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Whitecloaks, who are armed to the teeth, and they were like, "We're just gonna slice through these people 'cause they're in our way." And it's like, nobody feels even that bad about it.

Emily: I know. It's wild. Because Nynaeve and Elayne have this whole thing where they're like, "We can't channel because Moghedien might find us," but it's like, you could channel and end this whole thing free of violence.

Sally: Yeah. You could've saved the lives of, like, fifty people.

Emily: Yeah, and --

Sally: Whatever it is.

Emily: It's just, like, not talked about.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's like, for -- I mean, it's especially because, like, we're going to find out, Moghedien's on the boat with them. She's already here. She knows where they are.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They keep underestimating Moghedien, and so it's just, like, people dying because they're like, "She can't possibly have found us yet." You've been here a week! That's plenty of time for her to find you.

Sally: Yeah, it's like, I don't know why they're not operating under the assumption that she already knows where they are.

Emily: Yeah, like --

Sally: Like, of course, be cautious, but she already knows where you are.

Emily: Wouldn't that be what you were doing? I just don't--

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I feel like if someone was out to get me, I'd be like, "Safest thing to do is act like they've already found me."

Sally: Yeah. And it's also just like, I think it's very funny that they're like, "We're worried about Moghedien finding us because we channel," when there's literally an army of Whitecloaks around them.

Emily: I know.

Sally: It's like, maybe the little more pressing concern, like, don't channel where the Whitecloaks can see you? (laugh) Because they will just string you up right here.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But they're just like, "Can't channel because of Moghedien." So there's just basically, like -- I also don't love -- I hate the optics of this scene, where it's, like, Nynaeve and Elayne surrounded by this group of armed men and Birgitte, who --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Kind of walks this world's line between what is masculine and what is feminine, which makes her a very interesting character, but in this scene, she's masculinized, uh, because she has a weapon.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um, and so we have these two, like, very delicate women who need protecting, literally surrounded by, like, a dozen plus men and Birgitte. And it's just like, what? (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, and they're -- the men they're surrounded with, particularly, are some who come from some of the most, like, honor-based societies --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In terms of, like, gender and how they treat women. So it's just like, we are literally putting women on a pinnacle above the carnage.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's just upsetting.

Sally: It's like, the lives of -- and it's like, I don't want to turn it into, like, a body count mathematics, but, like, the lives of these two women are so much more important to us than, like,

I don't -- I don't know exactly how many people, but dozens of people that we are just gonna cut through to get through this, and their -- their lives and my promise to get them out of this place is worth starting this fucking war that's going to kill thousands of people. And I know we talked in an earlier episode that it's not necessarily anyone's fault, quote unquote, that this happens. Like, we're in a situation where, like, the political tensions are sort of boiling over already. This is just kind of one more log on the fire. But it's like --

Emily: Yeah, we know --

Sally: They still have a part to play in this.

Emily: Yeah. We know wars don't technically start over single events. Wars start because regions become pressure cookers --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: For violence, and this one certainly has, but you're right, it would be great if they could walk out of this, like, hands clean.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: If they could walk out being like, "Well, maybe violence was inevitable, but we did not contribute to it."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, that's what you want from your heroes.

Sally: Yeah. It's just, like, a very frustrating -- I don't know. It's just a very upsetting scene. Just the way that they all respond. And then, after -- especially afterwards, 'cause Galad gets them on the boat, and they're like, "We're gonna take all these refugees with us," which is like, they're trying to account for, like, one bad action with --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Another, honorable action. But then Galad is just like, calling for his armor as they sail away, and he's just gonna go murder more peasants.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And consider that honorable.

Emily: It's just, like, the global issues are subsumed by the personal issues --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which, in a series like Wheel of Time, feels like a total upending of what it's supposed to be.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, this series purportedly is all about how every person is important to the thread of the plot. Y'know? In -- to saving the world. But. Apparently not.

Sally: Yeah, it's --

Emily: It's more important for us to show Nynaeve's personal growth and getting over how Nynaeve -- how Moghedien kicked her ass once.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But that's the climax of this book, bizarrely, instead of this very upsetting --

Sally: This extremely upsetting --

Emily: Scene.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, uh, yeah, you're right. They get on the boat. They're like, "We're taking all the peasants with us," and they're just like, "Well, see you, Galad." And he's like, "OK, goodbye." And Galad is now absent from the book, as he will be for the next -- pfft. He hasn't been back that you've seen him, right?

Sally: I can't recall, but I don't think so.

Emily: I don't think he's back till nine or ten.

Sally: (laugh) Bye! Just go have fun doing your terrorist policing.

Emily: Yeah, and he's not back in any relevant way until eleven. Uh, excuse me, twelve.

Sally: He's such a useless character. Like, there was a lot of potential for Galad to be an interesting character, just like there's a lot of potential for Gawyn to be an interesting character. Robert Jordan is just like, "Nope. Masculinity is solid; it cannot be challenged in any way that is interesting. Uh, so here are these two different but also the same pillars of masculinity, and they will suck ass all the time for fourteen books." (laugh)

Emily: One hundred percent of the time. (sigh) So, that's a downer. Guess I didn't really end up doing a shitty Tarot reading.

Sally: I mean, that could be our sign-off.

Emily: (laugh) It could. Um, but thank you for joining us. Do you have anything else to add? Sorry.

Sally: No. No, thank you for joining us. Thanks to Glynn MacKenzie for our theme song. Uh, check out all the stuff we have on the internet -- uh, Patreon, Twitter, Instagram, livestreams every Friday on Twitch dot com backslash Emily Juchau.

Emily: Twitch dot TV slash Emily Juchau, I think.

Sally: Sorry.

Emily: Yeah, uh --

Sally: Twitch dot TV.

Emily: Hopefully Final Fantasy 15 kicked off without a hitch, but who's to say? We don't know. Uhh.

Sally: Tybalt, should we do a Tarot reading for you?

Emily: That's that. Yeah.

Sally: 'Kay, I'm gonna go get him. (laugh)

Emily: What?

Sally: (distant) Tybalt, we're gonna read your Tarot cards. Unless you wanna do one for the characters.

Emily: It might as well be Tybalt.

Sally: 'Kay. (to Tybalt) Are you ready to get your Tarot reading? Say hi to the people.

Emily: You've gotta pick three cards, Tybalt.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: He's just zooming. He doesn't know.

Sally: Oh! Leggie down.

Emily: That one?

Sally: OK. (laugh)

Emily: The queen of pentacles.

Sally: (laugh) OK, do it again, buddy. Sorry. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Tybalt.

Sally: Gotta pick another card. Gotta pick another card. (laugh) He hates this.

Emily: He's so mad. Do you want a card? Ahh!

Sally: He's biting her.

Emily: Fine. I'll just pick some myself. Queen of pentacles, page of swords, and ... the nine? Of ... oh, wands.

Sally: Oh.

Emily: I can't remember. I always want to call them sticks. (laugh)

Sally: The nine of sticks.

Emily: The nine of sticks. (clears throat)

Sally: Tell our baby's fortune.

Emily: Well, the queen of pentacles is a lady holding a star, which I guess is a pentacle, and she's sitting on a throne, just sort of surrounded by wildlife. She looks really melancholy, like she's looking into a crystal ball. And I guess this represents, like, past, present, future. (laugh)

Sally: OK.

Emily: That's the way I'm gonna do it. So I guess the past -- this looking really melancholy into the future is maybe Tybalt going to the vet to get his shots this week.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: How he felt betrayed and upset by, not just us, but also by fate.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: And then, um. (laugh) The page of swords is a young dude -- is that hair? What is that?

Sally: It looks like a scorpion from over here.

Emily: It looks like a scorpion. He's in tights and boots, and he's got a single sword, and he looks pretty, like, just that I think he's really determined -- I'm gonna look it up too.

Sally: OK. Tybalt's very determined to eat every time we record --

Emily: That's true.

Sally: Which is what he's literally doing right now.

Emily: Page of swords: “Alive, active -- authority, overseeing. Secret service, vigilance, spying examination.” That does fit Tybalt.

Sally: Spying. (laugh)

Emily: Spying. He just sort of stares at us. And then this is the nine of wands. It says: “The card signifies strength in opposition. If attacked, he will meet the onslaught boldly.”

Sally: (laugh, to Tybalt) OK, that’s you when Emily plays with you tonight.

Emily: That’s you when I play with you tonight at nine p.m., like I always do.

Sally: Um, I think it would be really funny -- maybe our between seasons five and six episode should be Tarot readings for all the characters.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Like, that’d be very fun.

Emily: It would be bad. As I think everyone now knows, I’m not a very good psychic.

Sally: Well.

Emily: Whatever. Fortune-teller? Is that the word? But it’s OK, because that’s the point. Thank you all for listening. Have a lovely week.

Tybalt: (meows)

Emily: Oh, hi. Are you ready to meet the onslaught boldly?

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Ahhh! Uh, don’t do war crimes. Goodbye.

Sally: Bye.