



Episode 141 – Sexy Gholam

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SALLY: Everybody Hates Rand is a *Wheel of Time* podcast that will contain spoilers for all fourteen books, so if you're anti-spoiler pause this, read all fourteen 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]

SALLY: Some listeners brought up that we haven't talked about *Hatchet* in a while. Should we – do we have anything to add to our *Hatchet* canon?

EMILY: I haven't – [coughs, laughs] heh! I haven't looked at the *Hatchet* Wikipedia articles in a while. If someone paid me enough money, I would read all the *Hatchet* books and review them, um, as, like, a podcast. Um, but as it is right now, I don't particularly have anything to say about the *H-Hatchet* books. I haven't thought about them in a while, I guess.

SALLY: Yeah, I tend to repress them, so I'm glad you guys think my childhood trauma at the hands of Gary Paulsen is amusing.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: But, maybe, um, when reach, like, a thousand dollars on Patreon, we'll do *Hatchet* for We Don't Watch Outlander.

EMILY: Finally, the crossover content that everyone has been craving.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen.

SALLY: Considering we currently have, like, 369 dollars a month? It will take a while.

EMILY: But it won't just be *Hatchet*. It will be the entire series including such titles as...*Brian's Winter*. Is that one?

SALLY: Yeah. That's right.

EMILY: I think so.

SALLY: That's the only one I remember.

EMILY: I think he fights a bear in one.

SALLY: Cool.

EMILY: And it's, like, Leonardo DiCaprio, you know, fighting that bear in that movie that he won an Oscar for or whatever?

SALLY: We'll have Leonardo DiCaprio play Brian in our, um...

EMILY: I'd rather he didn't.

SALLY: Adaptation. Okay, who would you cast?

EMILY: Who would I cast – [laughs] this is a fun, this is a fun question – who would I cast as Brian in *Hatchet*? Um, I don't know many child actors.

SALLY: Yeah, because Brian's, like, thirteen? Twelve?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Twelve, thirteen? I don't know *any* child actors [laughs].

EMILY: I know. I'm, like, trying to remember any of the child actors from any of the Netflix shows.

SALLY: Yeah. The only ones I can picture are the *Stranger Things* kids.

EMILY: Right.

SALLY: But they're, like, sixteenish now, right?

EMILY: You could age up Brian, I think, and that would be reasonable.

SALLY: Yeah, that's true.

EMILY: I mean. It would be less distressing to watch a movie if things were happening to –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Like.

SALLY: Oh my god. I want Brian to be, um, the really dumb one from *Julie and the Phantoms*. I can't remember what his name is. I just want him to bring that energy.

EMILY: The one who looks like Dylan O'Brien's weird cousin?

SALLY: Yeah. I mean, I think he's, like, 30, though, but.

EMILY: Yeah, the *Julie and the Phantoms* – If I had to pick a kid from *Stranger Kings* – [laughs].

SALLY: Kings. Stranger Kings.

EMILY: Stranger Kids, I was trying to say, I think. But *Stranger Things*, it would be, um, not the one who's blowing up.

SALLY: Finn Wolfhard?

EMILY: Yeah. Just not that one.

SALLY: Okay.

EMILY: I'd be fine with either of the other two boys.

SALLY: Okay, I could see that. I take back my *Julie and the Phantoms* –

EMILY: Both of them have appeal.

SALLY: Tybalt!

EMILY: For one thing, I think it would be cool to see Brian played by – I'm saying 'it would be cool to see Brian played by' as though Brian has had so many –

SALLY: [snorts, laughs] Adaptations.

EMILY: Adaptations. But, obviously, Gary Paulsen has no imagination and so I'm sure Brian was written as, like, a white boy in mind. It would be nice to have any actor of color play him instead. Just because there is nothing determining Brian's race in *Hatchet*. It's literally just Brian.

SALLY: Uh, there's – I would say 'who else should be cast?' But there's literally nobody else in *Hatchet* except [laughing] the corpse of the dead pilot.

EMILY: Yeah, there's a pilot who's in it for five minutes and then he has a heart attack, and he dies.

SALLY: It would be very funny to have somebody, like, super famous play the pilot.

EMILY: Oh my god, yeah. Like Idris Elba.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: Although Idris Elba has lost some respectability for me since he was in *Cats*.

SALLY: Oh, I mean, yeah. He looks horrifying in *Cats*.

EMILY: I know it's not his fault that he looks horrifying in *Cats*, but I'm just like any celebrity that was like, "*Cats*? Sure!" Except Ian McKellen. Ian McKellen gets a free pass to do *whatever* the fuck he wants, because he's 81, and, like, a gay theater kid. So, yeah, he would be in *Cats*.

SALLY: It also looked like Ian McKellen was having the fucking time of his life –

EMILY: Right?

SALLY: When he was performing in *Cats*. You've never *Cats*.

EMILY: I've seen clips.

SALLY: ...Pretend she's some type of expert.

EMILY: [laughs] I've watched videos about *Cats*.

SALLY: That's so weird. But you won't [laughs] *Cats* itself?

EMILY: Yeah. I watched the Lindsay Ellis video essay about *Cats*, titled 'Why is *Cats*?'
[laughs]

SALLY: They're jellicle cats.

EMILY: They're jellicle cats. And I feel like that really hit the highlights for me.

SALLY: No, it's an experience start to finish.

EMILY: Like an acid trip.

SALLY: With, um, my boy Skimbleshanks the Railway Cat.

EMILY: Everyone loves Skimbleshanks.

SALLY: Yeah, he just wants you to have a good train ride.

EMILY: Everybody Hates Rand, [laughing] Everybody loves Skimbleshanks the Railway Cat.

SALLY: That will be my spinoff podcast. Um, anything else we wanna [laughing] pack into this cold open?

EMILY: [laughs] No.

SALLY: Okay. Um, welcome to Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* podcast. I'm Sally Goodger.

EMILY: I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: And this is Tybalt.

EMILY: Welcome to *Wheel of Time*, the only fantasy text that manages to make, um, things like spymastery boring as fuck.

SALLY: *Soooo boring*. The entire time I was reading it I was like, "Why do we first have to get the incorrect report, and the correct report?"

EMILY: And then the correct report! And also, like, why – what in Robert Jordan's head was he like, "You know who would be a fun character for me to write? This man who has the personality of an accountant from *Parks & Recreation*, but who's big into spy work." And, like, I have nothing personal against Balwer.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: He's fine. He continues to be a character as many of, like, Morgase's peripheral characters are, and he eventually becomes Perrin's sort of quasi-spymaster.

SALLY: That's weird.

EMILY: Not that Perrin wants or needs one. Balwer's just like, "But I need to do it." And Perrin's like, "Okay, whatever. Tell me whatever shit [laughs] you want." Like, he's fine. In another text I think he would be an interesting character, but the fact that we are getting him paired with Pedron Niall, world's least likeable grandfatherly man, is unfortunate.

SALLY: Um, but I was thinking about this – just to set the scene real quick, we are with Pedron Niall in the Tower of the Light or whatever – the Fortress of the Light. Whatever the fuck their dumb stronghold is called. And he's talking first to his, like, puppet...spymaster and then his actual spymaster.

EMILY: Yeah, he's paying a guy to be a fake spymaster, which to me just seems like a waste of resources.

SALLY: Yeah, like the point of your spymaster like – everyone's like, "Oh, we all know that's the spymaster," and it's, like, wouldn't you think anyone with two brain cells would be like, "That's not actually the spymaster. I can't actually know who the spymaster is." And he's, like, this guy isn't just getting paid a little bit. Like, he's canonically rich enough to buy several fake Horns of Valere.

EMILY: Yeah, not only is he clearly a fake spymaster, but he's clearly a bad spymaster. So it's, like, why wouldn't you think he was fake? [laughs] And, I mean, he's like, "I spend money of fake Horns of Valere all the time and then go into my mountain retreat, or whatever, to try summoning the heroes of the Horn." He just believes everything he hears.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And yeah, he gives Pedron Niall this inaccurate report that I can't even remember mostly, because it's just meant to favor the Whitecloaks. He's like, "Illian is about to fall into our pockets. As are every other country."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: "And it's totally fine." And then Balwer comes in and is like, "No, that's not true. No one is on our side because we're the fucking Whitecloaks. No one wants to be allied with us." I mean, he says it nicer than that, but that's the gist of it.

SALLY: Yeah. Um, yeah. And I was thinking – this is not, like, a concrete thought literally at all. But, like, so much of epic fantasy that is, like, based in a quasi-European like continent, so, like, you know *Game of Thrones*, *Wheel of Time*, kind of *Lord of the Rings*. Um, like, lays so much of its plot foundation on this, like, mock realism of politics in that there has to be so many different things happening all at the same time. I'm not saying that that's – I'm not saying 'mock realism' as in, yeah, politics is a lot of different things happening at the same time. That's how politics work, but it's just, like, so weird to me out of all the, like, quote unquote realistic elements to try and put into your fantasy series that so many epic fantasy writers up to this point have hit on, like, it has to be political machin – machina – machinations. Whatever that word is. Like, it has to be that. I have to have characters playing the game of houses, basically playing the

game of thrones. And it's just, like, I don't know. Very odd to me. This is what I was thinking about instead of actually listening to anything the Whitecloaks were saying.

EMILY: Well, yeah. I don't know – I don't know either, because my first instinct would be to say that when you have politics driving, um, the plot then that is a, not necessarily a neat, but a sidestep away from having your plot revolve around, like, fighting.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: And, like, the video game mechanics of just stumbling from one encounter to another. But, uh, and that is, like, maybe if you are someone who is like, "I don't want to depict a lot of warfare and fighting in my fantasy series," then, yeah, that makes sense. But these are, of course, authors like George R. R. Martin and Robert Jordan who are also just like, "war crimes!"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, it's sort of, like, yeah, I guess an attempt to add a spice of realism so that it doesn't feel like a Dungeons & Dragons game.

SALLY: Yeah. I don't know. I just find it – I find it to be one of the most exhausting parts of reading books like this. These, like, epic, doorstep...dragging on forever and ever. It's just the idea that there are so many pieces of information, and, like, Emily said, there are people who are capable of digesting all those pieces of information who just must be smarter than me [laughs]. And so congratulations and I love you, but I, personally, just find it so exhausting that, like, with these books, especially *Wheel of Time*, every chapter from a different person's point of view presents me with an entirely different chessboard of political pieces.

EMILY: Yeah, like, we're not just keeping track of the information, we're keeping track of which information is being disseminated accurately to whom. Who has the incorrect information? Meanwhile, also keeping track of what is really happening.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And it's, like, from the Whitecloaks I seriously need only one very small set of actual information and that is what is happening in Tarabon and Arad Doman.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Which we get here in a very buried underneath it all as Pedron Niall opens this note from one of his informants in Tarabon, and it is like [high pitched voice], "The Seanchan are back!" And Pedron Niall literally just throws it away because he's like, "Fake news."

SALLY: Yeah. He's like, "This guy must have come down with a brain fever." I love it when they're like, "He has the brain fever."

EMILY: They're like, "This previously totally sane person must be mad. Let me get back to plotting world domination." Which is literally all Pedron Niall is doing.

SALLY: Yeah

EMILY: In like a bizarre sort of thing that we're supposed to keep track of Pedron Niall's heretofore wildly unsuccessful bids for world domination.

SALLY: [laughs, snorts]

EMILY: Like, he has been introduced since, I would say, solidly Book 2.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Because that's when Valda – no. Carridin become a character. The fact that I have to keep track of multiple Whitecloaks.

SALLY: I know. It's ridiculous.

EMILY: Kills me. He's been a character and he's been trying to, like, to dominate the world since Book 2 and has made zero progress. Zip. In fact, all that we can – like, the only power he has gained over any type of throne is in Andor because Morgase is right there, [whispers] but everyone thinks Morgase is dead.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: In Andor. So he has nothing.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And in fact, Amadicia is falling to the prophet.

SALLY: Yeah. Like, Pedron Niall didn't do the, like, logical thing which was to, like, announce to everyone, "Look, Morgase is dead. And here's some type of proof that I can offer." I mean Morgase is alive.

EMILY: [laughs] I was like, "Wait."

SALLY: Sorry. [laughing] Morgase is alive. Sorry. Be like, "Look, I do actually have the queen of Andor here with me."

EMILY: And she's voluntarily here with me. Look, she's fine. You know film a – [laughing] one of those videos where she has to be like, "I'm fine." But she's mouthing at the camera "save me."

SALLY: She's got, like, a newspaper from that day.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Um, yeah [laughs]. So he could have done that and he would have some, *some* political foothold in Andor, but he's just like, "She'll come around and then we'll take our army." And it's, like, [laughing] you missed your window, my guy. And now everyone's gonna be like, "No, you haven't had Morgase there for three months or whatever. You would have told people."

EMILY: He's essentially doing the same thing that the White Tower is doing, which is nothing, but feeling like they're doing everything. And it's, I mean, fine, sure, you have a pretty intentional parallel there, but, um, it comes to nothing.

SALLY: Yeah, like, again I don't know how many times we can say this but it's, like, the incompetence that Robert Jordan gives to his antagonists is just, like, not interesting at this point, because all of the antagonists are incompetent. With, like, maybe the exception of the Seanchan, but they're literally invaders so I'm not gonna be like, "Yeah, those are my favorite antagonists" [laughs].

EMILY: Right. Like, name an antagonist who [laughs] – an antagonist has to have three things.

SALLY: [laughs] Big dick.

EMILY: [laughing] I was gonna say sexy, but sure.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: First they have to be sexy. Second, they have to have more than two functioning brain cells.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: And three, they have to have some sort of power to enact upon the plot.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: And literally none of our antagonists in this series fulfill this quota. Seanchan? Not sexy at all.

SALLY: No! [laughs]

EMILY: Pedron Niall? Not sexy and does not have any brain cells.

SALLY: Or really – agh! He has some power but he's not using it, so.

EMILY: Yeah. He's just like, "I'm just gathering the Whitecloaks." And it's like, "What the fuck?"

SALLY: Yeah. Okay, which antagonists are sexy, though.

EMILY: Asmo-deen.

SALLY: [sighs] Asmo-deen.

EMILY: And we lost him! [laughs]

SALLY: And we lost him.

EMILY: Yeah, that's a good question. Which antagonists are sexy? Let me think about it. Uhhhh. None of the Forsaken really are sexy.

SALLY: No.

EMILY: Even though Robert Jordan writes them to be sexy.

SALLY: Yeah. He's like, "Look how sexy Graendal is." And I'm like, "I mean she's probably a very beautiful woman, but I don't particularly find human enslavement to be quite sexy."

EMILY: [laughs] Okay. I'm gonna say something bold and it might upset a few people. Um, the *gholam* has the potential to be sexy [laughs].

SALLY: I agree! I agree [claps]. I agree [claps] I agree [claps]! [laughs]

EMILY: I think he's our best functioning antagonist. He's very smart. Probably – he probably only has two functioning brain cells.

SALLY: But he's got two.

EMILY: Because – he does have at least two. But he does not cross the threshold of outpacing Mat, who is the protagonist who is most often set in conflict with him. Like, Mat is smarter than him. And it's sad that we don't get to see him outsmarting Mat once or twice. If that makes sense?

SALLY: No, I get you. I also feel like the *gholam* has big potential for, like, sexy vibes because he's got very vampire vibes.

EMILY: Mm. Yeah.

SALLY: Like, there's this scene at the beginning of *The Path of Daggers* where he, like, drains someone of all their blood. And I'm like, "Okay, listen. Don't like – again, I'm not *condoning* vampirism, BUT."

EMILY: Yeah, we're not celebrating how the *gholam* literally rips people apart.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But the fact that he's super strong. The fact that he can literally go under doors. The scene where he throws a knife at Mat and Mat catches it. That's wildly homoerotic.

SALLY: Yeah, exactly.

EMILY: So.

SALLY: So, I'm just saying the elements are there to have, like, a sexy vampire asshole that you're like, "Okay." He's just got the vibes, you know? Okay, so we've got one, one functioning antagonist in all fourteen books.

EMILY: A single functioning antagonist.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I can't think of any others.

SALLY: It's, like, the Dark One's not sexy. He talks in all caps.

EMILY: I know. He's terrible. He's also not smart.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, he's, like, "Here Demandred, do stuff for me."

EMILY: I know. Get fucked, the Dark One. He's like [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [husky voice] "Hey, everyone do different shit. And, like, don't work together. Teamwork does not make the dreamwork in my case."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, he's so obsessed with his own, you know, way of doing things.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: That he doesn't ever get anything done.

SALLY: That's a nice commentary on evil, I guess.

EMILY: Well, it's a false commentary on evil.

SALLY: Good point, Emily.

EMILY: Because, as you have pointed out, via your Holocaust studies, is, like, the Nazi party and other fascist regimes are wildly efficient.

SALLY: Yep, that's their, like, whole thing.

EMILY: Yeah, they're so competent. They get things done. That is how they work.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: How they manage to commit major genocides alongside structural, infrastructural things like racism. You know, like, that's a major component. It's like a failed experiment. It's like Robert Jordan's failed experiment to see if incompetent antagonists are interesting. And no [laughs], is the answer.

SALLY: Well, yeah. And it's also frustrating because it feels like the antagonists had to be dumbed down in order for the protagonists to succeed.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And it's like you said with the *gholam*. You have to hit that sweet spot of it, like, still being a very threatening antagonist, but also, like, the protagonist is just, like, one step ahead. One step smarter. One step, you know, more valiant or whatever. Like, it has to be close. That's, like, what makes it tense. But here, I'm like, "Rand is going to kill Sammael, because Sammael is a dumb piece of shit." Like, I have no doubt in my mind that's going to happen. I, like, it never crossed my mind in the balefire battle with Rahvin that Rand would lose. And I know that's, like, movie mechanics. Like, we're watching *Haikyuu!!* right now and I keep being like, "Emily [laughing,] do you think they're going to lose?" And it's like of course the main character team isn't going to lose the sports game. Eventually. You know, like, in the finals. They're gonna win.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And so, of course there's that, but that's where the suspension of be – of disbelief comes in. Where it's, like, I want to feel tense.

EMILY: Yeah, like, I know a wax poetic about the *gholam* throwing – knife throwing scene all the time, but that is such a microcosm of what we are looking for there. Is a knife gets thrown at your protagonist, incredible comp – like, Mat is fighting for his life in that sequence. He is very threatened. He watches one of his best friends die brutally. Elayne's unconscious. The stakes are very high, but Mat catches the knife.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: And that's such a protagonist – a distillation of what it means to be a protagonist in, you know, the fantasy genre.

SALLY: Yeah! Just being that one millise – like millimeter ahead.

EMILY: Faster.

SALLY: Yeah. But here it's just like the Forsaken are stumbling drunkenly around the continent.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: And Rand, because he, for all – all negative things about Rand aside, he's a rather focused young lad.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: So, like [laughs].

EMILY: Rand has fucking a to-do list. He talks about his to-do list in his section.

SALLY: Yeah! He's just keeping his little planner.

EMILY: He's like, "I gotta do this. I gotta talk to, um, the first maid and the main guy." Both of whom will be important for Elayne, I guess, but it doesn't really matter otherwise. But yeah, he's like, "I've gotta cross off the Waygates. I've gotta do all this shit." And it's just, like, yeah he's got a game plan. Unlike Pedron Niall who seems to just be like, "I'm just gonna sit here and be evil."

SALLY: Yeah, I'm just gonna laugh maniac – like Demandred I'm gonna laugh maniacally.

EMILY: Have you got to the point where he's been assassinated, yet?

SALLY: No, but I can't wait.

EMILY: Is that in the next one?

SALLY: No, I haven't gotten there if it's in *Path of Daggers*, yet, but I'm only two-thirds done.

EMILY: I don't know if it's in *Path of Daggers*. I don't know when it is. I can't remember who does it either. We're introduced to multiple – I think it's Valda. It has to be Valda.

SALLY: Maybe he has already been assassinated. This sounds vaguely familiar.

EMILY: He talks about how he's bringing back all the Whitecloaks and Valda's coming back from Tar Valon. And I know Valda is the one who kills Pedron Niall with, um, the high Inquisitor guy, who's name Asunwa. He gives, like, implicit, you know, permission, kind of.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: He's like, "Sure, take over."

SALLY: I feel like that happened in *A Crown of Swords*.

EMILY: It – I can't keep track of the Whitecloak shit.

SALLY: I feel like that's happened, or maybe I've just fantasized about him dying so much.

EMILY: He gets, like, sta – it's very Julius Caesar-esque.

SALLY: Yeah, he gets, like, stabbed.

EMILY: Yeah, and he, like, bleeds to death in his little throne room.

SALLY: Yeah, I feel like that happened in *A Crown of Swords*.

EMILY: It has to have happened in *A Crown of Swords* because *A Crown of Sworns* – [laughs] *A Crown of Sworns*.

SALLY: A crown of sworns.

EMILY: *A Crown of Swords* ends with – I can't keep track of this. *A Crown of Swords* ends with the Seanchan invading Ebou Dar. So in the next book and a half, at some point, it feels like Amadicia should fall to the Seanchan.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Right?

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Because theoretically Amadicia has to fall before Altara.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: I know that's not technically true because there's, like, Ebou Dar has a coast. Altara, I should say. I was looking at the map today and it is wild. There's a stretch of land beneath Tarabon and Amadicia that's just, like, a coast. And it's called, like, the Shadow Coast or something. And I'm like, "Why the fuck don't we spend any time there? That sounds intriguing as hell?"

SALLY: Yeah, that sounds lit.

EMILY: And also, why aren't you on the coast? There's, like, fish there. Resources.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Everyone in this fantasy land [claps] is bad at Minecraft [claps].

SALLY: [laughs] Um, yeah. I just, again, can't with these, like, swaths of land that Robert Jordan's like, "Nobody's claimed that." And I'm like, "That is not how monarch-based societies work."

EMILY: Shrink your continent if you don't want to use all of it!

SALLY: Yeah. Like, Robert Jordan collapses the thesis of his own map with Morgase being like, "That piece of land is mine, and I will not let anybody else have it."

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: That's her entire fucking plot. Is her refusing to be like, "Someone else could reasonably rule Andor and I would be fine with that." So it's, like, do you think any – like, so many rulers would be like, "Land. Mine."

EMILY: Yeah. Land.

SALLY: Stupid.

EMILY: Something called the Shadow Coast?

SALLY: I wanna live there. That sounds fucking baller.

EMILY: Anyway, so the Whitecloaks, deeply incompetent. Morgase, also deeply incompetent.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: We, like, catch up with her. She's just got a bunch of ladies who are gossiping about Andor. The situation in Andor. Nothing's new there. Um, we then flip over to Rand.

SALLY: This is where – also, Morgase's section is where we offic – I guess, no we learned in the last book. Morgase learns that Galad joins the Whitecloaks.

EMILY: Oh yeah. Right, right, right. Morgase – someone is like, "I hear Galad joined the Whitecloaks," and Morgase is, like, affecting disinterest in this development, because she's like the only thing – like, Galad is essentially a hostage.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They can kill him, um, to keep me in line, or threaten him to keep me in line. Um, so I just need to pretend that he doesn't matter to me as much as my biological children. Which, is, I think, one of the more likeable things about Morgase, is that she's very affectionate of Galad and Galad is very affectionate of her.

SALLY: Yeah, they have a sweet relationship.

EMILY: Yeah, like, they are good – it's nice to have a good stepmom, stepson relationship.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: She doesn't give a fuck [laughing] about Gawyn though.

SALLY: She's like, "I *really* hope Elayne is okay. And Gawyn, I guess."

EMILY: And looks at smudged writing on hand.

SALLY: Gavin?

EMILY: [laughs] Gavin! I hope he's okay.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: He's not in Tar Valon, apparently.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, Rand is walking through the palace at Caemlyn, surrounded by this ridiculous honor guard.

SALLY: It's like eighty people!!

EMILY: I know! He's like, "I've got twenty Saldaeans with Davram Bashere. Like, a bunch of Maidens led by Sulin. And I'm with Bael and his –" this is not a joke – "Knife Hands." He's fucking Bael Knife Hands.

SALLY: [making cutting noises]

EMILY: Like scissor hands!

SALLY: [keeps making cutting noises]

EMILY: [high-pitched] What the fuck?!

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So that's, you know, hilarious.

SALLY: Yeah, and there's a bunch of servants. So it is legitimately, like, eighty people just following Rand around.

EMILY: How big are these hallways?

SALLY: Yeah, and it's, like, that is so many people?

EMILY: Yeah, it's ridiculous.

SALLY: It's [laughs] again, just, like, defying logic.

EMILY: Um, and they're just like talking about shit in Caemlyn.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean Bashere does have a great line where he's trying to tell Rand something and Rand just starts laughing, and he's like, "Oh, did I say something funny?" [laughs]

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: He's just being...good.

EMILY: What is Rand even thinking about? Oh yeah, he's like – Rand's like, "Listen, Mazrim Taim taught me how to not be sweaty anymore. It's fabulous. I wonder if the Aes Sedai can do it." And then he's like, "Mahahaha!" Thinking about Aes Sedai sweatiness. And Bashere's like, "What? Why the fuck are you like this?"

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: Um, they talk about how Caemlyn's filling up with, like, refugees. Um, and how there is, like, trouble in the city because a lot of people are, like, the sort of mob. The – I don't want to call them the Dragonsworn mob, because they're not quite at that level, but they're people who are, like, very into Rand as Dragon Reborn concept.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And they are turning violent against anyone who questions his authority. And they're like – they're getting mad – oh, a dude laughed at Rand's quote unquote miracles, and then got hanged from the rafters, which is upsetting.

SALLY: [whispers] Yeah.

EMILY: And Rand's like, "My miracles?" right as a dude drops a vase worth, you know, millions of dollars and it just, like, rolls. Totally fine. And everyone's like, "The timing, my dude."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [laughs] Um [clears throat], and they find out that there is news of some Andoran noble people coming closer to the city. That's not super relevant. And then Bael is like, "I have some

people who told me that two Aes Sedai have taken rooms at an inn in the city.” Um, and Rand is like, “Oh, is one of them one we’ve already heard of?” Apparently, there’s an Aes Sedai – there’s rumors of an Aes Sedai who heals dogs and cats, which I think is supposed to be one of the Black Ajah ladies who Nynaeve and Elayne were chasing.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: There was one on their list who was, like, really into cats, or something.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Whatever. Bael’s like, “I don’t think so.” And Rand is kind of like, “Oh, maybe I’ll send for one of them.” And then he happens to walk past a garden where Aviendha is and he’s like, “Let’s go see them right now.” And then the Maidens are like, “You stupid asshole.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Rand is like, “If you want to put on dresses to talk about matchmaking then go ahead.” And they’re like, “Rude.” And then [laughs], Bashere and Bael are also like, “Maybe you are being a bit of a dick about Aviendha.” And Rand’s like, “Neither of you would look good in dresses either,” [laughs]. Which is just, like, one of the few charming Rand moments. Where he’s clever and, um, I don’t know.

SALLY: Yeah. Just sort of personable.

EMILY: Yeah. You have to, like, grasp straws with Rand. Any moment that he seems normal. Uh, so they just sort of leave the palace right away and head toward this inn, which is called Culain’s Hound and is a reference to Irish, or I should say Celtic, mythology. Um, Cuchulain the uh – I’m sorry for the pronunciation by the way – who was, like, a demigod who – Cuchulain means Culain’s Hound.

SALLY: Oh.

EMILY: He was, like, who killed the big dog.

SALLY: Oh, yes.

EMILY: Of a lord and was like, “I’ll just, you know, act as your guard dog until a new one can be trained.” Or something. He’s a famous figure in Celtic mythology. So, it’s just sort of interesting that that’s placed here, because Andor isn’t really our Celtic base. None of these countries, I think, really have any sort of Celtic vibes going on.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Not that I am an expert. Um, but, you know, it’s much more Anglican in Andor.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Rand walks in and is confronted with the awkward sight of every teenage girl he's ever known.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And he's like, "What the fuck?" And they're all like, "*What the fuck?*" Including Mat's sister Bodewhin. Bodwin? I don't know what. Who I'm guessing – the age range we're given here is, like, the oldest one is seventeen and the youngest one is fourteen.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So these are literally just a bunch of teenage girls from the Two Rivers. [page turns] And Rand has a fun moment where he gets to catch up with them. They're like, "Lord Perrin." And he's like, "*Lord Perrin? Exsqueeze me?*"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And they, like, tell the story of, like, Trollocs invading the Two Rivers. And oh, now Perrin and Faile are married and it's all quite funny, because Bashere is standing right there and doesn't know that "Faile" refers to his own –

SALLY: His daughter! I didn't even think about that.

EMILY: I know. Imagine, if he'd been like, "Oh, uh" [laughs].

SALLY: "Beg pardon?"

EMILY: "Pardon! Did you say Zarine Bashere?"

SALLY: [laughs] "She married who know?"

EMILY: [voice cracking] "She married who?"

SALLY: "The blacksmith motherfucker?"

EMILY: He's like, "Rand, who is this guy?" Rand's like, "Good guy." Bashere's like, "Hmm."

SALLY: "I don't believe it."

EMILY: "I don't believe him."

SALLY: "I'm gonna take out his kneecaps."

EMILY: [laughing] “I’m going to curb stomp him as soon as he gets to Caemlyn.”

SALLY: Which is basically what happens. It’s like an emotional curb stomp.

EMILY: Yeah, that’s Bashere for you.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Emotionally curb stomping his son-in-law.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: He’s like, “Perrin, bend down.” Perrin’s like, “Yes sir?” [laughing] Bashere slaps him.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: “I couldn’t reach.”

SALLY: I love the idea of Perrin being, like, twice Bashere’s height. I know that’s not physically possible.

EMILY: Bashere is a leetle guy.

SALLY: Because Perrin would have to be, like, ten feet tall [laughs].

EMILY: And Perrin is supposed to be, like, six foot one or something.

SALLY: Yeah, I know. It’s just so charming. Him bending down.

EMILY: Um, the girls are like, “What we’re doing in Caemlyn is that we’re with some Aes Sedai who were in the Two Rivers and they tested us and are taking us to Tar Valon.” At pretty much that moment Verin and Alanna enter the room, and Rand’s like, “Oh, so you stopped in Caemlyn because you heard about the White Tower being broken.” And they’re like, “This is an awkward conversation to have in public.” So they’re like, “Why don’t we go to a private dining room?” And there’s this sort of awkward posturing moment where the Warders want to go with the ladies and Rand’s bodyguard of eighty people –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: – wants to go with him. And the three of them are like, “No, we’ll just talk in private.” Which, of course, Rand doesn’t, like, regret, uh, per se. It’s not like he’s like, “If only I had a bunch of people with me that wouldn’t have happened,” but that is sort of implicit in the text. Is that maybe Alanna would not have done what she did if there were a bunch of witnesses, armed witnesses with Rand. Um, but they go to talk, and they start to have what seems like a very interesting conversation. At least, to me. I was reading it, I was seized by how abrupt what happens is.

SALLY: Yeah, same.

EMILY: And I kinda want to see Rand catching up with Verin. Because he's like, "Yeah, I'm really interested in wherever the Aes Sedai are because I hear that they can help me." And Verin and Alanna are like, "Well, we can't really tell you where they are even if we do know." And Alanna's like, "Where's Mat?" And Rand's like, "I don't know where he is." Or he's like, "I'm not gonna tell you that." Just duh duh duh duh, you know? And it's, like, an interesting moment where Rand could be having a conversation with an Aes Sedai who, although Moiraine has told him explicitly not to trust any Aes Sedai, he is more familiar with Verin and would not have – like, we're about to enter this long section of the series where Rand's reactions to every Aes Sedai around him is essentially the same. Which is that them like foreign, particularly annoying foreign diplomats. And it's, like, Verin at least has done some shit with him. So, there is the possibility of a relationship there. But, Alanna, word ruiner, immediately is like, "You look ill. Let me touch you. I promise I won't – nothing I do will hurt you." And Rand's like, "Well, she can't lie," so lets her touch him. She does – I think it's called delving, like checking to see if he's ill at all. And then she just immediately bonds him as a Warder, which Rand describes as, like, a burning sensation followed by – he talks about being more aware of himself and of her. And that he's very shaky afterward. And he's like, "What the fuck did you just do?" And Verin's like – they try and shield him, and he immediately shields both of them.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And is like, "What the fuck?" And Verin's like, "She didn't hurt you. She just bonded you as her Warder." And Rand's like, "What the fuck?"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, and he is like, "Okay, well here's the deal. You're not allowed to come near me ever again. If you actually even enter the old city," as opposed to where they are, the new city, "then I'll find out and I will throw you in prison."

SALLY: Yeah, and he's like, "I'll also shield you and tie it off or whatever. So basically like still you."

EMILY: Yeah. I mean, until some other guy who can channel comes along or – yeah. But basically." Um, and they're like, "Fine." He's like, "Am I clear?!" And they're like, "Yeah. Crystal, bud." And then he storms out into the, uh, common room where Bashere has his, like, leg slung up, gayly, on one of the benches, and is telling all the teen girls [laughs] about how Rand is the Dragon Reborn.

SALLY: [laughs] I like to imagine them sitting in a semi-circle on the floor around him.

EMILY: Um, and they're like, "This dude says you're the Dragon Reborn. You need to, like, stop letting people spread that rumor about you. Don't be an asshole." And Rand's like, "I am the Dragon [laughing] Reborn." And they're like, "Don't be an egotistical idiot." And he sort of

goes zero to sixty, like wraps them up in the Power just to demonstrate that he can, and he has this very short rant where he's like, "I'm the Dragon Reborn. You can't change it. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Do you get it?!" Um, and because we're in Rand's point of view we don't really see the escalation of him going from being, like, floating some people to they're both crying hysterically and he's yelling, and everyone is in shock. Um, which I don't really. I guess all I'll say about that is when Rand goes through traumatic things, he externalizes it.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: He takes it out on, typically, other people. As opposed to, uh, Mat and Perrin are the two most obvious examples otherwise. Perrin internalizes things, such as when he's like, "I'm just not going to think about it," until Faile gets him to start crying about his dead family. And Mat internalizes things so thoroughly that he doesn't even realize he's traumatized; he just throws up or whatever.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Which is upsetting. And they're all normal, valid trauma response, but pairing that particular trauma response of Rand's to all of the other things he does to intentionally frighten women is a little bit troubling.

SALLY: Yeah, I have a complicated relationship to this scene because it's like of course I don't want Rand to be, like, threatening this sixteen- and seventeen-year-old girl, but it's like...this is one instance where I'm willing to give him a little bit more leeway because he is – has literally, like seconds ago, been –

EMILY: Assaulted.

SALLY: Assaulted. Just like – yeah, assaulted. Extremely violated. He's so angry. He's so afraid. Um, and it's, like, when you are in that headspace, like...I think it's, like, a good depiction of how people don't always respond to trauma in really, like, pretty ways of just, like, crying and being, like, you know. Like, beautiful waifish. Like the tuberculosis people. Like, people respond to trauma in really ugly ways. And again, I'm not – I agree with you that it takes on worse resonances when looked at Rand's entire pattern of behavior. Where he'll start to do this more and more intentionally.

EMILY: But, like, not everyone's Perrin who weeps beautifully once into his girlfriend's bosom and is like, "Cool. I'm done."

SALLY: Yeah. "I'm fine." Yeah, exactly. Or not everyone who is Mat who's like, "I'm gonna puke and be done." You know? It's, like, sometimes responses to traumatic events are way more complicated and ugly. And to his credit, once Rand realizes it he's like, "Oh, *fuck*. I am so sorry."

EMILY: He's like, "Uhhh. Oh dang. Sorry, girls."

SALLY: He's like, "I really didn't mean to do that. I, you know..." So, like, it's not a – like, troubling thing. I don't think it's a good thing, but it is a good representation of what feels like a very realistic response.

EMILY: Yeah, I think the problem is that so much of Robert Jordan's – what he's made interesting about Rand, which are his various traumatic responses and his mental illness, are really inextricably tied to his relationship with women.

SALLY: Mm-hmm. Fair.

EMILY: Like, Rand's trauma response externally doesn't end up hurting Bashere.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It ends up targeting girls.

SALLY: Yeah! Like a sixteen-year-old girl. Bode is probably like sixteen or something.

EMILY: And Rand has these, like, symptoms of insanity regarding how he harms women specifically, rather than people in general. So, um.

SALLY: No, and that's totally fair, because I also think that, though Rand being bonded against his will is, like, an interesting layer to the whole Warder bond and a lot of other consent things that are going on, like you said, this is basically the turning point of his relationship with Aes Sedai. Where he is no longer willing to entertain Aes Sedai as allies or good people literally at all. And, like, Robert Jordan is presenting that as justified because of Alanna. And, of course, I'm not saying Alanna is right. Alanna is literally one of my least favorite characters that has ever been written in the history of the world. She is literally assaulting him.

EMILY: And also nonsensical. It makes no sense that Alanna does this at this point.

SALLY: Yeah, and the fact that Verin's just like, "She bonded you, no big deal."

EMILY: Yeah, I think we get a Verin point of view pretty soon after this and Verin's just like, "What the fuck?"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: "Like, I didn't see that coming." Like, it's not like they plotted it beforehand. Which means Alanna made this snap decision to bond the Dragon Reborn as her Warder. Which, again, makes her out to be not only, um, a person who violated another person, but she is also so stupid.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, of all the things.

SALLY: Yeah, so what I'm trying to get at here is, like, Robert Jordan is basically just presenting a justification for Rand's complete, like, fucked up relationship to women in all these – especially, like, magical women in this regard.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: And it's like of course you'd have deep distrust of an Aes Sedai – of Aes Sedai after doing this, but it's just, like... Robert Jordan's ability to have Rand turn one isolated incident with – and not just this incident with Alanna, because of course this is a big trauma that affects him. But, like, a woman dying a mile away from him. Turning that instance into a personality trait.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: With Rand is, like. I feel like I was probably insensitive in the way I was trying to describe that, so I apologize.

EMILY: I don't feel like you were.

SALLY: I just feel like it's...like.

EMILY: I just think you can gender swap it pretty easily and see how it doesn't work. I mean, when women are, very frequently, victimized not just by a single man, but many men in their lives, they are still fully expected to engage with men.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Throughout – in many ways. To have normal relationships with men and to not be distrusting of men and part of that is part of a patriarchal system. And however you feel about men if you are a victim of them is totally valid, but, like, um, it's just women are not given the same amount of leeway.

SALLY: Yeah, and I just feel like Robert Jordan is using it as an excuse.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: For Rand's rampant misogyny. As opposed to actually discussing the fact – like actually having the fact that he was assaulted be a plotline. It's just, like, it's an excuse.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: For him to – it's just an easy, clear cut excuse for him to be like, "I don't deal with Aes Sedai anymore." Which would be like a valid and interesting thing if it was part of the trauma instead of it just being, like, I just feel like it's not analyzed or extrapolated upon in anyway other than Rand just being like, "Now I hate women one hundred percent for sure."

EMILY: Yeah, I just, like, don't get it. Because at the end of this book you have him being put into a box by Aes Sedai.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: You'd think that that would be, like, the justification enough that Robert Jordan needs to shape Rand's relationship with Aes Sedai. And if you're like, "This has to be a precipitating event for how Rand will react to Aes Sedai for the rest of this book, and that will set up the box thing." That's not true either because, as he references, he just had a letter for Moiraine that was like, "Literally do not trust any Aes Sedai."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Rand has so many psychoses around Moiraine and her death that him reacting to women the way that he does throughout this book is not unbelievable at all if that's the only part of it, you know?

SALLY: Yeah. So it just feels like Robert Jordan was like, "I will pepper this in because."

EMILY: "I will pepper in men being either literally or metaphorically raped and be like [whispers] 'it's no problem.' Just to, like, throw it in there." I don't know.

SALLY: [high pitched screeching]

EMILY: Yeah, we'll keep talking about this.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I'm sure, especially as it continues to influence – I can't even call what happens in *Lord of Chaos* 'the plot.'

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: It's not a plot. The series of words strung together. Um. This has been another –

SALLY: *Thrilling* episode of season six.

EMILY: Thrilling and angry episode of season six. At least we had the sexy *gholam*. Okay, thanks for listening. Thank you to Glynna Mackenzie for our theme song. Thank you for following us on social media. I think Sally's mentioned it already but thank you to anyone who had us on their Spotify wrapped this year [laughs].

SALLY: I'm gonna kiss you! [kissing sounds]

EMILY: She'll kiss you, I guess.

SALLY: No, it's just so nice. I love you guys.

EMILY: It is nice.

SALLY: I can't believe you guys listen to us talk for like an hour every week.

EMILY: Yeah, I mean I can give our very hot takes about the [laughs] *gholam* being a sexy antagonist.

SALLY: You're right. I mean, we are the media empire the world isn't ready for [laughs].

EMILY: Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: Um, this is, like, millennial complaining, but I just feel like people should abolish [laughs] phone calls.

EMILY: Oh. Yeah.

SALLY: Like today I had a series of phone calls with a man I work with. And it was, like, fine and I'm trying to be like, "He's really stressed out." Trying to offer him some, you know, grace. But he was like – he messaged me on G-Chat – is it even called G-Chat anymore? Whatever. Um, and was like, "I need you to call me." And so I called him. And he was like, "I can't talk to you right now." And then he called me back and was like, "I still don't have an answer for you so I'm going to find out." And then called me back and be like, "Okay, this is the answer." And I was like, "This *entire thing* could have been one email at the end of the day."

EMILY: What a nightmare. This is like how yesterday I got out of the shower and I had two missed calls from my mother. And when I called her back I found out it was because she couldn't figure out how to find the Old Navy e-receipt in her inbox. I had to tell her to use the search bar. The search bar! [laughs]

SALLY: And for that record, why is it that moms will be like, "Call me?" And thirty, *thirty* seconds later you will call them and they will not answer the phone [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah, I called her back and she didn't answer. And a minute later she calls me back like, "Oh hi." And I'm like.

SALLY: Explain this! What were you doing!

EMILY: She also today texted me and was like, "I need some stocking stuffer gift ideas." And then she sent me a text that was like a weird series of numbers and letters. Like, it made sense. I have to look at it. It wasn't just, like, hand slamming the keyboard. It was something. And she was like, "Sorry, that wasn't for you." And I was like, "Who?"

BOTH: Who was it for?!

EMILY: It was, like, a cryptic, like, assassination text. Like go to these coordinates and kill the person you find there. It was weird.

SALLY: Alanna's the person you find there to kill.

EMILY: Yeah, I wish she was dead. Okay, thanks for listening everyone. Have a good week! Goodbye!

SALLY: Goodbye!