



Episode 143 – “Traveling Corn on the Cob Salesman”

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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]

EMILY: [singing, mumbling] Nobody likes me, everybody hates me.

SALLY: That's not true. I like Tybalt. Against my better judgement. He's just, like, not a...good animal.

[some bumping noises as Emily adjusts the microphone]

EMILY: He heard us talking about him [laughs].

SALLY: He probably did hear his name.

EMILY: Talking shit!

SALLY: Um, in – we can give him the intelligence test that they give the dog *Hyperbole and a Half*.

EMILY: I read that blog when I was but a teen and gave that test to Otis.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Unsurprisingly did not pass.

SALLY: Yeah, I don't think my mom's dog would pass either. I don't know, Duke is fairly smart. I think he would struggle with the 'get out from under the blanket' one.

EMILY: Yeah, Otis just sort of gave up in that one and was like, "Well, this is how I live now. In the dark. Under this confusing, um, texture and weight." Um, poor Otis, our family dog. Not long for this world, but then again [laughs] he might outlive all of us. He's sort of a – he's sort of enigmatically eternal.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean that's what my family thought about our family cat.

EMILY: Oh, yeah. Daisy.

SALLY: For the last ten years of her life. Like, "Surely this cat will die any day now." She lived to be, like, 22.

EMILY: I've seen Otis, um, only a few times in the last nine months. Whenever I have to stop by my mom's house to pick up something or drop off something Otis will come out. And he's, um, so old.

SALLY: God bless him.

EMILY: And he started shaking quite a bit.

SALLY: Awwww.

EMILY: Kind of in the way old dogs do. We don't think he's in pain or anything. He doesn't have any...

SALLY: Just got some tremors.

EMILY: Doesn't give any indication of that. And he also just might be kind of cold. Um, but he just sort of, um, [laughing] looks and smells like death. It's so sad. We all call the swimming pool that my parents built a few years ago the Otis Lee Memorial Swimming Pool, even though he's not yet dead.

SALLY: It happens.

EMILY: And Adam, my brother, the other day texted the family group chat and was like, “I got a quote on getting Otis bronzed. [laughing] Should be about two thousand dollars.”

SALLY: [laughing] Oh my gosh.

EMILY: So, um, yeah.

SALLY: This is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* podcast. I am Sally.

EMILY: I am Emily. Are we giving up on our last names?

SALLY: I don’t know. I just didn’t add it for some reason.

EMILY: I don’t – I just remember doing a transcript a little while ago and we didn’t say our last names, but I’m, like, I don’t mind. If people don’t know our last names by now then...repeating it shan’t help.

SALLY: Yeah, repeating our last names specifically [laughs] isn’t gonna give anybody –

EMILY: People hear –

SALLY: If they haven’t got it at this point.

EMILY: Juchau and are like, “I don’t know what those sounds mean.”

SALLY: Did you just vomit? What was that?

EMILY: Might as well have. Remember, my father’s name. Chris? Is on thin ice [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, um. I don’t know. I can redo it.

EMILY: We don’t have to talk about the books now, I just, um – we don’t have to talk about the books now, I just wanted to have it so that it’s in. So that in post I can put it wherever I want.

SALLY: Okay, I’m sorry that I’m really bad at doing it.

EMILY: No, you’re not. I am also – was also really bad at doing it. Sometimes I just didn’t do it apparently [laughs].

SALLY: Whatever. Whatever. Um.

EMILY: I’m just conscious of our – doing the transcripts for the last year has made me hyper conscious of our many podcasting foibles, I guess.

SALLY: All – all of them? [laughs]

EMILY: All of them. Soooo.

SALLY: [laughing] Everything we do is a foible.

EMILY: This whole poidcast – poidcast.

SALLY: [in a bad New York accent] This whole poidcast is a foible! [laughing]

EMILY: Stupid.

SALLY: Um. Ummmm.

EMILY: So, *The Wheel of Time*.

SALLY: So, *The Wheel of Time*...

EMILY: Turns and turns and we're still here in Salidar. Just –

SALLY: Somehow.

EMILY: Somehow [laughs].

SALLY: Somehow we are still here.

EMILY: Every chapter that opens on Salidar I'm like, "I feel like I've been here for eternity. Like, I am, like, locked in purgatory, which is Salidar. Specifically in the, you know, summer heat."

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah. And especially with Nynaeve in this particular headspace where she's like, "I have to work on this block that I don't want to work on, and I miss Lan. And Elayne sucks." So she's just, like, an insufferable narrator who is deeply unhappy. And it's just, like, everyone around her is deeply unhappy. Everything is just awful.

EMILY: I don't know why writers hesitate to portray happiness so much. I think it must be easier to write pain and suffering than it is to write humor and joy on some level.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But it is pretty, yeah, sad how just, like....um, depressing it is to be in Salidar right now.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Um, we pick up with Nynaeve, pretty much right where we left off. We've skipped Theodrin's actual lesson, I guess, but we, you know, sort of the middle – in media res find out

that Theodrin dumped a bucket of water on Nynaeve in an attempt to shock her into channeling, and then Nynaeve immediately [laughs] punched Theodrin who punched back.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So now they're both banged up, and are like, "Well, that didn't work." And sort of, Theodrin resorts to more typical means of trying to get Nynaeve to work through her block. Just doing the usual Novice meditation exercises.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Which also does nothing. So Nynaeve returns to her room, they heal each other of their leetle bruises, and finds Elayne there, also miserable and complaining about all the shit she's had to put up with today. And Nynaeve is like, "I think we should leave Caemlyn, and Elayne –" or [laughs], "I think we should leave Salidar. And Elayne's like, "That's stupid." And Nynaeve's like, "I don't think it is, though." And Elayne's like – "Because I overheard what the, what the message is gonna be back to the White Tower. And I think if we stay here any longer they might decide to send *us* to the White Tower as, like, I don't know. Uh, an apology gift? To Elaida."

SALLY: [high-pitched] Sorry.

EMILY: Like whoops. And Elayne's like, "No, we really have to convince them to approach Rand?" Or...I don't.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [stumbles over words, laughs]. The problem with Elayne and Nynaeve in Salidar right now is that it is difficult to parse what their actual motivations are. Usually when I'm reading it, it makes sense. But then in, you know, post, um, it doesn't make sense at all to me. Which, I think, is not a good sign because, you know, plot points should be clear even after you're no longer in them.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Elayne and Nynaeve obviously have no influence in Salidar. They can't convince any of the rebel Aes Sedai here to do anything about Rand one way or another. The embassy has also – from Salidar to Rand – has also been send with Min, so they more or less have someone they trust with the Aes Sedai there and have done all they can do there. Um, so to me it would make a little more sense if they were like, "We have to stay here because we are, you know, initiates in the Tower. Like, we have not been cleared. We're not full Aes Sedai yet."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: "We're still students. And if we break our bonds, quote unquote, with the Aes Sedai then, like, we're not coming back. Then we're outlaws."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But no one ever really brings that up, I guess.

SALLY: Yeah, it's just, like, that never crosses their mind.

EMILY: Yeah, as, like, what I would assume would be the most rational reason for staying. Which is that you need to graduate otherwise you're going to be a dropout for the rest of your life.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Which would be thematically interesting considering that in Book 7 they're going to run up against this group of women who are all White Tower dropouts in one way or another. Um, and have made lives for themselves in interesting and fulfilling ways since then. Anyway, Elayne and Nynaeve's argument, I guess, is cut short when Tarna Feir [like fear], or Fare, however you say her name, uh, just [laughs] sort of slams the door open like the Kool-Aid man.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Is like, "I'm here. They've been trying to hide you from me, but I'm not dumb. I know you're here." And I'm like, "Well someone had to have given you directions to their room."

SALLY: Yeah, did you just burst into every room in this house?

EMILY: "Hello!" And everyone is like, "Exsqueeze me?"

SALLY: "Hello?" [laughs]

EMILY: "Hewwo?"

SALLY: "HEWWO? Who are you?"

EMILY: Um.

SALLY: "I'm naked. And afraid."

EMILY: [laughing] Naked and afraid. But she's like, "Wow Elayne, Elaida would love to have her hands on you." And Elayne's like, [laughing] "That doesn't make me feel better."

SALLY: Yeah. What the hell?

EMILY: And Tarna sends her away so she can talk to Nynaeve, basically about Rand. Also asking questions about Rand.

SALLY: I know. Poor Nynaeve. The fact that she can, like we said, look at Rand.

EMILY: Yeah, Nynaeve does give, uh, parallel but perpendicular sort of, um, they're not instructions, I guess, but whereas with the Aes Sedai in Salidar she said, "When Rand was a child he always listened to reason and you just need to not be aggressive with him." Which is clearly her not so subtle way of being like, "Please don't attack Rand."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: She, to Tarna, is like, "Oh, well he simply can't – couldn't be reasoned with as a child. You had to drag him this way or that." Fully knowing that if anyone, uh, tries to tell Rand to do anything he doesn't want to do. He's going to be like, "Fuck no." Um, so that's just sort of, I guess, circling back to a point I brought up last episode when I said I didn't really know if there was a greater point to what we are hearing from Nynaeve there. Um, but that's it, I think. Tarna's like, "Well that's not very helpful" [laughs or something. Oh, she talks about Nynaeve's block. She uses a lot of, um, interesting language to refer to Nynaeve. Not just calling her Wilder, which I guess is – you know Wilder parentheses derogatory.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: In that popular meme format. Um, but she also refers to her as a 'cripple,' which is not great.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And she's like, "Oh, don't take offense, because I, too, was a Wilder." And Nynaeve's like, "Words still hurt, Tarna" [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, Tarna's like, "I couldn't channel unless my eyes were shut." Or something.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: She's like, "But Galina just beat me until I got over it. Hopefully Theodrin does that to you." And Nynaeve's like, "I mean, I hope not."

SALLY: "I hope she doesn't."

EMILY: "I hope...she doesn't. It would be great if she doesn't."

SALLY: I mean, but isn't that basically what happens to Nynaeve? She almost dies in a river.

EMILY: Yeah, she almost dies in a river. Is the bucket foreshadowing for the river?

SALLY: I guess.

EMILY: Water will eventually do it, Nynaeve. Someone needs to hold your head under water until you almost drown. [sighs]. But [laughs] Tarna leaves and Nynaeve goes looking for Elayne. Just sort of wanders around for a little while looking for her, then eventually comes back to the room just as Elayne is coming back to the room. And, uh, I can't remember if anything happens between them there.

SALLY: No, I mean they just decide – this is when they decide, I think, like if we can find something that we need in *tel'aran'rhiod*, we'll stay. And if we can't find something that we need, we'll leave [laughs].

EMILY: It's a very weird ultimatum. I think their also initial thought is “we need to find something that will convince the Aes Sedai here to support Rand.”

SALLY: Oh yeah, that's what it is. That makes more sense [laughs].

EMILY: Which are – what – what, you know, McGuffin are you gonna find that will convince anyone to support Rand once they've had a good look at him? He's a demon.

SALLY: It's a little piece of paper that says please.

EMILY: Please. I do what I want [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: So they go to *tel'aran'rhiod* and start their little need ritual, which I think we last saw in effect...eh. When? Did they do that last –?

SALLY: I feel like they – I feel like we've seen it before.

EMILY: I feel like Egwene did it and that's how they – that was what lead them to Tarabon, whatever that city is called.

SALLY: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

EMILY: In the first place.

SALLY: Tanchico.

EMILY: Tanchico, yeah, and to the male *a'dam*. I don't remember if Nynaeve and Elayne have themselves done it. Um, but they do it here. It takes them to Tar Valon first and then into the White Tower. Elayne's like, “Egg?”

SALLY: [snorts]

EMILY: But Egg is nowhere to be seen. So she's like, “Ah, it must just be someone who looked like her.” And then they are taken into the storeroom of *angreal*, *s'angreal*, and *ter'angreal*. Um,



I don't know, probably a – probably a more thorough fan than me would know what exactly they're being led to here that would purportedly help the Aes Sedai to support Rand. I don't know what it's – what it is, what the deal is. Um, and they basically are like, "Well, whatever it is we can't physically get to it here, so there's no point." But they decide to try again, this time focusing on a *ter'angreal* that is not in, um, Tar Valon. Which takes them to Ebou Dar, a city with lots of, you know, canals and then immediately into the kind of, uh, the quarter of the Ebou Dar called the Rahad or the Ray-had. I can't remember exactly, but it is essentially for, um, poorer people. It's where the peasantry of the city lives, I guess.

SALLY: Yeah. The slums quote unquote.

EMILY: Yeah. The city slums.

SALLY: The projects.

EMILY: So, they're in the Rahad and they're taken to another storeroom inside a building. They look...they look around in there and eventually come across the Bowl of the Winds. And Elayne with her *ter'angreal* sixth sense is like, "I think this could control the weather, but I couldn't channel enough to, you know, actually make it work." And Nynaeve's like, "Okay, well, we'll have to actually come to Ebou Dar." Or I think Elayne's actually the one who suggested it. And Nynaeve's like, "Yeah, fuck yeah. I'd rather be literally anywhere than Salidar. Let's go to Ebou Dar."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So they're like, "Great, but how are we going to find it?" Go out onto the streets and the Rahad is just, like, a warren. There aren't any street signs anywhere. This is, I think, a pretty, like...transparent means of Robert Jordan making sure they have to spend a lot of time in Ebou Dar without actually getting anything done. I don't love it. I wish...it had happened a different way, because I don't really understand how Nynaeve and Elayne, two perfectly reasonable people, would not be able to, like, pick out some landmarks.

SALLY: Yeah. Like, anything. Like, they talk about the doors being different colors. Count the doors or *something*.

EMILY: Count the doors. Do...I don't know. I guess I haven't been in a city without google maps in a while, so I don't know how easy it would be for me to get lost. Like, there aren't any people around.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: You kind of have...

SALLY: Yeah, I just feel like...like I've – like, when I, when we were in London, I would always turn my Wi-fi off.

EMILY: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SALLY: And so I would take screenshots of Google maps if I ever did happen to get lost, but I managed just fine. Like, I'm not saying that London is apparently like this fantasy city that is impossible to navigate, but it can get pretty confusing, you know?

EMILY: I just, like, wandered in London one day and had no idea where I was, but eventually I came to a landmark.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And from there, I think it would be pretty easy to, like, pick my way back. So all they have to do is find their way to the river and then get back, but they can't do that.

SALLY: They're like, "It's literally impossible! Everything looks the same!" And it's like there's no way that's true, babes.

EMILY: Like, I don't want to spend a whole lot of time putting their navigational skills on blast, but it's, like, it's – it's just so irritating because Robert Jordan does, does these delaying tactics all the time. And it's, like, none of us want to be – given, Book 7 is one of the more interesting books in the series. And a lot of what happens in Ebou Dar is interesting.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But none of us want to be there if we don't *have* to be there.

SALLY: Yeah, but it's, like, there are other things that could have delayed them. Like discovering the Knitting Circle, or whatever it's called, and trying to figure that out. Or, like, I don't know [laughing] the fucking Seanchan invasion, which is actually something that would keep people trapped in a city.

EMILY: Or just like realizing that they don't have the, like, wind power – like Book 7 more or less opens with them negotiating with the Windfinders.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Is that already for them to use the Bowl of the Winds?

SALLY: I can't remember. I think so. I think so.

EMILY: It's like why not put that off for a while? I don't know.

SALLY: Longer...it's just very frustrating, because it's one of those things that it's like your characters are stupid and your readers are stupid and that just feels like that's how Robert Jordan treats everybody sometimes.

EMILY: Yeah. And we're just in the middle of a delaying tactic right now, so it's particularly gratiating – grating, I should say, to be staring down the barrel of another one.

SALLY: Yeah, where it's like you control this universe, Robert.

EMILY: Robert!

SALLY: [laughing] It doesn't have to be this way.

EMILY: You do what you want.

SALLY: But yeah, they find the bowl of the winds. They go back. Nynaeve isn't sleeping because Theodrin told her not to.

EMILY: Yeah, Theodrin was like, "Maybe exhaustion will do the trick." So Nynaeve is supposed to stay up the whole night so she starts pacing and, like, weeping. And again, it's like I'm not loving, you know.

SALLY: Yeah, it sucks that she's, like, so depressed right now. Like, I want her to be happier.

EMILY: Yeah, like, characters, um – I just read, speaking of Megan Whalen Turner, or maybe not [laughs] depending on whether I cut that out of the podcast, but – speaking of that series, *The Queen's Thief*, it's called. I just read a book that had a lot to do with a character losing an arm and then sort of going through a period of recovery and grief.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And, um, just sort of being miserable for a long time and not doing anything. And there's a way to write that sort of extended misery without making it unpalatable to the readers. Uh, but yeah what's going on with Nynaeve right here, because we don't see any way out of it, I think it's hard for us. Whereas, in this series I was just reading, it was kind of like, "Oh, I know what he needs to do. I know what other people need to do to help him."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And with this it's just like there's no negotiating with Nynaeve's misery here, because it's completely inflecting upon her by Robert Jordan's inability to move her characterization forward.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah. Um, but then Nynaeve gets attacked by a stool and a massive bubble of evil – or what Nynaeve and Elayne claim is a bubble of evil and what the Aes Sedai claim is an attack by the Forsaken.

EMILY: Yeah, it obviously makes more sense as a bubble of evil. Elayne is like, "Why would Sammael just send furniture after us?"

SALLY: Yeah, because basically all the furniture, all the objects in all of Salidar are attacking. Like tea kettles and sheets and people are dying strangled by their own dresses. And it's very upsetting. It's like –

EMILY: But it's not, like, a lot of people. And there's no, like, strategic importance to the people who are dying. It's just a matter of chance.

SALLY: [laughing] Okay, Emily.

EMILY: [laughing] I'm just saying, why would Sammael do it?

SALLY: No, I mean from the Aes Sedai perspective it's very dumb to be like – I mean, the Forsaken are deeply incompetent.

EMILY: That's true! You got my there.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Sammael is so stupid that he might just be like, "I don't know maybe it'll –"

SALLY: "Send the furniture after them."

EMILY: "Send the furniture after them, that might panic them." And he's right. They do panic.

SALLY: Um, but Nynaeve and Elayne link with Anaiya? I think?

EMILY: Anaiya comes around, just gathering people, linking up. She's like, "Alright, we're ready for this. Like, this is not a drill. We're just gonna go around channeling." This is Nynaeve's first experience, I think, being in a linked circle.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And she's just like, "Oh my god. I lose all sense of individuality and blah blah blah blah." Um, and this bubble of evil is defeated very easily. They just have to cha – get the stuff to stop either by channeling or physically moving it. Like, touch it, essentially, and it drops. Of course it is very sad that people do die, but I can't imagine it's, um, many people.

SALLY: Yeah. And you're right. It's not, like, [laughs] Elayne dies.

EMILY: It's not like Elayne is brained by a stool.

SALLY: Yeah. It's not like Sammael is like, "Let's kill the future queen of Andor that will be helpful to me."

EMILY: I mean. It would have been hilarious if one of them just died.

SALLY: It would. [laughs] Only Elayne though. Nynaeve I could keep around for a little while.

EMILY: But, no, it's not like we're seeing named characters dead on the streets. They're all, of course, just servants.

SALLY: Yeah, all red shirts.

EMILY: Um, and yeah, Anaiya's just like, "This is definitely an attack by the Forsaken." And Nynaeve and Elayne are like, "No, it's not. It's a bubble of evil. We've seen one in tear." Which, they manifestly did not see. They just heard about. So they're quote unquote experience with it is a little...

SALLY: Exaggerated.

EMILY: Exaggerated. But they're like surely – they understand what it is very quickly for people who have only experienced it once. Which I think is interesting.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: I also think the bubbles of evil are, um, usually quite...interesting. Just in, like, they're like a fun random effect sort of thing going on in an otherwise stagnant series. But they are also transparently a way of upping the ante when things are pretty slow. So.

SALLY: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Oh, Nynaeve's miserable? I'll throw a stool at her. Maybe that will increase the reader's interest in what is going on.

SALLY: Maybe that will knock it out of her.

EMILY: Maybe that will make everyone happier.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: It won't!

SALLY: I mean, getting hit with a stool wouldn't make me happier.

EMILY: No, she's still so sad. And Anaiya's like, "Go back to sleep." And Nynaeve's like, "Fine, I will. I hurt. My hurts from –"

SALLY: Yeah, I got HIT BY A STOOL!

EMILY: Bleh!

SALLY: Oh, Tybalt, was that a garbage truck?

EMILY: Oh, Tybalt [laughing] your eyes are so big. There's also a scene in the middle here where we cut to Egg, who is in *tel'aran'rhiod* against Wise One orders. Um, and is um, also fleeing from Elayne and Nynaeve because she can't risk being seen by them, I guess?

SALLY: Yeah, I – it's weird.

EMILY: On the off chance that they'll report to the Wise Ones.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, although, as she says they can keep a secret. I think she just doesn't want to be seen as, like, wrongdoing.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: You know, mischief making.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Uh, but she is like, "I've just been going to the White Tower and looking for any sign of what Elaida and Alviarin are up to." But she also is like, "I can't go into their offices." So I'm not sure what she's been doing exactly.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: To gather intel. Um, and she's also like, "I've been seeing strangers around *tel'aran'rhiod*." Such as, we know, Leanne and Siuan, but Egg clearly doesn't recognize them. Is like, "Maybe they're Black Ajah." And it's just like communication problems aren't a fun plot, Robert!

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But she goes to this space in *tel'aran'rhiod* where you can just kind of look at people's dreams. She's like, "Oh Bair is sleeping. Rand is sleeping. I don't know where Rand is. Maybe in Caemlyn, maybe in Tear. It's weird that he can hop around. His dreams are warded. Blah blah blah blah blah."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And, um, she's there when she is not even – she doesn't, like, go to Gawyn's dream. It comes to her. I think the assumption we're supposed to make is that when a dream involves, you know, a person it would sort of, law of physics, be attracted to them.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But it is also just a way of getting Egg into this weird dream in which Gawyn has to rescue her from Rand and then take her out into the hills and lay her on a blanket and confess his love to her. And then fade to black [laughing] but I assume it's a sex dream.

SALLY: Yeah. Um, there – I have so many problems with this scene.

EMILY: Yeah. Go off! Go off!

SALLY: [laughs] Obviously. But I also feel like if I was gonna – I feel like I say this with every sex scene – but I could, like, take this scene and just, like, distill all of the problems with *Wheel of Time*'s sexual politics. Because it starts off and Egg finds herself *chained* to some sort of pillar and she's, like, furious. She's like, "How dare Gawyn keep me chained up." Like, there's kind of this implication that, like, oh what a weird pervert. What is happening in his dreams? Then all the sudden, when she realizes that he's – that she's chained up by someone else and he's rescuing her from another man, it immediately [snaps fingers] becomes like a romantic context. Like, the switch is flipped so fast. Um, no matter that Egg is still tied up. [laughs] No matter that she's still being held captive by a man. Like, the situation becomes romantic so fast. And it's just, like, yeah. Like, rather than Gawyn having this – I mean, it could have been interesting if it was like, "Gawyn is into bondage."

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: And Egg is like, "Oh, let's kind of explore this!" Could have been totally fine but there's this – it's played off as a humorous joke at the beginning, the way sex is so much in *Wheel of Time*. Just her being like, "Why *the fuck* does he have me chained up? This is ridiculous." But then rather than it being something like we are entering this sexual...[laughs] arena as equals who both have agency, it can only be romantic in Egg's mind – it's either, like, girlboss energy I'm mad at him for chaining me up, or isn't it so romantic that he's rescuing me? Like, there's no ground for it to just be, like, this is Gawyn and I occupying a space together.

EMILY: Yeah. I – [laughs].

SALLY: What did I – [laughs] what?

EMILY: Just this whole thing. There's so many layers. Okay, okay. First of all, Gawyn's fantasy, his dream, is a fantasy. He doesn't have any control over it. Um, because this is literature it does invoke a certain amount of this is what Gawyn is really like and we are learning about Gawyn here and the way that he views women, the way that he views romantic partners in particular. It is still – there are like – there's consent being broken repeatedly on both sides here.

SALLY: Yes. Yes. Yes. Yes.

EMILY: Gawyn undoubtedly would not want Egwene herself present in his dream of her.

SALLY: Of course!

EMILY: That would be *mortifying*.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I mean, even he were just, like, a normal lad and was having a normal sex dream the way people have sex dreams where it's like weird dreams! Oh, but also sex? [laughs]

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah, like, yeah.

EMILY: Where there's not, like, a narrative sequence.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

EMILY: Either way, he would just be like, "Ugh, fuck now. I don't –" You don't ever want anyone seeing into your deepest thoughts and dreams and fantasies. That's horrifying.

SALLY: Very invasive.

EMILY: But then it's like the dream grabbed Egwene and she has no choice in the matter and the whole time she is struggling knowing that she shouldn't be in this dream and trying to get out, but it simply will not let her go.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And that itself is romanticized.

SALLY: Yeah. She's just like can't – can't help but falling further into this dream.

EMILY: Ugh, oh my god. Um, and so the whole thing is nasty. It is sexual politics in *Wheel of Time* yes, magnified to a thousand.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Where neither party really wants to be here.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: But because they are, like, play acting these gender roles it is inherently romanticized and sexualized.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It's just, like, as long as people are – in Robert Jordan's, like, weird world as long as people are playing the prescribed roles given to their genders, everyone is having good sex.

SALLY: Yeah.



EMILY: And that is not necessarily [laughs].

SALLY: [laughing] Not true at all!

EMILY: Not the case!

SALLY: Um, yeah. It, yeah. Like, there's so much to be said about Gawyn. Like the fact that his sex dream starts with rescuing Egg from another man.

EMILY: Yes. That it's Rand.

SALLY: Specifically Rand.

EMILY: Who, he didn't even view Rand as an enemy until earlier in this book when one single person [laughing] spread the rumor.

SALLY: One single, like, traveling, like, corn on the cob salesman [laughing] or whatever he is.

EMILY: [laughing]

SALLY: Was like, "Hey I heard – "

EMILY: He like opens his coat.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Do want some CORN?!

SALLY: [laughing] Cannot remember what that man is doing.

EMILY: I don't know.

SALLY: He's like, "Hey, I hear the Dragon Reborn killed your mom." And Gawyn [laughing] is like, "One hundred percent indisputable fact."

EMILY: Oh, yeah. That was fact checked.

SALLY: [laughing] In his coat made of corn.

EMILY: [laughs] Like, this man walks in, is like, in the tweet format, "Your mother is dead, this tweet is disputed by actual sources." And Gawyn is like, "Oh, oh Rand? He killed my mom? He killed my mom? Okay, he's my nemesis. He is the supervillain; I am the superhero." He doesn't even know you fucking exist, Gawyn.

SALLY: Yeah. Rand is like, "Who? Gary?"

EMILY: Rand's like, "*What?* I don't even – Okay, whatever."

SALLY: Yeah. So, there's just so much going on here. Gawyn is... [laughing] the worst character ever written? Possibly? I don't know. This scene is just, like, like Emily is right. It's very invasive for him to have his dreams invaded by Egg as a conscious party in his unconscious dreams, but just, like, woof it is – yeah. And just, like, the fact that he takes her out of this, like, palace into these, like, the hills are alive with the sound of music hills. And, like, lays her down his cloak. It is, like, so ugh.

EMILY: And, like, the dream warping of it all. The fact that Egg is more beautiful than she feels she really is in real life. The fact that Gawyn is less handsome than he really is, because that's how he views himself. And I'm like, "But why though? In your dreams though wouldn't you make yourself as hot as possible?"

SALLY: [laughs] Be like, "Yeah I'm a *hunk*."

EMILY: Um, which, again, is another, like, gender stereotype, I think. Men want to be the ordinary guy, the good guy who nevertheless get the girl. Gawyn is [laughs] enacting incredible violence against Egwene's childhood friend in front of her and the transition from that to, uh, romantic confessions and presumably sex is, like, zero to one hundred but Egwene's comfort with that is never in question.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Like, at one point Rand's decapitated head is, like, looking up at her and she's like, "Ew." And it just, like, disappears because it's a dream and Gawyn can sanitize his dreams.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: When reality is not that way. But it's like projecting his future, I guess – his future beliefs that he should just be able to do whatever he wants and as long as it is in Egg's best interests as he perceives them then she is just, you know, a passive participant.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: To be rescued, to be confessed to, to be fucked. Whatever.

SALLY: Yeah. It's back to those gender roles. One person is active and one person is passive, and the actor must be the man and the.... passive one [laughs] must be the woman.

EMILY: Yeah, which is why we get into such weird territory with Mat and Tylin in the next book where these people are not actively portraying the correct gender roles. Which, in Robert Jordan's world, um, makes, makes it so that they're walking a line. And the line is either kinky on one side or rape on the other side and apparently it's up for interpretation.

SALLY: Yeah. It's not.

EMILY: I mean, it's not.

SALLY: But yeah, there's parts of that that is played as joke, because they're not prescribing to those gender roles.

EMILY: Yeah. Because Tylin is the pursuer.

SALLY: Yeah. The actor.

EMILY: Um.

SALLY: Quote unquote. *Barf*.

EMILY: Yeah, and the whole Gawyn giving a love confession that's very flowery, but disingenuous. Followed by a more real, genuine love confession that gets Egg to say I love you back. That, again, is you know, toxic male fantasy wherein I don't actually need to be Cyrano de Bergerac, with the best words of all time. I can just bear my soul and women will respond the way I want to.

SALLY: Mm-hmm. Even if my soul is some weird shit about my brother and how he loves, but he's a Whitecloak now.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: And obviously she likes him and blah blah blah blah but will you still have sex with me? And Egg's like, "Yeah, sure."

EMILY: This scene just as the foundation – not quite the foundation, because Egg has had her own dreams about Gawyn – um, but the fact that their physical, real world relationship is literally built on a dream foundation is so troubling. And [sighs] out of whack, I mean.

SALLY: Yeah, like, so upsetting on so many different levels. And it's also just, like, like that's the male fantasy, right? That you can have a fantasy about a woman in which she behaves the way you want to, and then you can bring that down into reality. That's what is happening with Gawyn here.

EMILY: That he doesn't actually have to, you know, do anything other than enact what he saw in his own fantasy.

SALLY: Yeah, and then Egg is just going to respond, you know. Because it's, like, he doesn't have to do any of the work of being like, "How are we engaging in this relationship? What does this relationship look like? What do you need from me?" He is just like, "Yes, I can save Egg and be some type of protector figure and then we'll just start making out every morning for like two hours or whatever is happening?"

EMILY: Yeah, and she'll go along with it.

SALLY: Yeah, which [laughs] she does.

EMILY: And reader, she does.

SALLY: For some reason! Like, ugh. It's so frustrating. It's giving me a headache [laughs].

EMILY: I know.

SALLY: Ugh. I hate him. I hate *him*. I hate him. I hate him. I hate him. I hate him. I hate him.

EMILY: Gawyn or Robert Jordan.

SALLY: ...where's the line, you know?

EMILY: Because for me it's both, you know? Yeah!

[both laugh]

EMILY: Really, with Gawyn you're like, "Ugh." You know, it's one thing for a writer to consciously come up with a villain or a compellingly evil or morally gray character. Or even just a compellingly, like, um, I don't know how to say it. Um, even a character who is unlikeable.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean, in another reality Gawyn could be a compelling fuckboy character.

EMILY: Yeah, if there was any sort of consciousness or attempts to interrogate the function that Gawyn is serving than I would have, like, I can't emphasize this enough, I would have zero issues with him. We take all our anger out on Gawyn for being this construct of Robert Jordan's, who Robert Jordan seems to have been entirely, um, like on board with. Like, it's like Robert Jordan didn't see the problems.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Hundred percent couldn't say it better. Took the words right out of my mouth.

EMILY: [sighs]

SALLY: So, um.

EMILY: It's nice to see Egg is alive, since she's been convalescing for months, apparently.

SALLY: Yeah, it's unfortunate it has to come out this way.

EMILY: Yeah, her entire – well, the first half of her role in this book is unfortunate to say the least.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Uh, that's that. *Lord of Chaos* is all bad.

SALLY: Have we said that enough?

EMILY: Have we said that enough? Have we made it known? Do you have anything else to add?

SALLY: No.

EMILY: Okay.

SALLY: I added everything I could add. Ow. I just poked myself in the eye.

EMILY: [laughs] I've said all I want to say.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, thank you for listening. Thank you to Glynna Mackenzie for our theme song. Thank you to our supporters on Patreon. If I ended up cutting that section out, our apologies if your graffitied book is delayed. We are working on those, but if you are, um, at all upset by how long the delay has been, but we are certainly willing to talk to you about other benefits that you might receive, other than those.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They just take us a while because they're each personalized and, especially in the pandemic, it's difficult for us to get to the post office. Follow us on Twitter, on Tumblr, on Instagram. Uh, some programming notes. This episode is coming out on December 21<sup>st</sup>, I believe.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So, you should not expect a twitch livestream this week.

SALLY: [laughs] As Friday is Christmas!

EMILY: Friday is Christmas and I don't – I doubt either of us will be home.

SALLY: No.

EMILY: We are not violating any CDC recommended rules. We are both interacting with people who have also been quarantining for two weeks. We ourselves are in lockdown. So we're all safe here in this household. Um.

SALLY: Except for Tybalt.

EMILY: Except for Tybalt.

SALLY: Who I might throw out the window [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah. He's on the edge. Um, you should also not expect an episode next week. Are we taking a recording bye week next week?

SALLY: Yeah, sure. Why not?

EMILY: Um, next week, the week between Christmas and New Year's, next Monday, we'll be off. But, then we'll be back in the new year, 2021, on with *Lord of Chaos*. Dun dun. Um, also in 2021, Sally's blogs about *Path of Daggers* will start up on Patreon, which is exciting. For now, we've got, like, a latent stretch where we are enjoying the holidays.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean. I don't know if my *Path of Daggers* blogs are exciting, because *Path of Daggers*, much like this book, is full of suffering.

EMILY: You have an eyelash. Close your eyes.

SALLY: Okay.

EMILY: Okay [laughs]. I got it.

SALLY: Sorry.

EMILY: [laughing] It's okay. I just was doing a transcript where you had a hair on your nose or something.

SALLY: [laughs] Emily just has to keep my face clean and beautiful.

EMILY: I'm just looking at her face while she talks.

SALLY: But *Path of Daggers* is full of suffering.

EMILY: That's true.

SALLY: So join me for that, I guess.

EMILY: Yeah, if you are really enjoying us just being miserable.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Like Nynaeve is miserable, then, yeah. Keep going. Read those blogs.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, that's all our programming notes as far as I'm aware. Actually, no. Next – the last week of December, that, you know, weird space between December and January, you can expect, if you are on the correct Patreon tier, an edition of In An Hour Or Less.

SALLY: Yeah, also, um, if you are, um, a follower of our side project a new Letter to Hozier should have come...

EMILY: This weekend.

SALLY: Yeah, some...

EMILY: The weekend prior.

SALLY: Sunday. So, yesterday for you. If you're listening when this drops.

EMILY: So go check that out.

SALLY: So there's a lot of EHR stuff going on. Um, so however you get your fill, we love you.

EMILY: Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: Oh my god yesterday Tybalt did rip a hole in his carrot toy and there was catnip literally over our main floor.

EMILY: I was brushing my teeth and all heard was Sally's hysterical laughter and then the vacuum.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: It was troubling.

SALLY: What has she done?!

EMILY: I was like, "Ooh."

SALLY: But, no, he ripped a hole in his little catnip filled carrot and he went *apeshit*. Because that was more catnip than he'd ever had in his entire life. His eyes were the size of the moon [laughs], and he was so silly. And he got so angry when I took the carrot away from him.

EMILY: Oh Tybalt.

SALLY: Because he just wanted the *drugs*.

EMILY: Tybalt, did you get some drugs? Another yawn.

[both laugh]

EMILY: Alright, have a good week everyone. Bye.

SALLY: [laughing] Bye!