



Episode 175: Sharks and Vagrants

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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.

[a low-quality version of 'Danny Boy' plays with a lot of static]

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Oh my god.

EMILY: [singing] Oh, Danny Boy!"

[The sound of Velcro]

EMILY: We're here to commemorate the passing of Gary James Paulsen, author of *Hatchet*.

SALLY: *Hatchet*.

EMILY: *Hatchet*. Who, uh, died this last week as we're recording, at the age of 82. Lived to be a good old, good old age.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, on October 13th. So, if you're a – if you, uh, are entering this podcast having not listened to the first season or so.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: First of all, good choice.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Second of all, you probably don't know that we spent quite a lot of time talking about *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: I don't really know why. It's just one of those things.

SALLY: Yeah, I truly...um, have not listened to – I mean, I have not listened to the first season of our podcast since I, like, did transcripts for it, so, uh, I cannot remember how *Hatchet* came up. Uh, but quick summary of our relationship to *Hatchet*, I was deeply traumatized, um, by *Hatchet* by Gary Paulsen. Specifically, the scene on the beach where Brian gets violent diarrhea.

EMILY: Oh yeah. Yeah.

SALLY: Um, then Emily mentioned the scene where he has to swim out to the airplane and the pilot – the dead pilot is still in there.

EMILY: Yeah, I think about that all the time.

SALLY: Um –

EMILY: It probably came up because Perrin fights with an axe.

SALLY: Oh yeah.

EMILY: And is, like, a wilderness boy.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: I don't really know. Um, it's a very – it's a *wild* book. I read it all in one night when I was – I was older than the usual age that one reads *Hatchet*. It was because my brother, my little brother, was reading it. And I just saw it lying around and I picked it up, and then got sucked in.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean –

EMILY: By that minx Gary Paulsen.

SALLY: [laughs] That saucy little minx, Gary Paulsen.

EMILY: With his tales of wilderness survival.

SALLY: Yeah. I mean, there is a certain, uh, *je ne sais quoi* about *Hatchet*, you know?

EMILY: Yeah, it's very important to, uh, the realm of children's and teenager's fiction.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Particularly, I think it – I mean, I'm sure it has a lot to do with starting the survival genre and making that applicable for children. It's pretty wild, though.

SALLY: It is super wild. And then in a later season Emily recounted the details of all the sequels for us.

EMILY: Yeah, I read through the entire *Hatchet* extended universe on Wikipedia. *Wiki-pay-dia*. And it was *pretty* wild. Like, Brian just spends a whole, a whole year or something chasing a bear. I don't remember now. It was pretty wild.

SALLY: The bear is his enemy. When the bear could be his friend.

EMILY: Speaking of reading from Wikipedia.

SALLY: Oh yeah. Here we go.

EMILY: This is just verbatim from Wikipedia¹, but this is about – I Wikipedia'd Gary Paulsen because I was like, "I don't know anything about his son of a bitch, you know? What was? What was his life like? Did he get stranded in the wilderness and only have a *Hatchet* to survive?" Who's to say?

SALLY: [laughing] *Hatchet* is autobiographical.

EMILY: [clears throat] Okay, so he "was born on May 17, 1939, in Minneapolis to Oscar Paulsen and Eunice Paulsen."

SALLY: Eunice!

EMILY: "He wrote some fragmented autobiographical works describing his early life." It says their names, "such as *Eastern Sun, Winter Moon: An Autobiographical Odyssey*. The book,

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gary_Paulsen

which is written in the first person, begins when he was seven, living in Chicago with his mother. Paulsen described several traumatic occurrences that transpired during the three years that are chronicled by the book.” From seven to ten and he wrote a whole book about it.

SALLY: Yeah, damn.

EMILY: “For example, one day while his mother was napping, Gary sneaked outside to play. There was a vagrant –There a vagrant snatched him and apparently attempted to molest him, but his mother suddenly appeared on the scene and beat the man to death. Paulsen reported his mother’s many adulterous affairs in the book, suggesting that the man he called father was not really his biological father. He also discussed his mother’s alcoholism. He told how she would bring him to a bar and had him sing for his supper, even though she had an income from her work in an ammunition factory, and he felt there was no need for this.”

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: AHHH! “When World War II ended, Gary’s father sent for him and his mother to come join him in the Philippines, where he was stationed. A great part of the book is dedicated to the voyage by naval vessels to the Philippines. During the trip, Gary witnessed a plane crash. He, his mother, and the people who were also being transported on this ship,” parentheses *yacht*, “looked on as many of the airplane’s passengers were killed or maimed by the sharks that would follow the ship consuming waste. His mother, the only woman aboard, helped the ships corpsman care for the surviving victims. After arriving in Hawaii, according to Paulsen, his mother began an affair with the corpsman.” Um, that’s the first two paragraphs.

SALLY: ...What the ever-living fuck?

EMILY: [laughs] Uh, then there’s another book. “Bits and pieces of Gary’s adolescence can be cobbled together in *Guts: The True Stories Behind Hatchet and the Brian Books*. In that book, Paulsen discusses how he survived between the ages of twelve and fourteen back in Minnesota. He barely mentions his parents except to say that they were too busy being drunk to stock the refrigerator. He worked several jobs during this time, including setting pins at a bowling alley, delivering newspapers, and working as a farmhand. He bought his own school supplies and a .22 caliber single-shot rifle, which he used to hunt for sustenance. Eventually, he gave up the rifle and manufactured his own bow and arrows, which he used to hunt deer.” That’s all just in the early life portion of his Wikipedia summary.

SALLY: Um!

EMILY: There’s a lot going on there.

SALLY: That’s a lot to unpack.

EMILY: Oh! He bred and trained sled dogs. That’s nice.

SALLY: That’s very cool, Gary. Damn. Um.

EMILY: I am proud of him for, um, overcoming what appears to have been a very tumultuous childhood.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: To become a successful author and apparently dog breeder and trainer. And whatever else his hobbies were.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But also, what the fuck, man?

SALLY: Yeah. Gary. Gary.

EMILY: Gary. Was anyone born in the 1930s okay?

SALLY: Uh, I think no. At least in the States we can say no.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Everyone I've met who was born in 1930 has –

EMILY: Some wild tales.

SALLY: Some wild shit. It was kind of just, uh, a brutal wasteland here, apparently.

EMILY: That context does, you know, sort of bring *Hatchet*, as a work, into stark relief.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I'm like, "Oh. Oh. Yeah, of course that man would think this was an appropriate book for children and write it accordingly."

SALLY: Yeah. And he was like, "Kids need to know!"

EMILY: "Kids need to know how to fucking survive in the wilderness, because their alcoholic parents might...lose interest in them or whatever."

SALLY: Be too drunk to stock the fridge!

EMILY: Yeah! You might have to hunt for your own sustenance.

SALLY: Yeah, freaking Katniss Everdeen out here.

EMILY: Oh, man. Gary. Gary.

SALLY: Gary...may you truly rest in peace.

EMILY: Truly!! May you rest in peace! Doing whatever your version of heaven is. Which, I hope if it's, like, hunting, it's not, like, you know, the deer who have gone to heaven. Because that would actually be hell. But I don't feel like deer should be able to go to hell. Because they're innocent. So, I hope it's, like, robot deer.

SALLY: Yeah. Gosh, this is giving me, like, a religious crisis.

EMILY: An existential crisis? I know. What do the hunters do in heaven?

SALLY: 'What do the hunters do in heaven' is a great title for a book. No one steal it, I'm keeping it [laughs].

EMILY: [laughing] TM! TM! TM! TM!

SALLY: TM! TM! TM! TM! [laughs]. And I will dedicate it to Gary James Paulsen.

EMILY: To Gary Paulsen, may you be hunt – may you hunt forever in the halls Valhalla, or whatever.

SALLY: Oh, there we go. Maybe he can go to, like, Viking heaven. I'm sure they figured that out centuries ago.

EMILY: Yeah, they probably did.

SALLY: How to keep it, you know, sympatico with the animals.

EMILY: Maybe like once a year [laughing] the animals get to hunt the humans.

SALLY: [laughs] The most dangerous game! Uno reverse card! [laughs]

EMILY: Duh dun. Duh dun.

SALLY: Suddenly the deer have shotguns.

EMILY: Wow. And opposable thumbs. Are you gonna take a shot of rum for Gary?

SALLY: Yeah, I just didn't know when.

EMILY: I don't either.

SALLY: Would be the appropriate time.

EMILY: I feel like we've memorialized him, so.

SALLY: Uh, so we – the only alcohol we ever have in the house is Malibu Coconut Rum, because it is the only alcohol that I like. Typically mixed with copious amounts of Diet Coke, but here we have what I think is the equivalent to a shot.

EMILY: It seems like a lot. Yeah, we don't have a shot glass, so Sally is drinking this out of a fancy wine glass.

SALLY: Yeah, I sto – I mean, when I say “stole” from the glassblowing studio, they were going to throw them in the dumpster.

EMILY: Yeah, that's not stealing.

SALLY: So, I salvaged.

EMILY: That's scavenging.

SALLY: Um, so I feel like the shape of the glass is making it look like more alcohol than it is.

EMILY: It sure doesn't look like water, you know?

SALLY: Yeah. Gotta twirl it a little bit [laughs]. The way they say –

EMILY: Oh, is that true

SALLY: [laughing] I don't know. Anyway, Gary, here's to you. Um, though *Hatchet* is a, a complicated part of my childhood, I do...seem to think about it a lot. So, you had a lasting impact on us and thanks for all the sled dogs. RIP. Okay, guys, here we go.

EMILY: Wow! You downed that!

SALLY: UGH.

EMILY: [laughing]

SALLY: That's what you're supposed to do. You're supposed to shoot it. Ugh.

EMILY: [laughing]

SALLY: Also, I do not think coconut rum – ugh [laughing].

EMILY: You've got your Diet Coke! Drink it!

SALLY: I do not think coconut rum is meant for shooting! Ugh, you guys.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughing] UGH!

EMILY: Disgusted, just like Gary Paulsen did to us with his books.

SALLY: UGH. Well, if Gary can survive his childhood among the sharks, I guess I can survive that.

EMILY: The sharks! And the vagrants!

SALLY: The vagrants. [laughing] And his mother beating people to death in front of him. Although, if that happened to my kid, I too would probably beat someone to death. So.

EMILY: Yeah, seriously. But, like, wow. What the fuck? Gary Paulsen's demise corresponds with my dog Otis' –

SALLY: Oh, that's right. Let's transition. That can also be a shot for Otis.

EMILY: Yeah, sorry. That was a shot for Otis Lee Juchau. My family had an elaborate funeral for Otis, which we talked about in the last episode we released, as Sally's signoff. And I just wanted all you guys to know that it did happen. It was about as elaborate as we referenced in the episode. Um, uhuhhhh. The first – I mean, we were all going to wear black, but on the day of my dad texted the group chat and was like, "Does anyone have a black fedora?"

SALLY: Chris.

EMILY: [sighs] So that was just sort of the level of drama we were all bringing to it. We had several people back out of musical numbers, because they were afraid that it wasn't actually a joke, you know?

SALLY: Oh! They were like, "Uhhh."

EMILY: Yeah, my family – my family. Okay. Otis. I loved Otis. Otis was not a good dog, but I loved the hell out of him.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: As one does with, you know, your family dog. The rest of my family had a complicated relationship with Otis [laughs], because he just constantly made messes, yapped at people. He was awful. Um, so the idea of holding a funeral for him, is like slightly cathartic, but mostly it's just, like, a funny bit that my family was doing. The way my family kind of commits to bits.

SALLY: Yeah! I feel like the way people – if I didn't know your family, if I hadn't known your family for almost six years, I would be like, "I don't really get the vibe here."

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: But it's very Juchau family to be like, "We're going to do this extended funny thing and that gives us a reason to all get together and just make goofs." You know?

EMILY: Yeah, it was just a – it was just goofs.

SALLY: Yeah, but I could see how someone might be like, "They're holding a funeral, a formal – a formal dress in black funeral for their dog."

EMILY: Yes, in the rain outside.

SALLY: In the rain. I think I probably should not sing Enya, or whatever [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah. Like, Collins, my brother-in-law, who's only been married into the family for four years? Five years? Was going to play Celine Dion's "My Heart Will Go On" on the recorder, but he was like, "I don't – I feel like this isn't actually a joke."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And Sarah, my sister, was like, "It is, though. You have to believe it is." And he was like, "I'm worried you guys will be mad at me" [laughs]. No, it is legitimately a joke.

SALLY: Yeah, it's for laughs.

EMILY: So that happened with several people. Um, I mean, there was some heart behind it, but it was mostly just funny. 'kay. Oh, [laughs] we forgot to introduce ourselves.

SALLY: Surprise!

EMILY: This is Everybody Hates Rand. It is a friendly neighborhood Wheely Time podcast. We just got a little sidetracked this time. Um, I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: And I am Sally Goodger.

EMILY: [mumbling] I'm Sally Goodger [laughs]. I mean it was one shot, but [laughing].

SALLY: I am not drunk. I just might puke [laughs].

EMILY: Gross. This is our second time recording this for undisclosed audio issues, so hopefully – we always say this. Hopefully we'll keep it short, but then we go for 30 minutes. But, in the spirit of keeping it short, I will run through a pretty quick summation of the chapters and then we can discuss anything that really stands out to us.

SALLY: Okay.

EMILY: So, these chapters are from Elayne and Nynaeve's point of view. First Elayne, then Nynaeve's, and then we get a little brief interlude from...

SALLY: Reanne.

EMILY: Who?

SALLY: Right? Reanne.

EMILY: Oh yeah, Reanne. Who is one of the Kin. Elayne and Nynaeve go to the inn where Mat is staying to do what Birgitte told them to and apologize to Mat. They also have chosen some concessions to offer him, in exchange for his cooperation in helping to find the Bowl of the Winds. This is mostly motivated by Elayne's desire to please Avienhda, so these are hardly selfless motives. But they go to Mat, who is very hungover in his room, and very, very unhappy. They talk to him and tell him that, along with all these things, they want him to move into the Tarasin Palace. Uh, which causes the dice to stop rolling in his head and he is like, "Ugh." He does not want to, but, uh, they pretty much, you know, twist his arm into doing it.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: As soon as they leave, they're confronted by Setalle Anan, the innkeeper, who accuses them of being, you know, just, like, big sluts who are faking being Aes Sedai in exchange for the favors of a man. Which, I don't really know maybe it's different in Ebou Dar, but mostly Aes Sedai make men stay away.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Maybe she thinks it's, like, elaborate costuming, you know? The way some sex workers will dress up for role play purposes.

SALLY: Oh yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah [laughs].

EMILY: Which is really funny. Like, they're wearing slutty nurse outfits or whatever.

SALLY: [laughs] Slutty Aes Sedai outfits.

EMILY: I mean, they are. Elayne and Nynaeve canonically wear very slutty dresses, which good for them, I say. But.

SALLY: Yeah. Just the idea of someone having, like, an Aes Sedai fetish is so funny.

EMILY: I know. Can you imagine?

SALLY: There's just some man –

EMILY: I imagine it's just Warders.

[pause]

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: I think you are correct. This is why Lan and Nynaeve get married.

EMILY: I'm a man with a debilitating Aes Sedai fetish, so I have to become a Warder. A death machine. It's part of the fantasy.

SALLY: Eww. God.

EMILY: Yeah, gross.

SALLY: The Warder bond is enough to make anyone just pass out. Pass away.

EMILY: Anyway, Elayne finds this nonsensical. She also suspects, based on what Setalle Anan says of Aes Sedai and the White Tower, that Setalle Anan has herself been to the White Tower. And she thinks, "Ah, well. This is kind of a sad woman who wanted to be able to channel but couldn't. She's just interfering." She's ready to leave, but Nynaeve picks up on the fact that Setalle Anan is offering to bring them to other women "like them." As in other women who can channel.

SALLY: Other sluts.

EMILY: Other sluts. Um, but who are sort of hidden away. And Nynaeve, uh, thinks that these women might be able to lead them to the Bowl of the Winds rather than Mat, because Nynaeve doesn't want anything to do with Mat for reasons that are incomprehensible. Um, so she plays along and gets Elayne to play along, at least long enough for Setalle Anan to take them through the city to the headquarters of the Kin where they met a few, um, women including Reanne, who seems to essentially be in charge.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, and these women question Nynaeve and Elayne as to whether they've been in the Tower and conclude that at least one of them certainly has been in the Tower, could have coached the other one. But what they want to do is send Nynaeve and Elayne to some sort of farm to, I don't know, learn how to not be so slutty and bad.

SALLY: Yeah, rehabilitation camp.

EMILY: Yeah, rehab – yeah. For naughty teens or whatever.

SALLY: Wilderness camp.

EMILY: Wilderness survival camp. That's what the farm is. Um, Nynaeve keeps trying to question them about the Bowl of the Winds, but they are ignoring her. And so, eventually Elayne snaps, like we're not getting anything out of this so we should just leave. Uh, so they do leave, still insisting that they are, in fact, Aes Sedai. Reanne, we go to her point of view and see that she has some misgivings about this whole situation, but not enough to really do anything about it.

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

EMILY: Then, as Nynaeve and Elayne make their way back through, um, the city, Elayne starts thinking about how weird it is that, um, all of these women who can channel in pretty big quantities, with pretty high levels of power, uh seem to be in their middle ages. In their middle ages [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] In their – in the Medieval times.

EMILY: Seem to be middle aged or older, which, to look at all – to get gray in one's hair as an Aes Sedai, the way Cadsuane has, is to indicate that one is hundreds of years old.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: This is the first somehow Nynaeve is hearing about the slowing effect of channeling. And this one of the first times we, as readers, are hearing that divorced entirely from the Aes Sedai face. You know, the ageless face that Aes Sedai women get. And that sort of contrast will eventually lead us to the idea that the ageless face comes from using the Oath Road but channeling itself does lead people to age more slowly.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Anyway, Elayne's pretty mind boggled by that. Nynaeve's really upset by it, because she's always been treated as a woman who's 8 or 10 years younger than she is, and now suddenly she has answers for it. But as they're standing there arguing about this and Nynaeve is becoming distracted by a dress, essentially. Dresses in the window. Uh, they are attacked. Elayne gets a blunt arrow to the head, knocking her out. Nynaeve also gets, like, nicked, so she's a little loopy, but manages to channel their way out of the situation. Presumably these are Darkfriends sent by Carridin and his ilk to kidnap them, but they get out of it. Um, and sort of end the chapter admitting to themselves they really do need Mat's help. So, that's what happened in those chapters.

SALLY: Yes. Good summary.

EMILY: Thanks. Uh, the pretty big topics of discussion are the relationship between Mat and Elayne and Nynaeve, which we've talked about before, uh, on various levels. Um, how Nynaeve and Elayne are presented by Robert Jordan in these scenes and how that reflects the general misogyny that is found in *Wheel of Time*, coming from Robert Jordan as he writes his female characters. Um, and the emergence of the Kin as a new faction of people for us to deal with.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: So, uhhhhhhhhh, all of it's bad. Let's just say that right off the bat.

SALLY: That's correct. All of it.

EMILY: Even the Kin. As much as I love a good worldbuilding, you know, sort of weird culty group, the Kin are more or less entirely unnecessary.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: While it's interesting to learn that – because a lot of these women we learn, either from Reanne's point of view or, I don't know, assumptions that Nynaeve and Elayne make, a lot of these women are in Ebou Dar, part of this group, because they did something like failed out of the test to become Accepted.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, they got too scared to continue. And we remember from Nynaeve and Egwene's testing that, like, you can quit, but you'll get put out of the Tower. So that's sort of always been an open question, like, what happens to those women?

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: But that is one of the open questions in fantasy that doesn't necessarily need to be answered.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And the fact that Robert Jordan chooses to spend his time answering it, rather than sticking with the more relevant thematic things that he's already got going on, is sort of proof that he has no control.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Self or otherwise over this narrative.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: It's, like, you're on Book 7, buddy, and you're still choosing to expand rather than narrow your focus?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: That is a troubling sign in a series that is already – you know, we are already struggling to keep plot points straight.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah, I agree. Like, the Kin are really interesting and if there weren't – if it wasn't already so unwieldy, I'd be like, "Yeah. Mid-way through the series is a pretty interesting way to introduce this." But if we didn't also already have the Sea Folk and the Seanchan and the Aiel and, uh – I

EMILY: *Two* factions of Aes Sedai.

SALLY: Two factions of Aes Sedai, uh, all the folks in Emond's Field, Rand's group of Asha'man, Mazrim Taim's group of Asha'man.

EMILY: Ugh.

SALLY: Like there's so many.

EMILY: Logain's group of Asha'man.

SALLY: [laughs] Logain's group of Asha'man. The Forsaken. Like, there's so many groups to keep track of that are relevant to the plot in some way or another. So, it's like why would you add them in, especially because so far where I've read up to, and I know I'm only right at the end of Book 9, but it doesn't feel like the Kin are playing any significant role that couldn't be played by other Aes Sedai or other Sea Folk women.

EMILY: Yeah, they don't that I can recall. They are sort of brought in by Nynaeve and Elayne to help with the Bowl of the Winds thing, but it's a little bit frustrating that this isn't something they can't manage with between themselves, some of *the most powerful* women channelers we are told over and over again. And the Sea Folk, who also have some really powerful women channelers.

SALLY: Yeah! It's very, very bizarre. Um, the whole Bowl of the Winds sequence in Book 8 is batshit crazy, anyway.

EMILY: It takes a full fourth of the book –

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: To get our group of many, many, many women channelers – Elayne, Nynaeve, and Aviendha, all of the Aes Sedai in the palace, all of the Sea Folk women who agree to this, all of the Kin – to get from point A in the Tarasin Palace to point B on the, you know, rehabilitation farm. Where we then are introduced to even more –

SALLY: Even more women.

EMILY: And there's a captive Black Ajah woman in tow. Um, and then it takes us even longer for everything to get in order for them to use the Bowl of the Winds. Which they do and then immediately Ebou Dar is attacked by Seanchan so they have to flee, sort of.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: In a rush.

SALLY: Yeah. It also is, like, very frustrating because this is one of those things where it's like they can't go – they just can't go back to Egg because of Nicola and her dumb blackmailing plot.

EMILY: And because Elayne and Nynaeve are so freaked out by the bad deal they made with the Sea Folk they feel like they can't face Egg. But those are both stupid reasons.

SALLY: Those are both bad reasons that don't need to exist in the plot at all. Um, and it feels a little bit like Robert Jordan wrote himself into a corner there and was, like, they just can't reunite with Egg and use all of the powerful channelers there to do the Bowl of the Winds, because of these few plot points that I introduced that don't seem to really go a ton of places.

EMILY: I also feel like the Bowl of the Winds could have been an interesting opportunity, um, to, uh, introduce the concept of women and men channelers working together.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: We do get that at the end of the book you're in.

SALLY: Yep.

EMILY: With the cleansing of *saidin*, where we have a lot of men and women channelers working together and it's very fulfilling there.

SALLY: Yeah, I'm excited.

EMILY: But I would like to see it in a microcosm with the Bowl of the Winds. Or, you know, taking place with a separate group of characters.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I would really just be delighted at this point for any of our characters to turn to each other when they have problems that need solving.

SALLY: Yeah. Instead of constantly reaching outside to new groups of people. The Kin, these random Sea Folk.

EMILY: Yeah, I know this isn't a traditional fellowship, but you guys have enough people in your immediate circle of people who you trust that – who are really fucking powerful.

SALLY: Yeah! Like, even if Nynaeve and Elayne were like, “Okay, we’ll take the Bowl of the Winds to Rand in Cairhien. There’s a fuck ton of Aes Sedai over there that we could use. All of whom are powerful enough.” Like it’s just, like, I don’t know – I know we’re positing a lot of things. I don’t know if they’d be, like, logistically possible with the Seanchan invasion happening but you can *licherally* teleport, so.

EMILY: Yeah, which is. I mean, why don’t they *licherally* teleport to the farm? Why don’t they *licherally* teleport from the farm to Caemlyn?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Why don’t they *licherally* teleport fucking anywhere?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Guys, I – I mean. You make me so mad, Robert Jordan. That you introduce teleporting and then still manage to give us ages long travel sequences. What the hell?

SALLY: The one from Ebou Dar to Caemlyn in Book 8 is, like, particularly painful for me.

EMILY: It’s brutal.

SALLY: Um, because again it’s just this group of, like, *three hundred* women or something insane, just being annoying. Um, so I agree. The Kin are really interesting, but I also feel that they’re interesting in Ebou Dar, but once they’re taken out of that setting they become way less interesting. Because they just then are really quick to fold into the, um, structure of the White Tower. Like, very quickly these women who have been channeling for years are very happy to be put back in, you know, novice white dresses or whatever. They’re really excited about the opportunity to go back into the White Tower and you don’t really see any of the Kin pushing back against that.

EMILY: Yeah, it’s another opportunity for Robert Jordan to infantilize women en masse. Another thing that would be really interesting about the Kin is if you had them remain in Ebou Dar during the Seanchan invasion and put up any sort of unified resistance.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: While women channel – while channelers – women channelers especially are particular victims of the Seanchan, none of the cities that the Seanchan have invaded have this coordinated and large a group of women channelers. And it would be really interesting if they had fair warning, you know, and, you know, if they learned a few tips and tricks from Elayne and Nynaeve about disguising themselves, disguising the ability to channel, whatever, whatever. Then it would be really interesting to have this guerilla magical warfare.

SALLY: Hell yeah!

EMILY: Which Mat could then engage with.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: When he's stuck in there. I don't know, man. I can think of so many better ways to write this series, and it's so frustrating when you can see, spread out before you, all the many paths that could have been taken. And Robert Jordan stuck with the most boring one.

SALLY: Yeah. No, it is really frustrating. And the Kin just become this sort of, like, knot in the plot that you then have to work around.

EMILY: Yeah, just this unwieldy...

SALLY: Yeah. Because truly we already – not to beat a dead horse – but we already have such an unwieldy number of Aes Sedai to then add in this number of Kin women and then all these Sea Folk women that then get folded in as well. There are simply too many channelers and I cannot keep track of them.

EMILY: Yep.

SALLY: And I don't understand why there is such a large volume of them that are named. Like, it's just really strange to me. Um, so anyway that's what's going on with the Kin. They are, like many things in the series, they have a lot of potential that they don't really fulfill or get to fulfill.

EMILY: Speaking of wasted potential, here's Elayne and Nynaeve.

SALLY: God they truly are, like, the epitome of failure to launch, you know?

EMILY: Yeah, yeah.

SALLY: [laughs] Just, like, what are you doing?

EMILY: Can't get anything done because they are unwilling to seek help from a man. Which is definitely what Robert Jordan wants us to be thinking about. How women need to accept help from men more and do it more gracefully and kindly et cetera, et cetera.

SALLY: Yeah. Just don't put up so much of a fuss.

EMILY: And women just need to be more meek and mild. And we're saying all this with some sarcasm, but obviously Elayne and Nynaeve are incredibly unpleasant to read about in these scenes.

SALLY: No, yeah. It's one of those frustrating things that it's like you can see what Robert Jordan is sort of – the underlying thing here is they are being simply unreasonable because they have such weird gender loyalty is a term Emily used a lot last – when we first recorded.

EMILY: Yeah, we'd much rather accept help from women than from a man, even if we don't know the women at all, but we know Mat quite well.

SALLY: Yeah, like Nynaeve literally grew up with him. Whatever. Yeah, so you can see that underlying message that is coming across. That it is like just accept help from men. It's almost like this was written circa the 90s, 2000s, like the budding feminist movement –

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Is actually full of shit. You need to be less self-sufficient and accept more help from men. And be a little more pleasant when you do it, because all this like feminist energy is really difficult to swallow.

EMILY: Yeah, don't be a feminazi, come on.

SALLY: [gagging noises] Which is, like, so frustrating to read about, because, again in these scenes Nynaeve and Elayne are performing just such incompetence. Both in their interactions with Mat, it's like they've never spoken to another person at all, ever.

EMILY: It's like they have never had to be accountable for themselves before.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Nynaeve is a woman in her late 20s – [clears throat] excuse me. Nynaeve is a woman in her late 20s, these are both word travelers, Elayne has been raised to be a politician. Although, given politicians aren't exactly great at taking account of themselves.

SALLY: Accountability, yeah.

EMILY: But supposedly she's been raised by a good politician.

SALLY: All evidence to the contrary.

EMILY: Which should lead to some decent communication skills. And it's just, there's none of that as soon as Nynaeve and Elayne come up against an inconvenient man.

SALLY: [pause] Yeah. It's so – it's so frustrating. Like, they literally burst– they just walk into Mat's room because he doesn't answer the door, because he is hungover.

EMILY: Just breaking and entering.

SALLY: They're just walking into his room and they're like, "We, um, you will listen to us apologize to you even if this might be an inconvenient time for you."

EMILY: They're sadistically gleeful to find him in pain.

SALLY: Yeah, yeah. Which we had a – I can't remember exactly, but some comment about how Nynaeve is like, "He deserves this for all his depravity."

EMILY: Yeah, they moralize over him.

SALLY: Yes. Uh, claiming the moral high ground when they have absolutely no ground to stand on when it comes to ethics, these two women.

EMILY: Nope [pops lips].

SALLY: But it's like, the whole scene is so unpleasant to read, because Nynaeve is basically spitting things out with her teeth clenched. Like, Elayne is having to pull this apology from her. And Elayne herself is giving what is obviously a very practiced speech and it's intercut with her inner monologue about Rand. How she's, like, so annoyed with him and how somehow it's Rand's fault that she's having to do this.

EMILY: It's Rand's fault because she only knows Aviendha through Rand.

SALLY: That's what it is, yeah.

EMILY: And Aviendha's the one who's motivating Elayne to do this. But, again, there's gender loyalty there. Elayne would rather blame Rand than Aviendha.

SALLY: Yeah, even though Aviendha's the one who's like, "You've been a shitty person. Mat saved you from a very scary situation and you simply refuse to thank him or acknowledge him and you've treated him really badly." All of stuff which is, yes, it comes a lot from Aviendha's honor code, you know?

EMILY: Which, Elayne, you should not feel obligated to follow.

SALLY: You should not feel obligated to follow anyway. But she's like, "My friend is basically being like 'I will think so much less of you unless you do this,'" which I think is an interesting situation to be put in. Like, I've had situations where it's like, "Oh, I have behaved in a way that's disappointed someone that's really important to me. That makes me question, you know, the way I've been moving through the world." But instead of Elayne being like, "Maybe this is on me." She's like, "I'm literally only doing this for Aviendha." There's no actual apology in there, really.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: So it's just, like, clunky and miserable and then when she's like, "Thank you so much for saving us." Mat, being a normal person, is like, "Yeah, it was no big deal. You guys are really competent. You probably would have gotten out of the Stone of Tear without me." And this pisses Elayne off *so much*.

EMILY: And Nynaeve. She literally almost kills Mat.

SALLY: Yeah. And it's like what else did you want him to say?

EMILY: Did you want him to lord it over you?

SALLY: Yeah. That's just the super polite thing to do. Accepting apologies can be just as awkward as giving them, you know? Especially when you're Mat who's just like, "Blegh!"

EMILY: [laughs] Hungover.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs]. I hate when people –

EMILY: I hate when people acknowledge my heroics.

SALLY: Yeah and you also feel like shit and it's also like eight in the morning, like, the sun has barely risen. It's probably like six in the morning. So he just says the normal, polite thing and they're like, "Wow, Mat is such a piece of shit. I can't believe he's not more willing to be like, 'thank you so much for apologizing to me.'" It's just, like, they're so shitty about the whole thing. Sorry, I'm on my little soapbox.

EMILY: No, you're fine. So, Robert Jordan's portrayal of Elayne and Nynaeve as these incompetent, immature people, which I feel like we've repeated variations of this over the last three books – but, that portrayal is itself misogynist, because it represents a pattern rather than a specific character.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: If you had a character who, whatever gender, was immature and incompetent, great. But this is something that Robert Jordan does to each of his female characters, much more than he does to his male characters. It just happens to be particularly egregious with Elayne and Nynaeve for whatever reason.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, um, no. Obviously *The Wheel of Time* is not a feminist text.

SALLY: Yeah, it's just, like, it's so hard to talk about, because it's just simply absurd. Like, it also just doesn't make any sense. Like, um, like the only thing that makes any form of sense, I guess, is that they have this image of Mat as some type of womanizer and they're like, "Ugh, that's so offensive," but they don't seem to have any proof for this.

EMILY: They just see him flirting with women. Nynaeve at one point accuses Mat of not wanting to go into – not to his face, thank god, but um, she accuses him of not wanting to go into the palace – or, I guess this is Elayne's inner monologue.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Because surely outside of the palace, he has plenty of opportunities to grope and flirt with women, regardless of whether they are willing or not is the implication. And gamble and drink and do all sorts of things that Elayne deems to be inappropriate behavior. Which, according to her, would never happen in the Tarasin Palace because Tylin wouldn't want that sort of behavior in her presence. And of course there's an underlying irony there. Mat himself is the victim of unwanted advances by Tylin herself. Elayne's worldview is not accurate. Her character judgement is not accurate, but these are not things that Elayne ever learns from or grows from. And, I think, as we've talked about, this entire arc with Mat's relationship with Elayne and Nynaeve would work and would be rewarding and cathartic if Elayne and Nynaeve didn't abandon him in Book 8.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Because, over the course of this book, Elayne does come to respect Mat, um, and to value him as a person and as a free agent. But then that sort of goes out the window when they judge Mat to be a, uh, small enough sacrifice to make in order to use the Bowl of the Winds and to get the Bowl of the Winds away from the Seanchan. [clears throat, sighs] Which is tough in fantasy which is a genre that is frequently motivated by people's loyalty to each other.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Fantasy...there are certain genres of fantasy that don't do this. *Game of Thrones* is one of them. *Game of Thrones* has a lot of backstabbing and a lot of people who aren't necessarily friends. And that makes *Game of Thrones* entertaining, but, um, some of the most enjoyable moments in *Game of Thrones* – at least for me – was when people who actually liked each other got to be with each other. It's so great when the Stark Siblings reunite in the last few seasons of the show. That's beautiful and cathartic.

SALLY: Yeah! Just, like, I don't – I've been struggling with this a lot while reading the latter half of the series is it's just like...it, Robert Jordan, it's nice when people care about each other. And it – not just Robert Jordan, I feel like authors in general want to pull a lot of their conflict from conflict between people, which I get. It's –

EMILY: Hard to have coworkers.

SALLY: God, isn't it. It, like, having relationships is difficult and there's a lot of conflict that just generally happens when you are living around, with, in proximity to other human beings with their own free will and thoughts and opinions. But also, like...yeah. People do care about each other and it's nice to read about. Like, there's a reason it's, like, you know, so amazing that Sam decides to go with Frodo when he goes into Mordor, you know?

EMILY: Yeah, woof.

SALLY: Or when the fellowship all reunites at the end. It's like fuck yeah! It's so good to see people who like each other.

EMILY: Oh, man. Or when Aragorn and Gimli and Legolas go after Merry and Pippin?

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Boy. Let's hunt some orc.

SALLY: Let's hunt some orc!

EMILY: AHHHH!

SALLY: And they're like, "Yeah, we're gonna go – we're gonna go into this dangerous thing for our friends, because we love our friends!" And it's just very frustrating because it feels like everyone in *Wheel of Time* constantly turns away from relationships rather than towards them.

EMILY: Yeah, I suspect some of Robert Jordan's thesis here is that this is supposed to be about a group of imperfect people saving the world, if only they can get along long enough to do it. But that's, um, in, in execution that thesis isn't as poignant as I think he wants it to be. It is great when people start working together a little bit more. Towards the last battle. But we are still sort of operating on the same dividing lines that we have always been throughout the series. So there's no real tangible growth for us to visit. And I think it's frustrating to, yeah, rely on conflict coming from between other people and to sort of make your world about 'we have to resolve these conflicts between people before we can face the forces of darkness' or whatever. When everyone in this book has personal, internal struggles that they also need to deal with.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And that are totally fine for us to focus on. Also, not overly, Perrin. Axe versus –

SALLY: Oh, axe versus hammer.

EMILY: Yeah. The series is just too long. There series is just too long.

SALLY: Too long. Yeah.

EMILY: Woof.

SALLY: Like, not to hype up *Lord of the Rings*, because it's not perfect, but, like, a group of imperfect people getting together to save the world that is, you know, the Fellowship of the Ring.

EMILY: It's every fellowship.

SALLY: And it's, you know, like Boromir makes some shit choices, but in the end he turns back towards his friends.

EMILY: Yes. Ugh! Beautiful. Save Merry and Pippin.

SALLY: [laughing] The other day –

EMILY: Stop! I'll cry. What?

SALLY: The other day my friend Lauren sent me this text that was like, um, it was something basically like if you replaced Boromir in the Fellowship, the person was like, "I would never treat Frodo like this." Um, and I said something and Lauren was like, "If I got shot with arrows I would simply live" [laughs]. She was like, "I would not die in front of Merry and Pippin. I refuse to."

EMILY: I know, poor Merry and Pippin. Traumatized.

SALLY: [laughs] I know. She was like, "I would simply never die in front of them." Anyway, it was just really funny. My friend Lauren is the funniest person I know.

EMILY: That's amazing. She is so funny.

SALLY: I would simply live.

EMILY: I would simply live.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Um, that's pretty much all I want to say about those two chapters.

SALLY: Yeah, I know. I feel like I had some more insights last week, but –

EMILY: I feel like we've pretty much got it down.

SALLY: Robert Jordan loves to just be a broken record, repeating the same things over and over again, so I'm sure we'll circle back to them at some point.

EMILY: Um, next – uh, the next sequence, uh, is going to be hopping around a little bit. We will visit, um, Moghedien as she sort of gets assimilated back into the Forsaken, generally. We go over to Morgase, who is still with the Whitecloaks and while I don't believe we read about sexual assault directly, there are pretty direct references to that happening. So trigger warning for next week. And then we're hopping over to Perrin as he and his coterie leave Cairhien and end up in the Midwest of this continent, where he will be for the rest of time. So, if you are – if that's your favorite arc in the series, I'm so happy for you. It's starting next week.

SALLY: Someone I hope will be happy because it certainly won't be me.

EMILY: Like 10 people out there are like, "Fucking love Perrin – Perrin's wilderness journey."

SALLY: Yeah I fucking love Perrin in the empty field of dreams that is Kansas or whatever.

EMILY: [shuddering noises] If you build it, they will come.

SALLY: [laughs] If you build it, they will come. By ‘they’ we mean the Shaido. They’re coming for you. Run.

EMILY: Oh boy are they coming. RUN!

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: So, that’s what’s on the docket. Thanks for listening! Thank you to Wiki Commons for that rendition of “Danny Boy” which opened the podcast.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Thanks to our patrons on Patreon, our followers on social media. We’re sorry we did not have an episode last week. The schedule got a little bit busy. I was out of town for a wedding for a few days.

SALLY: Um, yeah, but yeah. Thank you to everyone who follows us, who shops on our Bookshop. Um, and all that. All that stuff.

EMILY: Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: I feel like this whole episode was a sign off.

EMILY: This whole episode was a sign off. RIP Gary Paulsen.

SALLY: And RIP Otis.

EMILY: [singing] Oh Danny boy! The pipes, the *pipes*, are calling!

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: [laughing] Goodbye!

SALLY: Bye!