



Episode 187: Know the Snow ... Biblically

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

Emily: Our title is a joke and is meant to be taken as such. "Everybody," in this context, refers to us and our cats. You are free to feel however you want about Rand. He's a fictional character. Please don't DM us.

(theme song by Glynna MacKenzie plays)

Emily: This has been such a mixed bag – (laugh) of a cold open.

Sally: Somewhere in there, something good.

Emily: There's a real – real, uh, roller coaster. This is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: Um. (clears throat)

Sally: Before we start ...

Emily: ... Okay?

Sally: Several people have asked us to address the fact that we are skipping –

Emily: Aww.

Sally: Path of Daggers.

Emily: Aww, dang.

Sally: So as much as Emily would love to continue her joke indefinitely – (laugh)

Emily: It's a good joke. (laugh) Sorry if you don't get it, my new-age humor.

Sally: (laugh) She's a comedian, you guys.

Emily: I'm a comedian, and if you don't get it, then that's too bad.

Sally: Um, so I will try to address this in, like, thirty seconds or less. Yes, we are, for the time being, skipping Path of – skipping Path of Daggers. We felt like we needed a kind of, like, mental reset as we go into the second half of the series, which is infamously known for being

kind of a slog, so we decided that Path of Daggers – there really isn't a whole lot that happens in that book, so if we were going to lessen the load, Path of Daggers was a good one to skip. And it was very funny to skip Path of Daggers without any comment, so.

Emily: Yeah. So. Yeah, you nailed it.

Sally: Thank you.

Emily: Uh, people have asked if we were skipping it because Mat isn't in it; that was a contributing factor –

Sally: (laugh) That was a contributing factor.

Emily: But it is perfectly aligned with the main factor, which is that Path of Daggers, we're not missing much –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: By skipping it.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: And Mat is obviously, like, a comic relief character and a lot of what is good to talk about in the series –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: I know we are, like, Mat stans or whatever – we won't be, uh, as much in the later half of the series –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's not as good. Um, but, like, it sometimes – especially when we are talking as much as we are about the problems that this book series has –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We don't like feeling like we have a ton of negative energy.

Sally: No.

Emily: Um, and so Mat is, like, a bright spot sometimes, where we can talk about fun, funny things that happen –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, yeah, the fact that he's not in a book is like, okay, well, there's really not gonna be any highs in this book.

Sally: Yeah. And, like, I remember when I was blogging about Path of Daggers every week, I would be like, sorry this one was such a downer, guys. Like, I just feel like I didn't have anything good to say about the book. It is mostly just, like –

Emily: Sorry for that noise. That was Tybalt walking right in front of the microphone.

Sally: Oh, yeah, his – his little tail just thumped it a little bit. So yeah, we just would be a very, like, critic – criticism-heavy season and not a lot of highlights. So yeah, we're just leaving it. And maybe we'll come back to it, or maybe we won't. So.

Emily: But for now we're skipping it, and I think we feel like if there was anything important that happened in Path of Daggers, then it will come up by necessity –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As we are talking about the squeakquels.

Sally: Yes. I can think of, like, literally off the top of my head, just three events. Cleansing of the Bowl of the Winds, Egg gets war powers, Rand fights the Seanchan.

Emily: Yeah, and then there's the whole Asha'man betrayal thing at the end, I guess.

Sally: Oh, yeah. (laugh) See, I already forgot about –

Emily: And then Faile gets kidnapped. Which, by the way, I want to clarify something because I was graffitiing a copy of Path of Daggers, um, this week. Uh, I don't believe anyone has told Perrin yet that the Seanchan –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: And Masema are meeting. What happened was that Faile and, uh, her – her party of women – or maybe just Faile, I don't know – received word –

Sally: Mm. Mm.

Emily: As they were out hunting –

Sally: Okay.

Emily: I think, like, two of her gals, you know –

Sally: Her spies, yeah.

Emily: Lacile and Arrela came up to tell her that and that's why they were with them.

Sally: Okay. That makes sense.

Emily: So Faile is aware of it. Presumably Berelain is also aware of it but has not yet told Perrin because, to be honest, she probably knew that he would not care –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: At this, uh, time. But hopefully he will find that out soon.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Uh, but for now, we're with Faile.

Sally: Hmm. And, Lord, I wish we weren't.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: 'Scuse me. Yeah, it's, um – it's, um, a downer. Um, so ... I, like, the entire time, reading it, was like, What am I gonna talk about?

Sally: Yeah, I was like –

Emily: What is there to talk about? Uh, here's what happens in the plot. We catch up with Faile as, uh – there's a sort of montage quality to what's going on for the first little bit, uh, as she and the other women with whom she was kidnapped are taken, uh, in an unknown direction, presumably toward the greater Shaido force, which Faile at first estimates to be in the low hundreds because she assumes that it would be very difficult for a much larger group to pass unnoticed. Uh, she's not reckoning on the fact that Sammael opened gateways to a bunch of, you know, random spots throughout the countryside. However, that did happen at least a few weeks ago?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So it is a little bit weird that –

Sally: Yeah, nobody's seen them and accounted for them?

Emily: Yeah, that the Shaido are all meeting up into this more conglomerate group, again, without really noticing. Especially because, although the Aiel are supposed to be, um, like, masters of camouflage and whatnot and moving about unnoticed, even in large groups, like, Faile and others specifically note that the Aiel are not adapted to snow. The cold winter.

Sally: Yeah, they're not even wearing, like, white camouflage. Like –

Emily: Yeah, they're still in their desert –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Camo.

Sally: And also, like, it reads – it reaches a saturation point where you just, like, can no longer hide that many bodies.

Emily: Yeah. Like, what?

Sally: Like, if you're traveling with forty thousand people or whatever, someone's going to notice.

Emily: I understand your random Amadician peasant is a little bit distracted by the Seanchan invasion –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: From the south, uh, west and Masema's whole thing – (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. Amadicia's really going through it.

Emily: Up in the north, but you would still, like, notice if a thousand random Aiel passed by outside. You'd be like, "Huh."

Sally: "Wow."

Emily: "Well, that's a new development."

Sally: Yeah, and, I mean, this was, like –

Emily: "As if this couldn't get worse."

Sally: Yeah, and, I mean, gossip is, like, the hottest commodity there is in –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, feudal, pre-technological societies. Pre-technological – there was no time before technology, but, like –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: You know. Before, like, phones and shit.

Emily: Before smartphones. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) So if I was just the local Amadician peasant being like, you know what would be hilarious? Going down to the local bar and being like, "Guess what I saw today."

Emily: Guess what – you guys, guess what? All nineteen of my cousins were kidnapped by the Shaido Aiel." Presumably that's the only explanation, is that everyone –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Who sees the Aiel is immediately kidnapped by them.

Sally: Sevanna is like, "I'm taking them. No witnesses."

Emily: Oh – yeah, no witnesses.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Taken," featuring Sevanna, but it's, like, a reverse Taken. Slap down –

Sally: She's taking everybody.

Emily: Slap down the Uno reverse card.

Sally: Instead of saving your daughter she's taking everyone in sight.

Emily: Yeah, that's what Liam Neeson should've done, turn the tables on the kidnappers. I'm kidnapping you.

Sally: Start kidnapping the kidnappers? (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. Putting them all in a warehouse. "Now what? Now what will you do?"

Sally: (laugh) "Now what are you going to do?"

Emily: "Not so fun, is it?" (laugh)

Sally: "Maybe next time, you invite Pam." (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) "Maybe next time, you invite Pam." Maybe next time, you invite Liam.

Sally: Yeah, maybe Liam Neeson wanted to get taken.

Emily: What's his character's –

Sally: I don't –

Emily: I mean, he doesn't have a character, like when Nicolas Cage is in movies.

Sally: It's just Nicolas Cage.

Emily: Yeah. Liam Neeson. Okay. Back – back to plot. (laugh) Um, Faile was kidnapped with Alliandre, Maighdin, uh, Bain and Chiad, and her two members of Cha Faile –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Um, Lacile and Arrela. Um, all of these – they have been kidnapped by a mixture of, um, Maidens and what is called the siswai d'aman, which are the guys who heard the big news about the Aiel, you know, way back in book four, and were like, "Peace out," and started wearing their red headbands things. They're basically, uh, social outcasts in a weird way –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But also we don't get a lot of Aiel points of view on the matter, so –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It remains a topic of some confusion, at least for me. Um, but these people, uh, have kidnapped them, taken off all their clothes in the form of gai'shain, um, and are just, like, trekking them through the snow. Faile is immediately concerned – Faile is very pragmatic in this sequence.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which does make her, at least for me, a little bit more refreshing to read. I enjoy characters who are problem-solving.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, even when they cannot solve the problem.

Sally: Yeah, at least she's, like, acting in some way –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Even if that's just making plans.

Emily: Yeah. She's thinking, she's very focused on survival –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: From the get-go. Um, and on her people's survival, insofar as that is in her power.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Uh, so she's worried about freezing. She is a northern gal, you know, Canadian in those terms, so she knows how dangerous snow can be, um, and she's worried about frostbite, her fingers and toes and face getting affected by that, and also, you know, just keeling over from hypothermia.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So she is doing her best to, like, tense her muscles –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As she walks, you know, to, like, keep blood, uh, flowing. Uh, eventually, though, their feet start bleeding because they are walking barefoot –

Sally: (whisper) In the snow.

Emily: In the snow, which is – you know, snow freezes over the top and gets icy.

Sally: Yeah, it – ooh.

Emily: At which point, when people – when the Aiel, I guess, realize that their feet are bleeding or, uh, are being too slowed down by them to continue, they just pick them up and keep moving.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: Um. Faile again tries to stay awake but eventually passes out from cold and exhaustion, uh, but wakes up, like, on blankets with the rest of them being fed some, like, tea by another gai'shain, who is Aiel. Um, and who is like, "Yeah, they dishonored you. They showed that you're weak by having to carry you." And Faile's like, "Um, we –" I mean, Faile's not like this, but I'm like, buddy, they should be dead.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don't know how to tell you this. They should be dead.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: You can't walk through the snow – or be carried – in cold weather that is, um, cold enough for snow for what seems to have been upwards of twelve hours –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Naked –

Sally: Naked.

Emily: And not die.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That's exposure. It's called exposure.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: I –

Sally: I've read that story, that Jack London story about the man in the snow.

Emily: Oh, yeah, the guy with – who's trying to light the matches at the very end.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: And he's all bundled up.

Sally: I've read it, it's terrifying. So I'm an expert, having read one Jack London story. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: So I can solidly say that all these women should be dead.

Emily: Yeah, I mean, I – we're – we're not scientists, and neither of us has any particular experience in uber-cold weather.

Sally: No.

Emily: Utah doesn't often drop below freezing or even below ten degrees. But it does drop to those much lower temperatures, and I can't really –

Sally: It's, like – yeah. It's just one of – like, not to, like, hash out reality of this fantasy story –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But it's one of these things that's like, it starts to lean into the – little bit of the, like, uh, racism we talked about with the Aiel, where they're just, like –

Emily: Oh, I can't wait to talk about the racism. (laugh) I've got some thoughts.

Sally: Where they are just inhuman to the point of being unaffected by such mortal things as exposure to the cold and exhaustion.



Emily: Yeah. Like, the Aiel live in a desert which gets very cold at night, so on some level they are better suited than – I don't know about most people –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They shouldn't be better suited than Saldaeans –

Sally: No.

Emily: Who do live in the extreme north – but they theoretically can cope with some amount of cold.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But snow is a whole different –

Sally: Yeah, snow and ice and freezing temperatures –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Are different than just cold.

Emily: Yeah, snow fucks you up, because now you're wet –

Sally: Yep.

Emily: As well as cold.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: So – I'm just – I – yeah, I don't want to be, like, Gary Paulsen over here, you should be dead, but you should be dead.

Sally: You should be dead. That's another one of – that's another one of my credentials. I have also read Hatchet.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: (laugh) It's just –

Emily: Does it get cold in Hatchet?

Sally: Um, I don't – I – probably, like, a little bit, but I don't think it happens in the winter. I think it happens in the summer.

Emily: Yeah. And he manages to – escape –

Sally: Escape before the winter. It's just one of those frustrating things about, um – I think in the fantasy genre in general, there tends to maybe be a little, like, cherry-picking of what reality you will pay attention to and what reality you won't.

Emily: Yeah, and it's –

Sally: Which is fine –

Emily: It's sort of all fiction, you know –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Does that. Um.

Sally: That's fair. Yeah. I mean, fiction is fiction.

Emily: Yeah, the author gets to choose –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Whether his characters live or die.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But it does become a little bit ridiculous that, I don't know, they haven't suffered – I – I – I guess I could believe that they, um, live, but I don't really believe that they would live without severe problems.

Sally: Yeah. Frostbite.

Emily: Yeah, losing some digits, losing the nose –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Something like that. Also – this is just, like, a little nitpicky pet peeve, but you know Robert Jordan is a dude writing this because the hair – long hair would be such a constant problem in this scenario.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Robert Jordan never notes that the women, you know, have hair ties to tie their hair back; hair is another thing that gets wet and freezes.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: So they would be slapping – you'd be slapping your hair out of the way, you'd be constantly managing your hair. I just – was bothering me, I guess.

Sally: No, and what I was trying – gonna say when I was talking about, like, cherry picking is it just gets a little old in books, I think especially like this, where it's like, we have to absolutely be, um, loyal to, like, the verisimilitude of battle or fighting or –

Emily: Yeah, human meat grinder.

Sally: Yeah. Ugh. (gagging noise) But yet, we'll have women just, like, very delicately naked in the snow.

Emily: I have a theory on this –

Sally: Survive without being, quote unquote, maimed by it.

Emily: Yes. I have a theory, but we'll get to it –

Sally: Okay.

Emily: After I finish the plot.

Sally: Okay. Sorry, sorry, sorry, keep going. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) No, no, no, no, no, it's fine. Um, so they're resting. Faile can see over the crest of a hill what she describes as an endless river of people.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: More on this later. (laugh) But this seems to be, as we are told, seven out of fifty-something septs of the Shaido Aiel that have come together and are now moving in tandem. Somehow, miraculously, we are still with the group of Wise Ones, which include Sevanna and Galina. So yes, don't tell me that Faile and the rest of them get Healed; Healing can't fix frozen digits falling off, which they should've had.

Sally: Well, yeah, and also, like, they – whatever. Continue.

Emily: Um, as they're sitting there, recuperating, uh, Therava, Someryn – who's just another Wise One – and Galina come up. Another nitpicky thing: it takes Faile a while to make note of Galina's Aes Sedai ring, to mark her as Aes Sedai. Aes Sedai always have the ageless face.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Galina has used the Oath Rod, so she should have the ageless face. I don't know why we just threw that out the window as soon as, uh, Robert Jordan didn't like it or forgot. Um, Therava is immediately an imposing figure. She's like, "Who the fuck are these people?" Um, Alliandre gets up and is like, "I'm a queen." (falsetto) "I'm a queen! And you have not only me but my liege lady."

Sally: Oh, I know. If I was Faile, I'd be, like –

Emily: And Faile's like, "I'm gonna throttle this bitch." Like – (laugh)

Sally: Smack, smack.

Emily: Haven't you heard – haven't you heard about survival mechanisms?

Sally: And Alliandre's like, "I – no. What?"

Emily: Make yourself as unnoticeable as possible.

Sally: Yeah. Don't start –

Emily: I mean, I do lose a little bit of patience with Faile's lack of empathy for some of the other people she's with –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, I understand it, but it is a little bit frustrating. Um. Alliandre has never been in any situation like this before. We know Alliandre's a survivalist; she's very good at adapting to situations. That's how she survived Masema.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But she's never dealt with anything like this before. And it is – if she doesn't know about the Aiel, which she doesn't; she is unfamiliar with their culture or anything about them – never met them except for, presumably, the few with Faile –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Hasn't immersed, uh, herself in their culture. To her, she's just been kidnapped, and she is a person who can guarantee a large ransom.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So she's working on a pretty operable theory there.

Sally: Yes. I – I agree. Like, it's frustrating, of course, coming from Faile's point of view – Faile, who understands what's going on a little better. But yeah, Alliandre – Alliandre's like, "I'm gonna play what I think is a winning hand."

Emily: And they're like, "Oh. No, that doesn't interest us." But actually, it interests Sevanna, who is collecting rich and famous people or whatever the fuck these evil people always do.

Sally: Sevanna is ...

Emily: Very Graendal of her.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Graendal Lite.

Emily: (laugh) Diet Graendal.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Excuse me, Graendal No Sugar. (laugh) Zero Sugar.

Sally: Ahh! Graendal Zero Sugar. (laugh)

Emily: Um. Speaking of Sevanna, she comes up and is like, "Oh, a queen? I love queens. I love making them weep."

Sally: (laugh) She's such a freak.

Emily: She's such a freak. And it is just, like, I – I mean, I can't remember the order of operations here –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But we are introduced to Sevanna as a person who is in control of Galina; Galina's also terrified of Therava, who is very clearly abusive toward her. Galina's a mess.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Huge mess because of what has been done to her in the last few months. Uh, and we have already spoken about Robert Jordan punishing women characters, so we won't linger too much on that.

Sally: (gagging noise)

Emily: Um, Faile does, at one point, ask the gai'shain who's helping her, like, "We're not Aiel. You guys shouldn't be taking gai'shain."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And he's basically like, shrug emoji.

Sally: He's like, "You right, but –"

Emily: "You right, but it's not my problem."

Sally: "What am I gonna do about it?"

Emily: And she's like, "Shouldn't you guys be helping us escape? Like, if you're at all honorable Aiel, then you would not allow this," and he's like, "I'm gai'shain. It's part of my honor to be gai'shain for the next six months," or however.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So Faile cannot expect help, um, in any major way from any of the Aiel gai'shain. Which includes Bain and Chiad, which is a bit annoying.

Sally: Yeah ...

Emily: Bain and Chiad do, to their credit, help as much as they feel that they are able to.

Sally: Yeah, but they're like, "We're not going to escape."

Emily: Yeah, they're like –

Sally: "So we won't be coming with you, so we can't help you in that way, but."

Emily: "But we don't think it's fair or correct –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "What's happened, so." But that is a later issue. Um, Galina, on someone's orders, heals Faile and the rest. Um, and basically, they get up and join – they're given clothes, gai'shain robes and shoes and whatnot – um, and then go join the big parade of people. Uh, Faile ends up with Alliandre – Alliandre and Maighdin; uh, she gets separated from the others for a while; they spend a while looking for them but can't, and finally they're just like, "Ah, we'll just have to

find them in the evening.” Maighdin – Maighdin? – Maighdin – quote unquote, Maighdin immediately asserts herself as, uh, someone who’s not going to act like a servant in this scenario, not that she was very good at that to begin with –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In fairness. Um, but she’s basically like, “We’ve been kidnapped. We’re prisoners. Until we’re out of this situation, I’m not following any rules of class,” you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is fair enough except that she’s also a queen. It would be hilarious if Maighdin was an actual peasant woman –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who was just like, “Fuck this.”

Sally: Yeah. “Look, the class structure does not apply; we are all prisoners.”

Emily: Yeah, but instead, it’s just Morgase being like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “I wanna behave like my usual royal bitch self, so.”

Sally: “And so I will.”

Emily: “And so I will. And I have a logical argument backing me up.” Okay. Whatever.

Sally: Whatever, Maighdin.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Air quotes.

Emily: Um, Faile and the others are outfitted with these jeweled, uh, belts and necklaces or whatever that mark them out as Sevanna’s special gai’shain because, like we said, they pick up on the fact that Sevanna is, um, collecting people.

Sally: She’s a material girl.

Emily: (sing-song) She’s a material girl, living in a material world.

Sally: Material girl.

Emily: Um, Faile, by the way, knows who Sevanna is. Obviously, even though she wasn’t there during the events of Fires of Heaven, she’s well-aware of the political and, uh, martial, I guess we should say, history of what happened, and she is correct in presuming that Sevanna was always behind Couladin, tugging the strings.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She's basically like, "I wanna kill Sevanna. And I will, if I can."

Sally: Bite her throat out or whatever.

Emily: Um, Sevanna also recognizes Faile – not in person, but Faile gives her name as Faile t'Aybara, and Sevanna's like, "Oh, I know that name. You're close to Rand al'Thor."

Sally: Therava, I think is the one who –

Emily: Was it Therava? Oh, right, right, right.

Sally: She's like – she's like, "I won't tell –" Or it's Galina or somebody is like, "I won't tell Sevanna who you are."

Emily: Therava comes up to them and is like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Who – so are you really a liege lady? Who are you?" And Faile introduces herself, and Therava's like, "Oh, yeah, I recognize that name, and I will tell Sevanna who you are unless you guys act as my spies in Sevanna's tent and just report on every little thing that she says." And the ladies are like, "Well, we obviously don't have a choice here. What – what – we have no negotiating power. Fine. Whatever."

Sally: Yes.

Emily: And as Maighdin, presumably because she has been in charge of spy rings like these, notes, um, probably every other servant working for Galina – Sevanna –

Sally: I know, all the names are too similar.

Emily: They all end with an "ah" sound. Everyone working for Sevanna is probably under the same orders by Therava, so if they mess up at all, then someone else will – it will be obvious.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So they can't really hold back. So obviously that's already not a great position to be in, but then Galina comes up to them and is like, "I'm an Aes Sedai, here on business of the White Tower," and Faile's like, "Pfft."

Sally: "Okay."

Emily: "Yeah, right."

Sally: "Sure."

Emily: "Who cares? Do I look like I care?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Galina's like, "Rude. Well, I just need you guys to, um –" or is it Galina who knows who she is? (laugh)

Sally: I think it's Galina who knows who she is. 'Cause Therava can be like, "You're gonna do what I tell you to, or I'm gonna kill you –"

Emily: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sally: And then Galina's like, "You're gonna –"

Emily: Galina's the one who needs leverage.

Sally: "Do what I tell you to or I'm gonna tell Sevanna who your husband is."

Emily: Yeah, okay. Okay –

Sally: There's all these women and all their plots.

Emily: And it's hard to keep track of, okay?

Sally: (laugh) I'm just a stupid little man, doing my dumb little podcast.

Emily: (laugh) Galina is like, "I want you guys to get this thing for me that's in Therava's tent," which we know is the Oath Rod.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And the ladies are like, "How do you want us to do that?" and Galina's like, "I dunno. Figure it out." And Faile's like, "Okay. This day might as well get worse." You know?

Sally: You ever have those days?

Emily: Where you're like – Faile looks directly at the camera.

Sally: "This might as well happen."

Emily: "This might as well happen." Um. So now they're in this weird – being tugged in three separate directions by three separate, uh, powerful women, supposedly.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: I wouldn't call Galina powerful at any sense right now, but she does have this leverage.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. So that's the plot. They continue on their way. No idea about where their destination is going to be, and Faile, the whole time, is thinking, "Okay, Perrin's probably on his way, but I cannot rely on him finding us. I must plan a way to get us out of this." So very, you know, uh, practical –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And, uh, independent of her, which is one of her better qualities.

Sally: Yeah.



Emily: (clears throat) Okay. Here's a couple things I want to say, and then if you have anything else to add, great.

Sally: Okay, lay it on me.

Emily: The racism part.

Sally: Ooh.

Emily: So we've talked, not at length, I think, but we have referenced that Robert Jordan seems to have taken, uh, much of his inspiration for the Aiel from Native American, uh, cultures and history. That comes out a little bit strongly here. In the colonial era, specifically, it was a thing for local, uh, native tribes to occasionally kidnap or assimilate or adopt white people, settlers, into their tribes. Of course, sometimes this was involuntary, but presumably, at other times, and, you know, there were people who stayed with them even when they had the option to leave –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Presumably a lot of people found a lot of freedom and actual family in these adoptions. But there's a sort of – and that's how we get things like Dances with Wolves, by the way, which – Rand has already given us his Dances with Wolves, uh, plotline, so we don't need to get too far into that.

Sally: (whispers) Dances with Wolves.

Emily: I know, it's a real – a real tough one. But Robert Jordan is really playing into that specific 1800s settler mindset –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Here. We mentioned last week that there's a sort of Manifest Destiny going on here in the need to, um, eliminate the Shaido Aiel, remove the, quote unquote, savages from this land that we view as ours. Obviously the – this concept gets a little tough in this particular setting because the Shaido do not belong on this part of the continent. They might have made their way here eventually, but they have been planted here by a bad guy, so.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: uh, it's a little tough. But there are some definite, like, white civilization against, um, indigenous populations vibes here, and those vibes are made a little bit stronger by the idea – by this whole kidnapping sequence.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Which is all about, uh, not respecting the kidnappees' cultures and customs and just, you know, forcing them to assimilate to the captors' customs.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, there's also the whole faceless horde thing. I don't know how – how long we can beat this dead horse, but there are truly far more Shaido than makes a lick of sense.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: There's so many. Even adding the idea that they are maybe kidnapping the entire population of Amadicia as they move through it –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's getting ridiculous. It has always been ridiculous.

Sally: It – it is absurd.

Emily: Seven out of fifty-six equals an endless stream of people?

Sally: Just, literally, an endless stream of people.

Emily: Come on. That Perrin apparently can't track? That's probably not true, I'm sure they'll find them pretty quickly. But – or do they?

Sally: Um, they don't find them in this book. They find them at the beginning of Crossroads of Twilight –

Emily: Oh, great.

Sally: And it does not – it actually takes them a lot longer than I think it should for them. They only find them when they really, like, settle into a place for a couple of weeks.

Emily: Gotcha.

Sally: So what the fuck is Perrin doing? Well, actually, I know what he's doing. He admits to it. He just starts opening – he makes Grady and Neald start opening gateways at random –

Emily: (high-pitched) Which is what he should've done from the beginning!

Sally: But then it makes them jump, like – I – it's really chaotic.

Emily: Okay.

Sally: But eventually he figures it out.

Emily: Okay.

Sally: Um. Yeah, I wanna jump back to what you said about, like, the kidnapping. Because while I think it is true – I mean, of course – I don't think it's true; it is true, what you're saying, that it's – kind of really takes on the vibe of, like, settler colonialism in the Americas. But this idea that, like, the local people are going to kidnap you, is just, like, such a colonial mindset in general. Like, it was –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Seems to sort of permeate the literature or the writings about South America and Africa by, um, European colonists.

Emily: I just read about American history all day, so. That's my –

Sally: Yeah, no, and I think it – I think it is very fair to say that the Aiel pull a lot of Native American, um, coding, especially when they are put in – especially when they are taken out of the desert and put into the, quote unquote, European continent. Somehow they got more of these, like, wilderness vibes.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: That seem like the – that Robert Jordan's like, "Well, the Native Americans know the wilderness, right? I'll just start pulling from there." And I'm like, what are you doing?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: What's happening? At least, that's kind of how it feels to me. Um. And it's just this really funny – not funny; it's really bad and racist, what he's doing. (laugh) But I also just, like, don't understand – I mean, I know he's trying to be like, "The Shaido are bad," but it has, like – and, like, they're doing things that are against the culture – but it's not like anyone in Aiel society ever has been, like, coming across the mountain, kidnapping people, and taking them back to the Waste.

Emily: No, and we're supposed to believe, for some reason, that because Sevanna said that she wants to start kidnapping random people that the mass of, apparently, seven million Shaido Aiel –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: All are okay with that.

Sally: Yeah, and it's, like, this thing that's never been a part of your culture, ever.

Emily: Yeah, that is – that is specifically anti your culture.

Sally: Yeah. One woman with her big titties out said, "Kidnap all of Amadicia," and they were just like, "Yeah, okay."

Emily: And, like, yes, I understand that Sevanna has leverage over the other Wise Ones, and the Wise Ones are generally the real leadership, but I don't actually believe that at this point the Wise Ones would continue to back her up. It would be so easy for Therava to just, bang bang, kill Sevanna.

Sally: I know. Please, Therava, actually –

Emily: For any of them to do it. Like –

Sally: I'm begging you.

Emily: They're – it's not hard to assassinate this random woman. She's going around on her own. She's – but, you know, it – it's just, like, this ridiculous set-up.

Sally: Yeah. It is fully ridiculous. Um, but just continuing – I gotta keep my brain – one second –

Emily: Sorry.

Sally: No, it's not your fault, it is my fault. But I – the, like – adding further to this sort of being kidnapped by the, quote unquote, savages, are the fact that all these women are naked.

Emily: Mm.

Sally: There's sort of this, like, latent –

Emily: That's my next thing.

Sally: There's sort of, like, this latent threat – maybe not so latent when Faile is being carried by Rolan, my arch-nemesis –

Emily: Rolan! (laugh)

Sally: Um, who is, like, slapping her on the bum because Robert Jordan loves to spank women. There's this sort of latent or not-so-latent threat of sexual assault.

Emily: Mm-hmm. Even though Faile is careful to tell us that they are being dehumanized to the point where she is not so worried about sexual assault.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They're just being treated like animals, which is not better. (laugh)

Sally: Uh, no, Faile. (laugh) Both of those things are bad, and also, like, I don't think being dehumanized to that point keeps you safe from sexual assault –

Emily: Yes.

Sally: In fact, I think it might make it –

Emily: I – I agree.

Sally: More likely to happen. But what do I know? Um, so it just also plays into this idea of, like – of, honestly, even though Faile is not, uh, a white woman, it plays into the idea, the sort of narrative of, like, a white woman's vulnerability –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Where she is being placed in this sort of, like – to use our world's terms, which I know are not particularly productive, she's sort of placed in the idea of, like, European society –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Um, and she is being kidnapped by, uh, the indigenous people, who are just going to, um, assault her, and that's ... just, I feel like, also a narrative I feel like has also been had, particularly around women being kidnapped.

Emily: Yeah. That's a narrative used to propagate racism; um, that's also a narrative widely seen in romance, as a genre –

Sally: Mm. Mm. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is sort of my second point. Robert Jordan loves to put his, um, male characters, generally, in situations befitting classic adventure or fantasy novels and to put his female characters in situations befitting romance novels, which is why they are so frequently, uh, stripped naked, uh, and put in these mildly, like, if we just changed a few words, then this would be the foreplay to a romance novel.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: You know? Um, if you're not familiar with romance as a genre, then hey, just read these couple chapters, and think, what if I added some, like, you know, more sexiness to it?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The women are all naked, it doesn't really matter that the, uh, people that are carrying them around are strangers. This is the perfect set-up, quote unquote, for a – a, uh, you know, some sex.

Sally: Yeah, for a steamy affair in the snow, in the tent, when you finally realize that your captor is actually a very gentle person who has, like, a dog that he loves or something. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) He loves his dog, therefore –

Sally: And this is no shade on the – on the romance genre. Um. Well, it's a little shade on the romance genre. Romance, as a genre, is getting a lot better and more progressive, the way a lot of things are, but not all of it.

Emily: Romance, um – romance as a genre deals with a lot of tropes, including, uh, playing with consent –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In ways that you might find sexy or in ways that, uh, some people might find skeezy, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It just depends on the person. Um, romance plays with nudity, rendering people – putting people in situations that could become sexy if you changed the context.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And if the context is a romance novel, then it probably will become sexy.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But it – it leads to, like, people being naked in improbable ways and scenarios, people having to share beds or things like that or, you know, the sleeping bag, also in improbable scenarios. This is exactly what happened with, uh, ice – igloo sex.

Sally: Yeah, the sex igloo. I was going to say, we talked about this in the sex igloo, but somehow, it seems like cold weather is frequently involved.

Emily: Yeah, I don't know if Robert Jordan was, like –

Sally: In order to, like, make bodies close together.

Emily: It snowed, and Robert Jordan had an insta-boner. He was like, “God, I love the snow.”

Sally: “I love the snow. It – it – the snow means that surely, a naked woman will appear and need warmth.”

Emily: And he knew the snow biblically but not at all in a rational way, because they should be dead. (laugh) Academically, perhaps.

Sally: (wheeze, sigh) Why would you say something like that? Why would you do this? This podcast goes on the internet. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, you think that's gonna stop me now? I've said some regret – regrettable things on this podcast.

Sally: Yeah, we all have.

Emily: “Knowing the snow biblically” is not one of them.

Sally: Agh, you said it again! (laugh)

Emily: I think it's such a funny joke.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: So, I don't know how familiar Robert Jordan was with the romance genre. Presumably pretty familiar if he is, uh, willing to engage with it to this extent. But if you're signed up for a fantasy series and not a romance series, then that's why things like this can come out of left field and feel so bizarre and, uh, like, really pull you out of the fantasy.

Sally: Yeah, especially because, um, this does not end in a romance. Faile, our main character throughout this arc, is forced into some really uncomfortable situations with men, but it's not like any of those men turn out to be her long-time lovers. She is still married and still loves her husband.

Emily: But it sure wants to make us believe that it might end with some sort of sexual contact –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Sexual – sexual contact with her kidnapper.

Sally: Yeah, with Rolan. I hate Rolan.

Emily: Rolan is not a character who goes away after slinging Faile over her – his shoulder and spanking her repeatedly. Rolan remains, and Rolan and Faile, for some reason, dance on this line of will they, won't they, which is egregiously upsetting when –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: One is the kidnapper and the other the kidnappee. But I – I – I mean, I don't know. I guess what I'm trying to say is if you are reading a romance novel or series, then you are signing up for a particular kind of fantasy, where this scenario makes sense. If you're signed up for high fantasy, which is a different genre, then, um, this sort of breaks conventions.

Sally: Yeah. Um, a sort of similar – not exactly, but, like, a similar thing happens in, uh, Kushiel's Dart –

Emily: Mm.

Sally: Also involving, um, being out in the snow –

Emily: Yeah. Classic.

Sally: Somehow being not nearly as clothed –

Emily: As one should be.

Sally: And it does not bother me nearly enough because that is, like, a romance novel. It's a romance fantasy novel, and I'm like, yeah.

Emily: Yeah, you're just kind of like, okay.

Sally: It's sort of what you sign up for. Yeah.

Emily: But this is wildly not that.

Sally: Yeah, we've kind of – it's kind of fucking with our horizon of expectations. It's fucking with the context. It starts to feel – it starts – it starts to get some of that cognitive dissonance. Um. It's – it's weird little thing – a weird little thing. So between the racism, the gratuitous nudity, um, and the confusion of genres, I would give these chapters zero out of ten.

Emily: (laugh) They're not great.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: They're not great.

Sally: I hope everything I said makes sense. I feel like I'm not really on it today.

Emily: Sure. No, I think it – I think it did. Do you have anything else to add?

Sally: I don't – I don't think so. I think I have said enough.

Emily: We've said enough.

Sally: (laugh) I've had enough of these two.

Emily: I've had enough of us two; I've had enough of you –

Sally: Yeah, I've had enough of Robert Jordan.

Emily: Robert.

Sally: My blog title this week was, “Will I Vandalize Robert Jordan’s Gravestone? Stay Tuned.”

Emily: Read and find out.

Sally: (laugh) More at ten.

Emily: Buddy, why you do these things?

Sally: I just don’t know. I just don’t know.

Emily: We’ll torment ourselves if we just constantly wonder why, I guess, so.

Sally: That’s true. Robert Jordan is –

Emily: We just have to get through this series.

Sally: Like a – a distant malevolent god. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. He’s up there. Or down there somewhere.

Sally: Laughing either way.

Emily: Yeah, either way, we’re talking about his books, so he’s happy.

Sally: That’s true. He got his TV show.

Emily: Yeah. Do you think he wanted a TV show?

Sally: I don’t know. I was just gonna wonder that. Maybe he wouldn’t be happy. But.

Emily: I mean, I know he wouldn’t be happy, because all of the people are people of – of color.

Sally: Oh, you’re right. He’d be like, “A Black woman?!”

Emily: “I wrote them as white. Excuse me? Exsqueeze me? Also, Moiraine and Siuan kiss? That was meant to be SUBTEXT!”

Sally: Robert, you made it pretty fucking clear what those two were doing –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: In the nighttime, so.

Emily: In the nighttime.

Sally: Or the daytime.

Emily: Or – or the daytime.

Sally: I don’t mean to limit them.



Emily: Thanks for listening, if you stuck with us this long. (laugh) If you weren't just like, "Meh."

Sally: "Meh."

Emily: "I actually – I actually don't want to relive Faile's kidnapping arc, so, click. Skip episode." Um, if you're still with us –

Sally: Which I would support, so.

Emily: Yeah, I mean, do what you gotta do for your mental health.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Just like we skipped Crossroads of – dang it.

Sally: Path of Daggers.

Emily: Path of Daggers. I get those two mixed up so much.

Sally Well, it feels like the exact same things are happening in Crossroads of Twilight that happened in Path of Daggers. Am I reading the same book? Who's to say.

Emily: Yeah, you might be. It's just, like, a nightmare that you can't wake up from. Thanks for listening. (laugh)

Sally: It's like Itachi's – what is his special –?

Emily: Genjutsu?

Sally: Genjutsu. The – the one he just put on the snake man, where you just live the same loop over and over –

Emily: Oh. Is it Iga –

Sally: Izanagi?

Emily: Izanami and Izanagi?

Sally: Yeah. That's what Crossroads of Twilight –

Emily: I can't remember which one.

Sally: Is like. I just have to accept that I can't change fate, and then Itachi will free me.

Emily: I mean, it's like any genjutsu, right? Because Itachi, um, made – made Kakashi be crucified for three days straight.

Sally: Yeah, listen, I –

Emily: Which was fucked up.

Sally: (laugh) I have some – like, I – I –

Emily: Itachi Uchiha did some things wrong. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. Like, I would mostly consider myself an Itachi Uchiha apologist, but that one, he needs to go to –

Emily: That one was unnecessary.

Sally: Trial for. Yeah.

Emily: Yeah. Three days, Itachi?

Sally: Three – like, maybe you could've done, like, a minute. One stab. Okay.

Emily: Okay, I'm – I'm deleting that whole Naruto sidebar.

Sally: Sorry for the Naruto – yeah.

Emily: Phew. Thanks for listening. Thank you to Glynn MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media. Hope we've satisfied your quest for Path of Daggers info.

Sally: Yeah, I hope so too. 'Cause I'm – don't know how much more I can give you.

Emily: Yeah, that's it. It wasn't a – a – it was, like, a ten-minute discussion, and then we got –

Sally: Oh, we do have that funny video of you. Maybe I should post that.

Emily: Oh, don't post it. I keep referring to it as Crossroads of Twilight in it. It's so humiliating.

Sally: (laugh) It's pretty funny.

Emily: (laugh) And you just keep being like, "Path of Daggers."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Is that – do you have a sign-off?

Sally: Yeah. Like, right before we started recording this, I was watching a Tik Tok that was basically like, "I'm pretty crazy, and I think what you're doing is pretty fucked up, so maybe rein it in," and I meant to send it to one of my friends, and I almost sent it to my dad. So. (laugh)

Emily: Ahh! (laugh)

Sally: I caught myself, like, at the last minute. Like, the five seconds left in the game, I was like, "Oh, thank God, that is not the right person."

Emily: You beat the buzzer. Could've –

Sally: Yeah, buzzer beater. Because my dad – I mean, I don't even know if my dad would know how to open a Tik Tok.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: (laugh) But –

Emily: Pretty reliably, I can guess that he wouldn't.

Sally: It was a really tough one to try and explain.

Emily: Oh, Bill.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Okay, everyone. Have a good week.

Sally: Gotta go eat some more crackers.

Emily: Don't freeze to death.

Sally: Oh, man.

Emily: Goodbye.