



Episode 191: The Hero's Journey, For Her

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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: Ed, you have been trying to sit on me all day.

Sally: I know. He's obsessed.

Emily: Can you guys hear him purring?

Sally: (laugh) Probably.

Emily: He's so loud.

Sally: Here comes Tybalt.

Emily: And here comes Tybalt.

Sally: Tybalt too.

Emily: These two are pretty distressed because it snowed.

Sally: It's snowing, yeah.

Emily: And, um, I don't know – Tybalt, get your face out of that glass of water.

Sally: My hydration. You can't have the freaking chapstick either. Oh my God, he's a menace.

Emily: You guys are trying to steal and sit on everything that we love and cherish.

Sally: Do you want to sit on me, Tybalt? We could have the whole family involved. Nope, he's walking away.

Emily: No, he wants to go look out the window.

Sally: Um, yeah, for some reason our cats are incapable of handling storms of any kind. Wind, rain, snow, hail. Or even just an overcast sky really freaks them out. (laugh)

Emily: Disruptions in the political climate.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That would explain –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The last two to three years.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Ugh.

Sally: They're really unhappy about the change in the barometric pressure today. Do you know what else is unhappy with the change in the barometric pressure today?

Emily: Your joints.

Sally: My – yes.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Specifically my shoulders.

Emily: I'm sorry. I saw your ... Tweet?

Sally: Yeah. My dumb Tweet about how I want to replace my tendons with rubber bands.

Emily: I mean, it seems like that would be more functional than what you have got going on –

Sally: I – I agree. (laugh)

Emily: At the moment.

Sally: I agree. I'm just gonna rebuild the whole infrastructure.

Emily: We've just gotta start from scratch.

Sally: Yeah. Throw the whole body out.

Emily: Materials needed: Rubber bands. Bones?

Sally: Bones.

Emily: Bones. What do you think about bones? Big fan.

Sally: Big fan.

Emily: Big fan. I have hundreds of them.

Sally: Love – he just looks so insane in that video, with his hands and his messy hair. I'm like, Hozier, what are you doing?

Emily: I know, what's happening? Who's filming him?

Sally: Big fan of them. Hundreds of them in my own body.

Emily: I would hope Hozier is a big fan of bones, not just because, of course, he has them, but because he writes so many bone-centric –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I don't mean that in a sexy way, I mean literal bones.

Sally: Like – yeah, like –

Emily: But also, he does write, you know, songs that would probably be good to bone to. Uhh.

Sally: On that note, everybody.

Emily: (laugh) This is Everybody Hates Rand.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sally Goodger. And Tybalt is on my desk.

Emily: Yeah, we might get interrupted every once in a while by these cats. Um –

Sally: By these two lunatic creatures that live in my house, rent-free.

Emily: Ed's still purring. He's nowhere near anyone. He's just sitting and purring.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I don't know what his deal is. So these two chapters in Winter's Heart are troubling, to say the least.

Sally: You guys.

Emily: You guys. They're titled "Ideas of Importance." I cannot recall what the important ideas are in that –

Sally: I know, I was thinking that too.

Emily: Chapter. Maybe it's just sort of a vague – vague title. Um, and "A Lily in Winter."

Sally: (gagging noise)

Emily: Which is the infamous – you know, you've got "The Far Snows," sex igloo scene.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And then "A Lily in Winter," Elayne and Rand's sex scene – (sputters) Which has so many layers of, um ... (sigh) troubling – troubling rhetoric to it.

Sally: Yeah. I don't remember what the chapter is called, but I guess we can call Min and Rand's sex scene "Shattered Mirrors."

Emily: Yeah. Yeah, it – there's always very elaborate setpieces –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Going on with it. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: It's like a Greek tragedy. Tybalt –

Sally: I mean, yeah, it comes in threes. Just like all the good Greek tragic plays.

Emily: Tybalt, get your face out of the printer, and do not – I'm really worried he's gonna jump for the –

Sally: I know, I am too. For the dumb paper chain. Tybalt loves our printer. It's his boyfriend. I think we've already talked about this.

Emily: Tybalt has a lot of boyfriends.

Sally: That's true.

Emily: The printer. Ed. Well, his relationship with Ed changes –

Sally: On the day to day, yeah.

Emily: On the day to day. Anyway.

Sally: Anyway.

Emily: We've done some preparation for this chapter. Preparation we wouldn't normally do.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Because really, these chapters, more than others, beg the question, what were you thinking, Robert Jordan?

Sally: What –

Emily: And why have you done this?

Sally: WHY? Why have you done this? These chapters made me want to peel my own face off.

Emily: Yeah. (laugh) Just get right out of the skin. Just get right on out there. Tybalt –

Sally: One second. Continue.

Emily: Um –

Sally: I'm gonna wrangle the beast, like Steve Irwin. (distant) Get out of here.

Emily: The crocodile hunter. (Australian accent) Crikey, that's a big one. (laugh)

Sally: Crikey. Did you guys know that alligators can climb fences?

Emily: (sigh)

Sally: Do you know how I know this? Because when my brother Ian – my family used to live in Louisiana, and when my brother Ian was four, he got, um –

Emily: Attacked by an alligator?!

Sally: (laugh) No, he got epiglottitis, which is a very serious, like, thing going on with your esophagus, basically.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: He almost died. But while he was in the hospital, my grandmother was in the house with my brother Perry, who was five, and their neighbor called and said, "An alligator crawled out of the drainage ditch, and it's climbing the fence into your backyard." They had to call the alligator man. If the alligator is under six feet, they have to catch and release it. If the alligator is over six feet, they had to kill it. But this alligator was under six feet. (clap) There you go.

Emily: This is like when I found out that bears can open doors. It's just, like – wildlife should – should be stopped by man-made barriers, in my opinion. You know?

Sally: And they're like, "No, dawg."

Emily: And they're just like, "No. We are all the raptors in Jurassic Park."

Sally: I'm just a little six-foot alligator, climbing chain-link fences, trying to eat little boys. Chomp. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Jesus. I'm going to go put Tybalt's sweater on.

Sally: Okay.

Emily: (distant) Explain the Ouija board.

Sally: Okay. You guys. In preparation for this episode, with the specific idea of Robert, we just have so many questions, Emily and I have prepared – have found, for you, a Ouija board. A –

Emily: (distant) I can't find Tybalt!

Sally: (laugh) And we've also apparently lost Tybalt, our cat. And we are gonna use this Ouija board to contact the ghost –

Emily: The spirit of Robert Jordan.

Sally: The spirit of Robert Jordan, because goddamnit, we have some questions.

Emily: In retrospect, Ouija boards are mostly used for, like, demons.

Sally: Well.

Emily: You know – (wheeze)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I don't know what the crossover between demons and ghosts is, but, yeah, we – we really want to get in there and talk to Robert Jordan beyond the grave, because – (sigh)

Sally: I have some questions.

Emily: Yeah. So –

Sally: And I demand answers. So this is your paranormal investigative journalism.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: EHR style.

Emily: Yeah. Let the games begin.

(sound of a bell tolling)

Emily: (hacking noise)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (hacking noise, deep, raspy voice) Can you hear me?

Sally: (laugh) I sure can.

Emily: (laugh) That's not the voice I'm going to be doing the whole time.

Sally: No, it better be. I want you to have to go into the hospital for damaged vocal chords.

Emily: No. Nope, nope. Nope, here I am. Here I – here – it's-ah me.

Sally: It's you.

Emily: It's-ah me. I have entered the – the willing vessel that has been prepared.

Sally: We did offer Emily up for the sacrifice, that is true.

Emily: For my – (laugh)

Sally: I drew a circle around her and everything.

Emily: Okay. Em–Emily?

Sally: Yes, Emily.

Emily: Alright.

Sally: But you are the spirit of Robert Jordan.

Emily: (slightly lower, more gravelly voice) I am but a – a fragment of the man once known as Robert Jordan – Robert Oliver. Oliver Robert.

Sally: Oliver Rigby?

Emily: Yes.

Sally: Is that his name?

Emily: Jordan.

Sally: Is that your name?

Emily: Oliver Rigby Robert Jordan.

Sally: (sing-song) Eleanor Rigby.

Emily: Just – just a simple shadow, a fragment of the man, because, you know, when you – they don't tell you this about the afterlife –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: But your soul does get split into –

Sally: Ooh.

Emily: A million billion pieces.

Sally: A million billion?

Emily: A million billion pieces, and a few of those get to float around and haunt people. BUT mostly you go to the bosom of our Lord, Jesus Christ.

Sally: Ooh. And I bet it is a lovely and warm and welcoming bosom.

Emily: Yeah, you can really motorboat those titties.

Sally: (laugh) Okay! Obviously, we got the – we did get the fragment of Jordan – of Robert Jordan that we wanted, which is the worst part of his brain. So thank you for being present with us today.

Emily: Yeah, you can call me Bobert. (laugh)

Sally: Okay. Bobert, um, today we would like to ask you some questions. Specifically about Rand and Elayne having sex for the first time.

Emily: Ugh, Rand and Elayne, my two best fictional –

Sally: No. (laugh)

Emily: Creations.

Sally: I think you missed the mark there, Bobert.

Emily: I poured my heart and soul into these two. These two young whippersnappers. In such, such powerful love for each other. How many – how many minutes did they spend together?

Sally: Maybe, like, four and a half.

Emily: That was so – so many. So many that I was willing to give to them.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Romeo and Juliet, the famous – the most famous lovers – only had, like, half of that. So the four and a half minutes that I gave to Rand and Elayne is really proof positive that I was committed to their relationship and their deep love to each other. It is weird that they're sort of, um – that there was a cousin scare with them. But I sort of wrote myself into that one. I, you know, introduced Elayne to be this princess character and then only after I had already made her romantically interested in Rand, after the publication of the Eye of the World, did I recall that Rand is himself related to the former Royal House of Andor, so I sort of had to confront that. And I've wondered constantly what that says about me and myself, to no avail. I never went to therapy.

Sally: Oh, well, we can tell. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: I'm glad we got, uh, Cousingate out of the way, first thing.

Emily: Yeah, I figured that was probably the top thing to address –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Out of that relationship.

Sally: Especially as we are in the palace of Andor, where both their parents were born.

Emily: Yeah, I would say that's the most problematic aspect of their relationship by far. Nothing else comes even close.

Sally: Oh, nothing – you don't – can't think of anything else going on with the two of them?

Emily: Absolutely not. They're perf – they're perfect – they're a perfect example of a – of male masculinity, you know, like the tri – you know, like in the Da Vinci code? Did that movie come out before I died? (laugh) The Da Vinci code?

Sally: (laugh) You saw it at ghost cinema.

Emily: Yeah, that's where one of the fragments of the souls goes. Um. It's like in the Da Vinci code, how the upward-facing triangle – Tom Hanks tells us all about how the upward triangle, the triangle that points upward, means man because it looks like a penis sort of, and the downward triangle means a woman because it's, like, a vagina or something. I wasn't really paying attention to that part. Whenever the word "woman" comes up, I sort of tune – tune to a different frequency. But yeah, Robert – uh, Rand? – that's his name – (laugh)



Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And Elayne, they are really these archetypes of masculine maleness and feminine femaleness, you know? He's a big strong tough guy who really likes swords and political power, and she's a really ... beautiful woman. End of list.

Sally: (laugh) So Rand is, like, the conqueror of the whole world, and Elayne is pretty.

Emily: Um, yeah, I don't – does she have other character traits?

Sally: (laugh) Well. I mean, actually, I don't think so. I think her character traits are “pretty” and “bossy.”

Emily: Oh, she is bossy. That's true. She is bossy. But that's because all of the female – women are bossy. Have you met them?

Sally: I – yes.

Emily: Sarah? Have you –?

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: That was your name, wasn't it?

Sally: Close enough. (laugh) Uh, I've met a few women. Not –

Emily: And they're all terribly bossy.

Sally: Yes, of course. Naturally. All women are bossy. Uh, some other things I would like to talk about in this chapter – well, the other main thing, of course, is the Warder bond. What's happening – the two things happening in this chapter are Rand and Elayne having sex for the first time and Elayne, Aviendha, and Min bonding Rand as their Warder. And I don't really have any comment or question; I would just like to know what you were thinking.

Emily: Well, if I'm being totally honest, the Warder bond with the three ladies, I didn't write that part. Have you heard of the saying that if you give a typewriter to an – (laugh) to a monkey, eventually he'll produce Shakespeare?

Sally: (laugh) Yes.

Emily: Well, I did give a typewriter to a monkey, and this was what transpired. Of course, the names were different. In post, I change – I changed them.

Sally: Okay.

Emily: But an ape did come up with the idea and the language to describe a transcendental bond between one man and his three wives or soon-to-be wives. Because as we all know, men deserve to have lots of ladies. (laugh)

Sally: What would your take be on perhaps one of these women having multiple husbands?

Emily: Uh, no, absolutely not. Illegal. That would be – because then – because, you know, he – the thing about a man having multiple wives is that you can sort of – I mean, you shouldn't, because that would be naughty – but if you're – if you're feeling a little horny, you can think about all four of them in bed together, and that's kind of sexy. But if I think about a woman and two men in bed together, then the – the two dicks might touch. And that isn't sexy, I immediately – I immediately am not hard any more. So that's why it's illegal for women to have multiple husbands.

Sally: Right.

Emily: Also because then who's in charge of the relationship, you know?

Sally: That is an important factor.

Emily: Do the men – the men have to fight each other and kill each other to the – in a duel. Pistols, then swords.

Sally: (laugh) Right, so there can't –

Emily: The swords meaning swords, not a euphemism for dicks, because as I've stated already, the dicks absolutely cannot touch.

Sally: (laugh) I am not sure if you are familiar with the mechanics of two men having sex with each other.

Emily: It's just the – it's – (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: It's just the dicks touching, isn't it?

Sally: Sure. We'll go with that.

Emily: No other sexual organs involved whatsoever.

Sally: (laugh) Yes, naturally, of course. But as you mentioned, there can't be two husbands because they would have to kill each other before they were able to marry the woman.

Emily: Well, right, because – we don't like to say this in our feminist society anymore, but as we all know, marriage should be between a man and a woman because the man has to be in charge, and the woman has to be his helpmeet, which – the word "help" is key in that sentence. I got it from the Bible, which as we all know is a – a guide to marriage and how to make it work and how to make it function.

Sally: Yeah, sure.

Emily: Between the Bible and "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus," the seminal text about gender relationships, you can't go wrong.

Sally: Okay.

Emily: Guaranteed happy marriage.

Sally: 'Kay.

Emily: Uh, men need to – to – to become the best version of themselves, men have to learn how to be leaders, not just of, uh, their own lives and their own hero's journeys but of their families, their marriages. And a – a woman also has a hero's journey, and her hero's journey is, um, to get married. So that's how it works. Joseph Campbell told me so.

Sally: Well, you can't go wrong if you're quoting the man himself, Mr. Campbell.

Emily: Yeah, Joseph Campbell, he was great about that sort of thing, I think.

Sally: Yeah. I think Joseph Campbell was, in fact, the original feminist.

Emily: Yes. He does not get enough credit for that. Really.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, nobody respected women like Mr. Campbell.

Emily: I mean, him. Sigmund Freud. Women's rights up the wazoo, that man.

Sally: Yeah, I mean ... (laugh) I would also like you to explain why in particular we had to experience Rand and Elayne having sex via Min and Aviendha and Birgitte. Why did you make that choice?

Emily: Well, obviously, it's hilarious. Because the women are, um, experiencing the sexual relationship – the – the – the – the sex act through, uh, the emotional core of the man rather than as themselves, the women, so there is a sort of, uh, boundary crossing there in terms of the two genders. There are only two. Don't – if anyone ever tells you differently, then they're a liar and they're out to – uh, they're out to corrupt –

Sally: Corrupt.

Emily: Corrupt the children. There are only two genders. So there's an interesting boundary crossing there, where the women have to experience sex from the man's point of view. Now, men only experience sex – and I wrote this in – I wrote this in the book, so that's how you know that I believe it – uh, men only experience sex in the – in the terms of a fire.

Sally: Hmm.

Emily: And – and raging and consuming and red-hot and white-hot, and it's all very, very sexual and very, very powerful. That's what men are like. I know. I am a man. With women, it's all about the give, the surrender, the being consumed to the consumption.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: And so to be a woman experiencing your male partner's perspective on that yet with another woman, it would be incredibly flustering because basically at that point you are a man and what do you do about that? Apparently you have to get drunk – (laugh) you have to get drunk.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Because here's the thing, you know? Rand is the Dragon Reborn. He's basically – he's like fantasy – he's like Jesus. In this fantasy world, he is the savior. And therefore he can be related to all sorts of saviors and world heroes from across every sort of mythology. There's, like, King Arthur. Um. Luke Skywalker.

Sally: Yeah, natch. That's who I think of.

Emily: (sigh)

Sally: He's got a sword.

Emily: Uh, yeah. Um, Je-Jesus? Did I already say that one?

Sally: You did say Jesus, but it's worth repeating.

Emily: There's all – all sorts of, just, men saving the world, you know, so many – I mean, you can't name a woman saving the world. (laugh) Who's heard of that? Ridiculous. But like King Arthur and other mythological examples that, I promise you, I can think of –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: There has to be a – not just one woman involved but, um, three to sort of evoke the godhood of the mythological man, the hero. In King Arthur's case, it was, um, you know, uh, Morgan le Fay and the Lady of – and I can't – I can't remember, but there was three ladies who carried him to Avalon after he died. Did you know that Tar Valon and Avalon? Same thing.

Sally: Oh, nice.

Emily: Same thing, 'cause Avalon was meant to be an island city, so –

Sally: So Avalon also looked like a vagina.

Emily: Well, they didn't have aerial photography back then –

Sally: Oh.

Emily: So we can't know, but that was my – that's just my assumption –

Sally: Cool.

Emily: Because why wouldn't it be? It was just inhabited by women and King Arthur. Anyway, so three women is mythologically important and evokes these big mythological stories that we're all so well-acquainted with. So it was necessary for Rand to have three women who would be important to him. And they had to be not just platonically important but sexually important because I'm horny, and so I gave him these three women to sort of symbolize various aspects of his personality, his own fragmented self, much like my fragmented soul. We have Elayne representing, uh, his biological mother, which is not creepy at all, because remember, Sigmund Freud was a feminist. Aviendha represents the culture of his biological father as well as the culture into which his biological mother was adopted, and, uh, Min represents his sort of

biological family. She's from the same region he's from, and they have a lot of, uh, similarities in their culture and upbringing. So that's the reason that he had to have three girlfriends. But then the problem became, as the series went on, okay, he's gonna have three girlfriends, but now people can teleport, I guess? I don't know why I – why I threw that one in there, because it really came back to bite me in the ass. All the time at Comic Cons, people were like, "Why didn't they just teleport?" and I had to be like, "Uh, 'cause when you teleport you can cut people open and sheep and stuff," so nobody wants to do that, so they can't teleport as much as they want.

Sally: It's all to save the sheep.

Emily: Uh, yeah, sheep are a vital part of the economy. You may recall that Rand grew up herding sheep –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: So sheep are very important to him personally.

Sally: Right.

Emily: That also comes back to the Jesus thing. Jesus loved sheep.

Sally: Literal sheep, they don't mean metaphorically, his flock, I mean actual sheep. (laugh)

Emily: Well, both. (laugh) You can love both.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (clears throat) Um, what was I talking – what the fuck was he talking about?

Sally: You were talking about how three girlfriends became a plot problem because people can teleport.

Emily: Because people can teleport, so eventually these three – these three women are going to cross paths. And usually it's my stance to, uh, a – usually – no. So usually in fantasy, the goal is to avoid women interacting with one another because what do they talk about when they're not talking about men? Dresses, I assume. I – I mean, I'm not a woman, so how would I know?

Sally: You never met a woman to talk to?

Emily: Well, I've never been a woman talking to another woman.

Sally: (whisper) Okay.

Emily: And I assume when they're talking to each other, they don't – they wouldn't tell me what they're talking about. If I –

Sally: Right, because women are secretive.

Emily: If I asked, they'd lie. Women are all liars. So in most fantasy, women aren't supposed to interact. But I'm a huge feminist. I believe that women should be able to talk. Even if women in real life won't tell me, I can extrapolate that probably they talk, um, to each other a lot like men

talk to each other, but with more arguing and more talking about, uh, their sexual lives and dresses and things like that.

Sally: Yeah, it sounds like you watched a lot of Sex and the City in the nineties.

Emily: I did, yes. I'm a –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I'm a Carrie. (laugh)

Sally: I – uh, okay. I just mean – (laugh) It seems to follow the same format. Clothes, boys, arguing.

Emily: Yeah. I watched those women sit at brunch for what felt like years.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Um, and all they ever talked about was men, so. That's –

Sally: It's basically a documentary.

Emily: It was – wasn't – it wasn't?

Sally: (laugh) Glad you identify as a Carrie, Bobert.

Emily: Well, who doesn't? She's the best character, obviously. Um, so I want the women to interact because I'm a feminist, which means that eventually Rand's girlfriends would interact with one another because that would create some interesting, uh, you know, interpersonal relationships and conflict, not just between Rand and the women but, uh, the women themselves, each other. But then people started asking me, you know, my editors started asking me, "Well, Robert –" Bobert is who I am, but this was when – back when I was Robert – "Now, Robert, it seems like these women all – all deeply respect each other and feel a great deal of affection for each other as they get to know one another, so does it not make sense, uh, that the women with Rand, that perhaps all four of them would love each other in the same way?" And I said, no, that's illegal. Women – I mean, we can look all – we can look at it in porn, but women in real life aren't allowed to do that. It's naughty. So to – I have – I have to, at that point, very carefully keep them separate from one another but just sort of dancing on that line to be a little bit titillating. Um. Does that answer your question? (laugh)

Sally: I mean, I think so. I – I mean, I don't know if it does, really, but you did answer it. You provided an answer, so thank you.

Emily: You're welcome.

Sally: Is there anything else you would like to say while you have the mic, Bobert? Um, I mean, 'cause we can also talk about Nynaeve and Lan.

Emily: Ah, Nynaeve and Lan, my other favorite couple. Boy, those two are just star-crossed lovers for the ages. Wow. Don't you just feel the – the palpable presence of their chemistry when they're on the page together?

Sally: I – I can't say that I do, Robert.

Emily: I really poured my heart and soul into them. What I love about them is that Lan is a very strong, tough man, um, and Nynaeve is pretty bossy, usually, but when she meets a big, strong, tough man, uh, then she really learns how to – how to be submissive and nice and more, you know, feminine.

Sally: Yes, back to that Hero's Journey for women.

Emily: Yes, it's – it's getting married.

Sally: Getting married and being a nice, submissive little wife.

Emily: Yeah, and ideally becoming a mother, but, um, I just simply didn't have the page count for that except for with Elayne. I did spend quite a lot of time with her becoming pregnant. But, you know. Uh, I didn't really think Lan would be into having children at this stage in his life. I mean, the man's, like, sixty, so.

Sally: Yeah, the age difference is a little concerning there. Nynaeve is, at most, 27, and Lan is forties, fifties.

Emily: Well, everyone knows that women become mature when they're 13 years old, so I actually think that they're at the perfect, um, age relative – relative to each other. Because men don't mature until they're well into their thirties.

Sally: (laugh) So they're sort of caught up to one another at this point.

Emily: Yeah, exactly. Especially because she's, like, twenty-six, which is like two times thirteen, which is the – the prime maturity for women.

Sally: I – I mean, she's basically a dried-up old hag.

Emily: Well, I wouldn't say "dried-up" because she really is into wearing sexy clothes sometimes.

Sally: Oh, yeah, of course.

Emily: So she's – she's at the peak of her sexuality. But that's true. She was – give it another year or so, and she would have been unmarriageable.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Lan was the only man strong and tough enough to marry her.

Sally: Good thing she caught him in time. Well, plot-wise, uh, Rand is coming to Caemlyn to get Nynaeve's help with cleansing saidin.

(distant sound of revving engine)

Sally: Someone outside is very excited about this.

Emily: It's a very exciting plot.

Sally: So she agrees to that. Rand leaves a flower on Elayne's pillow. Are you familiar with the term "aftercare"?

Emily: No, what's that?

Sally: (laugh) Well, sort of, in the most general terms, "aftercare" is sort of care and comfort that you provide to your partner after you've had sex. It can take a variety of forms.

Emily: Oh, right, right, right, because he really railed her. They went, like – (laugh)

Sally: (wheeze)

Emily: That was a – that was an absolute marathon of sex. I mean, in the – in the –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In the two pages that we were with, uh, Min's point of view after leaving Elayne and Rand, they reached – (laugh, whisper) orgasm –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And then started – got going again, and that was, you know, only, like, ten minutes. But, you know, they're young. Refractory periods are nothing. So yeah, they – I mean, they were really going at it for a while. So of course, yeah, that's the very – that's the gentlemanly thing to do is to leave flowers for the woman. Uh, to sort of express everything that you can't express in words.

Sally: Okay.

Emily: You know, the tenderness, the appreciation, the romance, because if a man were to put those things into words, he'd be gay.

Sally: So –

Emily: (clears throat)

Sally: So lilies in winter: ideal form of aftercare, for the man who can't say anything.

Emily: Yeah, I mean, it's either that or a Hallmark card. So.

Sally: "Thanks for the sex, babe."

Emily: "Thanks."

Sally: "XOXO, Rand." Oh. (sigh) Yeah, I mean, we could change gears from talking about Rand and Elayne's orgasm – I don't believe Elayne orgasmed. I just believe Rand did.

Emily: Why would you think Elayne didn't orgasm?

Sally: (laugh)



Emily: Surely – surely they – I mean, one imagines they had penetrative sex, which is when all women orgasm.

Sally: Definitely untrue. That is one thing you should have learned from Sex and the City.

Emily: I think I, a man, would know better than you – (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: What gets women to orgasm.

Sally: Yeah, why don't we change gears and talk about Nynaeve's interactions with the Sea Folk women a little bit. How does that sound?

Emily: Oh, sure. Who are – who are the Sea Folk? What did I do to – what were – who are they?

Sally: Well, their depiction is extremely racist.

Emily: Racist?

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: In what – in what possible way?

Sally: Well, you have a group of predominantly Black women or women of color –

Emily: Well, I did not ever use the phrase “African American” on these pages, so there's no indication – that – that's not racist, obviously.

Sally: Well, if we could challenge that for a minute, you live in a fantasy world in which the continent of Africa does not exist. Nor does America exist. So they cannot be African American, as you say, but they can still have very dark skin tones.

Emily: Right, they do – they do have very dark skin. They're very beautiful. Beautiful – exotic, I would say – (laugh)

Sally: Mm, there's the word. I was just waiting for it like a loaded gun. (laugh) Like a loaded gun. That's called fetishization, Bobert.

Emily: But they're – they're – (clears throat) they're very – they're many-faceted, the Sea Folk. I mean, because men find them sexual, but the other women hate them.

Sally: 'Cause they are vast. They contain multitudes.

Emily: Like the sea itself.

Sally: So their two traits are “sexy” and “mean.”

Emily: Yeah, that's, um, mostly what I've – that was what I wrote down when I started writing them, yeah.

Sally: Sea Folk, colon, sexy and mean.

Emily: Yeah, I had a very elaborate Word document sort of detailing all of the, uh, cultural practices and things that were important to note about individual groups of people, and with the Sea Folk, I just didn't fuckin' bother. I just put "sexy" and "mean" and left it at that. Figured that was all I needed – I didn't expect them to, you know, stick around.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: I sort of thought I'd introduce them and then, uh, leave them hanging. But the – it – the plot just had a way of getting away from me?

Sally: Mm.

Emily: It was – I really couldn't control it at times. I would –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Suddenly find myself in this – these situations where the Sea Folk were much more prevalent than I'd imagined, and so then I had to confront the reality that I didn't know very much about them and didn't care to learn any more about them –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: So, yeah, I just left it "sexy" and "mean." Because I – I wasn't going to give any of them any points of view. I could always, uh, come at it from Nynaeve or Elayne's perspectives, and obviously Nynaeve and Elayne didn't know very much about them and also did not care to learn. So.

Sally: Well, that is true. And so I will tell you, for the record, that having a bunch of women in – women of color, whose only character traits are "sexy" and "mean," are – is an extremely stereotypical and bad representation of women of color. They are hypersexualized, and they are also often considered too mean and too angry. So.

Emily: Pffft. Well, I'm not racist, so.

Sally: Right, you didn't use the word "African American."

Emily: Yeah, or, you know – race doesn't exist in the fantasy world, so how can one be racist?

Sally: Interesting take, Bobert.

Emily: I'm color blind. I don't see color.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Um, well, in this sequence, we also get a little bit of what I would call your favorite activity: uh, torture porn. Where – (laugh) I wish you guys could've seen that face she made – where Nynaeve is threatened by the Sea Folk women to be hung upside down by her ankles and who knows what else would have happened if she doesn't break the shield that is on her.

Emily: Well, I mean, that's just their culture. That's how they go about teaching them, uh, their young women how to – how to do things, is just to threaten them with physical or psychological violence. And the same thing has happened in every culture that we've been in. It's happened in the White Tower. It's happened in – with the Aiel. Excuse me, the Aye-eel. And so, you know, it's really – it's really not that different from anything that's been done before. But, uh, yeah, I had to add some excitement into this otherwise very dull scene. And to just really – to just really put that nail in the coffin of why Nynaeve does not like these people and wants to leave. Because, uh, she's – you know, she's one of my protagonists. She's one of – a very – she's a very brave, uh, selfless woman, and so, um, I had to give her a very good reason to leave to go along with Rand, because, you know, the plot requires that she now be along with Rand to sort of, uh, help him, mother him, nurse him back to health when it is required. She is, uh, this sort of Madonna figure.

Sally: Right.

Emily: As you will. And so, uh, uh, I had to really just threaten her with physical and psychological violence, which she couldn't tell her husband about because that would be, you know, crying for him to help. You don't ever want to do that.

Sally: Right.

Emily: She's very independent. Yeah, I just had to give her a – a pretty bad experience with them to make her want to leave. And then, you know, if – if bad things continue to happen to the other Aes Sedai who are around, well, that's not my problem.

Sally: Okay. Whose problem is it?

Emily: Well, nobody's, because it's not happening. If it didn't – if I didn't write it, it didn't happen. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Do you have any – any concluding questions for me?

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: While I'm here, in – in this liminal space between life and death? Before I have to go back to Jesus.

Sally: Oh, man, there's so many. Uh, what was the reasoning behind Gawyn as a character? What was the reasoning behind all of it, Robert? (laugh) Robert?

Emily: Gawyn? You mean my favorite character.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I love Gawyn. He's sort of a – what do you kids call it? – a self-insert character.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: He's just brave, chivalrous, strong. He can really handle having a strong, female love interest. In my notes, Gawyn and – and Egwene live happily ever after.

Sally: Right. I bet they have lots of babies.

Emily: Yeah, obviously. It's the hero's journey for women. For her. (laugh) The hero's journey –

Sally: The hero's journey – for her.

Emily: For her™. Like Bic pens made for women's soft, supple, small hands.

Sally: I forgot about the Bic pens for her.

Emily: And pink. We can't forget.

Sally: Of course. The hero's journey for women is also pink. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (hacking noise)

Sally: And the hero that we see is a woman happily doing gymnastics while on her period. Like all the tampon commercials.

Emily: (normal voice) A woman doing gymnastics on her period? Sally, what are you talking about?

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: What's been happening? I see on the recording device that forty minutes have passed.

Sally: (laugh) Ahhh! Welcome back.

Emily: Ah, thanks. Where was I?

Sally: Uh, you were possessed.

Emily: I was possessed.

Sally: You were possessed.

Emily: Oh, God, I almost just slipped back into his gravelly –

Sally: Yeah, he – now he's gonna have a hold on you.

Emily: What?

Sally: Can't keep him away.

Emily: Robert Jordan briefly possessed my body. Well, we did offer up my body as a vessel for any, you know, demons or spirits or whatever –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That would want to claim me. We drew an elaborate circle –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And lit a bunch of candles and –

Sally: Yeah. Tons of candles. We sacrificed a goat.

Emily: Yeah, there was – it was – it was pretty bloody, um, but luckily we skipped all over that for you –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because it wasn't a very pleasant auditory experience.

Sally: No. We'll never get our security deposit back now.

Emily: (wheeze)

Sally: (laugh) First world witch problems, am I right?

Emily: Well, I see we're – we've pretty much reached our – our time limit –

Sally: We ...

Emily: So I hope that we – I hope that you and, uh, and Robert really laid into some of the issues that are prevalent in – in these chapters and what's going on here. I mean, the rampant racism, the rampant sexism. The really problematic relationship between, um, between partners in a sexual relationship. And, I mean, I hope you really talked about, like, the difference between polyamory and polygamy and why one is good and the other one is not good.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And, um – I mean, did he have any great insights?

Sally: He had some excellent insights on the – (laugh) on the nuances of poly –

Emily: The nuances? (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) The new ances – the nuances of polyamory and relationship anarchy. He really had a lot of good things to say there. Really progressive man.

Emily: Oh, well, great, I'm really looking forward to editing it, for once. I mean – (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, you'll learn something new, definitely. He also had some great – a great testimony about our lord and savior Jesus Christ. Jesus – I can't speak anymore.

Emily: Oh, that's interesting. I mean, I didn't – (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I mean, I did sort of have him pegged for, you know, Christian-adjacent, at the very least, but, um, who – who knows, I guess I'll hear all about it pretty soon.

Sally: (weakly) You sure will.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: He really carried this episode. Thanks, Bobert.

Emily: Hey, thanks, everyone, for listening to whatever that was.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song and, um, our followers on social media, and our – our patrons on Patreon. I hope you're still eager to give us money after –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: This episode.

Sally: If you're like, "I'm taking my money back, and I'm sending those bitches hate mail," that is also acceptable.

Emily: Um, do you have anything else to add?

Sally: No, just – thank you. Um, and also, we are still offering stickers to anybody who, uh, pledges our Patreon in the near future, until we run out of stock.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So if you've been curious about our Patreon, now's a great time to join. You will get some stickers in the mix.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: A little stickered of – a little sticker – what is happening to me? A little sticker of Tybalt –

Emily: You just got really flustered by –

Sally: (laugh) Bobert was such an overwhelming celebrity presence.

Emily: Yeah, just a potent energy.

Sally: Yeah, just, I can't even speak. It's my fragile woman brain – (laugh) confronted with such a massive male intelligence. Um, you can get a sticker of Tybalt to grace your water bottle or something.

Emily: Oh, yeah. He's very cute to look at in sticker form. Less so in –

Sally: Yeah, not so much in real life.

Emily: Real life. Yeah, he's pretty upsetting.

Sally: Speaking of demons.

Emily: Um, do you have a sign-off?

Sally: I – this whole episode was a sign-off. I think we can just –

Emily: This whole episode was a sign off.

Sally: Or I can retell the alligator story, if you want it here at the end.

Emily: No, I – I want the alligator story right where it was.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I can't remember where that was. I think I'd already, you know, sort of surrendered part of my consciousness to Bobert, but whatever it was. Okay, everyone.

Sally: Thanks for listening. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Have a great –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Have a great week. Goodbye.