



Episode 211: A Caucasian Blob

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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: Yeah, well, if it isn't the consequences of my own actions. Now we have to actually talk about Elayne.

SALLY: [groans]

EMILY: My nemesis.

SALLY: I mean we don't *have* to.

EMILY: [sigh] Yeah, at what point –

SALLY: [laughing] No one has a gun to our head.

EMILY: We haven't signed any contracts, we just are – at what point do we cross into false advertising?

SALLY: Well, last time we said we weren't a *Wheel of Time* podcast, I think. So.

EMILY: No, we did.

SALLY: We did? Ah, beans. Um, this is Everybody Hates Rand. May or may not be a *Wheel of Time* podcast at this point.

EMILY: [with a cheeky tone] No promises!

SALLY: No promises made! No contracts broken. Emily is looking at the back page which is advertising *New Spring*.

EMILY: Yeah, I don't think I've ever seen that cover of *New Spring*. It looks pretty much exactly like *Eye of the World* but, yeah, sorry I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: And I'm Sally Goodger.

EMILY: On sale January 6, 2004, in hardcover.

SALLY: Oh wow.

EMILY: Jeez. He really did a prequel before finishing the series. That's embarrassing for him. Real *Game of Thrones* move.

SALLY: Just, like, finish your series. I mean, I'm not one to talk, but.

EMILY: I mean, if you are *published* than you are contractually obligated to finish your series.

SALLY: Yeah, I agree. I think it is kind of silly. Like, at what point do you just stop. Just say you're not finishing, George R. R. Martin.

EMILY: Yeah, George R. R. Martin admit defeat.

SALLY: Pat Rothfuss. Yeah.

EMILY: Admit –

SALLY: Admit defeat.

EMILY: That you can't do it and either get Brandon Sanderson to do it for you or give up.

SALLY: Man, what would Brandon Sanderson's *Game of Thrones* look like?

EMILY: You know, honestly, I think it would be better [laughs].

SALLY: I do, too! I – I – I will throw my support behind Branderson on that one. I think he would cl – I don't say 'clean it up' as in, like, sanitize it, though he might do that as well. Make less sex and violence and particularly less sexual violence.

EMILY: Yeah, I have to imagine he would. I don't know if it's against his religion or what to – who knows?

SALLY: But I don't think – I don't like the word 'sanitize' but I can't think of anything else. I don't think *Game of Thrones* – I think *Game of Thrones* would benefit from a little sanitization, is what I'm saying. And I also think Brandon Sanderson would clean it up in that it that it would just make the plot a little bit more tidy.

EMILY: Yeah, Brandon Sanderson, for his, um, faults as a writer, every writer has their faults.

SALLY: Of course.

EMILY: And we have probably over focused on Brandon's, since he's a – one of the writers of this series. He, uh, doesn't do a whole ton of, like, violence against women for the sake of violence against women.

SALLY: Yeah, you know.

EMILY: Which seems like a – a – a bar that's in the ground to step over.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But we will give him that.

SALLY: We'll give him that credit. I also feel like he's very good at, like, getting to the point a little bit more than George R. R. Martin.

EMILY: I mean, you say that but he did start a – *The Way of* – what's that? Storm?

SALLY: *Stormlight Archives*?

EMILY: *Stormlight Archives* and was like, "They'll be so thick."

SALLY: Well, that's true. I haven't read the *Stormlight Archives*, so I can't speak to that.

EMILY: Yeah, I don't know. I don't know how good they are at staying on topic. I only read the first one? Two? Did I read the second one? I have a vague memory of reading the second one.

SALLY: We have one of them over there on our bookshelf, right? Yeah. *Way of Kings*.

EMILY: Yeah, we have it for reference material, and in case one day I'm feeling something.

SALLY: Anyway, I do think Brandon Sanderson's *Game of Thrones* would be, um, good. So.

EMILY: Let's all sign a petition anyway. I feel like Brandon Sanderson's fans will sign anything that he –

SALLY: That's true.

EMILY: Give him any amount of money.

SALLY: Do Brandon Sanderson fans have a name? Do they call themselves the [laughs] Brandersons?

EMILY: The Brandos [laughs].

SALLY: The Brandos! [laughs]

EMILY: The Branderos.

SALLY: Branderos. I like Branderos.

EMILY: Yeah, the Branderos. Like, like bros, but with some extra syllables.

SALLY: Syllables. Branderos rolls off the tongue nicely.

EMILY: Um, and I just think it would be really funny if the Branderos were like, "Mm. You're not doing anything with it. We will [laughing] take this from you."

SALLY: [laughing] We will take this from you, George R. R. Martin and we will give it to our god, Brandon Sanderson.

EMILY: Dun dun.

SALLY: And he will...at least finish it. God.

EMILY: Maybe he hasn't even watched the series. I'm sure he's read the books – well.

SALLY: I think it would be so powerful if Brandon Sanderson is out there with just, like, not having read *Game of Thrones*.

EMILY: Not engaging with *Game of Thrones* at all.

SALLY: Not having watched *Game of Thrones*. Not even reading the Wikipedia summary. He's just like, "I don't need that." [laughs]

EMILY: I can't decide – I mean, I don't know Brandon Sanderson personally, so I can't tell you which is stronger. His Mormon complex or his fantasy writer complex.

SALLY: You're right, you're right.

EMILY: Like, who knows? But in this particular instance I hope it's his Mormon complex, because I think that would be incredibly funny if he was like.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: "I don't watch *Game of Thrones*. And I don't read *Game of Thrones*."

SALLY: And I would be like, "Brandon, what is it like to live in a perfect world?"

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah, Brandon, you did it! You did it!

SALLY: Where you never consumed *Game of Thrones* content.

EMILY: Oh man. You've stayed –

SALLY: You've stayed pure.

EMILY: You stayed pure and clean.

SALLY: You're the only one of us that's pure.

EMILY: Besides Jesus himself.

SALLY: Besides – well.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Don't know if we need to put any man *that* high.

EMILY: [laughs] Sacrilege.

SALLY: Um, we can say that you're stronger than Emily's sister Sarah, who watched all of *Game of Thrones* in, like, three minutes flat. So.

EMILY: Yeah, Sarah has a problem with, um, the following. [laughs] Hyperfixating.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Needing adult content because she spends all her time with toddlers.

SALLY: Yeah, that's relatable.

EMILY: And, um, hyperfixating again [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, it's on the list twice for obvious reasons.

EMILY: Yeah, she really – really can't help it.

SALLY: [yawns]

EMILY: Right, this is still a *Wheel of Time* –

SALLY: This is still a *Wheel of Time* –

EMILY: This is maybe a *Wheel of Time* podcast.

SALLY: This is maybe a *Wheel of Time* podcast.

EMILY: We'll see.

SALLY: Again, I will not make any promises.

EMILY: Yeah, we've been tangentially related thus far, anyway.

SALLY: *Game of Thrones* podcast. What on earth would *I* have to say?

EMILY: Speaking of *Game of Thrones*, the –

SALLY: I mean, we basically are, that's a good point. We basically are reading *Game of Thrones* right now with Elayne's point of view.

EMILY: Yeah, that's true. Plus – like, I mean, at the end of last chapter, which we summarized without reading, Elayne says, "I always pay my debts." You know, like the –

SALLY: Fucking, what's his name? Tywin Lannister.

EMILY: Yeah, or like any of the – isn't that their, like, house motto?

SALLY: Yeah, the Lannisters always pay their debts. A Lannister always pays his debts or something like that.

EMILY: It would be so funny if every family just in the world had, like, a dumb motto.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Juchaus...[laughing] consider themselves superior to everyone else.

SALLY: I think my family's would be: bad genes [laughs].

EMILY: Bad genes.

SALLY: Not – genes, g-e-n-e-s [laughing] not j-e-a-n-s.

EMILY: Yeah [laughing], you guys have good jeans, denim jeans.

SALLY: [laughing] Good denim jeans, bad genetic material.

EMILY: Bad genetic materials.

SALLY: That's what ours would be.

EMILY: Juchaus, intellectually elitist since...whenever. I don't know. Quite a while.

SALLY: I think – my maternal grandfather was very into family history. I feel like he's probably tracked down what my mom's family's actual motto was back in the –

EMILY: Oh, that's nice.

SALLY: In the England times. I don't know what it is.

EMILY: All I know was that we were Luddites.

SALLY: Nice.

EMILY: You know, the people who broke machinery because it was taking their jobs. And I wish we'd kept that attitude, you know.

SALLY: Yeah, listen.

EMILY: Be a little more on the side of the worker's revolution.

SALLY: Billionaires own a lot of things that you can break or burn. You didn't hear that from me [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah, that's not a suggestion, that's just a fact. It's just a fact [laughs].

SALLY: He owns – He [laughs].

EMILY: He, *the* billionaire.

SALLY: [laughing] The billionaire.

EMILY: If you face smashed all the billionaires [laughing] together that's what he would be.

SALLY: HE.

EMILY: He would just look like a Caucasian blob.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: [laughing] Like the guy in *One-Punch Man*

SALLY: [rustling while Sally laughs silently]

EMILY: [laughing] Caucasian Blob sounds like a horror movie.

SALLY: Caucasian blob. Oh my Christ. [laughing] *One-Punch Man* really got me [laughs].

EMILY: I haven't watched it. I just know his character design. Like an egg.

SALLY: Yeah his character design is pretty funny. He loses all his hair because he trains too hard. That's, like, canon.

EMILY: [laughs] It's like –

SALLY: [laughs loudly]

EMILY: Training induced alopecia?

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah, basically.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: The –

EMILY: I would think that it's like he punches so hard his hair can't keep up with him, or something.

SALLY: Um, if I remembering correctly he had – the whole thing is like everyone's like, "How did you get so strong, One-Punch Man?" And he's like, "This is my workout." And it's like one hundred push-ups a day, one hundred sit-ups a day, run, like, five miles a day. And they're like, "There's no way that has made you the strongest man alive."

EMILY: Yeah, I was like [loud crosstalk] that doesn't feel like very much [laughs].

SALLY: And he's like, "No." And he's like, "No, I'm serious. This is the workout I did for like a year and now I'm the strongest man in the universe. I, like, punched an alien ship into pieces." And they're like, "This is ridiculous." And he's like, "Yeah, as I was training all my hair fell off." And in the flashbacks he's got this, like, horrible mop of black hair.

EMILY: Oh no. BLEGH.

SALLY: So, yeah. I think a – if you, yeah, smash all the billionaires together, One-Punch Man Caucasian blob.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Bald because Jeffrey Bezos isn't bringing any hair to the table.

EMILY: Yeah, there would maybe be, like, three wisps.

SALLY: [whispers] That tracks.

EMILY: And it would be white or gray because they're all old.

SALLY: Anyway, the best character in *One-Punch Man* is named Metal Bat and he – [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] Took a left turn.

SALLY: His thing is that he carries around a baseball bat and he hits people with his baseball bat.

EMILY: Sort of the Steve Harrington of the *One-Punch Man* universe.

SALLY: Yeah, Steve Harrington, Stiles Stilinski archetype.

EMILY: Stiles Stilinski. Yeah. You have to love a character that's like, "It's me and a baseball bat. What are you gonna do? It's just me, average Joe, against the forces of evil."

SALLY: Yeah. And my baseball bat.

EMILY: And my baseball bat. And I'm like, "Yeah, that would be me, probably."

SALLY: I don't think I could even exist in a horror-type universe.

EMILY: Oh, I mean, I don't think so, either. I'm not – I'm not final girl material, but.

SALLY: I mean, I don't even think I would be killed off first, I think I am like – something about me is intrinsically opposed to being in that universe. Like, I wouldn't even make it. God would be like, "No" [laughs].

EMILY: You'd just be like –

SALLY: Throw her in the trash. Throw that soul in the trash bin.

EMILY: You don't even think you could just be like a background character you know? Like someone at the school while the other children in the school are going on mysteries.

SALLY: No, because there's a chance I might be the one murdered, you know?

EMILY: Yeah. I guess you're right.

SALLY: There's always that chance and I just couldn't – I just couldn't do it.

EMILY: Okay, well.

SALLY: So, if you guys – think about that.

EMILY: I think I'd be killed off first.

SALLY: I also think –

EMILY: Mm. Or like second or third.

SALLY: Not to like [laughs] take this turn, but I also think that those survivor movies – survivor movies, horror movies, apocalypse movies do, like, a really bad job taking into account the disability experience.

EMILY: Mmm. Yeah.

SALLY: Like, if – I think about this often. I'll be on my walks in the morning and I'll be like – I have to wear my knee brace when I'm walking right now because I'm trying to re-condition after a knee injury, and I'm always like, "If I had to run from something right now, I'm like –" obviously I could take the knee brace off, but I still wouldn't be able to run very far because I have so many, um, debilitating things going on. And I wouldn't really be able to fight, so.

EMILY: Mm.

SALLY: I just don't think those types of genres really do a good job with that. It's always like you're hale and hearty and you still get attacked. It's – there's, like, no infrastructure around disability. I think. I'm not very familiar with the genre, but that's my take.

EMILY: No, I agree. I don't think there are really horror movie characters who are disabled. Unless you're, like, a lady who's blind.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: And then that's the, like, movie, you know? Or deaf.

SALLY: Right. Yeah, I mean, disabled characters do exist in those movies, but I think they're always either, like, disabled in the point where they have some of, like, magical ability. Like you are a blind prophetess or something. Or are kind of played off as, like, a freak, so to speak. I never think – I don't think there's just, like, someone on our main cast of characters who is disabled and who has to contend with that while also fighting for their life.

EMILY: Yeah, who's also just, like, on crutches or a wheelchair or something.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Yeah. It's too bad.

SALLY: So.

EMILY: Someone –

SALLY: Think on that a little bit!

EMILY: Think on that, horror movie directors. I guess there's, um, no, I mean, that sort of is what you're talking about. The whole point of *A – The Quiet Place* is that the main girl is deaf so her whole family speaks ASL, so that's how they're able to survive in the universe, but that's, like, very much a one off.

SALLY: I thought the whole point of *A Quiet Place* was that they had to speak in sign language because the monsters are attracted to sound.

EMILY: Yeah, but that's, like, why their family was equipped to communicate.

SALLY: Mm. Mm. Well that's interesting.

EMILY: Why they are survivors.

SALLY: That's interesting. I take – I take the rebuttal.

EMILY: No, I still think your overall point remains and I think *The* – is it *A Quiet Place* or *The Quiet Place*? I can't fucking remember.

SALLY: Google!

EMILY: I don't remember, either.

SALLY: I think it's *The Quiet Place*? I think. The – Quiet –

EMILY: *The Quiet Place*? I don't know.

SALLY: *The Quiet Place*. *A Quiet Place*. No, you're right. *A Quiet Place*.

EMILY: Who knows.

SALLY: John Krasinski and what's her face. Emily Blunt.

EMILY: Emily – Emily Blunt. Are they real life married?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Okay.

SALLY: Real life married.

EMILY: Real life married [laughs]. I don't – I don't know. I didn't like that movie, but not for that reason. I just didn't like it because a toddler dies in, like, the first three minutes.

SALLY: Oh, that is deeply upsetting.

EMILY: Spoiler. Yeah!

SALLY: No.

EMILY: And my whole family was like, "What's the problem?" And I was like –

SALLY: A child died.

EMILY: A child died. I'm sorry, that was my problem. That's my limit. Goodbye.

SALLY: Yeah. I – okay, we will talk about *Wheel at Time – Wheel – Wheel at Time* [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: We will talk about the *Wheel at Time*

EMILY: *The Wheel, The Time.*

SALLY: [laughs] *The Wheel, The – Too Wheel Too Time.*

EMILY: [laughs] *Too Wheel Too Time.*

SALLY: [laughing] Tokyo Drift. Um, uh. Not to make this Sally's Soapbox Day, but, um, I just really do – this is my just, like, throwing my support behind the concept of content warnings and trigger warnings and making them more, um, mainstream. Because, like, I – one, any child dying is, like, deeply upsetting, but also, like, my family had a very young child die and it was deeply traumatic. And my brother, Ian, the child's father, went to see *Thor: Love and Thunder*, and, like, the villain's – I have not seen the movie. But what he said was that the movie was extremely triggering because one of the open scenes is about the villain's child dying.

EMILY: Yeah, the precipitating event is that the little girl dies in his arms.

SALLY: And, um, I understand that that one in particular, a child dying, is not necessarily something people think about, because we don't like to think about it. Like, we think about content warnings more in the terms of, like, sexual assault or this is a deeply racist piece of

media, or whatever. Trying to give trigger warnings for that type of thing, but I think it's just, like – like I – Emily went to see it and she was like, “Do you want to come?” And one, I couldn't go because I was super sick that day and also, I don't really want to see that, because it's going to put me in a bad space. So, like, I'm glad I knew, but for all those people like my brother who didn't know. So, I don't know. Just some food for thought when you're thinking about things that could be potentially traumatic or if you're a creator, think about putting content warnings for that type of stuff on your work.

EMILY: Yeah, it's especially interesting because, um, like, there – there's a difference between really, extremely mainstream media like Thor.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And, like, horror movies.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: Where, to a certain extent, I feel like you are signing up for triggering content.

SALLY: Yeah, yeah. That's a good point, Emily.

EMILY: Um, I do feel like when you reach into the, like, bounds of horror movies, if you are having people who are like, “You should watch this,” which is what my family did to me with *Quiet Place*, then they maybe should have been like, “Here are some upsetting things that happen,” you know?

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: Whatever, but that's, again, it's a horror movie, you are sort of – what you see is what you get. This is why I read the Wikipedia summaries before horror movies before I ever engage with them. But, yeah, with mainstream media especially there's, like, traumatic things that happen all over the place that's just like – we're just like, “Ah, it's part of the movie.” You know, and if it's not – since it's not graphic then –

SALLY: Yeah, they're like, “Whatever.”

EMILY: We don't consider it a problem.

SALLY: Yeah. No, that's a fair point. There is a kind of contract of participation almost for different forms of media.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And that's not to say it's not worthwhile to have content warnings on horror movies, because, like, everyone has a different threshold. But, like, it is just, like, a totally different – there's just a lot to consider there. I find content warnings and trigger warnings very interesting.

I'm very pro-them, but I have a lot of trauma that I'm dealing with that I don't like to be sitting in a movie theater on a Saturday and suddenly be deeply triggered by *Thor: Love and Thunder*, you know?

EMILY: Yeah, you don't expect *Thor* to do that, but it can. Anything can.

SALLY: Anything can. Just some food for thought out of the Sally camp.

EMILY: It's just – like, things don't have to be graphic in order to be triggering. One of my favorite book series includes, like, a very traumatic thing that happened to one of the main characters and it's never, like, depicted.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: Even in flashback, really, but it still comes with lots of trigger warnings, because you're dealing so extensively with aftermath and the character's trauma that it's still triggering.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [sighs] Anyway.

SALLY: Anyway.

EMILY: Speaking of content warnings, I still –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] I mean, *Wheel of Time*, content warning. I'm also very irritated, the more we get into this series, and this just sort of goes back to what we were talking about two weeks ago, I guess, but I feel like this charac – this series really took a left turn in terms of how *much* – how graphic...

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: It was.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: And *Wheel of Time* is still not a very graphic text in terms of, like, sex or sexual violence. Um, it has always been incredibly violent. It has been doing that since Book Two at the very least. But, like, we suddenly here at the end of this series are dealing with all these rapist characters.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Or sexual harassers. Hatchetface point in – point –

SALLY: Hatchetface case in point.

EMILY: Yeah, [laughs] that's what I was trying to say. And I'm just like, "What happened, Robert – back at camp Robert Jordan?" Was he just like, "People will lose interest unless women are being threatened with rape." And it's like, oh. Maybe he read *Game of Thrones*.

SALLY: [laughs] And he was like, "Oh. I can do that?"

EMILY: "Oh, I can do that?"

SALLY: Hmm.

EMILY: Oh, worm?

SALLY: And here I will just pepper in some sexual assault.

EMILY: Just to –

SALLY: Because why not?

EMILY: Just to remind people that I hate women, as though you didn't know that already. Okay, I guess we have to talk about it. This – these two chapters include the infamous, absolutely infamous like six- or seven-page bath sequence in which Elayne and Aviendha just got back to the palace. They go up to have a bath and we just have to listen to – like, they're not, like, in the bath, but we have to listen to descriptions of all Elayne's maids, them being undressed, them getting into the water, how Aviendha's weird about water, how Aviendha's weird about being dressed. Meanwhile Elayne's just sort of thinking about things. Blahbidy blah blah blah. And it's like, seriously, let's see. [Pages turning] one, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight – eight and a half while they're in the bath. And it's like, a lot of that is Elayne thinking about things. She's thinking about Gawyn and Galad, because Birgitte is, like, giving a report while they're in the bath and we're not given the report verbatim, we're mostly getting Elayne's reactions to it. So she's like, "I wonder where Gawyn and Galad are. I wish they would – I hope they're safe."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And it's like, you don't need to spend three pages on that, but you do. And there's a reference to how there's a bunch of Aes Sedai in Caemlyn and everyone is convinced that it's the White Tower showing support for Elayne as queen. Elayne herself does not know what they're doing there. I, myself, [laugh] do not know what they're doing there. I don't know if it ever becomes relevant.

SALLY: I don't either.

EMILY: I just – it hasn't in *Knife of Dreams*, right?

SALLY: I don't think so. Oh – no. One of them, one of them, one of the, like, rotating cast of Aes Sedai comes to the Tower – the Tower – the palace and is like, "I'm going to be your advisor." And Elayne is like, "No," and that's all that happens as far as I know.

EMILY: So, for all we know, it is just a bunch of Aes Sedai who are like, "I have nowhere else to be, I'll just hang out in Caemlyn."

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: A city that's under siege.

SALLY: It's a sexy place to hang out, apparently.

EMILY: I mean, Elayne's like, "The siege doesn't effect Aes Sedai very much, because they're incredibly privileged."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It's like, once food starts running out you can bet the Aes Sedai aren't going to be going hungry.

SALLY: Yeah, Aes Sedai privilege. There's something to talk about.

EMILY: Yeah, they're so feared. Um, anyway, their bath – [laughs] this stupid ass bath is interrupted by the Sea Folk Windfinders.

SALLY: Can I say two quick things about the bath?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: One, um, like, eight pages really is so egregious. Like, I'm not opposed to giving characters rest periods. We've talked about this in the past, like, the idea that there are periods of great action in books and then there need to be, like, rest periods in order for characters, and the readers, to kind of, like, recover. But eight pages, man.

EMILY: There also hasn't been any intense action from which to recover from.

SALLY: That's true. That's true. That's true. Yeah, [unclear] be a moment where Elayne needs to recover so, like, have a paragraph talking about how she's taking a bath, you know?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Not eight pages.

EMILY: Yeah, Elayne maybe *does* need to recover because she's been doing some, like, stressful political things and the big beacon is stressing her out, but that's not something we, the readers, necessarily need to recover from.

SALLY: No, I also think it is absolutely ridiculous that Robert Jordan [laughs] – just, like, in terms of Elayne and Aviendha's deeply gay coded relationship to have them taking, like, literally like hers and hers baths, like all those erectile dysfunction commercials –

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Where they're on the porch in two clawfoot bathtubs next to each other. That's exactly what I thought of the whole time.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Just, like, this is so ridiculous, Robert. Like, I don't take baths with my female friends.

EMILY: Yeah, and Birgitte just watching over it all with her lesbian-ish gays [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, she's like, "Aww, look at these little sapphics."

EMILY: It's like, what? Bro?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I know. Robert Jordan really does not know how to have women interact in any sort of close settings.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: He's like, "Ah, well, obviously they bathe together, they sleep in the same bed, duh duh duh duh."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They share clothes. They share periods.

SALLY: [laughs] Share periods.

EMILY: And I'm like – [laughs] And I'm like, "I wore matching outfits with my best friend when I was ten."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I have not, since then, shared a bed with a woman except – with like a female friend, you know? Unless for some reason we were at a hotel where there was only one bed. There was only one bed.

SALLY: There was only one bed. Oh ho ho.

EMILY: Exactly.

SALLY: Yeah, it's just, like –

EMILY: I have never taken a bath with a friend. Or any other person [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, like no offense to people who like romantic baths, but baths are me time. That is a sacred time that I will not share with anybody.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: I refuse to.

EMILY: How can you relax unless you're alone, you know?

SALLY: [scoffs] Exactly, Emily.

EMILY: You crazies. Okay.

SALLY: Relax? With eight other people in the room?

EMILY: With people?

SALLY: While I'm naked? No.

EMILY: Okay.

SALLY: Okay, but her bath is interrupted.

EMILY: By the Windfinders who very Blackly shove Birgitte into the room and are super aggressive to anyone who tries to prevent them from entering the room. They just won't take no for an answer.

SALLY: It's like, Robert.

EMILY: They have no sense of decorum, courtesy, or human decency. Okay, Robert. We fucking get it.

SALLY: Yeah, in terms of, like, racism about the Sea Folk being angry Black women this is, like, one of the –

EMILY: One of the more egregious moments.

SALLY: Yeah, if I were to write an essay about Robert Jordan's racism –

EMILY: Yeah, this would be a peak one.

SALLY: Towards the Sea Folk, this would be a peak piece of evidence, because they are – Emily just laid it all out. They are so aggressive, they are *indecent* and *inhuman* and, like, they're literally – you can put it in the form of them assaulting Elayne in a very vulnerable situation. She's literally a naked white, strawberry blonde woman. And they're just like, "We need to talk to you *right now*."

EMILY: Yeah, like Birgitte exits the bathroom, because they hear all this commotion and yelling and then, like, as is pretty normal, pokes her head back in to tell them what's going on and, like, one of them just shoves her in so they can get past her.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And it's, like, okay. But then we're also – that, also the effect of that is to, like, um, infantilize Birgitte and Elayne's mostly – one hundred percent female guards to be like they can't handle a security breach.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Which, like, Elayne, once everything's calmed down, is like, "Don't let people in again." And it's like, they shouldn't have to begin with. That's what they're for.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: You know? You shouldn't have to, like, berate them. Robert Jordan just set it up so that you would have to. To humiliate them further.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: [sighs] Anyway, what the Windfinders, led by Zaida, are there to tell Elayne is urgent in Sea Folks, except that they then spend what seems to be a good hour bargaining with Elayne. So, it doesn't seem that urgent in hindsight. But they are there to tell her the, like, Wavemistress? Is that her name?

SALLY: Mm. Nesta.

EMILY: Nesta din Reas, who we met at – in *Crown of Swords*. She, like, interacted with the girls and also with Mat specifically. So, she was there when Ebou Dar was invaded. And the Sea Folk are now receiving word that she died in the Seanchan invasion, um, and so they now have to reconvene to elect a new Wavemistress. Um, and Zaida herself has high hopes for being the next

Wavemistress, and maybe she is. I don't remember. But anyway, she's come to Elayne to initiate bargaining, basically because she's like, "I now have power, in which I can just remove all of the Windfinders, which I know that you need in order to carry out your siege, effectively. Because some of them can Travel to open gateways for supplies." Um, and this is meant to be a moment of character...growth for Elayne, in that she, last time she bargained with the Sea Folk, got her ass handed to her. And here she seems to do a moderately good job, where she's like – it pretty much gets, like, how – what they were willing to give up, but we all got what we wanted in the end.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: She gets to keep some of the Windfinders and ensures that the Sea Folk don't just kidnap every stray Aes Sedai they come across in an effort to fulfill the bargain to have Aes Sedai teachers.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: They are going to kidnap Merilille, though.

SALLY: RIP, Merilille.

EMILY: Yeah, RIP, Merilille. And Elayne's like, "Okay, you have to bring her back if we need her." Meaning if we find out she's a fucking Black Ajah. And I'm like, "Just leave her there" [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: You hate these women so much it seems. Jeez.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And if I've learned anything about Black Ajah ladies being in captivity situations with aggressive, violent women it's that – I don't know, no one's happy except Robert Jordan who gets to depict a lot of torture and bondage?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [panicked laugh]

SALLY: It's not like Merilille would be having a good time.

EMILY: But what – I mean, Merilille is not a Darkfriend. I will remove her from the list. Spoiler alert.

SALLY: She is?

EMILY: She's not.

SALLY: Oh, yeah. She's not. No, I knew that. We got to the point where we figured out who everybody was.

EMILY: Oh, you figured it out? [bad British accent] Figured it out!

SALLY: Yeah, it happens when Elayne gets randomly kidnapped –

EMILY: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah!

SALLY: By a bunch of Black Ajah, because –

EMILY: Because she has to get kidnapped.

SALLY: She's the stupidest woman in the entire fucking world.

EMILY: I know. [whispers] We'll get to it.

SALLY: Like, I cannot believe that sequence happened. The whole time I was reading it I was like, "Surely."

EMILY: Surely you –

SALLY: "Surely there's going to be a reveal – "

EMILY: The pregnant Queen of England aren't going on a SWAT raid of a well-known –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Darkfriend.

SALLY: Yeah, a SWAT raid planned in about fifteen minutes flat.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And she's like, "Oh no, I'm totally doing this."

EMILY: And it's like, "Bitch?" [laughing]

SALLY: Are you...*kidding me?*

EMILY: Nope.

SALLY: Are you kidding me? And she's just like, "[nonsense vocalizing] It's me, Elayne. I'm literally so stupid and incompetent, but – "

EMILY: I hate her.

SALLY: “I’m blonde and pretty and white so I can get just away with it.”

EMILY: Anyway, the Sea Folk leave, which is a relief to us, the readers, at least, because we’re like, “Great, that’s one less thing to – that I fucking have to deal with.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They’re – what they got in exchange for leaving Windfinders is a piece of land on the river.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: That they can use to basically, like, build a port town.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And, you know, progress trade further into the continent. Which, like, great for them.

SALLY: Good for them. Yeah.

EMILY: Um, Elayne [sighs] and Aviendha then get dressed. We have another very long sequence in which they get dressed. Um, and Birgitte arrives, or someone arrives – Birgitte finds out that Dyelin has returned with several heads of major houses. As we said last episode, I think, there are tons of minor houses, but only nineteen major ones and Elayne needs a majority of major house backing in order to actually succeed the throne. For some reason, this is considered important enough that we, the readers, are meant to keep our own arithmetic of who is on Elayne’s side and who isn’t, rather than Robert Jordan just telling us occasionally.

SALLY: Yeah. Being like, “Here’s an accounting sheet. Pro Elayne.”

EMILY: Yeah, or him just being like, “Elayne still doesn’t have the majority. The end.” I’d be like, “Great, that’s literally all I need.”

SALLY: Okie dokie, Robert.

EMILY: [sighs] But if you’re behind, there are five or six houses that are, like, literally besieging Caemlyn, so those ones are definitely anti-Elayne. Then there’s a bunch who are neutral. Um, or who Dyelin is like, “Yeah, they’ll come around,” but they’ve been supporting Dyelin.

SALLY: Yeah, they want Dyelin to be queen. And you know what?

EMILY: They’re right.

SALLY: So do I.

EMILY: Yeah. But anyway, Elayne and Aviendha get dressed for a meeting with important heads of houses only to find out, what's this? It's a bunch of teenagers.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [clears throat]

SALLY: I would say between thirteen and sixteen or seventeen?

EMILY: The oldest boy is said to be sixteen or seventeen. The youngest boy isn't given a specific age, but I was gauging him at like ten or eleven.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: Because he's never given any description of being, like – he's just described as like a pretty, blond boy. And so I was kind of like, "Oh, he's pre-pubescent." I could be totally wrong, though. There's four of them. Three boys, a girl. The oldest boy is like sixteen or seventeen. Um, Elayne expects him to have an advisor, but the advisor as – it was basically like, "I hate this motherfucker. You deal with him, Elayne. He's so annoying." And he is annoying.

SALLY: [yawns] He's a total fuckhead.

EMILY: But let me make this clear. He's annoying in a totally normal sixteen-year-old boy way.

SALLY: Yeah, he's just like, "I'm invincible and you should listen to me." And it's like okay.

EMILY: Yeah, literally every sixteen-year-old boy you've ever met just behaves like that.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: What boggles the mind is that Elayne herself is only eighteen.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, I don't really know what –

SALLY: Is she really only eighteen?

EMILY: I think she is.

SALLY: No, that's right. For some reason –

EMILY: I get mixed up between her and Egg.

SALLY: Me too. Me too.

EMILY: They're both between eighteen and twenty.

SALLY: Yeah, for some reason, I thought Elayne is like nineteen or twenty here. But the point still holds. There's not a ton of difference between being eighteen, nineteen, and twenty. So when she's like, "These *fucking children*. What am I supposed to do with these fucking children? They have no idea what they're doing. How can they lead a house?" And it's like, you want to lead an entire country.

EMILY: Yeah, now you know how Dyelin feels about you one hundred percent of the time!

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: You idiot. Um, not that Robert Jordan himself, like, makes an effort to point that out.

SALLY: No.

EMILY: Elayne's hypocrisy there. He's just like, "Yeah, Elayne's totally justified in thinking these children are idiots." Um, the girl is fourteen, fifteen, is also super annoying, also in a super normal fourteen, fifteen-year-old girl way.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean, I feel like Robert Jordan makes a little bit more...bratty than necessary. Like, most – the – I don't know. Most teenagers in general are kind of bratty, so it's not totally off scope, but I just feel like he wants us to remember that she's a teenage girl and therefore she is a brat. Rather than being a teenager girl with a different type of personality.

EMILY: Yeah. A [laughs] normal teenage girl.

SALLY: Like a normal teenager girl who is occasionally a brat and occasionally just fine.

EMILY: Occasionally very lovely

SALLY: Yeah, but –

EMILY: Like pretty much all teenagers are. Surprise! People are human. They have more than three character traits at a time.

SALLY: No. Catlyn, Catalyn, whatever her name is. Her character traits are stupid, bratty...mean [laughs].

EMILY: Arrogant, maybe.

SALLY: Arrogant. Yeah.

EMILY: Um, then there are these two little boys. One, who I think is meant to be twelve or thirteen. He's pubescent, it seems, because she's checking out Birgitte's ass when she's in heels, which I don't know why Robert Jordan needs to tell us that.

SALLY: Yeah, it's, like, you don't need to do this.

EMILY: I assume everyone, man or woman, is checking out Birgitte's ass all of the time.

SALLY: She's very sexy.

EMILY: Because she's incredible and beautiful.

SALLY: Yeah, I would be like, "Damn. Look at that ass."

EMILY: Also, a totally normal thing for a twelve-year-old boy to do. As long as you're not fucking rude about it.

SALLY: Yeah, and, like, by all – by all appearances he's just, like, is normal about. He's just, like, looking.

EMILY: He's like, "Oh, a woman in heels. And trousers. I've never seen that before."

SALLY: Yeah, and she's also very pretty. It's just, like, totally fine. And Elayne has this comment where she's like, "Birgitte likes to be looked at by men, but it has to be grown men." And I'm like, okay, there's a point to be made there, but also, like, this weird way that in this instance they want to just villainize a totally normal expression of male sexuality.

EMILY: I know. It's very weird.

SALLY: Him just being like, "Oh, yeah. That's a pretty woman and I'm a thirteen-year-old boy. And I just don't really – I'm just looking."

EMILY: Yeah, he's just, like, Robert Jordan is setting it up for another gender – Gender Moments with Robert Jordan.

SALLY: [laughs, claps]

EMILY: [laughs] With rainbow font. He's, like, expecting it to be, like, we have to set this up for man: has normal expression of sexuality. Woman: totally overreacts. Because what Elayne is saying is that if Birgitte caught him she would slap him, basically. And I'm like, "If Birgitte caught a twelve-year-old boy looking at her, yeah, of course like a normal adult she would not be, like, into that."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Because that's –

SALLY: Gross.

EMILY: Terrible. But, like, it would also be totally abnormal for her to react violently to a child.

SALLY: Yeah. And there's also just this, like, deeper rhetoric of Robert being like, "You see? Women *always* overreact when men hit on them."

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And it's like, no. You are – you are drawing comparisons that are not even in the same realm of experiencing.

EMILY: And there's also an element of Birgitte's asking for it.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: Because she likes when adult men look at her.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: And she also wears trousers, which is, for some reason, such a sexually [laughs] – such a huge turn on. Duh, duh, duh, duh, duh.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Anyway, our last head of house is a little boy. The little blond boy, who, um is the most personable of all of them in that he's a little boy and knows he's a little boy.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But he is also moderately astute and has clearly been well-trained.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Elayne's like, "Great. He will go far in ten years from now."

SALLY: [laughs] Is he the one – is it him or the slightly older boy where Dyelin is like, "Yeah, everyone's kind of fighting over who should be his guardian, so I just kind of, like, took him away" [laughs].

EMILY: No, that's the slightly older boy. They all have hilarious –

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Excuses for their guardians to not be there. The older boy's just like, yeah they wanted to get rid of him. The middle boy is basically like, um, yeah the whole family was just fighting too much that Dyelin just kidnapped him casually. And Elayne's like, "[squeaking noises] You kidnapped him?" And Dyelin's like, "They won't even notice."

SALLY: "They won't even notice and he wanted to come!" And the boy's like, "Yeah, Dyelin helped me get here." And Dyelin's like, "What's a little kidnapping on a Tuesday, you know?"

EMILY: Yeah. And the little boy, his guardian just recently – is in, like, bedrest.

SALLY: Yeah, he's super old.

EMILY: Just some elderly ass man.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um.

SALLY: So funny.

EMILY: Let me be clear. It is totally unnecessary that we have personalities, even names for these characters.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Why we get a chapter about them is beyond me.

SALLY: They are not ultimately that important except that they are supporting Elayne.

EMILY: Yeah. They are there to support Elayne. It is kind of like, they're teens. They don't necessarily actually support Elayne in any way that matters.

SALLY: Yeah. Like, they bring some soldiers with them, but it's not like a huge amount. It's like a couple thousand. Which is a lot of soldiers, but when you're talking in terms of armies, that's not a terrible amount of soldiers.

EMILY: But yeah, the – that's just it. The chapter ends with the heads of houses being left to get set up in their rooms. Dyelin casually slut shames Birgitte. Um, just for fun, because Birgitte and Dyelin hate each other, and I guess that's just what Robert Jordan thinks should happen. And then the scene ends with someone coming in to be like, "Our two favorite characters, Rene Harfor and Halwin Norry, are here to talk to you Elayne." [sighs] And that's what happens.

SALLY: Yeah. That's what happens.

EMILY: And that's what happens. Just a lot of unnecessary content.

SALLY: Let's bring back our favorite game of –

EMILY: Yeah we haven't –

SALLY: Favorite character, least favorite character.

EMILY: Done it in a while.

SALLY: We're not very good at doing this.

EMILY: Yeah, we've forgotten the last couple. Um. Oh gosh. Well.

SALLY: I would say mine is Dyelin, for kidnapping, with his consent, a small child.

EMILY: Oh, for favorite character? I wasn't thinking about favorite characters.

SALLY: Yeah, sorry. Favorite character.

EMILY: I was just thinking about least favorite characters. Um, I guess my favorite character is, um, the small boy child, who [laughing] doesn't do anything wrong.

SALLY: Small boy child.

EMILY: [laughing] He's just there.

SALLY: Just like, "I am aware that I'm ten years old."

EMILY: He's just, "I'm here, ten years old, to play the political game. Sign me up."

SALLY: [intense voice] When you play the game of thrones [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah, he's very, um, who's the younger – who's the younger king in *Game of Thrones*, who's not a sociopath?

SALLY: God, what is his name?

EMILY: The little one who jumps out a window.

SALLY: Yeah, what is his name? [sighs]

EMILY: We'll never know. Least favorite characters. It's hard because there's so many and I don't want to enforce what Robert Jordan's doing with any of them, you know?

SALLY: I know. I want my least favorite character to be Robert Jordan.

EMILY: I know.

SALLY: I want to be – my least favorite character is as they are puppeted by Robert Jordan.

EMILY: Yeah, Robert Jordan you did fucked up. Stop. *Stop!* Stop it! Okay. That's it.

SALLY: That's it.

EMILY: Hey, thanks for listening. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. And to our Patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media. Um, just so you know, we're talking a bye week next week, because I am going to be on – what?

SALLY: I'm just patting you because you deserve a vacation.

EMILY: Oh, well some might call it a vacation, others might call it an extended babysitting retreat.

SALLY: Ohh, angel.

EMILY: Either way [laughing], I will be unavailable to record and edit the podcast. So, we'll just be gone that week, but then we'll be back in a little while. For yet more Caemlyn content.

SALLY: God, it, like, never ends.

EMILY: Yeah, that hot, off the presses Caemlyn content. And then, after that, we're heading over to Egg for also quite a lot time.

SALLY: Egg!

EMILY: Egg! Egg! Egg! Egg!

SALLY: Egg! Egg! Egg! Egg!

EMILY: Bill Nye the Science Guy.

SALLY: [deep voice] Bill Nye. I wonder if I could watch *Bill Nye the Science Guy* anywhere. I stand to have a [laughing] fifth grade science education.

EMILY: I have a fifth-grade science education, currently, and it's not doing me any good. All I know is that microplastics [laughs] are bad.

SALLY: There are microplastics everywhere.

EMILY: There sure are! Okay, do you have anything to add?

SALLY: I do not.

EMILY: Great. Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: Yeah. Today my boss joined a meeting that she didn't really need to join because she thinks I'm doing a bad job. So. And corrected everything I said in the meeting.

EMILY: Oh. Well! That's fun.

SALLY: I mean, it's because I was wrong. So, it's not like she was doing it maliciously. She wanted to ensure people got the right information, but, um, it felt real bad.

EMILY: My boss just ignored me repeatedly.

SALLY: Great so.

EMILY: That also felt real bad, so.

SALLY: Maybe...we stop working.

EMILY: Ah [laughs]. Yeah, okay. I'm down to clown. Unionize!

SALLY: Unionize!

EMILY: Asha'man, unionize!

SALLY: Ash'aman, unionize!

EMILY: [laughs] Goodbye everyone!

SALLY: Bye!