



Episode 223: The Santa Gene

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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: Okay.

SALLY: Okie dokie artichokie.

EMILY: This is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: And I am Sally Goodger.

EMILY: We're just jumping right in because we have big plans.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Watching [laughs] BTS videos.

SALLY: [laughs] Um, my friend Elise – our friend Elise I should say.

EMILY: Yeah. Our old roommate.

SALLY: Our old roommate. Elise was our roommate during the early days of EHR when we were recording in our Brooklyn apartment in New York City at the world's shittiest kitchen table.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: So she has sat through many EHR recordings and she is downstairs reliving those – those days while we record the podcast.

EMILY: The horror. Reliving the horror.

SALLY: Yeah. Being back –

EMILY: Real final girl shit.

SALLY: Hi, Tybalt! Ed is not here this week to purr into the microphone. At least not yet.

EMILY: Oh god, you guys. Yeah. Any moment he could appear. He has a – he has a way of mysteriously –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Showing up on his own schedule.

SALLY: But yeah, after this, not that, um, BTS is more important to me than you guys [laughs], but after this we do plan to watch BTS videos with Elise and get dinner. So, we've got [claps] to jump in.

EMILY: Yeah, and it's the freakin' weekend, baby.

SALLY: Yeah, it's the Thanksgiving weekend and I don't want any more obligations.

EMILY: Yeah, is what I'm done-zo. Am I even gonna edit this podcast? Probably not. Just gonna slap the intro at the beginning and be like, "Well, that's good."

SALLY: Welcome to the raw cut.

EMILY: Welcome to the raw cut. You get to hear all of our disgusting mouth noises.

SALLY: Sorry.

EMILY: [in a demonic voice] The mouth noises.

SALLY: Oh god.

EMILY: [laughs] Sorry I just really like my own Batman voice. Um, alright. It's the dreaded 'Perrin meets with the Seanchan' chapter. Um, and honestly there's not much meeting with the Seanchan. There's just a lot of, like, the group posturing that's involved.

SALLY: It's *so* stupid.

EMILY: Yeah, it's very, you know, silly. Um, I would almost have preferred if we would have skipped all of this and just got into Perrin already being with the Seanchan.

SALLY: Same.

EMILY: I think Robert Jordan's trying to do a narrative thing of, like, creating the scene where Perrin shakes hands with this Seanchan military leader, Tylee, to be like, "Look at how serious this is," but Robert Jordan doesn't really, like, treat it seriously beyond that imagery.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So it's difficult to get on board with.

SALLY: Yeah, there's definitely like the weight of it being like an actual – it should be functioning like you are making a deal with the devil.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: It should be a sort of 'you're at the crossroads, you're sacrificing a certain amount of *your soul* in order to get something that you want.'

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: That is the sort of, like, literary imagery that this scene fits into, but, like, the tone and the actual imagery of the scene do not fit that. So, it – the scene sits very weirdly with me.

EMILY: Yeah. I think it's – there's something in here about how Perrin's making a deal with not the worst people in the Seanchan empire.

SALLY: Mmm.

EMILY: You know? He's not dealing with anyone who's really high up in the hierarchy. Most of the people we've seen who are Seanchan who are really insufferable and sort of remind us that they are part of an empire built on slavery, are the *sul'dam* and *damane*, obviously.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But also these aristocrats like Suroth, Tuon herself, that guy back in Book Two that Rand killed.

SALLY: [softly] Oh yeah.

EMILY: Et cetera, et cetera. It's hard to really feel like these military guys are anything other than military guys.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: You know? There's a level of yeah, you know, people in charge of armies are the same everywhere.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, Tylee herself isn't – is just totally normal and personable, so is her little right hand dude, who's name escapes me.

SALLY: Same.

EMILY: But they've kind of got like a little buddy cop thing going on. Which is obviously not to say that people from bad systems of power can't individually be likable, but it seems like a very purposeful choice on Robert Jordan's part to be like, "Make this easy for Perrin." You know?

SALLY: Yeah. No, that's such a good point, Emily. I think that's exactly why this scene feels weird. Because to me, as a reader, I'm like, "This is disgusting. I can't believe he's doing this."

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: But Tylee rolls up and she's just, like, funny and charming and is just like, "Yeah. Gotta do what you've gotta do," type of attitude. And it's, like, oh she seems like a totally fine person.

EMILY: Yeah, she's, like, normal. Perrin proposes this deal and then she's like, "Oh, it seems like we can't keep our end of the bargain, so we're not going to hold you to yours."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And, like, you know, just totally normal human being interacting with other normal human beings. Except that [laughs], in the background there's a *sul'dam* petting a *damane*.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So there's this [laughing] element of like – it's like if you were – it's like if you were talking to someone and Princess Leia in a bikini is in the background with a chain around her neck, you know?

SALLY: Yeah. Like, what is *happening*?

EMILY: You'd be like, "Oh, it's really hard to get past this imagery, isn't it?"

SALLY: It's really hard to get past –

EMILY: Not for Perrin.

SALLY: The enslaver in the background. And Perrin's like, "That's not my business."

EMILY: "That's not my business. As long as you don't enslave any of my people that I'm actually overworking and enslaving." So.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Hmmm.

SALLY: Yeah, you – you can't have Grady.

EMILY: You can't have Grady and Neald. Apparently Neald can control the weather.

SALLY: Oh.

EMILY: That's, like, a little tidbit we learn in this chapter. He's – Perrin just mentions something about Neald being pretty good at working with weather. And I'm like, "Hmm. Fascinating."

SALLY: Yeah. Why have we not learned this before?

EMILY: I don't know. Neald has some weird talents out there, as you will learn in, um, *Towers of Midnight*, I believe.

SALLY: Nice. Sexy.

EMILY: Yeah, sexy.

SALLY: Something to look forward to.

EMILY: It is something to look forward to. The one good scene [laughing] in *Towers of Midnight*.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] Just kidding. There's *two* good scenes in *Towers of Midnight*. What am I saying?

SALLY: Good job, *Towers of Midnight*.

EMILY: It's to make up for the zero in *The Gathering Storm*.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] We have to have a, uh –

SALLY: [laughing] Big fat goose egg. The book is – there's so many pages and nothing of interest happens.

EMILY: I'm wracking my brains right now.

SALLY: [laughs loudly]

EMILY: [laughing] Trying to think of anything that happens in *The Gathering Storm*. I seriously can't think of it. I think the only good thing might be that Perrin isn't really in it [laughs].

SALLY: Oh. That is a win, but –

EMILY: But I don't know if you can count a negative. Can you?

SALLY: Yeah, it's not – it's not – it's like a win by absentia. It's not, like, [laughs] a good thing that happened.

EMILY: Christ. Anyway, to get to actual synopsis. We open with Perrin and his sort of usual group in the woods. They are waiting for the Seanchan to arrive. People keep being like, "They're not coming." And Perrin's like, "They're coming. Everyone just calm the fuck down." Um, Berelain is there. Her bodyguard dude does not want her to be there. She is pissed at Annoura.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Because Annoura was meeting with Masema behind her back. We have had – we have no further information on this. Presumably Annoura has maybe told her why she was meeting with Masema. Or maybe she doesn't know that's why Berelain is mad at her. Who knows? I don't know why Annoura is meeting with Masema, so.

SALLY: Yeah, that was one of my questions to you. Do we ever find out?

EMILY: Perhaps!

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: But I don't – I don't know. Aram has now been meeting with the Prophet and is parroting things that he says. He'll just be like [in a valley girl type voice], "Well the Prophet says that this is going to fail and the Seanchan won't help us." And Perrin's like, looks into the camera and is like, "For some reason I thought that Aram could hang out with Masema and not tell him every single thing that I'm doing."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And we're like, "Perrin...what about Aram led you to believe that he has, mm, good judgment?"

SALLY: Yeah! Like, homie.

EMILY: He's an idiot.

SALLY: He's –

EMILY: A grade A –

SALLY: A grade A dummy.

EMILY: I'd like to call him a himbo, but that was six books ago he was a himbo.

SALLY: Yeah, you have to have a certain level of, um, jolly to be a himbo.

EMILY: [laughs] Jolly.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: [laughs] You have to have the Santa Gene.

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah, I think that's fair!

EMILY: You're not a himbo unless you could theoretically take on the mantle of [laughs] Santa Claus, by killing Santa Claus [laughs].

SALLY: That's what all the himbos are secretly training for.

EMILY: [laughing] To be Santa.

SALLY: [laughing] To be Santa. Um, yeah, eventually they're going to usurp him. Um.

EMILY: You have to do something when you retire from being hot, I guess.

SALLY: Yeah. But yeah, Aram is – Perrin is just like, “I can't believe that Aram is falling for this.” And it's like, “You can't?”

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: It's one of the – I know we've already talked about this at length, but it is, like, one of the more ridiculous things about Perrin that he's like – obviously Aram is very susceptible to outside influence.

EMILY: To brainwashing. Radicalization. And then he's like, “What? Aram got radicalized? Who could have predicted this?” And it's like literally everything about his narrative and character.

SALLY: Yeah, it's one character decision – it's one characterization that Robert Jordan seems to sort of keep from beginning to end.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: [laughs] Incredibly.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Incredibly.

EMILY: Aram: incredibly susceptible to cults.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] And then Perrin's like, "What's this guy doing in a cult? I can't believe it."
[laughs]

SALLY: Yeah, like, if we were going to enter – if we had, like, a reality TV show style of *Wheel of Time*, Aram, like, his *Bachelor* tagline would be like Aram –

EMILY: Has been in six cults.

[both laugh]

SALLY: [laughing] Has been in six cults.

EMILY: [laughing] And every single time he goes through deprogramming and then just enters a cult again.

SALLY: [laughs] Enters another cult. And then be like, "Why does this keep happening?"

EMILY: He could be a character on *The White Lotus* on –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I'm watching *The White Lotus* and I just [laughs] keep thinking about it.

SALLY: I'm gonna have to watch it. I want to talk to you about it.

EMILY: Yeah, it's very fun.

SALLY: But, yeah, Aram is like, "The Prophet says this isn't going to work." But the Seanchan arrive.

EMILY: The Seanchan arrive. Another thing that has happened off screen, besides Aram meeting with the Prophet, is that Perrin has acquired a hammer.

SALLY: Oh yeah.

EMILY: Um, which he's now carrying in place of his ax. We just – to clarify, we haven't seen Perrin since the scene where he threw his ax at the tree and decided to, um, meet with the Seanchan because Tallanvor came back and offered it as a choice. And it's just, like, a little logistically confusing.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I think this is the same hammer he's had since Book Three that he got in that random blacksmith's shop, but then I'm like, "Has he seriously been lugging around a giant hammer for the last...eight books?"

SALLY: Yeah, this is – this is my problem Robert Jordan's ax versus hammer symbolism, is that Perrin is not carrying around a craftsman's hammer. He is carrying around, like, a full ass war hammer.

EMILY: A war hammer! There's a difference.

SALLY: Like he is carrying – it's just a different weapon.

EMILY: Yeah

SALLY: So, like, the symbolism doesn't work. He's got fucking Mjölnir walking around. It's not like he's got his little Jesus carpenter toolkit.

EMILY: Yeah, like, I don't know. I feel like a blacksmith's hammer is pretty visually different than a war hammer.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Perhaps I'm wrong about that, but, um –

SALLY: It's never described as just being, like, a tool hammer. Perrin's used it as a weapon before.

EMILY: Yeah, he, like, got it at a blacksmith's shop or whatever, but what does that mean? He also got his OG hammer in Master Luhan's blacksmith shop, and that was patently a war hammer. Um, yeah, I don't know.

SALLY: I just – It bothers me.

EMILY: Yeah, it's – it's just the underlying thing. There isn't really a difference between an ax and a hammer if you are using them the same way.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which is to kill people.

SALLY: Yeah, like, in a different context an ax is also just a tool.

EMILY: Yeah, the symbolism just falls apart completely.

SALLY: [laughing] It just doesn't make any sense.

EMILY: Like, homie. Yeah, like, an ax is, like, the first tool you get in Minecraft.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: So I don't know [laughs] what to tell you guys.

SALLY: Yeah, so Robert Jordan obviously was not following Minecraft logic.

EMILY: Yeah. Jesus Christ. And he should have been.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Would have made for better narrative. Anyway, that's just of note because, as Perrin and his coterie, which is like Berelain and then a bunch of their guards. They leave behind Grady and Annoura and a bunch of Two Rivers, like, marksmen. They ride out into this field to meet the Seanchan, who are similarly accompanied by a large group of soldiers. And they meet and Tylee looks at Perrin's eyes and his hammer and makes a comment about how he might be the Wolf King out of prophecies, who apparently carries a hammer. And she says something about the Fox marrying the Raven and she's like, "Oh, I don't know what that last part means, but the end days must be upon us." And it's, like, oh well. Yeah, Wolf King over here and Fox Man over there.

SALLY: Fox Man over there. I've got some bad news for you, Tylee.

EMILY: Yeah. The end days *are* upon us.

SALLY: [laughs] The end days are indeed upon us.

EMILY: And you will be judged [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [laughs] Or will you? If Robert Jordan is your god, then no. Um, but, uhhhhh, they have this little quibble about um – Perrin’s like, “Hm, you showed up with more people than we agreed.” And she’s like, “Yeah, so did you. What did you expect?” And he’s like, “Well, we should, you know, to gain trust, everyone should send away their extraneous guys.” And they’re like, “How are we gonna do that? If you go first, then, you know, we could double cross each other.” And he’s like, “Well, it’s in my best interest – like, I really want this. I’m the one that’s asking for something here. You guys don’t necessarily need me. So, it’s in my benefit for you to leave first and let me prove that by taking my dick out.” Just kidding. He has this, this stick that he, like, demonstrates how good his arrow boys can shoot. And then he throws it up in the air and Grady’s like, “Fireball!” [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] Fireball, fireball, fireball.

EMILY: Fireball! Which, like, pretty good range, Grady.

SALLY: Yeah, good job, Grady. As always.

EMILY: Yeah, and they’re like, “Oh, so you have Aes Sedai.” And the *sul’dam* that’s with them is like, “Uh, not Aes Sedai.” And they’re like, “[gasp] Asha’man.” And Perrin’s like, “Yes. Very sexy.”

SALLY: Yeah, they’re both – he’s very sexy. He’s very tired.

EMILY: And is – so tired. Poor Grady.

SALLY: I know.

EMILY: Poor Grady. But with that sort of out of the way, they send their people off and get down to the nitty gritty of talking about Malden. The Seanchan are interested in making this attack. They apparently don’t know the exact location, Perrin does. Um, Perrin gives them the information that they are not just dealing with a normal band of Shaido, but with the bulk of the Shaido Wise Ones who can channel.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And they’re like, “Oh. Oh, well then there’s no way we can fucking do that.” And Perrin’s like, “No, I have this plan. It involves forkroot. We just have to *get* a bunch of forkroot, which you can help us with.” And they’re like, “Okay, well, that quantity of forkroot no one would be able to get.” And he’s like, “No, no, no. I have this signed permission slip from Suroth,” and then they’re like, “How did – ? Who are you?”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And I’m like, “Was this – did this belong to Masema? Was that where it came from?”

SALLY: It might have.

EMILY: I couldn't figure it out. I couldn't remember.

SALLY: I can't remember, either. I know it was not given to Perrin.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: At least the best I can remember. It does not belong to Perrin.

EMILY: Well, it's not like he's ever met Suroth.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And she would be like, "Oh yeah." [laughs]

SALLY: Do whatever you want.

EMILY: [laughing] Do whatever the fuck you want. I wouldn't be surprised if *Mat* ended up with that.

SALLY: [laughing] I can do whatever I want.

EMILY: I can do whatever want.

SALLY: Mat Cauthon.

EMILY: I know. There's a surprising amount of, um, permission slips just floating around from all powerful women.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They're like, "Oh, yeah. These people are all access, baby. VIPs. Um, and the deal that is made between these people, um, is that they will assist each other in this fight. Perrin also promises to give up any claims to Manetheren, which is...important, we are lead to believe, because there's a big wind suddenly. So it's like, "Look! The Pattern is reacting to that." But it's, like, I don't really get how. Someone [laughs] else could make a claim to Manetheren, you know? You don't have to.

SALLY: Yeah, I don't really get it, either.

EMILY: He's just like, "I won't make a claim to Manetheren, so I guess that means Manetheren will be easier to conquer." And I'm like, "So does that mean you're, like, sacrificing all the people in Manetheren to the Seanchan?"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I just don't fully understand, because if that's the case then that's a much bigger fucking deal.

SALLY: Yeah, to just be, like, my home. The Two Rivers and all the surrounding –

EMILY: Yeah, is fucking open real estate.

SALLY: Villages. Yeah.

EMILY: You know?

SALLY: Just go take it. I don't give a shit about that and is like –

EMILY: Or is he just saying there's not going to be a kingdom there? But, like, again, that's just saying it's easier to conquer.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It's pretty messed up, you know?

SALLY: Yeah, when I first read it, I was like, "Oh, Perrin's just saying he won't do anything to stop them from going there." That's how I read it the first time I read it.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And I was like, "Ew."

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Ew.

EMILY: Because what are you relying on to stop them, then?

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Rand? Your whimsical little unreliable friend, who knows?

SALLY: Yeah. It's...gross.

EMILY: [clears throat] But that's the bulk of the deal. Tylee and her buddy are excited, you know? They're like, "Sweet. Let's do it." Then shake hands. We then switch over to Faile, who is standing attendance with some other *gai'shain* on Sevanna as she argues with Therava over Galina, who is – has had her head and eyebrows shaved [laughs]. I'm laughing because it's better than crying. Galina's just, you know, being tormented publicly, constantly. Just being beaten nonsensically all the time. She's naked blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Robert Jordan's walking advertisement for torture porn. Sevanna's, like, in her bathroom or whatever.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: With her boobs out. I realized I would want Sevanna to be played by Jennifer Coolidge.

SALLY: [laughs] That's such good casting.

EMILY: [laughs] I can really imagine Jennifer Coolidge bringing [laughs] her breathy voice. [breathy] "I will marry Rand al'Thor." [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, it's also funny the idea of Sevanna sort of having, like, crazy milf energy.

EMILY: Yeah! [laughs]

SALLY: [laughing] Of just being a little bit unhinged.

EMILY: Jennifer Coolidge is so good in all her roles at acting super unhinged.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And I just think that would make Sevanna make sense, suddenly, if she was played by Jennifer Coolidge.

SALLY: I'd be like, "Yeah...I get it."

EMILY: I'd be like, "Oh. Okay. I get it now."

SALLY: You're not very pretty.

BOTH, Emily in a breathy voice: And you're not very bright.

EMILY: [continues in the breathy voice] I'm glad we had this talk.

SALLY: [laughing] You do such a good impression of that line.

EMILY: [laughing]

SALLY: You just have her cadence down perfectly.

EMILY: [imitating Jennifer Coolidge] I'm glad we had this talk.

SALLY: [imitating Jennifer Coolidge] I'm glad we had this talk.

EMILY: Um [laughs]

SALLY: Jennifer Coolidge. A gift.

EMILY: An icon, truly. For the ages. Therava's basically like, "Okay, well we're getting – people wanna leave, you know?"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: "We don't want to stay here in Malden." And Sevanna's like, [breathy], "Well, I think we should stay in Malden because there's good soil and also I'm the king of the world here." And Therava's like, "Well, not for long because some homie just got approved to go to Rhudean. So he'll be back in about [laughs] seven months."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [laughing] Because it's not like he's Traveling. He's gotta go all the way back to the Aiel Waste.

SALLY: On foot.

EMILY: On foot. Um and Sevanna's like [whispering] "Why didn't you tell me? [breathy] No one told me of this?"

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Therava's like, "No, bitch. You don't tell the king that you're about to usurp him."

SALLY: Yeah. Also, you're not technically in charge.

EMILY: I know. She's like, [breathy] "I'm the chief." And they're like, "No, you're not. You're, like, the widow of the last chief." And she's like, "Well, I'm going to marry Rand al'Thor. Who's the *car'a'carn*, so then I'll be the chief of chief – then I'll be the chie – the wife chief" [laughs]. Wife chief.

SALLY: Chief wife.

EMILY: And they're like, "You are so crazy. Rand al'Thor's obviously not going to marry you." And she's like, "We'll see about that!" And takes her boobs out [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah. Have you seen my weapons, though?

EMILY: Have you seen them? Have you seen them?

SALLY: And everyone's like, "Yeah. We have."

EMILY: Yeah, we have. A lot, actually. You do very little to contain them.

SALLY: Yeah, they're –

EMILY: Sort of admirable, but also sort of unhinged.

SALLY: Yeah. They're just everywhere, really.

EMILY: Um, as this is going on we get the changing of the guard in the *gai'shain*. Um, so Faile and the others who are with her are relieved to go back to their tents. It's, like, raining so Faile's trying quickly to get back. We get a little update from her that she's accumulating more and more followers who have sworn fealty to her, which is sort of a problem, because, of course, the more people who get the more chances there are for someone to be unreliable and, you know, go running to Sevanna. So she's constantly like, "Well, if that person tries, I'll just have to kill them." [laughs] And I'm like, "Okay, bitch. Show me."

SALLY: Yeah. Prove it.

EMILY: Kill someone. Promises, promises.

SALLY: There's a lot of people threaten – threatening murder and not a lot of murder happening in *The Wheel of Time*, so.

EMILY: [sighs] Alas [laughs]. Um, as she's going back to her tent, Faile runs into a random Wise One who asks her, you know, for a report on what Sevanna's doing. As they're talking, there's a sort of bubble of evil that's just a ripple in the Pattern of sort of unreality. Uh, Faile can't really describe it, except that it's obviously upsetting and everyone's like, "Oh, I feel really...hazy and misty, misty almost for a minute."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, but they go back, Faile is talking to Alliandre, who is also being beaten frequently and is just like, "Keep your chin up, Alliandre!" And Alliandre is like, "Thank you for that advice." Um, some guys come to their tent. Um, who are the best characters in this fucking –

SALLY: I agree.

EMILY: Book, perhaps. It's just a dad and his son who were taken captive as *gai'shain*, they're from Malden and they have made multiple escape attempts and are improving in every escape attempt, so they're kind of, like, legends around the *gai'shain* camp, which I just think is really funny. It's like a dude and his fourteen-year-old son. His freakishly tall fourteen-year-old son.

SALLY: [laughs] Good for you, fourteen-year-old son.

EMILY: And they're just like, "Yeah, we're just trying to get back to our family. So."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Yeah. Whatever. And they have now successfully stolen the Oath Rod, which will guarantee Galina's help, supposedly.

SALLY: [whispers] It won't.

EMILY: It won't, but they hand that off to Faile, who is then distracted by Rolan's arrival, and they have the most heinous conversation of all time, with Rolan just putting flowers in Faile's hair throughout. And he's just, like, "Yeah, I'm thinking of leaving." And she's like, "Oh, like, worm? Where – well that would suck, because I'm constantly being threatened with rape and apparently everyone else is. I think Alliandre has been raped and we just have, you know, our little weird helpers who follow us and beat up anyone who tries to assault us."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And it's, like, that's not an ideal situation, obviously, because Rolan clearly seems to expect something.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: From it. Um, but he's like, "Yeah, we're basically getting sick of the Shaido and we'd rather just go live back in the Aiel Waste." And I'm like, "You could have made this decision, like, six months earlier, you hos." But he's like, "Yeah, I think that I'll take you with us and drop you off in the nearest town." And she's like, "Uh! [in a pouting voice] You made me think that you were gonna leave without us." And he's like, "Hehehe, just teasing." And it's, like, what is this fucking *Sex and the City* flirtation?

SALLY: Yeah, you're right. It has very Carrie Bradshaw vibes of somehow also being middle school vibes. But through adult people.

EMILY: Yeah. And also we're talking about something as serious and potentially life threatening as escape from this camp, you know? Basically a prison camp.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, I don't know guys. Just, like, get your tone correct. Robert Jordan's insistence on being like, "I'm going to throw in this subplot about Faile potentially wanting to have an affair in the prison camp plot," is, like, the most insane thing.

SALLY: Yeah [laughing], like tonally the idea of her, um, flirting in a prison camp.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: [laughs] Just feels a little –

EMILY: Robert Jordan's like, "I'll just sprinkle this in to lighten things up." And I'm like, "You don't – what?"

SALLY: You don't – shouldn't lighten up the plot about being in a prison camp.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: It's serious subject matter for a reason.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Um, and also it's not that Faile is – Robert Jordan seems to treat it as Faile potentially wanting to have an extramarital affair, it is about her walking a very fine line with this person who is stopping her from being raped.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Like, I – I – Robert Jordan just treats their relationship in such a weird way.

EMILY: Yeah, there's an element of blackmail to it.

SALLY: Sure, absolutely.

EMILY: That's never fully acknowledged by Faile.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Because at the same time that's going on, in the background Robert Joran has Faile being increasingly, like, twitterpated with Rolan's around.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which is, like, you know the feelings between people and their captors are complicated, but, like, this isn't the space for it, Robert Jordan. You have not given a lot of room here for nuance, so trying to build that in, if that is indeed what you're trying to do is not – this isn't the appropriate place for it.

SALLY: Not at *all*. It's so weird.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: It's – yeah. Um, we talked extensively about the types of dynamics – the idea of, like, to put it in, like, a very reductive kind of phrase, but I don't really know how else to say it, the idea of kind of, like, sex under occupation.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Is a very complicated issue. It's not as black and white as you are having consensual sex with your captors or you are being assaulted. Like, um –

EMILY: There's a huge gray area.

SALLY: Yeah, like, a lot of stuff is – is happening. Like, it becomes very complex. And we talked a lot about it in our We Don't Watch Outlander – which is the podcast we do over on our Patreon page – when we read *Phoenix Extravagant* by Yoon Ha Lee, so, um, I can't – I know we had a very good discussion and I don't think I'm going to do it justice, so I'm just going to say if you're interested in that, you can go check that out. We had a pretty extensive discussion about it. Obviously, trigger warnings for talking about assault, but just to kind of keep it more simple here at the podcast, because I also don't have, like, a ton of mental energy today to talk about why – to talk about *all* the issues here, but just to, like, reiterate what Emily said, it is a topic that requires a *ton* of nuance and a ton of, like, empathy towards women, and Robert Jordan has not built either of those things into this plot. And so, it's just not possible to have a productive conversation about it, and so *everything* that he's doing feels wildly offensive.

EMILY: Mm-hmm. Yeah, like, Faile breathes and I'm like, "Somehow this is offensive to me."

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: Because Robert Jordan is so fucking weird about this subplot.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Like, dude.

SALLY: Yeah, somehow her just walking around feels misogynistic [laughs], so.

EMILY: [laughing] Feels like a hate crime.

SALLY: Yeah, so a lot is going on and –

EMILY: None of it good.

SALLY: None of it good. So. But –

EMILY: So –

SALLY: Shout out to this fourteen-year-old. It's the fourteen-year-old son who gets the Oath Rod, right?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: He's like, "Yeah, I just snatched it."

EMILY: “Just – tent was open and I just walked right in there.” And I’m like, “Damn, son! MVP.”

SALLY: Yeah, this fucking regular, uh, Danny Ocean over here.

EMILY: Yeah, seriously.

SALLY: And Faile’s like, “I’ve been trying to get this for, like, months.” And he’s like, [valley girl voice] “What like it’s hard?”

EMILY: “What like it’s hard? Me, a fourteen-year-old boy?” [laughs]

SALLY: He’s my favorite character.

EMILY: But, yeah. This is our, um, you know, the grim news from the front. This is what Perrin must make a deal with the devil to rescue Faile from.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Because clearly she’s not getting out on her own. So, something has to be done externally, and it’s either gonna be Rolan or Perrin.

SALLY: And the *lengths* to which Robert Jordan goes to prove to us that Faile cannot get out of here on her own is absurd. Like, everything that happens when they’re finally like, “Okay, Galina, we’re ready to escape.” Like, *everything*, that happens is so nonsensical.

EMILY: I know.

SALLY: From them being trapped in a house with falling timbers [laughs].

EMILY: Like, Robert Jordan has been *out* to make Faile look as incompetent as possible from the beginning while also insisting she’s a very competent woman.

SALLY: Yep.

EMILY: And, like, you cannot have it both ways, bestie.

SALLY: You can’t!

EMILY: Like, pick one or the other.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And it’s just him undermining his own female characters, as usual.

SALLY: Constantly. It's just, like, a bunch of nonsense. But don't worry, because Perrin will arrive to arescue her – rescue her. In approximately seven hundred pages.

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah, so [laughs], so snuggle in and get comfortable.

SALLY: [laughs] We still have most of *Knife of Dreams* to get through – or, at least – maybe all of *Knife of Dreams* to get through until we get to the end.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Um, when we will finally have the attack on Malden. So.

EMILY: Jesus.

SALLY: And it's been so long that it doesn't even feel satisfying when it finally happens.

EMILY: Yeah, you're just like, "Woof. Glad that's over." Okay, next week we are moving into a lengthy Mat section. Uh, like, uh six or seven chapters of it.

SALLY: Wow.

EMILY: Before we get back to Perrin and Faile. So, uh, brace yourselves for a pivot to different offensive Robert Jordan material, but offensive all the same.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: At least there will be, like, cool horses?

SALLY: There's some cool horses.

EMILY: Cannons? Being developed?

SALLY: Cannons? Um.

EMILY: There's some bright spots in the dark.

SALLY: Noal's there.

EMILY: Noal's there. He sure is. But that's what's on the agenda. This is a short one today. Um enjoy your holidays as we enjoy ours.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Also, I just don't wanna talk about this shit right now.

SALLY: There's just, like, [sighs].

EMILY: I have to have – I have to celebrate. I have to give thanks tomorrow.

SALLY: What am I supposed to do?

EMILY: What I'm I to give thanks for?

SALLY: If we had to talk anymore about Robert Jordan not understanding the nuances of keeping someone enslaved.

EMILY: [gagging noises]

SALLY: I mean, obviously, there's not a ton of nuance. It's bad. But like [laughs] if you're going –

EMILY: [laughs] But Robert Jordan would have us believe that there's a lot of nuance.

SALLY: Yeah. There's a lot of *gray area*.

EMILY: Shut up, shut up!

SALLY: [laughs] And we're just – we just – we – we're not welcoming that into our day, today. We are choosing self-care.

EMILY: I reject that energy.

SALLY: Yeah. I'm putting it back out into – into the universe.

EMILY: Um, thanks for listening though. Thanks to our Patrons on Patreon, um, our followers on social media, and, uh, our – thanks to Glynna Mackenzie for our theme song.

SALLY: Oh yeah. Absolutely!

EMILY: Um, as a note, if Twitter happens to go down in the next few weeks, always a possibility these days, you can still find us on Instagram and on Tumblr.

SALLY: Yeah. Much less of a presence on Tumblr, um, but if Twitter goes down that will probably change.

EMILY: Probably change indeed.

SALLY: And also, I just wanted to say, in the light of, um, the shooting that happened in Colorado last week, um, where, uh, um a drag club was attacked by an active shooter, um, I know this is obviously not solving the problem, but I just wanted to send a reminder that any books that are purchased through our Bookshop.org page, um, we get 10% of that back, and then Emily and I then take that 10%, match it if we are able to, and then donate it to mutual aid and

direct aid requests, um, prioritizing Black and Indigenous trans people in the United States. Um, that is very important to both of us as members of the queer community, but also, trans people are some of the most attacked and marginalized people in our country for sure and potentially around the world, and we feel that that is very important. So if you feel really hopeless in the face of what happened, you are not alone, but there are some things you can do to – to, uh, help out the queer community in small ways.

EMILY: Yeah, things are getting worse, um, not just in terms of violence, but in active legislation.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: So, keep an eye on that, vote your asses off.

SALLY: Vote your asses off, organize, protect – speak up for the queer community.

EMILY: Don't fucking buy books from J.K. Rowling.

SALLY: Yeah, don't –

EMILY: I'll come to your house.

SALLY: Yeah, we will. And I will take your J.K. Rowling books –

EMILY: And that's not a nice thing. It won't be fun.

SALLY: It won't be pleasant. We'll beat you up.

EMILY: Under normal circumstances, you'd like me at your house. I'm very sexy and fun.

SALLY: That's true. She's a great house guest.

EMILY: But –

SALLY: She's a guest in my house every day [laughs].

EMILY: I pay half the rent. I'm a guest here!

SALLY: I knooow. It was just a dumb joke.

EMILY: God dammit.

SALLY: But no, we will come to your house and beat you up with your Harry Potter books.

EMILY: Yeah and I'll kill you.

SALLY: Threat.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] I'm not joking. That was a threat.

EMILY: Parentheses threat.

SALLY: Threat. Um.

EMILY: Okay everyone.

SALLY: Yeah, so sorry to end on a bit of a downer, but it's important to acknowledge the things that are happening.

EMILY: [laughing] *End* on a bit of a downer.

SALLY: You're right. You're right. This whole episode has been like violence against women, violence against the trans community, collaborate with fascist regimes.

EMILY: Welcome to the end of *The Wheel of Time* series.

SALLY: Yeah. Ugh. Um, and, as always, protect your mental health in whatever ways you need to.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: But that *includes* finding ways to, um, help your community. So.

EMILY: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

SALLY: Okay.

EMILY: Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: Yes. Oh man. I was, um, as you guys know I've been sick, and I was developing a lot of chest pain, so we went into the doctor. I'm fine, I've just developed inflammation in my chest that's very painful. And there's, like, nothing you can really do about it, so they gave me some, like, codeine cough syrup to pick up at the pharmacy at the clinic. So, I'm, like, there, my chest hurts, Emily is just sort of guiding me around the clinic, I look sad.

EMILY: [giggles]

SALLY: And exhausted and I go up to the counter to pick up my cough syrup, and some guy comes up to me and he's like, "Hi are you Sally?" And I was like, "Yes. Do you have my cough syrup?"

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: And he was like – [laughs] Because there was another person helping me so I'm like, "What's happening?" And he's like, "No, I'm so-and-so." And I was like, "Ah, fuck," you know? I know exactly who this is. We work together, um, in kind of a convoluted way. And he's like, "We've just been emailing and so I wanted to come and introduce myself." And I'm like, "This is so kind. This is, like, the most polite thing you could do and you're being so wonderful, but I feel like dogshit right now. And I don't want to have to be, like, professional Sally. I want to pick up my cough syrup and *leave!*" So, then I had to sit there and be like, "Blah, blah, blah. Grants."

EMILY: She sounded very professional from where I was sitting.

SALLY: Thank you.

EMILY: Fake it 'til you make it, people.

SALLY: But I was like, "Really? Why I am I being punished?"

EMILY: It really did feel like punishment.

SALLY: Thank you. It was just rough. So, um, *watch out* at your local pharmacy. You never know when one of your coworkers –

EMILY: [laughing] You never know when someone might know you.

SALLY: Yeah. God!

EMILY: Alright, everyone. Have a good week!

SALLY: Bye!