



Episode 243: Sleete Watch 2023

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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.

EMILY: Well if it isn't us.

SALLY: Yeah, hello, everyone.

EMILY: And *The Gathering Storm*.

SALLY: Welcome to, uh, Gawyn Trakand's treatise on masculine suffering.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [in a gravelly voice] Life's so hard! Do do do!

SALLY: So dumb. He was like, "Swords! Women who need my protection!"

EMILY: "I can only – I'm only at peace when I'm fighting with swords! [laughs]."

SALLY: [laughs] I was like –

EMILY: I was like, "Sounds a little gay to me, bro."

SALLY: Yeah. Sounds a little –

EMILY: Maybe –

SALLY: Something you want to tell us?

EMILY: Yeah, maybe you're repressing some shit.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Basically, go to therapy.

SALLY: Yeah, the whole chapter [laughs] I was trying so hard to be like, "Give him a little bit of the benefit of the doubt."

EMILY: No, he's awful.

SALLY: Ridiculous. Anyway.

EMILY: It's terrible. There are so many unhinged –

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, these chapters are a little...

EMILY: They're so...yeah.

SALLY: Disconnected from reality.

EMILY: I [blows lips twice]. I have it open so I can sort of go through them. I should have marked them, because I was like, "There are so many things here just to point out as...incredibly whack." Um, it's another three chapters.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: You know. We're just blitzing through this. Doing our best anyway.

SALLY: Yeah, this is not Gawyn Trakand's podcast.

EMILY: Oh yeah. Fuck yeah. It's, um, Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* podcast. [pause] I'm Emily Juchau [laughs].

SALLY: And I'm Sally Goodger.

EMILY: [laughs] I forgot. Soon to be Everybody Hates Gawyn, which, I believe, is more true than Everybody Hates Rand.

SALLY: Yeah. Anyway, Emily, tell us about all the, um, bizarre things that happen in these three chapters [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah, I feel like I'm in a fun house.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, the first is an, uh, an Egg point of view. A very long Egg point of view, where we find out that there's been a time skip? That time skip is consistent with Gawyn, but what we talked about last time with Perrin being off the timeline, basically what that – what that's done is thrown the entire timeline into doubt.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Typically when you read a book with multiple points of view, unless the project in some way states otherwise, you know? Like maybe it's a book about time travel or you know that you're skipping through timelines via subtext or whatever. Or paratext, excuse me. Like, you generally operate under the assumption that everyone's on the same timeline.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, when suddenly you're like, "Well this character's not." You're like, "Then where the fuck are we?"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Who the fuck – what's happening?

SALLY: I also, I think I mentioned this last time, unless somebody is telling me – I mean I, maybe this is me just being a dumb dumb, but unless somebody specifically is like, "Perrin is on a different timeline," I was like, "Well, Malden happened," like I said, "Malden happened on the same day that Rand lost his hand."

EMILY: [laughs] So Perrin's in the past.

SALLY: So, Perrin is...no, I was just like, I'll assume everyone is on the same timeline no matter what.

EMILY: I just can't – it bothers me so much, even though it doesn't really matter because most of these characters aren't interacting with each other.

SALLY: No, I think you are doing the correct thing of knowing when things are happening in books.

EMILY: [groaning]

SALLY: My point – what I'm trying to say is, like, Brandon and Robert seem to be going out of their way a little bit to indicate that we are on a separate timelines, but not in a way that is, like, clear enough to me, I will say, maybe I'm alone in this, but not in a way that is clear enough to me. So, if the fact that we are on multiple timelines matters, I'm not gonna pick up any of that.

EMILY: Yeah, I don't know if it does matter, which is my problem.

SALLY: No, I think you're right. I think it is weird and, um, makes the reading experience just a little bit...confusing.

EMILY: Mm-hmm. More confusing, one might say [laughs].

SALLY: More confusing.

EMILY: Anyway, we pick up with Egg who's like, "Yeah, it's been a fucking month in the White Tower," and I'm like, "That's so bizarre considering everything else that has happened to you up until this point was in the space of a week."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So, okay? You're telling me all the like, it's like she made all this progress in the space of a week and then when we pick up with her a month later, she's basically still at the same moment in terms of progress.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: You know, given the rate of progress in the first week, I expect her to have fully overthrown the White Tower at this point.

SALLY: In five weeks, yeah.

EMILY: But instead, she's still a Novice. Um, she's going to a meeting with one of the Aes Sedai. We get some pretty hilarious of her. She thinks of Gawyn for the first time in about – no, that's not true. Egg thinks about Gawyn every time *romance* comes up. And I think we're supposed to be charmed by that, but instead it's just annoying.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Because girl, like, you haven't seen him in, like, six months.

SALLY: Also, like...

EMILY: He's –

SALLY: Do better.

EMILY: He's a scrub.

SALLY: Do better! He is a scrub.

EMILY: Then [laughs] she's like, [laughing] finally Egg is like, "Oh my god, Halima's headaches disappeared as soon as I was in the White Tower. How weird is that? Why didn't I think of that?" And I'm like, "Girl," [laughs].

SALLY: I also don't know why you didn't think of that.

EMILY: Probably because Robert Jordan didn't want you to think about that.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: If that also helps.

SALLY: It is also strange that there's a month time skip and she's just like, seems like for the first time ruminating on the things that Siuan told her.

EMILY: Yeah. She's like, "Well, finally time to process this. In the month that I've been being beaten I haven't been able to." Anyway, she visits this woman named Bennae. Beignet, like the –

SALLY: [laughs] Beignet!

EMILY: Beignet, who's a woman from the Brown Ajah who does some, like, surface, you know, not really any in depth lessons slash testing and then very transparently asks Egg for advice on a situation she herself is going through. Which, forget being the Amyrlin Seat, why would you ever ask an eighteen-year-old for advice.

SALLY: Yeah, I do not understand this. Like, I – I – don't fucking correct me, you guys. [laughing] I understand from a plot perspective and, like, the tropes that we are working within why all the sudden Egg is, you know, the Young Pope. She's this sort of young –

EMILY: Yeah, this is meant to be the next logical step in her progression.

SALLY: Yeah, everyone is – she's – everyone is looking to her. She's such a natural leader. You know? Et cetera, et cetera. But it is...a wild decisions to be like – and this woman has met Egwene once?

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: And was like, "I guess I'll ask her for advice?"

EMILY: I also don't believe that asking the Amyrlin for advice is something that typically happens. We've never seen it before.

SALLY: Yeah, so –

EMILY: It's not like people were coming up to Siuan being like, "Hey, could you solve my problem with my coworker?"

SALLY: Yeah, Siuan would throw them over a balcony.

EMILY: Siuan would be like, “I don’t have time for this shit.”

SALLY: “Shut up.” Yeah, so then at that point is it supposed to be like everyone sees Egg as so politically savvy?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And it’s like, I know that we, the readers, see that, but from, like, an outside perspective, she is...being beaten seven times a day. I don’t – I don’t – I don’t know. I don’t.

EMILY: It’s ludicrous.

SALLY: I don’t know.

EMILY: It’s just completely –

SALLY: I don’t understand the way that people in the White Tower proper are starting to think of Egg.

EMILY: Yeah, the way that this woman behaves, Beignet [laughs], um, just makes me think that, like, this woman is extremely incompetent if she can’t figure out what to do on her own. I know that’s not necessarily true. Everyone always needs help figuring out what to do, but the effect of having her ask an eighteen-year-old Amyrlin, when we’ve never seen anyone ask the forty to eighty something year Amyrlins for help is like...girl.

SALLY: It’s very strange.

EMILY: I just think instead of it being a commentary on, like, Egg’s capabilities, it should be more of a commentary on how isolated all of the Aes Sedai are within the White Tower.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: That they’re just, like, scrambling for any – because Beignet’s problem is with her own Ajah.

SALLY: Uh-huh.

EMILY: Which I guess would be, would sort of limit her social circle given what’s going on, but, for whatever reason, we don’t do that.

SALLY: Yeah. And I think...there is some of that going on in this chapter, because Egg’s kind of whole warpath this chapter is how divided all the Ajahs are and the way that they’re spying on

each other and how this needs to be fixed. So, there is some of that, but my reading experience, the framing of it was that everyone was turning to Egg as the leader.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: So.

EMILY: Egg then visits another lady. Her name is Suana, she's from the Yellow Ajah and she's a Sitter, which Egg considers to be important. And she doesn't directly ask Egg for advice, but Egg kind of puts some feelers out and then ends up giving her advice. Basically being like, "You should probably start hanging out with Sitters from other Ajahs in order to set an example for everyone else." And Suana doesn't, like, have her beaten for it, so, again, that's progress. But again, it's like – this is just sort of more of the same in terms of Robert Jordan, and now Brandon Sanderson, enforcing the idea that women, particularly women who are supposed to be incredibly politically savvy, because that's what they've built their lives around, are, for some reason, unable to do the simplest things.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So [loudly flips page], fun.

SALLY: Yeah, just nother – another fun layer on that cake.

EMILY: Yeah. Egg then gets together with Meidani, who we last saw her telling Meidani to set up an appointment with her and apparently it's taken a full month. Um, Egg is like, "Why the fuck haven't you called for me before? What are you doing? Why are you talking to Elaida like this?" and basically Meidani is like, "I can't say." Which, what does that make me think of? Oh, it makes me think of that scene in *Fullmetal Alchemist* [laughs].

SALLY: Oh, yeah.

EMILY: When, um, Mustang was mining for, um, information regarding his friend's death and Colonel Armstrong – Alex Louis Armstrong is like, "Here, I'll give you some hints by letting you know that I cannot tell you the answer, because I've been ordered by someone higher ranking than you not to tell." Anyway, that was just – I kept hearing this in Alex Louis Armstrong's voice.

SALLY: [snorts, laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] Is what I'm trying to say.

SALLY: As everything should be. In Alex –

EMILY: Alex Louis Armstrong!

SALLY: I know. He's...a great voice.

EMILY: Anyway, Egg *deduces* that Meidani must be under some sort of oath and is like, “Can you tell me...what’s going on?” Meidani’s like, “No. Maybe I can show you.” And then they’re like, “Okay, well, we can’t get past the Red Ajah ladies who are standing guard over Egg unless we travel within the White Tower.” So Egg somehow shows Meidani the weave. I didn’t know you could do a weave when you were this, like, jumped up on forkroot.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, I thought you couldn’t even piece it together, was the idea. But.

SALLY: But, yeah, it’s – this is another thing that I don’t understand, is they say they want Egg on a low enough dose of forkroot that she can do her lessons, but not a high enough dose for her to be a threat. So, this raises a couple questions for me. One, my understanding was that forkroot was a relatively new introduction to this society. How do they understand the dosage so well?  
[laughs]

EMILY: The dosage, yeah [laughs].

SALLY: How are they not just, like, killing Novices?

EMILY: Where are the forkroot trials?

SALLY: laughing] Yeah.

EMILY: That medical drama.

SALLY: Was this a double-blind study? What’s going on in the Yellow Ajah [laughs]?

EMILY: [laughing] Was this peer reviewed?

SALLY: And two, I just, like, Traveling – and maybe this is kind of, like, the point. Traveling is presented as such a massive re-discovery. Is it actually a relatively simple weave, you know? Enough that Egg could just, like, do it with the – does it not require as much of the Power as *I’m* being made to believe it takes, based on things like Grady and Neald not being able to open gateways if they’re too tired, you know?

EMILY: Yeah. It seems – it’s a breakdown of the world’s logic that we’ve been presented. We’ve been told, like, only so many people can Travel. There are some people who just simply aren’t strong enough.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And I’m like, Egg says that she can’t fully make the gateway, she can just produce the weaves. And I’m having a hard time understanding what the difference is.



SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like...you can show someone how – the weaves, but then the weaves don't – that just doesn't make sense.

SALLY: Yeah. I am, I am, I am confused.

EMILY: Anyway, Meidani takes Egg to the basement where the Black Ajah hunters have been meeting. Like, conveniently there's a meeting going on right now.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And they're expecting Meidani. Um, they walk in. Everyone starts yelling at Meidani for betraying them. Everyone's like, "Shut up, Egg! You're just a child. We don't get –" and Egg has to assert her dominance through a variety of methods. Um, and is basically like – we again get the hypocrisy of Egg being like, "How dare you swear – have a woman swear fealty, or whatever, on the Oath Rod."

SALLY: Yeah, obedience.

EMILY: I can't believe you've done that.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They're like, "It was basically the only plan we had to make sure that she wouldn't betray us in some way." And Egg's like, "Yeah, I guess that makes sense, but it's still ethically wrong." And it's like Egg, girl.

SALLY: The call is coming from inside the house [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah. Look in a fucking mirror. Ahh! Um [laughs] and they're basically like, "Oh, we can't do anything to Egg, so we have to talk to her." Saerin is like, "Let me reason with you." And this is the most...horrific display of reasoning slash debate that I've ever seen. It's so, like, child-like. You can, like, see into the blueprint here of what Brandon Sanderson's trying to do to construct this dialogue and make Egg the "winner," quote unquote. It's just...you guys. Like, she's like, "I'm gonna reason with you." Egg's like, "Fine." She's says, "Alright. For one thing, you can't be Amyrlin. With that forkroot, you can barely channel." Why is that?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: That's so easily, like, so you have to be a, you have to be able to channel powerfully to be the Amyrlin? Like, there's just so many loopholes in that little argument and it's also just, like, stupid.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: I don't –

SALLY: No, it's like – I think we've talked about this before with these, like – I am so sorry that I keep using this fucking word – but these sort of, like, girlboss plots.

EMILY: Yeah, yeah.

SALLY: Of characters like Egg or Daenerys Targaryen where you see, you can, like Emily said, can see through to the blueprint –

EMILY: [laughs] Can see the Matrix as it were.

SALLY: Every situation is constructed in order for these young women to just be, like, powerful beyond their age and station and what people think of them. Smarter than what people think, incredibly intelligent, geniuses, political superstars. You can see how it's constructed in order for them to be this way. And, as I think we've also said, these plots can be very satisfying, if you're just like, "It's nice to get that hit of serotonin where everything goes right for a woman for once."

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah.

SALLY: But also, it starts to just feel a little...ridiculous?

EMILY: Yeah. It's also, like, in this particular argument, I have no idea why this is what Saerin starts with. The obvious argument here, which Egg of course also picks apart, is that you can't be an Amyrlin when there is already an Amyrlin. And Elaida was technically legally raised. The end.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: That's a compelling enough argument.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Egg of course is like, "Well, you know that one of the people at least who raised Elaida is Black Ajah, so therefore it's not legal." And everyone's like [grumbling].

SALLY: Oh fuck!

EMILY: Oh fuck. Do pe do pe do. And Egg's basically like, "Having the minimum standard, having the minimum amount of people vote on Elaida as Amyrlin makes it inherently open to question." And it's like, no one says like, "Well, that's true, but, like, the minimum exists for a reason. If it had to be something that was completely," – what's the word? – "unanimous."

SALLY: Unanimous.

EMILY: “Then it would be. But you can do things by a minimum consensus. Like, that’s part of the law. So.” No one actually gives any arguments to Egg that she can’t counter. We never actually have to see Egg even really challenged.

SALLY: Yeah –

EMILY: This all seems like she’s walking on, across – walking a straight line.

SALLY: Just breezing through this what should be very interesting and intricate political situation and we’re like, “Yes, there is a leader, who was elected and...no Egg is saying she is also the rightful leader.” And like why? Egg really doesn’t have a reason why except that, yes, Elaida deposed the former Amyrlin, but there were also some pretty valid reasons to get Suan Sanche out of office.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Though I disagree with the methods.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: So, rather than approaching it from that way, from a political situation that potentially has no easy answers.

EMILY: They’re just like, “Oh, it’s black and white. The Black Ajah literally was part of it, so therefore Egg is the rightful Amyrlin Seat.”

SALLY: Yeah. It’s like, “Hmm.”

EMILY: And it’s like you can also make an argument against that. How could Egg possibly be the Amyrlin Seat when she was elected of a governing body that was made up of only half of the Aes Sedai?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like representatives from only half of the Aes Sedai.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Like, there are just as many ways to pick it apart, but no one – but we can’t see Egg fail.

SALLY: Yes, of course not.

EMILY: Um.

SALLY: That wouldn’t be very cool and feminist.

EMILY: [laughs] That wouldn't be very girlboss.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Anyway, the other thing about this is that all of these women have completely lost their personalities. And I say that, I know that Robert Jordan gave them the most surface level personalities to begin with.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: But we've lost even that. One of these women, I can't remember if it was Yukiri or Doesine, was constantly cussing.

SALLY: Mmm. Yeah.

EMILY: No one does that. One of these women was, like, so timid she was constantly fainting or throwing up in a corner. Whereas one of them was kind of the right hand woman to Pevara, you know, really forceful and in charge. And it's just, like, nothing.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: These are just names.

SALLY: They're very much serving a sort of singular function here. They have a very chorus-like function.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Which is fine, I guess. I also think this whole group loses something without Pevara being there.

EMILY: Yeah. She was great.

SALLY: Pevara was great and she was also kind of the driving force behind all of this. I don't know. I just miss her, I think.

EMILY: Yeah. Egg, after, like, demanding answers, being like, "How did this happen?" leaves without any of those answers. Is just like, "Well, I'm in charge now. Bye!" And everyone's like, "Okay! Guess we've been outsmarted by a twelve-year-old."

SALLY: [laughs] Also, like, Meidani also very quickly swears her allegiance to Egg.

EMILY: Yeah. And is just like, "I can't believe that happened." Which is again, like, *ta'veren* stuff. It's weird that Egg isn't *ta'veren*, but it's also, like...what's the feminine version of a *ta'veren*? Girlboss.

SALLY: Girlboss.

EMILY: I don't know.

SALLY: You just gotta be so bossy.

EMILY: She's twelve years old.

SALLY: She's twelve years old.

EMILY: There's an ongoing joke in that second book in the – the one after *Gideon the Ninth* where the main narrator is like an eighteen-year-old and the, like, thousand-year-old people around her keep being like – just decreasing her age every time [laughing] they talk about her. Until at the end they're like, "She's three years old."

SALLY: That's good. That's really good.

EMILY: We then [laughs] – ugh, to Gawyn.

SALLY: She's three years old.

EMILY: It's so terrible.

SALLY: I just feel like we don't even need to talk about it. Gawyn is like, "I feel best when I'm fighting with swords, because with swords there's a clear answer. You kill your opponent or you die."

EMILY: And I'm like, "That's not really like...so that doesn't keep you up at night?"

SALLY: Yeah. So, like, murder?

EMILY: So that's cool?

SALLY: Murder doesn't bother you as much as you're proclaiming that it does? I don't understand. And there's this, like, weird sidebar where we get the whole backstory for some random dude.

EMILY: For this random dude named Sleete.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: I don't give a fuck about Sleete. Why are you introducing Sleete at this point in the narrative?

SALLY: [laughs] He's like a *Metal Gear Solid* character. This is Sleete.

EMILY: Yeah. This is Sleete [grumbling noises].

SALLY: And he's just, like, a Lan substitute, basically.

EMILY: He's literally just Lan. Yeah.

SALLY: [laughing] And I'm like, "Why is he here?"

EMILY: Sleete serves exactly one function, which is to give Gawyn a lesson about trusting your partner, which neither Gawyn nor, it seems, the authors internalize [laughs]. Like, Sleete's whole this is that he was at Dumai's Wells and the he was abandoned, wounded and he had to fight his way back, you know *Taken* style.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: John Wick style back to his Aes Sedai to whom he's bonded. And he's talking to Gawyn about it and he's like, "Listen, like, my Aes Sedai didn't abandon me. Like, she knew I was out there, and we trusted each other to, like, take care of ourselves, essentially. If she thought I was in real danger then she would have come back for me. But sometimes you just have to, like, trust your partner."

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: "And trust in their abilities." And then literally a page later we have Gawyn hear that Egg is in danger and immediately run off to rescue her.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, I mean, it's just bad. It's, like, I don't think – clearly he didn't get that.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: The lesson I got from that was not what Gawyn got from that, but what's more troubling is I don't think that's the lesson the authors were trying to tell us.

SALLY: Yeah, I don't – I don't – the more that we deconstruct this the more I'm like, "I do not understand the structure of this chapter at all." Like what is the point of Sleete...Sleete [laughs].

EMILY: Sleete .

SALLY: S-L-E-E-T-E.

EMILY: Yeah, there's an 'E' at the end just so you know this came from Fantasy Name Generator not a weather generator.

SALLY: [laughs] My character Rain, Sleete, Snow, and Hail. The Four Horsemen of the Post Office.

EMILY: He's literally *Final Fantasy*. This is the Squeakquel – this is Cloud's younger brother Sleete [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, he carries a regular sized sword.

EMILY: Yeah [laughs].

SALLY: Or, like, a very big gun.

EMILY: [laughing] Or an even bigger sword.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] Somehow.

SALLY: Um.

EMILY: This is my sword that's the size of Australia.

SALLY: [laughs] And I'm just – I'm three years old. Um, so, yeah. I...I don't understand...how this chapter is set up. Um, because, yeah, like Emily said, Sleete – I cannot take myself seriously right now – Sleete gives this lesson about trusting your Aes Sedai and trusting that, you know, Aes Sedai can make good decisions when it's the right one.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: You know? And Gawyn seems to just be like, "Well, that was weird."

EMILY: "Well, that was odd. I don't know why he told me that."

SALLY: And then he, like, walks around his camp for a little while, hears that Egg is in the White Tower – he learns for the first time that she's been raised Amyrlin for the rebels.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Learns that she's in the White Tower and is like, she's being tortured. They reference, Katherine, I think, is here? Right?

EMILY: Yeah, it's Katherine, who got there via Traveling. So, we can assume that Elaida taught it to her, since we know Egg hasn't been [laughs] teaching people, except Meidani, I guess.

SALLY: Yeah and she's like, "Pinky promise that you're not going to teach anybody else."

EMILY: Yeah. And it's like, girl.

SALLY: He hears the say something about how Egg is being beaten and he's like, "Oh my god, she's being tortured and she's going to be stilled and executed." And, like, I totally understanding hearing, like, your – they're not even really partnered at this point, but for the benefit of Gawyn I'll be like hearing that your partner has been captured.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Taken, potentially being tortured, that's very scary. So, like, I will say that he has no idea that Egg is, like, on her...spy mission.

EMILY: Girlboss arc.

SALLY: So, like –

EMILY: Yeah, he's operating on a minimum of information here.

SALLY: Yeah, so I get *that*. I do understand that decision. Totally fair and valid, I guess. I do understand his reasoning, I just – again, I'm trying to give him the benefit of the doubt here, I just don't, like, understand. I don't know. I guess I just don't like it, is maybe what I'm trying to say. Is I don't like this arc for him. I don't like this, like we talked about, he's just abandoning everything he's built over the last two and a half years to just like – he's like, "I finally know where my loyalties lie," or whatever.

EMILY: I think what's troubling about this arc, for me at least, is that it does not challenge Gawyn in any way. We are operating solidly within his comfort zone, which is rescuing women.

SALLY: Mm!

EMILY: Um, Gawyn's not actually having to do anything that will, um, force him to think harder about the person that he is. Brandon Sanderson will give it his best shot, I guess, to have Gawyn be this sort of introspective person who...meditates on the sorts of things he's done, but it's not, like, it's not even like Gawyn comes out of this the other end and is, "I was wrong about what I did when the White Tower split." Because there's an inherent irony here about Egwene, an Amyrlin who Gawyn thinks is about to be violently deposed. He's now against that, but he fully supported it with Siuan and, in fact, contributed to the violence a great deal.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, so, yeah, it's just, like, there's not a lot of – yeah, the rationale makes sense, but I guess what bothers me is that in a few chapters he's going to get with Gareth Bryne or whatever and Gareth Bryne will be like, "She's fine." And Gawyn will be like, "I refuse to believe that."

SALLY: Yeah. Yes, I think what is also bothering me is we literally just left this exact same plot with Perrin and Faile.



EMILY: Ooh. Yeah. Solid [laughs]. Solid point.

SALLY: Like, Perrin hears that his partner – his wife. [Borat voice] His wife.

EMILY: [Borat voice] My wife!

SALLY: Has been taken and unknown horrors are happening to her, which, again, I get that. That is very troubling. And he just, like, carves a fucking gash through the middle of the continent [a loud car can be heard in the background]. Is that the car that scared the cats?

EMILY: Maybe. Yeah.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And me! Don't forget me, god.

SALLY: [laughing] You're right. I'm sorry. How dare I? Only thinking of my sons. Um, but, yeah, not to, like, beat the dead horse. We literally just left this plot with Perrin and Faile, and I'm sure Brandon was aware of the criticism of how horrific that plot was for everybody. Maybe not for the feminist reasons.

EMILY: [laughs] He just knew it was boring.

SALLY: Yeah. And so he's like, "Maybe I'll just spice it up a little bit." But, yeah, it's just a re – it's a...restating an upholding of this series, you know, one of its main themes, which is that women – *men* do need to rescue women. That women cannot handle any situation by themselves and I'm sick of it, you know?

EMILY: Yeah. For sure, for sure. Less we be accused of picking on Egwene for being OP and not doing the same for a male character.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Gawyn has way too many sword skills.

SALLY: Unbelieve – an unbelievable amount.

EMILY: It's similar – it's pretty similar to Rand. I just don't know what to tell you guys, but, like, all things being somewhat equal, you simply cannot defeat two people who are ganging up on you and who are much more experienced than you.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: I don't care how much you've practiced blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

SALLY: Yeah, it also says he defeats them three times in a row, which, like, statistically seems improbable.

EMILY: Yeah, it's not just, like, this is a cool new thing that's happening for Gawyn. It's, like, he's regularly beating guys into two on one sparring matches. Guys who are much more experienced than him.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And also have the, like, Warder superpower skillset, which Gawyn does not.

SALLY: Yeah. It is ridiculous. It is so stupid.

EMILY: It's...silly. I don't know why we are doing this with swords of all reasons. It's like we're trying to find a corollary between the girls having mega power with the One Power, so Gawyn and Galad and all the other sword boys have to be mega good at swords. And it's, like, dude, you're twenty.

SALLY: Yeah! Like, It's just, like, this, like, prodigy effect across the continent that gets really old. Like, it's so much more satisfying to watch a character build a skillset over time. Like, we just watched the most recent episode of *Ted Lasso*.

EMILY: Mm yeah.

SALLY: And we got to watch the soccer boys put, you know, to work three seasons worth of effort.

EMILY: Very satisfying.

SALLY: Sorry, it's the only example I can think of off the top of my head. Not that *Ted Lasso* isn't a great show. I don't know. It –

EMILY: Just, I guess, the literal only person I would buy being better than slightly above average with their chosen weapon is Mat, because he has thousands of years of experience in a young man's body.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which are, like, the two advantages, you know?

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: The – you always get in fights between young guys and old guys it's, like, speed versus experience, you know? And it's, like, well Mat has both.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Gawyn only has one and he's against two guys.

SALLY: He's against two guys, one of whom is basically –

EMILY: One of whom is John Wick.

SALLY: Yeah, one of them, John Wick.

EMILY: You're telling me John Wick –

SALLY: John Wick wouldn't *whoop* Gawyn's ass?

EMILY: Would lose to a twink? Are you fucking kidding me?

SALLY: Are you joking?

EMILY: God damn it.

SALLY: That's the whole plot of the most recent movie.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: [laughs] Anyway.

EMILY: [laughing] Stupid French twink.

SALLY: [laughs] I mean Bill Skarsgård gave a performance, that's for sure.

EMILY: Certainly did.

SALLY: Um, so, Gawyn, as per usual, is ridiculous, overpowered, self-flagellating, masculine fantasy, misogynistic, militarized little loser.

EMILY: Yeah, lest we think for even a second that Gawyn is any kind of loser, he's offered – in this chapter Sleete is like, "Hey, do you want to be a Warder with me? Alongside my Aes Sedai?" So, like, Gawyn's a hot commodity! Lots of Aes Sedai would love to have him as a Warder blah, blah, blah blah, blah, but he's only for Egwene. [laughing] He's saving himself.

SALLY: He's saving himself for marriage.

EMILY: Purity –

SALLY: He's got a purity ring and it's got Egg's name on it.

EMILY: Yeah. God, stupid. Then, he sneaks off to go, again, he just leaves his entire army behind. Is like, “Fuck these guys.”

SALLY: Which, again, remember when Perrin did this two books ago?

EMILY: Yeah, well –

SALLY: What’s happening?!

EMILY: It all worked out for Perrin, so I don’t know why it wouldn’t work out for Gawyn.

SALLY: You’re so right. Why wouldn’t – why wouldn’t Gawyn get everything he wanted, because he’s doing the most important thing you can do in life, which is –

EMILY: Saving women.

SALLY: Save women.

EMILY: Every – Perrin has had no ill effects of anything that he did, except being mild – moderately troubled in his heart.

SALLY: Being like, “You know what? That was…”

EMILY: Which, I hate to tell you guys, that’s a small price to pay.

SALLY: Yeah, having a little bit of guilt, a little bit of weird feeling.

EMILY: Aram’s dead.

SALLY: Yeah, Aram died. So did like tens of other –

EMILY: Who knows what happens to fucking Sleete.

SALLY: [scoffs] Do we ever see him again? Do you know?

EMILY: I don’t remember [laughs].

SALLY: We’ll be on Sleete Watch.

EMILY: [laughing] Why in the world would I remember Sleete?

SALLY: Sleete Watch 2023 [laughs].

EMILY: Besides the fact that he has the world’s best name.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] This is a podcast about Sleete now.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, this is a Sleete fancast.

EMILY: Don't get it twisted. Sleete the man, not Sleete the weather event. Though, this book has much more about weather events than it does about Sleete

SALLY: Hi, Eddie!

EMILY: [groans]

SALLY: Welcome to the party.

EMILY: Yeah, hi, Ed. So anyway! No, you can't sit there. We then [crying noises] have Cadsuane.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Everything is trying to hurt me.

SALLY: This is really such a weird set of chapters.

EMILY: I know. It's just, meh, bully Emily o'clock.

SALLY: Hi. Don't purr into the microphone, please.

EMILY: Cadsuane is standing with Sorilea and Bair, inspecting Semirhage. Whereas we got a diminishment of the personality of, um, all the Aes Sedai – all the Black Ajah hunter ladies. Here we get some of Cadsuane's quirks turned up to eleven. She says 'phaw!' like six times.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And it's, like, no one does that.

SALLY: Phaw!

EMILY: Phaw! [makes an exasperated sound] I think that's what it's supposed to be.

SALLY: [buzzes lips]

EMILY: [buzzes lips] And I'm like this is – do you expect people to take a woman who does [buzzes lips loudly] constantly seriously?

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Pfft! Horsey face.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [deep voice] My name is Cadsuane Horse Face.

SALLY: Oh no. Ed, do you – do you want to sit with me? Or what do you want to do? You're kinda – your butt's on the microphone.

EMILY: Make a choice.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Make a choice, you dumbfuck. Ah! Anyway, Semirhage is now being sleep deprived, which, again is physical harm.

SALLY: Is torture, actually, I think –

EMILY: Lest you all forget.

SALLY: Technically in the laws.

EMILY: Like, why didn't Rand say, "Don't leave any marks on her?" That might have been a more accurate representation of what's going on.

SALLY: That might have been more what he meant.

EMILY: Unless we are to assume that Rand doesn't know what's going on, which is totally plausible. But, then, Rand is not following up, which is his fault. Anyway, they, like, untie Semirhage for a second so Sorilea can interface with her and Sorilea's basically like, "Aw, you know, I was expecting some sort of crazy monster and it's just a lady."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And Semirhage, like, seems to react to that slightly and Cadusane's like, "What could this mean? [grumbling]." Anyway, Sorilea's like, "Will you show me *it*?" [laughs] And Cadsuane's like, "Yeah, sure." [laughs] Um, and they go – this is just so that we can see where the male *a'dam* is and how it's trapped, so that when it inevitably gets out of its cage, um, we'll be able to see what's going on with that. Um, Cadsuane has it in, like, a special box with, for some reason she's holding the Choedan Kal key?

SALLY: Yeah, she also – I'm sorry, this is another, like, way too nitpicky. She calls this a document box, and then she says the "foot long Chodean Kal" is in her document box?

EMILY: What kind of documents do you have, Cadsuane?

SALLY: Unless I – unless the Choedan Kal is just, like, flat. [laughing] Unless it is, like, only two-dimensional I don't, I don't understand what this box is.

EMILY: Yeah, what – wot? Is it a shoe box?

SALLY: A document box should be like an eight and half by eleven...

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: [laughing] At most, like, two inches at most. I don't understand.

EMILY: It's my document box! It's bigger on the inside.

SALLY: Sorry, that's so dumb. Maybe it is. Maybe that's part of the thing.

EMILY: Um, [laughs] she has the Choedan Kal key, I believe, because she took it after the cleansing of *saidin* while Rand was unconscious, and just didn't give it back. Which seems like it would be a bigger issue in their relationship. Like, I feel like we would have heard beforehand if Rand was like, "And I'm just letting Cadsuane keep it, because I don't need it." You *might* need it.

SALLY: You might need it. Um, yeah, it's also, like, I don't know. This feels like a very loaded symbolic moment. Cadsuane is holding –

EMILY: The nuke.

SALLY: The nuke, well, yes. One, Cadsuane is holding the nuke, the thing that could make Rand even more powerful in such a dangerous way, in such a *big* way. Not even necessarily, you know, dangerous, though that's how the Choedan Kal is presented. She's also holding the thing that could control Rand.

EMILY: Yeah, so it's, like, holding – putting the launch codes and the missiles themselves in the same box.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: It's very weird.

SALLY: Yeah, it's very much like Cadsuane – like, it just is very much like Cadsuane is pulling the strings in a lot of ways and it's, like, I know? I know this.

EMILY: I do know this, but I also simply don't believe it.

SALLY: Yeah, and I just. I don't know. The symbolism, I don't know exactly what to make of it, but it feels quite loaded at this moment.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Especially because, at the end of this chapter, they're like, "We need to figure out how to make Rand do what we say more."

EMILY: And it's like, "Um...okay?"

SALLY: Cadsuane is also pissed that Rand will not let her put one – the male *a'dam* on one of the Asha'man to "try it out."

EMILY: Oh my goss – gosh. This literally, I almost had a stroke when Cadsuane was like, "It's just obvious, like, sense. I obviously put on an *a'dam* as soon as I got one and tried to make it work. To see if I, where *literal hundreds* of generations of women before me have failed."

SALLY: [laughing] If I could take it off myself.

EMILY: If I could do it, though! But I'm Cadsuane.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And I'm like, "You need – someone needs to poke a hole in your ego like it's a balloon."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: You stupid asshole.

SALLY: [laughs] Unbe – unbelievable.

EMILY: And yeah, Rand's like, "I won't let you do war crimes to my boys."

SALLY: To my soldier boys. I only I get to do that.

EMILY: It's literally the first time Rand has ever stood up for the Asha'man [laughs] and Cadsuane's like [growling noises].

SALLY: How dare you?

EMILY: I'm so mad about this!

SALLY: Rand's like, "You can dehumanize them in whatever way you want, but not this."

EMILY: Except for this one.

SALLY: Yeah.



EMILY: Yeah. So, just insane. It's all insane.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Sorilea and Cadsuane at the end are like, "Well, we must arrange a plan to make Rand less scary and insane." And I'm like, "I don't believe anything you guys will do will work."

SALLY: Have you considered some sort of, like, support and like emotional...aid?

EMILY: Have you guys heard of therapy?

SALLY: Yeah, that might be what I'm looking for.

EMILY: Have you guys heard of a support group?

SALLY: Yeah, could you maybe be like, "Hey, bud. How are you doing today?"

EMILY: Yeah, like, dude.

[pause]

SALLY: Are you good?

EMILY: What's the situation?

SALLY: Maybe bring him some food every now and then. Make sure he's eating?

EMILY: Yeah, get him some care. Guys, I don't know. I don't know. Anyway, those are those three chapters.

SALLY: Those are those three chapters, which truly do feel disconnected from the plane of logic.

EMILY: I know. I'm like, "What just happened to me?" I feel like I've been...

SALLY: There are so many ways to have made Gawyn's funnier. Like, what if they were like, "Oh my god. Galad's been taken."

EMILY: [sighs] Galad.

SALLY: And he was like [laughs], "I have to go save my brother."

EMILY: Gawyn added as one of his aspirations that he wants to be more like Galad. And I was like, "Hotter? You mean?"

SALLY: Yeah, you want to be sexier?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Because apparently, you're just as good at swords as he is.

EMILY: Yeah, there's nothing separating you guys.

SALLY: You want to have more of a moral compass?

EMILY: Okay, I would like if you had more of one too, except I don't know if you've noticed, but Galad joined the KKK, so clearly it's *wrong!*

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: It's a little – it needs a reset.

SALLY: Yeah, it's not pointing north at the moment. Um, yeah, I don't, I don't know.

EMILY: Anyway! I think we're only reading two chapters next time. I could be wrong, I don't remember, but if we are we've got a Rand slash Min slash Aviendha point of view including an exciting foray into the Rand v Morridin –

SALLY: Romance!

EMILY: Philosophy talk. Yeah, yeah. They fuck.

SALLY: Sexual tension.

EMILY: They fuck. I'm just gonna tell you guys right now.

SALLY: That's canon. Brandon did that for us.

EMILY: Spoilers, they get nasty [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] I mean they should. Rand has more sexual tension with Morridin than any of his three girlfriends.

EMILY: Yeah, they're in *tel* – Rand gets into *tel'aran'rhiod* and Morridin's standing there with, like, a placard, you know, like the *Love Actually* guy, but it just says, "How nasty do you want it?"

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I will accommodate.

SALLY: Do they literally go into *tel'aran'rhiod* and philosophize at each other?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: That's – [laughs]. Okay.

EMILY: It's stupid.

SALLY: Phaw!

EMILY: We'll rewrite it so that it's just them fucking. [laughs] And then we get a very long Egg point of view. Uh, in which her arc in the White Tower, according to her at least, will culminate.

SALLY: Does she stab Elaida in the neck?

EMILY: Sadly, no.

SALLY: Dang.

EMILY: So, in my opinion there is no culmination with Elaida un-shivved.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: That woman's still walking around without a screwdriver in her neck?

SALLY: I don't know. Plot doesn't feel quite resolved.

EMILY: Plot seems unresolved.

SALLY: I don't feel fully satisfied.

EMILY: Okay, well, thanks for listening. Um, thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song, thanks to our patrons on Patreon, and our followers on social media. Do you have anything to add?

SALLY: You guys are the best and we love you a lot.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Thanks for listening.

EMILY: For sure, for sure. Do you have a sign off? Oh, I have one.

SALLY: Lay it on me.

EMILY: [laughs] I think I've already told you this, but, uh, this last Sunday we had family dinner, so I was over at my parents' house. I was helping my sister get her boys into the car, they're ages about three and five. They had a little race to get to the car. The three-year-old obviously lost, because shorter legs. And he was pretty upset about that, so my sister, who is a bully, told him, "It's okay, Will. Do you know who else used to lose foot races all the time? Emmy."

SALLY: [laughs] Rude.

EMILY: [laughing]

SALLY: So rude [laughs]. Okay, don't go bully your younger sibling.

EMILY: Yeah! Be nice.

SALLY: Be nice. We're just doing our best.

EMILY: [laughing] Okay, goodbye, guys.