



Episode 257: Five Guys Beheadings and Fries

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EMILY: Okurr.

SALLY: Okurrr.

EMILY: We've done it!

SALLY: We've reunited the White Tower.

EMILY: Yeah, the plot to end all plots.
[laughs] We thought –

SALLY: Yeah, god. What, Book 4?

EMILY: Book 4. It's been going on since Book 4. And now it's, um, you know, at least nominally over.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: How do we feel?

SALLY: Ummm. Fine, I guess.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: I – I – I feel like I keep saying this and it makes me sound like an asshole, but I did find it a little anti-climactic.

EMILY: Yeah. Yeah, I've been ruminating on that as well and trying to, like, trace back my feelings to when the books first came out and I was still sort of more, like, invested.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: In an emotional way to the story rather than just financially invested via our Patreon account [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Um and uhhhh. I – I remember it being kind of fine also. I don't remember being like, "Wow, that was great." I remember liking the, like, sequence with Egg in the Tower where she got to be a badass and all. But it, it felt at the end that there was unnecessary drama introduced

into the plot via, you know, the constant *Wheel of Time* problem, which is that people don't communicate to each other.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: That just, like, when nothing came of it was just like okay? So why was it even in the plot to begin with? You know, like Egg's stress that she's going to have to actually attack the White Tower, when we the audience know that she will be welcomed with open arms.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: Um, and it was just like oh. Okay. Okay.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah, there is a certain like, it feels like it's a...the plot is sort of built on a house of cards. Like, it seems like the whole thing is really easy to...knock over, in a certain way. Like, you said, it's all like not really anything. At least at this stage, it's like...Egg's just building up this huge army and nothing ever comes of it, which I know is technically the, like, great solution because Egg did her diplomacy, but I think what feels, um, dissatisfying for me is that ultimately it is not necessarily a direct result of Egg being a good diplomat. It is, like we kind of talked about in the raid on the White Tower itself, just like a re – a whole lot of deus ex machina to get us here. Like, um.

EMILY: Conveniently Elaida has been plucked out of the plot to no longer be a problem.

SALLY: Um, yeah! And even just the attack by the Seanchan on the White Tower to begin with. Like, that is a really interesting plot, um, that I feel like almost rather than being in service of the more general conflict of the Seanchan, like it would have been if it had happened after the reunification of the White Tower, happens before and then just kind of wipes the slate clean for every problem that Egg was dealing with, including Elaida being wiped off the map. Suddenly everyone has no choice but to elect Egg and it does play the important role of helping everyone in the White Tower realize that they were being really petty and that there are bigger solutions to deal with. So, like, it's not the worst plot, but it's just that assault sets up everything for Egg perfectly.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Versus it being like Egg did it.

EMILY: Yeah, I think there's a tendency, um, in writing to, like, combine every imaginable exciting moment into, um, you know a single short series of exciting moments.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: We can't just have the White Tower being reunified separately from the Seanchan attack, because those are two exciting things that are, um, culminations of different subplots, so why not slap them together. Well, because it – maybe you can do that with different subplots.

You know, um, as in – let's think of an example. The Seanchan can attack Ebou Dar at the same time that the *gholam* is stalking Mat and the Bowl of the Winds is being found, and those things can all happen in combination with each other and, you know, just kind of seem like coincidental and things that are happening that are bad at the same time.

SALLY: Sure. For sure. For sure.

EMILY: Um, but when things like this happen at the same time it reduces the efficacy of the individual subplots.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like you're saying. Now Egg's all – all of Egg's hard work is sort of – do you remember that we started calling her unironic – [laughs] like ironically [laughing].

SALLY: [laughing] And now it's all we call her.

EMILY: Only call her Egg [laughs].

SALLY: [laughing] Now she does not have a real name on this podcast.

EMILY: Sometimes when I transcribe the transcribe the podcast, I get a kick out of that [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, we really have not said Egwene the whole episode.

EMILY: [laughing] We just stopped.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Yeah, all of her hard work is just sort of undermined.

SALLY: Yeah, and even, like, as we get into this chapter, like right before they're about to, like, raid the city, Egg is like, "Well, let's just wait an hour." And that conveniently is, like, right when the delegation comes out to talk to her. And it's like well what would have happened if you'd stormed Tar Valon?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: With an army. Like, would that have had any impact on their decision to raise you Amyrlin? You know, it's just, like, everything falls into place really neatly. Um, I also personally feel a little bit cheated, because I was really invested in, um, functioning as, like, a Cassandra-like figure when she kept telling everyone the Seanchan were going to attack the White Tower and, like, nobody was believing, which, um, goes back to Cassandra, the figure in Greek mythology who was cursed to give prophecies that nobody would believe. It's Cassandra, right?

EMILY: It is.

SALLY: Okay, whew.

EMILY: Cassandra. Apollo. She spurned Apollo so he was like, “Boop.”

SALLY: Boop! No one will believe you.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And so she is –

EMILY: She’s popularly the prophetess of, like, the Trojan War.

SALLY: Yeah. Um and that is played to such, like, tragic effect, of course, in um.

EMILY: Oh yeah! Boom. Read, um, the plays following the Trojan War. The plays in which Agamemnon gets murdered because he took Cassandra home as his war prize and she’s like, “You’re going to get murdered and then I’m going to get murdered.” And he’s like, “Nah.”

SALLY: Not my problem! And you’re like –

EMILY: [yelling]

SALLY: For many reasons Agnamemnon – Agnamemnon? Agamemnon should be murdered several times over. Fuck that bitch.

EMILY: You’re like, “Great. I will love to see him get murdered, but not Cassandra please.”

SALLY: Cassandra has done nothing wrong. Cassandra’s innocent. Um, but that’s such, like, a compelling form of prophecy and such, like, an interesting myth to play with, this idea that you’re just not being believed. And of course there is tragic result in that the Seanchan *do* attack the White Tower and no one is ready for it, but it almost feels more like nobody is ready for it because of all the divisions in the White Tower rather than just nobody believing Egg. Like, if the Tower was functioning properly, they probably would have done a better job. So, again, it doesn’t feel like anything Egg is doing – I don’t know – gets to stand on its own two feet. So, I just feel kind of bummed out about the whole thing. And then it’s just, like, Egg just gets everything kind of handed to her and she’s just really on her girlboss shit in the second chapter in particular.

EMILY: Yeah, she gets to give some speeches. Some powerful speeches.

SALLY: Yeah, which is, like, fine. I can fuck with a powerful speech, I just – I don’t know. I’m trying not to be so negative and here I am, just being negative.

EMILY: No, I was going to be negative about the speeches, so it was nice of you.

SALLY: No, go. Go for it.

EMILY: To be nice about them.

SALLY: I mean, they can be good. Remember Théoden king's speech before the battle on the fields of Gondor?

EMILY: DEATH!

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: DEATH!

SALLY: [laughs] That's a great speech.

EMILY: That speech slaps. No, that's just – my personal preference is – I tend to find that when an author is very consciously presenting any sort of oration or, you know, citation from literature that doesn't exist in the real world. You know, fantasy literature. A poem or anything. And they're clearly presenting it as though it's supposed to be brilliant, I find that just sort of all sorts of...

SALLY: I find it – not to overuse this word – I find it a little cringey.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Because it's, like, you can see through the blueprint. Like, this is, um, supposed to be really impactful and, like, it...oftentimes if you were, like, to isolate the content of those speeches they don't really – nothing in those speeches alone is impactful, it is the way that the author has constructed the scenario to be, like, everyone is responding positively to this.

EMILY: Yeah. Everyone's cheering and stuff.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It's no 'friends, Romans, countrymen, lend me your ears.'

SALLY: Lend me your ears.

EMILY: When every staging gets to choose how people respond to it.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So, [laughs] this is Everybody Hates Rand.

SALLY: Yeah, sorry. By the way.

EMILY: The introduction.

SALLY: BTW.

EMILY: Whoever heard of cold opens? This is a hot open! We're coming in hot.

SALLY: Hot opens. Sizzling.

EMILY: Sizzling.

SALLY: Boiling.

EMILY: Outback Steakhouse.

SALLY: Mm, delicious.

EMILY: Have you ever been to Sizzler?

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, a long time ago.

EMILY: Yeah, me too. Just once and I was, like, eight, so I thought it was the coolest thing I'd ever seen.

SALLY: Yeah, same.

EMILY: Because they had, like, self-serve ice cream machines.

SALLY: And you're like, "Fuck yeah."

EMILY: You're like, "Whoa! Damn. *This* is fine dining. Four Michelin stars." Do they even do four Michelin stars?

SALLY: I think it's three.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughing] I think it's three Michelin stars.

EMILY: I just watched *The Bear*. Can you tell?

SALLY: Four Michelin stars.

EMILY: I know all about Michelin stars. Uh, Everybody Hates Rand. [slurring] I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: [laughs] I'm Sally Goodger.

EMILY: Yeah, we got there eventually.

SALLY: This podcast has five Michelin stars by the way.

EMILY: Yes.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Granted to us by –

SALLY: The Michelin Man [laughs].

EMILY: Michelin himself.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: The French podcast reviewer, famed –

SALLY: [laughing] Monsieur Michelin.

EMILY: [in a bad French accent] Monsieur Michelin.

SALLY: He looks like the critic from *Ratatouille*, obviously.

EMILY: AHH!

SALLY: [laughs] He cries –

EMILY: If it was just the critic from *Ratatouille*.

SALLY: Every time [laughing].

EMILY: He cries every time he downloads, because he's – he's –

SALLY: He's thinking about his mother.

EMILY: He's launched back into his childhood.

SALLY: Who used to make *The Gathering Storm* for him.

EMILY: Who – [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Eat up, my darling boy!

SALLY: Okay!

EMILY: Chomp. Okay, yeah, indeed. So.

SALLY: Egg is wearing a red dress.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: That's important. She also has braids in her hair – ribbons in her hair, which I feel like is a little infantilizing.

EMILY: I felt like it was a little gauche. She's like, "This represents the blood that was just spilled." And I'm like, "Ughhh."

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

EMILY: You did just oversee the beheadings of –

SALLY: You're right, it's –

EMILY: *Fifty* women.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Including Sheriam, who had to be dragged, crying and begging, to the fucking block.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah, um.

EMILY: It's grim, you guys.

SALLY: It is grim.

EMILY: It's really fucking grim.

SALLY: It's the Brothers Grimm up in here. Um.

EMILY: [laughs] And then Egg is like, "Don my bloodiest reddest gown."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: "So, I can launch my attack on the White Tower."

SALLY: [laughs] My bloodiest, reddest gown.

EMILY: [laughs] I'm like, "Could we – ? Maybe Robert Jordan studied color theory a little too hard, you know?"

SALLY: He was like, "I watched Little Red Riding Hood."

EMILY: This whole, like, color coding of the Ajahs has, like, stopped being effective in Book 3, I think, and it started being, like, ludicrously Hogwarts House-ish, you know? Where it just ends up being reductive.

SALLY: Yeah, where it's like – there's something to be said for, like, it's fine. This is how they divide themselves and they just do it. It's just got a color to it. You know? That's fine.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And, like, ceremonial occasions, perhaps you would wear the color of your Ajah and therefore denote that that's what you are a part of you know? For, like, going to the Hall or whatever if you're a Sitter. But this sort of like – especially in these last few books where it's like everyone in the White Tower and everyone in the rebel camp seems to *only* wear the color of their Ajah as though limited.

EMILY: Every Aes Sedai practically.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I think. Even the ones that are hanging out with Rand are always just wearing the color of their Ajah. There also just seems to be, like, a list of stock personality traits.

SALLY: Yeah, good point.

EMILY: For your stock Aes Sedai characters, depending on Ajah. Almost even a list of stock phrases and things that they should say, and it's just, like, really gnarly, guys.

SALLY: Yeah, it's pretty silly.

EMILY: But yeah, Egg is wearing red [laughs].

SALLY: Egg is wearing red. You're right, it is extremely grim. And we also just mostly skate past the fact that Edge – Egg just had fifty women beheaded.

EMILY: Yeah, like you sort of mentioned last time when I brought this up, it's not like – you were like, "Ugh, great. Everyone's moral compass is pretty fucked at this point." And what I'm seeing here is so interesting, because Egg is just voicing the, um, the justification of readers almost. She's saying like, "Well, clearly, it's stupid to just leave these people alive. We know Stilling can be healed and so ultimately, like, it's just we don't have the security to keep these people locked up, so ultimately it's just, like, a question of logistics." Which, we as readers, who are getting pretty sick of the Forsaken getting killed and then brought back to life, and people

who should be knocked of the board suddenly coming back, of course we're like, "Oof, yeah, just kill them." Um, but then when a character actually just kills them it's like well hold on...would they [laughs] really do that, though?

SALLY: Yeah, and, like, I feel like it is, in many instances, the, like, privilege of the reader to be, like, "Well, that was a stupid decision." You know? That's almost part of the fun of being, like, "Well, I figured out how I would do it better." Like, it's, um, a privileged position to be sitting outside the story and that's the way that criticism in general is privileged position. To sit down and offer any form of criticism of a text is to be like, "We're analyzing what the characters did for better or for worse." But, yeah, it is an entirely different thing to just be like – you're right, it's best to operate the story from the form of, like, a reader's criticism. That wasn't very well articulated.

EMILY: No, that's just, like, how you end up getting the live action Disney adaptations.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: That are now running rampant.

SALLY: Feminism in *Beauty and the Beast*!

EMILY: Feminism! Yeah, we have to just hand wave everything that everyone has criticized before and give – and over explain things that could have just been left alone. But in this instance, um, yeah, I agree with you. We're no longer staying true to the characters so much as we are catering to the readers. I do think we could have managed to, like, do this. Like, the authors could have justified the mass execution of fifty women very easily. We have been told in the text that that is the fate that awaits the Black Ajah.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: The problem is that, um, it has never been, like, proven up until this point that that's what happens. That's only every been in the realm of scary dream sequences.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And sort of, like, a possibility of what could happen to Moghedien. Um, but it's never been, like, an actual reality so we're suddenly jumping from 'nothing ever happens to the Black Ajah, except for Robert Jordan's weird torture porn' to 'oh, they all get executed – fifty of them get executed at once.'

SALLY: At once.

EMILY: Stilled and executed.

SALLY: Yeah. Just in case.

EMILY: Which seems unnecessary [laughs].

SALLY: Just to, like, double check.

EMILY: Um, and, like, Egg, you know – so, it’s not just Egg being like, if Egg was just like, “This is the law. It’s a pretty grim law, maybe we need to talk about it later, but it does happen to work in our favor in our instance logistically. Fine.” Then that would be one thing, but the way Egg phrases it makes it sound like she sort of overrode all criticism and used her executive authority to have these fifty women executed.

SALLY: Yeah! To just commit a massacre. Like, whether or not they are evil or not, this was a mass murder.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: A mass execution, however you want to phrase it. Execution, murder are just siblings.

EMILY: Yeah, I just think it would have been an interesting thing if up until this point we had actually had more people be discovered as Black Ajah and not just, like, kept secret the way the White Tower Black Ajah hunters had. If we had seen, like, one woman early on have to actually face legal consequences.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Like, maybe if Nynaeve and Elayne and Egg actually managed to bring back one or two Black Ajah to the Tower, um, and we had to see her stand trial or whatever. Or if just, like, the Black Ajah hunters had, instead of being like, “We’re going to do this insane black ops thing,” had just been like, “We need to arrange the murders [laughing] of these women.”

SALLY: Yeah, we just need to be committing assassinations in the Tower.

EMILY: [laughs] We just need to push them off a building.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah, I also – I agree it’s not set up appropriately. I also don’t feel like the – I feel like the framing of it plays a significant role. Like, I know I’ve been on my soapbox this book in particular about how everyone’s moral compass is fucked and how much I hate and how much it just does not feel...ethical [laughs]. Obviously, it’s not ethical within the story, but there’s a certain level of desensitization to mass forms of violence that bothers in me in particular. But also, it is very much true that you can present a character doing a bad thing and be like, “That doesn’t mean I agree with that bad thing.” You know? It would have been, I think, kind of interesting for Egg to be like, “I killed fifty people, because it was easier.” And not being – not offering her full logistical explanation for it and let us sit in the discomfort of that. Like, it – for everything we can criticize about Rand nuking a town, at least we’re just kind of left to be like, “Well, I don’t know how I feel about that.” And it’s kind of on me to chew on that.

EMILY: Yeah. Yeah, we could have easily had Egwene not go out of her way to justify it and have other characters maybe not support it as much as they clearly do.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: You know, have some people like, “Uhhh.” Kind of sketched out by it.

SALLY: That was kind of fucked, yeah.

EMILY: Yeah, but, um, all we’re told is like okay, these fifty women are dead. No one cares.

SALLY: But, you know, Brandon Sanderson can’t keep a girlboss down, so everyone is like, “She slayed that.” [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] Mega slay.

SALLY: That’s mother [laughs].

EMILY: Ohhh my gawwwd [pops tongue].

SALLY: Listen, women can’t do anything these days. Not even execute people.

EMILY: Not even execute fifty people at once.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Like, do you guys know how long it would take to execute fifty people?

SALLY: I know! They also, like, behead them.

EMILY: Beheading!

SALLY: Fully, like, the French Revolution, they have them up on a guillotine, basically.

EMILY: Yeah. There’s a stump! A stump!

SALLY: And, like, who’s the headsman? Yeah. They’re just, like, putting –

EMILY: Whose job was it?

SALLY: That’s what I was thinking to.

EMILY: Which little PA was like, “Okay, go find a good stump for beheading.”

SALLY: Yeah, and then have to cut off the heads of fifty people?

EMILY: Yeah, and they're like, "Hey, Gareth Bryne, could you send us, okay, not just one guy, because swinging an ax that long takes some effort, so five guys?"

SALLY: Five guys.

EMILY: Five guys [laughs] burgers and fries.

SALLY: [laughing] Five Guys Burgers and Beheadings. They sell burgers and the beheadings! People get hungry!

EMILY: Stop! Can't think of anything worse than eating a burger at a live beheading.

SALLY: Would Beheadings and Fries make you feel better? [laughs]

EMILY: Pffft.

SALLY: [laughing] Five Guys Beheadings and Fries.

EMILY: It does roll off the tongue.

SALLY: It does rhyme a little bit better.

EMILY: It does roll off the tongue a little bit. Yeah, like, you read *A Tale of Two Cities* and you're like, "Wow, it's fucked that these women are just knitting in the background while people's heads just roll on the ground." But you know what would have been worse? If they were [laughing] eating burgers and French fries.

SALLY: Burgers and French fries. Some shakes.

EMILY: Did you think of that?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [slurping noises]

SALLY: Yeah [laughing], while someone's, like, saying their last words. Someone's just got their Oreo shake.

EMILY: [laughing] Gross!

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: What's fucked is that this was actually the vibes of public executions for quite a while.

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah! It's, like, public entertainment. It's like going to the movie theater. You get your popcorn and your large soda.

EMILY: [sighs]

SALLY: So, yeah, my – I have many questions. Who beheaded these people?

EMILY: Are they traumatized for life?

SALLY: How long did it take?

EMILY: Hours, I would think.

SALLY: Hours, apparently.

EMILY: At least an hour.

SALLY: Yeah, fifty is a *lot* of people.

EMILY: Yeah, you're right. Fifty and hour would be one woman per minute.

SALLY: Yeah – Jesus Christ! They set up a fucking conveyor belt.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Assembly line.

EMILY: Yeah, like, do you have to watch the forty-nine other people before you get beheaded?

SALLY: Oh, Jesus Christ.

EMILY: This has been such a grim topic of conversation for this podcast and I'm sorry, but someone's gotta think about it.

SALLY: Someone's gotta think about it. Egg is all in these logistics about why she beheaded them, but where are the logistics about how she beheaded them?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And maybe she should, like Ned Stark, in *The Game of Thrones* have –

EMILY: Wielded the ax herself.

SALLY: Wielded the sword herself. Yeah. RIP, Ned. You were a real one.

EMILY: RIP, Ned. Behead, get beheaded. That's the fate of beheaders everywhere.

SALLY: Yeah, be-Egg-ed.

EMILY: Be – [sighs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Some – you know an egg is another word for your head [laughs]. So.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Be-egg-ed.

SALLY: [laughs] Be-egg-ed. Okay. Whatever. Egg is in a red dress with –

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah, we still haven't gotten past the red dress.

SALLY: Ribbons in her hair, representing the fifty people she just had executed. But she's also like, "It's important for me to –"

EMILY: Like, it's very *Devil Wears Prada*, she's like, "Slay. This is the red representing the blood. This is not just red."

SALLY: This is not just red. This is crimson.

EMILY: I wish I could remember the Miranda Priestly monologue off the top of my head.

SALLY: It's a very good monologue.

EMILY: Crimson. It was selected in Italy, based on swatches of the literal blood of women who were beheaded.

SALLY: I literally had Chesa down on the ground matching my dresses to the blood that was spilled [laughing].

EMILY: [laughs, gagging noises]

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Okay, Egwene is like, "Slay." And walking –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Literally! Walking down the runway in her red dress, is like, "I'm off the White Tower." Romanda and Lelaine come up and are like, "FYI, Sheriam did in fact make all off the *ter'angreal*, ring *ter'angreal* disappear. So now we only have one that Siuan happened to steal." Like, even the OG one is missing, which, by the way, we found out a couple chapters ago that Verin just gave that to Egg.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: She wasn't, like, ordered, she just let Egg believe that she was ordered to and was like, "Here you go."

SALLY: "You can have this. I have a good feeling about your dreams."

EMILY: Which was extremely iconic of Verin.

SALLY: I know.

EMILY: So, that's a problem, logistically speaking for them. They're also like, "Sheriam also told us one of the Forsaken is in the White Tower," and Egg is like, "Eh, don't worry about it. She'll probably leave." And it's like oooh-kay.

SALLY: Probably?

EMILY: Yeah. So, like, what's the risk assessment on that? It's like Murderbot, whose risk assessment is fucked.

SALLY: Its module is broken [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Read *Murderbot* everyone.

SALLY: *Murderbot* is so good.

EMILY: Um, Egwene goes to join the head of her army. Uh, she's with Bryne and Siuan. She's like, "Fuck you, Siuan. I hate your guys now. Congrats, Gareth Bryne, though." [laughs] She's like, "I don't blame Gareth Bryne for coming to save me, because Siuan probably bullied him into it." And I'm like, "Gareth Bryne is fully and adult man."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Stop infantilizing him.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And also stop infantilizing Siaun. She's also like, "Just keep her alive, Gareth. Or whatever. If you *can*." And I'm like, "This is – I would slap Egg, probably."

SALLY: Yeah. I'd be like, "Well, she already hates me. So."

EMILY: So, um, yeah just bitch slap her.

SALLY: Anyway, Gawyn is also trailing behind them like a lost puppy.

EMILY: Gawyn is stalking, stalking her.

SALLY: And a creep. Yeah.

EMILY: Ugh.

SALLY: She's never told him that he can come. She also doesn't tell him to go away, but.

EMILY: Yeah. So, they're, like, waiting, Egg – Bryne is like, "We can just launch the attack now." And Egg's like, "Well, how long until you, like, have to launch it?" And he's like, "Eh, I give it an hour before, like, the light gets too bad and we can't do anything about it." And she's like, "No? Okay, well let's wait for an hour." She's like her instincts told her not to do it.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Which just means Brandon Sanderson [laughs] told her not to do it. Instincts are code for the author [laughing] doesn't want this person to –

SALLY: Do this thing.

EMILY: Unless you have, like, a verifiable reason that someone would have instincts like that.

SALLY: Like the dice mechanic, which is well-established.

EMILY: Yeah. Come on.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah and [laughs].

EMILY: But they're like, waiting and –

SALLY: The dice are rolling.

EMILY: Facing down, yeah. The Tower Guard is like, they're just on opposite ends of bridges. The Tower Guard looks fucked. There's, like, five of them. Gareth Bryne is like, "I don't know what the fuck happened, but this is grim. We're just gonna mow over them." But they wait the hour, and an embassy comes down representing most of the Sitters, they do this whole, like, [laughs] megaphone callback.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: Very funny. Um, and the lady is like, “Um, we want to talk to Egg.” And Egg’s like, “Present, what do you want, bitch?”

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And this lady’s like, “We have decided to elect the Amyrlin Seat?” And Egg’s like, “So, you deposed Elaida?” And they’re like, “No, Elaida’s full missing!”

SALLY: Elaida got snatched.

EMILY: Sooooo. Pwease?

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And Egg’s like, “Ugh.” Siuan’s like, “Couldn’t have happened to a better person.” And Egg’s like, “Don’t joke about that.”

SALLY: Yeah, Egg’s like –

EMILY: It sucks. She’ll – even Elaida. So, it’s, like, Egg, your moral high ground is pretty shaky considering you just [laughing] beheaded fifty women, but.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, Egg’s like, “Okay, well we have some demands. You have to reinstate everyone, um, you know, reunify the White Tower.” And they’re like, “Yep! We’re, we’re for it!” And Siuan’s like, “This seems like a dumb decision.” And Egg’s like, “It’s not and also you don’t get to talk to me about dumb decisions. Bye!” And walks in.

SALLY: She did it!

EMILY: To join the White Tower. Um, at the White Tower, she is taken to the go through the Amyrlin raising ceremony again. Siuan’s like, “This is an outrage, you shouldn’t have to do it again.” And Egg’s like, “It’s fine. Like, they should get to elect me with their dumb little ceremonies also. Like, if you guys got to do it, they can do it to.” She’s like, “Go get all the rebels, assembled and ready to apologize” [laughs]. And I’m like how are you going to apologize? Like?

SALLY: How are they all going to apologize? Are you going to make them stand in a line?

EMILY: Yeah, Egg’s like, “It’s symbolic, it’s important, we have to, like, you know, be cool about it.” And I’m like okay, but you’re kind of...you know, the layers of psychological – the, the layers here are just impossible. Like, what are – are you, representing the rebels going to write the apology and then –

SALLY: To yourself?

EMILY: And then, yeah, on behalf of the White Tower accept the apology? Like, it becomes a little ludicrous.

SALLY: Yeah, it's just a lot of, you're right, just pomp and circumstance and politicking.

EMILY: Anyway, Egg is going into this ceremony. Gawyn fully is like, "I'm coming, too." And she's like, "You don't get to go into the transphobic Illuminati ceremony."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: So, shut up.

SALLY: [laughing] No boys allowed.

EMILY: No boys allowed!

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: And our definition of boys is...

SALLY: Very bad!

EMILY: Very bad.

SALLY: Very bad!

EMILY: Ugh.

SALLY: Only boobs allowed, I guess I should say [laughs].

EMILY: [laughing] Yeah, sorry. Only boobs allowed. No boys allowed! There's one trans sitter who's like...

SALLY: But...boobs?

EMILY: But I am boy.

SALLY: [laughs] But I am boy.

EMILY: [laughs] But I am boy. But have boobs. Yes.

SALLY: It happens, you guys.

EMILY: It happens, you guys. Incredible. Boy boobs are the best boobs, arguably [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, I can't argue with that.

EMILY: I can't argue with that...sorry, just started thinking about trans guys.

SALLY: They're hot!

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Sorry! No, I won't apologize, actually. Not sorry.

EMILY: Mega hotties.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [clears throat, laughs] So, Egg's like, "Stay out of our club! Our dumb club!" And then walks in and immediately realizes okay, so this is bad. Like, there's eleven people here. There should be eighteen, but the Blue Ajah is obviously not present. The Red Ajah are also not present, because they're in fucking hiding.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And, like, at least one Sitter from all the other colors [laughs] are missing.

SALLY: All the other houses.

EMILY: Egg's like, "This is, like, the bare minimum, so that's not even better than Elaida got, but whatever. It will just have to do."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But she is like, before she even starts the ceremony, she's like, "Um, will someone go get Silviana if she's still fucking imprisoned." And they're "Uh, sure, I guess." She goes through the ceremony. Thank god we don't have to sit through it again.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, and at the end, they're like, "Okay." Oh! There's also a big hole in the wall.

SALLY: Yeah! An enormous hole in the wall.

EMILY: Like, right behind the Amyrlin Seat, like, could you get anymore heavy handed with the symbolism here.

SALLY: It's symbolism.

EMILY: [whispers] It's symbolism. It's.

SALLY: It's, period, symbolism, period.

EMILY: [whispers] Cinematography.

SALLY: Poetic cinema.

EMILY: M. Night Shyamalan wishes.

SALLY: He does.

EMILY: Okay, at the end of the ceremony Silviana arrives. Everyone's like, "Ugh, this might not be a great time to sort of dispense justice on the woman who beat you every five minutes on the daily." And Egg's like, "Okay, first of all, I just beheaded fifty women."

SALLY: [laughs] This is nothing.

EMILY: [laughing] So you don't get to tell me what I can and can't do. She's like, "I'm obviously not going to punish Siviana because she's the only person in this fucking room who has a spine."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And everyone's like, "Mmmm. Mommy's mad."

SALLY: Ouchie. That hurt my feelings.

EMILY: Oooh. Egg's like, "You're all a bunch of losers!"

SALLY: Yeah, none of you stood up to Elaida.

EMILY: Yeah, all of you just, like, let Elaida run rampant and do stupid shit.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And that was bad. And you're bad and naughty. Anyway, Silviana please be my Keeper. And Silviana's like, "Okay. Worm."

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: This is a decision I'm fine with. I like Silviana.

EMILY: I'm – yeah. I also like Silviana. Silviana is the least offensive character [laughs] in this entire book thus far.

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah. Just a lady who's like, "I take my job a little too seriously and for that I can be criticized."

EMILY: But ultimately, I have a sense of honor.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And, um, you know, a moral compass, which most people can't say in this book.

SALLY: Including Egg. [whispers] Cough, cough.

EMILY: [coughs] And Egg's like, "This is a great decision, me. *Me*. Great decision."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] Five out of five stars. Five out of five Michelin stars for my decision making, because not only is this symbolically important, because Silviana's Red, it will make me look like I'm not super mad at the Red Ajah. It will hopefully prevent them from being totally ostracized. And also, Silviana's great, so.

SALLY: Yeah. Good job, Egg.

EMILY: And also she's not on Verin's fucking list of Darkfriends.

SALLY: Yeah, which is really limiting the pool these days.

EMILY: I know. Oh, Egg also told us that some people escaped and she gets to the White Tower and they're like, "Uh, some people went missing?" And Egg's like, "Ugh." And I'm like, "Yeah, duh. You let people escape." Of course they were like, "Hey, guys!"

SALLY: Yeah. Hey, guys.

EMILY: Everyone's getting beheaded!

SALLY: Yeah, the new Amyrlin is going to execute you. She's going to make you re-swear your oaths and when she finds out you're Black Ajah, she's going to behead you.

EMILY: Yeah, scram! Yeah. So, whatever. Um, having accomplished all this. Egg goes to meet the rebel Aes Sedai. She gives a little speech about how the Last Battle is upon us and we're gonna do magic.

SALLY: And we, once again, will be the institution of authoritarianism and bullying that we've been for thousands and thousands of years.

EMILY: [laughing softly]

SALLY: Nobody can take that from us ever again [laughs].

EMILY: She gets up and is like, “Guys, I’m so happy to announce that we’re back, baby!”

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] No changes!

SALLY: [laughs] Across the board, not a single one!

EMILY: I have been reviewing the White Tower, Aes Sedai generally, like, for the last few months and also prior to that and I just have to say, no notes [laughs].

SALLY Yeah, no notes. We really, we’ve really slayed this.

EMILY: It was great. I love our color coding.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I love how mean we are to everyone. I love how we treat men like they’re disposable. Um, further I love how we do child abuse.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: I love how Siuan Sanche sent me on, like, a black ops mission when I was sixteen. It really prepared me for this moment and didn’t skew my perspective at all.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And also I love all of the secrecy and the cliques and the gossip and our weirdly phallic symbolism of our Tower.

SALLY: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Actually, that one I’m going to change. From now on we live in caves, [whispers] because they’re yonic.

SALLY: You’re right. You’re right. That’s the one note. Caves.

EMILY: This is now the White Cave.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: The White Cavern.

SALLY: Ooh! The White Cavern is good!

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: The White Cavern is really good.

EMILY: The White Cavern like a sparkly, stalag – stalactites and stalagmites.

SALLY: Yeah. Very glittery.

EMILY: It would fuck! I think more cool things should be in caves instead of towers.

SALLY: Yeah! You...

EMILY: You tell 'em!

SALLY: You tell 'em. Um, I agree. Caves are cool. They scare me a little, but I think that's a healthy fear of nature.

EMILY: As they should. As they should.

SALLY: Like being afraid of the ocean.

EMILY: Yeah, there's no telling what could happen down there...So, we should be afraid. It's not like towers. Towers have been too...overdone by mankind.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Tom Cruise has climbed on too many of them.

SALLY: That's so true, bestie.

EMILY: Got his grimy little mittens all over them.

SALLY: Yeah but has – I don't even know what the fucking *Mission Impossible* protagonist's name is. Ethan?

EMILY: Ethan Hunt.

SALLY: Ethan [with a bit of a growl on the H] Hunt.

EMILY: [with a more exaggerated growl] Hunt!

SALLY: Sorry, I don't know that was [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughing] I don't know what was going on in my throat.

EMILY: Etha Cunt!

SALLY: Ethan Cuuuunt! Um, he has climbed a lot of towers, but has he ever gone spelunking? I don't know. I've never seen the *Mission Impossible* movies except for one.

EMILY: Number two starts with him just free climbing a stupid cliff.

SALLY: No.

EMILY: And it's like the most disappointing thing ever that he doesn't just fall, and they start the new *Mission Impossible* saga with a different protagonist. Also [laughing] played by Tom Cruise.

SALLY: All [laughs]. This is, um, Jason Hunt.

EMILY: Jason Hunt, Ethan's twin brother who also is a secret agent.

SALLY: And [clears throat] has the same personality.

EMILY: Tom Cruise only knows how to play one.

SALLY: I really think that free climbing, in terms of rock climbing, is one of the peak examples of man's hubris against nature. You tell me you're going to climb up the side of a cliff [echoing on the mic] with just your hands? No support? The cliff is going to win!

EMILY: Yeah, and then you're going to have the audacity to brag about it when you don't die.

SALLY: Okay, congrats on living.

EMILY: [scoffs]

SALLY: Um, the – [sighs]. It makes –

EMILY: It's like guys who have climbed Everest. This is gonna get me so many, so many babes.

SALLY: I feel like the babes that these Everest climbing guys think they're going to get are all like, "That was dumb. [laughing] Why would you climb Mount Everest?"

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: You can get babes in simpler ways. Have you tried being trans? [laughs]

EMILY: Have you tried being a trans man! [laughs] Or a trans girl. Yeah, just. Have you tried being trans?

SALLY: Have you tried being trans?

EMILY: It's the easiest way to get babes! [laughs]

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah! No notes on that policy.

EMILY: Depending on where you live. EHR's foolproof way to get babes!

SALLY: [laughs] Be trans.

EMILY: [laughs] Be trans. Okay, so. What a stupid episode.

SALLY: [laughs] What do you mean? I think we had some real solid points in there.

EMILY: We're doing great. Next week is Daddy Issues [laughs]: The Chapter, featuring Rand al'Thor.

SALLY: As if he didn't have enough going on.

EMILY: I know. They're like, "You know what will make Rand happy? His dad." I'm like, "Guuuys!"

SALLY: Has that made anyone happy? Ever?

EMILY: Guys!

SALLY: In their whole life?

EMILY: [clears throat] But that's what's on the docket. We're on the uphill slope to enlightenment. We're downhill and then uphill, I guess.

SALLY: Yeah. Can he go any lower?

EMILY: Rand is the only, you know, like, not literally the only point of view, but the only subplot we're getting from here on out. I think we get, like, one little flashback to – not flashback. One little...

BOTH: Sidestep.

EMILY: To Egg again, just to be like oh, Egg is in charge. But that's pretty much it.

SALLY: Okay! We're with Rand from here on out. In the last forty pages of this book, he needs to become enlightened.

EMILY: Mm-hmm. Here at the end of all things – here at the end of *The Gathering Storm*, next week we're taking off because we're going to – we're not, like, a jet engine taking off, though we also are. We're going on a road trip, so we're not going to record a podcast. I got there eventually.

SALLY: [singing] Leavin' on a jet plane.

EMILY: So, no [voice breaks] episode – fucking [laughing] next week.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Then we'll be back for two more episodes to finish *The Gathering Storm*. And then we're taking another break.

SALLY: Yeah, to get ready –

EMILY: Because we're moving.

SALLY: We're getting ready –

EMILY: And also, yeah.

SALLY: To move and we also have to get ready for *Towers of Midnight*.

EMILY: Yeah, guys. Just hang on tight, okay?

SALLY: Yeah. Strap in like a *Mission Impossible* character to go down some caves.

EMILY: Not enough caves in the *Mission Impossible* movies.

SALLY: You're right. There's just not enough caves in general.

EMILY: I know! That's what I'm saying. I was trying to find movies about caves and they're nowhere. Everyone's afraid of caves! Boo.

SALLY: Everyone's afraid of caves. Um, V of BTS just released a new music video that takes place in a cave. I don't know if it's a real cave but there are, like, stalactites in the background and it's extremely beautiful.

EMILY: I love that for him.

SALLY: He did a really good job. Yeah. So, there you go. That's [laughing] one cave related thing people can watch this week.

EMILY: Yeah. I'll go watch – your [laughs].

SALLY: Your assignment –

EMILY: Everyone who's on our Patreon and knows that I'm researching caves is like, "Yeah, this is normal."

SALLY: This makes sense.

EMILY: And everyone who's like, "What the fuck?"

SALLY: Why are we talking about caves?

EMILY: Why is Emily so into caves? Don't – mind your business!

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I'm into caves.

SALLY: We're into caves. Well, Emily more than me. Caves really freak me out, unless [laughing] V of BTS is in them. In which case, that would be tempting.

EMILY: For the love of god I will end this episode. I can do it.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Thanks everyone for listening. Thanks to Glynn Mackenzie for our theme song. Stop – stop laughing, Sally [laugh]. Thanks to our Patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media. [claps] Whew! Did it! Okay. [laughing] Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: Yeah, um, the other day I was walking home from the mailbox, um, at our apartment complex and, um, one of our neighbors had their garage open and I couldn't really, like, see entirely because I didn't want to be that creep that was looking in their garage, but they [laughs] appeared to have a towel, like a beach towel, depicting Alvin and the Chipmunks [laughs] hanging on the wall of their garage. [laughs] Like, from the most recent horrifying CGI movies, not even, like, the cartoons [laughs].

EMILY: I don't know what to do with this information. I don't know if we should befriend this person in our remaining weeks or avoid them.

SALLY: Yeah. It was, uh, the one at the very end of our row.

EMILY: Oh, they just moved in, I think.

SALLY: [laughing] That's the first thing they did, was hang up their Alvin and the Chipmunks towel.

EMILY: [laughs] They were like, “Necessary décor.” In honor of them, we should put up a little Alvin and the Chipmunks towel in the new place.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Okay, everyone.

SALLY: Bye!

EMILY: [laughing] Bye!