



Episode 273: The First Canine Fridging

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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]

[bagpipes playing *Amazing Grace*]

EMILY: [laughs] That about all I can stand.

SALLY: [singing] A wretch like me!

EMILY: Didn't we do that once for a different episode? I can't remember.

SALLY: I think so.

EMILY: I can't remember.

SALLY: [laughing] It might have been when Hopper died the first time. [laughing] He's the only character I care about.

EMILY: He's the only one who deserves the *Amazing Grace* bagpipes. Oh, Hopper. We hardly knew thee.

SALLY: I can't believe they managed to kill him twice.

EMILY: I know. It was truly so brutal. It was kind of like – they seem to be aware of the fact that, of all of the characters in Perrin's circle, Hopper was the only one worth...

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Garnering an emotional reaction of any kind.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: So they were like, “Yeah.” It’s kind of like, you know, when cheap Hallmark-ish movies are like, “Well a dog has to die.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And I’m like, “But you killed Hopper, who was arguably better rounded than [laughs] most of the human characters.

SALLY: Okay, legitimately.

EMILY: [laughing]

SALLY: Let’s talk about this. Okay, first of all, this is Everybody Hates Rand.

EMILY: Your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* podcast. I’m Emily Juchau.

SALLY: And I am Sally Goodger. And I don’t know if this is me just being a little pathetic, and I’m willing to acknowledge that sometimes I just don’t like it when media does hard things. But I just feel really over the whole idea of, like, feeling like you have to kill a character in order for there to be stakes.

EMILY: Sure.

SALLY: Um, I feel like it’s something that media has not been able to let go of and therefore we get a lot of deaths that just don’t make any sense. Like, the only reason they happen is for a character, and for us, to be sad.

EMILY: Yeah, there’s deaths that are just, like, emotionally manipulative.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Like when dogs die tragically.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: And when Hopper dies here, there’s not really any, uh, plot reason for it, I suppose we should say.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: If you’re, if you’re a story crafter and you’re including the type of story that may – you know [laughs] not a children’s book – or, maybe even a children’s book.

SALLY: Maybe a children's book.

EMILY: Yeah, children have to deal with death too.

SALLY: They can deal with hard things, too. Yeah.

EMILY: Um, any type of story, if you're including a death, then you have to think quite hard about it, obviously, because death is a big topic.

SALLY: Yeah, it's a huge topic.

EMILY: And you have to be able justify it – I think you should have to be able to justify it for narrative reasons.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: Rather than just I don't know what I was gonna do with this character at this point or I wanted this character, this other character to feel some type of way about it. Hopper was fridged. That's what happened.

SALLY: Hopper *was* fridged. First instance of dog fridging.

EMILY: Dog – canine fridging.

SALLY: [laughs] canine fridging.

EMILY: Title of this episode [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: But, yeah, all it's serving here is to make Perrin angrier at Slayer, when we have been given, you know, he's already quite pissed off at Slayer.

SALLY: They – Hopper really was fridging. And it was an unnecessary fridging, too.

EMILY: Yeah, he also got thrown off a building and Perrin had to catch him, and I'm like, "This is the wolf that can fly. What are you talking about?"

SALLY: I know. The whole thing – we can get into the structure of this scene because it is a little – it is very Brandon Sanderson.

EMILY: Yeah, very action packed, very cinematic.

SALLY: I found it a little difficult to follow but I am – I don't know. That was my reading experience.

EMILY: Sure.

SALLY: But yeah, to your point. I sit in the space a lot – I’m working on a story right now where nobody really dies. Death is still a huge part of it, but it’s not like a character dies –

EMILY: Beefs it on screen.

SALLY: On screen, you know. And there’s always a voice in the back of my head that’s like, “Maybe you should kill somebody.” And I constantly have to be like, “That’s nothing.”

EMILY: Yeah, I do that, too. I’m constantly like, “Hmm. Someone’s gotta die.” But I’m like, “I don’t really have a reason to kill any of them for – I would feel more upset with myself if I killed them, because it would feel like I couldn’t give them a satisfying character arc.”

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: Like, I’m not – the current stage I’m at in my current writing project is not such that I’ve nailed anything – I haven’t set anything in stone. Someone might still die, but every time I think about it I’m trying to, like, unlearn the idea that media is only good if someone dies in a tragic way.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: And it’s, like, there are so many good reasons to kill characters. You just – we have come to a, I think sort of the intersection of *Game of Thrones* with, um, the sort of proliferation, the absolute saturation of –

[noise in the background]

SALLY: Mmmm. Hey, could you guys shut the fuck up? What if I went out there and was like, “I’m recording a podcast.”

EMILY: “I’m recording a podcast about a dead wolf. Could you shut the fuck up?”

SALLY: [laughs] One of my friends just died [laughs].

EMILY: Excuse me. One of my fictional just died.

SALLY: One of my fictional friends who is also a wolf and therefore I am entitled to legal compensation.

EMILY: Yeah, I think the problem is that we are a generation that read *Where the Red Fern Grows* at way too young of an age and then also went on to watch HBO’s *Game of Thrones*, so now we’re like, “People have to die for a story to have any meaning or depth or depth of feeling.”

SALLY: And there are just so – death is huge, obviously, but there are so many other facets of the human experience that can lead to emotional depth and character progression, so I really just am so over...you're right, it is part of – it was one of many facets of the *Game of Thrones* parasite on modern day storytelling. Which is so sad, because there are even ways in which the deaths in *Game of Thrones* are functional in that storytelling.

EMILY: Yeah, I would put up *Game of Thrones* as one of the prime examples of meaningful character deaths in fiction.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: Not every single death, but many of them are extremely good.

SALLY: Yeah, but like – wow, spoiler I guess – the death of Ned Stark at the end of – [laughs].

EMILY: We all know where we were when Ned Stark died.

SALLY: [laughs] If you are, like Emily's sister, watching *Game of Thrones* for the first time a decade after it released.

EMILY: Did we talk about that?

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I'm sure we talked about it when it was happening. My sister being like, "Oh my god. Ned Stark died." Fully in, like, 2021 was so incredible for me.

SALLY: Shocked. Yeah.

EMILY: God, I love.

SALLY: It was a really funny, um, couple of months when Sarah was going through that and sort of experiencing what everyone had experienced six and a half years ago [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Um, but, yeah, that's such an incredibly well-crafted story decision that makes, that makes perfect sense in the progression and yada yada yada. And there are so many other instances of that in *Game of Thrones*. Like you said, not all of them. It does get a little gratuitous, but it's so unfortunate that that level of gratuitous violence in general, but also just sort of wanton killing of characters, is what people have taken from that.

EMILY: As the like, "We have to kill a character. Surprise!"

SALLY: Yeah, as though that's somehow the success factor and what keeps people engaged. And yeah, you're right, it's just emotionally manipulative.

EMILY: And to be clear, we're talking about a larger trend in media here, not necessarily this death, specifically. I do think this was just sort of a – maybe Robert Jordan was like “Yeah, maybe Hopper dies at some point” in his notes and hadn't really fleshed that out, or maybe Brandon – maybe – it doesn't really matter actually why they killed off Hopper, actually. And if I'm being, like, truly honest with you guys I don't really care that Hopper died.

SALLY: Yeah, it is at the point in the story where, like, as much as I think Hopper is an excellent character, Perrin, as we'll talk about, is apparently the best person at *tel'aran'rhiod* who's ever existed in all of time. So, it's not like Hopper has a functional reason to be in the story anymore.

EMILY: Yeah, Hopper's a classic case of my most resented trope, which is when the mentor dies.

SALLY: Yeah, because they just don't serve a purpose – a quote unquote “purpose” anymore.

EMILY: They're superfluous once they have taught the hero everything the hero needs to know. Now the hero needs to grow, which I'm just, like, that's so boring. But whatever. Read my book about it, I guess.

SALLY: It's really good. It's really, really good.

EMILY: So, yeah. We're not even – Perrin's a real Mary Sue in this one, you guys. He's so good at *tel'aran'rhiod*.

SALLY: Um, so, yeah. It is ultimately neither here nor there the fact, like, the functional fact that Hopper died. It is just, like, why did [laughs] Hopper have to die twice. He could also just, like, not be talking to Perrin in the World of Dreams anymore. That also seems in line with something Hopper would do.

EMILY: Yeah, just be like, “Okay, bye.”

SALLY: “You're done.”

EMILY: “Bye!”

SALLY: “See you later.” Um, but in this sequence, as we have alluded to, we're in the sort of climactic sequence for our two dreamer figures which are Perrin and Egwene and her coterie of Aes Sedai who are trying – who are trying – who succeed in confronting Mesaana at the same time Perrin is confronting Slayer. And they intersect in Tar Valon in a variety of ways, but before we get to that we have to sit through my *favorite* thing about *Wheel of Time*, which is a scene where a bunch of mean women negotiate with each other.

EMILY: [laughing] Yeah.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: It's always so delightful.

SALLY: Yeah, it's just *pleasant* to read about.

EMILY: It's like, it's actually like being in a work meeting.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: It's the vibes that it captures. And I'm like, "I don't – I'm reading a book so I'm not – so I don't have to be in a work meeting."

SALLY: So I'm not working. So I'm not on Teams, Microsoft Teams –

EMILY: I go to work so I make enough money, so that I can buy books to not be in work meetings.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And yet, here I am.

SALLY: Here I am with, like, a power dynamic – an inter-municipal power dynamic.

EMILY: But, narratively speaking, this is something that Egwene and many of our other main characters – so, it's a little disappointing that it's just Egwene in this scene, considering that Nynaeve and Elayne have laid so much of the groundwork for the Sea Folk. But this is something that has been building up throughout the series. Um, uh, it's just this negotiation in which the White Tower, the Sea Folk, and the Wise Ones agree to start sending each other what the Wise Ones and Sea Folk call apprentices and, um, and Egwene is like, "This is something that the Accepted would do." Basically, having people go out and do study abroad with different cultures, and honestly? I have no beef with this. This sounds like a great plan.

SALLY: I agree!

EMILY: It is a little annoying that it's coming to us through Egwene's eyes and that everyone is so, like, competitive about it. All the Aes Sedai later are like, "This is – the problem with this is that it doesn't leave us on a pedestal above the other ones. Like, we are on too equal footing with them. You haven't managed to negotiate us to a position of power above them." And Egwene's like, "Well, basically we lost that negotiating right a long time ago, because we've lost so much credibility through what has been going on for the last few books. And also, like, this was the only – we were either going to force it or we were going to compromise." But she's like, "Don't worry. We *will* be better than them, somehow." And it's like can't you guys have a healthy perspective about this?

SALLY: Yeah, just, like, a healthy intercultural exchange and knowledge passing experience.

EMILY: Yeah, it's interesting because this is the only thing that Egwene really does in her tenure as Amyrlin that actually, to me, is like here's something that will improve the world.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: Most of the other things Egwene does are, like, White Tower stuff.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: Which, the White Tower was so fucked up to begin with that there's no really resuscitating it.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Even with the Young Pope at the helm.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, I just don't care about the White Tower's sort of survival as a symbol, as a system after the Last Battle. It's not something that is relevant to me, though I'm glad Egwene is doing her best to improve it. But here's something that's like, "Wow! Multi-cultural union of channelers. That's great."

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Bring it on, baby.

SALLY: It's exciting and hopefully, you know, will maybe at some point – it starts with everyone just sending, like, two apprentices, just to, like, see if it works. But you hope that it leads, down the line, lots of people traveling and gaining understanding of each other and maybe everyone in this world being a little less fucking xenophobic.

EMILY: And also just being better people, generally.

SALLY: [laughs] Yes! Just being, like, nicer, kinder, more well-rounded, not convinced that they're correct about everything.

EMILY: Yeah. Maybe.

SALLY: Maybe. We can only hope and pray.

EMILY: I don't know if I would really believe it in Robert Jordan's hands, but I guess I'll never have to try.

SALLY: It's Robert Jordan's world and everyone in it is mean.

EMILY: So, this is an exciting thing that's happening and it's just a little wild that it's happening as sort of, like, a distraction.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It's not – Egwene, like, lays out the actual plan for us. Um, they have been saying, “Oh, there's going to be a big meeting going on on this date.” And there is, but it's not the one that they have been advertising.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: All the Aes Sedai meet in a central room in the White Tower while Egwene has this other meeting off to the side. But, crucially, she is waiting for Nynaeve or Siuan to come fetch her at any moment. And I'm like, “So, we're you just going to be like, “K, bye!’ in the middle of negotiations.” Everything finishes up and she's like, “That's weird. I haven't seen Nynaeve and Siuan yet.”

SALLY: Yeah, like, what were you going to do if it's like, “BRB, I have to go fight one of the Forsaken real quick.”

EMILY: I'm so sorry. Could you wait ten minutes? I have to go, I don't know –

SALLY: Lobotomize one of the Forsaken.

EMILY: Yeah, that's what happens, [whispers] because we can't kill women.

SALLY: We can't kill women.

EMILY: [whispers] God forbid. Unless they're, like, random Black Ajah red shirts.

SALLY: Or unless it's someone to make Rand sad.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Don't forget.

EMILY: Otherwise. Hmm!

SALLY: Don't forget about the list.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: I know the enlightenment is trying to distract you.

EMILY: But we won't forget.

SALLY: But I'll never forget.

EMILY: Never forget.

SALLY: I've been tortured by that.

EMILY: Always remember.

SALLY: But, yeah, the meeting finishes and the Wise Ones are like, "What the fuck? I thought we were supposed to be fighting and..."

EMILY: Egwene's like, "Yeah, that's so weird." And then Siuan shows up and is like, "Oh my gosh. It's so crazy. They didn't try to eavesdrop on us like we thought they were going to, so that we could do a trap. Instead, they ambushed us and it's just been crazy fighting and multiple people are dead already." And I'm like, "That's so great. I love cutting down on the numbers of Aes Sedai names that I have to remember."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, honestly. Uh, but Egwene takes off with the Wise Ones and, um, a couple of the other Aes Sedai she's with. They, like, reconvene and start setting up, like, a plan. Um, and so we'll be flashing back to Egwene throughout this scene as she is just, like, bouncing around the White Tower in *tel'aran'rhiod* fighting the Black Ajah. Um, you know, I'm not going to give you the blow by blow. That's just what's happening.

SALLY: Yeah, you can read it.

EMILY: Simultaneously, though, it is important that Perrin is moving through the World of Dreams with the dreamspike in hand. Um, he can only make these small jumps and eventually Slayer intercepts him and Perrin decides, oh, I'm going to go hide, I'm going to use *tel'aran* – excuse me, Tar Valon as more of, like, an urban battleground. Lots of hiding spots and stuff. So, he takes the dreamspike to Tar Valon, which we know effects the real world in that Traveling will no longer be able to be happening there. It also effects the people in *tel'aran'rhiod* in that they cannot jump outside of the bubble.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: They can make these short jumps, which, more or less, traps everyone within the White Tower. And Mesaana just alludes to, "Oh, I would have changed where we were at some point, but I can't because there's a dreamspike." Meanwhile, Gawyn is in Andor, is in Caemlyn still and just concludes on his own, with not really any external prompting besides his conversation with Elayne, like, "You know? I do have to be better to Egwene and go back to her and be her Warder and forget about being the bigger person in the partnership, as in the leader. Or the more important political figure."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And he's like, "[sighs] Everyone's right and I just need to, like, get over it." And I'm like, "Okay." It's anticlimactic and, spoiler alert, it doesn't really stick, which I think tends to be, um, in a way is, like, realistic. A lot of Gawyn's character arc, I think, is incredibly realistic in a way that is incredibly annoying to read, or to know in a person [laughs].

SALLY: Sure. Right.

EMILY: But, like, Gawyn sort of making a resolution and then immediately failing at it is very true to life. Unfortunately, it's just everything he does.

SALLY: Right. And I agree. I think it's super realistic. I certainly do this, where I'm like if something is bothering me, I know I'm not being the bigger person, I'm gonna try and be an adult and be my highest self about it. And inevitably it will bug me again, and, you know, it's unfortunate that Gawyn continues to act on those worst impulses instead of just being like, "Hey, this is bugging me again. What's going on?" It is just so frustrating that it is this thing, about him and Egg, and not some other, less misogynistic [laughs] character trait. Because I agree. It's super realistic. Everything he's dealing with, all of his insecurities and whatever.

EMILY: Yeah, sure.

SALLY: Normal, I guess.

EMILY: This would all be different if Gawyn was in love with a man, I guess.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: That would be something else.

SALLY: That would be fine, I guess.

EMILY: I would be like, "Alright. Fine."

SALLY: We're all ambitious.

EMILY: Just two dudes trying to deal with their separate ambitions at the same time, but instead it's now a man-woman thing, because, again, we're in Robert Jordan's world.

SALLY: Yeah, and really, even if we weren't in Robert Jordan's world, I think there could be something interesting about dealing with your separate ambitions and what that means in a partnership when they don't always align. And it's, like, Gawyn you're – hnnng. Whatever. We don't have to plot solve Gawyn being able to figure out how to do something else other than either be Egg's Warder and be committed to her one hundred percent and never having any individual identity or, apparently, being the king of the world [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah, there's pretty extremist thinking in the Gawyn-Galad-Elayne family.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: I don't know what Morgase was doing.

SALLY: No shades of gray.

EMILY: Maybe Thom Merrilin murdering Tallanvor – what's his name? That's not Tallanvor.

SALLY: Uhhhh Taringail.

EMILY: Taringail. Maybe that did something in the water, you know? And everyone is like, "We never went to family therapy over that, so."

SALLY: Whoops!

EMILY: Whoops. Anyway, Gawyn, is clear to us the readers, has never received any reply to his mean message. Um, including – he hasn't received Egg's new message.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: So, we the readers are also aware that Egwene's messages, so we're like, "Oh, something's interfering with the mail!" A classic fantasy subplot.

SALLY: Yeah! It's always the mail.

EMILY: When the mail doesn't get delivered. God dammit.

SALLY: Ah shoot, the dang post.

EMILY: [laughs] Very Shakespearean.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah. The whole plot hinging on your mail delayed a couple of days.

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah.

SALLY: [laughing] Are you joking?

EMILY: [laughs] Again, so realistic.

SALLY: Yeah, it is pretty funny. No, I never got your email, actually.

EMILY: What are you talking about? Anyway, [laughs] uh, Gawyn is like, "I have decided to be a good person. So, I better go to Egwene, but first I better go tell Elayne that I'm going to Egwene." So, he goes up to try and bid farewell to Elayne and Birgitte's like, "You can't go in. She's doing some *tel'aran'rhiod* thing." Which we, the readers, know Elayne is not doing

because she's pregnant and that nerfs her in every conceivable way. So, she, I guess is just in there asleep [laughs].

SALLY: So, Birgitte is either lying or doesn't understand what's going on.

EMILY: Yeah, but Birgitte's so rude and Gawyn's like, "Okay, I'll just go myself. Tell her I said bye." So, he goes to the Traveling grounds and, like, he gets to Tar Valon, but the gateway, like, snaps shut behind him, so it's, like, intersecting with the exact moment the dreamspike is entering. And he runs up to Egwene's bedroom thinking – he's – as soon as he found out that Elayne and Egwene are in *te'aran'rhiod* he's like, "Oh! This is the perfect time for the assassins to strike, because she's asleep and doing an important thing in her sleep." So, he goes running up to Egwene's bedroom, accumulating a couple of followers on the way. And just to [claps], you know, finish with his subplot. He gets up to Egwene's room and, um, uhhhh, finds, there's, like a maid, that got, like, trapped in one of Egwene's traps, which is extremely funny to because it implies that the Seanchan assassins were like, "Okay, we know there's Power traps in there, so we're going to throw [laughs] a random maid. Just yeet her in. [laughing] We don't kill her or anything. We don't know if it effects dead bodies."

SALLY: Yeah, just gonna throw in this live woman.

EMILY: So, there's just a woman floating on the ceiling, Mary Winchester style for this entire scene where, um, Gawyn is fighting the [intense voice] Bloodknives.

SALLY: Mary Winchester style is so evocative.

EMILY: Yeah. I think b – just one of the guards dies. The other one goes for help.

SALLY: Yeah, which means Gawyn...

EMILY: Of course, is fighting three people alone.

SALLY: Three. And it's only his love for Egg and his incredibly manly prowess and good sword skills.

EMILY: Swords, yeah.

SALLY: That get him through this.

EMILY: He's, like, screaming for help, but no one's coming. So, we are like, "Okay, clearly something's up outside." But don't worry. He manages to – he, like, gets it down to one other guy or, like, two other guys and he's like, "The only way I can think to even the playing field is to turn the lights out." So, he grabs a pillow and, guys, it's just like that Vine, you know? [laughs]

SALLY: [laughing] Where he hits the lantern. God, I can't even remember the –

EMILY: Where he hits the lantern. God, I can't even remember the –

SALLY: Yeah, I can't remember the dialogue there but it's pretty funny. The pillow fight one.

EMILY: The pillow fight one. Just hits it and the lights go out. He does that and, like, through his incredible hearing and instinct and what not, he kills the guys. But! He takes a big wound so he's

–

SALLY: A big wound. To the tummy.

EMILY: Basically bleeding out all over Egg.

SALLY: But she'll wake up and Bond him, and they'll be like, "Let's get married." And it's, like, you're eleven years old. Maybe calm down.

EMILY: Yeah, it's also, like, I wish that Bonding people wasn't how we solved all our problems.

SALLY: Every mortal injury?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Have you guys considered the emergency room?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: With a trained physician.

EMILY: Like, Egwene can't Heal *at all*?

SALLY: Yeah, she's like, "My skill with Healing is really bad." And it's like what are you doing? I thought you were supposed to be a very good channeler and you didn't think to learn how to Heal?

EMILY: And you just can't Heal *at all*? You don't have, like, basically life saving?

SALLY: Yeah, you can't just do, like, some first responder shit, you know? Until Nynaeve can show up?

EMILY: Yeah, like even loser clerics have Save the Dying or whatever that cantrip is. It's, like, come on.

SALLY: Stop the bleed, Egg.

EMILY: Stop the bleed! You should have first level [laughs] Cure Wounds. Come on!

SALLY: Yeah! It's so ridiculous! So, she's just like – yeah, they're immediately like – Gawyn's, you know, basically dead. They're like, "We love you."

EMILY: She's like, "It's okay. I'll bond you. And I want to marry you." And it's like, you guys are so stupid.

SALLY: You guys are so dumb.

EMILY: It doesn't solve any of the problems in their relationship, is the problem.

SALLY: No!

EMILY: Egwene is just, like, taking it on. She's just, like, sort of – like, I get it. You're trying to save his life, you know? But that just creates a new problem in the relationship. It doesn't solve the problems by having this magical, romantic bond between you two.

SALLY: Yeah, I think what you – definitely what you guys need is to be able to read each other's thoughts and feelings.

EMILY: Yeah, it's kind of like when two people, to save a marriage, are like, "Let's have a baby."

SALLY: Let's have a baby.

EMILY: Let's introduce another variable, who is a human with thoughts and feelings and trauma.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: [laughs] And then it's like, "Oh. No. We should have just kept that between us."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It's, like, yeah, you guys should have probably just broken up before breaking up meant killing each other, essentially.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah.

EMILY: [sighs] But Egwene in the World of Dreams is doing so much fighting and Perrin is also doing so much fighting.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And, um, it's, yeah, just a very actiony sequence. I think good action sequences are designed to make you skim through them.

SALLY: Yeah, it's a pacing thing for sure.

EMILY: Um, so when you do actually read them, you're like, "Wait, what's going on in terms of geography and bodies and whatever is happening?"

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, but the sort of, uh, the – Egwene and Perrin do intersect wherein Perrin just, like, jumps into the White Tower and is right next to Egg. And they're like, "Oh, what?"

SALLY: It's like that Spider-Man meme.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Pointing at each other.

EMILY: And Egwene's like, "Perrin, you can't be here." And Perrin's like, "Sure I can. I live here." [laughs] And Egwene's like, "I'll just tie you up, because for some reason that's my – "

SALLY: That's what keeps you people safe.

EMILY: That's my number one go to. Yeah, is making someone helpless in the midst of a bombing.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Egg no. Perrin is like, "I don't want to do that." So he unties himself.

SALLY: He just, like, wills the weave away.

EMILY: Yeah. And so –

SALLY: The wheel weaves and the wheel wills. Perrin wills as the wheel...weaves.

EMILY: I'm so tired.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] Egwene's like, "Oh my god. He has some skills! In that he understands that it's the World of Dreams. That's so crazy." And Perrin – then a Black Ajah lady jumps out at them and tries to do balefire at them, and Perrin's like, "No." And the balefire goes away and Egwene, like, kills the lady. And Egwene's like, "How did you do that?" And Perrin's like, "It's just a weave. Like..."

[pause]

BOTH: What like it's hard?

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] And Egwene's like, "No, it – it's balefire, dummy." And he's like, "[I don't know noise] Well, Egwene, I don't know what you're doing here, but good luck!" And leaves. So, that scene is bad is on a number of levels. On the one hand, I sure love it when our main characters interact. I wish they'd interact more.

SALLY: I know.

EMILY: And in a variety of ways so that not every way was bad, but here we are.

SALLY: Yeah, this scene could have been so funny and charming. Um.

EMILY: Mm-hmm. And it's clearly meant to be funny and charming. Like, it's clearly meant to be, like, [exaggerated chuckle] these two who had no clue that they were both doing the same thing, because the world is big and they're not in the same places in *tel'aran'rhiod*. Ho, ho, ho. They're so funny and charming. And instead, it's, like, they're both incredibly condescending to each other. So, mean about it.

SALLY: So mean about it.

EMILY: And we come away from this with only Egwene feel – having, like, learned something.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: The point is that they now both go to their climactic battles. Perrin has his confrontation with Slayer. Egwene has her confrontation with Mesaana. And Egwene takes her experience with Perrin into the confrontation with Mesaana and is like, "I need to remember that in the World of Dreams, things are as I will them. It's all just strength of will." So, therefore, she magics away the *a'dam* that Mesaana was holding on her, is like, "I do not accept this as my reality," and we can have literal battle of wills and I will come out on top."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Because my good friend Perrin reminded me that that's more important than channeling. Inadvertently, obviously.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But it's not like Perrin goes into his meeting with Slayer and is like, "I've learned something from Egwene," because Perrin's already learned everything, because Perrin's perfect.

SALLY: Yeah. Uh, this scene just reeks of, like, classic *Wheel of Time* misogyny. Women are never going to get – women are never going to have as much skill as men, *even* in something that Egg has been training in for a really long time and has, like, a natural gift in. So, that's really

annoying. I also found this scene incredibly annoying because it reminded me how bizarre everything going on with Perrin is. Like, there's a lot of really solid worldbuilding around the World of Dreams and the way that channelers interact with it. You know, Rand has done interesting stuff there, the Wise One, the Aes Sedai, our main trio of women, in particular. And it's, like, that's all been really set up for us. And then Perrin's whole thing is just that he can talk to wolves and wolves go to the dream world. And it's just like – it was frustrating to me anew how random that is and how little explanation [laughs] we are given for any of that. And I know a part – a lot of that is intentional. It's quote unquote “wild magic,” but it just feels like even if that is the idea in the worldbuilding, I should know a little bit more about what's going on. Like, I shouldn't feel so – that it's so random that Perrin alone is so good at this.

EMILY: Yeah, it's like...trying to be, like, subtextual when everything with Egwene in the world of dreams has been so, like, textual.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: If that makes sense. Like, with Perrin it's, like, oh, Perrin goes to the World of Dreams because he has his special wolf skills, because being a wolf guy is liminal and the World of Dreams is liminal, I guess. And we're just supposed to take our understanding, our outside understanding of these tropes and apply them to what Perrin is experiencing, as opposed to Egwene being sat down and told, “You are a capital D Dreamer.”

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: That means you can do this and this and this. And that means you need to go to school and learn this and this and this. And it's just Perrin hopping around, occasionally having, like, the same sorts of dreams that Egwene is having. And the only narrative purpose I can think of for this is that Robert Jordan wanted to spend more time in the World of Dreams because it's an incredibly interesting, like, set piece.

SALLY: Yeah. It's cool.

EMILY: Um but didn't want it to be only the women interacting with the World of Dreams, or something.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It's very weird. I think my only fix that I could think of is if Perrin and Egwene had intersected way earlier than this. And then Perrin could have been like, “What's this now? This is a real thing and not just a me thing?”

SALLY: Not just a wolf thing. Yeah.

EMILY: Oh, just people can go here? You know, and then, like, have an external sort of map of what's going on with him. Instead of Perrin constantly being in the dark about his identity, which is another of his least interesting character traits in my opinion.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: That he's just like, "I'm in the only one in the world who's ever suffered or experienced the things I'm experiencing. Except, I guess, Elyas."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: "But he seems to have it all figured out, so really it's just me."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: It's, like, dude.

SALLY: Yeah, you're right. We've talked at length about how, archetypically, this makes sense, in, like, the liminal space and liminal creatures – like, my brain has no problem accepting the World of Dreams plus wolves. But you're right, it relies on so much external knowledge in a world that's really committed to its *internal* magic system. So, I think, if that's something they wanted to do – they, being the authors – I would have loved a little more intentionally there, other than just, like, you said Perrin is the most specialest boy who ever lived and therefore he can talk to wolves...He is a wolf?

EMILY: [confused noise]

SALLY: Question mark? [laughs] So, it just bugged me.

EMILY: Yeah, it's just, the whole thing is just kind of annoying. And yeah, this clash of worlds makes it, like, suddenly clear to us, like, how differently the sort of Perrin and Egwene *tel'aran'rhiod* experiences have been treated by the authors.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Like, we have been with Egg, it feels like, in every excruciating step of this journey, whereas with Perrin we got the speed run version and now it should be the other way around. That Egwene knows way more and has way more experience and is like, "No, you dummy. Don't do this and this and this." But instead, it's Perrin and he simply has not earned that from us.

SALLY: Nope! No way.

EMILY: [sighs] Silly. Anyway, Perrin confronts Slayer who has, like, managed to stab Hopper and then throws Hopper off the top of the White Tower and Perrin goes and catches him Superman style and Lois Lane. But then Hopper's just, like, dying slowly. Hopper's – Perrin's like, "I need to heal you." And it's, like, apparently you can't heal people in the World of Dreams. Again, I think that's something Egwene could have told you, but here we are. And Perrin finally gets rid of, well, Perrin finally tackles Slayer into a nightmare that just

conveniently popped up right next to them. And in the nightmare, he is like, “I will throw the dreamspike into the nightmare lava,” because also conveniently this nightmare has lava in it.

SALLY: [laughs] Sure.

EMILY: And it’s like, “Oh no!” So he has successfully vanquished the dreamspike. He has not vanquished Slayer who disappears and is like, “I’ll be back.” And it’s like, “You’ll always be back. You’re so goddamn annoying.”

SALLY: I know. Unkillable.

EMILY: Yeah, literally unkillable. But Hopper dies and is like, “Peace out, dude. But also find Boundless.” And we’re like, “Who the fuck is boundless? Why are we bringing another mentor into this?”

SALLY: [laughs] It’s very much the Moiraine-Cadsuane situation, like, if the mentor’s gotta die then they have to be dead.

EMILY: Then the mentor’s dead. Yeah. No, but we’re like, “Okay? That was so weird.” And then Perrin wakes up and it’s like his army is mostly moved because the Traveling got fixed. Perrin’s all, like, wounded. [laughs] Faile has – I wish we had been in Faile’s point of view when she saw blood just start –

SALLY: Yeah, squirting, horror movie style, out of her husband’s sleeping body.

EMILY: *What the fuck?!* And Faile knows first aid, so, unlike Egwene she was able to stabilize him, presumably, long enough to get a channeler in there. Uh, but Perrin goes to join his army and is like, “I just want to get the fuck away from this place.” He’s like, “It smells bad here.” And I think that will be explained later, but I can’t remember. He’s like, “I thought the vibes would be back to normal once the dreamspike was back to normal, but they’re not. So.”

SALLY: Bad vibes. Moon’s haunted.

EMILY: Moon’s haunted [shooting noises].

SALLY: Pew pew.

EMILY: And, yeah, Egwene in her confrontation with Mesaana has this battle of wills that eventually, we are told, breaks Mesaana’s mind. So, she, uh, is no longer fully there.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And we were just talking about how authors seem to feel the need to kill characters, like, mentors and stuff. Fulfill those archetypes. But another extremely annoying archetype is not killing the villain.

SALLY: Yes!

EMILY: It's, like, dude. Egwene has, like, another moment that, like, is preceding this one wherein she does something very similar to another woman, by imposing her will on her. And then is like, "Oh, I don't know if I can kill her, because now she's helpless."

SALLY: Ugh. Barf.

EMILY: And it's, like, ooookay. Well, it's sort of, like, a mental thing rather than you – you know, in physical fights, you pin someone down and then you stab them. That's how most physical, actual *John Wick* style fights are won. You get someone so they can't fight back and then you kill them.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: So, if you've done that in the mental arena, rather than the physical one, it's still morally reprehensible, because it's morally reprehensible to kill someone, but that's what the world you have chosen to live in.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So. And then when Egwene does this to Mesaana she's not even like, "Oh, well, should I just kill her?" She just is like, "Here's..."

SALLY: Mesaana.

EMILY: Here's this emp – here's this person who...is more or less going to need to be on life support here. And I'm not trying to start and ethics –

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: [laughs] Discussion about euthanasia or anything like that, but clearly the author's intent is: Mesaana is off the playing field.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: But! She's still technically breathing.

SALLY: Yeah, and therefore Egg is not technically a bad guy. Or something?

EMILY: Yeah, Egg has been merking people left and right in this scene.

SALLY: So, like –

EMILY: Burning them alive, causing buildings to fall on them. But then when it's just a one-on-one confrontation with Mesaana it has to be, like, a –

SALLY: Right. I also think in both these instances, where Egg is dealing with these women, she disables them. They're, you know, non-verbal, like you said, likely going to be on life support or whatever the equivalent and need twenty-four seven care. And so, it just, once that happens we introduce this incredibly paternalistic attitude about disabled people where it's, like, essentially it's okay to do this to them, but it's not okay to kill them. And, again, there's a lot of ethics involved in that conversation, which is probably a much larger discussion than the last few minutes we have remaining in our silly –

EMILY: Forty-five minute ding dong podcast.

SALLY: Silly little ding dong podcast. But it's a common trope that you'll see. It's, like, we can take the villain off the plate by just, like, disabling them, both in terms of the technical. they are no longer on the playing field. But also disabled as an identity.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: And then we can't kill them because...you know...that's tragic.

EMILY: Yeah, it's just, like, this dumb thing in fantasy where it's like we can't just kill the villain, because I don't know.

SALLY: Yeah and it's never [laughs]. It's never anything about, like, truly the ethics of taking a human life. It's never about that.

EMILY: If the ethics of taking a human life were an issue...

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Then it should have been an issue much earlier.

SALLY: Yeah, it's obviously not about that, because, like you said, Egg is lighting people on fire – she's burning them alive. She obviously does not give a fuck about killing the Black Ajah. So, it really is just this, you know...posturing. There's a term, what am I thinking of? Basically virtue signaling, in a way, is what I'm trying to say, I think.

EMILY: Mmm. Yeah.

SALLY: Like, remember she's a good guy.

EMILY: Yeah, our characters are good people because they hesitate to kill in cold blood as opposed to killing in normal blood.

SALLY: Normal blood...*what?*

EMILY: Yeah, it makes me think of *The Atlas Six*, when it's, like, the whole issue is we have to kill someone.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And it's, like, you guys started this book by killing a multitude of people.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: And also they're like, "But we know each other." And I'm like, "You patently hate each other."

SALLY: Yeah, particularly the person you're proposing to kill. You fucking despise them. Which is wrong and incorrect. *The Atlas Six* is a fun read and we talked about it on *We Don't Watch Outlander* and discuss this issue at length. About like –

EMILY: The morality of killing. When you're going to introduce that into the text, it's sort of a black and white thing. You have to introduce it big time with your characters, a la Aang.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Or you have to accept that you're a hypocrite.

SALLY: Yeah! And also, like, I wish – I think we've talked about this on the podcast more – I wish more texts would just lean into the fact that – like, I personally obviously believe that killing is bad, because I believe in the inherent value of human life, but when you're occupying a story with this level of violence, it's not necessarily a bad thing for killing to be a part of everyday life. It doesn't always have to be a huge moral quandary. And, again, if you're going to do it, do it correctly. Don't just be hypocritical about it. And also, if you're going to be hypocritical about it, just let people kill people.

EMILY: Yeah, morality is shaped by context.

SALLY: Yes!

EMILY: Is a crucial thing that storytellers seem to forget.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Especially fantasy storytellers. Like, they'll introduce this game of level – *Game of Thrones* level violent world and be like, "Oh, but killing's wrong!" And I'm like I simply don't believe that they would really...

SALLY: Feel that way.

EMILY: Feel that way. I think they would think, "I am pro capital punishment," [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah. I am pro capital punishment and kind of, like, mine for the taking. Like, I just have to create my world and that sometimes means killing my enemies.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: I didn't phrase that last bit very well, but you're so right. It's not like Ser Jaime Lannister is going to be like, "[sighs] Should I kill somebody?"

EMILY: Yeah and you're like Jai – what? [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] And to the point about morality being shaped by context, Mesaana is a bad person. She's – and we can so dive in to the ethics of capital punishment until to the end of time – but what do you gain by not killing one of your main villains?

EMILY: Nothing. Absolutely nothing. Just that she's there as, like, a vague threat to us. Like, we're gonna, for the next book and a half, "Is Mesaana gonna come back in some way. I hope not, because she wasn't a very good villain."

SALLY: No, she was – in terms of Forsaken, incredibly boring.

EMILY: Except not quite as bad as the actual Forsaken point of view we get here, which is Graendal being like –

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Ah, dammit. The dreamspike thing didn't work, but at least I have my other evil plan. And we're like, "Girl."

SALLY: What evil plan?

EMILY: What the fuck?

SALLY: Could you stop?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Hey, Graendal. Stop.

EMILY: But don't worry, what happens to Graendal at the end of this book is worse than what happens to Mesaana, because, again, we can't just kill women.

SALLY: Yeah, we just – again, this is another instance of we cannot kill women, we just have to humiliate and do horrible things to them in other ways that are not killing.

EMILY: I guess I end this podcast, sad about Hopper, mad about everything else.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: There's, like, a Hopper shaped sadness.

SALLY: Okay, I'll draw a little wolf.

EMILY: I'll draw a little wolf howling at the moon.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: RIP Hopper.

SALLY: I know.

EMILY: You were so good.

SALLY: Such a good character.

EMILY: Everything else stinks.

SALLY: Everything else, just sort of bad.

EMILY: Yeah. Well, that's it. Now, I didn't even mention this when you first said it. You said something like, "This is the climactic sequence for both Egwene and Perrin," and I was like, "Yeah, that is how I've been framing it. That's how we've both been framing it." Um [page flips], but then I was forced to confront, because I've been thinking about the upcoming chapters. Perrin has, like, six climaxes in this book.

SALLY: Oh, cool. I love that.

EMILY: I mean, there was the trial. There's this – whatever is going on here. There's more to come.

SALLY: Okay, well, statement rescinded. This podcast has been edited for accuracy.

EMILY: So, the next chapter will deal with Aviendha. An extremely weird chapter that even *Wheel of Time* readers, with their Reddit threads, were like, "What?"

SALLY: [laughs] Listen, if the *Wheel of Time* Wiki people don't know, I'm not gonna have any fucking idea.

EMILY: Yeah, basically people for the last ten years have been like, "Hey, Brandon? What?"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, that will be fun. Um, and then we'll just get some Perrin and Galad stuff. More Perrin, um, climactic sequences, but we will get a Perrin sequence that I *actually* really like.

SALLY: Oh! That's exciting.

EMILY: Forging stuff.

SALLY: Nice. I do love a smith.

EMILY: Magic weapons.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Neald.

SALLY: I love a – [gasps]. That's my bestie.

EMILY: That's my bestie!

SALLY: That's my bestie! Neald is my best friend!

EMILY: [laughs] Twirling hair.

SALLY: Yeah. That's my bestie.

EMILY: So, that's what's on the docket. That's our moods. Anything else to add?

SALLY: No.

EMILY: Thank you for listening. Thanks to [laughs] our friend, Glynna – I don't know why I – she's my friend.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Thanks to our friend Glynna Mackenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers [laughs] on social media.

SALLY: I know. Ed is currently sitting on Emily's book. Like, it's open face down, so you know to hold her spot, and he's just sitting on half of it, and his little chest fat is rolling over the spine.

EMILY: Ed.

SALLY: Good news about Ed's health, if anyone was curious, he is once again put on his weight. He's quite chunky, he's on his right medication, and he is psychologically tormenting us because we don't feed him every hour on the hour.

EMILY: We feed him four times a day.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Which is two more times a day than most cats get fed, so.

SALLY: It's two more times than Tybalt gets fed.

EMILY: [sighs] Thank you all for listening. [laughs] Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: Yes. Oh my god. Uh, so last week, part of the reason we didn't have an episode last week was that I was traveling and ended up experiencing some delays due to the weather and other airline problems. But I was flying up to Washington, the state of Washington, to visit my brother and his family, and on the flight up there – my mom likes to sit in the aisle, so I always end up sitting in the middle, which doesn't really bother me. But there was a person, I assume a woman, but I, uh, probably shouldn't make those assumptions. Anyway, this woman sitting next to me in the window seat, talking on the phone the entire time in a foreign language – fine, you know? But well after the flight attendant was like, “You have to turn your phone off,” she was like chattering away. But then once the flight takes off, she pulls out a freezer bag full of hard boiled eggs [laughs] and proceeds to crack them back into the freezer bag and eat these eggs while sitting next to me. [laughs] Which is, like, the worse possible airplane food, right? Like, who brings hard boiled eggs on an airplane? Um, so smelly, so weird. I'm also allergic to eggs, like, not to the point of being anaphylactic, but I was, like...they made me super nauseous. Just the smell of eggs in general is pretty gross. But, yeah, she proceeded to eat, like, six hard boiled eggs while sitting next to me. This is a true story. My mother will corroborate.

EMILY: I'm stunned.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And disgusted.

SALLY: Isn't that such a wild airplane food? She brought those through security, and security was probably like, “What the fuck?”

EMILY: Ma'am?

SALLY: I guess this is technically allowed, but why would you?

EMILY: You – we have to pour out our waters.

SALLY: I know!

EMILY: We have to take off our shoes and people are allowed to bring six hard boiled eggs?

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Onto flights?

SALLY: It was so gross.

EMILY: That's even worse than my flight story when my nephew pissed his pants.

SALLY: [laughs] That's a pretty good story. That should be your sign off next week.

EMILY: [laughs] I'll get permission. From Will.

SALLY: Hey, Will. Can I talk about you peeing?

EMILY: Can I humiliate you on the podcast? No, it's okay. He's three.

SALLY: He won't care.

EMILY: He won't care. Anyway, flying. Terrible.

SALLY: Terrible.

EMILY: Eggs.

SALLY: Please don't bring eggs on your next plane ride.

EMILY: Alright everyone. Have a good week!

SALLY: Bye!