

Episode 294: The First-Ever Thawed Wife

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SALLY: Everybody Hates Rand is a Wheel of Time podcast that will contain spoilers for all 14 books. So, if you're anti-spoiler, stop this, read all 14 books, and come back. We'll be here. Waiting.

EMILY: Our title is a joke and is meant to be taken as such. "Everybody," in this context, refers to us and our cats. You are free to feel however you want about Rand. He's a fictional character. Please don't DM us.

[theme song by Glynna MacKenzie plays]

EMILY: I read these chapter *today* and I have already forgotten. Okay.

SALLY: I know. I'm trying to think. What can we talk about that isn't this?

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Um, we can give you a *Survivor* update. Um.

EMILY: I don't think we have many. We haven't been able to watch much in the last –

SALLY: I know. We haven't been able to watch *Survivor*, which is, um.

EMILY: Week or so.

SALLY: Pretty devastating.

EMILY: Yeah, we've come to a – our one season a week pace has come to a halt as we have had real life to contend with.

SALLY: That's really tragic. I can't wait for real life to end so we can go back to watching a week – a season of *Survivor* every week.

EMILY: For real, for real, for real. Um [laughs], Gawyn starts like, "I don't like fighting besides those Seanchan." And I'm like, "Wow, Gawyn said a correct thing for the first time in his life."

SALLY: How does it feel Gawyn?

EMILY: It's the thousand chimpanzees, give them a typewriter [laughs] phenomenon.

SALLY: Eventually they'll write *Hamlet* or whatever.

EMILY: Eventually they will say – they will come to the morally correct opinion for the first time in Gawyn’s young life. Um, this is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheely Time podcast.

SALLY: And I am Sally Goodger.

EMILY: Um, yeah. Pretty Seanchan focused this, uh, couple of chapters as they, more or less, officially join the fight.

SALLY: Mm-hm.

EMILY: Again, on the Kandor battlefield? I know longer know if they’re in Kandor.

SALLY: I think they talk about being in Arafel.

EMILY: Yeah, we’re on the fucking border. I think they’re talking about being by this river here But.

SALLY: Hmm. Fjord.

EMILY: There’s a whole couple of pages where Bryne is just giving battle orders and I just found myself just completely glazing over.

SALLY: Oh, yeah. Hundred percent.

EMILY: I was like, “I’m sure that this is something for some nerds, because there’s something for everyone.” That they’re like, “I’ve got to know the blow by blow set up of...lancers? And cavalry guys.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: “On the battlefield.” But I was like, “I could not care less at this time in my life.”

SALLY: Yeah, it’s...I don’t know. It just feels like a lot to contend with 460 pages into this book.

EMILY: [sighs] Yeah. Especially because we – um, or, at least, I know that eventually everything’s going to narrow down into a single battlefield anyway. Like, all of these fronts that we’re so desperately holding on to are eventually going to be abandoned regardless, so, um, this is one of those instances where, where hindsight does not serve.

SALLY: Yeah. Like, will it matter in 50 pages if...Gareth Bryne has enough cavalry?

EMILY: If they have enough *arrows* [pronounced are-ohs]. It’s not, like, the most tragic scene in *Les Miserables* where Gavroche has to go get more fucking ammo from the fallen soldiers, you know? And then gets murdered. A child!

SALLY: A child!

EMILY: A child!

SALLY: [singing in a bad cockney accent] ‘ow d’you do, my name’s Gavroche.

EMILY: [singing in slightly better cockney accent] ‘ow d’you do, my name’s Gavroche!

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] Like, okay.

SALLY: What if we took a French child and gave him the most insane cockney accent you ever heard.

EMILY: We need you to know that he’s *poor!*

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: So, he’s cockney!! And I’m like, “This would be so much funnier if everyone had just the thickest French accents and Gavroche was unintelligible he sounds.”

SALLY: Yeah [making noises].

EMILY: Which is, um, I just read the book. This is our thing that we can talk about. Um, instead. I just read the book and, literally, Gavroche is almost unintelligible because he’s using so much slang.

SALLY: Slay.

EMILY: Like, street slang.

SALLY: Amazing.

EMILY: That, of course, does not translate from A) French to English or B) from the early 1800s to now.

SALLY: 2024, yeah.

EMILY: And for whatever – actually, probably because the guy translating the book didn’t want to be completely cringe, was like, “Yeah, I will keep my, just the sort of italics French words every once in a while.” And you’ll just have to be like, “I have no idea what the fuck is going on.”

SALLY: What are you saying, Gavroche?

EMILY: He's probably swearing at everyone.

SALLY: Good for him! But it really is like, sometimes you get on the internet and the kids are, like, inventing just new words.

EMILY: Yeah, skibidi? What's that.

SALLY: What?

EMILY: Anyone know what that is? Sally doesn't, I guess.

SALLY: I've never heard of that.

EMILY: Skibidi.

SALLY: Sorry I'm old.

EMILY: I got rizz. That was the last thing I acquired.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Not personally, just the word.

SALLY: No, you've got rizz.

EMILY: Rizz!

SALLY: You've got rizz.

EMILY: Sorry, I was ranking Tybalt and Ed mentally on who has more rizz.

SALLY: Who has more rizz? Hmm.

EMILY: I think it's Ed.

SALLY: I do think it's Ed. Ed is incredibly charismatic.

EMILY: Maybe if it was, like, from a distance where you didn't actually have to interact with either of them, it would be Tybalt because he's so handsome.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And, um, so cute. But Ed is also so cute.

SALLY: Ed is – Tybalt is, Tybalt is beautiful. Like, Tybalt is a beautiful cat, beautiful tuxedo cat, beautiful long-haired cat, gorgeous green eyes. Just, you watch him walk and you're like, "Wow, that's a pretty bastard." And then Ed is cute in the way that, like, homely little critters are cute.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] I think Ed is a very cute cat, but he doesn't have that, like, you know, male model thing going for him.

EMILY: Yeah, he's got that old man rizz.

SALLY: Yeah, he does. He's got that Senshi rizz.

EMILY: Oh, hell yeah! Ed, are you a dwarf?

SALLY: Yeah, you are a dwarf. We all know dwarves have the most rizz.

EMILY: You're so fucking *thick!*

SALLY: Ed is quite thick. He's got a big ol' belly.

EMILY: And Tybalt is an elf.

SALLY: [quoting *Dungeon Meshi*] Because it's heavy!

EMILY: Because it's heavy!

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Gavroche's slang as to our *Dungeon Meshi*, um, references.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Equally making things unintelligible.

SALLY: Well, there's nothing you need to know about this chapter except that Egg is the only one I can throw my support behind any longer.

EMILY: Yeah, it's actually – I was getting a real big kick out of Egwene and Tuon having this argument. Not because I enjoyed reading it but because at certain point I was like, "Brandon-slash-Robert have written themselves into a corner where Tuon is utterly indefensible."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, and it's very clear because she just can't logic her way out of – like, Egwene is just superior – has the superior logic. Has the superior argument. And it's like they wrote

themselves into that and were like, “Oh, wait. I’ve never done this before with Tuon. She always wins verbal sparring matches. What am I supposed to do with this?”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I’ll throw a Brandon Sanderson shaped Mat at it, I guess.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: To break it up with quote unquote “comedy” [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, it really was – it was very, like, vindicating. I don’t think it’s supposed to be. I think there’s an argument to be made that Egg is supposed to be being, like, like, yes, Egg does absolutely, one hundred percent have the moral high ground and I think everyone can agree on that. But I think there’s part of it that’s, like, Egg! You’re just supposed to be fighting the Last Battle, why are you...doing this.

EMILY: Yeah, why are you wasting your time on something that has already been settled. Although Egg manages to get some major concessions.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: In a way, what’s happening here between Egwene and Tuon is, um, the authors giving us what was *supposed* to happen between Rand and Tuon.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Like, Rand and Tuon was sort of set up to be a sort of actual, logical, rational conversation between two world leaders, but Rand failed to show up for both of those. Not physically. He was present, but, like, the first one he just threw a temper tantrum and left, acted like a spoiled child. The second one, he came in, *ta’verened* his way into getting Tuon to sign her name on a paper and then also left. Didn’t get any real concessions.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: So, Egwene comes in here and through the power of girlbossing is just, like, “Yeah, I will shame this world leader in front of her subordinates, reveal some state secrets.”

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And be like, “yeah, sure, of course you can send out spokespeople from the Seanchan to tell [laughing] people that if they want to be leashed they can come along to the Seanchan empire, but in return, you have to release anyone who doesn’t want to be leashed.” And Tuon’s like, “Yeah, of course.”

SALLY: No one would want – no one would say now.

EMILY: [laughs] Well, Tuon initially is like, “No. Of course I’m not going to do that.” And Egg is like, “Well, either it’s – either you logically believe that being leashed is better for everyone and everyone agrees with that, or you don’t.” So.

SALLY: And Tuon’s like, “Wait.”

EMILY: Tuon’s like, “Wait! Oh my god!”

SALLY: Wait, is my entire empire built on a logical fallacy?

EMILY: No. She, of course, couldn’t possibly think like that.

SALLY: Yeah, she’s like, “Well everyone – ” She’s like, “Actually, everyone we talk to with our, um, cult leaders that we send out, our cult recruiters, is going to come to us and nobody is going to leave.” And Egg, we hope correctly, is like, “The opposite is going to happen, Tuon, but literally whatever.”

EMILY: Yeah, Egg’s like, “Sure.”

SALLY: What is this dumbfuck doing? [laughs]

EMILY: Hey, Tybalt.

[cat meows loudly]

EMILY: Okay?

SALLY: [laughing]

[cat meows loudly again]

EMILY: What?

SALLY: Tybalt is acting like the distance between our three barstools is too great for him to overcome [laughing]. They’re, like, a foot apart.

EMILY: Tybalt has a solid eight-foot vertical leap.

SALLY: [laughing] I don’t know what he’s doing.

EMILY: I have seen him [laughing] what felt like overcome my own height in sheer jumping distance.

SALLY: [laughing] Like, he’s being so stupid. Um.

EMILY: Being a brat.

SALLY: He is also having a brat summer, just like Rand. Um.

EMILY: I think one of the effects of having Tuon be forced to confront – for what feels like the first time in this entire series, which is insane – someone who, um, has the logic and rationale to hold her own ground.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Has the, like, state, political authority to also meet her on her own ground and, um, sort of has the leverage to have any sort of conversation about this.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Like, the fact that Tuon is confronting all of *that* in one person, which is Egwene, for the first time leaves you with this scene where Tuon loses, basically, although she would never admit it. Um, and just leaves you, like, wow they really could have – I just end up feeling about Tuon the way I feel about really sad tradwives on Instagram. I'm like, "Your brain is so rotten, and I really want to rescue you from this. I really want you to concede that what you're doing is not just stupid but evil and contributing to net negatives in the world."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: "And I want that for you, but I know that you are so into it that you could *never* possibly admit that." And it's really just depressing.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah, I agree completely. Um.

EMILY: I'm not saying we should not have this conversation or that it doesn't serve, like, any sort of purpose. Just, like, maybe we would have had a chance, narratively, to have dug Tuon out of this hole if we had started having these conversations a hell of a lot earlier.

SALLY: Yeah, agreed. It is really depressing. Like, you're sitting here, and like you said, Egg is, um – it is kind of fun to see Egg in this scene because you're like oh yeah. The last 14 books have made Egg into this person who can stand her ground with a massive world leader.

EMILY: Absolutely not afraid of Tuon, yeah.

SALLY: Yeah, incredibly, like, solid in herself. Incredibly, like, logical and articulate and you're like, "Fucking hell yeah, Egg."

EMILY: Slay. Slay, girl. Slay.

SALLY: Absolute, absolute iconic moment for her to just be like bombshell, bombshell, bombshell, bombshell. I'm actually the best in a debate, fuck you. Um, so, it's, like, cool to see

Egg, but it's like, um...what was I saying? I got distracted in Egg girlbossing her way through the world.

EMILY: It's hard not to be distracted. You're like, "Wow!"

SALLY: You're like, "Wow!"

EMILY: Look at her go.

SALLY: And it really is very – as someone who has been, like, number one Tuon hater from day zero, even. From the fact that I knew she existed until now, like, Tuon is my archnemesis. It's very gratifying to be, like, finally she has lost.

EMILY: Yeah, watch her get dragged to filth.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: This scene could only have been better if Egwene ended up by being like, "And by the way your fashion's ugly."

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah! Face: busted. Clothes: old.

EMILY: Hate your manicure.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Fuck you!

SALLY: Manicure's bad. Yeah, like, started reading her like they do on *Drag Race*. Um, truly awful. What's up with your two longs or nail or whatever. *Gross!* Um, I don't know. It, but it is just, like, fucking bleak for Tuon to be here leading an army of enslaved women in Book 14 and we're just, like, supposed to be on her side. I know we make this argument all the time, but, like, Emily said, it's just fucking depressing to be, like, the arc for this character has not been deprogramming her from this sort of like –

EMILY: Yeah, has not budged an inch in terms of, like, moral compass.

SALLY: Yeah, because Tuon got introduced in what? Book...?

EMILY: Eh, nine.

SALLY: Nine? Okay. So, Tuon has been here for several thousands of pages and there's been absolutely no real character change or character development. Like, she really hasn't changed at all as a character and it's just, like what, *truly* what is the point then? If we have a character who, from the second she is on the page until several thousand pages later, is not behaving any differently?

EMILY: Yeah, from sheerly a character perspective, setting aside all the moral, political, uh, quagmires that are set in front of us, like, you said earlier, it's fun to watch Egwene doing this because her – the last 14 books have built her to this. For the first time she's able to confront – I mean, she's articulate, um, she's um, so savvy, so smart. Um, just not afraid of Tuon at all. She's also able to confront Tuon with the fact that she herself was leashed, which is an incredibly important thing for some people who have experienced trauma to do. To be able to lay that at the feet of a perpetrator.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Which I think is really cool for her. And then it's just contrasted with Tuon who has moved up in the world politically, but, as a person, has not changed at all except in her relationship to Mat, I think. Is the only thing we're supposed to accept as the thing that has changed about her. That she has grown a little bit more flexible in allowing him to be a relationship she has. And it's, like, again, that – Mat can't shoulder that weight. Not because I want to protect Mat, but because the narrative has not given him the opportunity or the capacity to do that.

SALLY: Right, and just, like, no other character should be responsible for shouldering the growth of another character. Like, even if they are as in close of a relationship as a marriage, like, your characters should stand on their own.

EMILY: Yeah, it's like a reverse dead wife. Mat has alive wife.

SALLY: Mat has alive wife.

EMILY: [laughs] And it's absolutely tanking his character development.

SALLY: [laughs] She's – she's been the opposite of fridging. Thawed? She's been thawed.

EMILY: [laughing] She's been thawed.

SALLY: [laughing] First ever instance of thawing.

EMILY: A thawed wife.

SALLY: [laughing] TM, TM, TM. [laughing] EHR exclusive trope, the thawed wife.

EMILY: Yeah, just like in a real relationship, no person should be responsible for the growth of another person. You have to pull some of your own weight and Tuon is absolutely not doing that. So.

SALLY: Yeah, and, like, there are, you know, static and dynamic characters, flat and round characters. We've talked about that. And there are, like, certain instances where it's fine for a characters' motivations and personality to change, but usually those characters are our *bad guys*.

Like, bad guys are allowed to have the same evil motivations throughout the entire book. Not a – a good, interesting villain will also adapt as the narrative adapts, but, you know, whatever. Not to belabor the point, but Tuon does not fit any of [laughs] the criteria of being on the good side, not even structurally.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And I fucking hate her.

EMILY: Yeah. *DIE!*

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Here is what Egwene achieves through this conversation. We already referenced that, um, she has convinced Tuon that, um, anyone who is leashed and should – and does not want to be should be able to go free. This is a huge – imagine, this means Elaida [laughs] – this is how Elaida can finally win.

SALLY: Way to go, Elaida! We were all rooting for you.

EMILY: We were all rooting for you! Um, Egwene has also managed to establish rights for the Sea Folk, which Rand did not bother to do.

SALLY: Rand!

EMILY: She's really just covering his entire ass here. She's just, like, "Yeah, any islands you took from the Sea Folk, that's not fair game. We did not agree to that." And Tuon's like, "Um, no." And Egwene's like, "Um, yes."

SALLY: Bitch!

EMILY: Bitch! Um, and Egwene reveals to, you know, the court that is assembled here that all *sul'dam* can be taught to channel. Again, state secret. We don't know how many of these people were aware of that, although it's been covered up so presumably some of them. And that therefore Tuon herself can be trained to channel. And Egwene's like, "So if you want – if your logic holds up, put the leash on. You should want to change your entire position. Give up all your power and become a tool of the empire." And Tuon's like, "Mahhh!"

SALLY: [hisses]

EMILY: Tuon does the Bilbo when he sees the ring in Rivendell [hisses].

SALLY: Um.

EMILY: And Mat's like, "Hey, hey! Now, ladies!"

SALLY: Yeah, uh.

EMILY: Women be shopping!

SALLY: They start, like, fighting, like really fighting. Because Egg's like, Tuon's like, "Um, no the *marath'damane* or whatever no – the *sul'dam* can't channel." And Egg's like, "Then put the collar on. You were one of these, you're one these *sul'dam*. If it doesn't matter, it won't affect you." And Tuon – and again Brandon Sanderson and Robert Jordan have really, like, backed themselves – like Egg is at the top of the ropes with a metal chair [laughing], like, there's nowhere for Tuon to go.

EMILY: Give 'em the chair!

SALLY: [laughs] There's nowhere for Tuon to go, so then the ladies just start fighting and, like, pushing each other.

EMILY: Which, narratively, doesn't make sense.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: Egwene would never do this. Egwene has been pushed *so hard* and has never resorted to a literal catfight.

SALLY: Like, poking her in the chest.

EMILY: Yeah. So, again, this is an example of the authors' misogyny, where I have to categorize women into the categories that I need them to behave in. These sexist behaviors, so that I can write myself out of this corner, because this of course immediately tanks the conversation entirely. Mat comes in is like, "[noises] I'm a clown." And Egwene and Tuon have this moment of, like, comradery, which, again, extremely weird, over how insane Mat is.

SALLY: Yeah, it's –

EMILY: And I'm like, "Absolutely not."

SALLY: It's especially weird because, like, steps in between them and puts his hand on each of their chests.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: So, Egg is like, "Oh my gosh, Mat is touching my boobs." And I'm like, "Egg would not give a fuck about this."

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: At least, I hope she wouldn't. Not in a way where she and Tuon make eye contact over Mat touching Egg's breasts.

EMILY: Yeah, no. It would be one think if Mat, like, honk honked [laughs].

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Everyone's –

SALLY: Now, ladies, calm down.

EMILY: Now, ladies. Honk honk.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] But he's just doing the think where you put a hand on somebody's center, which is their chest. Absolutely unsexual, absolutely not weird at all.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And yeah, this is – we all just gotta commiserate about how weird and horny Mat is. And it's like, "What the fuck are you talking about!"

SALLY: What the fuck are you talking about? These are – we're supposed to – we've been led to believe that these are the two most competent, intelligent, dangerous, cunning women on the planet, Egg and Tuon, but they're gonna stop their fight because here comes – yeah. Mr. Clown himself to be like, "Hey ladies! Do do do do."

EMILY: Yeah, they get derailed by Mr. –

SALLY: Egg should have stabbed Mat in the stomach and then kept on going.

EMILY: Excuse me. Stab. Get away. Um, in a, at least somewhat amusing reversal of roles though, as Egwene departs she's like, "Mat, if you need me to rescue you, then I can." And he's like, "Nah, I got it." And I'm like, "It would be so funny if she then broke into the Stone of Tear and rescued him anyway."

SALLY: Rescued Mat.

EMILY: This is how Mat's character [laughing] can finally win.

SALLY: Can finally win. Mat has to be rescued.

EMILY: Ugh. Anyway, Egwene and – Egwene leaves and is just like, "Well, established. But we have an uneasy alliance, at least for the length of the Last Battle." We then flash over to Elayne who is near collapse because she's so exhausted as her forces have finally managed, more or less,

to defeat the first army that they are trying to take care of. She and Birgitte, like, go up to a sort of lookout point and see that, like, what remains of this force is now being surrounded and bombarded. Um, unfortunately, she hears, like, horns of the other army approaching and is like, “Oh my gosh, this is way too early. They weren’t supposed to arrive until tomorrow.” She is not the only one to find this suspicious, like, Tam is also there kind of yelling at Bashere. He’s like, “What the fuck is happening?” Um, Talmanes is also like, “What is going on? We’ve just been cross-checking our histories, and it turns out that there are no scouting parties that have been sent out to warn us of this.” So, basically everyone’s like, “Oh my gosh. Bashere’s a Darkfriend.” Egwene – Elayne puts him under arrest, house arrest more or less. Bashere is, um, outraged but isn’t really given a lot of time to defend himself and so the truth of the matter is yet to be revealed. Um, because everyone is too occupied by this next army. Which, um, of course everyone’s like, “Well, we’re so exhausted we just have to fight them anyway.” Elayne is like, “Yeah, I’ll fight them with my little bit of channeling that I have left.”

SALLY: Mm-hmm. [sighs] Oh, Davram. Sorry you’re being slandered in this way.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Or libeled. Or whatever.

EMILY: Yeah, it is frustrating of course that Elayne then just takes over.

SALLY: Yeah, it’s not like –

EMILY: In terms of issuing orders in a military sense.

SALLY: Yeah, it’s not like, “Hey, here’s Talmanes.”

EMILY: Yeah, okay. Talmanes and Tam, you’re now in charge, you know?

SALLY: Elayne’s like, “No, it’s me. I’m nineteen years old.”

EMILY: Which, again, we’re like, “You have no military experience. How are you relaying perfect orders? How are you...” Like, I don’t believe that Elayne at the top of her game is going to do a better job than...Graendal sabotaged Davram Bashere.

SALLY: Right? Like, Bashere has still done a pretty damn good job given the circumstances. It’s very annoying that the immediate thing they jump to is Darkfriend rather than, like, was an actual mistake made because we’re overworking this old man.

EMILY: Yeah, that no one was like um – yeah, they seem to think, like, this is enough evidence of sabotage that, like, paperwork has been forged and stuff like that. Which, like, fair enough, but it is just like, we, Bashere lovers, are like....

SALLY: Um?

EMILY: Hey! Let him cook! [laughs]

SALLY: Yeah, exactly.

EMILY: [laughing] Maybe he – maybe this is all part of the plan!

SALLY: Maybe this is all part of the plan, baby. You don't know what's going on in there, behind that mustache.

EMILY: [laughs] Behind that mustache.

SALLY: Hi, Ed. Did you wake up? Oh, only for a second.

EMILY: Oh.

SALLY: He's going right back under.

EMILY: We then switch to a Gareth Bryne point of view which sort of disproves my theory from last section about how maybe Ituralde isn't under Graendal's control because he has a point of view, because I know Gareth Bryne is under Graendal's control, however far that extends. Um, but we just have Bryne and Siuan, like, walking through this camp. Um, Bryne's, like, issuing orders he's also like, "Our main issue right now is that of course now we're facing enemy channelers who can – who we've seen Travel, so we absolutely can't have a stationary command center, otherwise we'll be just attacked there again." So, he's just wandering around, which seems like a bad fix, but I guess I don't know what else he would do. He's like, "I need to send the Seanchan somewhere," so he grabs a messenger and sends her to deliver that message, but then she gets murdered [laughing] *Final Destination* style.

SALLY: It...

EMILY: [laughing]

SALLY: *Final Destination* is really the only way to put it. This woman runs off.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And there's a *raken* flying above that gets knocked out of the sky, so its huge dragon-like body falls on top of her and, like, rolls over her corpse several times.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And everyone's like [laughing], "Oh my god!" Like, reasonably everyone is like, "Oh my god."

EMILY: Everyone's like, "Hey, what the fuck?"

SALLY: Um, like, very plot – like, talk about deus ex machina.

EMILY: Deus ex falling dragon.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Yeah, it's insane, because then who should Bryne find [laughing] to carry his message? Min! She, like, crawls out from under her desk and is like, "Hey, I can run a message! You know? I'm just here doing..."

SALLY: God knows what.

EMILY: Yeah [laughs]. Non, um, crucial paperwork or something. And Bryne's like, "I mean, yeah. I know you and I trust you, so off you, off you...go."

SALLY: Off you trot.

EMILY: Goodbye! And we're like, "Okay." [laughs] Stupid.

SALLY: That, like...[laughs] you couldn't have thought of any other *way* that it would be Min?

EMILY: Come on, Brandon! Come on!

SALLY: Why couldn't they just be using Min as a messenger? Why did you have to *Final Destination* this poor woman?

EMILY: Yeah. It would have been extremely reasonable...yeah, if Min had just been a messenger. She's like, "I'm gonna show up. I'm young. I'm athletic." She has told us.

SALLY: Yeah, she seems to fit. Again, Bryne trusts her. She's related to the Dragon Reborn, so she should have some stat – we find out she does have status in the Seanchan camp, so it really is just, like, I guess Brandon was just like, "Why don't we have a little pizzazz today?"

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: A little seasoning.

EMILY: I'll throw a dead *raken* at the problem. It's like, "Boy."

SALLY: [whispers] What if you didn't?

EMILY: You didn't need to do that. Anyway [laughs]. Min runs off to the Seanchan camp, um, where, like, a *sul'dam* comes to get her and is like, "Oh, no you absolutely can't just go see the Empress because all of our, all of the messengers have been, like, vetted and, you know, you're carrying knives for possibly assassination." And Min's like, "If only you could see me in action with my knives, you'd know how useless, [laughing] how truly useless I am."

SALLY: They're mostly an accessory.

EMILY: They're mostly decorative at this point.

SALLY: Don't you think they're kind of slay?

EMILY: Yeah, they're here to make me look cute.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: What?

SALLY: And, honestly, if Min was honest about the fact that she wore knives for, like, a fashion reason and I'd be like, "She's the most iconic character of all time."

EMILY: Yeah, I'd be like, "Go, girl. Slay." If she just was like, "I, you know, they are helpful at times. If there's a box that needs to be opened."

SALLY: Yeah. You gotta slice an apple or something on the fly.

EMILY: Got a well-cooked steak in front of me.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But no. She's like, "These are my murder weapons that I use to murder people." And I'm like, "When? Have you ever?"

SALLY: I'm trying to count Min's murders....zero?

EMILY: Kill tally is in the negatives somehow.

SALLY: Perhaps? [laughs] Somehow people have killed Min?

EMILY: Um, anyway, Min's like, "Well, you've gotta deal with me anyway, because the last messenger got – believe it or not! – smushed by a *raken*." And this lady goes and fact checks that and then takes Min to, uh, not Tuon. She takes her to, like, the generals, which is Galgan and Mat who are working. And Mat's like, "Min!" And Min's like, "*MAT?!?*"

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Matthew?! [laughs]

SALLY: Matthew?

EMILY: I was trying to remember the last time these two interacted was.

SALLY: Right? [whispers] Have they ever met?

EMILY: Uhhhhhhh? [pause]

SALLY: Like in Book One?

EMILY: I think in Book, end of Book Two.

SALLY: [softly] Jesus Christ.

EMILY: When everyone was at Falme together.

SALLY: Yeah. Oh, I keep forgetting Min was at Falme. Anyway, Mat's like, "Min, my bestie!"

EMILY: Yeah, and Min's like, "Mat? ...My bestie?"

SALLY: Yeah, they have just, like, a very familiar relationship. More familiar than I would be if it was, like, my childhood friend's third wife?

EMILY: I mean, it makes sense on Mat's end. He's seen her naked so many times.

SALLY: That's true.

EMILY: Due to *ta'veren* vision.

SALLY: That's right. You'd get pretty comfortable with someone I guess.

EMILY: Min's just like, "Uh? Yeah, my boyfriend's weird childhood best friend who he kind of bullied for the last half of their relationship." Yeah, weird. Um, anyway, Min delivers the message and then goes to leave when Mat's like, "Hold on a second. You see any visions around anyone?" Min's like, "Yeah, around Galgan is a dagger rammed through the heart of a raven." And Mat is like, "Well, that's bad. I'm, I'm raven."

SALLY: I'm the raven.

EMILY: [singing] That's so Raven!

SALLY: [singing] It's the future I can *see*!

EMILY: Min can see! Yeah!

SALLY: It's very applicable. [singing]

EMILY: Min's like, "I'm pretty sure that's not what it means." And it's, like, yeah raven do represent pretty much all Seanchan, so we know it could represent Galgan himself getting killed.

SALLY: Ah. Well. If only he was killing Tuon.

EMILY: Um. [sighs] Oh god. If only. Yeah, but before Mat can leave, uh, Tuon enters.

SALLY: I mean talking about busted outfits. We're supposed to be like, "This outfit Tuon is wearing is very slay," and maybe it would be if a different person was wearing it, but I – Min is like, "She looks super impressive," and I was like, "I don't know. Prove it."

EMILY: Min describes it "it seemed the clothing of a warrior, a kind of uniform," and then the thing she describes sounds like the most, like, impossible thing to maneuver in of all time.

SALLY: Yeah, it's, like, huge pants, like, a corset top.

EMILY: A long, a *long* train. And it's, like, yeah, sure, I bet Daenerys Targaryen style she looks very fun, but, like, Met Gala not go into battle.

SALLY: Yeah, you're right. It probably is a little slay, I'm just...full of haters.

EMILY: Well, I don't think Brandon is very good at describing clothes.

SALLY: And I'm full of tiny little haters.

EMILY: It doesn't help that she's wearing silver trousers, a blue robe, and a red top. So, so she looks like a star-spangled bitch.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: Um.

SALLY: Betsy Ross!

EMILY: [laughs] Stop.

SALLY: Betsy Ross sewed this for me [laughs].

EMILY: Anyway, Tuon walks in. Min doesn't do the full bowing, what's that?

SALLY: Prostration.

EMILY: Yeah, prostration. Um, and so Tuon is like, "Who the fuck is this?" and Mat describes her as "The Dragon Reborn's woman." And I'm like could we dispense with describing people as 'woman.' I know in *Wheel of Time*, you don't have the phrase 'girlfriend.'

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: But – and it would be extremely weird and woke [laughing] if he said ‘partner.’

SALLY: Yeah. The Dragon Reborn’s partner.

EMILY: But, like, lover would be fine.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Or just, like, close personal friend.

SALLY: [laughs] She is, um, colleagues with the Dragon Reborn.

EMILY: [laughing] She’s the Dragon Reborn’s Rodholder.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: It’s equivalent in rank. Which Tuon does say, “Oh, well, then she’s in equivalent rank to you,” [laughs] because Tuon has established that she and Rand are equal lengths.

SALLY: So, they’re partners.

EMILY: So, boytoy and...

SALLY: Girltoy.

EMILY: Girltoy are equal. Um [laughs] matrimony doesn’t get you very far these days.

SALLY: It would be what? Boytoy and sugar baby, I guess. Not that Rand really buys Min a lot of stuff. Rand doesn’t *buy* his girlfriends a lot of stuff for being such a rich bitch.

EMILY: Rand’s a bad boyfriend!

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I’ve been saying it for fourteen books. He’s bad at relationships. Anyway, Min sees a bunch of shit around Tuon and alerts Mat. Tuon overhears and freaks out initially, but then is like, “Oh, you see visions. You’re Raven. This is perfect. I will immediately promote you to my Truthspeaker.” She also refers to Min as “Doomseer,” which is our first indication in the entire series that Min’s power set might not be unique. That this is something that has been known of, even if only on another continent.

SALLY: Right [laughs].

EMILY: So, yeah, now Min has just been fully integrated into the Seanchan aristocracy against her will.

SALLY: [sighs] I mean the obvious problem here is that Min does not get to refuse.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Mat makes a joke at the end. He's like, "Well, Tuon always gets the things she wants." Like, "If she wants you, she keeps you." And it's like that's fucking horrifying.

EMILY: Yeah!

SALLY: And also, like, Min has a life. What? Is she just gonna live in the Seanchan empire while her boyfriend runs around?

EMILY: Granted, if Rand dies, Min doesn't have much of a life because she's so fucking codependent.

SALLY: [softly] Yeah.

EMILY: But, yeah, it's not like Tuon is like, "Do I have a job offer for you?! It comes with fame, fortune, you get to bitch me out whenever you want." And if I were Min I would be like, "That might be..."

SALLY: That might be kind of worth it. I kind of fucking hate you.

EMILY: That might be kind of worth it. And it is a power – it is a position with a lot of power, like, theoretically Min could do some real work in terms of deprogramming Tuon from her cult-like tendency with human slavery.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But it is, uh, an unfair, um, strain on Min's agency to just shove her into that position because that's where the narrative needs her to be very suddenly.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Again, this is something that has not been built to at all and so we're like, "Hey, wait a second. I mean, yeah, Min doesn't have anything else to do in the Last Battle. I guess that's true, but the Seanchan?"

SALLY: Yeah, it comes really out of left field.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: And...

EMILY: Like, w-when you think about it, it makes sense from a variety of angles. The Seanchan, Tuon especially, are very, very concerned with omens.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: And sort of future telling in all of its capacities. Min, of course, has this power set that could therefore be very useful, if not very, like, interesting. It's, there's sort of an interesting study to be made there in terms of how Min's viewings match up to Tuon's prescribed list of omens.

SALLY: Yeah, yeah.

EMILY: Um, but yeah just narratively it's about, it's about as effective as a *raken* being shot out of the sky and landing on a messenger. It's very just transparently see into the blueprints. This is where Min needs to be, so the authors have just plopped her there without doing any behind-the-scenes work.

SALLY: Yeah, and it would be, I think, an entirely different story – again, if Min was given a choice and Min actively said, “Oh, yeah. This is one, a chance for me to learn more about this weird thing that nobody seems to know anything about. Like, the Seanchan seem to recognize this.” And that curiosity alone would be a very understandable motivation for her. And, yeah, two, for her to be like, “Oh, yeah. This could be an interesting place for me to be diplomatically, as the Dragon Reborn's *woman*, to have a position of power in the Seanchan empire and to just help Tuon be less of a rancid bitch.”

EMILY: Yeah. This is something that I think Rand and Mat could have set up between them.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Mat is well-aware that Tuon is obsessed with omens, he could have, like, mentioned that to Rand. Rand could have been like, “Oh, well hold on there. Now I *do* have something instrumental for my girlfriend to be doing during the Last Battle. She can be in the ear of the Seanchan empress. That's an important thing.” Min could be like, “Ah! Of course I'll do it.”

SALLY: Yeah, I'll do some *espionage*.

EMILY: Let's do some espionage. Sexy, fun.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, so yeah. This very easily could have been set up a lot better, but that would require the authors to do more character work, which they seem to be allergic to.

SALLY: [laughs, snorts]

EMILY: So [laughs]. Alas!

SALLY: Character work gives Brandon hives! Leave him alone!

EMILY: Why would I – why would I work on my character, when I could shoot a dragon out of the sky? I can't get over it. It's so bad.

SALLY: [laughing] It really is so bad! I'm dealing with a plot problem right now and maybe I'll just shoot a dragon out of the sky.

EMILY: Listen, if you're dealing – if you're a writer dealing with a plot problem, there are *millions* of ways to get yourself out of it, but...not that many good ones!

SALLY: Yeah, you're right. There are not that many good ones. Dragon out of the sky? It will get you somewhere.

EMILY: Not a good one, but it does get you out of where you have written yourself, but.

SALLY: [laughs] Molotov cocktail. Boom. New problem.

EMILY: Different problem [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Um, that's the end of this section. Our next segment, I believe, will be three chapters.

SALLY: Nice.

EMILY: We inch ever closer to the Last Battle proper.

SALLY: *The Last Battle*.

EMILY: Yeah, the big chapter. Um, but, uh, we will be taking – uh, when you hear this we will be coming off our week-long break. So, actually, that's not relevant information.

SALLY: You – we – we missed you last week.

EMILY: Missed ya!

SALLY: And I bet you missed ussss!

EMILY: Tee hee hee.

SALLY: Hehe!

EMILY: Hehe! So, fun. [laughing] No further announcements. Sort of took the wind out of my sails. Um, anything to add on your end?

SALLY: [laughing] No, I don't think so. This is just, uh, your sort of weekly reminder – I said no and then I did have something. Um, to donate to Operation Oliver Branch, just in general, but, um, if you send us verification of that, we'll make you one of our transcript sponsors. Get a little tile. It's very cute, I think.

EMILY: Hell yeah.

SALLY: Um, I think that's about it. Thanks for getting through this one with us.

EMILY: Yeah, thanks for hanging on.

SALLY: Oof!

EMILY: Um, unlike that dragon to the sky.

SALLY: Unlike that dragon!! They shot out his fly organ. That's not a real thing. I mean, birds have a variety of things that help them fly, including their air bladder.

EMILY: Yeah, I guess it depends on your dragon physiological that you subscribe to.

SALLY: Ooh, are dragons more like birds or?

EMILY: Yeah, do they have, like, an organ that inflates to help them fly or?

SALLY: Or is it magic?

EMILY: Is it pure – yeah, is it magic? Who knows? Um, thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song, thanks to our patrons on Patreon, and our followers on social media.

SALLY: [singing] You guys are the best!

EMILY: Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: Um, this is maybe more of, like, a positive. Let's take, let's lead out of pride month on a high note.

EMILY: Mm.

SALLY: We went to a drag tea time this week with some of our friends at my old *haunt*, the aviary where I used to work. And, uh, there was a drag king there named Cliff Swallows. Exceptional name. Uh, it's supposed to be, like, the bird, the swallows, um and it –

EMILY: He kind of winked we he said that, so [laughs]. It was a child friendly space.

SALLY: You, you know. You know! You know what Cliff Swallows is supposed to be. But, yeah, it was supposed to be, like, a family friendly drag tea time. There were only a couple of kids there, including the cutest baby I've ever seen, like, truly in my entire life.

EMILY: A little hobbit baby.

SALLY: A little curly haired hobbit baby.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: At one point I think the baby was getting a little fussy, so Cliff Swallows sat down and, I don't know if it is affected or if they are actually British, but he has, like, a little British accent. [laughs] So, he was like, "Don't worry," in his little British accent, "your uncle Cliff is here."

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: And then he reaches out his hand and the little baby reaches back. I have a picture of it. And I sent it to my friend Brianna because, um, they know Cliff Swallows. She knows Cliff Swallows. Sorry to misgender, Brianna. She knows Cliff Swallows. And Brianna was like, "Oh my god. Creation of man vibes." [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] That's what I was just thinking. [vocalizing angelically]

SALLY: [laughs] So it's just this little baby being given life by this British drag king.

EMILY: [laughing] By this limp wristed British drag king.

SALLY: Yeah, so.

EMILY: Support your local drag performers. They're very fun and sexy.

SALLY: They are very fun and sexy. I did also, a more appropriate sign off of humiliation, is we did some dollar bills, but they were, like, our sweaty Facebook market dollar bills. So, I went up to tip both of the performers in, like, abject humiliation being like, "I'm sorry I don't have more. And I'm sorry...that they're like this." They were both really nice.

EMILY: Yeah, and then more people came up and gave tips.

SALLY: Yeah, so Emily and I are trailblazers.

EMILY: [laughs] Sally's trailblazer. I was like, "What? Where are we?"

SALLY: [laughs] Emily had the money, so. Sugar daddy [laughs].

EMILY: Okay, everyone. Hope you had a good week!

SALLY: Bye!

EMILY: Bye!