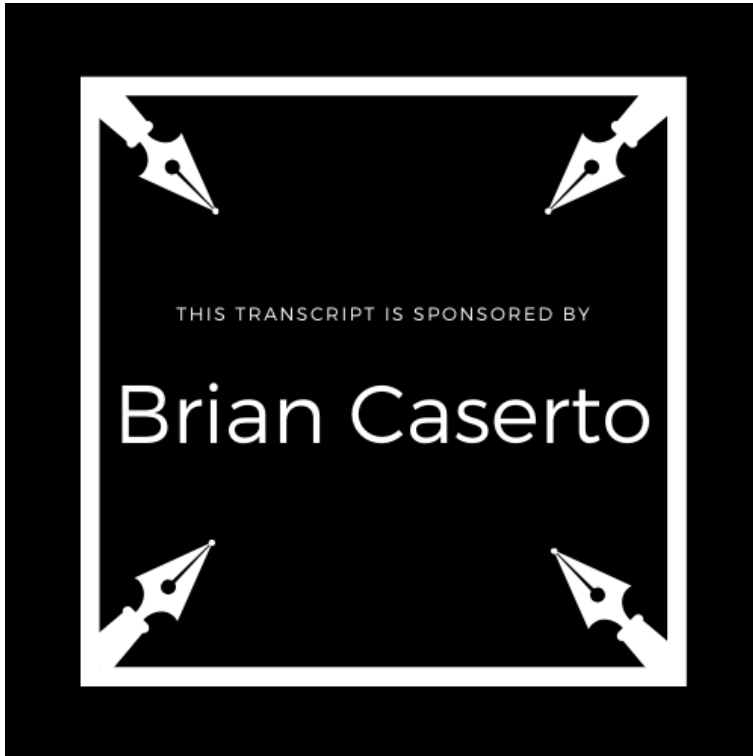


Episode 34 - “**Vanilla in the Streets**”

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Running time: 42 Minutes



Emily: OK, it's going.

Sally: Kay.

Emily: Ah! (laugh)

(cat meowing in the background)

Sally: (laugh) See, I told you.

Emily: (laugh) She's so angry!

Sally: Would you go?

Emily: Do you wanna hear a fun story?

Sally: Sure.

Emily: So -- (laugh) So, last night, um, I left work at 8 p.m., and I stopped at a gas station to get gas --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Obviously. And while my gas -- while my tank was filling up, I went inside to get a Diet Coke for my one-hour-long commute home, so I wouldn't fall asleep, um, and then I got -- I was like, "Oh, I'll get another one for my morning commute," which is also an hour long at 7 a.m. So

I had two Diet Cokes, and I get in line between this, like, hetero couple who are buying a Kit-Kat and two bougie bottles of water, and the lady turns around and looks at me and kind of does this thing where she, like, leans, y'know, so that she can make eye contact with me, and she's like, "Are you old enough to be drinking those?!" Just like that. And, um, the joke is that only old people drink Diet Coke. But it took me a while to realize (laugh) that that was the joke. And -- 'cause, for one thing, it's not true -- like, everyone I know drinks Diet Coke -- but also, I was like, why is she speaking to me? Why is this happening? Why would she make this joke? What's going on? So I just stared at her until it became almost unbearable, and then for some reason what came out of my mouth was, "I'm 27."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I'm not 27. (laugh)

Sally: Like that vine.

Emily: Exactly like that vine.

Sally: "I'm 27."

Emily: "I'm 27." And she just stared at me for a minute, and then the guy, who was, like, paying for the bottles of water, was like, under his breath, he was like, "Jesus, Debbie, this is what happens when you drink and talk to sober people." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And Debbie left the 7-11. And I was like, OK, and bought my Diet Cokes and left.

Sally: Wait, the cashier -- it was the woman in front of you, not the cashier that asked you that?

Emily: No, it was the woman in front of me.

Sally: Oh, I thought it was the cashier.

Emily: Sorry, I didn't make that clear.

Sally: No, it's way funnier that it's not the cashier.

Emily: No, if it was the cashier, I'd be like, oh, yeah, just cashiers makin' their little dumb jokes --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? But this was a random woman who initiated this interaction unprompted.

Sally: Jesus, Debbie.

Emily: It was brutal. It was seriously the most awkward thing that's ever happened to me. Jesus, Debbie. (laugh)

Sally: "This is what happens when you drink and talk to sober people."

Emily: (laugh) "I'm 27."

Sally: "I'm 27." I'm gonna say "Jesus, Debbie" all the time now.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: This is like, "Bye, Felicia," but now it's "Jesus, Debbie."

Emily: "Jesus, Debbie."

Sally: (reacting to a phone alert tone) Who's texting me?! Oh, it's my mother.

Emily: Oh. Isn't she downstairs?

Sally: "Would you be interested --" oh. She is downstairs. She wants me to go to a wedding reception with her, but --

Emily: Tonight?

Sally: Yeah. Why can't I spell? You guys, this is gettin' real vulnerable, but I can't type.

Emily: Did you just say "this is getting really vulnerable"?

Sally: Yeah, no, it's getting really vulnerable --

Emily: Like you were gonna say something actually -- "I can't type"? (laugh)

Sally: No, I was about to talk about how it's a huge insecurity of mine, but I guess we'll just move on, 'cause I --

Emily: It really is?

Sally: Yes!

Emily: I'm sorry.

Sally: It makes me so embarrassed every time I get something wrong.

Emily: But why?

Sally: I, like, think about it all day. Because it's so often.

Emily: But everyone does it.

Sally: Not to the extent that I do. Anyway.

Emily: The other night, my dad said something about how he made a typo 'cause he -- he used the verb "fat-fingered."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Which is like -- I don't even know if that's an actual verb --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But he, like, made it up. And my mom got super offended.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And was like, "Don't say that, honey!" And he was like, "What?" And she was like, "People might actually worry about that. That they have fat fingers."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And he was, like, so confused. So is that your worry, or is it just the typos?

Sally: Um --

Emily: 'Cause you have very lovely fingers.

Sally: I have very ugly fingers.

Emily: That's not even true!

Sally: You don't need to talk about it. I have very ugly hands.

Emily: Ughh!

Sally: It's OK. I know what my currency is, and it's not my pretty hands. (laugh)

Emily: Oh my God.

Sally: I'm no Adam Parrish, OK? (laugh)

Emily: Fucking -- (laugh) Here we are, five minutes in, and that tells us what you're reading -- still reading the Raven Cycle --

Sally: Yeah, I'm still reading the Raven Cycle.

Emily: You're in book three, though, so you're progressing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I'm technically still reading the Count of Monte Cristo, but so I would have something new to say during this segment, I also binge-read The Adventure Zone: the Graphic Novel yesterday at work. And it was delightful.

Sally: Good.

Emily: I really liked the art. It was cute. I don't know what else to say about it.

Sally: How was the adaptation?

Emily: It was pretty much the same -- I mean, they had to, like, change some words 'cause of copyright stuff --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: But basically it was the same. Like, I borrowed it from a friend, and I was like -- I was like, "Oh, are there any major changes?" and he was like -- he was like, "Oh, there are a few changes," and I was -- so I was, like, expecting something to happen, weirdly, but it was the same.

Sally: Hmm.

Emily: Almost exactly the same. They, like, skipped over some stuff for time.

Sally: Mm-hmm. Abridgement.

Emily: Yeah. For abridgement.

Sally: As it's called.

Emily: 'Cause -- I mean, that first arc does go on forever at some points.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, I would like to leave this cave now.

Sally: Yeah. It's a long one.

Emily: So anyway.

(clip from "Tubthumping" by Chumbawamba plays)

Emily: Umm. God. I'm sorry we're tired again, here at EHR headquarters. Um. This is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: And we're talking about the Great Hunt. I should make a musical.

Sally: OK? (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) She said, having no musical talent whatsoever.

Sally: I think you'd be wonderful in a musical.

Emily: No, I don't want to be in the musical, I want to make it.

Sally: ... OK.

Emily: I don't know what that means. I'm really tired. I think I want to be the --

Sally: You want to, write it?

Emily: Yeah, I think I want to be the Lin-Manuel Miranda of the Great Hunt musical, but without being, like --

Sally: The main character.

Emily: Starring in my own play, y'know?

Sally: Well, what would your Great Hunt musical look like? Give -- paint us a verb -- a verb picture.

Emily: Taint -- paint us a verb picture?

Sally: Active. Yeah, it has to be active, that's why I said verbs.

Emily: Um. Well, my initial thought would just be to try and make a really true-to-life adaptation, but probably I'd want to go a little avant garde. (laugh)

Sally: Jesus.

Emily: And, like, have everything be in an escape room or something? Or, like, have it set in an insane asylum or, y'know, some bullshit that high school drama kids always do with their plays.

Sally: Mmm.

Emily: Y'know?

Sally: Mm.

Emily: I'd want it to just be incredibly tacky. Kind of like the book. (laugh) The cover, I mean.

Sally: No, the book is tacky. That's fair to say.

Emily: Well, yeah. Some parts.

Sally: The Great Hunt is not one of my faves.

Emily: Uh, is the Great Hunt anyone's fave? Tweet us if the Great Hunt is one of your faves.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, I know -- I don't really have, like, a favorite Wheel of Time book, but I have several that are at the top of the list, and the Great Hunt is nowhere near --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: It's not even in the middle. It's not even middling. It's right down there with the Gathering Storm, my other least-favorite Wheel of Time book.

Sally: The Gathering Storm.

Emily: Yep. Those title -- ah, I haven't even done my title from different characters' perspective.

Sally: I know. You've been useless.

Emily: I forgot -- OK.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Guess I'll die. (laugh) Anyway, we only read one chapter, so this might be a really short episode. Uh, I think I, in the reading schedule, made it just one chapter because it's kind of a random Egwene point of view in the middle of a lot of Rand point of views --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and so it kind of felt weird to switch between them? But, um, now it just turns out there's not a whole lot to talk about. At least, I don't think so. What did you think? Did you read it?

Sally: Of course I read it, OK?

Emily: Well, I didn't know. Sometimes we don't read it.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: You're really belligerent today. (laugh)

Sally: Sorry.

Emily: It's OK.

Sally: I got a weird amount of sleep -- (laugh)

Emily: I'm sorry. And you didn't even get to nap at IKEA.

Sally: I know, that was -- that was really unfortunate. And everybody, um, crushed my dreams, telling me that the couch I wanted was ugly, so.

Emily: What I -- I didn't say it was ugly. I said, "She's so interesting." I think --

Sally: Which translates to, "She's so ugly."

Emily: I truly was interested by her. For a minute, I pictured her in our apartment. But then I was like -- it would be impossible to look at anything else. Due to the incredibly vibrant floral design of the couch.

Sally: (laugh) I don't -- I don't understand the issue, but it's fine.

Emily: OK.

Sally: We don't have to talk about our couch.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: I'm sorry -- my dream couch, comma, the couch you hate. (laugh)

Emily: I thought your dream couch was a green velvet sofa.

Sally: Dreams can be many-faceted.

Emily: OK. What -- wouldn't it be kind of nice, though, if you had, like, a green velvet sofa and then, like, an armchair that was that floral print?

Sally: Yeah, that could work. They had those too.

Emily: Ooh. Well.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We should look into it.

Sally: We don't have money for that.

Emily: That's true! We're very poor. Especially me, I think.

Sally: (laugh) No, it's OK, we're all poor. Um.

Emily: We're all poor here.

Sally: Eat the rich. What was I saying?

Emily: You've said that in every single episode for the last five episodes.

Sally: I -- listen. Listen.

Emily: I know we're really anti-capitalism here at EHR, but.

Sally: I spend my days figuring out how to grovel to the wealthy --

Emily: Hey, me too.

Sally: And those in the corporate world.

Emily: Less directly than you. I just have to be in customer service --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: For wealthy people.

Sally: No, that's bad too because they think that anyone who is in any service-adjacent area is their literal welcome mat, and they just walk all over you with their dirty feet.

Emily: Yep.

Sally: And I hate them. Eat the rich. What was I saying? I had a thought about this chapter and then I lost it.

Emily: Well, here's what happened in this chapter. It's kind of a montage of the Aes Sedai -- which now includes Egwene and Nynaeve -- traveling from Fal Dara to, uh, the river, where they're going to then travel on the river to Tar Valon.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Umm. So it really is basically a montage. There are a few, like, little snippets of scenes. We -- Egwene and Nynaeve finally get introduced to Suan. I always forget that this is the first time --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Actually meeting her. Right after she's been shot by an arrow. So she's there, like, bleeding and like, "Everyone leave me alone."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: She's like, "Everyone fuck off. It's fine. Just give me a Band-Aid."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Leave it." And Agelmar is like, "M-Mom. Mother." (laugh)

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: He's like, "Mom, I have to get the guy who did this. I need to kill him because male honor and bullshit like that and also just generally, y'know, guest rights. Someone shot you while you were in my house. Sort of an issue for me. For you. For all of us. For fantasy. Kay."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And she's like, "OK, well, I don't have time for that, so goodbye. I will be leaving now." And then she's like, "Oh, hi, Egwene and Nynaeve. Bye, Egwene and Nynaeve," and then that's that.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Then they get on the road. Um, and they have lessons -- the only one that we go into any detail with is Verin, and that's because it's the first lesson, where she's teaching them how to use -- uh, how to channel. Which is interesting 'cause Egwene's already, like, done some of this. Nynaeve's never done any of these little, like, beginning meditation exercises, so of course the first thing she does is set something on fire on accident.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um, and ... uhhhh, what else?

Sally: Um, then they proceed to have a variety of lessons, and it introduces some of our, like, main -- not, like, main-main Aes Sedai, but names that keep popping up over the next couple of books.

Emily: Yeah. Yeah. It's significant that they talk to Verin, of course --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: 'Cause we've talked about how significant she is.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And both girls will have more interactions with her. And she's gonna have a bigger part later in this book.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But I think they also mention Alanna --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And how she's super nice and fun, but also she keeps asking about Rand, and that's creepy --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, wow. The rape vibes are already here.

Sally: Yep. Magical rapist. I hate her.

Emily: I know. She can die.

Sally: Um, and then we meet -- they meet Liandrin --

Emily: Yeah, really briefly.

Sally: I think they hadn't met Liandrin yet. And then there's -- what's her name?

Emily: Anaiya?

Sally: Anaiya, yeah.

Emily: Anaiya, 'cause at the end Egwene is like, "Oh, I had a -- I've been having these really bad dreams about Rand, and I always just thought it's just stress dreams," but then she has, like, a weird dream -- she's like, "That felt different than the other ones, it had to do with, uh, Rand sleeping and there's a creepy woman standing over him and then he, like, disappears." Which we know, because we've read the book, is like, oh, duh, it's Rand being whisked away by Lanfear --

Sally: Through the Portal Stone.

Emily: Through the Portal Stones! Literally, he's about to disappear.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So -- it's actually a more literal dream than Egwene usually has.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Usually she's got more heavy-handed symbolism in there.

Sally: I'm sorry, I can't get comfortable because my cat has decided to sit --

Emily: She's still there?!

Sally: Under my knees.

Emily: Bitch.

Sally: And she's just, like, stretched out.

Emily: She's like, "Enough."

Sally: She got -- I mean, admittedly, I did lay on her at the beginning of this episode, so. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) I'm gonna keep that in.

Sally: (laugh) Um. Yeah, and so then Anaiya is like, "Oh, well, it could be that you're a Dreamer. Or it could be --" and then lists all the myriad stresses happening in Egwene's life.
(laugh)

Emily: Yeah. She's like, "Or it could be that you're 16 and have left home for the first time, and you just broke up with your boyfriend, and your boyfriend can channel --"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "And your other friend is dying and you've been sleeping in a tent with Nynaeve for the last week and a half, and that's probably stressful --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Dur dur dur dur dur," and Egwene's like, "Yeah, it could be that too, I guess."

Sally: Yeah. "Jesus, I never thought about it like that."

Emily: (laugh) Um. And it's significant -- she only talks to Anaiya because she can't find Moiraine --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because Moiraine has just, like, taken off in the dead of night. Along with --

Sally: Yes. Deserted.

Emily: Along with Verin and Liandrin, I think?

Sally: Uh-huh.

Emily: All three of the main bitches of this, uh, particular book have gone off. We know Moiraine's just, like, gone off to chill with those, like, old lady auntie Aes Sedai.

Sally: Yeah. Like a nerd.

Emily: I can't remember their name? Vandene and Adeleas or something?

Sally: Adeleas?

Emily: Adeleas?

Sally: That's not a real name. It sounds like a poisonous flower.

Emily: For some reason, whenever I hear their names together, it just, like -- the title of the movie Arsenic and Old Lace pops into my head.

Sally: What the fuck is Arsenic and Old Lace?

Emily: Have you never seen that movie?

Sally: I think it's safe, at this point, you can just assume I've never seen any movies.

Emily: I -- OK, it's an old black and white movie. And I don't know how I've seen it. I -- I actually don't think I've seen the end of it, ever. But it's just about, like, these little old ladies who live together and, um, keep poisoning the men who come to, like, stay in their boarding house.

Sally: Iconic.

Emily: And I don't even remember why. They're just, like, little old ladies and they're kind of senile. They think they're doing the men a service for some reason. It's very funny. Boris Karloff is in it.

Sally: Who's Boris Karloff?

Emily: That guy who famously played Frankenstein's monster.

Sally: Oh.

Emily: At least, I think. Excuse me. I have to go on IMDB. Which I usually only do on this podcast to check what obscure movies Tom Holland has been in. But now I've gotta look up Arsenic and Old Lace. But, yeah, it's got Cary Grant.

Sally: "His brother Jonathan arrives with his alcoholic accomplice, plastic surgeon Dr. Herman Einstein."

Emily: Are you looking at Arsenic and Old Lace?

Sally: Yeah, I'm reading the Wikipedia.

Emily: Am I thinking of the right movie when I say Boris Karloff? What am I -- I don't think I am.

Sally: I'm looking at the cast ...

Emily: Me too, but --

Sally: I don't see Boris.

Emily: Yeah, he's not there. I think I'm thinking of a different movie.

Sally: Well, that's alright. You have such a wonderful rolodex of movie trivia.

Emily: That's not even true.

Sally: It is true. OK.

Emily: Ugh, no, he's in the TV movie version.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Which is a little different. Doesn't have Cary Grant. OK.

Sally: (laugh) Then what's the point?

Emily: Glad I figured that out. What were we even talking about? Oh, yeah, Moiraine took off to visit those old ladies. Verin, it turns out, took off to just join the men in the search for the Great Hunt?

Sally: Yeah, which is, like, why didn't you do that --

Emily: Yeah, why didn't you just go with them?

Sally: In the first place?

Emily: It's a little confusing. And then Liandrin went off to do her evil witch stuff, I guess.

Sally: Yeah. Daemon. Demon.

Emily: Yep.

Sally: Um, I didn't have many thoughts about this chapter except -- and I think we've talked about this for -- before -- but I really hate the language that Robert Jordan uses to describe how women interact with, um --

(dog barking in the distant background)

Sally: That's my dog. I apologize. He's so angry. He's a really sweet dog, but he just is --

Emily: It's not even that he's --

Sally: Upset by so many things.

Emily: Yeah. It's not even that he's angry, it's just that he's --

(dog barking)

Emily: ... Very loud.

Sally: He's really, super duper loud.

Emily: He's very -- he's not, like, aggressive -- that's the wrong word -- but it kind of -- like, he's not aggressive in the sense of dogs being aggressive --

Sally: Mm-mm.

Emily: He's just, like, aggressive with his affection.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He, like, comes up to you and wants to lay on you and --

Sally: He's a very --

Emily: Shed all over you.

Sally: Yeah, he's a very excitable dog.

Emily: Yeah, that's a good word.

Sally: Um --

Emily: He's super sweet.

Sally: He's a cutie, but he is (whisper) so loud.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Um --

Emily: Bork bork.

Sally: Bork bork indeed. I really don't like the language that Robert Jordan uses to describe how women interact with *saidar* -- is that the female one?

Emily: Yeah, and *saidin* -- and, of course, it's totally different language for how men --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Interact with *saidin*. And it's supposed to be like, oh, look at the different -- the differences in femininity and masculinity, and it's, like ... stupid.

Sally: Yeah, and it's fine that it's different language because they're -- as, like, the story tells us - - oh, Daisy is waking from her --

Emily: Slumber.

Sally: Cryptic slumber. Um. As the story goes on to prove to us so many times, that, like, there are inherent differences between *saidar* and *saidin* that might not necessarily be coded as

masculine and feminine. Or they necess--shouldn't have to be, but the way that the language is written in chapters that discuss magic, like, it does become coded masculine and feminine because Rand is all about, like, flames and conquering and, like --

Emily: He has to seize *saidin*, and --

Sally: He has to -- yeah, seize it.

Emily: And conquer it and fight it. And it's always threatening to, like, submerge him.

Sally: Yeah. Whereas, like, women have to yield to it, and it is about submission, and, like, the metaphors that are always used are one of, like, a blossoming rose, which is --

Emily: It always just makes me think of fucking, like, orgasm.

Sally: Yeah, no, I was about to say, like, it's --

Emily: It's --

Sally: It's a beautiful -- a blossoming rose is a beautiful image, but unfortunately, for better or for worse, like, literature has been written in such a way that there are, like, specific symbols that you cannot separate from what people have used them as symbols for, and, like, a blossoming flower is used as, like, a woman's burgeoning sexuality --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And so it's often connected to, like, a woman getting her period for the first time or, like, going through puberty or whatever. It's like -- and, like, they call it "deflowering," which is disgusting, but when a woman loses her virginity, and so there's just this inherent coding of, like, sexuality and, like, blossoming womanhood in a way that, like, puts it very much in this, like, weird realm of -- like, a weird feminine realm.

Emily: And it doesn't help that, like, our three main focal points for channeling in these initial books are Egwene, Elayne, and Nynaeve, who are all also young women --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Dealing with, actually, their sexuality in --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Its various forms.

Sally: So it just, like -- and, like, their -- so often, in books like this, like, a journey like magic or, like, an educational journey is, of course, connected to, like, the arc of growing up and, like, your *bildungsroman* or whatever. But it's just, like, really annoying to me that, like, even at a

language level, like, we can't get something that isn't these, like, ridiculous, like -- I don't know what I'm saying, but, like, these ridiculous female symbols about, like, submission and whatever. Which is why I love, in this chapter, that Nynaeve sets something on fire.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Where it's just like --

Emily: Classic Nynaeve for you.

Sally: Yeah. Because it's like, that is not typically what we -- and, like, Moiraine even talks about in this book or the first book how, like, traditionally men are, like, more skilled with fire and earth, whereas, like --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Women are more skilled in air and water, and it's, like, the differences between, like -- there's, like, this flexibility and fluidity, apparently, to femininity, that's using, like, soft power, like water -- Egwene is even like, "Well, that's not fair, like, they get the stronger elements," and Moiraine is like, "It's all about how you use them" --

Emily: Well, it's ironic, because then Egwene ends up being way more powerful in the masculine elements.

Sally: Yeah. Which is awesome --

Emily: I know.

Sally: Which is great. I didn't know that. And so it's great that that's troubled. But just inherently, like, dividing it up by gender like that is just really annoying. It just bothers me, and, like, I wish that I could get over my incredible annoyance with, like, the gender politics in terms of, like, Wheel of Time's magic, because I know there's a lot else going on, but it's chapters like this that make the series so impossible for me. Because it's, like, so annoying, because people don't even think about, like, how troubling that can be and how that just reinforces women's, like, inferior -- like, inferior place in society, where it's like we -- there -- they have to use these soft powers, and they do these -- like, they get their power via submission, which is not inherently, like, a bad philosophy, like, it's tied to a lot of, like, really pacifist notions, that you have to, like, submit to the powers of the universe and, like, become more in tune with things as opposed to, like, using them to your -- um, to conquer or whatever you're doing. But it's just, like, it's always the women that have to do that. Like, you don't see Rand learning how to, like, submit and become one with whatever, at least in these early books. And it just really annoys me.

Emily: Well, it's further annoying -- there are two other things that come to mind. One is that it's really annoying that, with Nynaeve's arc in particular, that she, y'know, she's already got this block because --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: She's a wilder, and it has to do with her anger and her temper, and it would be really interesting if how she broke through that was by, um, taking a more masculine, quote unquote --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Approach to *saidar* and having that work for her.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, being angry and being able to, like, grab it and conquer it --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: As opposed to, like, y'know, her big moment, which you haven't read yet, is that she just finally is like, "Oh, I'm submitting to it."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's bullshit.

Sally: It's -- ugh.

Emily: But also, like, going back to sexuality and, uh, whatever, it's also really annoying that the -- the male language used for *saidin* then reflects upon male sexuality in these books, particularly on Rand.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: All of Rand's sexual encounters have to do with this, like -- from the various points of view we see them from, and we see them from a variety of points of view, unfortunately -- (laugh)

Sally: Ugh. (laugh)

Emily: Like, when he has sex with Aviendha, he's like, "Oh my gosh, it's like I can't even control myself --"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: When he has sex with Min, he's like, "I really can't control myself. I think I raped her." And Min's like, "What the ever-living fuck?" Like --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “That was a consensual encounter. Like, you may have noticed, I was giving enthusiastic consent --”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “And you’re just ignoring that.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And then when he has sex with Elayne, where, like, unfortunately hearing about that through, I think, Min’s point of view? Because --

Sally: Gross.

Emily: Of the double-bonding bullshit. And Min is always using these, like, flame language, for Rand, y’know, fucking orgasming, and I’m like, ugh. Gross.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But also, it’s just, like -- it doesn’t do anything for Rand’s already-problematic relationship with violence and sexuality.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, he thinks sex is inherently, um, not necessarily rough, but a forceful, passionate thing, when --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In some instances, it’s very soft and gentle and about submission and about, uh, sharing, things like that.

Sally: Yeah. And it just, like -- um, I just read -- I saw this Janelle Monae quote on Twitter -- at least, I think it was Janelle Monae. Someone was quoting it in reference to Foucault, which is really funny --

Emily: Oh! Hell yeah.

Sally: I think it was like, “When Janelle Monae said that, y’know, everything is about sex, except sex, which is about power, somewhere --”

Emily: Oh, yeah. (laugh) Foucault --

Sally: “Foucault threw his wig.” (laugh) Which is just a hilarious Tweet. But, like, it really is, and, like, the language -- the way that they -- like, Robert Jordan ties, like, the magic of *saidar* and *saidin* to language of, like, flowers and flames and submission and violence just --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Reflects the -- the typical, like, heteronormative notion of what sex is about. Like, for men, it is about, like, the claiming of power and -- for -- and in a violent way, and women -- for women, it's about submitting to a power outside of them. And so it just is, like, (whisper) really annoying.

Emily: Yeah. So, once again, it becomes this thing where, yet again, either because he's not at all connected to magic or just because he's a better character, Mat's sex scenes --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Are, like, void of that --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: For some reason.

Sally: I -- I don't know. Yeah, I don't know how Mat is able to, like, exist outside of this dynamic. Not that Mat is flawless when it comes to --

Emily: Right, sure.

Sally: The discourse of sex. He is also really annoying about it. Um, I know his arc has a lot to do with, like, becoming a, y'know, a productive partner, but he is also deeply unfortunate when it comes to the rhetoric of sexual encounters.

Emily: But it's just, like, Perrin also has this rhetoric of violence --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: With sex --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And he and Faile are always, like, ripping each other's clothes off, and it's like --

Sally: (gagging noise)

Emily: At least -- at least Faile has kind of a, uh --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Her sexuality is more about power and claiming it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But it's also -- it's just -- it's all --

Sally: But then again, Faile is --

Emily: Bad.

Sally: Yeah, remove -- also kind of removed from this dynamic of magic. So it's almost like, you get these, like, characters on the -- you get characters who are queered, in a way --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Faile. Even though, not -- I mean, in canon, none of -- neither of Faile or Mat -- or, those are the two I'm thinking of off the top of my head -- are queer characters, but they are, like, --

Emily: Queered.

Sally: Queered in that their, like, sexual encounters are different from the norm that we see in the series in that, like, Faile is more masculine, quote unquote, in her approach, and more, like, flame, shall we say, whereas, like, Mat, though, again, he's not totally perfect, like, there is a little bit more of, like, willingness to submit with Mat and be tender with his partners, um, that you don't see --

Emily: And, like, let them --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Well, it's interesting, because he has partners who he lets them take control --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Whatever, and then he has a partner -- not a partner, a rapist -- who literally does take control.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And that's really problematic. I don't know. I think what I'm saying is that, um ... I don't have anything against PG-13 sex scenes, but there are major benefits for having explicit sex scenes --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Especially if you're doing stuff like this, with gender and sex, because then you can trouble it --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You can have Egwene have this, like, flowering submission shit with magic and then have her be, like, a total dominatrix in the bedroom.

Sally: (laugh) Look, I stand by the fact that Gawyn's character would be one thousand percent improved if he was into kinky shit.

Emily: Right?

Sally: Like, he could be the most vanilla motherfucker in the streets, but -- (laugh)

Emily: But at least he -- if he was like, "Egwene, step on me" --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I'd be like, alright.

Sally: I'd be like, I can get on board with Gawyn. (laugh)

Emily: I'm more interested, because first of all, I agree. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, honestly.

Emily: And second of all --

Sally: Egwene, please step on me. So. Yeah, I -- yeah, I agree, because there's ways in which that, like -- there are incredible detriments to having language that slips away, for, like, a better -- like, I don't mean to, like, use a metaphor to talk about metaphors, but, like, when Robert Jordan has his, like, cutaway sex scenes, a lot of times people will do that in ways that are, like, playing around the issue.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And a lot of our problems in the way that we talk about sex is that we play around the issue. Like, we have so many euphemisms, and we have so many symbols, like, the fact that we have to talk about a fucking blooming rose as a woman's, like, bleeding vagina or whatever is because nobody can say, like, "Oh, she orgasmed." "Oh, she had a period." Like, people have had to, like, get around censors and get around our own, y'know, horrible cultural standards for talking about sex for so long, that, like, when it is explicit, you -- like you said, you can get -- you can get more into it and, like, for better or for worse, you can talk about, like, what's happening in detail that would trouble some of these notions as opposed to just being like, bleh bleh blah.

Emily: And we'll let you fill in the blanks --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Based on what you've gleaned from the text thus far.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So of course, with the language you're giving us thus far, we're going to assume characters have certain behaviors in bed.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: When, you know, that might not necessarily have been the author's intent.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or the author could have done something different.

Sally: Mm-hmm. Anyway, this is just one of the huge sticking points in Wheel of Time for me, and it drives me crazy.

Emily: Yeah, it's very annoying.

Sally: Because even, like -- even, like, Faile and Perrin, who I think have a really interesting marriage because Perrin -- like, his big thing is, like, learning how to, like, be more combative, which I -- I'm not totally on board with that arc in general, like, I know it's a cultural thing, but I don't know if it is necessarily a good thing that Perrin needs to, like, learn how to fight in his marriage.

Emily: Yeah --

Sally: Like, it's charming and funny and whatever, but, like --

Emily: Well, it's interesting because, at the core of it, it's about him learning to, uh, listen to what his wife wants --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And adapt his behavior accordingly, not just, like, completely submit to what she wants --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, you know, to come to a -- a sort of agreement, a compromise. But, yeah, it is -- does become troubling when --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: What she wants is for him to push her around.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like -- uh.

Sally: It just --

Emily: Honey.

Sally: That is a whole other thing, the whole, like, reinforcing that what women actually want is to be dominated, which is, like, whatever.

Emily: Yeah, like, gross.

Sally: Um, but, like, I do think Perrin and Faile have an interesting relationship because it's about Perrin, who's, like, a feminized character in a lot of ways --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And Faile, who's a masculinized character in a lot of ways, so they, like, switch. They've kind of, like, switched. I hate that we're talking -- but, like -- about, like, masculine and feminine as if they are these poles, but this is very much what the text sets up, so.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: That's the language we're using.

Emily: Not a lot of grey area.

Sally: So, like, they're kind of, like, flipped in their, like -- between their gender and, like, where they are gendered --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: But, like, that's what causes so many problems in their relationship, that Faile is too masculine and Perrin is too feminine. As opposed to that being, like, strengths that both of them can play to, it's about them adjusting their gendered behavior accordingly and Perrin learning how to be more, like --

Emily: Take-charge.

Sally: Take-charge and Faile, like, learning how to be more, like, taken-charge-of.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: Which is really frustrating. 'Cause there are so many scenes -- like, which I think is really charming -- where Perrin's like, "I'm happy to let Faile do a lot of the work around the Two Rivers because she's just better at it than me."

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And, like, yes, it's kind of annoying because it's like, Perrin, technically it's your job, like, do some work. Like, Faile doesn't want to be doing all of it. But it's -- would just be so interesting if he's like, "Yeah. She's taken charge."

Emily: "She's the governor."

Sally: "Yeah, that's fine. This is my wife, the governor." So.

Emily: Yeah. "I'm -- I abdicate in favor of someone who's actually competent."

Sally: Yeah. Ugh. So, anyway.

Emily: That's pretty much the only, uh, rhetoric in the chapter worth discussing.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, Lan and Nynaeve have another fight.

Emily: Oh my God, that's hilarious.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: 'Cause it's from Egwene's point of view. She's like, they go off into the shadows and fucking argue, and Nynaeve comes back furious --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Lan never comes back. (laugh)

Sally: No.

Emily: And then just takes off. Yeah, I was like -- I was reading that, and I was like, is that the last time they talk before they're back in the Stone of Tear? I mean, there's probably some interaction --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In Falme that we -- is off-screen, but. It's just interesting. I'm trying to track the relationship more this re-read because it always surprises me that they basically end up engaged within three chapters of meeting each other.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And they get married pretty quickly --

Sally: Gross.

Emily: In Wheel of Time timelines --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Too.

Sally: So. (laugh) Anyway, the relationships in these books are wacked out.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: In so many ways. Um. I -- yeah. Speaking of relationships that are unhealthy, the fact that Lan just, like, keeps -- their -- Lan and Nynaeve's "do they, don't they," particularly in -- like, Nynaeve is like, "OK, he said no, this is gonna be the -- the sich, the tea," and Lan's here trying to have his cake and eat it too like a bitch.

Emily: I know, I'm like, Nynaeve told you to fuck off. Because you told her to fuck off.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah. I hate Lan. He's, like, the worst communicator of all time --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And he's such a stereotype of masculinity in that way.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, men aren't necessarily bad communicators.

Sally: Right?

Emily: But if you model yourself after Lan, you might be.

Sally: That's why we get Rand.

Emily: Ha ha ha ha ha! I wanna die!

Sally: I know.

Emily: Stupid asshole.

Sally: (laugh) Rand is so annoying. Ugh.

Emily: Ughh. Do we have any -- oh. Um, I actually read the chapters that we talked about last time.

Sally: Oh. (laugh) Good for you.

Emily: (laugh) Umm, I don't have anything to say about them except that those are the first chapters where we get introduction to Aiel culture through --

Sally: Mmm.

Emily: Another culture's eyes, like, the Shienarans are like, "Here's what the Aiel are like. Here's why Masema hates you, 'cause he thinks you're Aiel."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Et cetera, et cetera. So that's kind of interesting. Um, also, it's clear at the end of that segment, when Rand goes to sleep next to the Portal Stone, that he accidentally channels.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like, I forgot that, but he, like, talks about how he, like, accidentally goes into the void when he falls asleep.

Sally: (whisper) Oh, that's right.

Emily: And that leads to him channeling. So it becomes unclear if, uh, Lanfear transported them or if she just followed them in some way.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I can't really remember if we get better clues for that later, but.

Sally: Also, if we are tracking, like, the language of magic, male and female, across, like, the relationships of society to male and female sexuality --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: The idea that men go crazy and cannot control what they are doing --

Emily: Oh, yeah.

Sally: Just, like, undercuts rape culture so well in that men just lose themselves in a frenzy of lust and they just can't control themselves or whatever. So. Fuck that noise.

Emily: Bullshit.

Sally: I call bullshit.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Anyway. We have to meet Lanfear soon, and that will be so unfortunate.

Emily: Just kill me!

Sally: (laugh) I hate Lanfear so much.

Emily: Uggggh! I hate -- that lady.

Sally: (laugh) She is the literal devil.

Emily: Stupid.

Sally: I can't wait to talk about Moiraine killing her in book five. In three and a half years --

Emily: God.

Sally: When we get there. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. Fucking -- fuck me. (laugh) It's such a satisfying scene. I wish Lanfear would just stay dead.

Sally: I know.

Emily: It's so annoying. Coming back as Cyndane or whatever the fuck her name is. I know who you are, Lanfear. You're still a big titty bitch.

Sally: Big titty bitch.

Emily: It's just the fact that -- it's nothing against big titties. Love me some big titties.

Sally: Obviously. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Obviously. But it's the fact that Robert Jordan is constantly like, "She has disproportionately huge breasts."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like a fucking -- (laugh)

Sally: OK, but imagine --

Emily: Like a video game character.

Sally: Yeah. She's, like -- she's like an anime character.

Emily: Honestly!

Sally: With her big titties.

Emily: I constantly picture Lanfear --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As an anime character.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: With, like -- just hentai titties.

Sally: (laugh) Have you seen that gif where the woman's, like, tits, like, swing around in a circle? (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, and it's so terrible.

Sally: (laugh) Anyway.

Emily: I always just wanna throw myself off a cliff --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: After I see that gif.

Sally: It's so miserable.

Emily: Just fucking kill me!

Sally: OK, but imagine, like, Age of Legends Lanfear doing, like, plastic surgery on herself to get big titties.

Emily: Like, I would believe it --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is the thing.

Sally: Yeah. Exactly.

Emily: She's like, "Well, I just want big titties. I can snare Lews Therin."

Sally: Yeah, maybe Lews Therin was just a --

Emily: Lews Therin's over with his boyfriend, Ilyeno.

Sally: Exactly, Ilyeno. Lanfear's like, "He's a tits man," and we're like, no, honey. He is not.

Emily: He's an ass man. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, exactly. (laugh)

Emily: "You miscalculated."

Sally: "You miscalculated. By a big shot." So.

Emily: (laugh) Oh, man.

Sally: Whatever. Lews Therin was probably a bottom.

Emily: (wheeze)

Sally: (laugh) I'm just saying.

Emily: Or a vers.

Sally: Or a vers. He could be a vers. That'd be fine. We don't talk about that enough.

Emily: He's definitely not a top. (laugh)

Sally: I just -- I can't believe that. I can't exist in a culture where Lews Therin is a top.

Emily: Yeah, that disturbs me on, like --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: An existential level. I can't really explain why, but --

Sally: I can't explain why, but it feels wrong to me.

Emily: I think it's because Rand is such a top.

Sally: Yeah, exactly.

Emily: I'm like, ugh. Ugh. I don't need that much top energy --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Coming from this one reincarnated man.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: OK, but that brings up the question -- (laugh) When you're reincarnated --

Sally: Oh, here we go. OK.

Emily: So you're reincarnated, and your -- what is that? Your sexual -- your desired sexual position?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: That just changes? That's not one of the --

Sally: That's not one of the static things, no.

Emily: The unchangeable -- (laugh) elements?

Sally: It's not essential -- I don't think it's essential --

Emily: Of your soul?

Sally: To a person.

Emily: It's not essential to your human soul?

Sally: No, I don't think so.

Emily: Your sexual proclivities?

Sally: I don't think so. Because --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Obviously, as we've talked about, Lews Therin was bi, and Rand could not be more straight, so.

Emily: (sigh) We always end up here. (laugh)

Sally: We do always end up here.

Emily: Um. I think that's gonna be it from us. It really is a short episode. Once I edit it down, it'll probably be 35 minutes. Which is fine. You guys can have a little bit of a break from us. (laugh) But we'll be back next week. We are, I think, discussing three chapters? Maybe two. Can't remember.

Sally: OK.

Emily: But it's gonna be the boys in, um, alternate dimension land.

Sally: Nice.

Emily: Which will be troubling --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But we'll see what happens.

Sally: Tune in --

Emily: Tune in.

Sally: To find out. Um, we'll be announcing the winner of our Instagram giveaway this week, so thank you to all of those who didn't participate, because I hate you. So. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) OK.

Sally: (laugh) Um. Just kidding. I don't hate you. Um.

Emily: OK, do we have any other housekeeping? (laugh)

Sally: Um. Not really.

Emily: Um, we're gonna be busy the next couple of weeks --

Sally: (laugh-cry noise)

Emily: What with moving, um, and some other stuff, so just to warn you, things might be a little, uh, a little wack. But.

Sally: A little wonky.

Emily: We're getting there.

Sally: Soon we'll be settled, and we'll have a table to record on again.

Emily: God, can you imagine? I've forgotten what it's like.

Sally: I know, I don't know what it's like to --

Emily: Ugh.

Sally: Do anything properly.

Emily: What's your sign-off?

Sally: Ohhh, shit. I had one. OK, well, um ... I guess instead I'll tell you about how one time Emily and I went to a concert at a place whose tagline was "Where punk rock meets pierogis," which was --

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Literally the most -- it was the old Polish cultural center, where they had punk rock concerts, which was hilarious. Um --

Emily: It wasn't even that much of a punk rock concert.

Sally: No, it wasn't at all. It was, like, a -- alt-pop kind of sitch.

Emily: Yeah, hard to -- hard to --

Sally: Hard to define.

Emily: Explain Dessa.

Sally: She defies genre. She's fabulous. You should go and listen to her. But it was this weird venue, but it was really small, and so we were going to stand back out in the main place after we got yelled at because -- (laugh) Emily was like, "Can I get a Diet Coke?" and the mean lady was like, "Only if you buy food," basically, so.

Emily: She wouldn't even give me a Diet Coke. She was like, "You can have a water."

Sally: Yeah. Demon.

Emily: And I was like, "OK, lady."

Sally: Um, but we turned around, and there's Dessa. And I just stop. (laugh) Just --

Emily: Well, we both stopped.

Sally: Dead in my tracks. And instead of doing something like saying hi, I just, like, stopped, and then I did a perfect 90-degree turn, and just walked into the other room.

Emily: (laugh) Out of the corner of my eye, Sally just disappeared.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Like a puff of smoke. While I was still standing, like, in awe of Dessa.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: 'Cause I was like, "Wow, she's so tall and pretty."

Sally: She's beautiful.

Emily: And then, like, Sally's gone.

Sally: I don't know. That was just my automatic response. And I'm certain that she saw me because there was no way not to.

Emily: She saw the raw panic on your face.

Sally: Yeah. Just the incredible panic of "This is a person who I love so much, so I'm going to run away." (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: And she was probably like, "OK, whatever."

Emily: Eh, she probably gets that all the time.

Sally: I mean, she's so beautiful.

Emily: I know. God.

Sally: I've never seen a creature -- and she was like -- she, like, turned it out on stage.

Emily: She's so cool.

Sally: She did not come to play. Anyway. It was super weird. (laugh) It was a very strange response. But, OK.

Emily: Byeeee.

Sally: Bye.