



Episode 39 – “Double-Sided Sword”

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Emily: And we have a cat!

Sally: Mm. We do. He’s hiding under the couch right now, ‘cause he’s a sensitive boy.

Emily: I think he just -- that’s generally where he’s most comfortable. He comes out at night, like a vampire.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And also you can coax him out pretty easily by, like, petting him.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: He purrs like a chainsaw. It’s horrible.

Sally: He’s very loud.

Emily: At the end of this, I might go and get him and make him purr into the --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: That’ll be our sign-off.

Sally: Yeah. Emily and I were just discussing how he came with extra cat batteries.

Emily: Yeah, he’s --

Sally: 'Cause he's, like --

Emily: (loud humming)

Sally: A loud boy. And he, like, chirps. (laugh)

Emily: He's so weird.

Sally: He's really precious. We love him.

Emily: Yeah, expect some photographs the next several days, I'm sure.

Sally: Or forever.

Emily: Yeah, or -- OK, well. OK. He just sat on me --

Sally: Yes.

Emily: While I was trying to read the chapters, so.

Sally: Really funny. If you haven't seen yet, go check out our Twitter.

Emily: That was fun. Umm. What are you reading right now?

Sally: I'm not really reading anything.

Emily: That's OK, you --

Sally: I've had a crazy busy week.

Emily: Yeah, you had a busy week.

Sally: I haven't really read -- I mean, I read "Goodnight, Moon" to my niece this morning.

Emily: Ooh, that's a good one.

Sally: Yeah. So that was fun.

Emily: Look at these little scratches he inflicted on me.

Sally: Oh, no. He scratched you? I mean -- I've shown you my scars from Daisy, our other cat. I hope he's not as mean as that cat. Look at that --

Emily: He hasn't really drawn --

Sally: That's bad.

Emily: Oh, no, it's mostly that I have really sensitive skin. You should see my back, it looks like I've been having real violent sex. Because I've got scratches on my back.

Sally: Who scratched you?

Emily: No one. He did.

Sally: Demon.

Emily: I know. 'Cause he got on my back and then prepared to climb to a higher surface, and I was like, "Oh, I guess this involves claws."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Super cool, super cool.

Sally: Mm-hmm. What are you reading?

Emily: Ummmm, well, the thing I've been reading that I'm happy to say I've been reading (laugh) is *East of Eden* by John Steinbeck, which is a really lovely book. I was gonna finish it today, but I might save it for work. I just read it at work.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, because it's the type of book you can read if, like, your boss comes in or someone comes in to the front desk. It's like, "Ooh, look at me, I'm an academic. I read Steinbeck."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: As opposed to the other thing I've been reading, which is a trilogy of YA books that I loved when I was 15 and I still kind of love. But, yeah. That's what I've been reading. Almost done with *East of Eden*.

Sally: Yeah?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Are my boys teenagers yet?

Emily: Yeah, they're teens. They're about -- it's all about to go down.

Sally: Shit's about to get real.

Emily: Yeah. It's all just, like --

Sally: Prepare for the drama-ma.

Emily: The drama-ma. That's for sure.

Sally: It is quite literally *dra-mama*.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Do you get it?

Emily: (laugh) Yeah. I fucking get it.

Sally: (laugh) 'Cause the drama is about their mom.

Emily: 'Cause their mom is, like, a psychopath.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And also a whore. And also an Eve metaphor?

Sally: Mm-hmm. She's doing -- Cathy's doing a lot.

Emily: Cathy -- yeah, Cathy does a lot. I'm really obsessed with Cathy.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She's a good character. I wish she wasn't an Eve --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I wish she didn't have to be an Eve thing because I'm like -- I have my own feelings about Eve, and I don't need those to be complicated by your heavy Catholic imagery, John Steinbeck.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Was he even Catholic?

Sally: I don't know if he was Catholic.

Emily: Well, it's just a very Catholic thing to have Eve be --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: A seductress. Haven't you ever heard of that other lady?

Sally: Lilith?

Emily: Yeah, Lilith. She's better -- she's a Lilith. Let's say Lee is Eve. (laugh)

Sally: Lee IS Eve.

Emily: Lee --

Sally: Lee has saved the world.

Emily: Is an icon.

Sally: I know.

Emily: I love one man.

Sally: Yeah, it's Lee.

Emily: From East of Eden.

Sally: It's true.

Emily: My dad.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Love him.

Sally: Have they had the conversation yet about -- what is it, like -- what's that -- it starts with a "T," it's like --

Emily: Timshel?

Sally: Timshel.

Emily: Yeah, that's, like, midway through the book.

Sally: Kay. I just couldn't remember where it was. Before my AP test --

Emily: Uh-huh.

Sally: We all sat in -- we read this book in my AP Literature class, it was, like, one of -- we -- it was, like, East of -- it was Crime and Punishment, East of Eden, and Their Eyes Were Watching God were kind of like the big three that we --

Emily: Jesus. That's an intense trilogy.

Sally: That we studied. Like, we read a lot of books throughout the year, but those were, like, the three pillars that my professor really -- my professor -- my teacher really focused on.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Before the AP test, my professor, like, gets up in the library, and she was like, "Remember, kids: timshel." (laugh) And just, like, walked out of the room. 'Cause timshel's all about, like, the choices that you have, and so she's like, "You're choosing whether or not you've prepared for this test."

Emily: "Thou mayest" --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is the literal translation, so.

Sally: Yeah. It was --

Emily: "Thou mayest conquer sin."

Sally: (laugh) Yeah. It was so --

Emily: "Thou mayest pass this test."

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, it was really funny.

Emily: Damn, that's brutal.

Sally: I know. She was hilarious. I loved her so much.

Emily: "Remember, kids: Timshel."

Sally: Yeah.

(clip from "Tubthumping" by Chumbawamba plays)

Emily: Alright. Hello. Welcome to Everybody Hates Rand, your -- friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I forgot what I was saying there for a minute. I'm Emily Juchau, proud cat dad. Oh, and Sally's eating.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: So that's Sally Goodger, proud cat mom and also eating a donut. Which is completely respectable. It's shaped like a star. Or it was before she ate it.

Sally: 'Cause I'm a star.

Emily: You are a star.

Sally: Thanks.

Emily: Anyway, here's our, uh, usual disclaimer that we will be discussing spoilers, probably. We never really know what spoilers we're going to come up against, but then, we don't have a structure to this.

Sally: It's like a spoiler lottery.

Emily: Yeah. It's just like, who knows what's gonna happen? Spoiler bingo. (laugh)

Sally: Oooh. No, bingo requires some forethought.

Emily: I should make a bingo card of spoilers for Wheel of Time.

Sally: That'd be really funny.

Emily: You should see how --

Sally: Be more EHR merch.

Emily: Yeah. Ooh, fun.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: OK, so we, uh, thankfully left Rand and his troubles behind for this week. There are two chapters that we studied. The first one is a Moiraine point of view. The second one is a Nynaeve point of view. So, starting with the Moiraine one, that's, um, pretty interesting. We've got Moiraine hanging out in the random countryside --

Sally: Yeah, with two farm lesbians.

Emily: Yeah, with -- they're sisters, so.

Sally: Oh, are they? They keep saying "sister," and I think of it just as, like, Aes Sedai sister, 'cause they call --

Emily: Oh.

Sally: Each other "sister."

Emily: No, yeah, they have a very, um -- you're like, "Oh, yeah, two old ladies living together on a farm. Lesbians." No, they're sisters, tragically. Although Moiraine does give off very lesbian vibes this chapter.

Sally: Oh, yeah, because she's like, "I've never even --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: "Looked at another man. What's a man?" (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Yeah, like, Vandene is like, "Is Lan finally seeing you as a woman?" and Moiraine's like, "No, 'cause I don't see him as anything."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "I'm just not interested in men. Boring."

Sally: Yeah. I'm married to my battle and also Siuan Sanche. Yep, nailed it.

Emily: Yeah, so speaking of spoilers, it's just, like, a betrayal of me personally that Brandon Sanderson or Robert Jordan or whoever it was that orchestrated this was like, "And I'm just gonna have Moiraine and Thom be in love at the end."

Sally: It doesn't make any sense.

Emily: And I was like, that's inappropriate for a number of reasons. One, I don't care what her real age is: she looks 30.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And he looks 90.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And that's, uh, gross.

Sally: Yeah. Disgusting.

Emily: Umm ... about as gross as when Elayne decides she's gonna take out her daddy issues on Thom.

Sally: Oh man.

Emily: In book four.

Sally: OH, man. That was --

Emily: A terrible --

Sally: So upsetting.

Emily: No-good, horrible --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Very bad sequence. (laugh)

Sally: I think Elayne should've just been deleted from this book.

Emily: I mean, I agree.

Sally: What does she bring to the table?

Emily: Just, like, the royal drama. But then --

Sally: But we could have Galad do that.

Emily: Oh my God. Could you imagine if Galad had the, like, coming-of-age --

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: Taking the throne --

Sally: Of Andor.

Emily: Yeah. Or maybe Gawyn could do it and actually be interesting. Know what --

Sally: What would that be like?

Emily: Well, know what would be fun? Is if there was, like, this tradition of queendoms and at the end --

Sally: (wheeze)

Emily: Elayne gets killed off in, like, the first book --

Sally: Ah! (laugh)

Emily: Or whatever, and they're like, "Damn, we gotta pass it to a queen," and Gawyn's like, "You know what?"

Sally: "I'm gonna do it."

Emily: "I'm gonna do it. I know that that's technically not a progressive thing, but I'm gonna fight against tradition and take the throne 'cause I'm the only competent one." This is in a version of the books in which Gawyn is competent.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, we --

Emily: Obviously he's not.

Sally: That's a big suspension of disbelief there.

Emily: Yeah, I know that's hard to believe.

Sally: But it would be really interesting.

Emily: Yeah, it actually would be. Or it could be a trans thing. He'd be like, "Hello, yes. I am a girl."

Sally: "In fact, I am a woman."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: (singing) "I am woman."

Emily: Hell, yeah. OK, well, we continue to improve Wheel of Time.

Sally: I know, it's incredible. But yeah. And also Moiraine shouldn't get with Thom because she's a huge lesbian.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, the -- even just, like, obviously that's what we want because we love lesbian representation, but Moiraine is, like, queer -- coded queer in a lot of ways.

Emily: She's coded super lesbian.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like in this chapter in particular.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And also, like, when you get New Spring and it's kinda like, "Oh, yeah, she and Sivan were, like, hitting it up when they were lil," and everyone's like, "Oh, yeah, it's just like a schoolgirl thing," and I'm like, no, it should be a lesbian thing. Not everyone in the White Tower was sleeping with their friends.

Sally: But some probably were.

Emily: But some definitely were.

Sally: Statistically speaking, lesbians do exist.

Emily: Lesbians do exist, and they come out in all-girls schools in particular. Anyway, the meat of the chapter is Moiraine has a conversation with Lan where she reveals to him that she, um, after -- she has made plans that after she dies, his Warder bond will be passed to, um, this bitch named Myrelle. Myrelle? Whatever the fuck her name is.

Sally: Sounds like a Pokemon.

Emily: Basically so that Myrelle can then pass it to Nynaeve. Like, is the insinuation. 'Cause Nynaeve isn't a full Aes Sedai yet and can't accept Lan's bond. And it's all just kinda like -- it's a very weird conversation. It's very indirect.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Neither of them is very, like, straightforward with each other, which isn't what I expect from people who have, like, lived together for the last -- I dunno --

Sally: Twenty years?

Emily: Twenty years or so.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So that's a little weird, but there's a lot going on. There's -- Moiraine keeps asking Lan if he, uh, wants to be released from the bond and sort of her saying that she's not going to allow that is like, uh, almost to force him to confront that he might want to be released from the bond?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's super weird.

Sally: It's like that -- it's like Moiraine is Tom Sawyer-ing him with the, like --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: "Oh, I love painting this white fence so much I'm not gonna let you do it." That whole scene.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: She's like, "Well, I'm not gonna release you from your bond, augh." And Lan's like, "Wait, what?" (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Lan, this entire chapter, is like, "Wait, what?"

Sally: Lan's like, "I don't understand what's happening."

Emily: "Moiraine's like, "Let's reminisce about the old days." And he's like, "OK, well, you -- I threw you in a lake, and then you threw the lake on me, and then you -- we spent the next week pranking each other, and it was epic and now here we are, a tiny lesbian and her weird companion." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Armed companion."

Sally: Yeah. Very strange.

Emily: And she's like, "Yeah, those were the good old days, weren't they? So, like, uncomplicated, 'cause you just didn't have any romantic attachments, and you just existed to serve me," and he was like, "Yeah, those were the days, huh?" (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) "I didn't have anything else going on in my life except serving you."

Emily: Yeah, and Moiraine's like (laugh) -- Moiraine's like, in her internal monologue, she's like, "Oh, I'm actually feeling jealous for the first time in my life that, like, he might be more interested in being with Nynaeve than --" Damn the fridge. (referring to a loud humming sound in the background)

Sally: All of our appliances also came with extra batteries.

Emily: They just scream in agony all the time.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) They're just like -- the other day, I was doing my laundry, and I could hear it through my earphones.

Emily: You should hear our dishwasher. It's, like, being tortured.

Sally: I dunno.

Emily: It just hates us.

Sally: Can't be free of any ...

Emily: Um. Uhhh, anyway.

Sally: She's talking about feeling jealous.

Emily: Yeah, Moiraine feels a little jealous, although she would rather not be feeling jealous. And it's this weird thing because Moiraine does have Lan's best interests at heart here --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Although there's a lot to be said for the fact that maybe if she was worried about his suicidal tendencies, because that seems to be the reason that she's created this bond, is that if she dies before him he won't just go off and die --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is definitely what he'd do 'cause he's an edgelord. It's like, honey, you could have an intervention or, like, communicate --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or do something about this rather than compelling him, which -- as we already know, the Warder bond creates so many, like, rape-y vibes already? And it's further confused by Myrelle herself being like a rape-y figure?

Sally: Eugh.

Emily: When Lan gets to her? She's just kinda like, "I'm just gonna take advantage of his emotional instability and fuck him."

Sally: Uh-oh.

Emily: Yeah. Oh, yeah, you're not --

Sally: Uh-oh.

Emily: There yet, that's a book seven thing, I think.

Sally: Mmmmmmm.

Emily: Maybe book six.

Sally: I've read book six.

Emily: Yeah, you've read --

Sally: Yeah, at the end of book six he shows up and he's got, like, twigs in his hair and he's covered in mud and blood and he's like, "Are you happy now?"

Emily: He's like, "Muaaaagghh!"

Sally: "Are you happy now?!"

Emily: "I'm angry!" Yeah, and then Myrelle immediately fucks him and is like --

Sally: That's a really healthy decision for everybody.

Emily: Yeah, exactly.

Sally: Yeah, it seems, like, totally fine across the board.

Emily: And it's great, because immediately after that, Egwene shows up and is like, "Oh. There's this boy here that I know personally, and you've just been fucking him?" And Myrelle's like, "Um, yeah." And Egwene's like "OK. Lan, babe, I'm gonna need you to go rescue Nynaeve," and he's like, "That sounds much better." And she's like, "OK."

Sally: That is bizarre to me on a lot of levels, particularly because I think Lan, as a character, reads completely devoid of any type of sexual energy.

Emily: He does, yeah. And Moiraine mentions in this chapter --

Sally: (laugh) I know.

Emily: She's like, "Yeah, I've never felt jealous of any of the women who've gone to his bed." And it's like, women have gone to Lan's bed?!

Sally: I know. I read that, and I was like, I -- Lan is a virgin in my mind.

Emily: Literally.

Sally: Lan is a Ken doll. I don't know what's going on. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: It was really -- it's just like a really strange thought, like I don't think there's anything about him -- (laugh)

Emily: Today I was watching my favorite television show, which is Superstore --

Sally: Of course it is. (laugh)

Emily: And the insult -- the -- one of the supervisors, as an insult to our protagonist, who's just, like, a stereotypical white boy --

Sally: Uh-huh.

Emily: Who, like, tries to be progressive and everything -- she called him a -- an American Girl Doll reject. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I have never laughed so hard in my life. (laugh) The look on his face. Just, like, "OK."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Like, he knew. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Anyway.

Emily: Anyway. Yeah -- yeah, no, Lan doesn't come off as any type of sex -- it's just -- it's just this -- ugh. It's sort of this constant thing with, um, heterosexual writers in particular who are writing a lot about heterosexual relationships, that they don't recognize the need to write sexual chemistry into their characters.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because they're just sort of, like, working from a default, so they're like, "Oh, yeah, everyone will just accept that these two characters who I've orchestrated to be together are, of course, going to have, like, sexual energy and will be --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Together." But it's like, no, that's a thing you have to write. Like, William Shakespeare, back in, I dunno, the 16th century, was like, "When I write Romeo and Juliet meeting for the first time, I will find a way to represent their sexual chemistry insofar that when they converse it will be in sonnet form."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, and that's the standard. Like, that was the clue-in to his Elizabethan audiences --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, oh, yeah, these guys aren't just, like, tweens falling in love, they're actually -- this is a sign of their sexual compatibility and romantic compatibility because I don't have time in a five-act play --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To show them getting together. And it's like, if you're gonna have Lan and Nynaeve get together and fall in love within the first two books, then you have to show us --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: On some level that they're sexually interested in each other. And to an extent, we do get that from Nynaeve but.

Sally: But, like, not from Lan.

Emily: Lan's just such a brick wall.

Sally: Yeah. I do love, in all the scenes where Nynaeve is like, in sexy dresses and her, like, first thought --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Is like, "Oh, I want Lan to see this."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I just love Nynaeve so much. I think Nynaeve is, like, the perfect person.

Emily: Nynaeve's very endearing --

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: In that she dresses more and more slutty as the series goes on.

Sally: I know!

Emily: And at first it's like, "Ooh, 'cause Lan will see this and like this," but then she's just like, "Ho, I don't care, I'm gonna dress like I want, which is --"

Sally: Hella sexy.

Emily: "Slutty."

Sally: Yeah, and I love it.

Emily: And everyone's like, "Great, good for you, girl."

Sally: Mat's like, "Yeah. That's my girl."

Emily: (snort) Yeah, Mat's like, "Damn."

Sally: "Look at her. Living her best ho life."

Emily: Hell yeah.

Sally: Hashtag ho life. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Mat would know.

Sally: (laugh) But yeah, it's really -- I don't know. You -- you're totally right, is that they don't - like, they -- I'm stumbling over my words here; shocking, I know -- um, but yeah we're, just suppose -- we've talked before about how Lan and Nynaeve's relationship in particular is, like, really strange because there's nothing written in the text to, like, get us there at the same time the characters are there? And so this, like, defolt -- defolt -- default that straight people -- just, like, that men and women end up together and that's just, like, what happens is so frustrating to read because I'm like, Lan is literally depicted as a brick wall. What about that is sexually appealing to anybody?

Emily: Yeah, if you want, like, an exercise besides Romeo and Juliet of, like, actual romantic and sexual tension, read any YA series that includes gay characters. Because you'll see the writer actually going to --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The effort to make these characters, like, hint that they're going to get together because that's not what we expect.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So they'll, uh, write in some, like, foreshadowing in not just the literary sense but in the, like, sexual, romantic sense.

Sally: Yeah, and like, they -- they -- and that's really frustrating because it's like, oh, you are making, like, gay representation work for it.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: It's like a double-sided sword because I think oft -- so often, like, if someone wants to point to their favorite couple in fiction, like, more often than not, people I know will point to, like, a gay couple.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And so -- but that's typically because, like, those are written better? Because authors feel like they have to earn it. And so it's frustrating because yes, they turn out better because that effort is put in, but it's like, the effort isn't put in typically because, like, the author feels like those characters deserve that, it's typically like, "I have to justify this to my readers."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: At least that's kind of my sense most of the time. 'Cause, like -- take, for instance, the Raven Cycle, which just is on my mind because I read it, where it's like, maybe not the best example because, like, I dunno, Gansey and Blue also have four-book build-up, same as Ronan and Adam, but, like, they just, like, don't read as having, like, a whole lot of chemistry to me.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Like, more than the typical. So this isn't, like, the best example, but, like, you read a Gansey and Blue chapter and you're like, "OK ... like, duh duh duh duh duh, straight people," and then you read Ronan and Adam and you're like, "Whoa."

Emily: "Love is real."

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) So.

Emily: Yeah, and it's the same sense when you read Nynaeve and Lan. Like, there's the sense of the author trying to insert, like, hints and stuff, like early on in the series, when we -- whenever we had Nynaeve and Lan, like, meeting or intersecting in book one, there was always, like, hints, like, "Oh, look, and they're interested in each other and attracted to each other." But it's just, like, it doesn't read --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Particularly. It doesn't evoke anything in the reader.

Sally: Yeah. And I just, like --

Emily: It's just flat.

Sally: This, I guess is like a -- I dunno, like -- all of the characters -- all of the male characters in Robert Jordan -- in the Wheel of Time that end up in a relationship, I think with the exception of Mat and, like, Gaul --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Have, like, just, like, don't seem to have a lot of sexual appeal to me.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And I feel like there's so much in this story about -- I dunno, there's a lot of, like, sexual humor --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: First, like -- and that always comes up, and, like, yeah, we're told that, like, y'know, Rand is a tall boy and everybody wants to fuck him and Perrin's, like, a big, strong, attractive boy, but, like, I feel like a lot more energy is directed towards, like -- this, and this is typical, like -- the women being fuckable than the men being fuckable, which is annoying.

Emily: Well, it's like you get these scenes with Rand where it would be a moment to explore the fact that he's a sexual being --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And that is -- has interests and desires, and he's just so, like, repressed and, I dunno, Victorian that he just shuts them down immediately.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, you get him in our sex dreams -- his sex dreams that he has, and it's like, they fade to black, y'know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And that's partly a Robert Jordan decision, but it's also just, like, the idea that Rand doesn't follow through, almost.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which doesn't, like, lend itself to the idea that he's good in bed.

Sally: I can't believe that.

Emily: Um. Yeah, no, I have a hard time --

Sally: Agh. Agh!

Emily: Believing that Rand is a good lover.

Sally: It'd be the -- (laugh) a good lover.

Emily: I'm just saying. Anyway, but yeah, Mat, partly because he does become an object of sexual desire but also because he's way less repressed --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And talks about flirting and talks about, like, being with women, it's just, like, he comes across as a sexual being --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who, then, when he has an encounter with a woman he's attracted to --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And genuinely, like, romantically into, it -- yeah, their chemistry is a lot more believable.

Sally: Yeah. It's just -- I dunno. It just frustrates me that, like -- I'm just tired of reading books where people are afraid to talk about sex.

Emily: Yeah, it's a little frustrating.

Sally: I'm so tired of it. Like -- whatever. Who cares?

Emily: Yeah, and it's, like, one thing if you're, like, marketing your books to children --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And you have, like, y'know, teen characters, maybe that's not what you want -- I know. I know.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Teens have sex.

Sally: Well, I just --

Emily: And it's important to talk about teens having sex --

Sally: OK. (laugh)

Emily: And to portray them having sex, but I'm saying, as someone who grew up in a conservative family, I can see the need for authors to write conservative books.

Sally: Yeah. No, and I'm not saying that, like, every books needs to, like, be about fuckin'. (Laugh) Like, that's obviously, like --

Emily: But, like, if that's the book you're writing, then yeah.

Sally: Yeah, if that's the book you're writing, that's fine. Like, there's so many books that don't even need to have sex in them.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, there are books that would probably benefit from not having sex in them. Like, totally. But, like, I don't -- like, and you -- she took the words right out of my mouth, she knew what I was going for -- like, this is a very adult book with very adult themes --

Emily: Yeah, there's no excuse here --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Robert Jordan isn't like, "And this is a book for children."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "So I'm just not gonna have anybody fucking." It's like, this is clearly a book for adults.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Look at the cover. Look at Lanfear's tits coming out of her dress.

Sally: Well, and, like -- we just had to read about people being flayed alive.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: In, like, pretty graphic detail, but you're not willing to be like, well, damn, sis, then Rand was like, "Mm-hmm. Gonna have a dream about them titties." Like --

Emily: (snort)

Sally: (laugh) It's just really annoying. We're rehashing old ground with me, I know. We can get back to the chapter. It just really bothers me that -- yeah, the implication is just, like, "Oh, there's sex happening but, like, we're not going to show it to you."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Or, "I'm not gonna show you, like, why the characters are interested in each other." Like -
- ugh. It's really annoying.

Emily: (sigh)

Sally: Well, and it's -- OK. One last thing. It's also really annoying -- and it's like, this is, again, another double-sided sword, where I feel -- like, double-edged sword. Double-sided sword? Most swords have two sides. (laugh) Where, like, I -- in, at least in my experience, having read

six books, like, there's a lot more explicit, on-the-page sexual attraction coming from the women in regards to --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: The objects of their sexual desire, where Egwene talks about, like, Gawyn and how she has, like, nice sex dreams about him --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And, like, Nynaeve talks about looking slutty for Lan, and like --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Min and Aviendha and Elayne are like, "Yeah, let's, like, let's fuckin' do it with Rand." Though, like, why?

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: But, and like -- I just -- so strange.

Emily: And whenever we get a Faile point of view, she's like --

Sally: Yeah, she's like --

Emily: "Damn, just gonna climb that like a tree."

Sally: Yeah, she's like, "Look at my boy."

Emily: And it's like, "Whoa. Uhh."

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: If I ever have to hear about Perrin's chest hair again, I will kill myself.

Sally: I know. But -- and so, in, like -- that's -- it's really nice, 'cause all these young women are getting -- like, have allowed their sexual, I dunno, sexuality and sexual desires, but at the -- like, the other side is that a lot of those women interact with, like, witchcraft and so you get kind of like a weird duality where it's like all the women that we see having, like, the most sexual energy are like -- I'm not articulating this very well, but it's like -- again, we have this idea of, like, sexual chaos, where, like, the men are able to, like, control it and stay focused and the women were -- it is both healthy -- it's, like, frustrating that it's, like, again, this gender dynamic where it can't be just, like, something that's healthy across the board. It's like the women have to have it, and the men have to, like, not have it.

Emily: Well, like, it becomes this thing that's, like, almost a commentary on their society where the women have this magical power --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And have access to that, so it's like we're getting this thing where women can only own their sexuality if they have --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Power, which then becomes a really troubling thing when we have Mat interact with a queen --

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Who also takes ownership of her sexuality because she's a queen and, like, can force people to do what she wants.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's just like, hmmm. There's a lot going on here that's not great.

Sally: Yeah, you're so right. Like, all the women that we interact with who have this, like, sexual -- this type of particular sexual energy -- are in, like, Faile and Elayne's case, like, royalty --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Egwene and Nynaeve have interactions with, um, magic. Sorry, I could not think of that word. Aviendha is like a warrior. So then we have these, like -- yeah.

Emily: Min's the only one I can think of who is a sexual being who, um -- like, the text goes to great lengths to talk about her sex life and her sexual interests --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, who doesn't have, uh, channeling power, although she does have another set of powers that's --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: A little, uh, chiller. But anyway, I'll talk about that way more at length in my next blog about Min. Hell yeah.

Sally: But, yeah. Min is dealing with her own thing with sex in that she's a not-like-the-other-girls kind of girl.

Emily: Yeah. Exactly.

Sally: OK. I just find the sexual politics of this book completely out in left field, and it --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Drives me a little crazy, but getting back to another thing that I find very interesting is the Aes Sedai-Warder bond. And we've talked about it a little bit. But, like, this chapter talks about it, y'know, at great length, and like how the different Ajahs use their different Warders. How she, like, threatened to give Lan to, like, a Brown sister to just become, like, a library clerk, basically. Which would be a hilarious alternate ending for Lan.

Emily: God.

Sally: Could you imagine?

Emily: He just, like, hangs out at the library all day.

Sally: Yeah, maybe he'd love that.

Emily: Yeah, who knows?

Sally: Maybe he's just --

Emily: We never see Lan reading. Is he even literate? Question mark?

Sally: I mean, his parents died when he was a babe.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Who taught him how to read?

Emily: They put a sword in his hand, day one --

Sally: Not a book. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, they're like, "Mm. ABC's? Who needs them."

Sally: "ABC's who, bitch?"

Emily: "Teach him --"

Sally: "Here's a sword."

Emily: "Teach him swordplay."

Sally: "Here's a double-sided sword." (laugh)

Emily: Kill you. (laugh) Um. Yeah, no, like, or he could become kind of like what this Warder is for these two women, which is just like a gardener and a handyman.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Y'know, kind of retired.

Sally: That'd be lit, honestly.

Emily: Yeah, and then there's also, like, the threat that she's handing Lan to a Green sister who has three other Warders. There's kinda like this omnipresent, like, threat of sex, almost. Which, yeah, we've talked about enough. But. Yeah, the Warder bond is, um -- I will at least say that by the end of this series, it has been explored fully. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, that's one thing.

Sally: It just -- yeah, it's just something that really fascinates me, and I don't really have a whole lot to say about it at this point. 'Cause I feel like I'm at the point in the series where it's about to become really complicated because --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: We've got Elayne, who bonded Birgitte in book five sort of -- not accidentally, but kind of without another option for keeping Birgitte alive. And then we have Rand, um, and Alanna, magical rapist.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So, like, a lot's going on there. So maybe we'll hit it up in another episode, when I have a little bit more to talk about. But this is, like you said, a really weird scene where Moiraine is, like, bringing up some of the less, um, fortunate sides of the Warder bond.

Emily: Well, it bothers me that we don't get to see a lot of, um -- or almost any -- uh, Warder points of view from men who have gone into it because they want to go into it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We have Lan, who has this suicidal streak and feels like he has nothing left to live for. Like, who, y'know, he's got his convoluted reasons, but we also don't get very many points of view from him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And then there's Gawyn, who's his own set of things but is also, like, doesn't become a Warder till the end of the series. We just don't get a lot of, like, men who are secure in their Warder-ness --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And have chosen it and really like their Aes Sedai and don't feel expendable and have their own rich internal lives, y'know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's -- it becomes frustrating because then what we're getting is the Warder bond as it's used against Rand, and Mat is constantly threatened with being bonded, um, as a Warder, and like -- just women, like, making little comments, Aes Sedai who are like, "Oh, I really want a Warder, how do you feel about that?" And him being like, "No. Please don't." And, like, the idea that they could do it against his will --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That really freaks him out. So it's just, like, frustrating because it -- then it becomes this negative thing whereas in the right, like, I dunno, set of circumstances, it could be a really positive and interesting thing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: If you were like a -- Moiraine and Lan, y'know, pre-this, or, y'know, if Lan was a little more mentally healthy and -- but Lan tells us canonically here that Moiraine doesn't approve of using --

Sally: Compulsion.

Emily: Coercion of any sort.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That she's always just been kind of like, "Here are your options."

Sally: Yeah. Well --

Emily: "And it's your choice."

Sally: And not to get back into sexual politics, I'm sorry, but the Warder-Aes Sedai bond is just, like, charged with issues of power --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And to quote that Janelle Monae Tweet that I saw and that I love, "Everything is about sex except sex, which is about power." (laugh)

Emily: Yep. Yep.

Sally: Um, but, like, what happens in -- and I feel like I'm gonna -- I'm gonna piece this together, we'll work through this thought together, teens and tweens --

Emily: (laugh) OK. What?

Sally: Yeah. Um -- I dunno. Um, it -- in a series where, like, Robert Jordan is doing admittedly kind of the bare minimum to trouble gender --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Politics and gender roles and gender stereotypes, um, like, what happens here is that you have, um, the Warder-Aes Sedai bond, which is a kind of marriage in a way -- like, you, like, share that type of intimacy -- um, but it's like a weird -- like a more magical freaky contract than, like, being in front of the justice of the peace. Then you have, like, the Aes Sedai put in the dominant position where, like, traditionally the husband is --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And then you have the Warder in the subservient position getting threatened with threats that are often likened to threats of sexual violence.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Just in, like, the way that they are coded and the language used, like, being forced -- like, bonded against your will, and people are constantly, like, um, y'know, threatening -- for instance, like threatening Mat with becoming a Warder is like -- that's like catcalling, basically.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: In its weird way. And so it's --

Emily: Like, "Hey, I see you're good with a knife, so --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Hey, maybe you could be my Warder."

Sally: "Maybe you could be my Warder."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, "Hey, there, buddy boy, nice axe." Like -- I dunno, it's weird.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It's really strange. So then you have, like -- again, then you put onto men, like -- in this system, like the -- the, what they have -- in, like, you mentioned, the two, kind of, Warders that we see, Gawyn and Lan, like, what these men have to offer are their violent tendencies? Like, you never see a Warder who, like -- an Aes Sedai who bonds her Warder because they're incredibly intelligent or they're a really good researcher and they need a research partner or, like,

they're also really good at Healing. Like, the Aes Sedai has the magic, but they're just, like, really good at doing stitches or whatever. Like --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: You don't see men being able to practice a lot of skills other than, um, being good with a knife. And so you get this, like, really strange, like, gender roles are reinforced but also we're, like, troubling it but not really troubling gender roles, 'cause you just apply the same gender roles but switch the gender.

Emily: Yeah. And it becomes interesting, then, when you get Asha'man and Aes Sedai bonding each other.

Sally: Ooh, neat.

Emily: Because then there's -- in some instances, whoever holds the bond, like, then defaults as the one in power, like --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We get a group of Asha'man who are bonded by Aes Sedai and then there's still, like, these -- these traits of the Aes Sedai domineering them, but later we get Asha'man bonding Aes Sedai, and it's a little bit different, and that always reads a little creepier to you because that's the type of violence we're used to seeing --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Y'know? Uh, but then you -- by the end of it, have people who have bonded each other and are actually, like, on level ground with each other?

Sally: Nice.

Emily: And that becomes an interesting thing. But we have to move on.

Sally: Sorry. It's just really interesting to me.

Emily: It is! And we'll talk about it more as it comes up. 'Cause it is, just like, a rich vein, I think. Um, the only other thing that happens in the Moiraine point of view chapter is she addresses all the foreshadowing for this book. She talks about stuff that's gonna happen in the prophecies. What's the Horn of Valere? What's Shadar Logoth got to do with everything? And then she has, like, an encounter with a Draghkar, and it's like, "Ooh. Scary."

Sally: Yeah, it's weird.

Emily: And then she and Lan take off again 'cause she's had an epiphany.

Sally: Of course we don't know what the epiphany is.

Emily: Yeah, of course. We don't get told. Um, then we head over to Nynaeve, who's about to go through her magic, uh, hazing ritual of becoming an Accepted, which is also super interesting and weird. It's a really -- my -- what struck me this read-through was how liminal it is. Like, the dreams -- these sequences are very dream-like, particularly the middle one. Like, that's a total -- like, that's a dream I've had, basically --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Where it's populated by people you know, and you're just really worried about something that's going on that's a totally unlikely threat.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, what's the actual possibility that Emond's Field gets taken over by a woman who has, I dunno, psychopathy and Munchausen's by Proxy? Like --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is what seems to be happening here. And is just, like, murdering people left and right.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Super unlikely. But this is what Nynaeve is scared of.

Sally: Yeah. I mean, it's an -- it's an interesting test, obviously, and there's a lot of, like, weird Christian imagery about being reborn and, like --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Cleansed of, and I --

Emily: Getting baptized --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Every time she comes out, yeah.

Sally: And I don't, like, super -- and I know it's just, like, rhetoric or whatever, and I'm sorry that I'm the type of person who's always like, "I have a problem!" (laugh) I think I'm too conditioned to, like, find things that I don't like.

Emily: English major syndrome.

Sally: Yeah, but, like, I don't love when they're like, "You're cleansed of sins you've committed and any committed of you," like it's a really --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And I know it's, like --

Emily: You don't need to be cleansed of sins committed against you.

Sally: Yeah, and so it's --

Emily: That's not something.

Sally: It's really strange. It's very strange, especially 'cause, like, the three, kind of, fears that Nynaeve is come -- the one that interests me the most -- I wonder if you can, like, shed some light on this -- is the one where she's in the maze with Aginor, which is, like --

Emily: Yeah, that's probably the most interesting one, I'd say.

Sally: Yeah. And it's just -- 'cause it's confusing, 'cause they're like, that's what happened in the past, and so is it, like, past life kind of stuff?

Emily: Mm.

Sally: Like, what's the deal there?

Emily: No, I think it's just supposed to be, like, her past, this life fears. She had that encounter with Aginor at the end of book one.

Sally: I always forget about that.

Emily: Yeah, did you, again?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Just now.

Emily: At the end -- (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: At the end of book one, at the eye of the world, like, Aginor and Balthamel are the Forsaken --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That confront, uh --

Sally: That's right.

Emily: All of them. And it's interesting to me that Aginor is the one that she fixates on and not Balthamel, 'cause he's the more, you know, rape-y of the pair.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, but I guess Aginor was the one who, like, used his power against her. She had, like, a bit of a sequence where she gets, like, thrown away --

Sally: Yeah, rendered useless.

Emily: Rendered useless, yeah, and that's when Mat and Perrin are like, "For the Wisdom!" Charge into battle.

Sally: (laugh) Fucking cuties.

Emily: Like dipshits. Yeah. Um, so there's that fear --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And then it's just, like -- it's interesting that it's bracketed in this, uh, that the setting is a maze, which is an archetypal fear, um, and also Nynaeve will be in other situations where she's in a maze-like place. The one that comes to my mind is in book five, when she's chasing Moghedien through Tel'aran'rhiod --

Sally: That scene is so lit.

Emily: Yeah, at the same time that Rand is fighting Rahvin, also in Tel'aran'rhiod.

Sally: (whisper) That scene is crazy.

Emily: It's a great scene.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Great sequence, but it's also, like, super labyrinth-like.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because they're just, like, dodging through the palace of Caemlyn and it's also, like, in Tel'aran'rhiod.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Stuff like that. So Nynaeve is, like, kind of -- not often, but will be in situations like this again --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Where she is up against a Forsaken in this weird setting.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and then we're also coming into the arena of her being forced to use, uh, channeling to defend herself and the idea that, um, this is about -- her fear is having to walk away from her anger.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is what she ends up having to do at the end, a bit. Like, I was like, oh, what is -- what's going on here that she's -- she's able to channel because she's angry and afraid and later, as she comes out of it, Sheriam's like, "Oh, you shouldn't be able to channel, that's really freaky, you shouldn't be able to do that." Um. 'Cause Nynaeve's just, like, that overpowered, I guess.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But -- that she's able to do it. But that's, like, a very real fear of hers is channeling and having to use channeling and probably also the idea that, um, channeling is something that's deeply emotional for her and maybe she feels out of control and scared by that.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, but at the end, she has to walk away. She's like, "Oh, I just want to, like --" (laugh) Aginor becomes this insect-like creature that she doesn't want to get away because once he gets away, he can hide. Like, it's like when I see -- find a spider, I'm like, I have to kill it right now or it'll get away. Um, and she just has to walk away from it and be like, "Mm. Yeah. Got other things to do."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "Thwarted anger" is the phrase Robert Jordan uses.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So, I dunno. I still think -- yeah, I think it's the most interesting sequence 'cause there's a lot --

Sally: Yeah, well --

Emily: At play there.

Sally: There's a -- just like you said, there's a lot of fears that she has to deal with, like obviously the most baseline one is Aginor --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And he's saying, like, really rape-y things to her, and so there's that, like, immediate threat.

Emily: And her own vulnerability 'cause she's naked.

Sally: Yeah, and 'cause she's naked ...

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So there's a whole lot of the fact that she's just, like, vulnerable to him, fighting, and they're in a maze, and so she's lost, and, like -- and so there's these, like, obvious, like, physical fears --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: But then, yeah, she has to deal with her, like, shit about being afraid of, like, her crutches, basically --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Which is her anger, and so it is really interesting. The other ones are a little more, like -- like, I kind of wish that one was the last one, and, like, the one where she's, like, has to walk away from Lan is, like, the first one?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Because I -- like, the last one is supposed to be the hardest. And I get it. Like, whatever --

Emily: Romance, whatever.

Sally: But it's just, like -- I think, like, generally speaking, like, Nynaeve's fear of, like, her own crutch and her fear of losing that crutch is, like, so much part of everything that she does, including her relationship with Lan --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: That it'd be interesting if that was, like, her penultimate one and she was, like, expecting it to be something --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Worse, and it was just, like, oh, you have to, like, learn how to chill out a bit. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) You have to learn to not be, like, this Hulk --

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Just powered by rage.

Sally: You can't be -- that's my secret.

Emily: I'm always angry.

Sally: And so, like, I get it, like, of course, like, her hardest fear is giving up, y'know, a different life or whatever --

Emily: The future that she really wants.

Sally: Yeah, the future that she really wants. And of course that's not to say that -- it's not to, like, belittle -- 'cause you can want to have marriage and children, and it's not a -- that's not, like, a bad thing -- obviously --

Emily: Like, we walk in on her, and it seems like she's got a pretty sweet life. She's a queen.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She's friends with Morgase. Like, she's got a husband who, y'know -- like, it's just like -
-

Sally: Adores her, yeah.

Emily: It's like a picture-perfect life, kind of.

Sally: Yeah, of course. Like, she's --

Emily: It's almost -- it's very little girl-ish in its --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Dream-like quality. Like, oh, yeah, when I was -- when I was 10, I too dreamed of being in a big house with a big man. Y'know, like, we all have -- some -- most of us have grown away from that --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I'd say.

Sally: Yeah, and so it's not to, like, belittle that fear --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Because it's a -- a genuine one and a really hard one and, like, obviously, the fact that these two chapters are paired next to each other is not an accident --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Because we have both of these characters dealing with their fear and repression about this relationship. Because the, like, last discussion they had, where Lan was like, "No," and Nynaeve's like, "OK, then."

Emily: "Bye."

Sally: Yeah, and so obviously that's very intentional. But -- I dunno, I just, like, wish that -- I -- this is -- OK, I'm done, I'm done complaining -- I just --

Emily: No, go for it.

Sally: Would love that her, like, penultimate thing could be herself.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And I feel like Nynaeve in particular, like -- she's got so much of that, but she's such, like, a caretaker figure, whether that is as, like, a mother or a friend or a wife or a healer, like, I feel like those are -- and those are really important parts of her story, I just wish that, like, her plot with herself wasn't a subplot. I wish that was, like, her actual plot.

Emily: Yeah. It's -- this whole format is a little crippled by the fact that Robert Jordan has chosen to have it be the past-present-future format --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Y'know? Like, you could do a lot more if you just stepped away from that and just, like -

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Three sequences, and you could write in them in whatever order --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Actually made sense for the character.

Sally: Or, like, the whole thing of this is that time isn't a linear thing, time is a circle --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: It could be like you're going to visit your past, present, and future at some time, but you --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Don't know which one is which, and you kind of have to --

Emily: Ooh. Dude, that'd be freaky.

Sally: Figure that out, yeah. And so it's just, like -- yeah, you're right, the problem is the structure of past, present, and future, which is an archetypal structure, and as you mentioned, this is a really archetypal sequence, where, like, I don't know if they're in Tel'aran'rhiod, or like -- Sheriam says it might be another world, whatever, but it reads very much as, like, the dream world, and the dream world is a place of archetypes. So of course we're dealing with -- it's the rule of threes, it's past, present, and future, it's -- y'know, a maze, it's, y'know, marriage and children, she's even got three children -- like --

Emily: Yeah. Just threes, threes, threes everywhere.

Sally: It's a whole -- it's a whole thing. So, yeah. But the test in and of itself is -- is pretty interesting. Unfortunately, this time around, reading it, it made me think of the test in *Divergent*.

Emily: Ah!

Sally: Did you ever read that book?

Emily: I don't -- I think I read it, like, ten years ago.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: And I don't recall.

Sally: Or, like --

Emily: But yeah, don't they have to, like, face their fears?

Sally: Yeah, they face their fears, and hers is -- Tris, which is like -- (whisper) her name is Tris --

Emily: I know.

Sally: It's Beatris, but she goes by Tris for short -- hers is physical intimacy, which is like, big mood --

Emily: Oh, boy.

Sally: But -- (laugh) Hers is, like, physical intimacy, and she comes out of that, and everyone's like, "We thought you were gonna fight spiders or something." (laugh)

Emily: She's like, "Nope. Just had to fuck."

Sally: Well, I mean, earlier in that book, she does get sexually assaulted, so I shouldn't --

Emily: Oh, yeah.

Sally: I shouldn't laugh. But. Um.

Emily: Well, no. It's also just a genuine fear.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um --

Sally: It just made me think --

Emily: Yeah, isn't her love interest named Four 'cause he only has four fears? And I'm like, I don't know about you, but four is kind of a lot of fears.

Sally: (laugh) I --

Emily: It seems like a normal amount of fears.

Sally: (laugh) I know, it's really funny.

Emily: I probably have four fears.

Sally: That book is so hilarious.

Emily: Spiders ... physical intimacy ...

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Yeah, that's a big one.

Sally: My dude, I go through four fears before I fully open my eyes in the morning.

Emily: I can't think of more than two. (wheeze)

Sally: Emily has two fears. I'm gonna call her Two from now on.

Emily: I don't -- uh, driving in the snow ...

Sally: Mm, that's a big one.

Emily: Yeah, that's scary. People dying?

Sally: That's a good one. My God, I have so many. Climate change, needles --

Emily: Oh yeah, you --

Sally: Um. The health of my family --

Emily: I had to get a flu shot the other day, and Sally, like, had to leave the room. It was so funny.

Sally: Ugh, the worst.

Emily: I was like, oh, you need to stick my arm and whipped my shirt off, and (laugh) Sally's mom, who was giving the flu shot, was like, "None of my children can stand needles. I don't understand it."

Sally: That's a lie! Perry and Ian are fine. She was just trying to make me feel nice.

Emily: Ohh. That was nice of her.

Sally: I mean, none of us really like blood or anything, but --

Emily: Well, yeah. Who does like blood?

Sally: (gagging noise)

Emily: Vampires, I guess. OK, OK. (laugh) Divergent is so funny.

Sally: But it's just -- getting back to an actual point, there are so many tests that have to deal with, um, facing your fears. And, like, life, if you wanna boil it down, is just a series of facing different fears --

Emily: Sure, sure.

Sally: Or whatever things that you're afraid of. New jobs, marriage, whatever. Life in general. Walking out the door every morning.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Pollution. You know.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um, so that in and of itself is kind of like an archetypal, um, thing is that it's fear.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um, but -- and it also -- they have a really beautiful line where Nynaeve come -- they're like -- Nynaeve's like, "I'm -- I was so afraid," like, "That was so miserable," and someone is like, "Well, yeah, you're about to be dealing with, like, basically nuclear bombs, like --"

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: "You should come to that with some fear and some awe and some reverence of, like, what can happen in this world. Like, you shouldn't just be ready to use it for anything." Which is hilarious, because that's Nynaeve's intention, is to use it to fight Moiraine.

Emily: She's like, "I'm here so I can fight someone."

Sally: (laugh) Yeah. And I'm like --

Emily: She's such an icon.

Sally: Consider -- I know, the fact that Nynaeve's like, "I'm gonna go to Harvard --" Nynaeve is basically Elle Woods.

Emily: Oh my God, she is.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah. "What, like it's hard?"

Emily: "What, like it's hard?"

Sally: Um, Nynaeve -- yeah, is like, "I'm gonna go to Harvard for the revenge narrative."

Emily: Exactly.

Sally: So.

Emily: I think Nynaeve's character can be distilled in the sequence where she's talking to Sheriam after the second sequence and she's like, "OK, so I have to do it again," and Sheriam's like, "Yeah, and this one's the hardest," and Nynaeve's like, "OK, I'm ready," like -- and Sheriam's like, "Great," and Nynaeve takes it at a run.

Sally: Run! I know!

Emily: She's so cool.

Sally: She's such a fucking legend.

Emily: I know.

Sally: Just naked --

Emily: Naked. Running.

Sally: Sweaty. Is like, "Let's fucking do it."

Emily: Yeah. "Fucking get it over with, you assholes."

Sally: Well, and also -- (laugh) At the beginning, they're like, "You know, you have three chances to do this," like, "You don't have to do it now," and she's like, "Fuck you."

Emily: She's like -- flips them all off --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And walks backwards into the *ter'angreal*.

Sally: She's like, "Nah."

Emily: Naked.

Sally: "I'm gonna do it right the hell now. Don't tell me what I can and can't do."

Emily: Anyway, it's a very traumatizing event --

Sally: Yeah, of course.

Emily: For her, and we see it again with Elayne and Egwene, although, uh, we just see the aftermath for Elayne, that she's just, like, sobbing her eyes out. (laugh)

Sally: I wonder what Elayne's were.

Emily: Oh my God. Elayne was like -- (inaudible)

Sally: What?

Emily: Elayne's were all about Rand rejecting her. Let's be honest.

Sally: Probably.

Emily: Yeah. Or Rand dying.

Sally: Past, present, and future.

Emily: Yeah. All her fears are centered around Rand dying. Anyway, I almost wish we could do this with all our main characters because --

Sally: Oh my God.

Emily: It would be really fascinating to see what happens with Perrin and Mat --

Sally: Right?

Emily: In the *ter'angreal*. Y'know? It'd just be cool.

Sally: I know. Sometimes I'm like -- I just want authors, sometimes, to do things just for, like, my satisfaction, like --

Emily: Yeah. Exactly.

Sally: It doesn't make any sense, but, like, what if Robert Jordan, beyond all conceivable thought, like, put Perrin inside this situation --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, what would happen?

Emily: Exactly.

Sally: I wanna see that.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And I'm mad that I don't get it.

Emily: I can probably figure out Perrin's fears.

Sally: Perrin's is, like --

Emily: I'd have a harder time with Mat's.

Sally: What is Mat afraid of? (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, exactly. (laugh) Depends on where we pick him up in the series. Like --

Sally: Yeah, true.

Emily: Ummm. Anything else?

Sally: Um.

Emily: Should I go get the boy so he can purr?

Sally: Yes. Go get the boy. Um, general housekeeping, we're still doing our giveaway for Ender's Game if you guys want it. Again, like I said, I think most people own a copy of Ender's Game, but if you do want it, just post a picture of yourself on Instagram, Twitter, or Tumblr, tag us in it with the hashtag or the comment, The Dragon Loves Public Transit, and we'll send you -- we'll pick a winner, obviously, and we'll send you a copy of -- Emily's creepy copy of Ender's Game and some money for your public transportation fund, 'cause we're gonna get rid of the --

Emily: (distant) It's so creepy!

Sally: Yeah, I put some pictures up online.

Emily: (distant) Oh my God.

Sally: We're gonna get rid of it anyway, so if one of you want it, I would much rather give it to you guys, my lovely, lovely listeners. Ah. Here he comes. Here comes my boy.

Emily: We need absolute silence while he vibrates.

(faint noise of purring)

Emily: OK. Have a --

Sally: Wait.

Emily: Oh, sorry.

Sally: I have to sign off.

Emily: Oh, sorry, I thought --

Sally: I have a --

Emily: That was our sign-off. Do you have another one?

Sally: I have -- no, I have a very special --

Emily: Hell yeah.

Sally: Halloween one prepared.

Emily: Oooh. Do it.

Sally: Um, I've been sitting on it for, like, two weeks.

Emily: Oh my God.

Sally: Yeah, I haven't even told you --

Emily: (gasp)

Sally: 'Cause I wanted to be like -- (laugh) Halloween!

Emily: You wanted it to be distilled.

Sally: Um. So I work, obviously, at an aviary that also has a really big, um -- we're officially going to become an aviary and a botanical garden, which means we have, like, a ton of beautiful plants around. And a lot of really wonderful horticulturists -- horticulturalists who work on staff, and one them has been hatch -- hatching? Pfft. Growing -- (laugh) it feels like it hatched -- growing this really weird plant forever, and it, like, is really rare that it buds, but it finally did, and it, like, sprouted this, like, really pretty flower, but she, like, sent an email to all staff and was like, "Look at my cool flower," and then, like, in the second or third paragraph, she's like, "When this flower blooms, it smells like rotting flesh. Isn't that so interesting?" And I was like, "No, it's not."

Emily: It smells like rotting flesh ... ?!

Sally: Yeah, and she was like, "I put it all in the horticulture office -- like, I put it in the horticulture office if you want to see it." Guess whose desk is right across from the horticultural office?

Emily: Does it really smell?

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: Oh my God ...

Sally: It smells like rot. Happy Halloween!