

## **EGSM030 – The Witcher**

### **Content Warnings**

- Spoilers for all of The Witcher (TV show and games)
- Innuendo & sexual references
- Discussions of: death & physical violence, canon-typical trauma (inc. child abuse), environmental apocalypse, oppression & discrimination
- Mentions of: food, torture, child death, war

**HELEN**

That's something that I've seen popping up on Tumblr. The idea that Roach is actually immortal and Geralt just thinks that all horses are like that. I love that.

**[Show Intro]**

**HELEN**

Hello friends and fans and welcome to Enthusiasm. The show where we talk about a few of our favourite things. I am your host Helen Gould, one of the best Rusty Quillers and today we're talking about The Witcher. I am enchanted to be joined by Maddy and Sarah. As always we shall introduce ourselves alphabetically which means that Maddy is going first. So Maddy, what are your pronouns and what do you do?

**MADDY**

Hello. I'm Maddy Searle, my pronouns are a she/her and I do various things for Rusty Quill. I've worked on Stella Firma, Lead Editor, I've been director on Inexplicables and right now I'm working on Chapter Multiverse. Currently upcoming actual play show.

**HELEN**

Yay! Very excited. Congratulations again.

**MADDY**

Thank you.

**HELEN**

I think I've already congratulated you in another episode of this?

**MADDY**

Yeah, possibly!

**[Laughter]**

**HELEN**

Well I mean it very much.

**MADDY**

But yeah, the congratulations can be continuous.

**HELEN**

And Sarah, what are your pronouns and what do you do?

**SARAH**

Hi all. I'm Sarah Shachat. My pronouns are she/her and I am delighted to be joining the Rusty Quill family, working on a series called "Cry Havoc, Ask Questions Later".

**HELEN**

Yes, I really can't wait. It's going to be so good. I'm sure of it. I mean I like anything classics based any way.

**MADDY**

Very excited.

**SARAH**

Oh brilliant. Good. As a former classics major, I have just been waiting for someone to write in a show set in this period of ancient Roman history and thankfully David K. Barnes did it. So...

**HELEN**

Yeah.

Moving on from the Romans, let's talk about where we first came across The Witcher. My confession is that I have not played the games but I have seen the TV show and upfront there are probably going to be spoilers for both Season 1 and Season 2 of the Netflix Witcher show and probably for all of the games. So continue listening at your peril. I will put a note in the show notes as well, if you for some reason start this podcast half an hour in.

So, do either of you want to go first? What were your experiences with The Witcher?

**SARAH**

Sure, I came to the games first, so that's how I know The Witcher. Primarily I have watched both seasons of the TV show and when the pandemic started, the great Emma who is an audio drama legend, started a Witcher book club so I've read a few. I spaced out at ... dropped out of the book club eventually, but I have read some of the novels in translation as well which has been fun.

**HELEN**

In translation?

**SARAH**

Yes, because they're originally in Polish.

**HELEN**

Oh, I didn't know that!

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**SARAH**

Yep.

**MADDY**

Andrzej Sapkowski is the writer I think?

**SARAH**

Sacowski, Sapkowski...

**MADDY**

Yeah.

**SARAH**

...we're very prepared. Know lots about the Witcher!

**MADDY**

Yeah. My special talent is that I studied linguistics for my under grad and I can read international phonetic alphabet so I've multiple times gone into the Wikipedia article and tried to remember how to pronounce the name. And I think it is Sapkowski, but I could be wrong. I need to go back and check and read the international phonetic alphabet again!

**SARAH**

I defer to you!

**HELEN**

There's a lot of novels aren't there? I feel like there's like 30.

**SARAH**

There's not 30 but there are quite a few. The places where I would recommend someone start if they're interested in the books, is there a couple of short story collections that are quite excellent. And then there's the novels that follow the main characters. It's in a slightly more linear fashion, although not entirely! And they're about 7 or 8 of those I think. And some additional short stories that take place later.

**HELEN**

So did you play those games as well Sarah?

**SARAH**

Oh yes, yeah, I came into ... I first learned about the Witcher through the game so I've played Witcher 2 and 3 and all the expansions.

**HELEN**

Ooh. That sounds like a lot. It's a big game isn't it?

**SARAH**

It's a lot. It's a great way to waste time! Phenomenal. Highly recommend.

**HELEN**

What about you Maddy? How did you come across The Witcher?

**MADDY**

I started off properly gaming probably about 3 or 4 years ago now. So I only had my laptop to start off with and the first Witcher game was on sale so I grabbed it and I tried and failed to get through the first part of it. Because it is very dated now and as a late modern gamer it just didn't quite do it for me. But, later on I played the entirety of The Witcher 3, sadly not the expansions yet but that is a yet, but that is a "yet"! I will at some point. And very much enjoyed it. Had a really great time. I have also seen both series of the Netflix series and the most nerdy thing that I have done, is that I have watched two like multiple hour long YouTube videos by a guy on YouTube called Joseph Anderson who does analyses of The Witcher games...

**SARAH**

Oh yeah! I've seen...I've not watched these videos, but I've seen this guy.

**MADDY**

Yeah, yeah. And they are extremely detailed and I find videos really weirdly comforting. And so it's kind of like ... I've re-watched them recently, even though they're so long and yeah, just the level of analysis is really interesting and because I've only played like a third of The Witcher 2 and I didn't quite get

along with it, but I still really wanted to know kind of where it went. Having the kind of multiple parts laid out for me by this YouTuber was really helpful and interesting.

**SARAH**

Nice.

**HELEN**

Then the next question then is ... because I've seen people talking about this online, but because I haven't played the games, I don't really have a stance on this. But, what do you think about The Witcher TV show compared to the games? Like what are the differences? I mean they're completely different mediums obviously, but like...I don't know, what are your thoughts. Tell me your thoughts about the different adaptations of the story?

**SARAH**

Yeah, it's interesting. They have ... I think ... very different strengths and kind of get to jam in a very different way. The games are just phenomenally immersive and I love how there's a set story line but also a lot of freedom within that, if you care about gear there's so much gear for you to upgrade and craft and oh my Lord, you know, The Witcher contracts if you just want to destroy monsters, that's a thing you can do. It sets up incentives and sort of structures it's mechanics, that you learn the game relatively quickly and then kind of get to embody Geralt. Which is I think probably why Henry Cavell was very excited to play him and wanted to make the series happen. And I think the series does an admirable job of translating a lot of the weirdness in the

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world without shying away from it. It's a very strange lore and information is introduced and very strange orders in The Witcher and the series kind of embraced the spirit of the franchise in a way that I thought was very cool. But I'd be curious for your thoughts Maddy.

**MADDY**

Yeah, obviously yeah. You're absolutely right with the two different mediums having different strengths and I think even though I enjoyed The Witcher 3 video game I fell in love with Geralt in the TV show because partly...partly as we we're saying, all fair Henry Cavell covered in dirt is just a gift to us all and partly because he really gets the kind of dry humour across and really gets the sense of 'Oh I don't want to be doing all this hero stuff but I guess I must'.

**[Laughter]**

**MADDY**

And I really enjoy that. And I also really like in the TV series you get to learn more about the female characters like Yennefer and Ciri. And even though in The Witcher 3 you get a big chunk of Ciri, it was really fun for me not having read the books to learn more about kind of Ciri's origin and all that kind of stuff. And yes, one think about the games is that there is a lot of boob in the sorceress's...

**SARAH**

Oh yeah!

[Laughter]

**MADDY**

Which I have mixed feelings about, but yeah!

**SARAH**

It feels very of it's era to. It's like classic early aughts boob the way that video games do.

[Laughter]

**SARAH**

Like I can date it!

**HELEN**

I know exactly what you mean with like improbable clothing choices. Especially because, if I remember correctly, aren't The Witcher games meant to be set in quite a sort of cold climate?

**SARAH**

Yes, you're in the north. So, that's definitely the time to be showing your abs off for sure! Is, is like basically in fantasy Germany.

**MADDY**

Yeah.

**HELEN**

And it also, one of the ...again, if I remember correctly, one of the iconic images from The Witcher is that one of Geralt in the bath.

**MADDY**

Yeah, yeah.

**SARAH**

Which they recreated for the show and I was like ‘good job guys’. Well done.

**[Laughter]**

**MADDY**

And another fun show reference in season 2 that I enjoyed in the games you can have a sexual encounter with Yennifer on the back of a stuffed unicorn.

**HELEN**

Oh my gosh!

**MADDY**

And they mention that in the show as a kind of throw away line.

**SARAH**

That is a detail from the books by the way. They do grab it from the original source material is that Yennifer has a stuffed unicorn and uses it for Triss.

**MADDY**

That is good to know. There's a common thread!

**HELEN**

That I did not know!

**[Laughter]**

**SARAH**

It's the kind of fun thing you can experience when you get into The Witcher.

**HELEN**

Yeah, you've got to be inventive sometimes.

**SARAH**

Yeah, the books are very cool. It makes me want to learn Polish, because I don't know if this is something that the author is doing or if this is coming out of a more Eastern European tradition of literature, but like, it's formally very weird. Like there's chapters that are just all dialogue or chapters that sort of take place out of order, or just sort of weird details thrown into stories. Kind of in a way where, if you were taking like a creative writing class, or like a

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screen writing class, it would be drilled out of you. But in these books it works. Like it's very cool and interesting. So like, oddly enough the unicorn, not the weirdest thing in The Witcher world.

**HELEN**

What is the weirdest thing in The Witcher world?

**SARAH**

Oh man!

**[Laughter]**

**SARAH**

Hoo boy!

**MADDY**

I think one of the things I would have to pick out is the kind of concept of the conjunction of the spheres.

**SARAH**

That's a good call, yeah.

**MADDY**

Which I have a basic understanding of where I think it's basically like humans and elves and monsters are all from different worlds and they all kind of

collided into one and it kind of suggests the presence of multiple like different universes which possibly like relate to different kind of fiction.

### **SARAH**

It's a multiverse is my understanding and at some point the original inhabitants of the world of the continent where the story takes place on were the elves. And then the conjunction of the spheres happened and a lot of other species including humans, dwarves, halflings and also monsters end up on the world and have to figure out how to live together or not as the case often is. The cool thing about Ciri is as we saw at the end of the second season of the show and is a part of the games and the books too obviously, is that she has the power to kind of move in time and space between all of the different spheres and different worlds and so like at the end of season 2 she and Geralt like bamf briefly into a completely different world and that's something Sapkowski plays with. Like I think at one point he sends the crew to like the Isle of Avalon. So like our world is included in all of this madness.

### **HELEN**

Now that's interesting. And thank you by the way for explaining the conjunction of the spheres because as I've said, I've only seen the TV series. So when like they only just started to explain that a little bit in the second season and I was like oh, ok. I guess, ok, we'll go with that then.

### **MADDY**

Yeah, it's kind of having just seen the series and played some of the games and also seen YouTube videos which includes a lore from the books. I kind of

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forget where all my pieces of knowledge come from and so it's hard to kind of resolve like 'oh yeah, that's from that' and 'that's from this'.

**SARAH**

Yeah, that's true.

**MADDY**

It's all a bit piecemeal. Kind of like the literature itself I guess.

**SARAH**

That's very true.

**HELEN**

There's nothing wrong with that. I had no idea though there was actually like a multiverse. I thought it was some kind of ... I don't know what I thought. I very much just happily just gaze upon the screen. And I just accept things as they are when it comes to The Witcher.

**SARAH**

Which is a wonderful way to watch The Witcher, I must say.

**HELEN**

I can't be doing with critically analysing things outside of my day job! I can't do it anymore! I don't have enough energy. So if my brain might ping and go 'that doesn't make sense', I'll be like 'oh well, never mind'.

**SARAH**

Yeah, I mean luckily, you know it's not like ... I was talking to someone about this the other day. I was like Game of Thrones for example, or Lord of the Rings or some other sort of high fantasy series really wants you to understand the lore and really wants ... like it's key to what's happening that you sort of get like this ring business is a manifestation of evil and like all the things. you can watch The Witcher and not care about the lore at all and you're fine. Because Geralt's in a bathtub or covered in dirt or one in the other, and it's great.

**HELEN**

I'm really fascinated by the concept of what a Witcher is.

**SARAH**

Yeah.

**HELEN**

Which, as I understand it, they sort of ... essentially get tortured as children by being given the special elixir thing and it gives them special powers.

**SARAH**

Spot on.

**MADDY**

Yeah, the Trial of the Grasses I think it's called.

**HELEN**

And theoretically, they don't have feelings. Well, they obviously have feelings. I don't know why anyone thought for a minute....

**SARAH**

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It's like the ultimate teenager boy thing. It's phenomenal of like 'oh I walk into a town and everyone thinks I'm cold and heartless and have no feelings, but I have feelings'.

**[Laughter]**

**SARAH**

Like it's such a good ... it's such a good device, I love it.

**MADDY**

And I also like this thing of possibly the reason why they tell themselves that they don't have feelings is because they wish that was the case, because they feel so much and they have to go through so much trauma. And that just makes it super sad.

**HELEN**

it is really...that's the thing. Like it's...there's like a melancholy, like a tragedy.

**SARAH**

Yeah.

**HELEN**

To what I know so far of The Witcher. And I think that draws me into it and also like I will watch almost any fantasy thing. I will give any of it a go. And I think they've done quite well with it.

Speaking of The Witchers, there was one in season 2 that got turned into a tree?

**MADDY**

Yeah.

**HELEN**

But I gather that he's actually quite a big part of the games?

**MADDY**

Eskel?

**SARAH**

So Eskel is a beloved part of the game. You can hang out with him in Witcher 3 and he has a very distinct personality. Yeah, they basically murk in him...

**[Laughter]**

**SARAH**

...in episode 1 or 2 of season 2...

**HELEN**

It's very early on.

**SARAH**

Yeah, which caused a little bit of an outcry among fans I know, although I thought it was cool. He does indeed get turned into like a lechon which is like a tree monster. That then Geralt has to kill.

**HELEN**

Yeah.

**SARAH**

And it's sad.

**HELEN**

It was really sad. And also like, it looked really painful.

**SARAH**

Again, they're all sad boys. All The Witchers are sad boys.

**MADDY**

Mm-hm

**HELEN**

Yeah. So what's Eskel like in the games? Because I was ... I did recognise the name because from dipping your toe into Fandom I noticed that everyone was shipping him and Geralt so I was like, oh ok, so this Eskel must be a major part of the plot. I wonder what will happen to him and then just [plop]. So what

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does he do in the game? Like why is he so beloved? You said he has a distinct personality but, like...

**SARAH**

There's a phenomenal section in the game where you and a bunch of allies that you've gathered throughout defend Kaer Morhen which is The Witcher stronghold...

**HELEN**

Yeah.

**SARAH**

...from the wild hunt. Which is this group of supernatural kind of elvin folk who want Ciri for reasons. And Eskel is very sarcastic, you know, larger than life kind of figure. He and another Witcher, Lambert, who also shows up in the TV show are kind of your two main allies of Kaer Morhen so that's him in the games. It's not like a huge role but he ... he was a fan favourite. And I totally understand why the show runners wanted to do what they did, both to sort of make a statement of like 'this is not going to be the games. We're telling our own story here'. And also, sort of give Geralt another sad thing...

**[Laughter]**

**SARAH**

...another thing he can be sad about and sort of its ... you know, I'm not usually a fan of like murder as a vehicle for character growth, like it should exist on its

own. But I think in the show, Geralt has a very complicated relationship to his past and to Kaer Morhen and the choice he has to make with Eskel then informs another choice that he makes later in the series and in the way that I think is very interesting and useful. Because he's put in the same spot with Ciri. At the end where she's endangering everyone at Kaer Morhen and he could do what he did with Eskel, we know he's capable of it because we watched him do it. But such is, his dad vibes are so strong at that point that he ... he uses the power of love to get through to Ciri instead. Which is great.

**HELEN**

Love the power of love.

What did you think of the finale Maddy?

**MADDY**

I really enjoyed it. I had a great time. I think unfortunately I was kind of doing something else while I was watching it so I didn't give it my full attention! But, yeah, I think having a big emotional climax where the relationship between Geralt and Ciri is really tested is really a great way to go. And I'm just thinking as well about the kind of running theme of what is a monster. What makes a monster and I just ...

**(HELEN and SARAH agree)**

**MADDY**

...I find that really, really fascinating and obviously, like is Ciri a monster because she has all these weird powers? Is Geralt a monster he's been like mutilated and manipulated? Like, is the character we meet near the start of

the series, the kind of ... the warthog man a monster because he's just had the curse put on him, all this kind of thing. And, it makes you think about appearances and actions and how we define things and how society kind of force people into corners.

**SARAH**

Yeah.

**HELEN**

I love that. You've absolutely hit the nail on the head. Because I love engaging with media that's exploring monstrosity. And like the concept of the monsters. And I'm sure I've said it before on this podcast, but like it's just ... a really interesting topic for me, especially where it comes to when various media explore well, can one be monstrous and still human, or can one be monstrous and still a person. Can one stop being monstrous. What makes a monster all of that.

**SARAH**

It's defined inwardly or by society as a whole.

**HELEN**

Yes. Yes exactly.

Ah, it is such a sad show now thinking about it. Bless him.

**SARAH**

No, but it does the thing that I love. I love music that does this to you where the lyrics are really heart-breaking but like the sound is really peppy and

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happy. The Witcher is very sad, if you think about it too long. But it's just a very fun involving action show, if you're looking at it on the surface and like I think that's, I think that's cool about it.

**MADDY**

On an aesthetic note, they kind of ... moving on the same theme. Yennefer's fashion is just on point.

**SARAH**

Oh, incredible.

**MADDY**

Just absolutely immaculate.

**SARAH**

No, note.

**HELEN**

Yeah, I was about to bring her up actually as an interesting exploration of like ... I mean she becomes treated like a monster by her own people when they think that she is a traitor and that's interesting as well in terms of like ... like social constructs of monster. Like what does treason mean?

**SARAH**

Absolutely.

**HELEN**

That's very interesting. And also in terms of like her search for power which is often constructed in narratives as 'if you want power too much then you know, it will go badly for you'. But she's a very morally grey person and I really enjoy that about her.

**SARAH**

Yeah, I really love both her in the games and in the show. There's slightly different flavours of the same problem. But I think in both you really see that her desire for power comes out of a need for safety and security which is something that I think is very true and often gets glossed over when dealing with characters who crave power or control. So like, again, The Witcher comes sideways at a lot of normal fantasy things. And the result is very cool, I find.

**HELEN**

I absolutely agree.

I want to talk about the wizard some more actually. Because there are lots of different tropes associated with sort of magic schools and learning how to like ... be a wizard, or a witch, or a warlock or a sorcerer or whichever word you want. And the relationships between Yennefer and Triss and Tissaia I think her name is? All very interesting to me in terms of ... like how relationships with people that you knew when you were a kid develop as you grow up and become an adult. Or with teachers and how those can change as you become on equal footing. I think that those are treated really well in this show. I don't know if they're similar in the games?

**SARAH**

The games are interesting in that like there's a lot of ... a lot more I think of the rivalry between the wizards and the witches and then in which are 3 they're kind of being hunted and persecuted and so there's like a ... the enemy of my enemy is my friend kind of a vibe going on with a lot of them. But yeah, I'm also just stunned by like how little I understand the magic in The Witcher and how that's mostly ok. Like I know season 1 of the show ... a lot of the early Yennefer plots were like her learning to do magic and I still couldn't explain it to you now if I tried.

**MADDY**

Yeah, because there's something about kind of channelling chaos that I didn't notice in the games. It may have been there but I just didn't notice. But yeah, it seems very particular to the show. I don't if it's in the books though.

**SARAH**

There's a lot of it in the books that I have read and I imagine that there's more in the ones that I have not. And it gets back into the sort of ... the books have a more kind of environmental concern with like this world that has been damaged and people are siphoning things from it whether it's chaos magic or whether it's human settlement, the continent is a place that is not yet at a breaking point but like could get there. Which is something that's interesting about those.

**HELEN**

That is interesting. I hadn't thought about it in terms of ... the story about the environment and about ... not dying world but like a broken world.

**SARAH**

Yeah. And like the threat of it becoming a dying world is part of ... and that shows up in the games too.

**MADDY**

Yeah, with the wild hunt and the frost and all that kind of thing.

**HELEN**

I think the magic system is interesting because my understanding is that it's about balance because I remember there's that scene of one of the girls makes a flower bloom but then her hand withers at the same time so you always have to take from one thing to cause another thing to happen. Which I think is an interesting philosophy to apply to magic.

**MADDY**

Yeah.

**SARAH**

Absolutely.

**MADDY**

I do find some magic systems somewhat unsatisfying when you can just kind of conjure things up without any consequences or repercussions. Yeah, I like things having a price, even if it kind of makes things difficult. Even if it's in D&D and you only have a certain number of spell slots. Even if it's as mundane as that. You're like, you can't just do everything willy-nilly all the time.

**HELEN**

It's why a lot of systems have something like mana as well.

**MADDY**

Yeah.

**HELEN**

So you have to be able to choose carefully what spells you want to use. On that slight tangent, I think we're going to take a little break and we'll be back in a second.

**[BREAK]**

**HELEN**

And welcome back. Ok. So, we briefly mentioned this during the break, but I want to talk about favourite characters from The Witcher because I would like to talk about ... I can never figure out how to pronounce his name in my head. Is it Jaskier, Yaskié, Jaskié... (laughs) Dandelion!

**SARAH**

So if you want you can just say Dandelion and it will be correct.

**HELEN**

We'll call him Dandelion.

**SARAH**

Because Jaskier is, I think it's Jaskier right Maddy?

**MADDY**

Yeah, that's how I...

**SARAH**

The character in the books and the games is just referred to as Dandelion which is this fanciable bard nickname and the show was like we're not calling a character Dandelion so they just use the Polish word for it, and so he's Jaskier.

**HELEN**

Ahh. That's really nice. I didn't know that's where it came from. Ahh. Well, I have been loving his character. He is one of my favourite characters in the show and I think that is true for many.

**MADDY**

Absolutely. Yeah.

**SARAH**

That's true for me for sure.

**HELEN**

I really love that they have ... oh, what's his name Joey Batey?

**SARAH**

Joey Batey, yup.

**HELEN**

I think he's the name of the actor that ... he's like actually the one singing and he's got his own band and everything. Excellent casting choice. Tell me your thoughts.

**MADDY**

I saw a little clip probably on social media somewhere about the scene in the cell with the mice and apparently that was all improvised.

**[Laughter]**

**SARAH**

In-credible!

**MADDY**

And the comments were like “make this man a Disney prince, stat!” kind of thing.

**[Laughter]**

**MADDY**

Just absolutely adorable.

**SARAH**

He is a “Not Safe for Work” Disney prince. That’s kind of how you would describe him, yeah.

**HELEN**

He would have to be one of the more modern Disney princes who aren't really a prince.

**SARAH**

He could show up on the Tangled TV show and be just fine.

**HELEN**

Yeah, like a rascally type person. I don't know if either of you have seen when he tried ... it's on YouTube. He has this like 10 minute video of when he tried to make a cake.

**SARAH**

Oh yeah, in lockdown they had The Great Witcher Bake Off.

**HELEN**

Yes!

**SARAH**

The video is art! It's wonderful.

**HELEN**

Its so funny. I highly recommend ... if anyone's having a bad day, go and watch that because it is just pure chaos and like, I think very relatable. At one point I think he's just sitting on the floor covered in flour...

**SARAH**

It ends with Joey Batey on the floor of his kitchen covered in flour and goop, cry-eating a cake from Tesco! It's phenomenal.

**HELEN**

It's wonderful.

**MADDY**

I need to seek this out.

**[Laughter]**

**HELEN**

Highly, highly recommended.

I think if I had one small gripe it's that I wish they gave him more sort of serious character development. Because he's very much there to be ... sort of quite funny and light-hearted.

**MADDY**

Yeah.

**HELEN**

But it would be nice to get him treated more seriously because I think he's a really interesting character.

**MADDY**

Yeah, I think that definitely makes sense. Because there's lots of potential for the kind of betrayal he feels from Geralt and even though it is exploring a bit, it kind of gets a little bit swept under the rug and ...

**HELEN**

Yeah.

**MADDY**

...it would be nice to see them hash it out a bit more.

**SARAH**

It's interesting, I think you're right Maddy, he does kind of get to be put in more serious situations in the second season, but he's never taken seriously which is a shame. Because, you know, there is a lot there and a lot of it's ridiculous and we've covered that in great detail. And mined great comedy from it. One of the things I really liked about pairing with Yennefer in season 2 is that he's put in a more dramatic situation where he actually gets to come through.

**HELEN**

I mean he gets tortured.

**MADDY**

I think I read somewhere that Joey Batey himself kind of struggled a bit with that scene because it was so kind of intense.

**HELEN**

Oh!

**MADDY**

Which is a shame.

**HELEN**

Oh bless him. See that's another thing. It's like the actor seems quite likeable as well.

**SARAH**

Yeah.

**HELEN**

I think that's also why we like him.

Any other like stand-out characters from any of The Witcher media that we want to talk about?

**SARAH**

I would like to shout out anyone whose ever played the video game knows that Roach, Geralt's horse is very buggy. In that you know, he shows up on weird parts of the map when you call him. He often runs into trees or invisible walls that are there in the game but aren't there on your interface. He'll bug out and like half of him will appear and there's something when I talk to people about the games, there's something really endearing and wonderful about Roach not functioning properly all of the time. And that's just part of The Witcher playing experience. So, love Roach.

**MADDY**

Yeah, and I think I've seen this in a video but not played this myself, but I think in one of the expansions Roach gets to speak.

**HELEN**

Oh!

**SARAH**

Yes, that is a thing that happens.

**MADDY**

And has a very incongruous voice if I remember correctly.

**SARAH**

Yeah, you can find that you don't have to play through the expansions, you can find this on YouTube. But yes, in the books, it's like a place name. Like Geralt

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has different horses because you know, if you were in this Witchering profession you'd probably go through a lot of horses and he calls all of them Roach.

**HELEN**

Ah.

**SARAH**

But in the show and in the games, it's one Roach.

**HELEN**

That's something that I've seen popping up on Tumblr. Which is the idea that Roach is actually immortal and Geralt just thinks that all horses are like that.

**[Laughter]**

**SARAH**

I love that.

**HELEN**

Which I think it's very funny.

Are Witchers immortal?

**SARAH**

No. they're just very long-lived.

**HELEN**

Interesting.

**SARAH**

They can definitely be killed and they live for like hundred's of years. They're part of the sort of serum stuff, the mutagens that get administered to them like slows down their metabolism or something so that they age very, very slowly.

**HELEN**

I see. I see.

**MADDY**

And I find it really interesting in the parallels between the sorceresses and the witches because they have a lot of the same kind of experiences, like going through traumatic things in childhood to learn their craft and not aging the same as other people and kind of being apart from society, all of that kind of thing.

**SARAH**

Yeah, not being able to have children too which is a big deal in the books.

**HELEN**

Oh, that's interesting. Huh. Any other favourite characters?

**SARAH**

I feel bad that we haven't mentioned Geralt yet. Geralt is great.

**[Laughter]**

**HELEN**

Well, we've talked a lot about him. The whole series about him. But you said something about him having sort of tragic back story and needing to deal with a lot of things that perhaps he hasn't explored yet.

**SARAH**

Right, and just been grumpy generally, in an endearing way. In all of the mediums actually. There's a lot of like 'ah this again' about Geralt.

**[Laughter]**

**MADDY**

Yeah, I'm too old for this!

**SARAH**

Yeah, I am too old for this stuff!

**HELEN**

Well, if you live for hundreds of years, you would get fed up wouldn't you?

**SARAH**

Very true.

**MADDY**

Oh this is one of the instances where I'm desperately trying to remember a name and can't. What's the name of kind of Geralt's mentor?

**SARAH**

Oh, Vesemir.

**MADDY**

Vesemir, that's it.

**SARAH**

Vesemir is great.

**MADDY**

Yeah, yeah. I think Vesemir is Geralt's kind of mentor figure is very interesting because as with Tassaia and Yennefer, they have this weird relationship of Vesemir kind of raised Geralt and Geralt respects him a lot but also put him through all of these horrible experiences in order to become a Witcher. And the conflict that they have in the second season of like whether they should use Ciri to try and make more Witchers I thought was very cool.

**SARAH**

Yeah.

**HELEN**

I do love that thing where like there's a conflicted mentor/mentee relationship. Because you love your mentor very much but also they taught you in really harsh ways. I love it when things explore that.

**MADDY**

Yeah, definitely.

**SARAH**

Yeah, and there's more in the show than ... because in the games, I think, in all the mediums that the series is in, we start in a place where the technology is no longer there to make more Witchers and then the games and the books everyone's kind of like 'yeah, that's probably a good thing' and the show sort of explores a conflict in that which I think is really ... was very cool.

**HELEN**

Ok. I want to move us into a little predictions part. So, from what you know of the TV show, what you know of the games. What do you think is going to happen next? I would love to hear some wild speculation.

Because I suspect that ... if I was them, what I would do next season is ... we had thing where Ciri sort of discovers her power to sort of hop into a different world right, and wild hunt turn up and they're quite interested in Ciri. So I would imagine that the next season is going to be dealing with the wild hunt

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and possibly other incursions from other dimensions coming after Ciri and potentially her like learning more about her powers because Yennefer was just starting to teach her how to use magic as well at the end of that and I think ... I'm hoping that there's going to be a more of the found family vibe where it's going to be Yennefer, Geralt and Jaskier bringing up Ciri I think to come into her own. But I also think there's going to be a lot of war and politics going on as well. But that I'm much less good at predicting.

What do you think?

**MADDY**

Yeah, I think ... I definitely agree that wild hunt and Ciri's powers will be important and I definitely want there to be found family stuff for sure. And one thing that we haven't discussed yet is the elves in The Witcher universe.

**HELEN**

Yeah, yeah, yeah.

**SARAH**

Yes!

**MADDY**

Because I find them very interesting and complicated because in some ways they are an oppressed class because they're treated as the same class, but in other ways, they're kind of supremacists and they believe that they're better than everyone else and they want to restore the world...and according to the law the world was theirs and the humans and the monsters kind of came in.

So it's like yeah, how are they going to play into this and they've already kind of committed this atrocity of like the grieving mother had killed all the babies in the town and just because she was so grief stricken. So yeah, it's a big complicated thing that I think will probably be more important next season.

**HELEN**

I think you're absolutely right.

**SARAH**

No I think that'll feed into the politics of it. Which they teased more than they did this last season. So I think we're in for a lot more politics with as we talked about, Emhyr showing up in Cintra. So you've got the Nilfgaardians which are kind of a more southerly like Mediterranean power empire coming up to the north which is more fractured and has kings and things.

But I think, Helen, that's spot on. They seem to be setting up the wild hunts so I think that's what we're in for in terms of Geralt, Ciri and Yennefer for sure. And there's another character that we just at the end of season 2 we see ... we have seen this owl throughout and finally we see her turn into ...

**HELEN**

Yeah!

**SARAH**

Who she is, which is a wizard. And so I'm excited for more Philippa Eihart content.

**MADDY**

Yeah, she turns up in The Witcher 3 and I hadn't played any of The Witcher 2 or seen the massively long analysis videos at that point. So I only had a kind of vague idea who she was and she seemed like quite an interesting and complex character. So yeah, I'm interested to see if that plot line follows the way it does in the games and the books.

**SARAH**

Yeah, yeah. They've done a good job of like, I think incorporating elements whilst still trying to make the story their own. So like Yennefer's whole story line in season 2 doesn't show up anywhere else of like her basically making a bargain with Witcher Bovejega

I hesitate to lean on my knowledge of the books and the games too much, because I'm like they're going to want to do some stuff that's just for them.

But, Philippa Eihart has some very cool story lines in the games and the books and we've got a lot of like very crafty, spy characters on the board so I think we're in for a lot of intrigue.

**HELEN**

I do love that. I love a good political intrigue in my fantasy shows.

**SARAH**

Two great tastes, taste great together.

**[Laughter]**

**MADDY**

And I'm interested to see if they bring Zoltan Chivey into the show because he's such a big supporting character in the games, and he follows the trope of Scottish dwarf which I have mixed feelings about!

**[Laughter]**

**MADDY**

Like it's fine but it's just like why they are always Scottish!

**SARAH**

It's a little lazy at this point, yeah.

**HELEN**

Does he also have red hair and a big beard?

**SARAH**

Mmhmm. I think it's brown more.

**MADDY**

I think he has like... yeah, brown and he has kind of a Mohawk at one point.

**SARAH**

Yeah, he does.

**HELEN**

Oh I'd love to see more dwarves with Mohawks! That's a fun character trait you don't see very often!

And also in the next season, I'd like to see more of Dara.

**SARAH**

Yeah!

**HELEN**

The elf who was friends with Ciri.

**SARAH**

Oh such a good job they did with him this season. They gave him a thing to do, it was great. Because he shows up, he shows up in like one story in the books, and that's kind of it.

**HELEN**

I'm hoping that he'll be involved in the political intrigue because he was starting to sort of be ... I mean he was a spy basically.

**SARAH**

Yep.

**HELEN**

And I'd be very interested to see if he ... because he can either decide; that was a very bad decision and I'm never going to do anything like that again, or he can decide no, I need to do whatever I can to help my people because we're now gonna ... they're going to be in a war against the humans now basically. Because they've now like proved all the human's prejudice is right about how you can't trust elves and all this. So it will be interesting ... I think both of those paths will be interesting for him. Either to become like a defector or to fully plunge into the idea of sort of being devoted to a war.

**SARAH**

And it's cool that Dara started as a spy who like didn't have a political agenda. He had this political awakening of like I want to ... you know, I need to stand up for my people. I am an elf. And I wonder if in subsequent seasons he's going to be like 'but I'm not a fanatic'. Or he is going to become a fanatic and he's going to be like I will die for the elves, in which case he will be another sad boy with more sad things.

[Laughter]

**HELEN**

Because he was so gentle when we first met him.

**SARAH**

I know.

**HELEN**

I've got a lot of soft feelings for him! I just want to be like, oh, it's ok.

**MADDY**

I was just thinking about in The Witcher 2, you have to make a choice at a key point in the game between whether you join forces with the Scoia'tael which is the elvish resistance force or Vernon Roche who is a human kind of part of the aristocratic hierarchy and it's interesting to have that kind of dichotomy and just from having seen the super long video essays, they basically turn the game into like two whole different games at that point which was very ambitious and impressive. And so even though I haven't played the whole thing, it didn't quite work for me when I tried it first.

Yeah, I might go back to it and see how it plays out because it just seems like a very ... yeah, just again, a very ambitious thing to do to have so much content that you can only do in one run and you have to do multiple runs of the game to get all the stuff.

**SARAH**

Yeah, no, it's a thing because like they give you choices that have real weight and change at the ending which is a thing lots of games do now, but it encourages re-playability and often like my first question when I know someone has played the games will be like oh what ending did you get? because it's sort of ... it's a wonderful ... again, way to sort of immerse you and involve you is that your choices change the game that you play.

**MADDY**

I'm replaying Dragon Age: Inquisition at the moment as a kind of comfort game and I wonder if they were influenced by The Witcher 2 because they have a very similar choice where you have to choose to go with the mages or the templars and you could have quite different diverging plot lines, depending on who you choose. So yeah, I wonder if someone who played The Witcher 2 was like, mmhmm ... someone at Bioware was taking notes!

**HELEN**

Out of interest, with The Witcher, are the endings just different or are some of them like bad endings or some of them good endings?

**SARAH**

I think there's like in Witcher 3 the one bad ending that you can get where... the game has been out for a very long time... where Ciri dies.

**HELEN**

Oh no!

**SARAH**

You can get that ending. But a lot of them are just sort of flavours of resolving Geralt and Ciri's relationship in different ways.

**HELEN**

Well, that's nice to know. If I ever do play it I will just try and keep Ciri alive and not worry too much about getting the most perfect possible outcomes.

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But speaking of endings, I think we've come to the end of the episode. I am very proud of that segue that I've just made.

Thank you, listener for coming along with us and listening to us talk about The Witcher in all of its different forms. Thank you so much Maddy and Sarah for talking to me about this. It's been so interesting because I don't know that much about it and I've learnt a lot.

So, you'll see me on the next episode. But for now, it's goodbye from me.

Goodbye. And it's goodbye from them. Do you want to say goodbye you two?

**MADDY**

Goodbye.

**SARAH**

Goodbye. This has been such a pleasure. Thank you for having us.

**MADDY**

Yes, thank you so much.

**HELEN**

Yay!

**[Show Theme - Outro]**

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executive producers Alexander J Newall and April Sumner, and edited by Marisa Ewing, Tessa Vroom and Catherine Rinella. Thanks for listening.

**[Show Theme – Outro Ends]**

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