



Episode 128: Were-Pokemon

Release Date: August 24, 2020

Running Time: 48 minutes

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

Emily: Our title is a joke and is meant to be taken as such. In the context of this podcast, "everybody" refers to us and our cat. You are free to feel however you want about Rand, who is a fictional character. Don't DM us.

(theme song by Glynna MacKenzie plays)

Emily: (sing-song) Bah bah dah bah dah (normal voice) I guess we started talking about Wheel of Time, so this is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I am Sally Goodger.

Emily: And we are getting so many messages on Instagram and Twitter because they -- at the time of recording -- announced some casting today.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Including Siuan and Min.

Sally: Yesss.

Emily: Min.

Sally: Min.

Emily: She's beautiful.

Sally: She is beautiful. We have, uh, Kae Alexander playing Min and Sophie Okonedo -- Okonedo? -- as Sivan Sanche. They're both very pretty. And then there's some, like, other Aes Sedai and some Warders cast, and I was like, "I don't -- I don't know."

Emily: Yeah, that's not terribly relevant to me. I mean, I'm already at the point where I'm like, this cast is unreasonably large already.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So it's like, yikes. Y'know? And we've only gotten to one of Rand's girlfriends. How am I gonna feel by the time we get to Aviendha? Be like --

Sally: I mean, I will scream because I love Aviendha.

Emily: I mean, yeah. Aviendha has some quality moments in this --

Sally: But also, when we get Aviendha, we are that much closer to getting Gaul casting.

Emily: We technically should get Gaul before Aviendha. (laugh)

Sally: I know, but I feel like they would announce Aviendha's casting before they'd be like -- they'd be like, "Oh my gosh, it's Aviendha," and then they'd be like, "And here are four thousand other Aiel."

Emily: Yeah, you're right.

Sally: Like, "Here's Gaul. Here's Rhuarc. Here's all the Wise Ones. Here's Couladin."

Emily: Couladin!

Sally: May he not rest in peace. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. Bleh. It's like the spirit of this entire section is "May Couladin not rest in peace."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Except Mat, who's like, "Honestly, I don't give a shit." (laugh)

Sally: Mat's like, "I was trying very hard not to do any hand to hand combat."

Emily: Mat was like, "I hate fighting."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "And yet here we are."

Sally: Mat's like, "I hate doing anything."

Emily: Mat's like, "I just wanted to not be here --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "In this whole zone. But then I got sucked in, and now I'm right back where I started, next to the log fucking tower, and everyone's drinking and cheering and doing, like, soldier camaraderie, and I'm just here, trying not to look at the head of my enemy."

Sally: Yeah. But, like, poor Mat -- baby got, like, shot with an arrow that, like grazed his head.

Emily: Yeah, Mat's, like --

Sally: He's just, like, bleeding.

Emily: Fucking covered in cuts that were deep enough to need stitches.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: 'Cause apparently, while, uh, Daerid?

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: I think Daerid was stitching him up --

Sally: Stitched him up.

Emily: He was teaching everyone the Jak o' the Shadows song. (laugh) Which is so classic Mat. Um. And I just think it's -- there's an interesting relationship with Mat to various knife wounds that he has that aren't really talked about.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: I feel like if you get -- I mean, I guess I don't know; I've never really needed stitches -- but I feel like it would take a long time to heal.

Sally: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Emily: And just -- it seems like Mat should constantly be having stitches and pulling his stitches every time he moves.

Sally: Like in John Wick.

Emily: Yeah. Oh my God, guys. John Wick. We haven't even talked about how we watched it --

Sally: We did.

Emily: A couple weekends ago. It was my first time watching the first movie, which made Devin really angry. (laugh)

Sally: Listen. Devin doesn't control you.

Emily: I know. And he knows. And it was Sally's first time with a John Wick movie in general. And I came away with the overall feeling that -- I mean, number one, Keanu Reeves is the hottest man alive. And number two, like, I knew that the dog dies. But now I really feel that the murder spree was justified. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, the dog was so cute.

Emily: That was the cutest dog. She only lived for, like, two fucking days --

Sally: I know, and --

Emily: Before she got murdered by the Russian mob.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: In front of John Wick.

Sally: Yeah, and John Wick was like, "Mm-kay, it's time to do --"

Emily: Kill Bill, yeah.

Sally: "One hundred and seventy-five murders."

Emily: John Wick was like, "I will kill so many people to avenge the dog and also the dog's symbolism of my grief --"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "For my wife --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And my normal life," and everyone's like, "Whoa. Deep." And Keanu Reeves is like, "I know. And I've got some sick moves."

Sally: Yeah. His very powerful leggies.

Emily: He has such powerful leggies. And also, yeah, he is getting cut up constantly and just needs stitches, and it's like, yo. I feel like Mat would be right in that same boat. People heal too quickly in fantasy, is what I'm saying.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: And I know there's magical healing to, like, move it along, but --

Sally: But, I mean, Mat is definitively anti-magical healing.

Emily: Yeah, so --

Sally: So he would always be healing in real boy time, which takes a long time. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Real boy time. I'm just -- it's like, we pay so much attention to Rand's, quote unquote, Fisher King wounds --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But, you know, otherwise Rand and Perrin are pretty much always getting healed as soon as they, uh, get wounds, whereas, like you said, Mat's obviously not, and we're just, like, kind of ignoring that aspect of his --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Physicality?

Emily: Physicality, for such a physical character. Um, so I dunno. That's just, like, a little side note of no importance. Um. Oh, Mat.

Sally: I know. He just wants to go away so badly.

Emily: Yeah. Mat's just sitting there, feeling sort of upset in the way that Mat feels -- processes negative emotions, which is in this sort of self-deprecating, exasperated way. Um, but he's approached by Talmanes and Nalesean --

Sally: Well, first, Melindhra shows up.

Emily: Oh, yeah. Melindhra shows up and is like, "Hey, what's up?" And Mat's like, "Euugh." 'Cause he's like, "I did try and leave her without a word yesterday. This is bad." He's like, "Listen, I'm sorry." And Melindhra's like, "What? You were, like, out pursuing your own glory or whatever. I knew you would," and to her, he's still here, obviously. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: So he's like, "Sure, that's what I was doing." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, he's --

Emily: "At least she won't kick my ass," he says, foreshadowing two chapters from now, when she will try to murder him --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: For completely unrelated reasons.

Sally: We've all been there, right?

Emily: Yeah. I mean.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Subreddit: relationships.

Sally: (laugh) Am I the asshole?

Emily: Am I the asshole? My girlfriend -- 29? Whatever -- however old she is --

Sally: Tried to kill me, 21 -- (laugh)

Emily: Twenty-one, male. (laugh) Um, then Talmanes and, uh, Nalesean show up and are like, "Hey, there's going to be a parade to welcome the Lord Dragon to the city."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "And obviously, we should be at the head of the parade." And Mat's like, "I don't want to fucking be in a parade." Like, "Why don't you talk to Rand about that?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And they're like, "No, we're -- you're the general." And he's like, "The WHAT?"

Sally: (simultaneously) "I'm the what?" (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) He's like, "Get me OUT OF HERE."

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Um. He's like, "N-n-n-n-no, no, no," and they're like, "No, we would follow you to hell and back." Talmanes is like, "No, I would follow you to hell and back." And then they're like, "We can agree on this, at least."

Sally: I know. The, like, sexual tension between the two of them in this moment where they're like, "I love Mat more."

Emily: And Mat's like, "What do I do about this?"

Sally: Mat's like, "Now I have two boyfriends."

Emily: "Mark me down as scared and horny." (laugh)

Sally: Because Talmanes and Nalesean, like, hate each other or whatever 'cause of European politics.

Emily: Yeah. And then they're --

Sally: Whatever.

Emily: This also will begin the, like, war between their groom -- groomsmen? Or, like, butler-type guys?

Sally: Oh.

Emily: Um. I know that's introduced, sort of, also in book six or seven. One of them's named Lopin --

Sally: Oh.

Emily: And I can't remember the other one. But you've got these two little servant guys trying to keep Mat in one piece and, like, dress him well, and Mat is just, like, resisting all efforts. (laugh, sigh) To civilize him. Classic. Um, but he sort of gives up and is just like, "Fine," and just starts drinking.

Sally: Healthy.

Emily: Yeah, healthy coping mechanisms by Mat Cauthon. It's a lecture series. (laugh) Tuesdays, Thursdays --

Sally: (laugh) Welcome to my TED talk.

Emily: Ten a.m. to eleven. Um. Jesus Christ. Then we switch over to Rand, waking up, uh, in his tent with just Aviendha and Asmodean, which I can't imagine what that whole vibe was like before Rand woke up. (laugh)

Sally: Stank, I am sure. (laugh)

Emily: Avoiding eye contact?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Too much eye contact? Asmodean just being like ...

Sally: Playing weird --

Emily: "Now, we've both had sex with him, right?" (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) That would be such a funny thing, if --

Emily: Asmodean convinces Aviendha --

Sally: That he and Rand have totally boned.

Emily: It's like, "What the fuck?"

Sally: My -- this is skipping ahead a little bit, but my favorite part of these two chapters, um, is when they're all going into the city and all the, like, peasants are trying to touch Rand, and they keep touching Asmodean 'cause they assume, with all his fancy lace --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: He's Rand. It's just, like, a very funny image of everyone just, like, stroking Asmodean 'cause I think he would hate it.

Emily: I know, I want the fanart of him just, like, looking long-suffering --

Sally: Yeah, and they're all just like --

Emily: 'Cause he can't just, you know --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Go off on them and whatever, burn them to a crisp --

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) As is his Forsaken wont.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He just has to sort of let grimy people touch him.

Sally: Yeah, and he's like -- (gagging noise)

Emily: (gagging noise, laugh) Gagging, over the side of his horse.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) So it's like, good for you. Suffer, you rich bastard.

Emily: (laugh) You're right. That is so good.

Sally: (laugh) It's just such a funny image.

Emily: Anyway, Rand's like, "What's happening? Like, what's happening with the other clans?" and Aviendha's like, "The Wise Ones are all still talking. Egwene is there," and then she relates this hilarious story about how Moiraine was like, "I'm not going," but they needed an Aes Sedai, so they dragged Egg out of bed.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And Aviendha saw and was like, "What'd you do this time, Egg?" and Egg was like, "Nothing! I didn't do anything!" and Sorilea's like, "Why are you protesting so much? You must have done something." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: And Aviendha's just cackling.

Sally: Yeah. And Rand and Asmodean are like, "We don't get it."

Emily: Rand's like, "This is too much like Mat."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, prankster vibes.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I guess. Aiel sense of humor. And I'm like, that's genuinely funny.

Sally: I'm -- I would do the same thing to my friends.

Emily: I know. "Bitch, where you going?" (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) "What'd you do?"

Emily: "Oh, no, what're they gonna make you do this time?" (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Ahh, friendship. No, Rand and Asmodean have never had real friends in their lives, so they wouldn't know.

Sally: Asmodean's like, "What is a friend?"

Emily: "A -- a friend?"

Sally: "What's a friend?"

Emily: "Is it something you eat?"

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "Is it an hors d'oeuvre?"

Sally: Is it an horse derves?" (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Oh, Asmodean.

Emily: Uh, but Aviendha updates Rand on the battle, including the fact that while thousands of Shaido have been taken captive, um, and the fighting's died down, a lot of people escaped, which the Aiel themselves don't consider, really, to be a problem. With the Aiel it's like, you fight, and whoever wins, wins.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And, like, y'know, getting away is just, you let people get away.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: 'Cause presumably they're going to retreat. But, uh, you know, what we're not aware of yet because we haven't gone into the Shaido points of view, not that we need to, but obviously Couladin dying left a vacuum of power, which Sevanna -- or Sevanna --

Sally: Oh, that's her name.

Emily: Will fill, and she'll be like, "Fuck this, we're just going to spread like a plague of locusts --"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "Across fantasy Europe." And it's like, but why, though?

Sally: You could just go home.

Emily: You could go home. They're like, "No, we want the wealth of -- you know." And I'm like --

Sally: Fantasy England.

Emily: Fine. Whatever. But also, like, you did just get your ass kicked. And I mean, it's not like Rand does anything about it for the next ever.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Rand doesn't do anything about it. Perrin finally has to do something about it.

Sally: Oh, Rand.

Emily: And Perrin wouldn't even do anything about it, except his wife gets kidnapped. Bleh.

Sally: Ew.

Emily: Um. But lots of people got away, which is a problem that Rand, like many of his problems, will ignore.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And then she is like, "Oh, and Mat killed Couladin," and Rand's like, "Mat killed Couladin?!" (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "Mat?!" And she's like, "What, like it's hard?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Did I not say so?" she says. (laugh)

Sally: "Did I not say so?" (laugh) It's so powerful.

Emily: And Rand's like, "Ah, poor Mat --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Just trying to get away." (laugh)

Sally: It is a very tender moment, where Rand pins exactly how Mat is feeling, and he's like, "Mat's gonna hate this."

Emily: "Mat's miserable somewhere right now."

Sally: Yeah. Cut over to Mat, just, like, drinking a whole bottle of disgusting whiskey.

Emily: Yeah, I want -- what actually, you know, film-wise -- we'd, like, have the conversation between Rand and Aviendha first, and Aviendha's like, "And Mat killed Couladin," and Rand's like, "Mat killed Couladin?" and she's like, "Yeah, didn't I say that?" and he's just, like, gazes into the middle distance --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And then it switches over to Mat, just, like, throwing -- (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Just, like, bleeding.

Emily: Covered in cuts. He's like, "Ugh."

Sally: (laugh) Oh, Barney.

Emily: Oh, Barney! What a manic --

Sally: He will sell it well.

Emily: I mean, yeah. I'm -- I'm developing a lot of faith in him as a performer. (laugh)

Sally: I'm developing a lot of affection for him.

Emily: Oh, what a man. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) "Celebration of piracy."

Emily: He's so weird.

Sally: I know. I'm obsessed. I am obsessed with him.

Emily: Um it's like he stumbled into social media and has never been exposed to it before.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: What happened? How did he get through life?

Sally: It's like he's speaking a different language and everyone is, like, really vibing with it. (laugh)

Emily: Everyone's like, "What?" (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. Is this, like, some extended performance art piece?

Emily: It sure feels like it.

Sally: I was literally crying when he tweeted, like, "Can a free market solve the global climate crisis?" (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) And someone was like, "No," and he was like, "I didn't think so."

Sally: (laugh) OK. Anyway. That's your Barney update of the week.

Emily: (laugh, inaudible) Whatever the fuck.

Sally: I wish I moved through life that way.

Emily: (laugh) Like a -- like an off-rail train?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just sort of -- phshoo --

Sally: I think it would be pleasant.

Emily: Wow.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Um, anyway, Rand's like, "Well, that sucks for Mat, but it also sucked for me how I started, like, talking about the Forsaken like they were, quote unquote, real people. Um, I even know Asmodean's true name." But, whatever. He's like, "OK, I have to go to the city." Aviendha's like, "No, you need to rest." Thus ensues a long fight. He's like, "Oh, have the Tairens and the Cairhienins come to try and talk to me?" They're like, "Yes, it was very undignified for everyone involved." The Tairens were like, "Let us see Rand," and the Aiel were like, "No," and they were like, "Ahhh!"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, and started just yelling for him. Like children.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And were eventually sent away. The Cairhienin, meanwhile, came and resorted to outright begging, so, clearly things are going super well in fantasy France.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And Rand's like, "OK, I've gotta go there and get it sorted out." And Aviendha's like, "Again, you almost died." (laugh) "Please rest." And he's like, "No. Asmodean, fetch my horse." She's like, "Fine, you can go out if you can get dressed," essentially, and he's like, "Fine, I will," and eventually finds that she is sitting on his clothes, which, you know, controlling. Love -- I love couples who just control each other.

Sally: Yeah, like, the whole scene is just, like, heinous. Because it's like, yes, Rand is stupid, but it gets to the point where his, like, relationship with the Maidens of the Spear is, like, so insufferable in, like, the way that they're reacting.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Where it's just like, yes, he is annoying, but he is also an adult. So, like, you do need to maybe not act the way you're acting right now, Aviendha.

Emily: Yeah. Like, it's annoying how many people baby him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's just like -- I mean, he's gonna make stupid-ass decisions. That's his prerogative as an adult man.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It sucks that he's an adult man in charge of several countries --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Who has the power to make stupid-ass decisions for everyone involved, but again, you're not really in a position to stop him unless you want to, like, organize a revolt.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, like, when it comes to choosing what he does with his body, like, you just gotta step back and let it ride, man.

Sally: Yeah, and also just, like, the way it's dialed in to, like, such a weird power conflict over Rand's ability to put on clothes --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Which is, like, you clothe children for them.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So it's, like, very infantilizing. And, like, of course, we talked last week about how Rand infantilizes the Maidens, so there's a little bit of quid pro quo there, I guess, but it's just kind of like, is someone in this relationship going to act like an adult who respects other adults?

Emily: Yeah, it becomes this annoying thing where it's like, of course Rand is annoyed that there are various Maidens who act like he is a child. Like, there's a lady who just brings him soup.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Like --

Sally: Apparently, really shitty soup.

Emily: Really shitty soup, like, um, Eowyn in that --

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Scene from the -- (laugh) Two Towers extended edition. Um, but it sucks that he can't just be like, "Listen, we've all been treating each other shitty. Here's the deal: I'll treat you the way you deserve to be treated if you treat me the way I deserve to be treated."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, can't we just, you know, settle that? But no one acts like adults, so here we are.

Sally: Yeah. But Rand gets his lily-white ass dressed and --

Emily: (laugh) Uh, on a horse. That is a really hilarious moment when he's like, "Here, I'll help Aviendha up," but halfway there, he's like, "I don't --"

Sally: "Oh, no, I'm going down." (laugh)

Emily: He's like, "Ooh, I don't know if she's coming up or I'm going down." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) It is a very funny moment.

Emily: Yeah, but he gets, uh, her up on the horse. They get surrounded by Maidens. Uh, Asmodean joins them; he, of course, managed a wardrobe change in this time. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) It's like, how -- it's been, like, five minutes.

Emily: Rand's like, "This fucking gay." (laugh)

Sally: It's like perfectly clean lace and, like, a new green velvet coat.

Emily: Rand's like, "Uggghhh."

Sally: It's so funny. (laugh)

Emily: I mean, Rand did stumble around for, like, twenty minutes --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Trying to find his own clothes and, like, gathering up his dumb sword and spear. Ugh. But they start riding to Cairhien. Uh, they have to pass through the huge-ass battlefield to do it, which is still fucking --

Sally: Gross.

Emily: Disgusting, and --

Sally: Covered in bodies.

Emily: Filled with corpses.

Sally: And carrion eaters.

Emily: So everyone's like, "Uh, nasty." But they get to Cairhien. Um --

Sally: They pass Moiraine, and Rand's like, "You coming?" and she's like, "Absolutely not."

Emily: She's like, "Fuck you." (laugh) Yeah.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: They pass the, uh -- the little caravan --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And Rand's like, "Why hasn't Karede left yet?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Fully knowing that this guy's a Darkfriend --

Sally: Karede?

Emily: Karede, yeah.

Sally: I thought it was Kadere.

Emily: It probably is.

Sally: No, don't trust me.

Emily: Karede or Kadere -- I can't. I think you're right. Kadere.

Sally: Mr. K.

Emily: Mister -- (laugh) Special K.

Sally: Ew.

Emily: The --

Sally: The cereal. (laugh)

Emily: The cereal. Exactly. (laugh) Um. I know it's Kadere; I don't even know why I'm looking.

Sally: It's fine. I just --it -- I thought I was having one of those Weiramon moments.

Emily: Why -- oh.

Sally: Where his name is fully not that. (laugh)

Emily: Where --

Sally: It's Weiramon.

Emily: I can only remember Weiramon 'cause it sounds like he's a were-something.

Sally: Pokemon?

Emily: Yeah. (laugh) He's a -- he turns into a Pokemon.

Sally: He turns into a Pokemon. (laugh)

Emily: Rand's like, "I choose you!"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He would never choose him, though.

Sally: Yeah, that's what he'd -- become, like --

Emily: He'd throw him off a cliff. (laugh)

Sally: A psyduck or something. (laugh)

Emily: Psyduck.

Sally: No, Psyduck is powerful when he wants to be. I'm trying to think of a useless Pokemon, but it's been a long time since I've been deep in the Pokemon game. (laugh)

Emily: I can't say I ever have been. Um. Is Jigglypuff a good one?

Sally: Oh, he can be a Magikarp.

Emily: Oh, Magikarp.

Sally: Magikarp is a shit Pokemon until he evolves.

Emily: Oh, that's just the fish one.

Sally: Yeah. The flying fish --

Emily: Or the rat one?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is that a good Pokemon?

Sally: I don't -- that's another one where I think it needs to evolve.

Emily: Gotcha.

Sally: Rattatat or Rattatata or something like that.

Emily: Rattatata.

Sally: Anyway, Weiramon is a were-Pokemon, who has --

Emily: (laugh) He's only a Pokemon by the light of the moon.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah. Of course.

Emily: Obviously. (laugh)

Sally: Um.

Emily: He had to drink water from a Pokemon's paw print. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Just like our werewolves teacher in college, trying to become a werewolf!

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: How did that really happen to us?

Sally: I don't know. I do not know how that was a real thing we experienced.

Emily: He just announced it so casually. I don't know -- I'll never know how to --

Sally: And Emily and I were just like, "OK?"

Emily: I was like, "I might need to leave this class." (laugh)

Sally: It was, like, day one too. He was just like, "This is me."

Emily: He was like, "I love werewolves. I once tried to become a -- actually, multiple times, I've tried to become a werewolf."

Sally: He's like, "I've tried everything." And it's like, "What?"

Emily: So -- (laugh)

Sally: Off -- speaking of off the rails trains.

Emily: I was just like, "I'm gonna need you to, like, have some academic distance between yourself and the subject of your study."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Otherwise you're gonna lose a little bit of my respect. But don't worry, he fully lost my respect by the time the class was over.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um.

Sally: Easy A, though.

Emily: I think I got an A minus.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: 'Cause I really dialed in on those papers. (laugh)

Sally: I mean, you were like, "The subject matter is stupid."

Emily: I was like, "I will not be writing on -- about this. Thank you, though." I mean, the movies alone we had to watch. OK, whatever.

Sally: The stories we have to tell, though.

Emily: They get to Cairhien, as Sally mentioned. There is, like, just peasants lining the streets, and they're thrilled; they start screaming for the Lord Dragon.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And try crowding in and touching him, much like -- you know, uh, it's a very Jesus moment, people trying to touch even his clothing, um, or being satisfied when they touch Asmodean or even his random bannerman instead.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who, the bannerman is given quite a long backstory, so I can't imagine how his whole life is going to end. In fact, I'm sure it will end by the time this book is over.

Sally: It's so sad, though, it's like, he's lost all of his family members in these various wars, and Rand's like, "Carry my flag now."

Emily: And he's like, "Yeah, that's what I will do. That's my one conviction, is that the Dragon's reborn." And it's like, what? That's what you took away from your -- (laugh)

Sally: Whatever. (laugh) It wasn't anything about, like, the banality of evil?

Emily: Whole experience?

Sally: Or, like, pacifism.

Emily: Blegh. No.

Sally: He was just like, "The Dragon is reborn, and I will carry his big flag."

Emily: No, why would we ever explore pacifism in the Wheel of Time world, an inherently militaristic text.

Sally: No, we can only do it when Perrin's being condescending to Tinkers. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, I went off about it in my last blog.

Sally: Blegh.

Emily: Um, but they only get, like, halfway through the city before one of the Tairen lords -- the -- the main Tairen lord, I guess -- comes to, uh, greet them and escort them, after which the peasants immediately stop --

Sally: Yeah, and Rand's like, "Hmm."

Emily: Doing anything, and Rand's like, "Ho ho, I see where this is going."

Sally: Telling on yourself, Lord Meilan or whatever.

Emily: Meilan. Milan.

Sally: Milan.

Emily: "It's Milan, darling." (laugh) Um --

Sally: We should watch Kinky Boots.

Emily: OK.

Sally: It's a fun movie.

Emily: I've never seen it.

Sally: (whisper) It's fun.

Emily: Uh, they get to the Cairhienin palace and are greeted by all of the Tairen --

Sally: (laugh) It's so funny.

Emily: I know.

Sally: It's just these, like, seven dudes are just, like, standing outside the palace.

Emily: There's seven dudes -- (clears throat) who Rand sent here because he figured -- he just wanted to get them out of the way --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And he just figured this would give them something to do. Obviously it just gave them more people to oppress, so Rand is like, "Oh, I am so good at making decisions." Anyway, of these seven people, for all of the hullabaloo that's made over them in these chapters, they're completely irrelevant.

Sally: Oh, good.

Emily: I have looked up all their Wiki pages.

Sally: OK.

Emily: So I can update us on --

Sally: OK.

Emily: Where they are now.

Sally: OK, that's a fun segment.

Emily: And how long they last --

Sally: Great.

Emily: Into the series. So Meilan -- Meilan? Meilan -- whatever his name is --

Sally: Meilan.

Emily: He's super dead. He dies in Lord of Chaos. He --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Gets assassinated by one of the French ladies -- what's her name? Colavaere?

Sally: Oh, yeah. Cole -- Yeah, Lady Colavaere.

Emily: Colavaere.

Sally: Colavaere.

Emily: Lady -- Lady Colavaere. So they're both vying for the Cairhienin throne, and both of them will end up dying.

Sally: I did not even remember this motherfucker, and he dies in the next book. (laugh)

Emily: Exactly. Uh, what's his name -- Torean. Torean? Uh, notable for being Estean's dad --

Sally: (laugh) Oh, yeah.

Emily: Estean, notable Band of the Red Hand veteran. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) That's so funny.

Emily: Um, he is sent to the Plans of Maredo, where Rand is gathering a massive army for the imminent attack on Illian. Basically, he is still alive as of the series ending, but he last appeared in the Gathering Storm and is sort of just being a Tairen lord in the background.

Sally: Just being Estean's dad.

Emily: Just being Estean's dad. Gueyam or Gueyam -- however you say him -- he last appeared in the Path of Daggers, because -- which you are reading currently -- as I mentioned, I think, last episode, Rand's gonna fight a bunch of Seanchan --

Sally: Ugh.

Emily: Then, and it's sort of a -- an extended thing. So he goes with Rand when Rand tries to deal with the Seanchan outside Illian. "It is assumed," it says, "that he does not survive this battle." So he is not even worth, you know, giving a eulogy for.

Sally: A hard line.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Maybe he's dead, maybe he's not.

Emily: Uh, Simaan or Simaan --

Sally: Simon.

Emily: Simon, whatever his name is -- he, uh, ditches. He's also sent to the Plains of Mardeo, but instead he commits treason by going to Haddon Mirk. Which, in the next couple books, there's going to be a small uprising in the swamplands. So he goes there and is like, "I am also part of the rebellion." He finally agrees to dissolve -- he tries to lay siege to Tear and finally agrees to dissolve the siege if Darlin is made king of Tear. and Rand's like, "Fine, whatever, but you have to pay for food."

Sally: Who the fuck is Darlin?

Emily: Darlin has been mentioned, as far as I recall, once --

Sally: (laugh) OK.

Emily: And it was when Rand -- uh, Mat was entering the Stone of Tear at the end of book three and a random guy was like, "Fight me, peasant." And that was Darlin. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Rad.

Emily: But Darlin will, rather than, uh, swear fealty to Rand, back when Rand was in Tear, just sort of peaced out --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: And started this little mini uprising in the swamps. But don't worry, folks, Rand will meet him at some point in the next few books and be like, "Actually a good guy," and put him in charge of Tear. So.

Sally: Why'd you peace off then, Darlin?

Emily: Probably -- I dunno, it's to show us --

Sally: 'Cause Mat refused to fight you? (laugh)

Emily: Mat was like, "Uggghhh."

Sally: You were so ashamed. (laugh)

Emily: Anyway, uh, Maraconn does the same thing as another guy, he also, it is assumed does not survive the battle with the Seanchan outside Illian, so again, couldn't be fuckin' bothered with an obit. Uh, Aracome also goes to fight the Seanchan just outside Illian, but his death is actually mentioned. He refuses Healing after battle and dies shortly after.

Sally: Why?

Emily: 'Cause Illianers are racist against Aes Sedai. Not Illianers. Tear -- Tairens. I mean, I guess everyone kind of is, but Tairens especially are like, "Don't touch me, Aes Sedai." Uh, and last but certainly not least, Hearne. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Or Hearne? Hernia.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: He does the same thing as that other guy -- commits treason by going to Haddon Mirk and is like, "Make Darlin the king of Tear," and Rand's like, "Fine." So what we have in this group of seven -- uh, let's see, what was that? One, two, three, four of them will be dead within the next three books.

Sally: Uh-huh.

Emily: Uh, and three -- two of them will commit treason, but it'll all work out in the end.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And one of them will stay loyal to Rand but is such a background character --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That it's irrelevant.

Sally: Wild.

Emily: The -- the -- the point I'm trying to make with this little exercise is that, for all of the names and titles and --

Sally: Like, freaking personality descriptions.

Emily: Yeah. All these men are given little, like, characteristics. This one guy, we are told over and over again, has a really -- what is that, like, ringing noise?

Sally: I -- maybe it's our broken electricity.

Emily: I mean.

Sally: Screaming to come out of the walls.

Emily: Ahh! Um, this one guy, it's like, he's so slow to anger, except that every time we see him, he is, in fact, angry.

Sally: (laugh) It's bad writing, Robert Jordan.

Emily: And then there's a guy who's, like, always tugging on his ear or something like that. And it's just, like, giving people a single personality trait doesn't make them in -- like, integral to the plot.

Sally: Or interesting.

Emily: Yeah, and it's like, while I understand that there's, like, sort of a richness to assigning a bunch of characters and nobility to, uh, the places that Rand is conquering because that's how it would actually be in a -- I mean --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You can't read fucking Shakespeare, any of the --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Henry books without having to dig through --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Twenty-eight names of various nobility --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: All of whom are known not only by their names but also by the, like, place they're ruling. So it's, like, what the fuck.

Sally: Who are you?

Emily: Like, it just be like that. But my big thesis statement is that maybe we shouldn't do that in writing anymore.

Sally: Yeah. I just -- I feel like it's -- I, like, don't know exactly what I'm trying to say, but it's one of those things, like, books being really thick, that makes people assume that a fantasy world is well-crafted or, like, a book of, you know, fiction is more deep and interesting and the fictional world is well-built, wherein I feel like it's just one of those very flimsy things that male writers, typically, though female writers are also guilty of it, that they just, like, put their book on in the hopes that people think it is impressive.

Emily: Yeah. It's just like, when you have the leeway to write this many pages, which apparently you do because you're a white man in the publishing industry --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, and you're hitting all the marketing points, then you have so much more room to explore relevant and interesting, like, world details, like pacifism.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: You could explore that instead of listing out 28 different noble people in Cairhien and Tear. Like, it's just, I don't -- I don't -- I mean, I see very clearly the point that Robert Jordan is making, which is that there's a whole lot of infighting, and none of it is actually progressing us towards the Last Battle, but that that's how real worlds handle things.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But I don't think that's a point that needs to be belabored quite as heavily as it is.

Sally: Yeah, especially because it's not like it happens with the Tairen nobility and we never have to deal with this again.

Emily: Mm.

Sally: Like, point would be made, and then it happens again. In, like, Ebou Dar, there's all these nobility, and in, uh, Caemlyn -- I just completely forgot the name of the city -- it happens --

Emily: Yeah, like, you haven't even got to Elayne --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Going on a full-ass, like -- ugh.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Uh, taking the crown thing.

Sally: Yeah. Like, it happens over and over and over again. And even, like, in the opening chapter, the -- the prologue of Path of Daggers, we've got all the, like, Borderland leaders, and then, like, all of their retinue is named, and I'm like, I -- what?

Emily: You need four names to talk about --

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: The Borderlander leaders. Four, that's it.

Sally: I was like, I don't -- I don't need to know the advisors.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And the generals and this one dude who's super angry. It's like, I can't keep track of that, and if you want me to stay focused on what is important in your story, you need to be a little bit more laser-focused.

Emily: Yeah. There's just, like, no capacity to trim things here.

Sally: Yeah. Um, on the subject of, uh, white -- like, Robert Jordan being able to do this because he is a author valued by the publishing industry -- um, I'm currently listening to the podcast "Call Your Girlfriend," um, and I've just been kind of listening through the 2020 backlog, and they had a really good episode talking about Big Publishing, um, using the novel "American Dirt," which came out earlier this year, as kind of their impetus for that conversation. And I can't remember what the episode was called, but it came out in February of 2020, and I think it's called, like, "Big Books" or something like that, and it's just, like, a really interesting look at how power functions in the publishing industry. And these women have -- like, have published a book, so they have kind of the back end experience that I don't have, obviously, so they can talk about it better than, um, I could. So anyway, just a recommendation.

Emily: Yeah, that's really a fascinating thing in the publishing industry right now is how books like American Dirt can get published, um, that are all about fetishizing tragedy in, uh, the communities of people of color but are not actually written by people of color.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, I mean, that book was the target of a lot of well-deserved controversy.

Sally: Yeah. Yes, and they obviously dive into the -- they appropriately dive into the specific controversy surrounding that book, but they also get into some, like, larger discussions of, like, power in the publishing industry and, like, who is protected in the publishing industry and, like, who publishers -- 'cause, like, American Dirt had, like, a six-figure advance or some shit --

Emily: Mm-hm.

Sally: And, like -- (laugh) and apparently, like, they were reading some reviews, and apparently people were like, "Not only is this appropriative, but it's also just, like, really shitty."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, the story is not good, the writing is not good, but everyone is just like, "Wow, white woman talking about immigration. She's so brave." So anyway, kind of trying to tie it back, like, we've had many conversations on our Instagram and, I think, in our, like, livestreams on EHR-adjacent -- the EHR-adjacent solar system -- about, um, the, like, rise of queer novellas and, like, how that has become a huge thing, particularly for Tor Books, who published the Wheel of Time. And so it's like, you can publish all of these hundred-page-ish books about queer people but give them no more space, and yet you can let Robert Jordan write for pages and pages and pages about characters he's gonna kill off in a book and a half? Like, it's just very telling who gets the page count.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: That was not where I was expecting this episode to go.

Emily: No, I think it's really good. I was reading all about sensitivity readers this week --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Because, um, I dunno, I finished writing a -- uh, on a project, and I was like, I should hire sensitivity readers, and so I was trying to figure out how much money, um, is appropriate to hire someone, and then I found out from all these, like, articles -- it was like, "Sensitivity readers are a subject of controversy," and I was like, are they? What's there to be --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Controversial about? And they were like, well, some people think that it is, like, infringing upon your ability to write what you want --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Essentially putting everyone in the box of, uh, you can only write what you know, and I was like, no, that's the point of sensitivity readers.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is so that you can get outside of your box and just do it right.

Sally: Yeah. Not to keep coming back to this episode, but they also have, like, a conversation -- like, part of their conversation is about, like, why white people get so up in arms about, like, not being able to write from other identities.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It's a really, really interesting conversation. Um. Because, yeah, it's like, that's -- I can't believe those articles exist. (laugh) That's so stupid.

Emily: I -- it was really funny. 'Cause I was just like --

Sally: What's the controversy? Oh my God, what's happening?

Emily: I know, I was like, oh, God, what's happening?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is there, like, some big thing? But it was just like, no, white people don't wanna be policed, and I was like, oh, well, where's the fuckin' news about that, then?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, come on. It's not actually hard. (laugh)

Sally: No, and, like -- again, I'm sorry to keep talking about this podcast, but I've been listening to it a lot, and I really love it, and I think it just kind of is very good for kind of shaping the way you're thinking about things, 'cause they're two very intelligent women, but in the last couple episodes, I've talk -- listened to, they keep coming back to, like, white people, when they're talking about, like, quote unquote, transgressing political correctness boundaries, it's never like, "Oh, I've been racist," it's always like, "I feel so bad about being racist." And it's never like, "I have offended people with what I've written," it's like, "I feel so sad that I can't write about the Mexican immigrant story." It's just all about white people's feelings. So. Some food for thought this week. You, as a white person, should be policed.

Emily: Yeah. Well. Police -- (laugh)

Sally: Not by the actual police. Fuck the police. This is an anti-police podcast. Your behavior should be policed by other people.

Emily: You should be responsible.

Sally: There we go. Let's not use the word "policed."

Emily: You should have -- you have responsibility to your community, and, surprise, your community includes a diverse group of people.

Sally: (laugh) What?

Emily: I know, it's shocking. Anyway. Essentially, this ends with Rand being like, "OK, everyone --" He, like, gathers all the nobility and is like, "Hello, I'm here. I will not be supporting the Tairen rise to fucking monarchy in Cairhien, a country that is not theirs."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "But I'm also not going to suddenly put the Cairhienin above the Tairen, for some reason." Like, why doesn't he just be like, "Great, Tear, go back home."

Sally: Yeah

Emily: "Thanks for nailing it down while I was away." I have no idea. Whatever. He's like, "Everyone sort yourselves by ranks," and they somehow do; I don't know. Wouldn't that take --

Sally: Years?

Emily: Like, I remember in, like, fucking middle school, they're like, "Sort yourselves by last name," or whatever, and I'd be like, "Ah, God, this is gonna --"

Sally: And I'd be, like, doing the alphabet. I'm like, "Oh my God, I don't remember the alphabet."

Emily: "Where am I? Am I -- am I before or after 'H'? I can't remember." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) I don't know!

Emily: Ahh! Um. But they do --

Sally: Yeah, and it would take, like, 45 minutes.

Emily: And then Rand's like, "Great, now everyone swear fealty to me. But you have to kiss the Seanchan spear," and it's like, first of all, gross and phallic. (laugh) Second of all --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Rand is -- like, goes off on this monologue about how the Seanchan spear is, like, a reminder of all the things he has to juggle, and as we've already mentioned in this chapter, Rand is shit at juggling. Put Mat in charge if you want a good juggler. Mat's like, "I can only --" I mean, Rand's like, "I can only focus on one thing at a time, and that one thing is not, um, the various nobility who are at war in front of me." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "I will describe it at length, but really I'm gonna be focused on Min's ass."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "That's my number one priority."

Sally: Yeah. Also, like, I know, reading it, we always carry our cultural lens on it, but when everyone was kissing the spear, I was just like, "This is unsanitary."

Emily: I know.

Sally: "Everyone's gonna get coronavirus." (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: You're gonna wipe out all of the Cairhienin and Tairen nobility, in this active biological warfare. (laugh)

Emily: Maybe that's the point. (laugh) When he dips the spear in some --

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Fuckin', uh, disease.

Sally: In the -- in the smallpox juice.

Emily: Ew! Eww. (laugh) Disgusting.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: OK, so that's that. Uh, we are leaving Rand and Mat and company for a little while, uh, and heading back to Nynaeve and Elayne as they accidentally trigger a civil war, so. Y'know, same old, same old with the girls. Um, but when we get back, Rand will have essentially done nothing, but nevertheless events will be triggered.

Sally: And it's like, how does he keep making -- I know, ta'veren, or whatever -- but it's like, how does he keep making things happen the way they need to happen when he is literally just walking around metaphorically with his dick in his hand?

Emily: It -- well. Yeah. With the spear, the Seanchan spear -- (laugh) so, symbolically with his dick in his hand. Um. Yeah, it's like -- uh, what was I gonna say? It is kind of boring to have a reactionary protagonist. And obviously, you can have fun with making, um, any type of character a reactionary character. Mat is primarily reacting to things around him, except that Mat is also reacting in interesting ways and is also not spending a whole lot of time waiting to react to things. But then you get, like, Perrin and Rand, who are just waiting for things to happen to

them. Which might be kind of meta if you're talking about how fate is influenced by and influences these boys, but in actual practice, it makes for some really boring, uh, plotlines.

Sally: Especially because Rand is waiting, and people's lives are at stake, y'know?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It's like, he's literally playing the waiting game in, like, a massive geopolitical sense.

Emily: He's like, which of the Forsaken is gonna attack me first? And I'm like, I dunno, but while you wait around about it, the Forsaken are definitely killing lots of people.

Sally: Yeah, so, like, I dunno, dude.

Emily: Maybe just pick one. Flip a fucking coin.

Sally: Yeah. I mean, they're all bad. You can just go after one of them.

Emily: But, like, if you're gonna be playing with things like, oh, fate, it would be so funny to see one of the boys just, like, weaponize their plot armor.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like, Rand be like, "I have to survive to the Last Battle, right? Like, that is what the Pattern is doing, right?"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "Yeah, fine, I'm gonna pick one of the Forsaken, and I am not going to die because the Pattern won't let me."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I mean, look at what happened to Mat. He's died, like, three times already. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) They keep bringing that boy back.

Emily: They keep bringing him back. It can't happen.

Sally: Yeah. That would be very good.

Emily: I know. It would be hilarious.

Sally: If Rand's just like, alright, Sammael, we are fighting.

Emily: Rand's like, "We're fighting, bitch," and Sammael's like, "What? No, this wasn't -- this isn't the plan --"

Sally: "That's not in my plan."

Emily: And Rand's like, "Too bad!"

Sally: Sammael pulls out his planner. Like, "We are scheduled to fight three weeks from today."

Emily: Rand's like, "I don't give a shit anymore. I'm just doing shit." You know? That would be cool. But alas, not the world we live in. So, thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thank you for listening; thank you for supporting us on Patreon and/or on social media. Tune in this Friday if you would like to watch one of us play a video game; we're not really sure yet if Sally will still be playing, because this will be her next week -- we don't know when Sally's going to finish her game, "A Short Hike," which is very cute.

Sally: It's very cute.

Emily: Um, and when I'll start mine, but you know. Whatever. Some -- one of us will be playing.

Sally: Emily's playthrough of Final Fantasy.

Emily: Fifteen! (laugh)

Sally: Fifteen.

Emily: Not even the good one. (laugh)

Sally: It's gonna be very funny and chaotic. (laugh) So we'll go from a peaceful bird hike to Emily --

Emily: Look forward to that.

Sally: Fighting monsters?

Emily: Demons? I don't know what is going on in Final Fantasy. Uh, do you have a sign-off?

Sally: Yes. (laugh) Um, this happened a couple weeks ago. But we were having a -- like, a small donor tour at the Aviary, when I was, like, trying to, uh, pitch a project to one of our donors. And they were facing -- so, like, they were facing east -- west -- east -- east, and I was facing west, y'know, so, like, they were -- we were facing each other.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Socially distanced. And as I was, like, trying to sell them this point about the Aviary, the biggest rat I have ever seen in my entire life runs out of the bushes like three feet behind them and onto the lawn. And, like, I looked over to my, like, boss, the director of development, and she was like -- her eyes were, like, gonna burst out of her head. (laugh) And we were like -- what

are -- we don't know what to do, 'cause, like, we work in a zoological organization. Like, pests -
- like, vermin are just kind of, like --

Emily: Yeah, rats are gonna be there.

Sally: Yeah, and, like, especially because we have, like, mice to feed to the owls and stuff.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, there's just, like, it -- rats are gonna be there. And we're in, like, a public park, and so it's just like -- but this rat was gigantic, and we're like, could you have picked any other 30 seconds of the day to make your appearance? (laugh) So my boss was -- and this one other employee were trying to, like, shoo the rat. It was very funny. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Oh, disgusting.

Sally: Yeah, but also horrifying.

Emily: I know, I'm so glad I'm not in New York City anymore. I don't think I've seen a rat since leaving New York.

Sally: I would always say hi to the subway rats.

Emily: I know you would. You also say hi to pigeons.

Sally: 'Cause I love them.

Emily: Yeah, you're very nice to vermin.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Which is why we live together. (laugh)

Sally: Shut up. (laugh) You're not vermin.

Emily: (laugh) Alright, everybody have a good week. Don't do war crimes. Goodbye!