



Episode 133 – “Last Battle Participation Trophy”

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SALLY: Everybody Hates Rand is a *Wheel of Time* podcast that will contain spoilers for all fourteen books, so if you’re anti-spoiler pause this, read all fourteen 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: What?

SALLY: I’m just – I’m gonna be so confused. I’m sorry. I worked on a transcript this morning from early in *The Shadow Rising*, read *The Fires of Heaven*, [laughs] and then read the *Path of Daggers*. [laughing] So, I’m like, “I have no idea where we are in space and time.”

EMILY: Welcome to running a *Wheel of Time* blog. Blog? Podcast.

SALLY: Podcast. Yeah.

EMILY: That’s what this is.

SALLY: [laughing] I’m just like, “What’s happening?”

EMILY: Yeah, I was transcribing something from earlier in *The Fires of Heaven* [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Today, and I wrote *A Memory of Light* blog yesterday, and I was thinking about something in particular...Oh! It's because I was working on the fucking, uh, uh, *Great Hunt*.

SALLY: Oh yeah! [laughs]

EMILY: For someone, a little while ago, for our – for our vandalism. And I came across –

SALLY: [snorts]

EMILY: [laughs] For our vandalism. For money. We vandalize for money.

SALLY: [laughs] I mean, we do.

EMILY: Welcome to being white!

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, but I was reading that scene in *The Great Hunt* where they're at the party, and Rand gets trapped by women in skirts. And then he goes to talk to Thom about it, and Thom says something about how one of the ladies is the Lady Breane. And I was like, "I know that name." And it was like – it was like only then, after five times reading the dang series, that I was like, "Breane's one of Morgase's companions," and it's heavily implied that she's a Cairhienin noblewoman." But I was just like, "La dee dah," didn't think we could have been introduced to her in the limited time we'd been in Cairhien. But we were. She was one of the women who tried to bone Rand for gold digging reasons. Which, like, good for her. I'm glad she settled down with Lamgwin and his cat.

SALLY: Yeah, she was in the chapter I just read.

EMILY: Yeah. She – oh, in *Path of Daggers*?

SALLY: Yeah, because Perrin has just connected with, uh, Maighdin, as she is called. And Perrin's like, "Ah, she really reminds me of Elayne for some reason." It's like [laughing] you have no brain cells. You are –

EMILY: The constant –

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: It's so frustrating. How just, for so many books at the later end of the series, it's like no one recognizes Morgase. And I'm like, "What's the point of having a character in disguise if no one's going to recognize them?"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Otherwise it's just like identity theft [laughs] in a weird way.

SALLY: Yeah. Everyone's just like, "Oh she's...Andoran."

EMILY: She's an Andoran lady with red-gold hair, who's very beautiful and looks like Elayne. And Perrin's like...

SALLY: "Must be a woman who's just down on her luck."

EMILY: I was so shocked – not shocked, but, like, [laughs] I found it hilarious how at the end of this book, Davram Bashere is like, "I heard Morgase is dead," and Rand's like, "Oh, yeah she's super dead." And I'm like [laughing], "According to what, Rand? Have you seen the body? You didn't even question Rahvin about it. This is literally just, you know, hearsay."

SALLY: You were too busy shooting to kill.

EMILY: So, Robert Jordan was like, "I'm just gonna skim over that little."

SALLY: I mean, Rand also has no thoughts in his head.

EMILY: Yeah, that's true. Rand sits down in the throne of Andor, and Davram Bashere is like, "So are you going to be king?" And Rand's like, "No, how dare you accuse me of that." And Davram Bashere's like, "You just sat –"

SALLY: [whispering] You're sitting on the throne.

EMILY: "– on the throne."

SALLY: What's happening?

EMILY: Rand's like, "I just wanted to sit down." And Bashere's like, "There are other chairs."

SALLY: You could have picked a less symbolically loaded chair to sit down in [laughs].

EMILY: This was immediately after Rand was apparently standing in a window.

SALLY: Yeah, just, like, looking at Mat. And Aviendha.

EMILY: Yeah. Fucking stalking – he like, he climbed. We're told he had to use his fingertips to climb into this window ledge, just so he can peer down and his friends. He's the creepiest motherfucker on the planet.

SALLY: I know. I also find the idea of Mat and Aviendha hanging out together alone very funny. Like, what were they doing? [laughs]

EMILY: Rand's like, "Mat's just probably probing for information on what [crosstalk]. And I'm like, "Surely they have something to talk about."

SALLY: Yeah. Knives or something.

EMILY: Knives or something. I don't know. We sit Mat hang out with Aviendha a little bit in the next book when she joins the girls in Salidar. Right? Mat takes her some of the way?

SALLY: I think so?

EMILY: And they're just sort of, like, awkward.

SALLY: Yeah, Mat's just sort of like [grumbles].

EMILY: I don't know. It's a shame Mat doesn't get to have female friends beyond Birgitte, because I think it would be hilarious if Mat was just, like, super close friends with Aviendha. Had a really love hate relationship with Elayne. And was just like, "Min who?" Like all of Mat's – [laughs].

SALLY: "Who's Min?"

EMILY: "We met her?"

SALLY: "I don't remember this."

EMILY: "I haven't met her since."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Book one. Literally. Has Mat ever...?

SALLY: I don't think so.

EMILY: Mmmm, yeah no. Mat, Mat met Min in Book One, briefly. May have met her in Book Two briefly, when they were all at Falme together. Then did not see her again, um, until – get this – he starts being – all the *ta'veren* boys start being able to, like, see each other when they think of things. And Mat casually thinks of Rand [laughing] and is like, "Oh my god! He's fully in flagrante with a woman."

SALLY: [laughs] Oh, that would be my nightmare.

EMILY: I know.

SALLY: To, like, think of your friend. Oh, sorry!

EMILY: Oh! Uh! Yeah, that's sort of –

SALLY: Carry on.

EMILY: An interesting plot point.

SALLY: In flagrante [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] In flagrante, I think, is the funniest way of saying fucking.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: The French are so good.

SALLY: The French *are* so funny.

EMILY: I guess we're talking about *Wheel of Time* now. No intro needed.

SALLY: Are we?

EMILY: Yeah, this is Everybody Hates Rand. It's your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* podcast. We're finished with *The Fires of Heaven*.

SALLY: We are done.

EMILY: Yeah. I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: I am Sally Goodger.

EMILY: And here we are to talk about the very confusing sequence of events at the end of *Fires of Heaven*.

SALLY: Yeah. Honestly, I was reading it, and I know they end up in the world of dreams, but when Rand is entering the world of dreams I was like, "Where is this motherfucker going?"

EMILY: Yeah, because at the end of the – not chapter. At the end of where we last left off, Rand, like, opens a gateway. And we're like, "Oh, yeah, so this is where he enters the world of dreams." Because I, like, remembered that part. But, no, apparently he just fully traveled. Which is, like, what?

SALLY: Yeah. Accidentally.

EMILY: This is how he figures it out? Like, okay.

SALLY: So wild.

EMILY: He fully traveled into the Palace of Caemlyn, where there are still just, like, people hanging out. And he and Rahvin are just, like, balefire everywhere. Until finally Rahvin is like, “I’m gonna take this to *tel’aran’rhiod* where I’ll have an advantage, because this is the stupidest motherfucker west of the Mississippi. West of the Alguenya.”

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] Is that the river name?

SALLY: I think it is.

EMILY: I think so.

SALLY: It’s close enough.

EMILY: Alguenya?

SALLY: Al -ga -ga

EMILY: *Alguenya*. Let’s see – I really doubt. Robert Jordan is always like, “Character names in the glossary. Place names? Absolutely not.” Nope, it is not. I’ll never know, I guess. [laughs] What were we talking about? *Tel’aran’rhiod*. Traveling.

SALLY: Yeah, so Rand and Rahvin are just in the palace of Caemlyn throwing balefire around like they’re...playing tennis, basically.

EMILY: Yeah. There are servants huddled in terror.

SALLY: Yeah, like, screaming. And Rand’s like, “I’m not gonna hurt you.” And it’s like, then stop throwing balefire at people!!

EMILY: Then stop making fire with your hands. Do you know what – you’re terrifying.

SALLY: Yeah. This scene is – this section is written really well in terms of Rand’s headspace.

EMILY: Mm.

SALLY: Because he’s very much in the, like, throws of *saidin* madness, I guess.

EMILY: Yeah, we’ve got Rand is suffering from a lot of grief, which I think is really interesting that, despite the grossness of the varying levels of destruction to the bodies that I mentioned last time, we do get an equal helping of grief for Mat as Asmodean oddly. Like, Rand isn’t just lingering over Aviendha’s dead, beautiful face. He’s like, “That thing smoked like Mat’s boots smoked.” Like, he’s clearly very preoccupied with all three of them. So, that’s interesting. Yeah,

and then he's got, um, some really extreme, uh, him versus Lews Therin stuff going on, because he is, I guess in his mind or in the part of his mind that belongs to Lews Therin, really recreating this moment where Lews Therin killed a ton of people. Like, in the confines of a fancy house, I guess, is what we're supposed to get. So Lews Therin keeps being like, "Ilyena!" And Rand's like [laughing], "I don't fucking know who that is."

SALLY: He's like, "I don't know – I don't care about that bitch. Lews, I'm gonna be honest. I don't care about Ilyena."

EMILY: "Lews – " I mean, he will, because he's a psycho. Because he's like, "Ilyena?" And Lews Therin is like, "She's a dead woman," and Rand's like, "[gasps loudly] AH! AHHH!"

SALLY: [laughing] "That's my weakness!"

EMILY: [laughing] Automatically.

SALLY: "Dead women!"

EMILY: "Dead women? No!" Um, yeah, and then it's more warped by the fact that *tel'aran'rhiod* is a weird place and Rahvin can impose things upon Rand. So, yeah, Rand has like gone full psycho.

SALLY: Yeah, he is not in a healthy state of mind [laughs], shall we say.

EMILY: Meanwhile, we're bouncing back to – back and forth between him and Nynaeve, who, um, is much more, like, clear with her narrations. But is also, like, a little bit confusing because we now have the added, um, mind meld between her and Moghedien.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which we didn't talk about last time, the end of the chapter, but, uh, Nynaeve is training Siuan in *tel'aran'rhiod*. Secretly. Um, they're probably the two worst people to be together in a confined space given that they just start fist fighting at one point.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah. It's like ladies.

EMILY: Women. Come on.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: [laughs] Have a little self-respect. Please.

SALLY: If you don't respect each other, at least respect yourselves [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah, the funniest part of that is that Siuan reverts to her, like, childhood kid clothes [laughs]. And is like, "Oh my god. I haven't had a good ally scrap in..."

SALLY: Years.

EMILY: Decades, I assume. Um, but while they're fighting [laughs] – Moghedien also thinks this is hilarious, so apparently –

SALLY: Well, I mean, it is [laughs].

EMILY: Sort of comes out of hiding to get a better view [laughs]. She's got, like, opera glasses. "Oh my god, this is hilarious."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And Nynaeve spots her, or something, and does the smart thing and immediately shoves Siuan out of *tel'aran'rhiod* and is, like, and goes running to hide. And there she is again confronted by Moghedien. Because apparently tracking people through *tel'aran'rhiod* is an easy thing. I don't think – probably the girls learn how to do it, but Perrin's mostly our touchstone for that, and as we've complained already, Perrin doesn't really learn how to use *tel'aran'rhiod* until Book 11. So, cool. Um, but Moghedien makes her usual threatening noises, but is sort of cut off when Birgitte again appears. Um, she later tells us that when Siuan woke up, and was like "[grumbles]," Birgitte was like, "Oh, something's wrong." And, uh, took whatever sedative Nynaeve had made, and traveled into *tel'aran'rhiod*. So, Birgitte doesn't really accomplish anything, because she is like, "Hey, Moghedien," before shooting at her. Which, she herself is like...

SALLY: "That was stupid."

EMILY: "That was stupid, but I have honor systems and whatnot."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, and Moghedien briefly, like, turns her into a little – a little child. And Nynaeve's like, "Okay, I've just gotta, like, pretend to grovel for a bit, to, uh, distract her." Nynaeve doesn't really have a plan formed, it feels like, until she grabs Moghedien. And then she creates an *a'dam*, one of the Seanchan bracelet and collar combo things, so that Moghedien is under her power. And Nynaeve talks about just fixing it in her mind, which I just think is such like – that's the way that rules work in *tel'aran'rhiod* – is that you can make anything reality by believing it is reality. And we eventually get into the finer points of that with Perrin versus Slayer as they are fighting and just doing things with reality. And, um, uh, so it's just interesting that we have Perrin master it in, like, the two books that he spends training and Moghedien, the Forsaken who we're told is arguably one of the best at *tel'aran'rhiod*, is just like, "Whoops!"

SALLY: "Oh no."

EMILY: "I'm caught tm."

SALLY: “Aww.”

EMILY: “Aw, dunk.”

SALLY: “Oh not.”

EMILY: That she can’t – is it – we’re not really given to understand there’s any sort of battle of wills going on here. It’s just, like, whoever moves faster.

SALLY: Yeah, and I think it would be more interesting if it was a battle of wills because that’s, like, Nynaeve and Moghedien’s whole thing. Is they’re repeatedly clashing – like at the same – Nynaeve – Nynaeve. Nynaeve even says here they’re at the same power level.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: It’s just interesting.

EMILY: Yeah, but we do know that Nynaeve’s superpower, as it were, is her very great strength of will.

SALLY: Yeah, exactly! So if it was a thing of will, it would be funny to be like, “Of course Nynaeve won a battle of wills. It’s Nynaeve, you know?”

EMILY: [laughs] She’s like ten second flat. Is like, “No.”

SALLY: Moghedien’s like, “Oh, that was exhausting.”

EMILY: And maybe that’s, like, the implication, because in all other regards we know Moghedien is a pretty weak, cowardly character, um, who sort of gives in at the first sign of danger. But, you know, it’s not made explicit, so it is sort of left to our interpretation. Which, in *tel’aran’rhiod*, I think, despite the fact that it’s a liminal space, we do need as much explicit material as we can find.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: Like, otherwise we just sort of end up in Rand’s whack headspace.

SALLY: Where you’re like, “What? What happened?”

EMILY: “I’m on an acid trip.”

SALLY: “There’s a lightning storm?”

EMILY: I don’t know.

SALLY: “Fish are eating you?”

EMILY: Yeah, Rand just cuts from a beautiful description of the garden to and now it's full of water and I'm drowning and piranhas are eating me. And I'm like, "What the fuck?!"

SALLY: [whispers] What's happening?"

EMILY: Slow down, bucko. Uh, but, so Nynaeve successfully captures Moghedien, which also gives her access to, ah, channeling, since Nynaeve herself can't really channel. Especially with the *ter'angreal* she's using. But Birgitte's saved. Birgitte goes back. Birgitte has a hilarious line where Nynaeve's like, "Oh my god, I almost, like, just ran." And Birgitte's like, "Well you didn't." And Nynaeve's like, "I know, but I feel like such a coward." And Birgitte's like, "[laughs] It's such a – it's so sad to be associated with a coward like you, Nynaeve," [laughing] saying to the woman who has captured one of the Forsaken after kicking her ass twice.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: And then disappears.

SALLY: Birgitte is so funny.

EMILY: Iconic. Um, but Nynaeve finds out from Moghedien that something is going on in Caemlyn between Rand and Rahvin. And, despite probably believing it's all happening in the physical world, she's like, "We're going to go to there." [laughing] Moghedien's like, "Why? No. That makes no sense."

SALLY: But it does! Because then Rand and Rahvin are there physically [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah, luckily then Rahvin and Rand just stroll on into *tel'aran'rhiod* physically, which supposedly is a detrimental thing, but, again, that's something that is told to us repeatedly throughout the series but is never really proven.

SALLY: Yeah. Moghedien keeps being like, "It's super dangerous that they're here physically. Something bad is going to happen. To them. To the world. To us." And Nynaeve's like, "Well, whatever."

EMILY: Yeah, similarly like, um – excuse me. Uh, the Wise Ones are like, "It's evil to go into *tel'aran'rhiod* in the flesh," but in, say *A Memory of Light*, we get an extended sequence where both Perrin and Gaul are in *tel'aran'rhiod* physically. Gaul for, like, a really long time [laughs], and he appears to come out of it with no detrimental side effects.

SALLY: That's because he's pure of heart [laughs].

EMILY: Perrin does fall into a coma for like two weeks.

SALLY: Well.

EMILY: For, like, the entire Last Battle. But.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I feel like I missed this the first time around. Perrin has, like, a whole bunch of stuff right before the Last Battle, and then he's literally in a coma for the entire thing. And then he wakes up enough to, like, join the climactic sequence. But that 200-page chapter titled *The Last Battle*? Perrin is asleep.

SALLY: Good for him man.

EMILY: Which I'm like –

SALLY: Sleep through the end of the world [laughing].

EMILY: [laughs] God I wish that were me. The only sad thing is that Mat doesn't get told that Perrin is asleep so Mat could be like, "Man!"

SALLY: "Why am I not asleep?!"

EMILY: "I could be asleep!"

SALLY: "Dammit!"

EMILY: "God damn."

SALLY: "Didn't know that was an option!"

EMILY: "I have to lead the Last Battle."

SALLY: "I thought participation was mandatory."

EMILY: [laughing sadly] "I thought I had to be here."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] Um, you get a participation trophy for participating in the Last Battle.

SALLY: I'm gonna make us participation trophies after we finish *A Memory of Light*.

EMILY: [laughing]

SALLY: In, like, nineteen years. It will be the EHR participation trophy [laughs].

EMILY: It's been 19 years.

SALLY: Partci – partishipashun.

EMILY: Partishupatian trophy.

SALLY: Prar – [laughs] I can't say it.

EMILY: And no participation trophy for Perrin [laughs].

SALLY: No for Perrin. He's in a coma. Like *Sleepless in Seattle*.

EMILY: He was –

SALLY: Not *Sleepless in Seattle*.

EMILY: What?

SALLY: *While You Were Sleeping* [laughs].

EMILY: God.

SALLY: Sorry [laughs].

EMILY: *Sleepless in Seattle* is the antithesis of coma.

SALLY: That's Gaul.

EMILY: Yeah, I mean. He is.

SALLY: Gaul is sleepless in –

EMILY: *tel'aran'rhiod*? Shayol Ghul? I don't know. Anyway.

SALLY: That's a long time from now.

EMILY: Anyway, we sort of have this mirroring thing happening with everyone, uh, being told and telling us that balefire is really dangerous. And we do eventually get some payoff with the idea that balefire is dangerous because in *A Memory of Light*, the world starts literally falling apart at the seams due to prolonged use of balefire. My big argument there is that, uh, like with many other things books about 8 through 11, Robert Jordan should have somehow managed to cut down to two books. Because so many of the plot threads like balefire, like the world of dreams, that he clearly meant to do something with earlier in the series, just get sort of fizzled out. And so then when Brandon Sanderson is frantically backpedaling to bring them back into the story it's sort of like "Ah, too little, too late, bro." I've completely forgotten everything about balefire. I've completely forgotten everything about the world of dreams. Your rules no longer apply.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, so that's my big thesis. Is that we should have been handling balefire a lot more than we did, if it was gonna be such a big fucking deal in the last book.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which is even downplayed a little in the last book. Egwene is like, "Ooh, magic weave," and negates its effects.

SALLY: I mean, good for her.

EMILY: I mean, cool for her, but it would have been cool if she was, like, figuring it out before then.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean balefire as a concept is just frustrating, because it's, like, so overpowered. It's just, like, a way to, you know, completely OP Rand [laughing] off the face of the planet.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: But then they're like, "Oh, but there's like a, you know, rule against using it." That Rand doesn't follow.

EMILY: And apparently the Forsaken don't either.

SALLY: Yeah, so it's just, like, and the fact that Egg is like, "Oh, I'm also OP and will negate it." And then Brandon Sanderson is somewhere in the middle trying to be like [laughing], "What's happening?"

EMILY: Yeah, balefire is such a cool concept in terms of, like, a metaphor for nuclear power. Or weapons of mass destruction. But, yeah, the problem with equipping your main character with it in Book 3, is, like, ooh Rand gets a little nutso with it.

SALLY: Rand gets very balefire happy. Very trigger happy.

EMILY: Especially in Book 5. I mean, it really jumps out here, where he balefires Rahvin so fucking hard that he, you know.

SALLY: Just vanishes. Nynaeve was like, "He was just fucking gone."

EMILY: Yeah, I think – I mean, we had Rand use balefire, I don't know if it was for the first time here in Book 5? I feel like he's probably used it before.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: But, um, against the Darkhounds. And I think it would have been more interesting if he'd just seen Moiraine use it, and then used it for the first time here not knowing what it would do.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: [laughs] So that then it's sort of, I don't know, lends itself to a more even progression. Because by the time you get Book – what is it? – 12 Rand balefires an entire, like, fortress out of existence, which is, like, [whispers] so bad.

SALLY: Rand, you can't do that. Moiraine specifically was like, "Don't do this!" And he was like, "Do it on a massive scale?" [laughs]

EMILY: It's cool. I'm Truman dropping the bomb on Hiroshima. Like, "Nooo!"

SALLY: Moiraine comes out of the Tower of Ghenjei and is like, "What the *fuck* did I tell you?"

EMILY: And Rand's like, "It was to kill Graendal," and Graendal's like, "But I'm alive, bitch."

SALLY: [laughing] He's so dumb.

EMILY: AHHH!

SALLY: Yeah, so balefire is just, like, out of control. Much like Rand al'Thor himself.

EMILY: Much like Rand al'Thor. Yeah, it's just things we need established rules for earlier. Like, there should be...there should be more obvious detriments to using balefire earlier in the series. Because otherwise we just have other characters' sort of anachronistic word that it is bad. You know? We don't have anyone really testifying, "Hey, I was there and I saw how bad it was," except for Forsaken, who – why would you believe the Forsaken, you know?

SALLY: Asmo-deen is like, "Well..."

EMILY: Asmo-deen's like, "I mean if necessary. If it brings me back to life."

SALLY: [laughs] "Then do it."

EMILY: "Do what you gotta do."

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, so balefire is just a weird...

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: ...bug.

EMILY: Cool concept in theory, but in practice sort of falls by the wayside. Um, so we have Rand chasing Rahvin through the palace, first physically then in the world of dreams. It's very confusing what's happening. It's just sort of like fire? Balefire? Things? Everywhere.

SALLY: Lightning? Piranhas?

EMILY: Rand is definitely channeling while he's in *tel'aran'rhiod*. Rahvin doesn't really seem to be. He seems to just be using *tel'aran'rhiod* rules, such as, you know, putting Rand in a – oh, or first he tries to make Rand not exist. Rand is already having this personality clash in his head between him and Lews Therin and then he looks down and is like, "Oh my god I'm see through. Ah!" And he sort of tangentially realizes that Rahvin is doing something, but he, again, has to impose his will on the world of dreams. Like, "I'm Rand. I'm this son of a bitch." And there's the whole piranhas thing, which is just, like, upsetting. Um, and [laughs] we later have Rand – Rahvin tries to turn Rand into, like, a beast of some sort. Which seems out of place, you think it would Perrin, you know, this would apply better. But all this is interspersed with Nynaeve walking around the palace of Caemlyn, noticing the signs of destruction and eventually being like, "Oh, men's footsteps everywhere," and she's just dragging Moghedien along, who's like –

SALLY: Who's, like, literally just crying.

EMILY: Moghedien's like, "We're gonna diiie." And Nynaeve's like, "Shut up!"

SALLY: "You're so annoying!"

EMILY: "You're so annoying." Yeah, it's not like Nynaeve is participating in the battle a whole ton. It's not like it's a three way fight where Rand is eventually like, "Ah, I have another person," you know?" It's that Rahvin has set one of his traps and Rand is in it, and Nynaeve catches up to Rahvin right then and sets the hallway he is in so on fire that he's just, like, yikes. And gets, like, all scarred and burned. He's like Anakin after falling into the lava.

SALLY: Don't try it, Anakin.

EMILY: [laughs] Don't try it Anakin. [mimicking Obi-wan] "I have the high ground!"

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] Nynaeve.

SALLY: "Don't try it, Rahvin."

EMILY: "I have the high ground. You were like a brother to me!"

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: But she sets Rahvin on fire and he turns around with Kill Bill sirens.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] But that gives Rand enough time to sort of wake up and, “I see him! Balefire!”

SALLY: Yeah, balefire the fuck out of him.

EMILY: Yeah, and that’s, like, sort of the extent of the battle. We then get, you know, Rand rushing up and being like, “What the? Nyna – ” He’s not even surprised to see Nynaeve. He’s just like, “Did you see Rahvin die?” And Nynaeve’s like, “Indeed. I can testify that that motherfucker is super dead. Unlike Morgase! Haven’t seen a body.”

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And Rand’s like, “Great.” Does not ask, “Who’s this woman?” [laughs]

SALLY: Yeah, right? [laughs]

EMILY: Like, Nynaeve makes a – has a whole panic, “Oh, if Rand sees this collar and bracelet situation he’s going to be like, ‘who the – what the eff?’” And I’m like, “Would he though?”
SALLY: No.

EMILY: He doesn’t really seem to care. So she, like, makes it invisible. And he’s like, “Oh, hey. Is this where you meet Egwene?” And Nynaeve’s like [whispering], “That’s not really the point right now. You need to, like, get out, because this is bad for you.” And he’s like [whispers], “Everything’s bad for me. I’m the Dragon Reborn.”

SALLY: Oh, I know. He has this whole drama monologue where he’s like [laughing], “Lan told me to tell you to fuck off.” And Nynaeve’s like, “What is he saying?”

EMILY: [laughs] He’s like, “Tell Elayne I found another person to love, and don’t ever love me again. And Lan told me to tell you the same thing, Nynaeve.” And Nynaeve’s like, “What?”

SALLY: [laughing] “What are you saying? It doesn’t make any sense.”

EMILY: She’s like, “What were you guys talking about? That this even came up?” It’s not like he’s like, “Just so you know, Moiraine’s dead. Lan’s having like a post-traumatic suicide mission thing, and he wants to break up with you.” And then Nynaeve could be like, “Ohh. Here’s a problem.”

SALLY: “At least that makes sense.”

EMILY: “At least that makes sense!”

SALLY: [laughs] But Rand just saying words and then disappearing.

EMILY: “Lan wants me to tell you he’s breaking up with you.” And Nynaeve’s like, “What? In the H?”

SALLY: She’s like, “I don’t believe him, obviously. Whatever.”

EMILY: But Rand’s leaves and Moghedien’s like, “Well, I did help! You can’t say I didn’t help!” And Nynaeve’s like, “You were crying the entire time.” [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: “And also, you’ve let slip that you’re in Salidar, so see you then, bitch.”

SALLY: Yeah, it’s very cool actually.

EMILY: I know, it’s cool. She’s like, “Here’s take this to drink. It’s something called forkroot.” And Moghedien’s like, “Ah! To keep me from following you! Yes, of course!” And Moghedien’s – and Nynaeve’s like, “Hahaha!”

SALLY: “Mahaha! See you in Salidar, motherfucker.”

EMILY: “See you in Salidar,” and Moghedien’s like, “[siren noises].”

SALLY: Yeah, and she, like, passes out.

EMILY: Yeah. Which then explains how Nynaeve will wake up and go capture her, I guess.

SALLY: For the, like, eighteenth time.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: This time though, they have an *a’dam*, which just, like, adds a complicated layer to the issue.

SALLY: For sure.

EMILY: Human rights violations.

SALLY: I’m sure we’ll talk about it at length in *Lord of Chaos*.

EMILY: *Lord of Chaos* when it’s, you know, actually a prescient issue. Rand, meanwhile, leaves the palace of Caemlyn. Is like, [laughs], “Hello darkness, my old friend,” [laughs] because he’s like, “Everyone I know is dead.” He sees the Aiel fighting off the Trollocs. And then he’s like, “Wait? Is that?” And then he’s like, “Oh shit! It is Aviendha. And there’s Mat!” Aviendha’s,

like, fighting someone with a knife and also channeling. Mat is, like, “Ah, let them go.” He’s done fighting now that they’re fleeing. He’s like, “See ya.”

SALLY: He’s like, “I’m tired.”

EMILY: Asmodean’s like, “I have been using a sword tm.”

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [whispers, laughing] “But not really. I’ve been channeling.”

SALLY: [laughs] “Rand! I’ve been using a sword!”

EMILY: “Rand, I’ve been using a sword! Can you tell?” Rand’s like, “Shut up.”

SALLY: “You’re not even holding a sword” [laughs].

EMILY: Asmodean’s, like, holding it the wrong way [laughs].

SALLY: [laughing] It’s, like, upside down.

EMILY: “I’ve been using this!” He’s just been bonking people with it.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Um, but Rand is like [laughs] – Rand’s like, “Oh my god!” Picks up Aviendha for a hug. There’s the iconic moment where he’s like, “I don’t want to let go of Avienhda, but I have to to hug Mat.” And Mat’s like, “Get the FUCK OFF.”

SALLY: Yeah [laughs]

EMILY: It would be a really great scene to be filmed. Mostly because we don’t know how – we just hear, “Mat fended him off,” like did Rand successfully pick up Mat also?

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, and Mat, like, wiggled out or?

EMILY: Mat’s like, “Ew, stop.”

SALLY: I love the image of Rand picked Mat up. And just holding him.

EMILY: I know. It’s delightful.

SALLY: Like a foot off the ground.

EMILY: He’s just like, “UGH.” Because he’s so tall.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Mat's like, "What's happening?! You've never been this happy to see me in your life! Even when we were childhood friends and things weren't complicated, you were still just like, 'Ah, Mat.'"

SALLY: "Ah, Mat."

EMILY: "Did you blow up some fireworks again [laughs]? You dumbass."

SALLY: [laughing] He doesn't try to hug Asmodean, though.

EMILY: He's like, "You're all alive! This is so great!" And Mat's like, "Okay."

SALLY: He's like, "Peace out."

EMILY: "Whatever." And Rand's like, "Okay, Aiel, you go chase after the Trollocs or whatever. I'm gonna go hang out in the palace. Rahvin's dead. Bee tee dubs."

SALLY: Everyone's like, "What?"

EMILY: "Great!" Aviendha's like, "Where'd you fucking go? You just disappeared." And Rand's like, "I had to go kill Rahvin." They're like, "What? Okay." So it's, like, conflicting memories. Obviously Mat, Aviendha, and Asmodean have no memory of dying. Or, you know, the timeline in which they died. But other people sort of do.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They keep being to Asmodean like, "I thought you were dead. Like super dead." And Asmodean's like, "But here I am." Which is enough for Asmodean to, you know, pick up the pieces. Figure out what's going on. But Rand – excuse me – Mat and, to my knowledge, Aviendha never have any idea. Until [laughs] – I was just reading *A Memory of Light* when the heroes of the horn finally get called, one of them is super sassy to Mat like, "You should be more grateful to Rand al'Thor because he saved your life two times. One you don't even remember." And Mat's like, "How can I be grateful [laughing] for something I don't remember?"

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I mean he doesn't say that, but that's what he should have said. Like, "What?"

SALLY: "What are you talking about?"

EMILY: "What are you talking about?" So, everyone's alive. Rand, as we said, spends the rest of the day staring.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: At Aviendha and Mat and Asmodean [laughs].

SALLY: So weird!

EMILY: I know. He's like, "I just have to be grateful for what I have, you know?"

SALLY: Everyone's like, "Shut up."

EMILY: "Moiraine's still dead."

SALLY: "Stop looking out the window."

EMILY: "And also, don't stalk people from the window." But, uh, Rand is interrupted when Davram Bashere walks in.

SALLY: [laughs] Just fucking waltzes in.

EMILY: Waltzes in, carrying, like, a wine bottle and two – like he's fully like, "Wanna party?" [laughing] And Rand's like, "What the fuck?"

SALLY: [laughing] He's like, "Sorry to come in unannounced, but there was to announce me."

EMILY: Yeah. "I don't know where your servants are. Is Morgase dead? I hear Gaebril's dead." Rand's like, "Yes, they're both dead." And Bashere's like, "So are you ruling now?" And Rand's like, "No. I am just going to sit in the throne" [laughs].

SALLY: Bashere's like, "Great. Whatever. Can I have Mazrim Taim, please?"

EMILY: "Can I please have Mazrim Taim?"

SALLY: "I would like to kill him."

EMILY: He's like, "I'm Davram Bashere, local dad" [laughs].

SALLY: "I have nine thousand horsemen hiding in a forest."

EMILY: "So many, you know, Mongolian parallel horsemen. They're not in Andoran land for, you know, political reasons. But they're close. And I'm just here chasing known fugitive Mazrim Taim." And Rand's like, "Well, unfortunately I am going to be providing amnesty for all the men who can channel, which includes Mazrim Taim." And Bashere's like, "Okay, I think that's great, but, um, but in a totally non-magic way, Mazrim Taim is full psycho."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: “Like I think he was before – he was like that before he started channeling. So maybe, rethink the policy [laughs] in this particular – Maybe you could arrest him and then do the amnesty thing.” Um.

SALLY: “So maybe you could just give me this one guy.”

EMILY: And Rand’s like, “No, I’m actually going to put him in charge of the school for other boys.” [laughs] and Bashere’s like, “You’re going to Mazrim Taim in charge of your school for boys who want to do magic?”

SALLY: [laughs] Rand’s like, “Yeah!” Bashere’s like, “Cool. Cool cool cool cool cool.”

EMILY: [laughs] “I can’t possibly see how this could end poorly.”

SALLY: [laughing] “This is a 100% foolproof plan.”

EMILY: “Love it. Love it.”

SALLY: [laughing] “Unrelated: can I stick around?”

EMILY: He’s like, “So are you gonna conquer the whole world?” And Rand’s like, “I mean, if no one else is gonna get in line with the whole Let’s Fight the Dark One schtick, then yeah. I’ll do what I have to do.” And Bashere’s like, “Well, I can’t really speak for any of the Borderlanders, but I feel like they’ll be behind you.” Meanwhile, in the next book or whatever, the Borderlanders are like, “First, we have to slap him.” And it’s like, “What a great subplot, that went nowhere.” Love it.

SALLY: [giggles]

EMILY: But yeah, now Rand has acquired both a dad and a regiment of cavalry.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs]. Which is, again, so funny that Bashere’s just like, “I’m hiding nine *thousand* horsemen somewhere. And they cannot find me,” [laughing].

EMILY: And the White Tower’s like, “*Where?*” What is really hilarious about it is that in this scene, and never again does Bashere give any indication that he was actively hiding from anyone. He’s just like, “We were just tracking Mazrim Taim, you know?” Totally normal. So it’s, like, do they just naturally move [laughing] in such a way that no one can find them, or is that just the depths of Elaida’s incompetence?

SALLY: I mean, maybe both.

EMILY: Probably both.

SALLY: But anyway, Bashere’s introduction is very good where he’s like, “Beep ba da beep, here I am!”

EMILY: So chaotic. “Ollo. What’s up?”

SALLY: “Please give me the baddie.”

EMILY: Um, meanwhile, Asmodean is like, “Now, I definitely did get resurrected by balefire, but I’m gonna try not to think about it too much otherwise I’ll go a little nuts.” And he just, like, walks into a room to find wine, and is like, “You? No!” And gets murdered. So, that’s just, like, the symbolic death not only of Asmodean, but of all our hopes and dreams.

SALLY: [laughs loudly]

EMILY: Regarding payoff in this series, i.e. there is none.

SALLY: Have you seen the interviews where Robert Jordan is like, “I thought it was super obvious who killed Asmodean.”

EMILY: And everyone is like, “In what way could it be obvious?”

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: There’s so many Forsaken.

SALLY: But no, we have to lose Asmo-deen. Thus ends *The Fires of Heaven*.

EMILY: Yeah, they do a skip to Morgase who’s like, “Gareth Bryne’s out of fucking town, so I have to go to my second option: the Whitecloaks.”

SALLY: It’s like, “Honey, you should have had more options.”

EMILY: That should have been at the bottom of your list!

SALLY: That should not be on the list [laughs].

EMILY: That shouldn’t even be on the list, yeah. Girl. Even the White Tower at this point, you know?

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: You trained there. At least you have a non-domestic terrorist relationship with them.

SALLY: Yeah, it’s, like, I know Elaida’s the worst, but you also did have a working relationship with Elaida for, like, years. Maybe you could figure out something better than...

EMILY: It is a total mystery why she goes to the Whitecloaks.

SALLY: Fucking nonsense.

EMILY: I guess she just feels like – I think the excuse given to us in later books is she’s like, “I can negotiate with them. Like, they can have part of Andor if they put me back on the throne.” And I’m like, “You don’t know what the situation in Andor is right now.” Even if it’s like a worst-case scenario. You’re like, “Gaebril is still gonna be on the throne for eons,” you can go to the White Tower, and I’m sure the White Tower will have some sort of vested reason for keeping you alive.

SALLY: Yeah. I also just feel like, bare minimum, she should have taken some time to gather information about things before going to the Whitecloaks.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And I also know that this is a, like, I have no vested interest in monarchy, so I can’t really speak to her interest, but I feel, like, if you were a leader who got kicked off the throne, like, would you *really* want to be on the throne so badly as to put yourself in bed with the Whitecloaks? Like, I know she’s like, “It’s for Andor!” or whatever, but it’s like, sis. You really want to put Andor in the hands of the Whitecloaks? Just feels like a weird choice to me.

EMILY: Yeah, like historically when monarchs get kicked out of power they go to the next nearest monarch.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: The Whitecloaks don’t really fall under that umbrella, however much they quasi-function as that.

SALLY: Yeah, as a government.

EMILY: They’re a militant group, they don’t control, you know, groups of people per se. Um, yeah, total – totally buck wild.

SALLY: Mystere, to say the least.

EMILY: But yeah, that is, um, *The Fires of Heaven*. The heavens have been fired.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I guess.

SALLY: They sure have. They have been totally sacked. There’s no one in charge of the heavens.

EMILY: Yeah, I mean these last few chapters are very fire themed. It’s, like, um, *the threads burn* and *glowing embers*.

SALLY: Yeah, well Nynaeve is literally like, “Hellfire. Fire. Hellfire.”

EMILY: [singing] HELLFIRE! DARK FIRE.

SALLY: [laughs] Um, and Rand is shooting balefire. And it’s like, “We get it. Fires.”

EMILY: There’s a lot of fire going on.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I comprende

SALLY: I’ve got it.

EMILY: I understand the metaphor. Thank you.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: [sighs] So, *Fires of Heaven*. A book that, uh, made some big swings. Had a few misses. Mostly, though, had good hits.

SALLY: Yeah, usually when we finish a book I’m like – finish a book for EHR purposes, like, finish a season – like, even if I didn’t necessarily like that book I’ve gained a better appreciation of it. I feel like with *The Fires of Heaven*, I’ve gained a more complicated relationship to it.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: I remember really liking it when I first read it, and I think that’s why. Because there’s, like you said, some really stellar moments. Like this ending sequence is really well done and all the stuff that happens in Rhuidean in the beginning is really interesting. And we get some really interesting Mat stuff. And I liked the circus more the first time I read it, because it’s sort of a charming plot to be thrown upon you. But then, in this read, I was like, “Okay, the circus is…”

EMILY: Dragging on for quite a while.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah. So, I don’t know.

EMILY: Yeah, *Fires of Heaven* is one of the thicker books, and I think one of the more complicated books. And I think it’s a point of transition for Jordan, in which he is now moving from where he’s been in the first few books, which is a little bit more narrow in scope in terms of characters are generally moving toward one goal together. Or moving at least toward one place together, and we’re generally switching points of view between three, maybe four tops, people. Into this way bigger scope where, uh, we have more points of view coming into play, and the chunks of time that we’re spending with groups are way longer. At least they feel way longer. So, I think that started in *Shadow – Shadow Rising*, but it’s sort of getting cemented here in *Fires*

of Heaven, which is a really problematic thing because, as we discovered in *Shadow Rising*, it didn't work so great.

SALLY: Yeah, and *The Shadow Rising* doesn't have quite the same feeling because there's that *huge* section in the beginning where they're all in the Stone of Tear together still. So this is the first whole book where we have this very large fracturing going on, without the characters in one place together.

EMILY: Yeah, in this one you still have this wild attempt by Jordan at the very end to, like, throw Nynaeve in to bring these two main plots together in a way. Um, in *Lord of Chaos* we're not really gonna get that at all.

SALLY: Mm-mm.

EMILY: Perrin will be there at the end.

SALLY: [scoffs]

EMILY: With Rand, but Perrin will have reunited with Rand long before that.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, it's less impactful, I guess.

SALLY: Yeah, it's not, like, in *The Dragon Reborn* when it hits so good when all the characters end up at the Stone of Tear.

EMILY: Coincidentally together, at the same time.

SALLY: Yeah, like all the plots coming together for such a knockout, climactic sequence. It's just sort of like, "Oh, Dumai's Wells is happening." And Egg is also the Amyrlin, and also this is happening [laughs], and also this is happening.

EMILY: Yeah, also people are going to Ebou Dar, but nothing has happened in Ebou Dar yet.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And la de dah de dah.

SALLY: Yeah, so it's, like, very odd.

EMILY: But yeah, *Fires of Heaven*: mixed feelings.

SALLY: Mixed feelings. About heaven's fires.

EMILY: [laughs, sings] Hellfire! That's gonna be stuck in my head.

SALLY: [mumbling] dark fire!

EMILY: Okay. Thanks for listening. Thank you to Glynna Mackenzie for our theme song. Thanks for sticking with us through Book 5.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: We are at the very least taking a bye week next week. We will then, uh, we're not quite sure yet, but we will be taking the week off to put together our *Lord of Chaos* reading schedule. I don't know yet if we'll return immediately with *Lord of Chaos*, or if we'll do something extra, or if we will need another bye week or something like that in the mix, because we are about to move.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: Which isn't hugely stressful but is a stress that we – you guys remember New York [laughs] to Utah.

SALLY: [screeches]

EMILY: Dun dun!

SALLY: Yeah, especially because it will be a huge process of moving all of our equipment specifically.

EMILY: Yes.

SALLY: Because we're getting a recording studio.

EMILY: Yeah, so you'll definitely be hearing from us on social media, but it might be just a little bit until we get to *Lord of Chaos*. But enjoy that break, because we are effectively at the one third point in the series.

SALLY: Yeah! Yeehaw.

EMILY: So, you know, haven't really taken a breath, much of a breather since we started.

SALLY: No, it's been pretty much every week for almost three years.

EMILY: Yeah. We'll keep you updated, though.

SALLY: Yeah! We'll keep you updated definitely. We'll keep you – check our social media, we'll let you know what's going on and we'll talk to you soon.

EMILY: Yeah, until then all of our Patreon content should be up as usual. We might get a few skips in the livestreaming, but that should be more or less as usual on Fridays. So catch us there.

SALLY: Yah!

EMILY: Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: This shirt got messed up in the dryer and now my boobs basically keep falling out of it. So.

EMILY: That's not a problem.

SALLY: I almost wore it to work yesterday [laughs], which would have been a problem.

EMILY: I don't think it's a problem at all.

SALLY: Well, thanks, Emily.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: You're welcome! Fires of Heaven!

SALLY: [laughing] Bye!