



## Episode 132 – Men Don’t Have Tear Ducts

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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 Glynn Mackenzie plays]

SALLY: You wanna know something fucked up that I learned today?

EMILY: I’m afraid [laughs], but okay.

SALLY: Um, within, uh, like, the United States tax law governing private foundations and, like, because, like, private foundations’ holdings, like, exist outside – they’re non-taxable income, because their purpose is to go to tax-deductible gifts, you know? But those private foundations only have to spend five percent of their, like, monetary holdings each year, and that includes in grants or – and/or administrative expenses. So, like, they could just be theoretically paying their trustees, like, 100,000 dollars a year to sit on the board of a private foundation and not actually be spending any money on philanthropy. So, doesn’t that fucking suck?

EMILY: I knew most of those words, but I didn’t...

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Can you say it again, but make it dumber for me? I didn't really understand.

SALLY: Yeah, of course. Um.

EMILY: Once taxes get involved.

SALLY: Oh, sorry.

EMILY: It [laughs] gets really hard for me.

SALLY: Well, taxes, like, American taxes are extremely confusing anyway, because, whatever. The IRS.

EMILY: It's all a lie. It's just whatever the IRS wants, you have to give them.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I don't understand it.

SALLY: Do you know that, um, if you call if call the IRS all the employees use pseudonyms, because people are so mean to them that they don't want...

EMILY: That's so sad.

SALLY: Attacking the IRS employees? [laughs]

EMILY: It's, like, how in *Watchmen* all the cops [laughs] have to wear masks.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah! It's fucking insane. The IRS employees have to have superhero aliases.

EMILY: I think tax collector is the funniest job that has existed and has been universally despised for forever, because it's, like, the universal, like, don't kill the messenger. Like, if we're going to kill someone people, we need to kill the king who's levying the taxes. The capitalist elite, not the IRS employees who are, no doubt, blue collar workers like you and me.

SALLY: Yeah, exactly.

EMILY: Okay, anyway back to [laughs].

SALLY: Um, so, um the way it works, general – this is a very, this is an oversimplification, obviously.

EMILY: Yeah. That's what I need [laughs].

SALLY: But that way that it works in the United States is that, um, all of your income or, you know, various holdings, monetary holdings are, um, taxable by the United States government. You know, social contract, etc. etc. And the way that philanthropy works in the United States is that you can make tax-deductible donations to organizations that are classified as 501(C)(3) non-profits. That's an IRS classification that means you are a not-for-profit organization, you are doing something, some sort of social service in the community. Um, and therefore you're not making *income* you're making *revenue*, um, which is an important distinction. Um, so, uh, like, if you think back to, like, the big robber barons like John D. Rockefeller and all those people who set up these huge foundations. That's where we got this history of having these massive foundations in the United States. Like, I was just reading that private foundations in the United States hold something like 600 billion dollars, or just, like, crazy amounts of money. But because that – those piles of money exist within these private foundations they're technically outside of taxable income money, like, they cannot be taxed because they exist within this private foundation in order to be used for philanthropic things. So, like, ideally it's like, "we're not going to tax that money, because in a perfect world the Rockefeller Foundation or whatever is going to give one billion dollars in grants to grassroots organizations or nonprofits across the United States." But the laws governing these foundations only require that they spend five percent of whatever their holdings are each year. Um, like, they only have to spend five percent, they don't have to spend any more of that if they don't want to. And that includes grants that they give out *and* administrative expenses. So, say you have you have a foundation that has one hundred thousand dollars in holdings, so to speak. You only have to spend – what's five percent of one hundred thousand dollars? Like?

EMILY: \$50,000?

SALLY: That's fifty percent.

EMILY: Yeah [snorts].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] Five thousand was what I meant.

SALLY: [laughing] Oh, that was so funny.

EMILY: I feel exactly as I did in my high school business law class, where I learned not a thing, because the girl sitting next to me was too cute [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] Okay, so say you have one hundred thousand dollars in holdings, you only have to spend five thousand of that over a whole, you know, fiscal year in order to meet your tax requirements. Um, and so that means you can pay – you could have five trustees on your board and pay each of them five thousand dollars and count that as administrative expenses, and not actually have done a single ounce of philanthropic work.

EMILY: Is that how the LDS church gets away with hoarding all its money?

SALLY: Probably. I was learning – I’m reading this book that’s talking about, like, this is the way that, yeah, people get away with hoarding all this money, because they’re paying trustees and people hundreds of thousands of dollars to sit on a board and basically do nothing and reject grant applications so that they don’t actually have to spend any money. And then all the money that they’re using to pay these people is not taxed, because it exists in this private foundation realm. So, isn’t that – sorry, this is such a very Sally’s niche interest EHR opening, but it’s just, like, really pissed me off.

EMILY: What a depressing reality we live in. Tybalt’s biting me. Ah!

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, yeah that’s upsetting. What a great way – what a – what a, um, great start to the episode about Mat dying. Which is the main –

SALLY: Well, Mat would also probably hoard his wealth.

EMILY: I mean, he does.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, he keeps it all in chests. In his little –

SALLY: Chests. Yeah, Mat is a private foundation robber baron.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: It’s just, like, really pissed me off.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And, like, [laughs] there was a huge push in congress a few years back to be like, “you have to do five percent in grants,” and they were all like, “Oh no, we will simply run out of money.”

EMILY: Because everyone in congress runs those organizations, because they’re all – I mean, I read textbooks for a living [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, she does. It’s pretty funny.

EMILY: I edit textbooks for a living and, um, it’s so funny reading all the stuff about the Gilded Age, you know, that’s meant for second and third graders that’s like, “Here’s what monopolies are. Monopolies are bad, and that’s why we outlawed them” or whatever. And I’m like, “Literally nothing has – that law means nothing there are still – look around us. What do you think Amazon is?”

SALLY: Yeah, what do you think Disney is? What do you think Microsoft is? I was also reading in this book that, like, the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation is famous for providing vaccines in Africa, you know?

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: And they're whole thing is "we've saved a hundred thousand lives," but, like, the very international trade law that allows Microsoft to operate its monopoly also prevents vaccines, like basic vaccines and other medications being shipped into Africa and being provided to the populous at, like, the basic health care human right level. So, like, you're not actually doing anything good, like, you could just get rid of the monopoly and then healthcare would be fine.

EMILY: Eat the rich.

SALLY: Yeah. Anyway, eat the rich. Sorry, Mat Cauthon, that's the one point against you. He claims to hate the rich people, but Mat is a rich people.

EMILY: I know. It is interesting. Mat is, um, goes – Mat's progression from, "I'm just a poor boy."

SALLY: "Nobody loves me."

EMILY: To, like, the wealthiest character in the series, but also, like, that wealth is so rarely...Janet just texted me, "The Mat Damon twins?"

SALLY: Oh. From *Teen Wolf*? [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: So sad that I knew immediately. I was like, "Yeah, the Mat Damon twins" [laughs].

EMILY: My friend Janet is watching *Teen Wolf*, which is really delightful for me personally. Um, although I still have to talk her out of watching the later seasons.

SALLY: Well, if I did it, she has to do it.

EMILY: [laughing] Oh, if you suffered?

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: [laughing] You absolutely, one hundred percent chose –

SALLY: I know!

EMILY: Against my advice!

SALLY: [laughs] And how else would I have seen the un-sexy cowboys?

EMILY: They were very un-sexy. I can't, she says, they're too awful [laughs].

SALLY: They're –

EMILY: They're really bad.

SALLY: Everyone – and this is no shade. Nobody has to be attractive – but everyone has to be like, “Look at how hot they are,” and I'm like, “They are just two normal looking dudes.”

EMILY: Yeah, it is pretty upsetting in *Teen Wolf* how you get these, um, these guys who they're – you're like, “You're attractive by nature of the fact that you have a six pack, I guess?”

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: I'm like, “Yes they have what is considered to be an attractive male body by 21<sup>st</sup> century gross standards.” But I'm also like, “Dylan O'Brien is right there. Never fetishized by the show. Just being a totally lovely normal looking.”

SALLY: Totally hot, too.

EMILY: Although he did get a little bit jacked after he went to *The Maze Runner*.

SALLY: Yeah, and the outfits they put him in just made him look like he had the biggest shoulders in the whole world.

EMILY: I know.

SALLY: Because they were still trying to be like, “This is Stiles and he dresses in clothes that are too big for him.” And I'm like, “You made this book look [laughing] like, just, like, his shoulders are so big.”

EMILY: I know!

SALLY: And it's, like, nothing against it. It's just a very funny costuming choice.

EMILY: I'm just, like, fascinated by the idea that *Teen Wolf* is like, “We're going to have our teen protagonist be shirtless or, if they're women, in their bras for 80% of the screen time or whatever, *except* for Dylan O'Brien.”

SALLY: Except for Dylan O'Brien.

EMILY: Dylan O'Brien we never see with his shirt off. We never see him in any state of undress.

SALLY: Do you think that's in his contract? [laughs]

EMILY: I don't know!

SALLY: Or were they just like –

EMILY: Is the thing. Or if they were just like emphasizing the fact that he's the normal, non-supernatural character by letting him, I don't know, have a normal teen body. That we're not allowed to see because he's a normal teen.

SALLY: It's weird, man.

EMILY: Okay [laughs]. This is Everybody Hates Rand. I don't know which part of that intro are going to stay.

SALLY: Sounds great. I can't wait.

EMILY: Is it gonna be the *Teen Wolf* fetishizing thing or the tax laws?

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Historically probably the tax laws. Um, this is your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: I'm Sally Goodger.

EMILY: Tybalt...oh.

SALLY: Just hovering over his bowl.

EMILY: Doesn't really have enough food to eat, but.

SALLY: We'll give it a shake-a-roo [metal shaking noises].

EMILY: There you go bud. Sad boy.

SALLY: Tybalt won't eat if the food is not in the center of [laughing] his bowl.

EMILY: I know. It's so ridiculous. I spend so much of my life shaking his bowl to make sure that the kibble is in the center.

SALLY: [laughing, snorts]

EMILY: Where he can best access it. Stupid. Okay, we're on our penultimate section of *The Fires of Heaven*. Uh, which means we are in the thick of climax zone.

SALLY: [air horn noises]

EMILY: [air horn noises] So, we're picking up right where we left off, which is Moiraine disappearing with Lanfear into – Lan and Lanfear.

SALLY: [whispers] I know.

EMILY: Boy, it is tough. They're not usually near each other on screen until this very moment. Uh, with Moiraine and Lanfear disappearing into the doorway. Rand just sort of stands there staring at it, and the doorway sort of erupts with, like, lightning's coming out of it. There's tons of smoke. I – I don't – is it really resolved what happens to it? The next time we see it, if we ever see it again, it's, like, melted.

SALLY: Yeah. Rand's like, "Starts melting, I don't know."

EMILY: Yeah, and all he can do is kind of channel the smoke up, but it's just, like, no longer accessible. Um, and I think later we find out, specifically from Moiraine, that this is due to negative effects of both of them channeling while they're going through the doorway. You know, the Aelfinn are really uptight about their rules. Um, and while you can get in with, what is it? Music, instruments of iron, whatever there are other – fire. Their dreaded [laughs].

SALLY: Their weaknesses.

EMILY: Their Achilles Heels. You can get in with those, which is why they ask about them, but you simply cannot channel inside there. Um, so it fucks up the *ter'angreal*. And Rand is just kind of like, "Well, whoopsie." As Lan comes up and is like, "Ah dunk." And Rand's like, "You can't go after her Lan." And Lan's like, "I know." And just, like, peaces out.

SALLY: Yeah. He's like, "Bye. Moiraine –"

EMILY: He just turns around and walks away. And Ran's like, "Okay."

SALLY: [sniffs] Bye, Dad.

EMILY: [laughs] "Well, we'll continue this conversation later I guess." Um, Lanfear's bubble has come – or I guess Rand did that bubble.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: His bubble has come down, so he can see Egwene. Egg is sort of collapsed with Aviendha and Mat. Mat is fanning her with his hat, which is simply the funniest.

SALLY: Yeah. It's, like, sure.

EMILY: Most useless thing I can think of [laughs]. And probably exactly what I would do if someone had fainted and I had no medical expertise.



SALLY: Be like, “Are you hot?”

EMILY: What can I do?

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Is this helpful? Asmodean’s, like, looking around for Lanfear.

SALLY: Yeah, he’s like, “Oh, shit!”

EMILY: “She’s gonna come – gonna jump out from around a corner. I don’t believe she’s really gone.”

SALLY: Uh, yeah, but.

EMILY: Rand’s like, “Is she okay?” Egg’s like [weakly] “I’m fine.”

SALLY: [coughing noises]

EMILY: [hoarsely] “I’m just dying.” And it’s like, Aviendha, why are you up and about? And she’s like, “Well, Lanfear had me just slightly less than she had Egg.” Which is, like, she’s like, “That explains the difference.” And I’m like, “It doesn’t, really, though.”

SALLY: No, it doesn’t.

EMILY: Because, you know, from our point of view, Lanfear had them for the exact same amount of time. And also, like, um, I just don’t, I don’t know. It’s just a very convenient plot excuse to get Egg out of the way. And I don’t really know why, considering that Aviendha herself immediately gets shoved out of the plot as soon as they get to Caemlyn.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Whatever. But the Wise Ones come up and are like, “She’ll be fine. She just can’t – she just has to rest for the next few days, essentially.” And everyone’s like, “Aw dunk.” So they are, uh, helping Egwene and the wounded, and Rand, sort of trying to figure out – he’s, like, going around figuring out what’s going on. What the status is. He’s like, “Without Moiraine no one can get healed.” Because no one else who can channel can heal, because the Aiel Wise Ones don’t know how to heal, which is buck wild to me.

SALLY: I know. I feel like that is the most useful that skill that Aes Sedai have, and, like, nobody – like, I know there’s, like, a whole Ajah where that’s there thing, but in terms of character count the percentage of people who know how to heal well, is [laughing] way too low.

EMILY: It’s *bizarre!*

SALLY: Yeah [laughs]. Like, that would be the one thing I'd be like, "I'm gonna learn everything about this, because that's so useful."

EMILY: Yeah, especially if you are living in fantasy land, where people are getting stabbed all the time, you know?

SALLY: Yeah. Everyone's got diarrhea all the time or whatever.

EMILY: Ugh. Fucking...

SALLY: Dysentery.

EMILY: Dysentery. Typhoid. Diphtheria.

SALLY: [laughs] Everyone is getting stabbed constantly.

EMILY: I can name diseases!

SALLY: [laughing] Good job, Emily.

EMILY: Those are just all the Oregon Trail diseases.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs]. I mean, those are the danger ones, right?

EMILY: Cholera! [laughs]

SALLY: That's why everyone died on the Oregon Trail, because they got all the shitting diseases.

EMILY: That's true. I mean, smallpox was the really big one. Did you hear the eliminated smallpox in Africa?

SALLY: That's awesome!

EMILY: Yeah. Way to go. 2020!

SALLY: Whoo!

EMILY: What was I saying about diseases? Yeah, I find it so aggravating when authors or whoever are like, "We're in a fantasy world, where people are getting stabbed constantly, so we're giving people healing powers, like, healing power is one of the magical powers, but, oh wait, that will totally eliminate the danger of people being stabbed. So now we have to put massive, and usually sort of arbitrary, limits on healing."

SALLY: Yeah. It's very strange. And then Nynaeve can just, like, heal whatever. So it's, like, but Nynaeve is never –

EMILY: With!

SALLY: At the battles?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Especially the first half of the series. She's, like, never at the battles.

EMILY: Yeah, she's never where she needs to be in terms of who needs healing.

SALLY: Yeah, so it's just very frustrating, because it's, like, you'd think the Aiel Wise Ones, growing up in – living in such a militaristic society they'd be like, "This is great. We can do more fighting if we know how to do more healing."

EMILY: Yeah, it's never explained how healing could develop, uh, in one society and culture, but not in another one. Especially because the Aiel are literally, like, descended from the servants from the Aes Sedai and Rhuidean was built by, like, Aes Sedai it is implied. So you would think they would be like, "Hey, here's healing. Pass this down for generations please"

SALLY: Listen, two different men invented calculus at the same time.

EMILY: Yeah! It happens!

SALLY: [laughing] You think two different groups of people can't invent healing.

EMILY: Yeah, I assume the Sea Folk don't have healing, either.

SALLY: Yeah, it's one of those weird – it's got a weird undertone of, like, the Western world has modern medicine.

EMILY: Has medicine, yeah.

SALLY: But the rest of them don't.

EMILY: I just think that it is reasonable to have some limits on medical aid. Especially because – excuse me, I have a popcorn kernel.

SALLY: [chuckles]

EMILY: Especially because we have limits on modern medicine in terms of who has money and who doesn't. At least in America. I know that is not the case in most civilized societies. Civilized is a loaded term. In most developed countries.

SALLY: Yeah, in most, I don't know. Countries that care about other human beings.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: That's not America!

EMILY: Who cares? [laughs] Popcorn kernel.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Um, but, like, yeah, the sort of arbitrary "well, just some people can do it and some people can't" is sort of ridiculous. And sort of makes me feel like we're in this, like, weird Dungeons and Dragons rules zone where only the clerics can heal.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I'm like, "Well, then give people healing potions," you know? Because sometimes you end up in a Dungeons and Dragons party, where your healers refuse to heal.

SALLY: Been there.

EMILY: Yeah! Currently there. And it's, like, got have healing potions.

SALLY: I can't die in this motherfucker.

EMILY: I can't die just because the bard is like, "Would rather shoot lightning than heal your stab wound." And I'm like, "Listen, I sort of get it. But also, [laughing] I do have a stab wound."

SALLY: But also, Egg is bleeding out on the docks or whatever.

EMILY: Bleck. Blegh!

SALLY: And they're like [laughing], "She just needs to rest and she'll be fine.

EMILY: "She just needs to rest, and we'll bleed her with leeches."

SALLY: Yeah, we have no idea what type of internal bleeding she has.

EMILY: Her humors are out of whack! [laughs]

SALLY: [laughing] Her womb is wandering!

EMILY: Um, so Rand sort of goes walking around and runs into Lan, where they have [laughs] the single worst conversation that two men have ever had.

SALLY: Oh my god.

EMILY: Lan's like, "I'm off. Moiraine did something to me where my bond passed to a different Aes Sedai, so I have to go be with her now." And Rand's like, "Okay." And Lan's like [hoarsely], "If you ever see Nynaeve, I need you to break [laughing] up with her for me."

SALLY: Rand's like, "Noo!"

EMILY: Rand's like, "No? And also you are fully, like, fifty something. Be a – "

SALLY: Be a man, Lan.

EMILY: "Do it your fucking self."

SALLY: Time to be a big boy now [laughs].

EMILY: I mean, like, in the breakup scheme of things, having your mentee do it, is, like, a step below breaking up with someone by text.

SALLY: Like, I think it's actually the worst way you could possibly do it. Like, here's my teen boy.

EMILY: Facebook messenger is way up here in comparison to the boy I taught how to sword fight.

SALLY: Yeah like, "Listen, Lan can't date you anymore."

EMILY: "Uh, Lan says."

SALLY: "Cuz he's fucking some other lady."

EMILY: "He's sleeping with someone else now and fuck you. Great! Great."

SALLY: "This has been a great conversation."

EMILY: I mean, Rand does say, "Nynaeve would not believe me, simply." Because Nynaeve has a brain and knows that Lan has this martyr complex. I just wrote a whole blog about Lan and how much I hate him [laughs]. And how much I hate the value that the plot places on him, and the sort of things that he says to Rand here. And how damaging they are to, uh, Rand. Because Lan says, "People like – men like you and me are only ever going to bring suffering to women. So the best way to stop that is to eliminate [laughs] women from our lives." Which is, like...what?

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: That logic...is astounding.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs], like, I don't even know where to start. It's...it really just doesn't make sense.

EMILY: I mean, we've said it all before, I think, but this is really, like, an encapsulation of Lan being like, "Here's my value system," which is becoming Rand's value system, although Rand also had the foundation in place, we are told from his *Manetheren* upbringing, which is similar to the Borderlands. Um, but it sort of puts a system into place in this series where, although women are more present and are much greater participants than they are in many of the fantasy, like, installments, books, movies, whatever, prior to this series, they are still not allowed to be their own agents. They're still positioned, inevitably, as emotional, um, cruxes by which men turn.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So, ultimately, by having – like I – [sighs] it – Lan isn't a character – well, okay. This is, this is a debate, I wouldn't say Lan is a character totally worth eliminating. Lan does bring a couple of things to the plot. Not a *lot*, but a couple of things. As an introduction to the Warder system, generally as Moiraine's partner, he's fine.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Whatever. But in terms of, um, his value to Rand as a mentor. In terms of his relationship to Nynaeve as a lover, he is one hundred percent useless, because of this attitude he has toward women and toward himself as a suicidal maniac.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Literally in the, this has been upsetting me for days, so I'm sorry if you already read about it in my blog, but here it goes. In the – *A Memory of Light*, Lan is charging to kill Demandred, for no reason, it's the stupidest plot point, and he is like, "I know what I'm doing is stupid and suicidal, but you never change the world if you're not stupid [laughs] and suicidal."

SALLY: What?!

EMILY: And I was like, "What kind of Fast and Furious logic is this?"

SALLY: [laughing] I live my life one quarter mile at a time.

EMILY: Like, seriously though!

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: It is like – I was like, "This is, like, something the NCAA puts in a commercial. Hey, men! Break your bodies! It's the only way you can contribute to the world."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: “Hey, men. Kill yourselves.” Like, what a horrible message to send to men!

SALLY: Yeah, I think it especially, like, adds like a really toxic layer when we are thinking about Rand in terms of mental illness.

EMILY: Mm.

SALLY: And how Lan is just, like, constantly telling Rand “There is no point to your life. You are ultimately going to die, and you are ultimately going to choose when to kill yourself by your actions.”

EMILY: “And you’re ultimately going to hurt everyone around you.”

SALLY: Yeah! Yeah! And it’s, like, what are you saying?

EMILY: So [mumbles] thesis: Lan almost blew up the world. Indirectly, but.

SALLY: Lan’s like, “I’m gonna really fuck up our Dragon Reborn just like mentally, emotionally.”

EMILY: Yeah, the toxicity is, like, through the roof.

SALLY: It is carcinogenic [laughs].

EMILY: Because yeah! Imagine you’re a savoir figure, and you are told by your mentor figure, “You’re going to die. Not only is there no hope, you’re going to die, but it’s also going to fuck up everyone you allow to get close to you.” And, like, even though that is, in some sense, a reality, like, of course if you die young, if you die at all, people close to you are going to mourn you.

SALLY: Yeah, of course!

EMILY: But there’s also the, like, much to be said about dying with dignity, about dying, um, in a way that you choose.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It’s, like, there’s also power to life, Lan.

SALLY: Yeah! And it’s, like, just because Rand is more – like 99% running towards death as he runs towards Armageddon, doesn’t mean that his life isn’t meaningful right now while he’s *alive*. And that he can’t be, like, have good, positive relationships with people without, like, dragging everybody down by people like, “I’m gonna die so there’s no point in me putting time and effort into our relationship.”

EMILY: I know. Like, sharp contrast with another thing we've been watching recent, which is *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, where you have a savior figure who is full of joy and vitality. Which, I know it's, like, a kids' show. Like, I get that, but it's also, like, so much of Aang's story is rendered meaningful by the fact that he has relationships with people and is looking for happiness and is looking for meaning.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: And Rand is just like, "Everything sucks, and I'm the worst."

SALLY: No – yeah!

EMILY: "So maybe I'll destroy the world." And it's, like, "Yeah, [laughs] if that's your perspective, dude."

SALLY: Yeah, I had never really framed *Avatar* like that, but I think in that way it's like a really...bold and sexy take of *Avatar*. Because you think of all of our savior figures and even, like, and I know Frodo is going through his whole extreme PTSD thing, so that's kind of a more nuanced story, but even Frodo is like, "Ahhhhh!" [laughs]

EMILY: Yeah, Frodo [laughs], especially by the end there is like, "Bah!"

SALLY: And Sam has to be like [softly], "Okay, let's take our Zoloft. Climb up the mountain" [laughs]. So yeah, it's just so, ugh, it's so toxular — toxic, this, like, nuclear waste conversation between the two of them.

EMILY: [shuddering noises] Um.

SALLY: And it's so sad, because it's, like, less than a page in length, really. And it's, like, the whole rest of everything is Rand being like, "MAH! Women."

EMILY: Yeah, and the troubling thing is that it could exist if the narrative at all condemned it. And I was reading something interesting today about, like, we shouldn't be so quick to, um, condemn authors or narratives for presenting morally gray characters, or characters that you don't agree with, or ideologies that you don't agree with. And not, like, going out of their way to be like, "This is the bad one." But the problem with *The Wheel of Time* is that it makes concepts like these, like that Rand and Lan are embodying, so central to the plot and to the salvation of the world, that there is no other message to take away from it than this is fine.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Or this is normal, or this is good.

SALLY: Yeah, and I also think – while I agree that ultimately literature exists not, like, it shouldn't just be everything you agree with all the time – but I also think there's an argument to be made about, like, if something that you're writing has such, like, a toxic result in the world –



like, thinking about the impact it has on female readers or young male readers to be like, “Women must be put on pedestals.” Like, I think there needs to be room for criticism like that, because, exactly, *The Wheel of Time* is like, “There’s nothing else to take from this than that women do not have agency.”

EMILY: Yeah, women can be controlled by the men in their lives. Women’s feelings are totally to do with what men decide to do with them. And yeah, men bring no value unless they are suicidal, essentially.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It’s very frustrating, especially because we do have an example of a self-preservationist in Mat [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, who’s just like, “Whee,” like.

EMILY: And Mat is constantly, as we have also said, feminized by the text.

SALLY: Mm-hm. So anyway, in another extremely toxic plot, Lan goes off to – is it Myrelle?

EMILY: Yeah. Myrelle, however you say it.

SALLY: And has a really disgusting post-Moiraine fling with this woman.

EMILY: Which, like, we don’t know how consensual it is.

SALLY: Yeah, exactly. I was gonna say it doesn’t seem very consensual to me for, like, on Lan’s behalf.

EMILY: Yeah, so great. Love it.

SALLY: And then he goes off and marries Nynaeve.

EMILY: Meanwhile, Rand is like, “Ah dang. This is, like, a whole ass explosion.”

SALLY: [snorts]

EMILY: “Everyone is watching.”

SALLY: [snorts] How embarrassing.

EMILY: He’s like, “Ugh, now Rahvin might now that I’m coming, which is, like, the exact opposite of what I wanted.” And he’s like, “Rand you’re such a dummy. Allow yourself to mourn for Moiraine.” So he goes into, like, a shed [laughs] or something. And takes out Moiraine’s letter and reads it, which is where he finds out that she has known about this future and has been planning for it since she went to Rhuidean. Uh, and she gives him some advice,

including to not trust women who is currently an Aes Sedai. Notably she says Alviarin and Verin are your – either Alviarin and Verin, and I get that that’s supposed to be like a spectrum of “like here’s the Aes Sedai you’re most familiar with and probably most inclined to trust besides me as opposed to Alviarin who you don’t know at all, and just had a – ”

SALLY: Creepy letter from.

EMILY: “Really creepy letter from.” But they are also, spoiler alert, both Black Ajah. And, although we also know that Verin is ultimately working for the good guys, it’s just sort of like a fun little nugget of foreshadowing there. She also is like, “Okay, I get it about Jasin. I get why you had to do it.”

SALLY: Oh! I was like, “Jason?” [laughs]

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Jason Bourne?

EMILY: Jason Bourne. She’s like, “I get it, about Nateal, but please be careful.” Which is sad, because it could have been a moment that is foreshadowing, but, like, Asmodean’s life [laughs] was cut off by the end of this book.

SALLY: [laughs] Gone before his time.

EMILY: Like, again, Asmodean, unlike any of the other Forsaken, would have been interesting to have around for a while. Because he could potentially have been the first Forsaken character that we, uh, liked, or trusted and he could have then betrayed Rand, or maybe didn’t.

SALLY: Yeah, he just like – in – he actually had a unique perspective to offer the story and Robert Jordan is like [laughs], “Don’t need him.”

EMILY: “Don’t need him.”

SALLY: Instead, I need 40,000 different women who all work for the White Tower. It’s like, “I don’t need all of those.”

EMILY: Bruh. Bruh. Bro.

SALLY: Just keep Asmo-deen around for a few more books.

EMILY: I feel like he took Asmo-deen so he could put in Mazrim Taim, which is such a bad trade.

SALLY: Like, bring me back Asmo-deen.

EMILY: Bring me back Asmo-deen, and have Asmo-deen start the Black Tower. He would be less obviously bad than Mazrim Taim.

SALLY: I know! Mazrim Taim comes on screen, like, literally just, like, dripping grease and filth.

EMILY: He's like twirling his mustaches. He's dragging –

SALLY: He's literally got a maiden tied to a train track! [laughs]

EMILY: He's like, "Ignore the woman I've tied to the train track behind me, and the bank I'm currently robbing."

SALLY: And Rand's like, "Sounds reasonable!" [laughs]

EMILY: "I'm fine!" And Rand's like, "Would you care to educate the populous?"

SALLY: It's, like, [laughs] the most upsetting sequence in the whole world.

EMILY: BAH! We'll get there.

SALLY: [shuddering noises] [laughs] Would you care to educate the populous?

EMILY: [laughs] It's so – it makes me so angry.

SALLY: It would be so funny if Asmo-deen was in charge of the Black Tower.

EMILY: I know. It would be funny. And she's like, "And deliver this letter to Thom."

SALLY: "My lover."

EMILY: [gags] Which he will. So Rand reads this letter, is like, "Great, even more for me to feel guilty and upset about. Blah, blah, blah. I hate when women's deaths [laughs] inconvenience me in this way."

SALLY: [laughs] Okay, but that's, like, literally what he says.

EMILY: I know!

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And then Sulin walks in and does her whole, starts breaking spears because Rand did not invite the Maidens on this raid. And she's like, "You can't change me. This is what I am. I am a soldier the same as any man. And to treat me like anything else is a huge disrespect." And he's like, "Fine, I won't do it anymore, but it'll just be bad for me. I'll just –"

SALLY: She's like [whispers], "I don't give a shit."

EMILY: [whispers] I don't give a shit. And we the readers are like, "It is totally your choice how you are affected by things."

SALLY: Yeah! Like, I get it. Like, if something upsets you, you would probably have to put in work before it will just stop upsetting you, but you could also choose to put in that work, and like work through your feelings on your own fucking time.

EMILY: Yeah, Rand, therapy is an option.

SALLY: Yeah, also therapy is a treatment plan. It is not just talking about your feelings over and over again.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: For 18,000 pages. Like, you need to do some work [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah, we're just stuck in this cycle of Rand being like, "But it upsets me so much when women die." And women being like, "That's not my problem, because you're not – I'm not that person in your life. I'm not here to help you work through that. I am literally just a soldier in your army." Sulin's like, "I don't have time to mom you, despite how fucking unbelievable mad you get when women like me do mom you. Like, take it – you get it one way or another bub." Like, come on.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So anyway, Rand walks out of the shed. He's like, "Fine, Maidens get to come." All the other Maidens who are outside are like, "Whoo! Sweet."

SALLY: "Yeehaw."

EMILY: And Mat's standing there, lounging and grinning and is like, "Are we doing this or what?" And Rand's like "Why are you fucking smiling?" And Mat's like, "What do you want me to do? Cry?"

SALLY: He's like, "I'm alive!"

EMILY: "What are you smiling about?" "What do you want me to do? Cry?" It's, like, does Mat ever cry in the narrative? I can't remember a time when... all –

SALLY: I feel like he's mostly just puking or laughing.

EMILY: He's mostly just puking or falling or punching things. The only time I remember him being close to tears is after, um, Tylin rapes him, which is upsetting, but, like, I don't know. I'm

always fascinated by how much male characters, especially written by men, cry. Because men are like, “My male characters can’t cry. Because I, a man in America, can’t cry.”

SALLY: [laughs] “I’ve never – I don’t even have tear ducts. I’m like Tybalt.”

EMILY: “I don’t have tear ducts.”

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I’m like, “Let me cry! It’s fine!”

SALLY: Crying is so nice.

EMILY: It’s also an instinctive reaction to pain. And anger and a lot of other things.

SALLY: Crying is so good. I love crying.

EMILY: Yeah, it also just adds to Robert Jordan’s whole torture porn fetish, which is he’s constantly having women getting beaten up or spanked or whatever. And they’re always in tears about it.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Whereas Mat and Perrin are literally never allowed to cry on screen.

SALLY: I think Perrin would die if he cried. Oh my god I just read this scene in *The Shadow Rising* –

EMILY: Oh wait, he did cry on Faile.

SALLY: Oh, that’s right. After his WHOLE FAMILY WAS MURDERED!

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Robert Jordan has, like, a bar. Like, if you’ve reached X number of family members brutally murdered you can cry one time.

EMILY: Yeah, there’s like a whole list.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: All your family is dead, you can get to cry one time. And he’s like, “Mat? Mat, you don’t get to cry despite being sexually assaulted.”

SALLY: No.

EMILY: “That’s not quote unquote good enough to warrant tears.”

SALLY: Your *whole* extended family has to be slaughtered.

EMILY: Yep.

SALLY: And then you can cry...once.

EMILY: And only on a woman.

SALLY: Only on a woman’s titties.

EMILY: [shuddering noises] Anyway. They’re like, “Okie dokie, let’s get this show on the road.” Um, Rand brings Mat and Asmodean and Aviendha with him to the courtyard where they’re taking off from I guess. He’s like, “Goddamn everyone in Cairhien knows we’re going.”

SALLY: Like you stupid –

EMILY: “What even is the point?” But he crates this portal, his skimming portal because Traveling is still not yet introduced into this narrative – it, like, always boggles my mind how long it takes Traveling to get there, because it’s, like, so vital and necessary. And I’m like, “Some characters don’t have it until, like, Book 11.” And it’s like, “What? How are we living like this?” Ahhhh.

SALLY: Just not teleporting, baby.

EMILY: Anyway, he makes this big platform, everyone gets on it, including most, you know, of the Aiel. Some of the Aiel. And they start Traveling toward Caemlyn. Someone falls off halfway through. And Rand’s like, “God I hope they have a heart attack before they starve to death.” And I’m like, “They’re Aiel, they’ve got to have, like, sixteen knives on them. I think if they choose to end it, they can end it.” Um, anyway, they manage to skim to Caemlyn. Literally to directly the spot where Rand, and then later Mat, broke into the palace by climbing that wall. The garden wall. As they get there, Rand’s like, “Oh my god, what are my feelings? Women? Elayne? Aviendha? Min? Who knows!” But he opens the gateway, um, and a – all the Aiel jump out. Rand goes last by – because he has to or the platform will disappear or whatever. Um, and sort of – things happen very quickly. It’s like the wall, the inner wall of the palace sort of explodes outward and a bunch of Trollocs come out, and then a bunch of lightning comes down from the sky.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Very quickly. So Rand sort of channels to protect himself, but is too late, When he comes too, I guess, he looks around and is like, “Oh, they weren’t just targeting me. Mat is dead. Asmodean is dead, and Aviendha is dead.” And of course we would be remiss not to note that their bodies are, um, preserved on various levels, depending on the author’s need to make them

accessible, I guess. Asmodean gets zero dignity in death in terms of his body and what happens to it, because he was a bad guy.

SALLY: Yeah, it's all charred and.

EMILY: Mat is not a sexualized figure to the protagonist, so he is, um, not, like, perfect and beautiful as the day, as the moment of post-coital bliss or whatever as Aviendha is. Uh, but he's also one of the good guys so his body's intact.

SALLY: Yeah, he's just knocked out of his boots and smoking a little.

EMILY: Yeah, which I think is just an interesting thing to track. Especially because Brandon Sanderson, who will take over the series later, is a big proponent of verisimilitude in battle scenes and good guys not necessarily having perfectly preserved bodies after death. He's like, "People get beheaded. And that just happens sometimes. It's a pretty quick death all things considered."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So yeah, sometimes our good guys get parted with their heads. Um, but you know. It's a fantasy trope thing.

SALLY: Yeah, but Aviendha is, like, laid out like Sleeping Beauty with her beautiful red hair.

EMILY: Yeah, it's like, "She's beautiful. Just her eyes are open. That's how I know she's dead. And also she's cold." And I'm like, "Shut up." Rand then is like, "RAHVIN!!"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [laughs] And goes to chase after Rahvin. He opens a gateway. As usual in these sequences, he doesn't really know what he's doing, so he just sort of does it.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, and I guess we will figure out pretty quickly later on that he has actually entered *tel'aran'rhiod*, but until then it's a little bit unclear. So he is now on the hunt for Rahvin. Okay, and that chapter, uh, doesn't technically end – we then go over to Nynaeve – but we'll talk about that next week. Lump it in with Nynaeve joining the climax, I guess.

SALLY: Which is – I don't know if I really – like the first time I was reading this book I was like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, we're going. We're going." And it's kind of very odd at the end that it's Rand and Nynaeve end up in the same place.

EMILY: It is interesting.

SALLY: It's just, like, not what I would have expecting reading this – like re-reading this book again, I'm like, "These aren't the characters that would come together in the end."

EMILY: Yeah, we so rarely get to see, I mean, any of our main protagonists fighting together in the same, like, space. And notably Rand and Nynaeve are still separated for most of it, although they are fighting the same person. Which is interesting, but Rand is largely unaware of Nynaeve. Um, but yeah, this series goes so far out of its way to keep its protagonists in their separate battlefields, that it is very odd that suddenly they're intersecting here.

SALLY: [claps] Running into each other. But, I mean, Nynaeve's the one I would want in battle with me.

EMILY: I know bruh, she's awesome.

SALLY: [laughing] Nynaeve is like the most powerful person in the whole world.

EMILY: She can't even channel, technically, in *tel'aran'rhiod* and she figures out how to get that channeling power, via Moghedien.

SALLY: She's just like, "Yeehaw, it's me. The most powerful woman in the world."

EMILY: Rahvin's like, "What the?"

SALLY: "I did not count on this" [laughs].

EMILY: Nynaeve's like, "I've kicked three Forsaken asses in the last two books alone. Moghedien's twice, obviously. Obviously." Uh, but we'll get to that in a little more depth next time, since it's mostly action plus epilogue. But, yeah, we're, like, at the end of *Fires of Heaven*. Damn.

SALLY: We're getting there, yeah. It kind of snuck up on me a little.

EMILY: I know, it all goes very quickly once you get to that battle in, uh, Cairhien.

SALLY: Ah, Cairhien.

EMILY: [laughs] Cairhien! But, uhhhhhhh, anything you want to add?

SALLY: Uh, nope, just, uh, please check us out on Patreon. If you are enjoying the pocast, supporting us on Patreon is a really great way to, uh, make sure the podcast continues. Um, that's how we do stuff like pay for our hosting fees on Libsyn and buy equipment and stuff like that. Um, plus you get access to a lot of really great bonus content, like Emily's aforementioned blogs. Um, and, uh, our other podcast and our blooper reels and stuff like that. So.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.



SALLY: Pretty good bargain if I may say so myself.

EMILY: Indeed. Thank you to Glynna Mackenzie for our theme song. Thank you for listening, and do you have a sign off?

SALLY: I actually have a listener submitted sign off that we've been sitting on for a few weeks, so I'm really sorry, Robby. Um, but we're getting to it now. And we – and it's also on theme because it's about *Avatar: The Last Airbender*.

EMILY: [gasps]

SALLY: I mean, technically it's about *Legend of Korra*, but whatever. Um, so Robby writes, "My sister and I have recently started re-watching *Legend of Korra* on Netflix and my love for General Iroh, the grandson of Zuko and the [laughs] love of my life, is rather enthusiastic."

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: I forget that they name – re-name a character.

EMILY: I know, and it's actually the same voice actor, too.

SALLY: Yeah. Hah!

EMILY: And you're like, "Huh! What's happening?"

SALLY: "While I was cooking dinner for the parents this week, my sister and I were Facetiming, talking very passionately about the show." That is so adorable. "In my excitement I very loudly exclaimed my favorite EHR expression saying, 'God, I want General Iroh to step on me.'"

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughing] "My parents, who had entered the kitchen without warning, stood frozen in confusion and concern, as I had to rapid fire explain that I didn't *actually* want someone to step on me and that I was, in fact, not in love with a cartoon character. To their credit, they said they were very supportive of me, [laughing] which made this parental exchange one for the history books: trauma section." [laughs]

EMILY: We support you!

SALLY: I can not even begin imagining how to describe to my parents the phrase, "I want them to step on me."

EMILY: I know. I can't. It's too many layers of, like, nuance and sexual nuance.

SALLY: They would just be like – especially my dad. He would be like, "I – " zoom [laughs].

EMILY: I mean, imagine my parents.

SALLY: Chris would be like, “Wait, what?”

EMILY: I mean, I would literally never bring up sex –

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: In front of my parents. Ever. Literally ever.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: The notion horrifies me.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Deep into my bones.

SALLY: Yeah, kind of same.

EMILY: [shuddering noises]

SALLY: Anyway.

EMILY: You’re very brave, Robby.

SALLY: Step on me! Yeah, you are very brave.

EMILY: Step on me, General Iroh!

SALLY: [laughing] Bye!

EMILY: Thanks for listening! Bye!