



Episode 136: The Forsaken Reality
TV

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

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

(theme song by Glynna MacKenzie plays)

Sally: So anyway, weird energy, but we're here. We're alive. Um, and we're kicking.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) I'm very tired.

Emily: We're both really tired, and this is, um, I don't know -- we're just surrounded by boxes.

Sally: I know.

Emily: This is the one place we haven't really unpacked yet.

Sally: Yeah, it's -- I'm hoping to do it tomorrow. It's just been intimidating me, 'cause there's so much stuff. Um, this is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast.

Emily: Season six, Sally's doing the intro.

Sally: Apparently. I just thought we needed to get --

Emily: No, I never will.

Sally: To pick up the momentum. (laugh)

Emily: No, I like it.

Sally: I hate you. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Um. I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And Tybalt is also in the room.

Emily: Um, and we do have to talk about the Lord of Chaos prologue, but I don't think anyone wants that, really. (laugh)

Sally: I mean, we could also do our cover analysis, because boy howdy, is this a, um --

Emily: There's a lot to talk about, to think about, to meditate about.

Sally: 'Cause, I mean, there's just, like -- I know this is supposed to be one of the, like --

Emily: Draghkar.

Sally: Drag cars, um --

Emily: But they're not even in that fight.

Sally: Yeah, but it's just, like, a horrifying bat of weird proportions. (laugh)

Emily: It reminds me of, um, the monster in the classic non-Disney film, the Swan Princess.

Sally: Mm. I've never seen that one, I don't think.

Emily: What? "Odette!" It has Odette and Prince -- I don't know what his name is. He's got a bowl cut, though. He's got a Prince Valiant cut, as my mother would say.

Sally: (laugh) Um, I mean, the first thing we have to address -- the elephant in the room -- is Rand al'Thor on this cover. He looks ... kind of like John Travolta?

Emily: He does a bit, yeah.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: That's a good celebrity --

Sally: Um, his hair is horrendous.

Emily: He's wearing a very deep V.

Sally: Yeah. Sarah McClintock --

Emily: He's wearing, like, a Fabio shirt.

Sally: Um, eyeballed his proportions for us. Let me look them up, because he is fully on his Dorito body.

Emily: It's pretty nonsensical, actually. Like, I don't think the head -- each of his shoulders is about a width and a half of one of his heads.

Sally: Yeah. Sarah said his proportions are chest: 44 inches, waist: 32 inches, hip: 26 inches.

Emily: It's nonsensical.

Sally: Yeah, so he is very wide at the top and very narrow at the bottom. (laugh) Um.

Emily: I mean, what's his name, Darrell K. Sweet --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just, like, has never seen -- (laugh) Darrell K. Sweet grew up in a bubble. He's never seen another human before --

Sally: His shoulder --

Emily: And he has no access to mirrors.

Sally: His shoulders upset me so much. They are so wide.

Emily: You could so easily retouch this. I mean, again, his arms do not reach -- his, like, hands are -- his arms are very short.

Sally: (laugh) I didn't notice it. They, like, barely go past his hip.

Emily: Um, he just sort of doesn't -- I don't like to look at his face. His face doesn't match any of the other Rand faces we've seen.

Sally: No. Also, his leggings look way too short.

Emily: His whole face looks about 48.

Sally: (laugh) And it, once again, looks like he's wearing jeans.

Emily: It does look like he's wearing jeans. And this pristine white shirt, after, as we know, he's been locked in a box for, what, three days.

Sally: Mm-hmm. And I like how one hand is in a fist.

Emily: And the other is open, indicating both -- vengeance and mercy.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: I dunno.

Sally: Very good analysis.

Emily: And we have this woman swooning over here. Um, the hint is that she's Red Ajah because she's got her, like, red symbol, um --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Cloak, but she's also got red hair, like pretty much every one of Rand's love interests.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So that's a little bit confusing. I also don't know of any of the Aes Sedai who are, like, part of Dumai's Wells who fits that description.

Sally: Yeah, I don't know either.

Emily: Again, it's just sort of, like ...

Sally: Look at how wack her hair is, though. It's, like, short on top like she has a mullet.

Emily: Well, she looks like she's on a romance cover.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like --

Sally: I mean, they both do. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, they do.

Sally: The color palette of orange and pink and purple doesn't help that very much.

Emily: It's just a very troubling cover. Rand looks very domineering, which I get is, like, the point at the end of Lord of Chaos, but it's not a thing that I like.

Sally: (Texan accent) "Kneel, Aes Sedai."

Emily: (Texan accent) "Or you will be knelt."

Sally: Yeah. That's not even the line, but --

Emily: Or is that Mazrim Taim?

Sally: It is Mazrim Taim, but. Mazrim Taim doesn't get the fun Southern accent.

Emily: Well, yeah, I don't know what Mazrim -- Mazrim Taim sounds --

Sally: Mazrim Taim has an annoying Utah accent.

Emily: Like a villain.

Sally: He sounds like me.

Emily: I see you, villain.

Sally: I see you, villain!

Emily: (inaudible) It's a -- a, you -- a country accent.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: (Texan accent) Eldritch blast.

Sally: Yeehaw. (Texan accent) Eldritch blast. Uh, so anyway, the cover is ridiculous, but what else is new?

Emily: It's one of the least faves, I guess I'd say.

Sally: I -- I really like the colors on it. So, like, if we could just delete Rand from it and have this nice sunset and, like, a weird bat --

Emily: Again, the bat thing isn't there. I don't get it. There are no Dark -- hound -- Dark -- spawn, whatever.

Sally: Shadowspawn. (laugh)

Emily: Shadowspawn -- (laugh) I can't remember -- at Dumai's Wells. Like, that's the whole fucking point.

Sally: Yeah, it's people doing the bad stuff.

Emily: It's -- oh, d-d-damn. D-damn, Daniel. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) D-d-d-damn, Dan --

Emily: D-d-d-damn, D-d-d-d-Daniel.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Stupid.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I mean, I guess half the Red Ajah are also Black Ajah --

Sally: Mm. Yeah.

Emily: As we talk about in this prologue.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Do you want to look at my alt titles now or --

Sally: Oh, Christ.

Emily: In the future?

Sally: I don't know, what do I -- do we have anything to say about the prologue -- the rest of the prologue?

Emily: I mean, yeah, I can synopsise it and things. I just wanna know if we want to save the Lord of Chaos titles or if you want to just read them now because it's appropriate since we just talked about the cover.

Sally: OK, I'll read them now. Let me -- I'll put this down.

Emily: OK, for some reason, um -- I don't have an explanation for this, but I did structure all of the alternate Lord of Chaos titles as though they were articles in the Onion. I don't -- (laugh)

Sally: OK.

Emily: I don't really know why. It just sort of happened.

Sally: OK.

Emily: Like, I got two or three and then I was like, "I'm just gonna do all of them like this."

Sally: OK. OK.

Emily: So listen and judge whether I should be an Onion article writer. Here you go.

Sally: ‘Kay. (laugh) Lord of Chaos titles. (clears throat) Written by Emily Juchau on October 30th, 2020, at 11:36 a.m.

Emily: Yesterday?

Sally: That’s what it says, when the note was created.

Emily: It’s not, though. I created it the night before when Egg’s sprang into my head.

Sally: (clears throat) Egg: “Local sorority girl better at politics than actual politicians.” (laugh)

Emily: The entire -- that’ll -- I’ll just reuse that one for the rest of Egg’s arc as the Amyrlin. (laugh)

Sally: Good for you, Egg. Perrin: “Wolf man beginning to think that local wolves might need to unionize.” (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Dumai’s Wells is so chaotic with the wolves.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: ‘Cause Perrin’s just like, “Hey, come help me rescue my dumb friend,” and the wolves are like, “What?”

Sally: The wolves are like, “Nah.”

Emily: “We’d rather not, though.”

Sally: “Nah.” Rand: “Leadership is actually pretty easy if you kind of just let people do what they want, local dictator discovers.” (laugh) Mazrim Taim: “Villainy just isn’t as tough as it used to be, reports evil mastermind.” (laugh) I mean, seriously. He just walks in and is like, “Please give me a position of extreme power,” and Rand’s like, “This guy seems trustworthy.”

Emily: (laugh) “Sounds great. I’d love to.”

Sally: (laugh) It fucking makes me so angry.

Emily: I know. So stupid.

Sally: Elayne: “Local princess expects life to turn into a Hallmark Christmas movie any day now.” (laugh) That one’s so brutal ‘cause it’s so true.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Min. (laugh) “Woman walking out of Sephora --” (laugh) ‘Kay, sorry. “Woman walking out of Sephora braces self to be mobbed by lovestruck men.” (laugh) Nynaeve: “Woman voted Most Likely to Cure Cancer in high school still just looking for the recognition she deserves.” (laugh) Gawyn. (laugh) “Local man just keeps failing upwards.” (laugh) Um. Mat: ““It seemed like a good idea at the time,’ says man whose ideas are known to be terrible.” (laugh) And then, bonus for all, in the -- the se-seven-en voice, as it were --

Emily: Yeah, exactly.

Sally: I can’t do the voice very well.

Emily: Oh, do you want -- need me to do it?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: What’s in the box?!

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) What’s in the box?!

Sally: Unfortunately, it’s Rand.

Emily: It’s Rand. He’s in the box.

Sally: (laugh) It’s fucking --

Emily: Rand’s in -- Rand’s in the box.

Sally: So stupid. (laugh)

Emily: What?

Sally: Just that Rand is in a box.

Emily: I know. This book, man. It’s just chaotic and bad, and all of it is terrible.

Sally: These are very good.

Emily: Thank you.

Sally: This is some of your best work.

Emily: Oh. (laugh) Thank you.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Some of my best writing, I would say.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Easily. Christ.

Sally: “Local sorority girl better at politician -- politics than actual politicians” is --

Emily: Well, she is.

Sally: Very good.

Emily: I mean, it’s the ease with which Egg upends the entire structure of the White Tower in this book and the next few books is just remarkable.

Sally: Yeah. She’s just like, “Da da da, I’m --”

Emily: And, you know, I’d like to credit it to Egg being a brilliant, um, political mastermind, but Robert Jordan did also set up this system that’s like a Jenga tower --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And the last few levels are one block each.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Just ready to collapse, baby.

Sally: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm. Also, isn’t Egwene, like, seventeen at this point?

Emily: Yeah, she’s, um -- yeah. Seventeen or eighteen.

Sally: Because Gawyn says explicitly in his points of view that he’s “a few years older than twenty,” so --

Emily: Yeah, I didn’t like that.

Sally: So that’s fucking disgusting.

Emily: I mean, that -- it -- yeah. And Galad -- that means Galad has to be, like, in his later twenties.

Sally: Yeah, like 27, 28?

Emily: Yeah, ‘cause he has to be older than Rand by a significant length of time.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Not significant. By several years. Long enough for Tigraine -- Tirgraine, however you say her name -- to decide to abandon her baby and go into the Aiel Waste and then train to become a Maiden, find another dude to be her baby daddy, and give birth to Rand.

Sally: Yeah, so.

Emily: So again, at least several years.

Sally: Several years. (laugh) At least. Bare minimum.

Emily: This prologue has, um, so many words used for what could easily be said in about two pages.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is that evil people are being evil and, um, a few of the Forsaken have been resurrected. Morgase is making bad decisions, as usual --

Sally: The worst decisions.

Emily: And so is her son, Gawyn.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It runs in the family. The royal house of Andor are just bad decision-makers, all of them.

Sally: Just fuckin' stupid.

Emily: Yeah, we start out with Gawyn. I think it's his first point of view since the end of -- or, I don't even know if he's had a point of view. It's the first time we're seeing him since the end of Shadow Rising.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: We got a blissful Gawyn-free book in Fires of Heaven. Uh, we find out that he's leading this group of lads named the Younglings and, uh, apparently the core group is those who fought in the White Tower, um, when Siuan was deposed. Specifically those who fought to have Siuan deposed --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is confusing. Um, and then the rest are just, like, dudes who are just joining for the hell of it, it seems like. And they -- Gawyn mentions that they no longer train with Warders, so I'm like, where are all the Warders, y'know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They didn't all leave with the --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, rebel Aes Sedai. There should still be Warders in the White Tower. And I guess they're just like, "Well, we don't really want to train young men again because, uh, Gawyn fucked it up for everyone by showing us that once you train a young man how to use a sword, he could easily stab you with that sword." (laugh)

Sally: Wow.

Emily: For no other reason than that he -- you know, he doesn't like Siuan. Gawyn, like, tries to provide this rationalization for what's going on here, but he honestly sounds like Iago in Othello with just, like, all these bad things have happened, but literally none of them are justifications --

Sally: My fault, yeah.

Emily: For, um, what he does.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's just so -- he's just so terrible. Um, and he talks about how he really just did it because Elayne disappeared and so did Egg. No mention of Nynaeve. He does not give a fuck about her.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And he's like, "I don't even have the right to think about Egg," and I'm like, shut up. Shut up.

Sally: I mean, first of all, correct, you don't have the right to think about Egg.

Emily: Yeah, but your sad boy --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Self, uh, debasement is not cute.

Sally: No. Like -- mm. I just hate this plot for men, specifically, where it's like, "Bad things have happened, and -- and so I am going to, like, wallow in my self-pity because I know I'm not a good enough person instead of, like, healing and becoming a better person."

Emily: Self-improvement is an option, Gawyn.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And he's just like, "No."

Sally: He's a garbage boy trash man.

Emily: We also see Gawyn make the funniest and most abrupt personality shift --

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Within the span of about three paragraphs --

Sally: Yeah, it was cracking me up.

Emily: Where he's like, "Rand, I guess, is the Dragon Reborn. I only met him once. Hard to believe he is a dictator now. He seemed like a nice guy. I --"

Sally: Yeah. "I liked him enough."

Emily: "I hope -- I hope he's well." And then a random peddler shows up out of the blue --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's like Robert Jordan just threw someone in there --

Sally: Yeah, like a dart.

Emily: To spread the news. And this guy's like, "Uh, yeah, Andor has fallen to the Dragon Reborn. Supposedly Morgase is dead." Gawyn, with zero corroboration of these rumors, is like, "I am going to murder Rand al'Thor." And it's like -- (laugh) What?

Sally: Yeah, it is truly bananas.

Emily: Yeah, like, the jump. The jump in logic.

Sally: Yeah. What's very frustrating -- and he's, like, try -- again, tries to make this justification of like, "Lots of times when people are saying all these rumors, when multiple people say them, they're definitely true," and I'm like, you've only heard it from one person, though.

Emily: One person.

Sally: Who claims that other people are saying it, but also, like, you just went through, like, a huge political coup, where people were lying and manipulating and pulling all these puppet strings, and you're just like, "I'm definitely gonna believe what this one dude says about what happened in a country a hundred miles away."

Emily: It's also just, like, Robert Jordan selectively picking which information he is spreading to which characters. You know, like, Gawyn hears very quickly that his mother is, uh, quote unquote, dead, and that Elayne is also missing, but he didn't hear at all about the months and months of upheaval in Andor --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Prior to that, or the fact that Morgase, like, disappeared.

Sally: Yeah, or the fact -- yeah, that she was just, like, letting this dude do whatever he wanted in Andor.

Emily: Yeah, if Gawyn's such, like, a loyal son or whatever, you'd think he would've been like, "Uhh, sounds like things are shit at home and I need to check on my mom."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And he just either didn't hear that or did hear that and was like, "Whatever. My mom's made bad romance decisions in the past."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "I'll just let her run the country into the ground."

Sally: And much like Rand al'Thor being like, "Something weird seems to be going on with Morgase, but not my problem."

Emily: Shrug emoji.

Sally: Yeah, it's fine when women are raped and coerced.

Emily: Yeah, no big deal.

Sally: Not my problem. I have to go become king of the Aiel or whatever.

Emily: Gawyn is with a coalition of Aes Sedai who are on their way into Cairhien -- I think they might be in Cairhien at this point?

Sally: Yeah, I think so.

Emily: And, uh, when we pick up, they're meeting with some Aiel -- Shaido Aiel -- Wise Ones, including Sevanna, who has somehow -- excuse us; a truck -- who has somehow, uh, wedged herself into the Wise One order despite not being qualified at all.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and there's also a woman named Therava who we will see again and again throughout all the Shaido points of view and some other woman whose name escapes me except that I am pretty sure that she gets brutally murdered by the Shaido Wise Ones later in this book.

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: As justification to, like, do something? I can't remember.

Sally: Yeah, and then Sevanna's like, "Ha ha, I now have this secret to hang over them all that they all murdered and whatever." Yeah.

Emily: That they did, like, a ritual murder.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: A Midsommar murder of one of the other Wise Ones. It's buck wild.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: This plot is just so weird. Um. But this coalition of Aes Sedai is headed toward Rand. Uh, we of course have to absolve Gawyn of any responsibility for what takes place. He just thinks it's a peaceful coalition. He's like, "Oh, damn, I guess they're going to go acknowledge Rand al'Thor. I wouldn't have predicted that --"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "But all signs point toward that." Because of course, Gawyn has to be innocent of this. Um, although when Rand gets stuffed in a box, he does not do much about that. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Gawyn is the most insufferable character that's ever been conceived.

Emily: Yeah. Um, and the two Red Ajah women who we see, Katerine and Galina --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Gal -- Galina? Galina?

Sally: Galina. I like "Galina."

Emily: Yeah, they also don't give us really any -- any indication that it's something else, although Katerine, I think, does say, "Do you think he'll come willingly?" and Galina's like, "Yeah, he has to. Look at all the shit we're doing for him." So the idea that he will not come peacefully is clearly an option they've thought of. So, like, the groundwork is being laid here. So that, um -- like, it's supposed to be a plot twist a little bit later in the book when all of the Aes Sedai suddenly are like, "Oh, there's thirteen of us, and we've come --"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "Kidnapped you, Rand al'Thor," but, um, y'know, all the ominous villainy throughout the prologue sort of lends itself to the fact that this will happen.

Sally: Yeah, 'cause both Katerine and Galina are also Black Ajah.

Emily: They're both Black Ajah. Galina is the head of the Red Ajah --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So she technically has slightly more power than Elaida, even. Which is just like, whatever. The White Tower is so wack.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, and Katerine -- I have nothing to say about her. I can't remember anything she does.

Sally: Yeah, she's just a character.

Emily: Um. Yeah, she's bland as hell. Um. Shaido are really invested in getting to kill Rand, I guess.

Sally: Correct.

Emily: Um, Sevanna, I guess, wants, like, revenge for Couladin? I dunno. Their motives are unclear, and I frankly do not care about them. Uh, I think we then switch to Morgase, who is in -- I can't remember countries -- Amadicia?

Sally: Yeah, I think she's in Amadicia.

Emily: And she has gone to the king there, Ailron, to --

Sally: Who's a clown.

Emily: Yeah, he's a total clown, and she is seeking foreign aid, after, she tells us, discovering that none of the royal houses in Andor would support her.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And it is -- that is, like, impossible. Because throughout all of Elayne's fucking arc becoming the queen of Andor, none of the royal houses know that Morgase is alive.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So how Morgase would know that none of them would support her is a total mystery. Um, I guess she just thinks that she fucked up enough under Gaebriel that none of them would support her, but I would posit that someone -- Dyelin, for example, who we meet, uh, with Elayne's point of view -- Elayne's arc, later on, as she's -- Dyelin's the next in line after Elayne -
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Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And she's just, like, a totally reasonable, chill lady.

Sally: I mean, who would want to be queen of a country, is --

Emily: No one.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Dyelin literally is like, "No, not for me."

Sally: Yeah. "No, thanks."

Emily: So if Morgase showed up at Dyelin's door, Dyelin would be like, "Rad. Someone to do it besides me."

Sally: "Excellent." (laugh)

Emily: "Would love this." And then, you know, we have to be like, why did Morgase go to Amadicia of all places?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That is unclear. Obviously the west is somewhat, um, closed off to her.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Cairhien and Tear. But that leaves the entire Borderlands and Tar Valon and Illian, technically.

Sally: Yeah, but she's like, "But I will go to the Whitecloak country."

Emily: "I will go to Whitecloak country, where this -- curse your sudden but inevitable betrayal."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, she's like, "I'll ask for the king, who is known to be a puppet of the Whitecloaks --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's also just a womanizer who won't get anything done.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And then Pedron Niall is like, "Hey. I hear you need help in Andor. Well, I am willing to help you." And she's like, "Yeah, so you can get the Whitecloaks into fuckin' Andor." And he's like, "Yeah, exactly. But what choice do you have?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "You dingus?" And Morgase is like, "None! Ahh!"

Sally: It's like, you have several, actually. You could just not do that. (laugh)

Emily: The -- mm. We've reached the point in the series where the absolutely -- the absolute, like, inability to disseminate information accurately throughout the continent becomes maddening.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, up till this point, it's mostly worked as, like, plot points, I guess. Or as just sort of a thing that's happening.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But we have now reached the point where it's, like, just transparently so Robert Jordan doesn't have to do the work of having various characters work out more complicated relationships.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: But also so he could put Morgase in this absolutely wild position that, uh, nothing will come of.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like, Morgase, uh, gets raped by one of the Whitecloak -- Valda, I want to say?

Sally: I think so.

Emily: Which I guess will motivate Galad to take over the Whitecloaks, but again, you shouldn't -- (laugh) Galad shouldn't be a Whitecloak, and you don't need to rape women to motivate men to do things, Robert Jordan, you fuckwit. And then Morgase herself ends up in Perrin's coterie, where he does not know she is Morgase for books and books. And then when he finally does, all she does is do a judgment at a trial. And then she literally disappears.

Sally: Where does she go?

Emily: I don't know! We see her, like, meet with Elayne, and Elayne's like, "Mom! Glad you're alive." And then I think Gawyn sees her, and then through the entirety of book fourteen, she is nowhere in sight.

Sally: She's off with her new paramour, Tallanvor.

Emily: I guess -- like, she's not even doing, like, helping refugees or helping the wounded like other rulers are during the Last Battle.

Sally: She's just off being a clown.

Emily: Ahh!

Sally: We're also at the point in the story where, like, my ability to engage with the text is getting put on thin ice simply 'cause I cannot -- like, I just don't have the same commitment to monarchy --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And, like, the divine right of certain families to rule a country that the Wheel of Time demands me to have. Like, I get it: Morgase doesn't want to leave Andor in the hands of someone who would be bad to the people. But it's like, you don't have a right to be on that throne. Y'know?

Emily: Yeah, there's nothing --

Sally: Like, you -- it just is a very frustrating plot to me.

Emily: Yeah, like, Morgase is already an intolerable character. As an example, she throws a complete tantrum for no reason.

Sally: Yeah, 'cause everyone was, like, making fun of her and Tallanvor flirting. y'know?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But she's, like, a full, grown-ass woman with two children.

Emily: She's in her forties --

Sally: Yeah, I think --

Emily: At the least.

Sally: She, like, throws a --

Emily: A cup of water or something.

Sally: A cup of punch? Yeah, at Breane.

Emily: Is like, "Get out!"

Sally: And everyone is like, "Jesus."

Emily: Oh my God. Yeah, she's basically just a child masquerading in a woman's body --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is nonsensical because everyone has been like, "She's a fine ruler," up until now, and all traces of that: gone --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As soon as she needs to be an idiot. Um, but yeah, she's already difficult to tolerate, and then just everything she represents is, like, nonsensical.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah, Wheel of Time is so committed to the idea of monarchies and who has the right to rule and democracy who? Never heard of her.

Sally: Yeah, it's monarchy, and then Rand comes in and is like, "Empire," and everyone's like, "Cool. Monarchy but bigger." (laugh)

Emily: "Monarchy but make it bigger. Sounds great." No, it's not.

Sally: It's not great.

Emily: And it actually inherently weakens the entire continent.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Alexander the Great did that too. You --

Sally: We'll learn about that --

Emily: Stupid assholes.

Sally: In Emily's presentation. (laugh)

Emily: I think probably you'll have already learned about it since we'll probably record that tomorrow.

Sally: Yeah, that's what I was thinking.

Emily: Um. Yeah, Christ.

Sally: So, yeah. Morgase is just insufferable to me in literally every way, shape, and form.

Emily: Tallanvor's insufferable. He's a total asshole --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To her. She's like, "You need to respect me as your queen," and he's like, "You're not acting like a queen," and I'm like, you still need to respect her as a person.

Sally: Yeah. Like --

Emily: Also, like, it is sort of what you opted in for. You can't just change the terms and agreements now. Like, you spent so much of your life putting her on a pedestal and being like, "My queen, I would die for you --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And now you're like, "You fucked up, so I'm going to --"

Sally: Be an asshole.

Emily: Yeah. Like, "You are no longer -- you got knocked off the pedestal for me, so now I'm going to treat you like dirt"? And it's like, buddy. No wonder she is, like, "What the fuck?"

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: And I think Robert Jordan is, like, trying to play it as, like, "Look, he's challenging her in some way, because she has had absolute power her whole life and needs to be challenged." And it's like, that's not true. I mean, she does, but not in a romantic context.

Sally: Yeah. I was --

Emily: She has to be challenged in terms of government, in terms of philosophy --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: By the people.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Not her young fuckin' stud.

Sally: Not her -- yeah, her young slam piece.

Emily: Ugh. God, I hate it.

Sally: Yeah, Tallanvor is also another -- wow, we really are just getting the most insufferable characters in the second half of this prologue, aren't we?

Emily: I know, Tallanvor and Gawyn are just, like, in a constant locked battle for Least Valuable Player.

Sally: (laugh) It's so true, though. Ugh. Barf. OK, anyway.

Emily: Then it's catching up with the Forsaken time. Sitcom. What would the sitcom of the Forsaken -- be? (laugh)

Sally: Horrid. I mean, it would actually probably be pretty funny. If they did, like, a Veep-style sitcom of the Forsaken --

Emily: Being incompetent --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The entire time. Yeah, that'd be kinda funny.

Sally: Where the joke is that everyone is just, like, deeply incompetent but thinks they're doing a good job. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I could actually really get on board with that. (laugh) Um.

Emily: (laugh) Ah, yeah, that could be good. Or just, like, um --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Just like the Bachelor, you know?

Sally: Yeah. But the Bachelor is the Dark One. (laugh)

Emily: I just want, like, dramatic zooms. The Bachelor IS the Dark One! They're all so obsessed with being his -- what's the word?

Sally: (laugh) Nae'blis or whatever.

Emily: Nae'blith.

Sally: Nae'blish.

Emily: Nae'blith.

Sally: Nae'blith. Bah bah.

Emily: (laugh) Said Sid the Sloth. "Nae'blith."

Sally: (laugh) So, uh, that'd be pretty funny. (laugh) I am gonna make, like -- I'm gonna spend the whole next week doing Bachelor and Veep clips and putting different Forsaken over them.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: I'm not working anymore.

Emily: Oh, that's good. Um. But, uh, we have seen -- as we referenced at the end of Fires of Heaven -- Fires of Heaven is the most efficient Forsaken-murdering book.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Um, and so the coalition that was once made up of Lanfear, Rahvin, Sammael, and Graendal has sort of fallen apart. Rahvin's dead, obviously. Lanfear's missing. Sammael is just sort of consumed by paranoia and is, like, shoring up his defenses in Illian --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: 'Cause he's like, "Rand is coming after me next."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which, to be fair, until the end of this book, Rand is coming after him next. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which leaves Graendal sort of awkwardly like, "OK. Love the --"

Sally: "Well, these fuckers gone and shit the bed."

Emily: And now we get to catch up with the three Forsaken who we have previously never seen on-screen before? I don't know about Demandred. He might have been there briefly. You lose track.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Well, Demandred was obviously at the very beginning of this book.

Sally: Yeah, but before this book, I can't remember if we've seen --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: D-boy.

Emily: But we're seeing Mesaana, Semirhage, and, um, D-boy. And we are, of course, getting all of their flimsy motivations for being evil. Mesaana's is literally that she didn't get the job that she wanted?

Sally: Yeah. Which is, like --

Emily: Which is like, what? So you sold your soul to the devil? (laugh) Ahh.

Sally: Like, the drama is so absurd.

Emily: I mean, given, the amount of times that people were like, "So what are you gonna do with an English major? Become a teacher?" That did make me want to sell my soul to the devil.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: A little bit. But I wouldn't actually do it, Mesaana.

Sally: Yeah. Especially 'cause it's like, the university wouldn't let her do research, so she had to teach.

Emily: Yeah. And she was like, "I'll show them."

Sally: "I'll become -- Satan?" (laugh)

Emily: What?

Sally: Like, girl. You went zero to six thousand.

Emily: Semirhage, at least, has a reasonable evil excuse to be evil, which is that she just likes torturing people. Which is, like, gross, but I mean, sure, if that's how you get your kicks, I too would sell my soul to the devil.

Sally: I guess? (laugh)

Emily: And then, uh, Demandred has one of the lamest --

Sally: I know.

Emily: Evil excuses ever. He just hates Lews Therin so much.

Sally: Yeah. It's --

Emily: Because he's not as good as him.

Sally: He was like, hee was born one day after Lews Therin and was just never quite as good, and if Lews Therin was never born, Demandred would've been the most powerful boy in our age. But it was -- he wasn't, and Lews Therin just kept failing upwards, as men tend to do. (laugh)

Emily: Like, they're like, "'Almost' was the story of Demandred's life," and I'm like, in whose comparison?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Demandred's? No one else's?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, it would be so hilarious if Demandred showed up -- you know, was evil --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And was like, "Lews Therin, this is because of all of the things you've done to me," and Lews Therin was like, "Who are you?"

Sally: "What?"

Emily: "What the fuck?"

Sally: "Who -- who are you?"

Emily: "What're you talking about?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, which, hilariously, is essentially what Rand is to Demandred. (laugh) Rand's like, "Who are you? I don't remember you."

Sally: "I literally have no idea what you're talking about, you absolute nutjob."

Emily: "I have no memory of this place." Um. So Demandred, Semirhage, and Mesaana are, uh, here, basically, to reference obliquely that they all have power blocs set up --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But that we don't know where they are. Demandred pretty much exists, solely, at this point, as a red herring --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: To the idea that he is Mazrim Taim.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: He's not. More than one evil man can exist --

Sally: No.

Emily: At the same time. (laugh)

Sally: That is simply ridiculous.

Emily: I know. Shocking --

Sally: No.

Emily: Isn't it? Um.

Sally: Ugh.

Emily: Mesaana is fairly obvious to me -- is in the White Tower.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because she knows so much about the White Tower's --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um --

Sally: Fuckin' security systems.

Emily: Security system for angreal and sa'angreal. And, uh, Semirhage, we'll find out within the next few books, is with the Seanchan. Which is just, like, OK. Whatever. I mean, at least someone got with the Seanchan. You know? I would be like, ah, look, an empire about to --

Sally: It's free real estate.

Emily: It's free real estate. They're already evil. All I have to do is hang out.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Zero work for me.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. But Demandred's like, "I've gathered you here today to tell you the Dark Lord's orders, which are, 'Let the Lord of Chaos rule.'" And everyone's like, "What the fuck does that mean?" (laugh)

Sally: Demandred's like, "I have no idea. I was hoping you knew."

Emily: Demandred's like, "Oh, God. None of us know?" (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "He just wants us to, like, do some chaos, I guess." Now, again, let me emphasize that the Lord of Chaos is a book that is bracketed to make us think that all the events in Lord of Chaos are set up by, if not Demandred himself, all of the Forsaken.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Literally nothing that happens in Lord of Chaos is influenced by the Forsaken. (laugh)
Um. Semirhage is with the Seanchan and does nothing to influence this continent, as far as I know. Mesaana's with the White Tower and doesn't have to do shit because Elaida's doing it all for her.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: I guess she gave the orders to Galina and Katherine to go kidnap Rand, but it's kind of like, they were already gonna do that.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, Demandred is in Shara. So --

Sally: Doing fuck knows what.

Emily: Doing fuck knows what.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: So we don't know what he's doing.

Sally: We have no idea what's happening.

Emily: And Graendal is in Arad Doman, which has not been a relevant setting for four books now.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So essentially, everything that happens in Lord of Chaos is because Rand is an idiot. That's my thesis. (laugh) Um. And we'll get into that later. But do not let Robert Jordan con you into thinking that any of this was intentional.

Sally: On the part of the Forsaken.

Emily: On the part of the Forsaken. Yeah. I don't know why he goes to such great lengths to make us think that they're smarter than they are, when his whole thesis with evil people is that evil people are just like the rest of us, and they fuck up a lot too. So you can't have it both ways, Robert. (sigh) Speaking of Forsaken, we then catch up with Osan'gar and Aran'gar, who we know are resurrected Forsaken, but neither of their old names is used.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So this is a very confusing chapter if you, like most of the nation, forgot that Balthamel and Aginor existed after they died in book one.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, it would be like if Be'lal suddenly came back and was like --

Sally: That's that motherfucker. I forgot him. (laugh)

Emily: "Hey, it's me, Be'lal," and everyone was like, "Who?"

Sally: "What?"

Emily: We have no idea who these people are.

Sally: Moiraine killed him in, like, three seconds flat.

Emily: Yeah. And Aginor and Balthamel also died very quickly.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They were barely worth, you know, the climax of the book.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, I mean, they also died, like, before you can -- you really know who the Forsaken are.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So it's like --

Emily: And we don't know their personalities. I mean --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Aginor was the one who basically made the Trollocs. He's your mad scientist guy. He's now been resurrected as Osan'gar. Balthamel was a huge womanizer, and we're told he's very reckless, and that's his only personality trait, and now he has been put into Aran'gar's body.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Osan'gar and Aran'gar, we are told, are, like, words for dueling daggers --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: That are both poisoned, so you'd think maybe these two would, like, work in tandem, but they don't, really.

Sally: L-O-L.

Emily: I guess one of them goes to the Black Tower, and one of them goes to the rebel Aes Sedai, so a little bit, but. Uh, yeah, they're not, like, working together. And all they're doing, really, is, uh, being evil. They're like, "How dare the Dark One give us these bodies?" And the Myrddraal guy or whatever is like, "I mean, you were dead. Are you complaining?" (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, 'cause they get -- do they both get put in women's bodies?

Emily: No. Osan'gar is a man.

Sally: OK. I guess that makes sense if he went to the Black Tower. Duh.

Emily: He goes to the Black Tower and will become part of Rand's coterie, I guess. Aran'gar is just ... not worth talking about. Y'know? It's just stupid.

Sally: I mean, yeah. Yeah.

Emily: Like, all the Dark -- all the evil guys are like, "Oh, it's such a good joke." And clearly, Robert Jordan also thinks it's a great joke. So.

Sally: Yeah, thinks that -- yeah. Being in a woman's body is really funny.

Emily: Cool.

Sally: Or that, you know, trans identities can be the butt of the joke.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Which is fucking awful.

Emily: The silver lining is that we've now finished the prologue. (laugh)

Sally: Ahhh. (singing) Who can say where the road goes --

Emily: (singing simultaneously) Say where the road goes ... (normal voice) Don't sue us, Enya. Um.

Sally: Please don't sue us, Enya. (laugh) Everyone says you're not very pleasant.

Emily: God, everyone is so, like -- "She's a recluse. She lives like a queen."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: The unfortunate bit is that now we have to, like, go into Rand's point of view.

Sally: It's OK. Davram Bashere is there, at least.

Emily: Davram Bashere is there to be, like, jokes.

Sally: Please --

Emily: Jokes enters the room.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's Davram Bashere.

Sally: Davram "Jokes" Bashere. He's your dad.

Emily: Boogie woogie woogie.

Sally: (laugh) Boogie woogie woogie.

Emily: And Mazrim Taim, evil mastermind, who is like, "This is pretty fuckin' easy."

Sally: Because Rand is the dumbest person alive. And I do not want to hear any arguments about how Rand is making necessary sacrifices to get Mazrim -- Mazrim Taim's knowledge. He's just being stupid.

Emily: Uh, that's the Lord of Chaos prologue.

Sally: It was --

Emily: Rancid?

Sally: Yeah. That's a --

Emily: Tough to get through.

Sally: That's a good word for it. It was rancid.

Emily: Yeah. Much like the stink of saidin or whatever. It made me feel like I was going slowly mad.

Sally: Yeah. Form mimics content, am I right? (laugh)

Emily: Ahh!

Sally: Ha ha ha ha.

Emily: Uh, do you have anything else to add?

Sally: Um. No, I don't have anything to add about the prologue except that I -- like, I generally think Robert Jordan's prologues are too many points of view, but the Lord of Chaos one was definitely too many points of view. Like, it was so many.

Emily: How many did we get? What -- six.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In that section alone. Six plus the four we read last time?

Sally: Yeah, so ten different points of view in 72 pages?

Emily: Nonsense.

Sally: Yeah, that's way too much. Especially when they're, like, just these, like, really short choppy vignettes that are supposed to, like, set things up, and it's just, like, too much to follow. It is just too much.

Emily: Genuinely, there is very little pay-off --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: For any of these. Um. But because they're positioned in the prologue, you are anticipating pay-off the entire time.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And then when you don't get it -- it's bad writing.

Sally: Correct.

Emily: So sort of a downer, I guess, but what do you expect? This is Lord of Chaos. Like we said, it's all bad.

Sally: It's all bad.

Emily: Um, thank you to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thank you to all of you for supporting us, especially our Patreon supporters --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who made possible this new and much quieter studio space. If our sound is soft this week, it will improve as I start to get new equipment and things. That's, uh, next on our agenda. Um, follow us on social media. Uh, you can tune in to the video game livestream every Friday at 5:30. Last Friday, I played Minecraft with friend of the podcast Devin for a couple of hours. Probably go back to Final Fantasy fifteen, but you know, it really depends on how the American election turns out. (laugh) So, we'll see.

Sally: Yep. And speaking of that, to our, um, American friends or friends around the globe who are concerned, um, I really hope that you have all done your part and voted, but definitely worth noting that, um, voting is not the end-all be-all of, um ...

Emily: Civic duty?

Sally: Civic duty and definitely not the end-all be-all of harm reduction. No matter which one of the candidates wins -- obviously there's a better choice in Joe Biden -- um, but Joe Biden also does not have an excellent history of, um, being extremely progressive or liberal. Um, he's actually quite moderate and conservative. So just, um -- I'm not saying all this to, like, really get you down, but, um, I just think that it's worth it, if you have not done so already, to, um, learn about the community aid and mutual aid organizations in your particular community, wherever it is, and organizations -- the grassroots organizations -- the glass -- grassroots political organizing organizations, these are the people that are going to take care of you and take care of your community. Um. So if you ever need any help finding some, I'm happy -- just message me; I'm happy to help you hunt some down. Um. Just -- yeah. But, you know, whatever happens tomorrow, I guess -- assuming we get the results tomorrow --

Emily: Oh, yeah, I doubt it.

Sally: Um. Yeah, we've been fighting these fights for a long time and, um, yeah. Just again, your community's gonna be the people who take care of you. Don't trust that politicians are going to do it. Sorry if that sounded really negative. You can cut that out of the podcast --

Emily: No.

Sally: If you don't agree or --

Emily: Politicians don't have, um, human people's best interests at heart. They generally have corporations' interests at heart --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Regardless of whether -- (clears throat) -- you're talking about Donald Trump or Joe Biden. That said, Joe Biden is obviously the correct choice because, uh, significantly fewer people's lives will be at stake. That said, whoever wins, um, we're gonna keep fighting.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: And that's what matters.

Sally: Yep. Um. OK, um.

Emily: Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: I do. I don't think I've used this one before. But, um, a few weeks ago, I was at the Aviary and I am just the type of person who talks to birds.

Emily: Sure.

Sally: Is just a fact about me. (laugh)

Emily: It was one of the first things I knew about Sally.

Sally: Um -- (laugh)

Emily: She greeted pigeons. "Hello, pigeon --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She said, to every pigeon we saw in London.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Which was many pigeons. (laugh)

Sally: And I still cannot believe to this day that Emily and I still talk. So. (laugh) 'Cause I'm a freak.

Emily: I found it charming.

Sally: Um, but I was walking somewhere through the Aviary and, um, one of the exhibits that I like a lot has the laughing kookaburra, the blue-faced honeyeater, and the masked lapwing, if anyone wants to look up those birds. But the lapwings were just, like, on the ground, being cute, and so I was like, “Hi.” And suddenly from the exhibit, someone goes, “Hello.” (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: And I, like, jumped, like, a foot in the air ‘cause I was like, “Oh my God, is this my Doctor Doolittle moment?”

Emily: Oh my Christ.

Sally: But it was just one of the keepers, in the exhibit, like, hidden in shadow behind the trees. And so I couldn’t be like, “Ah ha, I was talking to the birds, ha ha ha.”

Emily: Just be like, “Oh, hey.”

Sally: Yeah. I was like, “Oh, hi -- yeah, hey, hope you’re having a good day,” and just, like, ran away. Um, made worse, uh, that this -- I like this person; I think she’s really rad, but she’s a little, like, rough around the edges, you know?

Emily: Uh-huh.

Sally: Not normally someone who wants to be, like --

Emily: Is this Helen?

Sally: No.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Not in -- someone not interrupted with pleasantries.

Emily: Mm.

Sally: It’s not something she’d want. So the fact that she was just like, “Hi.” I was like, “Oh my God.” So it was one of the weirder moments of my life. I was like, “Oh my God. The birds are talking back.”

Emily: I hope that’s your last Aviary anecdote, not because I haven’t enjoyed them but because you’re leaving the Aviary and that’s so good.

Sally: I am leaving that job for, hopefully, a better job.

Emily: That’s the dream, people.

Sally: Um. Yep. Um, I will continue to bug my friends for good bird stories though, so.

Emily: Yeah, the birds have been the bright spot in the long Aviary nightmare.

Sally: Yeah. Long nightmare it has been. OK, friends --

Emily: Thanks for listening. Don't do war crimes.

Sally: Please, God, don't do war crimes.

Emily: And have as good a week as you are able.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: Goodbye!

Sally: Bye.