



Episode 168: Rand's Errands Three

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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 Glynn MacKenzie plays)

Emily: Um, this is Everybody Hates Rand.

Sally: It is.

Emily: (laugh) You looked surprised.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "Where am I?" (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) OK, I am a little loopy.

Emily: It's -- it's your friendly neighborhood wheely -- Wheely Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: Um.

Sally: Would it help the audio quality if I sat closer to the microphone? I just feel like I'm very loud, so I always try to sit a little bit farther away than you.

Emily: Oh, no, you're fine. I don't -- I don't care.

Sally: OK.

Emily: Um. Today, Sally texted me while we were in separate rooms watching --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um -- not watching; both reading -- separate -- separate copies of A Crown of Swords and said, "Is this Perrin and Faile sex the reason porn got taken off OnlyFans?" (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) I can't believe you read that; that was such a dumb text.

Emily: No, it was really good. I laughed.

Sally: OK, let's talk about these chapters.

Emily: I mean, I'd rather not.

Sally: They're really bad. Like, I -- I promise I won't say that about every set of chapters we read in Wheel of Time land, 'cause ... they're not all this bad.

Emily: Uh, usually there's some elements --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That I can find to enjoy. It's difficult with these ones. We do at least get Davram Bashere.

Sally: (gasp) With his leg slung sluttily over the arm of a chair. (laugh)

Emily: He does that every single time, I swear, someone walks into a room. And I'm like, when does he get down out of that position?

Sally: Never.

Emily: Or does -- is he just constantly switching legs?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? Which one will be slung -- (laugh) -- which -- which is my best side to present to the Dragon Reborn?

Sally: He's so funny, with his tall, mean wife.

Emily: Um, we first have a scene where Perrin and Faile are standing in the throne room of Cairhien along with -- (laugh) -- this is actually kind of comedic --

Sally: I know, it is, like, comedic genius right now. (laugh)

Emily: With Dobraine, who is the only nobleman in Cairhien, I guess, that is trustworthy, and Coulavere, who's just still in a dead faint. Literally everyone else has left the room. Um. Rand even left with his whole coterie. Perrin sent Aram -- oh, no, Aram's still there, staring, as Perrin describes it, worshipfully --

Sally: I know. It's --

Emily: At Perrin and Faile, which is, like -- hey, what? Does, like -- what's going on with Aram? Does he want to be, like, in on the Perrin-Faile relationship?

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Is he, like, just desperately hoping that they will suddenly open the heretofore very heteronormative boundaries of their relationship and be like, "Hmm, we've been thinking, Aram. We want to be a throuple."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: 'Cause, Aram -- I mean, it's not happening. I get falling in love with your two best friends, if Perrin and Faile are indeed your two best friends. (laugh)

Sally: I guess.

Emily: With Aram, I guess the pickings are slim.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, like, don't be a gay idiot.

Sally: Don't be a gay idiot. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) I wish Aram was gay. That would make him way more interesting.

Sally: I know, that would make him way more interesting. Well, it's just -- it's just really creepy. Because the way, of course, Robert -- in Robert Jordan's Wheel of Time, the majority of the staring he does is at Faile, particularly, right? 'Cause Robert Jordan is like, Aram -- of course Aram has worship -- hero-worship with Perrin, but, like, at least from what I recall from the scene, he's, like, staring at Faile a lot, and it's like -- I lost my point. (laugh) I'm really struggling, you guys.

Emily: Well, so that makes it very heterosexual.

Sally: Yeah, it makes it very -- very heterosexual. And just, like -- I, like -- it is somehow so much more weird -- like, weirder to me than if Aram was just like, "I have fallen in love with Perrin." But to, like, bring Faile into the equation, I am just like, what's happening?

Emily: Janet told me this last weekend about a movie that I believe is called "Single White Woman."

Sally: Hmm.

Emily: I could be totally wrong, and I wish that I could FaceTime her right now to ask, but every time I FaceTime her and Devin, they think that I'm dying, because we don't really talk on the phone that way.

Sally: I could FaceTime her. I have her number.

Emily: That would be even weirder. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "Emily wants to know -- we are recording the podcast right now -- Emily needs to know if that movie you told her about is indeed called Single White Woman." (laugh) But I'm too lazy to look it up right now. But anyway, the plot of the movie is that this woman gets a roommate who, um, she is -- who is unfamiliar to her; it's just, like, a -- a Craigslist listing or whatever, that she picks up this roommate -- and her roommate slowly begins transforming herself into her.

Sally: Horrifying.

Emily: You know, like, cutting her hair, um, to look like her, wearing the same clothes, and eventually attempting to take over her life.

Sally: (whisper) What the fuck.

Emily: And it's like, is that what's going on? With Aram?

Sally: Hmm.

Emily: Is he just -- is the way he looks at Faile is he's like, "Faile is my wife, because I am -- I am, uh, not -- I am not Perrin; I am a satellite of Perrin."

Sally: Hmm.

Emily: Like, "We are so attached, I am basically this, like, ancillary form of Perrin."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And one day -- soon -- (laugh) I will take over."

Sally: Yeah, he's gonna --

Emily: "I will Invasion of the Body Snatchers Perrin."

Sally: He's gonna cut his hair like Perrin. Grow a little beard.

Emily: I mean, it would've been actually -- I -- I feel like if Robert Jordan -- the problem with Aram -- and I did -- I'm sorry, I haven't -- I don't know if I told you this, but I cut out our long spiel about Aram a couple episodes ago, when we were talking about what a psycho he is --

Sally: That's okay.

Emily: Basically because we didn't have room for it, but here I want to talk about it a little. Um, I feel like the main problem is that Robert Jordan doesn't himself know what he's doing with Aram.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: When Robert Jordan portrays mental illness and PTSD, he usually does a fair job of, like, portraying it by the book.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In a way that is recognizable to readers.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: You know, we are able to recognize many of Rand's symptoms of insanity, and we are also able to recognize that maybe it's not insanity; maybe because this is a magic world, there is some magic at play here.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, and we're able to recognize when Perrin is experiencing PTSD, as fraught as it is with generally unfortunate other plot elements.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But with Aram, I just have no idea what's going on with him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don't know if it's an extended form of PTSD; I don't know if he has some sort of obsession with Perrin and Faile, and if he does, I'm not quite sure where that comes from; like, is he meant to be this stalker figure, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mentally ill in that way? Is he -- like, is he meant to fully be a sociopath now? I don't know, and I don't think Robert Jordan knows, and I think that is why, for many other reasons, Aram's presence in the plot is so unsatisfying. 'Cause if Robert Jordan would just commit, be like, "OK, Aram's a stalker now. And Perrin's a little too naive to fully get it."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And the way that Aram is acting doesn't -- makes Perrin uncomfortable sometimes but not frequently enough to drive --

Sally: Him --

Emily: Him -- to drive Perrin away.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: (sigh) I don't know. I just don't know.

Sally: Well, yeah, it's also just really frustrating because the way Aram is presented, as pretty much our only character from the, um -- Tuatha'an -- I can never say that word; I have, like, a brain --

Emily: Tuatha'an.

Sally: Freeze in it. Like, he's basically, um -- basically, like, pathologizing pacifism to the point where it's like, as soon as he's out of it, Aram is just, like, off the rails.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: You know? Like, as soon as he gets a chance to experience any form of violence -- it's like -- it's like Robert Jordan is presenting them as, like, a, um -- I'm really sorry to make this reference, but in Glee, there's a celibacy club that's, like, a big part of -- (laugh)

Emily: Oh my God. What the fuck. (laugh)

Sally: A big part of the first season, and there's, like, part of an episode -- my friends and I are rewatching Glee.

Emily: Yeah, this isn't just -- she remembers this reference --

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Off the top of the dome. She's watching it. (laugh)

Sally: I would never just pull out Glee as a reference --

Emily: Yeah, Jesus Christ.

Sally: If it were not, like, relevant. But there's, like, um -- there's, like, this monologue that one of the characters -- main characters has about celibacy club, which is like, this isn't actually how people are supposed to -- like, celibacy isn't valid; like, the -- the second -- it just makes you do weirder things. Like, it basically causes you to just, like, not have a healthy relationship to sexuality. And it's like, that's the way Robert Jordan presents violence sometimes. It's like the Tinkers are, like, too pacifist, against human nature, and therefore Aram has acted out and is now violent and obsessive in every feasible way.

Emily: Well, it's like we've gotten Aram hyper-condensed into one person hundreds if not thousands of years of the Aiel people.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, the progression of the Aiel that Rand finds out is that they were once more or less the Tuatha'an --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And then events beyond their control forced certain members to turn to violence, and now they are this hyper-violent people.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And so, it's like we are -- it's like Robert Jordan is trying almost to reprove his point.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is that, um, you can't -- you -- neither -- neither pacifism nor, um, a war-oriented culture falls under the umbrella term of "normal --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And therefore you can't get out of one and become normal. I don't know. Does that make sense? I really liked what you said about pathologizing pacifism. That was smart.

Sally: Oh, thanks. And on the, like, flipside of it, of course, is that, like, Aram has basically been uprooted from his culture -- I mean, he makes the active choice to uproot himself from his culture -- to remove himself from his culture, but he's basically been removed from all of his support systems, all of the ideologies that he grew up with, and that in and of itself can be a traumatizing thing, whether it is your choice or not, to just sort of be completely removed from everything -- your entire world view and your entire structure -- and it's not like Perrin and co. offer him a reasonable amount of support for that transition. They're basically just like, "You just need to learn how to use a sword, and then you are a functioning member of our group," and it's like, OK, but what about, like, support systems and, like, teaching him other things about

how life operates outside of the Tuatha'an camps? Like -- like, he basically has been offered no support, and I think it's not entirely surprising that he's gone down some weird routes.

Emily: Yeah, Perrin feels that Aram is his responsibility but only insofar as he is like, "Teach a man to fish."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, he's got this very masculine, like, "Well, as long as Aram can defend himself, then I've taken care of him." And I'm like, that's such a hyper-masculine way of viewing, um, the nurturing process.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? And it's patronizing, a little bit, to say that Aram needs to be nurtured -- he's an adult -- but you're right that he has essentially -- his family's dead, more or less --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: He still had, like, a grandma and a grandpa left, I think, but he has made the decision to leave his culture and live out in the world in a different, um, form of the world, and so he -- yeah, of course he's going to need a little more help adjusting. There's no shame in that.

Sally: Yeah, there's no shame in it at all, and I think that, um -- you're right that it can be really patronizing to be like, "This adult needs to be nurtured," but I think that, yeah, adults also need to be nurtured. Like, if you're -- like -- I mean, Perrin's not a good example for this, but if your entire family gets murdered, perhaps you need some time to, like, grieve and adjust.

Emily: Yeah. Here's Perrin -- Perrin's like --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "Aram will be fine if he does the same thing I did."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I'm like, you're not even fine.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? I dunno. Yeah, it's like Aram tried to go on this rumspringa and then just walked straight into a Quentin Tarantino movie, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's like, "I don't have any sort of, like, level ground here. It is just from zero to a hundred immediately." And to a certain extent, that is his choice. And, like, Aram, yes, is an

adult, and he made the choice to be like, “Not only am I leaving the Tuatha’an, but I am actively embracing violence as a new culture.”

Sally: Yeah, and it truly is like violence is his only culture. It’s like we never really see Aram, like, dancing or learning about new foods or, like, really being interested in meeting and talking to new people. It’s, like, just Aram plus violence.

Emily: It’s a pretty grim state of affairs.

Sally: Yeah, so I think you just really summed it up at the beginning of this conversation about Aram, where, just, it feels like Robert Jordan, um, in a -- like, one of the most classic moves of bad writing, like, Aram isn’t, like, a grounded character; he just does and says and moves where Robert Jordan needs him to move based on what the scene is.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It’s never like, well, Aram has a certain set of principles that he would hold to even if it was inconvenient for the plot.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um.

Emily: (sigh)

Sally: But, of course, the principle of violence will never be inconvenient to the Wheely Time plot because this world just thrives on violence.

Emily: Um, back to the scene, I guess. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. Whatever. Poor Dobraine.

Emily: So Perrin has to stand there while Faile and Dobraine sort of talk about whether they should just murder Coulavere right now. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And whether that wouldn’t be more convenient. Of course, they’re not saying that directly, and it takes Perrin an embarrassingly long amount of time --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To figure out that that’s what they’re saying, and then he’s like, “I don’t think --” (laugh) “I don’t think I’d be very happy if Coulavere just died,” and Faile and Dobraine are like, “OK, well, your opinion was never relevant; we would have murdered her with or without your permission, but thank you.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, but he hugs Faile. Uh, she's like, "Hiiii." He's like, "Hiii, I'm so worried about you," and she was like, "Yeah, let's go back to our rooms, blah blah blah." I can't remember the intricacies of their -- (sigh) strange rituals of their courtship.

Sally: Oh, I know. She's got her fan the entire time.

Emily: Oh, yeah, she has her fan the entire time. Uh, but basically -- oh, she's like, "Did Rand really get a bunch of Aes Sedai to swear fealty to him?" and Perrin and Dobraine are like, "Yup." And Perrin's like, "Oh, when we walked in, were you worried that, like, maybe the Aes Sedai had mind controlled us?" and she's like, "Yes, I was worried. The Dragon Reborn got kidnapped by so many Aes Sedai."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "And you just went sort of haring after him with insufficient forces, so I thought. You know, of course that was a concern of mine." And Perrin's like, "Oh, I guess we were both worried about each other." And it's like, duh. Yeah. You went away to a big, violent battle. Regardless of whether Aes Sedai were involved, that was scary for Faile too.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, but they go back to -- they head back to their rooms. Uh, on the way, they have this weird experience where Selande and her, uh, quasi-Aiel bunch of frat boys and sorority girls -- that's always how I picture them, you know? Like they just walked straight out of a frat --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Anyway, they, like, are trying to sneak up on Perrin and Faile, I think? Or something?

Sally: Yeah, for --

Emily: Or they're just awkwardly following? And Perrin's like, "Go away," and they're like, "Ooh."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And leave. And it's like, okay, I guess that was to just sort of introduce them as potential -- new potential satellite characters. But.

Sally: Yeah, it was -- it's very strange.

Emily: Whatever. Uh, Perrin's like, "So how did you, like, get in with Coulavere?" and Faile's like, "Remember, servants are always listening. But don't worry about it. Basically, I --" (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "Basically, she just really wanted to put me in with her group because she -- I'm a princess." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "The end." And he's like, "Okay." And they get into their room, and she immediately is like, "I can't believe that you would ask immediately about Berelain. Do you even know what I have suffered in the last week with Coulavere just trying to humiliate me and Berelain the entire time and Berelain saying that you were gone because you'd gone off to some mansion house so she could visit you and have affairs with you, and I just looked like some sort of, you know, idiot who doesn't know her husband's cheating on her, da da da, do you know how emotionally fraught that is for me?" And I'm like -- and Perrin, finally snaps, which is what Faile is trying to get him to do, and is like, "Quiet."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "Please. You're an idiot. I only love you. I'm obviously -- nothing is going on with Berelain, and quit telling me that something is when there isn't." This is a real turn-on for Faile, unfortunately. (laugh)

Sally: He is, like, hold -- picking -- he picks her up and squeezes her so hard he's like, "I'm worried I broke her ribs."

Emily: Yeah, he -- he holds her up off the ground by her shoulders, which I'm pretty sure is uncomfortable, and then he, like, hugs her to his chest, and he's just squeeze squeeze squeezing. He's like, "You are the most precious to me," as her, like, ribs break. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: And then he's like, "Oh, whoopsie. Oopsie whoopsie," and she's like, "No, you don't understand. This is all I've been wanting from you, is for you to take command and tell me I'm an idiot and put me in my place."

Sally: Yeah, it's ... incomprehensible to me.

Emily: I know, I know. I feel like we've --

Sally: Yeah, I feel like we've --

Emily: Nattered on so many times about how --

Sally: Beat that dead horse right to death.

Emily: It's dumb. The best part of this is that Rand walks in -- (laugh)

Sally: Fucking flings the door open -- (laugh)

Emily: Like, Perrin and Faile are about to make out, and Rand just barges in and is like, "Perrin, have you seen Berelain?" (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And Perrin's like, "Oh my God, you are the human embodiment of a cock block." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "You ginger fuck, get out of my room."

Sally: Yeah. Um. Faile does have a very funny line, though, where she's like, "Oh, thank you, Dragon Reborn, for visiting our rooms. I must not have heard you knock." (laugh)

Emily: It's like, "Oh, that's so -- I just -- I didn't hear you knock," and Rand's like, "Eugh."

Sally: "Eugh." (laugh)

Emily: The part of Rand that was raised by Tam al'Thor is like, "Oops."

Sally: It's a very good line from Faile. I do appreciate it.

Emily: And Min is like, "Eugh," in the background, like, "This is hilarious, but I don't want to get involved."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Anyway, Rand's like -- Perrin's like, "Do you need something else?" and Rand's like, "Oh, yeah, are you -- are you sure you don't want to lead the army in Illian?" and Perrin, who is actively wearing his T-shirt that says, "I just got through the human meat grinder" --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is like, "No, I don't want to command your dumb armies in Illian. Fuck off. Also, I'm supposed to stay near you. Min said so." And Perrin's like -- I mean, Rand's like, "We all must take risks."

Sally: Oh, I know. It is --

Emily: "But if you're sure."

Sally: Emo as hell.

Emily: "Alright, see you later. Good day, Faile." And Faile's like, "Oh my God, I hate him." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: While he's still in the room. Rand leaves and Perrin's like, "Ugh, so fucking awkward," and Faile's like, "Well, where were we?" and then they have sex. Um, I guess. I'm trying to think if there was anything else. I keep, like, wanting to say more about Perrin and Faile's relationship and then just remembering we have six full books ahead of us --

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Don't worry.

Emily: In which there will be nothing but that to talk about.

Sally: We'll get to it.

Emily: One day I'll be able -- one day I'll sit down and write out my thoughts in an essay format so it's not just me talking -- rambling.

Sally: I would love to read that essay. You're so smart and such a good writer.

Emily: (sigh) I just think it would be a little clearer. Um.

Sally: My essay would be like, "Heteronormativity is a cult," period. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) It sure is the way Perrin and Faile do it.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Ugh. OK, we switch over to Rand, who is, as usual -- I mean, if every Perrin point of view in every book starts out with Perrin sitting on the ground feeling sorry for himself, it always starts with Rand in a darkened room, muttering to himself and just reminding us how bad things are for him.

Sally: Yeah

Emily: He's like, "You'll never believe this, but Lews Therin is still yelling in my head about killing people." (laugh)

Sally: Still nattering on.

Emily: "I can't -- I -- I know, it's a huge shock. All he wants to do is murder, and that's a real inconvenience for me, a person who only sometimes wants to do murder." Um, he's like, "Min went to bed, finally; she's exhausted. And now it's just me and my twenty closest friends, the Maidens, who, let me remind you, I don't always like because they don't treat me like they -- I want them to." And it's like, yeah, believe it or not, humans don't always behave the way we want them to. (inaudible)

Sally: Ain't that the damn truth.

Emily: Um, he's like, "They don't just respect me except when we're in front of people," and I'm like, that's ideal.

Sally: I think they respect you just fine. I think you just don't know how to take a damn joke.

Emily: Yeah, that's -- you're -- you're right. You got me there.

Sally: (laugh) I think you just maybe need to calm down.

Emily: Uh, three of the Asha'man are also there. They are Fedwin Morr, Eben Hopwil, and a guy named Adley, who I --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Had totally forgotten about. I don't know if he dies or something.

Sally: Seriously. I was like, "Who is this? Why isn't Narishma here?"

Emily: I'm like, the name sounds familiar, but I guess he's just not one of the ones who I get most attached to or something. Who knows. Um. Adley and Morr, I believe, are dressed -- Adley and, excuse me, Hopwil are dressed normally; Morr is in, like, this sort of costume where he's just, like, in a normal coat. Oh, we're also told sort of just randomly that, uh, Fedwin Morr has a -- what Mazrim Taim calls a "bar" --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And which we, from our Aes Sedai points of view, would recognize as a block.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, meaning that there are some constraints on his power. His is that he cannot do things at a distance for whatever reason.

Sally: Yeah. I mean, it feels like a pretty reasonable distance to me. It's like fifty yards or something.

Emily: Yeah. "Oh, dang, I can't blow up people more than fifty yards away from me, and it's -- the blood will get on me."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, maybe that's a good thing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Maybe you should have to confront your actions, know what I'm saying? (laugh) Um.

Sally: RIP Morr, though, are we right?

Emily: Yeah. Rand tells us that he is going to make three errands -- errands -- (in a Rumplestilskin voice) "Here are my errands three." (laugh)

Sally: Shut up. Idiot. (laugh)

Emily: But he says the Maidens only know about two of them, and we, the reader, by the end of this point of view, only know about two of them, so I have no clue what his third one is.

Sally: (laugh) Good writing, Robert Jordan.

Emily: I mean, maybe it'll come up later. Maybe this is a mystery that will be revealed in 400 pages when we get back to Rand. But is this going to be, like, a, you know, who knifed that random Aes Sedai in Caemlyn? Oh, it was the Whitecloaks under Padan Fain that we could never know except by reading the Wikipedia?

Sally: (laugh) I forgot about that.

Emily: Um, but Rand's first errand is that he is Traveling to Caemlyn. He insists on an elaborate disguise, um, where he is, like, bound and looks like a prisoner and is wearing a hood. And all the Maidens are like, "This is dumb," and Rand's like, "Shut up," and I -- the whole time, I was reading it, like, this isn't that dumb if Rand wants people to continue to believe that he is -- like, Rand could have any number of reasons --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To not want the public to know that he's in Caemlyn. Until we find out from Rand himself that the reason he's doing this is on the off chance that Elayne and Aviendha are in town.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, oh, that is dumb, then.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I mean. (laugh)

Sally: Like, I was really on board with your whole, like, "Let's exercise a little bit of political thought, and maybe I don't need to announce my presence everywhere that I go."

Emily: Yeah, I love a good costume change. I love --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The idea that you're like, "I don't want to be swarmed by --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Dignitaries and lords and ladies as soon as I step into Caemlyn, so I will just sort of do things quietly.” I’m like, yeah. I’m into that.

Sally: Yeah. Reasonable.

Emily: Give me some espionage, you know? But no, he’s like, “I’m just afraid of women.”

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: “The women who love me -- I’m terrified of them.”

Sally: “I’m afraid -- they’re horrifying. They wanna -- they wanna kiss me? What?”

Emily: “Fuck me?”

Sally: “They wanna do what with my penis?”

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: “I don’t think that’s allowed until I’m married.”

Sally: “Will I ever see it again?” (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) “IT’S GONE!”

Sally: “They took it, all three of them! They stole it! Like the witches in Macbeth.”

Emily: I just watched an extremely funny, um, and extremely smart, uh, YouTube essay by the, uh, YouTuber -- uh, her -- her real name is Natalie; her, like, YouTube name is Contrapoints.

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: Um, yeah, she’s -- this was the first, like, full essay of hers that I’ve watched. She is so smart, so funny. Um, and she was, like, talking about, uh, you know Andrea Dworkin, that, like, philosopher?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: She was talking about her book “Intercourse,” which is all about women and sex. Uh, she was talking about how it’s, like, the “femcel” version of feminism, ‘cause it’s -- it insists that women must hate sex; some, like, random thing like that. Um, but she was talking about how in the book or something it was like, “Men are always afraid -- and this -- this explains why they behave the way they do about sex -- they’re afraid that women will consume them during

intercourse,” or something like that. And Natalie was like, “I dunno, based on the heterosexual dialogue I’ve heard in porn, that’s not what’s going on in their heads. It’s not like they’re like, ‘Oh my God, you’re consuming me! Ahhh!’ It’s more like, ‘Oh, yeah, you like that, you little ... blank?’” Bleh.

Sally: “Oh, no, she’s consuming me.”

Emily: “She’s eating me!” Like that scene in American Gods.

Sally: I was just gonna say the same thing.

Emily: Yeah, which --

Sally: Vagina dentata.

Emily: Excuse me?

Sally: Everyone -- I mean, that’s not quite what’s going on in -- I almost said Game of Thrones. Ahh! What is happening to me? Um. Anyway.

Emily: Um, anyway. So Rand’s like, “I’m terrified of women.” But the -- he is taken to see Bashere and Bael, who is in charge of the Aiel who are in Caemlyn.

Sally: Bael, in charge of the Aiel.

Emily: Yeah. Bashere in charge of the ... Saldaeans. (laugh)

Sally: That doesn’t work quite as well.

Emily: Yeah, it’s not a good rhyme. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Anyway, Rand is shocked and alarmed to find out that these men’s wives have also been invited to the party.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because they also know what’s going on and want to know what more is going on, I guess.

Sally: Yeah, I mean, basically, Rand is like, “How dare women be involved in politics?”

Emily: I mean, yeah, that’s -- I do understand why he would be a little bit confused, given that, like, Bashere’s wife and Bael’s one wife, Dorindha, never really participate in things like this.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, like, normally, when Rand is like, “Hey, I want to talk to you, Bashere,” it’s not like Deira comes along to handhold Bashere --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The entire time, you know? It makes sense that Melaine would be there, as, like, a representative of the Wise Ones, but.

Sally: Yeah. I mean, it’s confusing, but I don’t know why he’s quite as put out as he is.

Emily: Yeah, he is -- he is very hung-up about it. Um. But he’s like, “Here’s what’s going on.” Or they’re like, “Hey, you good?” I can’t actually remember their dialogue, and I’m not going to pretend like I do. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Why would I? Um. But Rand spends a lot of time looking over a map and reminding us that he has this big old army in -- uh, right on the border of Illian that is just ready to go at any time. And if Perrin won’t lead it, then he needs Mat to lead it. So he needs Mat to get back from picking up Elayne. He also needs Elayne in Caemlyn. So Rand is like, “Wow, I really, desperately need the boy that I teleported to this place to bring back Elayne -- on foot, for some reason.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “I can’t simply -- my third errand -- my third mysterious errand can’t just be going back to that place and being like, ‘Hey, Mat.’ Looking around, you know, finding out what the deal is.” It’s bizarre.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He also is like, “I really need Mat to lead this army.” Mat was in position to lead that army until you teleported him away on this nonsense errand.

Sally: Yeah, until you told him to fuck off.

Emily: Oh my God. It’s like -- more and more, I’m like, Mat only ends up in Ebou Dar because Rand fucked him over.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And that really makes me mad. Rand’s inability to just confront the women he has feelings for and be like, “Hey, guys, sorry, turns out I have feelings for all three of you. I don’t know what to do about that, but it turns out all three of you are adults and have decision-making capabilities, so maybe we can talk this out.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Regardless of how that ends for me.” But Rand is afraid to do that, so he’s like, “I will send Mat to just -- to -- I will just send my -- my friend, who isn’t even my friend, away to do that.”

Sally: Away, into a situation where he is, um, sexually assaulted.

Emily: Fully -- yeah, fully knowing that Elayne has never just done a thing in her life before because a man told her to do it, and I’m not talking about that in a fun, girlboss way. I’m talking about -- it’s in an annoying way, where she doesn’t take advice from anyone.

Sally: Yeah, she -- Elayne knows best.

Emily: Elayne knows best. Why would Elayne go to do the thing that makes the most sense for her at this time in her life, which is claiming the throne? (laugh) Oh my God.

Sally: She’s just going to fuck around Ebou Dar for a little while.

Emily: Elayne’s still in her gap year, you fucko. Why would she go home and take up her responsibilities?

Sally: Yeah, she is too busy girlboss-ing her way through Ebou Dar.

Emily: So of course Mat would just get sucked into the vortex of terror that is Elayne and Nynaeve’s relationship and end up in Ebou Dar, where he is repeatedly raped. Sorry. Thanks a lot, Rand.

Sally: (sigh) When you really -- when you really lay it all out, and you’re like, Rand being, um, an irresponsible pissbaby is directly responsible for Mat, um, being raped, held hostage, and then ultimately given into the hands of the Seanchan, it’s like, everybody better hate Rand or you’re not paying a-fucking-ttention.

Emily: Ugh.

Sally: Mat should get to take out Rand -- Mat should invent guns just to be able to take out Rand’s kneecaps.

Emily: It makes me so angry that, like, the -- literally, that last thing we saw in book seven was the -- excuse me; book six, where Rand sent Mat away -- was the last time Rand and Mat would speak until book fourteen, where they have this very cutesy, fun, “Ah, hey, bro, how’s it going? What’ve you been doing for the last seven -- ah, reaching enlightenment. Ah, getting married, rescuing Moiraine; you know, the usual. Aren’t we fun and charming?”

Sally: That’s --

Emily: And it's like, I would like some actual emotional intelligence from either of you --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I would like some of the issues that have been on the backburner for quite a while to come up here. I'd like Mat to be like, "Hey, guess what happened because you sent me away and couldn't deal with your own shit?" And Rand to be like, "Oh, dang. Sorry?" Wow, an apology, wouldn't that be novel? (sigh) Sorry, I got pretty fired up about that. (laugh) I wasn't expecting to.

Sally: No, I didn't know that they don't speak again until A Memory of Light. That is --

Emily: Nope.

Sally: Heinous.

Emily: And it really pisses me off -- and sorry if you're one of these people, listeners -- it really pisses me off when people are like, "I love how cute that conversation is. It's so nice to see them just bantering and being bros." And I'm like, what do they have to banter over? What have they had to banter over in fourteen books? They haven't had that aspect of their relationship literally since the first few chapters of book one, and if it's for nostalgia's sake that you want that, fine, I guess Brandon Sanderson is here, writing the fanfiction for you. But it's not an accurate portrayal of the growth that these characters have gone through.

Sally: Yeah. Well, and it's like, I love -- love -- a good banter.

Emily: Who doesn't?

Sally: Like, there's nothing better than just, like, lads being lads, friends just shooting the shit with each other. But, like, you have to earn it.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, banter just can't exist in space and -- sorry; spoiler alert, this will be a bit of dunking on Brando Sando, based on the few of his books that I've read -- but I feel like he wants to have the comedic and sort of homey atmosphere that comes from characters bantering with each other but does not put in the ground work in order to make the relationships between those characters feel authentic and believable. That's how I felt about Mistborn, anyway.

Emily: No, yeah, I feel you.

Sally: Um, so it is, like, really disappointing but not surprising to me that that is what's happening. Um.

Emily: I mean, I don't believe Robert Jordan would do any better, to be clear.

Sally: Yeah, okay, good point. Good point. I will dunk on both Robert Jordan and Brander -- Branderson.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Are --

Emily: It's just like, um, to go back to one of our favorite YA -- YA, um, series, there's quite a lot of banter in the Raven Cycle by Maggie Stiefvater --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But that banter only works because we are seeing these characters regularly have confrontations and emotional conversations. You know?

Sally: Yeah, no, a hundred percent. Like --

Emily: Like, Adam and Gansey's weird, convoluted relationship is only believable the way that it is because we see them yelling at each other.

Sally: Yeah, like, you --

Emily: About class privilege. (laugh)

Sally: You --

Emily: Like, in book one.

Sally: Yeah -- you know the moment -- I think it's in book three or four -- where they're, like, at an assembly and Adam looks over and just mouths "Yeehaw"?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, that is pure, like, lads being lads, and it would not work without, like, multiple books of them, like, forming a complicated, intense relationship with one another because they yell at each other.

Emily: Yeah, and they're like -- "This is my best friend, and our relationship is incredibly fraught because we're in high school --"

Sally: Yeah. "We're seventeen."

Emily: "And it's always incredibly fraught when you're in high school, but also we have a lot of real issues on the backburner."

Sally: Yeah, like --

Emily: And I'm like, it's so satisfying when they have fun with each other because it's so satisfying when they --

Sally: Yeah, like --

Emily: Yell at each other.

Sally: Ugh. Now, we don't -- we don't have to keep getting into the Raven Cycle, but the scene at the end of book one where Gansey is like, "Why don't you just leave your abusive family, Adam? You could do that, right?"

Emily: And Adam's like, "What?!" (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) "What the fuck is wrong with you?"

Emily: "Take your boat shoes and walk the fuck out of here, man."

Sally: Yeah. "Get your rich ass out of my sight before I beat you to death," and Gansey is like, "Maybe I have some emotional actualizing to do."

Emily: Dur. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) But, um -- ugh, sorry, I love the relationship between those dumb boys in those dumb books.

Emily: It's great.

Sally: Um. So the fact that, um, Mat doesn't get to be like, "Rand, take your boat shoes and get out of here" is upsetting to me.

Emily: Yeah, it's a real -- real disappointment. Um. Sorry we keep going on these long rants, and this whole time -- I just barely switched positions -- but up until this point, I've been sort of half on my back, staring at the ceiling like I'm in a therapist's office.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, um, that sort of lended itself to that tone. Uh, Rand is like, "Is Elayne here yet?" and everyone's like, "No. Duh." Um, and Rand's like, "Ah, dang, well, I don't know what I'm gonna do in Caemlyn if Elayne's not here to take over." He hears that, uh, the foundations for the War of Succession -- which Elayne will have to deal with -- have been laid in that sort of as soon as Rand disappeared, a bunch of people were like, "Well, I'm the queen now," and Dyelin managed to put that down, uh, by, I believe, imprisoning the ringleaders -- I guess the nobility -- hanging some other people -- um, and anyone else who would have been a baddie has just sort of left Caemlyn.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So what we have is a bunch -- and I would know this, 'cause I've just been reading Henry IV Part Two by William Shakespeare --

Sally: God, she's so smart, you guys.

Emily: It's so English. But what we have is a bunch of people who have, um, issues with the current leadership, whether that is Rand or Elayne, and believe that they have their own right to rule and are not happy to just sort of wait things out. So of course, when you have a group of people like that, they are going to find each other and are going to eventually form some sort of armed rebellion. But Rand can't be bothered with that, 'cause he's afraid of women, so he's like, "Hmm, well, that's too bad." All of the women in the room are like, "Hey, you're not gonna try and subjugate any more Aes Sedai, are you?" and he's like, "I mean, no, not if they are normal to me." And they're like, "That's not even a good answer enough for me because I'm a woman and for some reason I'm weirdly on the Aes Sedai's side."

Sally: I know, it's like, let's talk about, like, some weird pop feminism going on in this room right now, where they're like, "These -- we are on the side of the powerful ladies."

Emily: Yeah, Davram Bashere's wife is like, "I'm no gender traitor."

Sally: Yeah, seriously. (laugh)

Emily: "I just love the Aes Sedai 'cause they're powerful women," and it's like, shut up.

Sally: Yeah, it's like, okay.

Emily: We find out that there's a lot of Aes Sedai in Caemlyn, the same way that there are a lot of Aes Sedai in Cairhien, not the ones who are related to Rand but just sort of hanging out.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, I think the ones in Caemlyn can be explained by Elayne -- excuse me, Elaida has sent out a group to investigate and do something about the Asha'man. I don't really know what the ones -- oh, wait. And the ones in Cairhien are Cadsuane's party.

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: I believe. Yeah.

Sally: I forgot about her.

Emily: Yeah, she's getting her introduction soon.

Sally: Oh, no. (laugh)

Emily: But in both instances, it's not enough Aes Sedai -- the magic number is 13, I believe -- for Rand to really be panicked about, plus he's not staying in Caemlyn, so he's just like, "Meh. Deal with it," and leaves. He's like, "Well, I've gotta go to, uh, my forces in Illian to drop off one of these here Asha'man," or I guess both of these here Asha'man. He says he's dropping off Adley and Hopwil. And he is leaving Fedwin Morr with Bashere and Bael to carry messages, essentially, 'cause he can Travel.

Sally: I know. The Asha'man are like, "I can't believe I went to Mazrim Taim's School for Murder Boys just to become a glorified pigeon."

Emily: Literally. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Fedwin Morr's like, "Is this what you think of me?"

Sally: He's like, "Uhhhh."

Emily: "I can explode people?"

Sally: Yeah. "Thank you so much. I do have --" It's like -- it's like being a millennial at your job when the, like, boomer who makes eight times your salary is like, "Can you convert this Microsoft Word document to a PDF?" (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. God.

Sally: That's what's happening to Morr right now. (laugh)

Emily: He's like, "OK? I'm overqualified for this position? But sure."

Sally: "Why not?"

Emily: "Whatever you say." Uh, Rand reminds us that Sammael is always best on the defense.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And the chapter ends with Bael or Bashere or someone being like, "So are you finally gonna start your -- your little invasion of Illian?" and Rand's like, "Sure am," and then he doesn't.

Sally: Yeah. It's very cute, though, Bashere is like, "Woohoo!"

Emily: Bashere is like, "Yahoo, baby."

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: "Send me there." And Rand's like, "Actually, that's just not gonna happen for quite a while," because spoiler alert, Mat's -- Mat ain't here.

Sally: Yeah, Bashere is another extremely competent person that Rand just sort of keeps in Caemlyn.

Emily: Yeah, Bashere's like, "I mean, I do love fighting, but I guess it's -- there's no lost glory in --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Holding Caemlyn for the Dragon Reborn," and I'm like --

Sally: There is, though. (laugh) Sorry, babes.

Emily: I mean, you're -- you're not one of the Five Great Statesmen; you're one of the Five Great Generals.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Go do your fucking job. I know it's not your fault; Bashere, you're perfect, and you never did anything wrong in your beautiful life.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's Rand's fault he's misusing you.

Sally: Yeah, well, it's just like, it's the same thing with Mat. It was like, "I'm gonna send --"

Emily: Yeah, talk about glorified pigeons.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "I'm sending war boy supreme over here to pick up my --"

Sally: Girlfriend.

Emily: "Ex-girlfriend from her gap year that -- the neverending gap year."

Sally: Yeah. "And then I've got Davram Bashere, local zaddy, just sort of sitting in Caemlyn, doing nothing."

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: "And then here are all my Asha'man -- my super powerful murder boys. They will also just be running messages for me." (laugh)

Emily: Rand is just, like, that guy who does in fact have a luxury BMW --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But he's like, "Hey, Mat, you have a shitty VW van, right?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Can you go pick up my girlfriend at the 7-Eleven where the train dropped her off and she can't get home?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Mat's like, "I mean --"

Sally: Go pick up your girlfriend yourself.

Emily: "I guess? But only because you have a gun." (laugh)

Sally: Bang, bang.

Emily: Or the magical equivalent.

Sally: Yeah, poor Mat. Poor all of these boys.

Emily: So --

Sally: Being -- working for Rand must suck ass.

Emily: Yeah, he's the worst manager.

Sally: Worst boss in the world.

Emily: Yeah, he can't decide whether he's a micromanager or a -- just gone. In the wind.

Sally: Just -- (laugh) "You'll figure it out."

Emily: Totally absentee. He's just playing golf every weekend. Okay.

Sally: Playing golf every day, basically.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: If golf is being emo or whatever.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: I dunno. He pisses me off. Did you guys know this? I don't like him. (laugh)

Emily: So that's the state of -- (laugh) affairs in Caemlyn and Cairhien, as we leave them for quite a chunk of the book to, uh -- we're gonna hop over to Egg next. We'll be with her for a few weeks. Um, and then off to Ebou Dar.

Sally: Off to the races.

Emily: And I believe it just started raining, so if you hear that in the background --

Sally: What the h?

Emily: Okay, everyone. Uh, do you have anything to add?

Sally: Pfffft. No. Not about the chapters.

Emily: 'Kay. Thanks for listening. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Um, thank you all for sticking with us. Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: Um, I don't -- in lieu of a sign-off this week, if I could just take a minute -- I can also try and think of a sign-off -- but, um, I wanted to, um, remind everybody that EHR has a bookshop affiliate page where you can purchase books. Um, and we will get -- um, ten percent of your purchase will bounce back to us, and then we use whatever we gain from the bookshop affiliate page -- we, um, donate to, um, uh, direct aid requests and mutual aid funds that support, um, Black and Indigenous trans people. Um, it's our way to try and leverage this little platform of ours to do some good. We talk about a lot of different books. Um, I'm assuming if you're listening to a Wheel of Time podcast, you're a pretty big reader, so you're probably buying books. Um, you can find that link in, um, the bio of any of our social media. I probably should put a link to that on our website. But it's pretty easy to find. Um, if you have any trouble, you can always DM us, and I can send you the direct link. Um, and we got away from this during our break, obviously, but we used to post a book -- or a couple books -- recommendation every week, and I think we're -- not -- I mean, I'm in charge of the social media, so I am deciding that we'll get back into doing that, um, a little bit more with, like, more regularity. So I just wanted to remind you that that is also going on. So if you have a book, if you're in the -- the book shopping market, consider buying it through our affiliate page, even if you just do it once. That's a great way to, um, add a little bit of mutual aid into your everyday purchases.

Emily: Yes, indeed. Alright, everyone. Thanks for listening.

Sally: Quick sign-off. I texted my mom at the beginning of this and was like, "We're recording. I'll call you when we're done." She has called me twice during this podcast. (laugh)

Emily: Oh, boy. Classic. Well, Sally's gotta call her mom back, I guess.

Sally: It's just, like -- I know she's --

Emily: The reading comprehension. (laugh)

Sally: Moms are -- they either just don't answer the phone after they tell you to call them or they call you when you're like, "I am distinctly not available at this time." Moms! What are they good for?

Emily: (laugh) Goodbye, everyone.

Sally: Bye.