



## Episode 176: Mean Little Opinions Everywhere

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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)

Emily: Um, this is Everybody Hates Rand. It's your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I am Sally Goodger.

Emily: Multiple people at this wedding I went to this weekend because this was -- it wasn't a wedding; Cambria's already married. It was a wedding celebration.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, uh, since some of her friends are also my friends, slash, you know, just circles, same social circles, several people this weekend asked me if I was excited about the Wheel of Time TV show, and I had to be like, "No." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I had to be like, on one level, yes. As a reader of Robert Jordan's Wheel of Time series, yes, I am delighted that there is an adaptation coming out that doesn't seem like a trash fire.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That seems fun. I will enjoy watching it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But as a semi-successful Wheel of Time podcast host, it -- I -- it -- I struggle. I just need you guys to know: I don't know if I'm going to have opinions of the show.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We might just watch it. You know?

Sally: I mean, if the quality of my Tweets about the trailer is any indication -- (laugh)

Emily: Your Tweets were hilarious. I was watching the trailer, and I was trying to think of anything funny to say, and I was like, I got -- I got nothing. But then meanwhile you were just, like, coming out with bangers.

Sally: (laugh) Well, thanks. I don't know --

Emily: And I was like, damn. How does she do that?"

Sally: I don't know if that's true. Um. I also just sort of enter this fugue state, where I'm like, any stupid thing that comes into my head, I will put on the internet.

Emily: (laugh) It works.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: If it works, it works.

Sally: Um. I was cracking myself up with the Tweet I made about the cinematic parallels between Naruto and Wheel of Time. And I'm like, nobody is going to find this funny, but I found myself very funny, so.

Emily: There are a lot of cinematic parallels between Naruto and, like, everything, it turns out.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, literally, the other -- like, I think last night, we were watching it, and something was happening, and Emily was like, "This is very mythological," and cites, like, three different Greek myths. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, well. What're you gonna do? (laugh)

Sally: And I was like, oh, okay, yeah. There you go.

Emily: Um --

Sally: There you go. Naruto. Um. Yeah. And I think -- I don't think we should have to have opinions about the TV show. You know, we've committed to doing the book series, and I am already --

Emily: Is it not enough?

Sally: Is -- yeah.

Emily: That I give you my -- my little mean opinions about these books?

Sally: "My little mean opinions." (laugh)

Emily: Must I come up with --

Sally: Pretty Little Fires Everywhere. Pretty Little Mean Opinions Everywhere. (laugh)

Emily: Is it not enough? Have I not shed enough blood for this podcast?

Sally: It's what it feels like.

Emily: Especially after these chapters. This is a great segue.

Sally: Um. Yeah.

Emily: Did you actually read that chapter?

Sally: No.

Emily: Good.

Sally: Absolutely not. Emily walked in today -- my cute mom brought me AirPods, um, because I have so many --

Emily: Oh, yeah, I noticed you've been wearing them. A couple of times today.

Sally: Yeah. I have so many issues with my hands that my mom was like, "I think this might help you, if you don't have to, like, hold the phone up while you're talking on the phone," and stuff.

Emily: Mm. Smart.

Sally: Which was just, like, really sweet. It was mostly to connect to my work phone, which I haven't even connected them to my work phone; I've just been using them to listen to music, but I will get there eventually. I had my ear pods -- I had my little AirPods in, and Emily walks in,

and I took one out, and I was like, “Oh --” and she was like, “Do not. Read. The first chapter of this set of chapters,” and I was like, “Oh, okay,” and she was like, “It’s basically torture porn,” and then she just walked away, and I was like -- like a sage, coming out of the wilderness.  
(laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Walking out of a tree to slap the nearest passerby. “Don’t read this chapter.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Don’t read it.” I mean, yeah, I feel like that is sort of what my life purpose is, is to tell people what not to read.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Whether or not you listen to me is totally up to you, but I, like Cassandra, have given the message.

Sally: (laugh) Is it sad that the first thing I thought of was Cassandra Clare for a brief minute?  
(laugh)

Emily: Shut up.

Sally: Then I had to be like, “No. She means the prophet Cassandra.” (laugh)

Emily: Speaking of things not to read, Cassandra Clare’s cinematic universe, that spans, like, ninety --

Sally: Oh --

Emily: Seven-hundred-page books.

Sally: It’s becoming untenable. Like, the publishers --

Emily: And all of them are about the same thing.

Sally: The publishers need to stop her.

Emily: I know.

Sally: But they won’t, because she’s still making money.

Emily: ‘Cause she’s a -- she’s a money maker.

Sally: Someone needs to stop her. That’s somebody’s Hero’s Journey quest, to slay Cassandra Clare’s cinematic universe

Emily: (laugh) Okay, no, we are not advocating anyone to k-word Cassandra Clare.

Sally: No, I said Cassandra Clare's cinematic universe. (laugh)

Emily: Oh, okay.

Sally: You have to kill -- do not kill -- (laugh) Please, dear God, we are not advocating that. But someone does have to stop the cinematic universe.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Go to the heart of it.

Emily: I have strong feelings that authors who write trash are themselves probably fine people. I mean, there's -- there's different levels of trash. You know, there's blatantly sexist, misogynistic, racist trash, much like the Wheel of Time --

Sally: (simultaneously) The Wheel of Time.

Emily: And then there's trash that's just, like, Cassandra Clare's weird, kind of fan fiction-y trash. And probably it's not doing any good to the universe, but it's also probably not doing a sum total evil --

Sally: Yeah. No, I --

Emily: So whatever, she's probably a fine person.

Sally: I think, as long as you don't come out of it with, like, an aggressive incest fetish, you're okay.

Emily: What a horrifying -- what a horrifying notion. Wow.

Sally: And, like, not to kinkshame, but I mean, like, "aggressive" in the way that it's, like, uncomfortable for everyone in your life.

Emily: Yeah, like ...

Sally: Um, this has already taken some twists and turns.

Emily: I feel like it's taken enough turns that we're right back where we started, which is kinks that, uh, that you're making everyone else's business --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Not just yours, and that's Robert Jordan's torture porn fetish. Um, there's three chapters we read this week. The first one is Moghedien's point of view, uh, sort of in the follow-up of her escape from captivity into a new form of captivity, uh, where she is -- literally has her soul slash mind, um, sort of separated from her and held by the malevolent force that is first one of the

Myrddraal -- the Myrddraal, uh, who has been floating around, kind of as an avatar for the Dark One --

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: But he's so mystifying -- none of the Forsaken understand what he is except that he is not like the other Myrddraal.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Not like the other girls.

Sally: (laugh) "I'm not like the other Myrddraal."

Emily: "I'm not like the other Myrddraal. I have, like, I don't know, power."

Sally: Yeah, what's that --

Emily: "I -- I can boss YOU around."

Sally: What's that fucker's name?

Emily: Shaidar Haran?

Sally: Sure.

Emily: I think?

Sally: That sounds right.

Emily: I dunno. And it's, like, everyone's like, "He's not like the other Myrddraal," but the series never really answers the question of how.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don't -- I do think, based on my recent reread of Memory of Light, that he is sort of acting as an avatar for the Dark One, but I don't know if that's complete. Perhaps the Wheel of Time Companion could tell us more, but the day that I actually pull out the Wheel of Time Companion, which we own, to answer my question about this series is the day the world ends, as far as I'm concerned. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. Like, I'm just ethically opposed to it.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I'm artistically opposed to it. I just am opposed to it.

Emily: (laugh) Uh, the second chapter is -- fuck, I forgot the second chapter -- oh.

Sally: It's Morgase.

Emily: Morgase's point of view uh, dealing with the aftermath of torture by, uh, Asunawa, rape by Valda, and then the Seanchan invasion of Amadicia and her subsequent escape from Amadicia in the company of her usual, uh, coterie plus Balwer, the former spymaster for Pedron Niall. Um, so lots going on with Morgase. And then the third chapter deals with Perrin leaving Cairhien after an elaborate, theatric production -- (laugh) -- wherein Rand pretended slash perhaps was really angry at Perrin, exiled him, and then Perrin leaves and then we discover that actually this has all been a ruse, and Perrin is actually, uh, on Rand's orders, going to Ghealdan to take care of, um, Masema.

Sally: Yeah, this elaborate theatrical performance in which Rand maybe broke three of Perrin's ribs.

Emily: Yeah, we never received any follow-up on that. Perrin's like, "Maybe he cracked my ribs," and I'm like, are you just walking around with broken ribs, bitch? Did someone heal you?

Sally: Yeah, like, are you -- is one of your lungs punctured? What's happening?

Emily: Whatever. Oscar-winner, Rand al'Thor, over here.

Sally: More like bad theater kid Rand al'Thor, a little too into the performance.

Emily: (laugh) Drama kid -- well, that's how you win an Oscar these days. Look at Daniel Day-Lewis.

Sally: I don't believe the Oscars hold any meaning.

Emily: I agree. (laugh) That's my point exactly.

Sally: (laugh) What -- like, I feel like a really funny thing won an Oscar last year.

Emily: I don't -- I don't remember --

Sally: Yeah, whatever.

Emily: Any movies that came out last year. I don't think anyone does or should.

Sally: Uh, Fast Nine?

Emily: That was this year.

Sally: Oh, that's right. The Oscar cycle is so confusing.

Emily: It was supposed to be last year, but -- yeah, if Fast Nine doesn't win -- (laugh)

Sally: If Fast Nine --

Emily: Best Picture, I will riot. (laugh)

Sally: Fast Nine is way more enjoyable, probably, than anything that will be nominated for an Oscar. Dune? Probably?

Emily: Oh, yeah. Dune might. I don't know, I haven't seen it, obviously --

Sally: Special effects?

Emily: But yeah, special effects.

Sally: According to my friend Lauren, the special effects are really good.

Emily: I also hear it's very poorly lit and that there are a lot of bagpipes in the soundtrack.

Sally: What the fuck?

Emily: A surprising amount of bagpipes for a space movie.

Sally: Hmm.

Emily: Uh, but yeah, from the visuals I've seen, it looks like a -- it could win some costuming or effects awards, but who's to say? Whatever. Who cares. I have feelings about Dune. I won't say what type of feelings. You can probably guess. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) The fact that you said "feelings" instead of anything else. I think --

Emily: Opinions. I have some more mean little opinions about Dune.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: But whatever, this isn't a Dune podcast. It's not like you guys care. Go watch Dune. Enjoy the sand worms for me.

Sally: The sand worm looks stinky and nasty.

Emily: Oh, does it? I just love the concept of sand worms.

Sally: No, I agree, I mean, they're very good.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But.

Emily: Okay, sort of, um, splitting those three chapters into discussion topics --

Sally: Sure.



Emily: First we have, uh, Robert Jordan's fetish for torturing women. Um, I don't particularly want to skim over -- I mean, I don't particularly want to go into the details of what happens to Moghedien; she goes before the Dark One, who tells her, basically, she failed, but she's, uh, you know, not so replaceable that he's just gonna kill her off, so the, uh, happy medium for him, not her, is this thing called a mindtrap, which we don't really know what it -- what its original purpose was, but it just seems like something that can be used to torture people. You can own a person that way, we are told. Moghedien refers to whoever holds her mindtrap as her owner. So. It's implied that Moghedien has been physically tortured and perhaps sexually assaulted by, uh, the Myrddraal, Shaidar Haran. We kind of skim over that. Um, but, you know, sort of imagination is worse than knowing, especially when it comes to torture. Which, uh, authors can sometimes use as a -- as a, uh, powerful tool to ensure that they're not graphically describing torture --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But ensuring that we still feel the effects of it, uh, but can also be a good, a powerful mechanism of horror and of sort of multiplying --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: What we are sensing. Um, but Moghedien is left -- let out of this, like, weird captivity after what, to her, feels like many days but, we are told, is just a day. She was in sort of, like, a time dilation chamber or whatever. Uh, and is introduced to Moridin, who -- she is like, "Who is this motherfucker? He's, like, twenty-two years old. Handsome guy. I don't know what -- he's so arrogant."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Condescending to me." And he's like, "Actually, I hold your mindtrap, so shut the fuck up and get it in line," and she's like, "Okay, ten-four." What're you gonna do, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: What're you gonna do? Moghedien's really been through the ringer, which is not to say -- uh. Uh, Moghedien's been through the ringer. And it's -- it's -- I almost just said it myself, that, hey, reminder, Moghedien's a war criminal, and da da da da da.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Moghedien being a war criminal does not justify the things she has been through.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, Robert Jordan loves to play on this very slippery slope of, like, you -- we can -- we, or in this case, it's other baddies doing it to her, but we, the good guys, can torture and attack people and kill people and do whatever we need to, particularly if they are bad guys, because we are ultimately fighting for the good, and Moghedien has ultimately been doing

everything for the bad, and therefore she deserves everything that comes to her, and it's just, like -- it's just, like, not -- it's just, like, not an argument that holds up, any, at all.

Emily: I think what we're supposed to be feeling is gratified to witness bad things happening to bad people.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, there's a sense of cosmic justice to that, or there's supposed to be. But I'm reminded of -- this is kind of out of left field, but it's one of my favorite, like, true crime stories. Richard Ramirez, a serial killer who did horrific things, uh, finally got caught because they finally found out his identity while he was still sort of traveling from place to place and, like, published a headshot of him, descriptions, whatever, and, like, the next time he was in a town, he was immediately recognized.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And the town sort of formed this, like, mob to corral him --

Sally: Nice.

Emily: And, uh, gang up on him, and the police were like, "Ah, well, what're we gonna do? It's Richard Ramirez."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Everybody motherfucking hates him, as they should." And I think the, like, pleasure of a story like that is not that Richard Ramirez was getting beat up by a mob; it's that the mob, which had been victimized was, uh, able to reclaim some power --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Over this fear, 'cause there was, like -- it was a whole other level of psychological terror; this guy did not discriminate his victims. It was just, like, anyone.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So they were able to, like, reclaim some power, and it almost, like, feels like a certain measure of healing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don't -- I don't know how to --

Sally: Yeah, kind of in the vein of -- probably using -- I don't think I'm using this term exactly right, but more in the vein of, like, a restorative justice.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: As opposed to just, like, a sort of Old Testament coming down from on high. Old Testament for lack of a better word, but it's just sort of like justice is meted out -- I was talking, interestingly enough, in one of my Winter's Heart blogs, about this with Tylin, to a certain extent. So spoiler alert for that. But Tylin ultimately gets murdered by the gholam in Mat's stead --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: After she helps him -- helps him escape from the captivity she put him in in the first place, so once again, language fails us.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But Mat ends up, like, tying her up under the bed so it looks like she didn't help him, and the gholam comes to kill Mat and kills her instead. And it's supposed to be -- it feels like it's supposed to be this moment of, like -- well, I mean, it's of two minds. I don't think Robert Jordan necessarily views what Tylin did as wrong, so I don't think in his mind that moment comes out as, like, she's getting her just desserts. You know?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But to my mind, it's kind of like, okay, well, uh, yeah. She's finally being punished for what happened.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: But it's not a punishment where she is coming face-to-face with what she did wrong. It's not like someone is like, "You are a rapist, and you raped Mat, and therefore these are the consequences."

Emily: Yeah, there's -- there's -- she's not answering for any specific crime --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or set of crimes; she's just being murdered.

Sally: Yeah, she's just being kind of needlessly brutalized, and the same thing is happening here with Moghedien. It's not like she's on trial, whatever that trial happens to look like, if it's in a court or if it's a mob of small-town people. You know, she's not, like, being -- some justice isn't being, like, meted out to her for a specific thing that she is doing to terrorize people. It's just, like -- and, like, if we want to use the Dark One's twisted logic, she's being punished for failing, you know, but it's like, how can we try her for a crime that we don't think is a crime? You know? So,

like, this is getting, like, really slippery, but it's just, like, again, needless brutalization. It's not like we're like, "Moghedien is being punished for her crimes against humanity."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: She is just being tortured and brutalized. And not to, like, bring this in, but it feels a lot like Guantanamo Bay.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Where it's like, oh, we're torturing terrorists in order to get information, and it's like, first of all, there have been so many stories of the people who were tortured there were not even related to the terrorist groups, so fuck you. But it's just, like, I don't know how to, like, talk about this without, like, bringing the human soul into it, but it's like, what have you done except brutalize yourself in the process of, quote unquote, punishing another person?

Emily: Yeah, I just -- I don't think -- I think Robert Jordan's overall philosophy here is supposed to be that bad things happen to bad people, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Here's why you shouldn't do bad things: because ultimately, bad things will come back around to hurt you." But that sort of, like, karmic, cosmic justice, if you want to call it that, and I think we've pretty much proved that it isn't justice --

Sally: Yeah, I also think the argument is you shouldn't do bad things because it hurts other people.

Emily: Yeah. It's -- it's -- it's, uh, a very twisted, selfish thing to be like, "I don't want to do bad things because ultimately I will be ripped to shreds, essentially, by the powers that be." You should strive to do good things, to be a good person, because that's what's right to do. I don't want --

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: I don't need to explain -- (laugh)

Sally: I know.

Emily: Morality. Um. And, just, what's particularly troubling here is that Moghedien is one of five female Forsaken, and she, along with Lanfear, Graendal in the later series, and, to a certain extent -- actually, all five of the female Forsaken don't necessarily just get killed --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like the male Forsaken do.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And as we've talked about, there's a sort of dignity in, you know, Be'lal just getting balefired --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's kind of funny, but it's like, he's not really humiliated. He just gets killed on the battlefield.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's very glorious. Rahvin gets killed on the battlefield, Sammael gets killed on the battlefield, Ishamael gets killed three separate times on the battlefield, and here we have the women, who are just reduced, reduced, reduced.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To, um, enslaved people, to be tormented by one group or another, to be, in Mesaana's case, spoiler alert, just, like, uh, to lose all brain function.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: So. Hey, Robert, if you're only doing it to the women? Gross.

Sally: Yeah. Very gross. It's like women need to be punished more for being evil.

Emily: Or women need to be punished on a -- on a separate -- men can just get killed. Men can get the death penalty. It is a reflection of Rand's own thought process.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Rand doesn't want to kill women, but he will stop short of killing women and do whatever else to women.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, um.

Sally: Yeah, I mean, like, just killing someone is actually maybe, like, the least horrible -- like, if you're gonna, like, rank the bad things --

Emily: Sure.

Sally: Killing them is the least bad thing. If you're just, like, gunshot to the head.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Instant death. Balefire to the face. Boom, you're done.

Emily: Goodbye, Be'lal, we hardly knew ye. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Gone before your time, I suppose. Yeah, it's also, again, just another instance of Robert Jordan using, uh, rape as punishment for characters.

Emily: Mm.

Sally: Um. Like you said, it's implied, it's not necessarily on-screen in any way, but Robert Jordan implies frequently throughout the series that the Myrddraal are just these, like, horrific, lecherous creatures, always preying on women.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: Um, so it's like, the implication -- it doesn't have to be implied very hard for us to go to that place.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Um, and we're just kind of seeing it sort of, like, back to back to back to back in Crown of Swords with, um, everyone being like, "Mat is getting his just desserts 'cause he's such a -- such a lecher upon women; it's so funny that a woman is then preying upon him, ha ha;" then Moghedien; and then the next chapter, Morgase. It's like -- there's, like, a lot of weird, twisted morality going on there with the maid being like, "You just need to buck the fuck up. Lots of people have had it worse."

Emily: Oh, yeah, Breane.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah, that whole sequence is troubling on a lot of levels, particularly -- not particularly -- but partly because -- we have said this many times: you can and should write outside of your own identity, if you're doing so --

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Emily: In a compassionate and thoughtful way. But Robert Jordan is not writing from a woman's perspective in a compassionate and thoughtful way in portraying a woman has been a victim of sexual assault.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Robert Jordan, like, simply cannot inhabit the mind of a woman who has been raped. It seems to be impossible for him.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: To -- to do or portray with any nuance.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Given, Morgase is hardly the most nuanced character in the series; she's sort of a one-note character who is constantly reminding us of various aspects of her and her relationships with other characters. Tallanvor can't be on screen without her commenting on how young he is, how disrespectful he is, but implied throughout is that she's very attracted to him. And it's like, these are things we can remember about you --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or we should be able to remember about you. Robert Jordan, if you're -- if you're insisting on reminding us every time, then you're not writing well.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And in portraying a woman who is a victim of sexual assault who considers herself to be, uh, on some level, guilty --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because she, quote unquote, agreed to it -- she said yes, in order to evade torture --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is not consent.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Obviously.

Sally: It's, like, the very definition of coercion. "Either have sex with me or this really horrible thing will happen to you."

Emily: Yes. And while survivors of sexual assault often feel guilty for it having happened, okay, fair enough, but nowhere in the narrative does anyone, like, I don't know, push back against that for Morgase?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Breane, the only person who talks to Morgase about it at all, is like, "You just need to --" like you said -- "Buck the fuck up. You're being a coward."

Sally: Yeah. She says all the time, "You're being a coward."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And it's like --

Emily: "You need to act better. You need to not worry the men because they'll sacrifice themselves for you." And it's like, that doesn't sound like Morgase's problem, frankly.

Sally: Yeah, Breane.

Emily: If she can't tell her menfolk, whatever, "Hey, don't do anything stupid," and then not do it, then that's their problem.

Sally: Yeah. I mean, the fact that -- just, like, a sidebar; not trying to get away from the very important point of these chapters -- but, like, the fact that Morgase is constantly, like, struggling with, quote unquote, control over Tallanvor --

Emily: Mm.

Sally: Is just, like ... it's not a relationship to begin with, first of all. But also, like, you're supposed to be his queen. He's supposed to be obeying you.

Emily: Well, and then the idea is that by eventually having a romantic relationship with him, she is surrendering that control.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As though to say, that's what women always need to do.

Sally: Yeah. Surrender.

Emily: Submit. Women! Know your limits. (laugh) Have I shown you that video?

Sally: No, I don't think so.

Emily: It's so funny. It's, like, a black and white, like, um, satire video --

Sally: Oh.

Emily: Set in, like, the 1950s that's like, "Women --" (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) That's very good.

Emily: "In dinner conversations, don't comment on politics."

Sally: (laugh) Know your limits.

Emily: It's really funny, it's my family's favorite. "Women. Know your limits." (laugh)



Sally: That's certainly what it feels like.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It's just, like, this ridiculous thing where it's like, you shouldn't have to struggle with control over anyone. Like, I don't know how many times I can say that about the relationships in Wheel of Time. Like, relationships should not be a power struggle every single time you have a conversation.

Emily: Yeah. Dear God.

Sally: Like, what the -- like, Emily and I are not screaming at each other, deciding what we're going to watch on television.

Emily: Yeah. "I'M in charge." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) "I get the remote. I decide what we do about the Seanchan invasion." It's like, what?

Emily: Yeah. Any sort of healthy relationship, you are focused -- you're a team.

Sally: You're a -- that's, like, the point. Relationship. You're working in relation to one another.

Emily: (sigh)

Sally: Whatever. It, like -- Tallanvor -- I also forget that his first name is Martyn, and it's like, of course your first name is Martyn --

Emily: (snort) Spelled with a "y."

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: (laugh) Marteen.

Sally: Marteen. Um. He's such a little fucking bitch. I hate him.

Emily: Yeah, he's just a little toerag, I don't know.

Sally: (laugh) Tallanvor, know your limits.

Emily: (laugh) Tallanvor, know your limits. Um --

Sally: Ugh. But yes, going back to your point, like, there's absolutely no nuance. And it's not to say that women are not absolutely brutal to one another regarding the subject of sexual assault.

Emily: Oh, no, yeah, that's totally accurate. And, like -- I'd be like, fair enough, this is --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: An accurate portrayal of Breane as a character.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It tells us a lot about Breane and how she views herself and other women.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: Except that this is considered sort of the end of Morgase's, quote unquote, healing process.

Sally: Yeah, she's like, "I am being a coward," and it's like, there's nothing in Morgase to be like, "Well, this feels really bad when Breane says this to me. Perhaps this isn't correct."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Or, like, Lini doesn't say anything different to her or any of the other women that she comes in contact to -- with aren't like, "Yeah, that was really scary and shitty and awful and horrible and wasn't your fault."

Emily: Yeah, and it's, like, difficult because what the women are -- what people are saying to Morgase is, "Hey, you're a grown-up. Be responsible for yourself. Take responsibility for your own actions and choices." But that is, like, something we have been saying to Morgase up until this point and is not something that applies at all to this particular situation.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's just wild because now suddenly someone is saying it.

Sally: Yeah, it's --

Emily: And it's like, yeah, Morgase is a grown-up and should be taking control of her own actions and should be making better choices, but she was raped, and that was absolutely not her fault.

Sally: Yeah. It's -- it is, like, a total mindfuck.

Emily: Yeah, thanks a lot, Robert. Speaking of cosmic justice, I guess, I don't know how we're supposed to feel about the Seanchan invading Amadicia. I don't feel good about it because I don't feel good about the Seanchan invading anywhere.

Sally: I know.

Emily: I wish the Seanchan weren't in this. Do I feel bad that the Whitecloaks got pushed out of their dumb papal city?

Sally: No.

Emily: Not really. But I don't -- I don't feel bad about it, I don't feel good about it. I don't really feel anything about it.

Sally: Well, it's just one of those things where we're, like -- I think part of the, like -- part of it, if I'm, like, understanding Robert Jordan's weird project with the Seanchan, is that we're -- part of us is supposed to be like, "Finally, somebody's doing something about the Whitecloaks. Finally they're getting put in their place." And it's like, if none of the other countries on this continent could gather together to hunt down the fucking crazy witch hunters that have a whole country in the middle of your continent, that's just, like, very ridiculous.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: (laugh) Like, why do we need this whole other army to come in and be like, "Fuck them Whitecloaks."

Emily: Yeah, and it's, like -- what -- the Seanchan have no ethical ground to stand on.

Sally: Yeah. It's --

Emily: The Seanchan are like, "Oh, you ... treat women who can channel so poorly?" (laugh) Okay. You're the Seanchan.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You enslave women who can channel.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Ugh. Whatever. Morgase has this meeting with Suroth. We're supposed to be reminded constantly that Suroth is sort of spearheading this campaign.

Sally: Yeah, as if I could forget her.

Emily: Yeah. Jesus. Hate that bitch. Um. This is supposed to be, sort of on the geopolitical scale, our first confirmation that the Seanchan have indeed taken over Tarabon --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And are making headway in their invasion plans. This has been rumored, though, so frequently over the last couple of books, and I don't know, maybe I'm just a little jaded because I've read this series three times, but, like, it doesn't come as, like, a huge shock. It -- it becomes more annoying that Morgase and the others are so out of the loop.

Sally: Yeah, it's -- this is really one of those instances where, like, having so many points of view is such a detriment to the plot of this -- like, the -- not necessarily the plot, but, I guess, like, the plot experience for the reader.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Where it's like, yeah, I -- I know that Tarabon has been taken over by the Seanchan. I've been able to put together the context clues. I've been able to figure it out. Why do I have to do this again with another character's point of view?

Emily: Like, intellectually, I know Morgase has been in a landlocked country --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Far away from whatever happened in Arad Doman during the Great Hunt, and that pretty much right after those events, she was being brainwashed by Rahvin.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, like, I know that. But we have been reading so much about the Seanchan that it is really hard for us to give her any sort of grace here.

Sally: Yeah, it's just -- it's just frustrating. It's just, like, could we have maybe had another point of view in this instance? Like, what if it was Balwer's point of view, who knows what's going on?

Emily: Oh, fuck, I would love to know what Balwer thinks of this.

Sally: Yeah. Like, that would've been interesting, 'cause he's a guy who's very keyed into the geopolitical happenings all over the continent.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It's just, like, some of it boils down, really, to point of view choice.

Emily: Yeah. And, like, it is a lot more satisfying, at the end of Crown of Swords, when the Seanchan invade, um, Ebou Dar from Mat's point of view.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because Mat has some sense of what this means.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Mat doesn't have to rehash all of the horrors of what is happening. "Oh, those are weird-looking animals."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Oh my gosh, those women in chains are women who can channel."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Oh my gosh, the servants are dressed so sluttily,” you know? Like, I don’t need to hear these thoughts again and again and again. I get it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But Mat is just, like -- you know, face-plants into a wall of horror that this is happening --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And then a building falls on top of him, and it’s like, perfect.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Great. That is exactly how I feel about the Seanchan invasion.

Sally: Yeah. A building is also falling on me, metaphorically.

Emily: A plot building is falling on me. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: So, just, Morgase’s -- blegh -- is dumb. It’s also dumb that it takes the Seanchan invasion for Morgase and company to finally get out of dodge.

Sally: Right? And it’s so easy.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Balwer’s just like, “Doo da loo da loo.”

Emily: Balwer just, like, waltzes in and is like, “Hey.” I mean, he’s like, “Hey, Mat Cauthon and I would get along great because we’ve learned that if you just say some dumb words, they’ll let you do whatever the fuck you want.”

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: “And we know that doesn’t mean jack shit, so let’s leave,” and Morgase is like, “That seems fake, but okay.”

Sally: And it’s not.

Emily: And it’s not! The Seanchan are just that stupid.

Sally: The Seanchan just have a society so built on, like, honor that it’s just very easy for these slippery little men like Mat and Balwer to just play them like a fiddle.

Emily: I love Balwer.

Sally: Yeah, Balwer's such --

Emily: I think he's a great character.

Sally: A good character. Very --

Emily: I love that he's just like, "Fuck Valda. I want that guy dead."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I'm like, cool. I do too.

Sally: Me -- same. Samesies, dude.

Emily: Same, bruh. Ugh.

Sally: Um.

Emily: We find out, by the way, that Amathera, the former panarch of Tarabon, who we haven't seen since book four, has, of course, like everyone else, been taken by the Seanchan and reduced -- once again, women being reduced -- to one of these serving ladies in a flimsy robe who does sexy dances on the command of the nobility. And this is the thing that horrifies Morgase most. Not the literal slavery happening in front of her --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just the fact that the Seanchan seem to have no regard for nobility, for class.

Sally: Yeah, they're like -- she's like, "Amathera?" And it's like, if some poor peasant woman had been taken off the street, would you be like, "Well, that's fine"?

Emily: Well, and it's funny because it is implied that Amathera herself was basically some, you know, random woman --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Who just slept with the former king.

Sally: Oh, that's right.

Emily: And that's how she became the panarch.

Sally: I forgot about that.

Emily: So there is no intrinsic nobility --

Sally: I mean --

Emily: To Amathera or to anyone.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But Morgase is like, “Oh my God, they completely disregarded her position.” So of course the same thing could happen to Morgase. And it’s like, Morgase, what do you think has been happening to you for the last seven months, it feels like?

Sally: I know, this chapter is so frustrating because it opens with, like, obviously, just, like, all this horror happening to Morgase, and you’re like, goddamnit, this is so bad.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And then she goes through the rest of the, like, Seanchan invasion just being like, “Ah! Confronted with the consequences of my own actions!” I don’t know how to get at the point I’m saying, but it’s just, like, finally people are saying things to Morgase that she should have just been doing, three books ago.

Emily: Yeah. Woof. So the Seanchan have Amadicia. If only Valda were dead, but of course he’s not.

Sally: Yeah, he happened to ride out the day before.

Emily: Yeah, he happened to escape. Um. But Balwer and the rest of them get out, where we will pick them up in the next book as they run into Perrin’s coterie.

Sally: I know, it’s so sad that Balwer gets slapped with Perrin, like all the best side characters.

Emily: I know. Imagine Balwer and Mat.

Sally: Ugh --

Emily: The dynamic duo.

Sally: The continent would not survive.

Emily: The buddy cop movie. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Of Mat, military genius, and Balwer, spy genius.

Sally: Yeah. That --

Emily: They would literally create an empire.

Sally: Yeah. Mat would be like, “This is my spymaster. He’s my best friend. Such a weird little dude.”

Emily: “I just love this little dude.” (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: “I love this smart little dude.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, speaking of Perrin’s coterie, though. Uh, Perrin leaves with sort of all the usual suspects, plus some. He does leave behind Loial, who is being sent with an Asha’man named Karldin -- (laugh) Um --

Sally: (laugh) Quick sidebar. This morning, I was talking in -- with my friends in the group chat about how the names in Dune are so stupid. Like, why is the savior of the universe named Paul?

Emily: Paul. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) And Julie and I got on, like, an interesting conversation about, like, naming conventions. How, like, oftentimes scifi characters will have, like, one really weird name and one totally normal name, like Han Solo.

Emily: Yeah, the same thing happens in the series I’m reading, the Fitz --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Fitz and the Fool series.

Sally: Yeah. Um, and then I was talking -- and I was like, “This is not totally related, but Robert Jordan loves to make fantasy names by taking real person names and just adding a letter --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Or changing something. Like Logan and Logain. Or Karl and Karldin. (laugh) Or Martyn, with a “y.”

Emily: Marteen. Uh --

Sally: Robert, what were you doing? Sorry, that was so random.

Emily: Logain and Karldin are being sent to all the Ogier steddings, even though Loial does not want to go to any Ogier steddings, so I don’t really know what the deal is.

Sally: I know, I don’t know how this came about.



Emily: Uh, but they're sort of on a mission to get all the Waygates closed or guarded, whatever, whatever. Perrin's like, "Okay, well, peace out. See ya." And Loial's like, "I just feel so bad about you and Rand," and Perrin's like, "I don't. See ya later." And it's like, what the -- okay. Um, Perrin is leaving with Faile, obviously, the Two Rivers people, Gaul, Bain and Chiad; uh, he finds out that Faile has picked up this random group of Cairhienin and Tairen noble people who are culturally appropriating the Aiel, and he's just like, "Whatever, Faile's gonna do what she's gonna do. Not my business." And it's like, that's so true, bestie. Faile is gonna do what she's gonna do.

Sally: (simultaneously) Faile will do whatever she wants. Yeah.

Emily: Um, they also have a small group of Wise Ones and two Aes Sedai, Seonid and Masuri, who, of course, we'll get to know a little bit better through Perrin's points of view, and we are, uh, not introduced -- we've met Grady and Neald before -- but we are, like, okay, Grady and Neald are gonna be attached to Perrin. We're reminded that Grady's the farmer of the two, Neald "puts on airs," as Perrin says --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We don't actually know what his life is.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Grady has a wife, who he is, quote unquote, bonded to, through a bond akin to the Aes Sedai-Warder bond, although it seems to be a little less freaky.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Given, I guess, we don't know what the consequences are. Like, what happens if Grady dies? Does Sora go into a battle rage or something?

Sally: (laugh) This farm wife. Ooh!

Emily: But it just seems --

Sally: She could kill Mazrim Taim in her battle rage.

Emily: God, that would be fucking lit. She's like, "Fuck you. Someone's gotta do it."

Sally: "Might as well be me."

Emily: "Might as well be me, Sora."

Sally: If not you, who?

Emily: Sora Grady.

Sally: Sora Grady and Jur Grady.

Emily: Jur!

Sally: Sora and Jur Grady. And then Neald has a really funny first name too. It's, like, Fager.

Emily: Fager or something. I dunno.

Sally: Fager. Sounds dangerous. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Don't like it. Um. Grady and Neald, though. Speaking of dynamic duos.

Sally: They're very cute.

Emily: Um, so we've got that group, and then, of course, Berelain and all of her million -- nine hundred -- Mayeners and them. Perrin is not pleased, of course, to be saddled with Berelain, and this is kind of a wild jump from the last time we saw Berelain, where she was like --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Please don't send me back to Mayene," and Rand was like, "Eh," shrug emoji, but now he's like, "Oh, yeah, here's a thing you can do, is go talk to the queen of Ghealdan."

Sally: Yeah, "I will send you and all nine hundred of your contingent to Ghealdan."

Emily: Yeah, and it's like, okay, I'm pleased to have the Mayene army. They're fine.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Berelain, though -- this is, of course, setting up more tension between Faile and Berelain, and it's pretty fucking boring. The whole thing is pretty fucking boring.

Sally: Yeah, I mean, this plot is ...

Emily: But Perrin sets up our mission statement. He's like, "Alright, guys. Here's what we're doing. We're gonna go talk to the queen of Ghealdan; let her know that we are not an invading force; I don't know, try and get her on Rand's side. And then we're gonna go find Mazrim Taim, who's causing problems."

Sally: Masema.

Emily: Masema, excuse me. Their names are so similar.

Sally: I know, they're all the same.

Emily: "We're gonna go get Masema, tell him to stop doing atrocities, I guess, and then get him and anyone else who wants to come and take them back to Rand." And you know what? By the

end of book eight, all those things are done. Except for taking them back to Rand. So. You might wonder, what are the next three books about? Oh. The kidnapping arc.

Sally: They're just in the forest.

Emily: Don't worry. We'll get there. We'll get there.

Sally: We'll get there when we get there.

Emily: We'll get there when we get there. Whoa.

Sally: You okay there?

Emily: Yeah, I was just thinking about how these chapters have been so sexual assault-centric, and the next two chapters are also about Mat being sexually assaulted, so.

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: Thanks, Robert Jordan, for just putting all that into one little section for me.

Sally: I know. It's so strange, 'cause I think of Crown of Swords as, like, a ... jovial book.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: In my head, for some reason --

Emily: No, it's 'cause of all the festivals happening in Ebou Dar.

Sally: Yeah, that's a good point. Then you actually read it, and you're like, oh -- oh. Oh, God.

Emily: Oh, damn.

Sally: Oh, God.

Emily: Oh, God, everything is terrible.

Sally: Like, there's one instance where Birgitte gets to wear a slutty outfit and watch fireworks, and I guess that's what I've really focused on. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, you have to hold those memories close to your heart, otherwise you'll never get through it.

Sally: Ughhh.

Emily: Uh, but that's what's on the docket. Uh, that -- that little section. And those are those three chapters.

Sally: Those -- yeah. We did it.

Emily: We did it.

Sally: We did it, Joe.

Emily: We did it. (sigh) Um. Thanks to Glynn MacKenzie for our theme song. Uh, thanks to you all for listening. Thanks for indulging us while we were -- we took a little break for a week. Um, and thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Do you have anything to add?

Sally: No.

Emily: Okay. Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: I had -- I had a funnier one I was thinking of at the beginning of this episode, and I forgot it.

Emily: Oh, dang.

Sally: So I will tell you a less funny one. Sorry, guys. I am currently watching one of my coworkers' cats --

Emily: Blegh.

Sally: It's a whole thing. Um, and today I pulled up to go feed her -- her name is Lucie -- and one of the neighbors was outside and, like, flagged me down and was like, "Hey, are you the person watching the cats?" and I was like, oh, she just must've -- you know, cats, plural. Whatever.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: But I was like, "Yep, that's me," and she was like, "I think one of the cats got out." And I was like, "Oh." She's like, "I saw a cat in that yard that I do not recognize, so I think that one of the cats got out, and you need to go check," and I was like, "Well, there's just the one cat, um, and this is what she looks like: was it her?" and she was like, "You just need to go check."

Emily: What the hell?

Sally: And I was like, okay? Ten-four. The cat had not escaped. Lucie was sitting in her chair.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: She's seventeen; where's she going? (laugh)

Emily: Thelma and Louise. Lucie.

Sally: Yeah, it was such a bizarre encounter. She was one of those, like, neighborhood watch type ladies who's like, "No, the cat got out, and you fucked up," and I was like, okay.

Emily: Okay, lady. Calm down.

Sally: But Lucie had not escaped. She was still there.

Emily: Unfortunately. (laugh)

Sally: Oh, God, if only.

Emily: Okay, everyone. Have a good week.

Sally: Bye-bye!

Emily: Bye!