

## Episode 178: A Side of Skeleton

Release Date: November 15, 2021

Running Time: 43 minutes



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: It is, like, pitch-dark in this Chili's tonight.

Sally: I know. Why?

Emily: I hate daylight saving. (laugh)

Sally: Seasonal depression is, like, hitting me like a truck this week.

Emily: (sigh)

Sally: I haven't seen the sun in six days.

Emily: (mournful, sing-song) Here comes the sun ... doo doo doo doo ...

Sally: (simultaneously) Doo doo doo doo. Ugh. No, I fucking hate it. Like, it's not even six.

Emily: It's five --

Sally: And I can't see shit outside.

Emily: Yeah, it's really -- like, it's not new. Everyone thinks this, except, I guess, the people in Arizona, who --

Sally: Yeah. Whatever.

Emily: Are wrong about everything else but right about daylight savings.

Sally: (laugh) Right about daylight savings.

Emily: But it's, like, too dark. I keep waking up earlier than I want to.

Sally: Oh, I know.

Emily: And I hate it. This is stupid.

Sally: Yeah, I just feel like -- also -- this year, I am taking the, like, psychological toll of daylight savings way heavier than I have in the past.

Emily: Sure.

Sally: I'm just, like -- all day long, I've felt like I'm not on the right schedule. Like there's something I'm missing.

Emily: Mm.

Sally: Because I feel like it's later in the day than it actually is.

Emily: Mm.

Sally: So it'll be, like, eleven a.m., and I'm like, why don't I have any of my work done? And it's like, 'cause you've only been working for two and a half hours or whatever.

Emily: Yeah, that's fair enough. That's fair.

Sally: So I'm just really --

Emily: I mean, today, you had the day -- the day off.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: For Veterans Day. On a random Thursday, Sally had the day off. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. I know. I am --

Emily: So weird.

Sally: Trying not to be, like, a little piss-baby about having a day off, because it was nice to not work today, and, like, get some of my podcast stuff done, 'cause I have a lot of podcast stuff I need to do this week. But also like, Thur-- like, having a Thursday off is so annoying. I have two grants due on Monday that I just, like, can't work on. And I would love to have got them done today and then have, like, a really easy Friday, as opposed to just sitting around, twiddling my thumbs, doing transcripts today --

Emily: Sure.

Sally: And then having to do two grants tomorrow.

Emily: She didn't even watch any Naruto today.

Sally: I'm trying to be really disciplined. Because I get really down about myself when I don't do everything on my to-do list, because capitalism has me in a vise grip. I know this.

Emily: Sure. Yeah.

Sally: But I didn't watch any Nart. Much as I wanted to.

Emily: No, I wanted you too to. To -- yeah.

Sally: Maybe we can watch some after this.

Emily: I'd be happy to. I'm doing one of our classic EHR bits, where I'm scrolling through DoorDash while we're recording. Does that insult you guys? (laugh) That I'm thinking about food while talking about this podcast?

Sally: Well, I would hope that you guys would want us to be well-fed.

Emily: Well, Shake Shack is preparing our order, so --

Sally: Alright, let's get to it.

Emily: This is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I am Sally Goodger.

Emily: Um --

Sally: I am also a bag of bones. Sort of loose bones.

Emily: If I cut that part out of the intro --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Then just know that “bag of bones” is something offered by Shake Shack. (laugh)

Sally: Sorry.

Emily: For dogs, to clarify. Not, like, human bones. Just, like, have a loose skeleton from Shake Shack.

Sally: Oooh, spooky. (laugh)

Emily: Spooky Halloween. It’s like grave-robbing. Shake Shack’s side business is -- (laugh)

Sally: Shake Shack is just like, “Would you also like a skeleton?”

Emily: Could I get a side of skeleton, please?

Sally: Perhaps you are interested in a skeleton.

Emily: I mean, the family needs new ribs, so.

Sally: Yeah, we’re having some rib issues. Emily got broken by Yoga by Adriene.

Emily: I don’t know what did it! Or maybe it was my nephew Will. Who’s to say?

Sally: Oh, yeah, Will, who had a -- an -- a --

Emily: My nephew --

Sally: A demonic fit.

Emily: Yeah, my nephew Will is perfect, except for, in the nighttime, he goes insane. So.

Sally: Maybe that’s his pact with the devil. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, he’s like, one hour every night, I will go absolutely batshit.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: All of the rage I’ve been storing up will suddenly be unleashed. (laugh)

Sally: Be unleashed upon my aunt, Emily.

Emily: Yeah, there’s nothing freakier, you guys, than an eighteen-month-old who is just like, “I am full of wrath.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And you're like, oh, jeez, are you -- it's like, you know, how in Fullmetal Alchemist, one of the homunculi, Pride, turns out to be, like, a ten-year-old boy.

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: It's like if Wrath turned out to be an eighteen-month-old. You'd be like, ugh. (laugh)  
Same horror.

Sally: Could you imagine?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: God, Pride really is so creepy. (sigh) Every day, I'm like, is it time to rewatch Fullmetal Alchemist?

Emily: It's always time to rewatch Fullmetal Alchemist. It's there when we finish Nart, I guess.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You finish Nart. So.

Sally: So.

Emily: So -- (sigh)

Sally: These chapters left me with such a bad taste in my mouth. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Not as bad as the last two chapters.

Sally: Yeah, that's fair. That's correct.

Emily: But pretty bad, still, because, boy, did the domestic violence continue.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don't know --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don't know why -- it was just, like, Robert Jordan was like, "Nynaeve almost drowned, and she broke through her block, and then suddenly she's confronted with Lan being there, and she's going to slap him a lot." And I think, if we're being generous with Robert Jordan, that's meant to be, like, she's in shock. But I think if we're being more realistic with Robert Jordan, it's, like, the hysterical womb-wandering --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Type of behavior that he thinks women -- that he thinks temperamental women are just susceptible to.

Sally: Yeah. Nynaeve in particular.

Emily: Yeah, so it's not cute that Nynaeve is, like, just slapping the man she's in love with and punching him and whatnot. It's never cute when they do it in Wheely Time.

Sally: Yeah, I feel like -- also, like -- I don't know if it's quite, like, a trope -- I guess we could call it a trope, generally, just, like, women slapping their male partners or their love interests.

Emily: Yeah, it's supposed to be a lot less threatening --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And more, like, of a flirtation. I don't know, it's -- it's just, like, a dumb thing. (laugh) Boy, am I having some trouble tonight.

Sally: No, I -- yeah, I feel like you're -- yeah, you kind of hit it on the head, with -- it's supposed to be, like, kind of, like, flirtatious in a, like -- like, I hate that I am drawing upon this example, but last weekend, we watched Mission Impossible: Ghost Protocol, or whatever --

Emily: Did someone slap Tom Cruise?

Sally: No. The female character in the movie is supposed to be seducing this guy in order to get information out of him.

Emily: Oh, yeah.

Sally: And part of what ends up happening is that her seduction kind of, like, almost as a joke, ends up falling into this, like, she keeps hitting him -- like, slapping him -- and he's like, "Oh, this is kind of sexy."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And I feel like the trope often kind of leans that way. Where, like -- ooh, this fiery woman. So passionate. What a saucy minx. But -- and if that's happening in a consensual context, great. But also, it is domestic violence.

Emily: Yeah, like, I think it's meant to be, like, uh -- in a typical heterosexual relationship, then the physical power dynamic will, uh, tip toward the man --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: The man usually has more physical power in his arsenal 'cause he's bigger.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, that's not every relationship, but most of them, especially in Wheel of Time. God forbid.

Sally: Yeah, especially with Lan, who, we are reminded over and over again, is just, like, a mountain of a man.

Emily: Yeah, just a warrior -- warrior, angular, muscle man. He's not -- he hurts Nynaeve's hand with his face. He can't stop hurting people. (laugh)

Sally: His -- he's flexing his jaw muscles so hard.

Emily: He's like, "Ugh. Oh my God. My jaw is so sharp it will actually hurt your hand."

Sally: You're -- just to, like, sidebar -- you're so right with the, like, "He can't stop hurting people even with his, just, body existing," is such, like, a stupid part of Lan's -- we'll get into that, I guess. But, staying on the slapping for a minute.

Emily: Yeah, but it's just meant to be, like, when a woman is slapping her male partner, it's, like, it is -- wow, Tybalt is yelling somewhere. Not that that's unusual for him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's been having a real fit for the last 48 hours.

Sally: Tybalt's been having, yeah, a couple of days. Just a bad couple of days in Tybalt land.

Emily: He's also obsessed -- upset by daylight saving, I think.

Sally: Yeah, he's upset that the family isn't awake when he thinks we should be awake.

Emily: Or something.

Sally: And I'm like, how do you have thoughts, like, this complicated?

Emily: Who knows? I don't know. But, like --

Sally: Whatever.

Emily: The idea of, like, the woman suddenly asserting dominance --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's not even asserting dominance, because the idea is that the man is always going to let her do this --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That there's just, like, a sort of indulgence there, the way you would let a cat who's playing with you bite you a little bit.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's very patronizing.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: But also, women, don't slap your partners.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: 'Cause that is also, just --

Sally: It's --

Emily: Bad.

Sally: Yeah, it's part of the larger context of -- it's, like, women hitting men is -- like, I don't -- I really don't know how to crack this, like, tangle of thoughts in my head. But it's like, women hitting men is not viewed as a bad thing because it's part of this, like, "Well, I am asserting my dominance in this kind of, like, more masculine way," the way that hitting is -- violence is viewed as masculine, so therefore, if it's masculine, then it's good. So it's like, it's kind of good that she's hitting. And it's like, what's happening?

Emily: Yeah, it's just, like, a way of demonstrating one's independence.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Look, I can take care of myself, even against you."

Sally: Yeah. Like, I hate that I always use this term -- like -- but it just feels very, like, girlboss feminism to, like, slap your man.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: If he's upset you in a very particularly egregious way. And it's just like -- sorry, guys, I'm making no sense.

Emily: I'm not either. I just -- isn't there a moment in this series where someone slaps a man and he just is like, "Don't do that again"?

Sally: Probably.

Emily: Who does that?



Sally: Might be Perrin.

Emily: Yeah, it sounds like Perrin.

Sally: Like, I'm not saying -- (laugh) you should hit women.

Emily: Obviously.

Sally: But I feel like an appropriate response here would -- for Lan to be like, "Get away from me," and shove her away from me.

Emily: For Lan to be like -- just be like, "Okay --"

Sally: "Stop hitting me."

Emily: "Have -- have some time-out."

Sally: Yeah, Nynaeve is in time-out right now.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But --

Emily: It's sort of the, like, gender inverse of the men spanking women dynamic --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: In Wheel of Time.

Sally: That's a very good way to put it, Emily.

Emily: Um, and yet it still ends up, in all situations, the way Robert Jordan writes it, the women end up coming off looking stupid.

Sally: Yeah, 'cause --

Emily: Either because a man needs to spank her to put her in her place, or because a woman is being so foolish as to slap a man.

Sally: Yeah, especially 'cause I feel like, very often, this trope -- and in this instance in particular -- ends up with the woman, like, hurting her hand.

Emily: Oh, yeah.

Sally: Because she doesn't know how to hit properly or the man is too muscular. And it's like --

Emily: Too muscular. Or it's just, like -- or it's never warranted.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I mean, I don't -- violence is not warranted between partners, but there are situations where it is warranted to slap someone if they are being violent toward you.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Does that make sense? You know?

Sally: Yeah, like, if -- if it's in, like, self-defense.

Emily: Like if a -- yeah, if a man on the street, you know, groped Nynaev and she turned around and slapped him, that would be, like --

Sally: Yeah. Appropriate response.

Emily: Yeah, go for it. Anyway.

Sally: Yeah. I feel like I have done -- add nothing -- added nothing -- (laugh) I feel like --

Emily: Wait. This is what we get for not having Shake Shack before recording.

Sally: I feel like I have added nothing of value to the conversation around slapping, but.

Emily: I feel like I have nothing of value to add to this conversation around these two chapters, period. Which is a great feeling when one has a podcast about them. (laugh) But, um. I haven't even -- we haven't even really summarized them.

Sally: Yeah. Sorry, we just got right to the slapping part of it.

Emily: Um, they pick up right after -- right where the last two chapters left off, with Mat following one of the, uh, Kin away from the house. And this is unclear initially -- it clarifies itself at the beginning -- I mean, at the end of the two chapters -- but Nalesean apparently misheard Mat. Mat said something like, "If I don't come back, then tell them they have to find it themselves."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Mat -- and Nalesean misheard that as "I've found it" --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So went running off to, uh, Elayne, who, of course is like, "Oh, great. Well, now we've got it," and starts putting things into motion to go confront the Kin.

Sally: Which I just, like -- real quick -- I don't really understand why she was like, if Mat's found it, why do I need to talk to the -- I'm just -- I just felt very stupid throughout these entire chapters.

Emily: I think the actual sequence of events is Nalesean comes in, says, "Mat's found it, you know, our -- our stakeout of the Kin has paid off," and Elayne has then gone to the Aes Sedai and been like, "Okay, we found the Bowl of the Winds by following these women who we've confronted --"

Sally: Hmm. Oh, you're right, yeah, they followed them.

Emily: And the Aes Sedai are like, "What the hell? You've stumbled upon the Kin? That's, like, a secret that Aes Sedai all know and how could you have -- I can't believe you've done this." And Elayne's like, "How the fuck would I -- was I supposed to know about this big, secret conspiracy? 'Cause no one has been treating me like an actual Aes Sedai, giving me the, like, rundown of all the state secrets," you know?

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: And then they end up confronting the Kin, and then, like, at the end, Mat shows up and has actually located the Bowl of the Wind --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But it's just, like, this series of sort of misunderstandings that -- all's well that ends well, but it's very weird. I don't know why Mat couldn't have actually found it before --

Sally: Yeah, I was gonna say. Like, yeah, all's well that ends well, and maybe it's supposed to have a kind of, like, Shakespearean comedic effect, where everyone is doing the same thing, but nobody knows what the other people are doing or whatever. You know? But I just feel like it's very unsatisfying. Like, I do not feel satisfied with the way the Bowl of the Winds was found. I would -- it would be more satisfying to me if Mat just -- his luck powers worked, and they found it, and he told them.

Emily: Yeah, if he just was like, "Okay, great, I did it."

Sally: Yeah, rather than Elayne being like, "I'm going to bully my way into having the Kin tell me anyway."

Emily: Yeah. 'Cause then Elayne walks in and is like, "Well, now we've -- we've -- we know that you have it."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And they're like, "Okay, fine, yeah, we'll tell you about it."

Sally: Yeah. I don't know.

Emily: Yeah, you're right. It's just, like --

Sally: It just, like --

Emily: And mostly it's just confusing. I got to the end of these two chapters and was like, what the hell? Like --

Sally: Yeah. And I -- sorry, I keep interrupting you.

Emily: No, you're fine. I keep interrupting you. It's just not beyond reasonable doubt that Mat would in fact find it, run tell Nalesean, and then go off and do something else, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So that made sense to me too.

Sally: Yeah. Or if, like -- even if just, like, one or the other of these happened. That if Elayne happened to be like, "We found the Kin --"

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And they confronted the Kin, and they were like, "Do you know where the ter'angreal are?" and they were like, "Yes," or if Mat found it. Like, one or -- one would've been fine.

Emily: Yeah. Anyway, these chapters are mostly, um, obsessed with power dynamics, as is pretty much usual at this point, first between Elayne and the other Aes Sedai, then between the Aes Sedai and the Kin, uh, with this sort of interlude of Nynaeve and Lan, where, of course, it is also interested in power dynamics. Um --

Sally: Yeah, a lot.

Emily: This time in romantic relationships.

Sally: A lot of Nynaeve being like, "This is how you manage a man."

Emily: Yeah, and also Nynaeve trying to assert dominance over Myrelle, who isn't even there.

Sally: (laugh) Right.

Emily: Um. But, Elayne -- we pick up in deus ex machina -- not deus ex machina. In medias res.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Woof. Just mixing up my Latin phrases. Uh, we pick up in the middle of this conversation Elayne is having with the other Aes Sedai.

Sally: I mean, we do kind of pick up in deus ex machina, 'cause I feel like the deus ex machina of this series is Elayne just being like, "I can channel more than anybody, and therefore you have to listen to me."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So. (laugh) I feel like both hold. Sorry. Go ahead.

Emily: (laugh) Um, we pick up with her having -- not even an argument with the other Aes Sedai; they're all lecturing her. She talks about how they've all set themselves up like they're a court of some kind.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don't recognize what court it is, if it's White Tower stuff or Andoran; it doesn't really matter, though. But they're like, "Yeah, of course Aes Sedai know about the Kin, and we have just, like, let them do their thing because the Kin have, um, you know, been so good about managing runaways. The Kin always find the runaways, so we always -- therefore we always know how to find runaways."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and this has been sort of foreshadowed, uh, at the end of Lord of Chaos, which I've just been re-skimming because I've been graffiti-ing a copy. But, like, Vandene and Adeleas, on their way to Ebou Dar, keep talking about how they're gonna find runaways.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Da da da da da. So according to the Aes Sedai when Elayne actually gets an explanation out of them, the Kin have been around since the Trolloc Wars, whatever the fuck that means.

Sally: I know, they keep referencing this.

Emily: I have a really hard time referencing, like, are the Trolloc Wars like the Civil War --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In terms of a couple hundred years ago? Or are they more like, I dunno, the War of the Roses? (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Or -- yeah, it's like, how long ago are we talking? A hundred years, two hundred years, three hundred years?

Emily: Yeah, I just don't know how to -- how to set the Trolloc Wars.

Sally: And if a single one of you tells me the Companion says it was this long ago, I will delete our Twitter account. (laugh)

Emily: I don't -- I don't want to know. I don't actually want to know!

Sally: I don't want to know based -- I don't want to know from Wikipedia or from the Companion. I want Robert Jordan --

Emily: I don't want to have to look it up.

Sally: To provide me with context for how long ago --

Emily: Not in the appendix.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That doesn't count.

Sally: None of it counts. If Adeleas doesn't say, "The Trolloc Wars were X number of years ago --"

Emily: Or if I just should know, six books into the -- seven books into the series. The Trolloc Wars were approximately -- whatever, this is -- this is a dumb sticking point.

Sally: I do not accept. It's just -- it's just hard. 'Cause I feel -- I truly feel like I have never had any good grasp of, like, how long ago anything was. Like, how long ago was the Breaking of the World? How long ago were any of these -- how long ago was Artur Hawk -- whatever the fuck around? How long ago were all of these things? How many hundreds of thousands of years are we talking about, you know? Hundreds or thousands of years, not hundred thousand years.

Emily: Who's to say?

Sally: It's just hard, in a fantasy world that claims to be so old and yet technology is not a good way to track where we are in terms of history, you know?

Emily: Yeah, it doesn't help that the calendar keeps apparently fucking changing.

Sally: Yeah. We don't just have, like, the Gregorian calendar.

Emily: No. I don't --

Sally: The -- the Hawkwing calendar.

Emily: It's more -- it's more than I -- more work than I want to put into reading a book.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, would have -- would be required to understand the calendar. Whatever. Um. So Elayne's getting berated and threatened with actual penance, which includes physical punishment.

Sally: 'Cause of course it does.

Emily: Because of course it does. This --

Sally: In Wheel of Time.

Emily: Yeah. None of this would be a problem if the Aes Sedai -- if any of the power structures in this fantasy world -- believed in any sort of, like, collaboration.

Sally: God, seriously.

Emily: This is the same nightmare scenario that was end -- that was at the end of, um, Lord of Chaos, when all of the sort of Aes Sedai shenanigans that drove Rand out of Caemlyn and into Cairhien to get kidnapped were all just because the women were unable to collaborate. Someone had to be in charge.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And the person who was in charge wasn't necessarily the best person to be in charge.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Of course, because Elayne is one of the main characters of this book, we are, like, led to be on her side, uh, on what happens here. But maybe the Aes Sedai are correct that the Kin should just be left alone.

Sally: Yeah. No, I agree completely. Like -- when -- at the end of this chapter, end of these chapters, when Elayne is like, "The Amyrlin is gonna welcome you guys back in. You can be part of the Tower," and I was like, something about this feels, like, real 1984 to me. Like -- just, like, very controlling and, like, I think they were just, like, two different circles operating, kind of around one another, and I think that was a good system for everybody.

Emily: Well, and it's like, the idea is that the Kin have this huge membership number; apparently there are nearly two thousand of them. Which is, apparently, double the number of Aes Sedai --

Sally: I know.

Emily: In the White Tower. Again, I have zero context for keeping track of actual numbers of channelers in this world. But, you know, the idea is that, oh, that amount of channelers is, you know, a -- a good get for the Last Battle.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But it's like -- speaking in terms of, like, world, global dynamics -- speaking in terms of writing dynamics, I still don't think the Kin should be a thing.

Sally: I agree.

Emily: Especially not this big of a thing. Speaking in terms of global dynamics, I still don't know if this is in anyone's best interests. Um. But Elayne has taken charge, and the Aes Sedai are like, "Oh, now she's the biggest bully in the room --"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "So therefore we just sort of fall in line."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: There's no sense of, like, let's actually talk about this and take each other's advice into account. Elayne talks about everyone kind of, like, protesting what she's doing, but she's like, "Whatever, it just delayed me."

Sally: Yeah, she's like, it never occurred to me to be like, why don't I listen to these women's perspectives? Especially -- like, I have -- I feel like we've harped on this before, but I have a really hard time with the fact that it's, like, these women are three, four hundred years old or whatever -- or at least a couple hundred years old, like Adeleas and Vandene and everybody, and it's like, that means they have been around some shit. Like, let's take their perspective -- like, it's not -- it -- it's just very strange to me that it's all just, like, Elayne can channel and be the biggest bully, and therefore, even though she is only eighteen, as we are canonically told in this chapter, she gets to make these huge, geopolitical decisions?

Emily: Well, and it's just, like, wild that the series is like, yeah, and that's correct.

Sally: Yeah, like, there's no --

Emily: It should be up to Elayne, Egwene, and Nynaeve, and Rand to be making massive leadership decisions for people without any sort of input from anyone else.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like -- I don't -- it -- like, this -- this whole scene is framed to be satisfying, when Elayne --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is being threatened and finally is able to be like, "Listen, shut up and pay attention: I'm in charge. Stop bullying me," essentially. And it's like, yeah, of course I don't want the Aes Sedai bullying anyone. But that is itself a corrupt power dynamic that shouldn't be in place.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Their inability to, I don't know, govern each other in any sort of reasonable way.

Sally: Seriously.



Emily: But then, like -- and it's supposed to be a satisfying thing when Elayne comes back to the Kin and is like, "Look, actually, I am an Aes Sedai --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: 'And I have all these real Aes Sedai backing me up. So I'm putting you in your place,' et cetera, et cetera.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, yeah, I get that those are, like, personal victories, but are they actually in the best interests of anyone?

Sally: And also, like, if those are your personal victories, you should reconsider some things. Like -- just, like, I -- like, it's -- Elayne is a hard character, and I have, like, written about this in blogs and talked about it on the podcast so many times, so I'm sorry, but she is a hard character for me 'cause she is so invested in the project of monarchy and being like, "I have a birthright and a bloodright and therefore a power right to be in charge of everybody," and it's just like, girl, speak to other people and listen to other people. It's just -- it's just really frustrating.

Emily: I will never get over the fact that Elayne is put in charge of, like, all the armies in the Last Battle. Why? Why does this happen? (laugh) Besides the idea that the writer is like, "Oh, in my big, epic fantasy series, all of my main characters, who I've invested all this time and energy in, need to be the ones that are in charge, making the big decisions, making the big moves." And I'm like, I get that, but you should be a little bit more creative with how your characters either have positions of power --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like, either you should be able to be like, oh, I have characters who are over the age of eighteen and are farther along in their lives --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And those are some of my main characters, and it makes sense why they would be in power, or you should be like, I don't know, my characters are -- are -- are impacting things in different ways. I just don't -- I just, like, don't buy it, you know?

Sally: Yeah. I also -- the Wheel of Time is very invested in, like, you can only make a difference if you are the very tip-top person.

Emily: Yeah, because everyone is going to be fighting you the entire way.

Sally: Yeah. And so it's like, you -- it's like, there's no way, you know, Talmanes, just, like, a middle manager --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Is going to impact the world. You know, it wouldn't be very sexy and exciting, I guess, if Talmanes was in charge of the -- the battle, the armies at the Last Battle, and it's like, um, that is a lifelong military man. Why wouldn't someone like that be in charge? You know, like, it doesn't just have to be -- like, Elayne could be doing fuck-all else. I dunno. She's, like, nine months pregnant at that point, too, or whatever.

Emily: It's just also, like, such a disheartening worldview.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's basically like saying you have to be rich in order to change the world. Which is, like, yes, realistically, that's true, but I want a different project from fantasy.

Sally: Yeah. It's just very much the, like, capitalist, elitist, monarchist view that so much fantasy seems to take. And it's just, yeah, it's really -- it's really draining. Um. For Elayne to just have to be like, "Yeah, I have to be in charge of all these different people. I have to bully my way into doing anything." I dunno.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It just sucks.

Emily: It does suck.

Sally: And also -- 'cause, like, none of our -- none of our characters do leadership in, like, a kind way, I feel like. Everyone is all about bullying. It's never like, I -- it's never like the Goblin Emperor. Sorry to reference that again, but that's such a good counterpoint to Wheel of Time, I think, where the literal emperor is just, like, trying so hard to be good to people.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Instead of Elayne just being like, kick, kick, smack, smack, I'm in charge.

Emily: And I think -- I think the Wheel of Time tries its hardest to put, um, Perrin more or less in that position.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Perrin has a very, like, humanistic idea of leadership in that he's very concerned with the idea that the people he is leading are people.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who have their own lives and personalities and, um, desires and that makes leadership really hard for him. But then the sort of thesis of the book is that actually, these people want super badly to be led.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And, in some cases, bullied.

Sally: Yeah. Perrin's arc is really freaky, 'cause it's got the, like, no, people just want you to actually be kind of, like, a little dictator. It's easier for them.

Emily: Yeah, it's way more soothing for people -- you can't give people power.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They'll go nuts.

Sally: We can't do sort of a collaborative leadership of the community.

Emily: It's just ineffective.

Sally: Yeah. Which is particularly grating because it starts with, like, the Two Rivers people, who, at the beginning of the series, are presented as kind of a more --

Emily: Communal-based --

Sally: Yeah, communal-based decision-making body.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And then they're like, "Ugh. We did that for so long, and it was just, like, so contrary to our actual human nature, which is to be led around like sheep."

Emily: Yeah, we're just so horny for a Caligula over here, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: God. Not that Perrin's a Caligula. That's Rand. (laugh)

Sally: But yeah. It's very -- it's very much like, that's how Perrin's sort of, like, mass of people are presented.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And especially with Faile in his ear, being like, "No, you need to be a harder, stronger leader."

Emily: They want it. They really want it, Perrin. (laugh)

Sally: Fuckin' -- what the fuck is going on over here?

Emily: I know. It's nuts. Um. So while that's going on with Elayne finally taking -- girlbossing her way into real power, uh, Moghedien is just sort of coasting through the city --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: At random. Apparently she's going to, like, meet with her Black Ajah that she has stationed here, which is sort of setting us up for the inevitable confrontation over the actual Bowl of the Winds.

Sally: (sigh, whisper) Isn't that when Nalesean dies?

Emily: Yes.

Sally: Ugh. I --

Emily: I know, I -- every time I reread the series, I'm like, oh, I actually do care about Nalesean.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's not just, like, a redshirt that dies.

Sally: Yeah. He's just --

Emily: I'm like, fuck.

Sally: Like, a good --

Emily: I love Nalesean.

Sally: Weird little dude.

Emily: I love that little -- little guy. Um. Moghedien just happens to spot Nynaeve, and, like, her Kill Bill sirens literally go off.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: She -- it's, like, this whole thing. She can't just, like, balefire Nynaeve from her carriage or whatever. She's like, "I see Nynaeve getting into a boat. So I have to go find an inn, manipulate the innkeeper into letting me onto the roof, and then balefire Nynaeve from there. Balefire the ship that Nynaeve is on.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Of course there's no line of sight on Nynaeve because we have to give Nynaeve an escape route.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, but then Moghedien is like, “What the fuck am I thinking? What am I doing?”

Sally: Yeah, girl.

Emily: “I just channeled so much.”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: “So -- and balefire. What am -- what am I doing?” And then she’s just, like, panicking, ‘cause she knows she’s gonna get punished for it. Like, leaves to go talk to the Black Ajah. There are no genuine consequences for this except maybe personal punishment for Moghedien.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It would’ve been more interesting if every member of the Kin in the city was like, “What the --”

Sally: “We’re gonna go --” Every -- (laugh) It’s gonna be like the swarm of beggars from last week.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But it’s just a swarm of the Kin, attacking Moghedien. (laugh)

Emily: Just -- ahhhh! (laugh) Stab, stab, stab!

Sally: (laugh) Yeah. Yeah, like, nothing happens.

Emily: Nothing happens. You did just do a lot of channeling, but there was no impact.

Sally: But they’re all too busy being yelled at by Elayne, so.

Emily: Yeah. Oh, sorry. Nynaeve doesn’t even, like, sense it coming or anything.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or I guess she sort of does. But the effect of Moghedien’s balefiring the ship itself is that the ship is already sunk before it has started sinking.

Sally: Yeah, which is, like --

Emily: Fuck-y, but kind of cool.

Sally: What? (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Nynaeve’s sequence of, like, being sunk in the ship --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is good.

Sally: It's -- it's a very fun scene. I just wish it didn't end with Lan.

Emily: Yeah, Lan rescuing her. (cough) Like, the idea is, she's in the cabin of the boat, so when the ship sinks, she's got a little pocket of air --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Giving her a minute to try and investigate a way out, uh, but the way water pressure works, she can't just get out, she has to channel; uh, but I don't even know if it occurs to her to channel, really, she's just like, "I'm not angry; I'm too scared."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And she's literally, like, losing consciousness when she finally breaks through her block.

Sally: When she finally --

Emily: Surrenders.

Sally: For the first time in her life, completely surrenders. And this is supposed to be, like ...

Emily: Love wins.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, a bumper sticker moment of just, like, "Wow. Look at Nynaeve go."

Emily: Coexist.

Sally: Coexist, with all the little labels.

Emily: Yeah, look at her go. Nevertheless, she persisted -- in surrendering. (laugh)

Sally: Oh, yeah, it's -- (laugh) It's one of those celebrity songs at the beginning of Covid.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Imagine all the people. (laugh)

Emily: Imagine all the people. (laugh)

Sally: Living life in --

Emily: Wonder Woman in here.

Sally: Completely surrendering to saidar. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. And, like, make no mistake, this moment happening right as she is reunited with Lan is not a coincidence.

Sally: No, absolutely not. 'Cause you know who else she needs to surrender to? Her husband.

Emily: That big, strong man in her life.

Sally: (gagging noise)

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: She also goes just, like, on and on about how hot he is. And I'm like, I --

Emily: I don't believe it. I mean, I do believe it if I --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But only -- I kept reminding myself to picture the guy they cast for -- (laugh)

Sally: I did too, I was like, "Lan can be hot, Lan can be hot, make it happen for yourself."  
(laugh)

Emily: I was like, "Okay, okay, I can do this. He can be hot. But only if I picture that guy."  
(laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Woof. 'Cause Lan's personality is just not hot at all.

Sally: No.

Emily: I don't know what to tell you.

Sally: He's literally just like, "Wow, I'm -- I'm just sad and -- and made of muscle."

Emily: Anyway, Nynaeve bursts out of the cabin but presumably would still die because she was wearing a heavy-ass dress --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And a ton of jewelry, as she informs us, except that Lan is nearby. Ta'veren, Nynaeve, one might say.

Sally: Should be, yeah.

Emily: Uh, and dives in and rescues her, brings her back up to the ship that he's on. They then proceed to have a long conversation about their relationship and the state of Lan's bond before it occurs to Nynaeve to ask about her bodyguards, who were on the ship for her, which is not a good look.

Sally: Yeah. All four of them died.

Emily: All four of them died. Yeah, RIP to --

Sally: She's like, "Ooh, that's gonna be difficult."

Emily: But it's definitely not a boner killer.

Sally: The deaths of four men.

Emily: It's not like she knew their names.

Sally: Maybe if it was five. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) It's not like she cared about them.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She didn't even want bodyguards. Therefore -- God.

Sally: Nynaeve, this is not a good chapter for you.

Emily: Yeah, but Lan's like, "Myrelle has my bond, and I am suicidal and depressed," and she's like, "Well, I won't let that happen."

Sally: "I will stop you from being suicidal."

Emily: It's actually distinctly reminiscent of -- I've been watching Outlander. I know. Don't -- don't. I know one of our side podcasts is We Don't Watch Outlander.

Sally: I know, I do feel -- I'm gonna be honest, here in this space, I do feel a little betrayed that you're watching it. (laugh) Because we've built a brand upon not watching it.

Emily: You're so right, but Janet likes it, and, like, I -- you know, if I'm just sort of listening to it in the background, and it's just sort of Scottish accents, then I'm like, sure, whatever. Anyway, what I'm trying to get at is at the end of this first season of Outlander --

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: What's his name -- Jamie -- the main guy -- is, like, brutally tortured --

Sally: Yes.



Emily: And, uh, raped, and then I sent Janet a text that was like, "I'm so glad that --" He's -- he's also suicidal after this happens to him --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As is sort of obvious. Um, but I was like, "I'm so glad that after one heartfelt conversation with his wife, Jamie's cured of all his trauma."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Hashtag love wins."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) But it's also -- it's this same thing of, like, here's this man who has real trauma and mental health issues, and if a woman loves him hard enough, then she'll just rescue him from that.

Sally: Yeah, which is, like, somehow destructive to both men and women. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, because it is saying -- I mean, it is minimizing the pain that -- and trauma --

Sally: Yes.

Emily: And the way men feel --

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Pain and trauma, and the idea that you -- to be masculine is to just get over it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it is placing women in the position of being only -- only emotional support.

Sally: Yeah. Yes.

Emily: But emotional support in the, "Hey, get up and get going" sort of way.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Not in a "I'm in it for the long haul and whatever that means, as a good partner would be."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So anyway. Uh, Nynaeve and Lan. Not winning celebrity couple of the year in my opinion.

Sally: No.

Emily: I didn't even mention that Nynaeve was going to visit the Sea Folk, presumably to be like, "We found the Bowl of the Winds." I don't know why they immediately rushed off to do that, but --

Sally: I know, it feels like you should maybe have the Bowl of the Winds in hand before that happens.

Emily: Yeah, Robert Jordan got a little, uh, scatter-brained while plotting this.

Sally: He needed Nynaeve to almost die.

Emily: Yeah, he just needed to be in a boat. He was like, "I gotta have Nynaeve in a boat. How can I get her on a boat? I know. She'll be visiting the Sea Folk."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, but they are sort of still on their way to the Sea Folk when the chapter cuts off, and we'll pick up again as they are -- after they have been married by the Sea Folk for some reason. But yeah, Nynaeve's like, "Just don't worry about --" Oh, Santiago's approaching with our Shake Shack; we gotta wrap this up.

Sally: Santiago!

Emily: Nynaeve's like, "Don't worry, you're -- Myrle's gonna give your bond to me, and you are going to live, and we're going to have sex," and Lan's like, "Myrle will know that I am having sex," and Nynaeve's like, "I want her to know it was me."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: (laugh) Like that old lady in Game of Thrones.

Sally: Yeah. "Tell her it was me."

Emily: "Tell Cersei it was me." (laugh)

Sally: You're like, "Ma'am?"

Emily: Yeah, Lan's like, "Mwa ha ha ha, my charming --"

Sally: "My charming, psychotic wife."

Emily: "Lady wife." (laugh) And I -- I'm like, dude? Dude. Whatever. You two deserve each other. So fucked up.

Sally: It really does feel like it in this chapter.

Emily: Um, then we flash back to Elayne and the other Aes Sedai confronting the Kin. We find out that the Kin have huge numbers.

Sally: Yeah, crazy numbers.

Emily: Surprisingly huge numbers but are all thrilled, apparently, at the idea of being welcomed back to the Tower. I wanna see the Kin who are like, "Actually, fuck that."

Sally: Yeah, apparently all 2,783 or whatever are like, "Fuck yeah."

Emily: Yeah, I just want someone to be like, "Uh, actually, I'm enjoying my, like, sort of independent contracting work."

Sally: Yeah. Like, I don't want to go back to that place.

Emily: I don't want to go to fantasy Vatican. Um.

Sally: Yeah. I'm not even Catholic.

Emily: I'm not even Catholic. Yeah, where's the Reformation of women channelers?

Sally: Oh, yeah --

Emily: Who's the Martin Luther of this group? Ninety-six theses.

Sally: My God. Yeah.

Emily: Um. They also find out that Reanne is 400 years old, which is apparently old enough that one of the Aes Sedai faints?

Sally: Yeah, Merilille -- Merilille. Whatever her name is.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It's too many L's.

Emily: It's very -- it's very old.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: This is all with the comedic backdrop of Mat walking in and being like, "Look, I found the Bowl of the Winds," and meanwhile a serving girl is trying to kick him, and he's hiding behind Birgitte --

Sally: Yeah, and I'm like --

Sally: And it's just like, Robert Jordan, you don't need to make literally every Mat scene a, um --

Sally: Slapstick comedy. (laugh)

Emily: You know, slapstick comedy routine.

Sally: Yeah, I'm like, why is this girl trying to kick him?

Emily: Stop trying to make me forget that Mat was sexually assaulted this morning.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like four hours ago, you know?

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: (sigh) So where we leave our cast of characters, we are poised on the brink of finally getting the Bowl of the dang Winds. But things are still bad.

Sally: Yeah. Like --

Emily: Make no mistake.

Sally: Everyone in Ebou Dar is just, like --

Emily: Drinking the crazy Kool-Aid, you know?

Sally: Yeah, Ebou Dar is not good for any of our characters.

Emily: People go to Ebou Dar and are like, "I will be the worst version of myself." Except for Mat. He's doing great.

Sally: Mat is doing great, and he is the victim of everyone being the worst version of themselves.

Emily: Mat and Nalesean are just like --

Sally: Nalesean's just like, "Look at me."

Emily: "Hello?"

Sally: Beautiful, beautiful man.

Emily: I'll never forgive Ebou Dar for many things, but especially for killing Nalesean.

Sally: I know. Like, listen, you just could've killed Elayne. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) We'll play "Danny Boy" again when Nalesean dies.

Sally: I love you, Nalesean.

Emily: Pour one out.

Sally: Pour one out for the best member of the polycule. I mean, that is Talmanes, but.

Emily: Yeah. Okay, literally, Shake Shack is, like, on the brink of being delivered, so.

Sally: Okay, so we're gonna wrap this up real quick.

Emily: Yeah. Hey. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to you for listening. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon. Sorry I betrayed you by watching Outlander.

Sally: I know.

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

Sally: Umm. No. I'm sorry.

Emily: That's okay, Shake Shack's here, we gotta go get it.

Sally: Yeah, we gotta go. Gotta go, gotta go, gotta go!

Emily: Gotta go! Gotta go fast. Goodbye, everyone --

Sally: Like Lightning McQueen. Is that what that is? No, that's Sonic.

Emily: Sonic. Bro, you thought --

Sally: Oh my God.

Emily: Okay, goodbye!