



## Episode 179: The Tallest Man Is in Charge

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

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

[Theme song by Glynn Mackenzie plays]

SALLY: [groaning]

EMILY: Would it help if –

SALLY: [continues groaning]

EMILY: That's such a fun noise to start the podcast [laughs].

SALLY: Delete it.

EMILY: No [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I have the power. Um, maybe we should put some ice or something on it.

SALLY: I can't get any moisture on it.

EMILY: Ugh. But it's over tomorrow, right?

SALLY: It's over tomorrow, assuming they let me shower and I don't have to [a phone beeps] keep it through the weekend. I don't think I do, but.

EMILY: Sally has allergy patches on her – or, she did have allergy patches and they took them – Sally's getting tested for allergies.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: We're very – and I sound a little funny because I'm ill, so we're really struggling as a household [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah. Yesterday when I was so dizzy, I was like, "If we [laughing] have to go to the Urgent Care for the third time this week!"

EMILY: Yeah, guys we've had to – I've had to go to twice. Sally went with me the first time, because I woke up feeling up and probably was having a panic attack, but when you're ill slash having a panic attack, it's all like, "I'm ill!" The second one was for my butt owie, no future – [laughs] no further explanation will be provided.

SALLY: I'm surprised you even said it.

EMILY: I've already told the people in the blog.

SALLY: Mmm.

EMILY: I said, "I'm in the doctor's office," because I started writing the blog while I was waiting for the doctor.

SALLY: Nice.

EMILY: And I said, "I'm in the – it's a butt owie and you won't hear anything more about it unless it's butt cancer, and then you'll never hear the end of it" [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] Dear reader, it was not butt cancer.

EMILY: It was not. I told them at the end that it wasn't butt cancer. By the end I had a diagnosis.

SALLY: Thank goodness.

EMILY: So, if everyone was stressed out reading my weird blog. Okay.

SALLY: Um, yeah. So, we've had a week.

EMILY: [sucks teeth, sighs, burps]

SALLY: [laughs] Oh, that was perfect.

EMILY: I'm sorry I made eye contact with you while doing it.

SALLY: So good. Um.

EMILY: It's the holidays. For some reason, the end of November is always deeply chaotic.

SALLY: I know.

EMILY: Because there's Thanksgiving festivities and also my mom's birthday. So, I have my mom's birthday tomorrow, as we're recording, and then I have to go to extended family Thanksgiving on Sunday. And I'm like, "Should I wear my sluttiest sweater?" [whispers] Probably.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: To make a statement. The statement being, "I don't want to be here."

SALLY: Yeah. Which one's your sluttiest sweater?

EMILY: My deep V, green one.

SALLY: Nice. Nice. It's a good sweater.

EMILY: It's only slutty [laughing] if don't wear a bra with it.

SALLY: It's a good sweater.

EMILY: But yeah –

SALLY: Yeah, November is, like, the weirdest month in the world, I guess. Actually, I think February is the weirdest month.

EMILY: February and November are similar months, but November has some redemptive moments like I get time off for a holiday and, um, I do get, if not good food, a great quantity of food.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: And usually there are good pies involved at least.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: February has nothing. It's just a long stretch of nothing.

SALLY: [laughs] I mean, it does *technically* have Valentine's Day if you're into that, but.

EMILY: I was not even thinking about Valentine's. I forgot Valentine's Day was a holiday.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I was thinking of Martin Luther King Day.

SALLY: [laughing louder]

EMILY: And how I get time off of work.

SALLY: And Groundhog Day, usually, is in February.

EMILY: That was my grandfather's birthday. I only remember that because it was on Groundhog Day. This has been a super fun opening about our ailments.

SALLY: Oh, I mean –

EMILY: And also months of the calendar.

SALLY: Yes, November is an ailment [laughs] that I am currently suffering.

EMILY: That's true. I wish I – I think I still have a picture of my family's whiteboard that we wrote down all our ailments [laughing] one year. That was the year Anne got diagnosed with Diabetes.

SALLY: Sarah had blood clots.

EMILY: Sarah had blood clots. Anne had a pilonidal abscess. So.

SALLY: What the heck is that?

EMILY: It's a butt owie.

SALLY: Ahhh.

EMILY: But a little less embarrassing, because it's high on your butt. Like, more like, tailbone region.

SALLY: Right at that little dimple.

EMILY: I don't know. I think it was just a little...

SALLY: Well, that sucks.

EMILY: Yeah. This is Everybody Hates Rand. It's your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: And I am Sally Goodger. Another problem with our opening is that I haven't watched *any Naruto* this week.

EMILY: I know! I'm really missing it.

SALLY: So I don't have any updates.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: I know. I've been trying to be productive in the evenings, because we have, like, a busy weekend. Like, I'm seeing my friends tomorrow and then we have Friendsgiving on Saturday.

EMILY: Oh, you're seeing your friends tomorrow?

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: I didn't even know that. Over at Julie and Nathan's?

SALLY: Yeah. We're gonna go try – I mean, we'll see if this happens. We're gonna try and go to the new bookstore that opened.

EMILY: Oh, that's fun! The queer one?

SALLY: Yeah, the little queer bookstore. Not that I can buy any books, because I don't have any fucking money. But like –

EMILY: Hashtag relatable.

SALLY: Go in support because it's opening week. And then we have Friendsgiving and then my mom wants me to help her babysit Declan on Sunday. And it's just, like, when will I fit *Naruto* into my busy schedule?

EMILY: Yeah, that's too much. I think we should both not do reglier Thanksgiving.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: We should both just call in sick and watch *Naruto*.

SALLY: It's Nartsgiving [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] Stop, that's too good.

SALLY: Happy Nartsgivng, everybody [laughs].

EMILY: Uhhh, so good.

SALLY: Um, when I'm done with *Naruto* I don't know what my [laughing] diversion tactic on the podcast will be to stop us from –

EMILY: Talking about the actual chapters.

SALLY: Talking about the actual chapters. I mean, I could probably talk about *Naruto* forever and ever.

EMILY: Hopefully, by the time you're done with *Naruto* there will be, like, new seasons of things to talk about.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I don't know.

SALLY: *Demon Slayer* season two will be coming out! Right now *Mugen Train* is out – whatever. *Demon Slayer* season two will be coming out and I can go back with my favorite anime protagonist.

EMILY: Hopefully *Jujutsu Kaisen* will come out with a second season at some point.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean with the movie coming out I wouldn't be surprised if it didn't come out, like, this spring.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Season two of *Jujutsu Kaisen* will be, like –

EMILY: Gonna be wild.

SALLY: Fucking whack.

EMILY: From what I know.

SALLY: Okay, once again: this is not anime podcast [laughs].

EMILY: And once again, these are bad chapters. I'm having a lot of hilarity remembering how frequently both you and I were like, "*A Crown of Swords* is one of the better books." And now we're both like, "Ugh!"

SALLY: Yeah, I think it's – I think – I think Birgitte has tricked us [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah, the highs are real high.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: But the lows are real low in *Crown of Swords*. These ones are no fun.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean, it starts with Elaida. How much less fun can it get?

EMILY: Yeah, it starts with Elaida having a dream sequence in which everyone is, like, worshipping here. Uh, which...no comment.

SALLY: [laughs] I mean, what's there to say.

EMILY: There are three chapters. I'll run through a quickish synopsis.

SALLY: 'kay.

EMILY: In the first one we bounce around several points of view in the White Tower as Elaida finds out, uh, about the disaster of Dumai's Wells. Although, she doesn't get, really, complete information, I would say. And we also find out from Alviarin that Alviarin has delayed giving her the information to make her look as stupid as possible so that Alviarin can sort of take control of Elaida.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: We also find out, or we are also reminded that Elaida sent a big, like, group of Aes Sedai to the Black Tower to, like, attack it. But with the reports from Dumai's Wells they're realizing, "Oh my gosh, the Asha'man are actually – there's a lot of them and they're really scary." So, this will obviously end in disaster, but Alviarin prevents Elaida from doing anything about it. Um, and unfortunately – unfortunately slash fortunately for us, like, this is sort of a Chekov's Gun that won't be even sort of resolved for a full – another full book. *Path of Daggers*, right?

SALLY: Yeah, kind of towards the end of *Path of Daggers* you pick back up with Toveine?

EMILY: Toveine, yeah.

SALLY: When she's getting, um, bonded against her will by one Logain Ablar.

EMILY: [gags]

SALLY: Is that his last name?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Oh, look at me!

EMILY: Yeah, that was really good, bestie.

SALLY: I know! Gonna get some *Wheel of Time* points.

EMILY: *Wheel of Time* points!

SALLY: *Wheel of Time* points! There we go.

EMILY: We should have a chart for *Wheel of Time* points.

SALLY: That's what's gonna get us through the next couple of books [laughs]/

EMILY: Every time I remember some *Wheel of Time* trivia, without having to be told by a man on Twitter, I get a point.

SALLY: Wow, that is gonna be so good for us!

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] I will post updates every week so that the men on Twitter know I *do* know things about *Wheel of Time* [laughs]. Look how many *Wheel of Time* points I got this week!

EMILY: Look how many *Wheel of Time* points I got this week? Aren't I a special girl?

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] Daddy's special girl.

SALLY: Daddy's special girl!

EMILY: Ugh, gross. I don't like it.

SALLY: Every week I'll give myself a treat.

EMILY: A lollipop.

SALLY: UGH. This – we're done.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: We're done [laughs].



EMILY: Um, so, Alviarin more or less has taken control of the White Tower through Elaida, because Elaida's totally under her thumb. Elaida wants to do something about that by having a random woman, in this case Seaine [pronounced see-ain] – I have no idea if I'm pronouncing that correctly, but that's what we're going to go with. She wants Seaine to investigate Alviarin. Basically to find her responsible of a crime, any crime.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So Elaida can get her kicked out of power. Unfortunately, Elaida does not use the clearest terms possible. In fact, she uses the least clear terms possible and Seaine assumes Elaida wants her to look for the Black Ajah.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So she's like –

SALLY: Which is pretty funny.

EMILY: I know.

SALLY: Because Alviarin is Black Ajah.

EMILY: Alviarin is Black Ajah indeed. There's some dramatic irony here. At one point Seaine is walking to meet her friend Pevara and, like, sees another woman – I can't remember what her name is. Talene, maybe? And she's like – Yeah, Talene. She's like, "I kind of want to bring in Talene." But it transpires that Talene is the first woman they find out is Black Ajah. So.

SALLY: Dun dun!

EMILY: Yeah. There's lots of irony going on there. It is pretty hilarious to think of Seaine being like – I'm trying to think of, like – it's like if the President came to...just, like, a random staffer and was like, "I want you to investigate everyone, *even* the CIA, for..."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: What's a Darkfriend equivalent? It's like if President...John F. Kennedy was like, "You have to look in the highest level of government for communists."

SALLY: [laughing silently, with occasional sounds]

EMILY: [laughing] I couldn't think who a president was during communist times [sad whining noises].

SALLY: Yeah, what would it be these days? I wanted to say 'war criminals' but the President I think himself –

EMILY: Yeah, it's all war criminals.

SALLY: [laughing] Is a war criminal so.

EMILY: It's all war criminals up there.

SALLY: It's all war criminals down. Um.

EMILY: Yeah, I can't actually think of any bad thing that the government hasn't done for sure, for sure, for sure. Maybe Satanism?

SALLY: Mmm.

EMILY: But, you know that – actual Church of Satan people are cool. That's cool, but, like, Satanic people in the Satanic Panic days [clears throat].

SALLY: Oh yeah. People who were actually doing yucky stuff.

EMILY: Which, no one was actually doing yucky stuff. That was what the [laughs] Satanic Panic was.

SALLY: Satanic Panic. Red Scare.

EMILY: Just everyone being afraid.

SALLY: What are we all afraid of?

EMILY: This has been, like, the worst – this has been like a segment of Drunk History. And I'm not even drunk.

SALLY: We are sick, though. Welcome to Sick History.

EMILY: Sick History. It's just me with a sore throat [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] Trying to explain historical events. Who was the president during communism?!

EMILY: [laughing] Who was the president during communism?

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: U.S. History, specifically, because if they put me in charge of, like, ancient Roman history I'd knock it out of the park.

SALLY: I feel like I know less about U.S. History than probably any given European child. Like, I refuse – like, for some reason my brain refuses to accept it. Which is not good.

EMILY: I actually know a lot about U.S. History, because I edit a U.S. History textbook.

SALLY: Oh yeah.

EMILY: But only at a fifth-grade level. That's as high as it goes.

SALLY: Are you smarter than a fifth grader?

EMILY: I'm about as smart as a fifth grader, no smarter.

SALLY: I am no smarter than a fifth grader [laughs].

EMILY: I am no smarter than a fifth grader.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Okay. Seaine goes to her friend Pevara. Pevara's kind of important, I guess, especially to Branderson. But she's like, "Help me hunt down the Black Ajah, because all your family got killed by Darkfriends." And Pevara's like, "Fuck yeah," and cocks a rifle.

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah.

EMILY: I'm in!

SALLY: Opens a door and she's got, like, 97 shotguns.

EMILY: Yeah, she, like, escorts Seaine into the back to her John Wick arsenal of weapons.

SALLY: And she's like, "Let's do it." Pevara's...hardcore in the next two books when they're torturing women in the basement. [laughs] So.

EMILY: Yeah, it's a really – [laughs] I find, like, I know, I know, conceptually the entire, like, they end up sort of torturing women in the basement, that's all very bad. Morally it's very bad.

SALLY: Bad, yeah.

EMILY: Narratively I find this plotline very funny [laughs].

SALLY: I know! It's so – it's such like a funny distillation of Elaida's incompetence and how it just spirals out of control.

EMILY: Yeah, Elaida's incompetence has such a level that, like, four or five highly competent women will begin to do –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Quite a bit of good work rooting out the Black Ajah.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: And then, like, three books later when Egg comes in and is like, “Here, I actually have a list of all of the Black Ajah” they’re like, “Oh, we already got twenty of them handle.”

SALLY: They’re like, “Yeah, and? They’re all dead in the basement” [laughs].

EMILY: “Yeah and wanna see the bodies?” [laughing] Egg’s like, “What the fuck happened in here?”

SALLY: Elaida has once again – what’s that term? Where you, like, fail into succeeding?

EMILY: Failed upwards?

SALLY: Yeah, failed upwards [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] She’s Reaganing.

SALLY: [cackles]

EMILY: [laughs] Remember that episode of *30 Rock*?

SALLY: [laughing] Yes.

EMILY: Ah, god. I think it’s so funny.

SALLY: We need to rewatch *30 Rock*.

EMILY: Yeah! It’s on Netflix right now. Okay, um.

SALLY: They knew we needed it during November.

EMILY: We’re not even going to get through my quickish synopsis.

SALLY: Sorryyyy.

EMILY: Which is *fine*. That’s the way I want it to be.

SALLY: I just am so annoying.

EMILY: No you’re not.

SALLY: And love interrupting you.

EMILY: Um [laughs]. Then it's a chapter called "A Bath" and I feel like, like there's a chapter called "Leavetaking" or whatever in every *Wheel of Time* book, there's also a fucking bath-centric chapter. Robert Jordan is notorious for bath-centric monologues.

SALLY: Well, and this one is especially bad because –

EMILY: It involves sexual harassment.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: For – the layers here are pretty...

SALLY: This chapter is...a dense little nugget.

EMILY: Of bad. So, we pick up with Rand in a depressive state. I know you'll think, "Well, that's nothing new," [laughs] but it's particularly bad this time around.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And it takes us quite a while to get there, but eventually we figure out that it's because he believes he raped Min after their one hundred percent consensual encounter.

SALLY: [pause] I feel like it's – it, the chapter, like, this depressive state plays an interesting role. Because, as we talked about in the last chapter – in the chapter where they had sex, which, uh, Cambria was the guest on.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: I believe it was that episode. Um, an argument could be made that it was not one hundred percent consensual on Rand's part.

EMILY: Yeah, as soon as I – as soon as I said that I was like, "Oh wait, I don't believe it was one hundred percent consensual on Rand's part." And both of them were in pretty bad overall emotional states.

SALLY: Yeah, so I feel like it's an interesting – Rand is having an interesting response to –

EMILY: A sexual assault, perhaps.

SALLY: Yeah, yeah. Or just, like, a not great sexual encounter. Either way.

EMILY: There's – this is sort of also written to be a culmination of a lot of bad things going on.

SALLY: Yes, for sure.

EMILY: In Rand's life. It is perhaps a delayed response to the trauma of Dumai's Wells.

SALLY: Being kidnapped and put in a fucking box! And everyone's like, "The Dragon Reborn is fine."

EMILY: Yeah, he's like, "It's cool. It's all fine." What he actually cites in terms of stressors are that he's really stressed about the Forsaken and his upcoming battle with the Dark One. That's sort of just like a borderline stressor.

SALLY: I feel that.

EMILY: Um, of course Colavaere specifically, but all of his dead women. His argument with Perrin as well as, um, the Aes Sedai, because apparently Perrin chose that as their argument point. Rand didn't volunteer it. And he is genuinely upset about, um, the Aes Sedai prisoners. Uh, because he's like, "Yeah, I do want them to be captives and I do want to punish them, but obviously I can't." Like, he's struggling with that. He does talk about having bad dreams about being inside the box. Um, he has bad dreams about going to the White Tower to confront the Aes Sedai there and then the Asha'man all just get killed. And it turns out it's not just Elaida, it's all the women he knows who can channel who are confronting him. So, there's some, I don't know, some psychological stuff going on there.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean, yeah [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah, obviously. And then, of course, Cadsuane saying that if he's hearing voices then he must be mad. Which is, like, fucking obviously Rand. But yeah, he's really stressed because he's maybe going insane.

SALLY: I too would be stressed if Cadsuane spoke to me. So.

EMILY: Yeah, so overall I think this would have been an effective section if just the part about the sexual – the –

SALLY: Rand's perceived sexual assault.

EMILY: Yes. Was not part of it. I think it would be really interesting if Rand just had a depressive state for a few days.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Rand does seem to have some elements of bipolar disorder.

SALLY: Mm. Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Whether that's part of his *saidin*, uh, what's the word I'm looking for. Whether that's because of his channeling or because that's just part of who he is as a person, his psychological

makeup. We will never know. Presumably because of Robert Jordan's writing it's because of *saidin*.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But, like, he definitely has states of euphoria as well as these low points.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean, you can even call back to the very first book where he would have these real manic states of euphoria, related to channeling. So, like, unfortunately, as we've talked about in the past, particularly with the male characters in this book, a lot of the disability and, um, mental illness in particular that we see in these books has to be directly related to the taint on *saidin*. *Saidin*?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Oh my god I'm never gonna get that right. Strike my Wheely Time point.

EMILY: Lose a *Wheel of Time* point!

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: No!

SALLY: And it's, yeah, deeply unfortunate that it's all connected to – maybe not all connected, because I think there are – I think the books do make a point of being like, “Rand is traumatized by things that are not necessarily related to channeling.” Like being in the box. But I think this section would function more as, like, Rand is dealing with bipolar or...you know...clinical depression or whatever it is if it wasn't connected specifically with the sex scene with Min. Like, I think if it was just, like, Rand is having a depressive episode –

EMILY: And a delayed trauma response to what is happening.

SALLY: To what happened, god, only like a month ago or something.

EMILY: Literally only a week ago.

SALLY: A week ago!! And everyone's like, “Why is the Dragon Reborn locked in his room not eating? We only popped – we popped him out of the box like a week ago. He should be fine, right?”

EMILY: You should be a-okay, bud.

SALLY: Like, it could just be so interesting and it's in these sections – like, the first half of this chapter I was like, “Ah, I really feel for Rand in this chapter.”

EMILY: Yeah, of course.

SALLY: And I really am very invested in the way his character develops post Dumai's Wells. Like, some interesting things happen there. And then, Min shows up. And it's like [blows raspberry].

EMILY: Min shows up, first of all, after Rand specifically asked for no one to be let in.

SALLY: Yeah so –

EMILY: So, the Maidens are just sort of taking matters into their own hands. And they are proven right, which is sort of a, um, uncomfortable statement about how to handle any – not handle. About how to treat people who are having any sort of psychological, uh...

SALLY: Distress.

EMILY: Distress. Yeah. I don't know if it's a good thing. The idea that, well, we simply can't trust them to make decisions for themselves.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It's – I think it would be more interesting if it was another character, but this is part of a pattern of behavior with the Maidens.

SALLY: Yeah, they're –

EMILY: Believing that Rand can't make decisions for himself.

SALLY: Yeah, it would be one thing if it was, like, god even if it was just like Perrin who was like, "My friend is not –"

EMILY: Yeah, if Perrin were still around and were just like, "Hello?"

SALLY: "*Hewwo?*"

EMILY: This is very, like, weird.

SALLY: This is very...unsettling and I'm going to check in on my friend even if it means kind of pushing back on their boundaries.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: But instead, it's the Maidens, and Min, who also is very bad at deciding what Rand...can do. Min – Min has very similar patterns of behavior to the Maidens when it comes to Rand and his autonomy.



EMILY: Right. Yeah, I agree. Um, so he just sort of walks out and Min's there. And, to distill their conversation a little bit, um...[sighs] he eventually, uh, manages to get out that he thinks that he raped her. [small burp] Excuse me. Which, she refutes in...some very –

SALLY: [sighs]

EMILY: Uh, some real 90s feminism, uh, terms. Which are to say things that are very victim blame-y of other women who do get sexually assaulted.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: Things like, “Do you think I couldn't have made myself clear to you? Do you think I couldn't have fought back?” Things that, as we know, people who are victims of a sexual assault cannot do sometimes.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: For a huge variety of reasons.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: So, it's like Min being like, “I'm not like other girls. I have a knife.”

SALLY: I'm not like other girls. I can't get raped.

EMILY: I can't – I'm immune to being sexually assaulted.

SALLY: [high pitched] Because I have a knife! [panicked laugh]

EMILY: Right. So, it's, like, it vacillates wildly between Min saying things that are good like, “I was fully a participant in that sex, and you should not treat me as though I am an object that you are just doing things to. You should be able to understand that I was right there with you. We were partners.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But then also these really negative things that are specifically targeting other women.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: We've talked about this before, about Min being this sort of ‘not like other girls’ girl, but if you want really good evidence for that, then this is the chapter for you.

SALLY: Yeah, seriously. It's *so* painful, you guys.

EMILY: Yeah, it's pretty grim. She also is like – he also is like, "I'm also upset because I love you, but I also love Elayne and Aviendha." And Min's like, "Yeah. And so?" And he's like, "That's a problem!" And she's like, "It's not a problem because the Aiel do it" [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And he's like, "Uhh, well I'm not fucking Aiel, Min. I think it is a problem." And she basically is like, "Don't worry. We've got it handled." And it's like that's not really – you guys can't have one conversation about polyamory and then be done with it.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah. It's –

EMILY: If we even want to call this polyamory. I wouldn't.

SALLY: I wouldn't, either. It's not like Aviendha and Elayne get to kiss, despite the fact that they are in love with one another.

EMILY: Yeah. Fuck, if they were. [laughs] *Obviously*, Yeah, then that might be polyamory, but no. We just have this sort of, uh, version of polygamy.

SALLY: Yeah it's –

EMILY: Where the man feels really bad about it [laughs], so it's okay.

SALLY: It's totally – it's feminist because he feels guilty [laughing] have sex with three women.

EMILY: He doesn't like it, yeah.

SALLY: No, it's this very, like...Rand is like, "I'm pretty much a monogamous person being confronted with...a vaguely non-monogamous situation and it's uncomfortable." And Min's like, "[scoffs] Grow up!"

EMILY: Yeah Min's like, "Shut the fuck up."

SALLY: Yeah. [laughing] "Did anyone ask your opinion? On your relationships?"

EMILY: Woof.

SALLY: Which is Min one hundred percent of the time. She never is taking Rand's...feelings into account, it feels like. And I'm like, "You're a shitty partner, bitch."

EMILY: Oh, she's absolutely wild. Um, some other tidbits we get: Min was a virgin before this sexual encounter, just because Robert Jordan wants you to know that. We have had absolutely no indication that Min hasn't had a healthy and vibrant sex life prior to this point. She's in her late 20s.

SALLY: Yeah. I also feel like there's evidence in earlier books that directly contradicts her saying she's a virgin.

EMILY: But no. Robert Jordan wants you to know that the Dragon Reborn only has sex with the most nubile of wombs.

SALLY: [pause] I'm going to assassinate you for that statement.

EMILY: That's what is happening!

SALLY: Um. Yeah, it also, like -

EMILY: Only virgins for the Dragon Reborn.

SALLY: It seriously does go out of its way to be like, "All three women were virgins. He took all of their virginities."

EMILY: Yeah. Yeehaw.

SALLY: Yeah, and it's like -

EMILY: And the only sexually experienced woman in his life is Lanfear! Who's evil.

SALLY: I just think Robert Jordan...we're gonna fight in hell. So.

EMILY: Yeah, I'm ready. Gearing up.

SALLY: Gonna bring my 96 theses.

EMILY: On my death bed [gravelly voice], "I'm coming, Robert."

SALLY: [laughs] Jack and Will will be peacefully standing beside bedside [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: We believe our Aunt Emily was possessed [laughs] in the final moments of her life.

EMILY: [laughing] "Aunt Emmy do you have any last words?" "I'm gonna fight you in hell, Robert!" "Who's Robert?!"

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: "I'm coming! Brace yourself!"

SALLY: Yeah, sorry. Continue with your points. Min was a virgin.

EMILY: With my litany of word crimes that Robert Jordan has committed.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah.

EMILY: Um, oh gosh. He at one point is like, “If you don’t quit that I will spank you.” And she’s like, “Ooh.” She’s clearly excited by this. At one point he actually raises his hand threateningly and she, you know, subsides whatever she was saying. So.

SALLY: Isn’t it nice to threaten violence? Remember that whole episode –

EMILY: I’m threatening violence right now! Robert Jordan....get ready [laughs].

SALLY: Remember that entire episode we had where we talked about domestic violence [laughs].

EMILY: That was two episodes ago!

SALLY: Ahh! And here we are again.

EMILY: And it has been applicable every episode since. Woof. Um, a good thing Min says is that Rand can’t choose whether or not she gets sent away. She’s like, “I’m a grownup and I can choose to stay with you if I want.” And he’s like [whispers], “That sounds fake, but okay.” I don’t know why she wins her – in this – in this – I don’t know how *she* wins where Elayne and Aviendha did not, but.

SALLY: Um, I don’t either. She’s the girliest girlboss. Bossiest girlboss.

EMILY: Yeah, I think it’s just that she’s the bossiest of them, somehow. When Elayne is in the group.

SALLY: They’re all so bossy.

EMILY: I guess Elayne didn’t really try to stay with Rand. Um.

SALLY: I just want to say one quick thing.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: I feel like it would be totally fine – obviously – for Min to be in her late 20s and still be a virgin, because that is totally a thing.

EMILY: Yeah, yeah. Sorry I should have clarified that.

SALLY: Many people do not lose their virginity when they’re 18, like Elayne does.

EMILY: Or ever.

SALLY: Or ever. Also, virginity is a social construct [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah! Have sex or don't have sex. It's cool. It's all cool.

SALLY: It's totally fine. It is just disgustingly applicable in these conversations because Robert Jordan makes it.

EMILY: Yeah, Robert Jordan has never conceived of a woman who hasn't had sex if she's past the age of 19.

SALLY: Yeah, he's like, "Min was basically a dried up old maid until Rand came and saved her pussy."

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: So, that's just a point. Sorry. I was just thinking about that.

EMILY: No, thank you for adding that. Um, then Min and the Maidens –

SALLY: Tybalt! Don't do it.

EMILY: Oh, don't scratch.

SALLY: He's gonna try and open the sliding closet door. It's been driving him crazy.

EMILY: Min's also been telling Rand this entire time that he smells. Which, I feel like is rude because it's only been four days. Sally hasn't showered in four days, and she does not smell.

SALLY: Ah, thanks! [laughs]

EMILY: Like [laughs] –

SALLY: Yeah, it isn't actually –

EMILY: That's not a burn on Sally. Sally can't shower because of the allergy test thing.

SALLY: Yeah [laughing] Sally is disgusting and doesn't shower.

EMILY: [laughing] Sally hasn't showered in four days!

SALLY: I also feel like, objectively, four days is not that long of a time to go without showering, you know? Especially if you're not doing anything. It's not like Rand is in his room working out.

EMILY: Yeah, he's just been laying in bed.

SALLY: Or whatever. Like, he's just – also, like, don't tell a depressed person that they're gross.

EMILY: You're disgusting.

SALLY: Because, because –

EMILY: You're a disgusting criminal, aren't you? [laughs]

SALLY: That is something they think about?

EMILY: Yeah!

SALLY: Like, when I'm in depressive episodes, I really have a hard time brushing my teeth. Like, it's a hygiene behavior that I just really struggle with. And so when people like my five year old niece tell me that I have gross teeth, I'm like [laughing], "God dammit, that might have been the thirteenth reason." I'm just kidding, I'm not suicidal. It's a bad joke.

EMILY: Oh! I got there. I'm like, "Thirteen reasons why," and then couldn't remember what *Thirteen Reasons Why* is about, because –

SALLY: Why would you?

EMILY: After the Netflix show it's not about anything. It's about teens having drama.

SALLY: It's just a dumb TikTok sound right now, which is why I made that joke. I apologize.

EMILY: That might be the thirteenth reason?

SALLY: Yeah. What if that was the thirteenth reason?

EMILY: That's good. Um.

SALLY: [laughs] Um.

EMILY: [sighs]

SALLY: So.

EMILY: So, Rand has a bath. It is unfortunately attended by, like, three hundred women. Including Min who is intentionally trying to embarrass him in front of all the Maidens. They're all just, like, commenting on his body and doing a lot of other really gross things that Robert Jordan thinks are really funny, but actually you should never do to another human being, obviously.

SALLY: I hate the trope of, like, purposefully embarrassing your partner as though it's, like, funny.

EMILY: Yeah. After he's bathed, Rand gets the whole gang together, and it really is like four hundred people, to go visit the Sea Folk ship, because Min was like, "You really need to see them. Every – all the Aes Sedai are telling me that you need to see them." Or something like that. I don't remember. Or she's, like, read up on it. Um, but he's like, "Okie dokie," goes to see the Sea Folk *finally*. I mean, I guess it's only been a week. Well, it's been a week since he got back, but before that he was putting them off also for, like, another week and a half.

SALLY: Yeah, so it's been, like – plus the time he was gone.

EMILY: He's been very rude.

SALLY: Yeah, three – we'll say roughly three weeks – is quite a while to leave foreign delegation just sitting in the harbor.

EMILY: Yeah, it's, like, just shitty politics, and it's frustrating because we're supposed to believe that Rand, at this point, has at least a decent grasp on politics.

SALLY: Yeah, like –

EMILY: Like, he is supposed to have taken Moiraine's tutelage into his heart.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, but they show up. They all get in a little boat. He brings five Aes Sedai with him to the harbor, but then only two – no, he brings them all on board.

SALLY: Yeah, onto the ship.

EMILY: Along with the Asha'man. He notes that, uh, the Asha'man he has retained are Dashiva, Flinn –

SALLY: And Narishma.

EMILY: And Narishma.

SALLY: Narishma my baby!

EMILY: Oh, another! Another side note just going back to Rand's depressive state, is that he also kept gazing longingly at his – the Choedan Kal.

SALLY: [laughs] Oh yeah!

EMILY: The little statuettes, which, he notes – [laughs] he specifically says, "This was – I went and retrieved them from Rhuidean on the night that I started the armies in Illian." So you may

remember way back when we were talking about *Lord of Chaos*, how Rand went on some secret mission or whatever.

SALLY: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

EMILY: And was like, “I have errands three.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Or was that at the beginning of this book?

SALLY: I can’t remember.

EMILY: So that mystery from the beginning of this book has finally been resolved. That’s where he went.

SALLY: Ha-ha.

EMILY: Um, they go to the Sea Folk. Uh, Rand gets aboard with the Aes Sedai, the Asha’man, Min, and, I assume, a couple of guards.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They do this whole fancy, like, walking in the air thing to get there.

SALLY: Pomp and circumstance.

EMILY: Yeah, and Rand immediately, although it takes him a while to figure out this is what’s going on, begins exerting his influence as *ta’veren* over the Sea Folk. They, like, immediately hail him as the Coramoor, when that could have been, like, a bargaining point.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um and he kind of starts getting what he wants right off the bat. Um, he ends up going...oh, sorry I’m going out of order. But earlier when he was, like, greeted by the five Aes Sedai he was like, “I sent for seven of you,” and he was told that Verin was questioning other – questioning the White Tower Aes Sedai. This is a reference to Verin’s lobotomy tent.

SALLY: Ahhhh!

EMILY: Which we get at the beginning of *Path of Daggers*, where she starts putting compulsions on women to serve Rand. Could this go poorly? Who’s to say?

SALLY: Usually brainwashing and mind control goes really well, so.

EMILY: Read and find out!



SALLY: I'm rooting for Verin [laughs].

EMILY: Um [laughs] and Kiruna couldn't be found because, and Bera uses a very flimsy excuse – like, what's the word? Obviously, Kiruna is being punished by Sorilea for something.

SALLY: Right, yeah, yeah, yeah.

EMILY: But Bera's like, "She's consulting with Sorilea on a matter of –"

SALLY: Like a euphemism?

EMILY: Yeah, it's a very flimsy euphemism, but Rand is like, "Oh. Okay." Doesn't get it. Just a simple idiot. Anyway, he's like, "I'm sick of talking to you, Bera, so I want Merana to be in charge from now on." And that's [laughing] just, like throwing a wrench in the whole Aes Sedai system, which I mostly find pretty funny. Um.

SALLY: It's also especially funny because it's Merana. Like what if they just left Merana in charge. Would we be here?

EMILY: Yeah! We wouldn't!

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Merana's a pretty level-headed gal as we've found out. And it's just kind of funny that [laughs] Rand is fixated on Merana as she was in charge of the delegation, why isn't she still in charge? She should still be in charge.

SALLY: Yeah. I agree with him. But everyone's like, "Merana isn't the Aes Sedai rank right now." He's like, "Do I give a fuck?"

EMILY: He's like, "I don't – what are you talking about? That's not how we do it with the Asha'man?"

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, Narisma's just in charge because he's so pretty [laughs].

EMILY: Narishma's just in charge because he's pretty. It's the prettiest person gets to be in charge. Why Mazrim Taim is in charge, no one understands.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean it would be – Mazrim Taim has like nothing going for him. He's not canonically hot, he's greasy. At least from Elayne's point of view.

EMILY: Yeah. He has a bad personality.

SALLY: He's got a bad personality.

EMILY: But then, Rand also has a bad personality, and I don't believe Rand is hot.

SALLY: He is tall, though!

EMILY: The tallest gets to be in charge [laughs].

SALLY: The tallest is in charge.

EMILY: [laughing] That would be so funny. That's basically what men do.

SALLY: [pause] You're so [laughing] correct.

EMILY: Not to call them out, but.

SALLY: The tallest is in charge.

EMILY: Yeah, it's just whoever's tallest. Okay, stupid. So, when they're on the Sea Folk ship, when the, uh, Sea Folk are like, "Come to our cabin. Do a bargain," Rand bring with him Merna and Rafela, just, like, naming another random Aes Sedai. Rafela's not important, that I know. But Merana kind of is. And he brings a couple of Asha'man and Min. And they all go and sit down and start talking and, uh, Rand is sort of getting what he wants but starts having a trauma response to being in this really small cabin.

SALLY: Yeah, he's getting triggered.

EMILY: Yeah, which, like, he couldn't – he notes that he can't stand fully without having to hunch over, so this is a very claustrophobic situation for him. So he kind of rushes out sooner than, uh –

SALLY: Than everyone else would like.

EMILY: Than everyone else would like, yeah. Merana comes out after him and is like, "If you would stay a little bit longer than we think you would be able to get whatever you want, because you're just doing *ta'veren* stuff." And he's like, "You'll figure it out, like, you're Aes Sedai. You'll be able to figure it out." And we won't get back to Merana and Rafela and their bargain with the Sea Folk until *Path of Daggers*, I think, but it is a very good scene. Where they're like, "We got this and this and this. We had to give up this and this and this." And he's like, "That's shitty!" And Merana, like, rips him a new one. She's like, "Well if you hadn't walked out on us."

SALLY: Yeah, and it's like –

EMILY: So, while being sympathetic for Rand personally, politically he does make not a good move here.

SALLY: Yeah, he doesn't talk to the Sea Folk for weeks and then he just leaves in the middle of the negotiation. And if I were Merana in charge of negotiation, I too would be like, "I will beat your ass if you speak to me about how you don't like these terms."

EMILY: I love Merana. I love it when she lectures Rand.

SALLY: I know. Merana's a real one. Of all the hundreds of random Aes Sedai.

EMILY: Of all the rando Aes Sedai, I like Merana. Um, so that done, Rand is like, "Well, another success!" [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Not even – "I've bathed, and I've talked to the Sea Folk." Neither of those are really like – those are both sort of neutral things, but success. Then he says to Min, apropos of nothing he's like, "Well, want to go see me take care of the rebellion? Of the nobility's rebellion?"

SALLY: She's like, "What? Are you talking about?"

EMILY: Exsqueeze me? So that's where Rand's going next.

SALLY: I forgot about this scene. Or this little section.

EMILY: Yeah. Into the woods.

SALLY: [singing] Into the thick of it.

EMILY: That's literally a chapter title. Um, where Rand will get his second Fisher King wound and also, you know, keep doing *ta'veren* stuff.

SALLY: He's having a *ta'veren* kind of day, because he bathed.

EMILY: Because he bathed. Sorry our heater just came on. If you hear that background noise.

SALLY: It's because it's fucking cold!

EMILY: Well, that's those three chapters and I feel like we did a really good job covering them.

SALLY: I agree.

EMILY: And I have no regrets.

SALLY: I have some regrets [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: No ragrats.

EMILY: Hashtag no regrets. And, um, I'm mostly ready to be done. So, thanks, everyone, for listening. And thanks to Glynna Mackenzie for our theme song. And thanks to all our Patrons on Patreon. Um, this week that you're listening to this will probably be my last week covering the blogs and then we'll get back into Sally talking about *Crossroads of Twilight*. I can't think of any fun things to call it. Like how *Winter's Heart* was *Winter's Fart*.

SALLY: We'll think of something. I've got, like, 700 pages or whatever to think it through. That means I have to start *Crossroads of Twilight* this weekend probably.

EMILY: Sorry.

SALLY: I just like to get a few blogs under my belt. But I will be back with *Crossroads of Twilight*.

EMILY: Do you have anything to add?

SALLY: [pause, with a French accent] Non.

EMILY: [with a French accent] Non!

SALLY: [with a French accent] Non.

EMILY: Okay, do you have a sign off?

SALLY: Um, this is such an old one, but I was thinking about it today because I was addressing envelopes. One time [laughs] at my glassblowing job in New York City, I got yelled at for not ripping – you know how when you have a roll of stamps, and you take it off and there's the wax paper?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: I didn't, like, rip off the unused wax paper, because I'd only used like five stamps and I got ripped a new one by my boss. Her being like, "Why did you do this? It makes it really difficult to use." And I was like, "Okay, 10-4." [laughs] So, anyway, I was just thinking about how psychologically damaging that job was.

EMILY: What the fuck?

SALLY: So, anyway, that's an old one. Is it a good one? No, but it's what I have.

EMILY: But it's one. Okay, goodbye everyone.

SALLY: Bye, we love you!

EMILY: Byeeee!