



Episode 180: Dickmaster 3000

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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: I just -- my mind went completely blank. (laugh) Like a field of fog, like unto the field of -- of, um, scary fog that, um, snatches people --

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: In this. Is that what Stephen King's "The Mist" is about?

Sally: I have no idea what any of Stephen King's books are about. I avoid that knowledge as much as possible.

Emily: I usually read the Wikipedia summaries if it pops into my, um, you know, view. Just to -- just to know, because I'm a weird person and I like to know things --

Sally: You're not a --

Emily: Without actually having to witness them.

Sally: You are not a weird person for wanting to know what's going on in the zeitgeist. I'm just lazy.

Emily: I don't know if Stephen King's "The Mist" counts as the zeitgeist.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I just know that it's the mist, and I assume it's scary mist. I'm trying to think of -- I feel like we've seen something that was, like, mist snatching of people, really recently, like in the -- in, um, television. I feel like I've seen that rendered somehow, but maybe I am making that up? I'll think of it, or I won't. Who's to say? But, um, yeah, there's some scary fog in this one. Um, Robert Jordan's really into scary fog and scary wind --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And scary mist. It's a real -- it's a real theme in his books. I wonder what was going on there, if he just was like, "What's the most eldritch horror there is? Not the sea. Mist. Water vapor."

Sally: I mean, I guess I can kind of see where he's coming from. Mist is pretty freaky.

Emily: Yeah, I think -- I think fog is pretty freaky. Especially when it snatches the tent right off you.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: That's freaky. But, like, um, I don't know. I think the depths of the ocean are freakier.

Sally: I mean, the ocean -- I agree. I agree, the ocean is really haunting and horrifying and that we should probably just leave it alone, which I feel like we, as a species, knock on wood, have mostly been okay -- like, we've gone to space before we've gone to most parts of the ocean. (laugh) Um. But Robert Jordan does mostly have, uh, quite a landlocked continent, so.

Emily: Yeah, I think I'm just complaining that there's not enough, um, like, naval settings.

Sally: Mm. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Emily: I think I just like sailing ships, you know.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I don't like sailing ships with the caveat that they're inhabited only by the Sea Folk, who Robert Jordan is racist against.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Even though he made them up, he's racist against them.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: So. Um. Yeah, I just think the ocean is neat. Okay. This is Every -- oh my God. (laugh)
Why does anyone listen to this?

Sally: I don't know, it's really beyond me after last week's use of the word "nubile." (laugh)
Hopefully we lost most of you. Hopefully you've freed yourself of this.

Emily: Someone -- I like to imagine someone heard that and was just like, "Goodbye," and
clicked "stop" on their podcast player.

Sally: They're like, "Unsubscribed."

Emily: "That's it. That's enough for me." This is Everybody Hates Rand, if you're still listening.
It's your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: I am Sally Goodger.

Emily: What would your fake name be if we had made this under fake names?

Sally: What would my fake name be? (laugh) What would my fake name be? What a great
question. I've never had, like, an alias on the internet. I've always used my --

Emily: Me neither, but every day I think, more and more, I should have one. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, I mean, that's fair. That's totally fair. And then I think about people who, like, use
their real name on the internet and have, like, several thousand followers, like fifty thousand
followers, a hundred thousand followers, and I'm like, God. People must be really up in your
business.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: 'Cause I feel like people are up in my business, and I have three hundred Twitter
followers.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: My fake name. I don't know. I feel like I would want it to be funny, and I can't think of
anything funny.

Emily: (laugh, stuttering) F-f-francine

Sally: Francine? Okay.

Emily: Herbert.

Sally: Francine Herbert? Are you just pulling names off the shelf? (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) I just saw Frank Herbert.

Sally: Francine -- I'll be Francine Herbert, okay. That's a good one. (laugh) This is Francine Herbert.

Emily: I don't even like Dune. (laugh) Oh, wait, that was supposed to remain mysterious. You're not supposed to know how I feel about Dune. Um, so we read two chapters today, still about Rand, still in his -- this is -- he's coming off the high of having "dealt with," in quotations, the Sea Folk. He didn't really finish dealing with them. He just sort of, like, tallied up that "W" --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And was like, "That's done, I -- and I want to keep riding this high." Arguably, Rand has, um, come out of a depressive state --

Sally: Yes.

Emily: And entered a manic state.

Sally: Yes, I was gonna say exactly the same thing. He's very manic in these chapters, especially at the beginning.

Emily: He's pretty -- yeah, he's pretty manic and, like, is not listening to reason.

Sally: Yeah. Like --

Emily: And is --

Sally: (laugh) Min is like, "Maybe we shouldn't go to the rebel army in the forest, just me and you," and he's like, "Ha, Min, don't be ridiculous."

Emily: He's like, "I'm the Dragon Reborn, everything is, like -- everything is coming up Rand today."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And she's like, "I don't think it works like that," and he's like, "It does."

Sally: She's like, "I still think it might be a good idea to bring some of your bodyguards with you --"

Emily: And he's like --

Sally: "Into enemy territory."

Emily: Yeah, and then it's hard to tell if we are still seeing, like, a -- an irrational Rand or if this is just normal -- like --

Sally: Normal.

Emily: Normal level irrational Rand, because the dude never brings his bodyguards anywhere, which is so fucking stupid 'cause remember the last -- how they totally exploited that fact to kidnap you?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You dumb shit. Like, I can't believe he hasn't learned anything.

Sally: Yeah, I also just find it very frustrating that Rand was introduced to, uh, a very large contingent of bodyguards in, what, book four?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And three books later, he's still just like, "I will absolutely not utilize these for the sake of my own protection." It's just very strange.

Emily: Yeah. Like, I get it. They would be annoying. But Robert Jordan, like, leans into that way more than he leans into Rand being like, "Here is how I can use them." Does that make sense?

Sally: Yeah. No, I -- I find the idea of having somebody with you twenty-four hours a day really upsetting; like, if I were ever personally to have a bodyguard --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: In some alternate universe, I would really struggle with that, and I think that's interesting to explore. But Rand's solution to that just being like, "I will ignore the fact that I have a bodyguard at all," is very strange.

Emily: Yeah, there's just, like, also a level of condescension to it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, he doesn't take seriously the Maidens.

Sally: Yeah. He's like, "Well, I -- I need to keep them safe."

Emily: Yeah, which is just such another -- I mean, we've talked about it enough. It's just such a level of idiocy.

Sally: No, but I think it's a good point to bring up the condescension in that. He's like, "I need to keep them safe," absolutely does not recognize -- and I think Sulin brings this to the forefront a lot -- absolutely does not recognize that these are highly trained warrior women, who are very competent and probably better at fighting than Rand is. And he's just, like --

Emily: Yeah. Oh, no, they're not better at fighting than Rand is because no one's better at fighting at Rand. He is a swordmaster. Excuse me, blademaster. Excuse me, dickmaster.

Sally: (laugh) Ahhh!

Emily: You know, like the Stairmaster? (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) The dickmaster 3000.

Emily: Dickmaster 3000 over here is so good at swords despite having only picked one up two years ago. God fucking damnit. I hate him, and I hate Robert Jordan. It's okay. Negativity, begone! (slapping noise)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um.

Sally: Good Haikyuu reference.

Emily: Yeah. Speaking of idiocy, though, Min starts out this chapter thinking, "I'm not -- I'm not a dumb type of woman who cares about men and thinks about interior decorating, but I sure do like to think about the interior decorating of Rand's apartments, because nothing's more important than how my man feels when he looks at the tapestries," or whatever.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, Robert Jordan's, like -- speaking of condescension, you know --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Robert Jordan's inability to treat women -- his own women characters -- as though they aren't women with, like -- as though they aren't just people with -- empty-headed little dolls --

Sally: Oh, I know.

Emily: Out of a Better Homes and Gardens magazine or a Victoria's Secret magazine, depending on the moment.

Sally: Somehow he's -- he's put Better Homes and Gardens and Victoria's Secret together, so that the woman is both a sexy, sexy virgin woman with probably big tits and the type of woman you can make a home with. Not saying that those two are mutually exclusive. Like, you can be

sexy and a good homemaker. Can't believe I just used that phrase. But Robert Jordan is like, "Women need to be certain things. They need to be sexy. They need to be interested in homemaking. They need to be virgins. And I will mix all these magazines together to create Min, in this scene, thinking about how she would love to redecorate her boyfriend's room."

Emily: Yeah. Robert Jordan's collage of femininity includes the following:

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. Interior decorating skills.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: A fuckin' tight pussy.

Sally: (gagging noise, laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Disdain for other women.

Sally: Correct.

Emily: A great rack.

Sally: A great rack but maybe not too great.

Emily: Yeah, and also, like, not -- and, like, a little bit powerful but not a lot powerful.

Sally: Yeah, like, you can use a -- you -- you have knives, but you'll lose them when you throw them at Padan Fain and miss.

Emily: You have knives, but you always miss.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or you're very -- you're a very powerful channeler, but, like, not as powerful as that man over there.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Any man over there.

Sally: You can be the queen of Andor, but you cannot be the dictator of the continent.

Emily: Yeah, you're the queen of Andor, but honestly, you're not very good at it. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) You're the queen of Andor, but, like, nobody wants you to be.

Emily: You're the queen of Andor, but, like, should you be?

Sally: No!

Emily: You have special psychic powers, but are they useful?

Sally: No.

Emily: Not really. It's interesting to me that Robert Jordan chooses to use Min's point of view for these two chapters.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, it's a switch. We've had Rand in the last couple. Um, and it's, like, a, um -- it's a, uh, inversion of the usual point of view hierarchy, which is that if Rand's on-screen, usually he's the one --

Sally: He's narrating, yeah.

Emily: Narrating. Um. But Min, uh, narrating makes sense for the second chapter, because Rand is unconscious for the majority of it --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, not necessarily the first chapter, and I'm a little irritated that we're stuck in Min's point of view when Rand is, uh, like, having conversations that are important with Darlin, for example.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Min is just catching snatches of it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I mean, given, it would probably be -- there's probably not a good way for Robert Jordan to win here; it would probably annoy me just as much if I had to put up with Rand talking about politics in a sort of incompetent way.

Sally: Yeah, I hate when Rand talks about politics -- yeah.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: 'Cause he just is such a -- authoritarian.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: I'm probably not using that exactly correctly in terms of political theory, but he's basically like, "I need to be in charge, and that's the end of the story."

Emily: And Darlin's like, "Hmm."

Sally: "Hmm. Maybe not."

Emily: "Maybe -- I don't think so. I don't agree." Um. Sorry, sticking with the synopsis a little bit. Min talks about the drapes or curtains or whatever for a little while, um, and Rand is, like, getting dressed, and he's like, "I'm just going to go in -- in a farm boy disguise, you know? No one will see me, the Dragon Reborn, coming, even though I am one of the most -- I am one of the most distinctive faces --"

Sally: Yeah, in the whole damn world.

Emily: "In the continent." Um. But, uh, he's like, "Let's go," and Min's like, "I don't know if this is a good idea," and Rand's like, "It is; I'm a man, trust me. I'm -- I have a bigger brain than you. That's science."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um, and she's like, "Okie dokie," and he's like, "And don't worry, the Maidens won't know a thing, because they never know a thing when I teleport away mysteriously," which is patently untrue.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The Maidens definitely know when you teleport away, and it's a serious problem. It's, like, the one thing that they are constantly trying to prevent.

Sally: Yeah, and it's --

Emily: They keep confronting you about it.

Sally: You, as a world leader, cannot just disappear whenever you want to go wherever you want.

Emily: I know, seriously. Like, we -- we don't get to stick around to see the uproar --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: When they find out he's missing, but you have to imagine that every time you go missing, people are like, "Okay, well, what's --" Like, do they have contingency plans in place? Are they like, "Okay, we're gonna weekend at Bernie's this. We're just gonna pretend the Dragon Reborn is alive and not missing," or are they like, "We have to ring up Berelain again because Rand just keeps disappearing."

Sally: Yeah, well, and it also, I'm sure, is really stressful for everyone, 'cause, like, just about two weeks ago, you got kidnapped, my guy.

Emily: God.

Sally: And so I feel like you should -- you should be better at telling people where you're going, because yeah, everyone's just gonna think you got kidnapped again.

Emily: But it doesn't matter 'cause he's the Dragon Reborn, and he has the biggest brain out of all the -- all the boys. And the biggest dick, and the biggest sword, and he's the biggest.

Sally: And he is physically the tallest.

Emily: Yeah, so.

Sally: Only Gaul appears to be taller than him, so. Why isn't Gaul in charge?

Emily: Tallest man should be in charge.

Sally: Yeah. We covered this last week.

Emily: (laugh) It should be one of the Aiel. Um, but Rand and Min teleport in their disguise into the middle of a forest, where Rand immediately tells Caraline Damodred who he is. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) I know!

Emily: It's so funny.

Sally: Caraline Damodred's like, "Hello?" and he's like, "Hi, it's me, Rand, the Dragon Reborn."

Emily: And she's like, "Ah, as I suspected, because you're fucking infamous."

Sally: Yeah. Like, "I know who you are, you stupid piece of shit."

Emily: Yeah, and then --

Sally: Unless you're Darlin, and then you don't.

Emily: Yeah, well, Darlin is a little bit of a himbo.

Sally: I know, I love him. He's so charming in these chapters.

Emily: I think Darlin's great, yeah.

Sally: He's just like, "Whee do doo do doo --"

Emily: "Doo do doo do doo --"

Sally: "I'll do whatever Caraline says 'cause I love her, doo do doo."

Emily: He's like, "I will manwhore, man -- malewife my way through politics and being the eventual king of Tear."

Sally: And you know what? I think he's doing a great job.

Emily: He's valid. He's valid as fuck. Um. So, as a little recap, Caraline Damodred is with a guy named Toram Riadin in this forest somewhere outside of Cairhien. I don't care to look at the map, but I also --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: More to the point, don't think that forest is specifically on the map.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But it's near enough to Cairhien that it is technically within walking distance --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As we find out later in this chapter -- these chapters. Um. So these two Cairhienin noble people are sort of leading this rebellion that, thus far, has not taken any serious actions except to gather in the woods.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, separate from that, Darlin Sisnera is a Tairen nobleman who is also sort of gathering a passive uprising, closer to Tear and in this place called the Haddon Mirk, I think.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, so Rand has sort of had that on the backburner for at least a book and a half --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And has not done anything about it, and thus far, that strategy has not really been a problem because none of these people seem to be doing anything.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And in these chapters, there's also no indication that they are ever going to do anything.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: So --

Sally: There's no, like, plan.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Anywhere.

Emily: Um, so why they're a subplot is a little bit unclear. You know, looking at this from a macro storytelling point of view, it is, I guess, nice to know that there -- that, you know, the nobility aren't all just laying down for Rand. There is some definite, like, opposition.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But having them be, like, this weak, toothless opposition doesn't necessarily accomplish anything.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Except maybe prove Robert Jordan's point, which is that most of these people are useless.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But then, that's why they need Rand al'Thor, a dictator, in charge.

Sally: Yeah, the dick-tator.

Emily: The dick-tator.

Sally: Really putting the "dick" in "dictator," you know?

Emily: We're really -- we're really using the word "dick" a lot in this, um, episode -- this episode, but you know what?

Sally: Listen, we have an explicit rating on iTunes so we can say it as many times as we want.

Emily: Yeah. Yeah.

Sally: I'm not out here trying to censor myself.

Emily: So why Rand even feels that he needs to deal with these people is kind of -- like, I want him to deal with them, because it's a dumb subplot that I want to be gone, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As a reader, I want that. But as a -- on a separate level, I am like, what if Rand just ignored these people? I feel like they'd eventually just go away.

Sally: Yeah, like, they haven't done anything in the last book and a half.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Are they gonna do anything now?

Emily: Doesn't seem like it. But that's what's going on. So Rand and Min teleport into these woods and, like, immediately, I guess because Rand's ta'veren, Caraline Damodred comes, uh, riding out with a crossbow and is like, "Who the fuck are you people?" and Rand's like, "I'm Rand al'Thor, the Dragon Reborn, and this is Min," and Caraline Damodred's like, "Yeah, I sort of figured, because you literally teleported --"

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "Into the middle of a forest, and you're a tall, red-head dude."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, like, obvious -- fucking obviously. He's like, "Yeah, it's nice to meet you." Um, Caraline, for the record, is related to Moiraine. They look pretty similar, but they're just cousins.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don't know how well they actually knew each other. Um. But as they are -- I don't remember anything they say -- but a minute later, Darlin and a sort of contingent of people -- apparently they were out sporting, hunting --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, come up, and Darlin's like, "Hey, Caraline, you almost hit me when you fired your crossbow into the air," which at least is some verisimilitude I can get behind. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: When you're -- when you shoot up into the air, it does come down eventually.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, but Darlin's like, "Who's this?" Just a total idiot.

Sally: "Who's this man in the middle of the forest?"

Emily: "Who's this man in the middle of the woods, in a peasant coat?" And Caraline's like, "Oh, this is my cousin, Tomas."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "And his wife, Jaisi." Why Caraline isn't just like, "This is the Dragon Reborn, and he's in our power, wa ha ha ha ha!"

Sally: Mwa ha ha ha ha!

Emily: Can only be explained by Rand's ta'veren influence, which I guess is still going strong, and Caraline herself notes later in the chapter -- she's like, "It seems like he has put me under some sort of spell."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It would be refreshing if Caraline did this under her own power and for reasons --

Sally: Yeah, her own --

Emily: That were rational.

Sally: Yeah. Political reasons, like -- I mean, she's dealing with two different men who want to marry her --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Darlin and Riatin.

Emily: Caraline's in -- in a, uh, tight spot.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Dang, we're in a tight spot.

Sally: So if she were just like, "I'm going to try and gain some power, some leverage," as it were --

Emily: Yeah, that would be cool.

Sally: That would be interesting, rather than Rand's, uh, forest of coincidences power coming here.

Emily: But instead, Caraline is, like, immediately, as soon as we meet her, relegated to a sexy lamp --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Where two men are interested in her; she's not doing much except to ride next to Min while the men talk about politics.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: I think Rand and she do briefly talk, but not, like, extensively.

Sally: Yeah, I can't really remember, but yeah, it's definitely, um, Darlin who's doing the political power of this situation.

Emily: Yeah, it seems like Rand has to convince him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and Rand -- obviously they're surprised to see Darlin, 'cause he's supposed to be in Tear, and Rand comments on it, and Darlin's like, "Oh, we came up on a boat 'cause we just wanted to hang out. And now I've met Caraline, and I'm hanging out 'cause I want to marry her."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, Caraline seems at least somewhat receptive to this. Min, of course, has a viewing saying that they will get married --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So there's that, but also, just, like, Caraline's behavior, later, when they dismount -- um, Darlin offers his arm, and she takes it. Stuff like that. So he's not a dick, Darlin isn't.

Sally: I would find Darlin very hard to resist if I were Caraline.

Emily: Yeah, he's very charming.

Sally: He's very charming. Min comments the entire chapter about how he has an ugly nose, and I'm like, could you calm down, bitch? (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, we are supposed to be, like, slowly charmed into liking Darlin --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The way Min is --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Min's like, "He's not a pretty man, but he does have lovely eyes," and then later, she's like, "Well, he really has a great laugh."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And actually he's a really good guy," and it's like, you could just be, like, not commenting on his looks right off the bat.

Sally: Yeah. Min, you're so rude.

Emily: I mean, that's -- every narrator in the Wheel of Time does that.

Sally: Yeah, that's true.

Emily: Is like, "This person -- I'm just gonna rank this person immediately on the hot or not scale," but it's like, it is fine to know that Darlin is just a chill dude.

Sally: Yeah, we -- the further you get into Wheel of Time, especially 'cause Robert Jordan tends to repeat certain things, like, "Oh, she's a handsome woman but not beautiful," and --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: "Oh, he's --" Whatever. Like, usually, some sort of, like, one feature on their face is just irredeemably ugly or something. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Yeah.

Sally: And it's just, like, people actually exist beyond what they look like and --

Emily: Yeah, it becomes -- because they're so frequently used, these descriptors are rendered useless.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, they don't mean anything to us anymore.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The same way that you just skip over the word "the" when you're reading.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, you just skip over these dumb descriptions of people's looks.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, I don't know. I think -- I think the way the human brain actually works, and when you're a writer, describing people, we notice when people are particularly hot --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or particularly unattractive to us --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But for the most part, we just see other people and maybe, like, I don't know --

Sally: Yeah, honestly, it's very strange to me when writers are, like -- I mean, I wouldn't want to group everyone; let's stay focused here on Robert Jordan. But it's like, he's so determined to make each person he introduces an -- quote unquote -- "individual," rather than just being like, "This is a person who's the innkeeper at this random inn that we will be at for three pages --"

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, I don't need to know how fat she is or how big her boobs are or how, even, old she is. You can just be like, "A woman. The innkeeper."

Emily: The end.

Sally: And it's like, okay.

Emily: And I will just, like, paste my little personal --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "A woman" onto that random description.

Sally: Yeah. Like, it's very -- it's one of those things about epic fantasy that are -- are hard, to be like, every person needs to have a defining characteristic, and it's like, not really. Like, the reader -- I, at least, tend to just post my description of "a woman" on it anyway. Don't need Min sitting here for, like, a full chapter, being like, "Yeah, Darlin's kinda ugly but also kinda hot." And it's like --

Emily: "I really can't decide." And it's just, like, not every character is a playable Dungeons and Dragons character. NPCs are cut and paste for a reason, you know?

Sally: Yeah, and also, it's just, like, another poor reflection on Min that she has to spend the entire chapter deciding if she's attracted to a man or not, as opposed to just being, like --

Emily: But constantly assuring us that she's more attracted to Rand.

Sally: Yeah. She's like, "I might've found --" like, when we're introduced to Riatin, who's the classic, like, he's very sexy, but he's also a psycho, like --

Emily: Yeah, he's super handsome, but he's also completely insane.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, he -- you would have horror stories about him if you matched with him on Tinder.

Sally: Yeah, like, he is -- like -- I'm trying to be better about not using words like "psychotic" and "insane" --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: That's something I really need to work on. But Riatin is actually exhibiting some type of sociopathic behavior, at the very least, it feels like. I mean, he's also under Padan Fain's influence, so that's going on --

Emily: But it is also implied that, even before that, he was a huge dick --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because he was pursuing Caraline, and she was resistant enough to his advances that when he mentions it again, she's like, "I told you, I'm not marrying you."

Sally: Yeah. So, um, that's -- that's fun. But Min has to be like, "He's really handsome, and before I met Rand, I'd be really attracted to him, but I'm no longer attracted to him," because you can only be attracted to one person at a time; everyone knows that's how it works.

Emily: Yeah, the person you're sleeping with is the only one that you're allowed to feel attracted to. Uhhh, I don't think that's quite the case.

Sally: That's not quite true. It's also, Robert Jordan, super possible to be attracted to someone without ever acting on that attraction.

Emily: (clicks tongue)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Mind-boggling, I know.

Sally: (laugh) It happens to me all the time. Stupid.

Emily: So they ride through the forest and enter some sort of camp. Uh, I don't recall, but I don't -- uh, I don't recall specifically, I should say, but I also don't recall there being, really, a good idea of, like, how big this gathering is --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: How many people there are. Is this something that Rand should actually feel threatened by? Or is this kind of a joke? You know, these indications are not given to us.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, but they, you know, dismount and are taken to a very -- a super big tent.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is more or less like a -- you know, a catering tent at a garden party --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Where they can socialize. Um, and this is where we meet Riatin, Toram Riatin, uh, flanked by Padan Fain, who Rand immediately spots and is like -- clocks, yeah --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: His Kill Bill sirens go off, and he's like, "That dude is -- fuckin' sucks." Um, and Caraline's like, "Oh, yeah, I mean, he's been here for a few days, and he's a creep, but what're you gonna do?"

Sally: What do ya do?

Emily: Uh, speaking of creeps, we are -- we see a little snippet of a guy named Daved Hanlon --

Sally: Ugh.

Emily: Min sees him and immediately gets a viewing that he is a murderer and rapist and will continue to be those things throughout his life. Um, she's like, "Ugh, that guy is a -- is totally evil. You should, like, get rid of him," and Caraline's like, "Oh, yeah, he's part of this contingent of White Lions."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "They're mercenaries from Andor." And Rand's like, "Oh, you mean, like, the mercenaries who were fully under Rahvin's control --"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "So a lot of them are Darkfriends or influenced by Darkfriends?" She's like, "Yeah, they're just hanging out." So that's great.

Sally: Yeah. I also find this scene kind of frustrating, 'cause Min is like, "I know that that man is a rapist and a murderer, but there's nothing I can do about it because any time I try to interfere with a viewing, it just makes things worse," and not to be like, let's murder people, but if Min just murdered this man, how would that make it worse, you know?

Emily: Yeah. Speaking of bad people hanging around, there's a bunch of Aes Sedai, including Cadsuane, um, and apparently a bunch of Red Ajah ladies --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who are on their way north from wherever they have been in the south, and this is just sort of noted, but these women do not become relevant, so I'm not sure why they're there.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It would make total sense if just Cadsuane and her two hangers-on, who are based in Cairhien and visiting these people --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Were just there, since the Red sisters don't do anything. Robert Jordan, quit introducing characters who don't do anything.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: What are -- what are they there for?

Sally: Seriously.

Emily: Uh, but Padan Fain slithers away, and Toram Riatin comes up, and thanks a lot, by the way, RJ, for making Rand's alias "Tomas," which looks quite a bit like "Toram."

Sally: (laugh) I didn't even notice that.

Emily: So that was really confusing for me.

Sally: I was just, like, skipping over everybody's name.

Emily: Uh, but Riatin comes up. We learn that he is into Caraline and is trying to marry her. Uh, we learn that he's -- we can tell that he's under Padan Fain's influence. He's a creep. He, like, immediately challenges Rand to duel.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To do some sword-fighting for funsies. And Rand's like, "Ah, yeah, sure." And, of course, Rand -- it's the typical, um, male fantasy of your showy, arrogant opponent, um, underestimating you.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But then you suddenly outperform --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And are yourself a dickmaster.

Sally: (laugh) Speaking of arrogance, just -- Min is noting that Rand is being, like, unbearably arrogant to everyone that he talks to at this camp as well.

Emily: Yeah, she's like, "It's, like, a shitty disguise if you are --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You can't just come up in a peasant cloak and then be like, "But I act like I'm Alexander the Great."

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: So.

Sally: So it is really no surprise to anyone when he's like, "It's me, wheee."

Emily: "It's me, Rand al'Thor," except for Toram Riadin is surprised because he's dumb.

Sally: Yeah, but Rand has -- Rand is able to be the -- the steady rock --

Emily: Yes.

Sally: Like Lan taught him to be, outperforming all these, um, preening peacocks around him.

Emily: Yeah, he's a cool, solemn, masculine type. Not a --

Sally: Yeah, he's not French. (laugh)

Emily: He's not French! How dare you? (laugh)

Sally: Um --

Emily: Uh, but while they are having this play sword duel, uh, suddenly there are screams from outside, and this mist comes and, like, snatches the tent away.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And there's just, like, this dome of fog that's sort of shrinking in on them, and it, like, grabs a woman and breaks her neck.

Sally: Yeah, one of the Red Ajah ladies.

Emily: Which, again, why are they there?

Sally: Just to die.

Emily: Just to die. Uh, but everyone's panicking and screaming. Of course, Rand and Min end up with the three noble rebels, um, as well as the three Aes Sedai, Cadsuane and, like, Samitsu and another woman whose name escapes me. Uh, but they're like -- Cadsuane's like, "Okay, well, let's just leave in defensive formation," you know, does not give away Rand, although of course she recognizes him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, they start moving, um, and don't get too far before, uh, a, you know, woman comes screaming out of the mist, and Rand balefires the thing -- the mist monster -- coming after her, immediately exposing himself as the Dragon Reborn. Darlin's like, "Ah!"

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And Toram Riatin's like, "Ahhhh!" and runs away into the mist.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, so, okay. And Cadsuane then slaps Rand and tells him not to use balefire again. This is -- I have not been going into the various ways that Cadsuane has been being insufferable, but she is, as usual.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She is very rude, very condescending, and ultimately, I don't know why she's like that. As usual. Uh, but she's like, "Don't use balefire," and Rand's like, "I'm not crazy, just so you know." And she's like, "What the fuck?" (laugh)

Sally: She's like, "Ummm. All evidence to the contrary, but okay."

Emily: She's like, "Okay, buddy." Uh, shortly after that, Padan Fain -- or, they're still arguing or whatever -- when Padan Fain materializes out of the mist with his Shadar Logoth dagger, uh, which we recognize even if Min does not. Min throws a knife at him, of course misses, and he slashes Rand, uh, before running off.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Rand immediately collapses, Cadsuane's like, "I'm not good at healing. Samitsu, you have to help heal him." Samitsu's like, "Okay," tries, but then is like, "I think he's going to die. I have, you know, done what I can, but."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The prognosis is not good.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Cadsuane's like, "Okay, well, we've just gotta keep moving through the mist." Rand's unconscious, Min, of course, is weeping inconsolably. Uh, Darlin, MVP --

Sally: I know.

Emily: Picks up a six-foot-five or whatever dude --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And is carrying him this entire way without showing evidence of strain.

Sally: I know. What a hottie, honestly.

Emily: So. Yeah, Caraline, get on that.

Sally: Caraline's like --

Emily: "Maybe?"

Sally: "Okay. Okay. Okay." (laugh)

Emily: "Okay, tell me more."

Sally: Mm.

Emily: They eventually emerge from the forest and the mist at the same time. They see a road and, you know, to cut a travel sequence short, get down to the road, hijack some farmer's cart --

Sally: I know.

Emily: And take it to, uh, back to the Sun Palace with Caraline and Darlin just sort of shell-shocked with them, like, "I don't know what the fuck just happened, but there goes the rebellion."

Sally: Yeah, well --

Emily: "Viva la revolution." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) "Viva --" It's like that scene in Les Mis.

Emily: Yeah. (singing) Red, the color of angry men --

Sally: Empty chairs at empty tables. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, seriously, 'cause the mist snatched them all. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. Um, also in the wagon ride, Min just relates the fact that Rand got kidnapped and brutally tortured, and everyone is like, "Hey, what the fuck?"

Emily: Yeah, 'cause Cadsuane's like, "Don't take him back to the Palace; let's take him back to my house."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And Min's like, "Oh, you should not let him wake up surrounded by strange Aes Sedai." And Cadsuane's like, "Okay, but why?" and Min's like, "Well, they put him in a box." And -- plus paragraphs more of torture that, luckily, Robert Jordan doesn't make us relive.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. And the Aes Sedai are like, "Oh my God, he stilled people?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And barf. And Cadsuane's like, "Ah, boy, I shan't hurt you more than I must." And it's like, not reassuring --

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: But okay. Like, these are the women?

Sally: These are the women.

Emily: These are the people that I'm supposed to be, like, yeah, they're on Rand's side, yippee-ki-yay, motherfuckers. Like --

Sally: Yeah, it's very --

Emily: They're -- it's totally unsympathetic.

Sally: Yeah. Like, it's -- it felt -- feels very -- I mean, everything, I'm sure, Robert Jordan was doing -- actually, no. It feels very intentional for Robert Jordan to be like, "These women are shitty, and Rand should not trust them," and it's like, how many times are you gonna make me do this little dance, where you're like, "Actually, the Aes Sedai are all horrible bitches"?

Emily: Gatekeeping, gaslighting girlbosses, and it's like, yeah, fucking I get it.

Sally: I know. We don't -- you don't have to keep showing me how horrible they are.

Emily: No one in this stupid book series is trustworthy or nice or kind to each other. Everyone's just in it for the goddamn power. I fucking get it, Robert Jordan.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Do I have to, like, live through it? Every agonizing -- page by page.

Sally: Yeah. Like, this could've just been a scene where they're, like, not barfing at the fact that Rand retaliated against the people who kept him in a box and whipped him and all other sorts of stuff. (sigh)

Emily: It's just wild.

Sally: Like, they could've just said nothing. Yeah.

Emily: Yeah, 'cause you could have so easily had these women been like, "What?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Oh my God." Like, unsympathetic to the fact that any Aes Sedai would be stupid enough to do that to the Dragon Reborn.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Be like, "What the hell?" Even if they were just like, "What was Elaida thinking?"

Sally: Yeah, even that would be more acceptable to me.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: They don't necessarily have to be like, "Oh, poor Rand." I mean, they should be, but.

Emily: Yeah, they don't have to be, like, weeping over his trauma. I get it, they're -- they're cold women, they don't feel anything, whatever, whatever.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But yeah, if you could just be, like -- have a modicum of something that I'm not expecting. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: God.

Sally: Um.

Emily: Whatever. They get to the Palace. Everyone is like, "Hey, what the hell? So is the Dragon Reborn dead?" Cadsuane's like, "He's not dead," like nine times.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "He's not -- he's not dead. He's not dead!" Um, they take him to his bedroom and are, like -- everyone gathers around and is like, "Well." (laugh) "Guess he'll die."

Sally: (laugh) "What now?" Until, who should show up but --

Emily: Yeah. Oh, Amys also shows up.

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: Um, and Cadsuane's like, "Hmm, I want to get in on whatever the Wise Ones have going for them." And it's like, okay, yeah, mutual girlbosses, we get it. Join a club. Uh, yeah, then the Asha'man show up. Uh, Dashiva's like, "You can't just let him die. Flinn, do your -- do your jazz."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And Flinn's, like, just a pattering little old man, he's like, "I hope no one minds if I talk; it just helps me if I -- if I talk through my process."

Sally: I know.

Emily: And it's like, you're adorable --

Sally: I know.

Emily: And I want to keep you forever in my pocket.

Sally: I love him.

Emily: I love you, Flinn. I love you, Damer Flinn. And he's like, "Well, uh, I guess I'm good at healing. Uh, Dashiva was the one who started, like, me on this path," and we, who know that Dashiva is one of the Forsaken, are like, well, that was an interesting move by one of the Forsaken.

Sally: The Forsaken's like, "I need a really good doctor."

Emily: Yeah, you have to wonder if he just was like, "I need -- I'm gonna be in some battles. I want someone who at least --" It's like if you got, you know, time-traveled back to --

Sally: Oh my God.

Emily: The year 800 BCE. That seems to be what the Forsaken view this as.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They're like, "All our modern medicine has been replaced by this barbarian witchcraft."
(laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, I can't just go buy a bottle of ibuprofen.

Emily: Yeah, so you have to imagine that Dashiva's, like, thrusting the smallpox vaccine at Dashiva and is like, "Use this if the time comes."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. But yeah, Flinn's a good healer, and he goes to work on Rand's wound and at the end of it is like, "Well, it might still kill him, but I think he has a chance --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Now. And what I have done is seal the darkness away for a little while --"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So it's not attacking him but each other, these two types of darkness, the Shadar Logoth darkness and the Ishamael darkness, I guess.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which, you know, is sort of foreshadowing for how Rand will take care of the, uh, taint on saidin, but.

Sally: Yeah, really Flinn's the hero there.

Emily: Flinn is the fuckin' MVP. Rand's like, "Hey, you -- you know what? Good idea. Pit evil against evil. See who wins." (laugh) That sounds --

Sally: Damer Flinn, you little genius.

Emily: Yeah, that sounds wildly efficient. Way more efficient than anything else in this series.

Sally: Yeah. Let the evils eat each other.

Emily: So Min, like, curls up next to Rand --

Sally: Oh my God.

Emily: And is like, "I can't do anything but be there for him. I'm but a useless woman." (laugh)

Sally: God, she really is, like, doing the most to be the most useless in this chapter --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, of maybe all the chapters she's ever in.

Emily: She's pretty useless throughout. Uh, but yeah, we leave Rand convalescing and with a chance of survival, which we're pretty sure that he'll take since he's the Dragon Reborn, and it's only book seven out of fourteen.

Sally: Okay, but, like, how funny --

Emily: I know.

Sally: Would it have been if Rand was like, "Nothing --"

Emily: I'm telling you, "Weekend at Bernie's" him.

Sally: "Nothing can touch me today. I'm ta'veren." He dies. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) And then he fucking dies. Oh my God.

Sally: Like, could you, like -- the Creator is up there, just like, "LMAO."

Emily: The Creator's like, "Hubris."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "That's what that is."

Sally: "You're dead."

Emily: "You're fuckin' dead."

Sally: Surprise, now Mat's the Dragon Reborn. Mat can suddenly channel.

Emily: God if -- oh, I would not want to do that to Mat. Poor little -- poor little guy.

Sally: Actually, Damer Flinn's now the Dragon Reborn.

Emily: Got me there.

Sally: He's in charge.

Emily: Yeah. But --

Sally: He's just neat, I think.

Emily: Caraline and, um, Darlin, by the way, got sort of swept up --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In the chaos, and Min's like, "Well, hope they're okay." And it's like, they're known rebels.

Sally: Yeah, like --

Emily: I wouldn't trust that they're just okay.

Sally: Yeah. Like, maybe offer them some protection or something.

Emily: But, uh, so we leave that volatile situation just sort of where it is to return to Ebou Dar.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And, you know, spoiler alert, we're mostly going to be in Ebou Dar for the next, uh, little while, with one fairly long chapter left with the Rand crew. And there's a lot to do with the Rand crew.

Sally: I know, for one chapter.

Emily: Um --

Sally: He's gotta kill Sammael and everything.

Emily: Yeah, he's gotta fuckin' kill Sammael, he's gotta wake up and deal with shit. There's a lot going on. But that's that.

Sally: That is that.

Emily: We will be back next week for the exciting climactic sequence in Ebou Dar. Um, thanks for listening. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And our followers on social media. Do you have anything to add?

Sally: No.

Emily: (cough)

Sally: Ooh! (laugh)

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

Sally: Yes. Um.

Emily: Yeah, you told me yesterday that you would have one. This is exciting.

Sally: (laugh) I think -- I thought it was, uh, sort of amusing in the way that lifetime -- small life horrors are amusing.

Emily: Oh, okay.

Sally: Um, I was in therapy yesterday, as I am every week, and we were talking about some tough stuff. We were talking about, specifically, something -- like, I was specifically talking about my mom. And I was crying. And I wasn't crying for anything about my mom, I was crying about something that happened to my mom that really upsets me. Um, and my mom always calls me during therapy. It's, like, this annoying habit of hers to be like, "I have to call during the four or five -- to five o'clock hour on Tuesday."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It's, like, Pavlovian, even though I never answer. So we're nearing the end of my session, and she calls me, and it shows up on my Apple watch --

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And I, like, put my phone down, being -- like, just checking to make sure it wasn't, like, I dunno -- I don't know. I just always check, you know? So I put it down, but I guess I answered on my Apple watch.

Emily: (gasp)

Sally: (laugh) So I was, like, crying, and I was starting to say something about my mom, and my mom was like, “Oh my God, are you okay? Why are you crying?” And I was like, “Ahh!” Hang up on my mom. (laugh) Um. So. It would’ve been fine if she’d heard what I was saying; it would’ve just been a little awkward.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So check your Apple watches, kids. Maybe take them off during therapy.

Emily: Oh my God. (laugh) My lifespan decreased --

Sally: I know, ‘cause it’s like, what if I had been saying something bad? Like, I don’t usually talk shit on my mom.

Emily: Well, but -- (stutter) -- therapy is where you talk shit about people.

Sally: Yeah. Like, that’s my safe space to be like, I’m frustrated with something that happened. That doesn’t mean I don’t love a person. I’m just frustrated, you know?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: That’s why you have a therapist. Sheesh!

Emily: One of the cats is scratching -- hey!

Sally: So anyway. That was my horror.

Emily: (distant) Tybalt, get out. Bastard!

Sally: Tybalt, what are you doing?

Emily: (distant) Scratching my chair. (normal distance) Okay, everyone. Goodbye!