



Episode 183: No Body, No Dead

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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 Glynna Mackenzie plays]

EMILY: Um, this is Everybody Hates Rand.

SALLY: This is not a *Sex and the City* podcast.

EMILY: Although, it is a nice, refreshing twist to not talk about anime and instead talk about *Sex and the City*.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: Similar – it's, like, the Venn diagram of *Sex and the City* and anime [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I can't really picture it, but I know it's there. Um, sorry, this is your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: [strained] I'm Sally Goodger.

EMILY: Just take a gulp of – it's still pretty hot.

SALLY: Yeah, it's a little hotter than I thought it was [laughing] gonna be.

EMILY: I've just been sipping at the whipped cream leavings. Now, uh, we did talk quite a bit last week, and I had to cut all this out, about this particular moment in *Crown of Swords*.

SALLY: Oh right, right.

EMILY: We had a long discussion about it, but that was a super long episode. So, I took notes.

SALLY: Oh, excellent!

EMILY: And [laughing] they're pretty bad.

SALLY: I'm so excited.

EMILY: Here were the three notes I took that I cut – of stuff I cut out. “Weird reading experience, parentheses, *Crown of Swords* is relatively fast paced but we've been reading it for months.”

SALLY: Right, right, right.

EMILY: So basically we were talking about how *Crown of Swords* is one of the shortest Wheely Time books, and it takes place over ten to eleven days.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, theoretically, if you're the type of person who binge reads long books like these, you'd probably get through this one super fast, but weird that we've been reading it over months. It makes it all feel drawn out.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, I might have to go spray Ed in a minute.

SALLY: [giggling]

EMILY: Uh, I wrote, “Rand kills Sammael by revamping his Rahvin murder plan, parentheses, kind of disappointing, what with all the build-up” [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] It is.

EMILY: And we'll talk about that more in a minute. And then I wrote, "Hilarious knowing Sammael's gonna beef it at the end" [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Which I think we were just talking about how Sammael doing chaos with the Aiel –

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Was just, like, prime dramatic irony knowing he's gonna be dead withing 48 hours or whatever.

SALLY: Yeah. He's like, "Ha ha ha, look at me sowing the seeds of chaos." Doing a little caper dance.

EMILY: Yeah, and just all of *Crown of Swords* where he's, like, doing nefarious shit.

SALLY: Yeah, and it's, like, Imfao you get killed by fog [laughs]. Stupid bitch.

EMILY: Um, quite a drawn-out process, though.

SALLY: Yeah, it also would be, like, more funny to me if it wasn't juxtaposed with everything going on with Liah.

EMILY: Oh yeah.

SALLY: At the moment.

EMILY: We have to throw in a whole lot more Rand feeling guilty about killing women into this chapter. Which is, I think, probably why – I was reading this, and it is very similar to the ending of *Fire – Fires of Heaven* in terms of...literal maneuvers, I guess I should say.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Rand enters a city that's being held by one of the male Forsaken, because only the male Forsaken conquer cities. It is not up to women to hold leadership positions.

SALLY: [sighs, groans]

EMILY: But, Rand enters a city with a large group of his followers and disperse – there's fighting that takes place, uh, amongst his followers. Not amongst his followers, but between his followers and the Forsaken's followers while he himself goes off to assassinate whoever. And thus commences a fight of the Power, generally ending in whichever bad guy's demise. So, that's very similar, but I consider that *Fires of Heaven* climax to be really good.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And this one to be really lackluster.

SALLY: Yeah, it definitely doesn't hold up.

EMILY: And I think that's partly because it's so similar. It kind of just feels like we're retreading old ground. The big difference between what happens here and what happens at the end of *Fires of Heaven* is that, uh, *Fires of Heaven*, though technically not impromptu, is relatively impromptu.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They only plan for it about 24 hours in advance. When they find out that Morgase is quote unquote dead. Rand is like, "Okay, we're just going tomorrow."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But it is made more impromptu by a lot of upsetting, unrelated things happening right before they go there, I guess?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So it's like Moiraine's dead, but then it's like we still have to go kill Rahvin.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: You know that's...

SALLY: That sucks!

EMILY: Um with Sammael there has definitely been a lot of planning going into this. Uh, the way Rand behaves and the way generally everything pans out, it seems that this is the original plan coming to fruition though without Mat spearheading the armies in Illian. Which I guess was his original – supposed to be his original position, presumably because [pause] Mat or Perrin being in charge of the armies attacking Illian directly would have drawn out Sammael more. Which we don't talk about enough, is that Mat and Perrin were supposed to essentially be bait.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Uh, which I think Mat would have understood. I don't know if Perrin was ever clued into that.

SALLY: Yeah. Perrin was just like, "No, I'm not fucking going to Illian."

EMILY: Yeah, which good for Perrin.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs]. Yeah, but Mat would have been like, “I get it, strategically. I don’t like it, but I do, like, understand.”

EMILY: But it was, like, a plan he made with Bashere. Um, so this is obviously very well planned, but it pans out the exact same way just in terms of structure. The only difference is that we’re being sort of told, without being shown, that this has all been in the works. I don’t really know how to talk about this rationally, because it makes it sound like I’m saying, “Robert Jordan you need to dumb things down for your readers.” But I really do not like how the last two books, since this has been in the works since the beginning of, uh, *Lord of Chaos*. I don’t like how the last two books have been just kind of like frequently telling us there’s a plan that’s going to be in motion, without telling us what the plan is.

SALLY: Yeah. I think you can compare this to – I mean, it’s basically kind of functioning on a heist structure, right?

EMILY: Exactly, yeah.

SALLY: Where we know a plan is happening, but, like, the whole point of it is that the reader isn’t keyed into the keystone of the plan, basically until, like, the last minute. So you get bits and pieces of it and then at end you’re supposed to be able to put it together. I feel like I’ve gotten a ton of bits and pieces, but I can’t put it together.

EMILY: Yeah, I’ve had no idea what’s going on for the last two books.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: In Illian.

SALLY: Yeah, so it’s just, like, not fun the way *Ocean’s Eleven* is when Danny Ocean rolls up or whatever and is like, “Gotcha, bitch.”

EMILY: It’s also not fun because, as I’ve just said repeatedly, we’re not exactly breaking new ground here, Copernicus. Like –

SALLY: Yeah, like, the image of Rand opening the gateway into the main square of Illian –

EMILY: Exactly the same.

SALLY: Like, it’s cool, it kicks ass, but then you’re like, “We did this in Caemlyn, like, mmm, three months ago.” Like, I guess if it ain’t broke don’t fix it, but like – [laughs].

EMILY: I mean, it worked, bruh, but then why not just have Rand say, “We’re just gonna do what fucking worked, but this time I’m gonna put a little more thought into it to prevent loss of life.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which seems to have sort of been his idea. He's very, um, cavalier about the loss of life in terms of his armies over actually attacking Illian.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But he is like, "When I take Illian, the city, that's going to be with zero loss of life except for Sammael." And he seems to pretty much have accomplished that.

SALLY: Yeah, it is also frustrating because I feel like this plan didn't need as big or as complicated a distraction as Rand made it to be.

EMILY: Two full books of people moving slowly over to Illian to attack some forts.

SALLY: Yeah. Like, why?

EMILY: I get this book took place over ten days. I do get that, but we're talking about page length here.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Not time.

SALLY: There's also that, like, cognitive dissonance of like, okay ten is – ten days plus, I don't know, maybe a couple weeks in *Lord of Chaos*. I don't know the timeline for *Lord of Chaos*, but let's be – let's shoot like a month and a half or whatever.

EMILY: I also feel like, and this is kind of nitpicky, so sorry. I just want to say it right off the bat. But I feel like we have been told over and over that Sammael's one major trait is that he's a master tactician, and the bitch is stupid as fuck.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: He just fell for the oldest trick in the book: misdirection.

SALLY: Yeah [laughing].

EMILY: In what way was he at all, like, good at defending his position here? It was so easy.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah. I think another thing that isn't very satisfying is that at least with the fight with Rahvin, like, Rand and Rahvin are really giving each other a run for their money. Like, Rahvin is holding his own in that fight.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Which is part of what makes it, like, really scary.

EMILY: Yeah!

SALLY: When Nynaeve and Moghedien are watching it they're like, "Holy shit, holy shit, holy shit, holy shit."

EMILY: It's so freaky, yeah.

SALLY: But I feel like Sammael gets just, like, one hit on Rand, at the ankles. [laughing] And that's it!

EMILY: At the Achilles heel no less.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Yeah, Rand gets kind of fucked up, but it seems less to do with Sammael directly than just the circumstances generally.

SALLY: Yeah, like he's not – Rand's still sick from this big wound that he got.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: So he just gets a couple bangs and bonks and he's like, "Oh, it's just hard to deal with it because I'm already not at full strength."

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: But it's not like Sammael ever lands a hit on him. It's not like Sammael's really using – he's just using big lightning.

EMILY: I also – this absolutely kills me. There was no reason for them to be in Shadar Logoth [laughing].

SALLY: Oh, I know! Like why didn't Rand just, like, murder – except for Liah. Except for Liah. Which, like, why does she even need to be here.

EMILY: Well, like narratively, yeah, I guess there's – and for Moridin?

SALLY: I know [laughs].

EMILY: Like, narratively, I can think of a million reasons why Robert Jordan was like, "I want this big set piece to happen in Shadar Logoth." But literally Sammael's like, "Hey, let's not fight in Illian."

SALLY: Yeah. "I won't let you destroy my prize," or whatever.

EMILY: “I won’t let you destroy my city. I’m gonna choose a new battleground.” And he chooses Shadar Logoth, the place with sentient murder mist.

SALLY: I know. He’s like, “This will be fun, right?”

EMILY: He’s like, “This will be – ”

SALLY: I’m a – I’m a military genius.

EMILY: I’m a military genius!

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: As Sun fucking Tzu said [laughing], “One of the most important things is choosing your ground.” And Sammael’s like, “I want the ground that’s covered in murdered mist!”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [wheezing] “That sounds like the best plan!”

SALLY: [laughs] ARGH!

EMILY: How stupid can you be?!

SALLY: I know. Like, *sir*. *Sir*. What are you doing?

EMILY: I just, like, there are so many other places you can go. If I were Sammael – and I’m glad I’m not, because the bitch is dead – but, if I were Sammael I would just immediately teleport to, like, the Two Rivers.

SALLY: Yeah. Be like, “We’ll destroy your ground. Ha ha ha!”

EMILY: Yeah. “Let’s enjoy this instead. I’m gonna murder your family and friends.” [pause] I mean, I don’t know if all his family – Perrin’s not there. Fucking –

SALLY: Does Rand have any friends?

EMILY: Yeah, he doesn’t really, but, like, presumably there would at least be an emotional toll.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Rand would be a lot more hesitant about doing big things like balefire.

SALLY: Oh, I know – just, like, the balefire sidebar. Rand has one moment where he’s like, “Cadsuane told me balefire is bad. Maybe I shouldn’t do balefire.”

EMILY: Moiraine also told you balefire's bad. Actually, literally everyone, since its inception, has been telling you that balefire is bad.

SALLY: The voice in your head –

EMILY: Lews Therin.

SALLY: Is like, "Don't do balefire." And Rand's like, "Oh, but it's easy."

EMILY: But Cadsuane slapped me and therefore...

SALLY: And therefore, I have to because I have oppositional defiance disorder [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] AHHH! So, anyway, Rands' out here balefiring Shadar Logoth.

EMILY: [clears throat, groans] Yeah, to give you, like, a plot summary. We haven't really – we've sort of danced around this.

SALLY: Well, what's the plot, really? If you've read *Fires of Heaven* you know.

EMILY: Yeah, you pretty much don't need much here. Rand, uh, wakes up after having some gnarly sick dreams. It's been two days that he's been unconscious. He wakes up with Min protecting his fragile egg head, uh, with Cadsuane and a couple of her Aes Sedai on one side of the bed, Amys and a couple of her Aes Sedai on her side of the bed. And they all seem to be facing off with, uh, the Asha'man. Including Adley, who, at the very beginning of this book when Rand went on his errand's three, uh, he dropped off somewhere. On mysterious errands, which, uh, I guess we should have been able to surmise, and maybe did at the time of reading, but that was three months ago, were all related to the eventual attack on Sammael.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So Rand, uh, obviously understands, "Okay, this is our sort of green flag go. If Adley's back here reporting then that means things are in place, regardless of how I personally feel." He obviously doesn't say that. He is like, "Okay, I need to do things. Everyone leave." They're like, "We're not leaving, you're still sick." He's naked. Gets out of bed –

SALLY: *Why* is he naked is my question?

EMILY: I know. I don't know why people always take sick people's clothes all the way off.

SALLY: What are you doing?

EMILY: Yeah, it's only been two days. I understand that after, maybe, a few days in a coma you'd be like, "I don't want" – it is part of this person's care to –

SALLY: Yeah, change their clothes and keep them clean.

EMILY: Yeah, but full nudity?

SALLY: Put him in, like, a little sleeping dress. They have those.

EMILY: A little night dress. That would have been so charming.

SALLY: Yeah, a little –

EMILY: Like Ebenezer Scrooge [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] Rand rolls out of bed.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: With one of those little caps on, too. Excellent.

EMILY: [laughing] He's like, "What year is it?!"

SALLY: Um, so Rand is like, "Get the fuck out." He stands up, naked.

EMILY: And everyone immediately comments on his body, because –

SALLY: Because we can't let Rand just exist without harassing him.

EMILY: More to the point, Robert Jordan is so biblically afraid of nudity that he cannot let it pass by without someone commenting on it. Despite having created multiple cultures that do not care for nudity. It's like he wrote in the nudity phobia into all of his main characters specifically so that every time someone's naked he could be like, "But they're naked!"

SALLY: Rand is has – is naked. Cadsuane sees his bum.

EMILY: Oh darn.

SALLY: Oh *shoot*!

EMILY: It's a bum. We don't really need to talk about it.

SALLY: Yeah. Ugh.

EMILY: But he requests that everyone but the Asha'man leave and, in a surprising show, they do.

SALLY: Yeah seriously.

EMILY: Surprising for two reasons. One, the Aes Sedai all themselves have oppositional defiance disorder.

SALLY: Correct [laughs].

EMILY: Do don't know why they would ever do something Rand asks. Second of all, we are dealing with Rand al'Thor, the teleporting lunatic.

SALLY: I KNOW! [laughing] I know! They're like, "Don't fucking go anywhere!"

EMILY: "Don't go anywhere." And he's like [sing song], "I won't!"

SALLY: Fingers crossed behind his back [laughs].

EMILY: He's like –

SALLY: [mocking voice], "Oooh, I promise I won't!"

EMILY: He's like a little boy. Whoopsie!

SALLY: [laughs] Oopsie daisy! How did this happen again?

EMILY: Someone needs to take away the guy's teleporting rights.

SALLY: I know. They're all like, "You stay here!" And he's like, "Okay." And they believe him.

EMILY: Why would you believe him?!

SALLY: This is only the 97th time he's disappeared in the night.

EMILY: So fucking stupid.

SALLY: To do shit like try to end a rebellion by himself. AHHH!

EMILY: I hate this motherfucker.

SALLY: Also, this man just got kidnapped, like, two weeks ago.

EMILY: Yeah, there is zero discussion about that. He's like, "How am I alive?" And Cadsuane's like, "These multiple people healed you. They've done amazing things." Rand's like, "Great, thanks." No, like, follow up. Like, did anyone catch Padan Fain?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: What happened to, um, the leaders of the rebellion?

SALLY: Yeah, where's Darlin and –

EMILY: Caraline.

SALLY: Caraline?

EMILY: Anything like that. He's just like, "Go, go, go." And it's, like, buddy I think you can wait a half hour to invade Illian.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: This has been going on already for twenty-four hours at least.

SALLY: And, also, when I'm referencing kidnapping, Dumai's Wells did not happen that long ago. So why are they not more, like, you will have security personnel?

EMILY: Yeah. So stupid.

SALLY: So, anyway. In a *huge* shock, as soon as they all leave and Rand gets dressed, everyone teleports to Caemlyn to pick up Bashere and his 9,000 horse boys.

EMILY: Yeah, Rand's like, "Okay, time to go. Adley, report." And Adley's like, "Yeah, I've been hanging out in Illian [mumbled] apparently. Like, we arrived at our destination." Which was these particular forts. And Rand's like, "That's much sooner than it should have been." And Rand's like, "Yeah, it's because High Lord Weiramon," who is in charge because Mat nor Perrin could be found slash bothered.

SALLY: Um, in charge because Rand kicked Mat out of the plan!

EMILY: I know. Rand talks about, um, having dreams about begging Mat to find Elayne and arguing with Perrin, his two last encounters with either of them.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, which you might think, "Oh, here's a sh – here's a sign that Rand feels guilty about these things." Except that...there's nothing like the level of angst that Rand displays for literally any female character.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Liah, a barely named character.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Gets so much more angst than Mat or Perrin, who Rand has directly put in harm's way.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, so that's just annoying. Like.

SALLY: Yeah, it's so stupid because – especially because they arrived much sooner because Weiramon ditched all of his foot soldiers to take just the calvary to do this, and luckily the Aiel are able to keep up with horses – which is insane by the way.

EMILY: Yeah, I know. Fucking, the Aiel.

SALLY: So they have a reasonably sized army when they get attacked by 9,000 Shaido that [laughing] have been randomly teleported.

EMILY: Oh yeah! Adley's like, "Oh, and we ran into some Shaido. It was supe weird. Didn't really slow us down, but." And everyone just skips right over that.

SALLY: Yeah, they're like, "Uh, well."

EMILY: "Whatever."

SALLY: "What are you gonna do?"

EMILY: No one was like, "Shaido in *Illian*?"

SALLY: Yeah. Where did they come from?

EMILY: Thousands of Shaido in *Illian*?

SALLY: Yeah, and none of the scouts caught it or anything?

EMILY: Yeah, it's not like Mat – Rand pulls down a mat, *Emperor's New Groove* style, and is like, "It doesn't make sense?"

SALLY: It doesn't make any sense.

EMILY: By all accounts.

SALLY: Yeah. So that is all happening. And, like, yeah thank god the Aiel are able to keep up because Weiramon ditches most of his army because he has some weird, nobleman's [laughs] disdain for foot soldiers.

EMILY: Yeah, we've been introduced to this in the f – in the past.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And it goes back to, like, pretty much all armies, only rich people get to ride horses because –

SALLY: Only rich people have horses.

EMILY: Can afford horses, yeah. So, you get your patricians are calvary and plebians are infantry, etc. etc. So there's class warfare going on there, and Weiramon is a class dick, so.

SALLY: Yeah. And Rand's like, "Ah, damn! This nobleman and his stupid military choices." And I'm like, "It's because you kicked your military genius out of the party."

EMILY: Yeah!

SALLY: Mat was –

EMILY: You should have sent Weiramon to pick up Elayne.

SALLY: Could you imagine? [laughing]

EMILY: It would have been so funny. They would have been like, "Get fucked" to Weiramon. And I would have been like, "Okay."

SALLY: Okay. This is a much more satisfying plot.

EMILY: This is much more satisfying.

SALLY: So, anyway, that is another part of why I think I find this all so unsatisfying, is Rand has completely mismanaged the plan, and yet somehow it still works.

EMILY: Yeah. It feels like there are no consequences for his actions.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, he's still just going through with all of it despite the fact that the odds are stacked against him. He has done a lot of poor planning in some aspects of it.

SALLY: It's very bad project management.

EMILY: Yes.

SALLY: Failing upward.

EMILY: He's a super bad manager. Of people. But Adley tells us that after a little while, of attacking these forts, and he and Eben, I think, are the two that are there.

SALLY: Eben!

EMILY: It's him, Eben, and Fedwin Morr. I think Morr is in Andor. Uh, but he and Eben were obviously channeling in the hopes of getting Sammael to come out, and eventually he did. Adley's like, "It was, like, I mean he's very powerful."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: He like [laughs], he's got a singed sleeve. He's like, "I mean, fucking barely missed us with some fireballs."

SALLY: Uhhh!

EMILY: But Rand's like, "Okay, great. Everything's going according to plan." Except he doesn't actually say that, he just goes on to the next thing, so we the readers are just like, "Is everything going according to plan?"

SALLY: It's literally impossible to say.

EMILY: I guess we'll just find out.

SALLY: We don't have a fun Kaz Brekker moment at the end where all the pieces come together.

EMILY: Yeah. Uh, Min volunteers to be a distraction so they can leave. Which...girl.

SALLY: Girl you are [laughs] a gender traitor.

EMILY: Yeah. If I were the Maidens I would be like, "You're exiled" [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah. You are exiled. You are banned.

EMILY: Cause clearly you are not able to look out for this man's safety.

SALLY: I know! [pause] Like Min being like –

EMILY: Min saw him stabbed two days ago and is like, "I'm gonna go let him do his thing – " Not to be like, "Women have to be naggy and overprotective wuh duh duh duh duh."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I get Min's being kind of a cool girl here.

SALLY: That's exactly –

EMILY: Letting Rand go off on his boys' night

SALLY: That's exactly what she's doing.

EMILY: But, um, [pause] hey, what? It makes no sense.

SALLY: Yeah. It's just, like –

EMILY: She's just, like, dickmatized or something.

SALLY: Ugh. We have yet another instance where Rand is like, "I can't tell the Maidens because they'll want to come." They are your bodyguard.

EMILY: But I don't want women to die. Okay, then you shouldn't have made them your bodyguard.

SALLY: Yeah, what the fuck were you doing, you dumb piece of shit? And it's just, like, now not only are we not letting the female warriors, bodyguards, very competent fighter ladies do their job, we now have brought another woman into that to, like, stop them from doing it. It's just, like, the sexism piling on top of sexism on top of sexism, is getting real old.

EMILY: Yeah, it's annoying.

SALLY: Whatever. She goes off.

EMILY: They teleport to Andor, specifically right to Bashere's camp, uh, where everything is also ready to go because the Asha'man were partly acting as messenger pigeons.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Oh hi, Tybalt. Here to join us?

[a small meow in the background]

SALLY: Um.

EMILY: The Asha'man have been acting as glorified messenger pigeons, so Bashere knows it's time to go. Uh, he tells us he's got 9,000 calvary, Saldaean calvary. And 15,000 men who Mazrim Taim has turned away from the Black Tower.

SALLY: That's *so* many.

EMILY: Which is an *astounding* number, given it's only been a few months? Since the Black Tower's inception.

SALLY: Yeah, so, like, as we've talked about at length before, like, it's a very interesting phenomenon...phenomena? Whatever. Going on that there are, like, all these men that are like,

“I will be tested to see if I’m able to channel,” when up to, like, three months ago it was literally a death sentence and it still is a death sentence in a lot of parts of the world. Just because the Black Tower exists doesn’t mean they’re protecting every male channeler, you know?

EMILY: Yeah, it’s –

SALLY: So there have been 15,000 men, plus everyone who got accepted into the Black Tower, that’s like, “Sure, test me for being able to channel.” What the fuck? That’s just, like, Shaido level incomprehensible numbers to me.

EMILY: Yeah, it’s a major cultural shift that we are not talking about.

SALLY: Yeah. And I get it Rand is [mocking voice] The Dragon Reborn. He makes everything change. Der der der der der. It just feels like we spend so much time on shit like Rand’s fight with the Maidens and we’re not talking about, like, the actual interesting, intricate politics of men being able to channel. Like – whatever, man.

EMILY: And the, like, rationalization of why we’re getting some things and not the others is that we’re seeing through Rand’s eyes, so what we’re seeing are things he cares about versus things he doesn’t care about. And it is *infuriating* that the guy who is our savior of the world cares more about hindering his bodyguards just because they happen to be women, than...I don’t know, the fact that –

[meow]

SALLY: [laughs] You got something to say?

EMILY: Yeah, did you meow right into the microphone?

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: That tons of men are now interested in channeling. Like, wow.

SALLY: Yeah, because it’s like, Rand, you are responsible for those men.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: If those men are...upheaving their lives to come and get tested at your request, basically, then what are you doing for them? Nothing. What Bashere is doing for them, I guess, is turning them into soldier boys.

EMILY: Giving them crossbows and big shields. That’s all Rand, again because he doesn’t care, notices about them. But I care! I want to know what Mat and Bashere cooked up for these guys.

SALLY: I know!

EMILY: Because apparently there was a plan.

SALLY: So, it's just frustrating. It's this like – Rand claims he cares so much about the world and yet he only cares about women.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Like, men are completely disposable to him.

EMILY: [groans]

SALLY: Kind of in the same way we talked about Mat in the last few chapters being like, “Well, because they’re soldiers, death is something they’ve agreed to, basically, so I don’t need to grieve for men.”

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And it’s, like, bestie, that’s not how it works. The loss of human life is tragic no matter –

EMILY: Regardless of one’s gender.

SALLY: Yeah. So, the men are out here being stupid.

EMILY: Rand specifically forbids Bashere’s wife from coming with them. Or any of the wives. Uh, Bashere doesn’t argue, probably because he’s like, “I just want to get to fighting.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, it’s just another Rand being like [gruff voice], “Women won’t die.”

SALLY: [gruff voice] “No women dead on my watch.”

EMILY: And if I were Bashere’s wife I would drop quick him into outer space.

SALLY: Yeah, what if Deira murdered [laughing] Rand al’Thor.

EMILY: That would be appropriate, I think.

SALLY: She’s like, “Actually, the savior of the world is annoying. So I killed him.”

EMILY: “So I am promoting my husband to savior of the world status. Fuck Rand a’Thor.”

SALLY: Yes. Yes.

EMILY: Um, they teleport right into the middle of Illian – Illian the city, not Illian the country. Um, sort of – the armies start coming through, but Rand and his – count ‘em – five, six. Rand and his six Asha’man immediately start dispersing and just sort of channeling at random to trigger all of Sammael’s, uh, wards.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Sammael hasn’t set up traps, uh, specifically designed to attack men who can channel just ones that will warn him if someone is channeling.

[someone hits the table, so a sort of bonking noises]

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, Rand’s idea is, “I’m just going to trigger all of those and then once they’re all triggered, you know, that’s it.” You can’t re-trigger them, so Sammael will just know that there’s a bunch of male channelers, but not where specifically. Uh, they wait for literal hours. It is early afternoon when they get there and it is evening by the time Sammael does show up, with Rand just waiting there with his stabbed side.

SALLY: He’s, like, on top of a tower too or some shit.

EMILY: Yeah, he’s, like, on top of a tower. He feels channeling, Sammael arriving, immediately goes to there, which is good because Sammael blows up where he was standing a second before. Um, and they have a brief, in comparison to the Rahvin fight, fight where it’s just like a couple of salvos.

SALLY: Yeah, in D&D terms, everyone gets, you know [stumbling over the words].

EMILY: One round of combat.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Before Sammael is like, “I don’t want to wreck Illian.”

SALLY: AHH.

EMILY: “So come with me to this other place.”

SALLY: [laughs] “Come with me to the worst possible place for fighting *at nighttime*.”

EMILY: The worst possible terrain. At sundown. And Rand’s like, “Sure, whatever.” He shows up to Shadar Logoth and if I were Rand I would have started laughing. Like [laughing], “Are you kidding me? You dumbass.”

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, just leave. The city will kill him without me interfering at all.

EMILY: Yeah, just be like, “Bitch. Have fun.”

SALLY: “Good luck.”

EMILY: Um, but Rand starts kind of wandering through the city. He eventually finds out that there are Trollocs and Myrddraal in the city, presumably the reason Sammael wanted to bring Rand here, if we’re being generous, is that he’d set up some sort of ambush with Trollocs and Myrddraal. But as a reminder this map is just full of blank, unpopulated space.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Where Sammael could have, uh, done this. So.

SALLY: Yes. Like.

EMILY: That isn’t full of murder fog.

SALLY: Idiot bitch [laughs]. Bitch idiot.

EMILY: Bitch idiot. Uh, he also stumbles into Liah who, midway through, uhhhhh. Sorry, couldn’t remember the name of the book for a minute, midway through *Lord of Chaos*, when Rand came to Shadar Logoth with the Ogier and the Maidens, they lost Liah and she was presumed dead. Apparently, she has just been living here for the last few months?

SALLY: I – I’m very confused about this.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Because I have several questions. Why not just leave? If there’s something in the city preventing you from leaving, like, if the fog is causing issues, what are you eating?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: How are you – how?

EMILY: What? Is she, like, meant to be a hallucination?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Is she meant to be, like, a projection of Shadar Logoth, like a sentient, you know, sock puppet type thing? We’ll never know.

SALLY: None of it makes any sense.

EMILY: There are no answers. Anyway, uh.

SALLY: It's not adding up.

EMILY: Rand runs through the city a bit. Liah disappears, he runs straight into some Trollocs and Myddraal who he fights with, uh, a sword made out of magic that causes Sammael to bombard the area with lightning. Kind of pockmarking craters into the ground. Rand accidentally falls into one of these and is dangling by his hand when who should appear but a tall handsome man who helps him out of the pit. And, besties, I have a controversial opinion: Rand has more sexual chemistry with Moridin than [laughing] any of his female –

SALLY: Oh, I agree.

EMILY: I was like, "I want these two to talk."

SALLY: I know.

EMILY: Moridin's the most interesting part of these chapters.

SALLY: I agree. Like, I – it's honestly a little bit unfortunate that it turns out to be Moridin and not like –

EMILY: Just a random dude.

SALLY: Yeah, just a random dude who's been really good at channeling but has evaded everybody and it's like, "Who's this fun new sexy character?"

EMILY: Oh, I'm gonna be your new mentor, you know? Duh duh duh duh duh.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: No, he's just like – Moridin was apparently watching, the way he's always watching Sammael.

SALLY: Like a stalker.

EMILY: And was like, "Fuck, I can't let the Dragon Reborn die by dying – by falling in a hole."

SALLY: He was like, "This is pathetic. Both of you are having a really pathetic showing here."

EMILY: This is awful.

SALLY: As a gay man, I'm embarrassed for you [laughs].

EMILY: What the fuck?! So he pulls Rand out and, I don't know, it's just, like – they just have a very natural conversation for two people who don't know each other and, like, Rand is in the

middle of fighting Sammael. It doesn't seem to occur to Rand that, like, Sammael could channel to make himself look differently.

SALLY: I know.

EMILY: Or anything duh duh duh duh duh like that.

SALLY: He just, like, trusts him. He's so handsome!

EMILY: He's just a handsome, tall man. [laughs] He's so tall I trust him!

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: He's as tall as me! This is rare.

SALLY: Tall people can't just lie. You think there just out here being hot and lying? [laughs]

EMILY: You think people can be tall and lie?

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And Moridin is, like, acting so normally to his literal nemesis?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I don't know. It's just, like, an interesting dynamic and it's pretty frustrating that we don't get the two of them, like, sitting down and chatting until, uh, Book 14, at which point Rand has progressed to his full enlightened, "I am the avatar of God," sort of persona and Moridin has more or less become an avatar for the Dark One. These two just people, men, who are sort of representing big forces outside of their control are really interesting.

SALLY: No, I agree. I love this little, this little cameo. Especially where he was just like, "You're an idiot."

EMILY: Yeah he's just like, "Hey, dummy. Don't you know shit about Sammael? He'll want to murder you somewhere where, you know, you had an achievement."

SALLY: Sammael is so annoying.

EMILY: I know.

SALLY: Everyone's like, "We're able to beat Sammael because these are the things we know about him. If we try to take something that's his, he'll throw a hissy fit and also, if he wants to kill you, he'll want to do it somewhere symbolic."

EMILY: He's a toddler.

SALLY: [laughs] Like, he's so dumb.

EMILY: He's a total dummy. Wow. Um.

SALLY: But tragically Moridin isn't with us for very long. Although, they do balefire each other's balefire and that cause some type of –

EMILY: Yeah, they both attempt to balefire, uh, at the sentient – at Mashadar, but it opposite directions.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Kind of like shooting over each other's heads to, like, get something behind the other guy. But these streams of balefire cross. Don't cross the streams and that creates some type of mind-meldy moment.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which, uh, will become very relevant at the very end of this book, but is sort of sadly left to fizzle until it becomes relevant at the very end of the series. But Rand is like, "Oh, duh. Sammael of course will be hanging around outside the Waygate, because that's one of my achievements?" Uh, okay.

SALLY: Um.

EMILY: By the loosest definition, sure. I would say it's the Ogier's achievements.

SALLY: Yeah, I was like who – okay, colonizer. Like, come on. Gotta take credit for everything?

EMILY: But Rand gets a vantage point looking down on this, like, square where the Waygate is. He spots Sammael and is about to snipe him with balefire, ignoring everyone's warnings.

SALLY: [laughs] Including the – the horror that just happened when two hit – streams of balefire hit each other.

EMILY: He was like, "Oh, that wasn't weird at all. I just keep doing it."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: It's like buddy.

SALLY: [laughing] I hate you.

EMILY: He's getting ready to do that when Liah reappears. Deus ex Liah.

SALLY: AH!

EMILY: Um, and all she does is sort of stand on a high point while Mashadar starts to eat her.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Rand is like, “Oh no. I have to mercy kill a woman.”

SALLY: Again!

EMILY: Again! So, he balefires her so that she stops existing [dramatic voice] before her agony even started.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] Stupid. He looks away from Sammael and when he looks back all of the, like, mist is in the square and there’s no sign of Sammael. So he’s like, “Of course Sammael is dead.” And we, the readers, are like, “This seems like a really obvious no body, not dead.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: No body, no dead!

SALLY: No body. No dead.

EMILY: He’s gotta be alive somewhere.

SALLY: I’ve seen *Lord of the Rings*.

EMILY: Yeah, obviously. Yeah.

SALLY: Gandalf comes back, bitch.

EMILY: Gandalf comes back! Yeah, so Rand’s like, “Sammael’s dead.” And I guess Robert – my guess is that [laughing] Robert Jordan was like, “I’m going to leave it ambiguous in case I want to bring Sammael back?”

SALLY: Ugh.

EMILY: Like Liah, apparently, because people can just live in Shadar Logoth. [laughing] These totally happy existences.

SALLY: There’s actually just a Target [laughing] down the street. You can just set up in the Shadar Logoth Target. It’s fine.

EMILY: Yeah, Shadar Logoth is a lot like Brooklyn.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Very unwelcoming to strangers, but you can live there.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, but Rand's like, "Whatever. If Sammael was alive he would have killed me by now. So, he's dead." And Robert Jordan's like, "Yeah, I will not go back on that so he is dead."

SALLY: So Sammael was killed by the murder fog.

EMILY: Yeah, that means that, from Sammael's point of view – and there might have been some, like, balefire mechanics going on here. Like, Rand did something with balefire and so things happened faster. Uh, but that also feels like a copout because, as you'll recall, Mat and Aviendha and Asmodean all got resurrected because of Rand's use of balefire eliminating Rahvin from existence.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So that's tough. Uh, but, yeah, Sammael's just dead. RIP.

SALLY: That was easy.

EMILY: That was –

SALLY: Staples.

EMILY: A lot easier than the three books of lead up led me to believe it would be.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Rand stumbles back to Illian, where Bashere of course greets him cockily. He's like, "Heyyy."

SALLY: "Hey, it's me."

EMILY: "Took the city. It was surprisingly easy." And Rand's like, "Yeah. Just like this entire plot."

SALLY: [snorts]

EMILY: Bashere's like, "Here's the council of what is usually nine but now is eight, because Sammael was masquerading as the ninth guy." And they're all like, "Hey, do you want to be king of Illian?" And Rand's like, "I mean, what happened to the normal king?" And they're like,

“Well, he disappeared two days ago,” which is surprising, because everyone, I think, thought he’d been disappeared quite a while ago.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I would have assumed.

SALLY: [clears throat]

EMILY: But apparently he’d been under Sammael’s thumb until Sammael got distracted in the last month or so, causing mischief in various parts of the globe. Honestly it didn’t seem like it was taking up that much of his time, so I don’t know why he couldn’t multitask.

SALLY: He’s also a bad project manager.

EMILY: Sammael sucks at *everything*.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: That’s my hot take, which is real sad for the short king representation.

SALLY: I know.

EMILY: We have to rely on Talmanes entirely. He’s carrying that on his back.

SALLY: We’ve got a couple short kings. Got Bashere.

EMILY: Oh yeah, Bashere.

SALLY: We’ve got Rodel Ituralde.

EMILY: You’re right.

SALLY: Who rolls in with a velvet beauty mark on his face.

EMILY: Stop.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Ituralde, Bashere, Talmanes – ideal threesome [laughs].

SALLY: AH! [laughs] I agree. They’re all so hot.

EMILY: [sighs] God. Um.

SALLY: Yeah, but as far as short king representation in the Forsaken.

EMILY: In the Forsaken specifically, yeah. Sammael beefed it.

SALLY: [snorts] Absolute piece of shit.

EMILY: Loser!

SALLY: [laughs] Loser! You're short and you're a loser.

EMILY: You're short and you suck at battles! The one thing you're supposed to be good at. You suck at. Uh, but the king disappeared. I think he turns out to be alive somewhere, but I could be wrong about that.

SALLY: That's not surprising.

EMILY: I think he, like, ends up in the White Tower or something.

SALLY: Wh – of course he does. Robert Jordan refuses to kill people, except Sammael.

EMILY: I know. It's so annoying. Rand's like, "Okay, cool. I'll be king of Illian." Oh my god. I forgot the most hilarious part which is that Rand comes back and is like, "Sammael's dead." And he says, "Dashiva sighs in relief." And remember Dashiva is himself [laughing] one of the Forsaken.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: [laughing] So is Dashiva like, "Thank fuck that guy's gone. I fucking hated him." Or was Rand misconstruing his sigh of relief as a sigh of, like, "God I fu– stupid idiot."

SALLY: "Stupid. He keeps killing my coworkers."

EMILY: Another one down. Another one bites the dust.

SALLY: He's like, "Sammael is dumb" [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs]. I know. Dashiva's just like, "At least –"

SALLY: "I've literally been in Rand's room while he's sickly and dying."

EMILY: Yeah. Dashiva's like, "Ranking my coworkers [laughs] from least competent."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: "To most competent. Sammael's at the fucking bottom of the list."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But Rand accepts the crown of Illian, uh, but we leave right there kind of – not, like, a big cliffhanger. Cliffhanger in terms of Mat, for sure. We're leaving Mat –

SALLY: Is he dead?

EMILY: Yeah. Is Mat dead? Is Mat alive? Who knows? Um, we're leaving Rand at the tail end of another world-conquering accomplishment, but he does have a lot of major shit to deal with, interpersonally if nothing else.

SALLY: Yeah, we also get an annoying little...like –

EMILY: [dramatic voice] Word spread, everyone –

SALLY: Omniscient thing at the end. Yeah.

EMILY: No one knew what was happening and everyone conflated what happened in Illian with what happened in Ebou Dar, so blah blah blah blah blah. And it's like okay.

SALLY: You can't trust the news?! What?

EMILY: Shocking. But hey you all.

SALLY: News has bias? What?

EMILY: That was *The Crown of Swords*.

SALLY: That was *The Crown of – A Crown of Swords*.

EMILY: Yeah we finally –

SALLY: Which bothers me, because why isn't it called *The Crown of Swords*, which is what they literally call the crown at the end of the book.

EMILY: Yeah, they're like –

SALLY: It's called *A Crown of Swords*.

EMILY: It's usually the Laurel Crown, but it has some little swords in it so now it's called The Crown of Swords.

SALLY: So why isn't the book *The Crown of Swords*? The next book is *The Path of Daggers*.

EMILY: The next book should have been *A Crown of Swords*, the second one.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] And then another crown of swords.

SALLY: Too Crown, Too Swords [laughs].

EMILY: Too Crown, Too Swords!

SALLY: [laughing] Tokyo Drift.

EMILY: Oh god. I wish every series would use the naming convention of the *Fast & Furious* movies. No one had done it as good as they did.

SALLY: I make that joke all the time. Literally, someone will be like, “What if there was a sequel?” [laughing] And I’ll just be like, “Too Crown, Too Sword.”

EMILY: Yeah, it never stops being funny.

SALLY: Because it’s perfect. It’s the perfect name for a sequel.

EMILY: [sighs]

SALLY: Like, truly no one is doing it as good as the *Fast & Furious* franchise.

EMILY: In all regards [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] Ugh.

EMILY: How many swords would you rate this crown?

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: How many swords? Okay. Ummm, I – how many swords, total, are we going out of?

EMILY: Ten.

SALLY: Ten? I think I would give it...six out of ten swords.

EMILY: That’s how many I was gonna give it.

SALLY: Nice, nice, nice, nice.

EMILY: Six out of ten swords.

SALLY: Yeah, there are some real highs in this book.

EMILY: But also some real lows.

SALLY: Some real lows.

EMILY: Some real gnarly stuff about, um, abuse of power, sexual assault, misogyny.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Just a lot of gnarly stuff. But, um, it does have some banging moments, so.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, in some ways this book fucks. In other ways, it fucking sucks.

SALLY: Yeah, I agree. There, there – yeah. Six out of ten swords.

EMILY: Okay, well.

SALLY: We did it! Elle Woods voice, throws cap.

EMILY: Aw! We did it.

SALLY: I haven't watched *Legally Blonde* in a long time.

EMILY: Oh, let's do it. Hey, thanks for listening.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Thanks for sticking with us through season seven!

SALLY: Season seven!

EMILY: Um, thank you Glynna Mackenzie for our theme song, to our Patrons on Patreon, um, and to our followers on social media.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: We will be back in, uh, three weeks' time.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: As in the next two weeks will be – there will be no new EHR episode in your podcast player. Um, content on Patreon will also be delayed due to the holiday break. Please forgive us for that, but we will be spending some time with family and friends. Um, do you have anything to add?

SALLY: Um, no! I just hope that everyone has a really happy holiday season. Um, if you are celebrating holidays this winter season, um, uh-huh and if not, I hope you just have a really nice winter time wherever you are. Drink some hot cocoa.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Unless you're in the southern hemisphere and then it will be hot, so.

EMILY: Then drink some, like, nice cool soda. A pina colada or something.

SALLY: Ooh! A pina colada! If you –

BOTH: [singing] Like pina coladas.

EMILY: We're so annoying.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Not as annoying as Sammael, but pretty annoying. Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: Um, this will be my Christmas signoff, but my three year old nephew calls Santa "Ho Ho."

BOTH: [laugh]

SALLY: And it's just, like, the funniest thing in the world to me. Cause he'll be like, "Sally, Ho Ho is coming [laughs]."

EMILY: You really weaponized that against me. The other day I woke up with a lot of fluff on me.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And it was, I think, from a tissue. Like, I had a box of tissues next to my bed and, whatever, one of the tissues had some fluff in it. And I was like, "I just had a really weird night. I woke up with a bunch of fluff on it." And Sally said, looked me dead in the eyes, and said, "Maybe Ho Ho visited you last night."

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: It was so mean [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] Oh, I love it so much. So go rejoice, it's Ho Ho season.

EMILY: [laughs] Have a good one, guys. Buh-bye.

SALLY: Bye!

EMILY: