



Episode 188: How Not to Win a Guy in Ten Days

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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, stop 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. "Everybody," in this context, refers to us and our cats. You are free to feel however you want about Rand. He's a fictional character. Please don't DM us.

(theme song by Glynn MacKenzie plays)

Emily: Six fifty-five.

Sally: Okay.

Emily: We'll just stop, no matter where we are, no matter what's happening.

Sally: 'Kay.

Emily: We're done.

Sally: We are – I'm done. Put a fork in me.

Emily: (laugh) No.

Sally: No, put a fork in this bitch.

Emily: Um, in the interest of saving time, this is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sally Goodger. And if you are a representative of the company Pedialyte, please contact me – (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Financial compensation.

Sally: Because I think I would be a very good sponsor for you.

Emily: Oh, sponsor. Um, I was just checking that these are, in fact, the only Perrin and Faile chapters in this book. Which is so wild to me, 'cause it's Perrin on the cover.

Sally: Yeah, it's a real fake-out.

Emily: And as a Patreon – a Patreon patron noted – I'm sorry, I forgot who – that guy on the cover is probably Balwer, the one who we couldn't figure out who it was.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The fucking old-ass brown cloak –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Balding man.

Sally: I can't remember who did it either. I'm sorry – I'm so sorry, but thank you for pointing out what probably should've been pretty obvious, but, um.

Emily: Uhhh, I mean, yeah, it's sort of up in the air. It could still be Elyas. Though – he looks very much more, like, wilderness-y –

Sally: Mm. Mm-hmm.

Emily: That might be the shades of brown, though.

Sally: It's Balwer trying to blend in.

Emily: Balwer's trying to be discreet, yeah.

Sally: 'Cause nobody knows he's spying.

Emily: I mean, yeah, he's a very good little spy.

Sally: We are, unfortunately, with Perrin in these two chapters.

Emily: Yeah, we're – we're with Perrin. We're with, uh, a somewhat more – uh, how to put this – we're with a, um, sort of brisker form of Perrin; more is happening –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And he is – he is telling us more –

Sally: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, this version of Perrin, since he is, uh, not over his trauma. Perrin, which I think is true of all of our main characters, more or less, in this book and perhaps, uh, tends to be broadly true in humanity in general, Perrin is sublimating a lot of his problems. Um, so he is not addressing them directly, his stress about Faile. Um, he is just sort of focusing on whatever, uh, can be done, which is a pretty common coping mechanism –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: When it comes to trauma. I can't do anything about the problem in front of me, and I'd rather not just be stuck feeling what I'm feeling, so I'm going to act and keep acting.

Sally: Yeah, he's come out of the initial shock of what happened. Um, he has now slept and kind of eaten.

Emily: He's basically been in a dead coma –

Sally: Yeah, for a long time.

Emily: Yeah, Hopper had to kick him out of Tel'aran'rhod.

Sally: Yeah, Hopper, like, Fast and Furious sideswipes him in wolf form –

Emily: Oh, yeah. It's like Tokyo Drift.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Hopper Drift.

Sally: Hopper Drift. (laugh)

Emily: "Get the fuck out!"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Perrin's like, "No! Gotta find Faile," and Hopper's like, "Bitch, she ain't in –"

Sally: "She's not here."

Emily: "Why would you think she's here?"

Sally: Perrin's like, "I found her here once," in that weird-ass plot in the Dragon Reborn –

Emily: Oh, I know.

Sally: That I always forget.

Emily: Yeah, because it – it's –

Sally: Like –

Emily: Nothing.

Sally: Stop taking me away from Mat blowing up the Stone of Tear for this heterosexual nonsense.

Emily: God. That plot was so annoying because it was, like, Robert Jordan being like, "Mm, I don't want Perrin to be in the Stone of Tear for some reason."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And I need him and Faile to be in love," I guess? And it's like, yeah, that certainly quickened that plot.

Sally: Yeah, but – whatever. Um. Perrin wakes up in Berelain's tent. He is naked in her bed for –

Emily: And he's like, "Explain?"

Sally: And she's like –

Emily: “Well, your clothes were wet –”

Sally: “No.” (laugh) “I will not. I will not offer any explanation for my behavior.”

Emily: (laugh) “I will not. I’m just a bad person. That’s my explanation.”

Sally: Berelain is on the most bullshit behavior she’s been in the entire series.

Emily: Yeah, this is one of, um, Berelain’s probably top five worst moments list.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Perhaps top three.

Sally: Berelain is completely manipulating the situation to make everybody think that she and Perrin have slept together.

Emily: Yeah, which is a bizarrely, like, cruel thing to do –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Given how puritanical everyone is, especially on Perrin’s side of things.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: The Two Rivers folks are very traditional –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Um, in their monogamy and their loyalty to, you know, one’s partner.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Which is not, uh, uncommon generally, in a lot of societies –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I can’t really think of anyone who would react well to a man sleep – apparently sleeping with another woman literally the day after his wife got kidnapped?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, no one would be cool with that.

Sally: Yeah. It’s very – you – like you said, it’s just really cruel. And I don’t – feel like – I don’t know how many times I’m going to say this throughout the duration of this podcast: I do not understand Berelain’s motivations in doing this.

Emily: I’ve been thinking about that, and I truly don’t think Robert Jordan understands –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Her motivations. I think Robert Jordan built Berelain to be a character who confuses men –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: To enforce the idea that women are mys—not just mysterious, because there’s some sort of, like, good thing to that; but, like, completely bewildering –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And irrational.

Sally: Yeah, irrational, but also, like –

Emily: (distant) Tybalt!

Sally: Oh, is he in the trash can?

Emily: Yes.

Sally: Listen, Tybalt is –

Emily: Just like, his full-ass –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Head.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: He knocked it over and just dug himself in.

Sally: That’s so gross, Tybalt. Why do you want to be in the trash can?

Emily: It’s just tissues. God.

Sally: He just wants to be in your scent, I guess.

Emily: (normal) Eww. God, sorry. What were you saying?

Sally: Um, like, yes, I agree that Robert Jordan is presenting Berelain as this sort of, like, irrational and unfathomable character. But I also feel like the word “irrational” undercuts some of the, like, cruelty and manipulation that Robert Jordan is, like – she’s very intentional in what she is doing. It does not feel rational and like it makes sense, but she is, um – I don’t know. I just also feel like Robert Jordan is putting a lot of intentional cruelty and intentional manipulation into Berelain to also highlight that women can’t be trusted.

Emily: Yeah, it’s just, like, projecting a lot of, like – I – I think there’s, in a way, he built the Aes Sedai specifically to be like, “Women can’t be trusted.” That’s sort of the –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: The thesis of the Aes Sedai when you strip it down to its bones.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: None of the Aes Sedai are trustworthy.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Even our girls who we start with, Egwene and Nynaeve, who we would consider trustworthy, by the process of being in the White Tower and going through the things that they go through, become untrustworthy to the male figures.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: That's blatantly obvious with Mat –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Who gets left behind in Ebou Dar, and of course, you know, Rand has a big blow-out with Egg, eventually. Um, but the Aes Sedai are also, uh, sexually, um, neutered.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: The Aes Sedai are not depicted as sexual creatures –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Necessarily. Some of them obviously have sex lives. One thinks of Myrelle –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, who is a sexual predator –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it is implied, you know – Siuan and Gareth Bryne have a romance; Egg has a romance with Gawyn; various Aes Sedai – Aes Sedai characters are having romances.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But most of them are not, uh, meant to be depicted as, um, sexually manipulative.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Berelain is, like, this version of – like the Aes Sedai, she is untrustworthy and manipulative to men specifically, but also that's because of her sexuality.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That is her, like, main tool.

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

Emily: As opposed to, you know, the raw power that the Aes Sedai are working with.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is just really bizarre and, like, obviously super misogynistic.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Like, duh. Um. Yeah, I just don't – it – it's – it becomes impossible to talk about because there is no making sense of it without just being like, "Yeah, Robert Jordan clearly doesn't like women."

Sally: Yeah, like, it – when you really dial into moments like this – and to, like, everything going on with the Aes Sedai, both them being, like, sexually neutered is such a good term because you have – like, yes, there are Aes Sedai who are having, um, sex lives, but very often, those are presented on the far end of – I don't even want to call it the spectrum – the dangerous end of sexuality, which is sexual predation.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Like Myrelle, and Alanna is kind of slotted in there –

Emily: Right.

Sally: And even when you get the points of view of our characters who we're supposed to think of as the good guys, they say very troubling things about their partners, about how Nynaeve is like, "Lan is going to marry me whether he wants to or not," Egg says things like, "I'm going to bond Gawyn whether or not he agrees to it." Like, they are all operating in this sort of, like, "I am using my power in various manipulative ways, and even though I'm not presented necessarily as sexual, when I enter the sexual sphere, I am also using my power to be domineering and manipulative." So it's like, great. There's nobody just having, like, a normal and healthy sex life.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So that is all misogynistic, and then you come to the kind of, like, other end of the spectrum, where you get Berelain as this, like, femme fatale.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And it's like, Robert, that's also misogynistic. Everything you're doing is – like, you have not presented a woman on-screen – on-screen in quotes – without being misogynistic to her. So it really boils down to, like, what are you, as the author, thinking if you cannot present a woman without sort of spilling your hatred of her on to the page?

Emily: Right.

Sally: It's just really – this scene is so uncomfortable to read.

Emily: Yeah –

Sally: Perrin is, like, out of his skin uncomfortable. (laugh) He's like, "Where the fuck are my clothes?"

Emily: How do I – he, like, asks for food but then the food comes and by that point Berelain has verbally harassed him to the point that he’s just like, “I can’t stay to eat.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like – uh, just to, like, you know –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Run down the list to make our point: what is Berelain’s overall endgame which she tells us and, you know, which can only be – what is her endgame according to her actions and what she tells us? It is to, uh, seduce and become partners with Perrin. Why does she want to do that? That’s not clear. Um, she seems to say early on in the series, she says it’s because she wants to be close to the Dragon Reborn. She initially tries to seduce Rand, but when Rand is like, “Get fucked –”

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: In the scariest way possible, she turns her attention to Perrin.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, oh – okay, you don’t need to do that because you clearly are already – you already have a good relationship, working relationship with Rand.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: You are considered one of the closest advisors to the Dragon Reborn, or you were at one point; if you weren’t such a freak, you probably would still be there.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, getting Perrin out of purely, uh, sexual desires. At that point, Berelain just becomes an immoral person.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Perrin is taken, Perrin has a wife that he clearly cares a lot about –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Inserting yourself into the relationship at that point is just wrong.

Sally: Yeah, especially ‘cause Perrin has repeatedly told her, in no uncertain terms, that he is not interested in pursuing a relationship –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Of any kind with her. He, like, barely wants to speak to her at this point.

Emily: Right.

Sally: So it is immoral, it is predatory, it is so fucked up.

Emily: Is the motivation, like, psychological in that she wants to have what she apparently cannot have and she wants to sort of, you know, flex her power –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: In this ability to get whatever man she wants. Um, if that's, I guess, the case, then you're ultimately staring down the barrel of people losing a lot of respect for you.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Whatever you gain psychologically you're going to lose in, um, you know, physical value.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: If that makes sense. Um, so yeah, it just comes down to Berelain isn't acting like a person who has thought any of this through.

Sally: I know, I keep thinking, like – when I was reading it, I was like, what could the possible, like, political motivation be? Does she want to gain control of the camp? Like – that doesn't make any sense, because you already are basically running the camp –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: In many ways. Perrin is not – Perrin is an okay leader, but he's not super competent politically. Like, he already relies really heavily on you for that stuff, so.

Emily: Perrin's not, like, going to be any particularly good ally to Mayene, the country you represent –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which, Berelain is at her best when she is, like, speaking out as a leader of a country.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: And so it's like, why would you ally yourself with this guy who is not in charge of anything except maybe this, you know, rising state of Mane–Manetheren?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I almost did the show's –

Sally: Manetheren.

Emily: Yeah, pronunciation. Which is literally on the other side of the continent. Like, there's very little value in that.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So Berelain's acting like a stupid person.

Sally: Yeah. Yes.

Emily: Stupid and mean.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Super mean to do what you're doing to Perrin at the cost of him losing face, his reputation with people who now more than ever really need to rely on their leader.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Like, you're in crisis mode now.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So all you're doing is undermining this. And Berelain, at one point, says – and according to Perrin, she says it very sincerely – that no one wants Faile to be returned more than she does. So then at that point, it's like, okay, is Perrin the centerpiece of a competition between you and Faile?

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Is this less about Perrin than it is about Faile?

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

Emily: But that also doesn't really make any – I mean, that – it's nothing.

Sally: Yeah, like, you – we can talk circles around it all day, I guess, because – well, and, like, really, it boils down to this, like, trope of the, like, mean pretty woman. She is in competition with other women; she doesn't know how to be friends with other women –

Emily: Oh, yeah.

Sally: She needs to be the most desired woman in the room, and therefore, because Perrin doesn't desire her, she has to do all this, like, absolutely unhinged shit to – it feels like she's like, "Eventually he'll be trapped into just having the relationship with me because everyone thinks it's happening anyway."

Emily: And then it's like, will he be happy with that?

Sally: No.

Emily: What – will he be the person – a desirable person at that point?

Sally: No. And also, like, just because, like, there – there are lots of ways in which I think it would play out that if you've just convinced everyone that it's happening, it's like, okay, it basically is happening at that point.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But even if everyone's convinced, Perrin's – for all his faults – has a pretty strong, like, internal integrity. Like, he's not gonna sleep with you even if everyone in the entire world thinks that he is.

Emily: Yeah. At that point, pure – out of pure spite, he'd be like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “God, no.”

Sally: “Get fucked.” So it's just this, like, beautiful women cannot be trusted.

Emily: But also, ugly women cannot be trusted because look at all the Aes Sedai!

Sally: (laugh) They're all ugly and miserable.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And they're all – all – Robert Jordan loves to describe them as, like, mm, not quite pretty. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. Handsome. (laugh)

Sally: “No woman would call her beautiful. No man would call her beautiful.”

Emily: “But she was imposing.” Or something.

Sally: Yeah. “She had huge tits, though.”

Emily; “The badonkas, though.”

Sally: “Listen, she's ugly. Complete butter face. But the breasts.”

Emily: “But I would motorboat her.” (laugh) Like –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Shut up, man.

Sally: Yeah, it just is, like, again, the misogyny is just, like, dripping off the pages. Like, I could just squeeze it over a salad or something.

Emily: Yeah, this is, like, the world's longest manifesto of misogyny. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Not Winter's Heart specifically, the entire Wheel of Time.

Sally: The entire Wheel of Time series.

Emily: And it really, really jumps out here. Um, so yeah, if you were ever thinking, like, how – how to get a man in ten days – (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Not this.

Emily: “Knock him out and put him in my tent so everyone he knows thinks that he slept with me already,” I would not put that on the list –

Sally: No.

Emily: Of viable strategies.

Sally: No. No, no, no, no, no. Um, I – everyone would advise against that, actually.

Emily: It’s pretty – pretty bad. Um. (sigh)

Sally: Uh, plot-wise –

Emily: Yeah, plot. Perrin gets sideswiped out of Tel’aran’rhiod by Hopper, who’s like, “You’re a dumb fuck, get outta here.” Perrin’s like, “Where am I?” and Berelain’s like, “Mwa ha ha ha ha ha, you’re in my creepy sex tent.”

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And he’s like – Verin has a lobotomy tent, Berelain has a sex tent.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: No tent is safe when a woman is involved. Um, Perrin’s like, “Where are my fucking clothes?” and she’s like, “They’re over there,” doesn’t, like, bring them to him or anything. She’s like, “Please walk naked in front of me.” And he’s like, “How am I even here? Naked?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And she’s like, “Well, you and Tallanvor passed out on the top of the hill. I was the only one brave enough to come and get you –”

Sally: Which feels fake.

Emily: Yeah. She was like, “You were growling at anyone else who –”

Sally: Like, listen.

Emily: “Came to bother you,” and I’m like, like Lini?

Sally: Yeah, like Lini would not go up there, throw you over her tiny shoulder –

Emily: Slap you in the face –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And be like, “Get lost –”

Sally: And be like, “Time to go to bed,” yeah.

Emily: I know, like, Gaul is gone, the, you know, best friend position. But we're introduced to a lot of, like, Two Rivers guys –

Sally: Yeah, no one from home was like, "Okay, Perrin. Stop growling."

Emily: Yeah, come on.

Sally: "It's time to go to bed."

Emily: Like, this is what I'm talking about, people not stepping up. Come on. Grady and Neald aren't there yet, but two books from now, they would definitely slap Perrin.

Sally: Yeah, you think Jur Grady has patience for this?

Emily: (laugh) They're a little too, um –

Sally: It's just very annoying. It's ...

Emily: She's like, "So I took you here so that you wouldn't freeze you to death, and we had to, like, clean your clothes," and it's like, you obviously didn't, but fine. Um. And he's like, "Have they found Faile yet?" and she's like, "No. No one has returned yet from scouting, except my guys who I sent out were found dead."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, and she updates him, like, basically everyone is, you know, just waiting, ready to go. Um, the, uh, Amadicia – Ghealdanin contingent – you know, Alliandre's guys, led by Arganda – I have to start remembering their names –

Sally: I know.

Emily: Um, they are sending out patrols, despite Berelain telling them not to. She's like, "Arganda's, like, clearly lost it over the loss of Alliandre, and he is convinced no one else will be able to find her," and Perrin's like, "Yeah, well, that's kind of how everyone feels at this point."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Berelain leaves for a little while so Perrin can get dressed; of course, she comes back as he's still putting on his trousers, so gotta see the bum. Um, and they talk a little bit more; like, obviously these are useful updates to be having.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They're just sort of interspersed with Berelain saying absolutely wild shit and implying super gross stuff.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, she says, "Masema's guys have started arriving," and Perrin's like, "Started? It was supposed to be him and, like ..."

Sally: One hundred people. She's like –

Emily: Yeah. And she's like, "It's a thousand so far."

Sally: Maybe try, like, three thousand. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. And he's like, "Great."

Sally: "Super."

Emily: "This'll be just as fun as I thought it would be."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Berelain's like, "Well, what do you want us – what do you want us to do? We all advised you to just kill the guy, so –"

Sally: Yeah, listen –

Emily: "You kind of just have to deal with this now."

Sally: Berelain – this is also when Perrin learns about the Seanchan, right?

Emily: Yes.

Sally: Okay.

Emily: She, um, is like, "Oh, by the way, big news: he has been meeting with the Seanchan," and he's like, "Exsqueeze me? How'd you find that out? From your –" She has a couple of thief-catchers, we're told. And she's like, "No, it was actually reported to Faile while we were out hunting; some of her guys in that little – her vassals or whatever."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And she's like, "I can't believe you let me believe that little – that little secretary guy was your spymaster when you have a whole ring of spies," and Perrin's like, "I have a whole ring of spies? Me?"

Sally: He's like, "Balwer was my whole spy team, actually."

Emily: "Balwer was the one guy."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And now apparently I have a bunch of other –" He's like, "Okay, Faile has been keeping secrets."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, yeah, dude. Duh.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, he's like, "Okay, well, obviously it's big news that Masema is meeting with the Seanchan," but he ultimately is just like, shrug emoji.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: Can't really do anything about it now or won't do anything about it. Um, he's still sort of, like, having trouble integrating all of his various problems –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Into one single problem.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's still like, "Okay, Masema's in a separate box than Faile being kidnapped –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know?

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Uh, but sort of the effect of these two chapters is that all his problems are getting smashed together.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, so that's big news. Sort of – they're stalled out, but Masema's guys are arriving, and I think that's the gist of what Berelain tells us.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, Perrin leaves after a maid has seen him and Berelain together, and, you know, Perrin is like "Oh, her maids clearly are – are thinking a certain thing and are going to say things to other people." Perrin doesn't do a lot for himself – which is a little victim blame-y, I understand – to, like, get in front of this PR campaign.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, to portray himself as a, you know, a guy who's, uh, faithful to his wife.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don't know how much he could do.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Berelain is definitely better at this stuff than him. But it becomes a little bit frustrating, in my opinion, that, like, the Two Rivers guys – that this puritanical, you know, response to, um, Perrin supposedly sleeping with Berelain – very few people seem to give Perrin the benefit of the doubt.

Sally: Yeah. No, I agree. It's extremely frustrating. And by the beginning of Crossroads of Twilight, they've basically completely iced him out. Like, they do not speak to him when he walks through their camp.

Emily: Yeah, and it's like –

Sally: And it's just like, nobody, like, even asks him about it. Everyone is just like, "Okay, yeah, like, we just believe what Berelain is saying and what the maids are gossiping."

Emily: "We believe the rumors," Yeah.

Sally: Yeah. And I agree. Like it's – like, what do you do? At that point, it's just Perrin's word versus Berelain's word, and it becomes this, like, he said, she said nonsense. But there are, like – like, Perrin – and I get it. At that point – again, I also don't want to be victim blame-y, because Berelain is definitely being a complete predator in this situation. Um, but he's never just like, "Hey, nobody let me be taken to Berelain's tent again. That was ridiculous. Please don't let that happen again." Or, like, "I'm not –" (laugh) Or just being like, "We're not sleeping together."

Emily: Yeah, it's like, we've seen moments where Perrin is kind of, like, a powerful leader, public speaker. At a certain point, I would think the most on-brand thing for him to do would be just, like, call a sort of town hall –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And be like, "Okay, listen. I know there are rumors. I did not sleep with Berelain. If you want to talk to me about it, come and talk to me about it, but Faile's my wife; I'm not sleeping with Berelain."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Personally, I would prefer if no one left me alone with Berelain."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Because she's such a creep."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, okay, well, that might not work, but at least you're doing something.

Sally: Yeah, it just feels a little bit out of character, honestly, for Perrin to never say to anybody, except for Basel Gill, who's the first – also, Perrin doesn't really, like, put together the rumors –

Emily: Oh, yeah, he's a total idiot.

Sally: Until Basel Gill is like, "Everyone's acting weird because they're spreading rumors that you and Berelain slept together," and Perrin's like, "That's ridiculous." And never does anything – it's just weird. It's just this, like, frustrating plot, and, like, Berelain just gets to be in control over it. Perrin is given no control over the situation at all.

Emily: Yeah, it seems to be Robert Jordan grasping for a – some sort of, quote unquote, comedic situation –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: To sort of lighten the mood in this otherwise very grim setting.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But as usual, Robert Jordan's idea of comedic sort of falls back on, like, "Ah, women are bad guys, and men are bumbling idiots."

Sally: Yep.

Emily: Which is obviously not fun to read about, especially this far in the series, when I've been reading about it for the last eight books.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah, Perrin goes and finds the Two Rivers guys – Dannil, I think, is our main point guy –

Sally: Dannil.

Emily: And he's like, "Hey," da da da da da, they get ready to go, essentially. Perrin notes, you know, some people are having weird reactions to him, but again, doesn't put it together until Basel Gill approaches him. Lini, uh, comes up briefly, and the effect of that conversation is that she is super rude to Perrin, and Perrin's just like, "Ah, that's weird," and moves on, and it's, like – okay. Lini – mm. Lini is obviously meant to sort of, like, be and represent nosy elderly women. Lini, however, is also supposed to have been part of the Caemlyn, like, service sector.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: For quite a long time. At a certain point, one would think that strategically, she would know when to keep her mouth shut.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You can't just, like, mouth off to your employer.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: And not expect to get fired. Like, if I were Perrin, I would probably fire her over that.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, you – you'd just be like, "Okay."

Sally: "That's – that's it." It's – and not only is she super rude to him, she refuses to give him food.

Emily: Yeah. She's like, "Oh, well, you've already eaten, obviously; you'll get a bellyache from eating at – in other people's tents" – like bad insinuations of him sleeping around. And he's just like, "I don't really get it," but I would be like, "If you can't bring me food and do your job, then what am I keeping you for?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? Like, get lost.

Sally: Yeah, find someone else. Something.

Emily: I mean, obviously Perrin's a good person; he's not gonna, like, turn loose an old woman who –

Sally: (laugh) Into the snow you go, Lini.

Emily: Yeah, where Masema's running around. Oh, Berelain, by the way, noted that, uh, her people, who were out searching, were not killed by the Aiel.

Sally: They were killed by, like –

Emily: They were probably killed by Masema's guys, who are notoriously just nonsensically violent. So that's fun.

Sally: Oh, boy.

Emily: Yeah, Lini is another example of women behaving irrationally. Also, like, Lini, don't you have other things to worry about?

Sally: Yeah, and it also – like, I know we live in this puritanical society. But, like, people have been kidnapped. You have –

Emily: I know.

Sally: Four thousand religious fanatic cult-type people just in your party now. There are other – the apocalypse is coming. There are, like, eight different factions in here to manage. You've gotta feed these people. There are other things to be worrying about than if two people are sleeping together.

Emily: Yeah, like, at a certain point, it crosses the line from, "Okay, this isn't great; Berelain's messing with Perrin's reputation; maybe Perrin should do something about it," to "Mind your business, everyone."

Sally: Mm. Yeah.

Emily: Is it relevant to you?

Sally: Yeah, it's –

Emily: It might be relevant to your opinion of Perrin as a person, but ultimately, like, you have a job.

Sally: Yeah, you gotta keep the camp running. You gotta keep going. You've got just, like – (laugh) Yeah, like, there are other things to deal with. And also, like – it also, like, is not – oh my gosh, what – who is messaging me? It is, like, seven p.m. Whatever, I lost my train of thought. It's – we're not seeing this as much in, like, Wheel of Time as we do in, like, other fantasy series, I guess. So, like, there's that. But, like, it's not, like, unheard of for a lord –

Emily: To sleep around.

Sally: To have an affair, an extra-marital affair.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, it's not that big of a deal.

Emily: My God.

Sally: Like, it's a big deal if you're Perrin and Faile in the relationship, dealing with infidelity. But Lini? You've known these people for, like, four days.

Emily: I know.

Sally: Mind your business.

Emily: Mind your business, Lini.

Sally: Stop judging people. Judge Tallanvor, who just also just, like, fucked off into the forest.

Emily: Oh, fucked off. He's like, "Where's Tallanvor?" and Basel Gill's like, "Oh, he said you told him he could leave?" and Perrin's like, "... Sure."

Sally: "Uh, yeah, why not."

Emily: "Whatever." Like – okay.

Sally: Tallanvor probably also is hypothermic.

Emily: Yeah, good – get fucked, Tallanvor.

Sally: I hope he dies.

Emily: I think it would be hilarious if he just got killed by Masema's guys for going out by himself. Um. Anyway. Perrin's like, "What? I'm not sleeping with Berelain," but Basel Gill's like, "I'm just –" Basel Gill's constantly trying to edge out of the frame –

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: He's like, "I don't want to be having this conversation."

Sally: "Don't shoot the messenger!" (laugh)

Emily: "I'm so uncomfortable," and Perrin's like, "No, no, no, no, stop. Talk to me." (laugh)
Poor Basel Gill.

Sally: I know.

Emily: Um, Perrin is leaving to, like, go find food when the Aiel return. Um, not all of them, obviously. Uh, but Sulin and a contingent of the Maidens, accompanied by the three Warders, who we neglected to mention left. Which, you know, was nice of them.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um –

Sally: Too nice, maybe.

Emily: They get back, and Sulin's like, "Good news: Faile's alive. In fact, we think all of these women, uh, were taken alive," and she has the, like, clothes to demonstrate that they were taken gai'shain. And Perrin's like, "Phew. Big relief. What's the news on, like, where they're going?" She's like, "Okay, they set off in this direction; Gaul and the others are obviously still on their trail."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, Perrin, pretty quickly after this, orders, like, "Okay, now, Grady and Neald, start making gateways."

Sally: (simultaneously) Gateways.

Emily: Um. Following them. Obviously I can think of more efficient ways that he could've done this, but –

Sally: (whisper) Many more efficient ways.

Emily: Uh, that's not necessarily the point. Um, amongst other news that Sulin gives – uh, Perrin does ask, uh – oh. Were any – he's like, "Okay, who was taken?" Sulin's like, "There were bodies," and then a – a couple of men.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Presumably, like, Berelain's guard or whatever. Alliandre's guard. And Perrin's like, "Oh, so they only took women?"

Sally: Mm.

Emily: And sort of immediately is like, "That's scary. Is sexual violence –" That's what his mind jumps to.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Sulin's like, "No, no, no, no, they're gai'shain; they're not going to do that to them." Which, you know, they are already sort of transcending a lot of cultural taboos here by taking, quote unquote, wetlanders –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Gai'shain, so I wouldn't count out sexual violence as a possibility, but I do also understand why Sulin might try and reassure Perrin.

Sally: Yeah, of course.

Emily: Um. It does bring up the idea that there were men present at the party, and a lot of the problems that we brought up, um, in the last section, talking about Faile, would not be resolved but would be eased if it weren't a group of all women –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Who got kidnapped.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Like if, instead of Lacile and Arrela, those two, you know, gals from Faile's coterie, it – it was two guys instead.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, a lot of that, if it were a little – a bit more of a co-ed group –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Then we would be, I think, a lot less skeeved out.

Sally: Yeah, well, especially if there was just, like, similar treatment, you know –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Between the men and the women, I think that's what you're getting at, is just, like, yeah, it's not – and, like, as much as this sucks because nobody should be stripped naked in the snow, there's a certain degree of more discomfort when women are ever stripped naked by their captor.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Like, there's more violence implicit in that.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: So it's – yeah, the – it would be mitigated a little bit if it was, like, every – everybody.

Emily: I just – if I was going – if I was only allowed to make one edit to this, you know, whole subsection, I would replace Bain and Chiad with Gaul.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Gaul gets kidnapped; Bain and Chiad go on the warpath.

Sally: Amazing!

Emily: I also think it would be really funny to have Gaul, Perrin's best friend –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: With Faile and the others.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To be like, Gaul and his little group of kidnapped women. Just doo ba doo ba doo.

Sally: Gaul, six-foot-nine.

Emily: Yeah. Getting taken gai'shain. (laugh)

Sally: Thrown over someone's shoulder. (laugh) Feet dragging on the ground. You're right. That would improve everything so much.

Emily: Yeah, that's just what – that's just what I feel. So that's what my head canon will be, I guess.

Sally: No, it's perfect. Yeah, every time I read Bain and Chiad, I'll be like, "It's Gaul instead."

Emily: It's Gaul. Just believe that it's Gaul.

Sally: Just everyone believe – if we believe hard enough – it's like the Polar Express or whatever.

Emily: The Polar Express – what a deep cut. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Haven't thought about that movie in –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Years.

Sally: Um.

Emily: Oh, Tom Hanks.

Sally: I know.

Emily: Some of your worst work.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Uh – oh. The other big news that Sulin reports is that they have spotted evidence – oh, sorry, back up. Sulin reports also that this group of Aiel is very big.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And she shows evidence, based on, like, the arrows that she's gathered, that the vast majority of them are Aiel, but there's also some from other clans or whatever. Sorry, I can't keep those straight.

Sally: Yeah, the vast majority are Shaido.

Emily: Yeah. Sorry, what did I say?

Sally: It's okay, you just said "Aiel." I just want to clarify.

Emily: The vast majority are Shaido; then there's, like, Goshien and whatever, whatever.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Perrin quickly jumps to the conclusion that this means it's mostly Shaido accompanied by, uh, you know, these red headband-type people who ditched, uh, Rand, I guess.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which, one does wonder why they all joined up with the Shaido rather than just, like, going back to the Aiel Waste.

Sally: Yeah, be like, "Bye."

Emily: I mean, I don't really get that.

Sally: Maybe they're also being held captive in a weird way.

Emily: I dunno. I –

Sally: They just – the Shaido sort of absorbs people into this big blob –

Emily: Yeah. (laugh)

Sally: And then you can't escape. You're stuck in the Shaido blob. (laugh)

Emily: Gross.

Sally: You can't get out.

Emily: Stop.

Sally: You're glued.

Emily: Perrin's like, "How are there so many Shaido?" Like – 'cause – Sulin's like, "It's not just, like, warriors; we're talking about the whole sept, which includes women, children, blacksmiths." (laugh) Um –

Sally: The three genders. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. Exactly. People who don't – people who aren't fighters –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Are included in these – this group. Which is part of why the Shaido contingent is so huge.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Uh, but you know, not enough of a huge part. Um, Perrin's like, "That's super weird," and Sulin's basically like, "Shrug. We don't know."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But here's the follow-up big news: the Seanchan are also around, based on reports that we're getting, based on weird tracks we're seeing –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Of their psycho animals.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, and they are more or less moving in similar directions. Um. And Perrin's like, "Hmm. Well, this sure does seem like, you know, the – the web of a plot sort of cinching tighter around me."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "This sure seems like something is going to go down –"

Sally: Hmm.

Emily: "Wherever all these groups are going to meet up." But he's also not terribly concerned about the Seanchan, which – one should be, but.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Constant mistake. Big – big mistake.

Sally: Big mistake on Perrin's part to be like, "The Seanchan are the lesser of all my problems –"

Emily: I mean –

Sally: When they should, in fact, be the biggest of all of your problems.

Emily: Yeah, that's literally everyone. Rand's like, "I can just not worry about the Seanchan." And I'm like, or you could worry about the Seanchan. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. Or you could worry about –

Emily: Like we all should.

Sally: The invading empire.

Emily: Ahh! Um, but that's all taken care of. Again, everyone's getting ready to go. Um. When who – Perrin's, like, getting ready to go see Masema himself, but everyone's like, "I wouldn't go there by yourself; you're gonna get murdered."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, when who should appear but Masema himself and a, you know, contingent of his guys. He and Perrin talk; Masema's like, "I couldn't keep everyone from just coming along with me," and Perrin's like, "Did you try?" (laugh)

Sally: He's like, "They – they're all such believers who want to go see the Dragon Reborn, and how could I say no?"

Emily: And Perrin's like, "I bet what they wanted to do was continue murdering –"

Sally: I bet what they wanted to do was –

Emily: "And pillaging the countryside."

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Pillage the countryside.

Emily: But whatever, dude.

Sally: You – yeah. And it's like, Perrin, you've gotta address these things as they arise.

Emily: I know. Perrin's like, "Okay, well, you're here now. Um, I'm gonna have you keep traveling, but I have been – I have a different problem to take care of. My wife's been kidnapped, so gotta go, uh –"

Sally: "See ya."

Emily: "Do that. So you just keep traveling east." And Masema's like, "Oh, she's been kidnapped by the Aiel?" Now, perhaps unsurprisingly, Masema – you know, pre-zealot Masema – was racist against the Aiel –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So post-zealot Masema is also racist against the Aiel.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And is like, "I would love to kill some Aiel." And Perrin isn't like – sirens.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Warning bells. Perrin's like, "I'd love your help." And Masema's like, "Great." And Perrin's like, "Uh, but we're gonna be Traveling a lot," and suddenly Masema's, uh, big, you know, ethical dilemma about Traveling – out the window. If he can kill Aiel.

Sally: Yeah, he's like, "No, this is – this is the Lord's work. Therefore, we can use a little witchcraft."

Emily: "We can do just some witchcraft because I personally want to murder some Aiel." Now, if I were Perrin, I would concoct a cunning plot. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: To be like, "Okay, we're gonna have Masema's people specifically go through this gateway –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And have Grady and Neald open it into, like – I mean, about – about twenty feet above the ocean –

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Would be my ideal, but maybe to wherever Rand is would also work.

Sally: Yeah, just be like, “Go –”

Emily: Just be like, “Oh, yeah, that’s where you’re going. Bye!”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Your problem, Rand.”

Sally: Or have Masema go last and then close the gateway, cutting him in half and killing him.

Emily: Oh. That would also be an ideal.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Just kill Masema!

Sally: Just – kill him.

Emily: Just kill him.

Sally: He’s just so killable, Perrin.

Emily: He’s – yeah.

Sally: He’s just right there.

Emily: Top ten killable characters in the Wheely Time

Sally: But Perrin, instead, is like, “Great, I love this new army of murderous boys that I’ve gathered under my wing.”

Emily: “I love the road trip vibes that we’ve got going. What’s next, do you want?”

Sally: Like Crossroads with Britney Spears.

Emily: Woo-hoo. So – (laugh) that’s sort of where we’re at.

Sally: How’d we do? Oh, we got five minutes left –

Emily: Oh, fuck yeah.

Sally: To finish.

Emily: When we don’t talk about Naruto, we sure do blaze through it.

Sally: (gasp) And I could, man.

Emily: Sure could, man. Buddy. The hokages? Okay – we can't keep doing this, Daniel.

Sally: We can't – please, Daniel, we can't keep doing this. (laugh)

Emily: Um.

Sally: Please, Kishimoto, we can't keep doing this.

Emily: So that's where we're leaving Perrin and Faile, uh, not just for the moment but for the entirety of Winter's Heart. This latter half of the series – one of the reasons it might slog so hard is that Robert Jordan is opting for a different structure –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is these really, really long chunks with certain groups of characters as opposed to, you know – he did a lot more swapping around in earlier books.

Sally: Yes. If you have read the Lord of the Rings, you will be familiar with the very painful structure of the Two Towers –

Emily: Awful.

Sally: Where we've got this –

Emily: And Return of the King, I think. Up to a certain point.

Sally: Yeah, you're right. I think you're right. Um. I just remember it in Two Towers 'cause it is, like, so painful. You get a long stretch with Aragorn, Legolas, Gimli, and company doing the battle at Helm's Deep, and then you get the same time period from Frodo and Sam.

Emily: (simultaneously) From Frodo and Sam.

Sally: So there's just, like, these really long stretches, and I think we all can agree that the scenes in Mordor are a little bit more difficult to get through. Um –

Emily: Obviously. No, yeah, like, thank God for Peter Jackson –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Being like, "I'm actually gonna sprinkle in these sort of grimmer, sadder, much slower-moving –"

Sally: Yes.

Emily: "Frodo and Sam and Gollum scenes –"

Sally: Yes.

Emily: "And just sort of sprinkle them in like seasoning to the main event, which is Aragorn, sweaty –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Pushing through the doors.”

Sally: Yeah. So in the – yeah, in the movies, you get a more interlaced structure, which naturally means that the pace is moving more quickly because you’re just not reading these big slogs. And it is a real detriment in the latter half of the series that we have elected for these big chunks, because it feels like I am back in Mordor with the ring weighing me down.

Emily: Yes. And I think as a reading experience, it’s obviously bad. But it’s also counterproductive because what Robert Jordan is trying to do with these last books in the series is have them condensed to a much shorter amount of time.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Than earlier books in the series. You know, books one, two, and three took place over, like, a year and a half –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: These last books are taking place over, like – each book is maybe a week.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: More or less. And, um – but the effect of doing this, these much larger chunks of points of view is that while you might only be with each character for a certain amount of time, and all of these times are supposed to be happening congruently, the reader still feels like a huge amount of time is passing between –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Points of view.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: So, like, it does make sense, like you said last week, that Perrin doesn’t find Faile until the beginning of Crossroads of Twilight because there’s literally no other Perrin points of view in this book.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Of course it would have to be at the beginning of Crossroads of Twilight. But to us, it’s going to feel like literal weeks –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Between the two. So, uh, not a very accommodative form of writing for your readers.

Sally: No.

Emily: Um –

Sally: No, you get stuck in a kind of, like, time loop. You’re reading the same five days over and over and over and over again. And it gets old real fast.

Emily: But, uh, that's it, y'all.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song, to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media. Uh, do you have a sign-off?

Sally: Um, this is – I already told Emily this, and this is very stupid, but I have to do a four-hour, um, test tomorrow – medical test – for which the technicians only need me for four minutes of that.

Emily: Oh my God.

Sally: I just have to have these –

Emily: Cumulatively?

Sally: Yeah, cumulatively. They will take scans, um, and each scan is one minute long. They just have to take them an hour apart. 'Cause we are testing the movement of my stomach. I don't know why I'm trying to hide it; it's a gastric emptying study. They are seeing how my stomach digests. Which means I will be in a hospital for upwards of five hours.

Emily: Ugh.

Sally: Probably alone, in a room. (laugh) And then once, every hour, for one minute, they will take a picture of my tummy. And it's just going to be very silly, you guys. (laugh) It just feels a little bit unnecessary. Like, maybe a better test could be devised.

Emily: Maybe we could figure something else out. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Okay, everyone. Have a good – day!

Sally: Bye!

Emily: Bye.