



Episode 203: An Ugly Boy Who Can Do It All

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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 Glynna MacKenzie plays)

Emily: I wish I had another zinger like "Winter's Fart" to – (laugh)

Sally: I know, there's no good ones for Crossroads of Twilight.

Emily: Open this time. I couldn't even think of any alternate title – uh, book titles because, first of all, I have no idea what happens in Crossroads of Twilight – (laugh)

Sally: That's because nothing happens in Crossroads of Twilight.

Emily: And I'm pretty sure no one is sure.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah, exactly.

Sally: Nothing happens in this book.

Emily: It's a systemic problem; we'll talk about it. Um, but also I just was like, nothing funny happens –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In Crossroads of Twilight, you know?

Sally: Yeah

Emily: It's just sort of grim.

Sally: Yeah, it's a real downer.

Emily: It's a pretty – it's a pretty big downer. Our shining light – and this tells you how grim it is – our shining light is Ituralde. And I love Ituralde, but the fact that I'm deriving joy – that the only joy I'm deriving – is from a subplot that is starting in book ten –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Of the Wheel of Time?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, every other subplot has let me down. Now I've gotta look to new fare.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Now I have to look to a new middle-aged short king –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: With a – with daddy energy up the wazoo.

Sally: I know, with his little velvet beauty mark that he wears on his face.

Emily: With his little velvet beauty mark.

Sally: And his little ruby earring. Ugh.

Emily: And they call him “Little Wolf.” And I'm like, you know what? That was an attack on me personally and sexually.

Sally: I know. He's very sexy.

Emily: He's hot.

Sally: He's kind of, like, unbearably sexy.

Emily: Yeah, Ituralde and Davram Bashere, if they were in a room together –

Sally: They should've gotten together.

Emily: You're right.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: There's no arguing that. Absolutely not.

Sally: I mean, they both have very funny relationships with their wives –

Emily: I know.

Sally: But I think they would've been a power – the power couple of the century.

Emily: Well, put – let's put this together, they get together, and also their wives. Now we're –

Sally: Polycule. Yeah.

Emily: Now we're a polycule of just two short kings with big “I love my wife – I love my tall wife” energy –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But also “I love my short boyfriend.”

Sally: Um. Anyway, this is Everybody Hates Rand.

Emily: It’s your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. Not so friendly these days –

Sally: Not so friendly.

Emily: Your hostile –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Wheel of Time podcast – (laugh)

Sally: Your hostile neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast.

Emily: It’s – that’s where I’m getting, you guys. I’m Emily Juchau, enemy of the state.

Sally: (laugh) I’m Sally Goodger. “Are you or are you not an enemy of the people?”

Emily: What’s that from? (laugh)

Sally: The Umbrella Academy. Five and Diego are like, “Eh, it really depends on the people.”  
(laugh)

Emily: (laugh) “I’m the daddy here!”

Sally: “I’m the daddy here.”

Emily: We just rewatched season two in preparation for season three –

Sally: Season three.

Emily: Which is dropping this Pride Month, coming to Netflixes near you.

Sally: Yeah. They’re like, “The gays need Klaus Hargreeves and Elliot Page.”

Emily: After the – after the homophobia that is, I assume, Stranger Things season four. I actually don’t know, I haven’t – don’t at me. I have not watched or participated in the Stranger Things phenomenon. In fact, I’ve been explicitly told not to watch it because it’s too horror-y for me.

Sally: Mm. Mm.

Emily: Um, and there’s spiders, I guess.

Sally: Ooh. There’s always gotta be a goddamn spider.

Emily: I know. I know! Always.

Sally: Always.

Emily: At least I have Devin Wakefield to text me spider warnings in shows he knows I might watch.

Sally: Spider – spider filter.

Emily: Yeah. He's my human spider filter.

Sally: Good job, Devin.

Emily: It's a new type of spider man. A subset of – (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) A new type of spider, space, man.

Emily: Spider –

Sally: Not Spider-dash-man.

Emily: Not Spider-Man. Spider Man. Okay. (laugh)

Sally: Alright, let's get into it.

Emily: Let's get into the – let's first – let's first establish – here's the problem, is we're going to be saying a lot of things we've already said.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I mean, it's book ten. The ninth season.

Sally: You think I have original thoughts at this point?

Emily: I don't have original – I haven't had an original thought in ten years. (laugh)

Sally: Even before EHR, we were not having original thoughts.

Emily: Even before this podcast started – it was just original to you guys –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: 'Cause it was the first time you were hearing it. That's what you don't know. Sally's a great actress. She's been acting –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Surprised and amused this entire time. Um. So first of all, Crossroads of Twilight has an atrocious cover.

Sally: You are correct. This is an atrocity against God and man. I will give it this one thing –

Emily: It has horses.

Sally: It has horses, and it also is, I think, a couple points better than the Winter's Heart cover.

Emily: Oh, yeah, well, it's hard to be worse than Winters' Heart.

Sally: (laugh) It's also significantly better than the Knife of Dreams cover –

Emily: Ugh.

Sally: Which I have to stare at every week and just, like, force myself –

Emily: And the common denominator of those two is Perrin. I think Darrell K. Sweet mostly couldn't draw, period, but he especially couldn't draw late-series Perrin.

Sally: He was like, "He's 58, right?"

Emily: He did okay with Perrin on book three, right?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That was Darrell K. Sweet?

Sally: Yeah, that's where Perrin has his, like –

Emily: He just has, like, a big muscle – yeah.

Sally: Mortal Kombat headband.

Emily: Oh, yeah, and – and, I mean, he doesn't look like Perrin, but who does?

Sally: I mean, nobody looks like nobody.

Emily: Yeah, I don't know. Mat is wearing the most ridiculous hat I've ever seen.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: His head isn't proportional.

Sally: The hat is very small. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, the hat is, like, weirdly small. It's like a top hat but with the top part sheared off.

Sally: It's really funny.

Emily: It's not a – it's, like, always described as a wide-brimmed or broad-brimmed hat. That is, like –

Sally: He looks like a Pilgrim. It's a Pilgrim hat.

Emily: He does look like a Pilgrim.

Sally: Put a buckle on it, and he'd look like a –

Emily: He looks like a Puritan.

Sally: A Puritan. Um, yes. Here's some positive things. I really like the color scheme. I like the blue that says "Crossroads of Twilight" –

Emily: That's pretty, yeah.

Sally: I like that. And I generally do like the color scheme. Like, it's pleasant colors.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I don't like anything else.

Emily: I'm also convinced that Darrell K. Sweet did, like, three lines of cocaine before drawing —

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Any Wheel of Time cover.

Sally: That's what this is. He was inspired by the lines of cocaine.

Emily: Yeah. He was like, "Ooh, snow." Get it?

Sally: Snow. Wink. Anyway, the horses all look like they're dying.

Emily: I know, how dare you do that to my favorite horse of all time, Pips.

Sally: Pips. Pips is a good boy. Um, and then there's all these sad people ...

Emily: I assume that's the circus.

Sally: Yeah. This must be —

Emily: 'Cause they're dressed colorfully.

Sally: Is this — is this Valan Luca? One of these bastards has to be Valan Luca.

Emily: Maybe they're the Aes Sedai.

Sally: Oh, maybe they are.

Emily: Who knows?

Sally: It's impossible to see. Impossible to know.

Emily: We're not even into the Mat subplot yet. First we have to wade through the hundred-page prologue.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: A hundred pages, people.

Sally: Let the Dragons ride again on the winds of time.

Emily: Let the Dragon ride again —

Sally: Oh, the Dragon. Not dragons. Sorry.

Emily: I wish there were multiple Dragons. That would be, like, such a fun little thing for Robert Jordan to throw in in book ten. He says, “Let the Dragons –” and then we’re like, “What?” And he’s like, “Heh heh heh heh.”

Sally: “Mwa ha ha ha ha ha.”

Emily: “There’s actually multiple Dragon Reborns.”

Sally: There’s multiple Dragons Reborn.

Emily: The Dragons Reborn. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: We’re really scraping the bottom of the barrel here.

Sally: Oh, these jokes, man. Um.

Emily: Ahh.

Sally: Okay, anyway, that’s enough of the cover. Let’s read the dedication in this one.

Emily: Oh, okay.

Sally: Assuming I can find it.

Emily: There is none.

Sally: “For Harriet. Then, now, and always.”

Emily: (simultaneously) “Then, now, and always.” If I was Harriet, I’d throw it back at him.

Sally: Yeah, also, RIP, she doesn’t even get a whole dedication page.

Emily: I know, that’s rude. It’s all on the copyright page. They were like, “This late in the game, we’re finally trying to save page space. We can’t get Robert Jordan to write less, so we’ll just fucking sideline Harriet.”

Sally: (laugh) “We can’t have one more page in this book. It’s simply untenable.”

Emily: “It’s simply too many.” He has 840 – 849 pages or whatever.

Sally: 850 was too much.

Emily: (sigh)

Sally: Okay, the Crossroad – the Crossroads of Twilight.

Emily: Crossroads of Twilight.

Sally: I don’t even know what that is supposed to reference.

Emily: Well, it references the epitaph – epigraph. We do this every fucking time. I’m always like, “What’s an epitaph and what’s an epigraph?” and you’re like, “An epitaph is what they put on a tomb, Emily, and an epigraph is what they put in a book.”

Sally: (laugh) Now I’m worried I have it backwards.

Emily: And then we do this. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Okay.

Emily: “And it shall come to pass –” This is how every verse in the Book of Mormon starts, just so all you non-Mormons –

Sally: Yeah, you’re right, you’re right. I was right. Epitaph is on a tombstone.

Emily: You were right, yeah. Um. Everything – every – the Book of Mormon says “It’ll come to pass” all the time.

Sally: It’ll come to pass.

Emily: “In the days when the Dark Hunt rides –” And I fucking hate that because it implies that there is going to be a Dark Hunt at some point –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And all we get is this, like, Darkhound footprints later in the book that they kind of –

Sally: Oh, yeah. Don’t do anything with.

Emily: Yeah, one and done. It’s like, “Ooh, we’re teasing that maybe there’ll be a big confrontation with, like, a scary dark and wild hunt, you know, like in mythology, that’s led by Odin?” And it’s sometimes thunder and also The Dark Is Rising. It’s good in The Dark Is Rising.

Sally: It is very good in The Dark Is Rising.

Emily: (clears throat) “It shall come to pass in the days when the Dark Hunt rides, when the right hand falters and the left hand strays, that mankind shall come to the crossroads of twilight, and all that is, all that was, and all that will be shall balance on the point of a sword, while the winds of the Shadow grow.” Now, what’s interesting about that is it’s apparently a translation done by Jain Farstrider.

Sally: Oh, well, so Jain Far – Noal is to blame.

Emily: Yeah, Noal’s like, “I’m gonna make this as dramatic as fucking possible.” And he did.

Sally: Um. Yeah, I – the further we get into it and the more, like, little snippets of prophecy that we get, the more it just, like, feels so forced. Just, like, the prophecies just feel, like, unnecessarily convoluted on purpose.

Emily: Yeah, it mostly feels like, um, we’re working backwards.

Sally: Yeah.



Emily: You know, like, Robert Jordan came up with a weird title and then was like, “Oh, I have to make up some, you know, prophecy to sort of explain that.” I think the great – either the Gathering Storm or Towers of Midnight has, like, a longer prophecy and actually has people, like, responding to it, and I don’t remember if that is good or not, the way it plays out, but at least Brandon Sanderson tried to do something with it.

Sally: Yeah, my other complaint is we’re ten books into the series and no one has ever given me, like, the full Prophecies of the Dragon.

Emily: Prophecies. Yeah, I’m not even clear on how long they are.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, can you put it in a single book? Is it fourteen books long?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just, like, tell me.

Sally: Yeah, it just, like, really bothers me that, um, like, the whole series hinges on these prophecies, and Rand is the figure of prophecy, and all I ever get out of the prophecies are these, like, snippets and characters trying to put them together. But, like, if that’s the project, I also want to be able to try and put them together. Like, I want to be able to have them in front of me and try and, like, piece together clues as I’m reading.

Emily: Yeah, it feels like the last time that the plot really had anything to do with the prophecies at all and characters responding to them was way back in book three.

Sally: Yeah, that’s true.

Emily: Maybe book four. It feels like a plot line that was really, really important and relevant in the first three books and then just sort of got sidelined by other things.

Sally: Yeah, I also feel like it’s gotten usurped by, like, Min’s viewings.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Those are now a lot of what Rand –

Emily: Relies on.

Sally: Is – relies on and is responding to. And it – so, like, it’s – but – those two things, Min’s viewings and the Prophecies of the Dragon, start to feel superfluous. One or the other should have been cut.

Emily: Yeah, sort of what we were relying on.

Sally: Whatever. That’s me just belaboring the point, but it – I find it really annoying.

Emily: Okay, so we open this book with Ituralde, about whom we could wax poetic for probably the entire podcast episode, but we’re on a time limit here, people, so suffice it to say, he’s sexy.

Sally: He's very sexy.

Emily: He's, um, a short king, and he is very competent. He's what Devin would call a competent smol, meaning my type. (laugh)

Sally: I mean, he is very – something you gotta love about Ituralde is he just, like, gets shit done.

Emily: Yeah, he comes in here, he has a purpose, he's here to get things done. And this – in this instance, it's the only, um – first of all, it's the only plotline of the four that we read in the prologue – there will be more; don't worry –

Sally: Yeah, we're only doing half the prologue today, FYI.

Emily: Yeah, but of the four we read, it's the only one that, like, has a very clear, like, character comes in, introduces themselves, introduces their purpose, and then completes the purpose. There's more to the subplot, but stage one is complete.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Everyone else – we're kind of, like, sort of just wandering with characters who aren't the necessary point of view characters to understand what's going on.

Sally: Correct.

Emily: Uh, more on that in a minute. Oh my gosh, I just saw it says the Wheel of Time™.

Sally: Oh my God.

Emily: Ahh! (laugh)

Sally: Oh my GOD.

Emily: TM. TM TM TM.

Sally: TM TM TM TM TM.

Emily: Um, and this is also – as you referenced earlier, Ituralde is not coming back in this book. I believe he does come back in Knife of Dreams.

Sally: Oh, yeah, he comes back in, like, the sexiest sequence, where he just –

Emily: Yeah, in a – in a big way.

Sally: Fucks up a Seanchan camp, and I'm like –

Emily: You love – you love to see it.

Sally: I will – I was born to cook and clean for my husband. (laugh)

Emily: (wheeze, laugh)

Sally: Who – what is feminism? I don't know. (laugh)

Emily: The feminism leaves my body when I see Ituralde.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Um. Just like when I hear “Don’t Trust Me” by 3OH!3.

Sally: Yeah, that’s a good song.

Emily: For a whole two and a half minutes.

Sally: I was thinking about that song today.

Emily: Yeah, ‘cause it’s the best –

Sally: It’s a good song. (laugh)

Emily: Of our generation. (laugh) Anyway, with the other, um, subplots that we’re introduced here, they do – well, actually, I don’t know if I can say that totally, but the next one we get is from Gabrelle, who’s with Logain – Logain will come back later in this book –

Sally: Tragic.

Emily: Um, we also get some, like, Tower shenanigans – White Tower shenanigans – should come back in this book, I believe –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: And I’m not sure about Valda, but Valda’s point of view is also the least clear to me.

Sally: Yeah, it’s very confusing.

Emily: Anyway, um, Ituralde is in Arad Doman, a locale we have not been to since book two –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is quite a while, and this is also a part of Arad Doman that we haven’t been to before. It’s more Arad Doman proper, which is north of Falme and the Almoth Plain, which is where a bunch of chaos was happening in those first few books. Um, and what Ituralde tells us about Arad Doman is that, uh, it was a pretty stable country until the last few years; it was ruled by a king named – oh, fuck me – Alsalom. Alsalom.

Sally: Alsalom, Alsalom.

Emily: Which sounds like Absalom. Yeah.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: My son, my son. Um, he’s a king who was ruling pretty efficiently and well for a couple of decades; Ituralde liked him; Ituralde is his friend. Not long after the big deal in Falme, the first Seanchan invasion and the Dragon Reborn appearing in the sky, followed by an uproar of Dragonsworn activity on the Almoth Plain, um, Alsalom disappeared. Quote unquote, disappeared; he disappeared – Ituralde hasn’t seen him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Ituralde believes, as most people seem to believe, that the Council of Merchants – I can't remember if that's their proper title – the Council of Merchants, which is made up of big-time merchants, all of them women, because Arad Doman, uh, is a merchant state where women are primarily the merchants, um, and apparently they whisked him away and have been relaying orders from him to other people. But, uh, Ituralde describes that as a really confusing thing, and the merchants themselves seem sort of unclear on what's going on. Ituralde and a bunch of other people have received orders from Alsalom, but that has just led to more chaos, including, like, infighting in Arad Doman. Like, armies running into each other in the night and fighting. So it's just been a mess. Um, we have the benefit of either foresight or hindsight – I can't remember whether it's been confirmed that Graendal's in Arad Doman –

Sally: Um, I don't know if it's been confirm – like, the location's been confirmed, but you can piece it together because in, I think, Path of Daggers, she references giving something to Ituralde.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: So.

Emily: So Graendal is behind the scenes on all of this. Now, um, this is one of our instances of the Forsaken pulling strings somewhere in a way that does not affect anyone in our main cast.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which makes it a little bit frustrating –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because while it's great that Robert Jordan can come in here late in the series and be like, "Well, this is why Arad Doman hasn't done anything or been relevant for the last nine or ten books; it's because Graendal's been – just been keeping them totally occupied," it's like, I didn't actually need that as a reason.

Sally: No.

Emily: It would've made total sense if Arad Doman was just like – keep doing its thing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "The Seanchan are on our doorsteps; we're a little bit stressed out about that."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "We're also pretty close to the Borderlands; we're just doing our thing." You know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It makes total sense. But, um – and the fact that we need Graendal – we don't need Graendal as an excuse is what I'm saying, and Graendal would have been better served if the

Forsaken actually ever did things that were plot-relevant. Graendal would've been better served, I don't know, as, like, a main bad guy in one of the places that Rand was trying to conquer –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or doing something, the way Mesaana is in the White Tower or Semirhage in Seanchan. I don't know.

Sally: Yeah, it's also just, like, impossible, really, to, like, pin down her endgame. Except for "Let the Lord of Chaos rule," the chaos stuff, blah blah blah.

Emily: Yeah, there is no endgame. She hasn't accomplished anything except keep Arad Domon out of the fight.

Sally: Yeah, and it's not like – I mean, they've got Ituralde, so that's a big win for them.

Emily: Yeah, Ituralde's sexy and –

Sally: But – (laugh)

Emily: Very cool and all, but he is literally just one guy.

Sally: Yeah, and I just – it's just, it's not like Arad Domon is a major military power or cultural center or –

Emily: Yeah, they're very secluded.

Sally: Yeah, like, they don't – like, they've obviously got a lot, like, internally, but yeah, it's not like it's – I don't know.

Emily: So basically we're at the stage in the series where Robert Jordan is just sort of throwing plates in the air and seeing what will land.

Sally: Yeah, and it'd be one thing if, like, Ituralde, much like Davram Bashere, was introduced in book four or five –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And it's like, okay, I'm curious about this general and what's going on with him.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But it's book ten.

Emily: It's book ten, people. We have been introduced to four of the five great generals, and Ituralde has just been sort of over in Arad Domon.

Sally: Yeah. Apparently holding the country together with his bare hands. (laugh)

Emily: Apparently! It sure seems like it. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Poor guy.

Sally: Yeah. And they're like, "And now, here, for your viewing pleasure, is the fourth great general."

Emily: The fifth.

Sally: The fifth. Sorry. I forget –

Emily: Well, now – now the fourth, since Pedron Niall's –

Sally: Pedron Niall.

Emily: Beefed it.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um, Ituralde, we're catching up with as he has just received orders that he thinks are really important because the person who brought them to him was killed or almost killed by a Gray Man. The implication to us, the reader, is that these are actual orders from Alsalom rather than from Graendal –

Sally: Graendal, yeah.

Emily: Writing as Alsalom. I don't remember if that's true or not, but –

Sally: I don't either.

Emily: That's the implication thus far. Um, and Ituralde has, uh, initiated a sort of gathering under a flag of truce with, um, obviously himself in charge of the official Arad Domani armies and then a bunch of leaders from the Dragonsworn, who are in the Almoth Plain, just sort of milling about, creating chaos. These are the people who, um, Ituralde's been more or less fighting for the last few years. And there are Arad Domani and Taraboners among them, which is just sort of relevant because he's working with two countries here. And he gathers them together with the purpose of being like, "I want to hit back at – at the Seanchan, who are – have completely swallowed Tarabon, and it's not gonna be long before they come knocking on Arad Doman's door." And he's basically like, "What say you?" (laugh) What say you?!

Sally: What say you?

Emily: Um, and after some arguing, everyone's basically like, "Well, if you're in charge, yeah."

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, it's so iconic.

Emily: (laugh) It's – "Okay, well."

Sally: They're like, "The Seanchan can't be beat." And he's like, "But I'm Rodel Ituralde."

Emily: He's like – (inaudible)

Sally: And they're like, "You make a very good point. I will follow you into death."

Emily: I will follow you into the dark, Death Cab for Cutie style.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. Yeah. God, he's such an icon. The Little Wolf.

Sally: The Little Wolf has a plan.

Emily: It is implied that he was a commoner in Arad Domani terms before becoming a general –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So we always love to see a man of the people succeeding. Um, so yeah, uh, he does give us a little bit of insight into his plan, which will involve infiltrating the Seanchan ranks with, um, a bunch of Taraboner Dragonsworn and also some Domani Dragonsworn masquerading as Taraboners. Um, which they can do because most of the, quote unquote, Seanchan in Tarabon – in Tarabon are actual Taraboners, you know?

Sally: Yeah, and his whole trick is that the Seanchan aren't forcing them to wear Seanchan armor.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: They're just like, "You can keep your armor –"

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And Ituralde's like –

Emily: Which is cost-efficient for the Seanchan –

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: But Ituralde's like, "Mwa ha ha ha ha."

Sally: "Efficiency will be your downfall, you fascist bastards."

Emily: "I'll get you."

Sally: (laugh) Ugh, I love him.

Emily: Ah, he's so good.

Sally: So good.

Emily: Um, so yeah, he gets everyone in agreement on that, and the plan is set into motion. Which is fun because so few people thus far have actually fought back against the Seanchan. All we've really had was Rand's sort of kamikaze strike back in Path of Daggers, which was as long as it was futile. Um –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It just involved Rand sort of blowing things up on the Illian border for a few days, scaring the Seanchan for a few days before they came back. And what Ituralde is proposing is interesting because, unlike Rand, he does not have access to a bunch of channelers to fight back against the damane, the main thing that the – are feared about the Seanchan. Uh, so this is sort of, like, a guerilla campaign, where it's just, like – I don't know, sort of – we all love an underdog story, you know?

Sally: Yeah, it's also just, like, very satisfying –

(phone chimes)

Sally: Oh, whoops. Sorry. Um, it's very satisfying to see someone who's like, "I do not have the type of weapons that the Dragon Reborn has, but I am still going to make a plan and do what I am capable of doing," whereas Rand does have extreme fire power and is just, like, sitting around on his hands.

Emily: Yeah, absolutely doing nothing.

Sally: So it's just, like, so satisfying to finally see someone like, "Yes, I'm going to do something, and I'm going to use my big, sexy brain, and I'm gonna do a great job about it."

Emily: Yeah, it really makes you wonder, like, if Rand could just get a little hands-free with the whole Seanchan threat and could just be like, "Okay, Davram Bashere, Rodel Ituralde, Mat Cauthon, this is your whole job now."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: What could they not do?

Sally: Exactly. By –

Emily: I feel like they could actually do something.

Sally: With their powers combined.

Emily: Yeah, with their powers combined, with the Asha'man –

Sally: The Asha'man.

Emily: Oh, God.

Sally: The Seanchan wouldn't stand a chance.

Emily: Come on, babe. Come on.

Sally: But Rand's like, "I have to make a truce with the Seanchan because that's what the Finn told me," because Robert Jordan believes deeply in ingraining his fascist empire into the plot for some reason I – I cannot fathom. They have to be important.

Emily: I know what the reason is. (laugh) It's Confederate sympathizing.

Sally: You got me there. (laugh)



Emily: You heard it here, folks.

Sally: You got me there. But yeah, it is, like – these military geniuses are right there, and their whole, like – not their whole purpose – their job that they're all very good at is to fight battles.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And Rand is like, "No. Davram Bashere is my errand boy, I don't know who the fuck Ituralde is, and Mat I sent to collect my girlfriend and now he's in a circus with the Seanchan Empress, so he really bungled that one."

Emily: Agggghh. This will also come back in a majorly upsetting way in the Last Battle itself, where Robert Jordan or Brandon or both or whoever are just like, "Hmm, I guess we have to nerf all five generals," and it's like, or you could just, like, let me enjoy watching people be good at their jobs.

Sally: I know. I don't know what – it's so funny, I – there's, like – I feel like there's this divide between people who want nothing – like, nothing is more satisfying than watching someone who is very good at their job just do their job, and that's the whole story. That's me. I love nothing more than that.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And then there's people who's like, "I want people who are very good at things to be nerfed and people who are amateurs get to step in and, like, take over and somehow fumble their way into success."

Emily: I'm like, what about the guy who has experience?

Sally: What about – yeah, experience and training and is able to make good decisions. So I don't – I don't know what about that is satisfying, but I am obviously in Camp A, not Camp B, so.

Emily: Yeah, me too. Uh, sadly, we leave Ituralde and go over to Valda, who, uh, we last saw sexually assaulting Morgase before he – after he had assassinated Pedron Niall and taken over the Whitecloaks. He then left in an attempt to fight off the Seanchan and he, along with the king of – what's it? Amadicia –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Were defeated, soundly, it sounds like – they're calling it Ailron – that was the king – Ailron's Disaster.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Which is pretty funny except, like – (clears throat) it's not like Ailron – Ailron didn't live to, you know, get that rubbed in his face, apparently; he got murdered immediately, so.

Sally: It should be Valda's Disaster.

Emily: Yeah, it should be Valda's Disaster. Son of a – anyway, Valda's now with the Whitecloak camp. Um, we're not even sure where they are – maybe in Amadicia somewhere,

still? Maybe in Ghealdan? Uhhh? Who knows? Um, and Valda goes to visit Asunawa, who is the White – Head Inquisitor and sort of Valda’s only real competition in terms of power at this point amongst the Whitecloaks. Um, and they have the most obscure and useless –

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Like, three-sentence conversation I’ve ever heard. Like, what? I have no clear idea what this point of view is for except to remind us that Valda’s still alive.

Sally: Yeah, they have this conversation of, like, “The army should go here.” “No, the army shouldn’t. The army should go –” But we don’t know where “here” is.

Emily: Yeah, and also they make no decisions.

Sally: Yeah, they just sort of, like, shake their fingers at one another aggressively, and then a bunch of other people arrive, so they have to end the conversation.

Emily: Yeah, Valda implies something important is about to happen. It doesn’t, that we hear. What – the next thing we hear from the – cut me off if I’m wrong – the next thing we hear from the Whitecloaks is Galad killing Valda.

Sally: No, that’s correct. One full book from now, we will pick up with the Whitecloaks in the Knife of Dreams prologue, where Galad kills Valda.

Emily: So these three pages, as far as I’m concerned: completely unnecessary.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I did not need any information about Valda and Asunawa between Valda disappearing and coming back as a corpse.

Sally: Yeah. At least to the best of my recollection. I could be wrong, but I don’t – I don’t – I think in this one instance, I have the Wheel of Time plot pretty locked in.

Emily: Well, and it’s just, like, Valda, right now, is the representative of the Whitecloaks generally.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Uh, in the same way that Pedron Niall used to be the representative of the Whitecloaks. So whenever we visited Pedron Niall and he was just in the midst of some scheming stuff, we were sort of assured that the Whitecloaks as a main body were scheming –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Doing stuff. But, interestingly, Pedron Niall also never, like, left his base camp.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So that sort of, like, nerfed the Whitecloaks generally. We were kind of like, “Okay, the Whitecloaks are probably doing stuff, but it’s probably not important stuff,” and that was pretty much true –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Until Morgase showed up.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: At their home base. Um, now with Valda, he is the representative of the Whitecloaks, and nothing’s happening with the Whitecloaks. Nothing will happen – the Whitecloaks won’t do anything until Galad takes over, so there’s really nothing necessary about Valda here.

Sally: No.

Emily: Enough said. I just don’t think it even needs to be discussed. It’s just, wow, sure could’ve deleted those few pages, Robert.

Sally: And then Harriet could’ve got her dedication page back.

Emily: Yeah. Jesus. We then bounce over to Gabrelle, one of the two Aes Sedai who Logain forcibly bonded when a bunch of White Tower Aes Sedai came to the Black Tower in an effort to eradicate the Asha’mán threat. Um, this is an instance where Gabrelle is completely misused as a point of view character; she should not be the point of view character; it should be Logain, if we’re going to get any actual relevant information.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: All we get from Gabrelle is that all of the Aes Sedai who are now in the Black Tower, um, are faking like they have been sort of subdued, but really they’re all plotting behind the scenes to take down the Black Tower. Nothing will come of this, so it’s not terribly relevant. Mostly, Gabrelle tells us, like, weird things about Toveine’s behavior that don’t make any sense.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And we’re just like, okay. I don’t – I don’t get it. I don’t get why you think that’s weird. I don’t get if it is weird, blah blah blah. The single thing that happens is that they’re out riding, the two of them and Logain, and they meet one of Mazrim Taim’s henchmen – some, I don’t know, blond guy – who says some rude things to Logain and then peaces out.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Logain gets really mad, and then he’s like, “Well, let’s go back.” And it’s like, what? (laugh)

Sally: Is it this guy or do they meet another guy who’s like, “Mazrim Taim says you can go recruiting if you want to, you fucking loser.”

Emily: That part of the conversation was unclear.

Sally: Okay.

Emily: That – I mean, that is sort of what happened, but he – it sounded to me like he said, “You don’t have to go recruiting; you’re more important than that. Why would you want to?”

Sally: Yes. Yes, okay.

Emily: Oh. Okay. And Logain was like –

Sally: No, I just –

Emily: “Somebody needs to do it.”

Sally: Yeah. I mean, I think the point is that Logain is like, “I need to get away from Mazrim Taim.”

Emily: Yeah, it’s very –

Sally: And super – again, it – all this would have made more sense if Logain was the point of view character.

Emily: Exactly. (laugh)

Sally: So, like, I don’t know why Robert Jordan – I think it’s so that Gabrelle can say some truly vile things about her sex life with Logain. Um –

Emily: Yeah, we get a little aside about Gabrelle and Logain – Gabrelle and Logain are having sex. Um, Gabrelle assures us that it is truly divine sex because of the fun bonus that they’re connected through the Warder bond, so when Logain’s feeling horny, it – there’s, you know, a mirror facing a mirror effect. Um, now that’s a popular trope in romance, the genre. You know, sex is made funner when you’re with a partner who is expressing their pleasure or their desire in some way, whether that’s verbally or physically or in the magical case of a telepathy bond. So no shade on that particular trope. But the whole thing is made way more complicated and way more vile because we have the Damocles’ sword hanging over us of the fact that the way that the Asha’man have Warder – have bonded the Aes Sedai means that they can order them to do things –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That they want.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And while Gabrelle gives us no particular indication that her particular relationship with Logain is non-consensual, Gabrelle would never have pursued Logain, necessarily, if she wasn’t in this captivity.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So even if the whole “You have to do what I say” aspect of the bond isn’t being used, Gabrelle’s clearly not really doing things of her own volition here.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So – great. I’m glad you’re having super-orgasms, you know? But, like, I also wish that I didn’t have to hear about them because I wish you weren’t the one talking because you’re not giving me any information I can use.

Sally: Yeah, because from what – and this might be me, from where I’m at in Knife of Dreams. Logain and Rand are doing stuff, so this might be, like, hindsight. But Logain is like, “I have to get away from the Black Tower and reconnect with Rand,” because Mazrim Taim is very slowly – or very quickly, perhaps – taking over the Black Tower. And, like, most of the people here are no longer loyal to Rand. They are loyal to Mazrim Taim. So, like –

Emily: Yeah, we get a little aside about attending Mazrim Taim’s classes, which is ominous – is as ominous as it sounds.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, which sounds very culty.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Because it is.

Emily: It is.

Sally: Um, his special boys go to his special classes, and you’re like –

Emily: And probably drink blood or do some weird shit.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Or – or give him blow jobs, I don’t know. Whatever the fuck –

Sally: I don’t know what’s happening in Mazrim Taim’s very special classes for his very special boys. Um. (laugh)

Emily: But it’s very clearly cult shit, and yeah, Logain – credit to Logain –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Logain is like, “Someone has to send the news.” (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) “Someone’s gotta stop him.”

Emily: He’s like, “I will do – I’ll – I’ll whistle-blow, you know?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “I’ll do something.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “There’s the Dragon Reborn, right over there. Surely if he knew about this, he would do something,” and Rand’s like, “No, I won’t,” and Logain’s like, “What the fuck, man?”

Sally: Yeah, I just read this hilarious scene – again, very minimal credit to Logain – but Logain comes back and he’s like, “Once again, I was at the Black Tower, and once again, Mazrim Taim has more special followers in his special classes for special boys,” and Rand’s like, “Well, if Mazrim Taim is plotting treasonous things –” and Logain’s like, “If?! IF?”

Emily: He is! Are you insane? (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Like, the signs are all there, so Logain is truly fighting a – uphill battle.

Emily: An uphill battle against Rand’s total inability to engage with threats.

Sally: Yeah. Just constantly running up that hill to make a deal with God or something. I don’t know.

Emily: It’s very weird, because I think Logain would benefit a lot more from having points of view whenever he appears in this series, but as far as I know, he does not get a point of view until, uh, maybe the very last book in the series.

Sally: Hm. That’s interesting.

Emily: And I think it’s maybe some sort of ambiguity that Robert Jordan is trying to throw in? Like, I don’t know, red herring to make people think that Logain is one of the Forsaken or something? But it’s so stupid because why would anyone believe that?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Even – you know, it’s not like he’s doing anything shady or weird. He’s just telling Rand that the Black Tower is falling into the hands of a cult leader.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know?

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, and it’s like –

Emily: So I just don’t get it.

Sally: Logain is a creep in his, like, “I’m creepy with women” way. He doesn’t give off, like, “I’m one of the big baddie” vibes. Especially because Robert Jordan put all of those eggs in Mazrim Taim’s basket. So, like –

Emily: Right away.

Sally: Right away.

Emily: Like, right away.

Sally: (laugh) We’re just like, obviously I know who the big bad is here, and it’s not Logain. So yeah, for all of his problems, RIP to Logain and that, um, Sisyphus’s rock that he just keeps pushing up the hill against Rand’s stupidity. But.

Emily: I know, it's just frustrating. We'll talk about this more. But, like, Logain is meant to be this character who has a sort of redemption arc.

Sally: Right.

Emily: Whether he really needs to be redeemed, you know – Logain hasn't done anything, quote unquote, evil, except his behavior toward women, which is pretty gross and nasty. But the whole “starting a war” thing as a false Dragon hasn't ever really been classified as an evil act –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: By this series. That has just been sort of, like, classified as the behavior of someone who wants power and perhaps genuinely believed that he was the Dragon Reborn.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Okay, fine. But we keep getting these prophecies – Min's viewings – about Logain that he's gonna do something important. So what we have is less a redemption arc than a swinging into – back into relevance arc.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Logain is supposed to do important things. That would work a lot more, uh, efficiently if Logain was actually allowed to speak to us.

Sally: Yeah. If we, like, knew what was going on inside of his head.

Emily: Yeah, and maybe that would have made him less of a just totally – I could not get on board the Logain train, you know? At the end of the series, when Logain has his, quote unquote, big moment, spoiler alert, it's not all that big. I was just like, okay. Anyone could have done this.

Sally: (laugh) What was the point of this, Robert?

Emily: No, literally. Anyone could have done this. A child could have done this. (laugh)

Sally: Get Olver in there.

Emily: Oh, Olver has to blow the Horn of Valere.

Sally: Right, because why would Mat do it? (laugh)

Emily: Olver's blowing the Horn of Valere, breaking the seals on the Dark One's prison –

Sally: Olver's –

Emily: Leading the Last Battle. Why do we – why do we need people with experience who are good at their jobs, who have magic powers?

Sally: We'll get a twelve-year-old ugly boy to do it. (laugh)

Emily: When we have an ugly boy who could – (laugh) do it all.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: The ultimate Mary Jane.

Sally: The ultimate Mary Jane.

Emily: Ah.

Sally: Um, the red herring was –

Emily: Mary Sue, excuse me. Mary Jane was Spiderman's girlfriend.

Sally: "Is that Spiderman's girlfriend?" Have I told you that, about Nathan, how he's got –

Emily: Oh, yeah, he has face blindness –

Sally: Face blindness. (laugh)

Emily: Where he thinks everyone is Kirsten Dunst? (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: That's the funniest – (laugh)

Sally: Oh, I know. Nathan, you're the funniest person. Um, so Logain continues to befuddle.

Emily: Yeah. (laugh) Bemuse. Mystify. Rapid-fire, we get a long, very pointlessly long, point of view from Yukiri, who is one of what we will be referring to as the Black Ajah hunters in the White Tower. These are a group of women who stumbled into hunting down the Black Ajah.

Sally: In my Crossroads of Twilight blogs, I would always call them "the Aes Sedai torturing people in the basement."

Emily: (laugh) What?

Sally: That was what I referred to them as. And I totally forgot I was doing that until I read this and was like, I could have come up with a better name. (laugh)

Emily: Well, they do torture people in the basement for information. Um, something we got in Path of Daggers, so we did not cover in the podcast, necessarily – I think we did in sort of our recap – but, um, while they have not really come up with any more Black Ajah suspects, the Black Ajah hunters have uncovered a plot by the rebels to send some people to infiltrate and cause mayhem in the White Tower. And all that has really done is cause more divisions between the, um, Ajahs. This seems to be something that was a – an effort of both the rebels and the Black Ajah, because what we've seen from Alviarin is that she also has been trying to enforce that because it basically just weakens the Tower. Um, okay. I – it's a really boring subplot.

Sally: Yeah, I also just feel like there's too many plots happening in the White Tower.

Emily: Yeah. Here, also, we're getting, um – one of the other Black Ajah hunters runs up to Yukiri and she's like, "I have really important news about secrets. It's that I think the Sitters are conspiring to put Sitters on – in the Hall." And we're like ... okay?



Sally: Yeah. She – they’re like, the Ajah heads have hand-picked Sitters, and it’s like –

Emily: That’s not how it’s usually done – apparently.

Sally: Yeah, and it’s like, we’re in book ten, and I didn’t know that wasn’t how it’s usually done. It’s like when we –

Emily: Nor do I care, frankly.

Sally: It’s like when Sivan is like, “Everyone who’s sitting in the Hall of the Tower is way too young,” and I’m like –

Emily: Yeah, and you’re like –

Sally: That doesn’t mean anything to me, Sivan, because this wasn’t an established rule before it was apparently so heinously broken.

Emily: Yeah, there are conspiracies happening within both Halls of the Tower for no discernible reason.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I truly have been racking my brains –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And trying – I even tried – I was like, “How can I even put this into Google?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Why –

Sally: Why Sitters so ... little?

Emily: Why this happen, Robert? And I – I’ve got nothing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I’ve got – literally, there’s no, like, evil reason for this that I’m aware of. There’s no, like, power grab reason for this.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I just don’t remember. It’s not relevant. But boy, is it treated like it’s a big deal on both sides.

Sally: Yeah, Yukiri basically faints. She’s like – (gasps)

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: “How could they do something so scandalous as hand-pick Sitters?” And it’s like, well, who picks the Sitters, then? Is it a vote?

Emily: They're like, "Oh, well, it's different for everyone –"

Sally: Is it an electoral college?

Emily: "But apparently it's a vote," and I'm like, okay, I didn't know that, bitch, so how was I –

Sally: How was I supposed to be scandalized?

Emily: Why would I care?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So what if the Ajah heads picked them? And they're like, "It means that the Ajah heads conspired together to pick them, so maybe the Ajah heads know each other," and I'm like, I would not expect them to not know each other.

Sally: Yeah, it doesn't feel like that'd be an easy secret to keep.

Emily: I get all the Ajah heads are, like, secretive from everyone, but, like, why? And also, who cares?

Sally: Yeah, it's just – it's –

Emily: Mystifying.

Sally: Yes. And everything that happens in this plot with the Black Ajah hunters is mystifying –

Emily: Pretty mystifying.

Sally: To me. Like, all of it is just really hard to get a grasp on. And they do seem to react to everything as though it is the most scandalous, catastrophic news they have ever heard. So, like, it's a little bit of the Boy Who Cried Wolf situation.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, I don't know what to actually be upset about. Except for them torturing women in the basement.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: That is genuinely upsetting.

Emily: More on that if we ever come back to the Black Ajah hunters, but, uh, we're short on time, so we'll wrap it up.

Sally: We'll end it.

Emily: Um, we've got the full other half of the Crossroads of Twilight pro – pro – prologue to get through, which will include a point of view from Gawyn, tragically; um, a long one from Bashere; and then a very, very long one from a random Aes Sedai in Cairhien named Samitsu.

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: We'll be dealing with various assassination attempts in those last two.

Sally: Ugh. Guys, I really thought they were gonna take Dobraine from me.

Emily: I know, I would have stopped reading right there.

Sally: Yeah. Dobraine's the only thing holding France together.

Emily: MVP. Pffft. So that's how Crossroads of Twilight started. Not with a bang – well. Ituralde.

Sally: With a bang.

Emily: Immediately followed by a whimper. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: It's like – fireworks! And then no more fireworks for the rest of the night.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They're all malfunctioning.

Sally: It was one fire – you get one firework.

Emily: We just got one beautiful, glorious firework.

Sally: It's like in Lord of the Rings when Merry and Pippin set all of the fireworks off way too early –

Emily: The big dragon. Yeah. And then everyone's like, "Ah, great, well, no more fireworks."

Sally: And everyone's like, "Wow, the rest of this party fucking sucks –"

Emily: Blegh.

Sally: "You losers. No wonder Gandalf made you wash all the dishes."

Emily: Okay, everyone. Well.

Sally: Should we do favorite character, least favorite character?

Emily: Well, it's pretty obvious. Favorite character is Ituralde –

Sally: Yeah. Obviously.

Emily: Least favorite character is ... Valda.

Sally: Yeah. I can't disagree.

Emily: It's just pretty easy one-and-dones, this time around. (cough)

Sally: Yeah. There really are no other contenders.

Emily: Yeah, everyone else I'm just sort of "meh" about.

Sally: I mean, there's other characters – contenders for least favorite character. Logain is –

Emily: Yeah. Pretty bad. Gabrelle. (gagging noise)

Sally: Pretty horrific. Gabrelle and Toveine – Toveine are really annoying.

Emily: Everyone at the Black Tower right now. Terrible.

Sally: Um. But Ituralde is the MVP. Welcome, and we will see you again in 900 pages. (laugh)

Emily: My beloved. Goodbye. (sing-song) Near, far, wherever –

Sally: (simultaneously, sing-song) Far, wherever you are –

Emily: Don't sue us, Celine Dion.

Sally: (gasp) Celine.

Emily: Thanks for listening, everyone. Thanks – (laugh)

Sally: Thanks.

Emily: Forgot how it goes. I do it every episode. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media. Um.

Sally: Absolutely nailed it.

Emily: If you are interested in sponsoring a transcription of, uh, our episodes, which we try and release every week after the episodes have come out, then check out our Twitter or Instagram. There are links there to our Ko-fis. Each transcript is three dollars, and if you, um, sponsor, then, you know, you'll get a little shout-out when the transcript comes out.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And of course we'll be eternally grateful.

Sally: And we'll be eternally grateful for keeping EHR super accessible.

Emily: Indeed.

(distant car horn sound)

Sally: Honk.

Emily: Honk. Do you have anything to add?

Sally: No, I think that is all the podcast logistics for now.

Emily: Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: Um. This, um, is a – I was on vacation last week and – with both my brothers, um, and my dad, but he had to leave one day, unfortunately, to work, but for some reason, my brother Perry turned on the new Chip and Dale movie with, um, Andy Samberg and John Mulaney. He was like, “I really want to watch it,” and it was like, okay. (laugh) This might as well happen. And they – what makes this a sign-off and what makes it extremely embarrassing is that there were multiple moments where me and both my brothers were laughing out loud. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Like, we had some genuine positive responses to the new Chip and Dale movie, and that, I think, is pretty embarrassing, so.

Emily: That’s pretty funny. Okay, everyone! Have a good week. Goodbye!

Sally: Au revoir.