



Episode 208: Airing of Grievances

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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: We're not even watching any anime, so I guess this is Everybody Hates Rand – (laugh)

Sally: I know.

Emily: Your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. There's no delaying it. Oh, God, I just heard something. (gasp, laugh) Did you see that?

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Wheee! His whole butt – (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: His butt got, like, two feet of clearance. Ah, but not his front part.

Sally: What was that, Tybalt? (laugh)

Emily: I don't know; he heard a noise or I moved quickly or something. (laugh)

Sally: Oh my goodness.

Emily: (laugh) I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: Okay, well, we've now had an anime sidebar and a political sidebar, so on to Wheel of Time, where we get way more information about Darkhounds than I think we need considering that they are not ever a relevant threat in this series.

Sally: I know. It's so weird. And it's also just, like – Masuri is like, "I've actually studied them at length," and it's like –

Emily: "I, personally," and I'm like, whaaaat?

Sally: How convenient.

Emily: Yeah, how nice that the one lady who made her pet project the Darkhounds is like, “Oh, well –”

Sally: “I’m here.”

Emily: “I’m here, actually. I’m one of two Aes – one of three Aes Sedai – technically two Aes Sedai who were assigned to be here by the Dragon Reborn –”

Sally: Right.

Emily: I guess ta’veren. But also, her knowledge is not useful.

Sally: Yeah, and it’s super upsetting, ‘cause they are, like, an interesting – a really interesting little thing that’s going on.

Emily: I know; she starts, like, monologuing about them – she’s like, “There’s, like, a set number of packs; we don’t know how many. Here’s how many there usually are; here’s –” and then Elyas is like, “Here’s how wolves – how – Darkhounds used to be wolves, but they eat the souls of dying wolves when – that become Darkhounds,” and I’m like, damn, that’s crazy.

Sally: Yeah.

Tybalt: (meows)

Emily: Anyway – because that’s the series.

Sally: Right.

Tybalt: (meows)

Emily: Tybalt –

Sally: Do not bite Ed.

Emily: Um, yeah, we just get all this information that I’m like, oh, yeah – just, like, objectively, I like information about fantasy monsters –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: And worldbuilding if it’s, you know, interesting and, you know, there’s nothing – like, there’s nothing offensive about the Darkhounds as a concept, so I don’t mind Robert Jordan waxing poetic about them, but it’s sort of a Chekhov’s gun situation – a failed Chekhov’s gun situation.

Sally: Yeah, the gun doesn’t actually ever go off. Um, also, Chekhov’s gun only works in the short form, Robert Jordan.

Emily: Yeah, that’s true.

Sally: Or – I mean, I guess it can work in the long form. It's intended for short stories, but I digress. Um.

Emily: But, like, if you bring up a threat and then –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It never actually threatens any of our main characters –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, the Darkhounds are at the Last Battle; I'm not trying to say they're not. But there's so much going on at the Last Battle and so many threats and the – that the Darkhounds do not even register as a major one. They're just sort of, like, in the background, also doing some fighting. And you're like, oh, well, I was sort of hoping that they would, like – there would be something relevant for Perrin there, you know?

Sally: Yeah, it's also really frustrating, 'cause Perrin is, of course, our wolf boy. And it's like, this is a perfect, um, antagonist for him, then, are these – like, Perrin asks Elyas this really interesting question when Elyas says, "Darkhounds are made by other Darkhounds eating the souls of dying wolves," and Perrin says, "Can that happen to a man who's –"

Emily: Talks to wolves, like us.

Sally: Yeah. And Elyas is like – ("I don't know" noise) And it's like, it'd be interesting if that was, like, a legitimate threat for Perrin as he's –

Emily: Yeah, what if we had to watch that happen to Elyas?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Then Perrin could be, like, genuinely freaked out about that.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And also, that would be, like, a cool and terrible downfall for Elyas –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: A character who is fine –

Sally: Yeah, he's pretty misogynistic.

Emily: But he would be better served –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Serving as a warning of things that can happen to you.

Sally: Yeah, and it, like – in terms of, um – we've talked about this before. In terms of, like, immersive fantasy, which Wheel of Time is very broadly. Its biggest – biggest one is immersive fantasy if we're talking about the four categories of fantasy. And, like, this is a common tool in

immersive fantasy, to be like, “Here’s this thing that we know a lot about, but it’s not necessarily plot-relevant because it serves to, like, add depth to the world.” But, like, we’re in book ten, and the world is already very deep and very big, and so I want everything that’s happening to be plot-relevant. We are on book ten, right?

Emily: We are on book ten. We keep getting confused –

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: ‘Cause we skipped Path of Daggers, which I know all of you will be thrilled to hear is becoming our mental downfall – (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: That we skipped Path of Daggers; that keeps confusing us.

Sally: Hubris. Um, so it just is, like, a little exhausting at this point to have something be introduced what is relatively late in the game and then not have, like, any real payoff for it. It kind of stinks.

Emily: Yeah, I guess I personally – I – I know what you’re saying about immersive fantasy, but as a person who constantly, when I’m writing, I’m looking for things to cut out –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Information that is not relevant to the story because I’m a wordy writer; I’m a rambler, so I’m constantly like, “Ugh, there are things I could cut out here because this will not be relevant to the story.” And I just think Robert Jordan should have done that a little bit more. And I also don’t think, like – I think if you’re writing immersive fantasy and you’re going to throw in things, they can be not plot-relevant, but they should still be, like, an interactive element, if that makes sense.

Sally: Yeah, no, I’m definitely not trying to say this is, like, a good instance of that –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It’s just one of the functions that it serves. Like, a much, um, more, like, effective instance of this because it doesn’t detract, really, from what is going on, is, like, in Lord of the Rings, you know there are five wizards: the white wizard, the gray wizard, the brown wizard, the blue wizard, and – I can’t remember what –

Emily: I think there’s, like, two of the same color.

Sally: There might be. Um, but you only ever meet three of the wizards.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: You meet Gandalf, Saruman, and Radagast. So there’s just, like, these other wizards that are out there –

Emily: Well, yeah.

Sally: Doing stuff, and, like, Tolkien mentions them several times, and you're just like, oh, that's interesting; that's just, like, a bit of the world where they are these important figures doing important things, but we don't know what those things are, and it gives the world, like, a deeper agency. Like, things are happening beyond our central plot. And that's, like, a very deft – it's done very neatly, because I'm like, oh, that's interesting, what's the blue wizard up to? But I don't spend, in this instance, like, six pages going on about the Darkhounds and then –

Emily: Yeah, I would say, like, in this series specifically, and this is a bad example because it does come back, but, like, up until this point, instances of – mentions of the, uh, other continent, Shara –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: That's, like, fine.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In terms of immersive world-building; just being like, yup, there are other continents. A few of our characters have, like, interacted with people from there or have heard legends about there; Noal is full of stories about them because that's indicative of the fact that he's Jain Farstrider.

Sally: Right.

Emily: So, like, although the Shara come back at the end of the series – spoiler alert – it would've been fine – it would've been totally fine if they didn't.

Sally: Yeah, if they never did.

Emily: No one would even have clocked it, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, anyway, so that's my major – one of my major beefs from this section is, like, don't give me cool Darkhound intel and then I never get to, like, whip it out and use it you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I want it to be bullets in the chamber, not, like –

Sally: Yeah, in that – terms of, like, Chekhov's gun. Like –

Emily: I want to be able to be like, "Oh, no; it's one of the seven packs that Masuri has personally interacted with –" (laugh) I don't know. You know?

Sally: Yeah. What's Masuri doing? She's just wandering around the continent, hunting Darkhounds.

Emily: I know, chasing down Darkhounds? It's, like, a sick career.

Sally: Yeah, I want that career.

Emily: What's up with Masuri?

Sally: Very Supernatural vibes.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Masuri Winchester. (laugh)

Emily: Masuri Winchester. The road so far. She doesn't have a Sam Winchester, though. I guess maybe her Warder is her Sam Winchester. We don't know anything about him, though. Anyway —

Sally: I apologize if the microphone is picking up Ed purring.

Emily: Hopefully not, but there might just be, like, a bass line of vibrations in the background, and it's Ed. Don't worry about it. So of these two chapters, the first one picks up immediately where we left off, with everyone kind of gathered around the Darkhound footprints, and Masuri gives us this lecture; there's more interpersonal stuff going on in the background with everyone that I'm not particularly interested in, about the Wise Ones having apprenticed, against their will, the Aes Sedai.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um — and the Aes Sedai are now having character growth, much like Egg. Now they're becoming better, stronger people, as a result of having, I don't know —

Sally: As a result of, like — just some, like, abuse and bullying.

Emily: Yeah. Of just being bullied and, like, getting some — I don't know. I don't know.

Sally: Yeah, it's just, like, a frustrating — like, this is a trope I really struggle with, is the idea of, like, the teacher that is super mean to you is always the one that's gonna help you —

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Grow the most.

Emily: I just don't buy that. I've watched Naruto. Kakashi's so nice.

Sally: Yeah. And, like, personally —

Emily: I mean, he's also mean, but he's also very nice.

Sally: He — I mean, yes, Kakashi is perfect in all things and has a perfect balance. Except for the, like, rampant PTSD that he's dealing with, Kakashi is perfect in all things. Not that PTSD makes you an imperfect person, but Kakashi does make some weird decisions —

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: About, like — the fact that he was in the ninja CIA at fourteen, and he's like, "That seems reasonable to do to other children."

Emily: He's just like, "Oh, that's fine, yeah." And you're like, "Mm."

Sally: "Itachi can totally be in the ninja CIA when he's, like, eight."

Emily: Sure. Sure sure sure.

Sally: "That makes perfect sense." (laugh)

Emily: Sure. This won't lead to any –

Sally: So – this won't – (laugh)

Emily: Bad repercussions or whatever.

Sally: Who could've predicted this? Um.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: What am I saying? (laugh)

Emily: I dunno. Kakashi's nice. Most anime mentors are, like, of the nice variety, or at least they are, like –

Sally: No, yeah, I think that's fair to say.

Emily: Nice – they are kind, perhaps –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is better to say than nice.

Sally: Yeah. And I just think, like, personally, of teachers that were really mean to me, they had way more, like, psychological damage –

Emily: Yeah, they just made me afraid to learn.

Sally: Yeah. Like, it's not like – and I think there's this, like, underlying thread of being like, "I'm gonna do super good out of spite –"

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: "To prove that I can," and it's like, that's just, like, such a weird capitalist myth, that you have to, like, just work really hard and you can't actually learn and grow by people who are kind and let you take your time.

Emily: Yeah, I think the project here is that Robert Jordan is trying to enforce Egg's beliefs that it would be better for the White Tower generally to incorporate –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: A multicultural perspective and educational methods. Um, but I agree with that insofar as it is voluntary.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And he's not showing a lot of nuance, of being like, Egg personally, like, asked for and was very passionate about receiving mentorship from the Wise Ones. As a result, she has a very close relationship with the women who were her mentors.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, and, you know, that style of teaching had its own issues, in my opinion – not something I would buy into – but whatever, this is a fantasy text. But, like, we're supposed to believe that these women en masse because it's not just happening with Masuri and Seonid – this is happening with all of our, you know, Dumai's Wells Aes Sedai who have now been incorporated as Wise One apprentices – we're just supposed to believe that every single one of these women is like, "Oh, yeah, I am quickly being brainwashed into accepting this form of bullying as a viable education method," and it's like, I would be pretty mad all the time. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. Yes. I agree completely.

Emily: Anyway, that's going on in the background. Masuri gives her whole spiel about Darkhounds, and basically the effect of it is that she's like, "There's not really anything to worry about; they were here an hour ago; they circled, but they are clearly on a different mission because if they, you know, weren't, then we would be aware of it."

Sally: Right.

Emily: We'd be dead. Um, especially because this pack was so big. It was, like, fifty of them, she thinks.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is huge.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and this is also, like, the Chekhov's gun situation is that we are led to believe that this particular pack had a goal in mind and so that is sort of like, oh, well, what's that, then?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I expect an answer to that question at some point, and I – as far as I know, we're not ever given one. Um, at some point, Perrin starts, like, hearing signals from sentries that Masema and a bunch of his guys have been spotted, and so Perrin's like, "Get ready, everyone, for the shitshow that's about to start." He's preoccupied thinking, like, maybe Masema found out about this paper that Berelain's thief catcher stole, and I'm like – and is maybe going to just kill them all in order to suppress that information, and I'm like, bestie, I don't think you're thinking that through all the way. Either – like, if Masema kills you, specifically, then he's basically committing to killing your entire camp.

Sally: Yeah, which I don't think is outside of Masema's realm of possibilities.

Emily: No, but I think it's on the extreme end of the spectrum in terms of, like –



Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He would lose a lot of people doing it. As often as Perrin cites Masema smelling of madness, including this chapter, I believe –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Oh, no, it's not called that. It's a different chapter – it's a different chapter about Masema called "The Scent of Madness." Masema acts in a pretty rational way most of the time.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: He does not act with any sort of conscience or empathy, um. Or, um, nor does he bring logic to his, shall we say, religious arguments, but cult leaders never do. He's mad in that way, but he is not, like, acting irrationally.

Sally: No, that's a fair point. It's definitely Perrin who's a little – who's being led to be irrational based off his just, like, really vague anxiety about this paper and everything that's going on and –

Emily: Yeah, and this is, like, a looming – this is the Damocles' sword, is Masema looming above him, and as we said extensively in last episode, this is something Perrin could do something about but is choosing not to, so it's a little hard to be sympathetic with him. But it is a very big, big scary threat. Masema's guys outnumber him suddenly.

Sally: Yeah, they've got, like, three hundred people, and they send someone running back to the camp and are like, "Bring whoever you can." Um.

Emily: Bring more people, yeah. Just so we have a fair numbers fight.

Sally: Yeah, Masema brings, like, three hundred people with him.

Emily: Yeah, just to this little, like, meeting, where he's just, like, rolling up to tell Perrin something. In his entirety, in his entire mass of people, it's thousands upon thousands. I don't know what the full number is.

Sally: Um, I just read a chapter – the chapter where they finally get to rescue Faile, um, and Perrin says that they finally did a good count of Masema's people, and it is over twenty thousand.

Emily: Yikes.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That's so many people.

Sally: That's, like, an unbelievable amount of people.

Emily: Yeah, that's just – yeah, speaking of unbelievable numbers of people, where we're about to get. Um, yeah, so Masema rolls up, everyone's all tense and nervous, but basically he just comes up to say, like, "Hey, there's a town a little ways back called So Harbor that still has full

storehouses, so we could probably get food at a pretty cheap price,” and Berelain’s like, “Why would their storehouses still be full?” and that is a Chekhov’s gun question –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because there will be ominous things happening in So Harbor, explaining why their storehouses are still full. Which is fun; I really like that sequence.

Sally: I do too. I was gonna say. The So Harbor sequence fucks. I wish Perrin would do something more there, but it’s a cool little sequence.

Emily: Yeah, it is a cool way of incorporating the Dark One, bubbles of evil –

Sally: Yeah

Emily: Rather than just having a random event happen –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That then goes away immediately.

Sally: Yeah, so Chekhov’s zombie storehouse.

Emily: Yeah. Um –

Sally: Spoiler alert.

Emily: But Masema’s like, “Ah, they just usually ship their stuff out to bigger cities like Ebou Dar at inflated prices out of greed, like everyone does, but what with all of the uproar in Ebou Dar, they’re not gonna be able to do that,” which is also a rational enough explanation.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And everyone’s – Perrin’s basically like, “I don’t want to deal with this right now. Like, if you want to go there and get food, great, but I’m not fucking dealing with it.”

Sally: “I’m not going to feed my army until I rescue my wife.” (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, Perrin is literally like, “We can eat when Faile is rescued,” and everyone’s like, “Oh my God.” (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. It’s –

Emily: I’m looking for just, like, one person –

Sally: I know.

Emily: To just be standing there – you know – do you remember that very funny, um – I still think this was a very funny, um, thing that happened. At one of those, like, what’s that, where they have, like, the presidential, like, comedy night, almost?

Sally: Oh, yeah, and there was –

Emily: And usually there's, like, a comedian who does a – a stand-up routine, basically, but that one year Barack Obama had, uh, was it Key or Peele? I think Key –

Sally: I – yeah, I think it was Key. I can't remember.

Emily: As his, quote unquote, anger translator.

Sally: Anger translator. Yeah, that was a good bit.

Emily: That was a very good bit. Yeah.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I just want someone to be my anger translator in this scene –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To be like, “What the fuck, man? What do you think's gonna happen when you run out of food?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: This is still gonna be a problem.

Sally: I know. And, like, I also just – again, spoiler alert, but there's a spoiler alert at the beginning of this podcast, so what am I doing – so I just read the scene where Aram tries to kill Perrin. And his reasoning is that Masema has convinced him that Perrin is a Darkfriend, da da da da da, and I'm like, what if his reason was just that Perrin is annoying? (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Have you met the guy?

Sally: Anyone would try to kill him. Aram was finally just like, “I've had enough.”

Emily: I mean, yeah, it would've been way funnier –

Sally: “I haven't been fed.”

Emily: If Aram wasn't, like, radicalized – that's the word I was looking for last episode, by the way – if Aram wasn't even radicalized by Masema; he was just like, “I've had enough.”

Sally: Yeah. “I've just hit my limit.”

Emily: “I've hit my limit with you, pal.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It would be a pretty hard argument for Aram, of all people, though, to be the one who snaps.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, in reality, it should be Grady and Neald who get to –

Emily: Yes!

Sally: Who are literally being worked to the bone. They drag Grady out of bed.

Emily: Oh, my poor baby.

Sally: I know. And it's like, the man's already tired enough. So anyway, I just think Grady and Neald should get to be like, "No."

Emily: "Fuck off, actually."

Sally: "We're done. You can't do any of this without us, so we're striking."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: "We're unionizing. A two-person union."

Emily: Yep. "Goodbye."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "Give us our rights or no portals."

Sally: "No portals." Ugh, the Asha'man should unionize against Mazrim Taim.

Emily: I know. They should just –

Sally: Someone write the fanfic.

Emily: PLEASE. I'm begging you.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Who would lead the union mobilization? Which of them would it be? I mean, it would obviously – Grady and Neald would obviously have to be big proponents of unionization, but –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They'd be a little separated from the efforts of the main contingent.

Sally: I know, I'm trying to think, like, we've got some pretty good –

Emily: And don't say Logain, 'cause Logain is a class traitor.

Sally: No, I wouldn't say Logain – I would probably say – it would probably have to be, like, Androl, right?

Emily: Yeah. Have you even met him yet?

Sally: Like, very briefly.

Emily: Oh, okay, yeah. He's mentioned a couple of times and then Brandon Sanderson –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is like, “Well, here’s a character –”

Sally: Here’s a –

Emily: “I can insert a DnD personality onto.”

Sally: Yeah. Competent enough character. But if I could have my pick, it would be Grady.

Emily: That’s fair enough, yeah.

Sally: If I could just, like, put all of the Asha’man back together – or Damer Flinn. (laugh)

Emily: Damer Flinn. Powerful. Especially ‘cause Damer Flinn was, like, in the Queen’s Guard or something like that.

Sally: Yeah. He’s just like, “I have experience; I unionized the Queen’s Guard.” (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. “I’ve done it before.”

Sally: But, yeah, they should all unionize against Mazrim Taim, who is a tyrant –

Emily: And also Perrin, who is also a tyrant.

Sally: And also Perrin. And also Rand, who is also a tyrant. So.

Emily: Anyway. Um, having dispensed this news, Masema basically, like, peaces out. Like, that’s it. (laugh) hilariously – I know this isn’t actually funny; it’s actually horrifying – but, like, as they’re, like, riding down this snowy mountain, all these people – someone’s, like, horse falls, and he just gets immediately trampled –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it’s just like – (laugh) Imagine that, like, scene of the Huns in the animated “Mulan,” but we see, like, one guy fall off a cliff –

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: With, like, a Wilhelm scream –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Ahhh! That’s what I was picturing.

Sally: Yeah, and then, as they’re leaving, they just leave the man on the ground, but they butcher his horse in front of everybody.

Emily: Yeah, ‘cause they need meat. And I’m like, these are Masema’s people; I wouldn’t expect – I would expect them to fully be doing cannibalism at this point, so.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Not to be Donner Party on main.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Anyway.

Sally: (to Ed) Hello.

Emily: As Masema leaves, um, everyone – or, I should say, Arganda, who – as a constant refresher, we will have to bring this up: Gallenne is Berelain's captain of the guard; his only, uh, defining character trait is that he is pessimistic. He's an older gent.

Sally: And he has an eyepatch.

Emily: And he has an eyepatch. Arganda is Alliandre's guard, and he is literally the only person who seems to care that Alliandre is missing, so I don't blame him for being pissed off all the time.

Sally: Yeah

Emily: But he's pissed off all the time and wants to save the queen with the same fervor that Perrin wants to rescue Faile, um, except I find his a little bit more understandable because he literally – it's his job to protect the queen.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He gets paid by her.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And also, she's the queen of his country –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Not just the queen of his heart, Perrin.

Sally: Blegh.

Emily: Anyway, Arganda spots Elyas and a Maiden coming back and, like, runs to, uh – up to them as Perrin does, and they're like, "What's going on?" Elyas is like, "Okay, good news: we have located where the Shaido have stopped and camped, and it does not appear that they are going to be moving anytime soon; this seems like a semi-permanent situation. Bad news: there's a fuck-ton of them." And everyone's like, "How many is a fuck-ton?" and he's like, "Like ten thousand," which is a pretty big number and, as we have said, an absurd number considering that we are reminded this is not even the full might of the Shaido.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: How many Aiel are there? Several billion, it would appear.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Just the whole population of modern-day Asian is in the Aiel Waste.

Sally: The Aiel Waste.

Emily: A – a land that does not support large populations –

Sally: I know.

Emily: We have been told repeatedly.

Sally: It's very confusing to be like, this desert that Robert Jordan has created, they literally fight wars over, like, a puddle of water –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And yet there are four billion of them living there?

Emily: Who knows?

Sally: Make it make sense.

Emily: Um, anyway. Perrin's – everyone's like, "Well, what are the chances that we can ransom our particular captives?" and the Wise Ones are like, "Eh, kind of a – you know, that's not something that we, the Aiel do; it's not part of our honor code, but it's very obvious that the Shaido are not following our honor code, but then, if they're not following our honor code, are they following any honor code?" Like –

Sally: No.

Emily: How can we rely on them to keep their end of a bargain?

Sally: Right.

Emily: Actually, I don't know if anyone even really says that; it's just sort of implied. And everyone's sort of talking about this; Annoura's like, "Yeah, well, I'm a trained negotiator; we can try and do this," and Perrin's just like, "No. We're not doing that. I just want to go see it, and we're not – we're not gonna do that." In his internal monologue, he's like, "I don't want –" He basically says, "I do not want a peaceful resolution to this, because I want to – I want revenge."

Sally: Yeah, he says, "I'm not going to reward them for hurting Faile."

Emily: Yeah, which is some batshit, um – we – I don't – we don't need to explain to you why – (laugh) why that's fucked up.

Sally: Yeah, speaking of Naruto, when I was first – I reread – I reread the, like, blogs that I wrote on books that we're now recording on, to be like, "Did I have any insight six months ago that might be interesting?" Sorry, Ed is just, like, shedding all over the microphone, all over the couch.

Emily: I know, there's fur all over the dent in this couch.

Sally: Um, but I read this chapter around the similar time that I watched the very excellent arc of Naruto having to, like, face his shadow self –

Emily: Ah, I loved that arc.

Sally: Before he can, like –

Emily: So cute.

Sally: Come to terms with the demons inside of him, basically. Um, and in this, like, beautiful little arc – spoiler alert for Naruto: Shippuden – Naruto decides that he is not going to hold feelings of hate or revenge against the people who, um, chronically abused him as a child, refused to feed him, isolated him. He's going to practice, like, forgiveness and healing and he's going to work to, like, break cycles of trauma and revenge. And his whole thing is he's like, "I want to get stronger and better at fighting –" traditionally masculine things – "in order to build a more peaceful world." And you're just like, wow. That's so nice.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And so it's just, like, so frustrating to be like, stories can do this and have, like, really healthy representations of –

Emily: Yeah, stories, also, from the nineties –

Sally: Yeah, like, it's not like Naruto released today.

Emily: Yeah, and it's also not like Naruto is the pinnacle of progressive politics. Come on. You know?

Sally: Yeah, like –

Emily: Whatever. But, like, yeah, that's a story model that is totally possible, and Robert Jordan is just like, Perrin is going to constantly reject that and not grow as a character –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because of it. Like, we are meant to be on a downhill slope. This is not necessarily meant to be representative of Perrin being a good person or anything like that, but because our uphill slope from it is so convoluted and difficult to parse, it's – you know, it's never like Perrin has a moment of, like, "You know, I did some really fucked-up things, and I'm – really regret a lot of it, and I need to make restitution –"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "For what I did." That just doesn't happen.

Sally: Yeah, so it's just really frustrating to see this model – 'cause this is the model we often see – and we'll look at things like Naruto and there – there are other examples, I'm sure, I'm just not thinking of, that take, like, an actually very interesting look at revenge and what that means. And here, Perrin's just like, "I'm going to kill a bunch of people," though I do say it's very satisfying when he kills Rolan.

Emily: Oh, yeah. Bye, bitch.

Sally: (laugh)



Emily: Um, and I will also say, to be clear, I do not think it is a, um, practical – I don't think it's a practical possibility of negotiating with the Shaido.

Sally: Fair.

Emily: At all. Um, but I do think that, um, I – I don't like how that is not, like, accurately represented. Like, Perrin makes this decision sheerly out of wanting revenge and not being like, “There are logical reasons why this is not likely or possible, among them the fact that we would only be ransoming the six or so people who got taken from us. What about the thousands upon thousands of people who have just been kidnapped from their homes?”

Sally: Right.

Emily: You know, “Do we have a responsibility to them?” Et cetera, et cetera. But, like, I also think there are other solutions to this problem that do not necessarily involve the mass scale of violence that results.

Sally: Yeah, I also, um – and I'm sorry that I always turn this around to, like, critique Robert Jordan. I know writing is hard. But this is a – a problem that Robert Jordan basically – the sheer number of the Shaido, the way that Sevanna and company – Sevanna in particular – have just, like, thrown out honor codes – like, she is just a very evil-to-her-core kind of person. Like, the way that – and, again, just the, like, sheer number. There are ten thousand Shaido and five hundred Wise Ones who can channel.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And it's just like, these are basically insurmountable odds until Perrin strikes his really shitty deal with the Seanchan. These are just, like, insurmountable odds. So Robert Jordan has just created a problem that we cannot fix with peaceful solutions.

Emily: But I can think of several!

Sally: Well, like, Robert Jordan has, like –

Emily: No, I agree, I agree.

Sally: Like, he's just, like, presenting a problem that he's, like – he's trying to – even if, like, yes, we can see from the outside, he's like, “I am writing myself into where there are no peaceful solutions.”

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Because –

Emily: Because he wants us – he wants to force Perrin into a situation where he has to rely on the Seanchan.

Sally: Right.

Emily: That's the end goal here. But it's just so frustrating because there are ultimately – I mean, we're always going to argue that there are better possibilities than allying with the Seanchan.

Sally: Yeah, of course.

Emily: Um, and it's sheerly just Robert Jordan's project that's at work here. But I just become so frustrated when they're like, "Oh my God, not only is this a huge amount of people; there's a huge amount of Wise Ones because that was how the Traveling thing with Sammael broke up; you know, there's, like, four hundred Wise Ones, which is a huge amount. And I do really like the clever solution that they come up with, of, like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Spiking the water supply with forkroot.

Sally: I know, that's very cool.

Emily: Spoiler. That's a very interesting thing. And I like that that showcases Perrin's cleverness in a way.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But there are also other clever things you could be doing. They talk constantly about how, like, well, we just can't get into the city because once you're in, you can't get out. You can teleport.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Also, the fact that you can teleport means that you are not isolated in this situation. You at any time could Travel to Rand, to any other number –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Of people and be like, "Hey, here's a big thing that might interest you. This entire countryside is being ravaged by the Shaido, which are still your problem because you brought them here."

Sally: Yeah, or it's like, remember –

Emily: "At the very least, can you lend me, I don't know, fifty channelers?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Who can make gateways?"

Sally: No, you're – you're so right. And this comes back to something you talk about all the time, which is, like, the underutilization of teleportation.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Because – and it's so frustrating 'cause Perrin is, like, literally working Grady and Neald to the bone. Like, there's a section that – the – in the section that I just read, he's like, "Neald is so tired that he didn't even do his little mustaches today," or whatever –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And I'm like, how dare you.

Emily: That's so upsetting.

Sally: That's so – like – they're just, like, so tired; they're, like, stumbling around, and it's like, you didn't think to use one of those gateways to go find Rand or go find Mat, your childhood friend the military genius, who could probably solve this in three minutes flat.

Emily: Oh my God. Mat would love this situation.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mat's like, "Hmm."

Sally: Little brain just, like, explodes. And it's – so, yeah.

Emily: Yeah, but this is just the prevalent problem of Wheel of Time. We're given an ensemble cast who never works together –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: After the first couple of books. When they do work together, it is sheerly by accident.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And that's not a fun model to follow. I – I don't know. It's like the Stranger Things model, but the Stranger Things model works because in the majority of seasons, our ensemble cast does come together at the end –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And be like, "Here is the information we have been picking up all season; here's how we're putting it together; here's how we're going to solve each other's problems."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, oh, cool.

Sally: Very satisfying.

Emily: Like, okay, maybe Perrin can't handle this situation; Mat definitely could, especially if he's given a fair number of channelers. Maybe Perrin could be doing something over that Rand can't be doing – I don't know. You know?

Sally: Yeah. It – it is extremely frustrating: the, like, fracturing of our party. Um.

Emily: I'm mostly just mad because it never even is brought up.

Sally: Yeah, it's –

Emily: As a possibility.

Sally: You're so right. Perrin does not dedicate any energy to creative problem-solving. And if we want to give, like, credit: like, that – again, like you said – is the project. Like, Perrin is on this downhill slope towards violence; he's making bad decisions; he's becoming a worse person. He's letting vengeance turn him into a bad person. But, like, again, as you mentioned, the, like, coming out of it – it's not necessarily a reflection on how these things were bad.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: It's –

Emily: It's just like, well. And they did do it at the end, so I guess it all worked out.

Sally: Yeah. And it's also really frustrating because Perrin is also always talking about how he is, like, "I never know who's really in charge. Is Berelain in charge, am I in charge, are the Wise Ones in charge?" It's like, nobody's challenging you at any point.

Emily: Just because, you know, Masuri looks to the Wise Ones before she looks to you? The Wise Ones are more in control of Masuri's, like, daily functions. Of course –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She would look to them before looking to you.

Sally: Yeah, and I just find that really frustrating because I guess it's supposed to be like Perrin is so irrational and terrifying right now or something that people don't want to challenge them, but, like, again, Annoura is a skilled negotiator. Berelain rules a country. The Wise Ones have been ruling people for a long time. Like, nobody is presenting any solution except for whatever Perrin says –

Emily: Yeah, you're right.

Sally: And they're not pushing back, and it's just this, like, really frustrating look at one man just, like, barreling ahead, no matter –

Emily: And everyone being like, "Well, okay. I guess we have no choice but to follow this guy," and it's like, you actually have many, many, many choices.

Sally: Yeah, just leave.

Emily: Just leave. You wanna – go up to Grady and Neald, be like, "Hey, you wanna peace out?" Grady and Neald –

Sally: Grady and Neald will be like, "Fuck yeah."

Emily: "Fuck, yes, this is awful."

Sally: And it's also – speaking of Grady and Neald – it's also really frustrating that they're not like, "Hey, maybe we can turn to the Dragon Reborn, our boss, for a little bit more support here."

Emily: I know. I'm inclined to give Grady and Neald every possible grace –

Sally: I know.

Emily: Because we love them –

Sally: They're perfect.

Emily: I do think that there should have been more severe consequences of Perrin using them the way he does.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I think Grady or Neald or both should have been burned out at the end of this.

Sally: I – I agree.

Emily: At the very least, there's, like, a weird, convoluted thing at the beginning of, I guess, Towers of Midnight 'cause I don't know if we get a Perrin point of view in Gathering Storm –

Sally: (sigh) What a blessing.

Emily: I can't remember. But, like, when we pick back up with Perrin after the big battle –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, at Malden, I guess, there's, like, this convoluted reason why they haven't just traveled back to Rand, and it's that, like, Grady and Neald have been affected by some sickness which is meant to be, like, a bubble of evil –

Sally: Right.

Emily: And it just happened to hit the two of them amongst some other people. And I'm like, you could make a very rational argument that Grady and Neald simply cannot –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Do anything for weeks or even months after what you have put them through.

Sally: Yeah, it's also frustrating – sorry, this is our just, like, airing of grievances –

Emily: Yeah, this is – welcome to the annual airing of grievances, Perrin edition. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. And I'm sorry I keep jumping, but it's just, like, these two – I just happened to, like, this week, really bookend the beginning of the attack on Malden and the end of the attack on Malden. So I'm like, "Attack on Malden." Um, really, like, looking at the two things in perspective. But, like, Perrin doesn't really face a lot of consequences for the things that he's been doing. Like, I'm – I was telling Emily last night that I'm really frustrated that in the fight with Aram, Perrin doesn't have to kill Aram.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, Aram dies by some other – by some arrows that the Shaido shoot at him.

Emily: It's like the classic Batman thing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Batman can't kill someone, but don't worry; the Joker will get killed in some other random way –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That certainly wasn't Batman's fault.

Sally: Yeah, and it's like, Aram was – everything that happened to Aram, as we discussed at length last episode, is, like, directly because of Perrin's neglect of this person. So it's really frustrating that he doesn't have to, like, face up to some consequences of the way that he's been neglecting other relationships in his life for Faile. It's also – like, I never want anything bad to happen to Grady and Neald, because again, they are my most beloveds, but I agree: I think one or both of them should've been burned out, and I think Rand should've had to face consequences personally from them but also from Rand.

Emily: Yeah, I'm – I get mad that the Wheel of Time doesn't have more people, like – (laugh) I like arguments in writing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I, of course, hate arguments in real life.

Sally: Of course.

Emily: Everyone here, in this room, is conflict-avoidant. But I enjoy writing well – I enjoy reading well-written arguments in fiction –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Specifically when people who have had little power are able to talk to people who had power over them and confront them with the consequences of that, probably because that's a sort of, like, something that doesn't happen in our real-world judicial system –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: And so it's something that I want from fiction –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And fantasy. But it would be so fucking satisfying, you know, at this point – since Grady and Neald didn't end up suffering life-shattering consequences, I guess we don't need it – but if they had, they should have been able to be like, “Hey, fuck you.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “What the hell?”

Sally: And I still feel like they deserve that. Like, even if they didn't go all the way to the end of being burned out to the point that they can't channel, like, they are getting sick. Like, they are –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Unwell. Perrin is using them badly.

Emily: Yeah. He's basically, like, exploiting them as labor.

Sally: Yeah. No, that's literally what I said in my blog. I'm like, "Perrin is acting like a capitalist piece of shit," who basically tells Neald, "Keep making gateways until you die." He pretty much says that to him, word for word.

Emily: Jesus.

Sally: He's like, "You just –" Or maybe he says it in his monologue; he's like, "I don't care if Neald collapses; he'll make gateways up until that point." And it's like, what is wrong with you?

Emily: I know. Give me a Grady and Neald: A) Point of view. B) Romance. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: C) Restitution arc.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That's all I want from this series. Okay, someone write the – that's what I want from the Asha'man unionizing fanfic. Simply that.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) These are the subplots.

Emily: Yeah. I want a romance arc intertwined with the unionizing arc.

Sally: I mean, what is more romantic than unionizing in the end?

Emily: Nothing.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Nothing at all.

Sally: And this is why I believe so passionately that Grady and Neald have to lead the union.

Emily: I know –

Sally: Who's being used more poorly than Grady and Neald? Maybe Narishma, but – (laugh)

Emily: Definitely Narishma. God bless Narishma and Damer Flinn –

Sally: Damer Flinn.

Emily: And Hopwil, who's dead.

Sally: Oh, RIP.

Emily: RIP, yeah. Anyway, sorry. Just to slam in a couple minutes of synopsis before we peace out –

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Emily: This has been the airing of grievances episode. Not a lot of humor here. Um, Perrin wants to go scout out Malden; he calls up Grady to do that; Grady has clearly just rolled out of bed – he's exhausted. Perrin's like, "Uh, are you able to do this? Should we get Neald?" And Grady, referring to Neald by his first name, which I just think is cute – (laugh)

Sally: I know.

Emily: Because, you know, they probably are the only people each other talks to –

Sally: I know.

Emily: He's like, "Yeah, Fager is not – is less strong than me and is more tired, so no, it'll be me." Uh, they go to Malden, Perrin and a – and a small group. They survey the city. Perrin starts, like, scoping out tactical advantages, possible points of interest, including the water supply over yonder –

Sally: Yeah. The aqueducts.

Emily: Yeah, a cute moment where they're all, you know, on their stomachs on the top of a rise, and Perrin looks over and Grady has his chin propped in his hands and is, like, focusing, and Perrin's like, "Maybe he's doing something with the Power," and I'm like, is Grady using telescope vision while he's leaning on his hands like a 13-year-old girl at a sleepover? I love him. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Grady – Grady makes finger binoculars to focus the Power.

Emily: Yeah, we, like, zoom from Arganda and Gallenne using actual, like, telescopes, and Grady's just like – (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um, as they're sitting here, scouting things out, there is a burst of, um, channeling energy that all of the channelers present feel, and Perrin is overwhelmed by, like, the colors that show him what is – Rand is doing at the moment. And as with our last chapter, our last segment with Mat, all the channelers are like, "We have to go to there," and Perrin's like, "No, that's Rand's business," which, again, is representative of the fact that, here in Wheel of Time, we do not assist each other. Um, and that's that. He is – we leave them there. We will next suffer through a long chapter of what Faile and company are up to in Malden. That's the only chapter on the docket, so get ready for another airing of grievances episode, as we just sort of work through how Robert Jordan really relies on sexual assault and humiliation to, um, brutalize his female characters. But that's that. Do you have anything to add?



Sally: No. I have aired many grievances and relatively not a lot of plot happens in these chapters, so.

Emily: Yeah. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song, to our patrons on Patreon, and our followers on social media. Thanks for sticking with us for our, uh, our little break there –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Sally had a fun vacation.

Sally: Yes, thank you.

Emily: Um, I guess that's it. Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: I guess that's it. I mean, the fact that Tybalt puked in the hallway during this episode – (laugh)

Emily: Tybalt did just puke. I'm going to cut it out so you guys don't have to hear it, but he fully just puked, and I have to go clean that up, so.

Sally: I can clean it up.

Emily: No, you can –

Sally: If you want to clean what's in your bathroom, I can clean up the hallway.

Emily: I've got it. Don't worry.

Sally: 'Kay. Um.

Emily: Okay, goodbye – (laugh)

Sally: Do you see how we just solved that conflict by communicating?

Emily: Oh my God.

Sally: Who's gonna clean up the puke?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: We spoke about it –

Emily: We did.

Sally: And we reached a resolution.

Emily: Well, fuck. It's almost like it's easy.

Sally: It's almost like it's possible. (laugh)

Emily: It's possible, Robert Jordan, you madman! Augh! Save Grady and Neald!

Sally: He smells of madness.

Emily: Goodbye!