



Episode 222: Forsaken, LLC
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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: Boy, it really is so –

Sally: I know, it's like a –

Emily: Bad.

Sally: Sunken – it's like a sinkhole.

Emily: Our cats are, like, a, um, invasive species on this couch specifically. I don't remember what I read.

Sally: Me either, man.

Emily: It was a week ago, so.

Sally: Yeah, everybody. Welcome back. Thanks for, um, hanging in there with us during our mystery surprise off-week because of my illness.

Emily: Her ailments.

Sally: My ailments. Um –

Emily: Her Victorian devastation.

Sally: It really feels like a Victorian devastation.

Emily: I know. I don't know, any moment now, she'll be coughing blood into a handkerchief.

Sally: It's probably true. I –

Emily: (fake cough)

Sally: (fake cough) I'm sick.

Emily: Yeah, but, like, delicately. Like Moulin Rouge.

Sally: Mm. Um, but we're back. I apologize for any weird voice sounds and any coughing that you hear.

Emily: We'll try to catch any coughing in the editing process. Uh, this is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheely Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: Sickly Goodger. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) This weekend, Emily was so mean to me. I felt so sick on Friday, and I had the day off work, and I was just, like, so fatigued, and I was talking in this, like, pathetic, like, "Ehhh, I don't know what to –" Like, I did not feel good. And we were ordering food, and I couldn't decide what I wanted, and I was like, "What should we get?" and she's like, "Whatever you want, sickly." (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) I feel like my tone is being misrepresented here.

Sally: (laugh) It was – it was more mocking than any – than aggressive like that, so you're right, I didn't quite capture – I didn't quite present the mise-en-scene.

Emily: (laugh) Good – good vocab pull there. Sally's in for a rude awakening in about five months when she goes on a trip to Greece with my entire family and realizes we're all that terrible and mean to each other all of the time.

Sally: It's one of the many things I worry about with traveling with her family. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Oh, they won't be mean to you.

Sally: (laugh) No, I'm not worried that they'll be mean to you. Your family is always really lovely to me. It's just, like, a – a tone I don't really know how to interact with.

Emily: Yeah. Yeah, it's tough.

Sally: Like, I – I'm generally – I will – like, my family is just generally very polite to each other, you know?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It's just a different vibe.

Emily: It's – it's equally alien to me to be around Sally's family.

Sally: Sometimes we're mean to each other. But.

Emily: In my family, we just ruthlessly mock each other, so.

Sally: Yeah, no, it'll be fine.

Emily: Okay, so, Knife of Dreams. I almost just said Crossroads of Twilight.

Sally: Whatever it is.

Emily: The first three chapters of –

Sally: Ooh. Riddles three.

Emily: Yeah, our riddles three of Knife of Dreams are, uh, three disparate points of view. You know, we're not getting into our main, uh, chunks, as, unfortunately, Robert Jordan has chosen to put these last few books into big point of view chunks of the same major characters. So we get Siuan, um, buh—what's her name? Beonin.

Sally: (simultaneously) Beonin.

Emily: Beonin slash Elaida in the second chapter, and then Aran'gar in the third chapter, which is as gross as you are expecting it to be, so trigger warning in this episode for talk about transphobia –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Among other things.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: Um, none of these are particularly fun or interesting points of view or characters, so it's just a little tough to get through. We're also not getting too many, like, major revelations. It is kind of nice to see, um, what Egg wanted to happen in the last – her last point of view – happening in that Siuan wakes up, having received her message about being alive –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Not wanting to change the strategy at this severe time.

Sally: Yeah, it's, like, one instance where Robert Jordan, like, has the right pacing. Like, I feel like in normal – normal Robert Jordan world, Egg would be like, "I'm going to do this thing," and then we would see the scene, and then we would see Siuan reacting to the thing, you know?

Emily: Ah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sally: And I feel like, for once, it's just, like, a – we know what Egg is telling Siuan, we don't need the whole dream sequence, Siuan wakes up –

Emily: Yeah, we get to skip over that, yeah.

Sally: And is just like, "I'm diving right in, I don't need to, like, talk about it at length."

Emily: Yeah. So Siuan gets to then start delivering the message to various people, and we get to start seeing the Aes Sedai, the rebel Aes Sedai, reacting to the news that Egwene is alive and does not want any rescue attempts and wants them to carry on as they have been doing. So if you were, like, stressed about that, um, because of Egg getting locked up, like your main concern was what will happen to the rebel Aes Sedai, then here is the answer for you. Um, we get a small plot twist in finding out that Beonin has been allied with Elaida this entire time, though not very helpfully. We are led to believe that Beonin was, like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Sent to Salidar and then hasn't been in contact with Elaida since.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Beonin also takes sweeping credit for things that I just assumed would have happened naturally, you know, like the various bureaucratic delays –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: For the Salidar Aes Sedai, all of their sort of misfortunes, and it's like, those were all just sort of everyone being stupid. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, like –

Emily: I don't – I don't think you really had your hands on the wheel there, Beonin.

Sally: Yeah, you're not in charge of the weather.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: She's like, "It took so long to get there," or whatever she says, but it's like, that was the snow, bitch. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. Girl. (laugh)

Sally: I can't remember exactly what she says, but.

Emily: But she's like, "Elaida, be nice to me," and Elaida's like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, whatever. Teach me how to Travel." Ugh.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, which is the worst news. Elaida having Traveling is just, like, a big downer for the rebellion. Like –

Emily: Yeah, because now –

Sally: It was kind of one of the big trump cards they held in this little cold war.

Emily: Yeah, now, uh, the White Tower can receive supplies –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The same way that other besieged characters, such as Elayne, are –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Being able to receive supplies via Traveling. So.

Sally: Absolutely.

Emily: Sort of nullifies the power of the siege. Um, and, uh, then we get a little sequence with all of the Forsaken just sort of chatting about their nefarious plans.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Including the iconic moment where Moridin, apparently for the first time, shows the rest of the Forsaken mugshots of Mat and Perrin and says, “Now, you can kill these motherfuckers any time you like.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Save Rand al’Thor for me.” Classic bad guy hubris, by the way, saying –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Save so-and-so for me.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Stupid. Why do you care?

Sally: If they’re dead, they’re dead.

Emily: If they’re dead, they’re dead.

Sally: It doesn’t matter who killed them, homie.

Emily: Yeah, it’s just – what’s it matter, bro? Um, but anyway, he’s like, “This is what these two look like, and you can totally kill them,” and Semirhage is like, “Oh my fucking god.”

Sally: “If you would’ve told me this one week earlier –”

Emily: “Then one or both of them would be dead.”

Sally: Yeah, like, I was –

Emily: Why can you not –

Sally: Can’t you do anything right, Moridin?

Emily: I know, the management in Forsaken, LLC, is – (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Forsaken, LLC.

Emily: Yeah, like – oh, hi, Ed.

Sally: The – it really is – it really is some bad management going on there. But Semirhage is like, “I was literally in the room with that man, several times.”

Emily: Several – yeah, multiple times, actually. Actually.

Sally: Actually.

Emily: And, uh, now I won’t be for – ever. So.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Missed ops there, Moridin.

Sally: Missed ops. Also, here's Ed again, sort of loudly purring –

Emily: Yeah, if you can hear it in the background.

Sally: So if you hear a soft rumbling in the background, that is not an audio failure; that is just Ed.

Emily: Yeah. I'm trying to think of what else it could be. The humming of a helicopter some miles away.

Sally: Oh, yeah. Very –

Emily: That's just hovering, I – I guess, not going further.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah. Just sort of ...

Emily: We do occasionally get aircraft flying –

Emily: Yeah, there's a –

Emily: Quite close above. There's an airport pretty close to us.

Sally: There's an airforce base and an airport pretty close to us, and there are big hospitals that sometimes get life flights, so –

Emily: Yeah, yeah.

Sally: We've got a pretty busy, um, air space above us, actually.

Emily: Air traffic.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: If someone wants to buy the air over our town in Utah –

Sally: Don't give Elon Musk any ideas. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. (laugh) You're so right. What else can that man – Ed. Do the fucking limbo. There you go.

Sally: (sing-song) Do the limbo, limbo. How low can you go?

Emily: So that's an overview of the three –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Chapters. I don't know how many details are necessary for those. Um.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We're sort of just getting par for the course for these people.

Sally: Yeah, like, in the – in Sivan's point of view, Lelaine is like, "I want to usurp the Amyrlin Seat when Egg inevitably dies," or whatever, you know?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And then Romanda, it is implied, she wants to do the same thing, and it's like, that's been a plot point for forever. Like –

Emily: Yeah, Robert Jordan is trying to be like, "There are stakes if Egg fails," and it's like, yeah, there kind of were already.

Sally: Yeah, like, it's kind of been implied that these – either of these women could usurp her if something went really wrong at any point, you know? So.

Emily: Yeah. I don't assume that Lelaine and Romanda are going to be on their best behavior while the Amyrlin Seat is in absentia. You know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, it's all sort of implied, so Robert Jordan gets one point for solid pacing and then immediately that point is deducted for bad pacing, so. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Netting zero.

Emily: You win some, you lose some.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, we get the usual stuff with Sivan, her relationship with Gareth Bryne, who at least is off-screen, but, you know, we get a lot of Sivan being in his tent for some reason –

Sally: Yeah, I never figured that out. Like, is she just sleeping there?

Emily: She's just sleeping there. I was thinking about it as I was reading it, and I was like, Robert Jordan has really captured here the essence of a thirteen-year-old girl having a crush.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's pretty unfortunate because Sivan is a woman in her, at least, fifties.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: So I don't know what that says about what Robert Jordan thinks is, A) funny –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Probably the best option –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Real women, adult women think like, eugh; or if he just thinks that's what relationships are supposed to be, because in fairness, most of the men in this series also act as though they're in sort of middle-school relationships, down to the pigtail-tugging.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, like, Siuan wants to be near Gareth but is gonna be mad about it. She's not gonna be honest with herself or anyone else about it. She constantly wants to see him. She's constantly provoking him, getting into needless fights with him. And it's like she's just – she seems like this person who's just desperate for any sort of male attention –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: From the guy she likes.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's a very, you know, sort of Carrie Bradshaw type of behavior, which, as we have said multiple times before, Robert Jordan does seem to sort of draw his insights into the female psyche from Sex and the City specifically –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is not a realistic depiction of any live woman.

Sally: Yeah, also that show is predominantly written by men.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: That's a fun Sex and the City fact. If you watch the credits each episode, it's like, "Written by Darren Star," who was, like, the showrunner or whatever –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So it's like, so much of what – like, Sex and the City is, like, such a huge thing in the cultural zeitgeist about, like, women and their relationships and their sex lives, and a lot of that mythos was constructed by men.

Emily: Men.

Sally: And how they perceive women. And it's, like, glaringly obvious if you, a woman, watch Sex and the City, you know? Like, some – so often, I'll be sitting there and be like, "None of my female friends have ever said anything close to this to me in my entire life," of just, like, the way they talk in general, or specifically about their relationships, you know?

Emily: Yeah. Or, like, if my female friends were behaving like this, they would not be my female friends for long.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know?

Sally: Yeah, like, we recently watched an episode where it's like – not to get into the weeds – (laugh) We'll do our Sex and the City podcast once we finish EHR.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: But, like, Carrie's told all of her friends that she's having an affair with her ex, who's currently married, and she's cheating on her current partner, and she's like, "Isn't it great to have friends who don't judge you no matter what?" And it's like, a good friend would judge you and tell you that you are behaving badly.

Emily: Yeah. Charlotte –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is the only good friend in that episode.

Sally: Yeah. So it's just, like, that type of misalignment of, um, female desire and relationships in general, like, with their friends or romantically, and I think talking about it in the terms of, like, a middle school setting is really helpful because so much of what comes out in the relationships of Wheel of Time is everyone just being, like, embarrassed that they have romantic and sexual feelings, you know?

Emily: Yeah. Everyone's, like, ashamed, to be sexual beings.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or they're way too unashamed. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Or they're Berelain.

Emily: Or they're Berelain and could – could use a healthy dose of shame.

Sally: Yeah, like, a much healthier dose of shame there – to just take some off of Siuan Sanche and put a little – a little sprinkling on Berelain would be nice. But, yeah, they're just, like – there's – and, like, obviously, they're sort of presenting a sort of puritanical society, so it's, like, true to form, and Robert Jordan probably was writing from a very, like, puritanical – like, I mean that in sort of, like, a general adjective way, not that Robert Jordan was himself a Puritan. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, who – God only knows.

Sally: But just this idea that sex is, like, a bad thing.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Fundamentally. But, like, so much of this puritanical, shameful attitude of just being like, "I can't believe that I have romantic and sexual feelings for anybody," results in these scenes that are just, like, insufferable to read. Like, at least Berelain is, like, horny, and that's just – she's like, "This is just me."

Emily: Yeah, and it really speaks to, like, um, the fact that Robert Jordan is treating these things like foreplay –

Sally: Mm. Mm-hmm.

Emily: Rather than, like, um, I – I – I don't know. What I – what I mean by that is that when these things are happening, it's in relationships that are given endgame.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: These are things that are definitely going to happen. There's never any real question that Siuan and Gareth Bryne are going to end up together; that has been very much alluded to and pointed to throughout the series.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: And so you reach a point as a reader where you're like, "God, will they just get together already?"

Sally: Yes.

Emily: And Robert Jordan keeps drawing out the will they/won't they as though, you know, we are too stupid to see where this is going or because he hasn't reached the right narrative point for it yet, and once more, this is a failing of being in a fourteen-book series.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Where everything is drawn out in an unholy sort of way. And also, it's just further indication of this sort of sitcom thinking.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, the – we just have to manufacture drama in the relationship, um, in order to keep people coming back for more. And it's like, never in my life do I want to keep coming back for more Siuan Sanche and Gareth Bryne.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Every time I'm reading their point of view, I begin fantasizing about what death must be like. (laugh)

Sally: No, it's so true. I also think, like – and this is my – this thought might take me a minute to stumble through, so bear with me here. I also think, like, the concept of foreplay is also, like, hits here because, like, it just, like, reads like if we were just reading, like, a normal sex – like, a sexual encounter bewithtween Siuan and Gareth Bryne, beginning to end, it might start with them, like, teasing or fighting or whatever is, you know, appropriate for their relationship –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Then they would have sex, it would be over, and then they would have a life outside of that dynamic that's, like, their relationship and the way that they interact with each other. But that's, like, never brought into it. It's just like, how do we keep our relationship, quote unquote, romantic and flirtatious a hundred percent of the time, and for Robert Jordan, I guess that means people fighting, you know? But it's like, very much feels like this just, like, drawn-out way to

make it like a relationship, capital R™, rather than just, like, sometimes people don't have any particular feelings toward one another throughout the day; they're just in the same tent.

Emily: Yeah. Yeah. You don't even need to be in the same tent also, though, Siuan.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You can be on your own.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: God.

Sally: It just – it just feels weird. It feels like everything has to be this drawn-out sexual joke.

Emily: Yeah. It sure does.

Sally: And I'm like, I don't – it's not funny, first of all.

Emily: Yeah, it feels like – the – sometimes, reading these books, I feel like I am in a medieval court, watching a jester go through a terrible stand-up comedy routine –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And everyone around me is laughing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I'm like, "What?"

Sally: "What?"

Emily: "Am I – am I – is something wrong with me that I don't get it?"

Sally: Yeah. I feel you.

Emily: What's the deal here, you know?

Sally: Yeah. What's – why is everybody laughing at this locker room humor?

Emily: And it's because I'm a time traveler in this medieval court, you know?

Sally: Sure.

Emily: These things might have been funny four hundred years ago. (laugh)

Sally: Back when the Wheel of Time should have been written.

Emily: But they weren't funny in the nineties, and they're not funny now. Um, we also get a whole lot of Siuan is bad at riding horses humor, which isn't funny. Just continues to not be funny.

Sally: Like, at some point, you just develop the skill, right?

Emily: Yeah. At some point, like, you get okay at riding horses. You'll never – you might go your whole life being like, "I'm not very comfortable on horses," but at a certain point, you'll be like, "I know how to work a horse."

Sally: (laugh) Yeah. Like, it –

Emily: It's a simple machine. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, as somebody who has ridden horses only a couple of times in their life, yeah, I don't feel, like, confident that if I had to, like, run a horse –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Or, like, gallop that I would feel very safe, but I can get on a horse and make it go in a direction.

Emily: Sure can.

Sally: It's not rocket science.

Emily: I can make it stop. I can make it go. Boy –

Sally: I can turn it left and right, and I can turn it around.

Emily: Yep.

Sally: Those are basic commands from me to another living being that only took me, a ten-year-old, the first time I got on a horse, like five minutes to figure out.

Emily: And presumably Siuan Sanche has spent more time on a horse than us.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Actually, I took horseback riding lessons when I was a little kid, so.

Sally: That's so charming.

Emily: I don't think I wanted to –

Sally: Mm. Mm.

Emily: My mom just had a phase where to get us out of the house she sent us to various lessons –

Sally: Activities, yeah.

Emily: Specifically taught by our neighbors –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: And one of them was horseback riding lessons. And anyway, I took both horseback riding lessons and, fun fact, was bitten by a horse as a child, and I still am fine with horses, so. Get over it, Siuan. Anyway, Siuan then breaks the news to, uh, the – Egg – Egg's, you know, biggest supporters –

Sally: Yeah. Cabinet.

Emily: Who are – yeah, her cabinet, who are more or less her cabinet because she’s blackmailed them into it, so. That’s great. And is like, “Yeah, Egg just, A) is in the Tower; they’re not gonna execute her; and B) she does not want to be rescued.” Notably, throughout this, no one talks or asks about Leane, which I just think is kind of sad –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because, like, Sivan is kind of her friend –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, like, shouldn’t someone care?

Sally: Shouldn’t someone be like, “Is Leane okay?”

Emily: And they’re just like, “No.” But anyway, all these women are like, “Oh, no, we should, like, mount a rescue immediately,” and Sivan’s like, “No, no, no, no, no; Egg really doesn’t want us to do it because she’s convinced that it would, you know, create bloodshed, and the last thing we want is bloodshed. The White Tower will never be whole, and maybe she could do something from inside.”

Sally: Sure.

Emily: “So we’ve just gotta keep doing our business,” which is when Lelaine enters and is like, “Mwa ha ha ha ha, I want power, and also I kidnapped –” What’s her name?

Sally: Oh. Faolain? Or Falion?

Emily: Faolain, yeah.

Sally: Whichever one it is –

Emily: It’s Faolain.

Sally: Where, like, two episodes ago, we were like, “Is she dead?”

Emily: Yeah, literally, in the timeline of EHR, we were like, “Hey, where she’s at? And why does no one care that she’s literally missing?”

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Egg is like, “She’s missing,” and then we don’t hear about that again. (laugh) But, um, yeah, Lelaine’s like, “Yeah, I’ve had her in seclusion,” which presumably means a prison tent of some kind.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) A prison tent. Just got her in a chest somewhere.

Emily: Eugh. Terrible. The Rand al’Thor experience in 3-D.

Sally: Ugh. God, yeah, is Falion – Faolain – okay?

Emily: I – who knows? I don't know if we ever see her again.

Sally: Well, then – then Lelaine killed her and Siuan knows this and is complicit in her murder.

Emily: And also doesn't care. Siuan's just like, "Eh, I didn't like that girl anyway," and moves on with her life. Um, we then move on to Beonin, who wakes up, makes for a normal day, is consulted about the murders that are taking place in the camp, and it's sort of like a true crime episode where they're all talking like they're very authoritative sources about, you know, psychology and criminology –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And forensics, et cetera, et cetera, and it's just like, none of you are professionals, and even the professionals don't really know shit, so.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) It is very much, like, the beginning of, like, a fucking NCIS episode.

Emily: Yeah, where they're, like, standing around, chatting about these horrific murders –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And are like, "Well, given, da da da da da," and it's like, that's not true –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As we know, so.

Sally: Yeah. And that's the other thing that's so frustrating. Like, Beonin is like, "You need to find out what connected the two women; the only similarity between them is that they're, like, Blue Ajah or whatever."

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And it's like, we, the reader, know that is patently untrue. It has to do with how they're interacting – doing different things in the camp that are against what Halima wants them to. So, like –

Emily: Yeah, or maybe just Halima felt like murdering someone.

Sally: Yeah. Or Halima is just a murderer –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Who felt like murdering people. So it's just, like, frustrating at this point to be like, we have enough of an answer. We know it's Halima. We don't even really need to know why because the Forsaken never give us reasons for why they do things, so it's just another instance of being like, I don't want to read about something I already know about and people being wrong about it.

Emily: Yeah. Like, given, it would be weird if no one in this camp was conducting any sort of investigation, but, like, I don't need to read about the investigation.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's nice enough if you tell me there's an investigation, and I'll assume that they're going in the wrong direction, because who could predict a woman who can channel the male half of the Power?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That's a very, like, Sherlock Holmes-ish –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: If the least likely thing is – whatever. Whatever. Can't remember how that line goes.

Sally: Yeah. If everything else is impossible ... I don't remember either. (laugh)

Emily: The improbable thing must be true – I don't know. Yeah. So we can assume that people investigating aren't gonna get anywhere. But Beonin collects her Warder; they Travel onto the grounds of the White Tower; her Warder's like, "Wot?" 'cause apparently he doesn't know what the fuck's going on, and Beonin's like, "Just go about your business, Greg," or whatever his name is, and he's like, "Okay," and then she goes up to find Elaida, who is at that moment in a meeting with her new Keeper, Tarna, and they're just chatting about, um, you know, dumb logistics in the White Tower stuff, I – I don't know. I can't remember.

Sally: Yeah, I don't know.

Emily: Nothing important.

Sally: Tower business.

Emily: At which point Beonin comes in and Elaida's like, "Oh, Beonin, where the fuck have you been?" and Beonin's like, "Well. Spreading chaos. Let the lord of chaos rule." And Elaida's like, "No, you haven't. That was just them."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don't know if you – you don't – you didn't do anything. And Beonin's like, "Why does everyone fucking hate each other?" and Elaida's like, "Well, it's not my fault, I'll tell you that much." And Beonin's like, "Isn't it?"

Sally: It probably is.

Emily: It probably has something to do with you, since you're in charge here.

Sally: But it is mainly Alviarin who –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Is –

Emily: Puppeted that whole schism.

Sally: A mess. But Elaida is not without blame in any of this.

Emily: Yeah. And, anyway, Beonin is like, “The good news is that I have some sick new weaves, including Traveling,” and Elaida’s like, “Well, obviously I must regulate the knowledge of these weaves highly, because that won’t make any enemies of – for me,” but da da da da da. “Yeah, show me how to Travel and how to do their stuff.” So now Elaida has Traveling. That’s where we end that.

Sally: Yeah. Whoop-dee-doo.

Emily: And Beonin was a traitor all along. And I think also, interestingly, has just, like, completely given up on the idea of her having an in in the rebel camp, you know? Like, now she’s just back at the White Tower?

Sally: Yeah. Like, she just fucked off.

Emily: Yeah. She’s gonna be seen by Egg at some point, I assume.

Sally: Yeah. And Egg’s gonna be like –

Emily: Well, great. And it’s like, um, okay.

Sally: Smack you. Smack, smack.

Emily: Um, we then switch over to Aran’gar, who’s at this dumb meeting in some sort of garden, or, like, a fake garden. It’s like some sort of virtual reality room.

Sally: I know. They’re having their Ready Player One moment.

Emily: The Forsaken are always meeting in the dumbest places.

Sally: Like, just meet at the – I don’t know. Go to your – your coworking space.

Emily: Yeah, God. Rent some office space.

Sally: Yeah. You guys are getting ridiculous. (laugh)

Emily: Or go to a Chili’s or something, like normal people do.

Sally: Yeah, the meeting at Starbucks.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Have a walking meeting, as my boss always wants to do.

Emily: Ugh. Terrible. Um, but Aran’gar shows up and immediately is like, “Hmm, well, it’s weird and sad that Semirhage, Mesaana, and Demandred sort of have, like, a thing going on.” You know, they’re clearly in an alliance. Osan’gar, a.k.a. Dashiva, has not made an appearance since the big fight outside of Shadar Logoth. She’s like, “I don’t know where he is. Maybe he’s dead; maybe he’s in hiding.” And it’s like, probably dead.

Sally: He’s probably dead.

Emily: Probably dead.

Sally: He probably got murdered.

Emily: Um, and Graendal is just sort of awkwardly off on her own, and Aran'gar's like, "Well, since the other three have an alliance, I should make an alliance with Graendal, and I'm going to do that by sexually manipulating her," or something, and Graendal's like, "You would sexually manipulate me, the sexual manipulator 3000?"

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Mock two. (laugh)

Sally: Mock two.

Emily: How dare you – how dare you presume.

Sally: Yeah, iOS 47.

Emily: But they start this sort of cat and mouse encounter that is Robert Jordan's, I guess, idea of lesbians, but also his, um, very telling ideas of – as we've discussed, Robert Jordan seems to consider Aran'gar a transgender woman –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Even though patently she is not. Um, but this then tells us what he thinks about transgender woman, including the fact that they are all secretly predators –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: In the vein of, you know, what TERFs like to call "men using women's bodies in order to get closer to women."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So Aran'gar clear – is clearly just a pervy man who's trying to get in Graendal's pants.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And will do that by manipulating the titillating interest in a lesbian love affair, and it's like, dude. You and J.K. Rowling would have got along, I guess.

Sally: I know. For –

Emily: I guess you will, in hell.

Sally: Ugh. Yeah, if he were still alive, one wonders what his response would be to the whole –

Emily: Oh, God.

Sally: Harry Potter fiasco.

Emily: Can you imagine Robert Jordan having a Twitter?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's like the nightmare fuel.

Sally: Yeah. One would hope that he just would be, like, on there but never Tweeting, but who knows?

Emily: Ugh.

Sally: Who knows what we would – he would do? Um. We can count our blessings that he doesn't have a Twitter. Um, I – yeah, I just, like, don't even know what to say about it at this point. I don't think there's anything else to say. I don't know how much value there is to, like, keep talking about it, but there's also a danger of just, like, not talking about it. Like, it's easy to write it off as a small thing because it is one character who has really, in comparison, not very many scenes and very many points of view throughout the whole book, but it is so egregious and so transphobic and so harmful for people to read this and be like, "This is validating of all the things I already believe about trans people," or perhaps this is their first encounter of somebody presented as a trans character, and this is going to just, like, keep building off of or lay the foundation for really harmful beliefs. And, like, I'm sure we've said this type of stuff on the podcast before, but, like, the things that we see in media matter because they impact how we see the world, and how we see the world impacts the way we treat other people and act out in the world. So, like, it is not a joke to present a character like this, to present a trans character as a joke, as someone who is a predator, as someone who is – just, like, has this egregious sexuality and that's the only thing that motivates them. Like, it's not a joke. It's not funny. It has real-world consequences, and you shouldn't fucking do it. End rant.

Emily: Bang, bang.

Sally: Like, it just makes me so mad every time I think about it. Like, I can't – like, I know we are lucky, now to live in a reality where there are many wonderful trans stories by trans people themselves, by people who love trans people and are writing about them with that love and care, but there are also still things like this, and there are still people like J.K. Rowling doing this type of stuff, and it just makes me fucking furious.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, trans people are dying. Trans children are committing suicide because of shit like this.

Emily: Use your platform correctly.

Sally: Yeah. It just – that is my rant. Fuck you, Robert Jordan. Fuck you, Robert Jordan's editors for letting this slide. Um, and fuck you to anyone who's ever said they have any interest in Halima or find her funny. So.

Emily: (humorless laugh)

Sally: Um, okay. End of rant.

Emily: I'm trying to remember if anything fucking happens.

Sally: Um. (laugh)

Emily: Just – Moridin sweeps in, does a little dramatic gay entrance, is flanked by his two female enslaved people –

Sally: Prisoners, yeah.

Emily: Yeah. Uh, Moghedien and Cyndane. And Aran'gar's like, "Yeah, Cyndane's definitely Lanfear, and I don't know what he holds over them, but clearly something because he's put them in fucking matching maid uniforms," or whatever.

Sally: Got cat ears on or whatever.

Emily: Ew. (laugh) What if they looked like Jessie and James from Team Rocket?

Sally: (laugh) He's dressed up like Meowth.

Emily: Yeah. (laugh)

Sally: He's got this big gold choker on.

Emily: He would. Stupid, stupid man.

Sally: He is a stupid, stupid man.

Emily: Anyway, yeah, he shows up and is like, "Everyone – um, hi." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) "Hi, it's me, Moridin."

Emily: "Hi, it's me." I don't remember –

Sally: "Welcome to my meeting."

Emily: I don't remember the contents of this meeting. He's basically like, "Mesaana, shut up, you're still in a lot of trouble still –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Because you didn't show up to Shadar Logoth like you were supposed to." Um. "Rand al'Thor is on my personal hit list," and everyone's like, "Alright, we're ignoring that. We will kill him if we get to him first," blah blah blah.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And also you can totally add these names to your hit list." And everyone's like, "Who? We've never heard of them."

Sally: "Who is – Pairen Ayebura?" (laugh) "Who is this?"

Emily: (laugh) "I've never heard of her. I don't know her." Um, and just, like, you know, that's it. He's like, "Everyone just get ready. We're fucking – we're fucking getting ready," and I'm like, you guys have been getting fucking ready for the last eight books.

Sally: Getting ready for what, bitch?

Emily: Yeah, who knows. Oh, he tells us – or someone tells us – that, like, maybe Sammael is back?

Sally: Oh, yeah. This is so funny.

Emily: Because someone sent all of the, like – a ton of Trollocs and Myrddraal through the Ways, and, like, maybe it was Sammael?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And everyone's like, "But that doesn't seem right. I feel like he's super fucking dead," and he's like, "Well, no one else would be that stupid." And this is a question that I don't know if it ever gets answered. (laugh)

Sally: Who did it?

Emily: Like, transparently, it was Robert Jordan trying to add some mystery. Like, maybe Sammael's still out there, as though –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Sammael wasn't the least threatening of the Forsaken, you know? Just a dude.

Sally: Yeah, just some guy.

Emily: Just some guy having insecurity problems and taking them out on a global scale.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, classic Napoleon shit.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, yeah, presumably it was one of the other Forsaken, you know, dressed up to look like Sammael or create some confusion, but –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: God only knows.

Sally: Yeah, I also think it's really funny to be like – I – if I have to pick one of the dead Forsaken to masquerade as, you had so many options.

Emily: I know. Why Sammael?

Sally: Why would – why – like, Asmodean is right there.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I mean –

Emily: They've all stopped talking about Asmodean.

Sally: I know, they're like, "Who?"

Emily: Not that they ever did, I mean, but, like, really, there aren't that many dead Forsaken, you know, because they've all been fucking resurrected.

Sally: Mm. Fair enough.

Emily: The only ones who they know for sure are dead are Be'lal and Rahvin, who they've witnessed being balefired. Asmodean is the only other big, like, question mark because Graendal killed him, but did she, like, tell the others? Like, did she send out a newsletter? Like, "I took care of the Asmodean problem"?

Sally: Like one of those Christmas letters –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: That's like, "Dear friends and family –"

Emily: Her, posed next to Asmodean's dead body.

Sally: Yeah. "It was such a great year at the Graendal house, exclamation mark. We have so many fun things to share from our adventures. First, in January, I killed our coworker, Asmodean." (laugh) "This was such a fun accomplishment for me. It was years in the making."

Emily: (laugh) Stupid. "I wanted to kill that motherfucker for years 'cause he's sexier than me."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And can carry a tune, and I hate that." You just know Asmodean was the coworker at the Christmas parties –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Karaoke-ing.

Sally: Yeah, and, like, giving it his all.

Emily: Yeah. (vocalizing)

Sally: Like, he is – (laugh)

Emily: (singing) "I don't want –"

Sally: (laugh) But the person who is like, "This is my Oscar-worthy performance at the bar where everyone is drunk."

Emily: And everyone fucking hated him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, yeah, maybe they just were like, “Who cares where Asmodean is? He annoyed us all too much.” But then Sammael didn’t annoy you as much as him?

Sally: Yeah. Like, come on.

Emily: Terrible. But it is a pretty hilarious read on Sammael that they’re like, “Oh, yeah, this is one of his moves™. Send an army through the Ways.” (laugh)

Sally: To where? Who knows? Why? Who knows?

Emily: But this is also, you know, a plot device to make us nervous about some Darkfriend – uh, some, you know, people popping out of the Ways at some point.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I guess.

Sally: I also just feel like if I were Robert Jordan, plucking through my dead – or assumed-to-be-dead – bad guys, I wouldn’t want to resurrect Sammael either, even as, like, a – as a red herring. You know? Like, Asmodean, it feels like his death is much more inconclusive.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, Sammael is dead. We all know this. He got eaten by the fog.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Who knows what happened to Asmodean? I, as a reader – I feel like it’s a smarter choice to pick –

(sirens in the distance)

Sally: Oh, that’s a fire truck. I thought that was someone screaming.

Emily: Oh. Ahhh! (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Whatever. This is a dumb thing to get held up on. It’s just silly.

Emily: Well, but, we’re in Knife of Dreams. There’s nothing but dumb things to get hung up on, you know?

Sally: (laugh) That’s fair.

Emily: We’ve already talked about everything that’s worth talking about at any length, so now it’s just picking at plot points like your grandmother’s doilies.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Um, so that’s that. That’s the first three chapters of Knife of Dreams, and so the next thing that’s going to happen is we’re going to hop over to Perrin, which is equally disappointing because we have to deal with him making his deal with the Seanchan.

Sally: Grody.

Emily: But, um, that's what's on the docket. So, uh, thanks for listening. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media. Thanks to you for allowing us to have a break while Sally got her voice and energy back.

Sally: Yeah, thank you.

Emily: Um. Anything else to add?

Sally: I don't think so. Thanks, guys.

Emily: You have a – do you have a sign-off besides me calling you a sicky? Multiple times? (laugh)

Sally: It's rude; she's bullying me. Um, no, my sign-off is that when I – I visited some family up in Washington a couple weeks ago, and my sister-in-law got this new game for her birthday that's, like, basically tic-tac-toe.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Um, legitimately nobody could beat my six-year-old niece.

Emily: (gasp)

Sally: She's like a – some sort of strategic genius. Like, my mom –

Emily: Master.

Sally: My dad, and myself were sitting there, and we're three, like, very intelligent people. Like, my mom's got her master's, she's an RN, my dad's an MD. I have a podcast. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: And my six-year-old niece was, like, whooping our ass. So we all left feeling humiliated and embarrassed.

Emily: That's what they mean by beginner's luck.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: She's just beginning in life.

Sally: (laugh) No, I think she's just, like, freakishly smart and is going to take over –

Emily: That's also possible.

Sally: The world. Um.

Emily: If any of our nieces or nephews are destined for world domination, Liz is definitely –

Sally: Liz is up there, yeah.

Emily: At the top of the list.

Sally: And then she would bully me about it.

Emily: Oh.

Sally: She'd be like, "You're not very good at this game." (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Brutal.

Sally: And I'd be like, "You're right. I guess."

Emily: God, it's brutal out here. (laugh)

Sally: God. The six-year-olds are beating me up.

Emily: Alright, everyone. Have a good week.

Sally: Bye-bye.

Emily: Bye.