



Episode 228: Samwil Kill God
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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: Okay.

Sally: Okay.

Emily: Okay, yeah –

Sally: We're here.

Emily: "Okay" Is about the energy I can summon for –

Sally: Okay.

Emily: Three Elayne chapters.

Sally: Yeah. It's rough. I – I don't know why Robert Jordan would do that. I feel like as an author, you have to have some self-awareness of, like, point of view exhaustion. Like, I –

Emily: I thought you were about to say, "As an author, you have to know which of your characters are insufferable and which are not." (laugh)

Sally: I mean, I feel like you also have to know that. I think you do have to have the awareness of, like, how points of view come off.

Emily: Yeah. Sure.

Sally: Um. I like to write from multiple points of view, and I cannot fathom offering three chapters in a row from the same point of view unless it was, like, one hundred percent plot relevant. And I know the idea is that, like, in Caemlyn, of course it is one hundred percent plot-relevant –

Emily: Is it, though? Is it?

Sally: If it comes from Elayne's point of view, but also there's Aviendha and Birgitte and other people who are points of view characters who can offer, I think, more interesting perspectives

than just getting it from Elayne all the time, so I just don't really understand – like, we've referenced before, Robert Jordan kind of has, like, a point of view hierarchy. Like, if you're in certain scenes –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: If, like, Rand and Min are in – that's probably a bad example because oftentimes we will get Min points of view. But typically if Rand is in the room, Rand is going to be the point of view character because he's kind of the guy, you know?

Emily: Well, that just shows you that Robert Jordan has at some point come to the realization – because I think pretty strictly he was with Rand –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Whenever Rand was in the room for the first few books, and then at some point he was like, "I will start deviating, and even when Rand is in the room, I will go to other –"

Sally: Mm. Mm, yeah.

Emily: "Points of view," and so I wish he'd get there with Elayne. But, like, yeah, it's – to – to bring in our – our We Don't Watch Outlander product –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: We just finished the Atlas Six, which is also – moves through many points of view, and it alternates each chapter, and I just was, like, trying to picture, like, a Libby point of view four chapters in a row or whatever –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I was like, "I would have not finished the book." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, I – yeah, I think, like, there's a – a reader response thing going on. If you're – I think we've referenced reader response theory on the podcast before, which is, like, the literary theory that, like, the product – the actual product of a book exists between the author and the reader. Like, the reader has –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Um, plays a role in creating –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: The – the product. The literature. And of course I think that comes in to being like, you have to understand how the reader will respond in a certain extent, and if you have multiple points of view, there's a one hundred percent chance that someone is going to not like one of your characters. You know?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Or an almost one hundred percent chance, because people are very different: not every reader is gonna like or dislike the same characters, but I think it is unrealistic to believe that every reader will love every single one of your points of view. That's just not how, like, humans work.

Emily: Mm-hmm. And –

Sally: Um, and – go ahead.

Emily: Just to get it in there, this is Everybody Hates Rand –

Sally: Oh, yeah, sorry.

Emily: (laugh) Your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sally Goodger, who's –

Emily: Go on.

Sally: On my soapbox for sure.

Emily: No, go on.

Sally: And maybe, like, hate is a strong word. But, like, even in books where, I, like, generally like all the points of view characters, like the Raven Cycle –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Occasionally you'll get to a point of view and be like, "I'm very annoyed that I'm with Gansey right now instead of a character that I personally find more interesting."

Emily: Yeah, I find it usually that in books that have a lot of varied points of view, you end up – I think this is a pretty natural response –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You just sort of naturally pick your favorite –

Sally: Yeah, absolutely.

Emily: And that's the one that you're, like, looking forward to.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: Um, for whatever reason; maybe it's their relevance to the plot, or maybe you just enjoy that character's voice more; whatever, whatever. For a long time, for us, it was Mat.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: And now we're finding Mat chapters, even, to be something of a drag. But –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Elayne has never been at the top of anyone's list, as far as I know.

Sally: Yeah, and so – I mean, dear God, I would be almost afraid to meet the person whose – Elayne is at the top of their list, so –

Emily: Oh my God. Nothing – I bet they're really into the British monarchy. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) They were really upset when the queen died.

Emily: They have a "Keep Calm and Carry On" poster.

Sally: Um, so I think, like, if you're an author who's writing multiple points of view, you need to have, like, an understanding that, like, it will be unpleasant for certain readers if you have multiple chapters in a row from a character that they don't like, and I just feel like that is, like, such a risky gamble, to be like, "Am I going to –" Like, from a stylistic point of view, to just be like, "Am I going to make readers suffer?" That's why I think it is, like, really risky in these books when you just, like, don't have a single point of view character in the entire book. Like, books where there's no Egg.

Emily: Oh, yeah.

Sally: Or Path of Daggers, where there's no Mat at all.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, I think that's really wild. But it's also really difficult in a series like Wheel of Time, where there is no, like, boundary on who is a point of view character and who is not to – like, I – I understand why Robert Jordan makes that choice at certain times, just to be like, "We cannot be with Mat right now; there is too much else going on." I don't know. If you can't tell, I'm a little sick, so my thoughts may not be super coherent, but I've also been thinking a lot about, like, points of view because the own project I'm working on, I'm at a stage where I'm adding more points of view, and I'm, like, really wrestling with whether or not that is actually the right choice for the plot or just something I want to do because I like writing in those characters' voices.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: You know? And also I was thinking the same thing about the Atlas Six and how I really like that it's, like, almost a – a pattern. Like, you will get a point of view from each of the six characters, and then it will start over.

Emily: Yeah, before you get more.

Sally: Not necessarily in the same order. Like, it's not like Libby, Nico, ba ba ba ba, et cetera, et cetera. Like, it's not a set order. But it's like we're checking in with everybody at each stage of the book. I actually really enjoyed that. So I don't love these – and it's not even just with Elayne. Like, it can get exhausting when you just have points of view, neverending, from the same character in the same setting in a book that is so vast. Anyway.

Emily: Yeah, I find it particularly frustrating, uh, that these points of – these very long sets of points of view chapters – you know, we’re getting – what has it been, five chapters with Elayne, I think?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, and that’s all happening within not just the same day but within a few hours.

Sally: Yeah, that’s a good point, Emily.

Emily: Um, and that’s generally what’s happening, um –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In these later books. We had a bit of a deviation from that with our sort of bigger Mat section earlier, where we got to be with him over the course of a few weeks –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I think that that made that chunk of time feel more manageable.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, although of course we’re also biased toward Mat, so I don’t know how, um, objective that is, but I – that’s just one thing that I find really frustrating with Elayne points of view, is that they’re almost always taking place over, like, very brief amounts of time but so many pages, and so many of those pages –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Are devoted to sort of things that clearly could be edited out because they’re just not relevant to us.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It’s hard to justify the Andor plot in general at this stage in the series. Like, Andor is only relevant because we’re being told over and over again that it’s relevant.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But at a certain point, after Rand left Caemlyn, you know, it’s kind of like, okay, well, we don’t really care about this place anymore –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because the Dragon Reborn has secured it, more or less, so.

Sally: Yeah, and also, like, our horizon of expectations comes into this too. I know Elayne is going to win the throne because of the story that I am in and the way things have played out for the characters so far. I think we’ve said this before, so I’m really sorry if we’re rehashing ground, but, like, it is absurd that the Andor plot takes this long when we all know that Elayne is going to win.

Emily: Yeah, this might've paid off if Elayne hadn't won.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or if there had been some sort of, like, late-stage twist –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But everything happens very much according to, like, the archetypes required by this genre.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And so therefore – archetypes, as we've talked about before, and tropes and cliches, are a form of shorthand.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So when you're both enforcing all of those archetypes and tropes and cliches and just staying with them the entire time, you're leaving readers quite bored.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, so that's, I think, one of the main problems with Andor, along with the fact that Elayne herself is not a very likable narrator. She's particularly not likable right now, when Robert Jordan is on his whole "aren't pregnant women so funny?" shtick.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, like, it's difficult to derive any enjoyment from this, and now Aviendha's gone, so I don't even have Aviendha to look forward to.

Sally: Oh, I know. I don't understand why Aviendha is just sort of snatched away from this plot.

Emily: She has to go on a vision quest in the Gathering Storm, but that won't be till, like, three – actually, I don't think she even makes it to her vision quest till Towers of Midnight. Goddamnit. But yeah.

Sally: This series is too long.

Emily: I know, it sure is.

Sally: And I'm just, like – I'm just a little tiny guy in a big universe.

Emily: I'm just a little guy struggling fruitlessly to get to the next Mat point of view. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. And even then.

Emily: Who knows what will happen?

Sally: Yeah, I'm just in the – I've – I'm on the – the Titanic has sunk, and I'm grasping for pieces of floating doors, and those pieces of floating doors are just, like, Grady and Neald.
(laugh)

Emily: Yeah, we're doing a lot of Titanic metaphors these days because my nephew is obsessed with the Titanic.

Sally: "All the fancy food sunk to the bottom of the ocean!" (laugh)

Emily: He's really upset by the – the whole ordeal. Um, uh, yeah, Aviendha's gone. Aviendha left at the end of the first of these three chapters; the Wise Ones came and got her and were like, "Time to go, bucko –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: 'Cause the Aiel are heading out, and Elayne's like, "Well, where are y'all going?" and they're like, "We don't know." Or, "I'm not allowed to tell you specifically."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Rand sent new orders, and now we're just peacing out." And it's like, huh. It's so interesting how Rand can just, like, leave the Aiel and Bashere's Saldaeans stationed in Andor this entire time without asking Elayne's permission –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And now he's just like, "Eh, goodbye. Hope this doesn't affect you politically." And, like, luckily it doesn't because Elayne didn't use the Saldaeans or the Aiel as the main force of her army, but, like, she could have 'cause Rand offered them to her.

Sally: Yeah, Rand told her specifically to do that.

Emily: So, like, just Rand, you know, being Rand. This is all after Elayne and Aviendha finally made it to Elayne's apartments, a process which was dragged out because Elayne got lost on the way to her room. Everyone notices this; Elayne assumes that she's just having pregnancy brain and so she's all annoyed about it and it isn't until later that Birgitte's like, "No, the layout of the palace has physically changed."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Elayne's like, "What the fuck?" And Birgitte's like, "Yeah, maybe if you hadn't snapped everyone's head off telling us not to talk about it we could've talked about it earlier."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But here we are. Um, in Elayne's apartments, the only thing of note that happens is that, um, Elayne and Aviendha discover that Aviendha has a special Talent where she can pick up a ter'angreal and know what it does.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: This is a Talent that is overall useless.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um. It could have been more useful, considering Elayne has had this giant batch of ter'angreal, et cetera, that I guess Aviendha just hasn't been picking up and has not been invited to examine or do anything with, so, like, we've had these multiple asides where Elayne's like, "Here I am experimenting with ter'angreal," and it's like, you're telling me that Aviendha's been there the entire time, and Aviendha could've just known these things?

Sally: Yeah, like, I'm torn between this being extremely funny –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: In sort of Aviendha's just, like, "Stay in my lane, I don't know what my girlfriend is doing _"

Emily: Yeah. "Doesn't everyone know that this box makes music?"

Sally: Yeah, like, if – if my – if Elayne is too silly – is too much of a silly goose to figure out what the ter'angreal do, that's not my – Aviendha's business. Oh, sorry. Bonk. But yeah, it's also really frustrating because – it, like, negates both all the things Elayne has done as sort of this, like, quasi scientist or quasi, um, archaeologist trying to figure out these things from the past. It just, like, negates all that work by being like, we don't actually have to do any of that exploration; we're just sort of, like, getting rid of that entire plot device that we don't know what these magical items do and therefore they are kind of dangerous. We're just totally negating that by being like, we can use teleportation to send Aviendha anywhere to figure out what these magical artifacts do. Which I find kind of annoying.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Just, like, you can't just keep, like, erasing your plots.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: (laugh) At this late stage of the series. And – what else was I gonna say? So it negates everything that Elayne does ... whatever, I don't remember my second point. But.

Emily: I think a lot of people have pointed out how annoying it is that in the later stage of the books these, like, talents, capital-T Talents –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Keep just, like, stacking on themselves.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, it seems like Egg has a Talent for everything; Aviendha and Elayne and Nynaeve – like, between them, they're just, like, the most magical girls in the world.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it just becomes a little bit ludicrous.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, first of all, because all – we’ve already been told, wow, these are the most powerful women in the entire world, only for Robert Jordan to be like, “Oh, except for this random Seanchan woman, and this old lady who they found, you know –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “In the wilds of Caemlyn or whatever the fuck.” Um, so having them have all of these Talents is just sort of, like, very transparently a plot device –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: For Robert Jordan to tell us some form of exposition that he wouldn’t be able to get across otherwise. And the frequent asides to the ter’angreal, because this is something that’s been repeated, I believe in every book since they’ve uncovered this Ebou Dari hoard of ter’angreal –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Is either Elayne experimenting with them or Aviendha now listing them off. And I’m no longer sure what the purpose of that is.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, it’s just becoming repetitive. Um, the existence of ter’angreal and angreal and sa’angreal is, like, a fine part of Robert Jordan’s worldbuilding; it’s an interesting way of enforcing that this is an old world –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Where artifacts are magical and are sort of an obsolete form of technology.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: That’s very interesting. But if you’re not doing anything with them, then it becomes pointless. The only things that, you know, Elayne and Aviendha use from this hoard are the angreal and sa’angreal that they find. Just angreal, I guess. Like, Nynaeve has all that jewelry that she took. Um, I think they’ve both got a couple of angreal, and now Elayne has this magic knife that will hide her from the Dark One?

Sally: Yeah, it’s frustrating to me, one, that they only really seem to use the ones that are weapons.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Like, you’ve got this shit that does really cool stuff. Like, I think – a large part of, for me, what makes the cleansing of saidin so satisfying is the sort of, like – it is one instance when, like, the length of the series is a benefit ‘cause we first see the Choedan Kal in book two and it just keeps getting hinted and hinted, and Rand’s piecing together what all these artifacts do, and then

he finds a piece of ancient technology that he uses to correct something very fucked up with the world. Like, that's really cool.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And interesting. But that's, like, the only time, I feel like, so far. (laugh) And then Mat's foxhead is also very interesting and is used in a very interesting way. That's, like, two instances out of one million angreal. So yeah, it's annoying to me that, like, we've got one very creative and interesting use of these artifacts that do a variety of things; otherwise Nynaeve is just using her jewelry to, like, store more of the Power and be able to draw more of the Power. Elayne is using it just to hide from the Dark One, which I guess is really interesting but also, like, what? How does that one even work?

Emily: Yeah, I don't even know if that comes up, really.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Can't remember.

Sally: So, um.

Emily: Yeah, it's just, like, this is a thing in the fantasy genre. And you know it's a thing in the fantasy genre because it's in Dungeons and Dragons: the idea that there are magical items.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: That's very much, um, a hallmark of the genre. And in Dungeons and Dragons, for example, like, a careful GM will, um, make sure that you can't just have a bunch of magic items —

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Off the bat, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You have to work for them and then you might be offered a slim selection and then you only have enough money to choose, like, a few of them that you think will be very important. There are limits to the whole thing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Robert Jordan seems to have been following that logic in the early stages of this series, but now he's just like, "I'm just gonna give them the whole hoard but they just don't know how to use it."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, then what's the point of giving them the hoard?

Sally: Yeah, Dungeons and Dragons is such a good example. Um, what – I don't know a ton about Dungeons and Dragons; I'm not an expert – but, like, what little I know of the game and also what little I know about, like, game theory is, like, part of what makes, um, the stories you find in Dungeons and Dragons campaigns, and like Emily said, if you have a good GM, the – like, the rise of actual play sort of shows and podcasts or whatever – if you have a really good GM who's using the game mechanics very smartly and very carefully, it adds to the story rather than just being like, "You are telling a story and you are also playing a game." And, like, there's a lot to be learned from the game mechanics of, like, Dungeons and Dragons specifically as applied to, like, fantasy and other formats. Like, it is actually, I think, very valuable and important to think of, like, what type of game –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: You might be presenting. Like, what type of level are your characters at – (laugh)

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: What point are they at in the story? Like, what are they getting in order to, like, solve the plot in an interesting way? And you're, like, right. Robert Jordan has just completely fucked over his own game mechanics.

Emily: Yeah, I think the word I'm looking for is "economy" –

Sally: Yeah, there you go.

Emily: Like, he's fucked over the economy of, like, magic and magic items –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: By creating characters who are vastly OP –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Compared to where they began the series, so.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Now he's doing things to, like, casually, uh, reduce their power, like making Elayne pregnant.

Sally: I can't even talk about it today.

Emily: (laugh) No.

Sally: But, yeah, like, it's – we've referenced multiple times of, like, in a series of this length, you need to continually up the stakes. I disagree, actually. I don't think you – like, I think it's fine to have at some point sort of set the stakes and we just kind of have to get through them to the end. I don't actually think I need to keep having bigger and bigger and bigger bosses until I fight the big final boss. I think it's fine to have, like, a certain level of stakes and threat to just get through. Robert Jordan seems to feel the need to continually up the stakes, like every fucking

chapter, which makes these last couple books feel – I just feel a little, um, overstimulated, honestly –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: (laugh) When I'm reading them, 'cause just too – too much is happening. So you're right. Like, there's a certain level of, like, upping the stakes by giving everyone all these Talents, and they're so overpowered, but at the same time we have to, like, cap them –

Emily: Nerf them, yeah.

Sally: Yeah, we have to nerf them in really weird ways, and it's just like, again, this is why a study of game mechanics might be helpful. Like, if you're just like, at what point in this game do they need to be able to do this?

Emily: Mm-hmm. Yeah, I think you're talking about bigger and bigger bosses; this is – we are beginning to feel very much like a mid-2000s – like, we're – it feels like we're in season 13 of Supernatural.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) That's a good way to put it.

Emily: You know? Like, at a certain point, you're like, "God, just let it end."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I feel like we've defeated the boss already.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I know we haven't literally defeated the Dark One, but at this point the stakes are so high God's just walking around, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, it's just getting a little bit ridiculous. Anyway. Aviendha leaves; Elayne goes and meets with some mercenaries who are no longer, thanks to Charlz Guybon, the bulk of her forces but are still a significant portion of it, significant enough that she can't really risk alienating them. And they're basically like, "We want more money," and she's like, "No." And that's the extent of the meeting. I'm not quite sure why it happens.

Sally: Yeah, it's also pretty funny. She's like, "I can't alienate them –"

Emily: And then she yells at them.

Sally: And then she's like, "I'm not gonna pay you any more. Why would you ask that?" And they're like, "We are literally, like, mercenaries. The whole thing is that you pay us –"

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: "To fight for you."

Emily: And then they leave, and she's like, "I didn't really handle that well, did I?" and everyone's like, "Well, we don't really know a better way you could've handled it," and I'm like, so, Robert Jordan, why did you put this scene in there?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To show me that Elayne is a moderately competent ruler?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Sometimes she doesn't do the best thing of all time?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Sometimes she doesn't come up with the world's best solution? I don't know. They're also there briefly to have one of them allude to knowing Hatchet-face, 'cause Hatchet-face is there, and Elayne sends him off and then someone's like, "Oh, yeah, it's funny that he ended up here," and she's like, "Oh, did you know him?" and they're like, "Yeah." Again, the end. We already knew Hatchet-face was a mercenary, so not sure why it's there. Um, after they leave, Elayne has one of her meetings with, um, Halwin Norry and Reese Harfor. Uh, Norry reports that he's found a guy who he thinks can successfully tail Hatchet-face. There was a scene in the last book where Hatchet-face was like, "God, I keep getting followed. Someone from the palace clearly wants to follow me. Too bad I keep murdering those idiots."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And apparently now we're getting the other side of the story, where Elayne and Halwin Norry are like, "We have sent five people."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "They can't possibly have all been killed by thieves?" And I'm like, you could have eliminated the possibility of them all getting killed by thieves after, like, the second guy.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, after a certain point, the modus operandi, for one thing –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is too similar.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But no, those – they just sent three more guys to their deaths.

Sally: Yeah. RIP.

Emily: Yeah, RIP those probably underpaid laborers. Anyway, now they've found a guy who's totally disposable because he's also a criminal. (laugh) A guy who's, like, a really successful thief, and of course he's presented to Elayne and has a – has a dialect that he uses –

Sally: Yeah, naturally.

Emily: Um, an uneducated, per se, dialect, um, and he insists that he's innocent, and this is just sort of, like, really reinforces all of Elayne's upper class beliefs about people who are criminals and people who belong in prison and so it's just kind of annoying.

Sally: Yeah, like, this guy's options – she's like, “You'll either hang for all of your crimes, or you can do this for me, and I will put a spell on you that I always know where you are.”

Emily: And I'm like, um, successful thievery is suddenly a – a – a hanging offense?

Sally: Yeah. Like, this guy – (laugh) I'm obsessed with this guy, 'cause they're like –

Emily: I know, he's so funny.

Sally: “We know he's a thief because he likes to keep trophies, and he just has, like, a million stolen coin purses in, like, a chest in his house.”

Emily: And I'm like, that's baller.

Sally: Yeah, that's –

Emily: I mean, it's stupid –

Sally: It's –

Emily: But it's fucking baller.

Sally: Yeah, it is both – (laugh) It, like, makes him the perfect character because he's just, like, obviously very successful and obviously, like, a little bit of a dumbass.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And I'm like, that's my favorite kind of character.

Emily: This is Mat Cauthon –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In another life.

Sally: In another life. (laugh)

Emily: He's like, “I am the world's most successful person at stealing other people's money, but, like –” yeah, very good at just stealing other people's money, and I don't think we have the evidence that he's done anything worse than –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Basically pickpocket people, like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Steal their wallets.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, just because he's prolific at that doesn't mean it's any worse of a crime. It's your own fault for not catching him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, yeah, he did good.

Sally: Yeah, I just – it's so annoying to me. Like you said, it's just reinforcing Elayne's upper class attitudes that, um, stealing is somehow the worst crime in the world, when she's literally just admitted to basically murdering five people by forcing them to follow Hatchet-face.

Emily: Yeah. So they're like, "Either you hang for your crimes or you have to follow this extremely deadly guy," without really giving him the information on why this man is so –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Deadly. But they're like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, we just think that we'll have a success rate," so presumably this guy will eventually lead them to the Dark One's hideout –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is what they've been looking for. Um, then again, Elayne also puts a little spell on his, like, belt shit –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And is like, "I'll always know where you are with this," and I'm like –

Sally: Take off the belt.

Emily: Why the fuck didn't you do that to Hatchet-face?

Sally: Oh, yeah, that's a good point.

Emily: What – you're telling me – (laugh) there's been a magical solution all along?

Sally: This really does feel like an episode of Supernatural.

Emily: I know.

Sally: Very obvious plot hole. Just put the – just put it on Hatchet-face.

Emily: Yeah, this spell that I've never heard of before.

Sally: Yeah, leave my home – I can't even remember his name – I think it's Samwil. Like –

Emily: Yeah, Samwil, not Samwell Gamgee.

Sally: Yeah. Um –

Emily: Samwil something.

Sally: Samwil – yeah.

Emily: Samwil kill God.

Sally: (laugh) Um, uh, leave him alone. He’s obviously – and it’s not like he’s, like, living in some huge mansion. He just seems to be a guy who just likes to steal, and I think that’s fine. Um, leave him alone and just, like, direct your attention towards Hatchet-face.

Emily: Yeah. Agreed.

Sally: Elayne, you are –

Emily: Stupid. Um, anyway, then they get – oh. Reese Harfor is like, “Yeah, my spies in Arymilla’s camp says she’s really confident that they’re gonna break in any day,” but caveat: Arymilla is also very stupid –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And we’ll get a point of view from her later in this chapter that will enforce that. So what her confidence has to do with anything I don’t really know. Um, Elayne then gets news that Dyelin has returned from going to the camp of all of the other major Andoran houses who support neither Elayne nor Arymilla and are just sort of, like, third party observing off in the distance.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Dyelin has been trying to convince them to join Elayne but simply cannot because they’re like, “Dyelin, we want you to be queen,” and Dyelin’s like, “I will not be queen,” and for some reason they’re like, “Well, we don’t believe you.” (laugh)

Sally: “Then no one will be queen.”

Emily: “Then no one can be.”

Sally: Feels – yeah, pretty poignant given what’s happening in the United States Congress right now. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, jeez. There is no Speaker of the House. (laugh) Anyway, um, so while they’re meeting about this, they’re interrupted by, uh, all of the dummy teenagers who are sort of supporting Elayne, and they’re very annoying except for the one smart little boy who basically looks at their map of all their forces and is like, “Hmm, the Saldaean – the, uh, Borderlander contingent sure doesn’t make sense tactically, does it, unless it is actually inspiring everyone to – da da –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just basically calls out their plan right there. And Elayne’s like, “Dear God, we’ve been had by a twelve-year-old,” and this kid’s like, “Yeah, ‘cause you all are fucking stupid.”

Sally: Yeah, he's like, "Listen, any – any child –"

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: "Comme moi with a basic military education –"

Emily: "Also comme moi."

Sally: "Can see what you're doing."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And she's like, "No, this is, like, super smart; I thought of it myself." (laugh) "So, mm, I don't really – I don't really know what you're saying."

Emily: Yeah. Um, I mean, we've already said we don't know what the point of having these four be introduced as characters is; I particularly don't know why Robert Jordan is hung up on being like, "And this kid's distinguishing feature is that he's incredibly intelligent," 'cause, like, unless we're gonna be spending another 20 books with these people, and thank God we don't, it really doesn't matter what this kid is like.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: 'Cause he's either gonna be dead in the Last Battle – (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or we're gonna be done after the Last Battle, presumably soon, so.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Whether or not he grows up to be, like, Andor's prime minister or whatever is irrelevant to me.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. Oh, no, God, Ed. Elayne then goes back to her room, and finally we get an exciting update on the murder mystery that is ongoing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Now, um, Reanne –? Is that her fucking name?

Sally: I think so.

Emily: The fact that we have Reene Harfor and Reanne Corly is very confusing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Reanne Corly, who we saw in the last section, um, is murdered.

Sally: Yeah, dead.

Emily: Uh, very blatantly, Vandene informs us, killed by the One Power. Apparently because many other people have recently been killed by the One Power, a lot of Kinswomen who have been assumed runaways but are actually dead, and evidence was left that they were dead, not runaways, but Elayne and company were too dumb to see the evidence, so now the murderer is like, “I must be more blatant with my murders,” in showing them that there’s a channeler loose who’s killing lades.

Sally: There’s a horse loose in the hospital.

Emily: There’s a horse loose in the hospital. There’s a Black Ajah loose in the Caemlyn – palace of Caemlyn.

Sally: There’s a Black Ajah member loose in every home in the continent.

Emily: Literally, every – I know. Every square mile.

Sally: (laugh) There’s –

Emily: There’s multiple Black Ajah.

Sally: I don’t –

Emily: Irrelevant to me.

Sally: Understand their numbers.

Emily: And they’re just killing Kinswomen left and right –

Sally: Yeah, they’re just doing a lot of murders.

Emily: Who, frankly, I didn’t care all that much about the Kinswomen to begin with, so. I don’t know what the purpose of murdering them is. Elayne’s like, “Why would they do this?” And I’m like, is it just ‘cause Robert Jordan is like, “Yeah, everyone’s last order was, ‘Let the Lord of Chaos rule,’ and everyone’s just interpreting that as ‘murder spree.’” Like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who knows? It’s not like Sareitha or Careane, whichever one of them it is – I honestly can’t remember –

Sally: They’re basically interchangeable at this point.

Emily: Yeah, I mean, phew. It’s not like they’re like, “I have concocted a devious se-seven-en plot, you know, to psychologically torment you specifically, Elayne, because you’re so important,” you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It’s just like someone’s like, “I’m doing the murders.” So anyway, that’s only exciting because any murder, at this point, is slightly exciting.

Sally: At least it’s something that happens.

Emily: Yeah, at least it's something that happened. Like, RIP, Reanne, I guess, but I don't really care, 'cause she just was there for a long time.

Sally: Yeah, like, she was fine. She was a fine character. Kind of nice to see competent people doing kind of competent things.

Emily: Yeah, I don't know. We then switch over to Arymilla's camp, where we are informed that Arymilla is the worst person alive, and everyone in her camp is the worst person alive.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And she has just received word that someone will take payment from her, presumably the mercenaries that Elayne just spurned.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, you know, who knows?

Sally: Who knows?

Emily: All indications in, uh, Robert Jordan's writing if not the narrative specifically are telling us that the Caemlyn plot is going to come to a head soon. Um, of course, we've been thinking the Caemlyn plot would come to a head for the last three books, and now it finally is. We only know it is –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because we have the advantage of hindsight.

Sally: Yeah, we've read Knife of Dreams. Um.

Emily: But Robert Jordan could theoretically have dragged this on for another three books.

Sally: Yeah, it's insane. And also it really bothers me that Arymilla is such – just, like, a blatantly terrible person, one, because, like, don't we have enough of that in Wheel of Time already –

Emily: Yeah. (laugh)

Sally: But it's just this, like, further driving home of the – the plot that we already know, that Elayne is the – not only the, um, rightful heir to the throne but also, like, the correct heir to the throne because she is good and just, unlike Arymilla, who is –

Emily: A real Karen.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know?

Sally: Yeah, and just, like, actively bullying and torturing all of her followers, and it's like, it would be much more interesting to see, like – to legitimately see Elayne and Dyelin – that's a bad example because obviously I would want Dyelin to win. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. (laugh)

Sally: Elayne and someone who's, like, more evenly matched in character and politics vie for the throne.

Emily: Yeah, like, Elayne is better than Arymilla on the surface level, but as we've kind of talked about, like –

Sally: Mm, yeah, good point.

Emily: Elayne is also still sending people –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To their deaths, condemn – convicting a thief to hang –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: For the crime of thievery.

Sally: Stealing isn't even a real crime.

Emily: I know. Shut up. Stealing from rich people? Whatever.

Sally: It's like shoplifting from Target.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Or Wal-Mart, actually –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Maybe is a better –

Emily: Yeah, shoplifting from major corporations is not shoplifting.

Sally: Yeah. It's fine.

Emily: It hardly counts as anything. Any – allegedly. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, for legal reasons, that was a joke. (laugh)

Emily: For legal reasons, that was a joke. (laugh) Blah blah blah. Anyway, I don't want to talk about Elayne anymore, so sorry this wasn't a very fun episode, but it's like, you know, for every billion bees and four feral raccoons, you have to have a really long discussion about how Robert Jordan is violating game mechanics and game theory. Alf Seegert would be thrilled.

Sally: Alf Seegert – (laugh) Alf Seegert is one of our professors in college. I took a video games and storytelling class from him, which is extremely good, and that's where my, I'll admit, albeit rudimentary understanding of game mechanics comes from, but it is a very interesting way to look at and analyze both games, obviously, and stories themselves, which have a game element to them, a hundred percent.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: So, um.

Emily: Yeah. Game theory. Look it up if you're interested.

Sally: Yeah, it's very interesting. We've been thinking and talking a lot about Dungeons and Dragons in this house, so it's –

Emily: Yeah, sorry.

Sally: On the brain.

Emily: It's on the brain.

Sally: Um, the last thing I want to say is that I think it is cool that the palace of Caemlyn is changing layout. I just think that's neat, and I –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Wish that was the plot in Caemlyn, not a war.

Emily: Yeah, it's a fun new bubble of evil.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. Maybe not new – I think we've had stuff like that happening in the White Tower already. But it is a fun, um, mechanic, I guess, that Robert Jordan is using, having the world, the familiar – the world of the familiar – become unfamiliar and sort of labyrinthine –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In this late stage of the world, sort of unraveling in structure –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That's very cool. He went off on that one.

Sally: Yeah. Absolutely popped off. And I just – I wish – like, you could make a plot out of “How the fuck do I rule a country if I can't even –”

Emily: “Find my way out of the –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “My house?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah, like, what if it starts changing, like, actively trying to keep you in?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: There's a lot of, like, horrifying potential there, and Robert Jordan wussed out a little bit of it, but you know.

Sally: Yeah, I don't need to know anything about Arymilla. Is the palace sentient? That would be sick.

Emily: Is there a minotaur at the – at the – in the middle?

Sally: Yeah. Is –

Emily: Do we need a golden thread?

Sally: Yeah. Tell me more.

Emily: Who knows?

Sally: (sing-song) Tell me more, tell me more ...

Emily: (sing-song) Tell me more, did it go very far? (normal) No. Our next section tragically will be from Rand, but I think Loial gets married, so that's exciting.

Sally: That's exciting. Congrats to Loial and – Erith? Is that her name?

Emily: Yes. And, um, like, at least Bashere's there, so –

Sally: (gasp) Daddy.

Emily: We have that to look forward to. (laugh) Um, but thanks for listening.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Thanks to Glynn MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

Sally: Yeah, and Emily referenced our billion bees and four feral raccoons from last episode, and wanted to share a special thanks to Julie McCormick, who did some really fun fanart of us as four billion – one billion bees and four feral raccoons. The raccoons in particular are extremely cute.

Emily: They look very adorable.

Sally: They, um, are so precious, so Julie, you did a really amazing job. Thank you. Um, we love getting fanart, and, um, I know it's a little self-indulgent, but I do legitimately love every time you guys create anything, um, EHR-related, so thank you, um, for that, Julie. Loved it.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I really do wish I was a billion bees sometimes.

Emily: Mm, yeah, right now I wish I was four feral raccoons. You know why? 'Cause four feral raccoons would not be expected to have anything intelligent to say about Elayne, the world's worst ... lady.

Sally: Yeah. The world's worst ...

Emily: The world's worst.

Sally: We should do, um – I know we do, like, sometimes, favorite character, least favorite character –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Which I guess we could start doing again if we need more air time. We should do, um, like, an awards show.

Emily: Oh, an awards show? For, like –

Sally: Yeah, for Wheel of Time.

Emily: Worst – yeah. Best, worst.

Sally: For worst and best.

Emily: Best in show.

Sally: Yeah, maybe for, um, an upcoming episode, we'll have listeners suggest categories, and we'll –

Emily: That's a good one.

Sally: We'll vote.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Obviously we have the expert and correct opinions, so.

Emily: (laugh) Yeah, of course.

Sally: Um, you guys don't get to vote; you just get to suggest the categories. (laugh)

Emily: How dare you imply otherwise?

Sally: Yeah. We're right.

Emily: Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: Do I have a sign-off? Um, I had to – don't worry, first of all; I'm fine. I had to go to the urgent care on New Year's Eve, which, like, of course I did. That's pretty, um, on the nose for my life. Again, I am fine; don't worry. Um, but of course it was New Year's Eve, so it was, like, an extremely long wait; the urgent care was freezing; there was this child that kept looking at me? And, like, I know it's a child, but, like, leave me alone. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: And then, like – I seriously was at the urgent care for, like, three hours.

Emily: Yeah, you were gone a long time.

Sally: I was gone a really long time for, like, a relatively minor issue. It was extremely stupid. Which means that I watched the majority of Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs 2 in the waiting room of the urgent care on New Year's Eve. (laugh) And, like, I'll admit that the first Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs is pretty funny, you know?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, it's got its moments. Like with many sequels, this one did not have a lot of, um, ground to stand on. Um, I did have a book with me, but, like, I was not feeling well, so I couldn't focus very well with just, like, a strawberry on screen screaming at me, so. Happy New Year to me, I guess.

Emily: Happy New Year to all of us, really. At least you – (laugh) at least you, dear listener, weren't –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Didn't herald 2023 with Cloudy with a Chance of Meatballs 2.

Sally: Two. Deux.

Emily: Deux.

Sally: The squeakquel, as Emily would say.

Emily: The squeakquel! You know I love the squeakquel. Alright, everyone.

Sally: We love you, bye.

Emily: Byeeee.