



Episode 230: Who Sent the Trollocs??

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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: Umm. Hello. So this is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: And this is Knife of Dreams, and a lot is going on here, not necessarily any of it good, but it's there.

Sally: I mean, Darlin is here, sooo.

Emily: Darlin is here. Our beloved.

Sally: Darlin is –

Emily: Remember when Darlin carried a man –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who's, like, six and a half feet tall in a fireman carry for, like, three miles?

Sally: Yeah, I do. That was really sexy of him.

Emily: Really sexy of him. God, Darlin.

Sally: I love him. He's so perfect.

Emily: And now he's king.

Sally: And now he's king of –

Emily: Tear.

Sally: Tear. I almost said King of Illian, but that's Rand.

Emily: I almost said that too. Weird. Yeah, I just must have seen the phrase “King of Illian” more.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: King of Tear, the ugliest city in the world, according to Rand. Rand’s like, “This city fucking sucks.” (laugh)

Sally: Well, maybe –

Emily: The second they walk into it. As though maybe, like, the poverty –

Sally: Yeah, maybe the poverty that you are kind of responsible for –

Emily: Responsible for, yeah.

Sally: Might be –

Emily: Not doing great.

Sally: Contributing to that.

Emily: Um, first we have to deal with Nynaeve and Lan’s marital issues.

Sally: Oh my God.

Emily: Jesus Christ.

Sally: What if we just didn’t?

Emily: Just skipped over the entire Lan subplot?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because I think they should have. It really comes out of nowhere.

Sally: Yeah, it’s really bizarre. Like, my – in these chapters, I feel like they are very much – they are attempting to transition us towards the Last Battle –

Emily: Yeah, for sure.

Sally: But it feels like a very, like, hard cliff of every other plot we were dealing with, and all the sudden, we are at the Last Battle. Or at Last Battle preparation.

Emily: Yeah, it’s really – I was trying to think about that too, because I was like, we’re only told in retrospect that there were, like, something like ten thousand Trollocs or something –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: That attacked this manor house and that it was in fact a close fight.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: I don't know if it's the fact that, like, Rand as the point of view character at the time was so, like, far-removed from it, both physically and emotionally – like, he was literally inside the house just sort of sniping people from a distance, but also he was way more preoccupied with Lews Therin at that time –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which, as we've talked about, was, like, a good scene –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Lews Therin's sort of takeover is also an interesting step toward the Last Battle, but, like, the impact of ten thousand Trollocs coming out of nowhere and attacking them is sort of lost in that.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Especially because, like, Trollocs have just sort of popped out of nowhere and attacked them before in vast numbers.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, this has happened in the Stone of Tear; it's happened in the Aiel Waste; it's happened in the Two Rivers. They've just – that's just what they do when Robert Jordan needs some sort of physical threat on our characters. He just, like, summons an army of Shadowspawn into existence –

Sally: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Emily: Which I assume is also what the Forsaken are doing. Just, like, sort of twirling their fingers and –

(dog barking in the distance)

Sally: Yeah, and here's ten thousand Trollocs.

Emily: There they come. Yeah, so, like – and Trollocs have stopped being scary.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: They're no longer, like, at all a dangerous threat in our minds. We're eleven books in; Rand, Mat, and Perrin are all easily able to dispatch Trollocs and, to a certain extent, Myrddraal, which were the big bads the first couple of books.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So it's just, like, not a – a threat anymore.

Sally: Yeah, and at this point, like, the idea that they have just massacred ten thousand Trollocs is more, like, sad to me than anything.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, it feels really pointless to just, like – like, obviously we can't credit the – the Dark One and his subordinates with, like, a credible tactical knowledge.

Emily: (laugh) Yeah.

Sally: But, like, to have them, like, keep sending these hordes of Trollocs against them and losing, it's like what are you hoping to accomplish? It feels really needless. It's just, like, needless slaughter. And you know I'm always gonna side with the monsters, and it just feels, like, sad.

(dog barking in the distance)

Emily: Yeah, we're told in this chapter – like, Rand, I believe – hello, neighbors?

Sally: Yeah, dog, hush.

Emily: Rand, I believe, says something like, "With Trollocs and Myrddraal, like, there's no negotiations, no quarter; you just have to kill them." Which is, like, um, part of the fantasy trope.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: There has to be a nameless sort of monster –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, that the good guys can just sort of kill –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: In order to have action sequences without any moral consequences.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, but this book has spent – this series; excuse me – has spent the last several books sort of insisting upon the moral consequences of killing monsters because they've made monsters that are human-shaped in the Seanchan.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Who are doing this – have this sort of, like, monstrous society and government structure and da da da da da. And, like, who are the monsters, really? I mean, like, the Seanchan are terrible, but, like, Rand just walks into Tear and people are starving, and he goes and makes Darlin king, and they do nothing about the starvation.

Sally: Yeah. And, like, it – that scene is so frustrating because Darlin and his coterie are like, "We have been trying to solve this and these rebels are causing a ton of problems," and Rand's like, "I'll just make you king and disappear," and –

Emily: They're like, "Oh –"

Sally: Darlin's like, "This objectively solves nothing."

Emily: Yeah, they're like, "Oh, well, the rebels surrendered, and now they're going to pay to feed the city," and I'm like, where is the food coming from?

Sally: Yeah. Who's –

Emily: When will it get here?

Sally: Who's making sure they're actually doing this?

Emily: Yeah. Ugh.

Sally: Like, who's holding them accountable? Like, people can – people are already starving. The food needs to be here – whatever. But, no, you make such a good point about the way that, um – like, I feel like this series is trying to do a lot with the way that, like, "monster" is a very slippery category. You can have these, like, otherworldly creatures who are terrifying and eat human bones –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And then you've got people like the Seanchan and the Shaido and to some extent – well, to – I think the book is trying to posit to some extent, but I think to large extent, Rand himself. And I don't know; it just, like, doesn't land for me, I guess.

Emily: Yeah, the logical, like – it just falls apart, sort of.

Sally: Yeah, especially when, like you said, like, we're able to just slaughter, massacre tens of thousands of Trollocs and make deals with the Seanchan. I just, like, don't really know where the – I don't know where I'm supposed to settle in all of that. So.

Emily: Yeah, but like you said, clearly the point of this was to make our characters feel more urgently –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: About the approach of the Last Battle. And that hits, um – we'll sort of skip around here a little bit –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: That hits Lan, who has a mystifying conversation with Nynaeve wherein they're, like, in their room, and he's looking out over everyone cleaning up the thousand – ten thousand bodies, and Nynaeve's like, "What's up?" and he's like, "I just really feel like Rand should be more focused on the Borderlands, and, like, I'm really worried about what's going on there because – and, like, they should try and fix the Borderlander problem; all the kings and queens having abandoned their posts and blah blah blah blah." And there is, like, no transition – like, at no point in that little spiel does Lan say, "I feel like my job is to be in the Borderlands, and I feel like I could do a lot of good in the Borderlands, blah blah blah blah, that's where I want to be."

Sally: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Emily: It just jumps immediately to Nynaeve being like, “Oh, so you want to go there?” and I think Robert Jordan is trying to be like, “Of course Lan wants to go there, and of course Nynaeve, as his wife, understands that.” But I’m like, Nynaeve understanding Lan on this level is sort of, um – Lan is regressing in this scene.

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

Emily: Lan is supposed to have, um, sort of in the last couple of books overcome his grief over Moiraine and his more suicidal tendencies because he now has a relationship with Nynaeve that he is, um, invested in –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And living for. Much as I do not like the idea that he is living solely for his wife, you know.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, for sure.

Emily: That’s gross. But we haven’t really had any check-ins on Lan’s mental health, so we’ve just sort of assumed everything’s fine.

Sally: Um, Lan doesn’t have mental health.

Emily: Yeah, that’s correct.

Sally: Lan doesn’t – there’s no – there’s no internal world in that man, apparently.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: He’s just either sad or fighting.

Emily: Ugh.

Sally: Hi, Ed.

Emily: So Nynaeve being like, “You want to go to the Borderlands, and I have to, like, weasel you into a promise to take people with you,” is her acknowledging that Lan is still one hundred percent wanting to go just, like, into the Blight and die.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And it’s like, that’s a pretty fucked-up thing –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To know about your husband.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And to be like, “We’re just gonna skim right over that and go to, like, the problem-solving?” Like, Robert Jordan’s time management is so bizarre. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, it – like, I know I joke that, like, Lan doesn't have an internal reality –

(audio feedback as Ed jumps over the mic arm)

Sally: My God.

Emily: Oh my God. Hurdle.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Olympian-level high jumper.

Sally: Yeah, what was –

Emily: Tybalt just – not Tybalt. Ed just leapt over the – boom arm.

Sally: (laugh) That was so silly. Hello. Welcome to the recording. What was I even saying?  
(laugh) I know I'm making jokes about Lan, like, not having an internal world and feelings because it apparently seems like he never does –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But, like – oh my God, Ed, you made me lose my point entirely. (laugh)

Emily: No, Ed.

Sally: Oh, I give up. If it comes back, I'll say anything; I won't waste any more time. Uh.

Emily: Just clearly, he has a lot going on that the series has not really acknowledged in the last few books.

Sally: Yeah, I think that's what I was trying to say. Like, all jokes aside about, like, him not having feelings, like, the book very much posits that as, like, that's just how Lan operates, apparently –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Instead of being like, he's got a lot of, like, internal stuff to deal with, like his suicidal ideation, and that doesn't just, like, magically go away because you're married.

Emily: Yeah. Yeah.

Sally: And the book is just like, we don't – Lan's married now; he's fine.

Emily: Yeah. It's super weird.

Sally: Yeah. And then to just, like you said, have this whole major facet of his character just, like, skyrocket back to the surface, it – it is very much giving me whiplash.

Emily: Mm-hmm. Anyway, Nynaeve, like, fey trickster-style –

Sally: This is so stupid.

Emily: Gets Lan to agree that he'll get anyone – he'll – she makes him think that she's gonna drop him off in Shienar, 'cause he wants to go to Tarwin's Gap, and she's like, "I'll drop you off, and you just have to promise to accept any aid from anyone who, um, gives it to you." And then she Travels him to the very far end of the Borderlands, like on the border of Saldaea next to the ocean, so Lan is going to have to ride across the entirety of the Borderlands, assuming he can't find anyone else who can teleport, I guess.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Nynaeve's idea being she's going to sort of go ahead of him and, uh, start the rumor mill so that he is followed by a lot of people, blah blah blah blah.

Sally: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Emily: This is an extremely weird, like, man-centric – I – like, I don't know what's going on here. This is some sort of male fantasy; I just can't figure out what it is.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The idea of the lone hero, but now he's, like, joined by all of his comrades who just, through their patriotism for their lost country and their lost king –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Blah blah blah, something something. I don't know what's going on here.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But it's like, Nynaeve – it's so out of character for Nynaeve to just be like, "I'm just going to send Lan away and trust in the idea that he is going to have enough help to not die immediately whenever he does get to the Borderlands." And, like, I guess it's really not an issue, 'cause, yeah, Lan doesn't get there until the end of Towers of Midnight, when the Last Battle is already starting. So, like, I just don't know. It's the most irritating, confusing plot. I hate Lan. I hate his character. I hate the, like, weird male fantasies that are projected onto him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He is so bizarre. If I met him, I'd kill him. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) No, he's an incredibly frustrating character. And this plot is just, like, so convoluted. Like, obviously the end goal is for whatever reason for Lan to somehow, in some sort of Return of the King-esque archetype, return as the king of a country, fallen or otherwise, show up at the battle –

Emily: Yeah, the –

Sally: Blah blah blah.

Emily: The set piece here is Gandalf returning at the end of Two Towers –

Sally: Yeah.



Emily: On the peak of a hill in front of a force, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Lan is going to be leading this glorious charge of the Light Brigade to –

Sally: Yeah. Is that what they're called?

Emily: No. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Just – like the poem, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: All those guys are gonna fucking die, is the point –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: But, “Deaaaaath!” We don't care about death because we're fighting the Dark One, and it's like, you guys are so weird about the value of human life.

Sally: I know. And, like, I think the – like, the Theoden speech at the – before the, like, battle in front of Gondor is, like, a really good parallel because, like, the Rohirrim work as a society, one, because there is enough world-building there to, like, understand what they're doing, and also because they're drawing on really, like, medieval sort of Old English warrior values, where, like, it wasn't necessarily just that, like, dying was a good thing, but it was, like, built into their culture about, like, how you die an honorable death and those types of things. You know?

Emily: Yeah, it's a warrior society, and –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We are given to understand that and explain it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Lan, as the sole representative of Malkier, is just, like, a dude with super fucked-up mental health to us.

Sally: Yeah, and so him sort of leading this force to inevitable death doesn't carry, for me, any, like, heroic connotations. It's just, like, very masculine –

Emily: Wasteful.

Sally: Yeah, waste – like, wasteful masculinity is what it is.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And it's – like, the whole thing is upsetting and also the way that we get to it is upsetting. Like, it bothers me at this point, eleven books in, like you said, Lan has regressed so much that

we're back to Lan at the beginning of the Eye of the World who was, like, ready to go off. Like, it's like the past eleven books haven't happened to him at all. And instead of, like, showing some moments of character growth about him being like, "I am going to ask for help," which would be, like, a huge moment of growth for Lan as a character: "I'm going to ask for help; I'm going to try and call upon people's sense of, like, duty; whether or not they join me, this is where I'm going, but I am going to try and get help." You know, that'd be, like, great character development for him. We're just, like, we have this weird contrived plot about Nynaeve lying to her husband and dropping him off in the middle of nowhere and then leaving immediately, not making sure he's okay or has everything that he needs, and then going to talk to some random guy that she for some other reason also knows is Malkieri?

Emily: Yeah. So, like, to several of those points: Yes, Lan should have grown as a character in a capacity to ask for help; it's also frustrating because what he details to Nynaeve as his problems are, like, structural things –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: That Rand needs to fix.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: And Lan's position in this series is as Rand's mentor.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Lan ought to be utilizing that power as the, like, Dragon Reborn's BFF –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But instead he's regressed to, like, referring to Rand by his last name and being –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Him as, like, this otherworldly being who's unapproachable. And it's like, yeah, Rand at this point has also regressed and is sort of an unapproachable being, but, like, for a series that is so much purportedly about interpersonal relationships, Lan and Rand both are just like, "Nope." They have to be forced into it by their women.

Sally: Yeah, that's such a – that's such a good point. Like, Rand has more than enough capability to send Lan with an army that he does not need too.

Emily: Yeah, or to, like, just go deal with the Borderland problem.

Sally: Yeah. Just teleport his little faction –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: His inner circle up there.

Emily: It's frustrating. And it's –

Sally: Solve it.

Emily: Also portrayed as a character – character growth for Nynaeve –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: In that she's being mature and respecting Lan's decisions, except she's also not.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: And just, like, blah – blah blah blah blah. But, like, you're also correct that it makes no sense; like, is Nynaeve just teleporting from bar to bar in the Borderlands, looking for Malkieri guys?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I thought the country was dead.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: How many can there possibly be?

Sally: Like, we, at the end of this chapter, know of at least two.

Emily: It's not like there's a club –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or, like, a notice board. "Here's where the Malkieri expats meet." Like –

Sally: Yeah, I have no idea how she's finding these guys.

Emily: So it's a very, extremely contrived plot in this weird masculine power fantasy that is Lan.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So there we have it.

Sally: Masculine power fantasy is the perfect way to put it. Um.

Emily: Meanwhile. (laugh)

Sally: Ugh, yeah. Moving on.

Emily: Uh, Christ. Meanwhile Rand, um, is walking around, cleaning up the bodies, blah blah blah –

Sally: Ten thousand is so many bodies.

Emily: I know.

Sally: Can we linger on that for just, like, one second.

Emily: It's so many people. Rand is like, "Who sent these guys? Where'd they come from?" He at one point is like, "Maybe they were sent by this guy who I can see in my head, Moridin, because I sensed that we could feel each other and could find each other, and so maybe he's a bad guy and sent all of these Trollocs after me since that happened, like, in sequence," you know?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And I'm like – I don't know who sent the Trollocs. I don't know if the book ever tells us who sent the Trollocs. It is irrelevant.

Sally: Yeah, it really doesn't matter.

Emily: So, like, having this sort of, like, mystery that Rand keeps going back to is very frustrating.

Sally: I also feel like we've been asking that question since the beginning of the Eye of the World.

Emily: Yes. "Who sent the Trollocs?"

Sally: (simultaneously) "Who sent the Trollocs?"

Emily: Who knows?

Sally: Like, it – ugh. It's like a rhetorical question at this point.

Emily: Yeah. Um, Rand gets a letter delivered from Verin –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Where she's basically like, "Peace out. Don't trust anyone. Byeccc." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. She's like, "I am going to deal with your –"

Emily: Some other things.

Sally: "Your things other places."

Emily: Yeah, and –

Sally: And he's like, "What is she doing?"

Emily: She's like, "Remember, even people who swore fealty to you, like, if they're Black Ajah, then that doesn't count."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "They don't have to hold their promises, so."

Sally: Wink, wink.

Emily: Wink, wink. Ba ba da ba da. And he's like, "Okay, that was weird." Um, and then, like, what's her name – Elza –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Who is – we know from foresight and also, like, her little various snippets up until this point, like, she is also one of the Black Ajah, and Rand immediately goes, "Well, she's the one I don't have to worry about," and it's like, Robert Jordan, your dependence upon dramatic irony as your –

Sally: It's – yeah.

Emily: Like, masturbatory mechanism is so bizarre.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, you are propping this whole series up on dramatic irony and that is a – that is an empire built on shifting sands, my friend.

Emily: Yeah. Loial shows up and is like, "Hey. Gotta go."

Sally: (laugh) "Also, peace out."

Emily: "Also, peace out." And Rand's like, "Ah, but Loial, no, I totally need you to seal up all the Waygates," and I'm like, what has Loial been doing this entire time? You – I thought we just sent him away for three books.

Sally: We did.

Emily: Wasn't he doing that?

Sally: Apparently not.

Emily: You specifically sent him with an Asha'man who could channel to do that. And Rand's like, "It's still a big deal 'cause I don't know where all the Waygates are and blah ba dee blah blah blah," and I'm like, this has already been dealt with, except patently it has not because it's going to be a big issue in the fuckin' Last Battle, also, because everyone – they're – they use the Waygates to get into Caemlyn. Spoiler alert.

Sally: They don't even – they don't even close all the Waygates?

Emily: They don't even close all the Waygates. It's like Robert Jordan wants to have his cake and eat it too. He wants to be like, "The Waygates are continuing to be a relevant plot mechanism by which bad guys transport themselves in mass quantities across the continent." But he also wants to be like, "Rand's not an idiot," and you can't have it both ways. Either Rand has to be stupid and not solve the problem, as he is doing with many, many of his other problems, or you have to eliminate the Waygates as a problem.

Sally: Yeah, I also feel like there's a very easy third option of just being like, the Waygates are ancient technology that we don't understand; we don't know how to close them.

Emily: Yeah, that could've been a thing early on, but –

Sally: And the – we just have to keep eyes on them and have, like, a network of Waygate watchers. That would still allow the bad guys to use them if they were clever enough to get around them and not have this ridiculous side plot of Loial and the Ogier having to try and close all of them.

Emily: Yeah, and it's for some reason down to Loial? Like, why is –

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Can't anyone else close them?

Sally: Yeah, it just is, like, I don't – I don't understand. Like, it – there's too many plates in the air, I guess, but.

Emily: Anyway, Loial's like, "I super can't 'cause I've been away from the stedding too long," and Rand's like, "Mm. Are you sure?" and Loial's like, "Yes, I'm sure. I'm going to die." And Rand's like, "I don't care about that, though."

Sally: He's like, "That sounds like a you problem, bestie."

Emily: Like – (laugh) Loial's like, "I also want to go to the fuckin' Great Stump," and Rand's like, "Okay, whatever the fuck that is," and Elder Haman's like, "I can close the Waygates for you, 'cause Loial's my protege and he'll represent my opinions in the Great Stump," and it's like, okay, great, that's solved, so where's Elder Haman? Why does it still fucking not work?

Sally: Not closing Waygates.

Emily: Ugh. Does he get, like, assassinated immediately?

Sally: Oh, yeah. Just taken out.

Emily: RIP this guy. Who knows? Um. Then Bashere shows up. Elza shows up and is like, "Bashere is here," and Rand's like, "Hey, Bashere," and Bashere's like, "Okay, well, I've finally solidified this meeting with the Daughter of the Nine Moons. It's super weird; I'm, like, not talking to anyone except Suroth and Suroth's, like, direct representatives, so they're super secretive," and it's like, we already know, of course, that this is not Tuon herself –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But it's like, having servants who are, like, mute is – is, like, a red flag. You know, who are, like, intentionally selected for their muteness.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like, okay, that seems like a problem. Anyway, Bashere's like, "She's bringing six sul'dam and damane or whatever, and you're allowed to bring the same number of channelers, plus, specifically, you can bring a woman who can't channel," and Rand's like, "Okay," and Min's like, "Hooty hoo, that's for me; that's my slot," and Rand's like, "Maybe. We'll talk about it."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: There's a whole lot about Rand and Min arguing and being very annoying at each other. Oh, we do get a little tidbit about – like, we're just getting lots of little tidbits that are reintroducing us to the world at large, like the fact that Altara apparently has a new king. We know that that's what's his name – Tylin's son – what's his name? Literally, what's his name?

Sally: Oh. Beslan.

Emily: Beslan. (laugh) So, okay, great, Beslan's in power. I wonder if he has changed his allegiances from his sort of –

Sally: Yeah, revolutionary tendencies.

Emily: Les Miserables. Revolutionary tendencies to fascism.

Sally: What is it? (sing-song) “How do you do, my name's Gavroche.”

Emily: (bad Cockney accent, sing-song) “How do you do, my name's Gavroche.”

Sally: Oh, that was – I apologize for my bad singing.

Emily: No, you're – I don't think I got it either.

Sally: Beslan is, um –

Emily: Gavroche.

Sally: Gavroche. Yeah, I assume.

Emily: He's just a little urchin.

Sally: Just a little street boy.

Emily: A little urchin. There's more arguments about Alivia and this whole prophecy that she's gonna help Rand die. Min really hates that and is like, “Maybe I'm wrong,” and Rand's like, “You're never wrong,” and she's like, “Well, I was wrong about Moiraine, 'cause, boo, she's dead,” and it's like, okay, well, that's an interesting thing to bring up now, in book eleven.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Now that Mat finally has that info about Moiraine not being dead.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Very strategic on your part, Robert Jordan. Anyway. The next chapter has Rand and a very small coterie entering Tear, the city, not the country. This is, I believe, the first time we've been back in Tear proper since book four.

Sally: Mm-hmm. I think so.

Emily: Um. It's bad. There are, like, little sad urchins everywhere. People are starving. There's no guards. And shit like that.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It takes quite a – like, you sort of have to piece together that the city is under siege by rebels. Like, I know that’s been told to us before, but this is so not, like – the fact that Rand and company can just, like, waltz in there seems so weird.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it’s just a confusing little set-up. Um. The big things that happen are that they see a car. (laugh)

Sally: Yeehaw.

Emily: Or, excuse me, a steam wagon. And some little urchins are like, “Look, a car!” (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And Rand’s like, “Here’s a hundred dollars, boys,” and they’re like, “Sweet. We can use this to buy nothing because there’s no food.”

Sally: Yeah, I – yeah. Your money is meaningless. Give me – give me a hundred dollars’ worth of food, yeah.

Emily: Your money is meaningless. In an economic system wherein bread is worth one million dollars –

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: This is nothing. But we find out their names and then Min’s clearly like, “Oh, no, they’re gonna die,” and Rand’s like, “Maybe I can make them not die,” and it’s like, what – do you or do you not believe that Min’s prophecies are valid? Like, blah blah blah blah blah. They, uh – as he’s going through the city, he’s making dumb weird things happen, like birds colliding with each other and then just falling on the ground or, um, someone falling and – like, out of a multi-story house and just landing perfectly, so they’re fine. So just, like, our little reminder that this is what Rand does every time – any time he enters a populated, um, area. Rand tells us that he’s now out of, like – that he has left the manor house because he considers it pointless to be in hiding anymore. I didn’t really know that he was in hiding to begin with.

Sally: Yeah, me either.

Emily: It kind of just seemed like an R&R vacay.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, we’re just gonna hole up in this Airbnb while we recover from cleansing saidin.

Sally: Yeah.



Emily: But then, I guess it was a big deal that, like, the Asha'man found him. I don't know. Just – Robert Jordan isn't really being clear right now.

Sally: Yeah. He's not laying it out for me.

Emily: Um, Rand and his group, which is Min, Nynaeve, Cadsuane, um, some Maidens as bodyguards, go to, like, a hotel – an inn, excuse me. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) They go to the Best Western: Tear.

Emily: They go to the fucking Ritz. They go to an inn where there's a dude who's talking about how silk comes from worms –

Sally: Oh my God, I know.

Emily: And everyone else is like, "Silk obviously comes off of trees." This is a very weird little aside that Robert Jordan throws an unnecessary amount of attention to, presumably to remind us that Sharans exist.

Sally: Oh, is that – I thought he was supposed to be, like, a Seanchan spy.

Emily: There is a –

Sally: That makes –

Emily: Also a Seanchan spy. There's, like, a guy with a strange accent, who's like, "I'm telling you, they come from worms."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And everyone – Rand's like, "Oh, this guy's super weird 'cause he's wearing weird clothes and has really dark coloring –"

Sally: Hmm.

Emily: And has this – like, clearly struggles with the language." And then, like, also there's a Seanchan guy who's like, "Oh, yeah, for sure they come out of worms. Silk comes out of silkworms."

Sally: So –

Emily: And then peaces out. So, for – first of all, we're getting the insane world-building –

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: That the difference between Randland and the other continents is silk production. That's the, like –

Sally: That's the key –

Emily: Linchpin.

Sally: Yeah, that's the key cultural difference.

Emily: It's all about the silkworms.

Sally: It is –

Emily: It's like Pepe Silvia.

Sally: It's all about the silk.

Emily: It's the silkworms!

Sally: Like, yeah, you're right, it's such a bizarre piece of worldbuilding to be like, "This is such a crucial difference that it's, like, causing a quasi-fight in an inn."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And it is also just, like, so out of left field to be like, "No, silk just grows on trees."

Emily: Here in Randland –

Sally: Like, what does that mean? Like, does it just, like, legitimately grow off of trees like a – like the tree's fruiting silk?

Emily: That's horrifying. I don't want – I don't ever want to hear that again.

Sally: Like, what – is it just, like, these big swathes –

Emily: Swathes of silk.

Sally: Of, like, swaying silk threads off these trees? Like, I cannot –

Emily: Are there silk nuts? Like, what's the –

Sally: Oh my gosh.

Emily: Fucking deal?

Sally: Are you – eugh.

Emily: Finally, I want to know something more about this world –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And you're withholding that information because I don't think you want to give it.

Sally: Because it's so random. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, the whole point is just to be like, the Sean – the Seanchan are here, around. They're doing spy stuff, like we already know from Mat.

Sally: And also, this really random dude from Shara?

Emily: Who, like, it's not – we're not told that he's from Shara.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just, I feel like that's the implication.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: And it's like, what? That's weird. Sharans don't come to these places. But then it's like –

Sally: Maybe it's Demandred. (laugh)

Emily: Who else – (laugh) Demandred's weekends are like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "I will go to random cities, get super drunk –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "So that I can't speak Common anymore or whatever the fuck it is –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And be like, 'No, no, no: you don't understand. It's silkworms.'"

Sally: "It's silkworms.'"

Emily: "'You and your fucked-up silk trees can go to hell.'"

Sally: "'Get your fuckin' Biblically accurate silk trees out of here.'"

Emily: "'I don't want them!'"

Sally: "'They – they horrify me a little bit.'"

Emily: "'In my, Demandred's, perfect world –'"

Sally: In my, Demandred's, perfect world – the perfect world by me, Demandred.

Emily: Demandred. Terrifying. Terrifying concept.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's just Demandred, surrounded by a billion silkworms. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) That sounds pretty lit to me.

Emily: Just all the silk his heart desires.

Sally: It's just him and his silkworm babies.

Emily: Eww. Eugh. So anyway, that is, like, the most random aside Robert Jordan has ever come up with.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) I don't know.

Emily: All for them to get into a – an – a room in the inn so that Rand can open a gateway into the Stone of Tear.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: This – again, I'm super confused by. I thought you could only Travel from places you knew.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They don't know this random hotel room.

Sally: Also, like, why couldn't he just have opened a gateway into the Stone of Tear from, like, outside of the city?

Emily: I know. Why does he – like, I'm guessing it's a thing with, like, if you can actually see –

Sally: Mm. Mm, mm, mm.

Emily: Where you're going, that negates the other rule, but that has not been stated to us.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or if it has, it was super random and not important at the time.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So Robert Jordan is just, like, imposing new and weirder boundaries on teleportation, and it's just, like, dude, can you please pick what you want to do with this power?

Sally: Yeah. I need a little, like, D&D spell description.

Emily: I know. A little – what are the components?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So they show up in – like, in the Heart of the Stone where Callandor once was. They exit and there are guards in the room, and Rand's like, "What are you doing? This is an empty room," and they're like, "You ordered us to guard this room," and he's like, "Oh, well, I meant, like, Callandor, not the room." And they're like, "Well, you did not make that clear."

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: "And we don't want to be murdered by the Dragon Reborn, renowned tyrant, so."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Here we are." Anyway, they're like, "Can we get you where you wanna go? Like, uh, bad news, sometimes the floor layout changes," so here's another big sentient building.

Sally: Fuck yeah.

Emily: And Rand's like, "No, no problem, I'm just gonna follow my inner compass to where Alanna is." Like, you can sense where Alanna is and not know which turns are most efficient to get to her.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like –

Sally: Also, like, you came to talk to Darlin. How do you know Alanna's gonna be with him?

Emily: Yeah, he's like, "Alanna moved as soon as she felt me, so of course that means she went to Darlin," and I'm like, it would be a fucking hilarious move of Alanna to just be like, "I'm gonna go to the most fuck-ass weird portion of the Stone of Tear –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And be like, 'Oh, you just assumed that I would go to where you want to go? You fool.'"

Sally: Yeah, go to the basement full of ter'angreal or whatever.

Emily: (laugh) Yeah. "Oh, look at what I – look at what I've found. Another doorway."

Sally: "Another doorway. Let's go in again."

Emily: Like, what would happen if she went into the doorway? Would Rand be like, "Alanna's dead"?

Sally: "Oh my God. She's just, like, vanished."

Emily: "My tracker – her tracker chip –"

Sally: Her tracker chip!

Emily: "Is gone." Anyway, they go to where Alanna is, where, predictably she is with Darlin and also Caraline, Darlin's love interest and Moiraine's look-alike.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Also there is Weiramon and Anaiyella – I think I'm saying that name right –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: Who are both, I think, Tairen nobles. Maybe Cairhienin – maybe Tairen – I don't remember. They were – they've been around. Weiramon's the really annoying one.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I honestly can't remember who Anaiyella is – Anaiyella is. But Rand's super annoyed that they're there. He's like, "What the fuck are you doing here?" And they're like, "Y'know, just hanging out." And he's like, "Okay, well, leave." And they're like, "Okay."

Sally: Yeah, Weiramon, I think – this is when he’s like, “I came to do this big thing to stop the rebels, and it simply did not work and made everything worse.” (laugh)

Emily: And Rand’s like, “Oh, great.”

Sally: It’s – everyone’s like, “You are so terrible at your job. Please quit the military.”

Emily: Yeah. So Rand’s like, “What are you doing about the starvation?” Darlin’s like, “I cannot fix the starvation until we are no longer under siege by our own –” like, the – the Tairen nobility, basically. And Rand’s like, “Well, what are the Aes Sedai – the Aes Sedai are supposed to be negotiating a truce. Why haven’t they done that yet?” And Darlin’s like, “Buddy, I don’t know. Why – why am I in charge of all of this?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Blah blah blah. And Rand’s getting more and more mad and making more and more little scenes, throwing more and more little tantrums, and Cadsuane, instead of being like, “Please be polite to people,” not that that would help, but she’s like, “I will just humiliate you in front of everyone in – by spanking you or whatever with the Power.”

Sally: Yeah, she’s counting, like you do with children who are –

Emily: She’s like, “One. Two. Three.”

Sally: Misbehaving.

Emily: And Rand’s like, “I have no idea what you’re doing, just counting randomly in the corner.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it’s like, Cadsuane – like, first of all, besides all of the fucked-up – the layers of fucked-up-ness that are going on here with your mind, Robert Jordan’s mind, all of it, it is not effective parenting to not tell a child what you’re –

Sally: Yeah, what the –

Emily: What the problem is.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: What you’re warning them of.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And telling them to fix. So – don’t –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Doesn’t it just make you – every day, I’m like, thank God Cadsuane did not bear children.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Because the children she had – she could have had – would need so much therapy.

Sally: Yeah. Jeez.

Emily: God. And, I mean, Rand needs therapy, so.

Sally: Yeah, her surrogate child, Rand al'Thor.

Emily: Like, it actually is such huge narcissistic mom energy –

Sally: Mm. Yeah.

Emily: Of Cadsuane to waltz in and be like, “I am going to fix the Dragon Reborn’s mental health.”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And then do the absolute opposite of that, but the entire time be like, “I’m fixing it.”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: “Because I’m correct about everything, and I’m perfect.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Except I don’t think that’s what Robert Jordan was trying to characterize her as, so. Just ongoing frustrations with Cadsuane. Um, one of the other Aes Sedai who’s here at this point waltzes in and is like, “Wouldn’t you know it, we just reached a truce in the negotiations with the rebels –”

Sally: Hmm.

Emily: Presumably because Rand just showed up, and it’s like, Rand, why don’t you just go to the places where you need to solve the problems, because that’s apparently how this works?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: God almighty. Anyway, they’re like, “We met all of your terms, plus some,” and Rand’s like, “How dare you.” (laugh)

Sally: I know. He’s so annoying.

Emily: Um, but at the end of this, they’re like, “One of their terms is that Darlin is going to be made king.” Rand’s like, “Why do they want Darlin as a king? He’s the guy they’re fighting.” And they’re like, “Well, they just would rather swear fealty to Darlin than to you.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is a sick burn.

Sally: Yeah, which is – yeah.

Emily: Hilarious.

Sally: Very relatable.

Emily: And Rand's like, "Okay, whatever. Darlin, get your fuckin' crown and then you're heading to Arad Doman to fix all of their problems, regardless of the fact that your country is also in crisis. You've just been made – put in charge of a country that is in crisis; fuck that country."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "You're going to another country."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Rand's international politics –

Sally: Like, imagine if someone was like, "Joe, don't worry –" Joe Biden – (laugh) is who I mean.

Emily: Joe. We're on a first-name basis.

Sally: First-name basis with the president of the United States.

Emily: "Hey, Joe, your country? Perfect."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Everything's fine." I mean, that's a bad example because Joe Biden probably genuinely does think America has no problems.

Sally: He's like, "Everything is great in America. Just, like, everyone's crippling debt and, you know –"

Emily: Skyrocketing unemployment, the ongoing pandemic, the rampant racism –

Sally: Yeah. Just to name a few.

Emily: Just to name a few.

Sally: Yeah, if someone was like, "Don't worry about it, Joe; we're sending you off to ..." I don't know.

Emily: North Korea.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: To fix their problems. (laugh)

Sally: Good luck!

Emily: Have fun. It's like, he doesn't know how to govern North Korea.



Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Can you please, for the love of God, find someone from Arad Doman –

Sally: Yeah, you just –

Emily: Who might have an idea to fix Arad Doman.

Sally: Keep sending your – like, Rhuarc's over there. He's Aiel. Dobraine's over there. He's Cairhienin. Now you're sending Darlin.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, people live in Arad Doman.

Emily: People live there!

Sally: You can just – (laugh)

Emily: They have some opinions, probably, about how to fix their country.

Sally: You could just go –

Emily: That you fucked up.

Sally: (laugh) You could go find one of them.

Emily: Just pull a random one off the street.

Sally: They'd probably do better.

Emily: Hey, quick poll –

(audio feedback)

Sally: Oh, sorry.

Emily: Hey, quick poll: How would you fix the country? If someone did that to me, I'd be like, let's begin.

Sally: Yeah, I'd be like, oh my God, finally, somebody asked.

Emily: Dismantle capitalism.

Sally: First of all, electoral college: done – we're done with that shit. We're done.

Emily: Done. Out. We're out, yep.

Sally: Yeah, we are no longer capitalist. Nix the entire military budget. I don't want a single cent in that budget line. (laugh)

Emily: No, yeah, goodbyeee. That includes the police, since –

Sally: That absolutely includes the police.

Emily: The police and the military are the same thing.

Sally: We're dismantling every police department.

Emily: Goodbye to prisons, private prisons.

Sally: Yeah, no more private prisons.

Emily: We're banning prison labor.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Anyway.

Sally: Wow, look at – see, this is why a random person in Arad Doman would do better than Darlin, who doesn't even understand –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: What happens over there.

Emily: Darlin's like, "I've never even been to Arad Doman." (laugh)

Sally: He's like, "You want me to do what?"

Emily: "You want me to do what?" Anyway, he's like, "Caraline, will you marry me?" and she's like, "Maybe." (laugh)

Sally: "Maybe."

Emily: And that's the end. That's the end of that little Rand segment. The Last Battle's coming, and Rand is, um, quote, solving problems, unquote. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, Rand is just doing that little, like, cup game where you move the pea around.

Emily: Yeah, it really does feel like that.

Sally: But it's with, like, world leaders.

Emily: Yeah. He's like, "If I just – if I just move them to enough places, they'll fix things, right? And I won't have to do anything?" But we're leaving Rand now. We're gonna have a couple of weirdo snippets from annoying people, including the Sea Folk and the rebel Aes Sedai, where at least we will get the exciting revelation about the murderer in their midst, thanks to Narishma, my beloved.

Sally: I love you, Narishma.

Emily: Narishma, yeah.

Sally: Yeah, whatever. Words are ...

Emily: But that's what's on the docket. Join us next time, I guess.

Sally: Join us next time.

Emily: Anything to add?

Sally: No.

Emily: Naur.

Sally: Only that I would say yes if Darlin asked me to marry him.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I think –

Emily: How could you not?

Sally: I think –

Emily: World's sexiest man.

Sally: Yeah, he's just – I – I think it is also, like – Darlin is also dumb. (laugh) So, like –

Emily: Yeah, we've talked about how that's a major part of his appeal.

Sally: Yeah. Just, like, a himbo out here –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Suddenly been made king. And you're like –

Emily: At least he's well-intentioned, I guess.

Sally: Yeah. No, I totally am on board with King Darlin. I also trust Darlin will hire people to solve problems he can't solve.

Emily: Yeah, he's like, "Here's my smart wife."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "She'll run Tear for me." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. "I'm just a pretty figurehead."

Emily: Yep. Whee.

Sally: But Rand just being like, "Anybody who has any type of authority is just over in Arad Doman –" Whatever. No, I have nothing else to add.

Emily: (laugh) Thanks – (laugh)

Sally: Thanks.

Emily: Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media. Goodbye. Just kidding. Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: Um, guys, my sign-off is that I'm working on this puzzle that is really hard, and it is making me really mad because it actually shouldn't be hard; I'm just really bad at puzzles.

Emily: No, it is really hard. It's got, like – you're down to, like, the lettering portion, and it's, like –

Sally: Yeah. It's a Scooby Doo puzzle.

Emily: Big, pop-out letters, so–

Sally: And –

Emily: It's just two colors.

Sally: It's just all – yeah. Red and – or yellow and black and –

Emily: But think how happy you'll be when it's finished.

Sally: When I finish in 2027, I will be thrilled. (laugh) But until then, it's, like, I place one puzzle piece an hour. I'll post a picture of it, should I ever finish.

Emily: (laugh) Good night – goodbye.

Sally: Good night!

Emily: Good night.