



Episode 231: Greg McKraken III  
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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, so, this is [laughs] Everybody Hates Rand.

SALLY: [laughs] You can just take that twenty-five minutes, cut it. It was not twenty-five minutes. It was, like, ten minutes.

EMILY: This is – um. I'm Emily Juchau [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah. [pause] And I'm Sally Goodger.

EMILY: [laughing] Yeah.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: That's it.

SALLY: I'm –

EMILY: It's just Emily in this one.

SALLY: Yeah, I'm here. I'm here in body, but I'm not here in mind or spirit.

EMILY: Okay, guys, here's what happened in this, the very middle of *Knife of Dreams*. Okay, so, we witness a gathering of Sea Folk leaders, under the new direction of the, like, main lady who is Zaida, the woman who was harassing Elayne and co in Caemlyn for the last three books.

SALLY: Yeah, baby.

EMILY: Um, it's from the point of view of Harine, the woman who was harassed by Cadsuane and, in turn, harassing everyone else in Cairhien and assorted other places for the last also three books.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, Harine was severely punished because of her lackluster performance in making a bargain with the Dragon Reborn.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, which, if you'll recall, she – she basically just agreed to, because Rand was doing his sort of *ta'veren* thing.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, she had to. Um, Zaida got a better bargain with Elayne, although I guess Elayne also thought it was a good bargain, so. Um, Zaida also has in her company and Aes Sedai who is not Merilille?

SALLY: Yeah, I don't fucking know.

EMILY: Some rando named Amylia. Because Merilille, as you'll recall, like, ran away last book with one of the Sea Fok apprentices.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And they're just on the lamb, doing their thing.

SALLY: Yeah. No idea.

EMILY: Bu – and no clue who this woman is. For all I know, she's been kidnapped [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah! It's –

EMILY: Like, there were – remember, there are about a dozen Aes Sedai just milling about Caemlyn right now and we haven't *met* any of them. Elayne just keeps hearing about them.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So we don't know any of them by name. So, I assume this is one of them, but how she was, um, acquired is –

SALLY: Yeah, procured [laughs]

EMILY: Is [laughs], is unknown. And she, like Merilille, is pretty much a – have – on the edge of a nervous breakdown a hundred percent of the time due to being abused by the Sea Folk.

SALLY: Yeah. Toxic work environments.

EMILY: Yeah, a toxic work environment.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: A bad manager.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah. The worst.

EMILY: The literal worst manager, because she's being threatened with physical assault at every turn. And Harine – and, you know, the irony – this is how Robert Jordan loves to operate with his female characters, especially, his comedic female characters, is to present the dramatic, or rather comedic irony, of, um, these women complaining about something that they themselves have done.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So, hypocrisy, in other words.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah.

EMILY: So, Harine is like, "This lady, this Aes Sedai, just totally doesn't know how to behave next to the Sea Folk," but she keeps complaining about how Cadsuane treated her.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And her sister. So, cycles of abuse are not examined in this series.

SALLY: [laughing] Why would they be?

EMILY: Why would they be? Anyway, the most interesting part of this section, I think, is the repercussions of what happened in Ebou Dar being sort of lightly touched upon.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: A lot of the Sea Folk now are using Seanchan ships that they escaped in from Ebou Dar. And, um, Harine gives us a little snippet of how, like, no one wants to be using these ships, but because ships cost so much money to make, they're not just going to, like, put them to use. So, yeah. They're going to be using these ships for years and years.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: Um, but they are, like, odd to the Sea Folk. They are not of Sea Folk make, so it's different. And, like, how this escape from Ebou Dar, [laughs] initiated by Mat Cauthon, though no one really knows that, is now this major cultural event in the mind of the Sea – the mids of the Sea Folk. They're just calling it the, capital E, Escape.

SALLY: Mm-mm.

EMILY: And so, that's really influenced everything that's going on with them.

SALLY: Yeah, totally.

EMILY: Anyway, Logain shows up to this meeting and is like, "Rand is sending you guys to bring food to Arad Doman." Once again, Rand is, for some reason, at this moment hyper fixated on Arad Doman. I'm not sure why. Did he, like, get news in the last book that Arad Doman was in trouble? I can't remember.

SALLY: Yeah, I can't remember, because *we* got news that Arad Doman was in trouble.

EMILY: Yeah, just via –

SALLY: Starting in *Crossroads of Twilight*.

EMILY: Via Ituralde, I think.

SALLY: Yeah. But I'm not sure how much, if any, of that is on Rand's radar.

EMILY: It also feels like Arad Doman has been in trouble literally since –

SALLY: The beginning.

EMILY: Falme happened, yeah.

SALLY: Duh.

EMILY: Duh.

SALLY: Like, if you got invaded.

EMILY: Yeah, they've had the Seanchan – first, they had that big war with the Dragonsworn, initiated by the Whitecloaks. And then they've had the Seanchan on their doorstep. Um, and Graendal is also over there, I guess. So. And I think that's what Robert Jordan is trying to do. Like, you – he's set up the Forsaken each with spheres of power. Or spheres of influence. And Rand dealt with them, basically in order of how obvious their influence was.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: You know, he first dealt with – well, he incidentally dealt with Be’lal, because Be’lal was where he was going.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But then it became clear that Rahvin was in control in Andor and clear that Sammael was in control in Illian. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. So, he was talking them out. And the idea was that the women Forsaken, because women are so sneaky and whatnot, like, have less obvious spheres of influence. Rand doesn’t know that – or care, probably [laughs] – that Mesaana is in the White Tower. He does not know that Semirhage is with the Seanchan, but oh baby, he’s about to.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, and he has not know that Graendal is in Arad Doman, because we the readers have not really been like, “Look, Graendal is in Arad Doman.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: You sort of – I don’t even think her geography has been indicated, except that we, through Ituralde, know that they’ve been sort of interacting.

SALLY: Yeah, like, she calls for Ituralde in one of her points of view. And I think that might be the only indication that she is in Arad Doman. And she does that, I think, before we meet Ituralde.

EMILY: Yeah, for sure.

SALLY: Like, a book before we meet him. Or two, potentially.

EMILY: A couple.

SALLY: So, like, it’d be very easy for you to forget that she’s had contact with this person.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Because we almost always get her in this sort of, like, whatever her, like, sex slave –

EMILY: Dungeon.

SALLY: Dungeon, alternate dimension.

EMILY: Circus.

SALLY: Whatever is going on there. Typically, she’s there, so it’s like – and it also doesn’t really matter that she’s there.

EMILY: Yeah, it seems like Arad Doman would be in bad shape even if she wasn't there.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, you're telling me the king of Arad Doman would be able to have a, like, solid lock on this? But the point is that Graendal kidnapped him or whatever and he's presumed dead.

SALLY: Yeah. RIP.

EMILY: Anyway, it remains, like, a mystery, um, in terms of, like, Rand's decision making why Arad Doman is suddenly on the top of his priority list. Um, narratively, Robert Jordan, I think, is just at the point where he's trying to cross things off before the Last Battle.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Like, he's like, "Oh, I should probably have someone do something about Arad Doman, because that nation is sort of the last one that is in major flux. Like chaos. And doesn't really have anyone governing it per se."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Slash Rand has to have some sort of confrontation with Graendal. So, that's what we're moving toward and it's just really funny how transparently we're moving toward it by, like we said last time, Rand just shoving every world leader he has a grip on into that border – corner of the continent.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And now also being like, "Sea Folk, you have to deliver so much food."

SALLY: Yeah! For like a million something people.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: It's a lot of supplies.

EMILY: Also, that's quite a ways to go. I believe that they're between Illian – they're, like, near Illian.

SALLY: I – I have no idea.

EMILY: They have to make, like, circumnavigate the continent almost. And it's, like, we're having major food spoilage issues throughout the continent.

SALLY: Yeah, Rand. Maybe you could utilize your ability –

EMILY: TO TELEPORT! [laughs]

SALLY: To teleport to solve this issue.

EMILY: [laughing] He makes me crazy!

SALLY: In a more direct and logical way.

EMILY: Like *whhhhhhyyy* would you do this? They're also going to have to sail through Seanchan controlled waters.

SALLY: And – [groans].

EMILY: I know.

SALLY: [laughing] It makes me insane. Like, you could think of another reason. Like, if the Seanchan need to be – the Seanchan – if the Sea Folk need to be in Arad Doman for some reason.

EMILY: They don't.

SALLY: Like, we can think of another reason to get them there.

EMILY: I can't remember if they do anything of relevance there. I also don't know why Rand can't just be, like, weapon – like, just, I can see other ways to use the Sea Folk, narratively.

SALLY: Sure. Sure.

EMILY: You could use them to, like, crack down on the Seanchan.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: If you, like, managed to kind of arm the Sea Folk with various Asha'man then you could actually combat the Sean – the Seanchan and, like, cut them off from the home empire.

SALLY: yeah.

EMILY: That would be really interesting. That reduces their ability to bring in new forces. Et cetera, et cetera.

SALLY: Yeah, like, let them play pirate a little bit.

EMILY: Yeah!

SALLY: You know, like, do some naval warfare.

EMILY: Control the shipping routes.

SALLY: Yeah, the shipping routes. Start robbing them.

EMILY: *Go* to the Seanchan continent.

SALLY: Yeah, go to the Seanchan continent.

EMILY: And be like, “Let’s see what we can figure out.”

SALLY: Yeah. Espionage.

EMILY: There’s things – there’s things for the Sea Folk to do at this stage in the game, but Robert Jordan is not interested *in* the Sea Folk.

SALLY: Yeah, it, like, Arad Doman, has the vibe of ‘let’s pick up loose ends before we head into the final arc of the series.’

EMILY: Yeah. Like, Robert Jordan’s like, “Oh, dammit, I spent so much time with these characters that I really just sort of inserted initially for world building reasons, you know? Sort of flavor in the world.”

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: “And now I guess I actually have to fulfill my narrative promise and use them.” But, as far as I know, the Sea Folk don’t really do anything in the Last Battle, so. Again, no clue what – I feel like there should have been, like, a kraken, you know?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, Robert Jordan should have been like, “And the Dark One has the Forsaken, but [laughing] he also has a pet sea monster.”

SALLY: He also just has, like, a little sea monster. The sea monster’s name is...

EMILY: Greg [laughs].

SALLY: ...Fine.

EMILY: I know [laughs].

SALLY: It’s not, like, the best sea monster name I’ve ever heard.

EMILY: [laughing] Greg was the first one I could think of! I can think of other ones.



SALLY: [sighs]

EMILY: Um, this is McKraken [laughing] the kraken. He's Scottish.

SALLY: McKraken! [laughs] McKraken is better than Greg.

EMILY: His name is – his full name is Greg McKraken. [laughs] The third.

SALLY: [laughs] This is Greg McKraken III. We call him Kraky.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] No? You're nixing that one?

EMILY: Kraky is the nickname? [laughs] What – [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] We could call him Krako. Krako!

EMILY: Krako sounds like a slur for a race that doesn't exist [laughs]. Like a fantasy slur for orcs or something.

SALLY: Fantasy slur. Ah.

EMILY: Okay, okay. Leaving Greg McKraken where he belongs, in the depths of the sea [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: *Pacific Rim* style.

SALLY: Bye, Greg.

EMILY: Bye, Greg. So, anyway, the Sea Folk aren't being used very well. While Logain's at this dumb meeting and they're like, "Where's Rand?" and he's like, "I cannot say," which is literally just, like, "I cannot say." You know? It's not like he's like, "I'm not gonna tell you" [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, he's like, "Whatever."

EMILY: Someone comes with the news that there has been mass suicide in Tremalking and the surrounding areas. This has been a plot point that was gestured to at the very end of... *Winter's Heart*. So, after the cleansing of *saidin*. I think in the epilogue or in that sequence there might have been something about it. Or possibly in the prologue of *Crossroads of Twilight*. Um, but now it's been a solid book and a half and we're finally getting back to it. The Sea Folk, um – this is – and this is also the first info we're getting about the people who live on Tremalking as far as I know. They are called the Ayamar – Amayar, excuse me. And this started because the Amayar

were asking to get, um, a ride basically to the islands in the surrounding area, and the Sea Folk after a little while were like, “That was weird. No one asked for rides back to their place of origin.” So they investigated and found that everyone was dead or dying via poison.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Further details unnecessary. And because some people were still alive, they got the story out of them that this big hand on their island melted. We know that this was, uh, one of the statues connected to the, um, what are those called? The access keys.

SALLY: Yeah, the Choedan Kal.

EMILY: That were used to cleanse *saidin*? Yeah, the Choedan Kal. And, uh, so the hand melted and that was a sign for these people, according to their culture, their prophecies, or whatever, that the time of illusions, quote, was at end and so, um, they needed to die in order to go on to reality. Break the matrix, whatever.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, I don’t think the – the other Choedan Kal melted, did it? Or have we had any indication of that?

SALLY: I don’t think so – I don’t think we’ve had any indication of whether or not it melted. It would be really weird if one melted and the other didn’t.

EMILY: I agree, but it would also make sense for Robert Jordan to be like, “The lady one is broken, but the man one isn’t.” The man one must be intact, because Rand, in the next book especially, is still gonna be carrying around his access key.

SALLY: Okay.

EMILY: And being like – threatening world destruction or whatever at any given opportunity.

SALLY: That’s nice. We just gave some nukes to this man.

EMILY: Yeah. So, why the fem – again, why the female one was destroyed was, I guess, so no woman could do the same thing.

SALLY: It’s because we’re leaving behind the age of women, as we should.

EMILY: You’re right.

SALLY: And entering the age of men.

EMILY: The symbolism.

SALLY: Where we belonged the whole time.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: It is simply absurd that women have been allowed to speak for this long.

EMILY: Um, so, mass suicide is a big deal.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: Um, it is not necessarily treated as a big deal by the series at large. It is treated as a big deal in this moment by the Sea Folk.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Uh, who cry and have a – a strong emotional response to this. Uh, Logain is like, “Shut the fuck up and get moving. It’s time for the Last Battle.” And that seems to be the overarching, um, attitude of the narrative.

SALLY: Mm-hmm. [clears throat] Mm-hmm. But yeah, it’s really – it’s a really fucked up and interesting thing. Like, a couple of points. One, I think the Sea Folk’s reaction is, like, a really beautiful moment in the series, where people are seeming to have what is, like, an appropriate response to something horrible. Two, it’s slightly, like, almost – I don’t know what the right word is but cheapened is what comes to me. To me, the sort of attitude the Sea Folk have towards the people on Tremalking. I’m gonna maybe muddle some of the details, because I’ll admit I didn’t read this week’s chapters. I just read the summary, because I read *Knife of Dreams* only, like, six months ago, so it’s hard to re-read chapters every week. But, like, the Sea Folk seem to bear some sort of paternalism towards the people on Tremalking.

EMILY: Yes.

SALLY: Or some – almost, like, this pact or something to take care of them. And I think paternalism is the word that comes to mind, because they’re sort of talking about them as if they are children, like they are people that cannot take care of themselves. Um, there seems to be, uh, attitudes from the Sea Folk towards the people on Tremalking similar to what, um, Western European explorers had toward many people who live on islands. As they explored, you know, the Pacific Islands, Hawaii, um, the Caribbean, uh, they seemed to sort of think of them as, like, childlike.

EMILY: Yeah, the idea is, like, look at these – these are, you know –

SALLY: Yeah, there we go.

EMILY: Words that are tied to these things, but look at these simple, peaceful people in this sort of beautiful paradise.

SALLY: Yes. Thank you.

EMILY: This sort of connection to a beautiful land is tied to the people's simplicity and innocence. I think Westerners bring – specifically Christian Westerners bring in concepts of the Garden of Eden from the Bible to that and are like, "This is a place untouched and a people untouched by, you know, evil. Bad things."

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: "And therefore, we need to take responsibility for them."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Of course, that's just some mental gymnastics that people, colonists, do in order to colonize.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: It's been – as a colonist, as someone who is colonizing or enacting crimes against humanity against other mass groups of people, you have to justify that to yourself in a number of ways and you can do that either by completely dehumanizing the people that you're doing that to, or by elevating yourself to a sort of paternalistic or spiritually guidance.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: Role. So, I think you're totally right there that the Sea Folk are kind of, like, in the latter camp with Tremalking. And it's frustrating that these are the only other points of view we get on these people. The Amayar also don't get to speak for themselves.

SALLY: Absolutely. And the Sea Folk, I guess to their benefit, have not gone as far as colonizing Tremalking, but, like, we don't get enough detail to say what other ways they might be...

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Utilizing – so, like, that kind of cheapens it for me a little bit, because it isn't, like, an authentic relationship they have with – it's not, like, an authentic, diplomatic friendship across countries sort of relationship that they with these people who help supply them as they go on their way. You know? It doesn't feel authentic. Um, and, like, my second note on this, and I will admit my own, like, real world biases here, it's very to remove the idea of mass suicide from the idea of cults. That's where we most frequently see them. You think of, you know, Jonestown, very famously. It's very hard to remove that idea from cults and I did a quick skin of the Wikipedia page on mass suicide today, which was, trust me, [laughs] super fun read.

EMILY: Yeah. Woo!

SALLY: Um, and many – there – not many of them, but, like, a common theme I was seeming, was similar to what we see on Tremalking. This idea of ‘we need to die in order to move past illusion’ – illusion is the word in the book, but to move to a different reality or a higher plane.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Which also is associated with religion, that sort of language. And cults are very often, at least in our modern day understanding of them, associated with a sort of tangential religion, or religious-like structure or figure. So, and, like, Robert Jordan is writing, you know, twenty-so-odd years ago, so, like, perhaps has not seen as many cult documentaries as I have or whatever. He doesn’t – may not have that full understanding, but he did also live through...cults being in the news and stuff, so, like, I’m sure he had some of the same framework that seems very put in here intentionally or otherwise. And it’s very hard for me to kind of, like, reconcile what’s happening in Tremalking with what we’ve talked about previously in that there’s only one real religion in this whole world. So, I know, again, they are an island people who are separate, but it just feels like such a – my point, very roundabout, this feels like a really bizarre thing to drop in the middle of your climactic sequence of books and just be like, “This happened.”

EMILY: Yeah. It really feels like Robert Jordan is doorbell ditching this incredibly strange, nuanced thing.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But yeah, he’s just leaving in there.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And being like, “kay bye!” No follow up, no reactions from any other people, really. This just happened.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And so, because we’re not given really any framework on that, we’re not really sure what we’re supposed to be taking from it. Of course we, the readers, are bringing our own reactions to it.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Our own understandings of cults and of history and of mass suicides, but, like, that doesn’t tell us narratively what that – what this purpose is supposed to be.

SALLY: Yeah, that was so articulate, Emily. Just this idea of like – it feels really charged. Like, there could be really something here about this incredible tragedy and what that means as you go into this, you know, apocalyptic event that many, many, *many* people are not going to survive. Like, there – like you said, it’s so nuanced, there’s so much that could be coming out of this, but, like with *many* things Robert Jordan has done, especially in the second half of this series,

dropping this huge ethical quandary, this very difficult topic – mass suicide is horrific, because, trigger warning for this statement, it very often includes parents murdering their children as a part of, like, including them in the mass event. It's, like, so upsetting and horrific and really complicated, too, because there's like these weird elements of choice that you're thinking about and it's just, like, Robert you cannot throw this very – you cannot shoot me with this extremely loaded ethical bullet and be like, "Peace out, girl scout. Like Logain says, we've gotta keep marching soldiers north."

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Like, what the fuck? I know we make this point like literally every other episode, but this feels particularly egregious to me.

EMILY: Yeah, I think there's, um, two possible readings here. Um, and I think they're both pretty cynical.

SALLY: Sure. Lay 'em on me.

EMILY: Uh, I think the first one is that if we take the Sea Folk perspective of the Amayar, which is that they are this sort of innocent, simple folk, sort of the embodiment of removal from the rest of the warring world. Just this idealized society that's totally peaceful and simple that is completely disrupted by what is otherwise a good thing.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: The cleansing of *saidin*.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: This is meant to be an indication of the unintended consequences of this massive use of power that Rand and Nynaeve did.

SALLY: Mm. Interesting.

EMILY: Sort of like no matter – literally no matter what Rand does that is good, it has an opposite bad effect.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: We've seen that as he just moves through populated places. Um, so, like, that's just the cost of being this figure of fate, the Dragon Reborn. Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. Is that totally – there are unintended consequences, and those unintended consequences are very, very bad for innocent people.

SALLY: Mm-mm.

EMILY: Um, and sort of this embodiment of innocence, you know? Innocence versus corruption in Shadar Logoth and *saidin*.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, that's a reading. I think that's probably what Robert Jordan was getting at. I don't think it necessarily works, because, as far as I recall, we aren't – Rand and Nynaeve, the actors in that, in the cleansing of *saidin* aren't really given this news and allowed to respond to it in the appropriate way.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: There's also the fact that it is the female Choedan Kal, which Nynaeve used. I know that's very linked to Rand, but, again, there's symbolism there.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It makes it seem like something Nynaeve did rather than something that Rand did.

SALLY: Yeah, and there's so much in, like, if you did a very close reading on the cleansing of *saidin* sequence, there's so much about, like, how much more Nynaeve had to struggle to keep up with Rand.

EMILY: Yes.

SALLY: And that type of junk. Like, "She didn't do a good enough job," et cetera, et cetera, blah, blah, blah. You know?

EMILY: Mm-hmm. I think the second possible reading here is the cult reading and I think it is just Robert Jordan's cynicism about the apocalypse.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: As, you know, this world's understanding of Armageddon, Tarmon Gai'dan, gets closer and closer we're going to see things enacted that are mirrors of real world events that are sort of people's responses to the, quote, end times.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: We talked a couple of episodes ago about the idea of the rapture with the, um, Ogier. Now we're talking about this sort of escaping the terrible reality of the world by entering a new reality, aka dying. Both of those things, as I said, I don't think work, because there's such a limited response time via our characters.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: And if you're just reading this book, you know, going along, this is not at all given the narrative weight that other things are given. For example, we've been with Perrin's pursuit of Faile for five books.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Just in sheer terms of pages, we're getting about five pages here.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: About this major event.

SALLY: Yeah, and it's mostly the Sea Folk response, which is removed from the event itself and from our central characters. But, no, Emily, those are really smart readings. Thank you for being so smart and for...helping me understand kind of the intention here, because I did feel a little bit like I was losing my mind earlier like "Why would you do this Robert?" [cat meows in the background] And I think both of those are very accurate and it's possible there's both of those things going on.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: To some intent – to tome – sure, whatever. To some degree [laughs] is I think what I was trying to say. Yeah. I don't know. I agree that it doesn't really work. I'm very interested – like, the mythology and the sort of, like, archetypes of the apocalypse or the end of the world are very, very interesting. If you, like, are looking at, you know, the four horsemen of the apocalypse, the rapture, mass suicide to an extent, like, ghosts.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: All of these extremely interesting things have been just sort of, like, peppered in.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: As we read through, we can kind of start to look back and see that Robert Jordan is peppering in [cat meows] – Oh. My god. I'm speaking [laughs, cat meows again]. Sort of peppering in these symbols, these moments, these sort of, like, signposts on the way to the Last Battle. And, like, thinking about it in that way, to some degree it works for me. But I think, like, my main issue, and I'll admit that it is predominately a personal one, is, like, I don't love the project of trying to be like, "The world and politics continue to happen as the apocalypse approaches." That is true, but also, like, narratively is very unsatisfying to me. Like, if you're talking to me about the markers of the apocalypse, I would like them to be given, like, narrative weight and for some character to understand what's going on.

EMILY: Yeah, ironically I think, um, a, a, a piece of media [cat meows] where the apocalypse, quote unquote, is handled in a more interesting way is *Supernatural* Season Five.



SALLY: I knew it was coming, baby! [laughs] I was thinking about it, too!

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: I was like, “Who’s gonna say it?” [laughs]

EMILY: Because, unfortunately – we’ve talked about *Supernatural* before. Everyone knows it’s terrible after season five.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Season five, unfortunately, absolutely slaps.

SALLY: Yeah, season five *fucks*.

EMILY: Because it’s about the apocalypse.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: And it’s about preparing for the apocalypse and it uses a lot of Westernized, Biblically charged markers of the apocalypse like the four horsemen, stuff like that.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And the episodes that deal with the four horsemen, I would say, are the most interesting.

SALLY: Yeah, they are very good.

EMILY: Especially Death. One of the most iconic sequences in television. Um, and so, yeah. Robert Jordan seems to be following a similar project there, but one of the ways *Supernatural* works, in this – that particular, um, season, that particular tidbit of media, is by having a really narrow focus in terms of our main characters.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: But having a very broad world focus.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: In that it’s about the two brothers and a few tangential side characters who are returning characters, who are just traveling, bouncing around America.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, we have, in *The Wheel of Time*, a very broad range of main characters in a very broad world.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: That's incredibly overwhelming.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And it doesn't allow us to give any one thing or another much more weight than any other thing.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, everything is just sort of being presented. The mass suicide on Tremalking and surrounding areas is sort of presented in the same breath and with the same weight as things like, um, Mat and company seeing a company – a town of ghosts disappear.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: And, actually, that's presented as more horrifying because we have to see the one guy die with his horse and it's incredibly upsetting.

SALLY: Yeah! Sure!

EMILY: Um, soooo just sort of, yeah. Robert Jordan sort of floundering as he gets into the later stages of his project.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: I think – I agree that it's an interesting project when you take a step back from it.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And are like, "He's indicating what's going on in the, you know, immediate – the immediate moments proceeding the apocalypse."

SALLY: Sure. Yeah.

EMILY: What does that look like? Um, and I just think the project falters because it's too broad in scope, ironically.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And I also think it falters because we don't get the immediate follow up of the apocalypse.

SALLY: Hmm. Yeah.

EMILY: Which we'll discuss at much more length in Book 14, but you can't really talk so much about the apocalypse if you don't stick around afterward.

SALLY: Yeah, I think there would be so much benefit in the structure of this series, not to just like script doctor *Wheel of Time*, but, like, if the structure was more like, half lead up, middle of the series Last Battle, half –

EMILY: Yeah. Follow up.

SALLY: Or maybe just like a book or two about what happens after. Anyway, I feel like I could talk about this weird narrative choice for truly forever because it's just been, like, haunting me all day, but do have another chapter to talk about [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] We do have to talk about the other people. We go over to Romanda as a point of view character?

SALLY: I know. It's – what a weird draw.

EMILY: It's so bad.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, all we get about Romanda is that she really likes romance novels and that she's exactly as much of a toxic manager as every other woman we've encountered in this series.

SALLY: Yeah, and somehow her liking romance novels is, like, indicative of her being a toxic manager.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: It's just like further fuel to the fire that she should not be trusted, because [laughs] she's got such bad taste.

EMILY: I don't – I don't even know.

SALLY: Which, like, that's so unnecessary.

EMILY: Um, and this is a long chapter but all that really happens is that Romanda gets called to a sitting of the hall. Uh, with Egg in absentia, so it's – this is just the sitter, where they are given the news by Merise and Narishma, acting as sort of ambassadors to Rand, that the Aes Sedai, Egwene's Aes Sedai specifically, have his permission to bond forty-two – no. Forty-seven?

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Forty-seven Asha'man. Um, and this is where they get the news that the Asha'man have bonded a bunch of Aes Sedai, though these ones were from the White Tower not their group, though Rand doesn't seem to distinguish or care. He is just like, "Whatever. This – even Stevens."

SALLY: Yeah. Check!

EMILY: Check. Yet another –

SALLY: Put it off the to-do list.

EMILY: Um, mostly this chapter is devoted to being, like, a check-in on the rebel camp, because we're not really getting that this book because of Egg's absence.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And also because this book, largely, is more interested in what the boys are doing. Perrin and Mat and Rand.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: Uh, but it's the same old, same old. The, uh, old guard Aes Sedai are still struggling with the concept of the mass enrollment of novices, and especially novices who are older. And how that threatens their power and dignity, et cetera, et cetera. Romanda's very upset that that one lady, specifically, Sharina her name is, who's a very powerful channeler and also well into her sixties, is sort of angling for Yellow Ajah because she's so good at healing.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Romanda's like, "Oh my god, I simply cannot abide by someone being both better than me and not being terrified of me, because they're a mature woman."

SALLY: Yeah, they're, like, you...

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: It's very silly.

EMILY: It's very silly.

SALLY: It's all just about how women are insecure and don't trust each other.

EMILY: Um, this is also where we finally get the reveal that Halima is, in fact, a male Forsaken in a woman's body.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: And that Delana is, therefore, her Darkfriend helper. This isn't revealed in quite the way that I sort of, like, have it pictured in my mind or in quite the way I want it to.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: It's frustrating to me that, like, Narishma doesn't just walk in and, like, catch Halima.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: In the act. And, like, all it would have taken was for a male channeler to be present to sort of –

SALLY: Yeah, understand.

EMILY: Yeah, get it. It's, rather, that Narishma walks in and is telling them, like, here's the message. He's like, "Oh, by the way. Someone using *saidin* just tried to listen in." And they're like, "Oh, well that's super weird." And he's like, "Yeah, either a man who can channel is here, or maybe it's that – maybe it was that Forsaken who can channel *saidin* that looks like a woman!" And they're like, "What?" And he's like, "Yeah," and, like, tells this story about how Eben.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: His friend died.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Defending his Aes Sedai. And it's very important to Narishma to tell this story because Eben was his friend and he's grieving for him and he's like, this is how the Asha'man are handling each other's deaths and sort of this honor system. Warrior society thing.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It's a thing that we sort of skim over and, the way that the narrative frames it, because we're in Romanda's point of view, it seems like Narishma's kind of immature and just, like, a sad boy.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But it's very important to Narishma and he gives this story and that's how Romanda was able to click this connection between the two – Romanda is finally able to remember the connection between the two women who have been murdered by *saidin* and this missing woman named Cabriana, who we actually have met when she was being tortured horribly by Semirhage.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And who was used as Halima's sort of backstory. So, Romanda's like, "Oh! Halima came here claiming to know Cabri –" Or whatever her name is. I've already forgotten it. "And these two women were that woman's close friends, so therefore, that's why they were killed."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Which is, in my mind, sort of a leap.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, you know, Halima *was there* and those two women *were there* for months and months and months without murdering happening.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, it's a little bizarre to me. Um, again I would have just preferred that Narishma came in and was like, "Bam! That woman is channeling!"

SALLY: Yeah, what if Narishma just killed –

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Aran'gar.

EMILY: That would have been iconic. That also would have allowed for, like, a sick action sequence. Which I would have liked. And I also would have liked if Halmia could have just died right then.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It would have been a fitting end to her, I think.

SALLY: Yeah, I agree. I would also love for Narishma to get his own action sequence.

EMILY: Yeah! Narishma just be like, "It's me, Narishma. I'm a fucking badass."

SALLY: Yeah. I'm beautiful. I'm talented. I'm powerful. I'm the full package.

EMILY: [laughs] And I'm just gonna kill that Forsaken right there.

SALLY: And I'm just gonna take this Forsaken the fuck out. That would be really nice, I think.

EMILY: Yeah. Um, ha – but instead how it shakes out is that Romanda is like, “We need to arrest Halima and Delana.” And then everyone argues about it so much that Da – Delana and Halima get away.

SALLY: Yeah, it’s stupid.

EMILY: Which is another indication from Robert Jordan that women are all idiots. Um, [in a bad Australian accent so it sounds like ‘sore’] *so*.

SALLY: So.

EMILY: So, lots of opportunities in that chapter, I think, but all of them wasted.

SALLY: Yep, all of them wasted to focus on Arad Doman, apparently.

EMILY: [sighs]

SALLY: Ituralde’s got it covered, okay?

EMILY: He fucking does! Anyway, next week we will visit Egg in her captivity.

SALLY: Egg!

EMILY: In the White Tower. See what she’s up to. It’s a couple of long chapters. Um, but that’s where we’re at. And shortly after that the structural – the narrative structure will fall apart as we will be hopping points of view multiple times in each chapter.

SALLY: Yeah, it’s pretty wild here at the end of *Knife of Dreams*.

EMILY: Yeah, so. As we’re bouncing from climax to climax.

SALLY: Yeah and –

EMILY: Character to character.

SALLY: [sighs]

EMILY: So that’s what’s on the docket. Thanks for hanging with us for a grim discussion of mass suicide.

SALLY: Yeah. Thanks, guys.

EMILY: But, hey, Robert Jordan was the one who put that in his book, so.

SALLY: Yeah. Do some self-care.

EMILY: Yeah, just take some time for yourself.

SALLY: Take some time. Thanks for hanging out with us. Yeah, thanks for dealing with all the grim stuff that's sort of popping up here at – *Knife of Dreams*.

EMILY: Just remember Greg McKraken III.

SALLY: Greg McKraken.

EMILY: The Sea Folk's destiny [laughs] as it were [singing].

SALLY: He should get to captain the Sea Folk.

EMILY: Yeah, he should. They should – this entire book should have had subplot about, like, we will not conquer Greg McKraken III, we will befriend him.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: As all monsters should be.

SALLY: Yeah! Listen, he's never had a friend before.

EMILY: Yeah, he just wants to be *loved*.

SALLY: Greg McKraken would just like to be invited sometimes.

EMILY: Yeah. To parties.

SALLY: I bet he's great at parties.

EMILY: I bet he's never been invited to a party, and he watched all the other krakens in his grade school get invited to birthday parties –

SALLY: Aw! Stop!

EMILY: [laughs] I know. *Nothing* makes me cry [laughs] faster than the thought –

SALLY: The idea of –

EMILY: Of a child not getting invited to something.

SALLY: Yeah, but at his kraken school he never got to go.

EMILY: I know.

SALLY: And he just – no one ever threw Greg a birthday party.



EMILY: Oh my god. I'm legitimately gonna cry about Greg McKraken if we don't end the podcast [laughs].

SALLY: Okay! Greg has friends now.

EMILY: Greg! He's friend with so many people. We'll expand the mythology of Greg. Probably Larry the Trolloc will be in there.

SALLY: Yeah, Larry and Greg would be great friends, I think.

EMILY: That's what we've been building to. All the monsters getting together.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Larry the Trolloc. Brett the Aelfinn.

SALLY: Yeah. Larry has a boyfriend and now he has a best friend.

EMILY: Yeah! And wasn't there someone? There was a wolf. Stephanie the wolf.

SALLY: Oh, yeah. Stephanie the wolf. She's there.

EMILY: Yeah, they'll all get together.

SALLY: BFFs.

EMILY: And be a little adventuring party.

SALLY: Uh, love it.

EMILY: Okay. Thank you [laughs] for listening. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song, to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

SALLY: Yes!

EMILY: Anything to add?

SALLY: Naur.

EMILY: Okay, do you have a sign off?

SALLY: [laughs] I do.

EMILY: Great.

SALLY: Earlier this week, my friend Veronica, who I've known for a really long time and went to high school with texted me this Facebook post that she had seen.

EMILY: Oh no.

SALLY: Because she had been added to a group about our ten-year high school reunion, which is coming up this...June, which feels really weird to me. And she was like, "This is, like, the most batshit thing I've ever seen, you have to, like, look at it." And so, there was a survey so I clicked on the survey. And the whole point of the survey was like, "What activities do you want at the reunion?" And I was like, "Activities? Don't people just stand around and talk?"

EMILY: Yeah, don't they just, like, drink and dance, maybe?

SALLY: Yeah. Not at ours, apparently!

EMILY: Not in Utah.

SALLY: It was like this whole list of, like, there should be a carnival for kids and there should be – held at a public park, so kids can play on the playground. There should be catering that is kid friendly, and all of this shit about hanging out with people's kids. And then it was like, "How comfortable – how much would you be comfortable paying for a ticket [laughs] to the reunion?" And I was like, "You have to be *delusional* if you think I would pay not only to see people from high school, most of whom I hates, but to hang out with their kids."

EMILY: Utah is the most deranged state in the union.

SALLY: Yeah! I was like – and the ticket, it went from fifteen dollars to seventy-five dollars. I was like, "You think I'm gonna pay seventy-five dollars?"

EMILY: Seventy-five dollars to see a bunch of people who I fucking hated?

SALLY: Yeah. And meet their devil spawn.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: It also – one of the recommended locations was the local rec center.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: So you can watch their children drown.

SALLY: Yeah, no. That sentence alone is enough, but also the middle school that feeds into my high school is in the same parking lot as the rec center.

EMILY: Oh Christ.

SALLY: So we had to do swim classes there. I was like, “You – you also want to make me go to the site of my, like, middle school body horror of having to change at thirteen years old in front of a bunch of other girls.” Ugh, the whole thing is unhinged. Anyway, I will – unless something drastic happens –

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: To change the structure of this event [laughs], I will not be in attendance.

EMILY: I didn’t have to deal with it, because I wasn’t invited.

SALLY: I wasn’t invited, either.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Veronica was because she’s got friends or whatever. The only reason I know was because Veronica told me [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] Cheers to not being invited to high school ten-year reunions.

SALLY: [laughs] Just like Greg McKraken, we’re not invited.

EMILY: Not invited. This one I’m happy about. Sign of adult success.

SALLY: Yeah, at least Greg doesn’t have to go to his high school reunion.

EMILY: Christ. Alright everyone, have a good week.

SALLY: Bye!