



Episode 233: Pony Elevator  
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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, okay, unfortunately we have a lot to get through.

SALLY: Yeah, let's dive in.

EMILY: Um, I'm gonna –

SALLY: [singing] I'm off the deep end! [laughs] Sorry. I'm a little manic today, you guys.

EMILY: [laughs] Just harness, just bottle that energy. Save it for when we need a dose of humor in this relentless hellscape.

SALLY: Okay.

EMILY: Oh, this is Everybody Hates Rand [laughs].

SALLY: Bye the way!

EMILY: I'm Emily [sing song] Juchau.

SALLY: And I'm Sally Goodger.

EMILY: And I don't know any other way to do this than recapping.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: As I've said before, we're kind of bouncing around a lot.

SALLY: Yeah, do it. Lay into it.

EMILY: Sorry, recapping in order. I don't know how else to do it. So, we start with a Tuon point of view as – yeah, thumbs down – as Mat and co reunite with the Band of the Red Hand, the contingent that Talmanes led into Altara to meet up with Mat. Um, and which now has the big problem of they're basically stuck in Altara surrounded by Seanchan camps. Um, it's Tuon's, I think, first point of view?

SALLY: I think so.

EMILY: Um, and it's serving two functions. One of which is fine and one of which is bad.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Uh, the fine one is what's called defamiliarization.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, you know, it's when you present something that we, the readers, are very familiar with, often this is seen in, like, sci-fi novels.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: Like, talking about a lamp or whatever – an alien taking about a lamp would describe it in a really weird way.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: So, now we have Tuon describing Mat to us in a – through a cultural lens, um, and through her own personal opinions, that puts Mat in a different light. We're so close to Mat that stepping back and seeing how other people see him, even if the other people at hand is the worst person you know.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Is sort of, like, interesting.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Tuon has some, like, funny lines about Mat and sort of what she thinks of him. Like, it, like, she says, um, "Mat seemed [laughs] very much in his element in the palace in Altara, [laughs] but he *also* seemed in his element at the circus, and now he's also in his element." So, just sort of he confuses her and then she sort of has this understanding by the end of the chapter that, "Oh, Mat's actually viscerally terrifying as an intellectual leader of battles." The less fine thing is that what we're doing here is, um, uhhhhh, oh I had this thought so neatly laid out earlier and now I've forgotten it. But what Robert Jordan has been doing this entire time with the Tuon

and Mat relationship is, um, having Mat come closer to understanding and compromising with Tuon's values, regardless of whether they are actually good or bad.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: And we're seeing the reverse happening here with Tuon. Mostly she's just, like, a staunch asshole throughout this entire point of view. She's a jerk, she's classist, she says – she does the whole “woman routine” [laughs] in Robert Jordan land of woman says something and then immediately, um, does the opposite in her own head.

SALLY: Yeah. She also, um, refers to Mat entirely by –

BOTH: Toy.

EMILY: Yeah, which is super gross.

SALLY: And I would also like to take up a personal beef with whoever is writing the *Wheel of Time* wiki because the summary for this chapter does call Mat by name.

EMILY: Oh, gross.

SALLY: It calls him “Toy,” as if it's through Tuon's point of view. So, my guns are loaded.

EMILY: [laughs] DUN DUN. Um, anyway. What we're supposed to be doing is seeing, like, oh, Mat has been realizing slowly, has been getting to know Tuon, and has been coming to terms with the fact that, like, wow, she's really intelligent and remarkably...intelligent.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: That's the only good quality [laughing] of Tuon's I can think of.

SALLY: [laughing] Sure.

EMILY: I don't know. She's smart, he's starting to think she's hot. Or, I guess he does think she's hot now. You know, just this sort of slow burn romance. And what we're supposed to be seeing is that that's two sided. Tuon is having, like – and coming to terms with the realization that Mat is a, a not just this sort of bumbling idiot that she thought he was but is also incredibly good at knife fighting and also a general of a very big and efficient army.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And the problem with that is that Robert Jordan is [laughing] positing that coming to terms with those two things are equal.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: That the heir apparent to an imperialist country is the same thing as the general of a guerilla army [cat purring in the background].

SALLY: Yeah, and it also, like, a big point with Tuon, which you've already alluded to, is, like – I don't understand why we keep having to do this, with women being like, "Mat is such a bumbling, country bumpkin. He has nothing to offer, blah blah blah blah blah." And then every woman, apparently in the universe, has to go through the realization that Mat Cauthon is very competent. He's very intelligent. He's very good at what he does and he's just, like, gonna get in there and get shit done.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: So, like, a big part of it for Tuon [cat purring] is being like, "Oh, Mat is competent and intelligent," like you said. And he's competent enough that he's in his element wherever he is, because he's resourceful enough to make wherever he is his element. So, like, Tuon's view of Mat, like, her first step in the door to being like, "This is a person I'm attracted to," is basically her recognizing that he is an efficient weapon.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: That she could use.

EMILY: Yeah, it's gross.

SALLY: So, it's not even like Mat being like, "Oh I'm starting to value her as a person."

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Tuon is like, "Oh, I'm valuing him as a tool [cat purring] first and foremost."

EMILY: Yeah. Like, we get alluded to the fact that Tuon is somewhat resigned to this relationship due to factors that have not been fully revealed to us yet. Spoiler alert, she got, like, a prophecy and she's so hung up on prophecies that she's just, like, "Yeah, I have to do that."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: You know, similar to what Mat is doing, um, with the prophecy from the Eelfinn or the Aelfinn or whatever. But, um, so, like, yeah. What we're seeing is a reframing of Tuon being like, "Oh, he's just this guy that maybe I could make out with and it wouldn't be awful," to, like – so, just this sexually available guy I can experiment with on some level, because I have to because it's proph – prophesied – to "Oh, I could integrate him into my army." And it's like, "Gross."

SALLY: Yeah. So, yeah. It's just, like, disgusting.

EMILY: In neither viewpoint are you seeing him as a full person.

SALLY: Yes. Exactly. Like, that was going to be my next point. Like, Tuon is very big in the defamiliarization element, but also the defamiliarization of her point of view is also, like, the extreme dehumanization of literally everyone around her, because Tuon thinks that she's better than everybody both by bloodline, by culture, and by, like, her intelligence. She's got a *massive* superiority complex and it's gross for her to just be like, "I don't view my, um, partner as a person."

EMILY: Yeah, so –

SALLY: And will she ever?

EMILY: [grumbling] Who knows? No. [laughs] Not by the end of the series, I sure don't think.

SALLY: Disgusting.

EMILY: Um [cat purring]

SALLY: Also, [laughing] so sorry that Ed is purring *so* loud.

EMILY: Aggressively.

SALLY: I'm going to put my hands here as a sound barrier.

EMILY: Ed, don't do that. The funniest part of this is that we get to overhear Mat and Talmanes talking. Which is just charming, because Mat's, like, yelling at Talmanes [laughing] about various Band things, and Talmanes is like, "But wait, you haven't heard about our new crossbow cranks." And Mat's like, "CROSSBOW CRANKS?!" [laughs]

SALLY: "No way!!"

EMILY: And they fucking nerd out about it for a minute [laughs].

SALLY: Fucking losers.

EMILY: Um, but and – Talmanes, like, cites a book that Mat quoted once and Mat's like, "Wha? I don't [laughing] even remember." He wrote the book, is the joke [laughs], and he doesn't fucking remember having ever referenced it. Um, they, uh, Thom tells Tuon that Mat is *ta'veren*, so all this, like, coincidental stuff, like, makes total sense. Tuon is like, "Obviously that's bullshit and nothing makes sense. Oh, an owl hooted. Someone's going to fuck." Or die. Or whatever the fuck.

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah, it's pretty funny. Like, it is a genuinely comedic moment where she's like, "Mmm, that doesn't sound real."

EMILY: Yeah, but then –

SALLY: And then she sees a bird and is like, “[gasps]!” [laughing]

EMILY: [laughing] She’s like that dog in *Up!* that hears a squeaky toy or whatever.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: “Quick! I have to analyze the omens.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Shut the fuck up.

SALLY: It’s pretty hilarious.

EMILY: Um, they get back to the Band of the Red Hand, everyone greets Mat, like, [laughing] ecstatically. They’re like, “He’s home! Our homeboy hero is back. We love him!” Tuon’s like, “What the fuck?” Mat’s like, “Yeah, these are my one thousand boyfriends.”

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Um, Mat asks to see maps of the surrounding area and basically, they all end up in this tent where the Band’s [laughing] own mapmaker that Talmanes picked up.

SALLY: He’s like –

EMILY: Talmanes has an extraordinary job at being in charge of the Band by the way. He’s made some *good* executive decisions.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: And I hope Mat rewards him later. Sexually or otherwise [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, but this guy, Master Roidelle, has a bunch of maps of Altara and they have already sort of figured out where, like, the nearest camps of Seanchan are. [cat purring] And Mat just charmingly, like, squats down on the ground and is, like, looking it all over and starting to plan. Tuon talks to Talmanes and a few of the other Band leaders and is like, “Is Mat a lord? You all call him Lord Mat.” And Talmanes is like, [laughing] “No, he fucking hates lords.”

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah.

EMILY: “But we all have – [laughing] but we all love him in our hearts so much that we call him Lord.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And, uh, Tuon's like, "What's the point of this? This is obviously an impossible situation. You can't sneak all of these people out of Altara past the Seanchan." And they're like, "Well, he probably is then planning for us to go to battle or execute and otherwise large-scale offensive." At which point Tuon realizes, "Oh, Mat could actually do that and it would be scary."

SALLY: Fuck yeah!

EMILY: We then swap over to Perrin as he and a squad of people are dumping the forkroot tea into the, um, aqueduct system that leads to Malden. It's a very good, interesting scene. I'm very interested in this mechanic for Malden.

SALLY: Me too

EMILY: Of, um, sort of going in from the inside. Uh, weaponizing forkroot. Although, you know, it speaks troublingly of the future.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It's similar to Mat's sort of cannonball innovations and even this fancy crossbow thing. Warfare is getting more and more dangerous. Um, warfare's always dangerous. Warfare is getting more and more efficient.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, but Perrin is there with some of the Seanchan and with a whole bunch of people, all of whom are apparently going down through the aqueducts, which is, like, covered. You know, they take the covers off to pour the forkroot in, but after that it's just a tunnel straight into the city. Um, which, it would have been really funny if Perrin just had managed to infiltrate Malden, [laughs] like get his entire army in.

SALLY: Yeah, he's like, "We're all just going in through the aqueducts."

EMILY: Through the aqueducts, but obviously there's a terminus, and it's a cistern which would not fit the entire army so they're just sending in a small squad. The goal of which is to find Faile and the other captives and, um, kind of corral them back into the cistern while the actual assault is happening on Malden. Um, so, that is the plan. We get some other tidbits. Perrin is in contact with some local wolves, who are ready to drop and fight, uh, at any moment. They're so excited.

SALLY: Yeah, I don't really know why.

EMILY: Just kidding. They're kind of like, "Whatever. Yeah. Sure." [laughs]

SALLY: Perrin's so annoying. I would be like, "No."

EMILY: Um. Yeah. “Shut the fuck up.”

SALLY: Deal with your own problems, bastard.

EMILY: Gaul goes in for dumb reasons that he wants to capture Bain and Chiad before anyone else does. Again, that romance, if one wants to call it that, is difficult and, uh, is just impenetrable. Um, Mishima, who’s the second in command to the Seanchan, you know, after Tylee who’s our [stumbling over words] who’s our point woman, um is there supervising. And at one point he sort of has a Tuon moment of realizing, “Oh, Perrin’s actually scary and competent,” or whatever and is like, “Tylee was right about you.” And Perrin’s like, “What’d Tylee say about me?” And Mishima’s like, “Oh, you’d have to ask her.” And then Perrin sees Tylee later in the chapter and doesn’t ask her and [laughing] it fucking bothers me. Why bring it up?

SALLY: Yeah. Perrin is like the least plot conscious character you’re – you’ll ever see.

EMILY: I know. He’s just, like, bumbling.

SALLY: And you’ve got to respect that about him on some level. Where he’s just like, “I am not in a story,” versus Mat and Rand who are like, “I am in a story,” [laughs].

EMILY: Rand is like “One hundred percent I am in a story,” all the time.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Twenty-four sev he’s like, “Gotta follow the prophecies.”

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Mat’s like, “I have this sneaking suspicion that I’m actually in a story and can manipulate that to my will.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Perrin’s like, “I’m just a dude! Going through life!”

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: “With my ax, or my hammer, no symbolism there.”

SALLY: No.

EMILY: “Going after my wife. Again, nothing is a metaphor. It’s all just real.”

SALLY: [laughing]



EMILY: He's so stupid.

SALLY: [continues laughing]

EMILY: Perrin goes to Travel back to the camp via Grady, who is so exhausted.

SALLY: I know. Dead on his feet.

EMILY: Yeah, he's basically like lay [laughs – laying there. Perrin at one point is like, "Yeah, we have to use the aqueducts because Grady and Neald just won't be able to open gateways. Like, we have to limit them." And I'm like, "You couldn't have used them a little more efficiently? So that you'd be able to just *get* into the city on the day of?"

SALLY: Fucking idiot.

EMILY: It's so wild.

SALLY: Yeah. Grady's just, like, laying on the ground. Perrin comes up and just, like, kicks him in the stomach and is like –

EMILY: Get the fuck up, you dipshit! [laughs]

SALLY: "Could you open another fucking gateway? [laughing] You lazy piece of shit?"

EMILY: I hate you! No rights! No payment!

SALLY: None!

EMILY: I'm the worst manager in the world. And Grady's like, "Please, sir."

SALLY: "Please, I need my allotted fifteen minutes."

EMILY: Um, yeah, Grady's like, "I'm on break."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] "I am off the fucking clock. Can I have one cigarette?"

SALLY: Perrin's like, "Naur."

EMILY: Um, we do have a very telling paragraph here that pretty neatly sums up everyone's opinion about the Seanchan and, I think, the point that Robert Jordan is trying to force. Grady's like, "The *damane* creep me out because they're so brainwashed they don't even want to be freed. I don't like that." And Perrin says, um, "Whatever happens with the *damane*, Grady, it won't be this week, or next. And it won't be us who fixes it. So you let them be. We have a job

of work in front of us that needs doing. You understand?” So, Perrin is saying, the bad thing in front of them is not the priority and it’s not their job.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, this is so, so wild, and I’m so sorry to bring this up, but *X-Men* [laughs].

SALLY: Mm. Mm.

EMILY: Um, in the, what’s the movie? *Logan*?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which, overall, I didn’t like, but it had a great line that I think about, I legitimately think about all the time. Uh, and I can’t even really remember the context. I think they’re on a road and they pass someone’s car who’s broken down. And Professor X wants to stop and Logan says, like, “Someone will come along.” And Professor X says, “Someone has come along.” Meaning them.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which is the correct attitude in any moral quandary or when it comes to helping people. Even if it’s the more difficult attitude. And Perrin is taking the easy way out, saying “It’s not our job to fix the entirety of Seanchan society or the *damane* or anything like that. We can’t take a stand against this.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, and it’s like, “Perrin, if everyone thinks that, and everyone clearly does, then it’s never going to be fixed.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, pony up, dude.

SALLY: You’ve been saying that a lot lately.

EMILY: I know. [laughing] I think I’ve said it twice in the last two days. I just think it’s a nice phrase.

SALLY: It is a nice phrase.

EMILY: I like to think about ponies. Where are they going up to?

SALLY: Where are they going?

EMILY: [laughs] In an elevator.

SALLY: In an – [laughs]. Where are they ponies going?

EMILY: Um, Perrin also says, like, in his own head, “We’ve got to deal with the Dark One,” and then he’s like, “Anyway, it’s grown hard to think of Tylee as being on the Dark One’s side.” So, again, this idea of once you meet them the Seanchan aren’t that bad.

SALLY: And it’s like, not for *you*, Perrin.

EMILY: Yeah. You’re fine!

SALLY: Someone with incredible privilege in your world’s political, socioeconomic, cultural standing.

EMILY: Yeah, you’re one of the three most powerful men in the narrative.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Even if you don’t recognize that you are part of the narrative.

SALLY: Even if you refuse to believe it. So yeah. That is a really good callout on that paragraph, because, yeah, everyone is just like, “Well...”

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Shrug!

EMILY: [laughs] Shrug. Not our problem.

SALLY: Long pause, but I was trying to think of anything to say, but they’re just like, “I don’t know.”

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: I’ll deal with it whenever.

EMILY: Um, Perrin returns to the camp via gateway. Ed, could you get your tail off of the microphone [something bumping the microphone].

SALLY: Just one thing. One quick thing. I just want to, like, parallel this with that great scene in *Fellowship of the Ring*.

EMILY: Oh yeah.

SALLY: When Frodo's like – when everyone's like, “Who the fuck would do this horrible thing?” And [crying noises] Frodo says, “I will.”

EMILY: [crying noises]

SALLY: It's so emotional. I don't know why.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: But he's just like, “I'll do it.”

EMILY: Someone has to do it!

SALLY: Someone has to do it!

EMILY: Someone has to stand up and say I'll do it.

SALLY: And it's gonna be me, Frodo Baggins.

EMILY: And *The Wheel of Time* is like, “What if no one did?”

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: What if no one said I'll take the ring to Mordor. I'll do the hard thing.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: What if everyone was just like, “Well. We can't fucking do anything about it.”

SALLY: Guess I'll die.

EMILY: Guess I'll die. I mean, that's one hundred percent of rich people in the world right now.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, we're living it.

SALLY: That is very true. We do not have enough Frodo Bagginses.

EMILY: I mean, [laughs] I personally have a moral ground to stand on, but Jeff Bezos does not.

SALLY: No.

EMILY: Um, Perrin returns to his camp and his tent, where Berelain is meeting with Tylee, who's sort of shown up unexpectedly to give them some news. Um, the funniest part of this

scene is that, like, all of their servants who are, like, Linni and Brenne, are treating everyone like absolute shit [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And Perrin, in one small redeeming way, is embodying the, um, a waiter or [laughing] waitress could slap me intentionally and I would still tip them twenty percent.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, Tylee's like, "You let Linni, or whoever, just spit on you?" And Perrin's like, "Yeah, we don't enslave them, so get fucked" [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, so that's pretty charming [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Tylee's big news is that a large force of Whitecloaks has been spotted nearby. And the Seanchan are under orders to track down this particular force. This is when we get the whole Galad desertion breakdown via, um, through Perrin's point of view. Although we've had it earlier in this book for other people. It's kind of funny to see Balwer's reaction, who's basically like, "I want to kiss Galad on the mouth" [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: "For killing Valda," and it's like, yeah, Balwer. Me too.

SALLY: Same. That was really hot of him.

EMILY: Yeah. Way to go. Um, so, Tylee, like, reports this and Perrin's like, "Okay, well we're not going to do anything about it and you're not going to do anything about it, because obviously you have a vested interest here." And she's like, "Yeah," and then no further arguments are made.

SALLY: And then – so, there's just seven thousand Whitecloaks on the peripheries.

EMILY: Yeah, so just, like, keep that on the back burner.

SALLY: Yeah. 'Cause they'll be coming 'round the mountain.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Galad will be coming 'round the mountain. Uh, her other news is that a force of –

SALLY: [laughing] I'm sorry [cat scratching a scratching post in the background].

EMILY: Guess who else is having a manic moment?

SALLY: [laughing] The cats are being as disruptive as possible.

EMILY: It's the storm sillies.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [singing] Just another manic Monday. It's Wednesday.

SALLY: I also have the storm sillies, I guess.

EMILY: Don't fucking come in here and – [sighs].

SALLY: [laughs] Okay. Everyone hush. Emily was speaking.

EMILY: Tylee's other news is that a couple forces of Aiel are also on the move towards them. Which, uh, we don't know what Aiel. Which Aiel? Who's side are they on? We don't know and won't until the next Perrin point of view, maybe. Then, we switch over to Faile, who is talking about kissing games with Rolan, so.

SALLY: Yay.

EMILY: Okay. Okay.

SALLY: I think it's pretty funny that the Aiel have, like, kissing games instead of just, like, making out whenever they want.

EMILY: Oh. Um. Yeah. Like, is it supposed to be, like, spin the bottle and stuff?

SALLY: Oh, could be. Could be.

EMILY: Stuff like that. I mean, we have kissing [laughs] – that's the only kissing game I can think of.

SALLY: Um, yeah. Maybe it's like that. I guess I would never classify those as, like – I don't know what I'm thinking. You've also got seven minutes in heaven, or whatever.

EMILY: Oh. Yeah, yeah, yeah. Who knows? Um, Galina comes up, looking absolutely batshit insane and is like [intensely], "Where's the rod?!" and Faile's like, "Um, I have it, but you have to promise that you're going to take us out of the city." And Galina's like, "Yeah, sure. Whatever. I will say whatever arrangement of words you want me to say to get the fucking oath

rod.” And Faile’s like, “Well, she’s an Aes Sedai, so she can’t lie. Therefore, yes. I will meet you at a random abandoned building tomorrow with all my people and you can take us out of here.” Which I’m sure will end great.

SALLY: It sure does.

EMILY: It sure does. Um, so, again. This is, like, dramatic irony. Robert Jordan playing with what characters do and do not know. Obviously Faile does not know that Galina is Black Ajah, although frankly there have been hints prior to this. Um, not that Faile has to pick up on every single one of them. She’s not, like, a genius. She’s a pretty normal person, but, like, I don’t know. Everyone in this fucking series is always like, “Don’t trust Aes Sedai.” So it’s, like, why would [laughing] you trust Aes Sedai?

SALLY: Yeah, in this instance in particular.

EMILY: Yeah, especially one as clearly unhinged as Galina.

SALLY: Yeah, someone’s who clearly unwell and obviously scheming, you know?

EMILY: Yeah. Just, like, everything she says sounds like a scheme.

SALLY: Yeah, like, she’s the villain in a Disney movie.

EMILY: Yeah, she’s very Disney villain coded.

SALLY: Yeah, like, the advisor who’s always, like, speaking in a double entendre [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughing] And everybody knows except the king.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: [laughing] That’s Galina.

EMILY: It’s like if, sorry to keep making *Lord of the Rings* references, but it’s like if they walked into Theoden’s palace and fucking Wormtongue was there, whispering in Theoden’s ear, and Gandalf was like, [laughing] “That’s fine. Seems normal.”

SALLY: [laughing] That’s totally normal! That seems –

EMILY: That dude has some serious anemia, but [laughing] no big deal!

SALLY: It’s great that you’ve brought on a new advisor in your old age.

EMILY: Theoden, I love that you are delegating tasks.

SALLY: Yeah, I'm really proud of your boundary setting.

EMILY: Such as [laughs] decision making.

SALLY: [laughs] Such as ruling your kingdom, yeah.

EMILY: All decisions. Breathing [laughs].

SALLY: Breathing.

EMILY: Okay. Now we switch over to Rand, unfortunately.

SALLY: Oh, yeah. This is a big one.

EMILY: Yeah, as Rand and co go to the meeting with the quote [laughing] Daughter of the Nine Moons unquote.

SALLY: Yeah, speaking of a big ole instance of dramatic irony.

EMILY: I think the phrase "this is a trap" [laughing] is used, like, nineteen times.

SALLY: Yeah, everyone is like – like literally – Rand gets to bring, like, ten people with him.

EMILY: And everyone single one of them is like, "This is clearly fucked up."

SALLY: "This is a trap. This is obviously a trap."

EMILY: And Rand's like, "Whatever! I'm stupid." What Rand and his accompanying people – which is, like, Nynaeve, Cadsuane, Logain, Narishma, another random Asha'man, and Min – all, uh, ride down to this random farmhouse in the middle of nowhere. Which, it's, like, again, irony. We, the readers, know that Tuon, for like a state visit, would never go anywhere unescorted by, like, literally nine hundred people and guards.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, the idea that she would be there with six sets of *sul'dam* and *damane* is ludicrous.

SALLY: Yeah, also in an abandoned farmhouse.

EMILY: Yeah. Oh, of all things. Via Cadsuane and Nynaeve's various *ter'angreal* they pick up on the fact that Semirhage, who walks out looking like Tuon, or what we know Tuon vaguely looks like, uh, they're able to, like, disrupt the weave she's using to look like someone else. And Semirhage appears. Um, Rand calls the alarm and then Semirhage is, like, able to get off one shot before everything goes bad for her. It's difficult to believe – I know Rand is stupid in this



instance, the whole “this is a trap thing,” but it’s also incredibly difficult to believe how stupid Semirhage is, thinking this little plan will work.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like –

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: How was this going to happen?

SALLY: It’s so frustrating – again, not to, like, beat a dead horse. I really thought, like, my goal for this week was to come in and try and have new things to say [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] We don’t!

SALLY: But, like, this constant back and forth of being, like, the Forsaken are very intelligent and then having them make just the most unintelligent decisions you’ve ever seen in your life, is just, like, exhausting at this point. Especially for Semirhage, who has, up to this point, been presented as one of our most fucked up Forsaken, but also one of our most intelligent, who’s, like, constantly playing the long game.

EMILY: Yeah, like Rand gives us, via Lews Therin, a few, like, creepy stories about Semirhage. One time she was in prison, but she freaked out her jailors so bad they helped her escape.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Blah, blah, blah, blah.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Semirhage is, like, renowned as this *utter* creep. And, like, we the readers are like, “Hey, Semirhage has been playing the long game here. She does seem pretty competent, getting in with the Seanchan.” We know from the beginning of this book that she literally dismantled the entire Seanchan empire with a single massacre.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, so it’s kind of like, now you’re expecting me to believe that she would walk into a situation...with six channelers versus six channelers and be like, “This is a fight I can win because *why*? I have the element of mild surprise.” She doesn’t even like – the sort of game changer in this is the male *a’dam*, which she’s revealed to have been carrying. And it’s not like she’s got that tucked under her arm. It’s, like, hidden in the farmhouse.

SALLY: It’s, like, in the house.

EMILY: Yeah. What are you going to do? Run and grab that? After what?

SALLY: Yeah, and it's also like, you thought a disguise was going to – like a disguise with the One Power was going to work against the most powerful channeler in, like, human history?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: [laughing] It just is, like, what is this plan?

EMILY: Like, they're all on high alert.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It doesn't make sense unless you assume that Semirhage is seriously underestimating both Rand and everyone Rand knows and trusts.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: Which is, okay, a level of arrogance I sort of buy from the Forsaken, but at this point, Semirhage is one of the, like, six Forsaken left standing. After a certain point you'd be like, maybe someone should learn that, at the very least, the odds are stacked in Rand's favor by the Pattern itself. Like, the world wants him to win.

SALLY: Sure. And also, like, yeah. You're going up against, like, literal fate. That always goes really well for anyone who attempts it. And also up to this point, Semirhage – like you said, all the Forsaken have a big ego, but Semirhage, up to this point, has been one of the one's more in control of that. Like, more willing to be like, "I can play an advisor for a long time and it doesn't get to me, because I don't care." Versus Sammael who's like, "I will be King of Illian."

EMILY: Immediately.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Can't handle it if I'm not for a single second.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: So, it's just, like, again, this weird sort of, um, nerfing of our bad guys in order for Rand to win in this moment. Which, on one hand, I think is fine. I don't want to go through – like success for Semirhage for this situation would look like collaring Rand.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: I don't want to go through another situation where the Dragon Reborn is in prison. Like, I have had enough of that for *me*. I've had enough of that for *Rand*. Like, we don't need to continually be retraumatizing the character in this way. So, I'm not totally against the way that this plays out. I also just don't know why it happens this way. And I guess it doesn't really matter at this point, but it's silly.

EMILY: Yeah. Robert Jordan is frantically trying to tie up some plot points and he's doing it in the clumsiest ways possible. At this point.

SALLY: Yeah. We've only got three books left, baby, we've got to just start knocking Forsaken off.

EMILY: Yeah. Rand loses his hand in this attack. Something that has been highly foreshadowed by the series itself. Um, but which, in the moment, doesn't really make a lot of logistical sense. It seems like he got hit by a, a fireball? Which would set you on fire, not necessarily blow your hand off.

SALLY: Yeah, it's confusing. Because everyone walks up holding the Power, except for Rand, because he's worried that Lews Therin is going to take control of it and start doing war crimes again. Reasonable. Um, so, like, he, by the time Semirhage is, you know, firing off missiles or whatever, he can't get Lews Therin to give up to control to him. Like, he needs more time to –

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Power up than usual. So, like, I'm confused about the choreography, too. Because he, like, throws himself in front of Min and like, holds up his little scepter? And all this does is burn him up to the hand.

EMILY: Yeah, he – this is an important point, that I'll, I'll want to talk about in more detail. He is already standing in front of Min.

SALLY: Oh.

EMILY: He cannot move because she is behind him and then the fire would hit her and there's some symbolism there.

SALLY: Okay. I didn't – I didn't know that.

EMILY: But yeah, the point is he kind of throws up his hand to shield himself, holding the dragon scepter. And yeah, again, it's like, would the fire would not then still?

SALLY: Still hit you? Like, fire doesn't –

EMILY: Is it a fire or is it something else? Some sort of weird lava [laughs] thing.

SALLY: Some sort of, like, solid fire that you can deflect like you're in a Mario game?

EMILY: Who knows? It makes no sense.

SALLY: [laughing] I don't understand what's going on.

EMILY: But, again, Robert Jordan is clearly just like, "Oh, I keep talking about Rand losing a hand and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And he keeps saying shit like 'I'd rather lose a hand then do this.' So, I've got to make him lose a hand and I can't do anything – I can't [laughing] do a normal thing about that. I'll have Semirhage throw a fireball at him." I don't know. Here are the two points I want to make about this. Uh, one is that, as I said, Rand is standing in front of Min after forcing – not forcing her, telling her several times and worrying about it frequently, that she will be unprotected. So, he keeps saying like, "Oh, just keep behind me." And she finally is like, "Yeah. Sure." So, the very fact that Rand is over trying to protect Min is what causes him to lose a hand, because he can't just move out of the way, because Min's there. So, it seems to be Robert Jordan pointing to the irony of Rand's obsession with protecting women, especially the women who are close to him. Um, but it sort of falls flat, you know?

SALLY: Sure. And I think it falls flat because there's another reading, which is that Min shouldn't have come. Like, she's being bossy and silly and taking needless risks in the name of female empowerment. Like, there's no reason for Min to be at this big political negotiation. She just insists that she always has to be there.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: So, there's the other reading of being like – yeah, I think it's silly to not be like, "Why don't you try and *both* you duck away from the fireball?" Min does have agency to also duck away from a fireball. But there is this sort of underlying sense that Rand was correct and Min is –

EMILY: An idiot.

SALLY: A foolish woman.

EMILY: Yeah. Um [clears throat], the other point is that Rand, while he's sort of – while they're all standing there, as Semirhage is like – makes the big reveal that Rand is going insane, because of the voice he hears in his head. This is not a peer reviewed study. This is just the vilest person you know trying to say, "This person is going insane." As though she might not have any [laughs] motives for doing that.

SALLY: Everyone – everyone there would be like, "Whatever." Yeah.

EMILY: Yeah. Rand has this moment where he's like, "Oh my gosh. Min's gonna freak out and it's gonna be emotionally devastating to me," and he's, like, hyper focused on the bond with her through which he just feels her love all the time. And he's like, "She doesn't even waver. She's just like, oh my gosh, this unrelenting stream of compassion and understanding and love." Which makes me *so mad*. Because it's like, Min doesn't even have the privacy to, like, have her own little freak outs over her relationship, or this person. Min could be, like, having a total panic

attack right here and it wouldn't mean she loves Rand any less. It would just be like, "Shit! Something terrible is happening to this person I care about."

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: But it's like, she is doing the incredibly emotional labor of having to police her own feelings – just her feelings. Not even how she's showing them.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: For Rand's benefit. And Robert Jordan just seems to think that's, like, sure. Normal. Women do that. And should do that. [voice breaking] Sooo [gun noises].

SALLY: Yeah. It's so annoying, and just, like, goes back to the – ridiculous, underlying symbolism of this scene in general. Is that, like, none of the women in Rand's life have agency because he won't let them.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: He insists on controlling their physical safety. He insists on controlling their emotional state. I mean, they bonded him. I will say that. I will note that Min, Elayne, Aviendha were the initiators in that bond, so they played a role. I'll admit that they had agency there, but Rand's inability to accept that, like, your emotions are not who you are. I have emotions all the time. All day long I have emotions.

EMILY: What's that *It's Always Sunny In Philadelphia* quote –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Where they guy's like, "I think I had a feeling for the first time since, like, the fourth grade. Can you believe that?"

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And the other guy's like [laughing], "I have feelings all the time? What are you talking about?"

SALLY: What are you doing? I have feelings all the time and they are not necessarily indicative – I mean, everyone does. Not just me. They're not necessarily indicative –

EMILY: [laughs] You're the only person who has feelings, Sally.

SALLY: [laughs] I'm the only person who has feelings. It's just me. Apparently, that's how Rand thinks. Um, they're not necessarily indicative of what you *actually* think or what you *actually* feel. Like, you have – people have knee jerk emotional responses to things all the time and it is actually very healthy to be in this situation, see your partner get his hand burned off –

EMILY: And then have him be like, “Whatever.”

SALLY: Yeah. Have him be like, “Whatver.” And then also learn that apparently, from a very trusted source [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] The most trusted source one might say.

SALLY: WebMD over here is like –

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughing] “Your symptoms might indicate insanity.” Like, all that is so upsetting. And even disregarding your like – the way you might feel normally, like, *everyone’s* trauma response is kicking in right now. You can see this very much in Rand, who’s having a very flat affect, freeze response. Which is totally whatever. But, like, it doesn’t mean that Min doesn’t love you. It means that she’s allowed to process her fucking feelings.

EMILY: Yeah. Anyway, Min does manage to throw a knife that actually hits Semirhage, so if you’re keeping count of knives that Min has actually managed to A) get out of her sleeves and B) hit a target with, I think we’re up to, like, two. Um, it would have been sweet if she just, like, hit Semirhage in the face and Semirhage died. That would have been iconic.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I can’t, like, understate how much that would have redeemed the [laughing] entire series for me.

SALLY: Yeah if Min –

EMILY: [laughing] Just slightly.

SALLY: Killed Semirhage.

EMILY: Everyone’s got this big channeling thing and Min’s just like, “Parry this, you fucking casual.”

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: [laughing] Knife to the head.

SALLY: Knife to the head! It’s like if Narishma go to kill Halima.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Robert Jordan’s just like, “Only Rand can kill Forsaken, apparently.”

EMILY: It's like, no, let the normal people do it.

SALLY: [whispers] Whatever [pops lips].

EMILY: Anyway, we switch over to Mat, who is supervising the first offensive that he is launching against the Seanchan. Uh, he, because he's with some other people who want it explained to them, uh, tells them that the goal of this very guerilla campaign, which is sort of, um, slash and burn techniques, disrupt then fade away. Uh, no, like, major battles if they can avoid it. Just cause as much damage as possible and then get out. He says the point of this is to get the Seanchan to send reinforcements to as far away from that mountain pass as he can get them to. Basically in order to, like, free up that, um, route. So that they can get out of Altara. Um, which is, as far as I know, a sound strategy, and Mat being who he is, endowed with a great degree of luck, is almost certain to accomplish it. Which is not to understate his own military skill. He clearly has a lot of interesting things going for him. And, basically this little scene, like the actual logistics, are that, uh, a different force attacks the little Seanchan camp, or gets someone to send reinforce – I actually couldn't keep track of it. Basically Mat sets up his own army with all of their crossbows, or a bunch of crossbow guys to, like, ambush a, uh, passing group of Seanchan soldiers? Or whatever. I don't even know if they're Seanchan soldiers. Um, and with these fancy new crossbows and Teslyn helping, like, channel. Which, Mat has creatively solved the 'can't channel unless my life is in danger' offensively problem with "Oh, you don't need to make any bombs. Just cast a light."

SALLY: Mm-hm.

EMILY: Which does allow the crossbow guys to then see what they're aiming at. So, this is a major massacre and Mat is basically like, "Move on."

SALLY: Yeah, and Joline or whoever is like, "But what about healing the wounded?"

EMILY: And Mat's like, "No."

SALLY: She's like, "But those aren't the rules of warfare, Mat!"

EMILY: And he's like, "New rules, bitch."

SALLY: New rules, new me.

EMILY: [laughs] New rules, new me. Um, which again comes back to the idea that warfare is changing in this nation.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: We're definitely witnessing, I think, um, and this speaks, I think, to Robert Jordan's personal experience as a Vietnam veteran.

SALLY: Absolutely.

EMILY: We're watching a – the world go from a very structured, you know, sort of armies lining up and then charging at each other thing to a much more fluid and a much scarier form of warfare.

SALLY: Yeah, it's terrifying.

EMILY: Yeah, and there are no Geneva Conventions, so.

SALLY: There are none.

EMILY: It's a no man's land until someone nails those out, which hopefully they will.

SALLY: Yeah, almost immediately.

EMILY: Please god.

SALLY: Please someone get...I don't know. Who would it be at this point? Fuckin Galad?

EMILY: Galad!

SALLY: [laughs] He's the only one with a moral compass.

EMILY: Galad's like, "Oh, wait a second."

SALLY: [laughing] Hold on now.

EMILY: Hold the phone.

SALLY: H-hold on

EMILY: Uhhhh, oh earlier there was a little bubble of evil, or rather a ripple in the Pattern, where everyone thought they were disintegrating.

SALLY: Oh yeah.

EMILY: And we had something similar at the beginning of this book, so that's gonna keep happening.

SALLY: Horrible.

EMILY: I think that's those two chapters.

SALLY: Yeah, you did a really good job summarizing those.



EMILY: Oh, thanks.

SALLY: You're so smart and brave. Just like Frodo Baggins.

EMILY: No. No one's as brave as Frodo Baggins, my beloved. Okay. Anything to add?

SALLY: Naur [no in a bad Australian accent}.

EMILY: Naur.

SALLY: Naur!

EMILY: Okay.

SALLY: I'm sorry we do that so much, you guys.

EMILY: I know. We're obsessed with the Australian way of saying no.

SALLY: We're annoying [laughs]. [in a bad accent] Cleo!

EMILY: [in a bad accent] Cleo! The condensation!

SALLY: [laughing] The condensation.

EMILY: Um, okay. We – next time we will be with the attack on Malden. We'll just be with Perrin and Faile for a little while.

SALLY: Fucking finally.

EMILY: Yeah, fucking finally. The metaphorical paper chain is on its last link.

SALLY: Yeah. Fucking Christ.

EMILY: Uh, thanks all for listening. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song and our patrons on Patreon. Uh, do you have a sign off?

SALLY: And our followers on social media! Thank you, too!

EMILY: And our followers! I knew I forgot one.

SALLY: That's okay.

EMILY: On social media [a loud car passes in the background].

SALLY: Um, yeah, guys. The big bumner this week is that I'm going to have to buy a new laptop pretty soon. I've had the same Macbook air since I started college ten years ago.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: She has served me well and she's hanging in there, but, um, planned obsolescence is catching up to her real bad.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: So, RIP to me and the four thousand dollars or however expensive computers are now that I will have to spend.

EMILY: Maybe you can get a rose gold one like mine.

SALLY: Yeah, yours is very cool.

EMILY: To match our lighter.

SALLY: Yeah, we do have a rose gold lighter now.

EMILY: These are all – I don't choose rose gold things.

SALLY: Rose gold chooses you.

EMILY: It does choose me!

SALLY: [laughs] You should get some rose gold hoopies when you can change your earrings.

EMILY: Stop. The rose gold computer was the cheapest model that they had.

SALLY: That's – I, I get it.

EMILY: So I end up with that one. Okay everyone.

SALLY: [yawns]

EMILY: Have a good week!

SALLY: Bye!