



Episode 234: Hammers Build Homes

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

Sally: And I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: Here we are, in Malden, fucking finally.

Sally: Finally.

Emily: (vocalizing)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's exactly –

Sally: "Ode to Joy" starts playing. (sing-song resembling "Ode to Joy")

Emily: (sing-song resembling "Ode to Joy") Both of us off-tune. (laugh)

Sally: Whatever. Listen, music – there is a small black hole in my brain where knowledge of music would go –

Emily: Oh. It's blank.

Sally: And it's just sort of, like, sucked in –

Emily: Just a vast blank.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Um, Ode to Joy is playing because we are in Malden after, like, nine and a half books of Perrin wandering around the wilderness of some country, question mark.

Emily: Yeah, I don't know where they are at this point.

Sally: Doing –

Emily: I should, but.

Sally: Fuck all.

Emily: Just, there's a – there's a spot in the map where I'm like, "Perrin's in – in there somewhere."

Sally: Yeah, just kind of –

Emily: Speaking of black holes.

Sally: Yeah. He's – Perrin's in the black hole of the Wheel of Time world.

Emily: Um, yeah, it's – it's a – it sucks in time; it sucks in life, memories, happiness.

Sally: What is this tile supposed to be?

Emily: I think it's supposed to be a blacksmith's puzzle.

Sally: Oh. That makes sense.

Emily: Which is funny because it's a Faile point of view, but I guess she does reference a blacksmith's puzzle in this chapter and talks about how Perrin likes them. Um, the Malden sequence is pretty much as disappointing as you'd expect. Um. Or maybe that's your thing, is big battles while women are helpless in basements, you know? Like –

Sally: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Maybe that is –

Emily: Everyone has different likes and dislikes. (laugh) It's not one of mine, but to each – to each their own.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, this is a three-chapter sequence. It starts with Faile and company, um, getting ready to leave via Galina.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, they have to tie up the, like, one other lady who shares their tent – Faile, Maighdin slash Mrogase, and Alliandre – because she's a – an informer for Sevanna and realizes that they're up to something. So they have to tie her up, and then Bain and Chiad, who were going to escort them, along with Lacile and Arrela, um, now have to get rid of this tied-up woman.

Sally: "Take care of her."

Emily: "Take care of her," they say, and does that mean they'll kill her? Who knows.

Sally: It's impossible to know.

Emily: Who knows. Um, of course Bain and Chiad were going to be their protection against the threat of rape and gang-rape that is omnipresent in Malden these days –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So that's just some fun ambience that Robert Jordan is providing for us. He also makes note that of course Bain and Chiad can't actually fight while they're gai'shain, so how they would protect people is not something you want to think about, and yet he's given it to us to think about.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So just a lot of unpleasantness. Anyway, they go to this meeting point with Galina, where they are all behaving like the biggest idiots in the entire world. It's like a Loony Tunes type of trap setup –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Galina's like, "Please come into this scary, about-to-collapse building with me, and I will then – we will then make our exchange," and they go into the – for some godforsaken reason, they follow her into this building –

Sally: Into the basement of the building, no less.

Emily: Yeah, and she's like, "Oh, I think I heard something," rolls a three on her deception check – (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And then leaves so that she can collapse the building on them.

Sally: Yeah. You're right, Loony Tunes is the perfect way to describe it. It's got very, like, Coyote and Roadrunner, Tom and Jerry-esque vibes of just being like, you have to be the type of oblivious cartoon figure to not be like, "This is obviously a trap. This is a bad idea, and –"

Emily: Yeah, it's just a great encapsulation of how Robert Jordan has been insisting that – this entire time that Faile is a competent and intelligent person –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And is, like, doing the best anyone could in this captivity, and yet continues to force her into situations where she then makes very incompetent and bad decisions.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, you can't have it both ways, you idiot. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, I also just, like, don't understand how the house even, like, collapses. She's got some sort of, like, Rube Goldberg machine that, like –

Emily: Yeah, she's, like, rigged it to collapse, we later find out. And it's like, what, is she a fucking structural engineer? What the –

Sally: I know, I just – (laugh) But you’re right, it is exactly the type of paradoxical situation that Robert Jordan loves to put particularly his female characters in, specifically, I don’t know, so they can be rescued by men and put in further danger of assault.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I don’t – I understand that the whole project here is, like, Galina is a bad guy and she doesn’t want anyone to know that she’s Black Ajah, so she can’t – I mean, I think she very easily could have just, like, brought everybody out and then left –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And been like, “They don’t know anything about me.”

Emily: She’s just so evil that she can’t –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Comprehend helping anyone other but herself, is the Robert Jordan –

Sally: Yeah. So the –

Emily: Character summary.

Sally: Whole thing is dumb. It also – yeah, like you said, like, puts Faile out of the city when the battle happens, which I also don’t understand. Like, let her fight.

Emily: Yeah, there – it’s literally just to get Faile out of this situation. It’s not like she doesn’t meet up with Perrin later.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, it doesn’t extend the plot; it just sort of moves the pieces around the board in a way that Robert Jordan is satisfied with. Um, and – oh, and it – it doesn’t even – it’s not even – there’s no tension for us, because we know exactly what’s going to happen. Because that’s what Robert Jordan has done by setting up all this dramatic irony with us already knowing Galina’s Black Ajah –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And then for some reason he’s insisting that all of these characters would trust her anyway. And so we’re like, yeah, obviously, Faile and her friends are going to get fucked over by Galina, but also she’s not going to die because this is the Wheel of Time –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: A high fantasy series where main characters don’t die. Um, so, like, okay; it’s just transparently, like, “I’m moving Faile out of the picture.”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is frustrating. Um, we then – oh, sorry, I didn't even – even describe how they fucking are going to get out of this. They just – they're like, "We can't –" First they try and, like, move things around so they can climb their way out. Um, but they – that doesn't work; they feel like they're gonna get the building further collapsed on them. So they're like, we'll have Maighdin, like, wave a – a flag that's tied up outside, using channeling –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: To, like, try and get someone's attention. Which, of course, since she's so bad at channeling, is going to be difficult.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So then we also have Faile being like, "There are lots of kinds of fights, and this fight is that we all have to keep Maighdin's spirits up," so it's this elaborately, like, um, feminine coding –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We all just have to sit around and encourage Maighdin, rub her feet, blah blah blah blah, because God forbid women actually participate in a fight.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So. (sigh)

Sally: Ugh.

Emily: Ugh.

Sally: Let Faile kill Rolan.

Emily: I know. Cowards.

Sally: Or Sevanna.

Emily: Oh, God, Sevanna. We'll get to that in a minute. Perrin is outside of Malden on this hill; Neald has summoned the huge cloud of fog –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To obscure them; apparently was like, "Ah, shit, that was way bigger than I thought it was."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: But they're all hidden in fog while they're sort of, um, moving people about.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, there's a hilarious line here where – right at the beginning – where Perrin is like, "Yeah, soon – soon what's going to happen is Alyse –" who is Galina, but, um, he thinks her

name is Alyse – he’s like, “Soon, because obviously she will have carried this message to Faile, soon Faile’s going to know to go to XYZ place,” and then in the next paragraph, he says, “He had planned with care for every eventuality he could imagine, down to outright disaster.” (laugh) Clearly not.

Sally: Yeah. That Galina would betray you? No.

Emily: Just didn’t – didn’t occur to him. Um, what they’ve done is they’ve got sort of their, like, little group of people, and they have corralled all of Masema’s people off to one side. For, like, a plan that was so long coming, we don’t actually know some of the finer details of it. Like, it is – remains a mystery – it remains a sort of obvious mystery to us, like, where the Seanchan are in all of this.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like, what they’re doing, what they’re – how they’re going to be interacting with this battle plan. Um, Masema’s people are clearly positioned in this certain place because they’re going to try to get the Shaido to run right at them and kill all of them and each other, so that’s sort of, like, a mass elaborate execution plan that is extremely dark.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And, uh, we’re just kind of like, yeah, he’s killing two birds with one stone, as though we’re not talking about hundreds of thousands of human lives here.

Sally: Yeah. It is so upsetting to me. Like, I know we’ve got a lot to get through, so I’ll try not to linger on this for too long, but, like, it is so repulsive to be like – I know we’ve talked for, like, literally years about how someone just needs to Old Yeller Masema. You know?

Emily: Masema, though, not his –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: One hundred thousand people.

Sally: Yeah, not – is it really a hundred thousand people?

Emily: I don’t actually fucking know, I’m just –

Sally: It’s – it’s a lot of people.

Emily: It’s like how there’s so many Shaido. (laugh) The numbers are unknown.

Sally: Just an uncountable number of Masema’s followers. I – so I know we’ve been talking for a long time that, like, the Masema problem needs to be dealt with, and, like, at this point it seems like lethal force is the only option because Masema’s not going to change.

Emily: Or compromise or do any sort of reasonable diplomacy.

Sally: Yeah. So – I mean, I don't know if Perrin – like, I don't know if part of this is supposed to be killing Masema, but it isn't, 'cause Masema's, like, hanging back with the generals, so, like, he, for all his faults, is not illiterate when it comes to warfare, you know?

Emily: Yeah, he is a Shienaran – an ex-Shienaran soldier. Perrin's like, "Here's the battle plan." Masema's like, "Okay. I think I'll step out of this death trap because I'm not an idiot."

Sally: Yeah. Yeah. So, like, it's so frustrating 'cause I feel like Robert Jordan – and, I mean, I feel like we've been projecting – I've been projecting a lot of intent on Robert Jordan lately, so I don't know. But it feels like the set-up is Robert Jordan also realizing that, like, lethal force is the only option here. But, like Emily said, like, Masema's followers are different from Masema. It's a totally, like, separate problem, and it really just feels like Perrin being like, "I know there's this problem, and I'm not going to do the hard thing and deal with it in, like, a real way; I'm just going to execute tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands of people in the battlefield, sacrificing them for literally no reason except that I can't think of something to do with these people."

Emily: Yeah, the way Robert Jordan has set up this mob of people by having us meet and interact with, I don't know, half a dozen of them besides Masema, is, um – with that sample size, he's being like, every single one of these people is an irredeemable piece of garbage –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who is in this for sadistic reasons because they just want to hurt their fellow human beings, blah blah blah blah. There's no nuance here in terms of, like, what causes people to join mobs –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: What situations were these people coming from? Were they forced to join this mob because that was the only alternative when – between that and dying?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Were they forced to because this was a place where they could maybe get food?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In a country – in a country that is apparently starving?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like, it's just so unsympathetic to what drives people to make these horrific decisions. And so, like, yeah, there's not – I don't have a lot of sympathy for, like, the people in Masema's gang who are cutting off ears and stringing them around their necks, obviously, but there's a lot of difference between that person and presumably the one hundred other people besides them who are just here because they're sort of people who made bad decisions or made impossible decisions.

Sally: Yeah, no, that was so eloquently put, and it just – like, it's such a moment of, like, stark, like, dual morality, like a binary morality: like, people are either good or people are evil, that this

series depends a lot on, I guess. We've talked about that at length. But it's – it's just so gross because we're also – we can set up Perrin, like, you know, like, assassinating this mob of people with what happens with Aram in this chapter – spoiler alert –

Emily: (mumbling)

Sally: RIP. You know, this is the infamous scene where Aram tries to kill Perrin and then Perrin – then Robert Jordan bitches out and doesn't make Perrin kill Aram; Aram just gets sort of, like –

Emily: Murdered by arrows.

Sally: By stray arrows. And Perrin steps over his warm corpse and is like, "Well, I shouldn't have given him that sword."

Emily: "Well, that sucked." No mention of Aram ever again. (laugh)

Sally: Like, it's so cruel. It's so awful. Ugh. But what happens is that, you know, Aram has been brainwashed by Masema into thinking that, you know, Perrin and Elyas are Darkfriends because they've got their special wolf eyes, and that Perrin is a bad guy who's gonna hurt Faile, and somehow Aram's loyalty has switched entirely to Faile rather than Perrin.

Emily: Yeah, he's, like, convinced Aram that Perrin is actually the architect of the destruction in the Two Rivers –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And therefore the, you know, behind-the-scenes murderer of Aram's entire family.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, like, yeah, if I were convinced of that, I too would probably try to kill Perrin.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: But, like, mm. Yeah, like, Robert Jordan has been spending so much time with Perrin agonizing over Faile, not really doing anything other than that, um, and making deals with the Seanchan that sort of, like, characters like Aram have fallen by the wayside. We've been told a few times that Aram has been hanging out with Masema but because we're not in Aram's head and because Perrin is not caring about what's happening in Aram's head, like, this sort of comes out of nowhere.

Sally: Yeah. It does feel, um, very random, and we can talk about that more in a second, but before I forget my point, like, the mass execution of Masema's followers feels particularly disgusting 'cause we have the exact, like, sort of parallel of Aram as a – you know, indicative of what most people in the mob are probably like: someone who had a really tragic things happen to them who had no resources and, like you said, found a place where they could find food and community and relative safety because they could get weapons and, you know, not be alone in the wayside – in, like, just a field –

Emily: Yeah.



Sally: Where the Seanchan could kill them. So that's what happened to Aram and we're just being like, well, Aram should be killed because he fell for it and decided to do something violent, when Masema's probably made a pretty convincing argument that Perrin was the architect of all this destruction, because in some way, he was.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And that's fine. We're all responsible for various things, you know. So it just, like, is so gross. It's just so gross and maybe it's supposed to be, but I hate it, and ...

Emily: Well, it's just transparently, at this point in the series, Robert Jordan ticking off problems that characters need to solve. And it's like, Aram's a problem because Aram no longer has a place in the narrative –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Therefore I'm going to sideline him into Masema's sort of group of people and have him be killed.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Masema's entire mob is a problem because in the real world, this is something that would take a lot of time and resources to solve.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Although, theoretically, if you study cults and mobs at all, once you get rid of the leader, they tend to fall apart a little bit –

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: So, uh, it might not take that much time and that many resources.

Sally: Just kill Masema. Sixty percent of the problem will be solved right there.

Emily: I know. But regardless, Robert Jordan is just like, I'm just –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Moving pieces on the board, at this point –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And my movements – my hands on the pieces – are becoming ever more transparent.

Sally: Yes. Yes.

Emily: So, yeah, Masema's not an idiot, so he's hanging out with his three hundred bodyguards or whatever, with –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Hanging back with the generals. Perrin's like, "How do I know your people won't just fucking cut and run as soon as they get charged at?" and Masema's like, "Oh, well, I too signed off on this death trap, so I've threatened them horribly, and they'll definitely stand and fight."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, him being there freaks everyone out; Perrin has to, like, tell, uh, the Mayeners to hang back and guard Berelain in case Masema tries to kill her.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Blah blah blah. Perrin goes to, uh, Maighdin's crew – you know, Basel Gill, Lini, et cetera – because they are in charge of getting more or less the civilians in this camp – the, uh, servants; people like that – off to a safe distance. They leave. The Maidens – the scouting Maidens – are like, "We have eliminated all of the sentries." They come back. Um, and everyone sort of lines up and gets ready, I guess. Some Shaido, like, come out to sort of go into the fog, so they're like, okay, we'd better get ready. Oh. And also – (laugh) Um, Perrin is like, "Where's Grady?" and Grady had been sent to the Two Rivers to pick up some reinforcements, which could only be, like, a few hundred people –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Tam? Rand's dad is suddenly being dragged back into the plot? (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. We're like, "Here he is."

Emily: It is so fucking funny to me that Perrin's like, "I have to be very careful about the gateways that Grady and Neald make because they have such – they have so little left in them –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "So few left in them." And he's like, "I am going to use one of those precious resources to go to the Two Rivers and get, like, two hundred archers and Rand's dad, because he's the only guy I can trust to command the Two Rivers people." Which, you just have to imagine Tam al'Thor's, like, doing his thing – suddenly a man in a black coat –

Sally: Farming sheep, yeah.

Emily: Comes up and is like, "You need to go to this fucking battle. I'll teleport you there. By the way, your son's the Dragon Reborn."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And Tam's like, "Wot?"

Sally: "Wot?" I also think it is wild that we are in book eleven –

Emily: Book eleven!

Sally: And Tam's like, "My son is what?"

Emily: And Perrin's like, "I have known this for the last seven books –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And simply did not tell you. Just don't worry about it, Tam," and Tam's like, "Okay. I'm a man, so I can't make a fuss or show any emotions about anything, besides stoicism."

Sally: Yeah, it's –

Emily: No wonder Rand's fucked up.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Sorry, Tam, but bad.

Sally: But masculinity traps us all in the end.

Emily: Toxic masculinity, goddamnit.

Sally: It strikes again. Uh, it is very random; like, I know the longbows – the Two Rivers longbows – and perhaps the whole point of this is to reintroduce them as an effective weapon, I assume so Mat Cauthon can just, Kirby-like, swallow them into his army. Um, so my best guess is, like, we need to reintroduce that they are an effective weapon of war. And they are very helpful in this battle – you know, they're very powerful longbows. But it's like, you have so many tens of thousands of people to fight this battle – you need two hundred longbows to win?

Emily: It's also like, Perrin had this gateway at his disposal, and instead of sending Grady or Neald to any of his other – like, Rand, for example? – to get help, he was like, "The Two Rivers. Tam al'Thor is the only person I can rely upon." It's just –

Sally: Very random.

Emily: And, like, it's – it's yet another, like, indicative thing that's indicative of the fact that the narrative is so fractured at this point.

Sally: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Emily: Characters don't know where the other characters are; they're not in communication with each other. They're all doing their own separate things; they have their own separate agendas. And we're supposed to be like, yes, all of these people will successfully come together to fight a coordinated battle in the last book or whatever. But we're in book eleven.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Robert Jordan's game plan was to end it in, like, the next book. It was only 'cause he died and Brandon Sanderson was like, "There's no fucking way –"

Sally: (laugh) "This man was a maniac."

Emily: That this series went on for another three books. And, like, it just doesn't make sense.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It was okay for the narrative to be this fractured ‘round about book seven, eight – six, seven, eight. But at this point we should be on a trajectory to bring people back together –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Not forcing them further apart.

Sally: Yeah, or bringing more players onto the board at this point is also frustrating me a lot ‘cause, like, we’ve got so many plots to keep track of and so many subplots to keep track of that now I’m like, great, I have to remember that Tam al’Thor has two to three hundred Two Rivers longbows floating around.

Emily: Yeah, that, like, little additional force. And Robert Jordan is just like, “The way that I need to reintegrate my – my characters is by integrating the Seanchan into their forces,” not having Rand and Perrin and Mat –

Sally: Reunite.

Emily: Reunite and, like, be a united force, because, I don’t know, their years of childhood friendship are going to carry them through the horrific emotional and physical traumas that they’ve all suffered separately.

Sally: You know. Rainbows.

Emily: Robert Jordan doesn’t give a shit about friendship. He doesn’t believe in it.

Sally: Rainbows. Unicorns.

Emily: There are no friends in this book.

Sally: Yeah, nobody likes each other.

Emily: Ugh. Um, Perrin doesn’t even talk to the wolves. That’s all I was looking forward to.

Sally: I know, I want some wolves back.

Emily: Gimme the wolves. Anyway, we flash back to Faile and her people. Maighdin has finally – they finally – some people show up, including all of, like, one thousand of Faile’s followers who have all sworn fealty to her, plus Rolan and all of his buddies who are sexually exploiting these women. Um, and they’re like, “Don’t worry, we’ll get you out,” because they saw Maighdin’s flag, so successful plan, but now we’re back –

Sally: Rolan’s back.

Emily: We’re back in the entrap – we’re back in the trap.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, but Faile’s like, “Oh my God, I’m so – I’m so happy to see him. This is the best thing that’s ever happened to me.” Anyway, um, they get the battle started by Perrin and Aram just, like, walking out of the mist, you know –

Sally: Dun dun.

Emily: It's supposed to be super cinematic, but it's kind of laughable.

Sally: Yeah, I think it would be funnier if Neald made the mist go away –

Emily: Was just like, “Fwoom.”

Sally: And then all the sudden, there's, like, two hundred thousand people on the hill.

Emily: Yeah, it would've been a little more like the, um – I think what's – I can't – it's like the Mulan scene, you know –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Where it's the Huns on top of the mountain –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And you're like, “Oh, shit.” Um, but instead it's just Perrin and Aram, and the Shaido are like, “Okay?”

Sally: “Two guys?”

Emily: “Two guys? Two randos? That's fine.” Um, as the battle starts and as, you know, it becomes clear that there's going to be a pitched battle, they're all watching to find out if there's going to be major, um, retribution from the channelers within the Shaido camp; they are all trying to see if the tea will work. So Perrin is situated with, like, one of the Wise Ones next to him, who, as the battle begins and channeling starts, she's like, “Okay, yeah, it was successful; I'm only seeing, like, twelve or fourteen people channeling,” which obviously is a significant –

Sally: Decrease.

Emily: Decrease from the one thousand Wise Ones.

Sally: Yeah, I just realized they didn't wait very long to make sure that everybody had drunk some of the tea, you know?

Emily: Yeah, was it, like, the – did they do this the night before, so –

Sally: Yeah, I'm just – maybe that's my problem, is I'm confused with the timeline, but I just feel like it's a big gamble to be like, “We're sure one thousand people –” I mean, you would hope that everyone is drinking water every day –

Emily: (laugh) These fourteen who are unaffected are just dehydrated as fuck.

Sally: Just – (laugh) dehydrated. I just feel like they subsist only on coffee.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I guess coffee has water.

Emily: Yeah, they're the Diet Coke addicts within these – (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, they're our people. Um, I just feel like it's a big gamble to be, like –

Emily: Water haters.

Sally: Water haters. Team water hate. I love water. I'll die if I don't have a little water every minute.

Emily: Unlike me. I'll die if I have to drink water.

Sally: (laugh) We're perfectly balanced.

Emily: Yeah, stop – stop it. Um, and so the battle begins. Perrin is overcome by his, you know, barbarian rage –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And rushes, even though he's supposed to hang back, um, 'cause he's just so anxious to get to the gates of the city and meet up with Faile. Faile, meanwhile – um, the – Rolan and his pals move enough stuff that eventually they're like, "Okay, we can't move anymore without it falling, but we have created a path for you to get out," so all of the women have to climb out. Rolan insists on, um, Faile being first and pinches her ass when she has to climb over him, um, and she says, "She laughed in spite of herself. The man just would not stop trying!" Exclamation point. Which just sort of brings us to a sort of omnipresent – I don't want to call it a misconception because that implies some sort of innocence – but there was this thing going on for quite a long time and is still going around that persistence in a man is a highly romantic quality.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, it's in, like, the fucking Notebook, you know, that – that old gem.

Sally: Mm-hmm. Mm.

Emily: It's in a lot of rom-coms that a man, once he's told "no," if he just keeps trying in, you know, quote, charming ways, then eventually the woman will give in to his advances. Um, and it's "romantic" because the implication is that the woman is either too foolish to know what she wants for herself or cannot admit what she wants for herself, so it is built upon the back of infantilizing women.

Sally: Absolutely, it's built on the back of just being like – I – yeah. Yeah. And also, just, kind of, it seems to imply that there's just, like, a vacuum – like, women's desires and feelings are just, like, a vacuum; like, "I can convince her if I try hard enough;" like, her saying "no" doesn't mean anything because she has no actual agency. Um. That was clearer in my head. But, um, it's also this idea that they have to, like – like, women need men to prove themselves. Like, they're saying "no" as, like, a test.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And it's like, no. Like, it's – you don't have to prove yourself.

Emily: Yeah, women should be taken at face value.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Obviously.

Sally: If you say “no,” it’s no. Leave her alone.

Emily: But in this sort of “Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus” notion of gender that Robert Jordan is operating on, yes, women do need to be proved – women do need to have men prove their loyalty and desires to them, and men have to jump through all these sort of, like, chivalrous hoops in order to convince women to love them – or something?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don’t know, but also, you know, the omnipresent “women are too stupid to know what they want.” And all of this is just sort of to make Faile more, like, in the Rolan camp. We’re never meant to be like, “Oh, yeah, Faile’s definitely gonna cheat on Perrin with Rolan.” But, like, it’s meant to be like, Faile is like, “Yeah, Rolan – Rolan’s flirting is harmless, and I like it, and it makes me feel desired, and I enjoy it, and it’s no big deal, and he’s my friend,” blah blah blah.

Sally: Yeah, there’s – it’s – we’ve talked so much about, like, the massive insensitivities that are happening in this plot, particularly around what happens to women in – what happens to people in general – but what happens to women in prison camps. And this idea that she would find his constant attention charming is, like –

Emily: Instead of deeply, deeply threatening.

Sally: Yeah, instead of being like, “I have to play along because I am worried about what happens when I don’t,” um, which is more in line with reality. Um, it’s really dangerous – like, I’m constantly trying to be more careful about, like, if I’m offering criticism in good faith or bad faith and how much, you know, um, sometimes things are just books and not everything that’s presented in a book is endorsed in a book. But I do also believe that the things that we read impact the ways that we think, and if you are – if you are a young man who reads texts predominantly like Wheel of Time, where you are being presented with this idea that women find constant advances charming and it makes them feel protected, like, what are you learning? It’s really – it’s so upsetting to me. Ugh.

Emily: Um, but, like, Maighdin drinks water from the canteen and immediately passes out, so I guess that’s how strong the tea ended up being.

Sally: Oh. (laugh) Is that what that was?

Emily: I know, they’re like, “Oh, she must just be exhausted –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But I think it’s meant to be, like, she can channel, so, bonk.

Sally: Like, they dumped nine thousand pounds of forkroot into one hundred gallons. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Doo doo doo.

Sally: It's so potent.

Emily: Um, we switch back to Perrin as he is fighting through Malden. Aram tries to kill him, and Aram dies. And Perrin, like you said, steps over his warm corpse and is like, "Well, live and learn, buddy." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. It's like, you callous asshole.

Emily: It's so ridiculous. Then there's this – meant to be this sort of tragic dramatic irony wherein Perrin sees Faile, she's being towed along by Rolan, who's trying to protect her, sees their whole group, runs up – Faile's like, "Perrin!" So Rolan, who thinks this is a scary man charging at him, was, like, raising a weapon, but then as soon as Faile greets him as her husband, is like, "Oh, wait," and does not do anything, giving Perrin ample time to slam him in the head with his hammer, which, as we have said, is a lethal weapon.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Like, Perrin fucking blunt force trauma-ing Rolan into the next decade –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Do you think Rolan's like, "A hammer! Only a creative and –" (laugh)

Sally: "Only a gentle craftsman would –"

Emily: "Only a gentle craftsman would wield such a weapon. Such a – such a tool, excuse me. It's not a weapon."

Sally: Such a delicate – yeah, it's not a weapon. There's nothing a hammer can do that is dangerous. Hammers build homes.

Emily: Yeah. Never – they don't crush men's skulls and brains.

Sally: Anyway, Rolan is dead. (laugh)

Emily: Rolan is dead, and Faile's like, "Oh my fucking God." (laugh) And Perrin's like, "Faile," and, like, grabs her and hugs her, and Faile's like, "What the shit did I just see? What did I witness?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Perrin has the most – um, he's like, "Did they hurt you?" and she's like, "No, they didn't hurt me," um, and Perrin is, like, picking up on all her scents with his mood ring nose and is like, "Oh, she feels a ton of shame," and rather than, like, tucking that – rather than having, like, a normal response, which is, like, this is something we need to talk about later – like, what happened here, what happened to you – he just says, "Well, the man was dead, and a woman had the right to keep her secrets if she wanted." So his obvious assumption is that Faile and this man had a sexual relationship –



Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And he's like, "Well, I'm a good guy, so she can just keep that secret from me if she wants to. Like, we don't have to talk about it."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Rather than being like – like – Perrin, you can't make interpretations out of your smells that are one hundred percent accurate.

Sally: Yeah, it's also really bizarre 'cause when I first read it I was like, oh, Perrin's assumption is that she was raped.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Which is obviously what many people would think, given the situation. And for him to just be like –

Emily: "We don't have to talk about that at all."

Sally: (laugh) "My wife was raped, and I'm just gonna not do anything about that at all as her life and sexual partner."

Emily: Yeah, he's just like, well, the man – I killed him. So.

Sally: So she's better.

Emily: So end of – end of discussion.

Sally: Trauma evaporates when the rapist dies.

Emily: Exactly.

Sally: (laugh) If only.

Emily: He's just like, "We can just move on now," you know? "No big deal."

Sally: I also, like, can't imagine – you're so right – being Faile and just being like, "Oh my God, my husband just bashed someone's brains in," and, like, for all their complicated relationship, and as much as I'm happy that Rolan dies because he is obviously a sexual predator, um, he was her friend, I guess, and, like, Perrin just murdered him. (laugh) Like, what would you think of your husband after that? Wild.

Emily: You'd just be like, "Oh my fucking God." Like, regardless, seeing anyone's head get bashed in in front of you is a traumatic event.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, goddamnit. Just –

Sally: It's just, like, the most deranged reunion –

Emily: I know.

Sally: Robert Jordan could think of. (laugh)

Emily: I know.

Sally: So, yeah, it doesn't feel very satisfying that they're reunited. And a part of me likes that. Like, time apart – these – Faile went through something very traumatic; Perrin insists that he went through something very traumatic – (laugh) by being separated –

Emily: Perrin will not be one-upped by his wife's trauma. How dare you. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: This is a marriage of equals.

Sally: (laugh) Our trauma. Um –

Emily: (laugh) Communist flag. "Our trauma."

Sally: (laugh) Um, so part of me is like, of course any time apart changes you and will change your relationship, so part of it is kind of satisfying, that they have this, like, really clunky, awkward reunion, but pretty much immediately after, they just kind of fall back into their same patterns, so it's just very weird.

Emily: Yeah. Brandon Sanderson will try, I will say, a little bit, in the next book, to be like –

Sally: Good job, Brando.

Emily: Or maybe the book after that. I can't remember if Perrin is even in the Gathering Storm.

Sally: I would love if he wasn't. Brandon, do this favor for me.

Emily: I can't – I can't remember. But Brandon is kind of like, "Yeah, clearly they have stuff to talk about." Like, da da da da da. Um. But, um, you know, it's still not great.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: Um, so they sort of start organizing. The, uh, battle starts, um, dying down. Um, they realize that Galina must be Black Ajah because Perrin's like, "Oh, you were supposed to go to the fortress; Galina – this lady told me she was going to –" and Faile's like, "Oh, well, she lied to us, so she must be Black Ajah, and I will kill her if I see her," and one of the other Aes Sedai is like, "Well, she obviously needs to stand trial," and they have this whole big discussion about how justice needs to be enacted for Galina in the – through the correct channels rather than just killing her. Which is quite hilarious given the background of Perrin just murdering a man and, you know, assuming that because he was probably a rapist, that it is fine.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So. Robert Jordan loves irony but also has no idea when he writes the most ironic shit imaginable.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or maybe he does, and I'm not giving him enough credit, but at this point I doubt it. Tylee, the good old Seanchan, your friendly neighborhood fascist, rides up –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: With a nude woman slung over her saddle like an animal.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: At one point she just, like, pats her bum, is like, "This is my spoils of war, a naked woman." I don't know why she's naked; she is, though. It's just Robert Jordan having some sort of sick gratification.

Sally: It's Sevanna, right?

Emily: It's Sevanna, yes, excuse me.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Sevanna, all gagged, and everyone's like, "Oh my God, Sevanna." And Tylee's like, "Yep."

Sally: This – and it's just like, what? What? What is she going to do with her, you know?

Emily: Probably turn her into, uh, one of those –

Sally: Creepy little –

Emily: Creepy little – you know – Sevanna's going to have the tables turned on her. We're supposed to be satisfied by this.

Sally: Yeah. We're supposed to be like, "She is going to become a very poorly treated servant."

Emily: Yeah, this is meant to evoke how Faile and all of the other women were stripped of their clothes, forced to walk in the snow, blah blah blah blah, became gai'shain. The same thing is going to happen to Sevanna in the world of the Seanchan. And we're supposed to be satisfied by that. I am not, because I'm not a monster. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: And it doesn't make me think better of the Seanchan, which Robert Jordan is clearly positing it to.

Sally: Yeah. Like, look at these, um, dispensers of justice. Yeah, the justice – it's – you're right, the irony in this scene is unbelievable. 'Cause so many people are operating with this, like, um, Hammurabi's code, eye for an eye –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Sort of form of justice, and then they're having this, like, discussion about someone being put on trial?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Huh. That one's food for thought.

Emily: Yeah, we'll really have to digest that one. Um, Tylee is like, "Yeah, the battle's pretty much over; most of Masema's people are pretty much dead. Masema himself and his two hundred surviving followers have gone God knows where," so blah blah blah blah. There's this part where – there's this absolutely ridiculous part where Perrin is, like, "I remember, because obviously the last three months of Faile's captivity have not happened and we just need to, like, circle back to exactly where we were in our relationship prior to that –"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "Which is where I was learning that Faile likes it when men behave in certain ways, so I need to behave that way." So he's, like, leering at Sevanna. And Faile's like, "Could you not right in front of me? Dear God."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's just this ongoing, like, comedy of genders that Robert Jordan is, like, tonally –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's tonally improbable. It's exactly – we were watching "The Hunchback of Notre Dame" last night –

Sally: (laugh, singing) "Choose me or your pyre."

Emily: (singing simultaneously) "Your pyre." And then we switch over to the gargoyle being, like – making fart jokes. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) That movie is so wild.

Emily: It's deranged.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Like, the soundtrack absolutely slaps, but –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: It is deranged. This – this scene is deranged. I can't.

Sally: Yeah. Like, Perrin, especially if you are operating under the assumption that your wife was sexually assaulted, you're just gonna, like, exhibit sexually explicit behavior in the middle – in front of all these people?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Whatever.

Emily: We then have the most horrendous of – (laugh) in the series of horrors –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We have the biggest horror, which is that, uh, at the end of this, Tylee's about to ride off, and she says, um – immediately after saying “We've taken X number of women captive to enslave as our damane,” she's like, uh, “You should call me Tylee” and gives her hand to shake. And Perrin says, “It was a strange world.” It certainly is, Perrin. (laugh) “He had gone to her thinking he was making a deal with the Dark One, and the Light knew some of what the Seanchan did was beyond repugnant, but the woman was stalwart and true to her word. ‘I'm Perrin, Tylee,’ he said, clasping her hand.” And this is when I set up my little scope to snipe Robert Jordan in hell. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, you know, just, like, “Hey, Perrin – hey, big dog. I just took three hundred and fifty women captive; I'm going to put collars on them, brutally dehumanize them, use them as weapons of war –”

Emily: “I still have a naked woman slung –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Over my saddle.”

Sally: “And, like, God knows what I'm gonna do with her. But, like, you know what? You're a real stand-up guy and I want to be your friend.” And Perrin's like –

Emily: “You know what –”

Sally: “Same.”

Emily: “You too participated in this battle that could only go well for you, and you had no reason to not want to participate in, given –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “How many concessions I made.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Yeah. You're great too.”

Sally: “You're such a great person. I really value you as a person, as a friend. It's – the, like, little bit of stuff that bothers me is, like, not a big deal.” What – where's your spine, Perrin?

Emily: Yeah, Perrin, look. Listen. Listen. Perrin, I don't fucking care if Tylee is your new goddamn best friend –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But don't go making sweeping generalizations about the Seanchan.

Sally: Yeah. “Some” of what they do is bad.

Emily: Some of what they do is bad? All of what they do is bad, Perrin.

Sally: Yeah, their whole empire – their empire, first, like, end of sentence.

Emily: Their empire built on badness –

Sally: Yeah, built on literal slavery.

Emily: As every empire is.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Ugh.

Sally: Robert. Yeah, there’s this, like, playing both sides type of thing going on here. Robert’s like, “Well, there are people on both sides of every war.” That is true. There are human beings on both sides of every war; it is in the definition of war, typically, to have two or more groups of people in order to fight. But you can’t really make the argument that there are, like, human beings on both sides when the only people you show me on the other side are people in power, you know?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It’d be one thing if our, like, Seanchan – it’d be one thing if our, like, main Seanchan character was Alivia. Alivia’s a great character.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: But instead we’re like, Tylee is amazing. Tuon is sensational. Suroth is a little crazy, but it’s kind of funny, right? I’m sick of this shit. At the very end, Galina gets taken captive again.

Emily: (laugh) Galina gets recaptured. Oh, no, darn.

Sally: And it’s just, like –

Emily: It doesn’t pay to be evil, does it? You too will be forced into this absolutely bizarre sexually coded slavery that only gratifies your male author and readers. That’s how it works if you’re an evil woman. So don’t be an evil woman.

Sally: So don’t be an evil woman, and definitely don’t be a lesbian.

Emily: You need to be pink and frilly and comply.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: That’s the only sort of woman who –

Sally: Pink and frilly and compliant.

Emily: Yeah. Well, we made it through this episode.

Sally: We did it, you guys. We are on the other side of the Faile-gets-kidnapped arc. God, it's like breathing fresh air.

Emily: Fresh oxygen. (laugh)

Sally: I – yeah.

Emily: Thank God.

Sally: Ugh.

Emily: Okay. We're gonna read a couple more chapters next week about women making bad decisions. It'll be Elayne. Surprise, surprise.

Sally: Yeah, well.

Emily: Um, thanks for listening.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Sorry I forgot you last week. Your theme song, not thanking you, ironically. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) We did thank you, yeah.

Emily: Um, thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

Sally: Yeah boy.

Emily: Yeah boy. Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: Yeah, today – you guys, I – speaking of hydration, I carry around, like, a 24-ounce water bottle with me all the time. I'm like a child moving with my safety blanket from room to room. Um, and today I dropped it on my foot.

Emily: Oh no.

Sally: And it hurt so bad and I'm gonna have a big old bruise on my toe.

Emily: Just perfectly round. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: In the shape of your –

Sally: Yeah. So.

Emily: Water bottle.

Sally: Um, hydration does come with a cost. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) You too might be passed out –

Sally: You too – I might pass out –

Emily: Helpless. When – when you're under siege. Or you'll have a big bruise on your toe.

Sally: Or you'll have a big bruise on your toe. There's no between.

Emily: There's no – there's no winning. Alright, everyone. Have a good week.

Sally: Bye.