



Episode 244: Elon or Ellen
Release Date: May 8, 2023
Running Time: 35 minutes

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)

Sally: Okay. 'Ello.

Emily: 'Ello, poppet.

Sally: 'Ello, sista.

Emily: 'Ello, sista. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Such a niche joke. You have to both have watched Pretty Little Liars and/or watched Mike's Mic, the YouTube personality –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Dissection of Pretty Little Liars, the third part. I don't think that comes in –

Sally: Yeah, it's part three.

Emily: Until part three of three.

Sally: Of three, and each is, like, two and a half hours long.

Emily: Yeah. (laugh)

Sally: Um.

Emily: We've run out of things to watch.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That's not a – that's not – no offense, but that's not a request for recommendations.

Sally: No.

Emily: Yeah, we're very specific in our –

Sally: We have –

Emily: Entertainment needs.

Sally: Yeah, our – our tastes, and we will meet them by watching niche YouTube video essays –

Emily: About early 2000s, um, shows.

Sally: Teen dramas.

Emily: On ABC Family, or wherever the hell.

Sally: So.

Emily: You know what's not fitting the entertainment bill? (laugh) This week?

Sally: The Gathering Storm! (laugh)

Emily: The Gathering Storm. It's so boring. God.

Sally: Yeah, these two chapters.

Emily: Even when things happen, it's boring.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah. I guess things technically happened in these two chapters, but.

Emily: I guess things technically happen. Um, alright, yeah, just two chapters this time. Blissful. Bliss delight. This is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: And here is Rand, back in the – the bad place. (laugh)

Sally: In the bad place. He's in – um, Rand is in the World of Dreams, which is somehow apparently different than the dream world. I noted that. It says here ... "This place was different from the dream world."

Emily: Oh. Yeah, I dunno.

Sally: So I don't know what he means, if he's in Tel'aran'rhiod, or if he's in, like, Moridin's special dream space for special boys. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. Moridin's special "no girls allowed" –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um –

Sally: Clubhouse.

Emily: Clubhouse, yeah, where the – everything is on fire, and everything is sentient and screaming.

Sally: Yeah. It's a really fun place to be.

Emily: It's a delight. It's the ambience.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Catch it on page 6 of Pottery Barn magazine.

Sally: (laugh) "You can buy this screaming fireplace for your own home."

Emily: Goth chic.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Um, this is a return to a setting that we have not seen since the first three books in this series –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Possibly since even book two.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, this is the sort of, like, creepy room in this castle-type thing, this labyrinthine castle beset by storms that Rand would go into, and creepy things would happen. Like, there would be a – a rat with its back broken or something like that.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And Moridin would always – excuse me, Ba'alzamon slash Ishamael would always be there being like, "Drink something," 'cause, you know, fairy rules –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So you shouldn't drink, even though we never know what the consequences would be.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As far as – maybe it was poison, and poison, you know – if you die in Tel'aran'rhiol, you die in real life –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So maybe that would've killed Rand. Um, or any of them. But, uh, this was, like, a – a setting we returned to a few times in those early books, so in a way it's sort of iconic.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: In the same way that early Ba'alzamon was sort of iconic. You know, Mr. Fire Eyes himself.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Um, it does also seem to be Brandon's attempt to, um – or, you know, it does seem to be the author's attempt to not just call back to those early books but sort of make some sense out of those early books in which the Ba'alzamon/Ishamael figure was so ludicrously confusing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, we, like Rand, did not know whether he was the Dark One, what – why he kept coming back, why he kept getting wounded but not dying, what this place was –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So we're now coming back to it with the rules that have been established and with Rand's new know-how –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, it's – I'll say this – a long time to wait if you're a book-only person, you know –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Not, uh, fishing through Reddit theories or whatever.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: If this is where you're finally getting the explanation, then woof.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: What a wait you've had.

Sally: RIP.

Emily: But Rand implies that this is maybe Tel'aran'rhiol, maybe some other thing, he doesn't really know, which is super helpful.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, we – because we at least know how Tel'aran'rhiol works –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So the idea that it might be a tertiary place is horrifying.

Sally: Yeah, what else?

Emily: (sigh)

Sally: What else is out there?

Emily: Yeah. But he's like, "Here's Moridin, who I now recognize as Ba'alzamon, who I now recognize was not the Dark One but Ishamael, one of the Forsaken, and he should be dead, because, you know –"

Sally: "I killed him."

Emily: "I killed him like three times, but particularly I killed him hard in the Stone of Tear," back at the end of book three, "So what's he doing back?" And Moridin is like, "The Dark One brought me back, 'cause that's what he can do, and just so you know, the only way to kill us – to permakill us is through balefire, so there's that lifehack for ya," I guess, but also Rand has been warned extensively not to use balefire, and I think Moridin himself even is like, "Balefire sucks."

Sally: Not a great idea. Not a good idea.

Emily: Um, and we're now sort of able – these two guys are now sort of able to meet on, um, even footing. That's both displayed in the setting itself, where instead of there being this creepy power dynamic where Rand doesn't know what's going on and Ba'alzamon is taunting him to try to get him to drink something or whatever, it's just this set-up of two chairs by the fire, which Rand is like, "This is awkwardly socially –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, friendly.

Sally: Cozy.

Emily: In its way.

Sally: Frog and Toad. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. (laugh) Just an old gay couple sitting by the fire.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Warming our joints –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Or whatever the hell.

Sally: You know.

Emily: And they're not having, like – you know, this isn't descending into violence.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. These are two guys who are very tired; Moridin himself is like, "I'm super tired. Like, I'm just done-zo, and it's not time for us to fight yet. Like, there is a preordained time, and I'm sick of you being here. So whatever you did to get here, get out."

Sally: (laugh) Same.

Emily: And Rand's like, "I mean, I too would not like to be here, but I didn't come here on purpose, bestie."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, we're not given an explanation for that; I don't know if it's ever, um, explicitly explained, but my guess off the top of my head was, b) this is just another symptom of their balefire crossing streams.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, we also get the beginning of their sort of philosophical combat versus their physical combat. This is – I don't know if it's explicitly Brandon or Robert Jordan, but I think of it as Brandon because the endpoint here in terms of philosophy is very Mormon philosophy.

Sally: Mm. Interesting.

Emily: Um, in A Memory of Light. So that could be fun. Maybe I'll break out of the Book of Mormon.

Sally: Ooh.

Emily: My old Book of – just read to you guys. (laugh)

Sally: Guest star: Emily's dad.

Emily: Guest star: Chris Jucahu. (laugh) Horrifying.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "Hey, Dad, do you want to talk to all the people on the internet about Jesus or whatever?" It's not even about Jesus. Okay, whatever. What I'm saying –

Sally: It is very interesting.

Emily: What I'm saying is that this theology is going to get very Mormon very fast.

Sally: Mormon™.

Emily: Um, but Rand and Moridin are just like, blah blah blah blah blah. Rand's like, "You're so boring, you just don't want to do this anymore, so." Moridin is like, "I realized that, um, the Dark One is going to win eventually because, you know, there's always going to be this fighting." It's, um, a callback to – you know, this is, like, a trope in fantasy, the idea that evil – uh, evil is never defeated, only ever sort of –

Sally: Subdued. Yeah.

Emily: Kept – kept at bay. Subdued or whatever. Um, it's a – it's a vicious cycle. Someone always has to step up. And Moridin, um, implies, like, well, you know, eventually, just mathematically speaking, the Dark One's going to win, so it's better to be on his side so then you get some sweet boons for, like, a minute before you die, and Rand's like, "This is just terrible –

terrible philosophy.” I mean, Rand doesn’t say that, I think, but we, the readers, are like, “What?”

Sally: Yeah. I’m not following, Moridin.

Emily: Yeah. It’s not – it’s not even quite nihilism, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, it’s not like Moridin is like, “I crave the sweet embrace of death or the abyss.”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: It’s just like, he’s like, “I’m in this for the world’s stupidest reason, which is to be in power for five minutes.”

Sally: Yeah, it – yeah, it –

Emily: “In what I believe will be the end times.”

Sally: Yeah, it’s not even, like you were saying, nihilism or, um, fuck – what’s the other one? Existentialism.

Emily: Yeah

Sally: Where it’s like, “Nothing matters, so I’m going to do what I want, and what I want to do is be evil.”

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: It’s literally like, well, when – if evil keeps winning, the world just continues, so the Dark One’s always going to be – or, if good keeps winning, the world just continues, so the Dark One’s always going to be there, but when the Dark One wins, the world will end, so therefore he’ll win for good. And it’s like, what the fuck are you saying, my guy?

Emily: And it’s like, okay, and then the world ends, and you’d be dead.

Sally: And then you die too.

Emily: Either way, you – either way, you’re dead.

Sally: So what –

Emily: In what possible way – why – you know.

Sally: Like, just tell me you want to be evil. That – that’s more cohesive.

Emily: Yeah, I’d buy it more.

Sally: I was so confused.

Emily: Rand’s like, “Your logic destroyed you, didn’t it?” And it’s like, what logic? (laugh)

Sally: What logic?

Emily: It's terrible logic.

Sally: Yeah, he also calls him by his loser human name.

Emily: Elan.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Which, you guessed it, folks – (laugh)

Sally: Where have I heard that before?

Emily: It's either "Elon" or "Ellen." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) I don't know which one is funnier.

Emily: Moridin comes in dancing, like Ellen DeGeneres. (laugh) Ahhh. Nightmare.

Sally: Yeah, so, um.

Emily: And Rand's like, "Well, but get this, Moridin: I'm actually going to break the cycle because I'm going to kill the Dark One." (laugh) This is where our Mormon philosophy comes in. Moridin's like, "Okay. Terrible idea, but."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "You don't even know how stupid that is, but whatever." Um, I think there would be something interesting here in Rand being actually tempted by the idea of letting the Dark One win to break the cycle, because what we're not getting into here is what is implied but not stated outright in this sort of series theology, which is that if evil's always rising and good always has to defeat it, Rand, unfortunately, is the embodiment of the guy who always has to defeat it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And that would be exhausting.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, maybe not if you don't remember your past lives, but Rand in this particular instance does remember at least one of his past lives –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So wouldn't that be pretty fucking depressing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But we're not really pushing on that envelope, which is too bad, I think, because, um, you know, it would be interesting to be back in this place where Rand has previously defied Ba'alzamon and to for once have him actually be legitimately tempted by something.

Sally: Yeah. I agree.

Emily: But the authors are cowards.

Sally: Yeah, let Rand give up. How about that?

Emily: Min, meanwhile, is watching Rand sleep and reading her books. Rand wakes up. She comforts him because that's all she's there to do now; including, she's like, "Hey, big news from my philosophy research: I think you're gonna have to break the seals on the Dark One's prison in order to, you know, fix the Dark One's prison," and Rand's just like, "Yep, I think that too," which is a real bummer. Not the, like, seals breaking, but Min's been reading these stupid books for, like, seven books now –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And she finally has some sort of, like, epiphany or idea, and it would be really cool to have her, like, actually have to fight for that in some way –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But instead it's just, like, easy win.

Sally: Yeah, or –

Emily: And Rand kind of got there on his own.

Sally: Yeah, what bothered me is, like, I'd be fine if he accepted it, but it really bothered me that he was like, "Yeah, that's what I've been thinking too." It's like, fuck you. Can Min not have one thing in this series that she gets to do on her own?

Emily: I know, it's just like –

Sally: Can she not just be, like, scholar lady who's like, "I figured it out."

Emily: Yeah, "Here's my cross-references," and Rand could be like, "Oh, shit. You're right." You know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's fine if he accepts it; I just want her to, like –

Sally: Yeah. Or –

Emily: Work a little for it.

Sally: And I also – I do agree with what you're saying too, that, like, what she's proposing is, in the mythology that we have been built up to, um, ludicrous. Like, everyone is like, "Why would you break the seals on the Dark One's prison?"

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: You know, like, it's been a big deal that the seals have been deteriorating. So, I don't know, maybe they have to, like, fight to get other people on board, or something, but it's just like a really anticlimactic – anticlimactic moment for the Min stans of the world.

Emily: Yeah. And for the record, they do have to fight to get other people on board with it, but, like, it's Rand doing the fighting. It's not, like, Min presenting – (laugh)

Sally: Her dissertation.

Emily: Like, it'd be so iconic if Min was just defending her thesis –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In front of the world leaders.

Sally: Yeah. And she's like, "Um, actually –"

Emily: "Here's what I have been doing when you all have been underestimating me."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Which you shouldn't have been doing because what nobody recognizes is that I'm the Dragon Reborn's bodyguard." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Oh, yeah, she talks –

Emily: Just so fucking stupid.

Sally: She's like, "I have knives, so if anyone came in to assassinate Rand –"

Emily: "They'd lose." And I'm like, girl, everyone who's ever seen you has seen your knives. You're not subtle about it.

Sally: Also, like –

Emily: You're not even, like, committing to the bit of being, like, "Underestimate me."

Sally: You've also, like, missed nine times out of ten. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, you – you are not that good with them.

Sally: Which is fine. Neither am I. But –

Emily: Yeah, you're the – the problem is that you're the only character who acts human –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: With your weapons –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In a world – in a world where everyone is at level 13 or whatever the hell.

Sally: Yeah, you – it's fine. But just – whatever. She's –

Emily: It's just – lower your expectations.

Sally: Ridiculous.

Emily: We then switch over to Aviendha, who watches as some people return from the latest meeting with the Seanchan to try and, um, get a meeting between Rand and Tuon. She's been doing one of her dumb punishments; she's talking to Amys; they go over as these people get back and are like, "What's going on?" They talk to this Maiden, who's like, "Yeah, they're willing to do a meeting, but I'm really pissed about it because the Seanchan are so fucking evil."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Um, like, while we were there, we even saw some Aiel chained up," which is a referenced to the Shaido Wise Ones, which, again, is confusing because –

Sally: What's the timeline, Brandon?

Emily: What's the timeline? I guess if Perrin's thing happened weeks and weeks ago – yeah. That makes sense.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: I guess?

Sally: Okay. But – yeah, so when – if – when we touched base with Perrin, we were just totally off the timeline, which you talked about.

Emily: Yeah. And, like, in the past.

Sally: In the past.

Emily: So the Shaido have been captured for a long time in this timeline. It's so dumb.

Sally: Okay. I guess I have no choice but to accept.

Emily: And I – Amys is like, "What do you think of this, Aviendha?" and Aviendha's like, "Well, unfortunately, I too am complicit here because while I also hate the Seanchan, like, their time will come. First we've gotta defeat the Dark One together." And I'm like, you guys are so committed to this stupid plan. Like, it's so entrenched in the series. There's not –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Any use talking about it or, um, rehashing it yet again. But it's just annoying to have Brandon be like, "Yeah, there's, like, three people dissenting about it, but they're all being shot down pretty fast."

Sally: Yeah. It's dumb. Because Aviendha's like, "My heart disagrees with this, but my head agrees with it," and it's like, can we get over that?

Emily: Yeah, if everyone's gonna be on board with this, can we just stop being like, "But don't worry, they're still good people about it 'cause they don't want to – they don't want to do it."

Sally: They – they feel bad, a little bit.

Emily: They feel bad about it, but, like –

Sally: They're still gonna do it.

Emily: It's still logically the correct thing to do, so. I'm like, shut up. Um, then we switch over to Egg, who's, like, cracking nuts or something, which feels like a light lesbian sort of – you know, the way, girl power is always about stomping on men?

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: I don't know.

Sally: Sure, yeah.

Emily: I one hundred percent don't believe that was Brandon's intention because I don't think he would think that hard about it. But, um, Egg is meeting with a few of the White Ajah, and she has basically the rehash of the conversation she's had with nine other people already –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: In terms of, like, "Hey, I'm Egg. Respect me. You've all gotta shape up and stop acting like whiny babies. Peace out."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And everyone's like, "Whoa."

Sally: "Wow."

Emily: They're like, "Wow, she's so OP –" The white people are like – (laugh) The white people.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Well. The White Ajah ladies are like, "Your logic is impeccable," and – (laugh) It's exactly like last time, it's just like, well, you kind of hand-fed it to her.

Sally: Yeah, like –

Emily: It's not a difficult argument to make here.

Sally: The whole – their whole thing is like, "Well, what would you have done with the Dragon Reborn?" And Egg is like, "Nothing," basically. (laugh)

Emily: And they're like, "Oh, that doesn't seem great," and she's like, "But it would be better than what Elaida's done, which is actively bad."

Sally: And they're – they're like, "Well, you got me there."

Emily: They're like, "Well, that's true, I guess."

Sally: Um, yeah, it's dumb. It's stupid. Um, I also don't know why we're still talking about, like, what the White Tower should have done with Rand?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, that's – that ship has sailed.

Emily: Woof, has it sailed.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Fully seven books ago. And they're just like, "Did we fuck up maybe?" And you're like, yeah, bestie.

Sally: Yes, girl.

Emily: Yes, girl.

Sally: Yes, you fucked up extremely badly, and you have been ever since you put Elaida in charge.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: This is not news. Whatever.

Emily: The end.

Sally: Then we have to meet Katherine, unfortunately, whomst I hate.

Emily: Yeah, Katherine's back and is like, "Heh heh heh, I'm foiling your – I'm foiling your plans."

Sally: She's twirling her mustaches.

Emily: Yeah. (laugh) She's like, "We have come up with a plan to foil your plans, which is now you're just gonna do chores all day so you won't have a chance to even meet with other people," and Egg's like, "Hmm. Concerning." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Goes to the kitchens for her work detail. We get a description – a, you know, lightly fatphobic, as usual, description of Laras – you know, we can't describe Laras without being like, "And by the way, she's fat."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, in every line –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That comes out, so. Great. Thanks.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Love that. Anyway, Laras, true to form, is like, “Here, I will help you escape,” because Laras is a fundamentally good person who –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is always trying to help the people. It is, I think, implied that she’s probably, you know, head of the Underground Railroad for getting all of the, like, runaway novices and stuff out of the –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: White Tower. It seems like she’s got a pretty good system in place. Not that Egg thinks about that. But Egg is like, “Mm, sorry, I have to do this heroic thing of refusing to, you know –”

Sally: Leave a situation where I’m being abused.

Emily: “Yeah, I must –”

Sally: And tortured.

Emily: “I must be martyr. I must be Madam Martyr.” Anyway.

Sally: Um. Yeah. I would like to know more about Laras, please.

Emily: Yeah, I feel like Laras –

Sally: What’s she doing?

Emily: Has an interesting life, working in the kitchens, rescuing people on the side, somehow never getting caught.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, damn.

Sally: Way to go.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Anyway, Egg then has to go see Elaida.

Emily: Yeah. Katherine’s like –

Sally: Again.

Emily: “JK, now you’re gonna have to go see Elaida,” so Egg takes a bath and then goes up to Elaida’s room, kind of thinking, like, “I’ll just play it like I did last time; I’ll just, you know, stay quiet.” Unfortunately, she gets up there and Elaida is hosting this dinner with, like, one of each Ajah or something like that, most of whom are women Egg has already talked to or hung out

with, including this White Ajah lady from earlier. And Egg's like, "Oh, no, I can't be seen to be subservient because, you know, that would be dishonest?" And I'm like, I feel like these women – ah, well, in Robert Jordan's world, women are all idiots –

Sally: Correct.

Emily: But theoretically these women ought to be smart enough to be like, "She is still a captive."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: You know, she sort of has to do shit.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Sorry. In the charge of this bully lady. What do – I don't – I don't know.

Sally: Yeah, like, ugh.

Emily: Anyway, Elaida is ludicrously badly behaved and stupid in this scene. It's not just, like, her little smackdown with Egg that happens later which – in which Elaida is, like, manufactured to look even more like an idiot than she is.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like, in Elaida's scenes we've had previously, we've known she's an idiot and a bully.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But Robert Jordan has at least managed to, like, put a, I don't know, patina of doubt over that and us, just being like, "Well, maybe she's, you know –"

Sally: Maybe she's got a plan cooking in there somewhere.

Emily: Yeah, maybe she's not a total idiot. Maybe she just, like, made bad decisions; we don't know what the – we don't know what the deal is. It's like, Elaida has never come off as – we've known she's incompetent in, like, the macro sense, but it's never been like she's so stupid that she would, like, get people together and, like, backtalk them in front of each other.

Sally: Yeah, it's – yes. There –

Emily: It's wild.

Sally: Is no obvious end goal like there has been with, like, her bullying Meidani. It's like she knows Meidani is a spy.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So, like, there – you can – it's not a good decision, but at least there's some logic there. This is just, like, her whole point is to just be like, "I'm in charge, ha ha ha."

Emily: Yeah, Egg's like, "She's just flexing, basically," and I'm like – I feel like what's happening here is a fundamental misunderstanding of, if we're in this gender essentialist conversation, this isn't how women behave with each other.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like, this isn't how mean women are.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which actually comes back to Elaida constantly acting like – you know, Elaida's one of those mean lesbians –

Sally: Yeah, that acts like a man.

Emily: Yeah, who acts so manly and just bullies people through force.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But it's like, I don't – I just don't know, guys. I don't –

Sally: No, that's a good point and something to hit on a little bit more, like Emily was saying: most of the women we see in the White Tower who are, quote unquote, mean, do have, um, more of what you typically see in a gender-essentialist, gender stereotypically world of the way that "mean" women behave with one another, which is much more, like, catty and sneaky and manipulative rather than, like, outright bullying. Which is more of a masculine behavior, so what's just – let's just sit with that for a minute, the way that Elaida, our villain, is posed as deviant.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: For being more masculine than she should be.

Emily: I guess what I'm saying is usually it feels more like she's being posed as being deviant –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In this one – in this particular one, it just feels like the writer doesn't know how to handle her.

Sally: Yeah, I mean, she is acting –

Emily: Or how to handle this conflict.

Sally: Like a buffoon –

Emily: Yeah. Like, clown –

Sally: In these – like, she is a –

Emily: Get on that clown makeup.

Sally: Yeah. Like, she feels like a cartoon villain who is saying all the nonsensical things that you would expect Wile E. the Coyote – Wile E. Coyote, not Wile E. the Coyote – (laugh)

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: It's – the whole thing is ridiculous. So, yes, I agree that she is acting very out of character. It's like we had to get – again, seeing through that blueprint, we had to get to a breaking point between her and Egg, and somehow this is how we have manufactured this.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Because she goes – she just, like, has a break – like, some sort of psychological snap at the end.

Emily: Yeah, and just starts beating Egg to –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Death, practically.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Egg faints, I believe, at the end.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, um, yeah, like, the height of Elaida's idiocy is that she doesn't recognize quotes from the Karatheon Cycle –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which we, the readers, wouldn't really recognize – you know, it just comes back to paratext and whatever the hell –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It is a little annoying that Egg is like, "Anyone should know this," but I'm like, should they?

Sally: Um, not everyone has access to a tutor, Egg.

Emily: Yeah, I mean, I guess Elaida in her one thousand years on this earth should maybe know that, perhaps, but, like, bro –

Sally: Yeah, but –

Emily: Egg, how did you know that?

Sally: Essentially –

Emily: Those texts are – you're saying –

Sally: Yeah, what –

Emily: You had time for memorizing texts –

Sally: The Karatheon Cycle?

Emily: And this random obscure thing?

Sally: Yeah. Um, Elaida and Egg get into it. It's another debate –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: That, um, Elaida obviously loses the entire time –

Emily: Is set up to lose, yeah.

Sally: Um, because she is saying some pretty outlandish things. Um, and I don't really know what else there is to say about it.

Emily: Um. There's, like, a serious misstep here that's just a plot hole, I guess, because it's not treated as a misstep later, which is that Egg just categorically rats out Meidani by being like, "I heard that you said that you want everyone else to swear a new, um, oath," and I think Meidani was the one who told Egg that.

Sally: No, Elaida said that in the –

Emily: Oh, did she say that in Egg's hearing?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Okay.

Sally: I think so, if I'm remembering correctly. 'Cause I think that's when Egg, like, breaks the pitcher or spills the soup or whatever.

Emily: Oh – oh, yeah. (laugh) The height of her hypocrisy. "Elaida's thinking of making women swear fealty??"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "I can't imagine!"

Sally: "I can't believe someone would do that."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um.

Emily: Oh, and then Egg just astounds everyone with her superhuman capacity to endure pain.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is so stupid. (laugh)

Sally: Like she is – like, I – (sigh) Yeah. Like, Elaida, uh, starts beating her and cutting her with the Power so that Egg is, like, bleeding to death before everybody's eyes –

Emily: I think she, like, threw her into a mirror something –

Sally: Oh, yeah, is that what happened?

Emily: So she's cut up. Yeah.

Sally: Yeah, she's, like, throwing Egg against the wall. Um, she's beating her, and Egg is just like, "Here I am."

Emily: (vocalizing)

Sally: The portrait of serenity.

Emily: She's the fucking Joan of Arc, yeah.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Saint Sebastian with a bunch of arrows sticking out of him.

Sally: Yeah, and everyone else is like, "Elaida, what the fuck?" Um –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And I just, like – I've probably said this in bits and pieces throughout Egg's arc, um, with pain in general, but I just feel like it's worth repeating in full if I haven't officially said this. But I am, like, really up to my ears done with this bullshit about how withstanding pain without showing any emotion or being upset about it or even being, like, physically disabled or maimed by it is extremely ableist. Um, not that that comes as any of a surprise from the Wheel of Time. But being upset or crying or screaming or having difficulty moving after being beaten and tortured is not an indicator of how strong your character is. There's no moral equation between handling pain or torture or illness and being a good person. Um, this is also a pretty common thing we see throughout fantasy texts, this idea that, like, the more you endure, the stronger you are. We see Rand doing the same shit in the first chapter when Min is like, "Wow, the – the wounds in his side are so painful," and it's like, that is an open, chronic wound that he has, and Rand is not allowed to be upset about it at all. Um, so I'm just pretty done with it, like, in general, for everyone who experiences pain, but also personally as someone who experiences quite a high amount of pain on a daily basis: sometimes I get pretty upset about that. And you know what, it doesn't mean I'm a shitty person.

Emily: Yeah, the false corollary between willpower –

Sally: Yeah, that's a good term for it.

Emily: And, like, physical – whatever – is just absurd.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So not really the triumphant moment –

Sally: I know, it's supposed to be this, like – it does have an air of, like, sainthood to it.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like Emily referenced Saint Sebastian, this idea of being like, you can endure so much pain because it keeps – it's really – I'm being fucking beaten over the head with how much Egg cares about the White Tower as an institution and how she has, you know, married herself to the White Tower, akin to a nun –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Marrying herself to Jesus. So.

Emily: Which is so stupid because Egg spent all of three chapters in the White Tower.

Sally: I know, she's like, "I just love the White Tower so much that it's so much more painful to think about how upset everyone is than to be beaten to death by a mirror and a bunch of switches. That doesn't bother me at all. Like, I'm actively fainting but I'm just, like, so upset about the way that Elaida has treated this institution that abused and psychologically manipulated me."

Emily: "And my friends."

Sally: "And my friends and –"

Emily: "And everyone that I know."

Sally: "Um, everyone that I know and is just sort of a categorically bad and manipulative institution, but I'm really upset about this, so that's why I can endure so much pain. I could pass a kidney stone right now and nobody would know anything."

Emily: (laugh) Stupid. Ahhh.

Sally: Okay, well, that's the end of my rant on that.

Emily: That's the end of everything I have to say. It's the stupidest – okay. So.

Sally: If I were Brandon Sanderson, I would have just ended whatever Robert Jordan was doing and been like, "I'm gonna pick up with Laras and her Underground Railroad that gets people from the White Tower to Ebou Dar."

Emily: Yeah. Fuck the stupid – this subplot about the White Tower being broken. Maybe let it stay broken.

Sally: Yeah, maybe it's good for institutions to burn to the ground sometimes.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Has anyone considered that?

Emily: Well, have they?

Sally: Listen.

Emily: ‘Kay, we’ve got another three chapters next time. Um, we’re unfortunately gonna be stuck with Cadsuane, then we’re getting a random Perrin point of view, then Suan, then a long Tuon chapter. I know, so depressing. It’s a real – real bummer-oo, as it were.

Sally: Maybe I’ll just protest and not read it. (laugh) I’m not reading another Tuon point of view in this series. I refuse. I don’t –

Emily: (laugh) At least they’re few and very far between.

Sally: I don’t care what plot details I miss. It doesn’t matter to me.

Emily: Ugh, they’re so stupid. Okay, everyone. That was a short one, but, uh, Sally’s about to go out of town, so we’re a little busy.

Sally: Yeah, also, what else is there to say?

Emily: Yeah, it’s just kind of a bummer. But thanks for listening if you stuck with us.

Sally: Yeah.

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

Sally: Yes, you guys are the best.

Emily: Anything to add?

Sally: Pfft. No.

Emily: Okey dokey. Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: Um. Yesterday I had to get an upper endoscopy, which for those who don’t know means they are scoping your esophagus and stomach. Um, looking for signs of trouble. Um, and you have to be sedated for the procedure, obviously. Um, and, um, they, like, wake you up from the sedation and they, like, put you in the recovery room, and I – this is my second endoscopy. And at my first one, they waited until I was, like, awake to come talk to me about what had happened – (laugh) But I was, like, probably 45 seconds out – awake – before the doctor came to speak to me. And he was a very lovely but very soft-spoken man, and I am, like, fully unconscious while this man is trying to talk to me. (laugh) I still have no idea what he said. But later the nurse was like, “Yeah, they didn’t find anything,” so at least somebody told me what had happened, ‘cause I was just like, “Okay – oh – okay.”

Emily: “What?”

Sally: “Okay.”

Emily: Yeah, I went back to get her and she was, like, slurring her words –

Sally: (laugh) Ugh.

Emily: Fully still sedated.

Sally: But that was –

Emily: Ready to fall asleep again.

Sally: A good time to deliver a medical report to your patient.

Emily: Yeah, so great bedside manner. Classic.

Sally: (laugh) It was also, like, a 30-second conversation. He was just, like, fucking out of there.

Emily: “Goodbyeee.”

Sally: Um, so who knows.

Emily: Okay, everyone. Have a good week!

Sally: Bye.

Emily: Byee!