



Episode 246: Goat Girl Summer

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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)

Sally: We're ba-ack.

Emily: Oh, creepy. Dun dun dun dun dun.

Sally: Did you miss us?

Emily: Did you miss – did you miss me?

Sally: Did you miss me?

Emily: Did you miss me? 'Ello, Spencer.

Sally: I know – (laugh) I know you want to kiss me.

Emily: I know you want to kiss me.

Sally: 'Ello, sista.

Emily: (laugh) Okay, this is Everybody Hates Rand, believe it or not, your –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Not-so-friendly Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau. I'm Emily "Goat" Juchau. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, I can't believe you guys are listening to a bunch of goats speak into a microphone.

Emily: Haven't you guys heard? Women are like goats.

Sally: Anyway, I'm Sally Goat-ger. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) This is a goat pride podcast.

Sally: Happy pride, yeah.

Emily: Forget the gays. We're all about goats here.

Sally: All about goats.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: We saw some great goats in Greece.

Emily: We actually did see some nice goats in Greece.

Sally: Okay, I would like to describe to you guys the feeling I had when reading this chapter. It was sort of like I was a water balloon and someone had poked the tiniest hole in me, so –

Emily: And just deflating.

Sally: Very slowly, I was just deflating, word by word by word.

Emily: I felt like that graphic that gets used a bunch in Supernatural after, like, season two, of someone going to hell.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is just sort of like a fwoosh.

Sally: Yeah. Mm-hmm.

Emily: A fwoosh sound and, like, a bunch of fiery red and brimstone graphics and whatnot.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, that's what I felt like.

Sally: In this chapter – ugh. In this chapter – we really should be throwing a funeral. We should be wearing all black.

Emily: (vocalizes)

Sally: Um, we get the first –

Emily: (singing) Who can say where the road goes ... (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Uh, we get the first, um, Mat point of view via Brandon Sanderson.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And there is just something that did not translate for Brando, I guess.

Emily: I've been thinking about it a lot.

Sally: Um, I will – I would love to hear your theses, but before I forget –

Emily: No, yeah, go for it.

Sally: I will say – what was I saying?

Emily: Sorry. (laugh)

Sally: No, the thought completely vanished from my head. I think I was trying to, like, give Brandon – oh. I will say for Brandon, he is picking up Mat at a very weird point in his character arc, where Robert Jordan had already begun a truly rancid character assassination –

Emily: Oh, yeah.

Sally: Of Mat. So I think it would be very difficult to pick up Mat at this point in the story, but I am sure it could've been done a little bit better than this.

Emily: Yeah, it's difficult to pick up both Mat and Perrin – and we get a Perrin point of view –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, right after this – um, because they've both ended major arcs –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In their characters recently –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And so, like, Brandon Sanderson's task upon starting this book was to get them from there – the arc that they just ended – in Mat's case the sort of the, uh, Tuon arc. Now his job is to get Mat to the Tower of Ghenjei arc, which will sort of mold –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And meld into the Last Battle arc, and to get Perrin basically from, uh, wasteland of kidnapped Faile to the Last Battle because Perrin doesn't have much, um – um, Perrin doesn't have as momentous a task to do in the in-between –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As Mat does with the Tower of Ghenjei. So yeah, there's some difficulty there. I do also, um – here's – I think it's sort of a – I think it's sort of a perfect storm, what we've got here.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: First we have Brandon's fundamental misunderstanding of the character.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, Brandon seems to conceive of Mat primarily as comic relief. That's not exactly – like, that's not one hundred percent false, but that is not the only function Mat serves, and that seems to be the only function Brandon gives him, at least in this book.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, of course Brandon's own comic – like, understanding of comedy is also, um – I don't find particularly funny. I find it very grating.

Sally: Yeah

Emily: Um, I'm sure it's funny to others, so I don't want to cast too many aspersions, but he's trying to combine his own form of comedy, which involves a lot of witty repartee, witty in quotes because wittiness is sort of what you make of it –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, a lot of what is known on the internet now as sort of Marvel-style, um, “well, that just happened” observational humor –

Sally: Yeah, yeah.

Emily: Um, and sort of this, like, quick, snappy dialogue that you'd find in a Joss Whedon show.

Sally: Mm. Yeah.

Emily: Um, and he's combining that with the inherent misogyny of the Wheel of Time.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because Robert Jordan, as we've said many times, really enjoys, like, poking fun at women –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: As sort of his funny thing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So it's like Brandon Sanderson picks up the Wheel of Time, is like, “Okay, Mat's the funny character, and the only thing Brandon Sanderson – the only thing Robert Jordan ever seems to find funny is, like, women being stupid –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “So therefore the only thing I can do is have Mat make fun of women being stupid.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So. There's that.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, Brandon also seems to falsely conceive of Mat as only a fool character. Mat is filling several archetypes; I believe we've talked about this before. His primary archetype is as the trickster figure.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, to a lesser extent, he is filling a fool archetype.

Sally: Yeah, which are different.

Emily: Those are two very different things; they often are very, um, similar, very close.

Sally: Yeah, they can definitely overlap really well.

Emily: Yeah, for sure. But a trickster, um, both in mythology, folklore, and in more contemporary genre work, um, is primarily there to, um, upend the status quo.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, to change things, to, um, uh, shift around the balance of power, uh, to do the unexpected.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, am I missing anything?

Sally: No, I think that's – those are the broad strokes.

Emily: Uh – yeah, I read a really good book recently about, um, tricksters generally, and one of the reasons tricksters often overlap with fools is because the way we understand tricksters is as, um – uh, this isn't the phrase that the book used, I don't believe, but it's the way I think of it – is as bottom characters, and I mean that both in the, um, like, tier in terms of – not in terms of tier – I mean that in both, like, a sort of class understanding as well as in a, like, um, you know, bottom synonymous for “ass.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Tricksters are very concerned with consumption and also with, like, bodily functions.

Sally: Mm. Mm..

Emily: Shitting, you know.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: So when you read a lot of older stories about tricksters, you'll get a lot of, like, really ridiculous stories about bodily functions. And those are meant to be funny; that's the way –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: That they are conceived of in the folklore. So that's why you end up getting this sort of conflation of, like, oh, tricksters are all comic characters.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: And they're bottom in terms of class because, again, they're often upending – they're usually starting in underdog positions, upending that structure in an effort to gain power for themselves.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: So hopefully that all sounds familiar with Mat, who generally walks into a plot, does his level best to completely –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Reverse things that are going on, and, you know, is a farmer, a gambler who's now in charge of an army. Lots of stuff like that. Um, a fool character, um, is, again, doing somewhat similar things; they're often poking fun at power structures and at the people higher up in power structures, but ultimately, like, they're there to be bumbling, to sort of fall their way into funny situations. Um, there's just, like, a level of, um, intention, I think –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That's often the difference between the two.

Sally: No, that's exactly what I was going to say. Like, if you're familiar with any Shakespeare plays, um, there is very often a fool character, and sometimes Shakespeare does really interesting things with giving them intentions, but generally they're a character that's kind of, like, floating through the plot.

Emily: Yeah, at the whims of the plot, really.

Sally: Yeah, just kind of there for the vibes, essentially. So if you take something like Touchstone from *As You Like It*, I think – no, I'm thinking of – Touchstone is not his name. That's the fucking name of the fool –

Emily: Touchstone is *Twelfth Night*, I think.

Sally: Yeah. Um, if you take one of those guys compared to, like, Prometheus, who is technically a trickster figure because he is doing exactly all those things, upending the power structure, it's exactly that, like, intention and that kind of sharpness to it.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Like, they are doing something specifically, not just literally buffooning around. So.

Emily: Yeah. So what we're getting here is, like, a conflation between the three things: tricksters, fools, and comic relief.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And the way that we're, like, ending up in Brandon Sanderson's conception of Mat is that it's, um, you know, primarily comic relief with some hints of fools and tricksters thrown in there.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But the biggest thing is that Mat is, at least through this plot and very much through, uh, *Towers of Midnight* as well, is not going to be doing things intentionally. Which is pretty

difficult because Mat is, um, as we've talked about a little bit before, um, one of our most, like, driven characters in terms of knowing what he wants.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, often what he wants is, like, held outside of his grasp by the plot, and that is what creates his conflict –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: His central conflict is like, “How do I get what I want when I am literally being stopped from having what I want at every turn?”

Sally: Yeah, and I – I can see where this would get tricky. I don't think I would have an easy time writing Mat as a character. This is me giving – I'm really mad about this, but I am trying to, you know, give Brandon, um, some sympathy here. Mat is a very – Mat has very difficult layers because this idea of him, like, not doing things intentionally, I feel how it would be easy to fall into that because Mat has this weird luck mechanic.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: You know, where it's, like, whatever he's doing, he sort of ends up in the right direction for the plot. Again, not necessarily for Mat. And so there is that tension of Mat is – Mat is doing things intentionally for the things that Mat wants. That has always been the case, even if it seems like those things are meaningless. They are meaningful to Mat, and he is always going after them quite intentionally. But of course the plot is holding him – pushing him in different directions. I also think Mat's narration style is very difficult because he is not often actually really talking about the things that he wants or explaining the decisions that he's making, so it requires some sort of, like, you know, focus in the plot to understand, oh, the decision that he's making is leading him towards this, though he has not, in sort of the Brandon Sanderson style of characters really explaining to us what they're doing and why, Mat does not do that. So I – I –

Emily: Yeah, as we referenced, Mat is our anti-mediation character.

Sally: Yeah, Mat is just, like, fully in his own head, fully driving the car in a strange direction.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: So I see why it is a tricky thing to pick up. But, like, the fumble is extraordinary here because we're – we're losing that sort of Mat aspect of being a little bit separated. Like, we don't get full access to Mat, which I think is really interesting. So.

Emily: Yeah. So we have Mat just sort of bumbling around now and seemingly not knowing what he's doing or where he's going, which is evoked quite, uh, profoundly here by having Mat suddenly not know where he is on the map.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's suddenly over-relying upon Vanin –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And others to tell them, like, where they're going –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Where they are and what road that they're on.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Previously when we've had Mat in the charge of his army, like, riding at the head of a column, whatever – which I don't believe Mat would do because there is such a thing as, like, scouts and advance guards –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, not to be super rude to Brandon Sanderson. (laugh) But, like, um – uh, what was I saying? Um, but Mat generally has, like, had a strong concept of, like, "I'm in charge of the army therefore I'm the one who needs to know where we're going and where we are."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But Mat keeps being like, "Oh, we're lost, and Vanin's in charge for some reason because I don't want to hurt his feelings and give responsibility for finding our way to this other guy." And I'm like, nothing that you said made any sense.

Sally: No. Like –

Emily: In terms of, like – like, Mat is not just a fool; Mat is also a highly competent military leader. Mat would not leave the fate of his army to Vanin, who –

Sally: Is a scout. Like –

Emily: Is a scout, which is a totally different thing.

Sally: He's very good at it, but Vanin should not be, like, literally navigating for the army. Yeah, it's just, like, a perfect distillation of Mat just, like, becoming this totally different character.

Emily: Yeah. Um, the reason that Brandon has put Vanin in charge here is, a, to be, quote, funny, um, and b, it's to get Mat and the rest of the group into this town at Hinderstap for a resupply, which is going to be – like, Hinderstap is the only thing that happens in the Gathering Storm for Mat and his crew, and Hinderstap is a nothing plot.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: It is a, like, random side adventure literally just for comic relief. Uh, Brandon Sanderson tries to bring it back in a big way in the Last Battle, in a very, like, weird way, but, uh, we'll get into it, I think, in book fourteen when it actually happens, but sort of as a summary, it's just Brandon sort of trying to, um, uh, be clever with, uh, the mechanics of the world in a way that, uh, characters use to their advantage. Which is not necessarily a bad thing and works very well in Brandon Sanderson's own books. It does not work as well in the Wheel of Time, which highly relies upon every character being as stupid as possible about the rules of their own world.



Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um, which is why it makes such a big impact when Mat himself, uh, utilizes his own luck powers as a weapon.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just a little sidebar there. Anyway, so they're supposed to end up in Hinderstap. We don't actually need to be in Hinderstap as readers, but that's what Brandon Sanderson wants – that's where Brandon Sanderson wants us to go so he can do his cute thing. Um, so for some reason Vanin's in charge instead of it just being like, "And Hinderstap is on the road, so that's where we're stopping."

Sally: That's where we're stopping.

Emily: Um, Mat is talking to Talmanes; Talmanes also has been changed drastically from a smart military guy who's sort of, like – loves and is friends with Mat as Mat is to being literally, like, this brick wall against which, you know, witty banter, like a bouncy ball, can go back and forth.

Sally: Yeah, he's just, like, a racquetball court.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Talmanes has been turned into a racquetball court.

Emily: Talmanes is there so you can, like, plug in witty response. Look, he's saying the funny thing to make us laugh.

Sally: As if Talmanes would.

Emily: Yeah, Talmanes –

Sally: He doesn't give a shit about that.

Emily: If Mat walked up to Talmanes and said, "Women are like goats," Talmanes would say, "Goodbye." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And that's not because Talmanes is drinking his "Respect Women" juice –

Sally: No.

Emily: That's because Talmanes would be like, "There's clearly not going to be a point to this conversation; therefore I do not need to be involved."

Sally: Yeah, "I'm leaving."

Emily: What – like, we're not here to have fun, Mat.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or at least, you know, we have some fun, but, like, Talmanes is also like, “I just like hanging out with you, Mat, because it’s not boring.” And I’m like, you like hanging out with Mat because he wins.

Sally: Yeah, that was – that’s very confusing to me. Brandon also works really hard to try and convince us that Talmanes has a sense of humor, which has, like, never been part of his character, really.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, he can give a pretty funny response every now and then, but he’s not, like, there for the laughs.

Emily: Talmanes is funny because he has no sense of humor.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Brandon Sanderson, instead of just taking that at face value, is like, “No, he has no sense of humor because Mat doesn’t understand that he has a sense of humor, because his humor is so highbrow.” And it’s like, no, he just literally is a stoic man who doesn’t really laugh at anything Mat says and is kind of like, “This idiot.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know?

Sally: He’s like, “This is my idiot.”

Emily: “This is my idiot, and I’m actually focused on the logistics of moving an army, which is difficult.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Anyway, Mat’s doing this long monologue about how women are like goats. Um, I don’t know – what really boggles my mind is that, like, Brandon Sanderson was like, “This will age well.” (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) You know what ages really well? Misogyny.

Emily: This’ll be – I bet in ten years, this’ll read great.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: If I’m giving Brandon Sanderson, like, an absolute – like, this is not just giving him the benefit of the doubt; this is probably putting motivations in his head – but, like, there’s a level at which this could be, like, “I am poking fun at Robert Jordan –”

Sally: Sure.

Emily: And being like, “This is the best you can do, like, in terms of, like, humor? Misogyny?”

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: This is how – like, he’s just elevating it to it being way less subtle than it was before.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. But I don’t believe that’s what is happening here; I think this is just, as you called it, a fumble.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: What this whole monologue is meant to be is, uh, a thinly veiled disguise for how Mat is worried about Tuon. This is thinly veiled because Brandon Sanderson cannot resist just telling us in plain terms what’s going on in characters’ heads at any given moment.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So Mat’s worried for Tuon. Blah blah blah. He’s struggling with being married, which you wouldn’t struggle with being married if your spouse was literally not in the picture and you were just still being a bachelor. Like, nothing has changed for you, Mat.

Sally: Like, your situation has not changed at all, homie.

Emily: Since you are in the Wheel of Time and not the cool, LGBTQ-friendly text that I wish this was, there aren’t really any women for you to, like, hit on around you, and I know you’re not gonna hit on the Aes Sedai –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So literally nothing has changed. Speaking of the Aes Sedai, they come up to do this, uh, you know, can’t really put this all on Brandon Sanderson, but again it is elevated past the point of subtlety. Uh, but this typical thing of women being absolutely stupid and asking Mat, “Can we – like, how long are we gonna – are we there yet?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mat’s like, “No. Clearly.”

Sally: Yeah, they want to get Caemlyn.

Emily: And he’s like, “No, it will be another, according to Vanin, twenty days before we get to Caemlyn,” which actually is a lot less time than I thought.

Sally: Yeah, same, I was like, that’s not even bad.

Emily: Yeah, twenty days on the road? That’s, like, fine, dude.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It’s obviously not ideal, but –

Sally: Like, yeah –

Emily: You don't have Traveling, so jeez. You're getting from one end of the map to the other, practically. Twenty days is fine.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They're like, "We want to get there faster," and Mat's like, "Okay, well, you would need multiple horses to get everyone at speed through there," and the Aes Sedai act as though they have never left the house before and have never traveled anywhere before and are like, "Oh, well, we need you to hold our hands through explaining to us everything that we would need to do in order to travel cross-country."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They also – we also forget that Joline has Warders here for some reason?

Sally: Yeah, they're just gone.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: She's like, "We need twenty," and she describes her party, and the Warders are absent. So I guess they're just running behind them.

Emily: Yeah, Mat's like, "Who's gonna take care of the horses?" and in my head, I'm like, "The Warders, obviously," but then –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: (laugh) Um, the Warders don't exist, for some reason.

Sally: And as Talmanes points out, Mat is unbelievably rude in this interaction. Um.

Emily: Like, childishly rude.

Sally: Yeah. Like – they're like, "Well, you should give us the –" He's like, "Where are you gonna get twenty horses?" and they're like, "Well, you'll give them to us; like, you can take them from your army and we'll take some soldiers," and obviously it's the Aes Sedai being very entitled, but this is nothing new, and Mat is just like, yeah, like a petulant child, being like, "No," in the rudest way possible. And Talmanes is like, "Hey, dog, what the fuck was that?"

Emily: He's like, "That was super out of character. It must mean you're worried about Tuon."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I'm like, being worried about a woman doesn't excuse you being extremely rude to other women.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, so that's just okay behavior?

Sally: Yeah, like this whole thing of Mat being like – Mat is worried about Tuon and therefore he is behaving badly is just, like, kind of like the whole thesis of this second half of the Wheel of

Time. Like, everything – we’ve talked about this before – but this is just, like, a maybe more microcosm example. Like, behaving – every time you’re behaving badly, you can excuse it by being a man who is worried about his fucking wife, apparently, or his girlfriend. Gawyn, Perrin, Mat, Rand, like the list goes on and on and on. And I – this is just a narrative that we get all the time, that it’s just like, men are unable to express their feelings properly, um, and nobody holds them to the standard that they need to say, “Hey, I’m worried about my wife. Instead I’m going to throw several fits, all in a row, that are just, like, extremely misogynistic, but it’s fine, because I’m worried about my wife.”

Emily: And, like, to be fair, this is how the real world works still.

Sally: Sure, sure.

Emily: You know? Men be like, “Well, I can act however I want because I would never treat my mother this way,” or something. I don’t know.

Sally: Sure. No, that’s fair. Like, it is – it is a real-world thing that happens, that, like, when men are in distress, they can do whatever they want. You know? Um.

Emily: Regarding their emotional volatility –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And they won’t be blamed for it because they have emotions, and when men have emotions, we have to cater to them much more than we ever have to cater to women or actually children.

Sally: Yeah, that’s true. Especially little girls.

Emily: Um – yeah. Um, but the problem is that I don’t think Robert Jordan is, you know, portraying this as a sort of “gotcha” about the real world; he’s just portraying it because that’s how things work in his mind.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it’s fine.

Sally: Yeah. (sigh)

Emily: Um. Yeah, so Mat is acting incredibly juvenile, again, which is something Mt doesn’t typically do; Mat, um, as silly as he sometimes is, is actually a pretty mature character.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As we’ve talked about, he has some of the most mature platonic relationships with women.

Sally: Women, yeah.

Emily: And has some of the most mature platonic relationships with men, so.

Sally: Yeah, also whenever Mat acts juvenile, he does it on purpose. It's like a tool –

Emily: Yes.

Sally: In his toolkit to, like –

Emily: He's like, "I'm going to act like a silly little boy because Nynaeve's treating me like a silly little boy –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And so I'm just gonna kind of play along."

Sally: Yeah. Exactly. Like, it's something he does on purpose, not because he cannot control his emotions.

Emily: Yeah. Uh, but mission accomplished: everyone looks stupid and mean and terrible to each other. So it's another day in the Wheel of Time. But we end this chapter with the group being like, "We're going to go into Hinderstap to resupply, and Mat is going to have to do a lot of gambling because they don't have a lot of money for it, so."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The – the end.

Sally: Mat, in addition to – I just have to say this. Mat, in addition to the goat thing, gives the most complicated, nonsensical rant about gambling, about what it would be like to gamble with a woman, and it makes him sound like he's on the verge of a psychological break.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, it is truly nonsensical. And, like, wild. So.

Emily: The whole thing about that is that, to me, it's, like – it's, again, just toeing the line of saying the silent part out loud. Because what Mat is saying with that little weird anecdote is that, like, women are impossible to reason with because women are an entirely different species; they're aliens; women will always have a, you know, greater solidarity in gender than their – any personal feelings they might have toward individual men –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is just your classic Robert Jordan "Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus," argument, which Robert Jordan has been putting in every line of this book, but now Mat is finally just saying it super loud.

Sally: Yeah, it also, to me, like, is sad 'cause it does hold a kernel of truth. Like, Mat is basically describing being, like, gaslit –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: You know, which is something that women actually do to Mat all the time –

Emily: In the Wheel of Time. Yes.

Sally: Yeah. So, like –

Emily: But you're right, it does make him sound completely unhinged.

Sally: Yeah, like –

Emily: Like, instead of just being like, "You know what sucks? Is how everyone is constantly gaslighting me."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's being like, "Here in this hypothetical situation in which I'm gambling because I'm a gambler and that's the only framework through which I can see the world, apparently."

Sally: (laugh) Women are just – women be lying.

Emily: Women be lie – women be shopping. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) It's just, like, what? Also, when has Mat been a purveyor of complicated metaphors?

Emily: This is, yeah, another Brandon Sanderson-ism that we're suddenly – like, in Robert – in Brandon Sanderson's comic relief toolkit –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's like, "Here's what I think funny people do: they do weird monologues. They are really invested in costumes?"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: That's gonna be sudden – disguises? Mat's gonna suddenly be –

Sally: No.

Emily: Really interested in that.

Sally: Please tell me you're lying.

Emily: No, I'm not. Why would I lie to you when I had to live through this?

Sally: He's gonna put on those glasses with the big nose and the silly mustache –

Emily: Yeah, literally. Pretty much literally.

Sally: Okay, so monologues, silly disguises –

Emily: Misogynistic jokes.

Sally: Misogyny.

Emily: Joss Whedon-isms.

Sally: Joss Whedon-isms.

Emily: Yeah, it's pretty – pretty rough.

Sally: I cannot think of a more heinous thing.

Emily: I can also not think of a more 2012 man thing.

Sally: You're right, 2012. I think the first Avengers movie came out in 2012, so.

Emily: Yeah, so probably everyone reading this book was rolling in their – rolling on the floor.

Sally: Rolling on the floor.

Emily: God. "How funny. Women are like goats." (feigned laughter)

Sally: Women – women are like goats.

Emily: Every woman reading this was like, "I am like a goat."

Sally: Very cool. "I am like a goat."

Emily: "He knows me so well."

Sally: "Mat is right. Mat is right. He knows me for real."

Emily: Okay. So then we switch to Perrin's point of view as he goes into Tel'aran'rhiod and is like, "Hey, Hopper, teach me how to do things," and Hopper's like, "Okay, run around with me," and Perrin's like, "No. I don't – not that way." And Hopper's like, "Okay, well, come back when you actually want to learn shit, you dumb freak."

Sally: Yeah, Perrin is – it makes me so sad. Also, Brandon – (laugh) before I forget. Brandon called us out directly with this line where he – Perrin is like, "I put down my ax and picked up the hammer 'cause the ax can only be used as a weapon, but at least the hammer gives me a choice to use it as a weapon," so as we've been talking about, a warhammer is a weapon, but apparently he's got a choice, so I just would like everyone to –

Emily: I just would like to remind everyone that axes are also tools.

Sally: Oh, you're right. (laugh) So –

Emily: Like, the primary tool. The first tool you get in Legend of Zelda: Breath of the Wild slash Tears of the Kingdom, so.

Sally: Um, so Perrin is also an idiot, apparently. He has never chopped down a tree in his farmboy life.

Emily: Yeah, he's like, "I'm a blacksmith, not a tree chopper, whatever the fuck that is."

Sally: Um –



Emily: "I've only ever used a hammer as a tool. No other tools exist."

Sally: Axes.

Emily: "They're illegal."

Sally: Shovels. Saws. I'm running out of tools.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: What do I have? Pickaxe.

Emily: Screwdriver.

Sally: Screwdriver. Those were invented, right?

Emily: Probably.

Sally: I'm trying to think of what's in my Stardew Valley backpack.

Emily: Oh.

Sally: "Sword" is in my Stardew Valley backpack. That could be a tool, I guess. Um, lever, pulley. Um –

Emily: Yeah, simple machines, even. So, yeah, Perrin –

Sally: Perrin's just on his whole bullshit about – Hopper's like, "Okay, you have to run around with me," and Perrin's like, "No, I can't do any wolf stuff because when I do wolf stuff, I wolf out."

Emily: "I go crazy." And Hopper's like, "I am but a psychopomp in your mind –"

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: "Who, um, is a wolf, so why you're asking me to teach you non-wolf shit makes not a lot of sense but okay."

Sally: Whatever.

Emily: He's like – and Perrin's like – (mumbling growls) Um, Faile, meanwhile, is, like, trying to wait for Perrin to go to sleep so she can go do girl shit. Goat girl shit.

Sally: (laugh) Goat girl summer.

Emily: (laugh) Goat girl summer. And they keep having these, like, dumb little vignette conversations –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Perrin's like, "I didn't sleep with Berelain," and Faile's like, "I know that," and he's like, "But do you believe – why do you – why do you smell jealous about it?" and she's like, "'Cause it kind of pisses me off that everyone's saying that you slept with Berelain –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “And it makes me jealous that people think that you slept – like –”

Sally: Yeah, which is –

Emily: “It’s a totally normal thing for me not to feel a-okay even though I know –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “You didn’t sleep with Berelain.” And he’s like, “Okay. By the way, it’s totally cool – it’s totally fine with me if you slept with that guy,” and she’s like, “What?”

Sally: Yeah, what he says is, “I don’t care about whatever happened to you,” I think.

Emily: Yeah, again, we are – it’s unclear if Perrin is thinking of an assault situation or of a consensual but –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, what’s that word? Consensual but, uh, a different type of coercion there.

Sally: Oh, yeah. Yeah.

Emily: Um, or a totally consensual thing. It’s unclear what Perrin’s thinking of, and by sort of not being clear about it, he’s just sort of leaving that whole umbrella open for us.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Faile’s like, “You’re saying it would be okay for me to sleep with that guy but not okay for you to sleep with Berelain?” And I – me and Perrin are like, “Yes? Because those are two very different situations.”

Sally: Yeah, he was like, “You were like a prisoner.”

Emily: “And I was patently not, soooo.”

Sally: “Sooo –”

Emily: “Yeah, actually.”

Sally: “Like, the rules of engagement are a little different.”

Emily: She’s like, “How dare you?” But she’s like, “We didn’t – nothing happened – that didn’t happen.” And he’s like, “Okay.” I can’t remember what else – what other dumb shit they talk about.

Sally: Whatever. They’re just back to being the most annoying couple award. That’s not true. Mat and Tuon are the most annoying couple now. But.

Emily: Faile also, just to – just so that we know, is like, “Don’t worry, we’ve been having crazy sex.” And I’m like, “Literally did not ask.” (laugh)

Sally: Great. Congratulations.

Emily: Okay. Whatever.

Sally: I'm so glad that you guys have a fulfilling sex life.

Emily: Anyway, Perrin finally falls asleep, so then Faile leaves to go meet up with Lacile, Arrela, and Alliandre. And for like a second, I was like, oh, this is a lovely – I thought Maighdin would show up, you know?

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: And I thought it would just be like, "Hey, we went through this sort of, like, terrible thing together. Let's meet and, like, have a fire and sort of have a little group therapy moment," and you know what, readers? My hopes were bashed against the – the rocks – the cruel rocks because that's not what happened. Someone went and foraged in the dead bodies to find little mementos of the people that they slept with or had perilous relationships with in Malden –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And they're like, "We're having a little sort of, like, funeral moment for them, to be like, 'You know what? It was really complicated, but it happened, and we mourn for them.'" And I'm like, that even isn't, I guess, that bad, if it was handled more sensitively. It makes sense for them to be like, "This was an incredibly complicated situation that we had incredibly complicated feelings about –"

Sally: Yeah. Hundred percent.

Emily: Um, "And that's something we need to process, ideally together."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But of course in the hands of these authors, it comes out pretty bad.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It ends up just kind of adding fuel to the "Faile and Rolan were sort of a – an ongoing will they/won't they" even though he's dead.

Sally: Yeah. What Faile says is along the lines of, like, "Rolan was a good guy because though he was doing all the things he was doing for me because he ultimately expected something from me, he never demanded anything from me. He was never forceful. He never assaulted me." Which is, like, okay, that's not the, like, black and white binary that we apparently think it is; like, the line of good doesn't go all the way up to rape and then it just becomes black. You know?

Emily: Yeah, exactly.

Sally: Like, that's not how this works. For him to be up in your business, flirting with you, touching you, groping you, saying suggestive things to you without your consent –

Emily: Was also bad.

Sally: Was also bad. Um, and as we've pointed out, Faile didn't really have any other option in that situation but to respond positively. So she's like, "He was a good guy." She also says that she is sad that he died because he was ultimately a good guy, and I'm like – again, it's totally fair for you to be like, "It's sad that he died." I get that. But this whole, like, insistence that he was a good guy makes me homicidal.

Emily: Yeah, it's one thing to be like, "Boy, am I haunted by the role that I had in his death."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, because this incredibly insane thing happened, you know –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: With the whole – this, like, comedy of errors of Perrin running up and Faile shouting at the wrong moment –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Rolan getting axed through his head.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or, rather, hammered through his head. And it's even worse for Lacile over here, who was actively sleeping with her guy –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And also outright murdered him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? Which, like, good for her, but also –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Would lead to some incredibly complicated feelings.

Sally: Yeah, how could it not?

Emily: Like, that's such a fraught situation. Um, but yeah, unfortunately, our takeaway isn't, "This was an incredibly fraught situation; there are no easy answers; this wasn't black and white, and that's something everyone has to live with." Instead, what we're left with is, "Well, it's over, but, you know what?" (laugh) "Don't cry because it's over; smile because it happened."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Rolan was such a good guy while he was alive. RIP, my dude.

Sally: Yeah, it, um – Faile says at one point, she’s like, “I think Rolan loved me,” which is just, like, Faile is not that naive.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Rolan – I – maybe I’m being unkind, but I don’t think a loving relationship is what he was looking for? You know?

Emily: Yeah, and if that was – Robert Jordan’s depiction was meant to portray actual love, then there’s some things we need to address with Robert Jordan in a court of law, because –

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Jesus Christ.

Sally: Yeah, they also – again, this is a bit repetitive – but they continue to draw this line between these, like, Brotherless Aiel and the Shaido Aiel – again, as if it’s like, they were like, “These guys were honorable.”

Emily: Yeah, because the Shaido were outright drunkenly assaulting women, whereas the Brotherless Aiel were just sort of lingering around the women, protecting them from outright assault but then sort of being like, “So I guess you need to sleep with me, right?”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: “Because I protected you, sooo.”

Sally: Yeah, it’s this very much, like, um – what is the word I am looking for? Transactional relationship that they had with these women that, again, I think it is totally fair to have, like, left this only a couple days ago and maybe not have the clearest head about it, but knowing the Wheel of Time, I truly believe this will be, like, the last form of resolution any of these women have about this plot unless they happen to, like, think about it in passing. Totally fine for them to have, like, confusing feelings and to be, you know, like, lost in their grief, whatever. But also, like, these are all grown women who exist in the world and have been dealing with men their entire lives. I don’t know. It just reads really strange to me. Like, I – generally women, in my experience as a woman, have different feelings about men who treat them this way than the way Robert Jordan and Brandon Sanderson are presenting it, so.

Emily: Yeah. Agreed. But don’t worry; happy Pride month: one of these complicated transactional relationships –

Sally: Oh, you’re right.

Emily: Was an implied lesbian relationship.

Sally: You’re right, you’re right.

Emily: So the gays just keep on winning.

Sally: It’s so true. Wow. Good job, gay people.

Emily: I know. Fly that flag. I'm –

Sally: There was a Pride flag waving above the Shaido camp. (laugh)

Emily: I'm so glad – oh, yeah. Thank you to our lord and savior Brandon Sanderson for all the LGBTQ rep.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Love it.

Sally: He's like, "Remember the lesbians? Who, uh, had a coercive relationship and then one of them died?"

Emily: Ooh, so twee.

Sally: Good job, girls. Go, girls.

Emily: So charming.

Sally: Whatever.

Emily: Women can't do anything. (laugh)

Sally: Women can't do – women can't even have coercive relationships and murder each other anymore.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Okay, so then there's a last paragraph or two that's like Perrin being like, "Oh, Faile's pissing," or whatever – (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "Meanwhile, I'll lie here and make a to-do list of my problems," and then he's like: Problem number one: Um, learn to control the wolf inside of him. Problem number two: Change his entire relationship to himself and make decisions better. Problem number three: Let Faile have agency.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I'm like, Brandon. This is ambitious, and I mean that truly. These are all things Perrin has been struggling with for twelve books, and you're like, "Besties, I will resolve these things in the next two books; you have my word on it."

Sally: Yeah. Okay.

Emily: I'm like, if you can do it, man, I might forgive you for the "women are like goats" thing. Probably not, but you know, it's a step in the right direction.

Sally: Step in the right direction. What if the first EHR T-shirts we made were “To-do list: Number one: Learn to control the wolf inside of me.” (laugh)

Emily: “Number two: Make decisions.” (laugh)

Sally: “Number three: Let women have agency.” (laugh) What do you guys think? We could do one of those graphics where it’s the, like, wolves T-shirts, you know?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: On the background, but it’s, like, very lightly superimposed to –

Emily: Control the wolf inside you. Let women have agency. These two things are so related, you don’t even know.

Sally: Yeah, one of the wolves is a lesbian, though, so happy Pride month.

Emily: So yeah, fine. Everything’s fine.

Sally: Everything’s fine.

Emily: There are gay women. Okay, so that was the worst things my eyeballs ever read.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But here we are; we finished.

Sally: And Emily’s read War and Peace, so.

Emily: That’s true.

Sally: You know she means it.

Emily: War and Peace was pretty rough. Um – (clears throat) I would certainly not rank it as bad as Wheel of Time, though. So, everyone, thanks for listening. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song; thanks to our patrons on Patreon –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And our followers on social media.

Sally: Yeah, it’s good to be back with you guys. Back in the – the thunder dome.

Emily: Yeah, everyone should be back on track as of this week –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: So just keep an eye on our Patreon, whatnot, for things getting released.

Sally: For all that hot Howl’s Moving Castle content.

Emily: Yeah. Fuck yeah. Um, do you have a sign-off?

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Sorry I already used my dad clipping his fingernails.

Sally: No, that one was pretty good. There were lots of funny moments from our trip, so I'm sure we'll be pulling on those for a while. Um, we were also in Istanbul for a couple of days, and – (laugh) I'm such an embarrassing person. Um, around Istanbul, there were these birds that I didn't recognize. So do you guys know what I did? Because I'm 72 years old? I pulled out my bird identification app and was, like, doing my little – you have to do, like, a little bird profile. So it can tell you what bird it is. And we were waiting for the bus, and I was doing my little bird profile, and then it didn't tell me what bird it was, and I got really sad, so then I got on the internet and was Googling the bird description and just put "Istanbul" after it, so it was like, "bird Istanbul." But I did figure out what it was. I would just like to say that I'm an embarrassing person to be in the world with.

Emily: I just was like, "What you doing?" and she was like, "I'm on my bird identification app," and I was like, "Your what?"

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: "That's a thing?" (laugh)

Sally: "Are you literally 45?"

Emily: It honestly was fine, though, because at least she was not adding to the general chaos of my family at that time. It was a really, really chaotic day.

Sally: (laugh) It was.

Emily: Sally was just puttering through her bird identification, looking very peaceful about it, so. I was like, "Whatever, that's one down."

Sally: "She's happy."

Emily: "She's happy."

Sally: "Now for the rest of them."

Emily: "Now for ME." Alright, everyone. Have a good week!

Sally: Bye!