



Episode 251: You'll Never Guess What Was at the Mattress Supply Store

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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: [sing-song] Hey-ey!

SALLY: Hiiiiii!

EMILY: Hiii!

SALLY: Um, okay. Hello. Hello [something hits the microphone, causing a little feedback], welcome to our podcast. Hello.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Hello! Hello!

EMILY: It's Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: I'm Sally Goodger.

EMILY: I don't think we even got through our full introduction last week. We were so irate.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] About everything that had happened.

SALLY: It was pretty rough. Um, this slope, like, it continues to go downward, but the incline, the, like, grade of the incline has lessened just a little bit this week.

EMILY: Yeah, I was, I was reading these chapters thinking, “Have I been totally, like, brainwashed or worn down somehow that I think this is pretty acceptable.”

SALLY: Yeah, I was like, “This is pretty mild.”

EMILY: I just was like, “Okay, yeah. That’s fine.”

SALLY: Like, it makes me really mad and it’s really disgusting, but I was like, “Eh.”

EMILY: Yeah, my, like, one main beef is that Rand does a war crime in this little section, but I found the Nynaeve sort of...miniature mystery segment –

SALLY: Yeah, that was fun.

EMILY: To be inoffensive and overall, um, uh, nice. Um, this may be a controversial statement, but I don’t think Brandon has done any major wrongs to Nynaeve’s character. I actually think he may have improved [laughs] in some ways.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: I found her to be a much more empathetic narrator.

SALLY: Yeah. Me too.

EMILY: Um, which is fitting because Nynaeve is a very, like, helping others-oriented person. She’s a healer.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Um, so it was a little ridiculous that in most books she’s just, like, a super judgmental asshole, including to the people she’s healing.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, and, like, in this one she’s still kind of rude to people’s faces, but she’s much more empathetic behind the scenes.

SALLY: Yeah, it’s interesting to watch the duality, like, she accepts and, like, tells us repeatedly she’s, like, playing the role of the Aes Sedai, you know?

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: She’s like, “I’m definitely leaning into it.” And I’m like, “We love a self-aware Poirot.”

EMILY: Yeah. For sure, for sure. So, that's inoffensive. We find out where Graendal is, or at least – yeah, yeah. We do. Because this thirteen-year-old victim [laughs].

SALLY: This thirteen-year-old victim of fucking brainwashing.

EMILY: Yeah, has revealed it to us. But, like, the Rand bit is bad. And then we get a Mat segment that is, again, just, like, a not Mat character, but.

SALLY: *Oh.*

EMILY: Other than that, fine.

SALLY: [laughing] I was like, “Who is this bitch?”

EMILY: “Who is this?”

SALLY: I do not know her at all.

EMILY: I don't know her either.

SALLY: I don't know her.

EMILY: This is a man who would be the dungeon master of a D&D campaign, and I firmly believe that Mat would show up to session one and then never again.

SALLY: Yeah, suddenly Brennan Lee Mulligan is here.

EMILY: [laughing] Yeah.

SALLY: Whipping out six-page backstories for [laughing] a completely irrelevant side character. [laughing] Like, are you joking?

EMILY: [laughs] Oh, sorry just imagining Mat as Brennan Lee Mulligan really got me. Really good at improv [laughs]. Good at silly voices.

SALLY: Good at silly voices. Good at monologues!

EMILY: An ally.

SALLY: An ally! Would never marry a fascist!

EMILY: [laughing] Married to Isabel Roland.

SALLY: The love of my life.

EMILY: The funniest woman alive.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: You guys we got, um, the Dropout streaming service, so highly recommend that. But now we're really into the whole college humor lore of it all.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, that's where we're coming from.

SALLY: Emily watches all their D&D stuff, which seems really fun, and I get the benefit of knowing about it without watching actual play, which is hard for me. But I do want to, like, know the story.

EMILY: Yeah, if you're like, "Mm, Critical Role is four hours a week of content. That seems really overwhelming." Give Dimension 20 a shot, because it's also a lot funner with, like, non-high fantasy settings.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: All of the people who are on it are extremely funny. They do guest DMs. The main cast is not all white.

SALLY: Yeah! And they're currently doing a campaign where all the players are famous drag queens.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Which is, like, really exciting. One, just, like, as a concept [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Dungeons and Drag Queens.

EMILY: A) so good.

SALLY: And, like, two an ex –

EMILY: Two, Brennan Lee Mulligan finally got a new shirt [laughs].

SALLY: You think Izzy's just in his closet like, "This is all the same plaid shirt."

EMILY: I thin Izzy does not give a fuck. I think Izzy's like, "Whatever. Wear your same six shirts." [laughs]

SALLY: Um, so one, just, like, a super fun and exciting concept. All the drag queens are, um, drag queens who kind of rose to fame through the *RuPaul's Drag Race* sort of sector. So, they're all just very funny, charismatic, well-known. So, one great concept. Two just, like, very strong political statement given the current state of affairs in our country regarding queer rights and the attacks on drag queens in particular. So, way to go Dropout TV. It's an extremely cheap streaming service that provides a lot of good content and, I don't know, like gives a shit about people.

EMILY: Yeah. And Dungeons and Drag Queens, all of the drag queens are – have never played D&D before.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Or if they have, it was, like, you know, a session in middle school.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: I'm hearing it's all – I haven't watched it yet, but I'm hearing it's also, like, a master class in how to DM for new players and get them engaged in – on their level.

SALLY: Sure. Brennan is a delight. Every – I don't watch it. I don't watch Dimension 20, but every clip I, like, see on TikTok, I'm like, "This is the funniest DM and the best DM in the universe."

EMILY: He is one of the funniest people alive, especially when it comes to DMs.

BOTH: Okay.

EMILY: Yeah, so that's, like, the good content that we're engaging with these days, but here we are still back in [laughs].

SALLY: Here we are still reading this, the longest book in the fucking universe.

EMILY: I know. At least we're over the hill.

SALLY: That's true. Because my death is incoming surely. Um, it's so long. Not only in terms of, like, actual page count, but the amount of suffering I go through every time I have to read this book makes life feel a hundred times longer.

EMILY: Yeah. For sure. For sure. For sure.

SALLY: So anyway, we open with Nynaeve, who is watching a cool thing, which is a ghost funeral [laughs].

EMILY: A ghost parade! Or something.

SALLY: [laughs] A ghost parade. With Cadsuane and Merise and Corele.

EMILY: Yeah, just some of the Aes Sedai. Apparently this is a phenomenon that's been happening in Arad Doman for a little while.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Is just this nightly ghost funeral.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, everyone has kind of just, like, gone up to a vantage point to observe it.

SALLY: Yeah, they're just, like, glowing ghosts carrying a coffin around the city.

EMILY: Yeah, and it's, like, Corele and Merise are just sort of, like, complaining about what a dick Rand is.

SALLY: Valid.

EMILY: Which is valid and Nynaeve is just kind of like, "Yeah, agreed, but there's really no use complaining about it at this point. Like, you guys aren't being productive at all."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And kind of has this weird moment of eye contact with Cadsuane where it seems like they're on the same page about this.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But also Nynaeve is like, "I fucking – I mcfucking hate Cadsuane." And I'm like, "You're so valid, Nynaeve."

SALLY: Yeah, she's really correct for that.

EMILY: Yeah, because Cadsuane *sucks*.

SALLY: Cadsuane sucks [sighs]. God, she's the worst.

EMILY: Um, as is usual in these Brandon Sanderson segments, um, there's very little mystery involved in terms of like Nynaeve, what she's thinking about and what her primary concerns are. Right now she's mulling over the problem of how to, like, be a good advisor to Rand when he is so hellbent on not trusting anyone.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And being a mega-dick. She's kind of like, "Well, the only person who's been at least moderately successful was Moiraine and as far as I know that was only because Moiraine, at the end of her life, was, like, licking his boots."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which was a major bummer. And Nynaeve's like, "I'm not going to do that, so I don't really know, but maybe I can do something that will help him and get me in his good graces." Um, as she's, like, leaving she's like – she sees – there's just, like, people on the streets. As we said last week, Arad Doman, full of poor sluts.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] So, Nynaeve passes some and hears a child coughing very Dickensian [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: She's like, [British accent] "Oh bother." Goes over to assist the child, is all, like, annoyed at the child's parents. She's like, "You have Aes Sedai in the city who you could be sending to for healing." And I'm like, "I mean, there's a lot of reasons they might not have gone to the Aes Sedai for healing. One, you're all assholes."

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: B) apparently some of you just can't heal, like, that has been a plot point several times.

SALLY: Yeah, also if you are, um, a refugee living in poverty wouldn't it be frightening to go ask somebody who might ask you to pay them?

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Like, that was my first thing, like, "They probably didn't ask because they assumed they would demand payment of some sort. So why would they put the child through that hike up the hill or whatever."

EMILY: Yeah, there are a lot of reasons why people in vulnerable positions do not seek out healthcare and it's mostly because the healthcare is not good or –

SALLY: Yeah, or like –

EMILY: The system is going to be bad for them in some way. Like, in a modern day, a refugee family might be worried about being separated from their child.

SALLY: Yeah, or if they are undocumented, suddenly the police and ICE get involved. Like, it's sort of a, not to, like, linger on this, because I don't think it's – Brandon was intending to be like, "Look at Nynaeve, what a good healer," but it's just got this sort of attitude of like why don't the

poor people help themselves. It's very Aviendha at the beginning of the book being like, "Refugees are stupid."

EMILY: Yeah, Nynaeve at the end is like, "Fucking next time just tell people that they should bring their sick to the, to where we're at. You know, be less ass –" [laughs] Be better!

SALLY: [laughs] Be less ass.

EMILY: Be less ass!

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Be! Less! Ass! Gonna chant that at my local sports team.

SALLY: Yeah. [laughing] True, Utah sports teams are pretty bad.

EMILY: Um, but, like, in the background of Nynaeve's mind, she is, like, pretty sympathetic to these people. So it's, like, a weird sort of um, uh, contrast that is going on here. Like, Nynaeve looks at this mother and is like, "God, it's clear she hasn't been sleeping lately. Like, I understand why this father is being protective and antsy over his child." You know, like, it's just a weird setup.

SALLY: Yeah, instead of saying any of those things out loud, she's just sort of rude.

EMILY: I guess I just – I feel like in a Robert Jordan Nynaeve chapter, um, Nynaeve would not be having any of the more charitable thoughts. She would just be thinking and acting out the rude stuff.

SALLY: You're right.

EMILY: It's at least nice to know that she is not an asshole on the inside [laughs].

SALLY: That's true! That her internal world is compassionate.

EMILY: [laughing] Is compassionate and kind to people.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Yeah. Rough. Anyway, she goes back to, like, the manor house and she doesn't tell us her plan, really, so we're left to sort of follow her along in this little mystery. But she gathers up some off duty soldiers and then asks the, like, um, what's that called? The, like, main housekeeper of this place where Rand is staying. Like, "What do you – can you take me to where these dungeons are that the messenger who was sent from the king would have died in? I want to go investigate them for myself." So, they go to this. Nynaeve enters it with a couple of soldiers. They find the jailor and his two, like, associates. This is also, like, the shop is in a chandler's shop, a candle making business.



SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Nynaeve notes that this is all, this is of course a front. And one of the Saladaean soldiers remarks that likely the main jailor and his two adult guys don't do any of the work. Instead, there's this kind of, like, thirteen-year-old teen boy apprentice who's probably doing all of the work. Um, they're taken down to the dungeons. Nynaeve sees the very inhumane conditions under which people are being imprisoned. In this case, it is just the, like, Domani woman whose house Rand is staying in, who sentenced her to this because the other guy died. Um, Nynaeve interrogates the jailor and is like, basically like, "Did you kill him?" They're like, "No, that was – that would be stupid. He was a very valuable prisoner and also we have to be good at keeping people alive, because that's our job."

SALLY: Yikes.

EMILY: And they're like, "Great." Nynaeve kind of happens to notice that, um, the woman who's currently in prison – sorry I can't remember her name and I don't care.

SALLY: Me either.

EMILY: Um, is sick. And realized that she is being, or has been, poisoned. She manages to save her life and they put together that the person who prepares the food is actually this apprentice, who's not necessarily involved with the, uh, underground dungeon business so much. Um, but he tries to run, and they catch him.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: In the next chapter, we're with Rand. Nynaeve brings – wakes up Rand and is like, "Here's this child that –"

SALLY: Killed the messenger.

EMILY: Yeah, killed the messenger and is also seeking to kill, you know, this woman, this Arad Domani politician. Um, and Rand is like, "Oh, well, he must be one of Graendal's people and likely he's under a whole lot of compulsion. Um, so take the compulsion off and maybe he'll be able to tell us, like, something about Graendal." Um, he tells Nynaeve how to take the compulsion off, which is just, like – apparently, he can't do it because he's not as skilled or something.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And it's just, like, an arduous process or whatever, so Nynaeve has to do it. Um, and when she is done the boy, like, basically keels over dead.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, Nynaeve compares him to being in, like, a vegetative state, compared to, like, uh, uh, patient that she had dealt with in the past, who'd, like, suffered a traumatic head injury and had, like, um, a traumatic brain injury and was no longer –

SALLY: Yeah, like, fully cognitive.

EMILY: Yeah, had lost her cognitive abilities. And so this boy is – [laughs] and Rand's just like, "Oh, no worries." And Nynaeve's like – [pause] – Rand's like, "This is just what happens when you take the compulsion off, because, like, the compulsion is so entrenched in his brain that it's already done a tremendous amount of damage, so taking it off just leaves the damage." And Nynaeve's like, "Were you – so you just didn't tell me that? Like, that this would kill this boy." And Rand's like, "Yeah, like, not really my – not – I don't care."

SALLY: Yeah, but, like, right before the boy dies Rand's, like, yelling at him, first of all. So, calm down.

EMILY: Rand's like, "Tell me where Graendal is!" And this boy, like, manages to say a name of a place.

SALLY: Of a place. Um.

EMILY: Before dying. Tragically.

SALLY: Yeah, um, so it's, like, like we were saying. It's somehow, like, less fucked up than other things that have happened, but it's also still just, like, incredibly disturbing. Um, both we're getting into the realm, getting further into the realm of compulsion, which we've sort of danced around a little bit, but Graendal, as we're building towards her being our big bad in this situation, you know, that's like her whole thing. So, we're getting more into that realm and it's really freaky. Both just as concept, but now we're learning just how much damage it does to a person's brain, which is extremely upsetting. So, it's just a really disturbing scene. And Rand's, um, manipulating Nynaeve is really upsetting. She's supposed – like, he says later in the chapter, she's one of the people he trusts the most and he's still treating her so badly. So, obviously not great in terms of Rand's mental state, but it's also, like, there's so much happening that everyone wants to pin on Rand's mental state. They're like, "Rand is not himself" and they're not really – I feel like our main Aes Sedai figures are not really giving a lot of, um, weight to the fact that Rand is still making conscious decisions. Like, nobody really wants to hold him accountable to the decisions that he's making, they only want to talk about the fact that he's obviously sort of gone off a deep end of some sort and they need to course correct that rather than being, like, "Hey, pal. You can't just, like, murder children for information."

EMILY: Yeah, it's really, like, infantilizing in a way.

SALLY: Yeah! Yeah, that's a good point.

EMILY: The way that they're like, "This mentally ill person, um, is just so mentally ill at this point, in our opinion, that his decisions, as bad and as harmful as they are, we can't even really, like, lay at his feet."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: They're only concerned about his decision to [deep voice] make himself harder. And they're like, "That's all of – that's what leading to all of this." And Nynaeve is just like, "Rand, that, you know, if that is your mentality than this will end with you dead."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And Rand is like, "Yeah, bestie."

SALLY: He's like, "I know."

EMILY: I would like to end up dead, because clearly there's no other – he's like, "There's no other way, and it's just stupid for me to have any sort of hope for the future."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And blah blah blah blah blah. And it's like, "Okay, bestie. Like, that's the depression talking, that's the trauma talking. There is obviously value in having hope for the future, even in a position as awful as yours. Blah blah blah blah blah." But, of course, Rand does not want to hear that. So, yeah, instead of it being, like, this sort of like, "Okay, this man has made a conscious decision to, um, behave in a certain way, perhaps, to, like, alleviate some of the pressure he is under. Or perhaps in an effort to, you know, make his life easier to deal with. Trauma isn't as hard to deal with if you are, in Rand's opinion, being, making yourself immune to it."

SALLY: Yeah, it's, like, a deeply dissociative state that he's operating in. Just, like, completely disconnected from his own life.

EMILY: Yeah, but you are still responsible for the things that you do as a coping mechanism.

SALLY: Yeah! No, absolutely. I agree. I didn't, uh, say that to try and be like – no! I just want to clarify what I'm saying. The dissociation that people have from their lives or this sort of, like, stepping back from the everyday events happening around them, is one hundred percent a coping mechanism and, like, yes, you are still responsible for – Tybalt. [sighs] You are still responsible for what happens, the decisions that you make.

EMILY: You are still responsible for Tybalt [laughs].

SALLY: You are still responsible for Tybalt and the crimes that he is currently committing. Um, look at him [laughing] trying to squeeze through – he looks like Pooh Bear, stuck in a hole.

EMILY: Tybalt's clawing open the closet in this room in an effort – let's not have sliding closet doors in [laughing] our next apartment.

SALLY: Yeah, that should be on the top of the [laughing] priority list.

EMILY: [groans]

SALLY: Um – ooh!

EMILY: There he goes.

SALLY: Anyway, yes, Rand is still responsible for the decisions that he's making. And, like, it's really alarming to me, like, I understand from a narrative perspective, like, we've talked about in the past. Like, this series has never really taken into account the experience of the common folk or really, like, what it is like for Rand – as the common folk, for the Dragon Reborn to be their leader. It's only ever about what it's like for the Dragon Reborn to be in power. Like, nobody ever, we don't really get an on the ground point of view from Arad Doman, for instance.

EMILY: Yeah, the poor sluts.

SALLY: Yeah, from one of the poor sluts.

EMILY: The [laughing] Dickensian children running around.

SALLY: Yeah, the fucking Artful Dodger out here, with fucking bronchitis or whatever. We never get that and the narrative is not concerned with that, so, like, it doesn't – it's not, like, out of line with the narrative to not focus on the fact that Rand is becoming a miserable tyrant.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Like, nobody – like, the people whose point of view we get, they're not really impacted, except for Cadsuane, but, like, that was deserved [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: So, um, so it makes sense to me from, like, this narrative's perspective, why nobody is focusing on the fact that Rand has become this horrible tyrant. Um, but it's, like, frustrating to read about, that nobody is concerned that, like, this person who is literally in charge of, at this point, probably over half the continent simply cannot be bothered to have a single ounce of empathy.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Like nobody's –

EMILY: Or have any sort of discussion about ethics.

SALLY: Yeah! Or be willing to be held accountable for his actions.

EMILY: Yeah, like, this is tyrannical behavior and everyone is just like, “It’s because poor uwu Rand is having such a rough time and is just becoming this awful person as – because it’s easier for him to become an awful person.” Yeah! It’s always easier to be an awful person.

SALLY: Yep!

EMILY: That’s [laughing].

SALLY: That’s kind of the point.

EMILY: That’s the point!

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: It’s hard to be good. Okay? We all get that, but it’s just every – Nynaev’s out here judging people for not bringing their sickly children to receive questionable medical care, but is like, “I will make every excuse possible for Rand.”

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So, yeah, it’s just difficult, because as much as Rand is mentally ill, he is not, um, experiencing any sort of, uh, psychotic break from reality.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: He is still very much in charge of his own thoughts and actions and therefore is both legally and ethically very much accountable for what he’s doing.

SALLY: Yeah, totally, and even in an experience – I would say, I have very minimal experience in this, because one of the housing programs that I work with serves, um, a population with serious mental illness. Like, those consequences are not always ideal, but even folks who are having extreme breaks from reality [pause], like, there has to be – like, consequence is an intense word because they’re not responsible for what’s going on, but there typically is some sort of intervention.

EMILY: Yes.

SALLY: That happens so those folks stop hurting themselves and hurting others. So, they stop presenting as a danger.

EMILY: Right.

SALLY: You know, again, often that is, like, way too militant, but that is a whole other conversation, so, like, this sort of, like, dancing around doing any type of intervention, any type of talk with Rand, because he's just, ah dang! Feeling really down and out these days, is just like absurd.

EMILY: Yeah, what we're meant to understand from all of this is that lots of people are trying to intervene by starting to have these conversations with Rand, but an intervention cannot be successful unless there are any sort of consequences.

SALLY: Yeah! Absolutely.

EMILY: And what's – the pattern that we're seeing is that Cadsuane, Nynaeve, Min, whoever, comes up to Rand, says, "What you're doing is a problem." Rand says, "No, it's not." And they say, "Agree to disagree."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And continue on their day. It's not like Min says, "If you don't stop doing this, I will leave."

SALLY: Mm-hm.

EMILY: It's not like Nynaeve says, "If you don't stop doing this, I will leave."

SALLY: Yeah. Um, it's also very interesting that, um, it falls on all the *women* in Rand's life.

EMILY: Yeah, what a shocker.

SALLY: To try and intervene, um.

EMILY: Well, because the men just get it. All of the Asha'man are like, "I understand because I burden under – I labor under the same immense manly burden."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Lan is like, "*I get it.*"

SALLY: I just have a hard time believing that Davram Bashere would stand for this, you know?

EMILY: Yeah, in my version of Davram Bashere.

SALLY: Yeah, he's taking his army and getting the fuck out of here.

EMILY: Honestly, Davram Bashere is king of staying in his lane in a way [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, that's true.

EMILY: He's just like –

SALLY: He's stayed too far in his lane. He's just like, "Eh."

EMILY: He's just like, "Okay." Yeah, to be fair, Rhuarc and Davram Bashere have also, like, brought up their qualms. Um, but there's an interesting sort of, like, Bashere and Rhuarc are both in a military hierarchy under Rand.

SALLY: Mm-hmm. Good point.

EMILY: And so, there are, like, more palpable consequences for them if they misstep.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: As opposed to the Aes Sedai, who are there basically as a formality.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And especially people like Min and Nynaeve who are like –

SALLY: We're kind of here because we love you.

EMILY: Yeah. We're here because of our personal connections to you. It's a, it's again, this series would have been so much interesting – so much more interesting, to me anyway, if some of our main characters had been able to stick around and interact more.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Because of what happens with Rand at the end of this book, spoiler alert he basically becomes enlightened and it's like, "Tee hee, now he's good again." And everything's fixed and solved. We never have to see Perrin and Mat dealing with this extreme side of Rand.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They sort of got tastes of it at it's, like, beginning, over in books five and six, um, but we don't have to see them, how they would interact with this.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Probably, based on Robert Jordan, not well.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But, like, in a world where there are consequences for – and interventions, it would have been interesting to see, like, Perrin and Mat be like, “We will take our immense followings that you rely on for military power and also leave.”

SALLY: Yeah! And leave! You know, like –

EMILY: We’ll try and fix this on our own and you can show up in the Last Battle or not.

SALLY: Yeah, that would have been extremely interesting. And it’s just like – and I gotta say, you guys, this sort of uwu attitude, not holding Rand accountable to his actions, is pretty common amongst the fans as well.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Um, so, I don’t – and I think in part that’s because that’s how the narrative presents him. Rand is only a figure of tragic suffering, he never seems to be a figure of decision making, which is silly to me because all he does all day long is make decisions.

EMILY: Bad ones, mostly [laughs].

SALLY: Bad ones. So, it’s just, like, the narrative puts him in this really confusing space where nobody – he’s just everyone’s most special boy – wants to hold Rand accountable for his actions and, like, it’s not like Rand every gets his version of the Nuremberg trials, you know?

EMILY: Yeah, because what happens at the end of this book, Rand gets to effectively wipe the slate clean. Everyone is so relieved when Rand 2.0 comes out of this and is like, “I’m enlightened, I’m perfect, I’m wise, I’m lovely, I’m absolutely Jesus.”

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Everyone is just like, “Oh my god. It’s such a relief that he’s not being an asshole anymore that they’re not like, “So, are we going to talk about the bad stuff you did?”

SALLY: Yeah! Like, I [laughs]. As we’ve talked about, these books follow, um, over the course of the fourteen books, the cycle of the Hero’s Journey. We see micro Hero’s Journeys and then we’re seeing sort of a macro Hero’s Journey with Rand. An important part of the Hero’s Journey is what’s called apotheosis.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Or this sort of like – apotheosis means “god making” in Greek – so the sort of elevation of the hero, who often starts as an everyday man, into being somebody who is above the people. You know, who – it often comes in the form of some type of enlightenment. There’ll be crucifixion imagery, you know, all this sort of stuff.

EMILY: [snorts] Sorry, just remembered Jenny Nicholson’s Easter play [laughs].



SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: YouTube video.

SALLY: Um, so there'll be this sort of, like, again, this sort of god making. The idea that this is suddenly someone very different than the everyday –

EMILY: Yeah, it's Luke Skywalker coming back in *Return of the Jedi*.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Fully as a Jedi.

SALLY: Yeah, fully realized – there's also, that's another part of it. Fully realized as the hero that they need to be. And that's what we're playing with at the end of this book when Rand's like, "I've gone through my abyss, this sort of, like, extremely dark mental state, and I'm coming out of it fully realized as the Dragon Reborn I need to be [laughs] in order to win the Last Battle." And it's just, like, so hard for me because, like, [laughs] part of what makes figures like, um, Jesus and the Buddha, which we're often playing with in this sort of apotheosis imagery, um, compelling is that they did not commit atrocities [laughing] before their enlightenment or crucifixion.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: [laughing] So.

EMILY: It's not like Jesus shot a bunch of orphans and then was like, "Daddy!"

SALLY: Be like, "Oh, I, I'm better now."

EMILY: I'm better!

SALLY: And like –

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Yeah, it leads you to some really interesting thought problems. Like, in a world where new gods are created, should the gods not be held accountable for their mortal actions?

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Like, someone write that book, you know? Like, that's interesting.

SALLY: Ooh. That's interesting. But –

EMILY: But, yeah, here it's just, like, "Oh, Rand's perfect now, so it's no big deal."

SALLY: Yeah, and, like, to draw on *Star Wars* as an example, because *Star Wars* relies so heavily on the Hero's Journey. It's like –

EMILY: George Lucas was *on* Joseph Campbell's dick.

SALLY: Yeah, he was like, "Oh, I've got notes upon notes!" But it's, like, you compare the arcs of the two main characters in each trilogy. Luke Skywalker [pause] lovely, weird little guy.

EMILY: Just a twink [laughs].

SALLY: No atrocities.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughing] Just a twink who committed zero atrocities.

EMILY: Yep. Has done nothing wrong in his perfect life.

SALLY: Um, and then of course you're playing with Anakin Skywalker, his father. Oh my god [laughing] spoiler if you didn't know that.

EMILY: [fake scream, laughs]

SALLY: His father who, like, a huge part of that arc –

EMILY: [laughing] Sorry, wait, wait, wait. I just can't get over someone who in 2023 [laughs] hasn't heard the news.

SALLY: Is like, "WHAT?" [laughing]

EMILY: Who starts off with *The Phantom Menace*, of course.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Because why wouldn't you?

SALLY: Why wouldn't you start –

EMILY: It's the first movie, right? [laughs]

SALLY: Why wouldn't you start at number one? [laughing] Um, but, um, um, for all the flaws that the first three movies, episodes one through three of *Star Wars*, have, the arc that Anakin takes from literally being space Jesus.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Literally being immaculately conceived by the Force or whatever is going on there. Going through this arc where he is, like, obviously supposed to be destined to be this great hero. Anakin of course commits all these crazy atrocities –

EMILY: Including killing orphans!

SALLY: Including shooting orphans! And then wanting to be like, "I was correct," and then there's everyone who's like, "No, like you do not, you no longer get to occupy this role as hero. Because you have behaved so far out of what is expected."

EMILY: Yeah. They're just like, "Well, you failed. You're the bad guy now."

SALLY: Yeah! And Anakin's like, "This is unbelievable."

EMILY: Yeah, and, like, Anakin does go through a sort of, like, Dark Hero's Journey where he apotheosizes as Darth Vader.

SALLY: Yeah. Sure, totally. Sort of like – Dark Hero's Journey is perfect.

EMILY: We even have, like, that sort of crucifixion imagery of him getting raised up in his new cyborg body. And yeah, it just, like, you either go one or the other way. You're either a hero or a vill – you either live long enough. Blah, blah, blah, blah.

SALLY: Yeah, dark night – night is a very dark time for all of us or whatever.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] But I think Anakin is a very interesting, like, case study for a lot of reasons. This way he does sort of have this anti-Hero's Journey, which is where Rand almost seems to be heading, where you, like, become Lucifer rather than – you become fallen, rather than being raised up the way that Jesus was. Um, but, you know, Anakin and Darth Vader get held to very interesting consequences narratively. Um –

EMILY: Yeah, like, An – Dark Vader has a redemption arc at the end. And that's the point, I think, we're trying to make. You don't have to become a villain just because you had this sort of, like, dark arc.

SALLY: Sure!

EMILY: The abyss was particularly dark. Um, but that does mean that you have to inhabit the, the – you then have to go on a new Hero's Journey, which is then the redemption part of that, because there still has to be consequences.

SALLY: Yeah, like, yeah. That's exactly it. In this book it seems like enlightenment and redemption are being intermingled.

EMILY: Yeah, for sure.

SALLY: The very fact that Rand becomes enlightened becomes enlightened means that he is redeemed. And it's, like, redemption is not a single act that you can sort of achieve by yourself the way that you can achieve by yourself the way that you can with enlightenment. Like, in – redemption is a process where you have to, like, you know try – be accountable for your actions and try and do better for your community to try and erase some of the harm that you have done.

EMILY: Yeah, redemption is hard work, which I think we as millennials, thanks to *Avatar: The Last Airbender* and Prince Zuko fully understand.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Um, but, like, Robert Jordan's generation was still sort of hung up on the concept of when someone is redeemed then that's just, like, a one and done action. Either they die tragically redeeming themselves or, um, they experience enlightenment or whatever. And it's just, like, it's never – narratively that is very easy.

SALLY: Sure!

EMILY: You know? It's nice to have these massive moments of narrative catharsis, but, like, it's not realistic and no one really buys it.

SALLY: Sure, it's, like, nice in the moment, you know? That's, literally, what catharsis is. You're supposed to feel good in the moment, but would I ever hold the story of Rand al'Thor's enlightenment slash redemption up against the, like, perfect narrative structure of Prince Zuko's arc?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Like, one of them makes more sense and is more satisfying ultimately. One of them, like, fully leans into a, like, an embodiment of like redemptive justice and...not necessarily always being punitive and carceral around characters. That's, like, a whole – that's one of the main themes of *Avatar: The Last Airbender*, you know? Anyway, drawing on lots of different media here. *Star Wars*, The Bible [laughs], *Avatar: The Last Airbender*.

EMILY: [laughs] All the hits.

SALLY: All the greatest hits. Um, just to say that, like, this is, it's so frustrating and disappointing to me. If Perrin gets put on trial for killing two random dudes at the beginning of the series, why doesn't Rand get put on trial for all the horrific things he's done. Dumai's Wells alone.

EMILY: Yeah! For sure. I mean yeah – we're jumping the gun a little bit here.

SALLY: Yeah, sorry.

EMILY: No, it's totally fine that this is coming up. It's just, like, to say, we're going to talk much more in length about Rand's enlightenment when we get there, and we still have yet to hit the major war crimes that Rand does. What's happening here is basically some unethical medical care. Um –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: The equivalent of operating while drunk, you know? This surgeon does not have the full information because it has been withheld from her. That's bad! Um, so, more of that to come. This has lead us to – this has left us with precisely three minutes to talk about Mat's entire –

SALLY: Oh, sorry.

EMILY: No, I love it. Because, what is there to say? About Mat's chapter? [laughs]

SALLY: It starts and like I don't – speaking of abysses that continue to go lower and lower, I don't know how Brandon continues to just hit foul ball after foul ball after foul ball with Mat.

EMILY: It's the clownification of Mat Cauthon.

SALLY: I know! He's like –

EMILY: It's so offensive!

SALLY: He's created this insanely – he's arrived at the town where allegedly the person who has the sketch of him is. He's created this unnecessarily complicated plan of attack, because he's really freaked out after Hinderstap, which is totally fine.

EMILY: That's the reason we're given, but I don't believe Mat would be freaked out.

SALLY: Yeah! I also don't believe that Mat would ever, like, dedicate this much of his key general-esque figures into something this ridiculous.

EMILY: Yeah. It's just silly.

SALLY: Um, he has also concocted elaborate backstories for each of them, which is supposed to be a point of humor for him. He has this sort of witty back and forth with Talmanes and another

guy and he's, like, literally written – *written*, which [laughs] flag that as part of the 'is Mat Cauthon illiterate' inconsistencies of this series – written these, like, ridiculous backstories and everyone is like, "What?" Whatever. It's so silly.

EMILY: All of which is to lead to, um, Verin just shows up. And is like, "Hi! It's me. I A) have Traveling, so let's make a deal."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: The only other thing that happens in this chapter is that Mat checks in on Aludra, who is still hard at work making her cannons, called dragons. This I do find to be somewhat interesting, partly because we're talking about the logistics of creating the dragons, which I continue to find to be –

SALLY: Yeah, really fascinating.

EMILY: A fascinating process. Like, the sheer amount of resources that Aludra is requiring. Um, I also think it is interesting that she and Mat have kind of an awkward moment of acknowledging the fact that they were...we still don't quite know the extent of their sexual relationship, but they certainly had some form of relationship before Tuon suddenly got involved.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I don't think it's handled great, but I like to see that the narrative at least attempted to acknowledge it. And be like, "Yeah, this would be super weird to be in Aludra's position. And be, like, the guy she was kind of making out with, kind of her fuck buddy, is suddenly going through this whole narrative romance right in front of her and has not spoken to her in several books because of it."

SALLY: Yeah, and it's also this romance is with the leader of the people who committed genocide against your entire...

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Family community.

EMILY: Awkward.

SALLY: And Mat's just like, "It's really awkward because, like, we used to kiss and, like, Tuon made it really awkward." [laughing] And he's not even acknowledging the, um, massacre of the Illuminators. So, good job, Mat!

EMILY: Ongoing Mat –

SALLY: Ex-boyfriend of the year.

EMILY: [laughs] So yeah. Some interesting things. I, of course, am thrilled to see Verin again. Verin holds a very interesting role in this book, this narrative.

SALLY: [whispers] I'm obsessed with her.

EMILY: Um, this series, honestly. She's very cool.

SALLY: Yeah, she's very fun. Speaking of compulsion.

EMILY: Yeah, whoo. Lobotomy tent.

SALLY: Lobotomy tent is always haunting us.

EMILY: So, it's nice to see her again, but otherwise a completely useless – a complete waste space of –

SALLY: Page space!

EMILY: It's not funny enough to justify it being a comic relief scene.

SALLY: It's so stupid! Like, Mat doesn't care about backstories. Mat's lied – Mat's flown by the seat of his pants his entire life.

EMILY: Yeah, Mat's never planned a thing in his life besides a battle.

SALLY: Mat is...ugh. Whatever. I, I have no more words. The cats are doing some sort of crimes to each other.

EMILY: Shenanigans. So, next on the docket, as Rand also alludes to when he's talking to Nynaeve, is the meeting with the Seanchan. Uh, um, with Tuon. Then after that Rand is like, "I will turn my attention to Graendal." But first we have to get through this meeting with Tuon. Spoiler, it will go badly. Um, both for us the readers and for pretty much everyone involved.

SALLY: Like, how badly. If you could put it on the Richter Scale of earthquakes.

EMILY: I don't know. Are we – there are very few physical consequences. We're not going to end up with any more arms lost.

SALLY: Okay.

EMILY: Um, but morally pretty reprehensible. Um, and then I think we get one more Mat point of view. Um, as he sort of has this negotiation with Verin, and then largely the rest of the book is going to be switching between Rand's arc and Egwene's arc.

SALLY: Okay.

EMILY: So, we have – we're running low on the side character side plots.

SALLY: Okay. Alright.

EMILY: That's what's on the docket.

SALLY: Alright. Well, I accept. I mean, I've got no other option, but I accept.

EMILY: [laughs] We signed on to this podcast. No one's holding us to it except us.

SALLY: No one's got a gun against my head.

EMILY: But we're completionists.

SALLY: The ghost of Robert Jordan does haunt me sometimes.

EMILY: [sighs] I will – I haunt the ghost of Robert Jordan.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: That's what I choose.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Um, so that's what's next. There will be a week's delay in that, because Sally's having a little vacation.

SALLY: Yeah, I'm having a little vacation so you'll get this episode, no episode next week, also the transcript for this episode is going to be delayed. It's my week to do the transcript, but I will be out of town for most of that week. So, I'll get it to you as soon as I can.

EMILY: Yeah, no stress.

SALLY: Um, but I will be on the beach. Um.

EMILY: Enjoying the beach. Which is great. Everyone deserves a beach trip.

SALLY: I love sitting on the beach.

EMILY: Yeah, read some books that aren't *Wheel of Time*, et cetera.

SALLY: Yeah, so that's kind of logistics stuff.

EMILY: The schedule of Patreon stuff will be coming out as usual. No, um, delays or ruptures there.



SALLY: Yeah, exciting news from the *We Don't Watch Outlander* verse. We are discussing the very popular series, *The Murderbot Diaries* by Martha Wells, so if that interests you, perhaps consider checking out our Patreon.

EMILY: Yeah. Tee hee. But thank you –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] For listening.

SALLY: Tee hee!

EMILY: Tee hee! Thanks to Glynn Mackenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our Patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Do you have anything to add?

SALLY: No.

EMILY: Or a sign off?

SALLY: [laughing] I do have a sign off.

EMILY: Oh great.

SALLY: Okay, I work remotely, but I had to go into the office on Monday morning. This past Monday and while I was going there, we're also, again, going on the previously mentioned vacation, which requires a lot of, like, logistic coordination, just to, like, get the whole family to the lake with everything that we need. So, I called my mom on my commute to just be like, "What do you need me to do? Like, what do I have to pick up?" Duh, duh, duh, duh. So, she's, like, running through this list of logistics while I'm driving. It's also 8:15 in the morning. I'm not a morning person. I did not feel well, so I fully acknowledge the possibility that this was a hallucination [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: But as I was driving, there was one of those, like, road signs that typically says, you know, like, 'left lane closed ahead. "

EMILY: Uh-huh.

SALLY: There was two screens that was flashing back and forth between. The first one that I saw was 'at the mattress supply.' So, I was like, "Oh, maybe there's a wreck or something."

EMILY: What?

SALLY: And I was like, “But there isn’t, like, a mattress store near us, so this is kind of weird.” [laughing] And then it flashes to the next screen. You guys, I know this sounds insane, but it said – [laughing, sniffs, laughs again]. It said, “Cock and ball torture.” And then [laughing] it flashed to the other screen “at the mattress supply.” So, again, [laughing] I fully acknowledge that maybe it was a hallucination, but it also – I tried so desperately to get a picture of it, but I was driving. Um, but –

EMILY: *Where was this?*

SALLY: [laughing] This was right by the Shane Company on State Street. There was just this sign, [laughing] that said, “Cock and ball torture at the mattress supply.”

EMILY: Given a million years, I never would have guessed that that was what was at the mattress supply.

SALLY: Yeah, so, I don’t know if had been, like, hacked or it was some sort or prank. Or if it was a very strange hallucination that I had.

EMILY: It has to have been some sort of prank, but oh my god.

SALLY: So, I’m sorry it took me so long to get through that.

EMILY: No, it was incredible.

SALLY: But that’s what happened to me on Monday morning. And I was on the phone with my mom like [pause].

EMILY: I have to go.

SALLY: *What?*

EMILY: [laughing] Excuse me I have to go to the mattress store.

SALLY: I have to go to the mattress supply store for very personal reasons [laughs].

EMILY: [laughing] See what’s going on.

SALLY: I have to investigate.

EMILY: Where’s the mattress supply?!

SALLY: I truly – I was like, “I don’t not know what store they’re talking about. There’s not mattress store near us at all.”

EMILY: Wow.

SALLY: So, anyway.

EMILY: Okay. I have to process that, but.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Thanks everyone for listening.

SALLY: laughing]

EMILY: Goodbye?