



Episode 258: Callandor Turns Into a Gun, Actually

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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: Hello.

Sally: Hello.

Emily: Hellur.

Sally: Hellur.

Emily: At the moment, we are a family of people who can only use their right arms. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Embarrassing. Sally's left is in a sling for joint issues –?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I just had shots yesterday, and it hurt.

Sally: Yeah, Emily – yeah. Is it hurtin'?

Emily: Yeah, a little.

Sally: Ouch, ooph-y?

Emily: Yeah, just sort of achy, generally.

Sally: Yeah, those – those – especially when you get that double, um, booster and flu shot combo, it's like, oh, you wanted a lead bullet in your arm? And it's like, no.

Emily: Yeah. Yeah, every time I do it, I'm like, I'll book this for the same day because I don't want to do it twice –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: But then afterward, I'm like, why do I – why?

Sally: Why do I do this?

Emily: Ahhh! It hurt.

Sally: It hurt.

Emily: Hurting is not an excuse to not get your flu shot and Covid booster, though.

Sally: That's true.

Emily: So.

Sally: I'm going to try and get mine next week.

Emily: That's my soap box. It's flu season, everyone. So go get your shots.

Sally: It's flu season, and despite what particularly the American government would want you to believe, Covid numbers have not fallen from previous years.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Um.

Emily: It's Covid season too, more or less.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Covid does seem to spike in the winters.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Correct?

Sally: Yeah, I think – I think it generally trends with the flu, is my understanding. But I'm not an epidemiologist, so.

Emily: Wear your masks and whatnot.

Sally: Wear your masks, get your shots. Um, yeah.

Emily: And don't kill your dad.

Sally: Okay.

Emily: Like Rand al'Thor.

Sally: Oh, yeah. Boo. Ugh.

Emily: (laugh) Don't worry, he didn't kill his dad.

Sally: This is such a lame set of chapters.

Emily: Yeah, so this is Everybody Hates Rand –

(muffled cracking noise)

Sally: (whisper) Sorry.

Emily: Your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau, and neck-cracky McGee over there is – (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Sorry. I have to do the other side. (pause) Oh, that one didn't crack. Yeah, this is me, I'm Sally.

Emily: My easiest way to upset my friend Devin is to roll my shoulder in the socket –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: 'Cause it makes a really upsetting noise that he describes as “meaty” – (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which I think is more upsetting than the noise itself.

Sally: Yeah, he was also like, “It has a lot of bass,” and I was like, what?

Emily: I don't know what to tell you.

Sally: It is, like, a deeper sound than, like, you typically hear with joint pops, but.

Emily: It's just that shoulder.

Sally: Yeah, it's just –

Emily: And it doesn't hurt or anything; that's just the noise it makes.

Sally: Yeah, sure.

Emily: These things happen. So, yeah, these are – this is the second-to-last section of the Gathering Storm. Um, Rand chapter, followed by a Min chapter, both pretty short.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So we might not be here long. (laugh) Um, and we get the long-awaited meeting between Rand and Papa?

Sally: Papa?

Emily: Um, as Cadsuane successfully lures Tam back to, uh, Tear to talk to Rand, very quickly, it would seem, because it seems like Rand – Rand's like, “I don't go back to my rooms right way,” and I'm like, from where? The meeting with the Borderlanders?

Sally: Yeah, and it – yeah. And then he's, like, walking around for an indeterminate amount of time.

Emily: Yeah, a few hours, max.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, since the – the Stone of Tear is big, and it's nighttime when he gets back.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But, like, that means someone Traveled – successfully found Perrin, Traveled to Perrin, talked to Tam, and brought him back, all within a few hours.

Sally: Three and a half hours, maybe?

Emily: Which, granted, we've been saying not enough people are using Traveling, but it does sort of emphasize how poorly this was, uh, planned out.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Yeah. Um, this is the first time Rand's seen his dad since book one, right?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Wow.

Emily: Yeah, the only person who's had – the only, like, main character who's had any interactions with Tam, um, since book one is Perrin.

Sally: Hmm.

Emily: Although I think Mat in book three finds out that both Tam and his dad had gone to the White Tower, looking for the boys.

Sally: Oh, yeah, to try and see the boys.

Emily: Um, to no avail. Um, and, uh, I mean, first, Rand does literally walk around the Stone of Tear for multiple hours, doing God knows what, just sort of looming at people.

Sally: Just sort of looming and kind of, like, having one of his recently introduced Brandon Sanderson monologues about his feelings.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: He's like, "I've felt kind of bad about almost throwing bombs at the Borderlanders. Hmm."

Emily: He's like, "There's this –" (laugh) He's like, "There's this little voice inside me that's being, like, 'Mm, maybe not, bud.'"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "But it's not Lews Therin. And I've never heard of little voices in anyone else's head ever before."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: This is a man who needs to read Pinocchio or something. He's just –

Sally: Yeah. Jiminy Cricket is –

Emily: Buddy, yeah, that's your moral compass, which has been sadly lacking, I'll admit. Like, it has not been pulling its weight.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Presumably Lews Therin put it in a box. Pfft. Triggered.

Sally: Um, Rand – the other, like, main thread of Rand's rumination is about Callandor. Of course, he is back in the Stone, where he notoriously pulled the sword from the Stone.

Emily: Mm-hmm. Classic.

Sally: Fulfilling the first of his major Dragon Reborn prophecies, which is like, the Stone won't fall until the Dragon Reborn removes Callandor or whatever. And he's, like, really thinking about the prophecies for the first time in what feels like a while. Um, and –

Emily: He's like, "Why would I even – why am I even supposed to pull the – why am I even supposed to get Callandor in this one prophecy –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "When it doesn't seem like any of the prophecies mentioned that I actually have to have it in the Last Battle?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Then smash-cut to Min, who reads us a phrase that's literally about Callandor being at the Last Battle.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's, like, very, very transparently –

Sally: Yeah, Brandon is really trying to set that up. Um.

Emily: Um. But yeah, Rand is like, "The prophecies are just another type of box."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "They constrain me; I'm not allowed to – I don't have any freedom. I can't leave any of this behind. I'm doomed to die." So it's all just, like, a very, um – the – you know, the stuff that he has been struggling with, though less explicitly, for the last fourteen books, about the weight of being the Chosen One –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: And what it means to be a Chosen One with all these prophecies about them. Specifically all these prophecies that are like, “Doesn’t seem – doesn’t look good for our hero.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, I – I think it’s fairly obvious that, like, you know, there – there are levels of meta-narrative going on here. We know that Rand’s probably not going to die because he’s the main character, and that typically doesn’t happen in fantasy books. There’s a chance, of course, that –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: That trope will be broken, but it would be very disheartening and fatalistic in a way if Rand just –

Sally: Beefed it. (laugh)

Emily: Actually beefed it the way he expected to. Like, that would be super wild.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, like, as readers, we’re pretty familiar with the concept that, like, even if there’s a prophecy saying that all seems lost, likely things will turn out alright at the end.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: Um, and Rand, on a certain level, um, is also operating from a meta-standpoint in that he is familiar with the sort of concept of being the Chosen One because he is – he has a predecessor in that position.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: Um, and of course he’s also got all these prophecies about him. Just, the Wheel of Time is a very, like, narrative-focused narrative –

Sally: Mm-hmm, sure.

Emily: In that way, with our Heroes of the Horn and these sort of stories built into the overall story. Um, so with those things on the backburner, it can be kind of fairly obvious to us that Rand is having, like – a negative attitude sounds, uh, sounds very condescending, but he literally has an attitude that is quite negative about what is going on. He is – he is pessimistic; he is fatalistic about all of this; um, and as Tam points out as soon as they sit down to talk, Tam is like, “You can spin this and have – you know, you can think about this more positively; you can still empower yourself, even feeling unempowered,” blah blah blah blah.

Sally: Yeah, Tam introduces to Rand the really groundbreaking concept that, like, you have agency over your own intentions. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And, like, about your own attitude and the way that – your outlook in general; like, you can play a – sometimes things are bleak, sure, but, like, you can make the conscious choice to be

like, um, living within your values even when situations are bad. And Rand is like, “Mm, no.” Um, but before we dive into that whole thing, I just want to point out that it is, like, such a weird thing to me, specifically – I don’t know if I really have any narrative point to this – where Rand is talking so much about, like, um – I don’t yet have a narrative point to it ‘cause I have not read the whole series. But Rand’s whole thing is he’s like, “I don’t know why the prophecies mention Callandor when the Choedan Kal are way more powerful.” (laugh) And he’s like, “Why would anyone mention this loser sword?”

Emily: “This lame-ass sword –”

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: “That’s flawed because it requires me to trust not one but two women.”

Sally: “Two women,” yeah.

Emily: “I don’t even know one woman I trust.” You know? Like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That’s the absolute maximum of trustworthy women in the globe.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: According to Rand al’Thor. Yeah, Rand is like, “Well, the Choedan Kal were also made in the Age of Legends –”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: “And so clearly they should be part of it.” You know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I’m like, now we’re getting a little too, like, meta-narrative.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who wrote the prophecies? Where do the prophecies come from? We don’t really talk about that. Isn’t it possible that the person who wrote the prophecies, A, didn’t know about the Choedan Kal –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: B, was actually being prophetic and was like, “Yeah, the Choedan Kal aren’t part of it.”

Sally: “They just, they aren’t part of it.” It’s possible for things to exist that don’t relate directly to the prophecies of the Dragon Reborn, you know?

Emily: Yeah, and Rand seems to be like, “Well, the Choedan Kal are obviously important to me because I used them to cleanse saidin,” and I’m like, I don’t think we’ve had any prophecies about the cleansing of saidin –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Actually. Like, that was just a thing you did.

Sally: Mm-hmm. A good thing.

Emily: Yeah, an excellent thing.

Sally: A net positive, yeah.

Emily: Um, a really – yeah, a really positive thing, but – the – we come back to the sort of problem of, like, we the readers have not seen the prophecies in their –

Sally: Entirety.

Emily: Entirety, and therefore the authors behind the scenes can sort of make up whatever they want about them –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And just sort of hand-wave that aside. Yeah, Callandor – we're, like, getting heavy hints in these two chapters that Callandor is important somehow. Um, and Rand is resistant to that idea because it requires him to trust two women and also because the Choedan Kal are way more powerful.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's like, "If I'm gonna kill the Dark One, why not just use this access key that can let me nuke towns," or whatever.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And then we get Min who is reading about the Choedan Kal being present in the Last Battle, um, and talking to Cadsuane about it and them just basically being like, "Yeah, it's weird that it's in the prophecies, not for the reasons Rand thinks it is, but just, like, what will he do with it?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "What – what's gonna happen?" Blah blah blah blah blah. Um, and yeah, Callandor will come up in the next couple books, I guess, but so far it's just sort of, like, heavy foreshadowing –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: On the authors' part that Callandor will come back and be important despite being introduced in book three and then –

Sally: Then left –

Emily: Sort of disappearing.

Sally: Literally left in the exact same Stone we pulled it from for five books, before Rand –



Emily: Until Narishma –

Sally: Almost kills Narishma trying to retrieve it. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, till Narishma almost died.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And then Rand almost killed everyone –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Wielding it, and now where is it? I dunno.

Sally: Cadsuane has it.

Emily: Oh – why does Cadsuane have it?

Sally: Rand, like, gave it to her for safe-keeping along with the male a'dam.

Emily: Oh, yeah, that does make sense. But he's like, "I sure hope Cadsuane hasn't fucked up and lost that too," and I'm like, you exiled her without, like, cleaning out her desk first?

Sally: Yeah, without being like, "Hey, could I get that sword back?"

Emily: "Hey, I still – I need my big magic items back."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Dur.

Sally: So I don't really know what he's doing. (laugh)

Emily: I mean, I guess he just thinks, like – he just thinks so dismissively of Callandor. Um.

Sally: Yeah, he's like, "It doesn't really matter if I have the big sword because I have my nuclear codes."

Emily: "I have my bigger sword."

Sally: Yeah. "In my little pocket, I carry around my nukes."

Emily: He even goes to the room where Callandor was kept, and now there are just, like, guards standing around this empty room, and Rand's like, "You guys can leave. There's nothing here, literally."

Sally: Empty chairs at empty tables. (laugh)

Emily: And the guys are like – (gasp) "But we've been fulfilling this symbolic –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Weird duty for the past –” If I was one of those guys, I’d be like, “Huh. You couldn’t have, like, sent a memo that we could stop guarding the room after Callandor was gone, six books ago? Huh?”

Sally: Yeah. Freaking so dumb.

Emily: I’d be like, “Buddy, I’ve been on the night shift.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Christ.

Sally: “I haven’t seen my kids in six months.”

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: “All because you couldn’t send a telegram?”

Emily: “All because you couldn’t send a raven?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Or whatever the hell?”

Sally: So I guess don’t lose track of the sword in your mental inventory of the Wheel of Time. It is currently with Cadsuane, which is also, like, I’m sure that will be a fun turn of events.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: It always is when Cadsuane’s involved. Case in point.

Emily: Case in point: Tam is in Rand’s room when Rand gets back. It is so awkward.

Sally: Like, painful.

Emily: Like, they don’t hug or anything. Rand’s just like, “... Hi.” And Tam’s like, “... Heeey.”

Sally: So weird.

Emily: He’s like, “Why don’t you sit down?” and Tam’s like, “Yeah, okay.” Rand’s like, “Where – how’d you get here?” Well – I don’t even think he asks that. He’s like, “Where’ve you been?” and Tam’s like, “Oh, well, you know, you’re the Dragon Reborn; it’s pretty easy to find you. And I’ve been with Perrin.” And Rand’s like, “Hmm. I don’t like that Perrin has been using the Two Rivers guys,” and I’m like, Rand, you don’t really have a leg to stand on –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: About people using other people’s armies. Like, shut up.

Sally: Yeah, and if anything, Perrin has more right to the Two Rivers armies than you have to any of your armies.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: He's from the Two Rivers.

Emily: He's from the Two Rivers. He, like, actually fought with them to liberate the Two Rivers.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He can get their loyalty.

Sally: Unlike you.

Emily: Unlike you, who's just like, "Um, Ituralde? Go somewhere else. Go elsewhere."

Sally: Good decision, Rand.

Emily: (sigh)

Sally: Rand's in the mirror, like, "Good job."

Emily: Yeah. Um. I'm trying to remember what happens in this conversation. Um, Rand kind of is like, "Well –" He, like, puts on his little king hat and is like, "I commend you for raising me pretty well and because if you had told me that I was adopted and that had been well-known, then I might have been assassinated as a baby, so good job on your decisions. Here's a medal of honor."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Tam's like, "Okay. My Lord."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Rand's so annoying.

Emily: And Rand's like, "I do not understand why Tam is joking about this."

Sally: Yeah, like, there's a moment where Tam, like, calls him "son," you know –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: He's like, "here's this, son," and he's like, "Ah, maybe I shouldn't call you that," and Rand has – (laugh) This is such a dumb scene. Rand is like, "I should tell him that he's the only father – he is my father; he raised me, and he loves me and I love him," and he's like, "But I can't do that; I'm not allowed to have a dad. Bleh bleh bleh." (laugh)

Emily: It's the most, like, classic man angst scene we've ever seen – this is an – pretty accurate portrayal of trying to have a meaningful conversation with one's father.

Sally: Yeah, probably true.

Emily: Like, these two men can't just be like, "Hey, you know what? It sucks. Regardless of the, like, bigger consequences –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “It sucks that you didn’t know you were adopted.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “I am sorry I didn’t tell you.” Like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “But I still feel like your father; I raised you,” and for Rand to be like, “You’re right. It did suck, and I’ve had to go through a lot, and I’m sad you haven’t been there for me, but I still –” you know, like –

Sally: Yeah, like, “I love you too. We’re two flawed people who still love each other.”

Emily: Yeah, they cannot physically hug; they cannot verbally hug. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: They just can’t have any sort of honest communication, which, um, again, is, like, a pretty accurate rendition of most people’s –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Relationships with their parents.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: But also it’s like, Rand and Tam had a pretty, like, healthy, open communication style when they –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, in the few – the few scenes we had of them together, it was clear that they loved each other and were affectionate of each other; respected each other. So it’s just like, you know, it’s sad.

Sally: Yeah, it’s sad. Um, yeah, it sucks.

Emily: The whole scene, to me, feels very rushed.

Sally: Yeah, I agree.

Emily: Which is quite funny considering that this is such a long book series and normally we’re complaining about how much time it takes. But, like, this is all happening on the same day that Rand met with the Borderlanders. Tam is here so fast, and they have a conversation that lasts three pages, I think?

Sally: Yeah, something like that.

Emily: Three and a half or four pages. And it just, like, goes to hell immediately.

Sally: Yeah, um, of course Tam mentions – Tam is talking to him and is like, “You’re not doing well psychologically, and –”

Emily: Yeah, Rand’s like, “I’m depressed,” and Tam’s like, “Yeah. Gosh, I wish someone would’ve come and got me sooner,” and Rand’s like, “You mean you didn’t come here of your own free will?” Which, like, yeah, I would be upset about that too.

Sally: Yeah, I’d be – I’d be pretty pissed about that too.

Emily: If it was like, oh, you needed some random woman to come tell you, “Hey, your son needs you.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, just show up for your son, Tam.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, but anyway, Tam’s like, “Yeah, like, these – Nynaeve come and got me. This Cadsuane was telling me that everything is bad with you,” and Rand’s like – (Batman voice) “Cadsuane.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “She’s behind this! I hate her!” and Tam’s like, “Chill out.” But it’s like, yeah, it is bad. Cadsuane gave you, like, a script to use, Tam.

Sally: Yeah, and he gets, like, taken to the cleaners in the next chapter ‘cause all the Aes Sedai are like, “If you’d just done what we told you.”

Emily: And he’s like, “I don’t think that would’ve worked.”

Sally: He’s like, “I also don’t need a script to speak to my own son.”

Emily: Yeah, what’s –

Sally: “He’s my son.”

Emily: What’s mind-boggling is that Tam wasn’t, from the jump, like, “I don’t need your fucking script.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “I’ll just go talk to him.”

Sally: Yeah. “He’s my kid.”

Emily: Yeah, “What are you – what the fuck?”

Sally: Yeah, what is wrong with you?

Emily: Especially because, like, Tam – you know, it might’ve been book one Tam, but Tam has now had plenty of interactions in his line of work with the Two Rivers folks, like, talking to Aes Sedai and people in power, so.

Sally: Yeah, it’s also just, like, very disappointing – um, the whole way that Tam goes about this is really disappointing. I know we’ve joked that Tam has only had a few failings as a father, but, like, this is another one to put on the – the docket. To not go in there, just to, like – I can understand being afraid of your own – like, being intimidated by the interaction, but there is something just, like, so upsetting about the idea that he is, like, legitimately afraid of his own son.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Instead of going in there and, like, giving Rand the benefit of the doubt.

Emily: Yeah, I think the problem is that – or, one of the problems – is that we have only had – you know, this relationship between the two of them has been so one-sided from our point of view, because we’ve only ever had Rand’s –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Thoughts and feelings about it. The few times that it’s come up with Tam in that, like, Perrin will mention something, Tam is just kind of like, “Well. What are you gonna do? Sometimes your son is the – is Jesus.” Like –

Sally: “That sucks.”

Emily: “I don’t know what to tell you.” So it’s like, yeah, to us, Tam has seemed very, like, dismissive –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Almost, about Rand, and, um, we don’t have a lot of evidence to show that he, um, is even still interested in a relationship with Rand.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So then being in Rand’s point of view here, like, it all does feel very inauthentic –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Tam being here, and sort of the added layer of the Aes Sedai talking him through it is weird.

Sally: Yeah, you’re right.

Emily: And I don’t think that’s what the point – that’s not what the intention of the scene was. Like, I think the authors intended, uh, because of the way that they framed it, intended to just be like, “Yeah, Tam is also human.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and, you know, is allowed to have weird feelings about his sort of estranged son who is now a world leader; like, that would be incredibly weird.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: Um, but instead it just comes off as like, Tam's kind of being an asshole.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And really insensitive. So yeah, not a great – not a great one for Tam al'Thor.

Sally: Yeah, it's just like, I – I feel like we've been leading up – I mean, we've obviously been leading up to this scene through the entire book, where it's like, Rand will have a chat with his dad and that will put him on the path to enlightenment or whatever. And I, like, genuinely thought it would come from some, like, lovely fatherly advice from Tam, who's been presented as, again, like, having a very good relationship with his son at the beginning of the book and being, like, a confidante and a mentor and, like, a real present parent. So him coming in and, like, reminding Rand about his humanity from, like, an authentic human connection rather than Rand having to be reminded of his own humanity when he almost murders his father in cold blood.

Emily: Yeah, it's, like, needlessly dramatic.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I think. Yeah, it would've been so much more touching and, I think, authentic, if we just had Tam come in here and be like, yes, this is what Rand needed.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Was to have a conversation with someone who knew him as a child –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Tam is, like, a well of fatherly wisdom –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As evidenced by this conversation he kind of starts to have with Rand about, like, agency and –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Your own mental health and attitudes. Um, but instead we have to, like, make it a big deal –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Where Rand, um, almost kills Tam and then is like, “Ah, now I have to go murder all the Seanchan,” and that leads to Rand's enlightenment, um, sequence, in the next – the last few chapters of this book, which, I think, unfortunately, seem to all come, like, internally from Rand himself –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Rather than Rand responding in a positive way to external stimuli. It's Rand just being like, "I have reached a breaking point, and now, through my strength of will and humanity, I will just, like, decide to be a better person."

Sally: Sure.

Emily: "Blah blah blah blah blah, I'm enlightened." Um, and there's definitely, like, a religious aspect of that. It really leans into Rand as our Jesus figure, our Buddha figure –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, where all – wherein these enlightened religious, um, leaders, figures have seemed to just sort of, like, come out of the wilderness, suddenly perfect.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But those figures also had, like, interactions with divinity –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That led them to becoming enlightened.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So having Rand just be like, "Well, I am myself divine," is just sort of unpleasant.

Sally: Yeah, it's not like – I dunno, yeah, it's just unsatisfying. Like, people are, one, allowed to get help, you know? Like, Dragon Reborn, Jesus, Buddha figure is allowed to, like, seek help from his parent. You know? That should be something that he is allowed to do. And also just, like, yeah, it's not – like, nothing up to this point – like, if it was going to be an entirely internal journey, Rand has not earned that because his first indicator that he is feeling any sort of way about his decisions thus far is a tiny little voice in his heart in this chapter, and then within three chapters from that, he is, quote unquote, enlightened.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, that's not something he has earned. Um, again he doesn't seem to get the redemption either on the front end of his enlightenment or in the back half of his enlightenment, where he has to, like, earn back his reputation. It's just very cheap; the whole thing feels very cheap to me.

Emily: Yeah, it's a very steep, like, narrative arc in terms of, like, we've hit rock bottom in the last few chapters or so –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And then we skyrocket –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Up to the top. There's not any sort of, like, growth arc. It's just a vertical line.



Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which, um, is sort of satisfying in the, like, short term of a narrative –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: When things just take an about-face in a more positive way because that, uh, gives your leaders, like, relief –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Of suddenly things are not going to be as bad.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, but in the long term, it doesn't hold up quite as well –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because everyone is conscious of the fact that people don't really work that way.

Sally: Absolutely.

Emily: And it's weird and alienating if, you know, demigods like Rand work that way.

Sally: Yeah, like –

Emily: And I – to be fair, Rand is weird and alienating in the next two books. He does kind of take on more of a demigod role, but we'll get into that in those books.

Sally: Um. Okay. Sure. Excited to talk about that; excited to see what, like, enlightenment Rand – enlightenment, exclamation point, Rand – looks like, I guess. Um.

Emily: I just think it would've been so great if Rand went to therapy.

Sally: Yeah, or even just, like, had a moment of, like, emotional catharsis. Like, there's really something to be said, if you have a positive relationship with either of your parents or any sort of, like, familial figure in your life who is older than you, when you are, like, genuinely upset to be in that space, where you're allowed to just, like, cry?

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Like, if Rand just had a scene with Tam where he was just, like, crying, I would've been like, "Hoo. Nice."

Emily: Yeah, cathartic, also.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Boy, that would've been great.

Sally: Like, it's nice for him to, like, experience an emotion, to feel an emotion and remember that he is a human being.

Emily: There's a really great fanfiction in Good Omens where Crowley just goes to therapy.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: It's, like, long. And very rewarding. (laugh)

Sally: Sure.

Emily: And you're just like, yes.

Sally: That's lovely.

Emily: This is great.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Why is – why doesn't every fanfiction do this?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just have the character go to therapy.

Sally: Does he have a nice therapist?

Emily: Yeah, he has a lovely therapist. I mean, she's kind of like a mean 30-something, but that fits for him.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: Um, so yeah, I just think Rand – I think therapy should exist in Wheely Time world, A –

Sally: Yeah, absolutely.

Emily: And B, Rand should go to it. So, Rand, after realizing that this was all a big set-up by Cadsuane and the Aes Sedai machinations, is like, "I will almost nuke Tam," and is like, "Oh, God, Tam look terrified," as one would if you were about to be balefired, and is like, "I must go," and he Travels away, like, "I'm gonna go murder all the Seanchan with the Choedan Kal." And, like, genocide is never okay, you guys. But it's difficult in this position to be like, "Yeah, maybe you should just murder the – all the Seanchan."

Sally: I know. It's presented as, like, I – (laugh)

Emily: It's presented as, like, the ultimate evil –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is Rand just going genocidal on an entire group of people, but the problem is that these are the group of people who are perpetrating genocide.

Sally: Yeah. And, like, actively waging war – and, again, genocide is not the answer, obviously. I – duh. But this idea that everyone is like, "God, Rand is gonna go obliterate the Seanchan," it's like, but – what? I just, like – it's such weird framing. It's just this sort of –

Emily: I think the problem is they're acting like it's a crazy thing to do.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: When in reality it is a very rational, though, um, morally bankrupt, thing to do.

Sally: Yeah, that's a good way to put it.

Emily: He has a problem, which are the Seanchan. The Seanchan are not backing down, so yeah, murdering them would solve the problem.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: It would be insane if he was like, "I've had this bad interaction with Tam, so now I'm going to go murder Perrin."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who has nothing to do with it, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, we then smash over to Min, who is in this room full of Aes Sedai. She's just reading and being like, "The only thing I can do for Rand now is study." She's reading this line about the Karatheon Cycle that's like, "He'll wield a sword of light, and the three shall become one." Very, you know, holy trinity –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Very – sword of light equals Callandor, obviously.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And she's like, "All of the – all of the, um, commentaries on this segment of the prophecies are like, 'Yeah, this is obviously a metaphor for him uniting a bunch of countries, the main countries.'" She's like, "I don't think that's right." And we have to have this dumb interaction where one of the Aes Sedai is like, "Well, you don't even – you didn't even graduate high school, so what do you know?" (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: "Slut."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Cadsuane being like, "Okay, what, Min? Just – you are obviously a normal person with a – Min, you can have as good an opinion as anyone."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “So please share with us.” And Min’s like, “Yeah, it can’t be about the countries because that doesn’t make sense,” and we’re like, I mean, it kind of – again, we’re coming at this with, like, the prophecies –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Are supposed to somehow, now, be just one to one.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is not, as we know, readers, the nature of prophecy.

Sally: Yeah. So it’s, like, difficult not to be on the other Aes Sedai’s side when she’s like –

Emily: Yeah, and be like, “Um.”

Sally: You’re right, Min is not forming a – a thesis that’s backed up with evidence.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: She’s just like, “Vibes are off.”

Emily: “She’s like, “Hmm, I don’t like this.” She’s like, “What’s all this about Callandor?” and Cadsuane’s like, “Yeah, I think it’ll be important.” The end. Then Tam comes in and is like, “What the fuck?!” (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, Tam, the first person to yell at Cadsuane, really.

Emily: Cadsuane’s like, “Ugh,” and ties him up with Air. She’s like, “Settle down, boy,” and Tam’s like – absolutely bodies this, he’s like, “I know a bully when I see one, you bitch.” (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Cadsuane’s like –

Sally: Ooh.

Emily: “That got me.” And I’m like, wow, fatherly disapproval.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It can really –

Sally: It can really get ya –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: When you least expect it.

Emily: Cadsuane’s like, “Do I have dad issues?” (laugh)

Sally: Cadsuane’s like, “Am I a bully?”

Emily: In that moment. Oh my God. Probably it worked ‘cause Tam – Tam, um, compared her to, like, a man bully. She’s like, “Oh, God, I would hate to be a man.”

Sally: “I would hate to be a –” (laugh)

Emily: For the love.

Sally: It’d be one thing to be, like, the mean girl in high school, but.

Emily: But a man?

Sally: To be a man. Heinous.

Emily: Um, so, like, yeah. Number one callout post, Tam al’Thor. But anyway, he’s like, “What the fuck have you done to Rand? He’s all sorts of messed up. Why didn’t you come get me sooner?” and Nynaeve should’ve been like, “Um, Tam, no one needs to fetch you to parent.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Parenting is just something you do –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Of your own volition.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But everyone’s just like, “Why didn’t you follow the script? You’re just a dumb man who didn’t do what we told you to do,” and Tam’s like, “I’m not gonna do what you told me to do with my own son –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “You psychos.”

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: “What in the – what in the world. But also, he’s almost tried to kill me, he’s clearly super fucked up; what in the world is going on?”

Sally: Yeah, also, Rand’s like, “What did you do to him?” and Cadsuane’s like, “I’ve never done anything to your son except try to help him,” which is categorically false.

Emily: Yeah, Cadsuane’s like, “I’ve only tried to teach him manners,” and Tam’s like, “You just tried to teach me manners –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “So I can see how that went.”

Sally: So, yeah, I can see exactly how this played out.

Emily: So you bullied him and abused him. Great.

Sally: And you're really surprised that that didn't turn out in your favor?

Emily: If Tam had walked into his room with a glock, that would've been completely justified, is what I'm saying. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. On the way down from Rand's room, Tam invents the gun.

Emily: (gun cocking noise)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Um, anyway, he's like, "And then he ran off; I don't know where he went." Min's like, "He's far away, off to the west," and Tam's like, "Oh, yeah, I looked through the gateway and it looked like Ebou Dar," and they're like, "Oh, no, he's going to murder all the Seanchan." Which, again, we're supposed to be like, "Oh, no."

Sally: "Oh, nooooo."

Emily: But instead I'm kind of like, "Okay."

Sally: Maybe – maybe – it's at least a good thing that for once he's bringing the fight to their door.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Rand has decided to go on offense against the Seanchan.

Emily: I'm just kind of like, yeah, go off, king, I guess.

Sally: Yeah, it – like, at least take Tuon off the board.

Emily: Yeah, just – *pew*. Rand invents a glock –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: On the way over.

Sally: Callandor turns into a gun, actually, once you push the right sequence of buttons.

Emily: I mean, assassinating Tuon would at the very least be interesting, given the entire royal family is dead over in the continent. So what happens if she dies? I don't know.

Sally: Mat's Empress. (laugh)

Emily: Mat is in charge. Ha ha. God, could you imagine if that was how the Seanchan arc got resolved?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mat just suddenly, via line of succession, is in charge of the entire Empire.

Sally: Yeah. And he's just like, "Well, I –"

Emily: “Okay. Stop doing war crimes, then.”

Sally: “I’ve got some notes.”

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: “I’ve got some things that are gonna change, effective immediately.”

Emily: “Goodbye.”

Sally: “Goodbye.”

Emily: God, that would’ve been so cool.

Sally: That would’ve been so funny. Um. And very good. It would’ve been a much more interesting resolution.

Emily: Yeah, I would’ve been like, wow, the entire Mat and Tuon arc up until this point has been worth it, somehow.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mat’s in charge of the Seanchan. Okay.

Sally: Okay. Mat and Thom.

Emily: Mat and Thom – yeah, Thom, effectively, is in charge of the Seanchan –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I think we can all agree.

Sally: Yeah. Thom’s like, “I’ve been training my whole life for this.”

Emily: Thom’s like, “Yes. Ha ha.” Okay, so those were those two chapters. Anything to add?

Sally: No, I just remembered the sign-off I was going to add.

Emily: Oh, great, I’m so excited.

Sally: It’s pretty funny. Um.

Emily: Um, thanks for listening. Thanks for, uh, allowing us to take a week off last week –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We had a lovely vacation. Um, thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song; to our patrons on Patreon; and our followers on social media.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Um, and I think that’s it. We’ve got one more episode to do with the Gathering Storm, then we’ll be taking another short break and coming back at you with Towers of Midnight.

Sally: Coming back at – with the – the book. It's so big.

Emily: It sure is.

Sally: I carried it around on a walk on our vacation to take some pictures, and I – maybe that's why my shoulder's fucked, you guys.

Emily: Oh, damn.

Sally: It's not, but it very easily could be.

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

Sally: I do. Um, so this girl I went to high school with who was, like, effectively my nemesis; I was not her nemesis, I was not on her radar. But she really bugged me. (laugh) Um, her married last name is "Riches."

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Which is, like, appropriate. She was very wealthy.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um, she and her husband just had their first child.

Emily: Oh, no.

Sally: And they – they are both very big on the, like, Republican politics scene, for context. They named their baby Independence. So her name is Independence Riches. (laugh) Which sounds like a Bond villain to me. Independence Riches.

Emily: There's not even, like, a good nickname you can get from "Independence."

Sally: Yeah, they're calling her "Indy," I think –

Emily: Oh, great, like Indiana Jones.

Sally: Which is like Indiana Jones, yeah.

Emily: Oh my God.

Sally: (laugh) The runners-up – she put this in her Facebook post, I think – were "Constitution" –

Emily: Ugh.

Sally: "Connie" for short, and "Pennsylvania," or "Penny" for short.

Emily: I can't wait till this kid grows up.

Sally: "Hi, I'm Independence Riches."

Emily: Well, just, like, the issues she's going to have with her parents.



Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Girl, you're in for a world of therapy.

Sally: Yeah. Independence.

Emily: Christ. Independence Riches.

Sally: "This is my child, Constitution."

Emily: Pennsylvania Riches.

Sally: "This is my child, Pennsylvania." What the fuck?

Emily: Ahhh.

Sally: "This is my child, New York State."

Emily: Christ. "Washington State." "Washington – Washington State –"

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "Please awaken your brother, Washington, comma, George."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Goodbye, everyone.

Sally: Goodbye.