



Episode 260: Hello, Heretic  
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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: Ah, shit, here we go again.

Emily: Hewwo.

Sally: Hello.

Emily: The Wheel of Time, trademark symbol. We're back, baby, with Towers of Midnight. You might be wondering, what are the towers of midnight? You know, are there midnight towers up and about? Is the Tower of Ghenjei black? Nope. Tower of Ghenjei's metallic, I believe. Or –

Sally: Or this.

Emily: Silver brick? Whatever's going on in Darrell K. Sweet's interpretation?

Sally: Yeah, has Darrell K. Sweet ever seen a stone wall? Yeah, let's, um – first of all, this is Everybody Hates Rand.

Emily: Your friendly neighborhood Wheely Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: Can you believe The Gathering Storm was a New York Times bestseller?

Sally: I can, because usually things that go on the New York Times bestseller list are bad.

Emily: Yeah, that's true.

Sally: Like "Girl, Wash Your Face." (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: I don't know if that was a New York Times bestseller, but.

Emily: No, yeah, the New York Times is a bunch of hacks, as we've all realized in the last few years.

Sally: But also, I can't believe it at the same time because it was such a silly, silly book.

Emily: The Gathering Storm, having had a couple weeks to think about it: not a good book.

Sally: Like, it really – like, I know we are biased. Obviously.

Emily: And I know it's controversial, but it was – it was a stinker.

Sally: Not – it was a stinker. It was kind of a dud.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um. (laugh)

Emily: It was a real failboy, failson, of a book. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And this one, you guys –

Sally: We gotta talk about the cover.

Emily: Yeah. Darrell K. Sweet's at it again.

Sally: I know I tweeted about it, but I gotta talk – we gotta talk about it.

Emily: Noal does have goat legs.

Sally: He looks like a satyr.

Emily: Their boots are so funny.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I love the implication that every man in this world –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Wears the fucking calf-high Chanel boots. (laugh)

Sally: The red bottoms. They're Louboutins. (laugh) "Are you wearing – Is she wearing –"  
"Yeah, the calf-high red, uh, brown leather Louboutins."

Emily: Yeah, with, like, the turned-down tops. And it's just, like – it's just, like, absolutely shapeless around the ankle situation.

Sally: Yeah, no ankle support.

Emily: Like, Mat looks like he's wearing Uggs.

Sally: Yeah. No ankle support for all the running around –

Emily: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Sally: And horseback riding they're doing.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Yeah, their clothes are all really funny. The interpretation of Thom's gleeman cloak is, like, a striped poncho? (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. He just – it's like – it just looks like he has bad taste –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And got that at a gas station somewhere –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Rather than that it's, like, a carefully crafted symbol of his craft, you know?

Sally: Yeah, it very much looks like the hoodies – the, like – oh, I don't know how to describe it. But I feel like these were really big when I was in college. They're kind of, like, big, baggy hoodies that are, like, striped and kind of, like, a woven fabric, and you'd always see kind of, like, the stoner kids wearing them.

Emily: Yeah, I think they still sell those in gas stations.

Sally: Yeah. So.

Emily: I don't know what those are called either, but yeah, I – I know exactly what you're talking about.

Sally: I also – Mat is holding a bag like he's never held a bag before in his life. (laugh)

Emily: I think he's meant to be, like, in the process of taking it – adjusting it – taking it off, but it's like hanging from his hand rather than his shoulder.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But his elbow's bent, if you can picture that? I mean, just go grab your copy –

Sally: Yeah, it's –

Emily: And really, really look at it. It's unfathomable.

Sally: Really funny. Um, and yeah, they just all look about fifty-plus.

Emily: Yeah, honestly, Noal, like, looks the best-dressed of them.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's got a cool staff thing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: With, like, some sort of weird, curly leaf on top. I don't know if Noal does carry a staff, but maybe he does.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, at least Thom's got his mustache.

Sally: Thom's got his mustache. Um.

Emily: Mat's wearing, like, a cinched belt.

Sally: Yeah, waist: snatched.

Emily: Yeah. Green coat under brown – like, he looks like he's cosplaying as Robin Hood.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, like, bad Robin Hood.

Sally: But, like, yeah, this –

Emily: Like Russell Crowe Robin Hood.

Sally: Woof.

Emily: And, yeah, he's wearing – he's carrying the world's ugliest tote and wearing the world's ugliest brooch – brooch.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Clasp, I guess. Cloak clasp.

Sally: Yeah, what is that – it's just, like, a –

Emily: It looks like a – it looks like he got it in the Crusades. Like – (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, it looks like a cross.

Emily: Yeah. (laugh)

Sally: For whatever reason.

Emily: So it – it's not, I would say, more offensive than the Gathering Storm wherein we had, um, Weird Barbie Aviendha. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) The Gathering Storm cover – I will say, for all the, like, jokes aside, I think the Towers of Midnight Darrell K. Sweet cover is one of his better ones.

Emily: Yeah. (laugh)

Sally: Just 'cause, like – (laugh)

Emily: For sure. Probably because it has no women on it.

Sally: Yeah, it's got no women on it for him to fuck up. Generally there is only three people for him to draw, so I think he gave them a little more time and attention than when he's had to draw, like, big parties of people.

Emily: Besides – yeah, besides Noal's knees, no one's proportions are too fucked up.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Well, maybe Thom. Does Thom just have the shortest right arm? He's, like, got a T-rex arm.

Sally: (laugh) Um, the colors are really nice. Like, they're in this forest with lots of, like, gold leaves, gold foliage on the ground. Um. It generally is just, like, a pleasant scene. I think Darrell K. Sweet is much better at landscapes than he is at portraiture.

Emily: Oh, for sure, yeah. Look at that tree.

Sally: Yeah. Gorg. And then, uh, it is like the – you know, the thing with book covers. They're like, "Draw a scene that would make someone want to read the book," and I would pick this up and be like, damn, where the fuck are they going? I want to know what's in that tower.

Emily: Yeah, what's happening? Why are they – why are they doing an upside-down triangle, which if you've watched the Da Vinci Code you know is the symbol for a vagina. (laugh)

Sally: Oh. Yeah, only if you've watched the Da Vinci Code would you figure that out. (laugh) There's no other way to equate that.

Emily: I don't know what to tell you. The Da Vinci Code is –

Sally: This is the second fucking episode in a row where you – (laugh)

Emily: Did I –? (laugh) Reference the Da Vinci Code in the last one? It's a formative text, you guys. I don't know what to tell you. I think about the Da Vinci Code all the time, you guys. Not in a good way, just in a way.

Sally: I've never seen it all the way through because I found it really boring.

Emily: Because it's so fucking boring!

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, it's, like, a real slog. By the time you get to Ian McKellen explaining in his French chateau to the – to Tom Hanks –

Sally: I really thought you were going to say "French accent." (laugh)

Emily: No, he's British, I think. But he's – they're in, like, a French chateau. Or maybe they're in England; I don't recall their road trip. But he's, like, explaining, like, the triangle is a womb

and actually Jesus fucked. (laugh) And had a – and had a line of succession. By the time you get there, you're like, "I don't know what I'm here for anymore."

Sally: What's happening? Yeah, I never got that far.

Emily: Um, yeah, that's usually about when I tap out. I think I've seen it once all the way through, maybe. Okay, this isn't about the Da Vinci Code, sadly enough. Okay, so Darrell K. Sweet is at it again. Not as bad as he's been in the past, but he's – you know, he's done it.

Sally: Not – yeah, he's done it again.

Emily: Um. The epigraph for this book –

Sally: Yep, nailed it, Emily.

Emily: Every time – every time. Only one more time to go, you guys.

Sally: Good job, Emily!

Emily: The epigraph is actually from a text written by Loial, titled "The Dragon Reborn." This is, I believe – I could be wrong – but I believe this is the first epigraph that we're getting from, like, beyond the current events of the book.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Presumably Robert Jordan didn't want to spoil it by being like, "Some people will survive the –

Sally: Some people will die.

Emily: Um, but of course there's – we – we've been watching Loial write this entire time, so I don't think it's really, like, a spoiler in that it implies that everyone will survive or even that Loial will survive –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because he could just be keeping a – a diary that later becomes, um, a work of literature. Um, and honestly I wish that more of the epigraphs were from Loial. I think that would be really fun.

Sally: I think it would make more sense, structurally –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: To have – um, if we're gonna have this sort of mechanic of Loial taking everything down, and we're also gonna have this mechanic of us working with a paratext – um, with, like, eleven thousand different paratexts between all the, like, little epilogues and epigraphs that we're getting – I think it would make much more sense if it was all Loial's, and, like, Loial is known to be extremely well-read and extremely well-researched.

Emily: Yeah, so he could be citing things.

Sally: Yeah, it would not be beyond the realm of possibility for Loial to be like, “And in this version of the prophecy they say this,” or “This historian said that.”

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And then he could have some commentary on it to anchor it for us more. I think that would’ve worked a lot better. So, points, Brandon.

Emily: Yeah, honestly, it wouldn’t have been too hard to, like, make this edit if this was something you decided to do later on – or, like, midway through the series –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just have, like, Loial be switching his sort of focus in his writing, be like, “I’m specifically going to be talking about the prophecies and how they’re playing out –”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: “With – with what I’m witnessing from my firsthand account,” you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Could’ve been easy. Anyway, this one is, like, boring –

Sally: I know.

Emily: Which is a shame. It’s just Loial talking about, like, Ogier stuff, which we know from a couple books ago, I think, that he went off with his mom and new wife – wife – to go, um, speak at the Great Stump – (clears throat) Entmoot.

Sally: (laugh) The Great Stump is the funniest name of all time.

Emily: I know, I wish every business meeting was called the Great Stump.

Sally: The Great Stump. Whenever we have to have a household meeting, I’m going to call you to a Great Stump.

Emily: I would love that. My sister, whenever she and her husband have to have a financial meeting, you know, about their budget, he plays, uh, “Money, Money, Money” by ABBA. (laugh) To summon her.

Sally: (singing) “I work all night, I work all day to pay the bills I have to pay.”

Emily: Ahh.

Sally: (singing) “Ain’t it sad?”

Emily: He loves money and he loves ABBA. Those are two things –

Sally: I mean, who doesn’t love ABBA?

Emily: About my brother-in-law you gotta know. Um, yeah, Loial's just telling us, "Well, everything that is happening in the rest of the books, bubbles of evil, dead people walking, that's also happening in the steddings."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, "And we're all just talking and debating, like we do, and it's my turn to talk, and I've got to try and convince everyone not to open the Book of Translation," which we've heard alluded to once or twice before and I think know is this thing that will make all the Ogier disappear?

Sally: Just fucking fly the coop.

Emily: Yeah, I think we've referred to it as, like, a rapture.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, turn – it's so – and I think we might've talked about how it's so funny to give the power to induce the rapture into the people being raptured. (laugh)

Sally: I know. That's crazy – like, what? (laugh)

Emily: They're just like, "Time to go now."

Sally: "Time to – it's time to rapture us."

Emily: "We done."

Sally: Um, yeah, so it's unfortunate because it's not – uh, the epigraph isn't giving us any new information except what we could already infer, which is that what – the bubbles of evil are hitting the stedding too.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And maybe if I understood the stedding a little bit more from a magical standpoint, I would understand what a big deal that is, but it's like, yeah, of course they're going there –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Even if they are anti-magic places.

Emily: This epigraph is also trying to, as briefly as possible, pull in the subplot of the Ogier involvement in the Last Battle and whether that's going to be a thing or whether they're going to remain secluded. Um, that isn't, like, a chapter in this book. Loial doesn't have a point of view in this book –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Nor did he have one in the last book, so I guess if you were trying to save on page space, then that's a – a quick and easy way to do it.

Sally: Yeah.



Emily: It does assume that we are at all worried about the Ogier involvement in the Last Battle. Like, that's something that we're – I had honestly forgotten.

Sally: Yeah. And it's like, at this point where, like, I know the Last Battle is going to happen, and I assume our good guys are gonna bring a force of significant size.

Emily: Yeah, like, it would honestly just be wildly out of left field and also extremely funny if Loial and the Ogier just didn't show, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, like, for – at the very least, we know Loial's gonna show.

Sally: Yeah

Emily: He's loyal. His name is literally Loial. So –

Sally: Yeah, or Loi-al.

Emily: Yeah, excuse me, Wheel of Time on Amazon Prime. We read the prologue this time, and, um, this is a prologue that, as prologues go, I don't know how well it functions because we're being introduced to a lot of subplots that are going to be prevalent within the book. The problem, as we're going to get into this book later on – um, as we're going to get into as we continue talking about Towers of Midnight – is that the sort of, like, vignette structure of the prologue is more or less going to be mimicked throughout the entire book. Every chapter is going to have two, three, even four points of view of about this length.

Sally: Yikes.

Emily: So sort of copying that structure, which Brandon Sanderson is doing in an effort to quicken the pace, make us feel more tense, more involved, not get, like, mired down in any one character's narrative –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: Um, all of that is like – then just having that be the prologue too, it would almost be more of a prologue to have a single point of view at this point.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. The only sort of, I think, prologue-y bit of this would be the very last point of view, where we see some random guy in the Borderlands, uh, witnessing an attack begin on the Borderlands –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So we're kind of getting the, like, "Last Battle's starting" –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Sort of thing. Maybe Padan Fain, but I don't care about any Padan Fain points of view.

Sally: Yeah, I was like, why is he still here?

Emily: But Lan, Perrin, Galad, and to a lesser extent Graendal are all going to be throughlines in this book, so just sort of introducing them here is something we could've done in the first chapter.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We're not getting any information here that wouldn't be as easily received in the first couple chapters.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So with that in mind, uh, we first get Lan riding through the Borderlands, where he was dropped off by his wife. He's like, "It's such a bummer that Nynaeve is worried about me." That line made me laugh out loud because I was like, you're going – you – you know this is suicide, don't you? Or are you delusional? Like –

Sally: Yeah, what – what's happening?

Emily: Do you think your, like, single-man war against the Dark One, that you're going to survive that?

Sally: That you're gonna win?

Emily: He's like, "I'll be – don't worry, Nynaeve. I'll be fine." (laugh)

Sally: "I'll be fine."

Emily: Like, bestie. No, you won't.

Sally: "I'll be – I'll be totally good and fine."

Emily: Like, when Nynaeve dropped you off, she was pretty much, like, "Okay, you're going to go die now," and you were like, "Okay, I'm going to go die now," and now you're like, "Ah, it's a real bummer that Nynaeve is trying to circumvent that and really just doesn't trust me to take care of myself."

Sally: Um. Why is he the way he is?

Emily: I don't – men. Man.

Sally: Like, what type –

Emily: He's manflesh.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: His name's Lan, it rhymes with "man" –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: His horse's name is Mandarb, nicknamed "Man."

Sally: This is my horse, Man.

Emily: This is my horse, Man, because I'm a man –

Sally: Because I'm a man, and –

Emily: And I'm good at fighting and good at being alone and not having emotions and having a hot wife. End of list.

Sally: That's – that's the things men are good at, yeah.

Emily: Yeah. That's what men are good at.

Sally: Having a hot wife that doesn't actually do anything.

Emily: Yeah, "I just expected Nynaeve to roll over and be like, 'Goodbye.' Weep, the way I always told her I didn't want her to do."

Sally: Yeah, it's really important for women to weep instead of doing anything proactive to help their husband.

Emily: Yeah, taking any action. Yeah. Like, my God.

Sally: Shut up, Lan. You're being so, so weird.

Emily: Anyway, this vignette has some guy hail Lan and be like, "Hey, I want to join you; your wife told me you're going this way, so let's go," and Lan's like, "No, fuck off. I don't need help."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And this man's like, "Well, actually, I am half –"

Sally: Malkieri.

Emily: "Malkieri, um, and I feel a connection to his heritage also, and I am a victim of this diaspora as well, and so I would like to participate in the cultural renewal that is going on," and Lan's like, "Goddamnit, well, when you put it like that, I guess you can come die with me." Why would we have a diaspora when we could have genocide? (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Mm, why – why stop at diaspora?

Emily: (inaudible mumbling) Um, we're not, like, going blow-by-blow because it's boring and also because this exact vignette is more or less going to be repeated throughout the rest of the book; every time we go back to Lan, we're just going to be seeing Lan acquire more and more followers, to the point that we might get a – to a Lan point of view and be like, "It's Lan again, moving on."

Sally: It's Lan again. He got some guys.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: He picked up his pick men, basically at this point is what's happening.

Emily: Yeah, the point of these and to have it happening across the, um, span of the book is to indicate, like, forward momentum toward the Last Battle. I think that there is a sense, um, that is being granted to us that as soon as Lan gets to where he's going, the Last Battle will, like, start.

Sally: Mm. Sure.

Emily: Um, because Lan is the only one of our main characters who is sort of actively doing something Last Battle-oriented.

Sally: Right.

Emily: Maybe not Last Battle-oriented but, like, straightforwardly like, "I am going to go fight in the Last Battle; that is where I am riding my horse today."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "To get to the Last Battle."

Sally: Right.

Emily: Um, so when Lan gets there, presumably he's not going to just camp for two weeks. It would be kind of funny if he did. But, like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So every time Lan gets closer, every time we check in with Lan, that's like our geographical, chronological check-in on where the Last Battle's at.

Sally: Sure, and I could see that, but, um, it sounds like it gets boring pretty quickly.

Emily: Oh, yeah, it's super, like, repetitive. It also requires you to be really invested in Lan's plot and whether he's going to acquire a lot of followers, and it's just, like, sort of a given. We know that Lan is Robert Jordan's favorite character, 'cause it's kind of obvious –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So it's not like he's going to be like, Lan gets there alone because no one wanted to join his –

Sally: Nobody – everybody was like –

Emily: Special boy club.

Sally: "I don't want to join this suicide mission."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It also would be, like, a different – I – just, like, collecting a bunch of random different guys isn't, like – doesn't make me feel excited. It's not like we're bringing together, like, people from the Borderlands that we know, because we don't know enough people in the Borderlands to feel excited about the people joining.

Emily: Yeah, this isn't, like, a "getting the band back together," wherein we already know people, nor is it, like, an Ocean's Eleven heist movie –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Wherein we're being introduced to people based on the needs that they fill.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We're more or less being introduced to redshirts, who are fulfilling the role of redshirts, which is to die so that Lan doesn't have to.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. So it's hard to, like, feel invested in any of them. So – except as sort of just, like, gatherers that Lan, our lone samurai in the wilderness, is collecting. Which is a very, like, male-centric media trope –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To be fulfilling, which is probably also why we're exasperated with it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Huh, speaking of male ... tropes. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Speaking of – this is a very man –

Emily: Speaking of boys – I mean, yeah.

Sally: Even Graendal's point of view is very man.

Emily: I mean, yeah.

Sally: Because it's Graendal.

Emily: Because it's Graendal, and she's like, "Oh my God, boobs."

Sally: And she just walks tits-first into every situation. (laugh)

Emily: "Have you ever thought about boobs?" Okay, we are with Perrin, he's having a dream, not a special dream, just a normal dream, but Hopper's there, and Perrin's like, "I don't get why," and we're like, then fucking –

Sally: Ask him.

Emily: Then fucking why are we here? You know? Perrin's doing some fuckin' symbolism with – he's crafting on his forge, and everything he – he forges turns out looking ugly as fuck.

Sally: (laugh) Just, like, lumps.

Emily: Yeah, just, like, lumps of metal. And then he starts, like, pulling things from the water that he's left it to cool it in, and it's taken the shape of men, specifically men that he has or is leading into battle. You know, it starts with Aram, who he feels guilty about, and who he feels particularly as though he has, like, shaped Aram's experience and contributed to who Aram became, and now there's these men who are relying on him for leadership. It's not a very light-handed – (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, you're like, okay.

Emily: Metaphor. You're like, okay, bestie.

Sally: Yeah, we – you did shape Aram's experience, and you should feel guilty about what happened to him because it was your fault.

Emily: He's like, "God, that was really fucked up, what Aram and I did," and everyone's like, yeah. There aren't really any easy answers there.

Sally: Yeah, you just have to carry that one, pal.

Emily: Um. Perrin's also like, "Everything's real fucked up and weird between me and Faile; I should be spending time with Faile, but instead I've gotta be a leader, and everyone – no one can take care of themselves." And I'm like, like any amount of conversation or time with Faile would – (laugh) fix what is between you two –

Sally: Yeah, also –

Emily: When neither of you will communicate your needs.

Sally: They're just annoying.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Perrin – this whole thing is very, like, back to – there's almost something to be said for, as grating as Perrin was during the whole rescue arc, at least he wasn't this sort of level of wallowing in self-pity all the time. Like, that was kind of stripped out of his point of view, and now we're back to him being like, "Everything's really hard, why do I have to make hard decisions?"

Emily: Everything's really hard. For some reason, the axe is being reintroduced at this point.

Sally: Um, I almost –

Emily: Screamed, yeah.

Sally: Picked up the book and threw it out my window. I was so fucking mad.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: At least Hopper is like, “You dumb fuck, the axe and the hammer are both weapons.”

Emily: Yeah. Hopper’s, like, by far the best part of this section. He’s spouting wisdom in a really funny way.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Hopper tells Perrin, “You are climbing back and forth over the same wall,” which is very, like – that’s exactly what Perrin’s doing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: If the wall is his character development, he just, like, can’t leave it behind him. He just keeps going back.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, which, as we’ve said before, is not a fun reading experience.

Sally: Not a fun reading experience.

Emily: So even, you know, being self-conscious of it via this text doesn’t fix the fact that it’s not fun. Yeah, Perrin’s upset about Faile; axe or hammer? Um, God, that was fucked up, what happened to Aram. Also, am I a wolf? How do I find the balance between the wolf and the man? And again, this is, like, ground that we’ve hashed so much before.

Sally: Since book one.

Emily: So.

Sally: We are on book thirteen.

Emily: Yeah. We’re sort of reintroducing all of the same problems that Perrin has been having and not coming to any terms with any of them. I guess the point of reintroducing them here is sort of Brandon Sanderson being like, “We are going to resolve this shit by the end of this book.”

Sally: We fucking better.

Emily: We then get – (laugh)

Sally: Oh, boy.

Emily: We then get what to us, as the readers, um, feels like a flashback. Well, we get to find out how Graendal miraculously survived that nuclear bomb. I know, it would’ve been so funny if this – she just died at the end of this.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She was like, “Oh, shit, balefire.”

Sally: She didn't get far enough away.

Emily: Ooh. Uh, but we see Graendal in her big mansion right before Rand's about to nuke it. She's entertaining Aran'gar, who has recently fled from the Aes Sedai camp after being found out. She also has, like, Delana with her, whatever. Um, and Graendal's like, "I just have to distract Aran'gar 'cause she's so annoying, so here, I'll just throw Delana at her," and it's like, and then these two lesbians are slutting it up on the couch next to Graendal. It's just gross, you guys.

Sally: It's extremely gross – it's grody.

Emily: Yeah. It's just like, okay. Okay.

Sally: Yeah, I – it – gratuitous.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It's gratuitous.

Emily: Graendal is walking around and gets – like, someone comes and gets her and is like, "There's a guy at the door." She goes and finds the guy that Rand sent to get Compulsion-ed by her to verify that she was there. She's like, "Well, obviously Rand's an idiot and has just sent this guy to me because he's feeling me out or whatever, so I'm just gonna –" But for whatever reason, she doesn't put Compulsion on him herself. I think it's 'cause she, like, deduces that maybe Nynaeve can look at the Compulsion. It's a little convoluted.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: There's not a clear reason for Graendal to do what she does, which is call in, um, Aran'gar and Delana and have them do the Compulsion so that when Nynaeve says that someone has been compelled and then Rand balefires it and the Compulsion's gone, um, it's not because Graendal died, it's because they died.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: It's all just very convoluted because, like, I don't know, they – I really can't think of a reason why Graendal would just do that.

Sally: Yeah, I struggle to follow her reasoning, where she, like, starts to and doesn't. Or, like, it's – I don't know.

Emily: Yeah, she doesn't really give us a reason in the text that I can find. So it seems to be pure luck, which isn't ever a great reason to have one of your villains –

Sally: Not beef it, yeah.

Emily: Randomly survive, yeah. Um, Graendal also does some fucking warg shit in this –

Sally: Yeah.



Emily: Scene, introducing a power that we have never beheld before, including any of the Forsaken use it.

Sally: Yeah, she, like, mind-melds with a dove.

Emily: Yeah, which is the symbol of Aphrodite, and as we all know, Aphrodite's the goddess of sex, and Graendal is sexy, or something. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. Nice. Good job, authors.

Emily: (laugh) The symbol – the symbolism.

Sally: You really nailed it.

Emily: Oh my God.

Sally: She mind-melds with a dove, and she references, like, very vaguely that, like, it's easier to do with other animals, such as, like, rats and ravens or something, which is like a vague – like, a very roundabout explanation for why, like, rats – like, vermin might be considered the eyes of the Dark One.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And it's just like, that – I have never questioned –

Emily: Yeah, I've just been like –

Sally: That at all.

Emily: Yeah, as we all know, rats and ravens are considered evil.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, I haven't even ever needed to know if that was really a thing.

Sally: Yeah, like –

Emily: It could just be mindless superstition.

Sally: And that would've completely worked for me.

Emily: Yeah, I just don't care, you know? We have never been like, "And there's a raven," and therefore some crucial bit of information gets away.

Sally: Yeah. Um, and yeah, that, like, mechanic has never been – at least, to my knowledge – used against us, where, like, a raven does hear a legitimately important piece of information and suddenly the dark side has it.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So it's really weird to get this at this point in the book, and yeah, to get this power where Graendal can view the world through pigeons' eyes, but she can't seem – it seems like she can't hear?

Emily: Yeah, she just manages to go through the dove's eyes and sees Rand and Nynaeve in time to see, like, Rand channeling balefire.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: Which gives her an opportunity to leave and also trap Aran'gar and –

Sally: Delana.

Emily: Delana there so that they die.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: The Compulsion goes away, et cetera, Rand thinks – she – she manages to fake her own death this way.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and herself escape. And then she's like, "Woo, well, that's gonna be fucked up for me because everyone's gonna be super mad at me for letting Aran'gar die," and it's like, Aran'gar was dead weight.

Sally: I don't think anyone will care.

Emily: It is not — everyone's like, Aran'gar who? What was she even doing?

Sally: Who's Aran'gar?

Emily: Being annoying.

Sally: "I don't care for Gob."

Emily: "I don't care for —" The Dark One.

Sally: "I love all my children equally."

Emily: 'I don't care for Demandred."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I think we can agree that Demandred would be – (laugh)

Sally: Got big middle child syndrome.

Emily: Least favorite. So easily. "I don't care for Demandred."

Sally: "I don't care for Demandred." (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Anyway, Graendal makes it away; she's all stressed that she's gonna get in trouble. It would've been so funny if the Dark One was like, pew pew.

Sally: Was like, "Mistake."

Emily: Yeah, "I'm just – I'm sorting the wheat from – wheat from the chaff at this point."

Sally: Yeah. "I'm sick of you, Graendal." And your fucking doves.

Emily: Yeah. But she makes it out. She also tells us that the big noise that the sort of aftereffect of a bunch of balefire going off is called a balescream. (laugh)

Sally: Balescream.

Emily: Which sounds like the name of a Transformer to me. (laugh)

Sally: Bale – you're right, it does. Balescream.

Emily: Um. (Batman voice) Balescream.

Sally: He's a fighter jet.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Is that your Optimus Prime? It was pretty good.

Emily: I don't know.

Sally: Ed, no.

Emily: Um, anyway, then we switch over to Galad, who I cannot emphasize enough that we're pretty much — this book might as well just be the Galad and Perrin show, with occasional side —

Sally: Right.

Emily: Journeys to Egg, Elayne, and Mat. Like —

Sally: Right.

Emily: It's pretty much just Perrin and Galad. Catch up with Galad as he is trekking through a swamp with his seven thousand Children of the Light who agreed to follow him. Galad is heading for the Last Battle, yes.

Sally: Good job, Galad.

Emily: We see him give an inspirational speech to his soldiers to get them through the swamp. It was like a TED talk. That's all I remember about it. It was pretty funny. Anytime an author tries to write an inspirational speech, it's incredibly hilarious.

Sally: Yeah. Galad is just like, "We have a purpose, and the Children of the Light are the most important special boys in the universe."

Emily: “We are the beacon that will guide the world in the Last –” Which is just, like, so ludicrous.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Anytime the Children of the Light have come up in any other perspective but Galad’s, it’s been like, “Boy, these guys are annoying.”

Sally: They are a plague.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: They are a pox upon the land. (laugh)

Emily: Everyone hates the Whitecloaks –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is why I will argue that Galad’s whole subplot in this section doesn’t work. Because Galad is here mainly to get the Children of the Light to the Last Battle. You know, like, he’s going to be a stable leader who gets a big force of guys there. Um, but the Whitecloaks have not really been relevant in many books.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They were barely relevant to begin with.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They were introduced as this kind of, like, mega-threat, and that was how they existed for, mm-mm, two books?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They were scary in books one and two, I would say, but then a huge force of them got wiped out by the Seanchan, and it was kind of like, okay. That’s that.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, they have been repeatedly put on the board by the authors, but they have done almost nothing of substance; they have interacted with almost no one of substance.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So therefore, like, them getting to the Last Battle is on, you know, my to-do list, way at the bottom. Right before getting the Seanchan to the Last Battle.

Sally: Yeah, like, it really only matters whether they get to the Last Battle or not because of sheer body count.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: You know, it's like that would put, like, twenty thousand more guys on the board or something like that.

Emily: And it's like, sure, if all of the Whitecloaks get wiped out, great.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That's a sacrifice – (laugh) I'm willing to make.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "Some of you may die."

Sally: "But that's a sacrifice I'm willing to make."

Emily: That's how I feel about the Whitecloaks –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But that's clearly not how the authors are presenting the Whitecloaks, which is as a sort of, like, misguided but ultimately powerful force under Galad's direction.

Sally: You know –

Emily: Galad just sounds, like, delusional when he says shit like, "We're the beacon."

Sally: Yeah. I mean, it really is, like, next-level cult shit, you know?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um, like I've been listening to this podcast about cults, I'm trying to learn more about cults, and I was reading this, and I was like, Galad just, like, took a spoonful out of every cult leader's little pot – soup pot –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: To be like, "We are the most important special boys."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: "There's a plan for us."

Emily: And every cult is, like, some weird place in Idaho that thinks they're the center of the universe –

Sally: Yeah. That's Amadicia. Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: And it's like, no one fucking knows about them. Yeah, Amadicia is Idaho.

Sally: Yeah, no one knows about them –

Emily: No one has spared a thought for them in years.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, yeah, it is at least an accurate representation of cult shit. This, like – this, like narcissist –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Weird shit. But then, like, the narrative itself boosts them to importance by having them be so much in this narrative with Perrin.

Sally: Yeah, and I think, like, this idea of, like, the Whitecloaks fundamentally being a cult, um, or having cult-like tendencies and the authors really shoving Galad into it is like a weird kind of way to try and redeem the Whitecloaks?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Galad is one of the narrative's most special boys. Um.

Emily: Yeah, and, like, we joke a lot about how Galad is great and how we love Galad –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And how special he is, but, like, there's a level of, like, Galad has never been particularly important to the narrative either, so.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's like, now Gawyn and Galad are suddenly these huge players when it's like, they have not been on the board for six to seven books.

Sally: Yeah, like, I think Galad is a fun character that I love when he is in the background, doing just sort of out-of-pocket weird shit –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like starting wars to get Nynaeve and Elayne on a boat. Like, that was so weird and unhinged of him.

Emily: Yeah, but he cannot carry his own narrative.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: There's nothing to him. As soon as you, like, start to dissect Galad, it's like, oh, he's made out of cardboard.

Sally: Yeah, he's made out of cardboard, this cardboard belief that there is a black and white right and wrong in the world, which is more just, like, weird cult thinking. And then we're just like, Galad is not a person; he's just, like, a bunch of sticks.

Emily: Our cardboard cutout of Jungkook from BTS has more personality than Galad.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And arguably is as good-looking, so.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah, and it's like, Galad isn't even – he's not even standing on being hot anymore.

Emily: Yeah, he's not hot anymore, really.

Sally: Yeah, because he's joined a terrorist group.

Emily: Yeah, we're just like, okay, whatever.

Sally: A white supremacist-coded terrorist group –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: That the authors are like, "These guys matter."

Emily: "These guys aren't the KKK. Why do you think they're the KKK?"

Sally: "Why would, in their white cloaks and white hoods, hunting down witches and burning things –"

Emily: "Yeah, why –"

Sally: "Would you think that they are the KKK?"

Emily: "Why the fuck do you think they're the KKK?"

Sally: "That's – you should learn some media literacy, actually."

Emily: "Hmm. hmm." So Galad gets his guys through a swamp and then immediately gets intercepted slash betrayed and meets with the other Whitecloak force, led by Asunawa, the, like, Questioner guy –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who's always been a creep in the background. Who's like, "Hello, heretic."

Sally: "Hello, heretic. Surprise."

Emily: Yeah. (singing) "Hellfire ..."

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

Emily: Yeah, it would've been incredibly fun if Asunawa had, like, sort of a psychosexual obsession with Galad, but sadly this book –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Only cares about Aran'gar fucking Delana on the sofa while Graendal is watching.

Sally: (laugh) It would be actually really – not to say that I'm, like, pro-psychosexual relationships, but if Asunawa was just, like, really obsessed with Galad –

Emily: Also, like, this is a cult.

Sally: That'd add a little spice – yeah.

Emily: Psychosexual obsessions are part of it.

Sally: You're right. You're right.

Emily: And Asunawa's, like, the most culty of these guys.

Sally: Yeah. If we're talking, like, Galad as baby cult leader on the rise. Aasunawa is next fucking level.

Emily: Yeah. Anyway, Graendal – Graendal. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Graendal shows up.

Emily: Asunawa's like, "You're under arrest 'cause – for being evil," and Galad's like, "Let me just interview your guys real quick about sort of our Whitecloak tenets and whether that logically makes sense," and I'm like, the sort of conceit here that you can talk extremist bigots –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Out of their beliefs by exposing them to their own hypocrisy? That ain't how the real world works, guys.

Sally: Speaking of podcasts, I just listened to an episode today where, uh, a cult expert was talking about QAnon –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And how, like, you absolutely cannot try to have a conversation with a QAnon person that is based on logic because they simply do not care.

Emily: Yeah, you are never, ever going to get through to a conspiracy theorist, which is what the Whitecloaks are, essentially, or any sort of cult based on logic, based on reason, based on exposing their own hypocrisy.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They do not care. Like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Galad can be like, "Well, obviously –" Like, they would have comebacks for this shit.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They have scripts.

Sally: Yeah.



Emily: And so to have Galad just be like, “Mm, well, according to the scriptures, which I’ve read better than you have –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “That’s not true,” and Asunawa just to be like, “Ooh, he’s right.” (grumbling) “I look like an idiot.” Not how it would go at all. This is honestly, like, the least likely part of this prologue, and we just read about Graendal escaping balefire by warging into a dove.

Sally: (laugh) Uh, sorry to bring up that weird QAnon example.

Emily: No, it’s –

Sally: I was just adding a little –

Emily: No, it’s so true, and that’s, like, the most prevalent example from our –

Sally: From our times, yeah, in terms of, like, dangerous thought groups.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um. I don’t even, like – you can’t even call QAnon just a conspiracy theory anymore. Like, it’s become such a crazy thing. Um, anyway, yeah, it’s, like, so silly for Galad to be like, “Logic will absolutely break this down,” and, um, no, it won’t. You know? Like, Asunawa is actually, like, brainwashing the people around him. So it’s silly. Um.

Emily: Also, by having this work in Galad’s favor, because spoiler alert, it will, having all of his experience with the Whitecloaks just, like, sort of beef this up will just make Galad’s faith in the Whitecloaks stronger –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As opposed to if he was actually victimized by Asunawa the way other people are victimized by the Whitecloaks routinely. It might lead him to, like, I don’t know, want to drastically change his own beliefs and viewpoints –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But we can’t have that because we’re too committed to this “Galad is the Whitecloaks leader” bit.

Sally: It’s real weird.

Emily: It’s bad.

Sally: Um, ‘cause, yeah, how this ends is Galad, like, surrendering so that his guys – he’s like, “We can’t split the Whitecloaks; it’s stupid,” um, and then Asunawa takes him away with the sort of implication being that Galad is going to be put to the question, cough cough, brutally tortured.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And it's like, well, damn, that's fucked up.

Emily: Yeah. But Galad's our hero and so he's letting that happen as long as all his guys are fine. Classic. Yeah, like, Asunawa makes the promise, and I'm like, like he's gonna keep that –

Sally: I know.

Emily: You know? Like in any real world he would keep that. Come on. (sigh)

Sally: Yeah, Asunawa's like, "Your guys won't be tortured," fingers crossed behind my back.

Emily: Yeah. We then get Padan Fain being a creep in the Blight. End –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) End his point of view.

Sally: End. Nasty.

Emily: He's like, "I'm weird and creepy. Bye."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Then we get, uh, some random guy who's at, like, a – a watchtower in Kandor, I believe. Um, and this throughline is like, "Oh, my son is becoming a man and now he's gonna be a soldier," and blah blah blah, and you know, it's not really anything that's relevant to us 'cause we're never gonna see these guys again.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Probably. Um, but it's just like, some – they're getting signals from another tower that something's coming, so.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just sort of, like, increasing the ominous tension of the text.

Sally: Yeah. Gondor calls for aid.

Emily: Yeah, and Rohan will not answer because the Borderland leaders are in fucking Far Madding.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Waiting for Rand to show up and do God knows what.

Sally: (laugh) Cool. Good job. Excellent.

Emily: Yeah, so – but instead of this being, like, any sort of, like, indictment –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Against what is happening, it's just like, "The Borderlanders are so brave and tough and manly."

Sally: Yeah, they're really cool, they've got a pretty sick set-up of mirrors up there.

Emily: Yeah, it is nice.

Sally: But –

Emily: I wonder what they do on cloudy days. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Or at night.

Sally: "Uh, we can't signal for help."

Emily: "Ah, dangit, it's nighttime."

Sally: Yeah, I think they also have torches, but this elaborate –

Emily: Oh, that's right.

Sally: But you're right, this elaborate mirror set-up only works if there's a clear source of sunlight. (laugh)

Emily: I just think it's extremely funny. Oh, boy. Okay, everyone. That's the prologue.

Sally: That's the prologue. And now I'm quickly going to introduce us to our craft of the season.

Emily: Sally has brought a clipboard with a bunch of colored pens. I'm enchanted. I can't wait to see what's happening.

Sally: This is a suggestion – this was an – so one of our patrons, Rob, suggested at the end of one of last season's episodes that we should track how we're feeling at the end of every episode to see if it gets better or worse. (laugh) And so I adapted that into a mood tracker –

Emily: Mood tracker!

Sally: Yeah, which is, uh, something –

Emily: Yeah, I see the moods.

Sally: Yeah, of course, is something that is common in, like, planner circles.

Emily: Okay.

Sally: Where you track your moods. (laugh)

Emily: Happy – here's the – here's the moods we can put. Happy, exclamation point. Sad. It goes straight from happy to sad, there – there's no in between. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) I was trying to think last night, how does Wheel of Time make me feel?

Emily: Um, dead inside slash resigned. And again, the, like, immediacy of which we are descending. Uh, mad, confused, and purple is “feeling like quitting the podcast.” (laugh) Um, well, that’s good. Can we use multi-colors?

Sally: Yeah, I was – we can – If we’re both feeling different or if we’re feeling multiple ways, we can – we’ve got little circles that we can divide up.

Emily: Okay, okay. Well, what do you think? How are you feeling?

Sally: I feel like after this one – I should’ve put one that’s like “ambivalent” because I, like –

Emily: I think that’s mostly “resigned.”

Sally: Okay.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, I feel fine after this prologue. Um.

Emily: Yeah, I’d say I’m a mix of yellow and a little bit of pink –

Sally: ‘Kay.

Emily: For confused because, like, I’m a little bit confused about why we’re here and why these subplots are and what they are.

Sally: Yeah, you’re right. That’s good, I agree. So we are half pink, half yellow.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And I will post updates –

Emily: Can’t wait to see how beautiful it is.

Sally: On our Instagram as we go.

Emily: It’ll just be red after a certain point.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: How’d you get those circles so circular?

Sally: I traced a quarter.

Emily: Wow.

Sally: I know, this is what I did last night.

Emily: It’s really beautiful, you guys. Well, I’m excited about this.

Sally: I just think it is a nice little way to end each episode instead of being –

Emily: “Let’s check in on our feelings.” It’s sort of like aftercare.

Sally: Everybody, check in – yeah.

Emily: Okay, guys, while Sally colors our mood tracker, thank you for listening. Thank you to Glynn MacKenzie for our theme song; apologies, I have apparently forgotten to put in the theme song slash into a couple of times, so my bad. Um, thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media; you all are a delight. Thanks for letting us take a couple of weeks off.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We have successfully moved into the new place; everyone's settled. We're now just, you know, hanging pictures at our leisure.

Sally: Yeah, we're now just hanging. Okay, those are crosshatched 'cause I don't –

Emily: They're beautiful.

Sally: Know the best way – the design might change as we go through the season.

Emily: Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: I do. This is technically Emily's sign-off –

Emily: It is?

Sally: But, um, when we moved in, the – (laugh) the toilet in my bathroom –

Emily: Oh, yeah. (laugh)

Sally: Wasn't flushing, so I had to put in a maintenance request, obviously. And, uh, first of all, it took them, like, a day and a half to get here for what I would assume – would call a high-priority plumbing situation.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um, so good job, landlords, as always.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And I was at physical therapy, I think, and Emily texted me, she's like, "Hey, someone came to fix your toilet." Next text message: "They pulled out an entire spoon."

Emily: Yeah, the maintenance guy came in with, like, all his plumbing equipment, and I was like, "I don't – it's in there, go ahead, just ain't flushing." He's in there for a little while, then he comes out just brandishing an entire, like, silver spoon.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Like, from a – from a silverware set. And he was like, "This was in there," just, like, casually, and I was like, what? It was what? He was like, "Yeah," and then he just took the spoon away, which, like, I don't want your toilet spoon, you know, but I kind of wanted to, like, frame it.

Sally: Yeah. "Our toilet spoon." I could cross-stitch a little pattern to go behind it.

Emily: Yeah, exactly. So that souvenir of our move is gone forever; I don't know what he did with it, hopefully threw it away.

Sally: Yeah, maybe he keeps a collection of toilet spoons.

Emily: Yeah, so –

Sally: And other things that people flush.

Emily: The previous tenants, I guess, were wild.

Sally: It does also sound like there's a spoon in our garbage disposal –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So.

Emily: Who knows. They were just like, "Let's just cram a spoon into every fuckin' drain in this place."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: So thanks, guys.

Sally: Thanks, guys.

Emily: Have a good week.

Sally: Bye.

Emily: Bye!