



Episode 261: TikTok Empath Energy

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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: Well, let's hop right into it. Um...I forgot how I – I forgot. I for...I for [laughs].

SALLY: How do we do this podcast?

EMILY: [laughs] This is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheely Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: And I'm Sally Goodger.

EMILY: We're okay. I promise we're okay. Well, here we are. The first three chapters of *Towers of Midnight*. Um, I said last time that there were no Towers of Midnight, but here we get the –

SALLY: Oh, yeah.

EMILY: The allusions. There are multiple. To possible contenders for the Towers of Midnight, referred to in the title. [laughs] It's not exactly clear which one it's supposed to be. Um, first we get, you know, in our little wind monologue, the wind is passing through the continent of Seanchan, which we have visited but once for Rand and Aviendha to do the nasty. And, honestly, if anything was going to happen on the Seanchan continent in this book, it would be the igloo fucking scene. Like, that seems, that seems tonally appropriate.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [laughs] Just convoluted sexual dynamics and issues of consent happening on hashtag Slavery the Continent. So, the wind goes through the Seanchan continent – I didn't even realize we were in Seanchan until – I was like, "Oh, some weird place in the Borderlands."

SALLY: Yeah, I was like, “Where the fuck are we?” and then it said Seandar and I was like, “Oh...kay?”

EMILY: It’s like people are up in arms because there’s a murderer on the throne. And I was like, “Isn’t there always a murderer on the throne?”

SALLY: Yeah, that’s called being an emperor.

EMILY: A monarch.

BOTH: Yeah.

SALLY: A monarch, a head of state.

EMILY: And emperor. Yeah, you get there on the blood of your enemies, for the love. And, like, we’ve been told multiple times that it is a particularly *Game of Thrones*-ish...

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Game of thrones [laughs]. Literal game of thrones. So, I don’t know why we’re supposed to be shocked. Shooketh.

SALLY: Yeah, but there are some black...towers, like black stone towers or something.

EMILY: Yeah, the wind goes by some sort of abandoned fortress that is made up of thirteen, I think, black towers. Um, and I read on the Wikipedia [pronounced Wiki-pae-dia throughout] that these have something to do with...actually, I don’t care to relate the history I learned on the Wikipedia because it’s not recorded in this book.

SALLY: But I want to know the history you learned on the Wikipedia.

EMILY: It was something about, like, the guy who invented the *a’dam*. He was, like, in, he, he was besieged in those towers by some ancestors of Arthur Pendragon. Excuse me, Artur Paendrag [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] Um, that is a weird bit of history.

EMILY: Yeah, anyway, they were like, and they’re supposed to be left abandoned until ‘it’s time.’ And it’s unclear what the time is.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] And it’s unclear what the time is, but the Last Battle maybe.

SALLY: Okay.

EMILY: I don't know. And that's why people are like, "Maybe we should go back to the black towers?" Anyway, that, I think, is the less strong contender for the Towers of Midnight. Much more of a – much more obvious, I feel, is Egg's dream about the Black Towers, of which there are also thirteen. And she sees them falling and rising and rising and falling, until there are only six left, and one is taller than the others. This is a visual metaphor for the Forsaken, of whom Morridin is now in charge, so he was the tower that broke and rose up again. And now is the big boy. And I am frustrated that there are still six Forsaken [laughing] at this time in the series.

SALLY: Yeah, I absolutely did not clock that the Towers were supposed to be the Forsaken, because in my mind, in my head, I was like, "There's just, like, two, right?"

EMILY: No. There's fully six of them.

SALLY: There's Graendal and...there's just so many.

EMILY: And many of them, many of the six who are left, four of the six are women, because Robert Jordan, like, Rand, refuses to kill off women. So there's Morridin, Demandred, Graendal, as we know is still kicking, as is Mesaana – which one of Egg's other dreams refers to Mesaana being in disguise in the White Tower.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: And then Moghedien and Lanfear, née Cyndane.

SALLY: [laughs] Née.

EMILY: [laughs] Née. Wait – Cyndane née Lanfear.

SALLY: Née Lanfear

EMILY: Um, are also walking about enslaved. So, yeah, that's the Towers of Midnight. This book isn't particularly, like, Forsaken driven, so, I'm not sure why this book is titled that.

SALLY: I mean, it's a sick title. I think I said that last time.

EMILY: Sure, yeah.

SALLY: *Towers of Midnight* is a cool title.

EMILY: Rolls of the tongue.

SALLY: Um, but yeah, up until this point, the titles of the Wheely Time books have been at least somewhat thematic, you know?

EMILY: Yeah. Yeah. Or they have alluded more specifically in, like, epigraphs to something that is going on thematically.

SALLY: *A Crown of Swords*, yeah. *Lord of Chaos*.

EMILY: *Knife of Dreams*.

SALLY: Yeah. Um, so, it is a bit strange. Like, I can see the desire to try and keep the Forsaken on people's minds, although, again, to the first time reader, which is, you know, this is my first time reading this book, as a reminder, in case anyone has forgotten that.

EMILY: Despite her expertise.

SALLY: Despite my obviously extremely well-formed and correct opinions about it.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] I did not clock that the Towers of Midnight in Egg's dream were the Forsaken, like, I – but I – again, I just, there's not a lot of context for that, if you're not like, "I remember there are six Forsaken."

EMILY: Yeah, that there are six remaining. Yeah, there's another dream. One's about Mesaana, one's about the Forsaken slash the Towers of Midnight, and the third one is even less clear. It has to do with a spherical crystal made up of twenty-three components, and Rand breaking it. And you're like, "What the fuck does the number twenty-three have to do with anything?" There's not twenty-three countries in the world, surely. There's not twenty-three seals on the Dark One's prison. So, that's unclear. I looked on the Wikipedia, and all they had to say was, "Uhhh, we think maybe it has to do with the crystal sphere is the White Tower itself, because there are twenty-three – when you combine all of the representatives of the Hall of the Tower plus the Keeper plus the Amyrlin, that's twenty-three." And I'm like, "That's a ludicrous leap." If it's gonna symbolize the White Tower, why –

SALLY: Why wouldn't it be a tower?

EMILY: Why don't it be white? Instead of [laughing].

SALLY: Why would it be a crystal sphere?

EMILY: Transparent, yeah.

SALLY: Yeah, I thought, I did think it was the Dark One's prison, because Rand is cutting the little ropeys.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: But again, I was like – I’m really bad at interpreting Egg’s dreams, so, um. So, the dreams are really confusing, and Egg provides us interpretation, her interpretation of one of them, which is Mesaana as a serpent eating little baby eagles. And she’s like, “This one’s pretty clear to me.” And I’m like, “Oh.”

EMILY: Is it?!

SALLY: [laughing] I’m glad it was clear to you. Um, but she does say, you know, the other two are more confusing and maybe she’ll figure them out through the course of the book, but it is kind of, um, like if we’re going to call the book *Towers of Midnight*, to not get some sort of explanation of the towers – either set of towers – in text, when they first are presented to me. I’m a little lost.

EMILY: My other beef with the title *Towers of Midnight*, is, to me at least, it automatically makes me think of the Black Tower. The tower that is, you know, [laughs] midnight colored.

SALLY: Midnight colored. Yeah, I also get really frustrated because, I know I have not read this book, but to me this is, like, the Tower of Ghenjei book. That’s where we’re going.

EMILY: Yeah, it’s got the Tower of Ghenjei on the cover.

SALLY: And it’s, like, the Tower of Ghenjei is a single tower and it is white stone. So.

EMILY: Yeah, it’s not black.

SALLY: It really bugs me.

EMILY: And, like, the Black Tower has, there are, like, two sections of this book that take place in the Black Tower, or have to do with the conflict in the Black Tower. That’s going to be a much more prevalent, like, plotline, throughline, in the next book, *A Memory of Light*. I’m not suggesting [laughs] that that book should have been tilted *Towers of Midnight*, but, like, maybe some of the stuff that took place in that book should have taken place in this book instead of having to wallow with Galad and Perrin in the mud.

SALLY: Yeah. So, um, the wind goes [laughs] through, uh, S – Seanchan, Seandar, everyone over there is mad because presumably it’s Semirhage on the throne, you know, or whatever is going on over there.

EMILY: Well, now, Semirhage is dead, so who knows who her, like, puppet.

SALLY: Yeah, you’re right.

EMILY: It’s, like, irrelevant completely.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But it amuses me there's not even any effort to explain it.

SALLY: The wind goes across the ocean [laughs], the entire ocean.

EMILY: The wind follow the trade winds and the book is like, "Hey, I don't know if you've heard of this, but trade winds." And I'm like – they're like, "In another universe, they would be called trade winds." And I'm like, "This book has sailing ships, does it not? [laughs] Why not use the phrase trade winds?" [laughing] Sorry, it made me so mad.

SALLY: No, it made me so mad, too. It's like, "The winds, which in another age would be called trade winds," and I'm like this is so, like, I can't think of an opposite term for immersive, but, like, nothing took me out of this more.

EMILY: Yeah, it took me out so fast.

SALLY: So silly. But we go across the whole ocean and we land in an orchard in Andor-ish, at the bottom of Dragonmount that has lost all of its apples.

EMILY: Yeah, sort of in the no man's land up there, that is, like, near Tar Valon, but not really. But, yeah, all the apples have fallen. What a disaster [laughs], we are told. They're like, "It's not apple fallin' time, but the apples done been fallin'."

SALLY: They're, like, little apple buds.

EMILY: Little apple babies.

SALLY: If you've ever had an apple tree.

EMILY: Yeah, it's not edible.

SALLY: There's an apple tree in my backyard, so, yeah, they're, when they fall, they're like super bitter and disgusting and not big enough to be, like, a meal. So, it's apparently, like, this huge orchard that's, like, the entire town's livelihood. They all depend on it for labor or food or something, and oh no!

EMILY: Especially right now because everyone's fucking starving, because all the food in all of the world is going bad and it's a real problem and farming sucks.

SALLY: Yeah, but who should walk down out of the mountains than Jesus.

EMILY: Our point of view narrator –

SALLY: Sorry, yeah.

EMILY: In this scene is a guy named Almen Bunt and, as he reminds us, the last time we saw him was way back in *Eye of the World*, giving a ride to Rand and Mat.

SALLY: It's the same guy?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: I didn't clock that.

EMILY: He gives them a ride into Caemlyn. Yeah, he mentions it obliquely and when he sees Rand he's like, "Have I seen you before?" and Rand's like, "Yes." And then moves on immediately.

SALLY: Rand is in his, like, weird girl era.

EMILY: Yeah. Yeah.

SALLY: [laughs] Which we'll get into [laughs].

EMILY: So, this is a guy we've met before, which I just think is a funny, um [laughs]. Like, as you'll recall, *The Gathering Storm* more or less started with a completely random guy, a guy very much like Bunt. Who's just, you know, a farmer with a whole life and a whole family that can be summarized in two pages. And in Bunt's case it's he's a widower, he's loyal to the Queen, he has a farm in Andor but right now he's not in the farm in Andor because he needed to be in this scene.

SALLY: Yeah, his sister's husband got bubbled of eviled. Bubble of eviled away.

EMILY: Yeah, or something.

SALLY: So, he's here with his weird nephews.

EMILY: [laughs] His tiny, his twelve-year-old nephews.

SALLY: Yeah, his twelve- and fifteen-year-old nephews.

EMILY: Who are like, "Uncle, the farm!"

SALLY: "But what about the farm!"

EMILY: [in a country accent] "But what about the farm! The apples ain't supposed to fall like this!"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And you're like, "What the?"

SALLY: And you're like, "What is happening in this scene?" *But* what *is* happening in this scene, in a sort of mythological, archetypal context, is, um, the connection between the savior and the land itself. I think we've alluded to this or maybe talked about this more explicitly, that, um, with the decay of the world and the decay of food and the decay of farming as the Dark One comes is a very interesting manifestation of evil. And it is not, like, mythologically out of context that things would not decay around Mat, Perrin, and Rand as these sort of, like, *ta'veren*-esque figures. It's very common, if we're talking about the success of a people, of course, in many, um – I'm really struggling to get this out and using a lot of filler words. But in, like, um...so if we kind of go back, I keep thinking of, like, Arthurian literature, literature surrounding kings, Shakespearean kings, there will be a strong connection between the leader, or the savior, and the land. The success of the people will be measured by how fruitful the land is. Um, in the sort of feudal times this would be, of course, a great a measurement of success because it would mean how well are the people being fed, how much can they sell. And this is sort of moved on in literature as a sort of symbolic representation for *good* something is. How good the leader is doing, how well the people are doing. This symbol between sort of the leader and fertility, almost. Like, how fertile is the land, how successful is it. So, when Rand comes down out of the mountain and what happens is he's walking by and the apples, the trees just, like, flourish. There are just, like, ripe, red apples falling off all of the trees. This is...directly tied to Rand being a more enlightened figure, being more connected, being better for the land the people. He's literally better for the land in this instance. So.

EMILY: Yeah, famously, uh, yeah infamously in the last book, Rand's usual *ta'veren* influence of preventing food around him from rotting, uh, failed in Bandar Eban, the capital of Arad Doman, that last shipment of food, or the food that had been brought in to alleviate the starvation of the populous, just rotted all at once.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And that was very symbolic of Rand giving up on trying to save this people and Rand's, um, state of mind and general wellbeing. Like, you said, it's a very, like, medieval concept for the king to be connected to the land, famously, like, if there were, like um, famines and droughts were really bad times for, for monarchies because that was the only person that people could blame, besides God, who you couldn't blame for things in Medieval Europe. And as you alluded to, Rand is sort of our Fisher King figure. The Fisher King has an unhealing wound that is tied to the decay of the land, so the quest is that in order to fix the land you have to fix the king, heal the king. So, it's a little frustrating that Rand is still walking around with his two unhealable wounds.

SALLY: Yeah, that's a good point. They should have been healed during his enlightenment. That's silly.

EMILY: Yeah, I think I made that argument several, several books ago [laughs].

SALLY: That makes sense.

EMILY: That he should have had those things get fixed, but alas. Apples are, of course, symbolic themselves of enlightenment from a Western Christian, uh, philosophy. So, that's particularly



symbolic. So, yeah, Rand walking through here, the apples blossoming all at once, leading to a fixed economy, fixed – you know, these people won't starve, which is great for them. These two hundred people.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Yeah, this is all indicative of Rand being enlightened, Rand being a healthier person mentally and emotionally, et cetera.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Of course, he walks in and is the weirdest fucking –

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: He's got big TikTok empath energy.

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah, yeah. He really does. I'm an empath. As an empath, Rand can really feel when people are starving, you know?

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: He is *so funny*. I was just like – I don't think it is intentional on behalf of the authors to be like, "Once our Jesus figure is enlightened, he really is just, like, in his weird bitch era."

EMILY: He seems so much crazier now than he ever did.

SALLY: And it's just so funny to me. It's so bizarre. This guy is trying to talk to him, he's like, "There's nothing up there on Dragonmount, like there's nothing to eat. There's nothing good." And Rand's like, "I wouldn't say there's nothing good up there."

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: "I wouldn't say there's nothing of no value." And this starving farmer is like, "Uhhhh, okay?"

EMILY: Yeah, Rand is, like, walking around. He's giving Galadriel [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: He's giving –

SALLY: He is very –

EMILY: In place of a dark lord, you shall have a queen! [laughs]

SALLY: Galadriel is a perfect example. Like, that really haunting scene where she's talking, but she's staring directly at Frodo.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And is like [creepy whispers], "Frodo of the Shire!"

EMILY: And everyone is like, "What the fuck?"

SALLY: That's Rand.

EMILY: Yeah, if you dropped Galadriel into *Game of Thrones*, everyone would be like, "Ummmmm."

SALLY: She's weird! That's Rand.

EMILY: So, yeah. He's giving Galadriel. He's giving Gwyneth Paltrow on Goop [laughing]. Just weird health bitch energy.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah.

EMILY: Yoga guru.

SALLY: He's a wellness influencer.

EMILY: Cult leader.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: He's extremely, extremely weird. And Bunt's just like, "Okay."

SALLY: Alright, fella.

EMILY: Rand's like, "You better gather all your people to go..."

SALLY: Pick those apples.

EMILY: Pick those apples. And he's like, "Okay!" And runs and grabs some people to pick the apples. And we're all supposed to be reassured – I mean, symbolically, we're very reassured, but then Rand himself is, like [groans].

SALLY: Rand himself is just, like, so weird.

EMILY: Yeah, you're like, okay.

SALLY: Like, [laughs] have you guys seen that TikTok sound where it's like, "Do you ever think the wind is trying to tell us something, but we just can't hear it?" That's Rand right now.

EMILY: I haven't heard that Tiktok sound.

SALLY: It's really funny. It's smashcut with the Woody Harrelson, "I just need you to stop saying odd shit." So.

EMILY: Yeah, my entire attitude toward Rand in this book is going to be Woody Harrelson in *True Detective* season one saying, "I just need you to stop saying odd shit."

SALLY: [laughs] I just need you to stop saying odd shit.

EMILY: While Rand Matthew McConaugheys it around.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I don't sleep, I only dream.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Shut UP!

SALLY: You're so *annoying*!

EMILY: [laughs] So, it's actually incredible they've managed to make his character as annoying as his last manifestation.

SALLY: Yeah, massive lane change, but has not become more tolerable to me as a character.

EMILY: Still incredibly weird.

[cough]

SALLY: Then, Perrin.

EMILY: Yeah, now we're getting into the overall structure of this book, which, you know, chapter one is just a few pages and is all in one point of view. Um, but we're getting into extremely short chapters with extremely short, not extremely perhaps, but pretty short points of view within. So, it's going to be hard to relate those without consulting the book. But, yeah, we get Perrin. He is on the road away from Malden, as he was the entirety of last book. Here's the update. It's been fully a month since Malden. They have traveled what Perrin expected to travel in a week, but they were severely delayed by some bubble of evil that caused snakes to rampage through the camp, biting people.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And the poison particularly, wouldn't you know it, affected the only people who can make gateways.

SALLY: Yeah, so as if Grady and Neald weren't going through it enough.

EMILY: Yeah! As if fucking Grady and Neald hadn't suffered enough, now they're laid up with snake bites.

SALLY: Snake bites. Yeah.

EMILY: Rand's like – Perrin's like, "They almost died." And I'm like, "They were almost dead before? How [laughing] could it get worse for them?"

SALLY: Like, where? They were at rock bottom.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Where did their health go?

EMILY: Just start digging.

SALLY: Those poor little guys.

EMILY: I know. Um, Perrin does tell us that it wasn't just Grady and Neald, it was all Channelers who got bit who were particularly affected, but of course Grady and Neald were the only ones who could travel so, it's a problem. Um, they've also been just, like, delayed by weather stuff.

SALLY: Yeah, it's pretty muddy.

EMILY: Yeah. Perrin's huge just city of people that he is caravanning behind him just keeps growing, because bandits, mercenaries, refugees, whoever just keep flocking to him being like, "Hey, we heard that food doesn't go bad." And Perrin, for some reason, is like, "Yeah, of course food doesn't go bad. Because food is normal." And isn't like, "Wow, literally nine thousand people have come to me being like food is going bad everywhere and I'm not – " [laughs].

SALLY: Perrin is not very good at patterns.

EMILY: Yeah, ironically. Considering he is in the Pattern, and he is the Pattern's most specialist boy.

SALLY: That's sure what it feels like.

EMILY: Perrin is also like things have more or less, socially, gone back to the way that things were pre-Malden. Arganda is annoying. That's, um, Alliandre's head of the army. Berelain is

annoying. Faile and Perrin are not doing great, um, marriage wise. They did find Masema's body, which is extremely funny because [laughs] Faile did not own up to murdering him. She was just like, "Hm. Imagine that."

SALLY: She's like, "Wow." Perrin's like, "Bandits must have got him." And Faile, washing dishes or whatever, is like, "How interesting."

EMILY: Yeah, and I'm like, "Honestly?"

SALLY: Slay.

EMILY: Queen shit.

SALLY: She really did a good job with that one.

EMILY: Serving cunt in a god fearing way. We love to see it, Faile. Um, as they're traveling, they run into a member of – like ages ago, before the battle of Malden, Perrin sent away Basel Gill with, like, a little caravan of people, including, you know, Linni and our good old friend Lamgwin.

SALLY: Lamgwin my beloved and his mean girlfriend.

EMILY: Yeah and his mean girlfriend. That whole, um, clown car of people. They were sent ahead with supplies. They have now left someone behind to inform Perrin, "Hey, they changed the route because we'd received word that they originally chosen route is impassable." So, now they're kind of at, like, a more or less at a crossroads with Perrin trying to decide okay, well do we follow Gill? Do we try and keep going the way we originally planned? Do we wait for the Asha'man to recover? Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. The usual Perrin situation. Just *stuck*.

SALLY: Just stuck!

EMILY: Just stuck, choices ahead of us, and honestly? None of the choices really matter. None of us care which way Perrin goes and it's not terrible relevant to the narrative, soooooo. Ax or hammer? Who cares?

SALLY: But this time there's a third, worse option.

EMILY: Yeah. Uh, Faile comes up and is like, "Perrin, you're such a great leader." And Perrin's like, "No, I'm not. I'm the worst. Everyone hates me. All I've done is a bad job," which, everyone loves that [laughs]. Just completely self-flagellating.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Faile's like, "This is fun, so."

SALLY: Faile's like, "Literally no one has said that except you."

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: He's like, "That's not true."

EMILY: Yeah, Faile's like, "You're doing great. You need to have some confidence. Chill out." Um. She's also like, "Honestly? I think Malden was good for us." And Perrin's like...

SALLY: HMMMMMMMMMMMMMMMM.

EMILY: [laughs] What an interesting thing to say [laughs].

SALLY: It is an interesting thing to say, Faile. In what way was it good for you?

EMILY: Maybe we should unpack this in couple's counselling, that you guys will never go to.

SALLY: I have been wracking my brain being like, "What does she mean?"

EMILY: I don't know!

SALLY: Faile, what are you talking about?

EMILY: I don't know.

SALLY: Fa-ile, what are you saying?

EMILY: I think she's just trying to be like, you know, "Trauma, always has meaning." Which isn't true.

SALLY: Which is not true. Your suffering does not always have meaning.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: It's just suffering.

EMILY: And it's, like, sure, Faile. If you want to be like, "What happened to me in my captivity has been, like, I've learned important lessons and I've taken some positives away from it." Like, that's fine, but you don't get to speak for Perrin.

SALLY: Yeah, you are allowed to make meaning out of your own experiences in whichever way works for you. You are allowed to make meaning out of your own suffering. You cannot – inherently, your own suffering does not have meaning and you cannot dictate that for other people.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Which is just what you said. Sorry, I'm on my soapbox.

EMILY: No. She just seems to be, like, implying they needed a break in their relationship.

SALLY: Yeah, or some shit.

EMILY: Which is a wild thing to say considering that she did have a break in her relationship, in the form of a man sexually assaulting her pretty repeatedly. Whereas Perrin...was just obsessed with her the entire time, so he didn't get a break.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, it's just wild. You know, the usual. We then switch over, on page 69, nice, to Galad, who is awakening in captivity. He has been beaten up, but does not seem to have undergone any torture, yet. So, he just, like, wakes up from being passed out. He's naked, which is like, oh how the turn tables, I guess.

SALLY: For once equal opportunity nudity.

EMILY: For once it's a hot guy who's naked instead of –

SALLY: And chained up and dirty and beaten and bloody.

EMILY: Yeah, but don't worry, he's still got his dignity. His dick-nity [laughs].

SALLY: [scoffs] Fuck off.

EMILY: [laughs] Um, Galad wakes up and is like, "Hmm, well. I'm not afraid of torture. I fear neither death nor pain." What do you fear my lady?

SALLY: A cage!

EMILY: He literally says he fears neither death nor pain. Like, that's a direct quote. And someone should have said, [whispering] "What do you fear, my lady?"

SALLY: [whispers] A cage!

EMILY: Okay, Galad.

SALLY: You're in a cage.

EMILY: Anyway, he gets himself up, tries to get himself up to prepare for what he assumes is the inevitable torture when some guys walk in, led by his guys. Galad's like, "I told you not to rescue me!" They're like, "No, we're – we've come with some of Asunawa's guys." And they show him Asunawa's head. They're like, "Isn't this what you would be delighted to see?"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Galad: [gagging noises]. Just throws up.

SALLY: [laughs] That would be so funny.

EMILY: He's like, "Oh, I'm just really bad with gore. Could we not do this?"

SALLY: Could we not do this? I didn't need to see his severed head.

EMILY: Um, Galad's like, "What happened?" They're like, "Well, we were just so compelled, so moved, really, by how you presented yourself and by how honorable and cool and manly you were. And how you are – and how obviously you're a better Whitecloak than Asunawa because you're better at...scriptures than he is. That we just decided to, you know, have an armed conflict about it."

SALLY: Yeah, like...this entire thing is very idealistic, which is fitting for Galad. Like, it opens and he's going through – he's got the same philosophy about pain that Egg took the entire time she was being beaten in the White Tower, which is just, like...basically – I guess not quite the same. He's like, "I'm distracting myself from pretending that it doesn't exist. Like, it's not even that bad. I am doing this for a higher purpose, like, I can bear anything as long as the Whitecloaks aren't killing each other." Or whatever. Which is, like, extremely idealistic and he's like, "I know it will be hard, but, um, I'm going to stay, you know, faithful to the truth no matter what happens to me under torture." And it's, like, okay, well, we never get to see that play out so there's no way for us to say whether that was true or not, Galad. And, then, of course, he never has to go through torture, because everything that he said worked out perfectly. All these guys were deprogrammed immediately by what Galad said about how Whitecloaks shouldn't kill each other.

EMILY: His two sentences that he only said in front of, like, three guys.

SALLY: Yeah. And it's just, like, yeah, Galad did the right thing and it worked out in his favor and everyone just notices how much incredibly integrity and honor and manliness he has. And it's like okay, what a great little fanfiction somebody wrote.

EMILY: Yeah, what a great little fantasy about leadership and –

SALLY: Yeah, you're right. Fanfiction would be much more compelling than this.

EMILY: Yeah, there would at least be, like, cool sex. Probably [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, definitely.

EMILY: [laughing] We'd at least get more of the psychosexual obsession between Asunawa and Galad.



SALLY: Yeah! So, yeah, it is just this little, like, fantasy scene and the whole thing feels very unsatisfying. Again, I don't want to watch Galad get tortured, but it's, like, there's no consequence to any of his actions.

EMILY: Yeah. No one wants to watch Galad get tortured, but there is, like, a narrative sort of, um, cowardice in being like here's a character who will of course stand up for torture and fully believes that he can stand up to torture and he's a perfect boy and he won't start crying and screaming as soon as he gets tortured, like literally everyone else in the entire world does.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: You know, because he's God's perfect boy or whatever. And to not – and to just be like well we'll never have to see – *we* will never have to see Galad reckon with the reality that torture destroys you.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, and honestly that's not even something that is, because of the structure of this scene, we just never would have to do that anyway. Because we saw Egg get tortured and never have to confront that reality. This series just doesn't believe in making its protagonists confront that reality.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, I think that's what's frustrating here. And then yeah of course there's the just, like, ongoing fantasy that if you're good enough at, um, talking, and if you're idealistic enough and if you have the right goals and ambitions and the right reasons for doing the things that you do, then everything will work out. Which, for some reason, only every really applies to Galad and Gawyn. I don't really know why other [laughs] people don't seem to do that.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But when it's that transparent, it starts to feel like we can see the blueprint. It's like okay, clearly Brandon Sanderson and Robert Jordan really need Galad to be in charge and they want Galad to be completely in charge of the Whitecloaks so there's not all this confusion about some of the Whitecloaks are with the Seanchan, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. We just need things to be nice and tidy before the Last Battle. And it's like, okay. But you could have done that without having this scene to begin with.

SALLY: Yeah, this all could have happened offscreen.

EMILY: Yeah, if Galad just showed up with all the Whitecloaks and was like, "Yeah. Met Asunawa. Killed him. End." We'd be like, "Great!"

SALLY: Good. He was a freak. He was a little creep in the darkness.

EMILY: Yeah, and we never gave a single fuck about him or viewed him as a viable threat, really. So.

SALLY: He was just a creep. Fine to kill.

EMILY: Whatever.

SALLY: Good. Good riddance. Now you've got all the magic – terrible boys.

EMILY: Yeah, so this is just the ongoing narrative about Galad being awarded for being a religious terrorist. Because, unlike the other religious terrorists, he's pure at heart.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, his namesake, Galahad from the Arthurian legends, who could only see the Holy Grail because he was so pure...and a virgin. Which, we'll never know if Galad is a virgin because no one has written that fanfiction.

SALLY: Does Galad fuck?

EMILY: Probably not [laughs].

SALLY: Question to the people.

EMILY: Um.

SALLY: God, you're right. He must be so insufferable to be around in – as a real person, I'd be like, "Shut the fuck up."

EMILY: Yeah, if I were Byar, is that who's with him? Dain Bornhald, struggling with addiction, and Byar, struggling with being a little bitch.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Those two. If I were either of those two, I'd be like, "God, I fucking hate this guy."

SALLY: Or maybe they're in a throuple.

EMILY: Where's the fanfiction people?

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I would actually rather claw my own eyes out than read a fanfiction in which Byar, Mister Torture. Jr. Mister Torture Jr.

SALLY: [laughing] Torture Jr.

EMILY: Is having crazy sex with Dain Bornhald, the most nothing character of all time.

SALLY: I didn't say it was crazy sex, I just said they were in a throuple.

EMILY: Vanilla – [laughs] incredibly vanilla sex.

SALLY: Just going about life, doing – they've got a lot of administrative tasks to see to.

EMILY: Okay, then we get to the third chapter wherein we get an Egg point of view as she is dreaming. First, in her dream, she sends a message to Nynaeve being like, "Bitch!"

SALLY: Yeah, which feels a little aggressive.

EMILY: She's like, "Where the fuck have you been? Meet me! Stop avoiding me!" And I'm like -

SALLY: And it's like have you been reaching out to her?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: This was not communicated to me that you were trying to get in contact with Nynaeve.

EMILY: Yeah, it kind of seems like you've had other stuff to deal with in the last few books, so you just haven't been talking to Elayne and Nynaeve, but what do I know. But she's like, "Come on. Come to the White Tower. We have to figure stuff out." And then she has her special dreams, which we've already talked about. Um, those kind of wake her up. She gets up and is about to leave when Silviana knocks on her door and is like, "Uh, the Dragon Reborn's here." And Egg's like, "Exsqueeze me?"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Smashcut to Siuan? Who is gathering with pretty much every other Aes Sedai, awaiting this meeting between Rand and Egwene with the Hall of the Tower looking on. Uh, kind of a nothing point of view. They're just like, "What's going on?" Our good old friend Captain Chubain is like, "He just walked in. Go figure." And everyone's like, "Whoa. How scary."

SALLY: Wow. Whooaa.

EMILY: And it's like yeah. It's not like he's got a big sign on his – it's not like Dragon Reborn is tattooed on his forehead.

SALLY: Yeah, and, like, even if it was, you people don't pay attention to anything.

EMILY: Yeah, he's a man. You guys would be like –

SALLY: A dude.

EMILY: We hate dudes. Gareth Bryne shows up and is like, “You seem nervous.” She’s like, “Yeah, I always thought it would be me, meeting with the Dragon Reborn, because that was my whole life’s work and I was present at that crazy prophecy, you know? And blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. But I’m happy it’s Egwene not me.” And Bryne’s like, “Wow, you’re so mature” and she’s like, “I know,” and they fuck in the hallway [laughs].

SALLY: It’s, like, like I think there’s some interesting thing there about Siuan’s character, about what you do, and your life’s work and ambition gets handed off to somebody else. But it really is, like, I wish – like, it would have been more interesting to me if she wasn’t mature about it. If she was like, “Yeah, I’m pissed. And I’m sad that everything turned out this way, and yeah Egwene’s gonna do a better job than me, but I’m still allowed to be pissed about it.”

EMILY: Yeah, you’re still allowed to have your feelings about it. You don’t have to, like, give yourself therapy every time that you have a negative feeling.

SALLY: Yeah, you don’t have to be like, “Well, yeah. It’s fine.”

EMILY: And I – I have complete closure about it now, immediately.

SALLY: [whispers] That’s dumb.

EMILY: But Rand has been, like, shielded by, like, twenty-six women, something ridiculous.

SALLY: Double shielded. Is that a thing? [laughs]

EMILY: The Rand of six books ago would have never gone within reach of thirteen Aes Sedai, that’s really freaky to him, but new and improved Rand – or rather, just new Rand [laughs].

SALLY: New and weirder Rand.

EMILY: New and weirder Rand is like, “It’s fine, because I’m magic.”

SALLY: No biggie. My magic moondust will keep me safe from this.

EMILY: Uh, but they arrive. Rand spots Siuan and is like, “Siuan! My old bestie.” She’s like, “What?” [laughs]. He’s like, “Thanks for taking an arrow for me back in the day.” And she’s like, “Literally had no choice in the matter.” And he’s like, “Still.”

SALLY: Thank youuuuu! Like, does magic fingers at her and walks away.

EMILY: He’s like, “I just know that see Egg will hurt, even though I thought that wound long healed.” And Siuan’s like, “Literally none of my business.”

SALLY: Okay.

EMILY: Okay, oversharing [laughs].

SALLY: You are oversharing in this hallway.

EMILY: Goodbye. Then we switch back to Egg's point of view as Rand enters the room. She's like, "Whoa, something seems way different about him. He's so confident."

SALLY: [laughing] Something's off about her.

EMILY: [laughing] Something's off about her. What's that from?

SALLY: [laughing] In *Avatar*, when Zuko and Azula are having final Agni Kai.

EMILY: [laughs] Oh yeah. Something's off about her, [laughing] and then we see Azula with crazy eyes and her – [laughing].

SALLY: Badly cut bangs [laughs]. I can't – something's off. I can't tell, but she's slipping.

EMILY: [laughs] I can't tell, but she's slipping. I always loved that *Avatar* made the supreme joke of a woman going insane will always try to cut her own bangs.

SALLY: It's so good!

EMILY: There's no sign of mental instability like a woman trying to cut her own bangs.

SALLY: Her own bangs.

EMILY: Ugh, so good.

SALLY: I know. It's such an iconic – Azula – [laughing] seriously, the bangs are so bad.

EMILY: [laughs] She's slipping. Anyway, she's like, "You know what's crazy? He was slipping, but not he seems to be hanging on really well. "

SALLY: Yeah, he actually seems fine.

EMILY: He doesn't seem crazy at all. She's like, "What's happened?" And he says something insane like, "I was reformed. Cadsuane did it by accident." And Egg's like, "Um, okay."

SALLY: Did she?

EMILY: She's like, "What are you doing here?" He's like, um, then he just says more insane shit about how, he's like, "I've realized that I hated Aes Sedai, but really I just hate fate and I just need to accept that everything's fine." And Egg's like, "You literally did not answer my question. Like."

SALLY: Yeah, he says something wild about – what does he say? It’s so weird. “I’ve been struggling to avoid Aes Sedai strings of control, and yet I allowed other strings, more dangerous strings, to wrap around me unseen.”

EMILY: [singing] I’ve got no strings on me! And she’s like, “What?”

SALLY: She’s like, “*Why are you here?* That is the question!”

EMILY: Could you answer a single question! That I’m putting to you. She’s like, “Hey, Rand. I think you need to see some mental health specialists. Let’s go see how – ” Because she thinks he’s having a delusional break.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which, of course, we as the readers are like, “Oh, Egg, you stupid idiot. Of course he’s enlightened,” because the narrative has not set us up to be really sympathetic to Egg in this moment.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean this whole thing is called the Amyrlin’s Anger.

EMILY: Yeah, you know, Egg doesn’t seem particularly angry.

SALLY: Yeah, it’s really strange. Like, why – I don’t know, the whole setup is weird. But he’s saying his odd shit.

EMILY: He’s saying odd shit. She’s like, “Let’s go talk to some people.” He’s like, “Hmm. Sorry, I can’t. But I’ve gotta go. There’s so little time.” And she’s like, “Okay, we really have to make sure that you’re, like, not crazy and everything’s good with you.” And he’s like, “No, everything’s fine. I’m Lews Therin – ” He, like, alludes to the fact that – he’s like, “I know what I have to do because what I did last time sucked.” And she’s like, “So, are you Lews Therin?” And he’s like, “What?” He’s like, “I’m both! I am all! I am one!” Blah, blah, blah, blah. He’s like, “Egg, in one month, please meet me. In one month, I’m going to travel to Shayol Ghul and break the seals on the Dark One’s prison. I want your help. So, I want to meet with you the day before I go to Shayol Ghul and discuss terms.” And she’s like, “Fucking terms? Like, we’re bargaining now.” He’s like, “You’ll figure – you’ll see.” And she’s like, “You can’t break the seals. That’s gonna let the Dark One out.” And he’s like, “Well, I have to clear away the rubble.” And she’s like, “I haven’t been with you for the last six books going through this philosophical journey, so this is very confusing and sudden to me. What are you talking about?” He’s like, “We’ll talk in a month.” She’s like, “What? Rand, you can’t – what?” It’s the most confusing conversation on her side of things.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: She’s like, “You can’t break the seals.” He’s like, “Meet me at the Fields of Merrilor, which is just north of Tar Valon, in a month’s time.” Um, then he leaves. And everyone’s like,

“Whoa, that was crazy. We couldn’t even talk or move because his *ta’veren* influence is so strong. How’d you do it Egg?” And she’s like, “I’m just special, I guess.” Um, and everyone’s like, “Well, we can’t let him break the seals on the Dark One’s prison.” And she’s like, “We have to get allies.” End of scene. She’s like, “Oh, I really need to talk to Nynaeve now.” So, very confusing from Egg’s point of view. Um, a prime example, especially with the two characters of Rand and Egwene, who are often, like, the epitomes of this particular issue in *The Wheel of Time*. That if characters would just, like, communicate in a calm and normal way and just have conversations the way normal humans do, then we would not have the problems that we have.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: But Rand’s on his wellness, health bullshit and is like, “Everything’s fine and I’m perfect. And I’m Lews Therin and I’m enlightened.” And so, of course, Egwene is like Rand is fully in the middle of a delusion.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: He wants to, like, nuke the world, basically. Obviously, I have to, like, try and stop him. And Rand instead of just being like, “Here’s the deal. Let’s sit down over lunch and I’ll tell you what the last few months, years, have been like for me and then you will see where I’m coming from.” Like, if they just had a normal conversation [laughs] it probably would have been fine, but instead we’re setting up this conflict of like Egwene is gonna gather people, Rand is gonna gather people and they’re going to meet at the field of Merrilor and they’re going to have some crazy discussion about what’s going to happen.

SALLY: Yeah, and, like, um.

EMILY: And, like, I don’t – I have not missed the fact that Rand is our prime male character and is representative of all things male and masculine, whereas Egg is our prime female representative of all things feminine. It’s all very obviously.

SALLY: Yeah, and there can be instances in which lack of communication can lead to plot in a way that is fun and fulfilling. Like, this is the second time I’ve mentioned William Shakespeare this episode, but, like, a really, like a strong driving force in a lot of Shakespeare plays is just that people don’t have all the information and they’re not saying things that other people understand. Particularly fun in comedies, you know, but a driving force in a lot of the tragedies and it works fine and lovely. And it can work in other instances, too, but we have done this so many times in *Wheel of Time*, where the conflict comes from people not being willing to have conversations, that it just is, like, draining. Like, I’m over it. I was over it six books ago.

EMILY: And, like, I get it. Men and women are different, according to Robert Jordan. And see the world differently and can’t talk to each other and therefore everyone’s mad at each other. And I’m like this isn’t the, like, sparkling social commentary that you seem to think that it is. For one thing, a woman would never have a position of power the way Egg does [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah. A female pope?!

EMILY: Yeah, god, are you kidding?

SALLY: An all female Catholic church?

EMILY: We had a young pope before we had a female pope.

SALLY: Yeah, they put a child up there before they'd let a woman do it.

EMILY: But that's where we end, with sort of those things set up. That sort of confrontation, setting up between Egwene and Rand. We know what Egwene is maybe going to be doing for some of this book, and nothing, really, has been set up with Perrin and Galad. Perrin's at a crossroads and Galad is in charge, still.

SALLY: Nothing's changed, but Galad is now wearing a flimsy robe. If that helps.

EMILY: Yeah, he's naked if that helps you.

SALLY: Just emotionally.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Doesn't have to, but, okay! It's time to track our mood! Let me get our markers.

EMILY: Okay, I need a refresher on the colors.

SALLY: Yeah. Okay. Are we feeling, at the end of this episode, happy, sad, dead inside, mad, confused, or like we want to quit the podcast?

EMILY: Um, I feel dead inside, primarily.

SALLY: Okay.

EMILY: How 'bout you?

SALLY: Um, weirdly enough I do feel a little happy for once.

EMILY: Yeah, then show that.

SALLY: Because I –

EMILY: Get a little green on the board while we still can.

SALLY: Yeah, get a little green on the board while life still feels good. [The sound of a marker coloring on paper] Because I do think, um, enlightened influencer Rand is extremely high comedy value.



EMILY: Yeah, that is pretty funny.

SALLY: I don't think he's supposed to be, but that's how I feel personally.

EMILY: No, definitely not supposed to be a figure of comedy.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: But it is incredibly funny.

SALLY: I don't sleep, I only dream [more coloring].

EMILY: [laughs] I don't sleep, I only dream. I'm gonna go watch *True Detective* season one [laughs] just to get the vibes.

SALLY: I've never seen *True Detective*.

EMILY: Well, it's pretty gory, so you wouldn't like it very much.

SALLY: Well. I'm trying to be braver.

EMILY: Well, I don't know how much value it really has, except for that one scene that is extremely funny and the rest of it is like...weird.

SALLY: Matthew McConaughey.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Gosh, I'm losing all my markers. They're falling into the cracks of the couch. Okay! We have tracked our mood, we have talked about many things.

EMILY: Yeah, let's sign off. This is, um, this is it. God, what am I doing?

SALLY: This is Everybody Hates Rand, [laughing] your friendly neighborhood –

EMILY: Again. We just start over.

SALLY: [laughing] *Wheel of Time* podcast.

EMILY: The Wheel of Time has no endings and no beginnings. Thank you, everyone, for listening. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: Yep.

SALLY: Um, you guys are exceptional.

EMILY: Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: Um, this is all I can think of, sorry. I – my nephew turned five. Congratulations to my nephew Declan, what a big kind. And I went to his birthday party last weekend and my niece, who is just a little over one, they set her down and she started walking and I was like, “Holy shit, did I – was I the only person who witnessed this child’s first steps?”

EMILY: Oh my god, yeah.

SALLY: I was like, “Oh my god! She’s walking!” And from the other room, everyone’s like, “Yeah, she’s been doing that for, like, six weeks.” And I was like, “Nobody told *me*!”

EMILY: Yeah, thanks everyone for the news alert.

SALLY: Yeah, I was like, “What the heck, this is, like, a huge milestone in a child’s life.” And everyone’s like, “Yeah, sorry. “

EMILY: Old news.

SALLY: Old hat, bitch. And Emery was like, “Yeah, bye, girl. See you later.”

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: And just ran out of the room.

EMILY: Imagine if she’d just walked and looked at you like, “No one will ever believe you” [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] I seriously was like oh my god. I didn’t even have my phone. I didn’t even take a video or anything. And everyone was like, “No big deal.” She’s been walking forever.

EMILY: Okay, everyone. Have a good week. Bye!

SALLY: Bye!