



Episode 276: Hashtag Love Wins
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Sally: Everybody Hates Rand is a Wheel of Time podcast that will contain spoilers for all 14 books. So if you're anti-spoiler, stop this, read all 14 books, and come back. We'll be here. Waiting.

Emily: Our title is a joke and is meant to be taken as such. "Everybody," in this context, refers to us and our cats. You are free to feel however you want about Rand. He's a fictional character. Please don't DM us.

(theme song by Glynna MacKenzie plays)

Sally: Oh, Elayne is so rancid in these. Anyway. Guess what this is?

Emily: (laugh) It's Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheely Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: If Elayne hates her midwife so much, why doesn't she get a new one? You know?

Sally: I don't know. I was thinking that too. She's – like, wakes up; she's like, "That's weird; I couldn't get into Tel'aran'rhiod last night because pregnant women can't channel –"

Emily: Yeah, "Because of my damn pregnancy, I can't do anything –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because that's just how women are –

Sally: That's how women are.

Emily: According to Robert Jordan.

Sally: Um, and then her –

Emily: If a woman gets pregnant, fire her immediately. She's useless.

Sally: Yeah. And then her midwife comes in, and Elayne's like, "God, I hate this bitch. She's so annoying."

Emily: Elayne's like, "This bitch is always telling me what to do, and she doesn't – and I don't like that she tells me what to do," and I'm like, okay, that's the extent of your complaints, I think?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So she's your doctor, so calm down, maybe. But also –

Sally: Calm down.

Emily: Yeah, if you want a yes man, then get a yes man.

Sally: Yeah, get a yes man doctor.

Emily: Who will be like, “Yeah, go out – you're pregnant, but – and a queen, like, the head of a state, soon to be multiple states, but just get out there while they're testing cannons. Why don't you go stand right in front of one, you know?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Safety is overrated.”

Sally: Yeah, “I don't believe in safety.” This is the type – she needs the type of doctor that will tell you not to wash your hands.

Emily: Yeah. She needs a – a vaccine, um, denier. What are those called? (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Anti-vaxxer.

Emily: (laugh) An anti-vaxxer.

Sally: A vaccine denier.

Emily: Denier, denier. Um, yeah, Elayne wakes up; she received a message from Egg, like, a – a coded message, which seems ridiculous because you're infiltrating a – one specific person's dream; it's not like someone's gonna overhear –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Elayne's dreams? I guess that is, uh, technically a thing that can happen due to –

Sally: But it's not like –

Emily: Dreams being warded.

Sally: A super secretive message. It's like, “Mesaana is dead, and Gawyn saved my life.”

Emily: “Byeeee,” yeah, it –

Sally: Like, those aren't two incredibly important – Mesaana isn't even dead. Not two incredibly important pieces of information.

Emily: Yeah. Elayne's like, “Wow, how great.” She wakes up and one of the first sounds she hears is that, like, the army outside is just, um, practicing with the cannons, which I think is incredibly funny.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And this entire city is just like, “What the fuck is happening?”

Sally: Yeah. Just, like, all day long, she's like –

Emily: Boom. Big booms.

Sally: “They’re just firing loose cannons.”

Emily: She’s like, okay.

Sally: RIP to all the cats and dogs in Caemlyn.

Emily: I know, poor – poor kitties. You guys would be so upset. Anyway, Elayne’s midwife comes in, checks out Elayne, and is like, “Uh, today I verified that there are two babies ‘cause I hear two heartbeats, congrats,” and Elayne’s like – (gasp) high on life as she goes to her next meeting with Norry and Dyelin, where they’re basically just talking about Elayne’s imminent Cairhien – Cairhienin takeover.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is just like a stupid conversation because Dyelin and Norry are like, “Here are some problems that we foresee with you attempting to become the head of state in Cairhien,” very reasonable concerns that the people have, that, um, you know ‘cause it’s just never really a good idea when someone becomes the king of queen of two existing countries.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, one is going to eat the other; that’s just generally how it works. Um, and Elayne’s just like, “Well, they’re all idiots. Of course I’m not going to do that.” I’m like, no one knows you, Elayne. You’ve been queen of Andor for two months. No one can make any policy decisions based on your behavior.

Sally: Also, like, I don’t believe you that you’re not going to do that.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, yes, you’re so right, people just keep being like, “Oh, well, she’s a monarch trying to take over another country, what else would she be doing?”

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: You cannot simultaneously rule two countries because you – because you cannot simultaneously be in two places at once.

Emily: Elayne’s like, “We have teleporting,” and it’s like, okay, that’s still –

Sally: Rand has had teleporting for forever and can’t manage to rule a single one of the countries he is king of, so.

Emily: He’s so bad at it. Incredibly bad at it.

Sally: That’s why he’s appointing stewards finally, at least.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: You know? Like, to – learn from someone else’s mistakes for once, Elayne. So it’s so dumb, but it’s like, all of your behavior and the way you’ve been making decisions indicates that you would do this anyway. Like, your little – she’s got a secret warehouse full of cannons that she’s not letting anybody else touch. What are you gonna do with those, Elayne? “They’re just defensive.” That’s not real.

Emily: Yeah. You’re hoarding weapons, yeah.

Sally: Monarchs – heads of state don’t think that way, yeah. You hoard weapons to use them.

Emily: Yeah, Elayne expects everyone in both countries to just take her morality as a given.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: As though – like, it’s just not realistic for a head of state to believe that.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? Either Elayne’s the stupidest politician who’s ever existed, to be like, “Well, the people are just wrong, and people can’t be concerned about me taking over Cairhien really, it must be some elaborate propaganda mechanism that we have to uncover a plot for,” and because there will be, like, an elaborate propaganda mechanism that we will uncover the plot for, the narrative is backing up Elayne’s point of view.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And saying, like, yeah, everyone in Cairhien is just an idiot to not just fully trust that Elayne is going to be a great monarch to them.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it’s like – like, the narrative is just shoving it at us, like, “This is the solution.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “You should be happy about this. You should be happy about Elayne ruling multiple countries,” and I’m like, I’m not even happy about Elayne ruling this country. She’s bad at it.

Sally: Yeah, she’s bad at it. She’s not a good ruler, and the narrative is constantly trying to tell me that she is. Like, in the later scene we get of the Two Rivers negotiations, she’s just a raging imperialist bitch about the whole thing.

Emily: She’s, like, not even good at negotiations –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is so wild, ‘cause we’ve seen her in other scenes where it’s been like, “Look how good Elayne is –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “At doing diplomacy.” But she sits down with Perrin and Faile and is like, “Why shouldn’t I just execute you?” And it’s like, okay, do you – you know why you shouldn’t execute them. Perrin has a giant army outside that will attack you.

Sally: Yeah. He brought Grady, who’s ready to fight.

Emily: Yeah, Grady and Gaul are right outside the door.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You’re so stupid.

Sally: You are – she is so dumb. She’s just – I hate her. I hate her. This is Everybody Hates Elayne.

Emily: Everybody hates Elayne! Anyway, Birgitte brings in two people who are hilariously wearing fucking cloaks over their head – masks. You know?

Sally: (laugh) It’s, like, so dumb. And this will soon be revealed to be Galad and Morgase –

Emily: I know, but –

Sally: But one thing I love about Galad is he’s so dramatic.

Emily: He’s like – I picture it as, like, Prince Charming in *Shrek 2* –

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Taking off his hairnet. That’s always Galad.

Sally: And it’s –

Emily: Slow-motion.

Sally: Slow-motion, yeah.

Emily: He’s like, “It’s me, Elayne.” And Morgase is just like, “Hi.” I just think it’s so funny. Like, why the cloaks? Are they thinking someone will recognize them?

Sally: That’s the point.

Emily: I wouldn’t recognize Joe Biden if he walked down the street. I’d be like, “Oh, that guy looks a lot like Joe Biden,” if that. You know?

Sally: Yeah. If that. I’d be like, “Hmm.”

Emily: You’d be like, “Oh, that person looks a lot like the dead queen Morgase.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And then later you’d hear it’s actually Morgase and you’d be like, “Oh, wild.”

Sally: “That’s crazy.”

Emily: Does anyone know what Galad – I mean, I guess Galad is memorable because –

Sally: He's very hot, yeah.

Emily: He – pussies are popping every time he walks into a room.

Sally: He's also – maybe he's trying to cover his dumb Whitecloak uniform, which he decided to wear to the palace.

Emily: Everyone's like, "The Whitecloaks are invading!" (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: "Ahhh!"

Sally: So I guess there's some reason, but it's like, the theatrics are needless, Galad.

Emily: Yeah. So funny. Anyway, Elayne and Morgase are, like, weirdly formal with each other because they're in front of people, and Galad's like, "Let me just tell you what I've been up to," and Elayne's like, "You're with the Whitecloaks; I don't really care what you've been up to," and Galad's like, "But it's important."

Sally: "Let me tell you. Let me tell you. I need to trauma-dump on you."

Emily: I – yeah. Nyeh. Anyway, Dyelin and Norry and Galad leave; Elayne and Galad make, like, a dinner appointment, which is so funny. Elayne keeps being like, "I'm oddly happy to see Galad again. It's nice to see my brother," and it's like, yeah.

Sally: Yeah, like I –

Emily: You've been so weird to him your entire life.

Sally: We've, like, analyzed Elayne's weird relationship with Galad at length, acknowledging that she does have some points about his extremist thinking, but at the end of the day, it's like, that is a person you grew up with, so, like, of course you would be at least, like, happy they're okay.

Emily: I think it would've been so funny if we switched to Galad's point of view after this and he's like, "God, Elayne is as insufferable as always. I hate that ho."

Sally: (laugh) There is a pretty funny moment later where Perrin's like – he and – his, you know, nine thousand people are going to meet Elayne, and he turns to Galad and he's like, "Are you sure you don't want to come?" And Galad's like, "No, my dinner with Elayne was enough, thank you."

Emily: Yeah, and we're just supposed to be like, "Oh, Galad's so weird and formal –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But it's like, what if Galad was just like, "Uh, God, no, not again."

Sally: "My sister is annoying."

Emily: “God, she sucks.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So that would’ve made Galad ten times more relatable.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Anyway, um, after leaving, Elayne and Morgase just talk about, like, you know, how they’re going to have to handle this relationship, um, or, you know, this sort of new –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Development. And Morgase is like, “By the way, I’ve been with Perrin and he’s here to, you know, negotiate finally.” Elayne’s like, “Bah, the Two Rivers, blah blah blah blah.” Then we switch to Aviendha’s point of view; she has reached Rhuidean and is now, like, engaging in an evening of contemplation and fasting before she goes through the arches. She’s just like, “It’s so wild how that crazy lady in the desert made me think so much about tradition and how useful it is and whether we should change and whether Rhuidean is obsolete now because everyone already knows the history of the Aiel, so what’s the point of going through the arches?” You know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I guess they’re not the arches; I think it’s, like, the –

Sally: The pillars.

Emily: Are they, like, the glass columns?

Sally: Yeah, the glass columns.

Emily: Yeah, the arches are a different thing. Then we switch over to the Black Tower and Androl. Androl, who’s working with leather. The chapter is titled “Working Leather.”

Sally: What is a leatherworker called? Do they have a specific name?

Emily: I don’t know.

Sally: I was mad that Brandon didn’t tell me.

Emily: Yeah, considering he tells me so many other pretentious, pedantic things.

Sally: Yeah. “What is a leatherworker called?”

Emily: I guess I thought they were just called “leatherworkers,” but that seems wordy.

Sally: “A person who makes leather from animal skins is a tanner;” knew that.

Emily: Right.

Sally: But, like, as a – “someone who cuts, sews, and decorates leather is simply called a leatherworker.”

Emily: Huh.

Sally: According to Quora, I guess. Maybe I should do a little more research.

Emily: Androl – this isn’t immediately clear; it will become clear – Androl is not a leatherworker by profession; he’s a jack of all trades. He’s basically a Mary Sue. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just in terms of, like, life experience. He has been to a lot of places; he has had a lot of experiences; that’s his whole thing. But now he’s in the Black Tower. Um, Androl – here’s what we learn about Androl right off the bat, besides that he’s working leather and being kind of annoying about it as he – he’s like, “Leather. What a gift.”

Sally: “Leather is a gift, and the most important thing in the world is being attentive to every single small detail, and because I do this, it makes me better than everybody else around me.”

Emily: Yeah, “Some idiots don’t know how to do this, but I do.”

Sally: “Me.”

Emily: “I’m perfect at it.”

Sally: “I’m perfect at paying attention to the small things.”

Emily: Yeah. We’re supposed to gain some sympathy for Androl for two reasons: one is that he has an interesting sort of, um – he has some limitations on his, uh, channeling ability in that he is, like, a very low-level channeler. He doesn’t – he isn’t able to harness a lot of power. And due to some mental illness that is, uh, that has stayed with him since the cleansing of saidin, he is unable to hold saidin for a long time. But he has a talent for Traveling, capital-T Traveling, which is interesting because we’ve always been told that you have to be, like, a pretty high-powered –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Channeler to Travel. Um. I don’t really care about, like, breaking that rule at this point; I think what Androl does with Traveling is interesting. I think Brandon Sanderson was trying to be like, “Yes, Traveling would be an incredibly important innovation and people would pretty immediately learn interesting ways to use it beyond just, like, teleporting,” and so it’s interesting to have one person in this giant series exploring that a little bit.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, Androl uses the fact that opening gateways – like, they have really sharp edges – you know, the infamous cutting sheep in half thing –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He uses that to, like, actually function as a knife or scissors when the –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: When the situation calls for it. Um, but so that's his channeling thing, and then also he is still – uh, as he moves about the Black Tower, which is what the bulk of this chapter is about, um, he kind of talks about how, like, some people who started channeling and were already, like, engaging with it before the cleansing of saidin are still suffering the effects of the taint on saidin. Like, was it this book, early in this book when Nynaeve healed a guy of his insanity?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So –

Sally: And he stops –

Emily: Having hallucinations?

Sally: Paranoia –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Whatever is going on.

Emily: Androl has, um, uh, visual hallucinations and sort of intense paranoia and anxiety –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Where he sees, like, shadows coming toward him –

Sally: Yeah, if he's channeling.

Emily: If he holds saidin too long, he says is what causes it. So – um, and he says that's – we're introduced to other characters, some of whom also have similar, like, symptoms of mental illness. Um, trying to think how I feel about that. I guess I think it's fine?

Sally: Yeah, I think it is interesting. Um, typically, uh – another thing I think we've discussed is, like, mental illness or disability as, like, a, quote unquote, cost for magic has always sat very badly with me. Um, so it's frustrating that it had to happen to these guys at all; I know it's built into the mythology of the world, but it's still kind of frustrating. So I – um, but the flipside of that is it is also frustrating when someone is given a mental illness or a disability that is then fixed in one, like, sudden sweep, um, 'cause it just starts to play with – I think we talked several episodes ago – maybe four or five episodes ago – about, like, what it means to – probably in the episode where Nynaeve healed that guy –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: So you can go back and listen to that one.

Emily: Naeff.

Sally: Naeff. Um, just about what it means to posit, like, everybody needs to be cured.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: So it's interesting. I mean, it's unfortunate that, you know, Androl experiences so much, um, distress because of these shadows, that is unfortunate, and it'd be cool to watch people explore how magic could be used as treatment rather than just Nynaeve –

Emily: Giving everyone a lobotomy and Healing it, yeah.

Sally: Yeah. So.

Emily: Yeah. Like, I think what we're meant to take from this or at least what it feels like, granted that that scene with Nynaeve and Naeff was earlier in this book, like, it feels like, oh, the Black Tower is so behind the times.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like, they don't even know that there's available Healing yet.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, and that everyone can just be fixed, quote unquote.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So they're in this sort of, like, suspended state, which, yeah, is frustrating. I think it would be more interesting to see people, like, living with it.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, and dealing with it in more interesting ways and, like, yeah, innovating around it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, Androl, moving through the Black Tower. Um, where – what are some other things we learn? Okay, there's a huge division in the Black Tower currently. This is – we've learned about this in the past through other points of view, but Androl tells us, um, yeah, it's sort of Mazrim Taim versus Logain, and Logain has been missing. Um, this is confusing because we know that Logain has been bouncing around with Rand, doing, like, diplomatic stuff with the Seanchan.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So it's unclear if, like, he is missing nefariously or if he's just sort of peaced out and hasn't –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Really left a calling card. Um, and I – I probably could have looked it up to figure it out. I do think Logain kind of goes, like, nefariously missing at some point; I just don't remember if this is it. Uh, 'cause one of the guys, one Androl's friends that we meet here in a minute of his little groupies is a former nobleman who says that he has interacted with the Dragon Reborn.

And he's changed his name, and – so it's not at all clear unless you look it up on Wikipedia or you're really invested in lore, I guess, but, um, a few books ago when Rand and his friends were all staying in that, like, manor house in Cairhien, that was the guy who owned the manor house.

Sally: Oh.

Emily: He, like, had a tragic backstory about how his brother channeled and he was kind of like, "Maybe I'll go to the Black Tower."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He did; he's here. He's also gay. That's not in this chapter, but Brandon Sanderson will slide it in there in the next book because hashtag representation.(laugh)

Sally: Hashtag love wins.

Emily: Hashtag pride. (laugh) Love is love.

Sally: Love is love.

Emily: Including for this guy.

Sally: One single gay Cairhienin old man.

Emily: Yeah. He's just here.

Sally: Of course he's Cairhienin too. Not to – (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. So Logain's missing. ("I don't know" noise) Don't know where he is.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And everyone's really worried about it, 'cause Logain's kind of in charge of, you know, the faction of people who are not in the Mazrim Taim camp. So everyone's kind of like, "Androl, what are we gonna do?" So we find out that Androl has a lot of, like, standing with these guys. They all look up to him and consider him a leader. Um, and Androl's like, "We really can't do anything right now, so – 'cause they outnumber us, idk, and they're also way more powerful." This isn't, like, directly stated, but it is implied that a lot of people who are in the Logain camp are new arrivals, or people who have been deliberately, like, kept low-status. Like, they haven't been promoted.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So Mazrim Taim has, like, speed-run his favorites, and Androl says something about, like, people getting taken away for, quote unquote, private lessons with Mazrim Taim.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is like, okay, that's the creepiest shit you ever heard.

Sally: Yeah. Hey, kids. If you're living in this sort of quasi-militarized –

Emily: Cult? (laugh)

Sally: Strange nation-state thing and the leader says, “Hey, kid, why don’t you –”

Emily: “Wanna go to a private lesson?”

Sally: “Why don’t you come with me and we can do some secret lesson?” I want you to know that that is a cult leader who is trying to brainwash you.

Emily: Something’s going on.

Sally: That is not your friend. (laugh)

Emily: Something is – something’s going on. (laugh) Um, so, like, a lot of the people who are on Logain’s side are, like, guys from the Two Rivers who showed up.

Sally: Because the Two Rivers people are the most moral people in the story.

Emily: Yeah, they’re the only good people in the story.

Sally: It’s because they’re farmers and they’re simple.

Emily: They’re simple farmers who have evaded taxes –

Sally: Which is actually iconic of them. But. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, which is actually incredibly cool, but yeah, the, like, sort of nostalgia of home –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Really colors them as, like, being on a farm automatically makes you a good person.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it’s like, that’s certainly not true.

Sally: That’s certainly not true. Evading taxes? Maybe.

Emily: It is true that at least one of the Two Rivers guys, it is cited that his entire extended family came to the Black Tower with him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, like, yeah, I guess if you had a really solid support system, that would lend itself to you being –

Sally: Not absorbed into the cult. That’s one thing you can do.

Emily: Yeah. So, like, okay, there’s something. But, uh, you know. Um, okay, of Androl’s friends, I’m not gonna, like, list them, but, uh, they are classic Brandon Sanderson characters in that they are each a name and two to three personality traits. So, like, there’s this one guy who is a pathological liar and also has mental illness but that’s separate – separate from the pathological

—

Sally: That's – it's t's a different mental illness than the pathological lying. He, um, like, speaks in a gibberish language occasionally.

Emily: Yeah. And everyone's like, "Okay, that's just –" whatever that guy's name is. Nalaam.

Sally: Nalaam.

Emily: Nalaam. Then there's another guy whose personality trait is Two Rivers. And then there's, like, Gay Cairhienin Nobleman. And then there's Other Guy.

Sally: Then there's Other Guy, who seems just kind of dumb 'cause he keeps quasi-believing the pathological liar.

Emily: Yeah. I'm not saying these, um, guys need to be fleshed out. I certainly, at this point, do not want more fleshed-out characters. I think we have a really solid cast of Asha'man that we could be drawing on if we wanted some people who were –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Strong personalities. Um, the only thing these people have for them that the other Asha'man we're with don't is that they have been at the Black Tower while everyone else has been off –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, skedaddling around the globe. Um, so – no, I'm making fun of the two personality traits thing because the way Brandon Sanderson writes when he has, you know, flat characters, or non-flat characters, frankly, is just hit you over the head with those personality traits repeatedly –

Sally: Yep.

Emily: To, like, keep those people in your head.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: Um, which maybe is effective for some people; I find it pretty grating.

Sally: Yep. Agreed.

Emily: Um, Androl himself is a very – I'm going to shy away from calling him a self-insert character because, A, I don't know if Brandon Sanderson came up with this character although he's clearly written by Brandon Sanderson, granted – given the hallmarks of Brandon Sanderson's writing in this chapter.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, but Androl is a character who – I called him a Mary Sue earlier? He is – Mary Sues are, like, the idea that you can insert a character who is all-powerful –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And can solve any problem, and usually she's a woman –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And it's like female empowerment, right?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: A lot of Brandon Sanderson characters are Mary Sue nerd empowerment.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Where you get guys who are, um, lower on – in the social strata in terms of, like, the macro group –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: In this case, the Black Tower, where all of Mazrim Taim's bullies are bullying Androl –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: You know, calling him names –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Making him do menial tasks, whatever. But these nerds are so cool and so respectable to their own small groups, which is, of course, the dream of men who don't have, um, a lot of social power.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, just to have your – your solid group of friends who all idolize and look up to you.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Androl is also good at everything, even if he's actually not good at everything. Like, look, he has a disadvantage, but he makes it work.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's just so great.

Sally: Yeah, and, like, the, um, the idea that he's got all these kind of, like, niche, obscure interests, like being able to make things out of leather, that are somehow just incredibly useful. Like, of course someone in his group is – is a Two Rivers bowman, and his ability to make, like, arm bracers for archers proves important in this chapter alone, you know?

Emily: Mm-hmm. And he's been to a lot of foreign places, so he knows a lot of trivia.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: He comes as close as any non-Two Rivers person has to drawing a Two Rivers longbow. Isn't that cool?

Sally: (scoff) Yeah.

Emily: You know.

Sally: Just, like, everything is coming up Androl.

Emily: Yeah, I guess what I'm saying is, you could replace this character with the, like, nerdy friend guy from Buffy: The Vampire Slayer, and it would pretty much read the same.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and all of that is just, like, you know, flavor in the chapter. It's not really working for me personally as a, like – a developed character. But from a narrative standpoint, um, you know, like a macro perspective, what we're getting here with Androl and we will continue getting is just, like, a window into the Black Tower and what's going on and what the guys on the ground are actually –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Talking about. Now, at the stage when Brandon Sanderson was handed this project, could he have done anything differently other than write his own small cast of characters and start placing them in the Black Tower? I don't really think so.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, Robert Jordan did not set him up for success there. His only option was to have, like, Logain be the main point of view character there. Um, but it's been kind of unclear, like, what Logain is doing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's been, like, not really in the Black Tower for a while.

Sally: Totally.

Emily: So. I don't know, there's pros and cons to the Androl point of view, in my opinion.

Sally: Yeah. Um, this is my first exposure to Androl, and I will say I was not impressed. Uh, I know there are a lot of people who feel very fondly for Androl, and I can totally see why that would be. Like, there's – there is a comfort, one, to getting back to the back – Black Tower plot, which is incredibly interesting – all of the things happening around Androl are very interesting, um, like the fact that there are now just children living at the Black Tower, and it's just, like, becoming this own little town, community, thing.

Emily: Yeah, I think it's really interesting – sorry to interrupt you – I think the Black Tower is interesting and comforting because it's so insular.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: It feels like problems here at the Black Tower –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Are a lot more manageable and approachable in –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: The sort of global scale we've expanded to.

Sally: Yeah, totally. It's comforting to be in a place where, like, you know what the problem is, and theoretically how to solve it.

Emily: And it's Mazrim Taim, and the solution is: kill him with a gun.

Sally: Is to kill him, yeah. Again, Grady and Neald have a gun. They're they – they have a single gun, and –

Emily: And –

Sally: Neald's gonna solve this problem. He's in Andor now –

Emily: Neald's gonna make a gun with the Power –

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: That's what that chapter was leading us to.

Sally: And he's gonna come in and shoot Mazrim Taim, and the problem will be solved. Um, to that point, uh, before I forget it, whether or not chronologically this lines up with Grady and Neald being back in Caemlyn, where it lies in the book structurally, it comes right after, theoretically, Grady and Neald are back in Caemlyn, which means they could've gone back to the Black Tower and –

Emily: Yeah, fair point.

Sally: Been a point of view character, whether or not one of them would probably have to choose to stay there – I mean, that's where Grady's fucking family is, allegedly, so that –

Emily: Yeah, where's Grady's family?

Sally: Would make a lot of sense. Grady goes looking for his wife and child, but no. So that kind of peeves me, now that I've put those pieces together, but again, we don't necessarily know chronologically where –

Emily: What's supposed to be happening here.

Sally: Where Androl is on our sort of impossible-to-track timeline. But I do see why Androl feels comforting. We're in a small, enclosed space with relatively small, enclosed problems, and Androl is the type of guy to see a problem or be given a problem and figure out how to solve it.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: That feels nice after we've sat for a very long time with characters who are either self-sabotaging or floundering or refusing to address their problems. So I see how that feels comforting. I found him very grating. (clears throat) Excuse me. There was a lot of the sort of, uh, Mary Sue-like fantasy stuff you were talking about that I find really annoying. The idea that Androl has lived such a wild and varied life and therefore has all these skills is, like, classic, like, loser behavior. Like, if you can't – not to be like, it's a bad thing to try lots of things out, but the implication that Androl just, like, never settled down and never found –

Emily: He never fit anywhere.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He never found his people –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And so he's never grown roots or whatever.

Sally: Yeah. It just – like, it doesn't feel fun and mysterious to me. It feels like Androl is – I feel like I'm being the bully now – (laugh) but it's just like, you're a man in your forties. Like –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: What are you doing?

Emily: Yeah. I'm not saying you have to be married and have a kid –

Sally: No.

Emily: But it's a little weird that you're just bouncing around, like –

Sally: Like, I'm gonna get a – I'm gonna spend six months at this college and not finish my degree, and then I'm gonna do an apprenticeship in Italy, and then it's like, it just feels so chaotic.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And, like – but that sort of chaos doesn't actually resonate with the type of character that Androl is on the page. Like, he's very steady –

Emily: He's solid. He's not, like, a flighty –

Sally: Yeah, it's not like we're getting, like, you know, Mat Cauthon pre-dagger, but he's also aged forty, so he got – he just went all over the place like a chaotic little bouncy ball. So that just feels really confusing to me, that Androl has this incredibly weird and varied and, like, mysterious past that we don't – he's like, "I – I would never tell you why I know how to shoot a bow from horseback," and it's like, okay, I don't actually care.

Emily: Yeah. It's like, Androl – Androl's past is trickster-coded –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, in terms of literary archetypes –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: But Androl himself is blacksmith-coded.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's a – he's a Perrin stand-in.

Sally: He's a Perrin character – yes, maybe that's the other thing, is he reads very much like Perrin, where he's like, "I don't know why everybody looks up to me," and it's like –

Emily: And it's like –

Sally: I just went through this plot.

Emily: I don't either. I don't either, bestie.

Sally: Yeah. I just went through this plot; I cannot do it again. At least he comes through it a little bit faster by being like, "Yeah, I'll think of something to do," when again, the solution is to kill Mazrim Taim.

Emily: Assassinate him.

Sally: Just assassinate him. Or infiltrate or something. It's not really something you need to think about. If you need to gather information, send Mr. Two Rivers to figure out what these special lessons are.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I don't know, the whole thing just didn't really land for me. So that was my long –

Emily: I agree.

Sally: Experience of Androl.

Emily: I will say if it had been Grady and Neald, then we would've had to have Brandon Sanderson Grady and Neald points of view –

Sally: (gasp)

Emily: And I don't know if I could have survived that.

Sally: I don't know if I could've handled it.

Emily: Yeah. Um, the next chapter involves Perrin and Faile going to negotiate with Elayne about the Two Rivers. I'm not gonna, like – we've already talked about how Elayne's a major bitch in that, so –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We're not gonna go through that again. But they basically come to an agreement that, um, the Two Rivers – the, like, land itself – is going to be, uh, rewarded to Rand so that he's now a lord –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And Perrin and Perrin's family are the stewards. Um, and they're also like, "Here's how we're going to handle taxes." Taxes aren't going to be paid to the crown of Andor; they'll be paid to Rand –

Sally: Rand.

Emily: And put in a trust for Perrin to work with to do infrastructure stuff. Um, and should Faile's family inherit the crown, then one of Perrin and Faile's kids gets the crown of Saldaea and the other one has to stay in the Two Rivers, blah blah blah blah. It's all pretty, um, you know, bureaucratic bullshit that I don't know that anyone's really – no one really cares about, like, the details of how it's worked out.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: I guess I care slightly that Perrin and Faile – Perrin and Elayne aren't actively at war with each other. On the other hand, it would be extremely funny.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But whatever. I'm glad we're checking this subplot off the list.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Skipping Tuon briefly, we then see, uh, Perrin going to the club – (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Me and the boys.

Emily: Can you imagine Perrin at the club?

Sally: (laugh) Standing in the corner, not even drinking.

Emily: Yeah. "Women: I'm afraid of them." Um, Perrin, uh, hangs out with Mat and Thom at an inn –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And they share their stories with each other, and it's sort of, you know – we've got New Mat, so it's pretty insufferable.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, but at the end of it, Mat's like, "Hey, I need one of your guys to make me a gateway, 'cause we're going to the Tower of Ghenjei," and Perrin's like, "I wouldn't." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) "That's a bad idea."

Emily: “Hopper advised me strongly against it.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Mat’s like, “Who the fuck is Hopper?” (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) And Perrin – it’s – (laugh) You guys have seen those TikToks where they’re, like, doing something normal, and someone asks – it’s like a specific audio – it’s like, “Who’s Michael?” or whatever, and everybody swipes things off the table and they pull out, like, bottles of alcohol and food –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: To be like, “He was my first love.” That’s what Perrin’s like with Hopper. Whatever is happening, Perrin has swiped things off the table, suddenly has a bottle of whiskey, and is like, “Hopper is my best friend. He’s a wolf.”

Emily: Mat’s like, “Okay?”

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: “Great. I guess I really can’t cast aspersions, you know?”

Sally: “My best friend is Thom, so.”

Emily: Yeah. Um –

Sally: That’s about it, really, I think.

Emily: Yeah, that’s about it. It’s just kind of, eugh, cringey to read. Tuon is a four- or five-page point of view and it is quite insufferable, um, just from a humanitarian standpoint, because it involves Tuon giving what is essentially, like, a royal audience but in what is called the teaching chamber, which would be more aptly named the torture chamber.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: For damane who are being trained. And it’s essentially that someone – we see Elaida, who has now been reduced to a damane, and she has demonstrated Traveling –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As was inevitable.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, eventually. And Tuon’s like, “Sick, we can totally use this. Let’s get ready to go out, guns ‘ablazing, teach all the damane how to Travel, and let’s take over the world,” and it’s like, how in the world are we supposed to be sympathetic with this character, who monologues for the first two pages about how much she enjoys torturing women?

Sally: Oh, yeah. Once again comparing them to horses.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: That need to be broken. She, uh, says they should go again to the White Tower since they weren't successful in completely capturing –

Emily: Yeah, we gotta get – we've gotta leash all women who can channel.

Sally: Every one of them –

Emily: Yep.

Sally: So we're going to use Traveling specifically to launch an assault on the White Tower and leash every woman there so I can bring them back to my torture chamber and torture them.

Emily: Yeah. And she keeps just being like, "What a wild ride I had in my several months in the circus. I'm so glad that Mat will be a loyal husband." And I'm like, the only way this – at this point – that this plot could have been redeemed is if Mat suddenly had a come-to-Jesus moment and was like, "My wife is evil, actually," and killed her.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And honestly, that would've been extremely funny and iconic and an interesting way for Mat to twist fate.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Be like, A) breaking the "men don't kill women" laws –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Of Wheel of Time. B) the, you know – what's it called when you kill your spouse? You know, like matricide, fratricide. Is there a name?

Sally: Oh, what is it called? Let's Google it. Oh, it might be "mariticide." I'm sorry, I'm dyslexic, it's a slightly different word –

Emily: Mariticide.

Sally: Than matricide.

Emily: I see. Matricide and mariticide. Yeah, uxoricide. "Uxor" is the Latin word for "wife," but it's a terrible word.

Sally: "My uxor." (laugh)

Emily: Not one of my favorite Latin words. (laugh) If I'm going to rank the entire language.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, mariticide – anyway –

Sally: Mariticide.

Emily: It would've been cool if Mat broke that taboo –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because tricksters are all about breaking taboos.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I'm just telling you guys, I could've finished the series better. (laugh)

Sally: It would've been really iconic if Tuon's like, "My loving husband," and Mat's like –

Emily: He just was like, "Pew."

Sally: "Grady gave me this gun."

Emily: "Grady gave me this sick gun that he used to kill Mazrim Taim with –"

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: And boom, baby.

Sally: And Tuon's like, "Who's Grady?" and Mat's like, "That's my boyfriend."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: "Perrin and I share the same boyfriend."

Emily: Mat's like, "Now I'm the emperor of the Seanchan. First move: Disband the entire Seanchan empire."

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: "Fuck you guys."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Oh, boy. Yeah. Yeah.

Sally: It would've been so good. We could do a lot of good things if Robert Jordan gave us a single gun.

Emily: I – yeah, I agree, every fantasy story, if you add one gun? There's a lot of things –

Sally: A lot of problems you can solve.

Emily: A lot of problems, just, boom, solved.

Sally: Single gun.

Emily: You love to see it. Um, anyway, from a narrative standpoint, that is now, uh – as opposed to many of the subplots that have been wrapped up in the last few chapters, this "Tuon learns about Traveling," the Seanchan maintain their arc as a relevant and prevalent threat –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: To the rest of the world slash cast. Um, that plot is just continuing on an uphill trend toward some sort of confrontation point.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Fun! Sorry, that was loud.

Emily: Fun!

Sally: Tuon's also wearing a skirt that basically has, like, "In God We Trust" on it.

Emily: Oh, yeah.

Sally: She's got, like, her empire's loser slogans just on her skirt. It's so embarrassing.

Emily: "I am the empire." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She should've had a Darth Vader mask. (imitates Darth Vader breathing, badly) Okay, uh, our next segment will be a rare two-chapter-er.

Sally: Nice.

Emily: Uh, and that is because we will just cover what Aviendha experiences in Rhuidean.

Sally: Mm. Sweet.

Emily: Um, whatever that may be. Wink, wink. Uh, I don't actually know if we'll have that much to talk about it, but I think it is at least vaguely interesting from a narrative perspective; whether it's good from a narrative perspective or not is beside the point. Stuff to talk about, though. (thud) That was the book closing, that sound. We're getting close to the end, folks.

Sally: I know. We always get to a certain point where I'm like, oh, we're near the end of the book.

Emily: We sure are.

Sally: It feels like every week when I'm reading, I'm like, this book will –

Emily: Never end.

Sally: Literally never end.

Emily: We're close, though.

Sally: We are close.

Emily: Um. Just ‘cause of the Tuon point of view, my mood is mad.

Sally: Oh, yeah, absolutely livid.

Emily: Like, raging; raging.

Sally: I’ll just do a bunch of red, cover all – color all of the page.

Emily: Rage.

Sally: Yeah, she is so rancid.

Emily: My nemesis.

Sally: Who – what demonic part of Robert Jordan’s brain was like, “This is going to be one of my main characters, and the narrative will not condemn her for any of her actions?”

Emily: (makes “I don’t know” noise)

Sally: Satan was working through that man.

Emily: So, thanks, everyone, for listening. Thanks for – thanks for Glynna MacKenzie –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who wrote our theme song and performed it and gave it to us, and it’s beautiful.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Thank her, everyone.

Sally: We love her.

Emily: Um, thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media. Um, do you have a sign-off?

Sally: Uh, today at work, uh, we were doing a trauma-informed care training. I work in housing. Um, so, uh, my agency is big on trauma-informed care, which, if you are unfamiliar with the principle, it’s just the idea that you should operate from the fact that if someone is being, quote unquote, “difficult,” it is not really because they are a quote unquote “difficult” person; it is because they are likely, um, being retraumatized by something that is happening, especially if you’re working in – this can apply to a lot of stuff, like, some – in – like, just in your interpersonal relationships, usually people, quote unquote, “act out” because something is upsetting them based on things they’ve experienced in the past. Um, but especially if you’re, like, working in social services, you’re working with populations who, um, are, uh, have a higher, uh, possibility or likelihood of having experienced quite intensive traumas in their life, including homelessness, which is itself a trauma. And the people – this was an admin-specific training, so all of us, you know, fucking paper-pushers were doing our best. But the lovely people, one of whom I believe is a licensed clinical social worker and the other one, who has

been working front-facing services for many, many years, was like, “What’s an example of some ways you guys in your admin experiences can, um, practice trauma-informed care?” and our, like, little HR guy had a great example, and my boss had a great example, and then our fucking IT director reads an example off the PowerPoint and pass – like, passing it off as his own – as his own. (laugh) He’s like, “I’ve really found that in these instances, it’s great to give people a glass of water,” and, like, literally three slides ago, it was like, “If someone’s, you know, in a state of hyper-arousal, drinking cold water or chewing on ice chips can help their nervous system calm down,” and I was just sitting there, like, dumbfounded.

Emily: He just plagiarized right in front of everyone.

Sally: Yeah! I was like, oh my God. Anyway.

Emily: Meetings.

Sally: Meetings are terrible, and men just have the most insufferable way of communicating with the world.

Emily: Lukewarm takes. Alright, everyone.

Sally: Bye!

Emily: Have a great week.