



Episode 284: R.I.P. Darlin's Sanity
Release Date: April 22, 2024
Running Time: 55 minutes

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: I don't know how to talk about this.

Sally: Gosh, well, the structure sure doesn't make it easy to follow what's happening.

Emily: There's too many — there's — mm.

Sally: There — okay, first of all, this is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And we are here to talk about chapters five and six of a Memory of Light, which, in, like, real broad strokes is the negotiation about the breaking of the seals. And then we go to Lan for a second, and it's, like, so unbelievably man-pain and stupid that I don't even want to talk about it. Lan's like, "I cannot wait to fucking die." (laugh)

Emily: I love it when Sally takes control.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I'm here in the passenger seat, baby.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I'm loving it.

Sally: Cool. Uh, yeah, I'm just gonna go with it as kind of my first impressions. Um, unfortunately, like many things I'm experiencing in this book, I thought this negotiation scene was pretty underwhelming.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Um, like Emily mentioned, there are a lot — well, was starting to mention — there are a — at least, I assume — there are a lot of people in this tent that we are negotiating in. And this is

just, like, kind of basic scene-craft is that it is not a good idea to have this many speaking parties in a room at once. I know we've facilitated an entire — a sort of UN summit, so to speak, but that's not something that translates really well on a page. So there are multiple times in the scene where it's, like, everybody else is talking about something and Rand and Egg — um, I almost said Egg-wayne. Ha, ha! (laugh)

Emily: The actual pronunciation, God forbid.

Sally: God forbid. Rand and Egg are negotiating and it's just kind of like, why was the scene structured this way if we're just facilitating instances for only two people to be talking to each other? So, again, structurally, I — it wasn't that hard to follow; I'm being a little bit dramatic — but it's not constructed the way, um — it's not constructed in a manner that serves a written format versus being on a screen or having some type of script that you can watch or read where you're just being like, “This person said this.” But, of course, that's boring in a book that's supposed to be, like, action-packed and have internal dialogue. So we just get conversations between two people interjected occasionally —

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: By the chorus, essentially.

Emily: Yeah, you're — the — the, um, pointing out that we're violating some basic scene-craft rules here is a good starting point, I think.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Too many characters, like you said. This whole section — and not just the fact that there are too many characters, speaking characters —

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: There are also just background characters —

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: That don't ever say anything. And that makes it very confusing. Um, we're also — like, the setting doesn't make a lot of sense in terms of, I guess, everyone's just standing around in some sort of giant tent.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And, to be clear, this is Rand, Egwene, all of the world rulers, and they each have five people with them —

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Four people, I guess, with them. Plus, you know, some random people, like Perrin and Faile and —

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don't know. Galad.

Sally: Galad. The Whitecloaks are randomly there. Stop giving the Whitecloaks a seat at the table.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: They are not a national body.

Emily: It's ridiculous. Um, so there's just, like, swarming with people.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, it stretches the bounds of our, perhaps, willingness to, um, suspend disbelief —

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In some ways. It's incredibly difficult to believe that a bunch of world – world leaders would look at a document that was drafted by just Rand. And, you know, he sent it over to, it sounds like, some scribes and lawyers to translate it.

Sally: Yeah, Wheel of Time will have lawyers? Surprise?

Emily: Ugh. They're just called clerks.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And we don't know what that means. We don't know if they're just, like, literally transcribing Rand's word-for-word dictations –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or if they are, like, translating it into legalese.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: If these people have experience with writing treaties or anything like that. But it's impossible to believe that, you know, like fifteen world leaders would read this document within ten minutes and then be like, “Yeah, we only have two problems with it.” That isn't how government works.

Sally: Yeah, especially not, like, international governments. I've been reading — I'm — been reading several books lately that deal with, um, the United Nations and, like, other international bodies in various ways, and sort of the underpinning theme constantly is that, like, international relations takes just a fuck-ton of time — like, the amount of time it takes to draft a document, have your team approve it, send it over to another country to look at, have their team look at it, kick it back with edits. You know? It's just, like, these type of negotiations take years.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: You know, I'm reading about a negotiation right now that took two years, just, like, in multiple cities with multiple people involved. And I'm not saying that's how it has to be, but like

Emily is saying, this is what we are familiar with as readers in the 21st century in a sort of post-United Nations world, that we are like, we – this is how we expect international politics to work. And even in a sort of monarchy-type way, back in the — back in the day, I still don't believe that it would happen this way.

Emily: It's also how we have been conditioned to believe government works in the Wheel of Time specifically.

Sally: That's probably a better point, yeah.

Emily: Every, like, government, political negotiation-type sequence: Egg with the Hall of the Tower —

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Rand meeting with leaders, Elayne meeting with her nobles, takes for fucking ever.

Sally: Yeah, that's a more valid point about what we — our horizon of expectations within the text.

Emily: No, I think the 21st century — because we haven't had — the – the only parallel that we can give to a bunch of world leaders meeting together in one space is the United Nations.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: International law is a fairly, like, new thing —

Sally: Yes.

Emily: In our world.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, which is not to say that we're doing it better than a fantasy land could.

Sally: No, of course not. But –

Emily: But it's the only template that Robert Jordan presumably had access to when he was coming up with this.

Sally: Right.

Emily: Um, and he doesn't much deviate from real-world politics unless it's to suit his weird fetishes.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Unless it's to make women weird.

Sally: It's the United Nations, but every decision is finalized by torturing a woman. You know?

Emily: Yeah. (laugh) By a woman being nude randomly.

Sally: Yeah. In the middle of the, you know, council chambers.

Emily: Or humiliated, yeah.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: For sure, someone has to get spanked in order to ...

Sally: (laugh) That's how you sign treaties.

Emily: (laugh) Authorize. "Alright."

Sally: "Everyone turn around."

Emily: "Everyone turn around to present your bottoms."

Sally: They have a little special paddle.

Emily: "For the official court spanking."

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: "We don't have court – we don't have executioners. We have spankers." Horrifying. I wish I hadn't thought of that.

Sally: Um, yeah. So it – it's breaking scene-craft. It's really pushing our horizons of expectations.

And as it does that, it kind of breaks my ability to care about whether or not the leaders agree to this. Uh, the document that we're referencing is the prophesied Dragon's Peace that Rand is presenting, um, which is essentially locking all of the world leaders into the national borders that they currently possess at the time of signing. What Rand wants — what Rand's intention is is that, you know, after Lews Therin broke the world, everyone just sort of went into this mad scramble and there was a bunch of fighting and infighting and nobody really rallied behind.

So Rand doesn't want to be like, "I have to, quote, unquote, re-break the world. I don't want the same thing to happen. I want this to turn out better than it did last time." And the way he has conceived of that is by trying to stop warfare from happening in some way, which is a very admirable goal. But, I mean, I — like the world leaders — see some problems with being like, "You are locked into the territory that you possess as of now," where it's like, what if the territory you possess as of now, Elayne, was not yours in the first place? So.

Emily: Yeah, we're getting — I – I think my main beef with the document that Rand presents is that the world leaders are pointing out problems with it that, um — the way that they point out problems is to make them look like the bad guys.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, that's fair.

Emily: Like, everyone's like, "Oh, the world leaders don't want to be locked into their borders, blah blah blah blah blah. And I'm like, that's – I mean, what that does is make them look like power-hungry, greedy people –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Who are hoping to exploit the chaos after the Last Battle to increase their territory.

Sally: Right.

Emily: Which is almost certainly not true of most of these people.

Sally: Right.

Emily: Most of these people, especially the Borderlanders, should recognize that after the Last Battle, presuming anyone survives, it's just going to be like, we're hoping to hang on.

Sally: Yeah, live.

Emily: Survive. But more to the point, um. But — but, like, those are very — the authors very clearly selected that as sort of the — the world leaders' beef with this document, as opposed to several other very important things they could be pointing out.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, of course, it is valid that they're like, "There's no way to enforce this treaty. So it's going to be —"

Sally: Moot.

Emily: "A shit show anyway."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "What about the fucking Seanchan —"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "The main threat to anybody's borders at this point?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And, like — but there are also things that they don't point out. Like, what about the fucking no-man's-land —

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: That is everywhere on this continent?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: What about the people there? Who's governing them?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Are we limited from taking over no-man's-land? Are we limited from governing it? Are we limited from giving aid to people who are there?

Sally: Right.

Emily: Um, where are the Sea Folk in all of this? No one cares about the Aiel until they push themselves forward as, like, “Here's what we're going to be doing.”

Sally: Yeah, as fucking United Nations peacekeepers, which is – I –

Emily: Yeah, as cops.

Sally: Yeah. That's a better way to put it. As the fucking police. As fucking Interpol. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) International cops.

Sally: Welcome to – “Hello, my name is Aviendha. I'm an international detective with a gun.”

Emily: (laugh) It's so funny.

Sally: Um. Yeah, like, these are all really valid, um, questions. I know I tend to go real-world – world examples. So I always appreciate you, like, bringing us back to the text, um, which is more appropriate for literary analysis. But like, yeah, you've got the – you've got this huge swath of land. Like, is Rand going to create a new country? Is Rand going to, you know, draw new borders for them? And, yeah, multiple people do bring up the Seanchan, and Rand's like, “I'll deal with it.”

Emily: And it's like, no one is like –

Sally: And it's like, that's not an answer.

Emily: “How are you going to deal with it?”

Sally: Yeah, he's like, “That's not your problem.” And they're like, “Categorically, it is our problem.” Um, but, yeah, you're right. The way it's presented is everyone just, like, being an asshole about it, being like, “Well, what do you mean? Like, what if –?” And several people do present, like, pretty reasonable things. Like, what if there are, like, ethnic, you know, um, Murandians on one side of a border –

Emily: Yeah, yeah.

Sally: ‘Cause that's just where they just happen to live? Am I just supposed to, like, abandon those people if they start to be ethnically cleansed or whatever? Um, and Rand's just like, “Eh, fucking bummer, I guess. This is what you have to sign in order to have me at the Last Battle,” which is also just, like, a great negotiation technique.

Emily: Yeah, especially ‘cause Egg is like, “You're going to do it anyway.”

Sally: Egg is like, “Fuck off.”

Emily: Yeah, come on.

Sally: Douchebag.

Emily: Are you – are you serious?

Sally: You're going to walk away from the Last Battle if we don't sign your stupid piece of paper?

Emily: Yeah, like, um, we're – like you pointed out earlier, this document is Rand's attempt to rectify the mistakes that he made as Lews Therin.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: One of my problems with it is that we, um, do not have – our understanding of the Breaking of the World is not necessarily about countries being power-hungry –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Or international borders breaking down –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because that doesn't necessarily jive with what our picture of the pre-Breaking world was.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's always been presented as this sort of unified utopia –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Where the Aes Sedai – men and women – were just sort of floating around, in charge.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And so the reason that things went to shit is 'cause the men went crazy and were literally doing natural-type disasters.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? The world, geographically, was literally breaking.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So to have Rand come out of nowhere and be like, "I want to prevent warfare because I feel guilty about how the world broke beforehand," is pretty out of left field.

Sally: That's a good point.

Emily: At least to me. It's also like, okay, so Rand, I guess, has been working on this document for the last book, since he's been enlightened.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But we – um, we haven't had any indication of that. He's been doing it totally in secret –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which isn't abnormal for Rand. He often makes plans, does little things, in secret from the audience, the readers –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And from the characters surrounding him, like Min. But this is the sort of thing that if he did it in secret and then presents it like his, you know, class science fair project, he should get laughed out of the room.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don't – we've talked about this before. Rand might be, you know, a king of several countries, might have done some conquering, but his capacity to negotiate treaties is severely untested.

Sally: Yeah, nil, effectively.

Emily: And the way we're getting through all these, you know, um, protests that categorically should be coming up is we're just like, “We're in a rush. Everyone's just got to get to the Last Battle.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I think the authors are hoping, like, the readers will also be like, “I just want to get to the Last Battle. I don't care what happens, really, in this tent because it's going to be affecting things that –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Haven't happened yet and I'll never read about.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. But, like, I do care about it. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, I care about it too. I think it's one of the more, like – we've often talked about, like, the most interesting thing about this text are these, like, gestures that Rand is making towards the future and what his legacy is going to be. Or just, like, generally what is going to happen after we fix things. Are we – what's the world going to look like? And it's generally just, like, an interesting project for Rand to be like, “How do I stop warfare?” Uh, this seems like a pretty simplistic solution, not that I am a diplomat or anything. Um, and also, having the Aiel come in – Aviendha is like – earlier, she's like, “I need you to grant me a boon whenever I ask for it, but you don't have to agree to grant it.” And Rand's like, “What?” But she comes in later and is like, “My boon is that you include the Aiel in the treaty.” And he's like, “I didn't include you ‘cause I trust you,” which is bad also. Like, you will not always be around, nor will the Aiel that you know always be around.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: But anyway, Perrin comes up with the great idea to turn them into the police. He's like, “The Aiel –” It's also – ugh. He's like, “The Aiel are a tool, and if they're not fighting, um –”

Emily: “Then they just simply won't know how to function.”

Sally: “Then they simply won't be a society anymore,” which seems really simplistic and also just, like, urges on this, um, racism we see filtering throughout the text about Indigenous societies and that if we do not – if the colonizer does not give them something to do, they will simply waste away their, you know, Protestant –

Emily: They'll become lazy –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They'll get on welfare, blah, blah, blah, blah, blah.

Sally: Yeah, like, if we're not constantly ensuring they have a job to do, how will we – how will society function? So, just, that sat really poorly with me as well. Um.

Emily: It's also annoying because Avienda's whole thing, at this stage in the story –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is that she should be the one who is initiating whatever happens with the Aiel.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So the fact that Perrin comes up with it is a little bit, like, condescending.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: There's also the fact that we had Aviendha come to Rand and initiate their whole overnighiter.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And we were kind of thinking like, okay, so she's going to ask him about what's going on.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Talk about it, talk it through. Maybe then he'll make some revisions so that this will fly over better with the Aiel.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But that didn't happen.

Sally: No.

Emily: She just fucked him and was like, “By the way, I'm going to ask for a favor later.” And he's like, “What?”

Sally: “Okay.”

Emily: “Was – is that in return for the sex?” Like –

Sally: Yeah. "I didn't realize this was a transaction."

Emily: "This feels very transactional."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah. And at one point, Egwene asks Elayne, like, "Did Aviendha find out anything for Rand?" And Elayne's like, "No, she tried, but didn't." And I'm like –

Sally: No, she didn't.

Emily: We didn't see Aviendha trying.

Sally: She didn't try at all.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Unless she thought she was going to fuck it out of him, you know. (laugh)

Emily: We didn't even see – she – she didn't ask him questions. We, of course, PG-13 cut-away from the sex scene.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So we're like, what is the truth here?

Sally: It is like the whole scene almost feels impossible to, like, slice your way through. Like, if I were to try and map it –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And be like, what are the threads of logic here? I don't know if I would succeed. Um. Yeah, so, I mean, I could talk, probably at length, about how I think this is, um, not a great solution. And Rand keeps talking, on and on, about how the world needs to be better. And, like, such a classic Western lens never considers that, like, you can make the world better by improving the material needs of the people who are suffering rather than, you know, just, like, putting really strict borders and probably then stricter things on, like, trade –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And humanitarian aid. But, whatever. I could get on my soapbox on that for forever. So that's object one and problem one with the scene: that it's just a mess in there. And there's, like, two documents for like seventy-five people to read.

Emily: Yeah, I also, um – like, to your point about solving the actual problems, there is a layer of just rich, um, irony going on here, that everyone is negotiating about the future of the world –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, and sort of the after-the-Last-Battle when the Last Battle is patently going on and people are dying in droves.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, we start this with Egwene getting reports from Gawyn about the likely casualty count from Caemlyn –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's in the tens of thousands.

Sally: I think she said hundreds of thousands of people.

Emily: Yeah, and we keep mentioning Kandor –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As just a country that has fallen. That's the one ruler that is not present –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: At this meeting – queen, whatever. Um, because she's trying to salvage Kandor. And I don't think we've seen much of Kandor in the last book. I think that was maybe a couple of random points of view in Towers of Midnight.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So this is news to me, that it's completely overrun.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But they're just like – yeah, so many people. We don't even know how many people are dead in Kandor.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I'm like, why are we? Why are we –?

Sally: Yeah, like, there are – it is just, yeah, very classic, like, a group of very privileged people, who – many of whom will probably not even see the battlefield, um, deciding what will make the world better while, like, yes, actively, there are people in crisis and you are taking time and, like, all of the Aes Sedai are there, apparently. It seems like Egwene has the entire White Tower behind her and takes her five in. And it's like, are these people's time best spent at this stupid meeting?

Emily: Yeah, waiting around?

Sally: Or could you, like, deploy them to do the things you're supposed to do as Aes Sedai and help manage these types of things and help things better for people? Like, there's only so much that can be accomplished by sitting around and talking and signing treaties and saying, “Oh, I promise I'm not going to invade.”

Emily: Yeah. My other – my last point about the whole treaty thing is that, functionally, this is trying to lock the nations of the world into the status quo.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, we're not, like, leaving much open for change. Even the Aiel, who are, like, taking on a, quote unquote, new role are functionally going to be the same in that they are nomadic.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They get to do whatever they want and have their own laws and rules and are not super, like, subject to whatever rules other countries put on them –

Sally: Right.

Emily: Um, and are, again, going to be completely militaristic.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, despite the fact that their whole *raison d'etre*, the Last Battle, is going to be gone. Um, but the status quo is just how a lot of old-fashioned fantasy series like to end, is with, um – you know, it's a little fairy tale-ish. Say a story starts with a king who becomes a bad king, then the story is going to end with the heir becoming a good –

Sally: A good king.

Emily: A good monarch.

Sally: Yes. Yeah.

Emily: So we're not actually gesturing toward functionally much change here –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, or even giving much room for growth. And that is very, like, reductive, I think, in terms of fantasy and feels out of place, especially in the 21st century, when a lot of fantasy and science fiction texts nowadays are governing toward – um, are gesturing towards revolution –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As sort of the optimum endpoint.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because that's what appeals to our modern sensibilities.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: So it just feels very, like, oh, great, a boomer wrote this. (laugh)

Sally: Well, yeah. I mean, I know that feels, like, simplistic, but it's, like, very obvious the standpoint that they are coming from. And this idea of, like – like, I – I'm – the United Nations are really heavy on my mind. But if you think of the, like, forming of that as a body after World War II, after, you know, several decades of Europe in particular being in incredible crisis and therefore that rippling all throughout the world, 'cause that's the base of so many colonial

powers, then being like, well, what we need to do to solve this is, like, stabilize, um, you know, international 21st century colonial borders in various places around the world. And we need to form a bureaucratic body in order to sit around and talk about making decisions, uh, not to be totally negative about the UN. They do do some good things, but, like, effectively it's forming another type of bureaucracy that's really based on borders and on, um, very particular ways of behaving with one another. And that feels like the pattern that we're working with here, like we've been in a great place of great crisis. So what we are going to do is kind of double down on the way that we have been working for a really long time and in fact make it more strict. And like Emily said, it just doesn't gesture towards anything new and exciting.

Emily: Yeah, it's a bummer in a way. And it's just, like, not a lot of criticism of it in – within the text, um, moves forward in any reasonable way.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We're presented with, like, some problems that the rulers just have to get over, a la the borders not changing. And then there are some things that we just have to trust Rand to handle, like the Seanchan.

Sally: Yeah, he's like, “If the Seanchan don't sign the treaty, the treaty is null and void.”

Emily: Yeah, the only problem that I believe is, like, quote unquote, solved is the sort of, um, uh, enforcement –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Rule, which, uh, they bring in the Aiel to solve – which, I will say that, probably unintentionally, that is a cogent criticism of the UN.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: If we're making that parallel. The UN does not have an enforcing body.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which means that any rules or laws that they make are – you know, there's no consequence for not keeping them, essentially.

Sally: Yeah, if a sovereign nation just decides to –

Emily: Do genocide.

Sally: Do whatever the fuck they want.

Emily: For example. Um. So.

Sally: Yeah, that's fair. That's fair. That's one solution, I guess, to the enforcement problem.

Not the best one, but.

Emily: The treaty is only one of three things that Rand brings up as discussion topics or, rather, as non-negotiable orders within this – um, these chapters, which – I think, like, Egg or someone accuses him of being a tyrant. And, of course, Rand brushes that off, as he always does. But Rand has never been more tyrannical than he is here –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In his enlightened state.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just sort of saying, “Well, I’ve written this document with absolutely no input from any of you.”

Sally: And apparently no input from anyone else at all.

Emily: Yeah, just me.

Sally: It’s just, like, just out of Rand’s brain. One –

Emily: And what gives you the fucking gall?

Sally: Twenty-year-old farm-boy-turned-Jesus-figure decided he had the solution to every international problem on the planet.

Emily: And apparently he does, because –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: None of the rulers have any beef with it, besides –

Sally: Yeah, besides those bad people.

Emily: Woof. Anyway, Rand is like, “Numero uno, the treaty. Numero dos, the seals on the Dark One’s prison. Numero tres ...” I forgot.

Sally: I can’t even remember what the third one is either. It felt so irrelevant compared to the other two. Oh, he is the general at the Last Battle.

Emily: Oh.

Sally: He commands all the forces. Everyone – every nation has to listen to him.

Emily: Yeah, and everyone hears these and is like, “Okay, we’re just tabling number three for a second because that’s so out of pocket.”

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: But while everyone is still fighting over this treaty – like you said, Rand and Egwene are engaging over the seals to the Dark One’s prison, which is what brought everyone here in the first place. But Rand is effectively bamboozling them –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: With this piece of paper.

Sally: Little bait and switch.

Emily: And so Egwene, who has no borders to protect –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is the only one who remains on-task. Um, and as you predicted in our last episode, the Rand-and-Egwene convo does not go well. Neither of them even brings up the topics that they are –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: They seem to have totally switched position compared to their conversations with their confidants.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Egwene is now like, “We absolutely can't break the seals on the Dark One's prison,” even though last night, when she was talking to Elayne, she was like, “I see the benefits.”

Sally: Yeah. “I just need to pick,” yeah.

Emily: “It's just a matter of timing.” Yeah. And Rand is like, “Well, I'm not giving you really any reasoning here behind this.”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And, in fact, he's like, “My big reasoning is that I want to kill the Dark One.” And this is like someone saying, “I want to kill Satan.” I don't know.

Sally: Yeah, “I'm going to kill God.”

Emily: Yeah, “I'm going to kill God.”

Sally: And you're like –

Emily: And Egwene's like, “Hey, what?”

Sally: Uh, I don't even know if you can. Like, can you kill the Dark One, as this sort of, like, cosmic embodiment of evil?

Emily: Yeah, that's the main problem, right? Because, like, everyone is going along with the whole theory –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That Rand is going to fight the Dark One.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, that is a literal phrase that has been thrown about.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So I guess, theoretically, maybe he could kill him too. But it's like, no one is sort of, like, okay, well, what would that do?

Sally: Yeah, that was my big beef, is, like, we talked so much – like, the literal symbol we're getting shoved down our throats all the time is the balance of the light and the dark. And if you just kill the Dark One, does that not completely throw the universe out of balance? Is that not a larger metaphysical – metaphysical. Larger, you know, cosmic problem?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: These are my questions.

Emily: These, at least, are questions Brandon Sanderson will answer later on.

Sally: Well, thank God, Brandon.

Emily: But sadly, no one with a brain –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Brings them up here.

Sally: Yeah, like, what the fuck is Cadsuane doing here, as an advisor, if she isn't like –

Emily: Cadsuane does nothing here.

Sally: Isn't like, "Point of order. Can you kill the Dark One?"

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: (laugh) "Point of order. Should you kill the Dark One?"

Emily: What?

Sally: Rand's just like, "No. I am man. I am man."

Emily: So all the rulers are just like, "We can't possibly sign this." And Egwene is like – Egwene and Rand literally descend into childhood name-calling –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is –

Sally: Also very encouraged at the United Nations.

Emily: Yeah, well. Fair enough. Fair enough.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: If only Egwene had taken off a shoe and thrown it at Rand. (laugh)

Sally: That would have been iconic, actually. (laugh) I love that journalist. He's everything to me.

Emily: Um. Yeah, an actual good journalist. (laugh) God, I love that guy.

Sally: Have you seen the quote where he's like, "I only wish I had more shoes"?

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: "Do you regret throwing your shoes at President Bush?"

Emily: No. Absolutely not.

Sally: "No, I regret that I didn't have more shoes." (laugh)

Emily: Anyway, but this is just more, like, they're so immature. What are they doing?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Why? Are our characters supposed to have grown?

Sally: No.

Emily: How is it that the last challenge they have to face –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: You know, here, is talking to each other? It's absurd.

Sally: It's so stupid.

Emily: And infantilizing and mean. Anyway, luckily, to save the day, in waltzes Moiraine, notably unaccompanied by Mat.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Perrin — we then switch to Perrin's point of view, and he's like, "Yeah, I can see my little vision of Mat, and he's on a road on a horse somewhere." And it's like, okay.

Sally: Mat? God damn it.

Emily: Mat, where the fuck? Because of course –

Sally: You are needed in this situation very badly.

Emily: Of course, the second Rand says, "I'm going to be the general at the Last Battle," we, as readers, are thinking, no, the fuck you're not. That's going to be Mat.

Sally: That's going to be Mat!

Emily: And why isn't his name even being tossed into the ring here? You know? Mat, like – (laugh) with the general problem, what ends up happening is everyone's like, “Rand, you can't possibly command the forces of the light because you are going to be, quote unquote, killing the Dark One.” You're going to be a little busy, my guy.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Radio silence.

Sally: Yeah, you're not going to be able to take Slack messages in the middle of that.

Emily: Yeah. “I'm sorry.”

Sally: “One second.”

Emily: “Hold on. I need to do some online –”

Sally: “Please move the forces here.”

Emily: “I need to do some online banking.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You just can't do that. So then what Rand comes up with is like, well, why doesn't Elayne lead – be the general of the armies of the Light? And we have – like, one person is like, “She's too young –”

Sally: It's Darlin.

Emily: “And inexperienced.” Yeah. Darlin is like, “Absolutely not.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Rand's like, “Well, she's taught me everything I need to know about leadership.” And everyone's like, “That's a criticism, not a ...”

Sally: And Darlin is like, “And you prove my point.”

Emily: “Exactly.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Exactly.

Sally: You stupid bastard.

Emily: And Rand's like, “Well, Darlin, you've only been king for two weeks, so.” And it's like, so has Elayne.

Sally: So has Elayne. So have you. In the grand scheme of things. Like, this pisses me off for so many reasons. One, you're – like, yeah, it's so – like, what a stupid narrative promise to not deliver on, to have Mat be in this scene with Moiraine being like, “I can do this.”

Emily: Oh, Mat would never volunteer.

Sally: Yeah, I mean, you're right.

Emily: But the idea –

Sally: But someone else would volunteer him. You know, as – you would hope.

Emily: Yeah, the idea would be that someone would be able to make the compelling, rational argument that Mat is not tied to any nations.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: I mean, he's technically of the Two Rivers, but the status of the Two Rivers itself is in flux.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mat is the leader of a mercenary band that just did the extremely, um, like, ethical thing of going into Caemlyn when it was literally on fire.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: To – I mean, they were there to save cannons, but they were also doing all they could to help refugees.

Sally: Right.

Emily: You know, the only mercenary band that initiated this.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And Mat has letters of recommendation from, like, half of the five great generals.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's actually weird that none of the actual five great generals are tossed into the ring.

Sally: Yeah, like, Bashere is like – yeah, that's a good point. I was about to be like, it's weird that Bashere didn't recommend Mat, but you're like, Bashere is there, Gareth Bryne is there. I think Ituralde is there.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Or nearby.

Emily: The fact that they're just like, “So Elayne’s who we’re going with?”

Sally: So Elayne Trakand, my pregnant wife – and no one – and no one is like, it's a conflict of interest to name your baby mama –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: As the – it pissed –

Emily: At one point, Elayne is like, “I love you for this” to Rand in front of God and everyone.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And is no one like, “So?”

Sally: Darlin pulls out a gun. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) “So?”

Sally: Hey, this is super not ethical.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, Rand, you can not be unbiased in this decision. And also, patently, Elayne is not a good ruler. I don't know where people – this – the narrative is, like, so insistent on convincing us that. But, yeah, it's incredibly frustrating that Mat's not put forward, and he's just doing fuck-all somewhere. That's super annoying. Like, I know we're trying to play with Mat's character there, that he's always got to be the rogue doing his own stupid shit.

Emily: But, like, the fact that he would arrive late would be enough.

Sally: Yeah, exactly.

Emily: For that.

Sally: Alive rate – late, one eye missing.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Just, like, bloody and disgusting. And everyone's like, that's our boy.

Emily: Walked straight out of the Tower of Ghenjei.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Here he is.

Sally: That's the one.

Emily: He's like, “It's me, dogs, son of battles, reporting for duty.” And, you know, there's an argument to be made, I guess, that what we're talking about is not necessarily literally the military commander of the Last Battle –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But the sort of commander in chief, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That position of leadership who, I guess, is going to be helping, uh, facilitate.

Sally: Yeah, theoretically helping –

Emily: Leadership decisions.

Sally: Move pieces around the chessboard, find reinforcements, make those difficult calls about things and how we move forward, you know?

Emily: Mm-hmm. That still shouldn't be Elayne, to be clear.

Sally: No.

Emily: Absolutely not.

Sally: Yeah, if they're like, we need Mat doing something a little bit more active, again, you have three of the five generals – great five generals in the room.

Emily: Yeah, if you need a commander-in-chief, I don't know. That just seems like something that Egwene would probably be doing.

Sally: Yeah, Egg would be a much better choice or, like, any of the Borderlander leaders –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Who fight Darkfriends on the reg.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: This pissed – I knew it was coming. Luckily, Emily told me, or I would have thrown the book out my window and been like, I'm never recording another episode of this podcast again.

Emily: That's how I feel. That's how I feel, though.

Sally: But reading it was still really bad.

Emily: (laugh) All of the – I mean, we're – Moiraine enters and pulls everyone together by quoting scripture. You know, the Prophecies of the Dragon.

Sally: Yeah, she comes in like a fucking charlatan and is like –

Emily: She's like –

Sally: That's a bad example. But, I mean, like, a snake oil salesman is the vibe she was giving off. Just like –

Emily: Cult leader.

Sally: Yeah, cult leader, just, like, spewing – everyone is like, “We have all these really concrete concerns with the demands that Rand is putting forward.” And Moiraine just starts quoting, like, the Prophecies of the Dragon, effectively out of context, because not everyone is going to be as familiar with them as she is, you know?

Emily: Yeah, and everyone's just like, “Oh, this is a great argument.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As though we haven't spent the last 13 books sort of, um, you know, not directly, but indirectly, uh, messing with the idea that prophecies are not always accurate –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: That prophecies can sometimes misdirect.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: That things are not set in stone in that way.

Sally: Yeah, bestie.

Emily: Like the prophecies are not – (laugh) are nothing. They shouldn't be being evoked here at all. For one thing, most people aren't, you know, well-versed enough in them to even give a shit.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: I could just be like, you're making that up. Cite your sources.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know?

Sally: Yeah, if someone was like, “I'm going to quote –” I can't even think of a valid religious text. I mean, basically any of them, that if it was not the religion that you grew up in or if you grew up not religious, and someone's like, I'm quoting, you know, the Qur'an to you, I'd be like, I don't know enough about the Qur'an to know if that's right or wrong.

Emily: If someone – this is like if someone walked in and started citing the Book of Revelations –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which talks about, like, the fucking four horsemen of the apocalypse, you know?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: You'd be like, “And you're telling me that those are literal.”

Sally: Yeah, that's a –

Emily: “That's your translation here?”

Sally: That's a better example. (laugh)

Emily: I just –

Sally: Yeah, it's like, hey, once again, bestie, like, I don't think the four horsemen of the apocalypse are, like, a thing I can fight or do or care about.

Emily Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sally: Um, yeah, it feels very, um, off-theme, um, to suddenly be like, “We have to follow the prophecies exactly.” It's also kind of, um, I don't know – like, of course, you can see the desire for people to want to lean on the prophecies in a moment like this, where it's like, the literal fate of the world is hanging in the balance. Depending on how we choose to act, we could destroy all of existence or win the day. And that's really scary, but that's part of the tension of like, one, a fantasy story. It's like, generally, like, the tension of the decisions that you are making as a hero, as one of the protagonists, and the weight that those decisions have, but also, the very human thing of, like, we have no idea how to know what the right decision is. And, yeah, to Emily's point, even with prophecies, we won't know what the right decision is. So to just lean on these 100 percent as our, you know, North Star for making these really complicated decisions, it feels a little hollow.

Emily: Yeah, for sure. I also – this is the big Moiraine moment, right?

Sally: Crickets.

Emily: This is the reason we got her out of the Tower of Ghenjei –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is to salvage this situation. Because, spoiler alert, Moiraine's not going to be doing much else. She will accompany Rand to Shayol Ghul, but, uh, effectively that's nothing. Anyone could have done that. Um, any channeling woman, I suppose, could have done that. Um, so this is what – this is why Moiraine needs to be here, but what she does is walk in, sort of shock everyone, and then be like, “Now, everyone, settle down.” And everyone's like, “You're right, Mom.”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And we're like, what? That worked? That shouldn't have worked.

Sally: Yeah, it was super underwhelming. You can tell that this is the moment that the authors are considering – like, Moiraine has to come back and do something important.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And I was reading it, and, again, I was like, crickets, absolute crickets for me in terms of emotional resonance. Um, this is nothing but, like, a very, again, hollow deus ex machina for a very difficult and high-stakes negotiation.

Emily: Yeah, what – what is required here is just nothing that can be solved by a single character coming back from the dead. We require discussion, conversation, problem-solving, time.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And it's frustrating because these are all things that we could have had if this book didn't spend – if this series didn't spend six books with Rand almost but not quite attacking Sammael.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Or Faile getting kidnapped.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or Egwene getting kidnapped.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Or Tuon getting kidnapped.

Sally: (laugh) Gosh, there are a lot of women getting snatched.

Emily: Isn't that crazy? Isn't that crazy?

Sally: Oh, that's –

Emily: Or Elayne getting kidnapped.

Sally: (laugh) Uh.

Emily: You know, like, you're just trying to fast-forward through what we could have been doing for the series, what would have made this series meaningful.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, and it's not landing. So Moiraine effectively does nothing except, you know, kind of surprise everyone, surprise attack. And so then everyone's like, “Hoo, well, it's not every day you see someone come back from the dead. I guess we all need to cool down a little.” And everyone just decides to do that of their own accord.

Sally: And, like, this makes some sense to, like, the – our main five characters who would obviously have – I mean four, excuse me, because Mat's busy being a piece of shit somewhere, deadbeat. Um. Sorry, Mat, I don't blame you.

Emily: No, he is a deadbeat. You'll be pretty livid when you find out what he is doing.

Sally: Okay, well, I'm sure something to do with his also deadbeat wife.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um. Um, so, of course, like, it would make sense that Rand, Perrin, Egg, and Nynaeve would have an emotional response to Moiraine coming in, given their past relationship with them. And it mentions how some people in the room know who she is 'cause she was so well-traveled. But not every single one of these world leaders is going to have personal experience with Moiraine or even know who she is.

Emily: Can you imagine Darlin is like, “Who's this bitch?”

Sally: (whisper) “Who – who the fuck is this?”

Emily: “What the fuck are we doing?”

Sally: Poor Darlin is having, like, a psychotic break in the middle of this. (laugh)

Emily: Darlin's the only one –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In here who's like, “I'm begging you all to be normal.”

Sally: “Please.” Darlin's like, “This is not how politics works. I'm losing my mind.” But, yeah, it's like, I don't think that all these world leaders should get to make these vital decisions based on the return of a character who just has incredible emotional resonance for the protagonists.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: It – I – I know that's, like, how narratives just work sometimes, that sometimes there are bigger chess pieces that make decisions, but it just, like, feels shitty if what we're trying to do is bring the world together.

Emily: Yeah, and I just – like, functionally Moiraine didn't bring back anything.

Sally: No.

Emily: Here's the thing about going into the underworld narratives –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Like, which is what happened with Moiraine. We have oft compared the Tower of Ghenjei subplot to going into the labyrinth, going into the underworld to retrieve Eurydice –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Stuff like that. You have to go to the underworld to get something –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Whether it's your dead lover, as the case of Thom.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, like, Moiraine was supposed to bring back something –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Of import. Usually that's knowledge of some kind.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But the only thing Moiraine is bringing back here is herself. And as we saw, quite vividly for the first five books of this series, Moiraine did her best but didn't actually manage to accomplish much in the way of controlling Rand –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Or, really, advising him. He more or less didn't take anything she said under advisement. He spent half of his time running away from her.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So to have her come back and be like, "Everyone just listen to me," and everyone be like, "Yeah, of course we'll listen to you." It's like, what? This isn't the role –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That you played before you died. I find it hard to believe that it would be the role you play after you died.

Sally: Yeah, that's such a valid point about, um, returning with knowledge. Um, that is even the in-text function of the Tower of Ghenjei is that you go in – I know Moiraine has technically already gotten her answers, but it would be interesting if she went in again and found out something, you know, revelatory from the Eelfinn and the Aelfinn, like a very concrete "this is how we have to go about breaking the seals" or "this is what the seals are actually made of" or "this is the weave on the Bore," like, something important and practical that she had learned that could help make this decision instead of just "I spent all that time being tortured and –"

Emily: For no reason except for Robert Jordan to get off. Yeah.

Sally: How stupid. I'm so mad at this, the more we talk about it. (laugh)

Emily: Um, so the last beef that anyone has is the Seanchan. Everyone settles down and is like, "Well, what about the Seanchan?" And Rand's like, "You'll just have to let me deal with that, but the treaty will be null and void if they don't sign it."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And it's like, okay, so we're just leaving it up to Rand to sign, to get Tuon to sign a treaty. People keep being like, "Well, what about the women who were captured?" And Rand's like, "We can't think about them now." And it's like that – oh, my God.

Sally: What classic, like, fucking bait-and-switch powerful man, tyrant bullshit to be like, "You have to stay focused on the bigger picture."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: "I need you to, quote unquote, compartmentalize the fact that women from your countries and lives have been stolen."

Emily: And also the fact that they're like, "What about the countries that have been taken over?" Countries that notably do not have representation at this meeting. Like, it would have been so important if, say, Amathera, the last ruler that Tarabon had before –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It got taken out by the Seanchan, was here –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Speaking her piece.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That maybe would have given her a reason to live.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To be like, “Absolutely not. I – you can’t – I want the country back.”

Sally: Yeah, like, you can’t just yield it. Rand says something like, “Well –” Ugh. He says his classic, you know, fascist propaganda. He’s like, “Well, though they’ve taken countries, like, the countries they’ve taken have – they’ve done good things there. So maybe we’ll just let the Seanchan, if they won’t concede to giving them back, we’ll just let them have them.”

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It’s like, that is such a good thing, because you know what empires definitely do? They stop chewing up other territories.

Emily: Yeah, they stop growing. It’s like capitalism.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: At a certain point, it’ll just stop.

Sally: It’ll just stop.

Emily: And be normal.

Sally: Hitler didn’t invade Poland.

Emily: Yeah, it’s not like – it’s like dragons. They reach a point where they’re satisfied with the size of their horde.

Sally: Yeah, like, that’s not a thing. That’s not a thing.

Emily: Yeah, so it’s a real bummer that, like, say, the characters from – like Thera, like Beslan –

Sally: Yeah, I’m sad Prince Beslan isn’t here.

Emily: Just to be, like, representing what they want for their countries –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In these sort of overgrown ...

Sally: Um, to make sure we said this clearly – we might have; I can’t remember. Um, on the subject of the seals, Moiraine convinces everyone that, yes, they have to be broken, but Rand isn’t going to break them. Egg is going to break them.

Emily: Yeah, which we know from Egg's conversation with Elayne, she's actually theoretically fine with.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That's what she wanted to begin with, even though she never argued for that.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, so, bizarre.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But yeah, Egwene's like, "Okay, I'll take them," and Rand passes them over.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: We are going to have to keep track of the physical location of the seals throughout this text. So there's your seal watch.

Sally: Yeah. Seal watch 2024.

Emily: Seal watch number one.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They have left Rand's ownership and are now in Egg's ownership. Um, on the subject of the Seanchan, Rand's like, "I'm going to go deal with them. That's one of the things I have to do." We, of course, are like, okay, well, if Mat's not here, he must be on his way to the Seanchan, so surely Mat is going to be instrumental there in some way, since he wasn't instrumental here. So another narrative promise that is being written here in the text. Our last little section, we go over to Lan, whose forces are, of course, overrun, as they inevitably would be, um, but they are rescued by the sudden, like, swarm of forces and armies that are being teleported from the Fields of Merrilor.

Sally: Oh, yeah, why don't we talk about that at all? The fact that they're like, "After this conversation, you will all be going to battle." Was that – did everyone know that?

Emily: Hmm.

Sally: (laugh) Was everyone aware?

Emily: Rand literally gave everyone an hour's warning for this –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, what?

Sally: It's like, "Okay, I hope you guys are all ready to go to battle." It's like, what if they didn't show up in armor?

Emily: They're just like –

Sally: "I am in my T-shirts."

Emily: Darlin's like, "I'm in sweatpants, dog. Like –"

Sally: Yeah, "I'm not ready to go fight."

Emily: "I thought it was going to be, like, a long day of –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Talking."

Sally: "Negotiating. I'm in my suit pants that look like – sweatpants that look like suit pants."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: "Trick you." Anyway.

Emily: So, yeah, there – there's nothing else to say about Lan. It's just waxing poetic about Malkier, a nothing country that we have no reason to have any stakes in. But, you know, same old, same old. Um, I'm trying to remember if there were any other little bits here. Oh, there was a very odd confrontation between Rand and King Roedran.

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: Where Roedran, who, as we mentioned before, is the only ruler who has never yet been on screen, um, appeared. Egwene had a little conversation with him, and then Rand waltzes up to him and is like – does his little Jedi mind trick of seeing inside your head. He's like, "You're not him," and then walks away and Roedran's like, "What?"

Sally: "I'm not who?"

Emily: Presumably this is a response to some sort of fan theory that maybe Demandred was Roedran all along –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Since Demandred is the one Forsaken unaccounted for, and Roedran was the one ruler unaccounted for.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: So. Okay.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah. Brandon is like, "I'm still keeping you in suspense about where Demandred is." And we're like, well, it should be fucking Mazrim Taim.

Sally: Yeah, I don't care anymore if it's not Mazrim Taim.

Emily: Yeah, if it's not Mazrim Taim at the last – last hour.

Sally: It's not another bait-and-switch.

Emily: Yeah. Annoying. So, overall, quite bad.

Sally: A real stinker.

Emily: A real stinker of a couple chapters.

Sally: But we did it, I guess.

Emily: We did it. It is done. The rulers are going to ... Elayne, at least, is going to start setting up the sort of next stages of the Last Battle. And Rand has some errands to run, including to the Seanchan, before he can actually go to Shayol Ghul. So, um, we're going to be entering the next stage of this book, which, spoiler alert, is, um, post – you know, I'm just dividing this up for our ease of mind. This is post, um, negotiations, but pre-Mat entering the Last Battle, effectively.

Sally: 'Kay.

Emily: So we're going to be doing a lot in terms of, like, um, the rulers of the world are going to split onto separate fronts, each – each more or less commanded by one of the remaining four great generals.

Sally: 'Kay.

Emily: So we're going to be switching around a lot, a lot, a lot to different fronts. While Rand is off running his errands, Mat is doing whatever he's doing with the Seanchan, and Perrin is going to start doing some stuff. But the ladies will mostly be with the battles.

Sally: Okay.

Emily: Uh, and that is, uh, what's next on the docket. But that's what's next. Thanks, everyone, for listening to this absolute bummer of an episode. But so it goes, you know. Thanks for listening. Thanks to Glynn MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

Sally: Yeah, you guys are the best. Thanks for following along for the final season. Womp, womp. Um, one small bit of housekeeping: um, if you listen to, uh, Everybody Hates Rand in the, uh, Apple Podcast podcast player, they have released a new transcript function, um, where it's probably AI is generating, uh, an automated transcript of our episodes. Um, so that will be up with the release of the episode immediately. They're relatively good, um, but they're obviously not perfect. Like, it's not – uh, it doesn't know who's speaking, obviously, the way our manual transcripts do, um, and there's just a lot of spelling errors and some slight, uh, other grammatical errors in the way that things are presented. So we are still, uh, crafting, uh, more formalized transcripts that we have reviewed and corrected, which will always be posted in the show notes at the very least by, um, usually by Thursday or Friday of the week following the episode drop, but at the very least by that Sunday following the episode. So, um, if you utilize those transcripts, you'll have a version of them a little bit earlier, but we will continue throughout the duration to make as accurate of transcripts as we are able to. So.

Emily: Yeah, whatever software they're using simply does not know how to translate Wheel of Time fantasy names.

Sally: Yeah, Moridin is really giving it a run for its money.

Emily: Oh, yeah, Moridin. It can't do Moridin.

Sally: Mor-Moridin?

Emily: Moridin?

Sally: Moridin?

Emily: And that's partly us, I guess, but also –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It would have no idea. I don't know if it ever got Myrddraal correct.

Sally: Oh, yeah, I haven't gotten that far into it. I don't know if we talked about Myrddraal last episode, but it's really –

Emily: Well, we'll find out.

Sally: It's also – really struggles with our names. Our last names were –

Emily Oh. (laugh)

Sally: Pretty brutalized. (laugh)

Emily: I bet.

Sally: Um, so that was pretty gnarly.

Emily: Okay, everyone. Do you have a sign off?

Sally: Um, I'm trying to think of one. Oh, I went – I visited my brother's house very briefly on Saturday to drop something off to him. And the way their house works is kind of – their front yard wraps into their back yard. So I could see my little nephew in the backyard. He's five. This – there's going to be a lot of Declan-themed sign-offs these days, I guess. So I go around to see what he's doing, and he has a pair of kitchen scissors.

Emily: (gasp)

Sally: And he's just cutting the grass with them. (laugh) He's like, "I'm – I'm cutting the grass. I'm mowing the lawn." And I was like, "Okay." Um, so I just, like, wander around with him for, like, 10 or 15 minutes while he's like, "I'm protecting the flowers. I'm cutting the grass. I want to be a gardener when I grow up." And I'm like, "This is a fascinating development." And I finally bring Declan inside. And I'm like, "I think you – it's time to come inside. Let's talk to your dad." And I was like, "What's going on?" And my brother was like, "He's been doing that for, like, two and a half hours." (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: “He’s having the time of his life.” (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) This really matches with the most recent text my sister sent me. I have my two nephews, Jack and Will. Sarah said, “Jack and Will are playing a game they made up on Jack's bed at the moment. It sounded pretty violent. I stuck my head in and asked what they were playing. Jack deadpans, ‘Monorail, colon, derailed.’”

Sally: (laugh) Derailed. Amazing.

Emily: (laugh) Those boys are obsessed with trains –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And train tragedies.

Sally: Crashes.

Emily: Tragic train accidents.

Sally: Yeah, gosh.

Emily: So. nephews, man –

Sally: They're just – they really fixate on stuff.

Emily: Are weird. Okay, everyone, have a good week.

Sally: Bye.

Emily: Bye.