



Episode 285: R.I.P. The Entire City of Caemlyn

Release Date: April 29, 2024

Running Time: 436Minutes

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 Glynn MacKenzie plays]

EMILY: Um, hey, everyone, this is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* Podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: And I am Sally Goodger. And this is Ed. And over there, misbehaving, is Tybalt. Um, this has happened several times where due to our Utah accent, which is inclined to drop T's, there are, I think, quite a few of you who think his name is Tibble, T-I-B-B-L-E.

EMILY: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah.

SALLY: And, uh, just to sort of clear, uh, our good name that we did not name a cat Tibble, his name is –

EMILY: Tibble rhymes with kibble.

SALLY: Well, he does love kibble. His name is *Tybalt*, T-Y-B-A-L-T, as in –

EMILY: The Shakespeare character.

SALLY: The Shakespeare character.

EMILY: From *Romeo and Juliet*.

SALLY: I'm sorry.

EMILY: The villain.

SALLY: Well, Tybalt – *Tybalt* is a villain. I will try to slur a little less.

EMILY: No, we, we – it is our Utah accents.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: *Tybalt*.

SALLY: Ty-balt.

EMILY: Ty-balt. Yes, it's –

SALLY: That's what the vet calls him.

EMILY: Yeah, it's made more complicated by the fact that I don't know if there's an accepted pronunciation for the Shakespeare character. I've heard it – I've heard it both ways.

SALLY: I've heard it both ways, as Shawn Spencer would say.

EMILY: Yeah, *heeeey*, Tybalt.

SALLY: He looks so evil.

EMILY: And he doesn't know his own name either because he's...

SALLY: He's not very smart.

EMILY: He's not very smart, but he is, as the play says, Prince of Cats, and he hates the world.

SALLY: Yeah. There's sort of...

EMILY: There's sort of a, a –

SALLY: Sort of a rebel without a clause. Cause.

EMILY: Enmity within him. [laughs] Rebel with claws.

SALLY: [laughing] Rebel with claws.

EMILY: [laughs] Stupid.

SALLY: You do have claws, and he loves to put them into our flesh.

EMILY: And you use them. Okay.

SALLY: We love our cats or something.

EMILY: Okay, focus. I'm focusing. Hey, we're here with two more chapters, um, most of which are logistic in nature.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: We are sort of seeing all of our main characters go off to...um, start the first stages of actual, like, pitched battle.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: In terms of the Last Battle. Um, so we get a chapter that is mostly the planning of that, primarily through Elayne's point of view. Um, another snippet from Lan as he's sort of like reacting to reinforcements coming to him at Tarwin's Gap. And then, um, the chapter where that actually begins again through Elayne's point of view, and then we flip back to the Black Tower where things are going badly. I know that will surprise you.

SALLY: Whoo! To put it mildly.

EMILY: Right after they had a roof or whatever fall on the Mat Cauthon style.

SALLY: Yeah, yeah.

EMILY: Things are still going pretty bad.

SALLY: Things are down and out at the Black Tower.

EMILY: Um, but the world leaders and everyone else exit the tent after, um, Rand to find that the surrounding area has sprouted massive trees.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Perrin calls them Great Trees, capital G, capital T, and is like, I've seen them in *stedding*. And it's been so long that we've actually been in a *stedding*. Through a human's perspective that it's like, what? What the fuck are you talking about?

SALLY: Yeah, no idea about the lore here, but it's just like Redwood Trees in my imagination.

EMILY: Yeah, like that sequoia and everyone's like, "They grew in five minutes." And I'm like, "How could you not hear that?"

SALLY: Yeah, you ask – it does pose the question, does a tree growing make noise? You'd think so if they were that big, or grew that fast.

EMILY: I guess I'm thinking of, like, movies where it seems like plants always, *Jumanji*, you know?

SALLY: [making plant growing noises]

EMILY: The creepy vines make these rumbly noises.

SALLY: Yeah, It's the plant power within them.

EMILY: I don't think it would be pleasant to be a tree and grow in five minutes.

SALLY: Yeah, I think it would be quite alarming to spring into existence, made by the Dragon Reborn, and then suddenly just be enormous.

EMILY: But this is more just, like, Rand influencing the earth in his sort of nature yoga girly way.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: He's just so transcendental.

SALLY: I'm sorry if you heard that. That was my stomach. Uh, she's got a lot to say. Um, yeah, exactly. It's in line with his whole sort of...Captain Planet thing that he has going on.

EMILY: [laughing] Captain Planet.

SALLY: Um, did you ever watch *Captain Planet*?

EMILY: I did not.

SALLY: It's kind of fun. There's – it's weird. Anyway.

EMILY: I understand the message is: don't pollute [laughs].

SALLY: Don't pollute, yeah. [singing] Captain Planet.

EMILY: Which I as an eight-year-old didn't really need that message but some mega corporations certainly do.

SALLY: Yeah, it's a cartoon that you're like, I think polluting is a behavior that we teach children, not one that we need to un-teach children. So, it is a bit confusing. Um, anyway, Rand's got his whole Captain Planet thing going on. And this instance of it is, uh, kind of confusing to me. It doesn't really seem to be serving much of a symbolic purpose the way that the other ones did. I guess the argument could be made that it's sort of a massive show of power as Rand heads off to Shayol Ghul. I guess that's one interpretation. But otherwise, it just seemed like this sort of odd set piece that we might be coming a bit over reliant upon.

Emily: Yeah, it did make me think because Perrin was like, um, “I haven't seen one of these since I was in a *stedding*.” So you're like, “Ogier,” and then you're like, oh, “I wonder where the Ogeir are.” And then later in this chapter, they show up.

SALLY: They show up. You're right. It is kind of a –

EMILY: So maybe there's a logical leap there. I do wish the Ogier had been present at this world leaders meeting. I think that would have been interesting – and I mean, we can't complain last episode that there were too many people present [laughs] at the meeting.

SALLY: AND!

EMILY: And then say also the Ogeir should have been there.

SALLY: I think that's a fair criticism.

EMILY: That's what I'm doing, though. There should have been fewer people *speaking*. The Ogier should have been present or Loial should have, even if it was just in his capacity of taking notes, because I feel like Loial would have been mad about missing this.

SALLY: Yeah, it is also, one, you're right. The trees are, they're probably purpose is to be a sort of a Chekov's Gun to be like, “Remember that the Ogier are coming.” Although it's quite a quick turnaround for a Chekov's Gun, you know, like you start with trees –

EMILY: [laughs] Three pages later.

SALLY: And then they're there three pages later. You're like, “Okay, you could have just brought the Ogier in.” I don't really see the point of it. But whatever. Now we have some sweet trees.

EMILY: [laughing] Is it really Chekov's Gun if the gun fires within 30 seconds?

SALLY: Does it count as Chekov's Gun if the gun is firing the first time you see it?

EMILY: If the gun is actively being aimed at someone. Yeah.

SALLY: Um, nut yeah, I agree. It's really frustrating to be, like, we had this entire agonizing plot about how the Aiel are going to be included or excluded and then be like we're not considering the Ogier. We are also not considering the Tuatha'an.

EMILY: Oh, yeah, for sure. They were also left out.

SALLY: And it's just, like, that seems very much indicative, whether or not the plot intends it to be this way, that those are sub classes of...

EMILY: People.

SALLY: People or beings on the political stage. And it's like, that's cool.

EMILY: Yeah, which is not entirely unexpected from this set of characters.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: But it is a little, like, sad that Robert Jordan went out of his way to be like, “Here are Ogier and Tinker or past Tuatha'an characters like Aram, who are present and operating in the plot” and then be like, “They don't count.”

SALLY: They don't really matter to me, Robert Jordan slash Brandon Sanderson.

EMILY: Yeah. It just shows that the like author's attitude sort of matches the characters in terms of, like, I have interest – I have introduced this group of people or even the species to be sort of a background set piece. And I'm not actually terribly interested in what happens to them.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: To which I say you shouldn't write about things that you're not interested in.

SALLY: Yeah, it does really start to beg the question of like, “What is the purpose of plots like, or character groups like the Tinkers or the Ogier?” The Ogierr show up and are like, “You have my axe!”

EMILY: Yeah, literally.

SALLY: Basically.

EMILY: The Tinkers, I think it's just to make the white characters, you know, racialized in that sense, feel better about themselves.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Perrin style. But.

SALLY: That's fair.

EMILY: That's a bummer. With the Ogier, I think it is just that Robert Jordan might have written Loial as sort of a like, “I got to have a tall Treebeard type guy in there. This is fantasy. I have to include all the hallmarks of *Lord of the Rings*.: and then was like, “Oh, fuck, I don't know what to do with this guy.”

SALLY: Oh, wait, what? Yeah, it, um, I was thinking a lot about the Ogier and their purpose in the story. And it's not as if they're entirely, like, um, entirely disconnected. But I do think *Wheel of Time* does this really interesting, and I don't necessarily mean interesting in a good way or a

bad way, of being like there is very much sort of, like, a mainstream military court intrigue fantasy that is taking up, you know, ninety-five percent of this series. And then randomly, you will just have, like, the weirdest things thrown in there that are, like, Emily said, hallmarks of other types of fantasy or the fantasy genre, like the Eelfinn and the Aelfinn.

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah.

SALLY: And the Ogier and, you know, even the like existence of *ter'angreal* and these, like, magical objects that do very cool things at pointing to, like, the depth of this world and the fact that the world has existed for a very long time and that there are other worlds and even the freaking portal stones and things like that, that you're just like, "What is going on?" Like all of these interesting things surrounding this plot and it just...it's just a sort of bizarre makeup. It leaves you with a lot of questions, which on one hand is really exciting, but on the other hand is just sort of like these things play a significant enough role in the series that sometimes there's just not enough info or connection back to the main plot for me personally.

EMILY: Yeah, you make a good point. I do think the intention probably, if we could ask Robert Jordan, would be, what he would say is, is to deepen the world. You know, that's the sort of, like, realistic fantasy genre as we see it. Like, well, in the real world, not everyone is connected or knows about everything and blah, blah, blah, blah. So why not in this fantasy world have things that are sort of important and things that aren't really that important and blah, blah, blah, blah. Um, and that's a valid argument. I do think it could have been done better here if Robert Jordan was going to properly prioritize things, you know, in terms of like what is just background for depth purposes and what is actually going to play a role in the plot. He left a lot of things feeling like they were going to become relevant later on but never actually doing that.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Yeah, the Ogier arrive. We find out that Loial successfully argued on behalf of not teleporting to an alternate dimension.

SALLY: [laughing] Good on you, pal.

EMILY: Or whatever [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah. Good job, lad.

EMILY: And so they have arrived. Not sure how.

SALLY: Yeah, it really is like what the – where the fuck did you come from?

EMILY: Yeah, the Ogier can't capital T travel.

SALLY: Or can they?

EMILY: Or can they?

SALLY: That would be hilarious.

EMILY: I mean, they can teleport. They can en masse be lifted into another plane of existence.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So maybe, yeah, they can. [laughing] Loial is like, “What? Like, it's hard.”

SALLY: Oh, Traveling was difficult for you guys? That's really embarrassing. I did it on foot because I think it's fun.

EMILY: Yeah, maybe they all walked to the Fields of Merrilor. But they're like, “Yeah, all of the Ogier are here.” And we're like, oh.

SALLY: Sweet.

EMILY: Okay, great. That's like, I guess, twenty of them [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, it's unclear how many there are [laughs] But it is another force, you know, and apparently Ogier are quite fierce in battle if given...

EMILY: Yeah, we've seen Loial at the...um...Sy? What? The Wells. Dumai's Wells.

SALLY: Oh, Dumai's Wells.

EMILY: We saw Loyal at Dumai's Wells and stuff like that. He gets his little barbarian rage going all up in here.

SALLY: RAGE!

EMILY: Anyway, that's what's going on with the Ogier. Primarily, Elayne organizes the other world leaders and now brings in some general characters. Turns out Gareth Bryne was in that tent the entire time with Sivan so that's funny. How did they get in? They weren't one of Egg's.

SALLY: They just – Sivan probably just walked in.

EMILY: And everyone was like, “Well, okay, she's so mean.”

SALLY: Yeah, I guess we'll let this happen [laughs].

EMILY: We can't stop her. [laughing] It's not like there was a bouncer checking people's IDs.

SALLY: Gosh, who would be our ideal bouncer character at the Fields of Merrilor negotiations?

EMILY: Oh, God, [softly] let me think about that for a second. Probably one of the Asha'man.



SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Just like, “No.”

SALLY: Damer Flinn.

EMILY: Damer Flinn [laughs], “No!”

SALLY: No, you're not on the list.

EMILY: Absolutely not. Goodbye!

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Extremely funny.

SALLY: Just an old man. Being like, “No, you can't come into the UN Summit.”

EMILY: It's going to be a no for me to all of the Whitecloaks [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, no, Galad you can't come, actually.

EMILY: You're not a sovereign nation, so.

SALLY: Yeah, why the fuck did the Whitecloaks get to go? Whatever.

EMILY: The Whitecloaks – because Rebel Jordan cares about the Whitecloaks”

SALLY: We don't need to talk about this *anymore*. The fields of Merrilor are in the past.

EMILY: Anyway, um, this organization meeting which Ranch does not attend, he just sort of disappears and everyone's like, “Bye!” So that's hilarious, considering that he wanted to be in charge and now he's just like, “Well.”

SALLY: Well, I'm not, so.

EMILY: Guess I'm not. As a generous reading, perhaps he is trying not to undermine Elayne's authority, but also you'd think he'd want to be there. Um, the plan that they come up with is that the forces of the Dark are amassed in four central locations that they know of at Tarwin's Gap, where Lan is currently flighting – flighting – fighting; in Caemlyn, where they are actively holding the city; in Kandor, another Borderland country which has apparently been, quote-unquote, “overrun.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: We again are like, so? Since when?

SALLY: Yeah, and also what do you mean by that exactly?

EMILY: Yeah, *the entire country*?

SALLY: Like directly up into the borders?

EMILY: Yeah, we're not asked to, like, investigate that further. And at Shayol Ghul, which would be more of, like, an invasion force because in order for Rand to go to Shayol Ghul to fight the Dark One, presumably he would need to not be murdered, like, by Trollocs as soon as he enters the place.

SALLY: [laughs]. Ideally.

EMILY: So, they're like, this is great. We have four battle fronts that we want to conduct, that we want to operate on simultaneously, and four great generals. The remaining ones, as a reminder, are Gareth Bryne, Ituralde, Bashere, and Agelmar from Shienar who we haven't really seen since Book 2. This is hilarious, by the way, because the fifth great general was Pedrol Niall, and I'm just imagining him here, and it would have been really funny, in a way.

SALLY: To be like, "There's actually nowhere for you to go."

EMILY: They're like, "Sowwy!:"

SALLY: Why don't you go ahead and beef it?

EMILY: [laughs] Bye!

SALLY: Bye! I don't know how you made a list.

EMILY: Get out of here, boomer.

SALLY: [laughs] Of great captains in the first place.

EMILY: Yeah! Every time we saw him, he was like, "Mwahahaha! my master plot is coming together." And then he just failed extravagantly.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah! And then it was, like, the worst master plot you've ever heard of, so convoluted and impossible to execute.

EMILY: Yeah. No idea how you got on that list. I mean, I do know how you got on the list. It was apparently by performing well in the Aiel War.

SALLY: Which probably just means massacring the Aiel.

EMILY: [softly] Yeah. Yeah.

SALLY: Committing crimes against humanity en masse.

EMILY: Anyway, they decide they're going to send Agelmar to backup Lan with a contingent of, like, the Borderlands generally, those armies. The White Tower, led by Egg, is going to go to Kandor because Kandor is sort of lowest on their priority list. They're like, "We can't take back Kandor, it's an entire country, but we are going to try to stop the advance so that we're not getting, you know, flanked." Shayol Ghul is going to be a smaller contingent, primarily of the Aiel, but it will be led by Ituralde, who is still suffering from some post-traumatic stress we are reminded.

SALLY: Poor guy.

EMILY: Um, and Bashere with Elayne herself and sort of Perrin's forces, a sort of motley crew, are going to focus on Caemlyn. Caemlyn's going to be their primary front in that they're like, "We need to prevent them from, you know, attacking us from the back. So, we need to retake the city even though Caemlyn can stand under a siege." So, there's some logistical problems with that. Ultimately, what they decide is they're going to draw out the Trollocs from the city so that they can try and retake at the Waygate. And we find out that the way that they're going to do that is to set the city on fire, which is basically raze it to the ground. Um, which I have no opinion on that. It's sort of a net neutral strategy to me.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, so yeah. Basically, the strat as of now is retake Caemlyn or, you know, the ground on which Caemlyn stood, make sure that Waygate doesn't fall into the wrong hands again.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Eliminate that force. Meanwhile, hold the borders in the Borderlands and, uh, establish a front at Shayol Ghul.

SALLY: Yep.

EMILY: So, like I mentioned at the end of last episode, this is going to be kind of our primary focus in terms of a lot of what our main characters are doing. We're just going to be jumping from battle piece to battle piece. There will of course be underlying plots running through this. We are again left with the sort of – what's a Damocles' Sword but positive [laughs], I guess. We're left with the unfulfilled narrative promise of Mat leading the forces of the Light. So, that's sort of like, okay, what is going to happen to the four great generals? Are they going to just step back when Mat comes? And sort of the idea is that eventually these four fronts are going to shrink into a single front. That would sort of fulfill the image that we have of the Last Battle of just Light and Dark running at each other, um, Lord of the Rings style and killing each other. Um, so that's what we're leading to, but first we have to get there. Um, I don't have any particular negative, um, feelings or opinions about this sort of mini arc. Um, I think it is the best that could

be done probably given the narrative that the authors decided to go with. It does also scratch a particular itch in my brain that I know is common among a lot of epic fantasy readers of just like, “I like to see warfare.”

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: The same way I like to read historical books about warfare and how that's managed and planned.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: Um, I do think it gets a little old after a little while, so I will hope for a swifter resolution than I remember, but I don't know if that will happen. It's like...what is of course insane about it is that this is – these aren't four fronts, you know, at the Battle of Gettysburg.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Or even in the continent of Europe. These are four fronts across a massive fantasy continent, and people are just communicating via teleporting and stuff like that. So that's kind of insane to think about. Like, you're like, how can you really hold a line when the line is miles upon miles upon miles long?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: You would think that Trollocs would just be like, “Oh, what the fuck? I think I walked into the enemy camp on accident.” [laughing]

SALLY: Yeah, they're just trying to find their way in the dark. And it's like, “Oh. Fuck.”

EMILY: They emerge between the port-a-potties [laughs].

SALLY: Where am I?

EMILY: Oh, God, I think we got lost, Larry.

SALLY: Larry! Larry! Larry would fumble his way across the enemy line.

EMILY: Yeah, Larry finally reappears and is like, “Oh, fuck, fuck me.”

SALLY: Rats. I don't have any, like, major beef with it either. My only, like, issue is exactly what you said, is it feels like we're setting up quite a long and drawn-out plot, which, um, I really feel like I'm overusing this comparison. But there is something to be said about, like, reading about logistics is super fun if done really well. And I think so far, Brandon is doing it really well because everybody is in more or less the same space.

EMILY: Yeah, we're at the sort of Brandon Sanderson sweet spot in that, you know, he likes to have just rapid-fire conversations about logistics where people don't have to display a lot of personality.

SALLY: Yes, exactly. And it's just like, hey, great. We're knocking things out. It makes sense. But as soon as we start to, like, disperse, even though we have this mechanic of teleportation, we are operating on so many fronts with so many different things happening. And that is a difficult thing to do well in the written format. I really hate to keep saying, like, these are things that are better done in a visual format because I don't mean it to be like film or television or, you know, comic books even are the superior format to books. They just do different things well and the idea of sort of, like, tracking – even the idea mechanic of like having a map on the screen and being like Agelmar and Lan are here and they are moving in this direction. Or we have this whole subplot about Faile I managing supply lines.

EMILY: We'll get to that.

SALLY: [laughing] Which is a cover for transporting the Horn of Valere. And it's like, how do you expect me to keep track of any of that shit without, you know, a sort of concrete visual? So, I'm sure that argument is getting old and I will try to make it less and less. But that was my main concern reading this, even being quite familiar at this point with the *Wheel of Time* map. I was like, "Okay, so...where's Kandor?"

EMILY: Yeah, this certainly wouldn't work if we hadn't already spent fourteen books –

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY – traipsing around the countryside with, you know, sort of a vague understanding of okay, Fields of Merrilor are, I think, right around here.

SALLY: Yeah, they have to be.

EMILY: And – sorry, we're looking at the map right now. Kandor is directly north, Caemlyn's directly south. Fal Dar – excuse me. Tarwin's Gap is to the northeast, and Shayol Ghul is, of course, far away.

SALLY: Way into the Blight.

EMILY: So, we're working very much in the, like, center point of the continent.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: We have already, I guess, done all that we were going to do in the... [crosstalk] I guess we were finding the Borderlands didn't get much airtime, and now they certainly are.

SALLY: Now they're getting it, which is good. Um, so yeah, my concern is just that – [pages flipping]. I guess it's also a personal issue, um, where I'm concerned about my ability to track all

of these logistics and, like, enjoy what is going on. I'll find it at some point. So, that could just be me.

EMILY: No, it is difficult to remember, okay, which armies are where, who's where, you know, we, you have to remember, okay, which general is at which front, which actual central characters are at which front, et cetera, et cetera. And as we jump from place to place, um, it'll be interesting to track whether the authors do a decent job of being like, "Okay, here's where we are," but, you know, it's a little tiring. Every single point of view, they're going to have to be like, "Here's the point of view character, here's where they are, here's what's currently happening" before we get into whatever the meat of that point of view is.

SALLY: Yeah, it almost makes you wish that, like, the *Wheel of Time* series was a little bit more, uh, postmodern with its format where at the front you get, like, a military, like, telegram that it's like, "you are in Kandor. Key military personnel [laughs] Here's a summary of the battle." And you're like, "Thank you for the telegram, secretary." I am now –

EMILY: I am caught up.

SALLY: Caught up, and nobody has to do it in narrative. Um, so, that is my main, like, worry about it. My other thing, and I'm not gonna keep harping on this plot for forever because I understand that is also boring. It's really frustrating to sit in this scene and have Elayne doing all of this.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Like I knew I was gonna be mad about it based on the last chapter, but I was sitting there, and I was like, "I'm willing to buy, I guess, that you know a lot about politics. I'm not willing to buy that you know this much about warfare."

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Like I'm sure you have to know some of that based on your, like, I don't know, princess school training, but just, like, we're getting super deep into logistics. And there's like a nod to that at the end where Gareth Bryne comes up to tell her that she did such a good job and daddy is so proud of her.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Um, and she's like, "I didn't do anything at all." And I wish he would have been like, "That's true," [laughs].

EMILY: You're right. You just kind of stood there and directed traffic.

SALLY: Yeah, because he's like, "You just like helped, like, smooth tensions and stuff." And it's just like...

EMILY: We see that that is directly in contrast to what we actually saw of Elayne doing, which was being very much the leader and bringing up various issues.

SALLY: Yeah, and just being like, we, you know, can we lay siege to Caemlyn and blah, and like putting Rhuarc in his place when Rhuarch's like, "The Aiel are going to Shayol Ghul." And she's like, "No!"

EMILY: You have to listen to us and be part of this. And Rhuarch's like, "Fine, bestie. I know better than you, though," [laughs].

SALLY: Rhuarc's like, "I've been in many, *many* battles and you are 14 years old."

EMILY: Yeah, at one point, one of the generals I think it's Ituralde, are like, "Well, the Aiel have never had to take and hold a position before." And I'm like, "So when you got your asses kicked [laughs] in the Aiel war, what was that? I wonder."

SALLY: So they were not taking and holding anything?

EMILY: Yeah, like the balls to say that.

SALLY: Yeah. Um, so it's just a frustration. It's really – I know, like, Elayne has a comment – and when we talk about the Horn of Valere plot, we'll get more to this about – or maybe this is a good segue – about how Matt's never in the right place at once. And that seems to be the like theme here or, like, the narrative hinge that we're trying to, like, you know, move this plot on is like when will Mat show up? Are we going to get to a point when we really need him? And what's that going to look like? Is he going to come in and save the day? Which is a *big* promise that we're building up in every single one of these military scenes. We are building up that Mat better do something *exceptional* when it comes to the military logistics and the battlefronts of the Last Battle. And it's just, like, the bigger that promise get, doesn't really matter what he does, he's not going to –

EMILY: Yeah, not going to be able to be able to fulfill it.

SALLY: Be able to fulfill it. So, every military scene that passes without Mat's presence just, like, even disregarding the fact that I don't think Elayne is the right character, it just, like, degrades...degrades this narrative, because it's just not going to be able to do what it's trying to promise.

EMILY: Yeah, it's also a sort of, um, uh, unfulfilled promise in terms of Mat's character arc. Elayne says, "He's never in the right place at the right time." Well, Book 14 is *when* he should be in the right place at the right time.

SALLY: Right! Also, his, like, whole thing is luck, which is being in the right place at the right time even if it means standing one inch to the left of where a knife gets thrown, you know?

EMILY: For sure, for sure, for sure.

SALLY: So, it's, like, "What are you talking about he's never in the right place at once?" We're just still trying to play off this idea that Mat is an irresponsible character, which doesn't really work anymore at this point.

EMILY: No, Mat has been one of the most responsible characters in the series for the last several books at least.

SALLY: Yeah, and it's like, though you don't seem to know what he's doing, the implications based on what I know of what happens is that he is doing something quote unquote "big." And Perrin references here, "He's doing something with the Seanchan." You know.

EMILY: Nothing important.

SALLY: Based on my – Perrin's like, "Based on my telepathic bond with my best friend."

EMILY: And everyone's like, "And so we're just going to skim over that."

SALLY: [laughing] You can imagine Faile being like, "Your what?"

EMILY: Your what? And Perrin's like, "Yeah, I can see – just whenever I think about them, I see them." And she's like, "All the time?" He's like, "Yeah, I've seen [laughs] Rand pissing, shitting, fucking. And they've seen me."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And that's just brotherhood, baby. That's the bond that men form in war.

SALLY: You guys don't have telepathic bonds with your friends? That's crazy.

EMILY: Yeah. Oh my God. Friendship necklaces. We don't need those. We have telepathy.

SALLY: We have telepathy. But it's just sort of like I'm looking at them through the Palantir and can see what they're doing from the outside.

EMILY: It's like scrying.

SALLY: Yeah, it is like scrying.

EMILY: Involuntary scrying.

SALLY: Um, so yeah, that's my main beef with this is just it's really building up to something and-

EMILY: Yeah, those are solid beefs to have.



SALLY: Thanks [laughs].

EMILY: To be holding on our horizon. Um, So Faile and the Horn of Valere.

SALLY: [giggles]

EMILY: [laughs] Elayne approaches Perrin after this big meeting and is like, “Listen, I need someone to sort of be managing our supplies, essentially to be the forces of the Light’s quartermaster.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which is a job that Perrin has no qualifications for.

SALLY: Correct. Elayne doesn't care about that [laughs]

EMILY: Yeah, but Elayne is like, “I need someone I can trust to be doing it.” And it's like, you and Perrin have had very few interactions.

SALLY: And it really is like, does Halwin Norry mean nothing to you? Like you –

EMILY: Yeah. This is Halwin Norry’s time to shine.

SALLY: Like you've had someone, like, disregarding my absolute love for that weird little man, like that's his whole job has been, like, organizing shit for you for the past nineteen books.

EMILY: Yeah, we are like – Elayne is like, “I need someone to do this *so* that ultimately they can sneak the Horn of Valere out of the White Tower and get it to Mat at the right moment. Blah, blah, blah, blah.” That's the sort of ulterior motive. They do actually need a quartermaster though. Armies cannot function without supplies, constant stream of supplies. That's, like, rule number two of warfare. Thanks, Sun Tzu. So it's A, insane that this didn't come up in the meeting itself, that would be, like, a primary concern of all of these experienced military guys. Like, how the fuck are we feeding our soldiers?

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: You wouldn't be like, well, we'll just teleport everything. Okay, but what about the White Tower is going to be also fighting their own war in Kandor?

SALLY: Yeah, exactly. And it's, like, saying you're just going to teleport anything is also not actually – like teleport things when? Who gets priority if like supplies get low? Like please, Elayne.

EMILY: Like this is a *big* issue that the authors are just asking us to skim over. And it's like, okay, for, you know, I don't actually need the vivid details of every aspect of this war. I am willing to accept that.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: But they're themselves bringing it up by sort of shoving it in our faces. Like, if we just hadn't mentioned supply lines, I would have been like, "Okay, that's not something we're thinking about in this narrative." But we're like, nope, we're doing some supply line stuff. So, Faile's effectively being asked to dual wield incredibly important jobs. The Horn of Valere and the supply lines. And it's like, no one should be doing both of those things at once. You have to think of a better cover story. I mean, no one needs [laughing] a cover story. You can teleport, just go get the Horn of Valere!

SALLY: I know it really is. Elayne's reasoning is so confusing to me. She's like, "We don't want them to try and steal it." I'm like, "Then pass it from one gateway to another place where you can protect it."

EMILY: You know where Mat is via –

SALLY: Yeah, via Perrin's telepathy. Go give it to him.

EMILY: Rand has also said, I'm going to go see the Seanchan. Why not get the Horn of Valere to Rand? Or Perrin? Or someone.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And it's like, if you're that concerned about one of your main artifacts, you know, the Horn of Valere, why are you concerned about Egwene carrying around the seals of the Dark One's Prison?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Why are we giving priority to some things and not the – not others?

SALLY: Yeah, you're right [laughs]. It is just very silly to be like, we have to do this sort of *Ocean's Eleven*...

EMILY: Yeah. Heist.

SALLY: Heist in order to get the Horn of Valere, which we own, to a member of our team [laughs].

EMILY: Obviously, this is insane. Everyone reading this knows this is insane. And there's zero reason...

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: Logically for this to happen.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: So, it's another one of those peek behind the curtain moments. *Clearly*, Robert Jordan and Brandon Sanderson wanted to do stuff with the Horn of Valere that, um, does not involve just handing it to Mat.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: It would be so inconvenient if, you know, Mat just had the Horn of Valere anytime he wanted and could call upon the heroes of the Horn. *Obviously*, the Horn of Valere needs to arrive at a particular moment. And so instead of coming up with a rational reason for it not to arrive at a typical moment, like, I don't know, at this point, just have the Dark One's – the Darkfriends or whoever steal it.

SALLY: Yeah. And then it's like, then you have to find it.

EMILY: Then you have to find it. That's, like, the whole thing.

SALLY: Perfectly – that'd be a perfectly passable plot. It would be really annoying. But I would be like, okay, again, I can peek behind the curtain and see the point here.

EMILY: It would honestly make sense considering that the White Tower where the Horn of Valere has been being kept has been invaded, like, six different times over the course of the books. Mesaana was the Forsaken in residence there.

SALLY: Yeah, you're right. She should have just snatched it. What was she doing?

EMILY: It was a nest of Black Ajah for the longest time. So, Horn of Valere should have just been missing. Instead of having Fail go on this insane *Ocean's Eleven* style heist, that spoiler alert, will go wrong in a variety of ways.

SALLY: [fake laughing] Who could predict?

EMILY: Who could have predicted this?

SALLY: Who could have predicted that this wasn't the best way to move maybe the most important item of the entire Last Battle?

EMILY: [laughing] You're gonna be so mad every time we get more of an update on the Faile slash Horn of Valere situation.

SALLY: And two, I don't have necessarily any major beef with Faile anymore at this point, but Faile is like a twenty-two-year-old idiot.

EMILY: I do actually believe Faile is as equipped as anyone to be the leader of the Light's quartermaster.

SALLY: Sure! Yeah, I – I feel –

EMILY: If Elayne's gonna be the general, why not Faile be the quartermaster? We have actually seen her doing quartermaster stuff in her army.

SALLY: Yeah, Fair, fair, fair. And you know, she's got, she actually has military training because her dad would probably be like, “Faile, how would you besiege this town?”

EMILY: Yeah, Daddy Bashere. She's like, “I'm ready. Flashcards. Boom, baby.”

SALLY: So like, I guess what I'm trying to say is I agree. I don't have necessarily any major beef with her being, like, the supply person. We need to have Faile do something because she's Perrin's wife and therefore she's a key character and she could whatever help out. But it really is like, and Elayne even says like, “I don't know Faile. It feels weird to trust her with this task.” And I'm like –

EMILY: hilariously, Elayne knows Faile exactly as well as she knows Perrin.

SALLY: [laughs] That's a good point. That's a good point.

EMILY: She has never not been in Perrin's company without Faile.

SALLY: That's a good point. So why does she trust Perrin so much?

EMILY: Hmm. Maybe it's because he's a man.

SALLY: Oh, he's a man and he knows my baby daddy. Um, so yeah, it's just, like, an absolutely wild thing to have fail do. Be like, why does fail need to be connected to the Horn of Valere? You're so right. Fail could be doing supply stuff and I'd be like, “Slay, bestie.”

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: You're doing a great job.

EMILY: Clearly, they were like, “That's a boring task to give her and it's like, I'd rather read about that than her unhinged journey to get the Horn of Valere. And I know that it's an important task, even if it's not a very glamorous one.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But they're like, “We're feminists, so we have to have Faile doing important stuff.”

SALLY: And I guess it ties back to her being a Hunter for the Horn, you know?

EMILY: Sure.

SALLY: So, she's got to *hunt* for the horn or whatever. But it really is like, at this point, if you're forcing me to read all of these military logistics, it doesn't matter if one of your main characters is doing supply line logistics. That is interesting to me as well.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: So what the fuck is this plot?

EMILY: Yeah, it's just the author's responsibility to make more interesting subplots and in this they completely failed.

SALLY: Yeah, and...yeah. And seriously, just...it was so easy. It was such low hanging fruit.

EMILY: [whispers] Yeah.

SALLY: Could have had the Forsaken succeed at one, parentheses, one, end parentheses, task.

EMILY: Yeah, it's also frustrating that they're like, we can't just go to Faile *fighting* the way that we're going to be going to other female characters fighting, like Egwene or Aviendha, who are just will just be on the front lines. I guess, because those women will be primarily fighting through channeling and Faile is not a channeler.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: So they're just like, "Oh, we can't."

SALLY: Women can't hold swords.

SALLY: It's like, we're just supposed to believe, well, Faile couldn't hold her out in battle. And it's like, I don't believe Faile is anything more than a mediocre, you know, fighter. I – sure, I don't really believe that. But if you're going to have me going to Egwene and Aviendha on the field of battle.

SALLY: Faile could also just be there.

EMILY: [sighs] Yeah.

SALLY: Like we're, well, there's like been a major plot about all the farmers of the land going to the front. And it's like, okay, you're willing to put the farmers on the front, but you can't put Faile on the front.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Fucking stupid.

EMILY: Anyway, um, other things. Elayne decides to announce that Rand [laughs] is the father of her unborn children. Bashere pressures her to do this because he's like, "The men will fight better if they know that you are the Dragon Reborn's [laughs] baby mama." wWich is an unhinged thing to say. Absolutely wild.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, if I was a soldier, I'd be like, "Don't care at all about that lady's sex life or the Dragon Reborn's, frankly."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They both seem unhinged to me, but whatever.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, also without consulting Rand, so that's funny. But again, nothing Elayne has done about her pregnancy or her future children has involved Rand [laughs], so.

SALLY: Elayne does have a wild, it's not wild knowing Elayne. She's like, "It'd be nice to forge ties with Saldaea because I would love to put one of my children on the throne of Saldaea."

EMILY: So again, Elayne just sort of power hungry, greedy for more countries. Classic.

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah. She's nuts. But yeah, they light Caemlyn on fire.

EMILY: They light Caemlyn on fire. Bye, baby. Lan on the front lines is just like, "Sweet. I'm so glad to have backup. I am an inspiration to everyone around me." And I'm like, no, you're not. You have been literally the world's most awkward man for the last thirteen books. So to have you giving inspirational speeches at this stage of the game is incredibly funny. Not in a good way."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Back at the Black Tower, Androl wakes up to find that he, Pevara, and his friends have been tied up. They're still in this sort of basement, un, um, this sort of basement area where they found Logain. He wakes up. They try to get free and are unsuccessful. They watch as horribly one of Androl's friends is dragged off and capital T Turned...And, you know, then comes back evil. And they're like, "Uh-oh." And Emarin, our gay bestie, is being dragged away as we cut the scene. But it seems like there's nothing they can do. Androl and Pevara are stuck. Logain will get turned anytime now. Black Tower is in a bad position. Rand did say something about going to the Black Tower, but that hasn't happened yet, so. Like Rand has literally – the last two chapters. Rand was not in. Rand disappeared. So we have no idea where he is.

SALLY: [sighs] Yep. That's pretty common Rand these days.

EMILY: Yeah. Pretty classic Rand.

SALLY: He's just like, "Bye!" As soon as Rand learned how to teleport, he was like, "You will not be able to keep me in one place for more than a day."

EMILY: You will never see me again.

SALLY: If I could teleport, I might do the same. Yeah.

EMILY: Those are those chapters. Do you have anything else to add?

SALLY: I don't think so. I've said enough.

EMILY: Um, our next few chapters are going to be more of the same, what I indicated. I'm just jumping between fronts. We will – Elayne and Rand will finally have a conversation about the babies.

SALLY: That's nice.

EMILY: So that at least is going to happen, but mostly it'll just be sort of jumping around. I can't remember if we read two or three chapters next week. If it's three, then we will finally get a Mat point of view. But if it's two, then we're sticking with the status quo. So those are those chapters.

SALLY: I don't have any expectations because I assume it will just be fighting stuff. But I do think it would be *so* funny if Androl and Pevara got Turned to the Dark One.

EMILY: Oh my God. That would be...

SALLY: [laughing] If that was, like, the resolution to that plot was that they just were both so inept at getting out of this situation.

EMILY: And now they're just so evil.

SALLY: [laughing] And now they're just so evil.

EMILY: [laughing] Now we have to fight Androl and Pevara, our beloved characters.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: It's so sad how they tragically fell and they're so powerful because they're double bonded.

SALLY: [laughs] It would be really funny.

EMILY: I agree.

SALLY: I'm sure they will get out of it in some, you know, MacGyver type way, but it would be incredibly hilarious.

EMILY: [laughs] Oh God, that would be so funny. Okay. Thanks for listening. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

SALLY: Yeah, you guys are the best. Check us out on Patreon if you haven't. Doing some fun stuff over there.

EMILY: Thanks to Ed for being a moral support in this trying time.

SALLY: He's been sitting here just kind of yawning a lot. I don't know. He's a sleepy guy.

EMILY: Uh, do you have a sign off? Um, last night we were watching *Bones*.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: We've been watching – We're almost done with *Bones*. And you guys, next we'll do a podcast about *Bones*. And how bad *Bones* is.

SALLY: I would love to.

EMILY: [laughing] I couldn't possibly.

SALLY: No, we don't rewatch *Bones* at all. We just go episode by episode.

EMILY: We do a retrospective. We try to remember what it's about.

SALLY: We try to remember and then you read the IMDb summary to try and, uh, get it right.

EMILY: Well, anyway, we saw – the structure of *Bones*, if you haven't seen it, is that they find a horribly mutilated and disintegrated body somewhere. There're, you know, twelve seasons worth of horribly – what's the word? – [laughs] decayed bodies just all around the Washington D.C. area. But they found one and in the course of their investigative work, they found out that this person had been tortured with the old rat in the bucket technique. I'm not going to elaborate on that because [laughs].

SALLY: You know what it means.

EMILY: It's gross. I think it was in *Game of Thrones* too, if that, uh, helps. But they announced this and Sally immediately, wisely, goes, like in *1984*, the George Orwell book.

SALLY: [laughs]



EMILY: And I had thought, but luckily hadn't said at the exact same time, just like *in Too Fast Too Furious* [laughing].

SALLY: Oh my gosh.

EMILY: So.

SALLY: It was incredibly hilarious. And I think Emily's was a more poignant cultural reference [Emily laughs] than George Orwell's *1984*.

EMILY: [laughing] I've never read *1984*. And that was the moment I realized I'd left such a huge gap in my – [laughing].

SALLY: [laughing] Whatever. It's fine.

EMILY: So anyway, that's all we've got.

SALLY: Go watch *Bones*.

EMILY: Don't watch *Bones*, [laughs] I'm begging you.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: It is very similarly – similar to *Wheel of Time* in terms of its gender dynamics, I will say.

SALLY: Oh, *Bones*? Yeah, it's kind of living in the 18th century [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah, Todd Copps and Robert Jordan went to the same school of women are bitches.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Women be bitches. Okay [laughs]. Women be shopping.

SALLY: Women be shopping.

EMILY: See y'all later.

SALLY: Bye!