

Episode 287: R.I.P. Deepe

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SALLY: Everybody Hates Rand is a Wheel of Time podcast that will contain spoilers for all fourteen books. So if you're anti-spoiler, stop this, read all fourteen 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 MacKezie plays]

EMILY: I think I can safely go on record saying this is the cringiest –

SALLY: Oh!

EMILY: *Wheel of Time* section of all time.

SALLY: Yeah, I think that's fair.

EMILY: Yeah. It was the most that I was, like, physically having a reaction to. I was like, “Ugh!” [gagging noises]

SALLY: Uh, yeah, same. You guys know by now that I get, like, palpable secondhand embarrassment. Like, we're watching – I know we mentioned *Bridgerton* last time.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Sometimes there are some scenes where I'm just like, “UGH!!!” throughout the whole scene because [laughs] I cannot stand to listen to the dialogue, which I'm sure makes watching super fun for Emily. Um, so when I was reading this today, I just, like, had to skim it. Like, I barely was able to digest what any of the characters were saying to each other because it was just like so, bleck, you know?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Like I know the point of novels is that they are not real life. They are not, um, an exact mimic of how human beings behave. But also there needs to be a level of realism in how people speak to each other, which just didn't feel like it was happening in this section.

EMILY: Yeah, I felt embarrassed for the characters. I felt embarrassed for Brandon Sanderson for thinking that that was, like, normal [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Maybe he doesn't think it's normal. I'm sure he was just trying to be cute, you know? But, like, then I'm embarrassed for him thinking that that's cute.

SALLY: Yeah. I was just like, "This is not your wheelhouse, Brandon. You have flown too close to the sun."

EMILY: You have flown too close to the sun with your millions of novels and short stories and... I don't know, next thing I mean – I feel like he's gonna put out a stage play any day now, you know?

SALLY: [laughs] A play by Brandon Sanderson.

EMILY: Yeah! He could – what's stopping him? Nothing, certainly not his own, you know, self-reflection.

SALLY: No, I mean, maybe a Brando stage play would be really good.

EMILY: What I think would be really good would be if he would, like, build an RPG of some sort. I feel like that's where his, that's what his wheelhouse is.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But it's, like, only because then he [laughing] wouldn't be writing the dialogue.

SALLY: Yeah, yeah.

EMILY: The players would be doing that [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, um.

EMILY: So this is Everybody Hates Rand..on Sanderson.

SALLY: That's right [laughs].

EMILY: Your Friendly Neighborhood *Wheel of Time* Podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: And I am Sally Goodger.

EMILY: And, um, yeah, man. It was a rough one.

SALLY: It was a rough one, and I'm gonna really struggle to not just repeat things I have said already. So, I'm really gonna work hard to bring something new to the table in terms of literary or cultural criticism here. But it was sort of like *Wheel of Time's* Worst Hits [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] Just the...just the lowest five.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs]. Top five worst *Wheel of Time* moments.

EMILY: Bottom five. Yikes! Um. We'll just go in order because what else are we to do, you know?

SALLY: Literally nothing.

EMILY: We start with a Loial point of view. Uh, we are still on the – he's on the Andoran front, I guess. They are engaging in the retreat that Bashere laid out for them last time we saw them. Loial's with all the other Ogier as they are attacking a line of Trollocs and sort of Loial's perspective is that he gives into this sort of berserker rage that we've seen that he and the Ogier are capable of harnessing in the past. They're also singing while they kill things, which is...sort of brings a Broadway-ish pizzazz to the whole massacring [laughing] of living creatures. Yeah, jazz hands.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I wish I knew any songs from *Chicago* because I feel like some of them would fit, you know?

SALLY: Yeah, you could do the...

EMILY: [singing] He had it coming!

SALLY: Yeah, the “Cell Block Tango.” [singing] He had it coming. He only had himself to blame.

EMILY: It is, of course, speaking of, you know, bad *Wheel of Time* things, Loial’s whole rhetoric in this scene is being like, “I don’t just have to, but I would prefer to, um, think of the Trollocs that I am...killing as weeds, you know? Things that must be killed.” He is, the Trollocs aren’t human, but he is dehumanizing them on sort of an existential level as just like they’re pests that need to be gotten rid of.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, this sort of rhetoric isn’t *great* coming from our heroes, even when it’s being applied to, like, fantasy world.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Because it’s the sort of rhetoric that, um, like, fascist and oppressive governments in the real world have used in order to justify persecuting people. You can think of Jews in Germany being referred to as rats.

SALLY: Yeah, vermin.

EMILY: Vermin. Um, so yeah, it’s just a real slippery slope there, and *Wheel of Time* obviously does not care to engage with that. This was clearly just Brandon Sanderson being like, “I have to do a Loial point of view because I, for some reason have to do a point of view with every character. And this is what I’m choosing...to give to him to sort of harmonize with his themes of ecosystems, you know, the Ogier trees, plants.”

SALLY: [laughs] I love...grass.

EMILY: And also [intensely] bloodshed, manslaughter!

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: I love grass and I hate Trollocs.

SALLY: Um, yeah, what, um, Loial’s perspective is trying to present to us is a very environmentalist, eco-text type of thing. Loial being, you know, our most Treebeard figure who is so deeply connected to the earth, um, uh, deeply connected to the planet. And that way the Ogier are also sort of Indigenized, if I can use that as a verb. I don’t know if that is real, but in the

way that the Aiel and other minority groups have been offered up as types of Indigenous people, um, in the sort of, like, tropes and archetypes that they occupy. Yeah, hey, Tybalt, I'm trying to make a point here.

EMILY: Could you sit down?

SALLY: Could you let me fucking speak? [sighs] Um, so the way that various minority groups have been, um, offered, like, various traits of Indigenous groups around the world, the Ogier have this sort of deep connection to the earth and to the point where it's almost, like, a little over, at least in this instance, a little over the top. Um, but that's kind of what I think the text is trying to give us is that, you know, this is a people that has a very strong connection to the land so much so that they're going to rise up and fight for it. You know? So that's what Loial is getting at, but it kind of, um, undercuts itself, like this idea that Loial is so connected to the ecosystem and so offended that these horrible things are happening to it really undercuts itself with this rhetoric of vermin. Not only does it veer, um, fascist, and we can talk in a second about how it veers eco-fascist, there's a sort of nice, uh, "nice" [Emily laughs] intersection there. Um, but Loial being like these things that are living – we talked in previous episodes about how it's unfortunate that the text has no respect for the Trollocs as living beings, but Loial being like, "These things are pests," when, like, pests of various forms still play some type of role in the ecosystems that they live in, you know?

EMILY: Yeah, I was gonna say weeds are an important part of any ecosystem.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Weeds are the most durable plants, so we get them because, especially in, like, Westernized, you know, lawns, green lawns, it's because we've *killed* so many of the Indigenous plants and made our earth into a barren wasteland.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: That the weeds are trying to revive it.

SALLY: Yeah, exactly. Like they're playing this, this, yeah, this role. Um, so for this, this little section to be like, it's an ecosystem and we have to absolutely remove a piece of the ecosystem. And I know they're – the argument is supposed to be that Trollocs are unnatural.

EMILY: But weeds are natural!

SALLY: But weeds are natural and pests are natural. So this idea that if the, if the text is offering up the Trollocs as part of an ecosystem, culling them out of the ecosystem is, um, counterintuitive. So, the argument just, like, collapses in on itself.

EMILY: Just picture Loial as, like, a suburban mom on a riding lawnmower. My mom, in other words.

SALLY: He's got a *huge* sun hut. He's wearing –

EMILY: You're just describing my mom [laughing].

SALLY: Capris, linen capris.

EMILY: Yep.

SALLY: [laughs] And, like, a little sleeveless button up top.

EMILY: Mm. She did sleeveless because she knew [laughing] my mom wouldn't wear sleeveless.

SALLY: That's Loial and garden gloves, of course.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: So anyway, that's what I was thinking about in this section. And, like, Emily kind of already mentioned, the way it crosses over with fascism, but a huge kind of eco-fascist argument is that human beings are bad for the planet and therefore they need [laughs] to be killed and we need significant population control through various measures when it's not human beings themselves who are bad for the planet, but the capitalist systems that are burning it. So just kind of this idea that there's an entire group of beings that needs to be removed in order for the planet to thrive again, just again, collapses these two things.

EMILY: Yeah, real bummer, you know?

SALLY: Yeah. Okay. End.

EMILY: No, that was great. We then have Galad reacting to the Ogier, and it's literally just a bunch of guys going like, "Fuck. They're *crazy*." [laughing]

SALLY: Yeah, *dude*, that's gnarly.

EMILY: It's so much scarier when non-humans commit murder, you know, do battlefield killing.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It's a little racist in sort of a light way. One of the Whitecloaks is like, "They must be Darkfriends." And one of the other Whitecloaks is like, "Obviously, they're not. Don't be an idiot."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which I guess is trying to show us that the Whit cloaks as a group are weeding out the bad apples among them.

SALLY: They are growing.

EMILY: That's...growth.

SALLY: Growth.

EMILY: We don't consider Ogier the peace loving, absolute – like I would kill to see Pedron Nial interact with an Ogier [laughing].

SALLY: An Ogier.

EMILY: What would he do? [laughs]

SALLY: Probably die, immediately.

EMILY: He would find a way to make them into Darkfriends, is what I'm saying. Then me get a Rand point of view [shuddering noise], talking to Moiraine in, I guess, Merrilor?

SALLY: Yeah. I guess.

EMILY: Yeah, the Fields of Merrilor. Rand is just hopping the fuck around. Rand's like, "It's about time." And Moiraine's like, "Oh worm? To go to do your one job? Fight the Dark One?" And Rand's like, "No. To go to Mat. He's in Ebou Dar." And Moiraine's like [sad noises].

SALLY: No! [spraying noise]

EMILY: [laughing] Yeah, sprays him with a water bottle.

SALLY: Spray bottle.

EMILY: She's like, “[sighs] Okay, okay, whatever, sure.” She's like, “What's the game plan?” He's like, “Well, I'm gonna go talk to her and that's it.” And she's like, “You're fantastic” [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, he's like, “Got to get the Seanchan on my side.”

EMILY: He's like, “Everything will fall apart if the Seanchan aren't on our side.” And she's like, “I'm not disagreeing, but like...”

SALLY: Is that your job specifically, you the Dragon Reborn?

EMILY: Yeah, you still haven't learned to delegate.

SALLY: Yeah, like is that not something I, Moiraine, could be doing? And maybe this was why I came back from the Tower of Ghenjei to do a peace brokering the way Aes Sedai are allegedly supposed to be really good at.

EMILY: Anything, anything Moiraine could be doing besides having this conversation with Rand.

SALLY: Yeah, and just like Emily's point at the beginning, like the dialogue is really...

EMILY: Very cringey.

SALLY: Cringey. Like they're trying to be, like, jokey and fun with each other, which was never Moiraine and Rand's relationship at all. So to be like...

EMILY: They also keep, like, reminiscing about the good times, which is seriously unhinged. It's like, I'm like, “Do we remember the same things?”

SALLY: No.

EMILY: You guys were *at* each other's throats.

SALLY: All the time.

EMILY: It was a German Shepherd and a Chihuahua about to fucking bite each other's throats out. And sometimes I thought that Chihuahua *should* [laughs].

SALLY: Was going to win, yeah. And should.

EMILY: Yeah. Until the Chihuahua tackled the Pomeranian into another dimension or whatever [laughing].

SALLY: What type of dog would Lanfear be? What's the like cunniest dog? [laughs]

EMILY: Like one of those really *skinny*, upsetting dogs that, like, if you dropped it from a two foot height, they'd break all their legs [laughing].

SALLY: So, like, a Borzoi type, Borzoi type situation.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Or, like, an Afghan Hound with the long, flowy hair.

EMILY: I forgot – I just remembered just now that Sally's favorite book as a child was a book about dog breeds. [laughing] So.

SALLY: I was thinking about that today and I was like, that was, like, a little neurodivergent of what I was saying [laughing].

EMILY: [laughing] So, I should have known when I said a dog breed, like you would actually know.

SALLY: Or like a Greyhound or an Italian Greyhound. Have you guys ever seen them?

EMILY: An Italian Greyhound! That's probably what I was thinking because my sister wants to get an Italian Greyhound and we all keep telling her not to do that [laughs].

SALLY: They are so upsetting looking. They look like they are scared of the very fact that they exist.

EMILY: Yeah, they look deranged [laughs]. And they look – Jake, my brother-in-law keeps being like, if it breaks its leg, [laughing] we'll have to shoot it [Sally laughs] to put it out of its misery. It's like just a dog that's got a horse in them, you know?

SALLY: Yeah. It's got that *horse* in him [laughs].

EMILY: [laughing] It's got that horse in him. She's got that dog in her. Whatever, this metaphor strains credulity, and I'm sorry.

SALLY: Uh no, I think it's perfect.

EMILY: But I'll create opportunities to get Sally to name dog breeds.

SALLY: Sure! Okay!

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: I could just start if you want me [laughs].

EMILY: Instead of talking about how bad this is. [softly] Jesus Christ. Like at one point, Moiriane and Rand talk to each other and then call each other out for deflecting the conversation.

SALLY: [laughing] Jake would be like, "Well, I have to shoot the dog."

EMILY: [laughing]

SALLY: Okay, sorry. Ugh, I'm crying.

EMILY: And I'm like, what's the point of this? What's the point of this?

SALLY: There's no point to it. It is another nonsense conversation where Moiraine is like, "Would you consider doing your job?" And Rand's like, "No, lulz." And she's like, "Oh my gosh, he's become so funny and silly."

EMILY: She's like, "Oh, teehee." He's like, "I am an eldritch being." And she's like, "Haha, yeah, you are sure, whatever." Um, yeah, it's just Brandon Sanderson trying to capture a vibe that was never there. And also that he is incapable of capturing the original, um, dynamic, partly due to it's hard to capture dynamics that other authors wrote and partly because he is not really capable of writing normal character dynamics, generally.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So that's always going to just, like, leap out at us.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So yeah, just a reminder that Rand and Moiraine, especially after the first couple of books, rarely spoke to each other.

SALLY: Yeah, and that they had that disgusting, like, power dynamic going on where Rand's like, "I'll only listen to you if you do every single thing that I say." And she basically just was functioning as, like, his servant.

EMILY: They sort of hated each other's guts, you know? And so we have Moiraine coming back here and them just being like, "Oh, we're happy family" is meant to be, like, their whole very toxic dynamic has been redeemed by Moiraine dying and Rand being enlightened.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which is sort of taking all of the work out of a toxic relationship becoming viable again. It would have been interesting if both Rand and Moiraine had done any sort of, like, character work to address these issues, but all we've really had is Rand, when he reflects on his relationship with Moiraine, just sort of feeling guilty that she's dead.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: He doesn't spend a whole lot of time being like, "Moiraine was right."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which is fine because Moiraine wasn't always right.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But they just have not been able to come to terms with each other as, like, complicated people who made mistakes and were right about some things and wrong about other things. They're just sort of cardboard cutouts of that.

SALLY: Yeah. And it's, like, they haven't even really, like, apologized to each other or like it talked about how their dynamic was really difficult and kind of doomed from the beginning based on both of their personalities and everything they had going on. So.

EMILY: Yeah. Like there was so much possible, like, drama between them that we could have had when Moiraine walked in. Rand could have been angry at her. That would have been totally viable.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They could have had any number of reactions to one another. That would have been more interesting than just, well, bygones be bygones.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I am your ideal mentor figure and you are my ideal hero and together we are Gandalf the White and Aragorn. And there's nothing bad between us.

SALLY: Exactly.

EMILY: It's like, guys, that's not true.

SALLY: Boo!

EMILY: You're lying. We do get some...uh, if not interesting, crucial information here.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Rand tells us sort of out of the blue that – he's like, “I have figured out what is up with *callandor*. The last thing that we've all been trying to figure out.” And it's that it can be used, like, as a *s'angreal* to not just channel *saidin*, but also the True Power, you know, the Dark One's, nasty gunk [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: He is like, I've – Rand has personally channeled the true power, I think, on accident, mostly, due to his increasing A, evilness [laughs] and B, connection to Morridin. So he's like, “That's a real temptation,” because the True Power is somehow even more addictive than regular, the One Power. And I'm like, “I feel like we're running out of ways to say that magic is addictive in this text.” So I don't really believe you, but sure. And he's like, “This is the hinge of my secret plan, which I will not tell you,” and which he does not tell Moiraine. But he tells Moiraine, “I'm going to kill a Dark One.” Moiraine is like, “That's stupid.” This is now, I believe, like, the sixth person to tell Rand that that's stupid. I believe all of them have been women, so that might be

why he has been dismissing all of them. But Rand, yet again, is like, “Mmm, *No*. I don't believe you and, um, due to my great wisdom as my eldritch being status, no.”

SALLY: No, I'm just going to do what I want because it's not, like, the fate of the world hangs in the balance or anything. Um, it really *pissed, pissed* me off when he was like, “I have discovered *the* secret about *callandor*.” And I was like, I've been waiting to hear the capital S secret about *callandor* for like six books now. And you're just going to tell me –

EMILY: In a random paragraph.

SALLY: In a random side – It wasn't like Min had put together this research.

EMILY: I thought that's what Min was doing!

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, didn't Rand tell her, like, “Go look up *callandor* and then he just takes credit for it.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I mean, maybe he was the one who figured it out. But it's like, where is Min?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Maybe Brandon Sanderson just hated her, which, like, I don't really blame him. She's a terrible character. But like, this was the one thing she was supposed to do besides suck Rand's dick off screen.

SALLY: Yeah. Two tasks.

EMILY: Brutal. [laughs] Two tasks.

SALLY: Two tasks on the list. Now that the *callandor* thing was apparently solved by my boyfriend, the Dragon Reborn himself.

EMILY: [in a baby voice] Because he's so much smarter than me!

SALLY: I have apparently become entirely irrelevant.

EMILY: Yeah. I'm literally just a blow up doll.

SALLY: So I just – RIP, Min, another victim of the patriarchy writing women.

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah. Then we have the tiniest Moiraine point of view, where she's just like, “The Wheel weaves as the Wheel wills,” directly to the camera. And we're like...

SALLY: That was not necessary.

EMILY: We didn't need that. What's happening?

SALLY: Shut up, actually.

EMILY: Oh my God. [pause, laughs] We both looked down – we have the book open between us, so we both looked down and realized it's the Lan section. And I immediately started thinking of Lan's big feminist moment in this [laughing] section.

SALLY: Women! Should also get to ride into a battle.

EMILY: How dare you insinuate that women can't fight. These women are just as good as fighters as men. And if you try to tell them differently, they'll kill you. And it's like Marvel is over there taking copious notes.

SALLY: Oh, yeah, that's it!

EMILY: Oh yeah, I'm so close!!

SALLY: Joss Whedon read this and was like, “Yeah.”

EMILY: Yeah, that's what we love about women is when they fight.

SALLY: It's when they fight.

EMILY: Um, yeah, it's a long Lan point of view. Lan is also doing the same version of what's happening in Andor with the sort of prolonged retreat. He tells us that they have already, like, burned the, uh, the two the main two cities of Shienar, Fal Dara and Fal, whatever the fuck. Fal Mora – eh?

SALLY: Fal Moran.

EMILY: Fal Moron

SALLY: Yeah, Fal Moron.

EMILY: Fall, moron [gunshot noises]. And Lan is in the middle of some tactic where he does a cavalry charge and then they leave and wait for the Trollocs to kind of go scavenge the bodies and then attack them again to catch them unawares. A tactic, I assume, will work exactly once, but sure. Lan tells it to us like it's some big, clever thing. Several more Channelers have joined this particular portion of the battle, so also Lan's tactics involve having, like, a Channeler with them. In this case, it's the Asha'man Deepe, who we last saw in Maradon, I believe, with Ing – fucking not Ingtar.

SALLY: [laughs] Ingtar!

EMILY: Ingtar's been dead for 12 books, Jesus Christ. Ituralde! [laughs] He's there and is just basically a counter spell. He's calling counterspell in here.

SALLY: Bing!

EMILY: Uh, trying to protect them from the enemy Channelers. Um, Lan is, of course, doing his usual badass stuff. He casually mercs a couple of Myrddraal and everyone's like, “wow, you're so incredible, Lan.” He's like, “Tis nothing. When you have as much testosterone as I do, these things become incredibly simple.”

SALLY: Yeah, exactly. Easy peasy.

EMILY: Easy peasy. Um, fighting, fighting, fighting, fighting. Eventually this ends and they get chased away because, um, the sort of enemy Channelers come back with a vengeance, and now they are accompanied by Mazim Taim, who has finally joined on one of the battlefields and, uh, kills the Asha'man Deepe, so.

SALLY: RIP, Deepe.

EMILY: Yeah, RIP my guy.

SALLY: You were... Uh, we hardly knew thee, but...

EMILY: We really hardly knew thee, but in all honesty, I liked you better than...Lan.

SALLY: Certainly better than Lan, yeah.

EMILY: Yeah, and a lot of other characters.

SALLY: Yeah, if I was rooting for anybody on this field of battle it would be, Deepe.

EMILY: Yeah, your sort of absence makes my heart grow fonder. [sighs] Your lack of character depth from Brandon Sanderson, really.

SALLY: I mean, he did lose a leg, so we can um..

EMILY: Yeah, and they're like, "We just tied him to the saddle." And I'm like, that seems incredibly dangerous.

SALLY: Yeah, the whole time Lan keeps being like, "Got to get off my horse or I'm going to trample a bunch of people." And I'm like, "Well, it's nice that you didn't give Deepe that option."

EMILY: Yeah, he's just like, "Hey, guys?"

SALLY: Couldn't you have figured something else out for him?

EMILY: Like, I guess if his horse falls, goodbye, Deepe, forever.

SALLY: Yeah, like for Lan being like, "I'm an *absolute* genius on the battlefield, this seemed like [laughs] such a silly decision."

EMILY: They were like problem solving, and he was like, "Just tie him to the horse." And everyone was like, "Oh!"

SALLY: Isn't the, like, number one rule of cavalry to, like, jump off your horse?

EMILY: Jump off your horse if the horse goes down.

SALLY: Yeah, you got to leap.

EMILY: You got to leap. Number two rule is if the horse's legs break, [laughing] you got to shoot it.

SALLY: You got to shoot it.

EMILY: [laughing] Shoot it like a Gray – what are they called?

SALLY: Italian Greyhound.

EMILY: An Italian Greyhound.

SALLY: I guess Italian in this instance just means small? [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: They're just little.

EMILY: Maybe they really like ravioli or something.

SALLY: Chef Boyardee was an Italian Greyhound.

EMILY: We had Chef Boyardee's spaghetti on Monday and it was pretty good.

SALLY: It was really tasty.

EMILY: I mean, it was, like, from the Chef Boyardee website. Our friend Angie made it for us.

SALLY: It was really tasty.

EMILY: It was tasty, yeah. Um, Tybalt, I hate how your hair gets in everything.

SALLY: Yeah, literally everywhere. Tybalt has just sort of curled around his pile of toys, including one, a squeaky elephant, two, a rainbow colored mouse, and three, a little sheep.

EMILY: Yeah, Tybalt, sorry, they all just ended up in one single pile, but maybe you like that.

SALLY: He likes to be like a dragon sitting upon his horde.

EMILY: The next chapter is a single point of view, which would be a relief if it wasn't all Mat's point of view and if it wasn't this.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Mat wakes up from his sexcapades in the garden where Tuon is receiving a report from her bodyguards about them being unable to capture the Gray Man. Mat wakes up and is like, "Um, we're naked." And Tuon's like, "Yeah, what about it?"

SALLY: He's like, "Not everyone is *down* with public nudity."

EMILY: Yeah, and he's like, "Could we, could I have some privacy?" And it's like, dude, well, you did fuck in a garden, so you sort of maybe should have thought of that before.

SALLY: This is *just* like what happened in *Bridgerton*.

EMILY: This *is* just like what happened in *Bridgerton*. My God. I've never been so upset and, like, concerned. We were like, "When is someone going to walk in on them?"

SALLY: Someone literally just had to walk around the corner.

EMILY: They were just in a gazebo.

SALLY: Yeah, open air.

EMILY: Fucking.

SALLY: It was insane.

EMILY: For a long time.

SALLY: A *long* time.

EMILY: Yeah, it was no quickie.

SALLY: And then they slept there overnight.

EMILY: There was foreplay. So, yeah [laughing], I guess it was just like *Bridgerton*.

SALLY: Just like *Bridgerton*.

EMILY: And I like Mat and Tuon about as much as I like that couple.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, Tuon and Mat are, like, get dressed, I guess, just so they will be dressed when Rand walks in because the guard comes in and is like, "Hey, we found a random guy trying to get in." And Tuon's like, "Okay, bring him here." For some reason. I don't know why she wouldn't just be like, "Okay, throw him in the dungeons."

SALLY: Kill him.

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah. But they bring in Ran, like, handcuffed and Mat's like, "Oh, I know him."

And Tuon recognizes him. Of course, she's met him before and is like, "Hello, red alert!"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Panic button. Where are the Channelers? Why am I not surrounded by Channelers at this moment? It's like, well, Tuon, you could Channel. So maybe if you would learn that.

SALLY: Stupid.

EMILY: You'd be equipped to handle this. Um, Mat kind of tries to de-escalate the situation badly. He's like, "Hey, everyone, shut up and listen to me." And so when the *sul'dam* and *damane* arrive, they kind of tie up both Rand and Mat next to each other, while Tuon discusses the situation with her guards and Seleucia, who's also arrived. Um.

SALLY: Tuon has taken Mat's medallion, which feels like...

EMILY: Yeah, and Tuon also stripped Mat [laughs], just literally stole it while he was asleep. So, again, their relationship is built on a foundation of mutual trust and respect that I really admire.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [sighs] And that's great. Um, Rand and Mat, while they are tied up for an unreasonably long amount of time, chat and it's, quote unquote, "banter."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: You know, it is Brandon Sanderson trying to do a joke, trying to do a punchline, trying to Joss Whedon us. It's just incredibly bad and is not at all like Rand and Matt's original dynamic, similar to the whole Rand and Moiraine situation. Um, Rand and Mat were never competitive with one another in that way. Uh, they also, Rand also just never really engaged with Mat's, sort of more jokey mischievous side. Whenever we saw them together, Rand was kind of like the straight man in this situation, [laughs] trying to keep a lid on it. And, you know, Mat is not – for the *last* time, Brandon Sanderson, Mat does not just make jokes. He's capable of having adult conversations. And he has been since book one.

SALLY: Mm-hmm. Incredible.

EMILY: Incredible.

SALLY: It's wild. I think we read different books.

EMILY: I think we did too. Anyway, Tuan's like, "Well, now that I've captured the Dragon Reborn, I guess I'll take you back to Seanchan with me." And Rand's like, "Well, I have a question for you. I passed the bar exam."

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Recently. And also I have inspected the lines of heraldry or whatever the fuck. He's like, "You claim that this land belongs to you because you are descendants of Artur Hawkwing. Correct?" She's like, "Yes. Bitch." [laughs] He's like, "Well, I precede Artur Hawkwing in that I am Lews Therin, and I conquered lands...before he did." And somehow that works, I guess.

SALLY: Yeah, this, like, shakes Tuon to her foundations.

EMILY: She's like, "Oh my God."

SALLY: He's like, "You have no claim because I had a claim before you."

EMILY: What?

SALLY: Yeah, which is which is just like...

EMILY: When was Lews Therin the king of the world?

SALLY: It seems like *thousands* of years ago.

EMILY: But also like he wasn't.

SALLY: That's a good point. Yeah, you mean like when did we hear this happen? Just now.

EMILY: Just now. I don't think Lews Therin – all we've ever heard about Lews Therin was that he was like an important guy in the Age of Legends and kind of, like, kind of the Amyrlin Seat of his time more or less. Not just like actual Charlemagne as Artur Hawkwing was.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, that's confusing, first of all, just sort of throwing this lore at us out of nowhere. But then also, like, yeah, that was millions of years ago.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Hey, well, I'm the reincarnation of Jesus, so...

SALLY: The world belongs to me, baby.

EMILY: The world belongs to me, baby. This is how severely mentally ill people talk.

SALLY: Yeah. We're just, like, yeah, it's quite, um, it's quite out there. And it's just, like, so frustrating because Rand, [laughs] I mean, frustrating, not at all surprising that the colonial text *Wheel of Time* is like, um, obviously, it doesn't matter that these were, like, sovereign lands with people living upon them already before a colonial, like a colonizing force came in. What matters is that somebody *else* has a...

EMILY: A prior claim.

SALLY: A prior imperialist claim upon this land. And that is what – it's like when a man is flirting with a woman and finds out that she has a boyfriend, even if she's already been like, I'm not interested in you.

EMILY: Yeah, suddenly it matters.

SALLY: Yeah, suddenly it matters that, oh, she belongs to somebody else. So, my bad.

EMILY: And Rand, maybe to his credit, is just trying to engage with Tuon on...

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: The only language that she apparently understands the same way that you might, if a guy's hitting on you, just say, I have a boyfriend.

SALLY: Right. Sure.

EMILY: Even if what you want to say is, well, [laughs] “I believe in feminism, so it doesn't really matter, you know?” But, um, we're not really getting that this is some sort of, like, 3D

chess move and Rand trying to just like out-rhetoric her. It's just sort of like he's had this brilliant idea through his enlightenment and now is legitimately claiming this.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, we have this moment that could be kind of like, oh, a character is being sort of clever turns into a character is being as bad as they are, sinking to her level.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Rand then backs up how impressive his lineage is by doing his trick where he, like, makes plants bloom or whatever.

SALLY: He has to sing for it though.

EMILY: Yeah, he's been doing this occasionally, um, and everyone was like, "We don't think he's..." It has been unclear until this point if he was, like, doing something Channeling wise to create that effect because I think other times we'd seen it, it was through like a non-channeler or female points of view. So it was unclear. But now we get that A, he's shielded so he can't actually channel and B, he is singing, mimicking what we just saw with the Ogier who can sing to make plants grow or whatever. So that's weird.

SALLY: Yeah. Has he sung in the past?

EMILY: He – Mat says that he's singing quite softly. [crosstalk] I think the implication is that Mat only hears because he's standing right next to him.

SALLY: Um, This made me think of Hadestown when Orpheus...

EMILY: [laughs] [singing] La, la, la, la, la, la.

SALLY: La, la, la, la, la, la.

EMILY: Yeah, and everyone's like, "Wow!"

SALLY: And plants grow around him and everyone's like, "Orpheus, savior of the people." That's what made this made me think of.

EMILY: Well, this is a very Orpheus moment. It is there – I'm not trying to say this isn't something he shouldn't be able to do. I do think we have some evidence from old Rand points of

view, specifically like when he went back through the Aiel lineage that, like, in the Age of Legends, people used to contribute to the Ogier singing.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: So it's not that he shouldn't be able to do this. It is just incredibly wild and weird [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, it's just it's, it's getting really hard to pin down with Rand what is related to Channeling, what is related to him being, like, super *ta'veren*, and what is related to, like, other skills he is getting now that he remembers...or is more connected to Lews Therin. So, it's — and maybe that's the point. Like it's all just he's just supposed to be incredibly overpowered and we're not really sure why, but it just is getting a little hard to track what is within system for him versus what is without his magic system.

EMILY: Yeah. It's getting a little annoying because we've also, like, Rand we know can also Channel the true power, which can bypass a shield, I believe. So, like, it was like, oh, maybe he's doing something incredibly evil here. No, he's doing something incredibly good, which is better, but still.

SALLY: Would have been funny if he was just like, yeah.

EMILY: [laughs] If he was like, “Yeah, I'm just achieving this incredibly scary effect by doing something insane.” Um, Mat is like, uhhhhhh, “Tuon.” He, um, gives her the most lukewarm letter of recommendation of all time. [laughs] It's actually pretty funny. Um, and Rand's like, “I just want to do an alliance. Let's have peace. Um, I have this treaty with the other rulers.” Mat advises Tuon, like, “It would be better if – like, you're going to have to fight the Last Battle at some point. It would be better if your borders are secured before you do that.” So Tuon is like, “I want to set the borders on the lands that I have conquered.” Rand allows that. Um, and then Tuon is like, [laughs softly] “I want all the women who can channel to be *damane*, and Rand's like, “Fucking absolutely not, furthermore, you need to return all of the women who you have captured from this land.” And she's like, “No, that's a deal breaker.” And he's like, “Okay!”

SALLY: Yeah, you can keep them, but no more or that will be a cause to end the treaty.

EMILY: So I guess just sorry to the hundreds of women who have been taken captive. No – absolutely no justice for any of them.

SALLY: Nope.

EMILY: From the narrative. Like they're just treated like this...afterthought that is super gnarly and offensive. I don't know.

SALLY: Yeah, I don't know what else there is to say about it that isn't captured and just like it's really disgusting, this idea that they're just collateral damage or, like, the, uh, you know...war impacts everybody and there's just victims of war sometimes, you know, blah, blah, blah, blah. And it's like, what? That's not good.

EMILY: Yeah, we... you know, a lot of the tension from this text we have talked about in the past comes from it trying to simultaneously achieve a good versus evil classic fantasy narrative, as well as a historically accurate sort of global power struggle narrative. So, while it is true in our history, in every history, that rulers have made compromises over real people's lives and safety, um, the fact that this comes in the same chapter as Rand's doing, this incredibly magical, Jesus-coded miracle of making dead plants grow and flowers blossom and whatever, is pretty tough to take.

SALLY: Yeah, that's a really good point, Emily. Like, there's so much conflict in this. It just – it doesn't work when you're trying to be like, “Rand is such a good person, like, he is the *embodiment* of good,” and yet at the same time he has to be a functioning political ruler.

EMILY: Grounded in this way, and it's like, no, either he's better than this or he's not.

SALLY: Or he's not. Yeah, you can't have it both ways.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And the tension of either of those could be incredibly interesting, but the text refuses to commit. It's, like, Rand *is* doing both, and almost worse sometimes, like, it's good that he's willing to make – it's actually for the Ultimate Good, capital U, capital G, that he is willing to make these types of sacrifices.

EMILY: Yeah, it's like how America wouldn't have been founded if we weren't willing to make some compromises about literal slavery. And we should revere the Founding Fathers for that. No.

SALLY: No.

EMILY: Those people are in hell, if you believe in that.

SALLY: Yeah. Casualties of war was the phrase I was looking for, but yeah, it's just yeah, ugh, yeah. These compromises are only compromises for the elite. For people on the ground, they are just, they're abandoned one way or the other.

EMILY: Life and death. Yeah.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, so depressing. Rand having it – Tuon agrees to that. Rand's like, “Great. Here, I've got some paperwork. We'll notarize it real quick. See you later.” And Tuon's like, “Yep, Mat, let's go get ready to join the Last Battle.” End of scene.

SALLY: And Rand ends the scene laughing, which is supposed to indicate to us that he really won the day.

EMILY: Again, is good and so much happier. And [laughs], um, the next chapter on a similarly grim note is titled To Feel Wasted. And it's a Gawyn point of view. So we just know that that's going to be some real meninist shit.

SALLY: To feel wasted.

EMILY: He isn't being used correctly.

SALLY:
I wish it was just about Gawyn getting like –

EMILY: Murdered?

SALLY: Absolutely shit face drunk.

EMILY: [laughs] To feel wasted.

SALLY: Being silly. But I'm sure he'll just be like –

EMILY: It's his bachelor party.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Yeah, we've got another, just another couple chapters on the similar timeline. So, similar plot lines, I mean.

SALLY: Lezzzz go!

EMILY: That's what's on the docket.

SALLY: Thanks!

EMILY: Yeah, you have anything to add?

SALLY: No, sorry. Go ahead.

EMILY: Thanks for, um, listening. Thanks to Glynn MacKenzie for our theme song and to our patrons on Patreon, and our followers on social media.

SALLY: Yeah! Thank you guys.

EMILY: Anything to add?

SALLY: No, I don't have anything to add. That was a real stinker set of chapters.

EMILY: Sure was.

SALLY: You know, I would give it zero out of ten.

EMILY: Yeah, I'd give it negatives. It degraded me on a moral and emotional level.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, I do feel sort of like –

EMILY: Filthy.

SALLY: I personally am filthier, that I need to be cleansed. Um, I need to repent.

EMILY: [laughs] Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: I do [sighs]. Yes. UGH Something has happened with the... with my work computer. Something has happened and it's been going on for a while. I just have a really bad procrastination problem right now because I've been feeling really sick and it just gives me really bad fatigue and brain fog. So, I will admit that part of this is my problem. But it – some setting got changed on my computer. I'm sure I clicked the wrong button, but, like, my work computer automatically logs me in to stuff, which is *bad* from a security level. We're dealing with

personally identifying information, me way less often, but in some reports that I have to, like, email to people and things like that. Um, and I've been playing around with it all week and I can't get it to reset. So I had to put in an IT ticket, which is the most – speaking of things that degrade me as a person. And our IT department *sucks*. It is a bunch of men [Emily laughs] who love to explain things to me.

EMILY: Enough said [laughs].

SALLY: A bunch of men who love to be like, “Well, you actually have to do this.” And I'll be like – I admitted even in the ticket that I was like, “I probably clicked the wrong button. I'm sorry.”

EMILY: Just fix it.

SALLY: Just fix it. And don't just – I just need it to be password protected again. Thank you so much.

EMILY: Ugh, Bummer. I'm sorry.

SALLY: So tomorrow they're going to be like, [nonsense noises] and I'll just be like, “Yep, heard.”

EMILY: You should kill them.

SALLY: I'm the reason you have a job.

EMILY: Yeah!

SALLY: Who funds your job?

EMILY: Shut up! [laughs] Goodbye everyone!

SALLY: Bye!