



Episode 290: Happy Pride to Bald Hair

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

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

(theme song by Glynn MacKenzie plays)

Sally: Um, speaking of Sesame Street, I was driving downtown, and, um, it's election season, right? And there's –

Emily: Yeah. By the way, Donald Trump just got convicted.

Sally: (laugh) I saw that.

Emily: On 34 counts, so. (laugh) Heh, heh.

Sally: Um. Yeah.

Emily: Happy election season, is all I'm saying. Yeah.

Sally: Happy election season, everybody. Um, but it's including elections – state elections, obviously. So there was, like, a billboard that was like, "Vote for this man for Congress." But his name is, I assume, J.R. Bird. But I read it as Junior Bird.

Emily: Junior Bird.

Sally: And then I started cracking myself up.

Emily: Big Bird's spawn. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Yeah. Being like, "No, please, Big Bird was my father," you know? Like, this is Junior Bird.

Emily: J.R. Bird.

Sally: J.R. Yeah, he looked like a scumbag. So. I mean, he's a politician in Utah, of course, he's – he's a politician, end of sentence.

Emily: Yeah, period.

Sally: Of course he's a scumbag.

Emily: In Utah, they're a particularly bad breed.

Sally: We make 'em different out here, that's for sure.

Emily: We make 'em Mormon out here. That's – that's what it is.

Sally: Bleh. Bleh. Okay, anyway, Junior Bird.

Emily: So, this is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I am Sally Goodger.

Emily: And Gawyn feels wasted and not in a fun white girl way.

Sally: White girl wasted.

Emily: White girl wasted. He's not in the club being like, "Oh my God, you're so pretty." And calling you by the wrong name. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, like, combining my two friends that we were just talking about. Story that lives in infamy. Um.

Emily: Um, no, he feels wasted because he's only killed five Trollocs with swords instead of, presumably, the dozens or hundreds that he thinks he can handle or probably could handle under the stewardship of Robert Jordan and Brandon Sanderson, who don't believe in good sword men making mistakes.

Sally: No.

Emily: They're like, "Yeah, battle is just about skill and not at all about luck or –" You know.

Sally: Which is fascinating, considering they built an entire character based on the concept that luck is a useful skill to have in warfare.

Emily: In battle, particularly.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah, it's crazy. Yeah, it's not like Lan is ever like, "Well, and I made an infinitesimal mistake because I'm human –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And everyone does that, and therefore I'm dead."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Or I've had a limb lopped off or a gut wound or whatever the fuck," which is just what happens –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In a war. Even John Wick doesn't come out of his movies unscathed, you know?

Sally: Yeah, and John Wick is, like –

Emily: John Wick's always fucked up.

Sally: John Wick is always fucked up.

Emily: And gives – yeah. Yeah.

Sally: It's kind of Keanu Reeves' hottest state, though, when he's kind of stumbling around, bloody and sweaty.

Emily: Yeah, you watch – you watch John Wick would get progressively hotter throughout the movie –

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: (laugh) As he just becomes more and more upset and –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Wounded.

Sally: And wounded. And you're like, what's wrong with me? But.

Emily: What's wrong with him? That's the question.

Sally: Yeah. I can fix him. (laugh)

Emily: I can fix him. Tenderly, by putting Band-Aids on his wounds.

Sally: On his beautiful face.

Emily: Because that's the only first aid I'm capable of.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, if he was like, “Sew me up – sew up this bullet hole, babe,” I'd be like – (gagging noise)

Sally: (laugh) I'd be like, “Mmmmmm.”

Emily: I'd be like, “No, can't you do that yourself?”

Sally: I – you guys. (laugh) I was actually thinking about this the other day. We have gone through sort of, like – I think the genre in our household right now is “cast away on an island.” Like, we've watched Mike's Mic, our favorite YouTuber –

Emily: Oh.

Sally: Did his “Lost” season 2 recap, and we've been sort of, um, unhealthily obsessed with the reality show “Survivor.” (laugh)

Emily: When we talked to you guys last week, we were telling you about how obsessed we were with “Bridgerton.” So, yes, this is a change that has transpired within the last seven days.

Sally: Yeah, uh, we don't need to talk about it. I mean, I would happily talk about it at length, but –

Emily: Everyone is mentally well.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In this house. We are doing great.

Sally: So good. But I was thinking about this because occasionally I like to be like, what are the practical skills that I could bring to a survival situation?

Emily: Sure.

Sally: And I was cracking – I was like, you have to know how to sew, to, like, sew people up. But then I was like, the only stitches I know are embroidery stitches.

Emily: Are incredibly elaborate little cross-stitches.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But damn, that wound – those sutures look

Sally: Yeah. They look very tidy.

Emily: Fly as hell.

Sally: But, um, probably not very practical. Okay, that was such a long sidebar, probably for the blooper reel. Let's talk about Gawyn.

Emily: No, I'd rather talk about “Survivor.” (laugh)

Sally: It's really good, you guys.

Emily: Ahhhh. Our podcast –

Sally: Hey! You guys might not have heard about the show called “Survivor” in the last twenty-three years. (laugh)

Emily: Have you guys heard about “Survivor”? It has 46 seasons, and you can just dive right in anywhere.

Sally: That's true. Sorry, go ahead. “Our next podcast,” is that what you were gonna say?

Emily: No, that's okay. Our next podcast is going to be a “Survivor” podcast. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, I would love that.

Emily: It will be titled “Everybody Hates Jonny Fairplay.” And this time it'll be true, and no one will argue with us on Twitter because how can you not hate that guy?

Sally: He is such a sleazebag. When – we watched it with our friend Devin, Jonny Fairplay's first season, and Devin was like, “The host hates this guy.” And I was like, that's kind of funny for the host to have beef with somebody on the show. And then I was like, oh no, this is the most hateable man in the history of television.

Emily: Yeah, I hadn't really had any strong feelings about Jeff, the host, one way or another. But after I came to hate Jonny Fairplay and knowing that he also hated Jonny Fairplay and seeing the suppressed rage in his eyes –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Every time Jonny Fairplay answered one of his little interview questions, I was like, I actually do trust Jeff. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, I think Jeff has a good read on people.

Emily: Yeah, I – yeah. I'm with him on this one.

Sally: Yeah, I think Jeff should have gotten a gun – (laugh) to chase Jonny Fairplay around the island.

Emily: I'm saying – yeah, I'm saying next season of Survivor should just be only villains and Jeff should – it should be the most dangerous game.

Sally: Yeah, hunt them for sport.

Emily: Yeah, Jeff just gets to hunt them for sport. Okay.

Sally: That was a sneak peek of our – sneak peek – why, every time –

Emily: Sneak peek.

Sally: I say that every time I try to say sneak peek.

Emily: Sneak peek, sneak preview.

Sally: Our sneak peek. Ugh.

Emily: Um. Hey, could you get lost? Yeah. So, Gawyn, I wish I could hunt Gawyn for sport.

Sally: Yeah, he is like – I'm hoping to some extent it is, like – at this point, you hope it has to be intentional on the part of the authors to craft this sort of elaborate masculinity god complex that he has. But I'm worried that it isn't and that they're like, “This is a genuine character problem that Gawyn is dealing with.” Like a genuine problem this character is dealing with.

Emily: Well, I was joking earlier in, like, comparing the sort of swordman skills –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Gawyn and Lan particularly. But it is true that it's hard to interpret Gawyn as a – a caricature –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: When you have Lan in the next chapter being just sort of an earnest portrayal –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Of doing the exact same thing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, so, yeah, you can't – like, that's not really something you can do is be like, “Isn't it so toxic for this man to be so absolutely confident in himself and so sure that the world should revolve around him and, like, so proud of himself when he does the most minuscule things for the woman he is married to?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Blah blah blah blah blah. And then they go to Lan and it's like, “Oh, but Lan is the coolest guy in the entire world.” He's an LGBT ally. LGBT ally. (laugh)

Sally: Happy Pride Month. Happy Pride Month.

Emily: Oh, yeah, it'll be June when this comes out. Happy Pride Month! The first – second gay character in “A Memory of Light” has been mentioned.

Sally: Has been mentioned. Happy Pride.

Emily: Happy Pride Month.

Sally: The gays stay winning.

Emily: The gays stay winning. We had Emarin, who's currently half-dead –

Sally: Evil? Yeah.

Emily: In a basement somewhere. And we have this guy.

Sally: Baldhere.

Emily: Baldhere.

Sally: Balder-ear? I'm sure – I don't know if it's –

Emily: I like to think it's Baldhere because it sounds like “Bald hair.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, oh, that's an oxymoron.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just like – (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Just like “cool sword guy and gay guy.”

Sally: Cool sword guy and gay guy.

Emily: A gay guy is by definition a cool sword guy.

Sally: That's true.

Emily: Swords are phallic, you dummies.

Sally: Yeah, so really what's happening is that Gawyn and Lan are just the most gay characters in the Wheel of Time –

Emily: I wish that were true.

Sally: Because they're so good at swords. It – I would say it would redeem them a little bit, and it would redeem them a – like, a little bit, but they would still be so annoying.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: If it was just like – I mean, you – Gawyn, the other part of his thing that's so hard to deal with is he keeps being like, “I agreed to live in Egg's shadow and be happy that my job in life is to protect her.” And then it's like, that is so obviously not true. And it's so annoying that you keep pretending to yourself that this is the case.

Emily: Yeah, he's like, “I've come so far.” He, like, hears Rand's name and doesn't go – start foaming at the mouth.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And he's like, “Wow, who needs therapy? I figured this out all on my own.” And you're like, man.

Sally: You – he's so insufferable.

Emily: I don't know what to tell you.

Sally: Yeah. So even though he's like, “It's totally fine that my job as Egg's Warder is to stand by her horse and make sure no stray Trollocs kill her while she is blowing up the rest of the battlefield,” for him to be like, “It's so frustrating that I'm not the one blowing up the battlefield.” You know?

Emily: Yeah, he's like, “I am just – I'm one of the best swordsmen in this army.” And you're like, okay.

Sally: This isn't a sword fight.

Emily: Yeah. Have you gone through –

Sally: This is a magic fight.

Emily: Some sort of sword brackets –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: With all the other warders, because every Warder we've ever met has been like, “This is the best sword guy on the planet.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They're all like that. I don't really believe you're that much better, Gawyn.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And for Gawyn to just be like, “It's so sad I'm not on the front lines getting – died because that's what happens on the front lines.” No matter how good at swords you are.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's like, “I hate it so bad. I'm not being used correctly,” which therefore is implying that, like, the people in power, such as Egg and Gareth Bryne, are not using him appropriately.

Sally: And, like, the ego on this man.

Emily: I know.

Sally: Unreal. To look at Gareth Bryne, your mentor and one of the five great captains, and be like, “You're doing this wrong by not using me, Gawyn Trakand, to personally end the Last Battle.”

Emily: Okay, but have you put me, Gawyn – he's just like, “I can single-handedly kill an entire army, don't you know?” And it's like, what the fuck are you talking about?

Sally: So.

Emily: I hate this man.

Sally: Um, the only other thing that really happens is that, um, Gawyn is – sends Egg to bed and is playing with the rings that he refuses to tell Egg about and Egeanin is like, “Where the fuck did you get those?” (laugh)

Emily: Egeanin and is like, “Hey, those are those murder rings that murder people who wear them. So maybe don't wear them.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Gawyn's like, “I won't.” And she's like, “You shouldn't even have them. Does Egg know you have them?” And he's like, “Uh, yes.” And she's like, “Okay.” And Gawyn's just, like, outright being dishonest and, like, he knows he is, and manipulative. He's – I – we have him on this sort of weird, like, addict spiral where he is hiding his –

Sally: Mm.



Emily: Actions, blah blah blah – but he's never put any of these rings on.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: What he's craving, if we're going to use that sort of metaphor, is just, I guess, some sort of power.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And it's like, yeah, I guess that tracks. Gawyn just wants to be so good at everything all the time and everyone to look at him and applaud him and say how good he is at everything all of the time. So I guess if there was a magic ring that makes you even good-er at swords, then you'd be like, “Wow, I want that.” I want that. But, dude – I don't know, I have nothing to bring anymore to Gawyn as a character.

Sally: He's just awful. Awful. He's just awful. Um, we keep talking – we've talked about – so much over the past couple of books how Gawyn is just, like, a character type that is in entirely the wrong story. And just this idea of being the best very much falls back into the sort of, like, Arthurian legend, Greek hero-type place that Gawyn wants to live in. And I'm just, like, sick of it. Like, you are not in that story. And I wish the authors weren't treating you like that, and I wish you weren't this way. I wish you would get killed.

Emily: Yeah, we're also setting Gawyn up for a tragic arc –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, both by having these rings that clearly he's going to put on at some point. You know?

Sally: Yeah, like, okay, Gollum, you know?

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Chekhov's dark magic rings.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Blah blah blah blah blah. Um, and tragedy is very much, you know, uh, par for the course in both Arthurian legends and in, uh, Greek myths and tragedies – obviously; it's in the title. Um, and, you know, from, uh, the Aristotle definition –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Gawyn is very much fitting, um, the tropes in that he is sort of – his tragic end is going to come through entirely preventable means because of his own flaws –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it will have negative impacts on those around him. That's more or less the definition of tragedy.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: Um, but most – what they don't tell you about tragedy is that if it's good, then you feel sad. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And I don't for Gawyn. I'm kind of, like, gleefully waiting for his demise.

Sally: Yeah, this is a man you look at, and you're like, "I want him to beef it." And even with the worst Greek hero, the worst figure of tragedy – I just read *Medea* a couple of weeks ago –

Emily: Mm-hmm, yeah.

Sally: And you're like, that woman is fully the most malicious and evil, like, type of person. But it's written in such a way that it's so compelling and so interesting, and you understand where she's coming from by the time the play ends. Same with people like Oedipus. Oedi – what? Oedipus? What am I saying? That just sounded wrong in my head.

Emily: Oh, it is Oedipus.

Sally: Oedipus. Um.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But, yeah, with Gawyn, you're like, then there's nothing here for me.

Emily: Yeah, like, by definition, was Tywin Lannister's death on the toilet a tragedy? Yes.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: But –

Sally: Did I feel bad about it?

Emily: No.

Sally: No.

Emily: I did not.

Sally: Do you feel bad when Oedipus stabs his own eyes out? Kind of.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I kind of do. I'm kind of like, man, dog, that's fucked up.

Sally: Damn, bruh, I'm sorry that happened.

Emily: At the – yeah, at the very bare minimum, tragedy's gotta make you go, man, I'm sorry that happened. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) I did read all of that.

Emily: I did read all of that, and I kind of wish I didn't. I mean, I've been saying it's not in the definition, but it is: catharsis is a necessary –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Aspect of tragedy. So.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Gawyn's demise will not be triggering that in us.

Sally: I'll be like, good. Too little, too late.

Emily: Like, byeeee.

Sally: You should have beefed it in book two. Rand should have climbed over that wall and shot you.

Emily: Ah, that would've been so funny.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Rand falls on top of Gawyn, killing him instantly. Elayne still falls in love with him and –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Has his children. Uh, we then switch to a Rand point of view. He appears – has just been going around to the different battlefields in disguise. Right now, he is – illusioned himself to look like Grady, which is such slander on Grady's good name.

Sally: I know.

Emily: What a – what a scrub.

Sally: If I was Grady, I would be like, “Absolutely not; you can't wear my face.”

Emily: Grady's like, “Uh, this is identity theft and I will be prosecuting to the full extent of the law.” (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Uh, Rand travels back to Merrilor to acknowledge that Min exists.

Sally: Yeah, we were complaining about that last episode, and Brandon Sanderson heard us, and was like, “Oh, yeah, Min needs to be in here.”

Emily: Yeah, but Min isn't doing anything substantially important, like finding out the secret of Callandor. She's just here to offer Rand emotional support, and for him to be like, “God, I'm so

glad Min was here when I was depressed and temperamental and lashing out at everyone I loved, 'cause I'd be dead otherwise." And you're like, have you bought flowers for Min recently –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To apologize for your behavior –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: During those episodes? Because it was pretty – pretty bad. Anyway, Cadsuane – Cadsuane comes up and, um, hauls away Rand for them to have a chat. It's just annoying. Um. Pfft. She's basically like, "Moiraine's right. You need to go to Shayol Ghul soon," except in the most annoying way possible, because it's Cadsuane. Um, she also is like, "Hey, what's going on at the Black Tower?" Rand's like, "Well, I sent Perrin to help." Um, she's like, "Well, obviously you can't go, because it's a huge trap." And he's like, "Uhhhh," dithering. And she's like, "Well, psych. I know I just said that, but also, they got out of – by themselves. So you don't have to go anymore." And Rand's like, "What was the – psychologically, what was the point of –" (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "This exercise?" I don't know how Cadsuane has the news before Rand does; like, the Dragon Reborn. It seems like Balwer should have been –

Sally: On top of that.

Emily: On top of that. Anyway, Cadsuane is like, "They freed themselves; um, but they took a beating doing it." And Rand's just like, "Wow, I sure wish I'd done something about that. Too bad."

Sally: Yeah, um, good on 'em, I guess. It is more, um, wish fulfillment on the part of Androl that he's able to just – this idea – freeing themselves. Good job, workers' revolution or whatever. But it's just kind of like, damn, nothing Androl can't do, quite literally. So it did kind of peeve me that all Perrin really had to do was pull out the dream spike. It's not like Perrin showed up with an army of wolves or anything. Um.

Emily: Yeah, just, like, from a realistic standpoint, all we saw was, like, Androl sort of escaping the basement –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Sort of taking care of the main threats in the basement. That's – they're still in the Black Tower that I believe – we have been led to believe is just swarming with guys who have been Turned.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. Hey, excuse you.

Sally: You're gonna bonk the mic with your bum.

Emily: And it's also like, he sent Mazrim Taim and the others Traveling away. Mazrim Taim can also Travel. And Androl and Logain and everyone else were, like, in bad shape afterwards. So the fact that Androl won this battle does not in any way indicate that they should have won the war.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like, there should have still been –

Sally: A war.

Emily: Something going on at the Black Tower instead of just, like, “Oh, and they're fine now.”

Sally: Yeah, it's one more instance in the really bad habit that Brandon is getting into in this book – we talked about it with Callandor last time. But it's like, I know you have a lot to wrap up in what is, I guess, technically limited page space, but there's so much page space dedicated to people just talking that, like, I'm just really frustrated by the way focus is being, um, on the things we are focusing on and the things we are choosing to believe just happen very quickly –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Is what I'm trying to say.

Emily: Yeah, the Black Tower is free and everything's good and fine off-screen, but on-screen we get Lan having an extended conversation with his horse.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, and that's not to say I don't believe in the importance of having conversations with your horse.

Emily: Yeah, being a horse girl. But, like.

Sally: But I didn't need to see that. Like, that three pages could have been used more efficiently.

Emily: Yeah, and also, at this late stage in the game, you are not going to convince me that Lan actually cares about his horse.

Sally: I know, poor Mandarb. He's really been through the fucking wringer.

Emily: Lan's like, “When all this is over, we'll settle down.” (laugh) It's just such an unhinged thing to say to your horse.

Sally: Yeah. “Me and you, old friend. I'll have babies that can ride on your back.”

Emily: And you're like, what?

Sally: I think what you could – the best thing you could do for that horse would be to set it free.

Emily: Not let – not have anyone ride on its back.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah, he's like, "Hey, Mandarb, children will ride on you one day." And Mandarb's like, "Do you know I don't enjoy people riding on me?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "My skeleton is made so bad."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Look at it."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "It's agony."

Sally: (laugh) My skeleton is made so bad.

Emily: (laugh) "Every step I take is agony."

Sally: Poor horses.

Emily: Um. Lan's like, "Mm, nostalgia about Nynaeve." And it's just like, you guys have the most –

Sally: Use that page space –

Emily: Silly relationship.

Sally: To have Min read a book about Callandor.

Emily: Um, the important thing that happens is that gay icon, Baldhere – (laugh)

Sally: Yas queen!

Emily: Um, comes up to talk to Lan and is like, "Hey, I think Agelmar is screwing up. Like, I think he's making mistakes that he shouldn't be making." And Lan's like, "Well, you know, the guy's human. What are you gonna do? This is gonna be, like, a long war. If he makes no mistakes, then that would be insane." And that's true. And I wish they would apply that to sword-fighting –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or literally anything else. Um, but Baldhere's just like, "I'm – I'm just worried about it." And Lan's like, "I'll talk to him." You know, "I'll go see if there's anything worth investigating." So he goes to, like, check out the – scope out the battle plans, blah, blah, blah. Agelmar comes in. Lan's like, "How you doing, buddy?" And Agelmar's like, "Ugh, you've been talking to that gay guy."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Sorry, I almost said a slur, like the pope.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Um, and Lan's like, "Eh, he's worried about you. I mean, we're all worried about you." And Agelmar, like – it's a great, um – he – just gaslights him. It's really fun. (laugh) He's like, "Hey, I'm good, you know, I know my limits. Everything's fine. Don't worry about it."

Sally: Meanwhile – (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: And Lan's like, "Okay."

Sally: Yeah, meanwhile, Agelmar hasn't – has got huge bags under his eyes.

Emily: Yeah. Agelmar's, like, drinking –

Sally: His fifteenth iced coffee of the day, yeah.

Emily: Fucking – a Monster energy drink, and he's like, "Everything's fine." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And Lan's like, "Okay, bestie. I trust you." And Agelmar's like, "You should trust me. I'm trustworthy."

Sally: And it's like, "Well, the fact that you said it that way makes me think you're not." (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, sounds a little – yeah, the guy who's like, "You can trust me." You're like, "Should I, though?"

Sally: Yeah, what type of Jonny Fairplay behavior is this? (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. Yeah, real snake behavior. And what immediately comes after this whole Agelmar "You can trust me" scene is that we immediately go to Bashere confessing to Elayne that he has fucked up –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And done something bad. So now we're like, oh, there's some sort of pattern –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Going on here with at least two of the generals. We don't really know anything about Bryne fucking up. By all reports, the, um, battle front in Kandor is going well. But, um, Bashere is like, "Yeah, we have a problem, which is that the army that we've been, you know, trying to get chasing us has split and circled around and now is, uh, in danger of reaching Cairhien, the city, and taking the city that's full of civilians."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Elayne's like, "How the fuck is that even possible?" Bashere is like, "Well, they don't sleep or stop to eat or care about terrain or anything like that." So –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That – it’s bad.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. And Elayne’s like, “Well, what are we going to do?” And Bashere is like, “I’ll – I’ll figure something out.”

Sally: Yeah, their plan is to attack them while all the Trollox are tired ‘cause they’ve been marched too hard.

Emily: Yeah, they’re like, “Ooh, gotta get there, attack them, and then we’ll just have to turn around and fight another army.”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But at least the one army will have been completely destroyed.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That’s the plan. And Elayne’s just like, “Let’s do it. We have no other choice.” We have no other choice. Egwene, meanwhile, goes into the World of Dreams. Uh, she overhears, for our benefit, the Wise Ones talking about, um, the ter’angreal and Rhuidean. We know that Bair went back to see if she would experience the same thing Aviendha did. It appears she did. So now the Wise Ones are moving on to, like, “How should we integrate this into our, you know, usual sort of rituals?” Blah blah blah blah.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So that’s one question ticked off on the box. That was not an Aviendha-exclusive experience.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Um, but Egwene is like, “Hey, guys,” and they’re like, “Hey. Oh, will you check this out?” They show her something that, like, has been reported on various battlefields, which is, like, these black cracks in the earth that I think so far Lan has been the only one who has, like, directly noticed for us. Perrin might have sort of tangentially in the World of Dreams. Um, but Lan noticed them earlier, and we made a point of it. But now the Wise Ones are like, “Okay, we think this is correlated to the use of balefire, that these, like, little creepy – the world seems to be falling apart,” and there’s just void between the pieces, which is scary. Um, and Egwene’s like, “Well, I mean, balefire is not an evil –” You know, magic isn’t evil.

Sally: Yes, which – I understand her point. And we’ve talked about this in the past with Nynaeve. (laugh) But when the magic is quite literally tearing the world apart, you have to wonder – much like, you know, certain radioactive elements – if there are not more risks than benefits.

Emily: Yeah, look. Plutonium isn’t evil.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: I think we can all agree. (laugh)



Sally: Yeah. It's not the plutonium's fault. But.

Emily: But maybe we should contain it a little better. Yeah. Egwene's, like, "I mean, like, balefire can be used well, but I will put out the call that we should absolutely avoid using it." And no one really was anyway, so that's not going to do anything. You know, like, the –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The culprits here are the bad guys who are like, "Oh, sick. This magic power not only obliterates everything it touches but also is making the world fall apart. I'm evil." Twirls mustaches.

Sally: Mustache-twirling, yeah.

Emily: "So that sounds great." You know? Okay. But Egwene's just like, "I don't know what I'm going to do." Um, but she bids farewell to the Wise Ones. They're kind of like, "This is it," 'cause it sounds like the Wise Ones are getting ready to go into Shayol Ghul. Oh, in that Rand point of view, he mentioned that, like, when he goes into Shayol Ghul, he's going to have Cadsuane with sort of Aviendha be spearheading the channeling forces that he's taking with him.

Sally: Yeah, and he mentions bringing Alivia.

Emily: Mm. Yeah, Alivia, who Min prophesied would, quote unquote, help Rand die.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So keep that on the radar. Um, but Egwene wakes up, and Gawyn's like, "Hey, your appointment with Dragon Reborn starts now." So Elayne – uh, Egwene rolls out of bed and goes to talk to Rand. (laugh) The funniest part of this conversation is that Rand kind of sort of mentions that he has a half-sibling.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Gawyn's like, "You've got a sibling?" And Rand's like, yeah, it's the same sibling as your sibling. And Gawyn's like – (laugh) does the white lady math meme. And he's like, "Elayne?" And Rand's like, "No, Galad."

Sally: Yeah, it's so funny when he's like, "Galad is your brother?" And Gawyn is like – the wheels are spinning, and Rand's line is so bitchy. What does he say?

Emily: "Not to tell you your own family history, but Elayne is not related to me." (laugh)

Sally: And you're like, all right, you popped up with that one line.

Emily: Like, okay, Rand, that was cunty, but I do think you need to acknowledge that for a little while, you were deathly afraid that you were related to Elayne.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: You had to have the family history related to you.

Sally: “Elayne?”

Emily: “Elayne?” Yeah, Gawyn's like, “You and Galad? Oh. I see it. You're both extremely obnoxious.”

Sally: Yeah. He's like, “I absolutely hate both of you, so.”

Emily: And Rand's like, “Okay, whatever.” He – (laugh) Gawyn's like, “Have you talked to him about it?” And Rand's like, “No, and I'm not gonna, so.”

Sally: Yeah, he's like, “I don't think Galad cares.” Says something about Galad being a Whitecloak, parentheses derogatory.

Emily: Yeah. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: It wouldn't probably mean – “It would probably not mean much to a Whitecloak.” And it's like, okay, well, maybe give him the chance. You're on your farewell tour.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Might as well talk to Galad and be like, “Hey, remember we spoke once? We are actually half-brothers.” And then maybe Galad would be like, “Sweet.”

Sally: “Cool.”

Emily: “My other half-siblings kind of hate me.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So –

Sally: “Maybe we could really vibe.”

Emily: “Maybe we could vibe,” you know? Or he'd just be like, “That's so awkward for you to tell me five minutes before you're leaving for your death, but okay.”

Sally: Yeah. I, like – in all fairness, Cadsuane mentions how Rand is going on his farewell tour, giving people gifts and, like, saying goodbye or whatever. It is kind of nice, I guess, to not put the burden of knowing you have a half-sibling on Galad and then immediately go off and beef it. Like, kind of kind.

Emily: Yeah, it's like Jesus poking his head in and being like, “Hey, I'm your brother,” and then he goes and gets crucified. And you're like –

Sally: Yeah, and you're like, “Okay –”

Emily: What am I supposed to do with that?

Sally: I have to live with that for the rest of my life.

Emily: Yeah, like, closure. Who?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, in this conversation, Rand is like, “Egwene, can I see the seals?” She hands them over. He is kind of, like, looking at them and he's like, “Egwene, these are fake. What did you do with the real ones?” And she's like, “These are the ones you gave me. They have been on my person.”

Sally: “Since you gave them to me.”

Emily: “Since you gave them to me.” And he's like, “Oh my gosh, they must have been swapped out. Like, when I went to get them,” because apparently he didn't check them.

Sally: I know. He's like, “I didn't look very close.” And you're like, you stupid motherfucker.

Emily: You're like, why are you looking close now? Like, what?

Sally: Yeah. It's very convenient for the plot that Rand didn't look at him when – look at them when he picked them up.

Emily: Yeah, this is just kind of Brandon Sanderson being like, “Ha ha, I pulled a fast one on you.” And you're like –

Sally: Not really.

Emily: Not really.

Sally: You kind of pulled a “you don't know what else to do to make us know that Mazrim Taim has the seals or whatever.”

Emily: Yeah. Stupid. We then switch over to Mat's point of view as he is getting outfitted, in what is meant to be a humorous scene, in, like, increasingly complex regalia for his station.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He gets to wear an eye patch instead of – I think he's just been going around with, like, a bandage over his eye.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So that's at least nice. He gets a sexy eye patch. It's a very, um, “Princess Diaries 2: Royal Engagement” scene –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Where he's just, like, looking at his – he's like, “I don't want to be a nobleperson,” but then he's looking at his many eye patches –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: And sick shoes and whatever. And he's like, “Hmm, maybe I do want to be ...”

Sally: “Maybe I do want to be a rich person.”

Emily: “Maybe this is incredibly cool after all.” No, he's like, “This is weird and I kind of hate it.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And that's sort of the end of the scene.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mat doesn't know how to behave as the new Prince of the Ravens.

Sally: But he is going to meet his generals or his soldiers or whatever.

Emily: Yeah. He's like, “I want to go. Let's go.”

Sally: He puts on his fugly hat. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. The stylist, the Seanchan stylist – there's, like, a bitchy stylist who walks in.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um.

Sally: What's her name?

Emily: Nata.

Sally: Nata.

Emily: Nata. And I – you know, in the live-action make of this, I think it should just be Paolo from “Princess Diaries.”

Sally: (laugh) That would be so iconic.

Emily: That's his name, right? Paolo.

Sally: Yeah, Paolo.

Emily: Doing the whole –

Sally: Um, I was gonna say “Tim Gunn,” but Paolo is a really good choice. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) No, it's just Paolo. He's like – and he's doing the same accent –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As in “The Princess Diaries.” And he's like, “Please get rid of that fugly hat.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Mat's like, “No, I need to cling to the shreds of my identity.”

Sally: And you're like – he must look so dumb in his regalia with his stupid hat. Like, imagine.

Emily: Yeah, I think within, like, two chapters, Mat is going to discard all of this. He'll just be like, “This isn't working for me.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And then be like, “Okay, I'm going to wear my normal clothes.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And so I have no idea why this scene even exists.

Sally: Yeah, this is, um – this scene calls back to, um, “The Great Hunt.” We had a great episode with, um, Sarah McClintock, talking about clothing in the Wheel of Time. And she pointed out, um, how Moiraine takes Rand's farmer wardrobe and gives him no option but to wear, um, rich boy wardrobe. And that remakes him as a person in the eyes of everyone who sees him. And this is a call-back to that of, like, the way that clothes, um, make people perceive you differently and can make you a different person metaphorically. Um, it doesn't really work; one, because Mat is entirely rejecting this role, and it's supposed to be humorous. So the scene is just kind of, like – it's another scene where I'm just like, I don't really get the point. Like, the only thing of significance that happens here is that Mat gets an eyepatch, which is, like, logistically helpful; I'm glad to know his eye isn't going to get infected because he's wearing a dirty bandage. Um, but, I don't know; I don't want to keep, like, beating the Mat arc over the head, but it's like, we know Mat's not going to step comfortably into the shoes of nobility. We don't really need to have this whole battle of the wills over what he wears while the Last Battle is really happening. I know it's very Seanchan to care about what you wear, but I was just kind of like – this is more, kind of, wasted page space, I guess is what I think I'm trying to say.

Emily: Yeah, I agree. I think two things are happening here. One is I think it's another checkbox for Brandon Sanderson, and, um, he often treats character arcs themselves as though they can be split into checkboxes –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Of, like, this thing has to happen to the character, and they have to have this train of thought, and that counts as character development. In this case, I think he wants, like, Mat to confront the fact that he is not just a nobleman at this point, but, like, the nobleman.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like, he's like Tuon owns Ebou Dar, and that's crazy.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And that amount of wealth and power is crazy and whoa.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, the other thing is that I think it's undermining the character develop – if you want to call it character development – but there was already a sort of, like, long-running gag within the series that while Rand was forced into –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: His sort of nobleperson's outfits in "The Great Hunt" and sort of just grew into that, Mat has very slowly, as he accumulated more and more wealth and status, has just been dressing differently of his own accord.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Maybe not entirely of his own accord. I think it was particularly called attention to in the Tylin arc –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: When he started wearing different clothes, but he has, like, made all these comments, like, "No, I kind of wear fancy clothes, and I kind of like that –"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "Even though I'll pretend not to like it, the way I do". And so it's like, to have him just be like, oh, well, now you're in a different culture, where that brand of, like, rich person aesthetic no longer counts so now we're just starting over from scratch –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Is very weird.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's also just, like, we're trying to put the same character arc that Rand had, and it's way less satisfying because in "The Great Hunt," we really felt like Rand had no power. Like, Rand really did feel like he was at the whims of Moiraine. He was very new to the whole, like, "I'm a person who people have to listen to" thing. But Mat has been in command of an army. I fully believe Mat could just be like, "I'm not doing this."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And frankly would do that.

Sally: Yeah. Especially by this point in the series, you're right. So, uh, yeah.

Emily: Just a flop comedy –

Sally: Yep.

Emily: That's happening here.

Sally: Another – unbelievably, it is another flop Mat comedic routine.

Emily: Can you believe it? This man just keeps dying on stage.

Sally: Can you – I really just want to take Brandon and be like, Mat is allowed to have a sincere point of view.

Emily: Things are allowed to happen.

Sally: Does not need to be nothing but jokes, jokes, jokes.

Emily: Um, that's those two chapters, though. Um, the next few chapters, we are going to move into the next phase of the Last Battle. Uh, this is more of a reactive than an active phase, as Demandred will finally –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Make his appearance with the long-awaited plot twist that he's been waiting in the wings to deliver, I guess.

Sally: Wow, I'm on the edge of my seat.

Emily: Can't – can't wait, huh?

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um, so this will be mostly, like – it's not White Tower-centric, 'cause they're not at the White Tower, but that, like, group of people.

Sally: Okay.

Emily: Egwene, Gawyn, et cetera, et cetera. The next chapter is titled “Into Thakandar,” so this will also involve the, like – Rand's contingent finally moving into, um, their battlefront, but mostly what we're going to be dealing with is Egwene, Gawyn, Bryne, Sivan –

Sally: 'Kay.

Emily: Um. And Demandred, of course.

Sally: And Demandred, our favorite boy.

Emily: Our bestie. So that's what's up next. Um, thanks everyone, for listening. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

Sally: Yeah, thanks, guys.

Emily: Yep. Um, anything else to add?

Sally: I don't believe so.

Emily: Okie dokie. Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: I do. Um, I saw my friend Sarah today. Uh, Sarah was one of my roommates in college, and we haven't seen each other in several years. She lives in a different state, but she's in town visiting. And she, um, as I came to learn over the course of the conversation, apparently works – not apparently; does work for this complicated start-up that has to do with, like, gardening. Um, and so she mentioned offhandedly – she's like, “Do you want to see photos of the, uh, cucumbers that I grew?” And I was like, “Of course I want to see anything that my friends are proud of and delighted by,” thinking it's just going to be, like, cucumbers she grew in her backyard.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: She shows me this picture. She's like, “I gave this cucumber to my – to my other friend.” She shows me this picture. This woman is holding a cucumber that is, like, from the floor to her waist.

Emily: Oh my god.

Sally: And I was like, what the heck? I – what – what is this? And she's just like, “It's a special type of cucumber.” And she's like, “Um, yeah, so when I brought it on the plane –” and I was like, “Sarah, you did not bring this enormous cucumber on the plane.” (laugh) And she's like, “Of course I did. I had to bring it to her.”

Emily: It was her personal item. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Yeah. And she's like, “TSA made me put it through the gun checker.” (laugh) And she's like, “And then when I was on the plane, the flight attendants were like, ‘You cannot hold that during the flight.’” And Sarah was like, “Why not?” And they're like, “It's blocking the exit row.” So I think she had to put it in, like, the overhead bin – (laugh) like a –

Emily: Where anything could happen to it.

Sally: Yeah, like a suitcase. So, um.

Emily: Oh my God. Imagine being that flight attendant. “What is that woman carrying?”

Sally: You're like – you think you've seen everything, you know?

Emily: Oh, it's a giant cucumber.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, if I were TSA, I'd probably put it through the gun – I'd be like, “Why else would someone carry a giant cucumber, except in a Bugs Bunny-ish –”

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: “Sort of way to smuggle weaponry in here?”

Sally: Truly.

Emily: God, I love that.



Sally: So –

Emily: I love that cucumber.

Sally: Yeah, it's –

Emily: The Frankenstein's monster of cucumbers.

Sally: It's quite large. Um.

Emily: Okay, everyone. Have a good week.

Sally: Bye. (laugh)