



Episode 291: Jingle Jangle It's the Dark One

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

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

[theme song by Glynna MacKenzie plays]

SALLY: Um, I was also thinking how, just, like, this one's less close in proximity, but there's just such a bad habit in these books of naming characters things that sound really similar. Like Demandred shows up in this chapter, "shows up," quote, quote.

EMILY: Yeah, not physically present yet, but.

SALLY: Fucking loser.

EMILY: His presence.

SALLY: Yeah, but you have, like, Demandred, and then, like, Damodred is the last name of several characters.

EMILY: Oh yeah, yeah, yeah.

SALLY: And you're just like, "Some of us are dyslexic [laughs]. And this is a little tough on me."

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah, there's, like, an unspoken rule in writing fiction that if you're gonna, like, make up a bunch of names, like your main cast of characters should generally not have, like, the same first syllable in their name, you know? Because it gets confusing, even for people who are not like – that's just like how people's minds work reading.

SALLY: Right!

EMILY: Especially names, you see the first letter.

SALLY: Then you just kind of skim it through, you know, especially these longer names.

EMILY: So, like, you'd like to say, well, with the sheer quantity of names in *Wheel of Time*, maybe they just weren't able to come up with them. But then you get Lyrelle and Myrelle, which...[laughs] is just one letter off and it's the neighboring letters in the alphabet. And you're like, this, we, it just feels lazy now.

SALLY: And also it feels like a sort of Team Rocket-esque, like, these are twins who just have different letters embroidered on all of their clothing. But don't worry, we are reassured that they have different personalities in that Myrelle is a slut and Lyrelle is a bitch. So [laughs] the two classic *Wheel of Time* women.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Characters, so don't worry, they're different. Yeah, this is Everybody Hates Rand, Your Friendly Neighborhood *Wheel of Time* Podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: And I am Sally Goodger.

EMILY: And we just got – it's hot, y'all.

SALLY: It's hoothttt.

EMILY: And the AC's off, and we have put off [laughs] recording like six times this week.

SALLY: It's not been a good week in this house.

EMILY: It's been bad. So, those are the vibes. Excuse us if it's a little...

SALLY: I will not be excused.

EMILY: Oh, you won't? I'll excuse you.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: I pardon you.

SALLY: Thanks, my liege.

EMILY: Um, yeah, I think it's just that we need a break, and luckily we're about to get one. So.

SALLY: Yes, we will be out of the office next week, so to speak.

EMILY: Yeah, no new episode next Monday.

SALLY: Sowwy.

EMILY: Sowwy!

SALLY: I'm traveling.

EMILY: Sally's traveling, and I don't wanna [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: We could probably have pounded out two episodes this week, but I don't wanna!

SALLY: No, how – we're too busy watching *Survivor*.

EMILY: Yeah. Now we do have to talk about Wheelie Time. Into *Thakan'dar!* Fuck, has an apostrophe in it. I forgot in last week's transcript.

SALLY: That's fine.

EMILY: How am I supposed to remember all of these apostrophes?

SALLY: I have to Google, like, every *Wheel of Time* name. I have a couple of them that are programmed into my computer, like Myrddraal. I got tired of looking up how to spell Myrddraal.

EMILY: Yeah, it's gotta stay.

SALLY: [sighs] But.

EMILY: I don't blame you. I [muttering]

SALLY: But every time I'm like, how do you spell the Fields of Mur – [laughs]? How do you spell the Fields of Merrilor? How do you spell Thakan'dar? How do you spell Shayol Ghul?

How do you – what? Where are we?

EMILY: Um, okay, Egg is on the battlefield yet again doing fire magic with some other girl bosses and Gawyn. They fight Trollocs, then they – Gawyn is like, “Something's – [laughs] something's off about her.”

SALLY: [laughs] Something's off about her.

EMILY: Her being the entire Trolloc army. He's just like, “Their behavior is abnormal.” And we're like, “Okay, we'll take your word for that because I don't really...”

SALLY: I'm sorry, I don't have, like, a baseline ecology, biology of Trollocs textbook I can...

EMILY: Yeah, they're just like telling us, not really showing us that something weird is going on, but whatever. Um, Egwene and Gawyn are, like, sketched out enough that Egwene's like, “I think we should pull back.” So she sends Gawyn off to pass the order to Gareth Bryne. Um, and as that is happening, a *huge* gateway opens up on like one side of their camp. It's like the size of the camp. So they're able to see the entire army arrayed before them of people wearing special types of clothes and holding special types of weapons. And Egwene is like, “There's mega channeling happening.” And we're told pretty quickly that this is the Sharan army. Now, probably read *Wheel of Time* before, so you're familiar with what we're talking about. But if you're one of the, I don't know, if [laughs] you're the one listener who's actually reading along with us [laughing].

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: You might be – you might be wondering what the fuck is Shara?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And who the fuck are the Sharans? Well, you –

SALLY: It's the map!

EMILY: You have every right to ask that question because Shara is not on the map.

SALLY: Oh, you're right. Hehe [laughs].

EMILY: And I, you know, this isn't a new thing for *Wheel of Time* in that they brought in the Seanchan way back in Book Two and the Seanchan certainly were not on the map and have not been added to the map. Shara, we have only heard about from other characters. Um, most recently, I think Noal has been the one to sort of reference Shara and every other character has kind of been like, "Okay, whatever." Sort of like, "This is our pathological liar friend who just says things and we don't really believe him."

SALLY: Much like Coach from the season of *Survivor* we finished this week [laughs].

EMILY: Noal's like, "They helicoptered me into Shara."

SALLY: [laughs] I pulled some strings in the –

EMILY: With the fucking government.

SALLY: [laughing] They helicoptered me into Shara.

EMILY: I was taken captive [laughing] and tied to a stake.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, no, we've only, we've only ever heard about Shara. It's sort of the fantasy Australia [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Or something. We've heard a lot of things about their culture. I mean, over the last fourteen books, we have probably heard twenty things about the Sharans, um, none of which is verifiable by any of our main characters. None of our main characters have ever showed any particular interest in Shara. Rand, even in his most world conquering phase, has never been like, "Maybe I should go see about Shara."

SALLY: Yeah, Shara is on the other side of the Aiel Waste, which is sort of a funny...configuration for a continent, geographically, to be like, we've got the wetlands, which are, you know, of more or less temperate climate. We have this fucking Mad Max wasteland in the middle.

EMILY: And then Shara.

SALLY: And then Shara, which we don't know anything really about it, ecologically, but there's an entire people who live there.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Who – so if it is desert-ish, it's more, you know, habitable, at least in the Waste.

EMILY: So, maybe there's, like, maybe the waste is the equator. Like, maybe.

SALLY: Yeah, that would make sense, I guess.

EMILY: There's not really a north or there's not a compass rose on this map.

SALLY: Nor is there a latitude and longitude.

EMILY: Oh, yes there is. There's a little stylized –

SALLY: So north.

EMILY: So maybe the hemispheres on this fantasy planet – whatever it doesn't matter [laughs].

SALLY: It doesn't matter. I just think it's a funny configuration to be like far – it has very, like, kind of Orientalist travel log undertones to be like on the *far* side of the known world is this...

EMILY: Yeah, there's this entire stretch of land that we can't possibly get past except through the Silk Road. And there is, I think, an allusion here to a quasi sort of Silk Road, like, trade routes existing between Shara and the land we're familiar with. But it has been cut off since the Aiel War twenty – twenty or thirty years ago.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, anyway, none of our main characters have interacted with Shara or Sharan as readers. We are operating on the sort of tension of where's Demandred? We know he's coming at some point. So, although as you referenced, he does not appear with this army. It is pretty obvious right off the bat that this is the coup that Demandred has been orchestrating in the background, um, is just going totally off the map, literally, to find a different, um, power base. I remember reading this the first time, you know, when the book first came out in 2013 or whatever, and being surprised, obviously, because... certainly wasn't something you would see coming. Um, And I remember being like, not delighted necessarily, but I was like, yeah, this is fine. That's fine to have an entire – like again, there was precedent with the Seanchan, so it didn't

seem too out of place, and it seemed like a good enough explanation for what Demandred has been doing this entire time. I also found it a little, um, relieving that we wouldn't just be fighting the forces of the Trollocs the entire time, because that was already getting quite old.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I was like, okay, here's at least some new dimensions to the bad guys that, um, this is going to bring. Now, uh, eleven years later, I do still find it surprising, because how could you see that one coming? I find it surprising in the way that, like, the *Game of Thrones* writers were like, "Haha, we got you!" by doing something that wasn't foreshadowed or thematically appropriate at all throughout the entire [laughing] last two seasons of the show.

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah.

EMILY: So, now I just now I think it's a little out of left field in a bad way. I mean, we've already exhausted ourselves saying Mazrim Taimm should have been Demandred anyway, so there wasn't really a happy ending to be found anywhere here that wasn't just kind of boring, but here we are.

SALLY: Um. Yeah, I agree. I mean, I kind of knew this was coming because you told me that Demandred would show up with the Sharans. And then specifically last episode, you said Demandred is going to show up with [laughs] the Sharans. But still, I was reading it and I was like, this is so – the *Game of Thrones* comparison is perfect because it's set up like it's supposed to be this big oh shit moment. And sure, it probably is for the people who are fighting this battle, but I was like –

EMILY: Yeah, Egwene's certainly like, "Oh shit!" [laughs]

SALLY: But I was like, "Are you joking?" like this is so silly and speaks to a lot of the structural problems we've been highlighting in *A Memory of Light* that there's a lot of things that we need to do because there were so many, um, incomplete threads throughout the series that it's just kind of like we're tying them off in really rapid succession and none of them can be satisfying, including bringing the Sharans and Demandred onto the chessboard. So to just kind of – I mean, I shouldn't say none of them can be satisfying. They *could* be satisfying if the authors had chosen to prioritize different things in the book than they chose to, but that – what do you do? There's nothing I can do about that. Um, so Demandred showing up is – Demandred isn't even here. So Demandred's minions showing up is just kind of like, "Sure, this might as well happen. Like, whatever." I do agree with you on the point of it's nice for them to be fighting people. Like we, one, you're right, it brings new dimension to the battle because you can only watch your characters blow up Trollocs for so many chapters.

EMILY: Yeah, Trolloc Meat Grinder is so... so passe [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] This is pretty last season, so if we could do something more trendy. Um, so it is nice to add dimension and it does complicate the battle in the way we've talked about. These are people, though, because they have a like, like, assumingly, some type of willing agreement to fight for the Dark One, we're supposed to position them as *evil* people, but they are still people, which I think our characters, at least what we know of *Wheel of Time*, they should have a different reaction to fighting and killing people en masse than they do the Trollocs, [different pronunciation]Trollocs, whatever we call them. So that is interesting, but it is just kind of like...I was also reading this and it also just felt like...did we not have enough...was the massive faceless horde of evil not big enough already. That was my other reaction was just kind of like feeling really defeated by the whole thing.

EMILY: Yeah, for sure. Um, I do think in terms of, like, feeling defeated, it is extremely overwhelming because again, it's not on the map. We have no clue how big Shara is.

SALLY: Yeah, like what –

EMILY: And what sort of force is represented here.

SALLY: Is this like the size the entire size of Asia?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: The entire – is it also like the – I shouldn't put it in real world terms like that. Is it another Seanchan army, you know, do we have just this massive? Or is it like a single little country showing up to...

EMILY: That's immediately unclear. It is also very obviously, like, from a narrative standpoint, the Sharans have been directed to this particular battlefield because Egwene's battlefield is the only one where they are making progress or having any sort of, like, winning sensation. Everyone else is more or less at a stalemate or have just made bad mistakes that are, um, forcing them into tight corners. So it is sort of just, like, smashing down on whatever raise of hope that we had for this battle being concluded on any of the battle fronts that have been set up. This has turned the tables very, um, badly, which can be exciting in a narrative when, you know, things happen that you're not expecting and now characters who were in a good situation are in a bad situation. That can be exciting. I do think it is a little bit fun to watch, like, Egwene and Gawyn just have to hide for their lives for a little while. Like that's scary. The concept of the Sharans have channelers and of course, channelers can sense channelers. So Egwene can't just travel out



of there. We see Romanda of all people try and do that and immediately get obliterated. Which, like, no loss there [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, if we were going to narc one of them.

EMILY: Should have been Romanda. So, like, that's scary. Yeehaw. That will be kind of fun, I guess. But of course, opening up the door to a human force, um, has its merits and also has its drawbacks. Mainly that *Wheel of Time* has never been good about introducing “foreign powers,” quote unquote, without orientalizing them horribly. And the same will very quickly happen here, wherein the Sharans will be sort of reduced to another faceless evil horde. But now they're evil because they're, um, different people.

SALLY: Of course.

EMILY: And they're racialized and orientalized and all that stuff.

SALLY: Of course! Fun!

EMILY: We have that to look forward to in such a fun way.

SALLY: Fabulous.

EMILY: And –

SALLY: I love being alive.

EMILY: [laughs] I love being alive. And so when you think about it from that dimension, the Sharans absolutely should not have been introduced here because there is no page space to give them any sort of treatment that is not that really. Like you can't really add much dimension to a horde that you're introducing in Book 14.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: When you have to bounce around to 38 other characters in the meantime.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I'm not saying that excuses [laughs] the racism, but like.

SALLY: But you're so right. Like, it does not excuse the racism at all. That is very much built into the foundation of *Wheel of Time* to be like, "Anybody who is foreign is bad."

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: The text is just sort of, like, fundamentally xenophobic, we've talked about that at length. But like a key point of, um, you know, giving, creating empathy in narrative is by giving points of view to different characters. Like, when you're operating on such, like, a massive world stage like this, the fact that even though, you know, she's my arch fucking nemesis, like, Tuon is there to help us at least kind of understand the Seanchan a little bit from an inside perspective. And like, thank goodness he didn't, because that would have made me fucking livid, but Brandon doesn't introduce, you know, a Sharan general or whatever, a Sharan foot soldier.

EMILY: Can you imagine the Sharan version of Androl.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs]. Where you're just like, "Why are you here?! [laughing] I don't care about you!" So there's no way for me to get inside this culture and understand it from within rather than just understanding it from, you know, Egg's point of view. And she very much will see them as an enemy to be obliterated.

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah, if anything, this is here to have Egwene have a bigger enemy than the Seanchan.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which is annoying because Egwene is perfectly justified in her very, um, virulent hatred of the Seanchan.

SALLY:

EMILY: Um, from a problem solving standpoint, I think it shouldn't have been the Sharrans. I think it should have been another force of Seanchan.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: The entire continent is in disarray. That gives plenty of room for Demandred to step in and whip together a very big, um, army that would create a human threat. Same exact dimensions, um, in that way. Um, and I think it would have given, like, Tuon a chance to have some sort of depth in dealing with fighting her own people and having to distinguish and also, um, sort of reckon with how vulnerable her people were to take over by another fascist dictator.

SALLY: Yeah. [laughs] Demandred himself.

EMILY: Demandred himself. But that's where we're leaving the Sharrans for now. Tragically, it's only going to get worse.

SALLY: That's so fun.

EMILY: Isn't it?

SALLY: I love that.

EMILY: Um, Demandred has, like, an evil guy name. The Wyld. I think it's Bao, you know, like dumplings. [laughing, flipping pages] It is! Bao!

SALLY: Bao.

EMILY: Remember that Pixar short? Bao.

SALLY: Yeah, where the mom eats her baby.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: I think about that a lot. I know the metaphor is very potent, but [laughing] that really fucked me up.

EMILY: But, yeah, you really are like, "Ah! Wait."

SALLY: [laughs] Saturn devours his children.

EMILY: [laughs] So Demandred...

SALLY: What a great painting. That's the tapestry we should get [laughing].

EMILY: Stop. I'm probably going to refer to Demandred as Dumplin' for the rest of... [laughing].

SALLY: Dumplin'.

EMILY: Our little guy Dumpling.

SALLY: Like that movie *Dumplin'*.

EMILY: Yeah, yeah. About beauty pageants or whatever in the South.

SALLY: [laughing] Jennifer Aniston.

EMILY: Oh my god.

SALLY: She plays the mom.

EMILY: Okay, White Tower Camp in a Bad Spot. Channelers getting merced all over the place. Egwene reunites with Gawain as this is happening, and he kind of, like, drags her to safety, but the tent that he'd just been in to talk to Bryne and Siaun gets blown up, like, immediately. So, Egwene and Gawyn are sort of operating under the assumption: Bryne, Siuan, and many of our other allies are dead, and we have no means of escape. And they're, I think, just, like, hiding in a wood pile as the day goes on.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: We switch over to Aviendha's point of view, as she is with a very small scouting party to sort of overlook the battlefield at Shayol Ghul. You know, there's the mountain, obviously, and then there's the big forge slash town, I guess. It's not super important that we know the layout here, although as our other battlefields condense down, back down to the Fields of Merrilor, this one will stay static. People are always going to be fighting here. Um, but it's Aviendha, Rhuarc, Ituralde is here, unfortunately, just calling people "Aiel."

SALLY: [disappointed] Yeah.

EMILY: Some racialized stuff going on there!

SALLY: Talk about character assassination.

EMILY: Yeah, rude. Um, but they check it out so Ituralde can start forming a battle plan, then pull back to talk to Rand. Um, he talks to Avienda about his plan to kill the Dark One. She's like, well, "You know, it would be more honorable if you took him captive by imprisoning him again, I guess."

SALLY: Yeah, she likens him to *gai'shain*, which, at first, when I thought she was talking about it, I thought she meant that Rand should literally take the Dark One as a servant. Like, I think that was just my head's face was not in it, but I was like, "What is she talking about?"

EMILY: He's just a little court jester [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah. The Dark One.

EMILY: The embodiment of evil [hisses]. The souls of the innocent!!

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah, I was like, "Could be kind of a funny end, I guess. Tonally a little different." But, um, Rand's like, "No, I'm going to absolutely get in there and slaughter the Dark One."

EMILY: Yeah, so yet another woman telling Rand maybe not do that, and yet again Rand being like, "But I shall."

SALLY: But I know better than everyone. Because I have a penis.

EMILY: Yeah, because I am man. I am man.

SALLY: That was a little, um, too focused on genitalia, but...

EMILY: No, I've done that often in the past. Um, uh, Ituralde's battle plan, we kind of get the overall, like, here's what this force is composed of, primarily Aiel. There's also, like, a Domani force, a Tairen cavalry slash pikemen force. And also this sort of ragtag band of Dragonsworn people that are just kind of like our farmers...weirdos. But these are the people that are going to be fighting. Rand says something about his special dagger working, and now he's disguised from the Dark One, and everyone's like, "That's great." Rand's like – Rand tells Aviendha that the seals have been stolen. And she's just like, "Yeah, we'll deal with it." And he's like, "Okay."

SALLY: Girl, *how*?

EMILY: Yeah, I'm like, Aviendha, "You are going to be fully very busy for the next little while, so." Don't know! Rand briefs Aviendha is like, "I expect once I start fighting the Dark One, then the Forsaken will sort of congregate in this location. So, I am entrusting you to fight them." Which is fun, I guess.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean, they did bring their number one Forsaken MMA fighter, Avi – uh, Nynaeve,, you know?

EMILY: Nynaeve [laughs]. Nynaeve's like, "What? Like, it's hard?"

SALLY: Like, it's hard. Bring it on! [laughs]

EMILY: Nynaeve unfortunately, is going into the cavern with Rand, along with Moiraine. And Rand is like, "I can't bring Aviendha." [laughs] He's like, "Min, sorry, I can't bring you." And Min's like, "Aw!" I'm like [laughs], "Min, were you expecting? Why would you?"

SALLY: Full offense, diva, what did you think you would do [laughing] in there?

EMILY: Yell Rand's name.

SALLY: Just be next to him when he dies.

EMILY: Yeah, very anime girl.

SALLY: Pathetically? Yeah.

EMILY: Anime girl written by a man coded.

SALLY: I was like, "What are you talking about? You will just get in the way."

EMILY: [sighs, laughs] But Rand is like, "Min, I'm actually sending you to join Egwene's battlefront to sort of keep an eye on both Egwene and the Seanchan forces as they intermingle." And she's like, "Okay."

SALLY: And again, is she qualified for that job?

EMILY: [softly]

SALLY: Is Min a diplomat?

EMILY: Min will serve a purpose on – in that mission.

SALLY: Fine.

EMILY: But it's a very deus ex machina purpose.

SALLY: Whatever.

EMILY: As whatever many things are at this point. Finally, Rand confers with Nynaeve about *callandor* and whether it's viable for use. She's like, "There's no way to use it. It's just a trap." And he's like, "Too bad. I gotta do it anyway."

SALLY: I think Nynaeve should have bonked him with it.

EMILY: And Nynaeve's like [sighs].

SALLY: [softly] Bonk. Right to the head.

EMILY: And Rand tells – he does his little battle speech and was like, "Tomorrow we ride!" [laughs] At dawn we ride.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So fun.

SALLY: Darlin's here though.

EMILY: Darlin is here!

SALLY: We don't see him on screen, but he's around.

EMILY: Yeah, he's referenced as the Tairen King. And I'm like, "Darlin!"

SALLY: That's pretty hot of you, actually.

EMILY: Bestie! Darlin and Ituralde make out sesh challenge.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Get to it [snaps].

SALLY: Hop on it, boys. There's not much time left.

EMILY: Now kiss. Okay, next chapter, we are relieved slash devastated [Sally laughs] to find out [Emily laughs] that Siaun and Bryne actually made it out through a convoluted Channeling that I'm not going to dignify with talking about. They have obviously moved to a different location

along with what remains of the army that escaped. We sort of get the, like, casualty list. Fully, like, half the White Tower got merced in that initial wave, so that sucks.

SALLY: Lots of Aes Sedai down.

EMILY: Um, and they were already not operating on full strength due to Seanchan raid on White Tower and the whole Civil War thing. So yikes. Um, but Suan and Bryne sort of talk about it in terms of like, oh, I'm sure Egwene will miraculously find her way back to us, homeward bound style.

SALLY: Well, she is like a little lost dog.

EMILY: Yeah, like a little lost golden retriever. Egwene's not a golden retriever. She's like a corgi, I think.

SALLY: Mmm. Yeah, small but mean?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Corgis, I don't know. I think corgis have a little bit of an attitude. What's a meaner small dog?

EMILY: Shih Tzu.

SALLY: Shih Tzu –

EMILY: Shih Tzus are so stupid though.

SALLY: Hmm. Yeah. I will ruminare.

EMILY: [laughin] She's an Italian Greyhound.

SALLY: [laughs] She is an Italian Greyhound! I think those are a little too afraid.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: She's like that mean chihuahua that Cambria would meet on her walk all the time.

EMILY: [laughing]



SALLY: [laughing] That would rush the fence. That's Egg.

EMILY: That was such an impactful story in our lives. We think about that chihuahua all the time.

SALLY: [laughing] I do. I hope he's doing well.

EMILY: Siuan and Bryne are also talking about just what happened and Bryne takes responsibility for it in terms of, like, here we have repeated again, Bryne being like – except it's Brynn himself this time – being like, “That was a *huge* mistake that I made in not anticipating that that was going to happen.” And Siuan’s like, “Okay, well, you're not a future – you're not a fortune teller. [laughs] Sometimes unexpected things happen, like the fucking authors of the series that were in reaching down their greasy little fingers to meddle with our plot line.” And Bryne's like, “No, I – you're gonna think I'm crazy, Siuan, but [laughing] Brandon Sanderson is holding a gun to my head to say this. I think something's wrong with me.”

SALLY: Gosh, guys, what could it be that's happening to the great captains?

EMILY: Yeah, gosh, guysHave you started to pick up on the pattern yet that something's happening to the great captains?

SALLY: That feels a little rude.

EMILY: It does feel a little rude.

SALLY: I know the whole point of this book is that it's supposed to be hard, that they have a big battle to fight, but at some point it can be hard enough, you know?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: It doesn't have to be like, our generals are being compelled or whatever, or you've got a fucking lobotomy tent somewhere [laughs].

EMILY: Imagine that lobotomy tent [laughs]. Next! Bashere’s just like [vocalizing]. Here I go.

SALLY: Sauntering in with his big ole mustache.

EMILY: With his gay little hips. Um, [laughs] then we switched to Lyrelle [pages flipping].

SALLY: Oh my god.

EMILY: It's so stupid. I literally, like, turned the page, saw her name, and cracked up.

SALLY: Lyrelle talking to Myrelle about men.

EMILY: YEah, like, why did Myrelle have to be here?

SALLY: If their names are gonna be that similar, don't – maybe just don't have them in sort of the same scene.

EMILY: Maybe he wrote Lyrelle and then was like, “Oh no, people might think that it's a typo for Myrelle, so I better put in Myrelle intentionally.” God, you guys. It's so bad. Um, anyway, Lyrelle I guess, has been in charge of one of the contingents of Aes Sedai waiting outside of the Black Tower. I have totally lost track of...

SALLY: Me too.

EMILY: What's going on. I think this is the contingent sent by the Salidar group, but I could be wrong. There's no way of knowing. Um, regardless, something's happened in the Black Tower. There was evidence of a lot of Channeling, and now we are getting sort of signaled that it's safe to enter. Um, Pevara, like, comes out to talk to them and is like, “Yeah, we've – they've liberated themselves, so now Logain's in charge, but he won't be able to meet with you because he's still recovering, blah, blah, blah, blah.” Pevara's last name is Tazanovni, which I don't think has ever been said before.

SALLY: It's a fun name.

EMILY: Yeah, it is a fun name. I just saw it, and I was like, “Dang, it's cool.” Um, Lyrelle's our classic Aes Sedai, doesn't give a shit about men being people, is just like, “We will just bond the most powerful Channeling boys that there are.” She's devastated to learn that, you know, this is, [laughs] we sort of slide over this in the rest of the series, but Aes Sedai are somehow capable of compelling their warders through the bond.

SALLY: Yeah...[laughs].

EMILY: Which is ugh! Um, and wasn't really established well enough. Like, I think that might've been why Alanna tried to – Alana did bond Rand to begin with. Um, and I guess Channeling boys just aren't susceptible to that, which Pavara tells Lyrelle, and Lyrelle is like, “Hm. That's a shame. Well, I'll just have to...find alternative methods.” And unfortunately, we have been reading about various women's alternative methods for the last three books, down to Logain's

weird girlfriend seducing him. Um, but Pevara's like, yeah, you should actually try and get to know some people before you bond them. And Lyrelle's like, "No, I shan't." And then Pevara's like, "Okay, well, we've assembled your requisite number of Asha'man that you get to bond." And these are the only ones that are available, so they have no choice but to bond them. Presumably, because these are the guys who are most willing to be bonded by strange women. So, good on them, I guess, couldn't be me. And of course we find out that this is all a trickery devised by Androl because he's so clever.

SALLY: And you're like, "Was it a trick?" [laughs]

EMILY: It's – okay.

SALLY: You're giving them what they asked for.

EMILY: Yeah, I'm just, I'm just so tired.

SALLY: I just was reading it and I was like, – they make, again, I feel like I'm supposed to feel Ocean's Elevened. And I was just like, "Okay?" Like maybe, I don't know, am I dumb? But I was [laughing] just like –

EMILY: I just don't *care*.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I don't care about me – I don't care about being told how smart Androl is anymore. Anyway, and we then see Androl and Pevara meeting with the rest of their little Ocean's Eleven group, um, where the only thing they really talk about is how Rand, [laughs] after the Black Tower liberated itself, sent them a little message being like, "Just remember guys, you're men, not weapons. Xoxo, Gossip Girl." And everyone was like...

SALLY: This would be like your abusive father who told you you were nothing your entire life, being like, "Remember to believe in yourself, sweetie! Xoxo, Daddy!"

EMILY: Yeah, you'd be like, "Hey, what?" [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] A little too late, Rand.

EMILY: Little too little too late. Very sentimental, but, um, like none of these guys know you. Or care.

SALLY: Yeah, which at least Androl or somebody acknowledges that they're like, "The Dragonborn hasn't been here in fucking forever."

EMILY: Yeah, I think it's like Emarin. Emarin, who actually has met Rand, is like, "Yeah, he seems like kind of a dickhead now. So." And Androl's like, "Well, I believe in him."

SALLY: And you're like, "Okay, bootlicker."

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah, he's like, "We just need to learn to be our own men." And I'm like, "This is such a boring subplot."

SALLY: I know, I just...

EMILY: It's so devastating too, because I think what was orchestrated with the Black Tower, and in a way, Rand's neglect of the Black Tower could have led to some really interesting things. Perhaps even if it was just told from a different perspective than Androl's, the most insufferable man to ever live, besides Coach from Season 18 of Survivor [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Was it 18?

SALLY: It was 18, yeah. The Tocantins.

EMILY: Tocantins. The Brazilian Highlands [clears throat].

SALLY: Very pretty, but very hot.

EMILY: There was a lot going on in the Black Tower in terms of, like, emotional cocktails that could have been unleashed throughout, but unfortunately, yeah, we're just getting Androl, who's this kind of bootlicker. Every man, pure of heart, et cetera. God forbid we'd be with a guy who's like, "I do not care about Rand."

SALLY: Yeah, if I saw the Dragon Reborn on the field of battle, I'd slice his Achilles tendon.

EMILY: Yeah, it's on site for me for doing that to us.

SALLY: Yeah, and then you'd be like, that would have been so interesting to read for someone to have, like, genuine beef with Rand. The only character we really get from is Gawyn, who has absolutely no cause to have this psychosexual obsession with Rand al'Thor.

EMILY: So bizarre. Yeah, to an extent, I think they try and do it with Logain. We do get a few Logain points of view later on, but Logain is also an unsympathetic character.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So when Logain is like, “God, I fucking hate Rand.” I'm like, “You bonded women against their will. You're really not giving me much to work with here.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: You're equally, you might not be capital E Evil, but you're a creep and a rapist, so.

SALLY: Yeah! And you have in the entire series, you know, like since we first met you. Um, so yeah, it's not like we get like, I know we kind of jokingly compared this to, like, a Union Revolution last time, but [laughs] the reason stories like that – I think – for some fucking reason I'm thinking of *Billy Elliot* [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: And all the miners striking.

EMILY: It's an important subplot in *Billy Elliot*.

SALLY: Um, like the reason stories like that are sympathetic is because there are people who are dealing with real problems, not Logain, who's been, you know, magically and materially privileged throughout the entire series and didn't actually have to go through Mazrim Taim's, um, School for Special Boys.

EMILY: Yeah, Logain's a late arrival. Again, this would have been a problem that was easily solved if we just inserted some of our longstanding Asha'man characters or, you know, had more Asha'man moving back and forth between the Black Tower and other places.

SALLY: Yeah, it's really unfortunate that we get some really solid Asha'man characters in Grady and Neald, Narishma, um...

EMILY: Damer Flinn.

SALLY: Damer Flinn. And they're just, like, so disconnected from, you know, whatever. I don't want to beat a dead horse to death.

EMILY: But those are those two chapters, you guys.

SALLY: For better or for worse, we are-

EMILY: For better or for worse, and sadly, I think it's worse.

SALLY: We are at the – we are inside Mordor.

EMILY: We sure are.

SALLY: And there's poisonous fog everywhere or something.

EMILY: Um, next couple chapters, we'll get an Egg point of view. I mean, we'll get a lot of Gawyn and Egg points of view in the next couple chapters as they deal with the sort of ongoing problems. Um, we will also get a Perrin point of view in the World of Dreams, more Lanfear stuff, and we'll get an Aviendha point of view as they finally enter Shayol Ghul, and finally a Rand point of view as he enters the cave itself.

SALLY: The cave.

EMILY: The Cave of Wonders.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: The Cave of Doom.

SALLY: Cave of Doom. And inside there, he will find a little jester boy.

EMILY: [laughs] And it's the Dark One! He's just been a little, he's just been a silly this whole time [laughs].

SALLY: He's just been a silly little guy with jingling bells.

EMILY: He's just a silly guy. [laughing] Just a little guy with a full jester outfit.

SALLY: [laughs] Full jester outfit. Jingle jangles as he walks.

EMILY: He's like, "Oh, you're gonna kill me? But look at me, I'm just a little guy."

SALLY: Look at me, I'm just a little guy. I'm just a little guy.

EMILY: I'm just a little guy, and it's my birthday. I'm a birthday boy [laughs].

SALLY: You can't kill the Dark One on his birthday.

EMILY: And Rand would be like, "I'm fine. I'm absolutely fine killing a child as long as that child is male."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Stupid.

SALLY: Well, if anyone is inclined to draw, um.

EMILY: [laughing] The Dark One.

SALLY: The Dark One as a little jester boy, um.

EMILY: I'd love that. Um, okay, like we said at the top, no new episode next week, but we will of course be back the week after that to continue. Pages are flying by.

SALLY: To continue our trek up up the mountain.

EMILY: Shayol Ghul.

SALLY: Carry Madame Zeroni up the mountain.

EMILY: Speaking of carrying Madame Zeroni up the mountain, check out our *Patreon* where we recently reviewed *Holes* for our side podcast We Don't Watch Outlander. And on that podcast, we are moving on to talking about romance with the romance bodice ripper, I guess? I don't know if you can call it a bodice ripper if no one's wearing a bodice. *Ice Planet Barbarians*. Except there's only one barbarian, so.

SALLY: Ice Planet Barbarian, singular. Perhaps there will be more barbarians.

EMILY: Could be later on, but. So far, just one. So far, I've been lied to.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, Ruby Dixon, how dare you?

EMILY: False advertising [laughs].

SALLY: There – it'll be a fun one for sure, cause I read it today and just sort of put it down. The section we read, and I was, like, immediately picked up the phone to text my friends everything that I read.

EMILY: [laughing]

SALLY: And they were like, “What is happening?” And I was like, “I wish I could tell you.” *Ice Planet Barbarians* has just like wild plot point to wild plot point over and over and over again... [laughs].

EMILY: So if you want to join our Patreon at the five dollar level, baby.

SALLY: You can hear what we have to say about romance, the genre, in general, which we'll be talking a lot about and, um, the balls to the wall shit that's happening in *Ice Planet Barbarians* itself.

EMILY: Mm-hmm. Thanks to all our patrons on Patreon. Thanks for our followers on social media. And thanks to Glynn Mackenzie for our theme song.

SALLY: Yeah, it's a banger.

EMILY: Anything to add?

SALLY: Naur.

EMILY: All right. You got a sign off.

SALLY: Let me think for a second. Oh [laughs] this is fitting because I'm traveling next week to see my nieces for my oldest niece's birthday. Um, and her – so my oldest niece is turning eight and her younger sister is, uh, just about five and her younger sister, Zoe, is just punchy, you know?

EMILY: An enigma.

SALLY: She's just really feisty. And my mom told me the other day, she's like, “Perry called me out of the blue.” Perry being my brother, Zoe and Liz's dad. And he's like, “Zoe wants to talk to you.” So [laughing] he hands the phone over to his five year old. And Zoe's like, “Gigi, I'm calling to tattle on my dad.” [laughs]. My mom was like, “Um, okay.” And it was like her dad



wouldn't let her do something. I don't even know what it was. She was just, like, mad that she was being stopped from doing something. And it was Emily who pointed this out to me, that it's so funny for, in Zoe's toddler, mind to be like, I understand the chain of authority runs from child to parent.

EMILY: The chain of command! [laughing] I gotta go all the way to the top.

SALLY: And now I'm old enough to understand that my grandmother is my dad's mother. So, yeah, I gotta take it straight to the commander in chief [laughs].

EMILY: Speaking to your manager about this.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] To her father.

SALLY: Yeah, I need to – I'm going to call in your manager.

EMILY: Very good. I love toddlers.

SALLY: They're so funny. Just the way their brains work.

EMILY: Weird little, weird little guys. Speaking of weird little guys. Alright, everyone.

SALLY: I'm just a little guy!

EMILY: I'm just a little birthday boy.

SALLY: I'm just a little birthday guy. Jingle jangle [laughs].

EMILY: Have a good couple weeks guys. Bye!