

Episode 293: Lanfearance
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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)

Emily: Okay, there we go. Just – Eddie's crunching in the background.

Sally: Yeah, I'm sorry if you can hear – if you hear something that sounds like bones crunching –

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Know that it's just Ed eating his, um, special prescription kibble for his gastrointestinal biome.

Emily: (sigh) It does sure sound like bones, though. Sounds like bones in a way that Tybalt's equally hard food does not.

Sally: Yeah, I don't know if it's – we talk about this all the time, but Ed has, like, no teeth, so he has to –

Emily: He's really gotta rustle –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The food around.

Sally: Throw the kibble to those back molars. And I don't know if the crunch is just – or he might just be a loud eater and we shouldn't shame him for that, I guess.

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

Sally: And I am Sally Goodger.

Emily: And –

Sally: I'm sorry; I'm trying to distract 'cause I don't want to talk about Tuon.

Emily: Well –

Sally: But I signed up to do this podcast, so –

Emily: It's bad. You didn't know about Tuon.

Sally: (laugh) You're right. I was –

Emily: You were ignorant.

Sally: I was scammed.

Emily: I'm the only one whose – who signed up, fully knowing. And I was, like, 23, so.

Sally: Yeah. Can you believe?

Emily: I was an idiot.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Okay, uh, yeah, we – we kick it off with a Tuon point of view as the Seanchan are still getting ready to go into battle. It feels like they're just mobilizing for forever.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mat is running around trying to make it go faster, but unfortunately, he's not technically in charge.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which seems like a backtrack of the most recent thing we heard –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is that the Prince of the Ravens gets to command the armies. So I'm like, okay, why couldn't we have just stuck with that? But instead, for some reason, we have to have Seanchan politics, still. Like –

(distant meowing)

Sally: I think that is Ed. I'll go get him. (laugh)

Emily: (sigh)

Sally: Hey, now.

Emily: Every once in a while, you just hear Ed screaming in another room, and it's 'cause he is sexually attracted to some of our plushies, our stuffed animals. (pause) Ed?

Sally: (distant) That was a naughty behavior.

Emily: Don't waltz in here, horny. (laugh)

Sally: I need to show you this fucking TikTok Brianna sent me about Ed.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: It's not Ed, but it's about Ed. Um, yeah, it was confusing to me too, because everything I'd been led to understand at this point was that Mat was in charge of the armies, like, even more so than Tuon, you know?

Emily: Yeah, instead we find out that the official ranking is: Tuon is technically in charge, the way, I guess, the president is the commander-in-chief.

Sally: Right.

Emily: Sort of a nominal thing. Uh, then it's still General Galgan, um, and then Mat is, um, below that, and Tuon sort of does a power play on Galgan in this chapter and makes it so that Mat is, like, officially his – what's the word for someone who, um, if an actor gets sick, then they take over?

Sally: Understudy.

Emily: Yeah, Mat's his understudy.

Sally: His –

Emily: So he has to be in all the meetings and stuff.

Sally: His official title is the Rod Holder, I think.

Emily: Oh, yeah.

Sally: And – (laugh)

Emily: So phallic. Might as well have been “Cock Warmer.” Like, what are you fucking talking about? (laugh)

Sally: I was like, what?

Emily: The Rod Holder?

Sally: The knob holder? Like, what are we doing? What rod is he holding?

Emily: I think we know what rod he's holding. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) It was just – not to be a 12-year-old boy in the chat today, but it was really cracking me up earlier.

Emily: How else am I supposed to get through this except by imagining –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That there is a designated person who has to just sort of be like, “Yeah, I'm here to do dick stuff.”

Sally: In every meeting, Mat just has his hand on Galgan – the front of Galgan's pants. (laugh)
As – in an official capacity, of course.

Emily: (laugh) Yeah, he's like, "This is purely professional and not a porno at all."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: This really does feel like the start of a porno.

Sally: Um –

Emily: Between the fucking – Knob Hill or whatever on the Fields of Merrilor map.

Sally: Oh, yeah. (laugh) Knob Hill.

Emily: And that Mat's new name is Knotai, which I – just has the word "knot" in it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I've been thinking about the Omegaverse a lot. So there we go.

Sally: Yeah, Knotai. Knotai.

Emily: No tie? I don't know.

Sally: I don't know. It starts with a "K." If – K-notai.

Emily: Yeah, we don't know if the "K" is silent. (laugh) We'd have to consult a pronunciation guide, and –

Sally: Which – don't do it, Emily, no!

Emily: God forbid we do that. Does this book even have one?

Sally: Oh, Brandon said it's too long already.

Emily: It doesn't, yeah.

Sally: Actually, the publishers probably were like, "No."

Emily: The publishers were like, "If you're reading book 14 of the Wheel of Time and don't know how to pronounce the names, then what are you doing?" And we were like, well, we're going to start a podcast and not pronounce the names correctly.

Sally: I've never looked at the pronunciation. I think we've looked at it, like, twice.

Emily: Yeah, but only for, like, lolz.

Sally: Um –

Emily: Just to see how we're supposed to and then continuing to not do that. Um, yeah, I guess we could look in the Wheel of Time Companion, but I shan't. It's too far away.

Sally: Um, yeah, so Mat is running around, trying to be like, "Can you guys please listen to me?" And they're all like – it – the – it is a – it is a scene where, for once, I, like, very much sympathize with Brandon Sanderson-Mat, where you're like, you just got told you now have this

big army to get to the Last Battle. And it's like, okay, let's fucking get there. But Mat, very much in the, like, scenes we get of him, it's, like, him running around, a little bit like a goofy chicken with his head cut off –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Swearing at everybody; generally being, um, improper.

Emily: Tuon very unsubtly reminds us that Mat is representative of chaos and that she is representative of order. She's like, "I can't believe I've done this." And I'm like, you guys need to leave some things subtextual. (laugh) I don't know how to tell you that it actually makes the narrative worse when you are just like, "Here's the symbolism." Equals – symbol equals symbol.

Sally: She's like, "I am the symbol of – I am the pinnacle of order itself, and I have married chaos itself."

Emily: Chaos. And I'm like –

Sally: And I was like, okay, first of all, no, you didn't. Mat's a bootlicker now, so he cannot be a chaotic trickster figure.

Emily: Yeah, if you'd married Book Four-Mat –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Then, sure, maybe, but.

Sally: But Tuon probably says "order" about 40 times in this chapter –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And it's like, Brandon, I understand.

Emily: Brandon, we get it.

Sally: Uh, Brandon, um, themes are for eighth grade book reports. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Brandon, did you even watch Game of Thrones? For the love.

Sally: Um, yeah, so Emily's exactly right. Like, Tuon throughout the scene is sitting on a throne, very composed, while Mat's running around, and it's supposed to be like, order and chaos, order and chaos: how will they come together to make the world a better place or to find the infamous Wheel of Time balance?

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And it's like, I don't really care.

Emily: I don't, yeah.

Sally: Tuon references briefly – she's like, "Mat – I might have to kill him after I am pregnant with his child."

Emily: And we're all just supposed to be like, okay? Like, what?

Sally: I just think the, like, world-building of the Seanchan Empire is so weird.

Emily: It's so unserious. It's like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Could we – no one believes this.

Sally: Yeah, Tuon's like, “The Prince of the Ravens is supposed to, like, help the empress.”

Emily: He's supposed to be – Tuan basically is like, “The checks and balances system of the Seanchan Empire is the constant assassinations.” And I'm like, yeah, and that has worked great in history. I'm not saying that the checks and balances system of, say, American democracy works great either –

Sally: Right.

Emily: Just that government is an ongoing project that humanity is trying to figure out.

Sally: Right.

Emily: Um, and that one, we have pretty much decided don't work great.

Sally: Just – yeah, constantly trying to assassinate each other.

Emily: Sort of killing each other? Yeah. She's like, “If someone manages to assassinate me, then that proves I'm weak and don't deserve to be the empress.” And I'm like, hey, what? Is that what you have to tell yourself at night to, like, get through the day?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is to just be like, “If someone kills me, then it's my fault.” Like, I mean, if someone kills you, it's because you're an evil bitch. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, it's because you're –

Emily: Or because someone else is more power-hungry. You know –

Sally: Right.

Emily: There's no real sense to most assassinations. So.

Sally: Yeah, it's pretty fucking bleak for Tuon to be like, “Mat should be trying to assassinate me in order to be as a knife to my throat,” and – Ed.

Emily: “To strengthen the empire.” And I'm like, every – every time you say “the empire,” I die a little inside.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: I feel like it's a knife to my throat –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Listening to you talk about the empire.

Sally: Um.

Emily: Anyway. Um, uh, important things going on: uh, Tuon references a couple of times that Selucia is acting as both her Truthspeaker, the person who's supposed to be able to reprimand her in public, and her Voice, the person who is literally supposed to speak for her. Um, that is a position that, uh, probably shouldn't overlap, and Selucia is not enjoying it, nor is Tuon. So Tuon's kinda like, "Oh, I might need someone else." So put a pin in that. Um, unfortunately, this is sort of indicative of the whole, like – we are going to be having enough Mat and Tuon points of view that the authors have felt the need to throw, like, Seanchan politics into this, the same way that they have thrown normal continent politics into our other points of view involving, like, generals –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And monarchs and things like that, the way Lan behaves with the other – other Borderlanders; stuff like that. Of course, we don't care about the Seanchan, and we all are, at this point, pretty transparently aware of where the Seanchan need to be and what they need to be doing. So this just feels like a delaying tactic, which is obnoxious. But anyway, Tuon, despite being like, "I have no idea if this will work out," is like, "I'll – I will myself do a gamble," she says, on Mat and promote him as well as give him a name change, which in the Seanchan culture is more or less indicative of a promotion. Now he's more on equal terms with her or something. She's like, "Mat's gonna react so badly to having his name change." And Mat's like, "I kinda like it," and bounces off.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And you're like, permanently though, Mat?

Sally: Yeah, like, all in for name changes for anybody, if that's –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: What feels right and good to you.

Emily: But having a name change assigned to you is a little insane.

Sally: By your boss? By your boss wife? (laugh)

Emily: I just want someone to push back against this.

Sally: I know.

Emily: Like, Egeanin just went for it so fast.

Sally: Right.

Emily: Girl, I needed you to have a spine and you didn't in that moment.

Sally: Right. And it, like, is – it's an interesting – if we want to, like, put the most positive spin on it with Egeanin – it's, like, a good representation of, like, an indoctrination mindset that even if no one from the group into which you are indoctrinated is watching you, you still behave as though they might be.

Emily: Mm. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sally: However, I don't think that's the project, or maybe I'm just not being very generous to Robert Jordan. I think it was more just, like, the Seanchan. But it is frustrating with Egeanin – even long after she even gives a fuck about the Seanchan Empire, she's like, “My name is Leilwin.”

Emily: Yeah, the project with Egeanin is supposed to be, I thought, someone distancing themselves –

Sally: You're right. Yeah.

Emily: From the Seanchan Empire. So the fact that she goes with the name change is very, like, antithetical to that. And Mat – I think the most intriguing thing he could have done would be to just say, “No” –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And have that function as the, quote unquote, knife to Tuon's throat.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just be like, he resists her power in other ways.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, and I think that would have been better in terms of, um, pointing – indicating what their relationship would be like after the Last Battle, et cetera, et cetera. Of course, Brandon Sanderson, when given two options involving Mat, is always going to go with the comedic one.

So, comedically, it is kind of funny that Mat is just like, “Yeah, I have no real attachment to my name.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Okay, whatever wifey is gonna call me. (makes “I don't know” noise) She's weird.” But, um, as they are sort of running around, they get news that, uh, Egwene's army is on the ropes and Mat is like, “Let's go – let's go. That's where they need us.” And Tuon's like, “Mmm,” and Mat's like, “Girl, you literally signed a fucking treaty.” And she's like, “Well, I can break a treaty.” And Mat's like, “What is the function of it? What's the point of a treaty if –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “You signed it five minutes ago.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Could you have – could you also have a spine?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Tuon’s like, “Alright,” and they're gonna go rescue the Aes Sedai, I guess, which I bet Egwene will be thrilled about. We then bounce over to Lan?

Sally: Unfortunately.

Emily: So obnoxious. Um, mostly what we’re – we're getting this from the next few points of view: is that there is a solar eclipse happening. Um, it actually started, I think, in the last section, and we just forgot to mention it – like, Aviendha –

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: Noticed it starting when it – while in Thakan’dar. Um, and I can't remember: I guess this eclipse will just last until the end of the Last Battle.

Sally: No, it passes. Really quickly.

Emily: Oh, did it already?

Sally: It passes really quickly, I think –

Emily: Okay. Phew.

Sally: Is the understanding.

Emily: I just was like, “Wait a second; I can't fucking remember.”

Sally: Yeah, I think – ‘cause the – I guess, also, I don't know if anyone on this planet has ever seen a solar eclipse –

Emily: Yeah, they all act like –

Sally: Because everyone is like, “Hey, it's just night forever now.”

Emily: They’re like, “Ahh! Someone killed the sun!” (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Yeah. Which, I don't know, maybe if you're fighting the Last Battle, it's not reasonable – it's not unreasonable to assume the Dark One would just like, you know, murder the sun.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But, yeah, I think it passes relatively quickly. Um, and because it passes relatively quickly, and to, like, me as a real-world reader, I'm like, oh, this is just a celestial phenomenon.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Phenomena; whatever, I can't remember which one. Um, I'm like, what's the point? Like, in many cultures, like, eclipses signal significant events. You know –

Emily: Right. Right, right, right.

Sally: Eclipses, comets, et cetera, et cetera, were used in, um, like, fortune-telling and prophecy across many cultures across the globe and still are today for people – signify significant things changing. So it's not, like, mythologically out of place in terms of an archetype, but it doesn't seem to really fit. I don't know. I'm being maybe a little bit too nitpicky, but I was like, do we also really need to have an eclipse?

Emily: I mean, I'm feeling more nitpicky, which is that: why isn't everyone going blind when they stare directly at the solar eclipse for several minutes?

Sally: You're right.

Emily: Also, why is anyone doing eclipse junk when we've already had Avatar: The Last Airbender –

Sally: I know.

Emily: Two-part episode, “Day of the Black Sun”?

Sally: “Day of the Black Sun.” Like, come on.

Emily: Like, they did it already. There's nothing left to say about eclipses.

Sally: Nope.

Emily: Shut the fuck up, Brandon. You don't have the excuse that this book came out before that because it didn't.

Sally: Damn.

Emily: Stop it. We then bounce over to Egeanin – ugh. So many “E” names. We bounce over to fucking Elayne, whose army has made it in front of Cairhien. The plan is: hold off this army and then turn around and fight another army. Everyone's super tired. And Elayne is like, “I gotta give – gotta inspire some morale for the troops.” So she gives the most cringe speech of all time. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's so clearly, like – every time someone in this book gives a speech – Lan did this a little while ago, I think – I'm just like, okay, clearly Brandon Sanderson was, like, in front of Theoden King –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In “Return of the King,” like, taking notes –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “How to do a good speech.” And it's just like, you can't do it without the emotional weight of context.

Sally: Like, literally; I was gonna say the exact same thing. That speech worked so well because of, like, the absolute word-by-word world-building that J.R.R. Tolkien did –

Emily: Yeah, fucking –

Sally: And then –

Emily: Theoden's arc as a leader.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The fact that it's told primarily through the points of view of Eowyn and Merry, the two lowest-status –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: People in the army. Everything going on in the other side of the battlefield. Like, shut up.

Sally: Yeah, like, that works when the whole project of the book –

Emily: It doesn't – Elayne has no business here.

Sally: Yeah, Elayne just being like, "We fight to die." And you're like, shut up.

Emily: Wait, what the hell?

Sally: Actually, no, Theoden King fights to die. Thank you so much.

Emily: Yeah, Theoden King does fight to die. You don't know. He's grieving his son. Stop it. (laugh)

Sally: Ahh! (laugh)

Emily: We're saluting.

Sally: Look at Tybalt. (laugh)

Emily: (baby voice) Oh, are you so tired? So tired and stupid? No.

Sally: (laugh) Guys, we're so mean to Tybalt. It's unreal.

Emily: If Tybalt understood human language, then he would be like –

Sally: "I'm calling DCFS." (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Okay, but he bites us.

Sally: But in return, he does bite us, so I guess it's about equal.

Emily: Okay. Um, anyway, Elayne gives this speech and then insists to Birgitte that she is going to fight with the army because, uh, most of the other channelers have been totally burnt out making gateways to get the army here on time. Um, you know, Elayne does have a decent argument at this point for being on the front lines –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So Birgitte is like, “Yeah, sure.” So we leave them there. Then we bounce over to Ituralde, spearheading the non-channeling fighting in Thakan’dar. Uh, the main things about Ituralde in this are that he is dealing with some pretty serious PTSD after Maradon. Um, it's unclear, and I can't remember, whether Ituralde is being manipulated by Graendal.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: He is notably the first general point of view that we've had, which makes me think that he's not. Because I think –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: If we were through, like, Bashere’s point of view while he's getting manipulated, then that would come out –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: In some way. And, uh, I don't remember if that's correct. So we'll wait on that. It would make sense to me if it was correct, though, because I don't know, he's so – he’s not sleeping. He's not going to be sleeping the same way everyone else is, frequently.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, it's just more Brandon Sanderson being like, “Look at how good I can do battle plans.” You know, like on paper.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Ituralde’s clever schemes involving thorns and stuff. Um, but yeah, it's just a battle of them fighting Trollocs. Pretty standard fare.

Sally: Yeah, pretty – pretty brutal.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Kind of – I'm just – I'm a little over the Trolloc brutalization that is happening.

Emily: Yeah, Ituralde’s like, “I lust for blood.” And I'm like, okay, if we were, like, doing an examination of this in the context of your PTSD and, like, vengeance –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: And the futility of vengeance narratives or something, I don't know, then I might be intrigued by that. But you're just – you just sound like everyone else.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is, “I want these Trollocs dead so bad.” And it's like, okay.

Sally: What if they have feelings too?

Emily: Yeah, what if they have feelings? Have you thought about that? They don't like fire.

Sally: They don't like fire.

Emily: They don't like being set on fire. Is that not enough?

Sally: Is that not enough? Can you not look into their eyes and see the soul in there?

Emily: Jeez. We then get a Sivan point of view as Egwene gets back to camp. Um, and when Egwene gets back to camp, we are already, like, seeing the initial, uh, approaches of the Seanchan: like, those little – their little dragon things –

Sally: Yeah. Raken.

Emily: Are already floating around and Egwene's like, "Ugh." We also hear that Min has joined, uh, Bryne's army and is just working as a clerk. So not a lot she's doing there to be effective. Then we go to – back to Rand's point of view as they enter the Cave of Wonders.

Sally: The Cave. Capital T, capital C.

Emily: Uh, it does – the Cave does that classic thing that it always does to the Forsaken whenever they visit Daddy, which is that it tries to, like, eat them. But Rand is like, "Through the power of God and anime on my side, I – I say no to this," so they manage to not do that.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Rand, on approach, is like, "Uh-oh; something's off with one of the women I've bonded. Is, like, Aviendha, Elayne, Min, okay?" We, the readers, are pretty aware that Aviendha, Elayne, and Min are all okay the last we saw them.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So you might remember that Rand is bonded to a fourth woman, who has been mysteriously missing for the last few – days? Weeks? I don't know how long it's been. Um, so put a pin in that one too, I guess. It is pretty iconic of Rand to not think about Alanna.

Sally: I know. Rand being like –

Emily: He's like, "I don't give a fuck about Alanna."

Sally: It's, like, on the smudged writing on his hand: "My – my four women."

Emily: "Eh? And ... Angelina? From Survivor 37?" (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) "Natalie, can I have your jacket?"

Emily: "Natalie? ... Natalie?" (laugh) Stop. Okay, Rand – they get to the bottom of the pit, I guess, or this cave, and see a sort of confusing Pieta. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Tableau: that's the word I was looking for, but Pieta is so much funnier.

Sally: No, way funnier to think of Moridin holding –

Emily: Holding Shaidar Haran's –

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Empty skin bag. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Way funnier, so that's actually what's happening, canonically.

Emily: Uh, no, Moridin's there with, like, sword drawn, ready to fight. Also is the body of a Myrddraal that has just sort of, like, collapsed and, you know, half turned to dust or whatever.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Rand's like, “Hey, what?”

Sally: What?

Emily: Moridin's like, “It's an empty vessel.” ‘Cause, behind him, is just, like, pitch darkness. And Moiraine’s like, “Rand, that's the essence of the Dark One himself, so don't touch it.” And we're like, okay. So this, I guess, finally clarifies to us that Shaidar Haran has been the literal physical embodiment of the Dark One for the last several books. That's been sort of unclear.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, wish we'd, I don't know, had that framed sooner.

Sally: Yeah, it doesn't really land here.

Emily: It doesn't – yeah, you're just kind of like, wait, what?

Sally: Yeah, like, I – and now that you're saying all these things, it makes sense. And when I was like, oh, that's probably – in hindsight, I remember reading it and being like, oh, the Myrddraal has to be that one guy, right?

Emily: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sally: But to just kind of put all those pieces together, that the Dark One has been wandering around.

Emily: Yeah, it's like – it's one of those things in Wheel of Time where something has been going on, but we have not given the, like, rule set in terms of magic to fully understand it.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, like pretty much everything that happened at the end of the Eye of the World.

Sally: Yeah, you bet.

Emily: But here, again, we're just like, oh, the Dark One can take an avatar? What does that mean?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: How does that, like – does that leave him vulnerable in any way?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And we just have been sort of like, don't ask those questions. Shuffle to the side.

Sally: Shuffle to the side. It also just kind of bums me out because, um, I know, like, there's a big part of the presentation of evil here – I don't know why I'm trying to, like, speak on behalf of the Dark One in these books and, like, wanting him – (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Someone has to champion him.

Sally: Yeah, he –

Emily: The only one else doing it is Moridin and he doesn't even want to be here.

Sally: Yeah, Moridin just wants to absolutely get zooted and –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, eternally zooted. Um. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Rand walks down; Moridin's got a huge bong.

Sally: (laugh) Whatever gets you through the day, am I right?

Emily: He's like, "It's medicinal. I have a prescription."

Sally: (laugh) Um, so there's, like, a big – the big, like – one of the, like, gears turning this representation of evil is that evil people are just, like, creepy and –

Emily: Mm.

Sally: Like, evil. The Darkfriends are all, like, creepy rapists who –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, eat children and things like that.

Emily: They do cannibalism. They do rape.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: All the things that our good characters would never do.

Sally: Yeah, would never do. Like, they're just so narsty, you know.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: It's not a very philosophical presentation of the dark and the light or good versus evil. So it just kind of bums me out, I guess, that, like, our avatar of the Dark One was, like, also just this

creepy guy, who – I think we've seen Shaidar Haran on-screen – at least, go off to commit sexual assault and other types of –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Violence against women and other gross torture things and it's just – this, like, feels really small, that that would be what the Dark One would do –

Emily: For sure.

Sally: In his avatar.

Emily: It just, like, minimizes –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The sort of idea of evil generally because there's obviously not a lot of nuance in this series about the fact that, um, people can be evil and good and do bad things and good things and those things, um – you know, no person is actually evil –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: No person is actually good.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and so I guess the concept is that, well, our dark – our dark – what are they called? Fucking Shadowspawn –

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: That's as close to the embodiment of evil that we can get. And it's like, no, that sort of reduces both the Shadowspawn and the idea of evil generally, because we know canonically that the Shadowspawn are one guy's sort of idea of evil.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: They're this sort of, like, Frankenstein's monster that popped out of one of the Forsaken's brains.

Sally: Right.

Emily: And in that context, they are, like, a little bit interesting of just like, here's what – what's his fucking name? Aginor. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) That guy? Yeah.

Emily: That guy, who I don't really care about, but they are at least, like, a human picture of what evil is.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So the Dark One stepping into that in terms of being like, “I will accept the human idea of me” –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Is very, like, boring. And just, like, why would you?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You're a cosmic embodiment of evil.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Be a little cosmic.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Be a little Lovecraftian.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To just be a guy, wandering around, is like, hey, where's the pizzazz? Where's the presentation?

Sally: Yeah, where's the little jester boy? (laugh)

Emily: Jingle jangle, Dark One. Come on.

Sally: Where's the jingle jangle?

Emily: Where's the jingle jangle of it all?

Sally: The je ne sais quoi. (laugh) Where's the jingle jangle of it all?

Emily: Come on.

Sally: But –

Emily: We were all rooting for you.

Sally: But yeah, it's like, where's the sort of eldritch-y – yeah, Lovecraftian –?

Emily: It just absolutely tanks the fear factor –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Of the Dark One. You're like, oh, he's just a guy.

Sally: He's just a guy.

Emily: We just saw Talmanes in chapter one –

Sally: Nerf – narc –

Emily: Nerf –

Sally: Two of these guys, yeah.

Emily: Yeah, like, six of them in a row, no problem –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: While dying.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So it's just like, okay, can we decide what the threat level of Myrddraal is?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Anyway, Rand is like, “Hey, Moridin, do we have to, like – I know we're the avatars of evil and good, but do we actually have to do a sword fight?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “That seems a little passe.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Wouldn't you say?” And Moridin's like, “No, we are absolutely going to do a sword fight. I am sticking to the code,” and Rand's like, “Fucking fine.” So they start doing a sword fight.

Sally: And you're like, Moridin.

Emily: It's a little silly. We do at least get the iconic “I win again, Lews Therin” –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Line. That's always a – now, talking about, um, evil done correctly –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That was a great example, way back in book two.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: (sigh) If only we'd stuck by that sort of cosmic Lovecraftian evil.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “I win again, Lews Therin.” Anyway, uh, back to Lan, still on the battlefield, but increasingly tired. As he does a retreat, he notices, um, like, an error on the battlefield in that two groups are simultaneously called to back up a different group and sort of makes a mess of the situation.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Lan's like, "I'm going to talk to Agelmar about this." So more of that. Then a long chapter – a long section with Perrin and Gaul in Tel'aran'rhod. Perrin is also, now, in sort of the dream version of Thakan'dar and is like, "Rand's gone into the cave."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "I am aware of this."

Sally: The cavern.

Emily: He's like, "Graendal is also around here somewhere 'cause we followed her here." Um, there are also wolves everywhere. And Perrin's like, "Hey, are you guys going to do something?" And they're like, "No." And Perrin's like, "What the – could you?" (laugh)

Sally: And they're like, "Sowwy, daddy."

Emily: "Sowwy."

Sally: "There are rules."

Emily: Um, Perrin goes into the cave and sees the sort of, like, Rand – the – the tableau, again, now with Rand, Nynaeve, and Moiraine included, um, sort of moving in slow motion, I think.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like –

Sally: Zzzzzhhhh.

Emily: Yeah, frozen.

Sally: Zzzzhhh.

Emily: But Slayer is also there and is, like, getting ready to shoot Rand in the back point blank with an arrow. So Perrin, just in time, prevents that from happening and starts fighting Slayer. He, like – Gaul's still there. They get, like, surrounded by these red-veiled Aiel guys who we talked about –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: At the end of last season or the beginning of this one – you know, Aiel guys who potentially can channel, who have been Turned by the Dark One, um, and are doing a fight. At some point, Perrin is just like, "I have to leave Gaul" and he also calls the wolves to fight these guys so he can, uh, sort of take on Slayer one-on-one. Just one of their classic dream sequence fights. But eventually Slayer, um, leaves the dream completely. He has just, like, gone back to the real world. And Perrin's like, "God damn it. I still can't fucking do that."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So angry. But he runs back, finds two of the channelers are still up, Gaul is wounded, a bunch of the wolves are dead. Um, Perrin, uh, is like – grabs the Aiel guys and is like – he does

the same thing, essentially, that, uh, Egwene did to Mesaana at – in the last book. Was that in the last book?

Sally: Or the book before. One of those two.

Emily: Yeah. The phrase he uses is “idiot,” of just making someone – there's, I think, a spell in D&D that effectively does the exact same thing. It's like – uh, I don't remember what it is, but it's, like, an evil thing in D&D, very clearly.

Sally: That's because it is an evil thing to do.

Emily: To just, like, wipe someone's mind –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To reduce them to a, uh, vegetative state is essentially what's happening here. Yeah, sort of not really thinking a lot about that. Perrin's just like, “Yeah, this is an effective move to disarm someone.” And I'm like, what? You can make ropes up here.

Sally: Yeah. Um, Perrin also – not to – I think we talked extensively about this with Egg and Mesaana, so I will just say: Perrin, totally willing to do this; not willing to murder these people. So just continue to chew on that.

Emily: Yeah, again, so wild.

Sally: Meanwhile, Gaul is like – (makes choking noise)

Emily: Gaul's like, “What? Why did you do that? Let's kill them.” (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Sally: Gaul also is like – Lanfear shows up and sort of explains what is up with these guys. And Gaul's like, “Oh, these are my kin –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, other Aiel guys who just got Turned.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And so he's like, “Brothers.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Kills – gives them an honorable death.

Sally: I know.

Emily: So, again, Gaul remains the only character –

Sally: Yeah, who has, I don't know –

Emily: I care about. Yeah.

Sally: Real empathy. Yeah. “Brothers.”

Emily: “Brother – my brothers.” Uh, but, yeah, Lanfear shows up, heals Perrin, and then, with some persuasion, also heals Gaul. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's extremely funny that Gaul allows this. I mean, he's a very sensible guy, but you'd just be like, so –

Sally: “What?”

Emily: “We're going to let the Forsaken channel on us?”

Sally: Yeah, and Perrin's like –

Emily: “We're doing that?”

Sally: “It's not a big deal, Gaul.”

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And Gaul's like, “Okay, what is and isn't a big deal to you? I'm starting to lose track of the _”

Emily: It's very unclear.

Sally: “The guidelines here. The rule book.”

Emily: But she literally shows up, heals them, and leaves.

Sally: Yeah, it's another – we need to give kind of a phrase for it – another Lanfearance. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) “Goodbye.” Lanfearance.

Sally: Yeah, it's sort of an amalgamation of Lanfear-appearance and Lanfear-interference. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. (laugh) There's a lot going on. Stupid.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um, Gaul's like, “I don't know what this lady's deal is,” and Perrin's like – shrug emoji.

Sally: And Gaul's like, “Okay.”

Emily: Gaul's like, “You are a little too focused on the wrong things.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “And a little unfocused on the wrong things. Man.” Anyway, Perrin's like, “Okay, I can solve one problem, which is that I've got this dream spike burning a hole in my pocket. I'll just go put that in Shayol Ghul to make sure no one else can just apparate in there and –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Kill Rand and the others while they're fighting.” I don't know how well this works in, like, the World of Dreams. Like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Oh, yeah, I guess you can't apparate into it. You have to appear at the entrance.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I forgot how dreamspikes work for a second. So, effectively, this will protect Rand in both the World of Dreams and Shayol Ghul, as long as someone is keeping a watch on the outside, which Thom is doing in the real world, and now Perrin enlists the wolves to do it in, uh, Tel'aran'rhiod. Perrin, hilariously, like, gets in there and sets it up and is like, “Nynaeve, can you hear me?” And Nynaeve's like, “Perrin? Sometimes I can still hear his voice.” (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Uh, so sort of a ghost experience.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But Perrin's like, “Hey, you're not going to be able to Travel.” And Nynaeve's like, “Okay? It wasn't, like, my plan –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “But okay?”

Sally: Good to know.

Emily: Um, then when Perrin gets out, after spending five minutes in there, Gaul's like, “Dude, that took forever.” And Perrin's like, “Nah, this was in and out, man.” And Gaul's like, “No, you were in there two hours.” So this gives us a sense of the sort of time dilation thing that's going on. And, uh, then Perrin and Gaul are like, ‘Alright, checkbox that, and back to investigating Graendal.’ End of section.

Sally: End of list.

Emily: End of list. So that's that. Um, we will be taking a week break for a little vacation that we're both going on, uh, but we'll be back after that with another couple of chapters sort of extending along this basic story line.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: You know. Uh, things are not spiking upward in terms of action, but they are on a slow uphill slope. Lots of things happening in lots of places. Uh, but thank you for listening. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

Sally: Yeah, you guys are the best and we love you a lot.

Emily: Yeah, yeehaw. Um, anything to add?

Sally: I don't think so, and I'm trying to think of a sign-off.

Emily: You want me to do one?

Sally: If you have one. I'm totally blank.

Emily: Uh, my mom, when she travels, and also sometimes when she doesn't travel, takes ambien to help her sleep. She's got major sleep issues. Um, so the other night, I picked her and my dad up from the airport. They'd just had a long flight from a trip that they'd been on. And my dad, like, that morning, had texted me and my siblings, like, "Mom is stoned out of her mind on ambien." And I was like, oh, that's so funny. He's just pulling our leg. But get in the car, we're chatting, and I'm like, "Oh, so you had too much ambien or something, Mom?" And she goes, "I don't remember getting on the plane."

Sally: Oh.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: My God, Rebecca. (laugh)

Emily: And I was like – (laugh) "Hey –" (laugh) She's like, "I just sort of woke up there." And I was like, "Bestie ..."

Sally: Um. Becky, I don't think an airport is a great place to be without your wits about you.

Emily: She – and then my dad was like, "We had to hold her hands for the entire –" Like, to get –

Sally: Just dragging her on –

Emily: Like, just towing her around. He's like, "I was so worried she was going to say something weird."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because when she's on ambient, she says odd shit all the time.

Sally: Sure. (laugh) "I need you to stop saying odd shit."

Emily: So, yeah, that's my mom, local drug addict, local prescription drug abuse. I was like, "How did you overdose on ambien?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And she's like, "I don't know, I might have taken – I thought I took only an extra five milligrams, but maybe I took an extra 10," and I'm like –

Sally: I don't know if you're supposed to take extra milligrams of ambien.

Emily: No!

Sally: (laugh) I think that's, like, kind of the point, Becky.

Emily: Ahhh! Makes me – “I don't remember getting on the plane.”

Sally: “I don't remember getting on the plane.”

Emily: You're an insane woman! Okay, goodbye, everyone.

Sally: Everyone say a little thanks to the universe that Becky made it home safe.

Emily: (sigh) Goodbye, everyone.

Sally: Bye!