

Episode 296: Taken by Wolves (Erotic)
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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: Um, sorry if you can hear any background AC, but it is, like, 100 and –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Something degrees –

Sally: It's –

Emily: Out there.

Sally: Unlivable, actually.

Emily: I just – I just can't do it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, I forgot last time, and it was so important to me when I read it: Gallenne – Gallenne – whatever his fucking name is –

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: Apparently beefed it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And now Arganda is wearing the little –

Sally: Yeah. Plume.

Emily: Plume – (laugh) that he used to have. And I was like, Brandon, how did you accidentally write the gayest shit I've ever seen?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, that's some Achilles –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Shit, some tragic – the Iliad could never.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Homer's like, “Oh, fuck.”

Sally: “Damn, he should have picked a feather off of his body.”

Emily: “Oh my God, a feather, and it's all – it's symbolic of the ephemeral nature of mortality.” And this is like – I can't believe this enemies to lovers has been going on in the background for so long. And I haven't known because I haven't been paying attention to it because everything about Perrin and his sort of group has been so annoying –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That I've just sort of been skimming it. But now it caught me and it bewitched me body and soul that these two middle-aged men loved each other so much that when one of them tragically fell on the field of battle, the other one plucked the feather from his cap, literally.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And was like, “I shall wear this as a symbol of our undying love.”

Sally: Of our undying love.

Emily: Of our old man love.

Sally: I love old – old people falling in love.

Emily: Yeah. God. Wow.

Sally: Makes you feel alive, you know?

Emily: (singing) Who can say – (normal voice) Yeah.

Sally: (singing) Where the road goes ... (normal voice) Oh my gosh. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) What?

Sally: I heard that fucking Enya song in a TikTok the other day –

Emily: Yeah?

Sally: And I was like, why are they making our joke? Like, I got – (laugh) my initial gut reaction was to be, like, mad. I'm like, this is an EHR joke.

Emily: Yeah, we're the only ones who are allowed to use Enya for comedic purposes.

Sally: Come on. What are you doing? This is ridiculous.

Emily: I haven't been the same since I found that article about how Enya lives next door to Bono and just lives in her castle alone. Like an insane woman.

Sally: Yeah, she's so weird.

Emily: And everyone's like, "Yeah, she's crazy." She's like, "Yeah."

Sally: "I am crazy."

Emily: "I do what I want." And I was like, whoa. God. She's goals for real.

Sally: Yeah. Living alone in a castle in Ireland? Could be worse things.

Emily: Yeah. I mean, the major downside is that she is living next door to Bono, but.

Sally: Maybe she, like, eggs his house every couple of days.

Emily: Yeah, every once in a while, to keep it spicy?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Between them? Just to –

Sally: Oh, yeah, maybe –

Emily: Put him in his place.

Sally: Maybe they have, like, a neighbor feud.

Emily: Yeah. Ooh.

Sally: But it's castles, so it's, like, rich people neighbor feud.

Emily: Castle feud – so they're, like, constantly besieging each other.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: They're engaged in modern-day siege warfare.

Emily: They each have a trebuchet –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And they just take turns firing it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or it's like a lawnmower, and they keep going back and forth, being like, "Hey, can I borrow your trebuchet?"

Sally: Yeah. Your trebuchet.

Emily: "We don't know whose trebuchet it is anymore." Okay, this is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I am Sally Goodger.

Emily: And, um, God, we're getting so much closer every day to – I don't know what, but something. Yeah, these two chapters are just about the resolution, more or less, of the generals subplot, them getting corrupted, and command finally being turned over to Mat, um, whose first major decision as commander-in-chief is to, um, quit the multiple battlefronts strategy and just have everyone gather at the – back at the Fields of Merrilor. Um.

Sally: But I was thinking a lot about what you said a couple of episodes ago about how “A Memory of Light” reads like it is meant to be read in one or two very long sittings versus breaking it up over, I don't know, 20-some odd weeks the way we're doing it. Um, and that just, like, really hit me when I was reading these chapters yesterday, when it's like finally all of this is wrapped up and Mat is in command. And I was, like, really frustrated ‘cause I feel like this entire plot has been a massive waste of time and a massive way to just, like, fill page space. And I feel like it didn't really get us anything except making the battles a little bit harder. But there were, like, plenty of other ways to stack the odds against us that didn't have to do with this, like, convoluted thing. But that's my own beef. But even if we were going with this plotline that, like, all of the generals are ... Compulsed.

Emily: Yeah, what's the –? (laugh) Compelled.

Sally: Compelled, I guess.

Emily: Compulsed.

Sally: I like “Compulsed” better.

Emily: It's funnier, yeah.

Sally: Um, it is really frustrating when you're reading it week by week by week to see six different people come to the same resolution only to just finally give Mat the story arc we have wanted him to have from the very beginning. Um, and I was also thinking back to my initial comment at the very beginning of this season, where I was like, “I think I'm going to be frustrated no matter what happens with Mat, ‘cause I'm frustrated that he's not here from the beginning.” And I was revisiting that, and I had, like, one small moment of triumph where I was like, finally, it's Mat.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: You know, like, I'm so sick of everybody else, and finally it's Mat. And then I was just like, yeah, feeling frustrated that, like, we haven't been – like, it is a perfectly reasonable difficulty level for, like, one small trickster-like guy to be leading the armies of – against the literal forces of evil. I don't know why we had to go through all of this. It really, to me, was just feeling like wasting page space. I really don't know how else to describe my reading experience of reading – maybe it would feel differently if I was, like, reading it really quickly –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: In real time. But as it does it, it just didn't work for me is what I'm trying to say.

Emily: Some of it, to me, is that I think the authors, um, maybe realized – maybe were self-aware of this or maybe were not – but, like, there seems to have been, um, uh, an assumption that Mat had not earned his place at the head of the –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: Forces. And that instead we had to come up with this convoluted scenario in which he is the only one capable of doing it, and only because he has, um, this ter'angreal that protects him from outside channeling.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, which – you know, rather than it being, uh, merit-based.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, “Well, he's the best we actually have.” Um, which is in kind of stark contrast to a lot of the other main characters, who have been put in their various positions on the battlefield by, like, having to claw their way directly into these positions.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like, we've seen so much about Egwene's sort of, like, leadership arc, and it's, um, you know, satisfying to watch her have such, like, good control over the White Tower. We are, like, totally confident that there's not going to be any sort of weird –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Machinations in the background. It's just like, cool, Egwene has got it together, and Egwene has earned all of the respect that she's getting.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Elayne is a character who hasn't actually earned the position she's got to, at least according to –

Sally: Right.

Emily: The readers, but at least the – the authors have been –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Setting up plots for her to sort of make it seem like she's earned it.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: This is in opposition to Mat, who has been operating so much on the sidelines for so long that he – like, the only people who are aware, even, that he's a good general and not just kind of, like, nepo baby – (laugh)

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Best friend of the Dragon Reborn, are, like, Rand, sort of – like, Rand was kind of like, “Uh, yeah, okay, I buy this.” And then it's like, Egwene and Lan also kind of are aware that he has battle prowess, but they, like, haven't seen it in action, really.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So, um, no one – like, there isn't a stratified system in which Mat can become the commander of the forces of Light. And I don't think that's, like – I'm not trying to excuse the writing here so much as just be like, yeah, they sort of fucked up with that early. This has been built into the series, this fuck-up.

Sally: Yeah, I – yeah, it's frustrating to be like, the readers know this, but the other characters don't. And that is just, like, bad, I think. Like, if Mat's whole thing is that he is the son of battles, why is that not his whole thing? Why does he also –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Why is his main arc actually matrimony – matrim-ony?

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Why is that his main arc? It feels very frustrating and unbalanced to me. And I also just do feel generally quite frustrated because, like, Rand does know.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Lan does know, and these were two very – or, at least, know enough to be like, “Mat would be a valuable person to have at the table,” even if not necessarily giving him command and then, through some other series of, you know, the four great captains or whatever being like, “You should be in charge.” That would be very satisfying, to have these four guys, like, cede the title to Mat. It just feels very frustrating ‘cause, like, Rand has enough of an understanding of Mat, especially by seeing him through these magic telepathy powers, to know what Mat has been doing, to know that – and Elayne knows: he has this huge band of mercenaries. So, like, it is not – I know they don't know the extent of it, but it is not unknown to these people.

Emily: Yeah, I agree. It should have been – at the very beginning, Mat – Rand should have been like, “Well, and Mat – Mat's the general.” And maybe there would be people being like, “What?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Your random friend who just commands a band of mercenaries and we've never seen him in action, so we don't know if it's really him or just Talmanes?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Sort of figureheading it?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Rand be like, “Well, I said so, and you have to deal with it,” and then Mat just knocking their socks off.

Sally: Yeah, like, I – I get what you're saying. And I think I'm just really frustrated by the book at this point and frustrated by my day. So I'm feeling a little punchy, but I get what you're saying. Like, what you've laid out makes sense based on the narrative that Robert Jordan and Brandon Sanderson are providing to us. And that is the narrative that we have to deal with. We can't live in fantasyland for forever, but it just – yeah, to your point, it just feels like a really major structural problem that is just very frustrating because Mat is – I know he's one of our favorite characters – but is objectively one of the more interesting characters in the series. Whether or not you are personally fond of him, he's doing a lot of fun archetype stuff, and to just consistently have those archetypes be shoved to the side in favor of him becoming Seanchan nobility, is very odd – it's a very odd character choice to me.

Emily: Yeah, and it's sort of, uh, in macro, the experience that we're getting in micro with the multiple battle fronts here: just sort of, like, the weakness of having a lot, a lot, a lot of point of views –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In a lot of different places that are not coordinating.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, it's so frustrating to have, like you said, six different people come to this realization.
Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I imagine it would be frustrating – I don't remember; it was 10 years ago – but I imagine it was kind of frustrating in the mo – even if you were reading this in, like –

Sally: Yeah. Like –

Emily: One or two sittings, just to be like, “Yeah, okay, I got it.”

Sally: Yeah, it might actually be more frustrating, reading it in one sitting –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: To be like, okay. Like –

Emily: Can someone, like, now spread the word?

Sally: Yeah, we've got it.

Emily: We've got it. I understand. We don't need to do this individually for all –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Four captains at the same time. Um, and, yeah, I think it's just, like, Wheel of Time – we've talked about this so many times – Wheel of Time draws a lot of its, um, tension and narrative stakes from lack of or miscommunication.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And that ain't working anymore. You guys have teleporting. I mean, it hasn't worked for like six books, but, like, people should be on the same page. Maybe I'm just spoiled because I live in a world where Sense8 existed, however briefly –

Sally: Yeah. God.

Emily: And everyone just got to share their minds and always know what was happening with everyone else.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I just want that.

Sally: Well, it is, like, frustrating because Mat is, apparently – speaking of men who are the first people on the planet to think of interesting ways to use gateways – is the first person to be like, “Open it and we'll just talk through it. Like –”

Emily: Video conference.

Sally: Yeah, it's FaceTime, baby. Like, nobody actually has to come here. We can just open multiple gateways –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And all be having a conversation together. And you're like –

Emily: Genius.

Sally: Wow, yes.

Emily: Innovation in the field. You get the Nobel Prize –

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: For fucking scientific discovery. (laugh)

Sally: I know. And I was like, it's a good idea. And that's the type of stuff where, like, it would be fun to have Mat be coming up – Mat be the one to come up with these interesting ways to use gateways 'cause we have our little trickster guy at the head of the battle.

Emily: Who's slippery, yeah.

Sally: Who's slippery.

Emily: Thinks outside the box.

Sally: Yeah. And, like, sees Yukiri open one gateway to look at things, and he's, like, got 19 other ideas about how we could use this, you know?

Emily: Fucking fabulous.

Sally: So, yeah, it is just, like – not to beat a dead horse, but the communication and, like, propping up Wheel of Time on lack of communication is frustrating, first of all, because, like, think of a better plot device. And second of all, like, we've had teleportation for, like, 10 books now. Like, it just isn't feasible that people aren't figuring this out.

Emily: Speaking of teleportation, this is something I forgot to complain about last time –

Sally: Sure, lay it on me.

Emily: When we were complaining about Andrel, is that Brandon Sanderson is no longer following the rules that Robert – like, Robert Jordan did set restrictions –

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: On Traveling. You have to know the place you're Traveling from.

Sally: Oh, that's right.

Emily: Androl just showed up.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Are we supposed to believe he was walking around for an hour while everyone was dying –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In order to learn the terrain?

Sally: Yeah. And wouldn't he also have to know the terrain of Dragonmount, theoretically?

Emily: I think – yeah, I'm – I'm a little more unclear on how –

Sally: That's right, you can Travel to a place –

Emily: A place you've never seen before, but – which is so backwards to me.

Sally: Yeah. Like, you should have to know the place you're Traveling to –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Versus the place you're standing in.

Emily: That's how it fucking works in D&D, I feel, so.

Sally: Yeah, maybe Robert Jordan was like, “There's way too many difficulties with that. How am I going to get people –?”

Emily: And it's like, Robert Jordan, that's the point.

Sally: Yeah. The point of magic systems is for– to give you –

Emily: New problems.

Sally: Rules you have to think around.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Yeah. Ugh. Um, yeah, so you're right. Androl is a loser. And isn't – (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Thesis.

Sally: Thesis: Androl is a loser. Um, okay. Those are my, like, thoughts in general about Mat taking command. I'm delighted to finally be here. I'm delighted to have someone –

Emily: (laugh) More than halfway through the book.

Sally: Yeah, we know isn't being Compelled and who we know is going to do a good job and who's, theoretically, like – one of the first things Mat says in the entire series is, “Battles interest me.”

Emily: (heavy breathing)

Sally: Which is, like, so – would be such good – it is such good foreshadowing. It's really satisfying when you finally start to piece together this arc.

Emily:

Sally: So just, like – I'm just really frustrated that we got so close. So close to being like, Mat –

Emily: I know, we were so close to having this sort of, like, epic –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Conclusion to this arc.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And now we're like, nope, Mat's a totally different character. Wrong – wrong thing number one.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Number two, we absolutely beefed it at the finish line. We buffed it. (laugh)

Sally: I buffed it! Oh, no, my point.

Emily: Oh, no, my point.

Sally: I shitted it. (laugh)

Emily: I shitted it. We shitted it at the finish line and it just ain't – oh, it could have been so much better.

Sally: Yeah, it is – I didn't really totally clock, kind of, what you were saying of, like, yes, Mat has the foxhead medallion – I did get that. But, like, Mat being, like, their only option isn't because Egg necessarily thinks – Egg does know he's a good general, but it's more so the fact

that he's the only man with military prowess that we can trust will not be Compelled. And it's like, great.

Emily: Yeah. Everyone's still operating on this assumption that Mat's not responsible or something?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So we can't just turn our armies over to him. Like, Egwene's like, "We have to let Mat be in charge. God help us all." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, seriously. (laugh)

Emily: And I'm like, girl, this is about to save your bacon. Like –

Sally: I know. Mat's about to get in there and be like – (explosion noises)

Emily: If you were like, "Androl's about – has to be in charge."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "God help us all." That would make sense. But.

Sally: Yeah, this should have been your attitude when Elayne was the commander-in-chief. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) "God fucking help us all. This is our only option. Really?"

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: "Really?"

Sally: The 19-year-old mother – soon-to-be mother of two, who can't walk straight without Birgitte's help.

Emily: Speaking of nepo babies, literally.

Sally: Yeah, so you're right. We shitted it at the finish line, but we are here now, for better or for worse.

Emily: Ahhh.

Sally: Gareth Bryne is also accused of being a Darkfriend, but.

Emily: Um, I can't believe that the first thing out of my mouth wasn't about how Ituralde got literally kidnapped by wolves.

Sally: Oh, yeah. I can't believe we're not talking about that either. And he's honestly like, "Good."

Emily: 'Alright, goodbye.'

Sally: And the image is him being dragged away into the darkness.

Emily: And he's like – yeah, into a cave, and he's like, “Finally, I'm at peace.”

Sally: “Finally.” Very Moridin-esque..

Emily: You've heard of “Dances with Wolves,” but have you heard of Taken by Wolves?

Sally: Taken, colon, by wolves.

Emily: Like, this is the start of a very erotic something.

Sally: Mm. Oh, you're right.

Emily: Elyas and Ituralde in a cave.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I'm also so – like, Elyas, you're such a weird character.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mostly – like, 98 percent of the time, I don't like you.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But here – (laugh) here you were presented with a problem to solve.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Perrin was like, “I need you to communicate to everyone that the generals are compromised.”

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And Elyas was like, “I will send the wolves to kidnap him. Got it.” And Perrin was like, “What?”

Sally: (laugh) “Wait.”

Emily: And Elyas was like, “Why in the world would I speak to someone –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “When I could drag him into a cave –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “And lie him delicately on a bed of furs,” presumably? I don't know what happens to Ituralde after this. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, and he, like – Ituralde wakes up and, like, a fire is burning and the light is really dim. And you're like, genre change?

Emily: Yeah. You're like, um, hey.

Sally: It's got a little steamy.

Emily: Hey, Ituralde and Elyas, two characters who have never interacted before –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But I would fully believe.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: You know?

Sally: Ituralde's very sexy, so I could kind of get kidnapping him if I had the opportunity to be like, "Hey, wolves, will you bring me this hot man so I can –"

Emily: Elyas is like, "Got it. This is the best way –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "To enact my crush." And Perrin's like, "Hey."

Sally: "Hey."

Emily: "I need you –"

Sally: "No."

Emily: "I need you to lock it in a little bit."

Sally: (laugh) "I'm going to need you to lock it in a little bit."

Emily: "I – this is just the worst time possible –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "For you to be having feelings."

Sally: Yeah, for the first time in his life. Elyas saw Ituralde with his big ruby earring and was like, "Oh."

Emily: He was like, "I want that twink obliterated." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) "By me."

Emily: "By me."

Sally: Um, yeah, Ituralde's point of view is very funny 'cause, like – he's like, "Everything's going fine" military, military, military."

Emily: Ituralde starts by being like, "I'm having the worst dreams ever. I had a dream about cannibalizing my own family –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “And that's weird, but I guess I'll just get past that.” And I'm like, what – how much Nyquil are you taking, my man?

Sally: I know. You have to wonder if Graendal has it out for Ituralde in particular –

Emily: Specifically.

Sally: Because those are like – it's pretty fucking gnarly in there.

Emily: Yeah. Yeah. I guess we haven't really had points of view much from the other three –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, like, yeah. Are they all getting narsty –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Cannibal dreams or what?

Sally: Or is that Ituralde's, like, trauma –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Compounding?

Emily: Trauma compounding, and also Graendal has it out for him specifically –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because she's like, “My plans. My plots.”

Sally: “My plans!” Yeah. “My plans in Arad Doman.”

Emily: “This short king absolutely fucked them all up. In return, I'll give him scawwy dreams.”

Sally: (laugh) Very scawwy. It's vewwy scawwy in there.

Emily: I mean, that's minimizing the impact that disturbing dreams can have on one's day –

Sally: Yes. Of course

Emily: But. Um. Yeah, Ituralde's just like, “Hey, something ain't right. Something is not right –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Both with my mind generally and also, oh my gosh, I've set us up for a trap.” And we have, like, his point of view as he's, like – he's, like, thinking, “I need to give command to someone. Like, I am no longer reliable,” and he's, like, trying to do that, but the Compulsion isn't letting him.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: It's very spooky. And then the wolves arrive and literally –

Sally: Bonk him on the head, basically.

Emily: Yeah, like, um, Elyas leaps for Ituralde and shoves him off the top of the rocks. Iturlade, like, falls backward like Jesus, and is like, “Thank God. Responsibility be gone.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And then, um, “the wolves took his arms in gentle mouths and pulled him off into the darkness as he slowly drifted into unconsciousness.” I mean, yeah, it's kind of erotic. Their “gentle mouths.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Damn, dude.

Sally: You're like, what in the “Ice Planet Barbarians” is about to happen in here?

Emily: I don't know, but also, again, I don't remember Ituralde having another point of view. So for all I know, he spends the rest of the Last Battle in this cave. (laugh)

Sally: In this cave with some wolves and they're like, “We can't trust you, so.”

Emily: “So you just got to stay here.” Yeah –

Sally: “We're vibing.”

Emily: I am, like – they're not giving us enough information about what's happening to these guys who have been Compelled. Like, it was one thing for Agelmar to try and commit seppuku. I'm kind of surprised that, like, Gareth Bryne, Bashere –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Upon, um, being found out didn't also have sort of like a kill switch activated in their brains –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To try and eliminate themselves. That seems like the smart thing to do.

Sally: If you are putting someone under – under Compulsion. Yeah.

Emily: Compulsion. Yeah, just be like, “Okay, we'll just kill them. And that's also a bad thing because one of our great military minds, now, is gone.” Um, but no, they're just like, “Whew.” Well, we don't know what's going on with Bashere, but Gareth Bryne, upon being confronted – they're like, “Hey, you've been fucking it up big time, big boy.” And he's like, “No, it's all – it's all good in the hood, fam.” And they're like, “No, absolutely – we've got the receipts, pal. And you've been fucking it up.” And he's like, “Whew. I'm so glad someone noticed.”

Sally: (laugh) It was all a cry for help.

Emily: It was – it's been a cry for help this entire time. “I really thought I was losing it.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “So thank you. I will see myself out.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, where are you going, Gareth? No one – what's – you know.

Sally: Yeah. It's – it's a good point you raise about, like, what Graendal hopes to accomplish with this Compulsion. You would think it would be more of a, like, not only are they making bad decisions, but they're going to do whatever they need to to stay in power –

Emily: Mm. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sally: Including, like, try and attack people who try to oust them and also, like, if that doesn't work – yeah, gone.

Emily: Goodbye.

Sally: Like, a little switch in the brain.

Emily: Yeah. This is one of the dangers of, like, um, playing with a magic system that, again, doesn't have very many rules –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Set out for it. Um, and so Brandon Sanderson is free to just kind of, like, take that wherever he wants. Um, Compulsion as we have understood it prior to this just isn't that sophisticated. It's more of a hard rock than a –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Than a scalpel.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: Um, it's like, either you turn into a total, like, sort of zombie, the way Graendal does to all of her little –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Creatures, or, um, you are the same person under one very specific order.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: You know, so the idea that Graendal has gone in there and her one very specific order is just, like, “Fuck up the battle plans,” and not something bigger like, I don't know. I don't know what I'm saying. I'm just, like –

Sally: No. No, you're – you're playing with the text that we've been given, whereas I am like, “What if I did it better,” which is not very helpful. Um.

Emily: You could do it better.

Sally: No, I don't mean, like, me specifically, I just mean, like, this plot is – I also don't necessarily understand the, like, boundaries of Compulsion. And so that's part of the reason why it feels like a weird magic to pull in to such a critical plot in the final book.

Emily: Yeah, it feels like they were trying to do something with Graendal 'cause I –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Otherwise she was just going to be kind of, like, rocking out.

Sally: We could have just killed her back in the nuclear blast.

Emily: We could have just killed her and had Lanfear and Moghedien do the same thing. Like, where the –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Hey, quick: Forsaken count, where is everyone? Demandred: yelling.

Sally: (laugh) Local man yells at sky.

Emily: Local man yells at sky. Lanfear: stalking Perrin, currently not doing anything to contribute to the battle, as far as we know. Moridin: sword-fighting Rand. Graendal: uhhh.

Sally: Running around, giving Bashere and team bad dreams.

Emily: Yeah. We're doing lobotomies, but also I think she's in Thakan'dar –

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: So she's kind of, like, doing multiple things at once, which seems confusing. Again, Lanfear should have just been doing one of those things.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, Moghedien: (“I don't know” noise)

Sally: Oh, I forgot that bitch was alive.

Emily: Yeah, she is, so where is she, though? We don't know. That'll probably come back at some point. It would be so funny, though, if it didn't.

Sally: And Moghedien was just like, “You know what?”

Emily: If we – the last time we saw Moghedien, Moridin was like, “Go off, my child. Do evil.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And she was like, “Okay,” and we never saw her again. (laugh)

Sally: And we never saw her again. And she was like, “Time for a career change.”

Emily: “Goodbye forever.”

Sally: And she just left.

Emily: Um, and I guess Mazrim Taim counts now as a Forsaken.

Sally: Ugh. Barf.

Emily: Though I don't like to promote him.

Sally: Yeah. Um, yeah, you're right. Compulsion probably isn't as sophisticated as I wanted to be on these guys. But they're all just kind of chilling now. They're all just kind of, like, straight hanging.

Emily: Yeah. Like, later – spoiler alert – they'll be allowed to just, like, rejoin their battles, just not as, like, guys in charge.

Sally: What the fuck?

Emily: They can just, you know, like, be warm bodies on the field, which, I guess, okay. But it really seems like if a guy had been recently brainwashed, I wouldn't – I would be like, hey –

Sally: I'm going to put a gun in his hand.

Emily: Yeah, I'm not going to give you any sharp instruments right now.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Like, you can go tie bandages or something. Something that –

Sally: We need messengers.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: They keep getting killed by dragons.

Emily: We need messengers. Would you look at that?

Sally: The dragons keep killing them.

Emily: You got a pair of legs on you, Gareth Bryne. Get going.

Sally: Get to running, old man.

Emily: Go feed the horses. You know?

Sally: Yeah. Like – (laugh)

Emily: Do something –

Sally: That does not put other people in danger.

Emily: So wild. So wild.

Sally: I think Bashere would love to be in charge of the horses if he had to have a different job in the army.

Emily: Oh my god, yeah.

Sally: I think that would make him happy.

Emily: Bashere's like, "I'll be a stable boy." And his wife would be like, "Ooh, kind of sexy."

Sally: Yeah, it's kind of sexy.

Emily: Um, okay.

Sally: What's happening to us this episode?

Emily: I don't know.

Sally: Lots of general-themed erotica being presented at your feet.

Emily: Yeah. It takes, like, a while for Egwene to figure it out and confront Gareth Bryne. Ituralde gets taken by wolves. Um, and then it takes a little bit for everyone to gather – for the White Tower to gather and be like, "Oh, we need to go ask Mat to take care of us." Then we see Mat, um, utilizing satellite imagery, a.k.a. gateways –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So he can look at the battles, which it's like – it's very fun to see Mat in his rightful place, which is squatting over –

Sally: A map. Mm-hmm.

Emily: A map. Yeah. Bitch loves maps.

Sally: That bitch loves maps.

Emily: He loves a map. Um, he tells us that the Sharan channeler that he captured is now an insta-damane. It's a special type of damane where the woman has already been brainwashed and presumably horribly tortured.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So now she's just like, "Yeah, whatever, change of scenery."

Sally: Yeah. "Same old, same old."

Emily: "Same old, same old. Whatever. I don't – this is a lateral move for me."

Sally: Yeah. Pretty much of a bummer, though, that Mat didn't, like, stop this from happening, that she just immediately got leashed.

Emily: Yeah. Mat himself is like, "This is crazy. I'm supposed to be convincing Tuon to not use damane, but here I am with my own." And I'm like, you have power.

Sally: Yeah. You – quite a lot at this point.

Emily: You can choose to do or not do things. I don't know how to tell you that you could just not do that.

Sally: And Mat's like, "It's crazy. I simply –"

Emily: Mat's like, "It's insane. The narrative has a gun to my head."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And you're like, oh my god. Mat and Galgan are starting to get a little sexy with each other.

Sally: Yeah, Galgan's like, "The first time – hey, babe. Hey, babe."

Emily: "When I send someone to kill you –" (whisper) – "it'll be someone who's bad at it."

Sally: (whisper) "And you can kill them first."

Emily: And Mat's like, "... What?"

Sally: "Why did you say it like that?"

Emily: And Mat's like, "Why did you – what?"

Sally: (laugh) "What are you saying?"

Emily: "Why are you wearing lingerie?" (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) "Why did you change?"

Emily: "What the fuck?"

Sally: "Where did your clothes go?" (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: "Galgan, please."

Emily: "Galgan, please."

Sally: "We're in public."

Emily: In the background, Tuon is having Min read the omens around seemingly random people.

Sally: Tuon –

Emily: Just sort of, like, gathering passersby.

Sally: She's like a six-year-old who got a new toy and is like, "Okay."

Emily: And Min's like, "Here's the omen and here's what happens. Here's what happens." Um, and eventually they get someone who has, like, an omen that Tuon interprets as they're going to join a faction against her or something. And she's like, "Kill them. Put them on the front lines." And Min's like, "No, you can't kill people. You can't use me like that." So it's fun to watch Min – to watch anyone, really –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Stand up to Tuon.

Sally: Seriously.

Emily: Again, as we've been talking about, Min has been granted seemingly limitless power –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In this, um, sort of relationship. So she can be like, "Bitch, no." And Tuon has to be like, "Alright."

Sally: Tuon threatens to torture her. She's like, "I can't –" Min's like, "I won't read omens for you if you're just going to use it like that." And Tuon's like, "I can make you talk."

Emily: And Min's like, "Try it, bitch."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And you're like, ooh.

Sally: You're like, okay, Min, I – I kind of get it.

Emily: Min, that was kind of cute.

Sally: I kind of get it.

Emily: I kind of – that was kind of cute of you.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, Min is functionally – like, there's this whole, um, story in Roman history that, like, every time the emperor did a little parade, there'd be a little slave guy standing next to him being like, "Remember, you're human."

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Just to be like, "Don't get too full of yourself."

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Um. "Don't – you know, don't do hubris. Don't think that you're a god." And so that's Min's sort of function here. And it's really funny to see her use and abuse it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just be like, “No.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Hey.”

Sally: “Bitch.”

Emily: “No.”

Sally: “Fuck you.”

Emily: Yeah. I love it for her.

Sally: Min's the only person we've seen get even close to being a court jester in this –

Emily: Yes. Which is insane.

Sally: Ability to, like – yeah.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Push on your monarch.

Emily: Wow. Min of all people. The least funny person in this – (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) She's got the least jingle jangle out of all of them.

Emily: I know, of all of them. Absolutely no jingle jangle to be had.

Sally: But here she stands: jingling, jangling.

Emily: Jingling and jangling. Um, then Mat sets together this sort of Zoom call with –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Uh, Egwene and the Hall of the Tower to –

Sally: “Egwene, you're muted.”

Emily: “Egwene – nope, you're muted. Nope. Oh, you're lagging.”

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: “Okay. Everyone got that?” Um, and eventually they pull Elayne in, also, to the Zoom meeting. Um, and we find out that Elayne's technically won this big battle over at, uh, Cairhien at staggering losses. I think two-thirds of her forces have been obliterated, which is very bad.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, actually, it might not be two-thirds of hers; it might be two-thirds of Lan's. Both of them have absolutely beefed it. Um, but, you know, the important people are still alive – RIP Gallenne –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Gallenne. However you say his name. Um, and Mat is like, “Okay, what I think is that we should all gather into one central location. That will give us, like, a week to sort of regroup while everyone catches up with us.” Um, Mat has, like, reasoning behind it. Like, everyone's like, “We don't just want to get, like, pinned down into one spot.” You know, that seems like a great plan to get flanked and, um, just put in a kill box, essentially.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Mat's like, “Well, you know, this is no – we're –” I don't remember if he says this now or later, but he's like, “Essentially, we are not – we are just making time for Rand.”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like, this is a delaying tactic, so it's not about sort of the endgame here.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's also just like, “This is – we need to get them to attack us where we want them to attack us.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “So it has to be appealing to them in some way.”

Sally: Yeah. Choose our ground at least a little bit.

Emily: Choose our ground at least a little bit. And, wouldn't you know it, he chooses the Fields of Merrilor and everyone's like, “That's so crazy. That's where we started.” And I'm like, yeah, it's almost like this whole plot has been for nothing. (laugh) Crazy how that works out. (singing) Who can say?

Sally: I just like – Brandon, you know what you could have been doing with this 500, 400 odd pages?

Emily: Insane things. Just so many things.

Sally: We could have done so many fun things. We could have known where Faile is. (laugh)

Emily: Faile. Still haven't seen hide nor hair of her.

Sally: We could have done all sorts of fun things with Rand and the Bore and ..

Emily: And also, like, negotiating properly.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: This all – all of this could have been politics and I would have liked it more.

Sally: Same.

Emily: Isn't that crazy? Um, our last little point of view in this section is Galad. Uh, his boy toy Trom has died. So.

Sally: Don't you hate when that happens?

Emily: Don't you fucking hate when that happens? Um, and Galad is, like, tired. He's like, "We have been fighting. It is real bad." He goes and regroups with all the sort of important people who are here: Elayne and Tam and –

Sally: Talmanes.

Emily: Talmanes and everyone. They're all talking about, like, how we need to make a – we need to do a propaganda and make this out to be a victory. And Galad's like, "Oh, it absolutely was not."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And they're like, "Well, got to keep up morale." Um, Elayne also is like, "Galad, why aren't you taking – why aren't you doping like the rest of us?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Getting your energy washed away by the Asha'man?" And Galad's like, "Uh, 'cause I'm commanding people and I don't want to lose sight of the fact that they're tired."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which I'm like, wow, Galad, sometimes you are – how are you the most empathetic person on the page right now?

Sally: I know. Absolutely nuts.

Emily: Um, and we just end ominously with them being like, "Oh, it's going to be so much worse at the Fields of Merrilor." End. In the very next chapter, we will get a Faile point of view.

Sally: Oh, that's good.

Emily: So we'll finally find out what is going on with her, which is, um, not much, you know? Gonna be Perrin, Aviendha, Faile, Rand. That's it. Those are the four. We only have two more sections –

Sally: Wow.

Emily: Two more episodes before we get into the Last Battle proper, chapter titled "The Last Battle."

Sally: Wow.

Emily: So that's crazy.

Sally: That is crazy.

Emily: Um, I believe next week, if I've got my math correct – uh, next week will be a week off. We are going to be traveling.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, um, sowwy.

Sally: Sowwy.

Emily: Sowwy. We'll be traveling for a week, but we'll be back as usual the following Monday to release more content –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: More of that sweet, sweet content. Um, and then I think we don't have too many breaks, more breaks planned for.

Sally: Oh, I don't think so. I think we'll probably get it done pretty soon, which is kind of sad in a way to think about it.

Emily: Kind of sad. Kind of crazy.

Sally: I'm trying to find a way to grieve the ending of this project in advance so that I feel, um, less devastated about it. I'm certainly going to miss you guys, the listeners. I'm going to try and find a way to stay in contact with all of you. Tybalt's committing crimes as I'm trying to have this heartfelt sentiment to my beloved friends.

Emily: Tybalt's been committing crimes all day.

Sally: It's – that will be our fucking sign-off. Just wait a second.

Emily: Oh, okay. (laugh)

Sally: I – I was trying to think of a sign-off and then I was like, “Oh, right, World War III has been happening in our house all day.”

Emily: (unintelligible)

Sally: Um, anyway. We'll find a way to stay in touch with you guys. I know this is way preemptive, but I was – preemptive, but I was thinking about it today.

Emily: Yeah, we like you guys a lot. So thanks for all the support over the years.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, we have a bunch of art that you guys have made us hanging on our walls and it's fun to look at every day and just remember all this.

Emily: The good times.

Sally: All the shenanigans, yeah.

Emily: Um, thanks for now to Glynn MacKenzie for our theme song, to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

Sally: Yeah. Again, you guys are the best.

Emily: Tell us that's – good, good sign-off.

Sally: Um, okay, we – for the uninitiated, if you just happen to pick up this podcast and listen – have two cats: Tybalt, who is a bastard, and Ed, who is in better health now but an older cat and with a chronic illness. And, uh, they fight sometimes the way that cats do. It's mostly, like, playing. Sometimes Tybalt gets a little aggressive and we have to be like, okay, Ed doesn't actually want to play with you.

Emily: Sometimes Ed will fully just –

Sally: Yeah, that's true.

Emily: Come and provoke Tybalt. So.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Ed is an instigator sometimes. And it's –

Emily: Mostly it's play.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, that's the point I'm – yeah, mostly it's play and you're like, okay, they both seem to get enrichment out of this and, like, the wrestling and the physical activity. Today, we hear this god-awful yowling in the living room, so we both come out here and Tybalt has – I watch him throw Ed to the floor. Ed, like, scrambles up, yowling, and Tybalt leaps, like, a fully – a foot onto Ed's back and Ed is just, like – like, making the most upsetting noise.

Emily: It was really upsetting.

Sally: And I had to, like, pull Tybalt off of him and we're like, okay, the violence is not acceptable. So Tybalt is now in his disciplinary pirate shirt, except a few hours later, he was doing it again and I look over and Ed's trying to jump onto the thing that we have our litter box in in order to –

Emily: Escape.

Sally: In order to get to safety and Tybalt just, like, basically grabs him out of midair and throws him onto the ground. I don't know what's happening, if they, like, had some type of fight, but Tybalt is really, like, Cain and Abel.

Emily: Where's the beef, guys?

Sally: In this household.

Emily: Is something in your little kitty brains –? He's just staring at us.

Sally: I know.

Emily: In his stupid pirate shirt.

Sally: He's like, "I didn't do anything wrong."

Emily: He's like, "I've never done anything wrong in my life."

Sally: "I'm the victim."

Emily: Oh my God, Tybalt.

Sally: So that is our sign-off. That is – you guys are probably so sick of hearing about these stupid cats, but –

Emily: The Last Battle is happening in our house.

Sally: Yeah, exactly. The Dark One, Tybalt, is fighting the Light, Ed, in the middle of our home.

Emily: (laugh) Evil. Okay, everyone. Have a good week.

Sally: Bye!