

Episode 298: The Flavor-Blasted Lands
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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: Whatever. We don't –

Emily: Feral beast.

Sally: This doesn't need to be the Sally's Sad Show. This can be – (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: This can be Everybody Hates Rand.

Emily: Everybody hates Rand in this household, and everybody's sad in this household because of – we had a bad Wednesday. And because this section starts with an Olver point of view, of all things.

Sally: Like – of all – I – of all things.

Emily: Of all the insults against mankind, to my intelligence –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We have to start with an Olver point of view, written by a man who can barely write adult points of view, let alone children points of view.

Sally: Olver just reads like Mat.

Emily: Yeah. But, like –

Sally: Brandon Sanderson-Mat.

Emily: Yeah. But, like, more annoying somehow. Even more annoying. Um. Sorry, this – yeah, podcast. (laugh) This is podcast. I'm Emily Juchau. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) And I'm Sally Goodger. Sometimes I wish we had a soundboard, so whenever I give a – thumbs-up to the computer –

Emily: Oh, like, cheering noises or something?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Toronto! Um, the listeners are probably like, “You just had a week off. Why can't you guys get it together?”

Sally: I was so revitalized and delighted by our vacation. We went to the Redwoods and it was so beautiful. And the trees were so big. And we saw 11 banana slugs.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And then we came back to the capitalist meat grinder –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And all the joy was squeezed out of me –

Emily: In, like, four days.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That's all it took.

Sally: That's all it takes.

Emily: That's all it takes. Um, yeah. Olver, huh? Too bad.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: That's the end of my analysis. Yeah, we don't learn anything from Olver. It's just a point of view with the, um, Faile group in the Blight, which, uh, I don't know, we just – why we don't just stick with Faile.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, except that in the Brandon Sanderson school of writing climactic sequences, you have to jump points of view a lot, um, and see a lot of different people, uh, weighing in on things. But, like, Olver doesn't have anything to offer either intellectually or through the lens of a child who is more innocent –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Than the other people. Like, he's not more horrified or traumatized by the horrific deaths that he's seeing, including – like, a guy gets eaten by a tree like two feet away from him. And Olver's just like, “Well, sucks to suck, I guess.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's like, “Well, that – that was gnarly.”

Sally: Yeah, that's bleak. Um.

Emily: That's bleak. Yeah.

Sally: And, like, I know Olver is, like, a war orphan and he's seen some shit. But, yeah, um, it feels very much like, um, up until this point, Olver has never had a point of view that I can recall. Um.

Emily: I don't think so, no.

Sally: Because why would he? He's not – he's like a, not tertiary, but one level below that character, at best.

Emily: Quadrutary. I don't fucking know.

Sally: Quadrutary character. Why would he have a point of view when we have so many other people who can provide this information, including, like – I know we've referenced before, the, like, point of view hierarchy that made Wheel of Time, early Wheel of Time, such – so much more narratively clean. But it's like, if we were abiding by that and Faile would just continue to be our primary narrator, this would all be so much nicer. Anyway, it feels to me like the only reason to do this is to remind us that Olver is here and apparently, to the narrative, quite important so that when he ultimately blows the Horn of Valere, we remember that Olver exists and we are supposed to care about him.

Emily: Yeah, it doesn't – it's not like a – yeah. Olver is constantly verging on obsolescence.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In terms of importance in the narrative. So giving him a point of view is just a very inelegant way of being like, “Hey, Olver is going to have more points of view.”

Sally: And, to your point, like, it would be interesting in a different context for us to have the point of view of a child. I believe Olver is 10? Somewhere between 10 and 12 at this point in time, I think?

Emily: Yeah, it's unclear because the writers don't know how to write –

Sally: Right.

Emily: Children.

Sally: Children. Um, but, like, that is an interesting perspective to throw into this. In many ways, children are more resilient than adults. They're kind of meant to be pliable in order to get through their life, both physically and psychologically as they develop. So in some ways, it's sort of interesting to – for Oliver to be in this situation and not necessarily responding. But also, he is a child, so it would be entirely appropriate for him to be incredibly upset and traumatized by the things that he's seeing. And, in fact, he should be because there's only so many things that anyone's psyche can bear, most of all, a 10-year-old's. So it's just like – again, he just reads like a little Mat, who's, like, full of bravado and is incredibly racist against the Aiel. Mat's not racist against the Aiel, but Oliver is incredibly racist against the Aiel.

Emily: Yeah, Oliver's two personality traits –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Are “racist against the Aiel” and “likes Mat.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And we're like, oh, yeah, he's such a well-rounded character.

Sally: Yeah. So I won't, um, belabor the point as I tend to, but real stinker point of view.

Emily: Yeah. The only thing we find out of any – um, that's worth commenting on is that Oliver just found out, like, two days ago that Noal's dead. (laugh)

Sally: Oh, I know. RIP.

Emily: And I'm just like, no one thought to sit him down and give him that news earlier?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like –

Sally: Like, “Hey, bud, your grandpa died.”

Emily: Yeah. “Your sort of adopted grandpa –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Your kind of primary caretaker for the last few books –” No, everyone –

Sally: (sing-song) Beefed it.

Emily: Was just like, no. I guess because he's being caretaken by Faile of all people, who's not exactly the maternal type, so.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Olver, at one point, tries to, like, smile at her and endear himself to her.

Emily: And she's like, "Ew."

Sally: She's like, "Ugh. Ugh, what is that?" (laugh) "What are you doing with your face?"

Emily: (laugh) Faile is literally that vine that's like, "A child."

Sally: "A child."

Emily: Ugh.

Sally: Which is pretty funny of her, to be honest.

Emily: I know. Iconic of Faile. Um, yeah, we just get an Olver point of view of them traveling through the Blight, again, making their way toward this sort of – what they call the Blasted Lands. Cheeto-blasted.

Sally: (laugh) Flavor-blasted goldfish.

Emily: Yeah, flavor-blasted lands. Um, but they're not – they're – they're getting closer, but they're not there yet. Uh, Faile is also carrying the Horn of Valere in its box. No one else knows supposedly that's the Horn of Valere. Not – like, not on her person, but, like, on the back of her horse to prevent further – to prevent anyone from thieving it, I guess, from the supply wagon. Um, we then switch to a Cadsuane point of view. So just, you know, taking the L's one after another. This is just Cadsuane conferencing with Aviendha and a few of the Wise Ones about Graendal. We have already, as readers, extrapolated – I mean, we already know that –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: This ugly-ass lady running around the battlefield is Graendal, but Cadsuane and the others are like, "Yeah, it's probably Graendal based off how she kidnapped –" What's her name? Sarene?

Sally: The hot lady.

Emily: The only hot lady in the world, I guess. They've also figured out that the Forsaken or at least Graendal, but we know it's the other Forsaken as well, are using the Dark One's essence, the True Power. Um, apparently, he didn't use it very much in the War of Power, when Lews Therin was kicking, which is interesting. And they make a sort of loose battle plan to confront Graendal, which is just: if she shows up, we fight her.

Sally: Revolutionary.

Emily: I know. That's it. That's it. Of course, this is coming from the people who have one battle plan, and that is: hold position. So we don't – (laugh) we're not operating with the smartest –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, with the – the best of the bunch here.

Sally: Um, something that's frustrating to me as a first-time reader, and I understand that my reading experience has been pretty, um –

Emily: Wild.

Sally: Wild, just because I'm reading the books pretty long – the final half of the series pretty far apart. But I feel like it's book 14 and I still don't totally understand what the difference is between the One Power and the True Power, except that one of them is bad.

Emily: Yeah. Um, I guess I don't either. I guess I don't –

Sally: (laugh) Okay.

Emily: It's the Dark One's power, which implies that the other power is the Creator's power.

Sally: That – I mean, and that makes sense. The – working off of the dichotomy of the world, the good and the evil, we've got the bad guy's power and the good guy's power.

Emily: The only – like, I know that if you use the True Power for too long, you start getting the little dots in your eyes, but it's unclear if there's any other side effects.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Like, does it drive you mad?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is that why Moridin's crazy? Or is it just kind of that he was unhinged to begin with?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, we don't see anyone else using the True Power besides the Forsaken, so we don't know. Um, otherwise, the only tangible difference is that, unlike the One Power, it's not gender-divided.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: So.

Sally: That's right. The Dark One is a nonbinary –

Emily: Yeah, nonbinary monarch, I guess. Um. Which does indicate, since we're working in this particular text, that it's evil because it's not divided by gender.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Anything that doesn't distinguish between gender must be evil, uh, which is disheartening –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: But that's the text. Um, unfortunately, the, like, True Power, One Power thing, is going to be important –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Later in this series, but I don't know that we really have any other information other than that. It's a different source of power. The Dark One has it. People wanted it. It's sort of representative of, like – you know, Lanfear as a mad scientist was going after the True Power, and that's what caused the bad things to happen. Very much Eve eating the apple, but ...

Sally: Honestly, slay.

Emily: Honestly, slay, yeah. I don't get it. I don't get it either.

Sally: Um, okay, that's helpful to know that it's not just sort of my own odd reading experience and sort of lack of memory, as you guys are well-aware. Um. And I guess, in the most generous interpretation, we don't really need to know the difference. Wheel of Time is operating in a big enough fantasy canon that we can hear – one of the powers comes from the evil place, and therefore we associate bad things with it. It's like the – the One Ring, you know?

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Don't touch – don't touch it. Even though it's very powerful, it'll do bad things to you. So I guess it doesn't really matter. In the most generous interpretation. It's just one of the many things that is frustrating to me about a Memory of Light, as I'm like, “Okay?”

Emily: Yeah, what? Wait a second.

Sally: And Rand keeps using it. And I'm like, what?

Emily: Hey, no, don't do that.

Sally: Why are you doing that? And why does it matter? Is it better? Is it sparklier?

Emily: Yeah, like, does it turn you evil? I don't know.

Sally: Is it going to –?

Emily: I think they say a couple of times it's more addictive –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: But sort of the addictive power of the One Power, uh, became a lot less relevant after, like, book three.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: After Rand stopped trying to stop himself from channeling. Everyone seems to, like, have it on lock. We don't see anyone succumbing to One Power addiction, whatever that's supposed to look like.

Sally: To the Itches. (laugh)

Emily: The Itches, yeah. Read our coverage of Jade City. Or listen to our coverage over on We Don't Watch Outlander. Um. Yeah, so consequences of using it: a little unclear. I think we've had, like, one Moridin point of view where he actually uses it and it doesn't seem like it's different in terms of using weaves and stuff.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But what do I know? Um. Yeah, disappointing that we're spending time on Olver when there's world-building stuff still.

Sally: I guess I could go on the Wheel of Time wiki, but I'm tired of having to do that.

Emily: Yeah, you should – it should be clear.

Sally: Anyway, yeah, Cadsuane and the ladies are like, “Way to go, brain trust. We've solved it.”

Emily: Yeah. Other than that, the only thing is that Aviendha is traumatized by survivor's guilt slash sort of abandoning her little troop to die while she was holding the link. And it's like, yeah. Cadsuane's like, “I mean, yeah, don't do it again.”

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, Cadsuane's like, “I will agree with you. That was kind of a narsty one, but –”

Emily: “That was kind of fucked up, dude.”

Sally: “You had no way of knowing what was going on because –”

Emily: But, like, maybe we should have had a policy in place about how to handle –

Sally: Don't abandon your circle.

Emily: Linked groups, yeah.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, we then switch back to Faile as she is waiting in her tent in the dead of the night for someone to come steal the Horn of Valere.

Sally: You guys, this is the stupidest – I know we say this a lot, but this is the stupidest thing a character has done in the Wheel of Time. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, it's quite wild. She's like, "I'm convinced someone is going to steal the Horn of Valere because a little while ago, I, like, came back to my tent and the – it had clearly been messed with."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "You know, it had moved position. So that's when I started carrying it around on my horse. And now I've just, like – I'm going to set up a trap. And the trap is that I'll wait for someone to come try and steal it. And then I'll stab them by myself. No backup."

Sally: "But also, the Horn isn't even there. I went and hid it under some rocks."

Emily: "Under a rock. I went and hid it under some rocks." And you're like, Faile. Maybe taking it out of the box was a good idea in case someone was bright enough to just grab it and run, you know?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But why don't you have it on your person?

Sally: Why not just, like, strap it on like a little fanny pack, you know?

Emily: Yeah. If you're the only one you can trust, girlie, that's where it should be. Strapped to your thigh.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Under the skirts. It's –

Sally: Imagine – (laugh) I know the Horn of Valere is quite small, but sometimes –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I imagine it like a little tuba. (laugh) So she's walking around –

Emily: (laugh) She's got it – it's like a shield on her back.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: That would be incredibly funny.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. No, she doesn't do that. And it's –

Sally: It's just, like, what in the world? I just – talk about, once again, seeing through the blueprint: We needed to get the Horn of Valere out of Faile's hands –

Emily: Briefly.

Sally: Briefly, and so we make her do the stupidest thing you've ever heard of. Because you know what's a great way to protect valuable items? Put them under rocks in the Blight.

Emily: Yeah, Faile's waiting there for hours, apparently. And then hears, like, a scream off in the distance of where she hid the Horn and, like, runs out there and finds Vanin and – what's his name?

Sally: Harnan.

Emily: Harnan. Uh, the two members of the Band of the Red Hand – they're – like, a monster attacked them as they were retrieving the Horn. Faile's like, "They're stealing the Horn of Valere!" Vanin, like, looks down at what he's holding and immediately drops it, which does not really indicate guilt.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's kind of like, "What? That's what this is?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeet.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Again –

Emily: Once again, the Horn of Valere has been yeeted, and Faile, you know, once again, has it, but Faile is like, "Clearly they're the bad guys. They're the evil ones because they're trying to steal the Horn." And it's like, no, there's a pretty simple explanation. They thought you were carrying fancy tobacco. They're soldiers. They want fancy tobacco.

Sally: Yeah. Also, like there's a monster around. Maybe they were –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I don't know. There's, like, literally any number of explanations. But once again, in this series, we do not – in this book, in particular, we do not think it might be helpful to, like, talk to people and question them.

Emily: Yeah, she's like – they just run off, Vanin and Harnan. Like, the monsters keep coming. It's – everyone's struggling to kill them. And Vanin and Harnan just, like, take off into the night, sort of on the assumption that now they're presumed guilty, so they can't stay. Um, and Faile and the rest of the camp just are like, “We're going to keep getting attacked by these monsters, so we have to keep marching.” So we're going in opposite directions, I guess. Um, and yeah, this is a very, like, convoluted setup. You would think, like, okay, well, why didn't we just have Vanin and Harnan try to steal the chest while Faile was in the tent, like she was planning? Well, we had to get the monster involved so that Vanin and Harnan would run away without explaining what's going on, so that Faile would think she's in the clear in terms of potential thieves of the Horn of Valere. And it's just like, guys, this is so silly and convoluted for what is already a very silly and convoluted plot. Um. And, yeah, it's bad.

Sally: It's just dumb. Now Faile has the Horn in her hands.

Emily: And everyone knows she has the Horn, and they're still on their way to the fucking Blasted Lands. And it's like, guys – and now they've lost – you know, people are dying left and right to the monsters.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And now Harnan and Vanin have also taken off, whether or not they are innocent or guilty of trying to steal the Horn. And it's just like, we know, because we've seen it, that Faile is an intelligent character.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: She's also had her share of incredibly stupid moves. But, to the narrative's credit, those were mostly in the beginning of her character introduction, like, pre-Two Rivers –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, rescue era. Um, but she's been pretty, like, clever and savvy after that. So it's weird, of course. That's one – that's how it – it contributes to this seeing through the blueprint effect that Faile is acting so transparently stupid –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: For a character that we've been told repeatedly is very smart.

Sally: Yeah. And should be savvy enough, at least, to, like, want to question these people.

Emily: Yeah. Weird. Bad. Weird. Anyway, we turn the page from that and get a map. Our – the last map. The last map of the Wheel of Time series.

Sally: Oh, wowza.

Emily: Um, yeah, I won't, like, describe the map to you because that would be wild, and also –

Sally: I will. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) And also Mat spends, like, half the text describing it.

Sally: It's so painful.

Emily: So it's sort of like, why do we have both of these?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and it's not going to be terribly relevant to us because as we're talking about the Last Battle, we're not going to linger too much on the logistical things that are happening in the background. Um, but we get this map and then we get a Nynaeve point of view in the cave. She tells us it's been, like, half hour max – less than an hour, excuse me, and that it's been, like, 15 minutes since Rand touched the darkness and that apparently he and Mordred are just now sort of – like, you know, that, um, like, “Duel of the Fates”-type image –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: That's, like, with all the Star Wars prequels with both of them with the lightsabers over their heads. It's very like that.

Sally: Freeze frame.

Emily: Freeze frame. And Nynaeve's like, “So this is wild.” There's also this wind that's trying to, like, suck them into the darkness. And Nynaeve's like, “I don't want to just stand here, clinging to a stalactite. That's lame.” So she tries moving around, clinging to other stalactites. And you're like, okay. But through this, she finds, wouldn't you know it: Alanna – Rand's rapist; Rand's magic rapist – is here. Remember, she went missing at the end of last book or the book before that. I can't remember. Um, and it seems that she's been stabbed and is, like, on the timeline of death. Nynaeve's like, “Oh, no, this is so bad because once she dies, Rand will go into, like, a killing rage, the Warder killing rage,” that we all know and remember. Um, “And this is clearly a clever trap set by Moridin. He must have just, like, stabbed her right when we came in,” which is so wild. Um. Like, why didn't he kill her before they came in?

Sally: Right.

Emily: Instead, we've given her a painful and, uh, long-lasting gut wound. Nynaeve's like, “This is bad because I can't channel to heal her because Rand has all the power in our – our link.” Once again, we're running into this problem. So we're sort of, like, reversing Nynaeve's character arc here from the beginning of this series, when she refused to do any healing with magic and instead was reliant on her herbs and whatnot. Um, now we've come full circle, I guess. You'd think if you were Alanna, you would, like, have released the bond. I don't know if you have to

channel to do that, though, and if she's shielded or something, but, like, any decent person would do that. Granted, Alanna is not a decent person, but it is insane that she wouldn't.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: The fate of the world literally –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Rests on it, perhaps. Um, so I'm going to assume for now that she has to be able to channel to do that. Who knows? I don't even know if she's conscious. Oh, no, she blinks at Nynaeve.

Sally: This is the ... mm.

Emily: (laugh) Go off, king.

Sally: It just – the whole – Alanna is such a dumb character, and the plot of her bonding Rand against his will is so frustrating for so many reasons. For it – but for it to just culminate in the fact that her death is a threat to Rand at his most pivotal moment is, like – I don't even have the words to articulate how frustrating that is to me.

Emily: Yeah, Alanna has entered the narrative and then proceeded to do nothing but fuck Rand for the next six to eight books.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, everything she has done has been net negative for Rand –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: For the world, for everyone.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So it's like, hey, what? And again, Alanna's never had any sort of consequences of those actions. I guess these are her consequences: that she's now dying like an animal in a cave –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Where wind is trying to suck her into a vortex of doom or whatever.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, like, that's not a consequence dealt out by other characters or even really by the narrative. It's the – very patently the authors trying to be like, “See, Alanna was serving a purpose all along, and it's so that she could be used against Rand.” And it's like, okay, well, then

Alanna has no agency in this instance. And the one time she exercised any agency, it was to set up this terrible situation.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So it's, yet again, an instance of just, like, we have a woman character who's acting the way no rational human being would do it –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Just to serve the authors' purposes of proving that women aren't smart.

Sally: Mm-hmm. They're only a danger to you.

Emily: Yeah. And they're selfish and they can't do anything right. Unless they're Nynaeve, Egwene and Elayne, I guess.

Sally: I guess.

Emily: Who are –

Sally: According to the authors.

Emily: Yeah, according to the authors. Anyway, boo. This gives, at least, Nynaeve something to do, which is try and sew up Alanna's gut wound. But that's not much. It's disappointing that Nynaeve, one of the most powerful channelers in the world, doesn't get to do something besides this.

Sally: Yeah, I feel like there's so much more Nynaeve could be doing.

Emily: Yeah, it's meant to be this sort of, like, full circle moment on her character arc and her narrative. Um, but it feels – but because the whole Alana plot is so useless and mean-spirited –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In a sort of authors-at-readers way, um, it doesn't feel good.

Sally: Yeah, it'd be different if she had to, like, sew up Moiraine, you know, based off their –

Emily: Yeah, or Rand himself.

Sally: Yeah. Oh, yeah, there you go.

Emily: So, you know, was trying to keep Rand from bleeding out while – Rand's still sweating while he's locked in this position.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Presumably, he's still bleeding.

Sally: Yeah, out of his unhealable wounds.

Emily: Yeah, that would be one thing. But saving Alanna is not something we want, even. Like, can you imagine if Alanna lives? I'd be like, ugh.

Sally: Nynaeve should keep Alanna alive throughout the duration of the Last Battle and then drag her out of the cave and execute her. (laugh)

Emily: Just two to the head. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Goodbye.

Sally: You – that was enough out of you, actually. You did plenty.

Emily: Uh, we then switch to Mat, tragically. Mat describes the landscape of the Fields of Merrilor for us. He is running around, trying to evade the Deathwatch Guards, his bodyguards essentially, who want him to come back with them and do responsible stuff. He runs into Egwene and is walking with her for a little while. She assumes that he's, like, running away permanently and is like, “Well, this is bad timing, but I'm down to clown at literally any time –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “To get you out of her clutches.” And I'm like, wow, Egwene, you're the only person I respect in this narrative.

Sally: She's like, “I'll kill her myself.”

Emily: She's like, “I'll kill her myself.”

Sally: And that –

Emily: “And this is fine. And I'll protect you.” And Mat's like, “What? Hello?”

Sally: “I think you've misunderstood.”

Emily: “I think you've misunderstood.”

Sally: “I'm running away from a job, not my wife.” And Egg is like, “Okay, lame. But.”

Emily: Yeah, Egg's like, “Have you considered running away from your wife, though?”

Sally: “She's an evil, heinous woman.”

Emily: “She’s terrible.” Uh, we find out that Mat knows that the Horn of Valere is missing. Everyone knows the Horn of Valere is missing. They tried to, like – you know, Faile went missing, didn't show up, I guess, on schedule. So they went and tried to figure out where they Traveled to and don't know. And Mat's like, “Hey, you literally had one job.”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And I wish Egwene was like, “Hey, you literally had one job. Your horn, buddy.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I mean, granted, we did not have to go through this convoluted of a plan to get it to you. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You should have just rolled up and got it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: This is insane. Um, we also know Perrin hasn't showed up yet. So both he and Faile are MIA, which is kind of fun. You know, miles apart, together at heart. (laugh)

Sally: Mm-hmm. Exactly.

Emily: Um. Oh, the one other thing that happens is that, um, Mat sees that – Grady has been doing some Traveling – some tasks for Mat, including, um, he sent some members of the Band and has now, um, showed up with 500 people in worn clothing. Grady says, “You sent these to a village in the – these are from a village in the south.” These are the people from Hinderstap. Mat has decided to use their zombie powers in the Last Battle. This will be played as, like, a really fun reveal and so cool, but I hated the entire Hinderstap subplot –

Sally: Yeah. It was –

Emily: Sort of the Alanna of the Last Battle.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Using Alanna as a – (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: As a substitute word for “fuck-up.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, anyway. Mat's like, "Nobody panic about it." Mat also tells us that his goal is not just to play a delaying game for Rand, but he's like, "Everyone keeps saying we just have to hold out until Rand is victorious, but even if Rand, um, does win, there's still these huge armies to contend with. You know, It won't be much of a win for humanity if the Forsaken are still running around and a giant army of Trollocs is just rampaging across the countryside."

Sally: Yeah. And it's – I'm glad Mat finally brings up this point that, like, the Trollocs are not going to drop dead.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Once the Dark One is –

Emily: This is not a Phantom Menace situation.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We have to be a little bit logical about this.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Egg's like, "Oh, God, I guess you're right."

Sally: Egg's like, "Well, how do we do that?" And Mat's like, "Don't worry about it. I've got it."

Emily: And Mat's like, "Don't worry about it." Mat, in his head, is like – Mat says, "I have to change it all." Mat also, without sort of telling us that this is his train of thought, is, like, realizing, "There's no possible way for me to hide my battle plans from the Forsaken and enemy channelers. Like, unless I'm constantly changing the battle plan – unless I'm literally the only one who knows what's going on."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is, of course, insane. It makes for kind of, like, a fun dynamic if Mat is controlling things without letting people understand what's going on.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: I vibe with it. But he's like, "Someone needs to let Elayne know that I'm going to change the whole battle plan," and everyone's like, "What?" And I'm like, hell yeah. Get fucked.

Sally: Good for him.

Emily: Get one over on Elayne.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She sucks.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But Mat also is like – (sniffs) “They're coming.” (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And Egwene's like, “Hey?”

Sally: She's like, “No, they're not.”

Emily: She's like, “Hey, Perrin’s the one with wolf powers –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Can you not do this odd shit?” And Mat's like, “No, I know. My spidey senses are tingling.” And wouldn’t you know it? He's right.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They have marched through the night to get here. I don't know why anyone assumed they wouldn't march through the night.

Sally: They wouldn’t – yeah.

Emily: Um, so this is it, everyone. The Last Battle is kicking off. And the last point of view we get is Perrin, as he finally manages to escape Tel’aran’rhiod by the power of will and just doing it ‘cause it's convenient.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: You know, it's not like he has some big epiphany or does anything. He's just like, “I gotta,” and then he does. And he wakes up, hilariously, in what seems to be the middle of the battlefield.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So everyone's just like, “What?”

Sally: “Hello?”

Emily: “Hey – hey –” Luckily, Master Luhhan is there –

Sally: Yeah. Of all people.

Emily: Randomly. Is like, “Hey, I've got you, boy.” And, I hope, carries him bridal-style away.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who's to say, though?

Sally: It would be a lot funnier if it was Master Luhhan's huge wife.

Emily: Oh, my God. Mistress Luhhan.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The equally hot and sexy blacksmith's wife.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The equally big woman.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I love her.

Sally: I love my tall wife.

Emily: I love my tall wife. Yeah. I wish she was carrying Perrin –

Sally: That would be so funny.

Emily: A very big man.

Sally: Yeah. If she was just like –

Emily: Away from the battlefield.

Sally: Scoop.

Emily: "Here he is." Um, yeah. So we have all the little, um – all the plates are now spinning for the Last Battle.

Sally: (sing-song circus music) Do do do do do do do do.

Emily: (same sing-song circus music) Chapter 37, "The Last Battle –"

Sally: Hee.

Emily: Is, um, slightly less than 200 pages, um, which is the bulk of the rest of the book.

Sally: I can't believe how much of this book we have read that has not been the Last Battle.

Emily: Yeah. Pretty nuts, isn't it? Yeah. I mean, like, technically, it is the Last Battle. We're just in – not in the chapter called “The Last Battle.”

Sally: Yeah. Like, it just feels silly to me that we're like, okay, no, this is the Last Battle.

Emily: Yeah. This is it. This is when we're finally rolling initiative on the Last Battle. And I'm like, I – that's nuts to me. Okay, whatever. Yeah. Yeah, I don't know, man. I don't really have any wise things to say about what we have covered so far. Um, it's been a very long set-up to the Last Battle, um, and we're just kind of stuck with it, you know?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Not really – once – once you have committed to a 200-page chapter called “The Last Battle,” there's not really much you can do. Um, the way we're going to be reading this, I think it will – I think we have it split into five or maybe six sections – I – I can't remember – on our website. It is – like, on our reading schedule on the website, it'll tell you which point of view it's going to, based on – you know, it's going to be the first Rand point of view, whatever point of view. Hopefully that is clear, but, uh, sorry if it's not, I guess.

Sally: No, you did a really good job.

Emily: Well, it's a little insane, the things we're going to be talking about. (laugh) We're going to be bouncing around a lot. Very short points of view. We will probably be saying a lot of things like, “Loial point of view: fighting. Onward.”

Sally: Onward and upward.

Emily: Onward and upward.

Sally: Excelsior.

Emily: Excelsior. Anything to add?

Sally: Um, I don't think so. I'm curious to see what the Last Battle proper looks like. Um, I think 190 pages is a lot for a chapter.

Emily: It is, yeah. Um, there will be, by virtue simply of having the bulk of our main cast now concentrated in one area, there can be, like, smaller subplots within this Last Battle chapter –

Sally: That's true.

Emily: Throughlines that we'll be following. Um, because now we're down to – instead of weeks, we're now down to days.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, I think probably only two, three days –

Sally: Yikes.

Emily: Uh, in terms of timing. Um, which I guess if you're doing this sort of exponential math on Nynaeve working on Alnana's gut wound, that makes sense.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. But, yeah, there will be little subplots for us to follow. We'll also be flashing back frequently, um, to what's going on with Rand. Rand is going to have a very sort of philosophical confrontation with the Dark One, which we will, uh, roll with the punches as those come. Um, yeah, I don't – I don't have anything intelligent to say leading up to it. Sowwy.

Sally: That's okay. You don't have to. Um, just thinking about Rand and how much I would just like to do that all in one section and the fighting all in one section.

Emily: Yeah. Yeah, it will be interesting, I think, to look back in retrospect, too. Um, yeah, I'm – I'm just excited to get going on it.

Sally: Mm. Here we go.

Emily: Here we go. Pedal to the metal. Thanks for listening. Thanks to Glynn MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

Sally: Yeah, uh, we don't plug our Patreon very often, but if the joke stayed in the podcast, we reference that we're currently covering Jade City by Fonda Lee over on our patron-only podcast, We Don't Watch Outlander. Um, we've only done one of probably four sections, um, but it's a very fun book and talk about something that's a little bit better paced. So if you want to check that out, and not to just dunk on a Wheel of Time all the time, but if you want to check that out, it's a really fun read so far. So you should also just read it even if you don't go listen to the podcast, but we'll be –

Emily: Yeah, it's fantastic.

Sally: Talking about that, talking about epics, talking about honor and family and guns.

Emily: And, yeah, superpowers.

Sally: (laugh) Knives, maybe, more than guns? Hard to say.

Emily: Yeah, I think most people are carrying knives, not guns, but, yeah, we'll get into that. Um, yeah, that's it from us. Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: Oh, yeah. (laugh) Um, this is about my dad, who does listen to the podcast.

Emily: Mm.

Sally: So, sorry, dad.

Emily: Dad – Bill listens to the podcast?!

Sally: Yeah, he listens almost every week. Isn't that sweet?

Emily: Oh my God.

Sally: I know, it's really nice.

Emily: Bill.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Hi, Bill.

Sally: Hi, Bill. Um.

Emily: I think I knew that, but I always forget.

Sally: Yeah, it's just –

Emily: 'Cause it's sort of intimidating to me.

Sally: Yeah, it's easier to pretend that no one I know or no one at all listens to the podcast.
(laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Just speaking into a void.

Sally: Yeah. Um, we were in the Redwoods with my dad for part of the trip, and we went to a very cute bookstore in one of the towns. And my dad comes up to the register behind us with this massive book.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And we're all like, "What did you buy?" And he says, "I bought a book about broth." And we were like –

Emily: Hey, what?

Sally: Broth? As in, like, soup?

Emily: It's important to note that he was in – he was browsing the, like, sort of cookbook section, which is a very small section of this cute independent bookstore, for, like, the entire time we were there.

Sally: Yeah, like, a good 30 to 40 minutes.

Emily: Yeah, I would look over at him and he'd just be contented.

Sally: I know. He's a very happy guy –

Emily: Just reading about his –

Sally: If you can just get him in his little cooking section. So then we proceed over the next few days to learn that my dad is obsessed with broth: making it, the health benefits of it –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: All of these things.

Emily: We've learned unspeakable things about broth.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Things I would never say.

Sally: Yeah. And it was just really funny, the entire time, that he's like, “Broth can do X –” My dad is a physician, also –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: So he does have some health backup. He's not a total – (laugh) snake oil salesman here on the – he's not been influenced by the Instagram girlies about broth. He's just very interested in it. Um, and he's like, “It's really good for you,” and then he would tell us how he makes it, and I'm like, I never want to eat broth or soup ever again.

Emily: Yeah, we came home, and I've got, like, some chicken broth for cooking in our fridge, and I almost just dumped it out –

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Out of protest.

Sally: I hope one day I can come back around to it ‘cause I have some good recipes in my roster that include broth. But, um, the sort of recipes he was sharing with us are – were a little haunting. But it was very charming how much he loves it and how excited he is about his broth and his stock.

Emily: Yeah, keep an eye out in case he becomes an influencer.

Sally: In case he becomes the broth influencer.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: The brothfluencer. (laugh)

Emily: Stop. (laugh) Brothfluencer.

Sally: Brothfluencer.

Emily: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sally: A soup-er star.

Emily: Ooh! (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Good one. All right. Goodbye, listeners, and also Bill. Have a good one.

Sally: Bye-bye.