

## Episode 301: Rhuarc Has Been DILF-Certified

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SALLY: Everybody Hates Rand is a *Wheel of Time* podcast that will contain spoilers for all fourteen books. So, if you're anti-spoiler, stop this, read all fourteen 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: Oh ho ho, well, if it isn't the emperor himself.

SALLY: That's right, baby.

EMILY: The emperor has no clothes. Come on, Ed [laughs].

SALLY: That's true, Ed doesn't wear clothes.

EMILY: Unlike his brother, who occasionally wears the shirt of humiliation.

SALLY: Tybalt was having *the* crisis of all time this morning. I think it's because I did some laundry and there were overalls in the dryer, so they kept hitting.

EMILY: Yeah, the little metal thingy.

SALLY: And I was like, "Tybalt, it's making everyone upset. It's not a fun noise, but no one else is throwing a fit about it [laughs]."

EMILY: But he's baby, so he gets to throw a tantrum about it. Hey, Ed, I'm sick of how you come and stand next to me instead of sitting in my lap like a normal cat.

SALLY: Um, I... Story time!

EMILY: Story time!

SALLY: [laughs] Um, I don't get a ton of acne, but the acne that I get is very painful. It's, like, quite deeply rooted. Um, and I was getting really bad, I think probably hormonal acne on the cheeks, you know, so just, like, super painful and nasty. So I really got on my, like, skin care game this summer.

EMILY: Mm. Sure, sure, sure.

SALLY: And found this, like, toner that I've been using that really helped, and I hadn't really gotten... I haven't *really* gotten any acne since I started it.

EMILY: Wow.

SALLY: But now I have these very painful little pimples on my chin.

EMILY: Oh, no.

SALLY: I'm really pissed about it.

EMILY: It just migrated from one zone to another.

SALLY: Yeah, they're just sliding down my...

EMILY: What the fuck?

SALLY: Yeah, so I'm just really... I guess, I don't think I do toner along my jawline. Maybe if I did that, that would help, but I'm really annoyed about it, because they just hurt, you know? And I have can't not touch my face disease [laughs].

EMILY: Me too.

SALLY: So I'm just like, "Boop-a-doo-boop-a-doo-boop-a-doo."

EMILY: Even after the COVID pandemic, I'll still be like...[slapping her face].

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah. Put my finger fully in my mucus membranes.

EMILY: Yeah, I'll be on Zoom playing Dungeons and Dragons, and I'll look at myself. [laughing] Why am I touching my face right now? But I am.

SALLY: I often sit in meetings with just, like, one hand on my cheek.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And I'm like, girl... wash your face [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] Girl, don't touch your face. Girl! Speaking of girl, wash your face.

SALLY: Yeah. This is Everybody Hates Rand [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] This is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: And I am Sally Goodger.

EMILY: And we're back, baby, to the Last Battle. You thought you'd seen the end of it, but it's still happening.

SALLY: I know we – maybe should have taken a break in the middle of it rather than one section into it.

EMILY: Well, but it had to be episode 300, or I wouldn't have felt symmetrical.

SALLY: So yeah, no, maybe we'll just take another break in the middle of it and be like, “Hello, we're here to rate our favorite *Survivor* seasons.”

EMILY: We might as well. I'm not recording this podcast during my birthday. God forbid.

SALLY: [gasps] Her borthday!

EMILY: My birthday. Yes. I know you've all been wondering. I *am* a Libra [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: That's why I'm so flirty.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: That's the only thing I know about Libras. Um, okay. Yeah, we're back, baby.

SALLY: We're back, baby.

EMILY: Still the first day of the Last Battle proper. Rand still fightin' the Dark One. And we pick up with Egwene, who is heading towards the battle front and hilariously has not realized until this point that Gawyn is missing. Like, it's not until she goes to ask him to do something that she's like, "Oh."

SALLY: Where's that bitch?

EMILY: He gone. And I'm like, honestly, that's kind of funny. Like, and also, like, Gawyn does not have any legs to stand on in any of his sort of psychological arguments, but it is...a little sad that his partner [laughing] did not notice he was missing.

SALLY: Yeah. I mean, you know, it's the Last Battle, I guess busy. But you do think someone who – like if I was in a very stressed situation, I'd be like, "Babe?!"

EMILY: Where?

SALLY: I need you by me at all times or I'll pass out.

EMILY: Yeah, we'd be handcuffed together or something. But no Gawyn's just like "Do do do do do." And Egwene's just like, "Yeah, whatever."

SALLY: Bye! I really don't need you. And you're like, honestly, I do kind of love that for you, Egg, that you're like, "Really can take him or leave him."

EMILY: Yeah. She's like, "I've already replaced you with Egeanin" [laughs].

SALLY: In this coming instance, you should just leave him.

EMILY: [whisper yells] You should leave him.

SALLY: He's doing the stupidest possible thing imaginable. And God does Brandon Sanderson just...

EMILY: Horny for it.

SALLY Ug, pages of it. And I'm like, "Okay..."

EMILY: Hey.

SALLY: Ew. Anyway.

EMILY: Egwene is like, “Oh my gosh, I need someone to go look for him before he does something stupid.” Bryne's like, “Yeah, I'll go look for him.” And Sian's like, “Oh, should I go with you?” And Egwene's like, “Bo, I want you to go to the, like, command tent and keep an eye on Tuon. The Seanchan Empress. I need a spy on the inside.” And it's like, okay, fair enough, I guess. Also, I don't want to have to deal with Siuan. Might as well put her in the tent full of annoying people and Mat.

SALLY: Mm-hmm. God, poor Mat.

EMILY: Siuan and Egwene exchange a very, um, [laughs] “I can't wait until I retire tomorrow” [laughing] type words.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Where Siuan's like, “I'm so glad I've left a legacy and that my legacy is you.” And you're like, hey girl [laughs]. The Last Battle maybe is not the time to be, like, talking about one's legacy. Haven't you seen any movies? You know?

SALLY: You're going to get –

EMILY: You're boosting yourself on the To Beef It List.

SALLY: The *To Beef It List*.

EMILY: To Beef It or Not To Beef It.

SALLY: [laughing] Too Beef It, Too Furious.

EMILY: That is the question.

SALLY: To beef it or not to beef it.

EMILY: Anyway, Egwene gets to the battlefield. She thinks, like, Gawyn just, like, went to the battlefield ahead of her to fight and was like, “Oh, why would he not just wait for me, you know?: But she gets there and realizes, since the whole Warner Bond is not exactly echolocation [laughs] in terms of pinpointing someone's GPS coordinates, she's like, “Oh, fuck, he's actually way behind the battle lines or way behind the enemy lines in the enemy camp.” Smash cut to

Gawyn who is creeping around with all his magic rings on. Yeah, to set the scene a little bit, the world's on fire.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [singing Smash Mouth] The world's on fire. Hey, now, you're an all star. Gawyn getting his ass kicked [laughs].

SALLY: Hey, now, I'm a rockstar!

EMILY: Don't even, Gawyn. You don't deserve Smash Mouth. My beloved Shrek would never share it with you.

SALLY: Yeah, Shrek would never. Shrek doesn't believe in toxic masculinity. Um, aybe he does. I, whatever – A different podcast. Yeah, the world is very smoky. Mat's had them fire flaming arrows into the river in order to create, like, a...

EMILY Smoke screen.

SALLY: Smoke screen. Um, this enables them – this one offers them protection. And then eventually they start firing the remaining dragons on the – cannons – on the enemy camp from, like, a variety of locations so they can't pinpoint them. So that's on fire. Demandred is also just, like, launching fireballs. So, we are just in a sort of like –

EMILY: Hellscape.

SALLY: Fiery hellscape. And here's Gawyn just, like, slinking around in the shadows, being like, "These rings make me feel really weird."

EMILY: "I'm so, it's so weird. Is this what heroin is?" And you're like, hey, hey, I need you to have a brain. Gawyn is like, oh, "Egg just realized I'm gone and she is mega pissed." And he smiles about it. He's, like, fond about it. Um, he says that, "Te found peace with his choice. Once, perhaps he would have done this for the pride of the battle and the chance to pit himself against Demandred. That was not his heart now." And then he spends the next several paragraphs telling us how – sort of why he's doing it is for the world. But really, it's so that he personally can make a difference in this battle. And it's like, Gawyn, I wouldn't say that pride is not in your equation. Like, you are clearly very motivated by glory and it's fine if you're not – I mean, it's not fine. It's very annoying, but it's fine, theoretically, if you're not self-aware about that. But the narrative itself [laughs] does not seem to be self-aware about that. It's contradicting itself.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Multiple times. And it's hard to tell because, you know, um, if a character says that they feel one thing and then the narrative shows us that they feel another thing, then that's, like, fine. It's the narrative establishing a sort of incohesive character.

SALLY: Show. Yeah.

EMILY: But Brandon Sanderson, in particular, as a writer, is not good at showing what anyone is feeling at any given moment. He just ever tells us.

SALLY: Yeah. And, uh, I think we talked a bit about this one in the first chapter we read of Brandon Sanderson. Brandon has kind of a problem of floating between being a distant third point of view, third person point of view narrator and a very close third person point of view narrator. So by that, which I mean, it's hard to tell if we are very strictly in Gawyn's head and Gawyn himself is saying, this is not my motivation or if there's a sort of, like, outside omniscient narrator saying, "This was not Gawyn's motivation." Like that distinction is very difficult in Brandon Sanderson's *The Wheel of Time*. Um, he seems to need both in order to tell the story, which is not necessarily a bad thing. It just makes instances like this where you're trying to pinpoint a character's true motivations in one of their pivotal scenes in the book like kind of incomprehensible.

EMILY: Yeah. Yeah, it, of course, makes me curious about how Robert Jordan would have done this because I don't think he had that problem with distinguishing, um, between what characters are showing versus what he's telling us. Because I really struggle with wondering – with whether Gawyn is intentionally this contradictory character who's telling us one thing and showing us another or if that's just the narrative beefing it.

SALLY: Totally.

EMILY: Because I think there is something interesting about Gawyn just telling us one thing and doing another, especially when he's telling us that he's so pure and motivated by chivalry and saving the world and blah blah blah blah blah, and actually acting incredibly selfishly. That tells us something about a certain type of masculinity.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: That it would be very *interesting* for *this* series in particular to be making that point.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But because the narrative is so unclear, we don't know if that's the point it's making or if the narrative is itself enforcing the point. Yeah. Um, but I think we've said all that about Gawyn before and luckily we won't have to [laughing] deal with him much longer.

SALLY: Suffer, bitch. I hope you bleed out slowly.

EMILY: Um, Gawyn notices, as Egg noticed in her point of view, the, like, cracks in the earth that we've been seeing as a result of balefire Egg does try to, like, Channel at them to solve the problem and seems to fix it, but she's like, "I don't really know what I did," which is kind of like, how can you do that? You know?

SALLY: Yeah, [laughs] the sort of the implication is that she's doing, like, opposite balefire is what it feels like.

EMILY: And you're like, "Um, okay." But, like, I feel like some thought should go into that, besides Egg just, like, sort of waving her hand at the cracks.

SALLY: Blalalala.

EMILY: And then everyone's like, "Hey, what do you do?" And Egg's just like, "I don't know."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It's like, wait [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, there's like [laughs] – we've long passed the point in the series where it's okay for our magical characters to, like, do it by instinct, you know?

EMILY: Yeah, people should not be doing things by instinct.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: This is – we are not in the, like, very initial [laughs] elementary stages of magic. In terms of that, we are at, like, people should be trying to do something, *failing* a few times.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And then figuring it out.



SALLY: Yeah. Applying the scientific method, as it were.

EMILY: That's what makes it satisfying, as Bill Nye would tell us.

SALLY: [singing] Bill Nye, the science guy.

EMILY: Science rules. Anyway, Gawyn finds Demandred and is like, "I'm fully just going to stab him in the face." Unfortunately, Demandred probably has all sorts of, like magic alarm spells around him. And so is like, "Hey, you there slinking in the shadows." Gawyn just kills his horse without killing Demandred, which I'm like, [laughing] hey, did that horse do anything to you?

SALLY: Net-negative in society.

EMILY: Net-negative in the world [laughs]. Gawyn came, he killed a horse, he beefed it.

SALLY: [laughing] The only thing Gawyn did in his short time on Earth –

EMILY: Was kill a horse!

SALLY: Was kill a horse.

EMILY: And lose to Mat Cauthon. Anyway, they start fighting. God only knows why Demandred even...

SALLY: Entertains this.

EMILY: Entertains this. It would have been so funny if [laughs] Demandred just finger guns blasted him.

SALLY: Yeah, there seems to be an implication that one, Demandred references some type of, like, weave that Gawyn has on him. And he's like, "I'm not, you know, I'm wearing the rings. I don't have a weave." So some implication that perhaps magic –

EMILY: That's what the rings do.

SALLY: Is involved. Um, and it also seems to be that Demandred has a little bit of a hard time hitting him with the Channeling due to this magic weave. At some point, he does just start picking up rocks with air and throwing them at him, which is incredibly funny.

EMILY: The old Mat Cauthon method.

SALLY: Yeah. But I also feel like Demandred is a much better swordsman than Gawyn, which is also –

EMILY: So funny.

SALLY: Hilarious. Gawyn's like, “Fuck, I wasn't planning on him being good at swords.”

EMILY: Fuck! I thought I was the best at swords.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And Demandred's like....

SALLY: You're 12 years old.

EMILY: [laughing] Demandred's like, “I'm four million years old.”

SALLY: Yeah. It would have been really funny if Demandred just hopped off his horse and was like [cutting noise].

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: It – like didn't even have to do a complicated sword move.

EMILY: Head off. He was just like, “Okay, goodbye.”

SALLY: Goodbye!

EMILY: No, instead, we have to do this, like, long sort of duel sequence so that Demandred and Gawyn can talk to each other. I never know why men are talking to each other when they're fighting. Pre-fight, sure.

SALLY: How do you have time? Yeah.

EMILY: Yeah. But it's like middle of the fight, guys. What's the point?

SALLY: It's the only time they're allowed to bond emotionally.

EMILY: I guess, yes. Sort of the verbal equivalent of kissing with tongue.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which is what they truly want to do. That's why they're sword fighting. Anyway, Demandred keeps saying his crazy shit about like, "Where's the Dragon Reborn? I know he's back there somewhere." And Gawyn's like, "I'm not his keeper. I don't fucking know." Demandred's like, "Well, you're his follower. Obviously, he sent you." And Gawyn is so resentful of the implication that Rand had anything to do with this decision. So, it's like, sure, bestie, you're really over it.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like you've been *telling* us all this time.

SALLY: Uh-huh.

EMILY: Shut up. Demandred also is like, "This is the best general I've ever fought against. So obviously it has to be some old ass dude."

SALLY: Yeah, it has to be Lews Therin

EMILY: And I'm like, I wish that if this were a movie, we would just smash cut to Mat, like doing stupid shit.

SALLY: Yeah, juggling.

EMILY: [laughing] Juggling to pass the time.

SALLY: Duh, duh, duh. So anyway, perhaps we should –

EMILY: Circus music.

[both vocalizing circus music]

EMILY: Just the Wii music constantly in his head.

SALLY: Mat's eating a Snack Pack chocolate pudding.

EMILY: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

SALLY: [laughing] Looking over his battle maps.

EMILY: Those are his – And a Capri Sun.

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah.

EMILY: Those are his rations.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Anyway, Demondred stabs Gawyn so good that Gawyn's like, “Fuck, I didn't even see that coming.” And Demondred's like, “Yeah, I bet you didn't, loser.” And then leaves him there to die, which is such a cool power move.

SALLY: Yeah, he's like, “Tf you make it out, tell the Dragon Reborn that I want to fight him!” Gawyn's like, “Please just let me die without Rand being a part of this.”

EMILY: And Demondred's like, “Nope,” and walks away. And you're like, hey, honestly, served cunt, Demondred.

SALLY: Yeah, he came, served cunt, stabbed Gawyn, and he left. And you're like, “Is Demondred currently my favorite Forsaken?” Yes.

EMILY: Yeah. Is he doing absolutely insane shit? Yes. Is he also embodying a toxic masculinity?

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: Yes. *But* I hate Gawyn's toxic masculinity more and for longer. So therefore, it's satisfying to see him get beat the fuck up.

SALLY: Yeah. So Gawyn's bleeding out from, like, a gut wound. He manages to get on a horse, which, like –

EMILY: wow, second horse you defiled today. Can't believe you.

SALLY: Could you leave the horses alone? And also, like, I...Not sure how believable it is to push yourself up and get on a horse after being stabbed in the gut, but you know what? He's got the magic rings, so I'll allow it.

EMILY: He's got the magic rings. So Gawyn: currently dying. Meanwhile, we cut to Faile currently suffering. She's in camp. Mandevwin, who's their sort of remaining band of the Red Hand guy, is like, "You got to believe me, those guys are not Darkfriends." And Faile's like, "Okay, no one thinks that their friends are [laughs] Darkfriends, you know? Calm down." He's like, "Please just think about it." And she's like, "Yeah, yeah, whatever." One of her little scouts is like, "Hey, check it out. We just found that there's this, like, station out here where the bad guy armies are doing the same kind of thing we're doing." Which is like there's a setup for supplies to go through gateways onto the battlefield from wherever they're coming from. And Faile's like, "Okay, well, bop it, flip it, twist it. Then those, um, gateways lead to the battlefield we're trying to get to. What if we slip through those gateways?" And it's like, well, Faile for the very obvious reason that once you get through the gateways, you're still then behind enemy lines. This is a terrible decision. She's like, "We'll have to go around them anyway to get to our guys." And I'm like, yeah. And then you get to your guys.

SALLY: Yeah, there's a difference between going around enemy lines and being stuck behind enemy lines. It's amazing nobody makes this clarification to her. It also really bothered me that their first thought wasn't like, well, why don't we destroy this outpost and weaken the enemy? You know? I'm not – I know they don't have, like, a ton of resources, but like they could have done something.

EMILY: Yeah, they could have done some fucking black ops.

SALLY: Yeah, like it's time to become a guerrilla operative, Faile, and destroy the enemy supply camp.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And she's like, "No, I will simply go further into enemy territory and it will be me, this eleven-year-old boy, fighting a bunch of Trollocs."

EMILY: It's also so frustrating in retrospect, knowing what we know that the Horn of Valere is no longer connected to Mat.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It becomes a little bit mind boggling that no one just, like, tries it.

SALLY: Yeah. *Beep.*

EMILY: You know, just to be like, hey...

SALLY: Will anything happen?

EMILY: Maybe because you know what I could really use right now? A fucking SWAT team of...Heroes of the Horn

SALLY: How fun would it be if it was like, [laughing] it's Faile, Artur Hawkwing, Olver. Guerrilla warfare, all across the blight.

EMILY: All these cool ass people who are just like, "Yeah, we're going to take out this..."

SALLY: This fucking supply camp.

EMILY: I also think it would be really funny for a Faile to be the Horn of Valere's horn sounder.

SALLY: Yeah. As someone who started as a hunter for the horn. And again, a *satisfying* character loop.

EMILY: A narrative arc that ends in a satisfying way. Would you believe it?

SALLY: Ripley's Believe It or Not.

EMILY: I know. Anyway, Perrin wakes up in the hospital.

SALLY: [laughs] Berelain is there and she's like, "Don't worry, I took precautions this time." And by which she means, Uno is sitting – [laughs].

EMILY: I have a chaperone to make sure that I don't molest you in your sleep. And Perrin's like, "What?" [laughs]

SALLY: Okay, you could just not assault me.

EMILY: Yeah, you could also make different choices. Also, there is already a chaperone in that there's a Wise One there healing him.

SALLY: Yeah, why does Uno need to be here?

EMILY: This was just Brandon Sanderson trying to be like, "I want Uno here." Anyway.

SALLY: With a broken arm.

EMILY: Yeah, they're like, "Perrin, you have been unconscious for a while. It's a miracle you're even alive, and you need to be unconscious for longer." And Perrin's like, "But I gotta get fightin'!" And they're like, "No more fighting for you, baby boy." And he's like, "But Faile!". And they're like, "She is fully MIA."

SALLY: Yeah, probably dead.

EMILY: "Good night!" [laughing] And he's like, "What? And Gaul!"

SALLY: I guess I didn't clock this, that Gaul still in –

EMILY: Gaul's still there!

SALLY: Still there in the dream world.

EMILY: And Perrin's on the verge of death, presumably partly because of being in the dream world for so long. But I don't know. You know?

SALLY: Gaul's built different, though. So we hope he's okay.

EMILY: Gaul is built different, so like, and that's the only narrative thing that makes sense [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: Anyway, Perrin goes back to sleep. Snooztown.

SALLY: What a fun thing for one of our heroes to be doing [laughing] at the Last Battle.

EMILY: Just checking in on him [laughs] Then we get to what might be the most rancid Androl point of view of all time. It's just him and Pevara talking. They're not like doing anything interesting.

SALLY: [softly] Yeah.

EMILY: Um, things that happen in this section, we find out that they have accumulated in their little group, Theodrin.. You may or may not remember her from all of our White Tower arcs. She's one of the Accepted that got graduated to Aes Sedai alongside Nynaeve and Elayne to

make Egwene's decision look less nepotism-y. Um, she's the nice one between her and...[mumbles]

SALLY: Faolain.

EMILY: Faolain or whatever the fuck. Yeah. Um, anyway, she's with them and is probably going to heal one of, excuse me, bond one of the guys. I don't know. Androl and Pevara are like, "Hmm, should we talk about how you did magic through me?" And also, finally, someone brings it up. Pevara is like, "Hey, how come you can Travel without following any of the rules of Traveling, like learning the ground?" And Androl's like, "It must be my Talent." And that's the last we'll hear of it.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And I'm like – it *pisses* me off that we are in a [sighs] world wherein the rules of magic have been so rigidly established. But meanwhile, we have this thing called Talents that Robert Jordan more or less used with integrity in terms of, like, yeah, some magic people have an additional magic thing that doesn't really fall any – under any of the other magic rules, like foretelling. What does that have to do with any channeling? But it also, like, makes sense from a sort of archetypical standpoint, you know, there are seers out there. There are people who are magic in these ways, who can see or sense things, uh, in the world beyond what they should be able to. But Brandon Sanderson is taking it and it's just like, "Yeah, talents are like X-Men mutations. You can just do magic better."

SALLY: Yeah, it sucks because it felt like Robert Jordan, like you said, was using it with integrity as such, where like Talents were above and beyond the magic system. Like, even though Aviandha's is very, like, handy, like her ability to just like pick up a magical item and know what it is, isn't really related to channeling. It's just like above and beyond.

EMILY: Yeah. Similarly, like, Egg has this talent to go into the World of Dreams. That's also not related to channeling. People who – there are people who can do that who can't channel.

SALLY: Yeah, exactly. But Brandon's using it to completely break the magic system for convenience. He's not doing it to be additive. It's just like it's more convenient for Androl to not – to be able to channel water out of a mountain stream in order to fill Pevara's water bottle, her Owala water bottle, on the battlefield.

EMILY: Yeah. Her Stanley Cup.

SALLY: [laughs] Pevara's walking around with a huge white Stanley Cup.



EMILY: Yeah, like all the fixins on it. You know?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: How those TikTok girlies will be like, “Yeah, here's my Stanley Cup, but it has six containers around it carrying breathaments and whatever.”

SALLY: Yeah. And you're like, “You could – Have you heard of this thing called a purse?” Crazy.

EMILY: The most crazy thing about this is that Androl very casually says that spring water reminds him of Jain. Presumably, this is a reference to Jain Farstrider, and this is just like, okay, Androl knew Noal?

SALLY: Who cares?

EMILY: Yeah, who cares? And also why?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Is this just to sort of, like, boost Androl's sort of relevance in the narrative even more?

SALLY: Yeah. Brandon just wants *so badly* for Androl to be the coolest person in the world. And that includes knowing Noal, the [laughing] actual coolest person in the world.

EMILY: Who we didn't ever knew was the coolest person in the world. Noal was cool based on the fact that he was a weird old man.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Who just waltzed into the narrative, saved Mat from assassination, and then was like, “I'm adopting you!”

SALLY: Yeah. And we're like –

EMILY: Okay!

SALLY: Hell yeah!

EMILY: Hell yeah, dude!

SALLY: Here's Androl being like, "I do everything," and then he does the worst thing I've ever heard in my life. First of all, he's, like, thinking about Pevara, and he's like, "She's not pretty."

EMILY: She's uggo!

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: But I'm a wise man, and I know that looks don't matter.

SALLY: And –

EMILY: I'm an enlightened man.

SALLY: Yeah, I'm an enlightened man, so I know it doesn't matter if someone's attractive or not. So, it's like he's first of all, like "She's incredibly ugly, and I don't find her attractive. But more importantly, she's really *solid* and sturdy and dependable."

EMILY: Like a horse.

SALLY: [laughs] He specifically says like an old piece of leather.

EMILY: Yeah...And Pevara is like, "Hey, are you comparing me to a piece of leather in your head? Because remember, I can hear your thoughts." And Andral's like, "[laughs] Maybe." And it's like the fact that Pevara calls it out is, like, I guess Brandon Sanderson trying to be like, "He he, it's a silly, fun moment. Look how Androl is so awkward and cringey in his romance. He's just like the rest of us." And I'm like, I don't – I don't know what – I don't know what to say to that.

SALLY: There are so many ways we could have just not written this. Androl could have been like, wow, "Pevara is really attractive to me." And it could have just been a moment about how he finds her really pretty and lovely *and* smart and dependable.

EMILY: The thing about, yeah, the thing about falling in love with someone is that you're not necessarily, like, thinking constantly, "Well, I guess I'd rate them on a scale from 1 to 10, objectively a 7, you know, or a 4 or whatever." You're just like, "This is a person I have feelings for, and therefore they are beautiful to me."

SALLY: Exactly.

EMILY: Like, feelings change your perception. Duh-duh-duh-duh-duh. You're not constantly like – well maybe men are like this. Maybe they're constantly like, “Well, she's only a 9.”

SALLY: She's actually like a 4, but...given the circumstances.

EMILY: I'll go for it. And it's like, “Okay, shortcut to make me hate your male narrator.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Great. As if you're positing that people actually think like that.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, yeah. And the fact that Pevara is just like, “Okay, I guess that's romantic.” And it's like, what – in what world?

SALLY: Girl, I would be like unbonded, unfollowed, blocked.

EMILY: I'd be like, “Hey, we gotta end this.”

SALLY: Gone. I'm hunting Mazrim Taim by myself. Get fucked.

EMILY: This is so stupid. You're so stupid.

SALLY: Fucking Androl, man [sighs].

EMILY: Fucking Androl, man. He is such a *loser*. Anyway, then we switch to Rhuarc's point of view as he's just like going around Thakan'dar kicking ass. He's like, “Hey, surprise, surprise. The whole strat to just hold position ain't really panning out [laughs] and our battle lines are broken and everyone is just running around fighting. But you know what? It works for us.” Um, The only thing that *happens* is that as Rhuarc is going around assassinating people willy nilly, Graendal comes upon him and does channeling to make him fall in love with her. So now Rhuarc is joining her little coterie, which includes several people beyond the one we've seen. She's got, like, a few Aes Sedai, several Wise Ones, a guy with a spear. I don't know. So, like, that's sad for Rhuarc, but also incredibly funny because now we have the Graendal certified Rhuarc Is a Hottie metric [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah. We can all go to bed tonight knowing that we were correct.

EMILY: Like we've been knew, but.

SALLY: But it's nice to be validated, you know.

EMILY: It's nice to be validated by Graendal's insane...

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Standards for who she collects.

SALLY: Yeah.

Serial killer style.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: You know?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It's like, okay. Yeah.

SALLY: Well, Rhuarc is a mega babe.

EMILY: Rhuarc is A) hotter than Aviendha.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [laughing] You love to see.

SALLY: [laughing] Graendal was like, "Oh, Aviendha? No. Rhuarc? Yes! He meets the DILF factor."

EMILY: Oh-hoho! Yeah. That old man hot factor.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [singing] Stacey's dad has got me down bad.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Rhurarc, you hottie! Um, Then we flip to Rand? Who's like, "Here's the utopia that I've crafted. It's so beautiful. We won the last battle. There's a memorial. Now, um, you know, I'm still – back in the Two Rivers. It's utopia Two Rivers. So, we've got Perrin's great-granddaughter or whatever running the show." He's like, "And the most important place in town is a school." And I'm like I feel like Rand's obsession with schools might have something to do with the fact that he was raised as a farm boy and didn't get to go to school.

SALLY: [softly] Yeah.

EMILY: I'm just curious about that.

SALLY: Yeah. Is it just like an unfulfilled childhood dream? I get it.

EMILY: Yeah! You know, if you couldn't go to school, but you wanted to go to school, that would be sad. Um, but yeah, he's like, "Schools are most important," which is clearly, like, you know, Brandon being like, "In an ideal society, education would be the most important thing. People would be constantly learning and growing and blah, blah, blah, blah." And I don't want to, like, pick apart, um, the standards of... utopia. This is a fine thing for Rand at least, to believe, given that the narrative has already established how much he likes schools. Um.

SALLY: And the Dark One is like, "Hmm, mid." [laughs]

EMILY: Yeah, the dark one is like, "Mid. Also, you're bitchless. Also, I hate you."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And you're like, "What?"

SALLY: [laughing] Excuse me?

EMILY: The Dark One is just like, "This place is *weak!* It's built on lies! It's flawed! Every, you know, people still people, still die and shit." And Rand is like, "Well, it's better." And the Dark One is like, "Well, it's not perfect. So shut up!"

SALLY: Mid.

EMILY: Yeah, mid. And then he's like, "I'll show you, I'll show you something good" and eats Rand's little utopia.

SALLY: [chewing noises] Like Pac-Man.

EMILY: Yeah, that's – the Dark One is Pac-Man.

SA:LLY: That would be so funny, though, if Rand walked into the Dark One's psyche and he was just a little round man.

EMILY: [Pac-Man noises] I mean, it would be interesting if the Dark One had anything, any sort of motivation, like hunger that we could relate to beyond just being like, "Yeah, I'm evil. What about it?" And you're like, okay, what does that mean? You know, whatever. So the Dark One continues to be uninteresting. His little feud with Rand and their sort of dreamscape continues to be largely uninteresting. It's just the Dark One being like, "Hey, here's a bad world that I like." And Rand being like, "I don't like that." And Rand being like, "Here's a good world that I like." And the Dark One's like, "I don't like that either." And it's like, okay, what are you guys proving to each other?

SALLY: You're at odds? [laughs]

EMILY: You're fundamentally going to disagree [laughs] on what the world should look like.

SALLY: Crazy! Who knew that light and dark were incompatible in this universe where they were set up to be incompatible?!

EMILY: Yeah, we're not making much headway here in terms of, like, the fight between the two of you, because it's not like you're going to roll a high enough persuasion check and the Dark One's going to be like, "You got me."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I guess I will let you have your special paradise world. It's beautiful after all, you know? That's not going to happen. So what's the *point* of, like, showing each other these things?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Is it just, like, a willpower thing of enforcing their will upon one another to establish these little...dreams? I find that boring.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I already know that Rand is an incredibly willful, stubborn person, and I am going to assume that the Dark One, a cosmic entity [laughs], also has a strong will.

SALLY: Yeah. It also, just in terms of, like, fantasy canon, and we've talked about the place that willpower holds in the fantasy genre before, where, like, willpower is the end-all, be-all. Like you can lack skills, you can lack strength, as long as you have willpower, you have everything that you need in order to succeed. And it's just kind of, like, it works in, like, shonen anime because it's...

EMILY: Naruto.

SALLY: Naruto, you know, and it's kind of...

EMILY: Believe it!

SALLY: Like it's un self-serious and also very self-serious about it at the same time. So it's, like, endearing. But in a book about cosmic forces, I'm like, okay, what else? What else do we have in this fight where I've been led for the last thirteen and a half books to see you building your skill set and all of these things? And it's just about, I don't know, your mind, your willpower, specifically.

EMILY: Yeah, I want some depth here of not just will, but of imagination and, um, intellect. I don't know. I don't really know what I want, but yeah.

SALLY: And like, this is the point to get philosophical, like, but in a, I don't know, different way, you know.

EMILY: We will get philosophical with Rand and the Dark One later, um, in this section.

SALLY: Hmm. Intrigued.

EMILY: So I guess we'll get our fix then. And in – with that in mind, these sort of two scenes are, um, establishing something, I suppose. And I guess we'll talk about whether it has laid a groundwork that is worth it in any way. As of right now, I'm inclined to say no, but maybe with further context, we'll change our minds.

SALLY: This is *The Wheel of Time* when its context ever [laughs] helped any of us.

EMILY: So, true. [clears throat] Yeah. In terms of, like, seeing, as we talked about last time, in terms of like seeing visions of alternate realities and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. That's a very,

like, *Wheel of Time* thing to do, especially in the early series. But the thing about those, like, alternate visions, those alternate reality visions is that they should surprise us and reveal something about the characters having them and reveal something about, um, the world at large. And these first two visions at least are not doing that. These are exactly what we would expect from The Dark One and Rand in terms of, here's the ideal scenario, you know?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: As we also talked about with the last scene and how The Dark One is not a surprising force of evil, he's very conventional.

SALLY: He's just like... a little gremlin who wants to destroy everything.

EMILY: He's just sort of Pac-Man about it.

SALLY: Yeah, he's, he's nega Pac-Man.

EMILY: [laughs] But that's where we left off in terms of the Last Battle.

SALLY: That's where we'll leave 'em.

EMILY: We'll read another few points of view in the next section and we'll just keep doing that [laughs] for a while. Nothing to add.

SALLY: Nothing to add. Let's see. Um, in this chapter, we had Egg doing mysterious channeling into cracks. Gaywn being her cringe fail, loser frat boy boyfriend. Failel, missing the mark completely in terms of how she can contribute to the Last Battle. Perrin waking up from a nap and abandoning his best friend [laughs] who has no magic powers in the World of Dreams. Rhuarc getting, um, DILF certified by Graendal [laughs].

EMILY: Stamps him on the forehead.

SALLY: Stamps him on the forehead. And Rand...uh, showing the dark one, his most favorite special magic boy school for special boys.

EMILY: It's the Black Tower, but better!

SALLY: It's the Black Tower, but not a cult this time.



EMILY: But I didn't fuck it up this time [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] But this time, I did it right.

EMILY: Yeah, so our heroes are not doing much in the way of heroism at the moment.

SALLY: [laughing] Disasters everywhere you look.

EMILY: [laughs] Fires everywhere that we've got to put out. So that's what we'll return to [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] I can't believe two pages of this, three pages of this was Perrin waking up and being like, "Wow, I feel like shit," and everyone being like, "Go back to bed, Perrin."

EMILY: Go back to sleep! Yeah, what did that do? [laughing] What, how did that help us?

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILLY: Cringe fail is right. This whole section was pretty cringe.

SALLY: [laughs] Okay, I got to go take the trash out. I forgot.

EMILY: We'll talk to you next time. Um, thanks for listening. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our beloved patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

SALLY: You got it.

EMILY: You got a sign off for us?

SALLY: Yeah. To keep up with sort of the cringe fail disasters of this episode. Uh, I have a friend who works in accounting at a nonprofit, and she texted me and another friend today showing the wage gap. Like, she and their accounting software, their wage gap between men and women.

EMILY: Oh! Fun!

SALLY: The average salary for a woman at this agency was forty nine thousand dollars, and the average salary for a man at this agency was seventy thousand dollars. So, if you clock that correctly, that's a twenty one thousand dollar wage gap between men and women at this agency.

EMILY: Don't you love to be alive?

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: More cringe. Also cringe. This is the Dark One's fantasy [laughs].

SALLY: The Dark One's fantasy is like [softly] workplace inequity. He gets really close to the microphone [whispers] workplace inequity.

EMILY: [softly] Workplace inequity. Imagine it. Can you imagine?

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Okay, everyone, sit with that one, I guess [laughs].

SALLY: Bye!

EMILY: Bye!