

Episode 8: “Ta’veren, Whatever.”

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Sally: I’m giving up on sleep. Permanently.

Emily: You’re not.

Sally: You heard it here first, kids. I’m never sleeping again.

[Both laugh]

Emily: It’s like the reverse Sleeping Beauty.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which, like can you imagine? You’re cursed to never sleep ever again until someone kisses you, and then you get kissed and immediately fall into a coma.

S: [laugh]

E: Because honestly that’s my ideal scenario.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I feel like I’ve been waiting for that for years.

Sally: For someone to kiss you, and then you can just sleep for ten years?

E: Doesn’t that sound great to you?

S: It does sound a little ideal. Like, a little, a little sugar, and then a nap.

E: Yeah.

S: A long nap.

E: A very long nap.

S: A *very* long nap.

E: Do we have any book news?

S: I do have book news.

E: That’s good, you’re always prepared for book news. I’m like, what’s going on in the world of books?
[weird voice] I dunno.

S: Um, this is not fantasy-related, but I think it is important because, again, we mostly talk about white dudes and what they do in fantasy, so we can diversify in our book news. So I think it was just announced yesterday that Danai Gurira and Lupita Nyong’o are going to adapt Chimamanda Ngozi Adichie’s “Americanah” as a mini-series

E: They are? As a mini-series?

S: Yeah.

E: Okay, well, fantastic. This is the best news I've ever received.

S: Yeah, it's very – I've been reading a little bit about it. I'm very excited because Danai Gurira wrote "Eclipsed," which was on Broadway, I believe. It's a play about the Liberian civil war.

E: Yeah, and didn't Lupita star in it for a while?

S: Yeah, Lupita starred in it, and I saw it, obviously not on Broadway, but I saw it, and it is very very good. Saw it performed.

E: I remember that.

S: Yeah, it's really good, and so she's writing the script adaptation.

E: Okay, and is Lupita gonna act in it?

S: Yeah, Lupita is going to be Ifemelu, who is the main character. And Lupita is incredible and amazing, but it's sparking a little bit of a small controversy because Lupita is Kenyan.

E: Ah, yes, I was about to ask.

S: And she's playing a Nigerian character. And so there is, and this comes on the coattails of Lupita announcing that she's going to produce the film adaptation of Trevor Noah's memoir "Born a Crime," which is all about apartheid in South Africa, where she will be playing his mother, I believe? So she's a Kenyan woman in Hollywood, which is very rare, it's very rare for a black woman in Hollywood, especially an African woman, to achieve any level of stardom because there's so much racism rampant across Hollywood. But it's also like she's picking up and putting on these different nationalities from Africa and there's such a tendency for people to view Africa as Africa instead of as a wide variety of cultures and identities and ethnicities. So I think people are mostly excited about it; I'm really excited about it, obviously, they're two brilliant women who work really well together, they've worked together on a couple of other projects, like "Eclipsed," which is just phenomenal, so I'm really excited about it, but hopefully it just prompts a lot of good dialogue about Africa, and our representations of Africa.

E: Yeah, so it's like this weird thing where you have to – well, you don't literally have to – but we need to support it while still being critical, which is true of all good media.

S: Yeah, absolutely.

E: Yeah, I dunno, we just have to move forward and be able to enjoy this and the fact that two really incredible women are doing a project written by another incredible woman.

S: Yeah.

E: While also maintaining awareness.

S: Yeah, I feel like criticism has reached, has fallen into these two hard lines –

E: You can absolutely do both.

S: Yeah! Exactly!

E: Which is exactly what we're doing here, with "Wheel of Time."

S: Yeah, exactly what we're doing.

E: We also enjoy it and criticize it.

S: Yeah! And I feel like that is what, especially like, as a literature person, it's so exhausting to like not be allowed to have a space that's just a discussion that brings up highlights and criticisms and discusses what's enjoyable and what isn't all in one conversation. Because that's what good "art" is supposed to do.

E: Yeah.

S: So. And it's just really exciting to me that, Adichie, who became famous basically because Beyonce sampled her on "Flawless," which was so good –

E: [laugh]

S: That her work is going to reach probably, maybe, hopefully a broader audience. Unfortunately not everyone listens to Beyonce.

E: Shocking.

S: Shocking, I know. But also, if Danai Gurira, who literally – "Eclipsed" was such, like, a fucking masterwork, like that script is incredible, and the fact that she's being able to produce a television project headed by a woman writer . . . like, that doesn't happen, that's incredible, especially, *ugh*, especially a black woman, it's amazing!

E: I'm so happy for her.

S: I know!

E: And so thrilled.

S: I'm so thrilled for her. And to be able to tackle these themes, of, like, home and immigration and loss, and like it's gonna be – I'm really excited about it. And while, it's not perfect – and like, who am I to start picking apart the nuances of African nationality?

E: Yeah, it's just. Yeah. It's really exciting generally to have a project that you're fond of be in the hands of someone you trust.

S: (whispers) I know.

E: Insert theme song here.

S: Insert theme song here!

[A clip from "Tubthumping" by Chumbawamba plays]

E: Okay, well, welcome to Everybody Hates Rand, our Wheel of Time podcast about the Wheel of Time, obviously. Currently discussing "The Eye of the World." Um, I'm Emily Juchau . . .

[long pause]

S: I'm Sally Goodger. Sorry.

E: Sorry!

S: That was like a huge delay, I expected you to say something else.

E: I couldn't think of anything witty. Not that I usually do, but.

S: You could introduce me instead. We could introduce each other. It'd be so tender.

E: Oh, that's so sweet. I'd get really confused, though, and I'd be like, *I'm* Sally Goodger.

S: [laugh] You could be.

E: And have an identity crisis and Freaky Friday would happen in our apartment.

S: That'd be fun!

E: Freaky Friday?

S: Yeah.

E: No, it wouldn't. You'd have to go to work.

S: [at the same time] Imagine, you wouldn't have to work.

E: You would have to go to work.

S: I know, but you wouldn't. And then I could play with the puppy. If he's there, since he was stolen from you today.

E: Yeah, you'd have a really good time walking dogs, but then you'd have to go to my other job.

S: And then it would be a disaster, and you'd probably get fired, so.

E: Oh.

S: People would be like, "Box." And I'd be like, "Where?"

[Laugh]

E: Ummm. What are we doing? Did we ever agree what we were going to talk about?

S: No, but we can. We can just give it a try, and in editing if you don't like it you can just cutsville. Cause that intro got rock-paper-fucked. Why did I do this?

E: [blows a raspberry] Hashtag, fucked.

S: Hashtag fucked.

E: I think we've gone a really long time without swearing.

S: Unbelievable. Shit.

E: Umm. Okay. Well. How do we introduce this topic? [laugh] We, we've had multiple people ask us about the title of this podcast – Everybody Hates Rand, in case you missed it. Find us on iTunes and Twitter and Tumblr. And our email address, everybodyhatesrand@gmail.com. Ha! Now you can't just skip the end. Now you got it in the middle. Fuck you, skippers.

S: Ha! Don't skip the end.

E: Yeah, don't skip the end. It's the funniest part. Sally's . . .

S: It's where I wax poetic about my life, which is in shambles.

E: That's where Sally tells us about any traumatic life event she can think of off the top of her head.

S: [laugh]

E: She has many, so. It's been working so far.

S: [whisper] It's because I'm a disaster.

E: Okay, anyway. Um. Our title, Everybody Hates Rand – first of all, it's partly tongue of cheek. We were being a little, like, I don't remember, I just thought of it one day.

S: Yeah.

E: It's because we, this podcast came from the fact that we usually sit around our kitchen table while Sally's reading Wheel of Time, and I'll ask her how it's going, and she'll [laughs] she'll tell me, and usually that involves a lot of complaining about Rand, and so when we were trying to come up with a title, Everybody Hates Rand seemed pretty funny. But now people are asking us why we hate Rand specifically, and I think we reference it kind of a little bit throughout, but maybe we need to be a little explicit, just to, like, put your fears at rest?

S: Yes.

E: So, here's where I'm at – and you can cut in at any time or whatever – but we're working from a standpoint where science fiction and fantasy is dominated by men. You can't just write things or produce media as though you're in a vacuum where only the majority exists, even if you're part of the majority. Like you have to think, "How is the way that I write women affecting women? Because maybe I view the world in such a way that there are only Bond Girls and mother figures," but guaranteed, your mother doesn't think the world that way. So you have to start fleshing out your characters, and one of the reasons Wheel of Time is so interesting is because Robert Jordan had taken a step in the right direction of including this really incredible array of female characters, who are so fun and funny and ambitious and diverse, and he writes them as though they're people, and that's like a really incredible thing coming from the nineties, when he was writing, into the 2000s and even now. So that's what makes Wheel of Time appealing to me, and it's really jarring to then be treated to Rand as a point of view character and as the hero who has a really troubling relationship with women. Like, we'll joke a lot about how Rand is annoying, and he is annoying; he's also very interesting in a lot of ways.

S: Yeah.

E: He has some of the most fascinating stuff going on with his sanity and mental illness, and even, I think, some interesting stuff going on with the hero narrative, and how he copes with that as a conscious hero in the hero narrative. But he's impossible to like because he doesn't treat women like people.

S: Yeah.

E: And it's like a symptom of this greater problem that I guess Robert Jordan fell into where maybe he thought he was being conscious of it or he thought it was interesting, but it's basically like Rand personifies this issue where men think that if they treat women uber respectfully, then that's somehow correct.

S: Yeah.

E: And obviously treat women respectfully, treat everyone with respect, but this is like chivalry taken to a toxic level.

S: Absolutely.

E: So. It's just really – I dunno, he doesn't allow women to have choices, he doesn't allow women to like be their own people, and I guess if you don't see that, then sorry, but we do?

S: Oh, yeah. On every single page. And if you don't see it – I also, again, don't know how – but look particularly in books four and five, his relationship with the Maidens of the Spear, and the fact the Maidens at one point have to come in and break their spears, being like, "If you won't let us be in these battles and have our own lives and have our own decisions, then you're taking our honor away from us."

E: "You're taking our agency."

S: Yeah, you're taking our agency away from us, you're not . . . and the idea that Rand's like, "I don't want any of these women to die for me," it's like, so frustrating, because these women, those women in particular are warriors, and they're actively choosing this life for themselves, and they chose to be Rand's bodyguard for themselves, and so the fact – yeah, what you said about chivalry being taken to a toxic level, it's just absolutely true, and it's so frustrating and so alienating, as a female reader, and I would hope to a lot of men, like, male readers as well, but especially as a woman to constantly be in Rand's head and for him to be like, "I have to worry so much about Egwene, I can't let these women do this for me, I can't."

E: Even, "The guilt I have involving these women is going to become a symptom of my madness."

S: Yeah.

E: And you can argue that Rand experiences character growth throughout the course of these novels, and maybe he does, but honestly I think a lot of that is hijacked by Brandon Sanderson coming in books twelve, thirteen, and fourteen, and I guess we'll talk about this at greater length when we get there, but I don't feel like Brandon Sanderson does justice to the female characters and indeed to many of the male characters in their treatment of women. Brandon Sanderson historically doesn't write women well – he's part of the problem of science fiction and fantasy being dominated by men who aren't allowing women to be women on the page. But even if Rand does experience character growth, the fact that it takes him fourteen books to get there is unacceptable.

S: Yes. Absolutely.

E: And, like, it's a fourteen-book series, but we see Mat and Perrin and any of the other characters change much more. This doesn't need to be a full fourteen-book arc. This should have ended, if it was going to be a part of Rand's character, it should have ended in book four or book five with the Maidens, if not sooner.

S: Oh, absolutely. IF not sooner. If not at the end of book one, basically. It's so – it's so gross, like, again, it's super alienating to me, and every time I have to read a Rand point of view where he's talking about women I basically don't read them.

E: Sure.

S: I just skim them because I don't, I can't. I can't handle this.

E: Yeah, it's just like every other alienating representation of women on the screen, like I can't watch James Bond movies, because they have Bond girls, which is horrifying.

S: So horrifying.

E: Because it's just like male fantasy. And Rand is just another type of male fantasy where men are just allowed to relentlessly protect women, despite what the women themselves would choose. And Rand is reprimanded for it often, and maybe that's Robert Jordan, but taking the author out of the equation, the fact that the women in Rand's life are telling him it's unacceptable and he continues to do it anyway is just – another part of the problem.

S: Yeah, and the fact that he won't listen, it's exactly the problem. And again, talking about, last time when we were talking about Egwene and Perrin and how much credit we want to give Robert Jordan or not, like in a way it, it's one thing about Robert Jordan that keeps me from totally loving this series, because the way that it's integrated into Rand's narrative isn't even as self-conscious, like I think of Rand in comparison to another tall ginger boy, Finnikin, from "Finnikin of the Rock"?

E: Excellent.

S: Excellent, and his entire arc is about learning how to let women be in charge, and learning what it means to have these women making decisions that he thinks he can protect them from, and protect his nation from, and it's – shocking, written by a woman, so –

E: Yeah, notably written by a woman.

S: Notably written by a woman, but Finnikin still reads on the page like a very authentic male character, and like, I, oh my God, those books.

E: Whatever makes a male character, by the way, gender is a construct.

S: Yeah, gender is a construct. Women can write men, men can write women, that's totally fine, if you, I don't know, speak to a woman once in a while, if you're a man.

E: [blows a raspberry]

S: But yeah, Finnikin has a lot of these similar moments about like, "Oh, I'm in charge and you can't do this, blah blah blah blah blah," but it ends, at the end of book one, and throughout the rest of the series, like of course there's still a little bit of that nonsense, but it's so deeply integrated into Finnikin's narrative that if you were to remove that, I don't think the books would have the same power.

E: Yeah.

S: But that's not the case – if you were to remove Rand's treatment of women in Wheel of Time, the books would become infinitely better.

E: Agreed.

S: Okay, so. I just got like really passionate about that? My heart's beating out of my chest. I hate him so much, it's – ugh.

E: That's why we hate him. If you can't relate, then . . .

S: If you can't relate, then maybe find a different podcast?

E: Yeah, honestly. Like, the title's tongue in cheek, but it's also based on the assumption that you, too can find something to hate in Rand, and if it's not that, fine, maybe it's something else, but like, we're going to be critical of these books, and especially Rand, and especially other characters. Rand's not gonna get all of it. There's plenty to say about . . . Lan.

S: [groans]

E: [laughs]

S: There's plenty to say about Elayne.

E: Oh, God.

S: I hate Elayne so much.

E: Who doesn't?

S: Fucking resident white feminist.

E: [groans]

S: I hate her so much. Um. Yeah, about a lot of people. And especially as we move forward with Rand's hero's journey, where the Maidens and his love interests come to play a larger part, the hate's only going to go up, my dudes.

E: Always with humor.

S: Always with humor.

E: We haven't been very funny for the last ten minutes, but.

S: Yeah, this is, this is pretty real. But, yeah. Always with humor because . . . yeah.

E: You've gotta laugh or you've gotta cry.

S: You gotta laugh or you gotta cry, my dudes.

E: So that's where we're at.

S: Anyway, that's where we're at, coming at Rand al'Thor, my arch nemesis.

E: [laughs] Well.

S: Well.

E: Soooo, umm, in the books themselves, going back to the Eye of the World.

S: Third Eye Blind.

E: Third Eye Blind, as it is fondly known.

S: [laughs] By me and me alone.

E: We just had Perrin and Egwene's first little interlude, and now we're going back to Rand and Mat. Um, and they are on our pirate ship, captained by Bayle Domon.

S: America's sweetheart.

E: Yeah, America's sweetheart, Bayle Domon, of the terrible facial hair, strange accent, and the lust for adventure.

S: Ooh.

E: He really does.

S: He does, he talks about it in this chapter.

E: Yeah, he's like, "Don't you just wanna explore?"

S: "Don't you wanna go see the world?"

E: And Mat's like, "I wanna fuck a pile of gold, so I don't know what you're – can't relate."

S: [laughs] Honestly. Mat's like, "I wanna fuck a pile of gold," Rand's like, "I wanna go home." Lame.

E: Yeah, everyone's like, "Laaaame."

S: Nerd.

E: [voice cracking] Nerd alert.

S: [laughs] True.

E: Um, but basically they're on this pirate ship headed down the river, um, several days pass, I'm not actually sure . . .

S: Yeah, at one point it's like, ten days to Whitebridge, so they're on there for like, probably about two weeks, something around that.

E: Yeah, a fortnight. A *fortnight*, to use fantasy language. Look at me.

S: Ooh. Emily Juchau.

E: Let me roll that D20.

S: [laughs]

E: Okay, so, multiple things going on here. First of all, navigating the politics of this ship, which is something that Thom does adeptly, Rand and Mat less adeptly. Basically, the crew, the ship's moving really slowly, which is already really bad, but Domon won't let anyone rest because he's really worried about Trollocs catching up to them? Which is a legitimate fear, especially given he's been chased all the way from Saldaea.

S: [laugh] Yeah.

E: But this is starting to understandably wear at his crew's nerves, and, uh, they're getting a little, uh, restless, a little, uh . . .

S: Ants in the pants, kinda situation.

E: Yeah, and mutinous. Not like, "Black Sails" season one mutinous, just like "Black Sails" season one episode three mutinous.

S: Okay. [laugh]

E: If you feel me?

S: I mean, I think I do? But unlike you I don't have the Dewey Decimal system attached to Black Sails.

E: I dunno, I dunno, man.

S: That metaphor didn't make any sense, I ruined my own damn joke.

E: *The Dewey Decimal system attached to Black Sails*. "Mutiny, look under season one, episode three. Gay love triangles, look under season two." Well, all of the seasons. It's a very gay show, highly recommend.

S: It's incredible.

E: Except don't watch the scene in season four where there's keel-hauling, because that ruined my entire life.

S: [whisper] I still need to watch season four.

E: I'd be happy to watch it with you, just not that scene. I'll make you skip it like I do in Fullmetal Alchemist.

Sally: No, there's a lot in Fullmetal Alchemist to skip.

E: Only the . . .

S: The chimera.

E: Yeah, just the one scene, with the little girl and the chimera. I assume there's some crossover between the FMA crowd and the WOT crowd.

S: If not there better fucking be. Turn off this podcast, guys, go watch Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood. It's on Netflix.

E: And Hulu.

S: Ooh!

E: Yeah, I just saw it.

S: And Hulu.

E: I dunno why, probably because the Netflix movie just got released, so they're like . . .

S: Oh yeah.

E: Which, by the way, we watched. It's hilarious.

S: So funny.

E: So funny. The wigs are [sing-song] terrible.

S: The wigs are so bad. Ten out of ten would also recommend watching that.

E: I feel like I didn't experience like humor, comedy at its fullest, until I saw Roy Mustang's wig.

S: [laugh] It's so bad, you guys.

E: And then I, like, ascended. I sprouted wings in our living room, and I flew up to speak to God directly. I was like, "what happened?"

S: And he was like, "LMAO, wasn't it hilarious?"

E: HE was like, “The budget was very cheap,” and I was like, “Obviously they spent it all on their . . .”

S: CGI.

E: CGI, is that what it is?

S: Special effects.

E: Alchemy? I assume they used real alchemy.

S: Yeah, alchemy.

E: ANYWAY, pirates. Where was I? Mutiny?

S: Um, mutiny.

E: Okay, yeah. So everyone’s kinda pissed at Domon, he’s doing this hilarious thing where any time anyone’s getting antsy he just goes and gets the fucking Trolloc shit that is on their boat and he just hangs it on the mast like a warning. It’s so fucking hilarious.

S: Fucking drama queen.

E: I know, and like, glares at everyone in the eye, and everyone’s like, “Fine, back to work, bitches.” Um, and Thom, of course, just stays out of everyone’s way when this is happening, because he knows that if this gets any worse, he’s going to be the first to die, basically. Um, Rand and Mat are less understanding of this. Rand thinks that the guy he stepped on [laugh] a couple episodes ago when they were boarding the ship is going to be the source of problems, which he is, later on, so Rand, astute, but like not on the ship.

S: Yeah.

E: Gonna be fine. Meanwhile Thom’s keeping up this charade of teaching them to be gleemen.

S: This is like my favorite thing that happens.

E: I know, it’s the most hilarious sequence.

S: [laugh]

E: It goes – we’re in the chapter called “On the Arinelle” or something . . .

S: I think it’s “Flight Down the Arinelle.”

E: Yeah, “Flight Down the Arinelle” . . . and we’re going into the next chapter a little, I think, and Thom’s teaching them how to be gleemen, so juggling. He won’t let them touch his harp.

S: Yeah, he’s like, [whispers] “Don’t touch my *fucking* harp.”

E: “I’ll fucking kill either of you if you touch my harp. I’ll throw you overboard.”

S: But he does let them touch his flute, and they’re both so bad at it.

E: I know, he’s like, “Rand is a little better because he’s a fucking shepherd, so he knows how to play the pan pipes.”

S: Pan pipes, I imagine.

E: Which I think is a hilarious trope that exists in Wheel of Time. It's evidence in Wheel of Time of tropes having a crossover in this universe, which I love.

S: Super funny.

E: Um, Mat is terrible at it, and everyone is like, holding their ears, and Thom's like, "I would rather die than ever let you touch my flute again."

S: Which, I don't know if, I don't think there's anything to this, but it's a hilarious turning of the Sirens episode in the Odyssey.

E: Yes!

S: Where all the crew have their ears stuffed with wax so they don't hear this beautiful singing, but here's Mat, the least sexy character at this point because he's going full Smeagol, and playing the flute, and everyone like trying to fucking drown themselves because it's so bad.

E: Yeah, and Thom's like, "Stop it," and someone in the crew is like, "LOL," And Mat's going to chuck the fucking flute at him. He's like, "Fuck you."

S: "Fuck you, specific sailor."

E: We were just talking about how if Mat didn't have the dagger, this would probably be his Big Gay Experience, because honestly, surrounded by sailor men. We all know.

S: We all know.

E: The sailor men are very sexy, very gay.

S: Very sexy, very shirtless.

E: Yeah.

S: And sweating and rowing, so in an alternate universe, which is arguably better, Mat and the sailor he almost threw his flute at fall in love, and have like an epic gay romance.

E: No, Mat would just fuck his way through this entire crew.

S: That too. That's . . .

E: And that.

S: But both.

E: Simultaneously.

S: At the same time, and the sailor, like, has to go through this internal journey of being like, "I can't stop my boy from fucking all these people, because he's not really my boy, but I want him to be my boy," and that's like his internal monologue.

E: Commitment. What does it mean?

S: Yeah. What does commitment mean?

E: And Mat's like, "I'm seventeen?"

S: "I'm seventeen, LOL, and bad at the flute."

E: [laugh]

S: I dunno.

E: I was about to make a flute and blow jobs thing, but then I was like, mmmmmm.

S: You could turn it into a euphemism? I'm bad at the flute. I don't know how to suck dick. Period.

E: Don't wanna.

S: [laugh]

E: But like you'd think Mat would be really good at sucking dick. Like, naturally? It just seems like one of those things Mat would pick up.

S: Just like a natural talent.

E: Yeah. A hilarious thing throughout Wheel of Time is that people are like constantly alluding to the fact that Mat's good with his hands, in terms of like, he does show some talent as a juggler, and like, throw knives, which is also Thom's weapon of choice, like there's a scene later in the books where someone throws a knife at him and Mat catches it out of the air.

S: Awesome.

E: Which is really sexy, and it's the most turned on I've ever been in these books.

S: Super sexy.

E: But there's also a sort of, um, what's the word?

S: [French accent] Double entendre?

E: [aggressively American accent] Yeah, double entendre where Mat's good with his hands but it's like, [different emphasis] Mat's good with his hands.

S: Ladies! And men.

E: Yeah, sure. Hand jobs.

S: Blow jobs.

E: For whoever. Whatever genitals you may or may not have.

S: Exactly.

E: Yeah.

S: Good for you, Mat Cauthon.

E: Good for you, Mat. Good at hand jobs, but given his experience with the flute, less good at blow jobs, so.

S: Yeah, so.

E: That's too bad.

S: Unfortunate that your hypothesis got disproved by a flute.

E: [whisper] I know. Sorry.

S: It's okay, again, in this alternate reality where Mat is full gay on this ship full of sailors, he's also really good at blow jobs. Head canons!

E: Sadly, though, that isn't the universe we live in. Sadly Mat has found this dagger and is in the process of, [laughs], he's about to take this dagger to Vegas and marry it, for God's sake. He's like stroking it in the shadows while Rand is having euphoric episodes at the top of the boat.

S: Yo, that episode is super weird because it's like a form of – it's one of those weird things where you think it's channeling? But arguably maybe not, maybe Rand is just – I don't know if this ever happens to you, but when you're standing on something high don't you ever just like get the urge to jump?

E: Yeah, of course, it's intrusive thoughts.

S: Yeah!

E: A total thing.

S: And my, my particularly bad one is if I'm near a body of water I wanna fucking throw my phone in it.

E: What?

S: Every single time. Even in the shower, I'm just like, "What if I fuckin' dunked my phone in this water." I dunno, guys, it's super weird but it's really bad at the beach because I'm like, "What if I took this tiny death brick and chucked it into the water?"

[laugh]

S: Okay, not relevant.

E: My thing is when I'm driving on the freeway, usually to get from Salt Lake City to my parents' house, I'll be like driving along, and I'll be like, "What if I just put the e-brake on, right now?"

S: Too fast, too furious in this shit, motherfucker.

E: "What if I just fucking became Vin Diesel?"

S: That's ideal.

E: Actually I'd go through the windshield, probably, or the airbag would go off, killing me instantly.

S: Likely, but there's a small chance you might become Vin Diesel.

E: I know, it's like. [laugh]

S: [laugh] It's tiny, but it's there.

E: You either die young or live long enough to become Vin Diesel.

[laugh]

S: Exactly.

E: Yeah, so, um.

S: So anyway! Rand at the top of the ship wanting to throw his phone into the water, basically, like, lets go and is balancing, kind of on this thing, and everyone is like, “He’s gonna fucking die.”

E: HE’s like, “Wheee!” And Thom has to come up and fucking yell at him.

S: Yeah! He makes Thom, Thom Merrill, old as balls, climb the mast to get his dumb ass down.

E: Well, I mean, to be fair, Thom is teaching them tumbling, which I think is hilarious because Thom’s like, “Here’s how to do a somersault, you sons of bitches.”

S: I know, at one point, he’s like, “Even a dirty farmboy like you can do it” or something like that.

E: “You can do a handstand,” and Mat’s like, “I can not.” Mat’s like, [incoherent mumbling] my dagger.

S: Um. [laugh]

E: Well, anyway, this is an iconic scene at the top of the ship, enough so that the ebook cover is referencing this scene. And I remembered it – when this chapter started with a dream sequence, I was so thrown, so taken aback because I thought it started with Rand being at the top of the ship? And just, like, laughing hysterically?

S: It’s so weird.

E: I dunno why. But yeah, it does seem to be one of the greater symptoms of Rand channeling, because in Baerlon when he’s facing the Whitecloaks –

S: He gets really giddy.

E: Yeah, there’s no actual channeling going on, not like with Bela, when he makes her go faster, or later in the book when he fucking makes a lightning strike or something, but he is starting to experience, in increasingly small gaps of time, these euphoric periods, followed by kind of – he’s getting a little bipolar, I’d say.

S: Yeah, there’s really spikes of highs.

E: Yeah, just highs and lows. Going from manic energy to really low energy.

S: Yeah, and it’s weird that in these manic euphoric moments, all concern for himself just vacates the premises. He’s up there, like, flowing in the wind like a kite and he’s like, “This is so great!” and everyone else is like, “He’s literally going to die.”

E: Yeah, it’s really self-destructive and scary for the people around him, and he just doesn’t really –

S: He doesn’t notice.

E: And it’s kind of this interesting parallel between Rand not knowing what’s going on with himself and also somehow not coming to terms with what’s happening with Mat.

S: Yes. Oh, my hell.

E: [laugh] Because what’s happening with Mat in this sequence, and later on, of course, when Rand and Mat are on the road, is so scary? And if that was actually happening to your friend – like, if you started clutching some – fucking anything, obsessively, and whispering to it, I would – I know you hate the ER, but I would take you there –

S: [laugh]

E: I'd be like, "She hates needles. I'll sit on her, if you need me to. Figure out what's going on. She's allergic to penicillin. Here's her medical history. She's my wife."

S: [laugh] I am allergic to penicillin. I'm glad that you know that. Very tender.

E: I feel like one time you told me that. You were like, "If you ever need to take me to the doctor, I'm allergic to penicillin," and I filed that away immediately. Anyway.

S: Anyway. Yes. So Mat is going – I keep saying this, but he literally is going full Gollum. Where he's like whispering to something in the dark and literally becoming more drawn into himself. In the chapter following this, of Rand and Mat at Whitebridge, Rand's like, "You haven't laughed in like ten days." And Mat's like, "I'm stressed because we're being chased." Which admittedly is a valid reason, but also – not enough to explain what the fuck he's doing.

E: Laughter is so much a part of who Mat is as a character that Min literally saw it in one of her visions. Like, a laughing face.

S: He's just laughing.

E: Mat's the comic relief, so it's really scary to watch this go on, and it's really frustrating that Rand isn't doing anything about it. Given, he can't do much because he's really preoccupied with survival, and eventually it's just going to be him just dragging Mat along, literally, at some point, Mat's going to be blind, and Rand's just guiding him. Which is really sweet and all, but . . .

S: Sheepdog Rand al'Thor.

E: Yeah. [laugh] So sweet. But it's incredibly frustrating but also just sad to watch Rand not being able to do anything, but also, it feels like he knows something is going on but isn't willing to internalize it.

S: Yeah, which I feel like is another chronic problem of his. Rand is kind of oblivious in regards to other people.

E: Mm-hmm.

S: He's very self – ah, what's the word that I want? I want to say self-obsessed but that's not right. He's just very focused on himself.

E: Yeah, he's pretty observant with the things going on around him, he just doesn't often let them – he's so stubborn that sometimes he just doesn't let things affect him, even if he knows them.

S: Yeah.

E: There's a sequence later, around books seven and eight, where literally one of the Forsaken is going to be in his entourage, disguised as one of the Asha'man. And Rand – every instinct he fucking has is going to be screaming at him to get rid of this guy, and Rand is just, like, "No."

S: Oh, my baby boy.

E: So it's just this – it happens, it's hilarious, because he's always like, "Women are so complicated," but he's doing the same thing here with Mat. [in a breathy voice] Like, "I don't know what Elayne feels about me, I don't know why Aviendha's being so weird." It's because she wants to fuck your brains out, you dick.

S: It's so obvious.

E: Yeah, it's super obvious, and it's super obvious what's happening with Mat here. So. I just said a really weird sentence. What's happening with Mat is also very obvious, but Rand can't or won't do anything about it.

S: Yeah.

E: Sorry, I know we're short on time, but . . .

S: No, that's okay. I just have some things that I want to say.

E: Go for it.

S: Which I will hopefully do shortly. Okay, so, one part of this episode, this chapter – Jesus –

E: Well, episode, chapter . . .

S: Episode, chapter, it's a really nebulous term at this point.

E: Part. Whatever.

S: In this chapter there's another instance of them going past these runes – these, like, ruins. I don't know why I said runes.

E: You said – yeah, they go past these Mount Rushmore-esque . . .

S: Yeah, they're exactly like the big elf-kings in “Lord of the Rings” that they sail through that are basically doing the Heisman trophy pose.

E: Thank you.

S: [laugh]

E: Also, fun fact, they pass the tower of Ghenjei. Which, you don't know what that is, do you?

S: I think it's mentioned in book four for a second.

E: Yeah, it's mentioned in Perrin's point of view. But they mention this big, shiny tower and Mat says, “I'll bet there's treasure inside. A thing like that must have been made to protect something valuable.” So that's foreshadowing, obviously, because Mat's going to go there in book thirteen and have to rescue Moiraine. Who is – literally, the fate of the world hangs in the balance.

S: Yeah. Mat. “I bet there's treasure inside.” Again: wants to fuck a pile of gold.

E: I know, I'm like, “Please, just calm down. Dummy.”

S: He's super weird. So they pass by all these ruins – not runes – and, again, these are very reminiscent of the big elf people in “Lord of the Rings,” and I don't think that's anything, it's just interesting, and this is another one of those instances of immersive fantasy where we have these ruins all over the place, as if to constantly, constantly remind us that we are in a world that's very old.

E: Yeah, and that whole conversation they then have with Domon surrounding those ruins and the Tower of Ghenjei is all very immersive fantasy. That's when we get our first “There's a whole museum! And it's full of animal bones that are crazy!”

S: “Yeah, like, not real animals. It’s cool.”

E: “And tons time has passed, and we don’t know what the fuck is going on.”

S: Yeah, and I’m really interested in that, because again, Robert Jordan in these books basically beats us over the head with the fact that it is a world that is very deep in time and a lot of things have happened. But I’m just so interested in it because there is this extended period of time that has happened, but – and I should preface this whole rant by saying that obviously I haven’t read everything, I don’t know all of how things played out in the past and whatever spoilers I might be missing, so take this whole rant with a grain of salt in that way, because I know there were different types of things available in the Age of Legends, blah blah blah – but the fact that such an extended period of time, like thousands upon thousands of years are taking place, and yet relatively speaking technology is very stalled, like in terms of what we would think of as technology –

E: Mm-hmm.

S: Like there’s no, really, no mass-scale industrial revolution like what would have taken place in this same type of time scale in our world. And that’s common across all epic fantasy, like “Lord of the Rings,” which – like there’s a lot going on there with industrialization in terms of Isengard, but it’s still like trees and nets, basically, it’s not anything like steam engines or whatever. And so it’s like a trademark of epic fantasy that there is no industrial revolution, it kind of stalls out in the middle of what we would call medieval fantasy, and obviously I have not unpacked this and I don’t know if it’s based on anything, but the professor in my fairy tales class that I took said something that was really interesting, she said, “There was no other age in human history where religion was so deeply intertwined with the daily life,” which is why the Middle Ages are such a huge part of fantasy.

E: That’s interesting.

S: Yeah. And obviously thinking, like, pre-Christianity, religion had a huge impact on people’s lives too, but when you think about the Middle Ages and especially the way Catholicism was so tied up in what people were doing on a day-to-day basis, it’s just really interesting to think of because –

E: People in the West, anyway, which is where most of these fairy tales are coming from.

S: Yeah, exactly. And where most of our epic fantasy is coming from. And so it’s such an interesting idea that you can’t separate epic fantasy from its religious aspects. And I think this is due in large part – this is just going to be me hypothesizing and waxing poetic, but I think it’s very interesting – I think this has to do in large part because the epic fantasy tradition is so bound up with “Lord of the Rings.” Everything – not everything, I can’t make that blanket statement – but so much of what we think of Epic Fantasy is so deeply entrenched in Tolkienian tradition, and what Tolkien was doing with “Lord of the Rings” initially, before he decided to make it what it was, this fantasy epic, he was in World War One, in the trenches, and even before that, he was writing these stories and he intended to be a type of mythology for England.

E: Yeah, yeah.

S: Like he wanted to create something – which is a very odd project, and I think a little bit self-important.

E: [laugh] There’s enough mythology to go around in England.

S: Yeah, so inevitably his – the “Lord of the Rings” as a series is so deeply affected by myth, especially Norse myth – and also there’s this Finnish epic called the Kalevala which has a lot to do with singing wizards, which is like where a lot of the magic of “Lord of the Rings” comes from. So it’s so deeply

entrenched in this myth that he's created, this mythos, and it's not necessarily always super obvious as it is in other epic fantasy, because J.R.R. Tolkien had his legendarium, "The Silmarillion," which existed outside of the "Lord of the Rings," and "The Hobbit," which was written in large part before the "Lord of the Rings" series, and so part of the reason why I personally think "Lord of the Rings" is so interesting, is because it's almost more deeply entrenched in the idea of being immersive because it has this whole mythic history that exists separate from it and that you don't necessarily need to understand it, but if you do it becomes more interesting. And so – okay, again, a little bit rambly – fantasy is either, I think this term came from either Lewis or Tolkien – the idea of *mytho poesis*. And the root *poesis* is a Greek word which means "making," and so poetry is literally a form of "making," and *mytho poesis* is myth-making, which is often what fantasy is called, especially fantasy like Tolkien, and Lewis to an extent were making their own mythologies, and these are often referred to as secondary worlds or sub-creations. And so epic fantasy is so deeply entrenched in this *mytho poesis* and so it's just really, really fascinating to me that these worlds will not abide both industrial technology and magic and religion, and this idea that there's something inherently mutually exclusive about them. And so I don't know if it's this idea that magic is supposedly associated with more "pagan" religions, like pre-Christian religions in the West, where we think of it as more like a mystical thing, like maybe there's some type of Orientalism to it that we don't want to put it in the modern-day world, because mysticism and magic is so much excluded from the Abrahamic religions. And that's become more complex as people have started to push the bounds of what a fantasy means, but I was thinking about it to the best of my ability – and again, as interesting as I think this is, this is an arbitrary way to separate fantasy – but it happens a lot in portal quest fantasies. Like obviously "Harry Potter" is set in modern-day England, and Harry – ok, not modern-day England, it's set in the nineties or whatever, so Harry doesn't have like an iPhone –

E: Although, can you imagine.

S: Wouldn't that be hilarious? "Harry Potter gets Ron an iPhone."

E: Such a different story.

S: [laugh] Such a different story. And so, Harry Potter, and I just recently read "Akata Witch" and "Akata Warrior" by Nnedi Okorafor, so those are kind of at the front of my brain, but there's a lot going on there with how technology and magic interacts; I think she always does that in a really interesting way, but there's no solid immersive fantasy that I can think of that allows industrial technology and magic to exist in the same way. Because even when magic exists in a story, like I think of "Percy Jackson," there are phones there, but Rick Riordan goes out of his way in almost every single book to be like, "You can't use these because the monsters will be able to find you." So then of course you run up against the idea that technology and/or magic renders the other one meaningless. The idea that magic is doing things that technology would allow us. Like, in Wheel of Time, instead of hopping on an airplane and flying to Tar Valon in forty-five minutes, we have the idea of Traveling, or using the Ways, and so – this is not a conclusive rant, but I was thinking about ruins and the fact that there's so much of that but there's not any real – I don't know, industrial technological advancement. Let me see if I've wrapped that up. Yep, I have. So.

E: Yeah, I mean we have – what we know of the Age of Legends, it was a very technologically advanced society, but technologically magically, in terms of magic being at the center of all their technology. So it was more like the Breaking of the World happened and all their technology was lost, but all their technology was magic-based. So it's just – like, my favorite parts of Wheel of Time are when he starts playing with the idea of an industrial revolution, because you do get very much the sense that that is imminent, first with Mat's invention of cannons and second of all with Rand's – one of the really cool

things Rand does is the creation of the schools that aren't magic-related at all, they're just like, let scientists and let librarians come and do their shit. Because one of Rand's very likable traits is that he's very bookish.

S: Yeah, it's so tender.

E: It's very sweet. He reads books to calm himself down and, when he finds out he's the fucking Dragon Reborn, he's just like, "I have to read up on it."

S: Yeah. Like studying his own prophecies, which is one of the best parts of these books in general.

E: It's so interesting. Um, but the idea that he's playing with an industrial revolution in the future is interesting, but also – yeah, for me to buy that they're at this level of not-technology would mean that the Breaking of the World took them back to the Stone Age.

S: Yeah, which I just don't know if I believe.

E: Yeah, you can't believe it, especially once you get these flashbacks to the Breaking of the World through Rand's experience in Rhuidean, through the eyes of the Aiel, where's it's like clearly the world was fucked up, and falling apart, but we get to see the Aiel's wagons being loaded up with iPhones, or the Age of Legends equivalent, all their magic shit, and just being sent away. And so much of that got destroyed, but not all of it!

S: Yeah. Yeah, it's just weird. It reads very weird. Not that it – I don't think it's like a detriment to the whole series, but it's something that I'm always thinking about when I read Wheel of Time.

E: So I think Robert Jordan does a fun thing later in the series – it doesn't happen fast enough, maybe – where he starts to play with magic getting triggered into this revolution of new knowledge and old knowledge and technology happening at the same time. So the idea that the world is going to be totally remade again, at the end of this series, but in a different direction.

S: Yeah. Which is fascinating. And I love that – again, while I was rambling through this – it seems like in fantasy there's this push that technology and magic cannot sustain in the same world together, which I don't think I buy, because not everyone can use magic, so there's a lot of room for that, and the fact that Robert Jordan wants to explore that is so good and so interesting. It's just – and I know, like this is the whole thing with books about prophecy, is that this is a specific moment, and therefore a lot of things that are important to the world are going to happen at this specific moment, so I get that – ta'veren, whatever –

E: [laugh] Ta'veren, whatever. Title of this episode.

S: [laugh] I just, it's so frustrating to me that there's almost no impetus before that, when it feels like technology is a natural growing of what has happened in the past. And so you're right, it's like . . .

E: This world stalled out.

S: Yeah, the world stalled out, and all of a sudden Rand al'Thor, the Dragon Reborn, is going to prompt all this stuff. I get it, that's the whole plot conceit, but the fact that it also has to happen on the level of technology and magic is very bizarre to me.

E: Yeah, for this conceit to work he has to start in "The Eye of the World" – which is basically, let's be honest, "Lord of the Rings" plagiarism –

Sally: [laugh] We've all been there.

E: It's happened to all of us. We know. But anyway, "Lord of the Rings" is so entrenched in not having technology.

S: Yeah. And another thing I want to mention – this is a totally off-topic kind of thing, not exactly, but I should have mentioned it at the beginning of my rant – fantasy is often seen as reactionary. Like, this is a criticism of it and why it's often called escapist, because it often takes place in something akin to the Middle Ages, as though people want to go back to this Golden Age before technology ruined everything.

E: Golden Age who? Honestly. The Middle Ages sucked. Everyone died of the plague. A single rat could kill an entire continent. Like, what was golden about it?

S: I think that's incredible. What are you talking about?

E: [laugh] "I was on the rat's side for all of it."

S: [laugh] I was absolutely on the rat's side for all of human history. You will always find me on the side of the vermin. I'm sorry.

E: [laugh] I was reading a Tumblr post the other day that made me think of you. It was like, "Ratatouille is not the name of the rat is the 'Frankenstein is not the name of the monster' of our generation."

S: It is, though. I have a lot of thoughts if you want to go deeper into "Frankenstein." I think we've already gone deeper into my brain than we needed to, but.

E: If we manage to get this entire podcast up to Halloween, we'll just do an entire break from Wheel of Time and talk about "Frankenstein."

S: *Okay.*

E: Which means Sally will talk about "Frankenstein" while I nod helpfully. The transcripts will be really fun on that one.

S: The transcripts – this is good, we can transition to a little housekeeping thing. I've been doing some research on podcast best practice so as to best serve you guys, and something I came across was something pointing out to me something I wish I would have realized on my own, but of course I have able-bodied privilege in this aspect, which is that podcasts are inherently an ableist medium because they are entirely audio-based and so it's a good idea, good practice for a podcast to provide transcripts for every episode, so for people who have different abilities in regards to hearing, if they want to engage with our medium, we can open – I shouldn't say "open the door." We can have that available to them. But also, Emily and I talk over each other a lot, so if you just want to go back and check what we said, or if you just want to have it along –

E: [mostly unintelligible] It'll probably be nonsense.

S: --It'll be there. So whatever you want to use it for, transcripts will be there. I've been working on it this week, hopefully by the time this episode is posted we'll have episodes one through three – being ambitious, maybe one through four – and hopefully in the next couple of weeks we'll be totally caught up.

E: Where are those going to be posted? On our website?

S: Yeah, on our website, thank you. Just in the ether, find them, Google them. It's a treasure hunt.

E: Hopefully once we get caught up we'll be able to post transcripts and audio at the same time.

S: Yeah, once we get all caught up, but it'll . . . we talk a lot, so transcripts are taking a bit of time.

E: We talk a lot despite repeated requests to stop talking.

S: I know, so feel free to delete whatever of that stupid rant.

E: Anyway, so obviously we didn't get very far, synopsis-wise, but we maybe answered some of your questions. Which is a reminder, if you have any questions that you want us to address in the future or especially in a Q&A episode, we'll probably be doing that at the end of "The Eye of the World," you can just send them to our email, everybodyhatesrand@gmail.com. We talked about all our other social media handles earlier, so I'm gonna leave that there.

S: Mm-hmm.

E: Next week we'll probably continue with Mat and Rand, up through Whitebridge, up until – spoiler – Thom's demise.

S: Faux death.

E: His very dramatic not-death.

S: It's a Robert Jordan standard.

E: Yeah, fake your own death.

S: Characters not-dying. [laugh]

E: Moiraine? She pulled a fast one on us, I'll admit.

S: That scene is incredible.

E: Yeah, we all thought –

S: Bitch, you thought [snaps] you'd seen the last of me. Surprise, bitch.

E: [laughs] She body-checked Lanfear into the next dimension, and I was like . . .

S: It was honestly a sexual awakening.

E: I know.

S: For a lot of reasons. I was like, "This tiny lesbian witch just tackled this embodiment of heterosexuality." It's incredible. It's so good.

E: Ugh. "This pair of walking boobs."

S: [laugh] Okay, but where is the lie? Lanfear is literally just a pair of walking boobs animated by jealousy. She's so – I hate Lanfear so much, when she died I was like, "Fucking finally."

E: Lanfear is like the Venn diagram where Envy and Lust –

S: Overlap. Which brings us back to: Are you watching Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood?

E: Fullmetal Alchemist is the reason I can name all seven deadly sins.

S: Go.

E: [laugh] Okay. Um. Capitalism.

S: [laugh]

E: Hentai.

S: [laugh]

E: So anyway, watch Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood.

S: Watch Fullmetal Alchemist: Brotherhood for the seven deadly sins.

E: I guess we're done.

S: I guess we're done?

E: Trailed off in a weird way. This was a weird episode. Sorry.

S: This was a weird episode but I feel good about it. [whisper] I feel great about it.

E: Good. Sally, sign us off.

S: Okay, well, this is like two weeks late, but it's officially Pisces season . . .

E: Oh my God.

S: So wrap yourself in a good victim complex and have a nice week.

[Laugh]

E: Fuck.