



## Episode 106: Cow Heaven

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Generously Transcribed by Lauren Livesey

SALLY: Everybody Hates Rand is a *Wheel of Time* podcast that will contain spoilers for all fourteen books, so if you're anti-spoiler pause 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. In the context of this podcast, "everybody" refers to us and our cat. You are free to feel however you want about Rand, who is a fictional character. Don't DM us.

[Theme song by Glynna Mackenzie plays]

S: Whatcha looking up?

E: My alternate *Fires of Heaven* titles –

S: Oh, no ...

E: - they're not very good this time.

S: I don't believe you. You say that every time.

E: No, really. Because I just listened to the episode where we did *The Great Hunt* alternate titles. This one has – I made up for lack of quality with quantity, I did lots of characters.

S: I feel like – I always feel so much pressure when this happens.

E: Do you want me to read them instead? It's just not like - [laughs]

S: No, it's OK, forgive me. [laughing]

E: - I can read them totally deadpan because I've already gotten over my laughter. Here you go.

S: It just makes me wee anxious. Oh, you're on dark mode. Night mode.

E: I sure am. On accident.

S: OK.

E: I've been too lazy to change it back for –

S: I feel like I should probably do this because technically it's better for people with dyslexia, even though I've diagnosed myself with dyslexia. [laughs]

E: I don't know.

S: What? [laughs] Rand is [laughs] ... OK, Rand's is *Riverdale*? [laughs] This feels like something which I don't really understand.

E: I couldn't think of anything for him except that *Fires of Heaven* is like, so fucking dramatic? And there's so much, like, love triangle shit going on? And then I thought about how he has red hair like the guy from *Riverdale*.

S: *Rand-erdale*. [laughs]

E: Absolutely not.

S: Yeah, Rand-erdale. Mat's is *The Heart of War (It's Talmanes)*.

E: You fucking bet it is. Funky little lesbian.

S: Funky little lesbian. [laughs] Perrin's is *Wolves Read MINDS? Vol. Five: Gone Fucking*. [laughs] Which is very good. Egwene's is *I'll Be Honest Here and Just Admit That I Have No Memory of What Egwene Does in the Fires of Heaven*.

E: I don't know. I don't know. I even did the reading schedule I was like what the fuck. What the fuck. Why is Egwene here? You know.

S: She doesn't do anything.

E: She doesn't do anything. She's just here to be like, *Wow, Rand pisses me off*, and it's like, everyone does!

S: Nynaeve's is *I Started a Civil War and Other Confessions of a Teenage Drama Queen!* [laughs]

E: Starring Lindsay Lohan.

S: I didn't like that movie very much but the soundtrack bangs. I used to listen to songs from that soundtrack.

E: I saw that movie once on TV and I have no recollection of it.

S: Yeah, it was like, fine. It was like, Lindsay Lohan drama. But the soundtrack was really good.

E: [speaking over] Now I have to look up that soundtrack.

S: There's like this song that Lindsay Lohan sings that was like, my fave.

E: Oh. My God. Like *The Lizzie McGuire Movie*? When she sings?

S: Yeah. "Sing for me, Paolo!"

E: "Sing for me, Paolo!"

S: [laughing] Oh my God. Elayne's is *The Greatest Showman – The Greatest Show-MAN Isn't Hugh Jackman, It's Me*.

E: It is.

S: Me, not Elayne.

E: Elayne has big theatre kid energy. I'm just gonna say it.

S: Oh my God, you're right. Elayne has big *Glee* kid energy.

E: You're SO right!

S: Like, from *Glee* the television show.

E: She is –

S: Rachel Berry.

E: But blond. And with better self-esteem, I think.

S: Mm-hmm.

E: Doesn't Rachel Berry have, like, very specific levels of self-esteem?

S: Yeah, yeah. Yeah.

E: I don't know, I only saw, like, three episodes of *Glee*, because there was a gay character in it, so that was considered too liberal for my household in the, uh, mid-2000s.

S: Birgitte's is a little traumatizing.

[both laughing]

S: Erm, hers is *Brave: Except the Only Bear Is Gaidal Cain, Am I Right?* [laughing] Prayers. Asmodean is *Good Rand Hunting*. [laughs] Which is fun. Have you ever seen that movie, *Good Will Hunting*?

E: I've seen clips of it on TV.

S: I watched it once and it was truly the most boring movie I have ever seen.

E: And you know it was, because it's a Matt Damon/Ben Affleck special.

S: Yeah. Yeah.

E: And they just, like, were like, I know what will fix it, Robin Williams. And Robin Williams was like, *I can't do anything with this*.

S: He's like - Robin Williams tried his damndest. But that movie was unsalvageable.

E: I mean, Robin Williams *made Dead Poets Society*, an unpalatable movie. It's so fucking ...

S: Like, I think I own that movie, just because I thought Robin Williams was so charming in it.

E: He is so charming, but then you get a little bit older and realize how self-indulgent *Dead Poets Society* is.

S: Oh, yeah.

E: And how focused on the privileged white male experience?

S: I mean, yes. It is horr- The fact that it's a poetry class at like a private prep school? Disgusting?

E: Yeah. I don't wanna hear it. Unless it's gay, then I could be persuaded, I suppose.

S: Yeah. I think Maggie Stiefvater saw *Dead Poets Society* and was like, *I can do it better*.

E: "I can fix this. There will be magic, there will be murder, there will be ghosts. Bees?"

S: "Ravens?"

E: "Ravens?" A raven named Chainsaw. Drag-racing. A lot of it. Gay.

S: Gay. People turn into trees. OK – Moiraine's is *The Perfect Bodyslam* by Stone Cold Moiraine *Damodred*. Good wrestling reference.

E: That was the only one I could think of.

S: It was funny.

E: I only know like, two wrestlers.

S: Oh my God. [laughing] Siuan's is perfect.

E: Oh, yeah.

S: Siuan's is *Sister Act 2: Back in the Habit of Manipulating Vulnerable Youngsters* [laughing]. Nailed it.

E: I can't wait to talk about this chapter.

S: [sighs]

E: I know.

S: And then Aviendha's is also a crime. A crime committed against *Frozen 2*.

E: This is before we saw *Frozen 2*, for the record.

S: A crime. [laughing] A crime. Aviendha's is *Frozen: The Porn*.

[both laughing]

S: Because Emily is a war criminal.

E: [sings] *Let it go* ...

S: No! Don't let it go. Keep it in.

E: Your – [laughs] your orgasm?

S: Yeah.

E: Oh. Kinky,

S: Rand's not allowed.

E: Kinky. I repeat. All right. Are you ready to talk about some rancid –

S: No.

E: - male point of view, female sexuality –

S: No. I am not.

E: Ha ha ha.

S: I am not so ready.

E: It's so fucking fun.

S: OK, this is *Everybody Hates Rand*, I don't know if we introduced the podcast.

E: We didn't, I was going to say that, but I forgot.

S: Oh, sorry.

E: It's OK.

S: This *Everybody Hates Rand*, your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* podcast.

E: It's fun to mix it up and have you say it, like last time when we sat in different chairs.

S: Yeah, that was very weird, but good.

E: It was good, it empowered me to make a lot of editing cuts and then our episode was only ...  
[laughs] [inaudible]

S: Why did *that* empower you?

E: I don't know why there's a correlation.

S: Because I was sitting in the driver's seat? And you're like, *dumb bitch*.

E: No! Is this the driver's seat?

S: [speaking over] You're absolutely - Yeah, because that's where you sit. You're in charge of the podcast.

E: I don't like that. Also, well, I guess I do statistically drive more. But I don't know, because you drove to Yellowstone, so ...

S: I did drive to Yellowstone.

E: That probably makes up for ... OK, this is so uninteresting. Yeah, whatever, I'm Emily. That's Sally. Blah-bliddy-blah.

S: Yes. There's Tybalt, sleeping.

E: There's Tybalt, snoozing his life away. And here is *The Fires of Heaven*, [Sally retches] again, a very fiery book that I wish I could light on fire sometimes.

S: I know, I remember us talking so much about, I really like *The Fires of Heaven*, and I do really like parts of it, but this beginning sequence is like, rancid. Good word.

E: Yeah. I pretty much think that all the Mat parts are good?

S: Yeah. [speaking over] Interesting, at least.

E: Even all the Rand parts - with the exception of sex igloo - I can get behind, because I think they're interesting. We're at a very interesting stage in Rand's development as a, um, soon-to-be tyrant, and also, um, you know, his fraying sanity in the wake of hell PTSD. And I think Nynaeve and Elayne *can* be interesting, especially with the Birgitte sequence, and the circus. They do also, though, kind of go on a little bit too long? There's some chapter with them later in the book before they get to Salidar where they're just chilling on the boat or whatever, and it goes on for-fucking-ever. And Robert Jordan's just like, *I'm just gonna describe so many random women to you*.

S: It's Robert Jordan's kink, apparently.

E: If I - It totally is! It's the chapter titled *To Boannda*. Bo-AN-da?

S: What the fuck is Boannda?

E: To Boannnda. I don't know, that must be the, like, port where they leave off. Anyway, the parts with Siuan and Min and Leane are pretty much insufferable, because then Gareth Bryne gets involved, and it's like eeesh.

S: And he is ...

E: The worst.

S: Disgusting. I hate him.

E: And the best we can say of Morgase is that at least there's only, I think, this like one section where we see her in like, Rahvin's...

S: Thrall.

E: Thrall, fully, and then the next point of view we get from her is when she is escaping. Which is nice. I mean, it's not *nice*, I wish it didn't happen at all, but I'm glad it's not drawn out, into what it could easily have been, which is what Robert Jordan attempted to do already in this one little section, which is make it porn.

S: [sighs]

E: I know.

S: I just ... wish men would stop writing.

E: [laughing] I just think men should stop.

S: Yeah. I just like, have read already in 2020 so many books where men's portrayal of women as sex *objects* – not subjects, objects – is just rancid. That's going to be the word of this episode, that's such a good word, Emily.

E: You're welcome.

S: Good choice for this chapter.

E: It's bad.

S: Rancid.

E: Anyway, there's several points of view in this chapter, Chapter Uno, *Fanning the Sparks*, because like I said, fire metaphors are the order of the day. We get the typical *Wheel of Time* turns, blah blah blah, and then we get over to Min and co, as they are waiting in a shed to go on trial, which sounds like the beginning of a bad joke.

S: Yeah.

E: A Tairen, a Domani and an Andoran walk into a shed. [both inaudible] I can't think of anything either.

S: And then: I don't know.

E: It just takes a turn for the worse. And Min updates us on the fact that they have been traveling with Logain for the last few weeks and the previous night they were kind of just chilling in some stranger's barn, and then the farmer came out to inspect the barn, as farmers are wont to do, and Logain knocked him over, including the lantern he was holding. Immediately set the barn on fire and then ran away, leaving the women to, uh, get caught for the crime of arson, and also murder if you count the cows who were in the barn.

S: Yeah, I was going to say, lots of cows died.

E: Lots of cows died, which we don't talk enough about.

S: Yeah. That's really traumatic.

E: I know, in a burning barn? That's really upsetting to think about. Poor cows.

S: God, the animals of *Wheel of Time* deserved better.

E: I know. I hope they go to cow heaven.

S: God, cow heaven sounds lit.

E: I know, I hope I go to cow heaven!

S: That sounds amazing! Cows are the coolest animals. Baby cows will just, like, suck on your thumb, because it's got, like, the same shape as a cow's nipple. [laughs]

E: Well, there was some info that I am so thrilled to have. I can't wait to tell all my friends and loved ones.

S: You were there, I think, when Christina told *me* about this.

E: I don't know.

S: In Oxford.

E: I've sort of blocked out a lot of my interactions with Christina.

S: That's OK. Emily was busy taking care of me because I literally could not walk, my cramps were so bad that day.

E: You were having a bad day.

S: Emily was like, *Come along, my invalid*. [laughs]

E: I was like, Oh no! I just felt so sad.

S: It was a pretty rough one.

E: When we went to that museum.



S: Yeah, those creepy-ass weird museums.

E: So many goddamn museums.

S: Anyway, RIP cows. Cow heaven sounds lit. Um, they're all sitting in the shed, and Min is, like, freaking out, because she's like, I don't wanna do this, obviously I don't wanna be punished.

E: Yeah, Min's sweaty, as hell, because again this is the start of the summer, that goes on –

S: Hot ta'veren summer, as Sarah McClintock calls it

E: Hot ta'veren summer – excellent, Sarah McClintock, good branding.

S: Follow Sarah on Twitter.

E: Yeah.

E & S: @SarahMcCostumes. [both laughing]

E: But, uh, Min's like, *Hey, does anyone know what the punishment for the arson and cow murder is?* And Siuan's like, *If we're lucky we'll get strapped in the village square*, which, whoa, ok.

S: And Min's like, *If we're LUCKY?*

E: *If we're unlucky we'll get flogged.* Which, I'm not quite sure what the border between strapping and flogging is – severity, I suppose?

S: Yeah, maybe the weapon.

E: The *weapon*. [laughing]

S: It is a weapon.

E: No, a switch versus a whip –

S: Like, a flail?

E: A flail!

S: Not a flail, sorry.

E: Isn't a flail, like – a flail –

S: A flail has spikes on it, right?

E: Yeah, a mace is the one with spikes on it, just on the stick, and a flail, there's –

E & S: The chain.

S: Yeah, I'm thinking of –

E: It's like a death yo-yo.

S: It's like a death kendama.

E: A what? [S laughs] Don't – nope. If you tell me Gethin has taught you yo-yo categorization [inaudible]

S: [speaking over] No, a kendama is a different kind of trick toy. Skill toy. Skill toy, excuse me.

E: Skill toy. That's true. It is a skill.

S: It's like, the stick with like the ball on it, like attached by a string.

E: OK.

S: And you do, like, tricks with it. I don't fucking know.

E: Oh, OK. That makes sense. You're right.

S: A flail is like a death kendama. [both laughing] Welcome to weapons class. What am I thinking of? Maybe just like a whip. What is the one that has multiple tails? Is there a name for it?

E: Um, like a nine o' tails?

S: Maybe that's what I'm thinking of.

E: But I don't know if that's the formal one. Whenever I think about whipping, I think of all the depictions of Jesus Christ's crucifixion that I saw as a child, because, y'know, I was raised in a Christian household –

S: Mm-hmm.

E: - pretty traumatizing. Not as traumatizing as it was for Jesus, I imagine. [both laughing] Or the millions of others in history who were crucified. But –

S: So, anyway ...

E: This is ... This energy is [pause] *great*.

S: Yeah, flogging versus strapping versus maybe being murdered.

E: Yeah.

S: And Siuan's like, *Cannot be bothered*, because she's Siuan Sanche and is the worst.

E: Yeah, Siuan's like, *I am praying for flogging, because it'll be, like, one and done, and then we're out of here, whatever, put this behind us*. And Min's like, *I personally do not want to get flogged or strapped, etc., etc.* And Siuan's like, *OK, well, it's better than execution, or I don't know, jail?* Jail for some reason never seems to come up. Does *The Wheel of Time* not have prison?

S: I think it's just capital punishment.

E: It's just capital – No, because they mention throwing Rand in the dungeon when he, um, infiltrates the Caemlyn gardens on accident.

S: Oh, yeah.

E: Morgase is, like, *I'm gonna throw you in the dungeons for looking at my daughter*. And Elayne's like, *This is all my sex dreams. This is how they start*. Yeah.

S: Gross.

E: But, yeah, jail doesn't come up as an option, interestingly enough.

S: Says a lot about the way Gareth Bryne's running his town.

E: Yeah, Gareth. [pause] That's not even true. I don't find much fault in the decision Gareth Bryne makes –

S: He makes a fine decision, it's just like why isn't jail an option?

E: I know. Maybe it's an Andor thing. We don't need to talk about this.

S: I don't – I feel like he *doesn't* make a fine decision because it was, like, an accident.

E: Well, but –

S: So, like, I get that they're getting paid back, and ... It's just, it wasn't the ladies' fault.

E: Yeah. I mean, I don't know anything about the justice system except what I've seen in *Law and Order: SVU*. I just think his, like, thing of, as we find out later it's like he chose the punishment according to the actual proscribed law, but being like, *Oh, these women have given me only two specks of information about themselves and one of them is that they're refugees and homeless*, and then being like, *You can work at my house*, is like –

S: Yeah, that's true.

E: - a fair, kind thing to do. Of course, then Suan's like, *I'm going to go overboard*.

S: But he doesn't say, *You can work at my house*, they're basically like, indentured servants at his house.

E: Yeah, you're right, you have to pay off the debt.

S: So, it's not like he's offering them –

E: You're right, he should have been, like, *Whatever solves the crime. And also, you can work at my house if you need work*.

S: Yeah.

E: You're right.

S: Like, they have apparently like an insurance system in this little town because they're able to, like, pay the farmer back. Like, he basically sends his right-hand lady to file an insurance claim.

E: Yeah. Although I don't – I think, because he's the lord, he's paying out of his pocket, which –

S: But then I'm guessing –

E: - is a big pocket. Because fuck the rich.

S: - he does like taxes and stuff, right?

E: I have no – The economy of *Wheel of Time* world is so –

S: What are the taxes of *Wheely Time*?

E: - far beyond my grasp. [both laughing] What is the tax system? Insurance? Insurance fraud? I feel like Mat would do that.

S: Yeah, because he's like, *Be extra sure that they're not trying to lie to you!* So, it's like, yeah, Mat would 100% commit insurance fraud. Mat's taxes – Mat is committing tax evasion if there is tax evasion in *The Wheel of Time*. [both laughing] Never filing his income!

E: I continue to wish that *Wheel of Time* was filmed sitcom style. And that, y'know, there's some scene where, like, Mat and Tuon are, like, sitting around, and Tuon's like, *I just received a letter from Elayne that you haven't paid taxes in nine years.*

S: And Mat's like, *Well, I'm not a citizen of Andor, so fuck that!*

E: She's like, *That isn't how it fucking works, ding-dong.*

S: And he's like, *Nope! No taxes!* He's like, *It's all freelance income, I don't pay taxes on it! I earned it all gambling.*

E: He's like, *I saved the world, so jot that down.*

S: Jot that down first of all.

E: I think that that is more than taxing –

S: Isn't that enough?

E: - the government? I don't owe the government anything! There wouldn't *be* a government without me!

S: OK, true, though. That's exactly something he would say. OK, anyway, I don't know, taxes, insurance ... I just don't understand why this had to be a plot at all.

E: Well, so they're sitting in the shed, Leane starts putting on makeup, and Sivan's like, *What the fuck are you doing?* Really aggressively. And Leane's like, *I have decided to take up flirting.* Sivan's like, *Copy that,* and Leane's like, *Yeah, my mom and aunts taught me how to do it, because the place I*

*come from has these - this culture of women being in positions of power as merchants and traders and for some reason they have chosen - Probably because Robert Jordan has a fetish – they have chosen sexuality as their, um –*

S: Weapon of choice.

E: - *weapon of choice. And so, like, I know I have the know-how, I've just never had the practice. And I am about to get into it. Because revenge is enough for you but it's not enough for me. I'm ready to do some fucking.* And Suan's like, *OKKKK*.

S: Copy that.

E: Copy that. And Min's like, *I'm going to slut-shame you from the privacy of my own head.* And it's like, Min? Shut the fuck up.

S: Yeah.

E: It also takes Leane approximately, uh, twenty seconds of dialogue time to completely make over her face, which just goes to show you –

S: I know, that's very funny.

E: - that Robert Jordan knows nothing.

S: Yeah, and Min's like, *By the time she's done, like, her cheekbones are higher, and her eyes look different, and like –*

E: Yeah, she's done full contouring, bitch.

S: - yeah, in like twenty seconds? No.

E: In like twenty seconds and with products that I'm assuming are *old*?

S: Yeah.

E: Have like, melted?

S: Probably are not her skin tone if they're made for Min?

E: Yeah, what the hell?

S: Yeah, and like he gives her a mirror that's in the size of a compact, so it's probably, like, cracked. And she's just like, *Perfect. Drag makeup.*

E: Ahh! Robert Jordan doesn't know anything about makeup. Robert Jordan was like, *I'm going to put all my scholarship about the Civil War into this text, and I'm just gonna bullshit the rest. Makeup?*

S: Don't know her.

E: Don't know her. Not even gonna watch a tutorial.

S: And it's very, like – I really like this plot of Leane becoming more feminine, and leaning more into her sexuality. Like, I think it's a fun plot. Of course, it is, like, mishandled by Robert Jordan, who's like, *She does it for power, not just because she likes flirting, and that's a completely acceptable way of social interaction.* And she's always using it to try and get something. And yeah, everyone else is brutally mocking her for it, instead of being, like, *Cool. Good for Leane.*

E: Yeah, and like, the idea that if she flirts with the wrong guy the guy is going to take it the wrong way and then Leane is obligated to have sex with him. As though flirting is in any way consent.

S: Yeah. Which is very upsetting. Obviously

E: Yeah, so that's like super fun discourse. But then they, uh, get picked up to go stand –

S: Oh, and Leane has also, like, tailored her entire dress in the time they've been in this shed? To like – like, it's tight around her boobs and her waist, and it's like, how did you just do this?

E: [speaking over] It's got a lower neckline. I was like, what?

S: In, like, five minutes? Maybe I just don't understand ... dresses.

E: No, like, they – Sarah McClintock, weigh in. How long would that take? Especially considering I'm assuming Leane hasn't been doing her own seamstress work.

S: Yeah, for at least a while.

E: For decades.

S: Yeah, because she's been Keeper for however long.

E: For however long Sivan's been Keeper, which is at least fifteen years.

S: Yeah. Yeah.

E: And you have to be Aes Sedai before that, so –

S: A long fucking time.

E: [growsl]

S: All women just know how to sew, right? We're born with the talent.

E: [speaking over] It's inherent. You're born with a needle and thread in your mouth.

S: Yeah. That's how we know it's a girl. No one's gonna check if she has a vagina, that's disgusting. But not all women have vaginas, so excuse my heteronormativity there, and cisgendered focus. I apologize. For a silly joke. Anyway, they get taken by some grumpy old man, to trial.

E: To trial. We immediately find out that the people who are taking them to trial, the people against whom the crime was committed, are, like, the town cheats. Which is kinda funny, but also like a weird way of stepping around, um, the guilt that someone might feel – I would feel really bad.

S: I would feel terrible! Like, if –

E: If someone's barn got burned down, and –

E & S: All their cows died!

E: Robert Jordan is like, *I'm gonna absolve them of this guilt by making all the people involved assholes*. And it's like, OK, that's a little ... I don't know, on the nose. But, uh, they see Gareth Bryne, Suan freaks out because of course she's seen Gareth Bryne before and is worried he'll recognize her. Leane does her flirty-flirt stuff. Gareth pops a boner, probably.

S: I would.

E: Yeah, who wouldn't. And then he's like, *Alright, ladies, tell me who you are*. Min's just like, *Please just let me out of here*. And Suan's like, *I'm gonna glare at you with my big beautiful blue eyes, that you will literally not shut up about for the next eight books*.

E & S: [both make retching sounds]

E: Anyway, as we already said, Gareth Bryne is like, *Your punishment is indentured servitude. Good fucking luck*. And Suan is like, *OK, I'll do the whole big oath. The big oath that no one but a Darkfriend would break*. Which she later is like, *I did not give a timetable, therefore I am free to do as I want*. And it's like, that ain't how it works, lady.

S: Nuh-uh.

E: And also, like, what if you die?

S: Yeah. You'd have chose a different oath.

E: Yeah, she's like, *I just didn't want anyone to be watching us*. And I was like ...

S: You could have just chosen a different oath.

E: Yeah, they took way more notice of you for doing this whack thing -

S: [speaking over] Saying this crazy oath, yeah.

E: - than they would have otherwise.

S: And Gareth Bryne is like, *Well, fuck, OK*.

E: Yeah, but it ensures Gareth Bryne's instant fetishization of her. Um, it's odd, because, whatever, they are leaving and then Logain comes and rescues them and is like, *Hi, I'm in charge now*. And it's like, bleurgh. Whatever, Logain, nobody cares about you. It's interesting the way that Robert Jordan goes out of his way to sanitize Gareth Bryne's sexual desire for Suan by making his obsession not about sex but about this, like, curiosity invoked by their one twenty second encounter? Which, as far as I know is not how people work? If someone immediately attracts your attention there's generally an aspect of sexual desire to it, and there's no shame in that.

S: Yeah.

E: But it is a little bit weird that you then gather your entire army and then go after her? That's just, like, hella desperate.

S: Yeah. Yeah. Because what happens by not just letting him be like, *I was very attracted to this woman*, and treating that normally instead of taking his whole army, and by like, deferring that to this obsession about the oath that she spoke during a trial over which he was in charge, it then becomes, like, something about a power dynamic? So, it switches the focus from just, like, sexual desire to some really complicated messy power dynamic. To quote Janelle Monáe, you know, sex is about power.

E: Power is about sex.

S: Yeah. Everything is about sex, except power, which is about ... Everything is about power, except sex— Wah! I'm fucking it up. Listen to *Dirty Computer*, it's a very good album.

E: Oh, OK.

S: Um, and so it's just like, it *is* about his sexual desire, it's just like Robert Jordan isn't letting that just be explicit. Which is what you just said.

E: Yeah, well, but then he's also trying to weave in this thread of Robert Jord— I mean, excuse me, of Gareth Bryne doing this very, uh, I'm sorry, I have forgotten who pointed this out to us on Patreon, but one of our listeners was making a comparison between Gareth Bryne and Robert E. Lee. And especially I think that is relevant here, because Robert E. Lee was also kind of a gentleman farmer.

S: That was Sam. Thanks, Sam.

E: Sam! Thank you. And who kind of has this like, local home, local um —

S: Local boy!

E: - home town hero, you know, about him, and that's what Gareth Bryne has here when he's going out with like, all of the old men who haven't seen combat in a while and who are tired, I guess, of being at home? Erm, as opposed to a plotline which I think would make sense considering where Gareth Bryne is at personally, where he's just been thrown out by Morgase, his long-time — it is implied — lover, um, if he just was like, *I can't - I don't want to do this responsibility, my right-hand lady is doing fine without me, I don't really need to be here. I'm just gonna go pursue this woman*. Still creepy, but less, there's less of a power dynamic to it when he's not at the head of an army.

S: Yeah, where he's like, *I'm not gonna take my whole army to hunt this woman down because I was turned on by her eyeballs*. Again with the eyeballs!

E: Again! Always the sexy eyeballs.

S: OK, the quote is from a Janelle Monáe song *Screwed*, on their album — I don't know if she uses "their", but she did come out as non-binary —

E: I believe she said "she" is OK.



S: Sorry, she slash they, Janelle Monáe's song *Screwed*, on the album *Dirty Computer*, the line is: "See everything is sex, except sex, which is power."

E: Except sex, which is power.

S: "You know power, it's just sex. You screw me and I'll screw you, too."

E: Damn.

S: God, I really like this song. OK, but yeah, Gareth Bryne and Siuan's dynamic is just the worst. Especially because when you get into his point of view, he's like, *Well, if the Domani woman was a little bit more well-trained in her art of flirting, I probably would have had a different response, but she was a little too fast here, and a little too slow here*. Like he was some *expert* in flirting!

E: Yeah, it was just like, annoying. He's just annoying. I've never experienced a Gareth Bryne point of view that I've enjoyed.

S: Yeah, he's very much like, kind of got this "holier than thou" thing –

E: He's got big "OK, boomer" energy. That's what I'm gonna say.

S: Oh my God. He *does* have big "OK, boomer" energy.

E: He also looks, when he describes the hat that he puts on, I imagine him as looking like, uh, you know that guy in the really purple outfit in the Disney animated *Pocahontas* movie? Which the high hat –

S: Oh, yeah.

E: - and the little pug dog? That's what I imagined him looking like.

S: Gareth Bryne does have big "white-guy villain" energy.

E: Colonizer energy?

S: Colonizer energy, that's the word.

E: Mm-hmm. Which is pretty similar to "OK, boomer" energy.

S: Yeah. He's gross, and I don't like the way he talks about women. But! Worse than him, somehow ...

E: Is everything happening in Caemlyn! Uh, huge shout-out to homeboy Tallanvor, who I do hate, but I think it's hilarious that every time Robert Jordan needs a guard in Caemlyn, it's Tallanvor.

S: Yeah.

E: It's like he's the only one. Like –

S: [laughing]

E: - maybe the entire palace is being run by Tallanvor.

S: Maybe would explain a little bit why he's so stressed out and miserable.

E: He's always fucking stressed, super horny for Morgase, because he's disgusting, and just like, the worst. My little brother texted me yesterday and was like, *What's the different between chivalry and benevolent sexism?* And it was such like an out of the blue question.

S: Ooh, I'm curious as to what your answer is, I feel like I'd struggle with that one a little bit.

E: I talked about how chivalry has like, a historical context, and a literary context, and also how modern chivalry can be genderless, and can just be about helping populations besides just women who may be in need of help?

S: Excellent.

E: I don't know.

S: Benevolent sexism is you thinking you're being good to women.

E: Yeah, well, benevolent sexism is reducing women's agency by putting them on a pedestal, or so I said. I don't know – I don't know, Adam, I can't talk about my brother's feminism because it's too bizarre to me.

S: Hopefully he'll get there.

E: One day. [sings] One day more!

S: [sings] One day more til revelation, Adam. [laughs] OK, but yeah, the high lady Alteira?

E: Alteima, who we last saw –

S: Alteima.

E: - at the beginning of book four, I believe fainting in the Stone of Tear? Dramatically.

S: Because Rand channels or some shit.

E: Because Rand says that her husband, her ailing husband –

S: Oh, yeah!

E: - is going to be put in the charge of Alteima's rival, so that they can then conspire against Alteima. Which, again, if you're a normal person and are reading these at a normal pace and not for a podcast where you analyze them extensively, you probably forgot, and that's OK, because, who the *fuck* would remember *that*?

S: Yeah. It was like a thousand pages ago.

E: Yeah.

S: And I'm like, who's this lady?

E: And Alteima's like a huge dick, which you can see immediately by the way she treats her servants, but she is on a mission to chat with Morgase and gain some power in Caemlyn. So, she goes and talks to Morgase, compares her to a flower, as one does. Is of course super-envious, because women can't see beautiful women without being envious. That's the emotion I always experience when I see a hot woman. It's definitely not, you know ... [laughs]

S: You know.

E: You know.

S: Yeah, I don't know. I don't know. Robert Jordan is on strike two in the first two chapters, the first being, uh, Graendal cannot be hot because Lanfear is so hot –

E: [laughing]

S: - and then the second chapter is Morgase, this absolutely beautiful woman, is in, like, a sheer gown, with her, like, titties out –

E: Titties fully out.

S: - and then this other lady is just like, super-envious, not like, *Maybe I'm a little gay?*

E: Yeah. Honestly.

S: And you know what? Titties are nice.

E: You know what's nice? In *Critical Role* – I'm sorry, this is relevant – one of the main characters, her mother is a renowned courtesan –

S: Cool.

E: - and sex worker who is also like, really well fleshed-out. So, a) she's like the hottest woman alive and everyone knows it, and she's also like, adorable, she's agoraphobic, she never leaves her house, and just super-supportive of her daughter and just like the nicest. And I'm just like, that's the way to write a MILF, you know?

S: Yeah. One hundo p.

E: So, shout out to Matt Mercer for –

S: That perfect MILF that he created!

E: - for roleplaying a MILF really well.

S: For our benefit. He didn't have to, but he did.

E: He did that for us.

S: He could have gone the Morgase route, and been like, *Der der der, she's like, really hot, but she used to be really conservative and now because she's in the thralls of a man, titties out*. Instead of being like, *She's being sexually abused*.

E: It's, yeah, scary. Shout out also to Matt, not Matt Mercer specifically but *Critical Role* for not demonizing sex work. It's a really nice thing about their fantasy universe. Anyway. Um, yeah, Morgase is, like, to us, the readers, clearly out of it, and struggling in some way. She's not quite making sense. Like, in their conversation, she's behaving a little bit oddly, but Alteima's so fucking self-centered that she doesn't pick up on it. Then Rahvin himself entered, he is described as "darkly handsome", which is racism, erm, and really buys into the stereotype of black men abusing white women, so, thanks for that one, Robbie J. And he's like, *Morgase, why don't you go take a fucking nap?* [laughs] And Morgase is like, *OK*. And then he sits down to interrogate Alteima, clearly using mind powers, which we've seen once before in *The Shadow Rising*, when Nynaeve and Elayne were subjected to it via Moghedien. This whole Compulsion thing. And then we briefly switch over to Morgase's point of view as she's like, laying in bed, like, *Am I taking – What am I doing? Was I gonna take a nap? I'm not tired*.

S: It's very upsetting.

E: It is, yeah, upsetting. Morgase has a ... an interesting storyline in this.

S: Yeah. For sure.

E: If Robert Jordan was at all, you know, capable of writing about women and trauma, then it might be a really fascinating thing, but instead it just is handled in really upsetting ways sometimes.

S: Yeah, like the fact that Tallanvor is a character.

E: Like Tallanvor just generally. Imagine if they ran away without Tallanvor, if it was just Morgase, her old fucking nurse –

S: And then Basel Gill and Lamgwin.

E: - Basel Gill, the old innkeeper, and Lamgwin, the guy who just loves his cat.

S: And the cat, obviously.

E: And the cat. I think his girlfriend comes along.

S: Yeah.

E: It just, it would be so much better without Tallanvor.

S: Yeah, being there like young and frat-boy and moody.

E: Yeah, because then it would be – without Tallanvor, it would stop being like a romance, Arthurian knight-saving-lady thing, and then it could become like a dissection of the class system, and Morgase really getting to know the people she's been in charge of for the last however-long. I think that would be nice. But what do I know.

S: Yeah. Nothing. That's all about saving women.

E: Nothing! I'm a wit- I'm a woman, all I know about is how to sew a dress. Immediately. And contouring. [English accent] "If the men find out we can shape-shift, they're going to tell the church!"

S: [laughing] God, I love that video.

E: It's a very good video. *Contouring 101* by, I think, Sailor Jay on YouTube. Look it up!

S: [laughing] "find out we can shape-shift, they're going to tell the church!"

E: So that's those chapters, I guess. Anything to add?

S: No.

E: That wasn't "those chapters", that was one chapter. It just felt –

S: It felt like eight chapters.

E: Yeah. Seriously.

S: No, I think that pretty much covers it. There's a lot of, like, of course, there's a parallel, though it's, yeah, kind of dangerous territory to say that sexual abuse is the same as, like, a spoken oath, but there's a parallel in the power dynamics presented to these two powerful women in these chapters, and like, classic *Wheel of Time* narrative, any powerful woman has to be brought low.

E: Yeah, I mean, that's the parallel, is of these two women who were pretty much on top of the world when we started book one, and have now been so extremely reduced in their circumstances, but yeah, you're right, it becomes unsettling there in the way Robert Jordan is handling it, to put them in situations of pursuit by a man that they haven't expressed any interest in. And, you know, rape.

S: Yeah. Yeah. So, just like these various transgressions against their consent. And just the – like, I am so tired of *Wheel of Time* "any powerful woman has to be brought low, because women cannot have power. They must be humbled, and they must be married off."

E: Absolutely must be. If you're not married by the end of *The Wheel of Time* series, then you're dead, probably.

S: Or they'll take you out back and shoot you.

E: Yeah. That's how it works.

S: Gonna invent guns just to shoot unmarried women.

E: Mat Cauthon will invent guns. He's already done cannons.

S: Mat wouldn't wanna shoot unmarried women, though.

E: He wouldn't. He would love them. Be like, [inaudible]

S: Like, literally.

[S & E both laugh]

E: But that's what happens when you invent cannons, you know?

S: Had to do it to them.

E: Had to do it to them.

S: That was his fate or whatever the fuck.

E: Hmmm. So that's chapter one. Next chapter –

S: Chapter two.

E: - chapter two, we will move over to Rhuidean where we will catch up with Rand, Asmodean, Egwene, Moiraine and Mat. And Aviendha and Lan and all of our other favorite – or less than favorite – characters.

S: Yeah.

E: Why is Lan even in this series? He stops being relevant after book one.

S: I don't know. He should have died at the Eye of the World.

E: You're so right.

S: I'm just finished – I'm about to finish, tonight, transcribing our season one finale, and I'm like, Lan could have died, so many times.

E: He just could have died. Yeah. He didn't have to have a tragic back story. He could have just died.

S: Should have been like a good dude, who helped train Rand how to sword fight, and awoke Nynaeve's sexual desires –

E: And then died.

S: - and then died, like a good boy! [laughs]

E: It's the best that [laughing] a man can do sometimes.

S: Men, yeah.

E: OK.

S: Thank you to Glynn Mackenzie for our fabulous theme song.

E: [laughs]

S: What?

E: Nothing, I'm just sorry I can't end a podcast.

S: It's OK. It's my one skill. It's the one thing I bring to this podcast.

E: That's not true.

S: The outro. Thank you Glynna Mackenzie for our wonderful theme song. We love it. I got in my car this morning and because I was transcribing last night my phone automatically started playing the new episode of EHR, and I like, heard my voice and I was like, oh my God.

E: What the fuck ...

S: What's happening? But then Glynna started singing to me and it was a lovely way to start the morning, so thank you, Glynna. Erm, as always, thank you to the people who support us on Patreon, who enable us to keep making this podcast by helping us to pay our hosting fees and other various things that we need to do to keep the podcast running, like create merchandise. Which we didn't *need* to do but I guess we did. And thank you to everyone who has bought stickers so far, including my brother Ian, who bought one this morning, which was very cute.

E: Aw, thanks, Ian.

S: And if you have not done so, that's a great way to support the podcast, if a monthly pledge on Patreon is just not in your reach right now. Which is totally understandable. The economy sucks. You know. But yeah, thanks for listening, thanks for being a part of our friendly *Wheely Time* neighborhood, and, yeah.

E: Do you have a sign off?

S: I do. Yesterday – not yesterday, because I didn't go to work yesterday – Monday, I went to work, and I had this little jar of honey at my desk, which apparently is a crime [both laugh] because I am allowed no pleasures, but because the weather is getting warmer the ants got inside, which is just what happens when it's springtime.

E: Like, you work at an aviary, it feels like if ants are gonna be anywhere, they're gonna be there.

S: Yeah, it's just like there are always bugs and ants and so it was like ... There was a lot of ants, so it was like, a little gross, but by the time I got in today, they were gone so it wasn't like a big deal. But I had an email being like, *Hey there's ants over there because of your honey*. And someone came up to me like, *Because of your honey there are ants*. And then another person was like, *It's because of your honey that there are ants*. And the other person was like, *You need to keep your shit in the kitchen*, basically. And I was like, oh my God, I understand that I was the cause of this, but it's not like I did it on purpose, could we stop being so aggressive about it? I feel bad enough.

E: Caaaaalm .... down!

S: Yeah. So, that was a bummer. And I was just like, feeling really sensitive that day, and was like, wow, I can't believe I'm such a failure and that everything I do is shit and ass, because everyone was like, *Your fucking honey*. It was a bummer.

E: But you were just supporting the bees.

S: I was trying to support the bees.

E: They're trying so hard.

S: They are trying so hard. Bee happy.

E: Aw, yeah, you have a little bee on your mug.

S: Yeah. A little bee mug. Anyway, that was a bumner-oosky, I was like, could you stop yelling at me about my honey. Anyway. I don't – don't show me that.

E: It's the cover. Of *Fires of Heaven*.

S: I don't wanna see that! It's so bad. [laughs]

E: Don't do a war crime! Goodbye.

[ENDS]