



Episode 108: **Pain Box**

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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]

E: I don't know what the smell is, but –

S: It's like a harvest blend, like –

E: Maybe like, cinnamon is what I'm smelling.

S: Yeah, it's got like, cinnamon, and it's got a little bad apple in it.

E: Cinnamon. Gosh, maybe I would like an apple. No, pumpkin spice – apple spice [laughing]. Isn't that just what apple cider is?

S: Yeah.

E: OK. I've never had cider.

S: Really?

E: Yeah.

S: Huh. It's fine.

E: It's like, a hot drink, right?

S: Yeah.

E: Yeah, I guess I've always thought if there's a hot drink that could be had, usually hot chocolate is an option and I'd rather have hot chocolate than hot apple juice.

S: Yeah, I don't really like it because it is just, like, hot, slightly stronger apple juice? And I've just never really taken to it, but –

E: I can barely eat fruits and vegetables to begin with.

S: Erm, when you were researching Twitch, can we just do it on my laptop?

E: The problem is I think –

S: Not for *Wind Walker*. I just think it would be funny to make *The Wheel of Time* characters in *The Sims*.

[both laughing]

E: Oh, yes, we could do that from your laptop. That could be a potential, next-week's-quarantine –

S: [speaking over] I just thought that would be funny.

E: - activity. Is *Sims* working on your computer?

S: I mean, it should be now. I haven't tried it, but it, like, redownloaded, so I just need to figure out if that's a possibility, but –

E: I think it would be. I'll have to figure it out, but yeah, you'd just have to download Twitch on your computer and we'd have to set up a mic, and we can do it so that people can just see the screen or they can see you while you're –

S: I would want you to do it with me.

E: - us, while we're playing with *Wheel of Time* character Sims.

S: I just thought it would be fun.

E: I think that will be fun, too. *The Sims 4* is such a delightful game.

S: So – just an idea that I had. Trying to give the people what they want.

E: Yeah, I could play *Minecraft* and make the White Tower or something. No, that would take *so* long, you guys don't even know. The sheer amount of stone I would have to mine to make the White Tower. I can't even think about it.

S: Think about what the Ogier had to do. Did the Ogier make the White Tower?

E: I know they made Tar Valon. Do you think every day is like a game of *Minecraft* to the Ogier?

S: Yeah. They're like, *oh, gotta build a huge tower so I know where my house is.*

E: That's how their eyeballs work, they only see squares.

S: Yeah, oh my God [laughs].

E: Everyone is made of squares.

S: Yarrghh. Arrgh. Just little blocky people.

E: Just little blocky people. That's why Loial's always like, *I don't really get the appeal of human* –

S: *They're very ugly.*

E: - *women. Look at this lady Ogier. She's so beautiful.* I wish Loial was here. That's the one downside of having no Perrin points of view in *The Fires of Heaven* is we don't have Loial or Gaul, either. Two of the best boys. Instead we have to deal endlessly and nonsensically with Rand's woman troubles.

S: [drawn-out, frustrated, rattling sigh, continues through Emily's next couple of sentences]

E: I know. As if being stuck inside for weeks on end couldn't get worse, we had to read these chapters. Oh, man. It's so bad. This is *Everybody Hates Rand*, your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* podcast. I'm Emily Juchau –

S: And I'm Sally Goodger.

E: - and we're doing OK.

S: I am not doing OK. But I'm trying to do OK.

E: I was like – I was pulling the median from us, the average.

S: OK.

E: You're doing terribly and I'm doing pretty well, considering the circumstances, so.

S: OK. So, yesterday, I think I convinced Gethin to read *Wheel of Time* out of spite? So that he could read it faster than me. [both laughing] So we'll see how that goes.

E: The perfect reason to read *Wheel of Time*.

S: Yeah because he was talking – Gethin has apparently read *Dune* three times.

E: OK! OK.

S: Yeah. And I was, like –

E: Does he listen to this podcast?

S: No.

E: No, Gethin! Gethin, you absolute –

S: Yeah. Apparently, he *loves Dune*. And I haven't read *Dune* so I can't speak to it, but Emily has and I trust her, so I'm going to say that's not good.

E: It's like – I don't know, I can see how in some people's minds or, depending on what your experience was as a child – or any other number of factors, I don't want to make huge overreaching judgment calls – I can see how *Dune* would be appealing to some people. I – because I have spent half my life reading the *Wheel of Time*, partly, and partly just because I'm over white colonialist male fantasy, was just like, I can't really do this. But, kinda that's just what happens when you read books in a genre that you've devoted half your life to studying, so I'm coming at it from a cynic's perspective. There are a couple great things about *Dune*. Namely, the worms.

S: [laughs] *There are a couple – Wait, just the worms.*

E: Just the worms, and also the “fear is the mind killer” speech, because it's so fucking funny. Like, do you even know the circumstances under which the “fear is the mind killer” speech happens?

S: Nuh-uh.

E: At the very beginning of the book, Paul – the main character is named Paul, as you may recall – and his mother, whose name is Jessica, they like, go – Basically, Jessica is like an Aes Sedai, because Robert Jordan plagiarized everything from Frank Carter, apparently, and they go to meet the Amyrlin Seat equivalent, who's like testing Paul, to see if he's the Chosen One or whatever? And she's like, *You have to put your hand into this pain box [both laughing] and find out if you are a man or an animal, because if you're a man then you'll be able to endure the pain. If you're an animal, you'll just let your reflexes drive you to get away from the pain.*

S: Why do you find out if you're a man or an animal? He's a man! [laughing]

E: I don't know, this is the first chapter I read, and I was like, what is happening?

S: What happens to the animals?

E: I don't – they're just animals. They're not worthy of being the Chosen Ones, apparently.

S: Hmm.

E: It was like – it's like some test of self-worth.

S: OK, pain box.

E: Pain box. There's no actual injury happening to his hand, but in classic sci-fi fashion, it's like, making your brain think that there's pain. So, it's like, *Can you keep your hand in the pain box?* There's like a fancy fantasy word for it, but I forgot.

S: The pain box?

E: Yeah, I just think of it as the pain box. But anyway, he's like "fear is the mind killer" when he's like, thinking about putting his hand in the box. *Fear is the little-death that obliterates everything.* [laughing]

S: OK!

E: So, that's *Dune*, I guess?

S: Yesterday, when we were having the conversation about *Dune*, they were putting in screenshots from the movie into the group chat, Gethin and Julie, and I discovered that the man who plays Paul in one of the adaptations plays Trey in *Sex and the City*.

E: Who?

S: Let me pull it up.

E: Whose boyfriend is that?

S: That is Charlotte's first husband. I think you came in on my re-watch at the end –

E: I came in right as she was getting involved with her second husband –

S: Harry.

E: - Harry.

S: Yeah, this guy.

E: Oh, my Christ.

S: Shall we watch *Dune*?

E: I'd sooner perish. I'd sooner put my face in a pain box than watch *Dune*.

S: What is – Why are his nipples just out?

E: I mean, were they going to put Timothée Chalamet in that exact outfit?

S: Is Timothée Chalamet gonna be in *Dune*?

E: Yeah, he's supposed to be in – I don't know what the status of *Dune* is, a) given the global pandemic, and b) just given that I haven't really heard anything about it recently [both laughing], but yeah, he's supposed to be Paul.

S: Paul? [pronounced like "Pall"]

E: Pall. Paul Atreides.

S: I don't – I don't know. Timothée Chalamet, why are you famous?

E: [speaking over] I think Zendaya is supposed to be in it. I don't know. I don't get it. Just because Greta [pronounced "Greeta"] Gerwig or whoever, loves him?

S: Greta Gerwig.

E: Greta Gerwig.

S: Greta [pronounced "Greeta"] Gerwig? I don't know. Did he get famous because of *Call Me By Your Name*? Wasn't that his big break?

E: Yeah, his homophobic bullshit.

S: Gross. I just – like, he's in everything, now, and I just [pause] constantly forget what he looks like.

E: I do, too. I can't remember what he looks like now. I see, like, hair. I think I'm imposing Harry Styles on him –

S: I just see hair. [laughs] Fair. That's fair.

E: Anyway, I guess we do have to talk about *Wheel of Time*, eventually. The problem is, there's really nothing to talk about.

S: Yeah, these are just, like ...

E: Two boring chapters.

S: Yeah, the only thing they really do is set up Rand and Aviendha's weird, like, sleeping arrangement in this novel.

E: Yeah, which I always forget is like, a thing.

S: Yeah.

E: I mean, I guess it has to be a thing for sex igloo to happen. It's like Robert Jordan's writing his own fan-fiction with his own characters. He's like, *Get this – they have to sleep in the same room.*

S: For reasons unknown.

E: The sexual tension must mount. Yeah. Because Aviendha's like, *I don't want to.* And the Wise Ones are like, *You must.* And everyone's like, *Why?* And they're like, *We're not telling.* [both laughing]

S: And like –

E: *It's best to remain mysterious.* And Rand himself says, "Aviendha's not a very good spy."

S: Yeah.

E: She's absolute shit at it.

S: Yeah.

E: So, like, why is she there to begin with?

S: I don't know. Is it just the Wise Ones being like, *We know you two are horny for each other, and we're gonna meddle?*

E: I don't know.

S: *Because that's what old women do, apparently.*

E: It's like, are they trying to get Rand and Aviendha together so that Rand will be tethered to the Aiel in this one particular way? Because if that's the case, I already feel like the entire situation is like this, but I feel like that's pretty unethical, and I wish that, erm, characters who I otherwise generally like wouldn't resort to such unethical measures. Like, take Aviendha's consent into account, please.

S: I know.

E: Regardless of whether she's horny for him. You can be horny for a lot of people and not actually want to sleep with them.

S: It's true.

E: That's how I feel about [pause] I can't think of anyone – most men, I guess [laughs].

S: I don't know. Chris Hemsworth.

E: Yeah! Chris Hemsworth! Like, Chris Hemsworth could fuck, and I'd be like, damn. He's fuckable, and I think he's really sexy. But he has a wife and children, and I have other concerns in my life [Sally laughing in background] that prevent me from fucking Chris Hemsworth.

S: Yeah.

E: There are just a lot of factors to consider! [both laughing]

S: Yeah, what's the –

E: As though Chris Hemsworth's *wife* is the number one reason for me, a stranger, not fucking him. We don't know each other!

S: That's probably –

E: That's number one! The point is that it's nonsensical and as far as I know it's never really explained any more deeply than it is here.

S: Yeah, and it's just, like, so indicative of the way relationships are written in this series, which I know we have got on our soapbox about a million times, but to just be, like, the foundation of any romantic, sexual, any type of intimate relationship is just going to be completely nonsensical is just very frustrating. It's just like – Aviendha and Rand, I guess, spend the most direct time together?

E: Yeah, but all –

S: At this point in the series?

E: But all their time together is spent, like, sniping at each other.

S: Yeah, so it's like, it's all antagonistic – Aviendha does not have a say in the matter because she's being forced to do it, and it's like –

E: Rand doesn't have a say in the matter because she's being forced to do it. He says in his little internal monologue that Aviendha can be pleasant company, when she, like, forgets where she is, but we haven't seen any evidence of that in the text. The only conversations we ever get from them are them being mad at each other. So ...

S: Mm-hm. It's just very yucky.

E: Yeah.

S: It's one of the more yucky things that happens in the *Wheel of Time* in terms of interpersonal relationships.

E: It seems to be built on the presumption that Robert Jordan has that any young man and woman who share a scene together will by necessity have sexual tension, which is certainly not true.

S: Yeah.

E: But, like, he seems to think that because in his head this is where they're going to go, that there's no effort involved in creating sexual tension. When in fact, that's something you have to write into the characters' relationship. It doesn't just appear because you will it to.

S: Yeah. Shocking.

E: Shocking, I know.

S: Yeah, and it also is the, like – I think there's a hint in it that Robert Jordan writes most scenes with sexual overtones as if they are comical rather than genuine? So, like, a lot of the Aiel's complicated honor system plays out as confusing or comical for our non-Aiel characters. And so, of course, like, you've got Egwene being absolutely horrified by the concept that Rand and Aviendha would share a room together. You've got, like, Rand being super embarrassed and Aviendha being, like, *Whatever*, and that's supposed to have some sort of comedic overtone rather than just being, *Sure, sex and romance can be fun and funny but also, there should be, like, safety at the core of all of that*.

E: Yeah, sex and romance should be fun and funny if the characters are in on the joke.

S: Yeah.

E: Just setting people up in a situation that's terrible isn't actually fun.

S: Yeah. And it just, like, again, comes out so many times with Egwene when she's sneaking away to make out with Gawyn every day and everyone's mocking her. And yeah, she's being ridiculous, but isn't there any, sort of – she's just having a nice time. Why does it always have to be, like, people are like, *Oh, she's so silly and horny*.

E: Yeah.

S: Or even some scenes with Mat and Tylin are played for the joke.

E: Oh, yeah. Mat's entire relationship with Tylin is, like, played for laughs, when it's like, *Oh, homie. No.*

S: Yeah. And it's just very frustrating. The whole thing is very frustrating. Because it's like – I don't know, man. Intimacy is a serious subject.

E: Yeah, especially because – I don't know, I keep thinking of how Rand hasn't really had any relationships with women before this point. I mean, there's been Egwene but their relationship hasn't gone into the realm of sexual, and so it just feels like these are kids, I guess, in a way.

S: Yeah.

E: Which isn't to say that virginity makes you immature, it's just that, their lack of experience combined with their age, combined with their general lack of maturity just as characters, really sets up this to be uncomfortable.

S: Yeah, it feels very predatory on the part of the Aes Sedai, for sure. Not just for Aviendha, but for Rand, especially since they know it's, like, not his culture to have to share your bedroom with anybody before you're married.

E: Yeah. Because Egwene's like, *He'd probably be fine with it, but I don't really know.* And it's like, if I heard "I don't know", then I'd be like, well, we're not going to do anything, then.

S: Yeah. I don't know.

E: So, it's enthusiastic consent, you know? This scene also – this scene, these chapters – also set up Rand's tumultuous relationship with all of the Maidens, which is a little more actually funny, but still a little weird, because it has to do with Rand not understanding culture, and also being a huge misogynist, so that's not as funny as Robert Jordan thinks it is.

S: Yeah.

E: But, Rand's sleeping quarters, his room, is in this big building that the Maidens have taken over, and have been like, *This is gonna be our HQ in Rhuidean, and also Rand sleeps here. Men don't, but Rand is the exception.* He's got this little room in the middle of it. Windowless.

S: Yeah.

E: Sort of troubling. I don't think I could sleep in a windowless room. Like, I know windows are their own set of danger, but –

S: No, it's like – my window in New York was really small, and that was always really upsetting. Because I was like, where's the sunshine?

E: Yeah, where's the air?

S: How do I get out? This is a fire hazard.

E: Exactly, yeah. Especially because Rand talks about doing some bullshit channeling that Asmodean told him to do that'll make the room warmer, and he, like, woke up in the middle of the night on fire.

S: Yeah.

E: Which is like what happens if I leave a space heater on, too much.

S: Yeah, that space heater gets really hot, really quick.

E: That space heater – yeah, I know. I have one in my room at home, too. Which, because the room is a lot bigger it takes a lot longer, but still. If you just leave it on, all night, then it's like, [gasps] where am I?

S: *The house is on fire! There's no oxygen!*

E: The house is on fucking – argh!

S: Yeah, but Rando-boy sleeps in a big palace thing? And he talks about –

E: [speaking over] Yeah, and he talks about, like, coming in and all the Maidens are acting like they're at summer camp, just sitting around playing games, chatting. And everyone's like, *Oh, hey, Rand? How's it going, Rand? Rand, have you been drinking enough? Rand – you're a white boy. Stay out of the sun.* [Sally laughing] And Rand's like, *Literally, I am one of you.*

S: *We have the same skin complexion.*

E: *We have the same skin.* Um, and Rand's really annoyed by all their, quote-unquote, mothering of him. I guess I feel like showing concern for people is not inherently maternal.

S: Yeah, it's not inherently motherly. [frustrated noise] I hate Rand's relationship to the Maidens. Where he's like, *Why don't they treat me with more respect?* And yet they are not disrespectful to you at all. I don't know, man, I just think – Like, I get it, it's frustrating. As someone who gets told constantly, like, you're not sleeping enough, you need to do this, you need to do that, you're not competent enough to take care of yourself. It's very frustrating to be infantilized in that way. But there is, just like, Rand's overtones of misogyny on top of it, that I don't wanna be treated like – like, they are women.

E: Yeah, he talks about how they treat him as a brother or a son, as though the only male/female relationships that he can conceptualize that are platonic are also familial. When you can just be friends with women. Shocking, I know. You and the Maidens can just have a nice relationship where you respect each other.

S: No, that's not allowed.

E: That's not allowed in *Wheely World*.

S: Nope. Gotta be fucking.

E: Gotta be – it's only allowed between Mat and Birgitte for some reason. The exception to the rule.

S: Yeah, it's because Mat is too hot for Birgitte.

E: Mat is too hot for Birgitte. And yeah, that's – well, Mat never really thinks of Birgitte sexually, either. I've been thinking about that. He doesn't really sexualize her. Even when she dresses in that, like, slutty Hallowe'en costume, he's like, *What's happening? I don't know* –

S: She's like, *I'm having the best day of my life, that's what's happening!*

E: What's going – she's like, *I like it when people look at me*. And he's like, *OK! You do you! You're very confusing, though*.

S: And she's like, *Yes. I do. I do*. I love Birgitte.

E: I love Birgitte, too. I wish that we were at the part of the book where she is here. But, alas. That won't be for a while.

S: But, yeah, then Aviendha comes in, lo and behold, and is like, *Ber-ber-der, we hate each other, you belong to Elayne*, whatever.

E: She's like, *Here, have a belt buckle that I had made for you*. And Rand's like, *Thank you?* But she's like, *Don't worry, it's not because I like you or anything, it's because of a tradition that when I become a Wise One I have to melt down all my weapons from when I was a Maiden and turn them into gifts and give them to people I hate*. And Rand's like, *Great, so you hate me!* And she's like, *Yes*.

S: Copy that!

E: And he's like, *Cool. Thank you. So glad that you keep spending time in my company, then!* Like, you could do anything, go away! And all this, like, bullshit about how he belongs to Elayne. And he's like, *That isn't how this works. Like, Elayne and I made out a few times, and she left me a very confusing series of letters, but that does not mean we're engaged. We're not even really boyfriend and girlfriend, you know? Like, but also I do not want to sleep with this lady – Isendre?*

S: Yeah.

E: Isendre? – who is now like, one of the servants for the Maidens because you might remember at the end of the last book she was stealing a bunch of shit, and so now she's like, wandering around dressed just in the jewelry she stole. Which, again, seems like a set-up for one of Robert Jordan's weird fetishes. Doesn't seem like something anyone would *actually* do.

S: Yeah, because again, it's just, like, nakedness is a punishment, ha-ha ha ha-ha.

E: Yeah.

S: It's just like, *She's naked-y*. But also, like, to her credit, she doesn't seem bothered that much by it.

[both laughing]

E: She's like, *Yeah, this is great, the set-up I've been dreaming of. I'm just wearing hella jewelry, that was looted from other cities*.

S: Nice.

E: *Nice, nice, nice. Check me out.* But she also keeps trying to, like, get to Rand to seduce him. And Rand's like, not into it because she's a Darkfriend, and he knows she's a Darkfriend, he knows *all* of the merchants are Darkfriends, but he can't tell anyone because then they might piece together that Asmodean is actually one of the Forsaken! [both laughing] Which I will admit is a highly comical situation.

S: Yeah. See, *that's* funny, Robert Jordan!

E: Although I think it would have been funnier if, like, Rand [inaudible] If Rand was like, *Mat, I need to tell you something. They are in fact all Darkfriends, but cannot, like, spread that info.* And Mat being like, *Why? What?* [both laughing] And Rand being like, *Because Asmodean is teaching me how to channel.* And Mat being like, *Great, he's lost it.*

S: *I hate that you've told me this.*

E: *I hate – I don't want this knowledge.*

S: I also feel like, would Mat believe him? That would be very funny.

E: [speaking over] No, he would be like, *You're going crazy.*

S: He's like, *Rand thinks this motherfucker is Asmodean.*

E: *Rand thinks this random bard is a Forsaken, what the fuck?*

S: *That he has trapped, and is learning to channel from.*

E: *And he's told me, founding member of the Elite Forsaken Kill Squad!* [both laughing] *Whatever, I'm not going to investigate. This seems normal.*

S: *Yeah, he's crazy. He's losing it.*

E: Yeah, but Isendre gets run off, and Aviendha's like, *Fine, I'm leaving, too,* and Rand's like, *Great! Great!*

S: *Go away!*

E: Because Egwene is having a much better time right now. Cut to Egwene, who's having about the same level of "bad-time" as Rand, and also thinking Rand is having a better time right now, because that's the entire basis of their relationship, and Robert Jordan thinking that that is comedic parallelism. [sighs heavily]

S: Anyway –

E: It's not, after the tenth time.

S: Egg is naked and cold. She wants to bath.

E: [speaking over] Egg is naked. She's making herself a bath, and then one of the *gai'shain* comes in and is like, *You're wanted at the sex tent. Sweat tent.*

[Sally laughing]

E: Freudian slip. Because I wish it was the sex tent. [both laughing] Sorry.

S: This is the book where a sex tent would happen, though.

E: I mean, yeah.

S: [through laughter] *You're wanted at the s-*

E: - *at the sex tent*. [inaudible] that's the invitation you get to go to an orgy.

S: Would you go?

E: [speaking over] ... sex tent. No! It's not – I need more, like, you know, ceremony.

S: Dear orgies?

E: Yeah, I would want, like, an invite, before –

S: Yeah, but what if you got, like, a lovely gold foil invitation that said, *You're wanted at the sex tent*?

E: I'd consider it. [both laughing]

S: OK. Now I know.

E: Yeah, now you know. She's like, *Hey, you're wanted at the sweat tent*, and Egwene is like, *Ugh, I just got ready to take my bath. Fine*. Starts putting on her cloak, is like, *Hey, what's your name? What's your whole deal?* And this lady's like, *I'm a gai'shain. Here's my name*. And Egwene pieces it together that she's one of these people who is acting differently post-revelation about Aiel history and is refusing to stop being *gai'shain*. She's just perma-*gai'shain*, which doesn't seem productive to me, but to each their own.

S: Mm-hmm.

E: Egg gets a cloak on, puts on her shoes, walks over to the sweat tent, gets in there. All the Wise Ones and Moiraine and Aviendha are sitting around, all naked. And I bet Amazon dot TV will have a really buck-wild time with this.

S: Yeah. Because I was thinking about it, and again, there's nothing inherently wrong with nudity –

E: No, not at all.

S: - and with people sitting around in a sweat tent, getting clean. But I'm like: This is *The Wheel of Time*. So, there are some layers.

E: It's like in *Game of Thrones*, you know? In the end of the first season, when Daenerys goes in the fire and all her clothes get burned off, and she's got some little dragons hanging on to her titties or whatever?

S: Mm-hmm.

E: And she steps out of the fire, and it's like, yes – reasonably, I do believe that a woman walking into a fire would reduce her clothing to ashes, so I accept the nudity in this scenario.

S: Yeah.

E: But I am also able to understand that this will become an inherently sexualized scene for many.

S: Yeah, and it's just like –

E: And it wasn't filmed in a way to make it not sexual.

S: Yeah, she walks out of the fire and the first thing you see is her butt, if I'm remembering correctly.

E: Yeah, or something.

S: And you're like, *OK, I get it. She's naked.* You can convey that in a hundred other ways without getting me right up there on that ass. But, erm – so, yeah, it'll be a hard scene in particular, because Egwene comments on Moiraine as a person you never expect to see naked, just because of her propriety. Like, attempting to maintain her propriety while being in this – quote-unquote – compromising situation, it's like ... How is this gonna happen?

E: Yeah, are they gonna do a slow pan of Rosamund Pike's titties or whatever? Like, please – do not.

S: Yeah, don't do Rosamund like this. But we'll also have like, two of our young female leads just sitting there, servile and naked. And it's like [noise of discomfort]

E: It's like, not a great scenario.

S: And like, like you're saying, I buy the nudity, it's a cultural thing, this is how they get clean in a place without an abundance of water, but it's just ... I'm worried.

E: We're all super worried about everything. But they have a little convo where Moiraine's like, *I wish you would convince Rand to not take his forces over the Dragonwall because it'll ruin all of the Aes Sedai plans.* And the Wise Ones are like, *What plans?* And Moiraine is like, *I refuse to answer that.* And the Wise Ones are like, *I don't believe you actually have any plans in place. Because there clearly aren't.*

S: Yeah, and also even if you did, we are not –

E: Yeah, it's not like the Aes Sedai are mobilizing. I know Moiraine's a little bit behind the times, but even if Siuan Sanche was still in charge –

S: She wasn't doing anything!

E: - yeah, nothing was happening.

S: That's kind of why what happened, happened! But, yeah, the Wise Ones are like, *You obviously don't have plans, what plans you do have are bad plans, and also, we are not part of the Aes Sedai. We are an independent people with independent motives and reasons behind what we are doing.*

E: Yeah, Moiraine's fear is that bringing the Aiel over the Dragonwall is going to lead to another Aiel War, and that all of the Western nations will now see Rand as, like, an invading force, at the head of an invading army. And that will turn all of the other countries against him, And the Aiel are like, *That is not our problem. That sounds like a problem for Rand, the person who made this decision. Maybe just let him do his thing.* Which he does. Fairly creditably.

S: Yeah, like all, more or less, he more or less does turn into a conqueror, but he would have done that no matter what army you gave him.

E: Yeah.

S: That was like, specifically his intention for a long time.

E: Yeah, like he pretty much – The countries he takes control over do OK, for the most part. And he generally leaves, like, competent people in charge when he's off doing his shit. So, it's just more Moiraine not trusting Rand to do things correctly, or have any idea what he's doing.

S: Yeah, it's just exhausting at this point. Everything's exhausting.

E: But Moiraine leaves eventually, and then the Aes – excuse me, the Wise Ones are just chatting with Egg and Aviendha about whether Aviendha should sleep in Rand's room. Which Aviendha is like, *I don't want to.* They're like, *Too bad. We're gonna do it.* And also, there's this whole thing about Melaine – is that her name?

S: Mm-hmm.

E: - deciding to propose to – well, first she has to propose to Bael's first wife. Bael, you might not remember because I don't think we said his name, is one of the clan chiefs that is hanging out with Rand. I think he's the super duper tall one?

S: Yeah. That's what I was gonna say.

E: His one distinguishing characteristic. And just now we're finding out that Melaine is interested in him, she's like –

[background noise: barking]

S: [laughs] There's – I think these are the same dogs that always get into a fight when they go on walks?

E: I know, these two dogs?

S: Yeah, one of them's really tiny and the other is fairly large, if I'm thinking of the right dogs? And there's Tybalt, just being like, *You peasants. You've disturbed my slumber.* [both laugh] So – anyway, just another day!

E: Just another day at the apartment complex.

S: I hate our apartment.

E: I do, too. And this dog never shuts up.

S: It's so rude.

E: I know.

S: Every time I walk up to the door it's like –

[both imitate barking dog]

E: And I'm like, shhh.

S: And you'll hear the owner from inside yelling at it to be quiet, and I'm like, if you're not going to bring your dog inside, or work harder to make it not such a vocal dog, don't just sit there and yell at it. Because now you're just being loud, too.

E: Now you're just contributing to the issue. And, I forget - oh, they do instruct Egg on one of her next Dreamwalking missions. She's now learning how to find other people's dreams, which I think will come into play later in this book, but for now she's also practicing on her own without telling the Wise Ones. She talks about how she has, like, gone into their dreams, per their instructions. She's also gone into Rhuarc's dreams, which is horrifying – I assume he knew this was going to happen?

S: Yeah.

E: But also, like – then she's like, *Rhuarc just thinks of me as, like, a little girl*. And I'm like, Rhuarc is an old man.

S: And also, you're eighteen.

E: And also, you're eighteen, so –

S: [whispers] You *are* a little girl.

E: It's fine.

S: Rhuarc's like, what, fifty?

E: Yeah, something like that.

S: So, yeah, you are a little girl to him. It's OK.

E: Rhuarc's a big man. He's, like –

S: He's big papa.

E: He's big papa.

S: I like it when they call me big papa. [laughing] *Put your hands in the ai-yer, if you a true play-er*. I think those are the lyrics.

E: He's got other things going on, is the point, besides thinking about you, ever. So, Egg is like, *That's pretty embarrassing, but whatever*. And then they, like, leave the tent, and oh, Aviendha has also asked Bair – I always ... Bair, Bael? It's so ...

S: Bayle Domon.

E: There are two Bael's! Yeah, Bael and Bayle Domon. Just spelled different. I have a terrible time –

S: [speaking over] I bet one of them's pronounced horrifyingly. Ba-EEL.

E: Bay-lee.

S: Look it up in the back, I wonder if it tells us.

E: I don't think Bayle Domon is in this book, is the point.

S: No, I mean the other – the Aiel chief.

E: [hums] You get to a point where they stop putting everyone's names in there?

S: I know, which is like, commit to the bit, if you're gonna have a pronunciation guide.

E: Yeah ... They have Bair but not Bael. And Bair is pronounced "Bayer".

S: "Bayer."

E: "Bayer." I don't know why,

S: Like the aspirin?

E: I guess. How horrible would it be if we found out Bayle Domon was pronounced "Bay-lee" Domon?

S: [laughing] Baylee Domon!

E: Baylee Domon. Sounds like a sorority girl.

S: I will not. I will not call him Baylee.

E: [laughs] Well, I won't call Moiraine "Mwah-raine", so ...

S: I mean, I won't call anybody what they're supposed to be called.

E: That's true.

S: I will die on a hill of "EDGE-ween".

E: Unless it's *obvious*!

S: Yeah.

E: Unless it's obvious!

S: Eg-WAIN.

E: Eg-WAIN. Ga-WAIN.

S: [short, gasping syllables] Ga. Wi. Ga. Wi.

E: Ga. Wi.

[both laughing]

E: You gave me three names that are very obvious to pronounce: Rand, Mat and Perrin. That's it. Everything else I *will* mispronounce.

S: Nynaeve has so many vowels in her name.

E: So many.

S: "Ni-NAY-vee". She's in the Ni-NAY-vee.

E: Ni-NEEV. Ny-NEEV. Anyway, the Wise Ones are like, *Please run fifty laps around the tent.*

S: Because Egwene was a little bit late.

E: And Aviendha forgot to make the tea.

S: Yeah.

E: And – I mean, these ladies are probably at the peak of their fitness game, is all I can say about that.

S: Yeah.

E: But it's also freezing, and they're still naked. It's like, Robert Jordan clearly never consulted a woman about what it's like to run without a bra.

S: [whispers] Christ.

E: It's really bad!

S: Yeah.

E: There's a reason sports bras exist! It's – just ... ohhhh.

S: Yeah. I think one time you talked about how Robert Jordan probably has a weird fetish for women punishing other women.

E: Yeah.

S: Because it's like, so much of women punishing other women in these books.

E: There's a lot. I know –

S: Not to like, Freudian analyze Robert Jordan, but –

E: But why else would you do it?

S: Kinky.

E: Yeah.

S: Titties flapping everywhere. Also, it hurts so much.

E: That's what I'm saying! It hurts *so* bad.

S: Yeah, even if you don't have very big boobs, which I don't. But even then, if I run without a bra, I'm like, hello, I have bruises on my chest, it feels like.

E: It's terrible. Woof. Anyway. Then they just, like, chat, when they run. Their whole chat takes place over one lap, which leads me to believe that they will be running the length of a marathon, because fifty laps is *a lot*. It's not, like, a short thing. But, whatever. Whatever. And they just talk about how, *Oh, the Wise Ones use each other, use –*

S: Them.

E: - *the girls and compare them to each other in order to motivate the other one*. And oh, look at that, that's so cute. And Egg is like, *Are you sure you're OK with sleeping in the same room as Rand?* And Aviendha's like, *Yeah, I don't have a problem with sleeping in the same room as a man, that's like, not an issue. Culturally. But Rand does belong to Elayne*. And Egg is like, *He technically does not*. And Aviendha's like, *You asked me to look after him for her. Sort of a mixed signal there*. And Egg is like, *I had no idea how you would interpret that! To the militant degree that you have interpreted that*. But it's not a particularly happy conversation.

S: No, there's just sort of a looming bleurgh.

E: The Sex Igloo. Looming. On the horizon.

S: It's looming. Ready to crush us. It's just hanging above us. Like the piano being precariously lifted in through a window in that episode of *Supernatural*.

E: [shudders] Only to fall on Dean Winchester, crushing him.

S: Crushing him.

E: Several times! And there's also a discussion about Aiel honor, and Egg's like, *I know I don't really get it*. And Aviendha's like, *You don't get it but you do practice it. Like, you're an honorable person*. And then Egg is like, *Yeah*. Robert Jordan is like, *She doesn't even consider skipping out on this task*. And I'm like, that's inhuman, I would be, like –

S: I would be like, no! This is against the Geneva Convention.

E: Yeah, what are you DO-ing?

S: Cruel and unusual punishment.

E: Just let me get a bra! Jesus.

S: But they're running. Boobs cupped. Provide your own bra.

E: [laughing] You'd have to! How else could you do it?

S: Listen up, Amazon dot TV! If you do this scene –

E: If you do this scene, I'll murder you, personally.

S: Yeah. First of all. Rafe.

E: Just don't do this scene! There's no reason for this scene!

S: There's no, like, actual substance.

E: Yeah. Which is – these entire two chapters, there's no real substance here.

S: It's very much like, a couple of chapters at the beginning of a *Wheel of Time* book, where things are being set up for four hundred pages later.

E: Later, yeah, where maybe they will come to fruition, but –

S: They're just kinda frustrating to spend forty-five minutes talking about.

E: Yeah, yeah. Well, the good news is next week there's, like, a Darkhound attack and that will involve some Mat, which is always just more interesting to talk about –

S: I love that boy.

E: - as we know. And then I think, the Aiel and everyone else will get ready to leave Rhuidean.

S: They will get ready to move out.

E: Yeah. And after that we'll flip over to Nynaeve and Elayne, so good stuff on the horizon. Just this one kinda su – Kind of a stinker! Kind of a stinker, these chapters.

S: Little bit of a stinky-poop.

E: Yep. Not great. OK, well –

S: Yeah. We made it!

E: Any housekeeping?

S: So, this is Wednesday in the *EHR* timeline, and on your timeline, friends, it is Monday or later, March 30th. Which means a couple of days ago Emily did a livestream of her playing *Wind Walker* as part of our special *EHR* quarantine content. [laughs] So, that will have been live last Friday but I'm

sure we will have the link posted somewhere for you to watch it for those of you who can't be live, so if you just need a little extra boost of comedy during your week. I have watched Emily play *Wind Walker* several times, and it's pretty funny.

E: I'm sure it was a disaster.

S: No, it was very charming.

E: No, I mean when they listen to this, I'm sure the livestream was a disaster.

S: We're working – I mean you can't really stream GameCube on anything.

E: Yeah, GameCube's old school, so it'll just be my webcam.

S: Yeah, it's OK, it'll be charming. It'll be very *EHR* – low-tech quality, but a lotta heart.

E: Sure.

S: Dumb of ass, pure of heart.

E: Yup, that's *EHR*'s motto.

S: But yeah, other than that, we just hope you guys are taking care of yourself mentally and physically, and taking care of your community by staying at home and isolating as much as is possible, for you. Big shout-out to anyone working in service industries or grocery stores or hospitals who cannot stop going to work, or whose employers refuse to let them stop because the economy is allegedly more important than people's lives. We're thinking of you and hoping that we can provide a little boost of positivity on your Monday morning. And thank you for protecting us and doing what you have to do. Yeah. Anyway.

E: Do you wanna sign us off? Do you have a listener signoff?

S: We have some listener signoffs.

E: I'm excited.

S: Yeah. Gavin's submitted one, which is funny [inaudible through laughter] Gavin has the funniest life in the world. [laughing]

E: Gavin – I've been haunted by the story of the child on the airplane since we read it the first time.

S: I'm obsessed with you, Gavin.

E: I literally think about it all the time.

S: This one is also really funny, though. This comes from Kristin [laughing], who is one of our generous Patrons. Thank you, Kristin, I hope you're doing well. And Kristin writes: *I work in R&D for a very large personal care product company. Like most industries, aside from bench chemistry, even R&D functions have moved to online platforms and databases. I might be an R&D expert but I am in no way an IT expert. Which is how I found myself fumbling through an extremely awkward conversation with our IT team the other week. The back story is that the server that houses my*

primary work studio has been acting up for weeks but has finally been resolved. So, in a follow-up call with IT, I mentioned that the server issues must have been fixed because it hasn't gone down on me in a few days. Yikes. Almost as soon as I said it, I realized the unintended innuendo and was so embarrassed that I quickly rambled through the rest of my recap hoping no one else caught on. In my mind, I knew exactly what I was trying to say, but IT lingo is lost on me. Obviously, what I said was less than eloquent, most definitely less than professional. We've all been there, man.

E: Yeah, dude, my nightmare is talking to IT people during this.

S: Yeah, because I'll be like, computer?

E: Yeah, I've talked to the IT guys at work before and it's just like, relentless *World of Warcraft* stuff that I did not sign up to talk about, so ...

S: So, don't worry. You're doing great.

E: You can do it.

S: And you're powerful and beautiful and I say the dumbest shit to everybody *all* the time, but definitely when people are like, computer? And I'm like – oh, and I have a lot of anxiety because computer bros are like, computer bros? And I don't know how to navigate in the system?

E: [speaking over] When they be like that?

S: Yeah, so I get it. You're beautiful and powerful.

E: Thank you so much!

S: Good-byyyy!

E: Have a good week! Stay inside!

S: Stay inside, distance for [inaudible]

E: I'm gonna stop, OK, bye.

ENDS

