



Episode 119: Chekhov's Halo of Greatness

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Sally: Everybody Hates Rand is a Wheel of Time podcast that will contain spoilers for all 14 books. So if you're anti-spoiler, pause this, read all 14 books, and come back. We'll be here. Waiting.

Emily: Our title is a joke and is meant to be taken as such. 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)

Sally: Do you remember how in -- for, like, eight months in New York City, I had broken earphones that I couldn't afford to replace?

Emily: I do, vaguely, yeah.

Sally: Couldn't afford to replace.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It's like, one of them just didn't work. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) New York was so sad.

Sally: New York was truly, um, so sad. My, uh, friend Gethin is moving into his first out-of-parents'-house, um, apartment, and his room is, like, really tiny, apparently.

Emily: Oh, is it?

Sally: So he wants to buy, like, a futon to sleep on. And so I was telling him about my experiences sleeping on a futon in New York and how it was, like, fine, 'cause it was my decision, and I really, truly did not want to buy a bed in New York City, you know?

Emily: Right.

Sally: And I was like, "But also, Gethin, it fucking sucked." Like, I never got a good night's sleep, my back always hurt. And he's like, "Whatever." And Julie and Brianna were like, "You slept on a futon in New York City?" and I was like, "Listen, I was heavily depressed the entire time I lived in New York City, and everything about life was miserable."

Emily: Yeah, people are always like, "You just slept on an air mattress for a full, like, six months?"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And I'm like, yeah.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don't know what to tell you. It's just how it was in New York -- nobody in -- no one in New York was surprised --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: When I told them I was sleeping on an air mattress. They were just like, "Ah, yeah, that's New -- that's New York, baby."

Sally: Yeah. Everyone's like, "Oh, basic human suffering? It's New York City for ya."

Emily: No AC. You can hear the mice just chittering at the night-time --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: While you sleep on your air mattress. (sigh)

Sally: That's New York City, baby.

Emily: That's New York, babyyyy. New York's a terrible place.

Sally: I miss it sometimes.

Emily: I do too. But, like ...

Sally: I mean, objectively, the year I lived in New York was one of the most challenging years of my short existence.

Emily: Yeah, I miss New York the way I imagine you would miss, um, an ex that you broke up with amiably, but it was a tumultuous relationship. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. Like, I just wish that I could be a rich person in New York City.

Emily: Oh, yeah.

Sally: I think it would be very lovely. To just, like, go to museums and fun restaurants all the time.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But for ninety percent of the city -- (laugh) Life is very hard.

Emily: They've been having this scandal over at Bon Appetit, the magazine, in which it was revealed that, um -- well, a) it was revealed that the editor, the main editor guy --

Sally: Hey.

Tybalt: (meow)

Emily: Had done brownface, which makes sense 'cause he's a white magazine editor.

Sally: C'mere.

Emily: Most of them are pieces of shit. Tybalt, do you have to go into prison already?

Sally: He just is being weird.

Emily: But the, um, woman who kind of exposed -- didn't expose him, but who responded to it most vocally and has, like, a platform to respond to it vocally, it -- her name's Sohla; she's one of the chefs at the test kitchen, but she always, like, appears in other people's videos. She's never -- I don't know if she has her own series, really. Anyway, she was like, "They hired me at 50k a year," and I was like, "Girl, and you're living in New York?" And that's what everyone's been like, but also --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: I was like, I think I was living on, like, 30k a year in New York.

Sally: I was.

Emily: Yeah. So. But I think they're probably living in Manhattan --

Sally: Yeah, which is, like, a totally different ballgame.

Emily: Yeah, and also, like, she's doing a job -- she wasn't doing -- (sigh) There is no such thing as unskilled labor. All labor is -- requires skills --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And hard physicality. My two jobs required me to never be sick, never be unhealthy, never have any aches or pains that would prevent me from doing my work or to just push through them if I did. And that's labor, skilled labor. But, like, the fact that she's doing, like, cooking stuff in our current economy, is like -- that labor is valued more highly --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Than the labor I was doing, so yeah, 50k is just like, girl. Bon Appetit, why are you like this?

Sally: Yeah, it's, um, been very interesting following these, like, um -- basically people being like, "These are -- this is my salary," or "This is what I got paid in --

Emily: Yeah, salary transparency.

Sally: Publish -- publishing. Um, et cetera, et cetera. Yeah, it's just very fascinating.

Emily: Have there been any exciting revelations? I don't feel -- I feel like I'm not on book Twitter very much.

Sally: Um, well, there's been a lot of drama about the fact that, um -- I mean, not a lot of drama; people are just rightfully outraged. Drama was the wrong word. But Jesmyn Ward, who we mentioned last week, her first book -- "Salvage the Bones," I think, was her first book?

Emily: I think she had another one before that.

Sally: Well, one of her books won the National Book Award.

Emily: Yeah, I think that was "Salvage the Bones."

Sally: And then the book after that, which I think was "Sing, Unburied, Sing" --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, she and her publisher had to fight to get a hundred thousand dollar advance on that book.

Emily: Oh, come on.

Sally: After she won the National Book Award. And I think she's been, like, a MacArthur recipient.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, she's, like, a very decorated and very skilled author. Not that being decorated means anything, but, like, she's got the accolades that you think publishing would care about to give, like, 100,000 dollar advances. And I know advances versus royalties is, like, a whole complicated conversation, but the fact that Jesmyn Ward, National Book Award winner, was gonna get less than 100,000 dollars was really crazy.

Emily: I'm having so many book-related thoughts this week. I mean, for a lot of reasons. I was reading a Tweet recently from, uh, I believe it was Nnedi Okorafor --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, who was saying, "I've seen my name appear on a lot of lists of, like, 'Here are some Black authors you should be reading,' and it's, like, made me feel not great because I don't -- I want people to be reading me because it's a good book, not because --"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "I'm a Black author to read to expand your list."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And of course, that made me feel bad because we did a whole podcast --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Episode saying, "Here are Black authors to read." And I was like, well, that's part of being an anti-racist. You learn and you grow.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We're trying. Um --

Sally: No, I've been -- to go back to, um, the concept of, like, lists of Black authors to read or, like -- the big thing every June -- and every February for Black History Month -- and every June for Pride Month --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Is like, "Are you reading these Black authors? Are you reading these queer authors?" And, like, I struggle with that too 'cause, like, I have relied on those lists a lot to, like, discover authors and books that, um, aren't marketed to me in the traditional way. So, like --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I'm grateful for them, but I -- yesterday, I was like, I'm going to make an effort to, like, buy an order of, like, books written by Black authors, because that's something I don't push myself to do, and I want it to be -- don't push myself to do as often as I should, and I want it to be, like, the more I do it, I'm hoping, the more it becomes ingrained in my just, like, consumption of media. Y'know? Is that I'm pushing past what is marketed towards me and my own internal biases, but it's like, yeah, it sucks that everyone, all of the sudden, is like, "I'm gonna read your work because you're Black, not because you're a really good writer." Anyway, that's, like, not coherent, but I'm just -- it's so w-wild.

Emily: Yeah, I mean, I've been rationalizing it to myself with the idea that when I was in college, I did some of my most valuable reading there, and often that was not books that I would have chosen on my own. It was books given to me on a syllabus by a professor.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But they still all added up to be something very valuable.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And so I've been kind of saying to myself, well, I might be a little bit more in charge of the syllabus here, but I am still sort of selecting the class.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And the class is Black authors.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And sort of understanding the history of them and how they're fitting into the current cultural moment, and everything they're contributing right now.

Sally: That's such a smart way of thinking of it.

Emily: Well, I mean, I still -- my feelings on that are certainly not as valid as Nnedi Okorafor's -

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who's saying, "It doesn't make me feel good." Like, I -- yeah, I get it.

Sally: Yeah, I do get it.

Emily: It wouldn't make me feel good either if I published a book and someone was like, "You should read this book 'cause it's gay. Or 'cause the author's gay."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I'd be like, "Hey, maybe you should read my book or whatever because it's good."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like -- ugh. And then of course you have books that have been praised and lauded as good and important and relevant to the culture that now it's like -- and for the fourth time this year, everyone's discovering that J.K. Rowling is a transphobic piece of garbage.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So.

(pause)

Sally: Yeah, the book world is just very interesting this week.

Emily: It's more political than you want it to be. And I don't mean, like, in political correctness, I mean in the nuances of --

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: People's relationships to power and -- like, J.K. Rowling -- listen, to our trans listeners: Do not let an old rich white woman invalidate your identity. She wrote some books. Whatever. We can all write books. You can write books.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: It's fine. She's a piece of garbage.

Sally: Did you read her manifesto today?

Emily: I did not. I did not want to put that in my life.

Sally: I -- good for you. I was like -- I want to -- I did that thing where I was like, "I want to be informed about it."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: "So I'm gonna read it." But then I got, like, halfway through it, and I'm like, "Why did I click on this? This just gave her one more click, and it's literally just, like, all shit." (laugh) It just, like -- she's just spewing shit.

Emily: I know. I try to stay away from the word "manifesto," 'cause it's usually attached to a white man who's decided to shoot up a school or something.

Sally: Yeah. I don't know if she called it a manifesto; but it reads like a manifesto.

Emily: Well, yeah, exactly.

Sally: So.

Emily: In that exact way.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: "I'm a white person, and I'm mad."

Sally: "I'm a white person --" She literally is like, "Here are five reasons why I have problems with the trans movement," or -- she didn't use those exact words, but that's what she was saying.

Emily: Hold, please.

Sally: Tybalt has decided to commit a heinous crime.

Emily: (distant) Buddy! Ah!

Sally: Anyway, she's garbage. She's literally such a piece of shit, and I hate her.

Emily: Anyway. That was a 15-minute cold open. (laugh)

Sally: What else is new.

Emily: What else is new? Welcome back to EHR.

Sally: Well, I don't like these chapters, so I would rather talk about --

Emily: Yeah, why should we talk about them?

Sally: The J.K. Rowling -- I mean, I would rather never talk about J.K. Rowling again, but it's an important thing to discuss, that she's a toxic monster. She's truly heinous.

Emily: (sigh) OK. I'm calm. I did Yoga with Adriene today.

Sally: I love Adriene.

Emily: I'm calm. I know. She's a delight. She's like a little ray of sunshine in the dark times. This is Everybody Hates Rand. (laugh) Friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily ... Juchau.

(long pause)



Sally: Yesterday -- (laugh) I was talking about how Chris -- I -- it was a long conversation, but I was talking about how Chris will make peanut butter sandwiches and then crush up peanuts to put on it instead of just, like, buying crunchy peanut butter.

Emily: To someone else? (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I wasn't part of this conversation, right?

Sally: Yeah, Emily was not there. Sorry. It was at work. Um, and I was like -- and notoriously everyone's always like, "Why don't you talk about Emily?" and I'm like, "I don't talk about my personal life at work, ever."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like --

Emily: Reasonable.

Sally: (laugh) Everything is off-limits.

Emily: If you talk about Chris more than me, I would understand that.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Chris is, like, a -- a figure of farce.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's a -- (sigh)

Sally: Um, and so I was just like, offhand, I was like, "There you guys go. Now you have an Emily fact." Or whatever. And Brianna's like, "Yeah, you've got -- it's gotten to the point --" My friend Brianna was like, "It's gotten to the point where, like, Emily facts just, like, fall out of my head. The only thing I remember about Emily is that she's tall. Emily tall." And Gethin's like, "Oh, Tall is Emily's last name?" (laugh) 'Cause he wasn't really listening. And I was like, "Yeah, Emily Tall, that's her name." Anyway. This is Emily Tall. And then he's like, "Emily's not even that tall." And I was like, "Shut up, Gethin. You're six-three. Go away." (laugh)

Emily: I mean -- (laugh) I'm not that tall. But yeah, he is six-three --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So he's coming at it from a biased perspective.

Sally: Yeah, well, Brianna, who's, like, five-foot flat --

Emily: Yeah, of course she would be like --

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: I also -- we've spoken about this so many times. I appear to be taller than I am.

Sally: Yeah, she's just all limbs. It's an optical illusion. Brianna also said it was your attitude that made you appear taller. So I don't know what that means.

Emily: Well, yeah, I'll be haunted by that till the day I die.

Sally: See, this is why I don't bring Emily up. Because Emily, like her father, is an object of such fascination to people that then we then have to then discuss Emily.

Emily: Yeah, I don't do it on purpose either.

Sally: Emily just doesn't like to be known.

Emily: Yeah, I try to be unknown. It's my whole thing. Which is probably why I'm such a figure of such mystery and appeal.

Sally: Mm-hmm. Anyway, I am Sally --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Goodger, and I apologize if earlier, before, me trying to defend, um, lists that feature Black authors, um, as a good thing when a Black person said they weren't, that's probably -- that's definitely a bit of my white fragility coming out, so I apologize.

Emily: I did the same thing. So.

Sally: It's tough.

Emily: Live and learn.

Sally: We're all learning and unlearning.

Emily: Yep. And I wish Robert Jordan was still alive to unlearn some of the bullshit he put in these chapters. Wow-za. (sigh) Put it all in one, 'cause I didn't want to spend more than one episode talking about it. But --

Sally: I didn't even want to spend one episode talking about it.

Emily: Ten minutes, maybe, tops. What is diffidence -- diffidence?

Sally: Diffidence? I thought it was, like, being sort of, like, humble. Like deferring?

Emily: Ah.

Sally: Let me look -- let me Google it.

Emily: Yeah, I was like, I don't even know what this is. Context clues, I can get -- I can discern a basic meaning, but, uh ...

Sally: Mm. "Diffident means modest or shy because of a lack of self-confidence." So, diffidence: "modesty or shyness resulting from a lack of self-confidence." (laugh)

Emily: Oh, shocking. Thanks.

Sally: Thank you. (laugh)

Emily: So we read three chapters. They alternate between Min's, Siuan's, and Gareth Bryne's, uh, points of view and back. It's --

Sally: Mm-hmm. Unfortunately.

Emily: Yeah, three of our least favorite, iconically, characters. Ironically, in my reread of *A Memory of Light*, I just reached the chapter where Siuan Sanche, spoiler alert, dies, so. There we go. It just feels like --

Sally: Yep -- yep. There we go.

Emily: It's coming full circle. (laugh) In some way.

Sally: (laugh) She -- she's dead.

Emily: She sure is dead. And it sure did take another nine books to get there. Because her usefulness as a character faded long before book fourteen. Let me tell you. And Gareth Bryne? Even sooner.

Sally: Have either of them ever been useful characters?

Emily: (whisper) No. (normal voice) So, as a quick plot summary, uh, Min, Leane, Siuan, and Logain finally reach Salidar, the -- Salad-are -- ha ha, like a salad. Salidar? I don't know how you say it. Uh, the town of rebel Aes Sedai. Min and Logain are just kind of shunted aside while Siuan and Leane are immediately taken aside for interrogation after some confusion, since they no longer look like themselves. And through a lot of, uh, manipulation that was planned out beforehand, Siuan and Leane sort of insert themselves into the power structure by reminding the, uh, six women who are now more or less in charge --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: That, uh, they have access to various spies across the nation.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And that they have a plan to, um, raise a new Amyrlin and get up -- fight up against Elaida. Um, and a way to frame that in the public eye that will make them seem more appealing. Um. Meanwhile, Gareth Bryne arrives and, uh, is escorted into town. He finally finds out that Siuan and Leane and Min are not who they say they are. Uh, and he is asked by the Aes Sedai to, um, lead -- to grow -- to form and lead an army to, uh, bring up against the White Tower. He agrees on several conditions, um, and thus ... that sets up the foundation for Salidar that will be there when our main focus -- foci --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: The girls -- Nynaeve, Elayne and Egwene, in the next book -- will arrive. So that's the plot. (laugh) Um, some things to talk about, I think. Uh, Min keeps bringing up Logain's "halo of greatness," quote unquote.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: It is, I think, Chekhov's halo of greatness in that it is brought up so frequently by the narrative that you think, "Surely, this must come to pass in a satisfying way in the narrative." Reader, it does not.

Sally: (laugh) Chekhov's halo of greatness.

Emily: It makes me so mad. It makes me so mad that Logain is who he is and what's happening with him. I --

Sally: You can talk about it if you want, I don't care about the spoilers.

Emily: Oh, I mean, it's just that -- there's all this drama in the fourteenth book with the seals, the Dark One's seals --

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: That, y'know, were introduced early on in the series as physical items that could be broken, um, and sort of, you can't keep track of any of them. It's like that -- you know, that game with the three cups and the --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: (laugh) Um, especially 'cause they just sort of get lost and stop being relevant somewhere around books seven through thirteen.

Sally: (laugh) Cool. That's, like, half the fucking series.

Emily: But they suddenly become relevant again in book fourteen because Rand says, "I want to break the seals, let the Dark One out, sort of, and immediately build a new prison because the old system is broken," essentially. And Egwene's like, "That's crazy talk." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "I don't want to do that." But essentially, the seals sort of disappear at some point and then there's a whole thing about getting them back. Eventually, what I'm saying, is that Logain is the one who ends up with the seals and decides whether to break them, which I believe he does.

Sally: (laugh) That's not even, like, a -- what?

Emily: In accordance with, like, Rand. But it is, like, buck wild to me that that is --

Sally: Yeah, that's, like, so underwhelming.

Emily: Like, Logain doesn't die, so -- in -- that I remember.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Boy, it sure would be a shock if he did. As far as I remember, Logain doesn't die, and it is sort of implied that now that, uh, Mazrim Taim is out of the picture -- because it's the Last Battle; obviously he would be put out of the picture -- when it's revealed, oh ho ho ho ho, he was a bad guy?!

Sally: (laugh) "What?"

Emily: The man laughing maniacally in a corner?

Sally: Yeah, the guy who --

Emily: Twirling his mustaches? Tying women to railroad tracks? He's a bad guy? He sure is, folks.

Sally: (laugh) Twirling his mustaches.

Emily: And Logain's like, "Oh, hey, I'll take over the Black Tower, be the new ... male Amyrlin seat. Whatever."

Sally: Yeah, I can't -- doesn't he -- don't they have a title? Who cares?

Emily: M'Hael. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) M'Hael.

Emily: M'Hael. I just remember it, 'cause someone took a picture of a Michael's -- you know, the craft store --

Sally: (laugh) Oh, yeah.

Emily: But the “I, C” had burned out, so it was “M’hael’s.”

Sally; (alugh)

Emily: Someone was like, “Ahh!”

Sally: That’s so good.

Emily: I know. A quality Wheel of Time meme.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Anyway, uh, it’s sort of implied that Logain is on a trajectory to being some sort of important world leader. But all of that is irrelevant because the book series ended.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And so much is in question regarding Min’s viewings and whether or not they’re even still in play after the Last Battle. The point is not whether or not Logain actually has a moment of greatness. The point is that the narrative goes out of its way to insist over and over again that we will be rewarded --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: For having to read this insistence over and over again that there will, in fact, be a prestige after this -- (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Y’know, build-up. And there’s just not. The moment with Logain breaking the seals, as far as I remember, is anti-climactic, partly because Logain isn’t a character who has established himself to be, um, a character we like or are rooting for throughout this entire series.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Logain’s a difficult character because just on a human, basic level, I don’t like him. Like, what is there to like?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Regardless of whether we are meeting him post-gentling or post -- after he’s had his power returned to him and he’s now, you know, no longer in a depressive state that is being forced upon him by external forces, he’s just not particularly a likeable guy.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's also -- there's a political element to it in that there's all these lies circulating about how he has been told by Aes Sedai to be the Dragon Reborn --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: When we know that's not the case. Logain sort of thinks he'll get revenge on Aes Sedai by -- I don't know, it's so confusing. But essentially, Logain chose, when he discovered he had power, to declare himself the Dragon Reborn and cause a war in Murandy. Which --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Isn't a likeable trait either.

Sally: No, of course not.

Emily: Given --

Sally: Anybody who wants power is unlikeable.

Emily: Yeah. Logain just had this con -- I railed about it in my blog that I think was released today, at the time of recording. Um, but Logain, in the fourteenth book, has some conversation with Mat where Logain's like, "Just let me go fight Demandred." 'Cause every fucking man in the Wheel of Time and the Last Battle is like, "Let me go fight Demandred." And Mat's like, "Why would you want to fight Demandred?" (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: "So stupid." Mat should be the one fighting Demandred --

Sally: Very funny.

Emily: If anyone. Demandred should actually just trip and fall on a sword and die --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: That would be, I think, the most narratively satisfying ending to his arc. But no, every man is like, "I want to prove myself by fighting Demandred." Logain's like -- has this whole thing about how he feels, essentially, like he was cheated because he wasn't actually the Dragon Reborn.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Basically -- he's like, "I could've been the Dragon Reborn, but basically it was just, like, mistiming." And I'm like, a) that ain't how, you know, destiny works in the realm of --

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Fantasy series. But also, it's just such a -- a -- a terrible and entitled thing to say.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That you deserve -- (laugh) that you deserve anything. (pause) Basically, I hate Logain, is what I'm saying.

Sally: Yeah, he sounds like a real bastard.

Emily: I also think he needs help and should be on some sort of, like, suicide watch --

Sally: Yeah. It's --

Emily: In these chapters because he's clearly a person suffering emotional and mental distress, and everyone handles that with, uh, way more levity than they should.

Sally: Yeah, they -- it's also just, like, they treat him like a kid or an animal.

Emily: Yeah. Min's like, "Aw, he just looks so sad but also boring." And I'm like, maybe you guys should stop using him? (pause) It's just a thought.

Sally: (laugh) Min has never had a thought in her life, so.

Emily: Oh, Min has had several thoughts, all of them terrible and misogynistic. I took -- I took notes --

Sally: I know.

Emily: Physically in this book because we're sending it to Taylor. Ah, Taylor!

Sally: Emily -- Emily's good at doing good things.

Emily: Well --

Sally: Like writing in the book while we're actually reading it.

Emily: Not really --

Sally: I just lay in my bed and am sad and read these chapters.

Emily: 'Cause, like, in the first chapter, I, like, wrote it and then I was like, "I've run out of things to say." Anyway, I feel like we don't talk about Min and self-fulfilling prophecies enough.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: She says here that she knows that Logain will end up being great, "the same way that she had known the first time she saw Rand Al'Thor that she would fall desperately, helplessly in love with him." And then she talks about how, um -- later she says, "She still had a personal



goal: making a man who had never looked at her twice fall in love with her before he went mad.” So let’s think about that for a little while. Min’s like, “I saw a vision when I looked at this man that I would fall in love with him. And because I know my visions are never wrong, I have decided to go out of my way to do everything in my power to make him fall in love with me.”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: “And, you know, to create our romance.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it’s just sort of, like, the definition of a self-fulfilling prophecy with the, like, added element of the Cassandra story --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Um, from the Iliad in there. Cassandra, the prophetess who, um, was doomed by Apollo, ‘cause he was a dick, to always prophesy, but no one ever believed her. So I just don’t really know what -- I feel like it’s one of those things with Min that could be interesting in relation to her oracular abilities.

Sally: I think I’m confused what you mean about self-fulfilling prophecy in relation to Min specifically.

Emily: She knows -- she’s the prophet, she’s the one prophesying that she’s going to fall in love with him -- so she reacts as though she’s already -- it’s already happened, right?

Sally: Mm.

Emily: As though she’s already fallen in love with him. Isn’t -- is that what -- I might be confused about what self-fulfilling prophecies are. I thought that was what it meant, is that when you react to a prophecy, then aren’t you making it come true?

Sally: I guess, yeah. I’m having a lot of brain fog today, so I’m sorry. I think you’re right.

Emily: I don’t know. Of course, the textbook definition is Oedipus, right?

Sally: Yeah. So I’m trying to, like, compare -- (laugh)

Emily: Who reacts --

Sally: Min to Oedipus in my head. (laugh)

Emily: The difference with Oedipus is that he hears the prophecy and is -- goes out of his way to avoid it.

Sally: OK, yeah. That's where I'm getting hung up. Because -- but rather than, like, avoiding Rand --

Emily: She's heading toward it.

Sally: The way Aviendha is doing --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: She's heading towards it. OK, I'm -- I'm on track. Yes.

Emily: I guess I think, self -- either way, you're fulfilling the prophecy by reacting to the prophecy.

Sally: Yeah. Even though I don't think Aviendha -- Aviendha -- well, Aviendha was told she was gonna have Rand's babies in Rhuidean, right?

Emily: Yeah, she's all, like -- she -- yeah, she saw in Rhuidean that this was gonna happen.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So she, too, is doing this self-fulfilling prophecy. Interesting. But also --

Sally: What's Elayne up to? (laugh)

Emily: Elayne's just a horny bitch. (laugh)

Sally: Well, that's true.

Emily: Rrrrgghh.

Sally: Yeah, I -- it's also very interesting because Min is constantly like, "I'm not going to tell other people about their viewings because it's not going to change anything," and yet is obsessed about viewings that involve herself. And I suppose that's just, like, human nature. But it's like, if you see -- and she does tell Siuan at the end of this chapter that if she and Gareth Bryne are ever separated, they'll both die a miserable death, which is, like, boring, or whatever -- (laugh) Um, but she's just, so often, is like, "Ah, I'm seeing all these people just be, like, have these horrible things or these great things, and I'm just, like, not going to do anything about them."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It's just -- she's just got, like, a weird relationship to her --

Emily: Own -- prophetic --

Sally: Oracular abilities, as you said.

Emily: Abilities, yeah. It just makes me wonder, like, if there is a version of Min -- if there's a different timeline of Min where she sees this prophecy and does everything in her power to make it not happen --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And it still happens, how does that affect how I, y'know, feel about her character? Do I feel like she's still a trope?

Sally: Hmm.

Emily: What -- you know. It just feels like the way Min was written, she can't do anything --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Without me resenting her personally because that's the way she was written --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is to be this caricature --

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, she's mostly an insufferable character. Especially 'cause, like, if she knows that all of her viewings come true, why wouldn't she just, like, not do anything and just be like, "Fate's gonna take me where fate's gonna take me."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Rather than being like -- leaning into it so hard or pulling away from it, just being like, "Da da da." I guess that's kind of the purpose Elayne is serving.

Emily: Yeah, of just being like, "And I am in love with him after meeting him for five minutes."

Sally: Yeah. Elayne is just like, "Whatever," and Min is like, "Gotta make it happen," and Aviendha is like, "I will die before I fall in love with Rand Al'Thor."

Emily: Yeah, it's just odd because Min -- yeah. Yeah, you're right.

Sally: And I'm not saying that's great, because a woman's character arc should never be determined by her relationship to her boyfriend or husband. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, it's just, like, Aviendha's resisting it but slowly falling in love with him, Min is, like -- it's like, by the necessity of Min acting, she falls in love with him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's a very odd concept, 'cause Min reacts to Rand by the time she sees him again, as though she's in love with him already.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Although they haven't -- ah, they've spent more time together than she and, uh -- he and Elayne have, 'cause they spent the whole fucking winter --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Between books two and three.

Sally: Yeah. The timeline of Rand's relationships with all the ladies is so confusing to me.

Emily: I know. All I really know is that he has spent almost zero time with Elayne, but she's --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The one who I least can handle about it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, Min's terrible, but -- what are you gonna do, you know? Prophecies. I just think Min could be an interesting parallel to, uh, Mat.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Who also feels, very physically, the necessity of fate upon him.

Sally: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Emily: And just the various ways that they go about that.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I dunno.

Sally: No, like, yeah, she could just have more going on, but her only plot is Rand, so. (laugh)

Emily: (sing-song) Da da da.

Sally: She's just a very boring character.

Emily: Yeah. That's what I wanted to say about that. Um --

Sally: You're so smart.

Emily: Thanks. So are you.

Sally: Well. Not today. Head no -- what is it? Head empty. No thoughts, head empty.

Emily: (laugh) OK, we are tragically now getting to the part of the series where every Aes Sedai name becomes relevant.

Sally: (fake sobbing)

Emily: Or becomes completely irrelevant, and there's no way of knowing which is which.

Sally: It's so upsetting. (laugh)

Emily: It is incredibly upsetting. Um, we see -- I'm just gonna run through them really quick. I'm gonna try -- I'm gonna try and be a resource for you, listeners, to keep track of various Aes Sedai --

Sally: Should we see if I can remember the main -- the first six? Let's see if I can --

Emily: No, not them first. You do them in a minute. First I have to mention, uh, Edesina --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Who sees Min and Logain when they're sitting at the, uh, inn waiting for Siuan and Leane to be done. Min sees "a silvery collar suddenly appear snug around the woman's neck and as suddenly it seemed to shatter." Edesina will, uh, be taken captive in Ebou Dar roundabout book seven, will almost immediately be rescued by Mat, uh, in book eight. So. Power to the people. It's just like, there's no way of knowing from Edesina --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: From this viewing of Min's because Min sees other viewings around Aes Sedai that I can't parse.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Because they mean nothing to me. So I just wanted to point that one out.

Sally: Hmm.

Emily: Yeah, let's see if you can --

Sally: OK.

Emily: OK. Ready?

Sally: Yeah. 'Kay, I know there's Sheriam.

Emily: Yep.

Sally: Um, there's Carlinya and ... Morelle? Myrelle?

Emily: However you say her name.

Sally: Um.

Emily: Points if you can mention any personality traits of any of them. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Well, Myrelle is our Green Ajah with, like, six husbands or whatever.

Emily: Oh, yeah.

Sally: I remember that. Um. Is Anaiya there?

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: 'Kay, and then there's two others that are gonna be really hard. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Because they're the ones that, like, Sivan's like, "I don't want to see them."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Does one of -- one of them starts with an "M"? Another one?

Emily: You're so close.

Sally: Is it -- is it Mor -- Morivin?

Emily: It's Morvrin. Which --

Sally: Morvrin, OK. Close. (laugh)

Emily: I don't know how anyone's supposed to pronounce that. No, that was close enough, I think.

Sally: OK, and then does the other one start with a "B"?

Emily: Yes.

(pause)

Sally: Ahhh! (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: I can't remember that one at all.

Emily: Her name's Beonin. Or Beonin.

Sally: What -- how would you -- that's not a name. (laugh)

Emily: Exactly. Exactly.

Sally: I did pretty good though, right, guys?

Emily: I documented in this chapter as they're introduced -- (laugh) There's, uh, Sheriam, who's evil. She's of the Blue Ajah on face value, Black Ajah secretly. That'll be coming out in book, uh, eleven or so. She'll be Egwene's Keeper, quote unquote.

Sally: Oh, that's right.

Emily: And will -- will, as the series progresses, become more and more unhinged. (laugh)

Sally: Cool.

Emily: So we have that to look forward to. There's Carlinya, the White, um, Ajah lady whose one character trait is that she's logical, which is the same character trait given to every member of the White Ajah, so it's a little difficult to keep track of her. I have no idea what happens to her. Couldn't tell -- put a gun to my head, I would not be able to tell you what the fuck happens to Carlinya.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Myrelle -- dunno. She's Green, as you said. She's the one who ends up with Lan's bond because --

Sally: Oh, that's right.

Emily: She's the only one, I guess -- Moiraine was like, "This woman has few enough ethics that I could hand a whole man off to her."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And Myrelle was like, "Sure, and I will fuck him on the way."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I'm like, issues of consent.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Guys.

Sally: The Warder bond is so upsetting.

Emily: Right. So Sheriam, uh, Myrelle, Carlinya. Then there's Anaiya, also of the Blue Ajah. Lots of Blue Ajah ladies, uh, checking in here. Uh, who's the, quote unquote, motherly Aes Sedai. She will be murdered in the next, uh, five or six books by the Forsaken, uh, Balthamel who is in the body of Aran'gar, who is -- alias -- whose alias is Halima. I can't fucking believe that there are cells in my brain devoted to keeping track of this bullshit. Who has the time?  
(laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Then there's Morvrin, like you mentioned, who, we are told is, quote unquote, stout, and that is her only --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Characteristic. She is skeptical of everything. She's a Brown. Again, no idea what happens to her. Couldn't tell ya. Beonin? She's a Gray. She's a pretty Gray. Thank you, Sivan, for telling us that. Um, and Sivan tells us she's very smart, but from what I remember, Beonin is the one who gives Elaida Traveling, so I don't, in fact, think she's very smart.

Sally: (laugh) Ding.

Emily: Welcome to the girl band. This is One Direction.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: One direction -- towards hell --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: These women are taking us in. I hate them all.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Rrrrggghhh. And then you have Sivan and Leane. Now, just for fun, I did want to go through, um, all of the gross things Gareth Bryne says.

Sally: I would rather we didn't do that.

Emily: (laugh) I think -- I think it's a good -- I think it's a good example. I think we say a lot, "You know, the way Robert Jordan writes about women is terrible." But I think we might as well --

Sally: OK, say things, and I will, um, rate them out of ten as how misogynistic they are.

Emily: OK, great. I did -- I did go through and underline and say "ew."

Sally: 'Kay. (laugh)



Emily: He refers to Leane as “the willowy Domani minx.”

Sally: Ah, see, I would give that, um -- ooh, “minx” is high. I would give that six out of ten.

Emily: He refers to Sivan -- he knows her as Mara, at this point -- repeatedly as “the girl.”

Sally: Uh, that’s a ten out of ten. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. He, in talking about Sheriam, says “she was pretty enough to make any man look twice despite the Great Serpent ring on her finger.”

Sally: Mm, that’s a nine out of ten.

Emily: He refer -- this is less in the misogyny care -- uh, category, and more in the “racist” category. He refers to Myrelle as “darkly pretty.” My --

Sally: I remember that one.

Emily: Least favorite way of, uh, modifying “pretty.”

Sally: Yeah. I was gonna give that one an eight out of ten.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Maybe an eleven out of ten for the added racism points.

Emily: Not great. Uh, he refers to -- you may remember Leane was the “willowy Domani minx.” She is now “that swan-necked Domani.” Swan-necked.

Sally: (laugh) That one is more just annoying. I’ll do, like, a five out of ten.

Emily: It’s not great. He, uh, in talking to Sivan, who is basically like -- they’re chatting, getting to know each other again, now that they’re Sivan and Gareth Bryne and not Gareth Bryne and a pair of floating blue eyes, like Gatsby in the fucking --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Rrgghh. He says, um, “He felt pity for her. He could not imagine this woman giving up and dying, but she had lost about as much as it was possible to lose, short of dying. On the other hand, he had not liked being called a buzzard or a pile of reeking fish guts.” So he says to her, “From now on, you can concern yourself with keeping my boots clean and my bed made,” immediately after saying, “Well, you no longer need to concern yourself with such things.” Such things being Aes Sedai things. So that’s more an example of interpersonal relationships, uh, not starting on a great foundation. (sigh) Later, he says, um, about Sivan -- he says -- she composes herself very quickly in front of the Aes Sedai. “When she turned again beside the fireplace, her face told no more than theirs. A remarkable woman. He was not sure he could have done as well

in her place.” Why would you, Gareth Bryne? Your career has set you on a completely different path --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Than having to --

Sally: You’re not an Aes Sedai.

Emily: Be composed in front of a bunch of political opponents. Why must men always assume, “She’s doing pretty great. I bet I could have done as great.”

Sally: “I bet I, with absolutely no training --”

(BEEP)

Emily: OK, there was a beep there because -- beep -- (laugh) Sometimes my computer goes dark while we’re recording, and we can’t handle that, so we always touch it to make sure it livens up again. But stopped the recording on accident.

Sally: I stopped the recording ‘cause I’m a -- a useless excuse of a human being.

Emily: No, ‘cause Audacity was like, “You touched a single button? Would you like to save the project?” I’m glad I hit “yes.” What if I’d just -- I can’t --

Sally: (laugh) No.

Emily: I can’t do this again. I can’t talk about Gareth Bryne’s shitty misogynistic comments anymore.

Sally: Anyway, if you guys recall, Gareth Bryne never scored lower than a five out of my completely made-up and arbitrary misogyny scale. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: So.

Emily: He’s just --

Sally: He’s gross. He’s really stanky. And, like, at one point, right after he was like, “You’ll keep my bed made,” and Siuan, of course, was like, “If you’re looking for that, you should have better luck with Leane,” and Gareth’s like, “Why do women always think that men are alluding to sex stuff?” And it’s like, you are literally giving off those vibes, first of all.

Emily: Yeah, and then he goes out of his way to make her more uncomfortable.

Sally: Yeah, and he's like, "You'll find out what kind of man I am." And it's like, why would you say such threatening, horrible things to a woman?

Emily: Yeah, and he's like, "Why is she acting all freaked out?" And it's like, oh my God.

Sally: You have no self-awareness, you rat bastard.

Emily: Basically, I'm coming to realize that many of the reasons that Gawyn is such a bad man is that he focuses a lot of his ideals about masculinity on Gareth Bryne.

Sally: Mm. Ooh, you're right.

Emily: There's a lot of the taciturn devotion to duty there --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: No matter what. Um, it's just generally unpleasant.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I mean, as has been pointed out by several of our listeners, Gareth Bryne is literally a caricature of Robert E. Lee, a -- as we have seen -- it's been a delight watching Confederate statues be defaced and/or torn down --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's like, fuck yeah.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Do it. So stop deifying Robert E. Lee.

Sally: I think we should stop deifying any military leader.

Emily: I mean, yeah, that's true.

Sally: They're not, uh, generally good people.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Not, just general -- just general -- ha. Generally. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: They're not good people. Um, just 'cause war is bad.

Emily: (whisper) War is so bad.

Sally: It just causes a lot of people to die. (laugh) In case you guys didn't know that.

Emily: OK, whatever. That's that.

Sally: Anyway, fuck Gareth Bryne.

Emily: Anyway, fuck Gareth Bryne. Fuck Siuan. Leane's the only character who's valid in any way in these chapters --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And she's just, like, doing her fucking best, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Trying to get by in this crazy world. (laugh) Uh, but that's that. Don't really want to talk about those chapters anymore. We'll talk more about Salidar when it's, perhaps, through less insufferable characters' points of view.

Sally: Mm-hmm. OK, um, outro, outro, outro.

Emily: Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Thanks to all you for listening and bearing with us. Uh, as a reminder, we are still giving away stickers to those of us -- to those of you, um, who can provide proof, a receipt, that you have donated to, um, a bail fund, ACLU, Black Lives Matter, um, any of the many charities that are floating around, the nonprofit organizations that are doing really good work on the ground right now. We will send you a sticker of your choice if you send us that receipt with your address. The artists will still be paid --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, from our Patreon funds.

Sally: Yeah, other income.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: Um, and also, like, if you are someone who wants to donate but, um, needs some direction as to the organizations that are doing the good work that you are interested in, please reach out to us, and we are happy to provide you, um, some places.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um. Yeah. OK, I do have a listener-submitted sign-off. Um, Logan submitted two. Trying to decide which one I want to read. (laugh) OK, I'm gonna read what he calls "the embarrassing one" first, 'cause it's very relatable for me personally.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Um. (laugh) So Logan writes, "In third grade, during a quiz game, our class was -- in -- during a quiz game, our class was playing, I was winning handily and got a question wrong. After the class had their fun wowing over me getting it wrong, I went to the bathroom and cried so hard I threw up and went to the office to call to go home."

Emily: Oh my God. (laugh)

Sally: This is very relatable because I did nearly the same thing when I was in third grade. (laugh)

Emily: Ohhh. Ohhhh, you poor kids. I'm so sorry. I want to give your third grade self a little hug.

Sally: Yeah, it's so embarrassing being the, like, quote unquote, smart kid in class.

Emily: Yeah, 'cause you feel like you can't ever do --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Wrong.

Sally: One time, I got a math problem wrong, and it was really embarrassing, and I cried really hard, and just, like, snot was, like, running out of my nose, and the teacher made me leave the classroom.

Emily: I was always deeply ashamed when I got in trouble for behavioral problems, which I, reasonably should have -- (laugh) probably more than I did.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: But I remember my third grade teacher had one of those little, like, stoplight codes for, like -- you put a yellow card up --

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: If you've done something bad, and I was always so upset and outraged when I got a yellow or a red card because I was like, "Me?!"

Sally: "Me, no less?"

Emily: "Me, no less?"

Sally: Yeah, they did that when we were in -- I mean, I -- they did that, like, a couple years, but I remember second grade was particularly brutal 'cause not was it only, like green, yellow, red, it was green, yellow, orange, red, and black.

Emily: Jesus. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) And so it was like, the stakes were very high --

Emily: When the lights go out. (laugh)

Sally: In second grade. Yeah. It was very upsetting.

Emily: God, that teacher had a sense of drama.

Sally: Yeah, it was very drama.

Emily: OK, well. Give your inner child a hug this week.

Sally: Yeah. They deserve it.

Emily: Be good. Black Lives Matter. Trans people -- trans women are women, trans men are men. All gender identities are valid.

Sally: That's true.

Emily: Fuck the police. Have a good week.