



Episode 122: Tittelligence

Release Date: July 6, 2020

Running Time: 46 minutes

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: Excedrin's also just, like, really dry. There's not, like, a good --

Emily: Like, chalky?

Sally: Yeah. There's not, like, a good coating on the pill.

Tybalt: (meow)

Emily: Oh, gotcha.

Sally: I think that's pretty common with, um, acetaminophens.

Emily: Acetaminophens. Acetaminophens. Acetaminophens.

Sally: Versus, like, ibuprofen and that -- those kinds.

Emily: Which -- what's Tylenol?

Sally: Acetaminophen.

Emily: Oh, OK. Yeah, that makes sense. Do you remember the -- or maybe this is just an experience I had -- when I was a kid, my mom had, like, the kid's Tylenols that you chewed up?

Sally: Yes.

Emily: The chewable tablets that tasted like -- like grape.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: (sigh)

Sally: And -- but it really tasted like death.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: We kind of have a coordinating color palette today.

Emily: Do we? Oh, yeah. Olive and black.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Olive. Yeah, I'm wearing my grandpa shorts.

Sally: I think you look very cute.

Emily: Sally loves my grandpa shorts, but -- (laugh)

Sally: I just think they're cute. And they obviously are comfy.

Emily: Yeah, they're very comfy; that's why I'm wearing them. Tybalt, I wish you would stop.

Tybalt: (meow)

Emily: Thank you. You obeyed my wishes for the first time in your life. (laugh)

Sally: Tybalt and I are fighting.

Emily: He gave Sally her migraine.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Through dark magics. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We assume.

Sally: I'm sure. (laugh; to Tybalt) Are you mad 'cause your food --

Emily: Um, God, now I'm going to be thinking about grape Tylenol for the rest of --

Sally: Because it's so gross.

Emily: And the, like, drinkable kind. Did that, like, stop being a thing? Or do parents still give their kids that shit?

Sally: Um, I -- there's still, like, drinkable Tylenol. I saw some at the store yesterday.

Emily: Hmm.

Sally: I was buying children's Tylenol for my supply drop, and they still have, like, the drinkable grape Tylenol. And I'm like, good God.

Emily: I guess --

Sally: No.

Emily: Learning how to swallow a pill is kind of a tough thing.

Sally: Yeah, I remember it --

Emily: Especially 'cause some of those pills are big boys.

Sally: Freaked me -- swallowing pills freaked me out a lot as a kid.

Emily: My mom can dry-swallow pills.

Sally: I know. She's a -- a magic person.

Emily: It's so freaky.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She'll just pop an Advil. And I'm like, ugh. How do you do that? She's just like, "I just can. It's one of my seven talents." Her seven talents that change -- (laugh) depending --

Sally: Every -- every day.

Emily: There's different permutations depending on which ones she can and cannot remember.

Sally: I'm gonna try and get a little closer to the microphone this week.

Emily: Oh, sorry, I could also move it.

Sally: No. It's fine. I just tend to sit laterally to the microphone as opposed to Emily, who sits in front of the microphone like a professional podcaster.

Emily: The fact that we have one single microphone for both of us sort of, uh, removes any label of professionalism that we might otherwise apply to this podcast.

Sally: I don't think we've -- anyone's ever applied the word "professional" to this podcast.

Emily: Well, yeah, exactly.

Sally: And that's fine with me.

Emily: Just two gals with vocal fry and big opinions. Men hate us. (laugh)

Sally: They sure do.

Emily: They want to be us. (laugh) Ohhh, boy. Um.

Sally: Men are on their last leg, though, let me tell you. In terms of my patience.

Emily: Oh, I was just like, in terms of general survival? (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: What bad news for them to receive.

Sally: (laugh) Sorry, men. This is your last week.

Emily: This is your -- soon, you too will be eradicated. No, uh, oh, in terms of your patience?

Sally: Yeah, just in terms of my patience.

Emily: Yeah, that makes sense.

Sally: They're just so frustrating. Today, I was at, um -- for various complicated reasons that I won't get into, my brother and sister-in-law have to spend a few days at my mom's house with, uh, their four-year-old and their eight-month-old, so prayers for my mom -- (laugh) who is being used and abused by her grandchildren at the moment.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: Um, but they had to leave the house quickly, and so they don't have everything that they need, so, like, I did a grocery run for them today, and one of the things -- they're like, "Please pick up the four-year-old a swimming suit, so we can just put her in the sprinklers." (laugh) You know, the things you do with toddlers. So I was, like, in Target, like, trying to find one that fits, because she's right in between 4T and 5T, so I was trying to, like, figure that out. I don't have toddlers.

Emily: Sure.

Sally: And trying to find one that's cheap, because I'm also poor, you know? Doing this thing. And this guy's like, "Could you move your cart?" and I was like ... it was, like, not in the way.

Emily: Could you move around my cart?

Sally: Yeah, I was like, what? He's like, "I just need to get around it," and I was like -- (whisper) "Then you could walk around it?" So I, like, moved it, and he was like, "Thanks so much," and just, like, proceeded to walk where my cart wasn't even parked. (laugh)

Tybalt: (meows)

Emily: He didn't, like, have a cart?

Sally: No.

Emily: Oh my God.

Sally: Anyway, I was just --

Emily: Oh my God.

Sally: It was just very annoying. And then the guy that checked me out -- the -- not the guy that checked me out -- the cashier person. Um, I was like, "Hi, how are you?" and he was like, "Fine," and, like, didn't talk to me, and then I proceeded to move, and then the old man behind me was like, "Hi, how are you?" and the guy's like, "I'm doing so good, thank you so much for asking," and then proceeded to have a conversation with him, so I was like, couldn't have made that any more obvious, could ya?

Emily: Tybalt. Come here.

Emily: Not that I want to talk to you. But. Anyway, so the Target run today was a) successful in that I got my niece a very cute swimming suit, um, and also lots of other stuff, because if they give me free rein -- Tybalt's going into prison. That's why I'm monologuing about swim suits for toddlers. Um, if they give me free rein to buy her stuff, I'm gonna buy her stuff. I got her a Queen T-shirt.

Emily: (distant) What, like my boy Freddie?

Sally: Yeah. Like Freddie.

Emily: Hell yeah.

Sally: Um, 'cause they had all these cute ones for, like, rock bands. You know? And I -- Liz is really into, um -- (laugh) Trolls 2: World Tour.

Emily: We still haven't watched it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Well, you have watched it.

Sally: I have watched part of it.

Emily: I haven't watched it. And --

Sally: We will watch it.

Emily: Really, my cultural palate is suffering. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, obviously. But she loves to do the, like, rock on sign. So I was like, oh, I'll get her a rock T-shirt, and I was like, I don't want to get her, like, AC/DC.

Emily: Yeah, no, Queen's the most wholesome of the --

Sally: Yeah, and then I found --

Emily: Classic rock.

Sally: Yeah, they're also -- in my opinion, I just like -- I just like Queen the best.

Emily: Yeah, they're great.

Sally: Plus, you know, gotta insert gay icons into Liz's cultural understanding --

Emily: Exactly.

Sally: As early as possible. So.

Emily: Um. I admire your brother and sister-in-law's dedication to clothing your niece.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: My sister and brother-in-law have a little inflatable pool in their backyard, and Jack just gets in it naked.

Sally: I think that my mom would've been fine with that, but I think my brother and sister-in-law are, like, grasping for things that they can, like, control.

Emily: Sure.

Sally: Considering things are spiraling out of their control. So they're like, "We can at least put our child in clothes."

Emily: Just, like, Jack's either nude or in a full sweatsuit.

Sally: Listen, he's just, like, a little Italian man. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) I walked with him to the mailbox the other day because my sister made a pit stop at our apartment complex to feed the, uh -- how old is he now? Two-month-old? One-month-old.

Sally: One month old, yeah.

Emily: One-month-old.

Sally: What's time?

Emily: What is time?

Sally: I dunno. (laugh) It feels like Will's been alive for forever.

Emily: It does feel like Will's been alive for a long time. Um, to feed the one-month-old, and Jack sort of made a lunge for freedom, and then I was like, "Might as well take him to the mailbox," and he just was trotting along, bare feet, in his sweatpants and full sweatshirt -- (laugh)

Sally: Rock on.

Emily: It's a very good -- picking up rocks, of course.

Sally: Yeah. What's up with toddlers and rocks, man?

Emily: He saw a Subaru Outback and he pointed at it, and he said, "Nunu car." Nunu is his --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Name -- the name he has been told to use for his, uh, grandma. Not my mother; the other grandma. And, um, I texted Collins later and said, "Does your mom drive a Subaru -- a black Subaru Outback?" And he said, "I think it's a red Subaru Outback." And I was like, "Well, we all know Jack's not great with colors." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I'm, like, 80 percent sure he's color blind in some way. (laugh)

Sally: Good for him. Good for him.

Emily: He's always like, "It's green," and I'm like, "It's not, though?" (laugh)

Sally: You OK, bud?

Emily: Ahh.

Sally: Ugh, I just love toddlers. They're so funny.

Emily: Yeah, that's been your toddler update.

Sally: I also bought Liz a whole gallon of bubbles.

Emily: Hell yeah.

Sally: And my mom was like, "This is so many bubbles." And I'm like, "You won't run out, though, will you?"

Emily: Yeah, she's a toddler. She needs so many bubbles.

Sally: Yeah. And I got her new bubble gum that's a little flashlight too --

Emily: Aww.

Sally: So she can shoot bubbles and then, like, light them up.

Emily: That's adorable.

Sally: Anyway, I'm a pretty cool aunt.

Emily: You really are. All I do is let Jack pick up rocks to his heart's content.

Sally: I mean, that's good too.

Emily: And just shower himself with dirt.

Sally: Listen, kids should be able to get dirty.

Emily: He loves it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He looks like a -- he looks like the Chilean miners emerging -- (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Oh, whenever he comes in from outside. OK. This is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I am Sally Goodger.

Emily: And here we are with the Fires of Heaven. Recovering from sex igloo. Not a great -- we are -- this -- these chapters are so, so steadily, uh, baseline Wheel of Time.

Sally: Yeah.



Emily: The most mediocre of chapters. We have a lot of female characters inhabiting the screen and, uh, it would seem that none of them except for the most masculinized of them, Birgitte, is capable of making intelligent --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Or self-aware decisions. So that's disheartening. Uh, but, you know, also the usual --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: For Wheel of Time. Can't say much better for most of the male characters. They're all idiots too.

Sally: Yeah, everyone just makes non-thinking-human decisions.

Emily: Yeah, there's, like, no level of, um, deductive reasoning --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Used at all.

Sally: All their heads are just empty of thoughts.

Emily: Like, there's a conversation Elayne and Nynaeve have, where Elayne's like, "I wonder why the Wise Ones never accompany Egwene to the White Tower." And Nynaeve's like, "It's probably just because they don't want to go near the White Tower." And Elayne -- both of them, instead of being like, "That defies all logic; it's the Dream World --"

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Are like, "Ah, yeah, that makes sense." Not like the next conclusion, which they could deduct --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: From Egg's behavior, that is like, they don't know Egg is going there.

Sally: Yeah. Egg is doing an illegal.

Emily: Egg is breaking the law.

Sally: Good for her. Little criminal.

Emily: The law of the land.

Sally: Um, yeah. There's just a lot of stupidity, especially from Elayne's part, if I may be so bold. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, she's a -- not a sterling example of intellect in these chapters. (laugh)

Sally: Or, like, ever, really. I think Elayne is a dumb character.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Which is fine. I love me a dumb character.

Emily: Well, yeah. But there's such a difference between a dumb character -- like, stupidity -- (laugh) First of all, stupidity is, like, a false thing --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Because, as everyone knows, there are different types of intelligence. There's physical intelligence, there's political intelligence, even --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: There's, um, intellectual intelligence and, uh, all of the many things that I don't possess. I think I already said physical -- (laugh)

Sally: You did. (laugh)

Emily: Physical intelligence. Today I was doing yoga, and it started with Adriene being like, "This is just gonna be, like, 15 minutes of hip openers." And I was like, "Agggggghhhh."

Sally: Oh my God, that's my dream. I love hip openers. They feel so good.

Emily: I mean, they do feel good theoretically, but since my hips are fundamentally broken --

Sally: Emily does -- Emily has the least flexible hips of any human being.

Emily: Here's the thing. I have a perfectly normal left hip. It's my right hip --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Specifically. (laugh)

Sally: Ah. I just love -- like, pigeon pose is my favorite, when you get that, like, deep stretch in the hip flexor. Ugh.

Emily: I don't even know what that pose is.

Sally: I'll show you after.

Emily: Oh, OK. Yeah, show -- show us. (laugh) I bet it'll -- I bet it'll translate really well to our audio medium. Yeah, do it on the podcast.

Sally: (laugh) Here, let me tell you about how to do pigeon pose.

Emily: Now she's -- (laugh)

Sally: Now Sally is --

Emily: Um. But, yeah, Elayne -- the thing with intelligent character or stupid characters is that we expect them to be intellectually stupid or stupid in some of the classical ways --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But to make up for that in other ways.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. Not that you need to, like, make up for anything. That's a false dichotomy.

Sally: Yeah. It's just, like, a balance -- everyone is a balanced human being --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: With, like, net losses and net gains. You know?

Emily: It's like D&D stats, essentially. I know that's a bad metaphor to apply to real people, but. (laugh)

Sally: But yeah, no, everyone is balanced. Everyone has skills and, like, physical intelligence isn't one of mine either. And, like, street smarts? I'm a motherfucking idiot if you put me on the streets. I'm like, "I don't know directions. I can barely read street signs." (laugh)

Emily: The thing about Elayne is that she seems to have none of it.

Sally: (laugh) That was not what I was expecting you to say.

Emily: What were you expecting?

Sally: I don't know. I was like, I'm curious to see what kind of intelligence Emily gives her. (laugh)

Emily: None of it.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) What can you give her? She's not, uh, intellectually intelligent despite the narrative trying to tell us that she is --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: By having her, like, rule a country --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Semi-competently. Um. She's not particularly socially intelligent, given how combative her relationships are with most of the closest people in her life.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: She's not romantically intelligent. She picked the worst scrub out there to, uh, target with her romantic obsession. And, uh, refuses to let her up. She has moderate physical intelligence in that she's not, you know -- she's not me with my wonky right hip. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) She might have a wonky right hip.

Emily: Yeah, we don't know. It's not relevant to her character.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's just -- what's she got going for her?

Sally: I dunno. Maybe she's got big tits or something.

Emily: Tit intelligence?

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Tittelligence.

Emily: Tittelligence.

Sally: What's your tittelligence stats? Mine are pretty low.

Emily: (muffled) This is Agent Juchau from Tittelligence.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um. Gotta get a badge that's just one single titty. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Which is not to say that having big boobs excludes you from any other type of intelligence, because it's not an indicator of anything.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Just throw that out there before I get @-ed -- @ by the same men who hate the podcast and my vocal fry.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Um. (laugh)

Emily: It's just difficult to parse, um, why, um, Elayne is so terrible without relying on some of the, um, misogynistic terms and language that is so frequently used to describe why women are unlikable.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um. But then there's always the reality that Robert Jordan wrote her in this way --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And by relying on the tropes, whether or not he intended her to be unlikable, she, you know, can't really get out of it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Sort of just, you know, she can't escape.

Sally: Yeah, and as we've, I'm sure, talked about, like, no character, but much less female character, is under any obligation to be, quote unquote, likeable and palatable. But it's not like Elayne -- like Nynaeve -- they're pretty -- they're very interestingly, like, contrasted in this chapter where Nynaeve is, like, getting in physical fights and is, like, dealing with some more, like, traits we typically see placed on, quote unquote, unlikeable female characters, like having a temper and being strong-willed, et cetera, et cetera. Like, Elayne has stuff like she's slut-shaming other women and, like, kind of always takes the side of men in things.

Emily: Yeah. She's not self-aware, or if she is, she refuses to acknowledge it in any healthy, mature way.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: When Nynaeve comments on how she has apparently gotten over Thom, Elayne goes off on Nynaeve.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In a really unproductive way.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. Yeah, it's just --

Sally: Yeah, I, like, am struggling to bring to mind the words that I want to use, I think 'cause I'm just hung up on her slut-shaming and how much I hate that about Elayne as a character.

Emily: It's really bizarre how, um, at this stage in the series, we are introduced to the talent -- her, quote unquote, Talent for making ter'angreal.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I was trying to figure out, why give that to Elayne? Like --

Sally: Why give Elayne space in the story?

Emily: (laugh) I mean, there's that.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: But it's just such a -- it does not fit in any of, either the tropes or the fictional characteristics that apply to Elayne.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: It's just like, what's it doing here?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: It makes no narrative sense. Of course, people can have magical talents that have nothing to do with their personalities or their position in the world, but in a book like *Wheel of Time*, we expect those things to be connected a little more.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And the only explanation Elayne gives us is that, um -- she's like, "Wow, I've always admired craftsmen." And I'm like, that's such a -- a throwaway thing to say now.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: We've never known this about you before.

Sally: Yeah, it's not like Elayne is like, "Wow, I am fascinated by carpenters."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Or whatever. (laugh)

Emily: "I've always wanted to be able to do something with my hands, to be able to create something --" She's never said that before.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So it's essentially like, it doesn't -- having it in the text now, essentially, you don't get to have it in the text now. It's void.

Sally: Yeah. Especially 'cause, like, the conversation that Nynaeve and Elayne are having is, like, Nynaeve is like, "You are pursuing a dangerous form of knowledge." Because she's like, "I could make one of these collars."

Emily: Referring to the, yeah, a'dam.

Sally: And Nynaeve is like, "Do you not understand how this is so scary? Like, you are literally talking about, like, making an instrument of enslavement." And Elayne is like, "Blah blah blah, I don't even care. I'm just talking about how powerful I can be and how good I will feel to make something."

Emily: Yeah. She's like, "If I can make this, then guess what else I can make."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, I get it. Resources are limited. Except that you do have the ring -- the ter'angreal ring.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You have access to other ter'angreal. And, um, it's -- yeah. Just so ...

Sally: I don't know, it just, like, brings me back to just, like, the whole ... sequence -- oh my God, what are words? (laugh)

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: In book two, where they're, like, trying to rescue Egg and -- I don't know. I mean, both Nynaeve and Elayne have some, like, troubling responses to, um, the women who are held captive. But it's just, like -- like, I just -- it's very frustrating -- it's a very, like, rich oppressor person thing to do to be able to, like, separate out these facts. You know? I don't -- like -- I don't -- (laugh) Having a hard time articulating. But it's just like, it really bothers me that she's just like -- I know she's got her, like -- like, the pursuit of knowledge is a big theme in the Wheel of Time, but it's just, like, very upsetting to me that she's just, like, refuses, even in this scenario, to, like, acknowledge any of Nynaeve's concerns.

Emily: Right.

Sally: About the way that these have been used. And she even talks about, like, ways to improve them. She's like, "The leash is absolutely unnecessary. Like, you could just have the collar and the bracelet."

Emily: And Nynaeve's like, "... Great."

Sally: Nynaeve's like, "Oh my God." Like, I -- I don't know. I'm struggling with my words here. But I just, like -- like with everything about the Seanchan and their technology, it is just, like, yuck. Like, I wouldn't be like, "I'm gonna improve handcuffs."

Emily: "I know how to make handcuffs better."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Here, cops. Here's the -- here's the blueprints."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, the pursuit of knowledge part of it is so funny because that seems like such a thing to insert into Elayne's character as if Robert Jordan is trying to indicate, "Look, these women are more than their chosen, quote unquote, Ajahs."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: You know, the pursuit of knowledge is a traditionally Brown trait. Uh, but here Elayne is, wanting to slut it up as a Green.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And it's like, that might mean something if you had, again, actually chosen for her to then stick with that --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Or to go past her, um, first inclinations.

Sally: Yeah. Like --

Emily: To have growth as a character, rather than -- (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Just --

Emily: Stasis.

Sally: Flatlining for 14 books.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Or, like, also, like, what if she had chosen the Brown Ajah and then continues to just slut it up.

Emily: Yeah.



Sally: Like, you do not have to define -- you don't have to, like, build space into your career to be able to fuck people.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, it just -- the whole concept of the Green Ajah annoys me so much. And the fact that two out of our three main Aes Sedai characters end up there -- we've had this conversation too. But I just hate Elayne. I was marking up a graffitied book for the Fires of -- a copy of the Fires of Heaven -- I'm sorry, you guys. My head is throbbing, so words are coming out in, like, the strangest sequences. But I was marking up these chapters when I was reading them, and I just kept being like, "Wow, Elayne sucks."

Emily: She really does.

Sally: Wow, Elayne sucks.

Emily: Just -- (sigh) But then I was, like, trying to think of what -- who -- 'cause clearly -- 'cause clearly Robert Jordan was like, "I need this Talent, this ability to, um, understand and identify and create angreal, ter'angreal thing --"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "To come back in the way that other Talents coming back." But then I was like, who else would he give it to? And I was like, no one makes sense. You could just have a random Aes Sedai be doing it --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, you know, this is sort of what happens when you, um, create three main female channelers and then, um, you know, have only three main female channelers.

Sally: Yeah. You have to overpower all three of them.

Emily: You have to overpower -- yeah, they just keep getting, like, these Talents stacked. It's very bizarre.

Sally: Whatever. Um, other things that are going on because Elayne being a stank-ass white feminist bitch is that, um, Nynaeve is getting knives thrown at her head. Um.

Emily: She doesn't feel great about this, understandably.

Sally: Yeah. And Valan Luca keeps trying to pressure her into wearing some, like, super tight --

Emily: Low-cut dress.

Sally: Revealing dress.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And he keeps flirting with her, despite the fact that Nynaeve is obviously not interested.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And Elayne's like, "You should stop encouraging him."

Emily: Yeah, it's such a fraught subject, 'cause you referred to it as slut-shaming, and I agree with you -- um -- I assume that's what you were referring to --

Sally: Yeah, yeah. Sorry.

Emily: Um, but, like, the -- the whole idea, the whole theory with Nynaeve and Elayne is that we see things through one of their points of view, and we're seeing it totally differently from the other points of view.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And because we're seeing through both their eyes, we're supposed to find that both are -- if not valid, necessary perspectives --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Because neither of these women is self-aware. But when you set that up within the context of flirting and, quote unquote, encouraging men, it's such, like, a dangerous topic because, um, women's behavior and its impact -- supposed impact on male behavior is such a, uh, treacherous ground --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Because ultimately, men are responsible for their own behavior.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Regardless of what Nynaeve does, she says she does not want it, so --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: That's the end of it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So shut up, Elayne.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And shut up, Robert Jordan, for trying to make it look like it's some funny, um, continuation of the joke.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah. Because, like, all -- it's not funny, because, like, all these ways that Nynaeve is trying to be polite about it are things that are conditioned into women forever. It's like, you can't just be like, "Fuck off." I mean, you -- you can. But society tells you you can't, is what I'm trying to say.

Emily: Yeah, and Elayne's like, "Why don't you just tell him to fuck off like you first did?"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "That would eventually drive him away," and Nynaeve's like, "Everyone keeps telling me that I need to be nicer."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "I'm trying to do that. What's it take, you know?"

Sally: Yeah. So it's just like, poor Nynaeve. In these chapters.

Emily: Just -- yeah, stuck.

Sally: Poor baby.

Emily: Um. And you mentioned she got into a physical fight. This was confusing 'cause she mentions her black eye early on, and I was like, is it still leftover --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: From the first fight? That Elayne mentioned? But we come to find out that she got in a fight with, uh, the Seanchan -- what is she, an elephant tamer? Zookeeper lady?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, over questioning her about sul'dam and damane and not believing her when she said that she didn't know anything else. And the way she phrases it to Elayne is -- to Elayne, "You've taught her too well," essentially, which sort of goes back to what you were saying about their different relationships with, um, this society of enslavement -- this happens a lot with Nynaeve and Elayne --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: One of them or both of them will, quote unquote, teach backbone to women who have been enslaved or otherwise oppressed --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And then one or both of them will become very irritated that then these women exhibit agencies and wills and, uh, are not so easy to walk over.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which, again, is sort of played for laughs.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's a serious topic because this is a serious issue, where, um, societally, when we take an oppressed group and, quote unquote, give them power, as though power shouldn't belong to them to begin with --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And power does belong to them to begin with -- um, and then when they start to behave like they have power, we get really angry that they're not grateful or --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, sticking with their usual positions --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In our worldviews.

Sally: Yeah. It's like, how dare -- like, you can exert your power, but how dare you try to exert it over me?

Emily: Right.

Sally: And it's, like, not even what she's trying to do. She's just like, "I'm just trying to hold a place for myself, Nynaeve. Like, I do not want to have this conversation anymore." And Nynaeve's like, "How dare you?" (laugh)

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um. Yeah.

Emily: Not great. Um, oh, we also find out -- to, like, set this, they're on the other side of the river from the town called Samara, um, where Luca is planning to set up the menagerie --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: For a big performance, and Juilin reports that he has seen, like, a bunch of Whitecloaks in the town, including Galad. And Nynaeve's like, "Goddamnit."

Sally: (laugh) “He’s everywhere.”

Emily: And -- “Why is he everywhere?” and Elayne’s like, “Don’t worry about it because he cannot stand zoos because he doesn’t like seeing animals in cages.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “He does eat animals, though.” And I’m like, what?

Sally: I know, I’m like, it’s -- she’s --

Emily: The false dichotomy there. You know?

Sally: She’s like, “He can’t --” Like, “He’s fine hunting them and eating them, but he can’t stand seeing them in cages.” And it’s like, in the year of our Lord 2020, I object to hunting, ‘cause there’s absolutely --

Emily: No reason.

Sally: No reason to, but if you’re existing in, like, sixteenth century fantasy continent, hunting would probably be a part of your food source, so, like, shut up, Elayne.

Emily: And, like, your primary source of protein. It’s not like they have --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Alternate sources of protein --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like they do -- I mean, they have some, but not enough.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it’s not like Elayne herself is not eating meat.

Sally: It’s not like Galad’s, like, cooking up falafel in the kitchen every evening.

Emily: Yeah. God.

Sally: So I’m like, this is a completely valid moral stance to have, Elayne. Why do you suck so much? (laugh)

Emily: I know. Like -- Galad’s like, “Maybe don’t put lions in small cages,” and Elayne’s like, “Um, get off your moral high horse.” (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) “This isn’t a safe space for lions.”

Emily: "I am going to be making collars to enslave women, though."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "I don't believe in slavery, but I'm fine with that." Oh my God.

Sally: Elayne just sucks so much! I hate her. (laugh)

Emily: Finally, Nynaeve is like, "Time for sleep," um, and goes to -- uses the ring to go to Tel'aran'rhold to meet up with Birgitte, who -- it seems that they've been meeting up pretty frequently.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, partly because Nynaeve is avoiding Egg. Um, so -- (laugh) she shows up wearing the very special low-cut dress and is like, "Oh, gotta change this," and Birgitte's like, "Why'd you change it?"

Sally: "You looked so hot."

Emily: "You looked so hot." She's like, "I love wearing sexy dresses."

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: "It's awesome."

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Birgitte remains the only valid character.

Sally: It's true.

Emily: It's also just so, like, cute and romantic --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Her talking about Gaidal -- it's a real shame that we don't get to see her and Gaidal's relationship in real time, only in nostalgia.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: In that, like, sort of sepia-toned, um, memory bank that Birgitte is slowly losing.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But -- 'cause, like, it's just such a fascinating concept and such a romantic concept, to have two people who have multiple lives together --

Sally: Mm. Yeah.

Emily: And when they leave them, when they die, essentially, they can remember them in context of all the other lives. It's very sweet.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um.

Sally: Plus Birgitte is just, like, the funniest girlfriend of all time.

Emily: I know. She's like, "I won so much money off him 'cause he would not stop staring at my tits." (laugh) "As though he had not seen them before."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Nynaeve's like, "Ah, stop talking about them," and Birgitte's like, "What? You -- you have them."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "Calm down."

Sally: "They're just boobies."

Emily: Um. But Nynaeve's like, "OK, whatever," and Birgitte's like, "Great slash bad news is I did find Moghedien." And Nynaeve's like, "OK, take me to her." And Birgitte whisks them to, you know, the darkness where -- (laugh) the Forsaken meet in Tel'aran'rhiod. They're standing sort of above Moghedien, who herself is standing above this meeting of the Forsaken: Lanfear, Graendal, Sammael, and Rahvin. Who, um -- whose attire and chairs are, of course, described in detail as though these are insights into their personalities. Which, because they're two-dimensional characters, they are. Um, and we just hear them sort of plotting.

Sally: Yeah. It's like, 'kay.

Emily: Doesn't mean much to us, or it does mean something to us, but it's nothing we don't know already, that the Forsaken are plotting against Rand and making it look as though Sammael is to blame so that Rand will go after Sammael. Um. Must've been a real shock when he shows up to kill Rahvin. (laugh)

Sally: Rahvin's like, "Fuck."

Emily: Rahvin's like, "Ah, dunk."

Sally: "That didn't work."

Emily: "Aww. And Lanfear just got --"

Sally: Can I get an “F” in the chat, folks? (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Um, including, they mention something about killing someone close to Rand, which will sort of explain the assassination attempt against Mat --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: A little later. (laugh) What?

Sally: It’s just funny. Everyone’s like, “Yeah, we’ll kill Mat to get to Rand.”

Emily: And it’s like, “Why don’t you kill Mat to kill Mat?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I’m, like, always offended on Mat’s behalf --

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: That everyone underestimates him. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I’m like, he’s the world’s most dangerous boy.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: He doesn’t have Rand’s nuclear power, but he does invent cannons. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, he also has a brain between his ears, unlike Rand.

Emily: Unlike the other men.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: God bless. Um, so we hear them plotting, and then, uh, Birgitte whisks Nynaeve back, and Nynaeve’s like, “Did Moghedien see us?” and Birgitte’s like, “No, but we were just, like, hovering above her.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “She could’ve looked up at any moment.” Which, you know, in Tel’aran’rhiod, things are as you make them, so --

Sally: Uh-huh.

Emily: It seems like they could’ve very easily made themselves invisible.

Sally: Mm-hmm.



Emily: Um. I'm not quite sure why Birgitte was nerfed in this way, where she doesn't seem to have this mastery over Tel'aran'rhiod --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: That, um, Egwene gets through many books of training and Perrin gets over several grueling, um, sessions with his wolf mentor --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: In the latter books. Literally --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Perrin, you know, gets it down in, like, five days.

Sally: Gross.

Emily: Because he's a man and men are so much better at things than women are. Um. (laugh)

Sally: Apparently.

Emily: It just comes naturally to him.

Sally: Doesn't it?

Emily: 'Cause he's part wolf. But Birgitte has literally lived a -- a cumulative -- I -- we assume -- hundreds or thousands of years in this place --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You'd think she'd be the best at it, better than the Forsaken.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So it's completely bizarre --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That she isn't exhibiting that. Except that Robert Jordan was like, "No, then she's too powerful." Or maybe he had not made up the rule set for Tel'aran'rhiod yet in the way that it's used in the later books.

Sally: Maybe.

Emily: Um, but Birgitte and Nynaeve are chatting, and then Moghedien just comes up behind them, slams Birgitte, and immediately rips Nynaeve's clothes off and contorts her into some

painful posture. Which, she says, she got the idea from -- from, uh, Graendal's Kama Sutra chair --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is made -- carved to look like people fucking. Um -- or, you know, just being in flexible positions. So immediately, we're framing this in terms of torture porn.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which isn't great because then both women also spend a lot of time talking a lot about mounting one another and using each other as horses.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, ew.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, there's no great way to look at this --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Without being like, what?

Sally: Yeah. Moghedien's like, "I'm gonna turn you into a horse and ride you through Tel'aran'rhiol." And it's like --

Emily: ... But why?

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, I don't -- it's, like, so bizarre. I don't know.

Emily: (laugh) You're like, there's no explanation for this that isn't just, like, reliant upon levels of sexuality and, um, gross, like, torture porn.

Sally: Yeah, and it's another instance in the series, though it's not explicit, of, like, um ... criminalizing, um ...

Emily: Kink? Sex?

Sally: No. Ahhh, what are words? Criminalizing, um, female -- women love women sexuality. Lesbian sexuality.

Emily: Sapphic.

Sally: Thank you. Oh my fuck. What are words? (laugh) Jesus fucking Christ. Of criminalizing, like, sapphic sexuality, because it's like, these two women are, like -- it's just, like, loaded with

sexual context and innuendo, but it's two women mounting each other, quote unquote, so of course there's something unnatural and evil about it.

Emily: Yeah. And, like, turning a person into an animal is a horrifying concept. Read, the, uh, myth from Artemis turning that one guy --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Who saw her naked into a deer? Right? So that --

Sally: Or -- yeah, a deer, so that his dogs would kill him.

Emily: Yeah, so he'd be murdered by his own, uh, good hound dogs. Hunting dogs. Which is, like, a horrifying concept, but it's also completely devoid of sexual meaning --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So the animal you choose to turn someone -- (laugh) into really, uh, makes an impact there.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: If Moghedien was like, "I'm gonna turn you into a bug," I wouldn't be like, "The sexuality!"

Sally: Yeah. But she's like, "I'm gonna turn you into a horse."

Emily: "First I'll turn you into a flea. A tiny little flea." (laugh) "Then I'll put that flea in a box --" Um, yeah, no, but a horse? And then talking about giving you a nice saddle and sitting on you is just, like --

Sally: And, like, braiding your hair --

Emily: Girl.

Sally: And ... "You might enjoy our rides, but maybe you won't."

Emily: Ew.

Sally: It's like, ew. (laugh) This is so stanky.

Emily: It just makes me so upset.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Nynaeve, um, tries to provoke her to kill her quickly, and then when Moghedien is asking her about Elayne, Nynaeve lies to try and protect Elayne. Is like, "Whatever, I'll just try and die

in Tel'aran'rhiod, and then hopefully my death will be warning enough for Elayne." Like, Nynaeve goes zero to sixty --

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Very quickly. She's like, "Now that I've been captured, the fear is gone, and I'm just totally, you know, going --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "To the kamikaze 'How can I get her to kill me?' route."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um. Which, like, interesting, I guess?

Sally: Yeah, I also feel like that's a very, like, traumatic mindset to be put into. Like, "I am going to, like, take any action necessary to die in this situation," and then when it is alleviated, it's just like, fuck. Like, how do you bounce back from that?

Emily: Yeah. And Nynaeve's trauma will be framed, in the next few chapters, um, in reference to her relationship with Birgitte. It'll all be about what she's, quote unquote, done to Birgitte.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, rather than giving Nynaeve space to process that trauma and how it affected herself.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Although it does later come back a little bit at the end of Fires of Heaven when she has the second confrontation with Moghedien and --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Sort of reverses it. Um, but yeah, deeply traumatic.

Sally: Yeah. Upsetting.

Emily: Um. Moghedien is essentially doing her villain monologue and is like, "I'm going to put Compulsion on you to go back and bring Elayne to me," when Birgitte manages to regain consciousness and shoot Moghedien, um, and then Nynaeve drops, and it's sort of confusing because Moghedien disappears, but also, darkness envelops Birgitte, and she too disappears. And Nynaeve's just like, "Ahhhh!"

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: And sort of stays there, and that particular point of view cuts off, and later we'll pick up with finding out that Birgitte has not been killed but ripped out of Tel'aran'rhiod.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Whether or not that was Moghedien's intention.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I can't remember if she did that on purpose.

Sally: I can't either.

Emily: Phew. Um. But then we go over to, God help us, Liandrin. Thank Christ, I think it's, like, the last Liandrin point of view because after this she stops becoming -- she stops being a relevant character.

Sally: Yeah, 'cause she's put into, like, permanent -- perma-torture.

Emily: Yeah, she tries to attack Moghedien when Moghedien is still wounded, and Moghedien is like, "Nah, bitch," and puts a really intricate shield on her so that she, uh, essentially can no longer channel.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And then get tortured by one of the other Black Ajah, um, whatever. And it's, like, you know, more torture porn. There's nothing --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Really, more to say. Just --

Sally: Yeah, it's not, like, an interesting scene.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It doesn't do anything to further our understanding of the world, the plot, or these characters.

Emily: We don't need -- again, as we've said many times -- we don't particularly need understanding of these characters.

Sally: No.

Emily: Because we're operating in a fantasy world of good and evil without too many nuances, so it's enough to say that they're evil. We don't need to say the levels to which they are evil --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And, uh, are willing to torment each other. It's just -- OK, we get it.

Sally: They're evil. That's all I need to know.

Emily: They're evil. And I personally would not care if Liandrin just stopped appearing in the text.

Sally: Yeah. She's a shitty villain.

Emily: She's a shitty villain, but it's also like -- it's not like Nynaeve -- this is going to come back to Nynaeve and Elayne, right? Like, they're all -- they're still gonna spend the rest of their life wondering, "Oh, is Liandrin after us?"

Sally: (laugh) Yeah. Ah, it's funny to think about.

Emily: So why does it matter whether we know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You might as well leave us in suspense.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: (sigh) So, like I said, a truly mediocre set of chapters.

Sally: It is true.

Emily: The only good that comes from this is that now Birgitte will be a -- a more prevalent part of the plot.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Thank Christ.

Sally: I love her.

Emily: She's so funny. So good.

Sally: So wild. Can't wait until she and Mat meet and become BFFs.

Emily: I know, it's very good. The best part of book seven.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The only -- well, not the only good part of book seven.

Sally: Yeah, book seven's very interesting, but.

Emily: Book seven's fraught with --

Sally: Much --

Emily: Lots of stuff going on.

Sally: Of things to talk about.

Emily: Um, OK. Thank you for listening. Thank you to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thank you to Excedrin for sponsoring this episode. (laugh) Chalky and disgusting though you may be.

Sally: But I love you. It's the only reason I survive many of my days. RIP to my liver, though, I guess.

Emily: Tune in to the Windwaker livestream this Friday if you would like to. They're usually a rollicking good -- good time. (laugh)

Sally: They're usually pretty silly.

Emily: Yeah, they're --

Sally: They're a little --

Emily: Usually an hour and a half or two hours of just nonsense.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: Um, and me sort of screaming when bad guys are there to fight.

Sally: Yeah. It's because there's a lot of baddies to fight in Windwaker.

Emily: I know.

Sally: Link never gets to rest.

Emily: Yeah, I would like to hit the snooze button on him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, in Minecraft, you get to sleep.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's nice.

Sally: Please continue to donate, um, write emails demanding justice for Breonna Taylor. We'll still -- I know I said on social media we'd just do it last week -- but we'll still honor it because justice has not been served. So if you want to write emails, um, they are all on our Instagram. My brain is, again, not working. Um, for Breonna Taylor or Elijah McClain, anything like that, we

will send you a sticker of your choice as long as supplies last. Um, so please continue to take action, um, and support Black communities in America and around the world, obviously.

Emily: Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: I have a listener-submitted -- (sigh) I have a listener-submitted sign-off from Logan. Um, uh, and Logan says, "When I was 19 in my college world religions class, we took a day trip to New Orleans. I grabbed a hurricane --" In your college field trip? (laugh) Only in New Orleans. "I grabbed a hurricane and was walking down the street where the strip clubs are."

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: "One had just opened with a patriot theme, and the guy out front turned to me and said, 'Hey, you want to come motorboat some titties ... for America?' And saluted." (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: New Orleans is a truly fascinating and amazing place.

Emily: What a -- a way to end this episode with -- what -- what did we say it? Titvestigators or something? (laugh)

Sally: Tit -- tittelligence.

Emily: Tit -- tittelligence. (laugh)

Sally: Tittelligence.

Emily: Alright. Have a good week, everyone.

Sally: Bye. Oh, I never clocked out. Fuck.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Goodbye!

Emily: Bye.