



Episode 152: Spiritually in a McDonald's

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

EMILY: Our title is a joke and is meant to be taken as such. In the context of this podcast, "everybody" refers to us and our cat. You are free to feel however you want about Rand, who is a fictional character. Don't DM us.

[Theme song by Glynn Mackenzie plays]

EMILY: Okay, [sighs] academia.

SALLY: Academia. This is whatever the fuck. This is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheely Time podcast. I'm Sally Goodger.

EMILY: I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: We're here.

EMILY: Barely. Physically.

SALLY: Physically?

EMILY: If not spiritually.

SALLY: Spiritually I'm on Mars with Perseverance, the little rover.

EMILY: Aww. That's nice. I'm in a McDonald's.

SALLY: [laughs] The other day as I was driving around, I passed, like, a bunch of Trax stations when I was going to Perry and Melissa's.

EMILY: Uh-huh.

SALLY: Heading down south they start to pop up a little bit more. Either in Salt Lake City proper or along the Frontlunner – Frontlunner. *Frontrunner*.

EMILY: Frontlunner.

SALLY: And I was remembering that time I had to come pick you up from that McDonald's parking lot [laughs].

EMILY: Every time I have to pass the McDonald's, which I have to do sometimes to get, um, I think it's to Devin and Janet's house, I'm like, "Ah, yes. That's where I had to call Sally in the dead of night."

SALLY: [laughs] Ten pm.

EMILY: "To be like, Trax stopped running. And I'm not at campus yet, so apparently I was on the last train."

SALLY: Yeah. It was so sad.

EMILY: And then I had to wait. Not even inside the McDonald's, because I think the McDonald's dining room was closed.

SALLY: Yeah. She was in, like, a sad little bench.

EMILY: I just had to wait outside the McDonald's.

SALLY: On, like, third east.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Which is a fine east [laughs]. It was just, like, I felt so sad for her. Me and my golden Jeep. We beep-beeped up and brought her home.

EMILY: Yeah, it was super nice. A weird amount of my life has been spent in McDonald's dining rooms. Primarily because when I used to walk dogs in New York it was like a McDonald's dining room was the only place you could take refuge from the weather.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So, I would just sit there, eating my French fries.

SALLY: I'm sure I've told this story on the podcast before, but at my job in New York City, at ye olde glassblowing studio, there was a McDonald's down the street, because in New York City there's always a McDonald's down the street, ya know? Um, and I would go there for lunch sometimes, because you could a meal for, like, six bucks or whatever.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: As opposed to everywhere else in Fort Greene where lunch was, like, [laughing] sixty-five dollars. Um, and one time I, like, came back with, like, my thing of French fries or something. Like, I hadn't finished eating it. And my boss was like, "[scoff] You eat at McDonald's? That's, like, that's such trasy food." And I was like, "...say that one more time please? What?" [laughs]

EMILY: Anyone who thinks McDonald's is trashy food or has said that to another live human being, is first in line at the guillotine.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean –

EMILY: Class traitors.

SALLY: [whispers] This woman probably should be first in line at the guillotine. Anyway, rich people are a disease, but we all knew that.

EMILY: Speaking of rich people...are we speaking of rich people?

SALLY: I feel like the Whitecloaks, whether or not they actually have money, occupy rich people status.

EMILY: Rich people energy.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Yeah, they're pretty uhhhh [laughs]. Just did a little operatic uhhhhh.

SALLY: I mean, to feel brave enough to wear white in a medieval adjacent –

EMILY: Oh yeah. Wouldn't you be dirty all the time?

SALLY: Yeah. Like, to be able to keep your cloak white you have to have, you know, rezources.

EMILY: You know that M. Night Shyamalan movie *The Village* that I made you watch?

SALLY: [laughing] Yes, I remember.

EMILY: And how she has to wear a yellow cloak, because yellow's the good color or whatever. And she, like, falls in a sink hole and she's just, like, covered in mud and scraping the mud off of her. That's just what I think it's like to be a person in a medieval era.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: You're just constantly covered in mud.

SALLY: Yeah, so those cloaks must be stanky!

EMILY: Yeah, um, so we actually read three chapters this, uh, week. So here's hoping we can get through all three of them, because a lot happens. Although, usually a lot happening is indicative of the fact that we will spend [laughing] less time talking about it than.

SALLY: Gonna stay on track.

EMILY: Usual. Um, we spend one full chapter in The Fortress of the Light.

SALLY: Barf.

EMILY: Catching up with various, as I said to Sally earlier, just deeply unpleasant men. And they're all sort of like – it's like a three-headed Hydra.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Of unpleasantness.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: We open with, uh, Valda, whose name, whose first name I don't know how to pronounce. And it's not my business, so.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] Just gonna stay away from it. But he has just arrived from wherever he has been causing terror.

SALLY: Mm. Tar Valon.

EMILY: Yeah, and he literally regales us with how in his ride from Tar Valon to here, across the continent, he's like, "Well, I just came across a lot of masses of people with the prophet, but I couldn't figure out how to work out prophet followers from just regular refugees, so I just killed all of them. Because [singing] mass murder is my hobby!"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: “Right next to my other hobby, which is rape.” Which we’ll get into, I believe, next book.

SALLY: [gagging noises] Listen, this man should be shot on sight.

EMILY: This man is very pleasantly killed by Galad in, like, a trial by combat or something. But it’s just, like, nice to watch Galad kill a man.

SALLY: Good for him. He needs to let some of that out, ya know?

EMILY: I know! Like, just be like, “Fuck you.”

SALLY: Um, but anyway he is truly just like the nastiest person.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Who’s just like, “I – it was great to just kill everyone in the countryside.”

EMILY: Yeah, and he just spends his point of view ranting about how literally everyone around him is weak and soft and incompetent, because they’re not, like, I don’t know, barging into people’s houses and murdering them.

SALLY: Yeah. I mean, very tellingly a lot of the language he uses to belittle other people is coded as feminine.

EMILY: Yes.

SALLY: Soft.

EMILY: Like, he’s hugely misogynistic, but, like, that’s the thing with all three of the Whitecloak perspectives that we’re given. There is a huge element of narcissism, misogyny, and just, like I said, unpleasantness.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And it’s just different – different [laughs], um versions of that. Valda happens to be the, uh, kind of, like, bully form of toxic masculinity. He overpowers everyone. He’s hypermasculine and an all around not fun dude. All he does is interact briefly with young Bornhald, Bornhald Jr., who has apparently given into alcoholism since we’ve seen him last. Or maybe he was on that track. We last saw him in Book 4 and, uh, Valda’s like, “What the fuck happened to him? Now he’s, like, an alcoholic.” And Bornhald’s like, “Well, I just spent months in the Two Rivers committing mass murder and enabling Pedron Niall to commit mass murder. So, that’s why I’m an alcoholic. I also should be in prison.” But he’s like, “Why don’t you have dinner with me?”

And Valda's like, "Sure, what's uh – war criminals should always share meals. I'll see ya later, but you should be sober, you weakling." And it's, like, great dude. He's, like, walking off and he gets grabbed by some Questioner who's like, "You should maybe go to the Questioner...Cathedral."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: "Or whatever the fuck it is."

SALLY: Yeah, it's, like, some dumbass dome.

EMILY: There's, like, a dome for the specific subset of the Whitecloaks. Like, the Whitecloaks are already deeply unpleasant and then it's like and here's for the hyper-unpleasant men.

SALLY: Yeah, just like a dome that's, like, gilded.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And you're like, "Okay."

EMILY: And Valda's like, "Fine." Goes there, looks at a painting of an Aes Sedai, um, being hanged, except she was already dead when she was hanged, which is like the Whitecloaks being like, "Body desecration. You love to see it." Um, and then Asunawa comes up to him and is like, "Maybe, I'm going to –" They use coded language, but we can all agree that we're not stupid, so we know that what he's saying is, "Maybe we should kill Pedron Niall." And Valda's like, "Yeah, okay. We'll talk about it later." And that's fucking that.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Then we bounce over to Pedron Niall, who has no idea that he's about to be murdered or – about to be? Maybe in the next book. I can't remember.

SALLY: Soon! His death will be upon him.

EMILY: But not soon enough!

SALLY: Never soon enough. The whole Fortress of the Light should just be, like, balefired off the map.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Please, thank you.

EMILY: And Pedron Niall is like, "Everyone is incompetent, including my fake spy master." As though your fake spy master is obligated to be good at his fake job.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: Stupid.

SALLY: He's like, "It's very annoying how bad he is at his fake job."

EMILY: But he's been sent another note from some hapless informant in Tarabon, who's like, "I'm begging you. There's a bunch of crazy ass people here. They've got, like, freaky dragon monsters. Giant cats or frogs or something. They're imperialist as fuck and coming from me, a Whitecloak informant? What a thing to say. And they claim that they're just here for their manifest destiny."

SALLY: [laughs] Oh, boy. You're so right.

EMILY: [laughs] And Pedron Niall's like, "You know, second time in as many months or whatever. It's beginning to be a little weird." So to Balwer he's like, "Could you maybe get someone into Tarabon?" And Balwer's like, "I mean, it could take me anywhere from two weeks to three months." And Niall's like, "Sure, go for it." Or something. Um, but he's preoccupied with thinking about that, I guess. Um, when we switch over to Morgase, who is getting ready with her people to escape that night with Peter the Darkfriend.

SALLY: Yep. Oh, Peter.

EMILY: And his creepy uncle, who everyone looks at them and is like, "That can't be that boy's uncle." And it's like, "Do any of you have braincells?"

SALLY: It's not his uncle!

EMILY: That's because it's not his uncle.

SALLY: Peter – Paitr, little man. The piper lad is like –

EMILY: Paitr keeps muttering –

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: About how his [laughs], his failure.

SALLY: About how he's repaying a debt. Yeah. He's like, "I'll finally be free of my failure." And even if that was that boy's uncle there's some major abuse going on in that house.

EMILY: He's, like, saying, "My precious." And Morgase is like [laughing], "This seems fine."

SALLY: [laughing] "This is totally normal. All teenage boys act like this, yeah?"

EMILY: Sure.

SALLY: Ridiculous.

EMILY: Anyway, some Whitecloak, again a Questioner, comes to get her and is like, “I’m here to take you to see Pedron Niall.” And she’s like, “Fine. Fine. Fine.” Goes with him and they cross this courtyard where they happen to see a hanging of quote unquote Darkfriends, including actual Darkfriends, Paitr and his uncle. Which just goes to show you rule of multiplicity. If you hang enough people, eventually you will catch [laughs] some Darkfriends.

SALLY: Yeah. There’s seriously like thirty or forty people being hanged.

EMILY: Yeah. It’s like that scene in *Pirates of the Caribbean*. Three. Where they’re singing the song – okay. Never mind. But Morgase assumes that this is all a, has been put on as a show for her. That her escape attempt has been –

SALLY: Discovered.

EMILY: Discovered. And that they’re just suddenly being like, “See, you can’t escape us?” And now in a, a great show of how Robert Jordan loves to use irony and miscommunication to victimize Morgase specifically. I don’t know why he’s so intent on fucking her over. But, uh, this was actually just completely coincidental [laughs]. They knew nothing about her supposed escape attempt. They just literally happened to catch some Darkfriends for once. Um, so everyone will part, Morgase never knowing these guys were actually Darkfriends and that her escape attempt would have led to her probably being killed. Um, and the Whitecloaks never knowing that Morgase almost escaped.

SALLY: Fucking *Tom and Jerry* up in here.

EMILY: No, literally. But Morgase gets to Pedron Niall’s office and, because she er – excuse me. She gets to Pedron Niall’s office and she offers a lot of rationale here that doesn’t actually make a lot of rational sense. And the more I re-read the series the more I begin to think that, poorly, Robert Jordan was trying to portray that Morgase lost something when she was under Rahvin’s control. That she has been influenced in ways. She talks about really not trusting the Tower, which, coming from a woman who trained in the Tower and has always had a good relationship with the Aes Sedai simply doesn’t make sense.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Unless she is picking that up from her time with Rahvin, who constantly was telling her not to trust the Tower.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, but this embedded mistrust of the Tower, she’s thinking, “I can’t go to the Aes Sedai.” And she’s not even that motivated to get Elayne on the throne because she’s like,

“Elayne will just be a puppet of the Aes Sedai,” which is, like, what? Girl, you, too, trained in the Tower. But she’s like, “Fine, I’ll sign your dumb treaty to let the Whitecloaks into Andor.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Pedron Niall’s like, “I wasn’t even, like, thinking about that, so this is great news. Sure. I’ll draw up a contract.” And then she’s like, “Do you want to play fantasy chess?” And he’s like, “Yeah, sure.” And she’s like, “Aw, dunk. I’ll have to pretend to lose because men are so sensitive.”

SALLY: I mean, she’s right there, but I also don’t – I’m like, “Why do you have to play chess with him, girl? Just go back to your room.”

EMILY: I know. I would just be like, “Goodbye.” He’s like, “It will actually take me some time.”

SALLY: Oh yeah.

EMILY: “To start sending the Whitecloaks into Andor, because I’ve got this other thing going on.” And Morgase is like, “What else could you have going on?” And he’s like, “You don’t have to worry about it.”

SALLY: “Don’t worry about it. It’s just my very badly constructed world domination plan.”

EMILY: Yeah, and the Seanchan invasion.

SALLY: That I don’t even believe is happening. So.

EMILY: Yeah, so. I don’t know.

SALLY: It’s just Robert Jordan’s bad plot devices.

EMILY: [sighs] Seriously. This drags on so long. Then we go to Asunawa, who is like, who, via him, we learn that the hanging was not intended to scare Morgase specifically. Um, but he says, “Well, I hope she holds out against Pedron Niall.” Again, here’s a bullet that Morgase has dodged, quote unquote, because literally no matter which way she turns in the Fortress of the Light, Morgase is going to come up against some creepy man who wants to either torture or rape her. Or both. Um, but he’s like, “I have this whole grand scheme to, uh, finally get Pedron Niall so impatient with Morgase that he just turns her over to me to torture.” Because he is desperate to torture someone as high in the social standing as Morgase, I guess.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um.

SALLY: [shuddering noises]

EMILY: Yeah. Horrible. But, of course, she has already given into Pedron Niall, so that fate has been sidestepped. So that's [laughing] that.

SALLY: [sighs] That's that.

EMILY: End episode. Um [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] I wish.

EMILY: No, we then hop over to Egg, who, uh, regales us with some little anecdotes about how unpleasant it is to be in the Cairhienin Aiel camp after Rand, you know, swept through like a hurricane. Um, everyone is feeling very unsettled. The Wise Ones are really upset, because they don't know what the fuck is going on with these Aes Sedai. They actually tried to send some Maidens in to spy on them or something, and the Maidens obviously didn't get far in a house full of magic ladies, so [buzzes lips] at least they lived, I guess. Um, and everyone's being just snappish and short. Egg, at one point, just to try get out of being in the Wise Ones camp and having to do unnecessary chores, goes to the river and gets a guy to row her out to the middle of the river so she can call up to the Sea Folk who are on their boat like, "Can I come aboard?" And she's thinking, "I'll just go up there, reveal that I know their most trea – most guarded secret, that their Windfinders are channelers, and, you know, strike up a friendship where I can learn how to control the weather." It's all about Egg. What she can learn from this. Which, uh, I mean, she has been embedded in the Aiel culture for the last several months, um, so sure, I guess. That is now the norm for her. I can just go into whatever culture is nearest me and –

SALLY: Demand they teach me things.

EMILY: Demand whatever knowledge they have. Um, now the Sea Folk don't respond well to this, though not for the reasons that are obvious, like, cultural appropriation. She just is like, they, like, toss down a ladder and they wait until she's almost all the way up and then they cut the ladder and are like, "Fuck you," [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They're like, "You can't just, like," they say your kind or whatever aren't allowed aboard the ship. You haven't been given the gift of passage. Meaning they can tell she's a channeler, the same way she can tell the Windfinder is a channeler. Um, but in a fit of temper she channels all the woman who are, like, the three main ladies. The captain, first mate, whatever, and dumps them in the water. Or tries to. They, of course, are excellent divers and are just like, "We're the fucking Sea Folk."

SALLY: Yeah, you think we don't know how to be in the water?

EMILY: We're afraid of water?

SALLY: What are you saying?

EMILY: It's like trying to drown a mermaid, you fucking idiot [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] This is not Egwene's finest moment.

EMILY: No, not at all.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And it's like [laughs] we're just scraping the bottom of the barrel. Like, clearly she's run out of things to do here.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: If she's resorted to harassing the Sea Folk, hiding from the Wise Ones, and spending her time in the city just, you know, making out with Gawyn. And what's frustrating is that she really didn't have anything to do her for most of this book.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, this could have been happening way earlier.

SALLY: The way she feels right now is the way I have felt through all of Path – or, sorry. *Lord of Chaos*.

EMILY: Yeah, exactly.

SALLY: [whispers] And *Path of Daggers*.

EMILY: [whispers, laughing] And all of the books. Except Book 7. And Book 3. So, that night, Egg finally gets to make her, it's not a debut. Her reappearance?

SALLY: Her redebut.

EMILY: Her redebut. Her rebut.

SALLY: Her rebut!

EMILY: [laughs] Stupid.

SALLY: [laughing] She's being rebuted into society!

EMILY: She gets to go back to *Tel'aran'rhiod* and meet with the Aes Sedai. It only occurs to her in the last thirty seconds, "Aw fuck. The Aes Sedai might reveal that I am not actually an Aes Sedai." Stupid. But she's like, "Well, can't do anything about it now." Heads in, chats with Amys and Bair who are already there, and then the Aes Sedai, the main six from Salidar plus

Siu'an, arrive. And are like, immediately do this, like, formal thing instructing Egg to come back to the Tower. And she's like, "Um, like, okay, but it will take me a couple months probably. I don't know quite where Salidar is, but I know it's way far away." And they're like, "Well, we were thinking you could just *Tel'aran'rhiad* to get here faster." And Egg's like – and the Wise Ones immediately are like, "That's bad. That's not something you're supposed to do." And the Aes Sedai are like, "Well, you've never done it yourself so how could you know?" Which is the most hilarious logic. Like, you've never died so how could you [laughing] know death is unpleasant?

SALLY: [laughs] You've never been hit by a car so are you sure that it's painful?

EMILY: So, are you sure? Maybe it's orgasmic.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] How the fuck would you know?

SALLY: That's the secret to the female orgasm [laughs].

EMILY: [laughing] A car accident!

SALLY: [laughing] Get hit by a car.

EMILY: [laughing] Stupid.

SALLY: [continues laughing]

EMILY: But, um, Egg's like, "Uh, well calm down. Nobody start fighting. Moms, please don't fight with my other moms."

SALLY: "Moms, please don't fight."

EMILY: "Um, I actually think I know how to do it. So, yeah, I'll just do that. But I really don't know where Salidar is." And Siuan provides a helpful, like, virtual map.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Like, fucking whips out Google maps.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And is like, "Here's what you do." Um [laughs]. Also perfectly for Rand, who [laughing], unbeknownst to the ladies, is just lurking in the shadows.

SALLY: Just lurking.

EMILY: He's like, "Oh! How helpful, a fucking map. Thank you."

SALLY: "Thank you so much. I'm going to use this for the dumbest plot in the whole series, maybe."

EMILY: Yeah. Um, they're like, "Okay. Goodbye." Um, and she's like, "Okay, I'll see ya later." And they all go back to their bodies and Egg's like, "I guess I'll start packing."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Meanwhile Rand is like, "Mwhahahaha."

SALLY: [laughs] Got a flashlight under his chin.

EMILY: [laughs] He's like, "How coincidental. I just sometimes come to gaze at my handiwork, to gaze at my sword."

SALLY: [laughs] Sometimes at night, I feel a need to gaze at my sword.

EMILY: To look at my sword.

SALLY: It's very, uh, [laughs] Freudian as it were.

EMILY: [laughs] It's deeply erotic. Now I just [laughing] have this imagine of Rand standing in the fucking dream Stone of Tear jerking off furiously while staring at Callandor. Which is so horrifying.

SALLY: It's who he is, though.

EMILY: [gagging noises]

SALLY: Although I don't think Rand would ever allow himself to jerk off.

EMILY: You're right.

SALLY: It would be like [laughs] –

EMILY: That's why he's just staring. It's an internal jerking off.

SALLY: Yeah. Exactly.

EMILY: [laughing]

SALLY: It's a philosophical jerking off as it were. The most – the highest form, actually [laughing].

EMILY: Philosophical jerking off is actually what Robert Jordan and Brandon Sanderson did just all over this series.

SALLY: [laughs] Blegh.

EMILY: [laughs] Disgusting.

SALLY: Um [laughs].

EMILY: Why do we have the best episodes when we're both really tired.

SALLY: [laughing] I don't know.

EMILY: We should deprive ourselves of sleep every Tuesday night. Okay.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Come back to Egg, who's packing when the Wise Ones show up and are, like, visibly angry and Egg is like, "Well, I'm sorry I lied to you." And they're like, "Well, at least you know that the problem is that you lied. We don't actually care that you're violating this big ass rule about *Tel'aran'rhiod*, just as long as you know that it's bad to lie to us." And Egg's like, "Well, last chance I get I better come clean about all the other lies I've told you, including the big one, which is that I'm not really Aes Sedai." And then she's just like, "Let me just appropriate the Aiel way of achieving reconciliation," which, in some ways, is appropriate because these are Aiel with whom she is reconciling.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: But she's like, "So, uh, I have *toh*." Then, sort of luckily, but we do also have to see – don't worry, we will cut back to the torture porn of Egg naked, crying, very upset as she is hit with a belt repeatedly. But we skip over the bulk of that in favor of switching over to Mat, who is playing Snakes and Foxes with Olver on the floor of his tent.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Daerid just has the funniest line where he's like, "You're becoming such a good father" [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] Daerid walks in and Mat's like, "If you ever tell anyone about this, I will kill you." And Daerid's like, "Why would I ever tell anyone what a good father you're becoming."

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah. Like, what a lad.

EMILY: He looks just like you [laughs]. And Mat's like, [whispers] "I hate you."

SALLY: [whispers] “I’ll kill you.” Um, yeah, but the Snakes and – I almost said Snakes and Ladders. The Snakes and Foxes thing is – it’s obviously supposed to be charming because he’s playing a board game with little lad.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: But it’s also like Olver recites the, uh, catechism, I guess.

EMILY: Yeah, Olver makes – it’s all very, uh, foreshadowing. Um, and I do – I am intrigued by the lovely idea of Mat playing this children’s game that will then later come back and haunt us as a very real life, with very real stakes, quote unquote, game.

SALLY: No, it’s fascinating.

EMILY: It’s delightful. And the, like, creepy children’s rhyme of “Courage to strengthen, fire to blind, uh, music to dazzle, iron to bind.”

SALLY: Music to dazzle.

EMILY: Music to dazzle. And Mat’s like, “That’s kind of ringing a bell,” forgetting the fact that, which, I don’t know, he has a weird memory, so I guess we can excuse him. – forgetting the fact that book the Aelfinn and the Eelfinn were like, “Uh, do you have music? Or iron? Or FIRE?”

SALLY: He’s like, “Why the fuck – yeah, let me just pull out my on-fire iron flute and just play a little song.”

EMILY: Mat’s like, “Sure do! All three! Right here, baby.”

SALLY: [laughs] Stupid.

EMILY: Just been in my bag of holding all this time. Ah, you know, I thought it was weird that I picked this up in a magic marketplace.

SALLY: Yeah, I thought it was odd that I specifically had to buy this item. The DM wouldn’t let me move on.

EMILY: Yeah, was like, “Uhhhh are you sure?”

SALLY: [laughs] “You sure you don’t want to buy that one?”

EMILY: “You sure you don’t want it? Half off! Half off!”

SALLY: “It’s free! Just take it!”

EMILY: [laughs] Just take it! Stash it, it will *come in handy later I promise*.

SALLY: Um, yeah, so it's very charming and it's also very interesting the way that the existence of the Eelfinn and the Aelfinn have – has been warped into this children's game.

EMILY: Yeah, even the little sight that like – [laughs] like, Olver makes the fucking sign of the cross. Triangle with a wavy line through it, which is an upside-down triangle to mimic a fox's head.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And the wavy line for the snakes is the exact same, like, symbol that Thom, I think, draws on the Tower to open a door.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Into the Tower of Ghenjei. And, yeah, it's just a really interesting example, and, like, an appropriately creepy example. Like, you think of all those horror movie trailers where you've got some creepy child singing a nursery rhyme. Of how myth and legend persist into, um, real world culture.

SALLY: Yeah, it's very ring around the rosy kind of vibe.

EMILY: Yeah, ring around the rosy is actually about the plague, or whatever.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs]. The Black Plague and you keep flowers in your pockets, so you don't smell like death.

EMILY: [groans, laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] It's like excuse me?

EMILY: Um, yeah. That's fun. I wish we'd found a way to not involve Olver in the actual children's game, but, you know, I guess Robert Jordan couldn't figure out a way to do it without involving an actual child character.

SALLY: Yeah, and I mean, the image of Mat, twenty-one-year-old bisexual...

EMILY: Icon.

SALLY: General disaster.

EMILY: Sweaty.

SALLY: Playing [laughs] Monopoly with eight-year-old boy that he's adopted is very charming. I just personally have my own feelings against Olver's need to exist.

EMILY: I think Olver served enough of a function in this book and the next book. I think he could have bowed out after eight or nine.

SALLY: Yeah, like it also would be very funny if it was just like Mat and Talmanes playing Snakes and Foxes.

EMILY: If Talmanes was like, “I’m just obsessed with this [laughs] children’s game.” No, actually that would be deeply creepy.

SALLY: Mat would be like, “Okay, we have to have some – we need to have a conversation.”

EMILY: Ew, gross. Um, but yeah, Daerid comes in and is like, “Uh, the Dragon Reborn’s here to see you.” And Mat’s like, “Ugh!”

SALLY: Mat’s like, “God dammit.”

EMILY: “Olver, go to bed.” So Olver leaves, but of course just sneaks around the back of the tent to eavesdrop. Mat goes to greet Rand, who’s accompanied by a couple of guards and Aviendha who’s got, like, a backpack on. And Mat’s like, “Uh, hi.” And Rand’s like, “We need to talk.” And Mat has this charming line where he’s like, um, “I told Olver it wasn’t a place for boys, but I don’t really think it’s a place for grown men either.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It’s actually kind of sad. Mat’s omnipresent fear of Rand is becoming, I think, more and more pronounced.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And obviously he works around it and manages to have a semi-normal conversation with Rand, but Mat has had arguably more unsettling interactions with Rand than any other character.

SALLY: Yeah, and I mean Rand is now in a position to just do whatever he wants with Mat’s life.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: You know?

EMILY: Send you to the front of the battlefield.

SALLY: Yeah. And, I mean, that’s basically – the way that this decision plays out long term, that’s basically what he does, you know? He makes a decision that puts Mat in a ton of danger.

EMILY: Yeah, and it's just, like, um, I don't know, think of your friend from high school who wasn't even really your best friend, but, you know, your good friend. Who's suddenly skyrocketed into a position of power. Suddenly they're the president of United States and you're sort of still friends, but, like, how do you get over that in your relationship?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Also, they have magic powers and could kill you by looking at you.

SALLY: Yeah, also they need a lot of therapy.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And they refuse to admit that.

EMILY: Yeah, it's just, like, a really bad position for Mat to be in and for Perrin to be in, as he will be in a few chapters from now. So, you know, as much as I don't like the fact that the latter half of the series goes out of its way to keep all of its main characters apart, I am, like, privately glad that Mat and Perrin don't have to be in the same room as Rand for most of this

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: 'Cause boy is he is a mess. And he's violent towards them more than he is to anyone else. Um, but Mat's like, "What's the deal? We're going to be in Illian soon, according to plan." And Mat's like – uh, excuse me, Rand's like, "Well, actually there's a new plan, which is that I need you to go to Salidar and get Elayne." And Mat's like, "*What?*"

SALLY: [laughing] Literally.

EMILY: Mat's like, "Exsqueeze me? Couldn't you just pop in and get her?" And Rand's like, "No, I just need you to go and bring your whole army with you." And Mat's like, "Why?" And Rand's like, "Well, it's just like a ton of Aes Sedai." Mat, terrified of witchcraft, is like, "Thank you." It's like if my best friend who's now the president was like, "I'm sending you into this pit of spiders." [laughs] Well great, thanks. Um, but Mat is making the, like, asking the appropriate questions, "Why do I have to do this specifically?" And Rand is not really giving satisfactory answers. It is clear why Rand himself doesn't want to do it. Because he is also leery of large groups of Aes Sedai. It's not great for him to put himself in. But he could easily say, "I'm going to send Bashere or someone else who has a lot of titles and is clearly one of my allies."

SALLY: Yeah. Send Dyelin.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: She's begging not to have to be Queen of Andor [laughs].

EMILY: Send a small coterie. You open a gateway, you send them in. Aes Sedai aren't going to hurt random noble, nobility.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They'd be like, "Hey, were here as representatives of the Dragon Reborn and we need to get Elayne back to Andor." Like, obviously the Aes Sedai might refuse and that's a problem, but how does Rand know that Mat will do any better?

SALLY: Yeah, Rand's like, "Take your whole army, it will intimidate them. I need to, like show some power here, but they should be on our side. Don't worry about that."

EMILY: Yeah. He's like, "And once you get Elayne, I want you to go back country all the way back to Andor, rather than opening a gateway for you to get there. I want you to travel the whole way and just, like, pick up and any Dragonsworn who you come in contact with. So that will just, like, bulk up my army. And that will just kill two birds with one stone." And Mat's like, "This is insane."

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah. Mat's like, "I can give you eighty-seven reasons why this is a bad plan. I can't just take my army through people's private estates."

EMILY: Yeah! Like, I'm gonna – people are gonna be pissed [stuttering].

SALLY: Mat's like, "So, um, Rand? This isn't a good idea."

EMILY: It's, like, an example of Rand trying to use, um, plot armor as an actual mechanic without expressly stating that's what he's doing. If Rand came in here and was like, "I need Elayne. I need this and this and this. You're *ta'veren*, maybe you'll get it done." I would at least be like, "Okay, it's not great." But it makes more sense than his litany of reasons.

SALLY: Yeah, like at least we're leaning into the ridiculous mechanic the books have set up for us.

EMILY: Yeah, but Mat's like, "This is going to go horribly wrong," and Mat doesn't even know how badly it's gonna go horribly wrong. Like it's hard to read this section and not know that this whole thing is going to end with Mat in Ebou Dar alone with fucking leg broken during a Seanchan invasion, held captive by his rapist. Like, yikes.

SALLY: Yeah, it's terrible. And it's also really painful to read because Mat just, like, can't exactly – he's too afraid to articulate to Rand exactly why he thinks this is a bad idea and exactly why he doesn't want to do it.

EMILY: Yeah, it's like when your boss comes in and is like, "You need to do this and this and this," and you're like, "That's stupid on so many levels and I could, you know, get the same task done, you know, way easier if you would just look at it this way," but you can't say that to your boss.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Because they'll fire you.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Mat's like, "I can't say that to Rand, because he might kill me."

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: God!

SALLY: So, Mat is not a perfect character, but pray for him.

EMILY: Hashtag prayers. Mat's [laughs] – Rand's like, "By the way Aviendha's coming with you." And Mat's like –

SALLY: "Great."

EMILY: "Sure, that might as well happen."

SALLY: Aviendha and I are best friends.

EMILY: Aviendha. Whatever. And Rand's like, "Great. How long will it take you?" Mat's like, "Two hours." And Rand's like, "Okay, I need one hour for myself." And Mat's like, "What?"

SALLY: "To do what?"

EMILY: To jerk off.

SALLY: To go stand in front of your sword and jerk off?

EMILY: To go stare at Aviendha from a hundred feet away.

SALLY: [laugh]

EMILY: Longingly [laughs]. No, what he really needs to do is learn the ground so he can Travel. That's, like, a mechanic of Traveling, but come on. Explain that, why don't you?

SALLY: Yeah, he's just like [laughs].

EMILY: Mat's like, "What are you doing for an hour?"

SALLY: Just gonna go walk around the woods by myself.

EMILY: Okaaaay.

SALLY: God, Rand must be so difficult to be around. Like, I hate Rand. Everybody knows that, but, like, [laughs] if I knew this person in real life who was like, “You have to go do this insane thing. Here’s my kind of girlfriend, kind of ex-girlfriend. I’m gonna go walk around the woods by myself for an hour.” I’d be like [laughs], “What?”

EMILY: Mat, who somehow didn’t pick up on the fact that Rand and Aviendha are boning.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Or has, like, always kind of known that they’ve got something. Sees the way they look at each other and is like, “Oh my god. They’re definitely boning. And they’re sending Aviendha to talk to Elayne. What the fuck?”

SALLY: Yeah. Mat’s like, “You think I didn’t notice you guys sucking face every chance you got in the Stone of Tear?”

EMILY: Oh my god.

SALLY: “I have eyeballs.”

EMILY: “The interpersonal dynamics are something I do not want to be involved in.” And Rand’s like, “Too bad you have no choice.” And Mat’s like, “Great!”

SALLY: Byeeee.

EMILY: [clears throat] Mat’s like, “Olver,” without [laughs] like even raising his voice.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: [laughing] And you hear, like, a squeak on the other side of the tent. He’s like, “Olver, go get your other dads. We have to [laughs] talk.”

SALLY: Figure this out.

EMILY: So Olver runs off to get the rest of the generals. Where Mat is like, “Change of plans. Who the *fuck* cares about Sammael, I guess. We’re going to get the Queen of Andor.”

SALLY: “By the way, this is Aviendha,” who’s sharpening her knife.

EMILY: Who’s sharpening her knife. She’s terrifying. And all the – and Aviendha’s like, “Mahaha.” And Mat’s like [whispers], “I don’t understand you.”

SALLY: And all the other lads are like – I just wish we got their reactions.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: You know?

EMILY: They're like, "What the fuck?"

SALLY: They're like, "Exsqueeze me?"

EMILY: Talmanes is like, "Well, this might as well happen."

SALLY: Yeah, I mean Talmanes –

EMILY: You ever have those days where you like [laughing].

SALLY: [laughs] This might as well happen! Gosh Talmanes would probably fit so many John Mulaney quotes just based off of his life.

EMILY: [laughing] Imitating an old gay man.

BOTH: You want me to do *what*?

SALLY: [laughs] Ugh.

EMILY: We then cut back to Egwene as she is, again, naked, crying. Just, uh, finishing up some corporal punishment. But she's like, "Is it over?" And all the Aiel are like, "Yeah, it's over. Whatever." They're like, "You're Aiel in your heart." And Egg's like, "Great. I'm the last of the Mohicans."

SALLY: [snorts]

EMILY: Like come on.

SALLY: Yeah. There's definitely some...

EMILY: Coding there.

SALLY: Yeah. That I don't – that I just, like, don't love.

EMILY: Well, I just read Roxanne Dunbar-Ortiz's *Indigenous People's History of the United States*, which doesn't delve too deep into that but articulated it in a way that's like the white savior narrative as it applies specifically to Indigenous North American narratives is that it's like a white person become "nativized."

SALLY: Mmm.

EMILY: Um, and so there is, instead of – there's this really, what Americans view as, natural and pleasant progression in which the races just, like, mingle and the actual native peoples all just die off, but their culture is left in the hands of white people. To dispense with as they wish.

SALLY: And I'm sure the white people will, quote unquote, handle it better. The culture, I mean.

EMILY: Give shit back, American museums. Give shit back to Indigenous people.

SALLY: Give shit back, American museums. Give shit back, British museums.

EMILY: Give shit back, museums.

SALLY: Museums, you don't need them.

EMILY: Just give them back, dipshits.

SALLY: No, that's a very good point. I've never really been able to articulate way Egg's...experience with the Aiel is so...grating sometimes.

EMILY: It just feels like she comes away with it having gained a lot and the Wise Ones, and the Aiel generally come away, uh, from it having not gained anything.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, sure they have an ally, I guess you would say, in Egg who's about to be the most powerful Aes Sedai in the land, but Egg pretty ruthlessly as the series goes on exploits that relationship for her own ends. So.

SALLY: Great.

EMILY: It's not like, you know, a relationship between equals.

SALLY: I just wish the Aiel didn't get shit on so much all the time.

EMILY: [sighs]

SALLY: What did they do to deserve this?

EMILY: They're coded as Indigenous peoples.

SALLY: Oh, you're right. God dammit. Fuck.

EMILY: So, Robert Jordan doesn't like them.

SALLY: Fuck.

EMILY: So, having finished her torture sesh, Egg's like [fake crying], "I have to go." And the Wise Ones are like, "Great. Love you. If it doesn't work out come back and we will get you married off." And she's like [fake crying], "Okay. It's nice to have a backup plan."

SALLY: That's your back up plan? You will either become a super powerful magic person, who has a hand in geopolitical affairs, or you will get married? [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] And be a super magic person, but just for the Aiel.

SALLY: Yeah. I mean, that's true. Being a Wise One isn't, like, a bad option.

EMILY: No, it's pretty cool.

SALLY: Yeah. Arguably better than being an Aes Sedai. You don't have to do all the crazy shit.

EMILY: Generally less of an asshole. Oh, I forgot to mention that Sevanna and some of the other Shaido Wise Ones are also in town.

SALLY: Yeah, barf.

EMILY: Indicative of the fact that they are traveling with the Aes Sedai entourage, but anyway.

SALLY: [annoyed noises]

EMILY: So, we leave off with Egg about to depart for Salidar via unusual methods. Mat also about to –

SALLY: [snorts]

EMILY: Depart for Salidar. Uh, Rand is depositing him several days away, so they'll kind of intersect there. So, at least finally things are about to happen in Salidar which we have not been able to say for the five to six hundred pages prior.

SALLY: Lord almighty.

EMILY: [groaning] And that's that. Okay. [laughs] Thanks, everyone, for listening. Thanks to Glynna Mackenzie for our theme song. Thank you to our supporters on Patreon and our followers on various social media outlets.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um.

SALLY: We'll have a new, uh, installation of In an Hour or Less, um, this – I guess by the time you hear this. Emily is going to be talking to us about epics, which will be very exciting.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Um, and, as always, you can read along on Patreon as I suffer through *The Path of Daggers*.

EMILY: She just finished it.

SALLY: I just finished it. Not the blogs – I finished it on Sally’s timeline, but the blog timeline is still going for another, like, two months.

EMILY: It’s very exciting.

SALLY: So you can enjoy that. And you can always play with us [laughs] on social media.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Play with me!

EMILY: Play with me! Alright, do you have a sign off?

SALLY: Uh, yeah. This is very petty and I’m sorry in advance. But I’m not a person who really gets acne. And I don’t say that to be like [dramatic voice] I’m not a person who gets acne. Of all the other bodily problems I have literally all of them. But I’ve been breaking out a lot recently and I have this little series, like Orion’s belt over here [laughs] on my face, that’s like three little pimples in a row. And it’s making me insane. They’re also really itchy. They might not even be pimples. They might be hives. So, anyway, I’m annoyed.

EMILY: I had a zit on my face and my nephew said, “What is that?” [laughs].

SALLY: God. Jack [laughs] shh.

EMILY: And I was like, “It’s an owie. Don’t touch it.” And he’s like, “Alright...” [laughs] suspiciously.

SALLY: That seems a little unsettling.

EMILY: Alright, everyone. Have a good week. Goodbye!

SALLY: Bye! We love you!