



Episode 155: That Lying Skank, Laritha

Release Date: March 22, 2021

Running Time: 47 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 Glynnna MacKenzie plays)

Sally: This is Everybody Hates Rand, uh, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I am Sally Goodger.

Emily: I'm Emily Juchau. (laugh) Um.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: We were -- had to read three chapters, which, um, was to get us through until, like -- next week, I think, we flip over to Rand and Min, which will be really insufferable, but, you know, we just had to get through this bloc in Salidar. Um. But a real -- real range of emotions for me in this one because we have, I think, one of Mat's worst patriarchal moments --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: In the series --

Sally: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Emily: But then it's followed by, um, Thom, one of the most patriarchal characters --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Giving a really bizarre, victim-blamey --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Story, but the moral of the story is a -- is a good one? He says to Mat, "You need to just let the women do what they are going to do and allow them to make their own decisions and just help them." You know? And so that's good, but the source of it is horrific.

Sally: Yeah, and I mean, it also doesn't -- like, it's good, objectively, but in context, it has this, like, "Women are stupid, and they don't ever know what they actually want, and they're a bunch of liars, and they're super stubborn, and you're never going to make them change their minds, so you just need to go along with it and help them the best you can, 'cause if you don't, they'll probably die of their own stupidity."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And just -- that's what the whole conversation feels like to me.

Emily: Yeah, I mean --

Sally: Like, I feel like I can't be happy that Thom is like, "Just let them do what they want; they can make their own choices," because he's like, "Women make their own choices, and they make bad ones."

Emily: And then, "We are strong, intelligent men, and so we just need to guide them through life."

Sally: Stupid.

Emily: "but you can't get too in-their-face about it or they'll be mad at you. So you just have to do it in secret."

Sally: Yeah. And there's nothing worse to a man, apparently, than a woman being mad at him.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It's like they cannot bear it.

Emily: Um.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: And it's like, it's not fun to have people be mad at you, but you act like you're literally being tortured, like someone is shoving bamboo shoots up your fingernails.

Emily: (laugh) Oh! Why would you say that? Ugh. That's horrible.

Sally: (laugh) That's how they behave.

Emily: Um, Mat's stint in Salidar just starts on this terrible note, but then it ends on a high note, 'cause, you know, there's that lovely scene where he gets his entire army to kneel to Egg.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is a very, uh, lovely moment in their friendship, I guess. Yet it is, um, really colored by the fact that ... (sigh) Let's -- let's -- I guess let's just get into -- get into it. So we start, as we usually do, with Mat being sweaty.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um, he's just constantly sweaty. Egwene describes him as looking "poleaxed and sweaty," which is one of Robert Jordan's finer lines --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I would argue. (laugh) Um. The Band of the Red Hand has been slogging through random, uninhabited forest for, like, three days. Mat is just delaying them because he doesn't actually want to get to Salidar.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: He's like, "Fuck this." Um. And when we -- oh, we are treated to a little anecdote about how Olver tried to stab Aviendha.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And Aviendha, of course, was like, "A knife? No!"

Sally: (laugh) "What do you have?" "A knife!"

Emily: Took the knife from him, whatever. And then when Mat, um, in one of his less-stellar parenting moments, just sort of slapped him upside the head and said, essentially, "Now, listen,

Aviendha is not a Shaido Aiel, which are the Aiel that you hate and are totally within your rights to stab, a ten-year-old boy.”

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Like, instead of being like, “Perhaps -- perhaps, uh, it -- on a child psychology level, the correct response for you to deal with the trauma of your father’s murder and your mother’s subsequent death, is not to, um, commit hate crimes but to process that in a healthy way.” Nope. He’s just like, “Mm, don’t stab Aviendha. She’s not Shaido Aiel.”

Sally: And, “Here, I will -- I will make a point of pointing out which Aiel you can stab in the future.”

Emily: “That one, Olver. Go after him.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um --

Sally: It’s like, Mat. Shut up.

Emily: Mat, no It’s bad.

Sally: And then later, Aviendha’s like, “Mm, I don’t know if Olver should be spending so much time with your army,” and Mat’s like, “Ugh, women always have to criticize the way I’m raising my ten-year-old son in the midst of a literal army.”

Emily: “Who I met two weeks ago.” (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Stupid. Um. But, um, Mat’s scouts, led by Vanin -- or most of his scouts -- come back, and are like, “Um, hey, Salidar’s, like, ten miles away. Some Warders jumped out and snagged two of our guys.” And Vanin’s like, “Uh, you know how the Dragon Reborn told you there were maybe gonna be 50 Aes Sedai? I counted, like, four hundred.” And Mat’s like, “Great.”

Sally: “Cool cool cool cool cool, cool cool cool cool cool.”

Emily: Mat’s like, “Awesome.” And Vanin’s like, “And also there is an army, uh, twice the size of our army --” Which, can’t even imagine Bryne’s recruiting methods --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To have gotten it this big this quick. He’s like, “They also have an army, so we’ve got problems.” And Mat’s like, “Great. Uhhh, well, there goes Rand’s entire idiotic strategy which was idiotic enough to begin with but now has been proven to be totally moronic, so … um …”

Sally: Almost like you shouldn't rush into situations without, um, complete information.

Emily: Yeah. Oh my God. It's almost like this was the stupidest plot point possible.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mat's like, "OK, Talmans, you're in charge, I guess. And just start, like, building defenses, mostly to communicate that we're not intending to attack anyone, and I and Vanin and a few others are gonna head into town, with Aviendha, who's already headed that way." So they, uh, start going towards Salidar. Yeah, Aviendha and Mat have that little conversation about, um, Olver. But they get to Salidar and everyone's like, "What the fuck?" He does see Birgitte off in the distance and is like, "She looks familiar to me, but I don't know why or how." So anyway, he, like, makes eye contact with Birgitte and then she disappears, and he's like -- (makes "I don't know" noise). Then they get to -- he asks an Aes Sedai to help them, and she takes them to the Little Tower. Immediately a bunch of women swarm Aviendha to try and, um, initiate her into their cult.

Sally: (snort)

Emily: Um. They're like, "Scientology. Have you heard of it?" And, uh -- what's her name? Nicola.

Sally: Anaiya. Nicola.

Emily: Well, Anaiya brings Nicola and is like, "Now, tell me again what you see," and Nicola's like, "Very annoyingly, he does glow."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And Anaiya's like, "That's so great. That's your first Talent. You can see ta'veren." And Mat's like, "Could you not spread that info around? I'd rather just be --"

Sally: Yeah, she, like, gets up with her loudspeaker.

Emily: "This boy's important."

Sally: And Mat's like, "Ew."

Emily: Mat's like, "Ugh."

Sally: "That's my least favorite thing to be said about me."

Emily: "How dare you restrict my mobility in this way."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) He also vaguely remembers Anaiya, and is just like -- (mutters incomprehensibly). Um. So then Nynaeve appears and is like, "Mat, what the fuck are you doing here? I hope you don't have anything to do with this army of Dragonsworn that's about to descend on us." And he says, "Actually, I'm in command." (laugh) She's like --

Sally: "Whaaaat?"

Emily: She's like, "Why do -- why do things have to happen with you?"

Sally: "Why do you have to be alive?"

Emily: "Why --"

Sally: "To torment me."

Emily: "Everything you do is just to cause me, personally, suffering." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And then she says, "I'll take you to the Amyrlin." He's like, "Great, I mean, I didn't even ask to see the Amyrlin. I asked to see Egg, Elayne, and Nynaeve --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "But whatever. I don't even -- why do you guys even have any Amyrlin? You're rebels." But she's like, "Come with me," and Aviendha's like, "Mat? Mat Cauthon? Please -- please save me." (laugh)

Sally: She's being -- I do like the image of Aviendha, who's, like --

Emily: Very tall.

Sally: Very tall, surrounded by --

Emily: Surrounded by --

Sally: Just, like, a gaggle of --

Emily: Like Gulliver's Travels.

Sally: Yeah. Just, like, tiny -- in comparison --

Emily: Aes Sedai.

Sally: Women, who are sort of fussing about her.

Emily: And, like, "Tell us the secrets of your magical power."

Sally: And she's like, "Mm."

Emily: And Mat, at this point, thinks that she's going to stab Elayne over Rand. Um.

Sally: I mean, admittedly, Aviendha has been ominously sharpening her knife throughout their entire --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Ride, so, like -- (laugh)

Emily: Like, the -- there's partly some of Mat's racism to blame there --

Sally: Yeah, for sure.

Emily: But, uh, also, like, yeah. She has just been sharpening her knife every time they -- there's a pause in the conversation. So Mat's like, "Uhh." (laugh)

Sally: Like -- like -- (laugh) You're right. Mat does have a lot of racism and xenophobia towards everybody who isn't himself, but the fact that Aviendha just, like, whenever they stop, is like, "Ooh, time to sharpen my knife."

Emily: And she's sharpening the knife, we find out, to give to Elayne so Elayne can cut her with it as she pleases.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um.

Sally: (whisper) Like, what?

Emily: So I guess in that instance you would want to give someone a pretty sharp knife to ensure that you're not getting cut by a dull knife, which I guess would be worse. But all of that is beside the point. Yeah, she hasn't been doing a great job to self-advocate for her innocence.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Um, their relationship, as always, is very weird. So Mat just leaves her there, thinking, "OK, well, if she's being bothered by a bunch of Aes Sedai, who she could stab if she chooses to, I'm not too worried about her safety."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Uh, then I'll just take this opportunity to go meet with Egg." The Amyrlin, excuse me. So Nynaeve takes him to the office, where he finds Egwene sitting behind a desk with the Amyrlin's stole around her shoulders, kind of attended by Elayne. He freaks out because he

thinks that they are, like, playing dress-up. He still thinks they're Accepted, which, to be fair, they're -- the change was made two days ago.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Mat isn't really in a position to pick up on what the cues mean. Like, he notices that people aren't treating like -- Nynaeve like she's Accepted, and she and Elayne are both wearing their own clothes, but he -- you know.

Sally: Yeah, the rules are kind of out the window in this place, you know? Like, it's not the White Tower. Those things could mean any number of things.

Emily: Yeah. So we can excuse Mat for not understanding the situation and for jumping to the conclusion that he does, which is that Nynaeve and Elayne and Egg, who, historically, have pretended to be above their station --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: In order to get things done are doing that again. What we cannot excuse him for is, um, his immediate desire to take control of the situation by manhandling Egg out of her seat, like, ripping the stole off her shoulders, being like, "You all need to shut up and listen and do as you're told." It's all very gross.

Sally: Yeah, and there's just, like, no reason for it. I mean, there's no reason to behave towards other people this way in general, but he just goes, like -- I know he's stressed because he doesn't like magic women, whatever -- but he goes, like, zero to three thousand.

Emily: Yeah. And it's like, the much more reasonable thing to do is close the door behind you, be like, "What's happening? What are you doing?" Ask questions, have a conversation. Um. You know, there's -- I have an urge to defend Mat because I always have an urge to defend Mat, and again, like -- but there are parts of this that are inexcusable. But Mat has also been in a situation where he went to rescue -- went way out of his way to rescue these three women specifically --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: And the first thing they did was use the Power on him and lecture him about interfering. So not to, like, overstate it and be like, he has trauma --

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Regarding that, but Mat does have a set response to this scenario in place because he's lived something like it before. Um. And, you know, there's a fine -- there's not much of a line between Mat's sexism coming out in the text and Robert's -- Robert Jordan's sexism that he wrote into the text --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: By having the women behave irrationally --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: By putting Mat in this situation.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: All of it is generally unpleasant.

Sally: No, that's -- that's a very good point. Um, I just had to do a training today on, um, trauma-informed care.

Emily: Oh.

Sally: Um. Yeah --

Emily: What's that?

Sally: Um, it's -- it, um -- it's like a -- a way of interacting with, um, basically, like, your clients if you're working in, um, social services or service-related fields. Um, like, in the case of housing, for instance, if someone comes in and they're, like, really -- like, if -- belligerent or, um, reacting in ways that are deemed, quote unquote, abnormal, you know, instead of respond -- like, it -- trauma-informed care would be, like, the coordinator or the, you know, whoever is -- the employee, instead of responding with being like, "Well, I am going to escalate the situation by calling in the police, or I'm going to, um, you know, I'm just going to assume that this person, there is something wrong with them; they are taking advantage of the system," et cetera, et cetera, et cetera, it's more like, OK, well, what might have retraumatized this person in this scenario that is making them act in a way that is defensive? Because they feel like they need to, you know, reestablish their own safety, or are they feeling, you know, unsafe because, you know, people are looking at their finances or whatever variety of reasons. It's about, um, reestablishing -- it's about understanding the way that trauma, um, happens and affects people's, you know, perceptions of their own safety at different moments in time and the way that retraumatization appears in seemingly -- seemingly out of nowhere, you know?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Into -- in response to, like, stimuli that -- it's -- so the response is -- is not adequate -- is not proportional to whatever happened. And so trauma-informed care is about just, like, OK, how can we reestablish safety for this person? How can we, um, you know, help them feel like they have more control and more dignity? Et cetera, et cetera. Um. That was probably a really bad example --

Emily: No, you're so smart.

Sally: A really bad explanation of it. It was a really interesting training.

Emily: Wow.

Sally: Not that I work with, um -- I don't really do client-facing things, but it is, like, really interesting to learn about. And so, I say all this because, like, that's a really interesting point about the way that -- and I also don't want to jump into EHR's habitual defense of Mat because he is responding poorly in this scene, obviously. But there is an interesting way -- particularly, Mat as our -- perhaps one of our most traumatized characters, repeatedly going through very intense traumas on, like -- especially on an interpersonal level. Like, we see in this instance, like, Elayne and Egg immediately try to channel against Mat and, like, use the power to restrain him and basically, like, put him in his place. And that's a form of abuse, honestly. You know, they're -- they like to physically manhandle him with the Power, and so the way that he might be retraumatized and so responding disproportionately. I dunno. Just kind of an interesting lens on the scene.

Emily: Well, yeah, just, like, if Mat's coming into the scene thinking, "The first thing they're gonna do is manhandle me with the Power or try to," then we can, you know, explain why he resorts to manhandling Egg immediately.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But again, that all explains his behavior; it doesn't excuse it.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: Mat's still an adult who is responsible for his own trauma responses. Um. And while Mat is a really remarkably written character in an otherwise -- what feels like a series devoid of remarkably written characters -- many of Mat's odder or more upsetting behaviors seem to stem directly from things that have happened to him in the past --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And so he's very neatly written in that way.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mat, as a character, isn't written in a vacuum, you know?

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Emily: He's responding to things in a sexist way because the text is empowering him to be sexist and seem like the most rational person in the room --

Sally: Yes.

Emily: When he does.

Sally: Yes, yes, yes. Hundred percent, Emily, you're so smart.

Emily: Uh, thanks. Again, I immediately just forgot what I said. (laugh) Um --

Sally: Don't tell the people that. They don't know.

Emily: Rrrghh. It's like I speak words and as they come forth, they are purged from my memory bank.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I'm like Mat. Zero short-term memory. Um. So, great. Egg, of course -- Egg doesn't reestablish her dominance in the situation until, like, a novice or someone comes in and addresses her as the Amyrlin Seat. And then Mat is like, "Oh, OK, so it's not just these three in a bubble; they have perhaps conned the rest of Salidar into thinking this." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Yeah. And your comment about the way that the three of them have played at being above their station is something I honestly totally forgot about and the way that that has really negatively impacted Mat, and that adds addition -- an additional, just interesting flavor to this scene, where he's like, "Why are you lying to everybody and telling them that you're the Amyrlin Seat?"

Emily: Well, and, like, Mat has been a pretty good bro about it up until this point. Like, he's --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Hasn't been going around spilling their secrets.

Sally: Yeah, spilling the beans.

Emily: He's like, "OK, that's your business if you're doing that. Whatever. I think it'll get you in trouble," but until this point, he hasn't felt like he has any control over the situation.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But now it's like, oh, they've gone a step too far because they are literally surrounded by what he deems to be an incredibly threatening situation.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Four hundred Aes Sedai, all in one place, is Mat's idea of hell.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which, as we, uh, see in an upcoming chapter -- we're gonna go through Rand and Mat and then we'll get back to -- excuse me, Rand and Min -- and then we'll get back to Mat in this -- one of my favorite chapters in the series, honestly, called "The Color of Trust," which is so dramatic. But we see the start of how Mat is not just, um -- doesn't just feel manipulated by Aes Sedai generally, the way kind of everyone does, but we have women going out of their way to be like, "You should be my Warder," or to, um, hit on him or --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Just generally things like that that make him uncomfortable. So anyway. Again, all of this is great, establishing why Mat's doing what he's doing. Um, but beside the point.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is that Mat starts to argue with Egwene, Elayne, and Nynaeve. He's like, "You guys are in tons of danger. I can't believe you're doing this. You're a bunch of idiots. Um. But all of it's fine because apparently you, Egg, who were in Cairhien until two weeks ago, have rediscovered Traveling."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "That's great. You can open a gateway, get us all straight to Caemlyn." And Egg's like, "We're not going to Caemlyn." Like, "I actually am the Amyrlin Seat here. So we're doing what we're doing. Um, what are YOU doing?" And he's like, "Well, I have been sent here by Rand, and he wants you guys to go to Caemlyn and, like, he wants to talk to the Aes Sedai -- you guys. Specifically he wants Elayne in Caemlyn." And, um, he doesn't do a great job of advocating for Rand here. And in his defense, who would?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Rand has made a series of totally irrational decisions that have put him at risk.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But, like, if Mat were a diplomat, he would probably present this a little differently.

Sally: Yeah, Rand did not make the best choice of ambassador here.

Emily: Yeah, like, seriously. Again, Rand could have sent literally anyone.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: He can teleport. Literally anyone, and he sent Mat, world's least -- like, most unfortunate communicator. (sigh)

Sally: Yeah. Like, Mat's communication skills -- he's just rolling zeros.

Emily: Yeah. Persuasion checks.

Sally: Nat one. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Mat's stats sheet somehow --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: How does he have, like, zero charisma, but when it comes to seducing people --

Sally: Yeah, he's, uh --

Emily: He's -- does a really remarkable job?

Sally: He's added a new category, which is seduction, which is different than charisma and --

Emily: Exactly.

Sally: Persuasion.

Emily: Um --

Sally: And he's maxed out there somehow even though he's so sweaty.

Emily: He's just got max -- I mean, he's got a rogue character stats. Max dex, max intelligence, generally speaking --

Sally: Generally speaking.

Emily: Everything else -- (laugh)

Sally: Zeroes.

Emily: Single digits. Um. So what he says doesn't do anything to make the women feel less threatened. Um, and we've already belabored the point that Elayne should be jumping at any opportunity to go to Caemlyn, but they're like, "Actually, we're going to Ebou Dar." Or -- I don't even think they say that to him yet. Their conversation is a little, uh, convoluted, especially because Nynaeve then literally --

Sally: Kicks him in the butt.

Emily: Kicks him in the butt, and then he is like, "I will use my superior height and the fact that you cannot channel in self-defense to physically threaten you." So just a -- a really great abuse cycle going on in this particular room.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, Egwene pretty quickly threatens Mat by saying, "Listen, you're at the head of an army of Dragonsworn." And Mat is like, "They are not technically Dragonsworn; look at me. I am in charge, and I like the Dragon Reborn the least of anyone." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um, and she's like, "Yeah, but you're moving around in charge of an army that Rand sent here, so by most reasonable definitions, you are Dragonsworn, and, uh, our army doesn't like Dragonsworn." So basically being like, "You're, um -- you're caught because I can hurt your army."

Sally: Yeah, "I have the bigger army, and they listen to me."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Allegedly.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And Mat's like, "That's pretty fucking rude. What did Talmanes do to deserve this?"

Emily: He's like, "My -- several of my boyfriends are back in that camp."

Sally: "And my ten-year-old son."

Emily: "And my ten-year-old son, who -- Aviendha's right: he probably shouldn't be there, but -" (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) "He did almost try to stab Aviendha --"

Emily: And Egg's like, "What are -- where -- where -- where did this conversation --"

Sally: "What are you talking about?"

Emily: "Get off-track?"

Sally: "All the words you are saying --" (laugh)

Emily: "They're -- it's like you're having a stroke." Um. But he's like, "Listen --" He's just like, "You've gotta go to Rand. He can help you with whatever is going on." And she's like, "No. This isn't Rand's affair," essentially. Which is reasonable enough, to be like, "I don't want Rand, world tyrant, to have his dirty little fingers in every pie."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "So I'm going to keep the, uh, White Tower out of his hair." But he's like, "Fine, I'm leaving. I'll come back and talk to you when you're ready to be reasonable." Which is basically the -- (laugh) the most dignified way of saying, "I can't see a way to win this argument, so --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "I'm leaving."

Sally: "I'm leaving."

Emily: "Before --"

Sally: Exit stage left.

Emily: Exit, pursued by a bear. Um. So --

Sally: I wish there was a bear.

Emily: Yeah, it would make everything more interesting.

Sally: Just, like, a little black bear.

Emily: He flees and Egwene is like, "Alright, here is actually my plan revolving around Mat. We can use him to motivate -- like, his army's presence to motivate the Hall and Sheriam and everyone to actually start moving toward the White Tower, which we've already started laying the groundwork for."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "Meanwhile, Mat himself can accompany you guys to Ebou Dar as, like, a bodyguard, 'cause clearly he's not going to let Elayne out of his sight."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Elayne's like, "That's a great idea because I really want to study his ter'angreal." Zero interest in Mat himself. And Nynaeve's like, "That's a terrible idea because Mat is, I mean, the least compliant person we have ever met. He is not -- he'll --" What is the -- (laugh) The phrase she says is, um, something about, "He'll -- he'll poke a stick through the spokes just for fun."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like, "He will throw us off-track if he can get a sense for the track we're trying for --"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "Just to see things go awry." Which is maybe overcrediting Mat his trickster persona and undercrediting him for being a tactical genius. Although these women haven't particularly had any exposure to that.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, but Mat's not an idiot. With reason -- within reason, he's willing to cooperate with things.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: The problem is that this plan to go to Ebou Dar is not at all a reasonable one.

Sally: It really is such a dumb plan.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Like, send the Aes Sedai that are already there to look for the Bowl of the Winds.

Emily: Yeah. They --

Sally: They -- it doesn't have to be Elayne and Nynaeve. Whatever.

Emily: So then, um, Sheriam enters to talk to Egg, and Elayne and Nynaeve depart. Um, Sheriam's like, "What is going on with your good friend Mat?" And Egg is like, "Well, unfortunately, he's in charge of an army. So that's a plot twist none of us were anticipating." Um, but she just uses the -- like she said she would, she uses Mat's army as a potential threat to get Sheriam to be like, "Well, I guess we have no choice but to head north toward the White Tower."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Egg's like, "Mwa ha ha ha ha ha. My plans are coming along swimmingly."

Sally: Yeah. Again, she's the perfect politician.

Emily: She is just such a great manipulator. Oh, we do get a little, uh, point here about how now that Traveling has been reintroduced, a lot of Aes Sedai were like, "Well, great, we should travel into the White Tower and steal the Oath Rod and a bunch of other shit."

Sally: (laugh) This is a plan I support, actually.

Emily: I mean, it's just -- I -- it's Robert Jordan's way of being like, "OK, now I do know that now that teleportation is a thing, some things are obviously possible. But here's my convoluted reason for them not happening."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is that the Aes Sedai are like, "Well, if we get caught, then they could figure out Traveling." Which, um -- I mean yeah, they could. "Then our advantage would be lost." You never use this advantage.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Except to Travel the army closer to the White Tower after significant delays.

Sally: Yeah. Also, they also say in this chapter that, like, while they've tried to teach a lot of women, only very few are powerful enough to actually make a gateway at this point. So, like --

Emily: The chances that the person guarding the ter'angreal storeroom --

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Is gonna be one of the, what, ten percent of women --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who can, uh, make a gateway is pretty slim.

Sally: Yeah, those are pretty good odds. And it would be so funny -- so funny -- if they just --

Emily: I know, the heist.

Sally: Yeah. Popped into the White Tower and stole all their important shit.

Emily: Yeah. Imagine Elaida's face --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The following day. "What?"

Sally: "They did whaaaat?"

Emily: "All of our angreal are gone, and you have no idea who's done it?" And Egg's like, "Mua ha ha ha ha."

Sally: "Mwa ha ha ha ha." Miss -- you know, Egg's Eleven or whatever.

Emily: Yeah. Egg's Eleven. (laugh)

Sally: (laugH)

Emily: No, no, no, Egg's Dozen!

Sally: Egg's Dozen!

Emily: How did we miss Egg's Dozen? (laugh)

Sally: Aw, dammit! (laugh)

Emily: Ah, it could've been so good, but Robert Jordan just threw -- threw every interesting and creative solution to problems right out the window.

Sally: That's how you could get Mat involved.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: "Mat, we're gonna steal a bunch of shit from the White Tower."

Emily: Mat's like, "I've been dying to do a heist."

Sally: Yeah, and Mat's like, "Fuck yeah. Me and all my six boyfriends are in." (laugh)

Emily: Love heists. (laugh) Um, but no. Robert Jordan decided to introduce teleportation but make it as boring as possible.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "No fun will be had with my teleportation powers," says Robert Jordan. "Zero."

Sally: Zero fun.

Emily: None. Uh, we then cut over to chapter three of three in this section. Where, again, we have Mat's conversation with Thom. Mat has just delivered the letter that Rand gave to him to give to Thom from Moiraine. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: What the fuck. Uh, Mat doesn't know it's from Moiraine. Thom clearly does because of the seal. Again, he has not spoken to this woman in three books. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And rarely spoke to her prior to that. But he's clearly having an emotional reaction. He hasn't even opened the letter. And, uh, Mat -- he tells this story about how when he was a younger man, there was a woman in some village who was married to a guy who, by all accounts, was an abusive piece of shit, and this woman was like, "Why won't someone rescue me?" until finally Thom was like, "I will rescue you." And then she was like, "How dare you try to get me to leave my beloved husband?" And then it turned out that she was a liar and a whore, I'm sure. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Because everyone said actually she was the abusive one in the relationship.

Sally: (laugh) She was a LYING SKANK.

Emily: UGH. Women are EVIL.

Sally: And probably ugly too.

Emily: And probably ugly!

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Probably her tits weren't very big either.

Sally: Very small bosom. Um, yeah, and then so Thom is like, "You never know when women are telling the truth, and, um, it's -- I'm just gonna completely victim-blame here and present absolutely no nuanced understanding of domestic violence and, um, abuse. Uh, to just reiterate that this woman was an ugly, lying skank, um, and you should just do what the girls tell you to because otherwise they'll die." And it's like, what are you saying?

Emily: It's like, where -- what? (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) What are you -- what --

Emily: Like, Mat's like the white -- the white woman with the math problems.

Sally: Yeah, he's like, "OK, so there's a bootmaker??

Emily: "I don't --"

Sally: "And Thom is rich?"

Emily: "Thom is rich, somehow."

Sally: (laugh) "But all women are liars --"

Emily: "I guess."

Sally: "And abuse is their fault?"

Emily: What?

Sally: It's like, Thom. No. Abuse isn't anybody's fault.

Emily: Thom does dispense the information -- that he's like, "Listen. Um. Do you know Elayne and Nynaeve are going to Ebou Dar in a couple days? And Juilin and I are going with them." And Mat's like, "Well, that seems like pretty fucking relevant information that no one told me. I mean, great. Great. You have to help me, Thom, get them away from here." And Thom's like, "No. They're gonna do what they're gonna do, and they've got this -- Egg's got this mad plan to actually become the Amyrlin, but she's gonna need a lot of help, 'cause, um, no one's respecting her the way they should and there are all these factions here in Salidar so it's all very dangerous," and Mat's like, "I know it's dangerous!"

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "I've been saying that the whole time! Newsflash, asshole! I've been --"

Sally: "I've been saying this for six books!" (laugh)

Emily: Ugh! And -- I mean, like -- (laugh) Like, void of any of the surrounding context, Thom saying, "Have you ever thought of helping them do what they want instead of what you want?" is a good line.

Sally: Is a great line!

Emily: Yes. Mat, have you ever thought of that? But surrounded by Thom's absurd story about the lying whore Laritha --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Laritha? It sounds like Larissa with a lisp.

Sally: (laugh) That lying whore Larissa.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: But surrounded by all that, it's -- you know. What the fuck?

Sally: So we have one nugget of actual feminism buried in text -- in a chapter that is deeply misogynistic. (laugh)

Emily: (sigh) And all of this ends with Mat, exasperated -- in exasperation, going, "Who's the letter from, Thom? Another woman you rescued, or did you leave her where she could get her head cut off?" And Thom goes, "I left her." And, like, walks away, as though he could have saved Moiraine from Lanfear, one of the Forsaken.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Mat's like, "I don't even know what you're talking about!"

Sally: He's like, "What are you saying?"

Emily: "Why are you --"

Sally: "Everyone here is nuts!"

Emily: Like, Thom is virtually walking through his My Chemical Romance music video --

Sally: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Emily: And Mat's over here, trapped in his perpetual Britney Spears music video. Like, what's happening? What is the -- why is there so much cognitive dissonance constantly? So Mat goes and finds his guys and under the guise of, um --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Inspecting Pips, gets Vanin, uh, to be like, "Uh, could you go tell Talmanes what the fuck is going on and to not, like, mount a rescue operation for me?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Vanin's like, "Yeah, sure. I'll be back." And Mat is like, "Great, well. I can already see where this is gonna end, and it's with me in Ebou Dar."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: What the fuck? How do these things happen to me?"

Sally: Yeah, to me.

Emily: To me, no less. We then switch over to Elayne, who --

Sally: Ugh.

Emily: Locates Aviendha, who is acting oddly. She's never even seen Aviendha outside of her, like, warrior lady outfit. But -- oh, wait, first she sees Birgitte, who's like, "Hey, uh, did you know that they're actually sending Vandene and Adeleas to Ebou Dar with you guys?" And Elayne's like, "Great, we're being babysat. By the way, can I please tell Egg who you are?" And Birgitte's like, "No!" And Elayne's like, "Why? She already knows, essentially," and Birgitte's like, "Well, I just don't want everyone thinking that I'm some hero so if they need, like, a giant-slayer, they'll send me when I'm really just a normal person like everyone else." And Elayne's like, "I mean, Egg's not gonna ask you to do that shit." And Birgitte's like, "Uh, Egg's having you guys go to Ebou Dar with Mat, who doesn't even want to go. There's no telling what she'll do. She's drunk on her own power."

Sally: It's true.

Emily: "So, leave me out of it." And Elayne's like, "Ugh. Fine. Unreasonable male-coded Warders."

Sally: "When I bond Rand, I'll make him promise to do everything I say."

Emily: "I hate how Aviendha has a will of her own." Anyway. (laugh) Then she goes, gets Aviendha, and takes her to their room. Aviendha's like, "Listen. Well --" She says, "Mat claims you have come here to kill me." And Aviendha's like, "I mean, no, I've just been sharpening this knife in a totally innocent way." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) "A very benign knife-sharpening."

Emily: "I don't know how he could have misconstrued that."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: She takes off her shirt and gives Elayne the knife and also a switch that she cut --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: On their way, casually, and she's like, "Listen. I have toh toward you because I did, in fact, fuck Rand, and also I'm in love with him. So you get to do whatever you want to me." And Elayne's like, "Well, I do want to stab you because I have some violent tendencies that should probably be unpacked at a later date." But she's like, "No, Aviendha. Put your shirt on because actually, I've known this was coming even though I didn't know it would be you. But there's another woman who's also in love with Rand, and the three of us have to share him." And Aviendha's like, "That seems like a plot point that has been totally constructed to fill one of Robert Jordan's weird fetishes," and Elayne's like, "I know, but we're just trapped in it."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "So that's where we are." Aveindha's like, "Who's this Min you speak of?"

Sally: "Who's this other lying whore?!"

Emily: "Ugh!" And Elayne's like, "Well, she's on her way to him right now. Um, and she's nice. We're friends." I don't -- I, Emily, haven't really seen evidence that they're friends --

Sally: Yeah, me either.

Emily: Because again, no one behaves like friends in this series except Aviendha and Elayne, eventually, who, like, cross the threshold from acting like friends to acting like lesbian lovers very quickly --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And without warning, so Robert Jordan's total -- and he classifies it as "sisterhood," so. Robert Jordan doesn't know anything about female relationships, is what I'm saying.

Sally: Yeah, I think we talked about this in an earlier episode, but, like, Robert Jordan's repeated insistence of, like, "They're sisters, they're friends, and therefore they bathe together." (laugh) It's like, you've tried so hard to make them not gay that you have made them so gay.

Emily: Yeah. You just --

Sally: I don't -- (laugh)

Emily: Swung that pendulum right back into lesbian territory.

Sally: I don't bathe with my friends.

Emily: I don't -- or my sisters.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: God forbid. Not since I was five. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So anyway, Aviendha's like, "Well, I don't really feel comfortable sharing a man with you unless we are really good friends," and Elayne's like, "Yeah, you're right, I guess." The end. Chapter ends. Which is how Aviendha will end up going to Ebou Dar with them, because she's on a quest to become friends with Elayne, a person who, frankly, it's impossible to come -- to become friends with because she's so obnoxious.

Sally: Yeah, like, she's really, you know, got a Sisyphean feat ahead of her.

Emily: Good luck to you, Aviendha.

Sally: This scene -- like, I know we've unpacked this all before, but, like, Aveindha being like, "Egg told me to watch Rand for you because Egg said that he belonged to you and therefore I bullied him mercilessly about how he belongs to you like property and then he happened to see me naked, and we ran away and had sex in an igloo and now I feel really guilty about it because, again, he belongs to you --" It's like, ugh. Ughh. Be quiet. "So therefore please stab me."

Emily: Like, what else was she supposed to do with the knife? Carve the word "lying whore" into Aviendha's back?

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Just like Laritha.

Sally: Just like Laritha.

Emily: That's been that pretty wack set of chapters. Um.

Sally: I feel like making fun of Laritha for sounding like "Larissa" with a lisp is a little ableist of us.

Emily: You're right. Sorry.

Sally: So I apologize for that.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But once again, Robert Jordan has taken a real-world name and just sort of switched some letters around to get Laritha.

Emily: Yeah, I just have a really lovely coworker whose name is Larissa, so --

Sally: Oh, that's nice.

Emily: Who I talked to at -- near the end of the day, so I guess the name was on my brain. Um, but yeah, there's nothing inherently funny about lisps.

Sally: No.

Emily: So apologies for that. The next chapter is called "A Threat," and I assume the threat is Min's burgeoning sexuality.

Sally: Blegh.

Emily: Um, then it's "The Black Tower" where, unsurprisingly, they visit the Black Tower.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Would -- wouldn't you know it? Um, and then there's some shenanigans in Caemlyn. This might be another three-chapter section. I'm sorry I can't remember.

Sally: That's okay.

Emily: But we'll switch over to Caemlyn and then back to, uh, Salidar to more or less wrap up what's going on there before we get into the real shit, which is Dumai's Wells.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So that's what's on, uh, the docket.

Sally: Yeah, today was the first time, when I picked up and opened the chapters, where I'm like, hey, we are actually getting through this.

Emily: Yeah, we're near the end. Yeah.

Sally: Yeah, we're -- we've somehow overcome --

Emily: We're not near the end. We've got, like, a quarter of the book left. But --

Sally: (laugh) But it feels like we've overcome the bulk of it.

Emily: Small victories.

Sally: Yeah, which is just sitting around in Salidar being sweaty.

Emily: Yeah. Um --

Sally: So small victories is right. Happy St. Patrick's Day.

Emily: Ugh. So that's that. Thanks, everyone, for listening. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Um. Thank you to our patrons on Patreon and, um, everyone else.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Any -- um, anything else?

Sally: No.

Emily: OK. We have a listener-submitted sign-off, don't we?

Sally: Uh, yeah, we do. Okay, so this is from Sarah. Not Sarah McClintock -- Sarah Widhalm. Um. I don't know why I always have to say that. Sarah McClintock is not the only Sarah that exists. I apologize.

Emily: Yeah, well, we just referenced three different Sarahs in this episode alone, so.

Sally: (laugh) So many Sarahs.

Emily: It's a little confusing.

Sally: Um. OK. "This sign-off is brought to you by second floor apartment living. One morning, I had to be at work by 4:30 a.m. --" Gross. I'm sorry.

Emily: What?! No. Sign-off right there.

Sally: (laugh) Um, that's traumatizing enough. Uh, "So at the crack of 3:30, I rolled --"

Emily: No!

Sally: "Out of bed, followed by our cat Juno, opened the bedroom door, and turned on the light in the living room. It was in the middle of summer and we had no air conditioning, so we had left the balcony door open in a vain attempt at cooling off the apartment. Unfortunately, the only thing that open door had let in was two bats, who started flying around the room in terrified slash terrifying circles --"

Emily: What?

Sally: "While my still-waking-up brain was trying to comprehend why my house was full of flying rats all of the sudden. I managed to shoo one out the front door with a broom while the second took to flying figure-eights in the hallway." She was -- it was performing for you. Um. "Juno was watching it with rapt attention, and at just the right moment, she leapt into the air and batted the bat to the floor. I shoved her away before she could make a tasty morsel out of it --"

Emily: Ahh!

Sally: "And put it outside on the balcony wall. It was so stunned it didn't fly away, but it was gone by the time I got home later. My wife slept through the whole ordeal --"

Emily: Woof.

Sally: "And I miraculously made it to work on time. P.S., Don't worry: thanks to a different encounter with a bat as a child, I had already been inoculated against rabies, as was the cat."

Emily: (bad imitation of Michael Caine) "Why do we fall, Master Bruce?" (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) "Why do we fall, Master Bruce?"

Emily: You're like Batwoman.

Sally: You are like Batwoman!

Emily: You've had so many encounters with bats. "Thanks to another encounter with a bat."

Sally: (laugh) "Thanks to a different encounter with a bat." That's a --

Emily: Christ.

Sally: The bats are coming for you.

Emily: Jesus. I'm glad you didn't get rabies.

Sally: I'm glad you didn't get rabies. I'm also glad your murderous, bloodthirsty cat didn't kill this bat, who was just checking out apartment living.

Emily: Can't even imagine. Yeah, it was -- actually, uh -- the first bat was its realtor. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: It was on a tour.

Sally: (laugh) It was just checking out the location; it was thinking of renting the apartment above you, and all of a sudden --

Emily: Woof. A broom. A cat.

Sally: Ahh!

Emily: Alright, everyone. Thanks for listening. Have a good week. Bye!

Sally: Have a good week!