



Episode 156 – “Made of Water Bottles”

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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: Um, I am counting five [laughs] water bottles –

SALLY: Shhhhhh [laughing].

EMILY: [laughing] In my immediate viewpoint. This is a small room and there are five.

SALLY: [laughing] I have to – I drink a lot of water!

EMILY: [laughing] I'm not shaming how much you drink water, it's just the fact that in my direct line of sight –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: With blinders on, there are [laughing] five water bottles.

SALLY: I'm so ashamed.

EMILY: Uh, it's so funny and so good.

SALLY: Every morning I fill up all of my water bottles, because it's, like, it's easier –

EMILY: [voice cracking] *All* of them?

SALLY: Shh. [laughs] I will drink my daily quota of water more – I will more likely reach it if I don't have to go refill a water bottle. If I can just, like, grab a new one and, like, the problem, you know, is solved. But, like, every morning I, like, fill up my water bottles and I have all of them in my arms and I'm like, "Avoid Emily. Avoid Emily. [laughing] She will mock me mercilessly." Um, so.

EMILY: Luckily, I don't come out of my room until nine because I don't feel human until nine.

SALLY: So, yeah, these are my water bottles.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughing] This is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* podcast. I am made of water bottles, I guess. [laughing] I am Sally Goodger.

EMILY: Water bottles for arms. Two water bottles for legs [laughs].

SALLY: I mean, yeah.

EMILY: I'm Emily Juchau. Um, [laughs] hey, welcome back to *Lord of Chaos*.

SALLY: [snorts]

EMILY: And luckily, we're getting near to the end. Min gets to Caemlyn with the Salidar embassy, which is composed of nine women. Don't worry. All nine of these women will be described to us. And by described, I mean the Robert Jordan classic Aes Sedai description which is, um, what their Ajah is and what their nationality is.

SALLY: Nothing else matters.

EMILY: Because for some reason that's relevant. And then I assume when Rand meets them in person, we'll get updates on the state of their bosoms.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: And whatnot.

SALLY: And what color their hair is.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Those are the only four things that matter about a woman [laughs].

EMILY: Distinguishing features. Boob status. Hair color. Nationality. Ajah. So, this chapter is called *A Threat*. I don't actually know what the threat is, looking back.

SALLY: I feel like there are many threats, so the fact that it's just, like, a threat.

EMILY: Well, but what? What's the threat?

SALLY: Is it – is it Min –

EMILY: The threat of Min?

SALLY: Yes, Min being there.

EMILY: Min being there.

SALLY: Is it when she's like, "I had the viewing that a bunch of Aes Sedai are going to hurt you?"

EMILY: Oh yeah. That makes sense.

SALLY: That would be the most plot relevant.

EMILY: Sure does.

SALLY: As we're heading into Dumai's Wells.

EMILY: Woof.

SALLY: That's what I'm guessing. But, yeah, it's like buried in this – *the* threat is buried in this pretty sizeable chapter of learning there's a bunch of Aes Sedai in the city and Min bullying Rand because he said, "I don't see you as a woman. [laughing] I see you as a friend."

EMILY: That was the most...tenth grade shit I ever read in a book that's purportedly about adults.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Oh my god. That was classic tenth grade.

SALLY: Yeah. [valley girl voice] He sees me as one of the guys.

EMILY: [valley girl voice] He sees me as one of the guys, so I better remind him I'm a woman by sitting as close to his dick as I can.

SALLY: Yeah. I'm gonna change the color of my clothes, so he knows I'm a woman. And then I'm gonna sit on his lap.

EMILY: Yeah, I'm just gonna wear pink from now on because that's the girl color. And sit on his lap and fall asleep on him, because sexy. Okay, I – we could spend all day dissecting Min's immature behavior despite the fact that she is in her late twenties, I think. Um, but uh, she arrives in Caemlyn. She ditches the embassy.

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah, she's like, "Bye."

EMILY: She's like, "Bye," sneaks out the window on, like, sheets tied together to make a rope to get to Rand at the palace. And, um, I mean, we get some of her backstory which is that her dad died and then she was raised by her aunts. She has three of them.

SALLY: Yeah, she's basically Sleeping Beauty.

EMILY: Yeah, she really is she's got those –

SALLY: Three little fairies.

EMILY: Fairies. Um, no mention her mother, so I guess she just doesn't have one [laughs]. Um, and apparently, she spent her childhood running about the mines in boy's clothes, which is mind boggling.

SALLY: Were you a miner?

EMILY: I guess her dad was a miner. But it's, like, in Baerlon. I guess I never really computed that Baerlon was a mining town. That, like, wasn't clear to us the first time we read it.

SALLY: I mean, I feel, like – this could just be my spatial – my lack of spatial reasoning, but I feel like the way every *Wheel of Time* city is described it is literally just a city in the middle of nowhere.

EMILY: Yeah, with no –

SALLY: Like, there aren't suburbs or, like, farms.

EMILY: Surroundings, yeah.

SALLY: It's, like, empty. City.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: So I just never gathered that Baerlon was anywhere near, like, mountains for mining.

EMILY: Yeah, I picture it all like, um, Minas Tirith.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Just in the middle of a flat plain where a battle is gonna happen, you know?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And I know Minas Tirith is on a mountain, but just one.

SALLY: Yeah, remove the mountain.

EMILY: Yeah, and it's just city in the – I guess Rohan would be the better.

SALLY: Rohan!

EMILY: Rohan! [English accent] Riders of the Rohirrim! Death!

SALLY: [laughs] Where was Gondor when the westfold fell?

EMILY: Stop.

SALLY: Where *was* Gondor when the westfold fell?

EMILY: Anyway, so Min is basically like, “I was raised in the coal mines or something.”

SALLY: Then my aunts tried to make me pretty.

EMILY: Then my aunts tried to make me wear girl's clothes, but that didn't succeed. But now here I am, I'm horny for the first time in my life, so here I am wearing girl's clothes.

SALLY: [snorts] Yeah, that's what happens.

EMILY: I mean, pretty much. Min, for some reason, is constantly described to us as being, like, sexually mature. As in she talks about things like, “I had my first kiss when Rand was still a shepherd boy.” To emphasize, I guess, both the age difference and the fact that she has experience sexually. And yet, we are placing her in this incredibly immature state of mind regarding female interactions with men.

SALLY: Yeah, she doesn't act like she's had sex with a man before.

EMILY: Or any sort –

SALLY: Or anyone.

EMILY: She acts like she's just barely been let out of the house. Papa forbade mirrors lest we fall victim to vanity.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: She's never seen herself before much less a man.

SALLY: Yeah. Well, she literally has this line where she's like, "I don't understand why women act dumb around men." Which is also a trope that I hate. That men make women go like –

EMILY: Crazy.

SALLY: Blank in the head. But it's just, like, you've never been attracted to a person before? I find that very – if we can cut out all the, you know, dumb sexist bullshit there, it's like, "I'm attracted to this person and it makes me think a little differently." You've never been attracted to a person before? I just don't believe that.

EMILY: Yeah, if you're in your late twenties, unless you are something like on the ace spectrum or demisexual or something like that, presumably you've been attracted to people before. And I say presumably, because I really doubt Robert Jordan had ever heard of the asexual spectrum.

SALLY: Robert Jordan's like, "Excuse me?"

EMILY: "Exsqueeze me? People not driven by sex?" Um, but yeah.

SALLY: Yeah, it's just, it's just silly. It's just one of those many things in *Wheel of Time* that just doesn't make sense. And I also, like, don't love – I feel like this is a trope that we see with, um, quote unquote strong female characters where it's like even if they've been attracted to people before it's only their, like, love interest that makes them go, like, silly feminine, you know?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: It's just, like, so it's like before this you were able to be, like, cold and detached, but Rand awakens the – the woman inside of you.

EMILY: Yeah, you see him and your womb immediately just starts wandering, trying to get closer to him or something.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: I don't know. It's bizarre. It's sexist. It's obviously sexist. None of the men start acting differently. Um, the closest we get is Perrin growing a beard but that is because Faile directly told him to.

SALLY: Yeah, and I mean we cannot hold Perrin and Faile up as any sort of relationship model.

EMILY: No, but the men aren't changing themselves for women.

SALLY: I get what you're saying.

EMILY: So, like, it's only Min. It's only Aviendha.

SALLY: And I just also feel like Rand occupies so much more point of view space when we are in one of the women's points of view than any of them ever occupy in Rand's points of view.

EMILY: Oh, yeah.

SALLY: And I know Rand is a world leader. *The* world leader [laughs] and has many other things to think about, but Elayne is also a world leader, allegedly.

EMILY: God, I wish she wasn't.

SALLY: [laughs] So maybe she shouldn't be thinking about this man so much.

EMILY: [sighs]

SALLY: But women are too emotional for politics.

EMILY: That's *so* true.

SALLY: Don't you guys, know? That makes me want to watch *Veep*.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Were you watching that when quarantine started?

SALLY: I feel like it was like *right* before quarantine.

EMILY: Yeah, god.

SALLY: I went through my *Veep* period.

EMILY: Um.

SALLY: [laughs] my *Veep* period.

EMILY: My blue period. My *Veep* period. So, Min gets some of the Aiel maidens who are just standing around to take her to, um Rand who's in the throne room visiting with a bunch of the Andoran nobles who, I guess upon hearing that Min is there, he immediately dismisses.

SALLY: Kicks them all out!

EMILY: He's like, "Get out." And they're like, "Fine, we don't want to be here anyway." Um, and then we switch over to his point of view. I guess because Robert Jordan couldn't even stand himself writing Min's point of view and was like, "I have to get out of here. This is insufferable." But we switch over to Rand who is, as usual, happily oblivious whenever any woman is attracted to him. He's like, "Min!" Pick her up, whirls her around. Is like, "Come to my rooms. We'll have a drink. We'll catch up." She's like, "[panicked laughter] Great." Um, they go to his rooms and he's like, "What's up? Whatcha doing here?" And she's like, "Well, first I have this letter from Elayne. I can't tell you where she is." And Rand's like, "I know perfectly well where she is. She's in Salidar." And Min's like, "Okay."

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: "Might as well. Here's this letter that Elayne wrote." Where she says, "Rand, I have made my feelings clear to you." Now, that's a blatant lie.

SALLY: False.

EMILY: "Know that they have not changed." They change every minute of every hour.

SALLY: [snorts] That's correct.

EMILY: Then she says, "I hope that you feel for me what I feel for you." And it's like, "A confusing amount of emotions?" I guess he does. Then she says, "Min can help you if you only listen to her." And apparently this last line is a late addition. It's "I love her like a sister and hope you love her as I do." Which, I don't know if that's supposed to be Elayne's latent jealousy cropping up being like, "I hope you only love Min as a sister." But it's like nothing Elayne has ever – Elayne, for a potential world leader, is the least helpful communicator in the series. And I say that as a person who last week [laughs] watched Mat absolutely fail at being any type of diplomat between Rand and the Salidar Aes Sedai.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Elayne's worse somehow.

SALLY: Somehow.

EMILY: Every time Elayne speaks she makes enemies.

SALLY: [laughing] It's so true, though. She's so annoying.

EMILY: And Min's like, "What? What's up?" Because Rand's like, "Ugh." And he's like, "Women are the worst. Elayne's beautiful and I just want to fuck her, but Aviendha's also beautiful and I want to fuck her. And I'm terrible." And he's like, "Ah, Min's looking at me kind of weird." And she's like, "It's not really polite to talk to one woman about another." And he's like, "Well, you're just my friend. I can talk to you about anything." She's like, "So you don't even see me as –" I think he says directly, "I don't think of you as a woman." And then she's like, "Oh."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Kill Bill sirens.

SALLY: She's like, "Now I will just mercilessly violate his personal boundaries until he wants to fuck me."

EMILY: Yeah, so skimming right over that.

SALLY: Sulin comes in at one point and throws a bunch of wine everywhere [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah. Sulin comes in while Rand is sitting with Min on his lap. Yeah. Sorry pronouns. Getting all confused. Sulin's like, "Exsqueeze me?" And Rand tells us that he has had Sulin reassigned to his rooms specifically, um, in the hopes that it will help her meet her *toh* faster, because she specifically doesn't want Rand to see her doing serving shit. And also to keep her, I guess, from running around the palace doing –

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I don't get that part of it, because it's like Sulin's a perfectly fit woman. She's – she can do manual labor if that's what she signed up for.

SALLY: Yeah. His implication is, like, she was doing too much manual labor. And it's like Sulin is probably the buffest woman in the world.

EMILY: Yeah, and also she's not doing any more manual labor than any of the, like, wispy maids in the palace.

SALLY: Yeah, than any of the frail white people in Andor.

EMILY: Yeah! Come on, bud. What's your deal?

SALLY: Yeah. He's just a – shithead.

EMILY: Yeah, but she's like immediately very angry. And it's kind of hard to tell why, because it's Sulin. Because Rand's like, "Now, I don't want you to hurt Min even though she's sitting on

my lap and I was allegedly with Aviendha until three days ago.” And Sulin’s like, “No one’s going to hurt Min except Aviendha if Aviendha wants to. Like, that’s not my problem.” I guess it’s that some stranger sees her serving.

SALLY: I guess.

EMILY: Something like that.

SALLY: She’s a hard one to crack.

EMILY: But Rand – Min starts telling Rand about how the Aes Sedai are with her. Um, how there’s nine of them. How they’re led by a girl – a girl – a woman named Merana. Uh, where they’re at. And then she says, “I don’t think they mean you any harm.” And he says, “Oh, is that your opinion or a viewing?” And she says, “Well, it’s just my opinion. But I did have a viewing that some Aes Sedai are going to hurt you. I don’t know when or how or why.” And he says, “Well, could it be the Aes Sedai who came with you?” And she’s like, “Could be. Don’t really know.” The thing about Rand and Min is that when they are just talking, they are having some of the most straightforward conversations in the series. Um, when you kind of manage to muddle through all the romantic stuff where Min’s like, “Woolhead. I’m a woman. Look at my tits,” you know? And Rand’s just like, [nonsense noises]. When they’re talking about normal things, they’re having totally clear, um, communication that isn’t as bogged down as typical *Wheel of Time* communication is between men and women. Which is the point, and which is why Rand is attracted to Min and why he views her as a friend. And why their relationship works-ish.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Rand and Min spend the most time together of Rand and any of his love interests, I guess. Min is gonna be here ‘til the end of the series. She’s basically hanging out with Rand wherever he goes.

SALLY: Okay.

EMILY: With, you know, occasional breaks as he goes haring off to various places and leaves her. But, generally, they’re together. And while their dynamic can be really annoying at times it’s also just, like, of the three of them I’m glad, I guess, it’s Min, because Elayne’s simply insufferable when she’s in the same room as Rand. Aviendha and Rand can’t have a straight conversation.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, at least Min can provide actual help and advice.

SALLY: Yeah. For sure.

EMILY: I’m sort of scraping my nails along the bottom of the barrel here [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, I mean it's funny to say that when that should be like, I don't know [laughs], the starting point for any relationship rather than the goal. Um, but, yeah Rand keeps talking in these chapters basically about how he trusts her and she's honest with him and he feels that he can be honest with her. Which is super nice when we're around so many characters all the time who are...politicking and maneuvering and manipulating. It's nice to just have two people have a normal, straightforward conversation.

EMILY: Yeah, and he's comfortable with her and the struggle then is getting through the next couple of books before Min is comfortable in her position with Rand. As not just his friend, but oh now we're lovers and she's gotten him to accept that he's in love with her too.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, it's always a little bit insufferable on her end. Usually through Rand's point of view, for whatever reason, conversations with Min tend to seem a lot better. Anyway, so they chat a little about her viewings. Rand says, "It's cool, Min. Like," – Lews Therin is freaking out – "I'm good. You can tell them that they can come by three at a time, but they absolutely can't channel around me, and I'll be able to tell if they can." She's like, "Cool, cool. Groundwork." Um, then Sulin comes in. Then Melaine comes in, um, who I guess has been in Caemlyn all this time. The only one of the Wise Ones, cause Bael, her husband, has been in Caemlyn?

SALLY: Seems right.

EMILY: Hard to keep track. Um, but she's there. She's like, "Hi, I'm bringing you news that there are more Aes Sedai in Caemlyn now. And Rand's like, "Yeah, I've heard about it. There are duh duh duh duh duh. And I know where Egwene is." Melaine is also like, "Egwene left to go somewhere."

SALLY: She's like, "Egg went bye bye."

EMILY: And he's like, "Oh, okay." And then Min suddenly pipes up where she's fallen half-asleep ago, which I'm like...

SALLY: Girl, you were wide awake a minute ago.

EMILY: Yeah, what happened? Did you get drugged or something?

SALLY: I know she mentions that they got in in the middle of the night, but it's, like, [sighs] it's just more ways that we can remember she is a soft, gentle woman.

EMILY: Yeah. Yeah. There's a lot of attempts to make Min palatable and feminine. Since she wasn't enough, I guess, early in the series, even though she totally was.

SALLY: Yeah. Robert Jordan thinks he made quote unquote unlikeable women in Min and Aviendha and it's, like, they're totally fine.

EMILY: Yeah. They're normal.

SALLY: You don't have to feminize them further by having Aviendha grow out her rat tail [laughs]. Wish Aviendha got to keep her rat tail throughout the whole series.

EMILY: God that would be fucking hilarious.

SALLY: It would be so good [laughs].

EMILY: Anyway, Min's like, "You're gonna have twins." And Melaine's like, "How do you know? I just found out I'm pregnant, like, legit this morning."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And Rand's like – Pfft I mean Min's all angry at Rand for some reason. And Rand's like, "You're the one that fucking spilled the beans. Dumb fuck."

SALLY: It's not my fault.

EMILY: But Min and Melaine have this conversation about Min's viewings. Min just sort of comes clean about them. This is sort of setting the stage for Min's relationship with all of the Aiel and the Wise Ones, which is generally amicable. Melaine sort of starts viewing her as an equal, even though she's not of the same culture. Which is also foreshadowing for how Min will be viewed by the Seanchan when that becomes relevant very late in the series. Which is that her, um, cultural distance from them is sort of immediately bridged by the fact that she has these magical prophetic powers, you know? She's sort of this court Merlin almost, who can just do shit.

SALLY: The Seanchan love prophecy or whatever, don't they?

EMILY: They do, yes.

SALLY: Okay.

EMILY: They love omens and what not. But Min and Melaine have this just totally, like, on the carpet conversation between two ladies about childbirth and whatnot. And Rand's just listening like, "One time I helped a horse give birth and it broke three of my ribs."

SALLY: Yeah and they're like, "You weakling." And it's like I would much rather help a human woman give birth than a horse.

EMILY: I'd rather not be anywhere in the vicinity of any creature giving birth but [laughs].

SALLY: Okay [laughs] that is completely fair and valid, but, yeah, a horse can kick you and break your ribs. I think it's a bit harder for a – a human giving birth to kick you and break your ribs.

EMILY: [sighs] Anyway, then we get the update on all of the Aes Sedai.

SALLY: Yeah, we have to get their little, like, resumes.

EMILY: Yeah, we have to get the spiels. The only ones that I consider relevant are Merana, who is a Gray Ajah. She's one of those who will swear fealty to Rand by the end of this book and she's, you know, around. Neutrally. Fine. Uh, the other ones are also around. We do get mentions of Seonid and Masuri, both of whom will be part of Perrin's coterie. Um, some of them their names are so unfamiliar that I'm like, "They must die [laughs] in the next book or two, because certainly never heard of them before." Um, like who the fuck is Feodrin Hurela? Never heard of her.

SALLY: Some hoe.

EMILY: Or Valinde?

SALLY: Valinde!

EMILY: So, anyway, I consider Merana, Seonid, and Masuri to be the only three worth mentioning, really.

SALLY: I honestly can't believe you remember where any of the Aes Sedai end up or where they are. I don't remember the Aes Sedai at all. None of them.

EMILY: [sighs] I probably wouldn't except I did recently read *A Memory of Light*, which sort of gives you some solid updates on where some of the Aes Sedai are.

SALLY: Makes sense. But you also didn't – you finished it like many months ago.

EMILY: I know, but things usually stick in my head for a few months.

SALLY: It's because Emily is wise and smart. Don't make that face.

EMILY: I'm just remember how little *A Memory of Light* I remembered over the course of several years.

SALLY: Anyway.

EMILY: Um, then Melaine leaves. She's like, "I've gotta go tell Bael that we're having twins. Great!"

SALLY: Imagine being like, "Mm."

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: “Some witch woman who – ”

EMILY: Some rando.

SALLY: “Was sitting on the Dragon Reborn’s lap told me that we’re going to have twins.”

EMILY: Identical twins. Girls. And Bael’s like, “Sure. This might as well happen.”

SALLY: Yeah. Whatever.

EMILY: Just another day. An Aiel Man in King Rand’s Court.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: By Mark Twain.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Then Rand and Min are like, “Uh, well this is awkward.” And Min’s like, “I better get back to the Aes Sedai. They’re gonna be mad that I just ditched them.” And Rand’s like, “Well, do you want to go to the farm with me?” And she’s like, “The farm?” And he’s like, “Yeah, [laughs] where all the scary men channeling are.” And she’s like, “Uh, no I think I’ll stay here.” And he’s like, “How can she be so afraid of them, but she’s totally comfortable with me?” And I’m like, “First of all, she knows you. [laughs] Second of all – ”

SALLY: I wouldn’t want to go to a farm where a bunch of dudes were whether or not they could channel.

EMILY: Yeah. And I mean – yeah. Even if Rand was like, “Do you want to go visit the army with me?” I’d be like, “No.”

SALLY: “Nah, homie.”

EMILY: Doesn’t sound like a good time to me. Is Bashere there? Maybe. But as we know, Bashere is not there. The only people there are absolutely rancid.

SALLY: The only people there are Mazrim Taim, the worst man you know!

EMILY: So terrible.

SALLY: There is Grady and Narishma.

EMILY: But we haven’t met them, yet, you know?

SALLY: Yeah. Min doesn’t know who the fuck Grady is?

EMILY: I don't know if she ever meets Grady.

SALLY: She's just like, "I do not want to go see your rancid school of rancid magic boys."

EMILY: I'll stay here thanks. And he's like, "Damn."

SALLY: "Well, that's kind of rude."

EMILY: "So fucking rude."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: But they part ways and Rand travels to "the farm," thinking okay –

SALLY: Also, you can't just be like, "Do you want to go to *the farm* with me?" Like, that's so ominous.

EMILY: I know. She's like, [voice shaking] "The farm?"

SALLY: "The farm where you go kill all your girlfriends?"

EMILY: "The serial killer farm?"

SALLY: [laughing] What are you saying?

EMILY: [upset noises]

SALLY: Ugh.

EMILY: Just – there's something immediately ominous about farms.

SALLY: [laughs] I don't know. If someone was like, "Yeah, we're going up to the farm." I'd be like, "To do what? Your cult ritual?"

EMILY: Well, yeah.

SALLY: [laughing] I mean, yeah, that's basically what happens.

EMILY: That's literally what happens. Rand digs into his closet and gets out his little pins to show Min.

SALLY: [laughing] His little Girl Scout badges.

EMILY: I know. His little Girl Scout badges to be like, "Here's what your rank is in our made-up system for magic boys. [laughs] Our death cult of magic boys."

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: He gets his pins, and he travels. He's like, "I've got to dispense these pins to the peasants, and I also have to let them know there are nine more Aes Sedai. Nine plus two makes eleven. If we get two more that's thirteen, which is bad, but eleven is okay. But I've got to tell them not to go murdering any Aes Sedai. Whoop. Let's do it." He gets to the farm. The farm is still just, like, a house and a barn, but they are starting to build more houses and they have repaired the buildings that they have. There are just boys all around there. There are a couple of ladies with some kids, who are just doing their ladies and kids thing. It's irrelevant. There are a bunch of dudes learning to fight with swords. There are also a bunch of dudes learning hand to hand combat from some random Aiel guy.

SALLY: Yeah, they're learning, particularly in this scene, how to kick *very* high.

EMILY: To kick very high. Poor – this poor Aiel guy who got recruited for this.

SALLY: I know.

EMILY: He just drew the short stick at morning chore assignments.

SALLY: Yeah. They're like, "You have to go to *the farm*."

EMILY: You have to go to *the farm*.

SALLY: And he's like, "What did I do?!"

EMILY: To teach them kicking and whatever. While they just stare at you with their creepy glazed eyes. Because they're in a *cuuuuuult!*

SALLY: And he's like, "Well, not my worst job."

EMILY: It's pretty bad, though!

SALLY: [laughs] "Not my best."

EMILY: It's pretty bad! Um, Rand is immediately approached by a deeply belligerent man.

SALLY: [laughs] That's such a good way to describe him.

EMILY: Who's like, "Who are you? I suppose you've come to the Black Tower to learn. You should have waited in Caemlyn for the wagon to bring you. You could have had another day to enjoy that fine coat." And Rand's like, "I'm Rand al'Thor."

SALLY: [giggling]

EMILY: And this dude's like, "Oh, *great*" [laughs].

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: “You don’t look so me!” [laughing] Like, he’s just like this random middle school bully. And Mazrim Taim just sees this happening and knocks him the fuck out. He’s like, “What the fuck?” And Rand’s like, “Okay?”

SALLY: This is why Min didn’t want to come to the farm.

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah! Imagine if Min was there. She’d be like, “What the fuck?” But Mazrim Taim’s like, “Sorry. He’s one of my most belligerent boys. He’s also gonna be one of my favorite cult leaders.”

SALLY: Yeah, what’s his name?

EMILY: Uh, Torval.

SALLY: Yeah. That’s right.

EMILY: And Mazrim Taim also mentions Kisman and Rochaid, uh, and those three, as I recall, mostly from skimming through *Path of Daggers*, which we’re gratifying, are kind of Mazrim Taim’s three.

SALLY: Yeah, they show up in...wherever the fuck Rand is...Illian?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: In that book. And they’re like, “Fuck you!”

EMILY: “Fuck you!”

SALLY: “We’re cult leaders now!” And Rand’s like, “But I’m *the* cult leader?” And they’re like, “No!”

EMILY: Rand, like, stares at these three and then, like, looks over at Flinn and Narishma and Hopwil and is like, “What went wrong?”

SALLY: Yeah. He’s like, “You have literally a perfect boy over here. Three perfect boys.”

EMILY: Is it like – it’s only a matter of, I don’t know, weeks? A month, maybe? Between when I snatched Flinn and Narishma and their coterie out of the jaws of Mazrim Taim. And these other boys who were with him a month longer are like, “Hey, we’re Satanists now” [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, maybe there’s a cult threshold. Like, maybe if you’re with the cult six months, you’re fine. But you’re six months and one day? Satanist.

EMILY: What's it called when you get out of a cult? Deprogramming.

SALLY: Oh yeah.

EMILY: Mat just – [laughs] Mat. Rand just happened to deprogram Flinn and Narishma through his whack Book 7 shenanigans.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean, Narishma almost gets murdered by Rand about every five pages, so.

EMILY: Yeah, that's true. Rand's always like, "I'm about to kill Narishma?" And Narishma's like, "For the ninth time, yes!"

SALLY: [laughs] He's like, "What if we didn't kill Narishma today?" Okay, anyway, this belligerent man has been knocked out.

EMILY: Taim's like, "What do you want?" Rand's like, "Oooh. You're who he learns it from." Rand's like, "I need to talk to the boys." And Taim's like, "Great. Come over to this shiny marble plinth that I have set up for speaking."

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah. This isn't culty at all.

EMILY: In this field. And Rand's like, "Okay." Gets all the boys together. Rand's like, "Hi. Uh, well. First of all you guys, just so you know there's some Aes Sedai here. Just be cool about it."

SALLY: "Don't do any murders."

EMILY: And everyone just stares at him like...

SALLY: Yeah, it's, like, haunting.

EMILY: I know. And Rand's like, "Okay."

SALLY: Rand's like, "Well. Moving on to the next bullet point in my PowerPoint slide."

EMILY: "This is the worst part of my Ted Talk." Yeah [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Then he tells them, "Okay, you need a name. Aes Sedai means servants. I'm gonna call you guys Asha'man, because it means guardians. But it doesn't just mean guardians it means, like, special guardians in the chivalric sense. You're basically chivalric knights." And they're all like, "Ah, Asha'man. Asha'man. *Asha'man*."

SALLY: They're just kind of mumbling. They're like, "Okay. Asha'man. Asha'man."

EMILY: “Cool. Cool. Cool. Nice to have a name.” Oh, Rand also finds out that they’ve been calling it the Black Tower.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Taim’s like, “Well, I mean, it’s what it is.” And Rand’s like, “Well...okay, I guess. Don’t really have any problems with it. Sounds a little...”

SALLY: It sounds extremely culty is what it sounds like.

EMILY: THE BLACK TOWER.

SALLY: But the White Tower also sounds extremely culty, so.

EMILY: Yeah, we’ve just living with it for longer.

SALLY: Yeah, so it doesn’t feel as culty. Rand’s like, “I guess we can’t stop them.” And Taim’s like, “I could stop them if you wanted me to.”

EMILY: And Rand’s like

BOTH: Nah.

EMILY: I guess it can stay. [laughing] Hashtag immediately regrets this. He’s like, “So, Aes Sedai start as novices then they’re Accepted and then they’re Aes Sedai. You guys are gonna start as soldiers, because you’re soldiers in the Last Battle. Hashtag you’re just cannon fodder. Is what I should be calling you.”

SALLY: Yeah, welcome to your sign on to some cannon fodder.

EMILY: “Then if you survive being the lowest of the low, you will get to be Dedicated and wear this special pin that looks like a sword.” And he’s like, “Mazrim. Mazrim Taim. Come let me pin it on you, like a fuck corsage.”

SALLY: [laughs, valley girl voice] We’re going to homecoming!

EMILY: Taim hates this.

SALLY: Yeah, he’s like [growling noises]

EMILY: He’s like, “Ugh.”

SALLY: Like a snarling chihuahua [laughs].

EMILY: [laughing] And Rand’s like, “And if you make it through being a Dedicated. If you survive that tier of the, uh, multi-level marketing scheme.”

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: [laughing] “If you sell enough Avon products, then you get to become an Asha’man proper.” He’s like, “I suppose I was the first Asha’man, but now it’s Mazrim Taim.” Mazrim Taim’s like, “I’ve been channeling for like twenty years.”

SALLY: “I’m, like, old enough to be your dad.”

EMILY: “Fuck off. Also I’m, at this point in the series before Robert Jordan decided not to, I’m definitely one of the Forsaken.

SALLY: Yeah. Um, and then Rand pins like a gold dragon on him. And this is so petty, but it really bothers me that one of the pins is silver and one of the pins is gold.

EMILY: Oh yeah.

SALLY: I just – like, I have, I have no problem with mixing metals. I do it all the time. It’s very fun, but I just feel, like, if you’re having a uniform...than they should be the same color.

EMILY: Okay.

SALLY: That’s just my personal opinion on the matter!

EMILY: I have no feelings about the pins. Except that I like that it’s pins instead of fucking white dresses.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which is somehow even worse. Um.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Anyway, so Rand’s like, “This is all so we can be prepared for the Last Battle, which we are for sure going to win.” And then all of the guys just – he’s, like, thinking, “Okay, now they’ll cheer or something.”

SALLY: “Now they’ll cheer!”

EMILY: He, like, pauses for laughter, for cheering, applause. And all the guys are just like.... crickets.

SALLY: They’re all very haunting [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] I – this scenario is so funny.

SALLY: I know.

EMILY: Because if you walked into the fucking farm and looked around you'd be like, "This is one hundred percent a cult. These men are all being abused by Mazrim Taim's leadership. He's teaching them shit that will get them killed. He's teaching them to, like, depersonalize and become cannon fodder. Human weapons." It's absolutely fucking horrifying and dehumanizing. Rand walks in and is like, "Seems normal. Except they're not applauding me."

SALLY: He's like, "It's a little weird that they aren't more excited about the enamel pins that I made for them."

EMILY: "I commissioned these specially."

SALLY: "I made these for my boys. And, I mean, as the first Asha'man, *technically* they should be applauding me."

EMILY: They're just, like, they have the vibe of kids who got sent to their least favorite grandparent's house for the weekend.

SALLY: Yes. Yes.

EMILY: And have just had the most awful time eating their grandma's, like, undercooked meat or whatever.

SALLY: Correct.

EMILY: And being, like, this has been the worst experience of my life. And then mom comes and picks you up and is like, "Did you have such a fun time with grandma?!" And you're like, "I wish I was dead."

SALLY: And you're like, "No, mom. I'm dead inside."

EMILY: But I'm old enough now to understand that I can't say such things to my mother about her own mother [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, So Rand is just like, "Okay, well I guess I'll get off this rock."

EMILY: "And go talk to Mazrim Taim in puh-rivate!"

SALLY: "Like, this has been really awkward for me. Sorry you guys are being abused, but [laughing] this is way more awkward."

EMILY: He's like, "Goodbye!" Just, like, edges off the stage [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And then he –

SALLY: [laughing] Stupid.

EMILY: [laughs] He and Taim talk [clears throat]. Rand's like, "Damn, you have found a lot of boys. I didn't really believe you when you said that you would get that many. But boy, that's a lot of boys." And Taim's like, "Yeah. It's a fucking intensive recruiting program. What do you want me to tell you?"

SALLY: He's just hunting down boys.

EMILY: "Also I am literally just, like, dragging men here. Probably here against their will. And none of them will every tell you about it because that's how bad I've scared them." And Rand's like, "Ah, yeah. Totally normal."

SALLY: He's like, "But you didn't like my pins!"

EMILY: And Taim's like, "What about the ones who can't channel that I just send back to you? What happens to them?" And Rand's like, "I just throw them at Bashere to make a little elite army of – and by elite I mean they'll probably die in the first ten minutes of battle."

SALLY: Yeah, Rand's like, "Do what you can with them." And Bashere's like, "I have a full ass army of highly trained soldiers."

EMILY: "I don't have time for this."

SALLY: Highly trained cavalry. And you want me to do something with these sad farmers?

EMILY: Maybe it's Bashere's idea of a good time. He's like –

SALLY: "Alright, boys!"

EMILY: "Oh ho! Summer camp!"

[both laugh]

SALLY: You're right.

EMILY: Less intense. Um, then Rand's like, "What's your fucking problem? I don't know why you're so mad since I put those badges on you. Like, I just think they're great and it will make everyone want to work harder and whatnot." And Taim, who is fucking livid because he's one of the Forsaken and he's Demandred and he absolutely hates Rand and hates having the Dragon pin on himself. [laughing] At this point in the series before Robert Jordan has decided to do things differently.

SALLY: I mean, if your worst – if your mortal enemy put a Girl Scout patch on you. Like, imagine the shame [laughs].

EMILY: In front of all the boys you've been horrifically abusing for the last months!

SALLY: Like, I can't imagine how angry, and rage filled Demandred, at this point in the series, is.

EMILY: Yeah. There's all your fucking dignity down the drain [laughs].

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: [laughing] You've just lost all credibility as an evil ma – mastermind.

SALLY: Your mortal enemy who's a nineteen-year-old man [laughs].

EMILY: Uh, Mazrim Taim is such a comedic figure. Sorry, Tybalt are we bothering you?

SALLY: It's just so funny, Tybalt. He put on a pin on him [laughing].

EMILY: He put a pin on him!

SALLY: He's like, "Didn't you like it?" [laughing]

EMILY: Mazrim Taim's like, "Is this pin the fucking tail on the ass?"

SALLY: [laughing] "I'm the ass!"

EMILY: "I'm the ass! You made me look like an ass in front of all our boys that we're co-parenting! That I'm parenting because you can't be bothered!"

SALLY: Yeah, you're an absent father who rolled in with gifts from his overseas trip.

EMILY: Mazrim Taim's like, "Is this even *our* cult anymore?"

SALLY: [laughing] "Do you not care about this cult anymore? Does this cult mean nothing to you?"

EMILY: "On our wedding day you promised!"

SALLY: [laughs, coughs]

EMILY: Everything's fine [laughs]. Mazrim Taim's like, "If you must know, I'm just super, super angry that there are so many Aes Sedai in Caemlyn." And Rand's like, "Oh, well. Can't be helped. I thought I told you to stay out of the city." And Taim's like, "I've got fucking spies. I haven't been going there myself. Except for the time I appeared on your balcony."

SALLY: [snorts]

EMILY: And Rand's like, "Yeah...sure."

SALLY: "Yeah, what was that about?" [laughs]

EMILY: Rand's like, "It's not a problem." And Taim says, "And if they join with the Red Aes Sedai? There are Red Sisters in the countryside. Several parties have arrived in the last few days trying to intercept men coming here." Then Rand has a little bit of a mental break because Lews Therin is like, "I'm gonna kill him!" And Rand's like, "What? Why?" Rand's like, "Go away." And Lews Therin's like, "No, I'm gonna kill him and then them. I'm gonna kill every one of his little cult boys." And Rand's like, "You need to fucking calm down. You're just a voice." And then Rand's like, "Lews Therin blah blah blah blah," rambling. And Rand's like, um, "You're dead Lews Therin. You're dead! Dead!" And then he comes to himself and he's like hunched over the table muttering, "You're dead! I'm alive and you're dead!"

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] And he, like, looks up and Mazrim Taim's like, "Ugh."

SALLY: "If you could keep it together a little bit longer that would be great."

EMILY: Taim's like, "You need to hold on." If you fuck up, then we're all fucked." And Rand's like, "Shut up." Anyway, Rand's like, "Have any of these so-called Red Sisters actually, like, stopped anyone from getting here?" And Taim's like, "No." And Rand's like, "Okay, don't fucking bother them. And don't go into the city. If I sense a man channeling, I'm going to come find you and kill you." And Mazrim Taim's like, "Oh great. So if Demandred or Sammael or whoever just shows up, you'll kill me?" And Rand's like, "Yeah. All I need is one excuse, bitch. I fucking hate you." And Taim's like, "Great. Good to know. Luckily I have Sammael in my DMs so I'll tell him not to attack you."

SALLY: "Hey, don't channel rn. Dragon Reborn mad at me? Question mark."

EMILY: "Mad at me, because I didn't want his fucking pins."

SALLY: "I didn't like the enamel pins he ordered off Etsy."

EMILY: [laughing] Sammael's like –

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: "Could you be normal for *five minutes?!?*"

SALLY: He's like, "Nope! Depressed. This depression is chronic but these ass cheeks are iconic."

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] That's from a TikTok I can't take credit for that.

EMILY: Okay. So, that's that. Christ.

SALLY: [laughs] Stupid.

EMILY: Um, next week we get a chapter with the embassy, basically, that has just arrived in Caemlyn. Kind of getting up to date on their shenanigans. Then we'll hop back over to Salidar to see Mat off with Nynaeve and Elayne headed for Ebou Dar. Headed straight for disaster. What fun. Um, but that's that. Thanks for listening.

SALLY: Thanks for listening.

EMILY: Thanks. Sorry it got a little crazy at the end there.

SALLY: That's what happens when you visit the farm.

EMILY: *The farm* tm. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thank you to our supporters on Patreon who make it so difficult for me to do my taxes.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Just kidding. It's actually very easy. You just have to fill out an extra form. Um, and thank you to our followers on social media. Do you have anything else to add?

SALLY: No.

EMILY: Okay. Do you have a sign off? I can try and think of one too.

SALLY: No, oh my god. This is, like, very dumb and niche, but, um, but my two-year-old nephew who is living in my mom's house right now. My mom has been sleeping some nights in his room, just because he's been a very anxious little guy, you know, because a lot of stuff is happening. So my mom is just like, will put him to bed and fall asleep with him. Probably mostly because my mom is tired [laughs]. But my mom snores, as my moms are wont to do. [laughing] And so yesterday I was playing with my nephew and he, like, like, I don't know why kids think it's funny when you pretend to fall asleep and they get to wake you up or whatever, but I pretended to fall asleep and he would wake me up. And he pretended to sleep and he started fake snoring so loudly.

EMILY: Ahh!

SALLY: [laughing] Because he's like, "This is what people do when they sleep, right?" And my mom is like, "What is that?" And I was like, "I think Delcan is making fun of you," [laughs].

EMILY: Fucking coming for you.

SALLY: [laughs] Ah, it was so funny.

EMILY: Ah, two-year-olds are great.

SALLY: Toddlers are brutal, man. Don't let a single insecurity out around them.

EMILY: Woof.

SALLY: Yes?

EMILY: Thanks for listening, everyone.

SALLY: Bye!

EMILY: Have a good week. Bye!

SALLY:

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EMILY: