



Episode 171: Elayne and Nynaeve Go to Clown College

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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 Glynna Mackenzie plays]

EMILY: Did you know that last week we either forgot to do the intro – and by we I mean I – or I edit, edited it out somehow.

SALLY: That's okay.

EMILY: While I was distracted, um, editing over at Devin and Janet's house.

SALLY: So, like, we didn't introduce ourselves?

EMILY: [laughing] Nope!

SALLY: Well, that's fine.

EMILY: I didn't realize until I was like 10 minutes into the transcript, and I was like, "This is weird, even for us."

SALLY: Wait.

EMILY: And I was like, “Hold on.” We just didn’t, apparently.

SALLY: Well, we had a lot to talk about last episode.

EMILY: We sure did.

SALLY: We really got into some intense stuff, so.

EMILY: I don’t know if we said anything...that made sense or was worthwhile, but we sure did say it.

SALLY: [laughs] Uh, quality of the podcast? To be determined. Quantity of the podcast?

EMILY: A hundred and seventy-one episodes!

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Of nonsense [sighs].

SALLY: ‘Kay, let’s be sure to do the intro this time.

EMILY: Yeah, I was gonna try. This is Everybody Hates Rand. It’s your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I know we weren’t very friendly last time, but usually we’re more friendly.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I’m Emily Juchau.

SALLY: I am Sally Goodger.

EMILY: And hey...hey...hey, cool cats [snorts].

SALLY: Hey, *cool* kids.

EMILY: We’re in Ebou Dar now. You know what that means. Fantasy...New Orleans? Or maybe fantasy Venice, it’s hard to sort of tell.

SALLY: I know there’s kind of –

EMILY: A conglomerate, I guess.

SALLY: Yeah, a congol – a conglomerate.

EMILY: This is our brand now is not good – is not doing words good.

[both laugh]

SALLY: These two fucking idiots can't even read!!

EMILY: Yeah, that explains why we're seven books into a *Wheel of Time* podcast.

SALLY: Um, Ebou Dar as – I find Ebou Dar as a culture really fascinating. You get this, yeah conglomerate of really world markers, for lack of a better term, of New Orleans, of Venice, of carnival sort of generally, which crosses a lot of different cultures including, you know, South American and Caribbean. Um.

EMILY: The fact that it's near the sea just brings to mind a lot of port cities.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: That have, sort of have this mesh of cultures. Ebou Dar is a – has its own distinct culture, but we see in Ebou Dar, I feel like, and perhaps this also has to do with where we are at within the series, we are seeing a greater mesh of cultures within the city. We're interacting really strongly with the Sea Folk. Also, our just main case of characters has been fleshed out to include more, quote unquote, people of color. And by that I mean –

SALLY: Aviendha.

EMILY: Oh, we'll talk about Aviendha [laughing].

SALLY: Can't wait.

EMILY: But also, like, the Tairens.

SALLY: That's true.

EMILY: Who are – have browner skin, we are told, than most of our Two Rivers folks.

SALLY: Yeah, we get Nalesean and his pointy little beard.

EMILY: Yeah, and also Juilin, and their, like, weird class warfare.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, and I'm like, "How am I on the nobleman's side in this class warfare?"

EMILY: I know. He's like, "I fucking hate Juilin," and I'm like, "God! Me too, man!" [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] Dammit!

EMILY: It's not because he's poor or anything, it's just because he's a fucking insufferable character.

SALLY: I know. He, like, rolls in with his little red cap and is like, "Look at how annoying I am."

EMILY: Juilin is here for two reasons. To dispense occasional information, that almost literally any other character could dispense, and to make occasional remarks reminding us that he had a thing with the Panarch of Tarabon, Amathera, so that when she comes back and they strike up a romance it won't take us by surprise. Which, I do sort of admire, because Robert Jordan didn't bother to do that with most of his [laughing] romances. Thom and Moiraine come out of fucking nowhere.

SALLY: What? I know, he shows up to be like, "This happened," and I'm like, "Why couldn't Thom tell me this?"

EMILY: Where's Thom, Julin?

SALLY: Okay. Before we get to the lads, anything else to say about Ebou Dar in general?

EMILY: Uh, well, less Ebou Dar, but more to do with the setting, generally. Mat tells us that they have been there a little bit over a month that –

SALLY: Which is –

EMILY: Yeah, I was trying to wrap my brain around why this timeline is so confusing, because reasonably, to advocate for Robert Jordan here for a minute, although he does, you know, uh, drop Book 6 and pick up Book 7 with Rand exactly where he left off, he left Mat and Nynaeve and Elayne in Ebou Dar before the end of Book 6.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And, in fact, I think, he left them there and then went over to Rand kind of puttering around Cairhien for a while. So, theoretically, it does make sense that we're now picking up with them later, but still within the realm of, "Oh, Dumai's Wells just happened." But the fact that, like we've already talked about, we had the weird time thing with Egwene where Moghedien has just barely escaped.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Is just sort of weirding me out.

SALLY: Yeah, I also – sorry my bones really are popping and crunching today – so if you –

EMILY: Crunchy Munchy.

SALLY: [laughs] I am Crunchy Munchy.

EMILY: It's me!

SALLY: Look at me, look at me.

EMILY: The Court Jester.

SALLY: [laughs] Crunchy Munchy can be Mat's court jester persona, like a drag persona, but [laughing] it's your court jester persona.

EMILY: [laughing] That's good.

SALLY: Um, I also just don't understand why it has to be, like, a month. Like, okay I get committing to your timelines, that's great, but I don't know why Mat and et al. have to be in Ebou Dar for a *month* before anything happens. That seems like a really – I don't know. It just creates kind of a weird dynamic. Like, Mat and Nalesean and company have just been, like, watching horse races for a month because Nynaeve and Elayne won't let them help.

EMILY: Yeah, Mat's bored out of his fucking gourd. Has nothing to do.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And Nynaeve and Elayne, uh, are just sort of doing jack shit. Apparently, they're going into the Rahad every day and searching for the Bowl of the Winds, but like –

SALLY: It feels like they're just stumbling around with a titty in each hand.

EMILY: It does make a little more sense though, like – didn't we, at the beginning of this season, talk about how I saw on some Wikipedia article that this book only takes place over the course of, like, twelve days.

SALLY: Yeah, an insanely short amount of time.

EMILY: Yeah, an insanely short amount of time. Well, thus far, the timeline has stuck to that. We were only with Rand and Perrin for less than a day. We were with Egwene overnight and into one full day. Um, the only thing – and it makes sense now why I'm like, "Ah, but they spent so much time in Ebou Dar, because apparently they did. They've been there a month already. What doesn't make sense to me, I guess, is that this whole rigmarole with Tylin is going to take place over less than two weeks.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I always thought that was a more extended, uh, I obviously cannot call it a courtship, but in Tylin's point of view that's what it is.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean, uh –

EMILY: With the whole they meet, she starts forcing him into the palace, refusing him meals, whatever, whatever, whatever.

SALLY: Yeah, it's – their relationship, in like the loosest possible meaning of the word.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: It feels more drawn out. And that's not to say that intense abuse can't happen in a fucking moment, you know? Like, it doesn't have to be drawn out over any extended period of time, although it continues for a while after the end of this book into – I was gonna say Book 8, but Mat's not in Book 8, into Book 9.

EMILY: Well, theoretically even if Mat's on screen that's where it's happening, so.

SALLY: Yeah, so it's just strange. It feels like it's all really... I don't know. It just feels really condensed. Tylin really is like, "I'm getting you out of the inn and into the palace in, like, 48 hours?"

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Whatever. What a rat.

EMILY: I guess, I guess I don't, I personally, don't have a problem with them being there for a month, though it does beg the logistical question of: really? They've been here a month and haven't done anything?

SALLY: I guess that's what just annoys me.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Like, it happens. There's not reason for them not to be.

EMILY: But I appreciate the sort of lived-in quality that Ebou Dar gives us more than most other cities.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: It feels like we have to spend so much fucking time in Cairhien before it starts to feel like a city that has a shape and a personality.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Ebou Dar right off the bat really has a personality, which is nice. And, like, the people in it really seem to be well-fleshed out even if they aren't necessarily people I like.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, Setalle Anan. Her relationship with Mat is already this like – like I’m glad we didn’t have to suffer Mat being his weird self around women with Setalle Anan, specifically. They’ve just already, like, come to their meeting point of their weird maternal...

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Friendship.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, I don’t know. There are pros and cons, I think.

SALLY: Yeah. You’re right. I think there are more pros. I’m just being picky. I just think it’s a little strange.

EMILY: I mean it’s...it’s...I guess it’s just mostly annoying because it seems like when characters in this series go on a quest, up until this point – and I think this is the point, we’re about to enter Perrin puttering around, you know, the middle of the continent for books on end. That particular area. But, like, prior to this it feels like if people are like, “I have a destination in mind. I have a task in hand,” they pretty much go and do it.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And so it’s a little weird to be picking up after a month of failure.

SALLY: Yeah, and to just like – we can go ahead and –

EMILY: And oh boy, is it indicative of things to come.

SALLY: Yeah, go ahead and dive in. We’re on a boat. Um, and Aviendha is like, “Hey, we’ve been fucking around for a month, maybe we should use the man who has magic luck powers to help us find our thing.” And it’s like, why didn’t you do that on the first day. Get the hell out of dodge.

EMILY: Nynaeve’s like, “I fucking hate Mat Cauthon.” And I’m like, “What?”

SALLY: Where’s this coming from?

EMILY: And Elayne’s like, “Dammit! Why didn’t I think of that?” And I’m like, “I mean, why didn’t you?”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: You got – [laughing].

SALLY: It truly is just like [laughing], like nothing – this scene sends me up the wall so much.

EMILY: It's just dummies being dumb for fully so many pages.

SALLY: Yeah, because Aviendha's like, "Maybe we should have Mat and his *ta'veren* powers plus special bonus luck power help us." And Nynaeve's like, "Mat fucking sucks! All he would do is be fucking annoying." And it's like, even if that was true –

EMILY: Is it not worth it?

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: To get out of this fucking place?

SALLY: Yeah, like, don't you want to fix the weather, um, and I don't know, accomplish your mission?

EMILY: Yeah. Nynaeve and Mat suddenly have a very fraught relationship where they did not before.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And the only inciting incident I can think of is that moment in Egg's office back in Book 6 where she kicked him and he was like, "I'm gonna kick you." And I'm like [mumbling]. Maybe Robert Jordan didn't write it the way it was intended, but that always came across to me as a banter moment, you know?

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Just sort of, like, that's how they are with each other.

SALLY: Listen, both my brothers are over the age of 30 and I kick them all the time [laughs]. So –

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Like, that's just what you do, I feel like, when you have banter-y, sibling-esh – sibling-*esque* relationships with people.

EMILY: For sure.

SALLY: So, yeah, when they're like, "Now they hate each other because Mat said I'll kick you."

EMILY: Because you kicked me. And Nynaeve's like, "I can't fucking stand this relationship. And also, Egg told me to stay away from him and now I have this whole weird complex with Egg." And it's like – Egg complex [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] Sometimes I hear myself saying Egg instead of Egwene and I'm like, "Woof."

SALLY: I transcribed the episode 169. We didn't refer to her by her name a single time.

EMILY: Yeah, we pretty much aren't anymore.

SALLY: [laughs] It's just Egg.

EMILY: It's bizarre.

[both laugh]

SALLY: She has become Egg.

EMILY: I am Egg.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Names have power. I am *EGG*! [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] It's her secret wizard name. She can't tell anybody.

EMILY: Yeah. Uh, so, like, uuuugh. That's bizarre.

SALLY: It's truly just one of those...contrived plot points to just make me, personally, insane. Robert Jordan, from the grave, is like, "Ha ha ha. Fuck you."

EMILY: "Fuck you."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I mean, Robert Jordan, this whole scene with the girls on the boat – we haven't even touched yet on Aviendha's narration.

SALLY: Oh yeah.

EMILY: We'll get there. Um, but this whole scene with the girls on the boat, the substance of which is that they are traveling to a Sea Folk ship. They have just received Egg's message that

they cannot return to the Aes Sedai camp with the Bowl of the Winds to use it. So Aviendha, again with the good ideas, was like, “Well, what about the Sea Folk?”

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: “You’ve said that they have channelers. They specifically have weather channelers, wouldn’t they be a good option?” So everyone is like, “Damn, Aviendha, that’s a great idea. Why don’t we just have you be in charge?”

SALLY: What a thought?

EMILY: I know, but they’re like, “Alright, yeah. We’ll go talk to the Windfinders, the Sea Folk who can channel.” They come – they happen, I guess, their visit to coincide with the woman who is basically the queen of the Sea Folk. Nesta whatever, who is only in this scene as far as I know before she gets killed by the Seanchan in the upcoming invasion and then the whole issue of who the next queen of the Sea Folk will be is up in the air, and boy does Robert Jordan want us to remember it. Um.

SALLY: What if there were le – fewer successshion plotlines. Succession.

EMILY: I don’t – If only that were the case.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: God, I wish that were me.

SALLY: Okay, sorry. I keep interrupting you.

EMILY: No, I feel you [laughs]. Um, but they happen to come across this very formidable woman and so are unable, I guess, to do their usual method of good cop-bad copping their way into every situation, and suddenly have to actually bargain for this.

SALLY: Dumb cop and dumber cop is more like it.

EMILY: You’re right.

SALLY: But, it really gets very grating to just be like – I almost said Egg. Elayne and Nynaeve will be like, “We are just going to try and bully, yell, and manipulate our way into and out of every situation.”

EMILY: Gaslight, girlboss, gatekeep.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: That’s all they do. Yeah, there’s no strategy here.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It's not like – it's frustrating – see, here's the thing. Here's the – here's the fucking thing. Robert Jordan is an author who likes to poke fun at his own characters.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Alright. Fair enough. That's a thing some authors do. It's a bit Dickensian.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which is a little out of style I think, but whatever. What have you. It sure does seem though, the way he pokes fun at his female characters is a little different than the way he pokes fun at his male characters. When he pokes fun at his male characters there tend to be genuinely very comedic situations, misunderstandings, miscommunications, Mat just kind of having a comedic personality. When he pokes fun at his female characters, it is to poke fun at their incompetence and to infantilize them. Elayne and Nynaeve actually given their skill levels, their world experiences, have no reason to be as incompetent in this scene and in this plotline as they are.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Nynaeve and Elayne have been out in the world managing, doing their own shit – not always well, but that was kind of their growth period.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: This is round two, baby. I expect them to have their shit a little bit more together. I want them to walk into Ebou Dar and get things done, because we've already seen them walking around Tarabon with their tiddies in their hands, you know?

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Almost literally because Robert Jordan won't let us forget that in different cities, women's tits are out in different ways. In Ebou Dar it's the boob window. Great, love me a boob window. Don't care, Robert Jordan, you don't need to remind me.

SALLY: Yeah [snapping]

EMILY: [laughs] snap, snap, snap. And with the Sea Folk, Nynaeve and Elayne are our, literally, only two characters who have been on a Sea Folk ship for an extended period of time.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They don't need to know this shit up and down, but they should know the basics. You can't walk onto a Sea Folk ship making demands. There's obviously going to be a bargaining process here, that's part of their culture.

SALLY: You also shouldn't walk into any situation where you hope to gain something by just making demands.

EMILY: Yes!

SALLY: That's like negotia – I feel like that's like negotiation 101.

EMILY: There, like, so completely unprepared. There's no discussion ahead of time. There just like, "We'll just go do this."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And then they make this bargain, which is alluded to without giving us any details for the next few books, that just apparently is very bad. And I presume Robert Jordan hadn't hammered out the details himself. He just wanted it to be very bad so he could make them look like idiots.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And it's like, *to what end?*

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: What possible character growth, narrative growth is here when you have your women characters acting like idiots? You're okay with making Egg a competent character. Is, like, one too much for you, Robert?

SALLY: [clicks tongue] Feels like it, doesn't it?

EMILY: Was her growth arc just way too fast for you? So now you have to scale back by having Elayne and Nynaeve be total idiots. And look, we're not exactly Elayne apologists over here. She is an idiot, fair enough. But it's been seven books of her being an idiot. You're telling me *nothing* has progressed?

SALLY: Yeah, Robert also loves to, when it is convenient for him, mention that Elayne was raised by Morgase, who is, up until...recent events, presumed to be a really competent leader.

EMILY: Yes!

SALLY: And a really competent politician. Like, she won the throne of Andor in the succession wars or whatever.

EMILY: But hey, once again, here's Morgase being made into a fucking toddler by Robert Jordan's inability to write competent women.

SALLY: There you go!

EMILY: Show don't tell, Robert.

SALLY: Yeah, and Robert Jordan will, like, mention these little things about Elayne having learned a lot about politics and the way you deal with people and the way different cultures work. Allegedly. Until she is in a situation where she has to actually apply any of this knowledge. Then she is just tabula rasa.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Which, to be fair, is me entering any test.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Whether or not I've studied for it.

SALLY: [makes a noncommittal sound]

EMILY: I don't know, man.

SALLY: We'll see. It's very frustrating.

EMILY: Are you looking up tabula rasa?

SALLY: I just have to make sure I used it correctly.

EMILY: No, it's blank slate.

SALLY: Okay, really – [sort of laughing] I really got stressed out there for a second. Yeah, the whole situation is just like four total clowns...complete...no thoughts, walking onto a boat being like, "We'll just go get an entire culture to do stuff for us." I mean, these are people who enslaved a woman so maybe they're thinking "we'll just do what we did with Moghedien."

EMILY: I mean, you're so right, bestie.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: But yeah, what's this fucking clown college arc coming from?

SALLY: [cackles]

EMILY: Like, is Elayne just on her study abroad to get her degree in tomfoolery, because that's sure what I feels like.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I mean, already this feels like a study abroad. The "I've been a month – I've been here a month and I've mastered Ebou Dar culture, I know that Mat could never take soldiers into the Rahad. They wouldn't find anything." Have you met Mat?

SALLY: Mat figured that out day one, baby.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Mat is survival of the fittest one hundred percent of the time.

EMILY: [sigh-groans]

SALLY: He's like, "I will be the fittest because I [laughing] refuse to die."

EMILY: Me? I'm gonna out live all of you out of spite [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah. I'm gonna – he'll be like Chris. Live to be 118 years old.

EMILY: Yeah [laughs]. Mat just turned 20 and he's like, "Great. One-sixth of my life is complete."

SALLY: [laughs] Okay.

EMILY: Arrgh!

SALLY: They really are just – ugh.

EMILY: Okay, so that's the – that's one rant. Now, let's take a break. Have a moment of hilarity.

SALLY: [deep breath]

EMILY: Uh, what's something funny? Oh! They do conclude Aviendha's suggestion to loop Mat into the situation by saying –

SALLY: Ha!

EMILY: [laughs] Okay, why don't – why doesn't Birgitte go ask him for help?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Birgitte's like, "Whaaaaat?"

SALLY: "You want me to do what?"

EMILY: "You want me to do whaaat? I don't want to do that." And Elayne's like, "He hasn't recognized you yet, so he probably won't then." And Birgitte's like, "Okay. I know this is just like blatant revenge." For something bratty Birgitte said about Elayne's ass, which, like, fair enough. Okay. But this is going to lead up to the iconic Birgitte and Mat friendship [laughs]. So we do have to thank Elayne for that.

SALLY: It's true.

EMILY: And we do have to enjoy the moment in which – the glorious, golden moment when Birgitte comes back from hanging out with Mat and is like, "Fuck you guys, actually" [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] "I'm with this kid!" And Elayne's like, "Oh, how the turn tables."

SALLY: Ah ha ha ha. Birgitte's like, "I love him, actually. We're getting platonically bro-married."

EMILY: Yeah. Do you want to come to our wedding?

SALLY: This kid's lit.

EMILY: I'm gonna be the best man at his wedding to Talmanes.

SALLY: Yeah, obviously. Obviously! Yeah, Mat –

EMILY: He's gonna be the best man at my wedding to Gadal Cain, wherever the fuck he is. So.

SALLY: Yeah [laughing], wherever that ugly motherfucker is hiding.

EMILY: So, uh...Oh! We do also get some details about the fact that, uh, no one has been able to keep it quiet that Birgitte is actually Elayne's warder. All the other Aes Sedai are pissed as hell about this. All the other warders don't give a fuck. That's generally the reaction. You do have to appreciate the warders, as much as we talked shit about them last time. They're like, "Woman wants to – woman's gotta do it? Sure."

SALLY: Women too can buy into this system of emotional slavery and abuse.

EMILY: Although, to be fair, Birgitte didn't.

SALLY: [gasp]

EMILY: We didn't even talk about her last time.

SALLY: That's right! Birgitte did not have a choice.

EMILY: Which, I think is handled well enough. It's a life or death situation.

SALLY: Yeah, of course.

EMILY: And Birgitte has enough of her own issues to deal with, and she's, I think, a much more fleshed out character than most of the warders.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I do find it frustrating how we are not reminded constantly how *dangerous* and graceful Birgitte is the way we are with all the male warders.

SALLY: I know. It's not like, "She stood there like a lion in the darkness."

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Or whatever the fuck they say about Lan every second he shows up.

EMILY: Ugh! Fucking winter's heart eyes. Or whatever the hell.

SALLY: [gagging noises] They also say that about Sammael in the third chapter.

EMILY: They say that about every man that has blue eyes I swear to god.

SALLY: [laughs] I've never seen a man with blue eyes that I've even noticed.

EMILY: No.... sorry. I'm just not staring into people's eyes that much.

SALLY: I'm not like, "Wow."

EMILY: "His eyes are –"

SALLY: His winter's heart eyes.

EMILY: His eyes are –

SALLY: His winter's fart eyes [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] Fuck! I knew you'd say that.

SALLY: Okay.

EMILY: Okay, circle back to the rant that I have, that I have.

SALLY: Lay it on us. Lay it on us!

EMILY: Alright. Aviendha.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: This is her first, as far as I know, actual narration in the plot.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: It's a little bizarre that she hasn't had a narration up until this point, but I guess in terms of points of view hierarchy, she's usually outclassed – not outclasses, outranked – by Egwene and Rand, with whom she's spent the majority of her company. Here, I guess, she's more on the level with Elayne, so they are sharing points of view a little more. Um, but this is also our first major point of view from, uh, an Aiel person. Um, and boy does Robert Jordan want us to remember it. The Aiel are not, in real world terms, people of color. We all know that. We've accepted it. We have moved on. The Aiel are, in Wheely Time terms, an ethnic minority. And Robert Jordan has coded them to be exactly like – not exactly like, but very similar to – native cultures, Indigenous cultures, um, as well as Bedouin, Islamic cultures. So, there's all that coding. And it's pretty offensive coding, because Aviendha sounds like an idiot.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Aviendha couldn't imagine the ocean. Aviendha didn't know that the ocean was salt water, with water that could not be drunk.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: It would make total sense that Aviendha would be freaked out by this amount of water. Okay, fine. I don't have a problem with that. The fact that it boggles Aviendha's mind this much that the ocean exists is a little bizarre, because the Aiel...aren't stupid.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I don't know if they're literate or not. I don't know if we've ever seen – actually, I do know Aviendha's literate because she lent Egg a book! But, like, literacy is also not a standard of intelligence that particularly matters.

SALLY: No.

EMILY: There's oral storytelling, there's oral histories. Duh, duh, duh, duh, duh. The Aiel waste, like, doesn't it come up against the ocean?

SALLY: Yeah. Or, like, pretty damn close.

EMILY: There's a coastline, people!

SALLY: Yeah. Like, it's not landlocked.

EMILY: And even in landlocked places, at this level of historical advancement, people know about the ocean. I live in Utah, a landlocked state, I know about the ocean.

SALLY: I was – that was gonna be my exact –

EMILY: The first time I saw the ocean I was like, “Oh, rad. The ocean. I’ve heard of this.”

SALLY: Yeah. I know what the ocean is. Um, no, I was going to say the same thing. We grew up in literally a landlocked desert, where the largest body of water is the Great Salt Lake, which is –

EMILY: Which, I don’t think I’ve ever actually been to.

SALLY: [gasp] Oh my gosh we should go to Antelope Island. It’s fun.

EMILY: Okay.

SALLY: We can go horseback riding there if you like horses.

EMILY: I don’t even know how to ride horses, but.

SALLY: Um, sorry. Sidebar about Antelope Island. Which, I’m always like, “Antelope Island is fascinating phrase to say.” Um, the Great Salt Lake, uh, one of the largest bodies of salt water besides the ocean. Disgusting. But anyway, I’ve heard people talk about the ocean, I’ve read books about the ocean, I have received education about the ocean. All things I assume Aviendha would receive in some form or another. So, the fact that Robert Jordan is like, “The one character trait I’m going to give Aviendha, right now, is [laughs] hydrophobia.” It’s not even hydrophobia. She’s literally like a – like she was pulled out of a bunker and is like, “What the fuck?”

EMILY: Yeah, what we’ve got here is this really infuriatingly offensive sort of, um, like, portrayal of Aviendha as though she is Pocahontas being brought to England. The native woman being put on display in some levels. The way that people look at her. The way that people regard her. But she’s also got this naiveté that white people love to ascribe to native cultures. This childishness.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Childish...that’s a word, right?

SALLY: Yep. Childishness.

EMILY: This childishness, this innocence, but also this hyper violence.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And it's all just – like, I mean, if you don't – I don't know how. This is just such a racist chapter [laughs].

SALLY: Correct.

EMILY: Without actually having, you know, actual race in it. It's just proof that you can make your fantasy world supposedly race-blind and then be racist as hell about it.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Wow. Man, I don't know.

SALLY: I don't either, but the analogy of Pocahontas being brought back to England is such a good one, because like Aviendha is even in, like, a pretty dress. And one of the Sea Folk says, "You're not garbed as expected you to be, *girl*."

EMILY: Oh, yeah. One of the Sea Folk immediately begins asking offensive questions about Aviendha's culture. Whether they tie up men during sex, whether they kill all their men. Which, is not just offensive to Aviendha, but is also [laughs] yet another offensive portrayal of another race, The Sea Folk.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah!

EMILY: Presumably the Sea Folk also have had enough interactions with the Aiel – again, coastline. The Sea Folk are educated people. Like, I know this isn't a world that has progressed to telegrams and telephones, yet, but it's not actually that hard to communicate, to have access to books, to have access to other people.

SALLY: Yeah. It's also just very strange to be like, "My seafaring people don't know as much about different cultures." And it's like, "Your seafaring people are the ones who should have contact with every culture in your world. That's how it works...to be a...people who go to lots of different places via the ocean" [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] Wouldn't it have been hilarious though if the Sea Folk were like, "Oh, yeah the Seanchan. We know about them."

SALLY: "Oh yeah. The Seanchan are *coming*" [laughs].

EMILY: The Seanchan? Those guys are bitches.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Good luck, man. I mean, we've had to nail out all sorts of deals with them.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But, like, woof. Good fucking luck.

SALLY: Godspeed. Yeah, I feel like they should know Seanchan. So, yeah.

EMILY: That sea's too big for them.

SALLY: [gagging noises]

EMILY: It's not too big for the Seanchan, but it's too big for the people who live on boats.

SALLY: [sighs] I – Robert Jordan.

EMILY: I know. I'm on my last nerve with you, motherfucker.

SALLY: Yeah, so. We've got two, um, basically we're presenting – basically two nomadic people who somehow have not gathered any sense of the world, which is just like dur, dur, dur, dur, dur. And yet – whatever. You're right. Extremely racist.

EMILY: Um, that's all I really have to say about that chapter, I guess.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: We then go over to Mat who is horse [laughing] – horse racing. Mat – classic – sweaty, with a bunch of guys, in the process of handing a bunch – some sort of transaction, monetary transaction.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Inspecting horses.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Lamenting his weird fatherhood.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: These are classic Mat chapter openers.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They're at the horse races. In Ebou Dar little boys can be jockeys, which I think was actually a thing back in ye olden days.

SALLY: [laughing] Ye olden days.

EMILY: Um, Mat, of course, likes horse racing because he's a gambler boy, who wouldn't? I think he also seems to get a thrill out of it, because he's luck doesn't really affect it, but this is something that he can rely on his own knowledge to sort of affect. Like, Nalesean's like [whiny voice], "Are you sure we should be betting on Olver?" And Mat's like, "Put all our fucking money on it."

SALLY: So good –

EMILY: "I've inspected the other horses."

SALLY: It's *such* a good scene. Like, the little, um, bookie comes over and Mat's like, "Nalesean, bet on this one." And Nalesean like [tightly], "Okay!" And he just keeps pulling money out of his fucking pockets [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah, like Mat's knives.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: Mat has slowly replaced all his knives with money. Mat tells us it's not a big deal if he loses this money, because he has what he calls a seed, which is his fat wallet which he can double, treble immediately [laughs] multiply whenever he wants just by walking into an inn and dicing a few times. This kid...wow.

SALLY: What is he up to?

EMILY: It's just such a fascinating portrayal of wealth, I think.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I don't know. I just get a big kick out of Mat being this absolutely class loyal to the working-class guy, but he's absolutely rolling in money.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Constantly. Through no particular effort of his own, just sort of doing what he loves.

SALLY: Yeah, gambling.

EMILY: Gambling.

SALLY: Gambling with all his boyfriends.

EMILY: He is absolutely god of wealth, which is one of his tropes. One of his archetypes.

SALLY: No, I love it. I love it when Mat loses all of his money.

EMILY: I know.

SALLY: When he's like, "Oh, there it goes."

EMILY: "Too bad."

SALLY: I mean, this hardly ever happens. He hardly ever loses money, you know. But he's just like, "Ah, well. Pobody's nerfect."

EMILY: Pobody's nerfect. On we go."

SALLY: Nalesean's like –

EMILY: "That's so much money!"

SALLY: "That was four billion dollars."

EMILY: And Mat's like, "I'm not worried about it."

SALLY: "Yeah, well, billions bummer, man. I don't know."

EMILY: Cowabummer, man.

SALLY: Cowabummer.

EMILY: We'll make it up tomorrow. Yeah, Nalesean's all stressed about the race. He's like, "I need to impress this girl I like." Mat's like, "You'll be fine, shut the fuck up."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Juilin comes back and is like, "Hello." Apparently, he and Thom are on sort of watch, trying to keep track of Elayne and Nynaeve. Mat references that there's a problem where none of his watchmen notice the girls leaving. Later we find out that's because they have learned how to, like, change what they look like through the One Power. Blah, blah, blah.

SALLY: [whispers] Stupid.

EMILY: Which, fine, whatever. That's a subplot. But Juilin's like, "Actually today we just saw them get in a carriage and go to the docks, and they went to a ship, so who knows what that's about." And Mat's like, "Oh, great. Okay, we'll I want to talk to Thom about it. Fuck off, Juilin!"

SALLY: Hey, we hate you, Juilin!

EMILY: Juilin's like, "Fine – r-rude," and walks away to never appear again until the next book, I guess. This is his one appearance. Um, as the horse commences, Mat is sort of looking around the crowd and happens to notice a woman who, to him, looks familiar. He's like, "I don't know why she looks familiar." He sort of reminisces about the holes in his memory. Which is sort of rare we get this, Mat just sort of monologuing about what he's lost. He doesn't usually reference it in clear terms, but he tells us he's lost swathes of his childhood.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which is wild.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: He's like, "Yeah, the dagger just sort of ate away at my memories," which is such a cool and fascinating visual. He's like, "I remember leaving the Two Rivers, don't remember jack shit up until Caemlyn."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So fascinating. I don't know. I just love his little, his weird little [laughing] character arc. Um, but eventually he keeps – his eye keeps getting drawn to this woman and eventually he realizes, "Ah! This is that woman from back in Book One who tried to kill me and Rand in a stable."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: He's, like, got the flashback, all of it. She had a knife that smoked because it was acid or something.

SALLY: Yeah, I don't know.

EMILY: What the fuck's she doing here? Meanwhile, in the background, Olver wins the race, of course.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Mat has his horse eyes. His horse sense [laughing] I don't know.

SALLY: What do your horse eyes see?

EMILY: [laughs] Like, what was that? Who was that lady wearing the horse dress at the Met Gala?

SALLY: Oh, Kim Petras [laughs]. That's Mat.

EMILY: No, that's Abell Cauthon [laughing].

SALLY: Oh, you're right. You're so right.

EMILY: Used horse salesman.

SALLY: Abell would look great in that dress.

EMILY: He would, man. Um, Mat starts walking away. Nalesean's like, "Where are you going?" Mat's like, "I just saw a lady who tried to kill me." And Nalesean's like, "Okay."

SALLY: This might as well happen.

EMILY: Oh worm?

SALLY: *Oh* worm?

EMILY: And Mat's like, "Yeah, get Olver back to the inn. Bye." And Nalesean's like, "Okay. Okay. Whatever."

SALLY: "Whatever. You ever have a boyfriend just like this?"

EMILY: "You ever have a boyfriend that's just like 'yeah I saw a woman who tried to kill me' and now obviously I'm going to go follow him."

SALLY: Like, trying to keep my boyfriend alive is a full time job.

EMILY: I – whatever [laughs]. I wash my hands of this. I know Talmanes is gonna ask me about it later.

SALLY: It's fine.

EMILY: Nalesean, how many times did you let Mat out of your sight? Almost always, Talmanes. Have you tried to keep that boy –

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: We need one of those leashes. One of those Disneyland kid leashes.

SALLY: What would Mat's animal on his leash backpack be?

EMILY: A fox.

SALLY: You're right. Dammit.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Um, yeah, but Talmanes – Nalesean will drop into the boyfriendz, with a z –

EMILY: Group chat [laughs].

SALLY: Group chat. The Boyfriendz.

EMILY: Lost him again, guys.

SALLY: Lost him again. And they're like, "Ah! Fuck!"

EMILY: Great. Well, hope he comes back in one piece. Who knows?

SALLY: Simply no way.

EMILY: Simply no way of controlling him. Mat then goes on this escapade through the city of following this woman. It's pretty comedic. Like, at one point she stops, and he is like, "Hngh!" and stops at a ring maker's stall, where of course he tries on a signet ring that he then can't get off his hand fast enough so he just, like, dumps a bunch of money and runs.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: When he's done. We get, like, a really good description of Ebou Dar in this chase sequence. It's really nice.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: At one point Mat loses sight of her and just climbs on this foundation. Although, all the like naked people in the fountains in Ebou Dar. He describes he's just hanging around this nude woman's waist. And everyone's like, "They're better when they're warm" [laughs]. Mat's like, "Fuck off!"

SALLY: Ebou Dar's just such a rowdy little city.

EMILY: I know. You gotta love it. Uh, Mat eventually kind of loses her. Then he sees her going into a house. He's, like, to himself, because Mat loves talking to himself, "Who the – who the fuck house is that?" And in the shadows a guy behind him is like, "Ah, that's Carridin's house." And Mat's like [yells].

SALLY: [laughs] Jumps nine feet in the air.

EMILY: [laughing] Like a cat. He's like, "Exsqueeze me?" And, uh, this guy –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] Who we are given to understand is Noal, although he, like, literally disappears as soon as Mat turns back.

SALLY: He's like, "Ooh!"

EMILY: I have no idea – I want the entire *Wheel of Time* series from Noal's perspective. What's he been doing the six books up to this point?

SALLY: Just fucking around.

EMILY: What's he doing now?

SALLY: In shadows.

EMILY: Is he also following this Darkfriend? Is that what he's – I don't know.

SALLY: I don't know.

EMILY: He's like, "I just keep running into this weird kid."

SALLY: Yeah, this is now my weird kid.

EMILY: Might as well, yep, might as well adopt him. Anyway, he's like, "Yeah, that's the Whitecloak's house, so whatever man." And Mat's like, "Okay." And then...viola. Noal leaves.

SALLY: He's just – Mat turns around and he's gone.

EMILY: Mat's like, "Okay. That was sufficiently weird."

SALLY: Phantom of the Opera.

EMILY: Does Mat recognize him when he appears in Book 9?

SALLY: [takes a breath] No.

EMILY: Because I was like, "Surely this is Noal," but I had to look it up to make sure I wasn't –

SALLY: Yeah, he popped up and I was like, "Oh, Noal," but then in the next chapter the guy mentions – Carridin, the guy, Carridin mentions someone named Old Cully.

EMILY: Old Cully.

SALLY: And I'm like, "So, which old man is it?" [laughs]

EMILY: I think Old – isn't Old Cully the Darkfriend lady's Darkfriend master?

SALLY: Yeah, but I was just like, “Maybe it’s that guy.” But, no it’s Noal.

EMILY: [laughing] Yeah what if it was Old Cully.

SALLY: [laughing] Just in the street with Mat.

EMILY: Who knows man?

SALLY: But, no, it’s just Jain Farstrider being a fucking nutcase. What else is new?

EMILY: Yeah, what’s he gonna do?

SALLY: He lives a fun little life doing whatever he wants.

EMILY: Next chapter is Carridin’s point of view. It is appropriately titled “Insects,” because Robert Jordan wants us to remember that all Darkfriends are insects. They’re just milling about, over each other, under each other, power is constantly shifting. It’s incredibly boring. Don’t know why we’re still doing this. Um, Carridin doesn’t really have much to tell us except the name of this assassin lady. Here she goes by Lady Shiaine. Uh, her real name is Mili Skane. I don’t know why we have to remember both of those, but I guess we kind of do. Carridin is sort of here on orders of Pedron Niall. He, of course, doesn’t know Pedron Niall’s dead yet. Pedron Niall has – this is our first time getting this information explicitly. Like, there are Whitecloaks maneuvering various mobs of Dragonsworn around the southwestern portion of the continent, just making a huge mess of things on the assumption that Pedron Niall will one day be able to sweep in and fix it. I don’t know why Robert Jordan has presented this scenario when he was just going to invade that portion of the continent with the Seanchan. Like, you don’t really need both things going on, but whatever. Um, Carridin’s whole family at this point has basically been killed off horribly. Uh, Sammael comes to visit him and is like, “Sorry, can’t fix it. That’s what Ishamael set them to do, so can’t undo orders, but hopefully I’ll be able to keep them from killing you.” And Carridin’s like, “I’m a foul piece of shit. I just care about my own life, because I’m evil.” And it’s like, “Yes. We get it.”

SALLY: Yeah. I know.

EMILY: I know, bud. Bud, I know. He’s like, “Sammael, I just saw Mat Cauthon through the window.” And Sammael’s like, “Oh, worm?”

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] Carridin’s like, “Yeah, ain’t that weird?” Sammael’s like, “Yeah, that’s super weird.” Probably because he’s like, “Isn’t Mat supposed to be directing the armies over at the Illian border?”

SALLY: Yeah, he’s like –

EMILY: Okay. Weird intel, but okay.

SALLY: Good to know. Good to know.

EMILY: Carridin's like, "Yeah, do you want me to like [cutting noises] kill him?" And Sammael's like, "...No." Which is [laughs] one of many times one of the Forsaken will be like, "Meh, let him live."

SALLY: "Eh, well, what could we possibly do? Kill him? No, I don't think so."

EMILY: "Kill him? Who needs it? Who needs to kill this guy? The guy who will be the general of the armies in the Last Battle?"

SALLY: Nope. Let him live.

EMILY: Yeah, let him do his thing. He's just horse racing right? Yeah, harmless. Uh.

SALLY: [snorts]

EMILY: [laughs] Sammael's like, "Okay, well, what I want you to be doing is looking for this big stash of *angreal*, *s'angreal*, *ter'angreal*." Basically the same thing that Nynaeve and Elayne are presumably looking for. So, great. Now we know they have competition. I sort of assumed that already.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I could have learned this so many other ways, but I had to suffer through a Carridin –

SALLY: [gags]

EMILY: chapter. At least it was short, mercifully short.

SALLY: He's so stinky.

EMILY: Like the lives of everyone in Carridin's family, apparently.

SALLY: I know, God. They described the brutal way his sister dies.

EMILY: Yeah, Sammael's like, "Your sister died horribly, but not as horribly as this other guy I saw killed my Myrddraal once," and describes it in detail. And we're like –

SALLY: What are you doing?

EMILY: Robert Jordan I didn't sign up to, like, watch a god damn snuff film before my eyes when I picked up this book, but okay. Thanks. Uh, next chapter, next section are two more Mat chapters, uh, which is nice, but, uh, you can – well, mostly two Mat chapters, there's some other points of view interspersed there. Uh, which we would be looking forward to, but we will

embark on the Tylin saga in the next section. So, if you're like, "Oh my god they just ranted so much," [laughs] it ain't changing any time soon, pals. It's just gonna be bad for a little while.

SALLY: Yeah, it's just gonna be a little negative, so every time you listen to EHR get yourself a little treat beforehand. And just make it like a little bit of a nicer experience for a few weeks.

EMILY: [mumbles] There's just gonna be some negativity up in this room tonight. Yeah, well, I've been feeling negative ever since I saw the weird way that Rand is standing on the cover of this book.

SALLY: I know. The cover is truly painful to look at. Why is his arm like that?

EMILY: Arnold Schwarzenegger arms. I don't understand it.

SALLY: What is he even doing. Hrah!

EMILY: He's just flexing.

SALLY: You want it – [very bad impressing of Arnold Schwarzenegger] You came to see my biceps.

EMILY: [laughing] That was the worst.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: You should only do Arnold Schwarzenegger impressions.

SALLY: It wasn't even really supposed to be Arnold Schwarzenegger. I just went with it [laughs].

EMILY: [laughing]

SALLY: I just went with what was in my heart.

EMILY: Yeah, that's – that's all you can do.

SALLY: [laughing] thanks.

EMILY: Okay, um, that was those chapters. Do you have anything to add?

SALLY: [laughing] No. I have said enough!

EMILY: Haven't we all? Um, thanks for listening. Thank you to Glynn Mackenzie for our theme song. To our patrons on Patreon. Um –

SALLY: Thanks to our followers on social media and anyone who is, um, buying books through our Bookshop link, that's really great. Um, yeah, and we just love you.

EMILY: Mm-hmm. Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: Yes. More administrative drama, but today –

EMILY: Love it.

SALLY: During the team meeting, and it's quite a large – it's more of a – the agency I work for is pretty big, so there was upwards of 40 to 50 people on this call.

EMILY: Whoa.

SALLY: Um, probably closer to, like, 40 on this Zoom call. And one of our, um, managers, who has a lot of energy.

EMILY: Ooh, sounds fun.

SALLY: [laughs] Like, he's a nice person, but just a lot of energy, was like, "Hey, we're gonna talk about some technology stuff!" And I was like, "What the fuck?" And he's like, "The IT department is thinking of switching the agency from Gmail to Microsoft Office."

EMILY: [gasps]

SALLY: And you could just see everyone's faces, like, fall.

EMILY: Noo!

SALLY: [laughing] It was like everyone had been shot in the heart all at once. And we were all just like –

EMILY: Crickets.

SALLY: Yeah. And then the chat starts blowing up.

[both laugh loudly]

SALLY: It was really funny. Okay, anyway that was my dumb sign off.

EMILY: Have a good week, everyone.

SALLY: Bye! We love you!

EMILY: Bye!