



Episode 172: Mat's Terrible, Horrible, No-Good, Very Bad Eleven Days

Release Date: September 27, 2021

Running Time: 45 minutes

Sally: Everybody Hates Rand is a Wheel of Time podcast that will contain spoilers for all 14 books. So if you're anti-spoiler, pause this, read all 14 books, and come back. We'll be here. Waiting.

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

(theme song by Glynn MacKenzie plays)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Okay, I have no idea where a cold open was or if there was one in that introduction.

Sally: Yeah, sorry, not very funny-funny-ha-ha.

Emily: But this is Everybody Hates Rand --

Sally: (laugh) Tybalt is back again.

Emily: Tybalt's back.

Sally: Guess who's back?

Emily: (sing-song) Backstreet's back, alright ... doo doo doo doo ...

Sally: (sing-song) Doo doo ... doo doo doo ...

Emily: We're your friendly neighborhood Wheely Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: I am Sally Goodger.

Emily: Did I tell you I found the introduction that I deleted?

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: It was in the blooper reel. (laugh) Like, in the middle of some -- it was very clear that we were talking about something, and I just sort of threw it in there to make sure that it got put in, and it didn't, cause I just deleted that whole section, so that's where we're at. Ummm. Hey, Crown of Swords. Hey, Mat Cauthon.

Sally: Hey, Crown of Swords is correct.

Emily: (laugh) Sooo ... oh my God, I can't focus either, so it's, like, just a thing that's going around. Okay.

Sally: It's catching. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, like a yawn. Okay, these are two chapters set in Ebou Dar. The first one is called "A Touch on the Cheek" and refers to the fact that Tylin touches Mat on the cheek and, uh, more thematically, refers to the fact that this is Mat's first meeting with Tylin and indicative of, um, their interactions to come, uh, which involve a lot of Tylin touching Mat without his consent. Uh, the second chapter -- woof. Is called --

Sally: The second chapter has quite a few point of views. Sorry.

Emily: Yeah, the second chapter --

Sally: Points of view.

Emily: Does have, uh, quite a few points of view -- is called "The Triumph of Logic"? And I don't -- I don't -- it seems to refer to the, uh, argument that the two Aes Sedai, Joline and Teslyn, are having about their place in Ebou Dar.

Sally: Um, don't two other Black Ajah sisters argue?

Emily: They -- uh, yes, and one of them also is making a logical point --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And the other one isn't.

Sally: Hers is about, like, "Let's kidnap people." I dunno.

Emily: Yeah, "Let's kidnap Nynaeve and Elayne," da da da da da. But, uh, we'll get to that.

Sally: Yeah, there's just too many Aes Sedai in these chapters.

Emily: There are too many people who can channel generally in the Wheely TIme, and that's just kind of an ongoing complaint. There's too many people who can channel who we have to keep track of. It is okay to have red shirt people who can channel, Robert Jordan. That's fine.

Sally: Yeah, they don't need to be named.

Emily: Like, even the fact that we are introduced in this chapter not just to Joline and Teslyn but to two additional rebel Aes Sedai who just were at the Ebou Dari palace before Nynaeve and Elayne's coterie got here -- wack.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, so this chapter opens with Mat going to, uh, the Tarasin Palace. Mat, like a good team member, friend, is trying to warn Nynaeve and Elayne of the fact that there are Darkfriends in the city and that they are associating with a very powerful man, uh, Carridin --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who is referred to as the Whitecloak ambassador to Tylin's court, which is interesting because --

Sally: (laugh) The Ku Klux Klan ambassador to the White House.

Emily: I mean, exactly. Usually the president, you mean.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, okay, good point. You got me there.

Emily: (laugh) The -- the White House is almost entirely made of ambassadors from the Ku Klux Klan, so bad example. This is a little weird because in most of the cities, uh, and power structures that we've seen, there hasn't been anything as formal as embassies.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: You would think that if -- that in this continent that has a wide spread of, um, uh, interconnected countries that are all engaged, we can assume, in both trade and, uh, warfare in some instances, that there would be --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Official embassies and ambassadors, but that is not something Robert Jordan has, uh, engaged in heretofore. Um, possibly because he's not interested in it. I dunno. Possibly because it's a huge world and he doesn't have time to get into it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I do think a different series that handled conflicts differently would talk more about ambassadors and, uh, diplomacy generally.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, but this is a very war-focused ...

Sally: Yeah, it's so interesting, now that you point that out, that there's no -- like, ambassador is not an official thing, like, the way it has been for centuries, in this world, anyway.

Emily: Yeah, like, you would think, at least, that when Elayne gets into power, she'd have to be dealing with ambassadors from Tear and --

Sally: Yeah, ambassadors from different countries. Yeah.

Emily: Cairhien and the Borderlands or whatever, but that's not necessarily something that happens.

Sally: Yeah, it's like, people who are, quote unquote, ambassadors are just always sort of staying at the palace --

Emily: Yeah, just, like, hanging out? And they --

Sally: With any given ruler, just sort of there.

Emily: Yeah, and they just sort of come and go as they place. It's not, like, an assignment --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know?

Sally: Hmm. I'm very interested by that.

Emily: I don't know. A lot of my favorite fantasy series -- I probably am bringing it up because, uh, there are ambassador characters, and that is a major, uh -- uh, facet of the world-building.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: When it comes to inter -- international relations.

Sally: Yeah. You're so right, though, bestie, there are no international relations in Wheely Time. It is just warfare and, um, bigotry. So.

Emily: And conquest.

Sally: And conquest. Yes, why would you have an ambassador from a country you are going to colonize and conquest? Conquer.

Emily: Yeah, it's just particularly interesting because here we're seeing, oh, here's an ambassador -- here are multiple ambassador characters, you know, the Aes Sedai themselves are --

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Kind of meant to be ambassador characters, hanging out at, uh, the Tarasin Palace with Tylin when it is well-known that there is no actual, like, um, country-wide coalescence --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Within, uh -- what's this --?

Sally: Altara.

Emily: Altara. (laugh) What's this country called? Altara. You know? So, like, what's the point of having an ambassador there, almost?

Sally: Yeah, I also find it deeply weird and interesting that in Ebou Dar they keep saying that, like, Tylin's power only extends two or three days' ride outside the city.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: It's just like, this is a queen who barely controls anything.

Emily: Yeah, I wonder if it's just trying to set up kind of the, like -- uh, not futility, because the Seanchan conquests are always very effective, but the idea that when the Seanchan take over Altara -- I mean, Ebou Dar -- they are not taking over Altara.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which sort of lends itself to these long, sweeping plots, mostly involving Mat, for the books after the Seanchan invasion, where it's like, there's guerilla warfare still happening in Altara.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The country doesn't get taken over just because the queen surrendered, more or less.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, anyway, back to the original point, which is that Mat is like, "I've gotta go tell Nynaeve and Elayne." He also has some other purposes; he wants to talk to Nynaeve and Elayne, generally, and be like, "Could you please -- could we please, you know, come up with a game plan?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Could we actually work together? Can you not go haring off into dangerous situations without bodyguards?" Which, we've already said, we're Team Mat on this. It's not particularly condescending to ask, uh, other people if they need bodyguards --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: When they're going into very dangerous neighborhoods. Um. Whatever. Mat has this pretty comedic sequence where he trots up to, you know, one of the ornamental guards in front of the Palace and is like, "I need to give this message to Nynaeve and Elayne Sedai." He's very formal.

Sally: Yeah, it's very cute.

Emily: He's just like, "I am going to be as direct as possible, get in and out." The guard obviously doesn't know what to make of him but brings him in, finds someone else to hand him off to, and Mat then suffers being handed off between servants like on seven different occasions.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: And he finally is like, "What the fuck?"

Sally: Yeah. "Can I please get a waffle?" (laugh)

Emily: "Can I PLEASE get a waffle?" (laugh) It's hard to say why this happens.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I mean, it's comedic, given.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But it's like, do all -- is there -- I don't -- I don't understand it. Usually if something like this is happening -- and I one hundred percent believe it would happen --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That just a bunch of servants are like, "I don't want to deal with this guy," so it's, like --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: This game of handing him off to someone else. But, like, usually that happens if there is just so much bureaucracy in place within a setting that simply no one can be trusted to take responsibility for anything.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? They're always trying to pass it off to someone else.

Sally: Yeah, pass the buck.

Emily: That doesn't necessarily seem to be the case in the Tarasin Palace, which, as we learn later, in our -- in Mat's later experiences, are very much -- like, Tylin is spearheading the efforts of all the servants.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: When Mat is eventually corralled into the Palace and sort of forced into these positions he doesn't want to be in, it is, um, at the -- it is because, it seems like, all the servants have risen up in a combined effort to maneuver him where Tylin wants him to go.

Sally: Yeah, it seems very efficient --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Servantry.

Emily: So that doesn't quite make sense, but it does also make sense that Robert Jordan is already introducing us to the idea that this is a place where Mat does not have allies.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mat usually gets along pretty well with servants and stuff like that, but here, he's just being sort of, like -- he's led into this really confusing situation that seems not to have an endpoint or a purpose to it, and that's sort of indicative of his entire time in the Tarasin Palace. It's just this, like, labyrinth that he fully does not understand what's going on, why things are happening, and, probably more thematically in Robert Jordan's view, it's this, like, reversal of roles. Robert Jordan sets up the assault, uh, of Mat by Tylin to be this outrageous thing because Tylin is coming onto Mat.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: A woman coming onto a man. Obviously we are educated readers who are not writing a fantasy novel in the 1990s; we know that it's rape. Women can rape men. That's what's happening.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But the whole thing is supposed to confuse Mat as much as it does because she's a woman coming onto him.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And so, I dunno, it's just sort of, like, setting up these vibes.

Sally: Yeah, no, that's a really good point. Like, yes, it is a very funny scene. Um -- and I find it all the more funny 'cause in Mat's narration, he remembers everybody's name.

Emily: Yeah. (laugh)

Sally: And it's like, I would not remember that many people's names at that point, but he's like, "This is Maeric, and this is what he said, and this is -Larin"

Emily: "And this is what he looks like." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) And just, like, keeps going. It's very funny, but it's also kind of, um, form mimicking content. You know?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: We just get this, like, iteration of people and he's just, like -- like a Scooby Doo sequence, going all around the palace.

Emily: Back and forth --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah, he has no idea where he is at any given moment.

Sally: Yeah, it's like in a -- in a warren. He has no idea what's going on. Um.

Emily: He has one of his famous lines here about how displays of wealth always make him more comfortable. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Which is -- I'm like -- yeah, he's always -- 'cause he's like -- he says, "Where there's wealth, some of it will usually stick to my fingers." (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, he's like, "If it's a rich place, then I could probably get some of it."

Sally: Fucking idiot.

Emily: "But also, I just sort of like it."

Sally: Yeah. Yes.

Emily: Which is such a fascinating little --

Sally: "I like being --"

Emily: We've talked about Mat, already, as the god of wealth, but.

Sally: Yeah, he's like, "I myself am a disgusting dirty mongrel boy --"



Emily: Dirty rowdy boy Mat Cauthon. (laugh)

Sally: “But -- but I love being around pretty, rich things.”

Emily: Yes. Opulence.

Sally: Opulence. Yeah. Um. But it definitely adds to his confusion and distress and the fact that he is rendered powerless in this place.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um. And we also have the -- his dice are rolling really heavily in his head, which is a really -- one of, I think, the most fascinating parts of Mat’s character, is we have this, like -- like, I hope they do something really cool with it in the show, as, like, a sound.

Emily: Yes, like, an audible thing that, when we’re in Mat’s point of view, we hear --

Sally: Hear dice rolling? Yeah, ‘cause it could -- it makes -- it -- like, I don’t know if -- the phrase “leitmotif” specifically refers to music, so it specifically works in, like, visual media. Like, a leitmotif is a certain sound coming.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So, like, in Lord of the Rings, you have the -- the Fellowship theme that plays when they’re all together at Rivendell, you know, and it’ll play at certain themes to kind of tie -- certain moments to tie the Fellowship together, so I hope they do something really neat with the sound to make it be like, “This is a leitmotif. We know some serious shit is gonna happen with Mat.” Um. But, yeah, his dice are also rolling, so just, like, the whole thing just kind of is both comedic and sets you on edge a little bit, especially when the Scooby Doo sequence ends and he’s in the middle of, like, six different Aes Sedai and they’re physically pulling on him.

Emily: Yeah. Which, we’ve had -- we’ve had mention of the dice rolling before. Like, Mat has referred to that sort of casually in the past, but this is his first real, like -- uh, at all long self-reflection about it, and he talks about how, um -- he has another really great line where he’s like, “I don’t really know what causes the dice to roll or what they are meant to indicate except that it always seems to be that I could die at the end of it --”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “In some spectacular fashion,” he says. So he is understandably, like, leery of them and is particularly noting these ones for being super loud, I guess. So he’s like, “Something big is happening.”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And I actually don’t recall -- do the dice stop?

Sally: The dice do not stop in these two --

Emily: In this section? Okay.

Sally: In these two chapters. Yeah, they're -- they're -- they keep going. Um.

Emily: Okay.

Sally: Which is unfortunate, because this is Mat Cauthon's Terrible, Very Horrible, Extremely No-Good Very Bad Day.

Emily: Mat Cauthon's Terrible, Horrible, No-Good, Very Bad Eleven Days, if the Wikipedia about the length of Crown of Swords is to be believed. And so, yeah, we don't know if these dice rolling is meant to indicate, uh, the eventual stopping of the dice at the end of Mat's points of views in this book -- there's that infamous moment where the building falls on him, the dice stop -- or if that will be a continuation. Something stops, another starts, da da da da da.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But that's going on. Mat finally stops the servant who is escorting him currently and is like, "Could you -- could I please get a waffle? What's it -- what's it gonna take, huh?" And she's like -- starts to say something to him, I guess, uh, when one of the Aes Sedai -- Teslyn, I believe -- sort of says something from behind him.

Sally: Yeah, fucking creep.

Emily: Creep. Mat turns around with a smile on his face -- (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) "Heh."

Emily: "Heh." Forces a smile and is like, "How do you do, ladies?" He's like, "I'm not all that concerned about Aes Sedai, (whisper) except I really am; they're very scary."

Sally: "They're super scary, but I pretend that I'm a brave little toaster." (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) "Mat Cauthon, brave little toaster, with my little fox medallion that protects me from most channeling -- not all, though." Um, he doesn't, I think, immediately recognize these two, but he knows that there are multiple Aes Sedai in the palace who he has not met, so as he's kind of talking to them, he realizes, uh-oh, these are Elaida's two Aes Sedai. We have Teslyn and Joline. Joline is very young -- actually, neither of them is very young in terms of Aes Sedai years. Uh, like dog years. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) How many Aes Sedai years is one human year?

Emily: Um. He's like, "Oh, shit, these are Elaida's Aes Sedai." They are Joline and Teslyn. Uh, this is sort of going into Joline's point of view that we get in the next chapter -- Joline and Teslyn

are both older than Elaida, who herself is, uh, a fairly old Aes Sedai. I mean, she is older than Moiraine. So if we have, like, the ranking of Egg, Elayne, and Nynaeve are the youngest, and then we have, like, Moiraine and Siuan in the generation above them.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Above them, it's Elaida. And then we have fucking Joline and Teslyn.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Joline's like, "Teslyn was one of my teachers in the White Tower, but I was one of Elaida's teachers in the White Tower." It's very confusing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: All these women just are living hundreds of years, it feels like.

Sally: Yeah, it also is just so trippy, also in terms of the hierarchy.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: That they, like -- they keep saying that, like, power is the only thing that indicates hierarchy, except then they start throwing around age like this, and I'm like, what is the truth?

Emily: Yeah. And, like --

Sally: Who is in charge?

Emily: The power hierarchy leads to some interesting, uh -- a -- interesting interaction that Mat doesn't fully understand in a minute here. But Joline appears to be a young-ish woman. She's very pretty. Uh, Teslyn herself is not very pretty. She's very imperious and --

Sally: Mat says it looks like she eats brambles.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: Which is so rude. (laugh)

Emily: She's very mean-looking. It's a very, like, Dickensian old --

Sally: Yeah, Miss Havisham --

Emily: (simultaneously) Miss Havisham description.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is very funny, because Mat will interact with Joline and Teslyn for the foreseeable future. Um, and he sort of ends with a -- uh, a very amiable relationship with Teslyn, which I find interesting.

Sally: Hmm.

Emily: In that she, more than the other Aes Sedai, comes to respect him a little more, and he, then, is able to respect her in turn.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: All Mat is ever asking is for, like, a modicum of respect, and then he'll be a good boy. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (sing-song) R-E-S-P-E-C-T.

Emily: Uh, Joline and Teslyn start badgering him about how they want to drag him back to the White Tower. He's just like, "Uhh," when more Aes Sedai show up. Uh, Vandene or Adeleas, he does not know the difference, which is hilarious, because he's like, "I'm sure it's Vandene."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And then it's Adeleas at the end, and he's like, "Damn it." (Laugh)

Sally: He's like, "They need to wear fucking nametags or, like, little colored hair ribbons."

Emily: "Dang it." Yeah, they need to be color-coded.

Sally: Like little twins.

Emily: Like the Powerpuff Girls or something.

Sally: Ahh! (laugh) Vandene and Adeleas, Powerpuff Girls.

Emily: Yeah, he's like, "These are like the twins in the Shining, for God's sake." But Vandene slash Adeleas --

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Adeleas, as we find out, like, grabs Mat's coat violently and sort of yanks him away, and then Teslyn grabs his coat and yanks him in the other way, so he's literally sort of suspended between these two women, and we can imagine it's a pretty funny visual --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because Mat is taller than most women --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So he's just sort of, "Hello?" (laugh) And he keeps trying to interrupt --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To be like, "Can you please -- can I please get a waffle?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: This is just the "Mat Cauthon: Can I Please Get a Waffle" -- (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. "Please. Please!"

Emily: He's like, "Please. My coat. You're gonna rip my coat."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "I don't actually care about that, but please."

Sally: "Please don't." He's also -- Mat, in these chapters, is pulling -- like, is, like, pulling his charm out to the best of his ability.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, he has some hilarious lines. Like, "There's enough of me to go around."

Emily: (laugh) "There's enough of me to go around, ladies." And they're all like, "Ugh."

Sally: Which pisses them all off and I think is hilarious.

Emily: I know, I would've cracked up.

Sally: I would've been like, "Ha ha, Mat, you're so funny. You can have your coat back." Um. Yeah. And so, like, it is a very -- it is another one of those, like, both funny and also really distressing visuals, because it just adds to this litany of women in particular touching Mat without his consent and handling him in some really inappropriate ways. Like, I understand the situation is pretty dire. Like, if Joline and Teslyn were to take Mat back to the White Tower, like, that would be bad news bears. But, like, Adeleas, there's no reason to, like, grab him?

Emily: I think we're, like, allowed to think of this as a comedic situation because we know nothing comes of it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, it would be very different if, you know, Joline and Teslyn actually did kidnap Mat.

Sally: Yeah. Ooh.

Emily: In the same way, I think, if we're being totally fair, Tylin's forwardness to Mat, we would be able -- in this chapter specifically -- we would be able to write off as funny if nothing more came of it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's still not great behavior, but it is ultimately, you know, kind of funny. Mat's general surprise, the idea that when he turns around, he accidentally touches Tylin's boob --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: 'Cause she's right there, and then he's like, "Ahh!"

Sally: He's like, "I am going to pass away." (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, he's like, "Ahh!" Like a fainting goat --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: About to keel over, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just so shocked by everything going on.

Sally: Yeah, I could find the Tylin scene funny except for when she starts touching his face.

Emily: Oh, yeah, I hate that.

Sally: That is when it becomes -- because, like, yeah, like, I -- I still -- like, still, there's, like, you obviously should not continue to flirt with someone who is obviously physically uncomfortable, the way Mat obviously is. Um, but, like, yeah, there are some, like, funnier moments, where Beslan is like, "You should find yourself a pretty -- a pretty little man for the ball," and she, like, looks at Mat.

Emily: And Mat's like --

Sally: Mat's like, "Again, I will be passing away." (laugh) Um, like, those could be played off as funny, yeah, but they only, um, escalate, and Robert Jordan has a really bad habit of, uh, playing, um, assault off as a joke.

Emily: Oh, yeah.

Sally: He does it not only with Mat but with a lot of other people. Um.

Emily: The Perrin -- Berelain-Perrin situation is meant to be funny.

Sally: Yes. Yes.

Emily: Perrin thinking -- not Perrin thinking; excuse me -- Rand thinking his first time with Min is rape is sort of --

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Supposed to be funny.

Sally: Yeah, it's sort of supposed to be a joke.

Emily: A lot of things that are just, you know ... this is sort of Wheel of Time, subtitle: Rape Jokes, the series --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It sure feels like, sometimes.

Sally: Yeah, no, it really -- it really does. Um. Like, Robert Jordan is walking a really bad line there. Um. But -- not quite to Tylin yet. Yes, like, it can be, um -- the coat scene is still pretty amusing to me because, yeah, Mat does not end up getting kidnapped. He also still is like a little bit in -- like, he has a little bit more agency 'cause he's --

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Not being physically cornered against a desk. He's able to, like, kind of shrug out of his coat and talk and be heard.

Emily: And ultimately, we know, I think, that this is a situation where, if worse came to worse, Mat could fight his way out.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: The sort of latent threat of Tylin, which Mat tells us explicitly, is that he cannot fight back physically.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She's a queen, for one thing, and he is in her country.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As opposed to, like, if he fought back against Aes Sedai who were trying to kidnap him, he has a bunch of other Aes Sedai who would theoretically back him up.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: Um. He's not breaking any laws there.

Sally: Yeah. Yes.

Emily: And also, just, there are a lot of social, um, things in place that make fighting against a woman who cannot channel a lot different than fighting against a woman who can channel.

Sally: Yes. Yes.

Emily: Okay. So there's this comedic back-and-forth Aes Sedai scene, uh, where we're getting the undercurrents of what is going on in the Tarasin Palace between Elaida's two-person embassy and the much larger Salidar group. Uh, the two Aes Sedai we're introduced to here, besides Adeleas, are Merilille, who was sort of in charge. She, again, is older than, I think, both Teslyn and Joline. But, um, she is lower in the Power, so when Teslyn and Joline are sort of aggressive to her, her automatic response is to back down even though -- it's, like, this weird thing. Aes Sedai aren't usually, like, butting heads like this.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Merilille, you know, like, might be the highest in the Power ranking within her specific group --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And so it's like, I'm in charge here, but how do I react against, you know -- is it all -- is it all under the rug? So that's going on. Mat, of course, has no clue about any of it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But they're all just going back and forth, the usual, "You're a traitor," "You're a traitor," da da da da da.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Finally, the servant returns and is like, "Mat? The queen wants to see you." And Mat's like, "Great. Ya love to see it."

Sally: You ever have those days where you're like, "This might as well happen"?

Emily: (simultaneously) "This might as well happen." He's like, "Okay. Great. I can't keep the queen waiting, can I? Ha ha ha."

Sally: "Ha ha."



Emily: And they're like, "Fine." Uh, let him go. Teslyn takes quite a while to let go. And then he leaves, and, like, as he looks over his shoulder, he sees them all go in separate directions, and he's like, "Eugh."

Sally: "Spooky."

Emily: "Spooky." But as soon as they're alone, he says to the servant, like, "Good thinking, thanks for getting me out of that," and she's like, "Oh, no, the queen really does want to see you," and he's like, "Oh."

Sally: "Pourquoi?"

Emily: "Why? Okay. Fine." He is taken to a room where Tylin alone is. Um, she's like, "Hello, Mat Cauthon." He's like, "Hiii, Your Majesty --" Oh. He greets her with a bow and saying, "Majesty, it's," like, "a pleasure to meet you," or whatever, and she's like, "Oh, you speak the Old Tongue." And he's like, "Eugh."

Sally: He's like, "God fucking damnit."

Emily: "Why does this happen?"

Sally: (laugh) "what is wrong with me? Why can't I keep this under wraps?"

Emily: "Why does it do this?" She's like, "Here you go. Here's a writing desk. I know you want to leave a message for Elayne and Nynaeve." He's like, "Thanks." Goes to write his message, which, in his own words, he thinks is very cordial -- is pretty brisk, really, and, you know, isn't very flowery.

Sally: Yeah, like, it's -- it's brisk, a little abrupt. Mat --

Emily: He has bad handwriting.

Sally: Yeah, he has bad handwriting. Mat says, "Oh, this is pleasant enough."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: We, the reader, are like, it could be better, but it's fairly neutral, so you know Nynaeve and Elayne are gonna have a fucking aneurysm over it.

Emily: Yes. "How dare he speak to us in this way?"

Sally: Yeah. Like, he has one line that's just like, "Be sensible."

Emily: Oh, going back to the Aes Sedai confrontation, he has a -- quite a funny line -- not funny, but a sort of sweet line, where the other Aes Sedai mention Nynaeve and Elayne, and Mat sort of automatically defends them.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And in his monologue, is like, “I will not just stand here and hear people talk shit about Nynaeve. I don’t give a fuck about Elayne, but she’s sort of wrapped up in it --”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “So I guess I will defend her too.”

Sally: Yeah. It’s very cute.

Emily: Just Mat’s loyalty, generally, to Nynaeve in particular and Egwene is very sweet.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, but Mat writes this note, seals it. He realizes, “Oh, I actually happen to have a signet ring.” Looks at it for the first time, it’s a little fox apparently scaring two birds.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, later we’ll find out those birds are ravens. So. Ha ha, symbolism. But he’s like, “Cool.” Marks the letter, turns around, uh, Tylin’s right there, and he’s like, “Hewwo?” Spooked. ““Scuse me, sorry, I’ll just be leaving.” She continues to stand very close to him, in such a way that he cannot get past her without physically moving her. This is Tylin’s favorite trick to pull. And she sort of starts monologuing about how he’s *ta’veren* and how she thinks Elayne and Nynaeve are kind of afraid of him, which, you know, is probably accurate, but.

Sally: Yeah, she calls him an “untamed rogue.”

Emily: An untamed rogue.

Sally: And a gambler.

Emily: And a gambler, “and I hear that you’re good with women.” Hint, hint, hint.

Sally: (gagging noise)

Emily: And at some point in the middle of this, she starts touching his face. Like, at one point, outlining his lips.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which, like, touching someone’s cheek -- an older woman touching a younger man’s cheek --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Could be construed as a maternal gesture.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But we immediately veer off of that path when she starts going near his lips. Obviously not great, Mat's sort of having an internal panic attack trying to think his way out of this situation, uh, when abruptly, Tylin backs off, the door opens, and her son Beslan walks in. And Mat's, like, still just sort of standing there, disheveled.

Sally: Yeah. Bent over halfway probably, backwards.

Emily: Yeah, like, "Hello?" Beslan walks in and is like, "Yeah, I just got finished with a duel. I accidentally killed the guy," and Tylin's like, "Meh, shit happens." And Mat's like, "Hello??"

Sally: Like, "This whole family is off the rocker."

Emily: "This whole city, but especially this family --"

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: "Need to calm down."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Beslan is meant to be about Mat's age, which, again, is troubling.

Sally: Yeah!

Emily: Um, he is just sort of this young guy.

Sally: Young dude.

Emily: Young dude. We'll find out more about him, I think, in further chapters.

Sally: Yeah, he sticks around.

Emily: Yeah. But Tylin's like, "Beslan, this is Mat Cauthon. You guys should be friends and go, uh, out, you know, drinking and carousing for Swovan Night," which is, I guess, the holiday that's taking place tonight.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Mat, like, can't really get out of it, so eventually he finds himself roped into plans with Beslan. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Sally: And he's just like, "Okay?"

Sally: "Great. Now I have to go out with this dude."

Emily: "Now I have this f-friend? I don't know what he is, but --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "But his mom's super creepy to me, so I don't want to hang out with him."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But here we are. Um, of course he's terrified that Beslan will find out that his mom is coming onto Mat because Mat, in his patriarchal worldview, is like, "It will be construed as -- as the reversal of that."

Sally: Yeah. "Me coming onto her."

Emily: "Me coming onto her," especially to her son, who is, you know, in the man-sense, overprotective of the women in his life.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Tylin would never do anything wrong, but Mat certainly could.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So that's yet another layer of Mat's stress in this situation. But he leaves and returns to the Wandering Woman, the inn he's staying in. Three of his guys, uh, including Vanin, are, like, sitting around, bandaging one of them up 'cause he got into a duel, and Mat's like, "I'm supposed to not know that they get in duels, as though anyone can take three steps in Ebou Dar without getting in a duel."

Sally: Yeah. Seriously.

Emily: Except Vanin, who everyone's afraid of, and Nalesean, who -- people just avoid?

Sally: Everyone's like, "He's too sexy."

Emily: Yeah, I guess. (laugh)

Sally: "Simply too sexy to duel." (laugh)

Emily: He's like -- Vanin is pleased about it, though.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Nalesean's like, "Duel me! Come on!"

Sally: "Let me fight you!"

Emily: "Come on!"

Sally: I don't know.

Emily: Uh, but Mat's like, "Hey, guys. Guess what?" (laugh) "Darkfriends over by the Whitecloak place. Vanin, can you keep an eye on it?" And Vanin's like, "Yeah, I'll go -- go take care of it, I guess." Uh, he's going up to his room, he passes one of the pretty serving maids, who, I think, in sort of contrast, we are meant to see Mat's interaction with a serving girl who is recipient to his attention. Uh, you know, it's implied that either they have had sex or will have sex in the future.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Mat's into her in that way, and she is, uh --

Sally: Into him.

Emily: Into him.

Sally: I mean, he's very cute. She's very cute.

Emily: But -- he asks her something, I can't remember what ... oh, she says, "Someone stopped in earlier and asked for, like, a meal, and -- to be paid on your account, but Setalle Anan wouldn't give it to him, so he just went away."

Sally: Yeah, he said he was an Illuminator.

Emily: An Illuminator, which ... is unclear.

Sally: Yeah. I was like, what?

Emily: I know, I have no clue who this person was.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Except maybe one of the Darkfriends who are now after Mat?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who knows. Uh, Mat goes upstairs and, in one of the infamous very good Mat action sequences where he's in a hallway --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: (laugh) He has lots of good hallway scenes, like Daredevil. Um, someone jumps out and attacks him, like, is choking him against the wall, and Mat finally gets a knife out and stabs him repeatedly.

Sally: (whisper) Stab stab stab.

Emily: Stab stab stab. Through a door, where he happens to find number two --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Of this two-person assassination team. Not assassination, I should say. The guy -- the first guy had a cudgel, which is not necessarily a --

Sally: Not necessarily a murder-y -- it's not like he came after him with, like, a gun, you know?

Emily: Or a knife?

Sally: Yeah, it's not like he's -- I know guns don't exist, but.

Emily: Yeah, yeah.

Sally: It's not like he was, like, immediately stabbed Mat in the kidneys or something.

Emily: Yeah, like, in --

Sally: Like, he was trying to hit him over the head.

Emily: Yeah. And Mat walks in and sees this second guy bending over an empty chest. And I didn't connect these dots until I looked at the Wikipedia, but it seems -- but apparently the empty chest is where they would put Mat, like unto Rand.

Sally: Oh.

Emily: Um, and it's unclear whether Mat understands that.

Sally: Yeah, I thought they were just trying to steal all his money.

Emily: That is what he tells Setalle Anan --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That they were probably doing, but Mat himself doesn't say, like, "They were definitely just after my money."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, uh, possible kidnapping attempt -- by whom? Not sure. Perhaps any of the Darkfriends who we've just had the displeasure of being with.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We know it wasn't Joline and Teslyn 'cause we just -- we get their point of view after this. Uh, but there's a lot of things going on in Ebou Dar, so.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Someone's out to kidnap Mat. We get introduced to Setalle Anan and her husband, who are both delightful.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mat talks about Setalle Anan -- he's like, "She's really pretty, but, like, I can't think about her that way."

Sally: She's like my mom. She's not like my mom -- but, like -- but, like my mom.

Emily: My mom. Like my mom, you know? You ever have those ladies who you just respect?

Sally: (laugh) And it's like, you should have more of those, Mat, actually. Um.

Emily: Yeah, you should have more, Mat. But I understand that you and Setalle Anan have a cute relationship.

Sally: Yeah, a cute relationship. And her husband is, like, a fishing captain, and he's all, like, buff and scarred.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And Mat's like, "He's pretty scary." (laugh)

Emily: "He's -- I'm terrified of him." (laugh) "I'm kind of terrified of both of them, but."

Sally: Yeah, but they're really cute.

Emily: "Also, if they invited me into a threesome, I would be like, 'Yeah. Sexy.'" (laugh)

Sally: I'd say yes too.

Emily: Mat Cauthon, just rolling through life. He's like, "Sorry I killed these guys, Setalle Anan."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "They were gonna rob me." And she's like, "Ah, that's weird, they came up here and specifically requested this room."

Sally: And Setalle Anan was like, "That doesn't seem unusual."

Emily: Yep.

Sally: She'll learn, though. Everything's weird when Mat's around.

Emily: Yeah, she's like, "Goddamnit, Mat."

Sally: (laugh) "Again? Another? You killed another man in my inn?"

Emily: "Another? Goddamnit, Mat." (laugh) So we leave Mat, standing over two corpses.

Sally: Also his manservant comes up with a fucking frying pan.

Emily: Oh my God, that's actually adorable.

Sally: Yeah, and then tries to hide it. (laugh)

Emily: Nerim comes up and is, like, trying to hide a frying pan, clearly having heard the commotion --

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Come out, probably while Mat was stabbing a guy to death and was like, "Oh my God," grabbed a frying pan, and was like, "I'll help?"

Sally: Yeah, like Rapunzel in Tangled.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And Mat is like, "It's -- it's all good," and Nerim's like, "I wish you wouldn't get blood on your clothes," which is, like -- Mat's like, "He's so fucking mean."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And so morose," but it's like, he's expressing concern for you, Mat.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He doesn't want you to bleed. Yeah.

Sally: In his weird way. Yeah, he's like, "Please stop bleeding on your clothes."

Emily: Again, the, uh, bizarre relationships between our main characters and their servants continues.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, but yeah, we leave Mat there, go over to Joline and Teslyn, who are having this debate. Teslyn wants to just leave the palace, I think? She says -- her argument is, "Listen, we're



in the doghouse with Elaida, but we're never going to do what we were sent here to do," which is -- I don't know what. I've already forgotten.

Sally: I mean, the best I've put together, like, between this and the few books after, is Elaida sent them away just to make a point.

Emily: Ah.

Sally: She's like, "I am making a point that, um --" 'Cause they were both Sitters of their respective Ajahs, Red and Green?

Emily: Green, yeah.

Sally: Um, and she's trying to be like, "If I can send the Sitters away on a really shitty, dead-end meaningless assignment, I would do it to anybody," so, like, I don't think Teslyn and Joline really have, like, an end goal, which is part of why they are so frustrated and upset, I believe."

Emily: Yeah, they're kind of, I think, just hoping, "Eventually Elaida's gonna come around.

Sally: Yeah, "Eventually she'll call us back to the White Tower and we'll have done our due diligence, and it, like, won't be a big deal anymore."

Emily: But Teslyn's point here is, "That's never gonna happen, so we might as well pack up Nynaeve, Elayne, and Mat Cauthon --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Three people she desperately wants in her power --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Bring them to her and, great, we'll be, you know, number one Elaida's boys."

Sally: Um, yeah, so they have a little argument. Um.

Emily: Joline's response is, "Well, we should just make Elaida wait."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "Two can play at that game."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "Elaida's just a shitty leader," I think, is the undercurrent here.

Sally: Yeah, Joline is like, "I will -- I'm content to wait until Elaida is deposed, which I know she will be." (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. 'Cause she fuckin' sucks.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Um.

Emily: "So let's just wait it out."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Oh! I forgot -- here's a fucking other weird mystery, unsolved. Mat finds a piece of paper in his coat.

Sally: Oh, yeah!

Emily: That is like, "Elayne and Nynaeve are in danger. You need to remind them of that."

Sally: Yeah. Um --

Emily: And Mat's like, "Who the hell --?"

Sally: I think it's revealed at the beginning of book nine, and I can't remember which one of the Aes Sedai it is, 'cause she gets captured as an a'dam.

Emily: Is it Teslyn, then?

Sally: I think -- it must be Teslyn, yeah.

Emily: Teslyn's the one that gets captured.

Sally: Not as an a'dam, as a damane. The a'dam is the collar.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And she's -- I don't even remember why she says she did it. I'm sorry. I'm really --

Emily: Yeah, unclear.

Sally: Really bad at plot points.

Emily: No, I'm -- I'm amazed that you remember that, because I went on Wikipedia, like, "Who'd this come from?"

Sally: Actually --

Emily: And it basically was like -- ("I don't know" noise)

Sally: Yeah, he -- 'cause Joline is the one in the basement, right?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: She tries to claim it was her.

Emily: Ah.

Sally: And Mat's like -- Mat gives her a test, and she fails, so she knows it's -- he knows it's Teslyn. So now he's like, "Fuck, I have to free Teslyn."

Emily: Oh, right.

Sally: "From the Seanchan."

Emily: "'Cause Teslyn tried to warn me."

Sally: Yeah. "Teslyn tried to warn me, so now I feel like --"

Emily: Obligated.

Sally: "I have an obligation to her," because Mat is a boy powered by obligation and gambling.

Emily: Boy, he sure is. Just slide in those twin batteries.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Turn him on. Um.

Sally: Like a wind-up toy.

Emily: Yeah, not sure why Teslyn does this, and Mat himself is like, "It can't have been Teslyn and Joline --"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They were the only two who really had the opportunity, what with all the coat-grabbing, but I don't know why they would.

Sally: Yeah, I really can't remember. She gives some -- some pretty thin excuse.

Emily: Especially because now we are hearing that Teslyn is arguing in favor of kidnapping Nynaeve and Elayne --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Mat, so it's possible she's just having that argument with Joline to have the argument so that Joline has a reason to come up -- have something to argue with? I don't know. I don't understand, and I don't know if I need to understand.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's sort of like the Aes Sedai gets stabbed in Caemlyn, leads directly to Dumai's Wells path.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Sometimes Robert Jordan just didn't know how to lead one plot point to another, so he manufactures it.

Sally: Yeah, you got the coat pull to the escape to the circus plotline.

Emily: Yep.

Sally: With half of Ebou Dar, it feels like. (laugh)

Emily: Sure does.

Sally: Um.

Emily: Anyway, we then switch over to these two Black Ajah women, who are in Ebou Dar on Moghedien's orders, looking for the same cache of magic items that Sammael has sent Carridin and the others to look for.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So I don't know how fucking all the Forsaken know about this thing, but they're after it. Perhaps because they too did the dream --

Sally: Dream thing.

Emily: Dream need thing.

Sally: Dream need.

Emily: But the two -- Falion and Is-Ispan -- I dunno.

Sally: It bothers me that her name is Falion. 'Cause I thought it was Faolain for, like --

Emily: Oh, yeah.

Sally: Half of the chapter because I'm a dyslexic idiot.

Emily: Because it looks exact -- no it looks exactly the same.

Sally: Yeah. And I was like, "What is happening? Why is Faolain torturing people?"

Emily: "What's she doing here?"

Sally: Different woman completely.

Emily: Falion, I guess, uh, is, like -- apparently -- apparently their methods have been to torture a bunch of the Ebou Dari Wise Women --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which we will have cause to meet, uh, later. And Falion tells us here that, uh, the Wise Women, you know, are connected to women who have either been put out of the Tower or who have some connection to channeling.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So we've already kind of got that brick in place for the coming plot. Uh, but Falion's argument is, "This woman we just questioned left the White Tower and tried to steal some ter'angreal," which apparently thirty-three percent of women who leave the White Tower do, which is just kind of funny.

Sally: Bruh, I would too.

Emily: Uh, but Falion's like, "If this kleptomaniac didn't know where the fucking magic storehouse is, then no one will."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "So our -- what we have to do is forget about that assignment and go on to the next assignment, which is, uh, we're gonna kidnap Elayne, Nynaeve, and Mat and bring them to Moghedien."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) So we have -- what is happening is there are a lot of, like, middle-tier baddies here --

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who are like, "Top-tier doesn't know jack shit about what they're talking about. We're gonna refocus on Elayne, Nynaeve, and Mat."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And somehow threaten them.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which, great, Ebou Dar, as though it's not enough of a cesspit of threats already.

Sally: Seriously. Like, you didn't even need to have bad people here. Just have the dueling problem. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. Pfft. Serious -- just have the dueling problem. It's huge. It's massive. Uh. But she sets about convincing the other woman that this is the correct route, especially because they haven't heard from Moghedien for a while.

Sally: Uh, because she's been enslaved.

Emily: Because she's been enslaved. But now she's out, baby, so who knows.

Sally: Beginning of next book.

Emily: Our very last point of view is, uh, from an unnamed man who is watching the same, like, Whitecloak mansion. Wikipedia informs me that this is, in fact, Noal.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, Jain Farstrider. Uh, that's those two chapters.

Sally: That's those two chapters.

Emily: But, uh, thanks for listening. Thank you to Glynn MacKenzie for our theme song, to our patrons on Patreon, and all our followers on social media. I believe we've hit a few mile marks in the last couple weeks. Eight hundred followers on Insta?

Sally: Eight hundred followers on Instagram, which is really exciting.

Emily: And a thousand, more or less, on Twitter.

Sally: Yeah! Thanks.

Emily: Also great. Uh --

Sally: For listening to our dumb stuff.

Emily: Yeah. Next week, you can not look forward to being back with, uh, Rand, as we are introduced to Cadsuane, a controversial figure --

Sally: Ugh.

Emily: But you can look forward, uh, unless there is some break in plans, to our good friend of the podcast, OG listener, and our -- our -- (laugh) I don't know how to define her in this way. Uh, she's, like, the one who got me into Wheel of Time.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: She's like our Wheel of Time daddy, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I'm gonna tell her that.

Sally: 'Kay, yeah, well, welcome Wheel of Time daddy, Cambria.

Emily: Cambria, uh, is going to be joining us. She's in town, and so we're gonna have her on to guest.

Sally: Yeah, in the sort of tracing things back, in the way of Aes Sedai being murdered in an alley, I read Wheel of Time -- we started this podcast 'cause I was reading Wheel of Time to talk to Emily about Wheel of Time. She started reading Wheel of Time because Cambria read Wheel of Time, so there you go. Ipso facto, lorem ipsum, Cambria's the reason EHR exists. (laugh)

Emily: Wheel of Time daddy.

Sally: Yeah. So, it'll be fun. She's lovely and delightful. Um, and I can't wait to have her opinions and thoughts on everything.

Emily: Yep.

Sally: Sorry she has to talk about Cadsuane. I wish we could give her more fun chapters.

Emily: No, I need to -- I need to text her the reading assignment.

Sally: Um.

Emily: Alright, DoorDash order is approaching. Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: I don't.

Emily: That's totally fine. It's a long --

Sally: I'm sorry.

Emily: Long fucking episode.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: DoorDash order is approaching!

Sally: Gotta go eat Chinese food.

Emily: See y'all later!

Sally: Bye! Bye bye bye.