



## Episode 181: Top Ten Heroic Mat Moments

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

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

[Theme song by Glynn Mackenzie plays]

EMILY: Okay. Okay. This is – This is Everybody Hates Rand. It's your friendly neighborhood Wheel – Wheely Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: And I am Sally Goodger.

EMILY: Um, so *Crown of Swords*. We've sort of reached...peak sexiness.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: When Mat catches the dagger out of the air.

SALLY: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Mm-hm.

EMILY: That moment's real horny for me, personally.

SALLY: It's a good moment. Um, we leave Rand, um –

BOTH: Convalescing.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: After his second Fisher King wound. Um, so we leave Cairhien, and we bounce back to Ebou Dar, where Mat is having yet another no good, very bad, horrible day.

EMILY: Yeah! It's the next – it's, like, the day after. The day after the last time we saw Mat. It's getting more and more infuriating to me, because when we started this – when we started this season I mean, we were like, "This cannot take place in eleven days!"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And then all evidence is to the contrary. It apparently does take place in eleven days. And I'm like, still it doesn't feel like it.

SALLY: I know. It really doesn't. Like, Mat – I think it's just the sheer number or volume of things that happen to him in these chapters, that I'm like...how?

EMILY: Yeah, the sheer volume which is, like, not a lot for a typical fantasy character, but is a lot for a *Wheel of Time* character.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: Especially in *Lord of Chaos*, you know. Things were happening like once every two weeks, you know, to everyone.

SALLY: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

EMILY: But with Mat it's just like thing after thing after thing. He keeps getting attacked by either Tylin or random bands of vagrants.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] Who are actually Darkfriends. He's at the horse races, he's at the inn. He's in alleys getting attacked. He's drinking with Birgitte. There's, like, a lot of stuff going on with him.

SALLY: Yeah, so it's very strange. Very, very strange. But he, uh, we sort of pick up and the – the gang is going off to the Rahad –

BOTH: To get the Bowl of the Winds.

SALLY: So Mat comes downstairs, all the coaches are arranged, Elayne is talking to the Knitting Circle ladies.

EMILY: Yeah, there's a few members of the Kin, who – spoiler alert – a few of them die later and Mat, like, like sort of says things about them as though he is familiar with them and not as though he has just met them the day prior.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, he shows more of an emotional reaction to, um, the Kin – members of the Kin dying, than, like, half a dozen of his actual soldiers.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Not – discounting Nalesean, who he is probably the most upset about, obviously.

SALLY: Yeah, Emily, you *have* to be more upset about women dying than men dying. That's the law.

EMILY: Yeah, I'm just saying it's *annoying*.

SALLY: It's extremely stupid. Um, like, you can be upset about anybody dying, because it's upsetting, but, like, yeah Mat feels – I just, whatever – you should – it is okay to feel a bigger feeling about someone you know dying than someone you met this morning dying. That's how human emotion works [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah, I just think it's annoying, because they're like – especially annoying, amongst all the other reasons it's annoying, because it's, like, just part of this particular militant type of manhood that is in Robert Jordan's works, where it's like okay well if you're a soldier boy than death is just part of the, the inevitable experience or whatever. So Mat is just like, "Oh, yeah, they're soldiers so this is more or less what they signed up for. And I'm like, "No one signed up to face a *gholam*!"

SALLY: Yeah, no one signed up to have their –

EMILY: Robert Jordan's creepy vampire monster.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, you're allowed to be, like, "Hey, what the fuck? My guys are just supposed to be, like, bodyguarding you in a normal, if dangerous, city, not facing supernatural creatures and Moghedien, who you guys didn't tell me about and would not have told me about."

SALLY: Yeah, like, this scene, hearing you put it all together, Mat should be angry at Elayne and Nynaeve.

EMILY: Mat should be three hundred percent more angry at Elayne and Nynaeve than he is and he is already sort of operating on a baseline level of anger toward them. And I'm, like, if he was, like, raging than it would be totally acceptable, because they are being so insane to him.

SALLY: Yeah, and it's also just, like, if they had brought Mat into the fold a week and a half ago, two weeks ago, a month ago. However long they've been in Ebou Dar, uh, perhaps the Darkfriends wouldn't have caught up with them and killed all their people, while they were sitting around, titties in hand, complaining that no one takes them seriously. Like, it's just – it's just, like, one – their incompetence and their immaturity has fallen on a bunch of Mat's men dying. And the Kin dying. But we don't see any of the Aes Sedai dying. They don't have to accept the consequences.

EMILY: Yeah, it's also particularly annoying – I keep just being like, "It's also annoying because duh duh duh duh duh." This is just gonna be annoying. But, um, I really did not like how for some reason, probably like character economics, Robert Jordan doesn't like to give us too many characters that we know all in the same group. He doesn't like them all to be in the same room for some reason.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: As though we might start to think, "Hey, it's weird that our ensemble all hates each other." Um, but, like, Mat comes up to Elayne and is like, "Where are Thom and Juilin and Aviendha and Birgitte?" And she's like, "Oh, they're all watching Carridin's house." And I'm like, "All fucking four of them?"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Who –

SALLY: You sent all of your good fighters away?

EMILY: You need four people for a stakeout? Aviendha is a very powerful channeler, Birgitte is your one, you know, using like RPG terms, long range fighter who's not magic based. Thom, I guess, is too since he throws knives. Yeah, four of your best fighters who are also way more fully cognizant of the danger of what's about to happen than anyone else. Whatever.

SALLY: Yeah, it's like why would you send away – why would you send them away? I would want Birgitte and Aviendha with me if I went into the Rahad.

EMILY: Yeah. Just period.

SALLY: Like, I would want Birgitte and Aviendha with me doing anything, because they're both really competent. But Robert's like we can't have too many comp – we can't have too many competent women on screen.

EMILY: We also have to nerf our competent women by knocking Elayne unconscious and having Nynaeve shielded for the better half of this fight.

SALLY: Yeah, I'll – Nynaeve is also acting like a full fucking dumbass this entire chapter. Which, this is – this happens after Nynaeve gets married. This is another thing that nerfs her character, is that she is all always acting like an idiot when Lan is around. She's always obsessed with where he is, she's also always trying to follow him. Like, in *Path of Daggers* she just runs off into the forest after him while they're all, like, fleeing from the Seanchan invasion.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And in this chapter she's like – gets embarrassed because she overhears that she was talking to Elayne about their wedding night.

EMILY: Which, oh my god, it's totally normal to talk about the wedding specifically. What Nynaeve is relating to Elayne, I believe, which is for some reason not related to us in detail until maybe we get a Nynaeve point of view in the next book or two. But, for whatever reason, the Sea Folk wedding ceremony, the idea is that they have structured into the wedding ceremony power dynamics. Of course, because it's Robert Jordan and he's obsessed with power dynamics, especially between married people.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, but the idea is that the person who has the most power in the public gets to wield that power in public, but then the other person gets the power in private.

SALLY: Mm-hmm

EMILY: The idea being that you won't be too mean to your partner in public, because they might get back at you in private. Which is fully a...an insane way to structure a relationship.

SALLY: Yeah, like, how – that doesn't work.

EMILY: And we're just told this as though Nynaeve and Lan, because they happened to get married by the Sea Folk, are just, like, bound by those rules. They are not Sea Folk.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: You are not obligated to follow the cultural dynamics of whoever, like, said the magic words to marry you.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: That's – what? [laughs]

SALLY: I know. It feels like just one way for Robert Jordan to be like, “Yes, Nynaeve is very powerful and very important politically, but don’t worry, Lan is in charge in the bedroom,” [laughs].

EMILY: Robert, I assure you, I would have assumed that anyway based on everything you have ever written about what you think women are like and what you think men are like.

SALLY: I know!

EMILY: Never in my life would I have been like, “Wow, I bet Nynaeve is, like, a dom in the bedroom.”

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: “And Lan is like her happy and delighted sub.” Like [stuttering] in what universe, Robert Jordan, would I believe that.

SALLY: Yeah, like –

EMILY: I mean, a better one, obviously. But I don’t believe in you!

SALLY: But I don’t believe in you –

EMILY: All you do is disappoint me!

SALLY: Yeah. So, it’s this strange thing that’s been written in for what reason I don’t know.

EMILY: And if I were Nynaeve of course I would tell my friends that.

SALLY: You’d be like, “Listen to this shit.”

EMILY: You’d be like, “What the fuck?” And of course she would probably be like, “Our wedding night was wonderful. It was great having sex for my first time with this person.”

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Duh duh duh duh duh. And the way Nynaeve reacts when Lan overhears a very normal snippet of that – it’s not like Elayne comes out of the carriage and is like, “Well, you said Lan’s dick was this long.” Which I would be like, “Hello, please don’t talk about my body to your friends.” But, eh, just in general terms you said it was great and Nynaeve reacts like, “Oh my god. He’s going to spank me in the bedroom or something erotically.” [screams, laughing] This makes me insane!

SALLY: I know. It’s so stupid. So then this whole chapter, Nynaeve, our most powerful channeler in this group, is completely distracted being like, “I need to make sure Lan isn’t mad at me” [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah. The reason she's shielded by the two Black Ajah ladies – they are able to, like, sneak up on them – is because she's busy having this conversation with Lan. So, it's, like, how can a set of chapters be both this infuriating and this sexy? Because everything Mat does in these chapters is very –

SALLY: Yeah, Mat's great in these chapters! He's at peak Mat.

EMILY: He's peak Mat, peak delightful.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Also going through it, which, as much as I do not like the situation I do appreciate, like – I don't appreciate the situation, but I do appreciate, I can appreciate the way Mat's trauma is being rendered.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: In these very true to Mat ways, which, as we've already talked about is complicated because does Robert Jordan even really view this as a trauma. It's hard to say, but he has written Mat to be a very traumatized character in these two chapters.

SALLY: Yeah, well it starts and he's in a textbook case of hypervigilance. He's, like, walking down the halls of the palace and he, like, cannot relax.

EMILY: Well, yeah, because he talks about how the following – the night previously he, like, came home to the palace and was, like, assaulted by a group of women who dragged him to Tylin. And unclo – like took his clothes off.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which is just so many levels of wrong that...we'll just leave that there. But, um.

SALLY: Yeah, it's just, like, I think and un – like an under talked about part of this is the way that the entire Tarasin Palace is complicit in Mat's sexual abuse – in, yeah.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: In abusing Mat. They're all just like, "We'll starve him. We'll take him to Tylin. We'll do all this. Like, we don't," – no thought of anybody, a single servant seems to be thinking about how Mat feels in the situation.

EMILY: Yeah, they're all just appendages of Tylin, which, on the one hand is a really good way of, um, uh...sort of making clear to us how Tylin's power is so complete.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And how it is a really terrifying, um, like prospect versus Mat who is a single person.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Mat's a single person versus.

SALLY: This whole institution.

EMILY: This whole hundreds of people, yeah. So while that's good it is, again, just rendered...uh it, it could be – this whole situation, if Robert Jordan was coming at it with the right attitude would be, there are so many aspects of it that are interesting and well-written, but then, because there's an edge of Robert Jordan thinking it's funny, the characters thinking it's funny.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It's like okay. A lot of the bite is taken out of it, I guess.

SALLY: Yeah. I'm gonna not get this right, I'm gonna bastardize something that you said, but when we were talking about *Ender's Game* on We Don't Watch Outlander you said something like, "Orson Scott Card [laughs] unintentionally wrote a really good book about child abuse."

EMILY: Oh yeah.

SALLY: And ro – but, like, it doesn't land because there's like –

EMILY: That's not what he thought the book he was writing was.

SALLY: That's not what he thought the book was about. So, there's – there are scenes that completely, again, take the bite out of all this really interesting depictions of child abuse that provoke a lot of thought. But then there'll be parts where it's like, "We had to abuse children to the save universe," or whatever that, like, take the bite out of it. So Robert Jordan wrote a really good several books, a really good arc, about sexual abuse and, like, the abuse of power, but that's not what he thought he was writing about.

EMILY: Robert Jordan thinks he's writing a ha-ha funny rom com about an older woman and a younger man and their little comedy of errors.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: And it's like okay that's not what you did, though.

SALLY: Yeah, so it just goes back to that cognitive dissonance [laughs].

EMILY: [quietly] Bleh.



SALLY: So –

EMILY: So Mat is hypervigilant, stressed out, on – very emotionally frayed.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: He refers multiple times to how he’s on the edge of hysterical laughter or hysterical –

BOTH: Crying.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, but he comes down to this courtyard. He sees Elayne talking to the Kin. They are talking about how the Aes Sedai are not accompanying them. Again –

SALLY: *Why?*

EMILY: Why are the Aes Sedai not accompanying them? Um, and also about how the Aes Sedai do not believe that the Kin say – that the Kin are as old as they say they are. Reanne is, what, four hundred something?

SALLY: Yeah. I wouldn’t believe it, either [laughs].

EMILY: I mean, I wouldn’t believe it either, but also the way Robert Jordan has always written the Aes Sedai, I kind of always thought they were multiple hundreds of years old. I would have thought Cadsuane was multiple hundreds of years old.

SALLY: Oh! Yeah. Yeah! Uh, no that’s a good point. I think, I think maybe the issue is that Reanne is older than Cadsuane and Cadsuane is supposed to be our oldest Aes Sedai. So they’re like, “You simply can’t be older than [laughs] Cadsuane. That’s absurd.”

EMILY: Yeah, it’s very weird ages stuff.

SALLY: Yeah. Um.

EMILY: But Mat comes up to Elayne and is like, “Hey, where – where – can we leave? Can we get this show on the road? Where’s Nynaeve? Where’s everyone?”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And she’s again like, “Okay, well half of our normal party is not coming with us. And Nynaeve will just be down whenever she’s down.” And Mat’s like, “Okay.” A servant comes up and gives Mat what is essentially, like, a fruit basket.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And is like, “This is from the queen duh duh duh.” And Mat, like, feels humiliated even though, uh, in his mind none of the witnesses beside the servant herself know what’s going on. But he’s just like, “Oh my gosh. This is so humiliating.” Just, like, rushes away. Um, to sort of join his guys, which is when Nynaeve and Lan come down, I believe.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Mat is, of course, shocked to see Lan.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Because the last time he saw him was in Cairhien after Moiraine died and is like, “Oh. Hello?”

SALLY: “Hi? You’re still alive?”

EMILY: What the hell’s going on? But they get going and, for some reason, split by genders, of course. So, Mat’s in a carriage with Lan, Nalesean, and Beslan, who is also for some reason going. Like, why do we have Beslan, but not, like, Aviendha and Birgitte.

SALLY: Right? Like what the fuck?

EMILY: It’s absurd. Um, the composition of this group.

SALLY: Can we just replace Beslan with Birgitte. She can be in the bro – the bro carriage.

EMILY: I would love if –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Brigitte, Lan, Mat, and Nalesean had a – [laughing].

SALLY: Just hanging.

EMILY: Had a hangout moment together. Um, what was I gonna say? Oh, the, like, central – the reason that we are given for these various characters and the Aes Sedai staying behind is that, for some reason, no one thinks this is going to be any sort of dramatic or violent thing.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Mat has insisted from the start that if you’re going into the Rahad, it’s a very dangerous neighborhood and therefore you should bring the bodyguards, which is why as many people as are going, are going. Elayne and Nynaeve, though, have the crucial piece of information that Moghedien is escaped and is after them, and Nynaeve almost got killed yesterday. Two of Mat’s soldiers did get killed.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So that sort of overarching excuse is just, like, rendered immediately useless. If you were Nynaeve and Elayne and you have brains in your head, but you don't, because you're Robert Jordan writing these women and women don't brains, they just have pussies, or something.

SALLY: Women don't have brains, they have babies.

EMILY: They have wombs that – [laughs].

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Embroider that on a pillow. Women don't have brains, they have babies. Hashtag feminism [laughs]. Hashtag love wins.

SALLY: [laughing] Stop! I'm gonna ban you from love wins. It's become the new Muppet walk in this household.

EMILY: [laughs] Anyway, um, so in this carriage of bros.

SALLY: Of dudes.

EMILY: [laughs] It says, "after Mat made the introductions," which we don't get to see.

SALLY: Could you imagine?

EMILY: Of Mat being like, "This is Lan. He's..."

SALLY: "For some reason he married Nynaeve."

EMILY: Yeah. Lan's like, "Well, I married Nynaeve last night and duh duh duh duh duh." And everyone's like, "Congratulations." And Mat's like, "Congratulations, I guess. Whatever makes you happy."

SALLY: Yeah, he's like, "Couldn't be me. But happy for you, I guess."

EMILY: "Yeah. Okay." He's just like, "Whatever." And Lan turns to Mat and says, um, "Hey, Nynaeve doesn't want to tell you this, but two of your guys are dead because Moghedien attacked them." And Mat's like, "Oh, okay."

SALLY: This is reason number one that Mat should have gone absolutely –

EMILY: Mat should have been, at that point, like, "Pull over," to the carriage.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: [laughs] And got out and stormed up to their carriage and been like, “Hello? What the hell?”

SALLY: What the hell is wrong with you? He should have flipped their carriage over.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: So they all landed in the dirt.

EMILY: Gone on a Hulk rage or something.

SALLY: Yeah. Like what is *wrong* with them that they would not tell Mat that two of his guys died.

EMILY: And one of the Forsaken is after them.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, I don’t know why Robert Jordan’s arc with Moghedien and these two girls has been like, “Okay, they meet them. It’s very scary. Nynaeve narrowly defeats Moghedien and then is terrified of her for quite a while afterward. Then they capture Moghedien, do all sorts of humiliating things to her, and then when she’s out of captivity, they’re just like no big deal.” I guess, because they’ve handled her before. And it’s like, you got so extremely lucky, not to, like, downplay that accomplishment, but every time you fight someone who’s very powerful and much more knowledgeable than you, that’s a huge risk.

SALLY: Yeah, like, Nynaeve has definitely done some cool stuff in regards to fighting Moghedien, but luck always plays a part in fights.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Like, like...[laughs].

EMILY: You’re not *ta’veren*, as much as you should be.

SALLY: Yeah, and also if you beat someone once why would you risk needing to beat them again? You know? Like, you should just...

EMILY: A boss fight is still a boss.

SALLY: Yeah! Like.

EMILY: They’re still whatever level they were before no matter what you’ve done to them.

SALLY: Yeah. It should make you freaked out every time you fight anybody, because you could die.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: That – what? You idiots! They just think they’re invincible.

EMILY: But they finally, like, pull up to the harbor. Mat gets out and goes to talk to Elayne and Nynaeve, obviously. This is when Lan overhears Nynaeve talking and is like, “I don’t give a shit.” To – and we should probably just take his word for that, that he actually does not give a shit.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: What Nynaeve says to her friends. Um, but Mat’s like, “Can I talk to you?” And Elayne is like, “[scoffs] Yeah. I wanna talk to you. They told me what your dumb fruit basket means,” and starts yelling at him about how he’s forcing himself on Tylin. He, at that point, gets super stressed and humiliated and, like, drags her away. And is like, “You’ve got it backwards. That’s not what’s happening.” Um, says that he’s being forced into a sexual relationship by Tylin and Elayne goes, “Oh. Well, that’s pretty bad,” and is, like, restraining laughter.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, top ten made me an anime villain moments. I’m gonna fucking [laughing] murder her.

SALLY: Yeah, she’s really, really, really heinous in that moment.

EMILY: But she’s just like, “Okay, great. Fine.” Like doesn’t even apologize.

SALLY: No.

EMILY: For making that assumption.

SALLY: No, she doesn’t. She basically feeds him, like...platitudes about like ‘well maybe you shouldn’t smile so much’ and like dumb shit like that.

EMILY: Oh yeah. She’s like, “Oh, that’s so funny that you’re the queen’s pretty.” That’s what they call –

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Consorts.

SALLY: And as she’s walking away Mat hears her muttering something about him basically getting a taste of his own medicine.

EMILY: Which, again, is patently untrue!

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: UGH. Anyway, Mat –

SALLY: So that's moment number two where he should have – maybe number two and three. First the assumption and then the laughter.

EMILY: Mat [laughs]. This is like top heroic Mat moments, because if I were Mat... There are so many setups in fantasy books where, like, a narrator will tell you, "Wow, I really wanted to yell or I really wanted to walk away or I really didn't want to do this." And this setup is such that if I were Mat, I genuinely would have walked away at this point.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: I would have been like, "Fucking enough. If these girls get killed?"

SALLY: They get killed.

EMILY: "They get killed. They have done absolutely nothing to make themselves safer, to allow me to help make themselves safe. They're... total dicks to me, to all my men. What the fuck ever, I'm out."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Like, I consider myself an okay person and I would have walked away.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And I think most people would.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: And it doesn't even enter Mat's head.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Mat's just like, "Okay. Another day, another humiliation, another degradation." Comes up to Elayne, takes off his little fox medallion and is like, "Here. I know Moghedien after you and either you or Nynaeve should wear this. So that you don't get murdered!"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And that, for Elayne, is like, “Oh.” Him presenting her of his own free will with something she really wanted is, for some reason, enough of a character assessment for her that – not everything else Mat has done for you. [sighs] But she’s like, “Oh, wow. This is really impressive. Sorry – ” I don’t even know if she says sorry, but she does say she will make sure Nynaeve knows what is actually going on and she offers to talk to Tylin and try and resolve the problem. Um, and also is like, “I can’t wear this because Nynaeve doesn’t have one and the girls don’t have one.” Which is just like, okay. Whatever.

SALLY: It is, like, the most absurd twisting of female friendship. I refuse to be extra safe because one of my friends can’t.

EMILY: Which is just, like honor. Whatever.

SALLY: Why not give it to Nynaeve, the one Moghedien is *actively* targeting? Like she’s got *Kill Bill* sirens, target locked on Nynaeve’s back.

EMILY: It’s just like a – we’re supposed to be like, “Oh here’s some, like, female honor.” You know? But it’s, like, there – you can be a little bit mercenary about this just in terms of rationale. Who is the most likely person in your group to be channeled at? Give them the fox head medallion.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: No one is ever going to – no one is going to channel directly at Mat.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: To, like, shield him.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Because he’s not a channeler!

SALLY: Yeah! It’s like –

EMILY: It makes me nuts.

SALLY: It’s like...malevolent honor. We’ve got [laughs] benevolent sexism.

EMILY: [laughs] And malevolent feminism.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Equality in me and my girlfriends.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Whatever.

SALLY: So, it's very silly and frustrating, but at least Mat gets to keep his medallion. Which is *good*, because then he uses it later to –

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Beat the *gholam*.

EMILY: But he's like, "Oh, I don't want you to fix things with Tylin. I don't know what I want." Basically.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Elayne is just like, "I understand." And walks away. And it's like, patently you don't understand. Because if someone was talking to you about a situation this serious you would be like, "We do need to resolve this."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: "We need to get you out of this situation somehow." But Elayne just walks away. Uh, they all get on their riverboats and sail across to the Rahad. Duh duh duh duh duh.

SALLY: Come sail away.

EMILY: [singing] Come sail away. Come sail away. Walk through the Rahad, which Mat describes as a sort of cognitive dissonance of its own, because they are with the Kin who are so revered throughout Ebou Dar that they are not getting attacked. So Mat's like, "Oh, this is just kind of weird and funny." There's just, like, a lot of threats hanging about, scary looking people, but, because we're with the Kin, all those threats seem to be nullified.

SALLY: Yeah, it's basically like that scene in *Tangled* where she goes into the, like, assassin bar.

EMILY: Yeah, with her –

SALLY: But because she can sing –

EMILY: Because she's so perky and feminine [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, because she's so perky and feminine they're like, "Oh, we won't actually attack you."

EMILY: Yeah [laughs].



SALLY: It's basically that scene.

EMILY: Because I'm a manic pixie dream girl.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: Um, they get to this house, this random six floor house. Um, they go in. The setup is described as a pretty narrow hallway.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which is just a little bit weird, because then a lot of people end up in this hallway fighting, so I was struggling with that. Uh, but they walk in. Mat, like, sends his guys – like, “Okay, some of you go to the back and secure all the exits.” And Elayne or Nynaeve or someone is like, “What's the big deal? Like obviously nothing is going to happen.” Which is famous last words.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Elayne is like, “Let's just go! Let's get the bowl.” And runs upstairs, followed by, uh, a couple of the Kin – most of the Kin, I guess – and Vanin is the only guy who, I think, goes with them.

SALLY: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

EMILY: That's when Nynaeve and Lan are arguing. Mat is also like, “I want to go upstairs, but Nynaeve and Lan are in my way.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which is when the two Black Ajah ladies, on Moghedien's orders presumably, although Moghedien herself is not present, and a sort of random band of thugs show up and are like, “Oh, hello. We're, we're here.”

SALLY: We're here.

EMILY: They, like, monologue demonically for a minute about how they're really just members of the White Tower Ajah and Nynaeve's a rebel or whatever, assuming no one in this room knows what's going on. Nynaeve's like, “Shut up. They're Black Ajah, [husky voice] and they have me shielded.”

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] Fighting breaks out.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: With Lan [laughing] just tackling them. Which is like – I don't love Lan as a character, but as a fighter it is pretty hilarious that he's like, "The best way to stop a woman from channeling is to break her concentration. Therefore, I, a very tall man, will tackle them."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And it's like, "Yeah, fucking efficient."

SALLY: Yeah, he knows how to fight. At least they brought Lan with them. Jesus Christ.

EMILY: Uh, and that does get Nynaeve unshielded so she can start engaging in a magic battle of wills with these ladies. She is trying to prompt the Kin who remain behind to join in with her. But she says – but then they hear Elayne, or someone, scream up above. So Nynaeve's like, "Please go up there, Mat." Mat runs upstairs, six stories which I would be like [heavy breathing].

SALLY: It says he takes it at a full run. Six stories.

EMILY: Bud!

SALLY: And I'm like, "I'm gonna lay down just thinking about it."

EMILY: He must be so physically fit.

SALLY: I know. Active little man.

EMILY: Which is shocking because he drinks so much.

SALLY: He seems to only sit around and drink alcohol, but –

EMILY: And he smokes a pipe, so his lung capacity must be...whatever.

SALLY: It's --- I don't know. He's got the –

EMILY: Nothing is more healthy than a twenty-two year-old-man, I guess.

SALLY: I mean, they really do have some weird physical –

EMILY: Superpower. Untouchable.

SALLY: Yeah, what are you doing? They can just, like, eat eight pizzas in a row and be fine.

EMILY: They're like, "Let's go run a marathon." And you're like, "Hello?"

SALLY: Are you okay? [laughs]

EMILY: Anyway, Mat runs upstairs, finds this sort of – everyone’s on the ground in various stages of bleeding and unconscious. As he walks up, a woman is screaming toward him. The *gholam* walks up behind her and snaps her neck with his bare hands. So Mat is immediately like, “What the fuck?”

SALLY: Big yikes.

EMILY: Yeah, big yikes. There are some other guys, I think, trying to break down a door. Um, but Mat and the *gholam* face off. Mat tries to attack him and gets, like, yeeted. Physically yeeted across the hall. And is like, “Okay. This is not a normal person.” Nalesean comes up, having chased after Mat, and the *gholam*, because he’s in the way, rips his throat out with his bare hands. Which is very gross. Um, but that just happens right in front of Mat.

SALLY: Yeah, his – one of his best buds.

EMILY: Nalesean, by the way, had been arguing – like, this is a classic ‘this character is about to die’ thing. But Nalesean just kept talking – [laughing] It’s like, it’s like he was like, “It’s my last day before retirement, you know?” But instead Nalesean kept talking about how he had a shitty night’s sleep and did not want to get out of bed this morning. So, uh, anyway RIP to a real one.

SALLY: I knooooow! I get sadder and sadder every time I read this.

EMILY: I know. It would have been so nice if Mat had Nalesean with him for the rest of his time in Ebou Dar.

SALLY: If Nalesean, too, was like, “I won’t leave Ebou Dar, Mat. I’ll stay with you and Olver.”

EMILY: [crying noises] God, I love you, Nalesean.

SALLY: I know. He’s the realest.

EMILY: We love you.

SALLY: Why couldn’t Elayne have gotten her throat ripped out?

EMILY: [sighs] These are the big questions.

SALLY: Why does Nalesean have to suffer for her incompetence?

EMILY: [small sigh] Anyway, Mat, kind of in this same moment, runs up and is trying to stab the *gholam*. He does stab him, multiple times, but the *gholam* is like, “[noises] Whatever.” Flips over and is, like, holding Mat’s wrists or something and forcing his hands back so he can grab Mat’s head. Or something. So, this sort of strength – Mat talks about throwing his whole weight against him, which, I know Mat’s not a very big guy, but.

SALLY: But still.

EMILY: Still. And Mat's like, "Okay, this is getting scarier and scarier." He's like inching – it's like a knife kind of inching toward you, uh, when his medallion falls out of his shirt, which is always half unlaced. So, we've got that sort of like [laughs] –

SALLY: Good for him.

EMILY: Set up. Uh, the medallion falls on the *gholam* and appears to, like, burn him. The *gholam* throws Mat away and starts screaming.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Mat gets up kind of dazed and is like, "What the fuck?" Like, looks at his medallion like, "It's not – it's the normal metal feel. I don't know what's going on." Elayne, on the other side of the room, starts kind of waking up and the *gholam* turns toward her menacingly. And Mat had this delightful, like – Oh, I think the *gholam* before that threw the knife.

SALLY: Yeah, threw the knife that Mat catches –

EMILY: That Mat stabbed him with back at Mat. And Mat snatches it. So Mat's standing there with the knife and the medallion, like, "What's going on? This is horrifying. I've just watched two people be murdered in front of me. One of them my good friend." And is just like, does not want to be there. It's like, palpably, he wants to run away from this.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: But Elayne starts waking up and the *gholam* turns toward her and Mat is just like, "Shit. I [laughs] have – I have to do something." And his sort of running theme is that he made a promise. An unwilling promise, by the way, to Rand, extracted from him. But, as we have been told by other characters, Mat's sort of code of honor is his word.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: He's given his word that, as much as he does not like Elayne personally, he is going to make sure she is safe.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, he starts – he rips the medallion off and starts whirling it.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: In, like, a figure eight pattern and advancing on the *gholam* and says, "You can't [laughs] – you can't have her." And the *gholam*'s like, "Heeee." Trying to like –

SALLY: Hnnng.

EMILY: Like cat trying to snatch past the danger zone to get at Mat. And can't. So, finally he turns and runs and, like, goes into another room, slams the door behind him. Mat chases after him, enters this room that does not have any escape routes, but the *gholam* is gone. Uh, at which point Elayne is really waking up so Mat goes to attend to her. Uh, just a little side note about the *gholam*. The *gholam* is one of Robert Jordan's supernatural creatures. Um, he, they – he. It is supposed to be – the word *gholam* is a little bit derived from a golem.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Which, um, is a concept from Hebrew or Jewish mythology of a creature that is created.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And then sort of responds to the will of its creator. A golem usually made out of stone or clay or something.

SALLY: Clay. Yeah.

EMILY: The *gholam* itself has vampiric traits. It's sort of unkillable. It doesn't really bleed. It doesn't drink blood necessarily, but it does glory in the shedding of blood. Uh, it can, like, slip through cracks and things. The only not vampiric about it is that it can go out in sunlight, and it doesn't turn into a bat, you know? But it is supposed to be this, like, human shaped monster.

SALLY: I thought it did drink blood.

EMILY: It might, maybe. Oh, does it, like, in –

SALLY: Yeah I'm pretty sure –

EMILY: In *Winter's Heart* is it like people being drained of blood.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah, yeah, yeah. He's like going on a killing spree looking for Mat throughout the city and I think, yeah, it's, like, draining people of blood. Something.

EMILY: I think you're right.

SALLY: I can't remember. I *just* finished that book.

EMILY: That sounds very familiar to me. So maybe does drink blood.

SALLY: But it also revels in, like, the shedding of blood. Like, it's a blood based creepy creature.

EMILY: It's sort of like Robert Jordan has taken the undead aspect out of it. I know you can't kill it and in that way it's undead, but vampires are sort of like connected to coffins and, like, the nighttime and by appearances are very dead looking.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And, like, the *gholam* doesn't have any of those traits necessarily. Instead, the *gholam* is sort of designed to be this perfect, like, contrast to Mat. This very, like, slippery, um, figure who's very average by appearances, but, um, he's sort of also this Jack the Ripper, serial killer designed character. It's supposed to be very spooky whenever we find out the *gholam* is after Mat.

SALLY: Yes. Yes.

EMILY: And it is, even though we know Mat has plot armor, the *gholam* is very good at killing people around Mat. So, that's sort of what's freaky about him. Um, but that's our main introduction to the *gholam*, Mat's ongoing nemesis for quite a few books after this. Um, Mat goes to help Elayne and she has yet another sort of change of heart. She's like, "Wow, god. Mat really is just a brave, good boy."

SALLY: Yeah, you dumb idiot.

EMILY: She's like, "Oh my god. I can't believe you did that." And he's like, "Okay, yeah I did. What the fuck?" [laughs] She tries to heal someone, but she's shitty at healing. Starts screaming for Nynaeve. Nynaeve comes upstairs, uh, followed by, um, Lan of course and then the two Kin. One of them is, like, dragging one of the Black Ajah ladies. I don't know what happened to the other one. Did she die or did she run away?

SALLY: Ummm, I don't know. I know the one we end up with is Ip— Ipsan? Ispan?

EMILY: Ipsan? Whatever.

SALLY: I don't know what happens to the other one.

EMILY: I think Falion gets away.

SALLY: [softly] Falion.

EMILY: Because I think we see her in Caemlyn, but I could be wrong. Anyway, uh, Nynaeve starts healing people. Obviously Nalesean is already dead, two of the Kin are already dead, everyone else is okay – able to be okay. Elayne goes looking for the bowl. Um, they're like – Oh, Mat's guys who were stationed in the back come up and are like, "Yeah, they just attacked us and ripped through us." So, overall, not a great little expedition. Multiple people dead. But Elayne emerges with the Bowl of the Winds and is like, "We got it. Let's start packing things up." Because apparently this is a storeroom full of *angreal*, *s'angreal*. It's the thing Sammeal's looking for.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, so Mat – this chapter sort of ends with Mat just being like, “Okay. Great. We’ve got it. Let’s get the fuck out.” Earlier he’d said to Elayne, “Let’s just get the Bowl of the Winds and get out of – ”

SALLY: Ebou Dar.

EMILY: Ebou Dar. And she was like, “No, no no.” Because – he was like, “Why would we bother watching Carridin? We’re not sticking around.” She was like, “No, we’re going to have to figure out how the Bowl of the Winds works and duh, duh, duh, duh duh. We have things to do.” Uh, but we’ll talk about this more with the next chapter. They do decide to leave right away. And it’s just by accident that Mat gets stuck behind. Um, so we have peak heroism by Mat and peak dumbassery by the female characters, which is just sort of how Robert Jordan likes it.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So it’s frustrating, because this whole set up does allow us to have this really good, glorious Mat moment, but the whole set up is just drenched in Robert Jordan’s sexism, so sort of kills the fun a little bit.

SALLY: Yeah, really – I really hate how Robert Jordan brings me into his sexism along with him, because it’s, like, I don’t like – I’m getting to the point where I don’t like any of the female characters in *Wheel of Time*. I only like the male characters and --

EMILY: That’s so annoying!

SALLY: Don’t drag me into your sexism!

EMILY: I know you don’t like any of your female characters. Do you have to make me hate them, too?

SALLY: Yeah. Like, fuck.

EMILY: God. But how am I supposed to respond to characters who consistently disregard the safety of others. Who consistently make really bad choices. Like, how am I supposed to respond to that?

SALLY: Yeah, they’re also just rude. They’re not kind. They’re very self-centered. There’s nothing there for me to work with.

EMILY: All we’ve got is Birgitte.

SALLY: All we’ve got is Birgitte. And she’s very masculinized.

EMILY: Yes.

SALLY: Made up a word there [laughs] probably.

EMILY: Sounds great.

SALLY: Which is unfortunate. Like, she's allowed to have her sort of femininity in regards to her sexuality, but that's it's own other bag of worms.

EMILY: [scoffs] Well.

SALLY: We did it.

EMILY: We have one more chapter in Ebou Dar. Next week we'll be covering that. Sort of the main – sort of the main plot point we're working with is the finishing up of this little arc. Um, we'll also be doing a chapter with Sevanna, I think where the Shaído get transplanted across the continent.

SALLY: Fun!

EMILY: Not fun, I would say [laughs], but it's there so we gotta read it. So, two more – two more weeks. Two more episodes.

SALLY: Two more episodes. Could you believe it? Believe it!

EMILY: Believe it! Naruto. That's our boy Naruto. I said 'Nart' to Devin the other day and he was like, "Is there really a character named Nart?" [laughing] And I was like, "No, that's just what we call Nart."

SALLY: That's just what we call him. Nart.

EMILY: Hey, thanks for listening. Thanks to Glynn Mackenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our Patrons on Patreon. And our listeners – and our followers on social media. Um, we have a shoutout.

SALLY: Yeah! We want to shoutout a new *Wheel of Time* podcast. It is specifically talking about, um, the television show.

EMILY: Which is in the process of coming out, at the moment. As we're recording.

SALLY: It is called Never Mind the Trollocs. Which is a great title.

EMILY: Yep. I agree.

SALLY: It's very fun. Um, we – a disclaimer, we have not had the chance to listen to it yet, but, um, it is hosted by some folks we do know, including Sarah McClintock who's guested on the



podcast. Uh, so we trust that all the folks over there have really interesting things to say about the TV show. Um, and, as we have mentioned on this podcast, we are not, um, interested in doing in-depth analysis of the television show. We want to remain focused on the books. That's what the podcast has always been about. Um, that's what Emily and I are trained in, is literary analysis. That's what we enjoy doing, so that's where we are going to keep our focus, so if you are looking for more analysis about the television show, Never Mind the Trollocs is going to be a great place for you to get it. So go check them out.

EMILY: Yep, go right on over there.

SALLY: Yeah, you can find them, um, I believe on any of the usual podcatchers, but you can also find them on Instagram and Twitter at, um, you can just search Never Mind the Trollocs, um, and you can connect with them that way to. So.

EMILY: Go forth.

SALLY: Go forth and listen.

EMILY: Um, that's it from me.

SALLY: That's it from me!

EMILY: Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: I feel like I should, given everything that's happened this week, but.

EMILY: I mean, I do.

SALLY: Oh, go for it.

EMILY: Just that I got my COVID booster shot, and the lady was like, "Alright, we recommend that you stay here for 15 minutes in case you have a reaction." I have not had a – an allergic reaction to the COVID vaccine, so I was not all too worried about that. But I faithfully, like a good medicine boy, set my timer and then figured I don't need to sit by the actual pharmacy.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I'm in the Smith's. If I collapse, someone will take me.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: There. So, I was wandering about the Smith's, looking for a chocolate apple – a chocolate orange, the break apart kinds. That's my favorite treat. And over the loudspeakers, first was "Waterloo" by ABBA.

SALLY: [laughs softly]

EMILY: But then it just slid right into...another ABBA song.

SALLY: [gasps] Amazing.

EMILY: And then after that...another ABBA song [laughing]. Some deranged Smith's employee was playing ABBA's greatest hits, while I was wandering around in a daze looking for a chocolate orange. It was just a really – I felt like I was in a Wes Anderson movie.

SALLY: [laughs] Some employee *really* needed that playlist to get through the day.

EMILY: Someone was like, “Jesus Christ I’ve gotta –” [signing] Waterloo.

SALLY: If I don’t have ABBA I will not make it through the day.

EMILY: Which was relatable honestly.

SALLY: Yeah, that sounds like quite a fugue state.

EMILY: It was. [laughing] I was like, “Am I dead?”

SALLY: [laughing] Is this the bad place?

EMILY: Is this the good place?

SALLY: Ooh.

EMILY: Because ABBA.

SALLY: ABBA and chocolate oranges.

EMILY: But I couldn’t find a chocolate orange, so it was the bad place.

SALLY: It wasn’t the good place, yeah.

EMILY: It was the medium place.

SALLY: [singing] Waterloo!

EMILY: Okay, everyone. Have a good week!

SALLY: [singing] The history book on the shelf, is always [laughing] repeating itself.

EMILY: Stop.