



Episode 199: A Vat of Dragons

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Sally: Everybody Hates Rand is a Wheel of Time podcast that will contain spoilers for all 14 books. So if you're anti-spoiler, stop 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. "Everybody," in this context, refers to us and our cats. You are free to feel however you want about Rand. He's a fictional character. Please don't DM us.

(theme song by Glynna MacKenzie plays)

Emily: Well. Welcome to Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: And here we are with two Mat chapters that I really enjoyed. I don't know how you felt about them.

Sally: Um, I did not care for them as much as you did. Um, I haven't – I didn't get a chance today to reread my blogs from when I read them initially; I might have felt differently. But it's really – I dunno, I felt a little bit, um, frustrated, 'cause, like, it – it leads you up to be this really big exciting escape, particularly from the Seanchan, and we never actually escape from the Seanchan –

Emily: Oh.

Sally: Because the Seanchan are in the circus with us and, like, absolutely dominate – like, the only thing Mat thinks about in Knife of Dreams is Tuon, and it's just, like, a really suffocating plot to be in, and this is the beginning of that, so I did not – I did not find it as exciting as –

Emily: Yeah, like, in retrospective –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: View, when you put it up against what's coming in Crossroads of Twilight and Knife of Dreams, then, yeah, I can see how it would be a part of the stifling experience.

Sally: Yeah. It just feels like a letdown.

Emily: I think – I think to me, I'm on the opposite end. To me, it felt like the last gasp before –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Tuon is, like –

Sally: Mm, that's fair, yeah.

Emily: The centrifugal force of the plot.

Sally: That's fair.

Emily: Because the structure of these two chapters, again, is very montage-like; we're picking up, like, right after, uh, our last Mat chapter, when he talked to Teslyn, I believe –

Sally: Mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Emily: And agreed to try and get her and Edesina, as well as Joline, out of Seanchan-controlled Ebou Dar. Um, and we keep – like, everything is intercut with these conversations between him and Thom and Juilin –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: All crammed together in Thom and Juilin's little dorm room.

Sally: Yeah, it's got a very, uh, King Arthur: Legend of the Sword vibe –

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Where they're all sitting around that table or whatever.

Emily: Which, as you know –

Sally: And they – like, they smash cut to different things going on.

Emily: Yeah, we've – we've got, already, a bit of a heist, uh, theme going on here despite the fact that what will be stolen is not, uh, what we want to be stolen, uh, although Robert Jordan is really building up to it. Um, but, like, Tuon is only mentioned briefly in that she's been staring creepily at Mat, and he's constantly like, "Why is this woman watching me? Why does she want to buy me? I'm not that hot." And it's like, Mat.

Sally: First of all, you are.

Emily: (simultaneously) First of all, you are. (laugh)

Sally: But I know that's beside the point.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I also understand that it is – I mean, I also agree that it's upsetting to just be watched. Here's a – a hot tip, if you are courting the man the omens told you you're supposed to marry: perhaps don't stare creepily at him from across the room.

Emily: I know, it would almost be endearing if Tuon wasn't who she was. You know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: If she was, like, a normal, non-war criminal.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Non-human rights violator, um, and was just an incredibly awkward person.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who was like, “That guy?” constantly.

Sally: Yeah, just trying to puzzle it out.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Being like, “He’s –”

Emily: “But he’s so ... odd.”

Sally: “He’s just – I can’t quite put the word to it.”

Emily: “He’s just a little guy.” (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) “He’s just a little freak.”

Emily: “He’s just a little freak.” Um. But no, it – it is not quite that, because Tuon is everything we’ve already said. Um, there’s also – Tylin is mostly absent. We get one, of course, gross post-coital scene between her and Mat before she’s like, “Well, I’m taking off for ten days,” and then she’s gone.

Sally: Yeah, which is always nice.

Emily: Yeah, it’s always nice. I also am a fan of, um – um, I feel like if you’re going to deal with, um, abuse and sexual assault plotlines, which is its own, you know, basket of ... can of worms. That’s the – basket of –? (laugh)

Sally: A basket of worms.

Emily: A basket of worms.

Sally: Significantly more horrifying than a can of worms.

Emily: I was thinking a basket of snakes. (laugh) Which is just a can of worms –

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: But bigger.

Sally: But upgraded.

Emily: Um, yeah. Upper level. It’s like the Pokemon evolution of a can of worms.

Sally: Yeah, it’s an evolved can of worms.

Emily: And then top of the – top of the food chain, the Pokemon – I don’t – can you tell I don’t play Pokemon? What’s the –

Sally: The final evolution, I think is what it's called.

Emily: The final evolution is a vat ...

Sally: (whisper) A vat.

Emily: Of ... dragons.

Sally: Dragons! You go from worm to snake to dragon.

Emily: Yeah, which sounds fucking lit, if I'm being honest.

Sally: Yeah, a vat of dragons – like, you also get a little bit less horrifying, like viscerally horrifying – a vat of dragons does not horrify me nearly as much as the concept of there just being a can. Of worms.

Emily: A can of worms, yeah, like a baked beans can, but instead it's worms.

Sally: Yeah, it's supposed to be baked beans, but instead it's just worms.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Horrifying. A vat of dragons, though.

Emily: A vat of dragons. Yeah, I'd – I'd take it.

Sally: Be like, oh, these are my dragons?

Emily: Oh, this is my vat of dragons? (inaudible)

Sally: (laugh) Sounds like a D&D spell.

Emily: Yeah, it does.

Sally: Cast Vat of Dragons.

Emily: I cast Vat of Dragons, an eighth level spell. (laugh)

Sally: What happens? I'll –

Emily: Make a wisdom saving throw!

Sally: I drop a vat of dragons on people.

Emily: It's pretty self-explanatory –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Matt Mercer.

Sally: Matt. You are unhinged.

Emily: You are unhinged, Matthew! Um, sorry for that sidebar. Yeah, sexual assault and abuse plotlines are their own can of worms, but I, if we're going to deal with them, prefer to do so without the, um, uh, perpetrator –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Either on-screen or, like, personally interacting with the victim.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: It is far more interesting to me and a lot less viscerally upsetting, while still maintaining sort of the impact of what's going on, to just have Mat reacting to Tylin despite the fact that she's not there.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, you know, little details like, everyone's talking about what's going to happen when Tylin gets back, because he immediately changes back to his normal clothes once she's gone, and everyone's like, "Well, as soon as Tylin gets back, he'll be jumping to get back to his fancy clothes," and he's like, "Oh, I – I just ignore them, except the first time someone said something about Tylin getting back, I, like, jumped, 'cause I got freaked out that Tylin was actually –"

Sally: Yeah, that she'd returned early.

Emily: Coming back. Which is one of those, you know, upsetting moments that sort of cuts through Mat's general, um, surface-level humor and wit, and you're just like, "Oh, well, that's horrifying, actually."

Sally: Yeah, it's awful.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: That constant level of hypervigilance that becomes so embedded into his character after two books in Ebou Dar that you don't really notice it except in moments like that.

Emily: Yeah. Um, so that's two things I enjoy about these chapters. And then I just am a big – as you said, it's very similar to the King Arthur: Legend of the Sword montages, and I'm a slut for King Arthur: Legend of the Sword montages specifically. Um, but, um, I enjoy Mat and Thom and Juilin interacting. I think they're a fun group because they are three different subtypes of the rogue archetype.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: And, um – not to be, like, reductive. Obviously they're all very complex characters, but they are fitting in this sort of realm of, um, sidestepping the law, even though Juilin is technically, you know, the Tairen version of a cop. But he, the last few books, has been, you know, more or less outside of the law.

Sally: He's gone a little rogue.

Emily: Literally gone rogue, yeah. Doing his own thing and, uh, you know, dressing up as a servant and whatever so he can sneak in and see his lady love, who he, for the first time here refers to as “Thera,” so I guess if you’re an eagle-eyed reader, you’d be like, “Thera? Like unto Amathera of five books ago?”

Sally: Yes. And if you are that type of eagle-eyed reader, you probably enjoyed Wheel of Time much more than I have –

Emily: Yeah, props to you.

Sally: Because you are significantly less confused than I am at all times.

Emily: Yeah. Um, so having the three of them together is just, I – I think, fun.

Sally: No, they are definitely very charming. I think the only thing it’s missing is I’m sad Noal isn’t yet folded into the group.

Emily: Yeah, once Noal kind of –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Replaces Juilin –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That’s when we reach peak –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Peak rogue.

Sally: Yeah. Mat’s like, “Here I am – twenty-three? Twenty-four?”

Emily: Yeah, twenty-three, max, I’d say.

Sally: “Here are my two ninety-year-old right-hand and left-hand mans.” (laugh)

Emily: Yep. Here’s Thom Killed-Two-Kings Merrillin. Here’s Noal, mysterious backstory, has a best-selling book –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Autobiography.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Has probably killed kings. I dunno. We don’t get –

Sally: Probably.

Emily: The whole Jain Fairstrider backstory.

Sally: No, we don't, unfortunately. No, so I agree. They're very – they're very charming together, um, especially there are these, like, funny little off-hands where, like, the whole kind of premise of these two chapters is they set up one plan, and it collapses, and they have to set up another plan, and it collapses, and Thom and Juilin keep having these funny asides about, like, "Well, I was so close to getting this done."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: "Ah, I was so close." And you're just like, these criminals. (laugh)

Emily: I know, I just – I love to watch them work.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? Just do their little thing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. Do you think if Robert Jordan had lived, he would have written the Travels of Jain Farstrider?

Sally: I can only hope he would have.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: They would have – that would have been such a charming book.

Emily: Yeah. With just Noal being absolutely off-the-wall –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Unhinged.

Sally: Completely unhinged little guy.

Emily: Yeah. I'd just be like, "Ah, fuck yeah."

Sally: Yeah. Noal currently is making his mark in the Band of the Red Hand by telling absolutely off-the-wall stories every night. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Mat's like, "Yeah, I haven't really seen Noal since I, you know –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Hooked him up with a place to sleep with the Band of the Red Hand, but apparently he just tells them wild stories every night," and everyone's like, "Oh, that charming old man."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Oh, except he does say that all of the Band of the Red Hand take his stories at face value, so now they're just like – absolutely like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Shara, man.”

Sally: They’re like, “In Shara, people have faces on their stomachs.”

Emily: Yeah, which, uh, is an actual, like, um, reported – obviously fake – thing. But, like, a monster that frequently was, you know, reported by, uh, explorers in –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Such quote unquote exotic places as Africa –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And South America, they’re like, “Oh, yeah, there are these monsters –” Actually, Herodotus, I believe –

Sally: (laugh) Of course.

Emily: Was the first one who did this. Yeah. Classic. He was like – Herodotus was like, “I heard down the telephone line of six different guys that there are people whose faces, whose mouths are on their chests,” and everyone was like, “Oh, that’s terrifying.”

Sally: You like to think of – who’s the dumb member of the Band that’s still with us? I can’t remember his name.

Emily: (sigh) He only gets – I mean, they’re all a little bit dumb.

Sally: Mm, that’s true.

Emily: Harnan is sort of our classic himbo –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The captain. The other guys are sometimes referenced as more dumb, but we don’t know them by name as well.

Sally: Well, it’s just nice to think of Harnan becoming a Herodotus-like figure and being like, “I heard –”

Emily: “From Jain Farstrider.”

Sally: “From Jain Farstrider himself –”

Emily: No – (laugh) He would be like, “I heard from this guy named Noal –”

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: “No relation to Jain Farstrider.”

Sally: “That – da da da.” Just absolutely insane.

Emily: “That over in Shara, there are people with faces on their tummies.” If you want to read a fun horror book about, um, monsters with faces on their torsos, then the Monstrumologist is a –



Sally: Mm.

Emily: Is a fun – though, I emphasize, very gory – horror, uh, book.

Sally: Yay.

Emily: Um, yeah, so if that's your cup of tea, go for it. There is also, meanwhile, this ongoing subplot of the gholam moving through the city and just killing people and sucking their blood.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: So that's just sort of a – a fun, like, latent plot in the background that is adding some, you know, impetus to them leaving besides the – once Tylin leaves for ten days, Mat's like, "Oh, okay, great, well, we have to get the fuck out of here before Tylin gets back." Um, partly because it will be easier to leave, but Mat also says explicitly that since he's now leaving with, uh – he's now planning on leaving with damane, that's a much bigger crime than just him and his people disappearing, and he doesn't want Tylin to be implicated in it. So he wants to get out before she gets back. Of course, Mat's vested interest in, um, keeping Tylin's, um, hands metaphorically clean is going to get her killed, um, though not on purpose, obviously. But.

Sally: It's just a form of irony that I feel like authors love to apply to men.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: The more you try to protect women, the more likely they are to die horrifically.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: It's like, what?

Emily: Okay. Okay?

Sally: Who is this benefitting? (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) I – I don't know. I don't know. I'm just like, no one cares about tragic irony when it applies to Tylin.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know?

Sally: Kill the bitch. I'll kill her myself.

Emily: I've been waiting for her to die for many, many books.

Sally: Let Noal at her.

Emily: Yeah. Noal would get the job done. (laugh) Let him go off. Um, so yeah, there's this sort of, like – I don't know, it reminded me of, like, this Jack the Ripper sort of thing.

Sally: Yeah, for sure.

Emily: There's, like, a serial killer on the loose in the streets of, um, Ebou Dar who's killing, like, every other night.

Sally: Yeah, and definitely adds, like, a – a latent threat. Latent – like, a – a tangential threat. But it does also attach to the main plot of the escape because they're increasing security at night in the city.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um, and they're going to have to escape at night because that's the easiest way to get access to the – easiest time to get access to the damane, quote unquote, kennels. So Mat's like, great, this asshole is running through town killing people, and –

Emily: He wants to kill me specifically, and he's making it so much harder to escape.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah. So.

Emily: So yeah, that all is woven quite neatly together –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: As opposed to the last time the gholam was a major threat, at the end of A Crown of Swords, when everyone was like, "We've gotta get out of Ebou Dar now, 'cause the gholam will come after us," and then that was just, like, nothing.

Sally: And then he didn't.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: For –

Emily: The one good thing about Tylin being killed in the manner that she does – which is not to say that I care or –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or disapprove of the way Tylin getting – the way Tylin gets killed – but the one good thing is – is that it's sort of, uh, shows us that that gun did not have an empty chamber. You know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: There – there, um – that dog had teeth. So.

Sally: Chekhov's gun was loaded, baby.

Emily: Yeah. Come on. So that threat was not just – how many – how many other ways can I say it was not an empty threat? (laugh)

Sally: It was not an empty threat.

Emily: Stupid.

Sally: The gholam is, for once, actually being a threatening villain.

Emily: Yeah. And now, after that, he gets to disappear for another four books. Which is too bad. It would've been kind of funny if he was hunting Valan Luca's circus specifically.

Sally: I feel like the gholam should join the Band of the Red Hand.

Emily: Oh, yeah?

Sally: After he falls in love with Mat. (laugh)

Emily: I feel like he killed Nalesean, so I have a hard time – (laugh)

Sally: Oh my gosh, I keep forgetting about Nalesean, I'm so sorry. I keep – in my head, Nalesean, like – just, like, died peacefully in his sleep. That's what I want for him.

Emily: Oh, that's so – yeah, that's what I want too.

Sally: You're right. You're right. No, they need to have a – a definite sort of, like, fox and hound –

Emily: Reconciliation – oh. Yeah.

Sally: No, they have a fox and hound situation, and this guy's like, "Why is he always in this circus?"

Emily: Yeah. Yeah.

Sally: The gholam does not have a gender. I don't know why I keep referring to it as "he."

Emily: I mean, they refer to it as a he, I think, so. He – it looks like a dude, I guess, so.

Sally: Of course it does.

Emily: Well, there are some – supposedly some lady ones but I'm actually grateful that Robert Jordan didn't pull those out because I shudder to think what he would have done with a woman serial killer. He already has the Black Ajah at his bidding.

Sally: Ugh. (sigh) RIP Nalesean.

Emily: He would've found some way to victimize and humiliate a – a monster, a serial killer monster.

Sally: You're so right. You're so right, bestie.

Emily: And then we would've been like, "Ugh."

Sally: You're so right.

Emily: But you're right; there is a lot of untapped potential, um, in terms of the – the sexual chemistry – (laugh) between Mat and the gholam.

Sally: I know, I just feel like there could be sort of, like, an extended enemies to reluctant lovers, and Mat's like, "You killed one of my boyfriends –"

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And the gholam is like, "I'll replace him as your boyfriend." (laugh)

Emily: At the bare minimum, there's, like, the – the very, you know, Catch Me If You Can plot –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Where they should be chasing each other a whole lot more. It's just what I think.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: But sadly this is the end of it. Um, I don't know if I've been going chronologically at all. Um, Mat tells us that his main plan, um, to get out the – out everyone once Tylin leaves is he, um – Tylin announces she is leaving, basically, so – on Tuon's suggestion, which I don't know what that fucking means, you know – is Tuon trying to get her out of the way or something? Who knows. Uh, but she's leaving with Suroth so they can basically go and survey her lands, and they're leaving and going on those, like, flying things which involves crossing the harbor to get to the grounds where the raken or to'raken or whatever are kept. And there's a funny exchange where she's like, "Don't worry, I won't make you fly," and Mat in his head is like, "I would love to fly on those things." (inaudible)

Sally: Mat's like, "That sounds fucking lit. I don't want to go with you, but."

Emily: "I do not want to go with you. I would like to stay here. But sign me up for flying on the wyverns or whatever the hell those are."

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Anyway, so –

Sally: Give me my vat of dragons.

Emily: Give me my vat of dragons! It's the closest thing we can get to dragons. Um – but, I mean, I guess besides Rand. It's a vat of dragons, and it's just a bunch of raken and then Rand.

Sally: (laugh) And then Rand's at the bottom.

Emily: Rand's like, "Hi."

Sally: Like a surprise.

Emily: Like Pandora's box.

Sally: (laugh) "The only thing left in the box was Rand."

Emily: "Was Rand, and it wasn't hope at all; it was kind of depressing, actually."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: “He was worse than most of the dragons.”

Sally: Yeah, we should have kept all of the dragons and let Rand out.

Emily: Yeah. I agree.

Sally: Pandora, you fucked up.

Emily: (laugh) Pandora! Or Mat, as the case may be. Does Mat have some Pandora qualities?

Sally: I was literally just thinking that. I was like, “Wait a second.”

Emily: I’m like, “Wait a –” He does, actually, but it’s not where you’re to yet. Uh, Verin gives him a real Pandora’s box situation.

Sally: Good for her, Verin.

Emily: Although he ends up not being a Pandora, going against her expectations. Whatever. We’ll get there. We’ll get there.

Sally: We’ll get there when we get there.

Emily: Thank you, Mr. Incredible. Um. God, I love that movie. Such a lit movie.

Sally: We should watch that movie.

Emily: Yeah, it’s great. Oh –

Sally: Ed is on the move.

Emily: Oh – on the move.

Sally: Bend your booty.

Emily: Yeah – no!

Sally: You’re gonna bump the mic. Good job, Eddie. Oh, nailed it.

Emily: Oh. Oh ho ho.

Sally: You seek Emily’s lap now?

Emily: It’s only one leg. My other leg is up, Davram Bashere style.

Sally: Ed is confused. This is a puzzle he cannot solve.

Emily: Well, to be fair, Ed, there aren’t many puzzles you can solve.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: You’re color-blind, for one thing. Um, so Mat waves off Tylin and her coterie, basically, and then conducts some reconnaissance of the harbor to try and figure out if that’s a potential

escape route – he just wants to cross that off his list before he marks Valan Luca as his only potential –

Sally: And can you blame him?

Emily: Um, he references that he has a way or a method of getting Valan Luca to leave earlier than intended, but we do not yet know what that is. Um, so that's sort of terrifying, but. (laugh)

Sally: Pulls out a gun. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. (laugh) Dun dun dun. Wheels out his first cannon. He's like, "I figured out why I need a bellfounder, Aludra." Bang, bang, Valan –

Sally: It's to kill Valan Luca.

Emily: It's to kill Valan Luca and take over his circus.

Sally: And I feel like Aludra would be, "That's an acceptable answer."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I just – I just read that chapter in Knife of Dreams, about the bellfounder and the –

Emily: Oh.

Sally: The lofting tubes.

Emily: I was like, "Where Valan Luca dies?" and then I was like –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Valan Luca doesn't die; that'd be so –

Sally: It would be pretty funny if Mat took over – Mat did a coup d'etat of Valan Luca's circus, and now he's the ringmaster.

Emily: Yeah, it's like, someone always has to be the ringmaster, so it always goes to the person who killed the former ringmaster. Like Tim Allen's "Santa Clause."

Sally: (laugh) I like that you said "like Tim Allen's 'Santa Clause'" instead of something like – like werewolves. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) It's – Tim Allen's "Santa Clause" was a formative –

Sally: I remember that movie, yeah.

Emily: Yeah, 'cause it was mind-boggling that he killed Santa and then became Santa.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: What kind of – out of left field that was.

Sally: What type of fucking plot is this?

Emily: Ah, man.

Sally: Anyway, Mat kills Valan Luca with a gun. (laugh) And then he takes over Valan Luca's identity in order to escape Ebou Dar.

Emily: Mat would make a great Valan Luca.

Sally: I agree.

Emily: He'd be a better Valan Luca than Valan Luca.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Okay, Mat surveys the harbors, concludes he cannot leave by ship, which leaves plan B. He goes back, meets with Noal, Noal's like, "Hey, I wish you would let me in on your little plots and mayhem and whatever," and Mat's like, "Plots and mayhem? Me?"

Sally: "Who?"

Emily: (Urkel impression) "Did I do that?" And Noal is like, "Yes, you're clearly a mischief boy. Let me in on your plots."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Mat's like, "Give it some time, buddy. Before you can join the inner circle."

Sally: (laugh) You have to earn your way up.

Emily: And Noal's like, "Okay, well, first piece of information: the gholam is back, and he's doing murders," and Mat's like, "Great. Goddamnit." Then he goes and finds Juilin and is like, "Juilin, I need you to steal an a'dam leash thing and two sul'dam dresses," and Juilin's like – (sigh)

Sally: You ever have those days?

Emily: (laugh) Juilin's like, "Mat, I'm not a thief. I'm a thief-catcher." And Mat's like, "Seems like the skills are translatable, you know? You know?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Juiln's like, "I mean ... fair." And Mat's like, "Listen. Here – here's the carrot I'm dangling in front of you. We're never gonna get out your lady love unless we get out of Ebou Dar, so make of that what you will." And Juilin's like, "Fine. Fine, Mat. Goddamnit."

Sally: "I'll go do some stealing."

Emily: He's like, "It'll take me a while, though." So he goes, uh, and gets ready to do his stealing. This is when we start getting these cuts with, uh, Thom and Juilin; Mat's like, "Yeah, I looped in Thom, like, right away, and he had some ideas." Um, but then Beslan gets involved or tries to get involved by listening at their door and then being like, "You guys, I have the perfect distraction: we'll do a revolution."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And Mat's like, "That sounds like a Les Miserables situation, specifically the ending, where everyone dies."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? So I don't actually think that –

Sally: Spoiler alert – (laugh) for Les Mis.

Emily: Oh my God, I'm so sorry to everyone who hasn't read or seen Les Mis. They do all die at the end. Um –

Sally: (sing-song) Empty chairs at empty tables ...

Emily: (simultaneously) Empty tables ... (normal voice) Yeah, Beslan's singing that and –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: In my version of the Wheel of Time TV show, which is unapologetically a comedy –

Sally: Yeah, of course.

Emily: Beslan is the only character who's in a musical.

Sally: Beslan's always singing Les Mis songs, and no one else is singing with him.

Emily: (laugh) "Red, the color of –" Mat's like, "Shut the FUCK up," in the background.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um –

Sally: (sing-song) "I did not live until today –"

Emily: (laugh) Yeah, Thom's always strumming his harp in the –

Sally: I love this. I'm sorry for my screech earlier.

Emily: Ah, no, so good. Anyway, Mat talks Beslan out of doing a revolution because he's like, "It's not going to happen the way you want it to; it'll get you and everyone else killed, and it'll also get your mother killed because there's no way to –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Prove that she didn't know," essentially.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And it's not like the Seanchan strike me as people who are gonna give everyone a fair and just trial before executing them."



Sally: Yeah, Beslan, God bless him, is like, “The people are ready to rise up! I’ll just give the call, and everyone will rise up –”

Emily: And Mat’s like, “Oh, yeah? Oh, yeah, princeling?”

Sally: “Oh yeah, sir?”

Emily: “Rich boy? What do you know about being fucking a peasant?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “What do you know about rising up?” Come on.

Sally: Yeah, peasants lied to you. I hate to break it to you, but the peasants lied to you, Beslan.

Emily: Yeah. Mat is actually a man of the people, and he’s like, “They’ll do nothing, actually.” So.

Sally: Yeah. They don’t want to get brutally murdered –

Emily: They don’t want to get murdered –

Sally: By the Seanchan, so they’re –

Emily: And they’re right and valid, so. Eat that. And Beslan’s like, “Ugh.” (inaudible grumbling) So Mat convinces Beslan, “Okay, wait for your uprising until a month after we’ve gone,” and Beslan for some reason agrees to that calendar date.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, he’s like, “Let us get clear,” and Beslan’s like, “Fine.” Um, Thom goes about – Thom’s little mission is to do an accurate forgery of the paperwork that they will need to smuggle out sul’dam and damane. Um, so that’s what everyone’s doing, um, when Mat decides to go – Mat goes to visit Joline to convince her to get on-board this plan once Juilin, uh – Juilin actually obtains the a’dam and the dresses. So Mat goes to Setalle Anan’s basement. His plan is, “Okay, we can get Setalle Anan to masquerade as one fo the sul’dam; then we just need to find another woman who will be another sul’dam. Um, and they sort of throw out, you know, possibilities. They’re like, “Riselle?” Who, if you have forgotten who Riselle is, I don’t blame you because her only personality trait is that she has the world’s best tits.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Which, like, good for her.

Emily: Yeah. Iconic, honestly.

Sally: I just wish there were some – like, she was allowed to have thoughts in her head.

Emily: I know, yeah. I wish that she wasn’t just, like, the sexy babysitter trope.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because Olver, the ten-year-old, was super horny for her in a way that was –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Upsetting to read about.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And now Thom, the 80-year-old, is also super horny for her in a way that is also upsetting to read about.

Sally: It would be pretty funny if actually Riselle was the Daughter of the Nine Moons.

Emily: God, I'd love that.

Sally: And Mat's wife was just, like, this super brilliant lady with excellent titties.

Emily: I know.

Sally: And I'm like, wow, power couple of the century. (laugh)

Emily: I would love that for her. Instead, Riselle is going to get married to some Seanchan officer, who hopefully is more her speed and her age.

Sally: Yeah, we hope.

Emily: One hopes.

Sally: We are not told.

Emily: Um, and Mat's like, "Well, could Thera –" Juilin's, you know, lover – "masquerade as a sul'dam?" and Juilin's like, "I don't know how to tell you this, but –"

Sally: "No."

Emily: "Thera is on the edge of a nervous breakdown at literally every moment."

Sally: Yep.

Emily: "So she needs to, uh, go through some deprogramming before she's gonna get there," and Mat's like, "Okay, well." (sigh) "Sure wish Birgitte was here, you know?"

Sally: Oh, take charge kind of woman.

Emily: Yeah, where are all my women? It's pretty funny to listen to these three guys just list women that they know in Ebou Dar.

Sally: Yeah. They're like, "Um ..." (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) "Well."

Sally: "We – I don't think we know any women."

Emily: "We actually don't know anyone. Rats." So – so far they've only got Setalle Anan. So Mat goes to test this plan out.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Joline is extremely resistant. This is the first time we meet her Warders, whose names are Fen and Blaeric. (laugh)

Sally: Blaeric.

Emily: I know. Blaeric I get such a huge kick out of. (laugh) I will forget those names, so I'm going to refer to them as Brad and Chad for the – for the duration. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) I mean, they might as well be fucking named Brad and Chad. They have no personality traits.

Emily: Yeah, Mat has the most hilarious inner monologue about them –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's like, "They are just – just two of the same men."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And all they like is Joline, and that's it. That's their only personality, is liking Joline, and I personally don't get it, because she's the worst –"

Sally: Joline sucks.

Emily: "But you know what? Whatever." So they're kind of in the background, lurking – um, looming – as Mat's convincing Joline that she has to go along with this plan because she, um, doesn't really have any other options, so you gotta do what you gotta do. And Setalle Anan's like – ha, she gives Joline a really savage burn that is iconic, but I can't remember. It's basically like, "Um, I wish you would act like an Aes Sedai. So far I haven't even seen you act like a grown woman." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And you're like, ahhhh!

Sally: You're like –

Emily: Burn.

Sally: Roast of the century, to be honest.

Emily: Yeah, and of course Setalle Anan is exceptional both in her verbal burns but also in that – in the way she interacts with Aes Sedai and women who can channel. Um, it was very annoying with Nynaeve and Elayne, that level of condescension. Here, with Joline, who is a well-known and established Aes Sedai, to the point of having the Aes Sedai face, it – it becomes, like, weird. Like, where does Setalle Anan get off, you know, speaking to Aes Sedai in this way when, so far, what we've seen from our average laypeople, no one talks to Aes Sedai that way, except maybe Mat –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who doesn't give a fuck.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And also has a special necklace that makes him immune to channeling.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And the heavy implication here, especially when Joline is like, "Mm, sometimes you sound familiar; are you sure I don't know you?" The idea is that Setalle Anan was previously in the Tower and something happened to her. She was burned out or stilled or something like that.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which makes a special sense, given that she's in Ebou Dar, where the Kin is such a rich, um, subculture.

Sally: Right.

Emily: Um, but I don't believe we really get big answers on that for quite a while, if at all, so.

Sally: Um, no, where I'm at in Knife of Dreams, she just let slip another big hint that she, like, knows what happens at, like, the Accepted testing or something? And they're like, "There's no way you would know that," and she's like, "An innkeeper hears all sorts of stuff," dur ba dur ba dur.

Emily: And it's like, okay, you're not doing a great job of hiding that secret –

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: If a secret it is. But also, it's sort of overstated.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's not important who Setalle Anan was in the past.

Sally: No.

Emily: She's not a name we've heard before.

Sally: Yeah. It's not like she's Cadsuane.

Emily: Ha. Yeah. Ha. Um, anyway, Setalle Anan is basically like, "Quit whining; we have to try this. But first we have to see if this will actually work." Um, and long story short, it doesn't. It, like, puts Joline in agony to be connected to a woman who cannot channel.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, and Mat's like, "Ah, great, well. Now what?"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And he is starting to leave, and Setalle Anan's like, "Well, now what?" and Mat's like, "Don't worry, I always have another plan," lying through his teeth. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) He said, like a liar.

Emily: Yeah. And Setalle Anan's like, "Okay, great. It's so reassuring to have you by our side." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Oh, Setalle Anan also told us, um, that she is fully planning on leaving with Mat and the others – she is ready at a moment's notice to sell the inn – and that her entire family, which includes her husband and a pretty big number of children have already left Ebou Dar via ship and are heading toward Illian –

Sally: Illian.

Emily: To wait it out. Um, which, I don't know. I just think when Setalle Anan is like, "Yeah, do you think I'm gonna stay in a place where they enslave women?" I'm like, preach, Setalle Anan.

Sally: Yeah. You go, girl.

Emily: She's sort of consistently being our voice of ethical reason here.

Sally: Yeah, hundred percent.

Emily: Anyway, so as Mat is leaving, who should he run into but Bayle Domon, who's like, "Well, if it isn't Mat Cauthon," and Mat's like, "Do I know you?" And Bayle Domon's like, "Yeah, you were on a ship with me." And Mat's like, "Ohhhh. The knife days." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) He's like, "Mm, I was, like, possessed by a dagger at that point –"

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: "So I don't, like, totally remember what you're talking about, but, like, mm, sounds vaguely familiar."

Emily: Mat's like, "I do sort of vaguely recognize you, but I also do not want to remember those days at all –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Because I was fully possessed by a demon," and Bayle Domon's like, "Yeah, understandable. Why don't we come have a drink?" and sort of manhandles –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mat back into the inn. And Mat's like, "Yeah, great, a drink," until they get up to Bayle Domon's room, where Egeanin is, and Mat's like – (sigh)

Sally: "There's no alcohol here."

Emily: "I should've seen this coming." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) "Damn it."

Emily: "Goddamn it." And Bayle Domon's like, "This is Egeanin." Mat, like, flops down on the nearest chair and is like, "What do you want?"

Sally: "You too? How many?"

Emily: "You too? This might as well happen." And Egeanin's like, "I've heard that you're a guy who can help me out, and Bayle Domon said that you can do that," and Mat's like, "Okay, well, what do you need?" and she's like, "And I also heard that you – that Thom and Juilin are with you, and I would – and – you know, I would like to see them, and also they should help me," and Mat's like, "Okay, what do you need them for?" and she's like, "You ask too many questions. Get out." And Bayle Domon's like, "Eh, give him a minute," and Mat's like – puts two and two together, or, I should say, puts several much – does a much more complicated math problem –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because this would not be my first thought, but he's like, "Oh. The Seekers are after you, aren't they?" and Egeanin's like, "What the fuck –?"

Sally: "How did you –? You're a lot smarter than you look, you little weasel."

Emily: She's like, "You – what the?" Dun dun. And Mat's like, "Okay, well." She's like, "I want to leave by ship in, like, the spring. I can get a ship by then." And Mat's like, "I'll do you one better. We leave, like, tomorrow, and all you have to do is provide three, count 'em, three sul'dam." And what's the number of sul'dam that Egeanin can conveniently blackmail? Three.

Sally: (simultaneously) Three.

Emily: So she's like, "Yeah, I can do that," and Mat's like, "Great."

Sally: "Excellent."

Emily: "Excellent doing business with you."

Sally: "See you tomorrow."

Emily: Yeah, he's got the crazy eyes.

Sally: Egeanin's like, "Maybe we should've picked a different crazy boy."

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: And Bayle Domon's like, "No, no. This is the right boy for us."

Emily: Yeah. Mat goes back to Thom and Juilin and is like, "Guess what I found?" and they're like, "Egeanin and Bayle Domon? That's a blast from the past."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Mat's like, "Well, are they trustworthy? And Thom and Juilin are basically like, "Eh, yeah, I mean, they were helpful. They're competent. They helped us do this, you know, complicated heist thing over in Tanchico." And Mat's like, "Will you please tell me what the fuck ever happened in Tanchico?" and they're like, "Well, Nynaeve and Elayne made us promise that we wouldn't," and Thom's like, "Meh. Mat – Nynaeve and Elayne aren't here, so."

Sally: He's right.

Emily: "Here's the thing. We had to steal and dispose of a male a'dam, and – you know, 'cause that would be dangerous for the Dragon Reborn." And Mat's like, "Okay. Did anyone tell Rand?" which is the only valid question –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That has ever been raised about the male a'dam.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Juilin's like, "I mean, I'm sure if it was important, Nynaeve and Elayne would've told him."

Sally: And they didn't.

Emily: And it's like, Juilin, are we even reading the same book?

Sally: Do we know the same women?

Emily: Do we know the same women? Because –

Sally: Because those two chucklefucks ...

Emily: Those two – the – genders communicating with one another? It doesn't happen.

Sally: Not in Wheel of Time land.

Emily: Yeah, never. I can't imagine it. Can't fathom it.

Sally: Also, Elayne thinks Rand is just, like, some sort of baby child to protect.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: She would never want to give him bad news.

Emily: Yeah, she's like, "I didn't want to tell you about this because I was worried it would give you nightmares, so I just kept it to myself," and it's like, girl.

Sally: Rand, leader of most of the known world, is like –

Emily: "That seems like something I should really be worried about, you know?"

Sally: If you had told me, I could've prepared for this.

Emily: And they're like, "Oh, well, don't worry, it's been destroyed anyway." Mm, ha ha, in another case of dramatic irony. And, um, yeah, this is one of those funny moments where Juilin's like, "Why did I even steal the sul'dam dresses?"

Sally: Yeah, he's just got, like, a bag of dresses

Emily: "Come on," and Mat's like, "What – how was I supposed to know that three sul'dam would fall into our laps, you know?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "It's contingency plans, man." Um, but so the plan has now been set up, they are teaming up with Egeanin and Domon to get out of the city. Because Egeanin is of the Blood, she can acquire all the paperwork necessary to take people, damane specifically, out of the city, so that's how they are all going to leave together, hopefully before Tylin gets back, but spoiler alert, Tylin will return before they leave. Um, so yeah, I, uh, you know, just like watching rogues do their stuff. I also think it's interesting, um, that we have some of the most narrative-conscious folks here, in – I mean, Noal is going to, again, be part of this trifecta: Noal, Mat, and Thom. But Mat and Thom are both very, um, aware on some level that they are in a story.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, Thom especially has this little thing where he's like, "Stories have power, Mat. You know, if everyone thinks that Rand did swear fealty to Elaida, then that would be a major problem, politically," and Mat's just like, "Whatever, onto the next problem," you know? So Thom is very conscious of, um, how that works from a political standpoint. Mat is more focused on it, I think, from a personal standpoint. Um, he is – we've mentioned this before – of the three ta'veren, the one who weaponizes his abilities most frequently. Oh, and his response to, um, Juilin, actually, about the sul'dam dresses, when they're complaining, Mat in his head is like, "I can't help that I'm ta'veren, you know? It's gonna happen."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Things are gonna come together."

Sally: I love it when a plan comes together.

Emily: Yeah, okay. Okay. Um, and that's not really anything yet; I just think it's interesting.

Sally: No, it is interesting, especially because, as we've talked about, Mat is, I think, the character that's – whose arcs are most, like, mythologically charged. Or, at least, the most mythologically, like, evident. Like, with Rand and Perrin, there's of course, like, mythological stuff going on, but with Mat it seems to be at the surface all the time.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: That he is running through an arc, that he is running through a prophecy, that he is running through a story. So it's – yeah, it's interesting that he gets literally a bard –

Emily: Mm-hmm.



Sally: And a world traveler slash bestselling author –

Emily: Another form of bard, if you –

Sally: Yeah, just a bard, but a different flavor.

Emily: Yeah. Yeah, it's really interesting. Um, but those are those two chapters.

Sally: Yeah, Mat goes to sleep – well, he doesn't sleep, tragically.

Emily: Oh, yeah, that's a great little ending, is that –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He goes to bed, and he is just laying there with, like, the foxhead medallion in his fist, ready to fuckin' –

Sally: Fight the gholam.

Emily: Fight the gholam if it slides under his door, and he's twirling a coin over his fingers, trying to think of how to prepare for when the plan goes wrong.

Sally: Yeah, a real Jack Sparrow moment of him.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I know – Jack Sparrow's not the first person to have ever twirled a coin between his fingers.

Emily: Jack Sparrow's the only person who's ever twirled a coin. How dare you.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um, but yeah, that – even that moment specifically is evoking a lot of things for Mat, both him as a dexterous thief figure – that's something we often see thieves and pickpockets do –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: As well as showmen, which Mat also is – sort of this illusionist alongside Thom and Noal. Um, and Mat, of course, is, as we've said multiple times, a god of wealth.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Who, notably, is about to kidnap a princess, very Hades and Persephone style. Wheee. So –

Sally: Wheee.

Emily: The end.

Sally: Wheee.

Emily: In the next section, we will get the actual escape, which unfortunately will bring, uh, our last two major players into the plot: Tuon and, uh, Selucia, her bodyguard slash handmaid.

Sally: Whomst I hate.

Emily: Um, and hopefully at that point we will learn what leverage Mat has over Valan Luca, but I don't remember if we do.

Sally: I don't know if I –

Emily: Maybe that's just vague on purpose.

Sally: Yeah, and he's like, "He he he."

Emily: "He he he."

Sally: "It's-a me."

Emily: "It's-a me." Uh, but that'll be fun. So. Anything to add?

Sally: No. Who's your favorite character?

Emily: Oh, fuck, yeah. Um, do you have one?

Sally: Um, I want to say Noal.

Emily: Mm.

Sally: Just 'cause I think he's so weird and charming every time he's on-screen. And, again, like, this group of highly competent men – Noal also always delivers an important piece of news when he's on-screen. He's never just, like –

Emily: Mm, yeah, yeah.

Sally: There for no reason. Sometimes he's there for no reason, but most of the time he's, like, actually giving important info, and I like that about him. He's not a page waster.

Emily: Yeah. I – I agree.

Sally: Um.

Emily: I'll say my favorite was Thom, mostly because most of the time he will not be my favorite, but –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I enjoy him in these very specific moments when he just gets to do his hypercompetent stuff.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like, he's like, "Alright, to forge this paperwork, I will need to find the correct inks," and I'm like, damn, okay.

Sally: You will?

Emily: You're really committing to the bit there, bud.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Like the Seanchan officer is going to inspect the ink type –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? But, you know, maybe they will. And Thom will be prepared. So.

Sally: Yeah. Thom – no. Yeah, Thom is also very charming when he's like, "I didn't get to forge my paperwork."

Emily: He's like, "Rrrghh."

Sally: "I was so close."

Emily: "I was so ready." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um, and least favorite characters ... um, I guess I'd just say Joline. She's just so –

Sally: She's very unpleasant.

Emily: Yeah, she's so entitled.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So rude. Ugh.

Sally: Yeah, she's not a pleasant one to be around.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I'm gonna say Tylin. She's really gross at the beginning.

Emily: Yeah, agreed. Okay. Well, everyone, thanks for listening.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Thanks to Glynn MacKenzie for our theme song, and thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media. That's it. Do you have anything?

Sally: That's it. No.

Emily: Okay, great. Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: I do.

Emily: Ooh.

Sally: Um, if you guys are Spotify users, you will know that Spotify will make, like, daily mixes or, like, recommended songs for you, and I was listening to one of mine, and one of the recommended songs was the Glee version of “Footloose.” (laugh)

Emily: Ahh!

Sally: And I was like, “What the fuck have I been listening to that you think this is a song you think I would enjoy?”

Emily: That was a savage read on you by Spotify.

Sally: Yeah, I was like – I was like, I gotta rethink my life choices.

Emily: Spotify was like, absolutely not.

Sally: Spotify was like, fuck this bitch.

Emily: God. Okay, I’m gonna go turn the AC back on.

Sally: Yeah, we gotta go make din-din.

Emily: Phew. Goodbye!

Sally: Bye.