



Episode 200: Arson Lite, for Men
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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, our 200th episode really snuck up on me. Which is embarrassing because I'm the one who edits the podcast –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: So every week I have about two hours to really contemplate what number of episode we're on. And yet.

Sally: It's okay.

Emily: It didn't occur to me till last week.

Sally: We'll do something to celebrate sometime.

Emily: I think we could, you know, just hold out till episode 250, which is about when we'll be turning the corner –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Between Knife of Dreams and Gathering Storm.

Sally: Mmm.

Emily: Which will be a real cause to celebrate.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Not because Robert Jordan died. (laugh)

Sally: That's not what we're saying, no!

Emily: That's not what I'm saying. (laugh)

Sally: Hold on!

Emily: But because, I don't know, things will take a new and spicy turn. Not in the plot – the plot will still be pretty boring – but, um, you know, we'll have different things to criticize once Brandon's at the wheel.

Sally: Yeah, we could have a – a dawn of Branderson celebration.

Emily: Oh, man. The Dawn of Branderson. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) It could be a holiday.

Emily: We can just sort of – I can try and remember the plots of the Brandon Sanderson books I've read.

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: Um, which is a lot of them. I've read quite a few. But unfortunately I cannot remember more than, like, four character names in the wealth of Branderson –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Books I've read, so that would really put a – put a damper on things. Unfortunately, we're contractually obligated to at least make a passing reference –

Sally: No, absolutely not.

Emily: To these chapters, so this is Everybody Hates Rand, episode 200 of your friendly neighborhood Wheely Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sam Winchester. (laugh)

Emily: And if you can hear a sort of slurping noise in the background, that's Tybalt licking himself. (laugh) You're not Sam Winchester; don't sell yourself short.

Sally: I'm – oh, thanks. I am not Sam Winchester. I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: You're a much more three-dimensional character than Sam Winchester. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) God, I hope so. Sam has no personality.

Emily: I know. He's truly –

Sally: Except “younger brother sibling.” No, syndrome.

Emily: Truly the worst. Younger brother sibling. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) This is my younger brother sibling.

Emily: We already had – the funny thing is that we already had a Supernatural episode –

Sally: We did.

Emily: With guest star Brie Olds.

Sally: No, we did. I forgot about that.

Emily: It was iconic.

Sally: That was fun.

Emily: We love to have friends of the podcast on. Let us know if you'd like us to have any other friends on. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, we don't have a ton, but –

Emily: Yeah, we don't have many.

Sally: But we could – we could find someone.

Emily: We could have my sister on.

Sally: I was about – I was just about to say, it'd be really funny. We could have an Our Flag Means Death episode with Sarah.

Emily: Oh, man. She'd love it. Sarah hyper-fixates on things like no one else, so. Okay, here's the chapter summary of what happened in these, the last two chapters of Mat's arc in Winter's Fart. Um, we pick up with Mat waking up – well, not waking up, 'cause as you pointed out last time, he doesn't really sleep. He's too busy thinking about contingency plans.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But he gets up the morning of the big escape and goes about doing some things. He confers with Nerim and Lopin, MVPs, his two serving men –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who originally belonged to Nalesean and Talmanes, I think – I think, um – what's that word?

Sally: Respectively.

Emily: I think respectively, but I can't remember.

Sally: Yeah, Nerim and Lopim – Lopim. (laugh) Nerim and Lopin have a bit of Rosencrantz and Guildenstern syndrome in my head –

Emily: They do a little bit, yeah.

Sally: Where I think they're the same person. Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: They're sort of interchangeable. And also, just like Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, are they in love? (laugh)

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: I a hundred percent believe they are married.

Emily: I'd like to think so, yeah.

Sally: Yeah. I mean, how could you not be? Listen, there's no better fodder for a gay romance than having to be reluctant manservants for the same man because your former master just either just, a) died, RIP Nalesean, or b) –

Emily: Yeah, and your masters are all romantically involved.

Sally: That's true, they're all boyfriends. They're all a polycule.

Emily: Yeah, so – and I don't know, it's a sort of enemies to lovers.

Sally: Yeah, because they're like, "No, I'm the better manservant."

Emily: Yeah, and they're like, "No, I'm the better manservant," but then eventually they begin to see the, um – they begin to see the benefits of each other's points of view, and they begin to really respect and admire each other's work ethics, both of which are very strong –

Sally: That's true.

Emily: And really see where the other one is coming from, and mutual respect turns to friendship, turns to passionate love-making. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Exactly.

Emily: And then mawwiage.

Sally: And then mawwiage.

Emily: And I guess they adopt Olver. 'Cause he's there.

Sally: Yeah, and they're like, "This is our ugly son." (laugh)

Emily: (wheeze) Nerim and Lopin's part of the plan, because – it's funny to imagine Mat and this, like, huge coterie of people leaving –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But really, he has, like, separated them out into groups so that, you know, the late – the less conspicuous people can leave the city –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Without being hindered by the most conspicuous people, i.e., the escaping Aes Sedai –

Sally: Right.

Emily: And Mat himself. So Nerim and Lopin, along with Olver and, like, half of the remaining Band of the Red Hand, um, are leaving the city, just mid-afternoon; they are leaving with all of Mat's money that he has squirreled away and, like, his clothes. So – and they're just peacing out;

there's, like, a designated rendezvous point. And it's a pretty funny little, you know, interchange between Mat and them where he's like, "Tell me again what the plan is," and they're like, "Ugh."

Sally: "We've told you a hundred times." Okay, I really respect that Nerim and Lopin have good ethics and would not – they would not do this, but how funny would it be if they just cut and run with all of Mat's money? (laugh)

Emily: If they just peaced the fuck out with Mat's millions of dollars?

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: So funny.

Sally: They ran away and got married and lived happily off of Mat's fortunes.

Emily: No, I just also think it's so funny that Mat is like, 'Okay, and if I don't show up in a few days, then go and find Talmanes.'

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: (laugh) Like they're children.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Go find Mom."

Sally: "Go find Mom."

Emily: Oh, so good.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um. Okay –

Sally: Okay, they – yeah, the plan is to go find Talmanes –

Emily: Uh –

Sally: Which they should all just do anyway.

Emily: I know. They're – you – just peace out from the circus immediately; go find Talmanes. Maybe that is the plan originally, but they just get caught up with the circus a little bit. They're also leaving with the majority of the horses, by the way. Um, meanwhile, Mat goes about his routine. Um, which involves – we neglected to mention this last time – he has been, like, going out in the courtyard and just riding his horse in little circles to sort of build up his stamina.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: 'Cause his leg and hip – his broken leg and hip, uh, have made it really painful for him to ride, so he is sort of conscious of that, and he is also aware that it makes more public the idea that he is soon to be leaving.

Sally: Right.

Emily: And he is, again, trying to establish that he is very much about to leave, that it is not necessarily connected to the damane leaving, and that Tylin is not involved. So he goes out, does that, has a brief little conference with Vanin out there. Um, he sees Thom heading over to the inn because Thom's job of the day is to go, uh, basically soothe Joline over at the Wandering Woman. He's like a – like a Percocet. (laugh) Human Xanax.

Sally: Yeah, give her some Vicodin.

Emily: Yeah. Um.

Sally: God. RIP, Thom, what a shitty job.

Emily: I know.

Sally: Joline is deeply unpleasant.

Emily: Thom is just –

Sally: (sing-song) Joline, Joline ...

Emily: (sing-song) Joline, Joline ... (normal voice) Okay.

Sally: Joli-i-ine ... (normal voice) Sorry, I keep interrupting.

Emily: No, it's okay.

Sally: I'm a little – a little loopy today.

Emily: Mat also asks Beslan to set a few fires in the city to do a distraction. And Beslan's all upset 'cause he's like, "I wanted to do the full revolution tonight or whenever." And Mat's like, "Okay, well, I'm just asking you to, you know, do some light arsons."

Sally: Yeah. Arson Lite.

Emily: Yeah, Arson Lite™.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Diet Arson. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Diet Arson.

Emily: Just – Arson Zero Sugar. "And I want –"

Sally: (laugh) For men.

Emily: For men. And – Arson, For Men. "And I want you to look like you're not involved at all. You know, just, like, get some cronies to go set some fires," because, as we have also previously referenced, the Seanchan are out more in force at nights, um, because of the gholam attacking people. So. Um, Mat's trying to work around that problem. So Beslan's kind of annoyed, but

he's like, "Fine, I'll do that." So Mat just does this all day. It's shaping up to be, like, a horrible weather day, lots of rain, lots of, you know, stormy – stormy weather. Um, and one of the prevailing things going on here is that you'll catch a lot of references to Mat, um, referring to – I mean, the second chapter in this little section is called "What the Aelfinn Said," and Mat references that a few times. You know, like, he'll be like, "If I get caught then I'll be facing, um, the executioner, and, you know, I've been told that I'm fated to die once, but I think that already happened," da da da da da. So we're already sort of, like, setting up toward this moment with, uh, Tuon at the end. Um, Mat passes most of the afternoon just in a – in his room, waiting. Um, finally when night falls and it's pretty deep in, he goes out to the front of the palace, or the side or whatever, to meet Egeanin and Domon. Um, which he does, uh, and they are, you know, accompanied by – like, Joline's Warders are holding lamps to make it look like a full Seanchan retinue.

Sally: Right.

Emily: You know, stuff like that. Um, so Mat, accompanied by Egeanin – maybe just Egeanin – um, go up to the damane, quote unquote, kennels. Um, oh – by – accompanied by Egeanin and the three sul'dam that are coming with them –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which are Renna, Seta, and Bethamin. I should get a cookie for remembering those names.

Sally: I know, that was really impressive.

Emily: Thanks, everyone. Um, and Mat's just like – it's so funny to me how Mat is just, like, totally uninterested in finding out, like, why –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Egeanin is able to get these three involved. He's just like, "I don't care, as long as they do what they're told." You know?

Sally: "As long as they do their job, it's not my business."

Emily: It's a sort of uncharacteristic lack of curiosity from Mat, but also, you know, the unstoppable force of Mat's curiosity coming up against the immovable object of his wariness of women who can channel and anything involving that.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So they go up to the kennels; the, uh, sul'dam go to fetch Teslyn and Edesina while Egeanin is sort of standing watch. Mat, meanwhile, is like, "I have to run an errand," um, and goes into one of the rooms to wake up one of the Seanchan Windfinders. We don't know that he is going to do this until he is already doing it.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Sort of seems like Mat himself doesn't know he's going to do it until he's already doing it. Um, and, I don't know, it's one of the – one of the – I – I like it. It's just Mat and this woman having a very, like – he wakes her up and is like, "What'll you do if I let you out?" and she's like, "I'll wake everyone else up and we'll get out and join our people," and he's like, "Okay, rad. I'm Mat." And she's like, "Great," and, like, spits in her hand, Seafolk style –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And he spits in his hand, you know, and it's just very – it's just a – an interesting moment, I think, where – these moments are so rare in Wheel of Time, where it seems like gender is always the number one –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Thing on the stage. You know, it's like every interaction between a man and a woman, gender is the third person in the room.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Which is really annoying. So it's nice to have this moment between Mat, a man, and a woman where it just feels like they are two people –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Interacting.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: And it's frustrating because then we're – what we're seeing is that Robert Jordan is capable of doing it, and he chooses not to.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and, you know, there's some implications there – maybe it's only happening because it's dark, so Mat doesn't – can't see her to comment on –

Sally: Yeah, on the size of her breasts.

Emily: Her rack, yeah, or what she's wearing or – I mean, she'd be wearing the same damane uniform or whatever, but it's just like, a very human moment between them.

Sally: Yeah. No, I agree; it's a very lovely moment.

Emily: And in terms of, like – you know, um, there are so many problems that, uh, we encounter more in modern media, especially in terms of, like, the white savior movement, um, but what I like about this here is that Mat is doing the first thing, but then it is up to this Windfinder and all of her compatriots to do the rest.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, like, there is a sense of agency here and – um, as far as I know, they succeed.

Sally: Yeah, it's definitely got more of the vibe of being, like, a, um, collaboration –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, Mat is assisting the movement –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Rather than being the movement, you know?

Emily: Yeah. But this is just – uh, in terms of Mat's character – sort of the prime example of Mat being unable – Mat's sense of honor. He feels like he can't let out two Aes Sedai without giving all of the other women who have been imprisoned a, like, fair shot.

Sally: Right.

Emily: You know, so.

Sally: Um, there's also a great exchange in this interaction where the Windfinder says, "You are a good and a great man," and Mat says, "I'm just a gambler." (laugh)

Emily: I know. (laugh) "I'm just a gambler and a farmboy."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: God, Mat.

Sally: It's just, like, wow. Showstopping.

Emily: Yeah, wow, showstopping.

Sally: What a great line.

Emily: Really.

Sally: "You are a good and a great man."

Emily: "I'm just a gambler."

Sally: "I'm just a gambler."

Emily: I start crying –

Sally: I know.

Emily: In the background. Then we have a comedic genius scene –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Where Mat walks out of the room and right behind a sul'dam who is talking to Egeanin, who is frantically sort of trying to deescalate the situation and be like, "Yes, I am authorized to take some damane from the kennels." And Mat, unnoticed by this sul'dam, sort of is coming up behind her, like, to –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) I don't know, get her in a chokehold or something?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Egeanin's like, "No!" and, like, works that into the conversation. It's just one of those classic, you know –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Moments. So then Mat backs away slowly and just goes down the stairs –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Horrified.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Terrified.

Sally: It would be pretty funny if he just gave her a bonk.

Emily: Yeah, just –

Sally: A Sasuke bonk.

Emily: Like – like Fezzik. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: To the – the albino guy.

Sally: Yeah. Ugh, we should watch the Princess Bride.

Emily: I love the Princess Bride.

Sally: It's a great movie.

Emily: It's one of the world's most hilarious pieces of media. Um, Mat then goes downstairs – oh, no. Mat goes back to his rooms –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: To fetch his things, his last couple things, the ashandarei, uh, among them, and who should he run into but Tylin, who's back very late at night and unexpectedly early. And Mat's like, "What the H?" And she's like, "Yeah, Suroth –" Uh, who I just wanted to call Sulin 'cause their names both start with "S-u" – Suroth received word of some sort of army disappearing in Murandy? Which is a reference to Egwene's army, um, Traveling all in one day to Tar Valon, away from Murandy, so sort of a reference slash timeline point there. You know, we get these rare points where, okay, here's where two events are converging.

Sally: Right.

Emily: With two separate storylines. Uh, but she looks at him and immediately recognizes that he is leaving, um, and also that she can't stop him. Um, and he's like, "You could come with me?" and she's like, "Absolutely not. Do you think I want to sleep in a tent or whatever? I'm the queen."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And he's like, "Okay, well, fine, it wasn't really – it wasn't really a genuine offer. Whatever." Blah blah blah. He's like, "Okay, I tried to make it so that they won't connect me leaving to you," and I think he tells her everything that's going on? And she just is like, "Okay, well, then, you have to tie me up." So what we have here in this moment of Mat tying her up is, um, what in the moment is framed to be funny. Um, Tylin is bossing Mat around, trying to make sure that his knots and the way that he's tying her up is as competent as possible and, like, will not lead to any, um, anyone questioning the situation or that she was legitimately tied up and couldn't escape. You know? But what we find out, uh, in the next book or two is that shortly after Mat leaves, the gholam comes, finds her tied up, and kills her. Uh, in a particularly gruesome way. And so all all of this humor, like, about her being like, "Now, you have to make sure that I can't escape and that I can't even scream for help," or whatever, da da da da da, is then tinged with horror, and it becomes this sort of, like, horror movie scene that is being set up but has not yet happened. Which – I don't want to give Robert Jordan too much credit for that, but in a way, that's sort of the perfect icing on the cake for Mat and Ty – and Tylin's whole relationship, which is that it's framed comedically but sort of as you look back on it is just this absolute horror show.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So, um – oh, and I also want to point out that, uh, yet again, we have Robert Jordan punishing a woman. Um, not, I would say, for being a rapist but for acting in a way that women do not traditionally act.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: As Robert Jordan has made painfully clear to us over the last few books, Tylin's crime is not that she has sex with Mat against his will; it is that she is a woman pursuing a man.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, and, like, you know, just as a – we – I think we've made this correlation many times, but, like, the difference between characters who are bad guys getting punished by the narrative and the difference between the author sort of omnipotently reaching down and punishing people is sort of a matter of pattern, but also you can generally tell it by, like, whether the punishment is at all correlated to the crime itself.

Sally: Right.

Emily: So, like, a great example – the example I thought of this morning in the shower when I was thinking about this was, um, in Game of Thrones – the show, not the book – I don't know if this happens in the books – uh, there's a real gross moment in one of the later seasons where –

what's his name? Ramsay? The – the really gross sociopath guy who, you know, has his feral dogs and just tortures people –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And whatever. Sansa, who, uh, was raped by him, just, like, sets his dogs on him so that he dies. So in that way, the punishment is correlated to the crime because it is his victim stepping up. Whether that is justice or revenge is another question entirely, but it's correlated. Opposed to that is when Ramsay, uh, earlier on in the plot, mutilates – Theon?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Tortures and mutilates him. Um, and that might seem like punishment from the author because Theon has done really gross, gruesome things prior to that in the plot. You know, like, he betrayed the Stark family, and I think one of the kids died because of him or something else. He killed some kids? I can't remember. He did bad things, and so now a bad thing is happening to him.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But they're not at all related. Ramsay's not doing it because Theon did bad things; he's doing it because he's Ramsay and he wants to hurt people. So. Hopefully that clears up any –

Sally: No, that was a great example.

Emily: Confusion.

Sally: I also think there's, like, a level of gratuitousness with Robert Jordan. Um –

Emily: And both of those examples I just pulled were also very gratuitous, I should say, but.

Sally: Yeah, but that's – that's Game of Thrones –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Which has its own in-world rules for what is and is not gratuitous, and it seems like nothing is gratuitous –

Emily: Fair point.

Sally: In that world. But, um, in Wheel of Time – like, it – particularly in regards to women; I do not recall an instance where a similar level of gratuitous punishment happens to a man. Off the top of my head, I can't think of one, but off the top of my head, I can think of, like, eight examples where a woman is horrifically, violently punished for, not really – like Emily pointed out – not really, like, an actual crime, like being a rapist and a murderer, but somehow pushing against the status quo. So, it's, again, like, one thing when – it'd be one thing if, like, justice was handed down inside of the narrative for Tylin, as a rapist. It's another thing for Robert Jordan to come in and just, like, murder her in an extremely brutal and horrific and needlessly disgusting way.

Emily: Yeah, this very, like, Final Destination way.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Really upsetting. Yeah, you're right. I think, of the majority of male, um, bad guys in the Wheel of Time – for one thing, I think the list is somewhat shorter –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, but the male bad guys include Couladin, who dies honorably, more or less, in battle.

Sally: In battle, yeah.

Emily: Uh, Sammael, Rahvin, Be'lal, Asmodean all just get sort of killed either off-screen or in this totally, like, non-gratuitous way by balefire –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or Mashadar or whatever. Sammael gets eaten by sentient mist, and we don't even have to witness his, like, death throes or whatever.

Sally: No.

Emily: Which, to be clear, I don't want, but –

Sally: No, I don't want to, but with woman, Robert Jordan will have, like, pages and pages of Mesaana being tortured or –

Emily: Yeah. Whatever.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, you know, more of the classic Robert Jordan moments.

Sally: They're also, like – I'm sorry, I feel like we're giving a lot of examples, but I just thought of this, so I want to offer up this other example. In terms of, like, justice being handed – this is also a good parallel because this is another rapist. In terms of justice being handed down inside the narrative, at the beginning of Knife of Dreams, I think it is, Galad confronts Morgase's rapist –

Emily: Mm.

Sally: Whose name I cannot at this moment remember –

Emily: Valda.

Sally: Valda. Um, and challenges him to, like, trial by combat, which is completely legal within the Whitecloak realm. Not saying it's a good form of trial, but it's there. And he just dies – I mean, it's – the sword fight is pretty tough, but he's just, like, beheaded or whatever, and it's, like, the end of the story.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And so, like, justice is handed out neatly, in, like, a neat, judicial package –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Whereas with Tylin, everything is extrajudicial, literally, because it's not – there's no court involved. It's just Robert Jordan being like, "This really gruesome thing happened to her."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So I feel like men are also given recourse – in Wheel of Time, given recourse, like, within the law. Like, the guy that Rand hangs for murdering somebody.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: If that had been a woman, something extremely horrific would've happened to her. So.

Emily: I mean, something extremely horrific did happen to her. Coulavere did a coup d'état –

Sally: That's right.

Emily: Rand tried to do an extrajudicial meting out of justice, um, and instead she hanged herself.

Sally: That's right.

Emily: Horribly. So. Wooof.

Sally: So it's just –

Emily: Robert, you sure had some issues.

Sally: Yeah, it's just, like – again, everyone goes on, like, about what a – a female-centric feminist text this is. I feel like this is still a conversation we are having. But, like, women do not even have any recourse inside the text as, like, human beings with rights, so.

Emily: Yeah, it's like, sure, the Wheel of Time has a lot of women in it: a lot of women getting murdered. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Or spanked or tortured. Like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: What do you want?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Okay, so then we get to the crux of the matter, which is – Mat leaves Tylin and goes down to sort of the stableyard to wait for Egeanin and the others. Um, he is there confronted by Tuon, who's like, "Oh, you really are leaving," so, like, clearly she's been following him around, very stalker-like. Um, he, with no idea what to do and worried that she'll raise an alarm of some sort, tries to, like, grab her to quiet her. Uh, but of course, she's Seanchan and highly trained in self-defense. So what follows is this, um – framed comedically – fight scene between the two of

them, where Tuon, it is emphasized repeatedly, is a very, very small person and Mat is a normalized person, so he's very taken aback by how good she is at fighting, and is just doing his best to stay up. And the matter is only resolved when, um – uh, Noal comes up behind Tuon and just grabs her.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: You know. Um, and Mat gets up and, like, shoves her veil into her mouth to gag her. He uses his own scarf, which symbolically goes around the, uh, place where he was hanged, uh, also to gag her. Um, and so she's restrained by him and Noal. Hilariously, he does put her little tiara back on her head. And Noal's just like, "Yeah, I had a pretty good idea you'd be leaving tonight, what with all the, you know, preparations," and Mat's like, "Yeah, good call." (laugh) And Noal's like, "Okay, so I'll come with you; what should we do with her?" Mat's like, "We'll just, you know, toss her in a – tie her up and toss her in a stable." Um, at around this point, Egeanin and, uh, her people come, including Juilin and, uh, Thera – Amathera – who immediately prostrates herself ... pro –

Sally: Prostrates herself.

Emily: Okay, I –

Sally: I know, it's a weird word.

Emily: Ugh. Um, who immediately is like –

Sally: So close to the other word. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) So close to the other word. Thera's like, "Eek!" and prostrates herself, and Egeanin and everyone else walking into the room who are Seanchan panic. Egeanin here refers to Tuon as the Daughter of the Nine Moons; Mat's like, "Holy shit, she's my wife," and everyone's like, "Please don't say that." He's like, "No, you don't get it; she's my wife." (Borat impression) "She's my wife." (normal voice) He says it three times. And either before or after this, Selucia comes up and is like, "This is foolishness; no matter what the omens said, you shouldn't do this." And Mat's like, "Chill out, lady," but she's obviously talking to Tuon – or obviously, to us.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and Noal's like, "Uh, should we throw her in a hayloft too?" and Mat's like, "No, we're gonna take them both with us." So, um, here are the main points I want to make about that scene. Um, it's very mythological. Again, Mat kidnapping Tuon and her maidservant is very reminiscent of a lot of stories in, um, mythology. The one that will come to most people's mind is, um, Persephone and Hades, and as we've already referenced, Mat and Tuon both have wealth and underworld overtones to them. Um, so that idea is omnipresent throughout this scene. Um, it is, uh, interesting to watch this sort of crash down on Mat: the – the idea that this thing that he has been aware of and avoiding for a really long time is suddenly confronting him. Mat, as always, I think, has the most interesting reactions to things happening. Uh, the major point I want to make is that this is highly out of character for Mat. Mat is a character who struggles really hard against fate and what's supposed to happen, and to a certain extent, his character arc in the

series proper is about eventually, like, learning to give in to things that are fated. I think this moment is meant to be part of that character arc, but I think it's a little too early for it. And because of the way Mat and Tuon's relationship has heretofore been framed, I think it makes it look like Mat is sort of reacting out of this sort of, like – I don't know what else to call it but, like, a horniness –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: In a sort of way.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Like, he's just having this gut, uh, "pretty lady" reaction. Kidnap. Which is gross.

Sally: Mm, yeah.

Emily: Um –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As opposed to Mat – you know, we don't – because it's Mat, we don't get, really, a lot of insight into what exactly he's thinking.

Sally: Right.

Emily: Probably because Mat himself doesn't have a lot of insight into what exactly he's thinking; he's not really a great one for self-reflection. But, like, it's not like Mat is like, "Okay, I have to do this because I am finally giving into the idea that, da da da da da, I have to accept my fate." It would be so much more interesting, in my opinion, if we are, you know, accepting the overall thesis that Tuon has to be the Daughter of the Nine Moons, which I inherently argue against – we have already sort of stated that Tuon's an insufferable character, and she will not get any less so –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, but if we sort of accept that thesis, then I would argue that the much more interesting and the much more in-character thing to do would be for Mat to let her go.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: To, you know, stick with the hayloft plan, and then for her to pursue their –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Fate as a couple. But, I mean, as a – as a plot, it was clear that Robert Jordan didn't know how else to force them into the same room together to build a relationship. To his minimal credit, he obviously didn't want to have two people get married who literally don't know each other at all. But then, once you sort of – it's not like getting to know Tuon improves her in any way. Um, and in fact, getting to know her makes Mat worse somehow, by association. (laugh)

Sally: No, I agree a hundred percent. The fact that Mat is willing to – I just read a very, very rancid scene in Knife of Dreams regarding Tuon; one of many very, very rancid scenes –

Emily: They're all pretty bad.

Sally: And the fact that Mat isn't like, "I don't actually give a fuck what fate says; this is a bad person" –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Really reflects poorly on him. And the fact – it just, like – it really – it really does tank Mat's character in a lot of ways. It's really upsetting.

Emily: Yeah, Mat's – we all joke about Brandon Sanderson committing character assassination on Mat, but in reality, Robert Jordan sort of took that into his own hands right around here –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: When he just decided, Mat's going to have a relationship with the Empress of a fascist country.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which, uh – the power base of which is enslaving women and doing a whole lot of other authoritarian junk. Um, so yeah, this is a scene that I think if you're just reading pure surface level comes off as very satisfying because it is mythologically –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Big; it's this really important moment in terms of any time that one of those prophecies that Mat had way back in book four comes back around, it's really satisfying.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, but if you delve at all deeper or if you sort of reflect on this or if you stop and say to yourself, "Is Tuon really a person – is this really a relationship that I want to be happening?" No. And it's all just sort of pretty bad.

Sally: Yeah. Um – um, a couple things. One, I agree with you that it is very, very out of character, and that's the first thing that struck me when I read this scene, is for Mat to be like – Mat, who not only rejects prophecy but has been rejecting the concept and institution of marriage since day one –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Not being like, "Okay, now I know who she is, and now I know exactly how to avoid her" –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: That feels much more in character for Mat.

Emily: “I know who she is. Kill on sight,” you know? (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, just be like, “Yep, leave her in a hayloft; I don’t want anything to do with her.”

Emily: Yep.

Sally: That feels much more on-brand. That’s also what he’s done pretty much with all of the other prophecies. Like, there’s a very satisfying arc with him becoming a general because he’s like, “I don’t want to be in a battle.” Like, every time, it’s like, “I don’t want to be here. I don’t want to be here,” and just kind of escalates into sort of, like, reluctance, acceptance –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And then stepping into it. Like, there’s that longer game, like you were talking about. So it’s really frustrating, and I agree with you that there’s a certain level of, like – and this feels the way with Mat’s relationship with Tuon in general and perhaps that’s because we don’t get a lot of Tuon’s points of views early in the relationship, so it does feel very one-sided, but Mat has, like, a very weird slide into being very obsessed with Tuon very quickly. Um, and that’s not to say people – and “obsessed” might be not the right word – but, like, he – it’s – she is pretty much all he thinks about and all he’s focused on in his chapters in both Crossroads of Twilight and even more so in Knife of Dreams. And I know that’s over the course of two books, so maybe that’s not quite as bad as I’m thinking of it; it just feels very egregious, ‘cause I’m very much in it.

Emily: I think the – I think probably what makes it worse is the pivot point. Mat is coming out of a really, really rough situation in Ebou Dar –

Sally: Ooh, yeah. Yeah. That’s a good point.

Emily: Sexually and romantically and whatnot, and then sliding right into his relationship with Tuon is super weird. Like, there’s no, I don’t know, down-time, recovery period.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It just – the intersection of those two plotlines –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Is always going to read really poorly for me. And, like, I think – I think you’re right that Mat, like – and we’ll get into it more as we get into those two books – but Mat’s sort of interest in Tuon is, um, egregious, and Robert Jordan seems to be writing it as a sort of, like, attempt at romance.

Sally: Right.

Emily: And as a way to deviate from Mat’s usual attitude toward women, which is very, um, I don’t know, sort of, um – wow, I can’t think of the word. Very, like, side quest-y?

Sally: Mm. Yeah.

Emily: You know, Mat will see a pretty lady and go over and it'll be a couple paragraphs, and then Mat – Mat is usually thinking about something bigger going on.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and women and romance are, in his life, sort of, um, not the main point. And so Robert Jordan is trying to be like, “Yeah, this is his wife, so of course she’s immediately going to be the main thing that he’s focusing on.” And I’m like, how? He has so many other things to think about and worry about.

Sally: Nope. It’s just Tuon, and how is he going to get Tuon to like him, and does Tuon like him, and it’s like, this is – it feels – I – ugh. I talked about this a lot in my last Knife of Dreams blog, and I’m not going to remember exactly how I said it; I feel like I was able to articulate it pretty well. Um ... I’m not going to get it. I’ll – when we get into Knife of Dreams, I’ll revisit it. But the whole plot just feels very suffocating. Um.

Emily: I think –

Sally: That’s how I feel about it.

Emily: I think it’s the Mat version of the Perrin and Faile rescue plot.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Um, because, once again, we are deviating from the main quest of the series –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: To deal with things that are not exactly relevant –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To the main series and are more to do with, like – it’s like Robert Jordan is suddenly like, “This is going to be a character-focused series –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And you’re like, it has never been, Robert; it’s always been very plot-driven.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So having this suddenly be like, let’s see what happens to Perrin when his wife is kidnapped and how he reacts, and let’s see what Mat does when he’s confronted with the reality of matrimony. You know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, those aren’t things we need to spend two books on. Two more books on. So when we do spend two books on them, it’s like – first of all, it makes you feel really suffocated, and second of all, it makes you feel like Robert Jordan didn’t know what he was doing, because he didn’t.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah. And it's also just, like, um – I'm trying not to be totally, totally negative. I've been in a very negative space about Wheel of Time in general lately, so apologies if I've been a bit of a downer. Um. Just struggling a bit. But, um, you talked about how mythological this scene – like, the kidnapping scene with Tuon – is. It's also very tropey, on, like, a more surface level, the idea of the kidnapped princess or the runaway princess, or, you know, having a kind of almost enemies to lovers situation going on. So it does feel very tropey. And that way, I could see how it – it's got all – it's got all the right set pieces to be fun and interesting in terms of, like, mythology and tropes and the satisfaction of prophecy. But it's all just tanked because Tuon is a rancid person.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: She does not believe that women who can channel have any agency; she also, in the entire fight scene – and I know this is, like, good strategy if you are fighting someone – but she targets Mat's injured leg –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: The entire fight. And again, I know that's good strategy if someone is kidnapping you, but it just feels like – and she also calls him "Toy," which she does repeatedly –

Emily: Oh, yeah, we haven't even got into that.

Sally: So it just, like, doesn't set her up as a person who will ever have any respect for Mat. Like, all she does immediately is, like, dehumanize him and then, um, attack his weaknesses – which, again, I know he's kidnapping her, so it's hard to – so, like, of course she's in the right to not have positive feelings towards her kidnapper, but it's just like –

Emily: Okay, but, like, she was the one who confronted him.

Sally: No – okay, you've got a good point. You've got a good point.

Emily: You know?

Sally: You've got a good point.

Emily: You see a guy leaving, a guy who's bigger than you. You don't have to be like, "Hey, son. Heading out?"

Sally: "Hey, hoss. Where you going?" (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, "What – what's up, chief?" You know? She's just like – you – girl. Just hide.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Go get the guards –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: If you are actually invested in stopping him.

Sally: Yeah, like, there was – you’re so right. There was another solution. So she’s just set up as this, like, rancid, mean person who’s going to attack Mat’s weaknesses, which is what she does throughout – at least up to where I am. She’s constantly exploiting him. So it’s just kind of like, you’re not a fun person, and I’m not happy that Mat is with this person. I know we have a bit of Mat favoritism over here at the podcast, but, like, if you’re going to force a marriage plotline on a character who’s been sort of, like, bachelor for life™, like –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: At least he could have, I don’t know, a pleasant wife who is nice to him. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, make it feel less hellish.

Sally: Yeah. Or just lean into the idea that it’s an arranged marriage. It doesn’t have to be a romance.

Emily: That would’ve been interesting – would’ve been interesting on a certain level.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: If Rand was just like, “Hello, Daughter of the Nine Moons.”

Sally: “This is Mat.” (laugh)

Emily: “This is Mat. Would you like to marry him?” Or, I mean, that’s how, like, it all could come back around.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mat leaves her, then, in the hayloft or whatever, she then eventually meets with Rand, says, “I’ll marry someone, how ‘bout, to arrange or treaty or something.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He’s like, “Great, I’ve got the guy for you.”

Sally: Rand, hilariously, instead of picking anyone noble, is like, “How about Mat?”

Emily: How about Mat?

Sally: Tybalt!

Emily: Oh, Tybalt, what are you doing?

Sally: You don’t need to be in the drawer. So –

Emily: (laugh) Don’t look at us, Tybalt, like that.

Sally: So it’s just – I – I can see how it is a fun set-up, and I know people have talked fondly about, like, the – the kind of hilarity, Shakespearean comedy of errors that is kidnapping your wife and joining the circus with her.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But it just, like, is just – the whole situation is just ruined for me. And I think you – you’re so right, you really hit it on the head that it is just, like, there’s no recovery for Mat between the trauma of Tylin and then the sort of exploitation that Tuon puts on top of him. So.

Emily: (sigh) Rough go of it for Mat Cauthon. Real character assassination, also. Uh, but those are those two chapters.

Sally: They sure are.

Emily: Um, unfortunately, Mat will not be, you know, the – the – the relief, the solace –

Sally: I know.

Emily: That he’s provided for us heretofore for the next few books, which is rough. Um, where will we turn? Where will I turn for peace? That’s a Mormon hymn. (laugh)

Sally: Where will I turn for peace?

Emily: I know.

Sally: Now I just have to depend on side characters.

Emily: Yeah. All I can do –

Sally: The thirty seconds Gaul is on-screen is all I have to live for. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, Grady and Neald™.

Sally: Grady and – speaking of men who should be in love.

Emily: I know!

Sally: I know Grady has a wife, whom he loves, but –

Emily: Okay, but what if Grady –

Sally: Had a wife and husband.

Emily: And his wife and Neald all got to have a lovely, polyamorous relationship.

Sally: Yeah. Grady’s wife was like, “I love this man,” and Grady’s like, “Thank God. I also love this man.”

Emily: (laugh) “Let’s combine forces.” Okay, uh, but that’s it from us for episode 200.

Sally: What – it is kind of funny that we hit these of all chapters on episode 200. ‘Cause, like you said, there is kind of, like, a feeling of culmination to them.

Emily: Yeah. Real – really. Um, we’ll just skip least favorite and favorite characters, because our least favorite character will obviously be Tuon, and our favorite character will obviously be Nerim and Lopin. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, obviously. Nerim and Lopin, it's like one word.

Emily: Nerim-and-Lopin.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Hyphenated. Um, but thanks for listening – for two hundred episodes, if you've done that.

Sally: I know, wow. If you've been with us since the beginning, you deserve a cookie, and I hope you go buy yourself one.

Emily: You deserve a medal, yeah. Um.

Sally: You deserve a treat.

Emily: And, you know, if you've only been here for a little while, welcome to you too. Join the party.

Sally: You can also get a treat, but a slightly smaller one.

Emily: Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song, which has not been with us since the beginning, but we have definitely improved as a podcast since acquiring it.

Sally: That's – I agree. It – that –

Emily: Thank you, Glynna.

Sally: She was the fated moment for us.

Emily: Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media. Do you have anything to add?

Sally: Um, I don't think so.

Emily: Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: I do. It's related to last week's sign-off in that since I made fun of the Spotify algorithm providing me with Glee songs –

Emily: Oh, no.

Sally: It's, like, all it does now.

Emily: Is it because, I, in the house, have been, um, watching a video about – (laugh) The Glee recap.

Sally: It's possible! It's possible it's reading the data in the air or whatever robots do. I don't know. (laugh)

Emily: I'm sorry if it's my fault. I just want to know what the drama is in Glee.

Sally: I mean, Glee is very funny to have summarized; it is not fun to watch. Um. So I think you're doing it right. But no, it's just been very – that makes more sense, because I'm like, mostly what I'm listening to these days is K-pop, so how is the algorithm going from BTS to – (laugh)

Emily: The algorithm – funnily enough, Spotify has not been recommending Glee songs to me.

Sally: It's 'cause it's doing it to me!

Emily: You're being victimized.

Sally: It's – I'm being victimized for your crimes.

Emily: By Glee and Spotify. Okay. Thanks, everyone!

Sally: Bye.

Emily: Bye.