



Episode 205: Wiener Dog Cafe

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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: Okay, well, now we've done our obligatory anime sidebar and a sideways reference to Critical Role, starring Matt Mercer, so –

Sally: Yeah, someone make an EHR Bingo card.

Emily: Yeah, we can move right along to –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The real important issues. Um, Welcome to Every –

Sally: Real important issues?

Emily: Yeah, that was said, um, in parentheses – in quotation marks. (laugh)

Sally: Air quotes. (laugh) Okay, sorry. Introduce the podcast.

Emily: This is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheely Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: And this is Mat Cauthon: Boyz in the House.

Sally: Boyz in ... the open air.

Emily: Boyz in the tents.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Boyz in the wagons.

Sally: There are some boys in the wagons. Mat, Olver. Noal counts as a boy, I guess.

Emily: Yeah. As usual, I find that if I take a step back and sort of remove all of the, like, nuances of Robert Jordan's writing, then I find the situation to be very interesting and amusing. The fact that they're in a circus. The fact that they all have these sort of, um, sitcom-like rooming –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Situations, you know? Mat is with Bayle Domon and Egeanin in a wagon.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Juilin and Amathera just have Olver with them constantly. Presumably Thom and Noal are rooming together. You know?

Sally: The real love story.

Emily: (laugh) It's all just very funny. Um. Tuon and Selucia are with Setalle Anan, famously anti-Seanchan.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: If only she would stick to that.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She doesn't quite hold the line as much as we would like her to.

Sally: No. If only she assassinated Tuon and Selucia and be like, "I don't know what happened, actually. Oops."

Emily: Yeah. There are so many different ways this could have gone. So many people could have killed Tuon. (sigh)

Sally: Cowardly.

Emily: I know. I know. Like, what would it have done, though, to – I was thinking about this, you know, because I was like, if Mat actually wanted to destabilize the Seanchan Empire on a significant level, would murdering the Daughter of the Nine Moons have done it? You know?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Especially because we know, with the benefit of foresight, that, um, pretty much the entire Seanchan government over in the Empire is about to get murdered.

Sally: Yeah, by, um –

Emily: By Darkfriends, basically?

Sally: Yeah. Semirhage's plot, right?

Emily: Yeah, Semirhage's plot is to destabilize –

Sally: She's like, "Ha ha ha ha ha."

Emily: The Seanchan continent, which, as Darkfriend plots go, I'm kind of like, "Sure."

Sally: Yeah. I'm like, I'm on board.

Emily: Yeah, no skin off my back –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Watching the downfall of that particular empire.

Sally: Yeah, take it on the run, baby.

Emily: You're telling me that Semirhage, the most evil woman alive, by most people's definitions, was the one who had to do it?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: It couldn't have been, say, one of our protagonists?

Sally: (laugh) No, because this book is inherently pro-empire.

Emily: (growl)

Sally: So we are supposed to see what Semirhage does as a bad thing because Semirhage is a bad person.

Emily: Like, I don't know if they're even like, "And now Darkfriends are in charge over in the Seanchan Empire," and I'm like, even if Darkfriends are now in charge of the Seanchan government, that can't be the case for long, because Darkfriends are historically the least competent people in the series.

Sally: Yeah, I also find it kind of, like, unbelievable that there is enough Darkfriend manpower to truly, like, go over there and overthrow the entire government and keep it stable. Like, we just have not been led to believe thus far that they have that type of manpower.

Emily: I mean, I don't know. We've – as we referenced last episode, eighty-five percent of the White Tower is Black Ajah, so –

Sally: That's true. That's true. Maybe it's just all of the Black Ajah are like, "Time to overthrow Seanchan." I don't know. It just – you're right –

Emily: Maybe that's what Alviarin has been doing with Traveling.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: She's mysteriously missing.

Sally: Um, and it's true, they are deeply incompetent, sort of like a – a slapstick comedy level of incompetent, so.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Yeah, it's a very confusing plot, and it also is one of those things that, like, it doesn't seem to really destabilize anything. Um, especially because, like, Seandar or whatever it's called is so far-removed from the Seanchan invasion that, like, over here, they seem to just be operating as usual.

Emily: Yeah. Complete, like, ancillaries of the empire.

Sally: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, which sort of brings us to, um, one of the things Mat says as he starts this chapter, um, which is that he's sort of surveying the wreckage of what happened a week ago, when he and the others escaped, but also he let the, uh, captured Sea Folk Windfinders loose and started a Sea Folk rebellion. Um, but he is, like, looking at all the boats in the harbor and notes that there's not enough boats for the Seanchan to return.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And Egeanin, with, uh – uh, manufactured timing, is like, “Well, of course, because they're – they don't need to return. That's not the intention, to return.” I mean, this is the Return – they have Returned here.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And sort of not having a – a retreat, a path of retreat – this isn't said, but it is implied – the fact that the Seanchan no longer have a path of retreat means that they are firmly embedded in this continent. The only way to get rid of them is to kill them all.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which, Mat also says something demoralizing like that, a little bit –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Later. Of course, the Seanchan can be embedded in the continent without having any power.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And no one seems to really, um, take that into consideration as a serious possibility, which goes more towards Robert Jordan's sort of project of, um, um – I mean, we call him imperialist and say that he is promoting empire, which he definitely is, but I think something he is also promoting, with his ultimate agenda of having the Seanchan and the rest of the continent just sort of stay out of each other's business –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Is the idea that everyone should just be completely, um, neutral and stay out of each other's affairs, which is a very Southerner – United States Southerner thing to think. Um, “If you don't like it, I can secede from the government,” et cetera, et cetera.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But even just, like, the way he talks about how – as Mat and Egeanin are walking back to the circus, um, Mat says something like, “Yeah, most people don’t care about the Seanchan invasion, because, you know, who is in power in the government is not relevant to them. What is relevant is whether the weather is good enough for their crops,” you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And from a realistic standpoint, that is true, but that’s also a deeply nihilistic thing to say. Even farmers, who are – and very poor people – can be concerned with the ideals in the seat of government, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You can be concerned that your government promotes and uses slavery.

Sally: Yeah, it’s also, like, a very, um – like, I don’t mean to always draw, like, real-world, real-time parallels, but, like, it’s such an elitist thing to say that, like, people in rural communities do not have, like, active involvement in politics and, like, thoughts about politics and important things to say about what’s happening in the places that they live. Like, this idea that only the people in power are concerned with what’s happening in – in the seat of power in this, like, circular thinking, is really screwed up and incorrect.

Emily: Yeah, and it is, like, um – it – it discredits poor people –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And everyone who isn’t the intellectual elite.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, it sort of makes a case for, like, people will just let anything happen because people don’t – aren’t ruled by their consciences, which is not the case at all.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, I don’t know; it’s all just pretty depressing, and that’s sort of the overall vibe that we constantly get with Mat and the Seanchan –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because, of course, what we’re getting into now is Mat, um, making peace with the Seanchan as they are represented by Tuon, who’s meant to be his future wife, and there’s a particular line that I just wanted to call attention to ... Um, he says something, basically, about how, uh, he’s powerless to do anything against the Seanchan invasion, so, um, the most he can do is just sort of make peace with it. I truly can’t remember. Um, I’m sure I’ll find it later and be very annoyed. Um, but that’s sort of the stance that Robert Jordan takes toward Mat’s whole relationship with Mat and Tuon, is that Mat is never going to be able to do anything to change Tuon or convince her of any other, I don’t know, set of ethics, and so he’s just sort of coming at this already from a position of defeat.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like – and we, the reader, are not supposed to believe that anything about Tuon is going to be changed. We just have to accept her –

Sally: Yep.

Emily: As she is.

Sally: Yep.

Emily: Um, which, of course, is very defeating, and while I don't think that the point of any romance should be changing one's partner – but then again, I don't think this should be a romance either, and I don't think this should be coming at an angle of romance first.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: If there has to be romance, it should be tangential to them creating a political relationship –

Sally: Yep.

Emily: Which should be based on the idea of Mat changing her mind.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, this is such an opportunity here. If you're not going to murder the Daughter of the Nine Moons, thereby destabilizing the fascist empire that has invaded the continent, the least you can do is try and set her up to be someone who will change things in the empire that has invaded your continent.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But no, you just are going to romance her.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So that's why we're gonna have a hard time with Mat throughout.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And this storyline generally.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, just, like, the acceptance is really hard to swallow, and as we've talked about, just, like, doesn't really fit with Mat's character. Mat has – is a character who tends to fight against the current. He's never, like – I don't know. Especially when it comes to, like, nobility and people in charge, he's never been like, "Well, things just are the way they are." Like, I don't know, it just – it just sits all so badly. Um, and it just feels so suffocating for Mat to be in this situation and be like, "Well, there's literally nothing I can do about it." And it gets to the point where it's like, there's nothing Mat wants to do about it.

Sally: Yeah. Like –

Emily: Yeah, there are things you could do about it, you just –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Aren't doing them.

Sally: Yeah. Mat just, like –

Emily: It's not helplessness. It's complacency.

Sally: Yes. It's complacency and complicitness – complicitness? Sure.

Emily: Complicity?

Sally: Complicity? Mat is complicit – Mat is complacent and Mat is complicit when it comes to Tuon's behaviors and Tuon's position in the Seanchan Empire. Um, it gets to the point where he's so infatuated with her – which is also really hard to buy, because Tuon does not have, like, a good personality –

Emily: Hm-mm.

Sally: Um, that he just is, um, honestly really selfish.

Emily: Then again, who in the Wheel of Time has a good personality? (laugh)

Sally: You know what? You got me there. Um, I would say ... Darlin. (laugh)

Emily: Darlin, my beloved. Dobraine.

Sally: Dobraine.

Emily: Only minor characters –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Have good personalities.

Sally: Every major character has bad personality disease.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um.

Emily: Jesus Christ. Ituralde and Bashere, my beloveds.

Sally: Um, yeah, so Mat just is, like – he's honestly acting very selfishly in regards to his, um, love and eventually lust for Tuon, so.

Emily: Yeah. Yikes.

Sally: It's really gross. And it's really hard to read. Um, end of comment.

Emily: End of – end of tangent. Um, we pick up with, as I think I mentioned, Mat is just sort of sitting by this river that, you know, leads out to sea, to the harbor, so he has a pretty good view of the harbor, and he is considering the harbor and the wreckage that has been left by this

uprising. Noal is with him. Mat is like, “Noal is such a weird guy; he just came along without being invited so he could, I don’t know, catch fish or something.”

Sally: Yeah, Noal’s a freak and I love it.

Emily: He’s, like, wading in the icy river, you know, and he’s like, “It’s fucking cold, Mat, we should go back,” and Mat’s like, “You’re the one who got in the river.”

Sally: No one told you to get in the river, Noal. (laugh)

Emily: Noal – yeah. (laugh) Jesus.

Sally: (laugh) I love him.

Emily: Yeah, and Mat has a – has a side comment about how he suspects Noal is very, very lonely –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: And needs a lot of company. Um, which is surely true based on what little we know about Noal slash Jain Farstrider and his history. Um, but Mat is concerned and spends quite a few pages sort of calculating the arithmetic of gains and losses based on the Sea Folk invasion. Not – uh, excuse me – uh, uprising. You know, he’s trying to figure out how many ships full of Sea Folk might have escaped, how many people might have been recaptured, how many people might have been, um, murdered and/or executed by the state, da da da da da. Um, we can probably assume, because it’s Mat, that he would have been interested in and concerned with this anyway – him being –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But he feels a particular level of responsibility for it because he was the one who let the Sea Folk out. And he never is like, “Wow, I sure regret that; I shouldn’t have done it.” He affirms multiple times that that was the only thing he could have done –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And still feel good about himself and good about anything. Which, again, that’s the Mat we’re familiar with.

Sally: Right.

Emily: Um, but, um, I don’t know, he’s just sort of – he is just sort of weighted down by these things, I think, that would trouble and disturb anyone. And luckily he isn’t making it too gendered in this particular, um, aside. He will later have some of the Two Rivers gender nonsense about whether the people you kill or get killed are women or men, but, um, he is thinking broad-scale, as a general would. Um, and at some point in here, he also flashes back to their actual departure from Ebou Dar. Like, you know, they – it was pouring rain, they were all in this little parade in the tunnel leading out through the wall, having their papers inspected; it’s very scary because he has Tuon wrapped in a tapestry across his horse, which is, like – I don’t – that sucks. You couldn’t have thought of a better –?

Sally: Yeah, like, there's no better place you could have put her?

Emily: You did – what are you gonna do if someone's like, "Why are you carrying a random tapestry?"

Sally: "Tapestry across the back of your horse?"

Emily: "A very fancy tapestry?"

Sally: You weirdo.

Emily: Yeah. So who knows what that's about. Um, but sort of right – you know, there's no real crescendo there. There's not, like, someone's like, "Wait, look at the seals on these. They're not absolutely perfect, like Thom Merrilin would have made them."

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Um, there just is a moment, suddenly, where there are explosions back in the city and big things and everyone just takes off. Um, which, Mat is like, "Oh, that's sooner than I wanted things to kick off, but still, good timing for us." Although then I was kind of like, aren't we getting lost a little bit in the idea that Beslan was also supposed to start a bunch of fires in the city?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Was that just, like, not happening because of the rain? What – we – we just aren't given any explanation for it.

Sally: I don't know.

Emily: It seems to be a subplot that Robert Jordan forgot.

Sally: Because Beslan is forgettable, so.

Emily: He sure is.

Sally: That's understandable, Robert.

Emily: Yeah. Um, anyway, Egeanin comes up to Mat and Noal and is like, "You shouldn't have left; I told everyone not to leave the camp." Um, and Mat's like, "Well, screw that." Um, Egeanin is in disguise, as is everyone. For people like Mat, that just involves wearing less fancy clothes; for Egeanin, she, like, had to shave her head and now she's wearing a – a wig –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and different clothes, and various people have had to change their haircuts, and we get little asides about that all the time. Egeanin is, like, constantly checking her wig, which – Mat is like, "It's 'cause she's all concerned about Seanchan propriety. You know, she doesn't want anyone to mistake her for the Blood," but I'm like, if I was wearing a wig, I would also be constantly worried about my wig.

Sally: Yeah, I'd be like, it's – is it in place? Like –

Emily: I know. Even if I just have a normal haircut –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Hewwo? So. Mat.

Sally: Especially because it sounds like it's just, like, a wig that she puts on her bald head; she doesn't have it, like –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: You know, glued down or anything.

Emily: Yeah, she –

Sally: To the best of my knowledge.

Emily: She just has it – it can, like, go askew – (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: In a strong wind, it seems like, so.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah. So, it's not, like, professional-level.

Emily: Jeez.

Sally: It's just, like, a mop of hair on her head.

Emily: Where did they even get a wig?

Sally: I think Valan Luca just has, like, a chest of wigs. (laugh)

Emily: He's like, "Ta da! Here are all my disguises."

Sally: Valan Luca would have a disguise chest.

Emily: Yeah, he would. Um. Anyway, Egeanin fetches Mat and Noal, and they walk back to, um, the camp. It's a pretty short walk, and they're also, like, right outside the city. Like, they pass the, like, horse-racing circuit where we started off the, um, Crown of Swords Mat points of view –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Where Olver was –

Sally: Jockeying his way –

Emily: Jockeying.

Sally: Into victory.

Emily: Yeah. Um, and Mat spotted that one Darkfriend lady, who then led him to the Whitecloak Darkfriend –

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: Which was a subplot that we totally forgot, by the way. Not we, I mean. I mean, like, Robert Jordan.

Sally: Yeah, the – the royal “we.”

Emily: Yeah, just, like, that Whitecloak guy –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Being an evil Darkfriend in the city was such a big deal –

Sally: Right.

Emily: In Crown of Swords and then immediately wasn’t. We don’t know if he got killed by the Seanchan, we don’t know if he disappeared –

Sally: What’s his name?

Emily: We don’t know if he’s still in the city. Carridin.

Sally: Carridin? Yeah. Who knows.

Emily: I think – who knows, man.

Sally: Maybe that’s the last we’ll ever see of him.

Emily: I do not think we are that lucky; I think he escaped somehow, but I truly think that’s another thing Robert Jordan just forgot.

Sally: He was like, “Oh, I need a White – oh.”

Emily: “Oh.”

Sally: “I have a Whitecloak to put back on the board.”

Emily: Yeah, “Oh, I left that guy in Ebou Dar and just sort of hoped everyone would forget about him,” and we were like, we did.

Sally: We did, Robert.

Emily: Because that was a stupid subplot to begin with. (laugh)

Sally: That was – I don’t – yeah, I had totally forgotten.

Emily: Anyway, um – oh, Mat and Egeanin are pretending to be lovers in the nighttime. I don't know why they, specifically, are pretending to be lovers – like, I don't know why it couldn't be, like, Egeanin and Domon –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Mat could be a servant too.

Sally: I –

Emily: Maybe 'cause Mat had already sort of established himself at the circus.

Sally: Yeah, I don't know. It – it feels like it's a contrived thing just for Robert Jordan to play it off for laughs about how much they currently hate each other and have to pretend to be fond of one another.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So –

Emily: Which I don't believe anyone would buy. Neither of them is very good performers.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Anyway, so that's sort of – you know, they have to walk arm in arm around while Noal is just capering around behind them with his –

Sally: Clicking his heels.

Emily: His string of fish.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: He's like, "I'm gonna make you fish stew."

Emily: He's like, "I'm gonna make you spicy fish stew so you forget all about your leg pain," and Mat's like, "Because my tongue will be on fire? Is that the point?"

Sally: Noal's like, "Yes, misdirection."

Emily: "Heh heh."

Sally: "A magician's first rule."

Emily: "The prestige!" (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) I love Noal so much. The chaotic energy that man just sort of runs around with.

Emily: I know. At one point, he just disappears, in this chapter, and we have no idea where he went, and I don't believe we're ever given an explanation.

Sally: I love him.

Emily: He's so – he's so excellent.

Sally: Yeah. Just really big chaotic gremlin energy.

Emily: I know. So weird. Anyway, so part of their whole, um, uh, elaborate aliases – um, so Mat is portraying himself, at least amongst the circus folk, you know, because he's been there before, everyone would know him –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And would know that he was with Tylin, so the story is that Mat started hooking up with this other noblewoman, this Seanchan noblewoman, um, and they decided to run away together. So the prestige – the prestige – (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Um, they also have made it clear that Egeanin is the one with money, which of course is not true. Mat is the one who has – who's – who's payrolling this.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um – bankrolling? Payrolling?

Sally: Bankrolling. I don't know.

Emily: Bankrolling this whole enterprise. Um, and we, I think, last book, kept being like, what is it – Mat keeps referencing what he has over Valan Luca and –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: How he's gonna make Valan Luca listen to him, and apparently it's just that Mat has a fuck-ton of money.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I don't know why it was made to be some, like, ominous blackmailing thing –

Sally: I know.

Emily: But it's just – Mat's like, "I will pay Valan Luca so much money."

Sally: Yeah. He has this, like, hilarious aside about how, like, for enough money, Valan Luca would kidnap the Dark One.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I'm like –

Emily: He would, too. I love that man. (laugh)

Sally: He's – speaking of chaotic gremlins –

Emily: I know. He is – at one point, he does a little dance –

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: ‘Cause he’s so excited that they’re gonna leave Ebou Dar. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, Valan Luca is both the most insufferable man alive and my favorite character, all at once. (laugh)

Emily: He’s such a nutcase. He’s proof that you can make an objectively hateable character still actually be fun –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And interesting.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Oh, God. Valan Luca.

Sally: It is so funny – it does make it sound like Mat has, like, Valan Luca’s wife hidden in a closet somewhere –

Emily: Oh, yeah.

Sally: And it’s just like, no, I will give him a lot of money.

Emily: I’ll just give him so much money.

Sally: And Valan Luca will be like, “Yeah, sure, whatever, you can bring ninety-seven people into my circus.”

Emily: “Oh, yeah, sure, a bunch of Aes Sedai? A bunch of runaway Aes Sedai?” You have to – I wish that Mat would give us numbers.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Given, I don’t understand the currency –

Sally: I don’t either.

Emily: Really, in Wheely TIme world, but I wish we had, like, a – a solid, real-world estimate.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, is he paying him millions of dollars?

Sally: Yeah, is it, like, ten million dollars? (laugh)

Emily: I have to believe it is.

Sally: Oh, Valan Luca, you absolute madman.

Emily: Anyway, so Luca knows all the real details, you know –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He knows he has the Daughter of the Nine Moons stashed in one of his wagons. But everyone else in the circus, um, has been given this story about Mat and Egeanin. So they get back to the circus, Mat's like, "Yeah, it's super slow; no one's spending money on the circuses, and no one has in a while," plus it seems to be kind of early morning –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or, you know, like ten a.m.-ish. Um, and they get back and there's just a couple of bouncers, but also the circus strongman, Petra, who Mat describes as not quite as tall as him, but twice as wide, which I'm like, fuck yeah, Petra.

Sally: That's a big man.

Emily: He bends horseshoes –

Sally: I think it's –

Emily: As part of his act.

Sally: Yeah. Strongmen are fun characters.

Emily: I know, it's so interesting. And he has a – a wife, Clarine, I think –

Sally: Who trains little dogs –

Emily: Who trains little dogs.

Sally: To do little tricks.

Emily: Yeah, they're the only heterosexual couple I care about in this.

Sally: Yeah, their dream is to open an inn one day.

Emily: And that sounds lovely and idyllic. I hope they survived the Last Battle.

Sally: Me too. And them and all of their little dogs can open an inn.

Emily: They're like, "We're the buffest man alive, his cute wife, and their eighteen small dachshunds."

Sally: I hope at this inn – (laugh) the dogs serve the drinks.

Emily: (laugh) Stop. It's a bunch of little wiener dogs –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In little aprons.

Sally: Yeah, and they, like, have little apparatuses –

Emily: And they can, like, balance the drinks –

Sally: Yeah!

Emily: Trays on their noses.

Sally: On their nose.

Emily: Wow. That would make a lot of money; I'll say that. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) I'd go!

Emily: I'd fucking go..

Sally: It'd be so fun.

Emily: I mean, even if they weren't serving the drinks, even if it was just, like, the equivalent of a cat cafe –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But it's a wiener dog cafe –

Sally: Hell yeah. I would go.

Emily: I don't really know if they're wiener dogs; I just like picturing wiener dogs.

Sally: I like to assume.

Emily: I feel like I've seen that in circuses.

Sally: Yeah, I always feel like wiener dogs or, like, little Jack Russell terriers or something like that.

Emily: Anyway, Petra and Clarine are like, "Oh, hey, we're just here to warn you that there are some Seanchan in – there's, like, a small squad of Seanchan in the circus. They're talking to Valan Luca." And everyone's like, "Oh, shit." Oh, shit. Um, and I – I've mostly been ignoring it up until this point, but the sort of overtone of these two chapters is that Mat and Egeanin are both trying to be the leaders of their particular, um – their strange little outfit – and Egeanin points out that that won't work very well, you know, there can't be two captains on the same shit – ship. Shit. Ship. Um, and from Egeanin's point of view, uh, it makes sense that she would be in charge because she has leadership experience and Mat does not. She does not know that much about Mat. Um, and also in Egeanin's defense, Mat has not told her any of the reality of – you know, Mat has not presented her with his resume. In Mat's defense, would Egeanin believe him?

Sally: No.

Emily: Probably not. So there's not really a good solution to this particular quandary.

Sally: Yeah. It's funny, though, 'cause, like, are none of the, like, um, Band of the Red Hand guys, like –

Emily: Yeah, they are with them, but –

Sally: Like –

Emily: To Egeanin, they might as well just be, like, four random bodyguard-type guys.

Sally: True. It's not like she's gonna talk to Harnan.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And be like, "What's your deal?" and he'd be like, "I would follow Mat into hell."

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And be like, "Oh, maybe that's worth investigating."

Emily: And she'd be like, "Men are all stupid," because Robert Jordan is insane.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, so yeah, there's not any way to redeem Egeanin because she's in the position of being a woman in Robert Jordan's world, so –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She won't act rationally, no matter what.

Sally: This section is – these two chapters are really annoying. Like, the dynamics between all the characters are really annoying. But, like, what's really upsetting – Mat is very, very sexist in these two chapters. He says some really horrific things about women and about Egeanin and he talks about how, like, Egeanin is so muscular, and her body is not soft and feminine, and that's so repulsive to him. Just, like, really awful things. And it's really upsetting because Robert Jordan positions it as though Egeanin's crime is being a horrible woman, not being a horrible person who believes in the institution of slavery.

Emily: Which we definitely – if we had any feelings of sympathy for Egeanin beforehand, they have been murdered brutally by her absolutely rancid little paragraph about how she has a damane, and her damane is named such-and-such, and her damane likes dog treats and walks in the park, and blah blah blah blah blah, Egeanin misses her terribly, talking about her the entire time like she's a beloved lap dog.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, truly horrific shit.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And why anyone – I – and, I mean, Noal in the background is like, "Doo ba doo ba doo." (laugh)

Sally: Noal pulls out a gun. (laugh)

Emily: But, like – so we don't have much sympathy here for Egeanin either, but it's because Egeanin is one of the Seanchan and is not doing a lot to further the cause –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Not because Egeanin is some sort of, I don't know, gender traitor for being too mean –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And not attractive enough for Mat.

Sally: Yeah, it's really annoying that that's what Mat keeps talking about. He's like, "Bayle Domon must be – must not have eyes." Like, "She's the most miserable, ugly woman I've ever –"

Emily: She's such an ugly shrew."

Sally: "Laid my eyes upon." Yeah, taming – tame this shrew. And it's like, dear God, Mat. She literally has said truly some of the most rancid things, and he – earlier, he's like, "I'm worried that all the, like, damane got killed or punished," and she's like, "They're way too valuable for that. They're such valuable property." And it's like, ew. Don't you have bigger beef with her than she doesn't have nice hips? What's happening?

Emily: I know, and, like, Mat, you don't have a leg to stand on when it comes to casting aspersions on other people's love lives.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You fall in love with the Empress.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So shut the fuck up.

Sally: Yeah, I mean, maybe it's too much to ask for Mat to judge Seanchan for their ethics, but.

Emily: Yeah, clearly he doesn't give a shit about that.

Sally: It really – like, it's so annoying 'cause obviously Egeanin is – I've got a lot of beef with her. But I feel very annoyed for her in this moment that it's like, she is judged by her gender, not by her actions.

Emily: Yeah, there's plenty to hate about Egeanin; the fact that she's a woman isn't one of them.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: The fact that she's not an attractive woman – whatever.

Sally: Not attractive by Mat's standards.

Emily: Yeah, who knows. She might be a total smokeshow –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: By our standards.

Sally: But Mat –

Emily: In fact, she probably is, since she's buff.

Sally: Yeah, she's super buff, spent her time on the ocean – whatever.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It's just really obnoxious. But.

Emily: Um, yeah, and all this is just meant to be comedy for us.

Sally: (sarcastically) Ha ha.

Emily: So neither Egeanin nor Mat comes out of this situation looking great.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, but they both go to sort of inspect – like, you know, walk by Luca's – scout it out, do some recon of the Seanchan who are here in the circus. Egeanin being like, "Yeah, of course, what are the chances that I would know any of them?" and of course then she does happen to know one of them.

Sally: Yeah, famous last words.

Emily: Yeah, of course. Um, they run into Bayle Domon and one of the, uh, Warders, who are also sort of watching this –

Sally: (laugh) Blaeric.

Emily: Blaeric – our favorite –

Sally: Infamous Blaeric. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, Blaeric. (laugh) But, like, right as they're walking up, the Seanchan leave, um, without noticing them, saying anything. You know, danger passed. And Luca comes out of his wagon and is like, "Everyone calm down; they just wanted to look at the horse permits," or whatever.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And he rants and raves at Mat about how he should've been gone six days ago, and what – blah blah blah blah, they could just take the horses, no amount of money is worth this, and Mat's like, "Calm down; I was gonna say once Thom gets back, we should leave," and Valan Luca's like, "YES!"

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: “Fuck yeah! Let’s –” Starts banging on doors to wake up circus folk.

Sally: Yeah. “Let’s go, lesbians, let’s go!”

Emily: “Let’s go, lesbians, let’s go.”

Sally: That’s Valan Luca.

Emily: Yep. That’s Valan Luca. Um – (laugh) Egeanin is mad, by the way, because Thom went into the city, which, I mean, I have no judgment call to make there; that’s sort of what Thom does for a living, is go into places he shouldn’t. But also, you did just escape.

Sally: Yeah, Egeanin is like, “I said nobody was supposed to leave.”

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And Mat’s like, “Thom does not answer to God nor king nor you.” (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) “Thom ‘Killed Two Kings’ Merrillin is not going to take your orders.”

Sally: Not gonna take – yeah, he’s just like, “You’ve just gotta let Thom do whatever he’s gonna do.”

Emily: “We’ve just gotta hope for the best with old Thom Merrillin.”

Sally: “Ninety-nine percent chance he comes back fine. Dont’ worry about it.”

Emily: “The other percent chance is that he will have killed another monarch.”

Sally: (laugh) “And then we’ll have another problem on our hands.” (laugh)

Emily: There’s no saying. He’s a serial killer with no – no trigger. (laugh)

Sally: Listen, serial killer killing monarchs is, like –

Emily: I know, that would be fucking sexy of them.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So Thom is – Thom will come back when he comes back.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Meanwhile they go about getting everyone started. First they go to Juilin and Thera’s wagon, where Juilin is playing Snakes and Foxes with Olver. This is the first time Mat is like, “Oh, and by the way, Thera is actually Amathera, the Panarch of Tarabon –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “For what that’s worth.” Nothing, apparently.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, but he's like, "Yeah, we've gotta get going," and, um, dispenses the news that – Noal shows up again. Noal ran off and then shows up –

Sally: He's back.

Emily: And Mat's like, "Where has he fucking been?" And I think that's it.

Sally: Yep. Oh, the dice start rolling in Mat's head again, to end the chapter. But when are the dice not rolling in Mat's head these days?

Emily: Um. Yeah. Just, we leave them as they – as the chaos is rising around them, as the circus gets ready to start moving again.

Sally: To hit the road.

Emily: (sing-song) Hit the road, Jack.

Sally: And don't you come back.

Emily: (normal voice) Yeah, don't go back to Ebou Dar.

Sally: Don't go back.

Emily: So that is where –

Sally: That's where we leave Matrim.

Emily: We leave Mat, no longer our – our safe harbor from the more rancid points of Wheel of Time. Now we have to look to greener pastures: Ituralde, Dobraine, Darlin. Just the side characters are there to get us through it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Reese Harfor and –

Sally: Reese Harfor.

Emily: Halwin Norry.

Sally: Gaul. Loial.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Loial's cute wife. Yeah.

Emily: Grady and Neald.

Sally: Grady and Neald.

Emily: Ugh.

Sally: And Grady's mean farmwife.

Emily: It's gonna be slim pickings for favorite character –

Sally: They really are slim pickings, yeah.

Emily: These days.

Sally: Um. This chapter, I would say – ah, I'm gonna say Valan Luca was my favorite character. (laugh)

Emily: He is – he is quite good. (laugh) Mine was probably Noal, for his fish – fishcapades.

Sally: His fishcapades. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) And least favorite character, um ... ooh, well, can I choose the Seanchan as an institute?

Sally: Mm. Mm-hmm, mm-hmm, mm-hmm.

Emily: I guess it's probably just Egeanin for that truly heinous monologue about damane.

Sally: Oh, that was rough to swallow.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Um. There aren't a ton of characters to choose from in this chapter, so I guess I'll say Mat.

Emily: Yeah, well.

Sally: You've made it onto the least favorite character list, Matty boy.

Emily: You made it, Mat. Ah, Mat.

Sally: Congratulations on your descent into hell.

Emily: Ugh.

Sally: And not in, like, a fun, sexy way.

Emily: Not in a fun, Orpheus going into the Underworld way, which you will undertake in a few books' time. Nope, just a sad, sad way.

Sally: Boo. Hiss.

Emily: Boo, you whore.

Sally: Boo, you whore.

Emily: Pfft. Well, everyone, that's the first couple chapters of Crossroads of Twilight.

Sally: Crossroads.

Emily: Thanks to Glynn MacKenzie for our theme song, thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media. Um, if you want to donate to our Ko-fi to sponsor some

Everybody Hates Rand transcripts because, um, you know, Crossroads of Twilight needs to be transcribed – or, I should say, our podcast about Crossroads of Twilight needs to be transcribed; perhaps Crossroads of Twilight should no longer be in print, just a thought.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (sigh) But anyway, if you want to, uh, donate to the cause of keeping EHR accessible, our Ko-fi links are on our Twitter and Instagram.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Do you have anything to add?

Sally: Um, and in terms of supporting EHR, we are talking about an actually interesting book about empire on our Patreon podcast, We Don't Watch Outlander.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: We're talking about Ancillary Justice by Ann Leckie, which has a lot to do with empire and what it means to be complicit in empire and what it means to fight back against empire. Um, and it is very cool and very genderTM. So, if you're interested in hearing more about that, you can support us on Patreon. Now's a good time to join.

Emily: Patreon is going to be experiencing a slight overhaul in, um –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: A couple months' time. Um, if you are an existing Patreon, then keep an eye on your inbox because we will send out a message forewarning you of the changes before they go into place.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, probably a great many of you won't be majorly affected, but there will be some, like, tier-shifting and –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, stuff like that, so just keep an eye on that and, of course, if you want to join the Patreon, then, um, just be forewarned that it will be changing a little bit in a couple of months.

Sally: Yeah, nothing too major; just, like Emily said, some shifts to make it, um, a little bit easier on our end. It's become quite a –

Emily: Yeah, a little more reflective of the labor –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We put into various things.

Sally: That's a good way to put it, Emily. You're so wise.

Emily: We're also – Sally's about to – what precipitated this is that Sally's about to finish – not about to; she's got about half left of Knife of Dreams to blog about –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and then since we don't want her to blog about the last three books, we want her to just experience them live as we podcast about them –

Sally: Live slug reaction. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, live slug reaction to the Wheely – last three Wheely Time books. Um, then we were just like, "Oh, what are we gonna do now?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So there will still be content on that tier –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Is the short story, but no longer Wheel of Time blogs.

Sally: And you – you're welcome, because I think the blogs have become –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Mostly me descending into madness, so. (laugh)

Emily: As I did, near the end of A Memory of Light.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I learned a lot from that experience.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Projects you should never undertake.

Sally: Ha ha.

Emily: Okay, everyone. Um, do you have a sign-off?

Sally: Yeah. I don't know if this was ever, like, a sign-off when it happened, but at my niece's three-year-old birthday party –

Emily: Oh, I feel like it was –

Sally: This was three years ago – so, yeah, this may be –

Emily: But now's a great time to relive it. (laugh)

Sally: May be a callback. Um, we had rented a bounce house for her, and my brother – I was in the bounce house, getting something out of the bounce house, when my brother Perry deflated the bounce house on top of me – (laugh)

Emily: Pulled the plug. (laugh)

Sally: And I got trapped in the bounce house, and I'm, like, laughing, but it was, like, legitimately quite scary. Like, I didn't know how to get out and there, like, wasn't a lot of air. Anyway, this last weekend, I was at my niece's sixth birthday party, where she also had a bounce house, 'cause, you know, kids love bounce houses.

Emily: Yeah, what are you gonna do.

Sally: And she – I somehow became the bounce house minder, where – kids were also just, like, handing me trash so I had, like, two fistfuls of gross Pop Rocks wrappers and half-eaten suckers.

Emily: Ugh.

Sally: And I hear from inside the bounce house, my six-year-old niece telling all her kindergarten friends how "My Aunt Sally once got trapped in a bounce house, and it was really funny."
(laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Olivia Rodrigo chimes in with, "God, it's brutal out here."

Sally: (simultaneously) "It's brutal out here." I was like, Liz, you traitor to the bloodline. (laugh)

Emily: Oh, man.

Sally: Do anything for clout.

Emily: You sent me that, and I got such a good chuckle.

Sally: Ugh.

Emily: Okay, everyone. Have a good week.

Sally: Bye.

Emily: Bye.