



Episode 224: Zorse  
Release Date: December 5, 2022  
Running Time: 44 minutes

Sally: Everybody Hates Rand is a Wheel of Time podcast that will contain spoilers for all 14 books. So if you're anti-spoiler, 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: It has been zero days since our last spanking incident in the Wheel of Time. (laugh)

Sally: (sigh) And isn't that unfortunate?

Emily: I mean, yeah. Didn't we get a message from someone recently that was just like, "Not a chapter goes by in Knife of Dreams –"

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: "That a woman isn't getting spanked."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, you're so right, bestie.

Sally: Not a chapter goes by. And –

Emily: Yeah. Robert Jordan's, like, sexual perversions are really – he just, like, has given up on disguising them.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: He's been allowed to publish, at this point in history, ten full books with just a light sprinkling of his sexual perversions, and now he's like, "Hmm, wonder how much else I can get away with."

Sally: Hmm.

Emily: And it turns out: anything he wants.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's a white man in America. That's how it works.

Sally: Them's the shakes.

Emily: Yep.

Sally: Tragically.

Emily: This is Everybody Hates Rand.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Your friendly neighborhood – your not-so-friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: The good news is that these chapters have a zebra.

Sally: They do have a zebra.

Emily: It's not called – now, it's not called a zebra, but I'm not fooled. I know a zebra when it's described to me. (laugh)

Sally: Yeha, they're like, "It's a horse called a razor, and it's just, like, a very good horse, but it's got black and white stripes."

Emily: And I'm like – I'm pretty sure there's a reason people don't ride zebras.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Like, aren't they, like, demonic or something?

Sally: Yeah, something like that.

Emily: They're extremely mean or something like that.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I don't know. Or maybe they, like – I – this is pure speculation; I have not ever watched, like, a Planet Earth based in Africa, to which zebras are native – I think?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So I don't know anything about zebras. This is just me speculating. Here are some reasons that I think zebras would be – (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, lay it on me.

Emily: Worse horses. Horses, but worse™. Um. Even more breakable bones. They just take a step: boom, shattered.

Sally: Mm. Mm. Mm. Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, Chris Rock played one in a Madagascar –

Sally: Oh, please –

Emily: In the Madagascar franchise, and that has tainted them forever, because he's not a very good comedian.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um –

Sally: (laugh) This article in Cowgirl magazine asks –

Emily: In Cowgirl magazine?!

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Speaking of sexual perversions.

Sally: Asks, “Why don't people ride horses? If you think zebras are just –”

Emily: Zebras?

Sally: Yeah, sorry. “Why don't people –?” (laugh)

Emily: Why don't people ride horses? ‘Cause they have a sense of self-preservation.

Sally: Cowgirl – Cowgirl magazine asks – sorry – “Why don't people ride zebras? If you think zebras are just horses with stripes, think again.” (laugh)

Emily: Wow, Robert Jordan really needed to read this article. (microphone feedback) Sorry.

Sally: “The simple answer is that they aren't domesticated animals. Previously, zebras have proven quite difficult to tame because of their aggressive nature.”

Emily: Oh, I was right. They're mean.

Sally: “Even – even if they were nice, zebras are much too small to ride. A person would damage their back.”

Emily: A person – oh, like, the zebra's back.

Sally: The zebra's back.

Emily: I thought it was, like, a person mounts a zebra and then gets debilitating back pain.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, the zebras have special back-hurting powers. Look at this mock-up of a zebra with a saddle.

Emily: Aw, it's kind of charming.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, but apparently they're just, um, a little bitchy and a little too small.

Emily: It does make sense that they're too small. I mean, I haven't seen a zebra in a real long time –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Since, I don't know –

Sally: Last trip to the zoo? I think they have them at Hogle.

Emily: I don't know even when the last time I went to the zoo was. So I'm gonna guess that the last time I saw a, you know, a zebra – a life-sized zebra was the CGI zebra in Life of Pi.

Sally: Mm. Mm. Mm.

Emily: Which, if you'll recall from the extensive metaphor that is Life of Pi, the zebra is actually his mother –

Sally: Mm. Mm.

Emily: Which I think is, um, you know, mean to his mom, 'cause apparently zebras are all bastards.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah. "Zebras can be very aggressive and dangerous towards people."

Emily: Dangerous?

Sally: "Their first instinct is very strong, and they can bite and kick with –" Oh, sorry, not their first instinct. "Their fight instinct is very strong."

Emily: Their fight instinct is – their first instinct is literally: bite.

Sally: "And they can bite and kick with ferocity." This is in helpful horse hints dot com.

Emily: Helpful horse hints dot com. God, I wish I could spend my life on helpful horse hints dot com. And I wish Robert Jordan had.

Sally: But anyway, Emily's – Emily's first instinct was right. Zebras are too mean to be domesticated and ridden safely.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And so that's –

Emily: I guess it makes sense if you're just surrounded by, like, lions and things.

Sally: Yeah. That's exactly what Cowgirl Magazine said, Emily.

Emily: There's, like –

Sally: And the person who wrote this article's name is Emily. Do you have a secret life – (laugh)

Emily: Writing about zebras?

Sally: Writing for Cowgirl Magazine? (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, as you know, I have all this cowgirl paraphernalia hanging around.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I wear cowboy boots and, uh, a howdy hat. What are those called? (laugh)

Sally: Howdy hat? (wheeze)

Emily: I don't know. (laugh) "There's a snake in my boot."

Sally: (laugh) "This is my howdy hat."

Emily: Those are just two words that go together.

Sally: My howdy hat and my howdy boots.

Emily: And my howdy ... ass. Um.

Sally: Okay. That was a very fascinating dive into why people don't ride horses. Zebras. Fuck.

Emily: Yeah, the problem with – the problem with horses is they don't have enough natural predators. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) I mean, it might explain their god complex.

Emily: Yeah, horses are too uppity in the food chain. Don't they know – don't they know they could be in the continent of Africa with their black-and-white brethren?

Sally: Fighting off lions.

Emily: Fighting off fucking lions.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: God. And, like, crocodiles and hippopotami and all the other stuff that's in Jumanji.

Sally: Yeah. Who knows. Rhinos.

Emily: Oh, yeah, rhinos.

Sally: Maybe a very mean elephant.

Emily: Okay, yeah, anyway, Robert Jordan, either in a, like – either because he was, like – here's what I imagine happening: Robert Jordan did some coke, as one does –

Sally: Mm-hmm. Yeah, sure.

Emily: And is like, "Babe –" to Harriet – "Babe. How come no one rides horses?" And it was 1973, so no one could Google the answer at that point –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Robert Jordan had never bought an encyclopedia – encyclopedia, excuse me – and so, um, he just was like, “I’ll just imagine what it would be like in a world where zebras were just rare hoses.”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So in Wheely Time world, the apocalypse happened, and men fell in the social food chain, sort of, and zebras were domesticated, and apparently that’s how it works. Now, can zebras and horses interbreed? I do not believe so, but Sally’s going to look it up on horse – helpful horse hints or whatever dot com.

Sally: “Can zebras and – can zebras breed with horses? “A horse – a zorse – is the –”

Emily: A ZORSE.

Sally: There’s a zebroid –

Emily: A ZEBROID?

Sally: (laugh) Let me fucking read this –

Emily: Sounds like a frat boy. (laugh)

Sally: Let me read this Wikipedia article. “A zebroid is the offspring between a zebra and any other equine to create –” equine? – “to create a hybrid. In most cases, the sire is a zebra stallion. Offspring of a donkey sire and a zebra dam are called a donkra.” (laugh)

Emily: A donkra.

Sally: “And offspring –”

Emily: That sounds like a Utah child name. (laugh)

Sally: “This is my son, Donkra.”

Emily: “This is my son, Donkra.”

Sally: “And offspring of a horse sire and a zebra dam, called a hebra, do exist but are rare and are usually sterile.” Where was the zorse? “A zorse is the offspring of a zebra stallion and a horse mare. This cross is also called a zebro – a zebroze, zebrula, zebrule, or zebra mule.”

Emily: The – Jesus. There’s so many.

Sally: “The rarer reverse pairing is called a hebra, horsebra, zebret, a zebrinny, or zebra hinny.”

Emily: Zebra hinny.

Sally: “Like most other animal hybrids, the zorse is sterile. A zony is the offspring of a zebra stallion and a pony mare. Medium-sized pony mares have been preferred to produce riding

zonies, but zebras have also been crossbred with smaller pony breeds, such as the Shetland, resulting in so-called ‘Zetlands.’”

Emily: Zetlands.

Sally: Someone was just, like, absolutely having a blast with the Scrabble tiles.

Emily: Yeah, they were going crazy. They did a bunch of tequila shots and were like, “Let’s combine zebra with all the other four-legged riding beasts’ names.”

Sally: Zorse.

Emily: Zorse. This is the evil villain of my – oh, that’s something.

Sally: (laugh) There’s a picture of a zebroid, and it – he looks sad.

Emily: Yeah!

Sally: A zorse – a zorse –

Emily: He’s sterile. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Not every zebroid finds fulfillment – (laugh)

Emily: I’m just saying, maybe it’s – for him, personally, it’s – it’s a hard thing. Like Charlotte, in Sex and the City. She’s not sterile; she has a baby.

Sally: His name was Romulus. One year old.

Emily: His name is Romulus.

Sally: Yeah, this is my –

Emily: After the founder of Rome. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) This is my zorse, Romulus.

Emily: Why – why Romulus? I wonder.

Sally: Okay, that was a longer Wikipedia diversion than –

Emily: Well, what else are we gonna talk about? I mean, you know? I just – I can’t – I’m just mystified by the number of choices – I’m mystified by Robert Jordan’s writing choice to be like, “I need Mat to find a distinctive horse and as a, like, Easter egg for the readers, I’m going to make it a zebra, so they’ll be like, ‘That’s a zebra,’ and that’ll be a fun little bit,” I guess.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But also, I’m mystified by Mat’s decision to buy what is potentially the most distinctive horse in the world for a woman he kidnapped –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And is trying to keep under cover.

Sally: Yeah, like, who among the people of Wheely Time world would not be like, “Look at that woman on a fucking zebra”?

Emily: Yeah. “I sure – I sure am going to remark upon her –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “And remember her in all the witness statements that I am later called upon to provide.” Yeah, I mean, a woman riding a zebra. I also don’t like the optics of, like, a – specifically a zebra being given to a Black woman.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, the whole Africa continent thing there isn’t great. I’m sure it didn’t even cross Robert Jordan’s mind, but that’s why you should have a sensitivity reader.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. Not that Robert Jordan ever heard of either sensitivity or readers.

Sally: (laugh) Maybe Robert Jordan couldn’t read.

Emily: (laugh) That would explain a lot. He’s just dictating everything.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That’s why he couldn’t keep track of his own subplots.

Sally: Yeah, “Eh, throw a fucking zebra in.”

Emily: “Throw a zebra in. Um, have ‘em spank someone. That always moves the plot along.” Does it?

Sally: No, it moves –

Emily: No.

Sally: The plot further into hell.

Emily: It grinds it to a standing – oh, whatever. Okay. So Mat goes into – okay, wait. Hold on. Plot. (laugh) So we’re picking up literally the day after the incidents at the end of Crossroads of Twilight. Obviously this is fine because we – Sally and I personally – are reading this, you know, several weeks after we finished Crossroads of Twilight.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: I imagine it was a little jarring for the people who finished Crossroads of Twilight in 2004, whatever, and then were expected to pick up Knife of Dreams in 2007 –

Sally: Yeah.



Emily: But whatever. Robert Jordan is doing this very weird timeline thing, as we've already discussed at length –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In these later books. So we are still outside of the town where Robert – uh, Mat took Tuon and Selucia to, like, shop for silk or whatever and then Egeanin got knifed by one of the sul'dam, and that sul'dam ran off, and Mat had to hunt her down. Tuon has given a sort of, once again, permission slip to Valan Luca, if he's ever questioned by the Seanchan authorities. Um, it excludes Mat specifically. I don't know if it excludes anyone besides Mat, but it does at least exclude him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Anyway, Mat's like, "I would like to move along, please, because that was a bad – that was a series of bad things that happened."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: A series of close calls, one might say. And Valan Luca's like, "Pffft. No."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "I could still squeeze some money out of the local populace."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Mat's like, "I will give you the money that the townsfolk would give you –"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "If we can just leave now," and Valan Luca's like – thinks about it for, like, a minute and then is like, "Which do I value more? My own abilities as a showman and a marketer of my circus, or my ability to squeeze more money out of Mat, a canny trader?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So he's like, "No, no, no, no, no, we're – we're staying for sure." And Mat's like, "Jesus fucking Christ."

Sally: He's like, "Hey, fuck you, Valan Luca."

Emily: Okay, whatever. Anyway, Mat goes into town. He wants, specifically, to buy a horse. He does not tell us it's a horse for Tuon, but, um, if you remember, Tuon has, like, two hobbies, and they are enslaving people and breaking horses because she's such a delightful woman.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And so it's kind of obvious. But, um, he goes into the same town where they were for the silks, he gets a fucking meat pie – just, like, a little, you know –

Sally: It sounds sort of tasty.

Emily: Yeah, he seems like a little British urchin wandering around –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: With his hot meat pie. He finds a lucky find, which is a length of wood that will be very good for making a Two Rivers bow. I'm not sure what happened to his last bow. God only knows. It might be left in the White Tower for all we know.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, I could have sworn he had it at least up until then, and I guess he must have – he switched at some point. Um, anyway, he wants a bow, so he grabs that and then goes to the stables, looks around, finally finds this razor and then enters into this little, like, haggling dialogue with the local horse trader, which, um, is at least inoffensive to read. It's just, you know

–

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mat kind of – Mat – Mat's roots showing, you know? Mat's dad is a horse trader, so –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's nice for him to be like, "Oh, yeah, my dad is this world's equivalent of a used car salesman, so I know all the tricks."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And, "Blah blah blah blah, I know exactly how to examine this horse to make sure it's in good health." This zebra; excuse me.

Sally: It could be a zorse for all we know. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) It could be a zorse. Yeah, the magic of Wheely Time world is that horse-zebra hybrids can breed. Which, like, I – just – whatever. Is there, like, a – is there, like, a place in Wheely Time world – in all the empty spots on the Wheel of Time world map, is there, like, a herd of feral horses, like, Spirit?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And then they have a rivalry with the feral zebras, and it's a sort of, like, Sharks and Jets situation? (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. They snap at each other.

Emily: Yeah. Someone make that movie.

Sally: And then obviously one of the horses and one of the zebra teens fall in love.

Emily: Yeah, in fair Saldaea, where we lay our scene.

Sally: (laugh) In fair Saldaea. Imagine Davram Bashere walking and being like, "That's a fucking zebra."

Emily: “That’s a zebra fucking a horse.” (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) In fair Saldaea where we lay our scene. Both herds alike in dignity.

Emily: Two horses break forth new mutinies, where civil blood makes civil hooves unclean.  
(laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Ah, I don’t think horses – neither horses nor zebras have ever had civil hooves.

Emily: Or clean hooves! (laugh)

Sally: Or clean hooves. (laugh)

Emily: They’re constantly covered in blood.

Sally: Where uncivil hooves become uncleaner.

Emily: Especially zebras, apparently. They’re –

Sally: Yeah, apparently zebras are out here just, like, picking fights everywhere they go.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: They’re – they’re fight – they’re picking the fights with the lions, actually.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: The lions had to evolve claws in order to defend themselves from the zebras.

Emily: Zebras are at the top of the food chain of lions.

Sally: Yeah, that’s what – that’s what the animal kingdom tries to keep secret.

Emily: Yeah, the Lion King is about who will be the puppet king –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: For the – the zebra dynasty.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: That’s what they don’t tell you.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Anyway, Mat is happy with his purchases and returns to the circus. He just hitches his horse to the – to the horse lines, where I imagine everyone for the next two days or whatever until he gives it to Tuon is like, “Is that a fucking zebra?” (laugh)

Sally: “Where’d that zebra come from?”

Emily: “Where did that stripey horse come from? Who does he think he is?”

Sally: Who does he think he is?

Emily: Some sort of bougie-ass horse, wearing pinstripes?

Sally: Yeah. A little bowtie.

Emily: Beetlejuice-looking horse.

Sally: Oh.

Emily: Anyway, um, Mat goes to the, um, Tuon's little wagon –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Where he finds her and Selucia talking to Olver and Noal. Noal's, like, mid-diatribes about, um, I think Shara –

Sally: Mayene? Oh, yeah.

Emily: Shara, yeah. He's just, like, talking about, you know, some far-off place and how – Noal is, like, one of those walking nineteenth century highly exaggerated reports from various, quote unquote, explorers, who were like, "Yeah, I went to Africa and saw a bunch of, like, I don't know, guys whose eyeballs were in their shoulders," and you're like, okay. I don't think that happened, but it's a nice story, though, I guess.

Sally: Yeah. Sure.

Emily: Sort of drenched in racism –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But what are you – what are you gonna do?

Sally: What are – what are you gonna do?

Emily: Um. Did you know Robinson Crusoe was a real guy?

Sally: I did not know that.

Emily: I mean, like, the dude – Robinson Crusoe, right, is about a dude –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who gets stranded on an island –

Sally: Yep.

Emily: And then eventually is rescued. There was a dude whose – who isn't – his name isn't Robinson Crusoe, but Robinson Crusoe's story is based upon him.

Sally: Whoa.

Emily: He also was stranded on an island, just with a ton – a fuck-ton of goats.

Sally: Oh.

Emily: It was just him and all these goats. So obviously he survived 'cause he learned how to walk up to the goats and just kick them so hard that they died. (laugh)

Sally: What type of leg muscles was this man working with?

Emily: I think he was kicking them. He could just – he knew how to fight the goats and also just, like, just keep the goats around. Anyway, he was eventually rescued by none other than Woodes Rogers, the villain in Black Sails, who was made famous before he went to the Bahamas to exterminate the pirates in the Golden Age of Piracy by circumnavigating South America and writing a little book about his –

Sally: Huh.

Emily: Like, journeys, including his description of Random Goat Man.

Sally: Random Goat Man.

Emily: Who, honestly – Random Goat Man was stuck on the island because he was in a boat that was, like, gonna sink because the captain was so bad and, like – apparently, in the Caribbean, there's this thing called shipworms, which is why pirates always had to careen their ships, to clean off the bottom of their boats. Obviously you get barnacles and stuff, which slow you down, but shipworms would literally eat through the wood, and then your boat would sink.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Which is a problem, not just for your speed but for your survival.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: Anyway, this boat was sinking, and there was a bunch of mutinies, and this guy was like, "I would rather be on a goat-infested island than on this sinking ship with an incompetent captain," which really tells you a lot about what sailing was like in those days.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And then when they were – he was rescued, he was like, "Honestly, I might stay with the goats. I don't know if I can handle getting on a ship again."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But they gave – gave him a lot of liquor and then he did.

Sally: I mean, it sounds like he had a pretty good gig on the island with the goats.

Emily: Honestly, it does, yeah. You see – you see, like, some – some island stuff, and it's like, gosh, those poor people on the island, or you read Hatchet, and you're like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Man, that dude shit on the beach or whatever. Or had to dive in the lake and get the radio.

Sally: Yeah, from the dead –

Emily: But, no, this dude just had it made with all his goats.

Sally: Yeah. I mean, and not a bad gig. If I had to go back into 18th century England or whatever, I think I would rather stay on the island – the goat island.

Emily: You would much rather stay on the goat island. He was, like, healthy. They were like, “Damn, this dude’s in good shape.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it’s like, yeah, ‘cause he’s not sailing for months on end with scurvy –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: The flux, and the worst – literally the worst – labor laws ever known to man.

Sally: Yeah. This homie was just, like, hanging with some goats, getting plenty of protein, calcium, or whatever, I assume is in goat milk.

Emily: Yeah, this is a very wildlife-focused episode of EHR. Sorry for my long diatribe about the Robinson Crusoe guy. I just read a book about it.

Sally: No, that was fascinating.

Emily: Anyway.

Sally: Also, like, what luck to get stranded on an island with just, like, goats instead of, like –

Emily: Yeah, just, like, wild goats. How’d the goats get on that island?

Sally: Ooh.

Emily: It’s like the Bering Strait all over again. How – what – how did they get there?

Sally: How did they get there? How did the goats –

Emily: Could they build boats? (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) Oh, that’s another thing the animal kingdom won’t tell you: goats are excellent shipwrights.

Emily: Goats are excellent at building ships. (laugh)

Sally: They’re very good sailors. (laugh)

Emily: That’s why goats are the ones that pull along Thor’s sled-thing.

Sally: Yeah, exactly.

Emily: ‘Cause they’re so good at, like, vehicles.

Sally: Yeah, they're –

Emily: They're mechanics and, um –

Sally: Engineers.

Emily: Labor, all at once.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Wow. Good job, goats.

Emily: Well, I forgot what I was talking about before that. Um, the – oh. Noal's travels.

Sally: Oh, yeah.

Emily: First, Mat walks in and Tuon's like, "Hi, Toy. You need to knock," and Mat's like, "Okay, precious," which, you know, unfortunately the word "precious" has been sort of –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Tainted by the Lord of the Rings – or enhanced by the Lord of the Rings – trilogy. And it just doesn't make sense, because Robert Jordan was writing well after the arrival of both the Lord of the Rings series in print and on screen.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So you'd think he would've picked up on that, but then, the dude didn't know that zebras and horses can't mix. So Robert Jordan did zero research on this book particularly. Anyway, um, Mat's like, "Yeah, I'm just gonna call you this pet name because you're calling me an insufferable pet name, and that's the level of maturity to which we have fallen."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Tuon's like, "Okay, sick game. I can't wait to play this," and Mat's like, "Okay."

Sally: What game?

Emily: (sigh) Anyway, Mat's like, "Are you any relation to Jain Farstrider, Noal?" and Noal's like, "... He's my cousin." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Noal's like, "Noooo? Just kidding. He was my cousin," and everyone's like, "That seems like a lie." But, um –

Sally: "I don't have any proof to dispute it."

Emily: Yeah, Olver's like, "Jain Farstrider is the fucking coolest, Noal. Why don't you like him very much?" and Noal's like, "'Cause he was a fucking dummy who left his wife to die of fever

just to go on adventures and get – fall under the power and become a tool of –” Blank. We don’t know. And we’ll never know unless you read the Wheel of Time Companion. But insert – fill in the blank is, like, Ishamael, I think.

Sally: It’s always that fucking bastard.

Emily: I know. Whenever you’re like, “Who’s the nefarious evil in the background?” It’s probably Ishamael. Anyway, so having done this – you know, had our first little Noal lore-drop in three books or so – um, Juilin runs in and is like, “Mat, there’s a big Seanchan camp setting up on the other side of the road; bye,” and Mat’s like, “Aw, shit.”

Sally: Okay.

Emily: “Fucking – the dice.”

Sally: They’re just everywhere.

Emily: Yeah, the – ugh. So he goes out and the Seanchan are setting up, like, an actual, like, occupation camp, you know?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: They’re actually coming to stay at this town, it seems like. And Mat walks up right as some stray soldiers are coming over to try and enter the circus, um, without paying. There’s, like, a big stand-off and then the Seanchan’s commander, who is also a woman, and it strikes me that Robert Jordan is really laying it on thick with the lady military leaders in the Seanchan.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: I don’t know what that’s about exactly except that I suspect that he’s trying to be, like – give the Seanchan a sort of faux patina of feminism, much like he gives other things, by putting women in positions of power without, um, actually investigating the systems of power.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: That’s just sort of Robert Jordan’s whole schtick.

Sally: Hundred percent.

Emily: Um, anyway, she calls it off with the help of Mat’s witness statement, and is like, “You all should join the army. It fucking sucks.” And Mat’s like, “I mean, good sales pitch. She’s correct, at least. It does fucking suck. I would recruit her for the Band.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it’s like, okay, thanks for that interaction. Anyway, Mat’s walking around, and he passes – or I think he’s gone to the Aes Sedai slash sul’dam wagon ‘cause he wants to make sure they’re okay ‘cause of the Seanchan, and he realizes someone is channeling big time in there. So he storms in and finds the two remaining sul’dam, since Renna – Renna? I think was the one who was killed after stabbing Egeanin –



Sally: Sure.

Emily: Who's now Leilwin, by the way.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because, as though we didn't have enough confusing subplots, there also has to be name changes at this late stage of the book. Anyway. Um. The other two are just sort of, like, pinned by the Power against the wall, and Joline is just, like, slapping one of them repeatedly. And Mat walks up and, like, grabs her to stop her, 'cause no one else is doing anything – Setalle Anan is there, by the way – and she turns around and smacks him, and he – he says, “That killed the goat.” (laugh) Which I just think is, like, the funny –

Sally: Yeah, like, what are you saying, you weird little farm boy? (laugh)

Emily: Like, Rand and Mat and Perrin – specifically Mat and Perrin – often come out with these insane little, like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Farm boy sayings –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? That, like, aren't really correlated to our world's farm boy sayings. You know, it's not like they're saying, “There's a snake in my boot.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But “That killed the goat” –

Sally: “That killed the goat.”

Emily: Definitely has the twang of a West Virginia boy somehow.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like – most of the time, I'm like, “This is incomprehensible, Robert Jordan.” But “That killed the goat” makes total sense to me.

Sally: Yeah, in this context, you're like –

Emily: I might start saying that.

Sally: That – that killed the goat.

Emily: That killed the goat. That did it. Anyway, Mat immediately violently starts spanking Joline and then, like, shoves her off his lap when it becomes clear someone's going to stop him because the medallion – people are obviously channeling at him. Uh, Joline's Warders try and enter; she, surprisingly, shows them the door without answering what's going on. Um, everyone wants to know how Mat can be unaffected by channeling, blah blah blah blah. This is when it comes out – not when it comes out, because it's been hinted to significantly, but everyone's

like, “Oh, clearly Setalle Anan knows more than she’s letting on,” blah blah blah blah, because she recognizes a ter’angreal and also recognized – like, referenced something about –

Sally: Yeah, she’s like – I think she says, like, “Cadsuane had something like that,” or something?

Emily: Yeah, she does mention Cadsuane, and she also says something to the Aes Sedai outside of Mat’s hearing, says something about, like, the test for becoming an Aes Sedai.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: So they’re like, “Ooh, what is up with this lady?” Um, anyway. Mat’s like, “What even was going on?” And apparently the – the – this whole thing was triggered because Joline wanted to, like, leave the – the wagon or something – I keep wanting to say “cabin” instead of “wagon.” I apologize. Um, Joline was gonna leave or was doing something bratty like she usually does, and one of the sul’dam also was trying to spank her because that’s everyone’s resort, apparently, and then they tied her up in the Power and then one of them, like, used the Power, which of course is a big, sort of, break-through – not for these women, psychologically, because the last thing they want to do is use the Power –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But sort of a breakthrough in the whole “Can we dismantle the Seanchan Empire just by teaching the sul’dam that they can channel?” You know, there’s a – a somewhat interesting subplot there if Robert Jordan would only commit to it properly.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, so anyway, that was what Mat walked in on, was Joline dispensing retribution for them being violent against her, so there’s what we’re seeing, is just sort of this cycle of violence, and of course it ends with Mat, the man, the most high in the power structure here.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. Let’s see. Obviously, we don’t want to – we – we know why there’s spanking happening. It’s because Robert Jordan has a weird fetish for it and because he likes to portray women as children –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: We’ve gone over all of this before. It’s particularly difficult because Joline is written to be extremely childish.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The only word one really can use to describe her is “bratty.”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: She is excessively, like, to the point of – I'd like to say unreality, but I know that there are people who are really like this; they're frequenting Reddit, as far as I know, or the bride Facebook groups.

Sally: Oh, boy.

Emily: But there are people who really lack the maturity to behave normally –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: As adults, and Joline is clearly one of them.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And, um, it remains highly inappropriate to react to that with violence, but what Robert Jordan is doing via Mat and what makes this scene so troubling is that on some level, at least for me, it's satisfying.

Sally: Mm. Yeah.

Emily: You know? It's like, Joline is such a dick. She's mean to everyone. She's extremely mean to Mat, who –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Risked his life and everyone else's lives to help her. Um, she's a liar. She was with Elaida.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: She shows zero sympathy to Teslyn and Edesina, who were literally enslaved –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And she basically calls them cowards all the time.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, she herself is using violence as a method of punishment.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So it's like, yeah, if you set up literally the worst person in the plot, of course there's a part of me and of the readers generally that's like, "God, I wish this – someone would put this woman in her place."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. And unfortunately Robert Jordan's mechanism for putting people in their place is having men dispense humiliation and physical punishment. A different writer – I'm trying to think of some alternatives – would, uh, talk Joline down.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: I've read lots of books where it's satisfying just to see someone who's good at talking, you know, give someone a verbal beatdown.

Sally: Totally.

Emily: Um, I personally, at this point, would be like, "Joline, you're out."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Take your Warders and go."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, "I'm not responsible for you anymore, and we're gonna – you're not welcome here anymore." Of course, whether Joline would listen to that is an entirely different proposition, but it's like, Mat, you have options; you can separate people from the situation. You can separate the sul'dam from Joline, who clearly can't handle being around people that she has power over.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You can – but ultimately she is an adult, and you just have to be like, "Whatever, I'm not going to interact with her."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So there are other ways for this to be resolved in a way that is satisfying to the readers. It's just a sort of, like, sign, I guess, of Robert Jordan's insidious brainwashing that I'm kind of like, "Yeah." (laugh) "Spank her."

Sally: No, totally – no, I – I totally agree, it is a very satisfying scene, and I know we were joking, but when Mat's like, "That killed the goat," it's like, finally, Mat has reached the end of his apparently legendary patience with these women.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: 'Cause they are awful to him.

Emily: And everyone.

Sally: Especially Joline – yeah, they are just, like – he's just, like, had it, and it's very satisfying to see Mat – particularly in this plot, is exhibiting a lot of, like, patience and diplomacy. Like, he could be – definitely be doing it more, but he is, for the situation and the group of people, being as diplomatic as I think anybody could be. And for him to just be like, "Enough. You are a total asshole, and I am done," and he's gonna behave a little bit immaturely too, and it's kind of satisfying to get to see him do that when he's been foisted – so much responsibility has been foisted upon him. And you're right: it is satisfying to see Joline put in her place, and it is really frustrating that Robert Jordan has set up a situation where I'm like, "Yes, I am satisfied that this happened." I agree it definitely could have been done in a different way, uh, and it should have

been done in a different way. And it's part of, sort of, Mat's character assassination that he's – participates in this.

Emily: Yeah, it's frustrating because, um, I – I think what you're – what you're referencing, that Mat has been such a diplomatic leader up until this point –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And we're in his head, so we know that he's really struggling with all of it –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And he's constantly exasperated by everyone and constantly wanting to throttle people –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But he is apparently limiting himself to making jokes at their expense –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: As is his way. But, like, it's frustrating because of the – excuse me – of the three boys, Mat is the best at leadership –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Just generally. Um, and I think – or, at least, his leadership style is one that is most, um, appealing, at least to me. The way we see Rand kind of removed from it all, sort of tyrannical –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Very few people have access to him. Whereas Perrin – what we see with Perrin, at least, is just Perrin moving through the world kind of juggernaut-ish and people coming to him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's interesting to watch Mat walk around this camp, and he's constantly going to other people.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: People are coming to him too, but he's constantly, like, navigating – he's very fluid in this world.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And, yeah, he's making concessions all over the place. So, yeah, what – it's a lot easier to be like, "Ugh –" Rand or Perrin doing this, you're like, "There's no excuse," but Robert Jordan has made it so that Mat has every excuse.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And that would be interesting if the point was that it's still bad.

Sally: Yeah, for Mat to be in this situation and be like, “I would love to beat the shit out of Joline –”

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: “But I am not going to do that.”

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: “Because it is wrong. And I am going to accept – exercise another satisfying option by just being like, ‘Fucking leave, then.’”

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: “‘You’re on your own. You can follow the circus, but we’re not feeding you; we’re not doing anything.’”

Emily: Yeah, a person’s moral strength of character is not determined by what they do when it’s easy –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It’s determined by what they do when it’s very difficult. But clearly for Robert Jordan, this is not about morality; this is just, you know, more of his comedy.

Sally: Yeah, or it fits totally into Robert Jordan’s moral compass, because I also think Mat stepping into this moment where he does throw a woman over his knee like a child and spank her is very much part of his trajectory of moving towards who he needs to be to Tuon, which is –

Emily: Forceful and also –

Sally: Forceful –

Emily: An equal to her.

Sally: Yeah, an equal to her, which means that he’s willing to step into the role as the military leader of this authoritarian empire, so for him to sort of step closer to those forms of violence, where he’s okay with doing – where he’s more okay with doing things like unleashing cannons on armies of his own continent and all of these types of things; where he’s okay with ignoring the fact that Tuon has and continues to keep slaves; when he’s willing to just, like, move into that system without a lot of logical thought; this is really in line with the second half of his character arc, unfortunately.

Emily: Yeah, that’s an excellent point. God, it just sucks, you know?

Sally: Yeah, just, like, you read it and you’re like, I feel –

Emily: Gross.

Sally: Disgusting.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I would like to go take a shower.

Emily: Yeah. Doesn't feel great.

Sally: Doesn't feel great.

Emily: Um, anyway, having done that, Mat leaves and goes to sleep. The Aes Sedai are like, "Well, we have to train the sul'dam now to use the Power, 'cause otherwise it'll kill them," and it's like, okay.

Sally: Teslyn is like, "Then let them die." (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Teslyn is the most iconic character.

Sally: Yeah. Like, in line with the sort of theme of the second half of EHR, it's like, maybe some people are right when they suggest that –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Maybe a little murder would make things a little easier.

Emily: (laugh) I just think Teslyn is such a good character.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I like that she's the only one who's nice to Mat.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I like that she – I like that she's not nice to Mat in an effacing way –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: She just seems to treat him as an equal.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I also like that she's just like, "Yeah, I'm traumatized by what happened to me, and I will react as though I am traumatized. Fuck. Yeah, they're enslavers; I don't care if they die."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Let them die."

Sally: Yeah. They've never apologized for it or made any effort to sort of make amends, so ...

Emily: They're still trying to do it.

Sally: Yeah. Perish.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And everyone is like, “Ehhh,” and Teslyn – maybe Teslyn is another one who should have a gun.

Emily: Teslyn should have a gun.

Sally: Pevara, Teslyn, Grady, and Neald.

Emily: Yeah. Just those four. The A-Team, as it were.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Um, and, you know, Mat just goes to bed, another terrible day marked off in the books.

Sally: Yeah. Bought a zebra –

Emily: Check.

Sally: Did some spanking.

Emily: Check. Investigated Noal’s mysterious backstory. Check.

Sally: Check.

Emily: Yep.

Sally: Rolled an investigation check.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Got a middling score there.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: Not a ton was revealed, but we do know something.

Emily: Yeah, it’s sad, Mat doesn’t – doesn’t share the findings of his insight checks with us.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: Anyway. Um, so that’s that, guys.

Sally: Those were –

Emily: We’ve descended from zebra madness to just plain madness.

Sally: Plain madness.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Some absolute tom-fucking-foolery.



Emily: Yeah. Yeah. Uh, as we've said before, we're gonna be with Mat and the others for quite a while still –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So strap in. Um, but yeah, thanks for listening.

Sally: Thanks for listening.

Emily: Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

Sally: Yeah, a special extra shoutout to our patrons; we are encountering some unexpected vet bills –

Emily: Oh, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah.

Sally: And a little extra money, um, if I can get my ass to do the budget this weekend, will be very, very helpful.

Emily: It goes a long way, yeah.

Sally: It goes a long way. So thank you very much. Both the cats are mostly fine.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Don't – don't worry about them; it's just that, like, vet bills are ridiculously expensive. So.

Emily: Yeah. Um, that's it, I think. Do you have anything to add?

Sally: No, I don't have anything to add. We have a patron-submitted sign-off this week.

Emily: Oh, excellent. I can't wait. Tell me more.

Sally: Yeah. This is from Morgan, one of our beloved patrons, who writes: "EHR has become one of those podcasts I listen to repeats of when I'm stressed," which is very kind, "and hearing you talk about Wheel of Time always offers some comical escapism, so thank you. This Thanksgiving, we hosted all of my in-laws for the first time, and I was –"

Emily: Oof.

Sally: Yeah, I know. RIP.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: "And I was in a flurry, doing all sorts of meal prep in the kitchen alone the night before, so naturally I plugged in my headphones for random EHR episodes, including 'Suroth in Falme with the Candlestick.'" That's a real throwback. Um, "This was great and got me through all the Thanksgiving eel meal prep – Thanksgiving eve meal prep – and then when I went back to rejoin my wife and in-laws in the living room, they were all sitting around the couch enjoying a nice, light-hearted conversation. When I sat down, I unplugged my headphones and my phone continued to play EHR and emits Sally's voice saying, "GENOCIDE' at a full volume."

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: “I frantically paused the podcast. They all turned to me, shocked, and ask, ‘What was that?’ ‘A podcast.’ ‘What kind of podcast?’ Wanting the conversation to end, I just – I said, ‘Just a history podcast.’ Anyway, happy Thanksgiving, EHR –”

Emily: (laugh) Just a history podcast.

Sally: “My favorite historical podcast.”

Emily: Genocide.

Sally: Genocide.

Emily: That’s really in character for you too.

Sally: It is very in character and I also think very appropriate for the American Thanksgiving holiday, to just be like –

Emily: Like, you’re lucky. If it would’ve been me, it would’ve been like, “ANAL SEX,” or something. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: So it could’ve been worse, you know?

Sally: It could have been worse.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: GENOCIDE.

Emily: Appropriate on Thanksgiving, yeah. Jeez.

Sally: Absolutely. You really got the conversation started, I hope, about the –

Emily: Ah. Atrocities.

Sally: Atrocities behind the American Thanksgiving holiday.

Emily: Sure. Sure, sure.

Sally: Um, and congrats on getting through your first Thanksgiving with the in-laws, that sounds –

Emily: Yeah, that’s tough.

Sally: Tough. You’re a – a brave little soldier. Okay. Our cats are –

Emily: Our cats are being demonic, so have a good week, everyone.

Sally: Have a good week. Bye, bye.

Emily: Bye.