



Episode 227: A Billion Bees and Four Feral Racoons

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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: Hello.

SALLY: Hello.

[a cat purring in the background]

EMILY: This is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: And I'm Sally Goodger.

EMILY: It's 2023, baby!

SALLY: Oh, yeah! When you hear this, it will be 2023.

EMILY: 2023...

SALLY: Yippee!

EMILY: Yippee, yeah, I couldn't – I know that "e" is one of the most easily rhymable words, you know, sounds in the, the English language, but couldn't think of anything.

SALLY: 2023, happy birthday to me [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] Well.

SALLY: In March.

EMILY: That one's nice because it's applicable to everyone.

SALLY: Yeah, exactly. Happy birthday, everybody.

EMILY: [laughing] Everyone's going to have a birthday in 2023.

SALLY: That's true.

EMILY: Um, so. Speaking of birthdays, Neald's only seventeen, apparently?

SALLY: Yeah, I know. Isn't that fucking mind-blowing?

EMILY: It was kind of mind-blowing, but also kind of made a lot of sense, given Neald's just general behavior [laughs].

SALLY: I – until I read that, I thought he was, like, thirty.

EMILY: Me too. I thought he and Grady were both just, like, dudes in their thirties.

SALLY: Yeah, but Neald's seventeen and Grady's, like, twenty-something.

EMILY: Yeah. Okay.

SALLY: They're – Grady is just prematurely aged.

EMILY: Which, I guess makes sense, because statistically, we're told, if you're gonna channel then you're gonna have to do it pretty young.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Except for, like, the rare outliers who are guess are just Wilders or who can be taught.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Such as Damer Flinn.

SALLY: Yeah, you're right. It does make sense within the, the logic of the universe. I just –

EMILY: Grady and Neald just have such old man energy.

SALLY: Yeah, absolutely.

EMILY: Like middle aged man. Like, they've – they've seen so much.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And, I mean, they have. Literally. They were at human mi – meat grinder 20K – 20K22 or whatever it was.

SALLY: Whenever we talked about that.

EMILY: A while ago, I guess.

SALLY: It's also, like –

EMILY: *Lord of Chaos*.

SALLY: Much more upsetting the way that, like, Perrin treats them, knowing Neald is seventeen.

EMILY: Yeah. Imagine you're like, "Hey, seventeen-year-old, work yourself to the bone."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But I guess people do that. Okay, so, *Knife of Dreams*. Unfortunately, we read three whole chapters, but, you know, it's a lot of same old, same old, so not too much ground to cover. We first are with Perrin as he and, um, the two main Seanchan people who are on his side now go to a Seanchan occupied town, um, in whatever zone – I, like, completely lose track of where Perrin is on the map at this point.

SALLY: Yeah, same.

EMILY: There's, like, a stretch there that I'm just, like, "He's somewhere in that radius. Somewhere in Altara slash Ghealdan slash Amadicia slash Murandy. I don't know."

SALLY: He's there in the middle of all those countries.

EMILY: Anyway, they're going there to fulfill two tasks. Um, I don't know why we need to be there for one of the tasks, because it wasn't something that we knew was needed, but the other one is for them to get the forkroot, which we do know about. Um, but the first task is for them to, like, commiss – I can't think of the military terms, but they need to get some, like, *raken* fliers.

SALLY: Oh, yeah, they requisition a bunch of them.

EMILY: Requisition! Thank you. You're so smart. They requisition a bunch of the pterodactyl beasts.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: To do god knows what. I can't remember. I think they're being sent out to scout or find a something. I, I literally don't know and this is – this is how it's going to be for the next little while, guys.

SALLY: I don't know.

EMILY: I don't know and I frankly can't bring myself to care.

SALLY: Yeah. Like –

EMILY: About the – how the minutiae of this little, little subplot.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Normally I am very interested in, like, battles. Things like that.

SALLY: Battles interest me.

EMILY: Battles interest me [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Mat Cauthon and I [laugh] are similar in that way. And the actually nitty gritty of the battle of Malden does kind of interest me, but all this lead up to it I just find really annoying. Um, it's not, like, *Ocean's Eleven*, where all the lead up is fun.

SALLY: Sure! Yeah!

EMILY: It's just kind of, like, I just wish we were there already. So does Perrin. Perrin tells us that it's been fifty-something days since Faile has been kidnapped and boy is he upset about that. He's like, "Guys, we can't focus on a single other thing until we get Faile. Including – up to and including the Seanchan occupying just half this continent. Um, a guy who just turned into beetles?"

SALLY: Oh my GOD.

EMILY: "Nope! That's not relevant to us. It's not [laughs] Faile." He's so whack. Like everyone's like, "Yo, that dude just turned into *beetles*." And Perrin's like, "I don't know what to tell you guys, but it doesn't have to do with Faile, so get over it." And they're like, "You're right, Perrin. I'll just scrub that image from my brain acid right this moment because it doesn't have anything to do with Faile. You're right. A guy turned into beetles right in front of my eyeballs, but –"

SALLY: Don't multiple people turn into beetles?

EMILY: Just the one dude.

SALLY: Just the one dude. I [laughs] feel like he turns into a lot of beetles.

EMILY: He turns into quite a lot of beetles.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: He like [vomiting noise] vomits up a bunch of the beetles.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And eventually it's just, like, beetles. It's – the imagery is meant to be like it was just a skin suit full of beetles.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: That's, you know, we're just left with skin and beetles. Um, there are rumors of other people turning into bugs. Like, one of the Seanchan guys who witnesses this is like, "Oh yeah. I heard about something like that, but it was centipedes." And I'm like, "Which – what bug would [laughing] you most – "

SALLY: What bug would I want to be turned into?

EMILY: [laughing] BuzzFeed personality test, "What bug would you like to be turned into?"

SALLY: I want to be turned into bees.

EMILY: That's a good one.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: It's hard to beat that one, because, um, one bees are good for the environment.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So, via your sacrifice you would be helping to save the planet.

SALLY: Especially because you turn into, like, one billion bugs.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: We would net one billion bees.

EMILY: It's however many – it's like one of those jar contests, you know? How many gummy candies are in this jar?

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: It's how many bees do you think would fit in your skin suit?

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: I don't know. That's a great question.

EMILY: I'm trying to think of what bugs I would want in me, but frankly I can't think of any. I'm not a big bug person.

SALLY: Yeah, I'm not a big bug person. You could be butterflies. Those are also very good for the environment. They're pollinators.

EMILY: Yeah. That's nice.

SALLY: Sort of peaceful.

EMILY: I don't feel like it would fit my personality very well, though.

SALLY: Um, okay. You could turn into –

EMILY: I think I'd want to turn into four feral raccoons.

SALLY: Okay, yeah.

EMILY: I know those aren't rodents and I'm sort of going off, um, you know, coloring outside the lines here, but I really like raccoons. I think they're just funny little guys.

SALLY: Yeah, they're neat.

EMILY: And so weird and mean. And, um, I like them. [laughs] And I think it would be [laughing].

SALLY: I think –

EMILY: Very [laughing] – I think there would be an element of humor to the skin suit falling away to reveal like a – like a bunch of five-year-olds trying to get into an R rated movie, it's just a bunch of raccoons in there piloting this bitch.

SALLY: Yeah, four feral raccoons. I think that is a powerful combination we've made. One billion bees –

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughing] And four feral raccoons. Good job, EHR hosts.

EMILY: It's like a math problem, like a word problem.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, so if someone wants to draw us new fan art, instead of me and Emily –

EMILY: [in a breathy voice] If Sally vomits up a hundred million bees, how many bees are left in her skin suit?

SALLY: [laughing] I really don't know if I'd turn into one *billion* bees.

EMILY: I don't know.

SALLY: [laughing] That seems like an overestimate, but I do feel like this man turns into so many beetles. Like, the whole floor of the tent is just covered in beetles.

EMILY: Yeah, they're like in a fucking –

SALLY: It's like a scene from *The Mummy*.

EMILY: Yeah. Perrin's just, like, crunch crunch crunching. You know what? I bet Robert Jordan did watch *The Mummy*.

SALLY: And he was like –

EMILY: And was like, "Get me a piece of that flavor."

SALLY: I want to pepper in some plagues of Egypt.

EMILY: Break me off a piece of that –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] Scarab.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Terror. Um, but that's the big event. Is that a bunch of bugs came out of a guy. And everyone's like, "Yo! What the fuck!" And Perrin's like, "Move it along. No one pay attention to that man, who just died by bugs."

SALLY: Yeah, like I know I just made a joke about the plagues of Egypt, but there is obviously very sort of apocalyptic imagery with literally the dead walking and –

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: They're not literally locusts, but beetles are pretty close.

EMILY: There's also a weather issue later

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: In Elayne's point of view where just, like, a storm forms over Caemlyn and we are given no indication as to whether it is, like, an – I mean it can't – it's obviously unnatural, but, like, are there Aes Sedai on the bad guys' side who are causing that? Which seems like a violation of the oaths, you know, because you don't know where that lightning might strike. Someone could die. Or is it just another bubble of evil? Targeting Caemlyn specifically, which I can get behind.

SALLY: Yeah. The Dark One was like, "This Elayne ho [laughing] is so annoying."

EMILY: I fucking hate this subplot! Send in the lightnings, Reginald!

SALLY: Yeah, um. Yeah, I was very annoyed by that, too, because obviously – obvi – *obviously* we can identify the beetle suit as a bubble of evil. [laughing] That's pretty clear.

EMILY: [softly] The beetle suit.

SALLY: Um, [laughs] The Blue Beetle. Um, but, yeah, the weather is very silly. But it is just like further, going back to the beetle suit. Like, I know we keep driving this hammer home, but you're Perrin Aybara, a man turns into beetles in front of you, and just no – noth – nothing.

EMILY: Nothing. He's just like, "I'm not even gonna sit and cry about that for a minute. I'm just gonna flagellate myself for not rescuing Faile yet."

SALLY: If I saw a man turn into beetles, I would be puking for like an hour straight.

EMILY: Yeah, I would, like, you know, book some therapy. Do something of that kind.

SALLY: Yeah. Pron-*to*. Whatever. They get their fucking pterodactyls because Perrin's got his magic permission slip that he got from Suroth, that he got from god knows where.

EMILY: I know – yeah, still can't remember where that thing came from. But, that done they then go over to this manufactory where there is being – where forkroot is being made and with some wheeling and dealing they manage to requisition all of that as well. It's pretty boring, you know, Seanchan politics. Stuff like that. The only other thing of note that happens, as far as I remember, is that, um, as they are riding into this little town, they notice that a bunch of Tinkers are all around.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.



EMILY: Um, gathering, which sort of lines up with what Mat saw in, um, the last book I believe. *Crossroads of Twilight*, when – or was it this book? No [laughs], it was last book. It's all blending together. Um, lots of Tinkers are moving south towards Seanchan occupied territory.

SALLY: I think that was this book.

EMILY: It was when he bought Tuon the horse. So, was that this book?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Because we talked about zebras so much.

SALLY: Yeah. Um, the other thing that happens is that Perrin gets shot with an arrow.

EMILY: Oh yeah! [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I totally forgot. That tells you how –

SALLY: It's fine.

EMILY: Significant it is. Um, with the Tinkers, the only thing that's interesting with that is that the Seanchan tell us that they have *nothing* like the Tinkers over in Seanchan. Like, just, like, so they're – clearly they'll be great.

SALLY: Yeah, they would never harm a pacifist community.

EMILY: Yeah, no big deal.

SALLY: No biggie.

EMILY: And Perrin gets a chance to be like, "Look at how cool I am. I really admire the Tinkers, despite all my microaggressions [laughs] against them."

SALLY: Yeah, it's like the – Perrin's like the 18<sup>th</sup> century equivalent of having, like, a bunch of stolen African art in your house.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And being like, "[laughing] I just feel a deep connection to –"

EMILY: I just feel so – it feels so powerful to me.

SALLY: Yeah. I just love – I just feel a deep connection to their culture.

EMILY: Yeah. And then at the end, [laughing] Perrin gets shot by an arrow. And they're like, "We don't know. The guys who shot the arrow just immediately took poison when they saw that they missed, so we have no way of knowing where it came from." And Perrin's just like shrug emoji. Moves along. He's like, "Well, it could have been Masema or it could have been any of the Forsaken." And it's like, yeah. We're kind of, I guess, at the stage of the book where attempts on your life, as with Mat in the last book with that giant knife fight, are just, like, so dime a dozen, that it's not even really relevant who's attempting them.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Yeah. Like, even Aram attempting to kill Perrin later in this book kind of doesn't even really dent my faith in Perrin's plot armor.

SALLY: Yeah. No, absolutely not.

EMILY: Like, whatever. He got an arrow in him.

SALLY: Yeah, but also, like, Neald heals him immediately, so it is –

EMILY: Oh, no. It's so funny. Neald comes up –

SALLY: Oh yeah.

EMILY: With his hands outstretched. And he's like, "I will heal you!" And Perrin's like, "Later, later." But I just think the image of Neald squirming his way through the crowd with his hands up, like, "Look at my magic hands. Remember?"

SALLY: Remember my magic hands?

EMILY: Remember I can do the magic and make you not have blood. [a pause, laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] I wish he could. What is that? De-sanguinate? Perrin.

EMILY: Spell of no blood [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Anyone can do it given a sharp enough instrument.

SALLY: I cast no blood [laughs].

EMILY: D&D spell. Eighteenth level or whatever.

SALLY: Roll a D4.

EMILY: Um, [funny voice] so. We then switch over to Andor, where Elayne is watching her walls get attacked for the nth time in however many weeks. Um, and [sighs] uhhh, everyone's like, "No, Elayne. Remember, don't go toward the fighting." And she's like, "I would never. I absolutely would never. I'm not an idiot." And then at the very first opportunity she goes straight toward the fighting so she can, I don't know, talk to Birgitte or something. And it's just, I don't really know what's going on with Elayne. I mean, I do know what's going on with Elayne here. What Robert Jordan is doing, just, like, in a thousand pages, he is making the same point that *30 Rock* already made with their funny sketch about a woman being president.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: Where she's giving a press conference and in the middle says, "Oh no! My period!!"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [screaming]

SALLY: Yeah, let's nuke Russia or whatever.

EMILY: Let's nuke Russia!! And it's like, yeah, I guess, Robert Jordan, either sincerely or comedically, tough to tell with the framing, believes that, you know, women are unstable and can't have power, especially when there's anything going on with their period or being pregnancy or whatever. Elayne's just so fucking moody all of the time.

SALLY: Yeah, it's, like, the thesis statement, again comedically or otherwise, seems to be women shouldn't have power because their hormones are too unpredictable. Period, babies –

EMILY: You never know.

SALLY: Whatever womanly things they have going on that day.

EMILY: The moon.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs]. The moon.

EMILY: Who – god only knows what would happen.

SALLY: Their wombs are wandering.

EMILY: Yeah, fucking hysterical.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, these two chapters end with Elayne just, like, screaming her head off in front of, like, ten people, some of whom are, like, dignitaries from foreign places, such as the Sea Folk.

Even though she clearly doesn't consider them to be important that way. And does not treat them that way.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, and we're just supposed to be like, "Yeah, that was a totally well-earned moment of her screaming her head off because she's so frustrated and so upset, because everyone keeps point out how she needs to get out of her wet clothes." And it's like, Elayne. You do need to get out of your wet clothes.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I don't know what to tell. Yeah, it's vaguely annoying that everyone's treating you like you're made of glass while you're pregnant, but your reverse response, which is acting like you are unbreaking, as in Bruce Willis in the M. Night Shyamalan movie *Unbreakable*.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: Is also not rational. Like, yeah. Sure. Maybe if you want to believe your weird logic that you can't die while you're pregnant because Min said your babies will be fine. Not true. I mean...just – like, even if you believe that, you could still get pneumonia.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: How will you rule the country, then?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: You know? Like, you are a leader. Yes, sorry. Your health is important, especially in siege – siege time.

SALLY: Yeah. I also just feel, like, yes everybody is babying her and that's really annoying. But it's also – like saying, "Hey, you should go put on some dry clothes and get warm." Feels to me almost more like a pleasantry.

EMILY: Yeah it's just –

SALLY: Of course it could be taken as annoying if the tone is right, but just be like, "Yep. Going to put on some dry clothes." I don't need to scream about it.

EMILY: Yeah. She's just like, "God, everyone who's seen me has reacted to the fact that I am dripping wet." And I'm like, "Are they supposed to ignore that fact completely?"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They would walk away and be like, “Oh my god. I didn’t say anything about the fact that she’s dripping wet. What’s wrong with me?”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: You know, that’s how the human brain works.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And also, Elayne, if you want them to quit babying you, quit acting like a baby. Sorry.

SALLY: Yeah, like, quit acting like a petulant teenager, which you are, I guess, technically. Even though you are –

EMILY: Less than Neald.

SALLY: Twenty. I know. Neald – you don’t see Neald screaming at the top of his lungs.

EMILY: Though he deserves it way more than Elayne.

SALLY: Despite all the labor law violations [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah, Jesus Christ.

SALLY: Um, so yeah. There’s just nothing else to say. Like, Robert Jordan thinks that Elayne acting irrationally is –

EMILY: The height of comedy.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, the big important thing that happens here is that we finally meet Charlz [laughs].

SALLY: Charlz with a Z!

EMILY: Charlz with a Z. Guybon. I don’t know what that – Guybon?

SALLY: Charlz Guybon.

EMILY: Guybon. My name –

SALLY: My name’s Guybon.

EMILY: Guybon. Charlz Guybon.

SALLY: Yeah, GuyBON [laughs].

EMILY: Guybon! Bye – what?

SALLY: [laughing] It's the most absurd name. Guybon. Bon –

EMILY: It makes no sense.

SALLY: Gon Bye.

EMILY: Robert Jordan was having a stroke while writing that name specifically.

SALLY: [laughing] Guybon. Guybon!

EMILY: I'm gonna put a Z at the end of it. Just for the fun.

SALLY: Charlz Guybon. Is it supposed to be some deranged derivative of Charles de Gaulle?  
[laughs]

EMILY: Who fucking knows? Anyway, he shows up with, like, ten thousand soldiers, which is kind of a big deal. And Elayne's like, "Fuck yeah! That's a great deal. You're also promoted, because Birgitte needs a second in command, so she can fucking sleep." Because apparently literally no one else in this city can do that job.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And it's, like, okay. Stop it. I don't believe you. Um, yeah, but Charlz is just a dude in his twenties, who's like the go – the one who reports this and Elayne's like, "Congratulations, you've just been promoted." And he's like, "I have [laughing] no experience."

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah.

EMILY: She's like, "That doesn't really matter, because you're very hot."

SALLY: And tragically that's true. Yeah.

EMILY: "And you're the one who gave me the good news. So there you go!" I like to imagine a – who would I like to imagine Charlz Guybon to be in a tumultuous romantic relationship with?

SALLY: Hmmm!

EMILY: Isn't there a captain of the guard in Tar Valon, too? Or am I imagining that?

SALLY: Oh, no. I think there is, yeah. I don't know what his name is.

EMILY: I just think captains of the guard should get to, you know –

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Fuck [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Kiss a little.

SALLY: Yeah, just kiss a little as a treat.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: I don't think there's anything wrong with that. Love is love.

EMILY: Love [laughs]. Love wins.

SALLY: [laughs] Love wins.

EMILY: [laughing]

SALLY: Whether you're the captain of the guard or not.

EMILY: Um.

SALLY: Charlz Guybon. You could be with the guy in Tar Valon. You could be with...hmm.

EMILY: I think Charlz Guybon should get to do lots of things.

SALLY: Hmm.

EMILY: To help deal with the problems in Andor. I think he should be, like, a honey trap for Mazrim Taim.

SALLY: [gasps loudly] That sounds fabulous!

EMILY: Then we could have, like, a fatal attraction thing going on.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And then he could stab Mazrim Taim or something. And that would be nice for me, specifically.

SALLY: Yeah! I *love* the plot that, uh, Charlz – Charlz Guy – [laughs] I can't say his name. Charlz Guybon. The dyslexia in my brain is being like –

EMILY: Charlz Guybon.

SALLY: “Bygone?”

EMILY: I know.

SALLY: Bye?

EMILY: Let bygones by Guybons – bon. Let bygones be –

BOTH: Guybons.

SALLY: Like, it is really fucking with me.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: But I do love the new plot for Charlz, that he gets turned into a – a honey trapping spy.

EMILY: I think some men should get to be femme fatales and that’s that on that.

SALLY: Yeah. Charlz.

EMILY: As a treat, you know?

SALLY: Yeah. Also, if you wanted to make his name Charles, just don’t spell it with a Z. It’s like a rap name.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Charlz.

EMILY: Charlz. My name is Lil Charlz.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: ZZZ.

SALLY: Charlzz.

EMILY: Like, are we supposed to really pronounce that hard Z, you know?

SALLY: Charl—ZUH.

EMILY: If and when the *Wheel of Time* on Amazon Prime gets to this character are they going to really emphasize the Z?

SALLY: Charl-ZUH.



EMILY: Charl-ZZZ. [laughs] No, no, no. It's Charlz.

SALLY: Charlz.

EMILY: CharlZZZZ? Speaking of people with bees in their –

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, Charlz Guybon will also turn into a billion bees.

EMILY: That's not his real name, that's just the bees.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I was hoping to find a...

SALLY: Yeah, a pronunciation. He's not important enough. He only brings.

EMILY: Sadly, yeah, sadly he's not in here.

SALLY: Ten thousand soldiers. Also, this is just my, like, petty compliant. I hate that Elayne just, like, rejects the army that Rand gave her, which then, fine, sets up a plot of her having to build her own army. And then immediately she just [laughing] gets another army.

EMILY: Yeah, just another dude deliv – another handsome man delivers an army to her through no effort of her own.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They were just already on their way.

SALLY: And it just is, like, one or the other would be fine, but you can't just be like, "No to Rand's army. Yes to Charlz's army." It just bothers me.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Like, make Elayne work for something in her whole life.

EMILY: Woof. The only other thing that happens with Elayne, this is just the constant Elayne chapter. You know, she's just walking through the palace at Caemlyn and she gets assailed by, like, seven different people or groups of people. She comes across Reane Corly, who's with two former *damane*, one of whom was like –

SALLY: [whispers] Oh yeah.

EMILY: Take prisoner in Tanchico and one of whome is Seanchan born. And it's, like, a big deal because the one who was born in Seanchan has sort of finally started making steps toward, um, not wanting to be a *damane* anymore and asserting her individuality. Um, but that's just

mostly framed as her being emotionally volatile and fragile and deeply annoying to everyone around her. Like kind of everyone else.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: And we're also told that one of the *sul'dam* has admitted to, um, being able to see the weaves. And Elayne's like, "Great. Send her back to Seanchan." And they're like – Reane's like, "So she can just get collared with the rest of the *damane*?" And Elayne's like, "Yeah, I don't care. She's – she did a crime against humanity by being a *sul'dam*, so I do not care about her individually and also it will be a good tactic to eventually take down the Seanchan, because that secret won't be able to be kept." And it's, like, I don't know who's side we're supposed to be on in that particular argument. I think Robert Jordan has sort of been building the thesis that this whole, um, *sul'dam* being able to channel is the straw that will break the Seanchan empire's back, um, but how they go about doing that seems to be up in the air a little bit. Elayne's strategy is about as sound as anyone else's, I guess. It's not great from a humanist perspective, or like a restorative justice perspective, and Reane clearly doesn't think very highly of it. But Elayne's like, "I'm not emotional. I'm logical. And logically this is the correct thing to do." And it's just like [sighs], is it though?

SALLY: Yeah. I have a couple of thoughts. My first is about, um – okay. My thoughts are first around this idea that the fact that the *sul'dam* can channel like breaking the Seanchan empire. Does not make sense to me in the same way that I don't – I still don't fully grasp the significance of the quote unquote breaking of the Aiel by revealing to them that they were once Tinkers. They're supposed to be these huge cultural revelations that will just, like, shatter the foundation of everyone's cultural belief. And I just struggle with it because I don't see any, like, real world parallel to this that I can fully wrap my around. Like I – I don't know. Maybe I'm just not fully seeing it, but I feel like there's not core belief that I hold that is so integral to my sort of, like, sanity and grasp and reality that someone would take that way from me and I would have – and I would see that – if that were true for my community that I would see the community crumble. I just – I know there are things that can really harm a community if you take a belief away from them. I just really can't grasp something that's so extreme it would collapse an entire empire.

EMILY: Well, and speaking of, like, the Aiel, it hasn't collapsed the Aiel.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like many, the majority, I would say, of the Aiel community is persisting in their current form.

SALLY: Yeah. Good point.

EMILY: So Robert Jordan's own metaphor doesn't work.

SALLY: Yeah, good point.

EMILY: But, yeah, I agree with you that, like, it is – when there are big revelations about a system of power, the way the system of power operates is to suppress that information.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: And usually they do so effectively, or at least people learn to live with it. Like, when the news broke about the rampant sexual abuse in the Catholic church –

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah.

EMILY: That, like, obviously caused a lot of people to leave the church or have crises of faith, but the Catholic church is still around and is still a powerhouse.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: you know, that didn't break the church. We still have a fucking pope.

SALLY: Yeah, that's a really good analogy, Emily.

EMILY: So, like, empires don't just fall because of one, like, little itty bitty thing. As big as you might think that is, like, they'll figure it out.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Their thing is crisis management. The Seanchan empire is a machine built on crisis management. They'll figure it out.

SALLY: And I think that's the other thing that maybe just doesn't work for me is like – this is more true of the Seanchan than the Aiel, but the Aiel is also a warrior culture, so there are some parallels there of like – I feel, like, yes cultures are made up of people, but cultures are not...their people. Cultures can persist when there are things like warrior-based, values-based.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: A machine, you know? So, you can't just, like, upset a few people and destroy the whole culture that just doesn't work. And also, if this is the experiment that Robert Jordan wants to play with, I just don't think the groundwork is laid well enough with either of those cultures. Like, I just – it's very much show don't tell and that just bothers me. Like, I'm told over and over again that the Aiel finding out they were once pacifists is, like, horrific to them, but it's, like, it was *thousands* of years ago.

EMILY: Yeah, that's the sort of thing that, for us to understand your project, you would – it would require us to be fully immersed.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: In those cultures specifically and for that, like to be the point of the story. Not the subplot.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: So, um, otherwise we're just kind of like, "Yeah, I guess we'll take your word for it," but it really is transparent that we're taking your word for it, you know? You haven't done a lot to prove it to us.

SALLY: Yeah. Um, I feel like I didn't make my – a very good point about what I was trying to say about cultures. You said it much better with the idea that the empire is a machine. Um, and machines don't really need beliefs. They can just pick up a different one and keep plowing through.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: My second point about, like, Elayne's whole decision here is [laughs] I feel like Robert Jordan is trying to set us up with this very intense ethical dilemma. Is it the right thing to send a couple women to be harmed if it ultimately means destroying the Seanchan empire? It's like the Trolley Problem [laughs]. Again.

EMILY: Yeah. Fucking Trolley Problem.

SALLY: [laughing] Once again we've got the Trolley Problem.

EMILY: This is more relevant if you listen to our side podcast [laughs] We Don't Watch Outlander.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Where we've had a lot of beef with the Trolley Problem lately [laughs].

SALLY: Um, like, is it better to harm a few people in order to destroy something that would save a bunch of people, or does, like, ethics exist in your individual relationships and the small choices that you make? And I just feel like...Robert Jordan doesn't get to do this. Like, he hasn't earned the right for us to have this ethical dilemma with Elayne when he just, like, literally doesn't give a shit about ethics at all in most of his subplots. Um, like, I don't know. Like, again, contrasting this with what's going on with Perrin. Like, we're just, like, bulldozing through Perrin, not allowed to pay attention to ethics, to these horrific things that are going on. Mat, in his own way, is also bulldozing through these exact same ethics. And suddenly Elayne is just, like, making a choice that of course we are uncomfortable with, but, like, I don't know. I feel, like, again, because it is a woman the framing is supposed to leave us a little bit more uncomfortable. And I just feel like he hasn't earned that. He hasn't earned that dilemma from me.

EMILY: Yeah. It's exactly the same thing. Like, Robert Jordan can't just make subplots out of major issues the way that he's – he's doing this. Like, this entire thing, the decision of how to handle this particular dilemma, could be like a book in and of itself, if we were writing a book in the style of say, like, *The Goblin Emperor*.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: Which is about people making good choices and ethical choices and, like, how leaders handle leadership.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Duh, duh, duh, duh, duh. But *The Wheel of Time* is clearly not devoted to that project, ethics and leadership. That's why Elayne is Queen of Andor.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: You know?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: There's nothing ethical about that. She inherited it.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: She's not fit for the job by any virtue – by virtue of anything except the fact that she was born to Morgase, who also was not fit for the job.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Not to be like, "Women can't do anything," but...Morgase and Elayne aren't good queens. Sorry if that's, like, your, you know, [claps] you're really devoted to the idea of the monarchy [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah. Just. Yeah. Again, it's too big of a series, trying to tackle too many heavy topics when, like, like you've said, this decision – should we send this woman back – should be, like, have very intense focus on it. And not just be something that's thrown out of hand in what is otherwise sort of a rest chapter between big events.

EMILY: Yeah. Yeah.

SALLY: It's kind of really despicable on Robert Jordan's part. Um, I don't know. I take a lot of beef with authors who use things like this as sort of just, like, scenery along the way to their major plot, which is somehow just a big fight that's going to resolve all the issues.

EMILY: Yeah, it makes, like, actual ethical dilemmas, it trivializes them, you know?

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Like, yeah you're exactly right. The entire point of this series, *The Wheel of Time* series, is to get us to the Last Battle, where things will be decided in, like, a literal duel between the champion of the Light and the champion of Dark.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So, yeah, having us be like, "Oh, but it's also a humanist project, where everyone needs to be making the correct choices along the way or somehow Rand will lose?" Like, patently, that's not true.

SALLY: No.

EMILY: It doesn't matter what Elayne does here. In terms of the overall plot.

SALLY: No, it doesn't.

EMILY: And Robert Jordan can't convince us that it does. So, why throw it in there?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [sighs] That's just sort of, um, I guess what you lose when you write a big book series that's just ultimately about being decided by who has better magic or sword powers. And don't come at me with the fucking ethical dilemmas that Brandon Sanderson tried to write into *A Memory of Light*. Too little, too late, besties.

SALLY: Yeah, and I also think like – there's also nothing wrong with writing a story that's, like, going to settled in a duel between the champion of the Light and the champion of the Dark. If you want to play on, like, that level of mythology, that's fine. Like, I don't know how relevant it is to the twenty-first century, but, like, that's okay. It's still enjoyable and fun. Like, other book series are getting much more into the minutiae of ethical decisions and warfare and leadership, et cetera, et cetera. If you just wanna be like, "Gotta train the best magician to fight the world's most evil magician," I'll be like, "Yeah, okay. That's fine. I understand the project."

EMILY: Yeah, there's stuff to do there. But that's your project, Robert Jordan! I know you have fourteen books, and it seems like you can do everything in those fourteen books, but, I mean, your skill is a factor.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah.

EMILY: Don't do things you're shitty at [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] No, you're right. There – mythology can be very relevant to the twenty-first century and it's not fair for me to say, "I don't know how relevant it is," but it's, like, yeah.

Commit to the project. And, like, that's obviously what you're good at. Like, the parts of *Wheel of Time* that are very mythological are the parts that are the most fun to read, because that's Robert Jordan's strength and he's leaning into that.

EMILY: Yeah, play to your strengths, bucko. Quit trying to get us with this other shit.

SALLY: Yeah, like, you don't need all these chapters about ruling countries and shit.

EMILY: While pregnant [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah [scoffs]. While pregnant.

EMILY: Because you know so much about either of those things.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, because you have also been a pregnant woman ruling a monarch-based country. That's – he's writing – write what you know! [laughs] Um, so. Anyway, those are my thoughts on Elayne's whole schtick.

EMILY: Yeah, Elayne then runs into some of the Sea Folk who are like – I can't even remember now what the Sea Folk [laughs] beef is.

SALLY: Oh! They're like, "Where is our apprentice who ran away with Merilille?"

EMILY: Oh, right. They're like, "Merilille clearly kidnapped our very abused apprentice." And Elayne's like, "Okay. I don't know about that, but, like, we don't know where she is." And they're like, "Stop lying to us." And Elayne's like, "You calling me a fucking liar?" And they're like [mumbling noises]. And it's like, why are we having – what – there is no point to this scene, except to remind us that Merilille is gone and so is Talaan, the apprentice, but, again, neither of those things is relevant to the overall series, so. I'm not sure why we're being reminded of it. Um, but anyway, that's those three chapters.

SALLY: Yah.

EMILY: Perrin has acquired a great deal of forkroot and is stressed about Faile, not the guy turning into beetles in front of his eyes.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: His priorities are so healthy.

SALLY: His priorities are correct. Everyone who's worried about the beetle man needs to –

EMILY: Chill the fuck out!

SALLY: Chill the fuck out. You've never seen a guy turn into beetles? Come on.

EMILY: What about this other guy's wife? You know.

SALLY: Yeah. What about this guy's wife?

EMILY: Have you considered that? Have you considered that dude's wife?

SALLY: [laughs] If you haven't, something's fucked up in your head.

EMILY: Yeah. And Elayne's over here just doing little Elayne things.

SALLY: Girlbossing.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Too close to the sun.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And that's that. We're gonna still be with Elayne next time, unfortunately.

SALLY: [gagging noises]

EMILY: But that's how it goes.

SALLY: What a way to ring in 2023.

EMILY: You win some, you lose some. Yeah, seriously. Miserable!

SALLY: Welcome to 2023, let's...um. God! I can't think of anything.

EMILY: I know. It's hard.

SALLY: It's too hard.

EMILY: So hard. So, so.

SALLY: Sooo!

EMILY: So that's it.

SALLY: We did it. Another episode of EHR.

EMILY: [laughs]



SALLY: I'm glad after a week off we remembered how to do it.

EMILY: I barely did.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: That should be obvious from this episode.

SALLY: [laughs] I feel like every time we skip a week, I sit back down at the microphone and I'm like, "Oh my god."

EMILY: [high pitched] What am I doing?

SALLY: How – what?

EMILY: [high pitched] How do I talk?

SALLY: I have to speak? No.

EMILY: So, [laughs] Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media. Do you have anything to add?

SALLY: Um, ah [laughs]. Sorry. Just opened my locket.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughing] Maybe that will be my sign off.

EMILY: [laughs] Okay.

SALLY: Um, no I don't. Thanks to our patrons for getting through that Trolley Problem episode of We Don't Watch Outlander.

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah, sorry.

SALLY: [laughs] Because, um –

EMILY: Sorry I uploaded the wrong audio at first.

SALLY: No, that's fine. I just think that we got a little, maybe a little *too* angry [laughing] about the Trolley Problem.

EMILY: [laughs] I was really upset about it.

SALLY: [laughing] No, I was too. I was like, “Why is this happening?” UGH, philosophy sucks.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: That’s my hot take.

EMILY: WE both sound like Eleanor from *The Good Place* [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] Who died and put him in charge?

EMILY: [laughs] Okay, do you have a sign off?

SALLY: Um, yes. I was laughing when I was trying to talk about our patrons, because I opened this tiny locket that Emily gave me from Christmas [laughing] that has just two very, very small pictures. One of is of Tybalt and one is of Ed [laughing] and they’re so funny.

EMILY: It’s just, like, close ups of their faces [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, it’s just, like, very close. And both of them look vaguely –

EMILY: Haunted?

SALLY: Yeah [laughs]. Like you’d see them in a *Scooby-Doo* castle and their eyes would be following you [laughs].

EMILY: I picked the picture based on its creepiness.

SALLY: I *love* it.

EMILY: It’s just them sitting next to each other, looking like the twins in *The Shining*. And I was like, “Perfect.”

SALLY: Yeah. No, it is, like, my favorite thing I’ve ever owned.

EMILY: I wanted to capture those vibes. Yeah, you’ve been wearing that locket.

SALLY: [locket jangling in the background] Yeah, I love it. I love it so much.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: I can keep them close to my heart.

EMILY: Just like Carrie Bradshaw and her wedding ring from Aiden.

SALLY: [gagging noises, sighs] It's just like that episode of *Sex and the City*, you guys. That's my whole life.

EMILY: Okay, everyone. Have a good year?

SALLY: Yeah. We're done! See you next year! 2024!

EMILY: Goodbye!