



Episode 235: Who Needs Therapy?
Have a Sword

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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, so. Kuh-nife of Dreams.

SALLY: This is Everybody Hates Rand.

EMILY: Your friendly neighborhood *Wheely Time* podcast. I'm Emily Juchau [cat purring in the background].

SALLY: I'm Sally Goodger and the rumbling you hear is Ed, who sitting directly under the microphone.

EMILY: Yeah, directly beneath the microphone, so that will just be, like, a nice little undercurrent to this otherwise non-soothing conversation about Elayne making some of the stupidest decisions imaginable.

SALLY: Yeah...I...am just gonna get this out of the way, so that I don't keep saying it [cat purring]. I need, like, a shock collar on me so that every time I say it it's like *zzt*.

EMILY: Okay.

SALLY: I...cannot fathom what [laughing] the point of these two chapters are. Like, *none* of it makes sense to me from, like, a plot perspective. Except, as we've said multiple times, Robert Jordan has a lot of loose ends to tie up. In this instance, the Black Ajah members that murdered Adeleas.

EMILY: Slash escaped the White Tower some, uh, like what was it? Seven, eight books ago?

SALLY: A hundred and fifty years ago.

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah.

SALLY: [laughs] So.

EMILY: This isn't even all of them, I'm pretty sure [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] I know. There was nine thousand members of the Black Ajah that escaped the White Tower and we'll be hunting them down for the rest of time.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: So, I just – I read them and I cannot crack them open. Nothing makes sense to me. It is, like, pure put me in *Alice in Wonderland* because I feel like I'm living in a world of pure illogic.

EMILY: [laughing]

SALLY: Okay, I've got it out.

EMILY: Um, yeah. I, too, can't quite fathom what was going on, uh, in Robert Jordan's understanding of the narrative for him to make this be sort of the climactic sequence. Because, while we're sticking mostly in this little section with, um, the immediate conflict, I guess you would say, of Elayne and co going to confront these Black Ajah ladies and then Elayne getting kidnapped blah blah blah blah. There's also, in the background and then in the subsequent chapters, we're, like, coming upon the climax of the siege on Andor.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And it's clear that Robert Jordan wanted to intersect those – or, I think it's clear that the intent was to intersect those two things in such a way that, like, we'd get peak climax [laughs].

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: You know, extra climax. Climax squared.

SALLY: Oooh.

EMILY: As some condoms [laughing] advertise. Can you imagine a sex toy that's like –

SALLY: Climax Squared.

EMILY: It's not just the climax, it's the Everest of climaxes.

SALLY: Ooh, excellent.

EMILY: Leave a trail of dead bodies [laughing] in your wake.

SALLY: What's happening in your brain right now?

EMILY: [laughing] I don't know. I'm so tired.

SALLY: [laughs] Can we – I would like to shelf what's happening in *Knife of Dreams* –

EMILY: [laughing] No, I can do this. I can do it. [swallows] So, Robert Jordan, like, wanted to, you know, for maximum efficiency and for some potential excitement, this is a way to get Elayne personally involved with what is otherwise a sort of geopolitical conflict where her life would not necessarily be in danger, it would just be soldiers. Although, earlier in this book, I think it was, he had her, like, run onto the walls before the battle was even over, so, theoretically you could have Elayne be in plenty of danger. The problem is you just have to have her – have to have – have to have her act like a complete idiot to do it. Which she manages to do here anyway. So, um, but I don't – I don't, uh, I don't why the two things have to be connected, except for, you know, the sort of fact that this is *Knife of Dreams*, and a lot of plots are wrapping up. Um, I don't really know why that decision was made.

SALLY: Yeah [sighs]. There's a lot happening – there – end of sentence. There's a lot happening in these two chapters. We're with Elayne, she's wandering – it's also like three o'clock in the fucking morning. She is wandering the halls of her palace, sleepless, blah blah blah.

EMILY: Yeah, she's now very alone without Aviendha. Aviendha isn't mentioned in these chapters, but I very much felt her absence.

SALLY: [softly] Yeah.

EMILY: With the idea that, like, Elayne is just getting up and wandering about in the middle of the night, sort of having these random business meetings. We catch up with her when she has just run into the two main members of the Kin, now that Reanne's dead, it's Alise and Sumiko are sort of the main ones. And apparently another unnamed Kinswoman has just been murdered. So, Elayne is like, "You have got to tell these idiots to not go anywhere alone, otherwise they'll get murdered, because we're blaming the victims here [laughs]."

SALLY: It is a solid fact of the universe that if you're never alone, you never get murdered.

EMILY: Yeah, and, like, the buddy system will definitely solve all these problems, you know?

SALLY: What if your buddy is the fucking murderer? Has anyone ever considered that?

EMILY: I mean, that would suck, but then I guess, at least you'd – [laughs] it would be pretty obvious [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] That's true. That's fair. Sucks for the person that got murdered, but good job for the detectives.

EMILY: Yeah, it would be pretty great for the investigation.

SALLY: The police need those types of cases handed to them.

EMILY: Yeah, this really feels like, what's that fucking meme that went around for a little while? With the little crude snowman drawing? [laughs] Mr. Policeman we gave you all the clues.

SALLY: [laughing] Oh yeah. Mr. Policeman.

EMILY: [laughing] Why couldn't you find her Mr. Policeman? Or whatever the hell.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: Why couldn't you find the Black Ajah, Elayne? We gave you all the clues? Or something. I don't know. Anyway, Elayne is interrupted in this by, uh, oh. This random Red Ajah woman just sort of barging in. She's exactly as obnoxious as everyone who serves Elaida, and pretty much every Aes Sedai is when an Aes Sedai is in a situation where she wants to be taken seriously. Her name's Duhara, I believe?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And she's like, "I've been sent to be your advisor" and Elayne's like, "I do not need an advisor. I have Aes Sedai here." And Duhara's like, "Well, it's so awkward, because you're gonna have to go back to the White Tower to finish your training and get raised to Aes Sedai, you know, as soon as it's safe to do so." And Elayne's like, "I am Aes Sedai. And duh, duh, duh, duh." I – it's stupid. It's – the weirdest thing about it is that it hasn't happened before.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I guess it makes sense because Elaida hasn't had Traveling, but at this point, um, the fast travel enabled by Traveling has so skewed our perception of how fast normal people travel.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: That it's, like, a little bit wild. I'm like, "What? This woman's only now showing up?" Probably that makes sense, but it's like we're meshing the last season of *Game of Thrones* with the first season of *Game of Thrones*.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, yeah.

EMILY: Some characters are just moving at this incredibly fast rate. Co – just bouncing around from point to point on the map.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And some are taking sixteen episodes to get to King's Landing or whatever the hell.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [sighs] Um, so, that's just yet more of my beef with Traveling. But this woman is – leaves. I don't know what the point of her is.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Except to remind us that Elaida has a vested interest in what happens, and that Elayne has a vested interest in Elaida *not* getting a handle on anything in Andor. Um, and so the Kinswomen leave and [laughs] then Elayne's guards are like, "Halwin Norry wants to see you. Apparently this random pickpocket dude that you sent after..."

SALLY: Hatchetface.

EMILY: "Hatchetface has found something." So, Elayne's so excited. She has – it's still, like, three in the fucking morning.

SALLY: Go to bed, you guys.

EMILY: She keeps telling us that she has massive pregnancy brain and she's moody as hell. Which is just, I think, sort of...it could be one of two things. It could be just flavoring that Robert Jordan thinks is funny, as he always thinks things are funny that happen only to women. Um, or it is to sort of point us in the direction of why Elayne is making stupid decisions, which isn't perhaps [laughing] as feminist as Robert maybe thinks it is.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, pregnant women are just as capable of making rational decisions as anyone else.

SALLY: They do it every day, actually.

EMILY: Yeah, in fact, they have to do it every day in order to live in the world.

SALLY: You know. Yeah, survive.

EMILY: Yeah. If pregnant women lost their minds for the nine months of their pregnancies, we would just have asylums full of –

SALLY: Yeah, pregnant women.

EMILY: Screaming pregnant people.

SALLY: I'm sure there are some people who would love that to be the case, but –

EMILY: That's not how it happens.

SALLY: That's not how it happens.

EMILY: One still has to go to their work.

SALLY: Go to their – [stumbling] in the case of this country, for a very long time.

EMILY: For the full nine months.

SALLY: Basically, until the baby is born and then right back.

EMILY: Until it starts crowning.

SALLY: Yeah [laughing].

EMILY: You are stuck in your, [laughing] planted in your office chair.

SALLY: You will send an email until you are at ten centimeters.

EMILY: Three hours later, boom. You're right back there.

SALLY: Yeah. They're like, "I don't know what you're talking about. You had to have a c-section? I don't know what that is."

EMILY: But we did give you a broom closet to pump.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] Check. Feminism.

SALLY: But also, don't do that at work.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: [laughs] That's gross. It's technically there, but you are discouraged from using it.

EMILY: But it will be frowned upon incredibly. Yeah.

SALLY: Yeah.

[pause]

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughing] America is such a fucking nightmare, you guys.

EMILY: Um. So, Norry comes in with this guy who's like, "Yeah, I followed him." Easily, apparently. He makes no comment on it being a big deal. And is like, "He goes to this house on Full Moon Street. Um, and I conveniently overheard many of the exact details that you would need to identify the two women here. Um, I also conveniently overheard them saying there's just two of us" [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: Which is so ludicrous as to be – like, Elayne doesn't question that for a second.

SALLY: Like –

EMILY: Isn't like, someone's like, "Maybe he misheard," and she's like, "There's no way!" She's also not, like, I don't know, maybe this man specifically is misleading us for some reason.

SALLY: Yeah, also –

EMILY: Maybe he was caught and paid off to mislead us.

SALLY: Do you know what it sounds like to me when overhear a villain saying, "There's just two of us?"

EMILY: It sounds like a trap.

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah. It sounds like they're saying, "There's JUST TWO OF US."

EMILY: Yeah, loudly. "Oh, if only we had reinforcements!"

SALLY: [laughing] Like, it sounds – it sounds so much like a trap.

EMILY: Yeah, they also –

SALLY: This is why Elayne and Rand are perfect for each other.

EMILY: I know.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: They're so stupid [laughs]. Just walk right into traps. It also could just be, like, there's only two of us here tonight. There's only two of us for dinner.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: There's only two of us for, you know, tomorrow's appointment.

SALLY: Yeah, there's only two of us to watch *Jeopardy!*

EMILY: This does not indicate at all –

SALLY: How many people are in that house at any given moment.

EMILY: Generally, yeah. Given Robert Jordan has made an effort to obscure to us, personally, how many Black Ajah are in the city, I think that we have only seen these two in the couple of times that we've gone through, um, what's his bucket's – Hatchetface's point of view to this house. Um, but I also seem to recall there being, like, hints throughout that there are more than these two in the city.

SALLY: Sure!

EMILY: And that's just my little beef with it. So, Elayne decides the best course of action is to immediately go confront these, uh, supposedly these two Black Ajah. She is so excited. I have a hard time...with her excitement, not because I think she should not be excited, but because it feels a little too much like Robert Jordan is trying to get us to be excited about it, too. When A) we're clearly savvy enough to know this is a trap and something bad is going to happen and B) this achievement, if you can call it an achievement, has not been made through Elayne. Unless you count Elayne threatening some guy into compliance, which I don't.

SALLY: Mm-mm.

EMILY: Like, there's been no effort, personally, on Elayne's or any other of our main characters, um, behalf to get this done. So, it doesn't feel like an accomplishment so much as an external gift that is just being handed to us. Which, really, diminishes any satisfaction you might feel about it.

SALLY: Yeah, I think satisfaction is the perfect word. This does not feel like a satisfying wrap up to who murdered Adeleas, especially because everyone is just making these, like, incredible logical leaps about who is Black Ajah and what happened and all this stuff.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And it just doesn't feel like a satisfying wrap up to, like, the Hatchetface plot or anything, because, yeah, Elayne hasn't been doing anything. And also, this plot has just kind of been, like, force fed to us at various points of Elayne's narrative. And I, like, don't actually really care that much about it.

EMILY: Yeah, it would be different if we were, like, in Vandene's point of view.

SALLY: Mm-hmm!

EMILY: Actually making, like, steps in this detective work. But it's also frustrating because, like, Vandene herself doesn't get to make this discovery.

SALLY: Mm-mm.

EMILY: Vandene's only discoveries have been like, "Yeah, also Kinswomen have been being murdered and we also have not been able to prevent that."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So. Like, my one ounce of satisfaction that I take from these two chapters is Vandene getting to murder Careane for murdering her sister.

SALLY: Yeah, it's a really sick moment.

EMILY: Like, that's, like fucking sweet. I wish Vandene didn't die immediately after.

SALLY: Yeah, it's – Vandene and Adeleas were, like, my favorite Aes Sedai characters. RIP.

EMILY: These two, like, old biddies.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [laughs] So.

SALLY: [sighs]

EMILY: Elayne's like, "Not only do we have to confront them immediately, while we're sleep deprived at three in the morning. Um, we do not need to, like, sit around and make any concerted plan, do any sort of reconnaissance or surveillance on this place."

SALLY: No, baby!

EMILY: "We're all four of us, all four of the Aes Sedai, are going to go." Despite the fact that they *know* for a fact that one of the other women. Sareitha or Careane is Black Ajah and there is the possibility that both of them are. So, already, you know, there's, like, innumerable branches [laughs] where we could be like, "Here's a better decision. Here's a better decision." Personally, I would wait. Personally, I would be like, "If I'm gonna have to go know I would just take Vandene."

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Elayne is powerful enough on her own and they have all these sick weaves, like inverted weaves. They have Warders. They have the entire force of the Andoran army. You could easily go there, capture these people rather than killing them, and I don't know, arrange some way to find out which is the Black Ajah, Sareitha or Careane. You don't have to go through these random hoops of being like, "We're going to take the bad guy into –"

SALLY: This trap!

EMILY: "This trap with us and hope that someone says something that will –"

SALLY: And then once we are, again, in a trap, actively, somehow [laughs] we will figure out how to deal with this situation.

EMILY: I know. It's so ridiculous.

SALLY: I mean, Vandene does. Vandene is the only one making any decisions.

EMILY: She just brings a fucking knife and is like, "Oh, you're going to shield me? [stabbing noises]." [laughs]

SALLY: I brought my knife to this Aes Sedai fight.

EMILY: [laughs] Um, they also completely dismiss the advice of their Warders, despite the fact that everyone woman here as one – at least one Warder and Careane is the one I think who has three.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, theoretically that gives you – not theoretically. In practice that gives you six people who are extremely well equipped – better equipped I would estimate than the Black Ajah people who don't have their Warders with them. UGH!

SALLY: And yeah, like, all of these people, you know Warders are trained with a lot of, you know, tactical skill, all six of them are like, "Not a great idea."

EMILY: Yeah. "This is terrible."

SALLY: And Elayne is like, "I don't make bad decisions."

EMILY: Yeah, I'm the queen [laughs].

SALLY: I'm the Queen of Andor.

EMILY: This also falls back on something that Robert Jordan has been telling us throughout this series without showing us. The idea that Aes Sedai are so powerful and so, like, that through their magic they have such incredible lethal force that no one can stand up to it.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: That the only reasonable people who can fight channelers is other channelers. Um, which, patently, has not been true. It is, certainly, a big bad thing when *damane* or Asha'man are used in battle situations. They're basically the equivalent of cannons, if not worse.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: But, like, in close quarters, we've seen Lan, Man, Rand just hold their own against channelers because...they have tools, like, they have equipment to help them.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I don't know. I don't know, you guys.

SALLY: Well, yeah, the idea that only channelers can do anything is, like, a huge part of the next chapter as well.

EMILY: Yes. Yes.

SALLY: And you're right. It just hasn't been, hasn't been proven, so I don't know if, like, another function of this is to try and remind us of the lethal force that Aes Sedai and, like, in particular have. As we head into the last three books? I don't know.

EMILY: I just also, like, it's different for every person, you know? Some people are probably gonna be pretty good at close combat magic. Other people are gonna be like, "What?"

SALLY: Close up magic [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah.

SALLY: [laughs] Vandene's like, "Is this your card?"

EMILY: Is this your fucking card? [laughing] Gambit style, kills someone.

SALLY: Yeah! And kills someone with it. Ugh, Gambit's such a cool X-men.

EMILY: Yeah, that's really –

SALLY: X-man? Is – X-man is singular?

EMILY: I guess.

SALLY: X-person.

EMILY: X-entity.

SALLY: X-entity.

EMILY: I don't know.

SALLY: X.

EMILY: So, despite everyone's advice, they go to this [laughs] house. And basically just waltz in. They just waltz right up to this room that has, Shiane, I think is the Black – not Black Ajah, she's just the Darkfriend hostess who's here. Elayne sends a bunch of, um, her bodyguards to go arrest Hachetface. Uh, no word yet on how that's gone. Well, I assume. All of the bodyguards are like, "Fuck yeah. I can't *wait* [laughs] to throw this guy in the dungeon."

SALLY: Yeah. [laughs]

EMILY: And I say good for them.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, but Elayne and the – Elayne and the three other Aes Sedai walk up. There's Shiane and these two Black Ajah, because they are able to disguise their, invert their weaves it's called, Elayne and the others manage to creep up directly on them and shield them and it's like, "Wow! Everything is coming up Elayne for all of ten seconds." Before four more Black Ajah just sort of walk up behind them and tase them.

SALLY: Mm-hmm. They've got a –

EMILY: At least, I think it's a taser.

SALLY: They basically – they have, like, a *ter'angreal* taser, basically.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And are just like, of course once you get tased, I guess –

EMILY: You can't do anything.

SALLY: You can no longer use magic.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: That's science.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Um, and so –

EMILY: So then they're like, "Oh, well this is fun. Let's kidnap Elayne and just dispatch the other ones." And someone's like, "Oh, well don't dispatch Careane. She's one of ours." [laughs] And Vandene's like [*Psycho* knife noises].

SALLY: Yeah [laughs].

EMILY: Stabs Careane. And then Vandene and Sareitha are immediately just killed by the Power, which just feels like annoying. It feels a little bit like Aram. It's like why have we spent so much of the last few books with these characters, which, given, I couldn't give you three characteristics of Sareitha's off the top of my head. She is bland as bland comes.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But, like, if we're just going to kill them off, because of the main character's incredibly poor decisions, and not have to have the main character reckon with that in any way. Then it's just very obviously, like, picking off red shirts, you know?

SALLY: Yeah. I – that's the perfect way to put it. We have to thin cast, I guess.

EMILY: Yeah, somehow.

SALLY: Somehow. And then add more characters, I guess.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Is what it seems like.

EMILY: Like, it is absolutely fine to kill off characters.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: At this point in the series, I would encourage it, but if they're characters who have been at all close to characters who have more longevity, then there has to be some sort of reaction to that.

SALLY: Yeah, for – and like we haven't – I at least haven't read the next couple books, but, like, in the moment it doesn't seem like Elayne gives a shit. Like, they recover Elayne – sorry, spoiler. Elayne gets kidnapped and thrown naked in the back of a wagon or whatever. I can't remember if she's naked, but it feels like she probably is.

EMILY: [laughs] She probably is.

SALLY: [laughs] Um, and she's just like, "Ah, whatever. RIP Vandene."

EMILY: Yeah. Birgitte keeps being like, “Well, her bond feels really sad.” And I’m like, “I would feel pretty sad if I was being kidnapped, too [laughs]. To be honest.” There’s no, like, is she sad because of the kidnapping? Is she sad because of the murders that happened in front of her? Is she sad because she fucked up big time?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Who knows? So, we then switch over to Birgitte’s point of view as they’re outside of this house and as all of the Warders feel their Aes Sedai die.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And charge – again, here’s a mass loss of life, because presumably all these Warders are just killed, immediately. Birgitte, meanwhile, just turns around, heads right back to the palace, knows that even with her – she wisely is like, “I have no idea how many Black Ajah are in there. Presumably if Elayne was surprised, more than she expected. So, I can’t safely take them on here, so I’m going to run back to the palace, get reinforcements, and then head them off as they are leaving the city, which I can do because I can pinpoint where Elayne is.” So, she goes back and starts to do that. She is, of co – of course, of course the only, like, hitches in this plan are that, like, every possible bad thing that could happen in the siege is also happening right now. Like, there’s some sort of mercenary mutiny happening elsewhere. The seeming neutral force is now in motion and everyone’s like, “What are they going to do about that?” Great. So, Birgitte basically is like, “Dyelin, you take care of that shit. I’m going to go to where Elayne is.”

SALLY: And also take most of our soldiers, so, like, good luck Dyelin. There’s, like, one of the gates is under siege. The mercenaries, like you said. All this stuff and they’re basically like, “Dyelin, you have, like, a hundred dudes. Good luck.”

EMILY: We have to rescue someone who, at this point, [laughing] isn’t even really worth rescuing.

SALLY: Yeah, like –

EMILY: Like, I know for Birgitte, personally, you want to get Elayne, but if I were Dyelin, at this point I would be like, “She did what? Okay, maybe I should actually be the queen.”

SALLY: Yeah, like, if we’re talking [laughs] – yes of course human life, Elayne is Birgitte’s friend.

EMILY: For reasons unknown [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah. Of course Birgitte wants to rescue her. But from the, like, [laughing] sociopolitical viewpoint of literally anybody else in the room, they’d be like – I’d be like, “No. Cutting our losses.”

EMILY: Yeah. They can have her.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: We're not going to ransom her.

SALLY: Birgitte, you're welcome to go after her, but you cannot take the soldiers with you.

EMILY: Yeah [laughs]. Go on a Liam Neeson *Taken* style rescue mission all you want, but, like —

SALLY: You can't have the whole army.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: This is absurd.

EMILY: Fuck off.

SALLY: Also, do you need the whole army?

EMILY: No, because Birgitte's whole plan is she's going to get the Sea Folk there and be like, "Well, unless you rescue Elayne, there's no way you can keep your bargain and then your bosses will be mad at you."

SALLY: Mm-hmm. So, the Sea Folk have to use their channeling as a weapon.

EMILY: Yeah, which, we're never given any indication that the Sea Folk *care* about the ethics of using their magic as a weapon.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: Uh, this is more adding fuel to the fire that the Sea Folk are so intractable and so impossible to deal with that they have to be...basically blackmailed into doing anything particularly helpful.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Which is just, like, slander against an entire nation of fantasy people and it's pretty obviously why this particular nation of fantasy people is getting that treatment.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean, it's just, like, very blatant racism.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: That Robert Jordan has constructed an entire race of people in an entire world and has still added anti-Black sentiment into it at, like, astounding levels.

EMILY: I know. He managed to do something that I think was so interesting in sort of removing the usual context of Blackness.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: From this race of fantasy people. You know, instead of being like they are tribal desert folk, which is usually what we get.

SALLY: Right.

EMILY: When Africans or African people are represented in fantasy. Um, he's like, "They're, like, tied to the sea."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Okay. That's really interesting. You would think that that would leave you with a lot of room to maneuver without, like, falling into any of the pitfalls – pitfalls of stereotypes. Things like that. But Robert Jordan is like, "I'm going to make them so hate-able."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: That for entirely separate bad reasons, all the white people in this fantasy world will still hate all the Black people in this world.

SALLY: Yeah, entirely, like, separate reasons and yet somehow still – like, they're entirely separate reasons, but they're still upholding the same racist narratives.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: That people have been throwing against Black communities across the globe for centuries, so it's, like, you – exactly. You constructed this entire culture of people, did that really interesting thing of removing them from their usual setting, and were just like, "Eh, I'm still gonna dump all this racist bullshit in here anyway. And all of my white characters are going to hate them, but, like, don't worry they are actually everything bad that I'm saying about Black people."

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: "They are actually that and I'm going to prove that to you in every scene with them."

EMILY: Which indicates what about racist sentiments in the real world?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Maybe you're right.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Because if their right in this fantasy setting, you could be right in the real world.

SALLY: You could be right in the real world, like. So yeah, it's some real interesting sort of worldbuilding gymnastics going on here. So, yeah. I mean, the racism is really, um, off the charts in this one. And, I agree, it's never been really – Ed is just sneezing up a storm. You guys, our cats are going to drive me to insanity.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: I think we've talked about the storm sillies on this podcast before, but.

EMILY: [whispers] It's quite bad.

SALLY: We've got a big storm, so our cats have some big sillies. Um, yeah. I agree with the sentiment that it doesn't seem like the Sea Folk are necessarily opposed to using the Power as a weapon. It's also never really been indicated to us that they do that. Um, you know, it seems like, typically, people who can channel are, they call them Windfinders, you know, the role seems to be primarily a sort of, uh, logistical one. Which I think is really cool. Like, a way to make magic, um, just kind of a part of mechanics of your life is really interesting. It's not like they're – like Birgitte is necessarily manipulating a pacifist community. It's not like she's got, you know, the Tuatha'an, you know...

EMILY: In a chokehold.

SALLY: In a chokehold, like, "Here's a sword!" Um.

EMILY: We've already done that.

SALLY: We've already done that, and it went –

EMILY: Super great [laughs].

SALLY: So well.

EMILY: Super great [laughing].

SALLY: It was amazing how well it went. It was just, like, a case study in how to –

EMILY: Cure all mental illness, yeah.

SALLY: [laughs] There's no mental illness that can't be cured with a sword.

EMILY: Who needs therapy? Have a sword [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I mean that's almost literally what Sigmund Freud said.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: If you accept the sword as a euphemism [laughs].

SALLY: If you just had a dick.

EMILY: You'd be fine.

SALLY: You'd be fine.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Um, so it's not – they're not like – Birgitte isn't really asking them to do anything that's necessarily against their ethics, I think. Um, but it does, like, sit really strangely with me in terms of ethics, that Birgitte has these people who's, like, it might not necessarily be part of a cultural code of conduct, but it was very explicitly part of my, like, deal with you. A part of this, like, contract, this treaty that we have signed that I will not be used as a weapon in *your* wars. I don't want any part of *your* wars.

EMILY: Yeah, for very obvious reasons.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: If Elayne loses, which is still very possible, then the Sea Folk are screwed in terms of the next ruler. And Birgitte is basically like, "Well, they wouldn't treat you well anyway." And it's like, well they definitely won't now!

SALLY: Yeah, and it's not like Elayne is treating them great anyway.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Elayne gave them one square mile.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: To have a port. You know how little one square mile is? Whatever. So, it's just, like, I don't know. It's just, like, more of this racism of, I don't know, you have to be useful to the plot

somehow and the Sea Folk apparently, as of yet, have not been useful, so Birgitte's just gonna sit there and bully them. I don't know. The whole thing just sits really gross with me.

EMILY: Yeah, me too.

SALLY: Yeah, I don't – I'm not necessarily being very clear, but the whole scene just sits badly. But it's successful.

EMILY: It's successful because, you know, all the Sea Folk are, uh, linked. So, that sort of trumps the individual Black Ajah. So, in the next chapter, they will be able to rescue Elayne, but we just end with Birgitte being like, "Oh my god. Elayne has not felt any fear this entire time she was being kidnapped." Which was clearly meant to indicate to us that Elayne is A) brave B) Elayne has great trust in Birgitte and Birgitte's capacity to rescue her from this situation. Um, but to me it indicates [laughing] Elayne's stupid.

SALLY: Yeah, like, I cannot – I can no longer deal – I feel like we've been dealing with this, particularly with, like, Elayne and Nynaeve for like *books*. This idea that bravery is only real if you are never afraid.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: And this is, like, a baseline thing that we teach children, you know? Like, you do not have to be fearless all the time in order to do hard things.

EMILY: In fact, being fearless, as Elayne proves quite obviously, is almost certainly, like, is a great way to get yourself into terrible situations.

SALLY: Yeah, like –

EMILY: A healthy dose of fear is just that: healthy.

SALLY: Yeah, like fear is *literally* a survival instinct.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: [laughs] That we have developed to keep ourselves, and our communities, safe. And alive.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: [sighs] So, I just, like, don't know – it feels to me like more of this really totally rad girlboss feminism of, like, our – our ladies are so brave. Aren't they so cool?

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: It's like no. You just got kidnapped. You're probably hogtied naked in the back of that cart [laughs] –

EMILY: [laughs] Knowing Robert Jordan.

SALLY: This is Robert Jordan's *Wheel of Time* and who knows where they were taking you. Like, I think it would be reasonable to assume, and honestly if Elayne actually cared about Andor she might want them to be like, "We're going to prioritize keeping the city safe over my individual person." Like, of course that would make you feel afraid. Maybe people aren't coming after you. Or maybe it's just Birgitte, you know. You have no way of knowing, except through the bond, who is coming through – who is coming after you. So, like, it's fine to be afraid. I also think it's just more of this like *absurd*, unbelievably frustrating pregnancy invincibility that Elayne is putting so much stock in. And as we've said multiple times, like, Elayne being like, "Nothing bad can happen to me," does not extend to the people around her and this is, like, a perfect example of that. Of her just, like, plowing through bad situations, convinced that she will live at least until her children are born. And now her body count is just, like, through the roof. From the last, like, four and a half hours alone.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Like, the Sea folk are not, um, hesitant in their weapons that they throw at these ladies.

EMILY: [whispers] Yeah.

SALLY: Just blowing people up. Quite gruesomely. At least, that's what it feels like. I don't know if –

EMILY: And Birgitte is like, "Take some of them alive." Which is also a bad decision. You should just kill them. The best Black Ajah is a dead Black Ajah.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: To be honest. Um, yeah, that's where we'll leave it. I guess my last parting shot is that it wouldn't be a problem that Elayne makes bad decisions except that the narrative never gives her, or anyone really, consequences for their bad decisions. This is the perennial problem in *The Wheel of Time*, specifically. Characters do silly things and the narrative, instead of being like, "This was a silly thing! And now the character has to deal with the fact that it was a silly thing." The narrative is like, "It worked out great, so keep, keep moving on."

SALLY: Keep – keep on, keeping on. Yeah. She, um, Elayne has sort of the Carrie Bradshaw-esque armor where she can make literally the worst decisions – she can make literally the worst decisions you've ever seen a character make and the worst that ever happens is she gets a little sad.

EMILY: Yeah, as, as we've said, Robert Jordan really did learn everything he knows about women from *Sex and the City*.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: And it is ever more obvious as the series goes on.

SALLY: Ahh.

EMILY: Okay, our cats are having a meltdown. So, thanks for listening. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media. Uh, we'll be ne – [laughs] we'll be back next week with the round up of Elayne's sort of plot here in Caemlyn and the siege on Caemlyn. We'll also get a little random chapter from Fyrik Karede, who's one of the Seanchan who's hunting down Tuon. In a good way not a bad way.

SALLY: In the wrong way. If he was hunting down Tuon to kill her –

EMILY: Yeah, that would make him a sympathetic character.

SALLY: Then maybe I'd be on his side.

EMILY: But alas.

SALLY: But alas he is a loyalist piece of shit.

EMILY: Um, anything to add.

SALLY: No.

EMILY: Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: Um, yeah. On – last Friday, one of my grants is being audited, being monitored is what it's called. And I was, like, emailing with the auditor and one of the people on the email chain replied to me and didn't take the auditor off and I didn't notice, so then I replied all the auditor. And it, like, wasn't anything bad. It was just basically me being like, "I don't know what I'm doing" [laughing] to the auditors.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: So, I want to die.

EMILY: Uh, guys.

SALLY: Just –

EMILY: Emails!

SALLY: Email is really hard. I get too many emails is the problem.

EMILY: Yeah, that's true. I always look at your inbox and am like, "Hng!"

SALLY: It's always – and I can never get it below twenty unread. No matter what I do.

EMILY: Jeez.

SALLY: It's my Sisyphus' – Sisyphean rock.

EMILY: [groans] It would drive me nuts. Okay, everyone. Have an okay week, I guess.

SALLY: Goodbye. I hope wherever you are it's not snowing.

EMILY: Yeah, Christ. Goodbye.

SALLY: Bye!