



Episode 236: DOUG
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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. Let's get this over with. And by "this," I mean the entire succession plot of Andor.

Sally: (laugh) We did it.

Emily: Ugh. We did it.

Sally: We did it. Elle Woods.

Emily: Well, did we? Did we?

Sally: I didn't do anything.

Emily: I mean, I feel like, yeah, sort of suffering passively, as the two of us are doing –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Isn't really doing anything. Elayne did it? I don't really feel like Elayne did anything either, though.

Sally: I feel like Dyelin and Halwin Norry did it.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And they don't get it – Tybalt.

Emily: That's probably true. Tybalt.

Sally: Could you – at least he didn't scratch your chair.

Emily: Yeah, that's true. He heard me. But, Tybalt, must you cause a commotion the single hour – (laugh) a week –

Sally: Yeah, the single hour a week when we need it to be quiet?

Emily: Ahhh.

Sally: Look at him just scratching his dumb little chin.

Emily: This is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood – (pause as Tybalt audibly scratches a scratching post) – Christ.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Tybalt's scratching, if you can't hear that. This is Everybody Hates RAND, YOUR FRIENDLY NEIGHBORHOOD WHEEL OF TIME PODCAST.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I'M EMILY JUCHAU. THAT'S TYBALT. Tybalt!

Sally: (laugh) Oh my gosh. I'm Sally Goodger. I'm sorry, that was, like, the longest Tybalt has ever scratched anything in his whole life.

Emily: It's 'cause he needs his nails trimmed. Stupid!

Sally: No, he just is insistent upon causing problems.

Emily: I'll trim your nails tonight, but can you not be an agent of chaos until then?

Sally: Welcome to our podcast.

Emily: Willkommen.

Sally: Willkommen.

Emily: I think that's German –

Sally: Villkommen.

Emily: For "welcome." Um, three chapters today, one of which is very short. You might – we might just be getting, periodically, up – up – what's the word? Interrupted by Tybalt's sort of general –

Sally: Oh, he's wiggling his butt, which means Ed is in sight.

Emily: Yeah, which means he's about to tackle Ed, and Ed –

Sally: Speak of the devil.

Emily: Ed, wisely, has chosen to sit on me as protection. Okay, but you guys, we're talking about this stupid, um, War of the Roses thing.

Sally: The War of the Roses has ceased.

Emily: I'm gonna go out on a limb and say the War of the Roses is more exciting than the Andor succession plot.

Sally: I mean, yeah.

Emily: Which is saying something because have you ever tried to read the Wikipedia page for the War of the Roses?

Sally: I have not.

Emily: It's pretty grim. Uh, not grim – it's just so boring. There's so many – every fucking name is used six different times.

Sally: Yeah, I feel like –

Emily: Everyone's named Richard or Henry.

Sally: Yeah, like, there are many problems with the British monarchy, but, like, their absolute lack of creativity is one of them. Like, not –

Emily: Oh, in, like, naming conventions?

Sally: Yeah, like, not every child needs to be named Henry.

Emily: Yeah, if there had been, like, a Uniqua running around, then that would've been a lot better.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or, like, even a Bartholomew, you know?

Sally: Yeah, it's me, Bartholomew.

Emily: There's a surprising lack of Bartholomews, considering that this is English history we're talking about. Can't even read the fucking book.

Sally: Um, but we, like, pick up with Elayne, right, in the back of the carriage?

Emily: Yeah, we pick up with Elayne in the back of the cart. She is thankfully not nude –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But she has been tied up quite tightly, so the Robert Jordan gratification Ferris Wheel continues. This stop: tied-up women.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, she just narrates how they're leaving, uh, the – they're leaving Caemlyn when she feels her bond with Birgitte shift to accommodate Birgitte's geographical movement; um, after that, it's over pretty quickly. Um, she is released; Birgitte comes in and releases her from her bonds, and, uh, they get out. Elayne is greeted by her happy – for some reason – the people who come to rescue her. The Sea Folk are, like, standing awkwardly in the background. Um, and Elayne is never like, "Thank you" to them? So, just, the ongoing diplomatic trainwreck that is the Sea Folk in Andor –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Continues. All the Black – of the Black Ajah – there were six, I think? Only one died, which is so annoying. Like, this was the perfect opportunity for Robert Jordan to just kill them.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: ‘Cause, like, it’s not like the Sea Folk give a shit. I know Birgitte was like, “Take prisoners,” but the Sea Folk could’ve, like, killed a bunch more of them –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Before she gave that order. Just, I want the thirteen women who we were – were, like, a plot point literally nine books ago – I want that to be wrapped up.

Sally: Yeah, I want that to be done.

Emily: I want them to be dead or out of the picture somehow.

Sally: I have also forgotten about seventy-five times that these are those same women.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Every time someone’s like, “Black Ajah,” I’m always like, wow, more? And it’s always like, “Nope.”

Emily: Jesus, there’s so many of them. No, it’s the same ones who’ve been bouncing around the continent, just as much as our heroes, only –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Somehow doing less.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is a big “somehow,” because frankly our heroes have been doing very little.

Sally: Yeah. Um, so, they – I mean, Birgitte, I guess, is being smart and, like, taking prisoners instead of Elayne’s plot last time to just, like, murder everyone she sees, basically, but it is really annoying to have this plot just, like, continue, continue, continue, and it’s just kind of, like, further evidence to me that, like, this whole sequence of events didn’t need to happen.

Emily: Yeah, it’s also troubling because ultimately, as we’ll get in the next chapter, what they decide to do with these imprisoned women and the, like, uh, Hatchet-Face, who also got captured, is to, quote, put them to the question.

Sally: Oh, that’s right.

Emily: I.e., torture them. So it’s like – I know that in this, like, sort of medieval fantasy world, that’s sort of the point of taking prisoners rather than just being, like – collecting ransoms –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which was the usual sich in history, when you took prisoners.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, yeah.

Emily: But, like, I don't know, we've already talked so much about how torture is, a, ineffective; b, morally corrupt –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So it's troubling to have our heroes be like, "Oh, yeah, this isn't even something I'm really going to think all that much about."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Just torture them. It's fine because they're bad guys."

Sally: It's always fine because they're bad guys. It's – it's always fine, and no one in human history has ever used the "it's fine to torture them because they're bad guys" to their –

Emily: No, no one ever does that. (laugh)

Sally: To their benefit. No one's ever said that. Cough, cough, the United States government.

Emily: Well, and it's like, the mechanism of putting those sorts of politics and that sort of logic into a fantasy text where you have bad guys who are, in the literal sense, bad guys –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: You know, working for the incarnation of the devil –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Is that it's sort of a vicious cycle of reinforcing propaganda in the real world, like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Well, yeah, then there is an objective good and evil –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Rather than just people who are in conflict with each other.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Um, so it doesn't – it's not great. And especially as we, like, get a tiny bit of nuance in the idea of the Black Ajah in the next few books as it is revealed that Verin has been Black Ajah this entire time, basically working undercover –

Sally: I know, she's so cool.

Emily: And so that sort of leads to the troubling, like – can't that be the case for other people?

Sally: Yeah, for sure. Like, it lends a lot of nuance and also, like, hopefully, when thinking about these nuances, we also realize that, like, hey, no matter what is going on with them, they're still

people, and they don't deserve to be tortured. Like, even if you are evil, you don't deserve to be tortured.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: That's gonna be my bold claim of the episode.

Emily: Yeah, even the Shaido Wise Ones don't deserve to be taken captive as damane.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Woohoo. Even Black Ajah don't deserve to be tortured horribly.

Sally: Interesting how both of the examples you thought of were women, Emily. I wonder ...

Emily: Yeah, is – does anything bad happen to boys? (laugh) In this stupid series?

Sally: (laugh) I wonder if that might be indicative?

Emily: Of something? Yeah, the systems that, like, are big on oppressing people in this series tend to be specifically targeting women –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is a sort of interesting form of misogyny. Yeah, generally, when it – things are happening to men, it's, like, Darkfriends like Hatched-Face.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Hatched-Face, we – for fairness's sake, have also gone out of the way to establish how morally –

Sally: Disgusting he is, yeah.

Emily: Bankrupt he is.

Sally: Just despicable.

Emily: But, um.

Sally: I just feel like – I know we harp on this a lot, but this series, and more series in general, should just be committed to killing people. Not only is it more efficient, I do think oftentimes it is more humane.

Emily: Yeah, I just – I mostly just think it's efficient. I just – I just am so annoyed –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: By bad guys who are lingering far after their expiration date.

Sally: Yeah, like are these people –

Emily: Their narrative expiration date.

Sally: Their narrative expiration date.

Emily: “Best by –”

Sally: Best by.

Emily: “Book four.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: If even. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Black Ajah plot: best by – yeah, maybe book four. That’s, like, Tanchico, right?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But after that, they sort of lose relevance.

Sally: Yeah, and we’re like, Liandrin’s still around?

Emily: Somehow.

Sally: Hasn’t she died, like, nine times?

Emily: Jesus. She’s been tortured horribly nine times, and that’s fine ‘cause she’s a woman who did bad things. Semirhage getting taken captive? Anything can happen to her because she’s evil.

Sally: Because she’s an evil woman.

Emily: Ahhhh.

Sally: You notice how all the male – I think we’ve said this before. All the male Forsaken just get to die.

Emily: Yeah. That’s what we’re talking about, I think, is there’s, like, a humanity given to the men –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: That’s just, like, die with dignity.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Well, I don’t know if we can say that Sammael –

Sally: (simultaneously) Sammael.

Emily: Died with dignity. (laugh)

Sally: Any dignity. He wasn't even born with dignity. (laugh)

Emily: Loser. Boo.

Sally: (laugh) But the point still stands –

Emily: Bel'al had one line of dialogue before getting balefired, so –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Dignity, yeah. But, yeah, they're still just, like, allowed to fall in the heat of battle.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Rather than being –

Sally: There's some honor there.

Emily: Cap – taken captive and horribly maimed, tortured, tied up.

Sally: Yeah, like –

Emily: Psychologically tortured as well as physically.

Sally: Yeah. Um, like, all indications point to these women just, like, spending the rest of their life in the Andoran dungeons.

Emily: (whisper) That's not what will happen, you'll see –

Sally: Oh, nice.

Emily: But that's what I'm talking about.

Sally: Exciting. But, yeah, I think – I think we've also made this point before, so sorry to once again beat the dead horse, but there's this, like, lingering narrative idea that, like, women must be punished as much as possible for any type of discretion.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Like, in any feasible way that they can be punished, in any physical way – any way that they can be abused in all the realms, they have to go through that suffering in order to atone.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It's also why the Christ figure in literature is always a woman for some reason. Looking at you, Dostoyevsky.

Emily: Oh, Dostoyevsky.

Sally: Crime and Punishment slaps, but that part bothers me. (laugh)

Emily: Oh, Sonya?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Being a Christ figure? Dostoyevsky had some – you know, that dude was horny for Christianity in an interesting way. You know, in a very Russian way.

Sally: What a statement. Sorry, that was so random. I'm a little punchy today in case you haven't noticed.

Emily: It's fine.

Sally: I'm very tired. We can leave the dungeons.

Emily: So the fucking Black Ajah are like, "Oh my God, how did you even find us?" and Elayne's like, "Well, Birgitte's my Warder, obviously," and they're like, "What? How were – how were we supposed to know that?" and one of the Black Ajah's like, "Oh, I did fully know that." (laugh)

Sally: I just didn't tell anyone.

Emily: "I didn't tell you guys." And they're like, "What the – (grumble)." Anyway, so yet again, women are stupid. Um, Birgitte gives Elayne the news that, uh, another part of the city is under attack, that some mercenary companies are mutinying and that she sent Dyelin to deal with it but that they need to sort of go there ASAP. Elayne in a, um, remarkably intelligent strategic maneuver, probably her first, is like, well, if they're outside the walls still, then we can Travel behind them and, um, you know, push them up against the walls, corner them that way. Surround them, as it were. Uh, which only works because literally the entire, like, bad guy camp evacuated to do this attack.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: You know, they – they're not holding back any reinforcements, stupidly. So sort of handed that to Elayne on a silver platter, but here we are. Birgitte also is like, "By the way, all the other neutral parties are on their way here and will probably be here by midafternoon or whatever," but we have to get this taken care of first. So Elayne et al Travel, um, to where they need to go. They're relieved to find that the gates have not fallen yet, and they just immediately start this attack. Um, it's just a pitched battle; there's not any exciting channeling or anything going on here. But, um, this maneuver works and eventually these soldiers start either surrendering en masse or dying, so.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's a pretty solid victory. Of course the, uh, bad guy nobles who were also here have, um – were, like, committed to this charge as well, so they are now either prisoners or whatever. Elayne confronts them and is like – the three main perpetrators, Arymilla, of course, and then Naeon and Elenia? Is that her name? No, that's the other lady. God, there's so many E names.

Sally: I have literally no idea.

Emily: Um, no, it is Elenia. Goddamnit.

Sally: Oh, that's right 'cause it sounds so –

Emily: Ellorien might be the other one.

Sally: Much like Elayne. Elenia and Elayne.

Emily: Yeah, Elenia, Naeen, and Arymilla are basically taken captive because those are the ones that, like, threw their support behind Arymilla, I think. Of the other – there are three others. One of them is the, like, creepy old man's –

Sally: Mm. Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, niece, and – or granddaughter or something – and she's like, "Oh, my grandfather just passed away of a stroke just five minutes ago," which isn't suspicious at all. (laugh) I think we're supposed to assume that she – yeah, she winks at Elayne.

Sally: I – yeah. Wink, wink.

Emily: "He died of a stroke." She probably murdered him.

Sally: Which ...

Emily: And she immediately declares for Elayne, followed by the other two, somewhat more reluctantly, but just because this is the best way to preserve their Houses, um, and Elayne is kind of like, "Yeah, whatever, I'll take anyone I can get at this point." Sylvase – that's the – that's the granddaughter – is the weirdo who's like, "If you want to borrow my secretary to question these people," and Elayne's like, "Okay, clearly your secretary is a torturer, and if you have a torturer on your staff, then that's troubling," but no one does anything about that.

Sally: Yeah. They're just like, you know, young women.

Emily: Sure, she has – she's had a hard life.

Sally: And their silly hobbies.

Emily: So she just – yeah, she should have a torturer on her staff.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: No big deal. Women can't do anything, God. (laugh)

Sally: Gosh. Come on, you guys.

Emily: Hashtag girl power.

Sally: Girlboss your way to the top. Girlbossing is a lifestyle, not a hobby.

Emily: Ugh. So Elayne now has nine of the ten Houses she needs, and now that that's been laid out for us, it becomes a little clearer: there are now six Houses on their way, um, and there is one last House that is just a holdout and is completely neutral and sort of refuses to be cornered by

anyone. So Elayne either needs to get some of these six Houses that are on their way on her side, or she needs to finally get this one holdout to agree, but that seems unlikely. So we skip to a few days in – a few days later. Um, Elayne is receiving a messenger from this group of people – I can't remember all their names; everyone is like, says – everyone groups them as “Luan and the others –”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And Luan is a man. Um, but this messenger is like, “Yeah, they want safe conduct into the city,” which is kind of, like, a – a sick burn, basically being like, “We're worried Elayne will take us captive if we don't get a guarantee of safe conduct,” so Elayne's all pissed about that and – but gives it to them and is like, “Are you sure you don't want to be queen, Dyelin? Because you'd just immediately get everyone's support,” and Dyelin's like, “No.”

Sally: I feel like if I were Dyelin – we said this last time as well – and I saw the events of the past 48 hours –

Emily: I know.

Sally: I would be like, “This might be my divinely ordained duty.”

Emily: I know. Here are Dyelin's reasons. This is clearly Robert Jordan just grappling with – just scrambling at the bottom of the barrel.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, she says that running her own House is “work enough without adding all of Andor to it.” Dyelin, what have the last six months been if not running the country?

Sally: Yeah, homie.

Emily: Christ. She “disapproves of the throne changing Houses without a good cause.”

Sally: Okay. Dumb loyalist bullshit.

Emily: That's – yeah, that's a dumb reason; there is a good cause: no one wants Elayne to be queen.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That's pretty much it. Um, she's basically like, “If you had died, then of course I would have entered my claim, but you're here, soooo?” And then she's like, “I think you'll make a better ruler for Andor because of your nepotism – because you're sleeping with the Dragon Reborn.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and she's like, “And I think you're a good queen 'cause I watched you grow up and I just think you're so fucking awesome,” and Elayne starts crying. But it's like, those are such bad reasons. (laugh)

Sally: Like, I feel like the only one that's even vile – bile – viable –

Emily: Viable.

Sally: Sorry. Is the nepotism one. Like, it is politically important –

Emily: That she's sleeping with Rand?

Sally: Yeah, to have the Dragon Reborn as an ally at this point.

Emily: Yeah, but also the hilarity of being like, "Well, we can't keep your baby daddy mad."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "He'll be super pissed if we get his girlfriend off the throne."

Sally: Oh, yeah. I wasn't even thinking about it that way. I was thinking of just, like, it would be nice –

Emily: No, I agree, it is –

Sally: It'd be helpful, yeah.

Emily: Politically viable to want that connection.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, like –

Sally: But to be like, "We're afraid of him."

Emily: It's pretty insulting. Yeah.

Sally: Yeah. "We only want you to be queen because we're worried your loser boyfriend –"

Emily: "Is not going – is not going to be as good friends with any other rulers of Andor."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, yeah. That's all fucking annoying, and it's like, why was Dyelin even a character if she was just going to be consistently presented as a better option than Elayne?

Sally: Yeah, it's really strange.

Emily: I guess it's, like, statistically unlikely that every single person in Andor – every single, like, leader of a noble House would be incompetent –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: But we are led to believe that the six led by Luan are the competent ones –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And that the only reason they're against Elayne is because they were driven out by Morgase –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Who was under Rahvin's control. But it's like, you could have solved that narratively in different ways, by, like, maybe not having Morgase swept up into Perrin's Charybdis of a terrifying plot.

Sally: Yeah, that's – yeah. Woof.

Emily: Like, if she'd just been allowed to be like, "Oh, by the way, I was under Rahvin's control," proclamation, or whatever, or, like, go on a diplomatic mission to visit people and apologize.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, like, I feel like you could have fixed the Andor plot in so many ways: one, by, like, not nerfing Morgase as queen. That, I feel like, is a really weird plot in general –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: To make Elayne queen –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: When she doesn't need to be. I also feel like the Dyelin problem is really easily solved by just, like, making Dyelin a man and then he cannot rule Andor.

Emily: Yeah, that would be interesting. And –

Sally: And it's just like –

Emily: Yeah, just can't do it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That also would've been interesting because then he would – if it had been, like, particularly a young-ish man, it would have presented Elayne a better opportunity to, like, make a political alliance through marriage.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: That would've been something I was actually interested in seeing, is, like, you're a queen, Elayne. You do have to eventually marry someone, probably, for diplomatic reasons.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: And that probably isn't going to be Rand.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And, like, what about a guy who, like, has to accept that, like, sure, I'll help you rule Andor, and I'll be your, like, weird trophy husband –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And help raise your children because the Dragon Reborn's probably gonna die in the Last Battle.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But I am gay. See, I am creating a great character.

Sally: You're creating a great character. If we just, like, genderbend Dyelin –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Fascinating.

Emily: Doug. (laugh)

Sally: Stop.

Emily: First man "D" name I thought of.

Sally: I feel like we could just keep "Dyelin." That's not the name. (laugh)

Emily: No, it's Doug.

Sally: It's not Doug. (laugh) You got away with Greg McKraken the Third; you're not getting away with Doug.

Emily: (laugh) Dougelin.

Sally: No! (laugh) Illegal, illegal. Flag on the play.

Emily: I love Doug.

Sally: I love the character too, but you cannot create such an interesting character and then name him Doug. (laugh)

Emily: You're being really insulting to all the people out there named Doug. (laugh) Haven't you seen the animated series "Doug"?

Sally: No, I haven't, actually.

Emily: What? With Patti Mayonnaise? That's his girlfriend.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Sally's cry – crying. At least I didn't come up with "Patti Mayonnaise."

Sally: That is not her name.

Emily: It is! It is. I'll prove it.

Sally: (laugh) Oh, I shouldn't laugh right into the microphone. I know the feedback is so bad.

Emily: Doug.

Sally: ‘Kay, I’m sorry to all the Dougs of the universe.

Emily: Oh, a classic Nickelodeon – see, Patricia “Patti” Mayonnaise.

Sally: That is absurd.

Emily: Voiced by Constance Shulman, who has such a distinctive voice. There’s also – let’s look at the character list. There are some interesting ones. His name’s Doug Funnie, by the way.

Sally: Doug Funnie.

Emily: Um, there’s Skeeter, who’s short for “Mosquito.”

Sally: Nice.

Emily: His full name is Mosquito. I don’t know – that’s never explained.

Sally: He – does she have a last name?

Emily: Um, Valentine.

Sally: Mosquito Valentine is a great name.

Emily: I know, that’s actually – that actually slaps.

Sally: I want to write a story about a person named Mosquito Valentine.

Emily: Mr. Swirly. Loretta LaQuigley?

Sally: Amazing.

Emily: Yeah, these are actually some classy – some hilarious names. Anyway, yeah, Patti Mayonnaise.

Sally: Okay, I am sorry I doubted you about Patti Mayonnaise, and I’m sorry, everybody named Doug. Um. Dyelin can be named Doug.

Emily: Ah, sweet victory. (laugh) She’s so mad at me. Okay, anyway, Dyelin should’ve been queen, or Dyelin should’ve been Doug. Whatever. So –

Sally: We’re very good at writing Wheel of Time –

Emily: I know.

Sally: In case anyone wondered.

Emily: Just not names. I guess we could keep Robert Jordan’s Microsoft Word document full of random fantasy names –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And play around with that a little bit.

Sally: Did he really have one of those?

Emily: Probably. How could he not have?

Sally: That's true. When you've got this many characters, you have to, at some point, just be like, "Ugh, fuck, I gotta name this innkeeper."

Emily: Yeah, "So I just need a name."

Sally: Mosquito Valentine.

Emily: Then again, maybe he was going – maybe he was – maybe he was doing it a new process every single time he needed to name a new character. That would at least explain why so many people have so many similar names.

Sally: Yeah, it's true. He just forgets.

Emily: Yeah. So, um, we get a little bit of housekeeping with Elayne. The arsons have not stopped in Andor, which is a problem. Um, Mistress Harfor wants to ... dismiss – I almost said "delete" – (laugh)

Sally: She wants to delete.

Emily: She wants to dismiss all of the people on the staff who they know were spies for Arymilla's people, and Elayne's like, "No, let's not because likely they'll just turn spies for other people and then at least we can keep an eye on them." Um, Master Norry has a whole – she and Master Norry decide to put the Darkfriends slash Black Ajah to the question. Weh.

Sally: I know, I'm so disappointed in you, Halwin.

Emily: I know. Halwin Norry also is like, um, "Few people keep a private questioner, my lady. It suggests, um, a dark side." (laugh) So he's like, "She's probably not trustworthy," and Elayne's like, "Yeah, can you get some people on her staff to keep an eye on her?" and he's like, "Sure." Um. Elayne meets with her midwife, who is like, "Great." They do some weird – some weird midwifery.

Sally: Yes, some weird midwifery.

Emily: That Robert Jordan is just sort of clearly like, "What are the –"

Sally: "I don't know what happens in there."

Emily: "What are the weirdest things that could happen?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, Elayne has to stand in a giant – a giant set of scales or something to be weighed. It's bizarre. At least her new, um, midwife is like, "Yeah, you should absolutely eat, um, whatever

the fuck you want. You shouldn't drink alcohol," which is a surprising, like, um, amount of medical knowledge for this –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Fantasy world, but she's like, "Yeah, don't just eat porridge. That sucks." Though she is like, "But you do need to, like, watch your weight and limit your weight gain," which is just a ridiculous little pinch of fatphobia that Robert Jordan is tossing in there.

Sally: And also I feel like that is, like, weird medical advice that goes around to women who are pregnant. Like, "Make sure you don't gain too much weight when you're pregnant." I feel like I've heard that before.

Emily: And I feel like it's usually because they're like – 'cause it'll be harder to get off –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: When you're done being pregnant.

Sally: Yeah, I don't think there's anything that's like, it's bad for the baby if you gain a ton of weight.

Emily: No.

Sally: It's actually probably better for the baby. I – I'm not a medical doctor, but I feel like, to ensure that you and your baby are both well-fed and energized for the absolute Cthulian nightmare that is birth.

Emily: Yeah. No, I think it's like – it's a fair thing that women both in a fantasy world and in our world are, like, actually given that advice –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But it's not interrogated at all –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In this text. It's just sort of presented like – and since we have this woman – is also appearing as the source of, like, actual medical knowledge –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: It sort of gives it an air of legitimacy.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: So anyway, just so you know, if you're pregnant, gain whatever weight you want or need to.

Sally: You're growing a human.

Emily: Yeah, and if you are like, “Wow, my pregnant wife isn’t losing weight as fast as I’d like her to,” fuck yourself.

Sally: Yeah, I’m coming to your house to punch you in the face.

Emily: Ugh. Finally, all of the six people appear, um, and meet with all of the – it’s, like, in a big room with all – everyone, all the House – heads of Houses. Oh, yeah, it is Ellorien. Ellorien walks in and is basically insulting everyone because she hates everyone. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, that’s relatable. That’s how I would feel in Andor.

Emily: Um, and Elayne’s like, “What do you even want this meeting for?” And they’re like, “We want to have a truce, um, so that we can, you know, be a – a single force against the Borderlanders.” And Elayne’s like, “Well, the thing is that you don’t have to worry about the Borderlanders because they’re here because I asked them to be,” and they’re like, “You can’t do that,” and she’s like, “I can, ‘cause I’m an Aes Sedai,” and I’m like, I don’t really think Aes Sedai can actually grant –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Armies passage across countries –

Sally: Yeah –

Emily: Either? But, like –

Sally: I feel like that’s some, like, crazy diplomacy power –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: To give, to just be like, “No, you can safely cross this foreign border because I said so.”

Emily: Yeah, it’s nuts. And, like, this is always presented as Elayne’s sort of, like, 5D chess move –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? It was, at the time, presented as this big deal, this super intelligent move, and now every time she brings it up to someone, everyone’s like, “Whoa, oh my gosh, that’s so impressive,” without us being like, what’s that impressive about it?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? Like –

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: We – especially since we’ve always known that the Borderlanders weren’t ever going to do anything bad to Andor.

Sally: Yeah. It – yes.

Emily: So, whatever.

Sally: Yes, I agree.

Emily: But everyone is like, “Oh my gosh,” and I guess some of the people are sufficiently impressed by that – they also ask what she’s gonna do for the Black Tower, and she’s like, “I can’t do anything about the Black Tower,” and everyone’s like, “Okay, we’ll stand for Elayne.” Um, I think she gets, like, two, so she has one above the bare minimum, and then some – Dyelin is like, “Why doesn’t everyone else stand up for the, you know, the consensus,” or the majority or something, and that gets a couple of other people, but Ellorien refuses to back Elayne and is just like, “Fuck off.” Um, and is like, “Yeah, I’m just going back home.” Elayne’s like, “Well, Tarmon Gai’don is coming, so you won’t be able to just, like, stay at home,” and she’s like, “Yeah, when Tarmon Gai’don comes, I will obviously join you in Andor, but I don’t have to be your dumb – I don’t want – I don’t have to be part –”

Sally: “I won’t be your little pet,” yeah.

Emily: “Of this,” yeah. Stupid. I too would go home rather than swear fealty to an 18-year-old or whatever the hell.

Sally: Yeah, it’s pretty – it’s pretty funny. Like, I know you just said all of this, but, like, they sit down for negotiations, and they’re like – the two things they hear from Elayne are: “I fabricated this diplomatic nightmare for really no good reason –”

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And, two, “The actual diplomatic nightmare on my soil I simply refuse to address or believe I can do anything about.”

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And everyone’s like, “Ah, seems reasonable.”

Emily: Yeah. That sounds like perfect monarchy –

Sally: Yeah, sounds –

Emily: Which, to be fair, it probably is in this world.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, sure.

Emily: There’s not really a high success rate going on –

Sally: Yeah, fair.

Emily: Around these parts. Um, but Elayne’s basically like, “Yeah, now I have Andor; there’s just, like, the coronation, but basically I’m queen,” and that’s how future books will treat her, is she’s just a queen. They might go into her coronation later; I can’t remember. Um, yeah, it’s yet another one of those moments that makes me wish, like, that the girl characters, the main three girl characters, were also ta’veren.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: One of the major good edits that the show made, I think.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Because, like, them just sort of suddenly swearing fealty to Elayne reads much more like a ta'veren thing –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Than like any sort of affirmation of Elayne's prowess as a ruler.

Sally: Yes. Yes.

Emily: Um, but that's just me.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: There's one other little chapter in the middle of those with Furyk Karede, who you may recall, I think in the last book, was chasing after Tuon in, like, the opposite way that everyone else is chasing after Tuon.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Suroth and Semirhage manufactured it so that everyone thinks Tuon is a traitor.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, so that's why they're all after her and why Mat can't entrust her to any of the Seanchan they're encountering. Karede, on the other hand, has absolute faith in Tuon, 'cause he is part of the Deathwatch Guards, I believe –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Which is sort of like Tuon's personal set of bodyguards.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And he has, like, a history of, uh, assisting Tuon. So he has his own sort of, like, mini force that he took out of Ebou Dar to go after Tuon – track down Tuon. And now we catch up with him as he is, like, going into this Seanchan camp up in the north of Altara, near where we know Mat and co. are operating, and it's basically just, like, him walking in. Everybody fucking hates him and all of his other – all the other Deathwatch Guards. I don't know why? I guess because they're associated with Tuon? It's just some weird Seanchan politics.

Sally: Yeah, I think so.

Emily: Or – I don't know, everyone just kind of doesn't like the Deathwatch Guards, 'cause they're, like, weird.

Sally: They seem pretty entitled to me.

Emily: Yeah, but he walks into this meeting and basically asks the commanding officer in this camp to, like, give him the low-down on what's been going on. This guy's like, "We are absolutely besieged by three million men." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: "Nothing can be done. Presumably they have Aes Sedai and Asha'man because they're just bouncing all over the place; we don't know what's happening. They must have the most – world's most brilliant commander." Karede's like, "Okay, well, I know that they don't have Aes Sedai or Asha'man because if they did then they'd be able to Travel and, um, that would – then they just wouldn't be here anymore."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which isn't great logic; they might have their own reasons for sticking around –

Sally: Yeah, like –

Emily: Such as completely upending this army –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Using Traveling. Like, that's perfectly reasonable. Also, they do have Aes Sedai, they just don't know how to Travel yet. So.

Sally: Yeah, so think a little harder, Karede.

Emily: Yeah. Karede also, in his skewed logic, is like, "This world-famous commander must surely be Thom Merrilin."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: 'Cause he's ageist, I think?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's just like, "Thom's the only dignified-looking one among them, so surely he must be the mastermind."

Sally: Which is also, like, so funny for someone to be like –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: "Thom Merrilin, king of dignity."

Emily: And it's like, yeah, if you do know Thom's backstory, which is that he killed two kings – (laugh)

Sally: Fucking sick.

Emily: Then it does sort of follow that maybe he would have a giant army that he's commanding –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: But then it is a – just a really solid moment when –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Karede comes in in the next sequence and is like, “Master Merrillin, I must commend you on your epic campaign.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Thom’s like, “Eh?”

Sally: Thom’s like, “Wot?”

Emily: “Oh, you’re looking for this clown.”

Sally: And Mat is, like, three days unwashed –

Emily: Doing a keg stand. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) And they’re like, “Okay. What?” They’re like, “Three million men? It’s one 25-year-old.”

Emily: “It’s one twenty –” Wait, how old –

Sally: Twenty-two-year-old.

Emily: Twenty-two-year-old with a lot of luck and a lot of gumption.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And absolutely no sense of self-preservation.

Sally: Yeah. It’s just him and his five hundred boyfriends and Thom.

Emily: Yeah. Everyone’s in love with him, presumably also Karede, once he meets him.

Sally: Yeah, he’s like, “Damn it.”

Emily: “Goddamnit. He’s hot.”

Sally: “Oh no!”

Emily: “Oh no, he’s hot!”

Sally: (simultaneously) “He’s hot!” (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: “He’s so dirty and gross, but he’s so hot.”

Emily: Um, but with this information, Karede and the Deathwatch Guards leave, um, to go track down Mat, and that’s where we’ll pick up in the next sequence.

Sally: (laugh) “We are absolutely besieged.”

Emily: Well.

Sally: No, that was such a good way to put it. He’s being so – it’s such a good –

Emily: Super dramatic.

Sally: Like, it is some peak Robert Jordan comedy when he was just like –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It’s just so good. That moment is so good.

Emily: To – yeah, it’s fun to be on the other side of things, being like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Oh, yeah, Mat’s plan is totally working –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: And we know why it’s working. We know how it’s working.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: There also is the news that, like, the soldiers that were in the pass are leaving the pass, so, yes, Mat and company are going to be able to leave that way, so, yeah. It’s nice to see a plan come together.

Sally: Good job, Mat Cauthon. Regular A-Team over here.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: We love you, Mat boy.

Emily: Uh, next week, we will finish Knife of Dreams.

Sally: We’re so close!

Emily: Isn’t that wild? Um, we’ll just get this one last Mat and company sequence and then Knife of Dreams is gonna be done.

Sally: It’s unfortunately a really good sequence and a really bad sequence.

Emily: Yeah, there’s some real highs and lows there. Um, but that’s crazy to think that we’re going to be in the Gathering Storm.

Sally: I know, in just a few weeks, we shall enter the age –

Emily: Of Brando.

Sally: Of Branderson.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Brando Sando will enter the chat.

Emily: Maybe we could interview him. (laugh)

Sally: Are you kidding? (laugh) Why would Brandon Sanderson –

Emily: I know –

Sally: Want to be on our podcast? (laugh)

Emily: That was a huge joke. Our ding-dong podcast.

Sally: Brandon Sanderson would be like, “You guys should –”

Emily: It just seems like such a waste that we live in the same state as him.

Sally: I know. And we can’t even –

Emily: Like, feasibly I could track him down. I could just stand in the BYU campus and be like –

Sally: Be like, “Brandon?”

Emily: “Hey, can I ask you a question? About the books that you undoubtedly do not want to talk about?”

Sally: Yeah, they must’ve been –

Emily: “The Wheely Time?”

Sally: So hard to write.

Emily: “Did it suck?” And he’ll be like, “Yeah,” and I’ll be like, “Okay, I knew that.”

Sally: Oh, Brando.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Yeah, he’s really close. He’s nearby, doing his Branderson thing, and we are here, doing whatever this is.

Emily: Doing our thing, yeah.

Sally: But we’ll have a party for the dawn of Branderson or something.

Emily: (laugh) I don’t know what the fuck we’ll do.

Sally: We’ll get the Cheesecake Factory.

Emily: Ahhh!

Sally: And we’ll record while we eat our Cheesecake Factory.

Emily: We are also, in the middle of the Gathering Storm, gonna be able to, um – gonna hit episode 250.

Sally: (gasp) That's right.

Emily: Which is exciting.

Sally: It is exciting. We have –

Emily: An exciting mile – mile – mile marker –

Sally: Milestone. We'll have to do something to celebrate. Maybe we'll do our awards show idea –

Emily: Oh ho ho.

Sally: And give awards to the Wheely Time characters.

Emily: Hooty hoo. Maybe we'll read our Gary Paulsen autobiography.

Sally: Yeah, his – that's the other one.

Emily: That we picked up at the independent bookstore.

Sally: At the independent bookstore. We do have Gary Paulsen's autobiography, burning a hole in our bookshelf downstairs.

Emily: Yeah. And boy, I can't wait to read it and then get rid of it.

Sally: Yeah, I just want to know how wild it is. The other – this could maybe be my sign-off. I'll save it.

Emily: Okay.

Sally: Hold on to Gary Paulsen.

Emily: Yeah. Cling to his – his memory. Thanks for listening. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Um, thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

Sally: Yes, we love you all so much.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Thanks for being here through Knife of Dreams.

Emily: Yeah, join us next time for the exciting finale. Okay, what's your Gary Paulsen-related sign-off?

Sally: Um, my friends Julie and Nathan were in, like, Michigan the other day or some – like, not the other day; like, a couple weeks ago. And they're, like, familiar with the, like, Hatchet joke of this podcast –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So they ran into a copy, not of Hatchet, but, like, one of the other ones –

Emily: Brian's Winter.

Sally: And they're like, "Look –" Yeah. They're like, "Look, Sally, we found Gary Paulsen in the wild," and I'm like, "He probably did exist in the Michigan wilds at some point."

Emily: Yeah. Who knows. That man was doing crazy stuff.

Sally: Yeah, so I was like – Julie is also a chronic reader of weird Wikipedia articles –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: So I was like, "Julie, I have a Wikipedia recommendation for you," and for like the next hour, she was texting me lines – just, like, lines from the Wikipedia, and she's like, "What the fuck is happening?" (laugh)

Emily: This man was nuts.

Sally: And I was like, I don't know, Julie. He was a maniac.

Emily: Wild. Wild. Okay, everyone. Have a good week!

Sally: Think more on Gary Paulsen.

Emily: Yeah, ruminate on that. Bye!

Sally: Bye, Gary – I mean, listeners. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)