



Episode 237: Great at the Military

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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: Well, it's over.

SALLY: [singing] And it's over now.

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

SALLY: And I'm Sally Goodger.

EMILY: And here we are to...do it, to do the thing.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: To finish it. Um, when did this book come out. 2005.

SALLY: Woof.

EMILY: [yawns/sighs]

SALLY: Let's see. In 2005 and I was ten years old.

EMILY: I was...twelve years old, I guess. [laughing] That math was pretty easy and it took me an embarrassing long time to do it. Um. I was just thinking about how I was in fifth grade. So, by then I would have already been acquainted with *The Wheel of Time* series.

SALLY: Dang!

EMILY: And might have, in fact, already begun reading it.

SALLY: Ambitious twelve-year-old.

EMILY: Well, Cambria, my best friend, was carrying them around and she was the coolest person I know – knew, so.

SALLY: Yeah, that's fair.

EMILY: It really – I really needed to.

SALLY: Yeah, obviously.

EMILY: I believe Robert Jordan died in 2008.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: Or perhaps 2007. I'm not sure. I remember learning about it in the middle school library.

SALLY: Oh, sad.

EMILY: [laughs] So, I know it was around that age. Um, and Brando Sando took over several years after that. I don't know what the exact timeline was. We should probably look that up for documentarian purposes.

SALLY: Yeah. For the oral history of *Wheel of Time*.

EMILY: But the last things Robert Jordan wrote about were a real tribute to his legacy, in that it ends with Suroth getting dragged away [laughs] to be tortured.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [laughing]

SALLY: Yeah! He's going out the way he would have wanted.

EMILY: He was committed to torture porn to literally his dying breath. His little – I like it when there's – there's an About the Author Bio. There's two different ones. One that was written pre-death and one that was written post-death. And in the pre-death one, which is in this book, it says, "He has been writing since 1977 and intends to continue until they nail shut his coffin." And I'd like to modify that slightly to, "He has been writing torture sequences of women specifically since 1977 [laughs] and did continue until they nailed shut his coffin."

SALLY: They nailed shut his coffin.

EMILY: And perhaps in the afterlife he's still up there. Or down there. Or, you know, maybe it's a lateral move.

SALLY: Maybe it's just a lateral move. Maybe he's just in whatever the after space is.

EMILY: Yeah, wherever Bruce Willis went at the end of the *The Sixth Sense*.

SALLY: Yeah. If he died in 2008, I hope he got to see *Mamma Mia!* before he passed [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] Can really tell you've been writing a blog about *Mamma Mia!* [laughs]

SALLY: *Mamma Mia*'s on the brain, baby! It's never not on my brain, but.

EMILY: What else came out in two thousand – 2008 was a –

SALLY: 2008 was a year.

EMILY: Certainly a year. Hold on. This is gonna be the whole episode [laughs]. I don't care about *Knife of Dreams*.

SALLY: Yeah, there's not really a whole lot to say that we, once again, haven't already said.

EMILY: First, let's verify when he did, in fact, die. Nope, two thousand...

SALLY: Six?

EMILY: Seven.

SALLY: 2007.

EMILY: September 16, 2007.

SALLY: Dang.

EMILY: Okay. Google. Top songs...

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: 2007.

SALLY: Oh, yeah. This is gonna be a trip down memory lane.

EMILY: Apologize by Timbaland.

SALLY: Oh my –

EMILY: [singing] It's too late to –

BOTH: [singing] To apologize.

EMILY: Wait, no.

SALLY: ...Is that not it?

EMILY: That's One Republic.

SALLY: Oh, that is One Republic.

EMILY: What's fucking Apologize by Timbaland?

SALLY: I don't know if I've ever heard it.

EMILY: More importantly Thanks fr th Mmrs by Fall Out Boy.

SALLY: Yeah, that song fucking slaps.

EMILY: Which has some of the gayest lines ever written. Crank That by Soulja Boy.

SALLY: That's a –

EMILY: WHOO! Dun dun.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Um.

SALLY: Buy U a Drank, that's a good one.

EMILY: Boy, I can't even recognized some of these. Bleeding Love by Leona Lewis is on here.

SALLY: That song's a banger.

EMILY: Woof.

SALLY: More Fall Out Boy.

EMILY: Yeah, they were – that's when they were big. Shut Up and Drive by Rihanna. [chaotic laughing]

SALLY: That is an absolute classic. There is a lot of Timbaland on this.

EMILY: Shadow of the Day by Linkin Park.

SALLY: [vocalizing] I don't have that tune right, but that is a good song.

EMILY: Hot – in the hot 100 singles – I think this was also the year of Umbrella by Rihanna, featuring –

SALLY: Yeah, Umbrella. Irreplaceable by Beyoncé.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Before He Cheats by Carrie Underwood! Hey There Delilah.

EMILY: Jeez. Hey There Delilah. Girlfriend by Avril Lavigne. How does that?

SALLY: [singing] Hey, hey, you, you –

BOTH: [singing] I don't like your girlfriend.

EMILY: Fergalicious!

SALLY: Oh! That's a classic.

EMILY: That's a real tribute to us, because we love that – we love –

SALLY: I love that song [laughs].

EMILY: Yeah [laughs].

SALLY: [laughing] I think I've referenced it on the podcast about a dozen times.

EMILY: We've specifically said it should go in the *Wheel of Time* soundtrack.

SALLY: Yeah, I believe that.

EMILY: U + Ur Hand by P!nk. The first song I ever heard about masturbation. I had to be – it had to be explained to me. I was pretty, pretty, um, sheltered back in those days. Um, let's see. Top movies 2007. Woof. *Knocked Up*.

SALLY: *Knocked Up*.

EMILY: With Seth Rogen. Ugh.

SALLY: *Blades of Glory*?

EMILY: Oh, *Hairspray*.

SALLY: *Hot Rod*.

EMILY: Yeah, a classic. I've never seen that. I don't know why I say that.

SALLY: I – it's a pretty funny movie. I don't know how I would feel about it now, but I enjoyed it.

EMILY: One time my brother and sister were watching *Hot Rod* and my grandma insisted on watching it with them.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And they said it was the tensest hour and a half [laughing] –

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [laughing] They've ever experienced.

SALLY: *Hot Rod's* not the worst one you could watch with your grandma, I guess. *Juno*.

EMILY: *Juno* featuring Michael Cera and Elliot Page.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I think they should make a remake of *Juno* where Elliot Page gets Michael Cera pregnant.

SALLY: [laughs] Uno reverse.

EMILY: [laughs] Exactly. Okay.

SALLY: Yeah, I don't recognize any of these movies.

EMILY: Oh boy.

SALLY: Action movies.

EMILY: Action movies. Oh, *The Seeker*, which was the incredibly bad, um, adaptation of *The Dark is Rising*.

SALLY: [whispers] Oh.

EMILY: A book we have covered on *We Don't Watch Outlander*, our side podcast. The Bourne Trilogy ended.

SALLY: Oh god.

EMILY: I know. Oh, *Stardust*, one of the actual best movies of our generation.

SALLY: Yeah, it's a good one.

EMILY: And, of course, *Pirates of the Caribbean: At World's End*.

SALLY: Oh. Wow.

EMILY: The end of that – [gasps] *National Treasure: Book of Secrets*.

SALLY: *National Treasure!*

EMILY: Okay, I could look at 2007 movies all day, but I guess I do have to say what happened in *Knife of Dreams*.

SALLY: I guess.

EMILY: I guess. So, Karede, we were talking about him last time. You remember. A real bootlicker of a man.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Furyk Karede rides up to the camp of the Band of the Red Hand. He's like, "I'm such a badass. All the guys are such badasses. We're ready to die at any moment. My serving man, my racially coded serving man, is gonna sneak away as soon as I identify Tuon and let the others know." And I guess that's supposed to be a source of tension, but it immediately goes away, so.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, more defamiliarization. He's like, "Oh, there's so few men here. This must just be one of their camps." Of course, we know this is it, baby. [laughs] The whole Band of the Red Hand. Talmanes rides up. He has a very sexy description.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Karede is like, "He's got a weird haircut, but he's clearly not, you know, a dandy," I believe is what he says.

SALLY: He's clearly not a dandy.

EMILY: Um [pages turning].

SALLY: Wrong.

EMILY: “He was no popinjay, though.”

SALLY: Popinjay.

EMILY: He says, “He wore the same [unclear] breastplate as the common soldiers and his eyes were hard and expressionless.” That’s our Talmanes.

SALLY: That’s our boy!

EMILY: Fucking.

SALLY: I love him. I know this is another running bit, but I think Talmanes is such a good character.

EMILY: In these dark times we have to cling to the things that we love.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Talmanes is it for me. [pages turning] Um, Karede boldly is like, “Take me to Thom Merillin.” And Talmanes is like, “Why in the fucking world would you want to see Thom Merillin? Okay, far be it from me to judge.”

SALLY: Yeah. Talmanes, a perfect, you know, polite nobleman is like, “Okay?”

EMILY: “Oh worm? You wanna see Thom? Okay, whatever. I don’t – Thom’s business is his own.”

SALLY: Thom’s, like, doing knife fighting with Noal or some insane shit. [laughs] They’re just, like, doing old man things.

EMILY: Yeah. He’s like, “Okay, I’ll track down Thom where he’s, I don’t know, playing bingo. What do old men do in retirement?”

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: I mean, Thom is doing the equivalent of bingo, but for the intellectuals.

SALLY: Oh yeah.

EMILY: Which is, he’s playing chess with Aludra.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Karede describes this as a very domestic scene, which is a, uh, pretty hilarious defamiliarization, because we know these people are familiar with each other, in that they're hanging out together constantly, but most of them fucking hate each other, so.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I guess that does actually make it an incredibly domestic scene.

SALLY: It's just like a real family.

EMILY: It's just like a real family. Who says found family has to be people who like each other?

SALLY: Like each other? It's just a bunch of people who hate each other.

EMILY: [laughs] Thom and Aludra are playing chess. Noal and Olver are playing Snakes and Foxes, of course. Egeanin and Juilin and whatnot are there. And Karede is like, "Well, Thom Merillin, you've led a fine campaign, but we finally tracked you down, so, you know, give 'er up." And Thom's like, "Exsqueeze me?" [laughs]

SALLY: Wot? [laughs]

EMILY: Are um – as they, as they get there, the Aes Sedai roll up and freak out because the one *damane* that Karede has in his company is, uh, a former Aes Sedai who has been so completely brainwashed that she is no longer that. So, pretty depressing to have that just sort of lingering in the background and no one making any attempt, besides Joline of all people to rectify that situation. Um, but Joline comes up and is yelling about it. Then, of course, Mat, Tuon, and Selucia ride up. Oh my gosh, I forgot [laughs]. Setalle Anan is there. Karede is also like, "Setalle Anan? What the?" And she's like, "Oh, hello."

SALLY: Hi!

EMILY: "Guy who stayed at my inn three months ago."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And he's like – like, imagine if you saw the guy who you saw at the hotel front desk.

SALLY: Yeah and you're like –

EMILY: Of the Best Western. Or I guess I shouldn't discredit Setalle Anan. Of the Hilton [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, of the Hilton. Of the Ritz.

EMILY: [laughing] The Ritz.

SALLY: Of the Ritz.

EMILY: Um, so [laughs] that's pretty funny. Anyway, the Aes Sedai are all yelling, of course, and causing a commotion as women tend to do. They're just so uncontrollable. Hysterical

SALLY: Women are just so emotional. Women, women be emotion – women be shopping [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs] Women just be doing women things. Shopping, yelling, crying.

SALLY: Crying.

EMILY: [laughing] Getting their period blood everywhere.

SALLY: Yeah, and just – [laughs].

EMILY: [laughing] I don't know.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: I regretted that as soon as I said it, but I'll leave it in.

SALLY: It's okay. It's always good to be talking about menstruation.

EMILY: Sure, yeah. [laughing] Normalize.

SALLY: Normalize it!

EMILY: [laughs] No matter how I feel about it in retrospect.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, then Mat rides up with Tuon and Selucia, but Mat immediately is like, "Everyone, deescalate. I will deescalate this situation by yelling at everyone. And because I'm a man that works."

SALLY: Yeah, apparently.

EMILY: Um, and Karede is like, "What the heck? Isn't this Tylin's Toy?" Um, he does have a pretty hilarious line about it. "As if being the Queen's plaything was the most important feature of him." Like, that's the only name that he's heard [laughs]. And I'm like, "Karede that's a personal problem of yours."

SALLY: Yeah, just because you don't view other people as human beings.

EMILY: Yeah and then he has a sick burn on Mat that's like, "He's not handsome enough to be a fucking sex slave." And it's like, "Karede...slash Robert Jordan who's clearly speaking for Karede. Why A) would you be like, 'Mat's ugly?'"

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] When we all know that his looks are off the charts. His – his natural charisma –

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: His use of charisma. But also, it has nothing to do with looks, you guys. You guys are so weird.

SALLY: Yeah, this is –

EMILY: Abuse and looks are, like, completely parallel lines. In that they don't ever touch. Or maybe it's the opposite.

SALLY: What did you say? Abuse and looks?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Yeah! Yeah, yeah, yeah. Yeah, it's not about how beautiful you are. As if – whatever. I – stupid. Also, yeah, I really don't know why Robert Jordan has, on multiple occasions, being like, "Mat's pretty ugly."

EMILY: I feel like he's mostly done it through men's points of view.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And I feel like it's the same way in which he's always like men always say about other men, "Women would consider him handsome," or "I don't consider him handsome" and either way those are being like, "I'm not gay."

SALLY: I'm not gay.

EMILY: Like, he just simply can't have men comment on other men's looks without quantifying it that they're like, "It's not sexual at all."

SALLY: Yeah, it's so bizarre. It's so bizarre. You're right. Instead of it being, like, a value neutral presentation of like, "Mat is of average height and a pretty skinny guy and he's got brown hair." To look at another man and notice what he looks like is obviously something I need to clarify is not coming from a place of being gay.

EMILY: Yeah. It's got the real "no homo" vibes that were real – so prevalent in 2003 of whatever the hell.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I know I already looked it up, but.

SALLY: Oh Mat.

EMILY: 2005.

SALLY: Congrats on being a little ugly. That's the secret to great success.

EMILY: I know. Listen, yeah. Some men that are a little ugly are actually the most attractive.

SALLY: Yeah! This is –

EMILY: That's the secret.

SALLY: That's the secret. You just –

EMILY: Women want a guy –

SALLY: I just want him to be a little weird looking.

EMILY: Yeah, we don't want an airbrushed –

SALLY: No!

EMILY: Marvel –

SALLY: No!

EMILY: Hairless, glistening man. Those are terrible. Give me a man who's just a little weird looking.

SALLY: Yeah! I just want him to be a little weird looking.

EMILY: And has a personality.

SALLY: I just want him to be, like, a little freak, you know?

EMILY: Yeah, I just want, like, little bit gremlin vibes.

SALLY: Yeah! I just want him to be, like, a little bit of a weird looking gremlin. That's my baby.

EMILY: It'd be sexy. That's –

SALLY: I'm trying to think of an example, but so much of the media is saturated with, like, Captain America straight out of his pod.

EMILY: Anyway, enough about Mat's looks. After Mat, quote, deescalates, unquote, Karede talks to Thom and Thom is like, "You're actually mistaken, this is the guy you want."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Karede's like –

SALLY: No it isn't.

EMILY: [laughs] "There's no way about this." And, um, Mat is like, "I know what you're bluffing about what you just told Thom, and that you only have, like, three hundred guys, because I'm not an idiot. And I can easily take you out with my guys, so. And I also don't believe you that people are about to advance on our positions, so. My scouts say something different. But all of that is beside the point. Can you get Tuon back to Ebou Dar?" And Karede's like, "Yeah – yes? Is this a trick?"

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And Mat's like "No, it's not a trick. I just – all the Seanchan are out to kill Tuon. [laughs] Are you a good one slash Tuon, do you trust this guy?" And Tuon's like, "Yeah, I trust him." And, um, Mat is like, "Well, great. Pack up your things and go." And Tuon chooses this moment to publicly marry Mat in front of everyone. And Karede – it would have been so funny if Karede faints, the way Aes Sedai do when they hear a shocking piece of news, but tragically he doesn't. Because Robert Jordan's a coward [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah. Why can't Karede be a little bit of a delicate fainting goat?

EMILY: Yeah a – [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Karede, the fainting goat!

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: He's great at the military, except for when he faints like a goat.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] But we're very supportive of him.

SALLY: He's great at the military [laughs].

EMILY: He's great at – war. Military.

SALLY: No, it's perfect. He's great at the military, [laughing] except when he faints. Like a goat. Karede, in case you didn't know this, we don't respect you.

EMILY: [laughs] No! Why would anyone? Anyway, Mat's like, "Um, exsqueeze me? Could you tell me why you just chose to marry me? What that's about?" [pages turning] He's like, "I didn't even think you fucking liked me let alone loved me." And she's like, "Well, obviously I don't love you. Don't talk crazy, but I had this big fore – I talked to an Aes Sedai – " this is the big reveal – she's like, "I talked to an Aes Sedai before we landed in Ebou Dar and she had this prophecy about a man who will marry you and, and capture you and also set you free and the foxes and the ravens and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And you just finished the prophecy by agreeing to let me go." Just like the Beast does in Beauty and the Beast, you know?

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: The act – the good Disney version, not the weird remake with Emma Watson. No offense, Emma. Or maybe some offense.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I don't believe it was your fault, but I do – [laughs] don't like people participating in Disney cash grabs. Anyway, it's like in the good one where Belle realizes she loves the Beast because he let her go back to be with her father.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, guys, that's what true love is, you know?

SALLY: When you get released from captivity.

EMILY: Yeah. When, after a period of captivity, you are – [laughs].

SALLY: You are then released.

EMILY: You are then released.

SALLY: You have to wait –

EMILY: On your captor's terms

SALLY: The bad part about this is that you don't know at which point in your captivity you may or may not be released. So, is the man holding you hostage your true love? Or is he genuinely holding you hostage?

EMILY: Yeah, you just sort of have to have – you just have to be like complicated feelings until then.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And then, when he does set you free, you're free to consummate those complicated feelings, by immediately declaring your, in Tuon's case, willingness to enter into the bonds of matrimony [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Despite a lack of feeling [pages turning]. Anyway, she's like, "What about you? Why'd you marry me?" And he's like, "Oh, because I got this dumb – I also got a dumb prophecy but from the snake and fox people." And she's like, "Shut up!"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And he's like, "Okay. This is already – we're off to a great start."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, and [laughs] she's like, "Okay, I'm leaving." And he's like, "Okay, the next time I see Seanchan, it will probably be on the opposite end of a battlefield." Which is a promise that is not fulfilled. I wish Mat had fucking fought some Seanchan.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But alas. He's like, "You're not my enemy, but your – you're not my enemy, but your Empire is." And she says, "Nor are you my enemy, husband, but I live to serve the Empire." Tuon doesn't live to serve the Empire. Tuon *is* the Empire.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: That is how imperialism works and how imperial bodies are embodied in the people leading them. Like, that's not just propaganda. It's what these people are actually legally constructed to be. So, that's an empty sentiment both ways, guys.

SALLY: Yeah, like the idea that, like, Mat saying, "You're not my enemy, but your empire is," is just, like, a fallacy? Like, it's just, like, a statement that cannot be true.

EMILY: Yeah, you can't separate those two things.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So.

SALLY: So, it's –

EMILY: It would have been funnier if they were married and they were just like, “Well, you're my enemy. We're also married I guess.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I mean. It still wouldn't have been great, but at least it would have been honest.

SALLY: Yeah, like, “Hey, this doesn't actually change anything.” I – yeah. It's so dumb, like, two households shit.

EMILY: Um, but Tuon and everyone takes off. She asks Karede what his opinion of Mat is. Karede is like, “Yeah, he's good and also he's in love with you.” And Tuon's like, “Oh worm? Well, I don't care about that, but let's go to Ebou Dar and shave my head.” We then get a, uh, well, technically while Karede was still there we got news that a, uh, group of Altaran soldiers led by a single Seanchan was – had located Mat's position and was after them, or something like that. Or, they had noticed the Deathwatch Guards and were after the Deathwatch guards. So, Mat sets up his battle plan to allow for Karede and most of his guys, escorting Tuon and Selucia, to escape. He keeps back a few of the Deathwatch Guards so as to convince these people that they're actually still chasing the Deathwatch Guards.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, and it's just this classic Mat battle. It's very tricky. It involves this sort of almost play acting, having his soldiers build half a ditch or half a little wall. And look like they're in the middle of building it so that – so as to give the enemy a false sense of security.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: There's flanking. There's new fancy crossbows. Aludra is not using her new cannons yet, but she still has some interesting, you know, she's basically exploding fireworks at people.

SALLY: Yeah. Very grenade – proto grenade.

EMILY: Yeah. The Aes Sedai use the Power once they feel in danger quote unquote. So. The battle plan itself is, like, fine. I don't – I'm not as enamored of reading about dying horses as –

SALLY: Yeah. It's –

EMILY: Robert Jordan is of writing about them, perhaps.

SALLY: Like it, it's very satisfying in the way that, like, you love to see a plan come together.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: It's very satisfying, but it is also like, I don't know, I think it loses – I think Mat's whole arc loses everything once he's officially married to Tuon. This is only a downhill slope. Like, you are already fighting for the Seanchan in this instance and you're going to keep doing that, so your whole genius just starts to feel really gross.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: To me.

EMILY: Yeah, it's not great.

SALLY: So, it doesn't really hit the way it used to. The way it did only –

EMILY: [laughs] A few chapters ago.

SALLY: A few chapters ago.

EMILY: Yeah. Um, the only relevant thing about this is that Mat's talking to, I have no idea how to pronounce this, Musenge?

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: Who's the Deathwatch Guard lieutenant left by Karede and this guy keeps referring to Mat as "Highness," which Mat is curious about, but doesn't question until the very end of the chapter. Um, at the end of the chapter when all of these people, and their horses, have been slaughtered – I know it's so sad.

SALLY: It's a lot of horses.

EMILY: I know. Poor – Vanin's the only one who's like, "Their poor horses."

SALLY: I know.

EMILY: Um, they identify the body of the Seanchan. Or rather, the Deathwatch Guards identify the body and are like, "Oh ho ho. Very interesting. We need to take this to Tuon." And we, the readers, are like, "What? Is this another – yet another villain I'm supposed to keep track of?"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Or at least I was.

SALLY: Yeah, I had no idea – no idea who he was.

EMILY: I was ready to go on Wikipedia to find him out, but it will be revealed in the next two pages [laughs] what's going on there. But Mat says to Musenge, "Oh, you don't need to call my Highness. My name's just Mat." Um, and this guy is like, "Oh, well now that you're married to Tuon you are Prince of the Ravens." So, Seanchan nobility. This is also marked by Mat, in a Perrin-esque move, sticking his hand out for Musenge to shake. Musenge does not, because of the nobility thing, but it's, again, a gesture of, like, camaraderie between, or toward, the Seanchan that is completely out of place.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, or rather very much in place for the project of this series, but out of place morally.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, so Mat dissolves into hysterics because he hates no-bills. [laughs] Nobills.

SALLY: Nobills.

EMILY: And that's where we leave him. We hop over to Ebou Dar where Suroth is, once again, in a power struggle with some rando general. She's getting a report on the situation in Arad Doman and Tarabon. This is all very, like, tangential to what is actually going on in this scene, so you have to kind of piece it together, but it sounds like Suroth's original plan at the beginning of this book to just send all her people to Tarabon was immediately countered by Ituralde.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: In that he withdrew into Arad Doman, the Seanchan followed and more of his forces came out to flank them. So, the Seanchan are in the middle of getting fucking annihilated over in Tarabon and Arad Doman. Again, you love to see it. Itulrade is the only real person in this series [laughs].

SALLY: I know! He's the only one with any fucking moral high ground.

EMILY: I fucking love him. Short king.

SALLY: Absolute icon. Legend.

EMILY: Um, but Tuon returns. Now has the news that her mother is dead, um, and is like, "Look at what we found." And it's the head that they got at this battlefield and is like, "This guy tried to kill me." And Suroth's like, "Oh, well that's – I'm so sorry that one of my servants tried to kill you." And Tuon's like, "He never did anything without your say so." Which is circumstantial evidence to say the least.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, and is like, “Arrest Suroth and now she’s gonna be the naked servant lady.” You know like –

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, it’s just – [pause].

SALLY: Mm-hmm. Correct.

EMILY: First of all, gratification et cetera, et cetera. This is just a way – like, this section literally ends with them cutting her clothing off. So, once again, women reduced to nudity, servitude, et cetera for what. But also it’s just sort of, like, pokes a whole in the logic of the Seanchan Empire. That they’re like, “Oh, everyone has its place and all of those places have a certain amount of dignity, you know. Even these servants are an intrinsic part of the Seanchan Empire. Duh, duh, duh, duh, duh.” Except that this is, like, how people are punished.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So you can’t just, like, have people who are born to this caste, or whatever, and also people are punished by being put into this caste. That’s inherently saying –

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: These people are of a lower and insignificant social strata.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: An abused social strata.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, so just a little thing there. Then we pop over to Pevara.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: I know. Random. Who is on a stroll into the woods surrounding the Black Tower with, like, five other Red Ajah Aes Sedai, whoever they could scrounge together to enact this mission of bonding warders. They are met by some Asha’man scouts, including some teen from the Two Rivers.

SALLY: Oh yeah.

EMILY: Who’s an al’Seen, I guess. We know that surname. They are then escorted into the Black Tower itself, which we now see is like a full palace in the style of the Saldaean palaces, aka Mazrim Taim’s personal preferences, I guess. And then we have the most Mazrim Taim is Demandred scene of all time.

SALLY: I knooooow! It's so absurd.

EMILY: Like, there's things like Pevara being like, "What's with the black and red color scheme? Blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." And we know that that's, like, Forsaken colors, duh, duh, duh, duh, duh.

SALLY: So stupid.

EMILY: Um, and just him being like super evil and posturing. He uses the phrase, "Let the Lord of Chaos rule," which we last saw given to Demandred, I believe.

SALLY: Yeah, at the beginning of –

EMILY: Book 6.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Not last saw, but that's where that phrase originated.

SALLY: Originated yeah.

EMILY: Was in a conversation between Demandred and the Dark One.

SALLY: And isn't Pevara like, "I've literally never heard that phrase before," or something?

EMILY: Yeah. He's like, [laughs] "You know the old saying. Let the Lord of Chaos rule." And she's like, "I've never heard that. What are you talking about?"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, it's obviously not a common thing. But yeah. They're like – Mazrim Taim's like, "What are you bitches doing here?" Basically [laughs] directly that.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And they're like, "Well, we figure fair's fair. You've bonded some of ours, we want to bond some of yours." And some guy's like, "[fake laughter] Red Ajah bonding Asha'man." And Mazrim Taim uses the power to give him a concussion and break his shoulder, or something like that. "His skull is cracked and his jaw is broken." So just, you know, outright physical violence.

SALLY: Abuse.

EMILY: Yeah abuse –

SALLY: Also denies him healing.

EMILY: Yeah, he's like, "If he lives until nightfall, we'll heal him then." So, if I were Pevara, this would be like. Okay.

SALLY: Red flag city, baby.

EMILY: "Uh, I'm leaving, actually."

SALLY: [laughs] You know what? Never mind.

EMILY: You know what? I'm good.

SALLY: I'm – I'm solid.

EMILY: This plan – I know I invested, I know I sunk some costs into this, but that's a fallacy. I can hit the bricks at any time.

SALLY: Yep. And I'm –

EMILY: And I'm going to.

SALLY: I'm electing to that in this moment.

EMILY: Sadly that is not what they do, and Mazrim Taim is like, "Okay, fine." And they're like, "You're not even going to negotiate with us or anything?" And Mazrim Taim is like, "No. You're right. Fair's fair." So, obviously there's an ulterior motive here and it's that the more channelers are in the Black Tower and under Mazrim Taim's thumb the better, because he can turn them evil.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: But we will not start getting to that plot until...possibly *Towers of Midnight*. Maybe a little bit in *The Gathering Storm*.

SALLY: What. A. Plot to introduce in Book 13. Twelve or 13.

EMILY: I know. It's been, like, weirdly alluded to, but it's also been just, like, kind of Mazrim Taim's weird posse. And it's like yeah I believe Mazrim Taim has a weird posse, because every, like, bully on the block acquires followers, but Pevara enters this room and it is hundreds of people. So, it's just, like, a little unclear how big the Black Tower even is.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: And then what exactly the breakdown is between the bad guys and the not so bad guys [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: The gleeful war criminals and the not so gleeful war criminals.

SALLY: Yeah, it's – even just the idea that there's, like, a palace at the center of the Black Tower. Like, what does that mean in terms of size?

EMILY: Yeah!

SALLY: Like, actual land.

EMILY: Like, I feel like it's been at most a year since Rand started the Black Tower.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: In our day and age if a building – if a palace was constructed in a single year, it would be a – an engineering marvel.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It would also be likely to fall apart in the first earthquake [laughs].

SALLY: Yes. Just like our townhome [laughs].

EMILY: Just like our townhome [laughs].

SALLY: Essentially made of cardboard.

EMILY: Which probably went up in a month and a half [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah. Um.

EMILY: But, like, yeah. Has he been using the Asha'man to do the labor of this palace? Like, it's just insane.

SALLY: Yeah, the whole thing is very confusing. His follower count is very confusing. I mean, it fits in line with *The Wheel of Time* never telling us exactly how many bad guys there are.

EMILY: While giving us many, many, many bad guy names that we have to keep track of? Yeah.

SALLY: Yeah. So, who knows what's going on there? Like Emily said, it's very much like, "This is Demandred and smart readers will pick up on that, because it's pretty obvious."

EMILY: Yeah, because we're in Book [pause while she looks at the book] 11 and Demandred is now the only one unaccounted for.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, it's gotta be Mazrim Taim, you know?

SALLY: It's gotta be. And it would have been really satisfying if it was.

EMILY: Yeah, it would have just been like, "Okay. That's normal and fine."

SALLY: But no. Demandred is on another continent or whatever.

EMILY: In fantasy Australia.

SALLY: Some – I mean, I want to go to fantasy Australia. That sounds pretty nice, but you know.

EMILY: So that's *Knife of Dreams*. It was a bad book, you guys.

SALLY: It was a pretty rough one.

EMILY: I didn't enjoy it very much.

SALLY: Yeah, *Knife of Dreams* doesn't have a lot of – I know we've said this, but this sort of, this notorious slog at the center of *The Wheel of Time*, does not have a lot of, like, entertainment value. Or a lot of, like, pleasure value for me, at least. I feel like there's not really a lot of, like, joyful moments to hold onto, except for, like we mentioned with Talmanes, like instances of side characters that you really enjoy. Or a few very cool moments. Um, it's just kind of like what was the point of all of this?

EMILY: Yeah, despite the fact that all of these plots are pretty much wrapping up in this book, there's not even really a lot of pleasure in, like, having them be done.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: I think that's partly because we know there are three more books after this.

SALLY: Yes. Yeah.

EMILY: So, like, we know that the sort of feeling of being finished or nearing the finish line is kind of a lie.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah.

EMILY: So I don't know. It's just not very good.

SALLY: And I just don't think there's a lot of satisfaction with the plots ending also, like, like you said, we know that we're just ending plots to begin new plots.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: Ed [a cat scratching in the background]

EMILY: There's also a certain amount of, like, all of the plots are ending, as opposed to, like, one or two plots being wrapped up in *Crossroads of Twilight* and another couple of plots being wrapped up in *Knife of Dreams*. And, you know, sort of having a weaving of plots.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: Rather than just sort of, like, this terminus point. And I don't know how much to blame Robert Jordan for this, because I think his original plan was to end in the next book.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, there's a certain amount of like, "Yeah, he was trying to wrap things up," but I also have total faith in Brandon Sanderson's assessment that, like, it would have been impossible to wrap up in one book.

SALLY: Yeah, absolutely. Um.

EMILY: Three books? I don't know. Could have been two books, I think.

SALLY: Yeah, I also just feel like with this *Knife of Dreams*, like, section of plots – Malden, the Tuon kidnapping, whatever is going on with Rand, Egg in the White Tower – like all of these plots feel really unnecessary.

EMILY: Yeah, the Andoran succession plotline.

SALLY: Yeah, the Andoran – that's the other one that's just like, "Why did – why did we have all of these? I don't really see how they contribute to the main plot. I'm just tired."

EMILY: Yeah. Most of them don't contribute to the Last Battle. I'm trying to think, like, um, like, here's what – here's what – here are things that happened because of those plots. Because of Perrin, the problem of Masema is more or less taken care of. Which, again, could have been done myriad other ways. The big this is that Perrin establishes a relationship with the Seanchan, which, as we have stated multiple times, is not necessary – is not requisite to the Last Battle, however much Robert Jordan wants it to be. That's pretty much the same with Mat's plot here, in floundering around in Altara. We do get a couple of different things like Aludra's invention of cannons and things like that. The sort of reveal about Moiraine the Tower of Ghenjei. But for the most part it's just about establishing a relationship with the Seanchan empire and Tuon specifically.

SALLY: Yes. Yes.

EMILY: Uh, the Andoran succession plotline is nothing. There's nothing going on there that needed to be four books long.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Yeah, no. And I guess we've had so little Rand over the last few books anyone that I can't really – a lot of Rand has just been sitting around talking to people.

SALLY: Yeah, I mean, after the cleansing of *saidin*, like why [laughing] are we checking in with Rand if he's doing anything.

EMILY: Yeah. So, it's just been a lot of waffling. Plots that Robert Jordan set up to do god – almost to, like, delay. Almost delaying tactics until the Last Battle. It's very odd.

SALLY: Yeah, and I know we're being pretty negative, so I apologize. I assume the type of people listening to our podcast are self-selecting, because they also have complicated feelings about *The Wheel of Time*. I know we're being really negative, and a lot of this, at least for me, is coming from my, like, personal tastes of not enjoying this, um, as well as, I think, some pretty well-founded criticisms about, like, how do you craft a story. And I guess the best I can say is that Robert Jordan was writing the books that he obviously wanted to write. And, you know what, that's nice for him, I guess. Don't know if these are the types of books, we should be platforming with, um, all of the aforementioned torturing of women, but, you know, at least he got his platform I guess.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Or I – I don't think he should have maybe had a platform. At least he got the creative space that he wanted.

EMILY: And boy was it big.

SALLY: That's me trying to find a positive [laughs].

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: I don't know if that's even valid.

EMILY: My positive is that Ed is here now. Sitting on my lap, purring.

SALLY: Yeah. Happy guy.

EMILY: He's quite nice. [heater kicks on in the background]. Okay, so. That's it, everyone.

SALLY: That's it!

EMILY: My computer's mad and our heat just kicked on, so.

SALLY: That's because it's cold.

EMILY: Better wrap it up. Thank you for listening.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: For sticking with us through Book 11. Perhaps through eleven whole books if you've been here that long.

SALLY: Well, ten whole books.

EMILY: Ten whole books. You're right.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Yeah, I forgot. If you're still wondering where that one was. We just didn't cover it.

SALLY: We just didn't do *Path of Daggers*.

EMILY: And we're not gonna. Imagine how we'd feel right now if we were just finishing *Crossroad of Twilight*, you know?

SALLY: We legitimately might have to take a break.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Podcast is on hiatus.

EMILY: Woof. But as it stands, we'll be picking up with *The Gathering Storm*. Not next week, but the week after. But thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media. Keep an eye on our website for the reading schedule for *The Gathering Storm*. That will be an interesting one for me. I usually put those together and I can't quite remember if Brandon Sanderson changes the structure of chapters.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: I do think he puts more points of view per chapter. So, that will be interesting. In a – in a desperate attempt to quicken the pace of the narrative.

SALLY: Brandon's like, "DEAR GOD."

EMILY: I know.

SALLY: We gotta get things rocking and rolling.

EMILY: Um, I think that's it.

SALLY: [pause] Yeah! We'll be back. Dawn of Brado Sando. We should call him by his name. The dawn of Brandon Sanderson.

EMILY: Yeah, especially if we get an exclusive interview with him [laughs].

SALLY: We're – Brandon is – I think he's better than that.

EMILY: You're right.

SALLY: [laughing] I don't think – I don't think –

EMILY: I certainly don't think he'd have the time for that.

SALLY: Yeah, he's a busy man. He's got, like, eight books coming out or whatever.

EMILY: I know. He's just a dude that has nine books on the roster at any given moment.

SALLY: How does he do it? Brandon, I can't even get through the day.

EMILY: Yeah, I don't know. Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: I do. Since we talked so much about the suffering of women and periods.

EMILY: Oh! [laughs]

SALLY: Um, just two of my friends got IUDs placed in the last two weeks, and *both* of them are having serious complications from them.

EMILY: Oh, god!

SALLY: Due to the way they were placed and the care that they are receiving. So, just, um, think a little more about reproductive health and reproductive justice and, uh.

EMILY: It's like *Mad Max* out there, you guys.

SALLY: It really is and as it is now women's month, or whatever. Women's history month? March is –

EMILY: I think it's International Women's Month?

SALLY: Something like that.

EMILY: Or is it International Women's Day? [crosstalk]

SALLY: Yeah, International Women's Day was this week.

EMILY: I don't know. Venmo us either way.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: We're women.

SALLY: [laughing] We are women. Um, and it's also a very good time to learn about the history of gynecology and the ways that, um, Black women were tortured and experimented on to give us –

EMILY: The subpar quality of health care that we have today.

SALLY: Yeah, so! We're talking negative, that's a negative note to end on [laughs], I guess.

EMILY: [laughs] Just have Ed at the end.

SALLY: Just have Ed! Purr into the microphone, baby. [whispers] Oh yes, yes, yes.

EMILY: You probably won't be able to hear him over the heater, but he's purring. And he's –

SALLY: He's purring. He's got his pink belly showing.

EMILY: He's angry at us for picking him up. Alright, everyone.

SALLY: Ed hates being picked up.

EMILY: Have a good couple weeks.

SALLY: Bye!