



Episode 216: Queue Fast Queue Furious
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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)

Sally: Well, friends. Another week passes –

Emily: Friends –

Sally: In Crossroads of Twilight.

Emily: Romans. (laugh) Countrymen.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Um – what's with this book? It's, like –

Sally: I don't know. It –

Emily: Titled.

Sally: It has gone through some trials –

Emily: Okay.

Sally: And tribulations.

Emily: Just like me, reading this book. This is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: Oh, look at that.

Sally: I know.

Emily: I love it when that happens. I mean, I don't love it when that happens, but it is pretty funny.

Sally: It is pretty funny, yeah.

Emily: When the book has some, like, weird breakage on the inside –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Where the spine is. Okay. Ugh. Anyway. Anyway, we're back with Rand, sort of, obliquely. We get –

Sally: He's there.

Emily: Yeah. We get two chapters, and one of them is, like, partly from Rand's point of view. Um, but mostly they're from Cadsuane's point of view, which is, as always, a trial and a tribulation unlike any other we've suffered.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And we're with the party, the same party that did the whole cleansing on –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Cleansing on saidin. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, mopping saidin.

Sally: Yeah, you just had to get up there and clean it off a little. It's dusty.

Emily: With one of those Mr. Clean magic sponges. The party is recuperating from their, um, you know, big to-do –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Uh, at a random manor house, which we are told is, like, pretty close to the big mountain range but within the boundaries of Tear, um, itself.

Sally: Mm-hmm. So it's, like –

Emily: So also pretty close to Loial's stedding.

Sally: There. Yeah.

Emily: Stedding Shangtai. Sh-Shangtai. Um, and this manor is owned by a guy named ...

Sally: I think it's Algarin.

Emily: Yeah, Algarin. Algarin, who, like, just to, you know – just to keep an eye on the moving target, I guess, uh, Lord Algarin expresses interest in this section to being tested to see if he can channel. We find out his tragic backstory is that he had a brother who could channel who Cadsuane herself gentled –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And rather than that being a major tragedy in which, um, the brother, you know, just died immediately after, it seems that he lived for some time after that, and so Algarin has a positive view of the experience because it meant he had more time with his brother –

Sally: Right.

Emily: And his brother being in his right mind. Um, I'd probably feel less obliquely about that if we knew how his brother eventually died. You know, like, did he still die by suicide, just ten years later? Or did he, like, have a heart attack, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, it's a bit confusing. But, um, back to the original point, which is that Algarin wants to get tested. He will, in later books, although it won't be very – you know, this is, like, a sub sub subplot. Um, he will find out that he can be taught to channel, and he will go to the Black Tower, and then he will assume a pseudonym, and then under that pseudonym, he will be part of the Black Tower plot. How anyone is meant to keep track of this, I have no idea, but just so you know.

Sally: What's his pseudonym?

Emily: I – I don't know. I can't remember.

Sally: Why would you assume a pseudonym?

Emily: He just has a fake name, I guess 'cause he's, like, a minor lord and doesn't want to be associated as, like, a nobleman or something?

Sally: Fascinating.

Emily: I don't know, it's all from Androl or Pevara's points of view, and they're just like, "This guy is clearly a nobleman."

Sally: He act – you can tell because they act a specific way.

Emily: They also are like, "And he's clearly gay." And I'm like –

(sound of a motorcycle revving in the distance)

Sally: So is that motorcycle.

Emily: Yeah, so is that motorcycle. And I'm just like, poor Brandon Sanderson, fumbling –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Blindly in the dark for a character, a character minor enough that the conservative Wheel of Time fans wouldn't be outraged or would miss it entirely –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And also enough of a character that the rest of us would just thank him for the crumbs that he's scattering to us. It is fairly obvious to me that Robert Jordan had no concept of this

character being gay because it is referenced that he has children, and I don't believe Robert Jordan has a nuanced enough idea of sexuality –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To understand –

Sally: To be, like –

Emily: That a gay man can still have biological children. But –

Sally: What –

Emily: That's just my little soap box for the day.

Sally: Yeah, what a mess.

Emily: I know, right? There's so much in this little nut of a character.

Sally: (laugh) There is a lot – there's a lot to unpack there. And perhaps we will when we return to Algarin in the Black Tower, but –

Emily: If we remember him. (laugh)

Sally: If we remember who the fuck this is.

Emily: So funny.

Sally: The whole thing is so, so, so silly.

Emily: I also think it's funny that, like, all of the gay Wheel of Time men – as far as I know, it's just this guy and, like, one Borderlander dude –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who Lan references obliquely, also in A Memory of Light – they're both older men.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, I was thinking the same thing.

Emily: And I just think – I mean, it's a very small sample size, obviously, and that's the point.

Sally: Right.

Emily: But also, like, it is interesting that we are presenting gay men in such a way that they can no longer be threatening.

Sally: Yeah. No, I was thinking the same thing. Like, it's very interesting, as though it's something safe about being like, "They're gay," because older people are no longer sexual.

Emily: Virile.

Sally: You know? As though it's impossible, you know, for them to have sex lives. But, I think more to the point is, like, yeah, they're not threatening in that they're not actively going against

what you're supposed to be doing when you're young, which is finding someone of the opposite sex to then – if we're thinking of sex as a binary – to then marry and have children. They are not threatening because they are not pushing against that, particularly in this – in Algarin – Algarin's – whatever – case, he's done that, so in some way, he's fulfilled some sort of duty, almost.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It's just, yeah, this way to make them unthreatening and irrelevant, kind of, which is really sad, because, one, you know, older queer people are not relevant, um, and also, like, we shouldn't – gay representation involves queer people of all ages and other identity factors. It almost just doesn't count that Brandon Sanderson was like, "Oh, you can have this guy."

Emily: Yeah, 'cause it's like, the idea is, by mainstream romance standards, these men are too old to fall in love –

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: With other men or women, whatever.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is, of course, patently untrue –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: People fall in love at all ages and, like, there are plenty of, like, gay elders –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Older people who are very much a vibrant part of the community –

Sally: For sure.

Emily: And, like, showing up at Pride parades and whatnot. And also have, like, extremely vibrant sex lives, many of them –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The same way that any subset of any group –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Does. So it's all just, like, ridiculous that it has to be sanitized in a way that is only sanitized when you're coming at it from a heterosexual, cisgender point of view. Anyone outside of those points of view would be like, "What? I saw an 80-year-old dude in bondage gear at Pride last year," you know, like – (laugh)

Sally: Yeah! They're there, like, every year, and they're the pillars of our community. (laugh)

Emily: They are the pillars of our community!

Sally: God.

Emily: These are the dudes who survived the Reagan administration.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which, Jesus, so few of them did.

Sally: Was – yeah, no small fucking feat. And they are extremely important and lovely, and I am so grateful that they're there every year –

Emily: I know.

Sally: Usually being like, "Fuck the police." (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, 'cause they know.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They know.

Sally: They know.

Emily: So anyway, just, like, this week, pour one out for our gay elders –

Sally: Yeah, truly.

Emily: And all that they've done for us, and, you know, be like – in the privacy of your own head; don't harass real people – be like, "Brandon, could've done better."

Sally: Could've done better on that one –

Emily: Could've done better.

Sally: Friend.

Emily: At the very least, the two gay old guys could've found each other and smooched.

Sally: Yeah. That would've been pretty iconic.

Emily: That would have been pretty iconic.

Sally: Be like, "Here's this random Borderlander nobility or whatever and also this –"

Emily: (laugh) The only thing they have in common is that they're both gay.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) We –

Emily: But that's enough.

Sally: We sound like aunts. Like, your conservative aunt: "I have a coworker who's gay."

Emily: Oh, "I – I literally know one other dude in this fourteen-book series, each book of which is six hundred pages, that's gay, so maybe you guys would make a cute couple."

Sally: "Maybe you guys would really get along." (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, you know?

Sally: Apparently they're the only two gay men on the planet, so they're – their options are quite limited. Um.

Emily: Well, Robert Jordan is much less shy about making allusions to lesbians, which I think is very funny, so.

Sally: I know.

Emily: But only because he can then be like, "All Aes Sedai are lesbians in some way because they're all power-hungry –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And as we all know, all power-hungry women are lesbians."

Sally: Naturally.

Emily: Natch.

Sally: Obviously.

Emily: Yeah. Hilary Clinton: huge lesbian. Margaret Thatcher –

Sally: Huge –

Emily: A gay icon.

Sally: Yeah – (gagging noise, laugh)

Emily: I need to memorize that quote about, like, "Was it girl power when Margaret Thatcher did war crimes?"

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Queen Elizabeth? A lesbian.

Sally: Ugh.

Emily: Have you heard about the queue? The fucking gigantic line to see the queen's body or whatever?

Sally: (wheeze)

Emily: I just think it's so funny.

Sally: "Have you heard about the queue?" Um. No.

Emily: (laugh) People are just making really good jokes about it. Like –

Sally: I have not heard about –

Emily: People have given birth in the queue.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: The queue is, like, this eldritch –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Thing that will last for centuries.

Sally: I love it. I love the idea that of a sort of – a line –

Emily: Yeah, you get in line, and you're like, "What are we in line for?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: They're like, "To see Queen Elizabeth's body. She died nine hundred years ago."

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) The idea of a sentient line sort of embodying the human horror of waiting around.

Emily: Waiting. Yeah. Write it, Stephen King. Write it.

Sally: "The Queue" by Stephen King. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) "It 2: The Queue." Clowns in sewers? Blegh.

Sally: Boring.

Emily: Boring.

Sally: Lines?

Emily: Lines?

Sally: Having to queue up for something?

Emily: The existential terror is –

Sally: Do you think you get a number when you join the queue to see the queen's – (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, it's like the DMV.

Sally: You have to pull a little ticket. (laugh) You're number four million, seven hundred thousand to see the queen's body.

Emily: Yep.

Sally: Is it just, like, in the streets of London or whatever?

Emily: I dunno. (laugh)

Sally: Causing all sorts of havoc? (laugh)

Emily: It sure seems like, based on the – the fact that England as a country –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Grinds to a stop –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: When a monarch dies, and I don't mean that as any shade on any of the actual English people –

Sally: Right.

Emily: All of whom, I know, are like, "This is so stupid and our economy is crashing."

Sally: Right.

Emily: But, you know, the powers that be in England are like, "We have to be reverent toward dead political figures."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which isn't a thing. Once you enter politics, you concede your right to be treated with respect upon your death.

Sally: Yeah, I agree. I think there's a sort of level of – once you enter politics you have to accept that you are no longer quite human in the way the rest of us are.

Emily: Yeah, you are the body politic –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As it were.

Sally: Yeah. It doesn't mean you should be treated horrendously, necessarily –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It depends on the decisions you make. Mitch McConnell.

Emily: Mitch McConnell!

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: His grave will be public urination stand number –

Sally: Yeah. I hate that man.

Emily: Fucking perish. Okay –

Sally: The queue.

Emily: Speaking of people I hate and whose graves I want to piss on – (laugh) Cadsuane –

Sally: Cadsuane is there, sort of ominously staring out a window at a thunderstorm, as if the metaphor could get any more heavy-handed.

Emily: And, like, peasants working –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In the thunderstorm, yeah. She's legitimately like, "Oh, these poor fools, doing back-breaking labor –"

Sally: These – yeah.

Emily: "In the rain and the cold." And I'm like, okay, at least they're contributing to –

Sally: Society.

Emily: Society, unlike you –

Sally: Unlike you.

Emily: Parasite. God. Anyway, Cadsuane is doing all her usual bullshit, but all that happens is that, like, Verin comes in and is like, "Hey, I just dropped off the Sea Folk," so at least we've gotten rid of that part of the faction –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: God knows they shouldn't have been there to begin with.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But Harine and her sister have been dropped off in Tear because they are anxious – they, like the Sea Folk in Caemlyn, have found out that the last Mistress of the Ships died, and so they're off to –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, you know, reconvene with the rest of their people to find out who the next Mistress of Ships will be. Unfortunately, Min had a viewing that Harine herself would one day be the Mistress of Ships; however, her viewing also included the fact that Harine would be punished very severely for her, um, –

Sally: Bargain with Rand.

Emily: Bargain with Rand, as opposed to the Sea Folk who made a bargain with Elayne and Nynaeve and who came off very well in that bargain.

Sally: Right.

Emily: So it's very obvious to us, the readers, that Harine will maybe one day be Mistress of the Ships, but likely Zarine or whatever her name was –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Will be first. Um, not that it matters because the Sea Folk do not matter in any tangible way in this series.

Sally: Yeah, unfortunately.

Emily: Unfortunately. Anyway, while Verin was in Tear, she got a glimpse of the political situation there, which is that Tear itself is sort of in this, like, weird siege thing –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because the government is in shambles because Rand abandoned it.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) That's gonna be a running theme, don't you worry.

Emily: Oh, yeah, don't you worry. We're just gonna keep circling back. Oh, things fall apart as soon as Rand took over violently and then just left them?

Sally: And then was like, "Peace."

Emily: So, that's a – that's a real shock to all of us.

Sally: A real head-scratcher how that happened.

Emily: Anyway, Darlin, God bless him, is trying frantically to keep things together with some assistance from the various Aes Sedai who are themselves Rand's representatives. Verin was under instructions not to let them see her, though. So blah blah blah blah blah. Um, Min tells Cadsuane that Rand wants to see her; Cadsuane's like, "Great," goes out to see her; they run into some other Aes Sedai, who accosts Verin; the only point of this that Cadsuane makes is that Verin is rebel-aligned and – although, I don't think Verin ever really was.

Sally: Yeah, Verin is an independent agent as far as I'm concerned.

Emily: Yeah, Verin is a fucking enigma.

Sally: Yeah. Verin has no alliances; she's subject to no one's authority.

Emily: Yeah, which, like, good for her.

Sally: I know.

Emily: Cadsuane, by the way, with this, like, very condescending tone, is like, "I know so much more about Verin than she is letting on. Like, she's not that good of an actress," da da da da da, and I'm like, do you know she almost poisoned you last book? (laugh)

Sally: And, God, I wish she would have.

Emily: And, God, I wish she had. If only, like, you know, minor poison to inconvenience you.

Sally: Yeah, just to make you have a really bad tummy ache.

Emily: Yeah, God, I wish Verin would do that. Anyway, Cadsuane – in Cadsuane's mind, Verin is rebel-aligned, and this other woman, Nesune, is White Tower-aligned, and she's like, "Oh, it's

so weird how they can just, like, get along, you know, talking about Black Ajah – Brown Ajah –” Well. (laugh) I don’t know if Nesune’s Black Ajah.

Sally: I mean, at this point, probably.

Emily: It’s – fifty percent of every Aes Sedai body is Black Ajah.

Sally: Ugh.

Emily: Anyway. She’s like, “They can just talk about dead snakes or whatever,” and I’m like, that’s ‘cause dead snakes fucking rule, so.

Sally: Yeah, dead snakes would unite all of us if we could all just –

Emily: I don’t know what you are talking about, Cadsuane.

Sally: Look at dead snake skeletons or whatever.

Emily: And also just, like, Cadsuane’s like, “Wow, people get over their political differences when they have bigger things to worry about?” and I’m like, yeah, for the most part.

Sally: Yeah, like, the impending apocalypse is, like, a pretty big deal.

Emily: Yeah. And, like, neither of them is really there by choice.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You can both – at the very least, people are always going to be united by having a shitty boss, which you are, Cadsuane.

Sally: Yeah. Which you are.

Emily: And above you, Rand, also shitty. Anyway, Cadsuane goes out – is traveling towards Rand, which takes seemingly forever. She enters this courtyard, where all of the Warders are, like, sparring and whatnot. In this case, it’s Narishma and Lan. And we get a reference to how the Aes Sedai who bonded Eben – RIP, died at the battle of cleansing of saidin – so of course his Aes Sedai is all sad about that.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, but Cadsuane’s like, “Oh, yeah, Nynaeve’s here. I fucking hate her. She’s so stupid and immature,” blah blah blah blah blah, and I’m like, why do we even have your – what – (laugh)

Sally: What is the point of this commentary?

Emily: I know. What the hell?

Sally: Um, one another thing I want to note here ‘cause it just, like, upsets me to no end –

Emily: Oh, the whole medallion thing?

Sally: Yeah, Narishma is, like, very visibly upset and keeps asking Lan, basically, to, like, beat his ass –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Because he wants to win. Cadsuane's like – (muttering) “Whatever.” And Merise – Merise, I think her name is – is like, “Yeah, Narishma's really upset because I took his little pin that the Asha'man get when they get raised to soldiers or whatever,” I don't remember the ranks. She's like, “I took it 'cause he needs to learn that he can only accept things that I give him, not anything that Rand gives him.”

Emily: Yeah, Rand, very justly, after this big battle, was like, “Narishma, you have very much earned your spot.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Like, you have advanced in the Asha'man ranks,” and Narishma, being a very young man and also a very cult-minded man –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Unfortunately, at this point, is like, “Fuck yeah, a very visible reflection of my achievements –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “And position. I want that.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Merise is like, “Oh, no, no, no, no, no, baby, you can't have that because I'm training you like a dog.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or like a toddler.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like – or, also, like a cult. Like, it's just all very manipulation, brainwashing, not a healthy, like, partnered relationship at all. It's very gross to think of Merise treating her normal Warders this way –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Let alone Narishma, who's an Asha'man. It's gross that this is sort of just par for the course amongst Aes Sedai and Warders.

Sally: Yeah, what we are – um. If we could jump – do a little jump around a little bit. But what we're getting in these two chapters, basically, what happens after Rand and Cadsuane talk about

seemingly nothing, um, is that, surprise, Logain and Davram Bashere are here, like, the two most confusing travel companions –

Emily: A very strange duo.

Sally: Yeah. Um, and with them comes the news, finally, to Rand, that Asha'man at the Black Tower have bonded Aes Sedai against their will.

Emily: On Mazrim Taim's orders.

Sally: On Mazrim Taim's orders. And so what we're kind of seeing in these two chapters is, like, the conflict between Aes Sedai and Asha'man coming to a head a little bit. Like, so far they've been – except in a few certain instances, such as, like, the group of Aes Sedai with Rand bonding, like, three or four of the Asha'man and Mazrim Taim bonding – I don't know how many it is – quite a few – but it is relatively an isolated incident at that moment. But up until this point, they've just mostly been sort of, like, revolving around each other as these two magical bodies, and suddenly in these two chapters we see the beginning of this, like, clash, where it's like, you can no longer revolve around each other; you have to, one way or another, integrate because that's going to be important, basically, in the Last Battle.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: More or less. And also important to sort of the moving forward of the world, because the other option is for you guys to basically just go to war with one another. And it is deeply unfortunate that what happens is not, like ... um, what am I trying to say? So I don't necessarily want to, like, place the blame on Robert Jordan for this because I think it is a very accurate depiction of what happens with people trying to get power over one another. I think it's very much – we are taught that you never want to be the one who has power over them; you want to be the person holding power over another person. You never want to be the person who got scammed; you want to be the scammer. So I think it's very accurate that both the Aes Sedai and the Asha'man are sort of clamoring to be, quote unquote, on top.

Emily: Yeah, there are these power play dynamics at work here in which these two groups, like you said, are colliding, and so of course what's going to happen is they are constantly vying –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: For a position of power over one another and enacting that in individual –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Aes Sedai-Warder or Asha'man-Aes Sedai bonds.

Sally: Yeah. It's just, like, so upsetting, because there's, like, such a stage here to set up a different type of relationship in the Wheel of Time world, and Rand is supposed to be this sort of creator of new systems. Like, he's destroying a lot of things, but he's also, like, setting the stage for new things to emerge. So it's just, like, such an – it upsets me so much how this is a missed opportunity for, like, figuring out how the Aes Sedai and the Asha'man could actually – this would – I know ultimately this would require Wheel of Time world to be fundamentally different on, like, a sort of molecular level, but it's so upsetting to me that it's not like, let's figure out how

we can actually be in partnership with one another and how we can actually work together without this sort of “who has bonded who and who is in charge of who.” And essentially Rand is like, “Egg is going to get to bond as many of the Asha’man as you bonded Aes Sedai,” because it has to be this sort of, like, tit for tat –

Emily: Which is exactly what happens.

Sally: Yeah, let’s balance ethics on a scale of who has as many toys. You know, it’s just, like, such an upsetting dynamic. There’s no actual work put into forming partnerships.

Emily: Well, and it’s clear that, like, Brandon Sanderson also saw this as an inherent problem that needed to be solved.

Sally: Right.

Emily: Whether Robert Jordan himself saw this as an issue or whether he just was kind of like, this is a continuation of something that, I don’t know, thematically, the world is still messed up even when the world ends –

Sally: Right.

Emily: Or maybe Robert Jordan didn’t see it as a problem at all. Maybe he saw it as comedic. But, like, clearly Brandon Sanderson was like, okay, this is a problem. What – what we have here is an opportunity for people to actually, like, create partnerships.

Sally: Right.

Emily: Which is what he then enacts with, again, a – an individual set –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Rather than on a systemic level, with, um, Pevara and Androl, who have their own relationship problems, I hasten to say, but that was clearly what he had in mind. But then, of course, that’s incredibly frustrating because it’s very very obvious that, like, that wasn’t necessarily part of the original blueprint.

Sally: Right.

Emily: And that’s just sort of something that’s going to be coming up a lot as we get into the last few books in this series. Some things are very clearly coming from Brandon Sanderson; some things are more ambiguous; some things were clearly written, like, and set in stone by Robert Jordan. And, just, the reality that, like, the series does become worse but also becomes better when another author, like, lays their hands on it – there’s just something very uncomfortable about that.

Sally: Right.

Emily: And, I dunno, I mean, I agree with you completely: it’s very frustrating that what we eventually see enacted with Androl and Pevara isn’t happening about six books earlier.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's very confusing to me that what we have when Robert Jordan is trying to show things on a system level, what he has is always, "Okay, if I'm going to show something changing, what I'm first going to show you is nine examples of people sticking to the prior system and then one person changing it."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, we see about a million people telling Nynaeve she can't heal gentling before she does it.

Sally: Right.

Emily: Blah blah blah blah blah. But it's like, you're the author, Robert Jordan. If you tell us that something is the status quo, we'll believe you.

Sally: Yeah, it's, um – and we talked – we hit on this, I think, a little bit, a couple episodes ago, but it's, like, a – almost a, like, expectation in fantasy these days that the world will be set up one way and we can just kind of believe that is the case and know that it is going to ultimately change because that is what happens in stories: people are taking action. So we can know that at the beginning of Wheel of Time, people expect male channelers to be bad, but ultimately we will see that that is not necessarily the case. Like, that is, um – we're talking about – if we talk about the horizon of expectations, which is what your reader sort of goes into anything expecting to happen, that is a very set – that is, like, a – the Wasatch Mountains that I can see out my window. They are not going anywhere, and that expectation in fantasy is also not going anywhere. And you can use that to your advantage by being like, "I've given you one example to sort of set the ground and then we can start playing with how we're going to change it."

Emily: Yeah. What Robert Jordan did with the Eye of the World was set –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The horizon of expectations, and he set it very clearly, and I would say very intentionally, as: prototypical fantasy world.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That's why it calls back so much to Tolkien –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: The sort of, like, blueprint for fantasy, and why so many of those tropes are enacted and fulfilled.

Sally: Right.

Emily: Of course, he added in his own flavoring. Okay, there's –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: This, like, group of the Vatican extra-powerful women. Gandalf is a woman.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: There are these very obvious gender dynamics here at play, which we would normally be paying attention to because there are no gender dynamics in the Lord of the Rings because there are no women.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, that doesn't – it's irrelevant.

Emily: Like, so yeah, of course we're paying attention to that. You have set the stage, Robert Jordan. Now it's your job in the next thirteen books, if that is how long you judge it will take –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To change things.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And not just, like – like, I seriously feel like I'm being – like I've been tied to a wagon or something –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I'm being dragged along to a slow death.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? It's just terrible.

Sally: Yeah, it's just like, we keep harping on this, but we're in book ten of fourteen, and it doesn't feel any different than it did on, like – like, of course many things have happened, but, like, ultimately the societal flavoring of the Wheel of Time world does not feel any different at all than in book one.

Emily: Yeah, I reject the idea that we're still harping on it.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: Robert Jordan is still harping on it.

Sally: Yeah. Fair enough, fair enough. You got me there.

Emily: And we're just still saying the same things we've been saying since the beginning.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's a fourteen-book series, guys, so.

Sally: We should be in – on – it should be not even resembling what happened –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: In book one by book ten, if you are truly going to drag it out over fourteen books. You – I – I should have been seeing the world ten years later at this point, honestly.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So.

Emily: Whatever.

Sally: It's just like, I know, to, like, bring it back to this, like, very small moment between Merise and Narishma, but it's just such, like, a perfect microcosm of what's happening, and then, yeah, Cadsuane goes to Rand and Rand's like, "You gentled Algarin's brother," and she's like, "I will not deny it because I'm a demon straight from hell –" (laugh)

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: "And I'm very proud of the fact that I tortured many men in my centuries-long career at the White Tower."

Emily: Yeah, blah blah blah blah blah, just one more on my fucking list.

Sally: Yeah, and then all of the sudden, a bunch of Aes Sedai burst in and are like, "Um, my Warder that I inexplicably left in Cairhien for reasons unknown is about to be here."

Emily: Yeah, as you alluded to, Rand and Cadsuane have a conversation that actually is not a conversation because nothing of substance –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Passes between them. Cadsuane believes, because Rand starts to bring it up, that there is something to be done there about the Seanchan.

Sally: Right. Right, right, right.

Emily: Because Rand's like, "I'm having trouble figuring out what to do about the Seanchan." Before Cadsuane has the chance to actually do her job and advise him, and, in fact, I don't think Cadsuane, like, ever, in the fucking series, advises Rand –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which makes it incredibly frustrating that they've had all this back and forth about her being an advisor –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And filling that role for him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But the few times Rand actually goes to her for advise, she either doesn't get the chance or purposely doesn't or fucks up so badly that he, like, rejects her out of hand. So, like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Guys. Again, same old thing, same old story. But yeah, these Aes Sedai are like, “Oh, we left our Warders,” again, for some reason, “in Cairhien, and now some brilliant person has hit on the idea that, like, they can use the Warder bond to trace where we are.”

Sally: Right.

Emily: “So they’re on our way. They’re on their way.” And everyone’s like, “Oh, blah blah blah blah blah.” And of course, um, it is this group of people who we saw disparately in the prologue of this series –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Logain, Bashere, and Loial –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Accompanied by their various coteries. Uh, Rand and Min first meet with Loial, do some catching up with him a little bit. Um, Rand, by the way, is still quite sick –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Physically. Um, he expected the nausea he was feeling whenever he embraced saidin to go away once the taint was gone, but as we discussed in the last book, and we also said that there is no textual evidence for this, really, so if you didn’t know this, not your fault.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, but that’s because his sickness is a result of whatever happened with his balefire crossing with Moridin’s. It has nothing to do with saidin itself. And Rand’s sickness is getting worse; he seems to be having some nausea even when he’s not channeling.

Sally: Right.

Emily: So, just, things generally are getting worse for old Rand al’Thor. He’s also, in his own head, meshing more with Lews Therin. I think there’s also an allusion here to the idea that maybe he’s meshing slightly with Moridin.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Um, Rand has, like, this little philosophical thing about, I dunno, leaves on a tree and the Creator and blah blah blah blah blah, and he’s like, “Oh, that’s weird; I never think that deeply,” and –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: So is it Lews Therin? Uh, but Moridin, who was Ishamael, was, like, a philosopher in the Age of Legends.

Sally: Right. I think we could also argue that perhaps Lews Therin never thought that deeply.

Emily: Yeah, Lews Therin is a fucking idiot.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: What does he say in, like, Path of Daggers? Like, um – “The only way to keep a woman safe is to put her in a cage –”

Sally: Blegh.

Emily: Like an evil eagle or something.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah, Lews Therin’s a big fucking dummy, so, yeah, if you’re having any, like, deeper thought, Rand, it is almost certainly coming from Moridin.

Sally: Yeah. Who has many flaws, but at least he thinks.

Emily: Yeah, which leads to some troubling, uh, thoughts about how much they are meshing –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In their personalities, but that’s a subject for another time, perhaps. Anyway, they catch up with Loial, who reports on how he and Karldin went to almost all of the steddings, except for Stedding Shangtai, ‘cause Loial – Loial’s afraid of going there. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, but he’s like, “Don’t worry, I’m sure they’ll get the news.” And were like, “Please guard the Waygates,” and most Ogier were like, “Yes, sure.” Some of them in, like, the Borderlands, were like, “Fuck off.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is confusing ‘cause that seems like a very human thing to do, to have, like, regional differences –

Sally: Right.

Emily: In the Ogier steddings, but.

Sally: And also, I feel like the Ogier in the – sorry, that was my ice pack – the Ogier in the Borderlands have more reason than anybody to be like, “Yeah, we understand why that’s important –”

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: “Living as we do, near the Blight.”

Emily: Um, but yeah, that is exactly everything that Rand is going to do about the Waygate problem.

Sally: Like, check.

Emily: Cross that off his list. Is it enough? Absolutely not. But it is done on the Rand al'Thor conquer the world to-do list.

Sally: I'll make – maybe I should make a conquer the world to-do list.

Emily: Mm, yeah, you should. It would be great.

Sally: Number one: fix the queue. (laugh)

Emily: Fix the queue. The queue: the reckoning.

Sally: 2 Queue 2 Furious. (laugh)

Emily: 2 Queue 2 Furious. (laugh) Loial – there's some gender dynamic blah blah blah about Loial and Erith and marriage and whatever –

Sally: I feel like it would actually be Queue Fast Queue Furious.

Emily: You're right. You're right.

Sally: I made – I made a mistake, and I would like –

Emily: Queue Fast Queue Furious.

Sally: I would like to apologize. (laugh) Okay.

Emily: How dare we.

Sally: Okay, sorry, continue.

Emily: At that point, Loial also tells Rand, um, that Logain has come with a bunch of Aes Sedai because the Asha'man bonded them against their will. Uh, we then cut over to Cadsuane so that we don't directly see Rand, you know, with steam coming out of his ears –

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: As a result of this announcement. And Cadsuane's basically like, "Oh, well, that's a pretty big deal, but sort of inevitable," you know, da da da da da, she's got a very laissez-faire attitude about it. Samitsu, who we also saw in the prologue, is there reporting to her, and Samitsu's like, "Yeah, I really don't hold any power anymore 'cause Sashalle just pushed me out," and Cadsuane's like, "I don't care, go back and watch her."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's like, okay, great.

Sally: That's your job.

Emily: Yeah, I – again, still do not care about the power dynamic between Samitsu and Sashalle. Uh, we will, at the end of this chapter – just cutting back to it – but we'll get a point of view from Elza, who is the Darkfriend in Rand's bosom –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The Black Ajah who has been mind-fucked into also swearing fealty to him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Her Warder, who caught up with her, is also a Darkfriend. Of course, they have the usual tortur-each-other dynamic –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Of two Darkfriends locked in perpetual combat with each other. I don't know. But basically, he's just like, "Sorry, it would've seemed weird if I didn't go with them," and she's just like, "Yeah, yeah, yeah, whatever."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: This is just a reminder that Elza's a Darkfriend –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In case you forgot.

Sally: In case – in case we forget.

Emily: Then we switch over to Rand yelling at Logain. He's like, "How could you do this?" Notably, he's not like, "What a huge invasion of privacy, one that I myself have suffered."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "I actually have a great reason to be angry about this, which is that this is a violation that I have experienced, and I can champion the rights of these women."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is that what his problem is? Absolutely not. His problem is, "I don't want war with the White Tower."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Okay.

Sally: And, like, both – both of those things can be your problem. You can be like –

Emily: Yes.

Sally: This is upsetting on a personal, like, human rights violation level, and this is upsetting on the political level that you could've just done a very big diplomatic ouchie.

Emily: Yeah. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Like, both of those can be correct, but the fact that he's like, "Fuck the rights of women; I don't give a shit about that at all –"

Emily: “This is a big diplomatic boo-boo, though.”

Sally: Yeah. “This is a big diplomatic owie. And I have a big boo-boo with the White Tower.”
(laugh)

Emily: And Logain –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Is like – like – this is so sad, because as we’ve said many times, we hate Logain.

Sally: Yeah, he’s a piece of shit.

Emily: But Logain is the only one –

Sally: I know. I know.

Emily: Coming to Rand and being like, “What do you expect?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “What are you – what do you want?”

Sally: Yeah, Logain’s –

Emily: “How are you acting like this? Are you surprised? You fucked off.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “None of the Asha’man know what you look like.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “It’s just Mazrim Taim up in there, it’s the Mazrim Taim show. It’s the Late Late Night Show with Mazrim Taim.”

Sally: Yeah. (laugh) The Late Late Night Show. The Daily Show with Mazrim Taim.

Emily: “We’re all just stuck in the Carpool Karaoke with Mazrim Taim –”

Sally: Oh, God.

Emily: “And doing what he says to us, and what he’s saying to us is, ‘Violate the rights of human beings, do war crimes, and lie.’”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “And, like, you’re not exactly in there, editing the curriculum, good buddy, so what right do you have to tell me that I fucked up?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I mean, like, Logain, you did fuck up. Ultimately, as the Geneva Conventions and many many many historical events have proven, you are still responsible for your own actions, even when given orders.

Sally: Right.

Emily: But Logain – he has a point, Rand.

Sally: He totally has a point. And he's – like – I hate having to be like, "Logain is right;" that makes me sick to my stomach –

Emily: It's exactly – it's like, I don't want to say Gareth Bryne's right –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don't want to say Logain's right, but if he's the voice of reason in this –

Sally: He's truly just like, "What – you –" He's like, "You have to come back. Mazrim Taim is telling everyone or letting everyone assume that we're doing this on your orders. So you are going to gain a reputation if you do not come back." And Rand's like, "Literally not my problem."

Emily: Yeah, he's like, "Here are, like, six red flags in a row for you –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Mazrim Taim has included the Asha'man that are with you, personally, as traitors on his little hit list –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Mazrim Taim has a group of people who are basically, like, his posse –"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "And they don't care, and it's all of the high-ranking Asha'man. He's clearly got cult shit going on."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "And, yeah, he's giving orders, speaking for you, that clearly you didn't okay."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And Rand is like, "I don't care; I want you to negotiate with the Seanchan," and Logain, very justly, is like, "Are you insane?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And, bestie, I don't know, because maybe this is meant to be showing us that Rand is insane because there's no justifiable reason that a reasonable person would not take this into account.

Sally: I know. On the, like, subject of Rand's insanity, like, you – we keep having these moments where it's like, Rand is behaving so irrationally that, like, you could feasibly make an argument that this has to do with, like, the status of his mental health. Unfortunately, I do not believe this was Robert Jordan's intention because Robert Jordan very much leans into the idea that insanity is always violent and always going to be deeply uncomfortable in some sort of, like, visible way.

Emily: Yes.

Sally: Like, Rand is always going to be talking to the voices in his head or breaking things or losing control of saidin and, like, all of these things that are ultimately, like, basically a stereotypical insane person. He's never – he doesn't, I think, have a nuanced enough understanding of the idea that sometimes insanity and irrationality come out in moments like this, where you are just not making logical decisions and you – you just are not operating within the realm of reality. So perhaps to Rand, if we were, like, giving him sort of, like, a more full form of madness, could be like, "I do not view the Black Tower as a problem because in my reality, the Black Tower barely even exists." You know?

Emily: Yep, "I have written it off."

Sally: Yeah, like, that could be a – a totally feasible way to explore this. But again, I don't – I think Robert Jordan very much puts moments of Rand's madness in these very visible, violent, over-the-top sort of things. I think, truly, Rand is – everyone is supposedly supposed to be, like, prioritizing the Seanchan over and over and over again, it's the Seanchan, it's the Seanchan, it's the Seanchan, and the rest of the continent can sort of fall apart. So we get is just, like, Rand's incompetence and his inability to recognize that he has literally multiple countries' worth of people that he can delegate to, and just refusing to do it. Speaking of bad middle managers; that was the theme last week.

Emily: Oh, yeah. Rand is probably the worst manager of all time.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As – also, Bashere is like, "Oh, I'm just here to report to you that there was an assassination attempt against me and against Dobraine, almost certainly because someone's after the seals on the Dark One's prison," and Rand, again, is like, "Not my problem. Here's what I want: I want the three of you – Logain, Bashere, and Loial – to go as diplomats to go suggest a negotiation with the Seanchan to meet with me." Why is Rand choosing these three people? It would literally seem that it's because they're the three people in the room with him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Not for any, like, personal merits that they have. He doesn't even know Logain.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: This is the first conversation he's ever had with Logain.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Loial, as he, in his own head, said, just, like, a few pages ago, is still, by Ogier standards, like, a teenage boy.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Bashere has enough on his fucking plate. Why? And, yeah, you're right, it's like – it would be such an easy thing to say, oh, it's probably because he's not making rational decisions because clearly he's struggling with insanity, but it's highly doubtful that that was Robert Jordan's intent. What is probably just happening here is that Robert Jordan thought that the Seanchan were the biggest problem to take care of.

Sally: Right. Right. And it's like, they are, I guess, in terms of, like, geopolitical events, literally the biggest problem.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: That does not mean they are the only important problem or the only problem worth addressing in a book – in a series that spans so many pages with thousands of characters able to address various things.

Emily: Yeah. Also, Rand and all of the people around him are not robots. They don't have to, like, be programmed to do a single task at once.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: You know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You are capable of doing multiple things. Rand, you're literally, like, in residence in this manor house, doing nothing –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Until these people showed up. The last, like, six times we've caught up with you, it has been – at the beginning, you've just been, like, laying in bed with Min.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's really hard to be on your side, bud –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: When you clearly take – have such, like, a serious disinterest in doing anything beneficial for the world.

Sally: Right.

Emily: And we're supposed to be, like, excited that, I don't know, Rand's broaching the topics of negotiations with the Seanchan, 'cause that'll lead to something, but frankly, my dear, I don't give a damn.

Sally: I don't give a damn either because – and I feel like I need to preempt myself 'cause so many people on the internet love to say that everyone is too critical of Rand when he's obviously dealing with mental issues. My points are, one, dealing with mental health issues is no excuse to behave badly to the people around you. I understand that sometimes it happens and you can't always control the blast zone, but that does not mean that it is not ultimately your responsibility to behave as well as you can in any situation.

Emily: And take responsibility for your actions.

Sally: Yeah, and take responsibility for your actions. Like, you can – again, you can't always, but most of the time, you need to do your best, and Rand is not even attempting that. And, two, again, just in terms of logistics, he can be like, "Cadsuane, do something. I am not mentally and emotionally able to handle this, and you are supposed to be my second-in-command, so I'm asking you to – I – I can't do it; I'm giving you full power – power of attorney –"

Emily: Yep.

Sally: "To make whatever decisions you see fit at this point." But he will not – he will not take responsibility on his own, and he will not delegate, so ultimately, I have absolutely no sympathy for him.

Emily: So. Thanks, everyone, for listening. (laugh)

Sally: This has been a bit of a bummeroo.

Emily: Well. At least we had some, like, jokes about the queen's dead body or whatever.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Thanks to our patrons on Patreon, our followers on social media, and, of course, thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song.

Sally: Yeah. We did it.

Emily: We sure did it, folks.

Sally: And I have a purely ridiculous sign-off to send us off with.

Emily: Oh, boy, I can't – I can't wait.

Sally: Um, so, first, I need to, like, paint a little bit of a picture. So I go on walks every couple of days as part of, like, the conditioning plan for my sick little body, and I was on a walk the other day, and I – I really do feel like I need to paint you guys a picture of what I was wearing in order to get the full effect of what happened. Um, so I look – (laugh) ridiculous when I'm walking. I have these, like, New Balance dad sneakers that are, like, purple and orange and they're specifically designed to keep my feet from rolling inwards. And I had on these, like, bright pink bike shorts and a fleece that I got from my company's 50th anniversary that's embroidered with our bright yellow logo. I have a bulky knee brace on my left knee and a denim hat that says "End homelessness" on it that I got from a work conference. So I just, like – who is this person, put together in, just, scraps of fabric? And there's a pickleball court in our complex that I want to get

inside of so that I can skate there because it's a flat surface, and we allegedly have a key fob that opens this, but I have yet to figure out how it works, so on my walk the other day, I was like, "I'm gonna try this again." This is, like, the fourth time I've tried to get the pickleball court to unlock. So I go over and I'm, like, using our key fob and, like, rattling the door. Eventually I notice the other side of the, like, electric lock is broken, and I'm like, oh, maybe if I, like, push it back – it's not broken; it's, like, hanging off, and maybe if I, like, push it back in, then it will work. I set off an alarm at the pickleball court. (laugh) And it was so loud. It was, like, eight in the morning. I couldn't get it to turn off, so I just had to, like, leave, and the pickleball court – I could hear it. It was so loud. I could hear it through the rest of my walk until I finally just went back inside our townhome, and I don't know how it got turned off.

Emily: Sally has remarkable restraint in not telling me things. (laugh)

Sally: I know, I was like, I have to save this. (laugh)

Emily: This is the first time – how did you not tell me that? (laugh)

Sally: Literally, I saw – I saw you – and this was on Monday – I saw you, and I was like, "I can't." (laugh) "I have to hold it in. I have to hold it inside my heart, how I burglarized the pickleball court."

Emily: Fuck, it's so good. (laugh)

Sally: So anyway – and I'm sure the people in the townhomes nearby were looking out, like, "Who is this elderly woman?" (laugh) Anyway.

Emily: Have a good week, everyone.

Sally: Bye.

Emily: Bye.