



Episode 239: No More Situations,
Please

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SALLY: Everybody Hates Rand is a Wheel of Time podcast that will contain spoilers for all 14 books. So, if you're anti-spoiler, stop this, read all 14 books, and come back. We'll be here. Waiting.

EMILY: Our title is a joke and is meant to be taken as such. "Everybody," in this context, refers to us and our cats. You are free to feel however you want about Rand. He's a fictional character. Please don't DM us.

[theme song by Glynna MacKenzie plays]

EMILY: Okay. What's up, gamers?

SALLY: What's up, gamers?

EMILY: Yeah, I just have to be careful where I lean back. Um, this room looks so empty without their –

SALLY: I know. We got – we finally got rid of the –

EMILY: Cat tower.

SALLY: Cat tower that Ed and Tybalt are always scratching in the background.

EMILY: Um, not because they're always scratching it in the background, but because they literally scratched it into oblivion.

SALLY: Yeah, it was really sad.

EMILY: Yeah, it was – there was gore everywhere [laughs]. Carpet gore [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, it was pretty gross and just, like, so much matted Tybalt hair in it.

EMILY: Yeah, Tybalt.

SALLY: Because it was, like, impossible to clean.

EMILY: He's sitting – he's just in the hallway.

SALLY: What a freak.

EMILY: Staring at us as always.

SALLY: Tybalt has been a *maniac* today.

EMILY: Well – [laughs] yeah.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [singing] He's a maniac! Maniac! [vocalizing] What would this podcast be if we couldn't start every episode with an update about our cats insane and disgusting behaviors.

SALLY: Yeah, well. Cats are perverted little critters that we let live in our home for some reason.

EMILY: It's true. You little freaks. You little freak! Okay, speaking of perverts [laughs, wheezes].

SALLY: Yeah! Speaking of perverts.

EMILY: [laughing]

SALLY: It's perversion time with Robert Jordan and Brandon Sanderson.

EMILY: It's pervert o'clock.

SALLY: Yeah! [laughs]

EMILY: With the – with the hybrid Brobert –

SALLY: [laughing] Brobert!

EMILY: [laughing] Brobert Janderson.

SALLY: [laughing] Brobert Janderson.

EMILY: Um.

SALLY: Brobert.

EMILY: God Almighty.

SALLY: Branbert.

EMILY: Did you hear about the, like, article that came out about Brandon Sanderson?

SALLY: No.

EMILY: It was, like, some – I haven't read it as a disclaimer.

SALLY: Okay.

EMILY: I know it was, like, a thing on Twitter. All I heard about it was that this dude wrote an article about Brandon Sanderson and just was, like, really mean the whole time. Like, not in a, like, constructive, like, "Here are things to be critical about in his books and his work."

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: Or the fact that he's a member of the Mormon church way.

SALLY: Sure, sure, sure.

EMILY: But just sort of like, "I don't like him. He's a nerd."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] It was just sort of bullying.

SALLY: That's so rude!

EMILY: And everyone was like, "What the fuck?" So, just to be clear, when I call [laughing] Brandon, Brobert a pervert, I'm not attempting to add to that particular discourse. I'm saying these chapters are pervert central.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, in their treatment of women, specifically. More spanking to come, that's, that's the spoiler alert. So, yeah, this is Everybody Hates Rand not Everybody Hates [laughs] Brandon Sanderson.

SALLY: No, no.

EMILY: Uh, your friendly neighborhood Wheely Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau, here's Ed.

SALLY: And I'm Sally Goodger.

EMILY: He's here, to sniff at the –

SALLY: Do you want to read the book?

EMILY: World's worst book. You can't read, Ed.

SALLY: That's embarrassing.

EMILY: I mean, maybe you could. That would be a real shock. Maybe that's why you're always trying to sit on our laps when have books.

SALLY: What are you reading? What are you reading, Ed?

EMILY: Update us on your literary opinions, Ed? Anyway –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: He could have spoken volumes there and we'll never know.

EMILY: Well, he might have been thinking something like, "James Joyce...sucks."

SALLY: Well, that would be a correct opinion, Edmund. Okay, you're like right on the microphone.

EMILY: Yeah. You gotta –

SALLY: Come on, come on.

EMILY: You gotta move, my guy.

SALLY: Come over. Oh!

EMILY: Oh!

SALLY: Come on. Man!

EMILY: Oh, move that butt [something hits the microphone]. Okay. [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: You're the worst creature alive. Okay! [sighs] We read two chapters, um, and these two chapters are a great example of why we'll primarily be reading in three chapter chunks, because I found that these two chapters in particular were really just re-hashings of things that we already knew. Like, I found myself skimming quite a bit at times.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah.

EMILY: Um, but they are a Rand chapter followed by an Egwene chapter. And I believe the chapter after Egwene is an entirely different point of view, which is going to be typical of these last few books. [Ed purring] We're going – we're departing from the, um, for lack of a better term, chunked points of view.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And now we're getting into rapid fire switching. One after another. I think the most we ever really get from a single point of view is maybe two chapters, back-to-back.

SALLY: [Ed purring loudly] Yeah.

EMILY: Um, I think that's an attempt on Brandon Sanderson's part to speed up the narrative.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, and sort of add more tension, you know? If we're hopping rapidly between a lot of different plots than it's a lot easier to keep going?

SALLY: Yeah, it picks up the pace for sure. We've said this in the podcast before, but, like, the counterpoint to this is, if you've ever read *The Lord of the Rings* books, you get into the Two Towers and all of the sudden you spend half the book with one point of view and then re-hash the same events.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: The other plot. Again, I know we've said this, but this is just, like, the most egregious example I can think of it. Because I think Tolkien did himself some disservice with that, because the Helm's Deep plot absolutely fucks and then the walking through Mordor is important, but very boring.

EMILY: Yeah, is, like, thematically interesting, but not fun.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Or good to read about [laughs].

SALLY: But, like, when you're in *Fellowship* and you're, like, moving along a little bit faster, it – Can I help you?

EMILY: Oh my god, Ed!

[something bumping the microphone a few times]

SALLY: [laughs] Ed adamantly refuses to leave the microphone. He craves an audience. I live for the applause [laughing], applause, applause.

EMILY: [laughs] If you just heard a lot of feedback, that is why.

SALLY: Um, so anyway, I – I would agree. And I did think it read faster, that was one of my notes. That it was, like, easier to get through two chapters, when I'm like, "Oh, at least I'm in an entirely different setting."

EMILY: Yeah, I agree. It does quicken the pace. Um, I think – I don't have anything against it. I think it maybe starts to suffer a little bit in the last book, *A Memory of Light*, when we have such rapid fire points of view.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Uh, we have so many of them in a row that it becomes sort of impossible to form a cohesive narrative.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But in this particular instance I think it's working. I think it's a good attempt by Brandon to salvage what was becoming increasingly unmanageable in the last few Robert Jordan books. And I think one of the big reasons people did not enjoy those books as a reading experience.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Most people. Obviously not all people. But everyone talks about the, like, long, slogging plots in those last few books. And those plots would probably not feel as long and slogging if there had been a little bit more, uh, maneuverability on Jordan's part. So, um, that's the little caveat about this book's structure, I guess.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: Um, we get the first little monologue bit about the wind moving around. Um, Brandon had – does a fun thing where he sort of drags that wind itself into the narrative.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, that's not particularly new. Robert Jordan has done that in the past. Think of, like, um, *The Great Hunt* starts with the wind and the wind itself almost pushes rand off the tower.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: Um, but Brandon, I think, more obviously pushes that to the forefront by having the wind be, like, a normal wind, but then it meets an evil wind [laughs]. And the two – the wind is blowing in two separate directions outside of where Rand is staying. Um, Rand is in a new manor house in Arad Doman. We have departed the manor house that was in Tear, Lord Algarin's and are now in a different one, and we're told that he has been in several over the last –

SALLY: Few days?

EMILY: However long it's been.

SALLY: Yeah, it's kind of hard to tell. A couple weeks, I think? At most?

EMILY: I don't know. They're hopping around a lot.

SALLY: Yeah.

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EMILY: Rand's just sitting there, staring out at the fucking wind and sort of just being, um – he's just, like, thinking a lot. I don't know. It's hard when I don't have two books – I know I could – but it's hard when I don't have two books in front of me to, like, literally compare. But one of the things I *feel* like is happening in the switch from Robert Jordan to Brandon Sanderson is that characters are significantly more introspective.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: Um, I won't say characters were never introspective before. That certainly wasn't true, but I think we get a lot more, like, multiple pages in a row of just Rand being like, "Here's what's going on with – here's not just what's going on with me, what has happened, but here's what's going on with me, here's everything I think and feel about it, and here's what's going to happen. Here are my plans." Like, Rand is sort of telling us sort of, like, what his plans are, which has been conspicuously missing in the last few books.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Whenever we had a Rand point of view. He's just been very present focused.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, I feel like the same thing, to a lesser extent, is happening with, um, Egwene. I don't – I don't know how to – I'm trying to think of a good way to put this. Um, I think there's a level of mediation going on with Brandon Sanderson's narrative style here, wherein characters are talking a lot more about things before they do them, or rather thinking about them.

SALLY: Mm. Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, in Robert Jordan's books we still had these, like, long points of view, but for the most part characters were, um, those long sort of periods of introspection were accompanied by action.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Rather than just Rand staring out a window.

SALLY: Out of a window. No, that's really interesting. When I was reading these two chapters I was like, "I know something feels different between reading Robert Jordan and reading Brandon Sanderson writing the *Wheel of Time*." But then I was like, "I can't quite put my finger on it, you know?" So it's always gonna be in the back of my mind, but I think that's a really huge part of it. Like, I don't know if I've ever seen Rand talk about his feelings one, at all.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: Or two [laughs].

EMILY: I think it's also just, like, a little more blatant. I don't want to say that Brandon Sanderson's talking down to us a little bit more. I think he's just used to a narrative style that, um, is somewhat more accessible than Robert Jordan's.

SALLY: Yes. Yes. Yeah.

EMILY: But, like, we're getting this, like, metaphor about Rand feeling like he has to turn into steel or whatever in order to not cry or feel anything again or whatever the fuck. Like, that is getting pounded on the head.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Repeatedly throughout.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And I know Robert Jordan isn't exactly subtle with his metaphors, but it feels like we're, um, I don't know. Getting it a lot more. Or maybe it's that individual chapters are more set up to have individual themes.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Like, Ro – in this one, it happens to be that Rand is obviously dealing with a lot of trauma, and refuses to deal with the trauma and is framing that in terms of, like, steel. I don't know.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: I don't know. This is probably not a very fun or useful thing to talk about.

SALLY: No, I think it's really interesting. I'm gonna be thinking more about this as we move through the book.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Because I do think there's, like, an important stylistic difference, and I think mediation is, like, exact word for it. Mediation is another thing we've talked about on the podcast. But when we're talking about mediating in writing, it's basically, like, the author standing between what the character is doing and what the reader is experiencing, you know? So instead of, like, *showing* your character crying it'll be like, "John feels sad." You know? Like, it's an attempt to more or less kind of – I can't think of anything to describe it that doesn't feel negative. I don't think mediation is necessarily a bad thing. That's my caveat, but it's a little bit more like spoon feeding what's going on. And Emily's right. It is a more accessible thing. You see it a lot in books aimed at younger readers. Um, you see it a lot in more, like, popular fiction and it just feels more accessible. It's easier to read. So, it can often be a good thing, or if someone's using it too much it feels annoying.

EMILY: Yeah. Yeah. I think – I think this, yeah. This isn't something we're going to answer in the first two chapters, but it is something we're gonna be thinking about.

SALLY: Yeah. It does, it does *feel* distinctly different.

EMILY: Yeah. Anyway, Rand is standing there, staring out the window. Min comes up, acting all, like, soft and docile and very [laughs] un-Min like in my mind.

SALLY: Yeah, you guys couldn't see me, obviously, but I just rolled my eyes so hard.

EMILY: It's like she's walking on eggshells after Rand loses his hand.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But if it's been a few weeks I just don't believe Min would be doing that anymore.

SALLY: Yeah, she's not really that type of person.

EMILY: Um, I also just, like, I don't know. Min's character has been annoying us from basically the second she was introduced, but she's particularly annoying when she's trying to accommodate Rand's lack of ability to process trauma.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: By just being super gentle and nice to him.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: Like, obviously you should be very gentle and nice to people who have experience trauma, but, like, it's not helpful. It's no longer helpful.

SALLY: Yeah, like, that's – yeah. It's no longer helpful. Like, to a certain extent – not to a certain extent. To a large extent, people have to be accountable for the way they respond to things. Like, you should hold space for the fact that you cannot respond in the exact moment of a trauma in a good way, but a few weeks later you should be able to articulate, especially to your partner, what's going on.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And be able to kind of, like, you know, be a grown up and handle your feelings.

EMILY: Yeah, and the way we've talked in the past about how Min has – the narrative has pushed her to become a sort of accessory to Rand, rather than someone with her own agency and points of view. It's, like, there's a lot going on here that Min could be reacting to.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Min's partner has just suffered a, a trauma. She was also involved in and adjacent to that trauma. She has probably been traumatized herself.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: He refuses to talk about it, process it, even talk about it to her in any sort of meaningful way. Like, at this point is Min feeling like maybe I – maybe I'm not helpful here.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, do I, like, not do I still love him, but is this relationship working?

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: Is this something that's working when he is so closed off emotionally? Like, he is – he's no longer a good partner in the relationship.

SALLY: Yeah. Hundred percent.

EMILY: But, as we've also talked about in the past, Min is very *trapped* by the fact that she has this, like, bond with Rand and obviously she was the one who pushed for that, but, like, we're not even able to be like, "Is she regretting that?"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: We're just like – Min just has to be this perfect little wifey next to Rand, who's just, like, there to cuddle him and support him.

SALLY: Yeah, and yes.

EMILY: It's incredibly annoying.

SALLY: It is incredibly annoying, because it's, like, I – I think it is very interesting to watch people...in relationships, in whatever relationship that is...you know [laughs] I almost just said, "Go through situations."

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughing] As if that is not what people are doing all the time.

EMILY: [laughing] Every day I wake up hoping I won't go through a single situation.

SALLY: I mean, that is what I hope.

EMILY: [laughs] Net zero situations.

SALLY: Net zero [laughs] situations.

EMILY: This is my goal today.

SALLY: I don't want any situations. [laughs] But it's –

EMILY: Friday I'm gonna log in, "No situations today, everyone."

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: It's enough from me. I'm going to see *John Wick*.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: I'm going to watch *him* get into situations [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah, yeah. I'm going to project onto someone else's situations [laughs]. God, what was I even trying to say? It's interesting to watch people in relationship to one another respond to the same big event, whatever that big event is.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: It's interesting to see how the big event changes them, and it's interesting to see how the big event changes their dynamic. And this extremely large event just hasn't changed their dynamic at all. And, like, like you said, there could be, like, the underlying emotional core

behind Min being like, “I’m trying very hard to make sure this doesn’t change our dynamic, because I feel like that’s what I need to do in this situation.”

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: But we just don’t get that. So. Anyway.

EMILY: We just don’t know. Yeah, I’m also frustrated that, like, Rand is never like – Rand is constantly concerned about Min’s emotional – not, excuse me. Her physical wellbeing, not her emotional wellbeing.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Or rather, he’s concerned about her emotional wellbeing in regards to him. He’s cognizant all the time about how she feels about him or things through the bond. But he’s never like, “Am I – is my behavior minimizing her? Or changing her in a way that she maybe doesn’t want to be changed?”

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: You know? Just not a lot of – for someone who’s being so introspective and sort of self-flagellating about literally every situation in his life [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Rand is just like, “As long as Min is standing next to be, projecting love, then everything’s fine.”

SALLY: Yeah, which is just, like, ain’t that how men have thought about women –

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah, that’s true.

SALLY: Through all of human history.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: I care about women because I want them to be safe, because their safety is a reflection of my ability to protect them and is therefore a reflection of my masculinity.

EMILY: Wheee!

SALLY: Anything else – they also need to love me unconditionally, otherwise they’re just, like, some dumb useless whore.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Beyond those two things, I don't give a shit.

EMILY: And he's like, "Why is she wearing embroidery?! I hate her."

SALLY: Yeah. He's like, "Why would she wear...pants?"

EMILY: Why would she make an effort to look nice?

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: You guys. I've referenced so often the book *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*, on this podcast.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And I just want to say a) if you're unfamiliar with that text, there's a great podcast called "If Books Could Kill," that just covered it pretty recently. You can find it anywhere. It talks about what's in the book, the guy who wrote the book.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: A lot of things. But I also just want to clarify, when I make that reference, I am talking about very specifically the notion of gender essentialism. The idea that men are inherently different from women. Um, and that they, on several levels, just simply can't connect or understand each other.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And so in relationships you have to make all these sorts of – well, generally the women have to, according to this guy. You have to make all sorts of accommodations towards the other person's weirdness. You have to try and understand where they're coming from, you know?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, gender essentialism is bullshit.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: Most of us are aware of that in the twenty-first century, but that's where both that book was coming from and where very clearly Robert Jordan was coming from when he wrote. These. Books!

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: [clapping along] And it's super annoying! Especially reading these in 2023. God damn. It really aged them in such a –

SALLY: Yeah, it did really age them. There's also some disgusting line in this chapter where Rand's like, "Min is so, like, petite and feminine next to me. She's so...small in stature and I'm so large in stature."

EMILY: We're just such a man and a woman. Real Adam and Eve.

SALLY: 'Kay? Could you deal with your various mental health crises? Or something?

EMILY: Shut up. I know. Anyway, Min's like, "What's going on?" Rand's like, "The wind is blowing two separate directions." And they just stand there watching for a little bit.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Like, "Ugh, that's not good."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, Rand's like, "I wonder if Graendal's here," kind of out of nowhere. And Min's like, "Why?" [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: He's like, "Well, because it makes sense that she would be here. She'd be away from everything and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." But he's not like, "Here's what we're gonna have to do to accommodate Graendal." Or like, "Here's what we need to be on the lookout for."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: He's just sort of like, "I wonder if she's here."

SALLY: Um, I also want to say that they're in, like, a log cabin.

EMILY: Oh, yeah.

SALLY: Which I think is –

EMILY: They're in a log cabin mansion, which I think this thing on the cover is supposed to be.

SALLY: Which is just, like, a pretty funny smash cut of two ideas when you think about it. A log cabin mansion.

EMILY: Yeah. Like a ski lodge?

SALLY: I also – yeah! That’s probably the way I need to be conceptualizing it, is, like, a ski lodge. Because I was reading it and I was like, “Log cabin?” And I was like, “One single room.” And he was like, “No, it’s massive.” And I was like, “One gigantic room,” [laughs].

EMILY: One incredibly large room.

SALLY: [laughing] I was like, “I’m having a really hard time with this.”

EMILY: I was trying to figure out what the – what the region is here. Arad Doman.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I finally figured out, like, maybe it’s got, like, Pacific Northwest vibes?

SALLY: Yeah, like it’s that time of clime.

EMILY: Yeah, yeah. Because he’s talking about how, like, it’s all, you know, fir trees and whatever. And I was like, “Log cabins?” Must be, like, mountainy kind of.

SALLY: Yeah, yeah.

EMILY: But it’s like, the only time we’ve – I guess we haven’t really been in Arad Doman. The closest we’ve been is Falme.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And the Almoth Plain, so I don’t really know. But when you look at the map of Arad Doman, it’s not, like, foresty.

SALLY: Oh, yeah. Is he just, like, this one – where even are we?

EMILY: I don’t know. Where? I guess Arad Doman –

SALLY: Is that – ?

EMILY: Goes across the mountains?

SALLY: And then it’s just, like, this little bit. Are these borders or rivers?

EMILY: They’re borders.

SALLY: Oh, yeah. The little, the lines I was looking at [mumbling].

EMILY: But it’s hard because some borders are – because the borders of countries don’t always touch each other. See this is the border of Tarabon, this is the border of Arad Doman. There’s all that space. It looks like an entire separate country, but it’s not.

SALLY: It also – this is so petty and dumb. It bothers me that the borders on the map don't line up with the rivers on the map.

EMILY: Oh yeah.

SALLY: Because, like, rivers were, you know, a pretty common way to divide up territory.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: That's stupid, I know.

EMILY: No, no I think it just goes to the mountains. I think the mountains are –

SALLY: The border? So where the fuck are they?

EMILY: Yeah, who knows?

SALLY: Anyway, Rand's in a ski lodge.

EMILY: Rand's in a ski lodge. They're chatting. Cadsuane and Nynaeve and Alivia come in and are like, "Yes, we've just returned from chatting with Semirhage, who, go figure, isn't telling us shit." And Cadsuane's like, "Obviously if we could torture her a little bit then maybe she'd give us something." And Rand is like, "No! Absolutely no torturing, because I don't want to torture women." You know? It would be one thing if Rand was taking the stance that torture is wrong.

SALLY: Yeah, yeah.

EMILY: But he's, like, specifically, "I don't want to torture women."

SALLY: Yeah, which is just, like, my guy. We make this point too many times.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: End of point.

EMILY: End of point.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: We've been there. And it's like, Cadsuane and Nynaeve and everyone is like, "This is ridiculous," but they don't think it's ridiculous necessarily because Semirhage is woman and that's Rand's reasoning. They think it's ridiculous because Semirhage is so evil that it transcends gender.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: They're like, "It shouldn't even count that she's a woman, because she's just so evil."

SALLY: Yeah, they also like [laughs] – I do think this is a fr – a pretty funny point when they're like, "This is the one who tortures people for like – "

EMILY: Fun.

SALLY: A hobby.

EMILY: Yeah. She's, like, Miss Torture.

SALLY: Yeah. Lews Therin in the background is like, "She once tortured an entire city." And Rand's like, "Hmmm. Woman."

EMILY: Logistic – and I was like, "Logistically how?" [laughs]

SALLY: Yeah. When – [laughs] I was thinking the same. She just, like, walked down the street and, like, knocked on doors?

EMILY: Yeah, how do you? I don't wanna know. I don't actually want any details. I don't want to know what Robert Jordan, Brando would come up with. But yeah. Rand's like, "I can't, I can't do it." Um, and Cadsuane's like, "Okay, well then we're not going to get anything from her." And Rand's like, "Well, just keep trying. Just keep asking questions." This is setting up the plot, um, that I guess Caduane specifically will be going through for the first, I don't know, half of this book. Wherein she is trying to figure out a way to, quote, "break Semirhage" without, um, quote, torturing her [laughs].

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: Uh, without sort of crossing that boundary that Rand has set. Um, and, uh, it's not a – it's not a very...satisfying plot, obviously, because it's all centered around tortured and what is permissible and what isn't.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Uh, just sort of according to individual characters' codes of ethics rather than any sort of overarching global code of ethics that humanity has decided on. Um, and it's just, like, again – just, again, it would be different, I think, if it was a plot wherein Cadsuane was like, "We are not going to kill this woman because she's valuable for whatever reason. She must have something. She must know things about whatever's going on, but also, we're not going to torture her because torture is wrong. Let's start thinking conceptually about, like, the ways in which we could still get her to talk."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: That might be interesting, but because it's overlaid constantly with the fact that we're not torturing her because Rand has weird hang-ups about hurting women.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: It's just annoying.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: It's also just like...just kill Semirhage. I know it's the same thing with Rand, and I know also that, um, some – summar – summary execution is not great, but, like, we're going back to what we've talked about previously which is that at a certain point you just gotta kill the bad guys.

SALLY: Yeah. You just gotta do it. Like, what do you want with Semirhage anyway?

EMILY: Yeah, they're like –

SALLY: You're willing to –

EMILY: "Semirhage must have such information." And I'm like, "What information could she give you at this point?"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Where Graendal is? You know Graendal's probably in Arad Doman. Like nothing has...at this point, Rand, you have Lews Therin's memories, so there's not much she can give you.

SALLY: Yeah, focus on that relationship.

EMILY: [sighs] Which he does. He and Lews Therin are yelling at each other at one point and Rand yells out loud. And everyone's like, "[laughing] Avoid eye contact."

SALLY: Everyone's like, "Okay!"

EMILY: Everyone's like, "Fun! This is fun!"

SALLY: "This just, this is happening now. Okay."

EMILY: "I love this."

SALLY: "How do we, like –" And, I know – not to make everything about, you know, disability justice, but, like, I feel like not a single person has ever tried to be like, "Rand might be experiencing hallucinations. Is there any way we can help with that?"

EMILY: Yeah, they're all just like, "Well, Semirhage, a random evil person, told us."

SALLY: [laughing] She diagnosed him and that's the end of it.

EMILY: She diagnosed him. As we all know, Semirhage, after she tortured an entire city –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Surely didn't lose her medical degree [laughs].

SALLY: She's a licensed, board-certified psychologist [laughs].

EMILY: The board was like, "She should keep it!"

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: She proved her knowledge of the human mind and psyche when she systematically broke it [laughing] for –

SALLY: Years upon years upon years.

EMILY: Listen, people don't always tell you this, but there are two ways you can earn a doctorate.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] Alright, alright.

SALLY: Yeah, we all know the second one is systemically – systematically torturing an entire city.

EMILY: Systematically killing people. Jack the Ripper just wanted his doctorate! [laughs]

SALLY: Yeah, he just didn't want to pay that tuition, you know?

EMILY: Yeah, the reverse method.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: The secret one [laughs].

SALLY: [laughing] The dark method of getting your PhD.

EMILY: [laughing] Kill enough people, you get to be an MD.

SALLY: [laughing, coughs]

EMILY: Because patently you've proven you know how the human body works.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Okay [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Back to Egg. Egg, again, we're getting a lot of meditation about *pain* and fucking every – and, as Sally pointed out to me not – just moments ago –

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] We just ended the world's most masturbatory meditation about how we shouldn't torture and we immed – smash cut to Egg being tortured.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: The self-awareness is at zero.

EMILY: Yeah, and just to, like, crystalize that for you. Clearly what's going on here is that *The Wheel of Time* book series considers some things torture and some things are not torture.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: And the line there seems to be something about, perhaps, lasting damage. Um, because Egwene and everyone else who's getting spanked systematically, will recover from those wounds, physically if not psychologically.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Pretty quickly. Then it's not torture. Or perhaps it's the intent of torture. Except we really lose that here because we're using the same language to talk about Semirhage [clears throat] that Silvianna casually uses to talk to Egg. Like, Silvianna is like, "I am going to break you."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Elaida, or whoever, is like, "You need to be broken." The same way that we're talking about Semirhage being broken. So, you guys, it's all torture. Um, and the lack of self-awareness there is pretty grating.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, there is more self-awareness in the fact that Brandon has juxtaposed these two chapters and they are both thematically about emotional reactions to pain.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: This is, again, I think because Rand is sort of our central male character and Egwene is arguably our central female character, meant to be a gender commentary. Don't really want to think about that, though.

SALLY: Women just have to submit to pain. The way we have to submit to everything.

EMILY: And have to submit in order to channel.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Uh, Rand's whole thing is "I can't possible show emotion or react to trauma because I just have to be strong and blah, blah, blah, blah, blah." And Egwene is all like, "What are the ways that I can react to pain in a way that I will master it, but, you know, I don't have any power in this situation so blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. I just have to submit to it and then eventually – by, also by openly emoting then that is how I conquer pain." Um, which are two very gender stereotypically ways of coping with trauma. Egwene is like, "Women be crying!" [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: [laughs] Women be shopping.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And Rand is like, "Men be closing themselves off from all of their loved ones and [laughing] refusing to go to therapy."

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, they do.

EMILY: [laughs] So that's what's going on here. Anyway, Egwene [laughs] is getting spanked yet again by Silvianna. At the end of this she's like, "I only had two tears. So I'm making such progress." And Silvianna's like, "Okay. Um, well, see you in the morning, I guess." And Egg's like, "I have to go –" Or Silvianna's like, "Go to dinner." And Egg's like, "Oh, well, I have to go to Elaida. Attend Elaida." So, we are literally picking up the same day that we left Egg on *Knife of Dreams*. And Egg's like, "I have to go attend Elaida, so I don't have time for dinner." Silvianna's like, "Okay, well, go to dinner afterward and then after that you have to come back to me to get beaten, because Elaida's obviously going to want that to happen." Egg's like, "Okay." Leaves, takes her forkroot, tries to talk to the two Red Sisters that are chatting with her. Um, and is like, "You guys should be really critical of Elaida, because she's representing the Red Ajah, so when she makes an idiot out of herself she's making an idiot out of all of you."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And they're like, "Shut the fuck up!"

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: And Egg's like, "Why did I even try to reason with Reds? They're all such hideous lesbians."

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Can't be reasoned with. God dammit. Um, Egwene wanders for a bit through the Tower, comes across a dead end because the Tower, like the Palace of Caemlyn, is now shifting its layout. They also, um, run into a, like, tap – it's either a tapestry or a painting that has been changed.

SALLY: Yeah. Spooky.

EMILY: Which is also spooky. So, we've still got some of those fun vibes going on. And now there's, like, eyes dripping blood or whatever the hell.

SALLY: Haunted. The Tower's haunted.

EMILY: Tower's haunted [gunshot noises]

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughs] Um, then they get up to Elaida's room. Uh, Egwene knocks and enters. Is like, "Wow, Elaida is really this power hungry tyrant, as evidenced by the fact that she lives in luxury. Suan, of course, who was perfect – "

SALLY: [snorts]

EMILY: [laughs] "Would never have done something like that." And it's like, listen, some people just like fancy rugs, you know?

SALLY: Yeah! Is that a crime?

EMILY: Maximalism. Have you heard of it?

SALLY: Ugh. I would love to have a maximalist house.

EMILY: I agree that I wouldn't really want to be surrounded by the colors red and white one hundred percent of the time.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which Elaida does. I would feel like I was inside some creature's stomach, but.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: That's where we're at.

SALLY: Gotta go with a softer palette, you know? Blues and greens.

EMILY: Yeah, get some, like, interesting color interactions there. Anyway, the door is answered by Meidani, um, who we know from previous books is one of the spies that was sent to the White Tower by the rebels and was quickly discovered by the Black Ajah hunters, a group that we'll be reconnecting with later in this book. And they forced her to, I believe, take another oath that she would I – uh, be loyal to the or something like that?

SALLY: Yeah, something like that. I don't know how they did it.

EMILY: I – or that she wouldn't reveal them or something like that. But basically, she's now operating under their orders. Or perhaps she's just being blackmailed into doing this. But they were like, "Go, you know, reconnect with Elaida." I think also the Red Ajah is telling Meidani to do this. I feel like everyone is telling Meidani, "Hey, go fuck Elaida because no one has an in with her anymore and she's crazy." And Meidani is like, "Pussy isn't gonna make her less crazy."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, like, maybe we can disconnect those two notions. Um, Elaida is also clearly aware, as Egwene catches on, that Meidani is a spy and is taunting her with that knowledge. So, Meidan's also just being psychologically tortured throughout this entire thing.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: [clears throat] And is also being forced to make herself into a sex object, whether or not she and Elaida have consummated any sort of relationship is unknown to us, because Brandon and Robert don't want to actually talk about lesbians having sex. They just want to allude to it.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, and in sort of whatever creepiest way possible.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: So, that's super fun. Um, Egwene has this whole psychological thing before she even enters the room, where she's like, "I really am gonna struggle to hold my tongue around Elaida, so I just need to remember to not, to, like, keep my eyes on the prize, because pissing off Elaida

is just gonna get me thrown in the dungeon or something else. So, I just need to focus on the big picture.” And it’s like, yes, duh.

SALLY: Good job, Egg.

EMILY: Obviously. But while she’s in this room, she’s listening to this conversation and Elaida says, like, two things that make her mad and she just gets so mad that [laughs] she has to drop the soup so she can leave.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, the things Elaida says, ironically enough, are that she doesn’t believe the Seanchan are a threat and that she’s thinking of adding a fourth oath to the Oath Rod, which is that people will have to take an oath of fealty to the Amyrlin.

SALLY: Hmm.

EMILY: Egwene, noted recipient of oaths of fealty [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Doesn’t even think, “Oh, that’s something I did.” I mean, obviously it wasn’t on the Oath Rod, but Egg it was also on the Oath Rod, because these women are under an oath of truth.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So, like, it sort of counts.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Egg’s just like, “God, Elaida is shitting all over the sacred ideals of the White Tower.” And it’s, like, bestie look in a mirror.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Anyway, she drops the soup. Elaida starts screaming at her. Egg, while she’s cleaning it up with Meidani is like, “You need to send for me so that we can talk.” Meidani’s like, “[annoyed noises],” and Egg is like, “Listen, I see what you’re doing and I acknowledge and respect it.” And Meidani’s like, “Thank you. I just want some acknowledgment in my job performance.”

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: And I’m like Egg maybe you could say, “Meidani, for your personal safety, fu – fucking stop what you’re doing. Because this is heinous.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: But no. Um, Egg makes her escape and goes back up to Silvianna. One wonders when Silvianna fucking sleeps.

SALLY: Yeah, gosh.

EMILY: She's constantly just beating Egg. Like, girl's gonna get arthritis at this rate.

SALLY: Oh, yeah. I bet she already does.

EMILY: Yeah, early onset. But Egg shows up, tells her what happened, Silvianna starts beating her and while Egg is being beaten she's like, "You know what? This is just so stupid." And it would have been so funny if it was like, you know, a metanarrative moment where she's like, "I can't fucking believe this. Rand is probably somewhere [laughs]."

SALLY: Yeah. In a log cabin!

EMILY: Beating himself up about the notion of even torturing women and here I am in the Women Place.

SALLY: Yeah [laughs]. Being tortured.

EMILY: Being tortured relentlessly. Hey! Turns out women aren't any better than men. We're all just people who sort of suck and sometimes are really good to each other. But not at this moment.

SALLY: No.

EMILY: But no, instead it's Egg being like, "I'm just so sad about how Elaida has fucked up so badly, because I'm so much better. And that's – people have way more reason to cry about that, so what even is this physical pain that I'm enduring. It's nothing. I can just laugh through this." Which is what she does. And Silvianna's [laughing] like, "Are you good?"

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Silvianna reacts more to Egwene laughing while taking a beating than anyone does to [laughing] Rand literally speaking to Lews Therin.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah.

EMILY: Which is pretty funny. Um, and then they're just like, "Well. The end." Egg's like gung-ho, ready to keep going. So, you guys.

SALLY: Jesus.

EMILY: It was a rough couple of chapters. Is what I'll say. That's all I'll say.

SALLY: [sighs]

EMILY: Oh god. And the next few are going to be even worse.

SALLY: Oh no.

EMILY: I'm really sorry to let you guys know this, but Gawyn is more of a presence in this book.

SALLY: [gasps] The one nice thing about the slog is that Gawyn presence has been minimal.

EMILY: Yeah. I don't know what's going on here. The effect is that it makes Gawyn seem like Brandon Sanderson's pet character, because suddenly he's appearing again, you know?

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: Sort of en masse. And obviously what's happening is that, you know, Robert Jordan just hasn't written about him in a while and now he's becoming important to the plot again, but it just ties him to Brandon Sanderson in my head.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Which I –

SALLY: It's like Brandon's picked him up and is like, "What a shiny little boy?"

EMILY: What a shiny little idiot. Here he is. [sighs] So guys, that's the first couple chapters of *The Gathering Storm*. Pretty bad.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Mr. Jeans.

SALLY: Mr. Jeans and...himself. Yeah, maybe at some point we'll stop reading about women being beaten.

EMILY: Not this book, baby.

SALLY: But I'm not holding out hope.

EMILY: Not this book. Um, okay. Thanks for listening. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Um, thanks to your followers on – thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

SALLY: Yeah, you guys rock. You guys are superstars.

EMILY: Um, do you have anything to add.

SALLY: Um, I – well, just a reminder that, um, we have a Bookshop.org affiliate page where you can buy books, if you are so inclined. The URL is linked on all our social media accounts, but it's just [Bookshop.org/shop/everybodyhatesrand](https://bookshop.org/shop/everybodyhatesrand). Um, and the books you buy through that page, EHR gets 10% of that purchase back and then we turn around and match that, if we are able to, and donate that to mutual aid and direct aid requests, prioritizing Black and Indigenous trans people. So, if you want to make your book purchasing go a little bit farther, check that out.

EMILY: Mm-hmm. Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Oh.

SALLY: I started a new medication and it's making me pretty sick, um, so I was Googling to, like, see the side effects, like, "Is this normal?" And it listed all the, like, side effects that I have and then it was like, "But it's also possible that this is just the way the disease makes you feel." And I was like...

EMILY: What?

SALLY: So, what? [laughs]

EMILY: So the side effects are just more of the disease?

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah. I was like –

EMILY: In what possible way does that count as a functional medication, then?!

SALLY: [laughing] I was like, "I don't know what the fuck to do with this."

EMILY: Oh my god.

SALLY: Yeah. Pretty funny.

EMILY: [laughing] Jesus Christ.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Okay, both the boys are in the hallway waiting.

SALLY: Freaks.

EMILY: Have a good week, everyone!

SALLY: God. Bye

[both laugh]