



Episode 240: Javert Era, or Javerta  
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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: Oh. Crack it, smash it. (laugh)

Sally: Ed, we're way too far away from the microphone.

Emily: Ed. Doo doo. Oh, he wants to sniff that Cherry Coke Zero.

Sally: Vanilla.

Emily: The Cherry Coke – I was like, "What's that beige stripe at the top?"

Sally: It's Cherry Vanilla Coke Zero.

Emily: It represents vanilla.

Sally: I think it's tasty.

Emily: Yeah, I mean.

Sally: My brother Perry always has it at his house.

Emily: Oh, yeah.

Sally: 'Cause they really like it.

Emily: And because the water in Washington is ass.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Just thinking about that as I'm about to go there this weekend.

Sally: So everyone up there is living off diet soda.

Emily: They better be. 'Cause, boy, the shit from the tap – blegh. Is real gnarly.

Sally: Yeah, I don't think I've ever had tap water there 'cause you scared me so bad about it.  
(laugh) That I just get it from Perry and Melissa's, like –

Emily: I – (laugh)

Sally: Fridge filter, or I buy a bottle of water.

Emily: I sincerely believe that my, um, my dislike of water as a beverage –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Comes from Washington.

Sally: No, I feel that.

Emily: And from being in my grandparents' house, where there was nothing to drink unless there was some sort of family gathering, in which case there would be black cherry soda.

Sally: Yum.

Emily: Which slaps. Um, or milk.

Sally: Ew.

Emily: I know, disgusting.

Sally: Not yum.

Emily: Which is fine when you're eight, but –

Sally: Yeah, when you're supposed to be drinking milk for your bones or whatever.

Emily: You're supposed to be – yeah, I don't believe in milk anymore. Um.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I know I should. (laugh)

Sally: That's okay, you've got a vitamin that has calcium in it.

Emily: Mr. Crackly Bones. I've got a vitamin?

Sally: I mean, if you have a vitamin, like a multivitamin –

Emily: Oh.

Sally: That has calcium in it, you should be fine.

Emily: I should take –

Sally: Or you can take Tums.

Emily: I should – Tums?!

Sally: Yeah, Tums are – according to my mom – a pretty good source of calcium.

Emily: Just, like, one a day?

Sally: I think two a day.

Emily: Wow. I love Tums. I eat them like candy. (laugh)

Sally: Like the chalky ones?!

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: You're a fucking maniac. Get out of my house.

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: The chalk ones make me want to vomit every time I take them. (laugh) But there you go, problem solved.

Emily: They're tasty chalk, though.

Sally: (laugh) Ew.

Emily: (laugh) No, Ed!

Sally: Spicy chalk.

Emily: Eugh. Not spicy, oh my God. Um, we went to – I went, this last weekend, with my friends Devin and Janet to see – exactly 24 hours after seeing it with you, we had to go see John Wick 4.

Sally: Yeah, of course.

Emily: Um, but we went to this weird mall and were walking around 'cause it was before the showtime, and there was this – this is – have you been to Valley Fair Mall?

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: You – do you know the weird candy shop?

Sally: No.

Emily: There's, like, a candy shop where you can, like, go in and, like, get a bucket or something and fill it with candy and they'll –

Sally: Oh. Weird.

Emily: Like – like Halloween-type candy, but also there's just, like, every form of niche –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Gross candy that you can find, you know?

Sally: Ok.

Emily: Like, um, it's like the kind where they have, like, lollipops that have dead scorpions in them.

Sally: Oh, boy.

Emily: Or, like, you know, gummy life-size hot dogs or whatever the hell. I don't know.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: Anyway, I got chocolate coins because it was thematic for the John Wick universe –

Sally: Sure, yeah, of course.

Emily: But also I got candy cigarettes, those, like, little –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Little, just, white – they're like the – they're like the sticks in –

Sally: The Fun Dip, right?

Emily: Yeah, in the Fun Dip, which in my controversial opinion, is the best part of Fun Dip.

Sally: I agree a hundred percent. I want that –

Emily: Okay, but how can you like the Fun Dip stick but not Tums? (laugh) They're both chalk.

Sally: No, no, the Fun Dip stick has an entirely different consistency.

Emily: Okay.

Sally: Or at least it did when I was a kid.

Emily: Sally has a more, um, refined palate than I do.

Sally: (laugh) I just think I'm texture-averse.

Emily: Anyway, I think the candy cigarettes are basically just like Tums, but less flavorful, and I used to eat them all the time when I was at the laundromat in New York City –

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Waiting for my laundry to be done. Anyway, with that fun anecdote, let's launch right into the most useless chapters ... yet? Of *The Gathering Storm* by Robert Jordan and Brandon Sanderson. Hey, Mr. Jeans.

Sally: I like that it doesn't say Robert Jordan and Brandon Sanderson on the cover; it just says Robert Jordan Brandon Sanderson.

Emily: Yeah, and men's names being what they are, that could –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Just be one dude.

Sally: Robert Jordan Brandon Sanderson.

Emily: One frat guy with three first names –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Followed by a surname. Anyway, this is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly – I remembered it this time. Your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sally Goddger. You remembered it last time.

Emily: I think –

Sally: It was just late into the game.

Emily: Yeah, I think it was late and I was sort of in a manic episode at the same time, so.

Sally: That's okay.

Emily: Um. Speaking of manic episodes – just kidding, I don't think anyone's having a manic episode in this one.

Sally: Gawyn's having sort of a mental breakdown.

Emily: Gawyn's having a depressive episode –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I guess. Um, there are technically four points of view in these three chapters, so sticking with our Brandon Sanderson multi-points of view, switching a lot, which I would argue at this point, um, perhaps including the last couple points of view we had, there might be an oversaturation of points of view.

Sally: Mm. Yeah.

Emily: We don't really need any of these from Aviendha, Gawyn, or Rand or Cadsuane.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We're not getting very much important information from any of them that we couldn't be – couldn't be related in dialogue or anything else.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: As we referenced last time, these points of view are extremely introspective in a way that, again, we're just getting information that could be communicated via dialogue with other characters or in, like, much-reduced inner monologues.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, Aviendha is thinking for, like, five pages about her dumb problems. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, Aviendha's chapter is really weird.

Emily: Yeah, but to get into the plot, I guess, what there is, Aviendha is with our usual group of Aes Sedai – you know, Rhuarc and all the classic Wise Ones –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Amys – Classic™ Wise Ones, Amys, Bair, and Melaine –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who we're told is just starting to show her pregnancy, which is just so funny to me because I feel like Melaine has been pregnant for nine books.

Sally: Yeah, and it's like, is that only three or four months of Wheely Time time?

Emily: And Melaine has been pregnant longer than Elayne, so – like, significantly longer than Elayne.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, again, that's just a fun reminder that Elayne is exactly three days' pregnant –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) And acting as though she's eight months' pregnant. Just making it everyone else's problem.

Sally: Everyone's problem.

Emily: Um, but this group has left, um, Caemlyn, which is where they were last, I think, and are on their way, per Rand's orders, to Arad Doman. They're a couple days' out from Rand's manor house or whatever. Aviendha's like, "We could've Traveled there, but why would we when it's just a few days' travel on foot?" And I'm like, so you don't have to travel a few days on foot.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's pretty – pretty self-explanatory there.

Sally: Yeah, it saves time, it saves energy. She makes it some, like, wheel – weird point of Aiel pride –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: That she's like, "We could just run there really fast," and I'm like, or you could teleport there immediately.

Emily: You could teleport there even faster.

Sally: Yeah, I don't understand.

Emily: I know, they're so –

Sally: It doesn't make any sense.

Emily: So wack. I'm like, is she just, like, proud of the fact that they're getting in their, like, cardio for those few days? It's like, guys.

Sally: I don't know.

Emily: You can just chill out.

Sally: You can just teleport.

Emily: Everyone can teleport, you know?

Sally: Yeah, everybody knows about teleportation except Gawyn at this point.

Emily: Except Gawyn and the Seanchan. But that will soon change. Um, they are – Aviendha's with some people scouting, as they're just, like, seeing this random band of Arad Domani refugees, and Aviendha's like, "Wow, I feel sad for these people. How weird and odd. I never feel sad for hungry –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Homeless people. That's so against my culture, my beliefs, my personality." And I'm like, are you an – are you – are you evil, Aviendha?

Sally: Yeah, Aviendha has never experienced – this is the first time she's ever experienced empathy in her whole life.

Emily: She's – empathy, have you ever heard of it?

Sally: "It's called empathy, you dusty old fart."

Emily: It's called empathy. (laugh)

Sally: That's my really bad Manchester accent, you guys.

Emily: It's really good. Yeah, Aviendha's like, "Elayne must have taught me how to feel empathy."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: And I'm like, Elayne?! Elayne? Elayne Trakand taught you to feel empathy?

Sally: Elayne also doesn't feel empathy; Elayne feels pity.

Emily: Yeah, Aviendha's like, "I pity –"

Sally: For other people who are not rich.

Emily: Well, to be fair, Aviendha also just says she feels pity, so.

Sally: Yeah, you're right. It's not even empathy.

Emily: (cough) She probably did definitely learn that from Elayne. Um, she manages to be like, "I feel so pity – so much pity for these sad refugees," while at the same time being like, "What idiots."

Sally: Oh my God, I know.

Emily: "They don't even know where they're – they're being watched. How could they not care?" And I'm like, maybe starvation is more on their mind than whether they're being watched by a random group of militaristic people who are not going to step in to help them in any meaningful way.

Sally: Yeah, and throughout the chapter, she's like, "Everyone in the wetlands is so stupid, and that's why when war ravages their country, they're unable to, you know, just keep on going," and it's like, damn.

Emily: Okay.

Sally: How heartless can you be?

Emily: Yeah. Like, on her shit list is just the general concept of cities –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? Just, there's, like, a lot of random stuff here that is clearly Brandon Sanderson's attempt to be – to capture the usual –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Robert Jordan thing of overemphasizing cultural differences –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: In order to be like, "Here's my diverse point of view character."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But the way Brandon Sanderson goes about it is by eliminating one hundred percent of Aviendha's character growth in this regard.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, it's just her waxing on and on about, like, "Wetlanders are stupid, except for Elayne." (laugh)

Sally: Okay.



Emily: And I'm like, if that is all Aviendha has learned in the last twelve books, then I would like Aviendha to die. Like, kill her off.

Sally: Yeah, like, she's just being mean –

Emily: Not pulling her weight, yeah.

Sally: And, like, Aviendha's never been, like, the nicest character, but she also hasn't been just, like, a total raging dickhead.

Emily: Yeah, she's meant to be sort of a – sort of a himbo, you know?

Sally: Yeah, good for her. Jock energy.

Emily: Yeah, just jock energy. Just sort of angry and irritable.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And, no, now she's like –

Sally: "I'm a mean girl."

Emily: "I'm a mean girl. I don't think my father, the inventor of Toaster Strudel –" (laugh) Does Aviendha even have parents? We've asked this question before.

Sally: No idea.

Emily: Um, the Wise Ones – Aviendha's ongoing trial – and this is what's going to be happening with Gawyn, too, and the Cadsuane point of view – is Brandon Sanderson is trying to set up these characters' arcs.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Throughout this book. Um, arcs – character arcs are not something Robert Jordan really believes in, so on the one hand –

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: That's sort of refreshing. (laugh) I almost made Sally do a spit-take.

Sally: That was really piping hot commentary. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) He'll be like, "Here's Perrin at the beginning of this book; here's Perrin: he's regressed at the end of this book."

Sally: Yeah, nothing's happened.

Emily: Nothing's changed. Masema's still here. So, like, while on the other hand – on one hand, that's refreshing, on the other hand, it's a little heavy-handed.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: Like, we don't need every character to have a point of view just setting up their character arc, which is what's going on here.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, this chapter pretty much exists to be like, "The Aiel are on their way to Rand." We know that already; don't need to have another point of view about it. "Aviendha: still in love with Rand." Okay, I assume that, and I swear to God I wish I could hear it less.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Aviendha's having trouble with how the Wise Ones are treating her; she's being given a lot of these, like, meaningless Aiel punishments that make her feel like she's really fucked up somehow.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and she's just, like, trying desperately to figure out what she's done wrong. She's like, "I can't ask, 'cause that would be unhonorable."

Sally: More humiliating, yeah.

Emily: And I'm like, how do you guys get anything done? The Aiel are supposed to be efficient. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, and their, just, lack of communication.

Emily: Yeah, you guys should be able to ask each other questions. Um, it's pretty obvious to us, the readers, and Aviendha even, like, sort of hits on it at one point, that this is a form of test.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: For example, as they're, like, picking up their march again, Amys takes Aviendha aside and sort of, like, quizzes her on her opinions on what's going on and sort of the, like, policy and Rand and Rhuarc, et cetera, and, like, not to be a dick about it, but Aviendha's not exactly giving radical or controversial answers.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's pretty, um – she's pretty much toeing the party line there. The only thing Amys is really upset about – or is – questions – is Aviendha being like, "Yeah, I'm gonna marry Rand," and Amys is like, "Okay, he has three other girlfriends or whatever the fuck; how you gonna do that?" And Aviendha's like, "Well, I know it, because I talked to Min, and she says I'm gonna have his babies," and Amys is like, "I wish I was dead." (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: At least, that's how I projected myself –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Onto Amys feeling.

Sally: Same.

Emily: Because imagine being in the middle of this drama. I would be so infuriated all the time.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Be like, you guys, shut the fuck up. Anyway. So, clearly Aviendha's just gonna be confused and miserable for the next few chapters, as I recall, as she tries to understand that the Wise Ones are very obviously quizzing her.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, I know I just said Aviendha's a little bit of a himbo, but it gets pretty dense at a certain point.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: Um, and just sort of this is meant to be her journey to being a Wise One, I guess, or meant to complete that journey, I guess –

Sally: Yeah. Just, I don't know, a test of patience.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Tests of at what point will she be like, "This is disgraceful to a Wise One," you know?

Emily: Yeah, I believe the test is at some point she'll be like, "I'm your equal, so you can't give me punishments anymore, so quit." And they'll be like, "Great, yeah. That's all you needed to do."

Sally: Yeah, you just needed to girlboss up.

Emily: Was claim it, yeah. And it's like, okay.

Sally: Girlboss: final evolution.

Emily: But seriously, did we need to be part of this journey for Aviendha? Not really.

Sally: Naur.

Emily: Um. This ...

Sally: Now guess who's back!

Emily: Now guess who's back, baby. It's Brandon Sanderson's special boy.

Sally: It's his trophy boy. (laugh)

Emily: It's his trophy boy. (laugh) Gawyn. Gawyn, my enemy.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And everyone's enemy. Has anyone ever met someone who's like, "Gawyn's my guy"? Besides Brandon Sanderson. (laugh)

Sally: Brandon Sanderson's like, "He's misunderstood."

Emily: "He's my special —"

Sally: "He's my blorbo."

Emily: "My special boy. (laugh) Brandon Sanderson's blorbo, Gawyn Trakand."

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Terrifying to think about. Gawyn — yeah, this is a four-and-a-half page point of view that's just Gawyn being like, "Damn, I really fucked up, huh?"

Sally: But he, like, won't even go that far.

Emily: I know. He's just like —

Emily: "Maybe I fucked up?"

Sally: "Maybe I fucked up. Maybe I should make a different decision. Maybe I should have a spine. Maybe I should have a backbone. Maybe I should stick to my own morals and values." And then he's like, "Nah."

Emily: Meh, maybe not yet. Maybe not yet, 'cause remember, this is only the first chapter in the character arc. God forbid anything happen in the first chapter of the character arc.

Sally: This chapter could just be him being like, "This is stupid, I'm gonna go find Egg."

Emily: Yeha. Which is what will happen eventually. It's just like, we don't need to be here for all of this.

Sally: We just need to watch Gawyn, you know, self-flagellate for a while.

Emily: Yeah, like, in a way it feels, like, patronizing, you know? Like, Brandon Sanderson is being like, "Hey, I know we haven't been with Gawyn for seven books, and thank God for that —"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "So here's a recap of everything traumatic or weird that's happened to him or because of him, blah blah blah blah. Now you're set up for him to change his ways." And I'm like, okay, maybe that's, like, theoretically good, but, um, I just refuse to believe you couldn't have integrated that with the chapter in which he actually started doing shit.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Making moves.

Sally: Making a decision.

Emily: Um. Pretty annoying. What Gawyn is doing is he's with the Younglings, which is just, like, 300 young guys, and they are sort of mounting guerilla warfare against the rebel Aes Sedai army, which is Gareth Bryne's army. There's only 300 of them, though, and Gawyn is no Mat Cauthon –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So they're not exactly making an impact. They're just sort of running around in the dark with Gareth Bryne, like, swatting them like mosquitoes –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Gawyn feeling – being like, “I don't feel very good about this.” Gawyn also is like, “It really just feels like Elaida is trying to get rid of us.” And I'm like – (laugh)

Sally: Yeah ... He's like, “Before Dumai's Wells, I had a suspicion.”

Emily: And now –

Sally: “But now, I'm, like, pretty sure.”

Emily: “Me? I'm, like, eighty percent sure.” And I'm like, are you the stupidest man alive? (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, it really seems like it.

Emily: Yeah, pretty – is pretty obvious. We're, like, reminded for, like, the first time since it happened that Gawyn had this extremely traumatic experience in the White Tower schism, where he killed a couple of, like, the Warder trainers.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Gawyn has basically not alluded to this at all in the last few books, and I'd like to give the authors the benefit of the doubt here and be like, “That's a sign of his trauma.”

Sally: Sure.

Emily: But the way it's just brought up so casually here is kind of, like, not – not representative of that, I think.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's just Gawyn kind of being like, “Well, here on the list of things that I'm not happy about are these guys I murdered, my teachers,” you know?

Sally: My teachers – yeah, even in the chapter, if I'm recalling correctly, it kind of tries to point to that, where he's just like, “I just haven't thought about this in a really long time.”

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: “For some reason.”

Emily: He's like, "Why now? After so long?" Then it answers his own question: "He suspected his sense of guilt had to do with facing Bryne, his first and most influential instructor in the arts of war." (laugh) Sun Tzu. Um. Which is just sort of going back to what we were talking about about mediation in the last bit. Here we have Gawyn asking a question, like an introspective question about himself, and the reader is not being asked to do any work.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Regarding that or to make any of our own assumptions or to read into the text in any way. We're just immediately being given the answer.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Or the answer that we're supposed to assume, which is that, oh, here's a parallel between these two things, so –

Sally: Yeah, these two experiences.

Emily: It's really talking down to us in a way.

Sally: Yeah, this is when it – yeah, this is what we were talking about last episode about the ways mediation can cross into being patronizing –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And, um, ineffective.

Emily: Yeah. So we get a lot of that with Gawyn, unfortunately.

Sally: Yeah, well, he's a patronizing character, so maybe it's on purpose.

Emily: Yeah, so maybe it fits. Anyway, he's like, "Well, I just, um – why I am even still here? Like, my loyalty is to Elayne and Egg." And then he's like, "Well, Elayne and Egg are just Accepted, so they don't have any choice in the matter." And then for the first time, he's like, "Maybe Egg has agency."

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Which is a desperate attempt, I imagine, by Brandon Sanderson to resuscitate his character.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, to be like, ooh, he is dead in the water.

Emily: Be like, dude, you gotta admit – like, maybe your sister and your girlfriend, like, are capable of making decisions. Like –

Sally: You know?

Emily: I know Gawyn's coming at this with, like – he was – he is seemingly the only character – this is the one Gawyn redemption moment – Gawyn's, like, the only character in this entire

series who seems to understand that Siuan Sanche asking these three random girls to hunt down the Black Ajah was wrong and child abuse.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or maybe not child abuse since they weren't necessarily children at that point, but deeply exploitative.

Sally: Yes.

Emily: And so, like, that's to Gawyn's credit, but Gawyn has not, from that moment, been like, "Okay, that was a situation in which they were being exploited; can I accept that there are other situations that they might be in?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or that they – circumstances might have changed.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, yeah, for the first time now, Gawyn is like, "Well, they're on the other side, so maybe that's where I should be." Gawyn asks his, like, lieutenant, Rajar, he's like, "Are we fucking up?" And Rajar is like, "Well, we can't question the Aes Sedai." And Gawyn – (laugh) says, um, "None of the other Younglings seemed to be plagued with these questions. To them, the world was much simpler." Which just feels like Gawyn being like, "I – every one of these guys is just stupid –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "And a peasant."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "I'm the only one born to privilege and therefore to higher – a higher understanding of the world."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which will especially hit wrong because you would hope that Gawyn's arc here would be, like, bring all the Younglings, convert the Younglings, take some fucking responsibility for these guys you've been leading, and I'm sorry to spoil it for you guys, but no, he just leaves them.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: I know.

Sally: He didn't even think about it, like, tactically? Like, hey, three hundred people is a not insignificant amount of people to bring to the other side of the war.

Emily: I think he'll, like, quibble about it later and be like, "It's just not logistically possible," but, like, Brandon and Robert, you're the authors. You can make it logistically possible.

Sally: You can make it happen. Gawyn sneaks into the camp: "Hey, Egg. How do I get all these people across?" She's like, "Check out this nifty tool I've learned." Egg is in the White Tower. Some other person.

Emily: "Hey, Siuan Sanche, whom I hate."

Sally: Whomst I hate. And Siuan's like, "Bing bang boom, I've got 300 –"

Emily: (laugh) Bing bling boom.

Sally: Yeah, "I've got 300 frat boys in my army now via transport –"

Emily: Yeah. Who are deeply –

Siuan: "Via teleportation."

Emily: Brainwashed and fucked up 'cause they were at Dumai's Wells. It's just like, yeah, Gawyn, maybe if you were such, like, a leader or whatever, you would actually commit yourself to leading these people, but instead you're just like, "Mm-mm, I have to make decisions for me." And I'm like ...

Sally: Okay. Selfish.

Emily: I'm like, okay, at book twelve? In book twelve?

Sally: You're still –

Emily: Whatever happened to character growth?

Sally: A little pissbaby?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And you will be?

Emily: Ugh.

Sally: Forever? Because you're – you've stagnated?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Whatever.

Emily: (laugh) There's also this metaphor that Brandon Sanderson is shoving, like a – like a circle into a square box or a square into a circle box, where Gawyn's like, "I can't even see the stars." (laugh)

Sally: Oh, yeah. (laugh) "There's nothing to guide him, you guys! He's got no –"

Emily: Yeah. He doesn't have a sense of purpose or ambition, you guys!



Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Stars – isn't that a Jean Valjean song? Or, no, it's, um, Javert. Doesn't Javert have a song about the stars right before he jumps off a bridge? (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Maybe. Gawyn's just having his Javert Era. Eh. Eh.

Emily: Eh. Eh.

Sally: My Javert Era. Javerta. (laugh)

Emily: Shut up. (laugh) What was that YouTube video we watched that was, like, a video essay about musicals or whatever, and it just kept showing that scene from the movie where Russell Crowe commits suicide? (laugh) And we just see him go *thunk* at the bottom of the dam.

Sally: (laugh) I don't know. It was probably Lindsay Ellis.

Emily: (laugh) Oh, God. So funny. Okay, Gawyn's in his Javerta.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Rand, meanwhile, is walking around; he's going to the Traveling ground, um, to meet up with the Sea Folk, who are now – like, the representatives, which in this case is Harine, who's been chosen as the sort of ambassador, which I believe was covered in Harine's last point of view –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, but she's now returning. On his way, Rand has, like, a passing thought of Mat and is like, "Oh, I've accepted that I'm seeing visions of these people – of Rand – I mean, Mat and Perrin." Um, he's like, "Hopefully Mat will return soon. He would need Mat and his tactical skills at Shayol Ghul," which is the first time Rand has ever admitted that Mat has a necessary skill set.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, which is pretty funny. But also, like, Rand, you could've made more of an effort to, like, find Mat and Perrin.

Sally: Yeah. Or, you know, you could have just not sent Mat on the dumbest errand in human history.

Emily: Yeah. Or, like, you could've sent him with an Asha'man. I wish Mat had an Asha'man with him the entire time.

Sally: Me too.

Emily: I know the timelines don't match up 'cause Mat got sent away before the Asha'man, like, became part of Rand's entourage. But I think, like, the Mat-Narishma energy –

Sally: Ugh.

Emily: Would be truly iconic.

Sally: Off the charts.

Emily: Yeah. Just –

Sally: He's just like, "This is my pretty boy trophy." (laugh)

Emily: "This is my pretty bodyguard dude who just channels."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I also feel like Mat would use Narishma more nicely than –

Sally: Than Rand.

Emily: (laugh) Than Perrin uses Grady and Neald.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, you're so right.

Emily: Maybe that's just wishful thinking, but.

Sally: Or we could have Damer Flinn with Mat because he loves to just collect old men.

Emily: Or they could've given Mat one of the evil Asha'man and Mat could have slowly converted him.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: I'm not saying in a sexual way, but that's how it should have been. But, like, you know, Mat has his magic necklace.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: The Asha'man could try and kill him and not work 'cause of the necklace, and Mat could be like, "Too late, bitch. Now you have to work with me."

Sally: Yeah. Blackmail.

Emily: "We're in this together." Yeah, or something. I don't know.

Sally: There is – really is a lot of possibilities.

Emily: There's so much that could happen, but I guess Mat couldn't have access to channeling because that would have improve – I mean, like, eliminated the need for –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Eighty percent of his plot.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So, sadly enough. Anyway. Mat – not Mat. Rand gets a messenger from Tear who’s like, “Hey, Darlin wants to know what the fuck’s going on. You told him to start getting an army, like, three weeks ago, and he’s got it,” and Rand’s like, “Well, tell him to keep building his army,” and it’s like, okay, well, you know, armies, like, need to do something at some point, right?

Sally: Yeah, you can’t just –

Emily: Or they, like, literally descend into lawlessness. That’s, like, a number one maneuver of armies, after “attack.” It is “descend into alcoholism and lawlessness.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But whatever, Rand.

Sally: Rand’s also really fucking rude to Darlin, where he’s like, “Can nobody follow simple orders?”

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: It’s like, well, you sent the king of Tear –

Emily: You gave –

Sally: To Arad Doman, so I understood why he’s confused.

Emily: A little confused. Like, dude. Rand and Harine meet. Rand’s like, “Where are the ships with all the grain promised?” And Harine’s like, “I don’t know how to tell you that, like, it takes a while to – for things to go from Point A to Point B. I can’t put boats through a gateway.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Like, what the fuck do you want?”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “You also sent us through enemy waters.” Like, she’s like, maybe mind your – this is the one time when Harine’s rude wherein I’m like, go, Harine.

Sally: Yeah, go off.

Emily: She’s just like, “Fucking mind your own business. Like, my business is shipping, and you clearly no jack-shit about it, so.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Back the fuck off.” And Rand’s like, “Oh, my bad.” (laugh) “You’re right. That was mean of me.” Um, they have a little chat. Then he’s like, “Harine, what happens to dudes who can channel?” She’s like, “You can’t know that,” for whatever reason, and so they make a bargain that eventually at some point he’ll have to answer a question of hers, which will probably come back to haunt him, but I don’t remember.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: Anyway, Harine's like, "Just like in every other culture, there's ritual suicide for these guys," and Rand's like, "I don't know why I was surprised." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. That's on me. It's like the "Dead Pigeon: Don't Open –"

Emily: Rand – (laugh) "I don't know what I expected."

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Rand's like, "Well, that's no longer necessary, because saidin has been cleansed," and Harine is like, "Yeah, you say it's been cleansed, but, like, it's gonna take a while to prove that."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Especially, like, considering all the guys who are saying it's been cleansed are guys who for centuries if not thousands of years have been known to go insane at some point or another. Like, this could be a mass hallucination as far as we're concerned.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Rand's all pissed off about that. And is like, "Why is everyone so fucking stupid about saidin?" And the Aes Sedai are very reasonably like, "It's just not gonna happen right away."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, maybe there's some problem-solving we could do, like – one of the Aes Sedai he's with is bonded to Damer Flinn, so she's like, "I feel like it's been cleansed," and it's like, well, maybe we could do something with having, like, Aes Sedai go out, and everyone knows they can't lie, so being like, "Saidin's cleansed," blah blah blah blah blah. So, like, there are maybe some PR things you could be doing.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, Rand, it's just not something that's going to happen right away. Um, and it's a little frustrating 'cause, like, unlike the Arad Doman problem, which I understand is a problem but which I kind of am, like, Rand being involved in it feels, um, like – Rand – Rand is sort of being overinvolved in Arad Doman right now.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The way he has been overinvolved in every country he has either invaded or taken over, depending on your perspective, I guess.

Sally: Mm. Yeah.

Emily: Like, Arad Doman definitely needs aid, um, and definitely needs some of its problems solved, but the way Rand is going about it is just, like, "I am integrating Arad Doman into this stuff." Rand is also clearly, like, not really interested in Arad Doman.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's not something he's, like – keeping him up at night.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So in a way I would prefer if we could, like, have more of Rand dealing with, like, how do I convince people that men who can channel – like, I would like to see the PR campaign, you know?

Sally: Yeah, who's he putting at the head of that?

Emily: He's just like, "Here's Narishma. Have you seen how hot he is?"

Sally: And everyone would be like, "Hot people don't lie." (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) "Hot people don't lie."

Sally: "We all know that."

Emily: "He's not going to become crazy and violent. Look at him; he's beautiful." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, he's gorgeous. Stunning. Weaponize that hottie.

Emily: Not to mention Damer Flinn.

Sally: Yeah, he's just a nice old man.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Who likes to do doctoring.

Emily: Yeah. Come on. He could be your grandpa.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Everyone, look. (vocalizing)

Sally: (vocalizing)

Emily: The Asha'man are so lovely. You know, and then it's, like, Mazrim Taim in the background, like –

Sally: He's like – (evil laughter)

Emily: "Asha'man, kill." (evil laughter) "Ignore the man twirling his mustache in the background."

Sally: "Focus on Narishma."

Emily: "Cackling a villainous laugh."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Just look at Narishma. Look at Narishma.”

Sally: Narishma’s just, like, glittering in the sunlight.

Emily: So, like, these are things I actually care about, and they’re not really getting more than a passing comment. Oh, we do get a passing mention of Brandon Sanderson’s actual blorbo, Androl.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Flinn’s like, “I’m not good at making gateways, unlike Androl.”

Sally: Did they –?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I totally skimmed over that.

Emily: “‘I’ve never been exceptional at making gateways,’ Flinn continued, ‘not like Androl.’” And Rand is like, “Flinn, shut up.”

Sally: Who the fuck is Androl? (laugh)

Emily: He’s, like, an Asha’man that Brandon Sanderson was just like, “This is my guy. I invented him, and the story is about him now.”

Sally: Did Brandon really invent him, or has he been referenced before?

Emily: I think the name has been referenced before –

Sally: Nice.

Emily: As, like, one of the miscellaneous Asha’man in the background –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But –

Sally: And Brandon’s like –

Emily: “That’s gonna be my guy.”

Sally: “Target acquired.”

Emily: Yeah. “I need a guy in the Asha’man camp –” I don’t know. Maybe – maybe Robert Jordan had plans for Androl all along, but.

Sally: No, I like it better that Brandon’s just like, “This is my man.”

Emily: He really feels like –

Sally: This is my boy.

Emily: A Brandon Sanderson creation, as we'll get to. Um, Rand waxes poetic about how much he longs for a simple life. This is unbelievable, not because I don't believe Rand wouldn't long for that; like, that's very much the self-pitying sort of shenanigans that Rand gets up to. But generally in the privacy of his own head.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, like, I just simply do not believe Rand would be like, "Here's a sad thing about me," in front of –

Sally: Damer Flinn.

Emily: Aes Sedai.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who he hates and mistrusts.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, he's not gonna be like, "Wow, my depression is getting really bad lately –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In front of Cadsuane, you know? (laugh)

Sally: Yeah. Yeah. Totally, yeah. Yeah, it's very out of character.

Emily: So, like, there's an example of introspection that should be introspection instead of dialogue. We're getting those two things –

Sally: Flip-flopped.

Emily: Mixed up quite a bit.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Finally, we get to Cadsuane, who is sitting in on an interrogation session of Semirhage, who's, like, being hung upside down, and that's the only thing being done to affect her physically. It's not great.

Sally: Yeah, I –

Emily: I do believe that technically counts as harm.

Sally: Yeah, I was about to say, like, Cadsuane's like, "Rand says we cannot torture or harm her," and I'm like, so hanging her upside down for an extended period of time just is, like, gray area in that matter?

Emily: Yeah, like, that's bad, you know?

Sally: Yeah, it's very uncomfortable.

Emily: Yeah, I believe it causes brain damage –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: After a certain point. So – whatever, though. This is in a world where, like – this is a fantasy world, where people can just, like, get knocked on the head and they're out for the count, but they'll be fine tomorrow.

Sally: Yeah, they'll be fine.

Emily: You know?

Sally: No major concussions.

Emily: Head injuries are nothing in fantasy worlds.

Sally: Yeah. The head cannot be injured.

Emily: Anyway, Semirhage is responding to all of these questionings by just being like, "Let me concoct the most horrifying thing you've ever heard about things I could do to you," and thereby just intimidating the Aes Sedai who are questioning her. Um, Cadsuane eventually, like, calls a halt to this and just, like, makes it so Semirhage can't hear or see while she talks to Merise, and Cadsuane just the entire time is like, "We really have to get creative with how we're going to break Semirhage. In fact, Semirhage reminds me of me, so how would I break myself?" And she's like, "That's a disturbing thought. It's so disturbing." And I'm like, it's not that disturbing. Like, it's a thought exercise. Like –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: It's unfortunate, but, like, Cadsuane has a weird reaction to it –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: For someone who's supposed to be so, like, badass and –

Sally: Yeah, and who's obviously, um, interrogated, in loose marks, people before, 'cause she's like, "I know exactly how to make sure people can't hear or see."

Emily: Yeah, blegh. As I was reading this, I was like, once again, this is, like, the Cadsuane mini-arc of Cadsuane figuring out how to break Semirhage, and there are hints of that here, which is that eventually Cadsuane's going to be like, "Semirhage has her power by intimidating all of us and making us feel like she's this larger-than-life terrifying person; if we accept that she's just a random person and, you know, can be humiliated and whatever like other people, then we'll – we'll be able to – if we can strip her of her dignity," more or less –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Then that's our way to go. Um, as I was reading this, though, I was thinking about how, like, Cadsuane's like, "We can't, like – we can't just get rid of Semirhage because she knows all this stuff about the Age of Legends," and I was like, where have I heard that argument before? Oh, right, with Moghedien, who immediately broke under –



Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Under captivity. (laugh) Just immediately was like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “I’ll tell you whatever the fuck you wanna know.”

Sally: “What do you – what do you want to know?”

Emily: “Yeah, sure, whatever.” And I was like, why isn’t Nynaeve involved in this?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It would be so hilarious if everyone’s, like, quaking in their boots in front of Semirhage and Nynaeve walks in and is like, “Listen up, doofus.”

Sally: “I’ve done this before, and I’ll do it again.”

Emily: “Tell me everything –” Like, to clarify, I don’t agree with anything that’s going on with Semirhage here; we didn’t agree with anything that happened with Moghedien.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, like, within the logic of this world, it should’ve just been Nynaeve walking in and being like, “You don’t scare me. I’m more powerful than you.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “I know it. You know it. So tell me what the fuck I wanna know.” You know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I just feel like that would have actually been, like, an interesting culmination of what was otherwise a completely useless arc –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: With Moghedien, is for Nynaeve to just be like, “Okay, but now I’m capable of rendering the Forsaken absolutely useless, because I just don’t give a shit about them.”

Sally: Yeah. I – I think it would be very – not that I – again, not that I approve of the whole “I’m gonna hold a human being captive,” but it would’ve been very cool and sexy for Nynaeve to just be like, “The Forsaken don’t scare me anymore; I’ve beaten Moghedien like six times.”

Emily: Yeah, on, like, six separate occasions, so –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Come on.

Sally: Yeah. You don’t scare me, Semirhage.

Emily: And again, that would've been, like, character growth from a character whose growth I actually care about, unlike Cadsuane.

Sally: Unlike Cadsuane. I don't need to hear Cadsuane realize that she has an inflated sense of self.

Emily: Yeah. I'm like, whoa, Cadsuane.

Sally: Oh. (laugh)

Emily: Figure that one out all on your own? I'm so glad you got there eventually.

Sally: Yeah, like, what? (laugh)

Emily: Ugh. Anyway, those are those chapters. We did it.

Sally: We are through chapter five, baby.

Emily: Yeah. Um, I don't know what's next except that Ituralde's in the next chapter.

Sally: Yeah, finally, some good fucking food.

Emily: Yeah, some content. But, uh, so it goes with the Gathering Storm.

Sally: Such is life.

Emily: Do you have anything to add – such is life. As they say in John Wick 4.

Sally: As they say in John Wick 4. Um. I don't think so.

Emily: Okay. Um, thanks, everyone, for listening. Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

Sally: Yeah, and just to bump our Patreon a little bit, we are currently starting a We Don't Watch Outlander read of Howl's Moving Castle.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And watching of the movie, so if that interests you, hearing what we think about that.

Emily: Yeah. It's a great quality fantasy book.

Sally: Yeah, pop over to the Patreon.

Emily: Yep. Um, yeah, do you have a sign-off?

Sally: Oh. (laugh) Um, we could just talk about Chris being like, guesses about – (laugh) the biggest city in Europe.

Emily: Oh, yeah, we're – my family's going to Greece with Sally next month, you guys have – keep hearing about that, and you'll hear more about it.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: My dad has been reading up a lot about Greece, um, and is very eager to exchange the facts and trivia that he's gaining, so, uh, last Saturday he was, like, quizzing us. He's like, "What's the largest city in Europe?" Sally was like, "Istanbul" –

Sally: Emily was like, "Istanbul." I just texted it. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) I was like, it's probably one of the cities we're visiting. Sally said "Istanbul." And I said, "If Sally wins, you have to Venmo her five dollars." Sally did win, so he Venmo-ed her six dollars.

Sally: Yeah, six dollars. Twenty percent tip, baby.

Emily: Um, my dad clearly wanted to keep going –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: With the question and answer format, but, um, everyone else sort of jumped in with their own little bits of trivia. I was like, "Anyone who can guess how many cars John Wick gets hit by in John Wick 4 gets a dollar – gets a Venmo." I sent my sister a dollar and six cents for a McDonald's Diet Coke.

Sally: Nice. Nice, nice, nice.

Emily: Anyway, Chris, my dad, felt very bullied by all of this –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and retreated in a – in a flurry of self-pity.

Sally: In a – yeah.

Emily: Speaking of persecution complexes –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Rand al'Thor. Anyway. That was just our family's inevitable –

Sally: Yeah, that's how I got six dollars from Emily's dad.

Emily: And that's how Sally got six dollars.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Buh dum tss.

Sally: What will I spend it on?

Emily: I don't know. Four, five, six McDonald's Diet Cokes?

Sally: Six McDonald's – don't tempt me. Those things whip ass.

Emily: I know, they slap. Spicy Diet Coke. Okay. (laugh)

Sally: Bye. (laugh)

Emily: Goodbye, everyone.