



Episode 241: Five Generals' Group Chat

Release Date: April 17, 2023

Running Time: 43 Minutes

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.

EMILY: Alright.

SALLY: Alright.

EMILY: What's there to say?

SALLY: Well, Ituralde is here.

EMILY: That's true. That's the, the [sighs] sunshine that we need, I guess. In the storm.

SALLY: What is with this weird tile?

EMILY: I don't know. I thought it was, like, spider webs?

SALLY: Yeah, that's what I thought, too.

EMILY: But I thought it was, like, Moghedien thing.

SALLY: Oh.

EMILY: But she's certainly not in this. Right?

SALLY: Uh, not that I'm aware of.

EMILY: No, it's just [pages flipping] Ituralde and Egg.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Maybe it's meant to be, like, glass breaking? I don't know. I don't know. Hey, this is Everybody Hates Rand [laughing], your friendly neighborhood *Wheel of Time* podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

SALLY: And I'm Sally Goodger.

EMILY: We're cruising on low energy.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Been a little heat wave in Utah, exactly one week after a, the blizzard. So.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Pretty classic and we are pooped.

SALLY: It just stinks.

EMILY: Um, and it doesn't help that [laughs] we had to read these chapters. Um, Ituralde. This is not his first point of view in this book, so we have evaded the beginning of the character arc trap. We're just catching up with him, immediately following the battle, I believe, which – where we saw him last.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: When he has, uh, routed the enemy, though at the cost of half his forces, he tells us. Um, and has a brief interaction with the Seanchan general, a guy named General Turan, who we may have seen before, but I don't recall.

SALLY: Yeah, I don't know, either.

EMILY: They're kind of all indistinguishable, these Seanchan military people.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, this guy's dying. Ituralde comes to have one of those, you know, enemy generals, gentleman's convos, I think, that, uh, we're so fond of in our military type literature.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah. It's something, something honor.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Something, something dying with dignity.

EMILY: Yeah, there's something in there about how, like, [sighs] I don't know war can be gentlemanly if there's no actual depth of feeling or, or anger or hatred.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: In the people directing the war, you know? We're, we're acting out of rationality and logic, not out of any particular – and loyalty to one's country not any particular blind hatred. Um, which, I don't know, that's certainly *a* narrative. I don't know why it's the dominant narrative. I suspect it has something to do with the Civil War [laughs].

SALLY: Oh boy.

EMILY: Uh, but who knows. Anyway, Ituralde comes up to this guy, this guy's like, "How'd you do it?" Ituralde's like, "It was really fucking easy. [laughs] You're not that smart." [laughs]

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Uh, and then this guy's like, "Well, you may have, you may have one the battle, but you're gonna lose the war." And Ituralde's like, "Yeah, I know. But I've gotta do it, because this will be important from a historical standpoint. When the Seanchan do eventually take over Arad Doman, eventually there will be a rebellion." You know, Ituralde's very forward thinking.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Of course, Ituralde does not consider at all, um, any form of outside help that he might get.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: He's been very – this isn't a shift in the Brandon Sanderson books, this has been true in his previous points of view as well. But the Arad Domani points of view, the few that we've gotten, have been very insular, more so, I would say, than some of the other points of view in other countries that we've got.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: Maybe it's been the same a little bit in Altara slash Ebou Dar.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Where sort of the idea of international help has not really been viewed as a concept. But, like, Ituralde did this big thing with allying with Tarabon, or some of the people in Tarabon, but has not been like, "Maybe I should be sending out messengers requesting aid from the Seanchan, or whatever." Like, we're not being told how this is quite different from the Aiel invasion, which was the last time there was any sort of international united front against an

outside force. Um, Ituralde isn't like, "Well, the rest of the world is just too fucked up right now," although, you know, maybe that's a rational thing to think.

SALLY: Yeah. Yeah, no that's really interesting.

EMILY: And I just, I don't know, I was thinking about it, especially because, as we know, this problem will be solved by Rand coming in later and providing external help. If one calls it help, but I guess Arad Doman will not technically be taken over by the Seanchan. And that is largely due to Ituralde fighting as long as he has been. You know, if the Seanchan had a foothold in Arad Doman, I think by the time Rand goes there then Rand would not try and take it back from them. He clearly has no interest in –

SALLY: Yeah, Rand's a fucking bootlicker.

EMILY: Yeah, rescuing [laughs] the countries that have been taken over. Um, so that's just, you know, I don't know. I – I admire Ituralde's forward thinking-ness.

SALLY: Sure.

EMILY: You know his, his idea that, although this is a, um, fruitless battle in the moment, it will be important for future generations.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: In providing a model, um, of and, uh, a sort of narrative that they can look to. Um, but also I'm like, "Why so insular?" Why so serious?

SALLY: Why so serious, Rodel? Ro-dle?

EMILY: Rodel.

SALLY: Rodeo.

EMILY: What's going on here? Just Robert Jordan plot holes or did he just not feel the need to explain it to us? I don't know. I – I guess it just, it bothers me because we have a, an existing example in which Ituralde himself was directly involved.

SALLY: Yeah, in a sort of allied force.

EMILY: Yeah. Like, so it's not like it's just completely inconceivable and no one's ever done it before. Ituralde himself [laughs] did it.

SALLY: Yeah, yeah. And, like, I don't know. I just, like, maybe it – I'm stuck on this, because later in these chapters Bashere specifically is like, "Oh, yeah, I admire Ituralde very much." But, like, you're relatively close to, like, eighteen of the great captains [laughs] and there's only five of them.

EMILY: Yeah!

SALLY: So, like, pick up the phone and be like, “Hey, Bashere, remember me.”

EMILY: [laughing] The great generals’ group text.

SALLY: Yeah, group text. Be like, “Hey.”

EMILY: Except for Pedron Niall [laughs].

SALLY: He’s not in the group chat. He’s never been in the group chat. He doesn’t even know there is a group chat.

EMILY: He thinks he was in the group chat. He started one and they all immediately blocked him.

SALLY: Yeah and they have a different one. That’s good and interesting. I guess maybe Gareth Bryne is also muted in the group chat.

EMILY: [laughs] They’re like, “Ew.”

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: “He’s annoying.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, but, uh, we then switch over to Leanne and then Egg within the space of, like, three pages. Again, this is some unnecessary point of view jumping, since they’re together through Leanne’s point of view, so it’s not really necessary to be in Leanne’s point of view.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: The only thing relevant here that happens is that there’s more bubbles of evil stuff happening in the Tower. First, Leanne is in her, like, freestanding cage cell.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Um, and it starts melting around her, which is very freaky. And has to get rescued from that. Then, when Egg is trying to return to her rooms, they find – she finds out that two entire, like, wings, or sections, of the Tower have just been switched.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So, now, like, some of the Novices' quarters are where the Brown Ajah's quarters used to be and vice versa. Which mean Egg has to like – the Novices' quarters it sounds like were on the lower floors or something like that, and now she has to climb really far to get to them.

SALLY: Yeah. Which sucks.

EMILY: Yeah, so [laughs] then we pick up with Nynaeve literally saying, "A storm is coming." [laughs]

SALLY: I *know*. It is really hammered in.

EMILY: Yeah, the metaphor – as if this book isn't titled *The Gathering Storm*.

SALLY: *The Gathering Storm*, yeah. So many people are like, "A storm's a coming."

EMILY: And I'm like, "Yeah, I get it."

SALLY: Yeah. I am aware that the storm is coming.

EMILY: Like, you can do themes, book themes right and wrong. And wrong is feeling like, yeah, you're being hit in the face with a hammer.

SALLY: I get it. We are prepping for the Last Battle.

EMILY: Yeah, I get it. And we're only on chapter seven, so. Like, what is this thing?

SALLY: I think those are Cadsuane's little hairpins.

EMILY: Oh! See, I thought it was Lanfear, because she has the fucking –

SALLY: Oh yeah.

EMILY: Stars and moons. But that makes sense. They've got, yeah, the little pins.

SALLY: That would be a funny twist if Cadsuane turned out to be Lanfear [laughs].

EMILY: Oh my god! I would actually, like, that would be redemption arc for Lanfear for me. Not in terms of, like, respecting her as a person, because Cadusane is almost exactly as hate-able as Lanfear in an entirely separate dimension, but, like, if Lanfear could pull that off.

SALLY: Yeah! I'd be like, "Wow, 4D chess."

EMILY: If Lanfear could stand to be in Rand's presence without hitting on him constantly, although maybe what Cadsuane is doing, bullying Rand, is a twisted form of...

SALLY: Flirtation.

EMILY: Flirtation. I don't know. If she could stand to be an old, mean ass woman as opposed to a young mean ass woman.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Wow. You know? I'd be like, "Intellectual redemption. Finally, one of the Forsaken has a brain."

SALLY: Yes, but alas.

EMILY: Also, how much chaos that would bring. That would be so cool.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: None of [laughs] the Forsaken actually manage to pull off a long con like this, you know?

SALLY: I know!

EMILY: Closest we get is, I guess, what's – Halima as...

SALLY: Oh, yeah.

EMILY: What's her name as Halima. Um, and maybe Mesaana, but, like, Mesaana isn't a known entity in the White Tower, she's just sort of a rando in the background. So.

SALLY: Yeah, it's not like she is Elaida, or whatever.

EMILY: Yeah, I don't know. Managing to get in with Rand that far would be a real coup and none of them are capable of it. Anyway, Nynaeve is mumbling like an old maid [laughs] about a storm coming. Um, as she...meeting with, or I supposed being tutored by, um, I don't know how to – there's too many I's in this.

SALLY: Dai – Daigian? [dye-gee-in]

BOTH: Dye-ghee-in?

EMILY: Daigian [dye—gee-in], who's one of Cadsuane's little minions, who, um, the only things we know about her really is that she does not have much of the Power. She's very low standing in terms of Aes Sedai, so she's always having to wait on everyone else. Um, and her Warder...

SALLY: Was Eben.

EMILY: Was just a Warder, who, like, does she have multiple? No, her Warder was Eben, who was lost and died in the cleansing of *saidin*.

SALLY: RIP.

EMILY: So, she's having some problems with grief, so Nynaeve is, like, here to quote "learn" from Daigian about the – it's either ninety-nine or a hundred weaves that –

SALLY: One hundred!

EMILY: One hundred, baby. The one hundred weaves that you have to do in the test to be raised from Accepted to Aes Sedai. Um, Nynaeve is, like, doing some mental gymnastics to be like, "Actually, I'm just here to distract Daigian in her grief and inconsolableness." Or whatever, but clearly she was just kind of sent here, foisted here by Corelle, a different one of Cadsuane's Aes Sedai, who was just trying to put Nynaeve off. Um, Nynaeve, as she's learning these weaves, finds it incredibly easy to do so, because although they are, like, weirdly complicated, they're simple. They don't require much actual Power. She also says she can commit them to memory instantly. I don't know how people do that, but I guess all of the Aes Sedai just do that. We never really see anyone having to *learn*.

SALLY: Yeah, no one's got, like, charts, you know?

EMILY: [laughs] Flashcards. My channeling flashcards.

SALLY: That would be pretty iconic, actually, if, like, Elayne's walking around with, like, a carabiner full of flashcards on her belt.

EMILY: I refuse to believe that Elayne would study.

SALLY: You're – you got me there. Egg would the carabiner of flashcards.

EMILY: Egg would, yeah. Egg is that type A. She would have a little planner.

SALLY: Yeah. Hell yeah!

EMILY: She'd, she'd be –

SALLY: Day planner girl. Iconic.

EMILY: It's so cute to imagine Egg having a normal teenage hood and young adulthood, being, like, in fantasy college, studying for her finals. [crying noises] What could have been if we weren't in this particular narrative. Um, Nynaeve is like, "These are, like, the most useless, these are just a waste of brain space. Why would anyone ever need to use these?" And Daigian is like, "Well, I can't, like, tell you what the test is, but you will have to remember them all." Basically the test is just that you have to be able to, you know, remember weaves under pressure.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Um, we'll get to this, I think in the next book when it comes up, but Nynaeve does actually do the test to become an Aes Sedai from an Accepted, so it's fine, I think, that this scene is here.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: In order to show that Nynaeve is preparing for it in some way. Whether the test is really necessary is sort of another question. Um, and it does feel a little weird at this point in the narrative to have people still going through these, sort of, rites and rituals that were set up early on, like with the Accepted test.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: But more on that later, I guess. Um, Nynaeve asks Daigian if she wants Nynaeve to try and heal her of her grief. Which...is a wildly insensitive thing to ask.

SALLY: The way this sent me over the fucking edge today.

EMILY: [laughing] I was like, "Bestie. What are you talking about?"

SALLY: Like, and thank God Daigian, like, puts her in her place.

EMILY: Shuts her down. Yeah, is like, "What are you talking about?"

SALLY: [laughing] What *the fuck* are you talking about?"

EMILY: I'm not, like, a heartless monster. Like, grief is an important part of the process.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, there might be a valid point to be made that, like, the way that the bond affects people carries grief to a sort of new level.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Or so we've been told.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Uh, we haven't really seen much evidence of that in the ways that grief affects the women.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: The way that the bond breaking, or the other person dying, affects the men, I agree might be something that's worth investigating healing in so that these men don't just become suicidal berserkers immediately afterward.

SALLY: Yes.

EMILY: But the way the women responds just seems to be grief.

SALLY: Yeah, that they're sad. Yeah, we've seen a couple. Like, Siuan's Warder died. She talks about.

EMILY: Yeah, it –

SALLY: Like, "It made me really sad." ... but.

EMILY: Yeah, we're just, like, these people are crying and it's like, yeah, that's a normal...

SALLY: Yeah. Yep. That's what happens.

EMILY: Part of grief.

SALLY: You can't...make it go away. Also, I think it is, like, legitimately just, like, a bonkers thing for Nynaeve to be like, "I can heal emotions."

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Like, what? [laughs] I know you're very powerful, but.

EMILY: Yeah, we're, like, really reaching, I think, for, like, Nynaeve's hubris here, or for some sort of, like, thematic resonance with Nynaeve being like, "I can heal anything."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: But, like, I don't know, is this something Nynaeve has ever thought about before? I wouldn't think it would really be, like, a Nynaeve thing to be like –

SALLY: Yeah, like I – I don't know. This made me so mad that I don't know if I fully digested it, but –

EMILY: [laughs] Just saw red for several minutes.

SALLY: Yeah, I was like, "Are you fucking joking me?" Um, I – I agree with, like, obviously Nynaeve is getting there via, like, a magical thing. She's like, "You seem really upset via this bond that happened."

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: So yes, I agree with you that, like, that is interesting, but, like, if you – I, I just, like, don't understand the full cognitive leap she's making. If she's like, "I can heal wounds upon the soul?" [laughs]

EMILY: Yeah, she's like, "You're feeling pain." And I'm like, "Nynaeve, I think we can agree that emotional pain and physical pain are entirely different things."

SALLY: You know, different.

EMILY: I don't know.

SALLY: Anyway, not to, like, harp on something that is, like, six lines long, but.

EMILY: It is pretty wild and doesn't really have anything to do with anything else.

SALLY: It is weird.

EMILY: So, Nynaeve then says sort of a moment later to Daigian, "You know, it's really stupid how the Aes Sedai system is set up and how we all have to respect people who are at higher power levels. And people like you, who clearly know a lot, don't get respected." And Daigian's like, "Hmm, maybe I respect you after all [laughs]."

SALLY: Yeah. Hmmm.

EMILY: "Maybe you're not the insolent idiot that I thought you were." Of course this is five minutes after Nynaeve suggested [laughing].

SALLY: I can heal you of being sad.

EMILY: [laughing] I can heal you of your emotional wounds as well as your physical wounds.

SALLY: I am the most powerful person alive.

EMILY: Yeah. If I were Daigian I would keep the jury out a little longer.

SALLY: Take that with a grain of salt.

EMILY: Nynaeve then sees that the Aiel have arrived and anxious because she doesn't want to be left out, um, she goes to go to whatever meeting she knows that Rand will call with them. Um, just because I'm on the page with it, it is wild to me that Brandon has Nynaeve refer to Mat as "Matrim."

SALLY: Yeah, that was weird to me, too.

EMILY: And I think he consistently does that, but, like, Brandon, do the bare minimum of research in Nynaeve point of view. She has never referred to Mat as “Matrim” before.

SALLY: Yeah. Matrim.

EMILY: No one has.

SALLY: No one does. Literally no one does.

EMILY: Just Tuon, which just shows how insane and sociopathic she is [laughs].

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah.

EMILY: Anyway, Nynaeve goes to join this meeting. Rand is already there. They’re waiting on the Aiel representatives, mainly Rhuarc and Bael. Um, he kind of snaps at her. She’s – they do their usual snap at each other thing. Min’s of course there. People start showing up. Cadsuane, Bashere, whatever. Nynaeve realizes, “Oh, Aviendha’s with these Aiel” and tries to kind of take her aside to talk to her, but Aviendha’s like, “Ah, later.” Um, Rand is, like, “So, where are, where are the fucking results?” Rhuarc’s like, “You sent us into a complex, like, problem involving politics, the economy.”

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: A nearby war.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, the layers upon layers of complexity here are, I’m not, I’m not putting, I’m not putting the Aiel, I’m not putting myself down, Rhuarc says [laughs], by saying this is a little much for us.

SALLY: Yeah. Rand is ridiculous. Rand continues to be ridiculous throughout this scene. At the end Nynaeve is like, “Maybe Rand is a good leader after all.” And I’m like, “Rand is just, like, suggesting an occupation.”

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Of a, you know, of a country in chaos. It’s giving very much [laughs] the American military coming into, like, fix a warzone.

EMILY: The Middle East [laughs].

SALLY: Yeah! The Middle East, exactly. It’s giving very much like, “Wow, these people cannot govern themselves due to the unforeseen consequences of an actual invasion.”

EMILY: Yeah, Rand, have you considered that the situation in Arad Doman is, if not directly, pretty indirectly, because of you.

SALLY: Yeah! It's, it's just, it's really insensitive. I mean, number one, Rand is being incredibly unkind about the people of Arad Doman and about the Aiel. Rhuarc multiple times is like, "We're not the fucking police, basically."

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: He's like, "This is not what we do." And Rand, like a bad manager, is like, "I have full faith in you."

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah!

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Rand is like, "You guys have proven to me time and time again that you're the only people I can trust. Therefore, I'm going to overwork the shit out of you. And give you tasks that are not, like, within your bandwidth." And yeah, that's exactly bad management, being like, "I refuse to delegate to anyone other than my favorite few."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So, it, like, yeah. This is how this conversation goes. Rhuarc opens his mouth and Rand is like, "You guys are failing." And Rhuarch is like, "Okay, you didn't give me a chance to explain what's going on, what people – where the fucking king is. Hint: he's missing."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: "What the government is. The entire, like, legislative body has scattered."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: "Ituralde's at war. Just him [laughs], just Ituralde."

SALLY: Just Ituralde.

EMILY: "One guy against the Seanchan and that seems to be how it is. Everyone's starving. People are just, like, leaving their cities en masse because they're refugees." You know? And Rand's like, "Well, I don't care about any of that," until Cadsuane is like, "Could you maybe chill out for, like, a second?" And Rand's like, "You're right, Rhuarc. The only person I listen to, for some reason, is Cadsuane, so. I'll be nicer." [groans] Everyone sort of explains what's going on to Rand. So, like, he didn't really, like, bother gathering information before he yelled at everyone. Once he has the information, he makes this snap decision that he's like [sighs], "Okay, well, we can't just seize Arad Doman, because, um, it would take too many resources." Which is such a ludicrous statement, considering that Rand is here with [laughs] the Aiel, he's got his

Saldaean army, his Cairhienin army, his Tairen army, all of the Sea Folk converging on Arad Doman. Like, what other resources could there possibly be? Not that I'm advocating for a military occupation.

SALLY: No!

EMILY: But that is basically...dude what's the difference? Then he's like, "Okay, I want you to kidnap the legislative body," which are all women, by the way. "I just want you to kidnap them and force them to choose a king." Which, yeah, reeks of, like, Western meddling in foreign countries to force, quote unquote, democracy.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Which is really just chose the leader that we, the West, want.

SALLY: Yeah, that's friendly to the West.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: Western interests, I should say.

EMILY: Bashere's like, "It's bold," which is the only thing you can say about that [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah. Bashere, speaking of king of diplomacy over here.

EMILY: [laughing] Bashere's like, "That's...something."

SALLY: "That's...an idea that you had in your head."

EMILY: It would have been so iconic if he would have said, "That's, dot dot dot, interesting."

SALLY: Yeah. That's...interesting.

EMILY: Really? Really? That's...

SALLY: Really?

EMILY: That's your plan, okay!

SALLY: Let's, let's think on that for a second and circle back tomorrow.

EMILY: Yeah, and the Aiel are like, "We're not kidnap – like, we're not your fucking brute squad."

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: A la *The Princess Bride* [laughs]. I *am* the brute squad.

SALLY: I am the brute squad.

EMILY: And Rand's like, "You are what I say you are." And Rhuarc's like, "Okay, you're not our king, like, I know you are this weird position, but we get to do what we get to do." And it would have been so iconic if the Aiel just left at this point.

SALLY: I know. It would have been so good.

EMILY: They were just like, "No." And peaced out.

SALLY: Yeah. Rand is like, "I am changing the Aiel." Or whatever the fuck he says. And it's like, that's not a fucking excuse. Rhuarc should have got up and walked out.

EMILY: Rhuarc should have been like, "Okay. You don't respect me. I don't respect you."

SALLY: I'm taking my Stone Dogs, or whatever the fuck clan he leads.

EMILY: Yeah, I don't know. Why is it the only people, the only person willing to push back against Rand is Cadsuane. Like, when Rand is on the world stage with other world leaders.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, these are the people who should be on par with him and willing to, like, push back. And instead, we have this random old woman who's really Lanfear in disguise.

SALLY: Um, I also just like hate, hate, hate, hate, hate this plot. Not only because yeah, he's like, "Kidnap all the legislative body, select my puppet king. I'm also – you're also – I'm not saying – I'm not willing to do a full military occupation, but you are basically going to be a military occupation in towns enforcing laws."

EMILY: Yeah, he's like, "You'll enforce peace and then people will come to you." Because that's always what people do when there are armed militaries.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: He's like, "You intimidate people and that's a good thing," and I'm like, "When has that ever been a good thing?"

SALLY: Like, *what* on earth type of, literally, police logic is this?

EMILY: Yeah, it just reeks of American understanding of, like, law enforcement, the police state.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: You know, the military state, as though all of these are, like...you know, net goods rather than things that will negatively affect us in the long run.

SALLY: Yeah, and he's doing all of this – he's like, "My plan is to make peace in Arad Doman and therefore the Seanchan will be more friendly to me." That's his, like, end goal.

EMILY: Yeah, his end goal is to satisfy the Seanchan, which is horrific.

SALLY: Yeah. He's like, "I'll just occupy this country with – " With – and like –

EMILY: I'll take care of Ituralde so that the Seanchan don't have to worry about him anymore.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Because I am just pandering at this point.

SALLY: Yeah. I am truly, truly pandering. It is also, like...Rand is not willing to admit – like, he says the Aiel intimidate people, but he's not willing to admit that it is a fear tactic specifically to put the Aiel, of all people, there.

EMILY: And also that it's highly racialized.

SALLY: Yeah! Like, it's very much like, "I'm putting this racialized body of people that everyone in this entire continent is terrified of and hates."

EMILY: Yeah, as if that's not going to end up in hate crimes on one side or the other.

SALLY: Yeah. It's just, like, truly heinous. I also hate that, yeah, he's like, "We have to take care of Ituralde." And it's, like, Ituralde is the only one in this whole book with a fucking backbone.

EMILY: I know.

SALLY: Although, again, it's very iconic when Davram Bashere is like, "I would love to fight Ituralde." [laughs]

EMILY: Davram's like, "I wanna kiss Ituralde on the mouth." [laughing] Rand's like, "Could you keep it in your pants for five minutes?"

SALLY: And he's like, "No! Have you ever seen him? He wears a big ruby earring and he's like four-eleven."

EMILY: "No! I'm so horny for him! He's shorter than *me*. Can you imagine?"

SALLY: I know.

EMILY: Two short kings.

SALLY: It's so iconic.

EMILY: [laughs] Two and a half short kings.

SALLY: [laughing] Two and a half short kings.

EMILY: Um, anyway, Rand comes up with this entire policy decision in about three and a half minutes. So that's fun, but, you know, I bet it's realistic. I'm one hundred percent sure that's –

SALLY: I bet it's going to work.

EMILY: How they do it in the oval office.

SALLY: Yeah, Joe Biden's like, "What if we just kidnapped everyone in Russia?" [laughing] "That'll solve the problem."

EMILY: "That'll solve it, won't it?" [pages flipping] We then switch over to beloved point of view [laughing] character Siuan Sanche.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah, no notes. There's no notes you can give a Siuan point of view.

EMILY: God, I know. She's so great every single time. And yet another new chapter title. This one has mice, because Siuan thinks briefly about putting mice in Davram – no. [laughs] In Gareth Bryne's bed, because, like, you share a bedroom with him. Where do you think the mice would end up? It's the stupidest.

SALLY: She's – I feel like...

EMILY: I feel unhinged at how stupid she is.

SALLY: Yeah. I...

EMILY: Not just because of the mice thing. Just generally.

SALLY: No, I feel like...I don't know. I feel like Brandon is not doing very much justice to Siuan Sanche. I feel like he is leaning really hard into the infantile characteristics of her. Like, she's using even more nonsensical, um...exclamations, you know?

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: And literally everything is some type of fishing metaphor and, like, it just, it's Siuan via Brandon Sanderson is not working for me.

EMILY: Yeah. Wait until we get to Mat.

SALLY: [crying noises]

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [crying noises continue]

EMILY: It's all I'll say. Um, so yeah, Siuan starts us off with a lengthy weather metaphor. As though we –

SALLY: Another one.

EMILY: As though we couldn't get deeper into that one, and also as though to be [laughs] – the metaphor here is, you know what, cloudy skies? Hard to say what the weather's gonna be like.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: [laughing] She's like, "I'm a meteorologist. I took an entire severe and unusual weather class."

SALLY: And you know what? Clouds can either mean rain or not rain [laughs].

EMILY: [laughing] It's incredible!

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: "Grey clouds blotting out the sun, temperamental and sullen." Just clouds! Just clouds!

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Clouds are so scary. You never know what they're going to do. Just like women.

SALLY: Ugh, you're so right.

EMILY: Anyway, Siuan's in the rebel Aes Sedai camp following, trotting alone after Lelaine. Um, Siuan is all concerned because Lelaine, in the last few days, has really taken a couple steps up the hierarchical ladder, and she is doing this by maneuvering herself to be, like, Egg's main lieutenant.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So, she's enforcing all of Egg's decisions.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Siuan's like, "Which is obviously really bad. If Egg fails to...come back, because then Lelaine is perfectly set up to take over from her." Of course, then when she brings this up to Egwene herself later, Egwene's like, "Yeah, but I am going to come back, so then great. She just then has to move out of my way. She's set herself up to move out of my way, in fact. And if I don't come back, well, at least you guys have a leader, you know?"

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: "At that point, it's out of my hands." So, Siuan's nerves are a little silly. Or, at least that's how I [pages flipping] – I don't think we really need to linger on them.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: Siuan's goes back to her camp – her tent, I guess, which is the tent she shares with Gareth Bryne, mostly because she has, like, an appointment to meet with Egg in *tel'aran'rhiod* at a certain time, but she gets back and Gareth Bryne is there reading. She is, like, folding up shirts for him or whatever and they have this conversation where he's like, "Why don't you just tell me why you, why you made that promise to me when you knew you were going to break it?" She's like, "I didn't break it. You didn't specify a timeframe." It's just, like, we've been through all of this already and I'm realizing that we have heard a lot, or at least been intimated a lot about Siuan's relationship with Gareth Bryne, without necessarily being in her point of view for most of that. So, even if this is technically new ground for us, it really feels like it has been well turned over at this point. So, like, even him questioning her about what her purpose was here and her just being, like, giving the same answers that she's given all of us.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: Like, the readers, Egwene, everyone who asks, and him just being like, "That's not it. That's –" and I'm like, "What are you looking for here?" It makes –

SALLY: Her deepest, darkest secrets.

EMILY: Yeah, which she eventually gives him for some reason. Where she's like, "Yeah, I was present at this foretelling, where the Dragon Reborn was, you know, foretold, and everyone who heard that prophecy besides me and Moiraine got killed and tortured, so we just made it our mission to...gaslight, gatekeep, girlboss our way into getting the Dragon Reborn into power. Which, um, I mean, I consider an absolute win." [laughs]

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: No flaws in that plan.

EMILY: No notes. Yeah.

BOTH: No notes.

EMILY: The ways we went about it, wouldn't change a thing. It was all perfect, including my own stalling and near execution.

SALLY: That was part of the plan, baby, that was in my five-year plan.

EMILY: All part of it, baby! Moiraine dying, presumed dead, yes. All – we're all about it.

SALLY: Yeah, that was the project end goal.

EMILY: It was in my planner [laughs].

SALLY: [laughs] Friday, Moiraine dies.

EMILY: Moiraine dies.

SALLY: Frowny face.

EMILY: Ahhh [laughs]. Gareth Bryne's like, "Oh, finally I've uncovered the truth within truths here." And it's just, like, weird. I don't know. I don't know what was really setting me off about this. I think it was mostly that it felt so redundant at this point. We, the readers, aren't getting any new information for one thing.

SALLY: Yeah, one, I mean, one I would clock it as a little bit of bad writing, like, you don't – I know the book series is very long, but my memory is not that short. Like, I remember what Siuan is about, I remember why she made this dumb oath. What I don't need is to rehash it again and waste page space in a book that's, like, a thousand pages long.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: So, yeah. It bothered me, too.

EMILY: I think it's just meant to be like, "Look at how deep their relationship is getting." But Gareth and Siuan's relationship has always been surface level at best.

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: There has never been any indication that they have a) physical chemistry b) intellectual chemistry. They just have been getting on each other's nerves since day one.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: And sort of insisting that they are OTP.

SALLY: Yeah, I will give Brandon credit for doing a better job of playing that off as, like, at least by this point, a sort of, like, understood joke between the two of them.

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: That they're like, "We're teasing each other."

EMILY: Yeah.

SALLY: It feels a little bit more natural here than it has in the past.

EMILY: [laughs] Yeah, there's less...apparent anger and hatred.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah. So, I don't know. I guess Siuan revealing her deepest, darkest secrets was, like, a turning point for them and now they can just be blissfully wed.

EMILY: Yeah, I think it annoys me because Bryne has to badger her into it.

SALLY: Oh, yeah.

EMILY: It doesn't feel like any sort of...move forward in their relationship because Siuan basically just, like, breaks under pressure.

SALLY: Mm. Yeah.

EMILY: It's not like she's trusting him with this information out of, you know, a sense of their own trust between each other. And Gareth Bryne, by badgering her about it constantly, is basically being like, "I don't trust you."

SALLY: Mm-hmm.

EMILY: So, it's like, "What is the foundation on which you guys are built? Laundry?"

SALLY: Yes!

EMILY: That's terrible.

SALLY: Yeah.

EMILY: I mean, we all love that line in *Everything Everywhere All at Once*. I would have loved just doing laundry and taxes with you in another life. But, like, that's not the point. That doesn't really work here, because there is no foundation.

SALLY: Yeah, the point – I mean, I haven't even seen the movie, so maybe I should stop running my mouth, but the point is not the laundry [laughs] itself, the point is that, like, in fulfilling relationships...doing the mundane tasks of life feel really safe and lovely.

EMILY: Mm-hmm.

SALLY: You know? [laughing] It's not literally about doing laundry.

EMILY: It's not about the laundry!

SALLY: [laughing] I mean –

EMILY: Gareth Bryne and Sivan Sanche, let's run away and start a laundromat, which will inevitably succeed both as a *business* and as our marriage! Because of how much laundry Sivan has done in Bryne's presence.

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: They haven't even done it together.

SALLY: Yeah, he's not doing anything.

EMILY: Yeah. Typical man [flips page].

SALLY: Yeah, can't trust them for anything. Fucking useless.

EMILY: [laughs] So, Sivan goes and meets Egg. They chat for a little bit. Um, there's a very, um, convoluted thing here about them talking about where exactly the *angreal* stores are kept. This will be relevant later in the book. It's a little ham fisted that it got shoved in here. I would have just believed that Egg knew where they were.

SALLY: Yeah, like Sivan would have told her at some point in the Amyrlin training.

EMILY: Yeah. Like that just would have been pretty basic early on. But Brandon Sanderson is trying to be like, "Look! No plot holes here."

SALLY: At least he's trying. I don't think Robert Jordan cared that much.

EMILY: [giggles]

SALLY: [laughs]

EMILY: Robert Jordan didn't believe in character arcs or coherent plot. And Brandon Sanderson, for all his foibles, believes in both those things.

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah.

EMILY: Um, and that's it, I guess.

SALLY: Ye.

EMILY: There's not, like, a lot to talk about. There's a lot to complain about, I guess. But mostly just that we're still breaking in the new writer here. I think a lot of my problem with Brandon – I was thinking on this last night – I think a lot of my problem with Brandon Sanderson in these books specifically...um, is that he feels much more, um...he feels – seems to be talking down to us much more than he does in his, his own books.

SALLY: Mm. Mm. Interesting.

EMILY: He seems to view the audience for his own books as, uh, a very clever, like, nerdy audience. The type of people who will care about the multiverse that he's crafting in the background. And to have done the research and to put it all – put all the puzzle pieces together. Whereas, with *Wheel of Time* I don't know if he thinks the audience is just overall dumber [laughs], which is kind of a sick burn. Or what. Or if he just didn't know how to do his usual thing without his usual characters.

SALLY: Mm.

EMILY: But it really just feels like he's being like, "I can't trust these people to put two and two together." And that gets a little grating.

SALLY: Yeah. Absolutely. I've made it through, at this point, eleven other *Wheel of Time* books, which are very dense and, I mean, I *personally* have not kept track – kept track of everything, because I am not good at that, but I know there are people who are extremely at that and love doing that for the *Wheel of Time*, so.

EMILY: Well, and you can follow the plot in a *book* without being –

SALLY: Yeah, that's true.

EMILY: "I'm keeping track of where Black Ajah Number 98 is at all times."

SALLY: You're so right, Emily. Thank you for building me back up.

EMILY: [laughs] You're welcome.

SALLY: [laughs] I don't need know where any member of the Black Ajah is at this point. I don't – if I fucking see Liandrin again.

EMILY: UGH. I'll die. I'll drop dead.

SALLY: [laughs] Yeah.

EMILY: Okay. Next on the docket we are getting what I believe might be the one and only Perrin point of view in this book.

SALLY: Hallelujah.

EMILY: And a refreshing Perrin point of view it is, as he is just doing non-violent things for a while.

SALLY: Nice. Good job, Perrin.

EMILY: We then get the exciting meeting between Ituralde and Rand.

SALLY: Nice.

EMILY: Before finally getting what I believe is the cover scene, you know? Why is Rand standing with his fist raised in front of this hole in the wall and Barbie Aviendha.

SALLY: This Barbie is a Wise One.

EMILY: This Barbie is insufferable.

SALLY: And this is just Ken [laughs].

EMILY: And he's just Ken.

SALLY: [laughing]

EMILY: Oh, the memes.

SALLY: I know I'm really obsessed with every meme that comes out of the Barbie movie.

EMILY: Yeah, it's gonna be great.

SALLY: I know I cannot wait.

EMILY: It's coming out on Devin's birthday.

SALLY: [gasps]

EMILY: He's like [laughing], "My gift from Greta Gerwig."

SALLY: My gift to me personally. Well, what day of the week is it do you know? We should all take it off and go see *Barbie* [laughs].

EMILY: We really all should.

SALLY: Have to do the pink 'fits.

EMILY: Four tickets for *Barbie* please!

SALLY: Four tickets for *Barbie*, please.

EMILY: Okay. But hey, thanks for listening.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song. Thanks to our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

SALLY: Yeah!

EMILY: Anything to add?

SALLY: I don't think so.

EMILY: Cool. Do you have a sign off?

SALLY: No.

EMILY: Hmm.

SALLY: I'm thinking.

EMILY: I should have one from my exciting weekend trip.

SALLY: [laughs] Well, Emily was gone this weekend on a trip to visit her, uh, sweet grandfather. And I got a text from her sister that was like –

EMILY: [laughs]

SALLY: [laughs] “We sent – Emily volunteered to go to the grocery store for all of us and she's been gone for *hours*.”

EMILY: [laughs] My sister, notorious exaggerator.

SALLY: I know. I was like, “If this was from anyone else from Sarah I would be, like, a little bit legitimately worried that something had happened to Emily.” But I was like, “I assume [laughs] it's fine.”

EMILY: [laughs] Sarah's just making fun of me.

SALLY: [laughing] Yeah.

EMILY: And she was! I just needed some alone time and it was *one hour*. Not hours.

SALLY: No, it was so funny. I was like, “Maybe she’s just taking the scenic route.” And Sarah was like, “More like the introverted route.” [laughs]

EMILY [laughing] Sarah can’t talk. You don’t even want to know how many times Sarah cried [laughing].

SALLY: That’s relatable. She’s just like me.

EMILY: All right, everyone. Goodbye!

SALLY: Bye!