



Episode 242: Banner v. No Banner: Dawn of Justice  
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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. This is Everybody Hates Rand, your friendly neighborhood Wheel of Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I'm Sally Goodger.

Emily: Got another three chapters today. Another short, pointless three chapters. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, they're very weird chapters.

Emily: Yeah, we're – got some weird things going on. Uh, we first have a Perrin point of view, um, which as I referenced is either the only one or maybe one of two in this book.

Sally: Hmm.

Emily: Um, and deals with the immediate, shall we say, aftermath of, um, Malden and Perrin's new task of having to deal with now having a lot of refugees, um, that he is responsible for or considers himself responsible for.

Sally: Yeah, apparently a hundred thousand people.

Emily: A hundred thousand. Again, truly astounding numbers from Robert Jordan and company.

Sally: Yeah, I – like, that's so many people.

Emily: It's like an entire – it's like a Midwestern city.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That's a lot of people. Yeah. It's hard to think about.

Sally: And, again, we'll get into this, but last week, we were talking about the sort of isolationist stance that everyone is taking, and Perrin is like, "How am I gonna feed these people?" and not once does he think, "Hey, you know who's responsible for most of the continent at this point?"

Emily: (laugh) “My good old friend Rand.”

Sally: “My good old friend Rand.”

Emily: “Whose dad I’m standing next to saying the most unhinged things about his son to him.”  
Like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Yeah, Rand is just collecting countries like they’re game pieces.” And I’m like, Perrin, maybe be sensitive to – (laugh)

Sally: Maybe be a little bit nicer. Like, I agree that Rand is a dictator and a freak, but, um –

Emily: Like, maybe his dad isn’t the person to voice that to.

Sally: Voice these opinions to.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um –

Sally: Whatever. Perrin’s looking at fucking wagons.

Emily: Yeah, he’s like, “I can’t – we can’t Travel because the Asha’man are so burned out that they physically cannot Travel anymore,” and I’m like, you’re telling me – like, yes, I believe you that they are so tired that they cannot try – they can’t open a gateway large enough for your entire – for one hundred thousand refugees to get through –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or even Alliandre and her honor guard, which is what Arganda is so upset about at the beginning of this. But I feel like you could let Grady or Neald go looking for Rand.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And, like, report the situation to him.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And see if maybe, oh, suddenly there’s a whole lot of other channelers who could get involved here.

Sally: Many.

Emily: Many.

Sally: In fact. I also believe that both Grady and Neald would jump at the chance to leave.

Emily: They’d be like, “Oh, really? Oh, worm? Get me out of here.”

Sally: Oh, worm? They're fistfighting currently for the opportunity.

Emily: No, well, they're too weak to fistfight. It would be the most intense rock, paper, scissors match – (laugh)

Sally: I also fully –

Emily: Of all time.

Sally: I don't believe that, um, Grady would lose a fight against Neald. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah, you're right. Neald is a – is a dandy. (laugh) And Grady's a farmer.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: He'd just one-punch-kill him. That's what I think is fun about some of the Asha'man –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is I think we should have more situations where they're in a stedding or whatever, and everyone's like, "We've nerfed them," and Grady just punches someone in the face, like –

Sally: Grady's like, "Whatever."

Emily: "I did work a day job before this –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "That made me incredibly physically strong."

Sally: Yeah. Some of us had jobs.

Emily: Yeah, some of us had lives prior to this.

Sally: Some of us –

Emily: Unlike Neald, who's sixteen or whatever and a little – a little baby gay.

Sally: Just a little baby.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Baby – delicate man running around.

Emily: Just discovering fashion.

Sally: Good for him.

Emily: Anyway, the structure of this chapter is that Perrin is inspecting a line of wagons while he is having people come up – take turns coming up to him to voice their needs or complaints. This is a slight, um, you know, alteration of the format that we've been getting in many Perrin points of view prior to this –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Where the chapters are just him, you know, having these almost little vignette conversations with these people –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Generally the same people represented here.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's constantly having to deal with Arganda and, um, Gallenne, who's the – oh, hi, Ed – who's Arganda's counterpoint from Mayene. He's constantly having to deal with Balwer, blah blah blah blah.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Anyway, again we get an example of somewhat condescending mediation here wherein we're told pretty blatantly that what Perrin's doing here is conflict avoidance.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, he's having a lot of feelings about having Faile back, and he doesn't want to confront any of them.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: He's also realizing that he fucked up a whole lot in the sort of lead-up to getting Faile back and that he let a lot of people down, including Aram.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: It's nice to see him acknowledge that, except that what we are dealing with is him just him saying, "I acknowledge that and refuse to do anything about it."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, "Because I can't process it." And while that's somewhat realistic, and Perrin's conflict avoidance style is certainly realistic, I'm pretty aggravated at how blatantly we're told –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That that's what he's doing. Like, look, I'm not a genius, but I could figure that out on myself – on my own.

Sally: Yeah, again, it – it's hard to do this without pulling out another book, which, again I logistically could do, but it's so far across the room. Um, Perrin is another character – we talked about, um – last week I think it was, um, Siuan – or the week before – who felt, like, very mishandled in the Brandon Sanderson narration style. She just did not feel quite right to me. I'm experiencing the same thing with Perrin when reading these chapters. Like, he just feels like a

fundamentally different character in a way, and I think part of that is the way that he is telling us –

Emily: Everything.

Sally: Everything. It's the same with Rand. Like, Perrin's never been a particularly introspective – like, he's a very introspective character, of course – that's, like, one of his main traits: thinks through things – but we're not typically going along for the ride with him in the best of my recollection.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Um, so, yeah, it just feels – it felt strange to me to be told so much – so much about what Perrin was feeling. Maybe we'll get, like, a one-off line or something in the past, but it felt weird. And, yeah, like, I get it.

Emily: It just feels to me quite, um, ironic, um, on a meta-level to have someone who's saying, "I can't talk about these things" be totally willing to talk about them to us in his narration.

Sally: Yes. Sure, sure.

Emily: Like, it's nice when points of view, um, are fundamentally compatible with characters' communication styles verbally.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And, like, who they are with other people. And that's something I sort of, you know, appreciate. So, yeah, when we have – I think that's something that we're getting at here, is that while Rand and Perrin, for example, are pretty, like, introspective characters and prone to melancholy, that's generally not something that they're like, "Wow, I'm sure having a bout of depression right now –"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or, "Wow, obviously what I'm doing here is this psychological coping mechanism," 'cause, for another thing, most people aren't usually aware that they're doing that.

Sally: Yeah, like, if you're that far deep in a coping mechanism, it's typically not a conscious thing. Not to say that's not the case for everybody –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But it's like, Perrin is obviously not doing well in this chapter.

Emily: Yeah, it's just like we're having a clash of the omniscient narrator that is inherent in third person point of views –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Um, and, like, actually being with these characters, if that makes sense.

Sally: No, totally. Another – like, another example we – we’ve pointed out many times in the past is, like, with Mat. Um, Mat is a character who’s always, like, moving forward –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And that’s, like, very – like, form and content match itself really well with that because Mat is just, like, running through his list. He’s not really ever pausing in his narration.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: You know, he’s just, like, moving through the day, constantly doing the next thing, surprising us with things that he’s doing –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Suddenly having a plan. You know, like the way that his narration moves matches that he’s a quick thinker, very action-oriented, often does things without thinking them through.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: So.

Emily: Mr. Impulse.

Sally: Yeah. Not to be like, Mat – not to be, like, on my Mat pedestal, as always.

Emily: Oh, you will be struck down –

Sally: I know.

Emily: From the Mat pedestal in just a few short chapters.

Sally: I know. I’m staying up here as long as I can.

Emily: So savor it – savor it while you still can. (laugh) Look down below you. The floor is lava.

Sally: Oh. That’s true; it literally is lava. Pretty soon.

Emily: It’s pretty – pretty terrible. Uhm, but, yeah, Perrin’s – all Perrin’s doing is talking to these people the way he always talks to them, which is that they’re coming up and being like, “I have a problem,” and he’s like, “Too bad.”

Sally: Yeah, it’s really great problem – it’s really great leadership. Perrin is also being like, “I’m such a shit leader,” and then just being like –

Emily: “But I refuse to do anything to change that in this moment.”

Sally: He’s like, “I’m not gonna try and, you know, adjust to solution-oriented thinking rather than problem-oriented thinking the way I have been –”

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: “For years.”

Emily: To be fair – to be totally fair to Perrin and unbiased, the people are coming to him with some pretty stupid questions.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: Um, Arganda is like, “Can I please start moving with Alliandre?” and Perrin’s like, “That’s a bad idea; we need to all march together.”

Sally: Sure.

Emily: And it’s like, yeah, that is a bad idea – would you rather have Alliandre kidnapped again the way she was when it was just her and, you know, twenty guys?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or would you rather stay with this giant group? Obviously. Gallenne is like, “We should attack the force of Aiel that is now –” that we had referenced in Knife of Dreams that was sort of coming and is now sort of irrelevant; I don’t know what they’re doing. As far as I recall, they don’t come back in this plot – they’re just there.

Sally: Nice, nice.

Emily: Which is super weird. But there’s another group of Aiel, um, and Perrin has elected to not fight them because they have stopped and seem not to want to fight Perrin.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And Perrin’s like, “Yeah, between fighting and not fighting, I would rather not fight.”

Sally: Not fight.

Emily: And Gallenne is like, “We should fight,” and Perrin’s like, “Terrible idea; have you noticed that we just fought a very big battle and are still recovering from that? And although it seems like we have a lot of people, most of those people are refugees.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So obviously not going to do that. Then we have Balwer come up and just sort of say, like, “Hey, I don’t like – now – I’m voicing this now, for some reason, instead of when I should have earlier – that I don’t like that we gave all of the, uh, Shaido Wise Ones to the Seanchan.” And Perrin’s like, “I mean, well, it’s done; what do you want to do?” and Balwer’s like, “I just think that we could get, like, way more information out of them because, you know, I’m your spymaster and blah blah blah blah, I just like getting information out of people,” and Perrin’s like, “They’re literally somewhere else now.” Balwer’s like, “Well, could we call them?” and Perrin’s like – or, I, Emily, at least, am like, Balwer, if we could just call people up on the phone, we’d be – we’d be a lot – in a much better situation than we are now.

Sally: Yeah, I mean, we basically do have telephones and people aren’t using them, so.

Emily: Yeah, I mean, to be fair. But, like –

Sally: But, yeah, like, if what's-her-name, Tylee, just had the – a Motorola Razor that she could just flip open whenever Perrin calls ... yeah, I am always inclined to, like, be like, Balwer's doing his best 'cause I love him so much, and it's like, I fully don't believe Perrin would have listened if he voiced this before –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But I agree, like, he's voicing it when it is impossible to do anything. It also, of course, bothers me that his reasoning is, like, "We could get information from them," not "You shouldn't have given them over as slaves to the Seanchan."

Emily: Yeah, Balwer's not making a moral stand here.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's just being like – it's sort of like Brandon Sanderson's being like, "Hey, reminder: Balwer's here, and he's the guy who likes to get information out of people."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "So here's a convoluted reason for me to remind you of that." When it's like, Balwer's clever –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He would know that this isn't really a solvable problem.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He presents Perrin with a lot of information, but that's generally his role, is to provide information, not to provide problems.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or unsolvable problems.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And to be fair to Baler, what he's often doing is setting things up for us –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Is being like, "Here's information I have that will become prescient in the future, such as, hey, maybe we should be worried about the Whitecloaks."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, um, that's not really the case here. I don't think that the Shaido Wise Ones who have been taken captive are ever relevant again, which is to no one's credit.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, you're so right: it is out of character for him. Oh, well.



Emily: Oh, well. Um, we get a weird thing here where we find out that Perrin is off the timeline. Perrin is fully in the past, as opposed to –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Other people.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because he has a vision of Rand and sees Rand pretty – we're given to understand that Rand is in, um, that manor house he was in in Tear.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: He still has both hands.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So it's prior to the Semirhage attack.

Sally: Yeah, and isn't this, like, literally the day after Malden?

Emily: This is, like, a couple days after Malden –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Or something like that. So, yeah, we're now dealing with two very separate timelines here, or maybe even three; we don't really know what the timeline on Egg is, for example.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: So that's just making these things very confusing, and I don't really know why it's happening. Like, why Perrin is suddenly – (laugh)

Sally: In the past?

Emily: Like – yeah. What's going on here?

Sally: Yeah, like –

Emily: I don't know if, like, Brandon did some math and was like, "This isn't adding up."

Sally: "This doesn't make sense." Which is, like, that's totally fair. Like, if you're dealing with this many characters, sometimes timelines aren't going to add up. And this is, like, one instance where it's, like, giving your readers more information would be helpful. Like, if it had something like "Two weeks ago" or whatever, you know –

Emily: Yeah. Yeah.

Sally: As a header on Perrin. Like, that feels like spoon-feeding information when really that's just, like, scaffolding –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: That helps me understand what's going on versus, like, spoon-feeding me that Perrin is avoiding talking to his wife.

Emily: Yeah. And also, like, Perrin being timeline discrepancy number one here is, like, um, irrelevant unless he's going to be interacting with people on the, quote, main timeline.

Sally: Mm.

Emily: And since Perrin is not going to be interacting with Rand, Mat, Egwene, anyone, for another book and a half, it really doesn't matter.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It really just feels like it's just Brandon Sanderson being like, "Look, I noticed all your Reddit threads about how the timeline doesn't match up."

Sally: At least he's noticing.

Emily: At least – yeah, I guess.

Sally: At least someone's keeping track of it, 'cause I sure can't, Brandon.

Emily: I – I would never have known. I would have just been like, sure. Everyone's been doing shit-all for the last seven books, so what do I care about the timelines?

Sally: Yeah, the attack on Malden probably happened on the same day Semirhage attacked Rand. What do I know?

Emily: Yeah, sure, why not? They're ta'veren. All these things would happen at the same time.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Then Tam comes up to Perrin and is like, "Hey, just wanted to let you know: we're all good to go." And Perrin's like, "Ugh, finally. Someone competent around here." He shouts this so that all of the other people can –

Sally: Yeah. Loser.

Emily: Can hear him. Um, and Tam's like, "Yeah, so we're ready to go," and Perrin's like, "Great, then let's start going." Like, this is such a huge mass of people that, you know, the end of the line is not going to catch up to the beginning of the line –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: By the time the march halts. It's that's – that's stupid.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Stupid big. Perrin also has a brief interaction with Aravine, who was Faile's sort of right-hand logistics woman on the inside, um, of Malden, who is also basically just, like, "Yeah, everyone's ready to go." So they start going. And Perrin just keeps being like, "Ah, there's Faile,

off in the distance. I really thought things were going to be perfect and like a fairy-tale when we get back together, but it turns out that it's not." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, which is, like, some groundbreaking thought from Perrin Aybara, um, legendary thinker of his time. It's also, like – Perrin then makes, like, an incredibly offensive, like, comparison to when he was a child –

Emily: Getting a Christmas present.

Sally: Getting a Christmas present –

Emily: And I love how Brandon Sanderson wrote this and then copied and deleted "Christmas" and pasted "Winternight," which is fantasy Christmas, I guess.

Sally: Yeah, fantasy Christmas present, and it's like, so you – you are just making it obvious that you think your wife is a present that you needed to get back. That – a toy that somebody stole from you.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So that one was ...

Emily: Rough to deal with.

Sally: Really fun. And, like –

Emily: It's just a terrible metaphor. Like, the truth in there, that Perrin was so focused on a goal –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That he didn't pause, really, to think about what the actual aftermath would be like or consider realistically, in those terms, what it would be like – like, there's a truth to that. But by framing it as "Christmas present," you are then framing Faile as "present" –

Sally: As present.

Emily: Which is just so many layers of awful –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Especially given what Faile has been through in terms of having possessive men all over her for the last few books.

Sally: Uh-huh.

Emily: It's just gnarly.

Sally: It's just – it is really gnarly. And it takes the, like – I dunno, for me it takes the, like, power and legitimacy out of the feeling of being like, "Something happened that I was expecting for a long time, and it's not quite what I expected." That's very realistic.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: And fine.

Emily: People have that all the time.

Sally: Yeah, every day.

Emily: Every day of my life –

Sally: Every day.

Emily: I wake up expecting my day to go a certain way and then it doesn't.

Sally: And then people send me emails. (laugh)

Emily: Yeah. (laugh) And then I get that email.

Sally: Not to be, like, a fucking loser who makes jokes about getting emails on the internet all the time, but I hate – every time I receive an email, I go a little bit more insane. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: And it's never-ending. Anyway, Perrin is not receiving emails, um, or phone calls, nor is he sending phone calls to Rand, being like, "Can you help me feed a hundred thousand people?"

Emily: He's also like, "Rand clearly needs me." Like, he's fearing – feeling that ta'veren pull –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: To get them back together, which he and Mat are basically going to be suffering for the next two and a half books.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like – he's like, "Rand needs me," and I'm like, okay, you have the tools right here to get in contact with Rand.

Sally: Just let Grady and Neald take a good nap and then send them off.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Yeah, the other, like, running undercurrent of this is Perrin being like, "I don't need to be a lord anymore," and Tam being like, "You can't just, like, not – there are, like, a lot of people who follow you and want to continue following you."

Emily: Yeah, you can't, like, unelect yourself from the presidency.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Sorry, but these things happen.

Sally: Yeah. And Perrin is like, "Mehhhhhh."

Emily: “Mehhhh. I’m just gonna keep complaining about it.” And I’m like, goddamnit, I really hoped we’d gotten over this by now, but this is the new ax vs hammer – ax v. hammer.

Sally: Banner v. no banner.

Emily: Dawn of – dawn of justice. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) Dawn of justice. He does reference his stupid fucking hammer in this.

Emily: I know, I’m gonna fucking murder him.

Sally: Okay. Anyway, next we’re in the weirdest Ituralde point of view –

Emily: I know.

Sally: That’s ever happened in the history of time.

Emily: Yeah, we’re in a – we’re in an Ituralde, uh, Brandon-flavor Ituralde chapter. Um, which is where Ituralde, several weeks or so after we last saw him – again, we’re getting some real timeline shenanigans here – but Ituralde and his men, update, have more or less been backed into a corner. Ituralde considers their current position to be the place of their last stand –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And that’s something he’s dealing with, is, like, his subordinates are being like, “Are we gonna keep moving?” And Ituralde just being like, “No, because there isn’t a better – we’re not gonna find a better position than this one.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And our – really our only hope now is some sort of miracle reinforcements, which we’re not likely to get because, um, many of the forces that we had at the beginning are dead or have since sort of scurried back to their hidey-holes. Arad Doman itself is a mess. Apparently there’s an army of Aiel there now, and no one knows what that’s about. The king’s missing.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Blah blah blah blah blah. Um, we do get the unfortunate reminder that Ituralde has been doing all this on, quote, King Alsalam’s orders, which is pretty transparently Graendal.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Um, to sow chaos, I guess, but it’s quite hilarious that Graendal’s evil plan has just been like, this net-good thing.

Sally: Yeah. Don’t let the Seanchan take Arad Doman.

Emily: Yeah. It’s kind of like how Semirhage’s evil plan was to kill the entire Seanchan royal family.

Sally: Yeah. (laugh)

Emily: You're like, I don't know, man, maybe keep – maybe keep working.

Sally: Maybe keep doing it.

Emily: I kind of want to see where it goes, you know?

Sally: Yeah. It's got some promising results.

Emily: Um, anyway, that's just, like, a little disappointing for personal reasons. I don't really like having monarchist characters. I recognize that there is a sort of, like, classical trope there –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: In the “loyal general to beloved monarch” type thing going on that's a little, I dunno, Shakespearean, in a way, but, um, it was – it – it was a lot – this hit a lot better when it was just, like, Ituralde doing this sort of thing on his own.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Being like, “I'm gonna stick it to the Seanchan 'cause no one else is fucking stepping up.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And I was like, “Yeah, babe.”

Sally: Yeah, babe.

Emily: Do it.

Sally: You look great right now.

Emily: Zaddy.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I had completely forgotten that the king of Arad Doman even had a name.

Emily: Yeah, because I don't – he's probably been named twice prior to this.

Sally: Yeah. Um, so yeah, it's – the monarchist thing is also hammered home a little bit too hard here for me in general.

Emily: Yeah. I don't – looking ahead, I suppose, there's a, quote, nice moment, unquote, where Rand manages to find King Alsalam and reunite him with Ituralde. That's not, like, a plot point – it's more or less, like, like an off-screen thing. But that does not change the course of the narrative in any way or, really, Ituralde's characterization, so personally I think Alsalam should've just remained MIA or dead.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because he wasn't a character to begin with, so him going missing is irrelevant. I think the only reason to have him back is so Brian – Brian? (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Brandon – (laugh) is so Brandon could have his sort of, um, Avengers assemble moment of having all of the monarchs of the nation briefly together before the Last Battle, which is a very boring scene that we'll get into in that book. Um, but yeah, I just think Alsalam should have been dead and, uh, Arad Doman should have figured out a different government, and that would've been interesting, and Ituralde should've just been Ituralde.

Sally: Yeah, I mean, I agree. I – I also just think this whole chapter is extremely heavy-handed. I do not like the way this chapter is constructed. Um –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: I know it's supposed to be, like, ta'veren shit. We'll get into that. But, um, it also feels like at this point, even if he was originally fighting on Alsalam's – Absalom – whatever the clown's name is – his orders, at some point, like, Ituralde is a logical person who would've just, like, picked up this battle himself. Whatever. I'm done. Done harping on this point.

Emily: So Rand shows up just sort of randomly and is like, "I'm the Dragon Reborn, and I need you to go do some shit, and here, I can prove I'm the Dragon Reborn by channeling, and if I prove it to you, will you do all this shit?" And obviously what happens here, we know, is sort of the force of ta'veren working.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In that Ituralde just sort of immediately is like, "Yeah, sure. A, I believe you're the Dragon Reborn, even though I don't really have any reason to."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "B, um, yeah, I'll just abandon my post here and believe you that you're going to help Arad Doman despite the fact that you have mostly done bad things in other countries. C, I will take my entire army to the Borderlands? To fight?"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "Because the Borderlanders aren't there? D, maybe I'll be the king of Amadicia?"

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That one is real random.

Sally: Yeah, that – that is the, like – yeah.

Emily: The icing on the cake of ridiculousness.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is Rand, just sort of unhinged, being like, "By the way, I need someone to be a monarch in Amadicia," a country that he has never been to, as far as I know? (laugh)

Sally: He's just –

Emily: Has never shown interest in prior to this? Again, this is going back to Brandon's Avengers assemble thing –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He just desperately wants a monarch because he needs some sort of, like, I don't know, logic in this world, which I respect – everything is unhinged –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And we just need – if we're going to be a monarchist continent, let's be a monarchist continent. But also, Amadicia?

Sally: And Ituralde?

Emily: And Ituralde, a country Ituralde does not belong to? It's wild. And Ituralde, instead of being like, "What the fuck are you talking about?" is just like, "Yeah, I guess, if you don't kill the guy who's currently king there. If it's just an empty seat." Which is such character assassination –

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: Of Ituralde –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Who has told us many times that he's out of retirement and doesn't want to be.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah, the whole thing is ridiculous. The whole – and also, it's – it's just like, if you want to set him up as, like, loyal to a monarch, you cannot then have him be like, "I will become a different monarch." That just, like, totally tanks this loyalist general – this loyal general trope.

Emily: It's so wild.

Sally: It's so weird. And also, Rand, like, your whole plan is to get the Merchant Council to enact – elect a new fucking king of Arad Doman, so if you're gonna put Ituralde in another country –

Emily: Why –

Sally: Why not just make him the king of Arad Doman? (laugh)

Emily: It's wild. And you're like –

Sally: I don't understand.

Emily: Is Rand insane right now? I get that that's – here's the problem – here's – here's where it becomes – you know, we've been having this sort of, like, ballerina pirouetting throughout –

Sally: Ahh.



Emily: B-plot throughout this series –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like, “Is Rand insane? Yes or no?” You know, one of those “Do you like me?” (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, yes or no.

Emily: “Check yes or no.” And there’s supposed to be this sort of inherent tension there.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And the tension is supposed to be because Rand is hearing voices, Rand sometimes is a little unhinged, blah blah blah blah. But generally speaking, Rand interacts with people in a normal way.

Sally: Yeah, he’s generally got a solid sense of reality.

Emily: He’s an unpleasant person at this point to be around, but people are more or less like, “I see where your logic is.”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: He has logic – yeah, he has an understanding of reality. And we are now at the point where it’s like, okay, Rand’s sanity, parenthetical question mark –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Should’ve been put on hold after the cleansing of saidin, because as he tells Ituralde, people didn’t become un-insane after saidin was cleansed, but all progression on that – regression on that front has paused.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So. Rand suddenly here being like, “I am unhinged from reality on some salient points” is like, yo, the tension no longer flies here.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Now it’s just bad writing.

Sally: Yeah, and we’ve talked about – again, not to repeat everything – we’ve talked about this before – that it’s like, when Rand does these types of things, like, being like, “I’m gonna make Ituralde the king of Amadicia,” that feels disconnected from reality. That feels like he is operating from a place of questionable sanity. Never feel like choices on the author’s behalf to make us question them. They always just feel like – yeah, Rand is just going through his normal life – you’ll know when he’s having a psychotic episode because he’ll be talking to people. And it’s just like, okay?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: But, like, he's – like, if he's dealing with insanity, he's always dealing with it. I just – I'm not explaining myself very well. It just feels like a very poor depiction –

Emily: No, it's like –

Sally: Of –

Emily: There are – there are mechanisms for writing in which to make readers question –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: What a person is going through. The classic example, at least in my mind, is the ending of Inception –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: We have a world that has been built and a mythology to make us think “Wha-?” at the end.

Sally: Sure.

Emily: That has not really been built; those rules have not been followed here.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: So when Rand acts weird now, it's not, you know, the top spinning, it's just Rand acting weird –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: With no sort of framework for what that means.

Sally: Yeah. And, like, the only framework we get for him having a break with reality is talking to somebody who isn't there. Which is like, yep, sure.

Emily: Agreed. Break with reality. But, like, maybe not, now?

Sally: Yeah, but maybe, like – but, like, what am I supposed to do with all these other situations –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Where he is not acting in a rational way? Am I just supposed to believe that Rand is being weird? I – ugh. You're right. There's no framework built for understanding anything. So it – this is just, like, an out-of-left-field ridiculous thing to say, and as much as it gets exhausting to go through Rand's point of view and have everyone just, like, agreeing to what he says, I think this is all worse from Ituralde's point of view because it just, like – yeah, it feels like character assassination for Ituralde.

Emily: Yeah, I think there is the bones of what could have been a really interesting chapter here. Because Ituralde is acting so out of character and we're given this, like, mechanism to understand that he's acting out of character, not because of bad writing –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Although that's a possibility in real life –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, like, in-world, there's a reason for Ituralde –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To be acting out of character, and it's that Rand is ta'veren. But we don't get any sort of, um, understanding of that on Ituralde's part. Ituralde a couple of times is like, "What am I doing?"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But we don't get Ituralde doing what could have been really interesting, which is telling us or expressing in some way, "This is a huge violation of me."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "My agency. Like, I'm agreeing to things here that I haven't even thought about, that when I've thought about them I don't like."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: "I'm agreeing to bring my army to a place when my army has not had any say in the matter."

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And it's just like, this is hugely fucked up, but we're just sort of meant to – it's framed as though Rand is just moving chess pieces. But, like, how do the chess pieces feel, you know?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And this was a chapter that could have answered that and instead was just like, "Nope, they're just chess pieces."

Sally: Yep, they just –

Emily: Ituralde is a shallow character with no depth.

Sally: Yeah, which is – like, you're so right, it's so interesting to think about the way that the ta'veren mechanism is a violation. Um, and Rand has never seemed to thought – think – have a single thought about that. Um, not to just dunk on Rand the whole time. So that would've been really interesting. I think it also would've been really interesting for Rand to meet Ituralde, a character who has, like, a very strong will –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: And, like, what – what if he had been able to resist a little bit? I think that would've been really interesting.

Emily: I'm so sorry to tell you this, but that does happen later in this book, but not with Ituralde: with Tuon.

Sally: Oh.

Emily: So – oh, Sally's leaving the room. Oh, no. I have to finish on my own. (laugh)

Sally: That's disgusting to me. That's despicable to me.

Emily: I know, I agree. The, like – I feel like up until this point, the closest we've gotten to understanding that, like, what Rand is doing is bad on a sort of, like, fate-moving-people-around –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is inherently unpleasant for the people it's moving around way –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is Mat's sort of pushback to everything that's going on. To a lesser extent, Perrin.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But, like, Mat is more cognizant of the effect that Rand has on people because he has his own sort of weird effects on people –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Rand is constant – I mean, excuse me, Mat is constantly fighting it. Yeah, but yeah, I don't think the narrative at any point, almost up until this point, has been like, "What ta'veren do is inherently a sort of act of violence." We're meant to understand it as, like, oh, the people making these wild agreements or deciding to do these things are – always end up happy in their decisions.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Or this is something that they would have done anyway, and we're just cutting out all of the extra time it would have taken them to get there.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But what's happening with Ituralde here is so out of left field –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That it doesn't make any sense, especially knowing with foresight that what Ituralde is about to go through in the Borderlands is fucking hell on Earth. Like –

Sally: Oh, no.

Emily: Credit to Brandon for writing a really good, like, battle sequence and having Ituralde be in a really realistically, like, traumatizing experience with his army, but, like, it's wild that Ituralde then comes out of that the other end and is not like, "I hate the Dragon Reborn."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "I hate everything about this."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But we'll get into that more, I think, when we start getting into those Ituralde point of views.

Sally: Yeah, that sounds very interesting. Um, so yeah, this just all felt very unsatisfying to me. It also felt extremely rushed. It's like, we need to get Ituralde on Rand's chessboard as quickly as possible, and therefore –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: We're not actually paying any, like, homage to the type of character he is, his actual, like, character – internal character – the way –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: That I think he could have responded to this in some interesting ways. Um, I don't think the choice of it being in Ituralde's point of view was a good one. Like, compare this to the Sea Folk scene in book seven, I think? When –

Emily: Yeah, something like that.

Sally: Min – or maybe book six, I can't remember –

Emily: No, it was book seven.

Sally: When Min is the point of view character watching Rand negotiate with the Sea Folk. That, I think, is a very interesting construction in the way that she notes that they're committing to things they don't want to.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Could've been really interesting. It's also just, like, compared to the way that Rand has collected other major characters, like Davram Bashere sitting on the throne of Andor waiting for him, you know, getting all the Aiel in these big kind of amazing and cinematic set pieces, to just, like, pick up Ituralde on the side of the road is just, like, come on.

Emily: It's anticlimactic, yeah.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's brutal. I dunno. I think the notion here might be, like, Ituralde's kind of a side character, you know, but, like –

Sally: (whisper) How dare you.

Emily: We didn't have any Davram Bashere points of view before he got the single most iconic entrance of any character of all time.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: So come on. Okay, we have more chapter –

Sally: Yeah, sorry to –

Emily: Look at the timestamp.

Sally: Linger on Ituralde.

Emily: We're 38 to 40 minutes in. You might be wondering, "How are they gonna hammer out that last chapter after spending 20 minutes on Ituralde?" Well, dear readers, it's an Aviendha point of view, and it's more or less copied and pasted the exact same Aviendha point of view we've already had.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: There's no – nothing really to discuss here. Aviendha witnesses one of those bubbles of evil: a dude spontaneously combusts and sets the mansion on fire briefly. But Aviendha and, uh, an Asha'man are able to put it out. Rand shakes his fist and the sky and is like, "How dare you, Dark One," which is pretty hilarious –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That he's like, "The Dark One's up there." (laugh)

Sally: The Dark One is in the sky.

Emily: Um, he's like, "You need to save your fucking power for when you fight me in Shayol Ghul," which is like –

Sally: You can't channel without getting nauseous, my guy.

Emily: Yeah, Rand, maybe trash-talk when you're in a better position. Um, but we just have the same old Aviendha doing chores, Aviendha not understanding what the Wise Ones want from her. The end.

Sally: The end. Yeah, it's silly. I also think we've gotten a bubble of evil in every single three-set of chapters that we've read so far.

Emily: Yeah, they've been coming at us real fast.

Sally: Which, on the one hand, I get. We want to, like – as we've talked about, these are sort of our mile markers for how close we are getting to our destination, so of course we want them to increase in frequency, but it does – considering we've got three books left before the final battle comes, they're starting to get a little exhausting.

Emily: Yeah. Agreed.

Sally: And I think it – I’m sure it got exhausting for Brandon to have to think of new and interesting ones every three chapters.

Emily: Yeah, every three chapters, have to be like, “Ah, shit.”

Sally: “I guess a guy will melt.”

Emily: “Something fucked up has to happen right now.”

Sally: Yeah, “He’s gonna turn into lava.”

Emily: Yeah, or something? (laugh) Like –

Sally: (laugh) The wind is blowing in the wrong direction –

Emily: You have to imagine Brandon Sanderson sleeping and he has his little notepad next to his bed and he wakes up from a nightmare and is like, “Guy on fire.”

Sally: “Lava.”

Emily: “Lava.”

Sally: “Melting cell.”

Emily: “Ahh.”

Sally: “Big clouds.”

Emily: “Ahh.”

Sally: Brandon at the drive-through of Swig, being like, “Hmm.”

Emily: (laugh)

Sally: That’s a very Utah-topical joke. You’re welcome. (laugh)

Emily: Oh, you guys. I’m sure we’ve told you about the soda-specific drive-throughs before, but thinking of Brandon Sanderson at one is just so funny.

Sally: Is so funny.

Emily: Getting his Diet Coke or whatever.

Sally: Getting his Diet Coke while he think – while he plots the Wheel of Time.

Emily: So another three pretty disappointing chapters.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And that's too bad. We, I believe, maybe, have another three chapters on the horizon. We're going to get a quite long, comparatively, Egg point of view, followed by Gawyn, followed by Cadsuane. So, again, the blows – the Ls just keep on coming. (laugh)

Sally: Just racking 'em up.

Emily: Yeah, they're quite bad. Um, yeah. (laugh)

Sally: It is really so annoying to get so many Gawyn points of view after such a long time without him.

Emily: I know.

Sally: What if Gawyn had just died?

Emily: It's like, if I'd had more Gawyn before, I might have had a chance to build up an immunity to him –

Sally: Yeah, a tolerance, yeah.

Emily: Like the man in black to iocane powder.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: But instead, it's just hitting me –

Sally: It's just – I'm being poisoned.

Emily: All at once, yeah. Hey, guys, thanks for listening. Thanks – thanks for all you do. Thanks to –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song and our patrons on Patreon and our followers on social media.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Uh, do you have anything to add?

Sally: Um, we're still moving through Howl's Moving Castle – I don't know if I said this – but we're doing Howl's Moving Castle on our, uh, Patreon podcast, We Don't Watch Outlander. (laugh) Um, so if you're interested in us talking about that text, which is one we actually like –

Emily: A lot more cheerful, yeah.

Sally: (laugh) If you want to know what that experience is like, you can join us over on [patreon.com/everybodyhatesrand](https://patreon.com/everybodyhatesrand).

Emily: Yep. Do you have a sign-off?



Sally: Um, recently one of my, um, family friends, uh, got ill. He's doing ill, but I went to visit him. He is an older – he's, like, my mom's age, you know, they had lived across the street for forever –

Emily: Yeah, he's dad-age.

Sally: Yeah, he's dad-age.

Emily: He commented on the size of our garage –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Last time he was over.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, he's that age.

Emily: Sort of like – (laugh) “Just let me – just let me rank your garage –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Real quick.”

Sally: “Like, thank you so much.

Emily: Rate it, excuse me.

Sally: Rate – welcome to Pimp My Garage. Um, so I went to visit him to see how he's doing, and I walked into his house, and he's got next to him on his armchair, which his kids told me he, like, picked up off the side of the road – (laugh) Next to him on his armchair, he's got the stack of the John Wick movies, one through three, but on television is a public programming something about petrified wood. And I was like, what's happening? And he was like, “I just like it.” It's like, okay?

Emily: In a – in a choice between petrified wood and John Wick –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Two pretty dad choices –

Sally: I know. (laugh)

Emily: This man went for the dad-er of the two.

Sally: The dad – the most dad choices. And then I was, like, riveted. I, like, couldn't look away.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Like, I was trying to talk to him, and I'm like –

Emily: Now you know what was happening to him.

Sally: Petrified wood is very interesting. Yeah, he was mesmerized. It was a spell.

Emily: Wait ‘til he puts on John Wick. See that man –

Sally: That is mesmerizing.

Emily: See that man reload a gun. It’s like hypnotism.

Sally: Ugh. I know, I – I mean, John Wick is very sexy.

Emily: For sure, for sure, for sure, for sure.

Sally: Keanu Reeves is also very sexy, but specifically as John Wick, where he’s just sort of sad and –

Emily: (John Wick voice) Yeah.

Sally: Delivering lines –

Emily: Delivering lines in the worst way possible.

Sally: In the weirdest way possible.

Emily: Yeah. Okay.

Sally: Anyway, go see John Wick 4.

Emily: ‘Kay, goodbyeeee.