

Episode 302: Demandred's Situationship
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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: It's a celebratory day, 'cause Gawyn's dead. (laugh)

Sally: Yeah, he is dead.

Emily: He finally beefed it.

Sally: (sing-song) Ding dong.

Emily: (sing-song) Ding dong, the witch is dead.

Sally: Which old witch? This old bitch.

Emily: This old bitch. Yep, he – he went down about as inconveniently as it was possible to go down.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And, you know, what else could we expect from him?

Sally: Nothing. He's been an inconvenience from the day he was born, and he managed, up until the very moment of his death, to be an inconvenience.

Emily: Loser from day zero.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Today, whatever. (whisper) Don't flinch, you have an eyelash. (laugh)

Sally: Okay. Oh, It's gone now, my face is clean.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Thank you.

Emily: Yeah. Hey, this is Everybody Hates Gawyn –

Sally: Yes.

Emily: Your friendly neighborhood Wheely Time podcast. I'm Emily Juchau.

Sally: And I am Sally Goodger.

Emily: Okay. Hey, it's still the Last Battle. Not very – (laugh)

Sally: It sure is.

Emily: It sure is. It's going to – again, for the millionth time, this chapter was not meant to be split into two months and read over that timeline. But here we are. We have to talk about it.

Sally: I mean, how else were we going to do it? This chapter is unwieldy.

Emily: I know. There's also no way we could have, on a podcast level –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Spoken about it and gotten – hitting all the highs and lows of ... high school football.

Sally: (simultaneously) High school football. Yeah.

Emily: The epic highs and lows. (laugh) This was definitely an epic high for me. An epic low for Egg.

Sally: (sigh) It's fine. Let's talk about it.

Emily: Sigh, yeah. Uh, this, again, just going section by section, we start out with a rare Silviana point of view that does the Brandon Sanderson slash poor editing thing of accidentally switching to Egg's point of view –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Mid-sentence at one point.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But nominally, it is a Silviana point of view as she is fighting alongside Egg and Egwene reacts to Gawyn getting mortally wounded by Demandred. Silviana's like, "Oh my gosh, it's some sort of insane criminal weave against the Amyrlin Seat." And Egwene's like, "No, it's just the Warder bond," which should itself be an insane criminal weave.

Sally: I know. At least someone's trying to use Alanna in that way. Um. You're – you're right. It should be a criminal weave in general. But it is funny to try to, like, attempt assassination of a political figure based off of who they're bonded to.

Emily: Yeah, Gawyn's not dead yet. So Silviana is like, "Pass his bond to me, because we cannot afford to have you go into sort of a, um, a manic grief episode –"

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: The way Aes Sedai traditionally do when their Warders die. And Egwene's like, "No, 'cause you need to fight too. And we're just going to have to go and try and reach him and Heal him before he dies," which is like – they don't know how bad he's wounded. But.

Sally: Yeah, Egg also reacts to this like it's really a very offensive thing that Silviana is saying, like, "Pass me his bond."

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Like, Egg is like, "How dare you? Like, I would never do that. It's so despicable." And, like, I get that Gawyn doesn't have a say in it at this instance, and that kind of sucks. But, like –

Emily: It's not like you're passing your marriage to Silviana.

Sally: Yeah. And, like, this is the Last Battle. And, like, I need you, the Amyrlin Seat, to be pragmatic about things. So this really, really frustrated me.

Emily: Yeah. Egwene's not a – Egwene – Silviana is not a better fighter than Egwene.

Sally: No, yeah.

Emily: Egwene is a much more crucial presence on the battlefield. So it makes pragmatic sense. And the fact that Egwene dismisses it as this sort of, like – it sort of buys into the whole Warder bond being this romantic thing –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And emblematic of romance and one's personal connections rather than what it is, which is a weave that has a lot of connotations, including, like, professional connotations.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: So while I do think that, like, Egwene passing the bond away would have, like, offended Gawyn in his dying moments –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: It's exactly what he deserves.

Sally: It's – it is exactly what he deserves for this tom-fuck decision that he made. And it just – (sigh) the narrative is so – going so far out of its way to kill Egg, it's just unbelievable.

Emily: Yeah. They're like, "We want her dead."

Sally: And, like, she could die – spoiler alert, if you don't know. Um, she could die in any number of formations on this battlefield, but for her to go insane because of Gawyn's idiocy and therefore put herself at risk is ...

Emily: Pretty gnarly, yeah.

Sally: I just – like, height of misogyny, in my opinion.

Emily: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Sally: Okay, anyway.

Emily: Um, we get an Elayne point of view as she and Birgitte talk about how Birgitte has officially lost all of her memories preceding waking up in the real world.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which is very sad. Um, and also is sort of, like, gesturing to – like, this can't – this is an issue that can't possibly resolve – be resolved within the structure of the Last Battle. You know, this is not something that can be fought with swords and bows and arrows and whatnot. So we need, if this is going to be resolved, and the fact that it keeps being brought up indicates that it needs to be resolved – um, we need some sort of, like, magical solution.

Sally: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Emily: So put a pin in that. Um, Galad is also around. He's like, "Hey." Um, he gets a message from Mat instructing him to take, um, a number of – like, a dozen Whitecloaks or something along with one of the medallion copies of the foxhead and just, like, go behind enemy lines and start doing assassinations of channelers.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And, um, Galad's like, "Yeah, okay, this seems like a suitable task." And Elayne's like, "Just real quick, you're not one of those nerd-ass losers who can't kill a woman, right?" And Galad's like, "No, I'm a Chad. What are – what the fuck are you talking about?"

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: "I'm Big Dick Richie over here."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I believe in women's rights and women's wrongs.

Sally: And women's wrongs, and I believe in my right to execute women for their wrongs.

Emily: (laugh) To extrajudicially execute women. Yeah, we then get the Galad point of view where he's doing this, and he's, like, normal about it, but some of the Whitecloaks are, like, a little too into it. And you're like, mmm.

Sally: And it just doesn't seem commented upon enough how into hacking up women they are.

Emily: Yeah, there's a sort of, like, implicit – like, I want to believe that Mat was like, “I’ll send the Whitecloaks –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “‘Cause when the Whitecloaks get – die, inevitably –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Because this is sort of a suicide mission, it’s not like anyone’s going to miss them.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: This will be a net positive –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: For society as a whole.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, which is pretty funny. Gareth Bryne comes up and is like, “Has anyone seen Gawyn?” And Elayne and Galad are like, “No, what’s – isn’t he with Egg, where he's supposed to be?” And Bryne’s like, “No, he's gone off fighting. That's crazy.” Um, and Elayne’s like, “Ugh, well, we’ll keep an eye out for him,” but, you know, can't afford to react the way –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: A sibling would react to their brother being MIA.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Unlike Egwene. Um, Mat is in the command tent, doing commands, when Logain enters. His, like, dramatic entrance.

Sally: And Mat's like, “Ew.”

Emily: Mat's like, "Eugh."

Sally: "What are you doing here, filth?"

Emily: Min's in the corner, like, "Eeh." This is the first time she's seen Logain since the road trip from hell.

Sally: Yeah, since that shenanigan.

Emily: Come to think of it, everyone in this tent has been on a road trip from hell. Mat with Rand in Book 1, Min and Logain –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Tuon post-kidnapping.

Sally: With the circus, yeah.

Emily: Yeah. Not a lot of fun road trips that people in the Wheel of Time have had. Um, anyway, Mat's like, "So what's your deal? Are you, like, jealous of Rand?" And Logain's like, "I'm not jealous," he said jealously. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: You're like, okay, I don't buy it. Logain's like, "What I want is to go fight Demandred because he just is asking for the Dragon Reborn and the best you've got is me." And Mat's like, "Okay, I do need to do something about Demandred theoretically and, you know, whatever."

Sally: Yeah, it's very funny to me that Logain asks Mat's permission.

Emily: Yeah, it's a very funny, like, power dynamic scene –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Wherein Logain is like both of – this arrogant, like, "I'm going to do whatever I want to do regardless," but I have, for some reason, come to your tent to notify you of this.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Like, Logain's teetering on this edge, as he kind of has been throughout the book, and I think this is the most interesting part of him, and unfortunately the part that the narrative is least interested in, that is, like, wants to be a well-integrated part of society and, like, a person who is doing good things, as opposed to his very, like, selfish impulses toward, like, glory and –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Dominion and whatnot. So he's, like, kind of got this thing going on, this conflict inside of him that isn't even, like, manifest except in these very, like, quiet sort of – when you, like, stop to think, like, why is he even telling Mat?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know? Gawyn just ran off and did the thing.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Badly.

Sally: Girl, I – fucking Gawyn.

Emily: But Logain's like, “Send me.” And Mat's like, “Yeah, okay.”

Sally: And you have to imagine Logain was like, “Good job, Logain.”

Emily: Logain's like, “Yes.”

Sally: “Good social interaction.” Sure.

Emily: Logain goes out and looks in a mirror: “I believe in me.”

Sally: “I believe in me.”

Emily: (laugh) Positive affirmations.

Sally: Social anxiety king. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) The idea of Logain having crippling social anxiety –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is very funny to me.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um. Min mutters something about how her big viewing about Logain, that he'll be – he'll have glory, has not yet been fulfilled, blah blah blah blah. Um, Mat says something to Tuon about how maybe she should, like, go to a more secure position. And Tuon's like, “I can take care of myself.” And Mat's like, “Eh?” He references, so fast you might miss it, that he and Tuon have decided quietly, in order to draw out their spy, or perhaps just in order to maneuver a little bit, that they're going to stage some sort of fight slash breakup –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: In order to get the Seanchan briefly off the board and making the Shadow think that they're no longer a threat.

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And it's like, okay, that's about as dramatic as I would expect from the two of you.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, it is ironic because literally seconds after this conversation, a bunch of Gray Man assassins entered the tent and try and kill everyone. So who was right? Mat was right.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Hey, this is not a safe place to be. And Tuon almost beefs it. And God. If only.

Emily: I know. There's a scene where, like, Min's like – ah, we'll get to it. We flip to a Min point of view. The tent, like, is immediately on fire.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Because there are also channelers. Min gets out of the tent while Tuon and Mat are fighting. She runs into Sivan, who is looking for Mat. Um, Min's like, "Where's Bryne? You guys are supposed to be glued at the hip, you know, like, according to my viewing, you're supposed to – you'll die if you're apart." And Sivan's like, "No, we already, like, did that. We saved each other's lives a while ago." And Min's like, "It's still in effect. You're going to die."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Sivan's like, "Well, you know what the French say."

Sally: Mi casa es su casa.

Emily: Que sera, sera. Um, they run into the tent. Mat and, um, Tuon are still fighting. Tuon's, like, about to get stabbed and Min, for the very first time in her life, successfully throws a knife.

Sally: Proud of you, girl.

Emily: I am both proud of you and like, but how, in success, did you beef it this badly?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We could have just let Tuon die. Come on, girl.

Sally: Yeah, you're right. Proud of you, Min, for doing anything at all. Very mad at you.

Emily: For contributing to the narrative, yeah.

Sally: Yeah. Very mad at you for not letting Tuon just ... die.

Emily: Yeah, it would have been so funny if Min was like, "Mm?"

Sally: "Ooh! Oh, my knife."

Emily: "Oh, no. Everyone knows how bad I am at throwing knives."

Sally: "Ah, shoot."

Emily: "I have complete plausible deniability."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Nope. Um, Mat grabs Tuon and they're leaving when Min's like, "Oh, Siuan – Siuan's here too," and Mat's like, "Oh, she's fully dead." So Siuan just, like, died off-screen by unknown means.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, and – so now, wherever Bryne is, he's going to go into the, like, Warder berserker rage –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And presumably die in battle. So sort of an – as we already referenced, Siuan already had her sentimental, like, "Can't wait to retire tomorrow" speech with Egg. So this isn't exactly coming out of left field, Siuan's death.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But Siuan has been a major character for the last 14 books. So: salute, I guess.

Sally: Yeah, I'm way more sad about Siuan dying than I am about Gawyn dying.

Emily: For real, for real.

Sally: Um, I am – I am very fascinated, though, by the way it happens. One, that it's off-screen for such a major character death. That's very interesting.

Emily: That we're in Min's head –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Min isn't watching it happen.

Sally: Yeah. And, two, sort of the first character who has a response to Min's viewing that I'm, like, actually interested in. Um, so many people get really hung up on them, you know, but Suan's just like, "Fuck that, the general's in danger. And where I think I need to be is trying to help resolve this situation. I don't really care if I die."

Emily: And, like, Suan did help.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah. She got Min in there. Blah blah blah blah blah.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I do think – I was thinking about this while reading this. The very first conversation that we see Mat and Suan have, one of their only conversations, Suan tells Mat this little parable – parable about her uncle who ran into a burning building.

Sally: Oh!

Emily: And died that way, saving children.

Sally: Wow.

Emily: And sort of the definition of heroism. Um, and so it's very fitting that Suan would die by running into a burning tent to save Mat.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: Although the narrative doesn't – lets us sort of have that quietly.

Sally: Uh-huh.

Emily: So, you know, it's these little poetic moments.

Sally: Totally.

Emily: I really wish Mat and Suan could have had a reunion –

Sally: Absolutely.

Emily: Of some kind. I think – I really liked them in the Dragon Reborn. They had a very funny sort of –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Series of interactions.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, that's it. RIP Siuan, I guess. And, by, um, extension, RIP Bryne, who I don't really care about.

Sally: I hope he kills a lot of Trollocs in the battlefield.

Emily: Yeah, I hope he goes down fighting. (laugh) Glad they died together, as they should be.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: The – one of the worst couples in Wheely Time.

Sally: Truly.

Emily: A brief Egwene point of view, still fighting, still trying to get to Gawyn. Uh, then a Demandred – a surprise Demandred point of view. Demandred is warging into the eyes of a falcon. Didn't know that was a thing you could do, but apparently it is if you use the True Power, not in other forms of power, but just this one.

Sally: Yeah. And you're like, fine.

Emily: He's like, “This is like a cla–this is a classic maneuver, in turn – in order to see the entire battlefield. And it really pisses me off that these people have come up with incredible innovations, like using gateways as windows.”

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And I'm like, how is it possible that in the Age of Legends, no one thought of that?

Sally: Yeah. You guys thought of warging into birds, but you didn't think to put a gateway in the sky?

Emily: You didn't think about windows? You didn't think about turning the gateway –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: On its axis?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Slightly? Boy. Um, this Demandred point of view is so out of pocket. I have no idea what to do with it.

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) He's like – he's like, “Here I am, warging. Here comes one of my right hand Sharan people, a woman named Shendla.” And Demandred's like, “Just so you know, I have a thing with Shendla.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “She's clearly in love with me, and I'm on the fence about her.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And it's like, why would you introduce this –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: (laugh) At this stage?

Sally: Just, like, two-thirds of the – or more – of the way through the last book. This is, like, one of only a handful of Demandred points of view, max. And you're like, here's –

Emily: In the entire series, yeah.

Sally: Here's just, like, the lowdown on my situationship.

Emily: Sexually. Yeah.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I need you to know – sexually? I fuck.

Sally: Yeah. And you're like, do you guys? What's the deal here? Like, is it just pining? Are you fucking?

Emily: Yeah. It kind of seems like just pining.

Sally: You two – they sort of touch hands awkwardly.

Emily: Yeah. And also, it's, like – really nerfs Demandred's sort of monomaniacal obsession.

Sally: Absolutely. Absolutely.

Emily: Like –

Sally: I was reading it and I was like, Demandred basically only works if his one dimension is –

Emily: Obsession with the Dragon Reborn.

Sally: Obsessed with Lews Therin. Yeah. I don't need anything else from him because the obsession doesn't work if there's anything else going on with him.

Emily: Yeah. And to an extent, it's like his threat level gets taken down from nine to four.

Sally: Yeah, because it isn't truly this all-encompassing sort of –

Emily: Yeah, it's not a powerful thing that Demandred has a lover.

Sally: Mm-mm.

Emily: A situation – a will they, won't they –

Sally: A will they/won't they.

Emily: Situation with a random woman who he's been lying to and gaslighting her entire society.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You know, that's not cool. That doesn't make him look more manly or whatever. It just makes him look like more of a normal person. And Demandred only works if he is this absolutely on-the-edge-of-insanity weirdo.

Sally: Mm-hmm. Also, like, are – why – why are we trying to give dimension to any of the Forsaken?

Emily: I don't – I don't know.

Sally: They don't really need it.

Emily: Yeah, they really don't. They're literally – I think the one Forsaken – the two Forsaken who should have had dimensions were Asmodean because we put him in a sort of ethical situation –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: That did require some dimension and Ishamael because he's the main one.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Everyone else –

Sally: It's so fine.

Emily: One dimension at most.

Sally: It was – it's so weird. It's such a –

Emily: 1D except for Lanfear's tits. Those are 3D.

Sally: 3D. Uh, it's just such a weird case of Wheel of Time's need to have people paired off.

Emily: Mm.

Sally: And I was like, you don't – the Forsaken –

Emily: Even Demandred.

Sally: Yeah. I was like, what is happening?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: It's so weird.

Emily: God forbid we think Demandred prefers men.

Sally: Or – why do I have to think of the Forsaken as sexual creatures at all?

Emily: Yeah. Yeah. (laugh)

Sally: Like, they're just the bad guys. They don't have to – but it gets even more out of pocket when Mazrim Taim walks in.

Emily: Oh, my – well. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh)

Emily: Real quick, the only imagine – the only reason I can imagine this interaction with Shendla being shoehorned in is so that Brandon Sanderson can clarify that the Sharans believe that they are doing the right thing – that they're, you know, on the right side, which of course is why they're fighting side by side with Trollocs.

Sally: Yeah, dawg, you think I care at this point in time what the Sharans' motivations are?

Emily: Yeah. Yeah. Demandred's like, "Aren't you, like, nervous? It seems like – you don't know what we're doing." And she's like, "Well, 'some would call you evil, but once you're victorious, you'll remake our world and our people will be preserved.'" And it's like, okay, I'm glad that the Sharans aren't just mustache-twirling evil, but also, them being introduced in Book 14 does not give us many opportunities to think of them as anything other than that.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Anyway. Yeah, then, uh, Mazrim Taim shows up to sort of be like, "Teehee, you're not doing so hot." And Demandred immediately, like, shields him and puts him in, like, a weird black hole that's getting his power sucked out of him –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: And is making more of those creepy void cracks appear in the world. And he's like, "I just want to clarify the situation for you. I don't care about you." (laugh)

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "Do whatever you want."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "I don't give a fuck."

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Mazrim Taim is like, "God damn it."

Sally: This whole thing with Mazrim Taim was so much more interesting than Shendla.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Like, I don't even know why – (laugh) Again, no idea what was going on there. But Demandred – this plays into his sort of, um, yeah, one-minded – he's like, "I don't care about your little Forsaken hierarchy. I truly don't care about anything but fighting the Dragon Reborn."

Emily: Yeah, it plays into things we know already about Mazrim – both Mazrim Taim and Demandred. And it's like – so much of what the Last Battle has been building toward and so much of the excitement of the later books is this sort of Avengers effect of seeing characters, um, interact and work together who haven't previously been – who have been in their own separate universes. And that even applies to the Forsaken and Mazrim Taim, who's been very isolated within the Black Tower.

Sally: Mm-hm.

Emily: So kind of having to see Mazrim Taim be the bottom of the totem pole for the Forsaken –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Is like, yeah, okay, I buy that. And also it's fun.

Sally: Yeah, hell yeah.

Emily: Sucker.

Sally: Hell yeah, brother. Fucking loser.

Emily: Then we get a Rand point of view, just talking to the Dark One again. It's very short. Um. (laugh) Rand does give the Dark One "it" pronouns because he doesn't have gender. Um, the main thing is that, uh – what?

Sally: It.

Emily: Yeah. The main thing is that the Dark One, like, obliquely shows Rand the battlefield and, like, people dying and "look how bad it is," you know, blah blah blah blah. Which is only important in that it will happen again in this sort of extended interaction. So we're establishing that move. Um, but then the Dark One is, like, going to put Rand in another vision of "what if the Dark One wins," I guess. Then we have a Juilin point of view as he's fighting. He doesn't die or anything. He's just fighting. We get, occasionally, these points of view where Brandon Sanderson will do that. Like Juilin, like Uno, like Tam, to a certain extent, just to be like, "Here's what it's like out on the front lines," I guess. I think they're a little unnecessary in that I can imagine what the front lines are like.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: But I appreciate the attempt, um, to be like, "Many types of people are fighting."

Sally: Yeah, it also has this undercurrent of, like, "Checking in with a beloved character," which is so kind in theory. But I'm like, I really wouldn't clock Juilin as one of my beloved characters.

Emily: Juilin – Juilin gets out his signature weapon –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: A sword breaker. And I'm like, I haven't cared about Juilin since Book 3.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: When I cared about him briefly.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And since then, I have not cared about him at all.

Sally: No. Sorry, babe.

Emily: Um, then an Androl point of view, God almighty. Um, Androl mansplains warfare to Pevara. It's ridiculous that Pevara would not know, theoretically, about warfare, considering that she is an Aes Sedai and is, like, 600 years old.

Sally: Yeah. Slay, girl.

Emily: Uh, but they're in some sort of disguise, just going behind enemy lines in an attempt to find Mazrim Taim. They're just, like, kind of looking for anyone who might point them toward

Mazrim Taim. They get waylaid by someone who is like, “What the fuck are you guys doing here? I'll take you to the Wyld,” meaning Demandred. And they're like, “Okay, might as well.” Um. (sigh) Flirting, Wheel of Time style, which involves jealousy.

Sally: (sing-song) Jealousy.

Emily: Bickering. Brandon Sanderson's weird sense of humor. We get the final canonical reference to Emarin being gay.

Sally: It does say he prefers men, which I'm choosing to believe as he is a bisexual guy who just leans more towards men. Doesn't – I mean, Brandon did not say the word “gay.” He did not say “homosexual.”

Emily: I'm not convinced Brandon Sanderson knows the word “gay.”

Sally: So, “preferring men.”

Emily: Yeah, that's our little, you know, fantasy way of calling people not-straight.

Sally: Yeah, it would –

Emily: Which I think is boring. I think you should make a fun fantasy word for it. (laugh)

Sally: (laugh) That makes me so nervous. Everything people are going to create is going to sound so –

Emily: Like a slur? (laugh)

Sally: Slur-coded, yeah. (laugh) There's no way someone's going to pick a normal word in their fantasy.

Emily: “Besides, Emarin is a faaaa ...” (laugh) Oh, God.

Sally: Just say “gay” or “queer” or ... In your book, say “LGBTQIA+.” (laugh)

Emily: Oh my God, can you imagine? And then there's a little pride flag –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Fully illustrated on the – it's – instead of a map.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: We wasted so much money on printing all the colors.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah, it's a fully colored book.

Emily: But Brandon is an ally.

Sally: Ally!

Emily: So he has to establish allyship. No, yeah, you obviously can't have the words "queer," "gay," or "LGBTQ" in the Wheel of Time, because that would require admitting that gay people exist.

Sally: Yes, natch.

Emily: Something that has not happened until this book.

Sally: Literally ever. Emarin's the first one in all of Wheel of Time.

Emily: Emarin and that one random general who Lan interacted with.

Sally: Oh yeah.

Emily: Um, they get taken to Demandred, who's like, "Why is everyone around me so incompetent?" Who even are you people? They're like, "Hey." He's like, "Okay, fuck Mazrim Taim. He's over there. Go talk to him." And they're like, "Sweet, we got directed to Mazrim Taim." And hustle in that direction. We get Galad's suicide mission. Again, some of the Whitecloaks are a little too eager to murder people. Uh, but one of them finds Gawyn. Like – Gawyn going –

Sally: "Blegh."

Emily: Just, "Blegh."

Sally: Laying on some rocks somewhere.

Emily: Yeah, Galad's, like – fully thinks he's dead until Gawyn, like, jumpscars him by opening his eyes. And Galad's like, "Ah!"

Sally: Stabs him. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Just kills him. He's like, "Oh, we got to get you to the hospital, man. I'll – I'll take you. Don't worry." Gawyn's like, "Tell Egwene I loved her." And Galad's like, "Yeah, sure, I guess." Gawyn's like, "I didn't kill Demandred. I've never been quite good enough." And you're like, it's so embarrassing.

Sally: Yeah, like – (sigh) There is another character structure where I would find someone, like, really struggling with self-worth and an inferiority – inferiority complex, like, interesting.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Perhaps if Gawyn was not the most privileged a person could possibly be in Wheel of Time world and just be, like –

Emily: Yeah, so entitled.

Sally: Yeah. And just being like, his inferiority comes from having a female partner who's more power – important than him. Like, I'm just so sick of him being like, “I've never been good enough. Galad's better at me than swords.” And it's like, okay, well, Galad's autistic and swords are his special interest. So. (laugh)

Emily: (laugh) Galad's autistic rizz: off the charts.

Sally: (laugh) Yeah.

Emily: Um, yeah, there's a huge difference between narratives about, um, self-worth wherein people are trying to measure up, like, to themselves or –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Even to an external standard that is being imposed upon them. And they just feel like they can't get there because of some intrinsic failure in themselves. As opposed to Gawyn, who has a very, like, externalizing notion of, um, not being good enough. A: That he's entitled to be the best –

Sally: Mm-hmm.

Emily: Whatever that means. And that when he doesn't get there, it's because of, like, things outside of the world.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: Things outside of his control.

Sally: Yeah. Externalizing all his problems, one might say.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Gawyn himself has never been the problem.

Emily: Yeah, he's not the problem. Um, Gawyn's last words are so hilarious. He's like, “Just so you know, Galad: your brother's the Dragon Reborn. Blegh.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Perishes. And Galad's like, “What the fuck am I supposed to do with that?”

Sally: Galad's like, “And I put it in a little box.”

Emily: Yeah. And Galad's like, "Okay, I'm going to roll that one back." Like, it's almost ludicrous for it to be revealed at all at this stage.

Sally: Yeah. Yeah.

Emily: It's not like Galad can do anything about it. Rand is fully on the other side of the continent.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Spoiler, but Rand and Galad will not interact at the end.

Sally: Why would they?

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Galad's a normal person who's like, "That doesn't seem like my business."

Emily: Yeah, Galad's just going to be like, "Okay, well, I'll take that under advisement." Weird. Anyway, then Gawyn dies. Gawyn does insist that he stopped hating the Dragon Reborn with his dying words. And it's like, no, you didn't.

Sally: Uh, I don't believe it.

Emily: I don't believe you. Um, Egwene feels Gawyn die. She, like, goes nuclear for a minute before Silviana and her bodyguards kind of, like, take her away from the battlefield –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: To faint, very Victorian-ly.

Sally: Yeah, one more maybe quick thing on Gawyn's death. Um, it's not a bad thing for characters to die in a situation like this. It's not that I necessarily have beef with any character beefing it.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: Um, but as we've mentioned, and as Emily just summarized, Gawyn's death prompts Egg to go into a sort of berserker – um, not even really – men go berserk, women go hysterical, it seems. Um.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: So let's – into a hysterical state, which, um, nerfs her as one of the most powerful people on the battlefield, which really, um, ups the stakes for our good guys, having lost, you know, a key player on the chessboard, which just feels really unnecessary to me at this point. Um, the stakes – I think I keep referencing this, but the stakes already feel high enough. Like, you have

one of the Forsaken on the battlefield, who's just balefiring everything. You have an outnumbered army, you have a limited number of arrows, as Tam will tell us in the next point of view. Like, it doesn't really feel like it matters a whole lot in terms of stakes if – like, it doesn't feel – Egg's death doesn't feel unnecessary – and I don't know if this directly leads to her death. You know, we haven't gotten there yet. But removing Egg from the battlefield in any way, shape, or form doesn't really feel like a necessary stake to me. So I'm feeling very, uh, frustrated by the way the ante is being upped, personally.

Emily: Yeah, the way the Last Battle is being structured is giving our main characters, more or less, these, like, miniature storylines to follow that each are supposed to have, like, crescendos of personal stakes as well as stakes that affect the battlefield more generally. Like, I don't know, Mat having this sort of, like, personal character arc crescendo that is also him being in control of the battlefield; meanwhile, there's stuff going on with him and Tuon, blah blah blah blah. And it's like – I don't know, I'm just curious if there is any other possibility in order to make the Last Battle as, like, climactic as everyone wanted it to be, because to me, it feels like sort of a lot of unnecessary extensions –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Into what's going on, and just like, I don't know. I – I'm – I'm mostly reading this – I'm like, wow, I am really glad that I will never write or be responsible for writing the sort of Ragnarok –

Sally: Sure.

Emily: Battle. It's just so difficult and so boring in a lot of ways.

Sally: Yeah, and maybe that's why Brandon felt that he kept having to do something drastic every –

Emily: Three pages, yeah.

Sally: Or Robert; whoever structured this. Um, it's just giving the same type of storytelling – I don't know if any of you are My Hero Academia watchers –

Emily: Mm.

Sally: But I've been having a really difficult time with the last couple of seasons because they're entering their final arc, where, like, they're fighting the bad guys, and the bad guys are impossible to defeat. Every time the good guys gain a leg up, the bad guys match it and go higher. And it's just like, how is this supposed to be fun to watch? Like, I'm exhausted. I feel like there's no chance at all. Like, it doesn't even – there's no, like, light. Like, it's completely normal storytelling to put your characters in a situation that seems quite bleak and have them fight the way – their way out of it. But every time they get a chance to fight their way out, they're just like, the entrance is blocked off. And that's very much my experience of reading the Last Battle right now. Like, it does not feel fun.

Emily: Yeah, it's like that anime form of –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Quote unquote “epic.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Which can be so exhausting and which a lot of modern anime is, like – well, maybe not necessarily. Yeah, it's just, like, an anime thing. And I think a lot of fantasy falls into this trap, too, of, like, any climactic sequence has to involve people just Dragon Ball Z-style powering up.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And powering up in opposition to each other over and over again instead of bringing sort of, like, more nuanced takes on climaxes.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I don't know.

Sally: Yeah, and I get it. It's hard. I definitely couldn't write a battle sequence like this, nor do I have any desire to do so. It just feels – um, my subjective reading experience of it is really unpleasant. I'm not having a good time.

Emily: Painful, yeah. Um – oh, the last thing is that Galad also is now – sort of has a vendetta against Demandred.

Sally: “I too will go kill Demandred.”

Emily: And the funniest possible outcome of this is that Galad and Logain, Spider-Man style, point at each other, are like, “Oh, let's do a team-up and kill –”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: “Demandred.” But tragically, that isn't what happens because no one writing this series has a sense of fun and pizzazz.

Sally: I think the funniest outcome would actually be that Galad kills Demandred and it's not even hard for him.

Emily: Oh my God. You're so right.

Sally: Just sort of, like, cementing the fact that Gawyn –

Emily: That Gawyn was a total loser.

Sally: Just a complete loser. Like, the worst brother in every conceivable way.

Emily: Galad's like, "What? Like it's hard?" And Gawyn, in the afterlife, is like, "Rrrrgh."

Sally: "Ahh!" Chewing at the bars.

Emily: Rattling on the bars –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Like a hamster –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: In need of a meal.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, yeah, then we get a Tam point of view that's just like, "Ah, they're out of arrows. Eugh. This sucks." And that's it for this section. Some major character deaths. Um, some major character lives.

Sally: Some major character lives. Tuon unfortunately lives.

Emily: Yeah, Androl is still alive.

Sally: Androl's still here.

Emily: Which is tragic.

Sally: Unfortunately. No one's killed him yet.

Emily: Yeah. But we inch ever closer.

Sally: We get introduced to Shendla, our new favorite character.

Emily: Shendla. Let's keep an eye on Shendla and see if, A, she appears ever again; B, she has any sort of arc.

Sally: Like, also, girl, what's your taste in men that you look at Bao the Wyld? It's probably all the gaslighting, but still.

Emily: It's all – yeah, it's the gaslight gatekeep girlbossing –

Sally: Uh-huh.

Emily: That Demandred's doing. He's a real scammer.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: He's like that Tinder guy.

Sally: Scammer.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: The Tinder – Tinder –

Emily: The Tinder swindler.

Sally: Swindler.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Could not say that.

Emily: Shendla's like, "What are you gonna do? I've been swindled, as has my entire nation. That's just the kind of guy he is."

Sally: And you're like, hmm.

Emily: You're like, I don't think he has that sort of rizz. Then again, every time I watch a documentary about a cult leader –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: I'm like, oh, I don't really get the rizz, you know?

Sally: I know, you never know until –

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: They're actively using their tactics on you.

Emily: It must be something about the eye contact.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Sort of a snake gaze.

Sally: The love bombing.

Emily: Eugh. Okay, so overall – mm. Unpleasant.

Sally: Real stinker. Um, I guess, like, a half-apology for being super negative about the Last Battle. I know it's very precious to a lot of you, and I will try to have more fun next week.

Emily: It's hard to have fun is all I'll say about this when it's just like, "Hey, people are dying and we really want you to take that seriously," and I'm like, Gawyn?

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: You want me to take Gawyn dying seriously?

Sally: If you want me to take someone dying seriously, you should kill a character that I care about.

Emily: I care about, yeah. Which, at this point in the series, is a precariously low number. So.

Sally: Yeah, very few.

Emily: Anyway.

Sally: I mean, I'm worried about Gaul in the dream world.

Emily: Oh my God, Gaul.

Sally: We haven't – yeah.

Emily: That's, like, the main tension that is carrying me through the Last Battle. What the fuck is happening with Gaul?

Sally: (laugh) I'm stressed about that.

Emily: I think we should have more, like, back and forths to Gaul. Just, like –

Sally: Instead of check-ins with Rand and the Dark One –

Emily: Yeah, it's just check-ins with Gaul.

Sally: It's just a check-in with Gaul and the wolves.

Emily: And just standing there with his spear, like –

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: "So ..."

Sally: "Hey, dog."

Emily: "Is anyone coming to get me?"

Sally: Yeah. “Or do I live here now?” King of the wolves.

Emily: Gaul becomes a wolf.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Become the monster.

Sally: There are two wolves inside of you. And –

Emily: By the time Perrin comes to pick him up, Gaul has just fully mastered not only Tel’aran’rhiod, but also being a wolf.

Sally: Being a wolf.

Emily: And Perrin's like, “Hey, that was – it took me 13 books to do that.”

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: And Gaul’s like –

Sally: “Mm. Bitchless.”

Emily: “Bitchless. Loser.” Okay. (laugh) This has been Everybody Hates Rand. Thanks for listening. Uh, thanks for giving us a break last week. As mentioned, we were traveling.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Um, thanks to Glynna MacKenzie for our theme song and thanks to our patrons on Patreon.

Sally: (laugh) We love you guys.

Emily: And our followers on social media. I think I missed you. Do you have a sign-off?

Sally: Yeah, I actually have two. Would you like to be offered –?

Emily: I would like to know. Yeah, I know one of them.

Sally: Yeah, one is about tea and the other is about our cats. I will tell you – I can tell you both.

Emily: Okay, tell me both.

Sally: Okay, the first one – and you can pick in the podcast final edit. We’ll – listen to the bloopers for whichever one of these you don't get. Um, as previously mentioned, we were traveling, and when we get back, the cats, particularly Tybalt, get very anxious. And one thing Tybalt loves more than anything in the world is sitting in a suitcase.

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: So when I unpacked –

Emily: Classic cat behavior.

Sally: Yeah.

Emily: Yeah.

Sally: Whatever. I unpacked my suitcase. I left it open for him that night –

Emily: Mm-hmm.

Sally: To just, like, chill in. And as I get ready – I'm, like, in bed, ready to go to sleep. And I hear all sorts of rustling. So I get out of bed and come out here. (laugh) And Tybalt is standing on the suitcase, pressing down on the lid of it with his paws. And I'm like, hello? And so I kick him off of it, and Ed comes springing out of the suitcase, like a jack in the box.

Emily: Trapped.

Sally: Yeah, Tybalt was, like, pinning Ed in the suitcase. (laugh) And I was like, hey, what the fuck type of psychotic behavior is this?

Emily: Tybalt was like, “No, no, no, check it out. I promise.” (laugh) It’s the Cask of Amontillado.

Sally: Yeah, he was like, “Yeah, dude, I've got some sweet cat treats in this suitcase.”

Emily: And Ed was like, “Woo da doo da doo. I trust my brother, of course.”

Sally: Of course I do.

Emily: I could have died. Ed. I could have died.

Sally: And then poor Ed starts sprinting around.

Emily: Boo.

Sally: Yeah, poor guy.

Emily: Okay.

Sally: Okay, anyway, those are both ridiculous.

Emily: (laugh) Have a good week, everyone. Goodbye.