

= The Gathering Storm (novel) =

The Gathering Storm is the 12th book of the fantasy series The Wheel of Time . It was incomplete when its author , Robert Jordan , died on September 16 , 2007 , from cardiac amyloidosis . His widow Harriet McDougal and publisher Tom Doherty chose Brandon Sanderson to continue the book after Jordan 's death .

Jordan originally intended to finish the series in a single volume titled A Memory of Light , but when Sanderson began writing the book it became clear a split was required as it was believed a single volume would be too large to print . The expected final book was then split into three volumes : The Gathering Storm , Towers of Midnight , and A Memory of Light . The books would be published a year apart with the first volume , The Gathering Storm , published on October 27 , 2009 ; a week earlier than originally announced . Upon its release , it immediately rose to the No. 1 position on the The New York Times hardcover fiction Best Seller list , making it the fifth consecutive Wheel of Time book to achieve this feat .

The three books will together encompass what can be considered Jordan 's final vision of the series . In the foreword , Sanderson states that they can be thought of as " the three volumes of A Memory of Light or as the final three books of The Wheel of Time . Both are correct . " He also comments on the differing writing style , suggesting that it could be compared to different film directors directing the same script . The Gathering Storm consists of a prologue , 50 chapters , and an epilogue .

= = Plot summary = =

The series ' storyline has been leading up to the " Last Battle " (Tarmon Gai 'don) ? a fight between the forces of Light and Shadow . According to prophecy in the series the primary protagonist Rand al 'Thor , as the Dragon Reborn , will " fight the [battle] " , and must be present for the forces of Light to have a chance at winning and stopping the being known as the Dark One , the primary antagonist , from escaping his prison .

The Gathering Storm follows many plot threads but focuses on two characters , Rand al 'Thor and Egwene al 'Vere . While it follows al 'Thor 's attempts to unite and rally the world 's forces for the Last Battle , it also addresses his struggle with his sanity , caused by the corruption of his mind from the use of the male half of the One Power . The unification of the White Tower , the headquarters of the female users of the One Power known as Aes Sedai , is addressed from al 'Vere 's perspective , as well as the exposure of the Black Ajah , a secretive and opposing faction within the story . While the stories of other main characters such as Perrin Aybara and Mat Cauthon are briefly touched upon , they have little bearing on the main plot line . Some main characters such as Elayne Trakand and Lan Mandragoran do not appear at all , but are referred to .

= = = Synopsis = = =

= = = = Rand al 'Thor = = = =

As Rand 's story begins , he is restoring order in the nation of Arad Doman while searching for Graendal , one of the Dark One 's favored servants known as the Forsaken . The Aes Sedai work with Rand to interrogate Semirhage , another Forsaken captured at the end of Knife of Dreams . After being freed by her allies , Semirhage is given a Domination Band , an item used to control male channelers , and locks it around Rand 's neck . She and Black Ajah sister Elza Penfell use it to make him torture and attempt to kill his lover , Min Farshaw . Unable to channel , he reaches out and inexplicably accesses the True Power , a different power normally only granted by the Dark One , using it to free himself and kill Semirhage and Elza . After this , he resolves to make himself harder and emotionless . He banishes his adviser Cadsuane Melaidhrin for not securing the Domination Band , promising to kill her if he sees her face again .

Rand meets with the Seanchan , a civilization that invaded the continent earlier in the series . Their

leader Tuon rejects Rand 's offer of a truce after sensing a dark aura that emanated from Rand after he channeled the True Power . Following the meeting , Tuon declares herself Empress and prepares a surprise attack against the White Tower .

Graendal 's hiding place is traced to a remote palace . Confirming her presence , Rand uses the Choedan Kal , a powerful magical artifact , to eliminate the entire building with balefire , a magic that wipes the target from time . This horrifies Min and Nynaeve al 'Meara and they turn to Cadsuane for help . Giving up on saving Arad Doman from the Seanchan and starvation , Rand returns to the city of Tear .

Nynaeve , under the instruction of Cadsuane , locates Tam al 'Thor , Rand 's father , who meets with Rand in an attempt to break his emotional isolation . Rand becomes angry when he learns that Tam was sent by Cadsuane , nearly killing his father before fleeing in horror at what he had almost done . Rand Travels to the Seanchan @-@ held city of Ebou Dar , intending to destroy their entire army , but he becomes reluctant to act after seeing how peaceful the city is . Nearly mad with rage and grief , he Travels to the top of Dragonmount , the location where he killed himself in a past life . Angry at the futility of life bound to the Wheel , he uses the Choedan Kal to draw enough power to destroy the world . Lews Therin , a voice in Rand 's head from his past life , suggests that by being reborn one has the opportunity to do things right . Agreeing , Rand turns the power of the Choedan Kal against itself , destroying it . Rand is finally able to laugh again .

= = = = Egwene al 'Vere = = = =

The second main plot thread follows Egwene al 'Vere , leader of the rebel faction of Aes Sedai . After her capture by the White Tower in the previous book , Egwene works to undermine Elaida a 'Roihan 's rule and mend the strife it is causing in the White Tower . She is initially granted freedom of the tower as novice , but after publicly denouncing Elaida , Elaida names her a follower of the Dark One , and orders her imprisonment . When Elaida fails to prove her accusation , Egwene is released .

Egwene returns to her room to find Verin Mathwin , who announces that she is of the Black Ajah . Taking advantage of a loophole in the oath Verin had sworn that she could not betray them " until the hour of my death " , she fatally poisons herself , allowing her to use her last hour to reveal everything she has learned to Egwene . Verin explains that although she was forced to swear to them or face death , she used the position to research the Ajah . She gives Egwene a journal detailing the group 's structure and nearly every member before succumbing to the poison .

When the Seanchan attack the White Tower , its fractured state prevents an effective defense . Many Aes Sedai are captured or killed until Egwene , leading a group of novices , succeeds in driving them off . Siuan Sanche , Gawyn Trakand , and Gareth Bryne mount a rescue of Egwene . They find her so exhausted that she cannot protest when they extract her against her orders . After awakening in the camp , she argues that they may have ruined her chances to gain credit in the Tower for the defeat of the Seanchan .

Egwene begins to expose the Black Ajah among the rebels , requiring every sister to re @-@ swear her allegiances . Fifty sisters are exposed and executed , while twenty are able to escape . Taking advantage of the weakened White Tower defenses following the Seanchan raid , the rebels prepare an immediate attack . Just before the attack is mounted , the Tower Aes Sedai announce that Elaida was captured in the Seanchan raid , and that they would have Egwene as their leader , the Amyrlin Seat . The rebels return and they begin rebuilding the Tower .

= = Writing = =

= = = Robert Jordan , illness and death (2005 ? 2007) = = =

Under the pen name Robert Jordan , James Oliver Rigney , Jr. began writing the intended final book , A Memory of Light , before the release of the previous book Knife of Dreams in 2005 .

Scheduled for publication by Tor Books in 2009 , it was intended to conclude the series , which began in 1990 with *The Eye of the World* , originally intended as a series of four or five books . According to *Forbes* , Jordan had intended for it to be the final book " even if it reaches 2 @, @ 000 pages . " After Jordan fell fatally ill in December 2005 from a rare disease , cardiac amyloidosis , he still intended to finish at least *A Memory of Light* , and thus the main story arc , if the " worse comes to worst . " Later he made preparations in case he was not able to finish the book . " I 'm getting out notes , so if the worst actually happens , someone could finish *A Memory of Light* and have it end the way I want it to end . " Shortly before his death , Jordan made a performance of the final book in a two and a half hour session to his wife and cousin , Wilson W. Grooms , Jr . Grooms stated in a later blog post " he became the Gleeman and told the bones of it ALL to Harriet and me ! "

The book was not completed at the time of Jordan 's death on September 16 , 2007 . His widow Harriet McDougal and his publisher , Tor Books president Tom Doherty made the decision to have the book completed posthumously , with McDougal saying , " I am sad to see the series end . But I would be far more distressed to leave it unfinished , incomplete and dangling forever . "

On December 11 , 2007 , four months after Jordan 's death , it was announced that McDougal had chosen Brandon Sanderson to finish the final book in the series , although the decision itself had been made the preceding month . Sanderson had been chosen partly because McDougal had read and liked his novels , and partly because of a eulogy he had written for Jordan . McDougal later expanded on her reasons , saying , " I do think [he] has a natural feeling for the ethical and moral issues of life . "

= = = Brandon Sanderson , split and *The Gathering Storm* (2007 ? 2009) = = =

Brandon Sanderson was devastated by the news of Jordan 's death ; he has been a fan of the series since he was 15 years old and he cites Jordan as an inspiration . He is known for the novel *Elantris* and the *Mistborn* series . He did not want to imitate Jordan 's style as he felt it would " turn into parody . "

In an interview with *Sci Fi Wire* , Sanderson stated it was a great honor to be given the chance to complete the series but conceded he was unable to fill Jordan 's shoes . Some parts of the book were nearly finished by Jordan , while others have only a couple of paragraphs to describe a twenty @-@ page scene , but he describes Jordan 's notes as " amazing . " He later elaborated that " the amount of material [Jordan] left behind is what makes this book possible . " Speaking to *The Guardian* , he stated that although some people wouldn 't like the book , and any failures would be blamed on him , " I say that I win because I get to be part of this . " Through February 2008 Sanderson reread the entire series , posting his impressions of each book on his blog . The reread lasted until March 2008 , at which point he " began to grasp the daunting nature of this book , " with so many plot lines that needed to be resolved .

When writing the book Sanderson was assisted by Maria Simons , Jordan 's assistant before his death and " right arm " , and Alan Romanczuk , the series continuity manager , together known as " Team Jordan " . Sanderson eventually dedicated the book to them , writing that " without [them] this book wouldn 't have been possible . "

Sanderson was originally working to a target of 200 @, @ 000 words , later 250 @, @ 000 words and by April 2008 up to 400 @, @ 000 words . By the end of October 2008 the 400 @, @ 000 estimate was still in effect . Sanderson later estimated the final length of *A Memory of Light* to be at least 750 @, @ 000 words . Information emerged on the Internet pertaining to the book , with a draft cover suggesting it was to be split into volumes . On March 30 , 2009 , Tor Books confirmed *A Memory of Light* was to be split into three volumes , the first of which , *The Gathering Storm* , would be released on November 3 , 2009 . This date was later changed to October 27 , 2009 , a week earlier than planned .

Although Jordan himself had promised only a single book , according to Sanderson neither Jordan 's widow nor Doherty believed he could achieve this . Sanderson claimed that he could not do the story and characters justice with a single volume , so a split was inevitable . The decision was made to split the final book into three separate volumes , rather than two , so that a reasonably sized and

unfractured volume could be released at the promised November 2009 date . Sanderson has stated that had the book remained as a single volume , it would not have been able to be released before November 2011 , and likely would have been so large (around 2 @, @ 000 pages) that it would be unpublishable .

On the split , Sanderson stated that without it he would have had to " railroad the story from climax to climax " and would sacrifice aspects even of major characters , eventually deciding that " The Wheel of Time deserved better . "

The first volume was originally intended to be titled A Memory of Light : Gathering Clouds . The other volumes had working subtitles of Shifting Winds and Tarmon Gai 'don for the second and third installments respectively . At the point the title A Memory of Light was dropped because book stores were worried it would be confusing , Sanderson decided the subtitle Gathering Clouds was " too generic , too basic " to be used as a title on its own . McDougal decided upon The Gathering Storm based on suggestions from Doherty . Sanderson states he considers the name to be " one of the more bland Wheel of Time titles . "

= = = Release (2009) = = =

Tor published several samples of The Gathering Storm leading up to its release . The first and second chapters were released for free on September 4 and 23 . An e @-@ book of the prologue , " What the Storm Means " , was released for purchase on September 17 , 2009 . Before the release , the final titles of the last two books were also revealed to be Towers of Midnight and A Memory of Light for the 13th and 14th books respectively . Sanderson felt using the title A Memory of Light for the final book was " the best way to honor Mr. Jordan 's wishes . "

The Gathering Storm was released on October 27 , 2009 , with an initial print run of one million books . Sanderson supported the release with a 25 city book signing tour , with McDougal attending some events . The first event in the tour was a midnight release party in Provo , Utah with several hundred fans of the series attending . An unabridged audiobook was released , produced and read by Kate Reading and Michael Kramer , who have so far produced all the audiobooks for the series .

= = Reception = =

The Gathering Storm , like the previous four books in the series , entered the top of The New York Times Best Seller list for hardcover fiction for the week of November 6 , 2009 ; it ended Dan Brown 's The Lost Symbol 's seven @-@ week reign . It dropped to the fourth position after one week . The book sold well in the United Kingdom ; BookScan records 13 @, @ 017 sold copies in the first week of sale .

Upon the release of the book the reception was positive . It was agreed that , compared to other books in the series , the pace was faster . Many subplots were resolved , something Zack Handlen writing for the AV Club found satisfying , saying that the book had " a blessed willingness to tie up loose ends , " something he felt Jordan had been unwilling to do . In a positive review , Seth Bracken of Deseret News explained that the pace is jarring but it also " creates a sense of urgency . " Reviewers noted that Sanderson 's style comes through in the novel , Handlen felt Sanderson 's prose " lacks some of the descriptive punch " compared to Jordan 's . Michael Mason @-@ D 'Croze writing for the Lincoln Journal Star went on to say Sanderson 's " voice comes through in certain ways " , describing the book as the " ultimate fan fiction . "

In a review of the audio book , AudioFile magazine were positive , saying the narrators bring " intensity and passion " to the series . The audio book was also a finalist in AudioFile 's The Audies 2010 awards in the sci @-@ fi and fantasy category .

= = Themes = =

There are several themes based on current world events and issues such as torture . Co @-@ author Brandon Sanderson , who was chosen to complete the book partially because of his

understanding of ethical and moral issues , has admitted in an interview with Wired that these were on his mind but he was not intentionally making a political allegory . Going on to say " fantasy is , at its very core , inherently representative . " He also described laughter as a theme for the book , with the main character himself being unable to laugh , " We ? ve got the terrible laughter and the full , joyful laughter , and poor Rand 's silence in the middle . "