

The Gathering Storm

by Brandon Sanderson · Language: EN

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Overview

The Gathering Storm is the twelfth book in Robert Jordan's epic fantasy series The Wheel of Time, completed by Brandon Sanderson from Jordan's extensive notes. The story follows Rand al'Thor, the Dragon Reborn, as he struggles to unite the nations of the world against the impending Last Battle with the Dark One. Rand's sanity is deteriorating as he channels the tainted male half of the One Power, and his increasingly ruthless methods alienate his allies. Meanwhile, Egwene al'Vere, the captive Amyrlin Seat of the rebel Aes Sedai, works to unite the fractured White Tower from within, while Mat Cauthon navigates political intrigue in the Seanchan-occupied city of Ebou Dar.

The novel is a pivotal installment in the series, setting the stage for the final confrontation. It explores themes of leadership, sacrifice, and the burden of destiny. The narrative alternates between multiple viewpoints, including Rand, Egwene, Mat, and others, weaving together political maneuvering, military strategy, and personal struggles. The book culminates in the dramatic events at the White Tower, where Egwene's rebellion and the loyalist Aes Sedai finally merge, and Rand's confrontation with the Dark One's forces at the Borderlands, setting up the climactic battles of the final volumes.

Why it matters: The Gathering Storm marks the first book in the series published after Robert Jordan's death, with Brandon Sanderson taking over the completion. It is notable for its focus on character development and the resolution of long-running plot threads, particularly Egwene's storyline. The book received critical acclaim for its pacing and emotional depth, and it is considered a strong continuation of Jordan's legacy.

Key Takeaways

- Leadership often requires making unpopular decisions for the greater good, as Rand demonstrates by forcing alliances through harsh means.
- Unity can be achieved through patience and strategic patience, as Egwene shows by enduring captivity to reunite the Aes Sedai.
- The burden of destiny can corrupt even the most well-intentioned, as Rand's growing hardness and paranoia illustrate.
- Sacrifice is sometimes necessary to achieve a greater goal, as seen in Verin's ultimate act of revealing the Black Ajah.

- Trusting your instincts and allies is crucial, even when the path is unclear, as Mat learns in his dealings with the Seanchan.
- The fight against evil requires not only strength but also moral clarity, as the characters grapple with the cost of victory.
- Even in the darkest times, hope can be found in the resilience of the human spirit, as the characters continue to fight against overwhelming odds.

Chapter Summaries

Prologue: The Farriers

The prologue introduces a dark mood as the world edges toward the Last Battle. A mysterious figure, the Dark One's influence, is felt across the land. The prologue sets the stage for the coming conflict, showing the growing darkness and the desperation of those who sense the end is near.

Part 1: The Last Battle Approaches

Rand al'Thor, increasingly hard and paranoid, travels to the Borderlands to rally the nations. He uses the Choedan Kal, a powerful sa'angreal, to cleanse the taint on the male half of the One Power, but the effort leaves him weakened and more unstable. Meanwhile, Egwene al'Vere, held captive in the White Tower, endures the abuse of the loyalist Aes Sedai while secretly working to undermine them and prepare for a rebellion.

Part 2: The White Tower

Egwene's plan to reunite the Aes Sedai comes to a head. She orchestrates a series of events that expose the corruption within the Tower, including the presence of Black Ajah. Her resilience and cleverness win her the respect of many, and she begins to gain support even among her captors. The political intrigue intensifies as the rebel Aes Sedai, led by her, prepare to march on Tar Valon.

Part 3: The Gathering Storm

Rand's actions become increasingly erratic and brutal. He uses the Choedan Kal to cleanse the taint, but the process nearly destroys him. He also confronts the Dark One's forces at the Borderlands, leading to a massive battle. His harsh methods, including forcing the Aes Sedai to swear fealty to him, alienate his closest allies, including Min, who fears for his sanity.

Part 4: The Siege of Tar Valon

Egwene leads the rebel Aes Sedai in a siege of Tar Valon. The loyalist Aes Sedai, led by Elaida, are unprepared for the rebellion's determination. Egwene's strategic brilliance and her ability to inspire loyalty among her followers lead to a dramatic confrontation at the Tower. She is captured and beaten, but her spirit remains unbroken, and she uses the ordeal to rally support.

Part 5: The Last Battle Begins

The novel reaches its climax as Rand, having cleansed the taint, faces a moment of crisis. He is tempted by the Dark One and nearly gives in to despair, but he is saved by the intervention of his friends and the realization that he must fight for the light. Meanwhile, Egwene's rebellion succeeds, and she is finally recognized as the true Amyrlin Seat, uniting the Aes Sedai. The book ends with Rand preparing for the Last Battle, while the forces of darkness gather.

Themes

- Leadership and sacrifice
- The burden of destiny
- Unity and division
- Madness and sanity
- Hope in darkness

Notable Quotes

- "The Dark One is not the only one who can use the Pattern." — Rand reflects on his role in the Pattern, showing his growing understanding of his power and responsibility.
- "It's time to roll the dice." — Mat Cauthon says this as he prepares to take a risky action in Ebou Dar, reflecting his gambler's nature.
- "The Wheel weaves as the Wheel wills." — A common saying in the series, used here to remind characters of the inevitability of fate.
- "I will not be a puppet on a string." — Egwene asserts her independence and determination to lead the Aes Sedai on her own terms.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is The Gathering Storm about?

The Gathering Storm is the twelfth book in The Wheel of Time series. It follows Rand al'Thor as he prepares for the Last Battle, while Egwene al'Vere works to reunite the Aes Sedai. The novel focuses on political intrigue, character development, and the escalating conflict with the Dark One.

Is The Gathering Storm worth reading?

Yes, especially for fans of the series. It is praised for its pacing, emotional depth, and resolution of long-running plotlines. It marks a strong transition to Brandon Sanderson's writing and sets up the final volumes effectively.

How does The Gathering Storm end?

Spoiler: The book ends with Rand cleansing the taint on the One Power and facing a crisis of faith. Egwene successfully unites the Aes Sedai and is recognized as Amyrlin. Rand prepares for the Last Battle, while the Dark One's forces gather, setting the stage for the final confrontation.

Who should read The Gathering Storm?

Readers who have followed The Wheel of Time series up to this point. It is not a standalone book; new readers should start with The Eye of the World. Fans of epic fantasy with complex characters and political intrigue will enjoy it.

How long does it take to read The Gathering Storm?

The book has about 300,000 words. At an average reading speed of 250 words per minute, it takes roughly 20 hours, or about 2-3 weeks if you read an hour a day.