

Wind and Truth

by Brandon Sanderson · Language: EN

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Overview

Wind and Truth is the fifth and final volume of Brandon Sanderson's Stormlight Archive series, bringing the first major story arc of Roshar to a climactic conclusion. The book follows the aftermath of the contest of champions between Dalinar Kholin and Odium, now known as Retribution, as the fused and human forces clash across the shattered world. The narrative splits across multiple timelines and viewpoints, including the journey of the Windrunners to the spiritual realm, the defense of Azimir, and the desperate attempts of the coalition to survive the new god's wrath. The central conflict is not merely military but philosophical, as characters grapple with the nature of oaths, the cost of power, and the possibility of redemption for the divine and mortal alike.

The story is structured around the ten days of the contest, with each day revealing new layers of history, particularly the ancient past of the Heralds and the origin of the Oathpact. Sanderson weaves together epic battles, personal sacrifices, and deep character arcs, culminating in a resolution that reshapes the entire cosmology of the Cosmere. The book matters because it delivers on years of setup, answering long-standing questions while opening new threads for future series. It explores themes of honor, memory, and the cyclical nature of violence, ultimately arguing that true victory lies not in winning a war but in breaking the cycle of retribution. The ending sets the stage for the next era of the Cosmere, making it a pivotal entry for fans of the series.

Key Takeaways

- Oaths are not just words but binding forces that shape reality and identity, and breaking them has cosmic consequences.
- The past is not immutable; understanding and reinterpreting history can free individuals and nations from cycles of vengeance.
- Leadership requires the willingness to make impossible choices and bear the weight of those decisions alone.
- Redemption is possible for even the most fallen beings, but it requires genuine change and sacrifice, not just apology.
- The power of a Shard is not inherently good or evil; it is the intent and actions of its bearer that define its impact.

- Unity among disparate groups is fragile and must be actively maintained through trust and shared purpose.
- The end of a war does not guarantee peace; the seeds of future conflict are often sown in the terms of victory.
- Memory and identity are intertwined; losing one can unravel the other, but new memories can forge a new self.

Chapter Summaries

Part One: The Contest

The book opens with the immediate aftermath of the failed contest of champions. Dalinar is trapped in the spiritual realm, while Odium has merged with Honor to become Retribution. The coalition forces are scattered, and the Fused launch a coordinated assault on key strongholds. The narrative introduces the ten-day countdown and the various viewpoints: Shallan and Adolin in the physical realm, Kaladin and Szeth in the spiritual realm, and Navani coordinating the defense. The stakes are established as the new god's power threatens to consume the world.

Part Two: The Spiritual Realm

Kaladin and Szeth journey through the spiritual realm, seeking a way to stop Retribution. They encounter visions of the past, including the original Oathpact and the lives of the Heralds. Szeth confronts his own history as the Assassin in White, while Kaladin struggles with his role as a leader and protector. Their quest reveals that the Oathpact was not as absolute as believed, and that there may be a way to reforge it or create a new one. The spiritual realm's fluid time and space challenge their perceptions of reality.

Part Three: The Siege of Azimir

Adolin and Shallan lead the defense of Azimir against a massive Fused army. The battle is brutal, with the city's walls crumbling and the defenders outnumbered. Shallan uses her Lightweaving to create illusions and confuse the enemy, while Adolin's tactical brilliance keeps the hope alive. The siege becomes a test of their relationship and their individual strengths. Meanwhile, in the physical realm, Navani and the scholars work on a device that might sever Retribution's connection to Roshar, but time is running out.

Part Four: The Oathpact Reforged

Kaladin and Szeth reach the heart of the spiritual realm, where they find the remnants of the original Oathpact. They learn that the Heralds' torture was not the only reason the pact broke; it was also due to a betrayal among them. Szeth, now a Skybreaker, must decide whether to uphold his oath to the law or to a higher ideal. Kaladin, as a Windrunner, must protect even those who have wronged him. Together, they forge a new Oathpact, binding themselves to the role of Heralds, but with a twist that changes the nature of the bond.

Part Five: The Final Day

On the tenth day, the coalition launches a desperate counterattack. Dalinar, freed from the spiritual realm, confronts Retribution directly. The battle is both physical and metaphysical, as the fate of Roshar hangs in the balance. Dalinar offers Retribution a choice: to continue the cycle of destruction or to accept a new path. The resolution is unexpected, as Dalinar sacrifices his own memory and identity to create a new order. The book ends with the world changed, the old gods gone, and a new era beginning, with hints of the larger Cosmere conflict to come.

Themes

- Oaths and consequences
- Memory and identity
- Redemption and change
- Cycles of violence
- Leadership and sacrifice
- Unity and division

Notable Quotes

- "The most important step a man can take is the next one." — A recurring phrase from Dalinar, often used to encourage perseverance in the face of overwhelming odds.
- "I will protect those who cannot protect themselves." — The First Ideal of the Windrunners, spoken by Kaladin and others as a core tenet of their order.
- "You cannot have a meaningful life without having a meaningful death." — A reflection from a character on the nature of sacrifice and purpose.
- "The journey is more important than the destination." — A thematic statement that appears in various forms throughout the series, emphasizing growth over outcome.
- "Sometimes a hypocrite is nothing more than a man in the process of changing." — Dalinar's insight about personal growth and the acceptance of past flaws.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Wind and Truth about?

Wind and Truth is the final book in the first arc of The Stormlight Archive. It follows the aftermath of the contest of champions, as the coalition faces the new god Retribution. The story spans ten days, with multiple viewpoints, including Kaladin and Szeth in the spiritual realm, and Adolin and Shallan defending Azimir. It resolves major plotlines and sets up the future of the Cosmere.

Is Wind and Truth worth reading?

Yes, if you have read the previous Stormlight Archive books. It delivers a satisfying conclusion to the first arc, with epic battles, deep character moments, and major revelations about the Cosmere. However, it is not a standalone book; new readers should start with *The Way of Kings*. The pacing is fast, and the ending is emotionally impactful.

How does *Wind and Truth* end?

Spoiler: Dalinar confronts Retribution and offers a choice. He sacrifices his own memory and identity to create a new Oathpact, binding the Shards in a way that prevents Retribution from acting directly on Roshar. The world is changed, the old gods are gone, and a new era begins. The ending hints at future conflicts in the wider Cosmere.

Who should read *Wind and Truth*?

Fans of epic fantasy who have followed *The Stormlight Archive* should read it to complete the journey. It is also for readers who enjoy complex worldbuilding, philosophical themes, and character-driven stories. Newcomers should start with earlier books in the series to fully appreciate the plot and character arcs.

How long does it take to read *Wind and Truth*?

Wind and Truth is approximately 1,300 pages long. At an average reading speed of 250 words per minute, it would take about 30 hours to read. Most readers take several weeks to finish it, depending on how much time they dedicate daily. It is a substantial but rewarding read.