

Words of Radiance

by Brandon Sanderson · Language: EN

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Overview

Words of Radiance is the second volume in Brandon Sanderson's epic fantasy series The Stormlight Archive, set on the storm-battered world of Roshar. The novel continues the stories of Kaladin, a former slave turned leader of the bridgemen, and Shallan Davar, a young woman who has taken on the identity of a scholar to uncover the secrets of the Knights Radiant. As the threat of the Voidbringers grows and the political tensions in the kingdom of Alethkar escalate, both protagonists are drawn toward the shattered city of Urithiru, the ancient home of the Radiants, where they must confront their own pasts and the truth about their powers. The book weaves together multiple plotlines, including the machinations of the assassin Szeth, the political struggles of King Elhokar and Highprince Dalinar, and the mysterious visions that guide Dalinar toward a new understanding of the world's history.

The central arc of the novel is the gradual reformation of the Knights Radiant, an order of magical warriors who once protected Roshar but were betrayed and destroyed millennia ago. Kaladin, who has the ability to control the winds and heal wounds, and Shallan, who can create illusions and bring drawings to life, must learn to trust their abilities and each other as they face the return of the Parshendi, the ancient enemies of humanity. The book explores themes of identity, honor, and the cost of leadership, while also delving into the nature of power and the lies that underpin society. The climax brings the characters together in a massive battle, where they must unite to stop a catastrophic storm and the awakening of a new Desolation. Words of Radiance is a pivotal installment that expands the world of Roshar and sets the stage for the larger conflict to come, making it essential reading for fans of epic fantasy and the series as a whole.

Key Takeaways

- The journey to self-discovery often requires confronting the lies you tell yourself, as Shallan must face the truth about her past to unlock her powers.
- Leadership is not about commanding others but about earning their trust through sacrifice and example, as Kaladin learns when he leads the bridgemen.
- Honor is not a fixed code but a personal choice, and Dalinar's struggle to reconcile his violent past with his vision of a better future shows that redemption is possible.
- The power of the Knights Radiant is tied to the oaths they swear, and breaking those oaths can have devastating consequences, as seen with the Recreance.

- Understanding the history of your world is crucial to shaping its future, as the characters discover the truth about the Voidbringers and the Radiants.
- Allies can come from unexpected places, and the alliance between humans and the Parshendi is fragile but necessary for survival.
- The fight against a greater evil requires setting aside personal grudges and working together, as the final battle demonstrates.

Chapter Summaries

Part One: Highstorm

The book opens with Kaladin and the bridgemen being sent on a mission to rescue Dalinar's brother, but they are captured by the Parshendi. Kaladin is forced to fight in an arena, where he discovers his ability to use Stormlight to heal and enhance his strength. Meanwhile, Shallan arrives at the Shattered Plains with her mentor Jasnah, hoping to study the Parshendi and uncover the secrets of the Knights Radiant. The part ends with Kaladin escaping and returning to the warcamps, where he is hailed as a hero.

Part Two: The Shattered Plains

Shallan begins her research on the Parshendi and learns about the Voidbringers from Jasnah's notes. She also discovers that her own powers are growing, as she can create illusions and even change the nature of objects. Kaladin is promoted to captain of the king's guard, but he struggles with the political intrigue and his own feelings of inadequacy. Dalinar continues to receive visions from the Almighty, which point to the need to unite the highprinces and find Urithiru.

Part Three: The Rift

Dalinar and his forces march to the Rift to quell a rebellion, and Kaladin accompanies him. During the battle, Kaladin is gravely injured but is saved by the Stormfather, who reveals that Kaladin is a Knight Radiant. Shallan, meanwhile, is forced to confront her own past when she is attacked by a mysterious assassin and must use her powers to defend herself. She also learns that her father was involved in the death of her mother, and that she has been suppressing these memories.

Part Four: The Oathgate

The characters converge on the Oathgate, a portal that can transport them to Urithiru. Shallan and Kaladin both travel to the ancient city, where they discover the remains of the Knights Radiant and the truth about the Recreance. They also encounter the Parshendi, who are revealed to be the Voidbringers, and learn that the Parshendi have been trying to summon a storm to destroy the humans. The part ends with the decision to use the Oathgate to bring the Alethi army to Urithiru.

Part Five: The Final Desolation

The Alethi forces arrive at Urithiru, but they are immediately attacked by the Parshendi. Kaladin and Shallan work together to defend the city, and Kaladin is able to speak the Fourth Ideal of the Windrunners, which allows him to use his powers to their full extent. Dalinar confronts the Parshendi leader, Eshonai, and manages to convince her to stop the attack, but she is killed by a rival. The book ends with the defeat of the Parshendi and the beginning of a new Desolation, as the Everstorm approaches.

Themes

- Identity and self-discovery
- Honor and leadership
- Power and responsibility
- Redemption and forgiveness
- The cost of war
- The nature of truth

Notable Quotes

- "The most important step a man can take. It's not the first one, is it? It's the next one." — Said by Dalinar Kholin to Kaladin, reflecting on the nature of progress and recovery.
- "Life before death. Strength before weakness. Journey before destination." — The First Ideal of the Knights Radiant, spoken by Kaladin and other Radiants.
- "I will protect those who cannot protect themselves." — Kaladin's personal oath as a Windrunner, reflecting his commitment to protect the innocent.
- "The purpose of a storyteller is not to tell you how to think, but to give you questions to think upon." — Said by Hoid, the mysterious storyteller, to Shallan.
- "You cannot protect yourself from sadness without protecting yourself from happiness." — Said by Kaladin to Shallan, discussing the nature of emotions.

Frequently Asked Questions

What is Words of Radiance about?

Words of Radiance is the second book in Brandon Sanderson's Stormlight Archive series. It follows Kaladin and Shallan as they discover their magical powers and confront the return of the Voidbringers. The novel explores themes of honor, leadership, and self-discovery, and culminates in a massive battle to save the world.

Is Words of Radiance worth reading?

Yes, it is widely considered one of the best epic fantasy novels of the decade. It expands the world of Roshar, deepens character arcs, and delivers a satisfying climax. Fans of complex worldbuilding and character-driven fantasy will find it highly rewarding.

How does Words of Radiance end?

Spoiler: The Alethi forces, led by Dalinar, use the Oathgate to travel to Urithiru. Kaladin speaks the Fourth Ideal and defeats the Parshendi, but Eshonai is killed. The book ends with the Everstorm arriving, signaling the start of a new Desolation and the return of the Voidbringers.

Who should read Words of Radiance?

Readers who enjoy epic fantasy with intricate magic systems, deep character development, and political intrigue. It is ideal for fans of Robert Jordan, George R.R. Martin, or Patrick Rothfuss. New readers should start with the first book, *The Way of Kings*, to fully appreciate the story.

How long does it take to read Words of Radiance?

At an average reading speed of 250 words per minute, it takes about 20 hours to read the full book. Most readers take a few weeks to finish it, given its length and complexity.