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Rand al'Thor, the Dragon Reborn, is ready to fulfill his destiny. To defeat the enemy that threatens them all, he must convince his reluctant allies that his plan—as foolhardy and dangerous as it appears—is their only chance to stop the Dark One's ascension and secure a lasting peace. But if Rand's course of action fails, the world will be engulfed in shadow.

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With Robert Jordan's untimely passing in 2007, Brandon Sanderson, the *New York Times* bestselling author of the *Mistborn* novels and the *Stormlight Archive*, was chosen by Jordan's editor—his wife, Harriet McDougal—to complete the final volume in *The Wheel of Time*, later expanded to three books.



Robert Jordan &
Brandon Sanderson

A Memory of Light

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A
MEMORY
OF
LIGHT

Book Fourteen of The Wheel of Time®



Robert Jordan

ROBERT JORDAN

AND

BRANDON SANDERSON


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For Harriet,
the light of Mr. Jordan's life,
and for Emily,
the light of mine.

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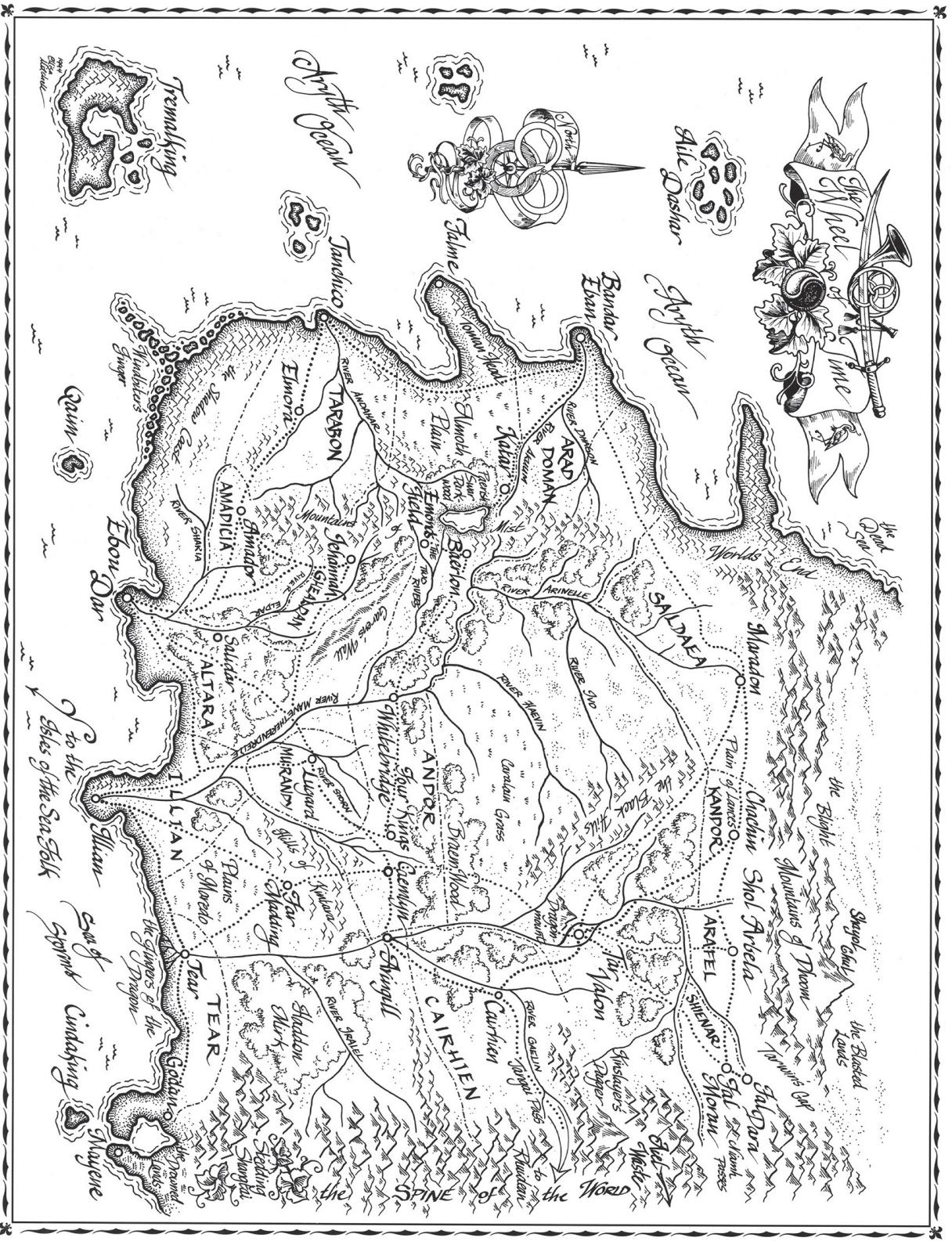
EPILOGUE:

To See the Answer

About the Authors

And the Shadow fell upon the Land, and the World was riven stone from stone. The oceans fled, and the mountains were swallowed up, and the nations were scattered to the eight corners of the World. The moon was as blood, and the sun was as ashes. The seas boiled, and the living envied the dead. All was shattered, and all but memory lost, and one memory above all others, of him who brought the Shadow and the Breaking of the World. And him they named Dragon.

—From *Aleth nin Taerin alta Camora*,
The Breaking of the World.
Author unknown, the Fourth Age.



A
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P R O L O G U E



By Grace and Banners Fallen

Bayrd pressed the coin between his thumb and forefinger. It was thoroughly unnerving to feel the metal *squish*.

He removed his thumb. The hard copper now clearly bore its print, reflecting the uncertain torchlight. He felt chilled, as if he'd spent an entire night in a cellar.

His stomach growled. Again.

The north wind picked up, making torches sputter. Bayrd sat with his back to a large rock near the center of the war camp. Hungry men muttered as they warmed their hands around firepits; the rations had spoiled long ago. Other soldiers nearby began laying all of their metal—swords, armor clasps, mail—on the ground, like linen to be dried. Perhaps they hoped that when the sun rose, it would change the material back to normal.

Bayrd rolled the once-coin into a ball between his fingers. *Light preserve us*, he thought. *Light ...* He dropped the ball to the grass, then reached over and picked up the stones he'd been working with.

“I want to know what happened here, Karam,” Lord Jarid snapped. Jarid and his advisors stood nearby in front of a table draped with maps. “I want

to know how they drew so close, and I want that bloody Darkfriend Aes Sedai queen's head!" Jarid pounded his fist down on the table. Once, his eyes hadn't displayed such a crazed fervor. The pressure of it all—the lost rations, the strange things in the nights—was changing him.

Behind Jarid, the command tent lay in a heap. Jarid's hair—grown long during their exile—blew free, face bathed in ragged torchlight. Bits of dead grass still clung to his coat from when he'd crawled out of the tent.

Baffled servants picked at the iron tent spikes, which—like all metal in the camp—had become soft to the touch. The tent's mounting rings had stretched and snapped like warm wax.

The night smelled wrong. Of staleness, of rooms that hadn't been entered in years. The air of a forest clearing should not smell like ancient dust. Bayrd's stomach growled again. Light, but he would've liked to have something to eat. He set his attention on his work, slapping one of his stones down against the other.

He held the stones as his old pappil had taught him as a boy. The feeling of stone striking stone helped push away the hunger and coldness. At least something was still solid in this world.

Lord Jarid glanced at him, scowling. Bayrd was one of ten men Jarid had insisted guard him this night. "I *will* have Elayne's head, Karam," Jarid said, turning back to his captains. "This unnatural night is the work of her witches."

"Her head?" Eri's skeptical voice came from the side. "And how, precisely, is someone going to bring you her head?"

Lord Jarid turned, as did the others around the torchlit table. Eri stared at the sky; on his shoulder, he wore the mark of the golden boar charging before a red spear. It was the mark of Lord Jarid's personal guard, but Eri's voice bore little respect. "What's he going to use to cut that head free, Jarid? His teeth?"

The camp stilled at the horribly insubordinate line. Bayrd stopped his stones, hesitating. Yes, there had been talk about how unhinged Lord Jarid had become. But this?

Jarid sputtered, face growing red with rage. “You dare use such a tone with me? One of my own *guards*?”

Eri continued inspecting the cloud-filled sky. “You’re docked two months’ pay,” Jarid snapped, but his voice trembled. “Stripped of rank and put on latrine duty until further notice. If you speak back to me again, I’ll cut out your tongue.”

Bayrd shivered in the cold wind. Eri was the best they had in what was left of their rebel army. The other guards shuffled, looking down.

Eri looked toward the lord and smiled. He didn’t say a word, but somehow, he didn’t have to. Cut out his tongue? Every scrap of metal in the camp had gone soft as lard. Jarid’s own knife lay on the table, twisted and warped—it had stretched thin as he pulled it from his sheath. Jarid’s coat flapped, open; it had had silver buttons.

“Jarid ...” Karam said. A young lord of a minor house loyal to Sarand, he had a lean face and large lips. “Do you really think ... really think this was the work of Aes Sedai? All of the metal in the camp?”

“Of course,” Jarid barked. “What else would it be? Don’t tell me you believe those campfire tales. The Last Battle? Phaw.” He looked back at the table. Unrolled there, with pebbles weighting the corners, was a map of Andor.

Bayrd turned back to his stones. *Snap, snap, snap*. Slate and granite. It had taken work to find suitable sections of each, but Pappil had taught Bayrd to recognize all kinds of stone. The old man had felt betrayed when Bayrd’s father had gone off and become a butcher in the city, instead of keeping to the family trade.

Soft, smooth slate. Bumpy, ridged granite. Yes, some things in the world were still solid. Some few things. These days, you couldn’t rely on much. Once immovable lords were now soft as ... well, soft as metal. The sky churned with blackness, and brave men—men Bayrd had long looked up to—trembled and whimpered in the night.

“I’m worried, Jarid,” Davies said. An older man, Lord Davies was as close as anyone was to being Jarid’s confidant. “We haven’t seen anyone in

days. Not farmer, not queen's soldier. Something is happening. Something wrong."

"She cleared the people out," Jarid snarled. "She's preparing to pounce."

"I think she's ignoring us, Jarid," Karam said, looking at the sky. Clouds still churned there. It seemed like months since Bayrd had seen a clear sky. "Why would she bother? Our men are starving. The food continues to spoil. The signs—"

"She's trying to squeeze us," Jarid said, eyes wide with fervor. "This is the work of the Aes Sedai."

Stillness came suddenly to the camp. Silence, save for Bayrd's stones. He'd never felt right as a butcher, but he'd found a home in his lord's guard. Cutting up cows or cutting up men, the two were strikingly similar. It bothered him how easily he'd shifted from one to the other.

Snap, snap, snap.

Eri turned. Jarid eyed the guard suspiciously, as if ready to scream out harsher punishment.

He wasn't always this bad, was he? Bayrd thought. *He wanted the throne for his wife, but what lord wouldn't?* It was hard to look past the name. Bayrd's family had followed the Sarand family with reverence for generations.

Eri strode away from the command post. "Where do you think you're going?" Jarid howled.

Eri reached to his shoulder and ripped free the badge of the Sarand house guard. He tossed it aside and left the torchlight, heading into the night toward the winds from the north.

Most men in the camp hadn't gone to sleep. They sat around firepits, wanting to be near warmth and light. A few with clay pots tried boiling cuts of grass, leaves, or strips of leather as something, anything, to eat.

They stood up to watch Eri go.

"Deserter," Jarid spat. "After all we've been through, now he leaves. Just because things are difficult."

"The men are *starving*, Jarid," Davies repeated.

“I’m aware. Thank you so much for telling me about the problems with every *bloody breath you have*.” Jarid wiped his brow with his trembling palm, then slammed it on his map. “We’ll have to strike one of the cities; there’s no running from her, not now that she knows where we are. Whitebridge. We’ll take it and resupply. Her Aes Sedai must be weakened after the stunt they pulled tonight, otherwise she’d have attacked.”

Bayrd squinted into the darkness. Other men were standing, lifting quarterstaves or cudgels. Some went without weapons. They gathered sleeping rolls, hoisted packs of clothing to their shoulders. Then they began to trail out of the camp, their passage silent, like the movement of ghosts. No rattling of chain mail or buckles on armor. The metal was all gone. As if the soul had been stripped from it.

“Elayne doesn’t dare move against us in strength,” Jarid said, perhaps convincing himself. “There must be strife in Caemlyn. All of those mercenaries you reported, Shiv. Riots, maybe. Elenia will be working against Elayne, of course. Whitebridge. Yes, Whitebridge will be perfect.

“We hold it, you see, and cut the nation in half. We recruit there, press the men in western Andor to our banner. Go to ... what’s the place called? The Two Rivers. We should find able hands there.” Jarid sniffed. “I hear they haven’t seen a lord for decades. Give me four months, and I’ll have an army to be reckoned with. Enough that she won’t dare strike at us with her witches ...”

Bayrd held his stone up to the torchlight. The trick to creating a good spearhead was to start outward and work your way in. He’d drawn the proper shape with chalk on the slate, then had worked toward the center to finish the shape. From there, you turned from hitting to tapping, shaving off smaller bits.

He’d finished one side earlier; this second half was almost done. He could almost hear his pappil whispering to him. *We’re of the stone, Bayrd. No matter what your father says. Deep down, we’re of the stone.*

More soldiers left the camp. Strange, how few of them spoke. Jarid finally noticed. He stood up straight and grabbed one of the torches, holding

it high. “What are they doing? Hunting? We’ve seen no game in weeks. Setting snares, perhaps?”

Nobody replied.

“Maybe they’ve seen something,” Jarid muttered. “Or maybe they think they have. I’ll stand no more talk of spirits or other foolery; the witches are creating apparitions to unnerve us. That’s ... that’s what it has to be.”

Rustling came from nearby. Karam was digging in his fallen tent. He came up with a small bundle.

“Karam?” Jarid said.

Karam glanced at Lord Jarid, then lowered his eyes and began to tie a coin pouch at his waist. He stopped and laughed, then emptied it. The gold coins inside had melted into a single lump, like pigs’ ears in a jar. Karam pocketed this lump. He fished in the pouch and brought out a ring. The blood-red gemstone at the center was still good. “Probably won’t be enough to buy an apple, these days,” he muttered.

“I *demand* to know what you are doing,” Jarid snarled. “Is this your doing?” He waved toward the departing soldiers. “You’re staging a mutiny, is that it?”

“This isn’t my doing,” Karam said, looking ashamed. “And it’s not really yours, either. I’m ... I’m sorry.”

Karam walked away from the torchlight. Bayrd found himself surprised. Lord Karam and Lord Jarid had been friends from childhood.

Lord Davies went next, running after Karam. Was he going to try to hold the younger man back? No, he fell into step beside Karam. They vanished into the darkness.

“I’ll have you hunted down for this!” Jarid yelled after them, voice shrill. Frantic. “I will be consort to the Queen! No man will give you, or any member of your Houses, shelter or succor for ten generations!”

Bayrd looked back at the stone in his hand. Only one step left, the smoothing. A good spearhead needed some smoothing to be dangerous. He brought out another piece of granite he’d picked up for the purpose and carefully began scraping it along the side of the slate.

Seems I remember this better than I'd expected, he thought as Lord Jarid continued to rant.

There was something powerful about crafting the spearhead. The simple act seemed to push back the gloom. There had been a *shadow* on Bayrd, and the rest of the camp, lately. As if ... as if he couldn't stand in the light no matter how he tried. He woke each morning feeling as if someone he'd loved had died the day before.

It could crush you, that despair. But the act of creating something—anything—fought back. That was one way to challenge ... *him*. The one none of them spoke of. The one that they all knew was behind it, no matter what Lord Jarid said.

Bayrd stood up. He'd want to do more smoothing later, but the spearhead actually looked good. He raised his wooden spear haft—the metal blade had fallen free when evil had struck the camp—and lashed the new spearhead in place, just as his pappil had taught him all those years ago.

The other guards were looking at him. “We'll need more of those,” Morear said. “If you're willing.”

Bayrd nodded. “On our way out, we can stop by the hillside where I found the slate.”

Jarid finally stopped yelling, his eyes wide in the torchlight. “No. You are my personal guard. You will not defy me!”

Jarid jumped for Bayrd, murder in his eyes, but Morear and Rosse caught the lord from behind. Rosse looked aghast at his own mutinous act. He didn't let go, though.

Bayrd fished a few things out from beside his bedroll. After that, he nodded to the others, and they joined him—eight men of Lord Jarid's personal guard, dragging the sputtering lord himself through the remnants of camp. They passed smoldering fires and fallen tents, abandoned by men who were trailing out into the darkness in greater numbers now, heading north. Into the wind.

At the edge of camp, Bayrd selected a nice, stout tree. He waved to the others, and they took the rope he'd fetched and tied Lord Jarid to the tree.

The man sputtered until Morear gagged him with a handkerchief.

Bayrd stepped in close. He tucked a waterskin into the crook of Jarid's arm. "Don't struggle too much or you'll drop that, my Lord. You should be able to push the gag off—it doesn't look too tight—and angle the water-skin up to drink. Here, I'll take out the cork."

Jarid stared thunder at Bayrd.

"It's not about you, my Lord," Bayrd said. "You always treated my family well. But, here, we can't have you following along and making life difficult. There's just something that we need to do, and you're stopping everyone from doing it. Maybe someone should have said something earlier. Well, that's done. Sometimes, you let the meat hang too long, and the entire haunch has to go."

He nodded to the others, who ran off to gather bedrolls. He pointed Rosse toward the slate outcropping nearby and told him what to look for in good spearhead stone.

Bayrd turned back to the struggling Lord Jarid. "This isn't witches, my Lord. This isn't Elayne ... I suppose I should call her the Queen. Funny, thinking of a pretty young thing like that as queen. I'd rather have bounced her on my knee at an inn than bow to her, but Andor will need a ruler to follow to the Last Battle, and it isn't your wife. I'm sorry."

Jarid sagged in his bonds, the anger seeming to bleed from him. He was weeping now. Odd thing to see, that.

"I'll tell people we pass—if we pass any—where you are," Bayrd promised, "and that you probably have some jewels on you. They might come for you. They might." He hesitated. "You shouldn't have stood in the way. Everyone seems to know what is coming but you. The Dragon is reborn, old bonds are broken, old oaths done away with ... and I'll be *hanged* before I let Andor march to the Last Battle without me."

Bayrd left, walking into the night, raising his new spear onto his shoulder. *I have an oath older than the one to your family, anyway. An oath the Dragon himself couldn't undo.* It was an oath to the land. The stones were in his blood, and his blood in the stones of this Andor.

Bayrd gathered the others and they left for the north. Behind them in the night, their lord whimpered, alone, as the ghosts began to move through camp.

Talmanes tugged on Selfar's reins, making the horse dance and shake his head. The roan seemed eager. Perhaps Selfar sensed his master's anxious mood.

The night air was thick with smoke. Smoke and screams. Talmanes marched the Band alongside a road clogged with refugees smudged with soot. They moved like flotsam in a muddy river.

The men of the Band eyed the refugees with worry. "Steady!" Talmanes shouted to them. "We can't sprint all the way to Caemlyn. Steady!" He marched the men as quickly as he dared, nearly at a jog. Their armor clanked. Elayne had taken half of the Band with her to the Field of Merrilor, including Estean and most of the cavalry. Perhaps she had anticipated needing to withdraw quickly.

Well, Talmanes wouldn't have much use for cavalry in the streets, which were no doubt as clogged as this roadway. Selfar snorted and shook his head. They were close now; the city walls just ahead—black in the night—held in an angry light. It was as if the city were a firepit.

By grace and banners fallen, Talmanes thought with a shiver. Enormous clouds of smoke billowed over the city. This was bad. Far worse than when the Aiel had come for Cairhien.

Talmanes finally gave Selfar his head. The roan galloped along the side of the road for a time; then Talmanes reluctantly forced his way across, ignoring pleas for help. Time he'd spent with Mat made him wish there were more he could offer these people. It was downright strange, the effect Matrim Cauthon had on a person. Talmanes looked at common folk in a very different light now. Perhaps it was because he still didn't rightly know whether to think of Mat as a lord or not.

On the other side of the road, he surveyed the burning city, waiting for his men to catch up. He could have mounted all of them—though they

weren't trained cavalry, every man in the Band had a horse for long-distance travel. Tonight, he didn't dare. With Trollocs and Myrddraal lurking in the streets, Talmanes needed his men in immediate fighting shape. Crossbowmen marched with loaded weapons at the flanks of deep columns of pikemen. He would not leave his soldiers open to a Trolloc charge, no matter how urgent their mission.

But if they lost those dragons ...

Light illumine us, Talmanes thought. The city seemed to be boiling, with all that smoke churning above. Yet some parts of the Inner City—rising high on the hill and visible over the walls—were not yet aflame. The Palace wasn't on fire yet. Could the soldiers there be holding?

No word had come from the Queen, and from what Talmanes could see, no help had arrived for the city. The Queen must still be unaware, and that was bad.

Very, *very* bad.

Ahead, Talmanes spotted Sandip with some of the Band's scouts. The slender man was trying to extricate himself from a group of refugees.

"Please, good master," one young woman was crying. "My child, my daughter, in the heights of the northern march ..."

"I must reach my shop!" a stout man bellowed. "My glasswares—"

"My good people," Talmanes said, forcing his horse among them, "I should think that if you want us to help, you might wish to back away and allow us to reach the bloody city."

The refugees reluctantly pulled back, and Sandip nodded to Talmanes in thanks. Tan-skinned and dark-haired, Sandip was one of the Band's commanders and an accomplished hedge-doctor. The affable man wore a grim expression today, however.

"Sandip," Talmanes said, pointing, "there."

In the near distance, a large group of fighting men clustered, looking at the city.

"Mercenaries," Sandip said with a grunt. "We've passed several batches of them. Not a one seemed inclined to lift a finger."