

Winter's Heart Study Guide

Winter's Heart by Robert Jordan

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Plot Summary

The fantasy world in the Wheel of Time series of novels is out of whack. This ninth novel in the series opens with conflicts continued from the previous book and two major factions preparing to fight it out. One faction uses the Power to weave patterns that can cause great destruction or perform miraculous healing. The other faction tries to suppress the Power and its masters known as Aes Sedai. Central to this all is Rand al'Thor, the Dragon Reborn. Rand has the ability to channel the Power and also potentially to bring the world back into balance. The age is called the Time of Illusions and is unstable with so many willing to go at each other's throats.

Armies are on the march while one of Rand's friends, Mat Cauthon, finds himself trapped in the port city of Ebou Dar and hunted by a humanoid monster called a gholam. The creature nearly takes Mat's life in a deserted alleyway, and the only thing that saves him is a special amulet that he always wears around his neck. Not only must Mat escape the creature, he needs to break off a relationship with the Queen, Tylin Quintara Mitsobar. As Mat schemes his escape, he finds himself responsible for two Aes Sedai who also need to escape, and eventually a whole band of people. Whether his escape comes off successfully is left up to the reader's interpretation, for that part of the story is not told.

Rand's story does come to completion. He takes the Choedan Kal, a set of special statues, one male and the other female, to the city of Caemlyn in the country of Andor and gives them to an Aes Sedai named Nynaeve al'Meara for safe keeping while he goes to Far Madding in the country of Illian. Nynaeve will have none of this and comes along. Before he leaves Caemlyn, Mat bonds with three women, even though he had been bonded to another before this story began.

In Far Madding, Rand manages to channel the Power, which registers on a device in the city that suppresses the power and points to the location of anyone trying to use it. His troubles compound when five assassins come after him, one of which he kills. But while trying to kill the others before they kill him, Rand falls into a trap set by the city Counsel. He runs away from the awaiting city guards and falls off a high roof. Captured, another must negotiate his release. This woman is the Aes Sedai named Cadsuane Melaidhrin, who can also channel the Power in the city. She does so and convinces the Counsel to release Rand to her. This allows Rand and Nynaeve to use the Choedan Kal and thereby set the world straight again in a dramatic climax that ends this ninth novel in the series. The whole point was to knock the Wheel of Time out of the Time of Illusion and into the next major cycle. Three more novels follow with two in the development stages, due for release in late 2010 and 2011.



Chapters 1-2 Leaving the Prophet; Taken

Chapters 1-2 Leaving the Prophet; Taken Summary

In Chapter 1, Perrin Aybara exits a visit with Masema, Prophet of the Lord Dragon, upset with the arguing that had happened. Perrin thinks that Masema is mad but has convinced the Prophet to visit his camp. Perrin and his forces leave Amador without incident, although Masema's guards look threatening, ready to attack upon any sign of trouble. The season is winter, and snow blankets the ground oftentimes up to the horses' knees. While traveling back to his camp, Perrin thinks fondly about his wife Faile, whom he dearly misses.

In Chapter 2, as Perrin approaches his camp, he notices right away that something is wrong. He has four forces with him, and they have all mounted their horses and are prepared for battle. Two of the forces leaders argue about what to do. The situation is tense and could break out into a fight, which would be useless because the forces are allies. Perrin, the leader of all the forces, rides up and stops the arguing. He learns that Faile has been captured by an enemy known as the Shaido.

Perrin takes the news very hard. He wants to chase after the Shaido straight off, but calmer minds talk him down. Perrin has the ability to communicate with wolves psychically, and he asks them for help from a distance. The wolves respond that too many people are in the woods, making life for them dangerous. The Wise Ones retreat to their tent to decide what to do, which drives Perrin over the edge again. He almost cuts open the tent flap, tied from within, and demands answers that they cannot give, not knowing what he wants to find out—where his wife is and if she is safe. A Wise One, a female named Nevarin, unties the flap from the inside the tent and talks Perrin down. He then climbs a hill and accepts the fact that he has to wait for the Wise Ones to come up with a plan.

Chapters 1-2 Leaving the Prophet; Taken Analysis

The story begins with many assumptions because this is the ninth novel in a series about The Wheel of Time. No backstory clarifies certain things in this fantasy world, which is somewhat based on science and heavily based on Eastern philosophies. The world has Power, which is everywhere except where blocked by special mystical technology. Women tend to dominate, with a few exceptions, such as Perrin. However, he must constantly struggle to keep control. Some of the women learn how to use the Power, which has a male and female side. The women use the female side to heal wounds and make special weaves of light for defensive shields and holding others as if caught in a net. The Power also has an air element that can be used to directly attack an opponent.



The world has come out of a serious war in which the Power had been used destructively. The destruction was so intense that a movement has begun to suppress the Power and its use. However, The Wheel of Time must turn for good or bad, and so this Age of Illusion cannot hold forever. Perrin is trying to rally forces to eliminate the Profit, Masema, whom he considers crazy. However, Masema is a supporter of the Lord Dragon Reborn, Rand al'Thor.

At this point in the story, Perrin is the protagonist who loses his wife to a moving army. Masema is the antagonist who wants to restore the Power through Rand, who is somehow incapacitated and cannot do what needs to be done. The overarching question is whether a force of nature, The Power, can ever be successfully suppressed. Within this context, Masema is a protagonist and Perrin the antagonist.



Chapters 3-4 Customs; Offers

Chapters 3-4 Customs; Offers Summary

In Chapter 3, Faile struggles to avoid frostbite as she is led along the march by a Shaído named Rolan. The Shaído have stripped Faile naked and have used her woolen stockings to fashion a leash around her neck. When Rolan looks at her, he does not see a beautiful naked woman, but an animal to be moved along with slaps to the rump. Faile sees Alliandre, the Queen of Ghealdan, and Maighdin, Faile's maid, being treated the same way. The other women try to fight their captors, but Faile holds back, thinking this a waste of effort. She instead tries to think about escape.

When the captured women slow down their captors, the men hoist them onto their shoulders, heads down, and carry them at a brisk pace. This puts Faile into great jeopardy, and she almost freezes to death during the march. Faile's captors make it to their main camp. Here a servant, who is known as gai'shain and has the same status as a slave, gives a blanket and honey-sweetened tea to Faile. She recovers enough to ask a few questions of the servant but learns little about her situation.

In Chapter 4, a Shaído woman named Therava looks over the prisoners and decides to make them gai'shain, or slaves. She orders a woman named Galina to heal the captured women's injuries from the march, which Galina can do because she has a magic healing ring that only Aes Sedai, a type of female wizard, can use. After the healing the prisoners are given white hooded cloaks and long boots to wear, along with wide golden belts and collars that mark them as gai'shain. The march continues, and Faile realizes that all the clans of the Shaído are on the move together. Her prospects for escape look very unlikely.

Therava offers to help Faile, Alliandre and Maighdin escape if they spy on Sevanna, one of the more powerful female Shaído leaders. Faile has no choice but to accept this. As the march continues, Galina approaches Faile and offers to help them escape too if they steal a white rod from Therava for her. Again, Faile has no choice but to accept the offer. She must become a spy and a thief or spend the next year and one day as a servant to the Shaído.

Chapters 3-4 Customs; Offers Analysis

These chapters explain Faile's fate among the Shaído. She is made a gai'shain, a type of slavery that lasts for a year and a day. Although she had been treated like an animal and almost froze to death during the march, she lives and has a relatively bright future with the temporary slavery.

The conflict comes in when Faile is approached by two Shaído women, each with her own agenda and each with a promise to help Faile escape. Unfortunately, this conflict is left hanging. The story never returns to what happened to Faile, even though an implied

promise for adventure has been made. This is usually very bad form in fiction and can only be justified as an experimental approach to a fantasy novel. Given that other novels may be planned, the author could bring Faile's story out in a subsequent book.



Chapters 5-6 Flags; The Scent of Madness

Chapters 5-6 Flags; The Scent of Madness Summary

In Chapter 5, Perrin awakes in Berelain's tent, a woman who wishes to make him her lover. Perrin had been wounded and required Healing, a special form of medicine that quickly heals but also stresses the body. He demands his clothes, dresses and leaves the tent. However, people in the camp believe that he has made love with Berelain, which mortifies Perrin. He returns to Berelain's tent because she might have information about his missing wife, Faile. Unfortunately, Berelain cannot say whether his wife is still alive, but she does give other information about Faile encountering trouble with a moving army. He considers abandoning the attempt to rescue his wife.

In Chapter 6, Perrin decides to chase after Faile and starts to make the arrangements. While doing so, part of a scouting party he had sent out to find her returns. They have no news other than finding Faile's clothing and the garments of the others who were captured. The rest of the scouting party continues to follow the army, trying to find evidence whether Faile is alive or dead. Perrin learns that the army numbers in the thousands, ten or more. Once underway, Perrin's forces meet up with another small army under Masema. Masema wants to rescue Rand, Lord Dragon Reborn. Suddenly Perrin feels that he will not be able to rescue Faile because Masema may take his life.

Chapters 5-6 Flags; The Scent of Madness Analysis

With these chapters, the story about Perrin and Faile ends. The reader can assume that Faile lives on as a temporary slave, but whether Perrin lives or dies is left hanging. Again, this story may be finished in a subsequent book, but for now the reader must abandon hope that these characters' fates will be explained.

Of significance to this story is how Perrin must constantly deal with the ways of women. He has difficulties with men too, most notably Masema, but he becomes ensnared in Berelain's desires for him. He has been faithful to Faile, yet it seems the entire camp believes he has not. This theme, somewhat misogynistic, carries through the entire novel. However, balance is achieved to a degree by showing how women have problems among themselves as well. The fundamental principle has to do with power—its use and abuse. The Power in this world has a male and female side, similar to the ideas of yin and yang in Eastern philosophies, implying that the two sides must balance in order to gain harmony. At this point in the world's history, the female side of The Power outweighs the male side because the male side, represented by Rand, is suppressed. Whether this is a kind of allegory for the Women's Rights Movement is up to the reader's interpretation. The copyright for this book is the year 2000, but the series began in 1990, and the writing commenced in 1984. This places the conceptual phase

of the book series squarely into a time of women's rights backlash and reactionary politics.

An alternative interpretation would be that no allegory has been attempted. This is simply a story about powerful people and how they interact. The interactions are different for women and men, but neither side has any claim to superiority when exercising power. The idea that women and men are equal but at the same time different is a commonly held modern take on the sexes, at least in most developed countries.



Chapters 7-10 The Streets of Caemlyn; Sea Folk and Kin; A Cup of Tea; A Plan Succeeds

Chapters 7-10 The Streets of Caemlyn; Sea Folk and Kin; A Cup of Tea; A Plan Succeeds Summary

In Chapter 7, Elayne Trakand, heir to the throne of Andor, rides through the streets of Caemlyn with her entourage. The people generally favor her, but Sareitha expresses her concern for Elayne's safety. Elayne argues that staying within the palace would do no good for keeping the people of Caemlyn on her side. Birgitte pushes Elayne to obtain a bodyguard as a compromise, and the issue of possible spies in the palace comes up. Elayne and her entourage return to the palace.

In Chapter 8, Elayne questions Reene Harfor about the possibility of spies because she oversees most of what goes on in the palace. Reene tells Elayne that she had not been able to identify any spies for certain, but also that she has suspicions about a man and woman who had left the palace in a hurry, leaving all their possessions behind. Elayne believes that they were spies. She then goes to her apartment and works on the issues at hand.

Elayne talks with Nynaeve, a woman who has the responsibility of instructing novices in the use of the Power, about the slowness of some novices in their lessons and the difficulty of teaching Atha'an Miere (Sea Folk) women because they have no respect for Aes Sedai (initiated women). Elayne then visits Reanne Corly in her apartment and talk about the damane (collared slaves) who want to remain damane even when Elayne is willing to free them.

In Chapter 9, Elayne returns to her apartment and meets with the Halwin Norry, her First Clerk. Halwin has good news that a rich deposit of alum has been discovered in Andor. This discovery promises to bring more money into the treasury, which has shrunk considerably from financing an earlier war. Halwin then tells her that the White Tower has acknowledged Rand as the true Dragon Reborn and has offered to protect him. The leader of the White Tower is an Aes Sedai named Elaida, and Elayne wonders how this will pertain to the Final Battle. When the Final Battle happens, the world will be changed. Halwin continues that the whereabouts of Rand are unknown. She hears more news, much of it old and all of it unimportant before she dismisses Halwin.

At her midday meal, Elayne is drugged and an assassination attempt is made by three men. An Aes Sedai named Dyelin comes to Elayne's aid. Dyelin manages to keep the assassins away from Elayne until palace guards arrive and kill the assassins.



In Chapter 10, Elayne awakens from the drug and learns that the three assassins had each carried a dagger coated in poison. Even a minor wound would have resulted in her death. She also learns that a man named Doilin Mellar, a lieutenant, killed two of the assassins. Elayne promotes him to captain on the spot, talks with the other women in her room about the proposed bodyguards and falls asleep. She enters a dream world that has a certain amount of reality to it and meets with Nynaeve. Both are shocked when a man enters the dream world because men do not, or at least most do not, have the ability. The women try to identify who the man is, but he eludes them. When out of the dream world, Elayne makes Captain Mellar the head of her bodyguards.

Chapters 7-10 The Streets of Caemlyn; Sea Folk and Kin; A Cup of Tea; A Plan Succeeds Analysis

These four chapters introduce Elayne Trakand and several of her allies, mostly Aes Sedai women. Elayne has too much responsibility, not enough money and underestimates how much danger she is in. She can act as if she were the Queen of Andor but has not yet been crowned, which gives her enormous power. She would like to start an educational academy for novices wanting to become Aes Sedai and feed all her subjects, but until the alum is discovered, the prospects are dim. Alum commands a good price, so once the mines go into production, her money worries will be over. Meanwhile she must deal with spies and an attempt on her life.

The dream world has advantages because most men cannot enter it and only the initiated Aes Sedai have enough control to make the dream world a practical meeting place safe from spies. However, one man manages to enter the dream world, indicating that the security of the meeting place has been compromised. The mysteries involve who this man is and how he became powerful enough to do what only Aes Sedai can do.

In the overall story, Elayne is on the side of the Power. She is a fairly new Aes Sedai initiate and has not yet mastered control, as shown when her gown and chair continually change in the dream world. Keeping objects constant requires more concentration than she has mastered. From a political perspective, she can be considered liberal in that she wants to feed all her subjects and promote education while being less aware of dangers than her companions. By the end of Chapter 10, she has taken the advice to form a bodyguard force headed by Captain Mellar. However, Mellar does not hold Elayne's best interests to heart, which puts her into more danger than before.



Chapters 11-12 Ideas of Improvement; A Lily in Winter

Chapters 11-12 Ideas of Improvement; A Lily in Winter Summary

In Chapter 11, Rand enters Elayne's palace disguised as an old man and accompanied by Min, an Aes Sedai. He is looking for Mat Cauthon and Nynaeve. His disguise is a use of the Power called the Mask of Mirrors, and since he is not accustomed to using the Power in this way, it makes him feel sick and dizzy. When Rand locates Nynaeve, he drops the disguise and asks her to keep two small statues for him until he asks for them at the right time. One statue is of a man and the other a woman. Nynaeve does not understand what he means by the right time, but she agrees to keep the statues until then. However, she insists on going along with Rand to deal with some men elsewhere rather than waiting for him in the palace. Rand does not find Mat in the palace.

In Chapter 12, Elayne talks with Min about how Min handles Rand. Min says she usually does not lie to him but tells him only what he needs to know. They come upon Birgitte, who is interviewing women to fill out Elayne's bodyguard to the desired number of twenty guards. Elayne then moves to Nynaeve's apartment in the palace, along with Min and Aviendha, where they find Rand. Nynaeve becomes outraged when Rand confesses his love for three women—Elayne, Min and Aviendha—all three in the room. However, all three women acknowledge their love for Rand and bond with him, which is a kind of relationship traditionally between one man and one woman, as in marriage. When Rand sleeps with Elayne, the other two women can see in their minds what goes on in the bedchamber, a very uncomfortable situation for them.

Chapters 11-12 Ideas of Improvement; A Lily in Winter Analysis

Chapters 11 and 12 set up key plot elements while bringing out the strange relationships among the characters. The two statues that Rand gives to Nynaeve for safekeeping are significant tools for using The Power, and they show up again in the final scenes of the story. When Nynaeve insists on accompanying Rand to a place yet unknown, she positions herself in danger but does not realize it. Rand does not want her along because her presence will likely complicate the tasks he must perform as the Lord Dragon Reborn. This foreshadows conflicts between Rand and Nynaeve, as does his bonding with three women. Nynaeve is a traditionalist when it comes to bonding.

The bonding is different from marriage, in that the Power is used to establish the bond, and a psychic connection immediately forms. The bonded people can see, in their minds, what the others see, and the visions are literal. In the usual human relationships



that we have, a sense of what the other person is thinking or doing at any particular moment can form over time, but the certainty of these impressions is commonly doubted. With bonding, no doubt exists. A parallel idea to bonding then becomes the development of the third eye, a part of Eastern philosophy. With a developed third eye, a person is supposed to be able to see events disconnected from space and occasionally time. The difference is that no development is needed with bonding, and so the shock of witnessing certain events comes on immediately. The author explores how people might react to these unwanted revelations. At this point, only Min and Aviendha suffer from witnessing Rand making love to Elayne. They become dizzy and emotionally distraught, but the implication is that Rand will also experience similar reactions when he sees shocking things, or more likely, becomes confused from having too many powerful voices in his head.



Chapters 13-15 Wonderful News; What a Veil Hides; In Need of a Bellfounder

Chapters 13-15 Wonderful News; What a Veil Hides; In Need of a Bellfounder Summary

In Chapter 13, Harine din Togara argues with Cadsuane about releasing Harine's Windfinder, Shalone. Harine is a Sea Folk (mariner) who distrusts Aes Sedai such as Cadsuane and the five other Aes Sedai in the room. Cadsuane refuses her demand, saying that the Windfinder is needed to determine what had happened when Rand had fled from the Sun Palace. Harine continues to fight for Shalone's release but fails to move Cadsuane, who orders Harine back to her room.

Cadsuane learns that a man in the city had successfully healed an Aes Sedai and returned the Power to her. This is significant because it is a new way to heal that was discovered by a man. An Aes Sedai named Alanna collapses, and attempts at healing her fail.

Demandred reports angrily that Rand had been seen in several cities and other locations. Osan'gar, the man who had the responsibility to guard Rand, says that Rand has been lucky. He should be captured or killed soon. An argument ensues with two women in the room warning Demandred that he should fear Rand's success as well as failure and placing blame on him and Osan'gar for Rand's escape. Another responsible party, Moridin, strides into the room and assures the men that the Great Lord of the Dark is still confident of their loyalty. He then catches a rat, toys with it a bit, throws it into the air, and the rat disappears in a strange flame that is hotter than normal fire. He is using the True Power.

A woman who accompanies Moridin, named Cyndane, tells the group that Rand has the Choedan Kal (the two statues) and knows a woman strong enough to use the female statue. Moridin tells the men that they will know where Rand is when he touches the Choedan Kal, and that it is their responsibility to stop Rand from performing a mysterious act with the two statues and the strong woman.

In Chapter 14, Tuon Athaem Kore Paendrag, Daughter of the Nine Moons, sails aboard a ship heading for the harbor at Ebou Dar. Her intention is to reclaim something that had been stolen from her ancestor. This ties with Rand in that she requires that he kneel before the Crystal Throne. She had recently had her fortune told, and she did not like the outcome.

In Chapter 15, Mat schemes on how he can leave Ebou Dar. He hears dice shaking in his imagination, an omen to him that something very bad is about to happen. He has a chance to leave the city with a traveling circus, but that will not happen for months. Stuck, he considers the use of fireworks with a catapult, but one of the fireworks makers



tells him to find a bellfounder, possibly to cast a cannon out of bronze or brass. Whatever happens, he expects violent confrontations of some sort.

Chapters 13-15 Wonderful News; What a Veil Hides; In Need of a Bellfounder Analysis

These three chapters push the story ahead while introducing characters who may or may not have important roles to play in future scenes. The major points made are that Rand had escaped from a city before he went to Elayne's palace; evil people are looking for him; Mat is in port city of Ebou Dar, and something bad is about to happen to him. A great deal of superfluous detail is given that tends to dilute the main plot. Once again the story depends upon the reader's knowledge of the previous eight novels, and so the plot suffers from being pushed into the background.

The story concentrates more on characters as a result, which fans of the series probably find entertaining enough. Many minor characters are named, a characteristic of famous Russian novels by Dostoevsky and Tolstoy. The implications of naming a character are usually that this person is important to the story and that the character will reappear later in the story. Unfortunately, many of these minor characters blink in and out for just one scene, which can confuse and annoy some readers. Half the story has been told at this point, and precious little has happened. Additionally, several loose ends have been left dangling without much hope they will be wrapped up by the end of the story. However, the reader knows by now that Rand is the central focus of the story and that he needs to find Mat for some reason. Rand has the important statues, known as the Choedan Kal, and evil forces need to kill him before he can do something with them that will change the world. Meanwhile, other people have their own agendas, such as Tuon as she enters the harbor at Ebou Dar.

Chapter 13 introduces the True Power, which seems to be the opposite of the Power. This is the struggle between good and evil that many stories use as a central theme, especially in fantasy fiction. Rand is fighting for good, while Moridin fights for evil. Good must always come out on top in this kind of story, although the line between good and evil may be blurred. People will die if good prevails, specifically Moridin and his minions. The saving grace is that the reader does not care, and so an exciting ending is promised in which evil people will receive the justice due to them.



Chapters 16-17 An Unexpected Encounter; Pink Ribbons

Chapters 16-17 An Unexpected Encounter; Pink Ribbons Summary

In Chapter 16, Mat and two of his friends, Thom and Beslan, try to make their ways through the crowded streets of Ebou Dar. The Seanchan forces have taken over the city, a campaign they call the Return. Those who still fight against the Return are beheaded when caught, and their heads put on spikes outside the city gates on the harbor-side wall as warnings. Mat has a romantic relationship with Tylin Quintara Mitsobar, the Queen of Altara and Beslan's mother, that is less than wonderful. In fact, he feels like a kept man, a toy for Tylin, and he would just as soon escape the city and her dominance if he could.

Mat still hears the dice tumbling in his head, the omen of bad things to come. He worries about that but knows nothing bad will happen until after the dice sound stops. After splitting away from his friends, Mat finds himself in a secluded alley. Here a creature called a gholam attacks Mat. The gholam is a humanoid monster that hires itself out as an assassin. Mat fights back with a special amulet that burns the creature upon coming into contact with it, and Mat swings the amulet in fast, wide arcs. The sound of approaching men causes the gholam to flee by squeezing through a small hole in a nearby wall. Mat then notices an old man at his side. The old man introduces himself as Noal Charin.

In Chapter 17, Noal and Mat move out of the alley and into a square called the Mol Hara, where the crowds of people keep the gholam away. Nearby is the Tarasin Palace where Tylin lives along with the more powerful High Lady Suroth Sabelle Meldarath, commander of the Forerunners for the Seanchan Empress who lives far across the sea. This means that Suroth actually rules Ebou Dar and the surrounding lands, but not all of Altara. Mat leads Noal to the royal stables.

The stable guards know Mat and allow him and Noal to enter the barracks, where Noal tells the story of Mat and the gholam. Mat leaves the barracks intending to clean up after the fight, and he comes across Juilin Sandar, a thief-catcher. Juilin wants to return to his home country, Tear, and offers to bring Mat along. Mat takes this into consideration and goes to Tylin's apartments.

Mat sees Suroth and several strangers in Tylin's apartments, which gives him pause. The sound of the dice shaking has gone away, and he expects trouble. Word of the gholam's attack on Mat has reached them, and Suroth tries to defend the safety of the city against accusations made by Tylin and some of the others. Mat tries to blame his injuries on the siege of the city, but nobody buys this lame explanation. One of the women strangers offers to buy Mat, but Tylin points out that he is a freeman. Suroth and



the others leave the apartments, after which Tylin orders Mat to dress in pink with pink ribbons, just so she can see what he looks like in pink.

Chapters 16-17 An Unexpected Encounter; Pink Ribbons Analysis

The story shifts to the viewpoint of Mat Cauthon. Apparently, the city of Ebou Dar has very recently been taken by the Seanchans because Mat attempts to blame his fresh injuries from the gholam attack. The city natives behave sullenly, another indication of recent conquest. For Mat, the city has become an intolerably dangerous place to stay, so he must escape it soon. A possible solution is offered by Juilin. However, the palace crawls with spies, making it impossible to talk much about the offer.

The exact connection between Rand and Mat remains uncertain at this point. The effect of this is to cast both characters into protagonist roles but each having different sets of antagonists. Rand has the forces of evil to contend with, while Mat has a mysterious humanoid monster trying to kill him. Since the gholam hires itself out as an assassin, an assumption can be made that the forces of evil have done the hiring. The only thread connecting Mat to Rand is that Rand wants to find Mat for some reason.

Mat's relationship with Tylin disturbs him. Tylin is an older woman, the mother of one of Rand's friends, and she treats him like a sex toy, dressing him in pink for example. Nevertheless, the relationship has kept Mat alive during the aftermath of the successful siege. If Mat were to escape the city, he would be out of immediate danger and out of his increasingly irritating relationship with Tylin. The motivation for escape has come to a head, and so the escape needs to be attempted soon.

The relative ages of Mat and Tylin can be guessed at around sixteen for Mat and mid-thirties for Tylin, since she is old enough to be his mother. This lends a certain amount of oedipal creepiness to the story without delving too deeply into the psychological ramifications of such a relationship. Mat simply does not like the way he is being treated; he is, after all, a freeman. A woman offers to buy him, which brings home the central frustration. Mat is being treated as a slave while he stays in Ebou Dar. Highly conflicted, he must resolve this situation.



Chapters 18-19 An Offer; Three Women

Chapters 18-19 An Offer; Three Women Summary

In Chapter 18, evidence of the gholam still being in the city manifests by people being killed by something tearing their throats out. The townsfolk guess that it is a wolf, but Mat knows better. Ships continue to arrive in the harbor, further crowding the city with people and goods. When the ships leave, they take soldiers with them but leave a strong garrison. News arrives about Rand, which Mat tries to ignore but cannot. The Seanchan become disturbed at the news and increase their patrols of the surrounding land under their control.

The morning after Tylin insisted that Mat wear a pink outfit, he burns the clothing and ribbons in the fireplace before leaving the palace for an inn called the Wandering Woman. At the inn, he asks the innkeeper for a room. Surprising Mat, she asks about Nynaeve and Elayne. Mat has no idea how she knows about these people, but he tells her what he knows in a whisper. All she can offer in the crowded city is a place to keep his clothes and a hiding place for his gold. He makes arrangements at the palace to have his clothes brought to the inn a little at a time, and while this is going on, he transfers his gold from the palace to the inn a little at a time too. His strategy is to leave the palace without Tylin noticing.

Remembering the desire of a fireworks maker to find a bellfounder, Mat locates one. The shop is busy with making special bells for an upcoming celebration, and Mat abandons the idea for the time being. He returns to the palace and Tylin. Fortunately for Mat, Tylin keeps herself preoccupied with Suroth and another powerful Seanchan woman named Tuon.

In Chapter 19, Mat returns to the Wandering Woman. Because the main room is full, he is given his meal in the kitchen, where he meets Joline Maza, an Aes Sedai friend of the innkeeper, Anan. A Seanchan officer demands to enter the kitchen because he suspects an Aes Sedai is there, and Mat moves quickly to draw Joline to his lap and pretends to kiss her. The ruse works. Anan handles the officer and his men, and they depart without arresting Joline. Quickly Anan directs Mat to carry Joline, who is crying and too weak to walk, up a set of narrow stairs to a stockroom. There he promises to help her escape the city.

Mat then goes back to the palace to pick up the last clothes he will need, along with the remainder of his gold and his weapons—a spear and bow. He hears a woman crying and investigates. She is Teslyn Baradon, another Aes Sedai who needs to escape the city. He reluctantly promises to take her too, but no others. Mat leaves to find Juilin and make arrangements for the escape while feeling unfairly burdened with the extra responsibilities for the two Aes Sedai.



Chapters 18-19 An Offer; Three Women Analysis

Mat must abandon his impossible plan to retake the city using fireworks shot through a cannon. The plan would not have worked anyway, but what stops him cold is the bellfounder's attitude. His shop is simply too busy to do anything but make bells. This seemingly irrelevant part of the plot hints at a technological advancement that will change the nature of warfare in this world. Up until Mat's idea of using a catapult to throw fireworks over the city walls, the use of gunpowder in war had not been considered. The fireworks request for a bellfounder hints strongly that the idea is to make a cannon, but in this story that idea never reaches fruition. Subsequent novels may take advantage of this setup.

Mat also hears about a Seanchan Air Captain at the Wandering Woman inn. He has no idea what that means, but in an earlier chapter mention had been made of gigantic flying creatures carrying men. In addition to firearms, a biological air force could be introduced into battle for subsequent novels.

The primary function of these two chapters is to align the elements for the big escape from the city. The addition of two Aes Sedai into the plan vexes Mat. He does not want the responsibility for these women, but he has no choice but to rescue the damsels in distress. This part of his character elevates him to heroic status, being that he has been thinking mostly of himself up until this point. The question remains whether he can stand up to the challenges coming his way, thus creating tension and conflict in the story. Will Mat come of age or run away from responsibility? Furthermore, will the Aes Sedai bring along all their fellows? How many are going to try to slip through the guards at the gate?



Chapters 20-21 Questions of Treason; A Matter of Property

Chapters 20-21 Questions of Treason; A Matter of Property Summary

In Chapter 20, Bethamin Zeami, a sul'dam (slave trainer), applies herself to be the best sul'dam that Suroth has. The damanes (slaves) that she trains consist of recently conquered women, which makes the task very difficult. Yet Bethamin handles the angry women gently and uses psychological tricks, such as giving the worst ones new names in order to ease their transition from freedom to what amounts to the status of trained dogs. The damane rooms, actually pens, are called kennels.

A former Aes Sedai damane that Bethamin has named Tessi does not feel well and seems to pretend obedience, but Bethamin strongly suspects that she secretly plots her escape. Bethamin writes a suggestion in her daily report that Tessi should be treated differently than the others due to the lingering willpower of the Aes Sedai. Rewards and punishments are to be sporadically administered in an effort to confuse Tessi's attempts at playing the obedient damane while actually plotting against Suroth.

Bethamin finishes her sul'dam duties and leaves the palace. She stops by her room at an inn and takes some coins to shop for souvenirs. While walking to the marketplace, she thinks about her job in this foreign land and how dangerous damanes like Tessi are with their skills at using the Power. Unable to shop, Bethamin returns to her inn, where she learns that a man had been looking for her. The innkeeper describes the man as middle-aged and with blond hair, but Bethamin does not know anybody like that. Going to her room, she discovers the man, a Seeker of Truth, reading her diary that had been locked in a box. The Seeker of Truth questions her about a sea captain named Egeanin Sarna, a woman that Bethamin had tried to contact. She tells him that she had simply been trying to find an old friend, and Egeanin might have known where her friend was located. After a few more questions, Bethamin realizes that the Seeker is actually looking for Egeanin, and the Seeker tells her why if she promises to keep the information to herself—Suroth may be plotting treachery against the Empress of the Seanchans. Bethamin confesses that she and Egeanin had been friends and promises to renew that friendship to help determine if Suroth is the head of a secret rebellion movement.

In Chapter 21, Egeanin discusses with her man, Bayle Domon, a shipment of some sort that had been thrown overboard to avoid arrest. Their discussion takes place in a room at the Wandering Woman inn. They are aware that the Seeker is trying to locate Egeanin, and she assumes that the reason is the attempted smuggling.

Bethamin comes to visit, bringing news of the Seeker and weaving together bits and pieces of what she knew about the possible secret rebellion movement. Egeanin does



not believe any of it. However, she and Bayle plan to buy a small ship and leave Ebou Dar as a precaution.

Chapters 20-21 Questions of Treason; A Matter of Property Analysis

The side plot brought out in these two chapters involves political intrigue within the occupying forces that hold Ebou Dar. Bethamin suspects that the enslaved Aes Sedai still have their ability to use the Power, called channeling, due to the weaving of energy threads into webs. Bethamin cannot actually see the threads, but she feels their presence. Her suspicions about a conspiracy developing may be unfounded in reality because Egeanin does not believe her. However, Egeanin does think that such a conspiracy may be possible, and if this is true, she and Bayle could be in danger. This subplot lacks enough background to fit well into the overall story, which is likely another assumption that the reader is familiar with the prior novels in the series.

An oddity about the Seanchan culture is revealed. Although Bayle is supposed to be some manner of servant to Egeanin, he is actually her husband and equal. Since this situation is frowned upon, Bayle must pretend that he serves his mistress when others are present. An amount of humor comes out when he forgets that he has a subservient role, standing when he should be sitting or pouring himself a drink after serving one to Egeanin. Bayle also has a tendency to solve problems by offering to kill people, which Egeanin must quell with warnings that he cannot kill everybody.



Chapters 22-23 Out of Thin Air; To Lose the Sun

Chapters 22-23 Out of Thin Air; To Lose the Sun Summary

In Chapter 22, Rand reappears in the island city of Far Madding, along with Min. A voice from a man named Lews Therin speaks in his head, warning Rand that being in Far Madding is very dangerous and could lead to death. Rand is following a man named Rochaid through the town when suddenly someone or something strikes him and makes him dizzy. He loses sight of Rochaid and must run to catch up, and this attracts the attention of city guards. Rand pretends he is simply a person in a hurry and waves at the guards, who stand down. He turns into an alley and finds Rochaid waiting for him.

Before Rochaid can draw his sword, Rand punches him in the throat, crushing his windpipe. Another man named Kisman attacks with a drawn sword, Rand ducks and draws his own. Before a fight can begin, they hear the footsteps of approaching guards. Knowing that carrying swords in the city is illegal, and fearful of being caught near Rochaid's corpse, they both flee the scene. An assassin kills Kinsman with a poisoned dagger. Rand makes it to The Crown of Maredo inn without incident.

Rand sees Lan at a table, and in the Woman's Room he sees Min, Nynaeve and Alivia chatting and laughing while having tea. He tells Min that he has killed Rochaid and has her pack up to leave the city because he knows of four other men in the city who want to kill him. The other women do likewise.

In Chapter 23, several Aes Sedai come through a travel portal (a use of the Power) on horseback to the Hills of Kintara just north of Far Madding. Men, protectors of the Aes Sedai known as Warders, accompany the group, as do non-Aes Sedai women. A woman named Shalon, one of the non-Aes Sedai women, wonders what it would be like in Far Madding where a mysterious device blocks out the Power, which comes from the Source, because she imagines this as losing the sun. Shalon may not be able to use the Power, but she and all other humans are aware of the Source.

The group approaches Far Madding, which is a city build on an island in the middle of a lake. The guards allow the group into the city after taking all their names and peace-bonding the swords. Peace-bonding involves wrapping wire around the hilt and scabbard, thus making it impossible to draw the weapon. Special locks are used to secure the wire.



Chapters 22-23 Out of Thin Air; To Lose the Sun Analysis

The story plot and setting land in Far Madding, an island city that has mysterious devices to block out the Source, and thus the Power because the Power comes from the Source. Rand is already in the city and has been discovered by at least two assassins. He knows of five and probably realizes that they wield poisoned daggers. The scene in which one of the assassins is mistaken for Rand and hit with a poisoned dagger reinforces this idea. The poison kills very quickly.

Rand disables a man with a single punch to the throat, demonstrating that Rand is a formidable warrior. The brief action scene foreshadows more action to come, but first other characters must be introduced and brought to the city.

The arrival of the Aes Sedai in Far Madding brings them close to Rand. Just what their mission entails is unclear at this point, but they must hide the fact that they are Aes Sedai. Within the city their powers cannot be used due to the mysterious device that blocks the Source, meaning that they need to bring Rand out of the city somehow. Rand has already decided to flee from the assassins, and so he and the Aes Sedai will likely meet somewhere to make the escape together.



Chapters 24-25 Among the Counsels; Bonds

Chapters 24-25 Among the Counsels; Bonds Summary

In Chapter 24, Shalon goes to the Hall of Counsels with Sarene, Harine (a Wavemistress), Cadsuane Melaidhrin (Aes Sedai) and others. Cadsuane asks for an audience with First Counsel Barsella, who more or less rules Far Madding. Inside the Hall of Counsels, beneath the main dome, they look at the device that blocks the Source while on their way to meet with Barsella. The device is built into the floor and resembles an elaborate compass. Barsella arrives, and the meeting begins with formalities and thinly veiled conflicts. Then the device indicates with black light rays that a man had just channeled. If it had been a woman, the light rays would have been red. This upsets Barsella because the device was supposed to prevent anyone from channeling the Power, and a discussion ensues whether this could be the Dragon Reborn (Rand).

In Chapter 25, Cadsuane and Alanna visit Rand and Min in their room at the Counsel's Head inn. Cadsuane wants Rand to take care of the boat people who had come along with her to Far Madding, but he resists taking on the responsibility and she slaps him hard. Cadsuane and Min leave the room to let Alanna and Rand have a private conversation.

Alanna and Rand had bonded at some point in the past. She demands to know what he had done, which is in reference to him bonding with three other women. Alanna becomes angry at this. Rand defends himself by telling her that she had forced their bonding on him. Once they get over their emotional turmoil, Alanna tells Rand that he needs the Aes Sedai for doing what he must do, because otherwise he would have to conquer all the nations in the world. Rand asks Alanna to organize the rebels in Cairhien and bring them to Far Madding, which she reluctantly agrees to do.

Chapters 24-25 Among the Counsels; Bonds Analysis

Of all the characters in the story, only Cadsuane seems to know exactly what Rand must do. She takes an enormous risk to be near him in Far Madding, so the stakes must be very high if Rand fails. The main plot of the story approaches the climax at this point, and the less important conflicts between the various characters add to the building tension.

More complexities regarding the bonding come out. Alanna had forced a bonding on Rand at some point before the beginning of this story. When he bonded with the other three women, Alanna had gone unconscious for three days from the stress she felt. The problem with bonding is that Alanna could not simply break the bond and be done with



it. She has to pass the bond to some other woman, and all whom she approached with this proposition refused. Another complication is that through the bonding, she must obey whatever Rand commands. This situation can be thought of as an allegory for traditional marriage under laws that disallow divorce and give nearly absolute power to men over their women. However, certain women such as Cadsuane exercise a great deal of power over Rand, and he is the Dragon Reborn. Obviously the position that Rand inhabits, although important for the future of the world, does not give him reign over much of anything out of the ordinary.

The character of Rand is not purely heroic. He has some of the elements of an anti-hero, being brash, impatient, impudent and at times foolhardy. The strongest positive trait is his willingness to do what must be done regardless of the risk. Rand possesses unshakable courage if not much nobility, but then nobility in this kind of fantasy world seems impossible to maintain for very long. As with the real world, situations become complicated and morality relative to the conditions in which people find themselves entrapped, oftentimes through underestimating the costs of earlier actions. The literary advantage to this kind of fantasy world is that the reader can relate to it easier than the kind that has clarity throughout for all characters. Fairy tales, fables and many myths occur in fantasy worlds that have clarity. Real life does not.



Chapters 26-27 Expectation; To Surprise Queens and Kings

Chapters 26-27 Expectation; To Surprise Queens and Kings Summary

In Chapter 26, Elayne and Egwene visit the village of Emond's Field in the dream world. No people inhabit the village because it is in the dream world, but the village reflects changes since they had last visited. The village is Rand's and Egwene's childhood home. Egwene expresses her troubles to Elayne about an upcoming attempt to conquer Tar Valon and how many lives that will cost.

Elayne wakes up in her physical body, has breakfast and receives Captain Mellar. He reports that Bergitte has selected thirty-two of Elayne's body guards, and the goal has increased from twenty to one hundred. She then discusses with Norry the projects that should start first in the city, the money coming from the discovered alum deposits. Later in the day Captain Mellar reports that an army has been sighted, but it is too far away to be a threat.

In Chapter 27, Elayne rides with an escort to the encampment of the army. She wants to make sure that the army will not attack Cairhien. During the negotiations, she discovers that the army is looking for Rand, and the commander asks where he might be. Elayne does not say because all she can tell is the general direction, not the exact location. She offers to feed the army in return for it passing through Andor without attacking anywhere. Upon being questioned again about the whereabouts of Rand, Elayne tells the commander that he is likely in Muranday, which is the country that Far Madding is located. The commander accepts Elayne's proposal to pass through Andor with no incident. However, when she returns to the palace, she learns that four other armies are approaching the city. She orders preparations to be made for the expected siege.

Chapters 26-27 Expectation; To Surprise Queens and Kings Analysis

These two chapters ratchet up the tension as the plot moves toward the climax. The forces from the northern border countries converge on Andor, but Elayne thinks only one army poses a threat. The other four armies are small individually, but together could number over forty thousand men. Meanwhile, Egwene expects forces to be sent to conquer Tar Valon, a country to the north and east of Andor. A great deal of bloodshed will occur if nothing changes the course of events.

Elayne's negotiating skills are showcased. She takes command of the negotiations with the first army she knows about and maintains her determination throughout. Her primary



motivation is protecting the child she carries, fathered by Rand, and a close second is practicing her role as Queen of Andor. The roles of women and men are not completely juxtaposed in this fantasy world. Men still lead armies, but women lead countries and still have motherly instincts.



Chapters 28-31 News in a Cloth Sack; Another Plan; Cold, Fat Raindrops; What the Aelfinn Said

Chapters 28-31 News in a Cloth Sack; Another Plan; Cold, Fat Raindrops; What the Aelfinn Said Summary

In Chapter 28, Tylin decides to leave Ebou Dar for a few weeks. Mat rides out with her and the many companions and servants she takes along. After clearing the gates, he splits off from the group and reconnoiters the harbor, noting the high number of guards. Mat returns to the city and spends his time plotting escape. He intends to free all the damane and expects them to help fight their way out of the city.

In Chapter 29, Mat discovers that removing the collar from a damane requires more than simply removing it. The fastening system must be undone in an exacting way to avoid the freed damane from going into a seizure. He must come up with another plan that involves using the fear of the Seekers to motivate Aes Sedai and some of the Seanchans suspected of plotting rebellion and help him escape.

In Chapter 30, Mat prepares for his new plan. He scouts the stables where the escape attempt will start, noting when the guards are changed. He pulls together all the belongings he will take, bundling them for travel, and dresses in practical and stout clothing. Just as he is about to make his move, he learns that the plans had been changed to include people from the Wandering Woman inn. He takes this in stride and keeps on moving ahead.

In Chapter 31, Mat has learned the correct way of removing the collar of a damane, and he does this for one of the Sea Folk. Then he instructs her how to unlatch the collar so she can free the other Sea Folk. Mat then goes to the palace and discovers that Tylin has returned early. She knows he plans to escape and lets him go. Those wishing to escape Ebou Dar gather together.

Chapters 28-31 News in a Cloth Sack; Another Plan; Cold, Fat Raindrops; What the Aelfinn Said Analysis

The story returns to Mat's need to escape Ebou Dar. Tylin's decision to leave the city for a few weeks gives him the opportunity to move more quickly with his plans. What works against him is his ignorance of exactly what keeps a damane docile and obedient like a pet dog. This is not a conscious mistake that this protagonist makes, but one that he stumbles into from being under time pressure. The challenge for him is to quickly regain his balance and move forward with an alternative plan that is not at all thought out. He



plays with the fears and emotions of the Aes Sedai, a very dangerous game of which he is fully aware. He also realizes that this desperate move can go wrong quickly in many different ways. Psychologically, Mat has jumped off a cliff with a flimsy parachute cuffed together at the spur of the moment. This danger builds suspense in the story, along with the possibility that Tylin might return sooner than expected.

This part of the story, up to the end of Chapter 31, concentrates on the difficulties Mat has while trying to escape Ebou Dar, but the actual escape is left hanging. The plot has been executed this way elsewhere, stuffing the pages full of character descriptions in scenes that build tension. In the usual manner of storytelling, tension builds and is subsequently released. In this style the release is omitted, possibly with the expectation of the reader imagining the release. The impacts on plot development include confusion if anything actually happened and frustration with the incomplete cycle, much as if a musical scale were to be played up to, but not including, the ending note one octave away from the beginning note.



Chapters 32-35 A Portion of Wisdom; Blue Carp Street; The Hummingbird's Secret; With the Choedan Kal

Chapters 32-35 A Portion of Wisdom; Blue Carp Street; The Hummingbird's Secret; With the Choedan Kal Summary

In Chapter 32, Rand overhears rumors of plague in Far Madding and of forces gathering for war while spending time at an inn. He dismisses the rumors as usually being wrong. He goes outside, where a woman tells him some news about the wars. He gives the woman a message for Cadsuane that he will be leaving Far Madding the next day. Rand then walks to his inn, The Counsel's Head. He talks with Lan and Min about Cadsuane and what possible help she will be.

In Chapter 33, Rand talks with Min about the possibility that a trap is being set to capture or kill him. Rand then leaves with Lan for a bootmaker's shop on Blue Carp Street where they expect to find assassins. Nynaeve joins them outside the shop. The plan is for Nynaeve to use the Power and raise the two men to the rooftops, and after they are done with the assassins, to lower them back down. The plan only works partially. The men gain the rooftops, discover that the assassins had already been killed, and fall off the rooftops while being pursued by city guards.

In Chapter 34, the story switches to Nynaeve's point of view when Rand falls off the roof. She cannot see what has happened due to the crowds, and then Cadsuane catches her by the arm. Alivia and Min are with Cadsuane. They lead Nynaeve away from the accident scene, and Cadsuane assures her that she will help Rand escape.

Switching back to Rand, he finds himself in a prison cell determined not to surrender. Then the scene shifts to what Cadsuane is doing. She goes to the Counsel's Chamber and offers to take Rand, who channels the Power and is thus a threat, off the city's hands. To emphasize her ability to handle Rand, Cadsuane initiates a demonstration of using the Power with a hummingbird coronet, causing it to float in the air and move about. The Counsel quickly turns Rand over to her.

In Chapter 35, Rand and Cadsuane leave Far Madding without incident. They are accompanied by Min, Nynaeve and Lan. With the Choedan Kal (two statues), Rand and Nynaeve propose to cleanse the male part of the Power. Cadsuane warns them of the danger involved, that the world could crack apart, ending all life, but allows the ritual to take place.



Rand and Nynaeve sit across from each other cross-legged, and each take their appropriate statue of the Choedan Kal. The Power starts slowly and gradually builds to crescendo. People witness this from several viewpoints, big lights in the skies and the unearthing of very large Choedan Kal statues. Lightning bolts shoot down and fire erupts in the forest. Factions fight each other, and finally the ritual ends successfully, marking the end of the Time of Illusions.

Chapters 32-35 A Portion of Wisdom; Blue Carp Street; The Hummingbird's Secret; With the Choedan Kal Analysis

Chapter 32 brings the story back to Rand and Far Madding. The extremely thin plot holds not much more than mystery about Cadsuane and what role she will play in Rand's fate. Cadsuane is an extremely strong woman, and Rand is unsure whether her help will actually benefit him.

The failed attempt to kill the assassins turns out to indeed be a trap. Rand had foolishly risked his life on the assumption that simply expecting a trap would save him. Instead he falls off the roof, and Nynaeve does not have enough ability to break his fall. This event shows that Rand's character often makes his own problems by way of short-sightedness and stubbornness.

The climax follows a typical fantasy story ending. Something very big and world-changing happens, and the world is better off for it. The presentation has a unique quality to it by showing many differing viewpoints mixed together. Another unique approach is to place a very brief dungeon scene before the climax, which generally happens earlier in fantasy stories as part of an overarching plot line. Furthermore, the hero escapes by the cleverness and power of another character, Cadsuane. Usually heroes must do their own work, but in this case Rand is more an anti-hero who happens to have important abilities, whether he is heroic or not.



Characters

Rand al'Thor (Dragon Reborn)

Rand is the main protagonist. He is an anti-hero who bonds with three women in addition to another he had bonded with, although against his will, in a previous novel. However, he has the ability to channel the Power, which is unique among men, yet common among women. With the help of several others and in conjunction with Nynaeve, he cleanses the male side of the Power and thereby ends the Time of Illusions in the Wheel of Time novel series.

For some reason Rand seeks out Mat, but they never meet in this novel. Rand's primary mission is to stay alive while assassins seek him out in Far Madding, which he nearly fails at accomplishing due to his short-sightedness and stubbornness. Rand is a fighter, not a thinker. He wants to kill the assassins before they kill him and falls off a high roof while trying, in an attempt to escape a trap set by the Counsel of Far Madding. Fortunately for him, he survives well enough, and Cadsuane negotiates for his release. Outside the city and in the northern hills, Rand fulfills his duty during the climax of the story.

Mat Cauthon

Mat is the secondary protagonist. His problem is escaping from Ebou Dar, a port city, before the gholam can kill him. The gholam is a humanoid creature that attacks when its victim is alone and in a dark place. The only protection Mat has against the gholam is an amulet with the ability to burn the creature as if a powerful acid. Mat successfully fights off the gholam once but has no confidence that he will be able to do this on the next encounter.

The story is not clear whether Mat succeeds in escaping Ebou Dar, but enough happens that this can be assumed. Mat carefully plots his escape from the city and an irritating relationship with an older woman, Tylin, Queen of Altara. Tylin treats Mat like her boy-toy, dressing him up in ridiculous outfits that he hates. As Mat schemes and plots, he keeps picking up new people who want to escape Ebou Dar as well, including two Aes Sedai and an inn-full of others. Just as he is about to escape, Tylin discovers his plans. Rather than forcing him to stay, she allows him to go with the assurance that Mat will soon miss her.

Nynaeve al'Meara

Nynaeve is the strong Aes Sedai who will help Rand to cleanse the male side of the Power in the climax of the story. She stays close to him but is aghast at his non-traditional antics, such as bonding with three women at once. While cleansing the



Power, Nynaeve is amazed at how horrible the male side is. She cannot understand how Rand could tolerate his side of the Power.

Elayne Trakand

Elayne is the heir to the throne of Andor and rules her kingdom as if already crowned. She bonds with Rand and carries his child. Due to this, she defends her kingdom against attack. However, the story does not explain if an attack ever comes, possibly saving this part for a subsequent novel.

Cadsuane Melaidhrin

Cadsuane brings many Aes Sedai to Far Madding in order to help Rand accomplish his goal. She is a very wise and strong woman who is able to use the Power despite the blocking of it in the city. When the time comes to cleanse the male side of the Power, she gives a warning but allows the attempt to go forward.

Birgitte Trahelion (Silverbow)

Birgitte urges Elayne to form a bodyguard. Elayne allows this after an attempt on her life.

Tylin Quintara Mitsobar—Queen of Altara

Tylin is the older woman who has an affair with Mat. Although she irritates Mat, her character is kind and forgiving, if also overly protective. Mat survived a battle previous to this novel from the efforts of Tylin.

Halwin Norry—First Clerk

Halwin is Elayne's First Clerk, the man who keeps the kingdom's books in order. He brings her the good news that a new deposit of alum has been discovered, a valuable mineral that will bring money into the treasury.

Perrin Aybara

Perrin leads a combined force of men at the beginning of the story. He has a special relationship with wolves and loses his wife Faile to a large moving Shaido army.



Faile

Faile is Perrin's wife. She is captured by the Shaido and ends up one of their slaves. The slavery can last only for one year and one day.

Masema

Masema is the Prophet of the Dragon Reborn (Rand). Perrin thinks Masema is crazy. Masema confronts Perrin and might have killed him, but the story is unclear on this point.

Berelain

Berelain is an Aes Sedai who wants to be Perrin's lover. Perrin successfully resists her, but the people around him think he has been unfaithful to Faile, which frustrates him.

Lews Therin

Lews Therin is a voice inside Rand's head who continually warns him of danger and comments on situations. He may have been a living man at one time or one of Rand's former lifetime personalities. The story is unclear just how this might work.

Min Farshaw

Min is one of Rand's bonded women. She is an expert with knives and likes to throw them into doors when frustrated.

Juilin Sandar

Juilin Sandar is a thief-catcher who offers to help Mat escape from Ebou Dar.

Aleis Barsalla—First Counsel of Far Madding

Aleis is the woman who rules Far Madding and with whom Cadsuane successfully negotiates for Rand's release from the dungeon. Aleis is a grim person who dislikes disorder and especially any use of the Power in her city.



Objects/Places

Far Madding

Far Madding is the city in Illian where Rand goes after visiting Elayne in the city of Caemlyn. Rand should not be able to channel the Power in Far Madding, but he does so anyway, and it registers on the Power-blocking device.

Ebou Dar

Ebou Dar is a port city in Amadicia that Mat must escape before the gholam can kill him. Many others wish to escape the city too, especially Aes Sedai (women initiated into the use of the Power).

Caemlyn

Caemlyn is where Elayne has her palace. Rand goes there to find her and Mat, but is successful in only finding Elayne. Mat is stuck in Ebou Dar.

Choedan Kal

The Choedan Kal consists of two statues, one male and one female. Both hold a crystal globe above their heads. Rand and Nynaeve use the Choedan Kal to cleanse the male side of the Power.

Damane Collar

The damane collar, once in place, causes people to be docile like trained dogs. It can only be removed using a special mechanical procedure, or else the damane goes into seizures.

Mat's Amulet

Mat's amulet has special powers over the gholam and is his only defense against the creature.

Power-Blocking Device

The Power-blocking device is located within the city of Far Madding. The device suppresses the use of the Power and indicates whenever anyone channels, black for men and red for women.



Chrystal Sword

Rand unearths the Crystal Sword after leaving Far Madding. It has some sort of important ability because he had hidden it before entering the city. However, the story is unclear what the ability might be.

Fireworks

Mat comes up with an idea to use fireworks with a catapult as an assault weapon. This never happens but indicates that the development of firearms is coming soon, just not in this novel.

Flying Creatures

Men riding flying creatures are mentioned but not developed. This indicates that a biological air force will be used in conflicts to come after this novel.

Poison Daggers

Poison daggers are used to kill swiftly and surely. Even a scratch will cause death, and a main ingredient in the poison comes from peach pits.



Themes

Controlling Nature

The Source and its outgrowth, the Power, are forces of nature that some people have learned to use, or channel. The world has split into two factions, those that favor using the Power and those who want to suppress its use. Aes Sedai are women who have gone through an initiation period and are masters at channeling. During this cycle in the Wheel of Time, the faction against them hunts the Aes Sedai and tries to turn them into docile damane, similar to trained dogs. Yet average people need to be in contact with the Source because its presence is as important as the sun. Without it, people feel empty and depressed.

From the anti-Source faction's point of view, the Power is evil because it had been used before during wars, and the impact of this use was terrible, similar to how the real world reacted to the fission bombs dropped on Hiroshima and Nagasaki at the end of World War II. The Power was too powerful to allow its use any longer, not even for benign purposes such as healing.

A parallel can be drawn to religion as well. Communism attempted to suppress religion because, according to Karl Marx, religion was the opiate of the people. This attempt failed entirely because people need religion like they need the Source in this story. Certainly religion can be abused by greedy people or those desiring power over others, and so can the Power in this story be abused. Nevertheless, the attempt at suppressing a force of nature or a human need deep in the psyche and soul is doomed to failure.

In this story the faction for the Source and the Power win, and the world is set back to something it once was, but different. Whether the anti-Power faction was right or wrong may not be important because the conflict had to happen. This is due to the nature of the Wheel of Time. For good or bad, better or worse, the cycles need to take place and work themselves out to the end, whatever that may be. No efforts by humankind can change the nature of the Wheel of Time. It is above all else the very essence of nature and existence. Fighting against it is always futile, but some people will try because it is in their nature to seek out solutions even when they cannot exist. The paradox is that forces of nature can be in conflict and often are, sometimes for no good reason whatsoever than to put up a good fight.

Power Use and Abuse

Both women and men have powers in this fantasy world, but women have the upper hand with their side of the Power. They have perfected the initiation process into being Aes Sedai, the version of wizard in this story. Instead of magic being the source of power, they use the Power that comes from the Source and weave intricate patterns of light and air. The light can be used to heal or control, while the air can be used to



manipulate or kill. The Aes Sedai play games with each other to see who has the most skill. However, the Power can also be used destructively in wartime, one of its abuses that put extreme fear of the Power into the hearts of the faction against its use.

A man's power comes from tradition and his position in life. Most men, in fact all but Rand, cannot use the Power at all. This does not make men powerless with women. For example, Rand can command any woman to which he is bonded, and she is required by tradition to obey. Rand's abuse of his power lies in the fact that he bonds with four women, three voluntarily and one to whom he was bonded against his will.

The ultimate abuse of power is the taking of another person's life. The evil forces against Rand try to kill him through assassins, and possibly Mat through the hired gholam. These evil forces use what is called the True Power, roughly the equivalent of black magic. They also use poisoned daggers, being that the Source (probably the source of True Power as well as Power) is suppressed in Far Madding.

The other side to this is the use of the Power for good. The Aes Sedai can heal with the Power, a process that drains a person's body but accelerates the healing from weeks or months to an hour or so. The principle is that Power undeniably exists. The question for humans is whether to use the Power for good or evil, being that the energy is neutral regarding the human condition. It has no capability to care or regulate how it is used.

Cyclical History

The whole concept of the Wheel of Time is cyclical history. In common terms, history repeats. However, the concept also has an element of history not repeating exactly the same, and so a spiral forms. The idea is that conflicts repeat, but the reasons for conflict change, as do the goals for success. What happens in one cycle impacts what will happen in the next, and several cycles may need to happen before anything is fully resolved.

The odd plot structure in this story, where story lines are left hanging without resolution, may reflect this theme. The readers never learn what happens to Mat, if his escape from Ebou Dar goes off without a hitch or if something terrible occurs. Other characters like Perrin, who has lost his wife, and Elayne, who carries Rand's child, remain in suspension by the end of the story. The meaning could be that the Wheel of Time also leaves hanging story threads from one cycle to another, just as the peace treaty that ended World War I opened the way for World War II to develop. That war led to the Cold War, and that struggle resulted in other conflicts yet to be resolved.

The true nature of history can be understood only by looking back. One can assign names and dates to periods of time that, while they were unfolding, had different names, or it was simply the here-and-now. World War I was called the Great War before World War II began. The First Gulf War was called Desert Storm while it was happening. Few people understood that the depression of the 1930s would become The Great Depression afterward. They merely knew that times were tough all over. Someday the

economic meltdown one must now deal with may be assigned a set of dates and an imposing title. One cannot know because this cycle of history has not yet completed.



Style

Point of View

The point of view (POV) is omniscient third person that jumps from character to character and interjects the impressions of each character while describing the scenes occasionally from a more distant view. This results in a patchwork of impressions and personal observations. Mat is in a relationship with a domineering older woman, so he often thinks about how bothersome it is to be under her control. Rand has someone else talking in his head, a kind of schizophrenia that may have logical reasons beyond poor mental health in this world. Bonding brings in the strange POV that one or more characters can literally witness, as if looking through another's eyes, what someone else is doing.

The male characters receive more direct POV than the female characters. Their POV tends to be done as descriptions rather than going into their minds and telling what they think in literal terms. The impression left is that the author has avoided trying to interpret what the female characters think in literal terms because presenting the male characters in literal terms might be easier. A sense of misogyny can develop as a result, although fair treatment is given at a high level. All people in this world have power in some sense over others, whether male or female. Considering the use of the Power, women have the lion's share, and political power is their domain too. The sense of misogyny comes in when Rand and especially Mat comment on how difficult it is to deal with women. The female characters express their frustrations as well, but not from the center of their heads. It is in what they say to others or do, such as Min's habit of throwing knives into doors when frustrated.

Setting

The setting is a fantasy world ruled by the principles of the Wheel of Time. It consists of one main continent and several islands. Roughly set into the historical times before firearms were developed, the warfare technologies primarily involve catapults and blades. Horses and sailing ships are the main forms of transportation.

Most of the settings are located within city walls, inns and palaces. A short scene brings in a dungeon, which is common in fantasy literature but not this brief. Rand spends just a few hours there until Cadsuane can negotiate his release. Outdoor scenes involve horses, armies, and smaller groups of people during the winter, which is harsher in the north than in the south. Electric lighting is unknown, so lamps burning probably oil illuminate indoor scenes.

A dream setting exists as well that parallels the waking world. In the vast majority of instances, this dream world is accessible only by Aes Sedai, but Rand finds a way into it



during a scene. He is able to channel the Power similar to how women do it, but with the male side of the Power.

Setting and plot tend to switch around every few chapters. The main characters do not all come together at the end of the story, just those around Rand. The story ends outside of Far Madding, including several differing viewpoints scattered about the land.

Language and Meaning

The author uses common literary practices for word choice and syntax most of the time. When a point needs emphasis, the idea is repeated. An example is: "Whatever it took. Light, she was no better than Bethamin! But knowing it changed nothing. Whatever it took (p. 430)." The common expression "Light" is often used by the characters in the same fashion as our popular expressions of frustration that are generally allowed in formal and polite conversations. This quotation is also a good example of how the author brings the thoughts of a character directly into the narrative rather than using "he thought" or a quotation. Whether or not this is more effective than using standard dialog conventions is up to the reader's taste.

Fantasy literature generally invents language to fit into the fantasy world. Several undefined words appear that originated from an old language in this world. The meanings are therefore hidden and cannot be discerned within context or may be explained in the earlier novels of the series. As a result a full understanding of the story suffers without the reader having experienced the previous eight novels and a prequel set twenty years before the first novel.

The storytelling is heavy on unrelated descriptive prose that can confuse the main plot lines. The nagging question that can haunt the reader is, "Why should I care?" Character names appear and disappear with disturbing regularity, along with their lengthy descriptions. The style may be acceptable to fans of the series, but for others it may come off as antiquated and undisciplined. Modern readers tend to like writers who show a lot and tell just enough to keep the story moving ahead logically. This story tends to bog down from irrelevant sidesteps.

Structure

The story is split into thirty-five chapters and no major splits such as sub-books or parts. Two main plots are presented, one having to do with Mat and the other with Rand. Rand's story is the primary of the two because this plot that leads to the climax. Of the books in the series, this is one of the shortest, coming in at about 285,000 words. The longest book has about 394,000 words. Among trade experts, this author is known to "go long," that is, write very long books. In contrast, the average novel runs from about 80,000 to 120,000 words.

The plots are interwoven without clear milestones separating the jumps from one to another. Generally a plot is brought to a cliffhanger, mystery question or minor climax

before jumping to something else. The structure of this story follows no expected format and could be considered experimental fiction. Just what the point of this experimentation might be remains unclear, other than perhaps to lengthen an average-sized novel into an imposing presence on the bookstore shelf. In the end, the unusual structure hurts the readability of the story by confusing more than clarifying.

A glossary of terms is included at the end that has questionable worth. It tends to explain the fantasy world more than define terms, and the explanations shed little light on the logical connections among the features of the fantasy world. However, readers who have experienced the previous novels may gain valuable insights that depend upon understanding the entire story line up to this point.



Quotes

"Perrin's eyes returned to the hawk, barely visible now even to him. It made him think of Faile, his fierce falcon of a wife. His beautiful falcon of a wife."

Chap. 1, Leaving the Prophet, p. 97

"Drinking deep of the hot sweet tea, she set herself to thinking of some way that being surrounded by thousands of Shaido could be turned to advantage. Nothing came to her. Nothing at all."

Chap. 2, Customs, p. 124

"Perrin opened his mouth, then closed it without speaking. The sun might as well rise in the west as Masema say what he just had. Suddenly Perrin thought that Faile might be safer with the Shaido than he was here and now."

Chap. 6, The Scent of Madness, p. 171

"Well, men always wanted their own way. Sometimes you just had to teach them they could not always have it."

Chap. 11, Ideas of Importance, p. 276

"On the pillow beside her when she woke lay a golden lily in full bloom, the dew fresh on the lush petals. Where he could have gotten such a thing in the middle of winter she could not begin to imagine."

Chap. 12, A Lily in Winter, p. 299

"The man was Nae'blis for now, but perhaps matters could be arranged so he did not get another body the next time he died. Perhaps it could be arranged soon."

Chap. 13, Wonderful News, p. 319

"Behind her veil, she was merely the High Lady Tuon, of no higher rank than many others of the Blood, but in her heart, always, she was Tuon Athaem Kore Paendrag, Daughter of the Nine Moons, and she had come to reclaim what had been stolen from her ancestor."

Chap. 14, What A Veil Hides, p. 329

"The dice were still spinning in his head, he realized. He had managed to forget them with the gholam trying to kill him, but they were still bouncing, still waiting to land."

Chap. 16, An Unexpected Encounter, p. 356



"'I understand, and I will obey.' Her voice shook, but what else could she say? The Light save her, what else could she say?"

Chap. 20, Questions of Treason, p. 418

"And now the Source itself was gone. Gone. That was all she was aware of, all she could be aware of. It was gone."

Chap. 23, To Lose the Sun, p. 467

"The Seanchan women were aware he was not Tylin's property, but on the other hand, he heard some call him her toy! Tylin's Toy, they said, as if that was his name!"

Chap. 28, News in a Cloth Sack

"At last, Tuon showed expression. She smiled, as if she suddenly knew a secret. She smiled, and he shivered. Oh, Light, how he shivered."

Chap. 31, What the Aelfinn Said, p. 590

"Whatever his fingers had caught broke with a sharp snap, and the alley rushed up to meet them."

Chap. 33, Blue Carp Street, p. 617

"Below lay the tomb of Shadar Logoth, open to give the world hope. And on distant Tremalking, the word began to spread that the Time of Illusions was at an end."

Chap. 35, With the Choedan Kal, p. 656

Topics for Discussion

Explain the importance of the Choedan Kal.

What characterizes the Aes Sedai?

Describe the relationship between Mat and Tylin.

How does Rand feel about his first bonding that happened in an earlier novel?

Why are assassins out to kill Rand?

Describe the gholam.

How do the Aes Sedai use the dream world?

Why might the cycle of time that this novel covers be called the Time of Illusions?

How does the Time of Illusions end?

Compare and contrast bonding in the fantasy world with traditional marriage in the real world.