

BRANDON SANDERSON

#1 *NEW YORK TIMES*
BESTSELLING AUTHOR



OATHBRINGER

BOOK THREE OF THE STORMLIGHT ARCHIVE

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Book Three of
THE STORMLIGHT ARCHIVE



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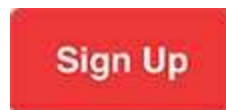
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For Alan Layton
Who was cheering for Dalinar
(And me)
Before Stormlight even existed.

PREFACE AND ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Welcome to *Oathbringer*! It's been a long road, creating this book. I thank you for your patience. Stormlight books are a huge undertaking—which you might be able to infer from the large list of people below.

If you haven't had the chance to read *Edgedancer*—a separate Stormlight novella taking place between books two and three—I'd recommend it to you now. Find it sold on its own, or in the story collection *Arcanum Unbounded*, which has novellas and novelettes from all across the Cosmere. (The universe in which this series, *Mistborn*, *Elantris*, *Warbreaker*, and others take place.)

That said, as always, every series is written so it can be read and enjoyed on its own, without knowledge of these other series or books. If you're intrigued, you can find a longer explanation I've written at brandonsanderson.com/cosmere.

Now, on to the parade of names! As I often say, though my name goes on the cover, there are tons of people involved in bringing you these books. They deserve my most hearty of thanks, and yours as well, for their tireless work across the three years it took to write this novel.

My main agent for these books (and everything else) is the wonderful Joshua Bilmes, of JABberwocky. Others at the agency who worked on them include Brady McReynolds, Krystyna Lopez, and Rebecca Eskildsen. Special thanks also go to John Berlyne, my UK agent, of Zeno—along with all of the sub-agents who work with us around the world.

My editor at Tor on this project was the ever-brilliant Moshe Feder. Special thanks to Tom Doherty, who has believed in the Stormlight project

for years, and Devi Pillai, who provided essential publishing and editorial aid during the course of the novel's creation.

Others at Tor who provided help include Robert Davis, Melissa Singer, Rachel Bass, and Patty Garcia. Karl Gold was our Production Manager and Nathan Weaver the Managing Editor, with Meryl Gross and Rafal Gibek in trade production. Irene Gallo was our Art Director, Peter Lutjen the cover designer, Greg Collins the interior designer, and Carly Sommerstein our proofreader.

At Gollancz/Orion (my UK publisher) thanks goes to Gillian Redfearn, Stevie Finegan, and Charlotte Clay.

Our copyeditor on this book was Terry McGarry, who has done excellent work on many of my novels. The ebook was prepared by Westchester Publishing Services, along with Victoria Wallis and Christopher Gonzalez at Macmillan.

Many people at my own company worked long hours to produce this book. A Stormlight novel is “crunch time” for us here at Dragonsteel, and so make sure to give the team a thumbs-up (or, in Peter's case, a block of cheese) next time you meet them. Our manager and Chief Operations Officer is my lovely wife, Emily Sanderson. Vice President and Editorial Director is the Insistent Peter Ahlstrom. Art Director is Isaac Stzward.

Our shipping manager (and the one who ships you all our signed books and T-shirts via the brandonsanderson.com store) is Kara Stewart. Continuity editor—and holy keeper of our internal continuity wiki—is Karen Ahlstrom. Adam Horne is my executive assistant and publicity/marketing director. Emily's assistant is Kathleen Dorsey Sanderson and our executive minion is Emily “Mem” Grange.

The audiobook was read by my personal favorite audiobook narrators, Michael Kramer and Kate Reading. Thanks again, guys, for making time in your schedule for this!

Oathbringer continues the tradition of filling The Stormlight Archive with beautiful art. We again have a fantastic cover illustration by Michael Whelan, whose attention to detail has given us an incredibly accurate rendition of Jasnah Kholin. I love that she gets a place to shine on the cover of this book, and I continue to feel honored and grateful that Michael takes time away from his gallery work to paint the world of Roshar.

It takes a variety of artists to recreate the styles found in the ephemera of

another world, so this time around we've worked with even more artists than before. Dan dos Santos and Howard Lyon are responsible for the paintings of the Heralds on the front and back endpapers. I wanted these to have a style evoking classical paintings of the Renaissance and the later Romantic era, and both Dan and Howard exceeded expectations. These pieces are not only great art for a book, they are great art period, deserving of a place in any gallery.

I should note that Dan and Howard also contributed their talents to the interior art, for which I'm also grateful. Dan's fashion pieces are good enough to be cover art, and Howard's linework for some of the new chapter icons is something I hope to see more of in future volumes.

Ben McSweeney joins us again, providing nine pieces of art from Shalan's sketchbook. Between a cross-continent move, a demanding day job, and the needs of a growing family, Ben has been ever consistent in delivering top-notch illustrations. He is a great artist and a quality human being.

Also lending their talents to this volume with full-page illustrations are Miranda Meeks and Kelley Harris. Both have done fantastic work for us in the past, and I think you'll love their contributions this time around.

In addition, a variety of wonderful people helped behind the scenes as consultants or facilitated other aspects of the art in this book: The David Rumsey Map Collection, Brent at Woodsounds Flutes, Angie and Michelle at Two Tone Press, Emily Dunlay, David and Doris Stewart, Shari Lyon, Payden McRoberts, and Greg Davidson.

My writing group for *Oathbringer* (and they often read submissions each week at 5–8x the normal size) included Karen Ahlstrom, Peter Ahlstrom, Emily Sanderson, Eric James Stone, Darci Stone, Ben Olsen, Kaylynn ZoBell, Kathleen Dorsey Sanderson, Alan “Leyten from Bridge Four” Layton, Ethan “Skar from Bridge Four” Skarstedt, and Ben “Don't put me in Bridge Four” Olsen.

Special thanks go to Chris “Jon” King for feedback on some particularly tricky scenes involving Teft, Will Hoyum for some advice on paraplegics, and Mi'chelle Walker for some special advisement on passages involving specific mental health issues.

Beta readers included (take a deep breath) Aaron Biggs, Aaron Ford, Adam Hussey, Austin Hussey, Alice Arneson, Alyx Hoge, Aubree Pham, Bao Pham, Becca Horn Reppert, Bob Kluttz, Brandon Cole, Darci Cole,

Brian T. Hill, Chris “Jon” King, Chris Kluwe, Cory Aitchison, David Behrens, Deana Covell Whitney, Eric Lake, Gary Singer, Ian McNatt, Jessica Ashcraft, Joel Phillips, Jory Phillips, Josh Walker, Mi’chelle Walker, Kalyani Poluri, Rahul Pantula, Kellyn Neumann, Kristina Kugler, Lyndsey “Lyn” Luther, Mark Lindberg, Marnie Peterson, Matt Wiens, Megan Kanne, Nathan “Natam” Goodrich, Nikki Ramsay, Paige Vest, Paul Christopher, Randy MacKay, Ravi Persaud, Richard Fife, Ross Newberry, Ryan “Drehy” Dreher Scott, Sarah “Saphy” Hansen, Sarah Fletcher, Shivam Bhatt, Steve Godecke, Ted Herman, Trae Cooper, and William Juan.

Our beta reader comment coordinators were Kristina Kugler and Kellyn Neumann.

Our gamma readers included many of the beta readers again, plus: Benjamin R. Black, Chris “Gunner” McGrath, Christi Jacobsen, Corbett Rubert, Richard Rubert, Dr. Daniel Stange, David Han-Ting Chow, Donald Mustard III, Eric Warrington, Jared Gerlach, Jareth Greeff, Jesse Y. Horne, Joshua Combs, Justin Koford, Kendra Wilson, Kerry Morgan, Lindsey Andrus, Lingting Xu, Loggins Merrill, Marci Stringham, Matt Hatch, Scott Escujuri, Stephen Stinnett, and Tyson Thorpe.

As you can see, a book like this is a *huge* undertaking. Without the efforts of these many people, you’d be holding a far, far inferior book.

As always, some final thanks go to my family: Emily Sanderson, Joel Sanderson, Dallin Sanderson, and Oliver Sanderson. They put up with a husband/father who is often off in another world, thinking about highstorms and Knights Radiant.

Finally, thanks to you all, for your support of these books! They don’t always come out as quickly as I’d like, but that is in part because I want them to be as perfect as they can get. You hold in your hands a volume I’ve been preparing and outlining for almost two decades. May you enjoy your time in Roshar.

Journey before destination.

BOOK

THREE



OATHBRINGER





SIX YEARS AGO

Eshonai had always told her sister that she was certain something wonderful lay over the next hill. Then one day, she'd crested a hill and found *humans*.

She'd always imagined humans—as sung of in the songs—as dark, formless monsters. Instead they were wonderful, bizarre creatures. They spoke with no discernible rhythm. They wore clothing more vibrant than carapace, but couldn't grow their own armor. They were so terrified of the storms that even when traveling they hid inside vehicles.

Most remarkably, they had only *one form*.

She first assumed the humans must have forgotten their forms, much as the listeners once had. That built an instant kinship between them.

Now, over a year later, Eshonai hummed to the Rhythm of Awe as she helped unload drums from the cart. They'd traveled a great distance to see the human homeland, and each step had overwhelmed her further. That experience culminated here, in this incredible city of Kholinar and its magnificent palace.

This cavernous unloading dock on the western side of the palace was so large, two hundred listeners had packed in here after their first arrival, and still hadn't filled the place. Indeed, most of the listeners couldn't attend the

feast upstairs—where the treaty between their two peoples was being witnessed—but the Alethi had seen to their refreshment anyway, providing mountains of food and drink for the group down here.

She stepped out of the wagon, looking around the loading dock, humming to Excitement. When she'd told Venli she was determined to map the world, she'd imagined a place of natural discovery. Canyons and hills, forests and laits overgrown with life. Yet all along, *this* had been out here. Waiting just beyond their reach.

Along with more listeners.

When Eshonai had first met the humans, she'd seen the little listeners they had with them. A hapless tribe who were trapped in dullform. Eshonai had assumed the humans were taking care of the poor souls without songs.

Oh, how innocent those first meetings had been.

Those captive listeners had not been merely some small tribe, but instead representative of an enormous population. And the humans had not been caring for them.

The humans owned them.

A group of these parshmen, as they were called, clustered around the outside of Eshonai's ring of workers.

"They keep trying to help," Gitgeth said to Curiosity. He shook his head, his beard sparkling with ruby gemstones that matched the prominent red colors of his skin. "The little rhythmless ones want to be near us. They sense that something is wrong with their minds, I tell you."

Eshonai handed him a drum from the back of the cart, then hummed to Curiosity herself. She hopped down and approached the group of parshmen.

"You aren't needed," she said to Peace, spreading her hands. "We would prefer to handle our own drums."

The ones without songs looked at her with dull eyes.

"Go," she said to Pleading, waving toward the nearby festivities, where listeners and human servants laughed together, despite the language barrier. Humans clapped along to listeners singing the old songs. "Enjoy yourselves."

A few looked toward the singing and cocked their heads, but they didn't move.

"It won't work," Brianlia said to Skepticism, resting her arms across a drum nearby. "They simply can't *imagine* what it is to live. They're pieces of property, to be bought and sold."

What to make of this idea? Slaves? Klade, one of the Five, had gone to the slavers in Kholinar and purchased a person to see if it truly was possible. He hadn't even bought a parshman; there had been *Alethi* for sale. Apparently the parshmen were expensive, and considered high-quality slaves. The listeners had been told this, as if it were supposed to make them proud.

She hummed to Curiosity and nodded to the side, looking toward the others. Gitgeth smiled and hummed to Peace, waving for her to go. Everyone was used to Eshonai wandering off in the middle of jobs. It wasn't that she was unreliable... Well, perhaps she was, but at least she was consistent.

Regardless, she'd be wanted at the king's celebration soon anyway; she was one of the best among the listeners at the dull human tongue, which she'd taken to naturally. It was an advantage that had earned her a place on this expedition, but it was also a problem. Speaking the human tongue made her important, and people who grew too important couldn't be allowed to go off chasing the horizon.

She left the unloading bay and walked up the steps into the palace proper, trying to take in the ornamentation, the artistry, the sheer overwhelming *wonder* of the building. Beautiful and terrible. People who were bought and sold maintained this place, but was that what freed the humans to create great works like the carvings on the pillars she passed, or the inlaid marble patterns on the floor?

She passed soldiers wearing their artificial carapace. Eshonai didn't have armor of her own at the moment; she wore workform instead of warform, as she liked its flexibility.

Humans didn't have a choice. They hadn't lost their forms as she'd first assumed; they *only had one*. Forever in mateform, workform, and warform all at once. And they wore their emotions on their faces far more than listeners. Oh, Eshonai's people would smile, laugh, cry. But not like these Alethi.

The lower level of the palace was marked by broad hallways and galleries, lit by carefully cut gemstones that made light sparkle. Chandeliers hung above her, broken suns spraying light everywhere. Perhaps the plain appearance of the human bodies—with their bland skin that was various shades of tan—was another reason they sought to ornament everything, from their clothing to these pillars.

Could we do this? she thought, humming to Appreciation. *If we knew the*

right form for creating art?

The upper floors of the palace were more like tunnels. Narrow stone corridors, rooms like bunkers dug into a mountainside. She made her way toward the feast hall to check if she was needed, but stopped here and there to glance into rooms. She'd been told she could wander as she pleased, that the palace was open to her save for areas with guards at the doors.

She passed a room with paintings on all the walls, then one with a bed and furniture. Another door revealed an indoor privy with running water, a marvel that she still didn't understand.

She poked through a dozen rooms. As long as she reached the king's celebration in time for the music, Klade and the others of the Five wouldn't complain. They were as familiar with her ways as everyone else. She was always wandering off, poking into things, peeking into doors ...

And finding the king?

Eshonai froze, the door cracked open, allowing her to see into a lush room with a thick red rug and bookshelves lining the walls. So much information just lying around, casually ignored. More surprisingly, King Gavilar himself stood pointing at something on a table, surrounded by five others: two officers, two women in long dresses, and one old man in robes.

Why wasn't Gavilar at the feast? Why weren't there guards at the door? Eshonai attuned Anxiety and pulled back, but not before one of the women prodded Gavilar and pointed toward Eshonai. Anxiety pounding in her head, she pulled the door closed.

A moment later a tall man in uniform stepped out. "The king would like to see you, Parshendi."

She feigned confusion. "Sir? Words?"

"Don't be coy," the soldier said. "You're one of the interpreters. Come in. You aren't in trouble."

Anxiety shaking her, she let him lead her into the den.

"Thank you, Meridas," Gavilar said. "Leave us for a moment, all of you."

They filed out, leaving Eshonai at the door attuning Consolation and humming it loudly—even though the humans wouldn't understand what it meant.

"Eshonai," the king said. "I have something to show you."

He knew her name? She stepped farther into the small, warm room, holding her arms tightly around her. She didn't understand this man. It was

more than his alien, dead way of speaking. More than the fact that she couldn't anticipate what emotions might be swirling in there, as warform and mateform contested within him.

More than any human, this man baffled her. Why *had* he offered them such a favorable treaty? At first it had seemed an accommodation between tribes. That was before she'd come here, seen this city and the Alethi armies. Her people had once possessed cities of their own, and armies to envy. They knew that from the songs.

That had been long ago. They were a fragment of a lost people. Traitors who had abandoned their gods to be free. This man could have crushed the listeners. They'd once assumed that their Shards—weapons they had so far kept hidden from the humans—would be enough to protect them. But she'd now seen over a dozen Shardblades and suits of Shardplate among the Alethi.

Why did he smile at her like that? What was he hiding, by not singing to the rhythms to calm her?

"Sit, Eshonai," the king said. "Oh, don't be frightened, little scout. I've been wanting to speak to you. Your mastery of our language is unique!"

She settled on a chair while Gavilar reached down and removed something from a small satchel. It glowed with red Stormlight, a construction of gemstones and metal, crafted in a beautiful design.

"Do you know what this is?" he asked, gently pushing it toward her.

"No, Your Majesty."

"It's what we call a fabrial, a device powered by Stormlight. This one makes warmth. Just a smidge, unfortunately, but my wife is confident her scholars can create one that will heat a room. Wouldn't that be wonderful? No more smoky fires in hearths."

It seemed lifeless to Eshonai, but she didn't say so. She hummed to Praise so he'd feel happy telling her of this, and handed it back.

"Look closely," King Gavilar said. "Look deep into it. Can you see what's moving inside? It's a spren. That is how the device works."

Captive like in a gemheart, she thought, attuning Awe. *They've built devices that mimic how we apply the forms?* The humans did so much with their limitations!

"The chasmfiends aren't your gods, are they," he said.

"What?" she asked, attuning Skepticism. "Why ask that?" What a strange turn in the conversation.

“Oh, it’s merely something I’ve been thinking about.” He took the fabrial back. “My officers feel so superior, as they think they have you figured out. They think you’re savages, but they are so wrong. You’re not savages. You’re an enclave of memories. A window into the past.”

He leaned forward, the light from the ruby leaking between his fingers. “I need you to deliver a message to your leaders. The Five? You’re close to them, and I’m being watched. I need their help to achieve something.”

She hummed to Anxiety.

“Now, now,” he said. “I’m going to help you, Eshonai. Did you know, I’ve discovered how to bring your gods back?”

No. She hummed to the Rhythm of the Terrors. No ...

“My ancestors,” he said, holding up the fabrial, “first learned how to hold a spren inside a gemstone. And with a very special gemstone, you can hold even a god.”

“Your Majesty,” she said, daring to take his hand in hers. He couldn’t feel the rhythms. He didn’t know. “Please. We no longer worship those gods. We left them, *abandoned* them.”

“Ah, but this is for your good, and for ours.” He stood up. “We live without honor, for your gods once brought ours. Without them, we have no *power*. This world is trapped, Eshonai! Stuck in a dull, lifeless state of transition.” He looked toward the ceiling. “Unite them. I need a threat. Only danger will unite them.”

“What...” she said to Anxiety. “What are you saying?”

“Our enslaved parshmen were once like you. Then we somehow robbed them of their ability to undergo the transformation. We did it by capturing a spren. An ancient, *crucial* spren.” He looked at her, green eyes alight. “I’ve seen how that can be reversed. A new storm that will bring the Heralds out of hiding. A new war.”

“Insanity.” She rose to her feet. “Our gods tried to destroy you.”

“The old Words must be spoken again.”

“You can’t...” She trailed off, noticing for the first time that a map covered the table nearby. Expansive, it showed a land bounded by oceans—and the artistry of it put her own attempts to shame.

She rose and stepped to the table, gaping, the Rhythm of Awe playing in her mind. *This is gorgeous*. Even the grand chandeliers and carved walls were nothing by comparison. This was knowledge *and* beauty, fused into

one.

“I thought you’d be pleased to hear that we are allies in seeking the return of your gods,” Gavilar said. She could almost hear the Rhythm of Reprimand in his dead words. “You claim to fear them, but why fear that which made you live? My people need to be united, and I need an empire that won’t simply turn to infighting once I am gone.”

“So you seek for *war*?”

“I seek for an end to something that we never finished. My people were Radiant once, and your people—the parshmen—were vibrant. Who is served by this drab world where my people fight each other in endless squabbles, without light to guide them, and your people are as good as corpses?”

She looked back at the map. “Where ... where is the Shattered Plains? This portion here?”

“That is all of Natanatan you gesture toward, Eshonai! This is the Shattered Plains.” He pointed at a spot not much bigger than his thumbnail, when the entire map was as large as the table.

It gave her a sudden dizzying perspective. This was the world? She’d assumed that in traveling to Kholinar, they’d crossed almost as far as the land could go. Why hadn’t they shown her this before!

Her legs weakened, and she attuned Mourning. She dropped back into her seat, unable to stand.

So vast.

Gavilar removed something from his pocket. A sphere? It was dark, yet somehow still glowed. As if it had ... an aura of blackness, a phantom light that was not light. Faintly violet. It seemed to suck in the light around it.

He set it on the table before her. “Take that to the Five and explain what I told you. Tell them to remember what your people once were. *Wake up, Eshonai.*”

He patted her on the shoulder, then left the room. She stared at that terrible light, and—from the songs—knew it for what it was. The forms of power had been associated with a dark light, a light from the king of gods.

She plucked the sphere off the table and went running.

* * *

When the drums were set up, Eshonai insisted on joining the drummers. An

outlet for her anxiety. She beat to the rhythm in her head, banging as hard as she could, trying with each beat to banish the things the king had said.

And the things she'd just done.

The Five sat at the high table, the remnants of their final course uneaten.

He intends to bring back our gods, she'd told the Five.

Close your eyes. Focus on the rhythms.

He can do it. He knows so much.

Furious beats pulsing through her soul.

We have to do something.

Klade's slave was an assassin. Klade claimed that a *voice*—speaking to the rhythms—had led him to the man, who had confessed his skills when pressed. Venli had apparently been with Klade, though Eshonai hadn't seen her sister since earlier in the day.

After a frantic debate, the Five had agreed this was a sign of what they were to do. Long ago, the listeners had summoned the courage to adopt dullform in order to escape their gods. They'd sought freedom at any cost.

Today, the cost of maintaining that freedom would be high.

She played the drums. She felt the rhythms. She wept softly, and didn't look as the strange assassin—wearing flowing white clothing provided by Klade—left the room. She'd voted with the others for this course of action.

Feel the peace of the music. As her mother always said. Seek the rhythms. Seek the songs.

She resisted as the others pulled her away. She wept to leave the music behind. Wept for her people, who might be destroyed for tonight's action. Wept for the world, which might never know what the listeners had done for it.

Wept for the king, whom she had consigned to death.

The drums cut off around her, and dying music echoed through the halls.



PART

ONE

United

DALINAR • SHALLAN •
KALADIN • ADOLIN