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#1 *NEW YORK TIMES* BESTSELLING AUTHOR

The cover art features a young woman with long, flowing red hair, dressed in a detailed, light-colored military-style uniform with a sash and a shoulder bag. She stands on a dark, rocky outcrop, looking towards the viewer with a determined expression. The background is a fantastical landscape with a path leading into the distance, flanked by trees with purple and blue foliage. A bright light source in the sky casts rays of light across the scene. To the left, a large, golden, crystalline structure is partially visible. The overall color palette is dominated by blues, purples, and golds, creating a magical and atmospheric setting.

RHYTHM OF WAR

BOOK FOUR OF THE STORMLIGHT ARCHIVE

Brandon Sanderson

The Rhythm of War

**The Stormlight Archive
Book 4**

2020

For Isaac Stewart,
Who paints my imagination.

Preface and Acknowledgments

I am proud to present to you *Rhythm of War*, Book Four of the Stormlight Archive. It's been ten years now since I began this series, and it has been an increasingly satisfying experience to see the story grow and fulfill the vision I've had for it all these years. In particular, one scene at the end of this book is among the very first I ever imagined for the series, over twenty years ago!

We are approaching the last book of this sequence of the Stormlight Archive. (I imagine the series as two sets of five books, with two major arcs.) Thank you for sticking with me all these years! My goal is to keep delivering these in a timely manner. And as always, deadlines for this one were tight, and a lot of people put in a lot of hours to bring it to pass. This list will be a little long, but each and every one of them deserves to be commended for their efforts.

At Tor Books, my primary editor on this novel was Devi Pillai, and she was tireless, punctual, and a wonderful advocate for the Stormlight Archive. This is my first Cosmere book that wasn't done with my longtime editor Moshe Feder, who still deserves a great deal of thanks for shepherding this series during its early years. But I want to give a special thanks to Devi for helping make this transition smooth and easy.

As always, thanks go to Tom Doherty, who gave me my first chance in publishing. Devi and Tom's team at Tor who worked on this book with us include Rachel Bass, Peter Lutjen, Rafal Gibek, and Heather Saunders.

At Gollancz, my UK publisher, I want to give special thanks to Gillian Redfearn who provides editorial support through the entire process, and who also works very hard to make the books look great.

Our copyeditor was the always-great Terry McGarry, and joining us for the first time as a line editor was Kristina Kugler. I've wanted to work with Kristina for a long time on a Cosmere book, and she did an excellent job with this one.

For the audio book, Steve Wagner was our producer. And returning to the series are the excellent Michael Kramer and Kate Reading, the best audio narrators in the world. They have my hearty thanks for continuing to humor us by taking on these fifty-plus-hour beasts of an epic fantasy series.

My primary agent for this book was JABberwocky Literary Agency, with Joshua Bilmes at the helm. Assisting him were Susan Velazquez, Karen Bourne, and Valentina Sainato. Our UK agent is John Berlyne at the Zeno Literary Agency. I continue to be grateful for their work and advocacy on my behalf.

At my own company, Dragonsteel Entertainment, we have my wonderful wife Emily Sanderson as our manager. The Ineffable Peter Ahlstrom is our vice president and editorial director, and Isaac Stewart is our Art Director. Normally I do something silly with his name, but considering that this book is dedicated to him, I figured I'd let him off this time. Isaac not only is the one who creates our beautiful maps, but is the person who introduced me to my wife. (On a blind date, no less.) So if you ever get a chance to meet him, have him sign your copy of this book, and be sure to swap stories with him about your favorite LEGO sets.

Also at Dragonsteel Entertainment are Karen Ahlstrom, our continuity editor, and Kara Stewart, our warehouse manager and CFO. Adam Horne is my in-house publicist, personal assistant, and all around "I can do that" guy who gets things done. Our other store employees include Kathleen Dorsey Sanderson, Emily "Mem" Grange, Lex Willhite, and Michael Bateman. They're the ones who get you your T-shirts, posters, and signed books. Their assistants, the "mini minions" of our team, include: Jacob, Hazel, Isabel, Matthew, Audrey, Tori, and Joe. Additionally, thanks to all those who volunteer, especially to the always awesome Christi Jacobson.

The artists who contributed to *Rhythm of War* braved not only pandemic and tragedy during the completion of the art, some even braved literal storms to deliver it. I'm in awe of their talent and commitment, and to all of them I not only give my heartfelt thanks, but I also wish them peace through the turbulent times they've faced.

One of the highlights of my career is getting to work with Michael Whelan. I'm humbled that he is so supportive of the books that he sets aside personal projects for a time to create the beautiful paintings he's done for the series. I would have been grateful for just one of his cover illustrations, so I feel incredibly lucky that he continues to work his magic for *Rhythm of War*, producing what I think is the best Stormlight cover so far. It's without a doubt a masterpiece, and I am in awe of it.

In *Oathbringer*, we printed portraits of the Heralds on the front and back endpapers, and we continue that tradition here. Early in the writing process for this book, we commissioned the remaining six Heralds, knowing that two of them would have to be saved for a future book. Each artist stepped up to

the task and provided masterpieces. Donato's Herald Talenelat is careworn yet triumphant, and I'm thrilled to have his beautiful vision of this character. Miranda Meeks is no stranger to the Stormlight Archive—we love getting to work with her any chance we have—and her Herald Battah is regal and mysterious. Karla Ortiz, whose work I've been a fan of for some time, has given us glorious and nigh-on-perfect visions of Heralds Chanaranach and Nalan. Lastly, Magali Villeneuve's Heralds Pailiah and Kelek are stunning and wonderful. Howard Lyon collaborated with her to paint amazing oil versions of these last two, which will eventually be displayed with the others.

Dan dos Santos is a living legend and a good friend. He brings his signature style to the fashion plates in this volume, tackling the difficult challenge of portraying the singers as alien but also in a way that readers can identify with them emotionally. I think he's done a fantastic job walking that line.

Ben McSweeney joined the Dragonsteel team full time this year, and the book showcases some of his best art. Shallan's spren pages especially continue to help fill out the visual aesthetic of Roshar. I love how Ben's piece detailing Urithiru's atrium helps convey the immensity of the city; special thanks here to Alex Schneider, who consulted on some of the architectural layout.

A great big thanks to Kelley Harris, a core member of our Stormlight team who always brings Navani's notebook pages to life with an impeccable design sense that reminds me of Alphonse Mucha's product designs from the early twentieth century.

Additionally, many artists and others helped behind the scenes on this book and deserve a huge thank-you: Miranda Meeks, Howard Lyon, Shawn Boyles, Cori Boyles, Jacob, Isabel, Rachel, Sophie, and Hayley Lazo.

We had a few very important subject experts help us with this book. Shad "Shadiversity" Brooks was our primary historical martial arts consultant. Carl Fisk also lent us some of his expertise in this area—though if I got something wrong, it's not their fault. It's almost assuredly something I either didn't show them on time, or forgot to change.

Our expert on Dissociative Identity Disorder was Britt Martin. I truly appreciate her willing to give me raw feedback on how to get better at how I represent mental illness in these books. She was our secret Knight Radiant for this novel, always there urging me forward.

Special thanks go to four of the beta readers in particular, for their detailed feedback on a certain aspect of sexuality: Paige Phillips, Alyx Hoge, Blue, and First Last. The book is better off with your contribution.

Our writing group on this book was Kaylynn ZoBell, Kathleen Dorsey Sanderson, Eric James Stone, Darci Stone, Alan Layton, Ben “can you please just spell my name right for once, Brandon” Olzedixploxipllentivar, Ethan Skarstedt, Karen Ahlstrom, Peter Ahlstrom, Emily Sanderson, and Howard Tayler. And a better group of merry men/women you will not find. They read huge chunks of this book each week, and dealt with me making constant and enormous changes, in order to help me get the novel into shape.

Our expert team of beta readers this time included Brian T. Hill, Jessica Ashcraft, Sumejja Muratagić-Tadić, Joshua “Jofwu” Harkey, Kellyn Neumann, Jory “Jor the Bouncer” Phillips (Congrats, Jory!), Drew McCaffrey, Lauren McCaffrey, Liliana Klein, Evgeni “Argent” Kirilov, Darci Cole, Brandon Cole, Joe Deardeuff, Austin Hussey, Eliyahu Berelowitz Levin, Megan Kanne, Alyx Hoge, Trae Cooper, Deana Covell Whitney, Richard Fife, Christina Goodman, Bob Kluttz, Oren Meiron, Paige Vest, Becca Reppert, Ben Reppert, Ted Herman, Ian McNatt, Kalyani Poluri, Rahul Pantula, Gary Singer, Lingting “Botanica” Xu, Ross Newberry, David Behrens, Tim Challenger, Matthew Wiens, Giulia Costantini, Alice Arneson, Paige Phillips, Ravi Persaud, Bao Pham, Aubree Pham, Adam Hussey, Nikki Ramsay, Joel D. Phillips, Zenef Mark Lindberg, Tyler Patrick, Marnie Peterson, Lyndsey Luther, Mi’chelle Walker, Josh Walker, Jayden King, Eric Lake, and Chris Kluwe.

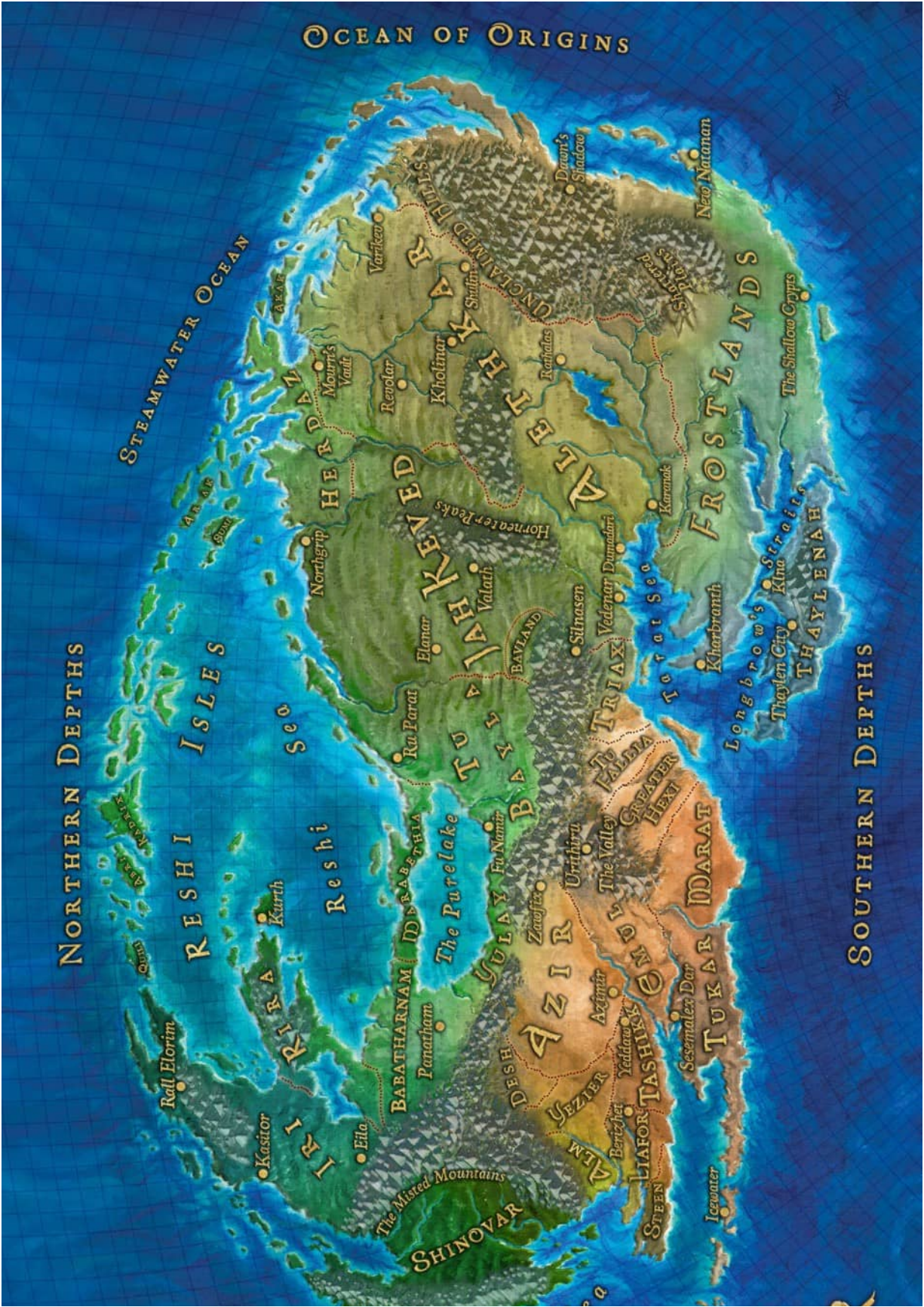
Our special beta reader comment coordinator was Peter Orullian, an excellent author in his own right.

Our gamma readers included many of the beta readers, plus Chris McGrath, João Menezes Morais, Brian Magnant, David Fallon, Rob West, Shivam Bhatt, Todd Singer, Jessie Bell, Jeff Tucker, Jesse Salomon, Shannon Nelson, James Anderson, Frankie Jerome, Zoe Larsen, Linnea Lindstrom, Aaron Ford, Poonam Desai, Ram Shoham, Jennifer Neal, Glen Vogelaar, Taylor Cole, Heather Clinger, Donita Orders, Rachel Little, Suzanne Musin, William “aberdasher,” Christopher Cottingham, Kurt Manwaring, Chris Macy, Jacob Hunsaker, Aaron Biggs, Amit Shteinheart, Kendra Wilson, Sam Baskin, and Alex Rasmussen.

I know a lot of you reading this would like to join the beta or gamma reader team—but know that it’s not quite as sweet a gig as you might imagine. These folks have to read the book often under a great time crunch, and they have to experience it in an unfinished form. In a lot of ways, they’re giving up the chance to experience the book in its best form, getting an inferior experience, so they can make the book better for the rest of you. I appreciate their tireless work, and their feedback. This book is much better for their efforts.

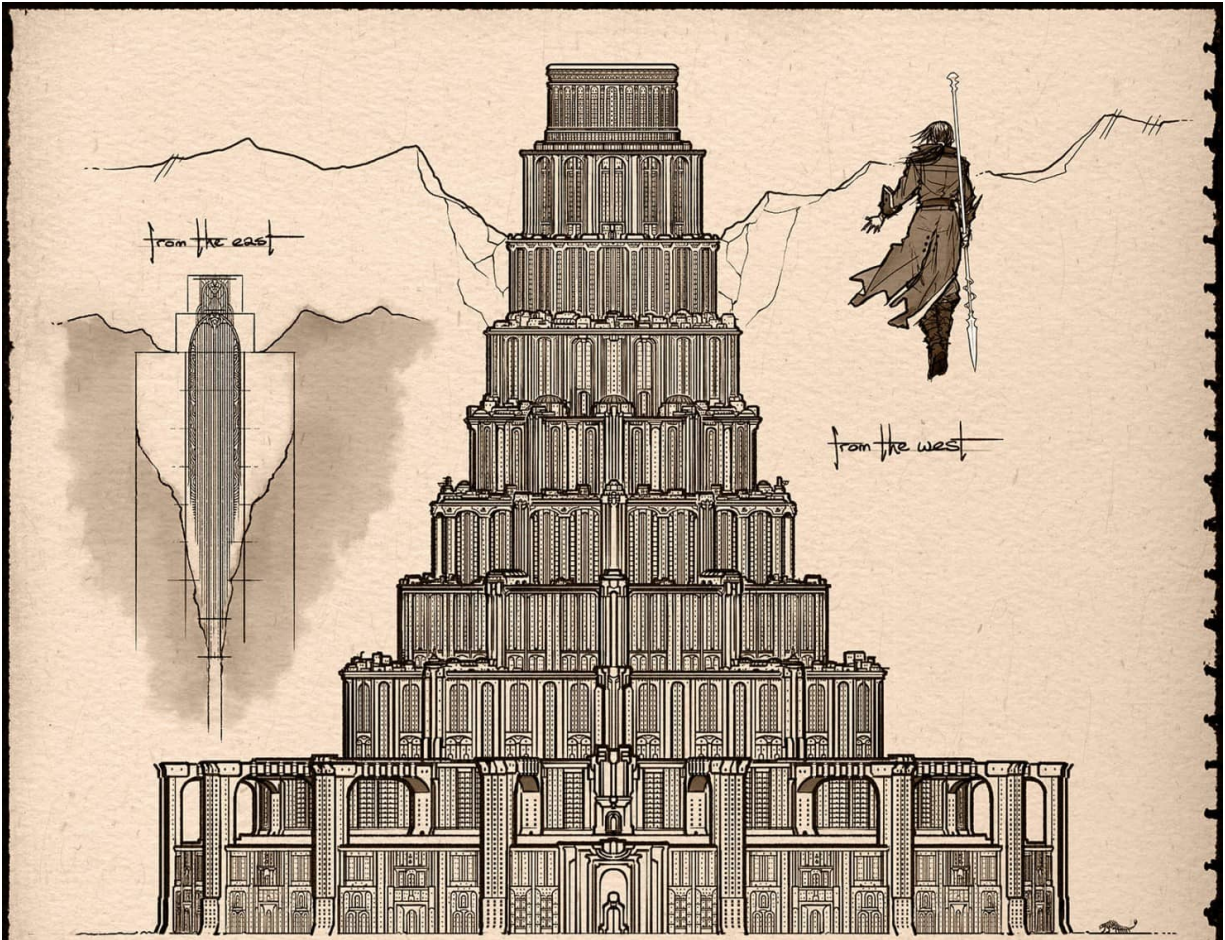
That was a huge list, I know. It gets bigger in each book! But I sincerely appreciate every one of them. As I often say, my name goes on the cover, but these novels really are a group effort, using the talents and knowledge of a great array of dedicated people.

Because of them, you can now experience *Rhythm of War*, Book Four of the Stormlight Archive. May you enjoy the journey.

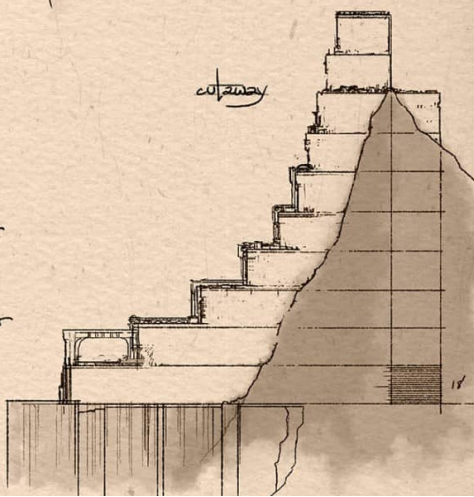
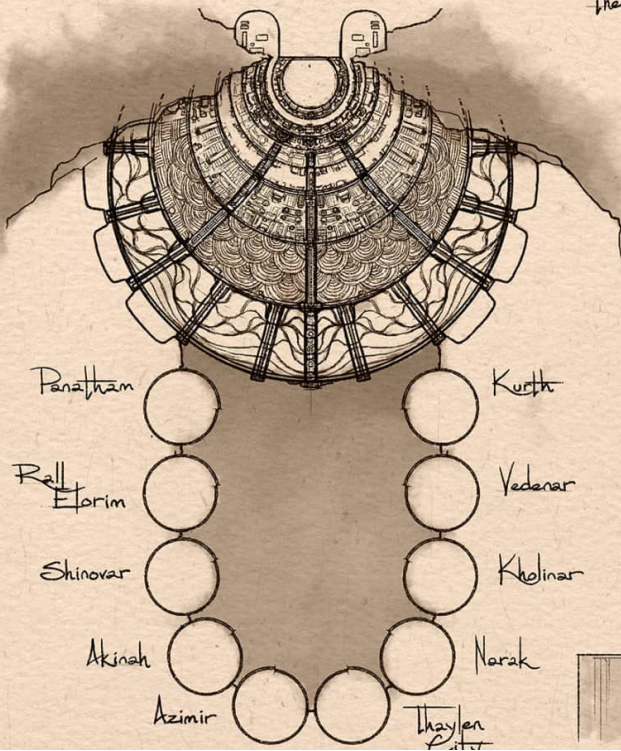


Map of Roshar

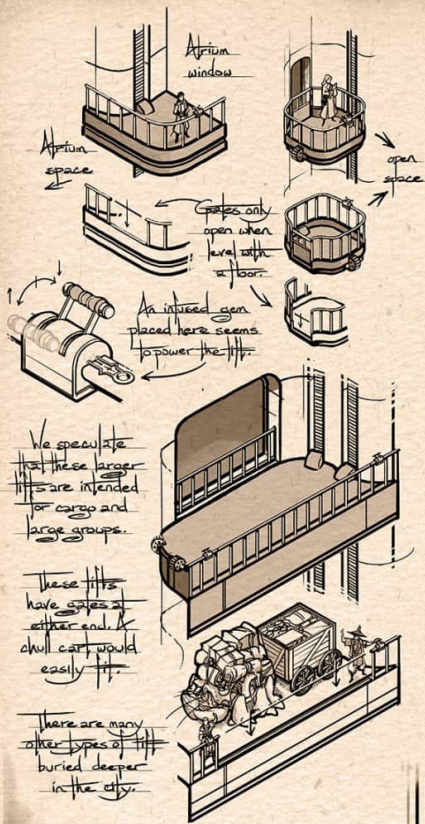




The city is incredibly huge! A chasmfiend's back would not reach the fourth floor. ٩٠!



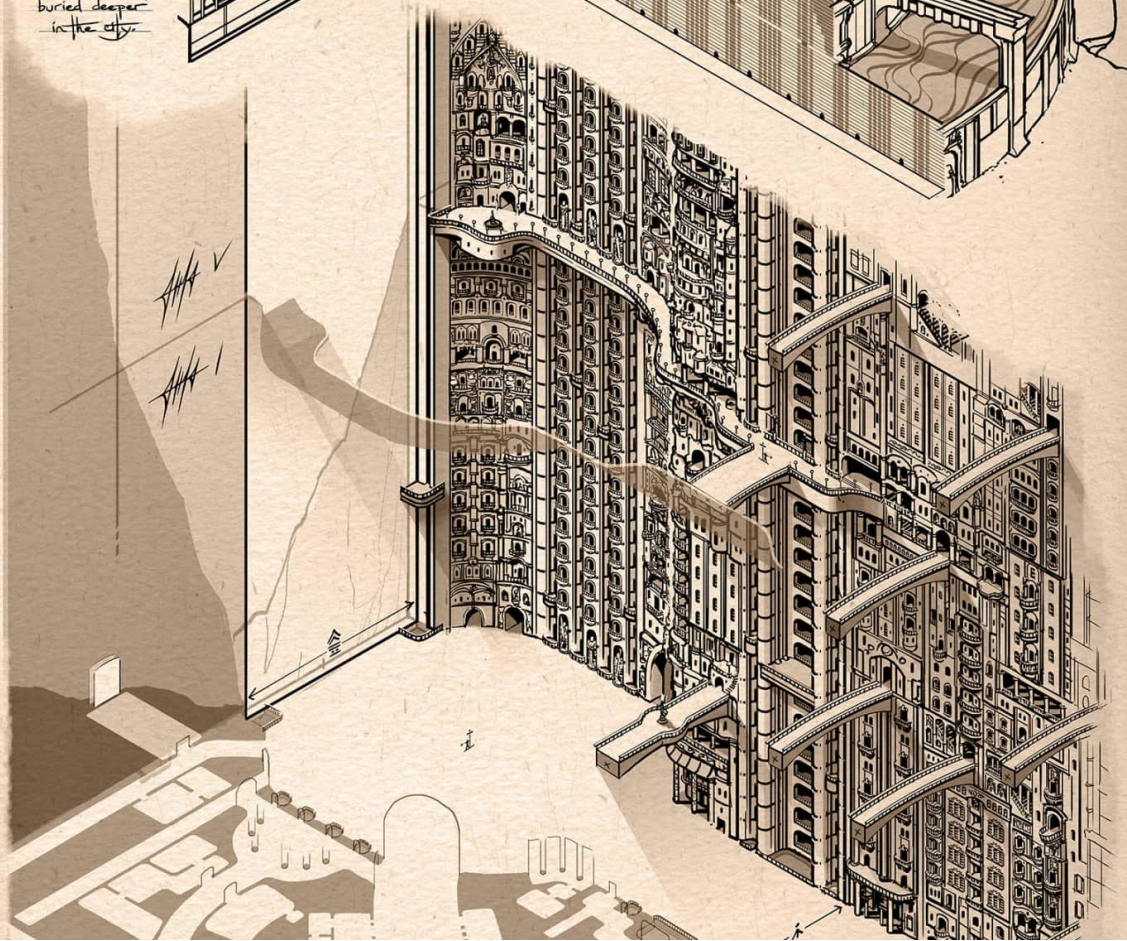
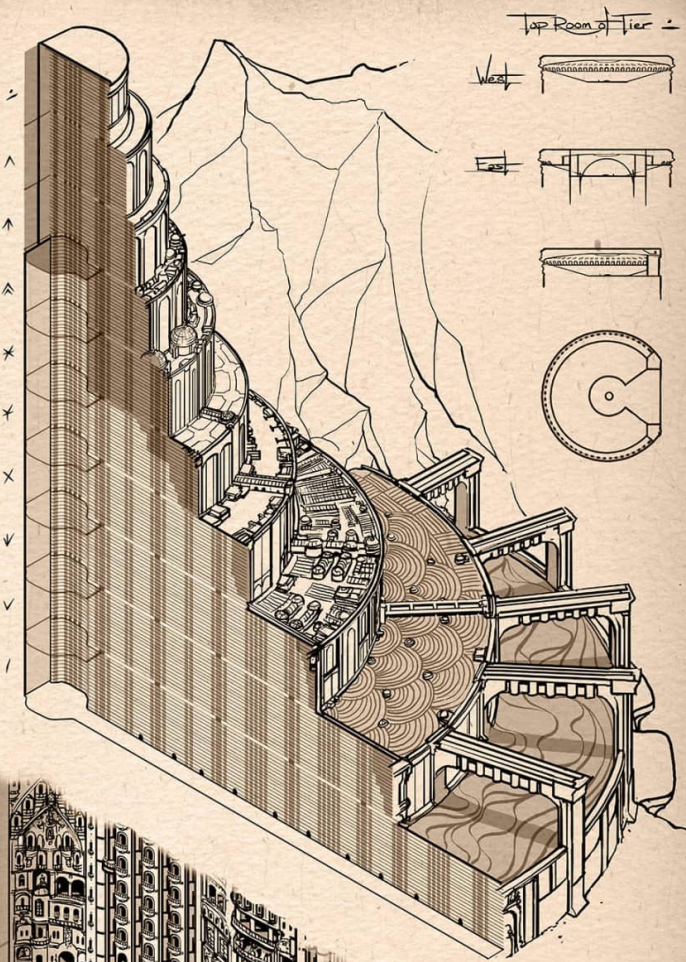
Shallan's Sketchbook: Urithiru



We speculate that these larger [structures] are intended for cargo and large groups.

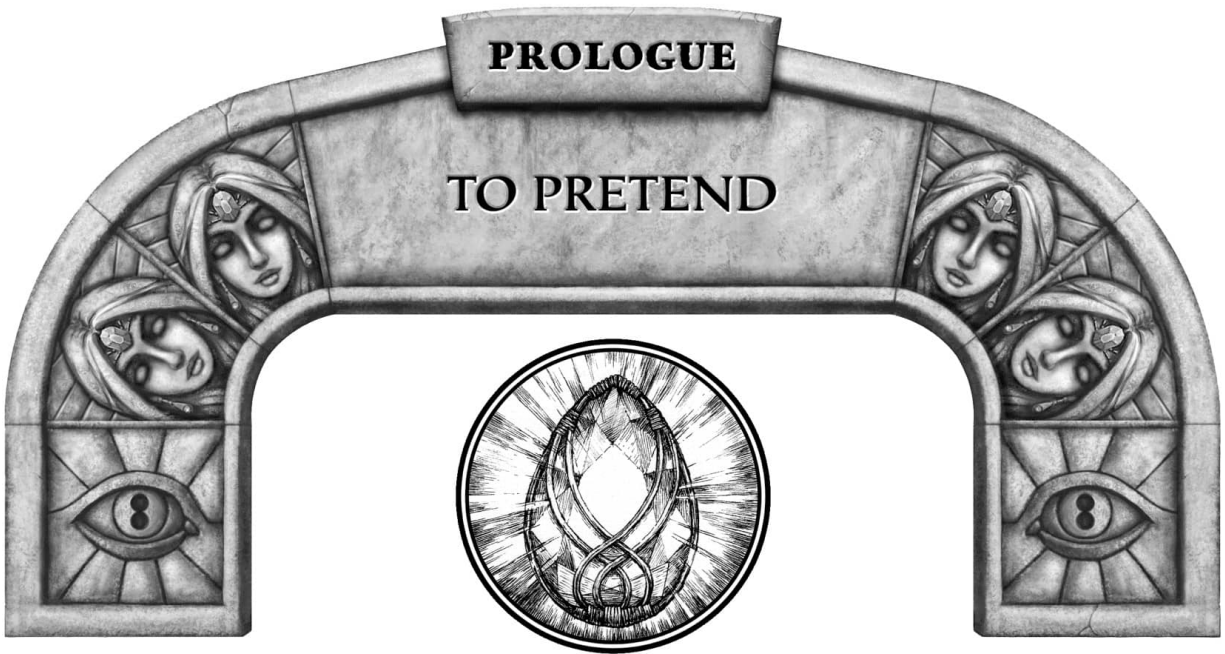
These [structures] have gates at either end & a dolly cart would easily [move] [them].

There are many other types of [structures] buried deeper in the city.



Hallan's Sketchbook: The Atrium





SEVEN YEARS AGO

Of course the Parshendi wanted to play their drums.

Of course Gavilar had told them they could.

And of *course* he hadn't thought to warn Navani.

"Have you seen the size of those instruments?" Maratham said, running her hands through her black hair. "Where will we put them? And we're already at capacity after your husband invited all the foreign dignitaries. We can't—"

"We'll set up a more exclusive feast in the upper ballroom," Navani said, maintaining a calm demeanor, "and put the drums there, with the king's table."

Everyone else in the kitchens was close to panicking, assistant cooks running one direction or another, pots banging, anticipationspren shooting up from the ground like streamers. Gavilar had invited not only the highprinces, but their relatives. And every highlord in the city. *And* he wanted a double-sized Beggar's Feast. And now ... drums?

“We’ve already put everyone to work in the lower feast hall!” Maratham cried. “I don’t have the staff to set up—”

“There are twice as many soldiers as usual loitering around the palace tonight,” Navani said. “We’ll have *them* help you set up.” Posting extra guards, making a show of force? Gavilar could always be counted on to do *that*.

For everything else, he had Navani.

“Could work, yes,” Maratham said. “Good to put the louts to work rather than having them underfoot. We have two main feasts, then? All right. Deep breaths.” The short palace organizer scuttled away, narrowly avoiding an apprentice cook carrying a large bowl of steaming shellfish.

Navani stepped aside to let the cook pass. The man nodded in thanks; the staff had long since stopped being nervous when she entered the kitchens. She’d made it clear to them that doing their jobs efficiently was recognition enough.

Despite the underlying tension, they seemed to have things well in hand now—though there had been a scare earlier when they’d found worms in three barrels of grain. Thankfully, Brightlord Amaram had stores for his men, and Navani had been able to pry them out of his grip. For now, with the extra cooks they’d borrowed from the monastery, they might actually be able to feed all the people Gavilar had invited.

I’ll have to give instructions on who is to be seated in which feast room, she thought, slipping out of the kitchens and into the palace gardens. *And leave some extra space in both. Who knows who else might show up with an invitation?*

She hiked up through the gardens toward the side doors of the palace. She’d be less in the way—and wouldn’t have to dodge servants—if she took this path. As she walked, she scanned to make certain all the lanterns were in place. Though the sun hadn’t yet set, she wanted the Kholinar palace to shine brightly tonight.

Wait. Was that Aesudan—her daughter-in-law, Elhokar’s wife—standing near the fountains? She was supposed to be greeting guests inside. The slender woman wore her long hair in a bun lit by a gemstone of each shade. All those colors were gaudy together—Navani preferred a few simple stones themed to one color—but it did make Aesudan stand out as she chatted with two elderly ardents.

Storms bright and brash ... that was *Rushur Kris*, the artist and master artifabrian. When had *he* arrived? Who had invited him? He was holding a

small box with a flower painted on it. Could that be ... one of his new fabrials?

Navani felt drawn toward the group, all other thoughts fleeing her mind. How had he made the heating fabrial, making the temperature vary? She'd seen drawings, but to talk to the master artist himself ...

Aesudan saw Navani and smiled brightly. The joy seemed genuine, which was unusual—at least when directed at Navani. She tried not to take Aesudan's general sourness toward her as a personal affront; it was the prerogative of every woman to feel threatened by her mother-in-law. Particularly when the girl was so obviously lacking in talents.

Navani smiled at her in turn, trying to enter the conversation and get a better look at that box. Aesudan, however, took Navani by the arm. "Mother! I had completely forgotten about our appointment. I'm so fickle sometimes. Terribly sorry, Ardent Kris, but I must make a hasty exit."

Aesudan tugged Navani—forcefully—back through the gardens toward the kitchens. "Thank *Kelek* you showed up, Mother. That man is the most dreadful bore."

"Bore?" Navani said, twisting to gaze over her shoulder. "He was talking about..."

"Gemstones. And other gemstones. And spren and boxes of spren, and *storms!* You'd think he would understand. I have *important* people to meet. The wives of highprinces, the best generals in the land, all come to gawk at the wild parshmen. Then I get stuck in the gardens talking to *ardents?* Your son abandoned me there, I'll have you know. When I find that man..."

Navani extricated herself from Aesudan's grip. "Someone should entertain those ardent. Why are they here?"

"Don't ask me," Aesudan said. "Gavilar wanted them for something, but he made Elhokar entertain them. Poor manners, that is. Honestly!"

Gavilar had invited one of the world's most prominent artifabrians to visit Kholinar, and he hadn't bothered to *tell* Navani? Emotion stirred deep inside her, a fury she kept carefully penned and locked away. That man. That *storming* man. How ... how could he ...

Angerspren, like boiling blood, began to well up in a small pool at her feet. *Calm, Navani*, the rational side of her mind said. *Maybe he intends to introduce the ardent to you as a gift.* She banished the anger with effort.

"Brightness!" a voice called from the kitchens. "Brightness Navani! Oh, please! We have a problem."