

*You have inspired so many and are such an important part of this world. Never forget that. You have started a battle with a terrible disease and have suffered much for it. You will prevail. Realize you do not suffer alone, thousands world wide suffer with you, not in physical pain but with the emotional pain that comes with knowing that someone you know and care about is suffering. You and your family have the prayers of so many for support during this difficult time in your lives. May your light always be a beacon for the world. You are a golden thread in the tapestry of the world.*

Kerry

## The Watch Book

By Kerry Rawluk

Dedicated to James Rigney Jr. (Robert Jordan)

May this be a reminder of just how many people you have inspired.

## CHAPTER 1:

*The Wheel of Time turns, and Ages come and pass, leaving memories that become legend. Legend fades to myth, and even myth is long forgotten when the Age that gave it birth comes again. In one Age, called the Third Age by some, an Age yet to come, an Age long past, a wind rose along the summit of the mountain. The wind was not the beginning. There are neither beginnings nor endings to the turning of the Wheel of Time. But it was a beginning.*

Down the great slope of the vast Dragonmount the wind gusted across the landscape. The fields, white with snow, were scarcely disturbed by this unnatural wind. There was a foul smell to it, like the rot and decay of thousands of bodies piled together, and the sound it made was enough to send shivers down anyone's spine. It was as though someone was crying out in anger and hatred at the world and his voice took on the form of a wind. Many strange things had been occurring lately, a sign of a weakening of the seals on the Dark One's prison.

Across the swift flowing river to the island city of Tar Valon, the wind continued its unknown and endless journey. The sun was only just above the horizon and gave an eerie glow to the white walls surrounding the city. Through the streets the wind howled, until at last it blasted against the huge white tower in the middle of the island. The White Tower was home to the Aes Sedai, channelers of the One Power, and still lay quiet in the early hours of the morning. There was scarcely a sound other than the wind. But there is always someone awake in the great tower.

Aria Monro looked over her shoulder as she slipped through another door that would lead her even deeper into the sub-basements of the Tower. She still felt uneasy about exploring the lower areas of the Tower despite the fact that she had been raised to the shawl and named Aes Sedai over 137 years ago. She had of course chosen the Brown Ajah as her new family. Seekers of knowledge and keepers of ancient history, the Brown suited her personality perfectly. Besides, she had no interest in politics so she would have been a horrible Blue and she was completely hopeless at Healing, the Yellow's would have laughed had she asked to join them. Her mind wandered far too often for her to make an effective student

of the law or negotiator, but she didn't want to be a Gray anyway. As for the White's, all they seemed to care about was logic and could spend hours discussing minute details of some complex issue. The Green's, the Battle Ajah, were playful and seemingly carefree but some of the weaves they knew made her shudder and be thankful that only Shadowspawn and Darkfriends would ever be on the receiving end of them. The Red's simply hated all men which was something that Aria just couldn't understand.

She had risen early this day in order to explore more fully the new area of the basements she had discovered. Rising well before dawn she had brushed the long brown hair that hung to the middle of her back one hundred times so it had a gossamer sheen before putting it into a tight braid. After changing her shift and brushing her teeth with salt and soda she pulled on a dress of green silk she had recently bought from a shop in the city, embroidered with golden thread along the hem and neckline, it had cost a pretty penny. Still, her sun-dark skin and fiery green eyes matched the material well. She paused briefly as she fastened her belt pouch and looked at the knife sitting beside it. All these years as an Aes Sedai with the One Power to protect her and still she didn't feel secure without her belt-knife. Aria smiled to herself as she hung it at her waist and left her apartments, to make her way down the seemingly endless number of stairs to where she had last been a few days ago.

The basements were cool and dark, but still she could see without aide of a light weave. Every step she took brought up a cloud of dust which threatened to make her sneeze. This deep in the basements had been virtually forgotten for hundreds of years. As she continued onward she found something surprising. There was seemingly an interwoven net of glowing threads blocking the path. "A ward? Here?" she thought to herself as she embraced Saidar. The One Power flowed into her and all her senses were enhanced. The dust overwhelmed her and she couldn't help herself as she sneezed a dozen times. Giving her head a little shake she channelled a thin flow of Spirit and gently probed the ancient weave that protected against intruders.

"A rather nasty one too" Aria commented to herself. "What is so important that needs to be protected by such a powerful weave?" The ward was made with all five threads of the Power; Water, Earth, Fire, Air, and Spirit. "I would be completely destroyed if I tried to pass through..."

Continuing her probing until she was satisfied she began to unravel the ward so she could continue onward. In only a few moments the weaves were undone and the ward dissipated. Keeping a hold of the Power she continued onwards and downwards. It was growing colder now, Aria felt sure that she should be able to see her breath. She focused and blocked out the cold so it no longer

registered in her mind.

It grew harder to see in the deepening darkness as she rounded a corner and came to yet another long corridor. This one however contained a hub at its end that branched into five other corridors each leading off in a different direction. Off to one side of the hub room was a small door so covered in dust it nearly matched the cold stone walls in color.

“It could take me weeks to explore each of those corridors and the branches they may take. Perhaps through the door for today” Aria thought to herself.

Opening the door she found complete darkness. She channelled a light for herself which floated just above her shoulder and bathed the room in a bluish glow. It was full of books; at least they looked like books. At the center of the room was a simple round wooden table with a matching wooden chair that looked to be ready to collapse under its own weight. Sitting on the table was an oil lamp and an open book.

Aria channelled the lamp alight and, releasing Saidar, allowed her own light to dissipate. The room took on a dim reddish glow from the flickering lamp causing the shadows on the walls to dance in what seemed a merry yet disturbing celebration that finally after all these long years the room once again had somebody in it. Striding to the table she closed the book and read its title. *The End of an Age* by Somal al’Cathaheim.

“Well Master Cathaheim what Age are you writing of?” Opening the book to the first page Aria found not words but a single large symbol. It was an ancient symbol that few of even the oldest Browns who had studied all the ancient histories would remember.

“The Hall of the Servants...” murmured Aria in shock “for something to be written by one of the Aes Sedai of old this book would have to be well over three thousand years and be from before the Breaking of the World!” Gently testing the chair, Aria found it to be surprisingly stable. She quickly opened the book to the first chapter and read. And as she read, the book took on a slight glow and her vision was filled with images, her ears filled with sounds. History played out before her eyes....

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“I’m telling you there’s something there!” said a woman in exasperation. “I’ve felt it, Beidomon has felt it, and even the male member of my team, Jaden has felt it! If we can find some way to tap this new source of power there won’t be anything that can’t be done. Saidar and Saidin can only do so much. This new

source is completely undivided! No female half, no male half. With this we may even be able to Restore those that have been burned out. We may even be able to Restore death! How can you not be willing to let me and me team proceed?"

The tall man she was talking to only shook his head. His face was a dark brown that matched his eyes which shone with the light of intelligence. His close-cropped hair was a black mass of curls. He was wearing a simple coat of green wool with golden clasps done up to the neck. His pants were black and had the look of being pressed meticulously to get such a perfect crease.

"Mistress Eronaile..." she hated it when he called her that and he knew it. The look she gave him would have made a charging bull flee in terror. He simply cleared his throat, "look Mierin it's far too dangerous. As wonderful as it would be to be able to heal such things the fact is this new Source isn't even in the Pattern! You don't yet know what it is. At least do some more research into the source of this new Power first. You and your team could be burned out or even worse otherwise. And so close to the Collam Daan who knows what might happen. As Director of Research I cannot allow you to take such a risk without first knowing what you're dealing with. I don't want to have to take you to the Council of Directors again but if you press me further I will."

Mierin sniffed as she turned from his office and slammed the door behind her. Her icy blue eyes shone with a fury and her lips were but thin lines on her face. Brushing her long black hair from the sides of her face she marched out of the Collam Daan Research Office, her long white dress with the deep broad sleeves rustling with her resolute strides. It was thin and made of the highest quality silk available and clung to her body in just the right places. She always liked having people look at her; now though she didn't even notice the lingering eyes of those who passed by. She wore a silver belt of moon and stars that hung at her waist and was matched with large silver earrings in the shape of five-pointed stars.

Embracing the Source she wove a Gateway to her lab where she knew Beidomon would be anxiously awaiting her return. Stepping through from the lush carpets and tall archways in soft gentle tones of the Collam Daan offices into the blindingly lit, sterile white lab was never a pleasant sensation. It was akin to listening to a symphony written by one of the great masters being played by unpractised amateurs.

As she expected Beidomon was waiting for her. "You look ready to chew iron and spit nails Mierin. He disagrees I take it?" The older woman sighed at the nod. "Are you going to heed Luthair this time?"

“Of course not Beidomon, the fool man only denies us the chance to get to this new Power because he didn’t find it first! Assemble the team. We leave at dawn tomorrow.”

Beidomon looked pensive. “If we go against Luthair again we could be expelled from the Collam Daan. I’ve risked much while under your leadership and we have only just managed to not be expelled. I dare not disobey him again, not even for you.”

Mierin looked at Beidomon and could see in her eyes there would be no swaying her. She sighed, “Very well Beidomon. I will not force you to come along with us tomorrow. But in case you do decide to come we will be meeting outside the observatory below the Sharom.”

Beidomon nodded her head and, embracing the Source wove a Gateway that lead to her apartments in the city of Tzora, leaving Mierin alone in the lab with nothing but her thoughts. “I’ll show you Luthair. Soon you’ll wish you had never opposed me. Once I’m known all around the world as the one who found this new source you’ll be nothing but a speck on the wall compared to me. Blood and bloody ashes I’ll show you...”

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She had been following Aria began snooping in the Tower basements. As Aria went deeper and deeper the woman knew she would find it eventually. Embracing Saidar she wove powerful wards behind her in case others tried to follow. “You should know better Aria, not to snoop where you don’t belong.” the woman said to the shadows of the basements...

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Mierin always liked looking at the Sharom, especially in the early morning when the light of the new day’s sun was just on the horizon and it was reflecting the new light. It was as if a giant pearl had been suspended high in the air for the entire city to enjoy.

As much as she hated to admit it, Luthair did have a point. What if something did happen and she or someone in her team was burned out, cut off from the Source, the One Power, forever. She couldn’t imagine living her life without being able to channel. She often pitied those who were forced to live life without ever knowing what it was like to hold the Source, to hold Saidar or Saidin, to feel the pure and unequivocal joy of it. What if she was about to become one of those people?

Her reverie was cut short as Gateways began appearing nearby. As members of her research team began stepping through and walking towards her she was filled with a new confidence in her mission today.

Her confidence swelled even more as she saw one last Gateway open up and Beidomon step through. The older woman's silver grey hair hung loose to her shoulders and swayed as she walked, her brown eyes sparkled with confidence. Mierin smiled, her whole team would be with her today, all twenty-seven. They would not fail.

As Beidomon drew closer she smiled widely at Mierin, the thin lines on her face growing deeper. "You were right this is far too important for me to not be here with you. We'll do today what others have only dreamed of, and you will gain world wide recognition of you achievements. Your team...is ready."

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The woman moved swiftly through the shadows of the corridor. Aria had come this way, there were none of the wards that had once been here, wards that she herself had placed. Her hair was dark as a moonless, starless night. Blacker than black it hung to the middle of her back. "The Daughter of the Night comes for you Aria" she said with a malicious hiss.

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Mierin opened the Gateway that would take the team to a small tropical island not far from the city and the Collam Daan. Here the Pattern was thinnest and it was easiest to detect the new source. Mierin was the first to step through followed by Beidomon and then the rest of the team. Once the last of the team was through Mierin let the Gateway close but kept a hold of Saidar.

The island was hot and humid. The trees reached high into the sky and the water that surrounded it was a clear crystal blue. It had a lush plant life with flowers ranging from the darkest of red to the brightest blue. There was a sweet scent that hung in the air, of the flowers and of the normal decay of dead and dying trees. Brightly coloured birds of green and blue flew overhead adding their beautiful yet eerie voices to the cacophony of sounds coming from the forest.

"Everyone prepare yourselves to link with me. I'll take the control of the flows. Jaden I'll tell you when to come into the link once I have twelve linked with me." The young man nodded and reached out for Saidin without actually grasping it, waiting to be the keystone to let another thirteen women into the linked circle. At Mierin's nod Jaden let himself be melded into the circle and soon the rest of the women had as well.

With a small smile of delight Mierin began to channel the complex flows she would use to bore through the Pattern. She used primarily Spirit melded with Fire, though she used Earth, Air and Water to stabilize the weave. It would take hours of weaving in order to safely make this tiny hole in the Pattern. “And so it begins” whispered Mierin, “You should not have doubted me Luthair. I am about to unlock a powerful new Source...”

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The woman stepped into the room with the five corridors leading off of it and turned towards the door at the side which was slightly ajar. She stepped over to it lightly and slowly pushed the door open. Aria was sitting at the table hunched over the book with a glazed look. The woman smiled brushing her black hair from her face and revealing silver star earrings...

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“Mierin something’s not right. I can feel something...waiting as you bore deeper. Surely you can feel it too? There’s something there waiting to push its way into the Pattern. Perhaps this isn’t such a good idea” said Beidomon uneasily. “Maybe you should stop.”

“I can’t stop now Beidomon; if I did the entire Pattern could unravel from what I’ve done. I must finish. Besides I sense nothing. You’re just tired that’s all. I’m almost there, I can feel it.” But as she bore deeper through the Pattern until she was right on the edge of breaking through something began to push back. At first Mierin thought it was nothing, just a feedback from all the Power she had been using, but soon she could no longer ignore it. The force of pressure against her weave was too great.

“I can’t hold it! Something is there and it’s pushing back! I have to stop it!” But it was far too late. Try as she could Mierin could not hold back the force pushing against her from the other side of the Pattern. As a hole was ripped through the Pattern the weave was forced violently back.

Screams of pain filled Mierin’s ears as she fought back. She looked around at her team. Twelve of the women were collapsed on the ground surrounded by congealed pools of blood which seemed to have erupted from the pores of their skin. “Oh Light, what have I done!”

She looked over at Jaden who was on his knees gasping and quivering, blood streaming down his face from his eyes and out of his ears. With a final scream he collapsed to the ground and convulsed violently, gurgling as blood filled his mouth, before falling silent. The weave was no longer strong enough to

hold back...whatever it was that was pushing against it. With a gasp Mierin let go of the flow and was knocked to the ground unconscious by the resulting backlash that shook the Pattern itself and changed the world forever.

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With a gasp Aria dropped the book. She shook as she realized what it was she had seen. “That was the creation of the Bore, the hole in the Dark One’s prison. That woman seemed so...familiar, but why?” It stirred up thoughts of dread and fear though Aria could not recall why it should.

A familiar voice came from the shadows of the door and made Aria jump from her seat, “Did you enjoy the history you saw in the watch book? Very few of them were made and only of important events. You should have kept going, it only gets better if you go further.”

“Who are you? Show yourself at once” demanded Aria after resuming a calm, collected Aes Sedai tone.

The woman who stepped into the room wore a long white dress with deep sleeves that rustled as she walked further into the room. It was thin and made of a high quality silk and clung perfectly to her form. Around her waist was a thin silver belt of moon and stars that matched the large silver earrings shaped like stars that she wore.

“It...it’s you! The woman from the book...Mierin! B...but how? You would have to be over three thousand years old!” exclaimed Aria with a start.

The woman only smiled with contempt, “That name means nothing to me now. I ceased being Mierin Eronaile long ago when I swore my allegiance to the Great Lord. Now you can call me Lanfear, I’m sure you know *that* name.”

Aria’s eyes bulged and she took a step back as if to escape from the woman who had been responsible for countless atrocities during the Age of Legends. “but the thirteen Forsaken and the Dark One are sealed in the Bore in Shayol Ghul...” Aria whispered with a quiver in her voice.

“Are we now? I’m afraid I have to disagree with that statement” said Lanfear as she stepped closer. “We have all been free of the Bore for some time now, though the seals that Lews Therin placed on the Bore during the War of Shadow all those years ago are still strong enough to hold the Great Lord. But they won’t be for much longer, even you must know that. The Time of Return is close at hand, and this time the Light shall fall.”

Aria quivered but said nothing. This was one of the Forsaken, who'd pledged their lives to the Dark One. Lanfear was said to be the strongest of the female Forsaken. Aria knew she would not survive this encounter.

"I'm afraid you've seen far too much of my history for me to allow you to live. Its too bad you didn't get to see what happened to the others, Somal was the only one who discerned anything about us before we found and killed him. Quite slowly and painfully if I might add, Semirhage had him in her tender care before he escaped and was able to slit his own throat. Don't worry your death will be quick and far less painful," spoke Lanfear as she embraced the Source. "Goodbye." She channelled and Aria couldn't even get out a scream before she fell to the floor, dead.

Lanfear stepped over the body and picked up the book. "Such a terrible thing to destroy history, even if not wholly accurate. I'm sure I'll find a use for you." With that she opened a Gateway and stepped through leaving Aria to be discovered, or maybe not discovered, in the deep basements of the White Tower.