

The Wound That Would Never Heal

based on the novel "Six of Crows" by Leigh Bardugo

Kaz screwed up.

Everything else had gone as planned. They'd taken the money and left no other trace of their presence. He would've called it another successful night, except he'd slipped. Kaz Brekker never slipped. He'd spent countless nights planning this robbery only to miss his footing. He could blame it on the weather, say the damp fog coming from the docks wasn't an ideal circumstance for scaling buildings. But excuses didn't work in Ketterdam.

He'd had only a moment to process the sickening crunch and searing pain that shot through his right leg seconds after the fall before he was forced to drag himself out of the alley. By the time they reached the Slat, Kaz's pants were covered in blood. He'd have to buy another suit.

He knew his leg needed time to heal, perhaps a cast, but as soon as people realized his vulnerability, they would come for him. Time wasn't something he could afford. The Dregs were merciless.

He'd spent the next week around the Slat, willing his leg to heal. Planning his next acts but letting others perform them. During the first few days, his absence was inconspicuous, but as the days dragged, he could hear the wisps of rumors starting. He had to do something.

He bit back his pain and tried not to limp as he made his way toward the East Stave. Letting a Healer fix his leg wasn't debatable- he hadn't been able to bear skin contact since his brother's death- so a cane was his only option. Thankfully, he knew someone who could give him just that.

On his way to the pub, Kaz was glad for the rain. Even though he'd brought a small cane with him, every step sent shocks of pain through his body, bringing tears to his eyes. At least now he could allow himself a limp, seeing as he'd made sure to dress like a tourist. Even his gloves were off tonight, safe in his pant pocket. He hoped he wouldn't need them.

It was warm inside. Not by much, but it was definitely better than the cold, wet rain. Kaz's eyes scanned each face. When he found his target, he started toward him. Kaz hoped he'd gotten the right person; all he knew of him was the rumors.

"Hello, Adrik," Kaz said in a lowered voice. Ketterdam was not the friendliest toward Grisha.

"That's not my name." Kaz had expected as much, but now he knew he'd found his man. His thick Ravkan accent was hard to miss. Kaz sat down, trying not to wince.

"You don't have to deny it. I have no hatred toward the Grisha. Besides, I'm only interested in what you can do for me, and I'm willing to pay," He perked up, so Kaz continued. "I want you to make me a cane. A cane that can last me my lifetime. A cane with a crow's skull that can break bones as well as support mine. I'll give you 200 *krug* for it."

"500," Adrik replied.

"300," Kaz said.

"It's a done deal," he said, and they shook on it.

Before Kaz left the pub, they set up a meeting place by the docks.

In the next couple of days, the thought of his cane kept Kaz from going insane, and when those days finally passed, Kaz silently made his way to the docks in the night.

When he got there, Adrik was already waiting.

“Money first,” he greeted Kaz.

“You’re not getting anything until I make sure you did your job,” Kaz extended his hand, and Adrik reluctantly handed over the cane.

It had a sleek look, with a long black stem ending in a silver crow’s skull.

“I hope you know, if you mention even a word of this to anyone, I will find you and I will slit your throat,” Kaz said casually as he tested the weight of the cane in his hand.

Then, without warning, he hit his cane hard against Adrik’s leg, muffling his scream with a gloved hand. The crack of a bone told Kaz he’d gotten what he wanted.

As the man lay on the ground in pain, he managed to gasp, “Who are you?”

Kaz grinned, dropping a bag of *kruge* on Adrik’s lap.

“You don’t want to know.”

He walked away then, and in Ketterdam’s silent night, the echo of his cane could be heard clear, hitting the ground with each uneven stride.

Click.

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Dirtyhands was back.