

# Brick by Brick

By Nora Barth

Characters from *Six of Crows* by Leigh Bardugo

*Brick by brick. I will make him remember.*

Dirtyhands, they called him. The boy with a cane and a dark glint in his eye, who would commit any sin for the right price.

This job would be no different. Kaz Brekker would see it done.

“Where have you been?” Jesper demanded, turning on his stool as he heard the thud of Kaz’s cane above the noise and chaos of the Slat. Kaz glanced at him briefly. The tall Zemeni boy was sitting at the bar, one eyebrow quirked easily.

“Seeing an old friend,” he replied, straightening the cuffs of his immaculate suit. “Where is Wylan?”

Jesper shrugged. “Upstairs. He’s working on a new flash bomb, I think. I’ve heard its prototypes going off all day.”

“Get him to my office. I have a new job.”

“Ah, so that explains your cheerful mood.” Jesper grinned, fiddling with his precious pearl-handled revolvers.

Kaz’s perpetual frown deepened. “I know about the loan, Jes,” he said, looking the sharpshooter in the eye. Jesper’s smile dropped. “I know you’re in deep debt with the wrong people. So I suggest you pay close attention to what I’m about to say.”

“I’m listening.” Jesper folded his arms. “How much?”

Kaz glanced around the Slat, full of loud, boisterous card players, and lowered his voice. “How does thirty million *kruge* sound?”

“Thirty—” Jesper blanched, nearly choking on his drink. “*Saints*, am I dreaming?”

Kaz merely hefted his cane. “You. Wylan. My office. You have ten minutes.”

He left the Zemeni on the main floor, still looking thunderstruck.

As he climbed the narrow stairs, Kaz had to admit that the offer did sound too good to be true. But that much *kruge* came at a dangerous cost.

The mission: go to Fjerda and retrieve Bo Yul-Bayur, a Shu scientist and the most valuable hostage in the world. He was being held in the Ice Court, the greatest

prison to ever be built. No one had ever broken into it and lived to tell the tale. But they would manage.

*Brick by brick. I will make him pay.*

The *R* tattoo on his arm seemed to prickle, and Kaz's gloved hand tightened on the crow's head of his cane. *I will make him remember us, Jordie. But not before I bring him to his knees.*

When he reached his office, the room appeared to be deserted. But Kaz knew better. "I've got another job, Wraith."

"The work just never ends with you, does it?" Inej sighed as she melted out of the shadows. The small Suli girl moved with the grace of an acrobat—and climbed with it, too. Kaz Brekker's spider was known for her quiet footsteps and lethal knives. She tossed him a brand-new hat.

"That was fast."

Inej shrugged modestly. "You *did* say please. I'm assuming this new job will help get us our *kruge*?"

Kaz moved to his desk, looking out the window at the black, jutting rooftops of Ketterdam. "You remember Nina, from the White Rose?"

"Of course."

"She's going to help us break Matthias Helvar out of Hellgate."

Inej pursed her lips. "I don't like where this is going."

"That Ejerdan used to be a *drüskelle* warrior; we need him if we're going to get into the Ice Court. Now, go fetch Muzzen; he'll act as our decoy. Then come back here. We have plans to discuss."

Inej sighed, nodded, and leapt onto the windowsill. In a matter of moments, the Wraith had disappeared from sight.

Kaz donned his new hat. The plan was forming, slowly but surely. Helvar's information would be crucial, of course. Their trip to Hellgate must be a success if they were to even consider Jan Van Eck's impossible heist.

But Kaz would make sure the prison break worked. They would construct a plan and get Bo Yul-Bayur out of the Ice Court. They'd get their money.

Thirty million *kruge*, split six ways. With that much gold, Kaz could ensure that Pekka Rollins would crumble. He'd build his empire, right under Pekka's nose, and

then he'd destroy him, slowly, because nothing could ever replace the part of Kaz that Pekka had taken away.

*Brick by brick.*

Kaz Brekker turned away from the window, remembering the cold waters of Reaper's Barge, the press of decaying bodies, Jordie's bloated skin underneath his hands.

Pekka Rollins may not remember, but Kaz would never forget.