

# Six of Crows

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*In the fictional world of Ketterdam, Kez Brekker and his crew attempt to pull off an ambitious heist. Part of his crew are Nina and Matthias, who have a complicated friendship and history. Once in love but then brutally betrayed by Nina, Matthias is compelled to expose her actions.*

'No, Nina,' Matthias said. 'Tell them. You said you were my friend once. Do you remember?' He turned to the others. 'We travelled together for three weeks. I saved her life. We saved each other. When we got to Elling, we... I could have revealed her to the soldiers we saw there at any time. But I didn't.' Matthias started pacing, his voice rising, as if the memories were getting the better of him. 'I borrowed money. I arranged lodging. I was willing to betray everything I believed in for the sake of her safety. When I saw her down to the docks so we could try to book passage, there was a Kerch trader there, ready to set sail.' Matthias was there again, standing on the docks with her, she could see it in his eyes. 'Ask her what she did then, this honourable ally, this girl who stands in judgement of me and my kind.'

No one said a word, but they were watching, waiting.

'Tell them, Nina,' he demanded. 'They should know how you treat your friends.'

Nina swallowed, then forced herself to meet their gazes. 'I told the Kerch that he was a slaver and that he'd taken me prisoner. I threw myself on their mercy and begged them to help me. I had a seal I'd taken from a slaving ship we'd raided near the Wandering Isle. I used it as proof.'

She couldn't bear to look at them. Kaz knew, of course. She'd had to tell him the charges she'd made and tried recant when she was begging for his assistance. But Kaz had never probed, never asked why, never chastised her. In a way, telling Kaz had been a comfort. There could be no judgement from a boy known as Dirtyhands.

But now the truth was there for everyone to see. Privately, the Kerch knew slaves moved in and out of the ports of Ketterdam, and most indentures were really slaves by another name. But publicly, they reviled it and were obligated to prosecute all slavers. Nina had known exactly what would happen when she'd branded Matthias with the charge.

'I didn't understand what was happening,' said Matthias. 'I didn't speak Kerch, but Nina certainly did. They seized me and put me in chains. They tossed me in the brig and kept me there in the dark for weeks while we crossed the sea. The next time I saw daylight was when they led me off the ship in Ketterdam.'

'I had no choice,' Nina said, the ache of tears pressing at her throat. 'You don't know —'

'Just tell me one thing,' he said. There was anger in his voice, but she could hear something else, too, a kind of pleading. 'If you could go back, if you could undo what you did to me, would you?'

Chapter 20, 'Nina'