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2016 fantasy novel by Leigh Bardugo Crooked Kingdom First edition coverAuthorLeigh BardugoLanguageEnglishSeriesSix of Crows duologyGenreFantasy, Young AdultPublishedSeptember 20, 2016PublisherHenry Holt and Co.Publication placeUnited StatesMedia typePrint (hardcover and paperback), audiobook, e-bookPages546ISBN9781627792134OCLC962228078Preceded bySix of Crows Crooked Kingdom is a fantasy novel written by Israeli–American author Leigh Bardugo, published by Henry Holt and Co. in 2016.[1] Set in a world loosely inspired by 19th-century Europe,[2] it takes place days after the events of the duology's first book, Six of Crows.[3] The plot is told from the third-person viewpoints of eight characters. Six of Crows and Crooked Kingdom are set in the Grishaverse. The Crows reappear in Rule of Wolves (2021), part of the King of Scars duology where Nina Zenik is a major point-of-view character. Leigh Bardugo has discussed the possibility of writing a third book in this series, but has not confirmed it.[4] In the prologue, a Grisha named Emil Retvenko is kidnapped by a winged Shu man. The book begins in a gambling parlor named Club Cumulus, where Jesper and Nina keep Jan Van Eck's lawyer, Cornelis Smeet, busy while Kaz and Wylan search his office for Van Eck's property documents. Kaz then plans to kidnap Van Eck’s pregnant young wife, Alys, and trade her for Inej, who is being held captive. Meanwhile, Jesper’s father, Colm, arrives at the city, as a bank Jesper owes demands he pays his debts. When Jesper and Wylan go to meet Colm, they are attacked but manage to escape. Kaz tells Jesper's father to give them three days to get the money and asks him to wait in a hotel in the city. Afterward, the crew's kidnapping is successful, and they trade Van Eck's wife for Inej. However, during the trade, three Shu soldiers with superhuman abilities attack Nina, Jesper, and other Grisha in the surrounding area. They manage to get away after Nina shoots one of them in the eye and Wylan sets another on fire. The crew meets at their hideout, and Kaz reveals he had bought shares in sugar companies and plans to sabotage Van Eck’s sugar silos using a chemical weevil, thereby raising the price of sugar. Nina and Inej persuade Kaz to smuggle out the remaining Grisha in the city using one of Van Eck’s ships. While Kaz and Wylan attempt to steal the seal they need from the Van Eck house, Nina and Inej infiltrate the sugar silos. However, all of them are attacked, and it is revealed that Pekka Rollins had allied with Van Eck. Pekka also attacks the hideout Kaz was using to hide Kuwei, where Jesper and Matthias were guarding him. They all escape and meet at the hotel where Colm is staying. Nina tells the group about her strange and eerie new ability to control dead bodies; she, Wylan, and Kuwei guess that it might be a result of her surviving withdrawal from jurda parem. They also learn Van Eck had deputized all the gangs in the Barrel, leaving them with few allies and no means of escape. Kaz puts together another plan and declares an auction for the indenture of Kuwei. During the auction the Fjerdans, Ravkans, Shu, and Zemeni bid for Kuwei. Kaz disguises the Grisha from the embassy as the Council of Tides. They claim that the auction is biased because Van Eck funded the Shu delegation. The Merchant Council believes that Van Eck had swindled them. The money was, in fact, channeled to the Crows by scamming the Merchant Council. Van Eck is arrested and his reputation destroyed. They manage to fake Kuwei's death and smuggle him out of the city with the Ravkans, where he will try to find an antidote to jurda parem. During the job, Matthias is shot by a young drüskelle and later dies. Kaz bluffs Pekka into believing that he had his son buried alive. Pekka then leaves the city in search of his son. With Van Eck gone, Wylan inherits the properties of his family. Jesper lives with Wylan and helps him handle the business but agrees that he will train with a Fabrikator to develop his power as Grisha. In the final chapters, Kaz finds Inej's parents with the help of Sturmhond and brings them to Ketterdam. He is threatened by the real Council of Tides. Inej threatens Pekka out of his business in her first move against the people active in Ketterdam's slave trade.[5] Main article: Characters of the Grishaverse Kaz Brekker, a criminal prodigy and lock pick with a reputation for doing anything for the right price.[6][5] He is also known as Dirtyhands and Bastard of the Barrell.[7][8] He is described as always wearing black leather gloves and carrying a cane with a crow's head on it. He is the de facto leader of the Dregs.[5] Inej Ghafa, a Suli acrobat who has a talent for sneaking around.[5] She was kidnapped as a child and forced to work in a brothel known as the "Menagerie" until Kaz bought her indenture.[9][5] She is also known as the Wraith.[5] Wylan van Eck, a merchant's son with some talent for demolition. He is unable to read due to severe dyslexia.[6][5] He is initially engaged as a potential hostage, but later proves his worth as a valuable member of the Crows.[5] Matthias Helvar, a former Drüskelle witchhunter from Fjerda.[10] Kaz frees Matthias from Hellgate Prison in Six of Crows because of his knowledge of the Ice Court as well as for his skills as a soldier.[6][5] He has a romantic history with Nina.[5] Nina Zenik, a powerful Heartrender who worked in a brothel named "White Rose".[8][5] She was a soldier of the Ravkan Second Army who was captured by Fjerdan Drüskelle, leading to her first encounter with Matthias.[6][10] After the events of Six of Crows, her Grisha power shifted from the ability to manipulate the human body to the ability to communicate with and control the dead.[11][5] Jesper Fahey, a dark-skinned Zemeni sharpshooter with a gambling problem.[6] He is described as being tall and lanky, with an intense facial bone structure. He is known for his quick wit and even quicker shooting.[5] Colm Fahey, a Kaelish jurda farmer who set up shop in Novyi Zem. He is Jesper's father.[5] Jan Van Eck, a rich and prominent merchant who sits on Ketterdam's Merchant Council. He makes a deal with Kaz Brekker to retrieve the creator of jurda parem from the Ice Court. He is also Wylan Van Eck's father.[5] Kuwei Yul-Bo, the son of Bo Yul-Bayur, the creator of jurda parem. Kuwei was rescued from the Ice Court by the Dregs in Six of Crows, and brought back to Ketterdam. He is an Inferni, and is Shu.[5] Pekka Rollins, leader of the Dime Lions and Kaz's main adversary. He is the rich owner of successful gambling halls and runs one of the most formidable gangs in Ketterdam.[5] Kirkus Reviews calls the novel "dark and violent...but gut-wrenchingly genuine".[12] It was nominated for the 2016 Goodreads Choice Awards for "Best Young Adult Fantasy & Science Fiction".[13] This second book in the Six of Crows duology is regarded by many to be sadder and darker than its predecessor. Year-end lists Year Publication Category Result Ref 2016 Bustle The 30 Best YA Books Of 2016 — [14] 2016 Entertainment Weekly YA Books of 2016 6 [15] 2016 Paste The Best Books of 2016: Young Adult 23 [16] 2016 PopSugar The Best YA Books of 2016 21 [17] ^ Bardugo, Leigh. "Crooked Kingdom". Retrieved October 3, 2018. ^ Bardugo, Leigh (February 22, 2016). "Author Leigh Bardugo reveals plot details and the cover to 'Crooked Kingdom'". Los Angeles Times. Retrieved October 3, 2018. ^ "'Six of Crows' continues Leigh Bardugo's streak of smart fantasy novels". Washington Post. 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"If you're planning on reading the Grishaverse books, don't start with Shadow and Bone". Polygon. Retrieved October 5, 2021. ^ SCHICK, MICHAL (October 20, 2016). "Leigh Bardugo answers 5 burning questions from 'Crooked Kingdom'! (SPOILERS)". Hypable. Retrieved October 7, 2021. ^ "CROOKED KINGDOM". Kirkus Reviews. September 27, 2016. ^ "Best Young Adult Fantasy & Science Fiction". Goodreads. Retrieved October 7, 2021. ^ White, Caitlin (December 6, 2016). "The 30 Best YA Books Of 2016". Bustle. Retrieved December 19, 2021. ^ Serrao, Nivea (December 15, 2016). "YA Books of 2016". EW. Retrieved December 19, 2021. ^ Smith, Eric (December 9, 2016). "The Best Books of 2016: Young Adult". Paste. Retrieved December 19, 2021. ^ White, Hillary (March 11, 2016). "The Best YA Books of 2016". PopSugar. Retrieved December 19, 2021. Retrieved from " Kaz Brekker and his crew have just pulled off a heist so daring even they didn’t think they’d survive. But instead of divvying up a fat reward, they’re right back to fighting for their lives. Double-crossed and badly weakened, the crew is low on resources, allies, and hope. As powerful forces from around the world descend on Ketterdam to root out the secrets of the dangerous drug known as jurda parem, old rivals and new enemies emerge to challenge Kaz’s cunning and test the team’s fragile loyalties. A war will be waged on the city’s dark and twisting streets—a battle for revenge and redemption that will decide the fate of the Grisha world. Preceded by Followed by Six of Crows King of Scars (in universe) Crooked Kingdom is the sequel to Six of Crows. It was released on September 27, 2016. It is the final book in the Six of Crows Duology. Dedication[] "To Holly and Sara, who helped me build; Noa, who made sure the walls stayed standing; Jo, who kept me standing too." Blurb[] Kaz Brekker and his crew have just pulled off a heist so daring, even they didn't think they'd survive. But instead of divvying up a fat reward, they're right back to fighting for their lives. Double-crossed and left crippled by the kidnapping of a valuable team member, the crew is low on resources, allies, and hope. As powerful forces from around the world descend on Ketterdam to root out the secrets of the dangerous drug known as jurda parem, old rivals and new enemies emerge to challenge Kaz's cunning and test the team's fragile loyalties. A war will be waged on the city's dark and twisting streets—a battle for revenge and redemption that will decide the fate of magic in the Grisha world.[1] Summary[] In the prologue, a Grisha man named Emil Retvenko is kidnapped by a winged Shu man. The book commences in a gambling parlor known as Club Cumulus where Jesper and Nina keep Jan Van Eck's lawyer, Cornelis Smeet, busy while Kaz and Wylan search his office for Jan Van Eck's property information. After they find what they need, Kaz plans to kidnap Van Eck’s pregnant young wife, Alys, and trade her for Inej, who is being held captive and is nearly tortured. Meanwhile, Jesper’s father, Colm, arrives at the city to meet him, as the bank is pushing the deadline for the debt Jesper owes. When Jesper goes to meet with his father, they are attacked but manage to escape. Kaz tells Jesper's father to give them three days to get the money and asks him to wait in Geldrenner hotel, a building located in the Financial District. Afterward, the crew's kidnapping is successful, and they trade Van Eck's wife for Inej on Goedmidbridge. However, during the trade, two Shu soldiers with superhuman abilities attack Nina, Jesper, and other Grisha in the surrounding area. They all manage to get away after Nina shoots one of them point-blank in the eye, and Wylan sets another on fire. The crew meets at their hideout, and Kaz reveals his plan to sabotage Van Eck’s sugar silos using a chemical weevil (cleverly nicknamed the Wyvil by Jesper). Doing so will raise the price of sugar, and Kaz had already bought shares in other sugar companies. Nina and Inej persuade Kaz to smuggle out the remaining Grisha in the city using one of Van Eck’s own ships. While Kaz and Wylan attempt to steal the seal they need from the Van Eck house, Nina and Inej infiltrate the sugar silos. However, all of them are attacked, and it is revealed that Pekka Rollins is in league with Van Eck. Pekka also attacks the hideout Kaz was using to hide Kuwei, where Jesper and Matthias were guarding him. They all escape and meet at the hotel where Jesper's father is staying in. Nina shows the group her strange and creepy new abilities to control dead bodies, guessing that it might be a result of her surviving the jurda parem withdrawal. Kaz puts together another plan and declares an auction for the indenture of Kuwei, which causes everyone to think him more insane than usual. In the auction, Kaz disguises the Grisha from the embassy as the Council of Tides. They claim that the auction is biased because Van Eck gave money to the Shu people. The money was, in fact, channeled to the Crows themselves by scamming the Merchant Council. Van Eck is arrested. They manage to fake Kuwei's death and smuggle him out. Amidst the job, Matthias is shot, and later he dies. Kaz bluffs Pekka into believing that he has his son buried alive. He then leaves the city in search of his son. With Van Eck gone, Wylan inherits the properties of his family. In the end, Kaz finds Inej's parents, is threatened by the real Council of Tides, and Inej threatens Pekka out of his business and out of Ketterdam. Gallery[] Art[] Art for the paperback editionThe bathroom scene by E.K. Belsher for the Litjoy Special edition Covers[] LitJoy dust jacket (front half) International covers[] UK Collector's Edition coverUK Collector's Edition back coverCanada Indigo Exclusive Edition Videos[] References[] ↑ Leigh Bardugo Official Website Share — copy and redistribute the material in any medium or format for any purpose, even commercially. Adapt — remix, transform, and build upon the material for any purpose, even commercially. The licensor cannot revoke these freedoms as long as you follow the license terms. Attribution — You must give appropriate credit , provide a link to the license, and indicate if changes were made . You may do so in any reasonable manner, but not in any way that suggests the licensor endorses you or your use. ShareAlike — If you remix, transform, or build upon the material, you must distribute your contributions under the same license as the original. No additional restrictions — You may not apply legal terms or technological measures that legally restrict others from doing anything the license permits. You do not have to comply with the license for elements of the material in the public domain or where your use is permitted by an applicable exception or limitation . No warranties are given. The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Leigh Bardugo is the #1 New York Times–bestselling author of The Familiar, The Invisible Parade, and the Ninth House trilogy. She is also the creator of the Grishaverse (now a Netflix original series) which spans the Shadow and Bone trilogy, the Six of Crows duology, the King of Scars duology— and much more. Her short fiction has appeared in multiple anthologies, including The Best American Science Fiction and Fantasy. She lives in Los Angeles and is an associate fellow of Pauli Murray College at Yale University. leighbardugo.com By Leigh BardugoCopyright © 2016 Leigh BardugoAll rights reserved.ISBN: 978-1-62779-213-4Title Page, Copyright Notice, Begin Reading, The Grisha Trilogy, Also by Leigh Bardugo, About the Author, Copyright, CHAPTER 1RetvenkoRetvenko leaned against the bar and tucked his nose into his dirty shot glass. The whiskey had failed to warm him. Nothing could get you warm in this Saintsforsaken city. And there was no escaping the smell, the throat-choking stew of bilge, clams, and wet stone that seemed to have soaked into his pores as if he'd been steeping in the city's essence like the world's worst cup of tea.It was most noticeable in the Barrel, even more so in a miserable dump like this one — a squat tavern tucked into the lower floor of one of the slum's grimmest apartment buildings, its ceiling bowed by weather and shoddy construction, its beams blackened by soot from a fireplace that had long since ceased to function, the flue clogged by debris. The floor was covered in sawdust to soak up spilled lager, vomit, and whatever else the bar's patrons lost control of. Retvenko wondered how long it had been since the boards had been swept clean. He buried his nose more deeply in the glass, inhaling the sweet perfume of bad whiskey. It made his eyes water."You're supposed to drink it, not snort it," said the barkeep with a laugh.Retvenko put his glass down and gazed at the man blearily. He was thick necked and barrel chested, a real bruiser. Retvenko had seen him toss more than one rowdy patron into the street, but it was hard to take him seriously dressed in the absurd fashion favored by the young men of the Barrel — a pink shirt with sleeves that looked fit to split over huge biceps, a garish red-and-orange plaid waistcoat. He looked like a dandified soft-shell crab."Tell me," said Retvenko. His Kerch wasn't good to begin with, and it was worse after a few drinks. "Why does city smell so bad? Like old soup? Like sink full of dishes?"The barman laughed. "That's just Ketterdam. You get used to it."Retvenko shook his head. He didn't want to get used to this city or its stink. His job with Councilman Hoede had been dull, but at least his rooms had been dry and warm. As a treasured Grisha indenture, Retvenko had been kept in comfort, his belly full. He'd cursed Hoede at the time, bored with his work shepherding the merchant's expensive cargo shipments across the sea, resenting the terms of his contract, the foolish bargain he'd made to get himself out of Ravka after the civil war. But now? Now he couldn't help thinking of the Grisha workshop at Hoede's house, the fire burning merrily in the grate, brown bread served with slabs of butter and thick cuts of ham. After Hoede had died, the Kerch Merchant Council had let Retvenko take on sea voyages to pay his way out of the indenture. The money was terrible, but what other options did he have? He was a Grisha Squaller in a hostile city with no skills but the gifts with which he'd been born."Another?" the barman asked, gesturing at Retvenko's empty glass.Retvenko hesitated. He shouldn't waste his money. If he was smart with his pennies, he would only need to rent himself out for one more voyage, maybe two, and he'd have enough money to pay off his indenture and buy himself a ticket to Ravka in a third-class berth. That was all he needed.He was due on the docks in less than an hour. Storms had been predicted, so the crew would rely on Retvenko to master the air currents and guide the ship calmly to whatever port they needed to reach. He didn't know where and he didn't care. The captain would call coordinates; Retvenko would fill the sails or calm the skies. And then he would collect his pay. But the winds hadn't picked up yet. Maybe he could sleep through the first part of the voyage. Retvenko tapped the bar and nodded. What was a man to do? He deserved some comfort in this world."I am not errand boy," he muttered."What's that?" the barman asked as he poured out another drink.Retvenko gave a dismissive wave. This person, this barman, could never understand. He toiled away in obscurity. Hoping for what? An extra coin in his pocket? A warm glance from a pretty girl? He knew nothing of glory in battle, what it was to be revered."You Ravkan?"Through the muzzy blur the whiskey had created, Retvenko came alert. "Why?""No reason. You just sound Ravkan."Retvenko told himself to relax. Plenty of Ravkans came through Ketterdam looking for work. There was nothing on him that said Grisha. His cowardice filled him with disgust — at himself, the barman, this city.He wanted to sit and enjoy his drink. There was no one in the bar to jump him, and despite the barman's muscles, Retvenko knew he could handle him easily. But when you were Grisha, even staying still could mean courting trouble. There had been more rumors of disappearances in Ketterdam recently — Grisha vanishing from the streets or their homes, probably snapped up by slavers and sold to the highest bidder. Retvenko would not let that happen to him, not when he was so close to buying his way back to Ravka.He downed his whiskey, slammed a coin on the counter, and rose from the barstool. He left no tip. A man could work for a living.Retvenko felt a little unsteady as he headed outside, and the moist stink of the air didn't help. He put his head down and set his feet toward Fourth Harbor, letting the walk clear his head. Two more voyages, he repeated to himself, a few more weeks at sea, a few more months in this city. He'd find a way to make it bearable. He wondered if some of his old friends might be waiting for him in Ravka. The young king was said to be handing out pardons like penny candy, eager to rebuild the Second Army, the Grisha military that had been decimated by the war."Just two more trips," he said to no one, stamping his boots against the spring damp. How could it be this cold and wet this late in the year? Living in this city was like being trapped in the chilly armpit of a frost giant. He passed along Grafcanal, shivering as he glimpsed Black Veil Island tucked into the water's bend. That was where the Kerch wealthy had once buried their dead, in little stone houses above water level. Some trick of the climate kept the island shrouded in shifting mists, and there were rumors that the place was haunted. Retvenko hastened his steps. He wasn't a superstitious man — when you had power like his, there was no reason to fear what might lurk in the shadows — but who liked to walk by a graveyard?He burrowed deeper into his coat and made quick time down Havenstraat, keeping alert to the movements in every twisting alley. Soon he'd be back in Ravka, where he could stroll the streets without fear. Assuming he got his pardon.Retvenko squirmed uncomfortably in his coat. The war had pitted Grisha against Grisha, and his side had been particularly brutal. He'd murdered former comrades, civilians, even children. But what was done could not be undone. King Nikolai needed soldiers, and Retvenko was a very good soldier.Retvenko nodded once to the guard stashed in the little booth at the entrance to Fourth Harbor and glanced over his shoulder, ensuring he hadn't been followed. He made his way past the cargo containers to the docks, found the appropriate berth, and stood in line to register with the first mate. Retvenko recognized him from past voyages, always harried and ill-humored, scrawny neck poking from the collar of his coat. He held a thick sheaf of documents, and Retvenko glimpsed the bright green wax seal of one of the members of the Kerch Merchant Council. Those seals were better than gold in this city, guaranteeing the best berths in the harbor and preferred access to the docks. And why did the councilmen garner such respect, such advantage? Because of coin. Because their missions brought profit to Ketterdam. Power meant something more in Ravka, where the elements bent to the will of the Grisha and the country was ruled by a proper king instead of a cadre of upstart merchants. Admittedly, Retvenko had tried to depose that king's father, but the point remained."We're not ready for the rest of the crew just yet," the first mate said as Retvenko gave his name. "You can keep warm in the harbormaster's office. We're waiting on our signal from the Council of Tides.""Good for you," Retvenko said, unimpressed. He glanced up at one of the black obelisk towers that loomed over the harbor. If there were any chance that the high and mighty Council of Tides could see him from their watchtower, he would have let them know exactly what he thought with a few choice gestures. They were supposedly Grisha, but had they ever lifted a finger to help the other Grisha in the city? To help those down on their luck who might have welcomed a bit of kindness? "No, they have not," he answered himself.The first mate winced. "Ghezen, Retvenko. Have you been drinking?""No.""You stink of whiskey."Retvenko sniffed. "Little bit whiskey.""Just dry out. Get yourself some coffee or strong jurda. This cotton has to be in Djerholm in two weeks' time, and we aren't paying you to nurse a hangover belowdecks. Understood?""Yes, yes," Retvenko said with a dismissive wave, already heading toward the harbormaster's office. But when he was a few steps away, he flicked his wrist. A tiny whirlwind caught the papers the first mate was holding, sending them flying over the docks."Damn it!" the first mate shouted as he went scrambling over the wooden planks, trying to capture the pages of his manifest before they blew into the sea.Retvenko smiled with grim pleasure, then felt a wave of sadness overtake him. He was a giant among men, a gifted Squaller, a great soldier, but here he was just an employee, a sad old Ravkan who spoke broken Kerch and drank too much. Home, he told himself. Soon I'll be home. He would get his pardon and prove himself once more. He would fight for his country. He would sleep under a roof that didn't leak and wear a blue wool kefta lined with silver fox fur. He would be Emil Retvenko again, not this pathetic shadow."There's coffee," said the clerk when Retvenko entered the harbormaster's office, gesturing toward a copper urn in the corner."Tea?""There's coffee."This country. Retvenko filled a mug full of the dark sludge, more to warm his hands than anything. He couldn't bear the taste of it, certainly not without a healthy dose of sugar, which the harbormaster had neglected to supply."Wind blowing in," said the clerk as a bell clanged outside, shaken by the rising breeze."I have ears," Retvenko grumbled."Don't think it will amount to much here, but once you get out of the harbor —""Be silent," Retvenko said sharply. He was on his feet, listening."What?" said the clerk. "There's —"Retvenko put a finger to his lips. "Someone cries out." The sound had come from where the ship was docked."It's just gulls. Sun's coming up soon and —"Retvenko raised a hand, and a gust of air slammed the clerk back into the wall. "I said be silent."The clerk's mouth dropped open as he hung pinned to the slats. "You're the Grisha they got for the crew?"For Saints' sake, was Retvenko going to have to pull the air from this boy's lungs and suffocate him into quiet?Through the waxy windows, Retvenko could see the sky beginning to turn blue as dawn arrived. He heard the squawking of gulls searching the waves for breakfast. Maybe the liquor was muddling his mind.Retvenko let the clerk drop to the ground. He'd spilled his coffee, but he didn't want to bother with another cup."Told you it was nothing," said the clerk as he dragged himself to his feet. "Didn't have to get all heated up." The clerk dusted himself off and got resettled behind the desk. "I never met one of you before. Grisha." Retvenko snorted. The clerk probably had and simply didn't know it. "You get paid pretty good for the voyages?""Not good enough.""I —" But whatever the clerk was going to say next was lost as the door to the office exploded in a hail of splinters.Retvenko's hands went up to shield his face. He ducked and rolled behind the clerk's desk for cover. A woman entered the office — black hair, golden eyes. Shu.The clerk reached for a shotgun Retvenko saw strapped beneath the desk. "They've come for the payroll!" he shouted. "Ain't no one taking the payroll."Retvenko watched in shock as the gangly clerk stood like some kind of avenging warrior and opened fire. By all that was holy, nothing could motivate the Kerch like cash.Retvenko peeked around the desk in time to see the shotgun blast strike the woman directly in the chest. She was thrown backward and collided with the doorjamb, crumpling to the floor. He smelled the sharp burn of gunpowder, the metallic tang of blood. Retvenko's belly gave a shaming lurch. It had been a long time since he'd seen someone shot down in front of him — and that had been in a time of war."Ain't no one taking the payroll," the clerk repeated with satisfaction.But before Retvenko could reply, the Shu woman wrapped her bloody hand around the door frame, hauling herself to her feet.Retvenko blinked. Just how much whiskey had he had?The woman marched forward. Through the remains of her tattered blouse, Retvenko saw blood, flesh pocked with buckshot, and the glint of what looked like metal.The clerk fumbled to reload, but the woman was too fast. She grabbed the gun from his hands and swatted him down with it, knocking him sideways with terrible force. She tossed the gun aside and turned her golden eyes on Retvenko."Take payroll!" Retvenko shouted, clambering backward. He dug in his pockets and tossed his nearly empty wallet at her. "Take what you want."The woman smiled slightly at that — with pity? Amusement? Retvenko did not know. But he understood that she had not come for the money at all. She had come for him. And it didn't matter if she was a slaver or a mercenary or something else entirely. She would face a soldier, not some cowering weakling.He leapt to his feet, muscles responding reluctantly to his demands, and shifted into fighting stance. His arms arced forward. A howling wind swept through the room, tossing a chair, then the clerk's desk, then the steaming coffee urn at the woman. She batted each item away with little interest, as if she were brushing aside stray cobwebs.Retvenko focused his power and shoved both his hands forward, feeling his ears pop as the pressure dropped and the wind swelled in a surging thunderhead. Maybe this woman couldn't be stopped by bullets. Let's see how she fared against the fury of a storm.The woman growled as the gale seized her, hurtling her back through the open doorway. She seized the jamb, trying to keep hold.Retvenko laughed. He'd forgotten how good it felt to fight. Then, from behind him, he heard a loud crack, the shriek of nails torn free and rending timber. He looked over his shoulder and caught the briefest glimpse of the dawn sky, the wharf. The wall was gone.Strong arms seized him, clasping his hands to his sides, preventing him from using his power. He was rising, sailing upward, the harbor shrinking beneath him. He saw the roof of the harbormaster's office, the body of the first mate in a heap on the dock, the ship Retvenko had been meant to sail on — its deck a mess of broken boards, bodies piled near the shattered masts. His attackers had been there first.The air was cold on his face. His heart pounded a ragged rhythm in his ears."Please," he begged as they soared higher, unsure of what he was pleading for. Afraid to move too suddenly or too much, he craned his neck to look at his captor. Retvenko released a terrified moan, somewhere between a sob and the panicked whine of an animal caught in a trap.The man holding him was Shu, his black hair pulled into a tight bun, his golden eyes narrowed against the rush of the wind — and from his back emerged two vast wings that beat against the sky, hinged, gracefully wrought in looping silver filigree and taut canvas. Was he an angel? A demon? Some strange mechanical come to life? Had Retvenko simply lost his mind?In the arms of his captor, Emil Retvenko saw the shadow they made cast upon the glittering surface of the sea far below: two heads, two wings, four legs. He had become a great beast, and yet that beast would devour him. His prayers turned to screams, but both went unanswered.CHAPTER 2WYlanWhat am I doing here?That thought had run through Wylan's head at least six times a day since he'd met Kaz Brekker. But on a night like this, a night when they were "working," it rose and fell in his head like a nervous tenor practicing his scales: WhatamIdoingherewhatamIdoingherewhatamIdoinghere.Wylan tugged at the hem of his sky-blue jacket, the uniform worn by the waiters of Club Cumulus, and tried to look at ease. Think of it as a dinner party, he told himself. He'd endured countless uncomfortable meals at his father's house. This was no different. In fact, it was easier. No awkward conversations about his studies or when he planned to start classes at the university. All he had to do was stay quiet, follow Kaz's instructions, and figure out what to do with his hands. Clasp them in front? Too much like a singer at a recital. In back? Too military. He tried just dangling them at his sides, but that didn't feel right either. Why hadn't he paid better attention to the way waiters stood? Despite Kaz's assurances that the second-floor parlor was theirs for the night, Wylan felt certain that at any minute a real member of the staff would enter the room, point at him, and shout, "Impostor!" Then again, Wylan felt like an impostor most days. (Continues...)Excerpted from Crooked Kingdom by Leigh Bardugo. Copyright © 2016 Leigh Bardugo. Excerpted by permission of Henry Holt and Company. All rights reserved. No part of this excerpt may be reproduced or reprinted without permission in writing from the publisher.Excerpts are provided by Dial-A-Book Inc. solely for the personal use of visitors to this web site. Jump to ratings and reviewsWelcome to the world of the Grisha.Kaz Brekker and his crew of deadly outcasts have just pulled off a heist so daring even they didn't think they'd survive. But instead of divvying up a fat reward, they're right back to fighting for their lives.Double-crossed and badly weakened, the crew is low on resources, allies, and hope. As powerful forces from around the world descend on Ketterdam to root out the secrets of the dangerous drug known as jurda parem, old rivals and new enemies emerge to challenge Kaz's cunning and test the team's fragile loyalties.A war will be waged on the city's dark and twisting streets - a battle for revenge and redemption that will decide the fate of the Grisha world.GenresFantasyYoung AdultFictionRomanceYoung Adult FantasyLGBTMagic 33034 people are currently reading573482 people want to readLeigh Bardugo is the #1 New York Times bestselling author of Ninth House and the creator of the Grishaverse (now a Netflix original series) which spans the Shadow and Bone trilogy, the Six of Crows duology, the King of Scars duology—and much more. Her short fiction has appeared in multiple anthologies including The Best American Science Fiction and Fantasy. She lives in Los Angeles and is an associate fellow of Pauli Murray College at Yale University. For information on new releases and appearances, sign up for her newsletter.She would be delighted if you visited her at LeighBardugo.com and fairly giddy if you liked her selfies on Instagram. Displaying 1 - 30 of 84,286 reviewsAugust 10, 2019Check out my Depop where I sell books and niche findings here AT HALF-PRICE: Before I start my review, can we just take a minute to admire this beautiful piece of art featuring my favorites: Source“I will have you without armour, Kaz Brekker. Or I will not have you at all.”This review contains *spoilers*.The wait for this grandiose sequel has been all-consuming, I've been thinking about the Dregs for months and months now, so getting back into their lives has been one of the most rewarding experiences.The book opens on Wylan still wearing Kuwei Yul-Bo’s features since Nina didn’t trust herself with her powers now. It had been just under a week since the Dregs reached Ketterdam, almost a month since they’d left Djerholm. And they're all fighting to get Inej back before Van Eck could have his way with her.They were almost out of time. But none of them knew the real game Kaz "Dirtyhands" Brekker - the smooth, smart, criminal mastermind - was running. And so, piece by piece, the plan to rescue Inej had come together.Things were about to get dangerous. “Why do you guys say that, anyway? No mourners, no funerals? Why not just say good luck or be safe?”“We like to keep our expectations low.”Literally one of my most pressing questions for the sequel was answered so quickly!!But the days until Van Eck’s deadline were dwindling, and to get Inej back, they would need surprise on their side. Only one shot at getting the Wraith out of this situation. But before all that can happen, we get to read from the pov of my favorite warrior: Inej Ghafa, legend of the Barrel. And let me tell you, she is one of the most strong and determined and courageous characters I've known, so watching her doubt herself and her Saints damn near broke me. What she had to go through in her first chapter left me both shaking and trembling. Ghafa has my soul, heart and my enter being wrapped around her pinky.“When fear arrives, something is about to happen.”Meanwhile, the Dregs have gathered enough intel to get their girl the hell out of Van Eck’s hole. I felt truly terrified for Inej because that brute managed to get into her head, but she was done being frightened of this man. And so was I—thanks to both her and the man of the hour, my favorite bastard of the Barrel: Kaz Brekker with that demonic cane.You know, I forgot for a second there just how dark he can be when it comes down to business. But he's called Dirtyhands for a reason, and we're reminded just exactly what he had done to earn his reputation. “Sometimes, the only way to get justice is to take it for yourself.”I'm still furious at myself for believing that that smug merch son of a bitch could outthink Kaz Brekker. And with the help of his loyal Dregs, they manage to get Inej of out harm's way... but not without trouble coming their way. The kind of trouble even Jan Van Eck hadn't foreseen: Shu with wings (!!!) looking to hunt and capture Grisha.But the deal is the deal and Van Eck has to pay up—Dirtyhands is not someone to piss off. They’d set out to get Inej back from Van Eck and they had. But they're not done with the merch. And the plan the Dregs have set is so intricate that it will be the end of the Van Eck empire, without a shadow of a doubt. Okay so, here's the official plan to both earning their thirty million kruge and obliterating the devil himself: They're going after Van Eck's sugar crop, since he controls the silos where the supply is produced:• Thanks to Wylan’s weevil they can destroy the sugar in Van Eck’s silos without being exposed.• “My father can weather a loss. The other merchants, the ones who own the sugar in his silos, will be hit worse.”• And once the other merchants learn that Van Eck has been buying up sugar that isn’t stored in his silos (thanks to Kaz purchasing shares on behalf of Van Eck), his reputation will be annihilated.“Van Eck’s reputation will take a hit when the sugar is lost. But when the people who paid him to keep it safe find out he profited from their loss, they’ll look more closely at those silos.”“And find the remnants of the weevil,” finished Wylan.“Destruction of property, tampering with the markets,” Inej murmured. “It will be the end of him.”• They'll get the weevil into the silos by letting tiny and ferocious Inej do what she's best at: climbing up twenty stories high and walking a high wire from one silo to the next...no biggie.• And while doing all of the above, they're also going to get the rest of the Grisha out of the city, at Nina's request. A ship to Ravka with twenty passengers (including Kuwei) is conspicuous, so they're going to steal Van Eck's own transport to remain obscure. They couldn’t just be smarter than their opponent, they had to be relentless.• I just... why is everything so damn complicated with the Dregs. They're nothing if not ambitious. “You couldn’t go to war with an upstanding merch like Van Eck, not if you were a thug with a reputation dirtier than a stable hand’s boot sole. To win, Kaz would have to level the field. He would show the world what he already knew: Despite his soft hands and fine suits, Van Eck was a criminal, just as bad as any Barrel thug—worse, because his word was worth nothing.”It's a known fact that Kaz Brekker is a smooth, smart, criminal mastermind, but he also hurts for his big, criminally inclined family. And watching him realize just that was one of my most cherished scenes.“He was going to break my legs ,” she said, her chin held high, the barest quaver in her voice. “Would you have come for me then, Kaz? When I couldn’t scale a wall or walk a tightrope? When I wasn’t the Wraith anymore?”Dirtyhands would not. The boy who could get them through this, get their money, keep them alive, would do her the courtesy of putting her out of her misery, then cut his losses and move on.“I would come for you,” he said, and when he saw the wary look she shot him, he said it again. “I would come for you. And if I couldn’t walk, I’d crawl to you, and no matter how broken we were, we’d fight our way out together—knives drawn, pistols blazing. Because that’s what we do. We never stop fighting.”I cant stop thinking about this without getting goosebumps. Damn you, Kaz. You know, speaking of which, Wylan finding out that his mother was still alive and in an insane asylum because of rotten Van Eck, made me want to string his father up in a barren field and let the vultures have at him, to quote Jesper.But seriously that whole situation made my heart race. I couldn't believe to what levels of evil Van Eck would sink. The only silver lining was the whole plan Kaz had in store for the devil. And hopefully seeing Wylan reunite with Marya Hendriks. I’m always weak for stories reuniting mother and son. Always.Also, Jesper trying to cheer Wylan up made me shed a tear or two...“Hey,” Jesper said, giving him a shake. “Hey. Your father could have made a lot of choices when he found out you couldn’t read. Hell, he could have said you were blind or that you had trouble with your vision. Or better yet, he could have just been happy about the fact that he had a genius for a son.”“I’m not a genius.”“You’re stupid about a lot of things, Wylan, but you are not stupid. And if I ever hear you call yourself a moron again, I’m going to tell Matthias you tried to kiss Nina. With tongue.”Wylan wiped his nose on his sleeve. “He’ll never believe it.”“Then I’ll tell Nina you tried to kiss Matthias. With tongue.” They seriously deserve the world and so much more. They all did. This was them at their best.And then halfway through the book, the plan suddenly changes because Ketterdam has turned on Kaz. “But if you couldn’t open a door, you just had to make a new one.” And that's what Dirtyhands excels at.“I know how to do it,” Kaz said slowly. “How to get Kuwei out, get the Grisha out, get our money, beat Van Eck, and give that son of a bitch Pekka Rollins everything he has coming to him.”Nina raised a brow. “Is that all?”“How?” asked Inej.“This whole time, we’ve been playing Van Eck’s game. We’ve been hiding. We’re done with that. We’re going to stage a little auction. Right out in the open.” He turned to face them, and his eyes gleamed flat and black as a shark’s. “And since Kuwei is so eager to sacrifice himself, he’s going to be the prize.”My heart leapt like a horse clearing a jump. Kuwei is going to auction himself with the hopes that the Ravkans will end up buying him. It was the best chance they had of getting Kuwei to Ravka and saving Grisha lives. To quote Brekker, it was a mad, spiky monster of a plan, and that was what it had to be for them to succeed.Seriously though, how does Bardugo keep up with herself? There were so many twists and turns that left my mind spinning even after having closed my eyes. The whole storyline is just so lancing—we know where the end-game is supposed to be, but to get there the Dregs would have to go through hell and back. And damn, that they did. But before hell comes their way, Kaz and Inej share an intimate moment that left me undone. He had gone to great lengths to prove he was capable of anything.“The sickness was there, the need to run, the need for something else too. Kaz thought he knew the language of pain intimately, but this ache was new. It hurt to stand here like this, so close to the circle of her arms. It isn’t easy for me either. After all she’d endured, he was the weak one. But she would never know what it was like for him to see Nina pull her close, watch Jesper loop his arm through hers, what it was to stand in doorways and against walls and know he could never draw nearer.”I’ll be 100% honest, this choked me up a little bit. “Before he even knew what he intended, he lowered his head. She drew in a sharp breath. His lips hovered just above the warm juncture between her shoulder and the column of her neck. He waited. Tell me to stop. Push me away.She exhaled. “Go on,” she repeated. Finish the story.”My heart should not be making that sound.“The barest movement and his lips brushed her skin—warm, smooth, beaded with moisture. Desire coursed through him, a thousand images he’d hoarded, barely let himself imagine—the fall of her dark hair freed from its braid, his hand fitted to the lithe curve of her waist, her lips parted, whispering his name.All of it there and then gone. ”This is heaven, what I truly want. I have no words to thank you for this. Seriously, Leigh can write evocative, raw and hauntingly powerful scenes like nobody's business.“Two of the deadliest people the Barrel had to offer and they could barely touch each other without both of them keeling over. But they’d tried. He’d tried. Maybe they could try again.”They truly deserve their happy ending.But in the end, it all came down to this: "Brekker, his Wraith queen, his rotten little court of thugs." Because no matter what would happen, the Dregs had a way of rewriting their own rules.I mean, that ending... that ending was every bit as epic as I had anticipated. It either would've gone brilliantly or in total disaster, but that’s generally the way this crew likes to work. Also, one last minor thing: I was on the edge the whole time to see who would survive, even though the table of contents kind of gave away who lives, who dies, who tells their story... But I cannot, for the life in me, believe Matthias Helvar got killed off by a young drüskelle. This is not what I want. This is not what I planned.“After all their mad escapes and close calls, he’d started to believe the six of them were somehow charmed, that his guns, Kaz’s brains, Nina’s wit, Inej’s talent, Wylan’s ingenuity, and Matthias’ strength had made them somehow untouchable. They might suffer. They might take their knocks, but Wylan was right, in the end they were all supposed to stay standing.“No mourners,” said Jesper, surprised by the ache of tears in his throat.“No funerals,” they all replied softly.”My eyes burned, tears streaming down my cheeks. I was whispering "come back to me," right there with Nina. I just... I was rooting for everyone to have their happy ending. Everyone. So this death came as such a shocking reveal. I felt sorrow dragging at my heart for hours after that. And I'm still not over it. This Saintsforsaken book has taken away a piece of my heart with that ending. I’ve got this ache in my chest that won’t go away. I want to be free. But I know I won't be forgetting the Dregs anytime soon. 5/5 stars*Note: I'm an Amazon Affiliate. If you're interested in buying Crooked Kingdom, just click on the image below to go through my link. I'll make a small commission!* Support creators you love. Buy a Coffee for nat (bookspoils) with This review and more can be found on my blog.Elle (ellexamines on TT & Substack)August 6, 2020I know we frown upon picking favorite books here, but you know what? This is my favorite book of all time and y'all can leave. Maybe there were people who lived those lives. Maybe this girl was one of them. But what about the rest of us? What about the nobodies and the nothings, the invisible girls? We learn to hold our heads as if we wear crowns. We learn to wring magic from the ordinary. That was how you survived when you weren’t chosen, when there was no royal blood in your veins. When the world owed you nothing, you demanded something of it anyway. Okay, listen, I could talk about how much I love everything about this series forever, although I think I already did while writing my review for Six of Crows. I love the twisty and creative plot, I love the morally grey characters, I love the group dynamics and banter, I love the engaging writing, I love all three of the romance plots (yes, I just lost all my credibility as an unromantic.). This series truly is my favorite fantasy series of all time, and this book is one of the only conclusions I've ever given five stars. I think it's rare to find a book that, for me, is both entertaining and thematically satisfying. THE CHARACTERS Who's my favorite character, you ask? I DON'T KNOW. probably Inej. The point is that FIVE of these characters make my top-ten fictional-characters-ever list. There are two series which managed to get two characters on that list, but this series shoved on FIVE. Kaz: He's the most morally black protagonist I've ever read about, and I love him to pieces. Yes, his plans go too far and get crazy here, but honestly, if Bardugo can think it up, I'm willing to accept that Kaz can too. Kaz gets even more of a human side in this book, which comes out through his relationships with Inej, Jesper, Wylan, and even Nina. Not Matthias, because Matthias somehow never makes these lists. Sorry, bud. Inej: I asked Leigh Bardugo one question at the panel where I met her, and that was her least favorite villain. She said Tanta Helene, ruler of the menagerie, and after this book I definitely understand why. Inej went through hell and came out stronger and far more in control. I know there are those who hate how controlled she is, but I think it's realistic. She's controlled around everyone except for Helene, who's her worst nightmare come true. I love that Inej isn't a chosen one, that nothing in her blood gives her agency. None of these characters are; Jesper and Nina both neatly sidestep the chosen one archetype with every second of pagetime. Jesper: JESPER!!!! He's developed so much and I didn't really expect it. Jesper likes living on the edge, a bit like Lila Bard from ADSoM. He's aware of his flaws and he's aware of the pain his own actions have caused him, and he's trying to work through it. His relationship with his father makes me want to cry. Wylan: In the first book, Wylan is likable but annoyingly naive. In this book, he's fucking awesome. He's a cinnamon roll but he's also willing and able to kill you, so basically, he's a character designed for me to love. His arc essentially turns him from a naive kid into an antihero, and I love that. His relationship with his father took a front seat here, but it was almost emotionally cathartic to read their interactions. Nina: Nina is idealistic and clever and can go from flirting to making speeches within ten seconds. She's definitely a bit of an antihero– she can be , but she's also a ton of fun to see on page. Her struggle with the Jurda was developed well here, and her powers are still fucking awesome. Matthias: He's always been my least favorite of the dregs, but you know what, I liked him a lot here. Rereading, it struck me how much respect the narrative gives this character without romanticizing the things he's done. His arc is pitch-perfect. I still don't love him nearly as much as some of the dregs, but that's a totally unfair standard to hold any character to. I'm sorry, Matthias, in any other book you'd stand out. RELATIONSHIPS, ROMANTIC AND NOT Inej and Kaz were always the standout couple of this series to me. The genuine care between them despite all they've been through gets to my emotions. (Which I apparently have! Who knew.) They're even better in Crooked Kingdom. Here, the narrative addressed these two character's traumas and didn't skate over them. Neither of them are ready to kiss yet and that's okay. What matters is that they emotionally open up to each other, let each other through the walls. (source look at my children guys) I would have come for you. And if I couldn't walk, I'd crawl to you, and no matter how broken we were, we'd fight our way out together-knives drawn, pistols blazing. Because that's what we do. We never stop fighting. Jesper and Wylan were a vaguely cute ship for most of book one until that one line at the end where Leigh Bardugo decided to start breaking my heart in two. Here, they started putting my heart back together thank god. They don't have a particularly angst-filled storyline, but their banter is hilarious and the trust in their relationship is so important to me. “You're stupid about a lot of things, Wylan, but you are not stupid. And if I ever hear you call yourself a moron again, I’m going to tell Matthias you tried to kiss Nina. With tongue."Wylan wiped his nose on his sleeve. “He’ll never believe it." "Then I’ll tell Nina you tried to kiss Matthias. With tongue.” Matthias and Nina were honestly not that big a ship for me in book one. I absolutely understand what's appealing about their dynamic; they're sweet and have amazing relationship development. But I don't have to lie down for twenty minutes when I read their scenes. The Dregs are such an amazing squad all together. There are so many platonic relationships here to break your heart; Jesper and Inej, Inej and Nina (although lbr they're a little gay), Kaz and Wylan, Jesper and Kaz. Jesper and Inej still have one of my favorite friendship dynamics of all time. Their banter and their genuine trust in each other and their lowkey joking about their mutual crush on Kaz... it gets to me. PLOTTING AND WRITING All I can say is: brilliant. Every twist is pitch-perfect. This 500+ page book barely even lagged for me. I read this entire longass book in one bingeread, it was that hard to put down. Bardugo incorporates plotting and character work seamlessly into every moment without sacrificing tension or twists. BUT WHY DOES IT STAND OUT? There's one thing I wanted to say about this book that I didn't say about Six of Crows: the theme of this book is hope. Crooked Kingdom is about healing from what's happened to you. Maybe these characters come out of what they've been through as different people, but they're alive and they're coping and they're happy. It's not about curing your injuries and fixing your trauma, it's about learning to cope with what you've been given. [spoilers ahead] Kaz isn't magically cured of his touch sensitivity– him and Inej never kiss, and yet they still make it work, and somehow them HOLDING HANDS was the most intimate passage I've read ever. Wylan never learns to read, but he gets to drag his father to hell and back for all the trauma he's been through, and it was both the funniest and most cathartic thing I've ever read. I'm writing this Nov 6th and I've already reread this scene three times. It says so much for Leigh Bardugo's talent that she executed this narrative so perfectly. I know many have an issue with the execution of a certain death in the book, but I honestly have no issue with said death. Yes, it's frustrating. I think it's meant to be. [spoiler] This is a character that has done terrible things due to his upbringing, brought down by a boy doing terrible things due to his upbringing. It's horrifying and poetic all at once. Bardugo has also implied said death may have occurred so another character might get their own spinoff, which I am completely here for. But even ignoring the death itself, I think it's done so well that I can't complain at all. Rereading his scene, it struck me just how sad it made me, despite the character being by far my least favorite character.Another thing I like, and excuse me for going on so long - the fact that the narrative emphasizes bigotry and taking away another's agency as the worst crimes of humanity is so. important. The moral code of the characters in this series is both flawed and realistic. They've grown up in an environment where it's kill or be killed, and their actions often range on evil. Yet these characters still have a code. Even Kaz, who legitimately plucks someone's eye out in part of book one, is emphatically not a fan of slavery and bigotry. Some of these characters have experienced this and come out alive, and they're righteously angry. I also love the emphasis on the evil of the elite taking from the poor, because that's what these characters deal with.I'm not even bothering to write all my ending thoughts anymore, but I went on a twitter rant about my adoration for this ending HERE if you want to check it out. VERDICT: This is probably my favorite book of all time. I'm seriously not joking. I think this is it. I'm not ready to say goodbye to these characters, but this was a glorious conclusion and I'm glad Bardugo stuck with two books. Recommended to everyone ever.Blog | Goodreads | Twitter | Youtube5-star fantasy x-rereads January 23, 2018 ”No mourners.No funerals.” Let me tell you a story about a girl I know.For the first time in her life, she got a job, a great job, and she was happy about it. There was only one huge drawback: there was no time to read. Only stolen moments and a few pages a day, just to keep in touch with the essence of magic only words can offer. One cloudy morning, while she was in the bus to work, reading, a scene came. You know which one. There was a gunshot. A kiss. And then silence. Deafening silence. But she couldn't cry. She couldn't scream and clutch her chest to make sure she wasn't bleeding. She was going to work. She had to plaster a fake smile on her face and pretend she was interested in stocks and investments, as if her world didn't just crumble. But her heart was crying. And when she returned home, she let the floodgates open. That was all she could offer.She would remember. “She was the Queen of Mourning, and in its depths, she would never drown.” In Crooked Kingdom, Kaz is planning another stunt. Or better yet, stunts. He has to get back his “money”, destroy his enemies and take control of the Barrel. The entire Ketterdam is after him and his crew, merchants, the city guard, the rival gangs, foreign dignitaries, and everything evolves around the young scientist they rescued and the drug that can change everything for Grisha, for better or for worse. But plans can go wrong, trust can be tested, hearts can get broken, and the six thugs and thieves have not spoken their last word yet. “Have any of you wondered what I did with all the cash Pekka Rollins gave us?""Guns?" asked Jesper."Ships?" queried Inej."Bombs?" suggested Wylan. "Political bribes?" offered Nina. They all looked at Matthias. "This is where you tell us how awful we are," she whispered.He shrugged. "They all seem like practical choices.” Every time I think I have witnessed the fullest extent of Leigh Bardugo's potential, I realize there is more. Her resourcefulness and ingeniousness will never cease to amaze me, she crafted plots and heists and schemes with such intricacy and presicion you couldn't help but feel deep admiration! And a little befuddlement, if we're being honest, because how could your own mind compete with hers? “My mother is Ketterdam. She birthed me in the harbor. And my father is profit. I honor him daily.” I loved how we spent so much time inside the heads of the main characters, but yet there were so many things we didn't fully know that managed to surprise us and resulted in muffled screams of triumph (or terror, there was enough insecurity and terror for a lifetime). And let's not forget that there were certain guest appearances that made us squeal like excited mating whales. The humor, the sarcasm, the witty banters, they were all there to ease the tention, to take a break before the fallouts. These characters, they were rare. Each and every one of them, with their flaws, their greed, their monstrocity and their righteousness, their dreams and secrets, they fought for a place in a world that rejected them. Kaz was brutal, vindictive, beyond salvation. Or so he thought. He was a nightmare, I recognize that, but there was a human hidden beneath his hatred and cruelness. And Inej was his weakness. “I would have come for you. And if I couldn't walk, I'd crawl to you, and no matter how broken we were, we'd fight our way out together-knives drawn, pistols blazing. Because that's what we do. We never stop fighting.” After all those terrible things that were done to her, she never lost her faith. She was strong, she did her best to survive and wished to change things for people like her, for the nobodies and the nothings. “I am grateful you're alive", he said. "I am grateful that you're beside me. I am grateful that you're eating." She rested her head on his shoulder. "You're better that waffles, Matthias Helvar." A small smile curled the Fjerdan's lips. "Let's not say things we don't mean, my love.” Matthias and Nina were my precious cinnamon rolls. They were so different, two enemies who were meant to meet and fall in love and fight side by side, to set the example of peace between two nations that were bred in hatred and fear.And Jesper and Wylan, they taught each other that they must embrace their fears and let them be their power. To accept who they were, they boy with the gift and the boy that couldn't read but was smart beyond imagination. “He doesn't say goodbye. He just lets go.” Let me finish this story about a girl I know.She wished for a happier ending. She wished for pink unicorns. But Leigh Bardugo gave her something bittersweet. A taste she will carry with her wherever she goes, no matter how many days and months and years have passed. She tucked them in her heart, and sealed it with her tears.This way, they'll never be gone.Instagram | Twitter | Facebook | BookNestAugust 15, 2024“Do you ever feel like a plastic bag, drifting through the wind, wanting to start again?” -American songstress Katy Perry on the tragedy of finishing this duologyI do not “have emotions” very often. I am rarely “sad,” which is a personal choice because being sad is gross and unpleasant. I much prefer to exist in an emotionless vortex of my own creation.However.I AM SO VERY SAD THAT THIS DUOLOGY IS OVER.All I want to do is dive back in (hence the “wanting to start again” part of the iconic quote above). And I don’t understand. Why am I so attached? This series, with series even being a strong word, is a mere TWO BOOKS LONG. It is divided among SIX PERSPECTIVES. I’ve spent longer amounts of time with batches of cookies than with these characters, and everyone knows I devour cookies like the ungodly Sesame Street creature/nightmare known as Cookie Monster.And yet that DOES NOT CHANGE THE FACT THAT I AM SAD.I miss this gang. I miss their hijinks and heists. I miss their banter. I even miss their extremely formulaic and occasionally one-track personalities. (Yes, we get it. Nina likes food. Matthias and Wylan blush a lot. Very creative.) I miss the will they/won’t they romances even though they were more “yes, of course they will. Obviously.”But another thing that doesn’t change in spite all of the aforementioned Feeling is...that this book is not as good as the first one. Granted, that’s a high bar, considering I five starred Six of Crows and spent an entire review narrowly resisting the urge to just type the word “AAAAAAAAAHHHHH” until it extended for 20,000 characters and we could call it a day. But still. Not as good.This plot was not as exciting by half. Or a third. Or a small small fraction. In fact, the only reason I’m even four starring this book is that I’m still so astonished I could like three characters from one book that it feels sacrilegious to rate it any lower.Everything about this was less exciting and less fresh and less unputdownable. You can’t just give me a heist in the first book and then talk about a bunch of dark-magic-drug-sci-fi-type stuff. I hate the trope of magic that damages you to use/turns you evil, because magic is fun and should be used all the time in every book forever. Also I hate most sci-fi, because it’s boring. It’s science. Don’t explain science to me even if you think it seems fun and fantastical, because it’s not. It’s a waste of my time and yours.Anti-science rant: concluded. For now. But watch yourself, science.There was also a lot more Time With Characters I Don’t Care For, Operating Under The Assumption That I Do Care For Them, Which Is False, Because I Do Not. There is way too much Wylan in this, and way, way, way, way, WAY too much Nina and Matthias. Especially NinaandMatthias as one entity. No thanks. Not interested.Nor am I interested in KUWEI, who manages to be a science-genius-with-magic who is also a hostage who is also in love with a person it would be messy to be in love with, and yet in spite of all of that is SO GODDAMN BORING! What the hell? It seems like you’d have to go out of your way to make the hostage boring, but there we have it. He’s a one-way ticket to snoozetown.Anyone else a huge fan of the fact that this four-star review is majority complaining? Devastatingly on-brand for me. Loving it.And I really don’t want to say any more nice things so. Think I’m good.Bottom line: My only real complaint about this book is that it isn’t Six of Crows, but that alone is such a goddamn personal insult to me and my family and my loved ones and my ancestry and my future descendants that I’m tempted to one star this just for the drama.---------------------pre-reviewthis series is only 2 books long. the perspective is split among 6 people. if you think about it, i've barely even spent any time with these characters at all.SO WHY IS THE FACT THAT IT'S OVER SO GODDAMN SAD.review to come :(---------------------rereading updatesexcuse me, FBI? i'd like to report an attempted murder. well kaz keeps thinking about inej and clearly leigh bardugo is trying to kill me with cutenes -- what? yes i'll hold--the first time I read this book I thought it was slightly disappointing, which is why I'm ROLLIN INTO THIS REREAD WITH MY EXPECTATIONS HIGH AF!!!--this reread brought to you once again by the generosity of lily4-stars diverse fantasy October 3, 2016 That’s the problem with Ketterdam, Jesper thought as they stumbled uncertainly through the dark. Trusting the wrong person can get you killed. What's that down there on the ground, you say? Oh, it's just my heart after Bardugo callously ripped it out *sob*Seriously, this book was such a crazy ride. The jump in quality from the Grisha trilogy to Six of Crows and Crooked Kingdom is just astounding. These books have Bardugo's compelling style all over them, and yet they are so much more complex, rich, and well-written. As a person who doesn't love multiple perspectives, especially more than two, I'm amazed at how the author manages to juggle so many diverse characters and make me care about them all.Crooked Kingdom is a beast of a book - my hardcover would make a nice murder weapon - and yet the action and tension never run dry. It's a cliche to compare a book to a rollercoaster but that's exactly what this felt like - highs and lows of emotions, equal parts humorous, sexy, entertaining, dark, violent, romantic and gritty.The stakes just keep getting bigger. This book opens where we left off with Wylan wearing Kuwei Yul-Bo's face, and our gang must rescue Inej, get revenge, and defeat the bad guys. But that doesn't even begin to sum up all the action, adventure and craziness going on here. And as well as being dark and compelling, the characters and relationships we love become even more fascinating and developed. There are a grand total of THREE ships here and I truly adore them all.I actually wasn't really feeling the Kaz/Inej chemistry in the first book, but it just came crashing down in a wave of feels here: “He was going to break my legs ,” she said, her chin held high, the barest quaver in her voice. “Would you have come for me then, Kaz? When I couldn’t scale a wall or walk a tightrope? When I wasn’t the Wraith anymore?”Dirtyhands would not. The boy who could get them through this, get their money, keep them alive, would do her the courtesy of putting her out of her misery, then cut his losses and move on.“I would come for you,” he said, and when he saw the wary look she shot him, he said it again. “I would come for you. And if I couldn’t walk, I’d crawl to you, and no matter how broken we were, we’d fight our way out together—knives drawn, pistols blazing. Because that’s what we do. We never stop fighting.” *shivers*In the end, though, Leigh Bardugo is EVIL. Don't forget it. There are so many satisfying things in this book - like watching Kaz Brekker just be fucking awesome, like all the twists and turns, like the wonderful gay romance - but it also hits you in the heart. And it hits hard.The ending was just epic perfection. It was the kind of ending a story like this deserves - the kind that leaves you wanting more, but knowing that it finished in exactly the right place.Blog | Facebook | Twitter | Instagram | Youtube | StoreSeptember 30, 2016COMPLETELY SPOILER-FREE REVIEW:First thing first, meet Kaz Brekker's crew:5 REASONS WHY CROOKED KINGDOM IS THE BEST SEQUEL EVER#1 Storytelling at its bestThis book will literally keep you on the edge of your seat, your toes curling and your heart racing. There was not a single boring moment. On contrary! I flew through this book and wish it was even longer than 546 pages.#2 Parade of twistsLeigh Bardugo is a genius. I can't even count how many times during this book I thought "No way! I didn't see this coming". The level of awesomeness of twists was beyond this world amazing. #3 Leigh Bardugo = Queen of bantersSeriously, if I wasn't nervously biting my nails waiting for outcome of this or that situation, I was smiling like lunatic whenever these precious characters were bantering among each other. And believe me, it was quite often.#4 All the feelsIf someone told me month ago that Crooked Kingdom was going to make me cry (multiple times), I wouldn't believe it. But it happened. Mrs. Bardugo brought out big guns = raw emotions. And I

loved it! (even though my heart broke couple of times)#5 Simply perfectCrooked Kingdom has all qualities that make it outstanding and unforgettable novel. I just have nothing to complain about. Story was addictive, all main characters grew on me big time, ending was realistic and there was even cameo of my favorite character from Grisha trilogy. Now all I can do is re-read it to find all those details that I missed when I read it for the first time and hope that this is not the last novel by Leigh Bardugo set in Grisha world.MORE REVIEWS ON MY BLOG Reading Is My Breathing PRE-REVIEW:"No mourners. No funerals." to Kaz and his crew in CROOKED KINGDOM! I can't wait to have this book in my hands!5-stars-read bookshelves-owned fantasy February 27, 2025It's unpopular opinion time, you guys. I don't know what's wrong with me, but I didn't love Crooked Kingdom. After I finished Six of Crows, I couldn't wait to start on this book, but I wonder if jumping into the sequel so soon had been a mistake. Without a doubt, this duology is complex and complicated, filled with a long and epic mission, lots of lovable if flawed characters, and so many twists and turns that you'll get whiplash. But it was just too much of a good thing and it felt never-ending.Part of the issue for me is that the sequel is essentially an extension of the first book, but without its laser-focused mission. Instead, the mission of this book was meandering, cleaning up all the loose ends and getting to things that were not achieved in the first book. Now there are multiple purposes driving the gang forward: rescue, vengeance, money, reputation, and staying alive. And so the mission became muddled and rambling.It didn't help that this is a huge book at 500+ pages. Our gang lays out elaborate plans, then things go wrong, then they lay out other elaborate plans, then more things go wrong, repeated ad nauseam. I think for someone who loves this universe and these people, having such a drawn out plot is a good thing, but it wasn't for me. I didn't need to read every little detail about this universe or what happens when things go wrong again and again. I feel this book could easily have cut out 200 pages, and still delivered the same story.It took me so long to get through this book. Every time I thought about reading some more, I just got this feeling of fatigue. If I took any individual chapter of this book, I can say that it was great fun and well-written. But put together, it was just too much. Instead of feeling exhilarated by this ride, I felt exhausted and spent, and relieved to have reached the end.~~~~~~~~~~~~~~See also, my thoughts on:Six of Crows~~~~~~~~~~~~~~✧ Connect with me ✧ Instagram ✧December 28, 2020chapter 40 will always ruin me. nina and matthias deserve their own series. _____things i need in order to survive: air, food and water, this book. this book obviously being the most important item on that list. wow. i will tell you what, i must have been a saint in another life because i do not feel worthy of this book. i laughed, i cried, i yelled, i loved, i cheered, i swooned, i died. i felt every emotion humanly possible. i am so grateful to live in a world where this duology exists.