

Continuing the adventure from Thousand Blades, the heroes find themselves engulfed in a growing conspiracy within the Hiksoni. Sely's dark secret threatens to destroy them all.

Bane of the Allwalkers: Thousand Blades - Book 2

By Mike Boxberger

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BANE OF THE
ALLWALKERS

Thousand Blades - Book 2

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Chapter 6

Escape

“No life is without darkness. But keep strong your faith – no darkness can hold back the light of the Holy Circle.” - Tome of Poltai

Bellsaw heard a key turn the lock through the thick wooden door, and the footfalls of the soldiers disappear across the hall. Luckily, they had been captured in the evening, and the Captain decided to use the small prison in their outpost to contain them before starting the long trek to Rhisda in the morning.

Time was of the essence. At the moment, there was the Captain and three of his subordinates. Given who she and her brother were and the weight of the charges against them, she expected more and more soldiers would join the escort as they were marched home. She thought it was also likely that regular citizens, many never before seeing royalty, let alone in chains, would begin to line the road to catch a glimpse of the prisoners.

Bellsaw examined the tiny cell. There was a small, barred opening in the door, but no other ways in or out. The room’s floor was dirt, with a clump of moldy hay in one corner and an old bucket in the other.

She hunkered down, followed by Rapul.

“We must leave tonight. Once they take us from this room in the morning, we will never be able to escape,” she whispered.

Rapul’s eyes drooped. “Let’s let them take us. I want to go home.”

Bellsaw shook her head. “If we return we *will* be executed.”

“The Law Regis will release us. There’s no proof.”

“What will stop Saisaw from controlling him?”

Rapul’s shoulders slumped. He looked utterly defeated.

“Brother, I know you are tired. I am too. But if we stand together we will be fine. Are you ready?”

Rapul avoided her eyes.

“Rapul?”

Finally he nodded.

“Good. Let’s stand back to back. My bindings were loosened. See if you can untie me.”

Rapul fingers tugged her bindings as he worked the knots. Some ten minutes later the ropes fell loose. She quickly untied her brother.

“You become invisible. I will call the guards, get one of their weapons, and take care of the rest.”

Rapul looked pained. “Please don’t kill these men. They are just doing what Cynder asks of them.”

“I will try, but I cannot promise that.” She was suddenly very thoughtful. “How should I call the guards?”

“Tell them you’re sick.”

“But I’m not.”

“It’s a lie.”

Her nose wrinkled. “I don’t lie.”

“Then tell them you want more food.”

“I am not hungry.”

Rapul gestured around the room as exasperation replaced his despair. “Tell them that this filth provides an unfit level of captivity and as the Princess of Cynder, you demand better.”

The place was quite unkept, Rapul was correct. Bellsaw nodded and Rapul disappeared. She moved to the door and directed her voice up through the window.

“Excuse me, Captain. This room does not meet the requirements a Princess of Cynder deserves.”

A high-pitched voice responded. “The Captain is asleep and I am Private Karvaal. I hear, and deny, your request.”

Bellsaw stretched to her tiptoes trying to make her voice more pronounced through the door. “Do you truly want to invoke the wrath of the future Empress?”

“I’m pretty sure you’re guilty.”

“Until the Law Regis makes that claim, I am innocent.”

“You killed the emperor...to get the crown.”

Fury erupted in Bellsaw. That some whelp way out in the borderlands could have such an incorrect view, with no firsthand knowledge of the event, was beyond disrespectful. Insinuating that she would be involved with such evil to take the crown left her shaking.

“I am not guilty! I loved my parents! You, Private, were not present when my parents were murdered! My brother and I would never have harmed our parents in the slightest way!”

“Calm down,” Rapul whispered. He appeared and grabbed her shoulders from behind.

“I’m fine,” she snapped as she stepped away from the door. She thought she had come to terms with her emotions after they settled in Mallicka. The crown and her sister were bad memories she had tried to lock away as she focused on leatherwork. Now she knew how raw her feelings still were.

She looked at her brother and saw that his eyes were moist, sad. He was all she had, and she would do anything in Creation to keep him away from Cynder.

Her jaw tight, she approached the door. All she had to do was lie. Produce a falsehood, a deception. Say a few simple words. Her face scrunched with effort. She looked at Rapul; he smiled approvingly, gesturing for her to continue.

“I’m hungry!” she shrieked. Her voice was so unnatural she covered her mouth in surprise. She heard something wooden slam on a table.

“Are you going blab like this all night?”

Emboldened, she continued. “We have not received any rations under your care.”

Rapul saluted her.

“Not even water,” she added with a proud nod.

Stomping boots approached the door. Rapul faded away and Bellsaw moved to the corner that provided her with the most room to maneuver. A key clicked the lock open.

Karvaal half entered the room, his saber leading the way. He glanced about the room then jerked in shock.

"Where...where's the other one?" Like a coiled snake Bellsaw stuck. Her foot smashed into his face while she tore the saber from his grip. Karvaal fell back through the door with a shout. The pitcher of water he had in his other hand splashed on the stone floor with a clang.

Bellsaw crouched before the fallen soldier and held the point of the saber before his bleeding face. "My sabers. Where are they?"

"They're still in the box on the wagon," Karvaal stammered, his voice nasal.

The sound of the other men echoed down a stairwell. Trying to honor her brother's request she stood, adjusted her grip, then drove the saber into Karvaal's thigh. The man screamed in pain as she pulled the blade free.

Bellsaw turned down the hall to meet the other three soldiers. She leveled her gaze at them.

"I am Bellsaw, rightful heir to the Crown of Cynder. I trained under Drellaw and Gunnel, weapon masters of Cynder. Let me pass or I shall kill you."

The Captain leaned to inspect the injured man behind her then raised his own saber.

"I am Captain Halsul and I will drag your murderous tail back to Rhisda."

Bellsaw lunged forward. Halsul blocked her blade, but her kick bent his knee at an odd angle and the man toppled with a cry. The two men behind him tried to flee, but fell in a heap in the tight hallway. Effortlessly, Bellsaw leapt over the mass of arms and legs and pushed through the doorway of the outpost. The cool night air hit her and though she knew she had to flee, she took a moment to savor the sweet air.

Rapul appeared beside her as she jogged toward the wagon.

"Thanks," he said as she stopped. Bellsaw nodded and with a couple strikes from her borrowed saber the box on the wagon was

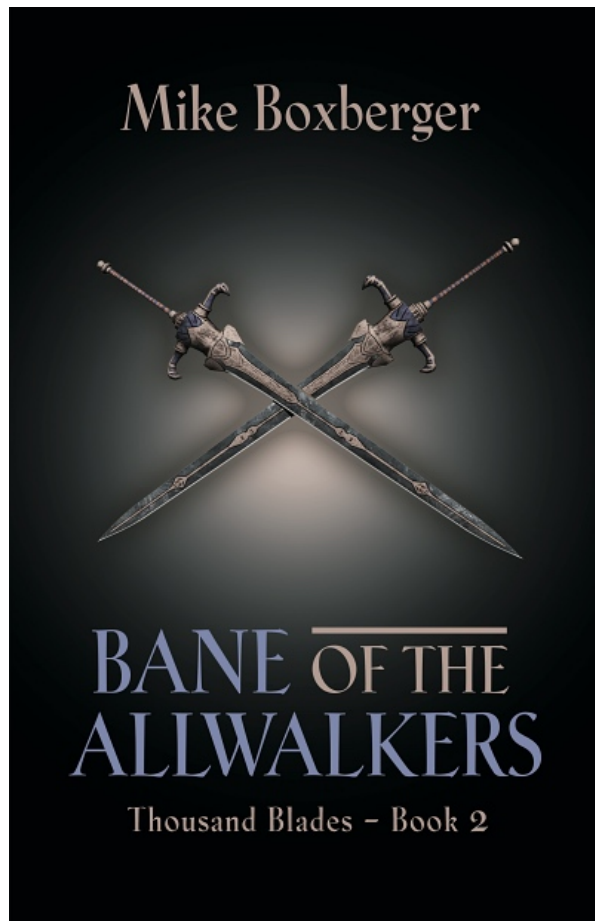
open. She lifted her prized blades, admired the way the moonlight reflected on their scroll work.

“I don’t mean to break up such a happy reunion, but they’re coming.”

Turning and running into the night the siblings made for Mallicka.

“Where will we go?” Rapul managed between huffs.

“We must go further. To the other side of Mallicka. The coast.”



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