



**BROTHERBAND  
CHRONICLES**

*BOOK 1  
THE OUTCASTS*

## PHILOMEL BOOKS

A division of Penguin Young Readers Group. Published by The Penguin Group.  
Penguin Group (USA) Inc., 375 Hudson Street, New York, NY 10014, U.S.A.  
Penguin Group (Canada), 90 Eglinton Avenue East, Suite 700, Toronto, Ontario M4P 2Y3,  
Canada (a division of Pearson Penguin Canada Inc.). Penguin Books Ltd, 80 Strand, London  
WC2R 0RL, England. Penguin Ireland, 25 St. Stephen's Green, Dublin 2, Ireland (a division of  
Penguin Books Ltd). Penguin Group (Australia), 250 Camberwell Road, Camberwell, Victoria 3124,  
Australia (a division of Pearson Australia Group Pty Ltd). Penguin Books India Pvt Ltd,  
11 Community Centre, Panchsheel Park, New Delhi—110 017, India. Penguin Group (NZ),  
67 Apollo Drive, Rosedale, Auckland 0632, New Zealand (a division of Pearson New Zealand Ltd).  
Penguin Books (South Africa) (Pty) Ltd, 24 Sturdee Avenue, Rosebank, Johannesburg 2196,  
South Africa. Penguin Books Ltd, Registered Offices: 80 Strand, London WC2R 0RL, England.

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Published in Australia by Random House Australia Children's Books in 2011.

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Published simultaneously in Canada. Printed in the United States of America.

Edited by Michael Green. Design by Amy Wu. Text set in 13-point Centaur MT.

Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data is available upon request.

ISBN 978-0-399-25619-6

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1

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*BOOK 1: THE OUTCASTS*

**JOHN FLANAGAN**

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*Dedicated to our own Brotherband,  
Max, Konan, Alex and Henry.*





# A Few Sailing Terms Explained

**B**ecause this book involves sailing ships, I thought it might be useful to explain a few of the nautical terms found in the story.

Be reassured that I haven't gone overboard (to keep up the nautical allusion) with technical details in the book, and even if you're not familiar with sailing, I'm sure you'll understand what's going on. But a certain amount of sailing terminology is necessary for the story to feel realistic.

So, here we go, in no particular order:

**Bow:** The front of the ship, also called the prow.

**Stern:** The rear of the ship.

**Port and starboard:** The left and the right side of the ship, as you're facing the bow. In fact, I'm probably incorrect in using the term *port*. The early term for port was *larboard*, but I thought we'd all get confused if I used that.

*Starboard* is a corruption of "steering board" (or steering side).

The steering oar was always placed on the right-hand side of the ship at the stern.

Consequently, when a ship came into port it would moor with the left side against the jetty, to avoid damage to the steering oar. One theory says the word derived from the ship's being in port—left side to the jetty. I suspect, however, that it might have come from the fact that the entry port, by which crew and passengers boarded, was also always on the left side.

How do you remember which side is which? Easy. *Port* and *left* both have four letters.

**Forward:** Toward the bow.

**Aft:** Toward the stern.

**Fore-and-aft rig:** A sail plan in which the sail is in line with the hull of the ship.

**Hull:** The body of the ship.

**Keel:** The spine of the ship.

**Steering oar:** The blade used to control the ship's direction, mounted on the starboard side of the ship, at the stern.

**Tiller:** The handle for the steering oar.

**Yardarm, or yard:** A spar (wooden pole) that is hoisted up the mast, carrying the sail.

**Masthead:** The top of the mast.

**Bulwark:** The part of the ship's side above the deck.

**Belaying pins:** Wooden pins used to fasten rope.

**Oarlock, or rowlock:** A peg that holds an oar in place.

**Telltale:** A pennant that indicates the wind's direction.

**Tacking:** To tack is to change direction from one side to the other, passing through the eye of the wind.

If the wind is from the north and you want to sail northeast, you would perform one tack so that you are heading northeast, and you would continue to sail on that tack for as long as you need.

However, if the wind is from the north and you want to sail due north, you would have to do so in a series of short tacks, going back and forth on a zigzag course, crossing through the wind each time, and slowly making ground to the north. This is a process known as **beating** into the wind.

**Wearing:** When a ship tacks, it turns *into* the wind to change direction. When it wears, it turns *away* from the wind, traveling in a much larger arc, with the wind in the sail, driving the ship around throughout the maneuver. Wearing was a safer way of changing direction for wolfships than beating into the wind.

**Reach, or reaching:** When the wind is from the side of the ship, the ship is sailing on a reach, or reaching.

**Running:** When the wind is from the stern, the ship is running. (So would you if the wind was strong enough at your back.)

**Reef:** To gather in part of the sail and bundle it against the yardarm to reduce the sail area. This is done in high winds to protect the sail and the mast.

**Trim:** To adjust the sail to the most efficient angle.

**Halyard:** A rope used to haul the yard up the mast. (Haul-yard, get it?)

**Stay:** A heavy rope that supports the mast. The **backstay** and the **forestay** are heavy ropes running from the top of the mast to the stern and the bow (it's pretty obvious which is which).

**Sheets and shrouds:** Many people think these are sails, which is a logical assumption. But in fact, they're ropes. Shrouds are thick ropes that run from the top of the mast to the side of the ship, supporting the mast. Sheets are the ropes used to control, or trim, the sail—to haul it in and out according to the wind strength and direction. In an emergency, the order might be given to “let fly the sheets!” The sheets would be released, letting the sail loose and bringing the ship to a halt. (If *you* were to let fly the sheets, you'd probably fall out of bed.)

**Way:** The motion of the ship. If a ship is under way, it is moving according to its course. If it is making leeway, the ship is moving downwind so it loses ground or goes off course.

**Back water:** To row a reverse stroke.

So, now that you know all you need to know about sailing terms, welcome aboard the world of *The Brotherband Chronicles*!

John Flanagan



PART 1



THE PROMISE



*Twelve years prior . . .*

**W**olfwind emerged from the predawn sea mist like a wraith, slowly taking physical form.

With her sail furled and the yardarm lowered to the deck, and propelled by only four of her oars, she glided slowly toward the beach. The four rowers wielded their oars carefully, raising them only a few centimeters from the water at the end of each stroke so that the noise of drops splashing back into the sea was kept to a minimum. They were Erak's most experienced oarsmen and they were used to the task of approaching an enemy coast stealthily.

And during raiding season, all coasts were enemy coasts.

Such was their skill that the loudest sound was the *lap-lap-lap* of small ripples along the wooden hull of the wolfship. In the bow, Svengal and two other crew members crouched fully armed, peering ahead to catch sight of the dim line where the water met the beach.

The lack of surf might make their approach easier but a little extra noise would have been welcome, Svengal thought. Plus white

water would have made the line of the beach easier to spot in the dimness. Then he saw the beach and held up his hand, fist clenched.

Far astern, at the steering oar, Erak watched his second in command as he revealed five fingers, then four, then three as he measured off the distance to the sand.

“In oars.”

Erak spoke the words in a conversational tone, unlike the bellow he usually employed to pass orders. In the center section of the wolfship, his bosun, Mikkell, relayed the orders. The four oars lifted out of the water as one, rising quickly to the vertical so that any excess water would fall into the ship and not into the sea, where it would make more noise. A few seconds later, the prow of the ship grated softly against the sand. Erak felt the vibrations of the gentle contact with the shore through the deck beneath his feet.

Svengal and his two companions vaulted over the bow, landing catlike on the wet sand. Two of them moved up the beach, fanning out to scan the country on either side, ready to give warning of any possible ambush. Svengal took the small beach anchor that another sailor lowered to him. He stepped twenty paces up the beach, strained against the anchor rope to bring it tight and drove the shovel-shaped fluke into the firm sand.

*Wolfwind*, secured by the bow, slewed a little to one side under the pressure of the gentle breeze.

“Clear left!”

“Clear right!”

The two men who had gone onshore called their reports now. There was no need for further stealth. Svengal checked his own area of responsibility, then added his report to theirs.

“Clear ahead.”

On board, Erak nodded with satisfaction. He hadn't expected any sort of armed reception on the beach but it always paid to make sure. That was why he had been such a successful raider over the years—and why he had lost so few of his crewmen.

“All right,” he said, lifting his shield from the bulwark and hefting it onto his left arm. “Let's go.”

He quickly strode the length of the wolfship to the bow, where a boarding ladder had been placed over the side. Shoving his heavy battleax through the leather sling on his belt, he climbed easily over the bulwark and down to the beach. His crewmen followed, forming up behind him. There was no need for orders. They had all done this before, many times.

Svengal joined him.

“No sign of anyone here, chief,” he reported.

Erak grunted. “Neither should there be. They should all be busy at Alty Bosky.”

He pronounced the name in his usual way—careless of the finer points of Iberian pronunciation. The town in question was actually Alto Bosque, a relatively unimportant market town some ten kilometers to the south, built on the high, wooded hill from which it derived its name.

The previous day, seven of his crew had taken the skiff and landed there, carrying out a lightning raid on the market before they retreated to the coast. Alto Bosque had no garrison and a rider from the town had been sent to Santa Sebillia, where a small force of militia was maintained. Erak's plan was to draw the garrison away to Alto Bosque while he and his men plundered Santa Sebillia

unhindered.

Santa Sebilla was a small town, too. Probably smaller than Alto Bosque. But, over the years, it had gained an enviable reputation for the quality of the jewelry that was designed and crafted there. As time went on, more and more artisans and designers were drawn to Santa Sebilla and it became a center for fine design and craftsmanship in gold and precious stones.

Erak, like most Skandians, cared little for fine design and craftsmanship. But he cared a lot about gold and he knew there was a disproportionate amount of it in Santa Sebilla—far more than would normally be found in a small town such as this. The community of artists and designers needed generous supplies of the raw materials in which they worked—gold and silver and gemstones. Erak was a fervent believer in the principle of redistribution of wealth, as long as a great amount of it was redistributed in his direction, so he had planned this raid in detail for some weeks.

He checked behind him. The anchor watch of four men were standing by the bows of *Wolfwind*, guarding it while the main party went inland. He nodded, satisfied that everything was ready.

“Send your scouts ahead,” he told Svengal. The second in command gestured to the two men to go ahead of the main raiding party.

The beach rose gradually to a low line of scrubby bushes and trees. The scouts ran to this line, surveyed the country beyond, then beckoned the main party forward. The ground was flat here, but some kilometers inland, a range of low hills rose from the plain. The first rose-colored rays of the sun were beginning to show about the peaks. They were behind schedule, Erak thought. He had

wanted to reach the town before sunup, while people were still drowsy and longing for their beds, as yet reluctant to accept the challenges of a new day.

“Let’s pace it up,” he said tersely and the group settled into a steady jog behind him, moving in two columns. The scouts continued to range some fifty meters in advance of the raiding party. Erak could already see that there was nowhere a substantial party of armed men could remain hidden. Still, it did no harm to be sure.

Waved forward by the scouts, they crested a low rise and there, before them, stood Santa Sebillá.

The buildings were made of clay bricks, finished in whitewash. Later in the day, under the hot Iberian sun, they would glisten and gleam an almost blinding white. In the predawn light they looked dull and gray and mundane. The town had been built with no particular plan in mind, instead growing over the years so that houses and warehouses were placed wherever their owners chose to build them. The result was a chaotic mass of winding alleys, outlying buildings and twisting, formless streets. But Erak ignored the jumble of houses and shops. He was looking for the repository—a large building set to one side of the town, where the gold and jewels were stored.

And there it was. Larger than the others, with a substantial brass-bound wooden door. Normally, Erak knew, there would be a guard in place. But it seemed his diversion had achieved the result he wanted and the local militia were absent. The only possible resistance could come from a small castle set on a cliff a kilometer away from the town itself. There would possibly be armed men there. But the castle was the home of a minor Iberian nobleman

and its location here was a mere coincidence. Knowing the snobbish and superior nature of the Iberian nobility, Erak guessed that the castle lord and his people had as little to do with the common tradesmen of Santa Sevilla as possible. They might buy from them, but they wouldn't mix with them or be eager to protect them in an emergency.

They headed for the repository. As they passed a side street, a sleepy townsman emerged, leading a donkey loaded with what seemed to be an impossibly heavy stack of firewood. For a few seconds, head down and still half asleep, the man failed to notice the force of grim-faced, armed sea wolves. Then his eyes snapped open, his jaw followed suit and he froze in place, staring at them. From the corner of his eye, Erak saw two of his men start to detach from the main body. But the firewood seller could do them little harm.

"Leave him," he ordered and the men dropped back into line.

Galvanized by the sound of Erak's voice, the man dropped the donkey's halter and took off back into the narrow alleyway from which he had emerged. They heard the soft sound of his bare feet flapping on the hard earth as he put as much distance between himself and the raiders as he could.

"Get that door open," Erak ordered.

Mikkel and Thorn stepped forward. Mikkel, whose preferred weapon was a sword, borrowed an ax from one of the other sea wolves and together, he and Thorn attacked the heavy door. They were Erak's two most reliable warriors, and he nodded appreciatively at the economy of effort with which they reduced the door to matchwood, placing alternate ax strokes precisely where they would do the most good, each building on the damage the other had

caused. The two men were best friends. They always fought together in the shield wall, each trusting the other to protect his back and sides. Yet they were a contrast in body shapes. Mikkel was taller and leaner than the average Skandian. But he was powerful and hard muscled. And he had the reflexes of a cat.

Thorn was slightly shorter than his friend, but much wider in the shoulders and chest. He was one of the most skilled and dangerous warriors Erak had ever seen. Erak often thought that he would hate to come up against Thorn in battle. He'd never seen an opponent who had survived such an encounter. Belying his heavy build, Thorn could also move with blinding speed when he chose.

Erak roused himself from his musing as the door fell in two shattered halves.

"Get the gold," he ordered and his men surged forward.

It took them half an hour to load the gold and silver into sacks. They took only as much as they could carry and they left easily the same amount behind.

Maybe another time, Erak thought, although he knew no subsequent raid would be as easy or as bloodless as this one. In retrospect, he wished he'd caught hold of the firewood seller's donkey. The little animal could have carried more of the gold back to the ship for them.

The town was awake now and nervous faces peered at them from behind windows and around street corners. But these were not warriors and none were willing to face the fierce-looking men from the north. Erak nodded, satisfied, as the last of his men, each laden with two small but heavy sacks, emerged from the repository. He breathed a small sigh of satisfaction. It had been easy, he

thought. Easier than he had expected.

Laden as they were, they couldn't maintain their previous jog as they followed the path through the scrubby undergrowth back to the beach. At least a dozen of the townspeople followed them, as if unwilling to let their gold and jewels simply disappear from sight. But they kept their distance, watching in impotent fury as the sea wolves carried away their booty.

"Thorn, Mikkel, bring up the rear. Let me know if there's any change," Erak said. It would be all too easy to become complacent about the men shadowing their footsteps, and so miss any new threat that might arise.

The two men nodded and handed their sacks of loot to other crew members, then faded to the back of the column.

They marched some twenty meters behind the main party, turning continually to keep the following townspeople in sight. Once, Thorn faked a charge at a couple who he felt had come too close, and they scampered hurriedly back to a safe distance.

"Rabbits," said Mikkel dismissively.

Thorn grinned and was about to reply when he caught sight of movement behind the straggle of townspeople. His grin faded.

"Looks like we've got some rabbits on horseback," he said. The two raiders stopped to face the rear.

Trotting toward them, following the rough track through the undergrowth, were five horsemen. The newly risen sun gleamed off their armor and the points of the spears they all carried. They were still some distance behind the raiders but they were coming up fast. The two companions could hear the faint jingle of their horses' harness and their equipment.

Thorn glanced back to the main party of raiders. They were about to enter a narrow defile that led down to the last stretch of open ground to the beach. He let out a piercing whistle and saw Erak stop and look back. The rest of the party continued to move as quickly as they could.

Thorn pointed to the riders. Uncertain whether Erak could see the new enemy, he held up his right hand, with five fingers extended, then brought it down in a clenched fist close by his shoulder—the signal for “enemy.” He pointed again to the riders.

He saw Erak wave acknowledgment, then point at the entrance to the defile, where the last of his men were just passing through. Thorn and Mikkell both grunted in understanding.

“Good idea,” Mikkell said. “We’ll hold them off at the entrance.”

The high rock walls and narrow space would encumber the horsemen. It would also prevent them from flanking and encircling the two sea wolves. They’d be forced into a frontal attack. Normally, that might be a daunting prospect, but these were two experienced and deadly fighters, each secure in his own skills and those of his companion.

They both knew that Erak would not abandon them to this new danger. Once the gold was safely at the ship, he’d send men back to help them. Their job was only to buy time, not to sacrifice themselves so the others could escape. And both men felt confident that they could hold off a few country-bumpkin horsemen.

They doubled their pace, covering the ground to the defile. Behind them, they heard a ragged cheer from the townspeople as they saw the raiders seemingly running for their lives ahead of the

avenging horsemen, who urged their horses to a gallop, determined to catch these interlopers before they could escape into the narrow gully.

The two warriors had no intention of escaping. Rather, as they reached the defile, Mikkel and Thorn turned and drew their weapons, swinging them experimentally as they faced the approaching riders.

Like most Skandians, Thorn favored a heavy, single-bladed battleax as his principal weapon. Mikkel was armed with a long sword. Both of them wore horned helmets and carried large wooden shields, borne on the left arm, with a heavy center boss of metal and reinforcing metal strips around the edges. They presented these to the oncoming riders, so that only their heads and legs were visible—as well as the gleaming sword and ax, still moving in small preliminary arcs, catching and reflecting the sunlight as the two warriors stretched their muscles.

It seemed to the horsemen that the shields and swords blocked the defile entrance completely. Expecting the Skandians to run in panic, they were somewhat taken aback now at this show of defiance—and at the confident manner of the two men facing them. They drew rein about thirty meters short of the two men and looked at each other uncertainly, each waiting for one of the others to take the lead.

The two Skandians sensed their uncertainty, and noted the clumsy way they handled their spears and small round shields. There was none of the easy familiarity that could be seen in an experienced fighter.

“I think these boys are still wet behind the ears,” Mikkel said,

smiling grimly.

Thorn nodded. "I doubt they've seen any real fighting."

They were right. The horsemen, who had come from the castle in response to a messenger who had run all the way from Santa Sebillá, were young and only half trained. They were all from well-to-do families. Their indolent parents had always supplied their every whim: new chain mail, a sword with a gold-chased hilt, a new battle horse. They viewed their training in the knightly arts as more of a social activity than a serious one. They had never before faced armed and determined warriors like these two, and it suddenly occurred to them that what had begun as a lighthearted expedition to send a few ill-bred raiders running in panic had quickly turned into a potentially deadly confrontation. Someone could die here today. So they hesitated, uncertain what they should do next.

Then one, either braver or more foolhardy than his fellows, shouted a challenge and spurred his horse forward, awkwardly trying to level his spear at the two Skandians.

"Mine, I think," said Thorn, stepping forward a few paces to accept the charge. Mikkel was content to let him do so. Thorn's long-handled ax was the more effective weapon against a horseman.

Thorn summed up his opponent through slitted eyes. The youth was bouncing around in his saddle like a sack of potatoes, trying to steady his spear under his right arm and keep it pointed at his enemy. It would be ridiculously easy to kill him, Thorn thought. But that might simply rouse the anger of his companions. Better to humiliate him.

Bracing himself, he caught the spearhead on his shield and flicked it easily to one side. Then he slammed the flat of his ax into

the shoulder of the charging horse, throwing it off balance with the force of the blow. As it stumbled, he drove forward with his shield, hitting the animal again and sending it reeling to one side. The horse struck the rough rock wall beside the defile and lost its footing, crashing onto its side with a terrified neighing. The rider barely had time to clear his feet from the stirrups and avoid being pinned under the fallen horse. He fell awkwardly to one side, his small shield underneath him. He scabbled desperately at the hilt of his sword, trying to clear the long blade from its scabbard. When it was half drawn, Thorn kicked his arm and hand, finishing the action and sending the bared sword spinning away out of his grasp.

The young rider looked up at Thorn with terrified eyes. He flinched uncontrollably as he saw the terrible war ax arcing up and over. Then it slammed into the hard ground, a few inches from his face. The Skandian's eyes, cold and merciless, held his. Then Thorn said one word.

“Run.”

The young Iberian scrambled clumsily to his feet and turned to escape. As he did, he felt a violent impact in his behind as Thorn helped him on his way with his boot. Stumbling and crying in panic, he blundered back to where his companions were waiting, their horses moving uneasily from one foot to the other, the riders' fear communicating itself to the animals.

Behind him, the boy heard the two Skandians laughing.

Thorn's instincts had been correct. The apparent ease with which he had dealt with the rider was far more disconcerting than if he had simply killed him. By letting him live, he had shown the utter contempt with which he and his companion regarded these

neophyte warriors. Such disregard made the Iberians even more uncertain.

“I think you’ve made them nervous.” Mikkel grinned at his friend.

Thorn shrugged. “So they should be. They shouldn’t be allowed out with pointy sticks like that. They’re more danger to themselves than anyone else.”

“Let’s see them off,” said Mikkel. “They’re starting to annoy me.”

Without any warning, the two Skandians brandished their weapons and charged at the small group of horsemen, screaming battle cries as they went.

The shock of it all was too much for the demoralized group of riders. They saw the terrifying warriors charging across open ground at them and each one was convinced that he was the target they were aiming for. One of them wheeled his horse and clapped spurs to its flanks, dropping his spear as his horse lurched suddenly beneath him. His action was infectious. Within seconds, all four horsemen were steaming across the plain in a ragged line, their dismounted companion stumbling awkwardly behind them, encumbered by his thigh-high riding boots, spurs and flapping, empty scabbard.

Mikkel and Thorn stopped and rested on their weapons, roaring with laughter at the sight.

“I do hope they get home all right,” Mikkel said and Thorn laughed all the louder.

“Are you ladies ready to join us?” It was Svengal, sent back with five men to reinforce the rearguard. “It seems you don’t need any

help.”

Still laughing, Thorn and Mikkell sheathed their weapons and walked back to join Svengal and the others at the mouth of the defile.

“You should have seen it, Svengal,” Mikkell began. “Thorn here simply frightened them away. The sight of his ugly face was too much for them. It even made a horse fall over.”

Svengal let go a short bark of laughter. Hurrying up the defile at the head of the reinforcements, he had seen how Thorn dealt with the charging rider. He was impressed. He knew he could never have pulled that move off. In fact, he couldn’t think of anyone other than Thorn who might have managed it.

“Well, you played your part too,” Thorn was saying in reply. “Although I must admit I *was* magnificent.”

“I’m not sure that’s the word I’d—” Mikkell raised his arm to clap his friend on the shoulder when the spear hit him.

It came out of nowhere. Later, thinking over the event, Thorn realized it must have been the spear dropped by the first of the fleeing horsemen. He surmised that one of the following townspeople, overcome with rage and frustration, had retrieved it and hurled it blindly at the Skandians, then run for his life into the scrub and rocks before he could see the result.

The result could not have been worse. The heavy iron head penetrated underneath Mikkell’s raised arm, burying itself deep in his upper body. He let go a small cry and fell to his knees, then crumpled sideways. Horrified, Thorn dropped to the ground beside his friend, seeing the pallor of Mikkell’s face as the life drained from his body.

“Sword . . . ,” Mikkel gasped. If a sea wolf died in battle without a weapon in his hand, his soul would wander in the netherworld for eternity. Svengal had already drawn his own sword and thrust it into Mikkel’s groping fingers. The stricken man looked up in thanks, then turned his gaze to his best friend.

“Thorn,” he said, the effort of speaking that one word almost too great.

Thorn bent his head close to Mikkel’s. “Hold on, Mikkel. We’ll get you to the ship.”

Somehow, the ship meant safety and salvation, as if the simple act of being on board could negate the effects of the terrible, life-sapping wound in Mikkel’s side. But Mikkel knew better. He shook his head.

“My wife . . . and the boy . . . look out for them, Thorn.”

Thorn’s vision blurred with tears as he gripped his friend’s hand, making sure that Mikkel’s grip on the sword hilt didn’t weaken.

“I will. You have my word.”

Mikkel nodded and seemed to gather his strength for one last effort.

“Won’t . . . be easy . . . for him. He’ll need . . .”

The pain and the shock were too much. He couldn’t finish the sentence. But there was still a last remnant of light in his eyes. Thorn gripped his hand tighter, willing him to finish. He needed to know his friend’s last wish, needed to know what he wanted done.

“He’ll need what, Mikkel? What will he need?”

Mikkel’s lips moved wordlessly. He took in a great, shuddering

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breath that racked his body. With a final effort, he spoke one word.

“You,” he said, and died.