

Jhiqui would have run as well, but Dany caught her by the wrist and held her captive. “What is it? I must know. Drogo... and my child.” Why had she not remembered the child until now? “My son... Rhaego... where is he? I want him.”

Her handmaid lowered her eyes. “The boy... he did not live, Khaleesi.” Her voice was a frightened whisper.

Dany released her wrist. My son is dead, she thought as Jhiqui left the tent. She had known somehow. She had known since she woke the first time to Jhiqui’s tears. No, she had known before she woke. Her dream came back to her, sudden and vivid, and she remembered the tall man with the copper skin and long silver-gold braid, bursting into flame.

She should weep, she knew, yet her eyes were dry as ash. She had wept in her dream, and the tears had turned to steam on her cheeks. All the grief has been burned out of me, she told herself. She felt sad, and yet... she could feel Rhaego receding from her, as if he had never been.

Ser Jorah and Mirri Maz Duur entered a few moments later, and found Dany standing over the other dragon’s eggs, the two still in their chest. It seemed to her that they felt as hot as the one she had slept with, which was passing strange. “Ser Jorah, come here,” she said. She took his hand and placed it on the black egg with the scarlet swirls. “What do you feel?”

“Shell, hard as rock.” The knight was wary. “Scales.”

“Heat?”

“No. Cold stone.” He took his hand away. “Princess, are you well? Should you be up, weak as you are?”

“Weak? I am strong, Jorah.” To please him, she reclined on a pile of cushions. “Tell me how my child died.”

“He never lived, my princess. The women say He faltered, and Dany saw how the flesh hung loose on him, and the way he limped when he moved.

“Tell me. Tell me what the women say.”

He turned his face away. His eyes were haunted. “They say the child was...”

She waited, but Ser Jorah could not say it. His face grew dark with shame. He looked half a corpse himself.

“Monstrous,” Mirri Maz Duur finished for him. The knight was a powerful man, yet Dany understood in that moment that the maegi was stronger, and crueller, and infinitely more dangerous. “Twisted. I drew him forth myself. He was scaled like a lizard, blind, with the stub of a tail and small leather wings like the wings of a bat. When I touched him, the flesh sloughed off the bone, and inside he was full of graveworms and the stink of corruption. He had been dead for years.”

Darkness, Dany thought. The terrible darkness sweeping up behind to devour her. If she looked back she was lost. “My son was alive and strong when Ser Jorah carried me into this tent,” she said. “I could feel him kicking, fighting to be born.”

“That may be as it may be,” answered Mirri Maz Duur, “yet the creature that came forth from your womb was as I said. Death was in that tent, Khaleesi.”