

khalasars, Jhiqui said, the bloodriders shared the khal's wine, his tent, and even his wives, though never his horses. A man's mount was his own.

Daenerys was glad that Khal Drogo did not hold to those ancient ways. She should not have liked being shared. And while old Cohollo treated her kindly enough, the others frightened her; Haggo, huge and silent, often glowered as if he had forgotten who she was, and Qotho had cruel eyes and quick hands that liked to hurt. He left bruises on Doreah's soft white skin whenever he touched her, and sometimes made Irri sob in the night. Even his horses seemed to fear him.

Yet they were bound to Drogo for life and death, so Daenerys had no choice but to accept them. And sometimes she found herself wishing her father had been protected by such men. In the songs, the white knights of the Kingsguard were ever noble, valiant, and true, and yet King Aerys had been murdered by one of them, the handsome boy they now called the Kingslayer, and a second, Ser Barristan the Bold, had gone over to the Usurper. She wondered if all men were as false in the Seven Kingdoms. When her son sat the Iron Throne, she would see that he had bloodriders of his own to protect him against treachery in his Kingsguard.

"Khaleesi, " Cohollo said to her, in Dothraki. "Drogo, who is blood of my blood, commands me to tell you that he must ascend the Mother of Mountains this night, to sacrifice to the gods for his safe return."

Only men were allowed to set foot on the Mother, Dany knew. The khal's bloodriders would go with him, and return at dawn. "Tell my sun-and-stars that I dream of him, and wait anxious for his return," she replied, thankful. Dany tired more easily as the child grew within her; in truth, a night of rest would be most welcome. Her pregnancy only seemed to have inflamed Drogo's desire for her, and of late his embraces left her exhausted.

Doreah led her to the hollow hill that had been prepared for her and her khal. It was cool and dim within, like a tent made of earth. "Jhiqui, a bath, please," she commanded, to wash the dust of travel from her skin and soak her weary bones. It was pleasant to know that they would linger here for a while, that she would not need to climb back on her silver on the morrow.

The water was scalding hot, as she liked it. "I will give my brother his gifts tonight," she decided as Jhiqui was washing her hair. "He should look a king in the sacred city. Doreah, run and find him and invite him to sup with me." Viserys was nicer to the Lysene girl than to her Dothraki handmaids, perhaps because Magister Illyrio had let him bed her back in Pentos. "Irri, go to the bazaar and buy fruit and meat. Anything but horseflesh."

"Horse is best," Irri said. "Horse makes a man strong."

"Viserys hates horsemeat."

"As you say, Khaleesi. "

She brought back a haunch of goat and a basket of fruits and vegetables. Jhiqui roasted the meat with sweetgrass and firepods, basting it with honey as it cooked, and there were melons and pomegranates and plums and some queer eastern fruit Dany did not know. While her handmaids prepared the meal, Dany laid out the clothing she'd had made to her brother's measure: a tunic and leggings of crisp white linen, leather sandals that laced up to the knee, a bronze medallion belt, a leather vest painted with fire-breathing dragons. The Dothraki would respect him more if