

“We could have fled,” he said. “I would have seen you safe to Asshai, Princess. There was no need...”

“Am I truly your princess?” she asked him.

“You know you are, gods save us both.”

“Then help me now.”

Ser Jorah grimaced. “Would that I knew how.”

Mirri Maz Duur’s voice rose to a high, ululating wail that sent a shiver down Dany’s back. Some of the Dothraki began to mutter and back away. The tent was aglow with the light of braziers within. Through the blood-spattered sandsilk, she glimpsed shadows moving.

Mirri Maz Duur was dancing, and not alone.

Dany saw naked fear on the faces of the Dothraki. “This must not be,” Ootho thundered. She had not seen the bloodrider return. Haggio and Cohollo were with him. They had brought the hairless men, the eunuchs who healed with knife and needle and fire.

“This will be,” Dany replied.

“Maegi, “ Haggio growled. And old Cohollo-Cohollo who had bound his life to Drogo’s on the day of his birth, Cohollo who had always been kind to her-Cohollo spat full in her face.

“You will die, maegi,” Qotho promised, “but the other must die first.” He drew his arakh and made for the tent.

“No,” she shouted, “you mustn’t.” She caught him by the shoulder, but Qotho shoved her aside. Dany fell to her knees, crossing her arms over her belly to protect the child within. “Stop him,” she commanded her khas, “kill him.”

Rakharo and Quaro stood beside the tent flap. Quaro took a step forward, reaching for the handle of his whip, but Qotho spun graceful as a dancer, the curved arakh rising. It caught Quaro low under the arm, the bright sharp steel biting up through leather and skin, through muscle and rib bone. Blood fountained as the young rider reeled backward, gasping.

Qotho wrenched the blade free. “Horselord,” Ser Jorah Mormont called. “Try me.” His longsword slid from its scabbard.

Qotho whirled, cursing. The arakh moved so fast that Quaro’s blood flew from it in a fine spray, like rain in a hot wind. The longsword caught it a foot from Ser Jorah’s face, and held it quivering for an instant as Qotho howled in fury. The knight was clad in chainmail, with gauntlets and greaves of lobstered steel and a heavy gorget around his throat, but he had not thought to don his helm.

Qotho danced backward, arakh whirling around his head in a shining blur, flickering out like lightning as the knight came on in a rush. Ser Jorah parried as best he could, but the slashes came so fast that it seemed to Dany that Qotho had four arakhs and as many arms. She heard the crunch of sword on mail, saw sparks fly as the long curved blade glanced off a gauntlet. Suddenly it was Mormont stumbling backward, and Qotho leaping to the attack. The left side of the knight’s face ran red with blood, and a cut to the hip opened a gash in his mail and left him limping. Qotho screamed taunts at him, calling him a craven, a milk man, a eunuch in an iron suit. “You die now!” he promised, arakh shivering through the red twilight. Inside Dany’s womb,