

bleeding feet and hollows under her eyes. Behind her came Ootho and Haggio, carrying the godswife's chest between them. When the bloodriders caught sight of Drogo's wound, the chest slipped from Haggio's fingers and crashed to the floor of the tent, and Qotho swore an oath so foul it seared the air.

Mirri Maz Duur studied Drogo, her face still and dead. "The wound has festered."

"This is your work, maegi," Ootho said. Haggio laid his fist across Mirri's cheek with a meaty smack that drove her to the ground. Then he kicked her where she lay.

"Stop it!" Dany screamed.

Qotho pulled Haggio away, saying, "Kicks are too merciful for a maegi. Take her outside. We will stake her to the earth, to be the mount of every passing man. And when they are done with her, the dogs will use her as well. Weasels will tear out her entrails and carrion crows feast upon her eyes. The flies off the river shall lay their eggs in her womb and drink pus from the ruins of her breasts..." He dug iron-hard fingers into the soft, wobbly flesh under the godswife's arm and hauled her to her feet.

"No," Dany said. "I will not have her harmed."

Qotho's lips skinned back from his crooked brown teeth in a terrible mockery of a smile. "No? You say me no? Better you should pray that we do not stake you out beside your maegi. You did this, as much as the other."

Ser Jorah stepped between them, loosening his longsword in its scabbard. "Rein in your tongue, bloodrider. The princess is still your khaleesi."

"Only while the blood-of-my-blood still lives," Qotho told the knight. "When he dies, she is nothing."

Dany felt a tightness inside her. "Before I was khaleesi, I was the blood of the dragon. Ser Jorah, summon my khas."

"No," said Qotho. "We will go. For now... Khaleesi." Haggio followed him from the tent, scowling.

"That one means you no good, Princess," Mormont said. "The Dothraki say a man and his bloodriders share one life, and Qotho sees it ending. A dead man is beyond fear."

"No one has died," Dany said. "Ser Jorah, I may have need of your blade. Best go don your armor." She was more frightened than she dared admit, even to herself.

The knight bowed. "As you say." He strode from the tent.

Dany turned back to Mirri Maz Duur. The woman's eyes were wary. "So you have saved me once more."

"And now you must save him," Dany said. "Please."

"You do not ask a slave," Mirri replied sharply, "you tell her." She went to Drogo burning on his mat, and gazed long at his wound. "Ask or tell, it makes no matter. He is beyond a healer's skills." The khal's eyes were closed. She opened one with her fingers. "He has been dulling the hurt with milk of the poppy."

"Yes," Dany admitted.

"I made him a poultice of firepod and sting-me-not and bound it in a lambskin."