

one by one. A foul, sweet smell rose from the wound, so thick it almost choked her. The leaves were crusted with blood and pus, Drogo's breast black and glistening with corruption.

"No," Dany whispered as tears ran down her cheeks. "No, please, gods hear me, no."

Khal Drogo thrashed, fighting some unseen enemy. Black blood ran slow and thick from his open wound.

"Your khal is good as dead, Princess."

"No, he can't die, he mustn't, it was only a cut." Dany took his large callused hand in her own small ones, and held it tight between them. "I will not let him die..."

Ser Jorah gave a bitter laugh. "Khaleesi or queen, that command is beyond your power. Save your tears, child. Weep for him tomorrow, or a year from now. We do not have time for grief. We must go, and quickly, before he dies."

Dany was lost. "Go? Where should we go?"

"Asshai, I would say. It lies far to the south, at the end of the known world, yet men say it is a great port. We will find a ship to take us back to Pentos. It will be a hard journey, make no mistake. Do you trust your khas? Will they come with us?"

"Khal Drogo commanded them to keep me safe," Dany replied uncertainly, "but if he dies..." She touched the swell of her belly. "I don't understand. Why should we flee? I am khaleesi. I carry Drogo's heir. He will be khal after Drogo..."

Ser Jorah frowned. "Princess, hear me. The Dothraki will not follow a suckling babe. Drogo's strength was what they bowed to, and only that. When he is gone, Jhaqo and Pono and the other kos will fight for his place, and this khalasar will devour itself. The winner will want no more rivals. The boy will be taken from your breast the moment he is born. They will give him to the dogs..."

Dany hugged herself. "But why?" she cried plaintively. "Why should they kill a little baby?"

"He is Drogo's son, and the crones say he will be the stallion who mounts the world. It was prophesied. Better to kill the child than to risk his fury when he grows to manhood."

The child kicked inside her, as if he had heard. Dany remembered the story Viserys had told her, of what the Usurper's dogs had done to Rhaegar's children. His son had been a babe as well, yet they had ripped him from his mother's breast and dashed his head against a wall. That was the way of men. "They must not hurt my son!" she cried. "I will order my khas to keep him safe, and Drogo's bloodriders will-"

Ser Jorah held her by the shoulders. "A bloodrider dies with his khal. You know that, child. They will take you to Vaes Dothrak, to the crones, that is the last duty they owe him in life... when it is done, they will join Drogo in the night lands."

Dany did not want to go back to Vaes Dothrak and live the rest of her life among those terrible old women, yet she knew that the knight spoke the truth. Drogo had been more than her sun-and-stars; he had been the shield that kept her safe. "I will not leave him," she said stubbornly, miserably. She took his hand again. "I will not."

A stirring at the tent flap made Dany turn her head. MirTi Maz Duur entered, bowing low. Days on the march, trailing behind the khalasar, had left her limping and haggard, with blistered and