

opal and amethyst, tourmaline and jade. “Faster,” they cried, “faster, faster.” She raced, her feet melting the stone wherever they touched. “Faster!” the ghosts cried as one, and she screamed and threw herself forward. A great knife of pain ripped down her back, and she felt her skin tear open and smelled the stench of burning blood and saw the shadow of wings. And Daenerys Targaryen flew.

“wake the dragon

The door loomed before her, the red door, so close, so close, the hall was a blur around her, the cold receding behind. And now the stone was gone and she flew across the Dothraki sea, high and higher, the green rippling beneath, and all that lived and breathed fled in terror from the shadow of her wings. She could smell home, she could see it, there, just beyond that door, green fields and great stone houses and arms to keep her warm, there. She threw open the door.

“... the dragon...”

And saw her brother Rhaegar, mounted on a stallion as black as his armor. Fire glimmered red through the narrow eye slit of his helm. “The last dragon,” Ser Jorah’s voice whispered faintly. “The last, the last.” Dany lifted his polished black visor. The face within was her own.

After that, for a long time, there was only the pain, the fire within her, and the whisperings of stars.

She woke to the taste of ashes.

“No,” she moaned, “no, please.”

“Khaleesi?” Jhiqui hovered over her, a frightened doe.

The tent was drenched in shadow, still and close. Flakes of ash drifted upward from a brazier, and Dany followed them with her eyes through the smoke hole above. Flying, she thought. I had wings, I was flying. But it was only a dream. “Help me,” she whispered, struggling to rise. “Bring me...” Her voice was raw as a wound, and she could not think what she wanted. Why did she hurt so much? It was as if her body had been torn to pieces and remade from the scraps. “I want...”

“Yes, Khaleesi.” Quick as that Jhiqui was gone, bolting from the tent, shouting. Dany needed... something... someone... what? It was important, she knew. It was the only thing in the world that mattered. She rolled onto her side and got an elbow under her, fighting the blanket tangled about her legs. It was so hard to move. The world swam dizzily. I have to...

They found her on the carpet, crawling toward her dragon eggs. Ser Jorah Mormont lifted her in his arms and carried her back to her sleeping silks, while she struggled feebly against him. Over his shoulder she saw her three handmaids, Jhogo with his little wisp of mustache, and the flat broad face of Mirri Maz Duur. “I must,” she tried to tell them, “I have to...”

“... sleep, Princess,” Ser Jorah said. No,” Dany said. “Please. Please.”

“Yes.” He covered her with silk, though she was burning. “Sleep and grow strong again, Khaleesi. Come back to us.” And then Mirri Maz Duur was there, the maegi, tipping a cup against her lips. She tasted sour milk, and something else, something thick and bitter. Warm liquid ran down her chin. Somehow she swallowed. The tent grew dimmer, and sleep took her