The Noble Lady was a tub of a ship, as fat and wallowing as the noble ladies of the green lands.   
  
Her holds were huge, and Victarion packed them with armed men. With her would sail the other, lesser prizes that the Iron Fleet had taken on its long voyage to Slaver's Bay, a lubberly assortment of cogs, great cogs, carracks, and trading galleys salted here and there with fishing boats. It was a fleet both fat and feeble, promising much in the way of wool and wines and other trade goods and little in the way of danger. Victarion gave the command of it to Wulf One-Ear.   
  
"The slavers may shiver when they spy your sails rising from the sea," he told him. "but once they see you plain they will laugh at their fears. Traders and fishers, that's all you are. Any man can see that. Let them get close as they like, but keep your men hidden belowdecks until you are ready. Then close, and board them. Free the slaves and feed the slavers to the sea, but take the ships. We will have need of every hull to carry us back home."   
  
"Home," Wulf grinned. "The men'll like the sound o' that, Lord Captain. The ships first –then we break these Yunkishmen. Aye."   
  
The Iron Victory was lashed alongside the Noble Lady, the two ships bound tight with chains and grappling hooks, a ladder stretched between them. The great cog was much larger than the warship and sat higher in the water. All along the gunwales the faces of the Ironborn peered down, watching as Victarion clapped Wulf One-Ear on the shoulder and sent him clambering up the ladder. The sea was smooth and still, the sky bright with stars. Wulf ordered the ladder drawn up, the chains cast off. The warship and the cog parted ways. In the distance the rest of Victarion's famed fleet was raising sail. A ragged cheer went up from the crew of the Iron Victory, and was answered in kind by the men of the Noble Lady.   
  
Victarion had given Wulf his best fighters. He envied them. They would be the first to strike a blow, the first to see that look of fear in the foemen's eyes. As he stood at the prow of the Iron Victory watching One-Ear's merchant ships vanish one by one into the west, the faces of the first foes he'd ever slain came back to Victarion Greyjoy. He thought of his first ship, of his first woman. A restlessness was in him, a hunger for the dawn and the things this day would bring.Death or glory, I will drink my fill of both today. The Seastone Chair should've been his when Balon died, but his brother Euron had stolen it from him, just as he had stolen his wife many years before. He stole her and he soiled her, but he left it for me to slay her.   
  
All that was done and gone now, though. Victarion would have his due at last. I have the horn, and soon I will have the woman. A woman lovelier than the wife he made me kill.   
  
"Captain." The voice belonged to Longwater Pyke. "The oarsmen await your pleasure." Three of them, and strong ones. "Send them to my cabin. I'll want the priest as well."   
  
The oarsmen were all big. One was a boy, one a brute, one a bastard's bastard. The Boy had been rowing for less than a year, the Brute for twenty. They had names, but Victarion did not know them. One had come from Lamentation, one from Sparrow Hawk, one from Spider Kiss. He could not be expected to know the names of every thrall who had ever pulled an oar in the Iron Fleet.   
  
"Show them the horn," he commanded, when the three had been ushered into his cabin.   
  
Moqorro brought it forth, and the dusky woman lifted up a lantern to give them all a look. In the shifting lantern light the hell-horn seemed to writhe and turn in the priest's hands like a serpent fighting to escape. Moqorro was a man of monstrous size –big-bellied, broad-shouldered, towering –but even in his grasp the horn looked huge.  
  
 "My brother found this thing on Valyria," Victarion told the thralls. "Think how big the dragon must've been to bear two of these upon his head. Bigger than Vhagar or Meraxes, bigger than Balerion the Black Dread." He took the horn from Moqorro and ran his palm along its curves. "At the Kingsmoot on Old Wyk one of Euron's mutes blew upon this horn. Some of you will remember. It was not a sound that any man who heard it will ever forget."   
  
"They say he died," the Boy said, "him who blew the horn."   
  
"Aye. The horn was smoking after. The mute had blisters on his lips, and the bird inked across his chest was bleeding. He died the next day. When they cut him open his lungs were black."   
  
"The horn is cursed," said the Bastard's Bastard.   
  
"A dragon's horn from Valyria," said Victarion. "Aye, it's cursed. I never said it wasn't." He brushed his hand across one of the red gold bands and the ancient glyph seemed to sing be neath his fingertips. For half a heartbeat he wanted nothing so much as to sound the horn himself. Euron was a fool to give me this, it is a precious thing, and powerful. With this I'll win the Seastone Chair, and then the Iron Throne. With this I'll win the world. "Claggorn blew the horn thrice and died for it. He was as big as any of you, and strong as me. So strong that he could twist a man's head right off his shoulders with only his bare hands, and yet the horn killed him."  
  
 "It will kill us too, then," said the Boy.   
  
Victarion did not oft forgive a thrall for talking out of turn, but the Boy was young, no more than twenty, and soon to die besides. He let it pass. "The mute sounded the horn three times. You three will sound it only once. Might be you'll die, might be you won't. All men die. The Iron Fleet is sailing into battle. Many on this very ship will be dead before the sun goes down –stabbed or slashed, gutted, drowned, burned alive – only the Gods know which of us will still be here come the morrow. Sound the horn and live and I'll make free men of you, one or two or all three. I'll give you wives, a bit of land, a ship to sail, thralls of your own. Men will know your names."   
  
"Even you, Lord Captain?" asked the Bastard's Bastard.  
   
"Aye."  
  
 "I'll do it then."  
  
 "And me," said the Boy.   
  
The Brute crossed his arms and nodded. If it made the three feel braver to believe they had a choice, let them cling to that. Victarion cared little what they believed, they were only thralls.   
  
"You will sail with me on Iron Victory," he told them, "but you will not join the battle. Boy, you're the youngest –you'll sound the horn first. When the time comes you will blow it long and loud. They say you are strong. Blow the horn until you are too weak to stand, until the last bit of breath has been squeezed from you, until your lungs are burning. Let the freedmen hear you in Meereen, the slavers in Yunkai, the ghosts in Astapor. Let the monkeys shit themselves at the sound when it rolls across the Isle of Cedars. Then pass the horn along to the next man. Do you hear me? Do you know what to do?"  
  
 The Boy and the Bastard's Bastard tugged their forelocks; the Brute might've done the same, but he was bald. "You may touch the horn. Then go."   
  
They left him one by one. The three thralls, and then Moqorro. Victarion would not let him take the hell-horn.   
  
"I will keep it here with me, until it is needed."   
  
"As you command. Would you have me bleed you?"   
  
Victarion seized the dusky woman by the wrist and pulled her to him. "She will do it. Go pray to your red god. Light your fire, and tell me what you see."   
  
Moqorro's dark eyes seemed to shine. "I see dragons."