

## CHAPTER V. THE WAGER

While the scribes were at their work I bowed before the King and prayed his leave and I and the dwarf Bes might get to ours.

"Go," he said, "and return here within an hour. If you do not return tidings of your death shall be sent to the satrap of Egypt to be told to your wives."

"I thank the King, but it is needless, for I have no wives, which are ill company for a hunter."

"Strange," he said, "since many women would be glad to name such a man their husband, at least here among us Easterns."

Walking backwards and bowing as we went, Bes and I returned to our chariot. There we stripped off our outer garments till Bes was naked save for his waistcloth and I was clad only in a jerkin. Then I took my bow, my arrows and my knife, and Bes took two spears, one light for throwing and the other short, broad and heavy for stabbing. Thus armed we passed back before the Easterns who stared at us, and advanced to the edge of the thicket of tall reeds that was full of lions.

Here Bes took dust and threw it into the air that we might learn from which quarter the light wind blew.

"We will go against the breeze, Lord," he said, "that I may smell the lions before they smell us."

I nodded, and answered,

"Hearken, Bes. Well may it be that we kill no lions in this place where it is hard to shoot. Yet I would not return to be thrown to wild beasts by yonder evil king. Therefore if we fail in this or in any other way, do you kill me, if you still live."

He rolled his eyes and grinned.

"Not so, Master. Then we will win through the reeds and lie hid in their edge till darkness comes, for in them those half-men will never dare to seek for us. Afterwards we will swim the water and disguise ourselves as jugglers and try to reach the coast, and so back to Egypt, having learned much. Never stretch out your hand to Death till he stretches out his to you, which he will do soon enough, Master."

Again I nodded and said,

"And if a lion should kill me, Bes, what then?"

"Then, Master, I will kill that lion if I can and go report the matter to the King."

"And if he should wish to throw you to the beasts, Bes, what then?"

"Then, first I will drag him down to the greatest of all beasts, he who waits to devour evil-doers in the Under-world, be they kings or slaves," and he stretched out his long arms and made a motion as of clutching a man by the throat. "Oh! have no fear, Master, I can break him like a stick, and afterwards we will talk the matter over among the dead, for I shall swallow my tongue and die also. It is a good trick, Master, which I wish you would learn."

Then he took my hand and kissed it and we entered the reeds, I, who was a hunter, feeling more happy than I had done since we set foot in the East.

Yet the quest was desperate for the reeds were tall and often I could not see more than a bow's length in front of me. Presently, however, we found a path made perchance by game coming down to drink, or by crocodiles coming up to sleep, and followed it, I with an arrow on my string and Bes with the throwing spear in his right hand and the stabbing spear in his left, half a pace ahead of me. On we crept, Bes drawing in the air through his great nostrils as a hound might do, till suddenly he stopped and sniffed towards the north.

"I smell lion near," he whispered, searching among the reed stems with his eyes. "I see lion," he whispered again, and pointed, but I could see nothing save the stems of the reeds.

"Rouse him," I whispered back, "and I will shoot as he bounds."

Then Bes poised the spear, shook it till it quivered, and threw. There was a roar and a lioness appeared with the spear fast in her flank. I loosed the arrow but it cut into the thick reeds and stuck there.

"Forward!" whispered Bes, "for where woman is, there look for man. The lion will be near."

We crept on, Bes stopping to cut the arrow from a reed and set it back in the quiver, for it was a good arrow made by himself. But now he shifted the broad spear to his right hand and in his left held his knife. We heard the wounded lioness roar not far away.

"She calls her man to help her," whispered Bes, and as the words left his lips the reeds down wind began to sway, for we were smelt.

They swayed, they parted and, half seen, half hid between their stems, appeared the head of a great, black-maned lion. I drew the string and shot, this time not in vain, for I heard the arrow thud upon his hide. Then before I could set another he was on us, reared upon his hind legs and roaring. As I drew my dagger he struck at me, but I bent down and his paw went over my head. Then his weight came against me and I fell beneath him, stabbing him in the belly as I fell. I saw his mighty jaws open to crush my head. Then they shut again and through them burst a

whine like that of a hurt dog.

Bes had driven his spear into the lion's breast, so deep that the point of it came out through the back. Still he was not dead, only now it was Bes he sought. The dwarf ran at him as he reared up again, and casting his great arms about the brute's body, wrestled with him as man with man.

Then it was, for the first time I think, that I learned all the Ethiopian's strength. For he, a dwarf, threw that lion on its back and thrusting his big head beneath the jaws, struggled with it madly. I was up, the knife still in my hand, and oh! I too was strong. Into the throat I drove it, dragging it this way and that, and lo! the lion moaned and died and his blood gushed out over both of us. Then Bes sat up and laughed, and I too laughed, since neither of us had more than scratches and we had done what men could scarcely do.

"Do you remember, Master," said Bes when he had finished laughing, as he wiped his brow with some damp moss, "how, once far away up the Nile you charged a mad elephant with a spear and saved me who had fallen, from being trampled to death?"

I, Shabaka, answered that I did. (And I, Allan Quatermain, observing all these things in my psychic trance in the museum of Ragnall Castle, reflected that I also remembered how a certain Hans had saved me from a certain mad elephant, to wit, Jana, not so long before, which just shows

how things come round.)

"Yes," went on Bes, "you saved me from that elephant, though it seemed death to you. And, Master, I will tell you something now. That very morning I had tried to poison you, only you would not wait to eat because the elephants were near."

"Did you?" I asked idly. "Why?"

"Because two years before you captured me in battle with some of my people, and as I was misshapen, or for pity's sake, spared my life and made me your slave. Well, I who had been a chief, a very great chief, Master, did not wish to remain a slave and did wish to avenge my people's blood. Therefore I tried to poison you, and that very day you saved my life, offering for it your own."

"I think it was because I wanted the tusks of the elephant, Bes."

"Perhaps, Master, only you will remember that this elephant was a young cow and had no tusks worth anything. Still had it carried tusks, it might have been so, since one white tusk is worth many black dwarfs. Well, to-day I have paid you back. I say it lest you should forget that had it not been for me, that lion would have eaten you."

"Yes, Bes, you have paid me back and I thank you."

"Master, hitherto I always thought you one who worshipped Maat, goddess of Truth. Now I see that you worship the god of Lies, whoever he may be, that god who dwells in the breasts of women and most men, but has no name. For, Master, it was you who saved me from the lion and not I you, since you cut its throat at the last. So that debt of mine is still to pay and by the great Grasshopper which we worship in my country, who is much better than all the gods of the Egyptians put together, I swear that I will pay it soon, or mayhap ten thousand years hence. At the last it shall be paid."

"Why do you worship a grasshopper and why is he better than the gods of the Egyptians?" I asked carelessly, for I was tired and his talk amused me while we rested.

"We worship the Grasshopper, Master, because he jumps with men's spirits from one life to another, or from this world to the next, yes, right through the blue sky. And he is better than your Egyptian gods because they leave you to find your own way there, and then eat you alive, that is if you have tried to poison people, as of course we have all done. But, Master, we are fresh again now, so let us be going, for the hour will soon be finished. Also when she has eaten the spear handle, that lioness may return."

"Yes," I said; "let us go and report to the King of kings that we have killed a lion."

"Master, it is not enough. Even common kings believe little that they do not see, wherefore it is certain that a King of kings will believe nothing and still more certain that he will not come here to look. So as we cannot carry the lion, we must take a bit of it," and straightway he cut off the end of the brute's tail.

Following the crocodile path, presently we reached the edge of the reeds opposite to the camp where the King now sat in state beneath a purple pavilion that had been reared, eating a meal, with his courtiers standing at a distance and looking very hungry.

Out of the reeds bounded Bes, naked and bloody, waving the lion's tail and singing some wild Ethiopian chant, while I, also bloody and half naked, for the lion's claws had torn my jerkin off me, followed with bow unstrung.

The King looked up and saw us.

"What! Do you live, Egyptian?" he asked. "Of a surety I thought that by now you would be dead."

"It was the lion that died, O King," I answered, pointing to Bes who, having ceased from his song, was jumping about carrying the beast's tail in his mouth as a dog carries a bone.

"It seems that this Egyptian has killed a lion," said the King to one of



his lords, him of the painted face and scented hair.

"May be please the King," he answered, bowing, "a tail is not the whole beast and may have been taken thither, or cut from a lion lying dead already. The King knows that the Egyptians are great liars."

So he spoke because he was jealous of the deed.

"These men look as though they had met a live one, not one that is dead," said the King, scanning our blood-stained shapes. "Still, as you doubt it, you will wish to put the matter to the proof. Therefore, Cousin, take six men with you, enter the reeds and search. In that soft ground it will be easy to follow their footmarks."

"It is dangerous, O King," began the prince, for such he was, no less.

"And therefore the task will be the more to your taste, Cousin. Go now, and be swift."

So six hunters were called and the prince went, cursing me beneath his breath as he passed us. For he was terribly afraid, and with reason. Suddenly Bes ceased from his antics and prostrating himself, cried,

"A boon, O King. This noble lord throws doubt upon my master's word. Suffer that I may lead him to where the lion lies dead, since otherwise wandering in those reeds the great King's cousin might come to harm and

the great King be grieved."

"I have many cousins," said the King. "Still go if you wish, Dwarf."

So Bes ran after the prince and catching him up, tapped him on the shoulder with the lion's tail to point out the way. Then they vanished into the reeds and I went to the chariot to wash off the blood from my body and clothes. As I fastened my robe I heard a sound of roaring, then one scream, after which all grew still. Now I drew near to the reeds and stood between them and the King's camp.

Presently on their edge appeared Bes dancing and singing as before, but this time he held a lion's tail in either hand. After him came the six hunters dragging between them the body of the lion we had killed. They staggered with it towards the King, and I followed.

"I see the dwarf," he said. "I see the dead lion and I see the hunters. But where is my cousin? Make report, O Bes."

"O King of kings," replied Bes, "the mighty prince your cousin lies flat yonder beneath the body of that lion's wife. She sprang upon him and killed him, and I sprang upon her and killed her with my spear. Here is her tail, O King of kings."

"Is this true?" he asked of the hunters.

"It is true, O King," answered their captain. "The lioness, which was wounded, leapt upon the prince, choosing him although he was behind us all. Then this dwarf leapt upon the lioness, being behind the prince and nearest to him, and drove his spear through her shoulders to her heart. So we brought the first lion as the King commanded us, since we could carry no more."

The face of the King grew red with rage.

"Seven of my people and one black dwarf!" he exclaimed. "Yet the lioness kills my cousin and the dwarf kills the lioness. Such is the tale that will go to Egypt concerning the hunters of the King of the world. Seize those men, Guards, and let them be fed to the wild beasts in the palace dens."

At once the unfortunates were seized and led away. Then the King called Bes to him, and taking the gold chain he wore about his neck, threw it over his head, thereby, though I knew nothing of it at the time, conferring upon him some noble rank. Next he called to me and said,

"It would seem that you are skilled in the use of the bow and in the hunting of lions, Egyptian. Therefore I will honour you, for this afternoon your chariot shall drive with my chariot, and we will hunt side by side. Moreover, I will lay you a wager as to which of us will kill the most lions, for know, Shabaka, that I also am skilled in the use of the bow, more skilled than any among the millions of my

subjects."

"Then, O King, it is of little use for me to match myself against you, seeing that I have met men who can shoot better than I do, or, since in the East all must speak nothing but the truth, not being liars as the dead prince said we Egyptians are, one man."

"Who was that man, Shabaka?"

"The Prince Peroa, O King."

The King frowned as though the name displeased him, then answered,

"Am I not greater than this Peroa and cannot I therefore shoot better?"

"Doubtless, O King of kings, and therefore how can I who shoot worse than Peroa, match myself against you?"

"For which reason I will give you odds, Shabaka. Behold this rope of rose-hued pearls I wear. They are unequalled in the whole world, for twenty years the merchants sought them in the days of my father; half of them would buy a satrapy. I wager them"--here the listening nobles gasped and the fat eunuch, Houman, held up his hands in horror.

"Against what, O King?"

"Your slave Bes, to whom I have taken a fancy."

Now I trembled and Bes rolled his yellow eyes.

"Your pardon, O King of kings," I said, "but it is not enough. I am a hunter and to such, priceless pearls are of little use. But to me that dwarf is of much use in my hunting."

"So be it, Shabaka, then I will add to the wager. If you win, together with the pearls I will give you the dwarf's weight in solid gold."

"The King is bountiful," I answered, "but it is not enough, for even if I win against one who can shoot better than Peroa, which is impossible, what should I do with so much gold? Surely for the sake of it I should be murdered or ever I saw the coasts of Egypt."

"What shall I add then?" asked the King. "The most beauteous maiden in the House of Women?"

I shook my head. "Not so, O King, for then I must marry who would remain single."

"There is no need, you might sell her to your friend, Peroa. A satrapy?"

"Not so, O King, for then I must govern it, which would keep me from my hunting, until it pleased the King to take my head."

"By the name of the holy ones I worship what then do you ask added to the pearls and the pure gold?"

Now I tried to bethink me of something that the King could not grant, since I had no wish for this match which my heart warned me would end in trouble. As no thought came to me I looked at Bes and saw that he was rolling his eyes towards the six doomed hunters who were being led away, also in pretence of driving off a fly, pointing to them with one of the lion tails. Then I remembered that a decree once uttered by the King of the East could not be altered, and saw a road of escape.

"O King," I said, "together with the pearls and the gold I ask that the lives of those six hunters be added to the wager, to be spared if by chance I should win."

"Why?" asked the King amazed.

"Because they are brave men, O King, and I would not see the bones of such cracked by tame beasts in a cage."

"Is my judgment registered?" asked the King.

"Not yet, O King," answered the head scribe.

"Then it has no weight and can be suspended without the breaking of the

law. Shabaka, thus stands our wager. If I kill more lions than you do this day, or, should but two be slain, I kill the first, or should none be slain, I plant more arrows in their bodies, I take your slave, Bes the dwarf, to be my slave. But should you have the better of me in any of these ways, then I give to you this girdle of rose pearls and the weight of the dwarf Bes in gold and the six hunters free of harm, to do with what you will. Let it be recorded, and to the hunt."

Soon Bes and I were in our chariot which by command took place in line with that of the King, but at a distance of some thirty steps. Bending over the dwarf who drove, I spoke with him, saying,

"Our luck is ill to-day, Bes, seeing that before the end of it we may well be parted."

"Not so, Master, our luck is good to-day seeing that before the end of it you will be the richer by the finest pearls in the whole world, by my weight in pure gold (and Master, I am twice as heavy as the king thought and will stuff myself with twenty pounds of meat before the weighing, if I have the chance, or at least with water, though in this hot place that will not last for long), and by six picked huntsmen, brave men as you thought, who will serve to escort us and our treasure to the coast."

"First I must win the match, Bes."

"Which you could do with one eye blinded, Master, and a sore finger. Kings think that they can shoot because all the worms that crawl about them and are named men, dare not show themselves their betters. Oh! I have heard tales in yonder city. There have been days when this Lord of the world has missed six lions with as many arrows, and they seated smiling in his face, being but tamed brutes brought from far in cages of wood, yes, smiling like cats in the sun. Look you, Master, he drinks too much wine and sits up too late in his Women's house--there are three hundred of them there, Master--to shoot as you and I can. If you doubt it, look at his eyes and hands. Oh! the pearls and the gold and the men are yours, and that painted prince who mocked us is where he ought to be--dead in the mud.

"Did I tell you how I managed that, Master? As you know better than I do, lions hate those that have on them the smell of their own blood. Therefore, while I pointed out the way to him, I touched the painted prince with the bleeding tail of that which we killed, pretending that it was by chance, for which he cursed me, as well he might. So when we came to the dead lion and, as I had expected, met there the lioness you had wounded, she charged through the hunters at him who smelt of her husband, and bit his head off."

"But, Bes, you smelt of him also, and worse."

"Yes, Master, but that painted cousin of the King came first. I kept



well behind him, pretending to be afraid," and he chuckled quietly, adding, "I expect that he is now telling an angry tale about me to Osiris, or to the Grasshopper that takes him there, as it may happen."

"These Easterns worship neither Osiris, nor your Grasshopper, Bes, but a flame of fire."

"Then he is telling the tale to the fire, and I hope that it will get tired and burn him."

So we talked merrily enough because we had done great deeds and thought that we had outwitted the Easterns and the King, not knowing all their craft. For none had told us that that man who hunted with the King and yet dared to draw arrow upon the quarry before the King should be put to death as one who had done insult to his Majesty. This that royal fox remembered and therefore was sure that he would win the wager.

Now the chariots turned and passing down a path came to an open space that was cleared of reeds. Here they halted, that of the King and my own side by side with ten paces between them, and those of the court behind. Meanwhile huntsmen with dogs entered the great brake far away to the right and left of us, also in front, so that the lions might be driven backwards and forwards across the open space.

Soon we heard the hounds baying on all sides. Then Bes made a sucking noise with his great lips and pointed to the edge of the reeds in front

of us some sixty paces away. Looking, I saw a yellow shape creeping along between their dark stems, and although the shot was far, forgetting all things save I was a hunter and there was my game, I drew the arrow to my ear, aimed and loosed, making allowance for its fall and for the wind.

Oh! that shot was good. It struck the lion in the body and pierced him through. Out he came, roaring, rolling, and tearing at the ground. But by now I had another arrow on the string, and although the King lifted his bow, I loosed first. Again it struck, this time in the throat, and that lion groaned and died.

The King looked at me angrily, and from the court behind rose a murmur of wonder mingled with wrath, wonder at my marksmanship, and wrath because I had dared to shoot before the King.

"The wager looks well for us," muttered Bes, but I bade him be silent, for more lions were stirring.

Now one leapt across the open space, passing in front of the King and within thirty paces of us. He shot and missed it, sending his shaft two spans above its back. Then I shot and drove the arrow through it just where the head joins the neck, cutting the spine, so that it died at once.

Again that murmur went up and the King struck the charioteer on the head

with his clenched fist, crying out that he had suffered the horses to move and should be scourged for causing his hand to shake.

This charioteer, although he was a lord--since in the East men of high rank waited on the King like slaves and even clipped his nails and beard--craved pardon humbly, admitting his fault.

"It is a lie," whispered Bes. "The horses never stirred. How could they with those grooms holding their heads? Nevertheless, Master, the pearls are as good as round your neck."

"Silence," I answered. "As we have heard, in the East all men speak the truth; it is only Egyptians who lie. Also in the East men's necks are encircled with bowstrings as well as pearls, and ears are long."

The hounds continued to bay, drawing nearer to us. A lioness bounded out of the reeds, ran towards the King's chariot and as though amazed, sat down like a dog, so near that a man might have hit it with a stone. The King shot short, striking it in the fore-paw only, whereon it shook out the arrow and rushed back into the reeds, while the court behind cried,

"May the King live for ever! The beast is dead."

"We shall see if it is dead presently," said Bes, and I nodded.

Another lion appeared to the right of the King. Again he shot and missed

it, whereon he began to curse and to swear in his own royal oaths, and the charioteer trembled. Then came the end.

One of the hounds drew quite close and roused the lioness that had been pricked in the foot. She turned and killed it with a blow of her paw, then, being mad, charged straight at the King's chariot. The horses reared, lifting the grooms off their feet. The King shot wildly and fell backwards out of the chariot, as even Kings of the world must do when they have nothing left to stand on. The lioness saw that he was down and leapt at him, straight over the chariot. As she leapt I shot at her in the air and pierced her through the loins, paralysing her, so that although she fell down near the King, she could not come at him to kill him.

I sprang from my chariot, but before I could reach the lioness hunters had run up with spears and stabbed her, which was easy as she could not move.

The King rose from the ground, for he was unharmed, and said in a loud voice,

"Had not that shaft of mine gone home, I think that the East would have bowed to another lord to-night."

Now, forgetting that I was speaking to the King of the earth, forgetting the wager and all besides, I exclaimed,

"Nay, your shaft missed; mine went home," whereon one of the courtiers cried,

"This Egyptian is a liar, and calls the King one!"

"A liar?" I said astonished. "Look at the arrow and see from whose quiver it came," and I drew one from my own of the Egyptian make and marked with my mark.

Then a tumult broke out, all the courtiers and eunuchs talking at once, yet all bowing to the mud-stained person of the King, like ears of wheat to a tree in a storm. Not wishing to urge my claims further, for my part I returned to the chariot and the hunting being done, as I supposed, unstrung my bow which I prized above all things, and set it in its case.

While I was thus employed the eunuch Houman approached me with a sickly smile, saying,

"The King commands your presence, Egyptian, that you may receive your reward."

I nodded, saying that I would come, and he returned.

"Bes," I said when he was out of hearing, "my heart sinks. I do not trust that King who I think means mischief."

"So do I, Master. Oh! we have been great fools. When a god and a man climb a tree together, the man should allow the god to come first to the top, and thence tell the world that he is a god."

"Yes," I answered, "but who ever sees Wisdom until she is flying away? Now perhaps, the god being the stronger, will cast down the man."

Then both together we advanced towards the King, leaving the chariot in charge of soldiers. He was seated on a gilded chair which served him as a throne, and behind him were his officers, eunuchs and attendants, though not all of them, since at a little distance some of them were engaged in beating the lord who had served as his charioteer upon the feet with rods. We prostrated ourselves before him and waited till he spoke. At length he said,

"Shabaka the Egyptian, we made a wager with you, of which you will remember the terms. It seems that you have won the wager, since you slew two lions, whereas we, the King, slew but one, that which leapt upon us in the chariot."

Here Bes groaned at my side and I looked up.

"Fear nothing," he went on, "it shall be paid." Here he snatched off the girdle of priceless, rose-hued pearls and threw it in my face.

"At the palace too," he went on, "the dwarf shall be set in the scales and his full weight in pure gold shall be given to you. Moreover, the lives of the six hunters are yours, and with them the men themselves."

"May the King live for ever!" I exclaimed, feeling that I must say something.

"I hope so," he answered cruelly, "but, Egyptian, you shall not, who have broken the laws of the land."

"In what way, O King?" I asked.

"By shooting at the lions before the King had time to draw his bow, and by telling the King that he lied to his face, for both of which things the punishment is death."

Now my heart swelled till I thought it would burst with rage. Then of a sudden, a certain spirit entered into me and I rose to my feet and said,

"O King, you have declared that I must die and as this is so, I will kneel to you no more who soon shall sup at the table of Osiris, and there be far greater than any king, going before him with clean hands. Is it not your law that he who is condemned to die has first the right to set out his case for the honour of his name?"

"It is," said the King, I think because he was curious to hear what I

had to say. "Speak on."

"O King, although my blood is as high as your own, of that I say nothing, for at the wish of your satrap I came to the East from Egypt as a hunter, to show you how we of Egypt kill lions and other beasts. For three months I have waited in the royal city seeking admission to the presence of the King, and in vain. At length I was bidden to this hunt when I was about to depart to my own land, and being taunted by your servants, entered the reeds with my slave, and there slew a lion. Then it pleased you to thrust a wager upon me which I did not wish to take, as to which of us would shoot the most lions; a wager as I now understand you did not mean that I should win, whatever might be my skill, since you thought I knew that I must shoot at nothing till you had first shot and killed the beasts or scared them away.

"So I matched myself against you, as hunter against hunter, for in the field, as before the gods, all are equal, not as a slave against a king who is determined to avenge defeat by death. We were posted and the lions came. I shot at those which appeared opposite to me, or upon my side, leaving those that appeared opposite to you, or on your side unshot at, as is the custom of hunters. My skill, or my fortune, was better than yours and I killed, whereas you missed or only wounded. In the end a lioness sprang at you and I shot it lest it should kill you; as could easily be proved by the arrow in its body. Now you say that I must die because I have broken some laws of yours which men should be ashamed to make, and to save your honour, pay me what I have won,



knowing that pearls and gold and slaves are of no value to a dying man and can be taken back again. That is all the story.

"Yet I would add one word. You Easterns have two sayings which you teach to your children; that they should learn to shoot with the bow, and to tell the truth. O King, they are my last lessons to you. Learn to shoot with the bow--which you cannot do, and to tell the truth which you have not done. Now I have spoken and am ready to die and I thank you for the patience with which you have heard my words, that, as the King does not live for ever, I hope one day to repeat to you more fully beyond the grave."

Now at this bold speech of mine all those nobles and attendants gasped, for never had they heard such words addressed to his Majesty. The King turned red as though with shame, but made no answer, only he asked of those about him.

"What fate for this man?"

"Death, O King!" they cried with one voice.

"What death?" he asked again.

Then his Councillors consulted together and one of them answered,

"The slowest known to our law, death by the boat."

Hearing this and not knowing what was meant, it came into my mind that I was to be turned adrift in a boat and there left to starve.

"Behold the reward of good hunting!" I mocked in my rage. "O King, because of this deed of shame I call upon you the curse of all the gods of all the peoples. Henceforth may your sleep be ever haunted by evil dreams of what shall follow the last sleep, and in the end may you also die in blood."

The King opened his mouth as though to answer, but from it came nothing but a low cry of fear. Then guards rushed up and seized me.