

Qura paused to catch her breath as the pair reached the summit.

It had been almost a decade since she stood at the top of Old Monk and the detour would be worth letting Blue see West Halford from up high

As she turned to gaze out the sight made her drop limply to her knees, mouth open.

Where the quaint halfling houses were stood square stone houses crouched, all the trees felled and in the centre of village were piles of logs, the diminutive shapes of havlin working at

chopping wood, patrolled by human-sized figures lashing out with whips intermittently As Qura's hands bunched into fists she saw a havlin collapse and the nearest figure kick the prone figure before dragging it by the foot to hurl the limp body into a ditch nearby.

Qura rushed to her feet, feeling the anger burn and the heat surround her, it faltering as Blue's massive armoured gauntlet rested on her shoulder.

"Rushing will not bring her back" his monotone voice echoed as she realised he'd already dropped low to the ground alongside her "we must reconnoitre first to keep your people safe"

Qura fidgeted with her goggles. She didn't understand Blue's plan fully or what he was asking of her

"just a fireball. Hold it with as much power as you can muster" he repeated, knelt in front of her

She looked up into the glowing green glass sections of his helmet and nodded as she pulled her goggles on, rendering her blind in the approaching dusk.

Focussing, she held her hands close together and gave life to a flame, pouring more and more power into it and reaching further out as it grew to the size of her torso.

She began to shake as she concentrated and the sphere grew brighter and brighter until her legs gave out and she lowered to her knees, barely thinking of anything other than the power she was channelling.

"Almost there" Blue's voice drifted and she felt him extend a hand underneath the fireball

She took a sharp breath as he added more power into the spell, something about what he was weaving tasted different to anything Qura had ever produced.

"you need to lift it up now" Blue's voice sounded really far away but he hadn't moved from their place in the undergrowth

shaking all over, Qura forced herself to her feet, despite not touching the ball in front of her, she struggled with all her might to get it to lift upwards, blue matching her movements precisely until she had it at head height.

Suddenly it shot upwards, trailing fire up into the clouds above them.

"it won't last long, we need to go now" blue's voice returned and he readied the large weapon he carried

Qura pulled off her her goggles and replaced her hat and followed the armoured behemoth out of the shrubs toward the humans rushing into groups to face where the flare had shot upwards

they were a hundred feet from the crowd and yet Blue's weapon barked and the closest bandits fell, their chests exploding from the impacts

As Qura readied her wand she heard the thud of a raindrop into the dust alongside her holding out her hand, the next drop stopped six inches from her palm – instead of water, this rain was drops of fire!

She grinned at what blue had done and looked up as several fiery droplets halted above her head.

While many of the humans were shouting and screaming as clothes and skin burned, several still charged toward the pair

As blue was picking off archers on the rooftops Qura smiled grimly at the trust he had placed in her and swept her arms out dramatically, pulling fire from the sky to wash over the approaching warriors, sending charred corpses and burnt survivors rolling away from them

Qura turned and waved her arms continuously, sending fire and flame toward any that came close while the thunder of Blue's weapon sounded again and again, each time mutilating those opposing them

the pair followed Blue's plan and as they passed the largest building blue continued to advance while Qura ducked in to release the Havlin

in the great hall she saw the Havlin being herded into a cage built into the back half of the building by three humans.

As she approached the three spun

"they send a rat to release the vermin while real warriors get their hands dirty!" one explained and pointed at her "kill it!"

the two followed this one's orders and dashed toward Qura, brandishing sabres

she focused and thrust her wand out toward one, the flame issued as a thin searing white line that burned straight through the bandit's chest.

As the other lunged from the other side she called on the Amulet of Gort and unleashed a torrent of flame that engulfed his arms, changing his angry yell into a scream of pain

Qura's attention returned to the leader just in time to see his sword plummeting toward her

She brought both arms together and focused, a heat haze forming in front of her and the sword stopping as if it had impacted. She bared her teeth and glared at the man in front of her as the air and sword suddenly glowed cherry red and up into bright white heat

the man screamed as the half-melted sword dropped from he ruined fingers but in instinct he kicked outwards, his boot lifting Qura off her feet and breathless from the impact.

No sooner that she realised what had happened, the man grabbed her by the hair and with a grunt lifted the havlin and smashed her through a nearby table

struggling in the wreckage Qura tried to bring her arms up but another foot impacted with her side and she felt ribs crack as she tumbled away

the kicks continued into her and as she found herself face down on the floor the man stamped down on her arm with a crunch causing Qura to scream in response.

His next kick flipped her onto her back and through her tears she could see him stood above her

"god damn vermin! Stomping about as if you were real people!" he yelled as he raised his boot once more.

Suddenly a candle impacted with the back of his head. He turned to look and Qura's eyes widened

Thrusting her good arm upwards, the candle flame expanded suddenly, igniting the man's unkempt hair and beard

as he screamed and flailed at his head Qura sat up and raised both arms channelling more power into the flame, it heating exponentially and spreading across his body.

Qura stood up and the ignited body also lifted under her control

Qura poured more power into the fire, the man's screams juddering to an end as the heat burst his lungs

"For all you have taken and all you have destroyed" Qura's voice was little more than a growl as the power flowed "You... Shall... BURN!"

She raised her arms to horizontal and the flames burned so hot they were near invisible what was visible, however was the skin flowing like water, muscles burning away and as she brought her hands together the charred skeleton turning to ash, while burned into nothingness Qura lowered her arms and took a deep breath.

Turning she spotted a group of humans had entered the hallway, no doubt to escape Blue's rampage

having witnessed what happened a look from her had them all dropping their weapons without a word being said

they held their hands up dramatically and edged past the group of Havlin, entering the caged area and many not lowering their hands until they had shut the cage behind them

Qura looked toward the Havlin, spotting many arming themselves from these weapons and Mother Superior carefully putting the other lit candle on a table beside her.

Qura wordlessly nodded and limped out of the hall.

She stepped into the still hot night air and found several humans dragging their compatriots bodies into a large pile in the centre of the yard, supervised by Blue

He didn't turn from his overwatch but as she approached he nodded slightly "remarkable control and a feat of strength"

he paused momentarily "i remember my home was scoured and the loss of my brothers"

"you remember?!" Qura's eyes widened

"not the details. Just that it happened" blue's voice replied

Qura wrapped her arms around his leg and didn't start crying until his hand rested on her head

Qura stepped back, waving the smoke away from the hole she'd just burnt

She righted her hat and watched Blue lift the frame effortlessly and hold it while humans and Havlin fixed the start of the barn in place.

She smiled and sat as the other observers cheered the construction.

Her solitude was broken by Mother Superior sitting alongside her and passing her a water skin, only chuckling slightly as Qura first reached out with her plaster cast

"What are your plans?" Mother questioned Qura after she'd had a deep drink

Qura lifted her cast and flexed her fingers "we've got another fortnight before we see if my arm has healed properly. If so we'll make a move. Blue still can't remember much so hopefully travelling will help him"

Mother smiled "you're so different from the little girl who burnt her bedsheets during a nightmare" she reached up and wrapped an arm around Qura's shoulders "We're all so proud of what you've done and who you've become" They sat together for a moment before the Mother Superior struggled to her feet "i'd best go chase wilhelm. It's got to be time for elevenses!"