GEORGE R.R. MARTIN

A GAME OF THRONES

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A GAME OF THRONES

BOOK ONE OF A SONG OF ICE AND FIRE

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WE SHOULD START BACK.

NINE DAYS THEY HAD BEEN RIDING NORTH AND NORTHWEST AND THEN NORTH AGAIN, HARD ON THE TRACK OF A BAND OF WILDLING RAIDERS.

I SAID WE SHOULD START BACK, THE WILDLINGS ARE DEAD.

WHAT PROOF HAVE WE?

WILL SAW THEM, THAT'S PROOF ENOUGH.

EACH DAY HAD BEEN WORSE THAN THE ONE THAT CAME BEFORE IT, AND TODAY WAS THE WORST OF ALL.

I WILL HAVE THOUGHT THE ENDLESS DARK WILDERNESS THAT THE SOUTHRON CALLED THE HAUNTED FOREST HAD NO MORE TERRORS FOR HIM.

WILL HAD BEEN FOUR YEARS ON THE WALL AND VETERAN OF A HUNDRED RANGINGS SAGED HAD SPENT FORTY. MORMONT SAID AS WE SHOULD TRACK THEM, AND WE DID, BUT I DON'T LIKE THIS WEATHER.

SER WAYMAR HAD BEEN A EWORN BROTHER FOR HALF A YEAR AND THIS RANGING WAS HIS FIRST.

IT WAS HARD TO TAKE ORDERS FROM A MAN YOU LAUGHED AT IN YOUR CUPS.

TELL ME AGAIN WHAT YOU SAW, WILL. LEAVE NOTHING OUT.
Camp's a bit farther on. Over that ridge I got as close as I dared.

There's eight of them. Men and women both. No fire burning. The snow's pretty well covered it. No one moving. I watched a long time.

Did you see any bloody?

Gared. Stay here and guard the horses. Will lead me there. I would see these dead men for myself.

Well, no. But no living men ever lay so still.
Your dead men seem to have moved camp.

I am not going back to Castle Black. A failure on my first ranging—We will find these men.

Up the tree, will look for a fire.

There was no use to argue. Fear filled his gut like a meal he could not digest, and only the taste of cold iron in his mouth gave him comfort.

The Wildlings had been dead. He’d swear it.

Who goes there? Will? Can you see anything? Answer me!

Why is it so cold?
From where he hid, Will saw them emerge from the shadows. All twins to the first.

It was his duty to call out to warn Ser Waymar Royce.

It was death if he did.

When the blades met, there was no sound of metal on metal.

Only a high sound at the edge of hearing. Like an animal screaming in pain.
IT WAS COLD BUTCHERY. THE PALE BLADES SLICED THROUGH RINGMAIL AS IF IT WERE SILK.

FAR Beneath Him Will Heard Their voices and laughter SHARP AS ICICLES.

A LONG TIME PASSED BEFORE He FOUND THE COURAGE TO LOOK AGAIN.

Will Stayed in the TREE, Scarcely daring the BREATHE While the MOON CREST Slowly across the BLACK SKY.

Finally he Climbed down.
The blade would be his proof.

Gared would know what to make of it or that old bear Mormont or Maester Aemon, but he had to get back to the horses.

He had to hurry...
THE MORNINGS HAD DAWNED CLEAR AND COLD, WITH A CRISPNESS THAT HINTED AT THE END OF SUMMER.

THIS WAS THE FIRST TIME BRAN HAD BEEN DEEMED OLD ENOUGH TO GO WITH HIS LORD FATHER AND HIS BROTHERS JON AND ROBB — TO SEE THE KING'S JUSTICE DONE.

IN THE NAME OF KING ROBERT OF THE HOUSE BARATHRON, LORD OF THE SEVEN KINGDOMS AND PROTECTOR OF THE REALM, BY THE WORD OF EDDARD OF HOUSE STARK, LORD OF WINTERFELL AND WARDEN OF THE NORTH, I DO SENTENCE YOU TO DIE.
“Keep the pony well in hand.”

“And don’t look away, Father will know if you do.”

Theon Greyjoy is an ass.

You did well, Bran.

Jon Snow was seven years older than Bran and an old hand at justice.
The deserter died bravely, he had courage, at the least. It was not courage, Robb Stark. It was fear. You could see it in his eyes.

Others take his eyes, he died well.

RACE YOU TO THE BRIDGE?

DONE.

Are you well, Bran?

Yes, Father. Only...

Robb says the man died bravely, but Jon says he was afraid. Can a man still be brave when he's afraid?

That's the only time a man can be brave.
Old man's been telling you stories again, that man was no wildling. He was a deserter from the Night's Watch, and no man is more dangerous.

But the question was not why the man had to die, but why I must do it. If you would take a man's life, you owe it to look him in the eyes and hear his final words.

One day you will be Robb's bannerman, holding a keep for your brother and the King. When justice falls to you, you must take no pleasure in it, but neither must you look away.

Father! Bran! Come quickly! See what Robb's found!
What in the seven hells in it?

A direwolf.

I see one now.

So on, you can touch him.

There's not been a direwolf sighted south of the wall in two hundred years.
There are five of them.

Direwolves loose in the realm, after so many years, I like it not.

Do we know what killed her?

There's something in the throat. There, just under her jaw.

A stag’s antler, I’m surprised she lived long enough to whelp.

The sooner the better, give the beast here, Bran.

Bran.

No matter, they’ll be dead enough soon.

No! It’s mine!
There are five pups, Lord Stark.

Three male, two female.

What of it, Jon?

Put away your sword, Greyjoy. We will keep these pups.

Better a swift death now than a hard one from the cold.

You have five trueborn children: three sons, two daughters. The direwolf is the sigil of your house. Your children were meant to have these pups, my lord.
YOU WANT NO PUP FOR YOURSELF, JON?

I AM NO STARK, FATHER. I WAS BORN WITHOUT A NAME. MY NAME IS SNOW.

YOU WANT NO PUP FOR YOURSELF, JON?

I AM NO STARK, FATHER. I WAS BORN WITHOUT A NAME. MY NAME IS SNOW.

I WILL NOT HAVE SERVANTS WASTING TIME WITH THIS. IF YOU WANT THESE PUPS YOU WILL FEED THEM YOURSELVES, AND THE GODS HELP YOU IF YOU NEGLECT THEM OR TRAIN THEM BADLY.

THE COUNT HAD COME RIGHT ONLY BECAUSE JON HAD OMITTED HIMSELF—EDDARD'S BASTARD SON.

I WILL NOT HAVE SERVANTS WASTING TIME WITH THIS. IF YOU WANT THESE PUPS YOU WILL FEED THEM YOURSELVES, AND THE GODS HELP YOU IF YOU NEGLECT THEM OR TRAIN THEM BADLY.

I WILL NOT HAVE SERVANTS WASTING TIME WITH THIS. IF YOU WANT THESE PUPS YOU WILL FEED THEM YOURSELVES, AND THE GODS HELP YOU IF YOU NEGLECT THEM OR TRAIN THEM BADLY.

YES.

YES, FATHER.

IT'S TIME WE WERE BACK AT WINTERFELL.

JORY, GATHER UP THE OTHER PUPS.

YES.

YES, FATHER.

IT'S TIME WE WERE BACK AT WINTERFELL.

JORY, GATHER UP THE OTHER PUPS.
WHAT IS IT, JON?
CAN'T YOU HEAR IT?

HE MUST HAVE CRAWLED AWAY FROM THE OTHERS.
OR BEEN DRIVEN AWAY.

AN ALBINO? THIS ONE WILL DIE EVEN FASTER THAN THE OTHERS.

I THINK NOT, GREYJOY. THIS ONE IS MINE.
In Riverrun, where Catelyn had been born, the Godwood was a garden, bright and airy. The gods of Winterfell kept a different sort of wood.

In the North, every castle had its Godwood, and every Godwood had its Heart Tree.

And every Heart Tree had its face.

Ned?
CATELYN: WHERE ARE THE CHILDREN?

IN THE KITCHEN, ARGUING ABOUT NAMES FOR THE WOLF PUPS. ARYA IS ALREADY IN LOVE, AND SANSA IS CHARMED AND GRACIOUS.

RICKON IS NOT QUITE SURE.

IS HE AFRAID?

A LITTLE.

HE MUST LEARN TO FACE HIS FEARS. HE WILL NOT BE YOUNG FOREVER AND WINTER IS COMING.
EVERY NOBLE HOUSE HAD ITS WORDS, BOASTING OF HONOR, GLORY, LOYALTY, FAITH AND COURAGE. ALL BUT THE STARKS.

THEIR WORDS WERE: WINTER IS COMING.

IN HIS YOUTH, NED HAD FOSTERED WITH THE THEN-CHILDLESS LORD ARRYN, WHO HAD BECOME A SECOND FATHER TO HIM.

THERE WAS GRIEVOUS NEWS TODAY, MY LOVE. JON ARRYN IS DEAD.

SHE COULD SEE HOW HARD THE NEWS TOOK HIM, AS SHE HAD KNOWN IT WOULD.

AND SHE HAD ALSO KNOWN HIS FIRST THOUGHT WOULD BE FOR HER.
Your sister, and their boy, Jon's son. What word of them?

The message said only that they were well and had returned to the Eyrie.

Go to her. Take the children. That boy of hers needs other children about. And Lyssa should not be alone in her grief.

Would that I could. But the letter had other tidings. The King is riding to Winterfell to seek you out.
Robert is coming here?

I knew that would please you. We should send word to your brother on the Wall.

Yes, of course. Ben will want to be here.

Cersei, and the children will travel with them. The Queen’s brothers as well.

Well, if the price for Robert’s company is an infestation of Lannisters, so be it. There must be a feast, of course, with singers.

Catelyn wished she could share his joy.

Dread coiled in her like a snake, but she forced herself to smile at this man she loved. This man who put no faith in signs.
This is beauty. Touch it. Care for it.

The cloth was so smooth it seemed to run through her fingers like water. She could not remember wearing anything so soft. It frightened her.

Is it really mine?

A gift from Magister Illyrio. The color will bring out your eyes. Tonight you will look like a princess.

A princess. She had forgotten what that was like.

Or perhaps she had never known.

Illyrio is no fool. The Magister knows that I will not forget my friends when I come into my throne.

Why does he give us so much?
MAGISTER ILLYRIOS WAS A DEALER IN SPICES, SEMISTONES, DRAGONBONE, AND OTHER LESS SAVORY THINGS.

IT WAS SAID THAT HE'D NEVER HAD A FRIEND HE WOULDN'T CHEERFULLY SELL FOR THE RIGHT PRICE BUT SHE KNEW BETTER THAN TO QUESTION HER BROTHER WHEN HE WOVED HIS WEBS OF DREAM.

THE SLAVES WILL COME TO BATHE YOU, TO WASH OFF THE STINK OF THE STABLES.

KHAL DROGO'S LOOKING FOR A DIFFERENT KIND OF MOUNT TONIGHT.

YOU WILL NOT FAIL ME TONIGHT, YOU DON'T WANT TO WAKE THE DRAGON.

DO YOU?

NO.

WHEN THEY WRITE THE HISTORY OF MY REIGN, SWEET SISTER, THEY WILL SAY THAT IT BEGAN TONIGHT.
I IS SOMEWHERE ACROSS THE NARROW SEA LAY A LAND OF GREEN HILLS AND FLOWERED PLAINS AND GREAT RUSHING RIVERS.


OUR LAND, HER BROTHER CALLED IT.

OURS BY RIGHT, TAKEN FROM US BY TREACHERY, VISERYS SAID. BUT YOU DO NOT STEAL FROM THE DRAGON.

VISERYS HAD BEEN A BOY WHEN THEY FLED KING'S LANDING TO ESCAPE THE ADVANCING ARMIES OF THE USURPER. BUT DAENERYS HAD BEEN ONLY A QUICKENING IN THEIR MOTHER'S WOMB.

YET SOMETIMES DANY WOULD PICTURE THE WAY IT HAD BEEN, SO OFTEN HAD HER BROTHER TOLD THE STORIES.

AND PERHAPS THE DRAGON DID REMEMBER, BUT DANY DID NOT.

THE DRAGON REMEMBERS.
Their brother Raegar battling the usurper in the bloody waters of the Trident and dying for the woman they both loved.

The sack of King’s Landing by the new Vipers called the usurper’s dogs, the Lords Lannister and Stark.

Princess Elia of Dorne pleading for mercy as Raegar’s heir was ripped from her breast and murdered before her eyes.

The polished skulls of the Last Dragons staring down, sightlessly from the walls of the throne room while the kingslayer opened her father’s throat with a golden sword.
She had been born on Dragonstone nine moons after their flight while a summer storm threatened to rip the island fastness apart.

She did not remember Dragonstone either.

The garrison had been prepared to sell them to the Usurper, but one night Ser Willem Darry and four loyal men had broken into the nursery and set sail under cover of darkness.

They had lived in Braavos in a house with a big red door. She had her own room with a lemon tree growing outside her window.

When Ser Willem died, the servants stole what little money they had left, and soon after they had been put out of the big house.

Dany had cried when the big red door closed behind them forever.

They had wandered since.
Dany had always assumed that she and Viserys would wed.

Dragons did not mate with beasts of the field, and Targaryens did not mingle their blood with lesser men.

And yet now he schemed to sell her to a stranger, a barbarian.

We won't need his whole Khalasar, ten thousand fighters would be enough.

The realm will rise to its rightful ruler.
Viserys of House Targaryen, the third of his name king of the Andals and Rhoynar and the First Men, lord of the seven kingdoms and protector of the realm.

His sister, Daenerys Stormborn, princess of Dragonstone.

Those three are Khal Drogo’s bloodriders, Lord Viserys. The other is Ser Jorah Mormont. A knight?

The usurper wants his head, some treachery afoot, selling poachers to slavers instead of giving them to the Night Watch.

And that is the khal himself. Wait here; I will bring him to you.

Do you see how long his braid is? The Dothraki cut it off when they are defeated in combat. He has never been.

I don’t want to be his queen. Please, please, Viserys. I want to go home.
HOMEP? THEY TOOK OUR HOME FROM US. SO HOW ARE WE TO GO HOME?

SMILE AND STAND UP STRAIGHT. LET HIM SEE THAT YOU HAVE BREASTS.

YOUR HIGHNESS, IT IS MY HONOR TO PRESENT KHAL DROGO, YOUR FUTURE HUSBAND.

TO BE CONTINUED