A GAME OF THRONES

BOOK ONE OF A SONG OF ICE AND FIRE

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My lady, you should have sent word you were coming. We would have sent an escort. The high road is not safe for a party as small as yours.

We learned that to our sorrow, Ser Donnel.

The clansmen harried us day and night. We lost three men in the first attack, two in the second, and another from fever. When we heard you approaching, I thought us doomed for certain.

The clans have been bolder since Lord Jon died. If it were up to me, I would take a hundred men into the mountains and teach them some sharp lessons. But your sister keeps all swords close to defend the Vale.

But what?

No one is certain. Shadows, maybe. I hope I have given no offense, my lady.

Frank talk does not offend me.

Catelyn knew what Lyra feared, not shadows, Lannisters.
“When we reach your keep, Ser Donnel, we must send for Maester Colemon at once. Ser Rodrik is Perversifh from his wounds.”

The lady Lysa has commanded the Maester to remain at the eyrie at all times to care for Lord Robert.

We have a septon at the gate who tends to our wounded.

Catelyn had more faith in a maester’s healing than a septon’s prayers, and was about to say as much when she saw the battlements ahead.
“Who would pass the bloody gate?”

“Ser Donnel Waynwood, with the Lady Catelyn Stark and her companions.”

“I thought the lady looked familiar. You are far from home, little cat.”

“How can I be when you are with me, uncle?”

“May we enter the Vale?”

“In the name of Robert Arryn, Lord of the Eyrie, Defender of the Vale, true warden of the East, I bid you enter freely and charge you to keep the peace.”

“Come.”
DID LYSA KNOW YOU WERE COMING?

THERE WAS NO TIME TO SEND WORD AHEAD. I FEAR WE COME BEFORE THE STORM.

MY LADY, I FEAR I CAN GO NO FARTHER TODAY.

NOR SHOULD YOU. YOU HAVE DONE ALL I COULD HAVE ASKED AND A HUNDRED TIMES MORE. MY UNCLE WILL SEE ME TO THE EYRIE.

LANNISTER MUST COME, BUT YOU AND THE OTHERS SHOULD REST HERE.

MY LADY, I BEG YOU ALLOW ME TO SEE THE END OF THIS TALE AS I SAW ITS BEGINNING.

I'LL COME TOO.

VERY WELL.

BROWN HAD NOT ASKED HER PERMISSION, CAT ELYN NOTED.
FRESH MOUNTS WERE BROUGHT FORTH FROM THE STABLES, SUREFOOTED MOUNTAIN STOCK WITH SHAGGY COATS. SER DONEL PLEDGED TO SEND BIRDS AHEAD TO THE EYRIE AND THE GATES OF THE MOON WITH WORD OF THEIR COMING.

WITHIN THE HOUR, THEY RODE FORTH AGAIN.

SO, CHILD. TELL ME ABOUT THIS STORMY NIGHT OF YOURS.

IT TOOK LONGER THAN SHE WOULD HAVE BELIEVED TO TELL IT ALL.

LYSA’S LETTER AND BRAN’S FATE, THE ASSASSINS’ DAGGER AND LITTLEFINGER AND HER CHANCE MEETING WITH TYRION LANNISTER AT THE CROSSROADS INN.

I HAD THE SAME FEAR. WHAT IS THE MOOD IN THE VALE?

AND THERE IS THE BOY.

ANGRY. THE INSULT WAS KEENLY FELT WHEN THE KING NAMED JAIME LANNISTER TO AN OFFICE THE ARYNES HAD HELD FOR THREE HUNDRED YEARS. NOR IS YOUR SISTER ALONE IN WONDERING AT THE MANNER OF THE HAND’S DEATH. NONE DARE SAY JON WAS MURDERED, BUT SUSPICION CASTS A LONG SHADOW.

“LORD ROBERT, SIX YEARS OLD, SICKLY AND SICKLY HE IS IF YOU TAKE HIS DOLLS AWAY. HE IS NOT AYRNYN’S TRUEBORN HEIR, YET THERE ARE SOME WHO SAY HE IS TOO WEAK TO SIT HIS FATHER’S SEAT.”

“SOME SAY NESTOR ROYCE HIGH STEWARD THESE PAST FOURTEEN YEARS—SHOULD RULE UNTIL THE BOY COMES OF AGE. OTHERS THAT LYSIA MUST MARRY AGAIN AND SOON.”
A woman can rule as wisely as a man.

The right woman can make no mistake, Catelyn. Lysha is not you.

"Your sister is afraid, child, and the Lannisters are what she fears the most. She stole away from the Red Keep like a thief in the night to snatch her son. Out the lion's mouth, and now you've brought the lion to her door."

I bring him here in chains.

Oh? I see an axe on his saddle and a sellsword that trails him like a hungry shadow. Where are the chains, sweet one?

The dwarf is here, and not by choice. Chains or no, he is my prisoner. Lysha will want him to answer for his crimes no less than I.

I hope you are right, child.
Once they reached the valley floor, the road flattened and they made good time passing through verdant greenwoods and sleepy little hamlets, past orchards and golden wheat fields, splashing across a dozen sunlit streams.

It was near dark when they reached the gates of the moon, seat of Lord Nestor, at the foot of the Giant’s Lance. Far above them were the waycastles of stone and snow and sky.

And then there was the eyrie.
The Arryns must not be overfond of company. If you're planning to make us climb that mountain in the dark, I'd rather you kill me here.

We'll spend the night here and make the ascent on the morrow.

Mules will take us as far as the Waycastle of Sky. Beyond that, the path is too steep and we ascend on foot.

Or ride up on chains with the beer, bread, and apples.

Would that I were a pumpkin. Alas, my lord father would be most chagrined if I went to my fate like a load of turnips.

If you walk, so will I. We Lannisters do have a certain pride.

Lady Stark!

Lord Nestor.

We have had a tiring journey. I would beg the hospitality of your roof tonight.

My roof is yours, but Lady Lyra was sent down word from the Eyrie. She wishes to see you at once.

A night ascent with the moon not even full? That's an invitation to a broken neck.

The mules know the way, Ser Brynden. It would be my honor to take you up, my lady. I've made the dark climb a hundred times.
STONE WAS A BASTARD'S NAME IN THE VALE, MUCH AS SNOW WAS IN THE NORTH. SHE COULD NOT HELP BUT THINK OF NED'S BASTARD ON THE WALL, AND IT LEFT HER ANGRY AND GUILTY BOTH, BUT THERE WAS NOTHING FOR IT...

I PUT MYSELF IN YOUR HANDS, MYA STONE.

DO YOU HAVE A NAME, CHILD?

MYA STONE, IF IT PLEASES YOU MY LADY.

LORD VESTOR, I CHARGE YOU TO KEEP A CLOSE GUARD ON MY PRISONER.

AND I CHARGE YOU TO BRING THE PRISONER A CUP OF WINE AND A NICELY CRISPED CAPON.

A GIRL WOULD BE NICE TOO, BUT I SUPPOSE THAT'S TOO MUCH TO ASK.

I TRUST YOU WILL KEEP LADY CATELYN SAFE, MYA. YOU HAVE NEVER FAILED ME.
Some people find it easier if they close their eyes. If they get frightened or dizzy, they hold the mule too tight. The mules don't like that.

I was born a Tully and married a Stark. I do not frighten easily.

Torch... just blind you... on a clear night like this, the moon and stars are enough.

At first, the ascent was easier than Catelyn had dared hope. The mules were surefooted and tireless, and Alys Stone appeared blessed with Night-Eyes.

The quiet soothed her, and the gentle rocking motion set Catelyn swaying on her saddle. Before long, she was fighting sleep.

Perhaps she dozed, for suddenly the massive ironbound gate loomed above them.

Stone, my lady.
Catelyn had not realized how hungry she was until the portly knight who commanded the waycastle offered her a skewer of meat and onions. She ate standing in the yard while the stablehands prepared new mules.

Then it was out again into the starlight.

The second part of the ascent seemed more treacherous. She could feel the altitude now.

A half-dozen times, Mya Stone had to dismount and clear the path of fallen rock.

Snow.

We ought to keep going, my lady. If it please you.

You don’t want your mule to break a leg up here, the girl said, and Catelyn was forced to agree.
Above snow, the wind was a living thing.

The stairs were cracked and broken from centuries of freeze and thaw and the tread of countless mules.

Whitey's a good mule, m'lady. Sure of foot even on ice, but you need to be careful. He'll kick if he doesn't like you.

The mule seemed to like Catelyn, and there was no kicking.

There was no ice, either, and she was grateful for that, as well.

My mother says that hundreds of years ago, this was where the snow began.

I can't remember ever seeing snow this far down the mountain.

Winter is coming. Child, Catelyn, wanted to tell her. Perhaps she was becoming a Stark at last.

Best to dismount for a bit and lead the mules. The winds can get a bit scary here.
She could feel the emptiness, the vast, black gulf of air.

The wind screamed at her, trying to pull her over the edge. She could not move forward, and the mule behind blocked her retreat.

I'm going to die here; she thought.

Lady Stark? Are you well?

I cannot do this.
YES YOU CAN, MY LADY. KEEP YOUR EYES CLOSED IF YOU LIKE. TAKE MY HAND.

LET GO OF THE ROPE. WHITEY WILL TAKE CARE OF HIMSELF. JUST SLIDE YOUR FOOT FORWARD.

NOW ANOTHER. EASY.

AND SO, FOOT BY FOOT, STEP BY STEP, THE BASTARD GIRL LED CATELYN ACROSS, BLIND AND TREMBLING, WHILE THE WHITE MULE FOLLOWED PLACIDLY BEHIND.

EVEN THE TOPLESS TOWERS OF VALYRIA COULD NOT HAVE BEEN MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN THE UNMORTARRED STONE WALL THAT WAS THE WAVCASTLE OF EYRY.

THE STABLES AND BARRACKS ARE IN THERE. THE LAST PART IS INSIDE THE MOUNTAIN. IT'S SORT OF A CHIMNEY LIKE A STONE LADDER MORE THAN PROPER STEPS. IT WON'T BE MORE THAN AN HOUR.

THE LANISTERS HAVE THEIR PRIDE, BUT THE TULLYS ARE BORN WITH BETTER SENSE. I HAVE RIDDEN ALL DAY AND THE BEST PART OF A NIGHT.
"Tell them to lower a basket, I shall ride up with the turnips."

Lady Stark! The pleasure is as great as it is unexpected.

I have sent word to your sister. She asked to be awakened as soon as you arrived.

I hope she had a good night’s rest, Ser Wardis.

The Eyrie was a small castle by the standards of the great houses. It had no need of smithy or stables or kennels, but Ned said its granary was as large as Winterfell’s. Its towers could hold five hundred men, yet it seemed strangely deserted.
CAT!
SWEET SISTER, HOW GOOD IT IS TO SEE YOU.

HOLD ON, IT HAS BEEN HOW VERY, VERY LONG.

IT HAD BEEN FIVE YEARS, FIVE CRUEL YEARS, FOR LYSA. THEY HAD TAKEN THEIR TOLL.

YOU LOOK... WELL, BUT... TIRRED.

YES, TIRRED, HOW VERY, VERY TIRRED.

LEAVE US! I WOULD SPEAK WITH MY SISTER ALONE.

HAVE YOU TAKEN LEAVE OF YOUR SENSES?

TO BRING HIM HERE WITHOUT A WORD OF PERMISSION OR WARNING, TO DRAG ME INTO YOUR QUARRELS WITH THE LANNISTERS—

MY QUARRELS? IT WAS YOU WHO WROTE THAT THE LANNISTERS HAD MURDERED YOUR HUSBAND!
TO WARN YOU TO STAY AWAY FROM THEM! I NEVER MEANT YOU TO FIGHT THEM.

MOTHER?

GODS, CAT, DO YOU KNOW WHAT YOU'VE DONE?

I HEARD VOICES.

THIS IS YOUR AUNT CATELYN, BABY. MY SISTER. DO YOU REMEMBER?

ISN'T HE BEAUTIFUL? AND STRONG TOO. JON KNEW. THE SEED IS STRONG. HE TOLD ME. HIS LAST WORDS. HE KEPT SAYING ROBERTS NAME. TELL THEM THE SEED IS STRONG.

HE WANTED EVERYONE TO KNOW WHAT A GOOD STRONG BOY MY BABY WAS GOING TO BE.
LYSA, IF YOU ARE RIGHT ABOUT THE LANNISTERS, WE MUST ACT QUICKLY. WE—

NOT IN FRONT OF THE BABY! HE HAS A DELICATE TEMPER, DON'T YOU, SWEET ONE?

THIS BOY IS LORD OF THE EVRIE AND DEFENDER OF THE VALE. THESE ARE NO TIMES FOR DELICACY. THIS MAY COME TO WAR.

QUIET! YOU'RE SCARING THE BOY!

DON'T BE AFRAID, MY SWEET BABY. MOTHER'S HERE. NOTHING WILL HURT YOU.

CATELYN WAS AT A LOSS FOR WORDS. AT HALF THIS BOY'S AGE, HER EYON HAD BEEN FIVE TIMES AS FIERCE.

WE'RE SAFE HERE. EVEN IF THEY COULD BRING AN ARMY THROUGH THE MOUNTAINS AND PAST THE BLOODY GATE, THE EVRIE IS IMPREGNABLE.

NO CASTLE IS IMPREGNABLE.
THIS ONE SAYS SO. THE ONLY THING IS, WHAT AM I TO DO WITH THIS IMP YOU HAVE BROUGHT ME?

HE IS A BAD MAN?

A VERY BAD MAN, BUT MOTHER WOULDN'T LET HIM HARM MY LITTLE BABY.

MAKE HIM FLY!

PERHAPS WE WILL, PERHAPS THAT IS JUST WHAT WE WILL DO.
Dany could not have said why Vaes Dothrak needed a gate when it had no walls.

No buildings, that she could see.

Yet there it stood, the Horse Gate, immense and beautiful.

Where is the city?
AHEAD UNDER THE MOUNTAIN. FIRST, WE PASS THE TROPHIES, MARKERS OF DOTHRAKI WAR VICTORIES.

THE TRASH OF DEAD CITIES.

IT HAD TAKEN MUCH PLEADING AND ALL THE PILLOW TRICKS DoRESH HAD TAUGHT HER BEFORE DANY HAD CONVINCED Drogo TO ALLOW VISERYS TO REJOIN THEM AT THE HEAD OF THE COLUMN.

AFTER THE DAY IN THE GRASS, Drogo HAD OFFERED HER BROTHER A PLACE IN THE CART. VISERYS HAD accepted, not knowing HE was being mocked.

THE CARTS WERE FOR EUNUCHS, CRIPPLES, WOMEN GIVING BIRTH, THE VERY YOUNG AND THE VERY OLD.

AND KILL. THEY DO KNOW HOW TO KILL, OR I'D HAVE NO USE FOR THEM.

ALL THESE SAVAGES KNOW IS HOW TO STEAL THE THINGS BETTER MEN HAVE BUILT.

THEY ARE MY PEOPLE NOW. YOU SHOULD NOT CALL THEM SAVAGES.

THE DRAGON BREAKS AS HE LIKES.
How long must we linger in these ruins before Drogo gives me my army?

The princess must be presented to the Dosh Kaleen, and—

The crones, yes, and the mummers show of a prophecy for the whelp in her belly. What is it to me? I was promised a crown, and I mean to have it.

The dragon is not mocked.

I pray that my sun and stars will not keep him waiting too long.

Your brother should have waited in Pentos. Illryrio tried to warn him that he had no place in a Khalasar.

He will go once my husband gives him the ten thousand.

Yes, Khalessi, but...the Dothraki look on these things differently. Khal Drogo would say you were a gift, and he will make a gift to Viserys in his own time. You do not demand a gift.

It's not right to make him wait to reclain his throne.

Viserys says he could sweep the seven kingdoms with ten thousand Dothraki screamers.
VISERYS CANNOT SLEEP A STABLE WITH TEN THOUSAND BROOMS.

IF IT WAS SOMEONE ELSE LEADING THEM? SOMEONE STRONGER!

WHEN I FIRST WENT INTO EXILE, I THOUGHT THE DOTHRAKI WERE HALF-NAKED BARBARIANS. I WOULD HAVE SAID A THOUSAND GOOD KNIGHTS COULD PUT A HUNDRED TIMES AS MANY TO FLIGHT.

YOUR KHAL WOULD SAY THAT ONLY A COWARD HIDES BEHIND STONE WALLS INSTEAD OF FACING HIS ENEMY, BLADE IN HAND, AND ROBERT MIGHT AGREE.

BUT THE MEN AROUND HIM? THEIR PIPERS PLAY A DIFFERENT TUNE. STANNIS, TYWIN LANNISTER. STARK.

YOU HATE THIS LORD STARK.

HE TOOK ALL I LOVED FROM ME FOR THE SAKE OF A FEW LICE-RIDDEN POACHERS AND HIS PRECIOUS HONOR.

AH! LOOK THERE, KHALEESI!
"Vaes Dothrak, the city of the Horse Lords."

Where are the people who live here?

None of the buildings are the same.

The Dothraki don’t build. These were made by slaves brought from the lands they’ve plundered.

Only the crones of the Dothrakh dwell permanently in the sacred city.

Vaes Dothrak is large enough to house every man of every Khalasar.

The crones have prophesied that one day all the Khaless will return to the mother of mountains at once, so Vaes Dothrak must be ready.
Kuallessi. Drogo, who is blood of my blood, commands me to tell you that he must ascend the mothers of mountains this night to sacrifice to the gods for his safe return.

Only men were allowed to set foot in the mother, and in truth a night of rest would be most welcome.

Tell my sun-and-stars that I dream of him, and wait anxiously for his return.

Doreali! Find Viserys and ask him to sup with me. I will give my brother his gifts tonight. He should look like a king in the sacred city.

Irri! Go to the bazaar and buy fruit and meat. Anything but horse flesh.

Horse is best. Horse makes a man strong.

Viserys hates horse meat.

As you say.
The clothing was made to her brother's measure, tunic and leggings of white linen, leather sandals that laced to the knee, a leather vest painted with dragons.

The Dothraki would respect him more, she hoped, if he looked less a beggar.

How dare you send this whore to give me commands?

I only...Doreah, what did you say?

Khal...Khal, forgive me. I went to him as you bid, and told him you commanded him to join you for supper.

No one commands the dragon! I am your king!

Sweet brother, please. The girl misspoke. I told her to ask you to sup with me, if it pleases your grace.

Look: these are for you.
WHAT IS THIS?
NEW RAIMENT, I HAD IT MADE FOR YOU.

DOTHRARI RAGS, DO YOU PRETEND TO DRESS ME NOW? NEXT YOU'LL WANT TO BRAID MY HAIR!

YOU HAVE NO RIGHT TO A Braid. YOU HAVE WON NO VICTORIES YET. BUT THESE ARE GARMENTS FIT FOR A KHAL.

I AM THE LORD OF THE SEVEN KINGDOMS. SLUT! DO YOU THINK THAT BIG BELLY WILL PROTECT YOU IF YOU WAKE THE DRAGON?
YOU ARE THE ONE WHO FORGETS HIMSELF. DIDN’T YOU LEARN ANYTHING THAT DAY IN THE GRASS?

LEAVE ME BEFORE I SUMMON MY KHAS TO DRAG YOU OUT. AND PRAY THAT DROGO NEVER HEARS OF THIS.

WHEN I COME INTO MY KINGDOM, YOU WILL RUE THIS DAY, SLUT.

I’M NOT HUNGRY. SHARE THIS FOOD AMONG YOURSELVES, AND SEND SOME TO SER JORAH, IF YOU WOULD.

PLEASE BRING ME ONE OF THE DRAGON’S EGGS.
She liked to hold the eggs. They made her feel stronger, braver.

As if she were drawing strength from the stone dragons locked inside.

She felt the child move within her, as if he were reaching out, brother to brother, blood to blood.

You are the dragon. The true dragon. I know it.

And she went to sleep dreaming of home.

To be continued.