GEORGE R.R. MARTIN

A GAME OF THRONES

DYNAMITE ENTERTAINMENT • ISSUE #3
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Arya’s stitches were crooked again. Sansa’s were always exquisite.

Sansa’s work is as pretty as she is Septa Mordane said. She has such fine hands.

Today the Septa was sitting with Princess Myrcella.

Arya thought Myrcella’s stitches looked a little crooked too. But you’d never know it from the way Septa Mordane was cooing.

She said Arya had the hands of a blacksmith.

What are you talking about?

Tell me.
WE WERE TALKING ABOUT THE PRINCE.

JOFFREY LIKES YOUR SISTER. HE TOLD HER SHE WAS VERY BEAUTIFUL.

HE'S GOING TO MARRY HER. THEN SANSA WILL BE QUEEN OF ALL THE REALM.

BETH! YOU SHOULDN'T MAKE UP STORIES.

WHAT DID YOU THINK OF PRINCE JOFF? SISTER? HE'S VERY GALLANT. DON'T YOU THINK?

JON SAYS HE LOOKS LIKE A GIRL.

POOR JON. HE GETS JEALOUS BECAUSE HE'S A BASTARD.

HE'S OUR BROTHER.
What are you talking about, children? Arya? Why aren't you at work? Let me see your stitches.

Arya, Arya, Arya. This will not do at all.

Arya, come back here! Don't you take another step! You'll shame us all in front of the princess!

By your leave, my lady.

Just where do you think you're going?

I have to go shoé a horse!
It wasn't fair. Sansa had everything.

Sansa could sew and dance and sing. She wrote poetry. She knew how to dress.

Worse, she was beautiful.

Sansa was two years older. Maybe by the time Arya was born, there was nothing left.

They called her Arya Horseface and neighed whenever she came near.

Nymeria loved her. Even if no one else did, she named the pup after the warrior queen of Rhoyne.

Sansa of course had named her pup "Lady."

By now Septa Mordane would have sent for her mother. If she went to her room, they would find her.

Arya did not care to be found.

Come.
They boys were at practice. She wanted to see Robb put gallant Prince Joffrey flat on his back.

There was a window in the covered bridge between the armory and the great keep that had a view of the whole yard.

It was the perfect place to watch from.

Jon?

Why aren’t you down in the yard?

Bastards are not allowed to damage young princes. Any bruises they take must be from true-born swords. Shouldn’t you be working on your stitches, little sister?

I wanted to see them fight.

Come here, then.
ENOUGH!

WELL, FOUGHT LREW, DONNI. HELP THEM OUT OF THEIR ARMOR.

PRINCE JOFFREY, ROBB. WILL YOU GO ANOTHER ROUND?

GLADLY.

THIS IS A GAME FOR CHILDREN, SER RODRIK.
YOU ARE CHILDREN.

I AM A PRINCE AND I GROW TIRED OF SWTATING AT
STARKS WITH A PLAY SWORD.

WHAT ARE YOU SUGGESTING?

LIVE STEEL.

TOO DANGEROUS. I WILL PERMIT TOURN-B Y SWORDS
WITH BLUNTED EDGED.

THIS IS YOUR PRINCE WHO ARE YOU TO TELL
HIM HE MAY NOT HAVE AN EDGE ON HIS SWORD,
SER?

I AM MASTER-AT-ARMS OF WINTERFELL,
CLEGANE.
THEY WILL HAVE STEEL WHEN THEY
ARE READY.

LET ME DO IT. I CAN BEAT
HIM.

BEAT HIM WITH A TOURN-Y
BLADE, THEN.

COME SEE ME WHEN YOU'RE
OLDER, STARK. IF YOU'RE NOT
TOO OLD.
COME, TOMMEN. THE HOUR OF PLAY IS DONE. LEAVE THE CHILDREN TO THEIR FROLICS.

JOFFREY IS TRULY A LITTLE SHIT. THE SHOW IS DONE, YOU HAD BEST RUN BACK TO YOUR ROOM, LITTLE SISTER.

THE LONGER YOU HIDE, THE STERNER THE Penance. YOU'LL BE SEWING ALL THROUGH THE WINTER.

WHEN SPRING COMES, THEY WILL FIND YOUR BODY WITH A NEEDLE STILL BETWEEN YOUR FROZEN FINGERS.

I HATE NEEDLEWORK! IT'S NOT FAIR.

NOTHING IS LITTLE SISTER.
FOR DAYS, BRAN COULD SCARCELY WAIT TO BE OFF. HIS FATHER WOULD BE HAND OF THE KING, AND THEY WERE GOING TO LIVE IN THE RED CASTLE AT KING’S LANDING. BRAN WAS GOING TO BE A KNIGHT SOMEDAY.

YET NOW THAT THE LAST DAY WAS AT HAND, SUDDENLY BRAN FELT LOST. HIS FATHER HAD TOLD HIM TO SAY HIS FAREWELLS TODAY AND HE HAD TRIED.

OLD NANN AND GAGE THE COOK NIKKED IN HIS SMITHY, HODOR, THE STABLEBOY WHO NEVER SAID ANYTHING BUT “HODOR.” BRAN HAD TURNED AND RUN BEFORE THEY COULD SEE THE TEARS IN HIS EYES.

WINTERFELL WAS THE ONLY HOME HE HAD EVER KNOWN. HIS MOTHER OFTEN SAID THAT BRAN COULD CLIMB BEFORE HE COULD WALK, AND HIS FAVORITE HAUNT WAS THE BROKEN TOWER.
Once it had been a watchtower, the tallest in Winterfell, a hundred years before his father was even born, a lightning strike set it afire, and the tower had never been rebuilt.

No one ever got to the jagged top of the structure now except for Bran and the crows.

The best way was to start from the Godwood and cross over the armory and the guard’s hall. That brought you to the blind side of the first keep, the oldest part of the castle.

Only rats and spiders lived there now, but the old stone made for good climbing.
From the last gargoyle, if you really stretched, you could pull yourself over to the broken tower. The last part was a scramble up the blackened stones to the eyrie and then the crows would come around to see if you'd brought any corn.

He wanted to hear more.

But he will listen to Stark, and his wife is Lady Arryn's sister. It's a wonder Lyra was not here to greet us with her accusations.

Let Lady Arryn be as bold as she likes, she has no proof... or does she?

Do you think the King will require proof? He's still in love with Stark's sister, the infirm little dead girl.

How long till he decides to put me aside for some new Lyanna?
ALL THIS TALK IS GETTING VERY TIRESOME, SISTER. COME HERE, AND BE QUIET.

THE QUEEN...

EEEEEEEEEE!
HE SAW US, BROTHER! SO WE DID.
TAKE MY HAND, BOY, BEFORE YOU FALL.

HERE NOW. YOU'RE JUST A CHILD, AREN'T YOU?

YES, SER.
MY LORD.

THE THINGS I DO FOR LOVE.
There was nothing to grab on to. The courtyard rushed up to meet him.

Somewhere in the distance, a wolf was howling.

And crows circled. The broken tower waiting for corn.
For four days, the wolf’s howl had hung over Winterfell like a flag of mourning. Dawn light would soon be spilling through the high windows. But Tyrion Lannister was not much of one for sleeping.

I could silence the creature if it please you.

Send a dog to kill a dog! Winterfell is so infested with wolves, the Starks would never miss one.

I beg to differ, nephew. The Starks can count past six. Unlike some princes I know.
A voice from nowhere; spirits of the air!

**Little Lord Tyrion! My pardons, I did not see you.**

I am in no mood for your insolence, Cleane.

Joffrey, it’s past time you called on Lord Edard and his lady to offer them comfort.

What good would my comfort do them? The Stark boy is nothing to me...

Down here.

**I'm going to tell mother.**

Tell her, but first go to Lord and Lady Stark and fall on your knees before them. Tell them how sorry you are, and that all your prayers are with them.

Do you understand? Do you?

The prince will remember that, little lord.

If he forgets, be a good dog and remind him. Do you know where I might find my brother?
"He is breaking fast with the queen."

Bread and two of those little fish, dark beer, oaf, and bacon. Burn it black.

Is Robert still abed? The king has not slept. He is with Lord Eddard.
HE HAS A LARGE HEART, OUR ROBERT.

I DON'T WANT BRANDON TO DIE. DO YOU HAVE NEWS, UNCLE?

I STOPPED BY THE SICKROOM LAST NIGHT. THERE WAS NO CHANGE.

LORD EDDARD HAD A BROTHER NAMED BRANDON AS WELL. ONE OF THE HOSTAGES MURDERED BY TARGARYEN.

IT SEEMS TO BE AN UNLUCKY NAME.

NOT SO UNLUCKY AS ALL THAT. THE MAESTER THINKS THE BOY MAY YET LIVE.

MYRCELLA GAVE A HAPPY SMILE. TOMMEN SMILED.

BUT IT WAS NOT THE CHILDREN THAT TYRION WAS WATCHING.

WHAT WERE THE MAESTER'S WORDS?
One.
The fall shattered his legs. They keep him alive with honey and water. Perhaps, if he wakes, he will be able to eat real food, but he will never walk again.

Perhaps, if he wakes, he will be able to eat real food, but he will never walk again.

If he wakes? Is that likely?

I would swear that wolf of his is keeping the boy alive. The creature is outside his window night and day.

The maester said they closed the window once to shut out the noise and Bran seemed to weaken. When they opened it again, his heart beat stronger.

The gods alone know, the maester only hopes.

Will Bran get better, Uncle?

He thinks that if the boy were going to die, he would have done so already.

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AAAReeRe
Benjen Stark is returning to the Night’s Watch with his brother’s bastard. I have a mind to go see this wall. We have all heard so much of.

What, me, celibate? The whores would go begging from Dorne to Castle Rock.

No, I just want to stand on top of the wall and piss off the edge of the world.

The children don’t need to hear this filth.

Tommens, Myrcella come.

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STARK WILL NEVER LEAVE WINTERFELL WITH HIS SON LINGERING IN SHADOW.

ROBERT WILL COMMAND IT. THERE'S NOTHING LORD EDDARD CAN DO FOR THE BOY IN ANY CASE.

HE COULD END HIS TORMENT. EVEN IF THE BOY DOES LIVE, HE WILL BE WORSE THAN A CRIPPLE. A GROTESQUE.

SPEAKING FOR THE GROTESQUES, I BES TO DIFFER.

AND I HOPE THE BOY DOES WAKE. I WOULD BE MOST INTERESTED TO HEAR WHAT HE MIGHT SAY.

TYRION, MY SWEET BROTHER, THERE ARE TIMES I WONDER WHOSE SIDE YOU ARE ON.

JAIME, MY SWEET BROTHER, YOU WOUND ME.

YOU KNOW HOW MUCH I LOVE MY FAMILY.
I am Daenerys Stormborn, Princess of Dragonstone, she told herself.

As the hours of her wedding day passed, it was all she could do not to scream.

She was afraid of the Dothraki, who seemed alien and monstrous, as if they were beasts in human skin.

She was afraid of what he might do if she failed him.

Most of all, she was afraid of what would happen tonight when her brother gave her to Khal Drogo.

I am the blood of the dragon.
WHEN THE SUN WAS LOW IN THE SKY, THE DRUMS AND SHOUTING AND FEASTING CAME TO A SUDDEN HALT. IT WAS TIME FOR HER BRIDE GIFTS.

AND AFTER THAT, THE FIRST RIDE AND THE CONSUMMATION OF HER MARRIAGE.

THESE ARE NO COMMON SERVANTS, SWEET SISTER. IRRI AND JHIGUI WILL TEACH YOU RIDING AND THE DOTHRAKI TONGUE. DOREAH, THE ARTS OF LOVE. SHE’S VERY GOOD. I CAN SWEAR TO THAT.

IT IS A SMALL THING, MY PRINCESS, BUT ALL A POOR EXILE CAN AFFORD. HISTORIES AND SONGS OF THE SEVEN KINGDOMS, WRITTEN IN THE COMMON TONGUE.

THANK YOU, SER.

ILYRID. SHE KNEW SHE COULD AFFORD TO BE LAVISH. HE HAD COLLECTED A FORTUNE IN HORSES AND SLAVES FOR HIS PART IN SELLING HER.
Draco's eggs from the shadowlands beyond Assha! The eggs have turned them to stone but they still burn bright with beauty.

I shall treasure them always.

Other gifts she was given in plenty. Khal Drogo's Bloodriders offered her weapons which tradition called for her husband to carry.

Other Dothraki gave her slippers and jewels and silver rings for her hair jars of scent, painted vests, tiny bottles of purple glass, a gown made from the skin of a thousand mice.

And last of all, Khal Drogo brought forth his own bride gift to her.
WHAT SHOULD I DO?

TAKE THE REINS AND RIDE. YOU NEED NOT GO FAR.

This was no ordinary animal. There was something about her that took the breath away. Grey as winter with a mane like silver smoke.

Praying that she would not fall off and disgrace herself, she gave the filly the lightest and most timid touch with her knees.

The filly began to trot, and for the first time in hours, Dany forgot to be afraid.

Or perhaps it was the first time ever.

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It is time. Go to him. Please him, sweet sister, or I swear you will see the dragon wake as it has never woken before.

Tell Khal Drogo he has given me the wind.

I am the blood of the dragon. I am the blood of the dragon, she told herself.

And the dragon was never afraid.
She felt fragile as glass in his hands, her limbs as weak as water.

She began to cry.

No.

You... You speak the common tongue?

No.

Perhaps he had only that word, but it was one more than she had known he had.

Somehow it made her feel a little better.
[Image description of a comic book page showing a conversation between two characters. The characters are in a natural setting, and the dialogue is indicated by speech bubbles. The text is not visible in the image.]
NO?

YES.

TO BE CONTINUED