A GAME OF THRONES

BOOK ONE OF A SONG OF ICE AND FIRE

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THE CRABS HAD ARRIVED FROM EASTWATCH ONLY THAT MORNING. PACKED IN A BARREL OF SALT, AND THEY WERE SUCCULENT.

ARE YOU CERTAIN YOU MUST LEAVE US SO SOON?

PAST CERTAIN. MY BROTHER JAIME MAY DECIDE THAT YOU HAVE CONVINCED ME TO TAKE THE BLACK.

YOU'RE A CUNNING MAN, TYRION. WE HAVE NEED OF MEN OF YOUR SORT ON THE WALL.

THEN I SHALL SELL THE SEVEN KINGDOMS FOR DWARFS AND SHIP THEM ALL TO YOU, LORD MORMONT.

LANNISTER MOCKS US.

YOU HAVE A BOLD TONGUE FOR SOMEONE WHO IS LESS THAN HALF A MAN. PERHAPS YOU AND I SHOULD VISIT THE YARD, MAKE YOUR TAPE WITH STEEL IN YOUR HAND.

ONLY YOU, SER ALLISER.

I HAVE STEEL IN MY HAND, SER ALLISER. ALTHOUGH IT APPEARS TO BE A CRAB FORK.

SHALL WE DUEL?
HA HA HA HA

TO THE VICTOR THE SPOILS! I CLAIM THORNE’S SHARE OF THE CRABS.

YOU ARE A WICKED MAN TO PROVOKE OUR SER ALLISER SO.

THE WATCH HAS NO SHORTAGE OF STABLEBOYS. THAT SEEMS TO BE ALL THEY SEND US THESE DAYS. STABLEBOYS AND THIEVES AND RAPIERS.

MORE WINE, TYRION?

YOU HAVE A GREAT THIRST FOR A SMALL MAN.

CHIP THE ICE OFF YOUR EYES, MY LORD. SER ALLISER THORNE SHOULD BE NUKING OUT YOUR STABLES, NOT DRILLING YOUR YOUNG WARRIORS.
OH, I THINK THAT LORD TYRON IS QUITE A LARGE MAN.

I THINK HE IS A GIANT COME AMONG US, HERE AT THE END OF THE WORLD.

I'VE BEEN CALLED MANY THINGS, MAESTER AEMON, BUT GIANT IS SELDOM AMONG THEM.

NONETHELESS, I THINK IT IS TRUE.

AND FOR ONCE, TYRON LANISTER FOUND HIMSELF AT A LOSS FOR WORDS.
Much later, when the serious business of eating was done and the others had left, Mormont offered Tyrion a chair by the fire and a cup of mulled spirits so strong they brought tears to his eyes.

I hope I can repay your kindness, Lord Commander.

You can. Your sister sits beside the King. Your brother is a great knight, and your father the most powerful lord in the Seven Kingdoms.

Tell them of our need here.

The Night's Watch is dying. Should an attack come, I have three men to defend each mile of wall.

I sent Benjen Stark to search after your brother's son, lost on his first rannings. Who am I to send searching after him?

I am too old and too weary for the burden I bear, yet if I set it down, who will pick it up? Alixer Thorne? Bowen Marsh?

I would have to be as blind as Maester Aemon not to see what they are. The Night's Watch has become an army of sullen boys and tired old men.

Apart from the men at my table tonight, I have perhaps twenty who can read, and even fewer who can think, or plan, or lead.

Once the Watch spent its summers building. Now it is all we can do to stay alive.
I promise the king will hear of your need. I will speak to my father and my brother Jaime as well.

He left the rest unsaid. That the king would ignore him. Lord Tywin would ask if he'd taken leave of his senses and Jaime would only laugh.

When I was a boy, it was said that a long summer always meant a long winter to come. This summer has lasted nine years. Already the days grow shorter.

The mountain people are moving south in numbers greater than ever before. They're running, but from what?

The fisherfolk near Eastwatch have seen white walkers on the shore. Tell the king what I say, I pray you.

The gods help me if I do not set some sleep tonight. Yoren is determined to ride at first light. I thank you again for all the courtesies you have done me.

Make them believe. That is all the thanks I need.

When the long night falls, only the Night's Watch will stand between the realm and the darkness that sweeps from the north. And the gods help us all if we are not ready.

It was bitter cold outside.
Patches of snow clung to everything, and the air was thick with the scent of frost. In the distance, a strange figure emerged from the fog, looking like a banner.

The ancient towers awaited with their crumbling battlements and a sense of foreboding. A haggard man was walking past, his eyes fixed on the PGA of the Hall.

It would be his last chance to see the world before he died. He would rise and fall, and then he would... be gone.

The Black Brothers appeared more powerful and ferocious than before. They were marching too slowly. As he looked, the banner faded, and the world seemed to contemplate that answer.
He entered the iron cage and pulled on the bell rope. Three quick pulls.

He had to wait an eternity, long enough to begin to wonder why he was doing this. He had almost decided to forget his whim when the cage gave a jerk and began to ascend.

Seven hells, it's the dwarf.

And what will you be wanting at this time of night?

A last look.

He moved up slowly by fits and starts, and then more smoothly. The ground fell away and the cage swaying, he could feel the cold of the metal through his gloves.

Look all you want. Just have a care you don't fall off. The old bear would have our hides.

Who goes there? Halt!

If I halt for too long, I'll freeze in place, Jon.
LANNISTER. THIS WAS THE LAST PLACE I EXPECTED TO SEE YOU.

IT WAS THE LAST PLACE I EXPECTED TO BE SEEN.

HELLO, GHOST.

WHAT ARE YOU DOING UP HERE TONIGHT, BESIDES FREEZING YOUR MANHOOD OFF?

I'VE DRAWN NIGHT GUARD AGAIN. SER ALLISER HAS KINDLY ARRANGED THE WATCHMASTER TO TAKE SPECIAL INTEREST IN ME.

AND HAS GHOST LEARNED TO JUGGLE YET?

NO, BUT GRENN HELD HIS OWN AGAINST HAIRED THIS MORNING, AND PYP DOESN'T DROP HIS SWORD QUITE SO OFTEN.

TELL ROBB I'M GOING TO COMMAND THE NIGHT'S WATCH AND KEEP HIM SAFE SO HE MIGHT AS WELL TAKE UP NEEDLEWORK WITH THE GIRLS.

TRY TO EXPLAIN TO RICKON WHERE I'VE GONE. TELL HIM HE CAN HAVE ALL MY THINGS WHILE I'M AWAY.

I LEAVE TOMORROW. I PLAN TO STOP AT WINTERFELL ON THE WAY SOUTH. IF YOU HAVE ANY MESSAGES YOU WOULD LIKE ME TO DELIVER... AND BRAN--

I DON'T KNOW WHAT MESSAGE TO SEND BRAN.

HELP HIM, TYRION. YOU SAVE ME WHEN I NEEDED IT.
I gave you nothing but words.

Then give your words to Bran, too.

You’re asking a lame man to teach a cripple how to dance. However sincere the lesson, the result is likely to be grotesque.

Still, I know what it is to love a brother. I will give Bran what help is in my power.

Thank you, my lord of Lannister.

Friend.

Most of my kin are bastards, but you’re the first I’ve had to friend.

My uncle is out there. The first night they sent me up here, I thought: uncle Benjen will ride back tonight. Came, though.

If he doesn’t come back, Ghost and I will go find him.

But who will go find you? He wondered.

I believe you.
HER FATHER HAD BEEN FIGHTING WITH THE SMALL COUNCIL AGAIN. ARYA COULD SEE IT ON HIS FACE WHEN HE CAME TO THE TABLE LATE AGAIN, AS HE HAD BEEN SO OFTEN.

MY LORD.

BE SEATED.

THE TALK IN THE YARD IS THAT WE SHALL HAVE A TOURNAMENT. MY LORD, KNIGHTS FROM ALL OVER THE REALM ARE COMING IN HONOR OF YOUR APPOINTMENT AS HAND.

DO THEY ALSO SAY IT'S THE LAST THING IN THE WORLD I WOULD HAVE WANTED?

A TOURNAMENT?

WILL WE BE PERMITTED TO GO, FATHER?

I MUST ARRANGE ROBERT'S GAMES AND PRETEND TO BE HONORED FOR HIS SAKE. THAT DOES NOT MEAN I MUST SUBMIT MY DAUGHTERS TO THIS FOLLY.

OH PLEASE, I WANT TO SEE.

PRINCESS MYRICELA WILL BE THERE, MY LORD, AND SHE IS EVEN YOUNGER THAN SANSAA. IT WOULD LOOK QUEER IF YOUR FAMILY DID NOT ATTEND.
I suppose so, I shall arrange a place for you, Sansa.

For both of you.

I don't care about their stupid tourney.

It will be a splendid event, you shan't be wanted.

ENOUGH!

I am weary unto death of this endless war. You are sisters. I expect you to behave like sisters!

PRAY EXCUSE ME. I find I have a small appetite tonight.

NO ONE TALKED TO HER HERE. SHE DIDN'T CARE. SHE LIKED IT THAT WAY. SHE HATED THE SOUNDS OF THEIR VOICES. THE WAY THEY LAUGHED. THE STORIES THEY TOLD.

THEY'D LET THE QUEEN KILL LADY. THEY'D LET THE HOUND KILL MYSAH. NO ONE HAD RAISED A VOICE OR DRAWN A BLADE.

BACK AT WINTERFELL, ARYA HAD LOVED NOTHING BETTER THAN TO SIT AT HER FATHER'S TABLE AND LISTEN TO HIM TALK. EVERY DAY, A DIFFERENT MAN WOULD BE ASKED TO JOIN THEM.
Pray where do you think you are going, youngs lady?

I'm not hungry. May I be excused?

You may not. You will sit down and clean your plate.

You clean it!

Her bedchamber was the only place that Arya liked in all of King's Landing.

And the thing that she liked best about it was the door.

She thought of Mycah again, and her eyes filled with tears; if she had never asked him to play at swords with her...

Her fault. Her fault. Her fault!
Steal some food from the kitchens, take Needle and her good boots and a warm cloak. She could find Nymeria, and together they'd return to Winterfell or run to Jon on the wall.

She would run away from this horrible place. Away from Sansa and Septa Mordane and Prince Joffrey. All of them.

May I come in? Yes...

Whose sword is that?

Mine.

Give it to me.

A Bravo's blade. I know this maker's mark. This is Mirkken's work. The hand of the king is expected to rule the Seven Kingdoms, yet my daughter is armed from my own forge while I know nothing of it.
This is no toy for children, least of all for a girl. What would Septa Mordane say if she knew you were playing with swords?

I wasn't playing! And I hate Septa Mordane!

Enough! I ought to snap this toy across my knee and put an end to this nonsense.

Do you know the first thing about sword fighting?

That...is the essence of it, I suppose.

I was trying to learn. I asked Mycah to practice with me.

I asked him. I was my fault. That...

Stick them with the pointy end?
No, sweet one, you didn’t kill the butcher’s boy. That murder lies at the Hound’s door. Him and the cruel woman he serves.

I hate them. I hate them all. Joffrey lied. It wasn’t the way he said.

I hate Sansa too. She did remember. She just lied so Joffrey would like her.

We all lie, or did you think I’d believe that Nymeria ran off? That wolf would never have left you willingly.

There were other wolves for her to play with. We heard them howling. I told her to run, to be free. That I didn’t want her anymore. Only she kept following and I had to throw rocks.

I felt so ashamed, but it was right. Wasn’t it? The queen would have killed her.

It was right, and even the lie was...not without honor.

Arya, sit down. I need to try to explain some things to you.
YOU ARE TOO YOUNG TO BE BURDENED WITH ALL MY CARES, BUT YOU ARE ALSO A STARK OF WINTERFELL. YOU KNOW OUR WORDS.

WINTER IS COMING.

WHEN THE SNOW FALLS AND THE WHITE WIND BLOWS, THE LONE WOLF DIES, BUT THE PACK SURVIVES.

IF YOU MUST HATE, HATE THOSE WHO TRULY DO US HARM. SEPTA MORDANE IS A GOOD WOMAN AND SANSAN IS YOUR SISTER. YOU NEED HER AS SHE NEEDS YOU.

WE HAVE COME TO A DARK AND DANGEROUS PLACE, CHILD. THE WILFULNESS, THE RUNNING OFF, THE ANGRY WORDS... IT'S TIME TO BEGIN GROWING UP.

I CAN KEEP IT FOR TRUE?

AND TRY NOT TO STAB YOUR SISTER, WHATEVER THE PROVOCATION.

HERE.

GO ON. IT'S YOURS.
The next morning, she apologized to Septa Morane and asked for her pardon. Three days after, her father's steward sent her to the small hall.

You're late, boy.

He had an accent. The tilt of the Free Cities, Braavos or Myr?

Who are you?

Your dancing master?

TOMORROW YOU WILL BE HERE AT MIDDAY.

Tomorrow, you will catch it.

This is not a greatsword that is needing two hands. You will take the blade in one hand only.

Left is good. All is reversed. It will make your enemies more awkward. Do not squeeze so tight.

What if I drop it?

Can you drop part of your arm?

Nine years Syrio Forel was first sword to the Se lords of Braavos. Listen to him, boy.
I'm a girl.

Arya tried to strike him.

Boy, girl. You are a sword.

Now you will try to hit me.

After four hours, every muscle in her body was sore and aching. Her hand hurt. Sweat ran into her eyes and down her back.

Tch, enough for now, boy.

Tomorrow, the real work will begin.
In the yard below, Rickon ran with the wolves. Bran could hear his brother's breathless laughter. He wanted to be down there too, laughing and running.

The crow of his dream had said he could fly. He couldn't even run.

It was a lie.

Crows are all liars. I know a story about a crow.

I don't want any more stories. I hate your stupid stories.

His eyes stung at the thought, and he knuckled away the tears before they could come.
My stories? No, my little lord, not mine. The stories are before and after me. Before you, too.

No one knew how old she was, but his father said she was called Old Nan. Even when he was a boy, her sons and daughters had left or died, and all that remained of her blood was Honor, the simple-minded giant who worked the stables.

I don't care whose stories they are. I hate them.

I know a story about a boy who hated stories.

Or I could tell you the story about Brandon the Builder. That was always your favorite.

Thousands of years ago, Brandon the Builder had raised up Winterfell and maybe the wall. The story had never been his favorite, but maybe one of the other Brandons had liked it.

Sometimes she spoke as if he were the Brandon who had been brother to his grandfather, Lord Rickard, or his uncle Brandon, killed by the mad king. All the Brandon stories had been one person in her head.

That's not my favorite. My favorites are the scary ones.

Oh, my sweet summer child, what do you know of fear?

Fear is for the winter. For the long night. When the sun hides its face for years at a time. And little children are born and live and die all in darkness while the white walkers move through the woods.

The others. Thousands and thousands of years ago. A winter fell that was cold and hard and endless beyond all memory, and there came a night that lasted a generation.

Kings shivered and died in their castles, swineherds in their hovels, women smothered children rather than see them starve and feel the tears freeze on their cheeks.
"IN THAT DARKNESS, THE OTHERS CAME FOR THE FIRST TIME. THEY WERE COLD THINGS, DEAD THINGS THAT HATED IRON AND FIRE AND THE TOUCH OF THE SUN, AND EVERY CREATURE WITH HOT BLOOD IN ITS VEINS."


"THEY SWEEPED OVER HOLDEASTS AND CITIES AND KINGDOMS LEADING HOSTS OF THE SLAIN. THEY HUNTED THE MAIDS THROUGH THE FROZEN FORESTS AND FED THEIR DEAD SERVANTS ON THE FLESH OF HUMAN CHILDREN."

"AND THE FACES IN THE TREES KEPT WATCH."

"AS COLD AND DEATH FILLED THE EARTH, THE LAST HERO SET OUT TO SEEK THE CHILDREN IN HOPES THAT ANCIENT MAGICS COULD WIN WHAT THE ARMIES OF MEN HAD LOST. HE SET OUT INTO THE DEAD LANDS WITH A SWORD, A HORSE A DOG, AND A DOZEN COMPANIONS."
“For years he searched, until he despaired of finding the children of the forest in their secret cities.”

“One by one, his friends died, and his horse, and finally even his dog.”

“His sword froze so hard, the blade snapped when he tried to use it.”

“The others smelled the hot blood in him.”

“They came silent on his trail, stalking him with packs of pale white spiders as big as hounds.”

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“Bang!”

“Hodor!”

“Visitors and your presence is required, Bran. Tyrion Lannister and some men of the Night’s Watch.”

“I’m listening to a story.”

“Stories wait, my little lord. Visitors are not so patient, and oftentimes they bring stories of their own.”
Any man of the Night's Watch is welcome at Winterfell for as long as he wishes to stay.

I am the Lord here while my mother and father are away, Lannister. I am not your boy.

Any man of the Night's Watch, but not me. Do I take your meaning, boy?

If you are Lord, you might learn. A Lord's courtesy. Your bastard brother got all your father's grace, it seems.

Jon!

So it is true. The boy lives. You Starks are hard to kill.
YOU LANNISTERS HAD BEST REMEMBER THAT.
HODOR, BRING MY BROTHER HERE.

YOU SAID YOU HAD BUSINESS WITH BRAN. WELL, HERE HE IS. LANNISTER.

I'M TOLD YOU WERE QUITE THE CLIMBER. TELL ME, HOW IS IT YOU HAPPENED TO FALL THAT DAY?

THE CHILD DOES NOT REMEMBER ANYTHING OF THE FALL, OR THE CLimb THAT CAME BEFORE IT.

INTERESTING.

I NEVER...

MY BROTHER IS NOT HERE TO ANSWER YOUR QUESTIONS. DO YOUR BUSINESS AND BE ON YOUR WAY.
I have a gift for you. Do you like to ride, boy?

My lord, the child has lost the use of his legs. He cannot sit a horse.

Nonsense, with the right horse and the right saddle, even a cripple can ride.

I'm not a cripple!

Then I'm not a dwarf. My father will rejoice to hear it.

You draw nicely, my lord. Yes, this ought to work. I should have thought of it myself.

Start with an unbroken yearling with no old training to be unlearned. Give this to your saddler.
WILL I TRULY BE ABLE TO RIDE?

IS THIS SOME TRAP, WHAT IS BRAN TO YOUR WAY SHOULD YOU HELP HIM?

YOUR BROTHER TON ASKED IT OF ME, AND I HAVE A TENDER SPOT IN MY HEART FOR CRIPPLES, BASTARDS, AND BROKEN THINGS.

YOU WILL AND I SWEAR TO YOU, BOY, ON HORSEBACK YOU WILL BE AS TALL AS ANY OF THEM.

THE WOLVES DO NOT LIKE YOUR SMELL, LANNISTER.

PERHAPS IT'S TIME I TOOK MY LEAVE...
No! Summer, here!

The wolves...
I don't know why they did that...

My sleeve is torn and my breeches are unaccountably damp. But nothing was harmed save my dignity. I thank you for calling them off, young ser.

I may have been hasty with you. You've done Bran a kindness. The hospitality of Winterfell is yours if you wish it.

Spare me your false courtesies, boy. You do not love me and you do not want me here.

Yoren, we go south at daybreak. You will find me on the road, no doubt.
In his dreams that night, Bran was climbing again, pulling himself up an ancient, windowless tower.

When he paused to look down, the earth was a thousand miles below him and he could not fly.

The gargoyles were whispering to each other in soft stone voices.

He must not listen. So long as he did not hear them, he was safe.

I didn't hear! I didn't hear!

I didn't hear.

Hodor.