A GAME OF
THRONES
BOOK ONE OF A SONG OF ICE AND FIRE

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LORD ARYN’S DEATH WAS A GREAT SADNESS FOR US ALL, MY LORD. I WOULD BE MORE THAN HAPPY TO TELL WHAT I CAN OF THE MANNER OF HIS PASSING.

WOULD YOU CARE FOR SOME REFRESHMENT? A CUP OF ICED MILK SWEETENED WITH HONEY? I FIND IT REFRESHING IN THE HEAT.

THAT WOULD BE MOST KIND.

THE SMALLFOLK SAY THAT THE LAST YEAR OF SUMMER IS ALWAYS THE HOTTEST. ON DAYS LIKE THIS, I ENvy YOU NORTHERNERS YOUR SUMMER SNOWS.

MAEKAR’S SUMMER WAS HOTTER THAN THIS AND NEAR AS LONG. THERE WERE EVEN FOOLS WHO TOOK IT TO MEAN THAT THE GREAT SUMMER HAD COME AT LAST.

BUT THEN WE HAD A SHORT AUTUMN AND A TERRIBLE LONG WINTER.

IF TRUTH BE TOLD, HE HAD NOT SEEMED HIMSELF FOR SOME TIME. HIS SON WAS SICKLY AND HIS LADY WIFE SO ANXIOUS SHE WOULD TAKE THE PRINCE OUT OF HER SIGHT. SMALL WONDERS THAT HE SEEMED MELANCHOLY.

SWEET CHILD, THANK YOU, YOU MAY GO.

NOW WHERE WERE WE? OH, YES, I ASKED ABOUT LORD ARYN…

I DID.

WHAT CAN YOU TELL ME OF HIS ILLNESS?
HE CAME TO ME ONE DAY ASKING AFTER A CERTAIN BOOK, AS HALE AND HEALTHY AS EVER. THE NEXT MORNING, HE WAS TOO SICK TO RISE FROM HIS BED.

WHEN LORD JON CONTINUED TO WEaken, I WENT TO HIM MYSELF BUT THE GODS DID NOT GRANT ME THE POWER TO SAVE HIM.

DID HE SAY ANYTHING TO YOU IN HIS FINAL HOURS?

IN THE LAST STAGE OF THE FEVER, HE CALLED OUT THE NAME ROBERT, BUT WHETHER HE WAS ASKING FOR HIS SON OR THE KING, I COULD NOT SAY.

THE KING DID COME, AND SAT BesIDE THE BED FOR HOURS.

THERE WAS NOTHING ELSE? NO FINAL WORDS?

JUST BEFORE HE CLOSED HIS EYES FOR THE LAST TIME, HE WHISPERED SOMETHING TO THE KING AND HIS LADY WIFE, A BLESSING FOR HIS SON. THE SEED IS STRONG.

HE NEVER SPOKE AGAIN.

YOU ARE QUITE CERTAIN THAT JON ARYN DIED OF A SUDDEN ILLNESS?

I AM, IF NOT ILLNESS, MY GOOD LORD, WHAT ELSE COULD IT BE?

POISON.
IT IS POSSIBLE, MY LORD, BUT I DO NOT THINK IT LIKELY. EVERY LONELY MAESTER KNOWS THE COMMON POISON, AND LORD ARRYN DISPLAYED NONE OF THE SIGNS.

AND THE HAND WAS LOVED BY ALL. WHAT SORT OF MONSTER WOULD DARE TO MURDER SUCH A NOBLE LORD?

I HAVE HEARD IT SAID THAT POISON IS A WOMAN'S WEAPON.

WOMEN, CRAWNS... AND EUNUCHS.

THE LORD VARYS WAS A BORN A SLAVE IN LYS, DID YOU KNOW?

I WOULD BE CURIOUS TO EXAMINE THE BOOK YOU LENT, JON ARRYN. THE DAY BEFORE HE FELL ILL.

I FEAR YOU WOULD FIND IT OF LITTLE INTEREST. A PONDEROUS TOME ON THE LINEAGES OF THE GREAT HOUSES. BUT IF YOU WISH, I SHALL HAVE IT SENT TO YOUR CHAMBERS.

I THANK YOU FOR YOUR HELP. I HAVE TAKEN ENOUGH OF YOUR TIME.

COME TO ME AS OFTEN AS YOU LIKE, LORD EDDARD. I AM HERE TO SERVE.

YES, NED. THOUGHT BUT WHOM?
There was no avoiding the heat. He could feel the silk tunic clinging to his chest thick, moist air covered the city like a damp woolen blanket.

The riverside had grown unruly as the poor fled their hot, airless warrens to jostle for sleeping places near the water, where the only breath of wind could be found.

There was no relief in the tower of the hand.

Arya? What are you doing?

Syrio says a water dancer can stand on one toe for hours.

Which toe?

Any toe.
MUST YOU DO YOUR STANDING HERE? IT'S A LONG, HARD FALL DOWN THESE STEPS.

SYRIO SAYS A WATER DANCER NEVER FALLS.

FATHER, WILL BRAN COME LIVE WITH US NOW?

HE WAS GOING TO BE A KNIGHT OF THE KINGSGUARD. CAN HE STILL BE A KNIGHT?

NO.

BUT HE MAY BE LORD OF A GREAT HOLD CASTLE AND SIT ON THE KING'S COUNCIL. OR RAISE CASTLES. OR SAIL A SHIP ACROSS THE SUNSET SEA. OR BECOME HIGH SEPTON.

BUT HE WILL NEVER RUN BESIDE HIS WOLF AGAIN, HE THOUGHT WITH A SADNESS TOO DEEP FOR WORDS.

NOR WILL HE EVER LIE WITH A WOMAN, OR HOLD HIS OWN SON IN HIS ARMS.

CAN I BE A KING'S COUNCILOR AND BUILD CASTLES AND BECOME HIGH SEPTON?

YOU WILL MARRY A KING AND RULE HIS CASTLE. YOUR SONS WILL BE KNIGHTS AND LORDS, AND MAYBE HIGH SEPTON.

NO. THAT'S SANSYA.
My Lord, Lord Baelish is in the solar. He begs an audience.

I'll see him at once.

You know, if old Selmy's mind were as nimble as his blade, our councils would be a good deal livelier.

Ser Barristan is as valiant and honorable as any man in King's Landing.

And as tiresome, though I daresay he should do well at the tourney. It was only four years ago that he was champion.

Is there a reason for this visit, Lord Petyr? Or are you simply here to enjoy the view from my window?

I promised Cat I would help you in your inquiries, and so I have.

You have something for me?

Someone.

Four someones, if truth be told.
HAD YOU THOUGHT TO QUESTION THE HAND'S SERVANTS?

WOULD THAT I COULD. BUT LADY ARRYN TOOK HER HOUSEHOLD BACK TO THE EYRIE.

A FEW REMAIN. A PREGNANT KITCHEN GIRL HASTILY WED, A STABLEHAND WHO JOINED THE CITY WATCH. A POTBOY DISCHARGED FOR THEFT...

AND LORD ARRYN'S SQUIRE.

HIS SQUIRE?

I SHALL SEND FOR HIM. AND THE OTHER.

MY LORD...

STEP OVER TO THE WINDOW HERE, IF YOU WOULD BE SO KIND.

"SER HUGH OF THE VALE. THE KING KNIGHTED THE BOY AFTHER LORD ARRYN'S DEATH."
There, across the yard, at the door of the armory. Do you see the boy squatting by the steps?

"He reports to Varis. The Spider has taken a great interest in you and your doings."

"Now along the wall, farther west. You see the man above the stables? He belongs to the Queen, and he enjoys a fine view of the door to this tower. The better to note who calls on you."

Seven Hells, is everyone someone's informer in this cursed city?

Scarcely. There's you, me, the King... although he does tell the Queen too much, and I'm less than certain about you."
Is there a man in your service that you trust utterly and completely?

Yes.

The wiser answer was no, my lord, but be that as it may. Send this paragon of yours to Ser Hugh and the others. Even varys cannot watch every man in your service every hour of the day.

Lord petyr...

I am grateful for your help. Perhaps I was wrong to distrust you.

You are slow to learn, lord Eddard.

Distrusting me was the wisest thing you've done since you got off your horse.
Your feet should be farther apart, and pivot as you deliver the stroke. Set your weight behind the blade.

Seven gods. Would you look at this, Jon?

They said I was to come here for training.

They would seem they've run short of poachers and thieves down south. Now they're sending us pigs to man the wall. Haldor, see what Ser Pissyp can do.

This will be uglier than a whore's ass.

CRACK
ON YOUR FEET, SER PIGGY. PICK UP YOUR SWORD.
HALDER, HIT HIM WITH THE BLADE UNTIL HE FINDS HIS FEET.
YOU CAN HIT HARDER THAN THAT.
CUT US OFF A HAM!

HALDER, ENOUGH. LOOK AT HIM. HE YIELDED.

THE BASTARD WISHES TO DEFEND HIS LADY LOVE, SO WE SHALL MAKE AN EXERCISE OF IT.
Ser Allister had often set two foes against him, but never three. He would go to sleep bruised and bloodied tonight.

Stay behind me.

Why are you waiting?

Three to two will make for better sport.

Three.

Know your foe. Ser Rodrik had taught Jon once. Walder was brutally strong, but short of patience. He had no taste for defense.
Frustrate him, and Haldor would leave him open as certain as sunset.

CLANG

Yield! I yield.
This mummer’s farce has gone on long enough for today.

For an instant, I thought I finally had you, Snow.

For an instant, you did.

Did he hurt you? I’ve been bruised before.

My name is Samwell Tarly, of Horn… I mean, I was of Horn Hill, my father is Lord Randyll.

If you want, you can call me Sam.

I wanted to truly. I just couldn’t.

I fear I’m a coward, my lord father always said so.

Why didn’t you set up and fight?

You were hurt. Tomorrow, you’ll do better.

No, I won’t. I never do better.
LIFE AT CASTLE BLACK FOLLOWED CERTAIN PATTERNS. THE MORNINGS WERE FOR SWORDPLAY, THE AFTERNOONS FOR WORK. THE BLACK BROTHERS SET NEW RECRUITS TO MANY DIFFERENT TASKS, TO LEARN WHERE THEIR SKILLS LAY.

That afternoon, the Watch Commander sent Jon to the winch cage with four barrels of fresh-crushed stone to scatter over the footpaths atop the wall.

Jon found he did not mind. He could think here—and he found himself thinking of Samwell Tarly and, oddly, Tyrion Lannister.

Most men would rather deny a hard truth than face it. The dwarf had told him.

The world was full of cripples who pretended to be heroes. It took a queer sort of courage to admit cowardice as Sam had.

His sore shoulder made the work slow. Duck was settling over the North as Jon signaled the winch men to lower him down.

Is that a wolf?

Direwolf. It's the sigil of my father's house.
Ours is a striding huntsman. I hate to hunt.

Let's go outside. Have you seen the wall?

I'm fat, not blind! Of course I saw it. It's seven hundred feet high.

I never thought it would be like this, with all the buildings falling down. And I never saw snow until last month.

They won't make me go up there will they? I don't like high places.

I don't understand. If you're truly so craven, why are you here?

Sam's round face seemed to cave in on itself and he began to cry. Huge choking sobs that made his whole body shake.

It was Ghost who knew what to do. The fat boy cried out, startled... then his sobs turned to laughter.

Jon could only stand and watch. It seemed the tears would never end.

Jon let the silence breathe. In time Samwell Tarly began to speak.
THE TARLYS WERE A FAMILY OLD IN HONOR, AND SAMWELL WAS BORN HEIR TO RICH LANDS, A STRONG HEART, AND THE GREATSWORD HEARTBANE, FORGED OF VALYRIAN STEEL, AND PASSED FROM FATHER TO SON FOR FIVE HUNDRED YEARS.

BUT WHATEVER PRIDE RANDYLL TARLY MIGHT HAVE FEEL AT SAM'S BIRTH VANISHED AS THE BOY GREW PLUMP, SOFT, AND AWKWARD.

SAM LOVED TO LISTEN TO MUSIC, TO WEAR SOFT VELVETS, AND TO PLAY IN THE CASTLE KITCHENS WITH THE COOKS. HE GREW ILL AT THE SIGHT OF BLOOD.

A DOZEN MASTERS-AT-ARMS CAME AND WENT FROM HORN HILL, TRYING TO TURN HIM INTO THE KNIGHT HIS FATHER WANTED. HE WAS CURSED AND CANED, SLAPPED AND STARVED.

AFTER THREE GIRLS IN AS MANY YEARS, LADY TARLY GAVE LORD RANDYLL A SECOND SON. DICKON WAS A FIERCE, ROBUST CHILD, AND SAMWELL HAD SEVERAL YEARS OF PEACE WITH HIS MUSIC AND HIS BOOKS.

WARLOCKS CAME FROM QARTH, PROMISING THEIR RITES WOULD MAKE HIM BRAVE. WHEN SAM SOT SICK AND RETCHED, LORD RANDYLL HAD THEM SCOURGED.
And then the day came when he woke to find his horse saddled and three men-at-arms beordered him to the forest and his father.

“YOU HAVE GIVEN ME NO REASON TO DISOWN YOU,” LORD RANDALL TARLY HAD SAID, “BUT NEITHER WILL I ALLOW YOU TO INHERIT THE LAND AND TITLE THAT SHOULD BE DICKON’S.”

Sam was given a choice, take the black and renounce his claim, or else his father would call a hunt.

Somewhere in the woods, his horse would stumble, and Sam would be thrown from the saddle to die. At least, that was what his mother would be told.

Sam told it all in a calm, dead voice as if it had happened to someone else. And strangely, he didn’t weep as he spoke.

Then I had better try to sleep.

He’s going to make me fight again on the morrow, isn’t he? He is.
WHERE HAVE YOU BEEN?
TALKING WITH SAM.

LORD OF HAM THINKS HE'S TOO GOOD TO SIT WITH US.
HE TRULY IS CRAVING. AT SUPPER, HE WAS TOO SCARED TO SIT WITH US.
I SAW HIM EAT A PORK PIE. DO YOU THINK IT WAS A BROTHER?
STOP IT!

HE TOLD THEM HOW IT WAS GOING TO BE. HE PERSUADED SOME, CAJOLED SOME, SHAMED OTHERS, AND MADE THREATS WHERE THREATS WERE REQUIRED.
LISTEN TO ME...

AT THE END, ALL AGREED. EXCEPT RAST.
YOU GIRLS DO AS YOU PLEASE, BUT IF THORNE SENDS ME AGAINST LADY BREGY, I'M SLICING OFF A RASHER OF BACON.
EH?

FROM THAT DAY FORTH, NEITHER RAST NOR ANY OF THE OTHERS WOULD ATTACK SAMWELL TARLY. SER ALLISER RAGED AND THREATENED AND CALLED THEM ALL CRAWERS AND WOMEN AND WORSE, YET SAM REMAINED UNHURT.
IT WAS A FORTNIGHT BEFORE HE FOUND THE COURAGE TO JOIN IN THEIR TALK, BUT IN TIME HE WAS LAUGHING AT PYP’S FACES AND TEASING GRENN WITH THE BEST OF THEM.

I DON’T KNOW WHAT YOU DID, JON, BUT I KNOW YOU DID IT.

I’VE NEVER HAD A FRIEND BEFORE.

WE’RE NOT FRIENDS.

WE’RE BROTHERS.
IT'S THE TOURNAMENT, MY LORDS. KNIGHTS HAVE BEEN ARRIVING FROM ALL OVER THE REALM. FOR EVERY ONE WE SET TWO FREERIDERS, THREE CRAFTSMEN, SIX MEN-AT-ARMS, A DOZEN MECHANICS, AND TWO DOZEN WHORES.

THE CITY WATCH NEEDS MORE MEN.

HIRE FIFTY MEN, LORD BAElish WILL SEE THAT YOU GET THE COIN. I WILL?

YOU FOUND FORTY THOUSAND DRAGONS FOR A CHAMPION'S PURSE. SURELY YOU CAN SCRAPE TOGETHER A FEW COPPERS TO KEEP THE KING'S PEACE.

I WILL ALSO GIVE YOU TWENTY GOOD SWORDS FROM MY OWN HOUSEHOLD GUARD, TO SERVE UNTIL THE CROWDS HAVE LEFT.

ALL THANKS, LORD HAND. I PROMISE YOU THEY WILL BE PUT TO GOOD USE.

THE SOONER THIS FOUL IS DONE, THE BETTER I SHALL LIKE IT.

THE REALM PROSPERS FROM SUCH EVENTS, MY LORD.

EVERY INN IN THE CITY IS FULL, AND THE WHORES ARE WALKING BOWLED AND JINGLING WITH EACH STEP.
WE'RE FORTUNATE MY BROTHER STANNIS IS NOT WITH US. YOU REMEMBER THE TIME HE PROPOSED TO OUTLAW BROTHELS?

THE KING ASKED IF HE'D LIKE TO OUTLAW EATING, SHITTING, AND BREATHING TOO.

I HAVE HEARD ENOUGH ABOUT WHORES FOR ONE DAY. UNTIL THE MORROW.

THE RED KEEP AND THE HAND'S TOURNAMENT WERE CHAFING HIM RAW. NOR WERE THEY THE ONLY THINGS.

THE LINEAGES AND HISTORIES OF THE GREAT HOUSES OF THE SEVEN KINGDOMS, WITH DESCRIPTIONS OF MANY HIGH LORDS AND NOBLE LADIES AND THEIR CHILDREN.

PYCELLE HAD SPOKEN TRULY. IT MADE PONDEROUS READING YET JON ARRYN HAD ASKED FOR IT.

THERE WAS SOME TRUTH BURIED IN THESE BRITTLE, YELLOW PAGES IF ONLY HE COULD SEE IT. BUT WHAT?

MY LORD?
I've promised the city watch twenty of my guard until the tourney is done. I rely on you to make the choice.

Did you find the stableboy?

The watchman, now, my lord. He swears he'll never touch another horse. He claims to have known Lord Arryn well. The hand used to bring his mounts carrots and apples.

The boy was the last of Littlefinger's four. Ser Hugh had been brusque and uninformative. The serving girl had been pleasant and said Lord Jon had been reading more than was good for him.

The potboy had been full of kitchen gossip about the new set of plate Lord Arryn had commissioned. The king's own brother, Stannis Baratheon, had helped to design it.

Carrot's and apples. Did our watchman recall anything of note?

He says that Lord Arryn often went riding with Stannis Baratheon once to a brothel.

The hand of the king visited a brothel with Stannis Baratheon? Which brothel?
THE BOY DIDN'T KNOW THE GUARDS WOULD.

A PITY THAT LYSA CARRIED THEM OFF TO THE VALE. EVERYONE WHO MIGHT KNOW WHAT HAPPENED TO ION ARRYN IS A THOUSAND LEAGUES AWAY.

I SUPPOSE YOU'D BEST BEGIN VISITING WHOREHOUSES.

HARD DUTY, MY LORD.

PERHAPS LORD STANNIS WILL RETURN FOR ROBERT'S TOURNEY.

IN OTHER WORDS, NOT BLOODY LIKELY.

THAT WOULD BE A STROKE OF FORTUNE, MY LORD.
STANNIS AGAIN. IT WAS CURIOUS. JON
ADORER AND STANNIS HAD BEEN
CORDIAL, BUT NEVER FRIENDLY.

YET WHILE ROBERT HAD BEEN RIDING NORTH TO
WINTERFELL, STANNIS HAD REMOVED HIMSELF
TO DRAGONSTONE. THE TARGARYEN ISLAND HE
HAD CONQUERED IN HIS BROTHER’S NAME.
WINE FOR THE KING’S
HAND!
I AM TOBKIO
MOTT, MY LORD.
PLeASE COME IN.
PUT YOURSELF
AT EASE.

IF YOU ARE IN NEED
OF NEW ARMS FOR THE HAND’S
TOURNEY, YOU HAVE COME TO
THE RIGHT SHOP. PERHAPS A
BLADE? I WORKED IN SUNDOR AS
A BOY AND KNOW THE SPELLS
tO TAKE VALYRIAN STEEL AND
WORK IT ANEW.

DID YOU
MAKE A SUIT
OF PLATE FOR
LORD ARRYN?

THE HAND
DID CALL UPON
ME WITH LORD
STANNIS. I REGRET
TO SAY THEY DID
NOT HONOR ME
WITH THEIR
PATRONAGE.
THEY ONLY
ASKED TO SEE
THE BOY.

HE HAD NO NOTION OF
WHO THE BOY MIGHT
BE. BUT IF LORD ARRYN
AND STANNIS HAD
COME FOR THAT.

I SHOULD LIKE TO SEE
THE BOY AS
WELL.
THE BLAST OF HOT AIR STANK OF SULFUR AND SMOKE. NED FELT AS THOUGH HE WERE WALKING INTO A DRAGON'S MOUTH.

THIS IS SENDRY. STRONG FOR HIS AGE, AND HE WORKS HARD.

SHOW THE HAND THAT HELMET YOU MADE, BOY.

THIS IS FINE WORK. I WOULD BE PLEASED IF YOU WOULD LET ME BUY IT.

I MADE IT FOR ME. IT'S NOT FOR SALE.

A HUNDRED PARDONS, MY LORD. THE BOY IS CRUDE AS NEW STEEL.

HE'S DONE NOTHING THAT REQUIRES FORGIVENESS.

SENDRY, WHEN LORD ARRYN CAME TO SEE YOU, WHAT DID YOU TALK ABOUT?

HE ASKED ME QUESTIONS, STUFF ABOUT MY MOTHER WHO SHE WAS, WHAT SHE LOOKED LIKE.

SHE DIED WHEN I WAS LITTLE, THOUGH SHE HAD YELLOW HAIR, AND SOMETIMES SHE USED TO SING TO ME. SHE WORKED IN AN ALEMONG.

YES, EDWARD. I THOUGHT I SEE IT.
YOU KNOW WHO THE BOY IS.

HE'S MY APPRENTICE. WHO HE WAS BEFORE HE CAME TO ME, THAT'S NONE OF MY CONCERN.

IF THE DAY COMES WHEN HE'D RATHER WIELD A SWORD THAN FORGE ONE. SEND HIM TO ME. UNTIL THEN, YOU HAVE MY THANKS.

MY LORD.

AND IT STILL LEFT HIM WONDERING WHAT JOHANN HAD WANTED WITH A KING'S BASTARD.

AND WHY WAS IT WORTH HIS LIFE?

TO BE CONTINUED.