

GEORGE R.R.
MARTIN



A GAME OF
THRONES

'Sheer mind-boggling scope' *Guardian*

Prologue.....	6
Chapter 01 - Bran	15
Chapter 02 - Catelyn.....	22
Chapter 03 - Daenerys	27
Chapter 04 - Eddard	36
Chapter 05 - Jon.....	44
Chapter 06 - Catelyn.....	51
Chapter 07 - Arya	59
Chapter 08 - Bran	66
Chapter 09 - Tyrion	74
Chapter 10 - Jon.....	79
Chapter 11 - Daenerys	84
Chapter 12 - Eddard	92
Chapter 13 - Tyrion	99
Chapter 14 - Catelyn.....	107
Chapter 15 - Sansa.....	116
Chapter 16 - Eddard	127
Chapter 17 - Bran	133
Chapter 18 - Catelyn.....	137
Chapter 19 - Jon.....	146
Chapter 20 - Eddard	157
Chapter 21 - Tyrion	167
Chapter 22 - Arya	177
Chapter 23 - Daenerys	186
Chapter 24 - Bran	195
Chapter 25 - Eddard	205
Chapter 26 - Jon.....	212
Chapter 27 - Eddard	222
Chapter 28 - Catelyn.....	231
Chapter 29 - Sansa.....	239
Chapter 30 - Eddard	248
Chapter 31 - Tyrion	263
Chapter 32 - Arya	275
Chapter 33 - Eddard	285
Chapter 34 - Catelyn.....	292
Chapter 35 - Eddard	307
Chapter 36 - Daenerys	313
Chapter 37 - Bran	321
Chapter 38 - Tyrion	332

Chapter 39 - Eddard	343
Chapter 40 - Catelyn.....	349
Chapter 41 - Jon.....	359
Chapter 42 - Tyrion	366
Chapter 43 - Eddard	374
Chapter 44 - Sansa.....	382
Chapter 45 - Eddard	389
Chapter 46 - Daenerys	396
Chapter 47 - Eddard	405
Chapter 48 - Jon.....	416
Chapter 49 - Eddard	423
Chapter 50 - Arya	429
Chapter 51 - Sansa.....	439
Chapter 52 - Jon.....	447
Chapter 53 - Bran	460
Chapter 54 - Daenerys	472
Chapter 55 - Catelyn.....	481
Chapter 56 - Tyrion	490
Chapter 57 - Sansa.....	498
Chapter 58 - Eddard	506
Chapter 59 - Catelyn.....	514
Chapter 60 - Jon.....	525
Chapter 61 - Daenerys	536
Chapter 62 - Tyrion	544
Chapter 63 - Catelyn.....	559
Chapter 64 - Daenerys	566
Chapter 65 - Arya	578
Chapter 66 - Bran	588
Chapter 67 - Sansa.....	597
Chapter 68 - Daenerys	605
Chapter 69 - Tyrion	614
Chapter 70 - Jon.....	622
Chapter 71 - Catelyn.....	633
Chapter 72 - Daenerys	643
Appendix	651

THE NORTH



THE FROZEN SHORE

BAY of ICE

THE HAUNTED FOREST

THE WALL

Eastwath by the Sea

BAY of SEALS

SEA DRAGON

NEAR ISLAND

Shadow Tower
Queen's Crown

Castle Black

Last Hearth

SEA DRAGON

WOLFWOOD

THE MOUNTAINS

LONG LAKE

THE LAZARUS

Harhold

IRON ISLANDS

THE NILLS

BARROWLANDS

Winterfell

White Harbour

BLAZEWATER BAY

THE FLINT CLIFF

THE NECK

THE BITE

THREE SISTERS

IRON ISLANDS

IRONMAN'S BAY

THE DUNE
VALE of ARRYN

PROLOGUE

“We should start back,” Gared urged as the woods began to grow dark around them. “The wildlings are dead.”

“Do the dead frighten you?” Ser Waymar Royce asked with just the hint of a smile.

Gared did not rise to the bait. He was an old man, past fifty, and he had seen the lordlings come and go. “Dead is dead,” he said. “We have no business with the dead.”

“Are they dead?” Royce asked softly. “What proof have we?”

“Will saw them,” Gared said. “If he says they are dead, that’s proof enough for me.”

Will had known they would drag him into the quarrel sooner or later. He wished it had been later rather than sooner. “My mother told me that dead men sing no songs,” he put in.

“My wet nurse said the same thing, Will,” Royce replied. “Never believe anything you hear at a woman’s tit. There are things to be learned even from the dead.” His voice echoed, too loud in the twilit forest.

“We have a long ride before us,” Gared pointed out. “Eight days, maybe nine. And night is falling.”

Ser Waymar Royce glanced at the sky with disinterest. “It does that every day about this time. Are you unmanned by the dark, Gared?”

Will could see the tightness around Gared’s mouth, the barely suppressed anger in his eyes under the thick black hood of his cloak. Gared had spent forty years in the Night’s Watch, man and boy, and he was not accustomed to being made light of. Yet it was more than that. Under the wounded pride, Will could sense something else in the older man. You could taste it; a nervous tension that came perilous close to fear.

Will shared his unease. He had been four years on the Wall. The first time he had been sent beyond, all the old stories had come rushing back, and his bowels had turned to water. He had laughed about it afterward. He was a veteran of a hundred rangings by now, and the endless dark wilderness that the southron called the haunted forest had no more terrors for him.

Until tonight. Something was different tonight. There was an edge to this darkness that made his hackles rise. Nine days they had been riding, north and

northwest and then north again, farther and farther from the Wall, hard on the track of a band of wildling raiders. Each day had been worse than the day that had come before it. Today was the worst of all. A cold wind was blowing out of the north, and it made the trees rustle like living things. All day, Will had felt as though something were watching him, something cold and implacable that loved him not. Gared had felt it too. Will wanted nothing so much as to ride hellbent for the safety of the Wall, but that was not a feeling to share with your commander.

Especially not a commander like this one.

Ser Waymar Royce was the youngest son of an ancient house with too many heirs. He was a handsome youth of eighteen, grey-eyed and graceful and slender as a knife. Mounted on his huge black destrier, the knight towered above Will and Gared on their smaller garrons. He wore black leather boots, black woolen pants, black moleskin gloves, and a fine supple coat of gleaming black ringmail over layers of black wool and boiled leather. Ser Waymar had been a Sworn Brother of the Night's Watch for less than half a year, but no one could say he had not prepared for his vocation. At least insofar as his wardrobe was concerned.

His cloak was his crowning glory; sable, thick and black and soft as sin. "Bet he killed them all himself, he did," Gared told the barracks over wine, "twisted their little heads off, our mighty warrior." They had all shared the laugh.

It is hard to take orders from a man you laughed at in your cups, Will reflected as he sat shivering atop his garron. Gared must have felt the same.

"Mormont said as we should track them, and we did," Gared said. "They're dead. They shan't trouble us no more. There's hard riding before us. I don't like this weather. If it snows, we could be a fortnight getting back, and snow's the best we can hope for. Ever seen an ice storm, my lord?"

The lordling seemed not to hear him. He studied the deepening twilight in that half-bored, half-distracted way he had. Will had ridden with the knight long enough to understand that it was best not to interrupt him when he looked like that. "Tell me again what you saw, Will. All the details. Leave nothing out."

Will had been a hunter before he joined the Night's Watch. Well, a poacher in truth. Mallister freeriders had caught him red-handed in the Mallisters' own woods, skinning one of the Mallisters' own bucks, and it had been a choice of putting on the black or losing a hand. No one could move through the woods as silent as Will, and it had not taken the black brothers long to discover his talent.

"The camp is two miles farther on, over that ridge, hard beside a stream," Will said. "I got close as I dared. There's eight of them, men and women both. No children I could see. They put up a lean-to against the rock. The snow's pretty well covered it now, but I could still make it out. No fire burning, but the firepit was still plain as day. No one moving. I watched a long time. No living man ever lay so

still.”

“Did you see any blood?”

“Well, no,” Will admitted.

“Did you see any weapons?”

“Some swords, a few bows. One man had an axe. Heavy-looking, double-bladed, a cruel piece of iron. It was on the ground beside him, right by his hand.”

“Did you make note of the position of the bodies?”

Will shrugged. “A couple are sitting up against the rock. Most of them on the ground. Fallen, like.”

“Or sleeping,” Royce suggested.

“Fallen,” Will insisted. “There’s one woman up an ironwood, half-hid in the branches. A far-eyes.” He smiled thinly. “I took care she never saw me. When I got closer, I saw that she wasn’t moving neither.” Despite himself, he shivered.

“You have a chill?” Royce asked.

“Some,” Will muttered. “The wind, m’lord.”

The young knight turned back to his grizzled man-at-arms. Frostfallen leaves whispered past them, and Royce’s destrier moved restlessly. “What do you think might have killed these men, Gared?” Ser Waymar asked casually. He adjusted the drape of his long sable cloak.

“It was the cold,” Gared said with iron certainty. “I saw men freeze last winter, and the one before, when I was half a boy. Everyone talks about snows forty foot deep, and how the ice wind comes howling out of the north, but the real enemy is the cold. It steals up on you quieter than Will, and at first you shiver and your teeth chatter and you stamp your feet and dream of mulled wine and nice hot fires. It burns, it does. Nothing burns like the cold. But only for a while. Then it gets inside you and starts to fill you up, and after a while you don’t have the strength to fight it. It’s easier just to sit down or go to sleep. They say you don’t feel any pain toward the end. First you go weak and drowsy, and everything starts to fade, and then it’s like sinking into a sea of warm milk. Peaceful, like.”

“Such eloquence, Gared,” Ser Waymar observed. “I never suspected you had it in you.”

“I’ve had the cold in me too, lordling.” Gared pulled back his hood, giving Ser Waymar a good long look at the stumps where his ears had been. “Two ears, three toes, and the little finger off my left hand. I got off light. We found my brother frozen at his watch, with a smile on his face.”

Ser Waymar shrugged. “You ought dress more warmly, Gared.”

Gared glared at the lordling, the scars around his ear holes flushed red with anger where Maester Aemon had cut the ears away. “We’ll see how warm you can dress when the winter comes.” He pulled up his hood and hunched over his garron,

silent and sullen.

“If Gared said it was the cold. . .” Will began.

“Have you drawn any watches this past week, Will?”

“Yes, m’lord.” There never was a week when he did not draw a dozen bloody watches. What was the man driving at?

“And how did you find the Wall?”

“Weeping,” Will said, frowning. He saw it clear enough, now that the lordling had pointed it out. “They couldn’t have froze. Not if the Wall was weeping. It wasn’t cold enough.”

Royce nodded. “Bright lad. We’ve had a few light frosts this past week, and a quick flurry of snow now and then, but surely no cold fierce enough to kill eight grown men. Men clad in fur and leather, let me remind you, with shelter near at hand, and the means of making fire.” The knight’s smile was cocksure. “Will, lead us there. I would see these dead men for myself.”

And then there was nothing to be done for it. The order had been given, and honor bound them to obey.

Will went in front, his shaggy little garron picking the way carefully through the undergrowth. A light snow had fallen the night before, and there were stones and roots and hidden sinks lying just under its crust, waiting for the careless and the unwary. Ser Waymar Royce came next, his great black destrier snorting impatiently. The warhorse was the wrong mount for ranging, but try and tell that to the lordling. Gared brought up the rear. The old man-at-arms muttered to himself as he rode.

Twilight deepened. The cloudless sky turned a deep purple, the color of an old bruise, then faded to black. The stars began to come out. A half-moon rose. Will was grateful for the light.

“We can make a better pace than this, surely,” Royce said when the moon was full risen.

“Not with this horse,” Will said. Fear had made him insolent. “Perhaps my lord would care to take the lead?”

Ser Waymar Royce did not deign to reply.

Somewhere off in the wood a wolf howled.

Will pulled his garron over beneath an ancient gnarled ironwood and dismounted.

“Why are you stopping?” Ser Waymar asked.

“Best go the rest of the way on foot, m’lord. It’s just over that ridge.”

Royce paused a moment, staring off into the distance, his face reflective. A cold wind whispered through the trees. His great sable cloak stirred behind like something half-alive.

“There’s something wrong here,” Gared muttered.

The young knight gave him a disdainful smile. “Is there?”

“Can’t you feel it?” Gared asked. “Listen to the darkness.”

Will could feel it. Four years in the Night’s Watch, and he had never been so afraid. What was it?

“Wind. Trees rustling. A wolf. Which sound is it that unmans you so, Gared?” When Gared did not answer, Royce slid gracefully from his saddle. He tied the destrier securely to a low-hanging limb, well away from the other horses, and drew his longsword from its sheath. Jewels glittered in its hilt, and the moonlight ran down the shining steel. It was a splendid weapon, castle-forged, and new-made from the look of it. Will doubted it had ever been swung in anger.

“The trees press close here,” Will warned. “That sword will tangle you up, m’lord. Better a knife.”

“If I need instruction, I will ask for it,” the young lord said. “Gared, stay here. Guard the horses.”

Gared dismounted. “We need a fire. I’ll see to it.”

“How big a fool are you, old man? If there are enemies in this wood, a fire is the last thing we want.”

“There’s some enemies a fire will keep away,” Gared said. “Bears and direwolves and. . . and other things. . .”

Ser Waymar’s mouth became a hard line. “No fire.”

Gared’s hood shadowed his face, but Will could see the hard glitter in his eyes as he stared at the knight. For a moment he was afraid the older man would go for his sword. It was a short, ugly thing, its grip discolored by sweat, its edge nicked from hard use, but Will would not have given an iron bob for the lordling’s life if Gared pulled it from its scabbard.

Finally Gared looked down. “No fire,” he muttered, low under his breath.

Royce took it for acquiescence and turned away. “Lead on,” he said to Will.

Will threaded their way through a thicket, then started up the slope to the low ridge where he had found his vantage point under a sentinel tree. Under the thin crust of snow, the ground was damp and muddy, slick footing, with rocks and hidden roots to trip you up. Will made no sound as he climbed. Behind him, he heard the soft metallic slither of the lordling’s ringmail, the rustle of leaves, and muttered curses as reaching branches grabbed at his longsword and tugged on his splendid sable cloak.

The great sentinel was right there at the top of the ridge, where Will had known it would be, its lowest branches a bare foot off the ground. Will slid in underneath, flat on his belly in the snow and the mud, and looked down on the empty clearing below.