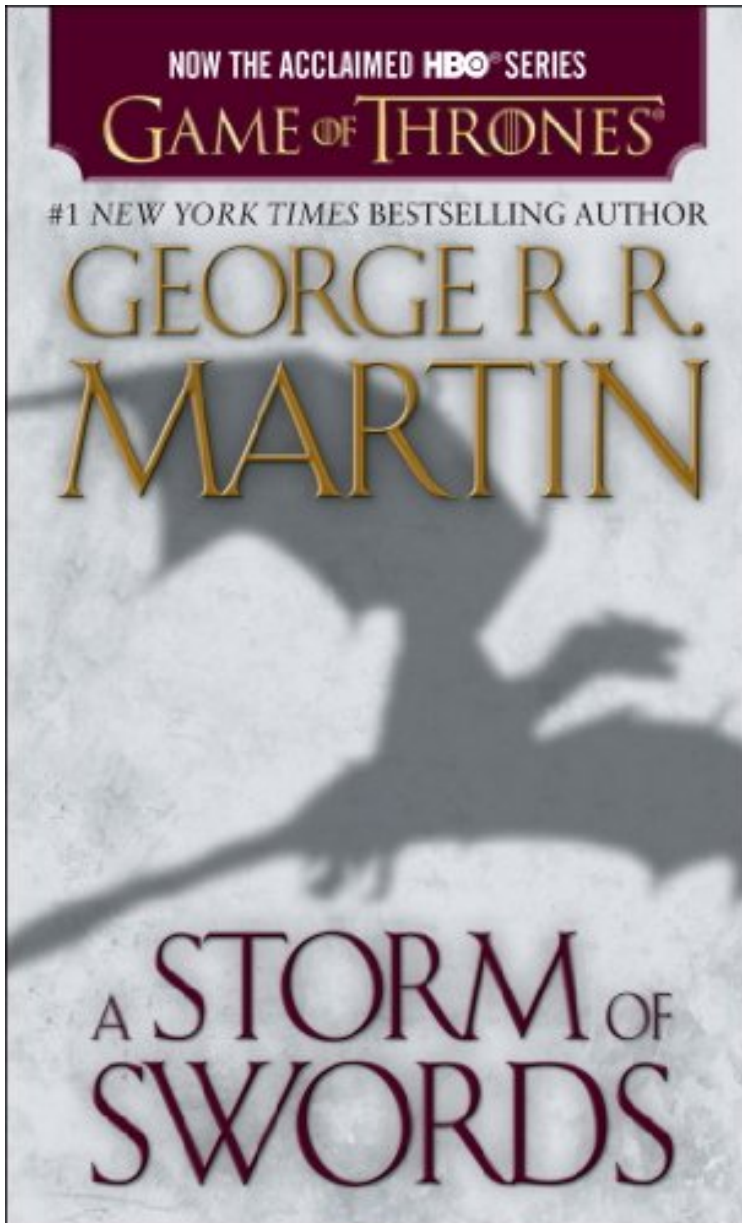


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A Storm of Swords (A Song of Ice and Fire, Book 3)



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Description :

Prsentation de l'diteurTHE BOOK BEHIND THE THIRD SEASON OF GAME OF THRONES,AN ORIGINAL SERIES NOW ON HBO.Here is the third volume in George R. R. Martins magnificent cycle of novels that includes A Game of Thrones and A Clash of Kings. As a whole, this series comprises a genuine masterpiece of modern fantasy, bringing together the best the genre has to offer. Magic, mystery, intrigue,

romance, and adventure fill these pages and transport us to a world unlike any we have ever experienced.

Already hailed as a classic, George R. R. Martin's stunning series is destined to stand as one of the great achievements of imaginative fiction. A STORM OF SWORDS Of the five contenders for power, one is dead, another in disfavor, and still the wars rage as violently as ever, as alliances are made and broken. Joffrey, of House Lannister, sits on the Iron Throne, the uneasy ruler of the land of the Seven Kingdoms. His most bitter rival, Lord Stannis, stands defeated and disgraced, the victim of the jealous sorceress who holds him in her evil thrall. But young Robb, of House Stark, still rules the North from the fortress of Riverrun. Robb plots against his despised Lannister enemies, even as they hold his sister hostage at Kings Landing, the seat of the Iron Throne. Meanwhile, making her way across a blood-drenched continent is the exiled queen, Daenerys, mistress of the only three dragons still left in the world. . . . But as opposing forces maneuver for the final titanic showdown, an army of barbaric wildlings arrives from the outermost line of civilization. In their vanguard is a horde of mythical Others--a supernatural army of the living dead whose animated corpses are unstoppable. As the future of the land hangs in the balance, no one will rest until the Seven Kingdoms have exploded in a veritable storm of swords. . . . From the Paperback edition..com

Is George R.R. Martin for real? Can a fantasy epic actually get better with each new installment? Fans of the genre have glumly come to expect go-nowhere sequels from other authors, so we're entitled to pinch ourselves over Martin's tightly crafted Song of Ice and Fire series. The reports are all true: this series is the real deal, and Martin deserves his crown as the rightful king of the epic. A Game of Thrones got things off to a rock-solid start, A Clash of Kings only exceeded expectations, but it's the Storm of Swords hat trick that cements Martin's rep as the most praiseworthy fantasy author to come along since that other R.R. Like the first two books, A Storm of Swords could coast on the fundamentals: deftly detailed characters, convincing voices and dialogue, a robust back-story, and a satisfyingly unpredictable plot. But it's Martin's consistently bold choices that set the series apart. Every character is fair game for the headman's axe (sometimes literally), and not only do the good guys regularly lose out to the bad guys, you're never exactly sure who you should be cheering for in the first place. Storm is full of admirable intricacies. Events that you thought Martin was setting up solidly for the first two books are exposed as complex feints; the field quickly narrows after the Battle of the Blackwater and once again, anything goes. Robb tries desperately to hold the North together, Jon returns from the wildling lands with a torn heart, Bran continues his quest for the three-eyed crow beyond the Wall, Catelyn struggles to save her fragile family, Arya becomes ever more wolflike in her wanderings, Daenerys comes into her own, and Joffrey's cruel rule from King's Landing continues, making even his fellow Lannisters uneasy. Martin tests all the major characters in A Storm of Swords: some fail the trial, while others--like Martin himself--seem to only get stronger. --Paul Hughes

Extrait Prologue

The day was grey and bitter cold, and the dogs would not take the scent. The big black bitch had taken one sniff at the bear tracks, backed off, and skulked back to the pack with her tail between her legs. The dogs huddled together miserably on the riverbank as the wind snapped at them. Chett felt it too, biting through his layers of black wool and boiled leather. It was too bloody cold for man or beast, but here they were. His mouth twisted, and he could almost feel the boils that covered his cheeks and neck growing red and angry. I should be safe back at the Wall, tending the bloody ravens and making fires for old Maester Aemon. It was the bastard Jon Snow who had taken that from him, him and his fat friend Sam Tarly. It was their fault he was here, freezing his bloody balls off with a pack of hounds deep in the haunted forest. "Seven hells. He gave the leashes a hard yank to get the dogs' attention. "Track, you bastards. That's a bear print. You want some meat or no? Find!" But the hounds only huddled closer, whining. Chett snapped his short lash above their heads, and the black bitch snarled at him. "Dog meat would taste as good as bear," he warned her, his breath frosting with every word. Lark the Sisterman stood with his arms crossed over his chest and his hands tucked up into his armpits. He wore black wool gloves, but he was always complaining how his fingers were frozen. "It's too bloody cold to hunt," he said. "Bugger this bear, he's not worth freezing over." We cant go back emptyhand, Lark," rumbled Small Paul through the brown whiskers that covered most of his face. "The Lord Commander wouldnt like that. There was ice under the big mans squashed pug nose, where his snot had frozen. A huge hand in a thick fur glove clenched tight around the shaft of a spear. "Bugger that Old Bear too," said the Sisterman, a thin man with sharp features and nervous eyes. "Mormont will be dead before daybreak, remember? Who cares what he likes?" Small Paul blinked his black little eyes. Maybe he had forgotten, Chett thought; he was stupid enough to forget most anything. "Why do we have to kill the Old Bear? Why don't we just go off and let him be?" "You think he'll let us be?" said Lark. "He'll hunt us down. You want to be hunted, you great muttonhead?" "No," said Small Paul. "I don't want that. I don't." "So you'll kill him?" said Lark. "Yes." The

huge man stamped the butt of his spear on the frozen riverbank. "I will. He shouldn't hunt us." The Sisterman took his hands from his armpits and turned to Chett. "We need to kill all the officers, I say." Chett was sick of hearing it. "We been over this. The Old Bear dies, and Blane from the Shadow Tower. Grubbs and Aethan as well, their ill luck for drawing the watch, Dywen and Bannen for their tracking, and Ser Piggy for the ravens. That's all. We kill them quiet, while they sleep. One scream and we're wormfood, every one of us." His boils were red with rage. "Just do your bit and see that your cousins do theirs. And Paul, try and remember, it's third watch, not second." "Third watch," the big man said, through hair and frozen snot. "Me and Softfoot. I remember, Chett." The moon would be black tonight, and they had jiggered the watches so as to have eight of their own standing sentry, with two more guarding the horses. It wasn't going to get much riper than that. Besides, the wildlings could be upon them any day now. Chett meant to be well away from here before that happened. He meant to live. Three hundred sworn brothers of the Night's Watch had ridden north, two hundred from Castle Black and another hundred from the Shadow Tower. It was the biggest ranging in living memory, near a third of the Watch's strength. They meant to find Ben Stark, Ser Waymar Royce, and the other rangers who'd gone missing, and discover why the wildlings were leaving their villages. Well, they were no closer to Stark and Royce than when they'd left the Wall, but they'd learned where all the wildlings had gone - up into the icy heights of the godsforsaken Frostfangs. They could squat up there till the end of time and it wouldn't prick Chett's boils none. But no. They were coming down. Down the Milkwater. Chett raised his eyes and there it was. The river's stony banks were bearded by ice, its pale milky waters flowing endlessly down out of the Frostfangs. And now Mance Rayder and his wildlings were flowing down the same way. Thoren Smallwood had returned in a lather three days past. While he was telling the Old Bear what his scouts had seen, his man Kedge Whiteye told the rest of them. "They're still well up the foothills, but they're coming," Kedge said, warming his hands over the fire. "Harma the Dogshead has the van, the poxy bitch. Goady crept up down her camp and saw her plain by the fire. That fool Tumberjon wanted to pick her off with an arrow, but Smallwood had better sense." Chett spat. "How many were there, could you tell?" "Many and more. Twenty, thirty thousand, we didn't stay to count. Harma had five hundred in the van, every one a horse." The men around the fire exchanged uneasy looks. It was a rare thing to find even a dozen mounted wildlings, and five hundred . . . "Smallwood sent Bannen and me wide around the van to catch a peek at the main body," Kedge went on. "There was no end of them. They're moving slow as a frozen river, four, five miles a day, but they don't look like they mean to go back to their villages neither. More'n half were women and children, and they were driving their animals before them, goats, sheep, even aurochs dragging sledges. They'd loaded up with bales of fur and sides of meat, cages of chickens, butter chums and spinning wheels, every damn thing they own. The mules and garrons was so heavy laden you'd think their backs would break. The women as well." "And they follow the Milkwater?" Lark the Sisterman asked. "I said so, didn't I?" The Milkwater would take them past the Fist of the First Men, the ancient ringfort where the Night's Watch had made its camp. Any man with a thimble of sense could see that it was time to pull up stakes and fall back on the Wall. The Old Bear had strengthened the Fist with spikes and pits and caltrops, but against such a host all that was pointless. If they stayed here, they would be engulfed and overwhelmed. And Thoren Smallwood wanted to attack. Sweet Donnel Hill was squire to Ser Mallador Locke, and the night before last Smallwood had come to Locke's tent. Ser Mallador had been of the same mind as old Ser Ottyn Wythers, urging a retreat on the Wall, but Smallwood wanted to convince him otherwise. "This King-beyond-the-Wall will never look for us so far north," Sweet Donnel reported him saying. "And this great host of his is a shambling horde, full of useless mouths who won't know what end of a sword to hold. One blow will take all the fight out of them and send them howling back to their hovels for another fifty years." Three hundred against thirty thousand. Chett called that rank madness, and what was madder still was that Ser Mallador had been persuaded' and the two of them together were on the point of persuading the Old Bear. "If we wait too long, this chance may be lost, never to come again," Smallwood was saying to anyone who would listen. Against that, Ser Ottyn Wythers said, "We are the shield that guards the realms of men. You do not throw away your shield for no good purpose," but to that Thoren Smallwood said, "In a swordfight, a man's surest defense is the swift stroke that slays his foe, not cringing behind a shield." Neither Smallwood nor Wythers had the command, though. Lord Mormont did, and Mormont was waiting for his other scouts, for Jarman Buckwell and the men who'd climbed the Giant's Stair, and for Qhorin Halfhand and Jon Snow, who'd gone to probe the Skirling Pass. Buckwell and the Halfhand were late in returning, though. Dead, most like. Chett pictured Jon Snow lying blue and frozen on some bleak mountaintop with a wildling spear up his bastard's arse. The thought made him smile. I hope

they killed his bloody wolf as well. "There's no bear here," he decided abruptly. "Just an old print, that's all.

Back to the Fist." The dogs almost yanked him off his feet, as eager to get back as he was. Maybe they thought they were going to get fed. Chett had to laugh. He hadn't fed them for three days now, to turn them mean and hungry. Tonight, before slipping off into the dark, he'd tum them loose among the horse lines, after Sweet Donnel Hill and Clubfoot Karl cut the tethers. They'll have snarling hounds and panicked horses all over the Fist, running through fires, jumping the ringwall, and trampling down tents. With all the confusion, it might be hours before anyone noticed that fourteen brothers were missing. Lark had wanted to bring in twice that number, but what could you expect from some stupid fishbreath Sisterman? Whisper a word in the wrong ear and before you knew it you'd be short a head. No, fourteen was a good number, enough to do what needed doing but not so many that they couldn't keep the secret. Chett had recruited most of them himself. Small Paul was one of his; the strongest man on the Wall, even if he was slower than a dead snail. He'd once broken a wildling's back with a hug. They had Dirk as well, named for his favorite weapon, and the little grey man the brothers called Softfoot, who'd taped a hundred women in his youth, and liked to boast how none had never seen nor heard him until he shoved it up inside them. The plan was Chett's. He was the clever one; he'd been steward to old Maester Aemon for four good years before that bastard Jon Snow had done him out so his job could be handed to his fat pig of a friend. When he killed Sam Tarly tonight, he planned to whisper, "Give my love to Lord Snow," right in his ear before he sliced Ser Piggy's throat open to let the blood come bubbling out through all those layers of suet. Chett knew the ravens, so he wouldn't have no trouble there, no more than he would with Tarly. One touch of the knife and that craven would piss his pants and start blubbering for his life. Let him beg, it won't do him no good. After he opened his throat, he'd open the cages and shoo the birds away, so no messages reached the Wall. Softfoot and Small Paul would kill the Old Bear, Dirk would do Blane, and Lark and his cousins would silence Bannen and old Dywen, to keep them from sniffing after their trail. They'd been caching food for a fortnight, and Sweet Donnel and Clubfoot Karl would have the horses ready. With Mormont dead, command would pass to Ser Ottyn Wythers, an old done man, and failing. He'll be running for the Wall before sundown, and he won't waste no men sending them after us neither. The dogs pulled at him as they made their way through the trees. Chett could see the Fist punching its way up through the green. The day was so dark that the Old Bear had the torches lit, a great circle of them buming all along the ringwall that crowned the top of the steep stony hill. The three of them waded across a brook. The water was icy cold, and patches of ice were spreading across its surface. "I'm going to make for the coast," Lark the Sisterman confided. "Me and my cousins. We'll build us a boat, sail back home to the Sisters." And at home they'll know you for deserters and lop off your fool heads, thought Chett. There was no leaving the Night's Watch, once you said your words. Anywhere in the Seven Kingdoms, they'd take you and kill you. Ollo Lophand now, he was talking about sailing back to Tyrosh, where he claimed men didn't lose their hands for a bit of honest thievery, nor get sent off to freeze their life away for being found in bed with some knight's wife. Chett had weighed going with him, but he didn't speak their wet girly tongue. And what could he do in Tyrosh? He had no trade to speak of, growing up in Hag's Mire. His father had spent his life grubbing in other men's fields and collecting leeches. He'd strip down bare but for a thick leather clout, and go wading in the murky waters. When he climbed out he'd be covered from nipple to ankle. Sometimes he made Chett help pull the leeches off. One had attached itself to his palm once, and he'd smashed it against a wall in revulsion. His father beat him bloody for that. The maesters bought the leeches at twelve-for-apenny. Lark could go home if he liked, and the damn Tyroshi too, but not Chett. If he never saw Hag's Mire again, it would be too bloody soon. He had liked the look of Craster's Keep, himself. Craster lived high as a lord there, so why shouldn't he do the same? That would be a laugh. Chett the leechmans son, a lord with a keep. His banner could be a dozen leeches on a field of pink. But why stop at lord? Maybe he should be a king.

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