

A Clash of Kings (George R. R. Martin)

1 “Approach,” King Renly called to the champion.

2 He limped toward the gallery. At close hand, the brilliant blue armor looked rather less
3 splendid; everywhere it showed scars, the dents of mace and warhammer, the long gouges left
4 by swords, chips in the enameled breastplate and helm. His cloak hung in rags. From the way
5 he moved, the man within was no less battered. A few voices hailed him with cries of
6 “*Tarth!*” and, oddly, “*A Beauty! A Beauty!*” but most were silent. The blue knight knelt before
7 the king. “Grace,” he said, his voice muffled by his dented greathelm.

8 “You are all your lord father claimed you were.” Renly’s voice carried over the field.

9 “I’ve seen Ser Loras unhorsed once or twice . . . but never quite in *that* fashion.”

10 “That were no proper unhorsing,” complained a drunken archer nearby, a Tyrell rose
11 sewn on his jerkin. “A vile trick, pulling the lad down.”

12 The press had begun to open up. “Ser Colen,” Catelyn said to her escort, “who is this
13 man, and why do they dislike him so?”

14 Ser Colen frowned. “Because he is no man, my lady. That’s Brienne of Tarth, daughter to
15 Lord Selwyn the Evenstar.”

16 “*Daughter?*” Catelyn was horrified.

17 “Brienne the Beauty, they name her . . . though not to her face, lest they be called upon to
18 defend those words with their bodies.”

19 She heard King Renly declare the Lady Brienne of Tarth the victor of the great melee at
20 Bitterbridge, last mounted of one hundred sixteen knights. “As champion, you may ask of me
21 any boon that you desire. If it lies in my power, it is yours.”

22 “Your Grace,” Brienne answered, “I ask the honor of a place among your Rainbow
23 Guard. I would be one of your seven, and pledge my life to yours, to go where you go, ride at
24 your side, and keep you safe from all hurt and harm.”

25 “Done,” he said. “Rise, and remove your helm.”

26 She did as he bid her. And when the greathelm was lifted, Catelyn understood Ser
27 Colen’s words.

28 Beauty, they called her . . . mocking. The hair beneath the visor was a squirrel’s nest of
29 dirty straw, and her face . . . Brienne’s eyes were large and very blue, a young girl’s eyes,
30 trusting and guileless, but the rest . . . her features were broad and coarse, her teeth prominent
31 and crooked, her mouth too wide, her lips so plump they seemed swollen. A thousand freckles
32 speckled her cheeks and brow, and her nose had been broken more than once. Pity filled
33 Catelyn’s heart. *Is there any creature on earth as unfortunate as an ugly woman?*

Text B: The Thin Man

1 So far I had known just where I stood on the Wolf-Wynant-Jorgensen troubles and
2 what I was doing—the answers were, respectively, nowhere and nothing—but when we
3 stopped at Reuben’s for coffee on our way home at four the next morning, Nora opened a
4 newspaper and found a line in one of the gossip columns: “Nick Charles, former Trans-
5 American Detective Agency ace, on from Coast to sift the Julia Wolf murder mystery”; and
6 when I opened my eyes and sat up in bed some six hours later Nora was shaking me and a
7 man with a gun in his hand was standing in the bedroom doorway.

8 He was a plump dark youngish man of medium height, broad through the jaws,
9 narrow between the eyes. He wore a black derby hat, a black overcoat that fitted him very
10 snugly, a dark suit, and black shoes, all looking as if he had bought them within the past
11 fifteen minutes. The gun, a blunt black .38-calibre automatic, lay comfortably in his hand, not
12 pointing at anything.

13 Nora was saying: “He made me let him in, Nick. He said he had to—”

14 “I got to talk to you,” the man with the gun said. “That’s all, but I got to do that.” His
15 voice was low, rasping.

16 I had blinked myself awake by then. I looked at Nora. She was excited, but
17 apparently not frightened: she might have been watching a horse she had a bet on coming
18 down the stretch with a nose lead.

19 I said: “All right, talk, but do you mind putting the gun away? My wife doesn’t care,
20 but I’m pregnant and I don’t want the child to be born with—”

21 He smiled with his lower lip. “You don’t have to tell me you’re tough. I heard about
22 you.” He put the pistol in his overcoat pocket. “I’m Shep Morelli.”

23 “I never heard about you,” I said.

24 He took a step into the room and began to shake his head from side to side. “I didn’t
25 knock Julia off.”

26 “Maybe you didn’t, but you’re bringing the news to the wrong place. I got nothing to
27 do with it.”

28 “I haven’t seen her in three months,” he said. “We were washed up.”

29 “Tell the police.”

30 “I wouldn’t have any reason to hurt her: she was always on the up and up with me.”

31 “That’s all swell,” I said, “only you’re peddling your fish in the wrong market.”

32 “Listen.” He took another step towards the bed. “Studsy Burke tells me you used to
33 be O. K. That’s why I’m here. Do the—”

34 “How is Studsy?” I asked. “I haven’t seen him since the time he went the river in
35 ’23 or ’24.”

36 “He’s all right. He’d like to see you. He’s got a joint on West Forty- ninth, the Pigiron
37 Club. But listen, what’s the law doing to me? Do they think I did it? Or is it just something
38 else to pin on me?”

39 I shook my head. “I’d tell you if I knew. Don’t let newspapers fool you: I’m not in this.
40 Ask the police.”

Text B: The Thin Man

41 “That’d be very smart.” He smiled with his lower lip again. “That’d be the smartest
42 thing I ever did. Me that a police captain’s been in a hospital three weeks on account we had
43 an argument. The boys would like me to come in and ask ’em questions. They’d like it right
44 down to the end of their blackjacks.” He turned a hand over, palm up. “I come to you on the
45 level. Studsy says you’re on the level. Be on the level.”

46 “I’m being on the level,” I assured him. “If I knew anything I’d—”

47 Knuckles drummed on the corridor door, three times, sharply. Morelli’s gun was in his
48 hand before the noise stopped. His eyes seemed to move in all directions at once. His voice
49 was a metallic snarl deep in his chest: “Well?”

50 “I don’t know.” I sat up a little higher in bed and nodded at the gun in his hand. “That
51 makes it your party.” The gun pointed very accurately at my chest. I could hear the blood in
52 my ears, and my lips felt swollen. I said: “There’s no fire-escape.” I put my left hand out
53 towards Nora, who was sitting on the far side of the bed.

54 The knuckles hit the door again, and a deep voice called: “Open up. Police.”

Text C: Jurassic Park

1 Two crewmen carried a limp body toward her, while another barked orders. "Is there a
2 doctor here?" he called to her, as she ran up.
3 "I'm Dr. Carter." she said. The rain fell in heavy drops, pounding her head and shoulders.
4 The red-halved man frowned at her. She was wearing cut-off jeans and a tank top. She had a
5 stethoscope over her shoulder, the bell already rusted from the salt air.
6 "Ed Regis. We've got a very sick man here, doctor."
7 "Then you better take him to San Jos," she said. San Jos, was the capital, just twenty
8 minutes away by air.
9 "We would, but we can't get over the mountains in this weather. You have to treat him here."
10 Bobbie trotted alongside the injured man as they carried him to the clinic. He was a kid, no
11 older than eighteen. Lifting away the blood-soaked shirt, she saw a big slashing rip along his
12 shoulder, and another on the leg.
13 "What happened to him?"
14 "Construction accident," Ed shouted. "He fell. One of the backhoes ran over him."
15 The kid was pale, shivering, unconscious. Manuel stood by the bright green door of the
16 clinic, waving his arm. The men brought the body through and set it on the table in the centre
17 of the room.
18 Immediately she could see that it did not look good. The kid would almost certainly die. A big
19 tearing laceration ran from his shoulder down his torso. At the edge of the wound, the flesh
20 was shredded. At the centre, the shoulder was dislocated, pale bones exposed. A second
21 slash cut through the heavy muscles of the thigh, deep enough to reveal the pulse of the
22 femoral artery below. Her first impression was that his leg had been ripped open.
23 "Tell me again about this injury," she said.
24 "I didn't see it," Ed said. "They say the backhoe dragged him."
25 "Because it almost looks as if he was mauled," Bobbie Carter said, probing the wound.
26 Like most emergency room physicians, she could remember in detail patients she had seen
27 even years before. She had seen two maulings. One was a two-year-old child who had been
28 attacked by a Rottweiler dog. The other was a drunken circus attendant who had had an
29 encounter with a Bengal tiger. Both injuries were similar. There was a characteristic look to
30 an animal attack.
31 Bobbie Carter turned back to the injuries. Somehow she didn't think she was seeing
32 mechanical trauma. It just didn't look right. No soil contamination of the wound site, and no
33 crush injury component. Mechanical trauma of any sort-an auto injury, a factory accident-
34 almost always had some component of crushing. But here there was none. Instead, the
35 man's skin was shredded -ripped-across his shoulder, and again across his thigh. It really
36 did look like a maul. On the other hand, most of the body was unmarked, which was unusual
37 for an animal attack.
38 "All right," she said. "Wait outside."
39 "Why?" Ed said, alarmed. He didn't like that.
40 "Do you want me to help him, or not?" she said, and pushed him out the door and closed it
41 on his face. She didn't know what was going on, but she didn't like it.
42 Then the kid groaned. His lips moved, his tongue thick. "Raptor," he said. "Lo sa raptor . . . "
43 At those words, Manuel froze, stepped back in horror. "What does it mean?" Bobbie said.
44 Manuel shook his head. "I do not know, doctor. 'Lo sa raptor'-no es Español"
45 "No?" It sounded to her like Spanish. Bobbie looked again at the slippery foam streaked
46 across the wound. She touched it, rubbing it between her fingers. It seemed almost like
47 saliva. . . . The injured boy's lips moved.
48 "Raptor," he whispered. In a tone of horror, Manuel said.

Text C: Jurassic Park

49 "It bit him."
50 "What bit him?"
51 "Raptor."
52 "What's a raptor?"
53 "It is not normal, this smell," he said. "It is the hupia*."
54 Bobbie was about to order him back to work when the injured youth opened his eyes and sat
55 straight up on the table. Manuel shrieked in terror. The injured boy moaned and twisted his
56 head, looking left and right with wide staring eyes, and then he explosively vomited blood.
57 He went immediately into convulsions, his body vibrating, and Bobbie grabbed for him but he
58 shuddered off the table onto the concrete floor. He vomited again. There was blood
59 everywhere. Bobbie was grabbing for a stick to put in the boy's clenched jaws, but even as
60 she did it she knew it was hopeless, and with a final spastic jerk he relaxed and lay still.
61 Bobbie looked at the body on the ground and realized that it didn't matter; there was no
62 possibility of resuscitating him. Manuel called for the men, who came back into the room and
63 took the body away. Ed appeared, wiping his mouth with the back of his hand, muttering,
64 "I'm sure you did all you could." and then she watched as the men took the body away, back
65 to the helicopter, and it lifted thunderously up into the sky.
66 *The spirits of the dead, which roam around Coast Rica
67

Text D: Shelter

1 I was walking to school, lost in feeling sorry for myself—my dad was dead, my mom in
2 rehab, my girlfriend missing—when I saw the Bat Lady for the first time.

3 I had heard the rumors, of course. The Bat Lady supposedly lived alone in the dilapidated
4 house on the corner of Hobart Gap Road and Pine. You know the one. I stood in front of it
5 now. The worn yellow paint was shedding like an old dog. The once-solid concrete walk
6 was cracked into quarter-size fragments. The uncut lawn had dandelions tall enough for
7 the adult rides at Six Flags.

8 The Bat Lady was said to be a hundred years old and only came out at night, and if some
9 poor child hadn't made it home from a playdate or practice at the Little League field before
10 nightfall—if he or she risked walking home in the dark instead of getting a ride, or was
11 maybe crazy enough to cut through her yard—the Bat Lady got you.

12 What she supposedly did with you was never made clear. No child had vanished from this
13 town in years. Teenagers, like my girlfriend, Ashley, sure, they could be here one day,
14 holding your hand, looking deep into your eyes, making your heart go boom-boom-boom—
15 and be gone the next. But little kids? Nope. They were safe, even from the Bat Lady.

16 So I was just about to cross to the other side of the street— even I, a mature teenager
17 entering my sophomore year at a brand-new high school, wanted to avoid that spooky
18 house— when the door creaked open.

19 I froze.

20 For a moment, nothing happened. The door was all the way open now, but no one was
21 there. I stopped and waited. Maybe I blinked. I can't be sure.

22 But when I looked again, the Bat Lady was there.

23 She could have been a hundred years old. Or maybe two hundred. I had no idea why they
24 called her Bat Lady. She didn't look like a bat. Her hair was gray and hippie long, hanging
25 down to her waist. It blew in the wind, obscuring her face. She wore a torn white gown that
26 resembled a bridal costume in an old horror movie or heavy-metal video. Her spine was
27 bent like a question mark.

28 Slowly Bat Lady raised a hand so pale it was more vein blue than white, and pointed a
29 shaky, bony finger in my direction. I said nothing. She kept pointing until she was sure I
30 was looking. When she saw that I was, Bat Lady's wrinkled face spread into a smile that
31 sent little icicles down my spine.

32 "Mickey?"

33 I had no idea how she knew my name.

34 "Your father isn't dead," Bat Lady said.

35 Her words sent a jolt that knocked me back a step.

36 "He is very much alive."

37 But standing there, watching her vanish back into her decrepit cave, I knew what she was
38 telling me wasn't true.

39 Because I had seen my father die.