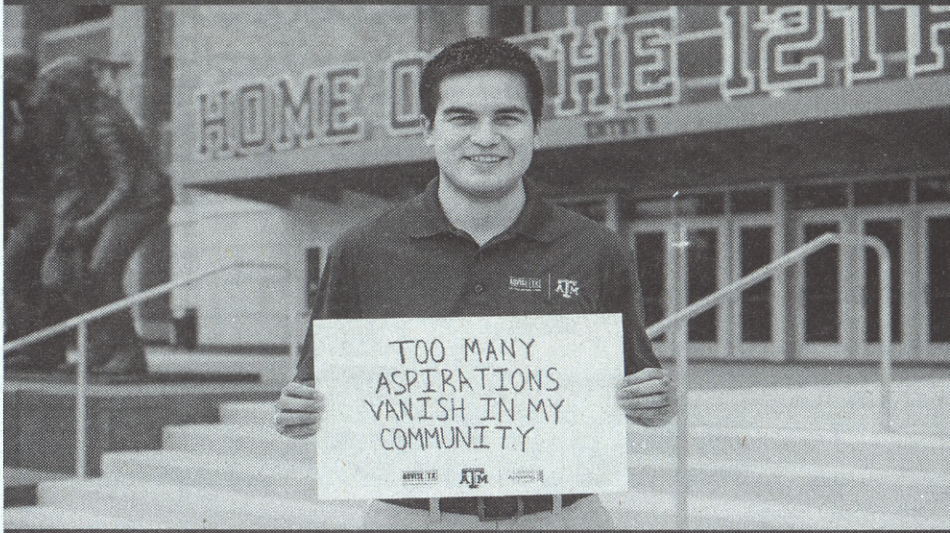


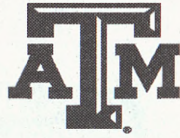
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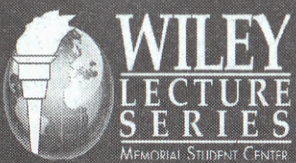
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REVIEW

New 'Game of Thrones' episodes leaked, so I binge-watched them. Here's what to expect.



Sam King
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Editor's note: Some "Game of Thrones" spoilers follow. Read at your own risk.

For many "Game of Thrones" fans, the wait until 9 p.m. Sunday night seemed never ending. For some (myself included), the waiting was literally too much.

Saturday night someone leaked the first four episodes of the new season online. Sunday morning, bright and early, I began my return trip to Westeros.

The new season picks up right where season four left off, maybe a few days down the road. At the end of the last season, Tyrion Lannister had just killed his father, Tywin, and with the help of the odd eunuch Varys, had escaped by sea. Cersei Lannister was still dealing with the death of her son, Joffrey Baratheon, and the subsequent coronation of her other son, Tommen Baratheon, so one can only expect some crazy from her this season.

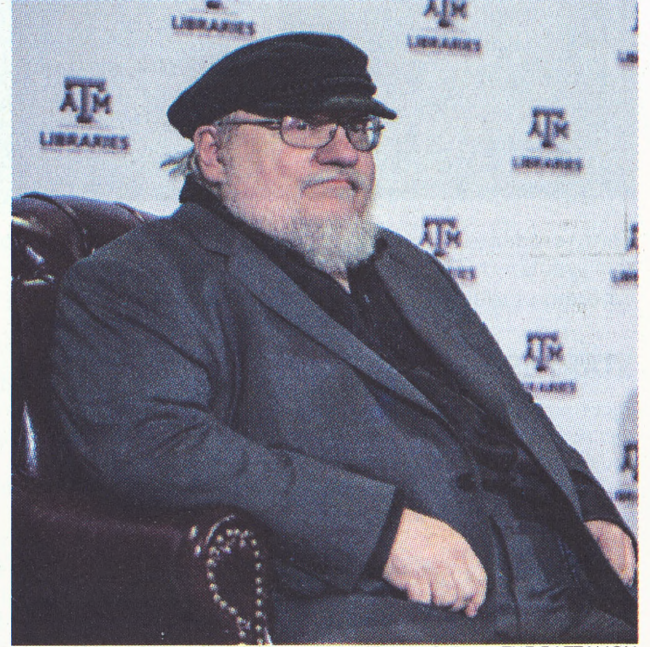
Across the sea, Daenerys was kicking butt and taking names, but was quickly realizing that freeing cities that have depended on slavery for years is not so simple. She was also forced to send away one of her most trusted advisors, Jorah Mormont, after discovering his past with King's Landing.

Up north, Jon Snow and the Night's Watch had just defeated the Free Folk and are gearing up for war. Also visiting the wall is Stannis Baratheon and his creepy mistress/priestess Melisandre as they try to recruit people for his bid to claim the Iron Throne.

The first episode flew by, full of exciting updates of all our favorite characters except Bran who will not make any appearances this season, it seems.

Sansa Stark and Lord Petyr Baelish are leaving the Vale and Sansa has a new mature, adult look about her. She's dyed her hair a dark color and dawned equally dark clothes. Perhaps foreshadowing some of the dark trials ahead of her, Sansa is expected to face some very morose tasks this season. I'm excited to see a Sansa who doesn't silently take everything she's handed with that stony expression of resignation. Some of her sister's fire wouldn't be a bad thing, and I have hopes we'll get to see some of it this season.

Cersei is losing power each day now that she is only the Queen Mother. Her son has been married to the clever and undoubtedly cunning Margaery Tyrell and Cersei is appearing to lose her grip. In episode four, she makes a grab for more power, putting Tommen in an awkward position with



Tanner Garza — THE BATTALION

George R.R. Martin, author of the "A Song of Fire and Ice" series, speaks at A&M in February.

his new bride, of whom he is apparently very fond. As much as I hate Cersei for her apparent lack of anything resembling a heart, I have to say that her love for her children is nice to see. It's her one redeeming quality, and I think this season will really focus in on that.

Stannis seems like the worst of all worries with his mediocre bid for the throne. He attempts to recruit Jon Snow, but Snow comes into

the room, of whom he is apparently very fond. As much as I hate Cersei for her apparent lack of anything resembling a heart, I have to say that her love for her children is nice to see. It's her one redeeming quality, and I think this season will really focus in on that.

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some new found power a couple episodes in. Our little bastard (yes, Jon, we know you're a bastard, no need to remind us every time you open your mouth) is all grown up and faces some difficult decisions early on. We see him lose some of his innocence, but we also see him hang onto his honor. I have a special place in my heart for Jon Snow (as we all do, I think) but I'm ready for him to stand up for himself. He's already done that in what I think will be a turning point for him, but I'm worried the stress of his new position and some dangerous enemies will lead to his demise. You've already got a sword-happy author, Jon, no need to add foolishness to that mixing pot.

Jaime and Bronn, Tyrion's hilarious champion, have teamed up to collect Jaime and Cersei's gross incest child, Myrcella, who was sent to Dorne as a part of a marriage pact with House Martell. But now that Oberyn Martell is dead,

And Arya, my little angel, the darling of everyone's eye and the personal favorite of Mrs. R.R. Martin (who has given George very strict directions to leave Arya alone) arrives in Braavos. While she doesn't make her reappearance until the second episode, she's just as stubborn and driven as she's been the entire series. Seeking out her eclectic comrade from the second season, Jaqen H'gar, Arya arrives at the House of Black and White where she begins to train to become a great fighter. This season promises trials and tribulations for Arya too, and any kind of childish innocence she had left is sure to leave her by the end. In the third episode, Arya has a wordless moment that is pure heartbreak for the audience to watch and which almost brought a tear to my eye.

I can't say there have been any major character deaths so far, good (Joffrey) or bad (Eddard Stark), but as Martin said at his A&M press conference in February: "No one is safe."

Fans who have read the books will even have surprises in store. Martin has said in previous interviews that characters who didn't die in the books (or at least, not yet) will die this season. So, you know. There's that.

This season is looking promising. The only problem now is the wait until either the same, wonderful people who leaked the first four episodes finish the job, or until the fifth episode premieres.

Sam King is a communication freshman and assistant news editor for The Battalion.



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