

GAME OF THRONES Purple Clover

Are you *the* Jon Stark?"

I get asked that question a lot. It happened twice on the same day last week. It's all because I share the same name as Jon Stark, the lead character and moral center of "Game of Thrones."

This has been going on for six years now, ever since the HBO series began.

True, there's an "h" in my first name and not his. But when spoken, they sound exactly alike.

Jon Stark, aka Lord Snow, is the purported illegitimate son of Eddard (Ned) Stark, the honorable Lord of Winterfell. Who didn't know that? *This* John Stark, that's who.

Everyone I know and meet is hooked on GOT. "Winter is coming" is the dire motto of the House of Stark. For me, it was the Season Seven premiere, which airs Sunday, July 16. I was not prepared. I had not been vigilant.

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I knew I had to do something, and quickly.

I was tired of being left out of discussions with my friends about what's happening on the continents of Essos, Westeros and Sothoryos.

More than that, my inability to discuss the rivalries between the Starks and Lannisters was hurting my business. I became a Boston real estate agent six years ago. Real estate is all about communication. You should see the astonished looks I would get from my clients—especially the younger ones—when I'd tell them I never saw even one episode of the fantasy series.

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How could anyone trust me to find them the right home or get the best price for theirs if I was that out of touch with unreality?

I did know, however, that "Game of Thrones" is based on the books of sci-fi writer George R.R. Martin. I visited a friend who lives in Santa Fe last fall, where Martin lives. She drove me by his house. It's surprisingly modest, no bigger than the tract house I grew up in. I would think at this point in his career he could afford something nicer, probably a castle. I could put him on a Multiple Listing Search that updates every 15 minutes.

But for now that would have to wait. I had some binge-watching to do.

Could I really digest all 60 hours of the series before July 16th? I had no choice, not if I wanted my life to have meaning going forward. As a realtor, I couldn't risk bad reviews on Yelp: "He didn't even know what the three-eyed raven was."

So I hunkered down in my House of Stark, where I spent 21 days watching all six seasons, never fast-forwarding once.

I had to put my whole life on pause as I camped out on my living room couch. I let my Sunday New York Times and New Yorkers pile up. No CNN, Rachel or Morning Joe. I didn't pay bills, cancelled medical appointments and skipped the gym. I rationalized it was OK to not go to work or answer my boss' emails. I figured it was essential that as a realtor I know what a castle is going for in Kings Landing, and if a siege would affect its resale.

When I couldn't sleep at night, I'd turn on my computer and submerge myself in the Seven Kingdoms. There's nothing like a flaying, burning, dismembering, clubbing, forced confession, stabbing, poisoning or mass slaughter to ease you back to dreamland.

I had so much to learn: The Iron Throne isn't an upscale, duel-flush toilet. Eunuchs can be cute and still have balls. A "red wedding" doesn't mean the bridesmaids should wear red. When traveling by dragon, be sure and keep your seatbelts fastened at all times. I had no idea that people in the Middle Ages had toned bodies and capped teeth.

I can now ballpark the price of a castle, or a wattle and daub if you're downsizing.

Best of all, I now know *that* Jon Stark from *this* John Stark.

He's much braver than I am, despite my scars from the spring bidding wars in the Boston housing market. Although we both have knife skills, mine are in the kitchen and not on the battlefield. We both like to wear black, though he has the shoulders to pull off a feathered cape. He's a bastard, and I'm not, though as I said I am a real estate agent.

That Jon Stark is played by the young British actor Kit Harington, who is impossibly good looking, has thick black hair, a vulnerable pout and chiseled abs. He is an internet sex god. I realize now that everyone's joking when they ask me if I'm really him. But maybe not. The show's a fantasy. Let me have mine.