

TV SERIES

A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms presents a subversive adventure in Westeros

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The latest prequel series to *Game of Thrones*, *A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms*, is an amazingly fresh entry that boldly challenges what audiences usually expect from the franchise, fleshing out the story of a hero who does whatever it takes to be honourable and kind in the grimdark world of Westeros; a world that seemingly always punishes kindness.

The show is an adaptation of the *Tales of Dunk and Egg* novella series (particularly the first book, *The Hedge Knight*), and chronologically takes place between the events of *House of The Dragon* and *Game of Thrones*. However, unlike earlier instalments in the franchise, *A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms* is a more focused and grounded character-driven story as opposed to an expansive, high-fantasy political thriller told through numerous interwoven viewpoints. This approach makes it a rather self-contained addition that allows viewers to jump in without having seen the other entries.

The series follows Ser Duncan, a kind-hearted hedge knight, as he enters a tournament to make a name for himself and honour his mentor. In this quest, he reluctantly takes in a young squire, a boy calling himself Egg. True to George R R Martin's storytelling, the seemingly uncomplicated initial premise leads to surprising and captivating twists and turns.

Set in the more-often-than-not bleak universe of *Game of Thrones*, the show is made outstanding by its characters and presentation. This deviance in presentation is most conspicuously observed in the protagonist himself: Ser Duncan, whose



righteous characterisation is akin to traditional heroic figures such as Aragorn or Superman.

Such apparently "heroic" characters in this franchise usually tend to face a gruesome and cynical end. But without delving too much into spoilers, Ser Duncan avoids falling into that trope. What makes this story so refreshing is that it still cleverly weaves in suspenseful subversions while maintaining a straightforward hero's journey. Besides Duncan, characters like Egg, Baelor Targaryen, Raymun Fossoway, and Duncan's deceased mentor Ser Arlan are all written as authentic characters who play compelling roles in the narrative. The show also features a good balance of humour and light-hearted moments, further distancing it from its companion instalments.

The show isn't action-heavy, paced in a manner where the action is reserved for the

climax. This intricate buildup is exemplified in the penultimate episode of the season, which features a visceral and immersive battle scene that not only delivers on the promised action but also weaves in with the narrative threads. This episode alone might contain the most brilliant writing and creative cinematography in the entire *Game of Thrones* franchise.

A Knight of the Seven Kingdoms is a tale of a man who has hope in a hopeless world. It breathes new life into the lore of Westeros, crafting a simple yet subversive story that checks all the right boxes. It is a faithful adaptation of the novella that expands on the source material, a great interlude between the prequel *House of the Dragon* and the main storyline of *Game of Thrones*, and most importantly, a genuinely exciting and feel-good story that works as an accessible starting point to one of the most iconic fantasy universes ever made.

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