



# SQUID GAME

EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO KNOW  
ABOUT THE NEW KOREAN TV SERIES

# **SQUID GAME**

Everything You Need to Know about the New Korean TV Series

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# INTRODUCTION

It's ranked number one in the top 10 most watched series on Netflix. Day after day it has climbed the charts until reaching, in small steps, the top step of the podium and it deserves it all. Squid Game is the new gem of Netflix, one of those series that pop up on the catalog of the streaming platform suddenly, quietly, but it takes little to understand that it is a high-level product. Squid Game, among the many titles of Netflix, stands out immediately, just the cover image. Masked men with faces marked with triangles, squares and circles and a group of 456 people with uniforms numbered as if they were pawns in a game (and that's exactly what it is), and then there is a repetitive tune that struggles to leave the mind of anyone who hears it at least once and a plot that is the envy of veteran American screenwriters so accustomed to twists and captivating stories between the real and the crazy. Yes, Squid Game is the series to watch, the one to talk about with friends, the series to get angry with in front of a screen, the story with which to reflect on important issues, a series that highlights, in its nine episodes one more beautiful than the other, all the good and bad of humanity, and how can you not watch it?

The Koreans manage to arrive where others seem to be trudging in the last period, building a compelling, well-structured story that is so engaging you want it to be the perfect end-of-day companion. In addition to the story, to be built to perfection, there are the characters. Each of them, in fact, has a characterization and a role so defined and well inserted in the plot that it can not be replaced or changed with any other face, voice or type of personality. With Squid Game you can have fun, you can be horrified, you can be moved but, above all, you can make an examination of conscience so deep that you can carry it with you for days, because this series shakes the human soul with such an unexpected and impressive power to leave a mark. That of Squid Game is an apparently simple story, that of people without money and on

the verge of despair that end up inside a hellish machine that, through "child's games", promises to give them what they have always wanted and that "should" change their lives for the better: money, but beyond the simplicity there is much more. And so it is that human beings with a conscience and a moral come to lose what makes them such by becoming murderers, animals, cowards, traitors and to do it for what? Money.

But beyond the reflection on the value of money and on the malleability of the human mind (and conscience), Squid Game does something equally important, it makes us realize how much adult life deprives us of the sense of belonging and sharing that society seems to want to give only to children. It's not a coincidence that the Squid Game itself provides a return to a forgotten childhood by making the 456 participants "compete" for the victory of 45.6 billion won, in six games, of those that were played in the street, in company, as children, bringing together a group of adults in a fairly long period of time, in a room, making them sleep, eat and "play" all together. And it is that emotion of sharing the game, the fun and the adventure that gives birth to the idea of building a game machine that, even if it goes to the extreme, is basically nothing more than a way for men and women who in real life are too busy working or despairing because they don't have enough money to build human relationships as adults. And it's the shared emotions that you remember at the end of your life, not everything else.

In its irreverence, recklessness and courage to go even beyond the lines, Squid Game strikes, shakes and opens the eyes in a delicate and, at the same time, macabre way transmitting a mix of emotions that go straight to the depths of the human soul and everyone should allow themselves to dig into their consciousness so deep. This series pushes to investigate what really matters in life and, making us live a sad but sweet nostalgia, reminds us how beautiful and important it is to go back to "play" together and share time with other people and, if this was its intent, we can say that it succeeded perfectly.

# THE SERIES THAT DIVIDES FAMILIES

The kids are going crazy, moms and dads are tormenting each other. At home, it's a riot. The **parents vs. children** game is back in front of the small screen. It's called "Squid Game effect", the South Korean television series from Netflix. A mixture of vintage-trash effect of Games Without Borders with the adrenaline of epic tragedy in Hunger Games style, and the hi-tech echo of Ready Player One. All set in an almond-eyed dystopian South Korean society. Laugh-out-loud funny? Not so much. Because you die. All the time.

Whoever loses at the game (albeit childish...see "**One, two, three Star!**") is slaughtered without mercy. A sort of Darwinian selection without appeal. Nightmare, anguish, fear, yet so much **hypnotic power**. At least for the hundreds of thousands (by now millions) of young people who are literally going crazy for "Squid Game", visible on the streaming platform, on its way to becoming the **absolute phenomenon of the season**. To think that the numbers worldwide speak of a success comparable to that of the series "**Bridgerton**". No sequins, no bells and whistles, no Regency-era love plots (and soft erotic scenes), of course. Here, in "Squid Game", the horror-drama written and directed by Hwang Dong-Hyuk, with a first season of nine episodes, the lives of the characters hang by a very thin thread.

Of good, many parents say, you have to see it in the **original language**, because it's dubbed in English. To think that, news of the last few hours, the hundreds of thousands of new fans are overloading network data traffic so much that it has prompted the South Korean SK Broadband to sue Netflix.

**So what happens in The Squid Game?** Heart-pounding plot. A group of people on the fringes of social life, overwhelmed and consumed by debt, are approached by a top secret organization that offers them a game: if they win, they earn a very large amount of money to pay off their debts and

live comfortably. A breakthrough? In short. Because they soon realize that in order to win the game they must survive, overcoming the deadly transposition of a series of children's games.

The first one? Just to give you an idea, the contestants (we're starting with 456 people) must challenge themselves to a game of One, Two, Three. Stella! Running it is a creepy giant robot child. Who slaughters everyone who moves. Nice? **Parents horrified, children thrilled.** The cinephiles, for their part, cry out for the South Korean genius that is sweeping the West, from Parasite (Palme d'Or and Oscar) to Oldboy (awards at the Cannes Film Festival). Parents remain puzzled also because there is talk of a **second season** coming. Guaranteed success. At least, let's see it in English.



# THE PLOT

The protagonist of Squid Game **Gi-hun** is a man addicted to gambling whose financial woes have brought his life to its knees. Supported by his mother, he continues to hope for his good fortune in order to redeem himself financially, both to pay off the loan sharks that are after him and to regain **his** dignity in the eyes of **his daughter** who lives with her mother and her new partner. In a train station, Gi-hun meets a man who proposes to **play a game in** which he will get money for every victory and a slap in the face for every defeat. At the end of the game, the man hands him a business card with a number to contact in case he wants to participate in a game with much higher prizes. Gi-hun, also considering that his daughter is about to leave for America with her mother and her partner, calls the number and decides to take part in the game. He is taken unconscious to a secret location with **455** other **people**. When they wake up, they are all wearing numbered uniforms, controlled by men in fuchsia suits with masks over their faces, and are led to an area where the first of the games takes place: **One, two, three stars!**

The games organized by a mysterious character, known as **Frontman**, are set up in huge spaces by a group of people strictly dressed in red overalls and a black mask. Each game, moreover, is inspired by those of childhood, therefore known by all. From the beginning, however, it is clear that this is not just any old competition: whoever loses or does not respect the rules, in fact, is killed instantly.

When they realize that the eliminations of the defeated players correspond to death, it's too late. Gi-hun miraculously succeeds in passing the test, but since the stakes are too high, he proposes to follow the third clause of the game contract, which states that if the majority of players agree, the games can be interrupted. But before voting everyone is shown a huge piggy bank with what will be the prize if they pass the six tests: **45 billion**

**600 million won** (about 33 million euros). The group splits in half, until the last elderly player, number 001, decides to call it quits and everyone is taken home with an invitation to return if they have second thoughts. Gi-hun goes to the police to report the incident but is not believed. Given his mother's condition, which requires an operation he can't afford, he decides to resume playing. Once back in the secret place, he makes friends with some people and together with them he'll try to face the deadly trials as a team. But the organization of the game has cruel rules and soon they'll realize that nothing is predictable and to win they'll have to commit abominable acts.

After the excellent **Alice in Borderland** released on Netflix last December and already renewed for a second season, comes this new Asian death game (after Japan it's South Korea's turn) that immediately surprises for the stylistic care, even of the smallest details, and the great evocative power staged by a sumptuous script within a story that would have been successful if it had been simply "playful". With the Japanese series has a lot in common, but here the story is more realistic and if possible more raw and ruthless. Squid Game's "players" are in fact chosen from among the truly desperate, especially economically, and are not forced to participate. There are therefore immediately **two game levels**: the **direct** one in which the characters have to face trials in which money is opposed to life and the **psychological** one for which once left free to choose they will be forced to decide not according to freedom but according to need. Later in the vision you will understand what is hidden behind the scenes in which there is also a third floor.

The viewer finds himself in front of a work much more composite than what is evident from the premises expressed in the trailer. What is revealed as a race of death has deeper facets, which are properly explored in the second episode, in which the lives of the protagonists are told without any filter, in the same way as *Parasite* (also South Korean, triumphant at the Oscars 2020) in which despair and degradation are the real invisible protagonists. Making this more apparent over the course of the series are some pregnant elements that drip with meaning. **The choice of music**