

Longclaw Loses Its Edge: Court Dismisses Game of Thrones Sword Copyright Claim

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Jalic, Inc., the officially licensed maker of Game of Thrones prop replicas sold under its Valyrian Steel and Jalic Blades brands, sued more than twenty toy, costume, and novelty companies, accusing them of selling swords that copy “Longclaw,” the wolf-pommel blade (i.e., a sword with a decorative wolf’s head at the end of the handle) carried by Jon Snow in HBO’s Game of Thrones series. One defendant, Windy Woman, Inc., doing business as Childish Tendencies, moved to dismiss. In September 2026, a federal court in the Eastern District of Tennessee granted that motion, finding that Jalic had not sufficiently asserted the elements of copyright infringement.

The court’s reasoning turned on the “Substantial Similarity” filtering test courts use to separate protectable expression from the unprotectable underlying idea. After taking judicial notice of the show’s wide cultural reach to satisfy the access element, the court set aside every generic, functionally necessary sword feature (a hilt, a blade, a crossguard) as unprotectable “scenes a faire,” or elements so common to forms of expression that they are ineligible for copyright protection. It also set aside the concept of putting a wolf’s head on a pommel; an idea which, however distinctive, sits outside copyright’s reach, and, thus, protection attaches only to Jalic’s particular form of expression of the wolf’s head. Comparing the exact contours, proportions, and detailing of Longclaw’s specific wolf-head design with the accused sword, the court found the overlap too general for a reasonable observer to call the works substantially similar.

For businesses that manufacture, license, or sell merchandise inspired by well-known franchises, or that compete in a crowded design category like fantasy weapons and collectibles, the ruling is a reminder that copyright protection reaches the specific way an idea gets rendered and generally not the broad concept behind it. A client accused of copying should ask what is simply generic to the category before conceding similarity, and a client protecting its own designs needs a record of the concrete, distinctive choices that separate its product from the idea behind it.

The takeaway is: if you are careful to document the specific expressive detail that makes your product unique, that record, not the shared premise, is what may win the day.