

The Pharaoh's Guardian - Max, Year 6, NSW

The sunrise gives me a boost to jump out of bed and into my training uniform. I'm excited to continue my training as an archer and to become the best soldier in all of Kemet at the mature age of 13!

Kids are running down the dirt streets while their mothers scream at them to eat breakfast. You may know my home city as Ancient Egypt, but we call it Kemet. Kemet isn't the kind of place you want to face without breakfast in your stomach. It is barren and dry and all you can see are families of six or ten people crowded into dusty sandstone houses.

One big road shoots through our town and branches out to neighboring villages, while thin paths, crowded with villagers, snake between houses. I hop out of bed and notice my ankle is throbbing from training the day before. I ignore the pain and focus on getting moving so that I can train with my mentor, Sargon.

Sargon is a stern, but fair person who has already taught me many new skills, especially with my handy bow. He is a respected trainer who is teaching me all the battlefield skills I need.

My mother, Rhanha, gives me a sense of calmness and cunning, which I need to be a smart soldier. She yells at me every morning to get to training so that I can become the best soldier in all of Kemet.

After breakfast, I walk to the small field in the army camp where I train. Wooden swords clash as Sargon yells instructions at the soldiers-in-training to keep their guard up.

"Menka!" Sargon calls to me, "I hope you're ready for more training! Feeling confident after your successful day yesterday?"

I nod eagerly.

"Alright everyone!" Sargon booms, "Come here so I can tell you today's training drills."

As Sargon begins to run through the day's training activities, I look around the terrain of the training grounds. Birds fly overhead as I notice a slight rustle coming from beneath the tree. Papyrus bushes surround the camp, but none of them are shaking like the one that looks as if it is a tiger getting ready to pounce. I ruminate on this suspicious bush, but just as I am about to call out to Sargon to check it out, he is standing right beside me talking about the up and coming training session.

"To have a good shot with your bow and arrow, you must learn how to stay calm with your stance and shot." He begins to guide me through the significance of breathing calmly while aiming for a particular target, but I can't stop looking at the bush. The shaking has stopped, but I still detect a hint of danger. Nevertheless, I need to focus on my training.

Sargon rushes at me with his incredible handling of his sword, but it doesn't bother me. I breathe in, load an arrow into the bow, and fire twice.

In the blink of an eye Sargon falls to the ground.

I realise that it isn't my arrow.

I run over to Sargon lying on the ground as something whips past my shoulder.

"Ambush!" I call out, as three men with wooden masks rush at me.

Thunk! Thunk! I fire two rubber arrows at the intruders which delays them, giving me time to run. I can see Sargon reaching out his hand. Crawling in the field right beside him, I see an intruder which almost gives me a heart attack. I leap and fire an arrow at the enemy's head while I scream for Sargon to run, but he doesn't, he lies on the ground and his eyes begin to flutter.

"Menka," he gasps, "trust your instincts."

My heart is thumping fast and I begin to feel dizzy at the sight of Sargon, unmoving and no longer breathing. I smack myself in the face and sprint for my arrow holster. Stone arrows are perfect for catching the opponents off guard so I leap forward and grab two stone arrows.

Fusssshh - kathunk! An arrow pierces an intruder's mask while another whizzes through the air and strikes another enemy right in the chest. Rage motivates me to avenge Sargon. I fire each arrow in quick succession, each taking out different ambushers from either side of me.

I sprint through the narrow streets as a variety of weapons are thrown at my tired self. Thwack! A stone axe zips past me and crashes into a sandstone house on my right. I dash past kids watching me in terror and dart through gaps between houses, running madly from these inexplicable antagonists.

I run for what seems like hours, tripping over barrels, leaping over obstacles through to the other side of the village. The streets become calmer as the sound of the intruders yelling fades. A cactus sized lump fills my throat and I am sapped of energy. I collapse in the sand and pass out cold.

By the time I wake up, it is night time and the black sky is lit by bright stars.

My throat is dusty and sore, while my legs are knots of tension. I limp through the silent streets as I make my way home. The sounds of civilians in their homes reminds me that my mother is probably wondering where I am.

When I finally get back home, it is almost morning and I wrap myself in my bed sheets. Sure enough my mother is shouting at me.

“Why are you home so late?” she demands.

She sees my tears and softens.

“They killed Sargon.” I catch the sob in my throat as I realise if those attackers come back, they will definitely go for the Pharaoh as their next target. This thought makes me rise out of bed to go to the Pharaoh’s palace and warn the royal guards.

I grab my bow and arrow and run to the Pharaoh’s palace. I have only been inside the palace grounds once. The luxurious palace was exhilarating to see, its monumental structure a perfect picture of royal life.

Outside the palace there are already crowds of merchants, peasants and even slaves all waiting to see palace officials. When I finally get to the front gates, two armed guards stand beside the Pharaoh, who is picking at grapes and speaking to one of his senior Senators.

The Pharaoh and his Senator look annoyed at the sight of a 13 year old staring intensely at the Pharaoh. Their attention makes my knees jiggle and chills run down my spine when the Pharaoh speaks.

“What is it boy?” he barks at me, “what is your concern here?”

I begin to speak, but an arrow whizzes past my head, and lands right onto one of the guard’s chest plates.

Kathunk! Chaos takes over as civilians run away, tripping over one another, pushing each other in a panic. Countless arrows continue to be fired at the guards, who are now in front of the Pharaoh. I crouch in front of the guards, scanning the grounds. I grab hold of my bow and arrows and begin to fire strategically. Multiple hidden intruders fall to the ground, while more and more keep charging at me and the guards, who are now in the battle.

“Five left,” I think to myself, while I continue to fire arrows at three others. One of the chief guards charges at an ambusher with a golden spear but gets knocked out cold. The other guard manages to knock the antagonist on the head.

“One more,” I fire an arrow, piercing through the air straight into the enemy’s head.

I run towards the palace to look for the Pharaoh and find, to my shock, the Pharaoh being held captive by an intruder with a stone spear! My blood steels up as I instinctively position my bow to fire my arrow.

Thwack! I had pulled a training arrow! It was enough to knock the ambusher out cold.

Murmurs begin to spread across the area as they realise the target has been knocked out with a training arrow. The crowd looks behind the Pharaoh and sees me, 13 year-old Menkahet, who has just saved the Pharaoh's life.

The Pharaoh walks up to me and stares deep into my eyes. "My boy," he says, "you have saved my life. Many of my guards have been killed. You must take their place in the royal guard. What is your name?"

I kneel before the Pharaoh and bow my head.

"My name is Menkahet."

The Pharaoh gestures to the crowd gathered around him and shouts, "Everybody meet the new Royal Archer - Menkahet!".

At my swearing in ceremony, I am awarded a suit of armor inlaid with gold and a specially crafted bow hoisted around my shoulder. Everyone cheers, I look at my surroundings and feel my face turn red. I breathe in a massive breath and cry, "For Kemet!"