

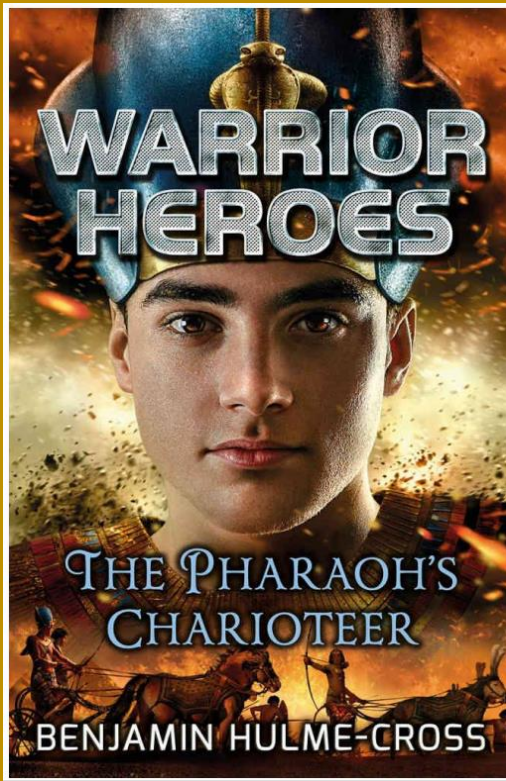
What has happened
so far?

What has happened
to Thami and Arthur?





1. Listen to me read.

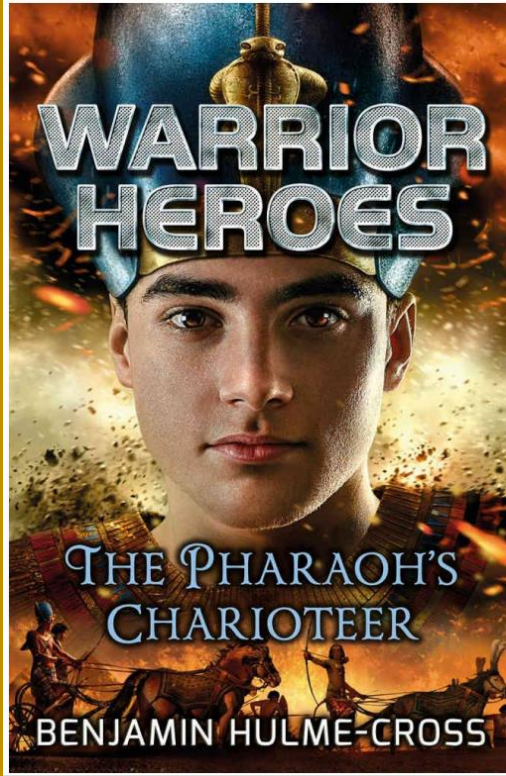


Remember, to follow the text with your finger as I read and keep up.

I may be stopping at certain parts of the chapter and asking questions so you need to be listening carefully.



1. Listen to me read.



There is a lot that happens in this chapter so I will break it into three parts.



CHAPTER 5

Arthur gasped when the blindfold was removed.

He had been in complete darkness from the moment that a sack had been pulled over his head. There had been no warning. No sounds of a scuffle. Somehow the kidnappers had floated past the temple guard sentries undetected. In fact the only voices Arthur could remember were those of Finn and Nefi calling out as they ran over from the campfire. When he and Thami cried out for help they were swiftly knocked unconscious, and by the time they came round they were each slung across the back of a horse, bound and blindfolded.

After several uncomfortable hours Arthur was dragged down off his horse and allowed to lie on a carpeted floor for a while, before being hauled to his feet again. He was marched up a long, steep flight of steps. He heard doors opening and closing, felt the ground beneath his feet become smoother, the air cooler and then warmer again, and then, with no warning at all, the blindfold was removed.

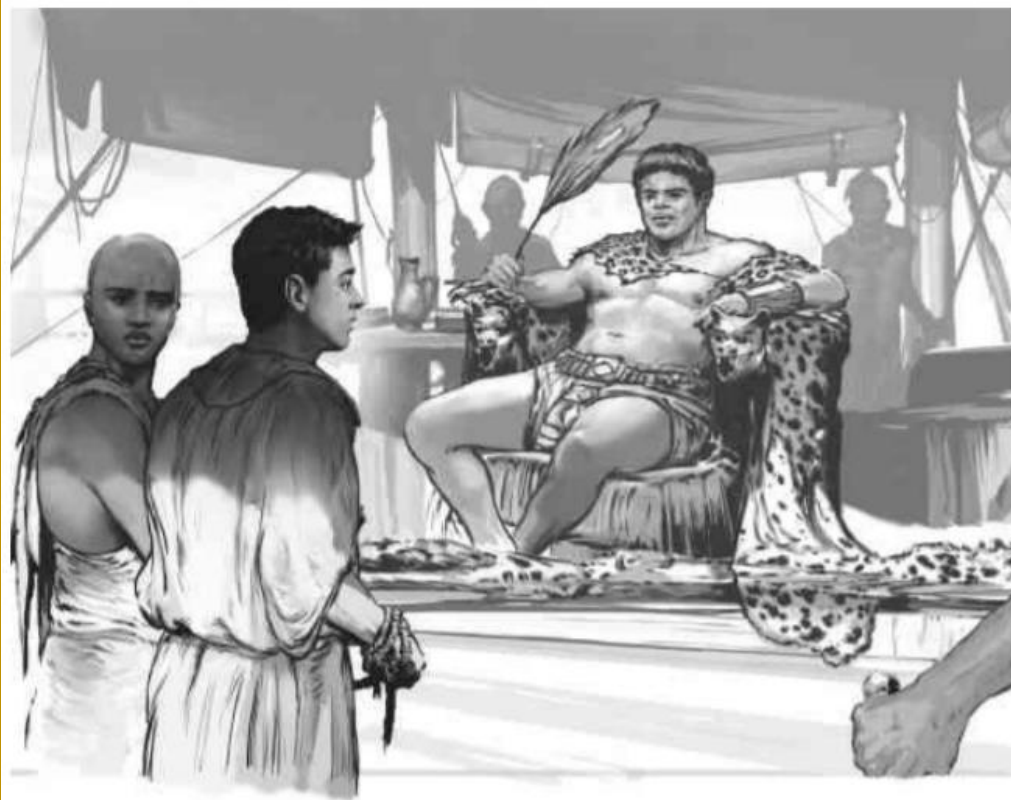
White-hot daylight stung his eyes and he cowered back from it, groaning. He was totally confused, having switched from night to day in an instant, and he began to panic, his breath coming in rapid, ragged gasps and his torso convulsing against the ropes that still bound his hands.

"Breathe deeply," he heard someone say and repeat over and over. Slowly he regained control and began to relax. He looked around and squinted through the bright light at Thami. "Breathe deeply," the boy kept saying. Arthur nodded. He began to take in a little more of his surroundings.



1. Listen to me read.

They were in a small courtyard, circled by smooth walls that looked to be covered in something like beige cement. The ground was bare earth, the same colour as the walls. In front of them was a huge man, his skin as dark as Thami's mother's. He was clearly very important. Most of the other men in the courtyard appeared to be soldiers who were standing rigidly to attention, while the big man was seated on a raised platform with an overhead screen shading him. He looked the boys up and down, one after the other, lazily swishing a fly swat around in one hand as he did so.



"You are Thamose," he said at length in a soft, low voice, waving the fly swat in Thami's direction, "son of the pharaoh of Egypt and his Nubian queen." He let the words hang in the air, and Arthur felt suddenly very conscious that he was at the heart of some very dangerous politics. "And do you, my prisoner, know who I am?"

Thami nodded and stared at the big man defiantly.

“You are the Nubian general, and this is your fortress in the western desert. What do you want with my friend and me?” Thami’s royal breeding was showing. He sounded supremely confident, and the general chuckled.

“Why does a general take a prince captive?” the big man asked, smiling broadly.


convulsing

hauled

politics

Royal breeding

supremely



There are lots of tricky words in this chapter that you may not have heard before. Before we read on, let's investigate some...

cowered

defiantly



L.O. I am learning to understand what I am reading.



Work in pairs to find the definitions of any unfamiliar words in chapter 5 and write them in your books.



L.O. I am learning to understand what I am reading.

Let's discuss and practise reading the words to see if we can determine their meaning then explain to me what has happened so far.

Who are the characters that we have just met?

"To start a war!" Arthur cut in, his senses now fully restored. Even as he said it, he knew it sounded stupid. Why would the Nubians actively seek to provoke Egypt, the most powerful kingdom in the region, maybe in the world, into open war?

Thami shook his head.

"You don't want a war, General, but that is what you'll get. You want to hold my father to ransom. You want him to agree payment of tributes to you in return for my release. Well, he won't do it!"

The general stood and looked down at Thami steadily. "You are a symbol, boy," he growled. "He won't pay tribute just for your life. He will pay tribute to prevent war. I know the pharaoh is weakened in his own palace by his closest advisers. They plot and scheme. The high priest wants one thing; the generals want another. Plenty of people want to overthrow your father. He can't risk going to war so he'll pay. My messengers are on their way to Thebes as we speak. You should pray that the pharaoh listens to them."

“You have been misled, General,” said Thami. “Certainly there are those who wish to overthrow the pharaoh, and certainly the high priest is one of them, but that is not all he wants. He also wants Egypt to make war on Nubia. The high priest sees your presence here as an insult. You must know it is he who set up this kidnapping! He hopes to use it as a means of persuading my father to go to war, not to pay you tribute!”

“General, please,” said a young man Arthur had not noticed before, stepping out from behind the platform. “This is what I was afraid of before the raid. Egypt is not as weak as our spies are being led to believe. We cannot risk a war – it could easily end in defeat for us and there are those in Thebes who long for that to happen. Even if we are not defeated we cannot conquer Egypt! We need not fall into the high priest’s trap. Let the prisoners go now before it is too late. Think how many will die if we go to war...”

Doubt flickered across the general’s face for a moment, but then he scowled.

“You question my judgement too much, Prince Shaharqo. I will always be loyal to your father but remember, military decisions are mine. Guards, take them!” He swished the fly swat at the boys as soldiers grabbed an arm each and led them away.

PLOT

Let's discuss what has happened so far.

What is the Nubian General's plan?

Why does Thami disagree?

Characters

Themes



Arthur did his best to remember every detail of the fortress as they were marched through it. The word 'fortress' had made him think of a castle, but as they were pushed along he soon realised they were in more of a fortified town than a castle. They walked along narrow, dusty lanes between terraced buildings, passing groups of soldiers at every turn, then up steps and eventually out onto the outer wall of the fortress, which was at least ten metres high. From here they could see out across the desert, although Arthur was surprised to observe that immediately around the fortress were trees and green fields.

"We are at one of the desert oases," said Thami, following Arthur's train of thought. "There is water here, hence the fortress."

They continued along the wall to a short, stubby tower, which they stooped to enter through a narrow doorway. From here the stairs led down again, and continued down by Arthur's reckoning to below ground level. At the bottom of the final flight of stairs the boys were pushed into a small, windowless room, lit by an oil lamp and furnished comfortably enough with rugs and cushions. Without a word, the guards cut the ropes that bound the boys' hands, then turned and re-climbed the stairs. They had passed no other doors onto the stairs as they went down, and Arthur concluded that the only way out was back up the tower and onto the fortress wall.

Deprived once again of natural light, the boys soon lost all sense of time. They were free to move around within the small cell and Arthur even ventured up the steps again but soon confirmed that, although they were not locked in, the only way out was the tiny doorway that linked the tower to the wall – and that had two armed guards outside it.

Arthur was alarmed to note that Thami's mood had deteriorated badly. Gone was the mask of regal confidence and authority he had displayed in front of the general, and the prince now lay sprawled in a corner, his face a picture of despair.

"This isn't over yet," said Arthur carefully, "and it's not your fault in any case."

Thami snorted. "I will be the reason that my mother's people and my father's people go to war. What else is there to say?" Already the horror that would haunt him for the next three thousand years was taking hold.

"Then we must try to escape," said Arthur briskly. "What we can't do is give up. You are a prince of Egypt, a son of the pharaoh, a hunter of lions and a future charioteer. We will fight this until it's over. Yes?"

Slowly Thami lifted his head and his gaze settled on Arthur. He seemed smaller than before, as if stooping beneath a great weight, but he gave Arthur the slightest of nods.

"Let's start by seeing if we can make a rope out of these rugs," said Arthur, keen to give them both something to do. The rugs were woven very tightly, and just to extract one row of thread was a painstaking task.

To extract enough to twist into a long enough rope to descend from the fortress walls would take them days, and as they settled into working rhythms, the repetitive finger-picking had an almost soothing effect.

They worked in silence like this for a while, and Arthur's thoughts turned for the first time to Finn. What would his brother be doing now? Had he been taken captive too? And what of Nefi? Better not let Thami start thinking like this, he thought, snapping back into his present environment.

"We should talk through exactly who is plotting what," he said abruptly. Thami looked up and nodded, and they began to discuss the possibilities. They kept coming back to the idea that the high priest was at the centre of the plot and that he had helped the Nubians kidnap Thami to provoke all-out war.

"But is the high priest hoping the war will damage the Nubians or your father?" Arthur wondered out loud.

"I think it's both," Thami replied. "He's always made it obvious that he hates my mother and her people. And he would happily see the Nubians crushed. But most of all he wants to be rid of the pharaoh so that he can acquire more power for himself and the temple by helping someone else onto the throne. War suits him in every way."

"I wonder how the high priest managed to fool the general here so well. He seems clever enough..."

"I have been wondering exactly the same thing," said someone from the stairway. Both boys jumped and dropped the rugs they were working on. Whoever it was had come down the stairs without a sound. He stepped into the room and Arthur recognised him at once.

"Prince Shaharqo!" Thami exclaimed.

Arthur swallowed nervously. Had the prince heard them talking about escape?

"It gives me no pleasure to see an Egyptian prince a prisoner here," said Shaharqo, and he seemed sincere. "I think that the general is being led into a trap, and unless someone stops him he is going to lead our whole army to war and a great many soldiers will die."

"Yes," said Thami desperately. "What did your spies suggest would happen if I were taken hostage?" Arthur grew hopeful. Maybe Shaharqo could be persuaded to let them go in secret.

"We were told that the high priest wanted to force the pharaoh into a position where he had to pay us tribute, and therefore would be seen as weak by others in Egypt. My father, the king of Nubia, thought it was an opportunity to enrich our kingdom."

"But the high priest hates Nubia," said Thami. "He has been pressing for war for months now. And I know my father. The Nile will run dry before he pays tribute to another king. We have to stop this. The only person who will benefit from a war is..."

"The high priest," they all said at once.

Arthur was overwhelmed by the size of the spider's web they were caught in. The idea that one person's political ambition and lies could be the reason for two kingdoms to go to war was almost too much to comprehend.

"There is something I should tell you, in the spirit of trust," said Shaharqo. "I led the raiding party to kidnap you. I did not like the plan, but I know my duty."

Thami shrugged. "That doesn't matter now," he said.

"I haven't finished. There were two other youths at the camp when we took you. A boy and a girl. I left a man behind to see what happened. He reports that the boy and the girl ran away from the camp. He tracked them because they weren't heading for Thebes. They were following us..."

PLOT

Let's discuss the chapter now that we have read it together.

What do Thami and Arthur believe is happening?

Who has come to help them?

Themes



Characters

L.O. I am learning to show that I understand what I have read.



Independent.

Story map the most important parts of this chapter.



Let's create one together on the flip chart.