

## **The Servant Boy**

**By Jake Gerritse**

Dong! Dong! Dong! I sprang out of my bed in alarm. I threw on my clothes and sprinted for the door, slamming it behind me. I ran to the tower in the corner of the courtyard and ran up the spiral stairs, two at a time. I reached the top of the wall and looked out into the valley. I gasped. We were under attack.

My heart raced, I heard the panicked shouts of the guards below, yelling orders for more soldiers. The golden trumpets sounded. That was the order to return to your barracks or room. I gave one last glance to the valley and gulped. I sprinted back down the stairs. I crossed the courtyard where the whole of the castles infantry was gathered. Terror stricken villagers raced across the lawn towards the central tower, the safehouse. I headed towards the tower but stopped, hearing my name shouted from one of the walls. I whipped around to face the caller. It was Mr.Burghe, the captain of the arms. He was a very spirited old Scot, with flaming red hair that shot out from all over his head.

“Come over here on the wall! We need ya!” I ran over. I was amazed! A lowly servant such as myself could only dream of helping this great castle! I wonder what they need me for? I climbed the ladder leading up to the wall and pulled myself up onto the thin ledge. Mr.Burghe looked over at me with his lively green eyes,

“Lad, I'm going to ask you to do something very important. The safety of our castle depends on it, and you.”

“What sir? I'll do anything!” He gave me a serious look.

“The lord and I have been watching you boy,” I gulped. What had I done now?

“You have sir?”

“Yes lad, you seem to be a very quick runner, the fastest in the castle in fact.” I glowed, no one had ever complimented me on anything, I was just a servant, after all.

“We want you to run to Aesthia and warn them of our enemy.” He gestured at the valley,  
“And see if they can send reinforcements. You would be a hero. We’re really counting on ya,  
lad!” I stared into his eyes,

“Of course sir, anything to help the castle.”

“Good lad!” I turned and began to climb down the ladder once more. Mr. Burghe turned one last  
time to stare at me,

“Good luck boy. Godspeed” I nodded, jumped the last three rungs to the ground, and turned to  
face the courtyard. I had a mission.

By the time I had reached the castle moat, I was out of breath. I scanned the outline of  
the moat. Nothing. I snuck around the edge of the castle wall and stopped when I spotted a  
loose brick. I pulled it and it fell out of its place, revealing a black metal handle. I gave it a tug  
and a section of the brick wall swung open. Inside was a rotted old raft. My father had showed it  
to me one summer day a few years ago. He had fashioned it out of old bedposts that people  
had put in the wood yard. My father had been a carpenter and had exclusive access to the yard  
and all its contents. He had wanted something to escape in if the time ever came that the castle  
was in danger. It had been dangerous to have built it, but I was grateful for it now. I pulled it out  
and swung it onto the murky water of the moat. In the back of the small chamber where the boat  
was hidden, I found the paddle and pulled it out. It was very crude, a pole with a thin slab of  
wood tied onto the end with twine. I laid my paddle on the raft and jumped on myself. Kneeling  
down, I stuck my oar into the water and began to paddle. The raft was shaky, the twine holding  
everything together seemed very uncertain. My hands were jittering with excitement. This was  
the biggest adventure of my life! My dad would have been proud! My dad, I missed him  
sometimes, he had been the only person in my life after my mother had died. He had been an  
innovator, an inventor, a creator. He would have loved something like this, a mission where he  
would have to rely on his wits and skill alone to accomplish something.

“BOOM!”

A cannon fired in the distance and I snapped back to attention. I paddled hurriedly to the opposite shore of the moat and jumped onto dry land. The raft promptly sank into the water and disappeared. It had been feeling shaky the whole ride anyway and had multiple leaks. I did a full turn around to check for any attackers but did not find any. I gave the castle one final look. It had been my home for nearly fourteen years.

“Goodbye” I whispered. I turned and sprinted into the woods.

It was as if my body was on autopilot. I leaped over logs and swung under dangling tree branches with an agility I had never known. The adrenaline coursing through me acted as fuel, I ran faster than I had ever run before. Every time I thought of the magnitude of my mission and its outcome on the castle if I failed, I was spurred on to greater speeds. The trail was not widely used and was extremely rough and thick with creepers and bushes of all varieties. In some parts it was even non-existent. I ran for hours until the sun began to sink into the distant mountains. My body grew weaker and weaker until I tripped on a root and fell flat on my face. I tried to get up but found that my body didn't respond. I understood. I needed rest. I was no use to the castle if I had no energy. I lay down on the cold ground and closed my eyes. I fell asleep immediately.

I awoke to the sounds of dogs barking. I opened my eyes cautiously and sat up. Off the side of the trail, a hundred or so yards away, I could see a pack of wild dogs. They were thin, all of them but one, the leader, judging by his sleek coat and muscular physique. He was confident, striding around like he owned the place. His coat was a dark, chestnut brown. He paused for a moment to sniff the air. They were out hunting and had just arrived recently, judging by the fact that I wasn't dead. I sat up quietly and tiptoed to the nearest tree. The leader whipped his head around and spotted me. He gave a great bark and bounded towards me. I had just enough time

to scramble up the tree to avoid getting my leg was ripped off. The pack surrounded the tree and snapped at my feet, saliva spewing from their pink tongues and razor sharp teeth. This was bad. A pack of feral dogs can and will kill a human if given the chance. Wait, What was that? I listened carefully, over the sounds of barking. Off in the distance I could hear water, river currents, to be precise. That could be my chance. I found a dead branch on the tree and pulled. It came off with a dry "Snap!" I reached back with my arm and gave the stick a mighty throw. It flew over the watching heads of the dogs and hit a tree far away with a dull thud. The hounds turned in unison and hesitated only a fraction of a second before running after it. I leaped from the tree and sprinted faster than I had ever sprinted before. I heard the angry barks of the dogs as they realized they had been fooled. They grew more insistent and louder as the hounds drew nearer. I leaped the last few meters into the raging currents just as the big leader ripped at my pant leg viciously and the left side tore away. I didn't care, I was safe. I waded across the speedy waters, listening to the furious yaps of the dogs behind me. I was feeling pretty pleased with myself, I had sure outsmarted them! I looked behind me and stuck my tongue out. "Nahahhhh" I jeered. Suddenly, the current strengthened, my legs were whisked out from under me, and I promptly hit the back of my skull on a rock. I felt my eyes roll back into my head and I blacked out.

I woke to the icy cold water on my face. My head was aching, like someone had smashed it with a stone hammer. I opened my eyes and looked around. I was on a small strip of beach on the edge of the river, surrounded by thick foliage. I looked down the river, there was a small path that ran along the edge of the water. I stood up groggily and started down the trail. My legs were wobbly and nearly gave out on me more than once. I stumbled along for a few minutes more until I spotted a ramshackle outpost, small enough to fit two men at most. I heard voices from inside and hobbled over. The voices stopped and I heard one whisper, "Hey, did you hear that?"

“Yeah!”

The door swung open wildy and a startled looking guard pointed a knife at me,

“Oi! What ya doing? Who are you?”

“Jack, he's just a kid! Calm down!” Exclaimed the second man who appeared a few seconds later, looking wary. I raised my hands in the air but the effort made me woozy and I collapsed into the arms of the first man. He grunted in surprise and shouted for his companion. The last thing I saw was the panicked faces of the guards and the beautiful green forest.

“Is he going to be alright?”

“Yes, he's fine, just got a nasty bonk on the noggin.”

I slowly opened my eyes. I was in a hospital ward. A doctor and a handsomely dressed man in a deep purple robe, with gold threads were speaking. I watched as the man approached me, smiling a warm, gentle smile. The smile was familiar, but I couldn't put my finger on it.

“How are you feeling? You got a pretty bad lump on your head!”

My head. The memories of my journey and my mission came flooding back to me. I sat bolt upright in my bed. My vision gave a dizzying wave and my head pounded.

“Sir! My castle is under attack!”

His brow furrowed and a worried look passed over his face.

“What? Where do you live boy?”

“A few days walk from here sir, in the castle of Azemar.”

I saw a look of surprise crossed his face but it was gone in an instant.

“Guard!”

He called and a soldier hurried in, armed with a spear. He whispered something and the guard nodded, “Yes m'lord!”

"It's all taken care of, we've sent reinforcement to Azemar. There's nothing to worry about now lad. The troops will be there by tomorrow evening." He told me, a warm smile on his wrinkled face. The smile, again, I recognized it,

"Who are you?" I asked.

"My name is Luke Abraham, lord of this castle."

My mind was reeling,

"But, but, you can't be!" I stammered

Now I knew where I recognized the smile from.

"Abraham? But, that was my dad's name!"

"What's your father's name?" He questioned.

"John. John Abraham."

Tears welled up in his eyes.

"Oh my lord" he whispered, "Son, John Abraham was my brother."

## Epilogue

I spent the rest of my days in Aesthia, the castle of my uncle. Every once in awhile a certain feisty redheaded Scot would come to pay his respects to the lord and myself. Azemar had been saved by the extra troops and my quick running. Despite being a celebrated hero, there was little left for me in Azemar. I was happiest in Aesthia with my new found uncle and his family. Besides, there was unexplored land for me to discover here, and many adventures to have. I was ready to start a new chapter in my life.

**The End**

