

THE SCYTHIAN TORCHLIGHT SHOOT

The Scythian peoples of the steppes were well known for their prowess as fast and deadly horse archers and, in some cases, were even better known for the fear they struck in their enemies. Some stories tell of Scythian archers captured by Roman armies that became so well respected, they were inducted as part of the standing forces. But this was a dangerous gamble on the part of the Romans, who soon learned that captured Scythians were no less dangerous as slaves and conscripts than they were as free men of the northern wilderness.

One such story tells the tale of Argret, a young Scythian captured by a Roman contubernium under the command of a Decanus called Titus Axius. Argret was put to work and watched closely by his captors, because they had seen his speed and accuracy with a bow in battle. But what they did not know was that Argret had not been forgotten by his Scythian brethren, and for two years he had been planning the demise of his captors with a mind and heart as unforgiving as the lands of his birth.

It was late one night when Argret left the tent of Titus Axius following the evening meal. It was his duty to care for the Roman's animals and travel gear, so he knew that his presence among the darkened tents would not arouse suspicion. He lit a single lamp and made his way slowly through the tent line.

The Romans, wearily settling in for the night, never saw what was coming. On the far hill, hidden among the brush and branches, lay the archers of Argret's Scythian tribe. As the boy walked among the canvas bars of his prison, the light of his meager lamp lit the cloth of the tents as he passed, just enough to cast the silhouettes of the slumbering Romans against the walls of their camp. It was then that the Scythians struck.

Silent and merciless, the arrows rained down from the darkness and split through the tent coverings, felling the soldiers within. And so Argret proceeded, noiseless footfalls through the grass, towards the Centurion's tent.



The Scythian Torchlight shoot re-enacts the events of the story of Argret. The archers on the line will take on the roles of the Scythian band lying in wait to rescue their captured comrade. The targets, tacked to a hay wall backing, each represent a Roman soldier of the contubernium (life-sized, human-shaped, targets painted in black paint on a white, muslin, cloth). The targets should consist of eight legionnaires in various poses, the Decanus, and finally, the Centurion.

A few feet in front of the target line, the event organizer sets up a small lantern (bring a few spares in case it gets hit by a stray arrow) on a rolling or sliding platform drawn by a rope, which begins at the far left-hand side of the range. The rope is attached to the base of the platform and lays across the ground in front of the target faces, loops around a stake at the far right-hand side of the range, and runs up the range to the person responsible for drawing it across the field.

As the lantern passes, the archers on the line must take aim and shoot each of the Roman targets as it is revealed. But remember, these Romans are in armor and only a head or heart shot counts as a kill. Each archer who successfully fells a Roman will move on to the next round against the Decanus (the other archers must stay behind to chase down the Roman legionnaires who have survived the initial attack).

In the round against the Decanus, only a head or heart shot will defeat him. Any archers who successfully fell the Decanus can move on to the final round, the Centurion (the remaining archers must stay behind to ensure that no other soldiers have heard the commotion).

The Centurion, who appears to be still wearing his impressive helm, can only be defeated by a well-placed head or heart shot. The archer who fells the Centurion will rescue Argret and earn his gratitude (the final torchlight shoot prize).

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