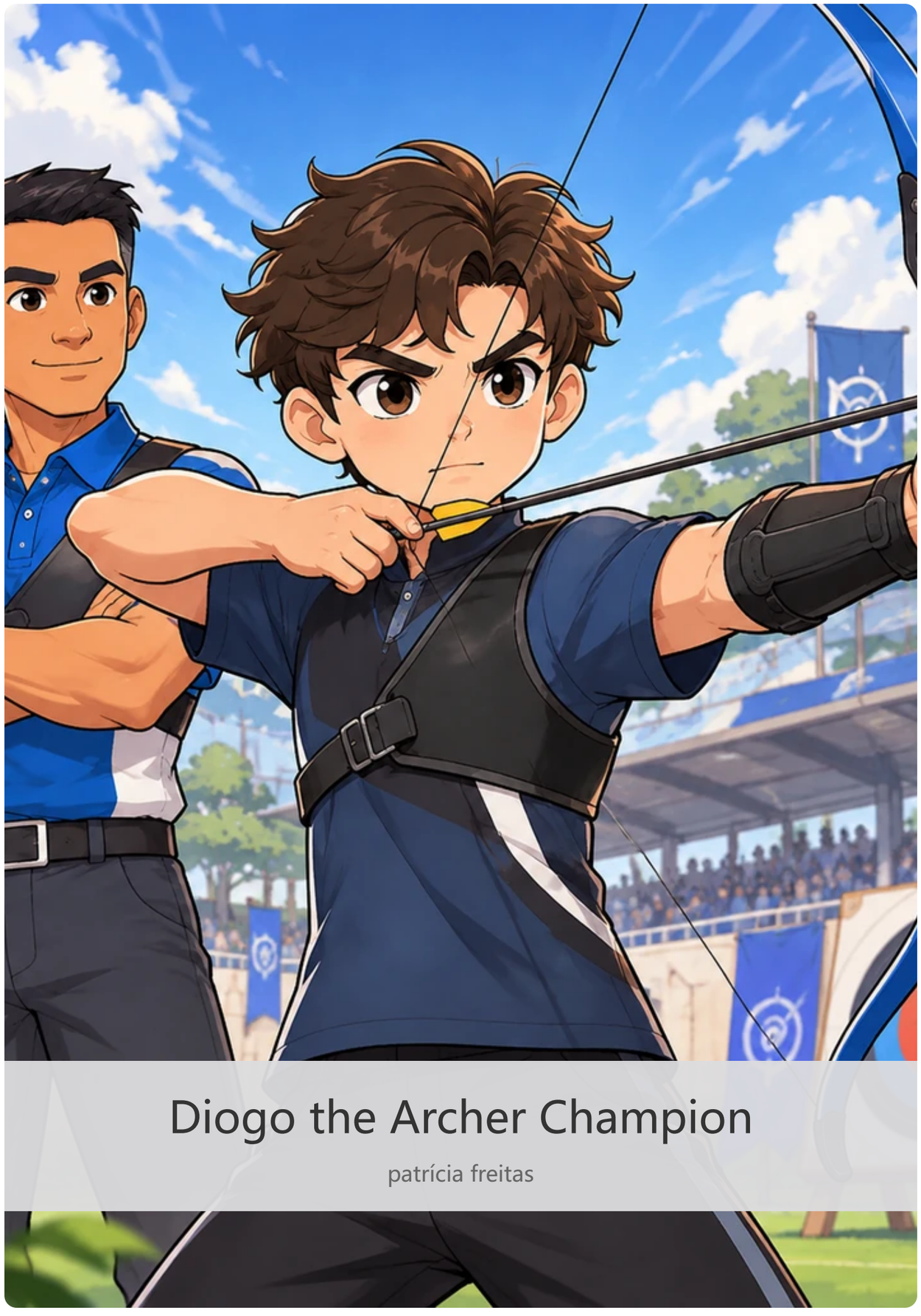


Diogo the Archer Champion

patrícia freitas



Diogo slumped his shoulders, glancing reluctantly at the heavy wooden bow lying in the grass. The afternoon sun beat down on the archery range, making the target seem incredibly far away. He wished he were anywhere else, feeling completely out of place among the other eager students.



Coach Silva patiently adjusted Diogo's grip on the bowstring, demonstrating the correct stance. Diogo tried to focus, but his arms felt clumsy and the string snapped against his arm guard. He sighed, watching his arrow wobble and miss the large target entirely, embedding itself in the straw bale below.



During a break, Diogo watched a classmate effortlessly release an arrow that soared gracefully, hitting the inner rings. Instead of frustration, a flicker of curiosity ignited within him. Maybe, just maybe, there was a secret technique he hadn't grasped yet.



The next practice session, Diogo arrived early. He carefully mimicked the steady, balanced posture Coach Silva had shown him. Taking a deep breath, he pulled the string back smoothly, focusing intently on the small yellow center of the target.



He released. *Thwack!* The arrow embedded itself firmly in the red ring, not quite the center, but significantly closer than before. A small smile touched Diogo's lips, and he quickly reached for another arrow, feeling a newfound sense of determination.



Weeks turned into diligent practice. Diogo began arriving even earlier, spending hours perfecting his form and aim. The once awkward bow now felt natural in his hands, and the consistent sound of arrows striking the target became a rhythm he looked forward to.



One afternoon, under a clear blue sky, Diogo drew his bow, took careful aim, and released. The arrow flew true, piercing the exact center of the bullseye. He stared for a moment, then cheered, realizing his hard work was truly paying off.



The day of the regional tournament arrived, and the range was bustling with competitors and spectators. Diogo felt nervous but prepared as he took his place. He focused purely on his breathing and technique, tuning out the noise.



During the final round, Diogo stepped up for his last three shots, the pressure immense. He calmly executed each shot, his arrows grouped tightly in the gold center. The crowd applauded, impressed by his steady performance.



The awards ceremony was filled with excitement. When the announcer called 'First Place and Regional Champion: Diogo!', a roar of applause erupted. He stood proudly on the podium, trophy in hand, completely transformed from the reluctant boy he had once been.