

Ben Solomon
In

Destiny Diverted

By Don Clifford

Chapter 4: Sabotage

“Sire, your chief stable steward wishes an audience.”

The king looked up from his writing table. “Do you know what he wants, Ahishar?”

“Something about the boy’s chariot, Sire.”

Solomon rolled up the papyrus sheet he wrote on and said, “Send him in.”

Ahishar ushered in the steward who dragged in a cracked length of painted wood attached to a wheel axle. The king rose from his seat and beckoned the steward to him. “What do you bring me, Jahath?”

“Evidence of sabotage, Sire.”

The king frowned. “By all means, tell me what you have.”

Jahath held up the pieces of wreckage. “This is the drawbar from the prince’s chariot. If you look closely, you will see that someone sawed it more than half way through.”

Solomon bent over for a closer look. He ran his finger over the smooth part of the cut to the jagged edge where the drawbar broke. “Why did no one see this before?”

“Because the cut was well hidden, Sire. Notice the sawdust. The person responsible packed it into the saw blade’s kerf and then painted it to match the drawbar’s color.”

The king rubbed his thumb and fingers together and felt the grittiness cling to his hand. “I see what you mean.”

Jahath continued. “It’s a good thing the prince’s chariot crashed into a wall.”

“I don’t understand.”

“The wall forced the chariot’s momentum straight ahead and blocked the vehicle from further sideways travel. Whoever committed this act designed the cut to break during a tight swerve and send the chariot spinning into the ponies. In a wide open area, no telling what serious injuries would have occurred.”

Solomon straightened up and motioned to Ahishar. “Thank you, Jahath. Your keen observations will

be rewarded. Ahishar will see you out.”

When the king and his administrator were alone, Ahishar threw his hands up in anguish. “Who could have done such a thing?”

“I’m not sure,” Solomon said. “I have a suspicion, but I must first speak with the queen. Meanwhile, call upon Benaiah and Azariah. Apprise the commanders of what we just learned. Tell them we have an enemy in our midst that we must find. When they have a plan, have them report to me.”

“Yes, Sire.” Ahishar bowed low and departed.

Later, in the queen’s quarters, Solomon made himself comfortable on a lounge cushion. “Sharelli, tell me again of that incident between Abel and the Kemetian soldier.”

“Nothing much to tell. The soldier called Abel a bastard. The boy retaliated and gashed his leg with the sling.”

“The boy has spunk, that’s for sure. But there must have been something more.”

Sharelli hesitated before she said, “Something did happen but I could never draw the boy out to tell me what it was.”

“I’m listening.”

“A couple of days after the sling incident, Abel ran pell-mell into our quarters, frightened as though a lion chased him. After I calmed him down I went to the entrance where a man ranting and raving tried to persuade our bodyguards to let him through. The man was Mishak, brother of the captain that Abel injured. He did not say why he chased our son with a sword. I ordered our guards to kill him if he or his brother ever threatened us again...I’ll never forget the look in his eyes.”

Solomon was on his feet. “Why did you not tell me of this?”

“We have not heard or seen either of the two since. I assumed the matter dropped.” Sharelli watched her husband pace back and forth. “Why does this trouble you, Sire?”

“The boy is in danger.”

Sharelli shot up from her seat. “How could this be?”

Solomon told her of the sabotage discovery. “After what you said, the incident no longer surprises me. The Kemetians have long memories. Apparently, this one bided his time and struck when he found an opportune moment.”

“Hurry! Call him back!” Sharelli was near hysteria. “We must protect him!”

Solomon drew his wife into his arms. “Calm down, my love. As long as he is with the Bedouin and far from here, he is in no immediate danger.” The king was not convinced but kept his thoughts to himself. All

this because of a boy's temper?

"I've already sent a message to the Bedouin apprising him of the situation. He will do his utmost to protect the boy."

© 2011 Don Clifford