

Dahveed and Jonathan Deal with Mahesa and his Charge.

I did manage an hour or two of sleep before daylight. Messengers from Libni and the three units with him reported that they had chased the Philistines down to the Shephelah, and were now returning in good order. About the third hour, I stopped at the hassar's tent.

The growls coming from it warned me that the hassar was in a bad mood. Dara came out, looking annoyed. Make that a very bad mood.

"How is he?" I asked.

"His leg is badly swollen."

"He can rest all day. I plan on staying here until we know for certain what the Philistines will do next. Has Mahesa had anything to eat this morning?" I indicated the Egyptian lying outside the tent.

"No."

"Dara!" the hassar's voice roared.

"I'll take care of the Egyptian," I said helpfully, "that way you can deal with the hassar."

Dara gave me a look that said much, and turned back to the tent.

I went to the officer. "Mahesa."

He opened his eyes, his look blank for a couple seconds until his memory returned. Seeing me standing by him, he quickly rolled to his knees, wincing as he moved. "What is your command, adoni?"

"Stand up."

He rose stiffly, and I turned him around, untying the bonds on his hands. He turned back, working his fingers a few times.

"Thank you, adoni."

Wondering if I could be as dignified as he was if our positions were reversed, I led him to my tent, and Ahiam gave him something to eat. Then I took him to the ravine where men from the 14th unit still held the rest of his party.

"Call them out," I said.

"They will live, adoni, and return to Egypt?" Mahesa asked as I caught a glimpse of his continued fear and uncertainty.

"Yes."

He walked across the road and approached dip into the ravine where his companions had taken shelter. "Debaset," he called, continuing in Egyptian.

A voice replied, and he said something more. I caught the words, 'El Shaddai' and a young man of about 14 years appeared at the edge of the trees. He stayed still for several moments, and then walked steadily to Mahesa, even though his legs were shaking noticeably. Another youth, a little older came next, and then more until about seven of them had gathered around the Egyptian officer.

When the first archer appeared, I noticed the tension in the men of the 14th unit. "Let them come," I ordered.

The men eased back. Twenty archers eventually emerged from the trees, and I noted that they positioned themselves evenly around the group of young men, clearly ready to make a fight of it even now.

Mahesa knelt to me. "May they go, adoni?"

"How long has it been since they had anything to eat or drink?" I asked.

“Some time yesterday morning,” he replied, startled.

“I would not send them away hungry and thirsty. Bring them into camp. I’ll detail an escort to the border as well. Otherwise, you may be attacked on the way.”

“You are gracious, adoni,” Mahesa replied, but I could tell he was worried that I had not released them immediately.

The men from the 14th unit closed around the Egyptians, and escorted them to my tent. Soon enough food and wine arrived from the quartermaster to feed them. Jonathan appeared while they were eating.

“So, you got them out,” he commented.

I noticed his leg was splinted as if it was broken.

“Dara said it would slow me down,” he explained sourly. “The Egyptian looks worried.”

“Since I didn’t release them immediately, he’s wondering if we’re going to kill them after all.”

“I also thought it might be a good idea to escort them to the border,” I added.

Suddenly, that wicked gleam appeared in the Hassar’s eyes. “I think that’s a very good idea,” he agreed. “Bring the officer to me,” he said to Josheb, who stood guard at my tent. My retainer went to Mahesa and brought him.

Seeing the hassar, he knelt again. “You sent for me, adoni?”

“Dahveed has told me that he will provide an escort for you to our borders.”

“Yes, adoni. We are grateful for his concern.”

“We are indeed very concerned. It wouldn’t do for something to happen to your charges while they traveled in our country. The 14th unit will travel with your companions to the north border at Dan, and they may go anywhere they wish from there.”

I kept my eyes down, undecided about whether I liked what the hassar had done or not. My promise had not been broken, but it certainly wasn’t fulfilled the way Mahesa had expected. Since he was a captive, there wasn’t much he could do about it, but I wasn’t entirely certain this was an honorable way to handle the situation. However,

“The north border is a long way. You do not need to take such trouble, adoni. The Shephelah is but a few miles behind us.”

“It will be the north border, Egyptian. You will accompany us to Gibeah so that we can properly supply you for the journey. From there, we will provide guides and escorts to Dan.”

Mahesa bowed again, looking at the ring on Jonathan’s hand. “Do I have the word of Israel’s Hassar on this?”

“You do.”

“We are in your hands,” he said.