

Dahveed is Demoted to Commander of the Second Unit.

Back at the fortress, Jonathan led the way into the throne room. One look at his face, and every courtier there bowed, including Abner, who still favored his side. The king was absent, whether because he was afraid of me, or still angry at Abner, I didn't know. But I doubted the latter.

Jonathan took the throne and Eshbaal stood at his right hand. In the corner, the spear handle still lay where I'd thrown it, and the spear head had not yet been pried from the wall. Neither had the ties for the curtains been replaced. Obviously, Sahrah Michal hadn't returned to her duties. I hoped she was all right.

"The Dahveed ben Jesse come forward," the hassar commanded.

I walked forward and knelt. "I am here, adoni."

"You have been general of Israel's armies to the king. He has removed the title from you. It is your duty to surrender the mantle of office back to the king."

"As the king wishes," I said, holding it up. Sar Eshbaal took it.

"Abner ben Ner, come forward." Taking the mantle from Eshbaal, Jonathan stood.

"Abner, the king has declared that you shall be the general of his armies at his pleasure."

Abner bowed his head slightly. "As the king wishes," he said, unable to completely hide the satisfaction in his voice.

The hassar fastened the mantle around Abner's shoulders with a new brooch Eshbaal gave him. Abner's face darkened when he saw the tear in the mantle, and he cast a disgusted glance my way.

Jonathan turned to me again. "Dahveed, the king has declared that you shall be a commander of a thousand to him instead of general."

My heart sank, all hope of finally seeing my family fading away. "I will serve as the king wishes," I said.

"General Abner, does a new unit need to be raised for Commander Dahveed?"

"Not at the moment," Abner replied. "He can replace Jarib in the second unit."

Anger crossed the hassar's face. I shook my head slightly. He hesitated, and I shook it again.

"Very well. A new commander will inspire the unit and give you the chance to bring equipment and fighting ability up to the usual standard. An excellent plan, General. I'll be out in a day or two to review the unit."

The look on Abner's face clearly said he'd planned nothing of the kind, but he dared not say so. "Yes, Hassar," he replied.

His tone boded ill for me. Anyone else could have resigned, but the king had taken me personally, and I might be forced to endure this for an indeterminate time. My stomach roiled at the thought.

"Yah, go before me," I pleaded in my mind. "Make a place for me somehow."

"You will report for duty in the morning, Commander," Jonathan continued. "Will that be satisfactory, General?"

"Yes, Hassar."

"You are dismissed, Dahveed."

I left the room.