



Recap:

Yosef is critically ill and the sheikh summons a doctor for an emergency examination. The doctor explains that Yosef's weakness is a result of a traumatic experience. He warns Sheikh Abdullah that the child might suffer from amnesia. His memories of the past six years would be erased. The sheikh is ecstatic and plans to introduce himself to Yosef — or Abdul, as he would be known — as his uncle. At last, after several tense days, Yosef awakens.

"The child has regained consciousness," the sheikh said with relief. "Wonderful."

With measured steps, he approached the room where his would-be son and heir was sitting up in bed.

"I must be careful," Sheikh Abdullah mumbled to himself. "I must convince this little *Yahud* that my story is true, down to the last fabricated detail. I am his uncle. His name is Abdul and he is — or was — my brother's son. His parents both died during a deadly plague, and I brought him to my palace. I will raise him as a son."

As he stepped into the room, he was engulfed by momentary panic. What if the doctor's prediction was proven false? Maybe the little boy had retained his memory, despite the trauma he had experienced?

There was nothing to do but hope for the best. Sheikh Abdullah walked over to Yosef's bed and looked down at him with undisguised satisfaction.

Nothing remained of the innocent little Jewish boy who had been brought to his palace just one week

previous. Mustafa had deftly snipped the boy's *simanim* while he had been unconscious, and his Jewish clothing had been burned to cinders. The sheikh had ordered a complete new wardrobe for the child. It was comprised of royal, expensive garments as befit the son of an Arabic sheikh.

"Abdul!" the sheikh exclaimed warmly. "My sweet little Abdul!"

Yosef looked at the stranger with blatant suspicion. He didn't recognize him, though the man appeared to know him well.

"Who are you?" Yosef asked, his voice quivering with confusion. "And — who am I?"

The little boy didn't know what to think. He couldn't summon up even a single memory of his childhood or identity. He was adrift in a world that was completely unfamiliar.

"I'm your uncle, the exalted sheikh of Sana'a," was the definite, self-assured reply. "And you, Abdul — you are my beloved nephew."

"Abdul," Yosef repeated, rolling the word on his tongue. "Abdul. It's so strange. Even my name sounds unfamiliar!"

"You were terribly ill," the sheikh reassured him. "You were unconscious for weeks on end! We nearly lost you, Abdul."

"What — what happened to me?" Yosef wanted to know.

The sheikh took a deep breath. Fabricating and repeating long-winded stories was no simple task!

"The plague, Abdul," he finally said. "Don't you remember the terrible plague that swept through your city? So many people died."

Yosef shook his head.

"Try to remember, my child," the sheikh encouraged him. "I'm sure it will all come back to you."

But Yosef merely shook his head again, pools of distress clouding his eyes.

"Forget it," the sheikh said, secretly relieved. "Don't exert yourself, Abdul. The doctor warned me that this might happen. Due to the severity of your illness, you forgot everything. You don't even remember your parents who died during the awful plague."

"My — my parents?!"

Yosef closed his eyes for a moment. He bit his lips, trying to swallow the desperate cries that were pushing their way out of his throat. How could he have forgotten his own parents?!

"Yes, your parents," the sheikh sighed. "They died several weeks ago, when you were already so sick. I quickly traveled to your city as soon as I heard the terrible news, and I loaded you into my carriage. As soon as you arrived in my palace, you started showing signs of improvement. I was so scared that I would lose you, too!"

Yosef looked at the sheikh and felt a wave of gratitude welling up within him. His uncle had saved his life! True, he couldn't remember his parents and even this kind uncle seemed like a complete stranger, but he would never forget what Uncle Abdullah had done for him.

"I think it succeeded," Sheikh Abdullah whispered to Mustafa. "The child believes me. He knows that his memory was wiped clean and he therefore relies on me to supply him with all the information he's missing. I'm his devoted uncle, after all!"

Mustafa was relieved. He knew that he had climbed several rungs of the societal ladder by helping Sheikh Abdullah obtain his dream child.

"I won't forget this, Mustafa," the sheikh said, as though reading his mind. "Believe me, you will be well compensated for your efforts!"

"Compensated?" Mustafa replied with mock disdain. "I do not seek compensation. I did this for you, my dear friend. I'm glad that I was able to be of assistance."

Yosef regained his strength, slowly but steadily. After two long weeks, the doctor finally permitted him to get out of bed.

"Now, don't overdo it, young man," the doctor warned. "I said you can get out of bed, but that does not mean you can go running around as little boys love to do."

"I won't, I won't run around," Yosef promised him. "I'll walk slowly so that I won't get tired."

And Yosef did just that. He walked along the rambling corridors, tentatively opening each door he passed. He saw large, empty rooms full of artistic paintings. He peeked into sitting rooms and conference rooms and he couldn't get enough of the opulence that surrounded him.

The sheikh bought mounds of gifts; every day something new. Yosef had so many toys that he didn't know what to play with first. He felt like the luckiest little boy in all of Yemen.

Occasionally, he wondered about his parents — the brother and sister-in-law of his beloved uncle. The memories ran away from him, leaving just a blank curtain in their place. It wasn't all that difficult to push those bothersome thoughts aside and to make himself comfortable in the lap of luxury.

"Abdul!" the sheikh called out to him one morning. "Come to the table, please."

Yosef ran to his uncle with a smile. "Uncle Abdullah! Is it true that tomorrow I'll begin learning with my private tutor?"

"At last!" the sheikh smiled. "With your brilliant mind, you will certainly make great strides. You will grow up to be a respected sheikh, just like your dear uncle!"

Yosef's appetite had returned in full force and he joined his uncle for breakfast. He ate everything that was served. The sheikh was thrilled to see the empty plates piling up near him.

"The *Yahud* doesn't remember his obsessions with kosher food," he thought gleefully. "Abdul is an Arab, through and through. He will be mine forever!"

To be continued...