

S. E. SKELTON

CONFESSIONS OF A TRICKER MOTHER

I tried to tell you, you know. That we were wrong before. Sharing, my dear, is not the same as ruling over another. Even if they could have gotten along well enough to inherit together, that's not what was foretold.

But they were born at the same time – and different as night and day. At the time, we thought we were so clever. I'd teach the little one all I knew about trade and crafts (or as you liked to say, bring up the next family delinquent). You would build on Esau's strength, and make him a great hunter (I said, "if possible, don't sacrifice the child"). We thought if they were different enough, maybe they would never find anything in common to covet.

I can't blame us, even now. All we wanted were children, safe and happy. And then that prophesy: the elder shall serve the younger. Come on now, how do you raise children under that? *"listen firstborn, you give that toy to your brother; might was well just get used to it now!"* How could we not try to reason ourselves out of it? And how could I shake you out of your hope, when you loved Esau so? Really, what else could I do but quietly plan?

But you're still not caught up, are you dearest? You see, I've been following a different plot since they were about ten. It was just an ordinary fight, but the truth was impossible to ignore; written all over two upturned, indignant faces:

*"mother, Jacob pushed me into a puddle"*

*"mum, he was just standing there, he had plenty of time to get out of the way"*

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*“How does that mean I WANTED to be pushed?”*

Jacob has just never understood how annoying his tricks are. Poor Esau has never been able to look at the possibilities of a situation; he just can't help expecting things to happen in the most obvious way possible

So that was when I knew, really. I ignored every thing before that. The prophesy while they were in my womb, Jacob's strangely competitive birth, their emerging personalities, and the way we split our children, on to each. All that history, all the fighting! And somehow, it took a mud puddle to shake me out of denial. They could never had shared your legacy.

After that, I started planning; I even talked you into giving your blessing yesterday, although you probably have almost as many years left yet as I. The birthright wasn't my own idea though. That was all Jacob (yes I *realize* I taught him, but he is his own man now). But, I did script the blessings – I knew how to make you think it was Esau. Even this, sending him off to the care of Laban (or hopefully one of my nieces), was forethought.

Its not as if we are sending him off into the wilderness, you know. Laban is family, and besides, if Jacob was capable of marriage to one of the local airheads, he'd have already gotten hitched. He is your heir now, and he needs the right kind of girl. This is best, don't you see?

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He resents me, too, for whatever that's worth. Not that I grudge Jacob his resentment, its not as if I was straightforward about the whole thing. Of course I knew he would have to run the whole time. Jacob couldn't just eclipse Esau's whole future and expect him to take it lying down. Can you blame me for not exactly highlighting that point? I mean, come on how would it have gone? *"Listen Jacob, its easy to get your blessing, all it will cost is prolonged exile with my side of the family. Sound good?"*

That's beyond even my persuasive touch! So, I lied, I said I could handle you, and that you would handle Esau. I told him that things would settle down, but I obviously wasn't willing to risk the whole thing on whether you would actually step in with Esau.

And really, he must be annoyed at himself, that was such an obvious lie. I had expected him to be a bit warier of me. But if Jacob hasn't had the naivety knocked out of him yet, my family can certainly teach him to watch his back.

And if one of them must be chosen, can't you see it is better him than his brother? Jacob can handle exile, and handle trickery, and the whims of this God. Esau will protect the land until things settle down. Don't you understand, my love, things have to be like this?