

False destiny



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

As William Shakespeare once said “ It is not in the stars to hold our destiny, but in ourselves.” In several cases this holds true, and we believe so as we are constantly searching for ways to better our futures and distinguish our destiny from those of others. The methods in which we search for such ways exist in our understanding of how cause and consequence plays out in the world. It is believed that employing kindness is a tool for receiving kindness, thus we follow a system of being kind to those who are useful to us. In Peter Shaffer’s *Amadeus*, Antonio Salieri follows exactly this system in his treatment towards the world renowned composer Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart, with an underlying motive of attempting to shape out his future destiny in a world without Mozart. Salieri’s bitter treatment towards Mozart in the beginning is contrasted with his false kindness and hospitality when Mozart is in need, and highlights Salieri’s recognition of employing kindness to achieve personal gain for himself. Shaffer uses Salieri’s changing treatment of Mozart to explore the idea that the role of kindness becomes increasingly more important when an individual attempts to determine and better their destiny; however, this determination can only remain as merely an attempt.

With a burning desire to create an image of greatness and to essentially be the best there is, there is often little that can get in the way, especially for an individual as strong-headed as Salieri. When Mozart enters the grandiose life of Court Composer Antonio Salieri, bitterness and discontent replace Salieri’s happiness and joy, quickly turning Salieri into one of Mozart’s greatest enemies. With a dream to create a destiny that would lead him to be the greatest composer there is, Salieri became jealous of the stolen spotlight

Mozart held, and fought to regain every shred of fame that he had once had. The understanding that Mozart was in fact a much more talented and superior music maker to himself drove Salieri into insanity, and thus his destiny to be the greatest was quickly destroyed. Salieri initially continued to believe that Mozart was merely a bump in his road to success; however, he soon realized that the increasing talent of Amadeus Mozart would only cover his work with more and more layers of tasteless notes and inharmonious chords. Salieri began working more furiously towards his success as a composer, using his political status and knowledge of the Emperor to fight off the incredible threat that was Mozart. These acts against Mozart, and the overall developed hatred of Mozart's musical ability was Salieri's defense to the belief that his destiny was being harmed. The kindness and respect that Salieri gives to the Emperor, and figures of equal status, contrasts the bitterness that Salieri treats Mozart with, and also highlights Salieri's understanding of the kindness required to achieve personal gain. Salieri bows down to the Emperor and meets his every request in an effort to gain more and more status, which works temporarily, but does not get him to the status that pure talent got Mozart to. The desire to shape his destiny in the direction of pure, individual fame pushed Salieri to think of more creative ways to eliminate Mozart, leading eventually to an idea that mirrors, instead of contrasts, his Salieri's treatment towards the Emperor, however with the hope of a slightly different result.

False understandings of success can be quite a convincing motive for continuing to pursue the current method of action, and Salieri's several backdoor moves were examples of this. When the realization that Mozart's

fame could not be avoided by ignorance and passivity, Salieri began taking action to eliminate Mozart through false kindness. The seemingly corruptive results of Salieri "helping" Mozart pushed Salieri to continue to walk Mozart into danger zones of defeat and demise, hoping for a complete eradication of Mozart and all his fame, leaving only Salieri's own work to shine through. To gain the trust of Mozart and lead him to his death, Salieri worked on befriending Mozart, giving him seemingly good job opportunities and helping him compose while he was sick. The kindness and hospitality that Salieri treated Mozart with during this time was completely a result of Salieri's attempt to help his own cause, and was employed for personal gain only. Each of Salieri's actions hurt Mozart a little more every time, and Mozart's naivety to the cause of such harmful actions led him to seek comfort in the conveniently available Salieri. Salieri's corrupt behavior and manipulative nature led Mozart into a pitfall of disaster, taking him from fame and security, to complete disaster and demise. Mozart's disaster and demise however, was exactly what Salieri was in search of. Salieri's belief that Mozart's death would bury himself into non-existence allowed Salieri to also believe that he would be able to regain his fame as the top composer with no obstruction. With this being his only desired destiny, and Salieri's previous experience with using kindness to achieve personal gain, the decision to falsely help Mozart was inevitable. Salieri believed that his continuous success at harming Mozart would give him the destiny he desired, however this was not necessarily the case, and Salieri's realization of this came too late. From the dependency that Mozart developed towards Salieri, it was clear that Salieri's methods of kindness and backdoor deceit were working

well to harm Mozart, and this represents Shaffer's explanation of how kindness becomes more important in attempting to develop destiny.

The deceptive success that comes from a disfigured understanding of the truth can often result in more consequence than success, and such was the case for Salieri. The understanding that Mozart's death would bring Salieri success pushes Salieri to continue acting the way he does, ultimately leading him to insanity not success. The way Shaffer develops Salieri is reflective of a power-hungry individual whose sole desire is to have personal fame. This is apparent in the extreme measures that he takes to secure his power when he feels it is being threatened. Salieri's understanding of the manipulative measures he needs to take in order to get what he wants pushes him to act in irrational manners, despite the risk he is taking against his own morals and image. After realizing the need to manipulate Mozart, Salieri pushed it further, eventually indirectly killing him through the harm he imposed. The sole motive for these actions was a result of Salieri's personal desire and attempt to create a foolproof destiny that would lead to fame. Not only was Mozart treasured more fervently, but Salieri was looked down upon as crazy and out of his mind. Salieri's actions of false kindness were clearly indicative of his desire for fame, however as Shaffer illustrates, the desired result is not always the case. The increasing role of kindness in Salieri's treatment towards Mozart gave him the image of success that was needed to keep going; however, it also provided a false image of the reality for Salieri, which led him to his own eventual demise. By understanding the true consequences of Salieri's actions, it can be seen that an increasing role of

kindness only gave Salieri an attempt at shaping his destiny to fit his desires, and was unsuccessful overall.

Antonio Salieri's intense desire for fame and power is unwavering, and quite often harmful to his success. As a result, living under the shadow of a much more talented and revered composer proved to be quite difficult for Salieri, and resulted in Salieri's attempt to destroy this roadblock to success. The motivation to try and reshape his destiny to one that leads to fame came from Salieri's joy and happiness of being the Emperor's respected and well-loved Court Composer. The threat that Mozart posed to this joy and happiness caused uproar within Salieri's internal being, and he refused to live his life under this threat. Salieri's destiny was following a path of success, and when this path was blocked by Mozart, Salieri began to seek out methods of re-aligning the path. This included the false kindness that Salieri presents to the Emperor, and brought a sense of false success that Mozart would disappear and Salieri's work would be all that was left. The kindness that Salieri gave to Mozart increased as this false success increased; however, as Shaffer highlights, this success was false and led to the demise of Salieri, defining the role of happiness as a contributor to attempting to determine destiny, and the determination of destiny as the only thing it can be: an attempt.