

# Pageant Plot Pardon (ESTHER)

**A play in 3 Acts**

This is a work of fiction founded on the Biblical story of *Esther*.

E Marie Seltenrych

# Copyright Page

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## **Permission page**

This play has been adapted from the Bible story of *Esther* and shows the hand of the Almighty in the lives of Jewish captives in Susa, Persia.

Text is contemporary translation by the author, E Marie Seltenrych. Original text has been adapted to suit a contemporary play, with additional text added for dramatic effect; (author's prerogative.)

## **Stage Direction codes**

Stage directions are also included for convenience but can be altered at the Director's discretion.

Codes: (SR = Stage Right; SL = Stage left; US = Upstage; DS = Downstage CS = Centre stage. These are based on actors' on-stage perspectives.

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*Author's notes:*

This is a complex story with twists and turns that require a variety of scenes; a variety of spotlights can be used to indicate change of scene instead of changing a whole set.

Settings suggested could be quickly adapted by an artistic director to become a spectacular movie.

Actors can be larger than life and quite comical as some of the dialogue is humorous.

I have used the Septuagint along with the Massoretic text [ our usual originally sourced Bible ] for some verification of dates and information.

Part of this play (ladies quarters) has been rehearsed by a ladies group, with much laughter.<sup>1</sup>

In a smaller theatrical group, Actors could enjoy playing two or three characters.

*Marie Seltenrych July, 2010*

*(B. Min Malyon College, 2004;*

*Certificate of Acting*

*Brendan Smith Academy, 1969)*

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<sup>1</sup> GOAA's (girls of all ages); Margate Baptist Church, Qld; 2003

**Cast in order of appearance: (44+ parts)**

King Ahasuerus (Xerxes)

Princes: (7)

Mehuman,

Biztha,

Harbona,

Bigtha,

Abaghta,

Zethar

Carcas;

Advisers: (7)

Carshena

Shethar

Admatha

Tarshish

Meres

Marsena

Memucan –

(Servants) 2 or 3 or more

(Musicians on harps, flutes, drums)

Acrobats to do cartwheels: (2 or 3)

Queen Vashti and (10 private maids)

Marri (personal grooming maid)

Messi  
Karu (bedtime maid)  
Bevi  
Olli  
Ohilibah  
Weeni  
Tinni  
Genna  
Rutaz  
Mordecai (the Jew)  
Hadassah (a young Jewish girl)  
Hegai (Eunuch preparing virgins)  
Bighana (criminal)  
Teresh (criminal)  
Haman (destroyer)  
Caleb: Chronicler  
Rex (friend of Haman)  
Hero (friend of Haman)  
Zeresh (Haman's wife)  
Imga (seer)  
Artabanus (friend of Haman)  
Harbona (hangman)  
Hathach (Eunuch)

Extras: (As many as possible: 5 for stage; up to 1,000 if making a movie.)

**Notes for actor/director**

## Act 1

Stage setting: The King's quarters:

### Scene 1

*Music playing to suit Persia around 485 – 464BC<sup>2</sup>*

*Elaborate curtains in blue and white with purple ribbons attached to silver pillars. Mosaic art work on backdrop; marbled tiled courtyard leading to gardens; red, blue and gold paintings; couches of gold, silver with porphyry sparkling crystals such as mother of pearl etc. Large Wine urns around room. In other words, very elaborate and ornate.*

*King Ahasuerus (Xerxes) with his senior princes: Mehuman, Biztha, Harbona, Bigtha, Abaghta, Zethar and Carcas; his advisers: Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memucan – seven of the most highly regarded. Servants are fanning the king and princes with huge fans. They are also seen to be cleaning up as though a celebration is concluded.*

**Prince Mehuman:** (Read scroll.) For a time past of 180 days, His Majesty, King Ahasuerus has displayed the vast wealth of his great kingdom; its splendor and glory and his own glory by inviting all the nobles, military leaders and important people to enjoy his vast wealth and great kingdom. All have been treated with the utmost favour and respect; all

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<sup>2</sup> ESV Bible, 2007 (p849) <http://www.esvstudybible.org/online>

have wine and dine with the great King Ahasuerus himself (Fold scroll and bow to king.) Oh, King, you are the greatest in all the earth; and gracious. (All stand up and bow to king.)

**King:** (Relax and be proud.) Yes; that is true, every word. I have shown the nobles of this world how wonderful I am; given them six months of celebrations to share my wealth and great power. I have made this kingdom great; now it is over! (Look alarmed) What is there to do in life besides celebrating or going to war; building monuments or, (look very happy), enjoying my wives?

(All snicker as King snickers.)

**Mehuman:** Oh, King, may I suggest that you continue to show your great goodness and power by having special celebrations for all your personal nobles and best of your servants. That would truly show your graciousness to even your humble servants and everything will run smoothly in your kingdom...

**King:** What is your advice, wise men and princes of Persia?

(Princes huddle together and advisers huddle together in each side of the room)

**King:** What are you all whispering together? Time up. I need suggestions now; otherwise my irritation will flare up.

**Prince Mehuman:** (Bow low before the king.) Oh, Gracious Majestic King Ahasuerus, we honour you.

**King:** Please go on, Mehuman; what is your suggestion?

**Mehuman:** We suggest, oh great king over all the 127 provinces of this vast world...

**King:** Mehuman, if you don't come up with a suggestion in one second your head shall have a noose around it; then you may suggest something, yes?

**Mehuman:** (Rub neck) For all your personal nobles, vassals and servants, Oh, King; a private congratulatory event for a full seven days, celebrating the success you have made in all the world and even in your own palace.

**King:** What do the wise advisers say?

(Push Carshena forward.)

**Carshena:** Your Majesty: (bow), we suggest that every servant should have his fill of wine, whatever he desires for a full seven days...; yes, a full seven days, night and day...; day and night, for that time of seven...; (he looks for help by waving his hands behind his back).

**Shethar:** (Push him forward;) ...this will display your graciousness to all, whether great or small; show that you are truly the most generous and abundant king in the whole earth.

**King:** But, if the nobles and servants are having a banquet, who will serve them?

**Admatha:** (Push forward); Your Majesty, they shall serve each other, whatever they desire...

**Tarshish:** ...yes, Your Majesty, this will be a unique occasion in all the kingdoms of the earth, to display your magnificent generosity.

**King:** I am sure it will be; yes, it is a good idea. The Queen must do likewise with her maids and servants.

**Princes and Advisers:** What a wonderful idea! Unique idea, what a wonderful mind you have Oh, King.

**King:** Yes, I do have great ideas; that's why I'm the king. Now let us celebrate the palace nobles and servants banquet; I mean now!

(Seven advisers rush to give orders to servants around to bring wine, food and seating for special guests. Within a few minutes Musicians and acrobats enter.)

**King:** (Stand.) (All fall to the floor). I command everyone to enjoy themselves in a unique way: drink and eat whatever you wish for the next seven days and seven nights; you are my pleasure. (Sit on golden couch padded with blue, red and gold cushions; party begins.)

**Scene 2:**

*Stage directions: Dim lights, blackout for one or two minutes; lights up. Everyone is lying around, quite drunk. Dancers are falling over each other. King is slouched on couch; servant is fanning him and drinking, quite wobbly.*

King: (Wake up. Roar): The Queen! I want to see my Queen.  
Vashti; Vashti, where are you?

**Mehuman:** Your Majesty, shall we fetch her?

**King:** Yes, do that! At once; she is the most beautiful woman in the land; I must see her; you must see her beautiful form; (makes a female form with his hands, everyone goes, aah). Order her to come now.

**Mehuman:** Come on you lot; we've got to get the Queen. (Harbona, Biztha, Bigtha, Abagtha, Zethar and Carcas leave in drunken state, Carcas and Zethar protest for a moment but give in. Exit SR.)

### **Scene 3**

*Queen's quarters (backdrop can remain the same, with a colourful nylon curtain over back garden area entrance or some of the entrance covered to appear as different perspective of same scene).*

*Curtain from US to DS on one portion of stage to act as entry into quarters; audience can see actors; a sheer curtain can*

*also be used DS with just enough room for walkway and tight scenes.*

*Women are reclining on couches in main room: Vashti is seated on a throne with cushions; Marri is nearest the Queen; Bevi, Olli, Ohilibah, Weenie, Tinni, Genna, Rutaz, Hetta are reclining, drinking and eating grapes. Messi is off SL*

**Queen Vashti:** I have not seen my husband the king for many days now.

**Marri:** (Picking up a calendar). Exactly 197 days since Your Majesty was called to the king's bedchamber.

**Vashti:** Thank you, Marri, for reminding me of how long it has been! (Screw up face). You don't imagine the king is tired of my beauty do you?

**Marri:** (Bow.) Your Majesty is the most beautiful woman in the whole land of Persia, Drangiana, Babylonia, Media, Parthia, Sogdiana, Bactria;<sup>3</sup> none are as witty, as fat... I mean rounded to accommodate forthcoming prince; being with child becomes your complexion, Queen Vashti.

**Vashti:** Enough! Did you say I was fat?

**Marri:** (Terrified.) I meant fat...igued with child.

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<sup>3</sup> ESV Study Bible, 2007. P 850

**Vashti:** You are a very smart woman Marri; this time you got away with it; if you have one more slip of the tongue it will be snip, snap, off with your tongue!

**Marri:** (Almost faint.) Your will be done! May I retire for a moment?

**Vashti:** No! You may not. Remain with me until the celebrations are ended, hopefully very soon.

**Messi:** (Enter through curtain SL, bow.)

(Mehuman and Biztha, fall down, drunk in small entrance area.)

Your Majesty, His Royal Highness, King Ahasuerus has requested that his queen comes into his palace to the banquet: to display her beauty before his honoured guests.

**Vashti:** (Sit up straight.) Shall the beautiful camel be displayed to the hordes?

**Messi:** No, Your Majesty, he didn't want the camel; he wants to feast his eyes on your body to behold your beauty, that's what he said.

**Vashti:** (Stand up: we can see she is very pregnant – all ladies stand up when Queen stands, bow until she says they can stop bowing.)

**Messi:** Your Majesty, I didn't realize: you look so hu...humble.

**Vashti:** Never mind. I know that I'm huge: it's probably a prince; (pat tummy) I am certainly not displaying myself to those lewd men in their drunken state; they have been going seven days and seven nights without stopping; I know we have done the same, but with fresh grape juice, not fermented and the other abominable potent stuff they call, "ale go holigal". Are any of them sober?

Stand up woman; you lot, stop showing me the backs of your necks; they all need a good scrubbing at the pools; especially behind your ears.

**Seven ladies:** (Heads up.) Yes, Your Majesty.

**Messi:** Biztha the Eunuch said they were all very merry; some are sick...

**Vashti:** They are sick of their king? Off with their sick heads...

**Messi:** No, Your Majesty, sick with the 'ale go holigal'...

**Vashti:** (Almost faint). I feel sick thinking about them.

(Ladies reach out to catch her if she falls.)

**Vashti:** Karu, please take me to my bedchamber...

**Karu:** (Bow.)

**Vashti:** Stop bowing, Karu.

**Karu:** Yes: Your Majesty; shall I get a bowl for your vomit?

**Vashti:** No, I'm holding on until morning. I heard you have only morning sickness during a confinement, so that is my new edict in the kingdom! I will be sick in the mornings. Now Messi, tell Biztha that I will not display myself in any vulgar fashion before a horde of drunken lewd males and others; I refuse to come, absolutely.

**Messi:** But, Your Majesty, the king will be most mad, wild, growling like a lion. He might even be mad with me!

**Vashti:** Messi, are you defying my command. I will never relinquish my rights to remain a beautiful warrior to the whole world. Conqueror of men because of my ravishing beauty; I do not wish to be seen in my condition.

**Messi:** But the king is big, and powerful. (Shake.)

**Vashti:** Shall I send you to the gallows? I command you to tell the king, that I definitely will not adhere to his request.

(Messi: exit into small area where Mehuman and Biztha are snoring; try to wake them – mime voices only here as play progresses.)

**Vashti:** Now I must away to my bedchamber to rest. Karu, please get me a drink of Susa Hot Chocolate; full fat to suit my condition. (Leave SR as ladies bow.)

**Bevi:** The old girl is in trouble now.

**Olli:** He won't stand for this. I think she will lose her...

**Ohlibah:** Baby!

**Olli:** No, her head. I've been here such a long time that I'm no longer a child; I've seen some strange things around here; heads rolling, people hanged; put in the fire; fed to the lions; not very good bedtime stories, I can tell you that...

**Weeni:** I remember when the king got married. It was so beautiful with all those men carrying him in the serving tray.

**Tinni:** Weenie, that wasn't a serving tray, that was a portachariot; you were so young then.

**Weeni:** I remember I was very young; too young to remember being young.

**Genna:** When are we going to get a husband? They seem to have forgotten that we've been locked away with this... dragon...I mean good woman; we need husbands before we're past it! I need a husband for me; all I see are Eunuchs.

**Rutaz:** Watch yourself Genna; these walls have ears; in fact they are only curtains, so I think the sound goes right through to the other side, where the dragon..., Her Majesty is sleeping like a baby, we hope!

**Hetta:** Soon we'll have another baby to feed and clean; yuk. Why do I always get those kinds of jobs? When can I have my own child; that's what I want to know? You know this life is not all it's cracked up to be; when I came in here as a Queen's Maid I thought I was in the lap of luxury, with silk cushions, silk gowns, peacock feathers, marble floors, Persian rugs under my feet; but life is not spicy. Yes, I need spice in my life.

**Weeni:** I've been using a really nice spice on my leeks; it's called Turmeric.

**Hetta:** I don't mean spices; I mean spice, a bit of spice.

**Rutaz:** In other words Weeni, she's bored. She needs a man.

**Genna:** Well I never get a chance to enjoy all those spices; I'm always called away to change some baby's *swads*; I'm sick of playing with all the concubines' babies. I want my own...

**Tinni:** I'm sick of playing with other women's babies, being a Nanny-pouch; listening to the Queen telling herself how beautiful she is. Maybe it would make a good story:

Once upon a time there was an ugly woman who thought she was beautiful; she talked to her polished bronze looking round thing every day and said, '*round thing, round think in my hand, who is the fairest in the land*'; and then the round thing said, '*Vashti is the fattest in the land..., I mean fairest in the land...*' (All laugh.)

**Messi:** (Come in SL; women gather around her.) You'd never believe what's happening.

**Rutaz:** Why can't we believe what's happened?

**Genna:** What's happened, come on, please tell the secret.

**Messi:** I will, just let me catch my breath; I've been running fast. The king said that the Queen is not his queen any more. She's been..., what's the word, lost the seat of her pants.

**Olli:** Dethroned; removed from her high position.

**Weeni:** (Act like a queen.) I'm the queen of Susa; no you're not, your bootza; (kicks leg up - all laugh.)

**Genna:** Wait on, girls; the king will need a new queen.

**Bevi:** He's got about five hundred concubines stored away at the back of the palace – he'll probably crown one of them.

**Genna:** Missed out again! I wish I was a concubine; better than being a nanny-pouche!

**Weeni:** Yes, we'll all probably get old and fat and die in this luxurious palace.

**Messi:** Let me finish the news please, ladies: he said now all the women will disobey their husbands and the whole kingdom will be rebellious.

**Genna:** Rebellion, a women's rebellion? I can't imagine that! We don't even have husbands to rebel against.

**Messi:** Wait, there's more news! He wants a new queen and not his old concubines; he is sick of them, so the news goes: he said 'away with them..., off with their beds,' or was it 'heads?'

**Ohilibah:** So, what's going to happen? We must have a queen; we have to have a queen; who will we bow to, or die with? Our lives will be empty.

**Bevi:** We just don't need a queen for someone to bow to; a queen is the only person who can continue to provide an heir to the throne. That's something I always thought would be a nice destiny for me.

**Messi:** Shush! I'll tell you everything; come closer come closer and listen.

**Hetta:** Is that a song?

**Messi:** Not now, Hetta, this is serious. The king is going to get all the most beautiful virgins in the whole land; line them up to, try it out.

**Weeni:** Try what? Are we having a fancy dress or something?

**Messi:** His bedchamber!

**Weeni:** That's very nice. Well, it is very elaborate, needs a bit of modernization; I'm good at decorating.

**Rutaz:** Are we talking politics here? I've always fancied myself as a politician...

**Messi:** No, the king is going to get a new Queen in his bedchamber from all the beautiful women in the land.

**Weeni:** So he doesn't want a decorator?

**Messi:** I don't know.

**Tinni:** The woman will decorate his bed, yes?

**Genna:** Single women?

**Messi:** Yes, all the single virgins. He'll choose one to be the new queen.

**Genna:** Girls, that's us! That's me anyway. I'm still single, young and beautiful.

**Messi:** He said single virgins.

**Weeni:** We all are; aren't we?

**Rutaz:** An artisan would say, we're all painted with the same distemper; so let's go for it girls, ladies; may the best virgin become queen. (All the ladies rush for their bronze round things and start pinching their faces, fixing their hair etc.)

*End of Act 1*

(Interval of 15 – 20 minutes)

## *Act 2*

### *Scene 1*

*Stage setting: Outside Queen's quarters; dim lighting. Mordecai and Hadassah (Esther) are seated, talking quietly.*

**Mordecai:** Hadassah, I am asking you to be very discrete about your Jewish lineage. Yahweh the Lord will be with you in this. Your name is now; *Esther*, which means *star*. You must do everything that Hegai the Eunuch tells you to do. He is to prepare the virgins for the King; do you understand my child?

**Hadassah:** I do, dearest Uncle Mordecai; I shall be obedient and do everything I am commanded because I respect your guidance; but I shall miss you dear Uncle for you are the only one I have in the whole world now; you have been as a father to me.

**Mordecai:** And you have been my dearest child, my beloved one. You know it is necessary for the sake of our people that you enter into a strange world and give your own life as an offering, just like Abraham offered his only son; I offer my only daughter.

**Hadassah:** I shall do my very best to bring honour and glory to you and our people.

**Mordecai:** But you shall never be alone, you know that? I shall be close by if you need me.

**Hadassah:** I know, but who shall take care of you while I am away? Promise me you will eat your greens every day and at the right times?

**Mordecai:** I promise, my dear; don't worry about me; if you become queen it will be a great advantage for our heritage; it will also give glory to our God, Yahweh; the Lord.

**Hegai:** (Enter SL – Esther covers her face with her veil. He and Mordecai greet each other warmly as if they are old friends.)

So, this is the beautiful virgin you talked about? What is her name?

**Mordecai:** Esther.

**Hegai:** A star! (Gaze upwards.) What a wonderful name.

**Mordecai:** Yes, she is the most obedient and chaste young virgin. Take good care of her for me.

**Hegai:** Oh, yes, of course I will. Come with me, dear virgin, Esther.

*End of Scene 1*

## ***Scene 2:***

*Mordecai is pacing up and down outside women's quarters; appears anxious. (Use curtain across stage with walkway only.)*

**Hegai:** (Enter SL) Esther is so beautiful; she will please the king, I am sure of that; my beautiful Star; how obedient; I have never met such an obedient girl and I have had hundreds, no, thousands to care for over the years; Esther said she sends her deepest love to her dear Uncle Mordecai.

**Mordecai:** But how much longer must we wait before we can see her lovely face? We have been waiting so long now.

**Hegai:** It is nearly the month of Tevet and she will be shown very soon; before the rains come.

**Mordecai:** Thank for your graciousness dear friend (Bow slightly.)

**Hegai:** (Bow lower). Thank you for the beautiful Esther. (Exit SL)

**Mordecai:** (Look around to make sure nobody coast is clear. Exit SL)

***End of Scene 2***

### **Scene 3:**

*King's quarters. There is a curtained area which is the king's bedchamber. Two thrones are vacant. Seven princes and seven advisers, plus guards with weapons (spears or axes)<sup>4</sup> are standing waiting for the arrival of the virgins. Esther and her seven maids and Hegai enter SL; he gives Esther a package.<sup>5</sup>*

**Hegai:** You are next: take this.

**Esther:** Thank you, Hegai.

**King:** (Unseen, behind bedchamber curtain.) Where is my virgin? Send her in now before I have you all lined up at the gallows. (The girls quickly fix Esther's garments. Hegai indicates that she must enter the King's bedchamber. Esther goes through to the king.)

**King:** Come here my dear; what a lovely gift. You are very beautiful; you have my favour...; come to your king...

### **Blackout**

*Esther's maids are sleeping outside king's bedchamber. Guards are half-awake.*

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<sup>4</sup> <http://www.bible-history.com/archaeology/persia/persian-soldiers.html>  
[http://www.theancientweb.com/explore/content.aspx?content\\_id=22](http://www.theancientweb.com/explore/content.aspx?content_id=22)  
[http://www.iranchamber.com/history/achaemenids/achaemenid\\_army.ph](http://www.iranchamber.com/history/achaemenids/achaemenid_army.php)  
p

<sup>5</sup> ESV Study Bible, (2007), p 856

**King:** (He can be heard inside his bedchamber.) I have found my Queen: Queen Esther.

(Maids quickly arise and brush themselves down, hug each other with happiness)

The king emerges from his chamber, holding Esther's hand high; (dressed in royal robes). The advisers and princes all pile into the room from different directions.

(Mordecai and Hegai enter SL.)

**King:** Bring her crown (Servants enter with crown on cushion.) [Crown is purple with white ribbon, gold winged creature at the front. He places it on her forehead. They move to the throne nearby and sit down.]

**King:** I declare a holiday for everyone. Let us celebrate this auspicious occasion. (Servants come in with trays, jesters, acrobats; musicians. All move from SL through stage to SR as though in a carnival movement. All exit, fade lights.)

### *End of Scene 3*

## **Scene 4**

*Entrance gate: Mordecai is seated at the gate, with a scroll in his hand. Bighana and Teresh, the Eunuchs guarding the girls are angry because Mordecai is in the gate; they are*

*plotting to assassinate King Ahasuerus; having a private conversation behind a pillar or large vase. Mordecai listens.*<sup>6</sup>

**Bighana:** (CS): Before the king goes to his chambers, you enter in by the back way.

**Teresh:** There is no back entrance.

**Bighana:** Enter the chamber through the back window; stay there until I join you.

**Teresh:** But where will I hide?

**Bighana:** In the king's closet; there you will find many beautiful garments to hide behind.

**Teresh:** But what if the maids come in, or a beautiful virgin? What will I do?

**Bighana:** Don't worry: I will make sure they think the king doesn't want to be disturbed; they won't bother you.

**Teresh:** And then what?

**Bighana:** Wait for me to arrive. I will attend to the king as usual; when he is contented I will say there is a disturbance outside. He will look out the window; you bring out your sword<sup>7</sup> and do it!

**Teresh:** Will I offer him some refreshment first?

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<sup>6</sup> Septuagint, (1986), p 653

<sup>7</sup> 2 Chronicles 36:20

**Bighana:** No, no refreshments needed. He gets all he needs. Just plunge the sword between his shoulder blades.

**Teresh:** Okay; but what will you do?

**Bighana:** I will help you carry him to his chamber; then I will raise the alarm while you get away from there. I will describe someone who does not even look a bit like you. I have a fabulous imagination.

**Teresh:** So you really want me to kill him?

**Bighana:** You must. It is the only way King Ahasuerus can be brought down; he is a monster; then his son will be king and we will be next to him in value.

**Teresh:** But the child is an infant, how can he be king? Isn't he a little too little? He has not even played in the mud yet. I loved to play in the mud as a baby, especially in the muddy season...

**Bighana:** (Move SL) Please, just do what you need to Forget about playing in the mud. We will be great and powerful, especially if he is too little to make big decisions; it is our duty. (Stay guarding gate.)

(Mordecai: slip past quietly, yet with urgency at this point. Go so SR women's entrance.)

**Mordecai:** (Curtain opens and Hegai appears.) I must see the Queen, Esther. It is very urgent. (He gives coins to Hegai)

**Hegai:** Certainly dear friend, Mordecai. (Exit SL) (Esther enters SL with two maids.)

(Mordecai: bow before Esther.)

**Esther:** Dear Mordecai: you are a loyal citizen of the Persian Empire; what is the matter, why did you beckon me? Are you ill? Please leave me alone. (Maids and Hegai turn away.)

**Mordecai:** The king's life is in danger. You must warn him immediately; I heard Teresh and Bighana talking about assassinating him - tonight!

**Esther:** I will do whatever I can. (All hurry away SL)

*End of Scene 4*

## **Scene 5**

*Lights fade*

Curtains close: there is a backdrop change here

*Scene set for hanging: this can be backdrop with gallows painted on. Haman is standing holding a scroll. Teresh and Bighana are waiting with their hands in chains (tied). Officials and princes are standing around King is seated on*

*his throne with Queen Esther beside him. Crowd is gathered on either side of stage to watch.*

**Haman:** (Read): The accused, Bighana and Teresh are found guilty of treason and must be hanged according to Persian Law; the command being made by the King, rendering the hanging irrefutable.

**Caleb:** (Write everything down on scroll.)

**Haman:** Hang these men. (Crowd: roar): Hang them. (Two soldiers drag them towards the gallows.)

**Bighana:** You must have told someone

**Teresh:** I didn't tell one soul.

**Brighana:** You must have said something to somebody; now look, I'm about to be hanged because you couldn't keep your mouth shut.

**Teresh:** And what about me? Am I not being hanged as well! It was your idea.

**Bighana:** I'm too young to die!

(Crowd: roar; appropriate hanging noises: can be pre-recorded.)

***End of Scene 5***

## **Scene 6:**

*City gate: Haman is sitting in the gate. Rex and Hero and extras (double role cast) pass by, bowing to him. Mordecai comes in SL and moves away, refusing to bow.*

*Rex and Hero, the king's officers confront Mordecai.*

**Rex:** Mordecai, it is you; why don't you bow before Haman like we have to?

**Hero:** Yes, we have noticed; we were wondering if you had a secret?

**Mordecai:** What do you mean? What secret?

(Rex and Hero exchange glances.)

**Rex:** We think you are not from this nation; we believe you are a spy!

**Hero:** Maybe even a despicable Jew!

**Rex:** Yes! You are probably trying to take over our great nation with your stupid Jewish religion and that god you call Yahweh!

**Mordecai:** Do not blaspheme the name of my God; He is the Lord God of Heaven, the Creator.

**Hero:** So, you are a foul smelling Jew.

**Mordecai:** Do not say such terrible things. My God is powerful.

**Rex:** Are you threatening us now?

**Hero:** He's not as good as Haman; he's coming now, bow to him you stupid Jew! (Haman and Artabanus enter SR.)

(Rex and Hero bow and kiss Haman's feet.)

**Mordecai:** Never! (Angry.)

**Haman:** Mordecai, why don't you bow to me? I am next to the king in power; bow to me you son of Mars! Is that really your name? What is your real name? Abraham; Saul; I am your God in this nation.

**Mordecai:** I will never bow to you; you son of Amalakite; you are no Persian; I know about you, Macedonian.<sup>8</sup>

**Haman:** How do you know that? Who told you such a blatant lie? I am a god of the Persians; I am powerful; I can destroy you.

**Mordecai:** You are not a god; you will be destroyed from the face of the earth according to the Word of the Lord God of the Hebrews; only the Lord my God will I worship; Him only will I serve. (March off, ruffled, SR.)

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<sup>8</sup> David J.A. Clines: *The Esther Scroll*; Editor: David A. Clines, Philip R. Davies (Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1984), 44.

**Haman:** He will not destroy me: I will destroy him, and his people. Worship me.

**Artabanus:** (Bow down; kiss Haman's feet.) You are a god, Haman! And I am next to you.

(Haman: revel in worship.)

***End of Scene 6***

## ***Scene 7***

*A seer is seated with a deep black jar. Lights are low; in the background are Haman, Zeresh (his wife); Artabanus,<sup>9</sup> Rex and Hero. Haman gives a bag of gold to Imga who places it near his feet on a little scale.*

**Imga:** Very good; (referring to gold). Be very quiet; we will see what Zarasthustra<sup>10</sup> says: (Throw pieces of pottery with names of the months of the year into the jar; wave hands over jar and chant in gibberish; remove one piece of pottery.)

The month of Adar is taken!<sup>11</sup>

**Haman:** Yes, that's the one I want; a celebration of burning! Perfect: 13<sup>th</sup> Adar to be precise; <sup>12</sup>thank you Imga; come now, let us advise the King.

***End of Scene 7***

***End of Act 2***

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<sup>9</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artabanus\\_of\\_Persia](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Artabanus_of_Persia)

<sup>10</sup> Funk & Wagnall Encyclopaedia (NY: Standard Reference Pub. Company, Inc, 1964), 9479.

<sup>11</sup><http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atar>

<sup>12</sup> [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purim#Purim\\_Katan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purim#Purim_Katan)

**Interval can be here [ten minutes]**

### **Act 3**

#### ***Scene 1***

*The king is on his throne; his seven advisers are present: Carshena, Shethar, Admatha, Tarshish, Meres, Marsena and Memucan*

**Haman:** (Bow to the king.) There are certain miserable people scattered in your great kingdom, Great Ahasuerus. They obey their own laws and not the laws of their king. It is in the king's best interest to destroy these aliens. Let a decree be issued to this end. I desire the safety of the king more than anything else in this vast world; place a thousand talents of silver into the royal treasury for the men who will carry out this great mission.

**King:** (Seem pleased.) Yes, do what is necessary. The king's safety is paramount. Your money will not be needed<sup>13</sup>; our kingdom is greater than money.

**Haman:** (Bowing again) As you wish, great Ahasuerus.

(Lights out)

***End of Scene 1***

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<sup>13</sup> Carey A. Moore, *Esther* (NY: Doubleday & Co, Inc) 38.

## ***Scene 2***

*Scribes are busily writing on scrolls. There is a table with a bowl of wax and the King's seal. (Can be a spot on stage)*

**Haman:** On this thirteenth day of Nisan, the King issued this decree. Let each province have its notice in its own language. Address this to the King's satraps and governors; in the name of King Ahasuerus; sealed with His seal. You, the obedient vassals of this kingdom must annihilate all those who call themselves Jews; old, young, feeble and healthy. This must be accomplished in one day, the 13<sup>th</sup> day of Adar; do what you will; plunder their goods. This is the King's command. (Place the ring seal on the decree.)

## ***End of Scene 2***

## ***Scene 3***

King Ahasuerus and Haman are drinking wine in the king's quarters. Outside people are running around, totally confused by the edict; reading the notices and telling each other what is going on, asking questions.

**Crowd:** Kill them? What does this mean? They're really bad people, etc. (Can be a recording)

**Mordecai:** (DSL in his private chamber that contains only a mat; just a spotlight can indicate his position; he tears his clothing, covers his head with sackcloth; sprinkles ashes on his head. Kneels down and prays. This can be a voice-over recording.)

Today is the thirteenth day of Nisan, the day before the Passover when we were brought out of captivity in Egypt as a great nation; loved by Yahweh; now on this very day we are decreed worthless; Oh, Yahweh, what is going to happen to your beloved people; we have sinned, I know that; I confess the sins of rebellion of my people; we have disobeyed your holy law; you who sit in the sides of the North, the Great I AM, help us; see the plight of your people. (Head in hands; weep; outside there is a great wailing of the Jewish people.)

### *End of Scene 3*

#### *Scene 4*

*Mordecai is pacing up and down outside the gate; wearing sackcloth and ashes.*

**Hathach:** (Enter SL) Her Royal Majesty, Queen Esther, has asked why are the people so disturbed; why are you behaving in such an unseemly manner. Here are some clothes so that you may come inside the king's gate.

**Mordecai:** No, I cannot accept them. (Hathach: exit SL – Mordecai continues pacing up and down)

**Hathach:** (Enter.) The Queen has commanded that you advise her why you will not come inside the king's gate.

**Mordecai:** Tell her the king is going to have all the Jews annihilated on the thirteenth day of Adar; it is a decree. Haman offered the king ten thousand talents of silver to do this atrocity; we will be removed from the face of the whole earth. Ask your beloved Queen to beg for mercy on behalf of her people.

**Hathach:** I shall ask the queen to do as you requested. (Exit.)

Mordecai falls on his knees and continues to pray silently and then wails. (Hathach enters.)

**Hathach:** I have a message from Her Majesty. (Holds a scroll.)

**Mordecai:** What does Her Majesty say?

**Hathach:** (Read.) All the king's officials and the people of the royal provinces know that for any woman or man who approaches the king in the inner court is in danger for the king has a law: He or she will be put to death immediately unless the king holds forth the gold scepter to spare his or

her life; she further says, privately, that she has not been called by the king for over thirty days now.

**Mordecai:** Tell Her Majesty this is most urgent and that she will not escape being in the king's household. If she remains silent then relief and deliverance from this will come from another source, but her and father's family will perish from the earth; please add this: who knows but that she has come into the royal court for such a moment as this.

**Hathach:** I will give your message to the Queen. (Exit.)

**Mordecai:** (Mordecai kneels down and prays.)

Lord god, King ruling over all, for all things are in thy power and there is no one that shall oppose you in the purpose to save Israel. For you have made the heavens and the earth and every wonderful thing in the world; you are the Lord of all and there is no one who can resist you, Lord. You know everything. You also know that it is not to insult you, or for my pride, or love of glory that I have refused to bow to Haman. I would gladly have kissed the soles of his feet for the safety of Israel but I have done as I have done because I might see the glory of man raised above the glory of you, Yahweh. I will not worship anyone except you: Oh, Lord. God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, spare your people for we are being destroyed; turn our mourning into gladness.<sup>14</sup>

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<sup>14</sup> Septuaginta.

**Hathach:** (Enter.) Her Majesty gives this message: Gather all the Jews together who are in Susa and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. Her Majesty and her maids will fast as you do. After this she will go to the king as you requested and go against the Persian law. She declares: “If I perish, I perish.”

**Mordecai:** Praise the Lord God of Heaven. Thank you Hegai. I will do as she says immediately. Thank you Lord. (Both exit.)

### *End of Scene 4*

### *Scene 5*

*Inner courtroom of King: King seated on his throne; Esther is wearing royal robes and standing in entrance. Two bodyguards are next to the king, with saddle-hatchets or spears<sup>15</sup>; the king sees Esther and his face lights up. He points the golden scepter to her.<sup>16</sup> She comes forward and touches its tip and bows.*

**King:** What is your request, dear Queen? Even if it is half the kingdom I will grant it to you.

**Esther:** If it pleases the king: let the king and Haman come today to a banquet I have prepared for him.

**King:** (Delighted) Bring Haman immediately, so that we may do as the Queen desires.

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<sup>15</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabar\\_Zin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabar_Zin)

<sup>16</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sceptre>

## *End of scene 5*

### *Scene 6*

The Queen's palace: low table is set with all sorts of lovely fruits and jugs of wine. Servants standing nearby. Couches are ready for the King and Haman. Esther sits on couch opposite. King and Haman are drinking, relaxed.

**King:** My dear Queen Esther, what is your petition? Even up to half my kingdom will be granted at your request.

**Esther:** If the king regards my petition then let the king and Haman, return tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king's question.

**King:** I look forward to tomorrow. (King exits; Queen and Haman rise. Haman exits after the king has gone. Haman walks along stage towards gate: sees Mordecai sitting at the king's gate. Mordecai gives him the cold shoulder. Haman looks angrily at him. Haman enters his own home; greeted by two servants.)

**Haman:** Go and tell my friends to come to my house. I have something of importance to tell them. (Servants exit.)

## *End of Scene 6*

### *Scene 7*

Haman's home; his wife, Artabanus his friend and others are there, drinking and eating.

**Haman:** Well, you all know how wonderful I am. I own many hectares of property, slaves and camels; I even own my own bazaar. I love being wealthy; I have ten sons and a beautiful wife. The king has elevated me above all my peers; I am the only person the Queen has invited to a banquet with the king today and tomorrow. But when I see that Mordecai, that filthy Jew, my blood boils; I cannot feel content as long as I have to see his ugly face!

**Zeresh:** (A bit tipsy.) I know what you can do, my prominent husband. Build a gallows seventy feet high, so everybody can see, and have Mordecai hanged on it. Then go to the dinner and be happy.

**Haman:** Zeresh, that is a brilliant idea. I should have thought of it myself. I will do it. I will have Mordecai hanged tomorrow before the banquet. Get out there and do what I requested. Have the builders come in and start the work immediately. We will work out a way to bring an accusation to the king about Mordecai; won't we, Zeresh?

**Zeresh:** (Giggle.) Yes, my dear husband; you are brilliant; you will think of a great plan.

**Haman:** I will go and see the king before sunrise tomorrow. Now what can we cook up about Mordecai?

## *End of Scene 7*

### *Scene 8*

*Night in the King's quarters. He is in royal dressing gown and slipper; pacing up and down. Two advisers Carcas and Zethar standing nearby, watching him. Two soldiers outside door.*

**King:** The political situation is deteriorating. Carcas, Zethar, get me the chronicles of my great deeds. Now!

(Exit and return with great book a moment later.)

**King:** Read it to me. (Settle down and wait.)

**Carcas** (Read.) On the night of the full moon, on the second day of Adar in the seventh year of the reign of the King Ahasuerus, the official, Mordecai discovered a conspiring to kill the noble King in his bed chamber by Bighana and Teresh. Their plot was foiled and they were hanged on the gallows by an edict of Persian law. On the third day..., the King was involved in a dispute...

**King:** I am concerned about these sorts of things. Deeply troubled. Tell me, Carcas, what reward did Mordecai receive for bringing this plot to the notice of the king?

**Carcas:** (Search book – Zethar join in.) Nothing, Your Majesty; according to thorough records of the Persian Law.

**King:** Let Mordecai receive his true reward.

**Carcas:** Look, there's Haman outside; do you wish to consult him in this most urgent matter?

**King:** Haman? Yes, bring him in.

(Haman: enter.)

**King:** come over here. Sit down. It's early, the sun has not risen. Now Haman, what reward do you suggest for a great man who has done an extraordinary thing for his great king? For a man the king delights to honour?

**Haman:** Oh, Your Majesty, I am honoured that you have asked me such a question. I believe he should be amply rewarded; yes, he should be given a king's robe to wear – that nice blue one you don't want any more – He must be given a royal horse on which only the king has ridden; with the royal crest. Let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most noble princes and let that prince give it to the honourable man, lead him on the horse through the city, proclaiming before him, "This is the man the king delights to honour."

**King:** Haman, that's just a wonderful suggestion; now I appoint you as a noble prince to go and do this to that great official, Mordecai, right away; before the sun is altogether up. (Haman: bow and exit. King: stretch and yawn.)

**King:** That was a good night's work. I'm going to take a short nap. (Exit.)

## *End of Scene 8*

### *Scene 9*

*Noises of cheering (taped) in background. Haman's house.*

*People dance across the stage.*

**Crowd:** It looks like Mordecai. He's riding the King's horse!

**Haman:** (Enter – distraught: go into own home. Friends follow.)

**Zeresh:** What on earth is going on? Why have you given this honour to Mordecai? He's supposed to be hanged by now...!

**Haman:** Zeresh, this is terrible. Everything is going wrong; I was going to tell the king that Mordecai is a traitor; he is not a Persian; when the King asked me to honour him because of something he read in the Chronicles of the Kings of Persia. Now I am undone. I don't know how to get Mordecai on the gallows. What am I going to do?

(Hegai and Hathach enter to take Haman to the banquet.)

**Haman:** Already! Oh, dear. (Brush coat: Hegai and Hathach stand close by so he will be sure to come.)

(Zeresh shakes her head.)

## *End of Scene 9*

### *Scene 10*

*Queen's quarters. The king and Haman are seated as before. Food is displayed and being served by two servants. The king is relaxing. Esther is relaxing on a couch. Haman is seated between them. Two of Esther's maids stand nearby.*

**King:** Queen Esther, what is your petition? It will be given you; even up to half my kingdom your wish will be granted.

**Esther:** (Kneel before the king.) If I have found favour with you Oh, King, and if it pleases Your Majesty, grant me my life – this is my petition; and also, please spare my people; this is my request.

**King:** Please tell me why you ask this petition? My dear Ester, please rise.

**Esther:** (Helped up by her two maids.) Your Majesty, I and my people have been earmarked for destruction, for absolute annihilation; if we had merely been sold for slaves I would have kept quiet because such a small distress should not disturb the king.

**King:** (Rise): Who has done this? Who?

**Esther:** (Point to Haman.) The adversary is this vile Haman.

**King:** (Stunned; leave the room in a rage.) I must consult...

(Esther: sit down.)

**Haman:** (Kneel down beside Esther, moves towards her until right up to her.)

Please, Queen Esther, please speak to the king on my behalf. I did not know that it was you and your people who would be destroyed from the face of the earth. I will serve you faithfully if you spare my life; for it is in danger; I feel it; (grabs her dress and grovels on his knees).

(The king enters.)

**King:** Will he even molest the queen behind my back. Seize him. (Two soldiers come and take Haman away, covering his face with a veil.)

**Harbona:** There is a gallows, seventy five feet high standing by Haman's house. It was ready for Mordecai's hanging.

**King:** Hang Haman on it, now!

*End of Scene 10*

## **Scene 11**

*King and Queen are seated in King's quarters. King has a ring and a scroll. Mordecai is kneeling before the king.*

*(Gallows are seen in distance (backdrop); noises of shouting, Hang Haman (taped if necessary))*

**King:** Mordecai, I am pleased to give you this. (remove signet ring and give it to Mordecai. Mordecai: gasp in amazement.)  
You are now my new Regent. (Turn to Esther:)

You are to have full authority over Haman's vast estate.  
(Hand a scroll to Esther.)

**Esther:** If it pleases Your Majesty, I wish to hand the affairs of Haman's estate over to Mordecai.

**King:** That is my wish if it is yours. (Esther: hand scroll to Mordecai who bows to the king and queen.)

**Esther:** Oh, King, I have a further petition to ask your royal highness. (Kneel before the king.) If it please the king, and if he regards me with favour and thinks it the right thing to do; and if he is pleased with me, let an order be written overruling the dispatches that Haman, son of Hammedatha, the Agatite, devised to destroy the Jewish people in all the king's provinces; for how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people. I cannot bear to see my whole family annihilated!

**King:** Rise up, my dearest; please my friend, Mordecai, write another petition in the king's name on behalf of your people, the Jews who honour me; seal it with the king's signet ring.

**Mordecai:** Thank you, Royal Highness; I shall attend to it immediately. (Bow and exit.)

*End of Scene 11*

## ***Scene 12***

*Mordecai and royal secretaries are standing around with pens and scrolls.*

**Mordecai:** Write this decree in the king's hand to all the provinces in all languages.

The king grants the Jews in every city the right to assemble and to protect themselves, to retaliate against their enemies according to their needs. Let the Jews be prepared on the day of distress.

(Background noises of horses cantering and shouts of joy.)

## ***End of Scene 12***

## ***Scene 13***

*Crowds gathered in open place.*

*Mordecai and Esther enter in royal robes.*

**Mordecai:** Today is the fifteenth day of Adar; you have been assembled for two days now. We have not been destroyed as a people. We have been vindicated. Remember that you have been redeemed; the entire nation of the Jews has been resurrected from certain death. Our wonderful Queen was prepared to give her life for yours. Let us give the glory and thanks to the one who provides us with our daily bread. Let us always do what is right in His eyes.

Let us rejoice and make this an everlasting celebration on this day each year. We will call it the Feast of Purim, when evil was shattered.

(Everyone dances with tambourines and harps. Music can be taped and mimed by musicians.)

**Notes:**

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<sup>1</sup><http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Atar>

<sup>1</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purim#Purim\\_Katan](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Purim#Purim_Katan)

<sup>1</sup>[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabar\\_Zin](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tabar_Zin)

<sup>1</sup> <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sceptre>

### **Recommended Internet sites:**

<http://mani.tk/index.htm> [Pictures of Persian Queens]

<http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Golestan-takht2.jpg> [Picture of Golestan Palace] Author/artist used tiny bits of this Golestan Palace artwork through ‘magic extraction’ Photoshop tools on cover picture.] 5<sup>th</sup> July, 2010

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