

***Esther: The Holocaust That Wasn't***  
***a.k.a.: Esther: The Musical***

***Book, Music and Lyrics by: Dennis L. Dunn***  
***Arrangements by: Kara Leinonen & John Livingston***  
***Dedicated to: Shirley Tripp***

**Cast:**

Esther (yeah!) 17-25 female. (Range from A below middle C to F)  
Resourceful/beautiful heroine (*e.g.*, Belle) but young enough to still  
flirt and long for *The Man of My Dreams*.

Mordecai (Mordi) 40-60s man (Eastern European accent, think Tevye). Tenor or  
Baritone (some high notes – a few Es and one F).

Haman (boo!) 30-60 man (Think Snidely Whiplash or any melodrama/Disney  
villain). Tenor/Baritone (great voice not required)

King Ahasuerus/Xeres 25-50 male. Tenor/Baritone. A few Ds. High note -- E. Think  
Gaston from *Beauty and the Beast*, but with a touch of heart.

**Other Parts:** Approx. 10 men / 7 women for chorus and multiple parts.

Chorus	Males/Females all ranges/ages
Zee (Haman's Wife)	30-50 Female-- (for 50s song) Soprano.
Esther's Friends/Pageant Contestants	15-25 female (ditzy young girls)
Hagai (Esther's assistant)	Male – any age. Tenor.
Various Guards/Rebels/Drunk Soldiers	Any age Males

Kids	About 4 (they don't sing much)
Bachelorette #354 / Royal Chronicler	Hatach (Esther's assistant)
Bachelorette #353	Astrologer (need weird hat)
Servant #1 / Crowd member #1	Small Child
Servant #2 / Crowd member #2	Small Child's Mother
Servant #3 / Crowd member #3	Towns person #2
Servant #4 / Crowd member #4	Minstrel / Towns person #1
Jews 1-5 (or higher depending upon audience size)	
Friends of Haman 1-5 (or higher)	

(version 43)

## Songs: Act 1

<u>Song</u>	<u>Singers</u>
1. Hear O Israel! (p. 3)	Cast, Mordi, Esther, Haman, Esther's Friends
2. Keep Our Women in Line (p. 12)	King, Men
3. The Man of My Dreams (p. 16)	Esther
4. God Uses People Like You (p. 19)	Mordi, Esther
5. Where Have all the Good Girls Gone (p. 22)	Minstrel
6. I Never Felt Like this Before (p. 23) ( <i>I've got an appendicitis</i> )	King, Esther, Hagai
7. I Remember You (p. 30)	Mordi, Esther, Women
8. A Peach of a Queen ( <i>May be cut</i> ) (p. 33)	Esther, Mordi, Palace Staff
9. A Government Job (p. 41)	Haman, Henchman
10. Best Served Cold ( <i>Optional song</i> ) (p.47)	Haman, Henchman
11. God Have You Deserted Me (p.49)	Mordi, Cast

## Songs: Act 2

12. God Will Save His People (p. 54)	Esther, Mordi
13. Satan's Servants <i>Or Jew I'm Gonna Get You!</i> (p. 60)	Haman, Henchman, Female Cast
14. This Could be the Day I Die (p. 63)	Esther, Cast
15. It's So Wonderful Being Me (p. 71)	Haman, Zee, Cast
16. Killin' the Jew ( <i>50's wantabee</i> ) (p. 73)	Zee, Haman, Haman's "Friends"
17. Women! (p. 75)	King
18. The King's Lament (p. 77)	King, King's Servants
19. Killin' the Jew ( <i>reprise</i> ) (p. 82)	Zee, Haman, Haman's "Friends"
20. The Man of My Dreams ( <i>reprise</i> ) (p. 87)	Esther
21. Finale: God Will Save His People ( <i>reprise</i> ) (p. 88)	Cast, Esther

## Synopsis

***The Story (The SHORT Version):*** A young Jewish woman (Esther), advised by her wise cousin Mordecai (Mordi), helps save her people from genocide in ancient Persia. The musical has elements of tragedy, social commentary, satire, and hope.

***The Story (The LONG VERSION):***

The King of Persia is ticked. His beautiful wife won't come when he calls. So he divorces her. (The King's a bit spoiled.) His counselors are worried: *What if all the women learned they could tell off their husbands?* Ut Oh. The foundations of society would crumble. They suggest the King divorce his queen and hold a contest to pick a new queen. (Song: *Keep Our Women in Line!*)

Esther, a Jewish orphan raised by her cousin "Uncle" Mordi, is picked as a contestant. She'd rather marry a nice Jewish boy (*The Man of My Dreams*). But the law's the law. She has to go. Esther charms the King and wins the pageant. (*I've Never Felt Like This Before.*)

On the advice of Mordi she conceals her Jewish heritage.

Shortly thereafter Mordi learns of a conspiracy to kill the King. He tells Esther. She tells the palace guards. The conspiracy is stopped.

Years pass. Haman, an enemy of the Jews, becomes second in command to the King. Uncle Mordi refuses to bow to this enemy. Now Haman is ticked. (He's spoiled, too.) Haman decides to kill Mordi and every Jew in the kingdom. He writes the law and the King unwittingly signs it.

Mordi beseeches Esther to go to the King and plead for her people. But the King's interest in Esther has waned. (Did I mention he's spoiled?) To show up unannounced and uninvited can result in death.

But Esther courageously goes anyway. Not wanting to tip her hand as to what's wrong, she invites the King and Haman to a series of banquets. Before the night of the second banquet the King can't sleep and has the royal records read to him (if that doesn't put him to sleep, nothing will). He learns that Mordi had saved his life. The King decides Mordi should be honored.

The king asks Haman "What should be done for the man the king wishes to honor." Haman, thinking he means Haman, suggests having the man paraded around town like a conquering hero.

Haman is given the job of honoring the man he sought to kill – Mordecai.

The tables are turned. Things quickly move against Haman.

That afternoon, Esther reveals the treat to her life and the lives of her people at the second banquet. The King changes his mind. The villain is foiled and all (other than Haman) live happily ever after (pretty much). Yea!

The play, while faithful to the Biblical account, has elements of tragedy, social commentary and hope.

**NOTES ON:**

***Length***

***Formatting***

***Parenthetical Notes:***

The play is about 2 hours long, including an intermission.

The script may suggest a longer time because of the number of “notes” to explain the background, optional scenes, and the alternative songs that are included so that it can be toned down for younger audiences.

There are several pages of “Notes” intended to explain the rationale behind a scene and explain Jewish history. Yes, they are sometimes boring. And Haman isn't the only one monologuing in the *Best Served Cold* section. But, I love to teach (and share and bore). Who knows? Maybe someone will learn something.

The problems with formatting are caused because the play was written in an old version of WordPerfect (6.0C for DOS! – a wonderful, elegant program), but in switching between Corel's newer WordPerfect and Word, codes, fonts and formatting go haywire on a regular basis. Ugh. A lot of typos that were fixed, were blown up by computer freezes. That meant going back to earlier versions – resurrecting the mistakes.

Please be understanding . . . to err is human, to really mess things up, you need a computer.

Enough for now.

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*Staging: The stage is black and the actors surround the stage or the audience for the first song. Male and female voice may also be done by two males, holding candles, dark, or spotlight on speakers/singers. Parts may be spoken, sung ac capella, or sung after chord is played.*

*Mordi enters he will come out as narrator through part of play, then leave as action starts. Mordi should use a Eastern European accent.*

### ***Intro***

### ***Hear O Israel!***

Female Solo: Can you count the stars in the heavens?  
Women: Or the sand upon the sea?  
Men: I the Lord the declare it.  
So shall your descendants be!  
Cast ("Jews"):  
You will my holy people.  
I will be your God.  
I will bless and keep you my rod.  
Men/Altos: (guiding you by my rod.)

*(Lights slowly come on.)*

*(Note #1: Esther and others -- with the likely exception of Haman -- should join in signing "Cast" parts. This is a Director's call depending on number of voices, mics, and strength of voices.  
Note #2: There are two pronunciations of Adonai, I am using the one that rhymes with joy.)*

Cast: Abba, Adonai, (pronounced: A-de-noy)  
Fill me with your joy.  
I will love and serve you all my days.  
  
Hear, O Israel! God is One!  
Look at all the things He's done.  
Held in the hollow of his own hands.  
He has given you the Promised Land.  
Men: The promised land  
Women: (How I long for the Promised Land.)  
Men: Hallelujah to the Lamb!  
Women: (We're held in His own hand.)  
Men: (in His own hands.)

*(Narrating)*

Mordi: Hello, my name, is Mordecai -- you can call me, Mordi.  
I am a Jew, part of God's chosen people.

*(Off-stage)*

Voice #3: Chosen for the dung heap. Idiot Jew! (*Derisive snicker*)

(*Shrug*)

Mordi: Some are less thrilled with this choosing than others. Being part of the Chosen People is not all peaches and cream, or even milk and honey.

We have our enemies. Pharaoh tried to drown our baby boys. The Greeks and Romans killed millions. And Hitler (*signs and/or nearly crying*), well Hitler had his Holocaust when over 6 million Jews were brutally Murdered.

One of our enemies is a central character in our little melodrama. Now, we've tried to make him seem almost funny. But, in my day, he was our Hitler: an evil, petty man who tried to kill millions.

Now, with Haman, you may applaud his songs, but please also boo him and what he stands for. Haman if you please . . .

(*Note: Line on booing Haman may be cut, as it can get distracting.*)

Haman: I am descended from a noble race!  
The proud Amalakites.  
I long to put the Jews in their place --  
Oh, how the thought excites!

Henchmen: We love to hear them screaming!

Haman: That's why I'm scheming!

Haman: All of you people --  
should bow to me!  
Kneel, wherever I go.

Henchman: You're the richest, greatest guy!

Haman: Don't you think I know?

Henchman: He's just rolling in dough!

Haman: I'm just rolling in --

Henchman: (Make a list, show your fist!)

Haman: Dough, ray, mi, fa, so much dough!

(*Mordi narrating back to the audience.*)

Mordi: Now this is the story of a Holocaust that *didn't* happen.

Why not? Well, partly because of my Little Hadessah – or Esther, to you -- she's the joy of my life. She called me "Uncle Mordi." I raised her after her parent's died.

*(Note: Next line optional. Although Jews celebrate Purim with cheers/boos presenting the play straight may be appropriate -- unless presented as part of Purim.)*

Please cheer for her throughout the program.

*(Lights on Esther and her "friends".)*

*(Giggling.)*

Friend #1: Esther, did you see the way Samuel was looking at you?

Friend #2: And Peter and Paul and . .

Esther: Come on, they're just being friendly.

Friend #3: Yeah . . right.

Friend #1: Is there a guy you really like?

Esther: I don't know . . I don't know if I even want to stay here.

When I was growing up, I'd sit on my bed every night, and pray, "God, use me." I dreamed of touching people . . changing the world. I'm not sure I can do that here.

Friend #2: But you're just a girl. . .

Friend #1: It's a man's world.

*(Sung)*

Esther: Every girl in our village knows her place.

I dream of something more.

I want to touch the world in a wondrous way -- *(or want'a)*

What does my future have in store?

*(Esther shrugs, she's embarrassed by her impossible dreams.)*

Friends: Quit your dreaming.

You're just preening.

Esther get your head out of the clouds.

Get a man, get a life.

Every Tom, Rick, and Levi dreams of you.

To take you as their wife.

Friend #1: *(They're all mooning)*

Friend #2: *(half of them are swooning)*

Friend #1: *(spoken)* But we're not jealous.

*(Spoken in a whine, similar to Gladys Kravitz on the old Bewitched) \**

Friend #2: *(spoken)* We're happy for you.

Esther: Someday I may meet my prince,  
He'd treat me as his queen.  
We'd have a little cottage all our own.  
That's where we'd make and call our home.

Friends: Are you sure your dreams aren't overblown?

*(Esther shrugs, she's embarrassed.)*

Esther: Maybe, but they're my own.

Esther: God of Israel  
Can you use me?  
Let me be a light!  
Helping others to see your way,  
Helping them do right.  
How I long to change the world.

Friends: *(But you are just a girl.)*

Mordi: You will get your chance, little Hadassah.

Now, as our story opens, the Jewish people were spread across the world. You see, although we were God's chosen people, He did not go blind to our misdeeds.

Because of sin our people were taken into captivity by Babylon. Our cities and temple reduced to rubble. Now, the Persians control the world. And though we have rebuilt our temple, it is only a shell of it's former glory.

But mostly we get by. We pay our taxes. Own businesses.  
We all have dreams: Esther has hers . . . Haman has his. And some of us wonder:  
Where is God in our distress? Does He even listen to us here -- away from the land of promise?

Men: Love Him with your Spirit.  
Cast: Love Him with your heart.  
Female Solo: Love him with your strength, vitality.

Cast: Oh, god of Israel we've been untrue.  
You've been faithful; we've rejected you.  
We've served the god of money and the god of lust.



We failed to worship You.  
(Women) (The God in whom we trust)  
Men: (in whom we trust)

Cast: At such a time as this!  
(Women) (such a time as this!)

Haman: All of you Jews live in fear  
Don't you know that Haman's here!  
I want to make it perfectly clear!  
Your lives are in my hands!  
Your lives are in my hands!

Henchmen: Forget your pleading!  
Soon you'll be bleeding!

Haman: It's a wonderful evil plan!

*(Note: Esther may join friends in singing if the "girls" cast is small.)*

Esther's friends: All of us girls in our teens.  
Share in such wondrous dreams!  
It's so exciting we could scream!

Friend #1: Of guys and dances!

Friends #2: And fine romances!

Friends: It's fun to be a G-I-R-L -- Girl.

Esther: (How I want to change the world!)

Cast: Hear O Israel! God is One!  
Will He forgive what we have done?  
Are we held in the hollow of his own hands?  
When we live in foreign lands?

Cast: Will you hear your people when they cry?

Esther & Friends: (When will I meet that special guy?)

Haman: (Mordecai you will die!)

## Scene #1

Mordi: Now we have taken certain liberties with this story -- to make it more fun and relevant to you -- but we have tried to be true to the story's core.

As our story opens, King Ahasuerus –

*(King and his men stumble onto stage.)*

King: That's me! Ahass . . . Ahasurjerk .. Ahasur-some-thing-or other, King of all Persia!  
*(Hic.)*

Mordi Uh huh . . . King Ahasuerus - or Xeres - had a big party.

King: Xeres is easier to say!

Mordi: And it wasn't a very nice party either -- there was too much drinking and stuff like that.

Servant #1: Wow, Your Majesty, Delta House has nothing on you!

Mordi: Gentlemen, please . . . I'm not quite done *(They shrug; several hiccup; one falls over.)*  
Now, as this was about 480 BC, they were not particularly enlighten in their views of women.

*(Young man runs up frantically with small scroll for Mordi, which he unrolls to read. He reads quickly until end.)*

Oh, I have been asked to read the following disclaimer:

*(Young man nods vigorously to the above. Mordi reads quickly. Some lines may be omitted if it seems too long -- doing an Eastern European accent quickly is difficult.)*

"The views and opinions expressed in this scene do not necessarily reflect those of the writer, producers, director, actors, theater company, stagehands, make-up men, piano player, custodians, UPS driver, or *any* male who is *vaguely* connected with this play. Each of us has been required to undergo hours of sensitivity and tolerance training in order to be part of the Thespian community. . . . And many of us would prefer *not* to sleep on the couch tonight."

Now, Gentlemen . . . you're on . . .

*Scene: Banquet hall. Tables setup up about five men swaggering/swaying with their drinks. Lights come up in full. First lines to be a take-off of "Tiny Bubbles".*

King *(tipsy)* *(hic)* Tiny *(head spins)* something or other, in my mug . . .

Servant #1: Wow! This is some party your majesty. What's it been ... seven days of wine, women and song.

King: *(Hic!)* Yep, some party. Everyone's here. What's that you said "Wine, women, and song." Ya know, there aren't any women here -- that's what we need -- some girls! *(slams mug of "beer" on table)* Servant bring out the girls! *(May substitute dames or dancing girls depending upon audience.)*

Servant #2: *(Apprehensively)* The women are having their own party, sir.

King: Well, let's get some over here! We'll have a regular beauty pageant. How about if we get my wife out here? Huh? She's a real looker . .

Guy #2: Great idea, your majesty.

Guy #1: Oh, yeah! She's a fox. That's what this party needs - dames -- *(slams mug)* and more beer.

*(King to servant)*

King: Yeah, tell my wife to come over and strut her stuff before all the guys.

*(Servant exits)*

Guy #2: This'll be great! Your wife is about *(hic)* the prettiest woman in the kingdom.

*(King contemplates, rubs beard or slops "beer")*

*(Servant returns, looking worried, sound's a little like Wally Cox, may gulp in places.)*

Servant #2: Um, you majesty, your wife won't be coming. . . She sent a note.

King: I'm a little tipsy right now. You read it.

*(Servant unroll the scroll)*

Servant #2: Um, King, I think you should read this privately.

King: I said read it! Read it or die!

*(sweating, wipes forehead, gulps, voice may crack)*

Servant #2: Yes, your majesty:

"Your Highness! Are you a knuckle-headed baboon? Of course I won't come there. Idiot! All the men are drunk. They're rude and crude on a good day. Now they'll be worse. I don't want to be ogled at by a drunken mob. Stick this idea in your royal ear.

Sincerely yours,  
Vashti"

King: What!!! She defies me? That wench! I'll burn her in oil! I'll hang her by her thumbs! I'll send her to bed without her supper. That's what I'll do!  
Advisors, what should be done with such a woman?

Advisor #1: She should get nothing to eat for dinner for like the next 20 years except spinach and liver and onions.

All: EEEWWW.

Servant #2: And make her listen to opera!

King: Uh, wouldn't that be cruel and unusual punishment?

Advisor #1: Are we really concerned with that?

King: Well, something must be done -- gentlemen, I need advice!

### **Keep Our Woman in Line**

*(NOTE: Parts are to be divided among cast members so that various characters sing them, depending upon voices available. King MAY add OPTIONAL SPOKEN (Comments).)*

(King)

I admit I am furious,  
is she crazy, delirious?  
Who is she to reject my simple request?

How do I respond to this mutiny?  
To protect my just tyranny  
I've got to keep this woman in line.

(Advisor #1)

For peace and security

Women must know their place.

King: (Indeed!)

Never should you allow them  
to treat you with disgrace.

King: (Agreed.)

(all advisors)

To protect family harmony  
prevent social anarchy  
Women must show men proper respect.  
Family order could disintegrate  
if women, their men, denigrate --  
We've got'ta keep our women in line.

(King)

How should I treat her?  
What must be done?  
To secure my dominion  
To keep her under my thumb.

(Advisor #2)

Feed'er broccoli and cauliflower --  
castor oil at every hour.  
Let her know who has all the power!  
King (optional): (That would be me!)

(Advisor #3)

Set a precedent for history  
or we'll bow before some Hillary.

(all)

We've got'ta keep our women in line.

(Advisor #4)

The gods have decreed  
that men know what's best.  
Women have those mood swings  
something to get off their chest.

*(NOTE: THESE TWO STANZAS MAY BE CUT)*

(Advisor #5)

Men can still think clear  
when smoking weed or drinking beer,  
*(Side stage: Singer falls over; another throws up)*

(Advisor #6)

To our commands women must adhere.  
To protect the fair weaker sex

from they're inferior intellect --  
(all) We've got'ta keep our women in line!

(Advisor #1 or 7)  
Vashti, the queen,  
must now be replaced.  
Find someone better,  
worthy to take her place.

(Advisor #2 or #8)  
Have fair maidens all audition  
in a royal competition!  
Find a girl who pleases you.

Gentle, humble and serene,  
a girl who'll never make a scene,  
*(King gives Thumbs Up sign. Dialogue below optional.)*  
King: (I like it!)

(all)  
A women who will stay in line.

(All advisors)  
The fate of the kingdom  
now rests in your hands.  
Respect is required  
for security in our land.

(King)  
The fate of the kingdom  
now rests in MY hands.  
Respect is required  
for security in my land.

(Advisor #4)  
Social order will then be restored

(Advisor #5)  
in his home each man a lord

(all advisors)  
peace will reign in the Middle East.

Set a precedent for history

*(Have a girl dressed as a boy -- or guy who can get up there -- sing the next line as a solo soprano)*

*(Soprano Solo)*

We'll never bow before some Hillary!

*(All men look at her/him suspiciously, she/he lowers his/her voice)*

Female Soprano: Um, my voice is changing.

*(They shrug and hold arms out, understandingly; may vary timing of words and ad lib)* All:

*(Spoken)* Oh, sure.

All: *(Sung)* And we'll keep our women in line!

Advisor #2: I think we have a consensus your majesty: Vashti should be removed from office. Another should take her place. A royal competition should be held to find the bestest, most beautiful girl in the entire kingdom.

*(King may consider putting on baseball cap backwards, or something similar.)*

King: Good idea! Let's do it. Take that my little Queen Vee.  
Vashti, you're out of there.  
*(Calls her out like umpire; hoists cup)*  
To the New queen!

*(All men hoist cups, at least one "advisor" falls backward in his chair; "beer" may fall all over him. His legs -- from behind chair or coach -- kick in agreement.)*

All Men: To the New Queen!

*(NOTE: Should this work survive the test of time, the line "Never bow before some Hillary", together with it's rhyming counterpart, may be adjusted for then current politicians and countries. For instance, two decade ago in Britain it may have been: "Or we'll get some prissy Maggie", which requires a variation in tune or: "Teach our women to submit; Or we'll get a prudish Margaret." By the way, I liked and admired Margaret Thatcher. Hillary, not so much.)*

## Act 1, Scene #2

*(Mordi steps back on stage, this is done side stage so that props for Scene #3 can remain on stage)*

Mordi: Now as you can see, the king wasn't the most mature man in the kingdom. He wasn't very liberal minded. Or Democratic. *(shrug)* Perhaps, if he'd been Jewish . . . The king could be cruel and impulsive -- especially after a drink or two or five. You may have known men like that.

So the edict went out throughout the kingdom to bring the most beautiful woman before the king.  
My cousin, Esther, got the letter.

*(Optional line if played straight.)*

Let's hear some cheering here.

*(Esther enters)*

Esther: Oh, no, Uncle Mordi. I got the letter: "Greetings from King Ahasuerus." It says I have to report to the palace tomorrow. Oh, Uncle Mordi! I always wanted to marry a nice Jewish boy.

Mordi: Let me see that? Oh, no, umm .. perhaps they will overlook you. . . maybe I can hide you? . . .

Esther: Not likely to work. . .  
Ummm, maybe I could politely decline? Is there an RSVP?

*(Looking at letter)*

Mordi I'm afraid not -- it's "S.U.O.E."

Esther: S.U.O.E?

Mordi: "Show Up Or Else" . . Subtlety is not the Persian's forte.

Esther: Nope . . uh, hey, Uncle Mordi -- "RSVP" -- what's that mean, anyway?

*(As if the light bulb just went off)*

Mordi: Umm . . . "Remember Send Wedding Presents"? . . .

*(She puts out her palms upraised as in "give me a break".)*

How should I know? . . I'm a guy. . Look . . Sweetheart, is the king's household such a horrible place to be?

Esther: How can you say that? Away from my family? My friends? Worshipping God in secret? Never able to have one man to whom I alone am special?



I'll never be really married. Never have kids. Never be able to be loved by a man who cares just for me. Oh, Uncle Mordi . . .

### **The Man of My Dreams**

A harem's a prison  
I don't want to live in  
the job is a royal pain.

It's not much of a plan  
to share my man  
during all of his royal reign.

*(If dancing is not done, consider cutting the below chorus and continuing to second verse. In Director's musicians discretion, verses can be cut to maintain flow of play, especially if dancers are unavailable.)*

Oh, the man of my dreams  
I'd be his queen,  
he'd hold me in his arms so tight --  
he might be a ditch digger  
he'd still be my winner,  
so long as he treats me right.

*(During this segment at least two children come to play the part of young Esther and Levi. Esther hides and is found by Levi; Kids dressed as large stuffed animals -- or two people in Raggity Ann and Andy sit with their heads sideways until they bow before their king and queen. The kids and dolls do a waltz or ballet to the music. It may be best to have each Esther signified by a special bow in her hair or dresses of similar color/pattern.)*

When I was kid  
playing games, I hid.  
I'd dream of what life would bring.

I'd play pretend with Levi,  
a pudgy, bright, good guy,  
He be David and I'd be his Queen.

Our subjects would bow,  
He'd smile and avow  
that there'd never been such a team.  
As the shepherd king  
and his beautiful queen.  
And I'd smile at the man of my dreams.

Oh, the man of my dreams  
I'd be his queen,  
he'd hold me in his arms so tight --  
when I talked, he'd listen,  
and his eyes would glisten,  
how I long for the man of my dreams.

*(The kids above step back, next comes teen Esther and a tall, dark and handsome young man, he will bow and hand her a rose during the opening stanza, then all dream players waltz behind during the bridge and bow to each other as another young girl enters in a dress at the end.)*

As I entered my teens  
I had hopes and dreams  
of the perfect youthful romance.  
Of a man with flair --  
handsome, debonair  
and he'd waltz me through love's soft dance.

*(Interlude)*

*(For this segment, the male characters start getting together, either just talking or playing cards while the women are alone, looking bewildered. The young handsome man notices and goes over to the new girl. A new young adult Esther emerges and will be summoned by a Number like the ones used by the Department of Motor Vehicles -- only giant. The other men leave arms around each other, neglecting their dates, and dismissing them with a wave of their hands downward; the prince puts his arm around the new girl and leaves with her. The girls dance the last waltz or ballet without partners; then stare off where the men left and wave or blow kisses to their old memories during the last stanza; teenage Esther is left with the rose and walks/dances slowly off-stage. She waves to Esther as she leaves forever.)*

I once longed for the throne.  
But now, I've grown  
to see the pain in the tabloid face.  
Of the princess despised  
before a million eyes  
rejected, unloved, disgraced.

Oh God above,  
why can't I be loved?  
For I'm doomed to the palace chains.  
I'll be awoken from slumber  
and called out by number  
to a man who barely knows my name.

So I'll try not to cry,

I'll kiss my dreams goodbye.  
For such men only live in your dreams.

Esther: Oh, Uncle Mordi, I doubt any man will have me after this competition, even if I am released from the palace. What should I do? *(She almost breaks down in tears.)*

Mordi: First, calm yourself. Remember Joseph and David once took dangerous paths that turned out all right. Maybe this path has been prepared for you.

And my little Hadassah, you've always loved the spotlight you love doing specials at the synagogue.

Esther: Well, yeah . . .

Mordi: And remember when you were a girl, you used to pretend you'd be a princess -- why not a queen? -- maybe this is your big chance.

Esther: *(She perks up)* Well, maybe if I was queen, well, OK, I'd love that. But what chance do I have? There will be hundreds of girls competing. And to just be in the harem -- I mean, yuck! -- I don't know court customs, let alone how to please a king. How can I win?

Mordi: Well, don't be just another pretty face. Show your brains. When you're before the king . . . think of what interest him -- he's a military man, use that . . . The eunuchs will give you advice on . . . other stuff . . .

Uh . . . and remember the Persians are very big on pomp and the grandeur of their king. They treat him as infallible. So, don't go trying to correct him.

Esther: Like, after Vashti, I couldn't figure that out. I mean, Unc, does any man like being corrected?

Mordi: Umm . . . Good point. But we Jews have a history of prophets pointing out sin. Some nations have a free press. We have guys running around in gunny sacks and long hair shouting: "THUS, SAYS THE LORD!"

Esther: And this causes people to change?

Mordi: Rarely. I've found most politicians fear a free press more than God. But . . . sometimes people change. . . David, he changed . . . he was a man after God's own heart. .

Esther: And I've heard the king can be harsh.

Mordi: Yes, but he's also been known to be a kind and compassionate and. *And* he's handsome.

Esther: (*Interested.*) Really?

Mordi: Now, dry your tears, Esther. Perhaps God's hand is in this.  
(*She bites her lip.*)

### GOD USES PEOPLE LIKE YOU

(Mordi)  
About what you should do,  
I haven't a clue.  
This letter distresses and bothers me too.  
But God is there to see you though,  
'cause God uses people like you.

Joseph He rescued from the pit,  
David was saved when Saul through a fit.  
He forgives through sin's apple we bit,  
for God uses people like you.  
(Esther)  
(God uses people like me?)

(Esther)  
How can I deal with palace intrigue?  
With those highbrow girls, I'm out of my league.  
Flattery gossip gives me fatigue.  
(Mordi)  
That's why God uses people like you!

(Mordi)  
He raises the poor from the dust.  
Lifts high those in Him who put their Trust.  
Finds a way to forgive and save us.  
Yes, God uses people like you!

*Director's Note: Esther is getting it on "Old Moses was . . ." and Mordi should nod proudly that she understands.*

(Esther)  
God uses people like me!  
Old Moses was called from the desert hill  
To free God's people, God's will fulfill.  
(Mordi)

Now doesn't your heart feel a little thrill,  
that God uses people like you!  
(Esther)  
(God uses people like me!)

(Esther)  
This isn't what I wanted.  
I had so many dreams.  
(Mordi)  
It isn't about what we want,  
life's seldom peaches and cream.

*(Esther nods.)*

(Esther)  
I'll do my best, God help me try.  
To do your will, to my home, it's good-bye.  
(Esther/Mordi – Mordi)  
*Rit.* I must leave, I'll try not to cry. You must leave, I'll try not to cry.  
*(Mordi gives her a kiss on the cheek)*  
(Mordi)  
'cause God uses people . . .  
(Esther)  
God uses people . . .  
(together)  
God uses people like you/me.

### Scene 3

*(In the throne room, the king is on his throne)*

*(Narrating)*

Mordi: So Esther took part in the "pick a queen competition."

*(Play theme music from the Dating Game or Where Have All the Good Girls Gone.)*

*(droning)*

Servant #4: OK, move along, move along. Everyone gets a chance to audition to be Queen.  
*(3 to 5 women, including Esther, get in line).*  
Next! *(first woman advances)*

*(King is bored out of his tree. Bach #353 will do a lot of physical contortions in her presentation, may use a nasal voice.)*

King: Bachelorette #353, Where did you grow up?

Bach #353: Ummm ... Grow up? Well, it was in a city...Something with a B. I think. . .  
Barcelona? Burbank? Babylon? Yeah that was it, Babylon. We had goats and  
sheep and those horses with the humpity things.  
*(**OPTIONAL** to audience if kids are in the front rows, they can be primed before  
hand):*  
Oh, no what were those things called? Do you know? *(Kids: "Camels")* What  
was that? *(Kids: "Camels")* Oh, yeah, that's right -- Camels, wow, you're smart!

King: Camels?

Bach #353: Yeah, that's it, camels. They could sure drink a lot of water.

King: Next! *(Bach #354 advances, Bach #353 sulks off)*  
Bachelorette #354, where did you grow up?

*(Done Valley Girl style, may be ad libbed, work on the cadence)*

Bach #354: Well, like, you know, my folks had a little house just outside the city. It wasn't  
much, ya know, what with 20 rooms and servants and the like. You know there  
was never enough stuff, like I only had 55 dresses and 22 dolls -- that were kind of  
pretty. The dresses, I mean, cause the dolls - well, they were pretty too. *(King  
nods off to sleep.. may starts to snore)* And, see my dad used to say how pretty my  
eyes looked and called me his little princess, so I really think I'm good for the job,  
cause, ya know being queen is kinda like, being a grown up princess, like . . . *(king  
awakens and may interrupt, snorting)*

King: Next! *(servants take back #354 offstage still talking to the servants)*  
Eye -- yi -- yi, can't we get a nice, unspoiled girl? Where have all the good girls gone?

*(Note: This is supposed to be the worst folk or country song of all time. Which is a pretty tough standard. Consider doing with tie-died shirts and/or Bob Dylan tee-shirt. Another option -- Willie Nelson wig. This is to be sung VERY off-key.)*

***Where Have all the Good Girls Gone?***

Minstrel: Where have all the good girls gone?  
Wish I could go and get me one.  
It's so tough 'cuz most guys are dumb.  
She says she wants another.

Where have all the good girls gone?  
She says I went and done her wrong.  
I gave her flowers, wrote her a song.  
'Bout how she's like my  
(darl'n, super-duper, really keen,  
taught me to keep my navel clean)  
mother.

*(Sarcastic)*

King: I can't imagine why she wasn't impressed. *(Shakes head.)*  
That's enough minstrel.

Servant #4: There is one more lady who awaits, your majesty.

King: Send her in. You may *both* leave. *(Glaring at the minstrel.)*

Servant #4: Thank you, your majesty.

SET: *The throne must have pillows on it or nearby.*

*(Side stage, outside the door; Hegai will be helping Esther with her gown/hair.)  
(Spotlight on Esther/Hegai.)*

Hegai: Are you ready, princess?

Esther: Hegai, I'm not royalty. I'm just a little girl in a pretty dress.  
Who's in way over her head.  
Oh, Hegai, the last queen was what? The great-granddaughter of Nebuchadnezzar.  
He conquered the world . . . I'm a nobody . . . and she was . . .

Hegai: Spoiled. Cruel. Vain. No, *you're* the real Princess.  
Esther, your name means "Star" and I believe you're destined to be one. Did you know most of the girls in the harem are praying for you? We all want a compassionate queen. Esther, you have won over the court, now you must win over the king.

Esther: But I'm so nervous.

Hegai: Say a prayer. . take a deep breath . . smile . . be yourself. And remember, he's still just a man . . . wearing a funny hat.

*(She looks at him like she's trying to hold in a chuckle.)*

### **I Never Felt Like This Before**

(1)

I've spent a year preparing,  
with oils and perfumes.  
Still I find I tremble,  
as I enter his room.

What sort of man will I find?  
Will he be harsh?  
Could he be kind?

(Hegai)

You must understand,  
underneath he's still a man.  
Let him find the girl behind the gown --

(together)

One chance to find the man behind the crown.

(Esther)

I never felt like this before --  
Scared and so hopeful, as I open the door!  
I'll never get another chance, I know.  
God . . help me, hear I go.

King: *(Under his breath.)* Another day, another bimbo. *(May substitute: "Ditzy blond".)*  
*(Dismissively.)* Come in.

*(She enters.) (curtsies or bows)*

Esther: Thank you, your majesty.

King: What's your name?



*(nervously)*

Esther: Esther, your majesty.

*(He smirks.)*

King: Don't be scared, miss. Now, let me guess, your parents were rich?

Esther: My parents died when I was young.

King: I'm . . . I'm sorry.

Esther: Well, my cousin raised me. *(proudly)* He's a great man.

*(For the below, think Julie Andrews, as Maria, talking to Captain Van Trapp about all the problems in the household. Much of the below is designed as "playful banter." The King is to be slightly bemused and increasingly intrigued. Esther should be a bit flirtatious. She is, after all, a young, attractive woman, and she's in it to win.)*

King: I see. Now, why should you be queen?

Esther: I'm not really sure I should. . . I'm not a princess, in spite of what they say. And I want to know so much. I've been pestering the eunuchs all year. I ask entirely too many questions. I want to know everything.

King: Everything?

Esther: Well, almost everything. I've learned about decorum and diplomacy and . . . umm . . . other stuff.

King: What would you wish to know from me?

*(Esther bites her tongue.)*

King: Come, come. What do you want to know?

Esther: Well, when you take that crown off, does your hair stick out --  
*(King looks thunderstruck, but interested.)*  
-- does it look stupid?

King: Are you calling me stupid?

Esther: Of course not, your majesty.

King: I think I should either throw you out or throw something at you. Well, alright, I hereby grant you the right to take off my crown and see for yourself.

*(Esther tentatively steps forward. She goes behind the king and lifts the crown and puts it beside the throne. As she touches him his/their body/bodies vibrate(s) -- they both feel something. Then she bends down and kisses his head.)*

Esther: I'm afraid his highness suffers from "hat hair".

*(He smirks/chuckles. She smooths his hair with her hand. He warms to her touch. He may put his hand upon hers. The next sentence is quietly said.)*

King: Indeed --

*(She goes to his side.)*

Esther: It's better than cat hair. *(He chuckles some more.)*  
That does a nasty number on black dresses.

King: Uh, huh. I'll try not to wear one of those. *(Regally)* Now, what else would you, my princess, care to ask? Up to half my kingdom --

Esther: -- Really?!?

King: Of course not -- it's an expression. Politics 101 -- "Promises you don't intend to keep."

Esther: OK. Well, Ummm . . . How do you relay messages to the troops? How does "concentration of power" work? And how do you get your army to do a flanking maneuver?

King: Whoa! I said one question! You understand military strategy?

*(Musical Interlude starts -- adjust as appropriate.)*

Esther: I don't understand, that's why I asked. *(Proudly)* But my side usually wins in the harem pillow fights.

King: So, you do fight. *(Intrigued.)* How would you fight me?

Esther: Well, the best strategy with such a wise and strong opponent is to sue for peace. *(He smiles smugly and/or nods)*  
But, you've shown you're right (left) handed. *(King raises an eyebrow)*  
So, attacking from that side is probably better. *(King nods)* Or, use the statues to hide behind and deflect attacks.

King: Well, you needn't worry. You won't have to fight me. *(He reaches for a pillow.)*

Esther: *(She bows.)* Thank you, your majesty.

*(He throws a pillow at her, gets up to grab another pillow and moves behind the throne. She may laugh and retreats to the couch where she grabs a pillow to hurl at him.)*

Cheater! *(She giggles)*

King: Lesson number one! Use the element of surprise!

*(For the next 30-45 seconds they have a pillow fight -- generally throwing pillows rather than smacking each other. Laughing together. Words may be ad libbed depending upon who hits who and how rehearsals went.)*

*Consider using flashing strobe lights to give the appearance to accentuate the comic feel. The music will change from the main theme.*

**ATTACK #1: To *The William Tell Overture* --**

King: *(after it plays a little and in Operatic voice): ATTACK!!!!*

*(King attacks with exaggerated high stepping/almost running in place motion -- Esther hits him a number of times as he comes. You may also stage children in the front row to throw pillows at him, too.)*

The King *(Turning): THE OTHER WAY!* *(King having fun; Esther laughing, intrigued)*

*ESTHER: (Attacking/Dancing to portions of the Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker, The King throws pillows, they generally miss as Esther turns in time with the music; the King stands in disgust -- Esther hits him with pillow and then dances back to music).*

*Ad libs available (chose your own):*

*Words may include:*

*Esther: That's an Hadassah, attack!*

*King: Treason! I'm being attacked by my own harem!  
You throw like a girl!*

*They retreat to themselves, behind pillars, breathing deeply. Music returns to main theme of song -- they look in the general direction of the each other, longingly. They are singing to themselves.)*

*(King)*

*I've spent my life surrounded by men, like me.*

*Never show your weakness -- that's how we're taught to be.*

*What sort of girl is this?*

*With brains and beauty (may be spoken) can they coexist?*

*(King looks bewildered or shrugs like this is a new idea)*

(Esther)

I've spent my life protected  
within a social shell --  
culture and tradition  
girls aren't expected to excel.

What sort of man did I find?

He can be gentle.

He can be kind.

(King)

Can she see the man I long to be?

Look beyond the crown?

To the real me?

(Esther)

Now I understand,  
maybe this was all God's plan!

(King/Esther)

Can she/he hear my heart pound?

(together)

One chance to find (Esther) the man behind the crown.

(King) the girl who deserves the crown.

(Esther/King)

I never felt like this before --

How quickly you have opened my heart's door!

(Esther)

Oh, what shoulders, piercing eyes,  
Can't believe I'm mesmerized.

(King)

Oh, what rich lips, hazel eyes,  
Can't believe I'm mesmerized.

*(Short Interlude. Music fades.)*

*(During the interlude the king will sneak go around back and come up on Esther, she will advance realize what he is doing and go back so he can "capture" her, he comes from behind, while she looks forward, he smacks her over the head with the pillow.*

*Esther chuckles. She puts her back-hand to her forehead in a feigned melodramatic fall.)*

King: Got'cha!

Esther: Alas, my King, I am hit. I'm dying. I should have sued for peace!  
*(She turns and falls into his arms.)*

King: Lesson number 2: a successful flanking action.

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Esther: I stand in awe of your military prowess.

*(They both chuckle. Music starts to build.)*

King: You let me capture you, didn't you?

*(Smugly.)*

Esther: I'll never tell.

*(Sung)*

*(King/Esther)*

I never felt like this before --

How quickly you've opened my heart's door!

Never thought it could be like this.

King (spoken quietly): Be my queen!

*(King/Esther)*

So we'll seal it with a kiss.

*(They kiss. Lights fade.)*

*(NOTE: Depending upon age of actors and their comfort level with the kiss, it may be appropriate to let the kiss be implied and dim the lights with them close to each other.*

*I've found that the young actresses who are most enthusiastic to play Esther have often grown up in conservative families. They are uncomfortable with public kissing. Directors should be sensitive to this -- it may their first kiss -- and discuss it privately prior to casting.)*

#### Scene 4

*Set:* Courtyard for coronation.

Mordi: So Esther won the "Pick A Queen" Competition. There was joy throughout the royal city.

The king declared there would be a celebration and a great banquet, where Esther would be introduced.

*(Side stage)*

Hegai: So, here we go again. Are you ready, princess?

Esther: Argh! These shoes are killing me! Hegai, they're going to hate me! . . .

Hegai: Calm down.

Esther: There will be rumors . . .

Hegai: Queens are allowed to be finicky about their food.

Esther: I'm so nervous.

Hegai: We've been here before . . . take a deep breath . . . smile. And remember, most of these people want to like you . . . and the rest -- well, they're mostly here for the refreshments.

*(She Enters. King crosses stage to take her hand and brings her forward. "Holy man" at center for the ceremony to suggest a marriage.)*

Crier: Introducing Esther, our Star, his Majesty's Queen Elect. .

*(King and Esther side by side, Esther looking out at Mordi. Below, imitation of priest from "The Princess Bride".)*

Holy Man: Marriage . . . It's vhat bringggss us together today . . .  
*(He continues mouthing words.)*

## I Remember You

*(Esther should be looking toward Mordi during most of this song.)*

*(Note: This is the authors tip of the hat to loving fathers and stepfathers.)*

(Mordi)

Ponytails and pictures, on the wall,  
Horsy rides and kisses when you were small.  
Trying to get ya to give up your thumb --  
Oh, Esther I remember you.

*(Optional: "Pop" -- off-stage)*

(Mordi)

I remember when your mother died.  
Holding you close as we cried.  
Watched with wonder as you've grown  
Oh, Esther I remember you.

(Esther)

I remember when my mother died.  
Holding you close as we cried.  
You loved and raised me as your own.  
Oh, Mordi, I remember you.

(Esther)

Shaggy whiskers, stories, cheap cologne.  
Hugs and kisses lavished in a cozy home.  
You raised and loved me as home as your own.  
Oh, Mordi, I remember you.

(Mordi)

Standing back and letting go.  
It's so hard and they don't know.  
I kiss on the cheek, ya say "Goodbye."  
Ya smile and shrug, but inside you cry.  
(Choir): Inside you cry.

*(spoken)* Mordi:

Eyeing guys, make-up, those teenage years.  
The horrible day, I reduced you to tears.

(Esther)

All the times I did you wrong.  
You'd forgive me, let me know I belong.

(Esther & Mordi)

Making up and hugging in the end.  
Oh Esther/Mordi, you were my best friend.

*(A little girl representing Esther dances with a young man version of Mordi. Or, they may "fight" around a chair. She creams him with pillow. Ideally, in fog, side stage.)*

*One Option for next three stanzas: (choir stanza) Young Esther and Mordi have pillow fight -- she wins. Young Mordi lifts her arm in triumph and then places her on the chair where he crowns her*

*with a paper crown at the same time older Esther is being crowned. Then he lifts her on her way to bed and Esther waves "goodbye" to her younger self, who waives back in turn.)*

(Choir Women)

Ponytails and pictures, on the wall,  
Horsy rides and kisses when you were small.  
You took home, raised her as your own.  
Oh, Esther we remember you.

*(Key Change)*

(Mordi)

Standing back and letting go.  
It's so hard and they don't know.  
I kiss on the cheek, ya say, "Goodbye."  
Try so hard not to cry.

*(King's Interlude)*

*(Throw in a pompous "hump" here and there.)*

King: My faithful subjects . . . for almost two years now, we have been without a queen. The kingdom has been diligently and thoroughly searched. I personally have closely interviewed hundreds of candidates -- It's a tough job but someone had to do it. I can assure you that this -- my queen -- outshines them all. She has grace, beauty, wisdom. . . Plus, an excellent throwing arm. I now present to you, Queen Esther!

*(Crowd may seem to soundlessly clap but lights on Esther & Mordi. The King places the crown on Esther's head.)*

Esther: *(mouthed to Mordi)* Thank you.

*(She now faces the crowd, smiles, and waves her arms in acceptance -- think of American politicians accepting their parties nomination for a President. Way wipe a tear away. Crowd pantomimes jumping up and down, cheering, confetti falls on her and king or everyone.)*

(Mordi)

So, I'll stay in the shadows while you shine.  
I'll remember all those years when you were mine.  
Oh, how I loved you, you were my world.  
You were my little girl.  
Esther: (I'll always be your little girl.)  
*(Note She may mouth: "I love you.")*



*(Lights dim. Crowd disperses. Spotlight highlights two women, who may be leaving, side stage.)*

Village Woman #1: Oh wasn't that lovely. I think she might have been crying she was so happy.

Village Woman #2: Strange how she keep staring into the crowd of peasants, rather than the nobility . . or even the king . .

Village Woman #1: And wasn't it nice how she thanked the king as he crowned her. So young, so sweet, so innocent. Pity no one knows a thing about her family.

Village Woman #2: Thanking the king . . umm . . yes . . I guess . . . maybe.

#### SCENE 4 -- A

***(NOTE MAY BE CUT AS PEACH OF A QUEEN NEEDS REVISION AND WE'VE GOT TO GET HAMAN IN SOON)***

*Lights fade. Mordi remains to narrate.*

Mordi: Now although Esther initially didn't want the job, she was made for it. She charmed the palace. She really cared about people. People were thrilled to have such a friendly queen.

*(Staff starts to enter, with Esther. Costumes should convey various skills, such as cook's hats, sewing equipment, mops and brooms, and doorman. CONSIDER: During song, having Esther walk around like she's on the red carpet meeting people, popparazzi flashbulbs going, bending down to kiss children when she's not signing.)*

Custodian: Guys, you're not going to believe this! I went to fix up the new queen's bedroom and she actually made her own bed!

Dressmaker: She told me how much she loved the dress I made.

Cook: And she went into the kitchen to tell me how good my dessert was.

Custodian: She's sure not like the last queen.

Dressmaker: That woman complained about everything! I spent two weeks making a dress and when it was too tight 'cause she'd feasted for a week. She tore it up and threatened to have me beaten!

Custodian: I've heard Esther singing in the halls. She even picks up after herself.

Cook: She's a breath of fresh air!

Dressmaker: From the queen of mean to her!

Cook: I've never known anyone as nice!

Dressmaker: Do you know, she still see's her cousin every week. No haute-taute stuff for her!

*(Narrating)*

Mordi: And she still listened to me and my advice just as she had before she became a celebrity.

*(During interludes or when staff is singing chorus consider having Esther sign autographs, have photographers -- ideally with the old fashioned cameras with flashes -- take her picture as she poses/smiles, and/or have her hold/kiss babies surrounded by adoring crowds.)*

### **A Peach of a Queen!**

(Mordi) *(Spoken)* *(Music plays as desired)*

About being a Jew, ya gott'a keep it quiet!

(Esther)

Please, tell the cook, I'm on a special diet.

Don't like bacon, though I've never tried it.

(Staff)

She's so helpful, gentle, and kind,

(Dressmaker)

Stuck her with a pen, she said, "Never mind"

(Esther)

Gott'a try to get along

Smile'n at folks and singing my song.

(Palace staff)

It's clear, she belongs

Never seems to do anything wrong!

(Mordi)

Here's something you should do:

Remember the power of "Thank you"

(Esther)

Thank you all for being so kind!

(Staff)

She's so sweet, what a find!

(Esther)

We've got a peach of Queen

She smiles and sings and she's never mean

It's clear,

we concur  
It's a joy to serve someone like her.

(Custodian)  
Came in this morning, she was moppin' the floor,  
(Doorman)  
She always says "Thanks" when I get the door.

(Dressmaker)  
She said "please" would you hem this dress"  
(Custodian)  
When she spilled her milk, SHE cleaned the mess

(Esther)  
Gott'a try to get along  
Smile'n at folks and singing my song.  
(Palace staff)  
It's clear, she belongs  
Never seems to do anything wrong!

*(Short interlude)*

We used to have to serve the queen of mean!  
She always griped and complained  
When she was here  
    we lived in fear.  
I thought I was going, going insane.

(Doorman or others -- spoken)  
Do this!  
Do that!  
Mop the floor!  
Hey, ya jerk! Get that door!

*Interlude*

(Palace staff)  
Now we're serving the nicest girl.  
Gott'a smile that could light the world!  
She's the answer to our prayers.  
She's a breath, a breath of fresh air.

We've got a peach of Queen  
She smiles and sings and she's never mean.  
It's clear, we concur

It's a joy to serve someone like her.

*(fade as all exit)*

We've got a peach of Queen  
She smiles and sings, we think she's keen.  
We've got a peach of a Queen  
She smiles and sings, she's never mean.

### Scene #5

Mordi: Now, Esther never told anyone she was a Jew -- not then anyway. Although I'm sure some of the staff figured it out.  
Now, shortly after Esther became queen, I was working near the palace when I heard men arguing.

*(Men enter, stage left, voice should be old villains, think Peter Lorrie for Guard #1 and James Cagney for Guard #2.)*

Rebel Guard #1: I told you it had to be tonight. *(Shows dagger.)*

Rebel Guard #2: Are you crazy? Put that thing away. He'll be heavily guarded tonight.

Rebel Guard #1: Well, OK. But tomorrow. We've got to put a dagger in that cruel, blundering fool of a king! If not tonight, tomorrow!

Rebel Guard #2: Quiet, haven't I told you to never mention that the king is the one we seek to kill! Look over there, that man heard you!

Rebel Guard #1: What does it matter. He's just a dumb Jew. He can't -- or won't -- tell anyone.

Rebel Guard #2: Perhaps, but let's get out of here.

*(Narrating)*

Mordi: Little did they know of my relationship with Esther. I sent a message to Esther who informed the police and the guards were arrested.

*(If enough actors available Guards 3 and 4 and 5 haul off the conspirators, dragging them across the stage; otherwise just have one or two guards below leading them on)*

Guard #3: Come on you dirty rebels. Get a move on it. The gallows await you.

Rebel Guard #1: No, No. I didn't do it. It was the butler. Yeah, the butler did it.

Rebel Guard #2: And my dog ate the plot!

Guard #4:                   So there was a plot! We've got you, scum.

Rebel Guard #2:           Um, no, there wasn't a plot at all.

*(continuing narration)*

Mordi:                     So a report was placed in the royal record.

Royal Record Person (former Bachelorette #354):

*(with a notebook and pencil comes across stage talking VERY fast)*

OK . . June 5 . . . the King got his nails clipped -- he had a hangnail -- which gave him an idea he used later that day . . . although first he had lunch -- pheasant in "Spaghetti Os" -- which was much too rich -- and, anyway, it was like reported that somebody wanted to kill the king, see. And there was like a royal investigation and stuff like that. The guy who fingered the bad dudes was Mordecai the Jew, who passed it along to Esther, who told the guards, who told their commander, who arrested the Eunuchs, who confessed under bright lights and opera music.

And the guys who did the bad stuff got their just desserts. They asked for meatloaf and sauerkraut for their last meal . . . which was really stupid if you ask me . . I would have asked for ice cream 'cause then they'd have to wait for the ice cream man and he doesn't come until August.

Mordi:                     You know, you look familiar . .

*(perky)*

Record Keeper: Oh, that's because I used to be like a real celebrity. I'm so glad you noticed. I was runner up in the "pick a queen" competition. But the other pretty girl won cause of her talent. She could sing. I can play *While the Saint Go Marching In* on my armpits. . . I can't understand why I didn't get the chance to perform. You want'a hear me? *(Mordi looks disinterested.)* I get that a lot. . . Anyway I've got to file these records today .... *(to herself)* should it be filed under G or J for June? Ummm. . . Definitely a G.

## Scene #6

*(Narrating)*

Mordi: Now you might think that if you save the king's life you might get a promotion -- a parade -- a dessert named . . . But the record got overlooked and an evil man, Haman, got promoted to second in command.

He even got his own pasty -- a Hamantashen -- named after him! Let me tell you (*may point finger at audience*) . . . there, is no justice sometimes . . . not that I'm annoyed . . . that would be beneath me . . . (*recovers*)

Now, it was five years before the next part of our story took place.

See that's the way it works sometimes in government. You do something good, someone else gets the promotion . . . someone else gets the pastry . . . I tell you would a Mordistashen be so hard to bake? But nooooooooo . . . (*May exit muttering . . . or recover again*)

*(Next line optional depending how play presented)*

Oh, and get ready to boo, Haman's finally about to come out.

*(Haman and the king enter) (Haman is the classic Melodrama Black Villain, the audience should be prompted to Boo whenever he appears on stage and cheer for Esther)*

Haman: Oh, your majesty, your eminence -- I sooo appreciate your appointing me as Second in Command. You could not have made a better choice.

King: Right you are, Haman. Delegation! It's the secret of good government!

Haman: Really?

King: Of course. You have to find people with skills and give them the freedom to do their jobs. For instance, you've got a knack for money.

Haman: Yes! I love it!

King: So, you're in charge of the Treasury.

Haman: I do sooo love collecting taxes.

King: Humm (*Shrugs or raises eyebrows*). . Well, to each their own.

I, on the other hand, am a military man. The most pressing needs of our kingdom are protecting and expanding our borders. Those Greeks are rather bothersome.

Haman: . . shame about the armada.

King: Yes. . well . . the sun got in our eyes. It was only 200 ships.

Haman: A trifle.

King: And a division or two . . or three. Anyway, I act as Commander and Chief.

Haman: And a very good one you are . .

King: Thank you. The troops must see their king! It inspires confidence!

Haman: Indeed, sire! It's almost as good as winning. *(Haman may have a panicky look as he realizes what he just said.)*

King: Ah, yes . . *(King looks a little annoyed.)* Plus, I look good in uniform.

Haman: Oh, absolutely, those uniforms are very smart.

King: It's the shoulder pads . . designed them myself.

Haman: You do look good.

King: Thank you. The Chicks dig it. Works well for football players, too.

Haman: I can understand how appearances are wise, Sire.

King: Now, Haman, I'm off to review the troops and then the Royal Chariot Races.

I hope they're better than the theater I saw last night. You know, I should make overacting a capital offense.

Haman: An excellent idea, Your Majesty.

King: I'm glad you approve. Yes, I'll do it! I love it when I'm decisive.

Haman: Oh, and your Majesty... A little trifling matter, too. Before you go, since I am now second in command, please sign this order to have all bow down to me . . . except you, of course.

King: Umm . . . well, appearances do matter . . you must be respected . . whatever . .

*(King signs the proclamation)*

King: Well, I don't want to be late. *(King starts to exits.)*

Haman: Don't worry, your Majesty, you can count on me. . .

*(King Exits)*

You can count on me to take all I can get.

Now -- this is just what I've always wanted. To have people bow before me, me, me and only me. While the king's away I will play. I'll be rich, rich, rich. Oh, hold it. I'm already rich. I'll be richer, richer, rich rich rich. *(cackle)* Yes! *(Yes is optional.)*

*(Haman exits---Mordi comes back on stage with extras around him start coming in to form a crowd.)*

*(Narrating)*

Mordi: Haman was now second to the king. When he went before the crowds people had to bow before him. But, I decided I would never bow before such an evil man. . .  
*(muttering, under his breath)* gets his own pastry. . .

*(Crowd enters around Mordi. Haman enters stage left in a haughty fashion. If possible have a cart to push Haman, to be used again for Mordecai later. Crowd all bows. Mordi defiantly refuses to bow. Haman glares. Mordi glares back. Haman glares some more. Mordi glares back. Haman leaves kicking something and leaves hopping in pain.)*

Guy #1: Why didn't you bow? Don't you know of the king's edict?

Mordi: I will bow to my God.

Guy #1: But you can be arrested.

Mordi: I am a Jew. From the family of Kish. Once a leader of my family refused God's command to oppose the sons Agag. . . As a child I vowed: "I will never do that!" *(to himself)* 'Course I never figured I'd meet a son of Agag. . .  
Well, if I die, I die.

*(Incredulous throughout)*

Guy #1: You guys always were a little weird. I think you're making a mistake. Haman nurses grudges.

Mordi: To bow before such a man would be a bigger mistake. I'll will trust my God. Haman may strike me down; but if I can erase part of my family's shame, it is a small price to pay.

Guy #1: Yeah, right. . .

*(Crowd and Mordi exit - Haman comes in limping, followed by 2 servants)*



Haman: Did you see that!

Servant #3: See a gnat? (*Looks around in the air*) Do we need a fly-swatter?

Haman: Clean out your ears, idiot. Did you see that Jew? Mordecai. He refuses to bow. To me. The greatest, most powerful man in the Kingdom! Servant #4: I'm not sure the king would agree with that.

Haman: Phooey on the king. I am the brains behind the throne!

Servant #3: But, uh, he's a Jew, Sir . . . So, are you going to let him get away with it?

(*sarcastic repetition - payback*)

Haman: He's a Jew, Sir --

He's a Jew. Well, maybe all the Jews should pay!

Maybe I should pay the king to settle this old score

Maybe I can find a way to take out even more!

what's money for?

(hum, hump, hump.)

but to settle old scores

Why kill one Jew when you can do more?

Oh, yes! This is an historic opportunity! The Jews have been my people's enemies for centuries.

Why stop with Mordecai?

Oooohhh, this is evil -- even for me -- should I? Could I? Yes, I could . . .

A little manipulation. Just a few well chosen words, write up a decree . . .

Servant #3: Sir, I know you're rich, but what does that have to do with anything?

Haman: Haven't I taught you anything? Of course, not. Because you're an idiot. The secret of wealth in government is to write laws and taxes to benefit yourself!

Steal from a man and they throw you in jail---but in government steal with higher taxes and you throw them in jail if they don't pay! . . . It's much better that way!

(*Henchman nod vigorously.*) You can steal from millions of people! Millions, I tell you!

All you have to do is just use part of the taxes that they thought were going to needless, worthless projects like roads and schools and hospitals. Use it for

yourself! Build bigger palaces and yachts and enjoy guilty pleasures -- like revenge!

Let me explain:

**A Government Job**  
(Haman's Song)

When I was boy and went to school  
I never lived by the Golden Rule,  
I bullied kids to get my way,  
and cheated at the games I played,

(They said,)

"Kid, you've got intellect,  
but your ethics are a bit suspect  
there's not a lot things you can do, (or: there's not a lot things **that** you can do,)  
but here's a career that's made for you . . .

(Ya gotta)

Get yourself a Government job,  
where you can cheat and you can rob  
write the rules that are right for you,  
take a cut, take a cut, or two  
Do, do, do!

And so I soon went into the law,  
wrote the rules, and oversaw,  
Twenty projects, at a crack  
and on every one there was big kick-backs.

YES! YES! YES!

(Ya gotta)

Get yourself a Government job,  
where you can cheat and you can rob  
write the rules, that are right for you,  
take a cut, take a cut, or two  
Do, do, do!

Now, this is a truth I must admit  
some government guys are legit  
take that Jew Mordecai,  
he won't steal and he won't lie,

Mordecai, he must die!  
die, die, die, die, DIE!

(Haman may jump up & down  
like 5 year old having a tantrum)

For when I drive in my chariot,  
he's never bowed before me yet!  
To my schemes, he won't go along  
I think his God done learned him  
          wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong, wrong!

ya got'ta  
    Get yourself a Government job,  
    where you can be part of a legal mob  
    If you're mad, don't ya pout  
    just pass a law, and rub'em out!  
    (hee hee hee)

And so I've hatched a wonderful, evil plan  
to rid the Jews from all the land  
I'll write a law for the King's command,  
kill the Jews, that's my plan!  
    ha, ha, ha (*evil laugh, of course*)  
    ha, ha, ha

*(end with evil laugh)*  
*lead to asthma attack and "hee-haw" of donkey which he is*

Small Child: (*To his mother*) Mommy, he needs a time-out.

*(Haman sneers at the child)*

## Scene #7

*King Enters, with servants, Haman follows with Notebook, his voice should slither)*

*(Narrating)*

Mordi: A few days later, Haman met with the King.

King: OK, let's see, I've got the military review at 10 . . lunch at the hanging gardens . . . I do hope we haven't hung anyone there today . . bothers the digestion. . and then *another* military review. Sheesh . . I've got to work fast. Oh, Haman, I see you're here, what do you have for me today?

Haman: Your majesty, just a few trifling things. First, there's the matter of the irrigation project on the Tigris river, then there's raising taxes, and a little problem with one of the peoples we conquered.

King: I was unaware of any such problem, what is it?

Haman: Well, I've afraid it's very serious your majesty -- very serious indeed. There is a certain people -- a strange people, your Majesty, very strange --

King: How strange?

Haman: Ever seen a *Star Trek* convention?

King: Yes . . *(king recoils)* NO!?!

Haman: It's true. Geeks and freaks. Even actors!

King: No!

Haman: Now these people are scattered and dispersed among all of the peoples of the provinces of your kingdom. Their customs are different . . their laws are different. And their noses . .

King: Different?

Haman: Prominently so . . So, I'm afraid it is not in the King's interest to tolerate their behavior any more.

King: But don't we support diversity? I could'a sworn it was in my last speech.

Haman: Oh, your Majesty! Conformity is the *new* diversity. Gotta keep up with the times.

King: Oh . .

Haman: And so I'm afraid that it isn't in the king's interest to let these people get away with it any longer. So, we should issue a decree to destroy them, and I will pay ten thousand talents of silver to the treasury for this decree. .

King: You're sure this needs to be done?

Haman: Very sure, your Majesty. And you are in a hurry. If the troops don't see you soon, they'll be disappointed.

*(dismissibly)*

King: Good point. And, well . . . whatever . . . I do need to get to the review. Take my official ring. Keep the money -- I trust you, do whatever you please.

Haman: Thank you your majesty. You are very generous. Oh, your majesty, let's do lunch. I'll give the scribes directions and then join you.

King: Very good Haman, I will see you shortly.

*(King exits)*

*(Haman turns to audience in sing-song/spoiled brat chant.)*

Haman: YES! I get to keep the money! I get to keep the money!

Now, we must consult the gods as to what day is proper to destroy the Jews . . . and with them, that cursed Mordecai.

Bring in the royal astrologers. *(Astrologers enter, with funny pointy caps)*  
Astro, do you have the dice for the casting of the pur -- "the lot"?

Astro: Yes, sir.

Haman: Then ask the gods for me, what day should be set for the destruction of the Jews?

Astro: Oh, great and powerful god . . . guide these dice . . . What day should be set for the destruction of the Jews?

*(Astrologer rolls the dice, while all look on)*

Astro: The month will be March.

Haman: Rats, that's months away. But that is plenty of time to plan.  
If the gods decree it; so be it. . . .

Now, bring in my friends! And the scribes and couriers!

*(They enter carrying reams of paper.)*

My friends: Today, I hold in my hand the decree that we've always wanted! Authority to squish the Jewish nation like a bug! -- including that accursed Mordecai!  
*(Light evil laugh, may lead to donkey bay, depending upon audience.)*

## OPTIONAL SONG/MONOLOGUE

*Note: The classic reasons for a villain's monologue are: (a) the audience gets to understand his -- and it's almost always a guy -- motives; (b) if the hero is trapped, the villain will monologue long enough for the hero to get away (see "The Incredibles").*

*In this monologue, Haman gets to explain the ancient rivalry between Jews and the Amalekites. Check the notes at the back for more on this.*

*This song requires that Haman be played a little less over the top -- less cartoonish; more dangerous. Further, his cry is almost sympathetic; a shade of gray under the black hat.*

*Please note that he builds his arguments on hatred and lies (half-truths). The desert where his people cruelly attacked Israel was one they had no claim to -- rather, they wanted to plunder and kill. And the Jews (in general) did not cheat for their wealth but built it on ingenuity, community, hard work, and God's blessing.*

*The scene is marked as "Optional" -- I doubt many Directors will include it. This is because: (1) many will object to giving Haman the chance to make his case; (2) the play is about Esther -- Haman should only get so much stage time; (3) Haman's departure from whinny comic villain to dangerous and purposeful risks changing the play's tone.*

*On the other hand, pulling away the curtain to remind the audiences that there is evil -- and it's dangerous -- has value. The play is designed to echo themes of the Holocaust and showing that lies can lead to hatred, persecution and murder supports that message (and may, alas, cause a few bad dreams).*

*And, if your Haman has musical chops, he can finally show them off on this song.)*

*(Continuing -- softly and menacingly)*

Haman: But, before the decree is released a bit of a history lesson: My people and the Jews have been enemies for a millennia. We are the children of the strong Esau, their forefather is the accursed thief, Jacob.

We were once a nation greater than theirs. They crossed in the desert -- they were weary -- they were weak -- they were *rich* . . . having just plundered Egypt. Did they pay us tribute? No. Did they honor our greatness? Of course not. They thought they could walk through our desert with impunity.

So we attacked. Does not even nature itself prove "the survival of the fittest"? That the strong overcome the weak?

But we were repelled.

And from that time forward they have sought our destruction.

500 years ago, one of their kings, Saul of the family of Kish -- who even they recognize was half-mad -- sought to annihilate our entire race. He almost succeeded. Now we are but a poor shadow of our former glory, while they grow rich.

But all of that will change. Because of me. (*Holds up paper.*) And because of this decree. They have almost destroyed my people . . . they have made our women widows . . . they have reduced our children to poverty . . . they have left us in tears and created widows and orphans . . .

Well -- I will be merciful -- when I am through with them they will have no widows or orphans crying long into night . . . slowly starving, as we once did . . . no . . . *I will kill the widows and orphans, too.*

### **Best Served Cold**

(Haman)

I've heard they massacred my people.  
They killed the young and the old.  
They have murdered and they have slaughtered.  
Revenge is best served cold.

For every window and each orphan.  
For every insult I've endured.  
I will kill and I will plunder.  
Oh of that, you can rest assured.

I've heard they are a chosen people.  
I've heard they serve a mighty God.  
(Henchmen) (a mighty God)  
I'll send them to hist'ry's dustbin.  
For upon my people they have trod.  
(Henchmen) (upon us they have trod)

They are merchants, they are bankers.  
But where did all their wealth come from?  
They made it all cheating, looting.  
They're subhuman, filthy, scum.

(*Henchman Join*)

For every widow and each orphan.  
For every mother's wailing cry.  
We will kill and we will slaughter.  
We will cause them all to die.

*(Haman)*

For they have massacred my people.  
Five hundred years ago.  
And I will never forgive them.  
Revenge is best served cold.

*(Lights fade)*



## Scene #8

*Set: Courtyard.*

*(Group of Jews Re-enter. Decree is nailed to wall.)*

Person #1: What's that say?

Person #2: It's a royal decree!

Person #1: Announcing Passover tomorrow? How wonderful.

Person #2: It's not wonderful at all. We're to be destroyed, killed and annihilated!

"Greetings to the nations! In 11 months all of the Jews in the Kingdom are to be destroyed. Everyone who attends a synagogue and their family, is subject to death!"

Person #1: And there's more:

"Further, all who wish to join in taking part in this plan for the destruction of the Jews are to be able to take over the homes and everything of the value of the people killed."

Kid #1: Does that mean he can take my dog, Barney?

Person #1: And more.

Person #2: Why does the king seek to destroy us? He's treating us like traitors! What did we ever do?

*(Person #3 runs on stage.)*

Person #3: I just heard! Everyone is talking about it! The whole city is in turmoil!

*(Mordecai Enters)*

Person #2: Sir, Sir, have you seen this decree?!?

Mordi: What decree? Let me see that. *(He reads and reacts.)* This is horrible. What is the King thinking? Does he think? This has to be the work of that evil Haman.

*(To Mordi)*

Person #4: Sir, I'm not Jewish. But this is horrible.

Mordi: I understand. Thank you for your concern.

Person #4: Sir, I want to do more. Under the Persian law, the decree cannot be reversed. But I would be willing to take in children, or others, into my home . . . protect them . . .

Mordi: You would provide a hiding place?

Person #4: I would be honored.

Mordi: But you understand if you are discovered, our fate, could be your fate?

*(Sigh.)*

Person #4: I understand.

Mordi: Thank you. It's people like you who give me hope for our world.

Person #2: Can anything be done?

Person #1: What can be done? The king trusts Haman above all others. No one will tell him this is a travesty -- it could mean death.

Mordi: There is one who may. *(He is thinking of Esther and he looks concerned, knowing the risk he will be asking her to take)*  
I will wear sackcloth. And I will appeal to the one who can talk to the king for all of us.

Otherwise, we're to be annihilated, murdered and destroyed.

*(Jewish crowd starts putting on sack cloth -- gunny sacks, ideally died black -- men with ashes on their heads)*

### ***God Have You Deserted Me?***

*Psalm 22:1-3*

(chorus)

*Men*

Annihilated, violated  
murdered and destroyed

*(All -- women doing harmony)*

They'll grab all our property  
They'll kill our girls and boys!

*(NOTE: All Crowd/Mordi Solos -- consider adding people/voices if not strong enough because of staging, vocal strength, or mics. Mordi should normally join men on song.)*

*(Individual lines by characters; parts are for crowd members 1-4)*

Crowd Member #1 they'll take our land

Crowd Member #2 they'll take our homes

Crowd Member #3 they'll take anything they can!

Crowd Member #4 they'll take our lives and property  
All: we'll perish at their hands!

*(Mordi solos)*

God have you deserted me?

*(Mordi & all)* What have we done?

*Mordi*

To deserve being blotted out,  
without a ransom?

*all:* (Without a ransom)

*Women*

Once you saved your people  
with a mighty hand.

*All*

But now our cries are to the wind  
shall evil win?

(shall evil win?)

*(chorus)(Men)*

Annihilated, violated  
murdered and destroyed.

*(Men & Women harmony)*

They'll grab all our property  
They'll kill our girls and boys!

*(Individual lines by characters)*

#1 they'll gas us and shoot us

#1&2 they'll string us up and loot us

#1,2,&3 they'll hang us one by one

#1 Is this fulfilled prophesy?

#1&2 We're dying in our misery --

All: God, what have we done?

*Women (Mf):*

We have no land to call our own  
You're our only hope  
But if You've sold us to our deaths!  
How can we cope?

*Men:*

Annihilated, violated, murdered and destroyed  
They'll grab all our property, they'll kill our girls & boys  
Annihilated, violated, murdered and destroyed  
They'll grab all our property, they'll kill our girls & boys

*Men (Mf):*

We cry out day and night  
With no answer from you!  
Men mock us and our plight!  
What can we do?

*Women:*

Annihilated, violated, murdered and destroyed  
They'll grab all our property, they'll kill our girls & boys  
Annihilated, violated, murdered and destroyed  
They'll grab all our property, they'll kill our girls & boys

*(All) (raising hands to the heavens)*

Lord, save Your people  
We're afraid to die!  
You're our strength, deliverer  
Hear us as we cry!  
(Hear us as we cry!)

**INTERMISSION**

**ACT 2**  
**Scene 1**

*(Mordi appears in gunny sack and moves on stage. Above a Eunuch looks down from the balcony/baptistry area. As an alternative -- depending upon staging -- Mordi plays side stage or beside the, somewhat distant from Esther, who must stay within the palace grounds.)*

Hatach: Queen Esther, something is happening in the courtyard! A man appears to be wearing a gunny sack and praying outside.

*(Esther enters and looks)*

Esther: Mordi? Oh, no. I know that man. Something awful must have happened. Send someone down to find out what it is. Send down good clothes that he may enter.

*(Hatach goes down to Mordi)*

Hatach: Sir, the queen seeks to know the reason that you dress in clothes of mourning?

Mordi: A terrible thing has happened. The king has decreed that all the Jews are to be killed. Here, please give the Queen a copy of the edict. *(He hands over the document; Hatach leaves, someone hands Esther the document to speed it up. She reads and starts to collapse.)*

*(calling down)*

Esther: Uncle Mordi, you wear clothes of mourning -- has someone died?

*(Calling up)*

Mordi: It's worse than that. All of us could die!

*(Hatach enters and hands her the edict, she reads as she talks)*

Esther: All the people to be killed? *(to herself)* How can this be? Oh, this is awful. *(calls out)* Uncle Mordi – come in. Get cleaned up. You know the palace grounds have a dress code. Talk to me.

Mordi: I will not get cleaned up. I will wear these clothes until something is done.

Esther: Oh, Uncle, what can be done?

Mordi: Isn't it obvious? You must speak to him, my child.

*(Author's Note: The original version of this play was written for a audience of children. This led to the "puppy do-do" line (Option #3) which should still play well with younger audiences (use for matinees?).*

*But for more mature audiences, I think Esther fumbling with the rights words -- or trying to avoid course language -- is appropriate. For Option #2 -- you may substitute whatever you think is the worst social idea for the past few decades: spandex for men? William Shatner in spandex? disco? bell bottoms? Roseanne Barr singing the National Anthem? Please avoid political bad ideas, as that causes people to turn off -- even some who agree with you.)*

### **OPTION #1:**

Esther: But don't you remember what happened to Vashti? She was kicked out just for failing to appear when the king said to! And you want me to tell him his decree is what? A piece of . . . of . . . *(throws up hands, exasperated)* really bad stuff.

### **OPTION #2:**

Esther: But don't you remember what happened to Vashti? She was kicked out just for failing to appear when the king said to! And you want me to tell him his decree is what? The worst thing since . . . since . . . since *disco*?

### **OPTION #3:**

Esther: But don't you remember what happened to Vashti? She was kicked out just for failing to appear when the king said to! And you want me to tell him his decree is what? Royal puppy do-do?

### **END VARIOUS OPTIONS**

Mordi: Surely you have some influence with the king? Don't you . . . um . . . see him regularly?

Esther: Oh, Uncle Mordi . . . he doesn't call for me any more. It's been over a month. I fear he loves someone . . . someone younger . . . And he spends all his spare time eating pork rinds and drinking beer with his buddy, Haman.

Mordi: Oy! Pork rinds? A Month? This is worse than I thought. Still . . . you must try.

Esther: But Uncle Mordi! If any man or woman approaches the king without being summoned . . . the law . the law is . . . they're put to death! Unless . . . unless the king extends his royal scepter.

Mordi: Oh, Esther . . .

## *God Will Save His People*

Mordi:

A great evil shrouds the land.  
Kill the Jews is Haman's plan.  
You must stop the law the King decreed.  
Now, you must go before the King.  
To overturn this evil thing.  
For your people you must beg and plead.

For God will save His people  
God will find a way.  
And there is hope for today, if we pray,  
and proclaim the truth He commands.  
and proclaim the truth He commands.

*Esther:*

I listen in fear, anguish and grief,  
for my people there is no relief.  
*Mordi:* (The kings decree you must resist.)  
Oh, God could there be another way?  
Is this the cup I must drink today?  
*Mordi:* (You were called for such a time as this.)  
*Esther:* (Such a time as this!)

*Esther:*

(*Mordi joins*)  
I know God will save His people  
God will find a way.  
*Esther*  
But if I try  
I may die  
so I sit and cry:  
"What should I do today?  
What should I do today?"

(*Interlude*)

Esther: Um . . . Uncle Mordi . . . God is powerful -- maybe -- maybe he can find another way to bring deliverance . . . someone . . . anyone . . . else.

Mordi: Child, in every generation some are called to stand up for God and His people. Some do become martyrs; but some, like Moses, bring deliverance . . . Perhaps that person is you. (*She grimaces*) Sweetheart, back when you were a little girl . . . do

you remember praying to change the world? *(she nods)* . . . This is your chance!

Esther: *(Slightly incredulous.)* But I didn't know I might die! . . .  
*(sung)*  
I'm just an ordinary girl.  
Who am I to change the world?

*(interlude continues)*

Mordi: Esther, don't think that your royal position will save you from disaster. If you do nothing, God will deliver his people from somewhere else. But you and your family will perish.

*(she sighs)*

Esther: OK. Have the people fast and pray for three days.  
I will try. . .  
And if I perish . . . I perish.  
*(Mordi smiles)*

*Esther & Mordi*

For God will save His People  
God will find a way,  
*(Esther)*

and knowing I might die  
still, I've got'ta try . . .  
To change the king's command.

*Rit. (Together)*

To live for God . . . and in His Plan.

Mordi: So . . . You OK with this?

*(Slightly sarcastic/fearful)*

Esther: Noooo! I flinch at paper cuts! I'm quaking in my boots. Oh, Uncle Mordi, do you know when it was that someone got the king to change a decree? . . .

*(he shakes his head, she looks down dejectedly)*

. . . neither do I . . . it's never happened before.

*(Sung)*

(Oh,) I once dreamed I could change the world –  
I once hoped to leave my mark.  
Into a hornet nest I'm hurled. . .  
A fool's errand to embark . . .

*(Esther exits from balcony)*



*(To audience)*

Mordi:           And so it will be. We hope and pray for God's protection. Our future dangles upon the thread of hope -- the hope that God can and will work through the words and actions of young Esther to change the mind of the king.

*(Lights fade out; lights out)*

*(This is included if you have a young child actress who is really good and with to make the play full length. The scene is not essential, but is sweet and suggests part of why Esther collapses later – she's weak from hunger -- and the hope many find in passages in the Bible. I like the aspect of "out of the mouths of babes".)*

### **OPTIONAL ADDITIONAL ENDING OF ACT 2, SCENE 1:**

**Setting:**       *Queen's chamber. Esther pacing nervously. She may appear unsteady on her feet. Steadies herself. Hatach enters.*

Esther:           Anything?

Hatach:          No. . . I'm sorry.

Esther:           He called someone else?

Hatach:          *(Nods.)  
(Esther exhales or bows her head.)*

Esther:           Then tomorrow's the day. I so hoped the king would call tonight.

Hatach:          I know. We all were. So many prayers . . hopes . . do you have any ideas?

Esther:           Nothing yet.

Hatach:          Your Majesty, you really should eat something. You've gone without food for two days already. You're wobbling. You need your strength.

Esther: I'll be fine, Hatach. I've got to set an example. Plus, if I meet my God, tomorrow, well, I want to have done everything I could today.

Hatach: I understand. . . Um, your Majesty. Word is out you're feeling bad. Princess Tara has asked to see you. . she's outside . . she'd like to give you something . .

Esther: Princess Tara?

Hatach: She's a child of one of His Majesty's wives before you arrived.

Esther: Humph. . . another day, another picture . . another song. I'm sure she means well. Well, it'll get my mind off of my stomach . . and tomorrow. Show her in.

*(Hatach leaves to escort in Princess Tara. She is between 6-12 and may have danced as "a young Esther" in Man of My Dreams. She's tentative and a bit scared. This is a little like Esther before the king earlier.)*

Esther: Come in, Princess.

Tara: Thank you . . your . . your Majesty.

Esther: Don't be scared. Now, what would you like?

Tara: Well, I heard that you were feeling bad. And I . . uh . . wanted to do something. You're so nice. But I can't draw and I can't sing very well. . .

Esther: That's alright, Tara, it's nice that you were so concerned. It means a lot to me.

Tara: Well, I thought maybe . . maybe I could recite a poem to you. I can't do it in the original language or nothin' but sometimes I think about it when I go to bed or have a bad dream.

Esther: It must be a very special poem.

Tara: It is. I love it. And it's not too long, either so I can remember it . . .

Um . . well, here goes *(may take deep, dramatic breath)*:

The Lord is my shepherd, I shall not want. . .

*(Esther looks quizzically/startled, she turns her head after the first refrain . . then starts mouthing some of the main words)*

He makes me lie down in green pastures, he leads me beside still waters,  
He restores my soul, He guides me in the path of righteousness for His name's sake.

*(Esther mouths all of the words this verse or may join Tara in saying them.)*

Even though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil, for  
You are with me; Your rod and Your staff, they comfort me.

You prepare a table before me in the . . in the . . *(she seems to forget)*

*(Softly)*

Esther: in the presence . .

Tara: *(nodding, Esther mouths this line)* a table in the presence of mine enemies.

You anoint my head with oil; my cup overflows.

Surely goodness and mercy will follow me all the days of my life. .

*(Esther joins.)*

and I will dwell in the house of the Lord forever.

*(short pause)*

Esther: That was wonderful, Tara.

Tara: Nah . . you'd heard it before, I could tell . .

Esther: Yes, but . . but sometimes I forget.

Tara: . . and I can't sing like you . . *(slightly dejected)* it was nothing . . .

Esther: Tara . . you have given me a very great and precious gift. That poem will **never** be a nothing. *You* will never be a nothing. To be able to remember all those words . . when you need them. . . it's the most wonderful thing in the world. . . Tara, thank you, so, so much. *(Consider having Esther give her a hug.)*

Tara: Uh . . um, thanks.

Esther: But Tara . . with all the Persian Gods, why?

Tara: I don't like 'em. They're scary.

Esther: *(She chuckles.)* Yes they are. And . . how did you know I needed that one?

Tara: I just did.

Esther: You just did?

Tara: It was a feeling. . Plus . . well . . I seen you passing notes to that guy with the tassels.

Esther: Uh, huh.

Tara: Just because I'm a kid, don't mean I'm stupid.

Esther: Indeed, you're not. *(Tara nods and exits happily.)*

*(Esther looks from Tara to Hatach and starts to smile/smirk.)*

Hatach: Feeling better?

Esther: *(Smirk grows.)* A table in the presence of mine enemies . . .  
Hatach, I may not be able to eat, but we're gonn'a cook.

*(Lights fade.)*

**Act 2, Scene 2: This Could be the Day I Die**

*(Haman and his minions enter in shadows)*

*(To audience)*

Mordi: It has been three days. Three days of prayers. Prayers that the God of Israel will answer us. Of fasting and tears of sackcloth and ashes. And more prayers.

Unseen kingdoms and principalities lining up on both sides. On one side -- the powers of hell. On the other side -- the powers of the Living God of Israel.

On the side of Hell, Haman and his supports, Satan's Servants, sharpened their swords and dream of the booty that they will receive upon our destruction.

*(Spotlight on either center stage or side stage where the horde is gathered with their swords. For actions/choreography the soldiers may stab with their swords at dolls or outward; fists for portions; for the following stanza:*

*Hang their bodies from a million trees*

*bring the Jews to their knees* (clenched fists in front)

*Send their ashes into the air* (left arms raised)

*We are Everywhere* (right arm joins left raised outward)

*We are Satan's Servants* (arms continue to be raised out)

*We're the SS* (uniform collapse of arms to attention with fists at sides, and heads proudly pointed up)

*AUTHOR'S NOTES: The references below -- which are pretty gruesome -- are intended to accurately reflect the truth of the holocaust. But not just the holocaust of WWII. The reference to "throw their babies in the Nile" refers to the Exodus story and the reference to "dangle babies from our swords" refers to the Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD by Rome. The Jewish historian Josephus maintains that 1.1 million Jews were killed at that time, although most probably died from by sickness and starvation while the city was besieged.*

**Satan's Servants**

We are Satan's Servants

We're the SS.

Spreading lies and confusion

that's what we do best.

Bring the Jews to their knees

Hang their bodies from a million trees.

We are Satan's Servants

We're the S.S.

We will never acknowledge their Lord  
dangle babies from our swords.  
Take their lands and their gold  
Kill their young and their old.

We are Satan's Servants.  
We're the S.S.

*(Consider strobe lights and guards dragging off "Jews" during this stanza, either on stage or in audience.)*

Ooh, Ooh.  
Gas'em, shoot'em  
Throw 'em in the Nile.  
Stab'em, Starve'm  
Bury them in piles.  
Ooh, Ooh, Ooh.  
Ooh. Ooh. Ooh. Ooh.

Some say we've gone away  
but we are here to stay.  
Look throughout history.  
We're always there you'll see.

We are Satan's Servants  
We're the S.S.  
Spreading lies and confusion  
That's what we do best.

Round'em up, work'em to death.  
Give'm gas for their final breath.  
Send their ashes into the air  
We are Everywhere.

We are Satan's Servants  
We're the SS.  
We are Satan's Servants  
We're the S.S.  
We are Satan's Servants  
We're the S.Sssss.

*(Haman and Guards exit; cast enters to surround auditorium.)*

*(A group of at least 5 "friends of Haman" come out they accost Jews in the audience -- or on stage -  
- with clubs, holding them by their robes near their neck or threatening them a few inches away  
from their face. Jews are to cower before this onslaught -- backing up a few steps as singing goes  
on. Haman may sing either the first two stanza and be joined by others or all "Jew I'm Gonn'a Get*

*You" stanzas and then the others for the final stanza of each verse.*

*NOTE: Depending upon the audience this song may replace "Satan's Servant's". While, Satan's Servant's is probably a better song, it may scare young children.)*

**OPTIONAL SONG: CAN BE SUBSTITUTED FOR SATAN'S SERVANTS**

***Jew I'm Gonn'a Get You***

*(Haman)*

Jew I'm gonn'a get you,  
No one'll miss you  
Jew I'm gonn'a get you -- now

Jew I'm gonn'a get you,  
Doesn't matter what you do,  
Jew I'm gonn'a get you now.

*(Group)*

We'll take your land and property  
We'll steal your shops and gold.  
We'll crush your bodies into dust  
this law has made us bold!

*(Entire group led by Haman)*

3. Jew we're gonn'a get you  
No one'll miss you  
Jew we're get you - now!

Jew we're gonn'a get you --  
Beat ya and abuse you  
Jew we're gonn'a get you -- now!

Forget about crying to your God  
There is no hope at all. . .  
For the mighty weight of the king's command  
upon your necks will fall!

Jew we're gonn'a get you!  
No one'll miss you --  
Jew we're get you - now!

*(Action now switches to the audience; the King and Haman, eat and drink while complying audience members are taken out; but it is not critical to show them eating if staging is difficult.  
NOTE: Esther's author wanted to show while the King and Haman are eating and drinking the*

*kingdom is in disarray.)*

Jew #1: Please, please, Mercy? What have we done?

Haman or  
Henchman: Done! What have you done! Your stench fills the kingdom! The only mercy you will receive is some of you will have a quick death!

*(They are drug off, exit.)*

## **END OPTIONAL SECTION/SONG**

*(STAGING: Throne and King center stage. Cast of Jews enters with candles surrounding the auditorium.)*

Mordi: And on the other side, millions were praying for deliverance through the living God of Abraham and Isaac and Israel.

*(Side stage)*

Small Child: Mommy, why do we light candles?

Child's Mother: Well, in the temple there are lamps and incense. And just as the smoke from the lamps and incense goes up to heaven so do our prayers. And God hears us. And He answers.

*(Esther enters from back of audience n a beautiful robe, wearing a crown.)*

### **This Could Be the Day I Die**

*Esther:*

This could be the day I die  
Still I know I've gott'a try

While the soldier's blades are gleaming  
I will I tremble, I will cry:  
Lord, save me or I will die.

*Jews: (holding candles)*

A thousand cries to heaven  
A thousand whispered prayers  
Undeserving of God's love and care.

But we'll cry unto the heavens  
to the God of Abraham.  
And our hearts say He'll meet us there.



*Esther:*

This could be the day I die  
This could be the day I die

*(Esther paces forward while Jews sing. She stops mid-audience for next verse. Soldiers will take out swords to slay her and look to the king. He will hold out the scepter at the end.)*

*Men*

If my people call upon Me  
If they raise their voice to pray  
If they turn from all their wicked ways

*All Jews*

I will hear them in the heavens,  
forgive them of their sins  
and I will heal their land.

*Esther:*

This could be the day I die  
This could be the day I die

*(Music to "This could be the day I Die")*

*(To herself and audience. May be ad libbed depending upon audience and mood.)*

Esther:           This is it. I may be walking to my death. For if the king does not extend his scepter,  
I will be struck down.

*(Esther is shaking, her eyes teary.)*

What am I doing? . . .

Breath . . in and out . . don't look at the swords . . one step in front of the other . .

Lord, please prepare the king's heart. Let me know what to say . . what not to say.

Please, Lord . . prepare me.

*(She takes a deep breath and walks forward a few steps as music gives intro.)*

*Esther:*

I'm not witty or courageous  
Just a child of Abraham  
Will God protect me with His hand?

This could be the day I die  
This could be the day I die

*Jews:*

A thousand cries to heaven  
A thousand burning tears  
A thousand hopes, a million prayers

We will cry unto the heavens  
to the God of Abraham  
And trust that He still cares

*Esther*

This could be the day I die

*Jews and Esther:*

This could be the day I die.

*(Jews blow out candles and go to one knee to pray to God while the rest of the scene plays out. Esther advances, faltering, as the king talks to himself.)*

*(to himself)*

King:           What is this? . . . the Queen in court? She's never come here before? . . .  
                  What could be so important that she would risk her life to see me?

*(The guards position their swords to attack Esther; they take a few tentative steps forward, Esther turns her head to them, scared; they all look to the King. Esther advances further. She falters. Then she collapses on the ground, having fainted.)*

*The King now looks more concerned. The guards advance with swords. The King motions with his hand for them to stop. They do. The King now gets down from his throne and quickly approaches the queen. Taking her in his arms or lap. He may fan her and/or have a guard without sword fan her.*

*His voice is gentle.)*

King:           Esther . . . Esther . . . wake up . . .

*(She starts to come to.)*

Esther:        Oh, my King . . .

*(To guards with swords.)*

King: Men . . get back! . . Can't you see you're frightening her? . .  
*(to Esther)* Now, what is it my queen? . . What do you want? . .

Esther: My king . . to be in your arms . . should be enough . . I've made such a mess of things . . disrupted the court . .

King: It's fine. It's fine. We were due for a little excitement. .  
Besides, I haven't had that effect on women for years. . .  
*(He gives big cheesy Gastonish grin to audience.)*  
I've still got it!

*(She smiles.)*

Esther: Of course you do, your Majesty.

King: Look, can you get up? We need to do this properly. Gotta keep up appearances, you know. I'll need to go to the throne and extend my scepter.

*(Softly)*

Esther: Thank you.

*(The King and Esther both get up. The King may help her. He then returns to the throne. Esther sluggish, may have trouble walking. She raises her head, may adjust her crown. She walks forward, he extends his scepter, she touches the scepter and then bows to one knee. The King's voice fills the room.)*

King: Queen Esther what is your request? Anything you want, up to half the kingdom, it's yours.

Esther: Really! *(To herself and under her breath)*. Oh, of course, it's just an expression.  
*(Regular voice. She raises her head to look at the king.)*

Your Majesty, if it pleases the king, please let the King and Haman come to a banquet that I have prepared for them.

*(The king is slightly bewildered. He waits a few seconds before responding.)*

King: Guard! Bring Haman at once, we will do lunch with the Queen.

### Scene #3

*(FOR CONSIDERATION: Please consider having Esther flick a pillow at the king at some point, most likely as he exits. One option: The King prepares to leave and as he's turning Esther throws a pillow at him. He turns back, smirks and comes back and then exits the other direction with her.*

*ALTERATIVE OPTION: She throws the pillow. He picks it up and playfully hits her with it, but then exits the opposite direction, which suggests better that he's emotionally moving towards her, but not quite there.*

*Related Comments: See "Flirting with the King" at end of script.)*

*SET CHANGE: Throne removed. Dining table in Esther's palace set up.*

*(Guards leave; return with Haman at a quick pace, holding his arms. Haman trips on the stares, glares at the Guard)*

Haman: I can walk by myself idiots!

*(Regains his composure to come before the king. Esther either alone or with servants serves the king and Haman.)*

King: Esther, this is about the best food I've had in ages.

You know, Esther you gave me quite the start showing up today without an appointment. It wouldn't have looked good if the guards had executed you right on the spot.

Esther: I'm sorry, your Majesty. *(Demure and a bit flirtatious.)* I have missed seeing you. *(King beams. She's now back in earnest.)* And it is important.

King: I'm sure it is. Could have been very bad. . . People might have suspected I had a Henry VIII fetish -- wouldn't want that -- got'ta control the weight and all -- could have been bad for the public's moral.

Haman: Morale?

King: That's what I said, "moral."

Esther: *(To Haman, under her breath.)* You know the definition of "moral"?

King: And Haman -- my most honored and trusted servant -- it's must be quite an honor for you to join us.

Esther: *(Quietly -- gulp! -- to herself)* Most trusted?

*(Esther recoils from this tribute to Haman, the king continues while nibbling on a grape or similar trifle)*

Haman: Indeed, Sire. This has almost been the highlight of my year, although I've got a celebration coming up that might top it!

King: Really! A celebration that would top eating with the king and queen?  
That must be a killer!

Haman: *(Smugly)*. Indeed, your Highness. It'll be a killer.

King: Now, Esther, will you tell me? What is your request and what do you want? Even up to half my kingdom, you may have it.

*(Esther bites her lip and trembles, she should be fighting back tears.)*

Esther: Umm . . My petition and request is this: *(She goes to one knee to bow before him.)*

If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request, let the king *and Haman* come tomorrow to another banquet I have prepared for them. Then I will make my request.

*(Bewildered.)*

King: Then, let it be done.

*(King and Esther exit.)*

Haman: Esther wants me! *(Haman starts to leave.)* She thinks I'm handsome, witty, and wise. Oh, and she's sooooo right!

*(Haman exits to side stage.)*

Guard #3: All arise for the great and powerful Haman.

*(All rise but Mordecai; Haman is walking and using a handkerchief to wipe his face. . He stares Mordi and Mordi folds his arms and stares right back; people exit. Haman goes on by steaming.)*

Haman: Only me. *(Sing to self; dancing -- poorly -- across the stage, to stumble)*  
Only me. The beautiful Esther invited only me. She wants me alone.  
Surely she knows . . . I'm the brains behind the throne.

*(pouting)*

Still it doesn't matter what happens so long as that Mordecai lives.

Fool. He stares unafraid. Doesn't he know he will die.

But I DON'T Care. I DON'T CARE. The beautiful Esther wants me! Only me!

#### Scene #4

**Author's Notes:** *I have tried to portray Haman with my understanding of the Biblical text and the way he is portrayed in the Jewish celebration of Purim -- essentially, as comic book villain -- in pettiness, cruelty, and grandiose designs for destruction and death.*

*In the Bible, he comes home, brags about his vast wealth, power and prestige. Then he whines that it doesn't matter so long as that Jew, Mordecai lives -- hence the song, It's Wonderful Being Me!*

*Part of this section of the script (together with Satan's Servants) portray some very ugly attitudes and ideas. In the Biblical text Haman's wife suggests committing murder, for no better reason than Haman is annoyed. His friends join in this request.*

*It is possible that the song will offend you. If it does, you're showing a healthy respect for human life.*

**Scene:** *Haman's house*

*(Haman enters from other door)*

Haman: Zee, I'm home!

**OPTIONAL SCENE SEGMENT (If you've got a very smart, well trained dog.)**

Haman: Here, King! Come to Daddy!

*(Dog -- Haman gets down to pet dog. The dog goes half way.)  
That's a good Boy! A good boy . .*

*(Dog looks at Haman and then turns and runs away. Haman looks dismayed.)  
Well, I didn't want to pet you anyway! So there!*

**End Optional Segment**

*(Zee and at least 5 extras enter.)*

Zee: Honey, you're late. We've got company. Now, now how was your day?

Haman: Oh my friends, such a day, such a day. Running my varied businesses. Oh, the billions I've made on my government contracts -- most of which I wrote myself. It's amazing how well that works.

It's soooo wonderful being me. The king has honored me above all others.

Today I ate alone ate with the king and queen. Tomorrow, I alone am invited *again* to dine with the king and queen Esther.

Zee: The king and queen! Oh, Honey, you've made it.

Haman: But on my way home, who should I see but that Jew, Mordecai. And with all the money, all the power, all the honors, it's isn't enough -- as long as that cursed Jew lives! But -- in general -- it's wonderful being me . . .

***It's So Wonderful Being ME!***

(Haman)

Now, people bow wherever I go.  
They all know I'm in control!  
With the taxes I steal, I'm rolling in dough.

It's wonderful being me! (May substitute: "It's so wonderful . . ." for variation)

Oh, I'm richer than Rockefeller.  
Bill Gates works as my bank teller.  
I want'a be bigger than Andrew Lloyd Webber! (want'a or gonna)  
It's so wonderful being me!

(Friends)

Haman -- you're quite the guy.  
Taught us -- to cheat and lie!  
We're the best friends -- you can buy!

You're a wonderful, wonderful guy!

*(Interlude -- Haman does stupid dance much like the Major General in Pirates of Penzance)*

I surrounded myself with sycophants. (pronounce "sycophants" to rhyme with "chance")  
They'd lick my boots if they got the chance.  
I maneuver the king with song and dance.

It's wonderful being me! (or: "so wonderful")

I dine alone with the King and Queen.  
I'm going tomorrow, it's becoming routine.  
Esther thinks I'm handsome, witty and keen!  
I'll try not to drool, if you know what I mean. (OR: "I'll try not to drool, if you know what I mean!") (See notes below.)

It's so wonderful being me!

Oh, I have such a wonderful life.  
Ought'a get myself a trophy wife!     *(Zee fumes)*  
I back-stab friends with my knife!  
    It's so wonderful being me!

*NOTE: The alternative lyrics are included depending upon casting. The idea of Haman drooling at Esther, who was beautiful, seems reasonable, as the king's is jealous later (if done this way, Haman can give Esther a look, or two). It's possible Haman had thought himself quite the Lady's man. But if there is a vast age difference, and especially if Esther is a teen, the lines should be changed.*

*(Friends)*  
Haman -- you're quite the guy.  
We're the best friends -- you can buy.  
We all love you! -- Hey, you taught us to lie!  
    *Rit.*  
    You're a wonderful, wonderful guy!

*(Depending upon how much you play out the above section; consider having a Henchman, or maybe a child, hold sign that says: "Hey, We're Not Done Yet" so audience doesn't applaud and miss jokes in last stanza. Then consider sign saying: "Now We Are!")*

*(Haman)*  
But in spite of everything I've got.  
While others bow that Jew will not!  
I think he's a booger and a snot!

    It's so *(sniffle)* tough being *(sniffle)* me.  
    *(Sniffle, sob, blubbing)*

Friends:       Group hug! Group Hug!.

*(NOTES: The sniffle is a tribute to the Major General in Pirates of Penzance. "I'm not really an orphan!" They gather around Haman and hug. But they will come out with his wallet, cash pocket watch and possibly boxer shorts, which the guy holding them will discard quickly. If using the boxer shorts -- then Haman should look down and possible feel his pants/robe.)*

Zee:           My husband, you've had a tough day. *(She hands him a drink.)*  
                You're stressed out. *(He sits and it to almost purr during this scene. She rubs his shoulders.)*  
                Now, let me help make it all better . . .



## Killin' the Jew

(Zee)

Oh Haman, my Haman.

You're so distressed.

Your Prozac's not workin' and you're depressed.

Haman: Well, why shouldn't I be?

(Zee)

Well, you can quit all your mopin'.

Quit messin' around.

You're not copin'.

Just bring this Jew down.

Well, you have got all the money.

Haman: But it's not fair!

But I like doing that!

(Haman)

I've got the power.

(Zee)

Build a gallows!

Haman: I like it!

(Zee & Guests)

A deadly tower!

(Men)

Killin' the Jew.

Killin' the Jew.

Killin' the Jew.

It's what you should do

(boo, dee, doo . . . boo, dee, doo . . . do, do).

(Haman)

Oh, what fun!

I am so cool!

I am so cool!

(Zee)

Oh Haman, my Haman.

The king's your friend.

You've got to use that, for this creep's end.

Haman:

That's right!

But I need a plan

Just get the king's blessing.

To have him die!

I'm listening!

(Haman)

I'll impale him -- 50 cubits high!

(Zee & Guests)

Well, you have got all the money.

(Haman)

I've got the power.

I'll fricassee him!

(Haman/guest)

Within 24 hours!

(Zee & Guests)

Well, Haman! Our Haman.

Your quite a guy!

Killin' people like they were flies!

Haman: I am aren't I!

Haman: Well, it's all about me!

(Men)

Killin' the Jew.

Killin' the Jew.

Killin' the Jew.

It's what you should do

(boo, dee, doo . . boo, dee, doo . . do, do).

Haman: Oh, what fun, watching him die!

(Cackle)

Haman: So, let me get this right, you want me to right up an edict to commit murder, just because I find this guy annoying?

Zee: Of course, Dear.

Haman: Oh, you're so good, Pumpkin . . .

*(All Exit.)*

## Scene #5

*(The King in baggy -- Lion King print? -- pajamas or an outer robe, possibly holding a teddy bear, contemplative; king may put robe over pajamas for next scene):*

*(Narrating. Side stage.)*

Mordi: But that night, while Haman plotted his revenge, God was working on the heart of the King.

King: Oh, it's late, I can't sleep. What's happening? Oh, why does my mind race, so?

## WOMEN

(King)

Every part of my kingdom works as I say.  
It's a marvelous synchronized machine.  
Every soldier is taught he must obey.  
While I sit around drinking my caffeine.

Every subject knows just where they fit.  
Meshed together like a Persian rug.  
To my will they all willingly submit.  
Together our kingdom's good and snug.

(chorus)

Then why can't I,  
get some shut eye?  
What's disturbing my sleep?  
For while I lie in bed ---  
something rattles in my head.  
I end up counting sheep.

It must be --

Women!

Women!

Women!

Women!

They go and muddle the brain.  
They're such a pain.  
They nag and complain.  
I think they'll drive me insane.

I remember that Vashti  
She was so mean and nasty.  
A disgrace to the fairer sex!

She would tell me what to do.  
I'd rather have the Spanish flu.  
I wanted to ring her neck.

"Put down that beer!"  
"Get over here!"  
I'll make this good and clear:  
    "You eat like a swine."  
*[Optional lyrics: Quit ogling/groping the concubines!]*  
"Your manners are atrocious."  
"Your breath is halitosis."  
    I heard it all the time.

I've had it with --  
    Women!  
        Women!  
            Women!  
                Women!

They go and muddle the brain.  
They're such a pain.  
They nag and complain.  
I think they'll drive me insane.  
    Insane  
        Insane  
            Insane!

*(NOTE: The optional lyrics are probably funnier -- and a little more accurate to what annoyed the queen -- but should be used only for an older audiences. King's voice should slide at least the last "insane".)*

*(Spoken)*

King:           And then there's Esther. What's up with her? . . . And why haven't I called for her? . . .  
                  I love talking with her . . . she's a breath of fresh air . . . she wants to know everything .  
                  . about me. . about what I do . . about the kingdom. Never a complaint . . .  
                  *(lecherous smirk)* and I do miss those pillow fights.

## The King's Lament

*(Sung) (The king will stumble trying to come up with a good adjective -- the author did, too -- you may hold the rest a little longer than listed in music.)*

Oh, Esther, beautiful, Esther.  
You're sweet, submissive, serene.  
Oh, Esther, my sweet Esther.  
You're a perfectly . . . perfect queen.

### OPTIONAL:

*(On fermata rest, king contemplates what word works, rather than just being befuddled. Ad lib OK, so long as not profane, may also use one or two of the below examples:*

1. *"Uh . . . drool inspiring, so that I'm perspiring . . . uh. . . no";*
2. *"Frugal, beguiling so that when I think of you I'm smiling . . . like an idiot . . . no"*
3. *"Wise, frugal and Intelligent with a bod' much smaller than an elephant . . . uh .. definitely not -- (spoken) humph . . . there is a reason kings hire composers - perhaps I should have employed that guy who uses too many notes . . . ."*

*If using the above, then go to repeat "my perfectly, (throws up hands) perfect queen" )*

Oh, Esther would never pester --  
a man when he wants to have fun.  
But when she looks at me beseechingly --  
I know that she seeks in me --  
A knight a kingdom able to run.

*(Spoken)*

What is it that she will not reveal? Why did she risk death to see me? It can't be: "Let's do lunch?" *(Under his breath.)* Of course, if she was dessert . . .

*(Sung)*

Esther, I have neglected you,  
but you have never complained.  
I spent my time doing what I wanted to.  
My nights being entertained.

What questions clings the back of your tongue?  
What message hangs in the air?  
Is there an evil that threatens my people?  
Something that's sent you into despair?  
(Does evil hang in the air?)

	<i>Tenors</i>	<i>Basses</i>
( <i>Servants</i> )	Evil . . . lurking under your bed. God is speaking. Unto your thick head.	Evil lurking, under your bed God is speaking unto your thick head. Evil lurking, under your bed God is speaking, unto your thick head.

Whatever it is I'll find it out --  
I'll be a man worthy of your esteem.  
Oh, Esther, beautiful Esther,  
In your eyes I'll be redeemed.  
My perfectly -- perfect queen.  
For I must find  
this evil in time  
for I can't get you out of my mind.

King: RECORDS!

Servant #3: You want to cut a record? Umm . . . I'm not sure you're that good.

King: What! Of course not. I need royal records. Something, anything to put me to sleep.  
Although, the sky is already glowing in the east.

Servant #3: Ummm . . . I know just the passage.

Let's see:

OK . . . June 5 . . . the King got his nails clipped -- he had a hangnail -- which gave him an idea he used later that day . . . although first he had lunch -- pheasant in "Spaghetti Os" -- which was much too rich (*king starts to doze off*) -- and, anyway, it was like reported that somebody wanted to kill the king, see. (*King eye open wide.*) And there was like a royal investigation and stuff like that. (*King starts to look up.*) The guy who fingered the bad dudes was Mordecai the Jew (*King looks disconcerted*), who passed it along to Esther, who told the guards, who told their commander, who arrested the Eunuchs, who confessed under bright lights and opera music.

King: Hold it! A plot against me? When did this happen?

Servant #3: Five years ago your Majesty, shortly after Esther became queen.

The report was apparently misfiled under the month of "Goon".

King: Mordecai -- the Jew -- saved my life?  
(*To himself*) Aren't those the people Haman said were a danger to our Kingdom?  
But he saved my life? (*King's bewildered -- more than usual -- but he's starting to put the pieces together.*)

And how . . . how did Esther know this man?  
(*To Soldier*) Soldier, what honor do the records show was given to this man, Mordecai?

Servant #3: Umm . . . it appears that nothing was done for him, your Majesty. Although they do state that the condemned had meatloaf and sauerkraut as their last meal.

King: Incredible! . . .  
Who would choose meatloaf and sauerkraut as a last meal!?! . . .  
And how could a man save my life and not receive a reward? Who is in the court?

Servant #3: Your majesty, Haman has arrived. He's reading the morning scroll, drinking tea, and eating a Danish.

(*Taken back*)

King: Eating a Danish!?!

Servant #3: It's a pastry, not a peasant.

King: Oh. (*Nods like this is "News"*) I knew that. Bring him in.

(*Haman should be reading a paper and holding a scroll. May have others around him, all of whom look apprehensive -- Haman is thrilled.*)

Servant #2: Haman, his majesty request that you be brought in.

Haman: This is it. Now is my chance to get Mordecai's execution papers signed. Just one more, itsey-bitsy manipulation.

***Government Job***  
(*Reprise*)

High, high to the sky,  
build those gallows for Mordecai!  
High, high to the sky . . . .  
Mordecai will DIE! DIE! DIE! DIE! (*Cackle or giggle.*)

(*Steps into the court before the King*)

Haman: Good morning, Your Majesty, did you sleep well?

King: Actually, I had a fitful night.  
(*To himself*) It's like I'm missing something  
(*To Haman*) -- Haman, I must honor a man who has done me a great service.

Haman: *(Aside to Audience)* Honor a man who has done a great service -- surely he means only me!

This is just what I always wanted: For everyone to see me in my glory while Mordecai lies impaled on the gallows.

That's just wonderful your majesty!

King: Haman, I have a question, for you.

Haman: Oh, yes, your majesty!

King: What should be done for the one the king desires to honor?

Haman: *(Haman smiles, he's sure the king means him.)*

Oh, Your Majesty, for the one the king seeks to honor. Let a royal robe -- one that has been worn by the king -- and a horse that has been ridden by the king -- be prepared.

.....

## ***USE ONE OF BELOW 2***

### **OPTION #1**

Haman: *(Continuing.)* Now, let the man the king desires to honor be paraded around town on this horse by one of the royal princes and have the prince proclaim: "This is what is done for the one the king desires to honor!"

***(Skip OPTION #2 and continue)***

### **OPTION #2** *(IF SELECTED, JUST CONTINUE AT END)*

Haman: *(Continuing.)* -- for instance, the Mustang would be good --

King: The Mustang?

Haman: It's a special Arabian horse, that was bred by a man named Ford.

King: A strange name -- compared to my name of Ahasuerus.

Haman: Indeed, but a good horse. Now, let the man the king desires to honor be paraded around town on the Mustang -- preferably an older, classic pony -- by one of the royal princes and have the prince proclaim: "This is what is done for the one the king desires to honor!"

## **END OPTIONAL SECTION**



King: That is an excellent plan. You know, you have the position of a prince within my kingdom.

Haman: *(Gleaming)* Yes, I do.

King: So, go at once and do it for Mordecai the Jew.

*(Haman's jaw drops. He slumps. Optional: The king moves over and flicks the bottom of his jaw. Haman clicks his tongue as his jaw closes.)*

King: Oh, and Haman.

Haman: Yes, your majesty.

King: Be sure to do everything you have suggested.

*(Haman then either pushes Mordecai. Ideally a horse mask -- about \$20 -- with black costume can be used together with a cart for Mordi to ride in. But also Haman can push Mordi around on a swivel chair, or in a prepared little red wagon, or in a cart or a big guy -- a "horse" when I played football -- may be used with Mordecai on his back. Haman's words are downcast and full of dejection -- almost tears. Servants/crowd bow as Mordecai passes. Some may snicker )*

Haman: Hear Ye! Hear Ye! This is what is done for the one the king desires to honor. . . I don't know why he wants to honor him . . . but he does. . . Hear Ye! Hear Ye! this is what is done for the one the king desires to honor -- I don't know why -- but he does .

. . .

Hear Ye Hear Ye! This is what is done for the one the king desires to honor . . .

Crowd #1: Hey, isn't that Haman, the King's counselor? He's acting like a page! Wow! Did he get demoted or something?

## SCENE 6

*(Narrating, side stage.)*

Mordi: As you might imagine – in spite of having a pastry named after him -- Haman was not the happiest guy that day.

*(Exit, pushing Mordi offstage. Haman runs back on stage almost in tears, Zee meets him across stage)*

Haman: Oh, I have never been so humiliated. The king's favor gone. I had to go around the city proclaiming Mordecai as the king's favored one! I think I'm going to be sick.

Zee: I have heard my husband. Oh, this is dreadful. It's an omen of what's to come.

Friend: Sorry, old man, but if you take on the Jews, you take on their God.  
*(Perky/Cheerfully)* You're doomed.

Haman: I want my mommy.

### **Killin' the Jew**

*(Reprise)*

*(Zee)*

Oh, Haman, my Haman.

I want to cry.

With this Jew exalted.

*(Zee & Chorus)*

You'll probably die!

*(Zee)*

Will my children be orphans?

*(Zee)*

I'm not so sure, dear -- 'cause you're a cad.

*("Friends")*

You're proud and you're needy.

You abused your power.

You've wanted to kill folks.

Now your plans have gone sour.

*(Men)*

You've been a fool.

You've been a fool.

You've been a fool.

So awful and cruel.

*(boo, Dee, doo . . . boo, Dee, doo . . . do, do).*

*(Spoken: may be varied depending on your Haman)*

Haman: Well how do you think I feel?

*(Whimper)*

*(Haman) (whining)*

That would be bad.

Haman: What?!

*(Haman)*

So what?

Well, who wouldn't?

Politics 101: Kill friends and

influence people . . .

*(Haman)*

Hey, I gotta blame someone!

Wasn't this your idea? It's always the woman's fault!

Always! And I'm the smartest man in the kingdom!

Haman: (Boo Hoo, Ooh, Ooh!)

*(Ideally, Haman hits high note, glass broken off stage. A recording of a dog howling is heard from offstage).*

*(Guard #4 enters in a hurry)*

Guard #4: Haman, what are you doing here? Esther's banquet has been prepared. And you're not there!

Haman: Oh, no, I forgot. *(He grabs cloak or cane and exits to table to table where Esther and the King sit.)*

*(Haman is escorted to Side stage where the meal is.)*

King: You're late. You're late. For a very important date. You've insulted my queen.

Haman: I'm sorry, Your Majesty.

King: I trust that you did all I told you concerning Mordecai, the Jew?  
The Jew who saved my life. *(Haman gulps loudly.)*

*(Esther takes this in -- smiles -- and realizes the time has come for the truth.)*

Haman: Of course, Your Majesty.

King: You know, that was some request you made this morning Haman.  
Why, the guy who is honored by sitting on the King's horse and wearing his robe might be mistaken for the king's designated successor.

Haman: Really? *(Aside, to audience, or under breath)* I didn't think he'd figure that out.  
*(Substitute "you'd figure it out" if under breath.)*

King: So it's certainly good that you honored Mordecai that way -- as he saved my life.  
And quit picking at your food. Don't you like the queen's cuisine?

Haman: No, it's fine. I'm just not very hungry. It's been a tough day.

King: Whatever. *(He half bows to Esther)* And now, my gracious, beautiful  
*(Optional additional adjectives, at which King gleams at the compliments: -- wise, frugal and intelligent)*  
Queen, will you please tell me your petition? And your request?  
Whatever it is, it will be given you.

*(Bowing and trembling)*  
Esther: Oh, my King, if I have found favor with you, and if it pleases your majesty, please save my life -- this is my petition. *(King is taken back.)* And spare my people -- that is my request.

Oh, your majesty, if we had just been sold slaves, I would have kept quiet, I wouldn't want to bother the king over something so trivial.

But I and my people have been sold for destruction and slaughter and annihilation.

King: What! Someone is trying to kill you! Who is it?  
Where is anyone who would dare to try to attack my queen!?!

*(Pointing)*

Esther: The adversary and enemy is this vile Haman!

*(Haman looks at both of them in fear. Drops food. Consider having Haman spit out food or water all over the place.)*

Haman: EKE!

King: I can't believe it! . . . He's been playing me for a fool!  
*(Leaves slamming door. Haman sees him leave. Esther gets up from the table where they were eating and moves to a futon.)*

*(He approaches Esther kneeling before her.)*  
Haman: Oh, queen Esther . . . please . . . *(she looks at him with disdain)*  
I didn't know you were a Jew . . . I didn't know . . . I mean, how could I?

Esther: But you did know that you would kill millions with that decree. . .

Haman: *(Whining)* Well yes, but those people don't matter. They're not special . . . *like me.* . . .  
*(Quickly realizing he's excluded her.)* And you, of course.

Besides, I mean, no one got hurt. Can't we all just be friends? We can all get together at the end and sing *It's a Small World*.

Esther: No. I hate that song. It rattles around you brain and drives you crazy. I think you should pay for your sins.

*(Delete "Go on Oprah" if she's no longer on the air and insert another name or delete completely.)*

Haman: Why should I? I'm in government. I'll cry. Go on Oprah. Say "mistakes were made" or "I apologize to anyone who might have been offended."  
People will forget about it by the time the next athlete gets caught misbehaving . . .

Esther: Haman, you're guilty of attempted murder! Attempted GENOCIDE! And you almost got away with it. Plus a lot more.

Haman: Well, yeahhhh. . . I know. There's embezzlement, hatred, deceit, manipulation. . . But, I mean are those capital crimes?

Esther: Overacting?

*(Haman looks at the audience with a "deer in the headlights" look of fright.)*

Haman: I'm doomed. . . . *(To himself and/or audience.)* Time for a different tact.

*(Switches to used car salesman sleazy. Consider having him use a mouth freshener.)*

You know, my Queen, you look so ravishing in that *(insert color)* dress. Very becoming. And . . . *(King enters behind him.)* besides attractive people like **us** should stick together. *(Esther rolls her eyes/head.)*

King: What is he doing beside her bed!?! Will he try to molest my queen in my own palace!

Guard #4: Get him.

*(They place sack on Haman's head and drag him away)*

Hachi: Your majesty, a gallows 75 feet high stands beside Haman's house. He had meant it for Mordecai – the Jew, who spoke up to save the king!

King: Hang him on it! *(They drag Haman away.)*

*(Note: Consider experimenting with some over the top exit screams. For instance, holding the scream for 15-30 seconds or a Tarzan yell that pulls up short.)*

Haman: *(Off-stage)* Awwwwwwwwkkkk!

Esther: *(falling before him)* Oh, my King, thank you for sparing my life.

King: Of course, my queen. Guards! Get Mordecai NOW!

*(Esther crying out in distress)*

Esther: Oh, my king, please change the law. . . please spare my people . . . My cousin Mordi . . my family . . . please . .

*(Mordi is escorted in, king in a soft voice.)*

*(To Esther, the king nods -- he holds out his scepter. She touches it.)*

King: Esther, your request is granted. *(softly)* Now, please, dry your tears.

Mordecai, you saved my life. YOU, I can trust. Now because Haman has attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and he has been hanged. *(Mordi bows and smiles)*

Mordecai, you know the law. No law of the Persians can be changed. So write whatever you think is necessary to undo the evil of Haman. Seal it with my ring.

Mordi: Bring in the scribes.

*(Scribes enter. Mordi assumes stance of one giving dictation, composing the right words.)*

Write as follows:

"In every city, the Jews are to have the right to protect themselves, to destroy, annihilate and protect themselves against any people who raise their hand against them and to plunder their enemies."

*(They pass out the new edict to the theater or depart to distribute it.)*

**(AUTHOR'S NOTE:** *Using only the first part of this -- the underlined portions -- may be appropriate. I'm still a little put off by the right to kill enemies as it is a violation of the law to have the sins of the fathers passed down to the sons, but I'd rather be Biblically correct than nice.)*

Esther: Thank you your majesty.

King: No, thanks to you, my lady. For what you have done is braver than any soldier I have ever seen. *(She moves beside him, and looks at him with wonder.)*

Esther: You are . . . you have become . . . the man I always hoped you'd be.

*(She kisses the king on the cheek. King swells with pride. She may do a bit of a dance around the king or rub his shoulders for this, at which the king may King should look very proud of himself. He has also fulfilled his dream he sang about in "I've Never Felt This Way Before" and become "the man I long to be".)*

*The Man of My Dreams (reprise)*

Oh, the man of my dreams,  
He'd be my king  
He'd hold me in arms so tight  
And when he found injustice  
He'd reach out to help us  
I've found the man of my dreams.

Esther: Oh, Uncle Mordi, we're saved. . . .  
(*Turns to the King*)  
Thanks to the King. (*She bows.*)

Mordi: We are this time. Because some prayed. And you acted to stand up to evil.

(*Group of 5 peasants enter carrying pitchforks and machetes stage left.*)  
(*Holding up pitchfork. Cast starts to enter.*)

Crowd M. #1: Hail Mordecai and Queen Esther! Protectors of God's people!

All Crowd: Long live Queen Esther! Long live Mordecai, advisor to the king!

(*Stage right a young man wearing Haman's black hat and cloak enters.*)  
(*pointing*):

Crowd M. #2: Hey, isn't that Haman's son! He's as bad as his father!

Crowd M. #1: Let's get him!

(*They raise their weapons and chase out after Haman's son.*)  
(*Mordi watches from the side.*)  
(*Cast continues to enter. Music starts during his last speech.*)

Mordi: Perhaps we were a bit overzealous in our efforts. (*Mordi shrugs.*)

So, my friends, we are not in danger and of losing everything. Today. But throughout history people have sought to kill God's people. Even today, in many parts of the world, people are imprisoned or killed for following God. For those people we pray. But today, we will celebrate God's victory.

## Finale

### God Will Save His People

*(Reprise)*

*Exodus 34; Ruth 2:12; 2 Samuel 23:3; Psalms 17;  
Psalms 27; Psalms 30:11; Psalms 57:1; Psalms 91; Zech 4:6*

In my time of trial,  
in my distress,  
You're the one I lean on.  
You're the God who gives me rest.

When enemies surround me.  
When I'm afraid.  
You're the One I call to.  
You have come to my aid.

The rock of Israel.  
Who forgives  
Abounding with mercy.  
He's the God who lives.  
(Hallelujah to our King!)

### *God Will Save His People (Reprise)*

(Esther)  
I sit in wonder, disbelief.  
God has given us relief.  
God has listened to his servant's prayer.

Who am I to be used of God?  
*(women joining)*  
Guided by his Holy rod?  
*(men joining)*  
Who am I to be worthy of His care?

For God has saved His people!  
God has found a way.  
And there is hope for today,  
If we pray,  
and proclaim the truth he commands,  
and proclaim the truth he commands.



Clothed in sackcloth and mourning  
nearly destroyed.  
You turned wailing into dancing,  
You have given me Your joy.

Not by strength,  
Not by power,  
but by thy spirit Lord!  
    (I will trust in the Lord!)

For God has saved His people!  
God has found a way.  
Hidden beneath His mighty wings.  
We will sing!  
That Yahweh is our King!  
    That Yahweh is our King!

**The End**

## AUTHOR'S ADDITIONAL COMMENTS

### 1. **Character Notes** (how the characters were written).

- a. **Esther** is a classic heroine. She's gutsy, humble and beautiful (the last one is specifically mentioned in the Bible). She wants to live her faith but is wise enough to hide her Jewishness among the Persians. (Jewish tradition holds that, like Daniel, she became a vegetarian while in court so that she could keep Kosher.)

As a young girl/woman (14-18) she has dreams of the future will bring. She's conflicted about being chosen for the harem, but once selected she in it to win. She's humble enough to seek and take advice (from Mordi and the chief Eunuch). Girl enough to flirt.

She's smart enough to know that this military king -- who normally gets whatever he wants - has to "win" his Queen in order to prize her, hence the pillow fight.

Later, as a young women (19-23), she struggles with the rejection of being out of the king's favor -- of being replaced by both the pretty, dumb girls who surround her and Haman's flattery and camaraderie. Her courage is shown most in her willingness to do what's right, even while she's scared to death. She longs for a relationship with her husband, and loves him, in spite of his flaws.

- b. **Mordi**. He's based loosely on Teyve in *Fiddler on the Roof*. He's a man of faith. But he goes through life with a certain bemused acceptance that life and the people around him aren't perfect. He smirks a little at the childish behavior of the Persian rulers, and even a bit at Haman. One Jewish writer has commented that their people have been using humor to emotionally deal with their trials for centuries. That's what Mordi does.

Mordi loves Esther passionately. Most commentators believe that he was outside the palace gates because of his concern for how Esther was faring inside. He's a very good dad.

- c. **The King** is a mixture of the Gaston from *Beauty and the Beast*, Prince Humperdinck from *The Princess Bride*, and/or The Commander/Father in *Sky High* (if you've seen that movie). He is narcissistic and easily manipulated.

But our king also has a desire to be a good king; he will redeem himself at the end. And we have to believe that there is a reason Esther can love this flawed ruler.

Depending upon which Persian King was actually the King in the book of Esther he may be mentioned in other Biblical passages. Jewish tradition says that he was also referred to as Artaxerxes in the book of Ezra. In Ezra he seems to have had some admirable qualities -- thoughtful, able to be persuaded, directing that records be examined, and ultimately changing his mind (upon learning new facts) and exhibiting a generosity to the Jewish rebuilding effort. In short, the portrayal in book of Esther (and here) of a slightly buffoonish King may be overstated.

- d. **Haman** is mostly a comic Disneyish villain (or, perhaps, Harvey Korman in *Blazing Saddles*). He's inept, petty and over-the-top. A buffoon.

However, with every edit I have made, Haman has become more menacing, diabolical, and evil. He is now bifurcated: a humorous cartoon villain one minute; a corrupt, manipulating murderer the next (and in the Biblical text, he is both).

The comic Haman may not be true to the original man -- he may have been as harsh, cruel, and humorless as Hitler. But the Jews (and the writer of Esther) have portrayed him with these humorous elements and so I have elected to follow suit.

Perhaps this is because humor is one way of dealing emotionally with enemies as vile as Haman. There is a bit of "spoonful of sugar" in the Jewish portrayal of Haman. In a way, Haman represents a harsh truth -- there are people who want the entire Jewish nation -- dead. Because of their faith, their heritage, and because they are different. By making him a cartoon villain -- who can be laughed at -- he is less threatening, more easy to handle, and can be presented to children with a smile (and a good-natured boo!).

- f. **Zee.** Vain. A bit manipulative. A touch of Jezebel: "Oh, you're upset. Just kill the guy. . . Now, come to dinner."
- g. **Esther's "Friends."** Obviously spoiled, jealous and frivolous. Much more interested in fashion and boys than doing anything substantial with their lives.
- h. **Henchman.** These people come in two forms: (a) latchkeys of Haman; (b) haters of Jews and representatives of Nazi brutality (they join to kill and plunder).

The latchkeys fawn over Haman's every word, even as they are verbally abused by him -- they desire to trace and follow him forever. The "loyal henchman" is a standard fixture in drama.

- I. **Hagai/Hatach.** The two Eunuchs are both sympathetic confidants of Esther. It appears historically that Esther was segregated from society once she became queen (Mordi had to send notes rather than talking with her, as I am portraying it). They are wise and love her. Like Mordi, they are probably older men who mentor her and treat her as something of a daughter. Hatach, at least, knows Esther is Jewish but keeps it quiet.
- j. **Bachelorettes / Royal Chronicler.** Air heads. Prototypical dumb blonds. I have portrayed them both as talkative and spacey. You may experiment with making one spacey in a different way -- *e.g.*, unresponsive to questions, as if she's high.
- k. **Regular Persians/King's Reader.** Normal Persians and members of the court are portrayed in the book of Esther as sympathetic and worried. The community is dismayed and in turmoil over the heinous decree the king has signed. But, because no one can tell the king he is wrong, they can't reveal the problem to the king.

Then, late at night, a "reader" tells the King of how his life was saved because of Mordecai. I don't believe he was reading the passage at random. He's had the passage ready for a long time, waiting for the opportunity. So too, the guards who know the gallows are waiting for Mordai are only too willing to implicate Haman once they know that it is safe to do so. (Like Esther, I suspect the reader was waiting for the right time to share the passage.)

1. **Jewish Community.** At the beginning (opening) they wonder what happened to their once proud culture -- does God protect them while they have largely assimilated into foreign lands, foreign cultures?

Later, they live in passive terror. Crying out to God. They represent the multitudes that were sent to the death camps. Henchman (other than those singing) may chase, beat and lead them away during songs such as Satan's servants.

At the end -- having lived with the death sentence for months -- they take revenge on their enemies (this was actually in violation of Jewish law).

## 2. **Themes (In Part)**

a. **God's Protection/ and Covenant.** The primary theme of the story is God's protection of his people and His ability to raise up (and bring down) people who will work to accomplish His goals. (See 1 Sam. 2, among other passages.) Mordai's assurance and statements to Esther that if she doesn't act that salvation will come to the Jews by another suggests he has faith that the promise to Abraham will be fulfilled.

b. **God Uses Compromised People.** The Bible shows that God uses people who have compromised their faith and who have feet of clay (which means, he might even use me or you). Among the flawed leaders: David, Noah, Moses, Abraham, Jacob, Gideon, Peter, Paul and Elijah (and I could go on).

Esther and Mordai are not perfect. While free to return to the Holy Land, they chose to largely assimilate into the Persian culture. Even their names suggest a compromised faith. Esther's name honors the Sumero-Babylonian God of love and fertility, *Ishtar* (a similar God in the land of Israel was the Asheroth). Mordecai is understood to mean "servant of Marduk" (another foreign God).

Esther hid her Jewish faith and participated in a competition that rewarded and required looks and sex over character (sort of like Hollywood). She married a Gentile in violation of Jewish law. There is no direct evidence that she kept Kosher while in the harem or the palace (Jewish tradition holds that she, like Daniel, became a vegetarian). Unlike Daniel and Joseph, there is no mention of her having a strong faith.

However, I have painted my portrait of Esther and Mordai with both of them having a vibrant faith (it just seems likely and it's the traditional approach). I am assuming that God's name is not used (I have referenced Him repeatedly) out of respect for *His Name*. I have also assumed that prayer occurred with fasting, that Esther had little choice but to join the "pick-a-queen" competition, and that those closest to her knew of both her faith and people,

although not necessarily at the outset of her becoming queen (suggested by her assertion that her staff will join her in the fast).

But just in passing, consider: What if their faith was only the size of a mustard seed? (Kinda like mine.) What if they thought of their own compromises and – remembering their kinsman Saul – wondered if God would hear their prayers?

Some, like David, can march into battle confident of victory because of their faith and knowledge that they are fighting God's battle. But most of us, like Esther, walk into God's battle as reluctant warriors: we go in with fear and trembling and often, we don't even fight at all.

c. **A Footnote on Vashti.** Many, including my wife, have noted the irony that the Persian Queen Vashti is the one standing up for modesty, while Esther, who compromised her morals, is held up as the virtuous heroine.

I will note, in passing, that if Vashti was the granddaughter or great-granddaughter of Nebuchadnezzar and only *some* of the Jewish stories/legends are correct, Vashti was incredibly proud and her insults of the king were pointed and vulgar. The stories suggest that she insulted the king and his manhood. Further, she is portrayed as incredibly antagonistic to the Jewish faith.

d. **Foster Parents/Adopted Parents.** The book/story honors the role of a foster-fathers. I have always been impressed by those people (foster-parents, adopting parents, and step-parents) who love and raise a child who is not their own, as their own. *I Remember You* is my tribute to them.

e. **A Topsy-Turvy Event.** Jewish tradition celebrates this story by treating it as a "topsy-turvy" event. Everything turns upside down. (Because everything was going Haman's way -- until the last 24 hours.) The Jews tell the story, hold carnivals, feasts, and it is the one celebration where drinking is encouraged.

I suspect it is the favorite holiday of most children -- they get to dress up in costume and boo Haman with gusto.

Most synagogues celebrate Purim first by reading all or portions of the Megillah (the book of Esther). Then there are Purim Spiels (a Purim story or play). These plays are frequently done by children (much like the Nativity is acted out in Christian churches) or by using puppets. A modern variation on the Purim Spiel is using a movie or musical (*e.g., My Fair Lady*) and modifying the lyrics/story to present the story of Esther. You can go to Youtube and search "Purim spiel" to see examples.

f. **Other Themes.** There are a number of other themes that are dealt with elsewhere in these notes:

1. The historic hatred/enemies of the Jews and Amalekites.
2. The tragedy of the choices Esther faced (in being selected into the royal

- harem and what that implied).
3. The battle between Saul's family and the Amalekites/Agates (played out in Mordi vs. Haman).

### 3. **History and Legends.**

I have tried to include elements of the historical record and legends that are not included in the Biblical account.

These include:

- a. Esther fainting upon approaching the king (reported by the historian Josephus).
- b. The Jews having assimilated into Persian society and their concern about whether God was still with them (themes echoed by their contemporary prophets and in Psalms).
- c. The use of "Uncle Mordi" (Josephus).
- d. The king's battles with the Greeks (unsuccessful). According to *Greek* historians, the battles were a disaster for the Persians, although the Greeks were prejudice in their reporting.
- e. The king's cruelty (reported in multiple stories, including one in which he cut a young man in two).
- f. The king's kindness/malevolence (Josephus' report of his kind words to Esther).
- g. Mordi considering hiding Esther (some legends).
- h. Esther's finicky eating (tradition holds she became a vegetarian to keep Kosher).
- i. Vashti being the great-granddaughter of Nebuchadnezzar (some records indicate she was of this royal line, adding to the king's legitimacy, and this may have contributed to her haughty attitude).
- j. Esther's name meaning "star" (her Jewish name meant "myrtle").
- k. The grandeur of the Persian court and their treatment of the king (historical records).

Although I have included the above, please don't believe that everything is historically accurate. Many of the commentators take different view of events. We aren't even sure which Persian king was referred to in the story. Further, it is a tenancy of storytellers (present company excluded, of course) not to let the facts get in the way of a good story. (Although Jewish legends have some great stories on Vashti, I have not included them because they seem too contrived.)

The Bible records the time line but not as clearly as one would hope. There was actually a several year gap between Vashti's being disposed and the advisors suggesting the selection process for the new queen (it likely occurred after the king's failed military campaign against the Greeks), rather than suggested at the banquet as I have written it.

Finally, in visiting a Purim festival I found that my knowledge is woefully incomplete. Among other things, I mispronounced Ahasuerus, Purim, and even Mordecai!

(Some of this can be blamed on how different Bibles translate the names.)

Such are the problems of growing up goyim.

#### **4. Saul, David and the Amalakites.**

Some commentators have suggested that the reason that Mordi refuses to bow before Haman is that Mordi (and Esther) are from the family of Kish, whose most noteworthy member was King Saul (the first King of Israel). Saul was rejected by God as king because he refused to exercise God's vengeance on the Amalakites. (1 Sam. 15.) Haman is a descendant of Agag (King of the Amalakites).

Under this theory (which I have adopted), Mordecai determined that he would not do what Saul had done -- compromise and honor a descendant of Agag. Mordi will not bow to the descendant of the man (Agag) who helped disgrace the family name. And, in so doing, he helps restore the family name and the Amalakites (Haman, *et. al.*) are destroyed. Yea!

A footnote on this deals with King David: "A man after God's own heart", who was also my childhood hero.

During that day it was common, following a civil war, to kill anyone connected to the prior king's household (and frequently their extended family). It was also common to kill or imprison anyone who spoke out against the king.

David went out of his way to try to make sure that the descendants of Saul and the family of Kish were spared and protected. He consistently reached out to his enemies and honored the people he replaced. David even allowing Jonathan's son, Mephibosheth (who may have been in line for Saul's throne, following Jonathan's death), to join his table as a friend.

It is an interesting footnote on history that the mercy David showed to Saul's family resulted in two people from that family -- Mordecai and Esther -- surviving to save the Jews 500 years later.

David sowed seeds of love that bore fruit centuries after his death. Awe, if we could all do that.

Another footnote on David: He named a son (of Bathsheba) after the man who confronted him with his sin: Nathan. Rather than kill the prophet, he honored him. And according to the Gospels, the lineage of Jesus included two sons of Bathsheba: Nathan and Solomon (Joseph was a descendant of Solomon; Mary was a descendant of Nathan).

#### **5. Did Esther Really Want to Change the World?**

I have presented Esther as a girl who God touched to change the world for Him. I believe He gave her a vision that she was called for something beyond her village. I think this is accurate because that is what God did with many other young people of faith: Moses, David, Joseph.

Stephen, in the book of Acts, tells us that Moses *knew* God had chosen him to help his people. Acts 7. Joseph felt called by the dreams and his dad's reassurance. David felt called by his heart, the anointing of Samuel, and God being with him as he fought the lions and bears of his life (including his brothers' contempt).

So, I feel God touched Esther's heart so that she felt she would serve him in a great way. Someday.

Somehow. But when she found herself taken into the harem, she must have questioned her calling, just as Joseph did when he was thrust into Egypt and the pit of prison.

## **6. How Did Haman Get Rich?**

The Biblical account does not let us know why Haman was rich. I have theorized it was because he got rich through kick-backs, manipulation, and other forms of graft. This is as much a comment on the Mid-East of today as it is on Haman. Frequently, in both ancient times and our own, wealth is gained through government positions and contacts.

When I was writing the first versions of the play I was appalled by the crony capitalism that was being practiced in the post-Soviet Russia and in Zimbabwe. The king's favor led to acceptance of taking a cut along the way. And even the gift of Haman's assets to Esther suggests a culture much closer to that of Russia than our own.

Many of us are fortunate to live in lands where graft and embezzlement by government officials rarely occur (and the perpetrators go to jail). This is a tribute to the power of the Judeo-Christian teaching. People accept a true leader is to "shepherd" his or her people (like David or Moses). And we don't even realize that teaching became so much a part of our culture that it is taken for granted.

## **7. The Villain's Monologue**

In one of our read-throughs a young actor mentioned that the dramatic reason a villain gets a monologue is to explain his motivation. I realized that Haman's never explained himself. Another young person told me Haman wasn't evil enough.

*Best Served Cold* is designed to address these issues, plus one more -- giving Haman one song that is musically interesting/beautiful. The song is soft and allows an actor with a good voice to shine, while still being threatening. We get to understand Haman's motivation -- his people were almost wiped out by Israel. (Just because Saul extended mercy to King Agag doesn't mean he didn't execute vengeance on hundreds, if not thousands, of others.)

Haman overstates and lies about what happened -- that's the way it is with hate.

But in this piece we are confronted with an uncomfortable aspect of Israel's history: that while they were in danger of genocide, they were commanded by God to commit genocide. (This is explained in the Bible as being God's judgment on the Canaanites.)

I grew up having found the destruction of the Canaanites to be one of the great unanswered Biblical questions. (The other is why God allowed babies to die.)

Recently, I found a reassuring answer to this question in the treatment of Rahab and the Gibeonites. In both those cases, God welcomed these foreigners into his people. Even though one was a prostitute and the others a city of liars/deceivers.

Here's the argument: God was at war with the Canaanites only because they had determined to be at war with God. Through their idolatry, immorality, and cruelty (human sacrifice).



In contrast, the Gibeonites and Rahab had a sincere faith and wanted peace with God. God welcomed them into His Kingdom. Rahab became part of the lineage of David and Jesus. Gibeon became servants in the tabernacle and temple. It was a city of refuge and Solomon received his dream from God at Gibeon.

James quotes the prophets this way: “Draw near to God and He will draw near to you.” The Canaanites choose to fight against God. Gibeon sued for peace. A peace God was pleased to grant. (Even if it meant Joshua looked a little stupid.) I believe that God also directed the spies to Rahab's household (or allowed her to find them) because Rahab wanted to serve the Living God.

## **8. Flirting with the King and the TWO Dinners.**

Some of the commentaries suggest that the dining and wine was a metaphor for seduction, leading to my suggestion of a bit of flirtation in the scenes. Certainly, Esther had a number of weapons at her command, these included her beauty, grace, and tact.

A debate has raged over why TWO dinners before the final request. Here are some theories:

- (1) By giving the king a night to think about it, Esther was able to get the king to think about what could be on her mind.
- (2) Because wine was so much a part of the meal, it is possible the king could not think clearly at end of the first meal.
- (3) Perhaps the king treated Haman with such deference that Esther realized it wasn't the right time (maybe happened, maybe not).
- (4) Pastor Bill Crouch, of Lakeridge United Methodist Church (Lubbock, Texas), suggests that: “In ancient cultures to invite someone to your home for a meal was a way of saying ‘I want a relationship with you. I want to get to know you.’ It had deep emotional significance. So, Esther was reaching out to rekindle a relationship with her husband, the king. He may have been flattered that she would risk her life to do so.
- (5) A corollary to that theme is one I am suggesting: A bit of sexual tension and flirtation between Esther and the King, since a certain amount of that will exist between couples.

I'm suggesting Esther is reminding the king of her charms, which are considerable. In addition to being beautiful, she was humble. She was submissive. In contrast to Vasti, she was proud to wear the royal robes. Her language and demeanor stand in sharp contrast to the arrogance of Haman and (probably) the former queen.

I believe Esther used her wisdom, submissiveness *and* sensuality (she *did* win the contest after all) to persuade her proud husband to save her people.

## 9. Presenting the Play for Younger Audiences.

I have written the story of *Esther* as a PG play. The first scene is straight out of *Animal House* (although cleaned up), the selection process for picking a queen is abhorrent, and even the ending (the Jews take revenge on their enemies) is a clear violation of Judeo-Christian ethics.

According to the law, you are not to punish the sons for the sins of their fathers. Deut. 24:16; 2 Kings 14:5-6. It is possible that the sons were involved in planning the murders to come, making them culpable too. One of the theories on why Achan's family was killed in Joshua 7 is that they were culpably involved in the theft/deception (knowing about it and intending to receive a benefit) and thus received God's judgment.

You may wish to tone down the play's content, particularly if you have young actors (or a young audience). To do this you will need to toss out some of the stanzas in *Keep Our Women in Line* and perhaps toss out lines here and there. You may ditch a song or two (*Satan's Servants* or *Killin' the Jew*). Unlike many playwrights, I'm willing to allow for such variations.

However, here are my reasons for the presentation the way I have done it. While I don't expect everyone to accept these arguments, please consider them:

- (1) Esther (and indeed much of the Bible) is a PG or PG-13 book. It should be presented that way (at least by the teen years). In general, if the Bible story is suitable for a teenager to read, it is suitable for the teenager to see acted out (within reason).
- (2) There is always the danger of having misconceptions stored in young minds by failing to present the truth. (The truth was something Jesus came to testify to. So it should not be tampered with, without *very, very* good reasons.) My wife knows one very intelligent adult woman who is convinced that Haman was sent to an island in exile, rather than executed, because of the *Veggie Tales* version of Esther.

When in doubt, tell the truth. *Veggie Tales* is designed for 5 year-olds. This play is not. We should respect young adults and their ability to handle the truth.

Kids are capable of taking more than we give them credit for. The original Fairy Tales from Grimm were pretty grim.

- (3) The play is designed (partly) to let the Holy Spirit prompt questions at appropriate ages. Part of the story that I am telling is that of the tragedy of a girl forced into the harem against her will, treated as hardly more than a toy by a spoiled ruler.

Stories like those in Esther lead to questions that help develop maturity:

*Do I want to be like the King or Mordecai?*

*When placed in a difficult situation, how should I respond?*

*How do you persuade someone who seems to be stubborn, insensitive, and narcissistic? (Oh, and most people are this way, now and then.)*

*Can I be courageous even to the point of death?*

*Why did God honor Esther, who compromised, instead of Vashti, who didn't?*

*When my world takes a dramatically different turn, can I accept that it might be God's leading?*

*At what point do I stand up for what I feel is right? (Esther claims she would have kept quiet if her people were sold into slavery. Is she right?)*

*Will God help me, even if I've compromised my beliefs and my faith?*

Sanitizing the story may result in those questions not being asked. That, too, would be a tragedy.

- (4) In writing this story I was influenced by the book *Princess: A True Story of Life Behind the Veil in Saudi Arabia*, a book I was unable to finish, partly because the description of the way women were treated was so disturbing.

It was not just in the ancient world that woman are victimized by a culture that treats them like chattel. It happens now, too. Exposing that truth to light may encourage others to fight for the God's goals.

- (5) The author of Esther, under the Holy Spirit's direction, did a masterful job of presenting the truth of the story in a way that allowed inconvenient (typically sexual) facts to slip by young minds (I know they did mine when I was a child).

I have tried to mirror that method of story telling. Just as the author drew back in his narrative of what happened when it was Esther's turn to go in to the king, so I have tried to draw back and direct that the lights dim when she is taken in his arms. But, at the same time, as a child becomes an adolescent and then an adult they may have an appropriately mature response: **WHAT!?!**

- (6) The story includes scenes of drunken men behaving badly, Haman and his entourage plotting murder for no better reason than Haman is annoyed, and a king who can be manipulated into signing a decree sanctioning genocide.

Oh, and did I mention the queen selection process?

But the Bible -- and indeed good storytellers -- use examples of the cultural corruption surrounding heroes to show the hero's true character. We learn of Joseph's character when he is propositioned by Potiphar's wife. We learn of David's heart when he is presented with

the opportunity to kill the murderous and increasingly mad Saul. We learn of Daniel's character when he continues to pray to God, head bowed toward Jerusalem, in spite of the king's decree.

Contrast makes a point. To get rid of that contrast lessens the story's power. We can't appreciate the significance of Esther's going before the king unless we know the background of what happened with Vashti. That means the drunken *Animal House* scene should stay in (although, perhaps, toned down).

When the Bible leaves it in, we should too.

(7) Sometimes we Christians are too rapped up in our Puritan traditions.

Thank you for considering my arguments and I hope you make the right choice for your actors and for your audience.

Dennis L. Dunn