

ESTHER

A Play for CYC

ACTORS

***Vashti –

Maiden 1 –

Maiden 2 –

*Maiden 3 –

*Maiden 4 –

Zeresh -

7 Beautiful virgins:

***Esther –

***Delawa - The Indian Princess singer -

Zoana - The Dancer from Persia -

Jeze - Miss Gorgeously Attired- Tyre -

Pteria - Miss Beautiful Hair Greece -

Alantris - Miss Makeup from Parthia-

Susiana - Miss Party Girl from Egypt –

SOUND –

LIGHTS –

PROPS MOVEMENT –

PIANO –

FLUTE ACCOMPANIMENT –

CLARINET ACCOMPANIMENT -

GUITAR ACCOMPANIMENT for 7 eunuchs?

* = small group singing parts

*** = solo singing part

King Xerxes -

Wine Steward 1 –

Wine Steward 2 -

Hegai -

Hatach -

Susa man 1-

Susa man 2 –

Susa man 3 –

Susa man 4 –

Mordecai -

Haman –

Royal Official 1 -

Royal Official 2 -

7 Eunuchs

*Mehuman –

*Biztha -

*Harbona –

*Bigtha -

*Abagtha –

*Zethar –

*Carcas –

Memucan – wiseman –

"I will bless those who bless you and whoever curses you I will curse." Genesis 12:3

- * Exit stage left/right = you on stage facing audience, exit to the left or the right
- * Exit up left/right aisle – your right/left, facing the audience
- * Enter from back of hall, left or right aisle = the audience’s left or right aisle

SCENE 1

*STAGE IN DARKNESS, lit only by candles
MUSIC playing for a full 2-3 minutes to set mood.*

KING’S GARDEN - FROZEN ON STAGE

King

Haman and 2 royal officials

Susa men on couch

Hegai and Hatach on bench

Eunuchs in centre of stage

AT BACK OF HALL

Esther and Mordecai at back, to walk up audience left aisle

STOP MUSIC BEFORE NARRATION

NARRATION: (while music plays) This is the story of Esther, a young Jewish maiden, orphaned while still a young child and brought up by her cousin Mordecai. At this time, approximately 400 years before the birth of Jesus Christ, the Jews, who had been taken captive from their own land, were now living in the area we today call Iran and Iraq. The Persian Empire, which we know today as the nation of Iran, extended over most of the ancient world. The Persian King Xerxes was a very powerful man, ruling over 127 provinces or territories. While our story has accurately held to everything in the Biblical account of Esther, we have added a lot of detail, according to our own interpretation of the events that unfolded so long ago. We hope to stir your interest in this Biblical story and all other stories from one of the Greatest books this world has ever known.

.....
SPOTLIGHT ON 7 EUNUCHS

They stand with arms around each others shoulders and sing CHAMBERLAINS SONG

#1

FADE LIGHTS

Eunuchs leave stage LEFT and change into virgin costumes

(Verity changes to green Susa costume and enters when everyone on stage comes to life)

SPOTLIGHT on Mordecai and Esther as they begin walking from the back of the room together.

ESTHER: *(with a basket of vegetables over her arm, marveling)* Mordecai, can you believe it, the shop keeper back there just told me that king Xerxes is holding another feast!

MORDECAI: Yes, Esther, I heard the same. This time he's entertaining all the people in Susa!

ESTHER: He must be a **very** generous man - don't you think? I mean, he just finished giving a 180 day feast for **all** the nobles **in every** province!

MORDECAI: Yes, yes, that's certainly one way to see it. He's won the hearts and allegiance of those he rules over. Most people speak well of him.

Should be at mid-aisle by now

ESTHER: *(after a pause)* Do you think we could walk a little further today? I'd love to see the palace. I've heard it's so beautiful. Maybe we will even see the feast. Isn't it in the palace garden?

MORDECAI: *(puts his arm around her shoulders affectionately)* Whatever you wish, Esther. You know I'd do anything for you.

ESTHER: *(smiles up at him)* You're the best cousin in the world!

Continue walking up to front audience left corner

STAGE BECOMES ILLUMINATED AS THEY APPROACH.

MUSIC – INDIAN party music plays softly.

Wine stewards serve wine

Everyone comes to life talking and laughing.

The King is mingling amongst the people

WINE STEWARD 1: More wine, Sir?

SUSA MAN 2: *(holds out goblet)* Thank you, kindly.

KING: *(talking to Susa Man 1)* And how do you like the wine? *(holds up his own cup)* We're serving Parthian Red this hour.

Susa Man 1: *(bows)* Best wine I've ever tasted. It's a great honour to be invited to your royal feast.

KING: (graciously) Have another glass. Have all you like.

SUSA MAN 1: (bows again) Thank you my lord, but this will be sufficient.

KING: (impressed) You're a wise man... (looks at Susa Man thoughtfully and then passes on to talk quietly to Haman and the Royal Official)

(Haman and Officials walk across stage to meet King at centre stage)

KING: Ah, Haman! Are you enjoying the party? (he motions to the wine steward) Pour him a glass!

HAMAN: *(and Officials bow low)* We must decline this time, O king. We have come only to tell you that I have thought of a plan to solve... *(he looks around at all the people and drops his voice so that this plan can be privately given)* you know, that distressing problem you've been concerned about....

KING: (smiles and takes Haman to a private corner of the stage) Tell me, my friend.

King and Haman talk in corner

Wine stewards continue to serve and the guests continue to fraternize in mime

Esther and Mordecai walk across front of stage as they are saying...

ESTHER: Oh, Mordecai, it's magnificent! The colours...the gardens...I've never seen anything so beautiful!

MORDECAI: *(laughs kindly at her)* Oh, I don't know...I think the gardens you've planted around our little home could rival the king's!

ESTHER: *(affectionately)* You're too kind!

HAMAN and ROYAL OFFICIAL bow low to the king and walk across stage to stairs.

CURTAIN CLOSES ON STAGE

MUSIC OFF

LIGHTS OUT – SPOTLIGHT ON ACTORS

HAMAN: *(boasting to official as they walk down the stairs)* I knew he would love my plan! You watch, I'll be up for a major promotion in no time. *(happens to glance over at Mordecai and grimaces with disdain – spits on the ground – moves to the stage RIGHT audience aisle and then keeps walking towards the back)* Jews! They're all a power-hungry, back-stabbing lot! The king should banish them to ...to ... be galley slaves in the Mediterranean. Why they were ever brought here – I sure don't know!

Haman and official walk right out the back door

ESTHER: *(has been drawing closer to Mordecai, ever since Haman glanced over, and is now hanging on to his arm - perplexed)* Was that man talking about us?

MORDECAI: *(turns to walk up the stage LEFT aisle and begins walking towards the back as he speaks. He speaks solemnly)* He was. Esther – it's not hard to tell I'm Jewish. But you - you easily could pass for some other nationality. Don't ever tell anyone you're a Jew...do you hear me? There's so many that hate us...

SCENE 2

CURTAINS OPEN

QUEEN'S SIDE – FULL STAGE EMPTY

Vashti in centre stage

Virgins (minus Esther) are standing on either side of Vashti holding wine goblets

Pteria with flute in hand

Party atmosphere.

VASHTI: *(oozing self-confidence and royalty, begins by singing first section of I'M VASHTI THE QUEEN – 30 SEC.)*

MUSIC FOR ZOANA'S DANCE BEGINS as all the ladies clap for Vashti

VASHTI: And now, girls, the maids will be serving Tyrian Port, down below *(she gestures off the stage)* while Zoana – our Persian princess, gives us a special performance.

Maid 1 enters with a pitcher in hand

Girls giggle and make way down stairs to stage right on the floor. Watch dance in awe.

PERSIAN DANCER MUSIC

Zoana dances. Once finishes dance, stay on the stage.

Girls clap at end and make way back up on stage. Stand again to either side of Vashti.

VASHTI: *(with a sweet condescending manner)* That was wonderful, Zoana! *(Everyone claps again)* I'm so glad the king wasn't here to see you perform, or I might be in danger of losing my high position! *(She laughs and so do the others)* He does love dancing. *All move to front of stage.*

CURTAINS CLOSE

VASHTI: (smiling) And now, we will have two princesses perform together. Delawa, from India (*motion hand towards her*) will sing us a song from her native land, while Pteria from Cappadocia (*motion hand towards her*) accompanies her on the flute. We are so privileged to have such a display of talent from the mighty Persian Empire. Come forward, girls.

DELAWA and PTERIA take center stage in front of curtain and begin their song (Salaam)

LIGHTS FADE the women exit through stage left curtain

****** FAST change to eunuch costumes**

SCENE 3

CURTAINS OPEN

STAGE - KING'S GARDEN

Everyone in same positions as Scene 1 (eunuchs, susa men, royal officials, Hegai, Haman, Hatach)

*Memucan is pouring over a large scroll, by himself in a corner.
Vashti behind curtain*

LIGHTS - FULL ILLUMINATION

KING: (*standing*) Gentlemen, our feast is drawing to a close. For the last seven days I have shown you many wonders of my kingdom...but the best is yet to come. I will now call Queen Vashti – my most beautiful treasure of all – to present herself to you.
(*wild clapping and cheering*)

KING: (*smiling happily to his seven eunuchs*) Go, tell Vashti to come before us wearing her royal crown.

*People on stage act in mime – mingling
Eunuchs go down stairs and to purple curtain*

MUSIC - Indian party music loud for 5 seconds or so and then goes very quiet

Mehuman peers through the curtains to the woman's side.

MEHUMAN: *Peers through the curtains to the woman's side and stands quietly for a moment, looking in, unsure whether to interrupt or not*

BIZTHA: (*whispers loudly*) The king told us to call her. We must call her at once.

MEHUMAN: (*whispers loudly back*) I'll just wait till the song finishes.

MUSIC plays loudly for 15 seconds or so and then fades out
Eunuchs wait nervously during this time

MEHUMAN: (*bows with back to audience, looking through the curtain*) Queen Vashti, may we speak with you for a moment.

VASHTI: (*comes through the curtain with a look of annoyance – her show has been interrupted!*)
What is it?

MEHUMAN: (*bows low and so do all the other eunuchs*) The king delights in your presence. He has asked that you come with your crown royal, that all his guests may marvel at his greatest treasure and see your magnificent beauty.

VASHTI: (*A look of disdain, she speaks haughtily*) Has the king forgotten that I am hosting a party myself?! I cannot come at his every whim. Tell him to ask one of the concubines Now go! (*she makes a 'scat' motion with her hand*) You're interrupting our talent show!

7 EUNUCHS: (*cluster together and look at one another in utter astonishment*)

CARCAS: (*very slowly*) Did she just refuse to obey... the king?

all nod slowly with a look of horror

MEHUMAN: And who wants to relay the message?
(*Everyone shakes their head. Mehuman sighs deeply.*) Zethar, I think it's your turn.

ZETHAR: Who, me?!

(*everyone shakes head ferociously, with eyes wide as if to say – Yes, You!*)

ZETHAR: Oh, alright....

Eunuchs head up stairs NERVOUSLY
King is expectantly smiling

KING: Where is Vashti?

ZETHAR: (*nervously*) Queen Vashti ...refused to come...your honour.

(*gasps of dismay from everyone in the room. King turns very red, looks around at all his guests in embarrassment. Memucan looks up from his scroll in astonishment*)

KING: What?! Refused to come?! How dare she? (*he paces back and forth angrily and then calls out*) Wise men, according to our law, what must be done to Queen Vashti? She has not obeyed the command of **King Xerxes** that the eunuchs have taken to her!

MEMUCAN: (*Steps forward quickly with his scroll in hand. He presents this speech in a very animated and expressive way, as though he is speaking for all the men of the kingdom. The men nod and agree to one another throughout his speech*) Queen Vashti has done wrong, not only **against the king** but also against **all the nobles** and the people in **all the provinces** of King Xerxes. For the queen's behavior will become known to **all the women**, and so they will despise their husbands and say, 'When King Xerxes commanded Queen Vashti to come before him, she refused.' This very day the Persian and Median women who have heard about the queen's conduct will respond to all the king's nobles in the same way. There will be **no end** of disrespect and discord. Therefore, if it pleases the king, let him issue a royal decree and let it be written in the laws of Persia and Media (*points furiously at his scroll*), which cannot be changed, that Vashti is **never again** to enter the presence of King Xerxes. Also let the king give her royal position to someone else who is **better than she**. Then when the king's edict is proclaimed throughout **all his vast realm**, **all the women** will respect their husbands, from the **least to the greatest**.

KING: (*Has been nodding throughout the speech and is in full agreement now - and still furious*) Yes, Memucan, I believe you are right. Eunuchs, (*with a dismissive gesture*) go tell Vashti she is no longer queen. Memucan, let's draw up a decree to say that **every man** should be the ruler over his own household.

King and Memucan get out the scroll and featherpen to write the decrees

The eunuchs slink off reluctantly down the stairs to summon the Queen – to purple curtain

BIGTHA: Carcas, it's your turn!

CARCAS: But no, I did it last week! Remember? When the king and queen were arguing about this women's feast in the first place!

(Other eunuchs glare at him and he reluctantly takes his place at the beginning of the line to enter purple curtain. LIGHTS go off- CURTAINS CLOSE)

SCENE 4

IN FRONT OF CURTAINS.

SPOTLIGHT only on the King – walking slowly across the stage.

MUSIC – soft and sad.

Haman enters from opposite side (from back of curtain and onto stage)

HAMAN: (*very sympathetically*) My Lord, oh, King. Anyone can see that something is troubling you tonight. Pray tell me what it is.

KING: (*sighs deeply*) Oh, I just can't stop thinking of Vashti...she was so beautiful. I miss her ...a lot....

HAMAN: My Lord, you are **the king**. (*gets a gleam in his eyes as an idea comes to mind*) Let a search be made for **beautiful** young virgins. Let the king appoint commissioners in **every** province of his realm to bring **all these beautiful girls** into the harem. Let them be placed under the care of Hegai, the king's eunuch, who is in charge of the women; and let beauty treatments be given to them. Then let the girl who pleases the king be queen **instead** of Vashti.

KING: (*Looks up approvingly and enthusiastically*) Haman, you are a man of fabulous ideas! And this is your best one yet! Set it in motion.

HAMAN: (bows low) Yes, my Lord. (*exits stage left curtain and calls*) Eunuchs! Report for duty!

KING: (looking very happy and rubbing hands together in delight) Now this is one job I'll enjoy! *King exits stage left curtain*

MUSIC: marching, vibrant

SCENE 5

CURTAINS STILL CLOSED.

SPOTLIGHT STILL ON CENTER OF STAGE.

MUSIC FADES.

*Esther comes running from stage LEFT curtain
Harbona stands waiting on stage floor LEFT
Mordecai waiting at stage RIGHT with firewood in hands*

ESTHER: (*Worried and apprehensive*) Mordecai. Mordecai, where are you?

MORDECAI: (*comes from the right side of the stage, carrying firewood*) I'm right here, Esther. I was just fetching some wood, so you can cook dinner.

ESTHER: (*takes hold of his arm. Mordecai looks at her with concern – he can tell something is really bothering her*) Mordecai, you won't believe this! I've just been asked by one of the King's officials to come to the palace. The king is choosing a new Queen.

MORDECAI: (*looks toward the left side of the stage*) Where is the man? Who asked you?

ESTHER: (*motions towards the same side of stage*) He's out there...waiting. I'm to get my things and come.

MORDECAI: (*bewildered*) So soon? You're leaving? (*thoughtfully*) The Queenof Persia?

ESTHER: (*throws her arms around him, as the realization hits home to her too*) Mordecai, what should I do? I don't want to leave you. Can I choose not to go?

MORDECAI: (*holds her for a moment and then takes her arms and speaks to her kindly*) Esther, if the King's officials have chosen you ... you must go. (*suddenly confident as idea comes to mind*) But don't be alarmed. I'll come too! I may not be invited into the palace, but I'll be out there, right close by, everyday – as long as you want me to. (*and then quietly*) And remember – don't tell anyone you're a Jew.

ESTHER: (*gives him another hug, almost crying*) Oh, Mordecai! You've been so good to me! If I know you'll be close by, I can endure anything.

Harbona comes up stairs and exits with Esther stage LEFT

LIGHTS FADE.

Mordecai exits stage RIGHT

SCENE 6

CURTAINS CLOSED

MARCHING MUSIC AGAIN

SPOTLIGHT ON FRONT OF STAGE

7 virgins lined up on the stage LEFT side of stairs.

Hatach is at stairs to escort virgins one by one to meet Hegai and receive their bag of beauty treatments. After they speak to him they enter through stage RIGHT curtains and prepare for next scene. FAST CHANGE for those in bathrobes.

Hegai in centre stage, in front of curtains, with bags of pot pouri in hands

MORDECAI comes in quietly from the back and goes to sit on the audience left-hand-side of the stage.

MUSIC fades

HATACH: Hegai, This is Princess Delawa, from the province of India.

HEGAI: Welcome, Princess Delawa. Do you have any special talent to offer the King?

DELAWA: (*proudly sings*) I can sing...the most beautiful songs...

HEGAI: (*nods approvingly*) Yes, yes, you most certainly can. (Hegai hands her the bag, Hatach bows to Princess Delawa, and she walks through the curtains as he brings up the next virgin)

HATACH: And this is Susiana, from Elam.

HEGAI: (hands her the bag) Quite pretty indeed. Are you gifted in any way?

SUSIANA: (*Miss Party Girl*) Well, I'm not very good at singing, but I know how to throw a wonderful party! And I *know* the king loves parties! (she titters) Why in Elam, he's known as the Party king! (Hatach bows to Susiana, and as she walks through the curtains he brings up the next virgin)

HATACH: And virgin number 66 is Jeze from Tyre.

JEZE: (*Miss Gorgeously Attired - very proudly*) I'm not into any silly tricks, but I'm the top model in the Tyrian fashion shows (*prances around*)

HEGAI: (nods approvingly and hands her the bag) I don't know how the king will ever choose between all these young ladies! (Hatach bows to Jeze, as she walks through the curtains proudly in response to Hegai's comment. Hatach escorts the next virgin)

HATACH: And there are still more to come! This is Zoana from Persia.

ZOANA: I'm a dancer. Watch me. (*does her moves, everyone claps*)

HATACH: (as an aside to Hegai) Apparently, she was doing backflips on the back of the camel on the way here! (*Hegai looks shocked*)

HEGAI: (*thoughtfully as he hands her the bag*) The king does love dancing. You've got an in there! (Hatach bows to Zoana, and as she walks through the curtains he brings up the next virgin)

HATACH: And this is Alantris from Parthia.

HEGAI: And Miss Alantris, what are you able offer the king?

ALANTRIS: (*Miss Makeup - flutters eyelids – speaks sweetly*) Oh, I wasn't told we had to **perform** here at the palace. I thought the King was only interested in beauty.

HEGAI: (*getting a little annoyed*) He is. He is. But all of you are beautiful!

ALANTRIS: (*looks around at the audience as though she doesn't agree*) If you don't feel I'm beautiful enough to be chosen as the queen, then I'd like to return home right now. I was engaged to the Prince of Parthia – my one true love!

HEGAI: (speaks very firmly as he hands her the bag) You should be honoured to be chosen to be part of the King's Harem. Let there be no more talk of returning home, or you will meet the same fate as his ex-queen!

ALANTRIS: (goes through the curtains quite miffed – with her nose in the air)

HEGAI: (commenting to himself) We may have trouble with that one!

HARBONA: (escorting the next virgin) Here is Pteria from Cappadocia.

PTERIA: (*Miss Beautiful Hair- with hand up to her hair*) I hope we'll have plenty of time to do our hair. It takes me at least 5 hours.

HEGAI: (*drily*) Don't worry about *time* my dear. You'll have **a full year** of beauty treatments before anyone goes to see the king.

PTERIA: (*looks at him in alarm, holds up her bag and repeats despairingly to the audience:*

A full year!

HATACH: (escorting last virgin) Well, this is the last lovely young lady for today. We didn't have to go far to find Esther. She lives only a day's journey from the palace.

HEGAI: And you, Esther. What talents do you possess?

ESTHER: (*in a very humble, respectful way*) I'm very thankful to have been chosen, my lord. But I'm not sure that I have anything special to offer the king.

HEGAI: (*smiles approvingly – speaks thoughtfully*) Esther is a beautiful name. (*As she passes on through the curtains, he takes hold of Hatach's arm and speaks quietly*) Tell me more about Esther. She doesn't seem to have the attitude that the others do.

HATACH: I'd say she's genuine, through and through. She even shared her water **with me** on our hot trek back! Not once did she ever complain! The King will find Esther has much more to offer than just a pretty face.

Hatach and Hegai walk through stage LEFT curtain

SPOTLIGHT OUT

SCENE 7

CURTAINS OPEN

LIGHTS – FULL ILLUMINATION

STAGE – QUEEN’S SIDE – POWDER ROOM

MUSIC – SOFT INDIAN STYLE

- * Susiana soaking in a tub.
- * Delawa with a face mask and in a bath robe.
- * Maid 2 is giving Esther a manicure Maid to have manicure stuff in hand.
- * Pteria is sitting with a bag full of rollers and a bath robe over her arm, as though she’s waiting for her turn in the tub and playing her flute.
- * Alantris is painting her face, fully dressed.
- * Jeze is in a bathrobe as well, discussing with Maid 1 the kind of clothes she would like made.
- * Zoana is practicing her moves in front of the mirror

Hegai is standing outside the room with his arm full of towels.

Mordecai is pacing back and forth in audience front RIGHT corner of the stage floor

JEZE: (to Maid 2 as she works on Esther’s nails) I really must have a dress made from this material. It’s just me! Don’t you think it brings out the blue in my eyes?

MAID 1: (looks it over carefully) It does look stunning on you. But I still think you look better in the green.

MAID 2: (fussing over Esther, she muses) Esther, your hands are so rough; the olive oil doesn’t seem to be working....

ESTHER: I’m sorry. (wistfully) I used to do a lot of gardening...

JEZE: (drapes both colours over her shoulders – one on each side and prances around) What do you think Alantris?

ALANTRIS: (looks over disdainfully) I don’t think either suit you. Why don’t you try the red?

JEZE: Certainly not the red! Asherah! (she’s swearing) I can’t trust anyone in this room. (she sighs) I guess I’ll have to ask Hegai.

MAID 1: So, it’s your turn to see the king tonight, Zoana. Are you nervous?

ZOANA: (tosses back her head and laughs very confidently) Only a little. I still remember *the ex-queen* once saying that if the king should ever see me dance – she might lose her high position. Obviously, the king must have a weakness for dancing ... and

PTERIA: (rolls her eyes) Yes, we know – you sure can dance!

ALANTRIS: (sassily) And you don’t have much competition – as if that’s really what the king’s looking for! (she comforts herself) But I was told he wanted beauty!

(In the meantime, Hegai who hears what is going on, rolls his eyes and shakes his head)

JEZE: We're all beautiful – it has to be something more than that – like maybe **style!** *(she grabs the blue material she has been looking at, flings it over her shoulders and does the model walk, then she tosses it on the maid who is doing Esther's hair. It falls off, and without a word, just a smile, Esther reaches down to pick it up and fold it)*

ZOANA: *(notices Esther)* Esther, I think you're practicing to be a *maid* – not a queen!
(they all titter with laughter)

ESTHER: *(looks down shyly)*

SUSIANA: *(wearily)* How many more minutes do I have in this tub?

MAID 2: *(looks out the window)* The sun dial is almost to the top – just one more hour should be enough.

SUSIANA: *(lets out a sigh)* Esther, tell us another story. It always makes the time pass so quickly.

DELAWA: I'll sing a song if you like.

ZOANA: *(snappily)* Oh, I have all your songs in my head – you've sung them so many times! *(Delawa looks snubbed)*

PTERIA: Tell us a story Esther. You were telling us about that poor girl who had to leave her own country to take care of her mother-in-law, because both their husbands had died... What was her name now? Ruby...Rose...

DELAWA: It was Ruth.

SUSIANA: *(with great anticipation)* Ah, yes, and you said it was a *love* story – so what happened next?

HEGAI: *(leans in closer with great interest to hear the story)*

ESTHER: *(with dreamy reverie)* Well, you see, when they got back to Naomi's homeland in ... well, her homeland..., there was no one to take care of them. So, Ruth offered to go and glean grain in the fields, so they would have something to eat.

ZOANA: *(astonished)* She was going to do the man's work?

ESTHER: *(laughs gently)* Well there was no man to care for them, so yes, she had to go out in the hot sun and pick up the few grains of barley that had been left behind by the reapers, and it would have taken the whole day to get enough food. *(with great*

anticipation, LIGHTS begin to fade) But, it just so happened that she chose to work in Boaz's field ... a wealthy, older man who was also very kind....

LIGHTS OUT

CURTAINS CLOSE

Virgins change into Eunuch costumes

Megan into Susa costume???

SCENE 8

CURTAINS REMAIN CLOSED.

SIDE STAGE – eunuchs, Hatach, susa men, memucan

King and Hegai at centre stage, in front of curtains

Esther behind purple curtain

Verity/Esther – at back of hall (behind door)

SPOTLIGHT on the king

All else is in darkness.

HEGAI: Well, you've seen at least 50 young virgins in the last few months. Did any of them find favour in your eyes?

KING: *(sighs deeply as he walks to and fro)* Am I too fussy? I don't know. You've sent me the most beautiful girls. They smell like the most exotic spices, their hair's full of curls. They can dance, they can sing, but somehow – there's just something missing. I long for someone caring ... someone loving ... someone kind. I long to feel respected ... feel as though they view me as their King. Isn't there anyone who could love me like that?

HEGAI: *(with a smile – thoughtfully)* There is one. She's not quite finished the prescribed beauty treatments, but I noticed her from the very first day. Be patient, O king, she is coming. I'm sure she will love you in that way.

LIGHTS OFF – king and Hegai exit stage LEFT

Hegai and Esther come in from behind purple curtain.

SPOTLIGHT ON THEM

HEGAI: *(as they walk up the stairs)* Esther, your long year of waiting is finally over. Tonight you go to see the King. Is there anything you would like to take with you?

ESTHER: *(very gentle and appreciative)* No, what you have given me is more than enough, Hegai. Thank you for all the kindness you have shown me here. You have been

so good to me! And now, I trust that my fate is in the hands of a much higher power, (*she looks up to heaven*) even greater than my lord the king. Bless you, Hegai.

HEGAI: And you Esther. (*he kisses her hand*)

CURTAINS OPEN

SPOTLIGHT ON THE KING standing in the garden, as Hegai brings Esther to him.

MUSIC – something soft and pretty

HEGAI: (*bows low and Esther curtsies shyly*) O King, I bring you Esther.

Hegai exits stage left. Get pillow and crown ready to bring on at end

KING: (*nods politely*) Good Evening, Esther.

ESTHER: (*curtsies again*) Good Evening, My Lord.

KING: (*somewhat awkwardly*) I was thinking we could go for a walk. Would that be all right with you?

ESTHER: Whatever you wish, O King.

KING: (*smiles*) There are beautiful gardens outside the palace walls. Would you like to see them?

ESTHER: (*smiles kindly*) I would love to see your gardens. I used to have one of my own...

KING: (*gives her his arm and she takes it nervously. They begin walking towards the edge of the stage*) Do you enjoy gardening then? Or did your servants do it all for you?

ESTHER: (*smiles nervously*) We didn't have servants, my lord...but I was happy to work in the soil.

KING: (*nods and makes a mental note. He pauses to look over at one of his plants in the corner*) Have you seen my Rose of Sharon? People say that it's the finest in the land. I had it brought all the way from the land of Israel.

ESTHER: (*taken back*) Oh really... No, I haven't seen it. Not close up anyway.

KING: (*they walk over and he takes off one of the flowers to show her*)

ESTHER: (*marvels*) I've never seen such a large flower before! And it's such a beautiful colour!

KING: *(with a smile)* Not more beautiful than you. *(he puts the flower in her hair and Esther looks embarrassed and pleased.)*

KING: So you have seen my garden from a distance?

ESTHER: *(fully sincere)* Yes, my Lord. A long time ago I passed by and marveled at the beauty of it all. You had so many guests and all of them looked so happy. You're...you're such a generous man, to invite so many guests and share your treasures with so many in your kingdom.

KING: *(looks at Esther thoughtfully, pauses for a moment and then takes her hand)* There's something very special about you, Esther. All the others before you were anxious to impress me with what they could do, or how they looked... but you, you haven't said one boastful word about yourself ...instead you've spoken with sincere praise for me.

ESTHER: *(as they gaze into one another's eyes. She speaks very genuinely)* I **have** only praise for you, my Lord.

KING: *(looks at her very thoughtfully and then speaks)* Come let's continue our walk, shall we?

ESTHER: I'd love to.

*They both exit stage LEFT
Megan get on eunuch costume*

*LIGHTS OFF – A QUIET PAUSE AND THEN TRUMPETS BLOW TRIUMPHANTLY.
The king is back on the stage and the king's garden is fully illuminated. All servants, officials, Haman, 7 eunuchs, Memucan come running to the stage. The King is standing, looking very, very happy)*

KING: I have found my bride! Esther will be your next queen. Everyone celebrate with us – today is a national holiday! We'll call it **Esther's** feast!

Hegai enters on stage with pillow and crown

*TRUMPETS BLOW AGAIN
Everyone gathers to sing GLORY OF THE MESSIAH.*

*Esther walks from back hall as they start to sing.
As the song continues, she kneels before him and the king places the royal crown upon her head.*
