

INTERMISSION

SCENE 9

LIGHTS ON

KING'S THRONE ROOM (CURTAINS PARTIALLY CLOSED)

King is sitting on his throne, happily, writing out decrees.

Memucan stands before him, rolling and unrolling scrolls, and attending to his needs

Haman and Royal Officials at back of hall

7 eunuchs lined up audience left side – staggered along the wall

Mordecai standing at the bottom of audience left aisle.

KING: So the conspiracy was found to be true, then...

MEMUCAN: Yes, Yes, O King. Bighana and Teresh have been found guilty of plotting your assassination. They were hanged on the gallows yesterday afternoon.

KING: And who did you say informed us of the plot?

MEMUCAN: Mordecai, son of Jair. He sits outside the king's gate, my Lord – for no apparent reason...and he overheard them talking.

KING: You've recorded all of this, I presume?

MEMUCAN: (Nods)

KING: Good. (looks thoughtful) He must be rewarded...somehow...

SOUND - Trumpets sound from the back.

Haman and the 2 royal officials enter in from back and walk down the audience left side.

7 eunuchs are interspersed along the aisle and bow down as Haman walks past

Walk at a fair clip so that by the time Royal Official 2 is speaking, they are seeing Mordecai and the fact that he isn't bowing.

ROYAL OFFICIAL 1: (*blows trumpet*) Hear, hear, everyone hear. The king has elevated **Haman the Agagite** above all the nobles in the kingdom!

ROYAL OFFICIAL 2: (*blows trumpet*) Hear, hear, everyone hear. Bow down to Haman, for the king has commanded this honour to be given him.

(Haman has his nose so high in the air that he doesn't even notice that Mordecai doesn't bow down, but the officials do)

ROYAL OFFICIAL 1: (*blows trumpet in Mordecai's direction*) Hear, hear, **everyone** hear. **Bow down to Haman!** The king says so!

ROYAL OFFICIAL 2: (*when there is no reaction from Mordecai, he turns angrily to him stopping the procession*) Why do you disobey the king's command, Jew?! Every day we go past you, proclaiming this new decree and **everyday** you refuse to bow down!

HAMAN: (*looks around, sees Mordecai and spits*) A Jew! Bow down to me Jew – or you'll regret it!

MORDECAI: (*very calmly*) I give honour to whom honour is due.

HAMAN: (*wheels around angrily*) How dare he act as though he's more important than me?!

ROYAL OFFICIAL 1: He should be put to death for this!

HAMAN: That would be far too merciful! **Every** Jew should be put to death for this! And I will personally see to it that they are! (*marches towards the bottom of the stairs angrily*)

ROYAL OFFICIAL 2: Every Jew? How are you going to pull that off?

HAMAN: (*angrily*) It won't be hard – you watch me!

(*The king looks up with a look of surprise as Haman comes up the stairs – but retains calm dignity*)

HAMAN: (*remembers at the last minute to bow, when he notices his officials bowing*) O king, there is a certain group of people scattered among all the provinces of your kingdom whose customs are different from those of all other people and **who do not obey the king's laws**. It is not in the king's best interest to tolerate them. If it pleases the king, let a decree be issued for their destruction, and I will put ten thousand talents of silver into the royal treasury for the men who carry out this business.

KING: (*takes off his ring calmly and hands it to Haman*) Keep the money and do with the people as you please.

HAMAN: (*bows low*) Thank you my Lord. You will not regret this decision.

As Haman and his officials turn and walk to front of stage.

CURTAIN CLOSES

Haman twists the ring onto his finger with evident delight. His officials look at him incredulously.

ROYAL OFFICIAL 1: That was a cinch!

HAMAN: (*Nods proudly and speaks slowly with great meaning to his words*) The King is a **very** trusting man.

LIGHTS OUT

Haman and officials exit stage left

MUSIC – tension building

SCENE 10

CURTAINS FULLY OPEN

SPOTLIGHT on Mordecai sitting at front stage right, on the floor, with sackcloth and ashes, holding a scroll in hands. Sackcloth and ashes on his head and crying bitterly.

Esther sitting on bench on stage right, doing her own thing (not to notice what is going on with other side of stage).

Maids 3 and 4 enter from stage left and notice Mordecai

They then run over to Esther.

MUSIC off

MAID 3: Esther, Esther, something is terribly wrong!

ESTHER: What is it?

MAID 4: Your cousin Mordecai is sitting by the king's gate, in sackcloth and ashes...crying!!

Maids continue to look worried and stand by Esther, behind bench.

ESTHER: Hatach, please go at once and find out what's troubling Mordecai.

HATACH: (bows low) Yes, my queen. (walk to stairs and over to Mordecai)

HATACH: Mordecai, the queen wants to know what is troubling you.

MORDECAI: (picks up the scroll that lies in front of him and slowly unrolls it, as he speaks to Hatach) Tell Esther that Haman has sent a decree **to all** the 127 provinces of the kingdom, that on the 13th day of the 12th month Adar, **every Jew** is to be destroyed – young and old, women and little children. And those who kill the Jews are to help themselves to all their belongings! (he hands the scroll to Hatach) Here, take this copy of the edict to Esther and **urge** her to go into the king's presence and **beg for mercy** for her people.

HATACH: (nods in utter astonishment. As he turns to go back to Esther, he mumbles to himself) So, Esther is ... (look to audience) a Jew?

HATACH: (hands the scroll to Esther and gives her time to read it through. As she reads the edict she reacts with great alarm and dismay. Hatach speaks with great concern) Esther, Mordecai wants you to go to the king and plead for your people.

ESTHER: (gasps in terror) I can't do that! All the king's officials and everyone in the royal provinces know that any man or woman who approaches the king in the inner court without being summoned there is but one law: **that he be put to death!** Unless, (she pauses and speaks uncertainly) the king extends the gold scepter to him and spares his life. (more urgently) But **thirty days** have passed since I was last called to go to the king!

HATACH: Is that what you want me to tell Mordecai?

ESTHER: (pleading) Please Hatach, make him understand. (Esther becomes very distraught, pacing back and forth, wringing her hands and saying, "What shall I do? Oh, what shall I do?" as Hatach goes to Mordecai)

HATACH: (returns to Mordecai, who looks up at him dismally) Mordecai, Esther is afraid for her life. To go before the king without being called is a crime punishable by death.

MORDECAI: (solemnly considers this and then looks up at Hatach and speaks slowly) Tell Esther, Do not think that because you are in the king's house you alone of all the Jews will escape. For if you keep quiet at this time, relief and deliverance for the Jews will arise from another place, but you and your father's family will perish. And who knows, perhaps you have come to your royal position for such a time as this!

HATCH: (*returns to Esther – this is an emotional interchange*) Esther, Mordecai warns you, that if you do not plead for your people at this time, they will be delivered by someone else, but you and your father's family will perish. He asks you to consider that you may have been providentially brought to your royal position for this exact moment in time.

ESTHER: (*even more distraught, looks down at the floor as she paces, then holds her hands together and looks up as though she is praying to God. Finally, she turns to face Hatch and speaks emotionally*) Tell Mordecai, go, gather together all the Jews who are in Susa, and fast for me. Do not eat or drink for three days, night or day. I and my maids will fast as you do. When this is done, I will go to the king, even though it is against the law. And if I perish, I perish.

LIGHTS OUT

CURTAINS CLOSE

MUSIC – tension building

SCENE 11

CURTAINS REMAIN CLOSED.

SPOTLIGHT on Esther who is being dressed with her queenly robe by her two maidens IN FRONT of curtains.

MUSIC fades out

MAID 3: (*very concerned*) Are you going to be all right, Queen Esther? Not eating or drinking for 3 days has left **me** very weak – are **you** feeling strong enough to go see the king?

ESTHER: (*very focused, but nervous, she looks upward*) I trust that my destiny is not my own. If I have found favour in His eyes then I may I find favour in the king's.... *SONG – The Way begins*

Esther sings The Way and Maids join in at measure 16.

MAID 4: (*pats her cloak - reassuring*) You look so beautiful. I'm sure the King will be very happy to see you.

ESTHER doesn't say anything but gives both her maids a hug. Then she exits stage right.

Maids look at each other with hopefulness and concern

LIGHTS OUT.

Maids exit stage left.

SCENE 12

MUSIC

CURTAINS PARTIALLY OPEN

STAGE SET FOR KING'S THRONE ROOM

FROZEN ACTION.

The King with his men are working on the scrolls together and Haman is standing as though he is making decrees

Haman and Memucan on stage left and 7 eunuchs on the other side. Just make sure eunuchs on one side and Haman and Memucan on the other side of king.

*SPOTLIGHT ON ESTHER coming down audience right aisle towards stage.
As she approaches mid-way the LIGHTS SLOWLY COME ON THE STAGE AND ACTION IS UNFROZEN*

The king and Memucan, and the 7 eunuchs are listening to Haman, but they all look up in utter astonishment as Esther draws close to the front. The king begins to smile as she comes up the stairs.

MUSIC fades out.

KING: (his face breaks into a big smile and he reaches for the golden scepter he has beside him)

ESTHER: (with evident relief and eyes focused on the king she comes forward to touch the scepter. Haman and the other men look at one another in stunned surprise)

KING: (speaks with love and a hint of amazement in his voice) What is it, Queen Esther? What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be given you.

ESTHER: (she smiles nervously and bows to him. Speaks with full respect and pleading) If it pleases the king, let the king, together with Haman, come today to a banquet I have prepared for him.

KING: (with evident delight, holds up his hand in a 'stop' motion in Haman's direction) Haman, enough work for today. Let's go at once, at Esther's request.

*King casts the scrolls aside – Haman and Memucan are not pleased. King jumps up to give his arm to Esther and they exit stage left.
Haman follows displeased.*

BIZTHA: (as the king and queen exit) She's one smart woman. There's nothing he loves more than a banquet!

MEHUMAN: (murmurs to the audience) Oh, I think its Esther he loves.

LIGHTS OFF

SCENE 13

CURTAINS OPEN

FULL ILLUMINATION ON THE QUEEN'S SIDE.

MUSIC – formal dinner style.

A table is set in royal style.

Hatach enters in with pitcher and goes back for goblets and places them at each setting. Maid 3 brings in tray of fanciful breads and Maid 4 a trap of fruit and plate of chocolates.

King, Esther and Haman enter and take their seats at the table. See diagram (king at head and Ester and Haman in behind table, facing audience, Esther sitting closest to King)

Esther begins nervously to serve out the wine. Haman holds up his goblet and almost makes the mistake of thinking he would be served first – Esther gives him an astonished look and then pours the wine for the king. Haman begins to help himself to the food and Hatach politely passes the food to the king first.

KING: (*relaxing on the couch, sips his wine*) Ah, I must say, Jerusalem Port is my favourite wine and here I am with my favourite wife! (*he kisses her hand as she passes him the chocolate treats.*) Now what is your petition, my darling? It will be given you. And what is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, it will be granted.

ESTHER: (*very nervous*) My petition and my request is this....(*she pauses, almost says it and then changes her mind*) ... If the king regards me with favor and if it pleases the king to grant my petition and fulfill my request... (*again she rethinks and then decides to try the real request tomorrow – the rest is said easily*) let the king and Haman come tomorrow to the banquet I will prepare for them. Then I will answer the king's question.

KING: (*looks very puzzled, but smiles with full adoration for his wife*) Haman, you and I are the most privileged of men. **Another** banquet tomorrow!

HAMAN: (*nods enthusiastically as he helps himself to another large bun and chocolates*) Thank you Queen Esther. I am most honoured to join you and the king. And now I must get back home. Thank you, thank you. (*he bows several times, picks up another doughnut from Maid 3 as she is clearing them away and leaves looking very pleased with himself and his treats*)

*LIGHTS GO OFF ON STAGE,
SPOTLIGHT follows Hama to centre, front of stage
CURTAINS CLOSE.BEHIND HAMAN*

SCENE 14

CURTAINS REMAIN CLOSED

SPOTLIGHT ON HAMAN

Mordecai is sitting on stage right.

Haman comes down the stairs and looks towards Zeresh his wife standing by a small marketplace on the far stage floor, left side.)

HAMAN: (*calls out*) Zeresh, my dear, I have good news to tell you.

ZERESH: (*silly and excited, running over up to stairs to take his arm*) Oh, what is it, Hamany? What is it? Has the king given you **another** promotion?

HAMAN: (*they turn to walk A BIT to stage right towards Mordecai – very loudly so that everyone can hear*) Oh, no my dear! I have already been promoted as high as a man can go in this kingdom – unless he's the king himself! (*chuckles*) And that's not all, (*he's really boasting now*) I am **the only person** Queen Esther invited to accompany the king to the banquet she gave **today**. And she has invited me along with the king again **tomorrow!** (*suddenly sees Mordecai and his whole face turns sour. He realizes that Mordecai is still not bowing down to him. He spits again and anger comes over his face.*)

ZERESH: (*gives Mordecai a dirty look and then tries to assuage her husband's anger*) Hamany, darling, you shouldn't have to put up with that man's total disrespect. Why, **you are** second only to the king! (*cuddling up to him*) And I am **so** privileged to be the wife of the **richest** man in Susa! Even now our ten sons have more wealth *to inherit* than most men will ever make in their **entire life!** (*she pauses and adds with great emphasis*) **And then**, to be **the only** person invited to dine with the king and queen – why they must think the world of you!!

HAMAN: (*Clenching his fist in anger he speaks violently*) Yes, but all this gives me no satisfaction as long as I see that Jew (*he shakes his fist at Mordecai who is behind them now*) **Mordecai** sitting at the king's gate! He shows me **no** respect!

ZERESH: (*she laughs*) Oh, there's an easy solution to that! Have a gallows built, seventy-five feet high, and tomorrow you can ask the king to have Mordecai hanged on it. Then you can go with the king to the banquet and **totally enjoy yourself**.

HAMAN: What a marvelous idea! That's exactly what I'll do! I'll have those gallows made right away and go first thing in the morning to ask the king!

LIGHTS OUT EVERYWHERE

7 eunuchs come out on stairs (as front of stage is set for next scene)

SPOTLIGHT ON THEM – sing Chamberlains's Song #12 – about the banquet

MUSIC – tension building.

SCENE 15

CURTAINS STILL CLOSED

SPOTLIGHT ON THE KING

STAGE SET – KING'S BEDROOM. – set up on stage right

King is lying on his back in bed with his head propped up with pillows.

7 eunuchs are sitting at end of his bed with him, stifling their yawns, looking very tired.

Zethar is reading a scroll (WILL NEED ACTUAL DETAILS ON SCROLL FOR ZETHAR TO READ).

Haman is behind stage left curtain with a bell.

KING: (clicks his fingers in the air) Stop right there! What did you just read?

MUSIC fades.

ZETHAR: (*clears his throat*) In the eleventh month, the month Shebat, **the seventh year of Xerxes reign**, Bigthana and Teresh, two of the king's officers who guarded the doorway, conspired to assassinate **King Xerxes**. But Mordecai the son of Jair, an exile of Jerusalem found out about the plot and told Queen Esther who reported it to the king. And when the report was found to be true, the two officials were hanged on a gallows...

KING: Has Mordecai received any honor or recognition for this?

BIZTHA: Nothing has been done for him

(*King looked very dismayed. Immediately a shuffling noise of footsteps is heard behind the side curtain and then Haman rings a bell*)

KING: Who is in the court?

(*Harbona and Carcas go to look behind stage left curtain and return to say*) Haman is standing in the court.

KING: Bring him in.

Harbona and Carcas go to bring him in.

HAMAN comes up the stairs.

KING: (*sitting up in bed, looking very pleased that Haman is there*) Haman, you're just the man I wanted to see. Tell me, what should be done for a man who has served the king well...very well?!

HAMAN: (*looks towards the audience with a smug smile and a wink – he thinks this honour will be for himself, takes a deep breath of pride, thinks carefully as he mumbles*) For the man the king delights to honor, (*has an idea! And then tells it very pompously*) have them bring a royal robe **the king** has worn and a horse **the king** has ridden, one with a **royal** crest placed on its head. Then let the robe and horse be entrusted to one of the king's most **noble princes**. Let them robe the man the king delights to honor, and lead him on the horse through the city streets, proclaiming before him, 'This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor! (*gets ready to accept this honour for himself*)

KING: (*looks towards his eunuchs and when they nod their approval, he gives Haman the command*) Go at once, Get the robe and the horse and do just as you have suggested for Mordecai the Jew, (*Haman reacts in shock*) who sits at the king's gate. Do not neglect anything you have recommended.

HAMAN: (*total shock and dismay, yet he has to check himself and put on a front for the king. Walks across to stage left in a daze. While the king goes back to listening to Zethar read from the scroll, the SPOTLIGHT fades. After a moment of darkness and silence, Haman can be heard in the distance crying out in a rather flat way - This is what is done for the man the king delights to honor – 6 times over until it fades out.*

SCENE 16

SPOTLIGHT ON - QUEEN'S SIDE.

MUSIC: Banquet style very softly

A glum Haman, the king and Queen sit at the banquet table (same seating), while Hatch and Maids 3&4 enter stage right to serve (nothing in hands, table is set already).

KING: (*more serious and thoughtful*) Queen Esther, **what is** your petition? It **will** be given you. What is your request? Even up to half the kingdom, **it will** be granted.

ESTHER: (*gets a look of encouragement from Hatch, and she finally gets up the nerve and in a pleading way pours out her request, down on her knees at his feet*) If I have found favor with you, O king, and if it pleases your majesty, grant me my life-- this is my petition. And spare my people - this is my request. For I and my people have been sold for destruction and slaughter and annihilation. If we had merely been sold as male and female slaves, I would have kept quiet, although the king would suffer a terrible loss.

HAMAN: (looks up at Esther in a puzzled sort of way)

KING: (*quite taken aback – sits up in astonishment*) Who is he? Where is the man who has dared to do such a thing?

ESTHER: (*in a wrenching way, pointing over to Haman*) The adversary and enemy is this wicked Haman!

KING: (*looks over at Haman in horror. And HAMAN reacts with great alarm. Then the king sets down his cup of wine and rises from the table in anger, marching off stage*)

HAMAN: (*rises from his chair and falls on his knees beside Esther, begging, sobbing, with his hands together on her lap*) Please spare my life, queen Esther. I didn't know you were a Jew. I had no idea this would affect you. Please forgive me. I'll take it all back. I'll change the decree. Oh, please forgive me....forgive me....forgive me....

ESTHER: (*doesn't answer. Turns to hide her face in her hands, still reclining on the couch*)

KING: (*comes back with his 7 eunuchs and looks over in horror at Haman beside the Queen*) Will he even force the queen while she is with me in the house?!

HATCHA: (*immediately takes a white cloth and covered Haman's head*)

BIZTHA: A gallows seventy-five feet high stands by Haman's house. He had it made for Mordecai, who spoke up to help the king.

KING: (*yells and points to Haman*) Hang him on it!

LIGHTS OUT

MUSIC – climatica

Eunuchs step to front of stage.

CURTAINS CLOSE

*SPOTLIGHT ON 7 EUNUCHS standing together at the front of the stage
They sing Chamberlains Song #16 – about Haman being hung and the decree being changed
EXIT stage left and go to back of hall.*

SCENE 17

DARKNESS

STAGE SET FOR KING'S THRONE ROOM

CURTAINS CLOSED – beginning of scene

SPOTLIGHT ON HEGAI AND MEMUCAN in front of curtain

On stage, behind curtain – king on his throne. Mordecai and Esther on one side and the 7 eunuchs on the other

MEMUCAN: Have you heard the news, Hegai?

HEGAI: (*grudgingly*) I don't hear much interesting news in the harem. It's mostly about whose turn it is to see the king, or

MEMUCAN: It is all to be reversed today! Haman and his ten sons have been hanged on the gallows, and now the King has decided to give Mordecai, Haman's position of honour.

HEGAI: (*brightens up*) Seriously? Mordecai – Esther's cousin – will be the king's top advisor? (*he thinks carefully*) But what about the decree that all the Jews must be killed? What good is a promotion when they're all still under a death warrant?

MEMUCAN: Ah, yes. That is still to be resolved... *walk opposite ways off stage*

**CURTAINS OPEN FULLY
KING'S THRONE ROOM FULLY ILLUMINATED.**

KING: (*takes off his ring*) Mordecai, you're the man who cared for my lovely queen when she lost her own father and mother, and today I hereby elevate you over all the other nobles of my kingdom, giving you the position of Haman the Agagite.

MORDECAI: (*bows and accepts the ring graciously. All the others nod their approval*) Thank you my Lord. I will do my best to serve you faithfully.

ESTHER: (*comes close to the king and bows down in front of his feet – she is pleading*) If it pleases the king, and if he regards me with favor and thinks it the right thing to do, let an order be written overruling the law that Haman son of Hammedatha, the Agagite, devised and wrote to destroy the Jews in all the king's provinces. For how can I bear to see disaster fall on my people? How can I bear to see the destruction of my family?

KING: (*holds out his golden scepter and Esther touches it and rises before him*) Because Haman attacked the Jews, I have given his estate to Esther, and they have hanged him on the gallows. Now write another decree in the king's name on behalf of the Jews as seems best to you, and seal it with the king's signet ring-- for no document written in the king's name and sealed with his ring can be revoked. Give your people the freedom to protect themselves against any who try to do them harm.

ESTHER: (*bows again gratefully*) Thank you, my lord. You have saved our people. (*she looks up to heaven as if she is saying a little prayer of thanks*) I thank you for your great kindness!

KING rises, takes Esther hand, looking at her with adoration – and she looking at him with same.
STAGE ACTION FREEZES and LIGHTS OFF STAGE – SPOTLIGHT ON EUNUCHS AT BACK -
as 7 Eunuchs come walking down the aisle singing CHAMBERLAIN'S SONG #18.

When they reach stage and finish song, the whole group unfreezes – LIGHTS BACK ON STAGE -
and everyone comes together to sing 'GOD'S LOVE'. All the characters come out to wave new decrees, sing the song and in the last chorus dance down the aisle and out the back door.

LIGHTS OUT

THE END