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# One Night with the King

By Stephan Blinn

**MORDECAI :**

the purpose of a person's life?  
Come it by chance, a casting of the lot,  
or does a call of destiny  
beckon to each of us?  
Many have wondered  
about my little Hadassah  
and why a simple Jewish orphan  
was chosen to stand against  
the annihilation of her people.  
And yet the mystery of the girl  
most know as Esther  
begins not where one might think,  
but 500 years earlier  
with a single act of disobedience.  
King Saul of the Israelites  
had been sent by the Prophet Samuel  
to wipe out  
an ancient child-sacrificing enemy.  
So pervasive was their evil  
that not even their oxen nor sheep  
were to be spared,  
and above all, no survivors left breathing.  
My lord, I give you Agag,  
king of the Amalekites.  
We have also seized for you his livestock.  
Even his queen.  
What dark portent bid me haste  
to cross this land of ours?  
How would you accuse me now,  
O Prophet?  
I carried out your lord's command.  
Then why do my ears  
ring with the lowing of oxen  
and the bleating of sheep?  
Your Majesty, the Amalekite queen,  
she escaped.  
We have the king.  
What is one woman?  
You fool,  
she is with child.

**MORDECAI :**

put a swift end to King Agag,  
Agag's queen,  
fleeing with the seed of vengeance  
growing within her,  
the Jews never found.

**HADASSAH:**

Rebecca, what kind of housekeeper  
do you think you are?  
Serves you right  
for bringing home your work.

**HADASSAH:**

The caravan arrived this morning.  
Well, Susa is the capital of the new world.  
Caravans arrive every day.  
Not from Jerusalem.  
Well, perhaps  
you ought to go back and ask them  
if they'll arrive the same time next year.  
Next year? You promised.  
- Rebecca!

**- REBECCA:**

You don't pay me enough  
to fight the battle for you.  
- Good morning, Hadassah.  
- And where have you been?  
I'm sorry, Grandmother,  
the markets were really busy.  
There's a new caravan in from...  
- Sore subject.  
- Uncle Mordecai,  
does not your own heart  
long to see our people restored to glory?  
It does.  
Did not Cyrus the Great conquer Babylon  
and free our people from captivity?  
He did.  
But do we embrace our freedom  
and leave this pagan empire  
to embrace our destiny?  
- Of course not.

**- MORDECAI:**

I pray to you day and night  
to give me the patience of Job,  
give me the wisdom of Solomon.  
And what do you give me?  
You give me the endless equivocations  
of a beautiful, young woman.  
Look.  
Hadassah, always dreaming.  
Maybe...  
Here, then, you be the princess.  
While many Jews had forgotten  
the acts of centuries past,  
the descendants of Agag had not.  
For Agag's queen did indeed survive  
and gave birth to a son.  
And she forged for him a mark,  
prophesying that one day  
an Agagite would arrive,  
a descendant of Agag,  
who would finally exact vengeance  
upon the Jews.  
Hadassah, read us a story!  
Read us a story!  
A story? You want a story?

**- GIRL:**

- Over here.  
Are you okay?

**HADASSAH:**

"'You cannot go before this Goliath  
'for you are but a youth.'  
"David replied,  
'While keeping my father's sheep,  
there came a lion and a bear.  
'And I slew them both.  
'This Goliath shall be as one of them  
for he defied the armies of the Lord.'  
As will Jesse Ben-Joseph,  
should he but take one step closer.  
With peace, Haman.  
- There's little but random news I bear.  
- I judge that.

Rumor has it  
Queen Vashti plans not to attend  
the King's banquet this evening,  
in protest of the war.  
Apparently the King has no idea.  
Some see random news.  
Others, opportunities.  
Of course,  
this is why you are a dispatch rider,  
and I am a prince of the Fars.  
Tell me, Agagite, what do you do with  
the extra darics you connive from me?  
I have 10 sons, my lord,  
and a wife that makes many demands.  
(CHUCKLES)  
Ten sons?  
You serve the great king well.  
Come, come. Go you now.  
Speak of me  
as you lavish your wife and sons.

**ABIHAIL:**

**HADASSAH:**

Remember, Hadassah,  
it is the glory of God  
to conceal a matter,  
the honor of kings to seek it out.  
It's from the Promised Land.  
Your great-grandmother  
brought it with her.  
And like you, its true treasure  
is etched within.

**PRIEST:**

There is much need for leadership  
in Jerusalem.  
More stew, my lord?  
I don't suppose that in your entire caravan  
you have a cook one half as good  
as our Rebecca.  
Here you are but a poor palace scribe,  
one who passes as a Persian, at that.  
Are you a Jew?

Or have you become a Gentile?  
We're a small people  
caught up in a vast and violent empire.  
We have capricious princes  
who could order our annihilation  
with the flick of a finger.  
And your presence in the palace  
might prevent it?  
Probably not.  
Look, tell me what I want to hear about.  
Tell me about the Temple.  
What ecstasy to stand in the presence  
of the Almighty!  
Like the intimate embrace  
of a husband and wife.  
It's so much deeper  
than mere mortal love.  
Oh, hello.

**MORDECAI :**

in the days of King Xerxes,  
who ruled over the empire  
of the Medes and Persians,  
from Ethiopia to India,  
that in the third year of his reign,  
he decreed a season of feasting.  
Rumors of war were in the wind, however,  
and some thought this the King's way  
of stalling off a much-debated decision  
to march on Greece  
in retaliation for his father's death  
four years before.

**MAN:**

Enter.  
The night's festivities  
hold not your interest, dear?  
It is long since you summoned me here.  
- Your hands have not been idle.  
- Not idle,  
not gifted either.

**MORDECAI :**

we'll discuss this later.

I have run out of laters.  
The caravan leaves tomorrow.  
Did not the priest even say  
it would be good for me?  
That he would look after me?  
You have so much of your  
mother and father in you, you know?  
And perhaps  
I'm just being a very selfish old man.  
Do you really want to go to Jerusalem?  
Truly.  
Then go with my blessing.  
Thank you.  
Rebecca!  
Yes, well,  
I will be late coming back tonight.  
The feasting has been extended.  
All Susa is invited.  
All of Susa?  
A drunken brawl is no place  
for a young lady of purity.  
Then why is a good Jew like you going?  
All the scribes have to go!  
There is war in the air!  
(ALL CHATTERING)  
The Queen indeed  
holds her own feast in protest.  
All is prepared as you have asked.  
You do know why the princes have asked  
you to extend the feast another night.  
You are too late  
if you seek me to deny them.  
Especially now.  
Such clamoring to march upon Greece  
and avenge my father's death.  
How long have you dreamt  
of molding Persia  
into a pillar of learning and culture?  
A flame to make even  
the greatness of Greece but a shadow?  
You know as well as I,  
this is not something that is won in battle  
but in the hearts of men.  
You would have me do nothing, then?

You're no warrior,  
no soldier.  
I'd have you stay,  
enhance your kingdom,  
preserve your throne.  
Looking for someone?  
I'm fine, thank you.  
You can run back to Rebecca now.  
Oh, I'm sure you're fine.  
Only tell me, Hadassah,  
or whoever you are,  
how do you intend to get into the palace?  
You didn't come to take me back?  
Come, or I shall call you  
Hadassah the mouse.  
Wait!  
I appear to you by the gracious command  
of the great king of kings,  
the emperor of the world, Xerxes,  
son of Darius.  
Great king.  
(ALL CHEERING)  
We drink.  
We drink also to my guard,  
the immortal 10,000,  
but I fear I would soon have to send them  
out to conquer new vineyards for me.  
(ALL LAUGHING)  
Then let us drink to Queen Vashti,  
the most beautiful in the land.  
Bring forth Vashti!  
Vashti!  
(ALL CHANTING)  
Bring forth Vashti!  
They are serious? They demand  
Vashti be here before all?  
Already rumors circulate  
as to why the Queen holds her own feast  
instead of attending yours.  
They sound riotous, my lord.  
They fear a divided kingdom.  
My lord,  
you know the Queen's position on the war.  
Send for her.



They go to fetch the Queen.  
She must be lovely,  
reigning in a place such as this.  
None is more lovely than you, my queen.

- My thanks, fair prince.

- Prince?

Why is it for years you threatened  
to join the caravans to Jerusalem,  
yet you never do?

What holds you back?

Perhaps the courage to face it alone.

What if you had someone to join you?

**MAN:**

The Queen asks the King's forgiveness.

She cannot leave her guests.

**VASHTI:**

and I will not lower my dignity  
or shame my reign  
by wearing the royal crown  
before your drunk  
and thinly veiled war council.

**MAN 1:**

**MAN 2:**

**WOMAN:**

**MAN 3:**

Am I to be a mockery before my subjects?

Or Greece as well?

- Continue, Cousin.

- Might not this

deed of refusal

travel abroad to all women,

making their husbands

contemptible in their eyes?

Will not it be said by all, "Xerxes

commanded his wife to come before him,

"but she came not"?

Vashti's guilty not only of

disobedience to the crown

but against the protocol of our fathers.  
And tell me,  
what dictates the protocol?  
A royal edict must be issued  
and written into the rolls of the land  
that Vashti...  
That Vashti come no more before the King,  
but that her royal position  
be given to a new queen,  
more worthy  
than her.  
My lord,  
what answer do I send the Queen?  
Vashti!  
Vashti!  
(ALL CHANTING)  
The land has no more queen!  
I wish not to be queen here any longer.  
Mordecai is giving me his blessing.  
Let us leave tomorrow,  
together.

**MORDECAI:**

Thus the scribes were assembled,  
and a decree sent forth.  
The princes did indeed press upon Xerxes,  
the king, soon to depart for war,  
"Leave behind a queen  
"to keep the people unified."  
Every maiden was to be considered,  
the choicest of whom  
to be brought from across the empire  
and into the palace.  
In accordance with the protocol,  
young men were also rounded up  
to become eunuchs  
who would serve the queen's candidates  
during their time of preparation.

**MORDECAI:**

In all likelihood they will not come for you.  
And not all that are taken will be chosen.  
Doubtless, the queen  
has already been selected

through bribery or chicanery.  
How do I keep our laws?  
How do I pray?  
What excuse do I offer God  
for not keeping his commandments?  
Oh, Hadassah.  
God sees the inward observance.  
The court is a dangerous place.  
I think it will be better  
if you forgot that you were a Jew.  
If this is a sin, then...  
Then let it be on my head.  
Promise me that you will do that  
if you're taken. Promise me that!  
If I am taken,  
I will do as you say.  
I should give you a different name.  
Hadassah is too Jewish.  
Esther.  
Esther is a good Babylonian name.  
Yes. That's what we shall call you  
from now on.  
Esther of Susa.  
Promise me.  
Promise me if you are taken.  
I said, "If I am taken."  
If, if, if.  
But for now,  
you should look for me  
in the streets of Jerusalem,  
dancing  
like David before the glory of the Lord.  
- Hadassah!  
- Who?  
Uncle Mordecai!  
(GASPS)

**MORDECAI :**

the King's orders are carried out?  
Senseless brutality  
in the middle of the night?  
Father, please show us favor  
and turn these dungeons  
into someplace wonderful.

Is this the dungeon part  
or the wonderful part?

(ALL GASP)

Look!

Sarah, it matches your eyes.

Have you ever found anything  
so wonderful in your life?

And Hannah,

was it not made for you?

Am I never going to see my mother again?

Only if you wish not to.

Two, three days, and who knows?

Home you go.

Do you think we're not beautiful enough  
to be asked to stay, Hadassah?

Welcome to a brand-new life.

The method of your arrival  
was not of my choosing.

I am Hagai, His Majesty's Royal Eunuch.

I have been assigned

to oversee your preparation.

All right, it's okay.

(GIRL SCREAMS)

**MAN:**

Which way to the quarter of the Jews?

(GIRL SCREAMS)

(GIGGLING)

You have a very bad habit.

The palace is no place for children.

You think of me as a child?

Well, you're wrong.

I am much younger than that.

How do they call you?

- Esther.

- Curious name.

From where do you come?

I am of the wind

whose sound is heard, yet none can tell  
from whence it comes or where it goes.

Well, we gather within the hour.

Try not to blow away before then.

Another 4,000 talents

for metal, weapons, armor.

And we must not forget  
the pay of the mercenaries.  
I know this is not a favored opinion,  
but if used for peaceful purposes,  
such amounts could serve many needs.  
Two different ways of life are involved.  
The Greeks have no king  
and they want none.  
It is one thing to beat our chests  
and parade our boldness  
pretending this is  
still the empire of our fathers.  
But you hear the costs  
of an actual campaign!  
If we are not honest with ourselves,  
I fear we lose much more  
than just our stature.  
Then, let us sit back and do nothing?  
Let the Greeks conquer.  
Let them establish democracy.  
Would not the King be the first to suffer,  
the first to die?  
Or does the memory of his father's death  
not stir as deep in his bones  
as it does in ours?  
I speak to you as one  
not without empathy.  
I, too, have stood in the battle  
and stared into the unknown.  
For the very sword that took my eye  
took from me my manhood as well.  
But be at peace.  
This is no warfare that you embark upon.  
This is only the life  
that a great dreamer could imagine,  
or at least it can be,  
if you so choose to embrace it.  
Think not I heard your  
whispered orchestrations that night?  
And how you drew even me  
into your schemes?  
In these troubled times  
it is easy to name any man traitor.  
I even recall a certain campaign

in Ionia under King Darius,  
where someone allowed  
the defeated Greeks  
to keep their own form of government,  
their democracy,  
instead of placing the protocol  
of the empire in control.  
Favoring democracy.  
The very doctrine to which  
all Persia is opposed.  
- I followed orders!  
- Come. Come, come, come.  
(CHUCKLES)  
We trouble ourselves with foolish things.  
The King asked me to speak. I did.  
I obeyed. As you obeyed.

**MORDECAI:**

creeping into palace halls,  
Haman the Agagite  
found the opportunity  
he had been waiting for.  
He began to strike out more openly  
at the Jews living in the outlying land,  
painting them  
as the true Greek sympathizers,  
setting the stage  
for his ultimate act of vengeance.  
Look.  
I am curious  
to whether you frustrate me  
out of sincerity  
or to ensure  
that you're never chosen queen.  
You assume I actually care about  
being chosen queen.  
I am serious.  
Serious of what?  
Finding a real queen?  
Is that why you subject us  
to these beauty treatments,  
these classes?  
You do not like our fine instructors?  
They simply neglect to

teach us some things.

- Such as?

- Well, seemingly

anything to do with actually being queen:

the thought well thought,

the word well spoken

and the deed well done.

As it is said in the great books.

You read?

Many tongues.

(LAUGHS)

Before I received your "invitation",

I was reading of

Gilgamesh the Babylonian.

**ESTHER:**

spoke to Gilgamesh, saying,

"Gilgamesh, you look worn out

and exhausted.

"What can I do

so that you can return to your land?

"I will tell you a thing that is hidden.

"There is a plant whose thorns

"will prick your hand like a rose.

"If your hands reach this plant,

"you will become a young man again."

Gilgamesh in the original.

I read translation,

never the original.

You read?

There are few pleasures left

to one such as I.

You offer us Hagai's position, my lord,

if we grant you the privilege

of picking a queen?

- Misgath of Persepolis.

- Misgath?

Of unusual beauty.

But up here,

- empty as a beggar's bowl.

- Consider her family.

Daughter of a rug merchant?

Will they not

also shower you with wealth?

**MORDECAI :**

certainly worse ways  
for the candidates to have spent their days  
than myrrh baths and beauty treatments,  
none of the rumors of riches and glory  
stirred more excitement  
than the thought of gaining entry  
to the royal treasury itself.

Whatever you chose  
for your one night with the King  
will be yours for the keeping.

Candidates, choose wisely.

(ALL GIGGLING EXCITEDLY)

You stand not impressed?

It matters not what impresses me.

How is one to choose when  
they know not what impresses the King?

Will you teach me?

I will do far more than that. Come.

A recent acquisition.

One, I believe,  
the King will find most pleasing.

Esther of Susa,  
come.

Seat yourself on the stool  
and read the scroll.

It is the chronicles of the King,  
the royal diary.

Through these doors  
you are no longer a candidate.

You are a servant.

Remember the protocol.

To approach uninvited  
is death.

I read for the King,  
alone?

Like this?

"Daily entry 23.

"Egyptian wheat reserves were reported  
"at half the normal levels  
due to a recent drought."

"Admiral Xtes was honored  
"for serving twenty years



in the Royal Fleet.

"After a lengthy speech,  
he promptly keeled over and died."

(CHUCKLES)

"Twenty-five. Three herd of sheep  
were stolen from Dirmalmirah,  
"Satrap of Midea.

"He requests that the crown send out  
the proper authority."

And so Jacob,  
also a shepherd by trade,  
was sent off into the far, far-off land  
where he came across the fair Rachel  
tending her father's sheep.

He was smitten,  
and went and rolled the stone  
from the well,  
and watered her flock for her.

Then Jacob kissed Rachel  
and lifted up his voice and wept with joy.  
When Laban, Rachel's father, heard of this,  
he said to Jacob,

"Should you serve me for nothing?

"Tell me, what shall your wages be?"

Jacob said, "I will serve you seven years  
for your daughter Rachel."

So Jacob served seven years  
tending Laban's sheep.

And they only seemed but a few days,  
for the love he had for her.

Then Jacob said to Laban,

"Give me my wife,

for my days are fulfilled."

So Laban threw a great wedding feast,  
but in the dark of the evening

Laban brought

his older daughter in to Jacob.

And, behold, in the morning

it was Leah, not Rachel.

Jacob was shocked. He said to Laban,

"What is this thou hast done unto me?

"Did I not serve with thee for Rachel?

"Why, then, have you beguiled me?"

**XERXES:**

I must admit that never before  
has such a tale been found  
in the pages of a royal diary.  
Here I expect to be lulled to sleep  
by tedious reports,  
instead I'm beguiled by a love story.  
And how ends your tale?  
This Jacob, he's able to have his bride?  
He's able to have her?  
Only after serving  
seven more years for her, my lord King.  
Believeth you in such?

Love?

Is it not the greatest commandment?

No matter what God one serves.

- How do they call you?

- Esther of Susa.

Susa? No.

Nothing good ever comes out of Susa.

Look at me.

Come. Come, if you wish to see what I do.

The Greeks, they have a god  
of similar form.

His arms will hold the bow,  
whose arrows they say are  
tipped with love.

Some archers' arrows are tipped  
with poison, my lord.

Sometimes

it's hard to tell the difference.

The symptoms are the same.

Perhaps in another time. Some  
other place.

You will read to me again.

You must tell no one of this night.

(GASPS)

(TRUMPETS)

(ALL CHEERING)

**- XERXES:**

- Blame me not for this, my lord,  
but the princes have ordered us  
to begin bringing you candidates

- by the end of the week.  
- You jest.  
- I am in the middle of...  
- At least you'll get it over with.  
Besides, these men might enjoy  
seeing some ladies around. No?  
(ALL LAUGHING)  
They tell me you're called Esther now.  
Oh, Jesse.  
Hatach.  
Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego  
were pagan names, too.  
We're in good company.  
Their names were Hananiah, Mishael  
and Azariah.  
They were thrown into the furnace.  
But then what happened?  
Come on, I found a way out.  
And there's a caravan  
leaving for Jerusalem tonight.  
So we can get out of this place.  
Escape?  
Jesse, I... I can't leave.  
What if...  
- What if I'm chosen?  
- What if you're chosen what?  
What if you're chosen queen?  
Look what they've done to us.  
What good could come out of any of this?  
Perhaps, instead of  
asking questions of our trials...  
Trials are meant to ask questions  
of ourselves.  
They cut me!  
I know  
we can't be what I hoped,  
- but...  
- Jesse.  
I can't leave. I'm sorry.  
I'm sorry.

**HAGAI:**

Each of you will be given  
one night with the King.

We gather first to honor  
Misgath of Persepolis.  
You enter as a peasant  
and leave a princess.  
Here we go.

(WHINNYING)

Steady her.

I'm so sorry...

- Oh!

- Almost there.

**XERXES:**

I must be allowing the candidates  
to keep their jewelry.  
Perhaps a horseback ride  
is not the best idea, my lord.

(GRUNTS)

(EX CLAIMS)

You weep not for the candidates  
this evening.

- My throat is sore.

- Your throat or your heart?

It has only been a few days  
since you read for him.

A few days is a thousand years.

If Xerxes had found pleasure in me,  
surely he would've...

You think a eunuch cannot know love?

Back before I was a cripple of a man,  
there was one that held my heart.

What became of her?

I know not.

I never found the courage to return  
to face her again.

She is beautiful but delicate,  
Your Majesty.

Just one more moment, please.

You may approach.

How do they call you?

(GAGGING)

(CHITTERING)

Esther.

This is your day.

We gather to honor Esther of Susa.

You enter as a peasant  
and leave a princess.  
You can let go of my arm now.  
He will be the fortunate one  
to choose you.  
He will be the one  
to whom congratulations are due.  
Esther, my arm.

**XERXES:**

You may begin whenever you are ready.  
Is there a problem?  
Did they not tell you I weary  
at this procession of candidates?  
I simply wanted someone to...  
Wait.  
You are the one who read to me before.  
You tried to beguile me with love stories.  
Did you not think I had the sense  
to see through your little parable?  
The arrogance! You speak to me  
as if I was this Rachel  
in need of help to look after  
my father's sheep.  
- My lord, I meant no...  
- And this is how you come to see me?  
Your only adornment before your  
one night with the King.  
It is, Your Majesty.  
You consider yourself of so little worth  
- that I can purchase your love so cheaply?  
- I was taught  
that when you visit a king,  
rather than expect a gift,  
one should bring one to lay at his feet.  
This is my most  
valuable possession in the world.  
It is my past, my present, and my future.  
And all of it is yours.  
Some would call you foolish indeed,  
as they would call your Jacob.  
Of all commodities, love is the easiest,  
and most cheaply purchased.  
If it is for sale, my lord,

it is not love.

Even you.

Even you must have a price.

I am neither a buyer  
nor a seller of love.

Suppose, my lady,  
a man offered you a more treasured gift,  
say, a kingdom.

(CRYING)

The only gift I would accept  
is your heart.

Then it is yours.

And you did not serve  
seven years to get it.

Tell me Esther of Susa,  
who are you really?

Tell me of your people.

Teach me of your ways.

My father taught me  
it takes the glory of God  
to conceal a matter,  
and the honor of kings to search it out.

Then marry me.

And we shall spend an eternity  
discovering this truth,  
together.

Persians, your queen!

(ALL CHEERING)

Know you how many times I tried to  
come for you after that first night?

How many evenings

I spent counting the stars  
to keep my mind off of you?

How many excuses I created  
just to avoid the other candidates?

Fools.

Misfits.

Donkey-brained caricatures of men,  
you guaranteed me that Misgath  
would be chosen queen.

Who is she? From whence did she come?

Who are her people?

There is little known about her, my lord.  
She is called Esther of Susa. An orphan.

We should've stuck to our first plan  
and poisoned Hagai ourselves.

- Quiet.

- Poison?

He did not, my lord.

He is far too impetuous.

- Far too...

- You know about poison.

Of course you do.

You were once the royal cupbearers.

Suppose in theory,

you wanted to poison another.

Suppose... Suppose this other  
remained nameless,

but was, in effect, one whom  
you had once vowed to protect.

My lord prince...

Come, come. Don't look so distressed.

We plot nothing here.

My lord.

(PEOPLE CHANTING)

From India to Babylon,

my sword has spilt the blood of  
traitors against the crown.

Proud, arrogant "chosen ones".

Allowed to return to their homeland.

But do they go?

Do they?

(MURMURS GREETING)

Thank you.

How wonderful are the ways of the Lord

that he should have raised up

my little Hadassah

and made her queen.

Have you told anyone our secret?

No.

If you continue to call me Hadassah,  
it will no longer matter.

Will you not join me in the palace?

I could have you named

to any post you desire.

My Lord will take care of me.

Do you take care of your lord?

Remember not his orders?

Procure it not from the palace,  
so nothing can be traced back to us.

The Jews have apothecaries.

Where is he now?

- You, over there...

- Why cannot a truce be arranged?

Truce?

That devil Memucan

has beaten me twice in a row.

I fear losing you.

I gave an oath

to my father.

He's the one I fear losing you to.

You must dream. You'll be gone much  
in the coming months.

Keep this for me.

- But it is yours. I...

- Then be at peace.

I always return for what is mine.

Will thou sit there all day, my lord?

This one.

**MORDECAI:**

buy belladonna off you?

Maybe they seek to poison someone.

Very deadly, very quick.

You sold them poison?

A Jew sells poison

to the King's food tasters?

Have you any idea for whom

it might've been intended?

Please, just allow me to see it.

The scribe says it is

for the Queen's eyes only.

(GIRLS GIGGLING)

That is what she told.

A plot to kill the King.

The King should be notified at once,  
my lady.

He and Memucan are a day's ride away  
at the training grounds.

Then it would be better, my lady,

if I send for the captain of the guard

- to investigate.



- Who else is closest to the King?  
Admantha.  
This is treachery.  
If my lady will permit, I myself  
will bring these two eunuchs to you.  
I'm armed, so I doubt the need for force.  
That will not be necessary.  
The King's new captain of the guard  
has gone to investigate.  
Time was of the essence, my lady.  
If only all shared your loyalty  
to the King, my prince.  
Captain of the guards.  
Master Haman, my lady.  
What of the eunuchs?  
They are being led  
to the gallows as we speak.  
I found this about their person.  
I interrogated them both.  
I'm convinced they plotted alone.  
Make sure Mordecai's name  
is entered in the chronicles  
and that it is certified with my seal so  
he may be properly rewarded by the King.

**ADMANTHA:**

Only a bite.  
Now I no longer ride the highways,  
my appetite suffers.  
Then may I assume that your fee  
for spying for me will be reduced?  
My appetite may be less,  
not of my sons,  
my wife.  
Well, that may cost you more, my prince.  
Much,  
- much more.  
- What might you have done?  
I would save the King for last.  
As in the palace board game.  
Rid yourself first  
of all of those pieces  
that are closest to him.  
One

by one.

**- HEGAI:**

- I go with or without you.  
There are too many rumors  
drifting through the palace,  
and not enough answers.  
These hinges are well-oiled.  
There must be plenty who use it.  
Lovers always find a way, my lady.

**HAMAN:**

my brothers and sisters,  
where we must root out  
those amongst our midst  
who seek our wreck and ruin!  
When a field of crops is defiled by disease,  
do we not set it on fire?

(ALL CHEERING)

I am asked why I choose  
to speak against these foreigners  
and strangers in our midst.

- The Jew!

- The Jew!

(ALL CHANTING)

No, not the Jew.

I, myself, know many an individual Jew  
who I am proud to call friend,  
but put these individual Jews together,  
and what are Egypt,  
Assyria, Babylon in their wake?  
Lead me away from here, quickly.  
You want proof?

Proof!

Proof!

Pulled from the royal library,  
the great scheme of  
the Greeks and the Jews  
to conquer the world!  
For let me tell you,  
the Greeks and the Jew  
both live by the same evil doctrine.  
All men are created equal.

All men are created equal.

- Do you believe you are equal to a slave?

- ALL:

**HAMAN:**

the Jewish God, nor in Greek democracy,  
but there are others in the palace that do.

Let me now speak of Memucan.

Prince. General.

Arch traitor!

"For services rendered to King Darius.

"Pacification of the Babylonian provinces.

"Payments made to Haman the Agagite."

When? When?

Ask of Memucan

why he allowed the Greeks of Ionia  
to retain their democracy.

Ask whose voice is loudest  
against the war today

and you will find out it is he!

"Common year."

Thirteen years ago.

**HAMAN:**

Are you alone?

- Highly unsafe.

- I was just finishing.

Please.

Allow me.

- Shall I return this for you?

- Thank you.

Something must weigh heavy

on my queen's heart

in order to be kept up

at this hour, reading.

My queen.

- Is her Highness unwell?

- I'm fine.

Perhaps I should retire.

(COUGHS)

**MEMUCAN:**

at the palace for more than two weeks.

She'll be wonderfully surprised,

think you not?

Here, read this, my lord.

You do not appear  
to be a traitor, Memucan.  
Return with me, and I'll have  
Admantha investigate  
Haman's accusations immediately.  
Haman is my appointment.  
And we do need him more than we realize.  
Truly, Memucan, at one moment you sulk,  
you say your name has been slurred,  
now you plead for your accuser.  
I have enough lives on my conscience.  
Chastise him mildly,  
and he will perform his duty well  
and be more grateful to you  
for your leniency.  
Spoken like a true Persian.  
Never judging a man before all the good  
and all the bad are weighed.  
Ride with me.

**- MORDECAI:**

- Worry not, action will still be taken.  
Lest you forget, this Haman  
is now head of internal protection.  
And lest you forget, I'm still queen.  
Yes, but queen subject to  
an ancient protocol that no doubt Haman  
knows how to manipulate  
far better than you do.  
Go not by the main gate.  
I wish not for the Queen  
to be alerted to my coming.  
(COMMANDS HORSE)  
You must promise me  
that you will not reveal this to anyone.  
Any more such promises  
and I shall have to take a vow of silence.  
Rusty old lovers' gate.  
I trust you used it much  
in your youth, Memucan.  
Who do you think had it installed?  
Go now.  
My love. Oh, how I've missed you.  
- Have you?

- Now, what is that supposed to mean?  
You looked flushed. Busy morning?  
Not as busy as it could get.  
No visitors?  
You sent for me, Your Highness?  
It appears you have  
misplaced our necklace.  
I wonder if that is all you have misplaced.  
(WOMAN EX CLAIMING PLAYFULLY)  
Perhaps Your Majesty would like to send  
for one of the concubines.  
Perhaps not.  
You look so much like your father.  
Sometimes I forget  
how different you truly are.  
Makes me wonder all the more why  
you feel such need to follow in his steps.  
Give her a few more nights,  
and then have her brought to me.

**ADMANTHA:**

You call that public tirade subtle?  
You mock me, Agagite.  
I need but report  
but once to the King of your arrogance.  
And your dreams of kingship die with me.  
You might be less harsh on the Jews.  
You should make yourself  
a laughing stock.  
The Jews, my prince,  
will be your chief weapon by which  
you attain power to the throne.  
Think, we plan to take the crown by force  
when the King is deep in Greece.  
What excuse will you use?  
Who attacks the land?  
Well, no one, actually.  
Unless, of course,  
you claim it was the Greek-loving Jews.  
Memucan expects an apology,  
as you predicted.  
Well, an apology is a cheap enough price  
to pay for a kingdom.  
Invite, then, Memucan to your estate.

Presumably so I can apologize to him.  
On the way, however,  
he will be ambushed.

**- ADMANTHA:**

- By my Jews, of course.  
Jews who slew him  
for being coupled with them as a traitor.  
- And what of Memucan's own guard?  
- It's merely an apology.  
Perhaps you can suggest to Memucan  
that if he arrive with a large number,  
I might suspect he'd come  
to punish me.  
One or two guards my men can handle.  
And who'll handle you?  
Who but you,  
my king.  
Prepare to die, Greek-lover.  
Admantha's men.  
Thank the gods you are unharmed,  
my lord.

**XERXES:**

My queen...

**MAN:**

blood has been spilled.  
You are needed at once.  
But lord King,  
an accusation by a dispatch ride.  
Why did you wait so long  
to inform anyone of Admantha's plot?  
- Surely you don't...  
- My lord, I had to but play the traitor  
to catch the traitor.  
Where are his witnesses, my lord?  
What were my motives?  
Let this Haman prove his words  
or be forever silent.  
But what would he have  
me show, my lord?  
There are no witnesses  
to plans forged in secret.

You will not act like that, Admantha.  
And was it not even Admantha  
who stirred the crowd into demanding  
Queen Vashti's appearance,  
knowing she would not come?  
All lies. That's lies.  
Lies. I stand in a crumbling house of lies.  
- Remember before whom you plead.  
- Plead for what?  
For your life, Admantha.  
(CRICKETS CHIRPING)  
Is it my foolish desire  
to believe these stories I hear  
or my glaring inability  
to perceive their mysteries?  
Perhaps you...  
You placed them back  
upon the shelf to collect dust  
without ever truly completing them.  
Who is the one that gathers dust?  
I believed I was your Rachel.  
But it appears I'm only Leah,  
and you serve time with me for another.  
No, my lord. It's not what you think.  
Nothing is as I think anymore.  
Plots slither through the night.  
Trust, it decays  
like secret gates left to rust.  
Admantha is carried to torture  
even as we speak.  
This Jacob and Rachel,  
they are no mere story to you.  
Give me some incentive  
to believe in who you really are.  
Give me some honor.  
For if it is truly the honor of kings  
to seek out truth in lie,  
I am a man of scorn.  
I will answer you,  
my lord, if you first answer me.  
Answer you what?  
Why did you summon Vashti  
when you knew she would not come?  
I am king.

And I need answer to no one.

(CRYING)

**MORDECAI:**

Admantha, the great Midian prince,  
finally confessed all,  
and was dealt with  
according to the protocol of the land.  
For his brave and valorous services,  
Haman the Agagite  
was proclaimed a prince of the Fars  
to inherit Admantha's house,  
wealth, prestige and power.  
Pieces are falling into place  
we've spoken of, one by one.  
Soothsaying does not become you,  
Haman.

No, my darling,  
I speak of the truth, not of stars.  
My burden I would not wish on any man.  
The blood of my forefathers  
will be avenged.  
And the gods will smile down on our son  
through our obedience.  
And are you mad? This is your plan?  
It is not that our allies  
are unwilling, my lord,  
but they have not fared well.  
A storm has robbed the Phoenicians  
of a good part of their fleet.  
Carthage finds herself short in timber  
with which to complete our warships...  
Surely the fate of the empire  
does not hinge on money?

- Are you ready to furnish it, then?

- No, not I, my lord.

But I'm aware of traitors  
within our borders that could.  
The Jews? We are not children.  
Nevertheless, the money may be raised  
by the confiscation  
of Jewish wealth and property.  
And the Jews will just  
hand it over without a fight?



No, of course not.  
First we must kill them all.  
Every last one of them.  
It is the only way to ensure  
they do not rise up and seek revenge.  
He speaks of women  
and children, my lord.  
Yes, women and children.  
I know.  
What is your solution?  
Or would you rather, my dear Memucan,  
the Greeks and the Jews unite  
and, hand in hand,  
murder us in our beds while we sleep?  
Is the past so mighty  
that we must destroy our brothers  
to be free of its grasp?  
No kingdom was ever so grand  
as the Jews' own King Solomon.  
He fought not one battle,  
toiled through not one war,  
but prospered upon the peace  
handed down by his father.  
Do not make void what your  
own father's death has purchased.  
- By picking back up...  
- Mind your tone, General.  
Why thirst you for warfare  
when we can drink so deeply of peace?  
You speak of peace,  
let us speak of the Jews.  
They would rather bow down to their own  
God than obey the laws of protocol.  
Their prophets even speak  
of a coming king.  
A king who will reign over all kings  
and set all men free.  
Is that not the very essence of democracy,  
my dear Memucan?  
I do believe, under your guidance,  
we are undone.  
If we are undone,  
we are undone from within, indeed.  
March upon Greece, if you wish.

But you march  
with no general in your lead.  
Then it has not yet been signed into law?  
Not as yet, my lady.  
Perhaps guilt stirs men too hotly at times,  
and they seek the salve of the law  
to ease the burning.  
And what would you have me do?  
I cannot seek him in the library  
unless summoned.  
If you arrived first,  
then he in effect  
would be seeking you, would he not?  
How came you pass my guard?  
I demanded none use the library this night.  
I seek that which you seek, my lord.  
Truth.  
Perhaps the truth  
of what exists between us?  
I have come on matters of state.  
Matters of state.  
I see.  
And what matters of state might that be?  
You desire more perfumes?  
You request more condiments?  
Surely as queen of the kitchen,  
you need not await me here.  
You know as well as I how quickly word  
travels throughout the palace.  
Especially when murder's involved.  
You are... You are learned, well-read.  
Offer me a story that  
answers my dilemma.  
- I have never pretended with you.  
- Never pretended?  
Think you not that I see  
Memucan's strings  
dangling above your head even now?  
You care more for these Jews  
than you do for me.  
Do you enquire of my burdens,  
do you offer me solutions?  
No.  
You just complain.

- As Vashti did?

- Away from me!

And come before me no longer,  
no matter what pretense you seek,  
or your fate shall be worse than Vashti.

- But I do love you.

- Love has failed me.

Knowledge has failed me, thus  
I bind myself to the protocol  
of my fathers and to my empire.  
By the next moon, I leave for war.  
And whatever my fate,  
it shall no longer be shared with you.  
This was once your favorite reading.  
And though it may no longer  
bear the story of love,  
it bears that of one Mordecai the Jew.  
One of whom you wish to destroy  
saved your life.  
And you never even honored him for it.  
The casting of the lot, the Pur...  
It has determined upon which day  
all the Jews of the kingdom will be slain.  
This day is to be the 13th day  
of the month of Adar  
according to the calendar of the Jews.  
Prince...  
The annihilation of a people  
can only be authorized by one  
who bears the signet of the King himself.  
(PEOPLE SCREAMING)

**MORDECAI:**

into all the land,  
to slay and annihilate all the Jews  
on the 13th of Adar,  
some six weeks hence.  
Both young and old,  
men, women and even children.  
And to plunder all of their possessions  
for the sake of the crown.  
The scribe insists that  
all is dependent upon you, my queen.  
Dependent upon me?

My queen might wish  
to go before the King and intercede  
for those that have no other hope.  
My lady...  
Have you forgotten your protocol?  
To approach the King  
unsummoned is death.  
Perhaps in court.  
But surely you can visit him in private.  
In his chambers.  
Surely I cannot.

**ESTHER:**

I walk before you with a loyal heart.  
And now I stand in the hour of trouble  
precisely because of my obedience.  
I beseech you, Father,  
let there be another way.  
Rise up a deliverer and let this pass.  
Let this pass.

**MORDECAI:**

"'comfort my people,' says your God.  
"Cry unto Israel  
"that her warfare is finished,  
"that her iniquity is removed.  
"The everlasting  
neither faints nor is weary.  
"His understanding no one can fathom.  
"He gives strength to the weary  
and power to the weak.  
"Even the youth shall faint and be weary,  
"and young men shall utterly fail.  
"But those who wait on the Lord  
shall renew their strength."  
Lord, we wait on thee.  
Renew our strength.

**MAN:**

Kneel before the great prince.  
Clear the way for he who comes.  
Kneel for the great prince.  
You...  
Lower yourself to honor

the great Prince Haman. Kneel!

- I said kneel.

- Stop!

- Why do you not kneel?

- I kneel before my king.

I abase myself

only before the God of my fathers.

- What's his name, this God?

- The great I AM.

The one true God,

the maker of heaven and earth.

The God of Abraham,

of Isaac and of Jacob.

A Jew.

Mordecai Ben-Yair.

Mordecai...

I shall name my prize pig after you.

Perhaps I may give you other reasons

to remember my name.

You will remember mine

for this!

Move on.

**MAN:**

You still ended up

on the ground like the rest of us.

But I did not kneel.

Come, now, you are a mere three days

from being handed a kingdom.

We must not let one Jew rob us of our joy.

That is not good enough.

Then seek permission

to honor the King's departure

with a public execution of a rebel

(ECHOING)

a symbol of your authority

over those that remain.

A gallows, 50 cubits high

with Mordecai right...

The chronicles.

**XERXES:**

A matter disturbs me.

You may be of assistance.

I am most pleased, my lord,  
for I, too, desire your counsel on a matter.  
A certain man  
has rendered great service to me.  
He has received many honors  
amongst his people,  
but he once saved my life.  
I feel, despite everything, full recognition  
has not yet been given him.  
What think you, shall be done  
for this man in whom the King delights  
to honor?  
Let a royal robe be sent for,  
one his Majesty has donned in public.  
And a horse  
on whose head a royal crest is set.  
Deliver them to  
one of the noblest princes of the Fars,  
so that he can array the man  
in whom the King delights.  
And then parade this man  
through the streets, proclaiming,  
"Thus shall it be done to the man  
in whom the King delights to honor."  
Most excellent proposal.  
Go yourself now  
and do all you have suggested.  
My lord.  
To a one Mordecai,  
the scribe who  
sits within the King's gates.  
Mordecai?  
The Jew?  
My lady.  
- And who is this honored man?  
- A scribe.  
A Jewish scribe,  
who claims to have saved the King's life.  
I should think you would be honored  
by such a privilege given by the King.  
Honored?  
The prestige of Persia is at stake.  
What will it be said of your husband,  
the king, that he commands

his highest prince  
to lead a Jew through the streets?  
A Jew, my lady!  
And how is a Jew  
any different than you or I?  
They are our enemy.  
They must be destroyed.  
They may be your enemy, but not mine.  
From the way that you defend them,  
- one might almost think...  
- One might think what,  
my prince?  
One might think. That is all, my lady.  
One might think.

**HAMAN:**

the Jew.

(CROWD CHEERING)

Make your way for Mordecai,  
who saved the King's life.  
He is the man in whom  
the King delights to honor.  
All hail for Mordecai, the Jew,  
honored of the King.  
Beloved of the Queen.  
All hail for Mordecai, the Jew.  
Honored of the King.  
Beloved of the Queen.

(THUNDER CRASHING)

Guards...

My queen,

I bring you word from Mordecai.  
You've run out of time.  
When the King leaves  
for Greece tomorrow,  
he will appoint Haman as his regent.  
It is our last chance  
to stop this edict of death.  
He made me vow to speak his words.  
You will indeed risk your life  
if you go before the King...

**MORDECAI:**

that if you keep silent

your position  
will save you alone from this edict.  
For if you keep silent,  
deliverance for the Jews  
will arise from someplace else,  
but you  
will surely perish.  
Who knows whether  
you have come to the palace  
for such a time as this?  
He said to give you this.  
Tell Mordecai to assemble the Jews.  
Ask them to fast and pray.  
I will do the same.  
And in the morning,  
arrange for me a litter.  
I will array myself as queen  
and go before the King unsummoned,  
even though it is against the law.  
And if I perish,  
I perish.  
(THUNDER CRASHING)

**XERXES:**

servants of the crown,  
today we embrace our destiny  
to raid and rule the world over  
and stand against the Greeks  
and all who would rob us of our glory.

**MAID:**

The litter will be here any moment.  
- No litter is coming.  
- What?  
I do not know what you plan, but...  
The King leaves for the outpost  
within the hour.  
I have not time to wait out this rain.  
I am not going to allow you  
to kill yourself.  
No...  
- Please tell me you did not.  
- What possible assurance do you have  
he would lower his scepter



to spare your life?  
You do not go into a bedroom of a man,  
you go into the hall of a king.  
This is not you against him.  
This is you against protocol.  
You against the empire.  
Then I... I go as  
David did  
before Goliath and the Philistines.  
Those are just stories, Esther.  
Do you hear me? Just stories.  
Know you what I love most  
about the story of David and Goliath?  
David's victory  
came not because he fought well  
but because he believed well.  
Thus I leave you on this day,  
your regent, in my absence,  
Lord Haman, prince of the Fars.  
It is my will  
that each of you obey him in every way,  
exactly as you would regard your king.  
Unsummoned she comes before the King.  
She does.  
Is protocol not broken?  
- Yes, protocol has been broken.  
- Guards!  
(INAUDIBLE)  
(INAUDIBLE)  
(ALL CLAMORING)  
...before the King.  
(SIGHS)  
- We have not time to waste.  
- What did he say to your request?  
The timing, the faces... I could not ask it.  
Not there, not in court.  
What then? Do we perish?  
We have but one last chance.  
You must help me prepare.  
A king may lower his scepter  
to whoever he wishes.  
My lord,  
this day your kingdom  
has all but been ripped from your hands.

This Esther has dishonored you  
more than Vashti ever could.  
See not you now  
how she has trapped you?  
Inviting us to a banquet  
to hear her request?  
If you go,  
the people will deem you to be a pawn.  
If you refuse,  
a coward.  
(DOOR SLAMS SHUT)  
There is but one way to proceed.  
Is the meal to your satisfaction, my lord?  
The night draws late.  
Once more I ask for  
your petition, my queen.  
My petition,  
my lord,  
is that you allow me to finish a story.  
One that I began many nights ago.  
The story of Jacob, my lord,  
does not finish with marrying Rachel.  
Well, they go on to have 12 sons.  
And like these 12 pillars that surround us,  
they became the pillars of a people.  
Surely...  
Surely you do not delay an army  
only to finish a children's tale?  
If I still find favor in your sight,  
let my life be given me, at my petition.  
And my people at my request.  
You demand of me your life  
and that of your people?  
My dear girl,  
I know not of your people.  
You have yet to tell me who they are.  
Had we been merely sold as slaves,  
I would have held my tongue.  
This Haman wanted our blood,  
my blood, the blood of Jacob, your Jacob.  
Your Jacob was given a new name.  
Israel.  
As, too, was I.  
You, Esther?

A Jew?  
Not Esther, my lord.  
Hadassah Bat-Abihail,  
daughter of the tribe of Benjamin,  
child of the most high God.  
Never have I heard  
a more pathetic story in my entire life.  
She is no Jew.  
She's another Vashti.  
Seems it not convenient to you?  
An army marches,  
and suddenly she is a Jew.  
Esther is a Jew.  
Your Vashti but protested  
the notion of war.  
This queen seeks to counter  
the very authority of your rule.  
A Jew? If such were true,  
why did she hide it till now?  
Pray, do tell us.  
The Almighty has indeed ordained  
that my words speak not truth unto you.  
At least allow my heart.  
For this  
which I have offered you,  
my most precious in all the world,  
the very identity etched within me.  
Well, is something supposed  
to be happening here?  
The stars... Do you not see them?  
Do you not see them?  
A mockery.  
Perhaps not how  
you had hoped it would end?  
Imagined you that I would beg?  
Think you I will beg?  
Beg for my life?  
Beg like my forefather Agag  
before your sword?  
Would you like me to beg for you?  
Oh,  
please, my lady.  
Please, Your Highness.  
Please spare me.

Spare me my life. You are a lady of mercy.

Spare me.

I beg for forgiveness.

Spare me, spare me, you Jew!

(GRUNTS)

Would he also assault the Queen,  
my wife,

while I am in my house?

Harbonah has informed me that  
the gallows post stands in Haman's yard  
even as we speak. Apparently  
intended for one Mordecai the Jew.

Hang him on it.

No!

No!

(GROANS)

What made you come back?

I saw them.

I saw the stars.

(RELIEVED CHUCKLE)

**MORDECAI :**

has a new generation redeemed  
the time of centuries past  
and stepped into their destiny.

On this day, I give you your new prince,  
and master of audiences,  
Mordecai Ben-Yair.

On the day appointed for their destruction,  
all Jews shall have the right  
to protect themselves  
and shall be entitled to take  
all the property of their attackers.

And I send forth this story  
enjoining all to keep a day  
of feasting and gladness.

A celebration to be passed on and retold  
through every generation,  
to be known as Purim,  
or the casting of the Pur  
that determined its time.

While we continue onward in the face  
of a world filled with uncertainty,  
we can rejoice,

for hidden within its mysteries  
is the honor of a king.

Thus dictated, I order this decree sent out  
under the great seal of Mordecai,  
prince of Persia,  
a Jew.