

PERUSAL SCRIPT



"You've read the Book; now do the Musical"



Salt Lake City

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ESTHER: The Musical

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Cast of Characters (7M 7F + ensemble)

ESTHER -- Queen of Persia, a dark-eyed classic beauty, poised, graceful, much younger than Xerxes

XERXES -- King of Persia, commanding, dark-bearded, majestic

MORDECAI-- Jewish Leader, Esther's uncle

LEAH -- His wife

HATACH -- Esther's Chief Chamberlin, a husky, handsome, eunuch

PAPYRUS -- His youthful scribe

AKKADIA -- Esther's beautiful blonde handmaiden

NILGAH -- (Lady Marsena) Akkadia's mother, a wealthy widow

JOZADAK -- A camel driver

HAMAN -- Prime Minister of Persia, dashing, proud, in-control

ARTABANUS -- Minister of State

LADY MERES -- (Lasivia) a haughty socialite

HANNAH -- a friend to Leah

JUDITH -- a friend to Leah

CAPTAIN -- Soldier 1

SOLDIERS 2-6 -- Bodyguards (#4 is also the TRUMPETER)

JEWS: Scribes, Women, Delegation, Spokesman.

Beggars, clowns, juggler, dancing girls, Arab agent, Greeks, Egyptians, snake charmer, mummy, slave train, merchants, assassin

ESTHER a musical by Mark Ogden. 7M 7W + soldiers, Jewish refugees, courtiers and visitors. About two hours. Various locations. (*Performable by Church, Educational, Professional and Community Groups*)

YOU'VE READ THE BOOK -- NOW DO THE MUSICAL! The Biblical story of staying true to yourself and finding courage. From the pages of the best-seller in history -- the epic story of Persia's legendary Queen now comes to the stage! Esther is the newly crowned Queen of Persia, wife of Xerxes, and she is Jewish -- a refugee from one of Xerxes' father's campaigns. No one knows that she is Jewish, or that she is the daughter of the highest ranking Jewish man in the land of Persia. Then the Jews are all condemned to die by Haman, the Prime Minister. Will Esther find the courage and the means to thwart Haman? **Order # 2070.**

Mark Ogden, composer, lyricist and book writer, and also founder of St. George Musical Theater, often said writing and producing a play was like having a baby. Once he conceived of an idea, it would grow and grow until he had to put it on paper and write music to accompany the dialogue. Finally, when the baby emerged on stage, it was a joy to behold as the newest member of his family. St. George Musical Theater was another of his babies. Conceived in the mid 1980's, this tiny nursery of players rehearsed, presented, reviewed, and revised Mark's dramatic work. In 1988, Mark's directing abilities won him the privilege of directing *It's My Life* by Carol Lynn Pearson. Sponsored by Southwest Mental Health, he and the show traveled to many Southern Utah schools and kept the dream of St. George Musical Theater alive. Tragedy struck in 1992 when Mark Ogden was diagnosed with AIDS. He fought a long, difficult battle with the disease, but passed away two years later in 1994 leaving St. George Musical Theater an orphan.

Esther

ACT ONE

#1 -- Prelude	Orchestra
<u>Scene 1 -- Banquet Hall</u>	
#2a -- Forty Days	Company + Haman
#2b -- Take A Second Look	Xerxes, Haman, Artabanus
#2c -- Sometimes A Compromise	Esther
#2d -- Forty Days (tag)	Company
<u>Scene 2 -- Harem</u>	
#3 -- With Pen and Ink	Papyrus & Hatach
#3a -- With Pen and Ink (reprise)	Papyrus & Hatach
<u>Scene 3 -- Esther's Suite</u>	
#4 -- Our Little Secret	Esther
<u>Scene 4 -- Inner Court</u>	
#5 -- Immortal	Xerxes, Artabanus, Haman
#6 -- In Spite Of ...	Haman, Artabanus
<u>Scene 5 -- Home of Lady Meres</u>	
#7 -- He's A Man To Watch	Meres, Haman
<u>Scene 6 -- Esther's Suite</u>	
#8 -- She Is Real	Xerxes, Akkadia
#8a -- Our Little Secret (reprise)	Papyrus
<u>Scene 7 -- King's Gate</u>	
#9 -- No Matter What You Do	Mordecai, Leah, Hannah, Jozadak, Judith
#10 -- Jews	Artabanus, Captain, Haman, Leah, Hannah, Judith
<u>Scene 8 -- Inner Court</u>	
#11 -- I Want To Make Things Happen	Esther

ACT TWO

<u>Scene 1 -- In and out of Esther's Suite</u>	
#12 -- I Want To Make Things Happen (reprise)	Esther
#12a -- I Can't Believe It	Akkadia, Papyrus
#13 -- Free	Mordecai
<u>Scene 2 -- Esther's Suite</u>	
#14 -- Free (Reprise)	Mordecai, Leah
<u>Scene 3 -- Home of Lady Meres</u>	
#15 -- Everything's Fine	Haman, Artabanus, Meres,
<u>Scene 4 -- Outside of Mordecai's Home</u>	
<u>Scene 5 -- Esther's Suite</u>	
#16 -- I Want To Make Things Happen (reprise)	Esther
<u>Scene 6 -- Inner Court</u>	
#16a -- Underscore	Orchestra
<u>Scene 7 -- Esther's Suite</u>	
#17 -- Our Little Secret (reprise2)	Hatach, Papyrus, Akkadia, Esther
#17a -- Because of Him	Hatach, Akkadia
<u>Scene 8 -- Xerxes' Suite</u>	
#18 -- Give Him The Works	Haman, Artabanus, Captain, Guard,
#18a -- Give Him The Works (reprise)	Ensemble
#18b -- Duel Underscore	Orchestra
<u>Scene 9 -- Esther's Suite</u>	
#19 -- With Pen and Ink	Hatach, Papyrus,
#20 -- Immortal: REPRIZE (Finale)	Company
#21 -- Curtain Call	Orchestra

ACT I

MUSICAL #1 -- PRELUDE

Scene 1 -- *Ancient Persia. The Banquet Hall of the Emperor's Palace. GUESTS are lounging, eating and drinking. Enter HAMAN.*

HAMAN: Honored guests! Governors, ambassadors, Ministers, welcome to Persia! And to the Emperor's wedding feast. Eat, drink, enjoy the celebration. But pace yourselves. How many parties last forty days?

MUSICAL #2a -- FORTY DAYS

ALL:

FORTY DAYS
AND FORTY FASCINATING NIGHTS
IN WHICH TO CELEBRATE HIS MAJESTY'S NEW BRIDE.
COUNTLESS WAYS
TO SHARE HIS MAJESTY'S DELIGHTS.
WE KINDLY ORDER YOU TO CAST ALL CARE ASIDE.

HAMAN: And thank you for all the delightful gifts -- the very best from ev'ry corner of the Empire: Syria, Media, India, Egypt. How proud I am to be your Prime Minister.

SUCH A FINE ARRAY!
SO MANY FLAGS UNFURL'D.
TO PERSIA COMES THE WORLD.

SUCH A FINE DISPLAY.
YOUR TREASURES SO WELL-KEPT
WE GRACIOUSLY ACCEPT.

HOW SUBLIME!
THAT SUCH VERY DIFF'RENT PEOPLES
CAN DWELL IN PEACE.
AND OUR NUMBERS WILL INCREASE
AS WE WELCOME DISTANT KINGDOMS INTO THE FOLD.
AND BEHOLD THEIR RICHES YET UNTOLD!

[A procession of riches and booty from the conquests is displayed.]

ARTABANUS: He approaches. His Majesty approaches!

[ALL bow. Enter XERXES and ESTHER.]

MUSICAL #2b -- TAKE A SECOND LOOK

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- *Esther: The Musical* by Mark Ogden

XERXES: Allow me to present the newest star in the Persian sky -- Esther, Queen Esther, my glorious bride.

LOOK AT HER!

ISN'T SHE A BEAUTY?

LOOK AT HER!

THAT LOVELY SMILE CAN'T HELP BUT MAKE YOUR HEARTSTRINGS STIR.

IN HER EYES

THERE'S A KIND OF MAGIC

SHINING BRIGHT.

YOU CAN'T HELP BUT LOVE HER AT FIRST SIGHT.

BUT TAKE A SECOND LOOK

AND YOU'LL NOTICE THE LOVELY GIRL INSIDE

BEHIND THE PRETTY FACE, THE JEWELS AND THE GOWN.

TAKE A SECOND LOOK.

HER INNER BEAUTY JUST CANNOT BE DENIED.

SHE WAS A QUEEN BEFORE SHE EVER WORE HER CROWN.

I've searched the world for a new queen, a queen to replace Vashti, your former Empress -- and at last I've found her. I know she's not from one of the Nine Noble Families -- as was Vashti, your disloyal Empress.

Yes, I have broken tradition, but I make no apology. The Gods themselves showed Esther to me -- in a vision! When I first saw her, when I recognized the girl from my dream, I nearly fell off my throne!

ARTABANUS: (*aside to HAMAN*) He had a vision?

HAMAN: He is losing his mind.

XERXES: May you learn to love her as much as I do!

HAMAN: Ladies and Gentlemen, the Royal Newlyweds!

[Cheers and applause as they cross to their thrones]

ALL:

LOOK AT HER!

ISN'T SHE ATTRACTIVE?

LOOK AT HER!

NO WONDER HE IS IN AN ADOLESCENT STIR.

[ALL freeze except HAMAN and ARTABANUS]

HAMAN:

LOOK AT HER.

ARTABANUS:

WHAT AN INSPIRATION.

SHE'S DIVINE.

HAMAN:

AND WHEN HE'S DEAD.

I'LL MAKE HER MINE!

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- Esther: The Musical by Mark Ogden

MERES: (*unfreezing, aside to HAMAN*) I still say he should've chosen a girl from the Nine Noble Families.
(*pointing her out*)

I still say Nilgah's daughter Akkadia should've been Empress.

ARTABANUS: Really, Lady Meres, one mustn't speak treasonously.

HAMAN: No matter what one thinks.

[The THREE smile knowingly]

XERXES:

BUT TAKE A SECOND LOOK
AND YOU'LL NOTICE THE LOVELY GIRL INSIDE
BEHIND THE PRETTY FACE, THE JEWELS AND THE GOWN

ALL:

TAKE A SECOND LOOK
HER INNER BEAUTY JUST CANNOT BE DENIED.
SHE WAS A QUEEN BEFORE SHE EVER WORE HER CROWN.

[ALL freeze except ESTHER who crosses to MORDECAI]

ESTHER: Uncle Mordecai, I'm so glad you're here even tho' I have to pretend I don't know you. So much has happened in two years. I was able to learn a lot in the House of Women. The names of all the provinces and their capitals and rulers. There were girls there from ev'rywhere. Of course, we weren't supposed to learn anything but grace and poise and how to please the King. In fact, the eunuchs got very cross if we did anything else. Even so, I'm not the shy little girl I used to be. Well, not as shy. Still, Uncle Mordecai, I never thought it would go this far.

MUSICAL # 2C -- SOMETIMES A COMPROMISE

IT'S JUST UNBELIEVABLE.
HOW COULD THIS HAPPEN TO ME?
HOW COULD I EVER FORSEE LIFE LEADING ME HERE?

ME, AS AN EMPRESS?
JUST BEING MARRIED IS STRANGE.
HOW MUCH CAN ANYONE CHANGE AND STILL BE SINCERE?

HOW COULD I MARRY A PERSIAN?
IT'S SOMETHING I NEVER PLANNED TO DO.
QUITE A CONVERSION FOR AN ORTHODOX JEW!

THANK GOD THAT YOU REALIZE
I HAD NO CHOICE BUT TO COMPROMISE.
MY FAITH IS STILL AS STRONG AND TRUE.

All my life I planned to marry under the Covenant. When the King's Minister saw me that day in the marketplace, I told him I wasn't interested. And when he showed up at our house, I was amazed. And when

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- Esther: The Musical by Mark Ogden

you finally agreed to let me go, I was astounded. But I trusted you. And besides, we certainly weren't one of the Nine Noble Families. I never thought he choose me. That 'dream' story! How could he have seen me in a dream? All of a sudden he was going to marry me and there was nothing I could do.

SOMETIMES A COMPROMISE
IS ALL A PERSON CAN MAKE.
IF YOU DON'T BEND, THEN YOU BREAK
SO YOU BREAK WITH THE PAST.

AND PRAY THAT YOUR CHOICE WAS WISE
AND NOT A DREADFUL MISTAKE.
WHAT OTHER PATH COULD I TAKE?
IT HAPPENED SO FAST.

I KNOW THAT YOU GAVE ME YOUR BLESSING.
BUT STILL, I'M NOT CERTAIN AS TO WHY
IT'S SO DISTRESSING.
I CANNOT DENY
THAT SOMETIMES A COMPROMISE
IS REALLY JUST FEAR IN A BRAVE DISGUISE.
FEARFUL OR BRAVE?
WHICH OF THE TWO AM I?

[She returns to the throne. The COMPANY unfreezes]

**SEGUE TO
MUSICAL #2D -- FORTY DAYS (TAG)**

ALL:

FORTY DAYS
AND FORTY FASCINATING NIGHTS
IN WHICH TO CELEBRATE HIS MAJESTY'S NEW BRIDE.
COUNTLESS WAYS
TO SHARE HIS MAJESTY'S DELIGHTS
WE KINDLY ORDER YOU TO CAST ALL CARE ASIDE!

*[Tableau, **blackout**]*

Scene 2 -- The Harem. A Patio outside Esther's suite. HATACH is dictating to PAPYRUS.

HATACH: Now read that back ...

PAPYRUS: 'And the King loved Esther

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- *Esther: The Musical* by Mark Ogden

HATACH: Falsetto, Papyrus, falsetto!

PAPYRUS: Look, nobody's around.

HATACH: Papyrus! A man in the Harem! Do you know what could happen to me if someone found out? Do you know what could happen to you? The second they realize you're male, you wouldn't be! So keep your dress down and your voice up!

PAPYRUS: That's it; I quit!

HATACH: Quit? You can't quit. I need y--... I mean -- what about Akkadia? You may never get near her. You may never even see her again.

PAPYRUS: A lot of good it does me, pretending I'm a eunuch!

HATACH: All right, all right, you can talk in your normal voice as long as nobody's around. Now where were we?

PAPYRUS: 'And the King loved Esther above all the women; and she obtained grace and favor in his sight more than all the other virgins; so that he set the royal crown upon her head, and made her queen'.

HATACH: That's not what I dictated.

PAPYRUS: You dictated garbage. You're the worst dictator I've ever worked for.

HATACH: I admit it. I admit you're a better writer, but the idea, the idea to write Esther's story, that was mine! And I predict, Papyrus, that hundreds, thousands of years from now people will still be reading it. And thanking us, us!, Papyrus, for preserving it!

MUSICAL # 3 -- WITH PEN AND INK

WE'RE MAKING HISTORY
BY TAKING HISTORY
AND PUTTING IT ON PAPER FOR POSTERITY.
SOMEDAY THE WORLD WILL PRAISE US
FOR WHAT WE HAVE WRITTEN DOWN.
SOMEDAY THEIR GRATITUDE WILL AMAZE US-

PAPYRUS:

BUT WE WON'T BE AROUND!

HATACH:

COME NOW, YOU MUST AGREE
THERE'S A NECESSITY
TO PRESERVE OUR GLORIOUS MEM'RY LITERARILY.
WE HAVE A HIGH COMMISSION.
THE WORLD WILL REMEMBER US

PAPYRUS:

TOO BAD THAT ALL OF THAT RECOGNITION WILL BE POSTHUMOUS!

HATACH:

THE PYRAMIDS! AND BABYLON!
WERE BUILT BY KINGS WHO WANTED TO LIVE ON WHEN THEY WERE GONE.
IF WE DON'T SHIRK, IF WE DON'T SHRINK,

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- *Esther: The Musical* by Mark Ogden

WE'LL BUILD OURSELVES A MONUMENT WITH PEN AND INK!
I THINK YOU MUST CONCUR
THAT IT'S OUR DUTY, SIR,
TO LET FUTURE GENERATIONS KNOW HOW GREAT WE WERE.
HOW WE ACHIEVED IN BATTLE!
HOW WE EXCELLED IN TRADE!

PAPYRUS:

AND MAYBE THEY'LL GET A LAUGH FROM ALL THE DUMB MISTAKES WE MADE.

HATACH:

THE PYRAMIDS! THE GIANT SPHINX!
WERE BUILT BY KINGS WHO WANTED TO OUTDO LIFE'S FINAL JINX.

PAPYRUS:

IF WE DON'T SHIRK, IF WE DON'T SHRINK,

BOTH:

WE'LL BUILD OURSELVES A MONUMENT WITH PEN AND INK

HATACH: All right, take this down: 'So the King threw a big bash for everybody in honor of Esther and he declared a big holiday and gave out presents like a King is supposed to do'.

PAPYRUS: 'Then the King made a great feast, even Esther's feast; and gave gifts according to the state of the King'.

HATACH: Perfect! I'm brilliant?

PAPYRUS: I shave my entire body for this?

[Suddenly, enter AKKADIA, NILGAH, and LADY MERES.]

AKKADIA: Hatach, here you are! Queen Esther needs this bracelet fixed. Do you need anything from the Bazaar?

HATACH: Well, let's see: some India ink. And some blue eyeshadow.

AKKADIA: Remember that mother. You remember my mother

HATACH: Of course, Lady Marsena.

AKKADIA: And this is Lady Meres.

HATACH: Oh, yes! I've heard so much about you -- and your scandalous parties.

MERES: The world thrives on scandal. It's my duty to society.

NILGAH: This is Hatach, Her Majesty's chamberlain.

MERES: Oh, how fortunate. Then perhaps you could tell us a little more about her? Her family, her background? It's all so mysterious.

HATACH: Yes, very mysterious.

MERES: So -- you don't know anything or you just won't tell?

HATACH: That's right.

AKKADIA: Lady Meres, it's really none of our business.

MERES: I still say that you should've been Empress. Not a glorified servant.

AKKADIA: I like being Esther's handmaiden. Besides, she's Empress now. The King loves her and that's what's important.

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- Esther: The Musical by Mark Ogden

PAPYRUS: (*falsetto*) I agree!

NILGAH: He loved Vashti, too, dear, but he banished her. Heaven knows where she is now.

MERES: Some say she's traveling abroad. Some say she's a broad traveling.

AKKADIA: Mother, let's go.

NILGAH: (*to HATACH*) Ink and eyeshadow.

HATACH: And some locusts -- chocolate-covered.

MERES: Ask her, would you? About her family? So many people would like to know.

AKKADIA: Goodbye!

PAPYRUS: (*falsetto*) Bye!

[They exit]

HATACH: (*worriedly*) Oh, crocodiles! This is terrible!

PAPYRUS: (*lustily, normal voice*) I can't stand it. She's so gorgeous.

HATACH: Lady Meres is the biggest scandal-monger in the Empire!

PAPYRUS: So? What's Esther got to hide?

[HATACH looks away nervously]

Wait a minute. She's got something to hide?

HATACH: Of course, not. It's just that ... that she's not royalty. Not even nobility! And the nobility are incensed.

PAPYRUS: Big deal. She's a commoner who got lucky. It gives everybody hope.

HATACH: Papyrus! They already think the King's turning his back on them. They helped him conquer the world and he slaps them in the face. Not to mention the fact that he drinks like a camel.

PAPYRUS: What is her background anyway?

HATACH: Papyrus Can you keep a secret?

PAPYRUS: Sure.

HATACH: So can I!

PAPYRUS: There is something fishy, isn't there?

HATACH: No! It's a sensitive issue, that's all. Esther's sensitive about it, too. And I don't want her upset. If you go snooping, if you upset her one tiny bit, you're fired.

PAPYRUS: Fine. I don't need to know. Altho' knowing her history might help in writing her history ...

HATACH: I'll write it myself!

PAPYRUS: Oh, boy -- that would really stink!

HATACH: Unfortunately ... you're right. So -- let's just say that her story begins when she enters the contest for Miss Queen of Persia. Let's just write the best part.

PAPYRUS: Okay. I can agree to that.

(slyly)

We'll just write the 'best' part

MUSICAL # 3A -- WITH PEN AND INK

HATACH:

WE HAVE A HEAVY RESPONSIBILITY

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- *Esther: The Musical* by Mark Ogden

TO DELIVER UP A MESSAGE TO FUTURITY.
WE'LL SEND AN OPEN LETTER

PAPYRUS:

A GREAT UNIVERSAL NOTE.

HATACH:

AND MAYBE SOMEDAY THE WORLD WILL SMILE AND SAYS
'WE'RE GLAD YOU WROTE

BOTH:

AND SURELY -
SOMEDAY THE WORLD WILL SMILE AND SAY,
'WE'RE GLAD YOU WROTEP

[Blackout]

Scene 3 -- ESTHER'S Chamber. *She is reading the Torah. A knock at the door. She quickly hides it under a pillow.*

ESTHER: Come in ...

HATACH: Good morning, Your Majesty ... What took you so long to answer my knock?
[She retrieves the Torah]

A girl who can read! It's unheard of! I wish I could.

ESTHER: Uncle Mordecai says that girls have brains, too.

HATACH: Well, they don't. At least, they shouldn't. What if the King knew?

ESTHER: You think he'd be angry?

HATACH: I don't know. But when he gets mad, he throws things. Like parties. Going-away parties. Don't forget about Vashti.

ESTHER: I know, Hatach.

HATACH: It's a side of the King I hope you never see.
(sliding the Torah under the bed)

So let's just keep this hidden, shall-

(discovering something else)

What in heaven's name!

(displaying a menorah)

ESTHER: It's a menorah. A symbol of hope. Uncle Mordecai gave it to me.

HATACH: It's a dead give-away, if you ask me. How many more skeletons are you hiding in here?

MUSICAL # 4 -- OUR LITTLE SECRET

ESTHER:

IT'S GOT TO BE OUR LITTLE SECRET.

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NO ONE MUST KNOW.
DON'T TELL A SOUL, OH PLEASE.
IT'S GOT TO BE OUR LITTLE SECRET
IF YOU'RE INCLINED
TO PUT MY MIND AT EASE.

IF YOU SOMEHOW SLIPPED,
IF YOU BLEW IT,
WE COULD BOTH GET SHIPPED OFF TO GREECE.
TRY TO BE TIGHT-LIPPED.
IF YOU DO IT,
WE'LL COME THRU' IT IN ONE PIECE.

IT'S GOT TO BE OUR LITTLE SECRET.
JUST YOU AND ME OUR LITTLE SECRET.
FORTUNATELY, OUR LITTLE SECRET ...

HATACH: Right, because Lady Meres has been nosing around.

ESTHER: Lady Meres! Who's she?

HATACH: An obnoxious busybody. A friend of Haman's.

ESTHER: Haman. I don't know why he makes me so nervous. Everyone else thinks he's charming.

HATACH: Too charming. Like he's up to something.

ESTHER: Maybe that's what they're saying about me, Hatach. I wish I could just tell everyone and get it over with.

HATACH: No, you don't. That's a very bad idea.

IT'S GONNA BE OUR LITTLE SECRET.
NEVER YOU FEAR.
YOUR LIFE IS DEAR TO ME.

I'M NOT AFRAID TO BE DEFIANT.
YOU WILL NEVER SEE ME BEND.
GIVE ME THE THIRD DEGREE OR GET VIOLENT,
I'LL BE SILENT TILL THE END.

BOTH:

IT'S GONNA BE OUR LITTLE SECRET.
JUST YOU AND ME OUR LITTLE SECRET.
FORTUNATELY, OUR LITTLE SECRET

HATACH:

CROSS MY HEART, HOPE TO DIE

ESTHER: (*picking up the menorah*)

UNTIL THE DAY
THERE'S NO OTHER WAY

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- **Esther: The Musical** by *Mark Ogden*

BUT TO SHOUT IT TO THE SKY
AND LET MY LITTLE SECRET FLY

[HATACH puts the menorah in a trunk and locks it]

BOTH:

AND LET OUR LITTLE SECRET FLY.

*[He tosses the key on top of the bed's canopy. **Lights dim**]*

Scene 4 -- *The Inner Court of the Imperial Palace. XERXES gives audience as HAMAN and ARTABANUS look on. SOLDIERS guard the door.*

ARTABANUS: *(condescendingly)* Mordecai, Minister of Trade, wishes audience. Do you so grant?

XERXES: I so grant.

[MORDECAI enters and bows respectfully]

MORDECAI: Greetings, Your Majesty. I bring a message from the Governor of Jerusalem, a message of gratitude for allowing them to rebuild their city and the great temple of Solomon which crowns it.

XERXES: I'm building a city of my own, you know -- Persepolis, the most magnificent capital in all the world with not just one temple but hundreds.

MORDECAI: Jerusalem only needs one, Your Majesty.

XERXES: Tell me more about this god Solomon.

MORDECAI: Oh, we wasn't a god, Your Majesty. He was a King like yourself.

XERXES: And they name their temple after him? Why not after me?

ARTABANUS: Yes, why not?

HAMAN: Too good for us?

MORDECAI: Your Excellencies, the temple doesn't honor Solomon. Solomon had it built to honor Jehovah, the God of Israel.

HAMAN: And what of our gods, our Persian gods?

XERXES: Now, Haman, don't press it. Father always said that people should be allowed to worship however they want

ARTABANUS: As long as they pay their tributes.

HAMAN: And remain loyal to the Empire.

XERXES: Well, of course! But otherwise, I try to be tolerant. I could easily compete with your Solomon, but I'm not up to challenging the gods. At least not yet.

MUSICAL #5 -- IMMORTAL

WHO CAN DENY THAT I AM THE MIGHTIEST KING IN THE WORLD?
YES, I CONFESS I POSSESS EV'RY BLESSED THING IN THE WORLD.

I RULE A VAST EMPIRE FROM SEA TO SEA TO SEA,

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- *Esther: The Musical* by Mark Ogden

BUT THERE IS SOMETHING HIGHER I DESIRE TO BE

ARTABANUS: And what is that, Your Worship?

XERXES: Immortal!

HAMAN: Immortal?

XERXES:

I WANT TO RULE MAGNIFICENTLY.
ONLY A FOOL WOULD MISS THIS OPPORTUNITY.
IF I WORK INTENTLY,
THE SCHOLARS WILL LIST ME.
AND I'LL SCORE A GLORIOUS ENTRY
IN THE WHO'S WHO OF HIST'RY.

LET ME REIGN MEMORABLY
SO I CAN GAIN ETERNAL POPULARITY.
FORKING OUT MILLIONS
WILL NEVER UPSET ME.
WHY, I'M THRILLED TO BUILD PAVILLIONS
TILL THEY NEVER FORGET ME.

IMMORTAL! IMMORTAL!
EVER REMEMBER'D AND NEVER FORGOT.
REMEMBER'D A LOT.
IMMORTAL.

ARTABANUS: Very wise, Your Majesty. Building monuments is an excellent way.

HAMAN: Conquering Greece would be better.

XERXES: Haman, I've told you -- Greece is a toy I'm tired of playing with! Don't bring it up again!

ARTABANUS: (*conspiratorially*) His Majesty is right, Haman. Persepolis is where we should be pouring our money.

(*To XERXES*)

More wine?

[*XERXES nods; ARTABANUS pours.*]

His Majesty is tired of making war. He needs a nice place to relax. Away from the bustle of the army. Away from it all.

HAMAN: (*understanding*) Yes, you're right.

ARTABANUS: By the way have you seen the plans for his Mausoleum (funeral pyramid)? It's going to be spectacular!

HAMAN: (*sinisterly*) Yes, it is.

XERXES: (*oblivious*) And the plans for the Hanging Gardens? Now that will be a sight!

I WANT TO LIVE EXTRAVAGANTLY.
WON'T TIME FORGIVE A BIT OF ECCENTRICITY?
IT FEELS SO GREAT TO HAVE FOLKS LOOK UP AT YOU

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- Esther: The Musical by Mark Ogden

I SUSPECT I WILL ERECT A MODEST NINETY-FOOT STATUE.
IMMORTAL! IMMORTAL!
EVER REMEMBER'D AND NEVER FORGOT.
REMEMBER'D A LOT.
IMMORTAL!

ALL:

FOREVER AND EVER REMEMBER'D.
ETERNAL, IMMORTAL!
[Tableau, applause]

ARTABANUS: Impressive, Your Majesty.

HAMAN: Now shall we look at those tax reports?

XERXES: No, I'm going to the Harem. I promised Esther I be back in two hours.

MORDECAI: How is your beautiful bride, Excellency?

XERXES: Radiant! Absolutely radiant! ... I have that effect on women.

[He exits followed by the SOLDIERS]

MORDECAI: Thank you, 'Gentlemen' ...

ARTABANUS: *(derisively)* It was nothing.

HAMAN: Oh, Mordecai. I understand someone tried to burn down your Synagogue.

MORDECAI: Fortunately, it was saved in time.

ARTABANUS: Your have our deepest regrets.

MORDECAI: That it was saved?

HAMAN: Mordecai, is everything a threat?

MORDECAI: Become a Jew -- and you'll have your answer.

[He exits]

HAMAN: Minister of Trade. Leader of the Jews. Do you know how rich he is?

ARTABANUS: No ...

HAMAN: Neither do I, but we ought to find out.

ARTABANUS: And make sure the Emperor is getting his fair share.

(Handing HAMAN a goblet)

We must always consider the Emperor. Watch out for him.

HAMAN: Take care of him ...

ARTABANUS: *(proposing a toast)* Immortality to Xerxes!

HAMAN: *(sitting on the throne, imitating)* 'Greece is a toy I'm tired of playing with! Don't bring it up again!
(rising, himself)

If things go as planned, Your Senility, I won't have to

MUSICL # 6 -- IN SPITE OF...

WHEN I SUCCEED,
WHEN I BREAK THRU'

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- *Esther: The Musical* by Mark Ogden

AND GAIN CONTROL AND ROLL RIGHT OVER YOU...

ARTABANUS:

WHEN YOU TAKE CHARGE
AND STAKE YOUR CLAIM,
WHEN YOU ENLARGE YOUR SPHERE OF FORTUNE AND FAME...

HAMAN:

MY 'FAITHFUL' FRIEND,
I'M SURE YOU KNOW IT -
YOU'RE THE ONE, YOU'RE THE ONE
TO WHOM I'LL NEVER OWE IT!
WHEN I SUCCEED, IT'S GONNA BE IN SPITE OF...

ARTABANUS:

WHEN YOU SUCCEED,
WHEN YOU PREVAIL,

HAMAN:

WHEN SOUVENIRS OF LITTLE ME GO ON SALE...

ARTABANUS:

WHEN CRITICS RAVE,
WHEN PEOPLE CHEER,
WHEN WE'VE GOT GOLD AND SILVER CLEAR UP TO HERE...

BOTH:

MY FICKLE FRIENDS,
JUST TRY AND HURT ME.
DO ALL YOU CAN.
I'VE GOT A FAN WHO NEVER WILL DESERT ME.
WHEN WE SUCCEED,
IT'S GONNA BE IN SPITE OF YOU-KNOW-WHO.
WHEN I SUCEED,
IT'S GONNA BE IN SPITE OF...
GUESS!

[Blackout]

Scene 3 -- *The Home of Lady Meres. She, NILGAH and AKKADIA arrive with packages.*

MERES: Ugh! The marketplace was so crowded.

NILGAH: All those people -- and I didn't recognize anyone.

MERES: Worse than that -- no one recognized us! Oh, look at my new patio chairs. I got them at a confiscation sale.

NILGAH: Lovely.

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- Esther: The Musical by Mark Ogden

AKKADIA: Oh, no! We forgot the ink. I'll have to go back.

MERES: Unaccompanied?

NILGAH: Absolutely not!

AKKADIA: Mother, I'm not a child.

NILGAH: You'll do as I say till you get married and have a husband to protect you.

MERES: And then you'll do as he says.

AKKADIA: Suppose I never get married -- and work for Esther the rest of my life?

NILGAH: Don't be silly. Your year of royal service will be up in three months and then we're finding you a husband.

MERES: And a catch you'll be, Akkadia: the beautiful daughter of a wealthy widow of a noble family. They'll come flocking all right. Nilgah, I insist you let me help make the match.

AKKADIA: I think I should decide.

NILGAH: Where do you get these ideas?

MERES: Nilgah! I know just the man! Haman!

AKKADIA: Haman!

NILGAH: He's already married.

MERES: So? So was the King. Besides, I've met Haman's first wife and she's sagging everywhere. He needs someone new. And I hear he's looking.

AKKADIA: That's disgusting.

NILGAH: Really, Lasivia.

MERES: But he's so handsome. And rich! And in the not-too-distant future he's going to be Emperor.

NILGAH: How do you know that?

MERES: There are rumors and rumblings. But the point is: Akkadia could be Empress! Nilgah, your daughter could be Empress!

AKKADIA: Mother, make her stop.

MERES: If only I had a daughter. If only I were two or three years younger. The Empress has always been a Persian Aryan princess, a blonde girl -not some dark-eyed vixen. How dare he choose a foreigner, an outsider!

AKKADIA: That's it. Goodbye.

[She exits]

NILGAH: Akkadia, wait! Lasivia, can't you ever shut up?

[She follows]

MERES: Fools! Ev'ryone knows Xerxes won't last. Ev'ryone knows it's Haman who's got his finger on the pulse of the Empire.

MUSICAL #7 -- HE'S A MAN TO WATCH

HE'S A MAN
WHO KNOWS WHERE HE'S GOIN',
MOVIN' UP NOTCH BY NOTCH.
HE'S GOT A PLAN.

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- *Esther: The Musical* by Mark Ogden

NOW HIS POWER IS GROWIN
HE'S A MAN TO WATCH.

HIS AMBITION HAS NO LIMIT.
RECOGNITION -- YOU'D BETTER GIVE HIM IT.
HE EATS UP SMALLER MEN LIKE THEY WERE HORS D'OEURVES.
HE'S GONNA GET WHAT HE DESERVES.

A REAL GO-GETTER.
A GUY WHO'S BEEN THERE.
HE'S NOT A QUITTER.
HE'LL JUST HANG IN THERE.

HE'S OUT FOR GLAMOR,
FOR FORTUNE AND FAME.
JUST HEAR THE CLAMOR
AS PEOPLE STAMMER HIS NAME.

HEY, MAN! HEY, MAN!
MOVIN' UP NOTCH BY NOTCH -
HE'S A MAN TO WATCH ...

[Applause. Crossfade. Special on HAMAN]

HAMAN:

OF COURSE, IT PAYS TO BE CAUTIOUS.
I'VE PUSHED A BIT IN THE PAST.
THO' BIDING MY TIME MAKES ME NAUSEOUS,
IT'S FOLLY TO MOVE TOO FAST

OH, WHEN I SUCCEED,
WHEN I GO FAR,
WHEN I BECOME A SUPERSTAR,
YOU'LL CLAMOR FOR MY AUTOGRAPH
AND I'LL IGNORE YOU AS I LAUGH THE LAST LAUGH.

MY FOOLISH FRIENDS,
YOU'LL SAY YOU KNEW ME WAY BACK THEN,
WAY BACK WHEN YOU TRIED TO SCREW (or UNDO) ME!
WHEN I SUCCEED,
IT'S GONNA BE IN SPITE OF YOU-KNOW-WHO.
WHEN I SUCCEED, IT'S GONNA BE IN SPITE OF GUESS!

[Blackout]

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- *Esther: The Musical* by Mark Ogden

Scene 6 -- *Esther's Suite. She and XERXES are having a sumptuous lunch. HATACH serves.]*

XERXES: A marvelous meal, Esther! Whenever I think I've tried everything, you come up with something new. What did you say these were?

ESTHER: Uh -- bagels.

XERXES: Bagels! They're delicious. They're -- chewy.

ESTHER: Good. I like seeing you happy. Hatach, has Akkadia come back yet?

HATACH: Not yet.

XERXES: Such a girl! Beautiful, cheerful, clever. Everything a wife should be.

ESTHER: So you like clever girls.

XERXES: Well -- not too clever. A lot of women are nothing but schemers. Now you -- you couldn't keep a secret if you tried. You're beautiful and cheerful and clever. Everything a wife should be. And nothing more.

ESTHER: Have you ever known a girl who could read?

[HATACH drops a platter.]

XERXES: Read? Oh, never. Only men read.

ESTHER: Right, of course.

HATACH: Shall I bring dessert?

XERXES: After all this?

HATACH: It's very special, Your Majesty. It's snow! Flavored with honey!

ESTHER: Or would you rather not?

XERXES: Bring it Bring it!

[HATACH EXITS.]

(of the bagels)

Where did you say these were from?

ESTHER: *(apprehensive)* Oh, we made them right here.

XERXES: No, I mean -- what nationality are they?

ESTHER: Nationality? Well -- it's an old recipe from Palestine.

XERXES: Palestine? Oh, yes! That's just north of Egypt. I love Egypt. I smashed a revolt there once. Kept them in the Empire.

ESTHER: Yes, you've mentioned that ...

HATACH: *(entering chagrined)* Your Majesty, it -- it melted. I don't know why. It was frozen when lunch started and the girls have been fanning it.

XERXES: Never mind. I'm full anyway. And I've got get back to the Inner Court. Haman has the tax reports.

ESTHER: He's very efficient, isn't he?

XERXES: I couldn't rule the Empire without him.

[Enter AKKADIA hurriedly with a brightly wrapped package]

AKKADIA: Your Majesty, I'm sorry I'm late.

ESTHER: Look, how pretty! Thank you, Akkadia.

(to XERXES)

It's for you.

XERXES: For me?

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- *Esther: The Musical* by Mark Ogden

[He opens it and pulls out a bejeweled goblet.]

Oh, Esther!

ESTHER: So you'll think of me whenever you're thirsty.

AKKADIA: And it's engraved ...

XERXES: (*joking*) 'To Whom it may concern ... 'To the Emperor of my Heart from the Girl of your Vision'. I love it! Quick! Fill it up!

[HATACH obeys]

'To the Girl of My Vision'.

[He drinks]

I can't believe you're finally here. Three years I spent looking. Three years of disappointment and frustration.

MUSICAL # 8 -- SHE IS REAL

I USED TO CLOSE MY EYES
AND PICTURE IN MY MIND
A MOST DISARMING, CHARMING GIRL,
THE PEARL I LONGED TO FIND.

I'D SEE HER SHINING THERE
THRU' A VEIL OF MIST --
SO LOVELY AND FAIR I JUST HAD TO STARE,
SO RADIANT AND RARE SHE COIULD NOT EXIST

BUT SHE IS REAL,
SOMEONE THAT I CAN TOUCH,
WHOSE LOVE I CAN FEEL,
SOMEONE TENDER AND WARM
I CAN HOLD IN MY ARMS,
A FANTASY COME TRUE.

AND I'LL REVEAL
THE EXCITEMENT MY TREMBLING HANDS CAN'T CONCEAL --
I HAVE FOUND HER!
AND I CAN'T DESCRIBE THE THRILL
TO KNOW THAT SHE IS REALLY YOU.

[He takes her hand and they walk onstage. He kisses her tenderly]

AKKADIA: Oh, Hatach, can you imagine a more perfect couple: never a quarrel, never a disagreement.

HATACH: Not so far ...

AKKADIA: That's what I want: understanding, fidelity, complete honesty. If I can't have that, I won't get married. I won't settle for anything less.

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- *Esther: The Musical* by Mark Ogden

HATACH: Well, you're young ...

[He exits.]

AKKADIA: *(shaking off her perplexity)*

SEE THE DIAMOND ON HER FINGER,
SHINING BRIGHTLY, NEVER DIM.
SEE EV'RY DREAM SHE'S EVER DREAMED COME TRUE
BECAUSE OF HIM, BECAUSE OF HIM.

[Enter PAPHYRUS unobserved, staring dreamily]

SEE THE WAY HIS KISSES LINGER
AS THE FIRES WITHIN HIM STIR.
SEE EV'RY DREAM HE'S EVER DREAMED COME TRUE
BECAUSE OF HER, BECAUSE OF HER.

AND IN THIS CRAZY WORLD IT STILL CAN HAPPEN.
TRUE LOVE HAS NOT BECOME PASSE.
THO' THERE'S NO GUARANTEE
THAT LOVE WILL COME TO ME
IN THEIR EYES I SEE A CHANCE THAT IT MAY.

SEE THE WAY HIS FACE IS GLOWING.
HE HOLDS HER LIKE A PRECIOUS GEM.
AND SOMEHOW I CAN STILL BELIEVE IN LOVE
BECAUSE OF THEM, BECAUSE OF THEM.

XERXES:

AND I'LL REVEAL
THE EXCITEMENT MY TREMBLING HANDS CAN'T CONCEAL.
I HAVE FOUND HER!
AND I CAN'T DESCRIBE THE THRILL
TO KNOW THAT SHE IS REALLY YOU!

[Applause. XERXES and ESTHER exit.]

PAPHYRUS: *(normal voice)* Akkadia, I've got to tell you something.

AKKADIA: Your voice!

PAPHYRUS: I'm not what you think I am.

AKKADIA: What are you?

PAPHYRUS: If I tell you, will you promise not to tell anyone?

AKKADIA: No.

PAPHYRUS: Then I can't ... But if I don't, I'll pop.

AKKADIA: Pop?

PAPHYRUS: Okay, I'll tell you, but-

MUSICAL #8a OUR LITTLE SECRET (REPRISE)

IT'S GOT TO BE OUR LITTLE SECRET.
NO ONE MUST KNOW.
DON'T TELL A SOUL, OH, PLEASE
IF YOU LET IT OUT, YOU'D REGRET IT.
AND MY HEART NO DOUBT WOULD ACHE.
YES, IT WOULD REALLY HURT IF YOU SAID IT,
BUT THE CHANCE I'VE GOT TO TAKE.

AKKADIA: Well?

PAPYRUS: I'm not a eunuch. I'm a normal, healthy Babylonian male forced to shave his legs, talk soprano and walk like an Egyptian. The real me is virile and courageous.

AKKADIA: I think I'd better go.

PAPYRUS: The real me thinks you're the most beautiful, most desirable woman in the world.

AKKADIA: Take a number.

PAPYRUS: I know. You've got a million admirers. But how many of them are risking bodily harm to be near you?

AKKADIA: You're not a eunuch? And you've been prowling around the Harem?

PAPYRUS: (*falsetto*) No!

AKKADIA: You're in deep trouble.

PAPYRUS: Akkadia, please. Give me a chance. At least a chance to escape.

AKKADIA: I should report you this instant.

PAPYRUS: Please, please, don't.

AKKADIA: But I won't.

PAPYRUS: I'll go away. Far away! And never come back ... You won't? ... Why?

AKKADIA: Because I feel sorry for Hatach.

PAPYRUS: Hatach!

AKKADIA: Well, how would you like to be a eunuch?

PAPYRUS: That's my whole point.

AKKADIA: But you're going to have to move.

PAPYRUS: Absolutely. I have to move ... But I can't.

AKKADIA: Why?

PAPYRUS: Because Hatach and I are writing a book, a book about Esther that was supposed to be her wedding present. But he's such a lousy writer -- and I such a good one -- that he smuggled me in here.

AKKADIA: I see.

PAPYRUS: Really?

AKKADIA: Yes, except -- what a strange gift. A book? What's she gonna do with a book?

PAPYRUS: Read it?

AKKADIA: She can read?

BOTH: She can read!

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- *Esther: The Musical* by Mark Ogden

AKKADIA: Oh, my goodness! Maybe she'll teach me. Thank you, Papyrus.

PAPYRUS: No, thank you! Thank you! I'll never forget this. My children will never forget this. Possibly our children.

AKKADIA: Don't press your luck, pal. Don't forget I hold your future in my hands.

PAPYRUS: That's a very pleasant thought.

AKKADIA: This is amazing!

[She exits]

PAPYRUS: *(joyously)* Yes!

[Blackout]

Scene 7 -- The King's Gate. *MORDECAI is inspecting incoming shipments.*

JOZADAK: *(with a shipping order)* I inspected the caravan from Parthia. There are supposed to be 100 camels. There are only 99.

MORDECAI: Well, we know what they had for supper!

[Enter LEAH, MORDECAI'S wife with a clay tureen]

LEAH: Mordecai, I came to tell you something's wrong.

MORDECAI: What's happened?

LEAH: Nothing. But something's going to. I woke up this morning with a premonition.

MORDECAI: That's better than a headache.

LEAH: Mordecai, listen to me. Drop ev'rything and come right home.

MORDECAI: Leah, I'm working.

LEAH: I don't care. Today is not a good day. That's why I brought this.

MORDECAI: Don't tell me ...

JOZADAK: Chicken soup?

(Drooling)

Oh, boy!

MORDECAI: I married a cliché.

LEAH: I wish it could cure ev'rything.

MORDECAI: Well, it can!

(To JOZADAK)

Would you like some?

JOZADAK: Yes, thank you.

[He grabs the tureen and goes to one side to eat]

MORDECAI: Aw, let him have it. Maybe it'll cure his homesickness.

[Enter two Jewish women, HANNAH and JUDITH]

HANNAH: Shalom, Rabbi.

MORDECAI: Good afternoon, ladies.

LEAH: They're starting to rebuild the Synagogue.

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- *Esther: The Musical* by Mark Ogden

MORDECAI: I know.

LEAH: I still say you should go to the King.

MORDECAI: Leah, he won't solve the problem. He'll just put guards all around it. Persian guards around every synagogue -- is that what you want?

LEAH: Well, it's better than having them burned to the ground. Let's at least send a message to Esther.

MORDECAI: Leah! Shh! Do you want them to hear? We've got to keep it a secret.

LEAH: But Mordecai, isn't that why we let her go? So she could help in times of crisis?

HANNAH: Oh, Leah, how's your daughter Haddassah?

(To JUDITH)

That's the girl they adopted.

LEAH: We miss her very much.

HANNAH: How does she like Jerusalem?

MORDECAI: Ladies, I'm sorry. I'm very busy.

HANNAH: *(miffed)* Oh, of course. Sorry to interrupt.

[They go of to one side]

LEAH: I hate this, Mordecai -- lying to our friends.

MORDECAI: We'll discuss it at home.

LEAH: Fine. Let's go.

MORDECAI: Leah, I'm working.

LEAH: Mordecai, something terrible

MORDECAI: Leah, we can't go running home ev'ry time we feel threatened. We're always threatened!

MUSICAL #9 -- NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO

NO MATTER WHAT WE DO
IT'S ALWAYS THE SAME.
THEY FIND OUT YOU'RE A JEW
AND THEN YOU HAVE NO OTHER NAME.

LEAH:

AND IF YOUR LIFE IS HUMBLE, THEY HATE YOUR BEING POOR.

MORDECAI:

AND IF YOU'RE RICH, THEN EV'RYBODY HATES YOU EVEN MORE.

HANNAH: *(nosing in)*

NO MATTER HOW WE GROW
OR WHAT WE ACHIEVE

JOZADAK:

EV'RYWHERE WE GO
SOMEBODY WANTS US TO LEAVE.

JUDITH:

AND IF WE AREN'T WILLING TO MOVE TO A NEW LAND --

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- *Esther: The Musical* by Mark Ogden

MORDECAI:

IT ALWAYS SEEMS THAT KILLING IS WHAT HEATHEN GODS DEMAND.

WOMEN:

SORROW IS ALL THAT WE KNOW.

MAYBE TOMORROW WE'LL SEE THE RAINBOW WE'VE WAITED FOR.

THE TIME WHEN THE GOD OF ALL MEN

WILL END THE DEARTH OF PEACE ON EARTH FOREVERMORE.

JOZADAK:

THE LION AND THE LAMB WILL LIE TOGETHER.

HANNAH & JOZADAK:

THE EAGLE AND THE DOVE WILL FLY LIKE BIRDS OF A FEATHER.

LEAH:

IT WILL BE A PEACEFUL AND SERENE TIME.

FULL OF LOVE! FULL OF JOY!

MORDECAI:

BUT IN THE MEANTIME ...

ALL:

NO MATTER HOW WE TRY,

WE CAN'T LIFT THE CURSE.

WE HOPE THE HATE WILL DIE

AND YET IT ONLY GETS WORSE.

LEAH:

AND IF YOU TRY TO LOVE THEM, THEY TREAT YOU WITH DISDAIN.

MORDECAI:

AND IF YOU HATE THEM BACK, YOU ONLY SUFFER DEEPER PAIN.

ALL:

NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO.

NO MATTER WHAT YOU DO

JOZADAK: Look! Lord Haman's coming!

MORDECAI: That devil! Go home, Leah! Hurry!

[HANNAH, JUDITH and JOZADAK scurry off. LEAH is too slow. HAMAN bursts in followed by ARTABANUS and the CAPTAIN of the Guard]

MORDECAI: Greetings, 'Gentlemen'.

HAMAN: That's no greeting, Mordecai.

ARTABANUS: You know, Lord Minister of Trade, some months ago His Majesty the Emperor ordered all of his subjects to show our beloved Prime Minister the proper deference by bowing down before him, something like this.

[He demonstrates]

But we've noticed that you never bow to Lord Haman.

LEAH: He can't. He has a bad back.

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- Esther: The Musical by Mark Ogden

MORDECAI: Leah! Stay out of this.=

ARTABANUS: Then kneel.

LEAH: Bad knees.

HAMAN: Have you forgotten your place, Mordecai?

LEAH: Bad memory.

CAPTAIN: Silence, woman!

[She retreats to one side]

ARTABANUS: Now please, be good enough to --

[ALL bow. MORDECAI stands defiantly.]

MUSICAL # 10 -- JEWS

YOU, JEW, WHAT AM I VIEWING?

DO I DETECT SOME DISRESPECT IN WHAT YOU'RE DOING?

CAPTAIN:

YOU, JEW, IT'S NOT AMUSING.

ISN'T IT CLEAR -- OR CAN'T YOU HEAR?

ARTABANUS:

ARE YOU REFUSING?

MORDECAI: I bow only to the Emperor -- because of his tolerance ... and to God Almighty.

ARTABANUS: But that's so limiting.

CAPTAIN: And inconsiderate.

HAMAN: And in light of His Majesty's command -- treasonous.

CAPTAIN:

LOOK, JEW, YOU'RE DISOBEYING.

JUST SMILE AND NOD.

ARTABANUS:

PRETEND HE'S GOD AND THAT YOU'RE PRAYING.

MORDECAI: Never!

HAMAN, ARTABANUS & CAPTAIN:

JEWS, JEWS, WHY WOULD GOD CHOOSE YOU?

WHY CAN'T YOU SEE THAT EVEN HE JUST WANTS TO USE YOU?

JEWS, JEWS, IT'S SO CONFUSING.

YOUR GREAT WISE GOD MUST BE A FRAUD.

LOOK WHO HE'S CHOOSING!

[LEAH, HANNAH and JUDITH have clustered together]

WOMEN:

NO MATTER HOW WE TRY,

WE CAN'T LIFT THE CURSE.

HAMAN: Bow, Mordecai.

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- *Esther: The Musical* by Mark Ogden

WOMEN:

WE HOPE THE HATE WILL DIE
AND YET IT ONLY GETS WORSE.

HAMAN: Bow I say!

[The CAPTAIN crosses behind MORDECAI]

WOMEN:

AND IF YOU TRY TO LOVE THEM, THEY TREAT YOU WITH DISDAIN.
AND IF YOU HATE THEM BACK, YOU ONLY SUFFER DEEPER PAIN.

HAMAN:

THIS IS YOUR FINAL WARNING.
BOW DOWN TO ME
OR YOU WON'T SEE TOMORROW MORNING!

MORDECAI: Never'

ARTABANUS: Stubborn fool!

[At HAMAN'S command the CAPTAIN bashes MORDECAI across the neck. He crumples]

HAMAN: Traitor!

[They exit quickly. LEAH rushes to MORDECAI as the lights dim]

Scene 8 -- The Inner Court. GUARDS at the door. XERXES on his throne listens to HAMAN and ARTABANUS.

HAMAN: I tell you, Xerxes, these Jews are treasonous!

ARTABANUS: We've been investigating -- and remember those two guards who were plotting to assassinate you?

XERXES: Of course, I remember. My own bodyguards!

HAMAN: Well, they weren't acting on their own. They were hired!

ARTABANUS: We found the blood money hidden in the barracks. And do you know how they were paid?
Partly in Persian gold

HAMAN: But mostly in Hebrew silver!

XERXES: Hebrew silver! But what does that have to do with these Jews?

ARTABANUS: The Hebrews are Jews, Your Majesty.

HAMAN: When your grandfather conquered Palestine, the Jewish homeland, and destroyed their temple --

ARTABANUS: The Temple of Solomon--

HAMAN: They were taken as slaves and scattered thru'out the Empire.

ARTABANUS: Scattered but not integrated. They keep to themselves and refused to be assimilated.

HAMAN: They're wealthy tho'. Into merchantry and money-lending.

ARTABANUS: But they won't recognize the gods of Persia. Actually, they hate Persia.

HAMAN: As soon as their temple's finished, they're planning to secede from the Empire.

XERXES: What!

ARTABANUS: *(pushing the right button)* Secede from the Empire just like Egypt!

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- *Esther: The Musical* by Mark Ogden

XERXES: Like Egypt? Never!

HAMAN: And then, when we've sent armies to Palestine, seditious bands of Jews ev'rywhere else will start uprisings. And how could we deal with that!

XERXES: Artabanus, my cup is empty.

[He fills it. XERXES drains it]

HAMAN: It's a conspiracy, Xerxes, and we've got to stop them.

XERXES: What do you suggest?

ARTABANUS: Your Majesty, we've come for your advice

HAMAN: Right now they're relatively weak, not large in number

XERXES: Well, we've got to get rid of them.

HAMAN: Rid of them -- completely.

ARTABANUS: That's rather extreme, Your Majesty, but-

(Railroading)

You're absolutely right. You're always right.

XERXES: I just don't want another Egypt!

ARTABANUS: Very well, Your Majesty, consider it done.

HAMAN: The only thing we'll need -- is your ring to seal the decree.

XERXES: Decree? You've already written -

ARTABANUS: No, Your Majesty, we've merely sketched out some preliminary plans.

XERXES: Well, let me see it.

[ARTABANUS produces the Decree]

(Glancing cursorily, then handing it back)

All right, I've seen it ... My cup is empty.

ARTABANUS: So it is.

[He fills it.]

XERXES: *(displaying the goblet)* Isn't this exquisite? Esther gave it to me -- as a surprise.

HAMAN: Ev'ryone loves a surprise.

XERXES: A toast. To Persia! May she ever prosper.

ARTABANUS: To the King's health --

HAMAN: And the destruction of his enemies!

[They clink cups.]

ARTABANUS: All we need now, Your Majesty, is your ring ...

XERXES: *(removing it)* Oh, yes, my ring.

[They freeze. Enter HATACH and PAPYRUS with a scroll]

HATACH: Decree, decree, decree! I've told you -- I don't want to hear about it.

PAPYRUS: It's outrageous!

HATACH: Put that scroll away, Papyrus. We're not going to write about it either!

PAPYRUS: I already have! It's our responsibility to report this, too.

HATACH: Our only responsibility is to serve Esther. And it has nothing to do with her!

PAPYRUS: Are you going to listen or not?

HATACH: Read! Read!

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- *Esther: The Musical* by Mark Ogden

PAPYRUS: ‘Then were the King’s scribes called and there was written according to all that Haman commanded. And letters were sent to all the King’s provinces, to every people after their language, in the name of King Xerxes and sealed with his ring, to destroy, to kill and cause to perish, all Jews, both young and old, women and little children. And according to Persian law even the King himself could not revoke a decree that was sealed with his ring’.

HATACH: All Jews? Women and little children? You’re right, Papyrus, we’ve got to do something.

[He exits]

PAPYRUS: *(looking back at the Inner Court)* ‘And the King and Haman sat down to drink, but the city of Susa was perplexed!

[Special up on ESTHER]

MUSICAL #11 -- I WANT TO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN

ESTHER:

I FEEL AS IF I’M DRIFTING LIKE A BAUBLE IN AN OCEAN
AND EV’RYTHING IS FLOWING ‘OUND ABOUT ME.
I’M SMACKDAB IN THE MIDDLE OF A MARVELOUS COMMOTION,
BUT EV’RYTHING IS GOING ON WITHOUT ME.

THERE ARE THREE KINDS OF PEOPLE I’VE HEARD IT SAID:
THOSE WHO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN AND FORGE AHEAD.
WITH THE SECOND KIND OF PEOPLE IT’S JUST REVERSED.
THEY SIT ON THE SIDELINES AND WATCH THE FIRST.

BUT THE THIRD KIND OF PEOPLE ARE THE WORST
IN MANY WAYS-WANDERING AROUND IN A DAZE,
IN A LACKADAISICAL HAZE

I DON’T WANT TO BE ONE
OF THE ONES WHO JUST WATCH
WHO JUST SIT ON THE SIDE TILL THEIR CHANCE IS GONE.
I DON’T WANT TO BE ONE OF THE ONES
WHO WONDER WHAT WENT ON.

I DON’T WANT TO BE ONE
OF THE ONES WHO JUST WATCH,
WHO RETREAT WEHN THEY MIGHT JUST AS WELL ADVANCE.
I DON’T WANT TO BE ONE OF THE ONES
WHO LEAVE THEIR LIVES TO CHANCE.

I WANT TO MAKE THINGS HAPPEN.

PERUSAL SCRIPT -- Esther: The Musical by Mark Ogden

I WANT TO MAKE A DIFFERENCE.
I WANT TO DO SOMETHING NOW!
BUT WHAT? BUT HOW?

[Slow dim. End of Act I]

24 more pages contained in Act Two