

Esther – A Semi-Staged Musical Cantata by Paul J Burrell

Synopsis

Xerxes is King of the massive Persian Empire and he wants people to know it! In order to display his power to the world, he holds a celebration in honour of himself which culminates in a great banquet. Here he summons his wife, Vashti, who refuses to come just to show her beauty to the King's nobles and Lords. The King (greatly embarrassed by such wilful disobedience) is advised to banish her since she may set a bad example to other women. This he does, but after a short time he becomes lovesick and decides to find another wife (by audition).

Esther, whose parents have died, is being looked after by her cousin Mordecai. He urges her to go to the palace in the hope that she might be chosen. Out of thousands of girls, finally King Xerxes chooses Esther. Shortly afterwards Mordecai foils a plot to kill Xerxes. This is recorded in the King's chronicles.

Meanwhile an ambitious tyrant, Haman, has gained rapid promotion. He wants people to know his new-found authority and requires everyone to bow down worshipfully as he passes. Mordecai refuses. When Haman discovers this he becomes intent, not only on destroying Mordecai but also the whole of his race, the Jews. Haman casts lots (Purim) to decide on which day the mass murder will take place.

When Mordecai discovers this plan he writes to Queen Esther stating that she is the one who must plead to the King for her people. Esther has not been invited to be in the King's presence for a whole month. She risks her own life in going to see the King since it is a capital offence to approach his inner chamber without first being called. Thankfully Xerxes is so pleased to see her that he offers her up to half his Kingdom. All she asks is that both Haman and the King come for a meal with her that very evening. The King agrees. Haman boasts ecstatically about this privilege to his wife (Zeresh) and his friends. Later at the meal Esther's only request is that they meet together again the following night. As Haman leaves he notes that Mordecai still does not bow down to him, and on the advice of his wife, builds a gallows for him.

That evening the King cannot sleep. He commands that the Chronicles of his reign be read out. When he hears a section naming Mordecai as the one who saved him from treason he discovers that nothing has been done to reward him. Xerxes insists that the matter be set to rights and enquires as to who is in the court. Haman has just arrived to request the death of Mordecai on his newly built gallows. Haman presumes that he is the one to be honoured but is devastated to find that it is Mordecai. Haman is commanded by the King to lead Mordecai through the streets and to proclaim his great honour!

Things get even worse for Haman when, at that evening's meal Esther reveals that he seeks to destroy all the Jewish people. The King is furious and temporarily leaves the room. Haman had not realised Esther was Jewish and tries to retrieve the situation by pleading vigorously and holding on to her. When the King returns he clearly thinks that Haman is up to something else! Haman is sent to hang on the gallows he had prepared for Mordecai. Mordecai himself is given Haman's position and possessions.

Since Haman's decree had the King's signature, it is irrevocable. Xerxes gives Esther and Mordecai permission to issue another edict allowing the Jews to defend themselves against all aggression. This they do successfully throughout the Empire. At the end they hold a great feast known as Purim to commemorate their victory and the triumph of good over evil.

CHARACTERS

(Queen) Esther - Scenes 3b, 5a, 7, 8a, 11 & 12. Songs - 'Real in My Life' and 'In Your Arms'

Mordecai (Guardian and older cousin of Esther) - Scenes 3b, 5a, 6, 7. Song - 'The Promise'

King Xerxes (King of the Persians) - Scenes 1, 2a, 3a, 5a, 8a, 9, 11, 12. Song - 'Who Do You Think You Are?'

Queen Vashti (First wife of Xerxes) - Scene 2b. Song - 'Who Do You Think You Are?'

Haman (Ambitious courtier) - Scene 5b, 6, 8b, 10, 11. Songs 'The Palms of Our Hands', 'Quite Forgotten'

Zeresh (Wife of Haman) - Scene 5b, 8b, 10. Song 'The Palms of Our Hands'

Memucan (Chief Advisor to King Xerxes) - Scenes 1, 2a, 3a, *and possibly 11 and 12*

Harbona (Court Eunuch) - Scene 2b, 4, 8a, 11, 12

Narrator to King Xerxes (reader - could be one of the courtiers *see below*) - Scene 9 and possibly other scenes involving King Xerxes

Queen Vashti's **two friends** (women) Scene 2b (could also be Friends of Zeresh and Haman - Scene 8b (*see below*))

King Xerxes **two courtiers/court officials** (men) With Xerxes in all scenes esp. the end of 10 - but could just be Memucan and Harbona.

Friends of Zeresh and Haman (2 women and/or two men) - Scene 8b

Songs '*The Bigger You Are, The Harder You Fall*' and '*I Will Fly Like The Eagle*' could be sung by one of the main characters or by (an) auditioned soloist(s)

The original Hebrew name for Esther was Hadassah

The original Hebrew name for Xerxes was Ahasuerus

Esther

Scene 1

The Court of the Palace of King Xerxes.

Regal fanfare.....

Xerxes Er.....excuse meOi(*music stops*) Would you mind not making that dreadful racket just for a minute, thank you(*clears his throat*).

I am Xerxes, the great King, the only King of the entire Persian Empire, the King of 127 countries, the King of this big and far reaching earth.

I have been reading about myself, ... a little hobby of mine ...some say that I am cruel, despotic, capricious, sensual (whatever that means)but, apart from that, I have a heart of gold and if you don't agree, I'll have you flogged. After all, what's wrong with total dictatorship, I mean.... when was the last time **you** had a change of government? (and you're all looking very healthy).

Being King of the whole earth, I like to surround myself with good people, beautiful people, only the best. I have wonderful advisors, servants, animals, gardensOh! almost forgotand of course my wifeVashti, pretty little thing – picked her up in one of those southern provinces, you know. Of course, I don't have much time to see her, but she is rather beautiful, I'm sure you'd agree – perhaps I'll send for her

Trumpet fanfare

Memucan “Sir, I have excellent news. Everything is underway. We can now proceed with the great banquet in honour of your majesty. The princes, the nobles and all your commanders await you at the great feast, the **best** the world has ever seen. If it please the King, let the party begin”.

Song – King of Rap

King of Rap

(Solo - Rapper)

*He's the King, he's the King, he's the powerful King
He's the ruler of our destiny
Don't question his security
Or you'll get some shock therapy!*

*If you wanna know a king's authority
Look at Xerxes superiority
We don't want no democracy
'Cos he's his own majority, OK!*

(All - sung)

Let's sing to the King imperial, majesterial, inspirational
His deeds are fundamentally, indescribably, unbelievably wise
He rules this mighty superstate in a manner that we must celebrate
He reigns with such authority, we must always be satisfied
Xerxes, Master, Ruler and King
Xerxes, in your honour we sing

(Solo - Rapper)

He loves his popularity
And bathes in his celebrity
We worship him adorably
'Cos we gain from his prosperity!

We know that necessarily
We'll take his lead submissively
He markets his supremacy
"I'm the King! I'm the King! Don't question me, OK?!"

(All - sung)

When people come from every land, they all understand who is in command
He writes his place in history, there's no mystery in his victory plan
His kingdom reaches to the skies, always gets his prize, no one can deny
His power will always see him through what he wants to do every time.

Xerxes, Master, Ruler and King

(Rapper – 'Check him out, check him out!')

Xerxes, in your honour we sing

(Rapper – 'Check it out, check it out!')

(GONG!)

Scene 2a

The Palace – beautifully decorated

Memucan The feast we arranged was out of this world. He expected something special. What he got was truly spectacular and it was not going to be just one night either. We'd had months of one banquet after another, sightseeing trips to the King's great achievementstown planning, architecture, water drainage (what a bore!)but this celebration was to go on for a week, then after a couple of days, wine and dancing, the King suddenly remembered something.

A great feast with music, dance and entertainers

Xerxes Well this must be the best thing that's happened in years. The idea of celebrating me for week upon week was absolutely first rate. I wish I'd thought of it myself.... or perhaps I did!but I mustn't let people get boredjust a minuteVashti.....my wife Vashti.....I'll show them Vashti. She's so pretty (if I remember rightly). They can admire her features. She could dance or jiggle around a bit – that would be nice. I must send for her right awayshe's entertaining the ladies somewhere or other – Harbonaoff you gobring Queen Vashti here as soon as you can. Say 'the King asksno change that. Say 'the King **requires** you to attend him, and his Lords at the great banquet'. (**Harbona tries to leave**)and by the way, tell her to wear that nice silk number I got for her last week.

Scene 2b

Stage left – subtle lighting. Two aristocratic women are talking with Queen Vashti

Harbona 'Queen Vashti'

Vashti "Yes, Harbona can't you see I'm deep in conversation".

Harbona "Queen Vashti, the King requires you to attend him at the great banquet (**Vashti mimics him**)

Vashti "Harbona, tell him I'm really rather busy at the moment"

Harbona "Forgive me, my lady but he would like to er**show** you to his nobles and his lords"

Vashti "I beg your pardon, you little Enoch (or is it **Eunuch**, I can't remember). You must say to him I'm ratheroccupied".

Harbona "O, my lady, forgive me, I think it is important".

Vashti "Harbona, are you trying to tell me what to do?"

Harbona "No, my lady, but the King"

Vashti "The King, Harbona, must wait for a **long** time. Tell him I am not his candlestick.....I am not his Barbie doll"

Harbona **(Pause)** "Does that mean you won't be coming then?"

Vashti "I think it is safe to assume that, Harbonagoodbye".

Harbona **(Crosses stage)** "My LordI haveI have news".

Xerxes **(Holds up his hand)** "Stop – everyone stop – I have something very, very important, very special to bring to your attention. Harbona, tell us your good news".

Harbona "The Queen, your majesty, she said, she sort of implied"

Xerxes "Come on man, out with it!"

Harbona "The Queen, my Lord, saidshe will not come. She said.....No".

ALL "No?"

Who Do You Think You Are? - Song

Vashti & Xerxes (solos) + All

Vashti & Co stage left – Xerxes & Co stage right

V1
Solo Vashti
He may be chief of an army
He may be stronger than all
He may think I will come running
But Xerxes can simmer a while.

ALL
Group 1
Chorus
You may be richest in the universe but
My pride's stronger than your purse
I am not your puppet queen just
Who do you think you are, you
Who do you think you are?

V2
Solo Xerxes
She may be pretty to look at
She may have charm on her side
But she has now disobeyed me, my
Temper has come to the boil.

ALL
Group 2
Chorus
(nb different tune)
You think you're queen of all the universe
lots of money in your purse
I am not your puppet King just
Who do you think you are, you,
Who do you think you are?

INSTRUMENTAL then

Xerxes (solo)
Vashti (solo)
Xerxes (solo)
Vashti (solo)
She may be pretty to look at
He may be stronger than all
But she has now disobeyed me
But, Xerxes can simmer a while.

ALL
Group 1 and Group 2 chorus together (2 parts) and end with
extra line.....

YOU! Who do you think you are?

Scene 3a

The Palace – dimly lit

Memucan So that was itshe may have been pretty, but reallyshe just had to go. You may think this is a little harsh, but as I pointed out to the King.....if she gets away with this – life would become unbearable for him and for all of us with wives. You know what it's like. Every time they disobey their husbands they would say **(high squeaky voice)** "Queen Vashti did it". No we couldn't have that. On our advice – he packed her off the next morning, gave her a fuel injection camel, some leftover food (very generous, I thought) and away she zoomed into the desert.

But would you believe it – even after that great feast

Xerxes **(lovesick voice)** "I'm missing her".

Memucan "But my Lord, we **can't** allow her back".

Xerxes "I know, I know, and it's all **my** fault. Women are just so nice to have around.....every now and then".

Memucan "Well there must be someone else. **(Snaps fingers)** Hey, great idea. We should audition for a new wife".

Xerxes "Audition? I'm a King, not a musical!"

Memucan "We can put the ads in every town in every province - Are you attractive, charming, obedient? Then **(RAP)** Change your life to become a wife. You can meet the King all you do is ring0800 100 100

Xerxes "Memucan, freephones haven't been invented yet".

Memucan "OK, but they **could** all come to the palace couldn't they.

Xerxes "Well, you organise it – but in the end this will have to be my decision, is that clear?"

Scene 3b *A modestly furnished room. Esther is busy.*

Mordecai "Esther, Esther, have you heard the news.....King Xerxes is advertising for a new wife....and I've just been thinking....

Esther “Mordecai, of course I’ve heard the news, all those crazy girls down the street are getting excited about it, but not me.....I’m happy as I am. Who needs a King when I can look after you, my favourite cousin. **(Puts her arms round him)**. At least you’re not going to throw me outare you? In any case I’m not going to parade my body like at somecamel market and look, do you **really** think these hands are the hands of a Queen?”

Mordecai “Listen Esther, listen to me. You’re more than a Queen. If it’s the right thing to do, you will succeed. If it isn’t, then all you lose is a little pride. A long time ago our forefather, Abraham, was told he would have many, many descendants – he saw the stars in the desert night sky and God told him “Your children will be as many as those stars”...

Esther **(Laughs)** “Mordecai, I really don’t want any children yet”.

Mordecai “Yes but just let me finish, Abraham was very old and even his wife Sarah was 90. How on earth could they have children? And yethe believed God and left it in God’s hands. Esther, believe me. Go to the King’s palace. Don’t tell them you’re a Jew. Who knows, it may be that God has some special plan for you”.

(Song – The Promise)

Esther “Mordecai, you have a way with words pray for me”.

Mordecai **(Pause)** “The Lord bless you”.

THE PROMISE

Mordecai solo and all chorus

(Starlight effects)

- Mordecai (solo) Many, many years ago a promise had been made
That our people would be like the stars in heaven
All the problems that we suffer now are very real
But hope is just a step of faith away.
- All Chorus Listen, you can hear the angels
Whisper through the stars that fill the sky
Every single star reminds us
Of God's promise....he is by your side.
- Solo V2 Do not be afraid of facing life with all its fears
Just think of every star that shines its light at you
See the stars and think of everyone who needs you now
God carries all our future through the night.
- Chorus

Scene 4

The Palace

Harbona “Girls, girls and yet more girls. They came in droves. Some longed to come, some were dragged. Some were plainly pretty. Some were pretty plain. After a month of one girl after another it all began to get to me. One night I had a dream I was doing the auditions ... and when I woke up ... I was!”

Then after one year we got down to the twelve finalists. They were all given special beauty treatment.

“But only one girl stood out in my mind, and for the most curious reasons. She did not have a ‘made-up’ pretty face – though she was very attractive. She was intelligent, witty, knowledgeable good company.... and above all, natural. The others were lovely but also desperate to succeed. She was just herself, the only one who seemed to know the decision was not in her hands. We really liked her and what is more importantso did the King. Her name was Hadassah or Esther as we called her. Apparently she had been brought up by her older cousin Mordecai because her parents had died. Whatever she felt about the whole thing I’ll never know”.

(Esther song – Real in my Life)

REAL IN MY LIFE

Esther solo and all chorus

(Spotlight on Esther sitting in a corner of the Palace)

V1 Solo
(Esther)

While I stand, the world holds its breath
Please help me decide, now
To do what is right.

Lord, if ever I needed you
To be by my side
O my God it is now.

Chorus

I want to know the peace of my God
Made real in my life
So I can show his calmness
I want to know the power of God
Made real in my life
So I can live and serve him
I want to know the glory of God
Made real in my life
So I can sing his praises
I want to know the presence of God
Made real in my life
So I can live and worship Him

V2 Solo
(Esther)

Here I am, my life in your hands
To live and to learn, Lord, I want to obey

Faith, I thought, was stronger than death
But I need you now, Lord please help me believe.

Chorus

Scene 5a

Spotlight stage left

Mordecai *(Writing)* Dearest Esther, I know your heart must be playing tricks with you, I understand you must have mixed feelings, but I really thought it was right for you to go to the palace last year. Somehow there must be an inner purpose in all this. I am writing to tell you something very important. I have been working at the King's gate, as you know, and I overheard a conversation between two men, Bigthan and Teresh, who were really angry because they were overlooked for promotion and their advice ignored.

Spotlight stage right

Esther *(Continuing reading)*....they are full of deep hatred and are plotting to kill the King and seize power. Esther, you must tell the King about this.

The Palace

Xerxes Well.....there it is. A new wife, a new start....and I was so grateful to Esther and Mordecai for passing on that information. Mordecai must be rewarded some day, but first to more important things. We have got into a bit of a muddle of late, what with weddings and the like. I need a Levelling Down campaign –a cabinet reshuffle perhaps. One man has started to catch my eye, a Junior Minister called Haman. True, he is a bit pushy and a touch arrogant, but he that might be the type to get things done.

Scene 5b - The home of Haman and Zeresh – fairly wealthy

Zeresh "Haman, **do** come away from the mirror darling".

Haman *(Looking in a mirror)* "Oh Zeresh, I'm so fed up of being just one more civil servant. Everyone else seems so mediocre and I've tried **every** trick in the trade to get myself noticed. If the King wants to go for the real talent why settle for second best when he can have me. Zeresh, how do I get rid of this stupid spot on my nose?"

Zeresh "I hope it will happen soon. We've been in this poky little mansion for too long. Did you send the King those Egyptian spices he likes?"

Haman "Ow! Yes, and I was the only one who could get them. I'm sure he'll appreciate that ...**out** damned spot".

Zeresh "The old fool might come to his senses before long so we'd better keep trying. This is all proving very expensive but, if you succeed – who knows where it will endHaman! Hurry up, why don't you just squeeze it?"

Haman *(Oblivious)* "Well.....nothing ventured.....nothing gained. Ow!"

(Haman & Zeresh – Song – The Palms of our Hands)

THE PALMS OF OUR HANDS

Haman and Zeresh (solos) + All Chorus (2 parts)

Haman	Living life in mediocrity As the days just pass me by Making little changes here and there No real power to satisfy....but....
All Chorus	We will build a palace of gold With steps to the throne When we have seized our destiny There will be no end to our power All people will bow And we will gather the moon and stars In the palms of our hands.
Zeresh V2 solo	Won't you take me from this empty place Take me to a better life Seize your golden opportunity Don't be slow to realise....that.....
All	Chorus
Duet (Haman & Zeresh) Middle section	We shall overcome our fear There will be no holding back tonight In the shadows we will move As we grasp and seize what is our right. Chorus

Scene 6

Haman begins relaxed in an armchair

Haman Suddenly – there it was. I could hardly believe it. I was appointed to be second in command to the King himself. Oh, I deserved it, I know....but so quickly? I **had** to let people know my new position, so I thought of a wonderful idea. Everyone must bow whenever I pass by, and not just a casual nod of the head.....more of a worshipful sort of bow. I had the King's backing, of course, not that the old man cared one way or the other**BUT**, unfortunately, it was brought to my attention that one obnoxious man would not so much as bend the knee when I passed by. I really had to see it to believe it! There he was standing straight-backed and defiant while everyone else grovelled at my feet. What was his name?.....Mordecai. (**Haman stands abruptly**). But hear this. I have just learned that this Mordecai is a Jew. You'd better understand that my race, the Amalekites, have had bitter wars with the Jews. So now, I am powerful and I could have him killed of course, but I want to set the records straight. I shall punish not only this Mordecai but the whole of his stupid race. He has wounded my pride but now I am glad.....because they shall **all** suffer. (**Music under**) but I must choose the right day. I shall cast PURIM, the lots to decide on which day they must be killed. May the gods help me to bring complete destruction on them all. I will bribe the King with silver and use his signet ring to carry out this complete and pleasurable, this bitter sweet extermination. It must be published in every province so that none of them survives. If it's the last thing I do, they shall die, every one of them, Mordecai and his people. How dare they? (**Dark music – sorrowful strings**).

Front stage right - isolated

Mordecai (**Prayerfully**) "Oh my God, forgive my pride if I have done wrongbut how, my God, could I bow and worship anyone but you. Lord, hear us as we cry to you. We are so weak and helpless, but you are stronger than any man.

Abraham, Moses, Joseph, Samuel, David, Elijah. All cried out to you in their time. They all needed you, they all believed in you and Lord, in all my weakness.....so do I.

(**Song – Stronger than this**)

STRONGER THAN THIS

Sung by Chorus of Jews - defiantly

All V1 Haman loves to play to the gallery
Everyone must bow at his feet
Haman's anger goes to infinity
Says our death would make him complete.

Chorus **He may bring all of his army – Our God is stronger than this**
He threatens death and destruction – Our God is stronger than this
He lifts his sword up in anger – Our God is stronger than this
He longs to see us in terror – Our God is stronger than this

All (2 parts) Abraham and Moses, Joseph and Elijah
Samuel and David, All believed in God
Put their trust in God.

V2
Haman has this mighty opinion
What he wants should not be denied
With his hatred, power and dominion
No-one dares to ask him, 'Why?'

Chorus and two parts as above

INSTRUMENTAL

V3 Haman cannot stand disobedience
He's a legend in his own mind
If our people will not obey him
Must we pay his price and die?

Chorus and two parts as above

(2 parts) Abraham and Moses, Joseph and Elijah
Samuel and David, All believed in God
Put their trust in God.

Abraham and Moses, Joseph and Elijah
Samuel and David, All believed in God
Put their trust in God.

Scene 7

Esther stage left, Mordecai stage right.

Esther *(Holds letter from Mordecai)* - From Mordecai? *(PauseSmile turns to sadness.....looks up)* But why? Why this terrible, brutal act against my people. *(Reads)* Haman will pay 10,000 pieces of silver to King Xerxes when he has carried out this murder. "Esther, you **must** go to the King and plead with him for the lives of our people." *(She pauses and writes)*

Mordecai *(He holds the letter and reads...)* "Dear Mordecai, you know that I respect you more than anyone and you **know** that I love my people but do you understand what you are asking of me? There is a law within this palace I thought you knew – anyone, including myself, Queen Esther, who enters the King's inner court, without first being invited and called, **shall** be put to death – unless by chance King Xerxes should hold out his golden sceptre. Mordecai, I am also afraid that the King has lost interest in me. I have not been called to see him for a whole month. I really do not know what influence I can have now." *(He becomes tense and writes)*

Esther *...(Holds letter, looks up)* From Mordecai..... I hope he understands *(reads...)* "Esther, do not think that because you are now rich and in the King's palace that you will escape death any more than the rest of us. You must not keep silent at this time. God could choose anyone to save us, and **you** are in a position of privilege. Who knows, but that God has put you there for such a time as this. I understand your fears and that your very life is on the line but please, Esther, do not turn your face away from God and from your people. It is better to die with honour than to live with disgrace" *(writes...)*

Mordecai *(Reads...)* "Then please, please ask **all** the people to pray for me for three days and three nights. I understand what you are sayingI will go to the King ...

(very slowly)

"and if I liveI live.....and if I must dieI must die.....Oh my God I want to be in your armsI **want** to believe your promises. Please ... help me now.

(Song – In Your Arms)

IN YOUR ARMS

Esther Solo & All

- Solo
When the shadows fall and darken life's dreams
In the valley of believing
There are moments when I feel so insecure
When I really need to be with you.
- All 2 parts
*In your arms (in your arms) – I will feel complete again
In your arms (in your arms) – I will know the way ahead
In your arms – I will reach out and believe
(In your arms I will believe).*
- Solo
When the morning comes and brings me good news
That the sun will rise within my life
Your promises are light to my dreams
When they lead me home to you.
- All 2 parts
*In your arms (in your arms) – I will feel complete again
In your arms (in your arms) – I will know the way ahead
In your arms – I will reach out and believe
(In your arms I will believe).*
- All
CHORUS

**The promises that I believe are true (Ah...)
So I'll wait till tomorrow (Ah...)
And fight back my fears
The road ahead will take me back to you (Ah...)
'Cos all I want – and all I need
Is just to be there in your arms.**
- Solo
You know that I would live my life for you
There's no-one else to turn to
You know that I could die to be with you
For the honour of believing.
- All 2 parts
*In your arms (in your arms) – I will feel complete again
In your arms (in your arms) – I will know the way ahead
In your arms – I will reach out and believe
(In your arms I will believe).*

CHORUS

Scene 8a

Palace outer court

Harbona I saw Queen Esther in the palace for the first time in a month. I had no idea why she had come. She looked as beautiful as ever but she also appeared very solemn. I could hardly believe it as she went towards the King's inner court. She knew the rules of the palace. I had to say to her "Queen Esther, I beg you, do not think of entering the King's court. You cannot take your life in your own hands in this way". I will never forget her reply. Slowly she said

Esther "My life is not in my hands".

Esther 'parts the purple curtains' to the inner court where the King and his commanders are in deep conversation. It is clearly an important discussion. Harbona looks through a small slit in the curtains as Esther moves towards the King. It is as if the whole world stops and balances on the point of a sword. Here life and death are face to face. The King turns and shudders at the sight of Esther. He is clearly shocked. Esther faces death. There is a pause.

In an instant the King grasps his golden sceptre and holds it out towards Esther. She is pardoned.

Xerxes "Queen Esther, I have not seen you for such a long time. **(Aside)** Gentlemen forgive this interruption in our conversation. Esther, ask for anythingeven up to half my Kingdom.

Esther "My Lord, I would not presume to ask for that. If it seems good to you, please come to dinner with me tonight, and sir, if it seems good to you to grant this request, I would be pleased if you could bring Haman with you.

Xerxes "Esther, that's an excellent idea. We shall both be there".

Scene 8b

Haman's home – much more luxurious than before. Haman arrives. His wife and friends are gathered. *Zeresh boasts of Haman, her children, and everything in sight!*

Haman *(Whistles and sings 'we will build a palace of gold')* Hello there, anybody home?

Zeresh "Haman, why are you so late tonight? We've all been waiting for you and your chicken's gone cold.

Haman *(Excited)* "Stuff the chicken, you'll never believe what's happened to me today. I, and only I, have been invited with the King to have dinner with Queen Esther. Even if she did look a bit miserable at times, the meal was great but guess what?the King offered her **half** his Kingdom. I could have given her some ideas. Did she ask for gold, palaces or countries? No, all she wanted was my presence at another dinneralong with the King. She's crazy man! But I tell you what did make me crazy. That Mordecai did not so much as bend his knee when I walked past. I've got all this success but he still makes me mad.

Zeresh "Look, I know you've tried hard to forget about him but now you've got the power, why not do something about it. Make a gallows for him. Let him go hang Literally!

Haman "I just love your little ways – we're going straight to the top. You're right. I'll go and see the King about this first thing tomorrow. I shall get some men to build the gallows right now.

Scene 9

The King's bedroom – dimmed lighting

- Xerxes** (*Yawns*) I haven't slept a wink all night. Having these chronicles read out is just the stuff to send me to sleep, not that my life's been boring, mind you! ...carry on reading ..
- Narrator**then on the sixteenth day of the eleventh month, a man who attended the King's Gate, by the name of Mordecai, learned of a plot of treason and was able to inform Queen Esther and thereby save the King's life. Then on the seventeenth day of the eleventh
- Xerxes** What was that? Just a minute. Who was that Mordecai? Has anything been done about him? Has he been thanked?
- Narrator** Er.....not to my knowledge, Sir.....nothing recorded.
- Xerxes** Then surely we must honour him. Who's in the palace at the moment?
- Narrator** II believe Haman has just arrived to see you, my Lord.
- Xerxes** Then send him in (*Pause*) Haman, what a pleasant surprise to see you so early. Haman, you know I have a deep respect for you. I know your judgements are good. Tell me, what should I do for the man who deserves honour and recognition?
- Haman** (*Whispers*) Oh me he must mean me, who else is there? (*To the King*) Er, I think this erman, **whoever** it is (*smiles*) should.....wear some of the King's robes. He should thenride on a horse, the King's own horse. He shouldwear a royal crown on his head and be lead through the streets for all to seeby one of the King's noble servantswho shall call out "This is what happens to the man the King desires to honour". (*to himself*) Joy of joys, this has **got** to be me.
- Xerxes** Then, Haman, waste no timetake the clothes, take the crown, take the horse and take.....**Mordecai** the Jew through the streets and shout "This is what happens to the man the King delights to honour".
- Haman** (*frowns and sighs*)Oh!

Song – Quite Forgotten

QUITE FORGOTTEN

Haman solo & all (2 parts)

Haman (solo)
V1
There he is, sat on the horse
Face full of smiles and absorbing applause
Here I am, undignified
Walking my feet off while he gets the ride.

(Group 2 repeat verse 1)

Group 1
and Haman
Quite forgotten and neglected
I feel rotten and rejected.

Haman (solo)
V2
Look at them, waving their arms
I can't believe they can fall for his charms
Just when I felt better inside
Out of the window went all of my pride.

Group 2 repeat verse 2)

Group 1
and Haman
Quite forgotten and neglected
I feel rotten and rejected.

Scene 10

Later at his home – Haman tries to creep in

- Zeresh** Well, my sweet, did you see our little puppet King? (*Haman jumps*)
- Haman** Er.....yes I did
- Zeresh** And will Mordecai hang on our **dear** little gallows?
- Haman** Er.....not quite
- Zeresh** Not quite?
- Haman** Er.....slight change of plan, I'm afraid
- Zeresh** How come?
- Haman** Right out of the blue the King nearly honoured me.....and then didn't. I almost asked for Mordecai's head.....but got all of him instead.
- Zeresh** You do waffle on something shocking. What **do** you mean?
- Haman** I had to lead Mordecai through the streets to be Erpraised by all the city. (*Wails with his head in his hands*) NO! I can't stand it.
- Zeresh** You must be joking! I just knew you'd bungle this. Stop thinking about yourself and think of me.....anyway.....if it's not too late.....try to put things right at your dinner with the King tonight. (*arrogantly*) However, after what you've told me, quite frankly, I don't rate your chances too highly, this Mordecai looks set for better things. Oh, and by the way.....You've got another spot on your nose!

Court officials arrive to bring Haman to the dinner with Xerxes and Esther

Scene 11

Another wonderful dinner

- Xerxes** Well Esther, I must say, that was a truly, truly splendid meal, wasn't it Haman?
- Haman** Ye.....Yes, my Lord
- Xerxes** Come on Haman, perk up a bit. You are allowed to smile you know! Now Esther, perhaps you can tell us. What would you dearly like? Remember, up to half my Kingdom.
- Esther** Well, my Lord, there is something I need to say, more important than **any** other request.
- Xerxes** Then now's your chance
- Esther** My lord, please allow my life and that of my people to be spared.
- Xerxes** Esther, what on earth do you mean?
- Esther** My Lord, it would be possible for us to live as slaves but a decree has been issued that we must all die.
- Xerxes** Who has the arrogance to decide such a disgraceful action?
- Esther** My Lord, the enemy is sitting right beside us.....it is Haman.
- Xerxes** **(shouts)** Haman? Both of you.....wait there I am going outside for a moment to think on this. Stay right where you are! **(King exits)**
- Haman** Esther, oh Queen Esther, have mercy on me
- Esther** Get off me!
- Haman** Oh please, please Queen Esther, I beg of you **(carries on pleading and pulls at Esther's clothing)**.
- Esther** Stop it. Leave me alone. Take your hands away from me. Will you let go? **(etc...)**
- Xerxes** **(returns)** So now. Will you even assault the Queen when I am out of the room? In my own palace, indeed!
- Haman** Sire, you don't understand
- Xerxes** I most certainly do understand. Harbona, have this man removed immediately.
- Harbona** **(shouts)** Guards, come quickly! **(speaks)** I should also point out that Haman has made a high gallows for Mordecai, the man who saved your life.
- Xerxes** **(Angry)** Then give to Mordecai.....Haman's house, his possessions, his position and as for the gallows.....hang **him** on it. **(Points to Haman ...Tense music)**

Song – The Bigger You Are, The Harder You Fall

THE BIGGER YOU ARE – THE HARDER YOU FALL

Solo and Choir

- Solo** You thought that you could make things happen
That you could bring us in line with you
You said that you would never be sorry
If you could bring us all to worship you
So slow....the hours went by, you had to find
Some way to turn day to night
You tried to turn out the light
On all our lives.
- All** ***Chorus***
Oh.....can't you understand it
The bigger you are, the harder you fall
Oh can't you understand it
The bigger you are, the harder you fall
- Solo** Daytime.....while you scheme and fashion
The sun will not get inside you heart
Night time and your dreams are waiting
To make you into an overnight star
So long since you lost your feelings
Don't you know the hurt that you gave to us
You'll reap just what you sow you can be sure, just be sure.
- Chorus (last note down)***
- Instrumental***
- Solo or All** Pride comes before a fall so don't believe
That you got one up on us
Don't think that you'll escape what you deserve.
- Chorus (twice)***

Scene 12

The Palace

Esther Sir, I know that Haman is dead but please, I urge you, have mercy on my people. Change Haman's decree.

Xerxes You must know, Esther, that once a command has gone out under my signature, it cannot be reversed.

Esther But my Lord

Xerxes Let me finish. I am a dictator, not a Prime Minister. There is no such thing as a 'U' turn.....however, there is one possibility. Let Mordecai and yourself issue another command, using my name, that all the Jews may defend themselves by whatever means they like. Send the decree to every province, from India to Ethiopia by the swiftest horses. Hurry, while there is yet time!

Harbona So it was performed exactly as the King had suggested. The enemies of the Jews were defeated and destroyed in every town and city. Haman's ten wicked sons were hung on the same gallows as their father. At last the Jews could have peace and security and on a special day, the 14th day of Adar, a day that was meant for their destruction, Esther and Mordecai declared a great festival, a day of gladness and rejoicing. The day, to be known as Purim, was to be celebrated forever, by every Jew in every land. It would be a lasting reminder of how God had saved them from destruction. Those who trust in the Lord will find new strength. They will soar high on wings like eagles. And as you can imagine, the very first PURIM was quite something!

Song – I Will Fly Like The Eagle

I Will Fly Like The Eagle

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Chorus (solo) I will fly like the eagle to the place of Your throne
I will sing with the angels of Your goodness and love
And while I have breath, I will honour Your name
I will work to build Your kingdom here on earth
I will work to build your kingdom here

Verse 1 (solo + choir in bold) Each New Day, there is a new beginning
I have found **your mercy and your love**
Now I know there is a future for me
All because **of what you have achieved**

Chorus (All) *I will fly like the eagle to the place of Your throne
I will sing with the angels of Your goodness and love
And while I have breath, I will honour Your name
I will work to build Your kingdom here on earth
I will work to build your kingdom here on earth*

Verse 2 (solo + choir in bold) Each new day, I have a brand new challenge
Take me on **to the goals You can achieve**
This life is looking for Your kingdom
And I know **my time is in Your hands**

Chorus (as above)

Middle 8 (solo) Those who wait for the victory
Will renew their strength and power
They will run and not grow weary
They will rise up high and celebrate in style!

Chorus (as above) + extra line 'I will work to build your kingdom here on earth'