

## **Prologue**

(Open on an angel standing on a darkened stage.)

Angel

The story that you are about to see is more than a melodramatic tale of intrigue. It is a tale which has far more to it than meets the eye. Soon you shall see some things which may come as a surprise. For now sit back and relax as you take a journey into the distant past and watch battles which have long since passed.

(The angel exits.)

(Lights up on the siege of an Indian city.)

(Enter two guards standing watch.)

Guard 1

We were promised wealth and glory on this campaign. For five long weeks we have been sitting outside of this city. There is no end in sight. The worst part is that the we failed to accomplish anything meaningful.

(He lowers his voice when he says this for fear of being overheard.)

Guard 2

We can still get our wealth and glory. We just need to be patient. Who knows maybe we'll get rich tomorrow. If that happens then all of this waiting will have been justified.

Guard 1

You are right, but right now we are sitting here and doing nothing. Meanwhile, Mordechai's army is conquering the enemy and gaining fortunes worthy of kings.

(Guard 2 leans toward Guard 1 and lowers his voice to a whisper.)

Guard 2

Some of our friends are talking about rebelling against Haman. How that fool ever became a general is beyond me! That buffoon allows our supplies to run low and insists that we continue this siege. Many in this army feel we should desert and leave him to fight his battles on his own. Maybe we should all just pledge ourselves to Mordechai. His troops are always well fed with a surplus of supplies to spare.

(Enter Haman in bronze armor which shines in the sun, the guards snap to attention.)

Haman

Report.

(Guard 2 turns towards the audience.)

Guard 2

Wonderful now we have to give him reports about how the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. Maybe I should tell him that the Daevas came looking for him. Perhaps they told us that they want him to stop embarrassing their ambassador the king. However, if he really wants to waste his breath, then who am I to stop him? Sometimes I think that it would be less painful for me to run into a wall than to put up with him.

(Guard 2 turns back to Haman.)

Guard 2

There has been no new enemy movement since our watch began my lord.

(Loud footsteps are heard and suddenly an out of breath messenger runs on stage. Annoyance and anger tinges his voice as he turns to the messenger.)

Haman

What is it?

Messenger

My lord I have two messages for you. One of them comes from the royal scribe. The other one comes directly from my lord Mordechai.

Haman

What are these messages? Tell me and then go.

Messenger

The last of the rebel fortresses has just been conquered by Mordechai. In an hour's time the spoils will be brought here so that they can be divided.

(The messenger hands Haman a small sealed scroll and runs back towards camp. Haman turns towards the audience.)

Haman

Does he think that I'm his barber? One day he'll go too far with his orders and he'll get cut.

(Haman turns back to the guards and waves them away.)

Haman

Why are you wasting your time standing there? Return to your posts immediately.

(Guards turn back towards the city and Haman breaks the scroll's seal. Enter Mordechai.)

Mordechai

Haman quickly gather your troops and prepare to attack! We have the advantage. We must make sure not to waste it. If we attack the city now it can be conquered easily. They have no allies to help them defend themselves!

(Haman glares hatefully at Mordechai for a moment before turning his face into a neutral mask.)

Haman

Let's return to our command tent.

(Mordechai dismounts and they exit)

## Scene II

(Mordechai and Haman enter their command tent)

Haman

That fool sits in his palace in Media while we fight his wars. Now he demands to know why the enemy won't surrender to him?!?

Mordechai

The king is right. We have postponed our attack for too long. We should attack them now with everything we have. We could defeat them within hours.

Haman

He's the king you're right. That's why I don't suggest this lightly. However, now might be the right time to initiate a coup. It may be necessary for the good of the empire.

Mordechai

That is foolishness Haman. Why are you talking about committing an act of treason?

(The roar of men and clashing of weapons is heard outside. Then the first guard from earlier stumbles into the tent. His clothes are disheveled, and he is bloodied.)

Guard

The troops are rioting. Our entire supply of food is gone. My lords if you don't stop them then this camp will be destroyed!

Haman

How's this possible? There was plenty of food. You'll be executed for inciting a riot and lying to me!

(A mixture of anger and confusion envelope Haman's face while Mordechai keeps his face impassive. The guard turns towards the audience.)

Guard

Is he really this forgetful and ignorant? I should have listened to my mother and been a farmer. If I had then the crops wouldn't wither and then blame me.

(The guard turns to Haman.)

Guard

You ordered that all of your troops should get a double portion of food and drink. In order to keep them from rebelling!

(Haman turns towards the audience.)

Haman

He's a liar. The troops were well-fed. How could they rebel?

(Haman turns to the Soldier.)

Haman

There must be something left it's impossible that nothing remains!

(He advances on the soldier but is stopped by Mordechai who pulls him back. Meanwhile the sounds of clashing weapons grow louder as they approach.)

Guard

Only Mordechai's stores still have enough food my lord.

(Haman turns to Mordechai his emotions now carefully hidden.)

Haman

Mordechai, I must have some of your supplies. I'll pay you very well for some of your surplus food.

Mordechai

I will sell you some of my surplus, but we will have to do it with a bill of sale. We will ensure that none may dispute that I sold you supplies.

(The sound of shouts and chanting grow deafeningly loud, causing a look of panic to appear on Haman's face.)

Haman

I'll do whatever you want just give me the supplies to stop the riot!

(Mordechai reaches down and removes his right sandal. He grabs a quill, dips it into ink, and scribbles a few lines on it.)

Mordechai

Know that the master of the universe will be our witness. He will ensure that this will be binding.

(Haman grabs the sandal and marks it with his signet ring as the tent flaps are pulled open.

Haman turns towards the audience.)

Haman

Let him speak of his worthless god. It's all meaningless. The Daevas have made me a god among men. I'm not bound by his lies. He's a child if he thinks that I will ever be controlled by this deal.

(Haman turns towards the entrance of the tent.)

Haman

Return to your stations men. I've bought food for our armies and tonight we'll eat like kings.

(A loud cheer is heard from offstage.)

Mordechai

Go into my stores and take only what you need.

(Haman looks down at the sandal he is holding. As he reads it his body starts to shake. Haman turns back towards the audience.)

Haman

That worm seeks to enslave a god like me, does he?

(Haman turns back towards Mordechai.)

Haman

Return to your posts we attack at dawn.

(The guard exits.)

Mordechai

You have to be smart and ration the supplies that I give you. Otherwise, you will run into the same problem that you did before.

Haman

Yes, my lord. It will be done.

(They exit)

(End prologue)

## **Act I Scene I**

(Open on an angel standing on a darkened stage)

Angel

Allow me to set the scene that shall be the true beginning of your journey. More than two years have gone by in the blink of an eye. A war has been fought and won. Now two grand celebrations are being thrown in the capital city of Shushan. They celebrate the establishment of the Persian king's control over most of the known world. The first party gathered together people from across the empire. For six months the king displayed his wealth to its fullest extent. After the empire had eaten and drunk its fill from the king's hospitality a second grand festival is thrown. This second party is in honor of the inhabitants of the capital. It is to the final day of this seven-day feast that you will be a witness. Imagine the festivities as they would have taken place. Before you lies a massive castle that is surrounded by a moat so wide that the only way across are the boats that wait to carry people across. Thousands of people line up on both sides of the moat to enter this fortress. They enter through tremendous stone doors that tower over all. They humble all who walk beneath them. The air is heavy with the sound of song and dance as you enter the royal compound. People of all backgrounds and ages walk through the halls around

you. The floor underneath you is made of the finest mother of pearl, onyx marble, and alabaster that can be found in the east. You gaze all around in wonder at the pillars of fine marble that line the halls. From these pillars hang curtains of rich whites, purples and sea blue that are fastened upon the pillars by rods of silver. You arrive at a fork in the hallway and you follow a crowd down the right passageway. Here the air is saturated with the smell of roasting meat. You are completely surrounded by the sounds of revelry. Finally, the passageway opens up into the castle throne room. It is more opulent than any other room in the palace. This massive chamber is overflowing with guests, royal dignitaries, and palace servants who are all mingling. They do this in a way which breaks the very notion of societal stations. You make your way to the center the room where you are quickly swallowed up by the crowd.

(The angel exits.)

(Lights up on two richly dressed guests talking.)

Guest 1

You know it's a pity that the stability of the kingdom and our future is not set in stone.

Guest 2

What do you mean?

Guest 1

Well our capital has been moved from the great paradise that is Babylon to this backwater in the middle of the Persian wastelands. Not to mention the fact that we are stuck with an incompetent ruler who essentially bought his position. Today things are good, but what about tomorrow? Will things stay pleasant if the throne is taken by the buyer of the week?

Guest 2

That is not a sign of instability, our king Achashverosh wants to show his limitless power by moving the capital and in doing so remaking the image of the kingdom. I doubt that we have much to worry about as far as our future is concerned. Our friends and neighbors in the empire will not allow us to be harmed.

Guest 1

He has told us that this is the reason, but as strong as he claims to be the fact remains that he uprooted our ancient capital and moved it. This proves that he feels weak in the long -

established capital. If the king feels that he has no power in the old capital how well will we do when someone decides that we are an easy target? Right now, we may be in a good position, but if the king falls then the empire will be consumed by war.

(Enter the chief steward holding a golden goblet in his hand.)

Chief Steward

My lords by the invitation of the king all the dignitaries from Shushan are asked to join the officials of Nubia and Judea in the garden.

(They break off conversation. Lights out. Lights up on garden scenery with several couches present. The two guests standing next to stools holding gold cups studded with jewels. There is a man in profile just out of earshot standing by a table of exotic roasted meats.)

Guest 1

Was that Haman?

(Guest 2 turns towards the audience.)

Guest 2

I must have had way too much of this wine. If I am sober then Yes, I believe it was.

(Guest 2 turns back to Guest 1.)

Guest 2

There's Mordechai over there. I hear that both he and Haman have been demoted to being waiters for the last six days.

(They walk towards the golden couches. They recline on them. Guest 1 turns towards the audience.)

Guest 1

This is where our taxes go? No wonder taxes are so high. If I have to pretend to approve this use of my money, then the least that the king can do is give me a tax break.

(Guest 1 turns back to Guest 2.)

Guest 1

You know I have only heard about this kind of luxury once in my life. I wondered if I would ever live to actually see a feast like this one.

Guest 2



In your life you have even heard of one time when this much wealth was displayed? I would think that in the history of the world there has never been an event like this one.

(Guest 1 turns towards the audience.)

Guest 1

Is he serious? The fact that he is acting so dramatic does nothing to improve my mood. Only a few cups will do that.

(Guest 1 turns back to Guest 2.)

Guest 1

Yes, there has been one like this. It happened during the reign of queen's father Belshazzar. That was the night that the Persians and Medians conquered Babylon. How could you forget about that?

(Guest 2 turns towards the audience.)

Guest 2

He's serious? How can I be expected to remember something as inconsequential as the fall of the previous regime?

(Guest 2 turns back towards the Guest 1.)

Guest 2

How much wealth does our king have that he can throw two festivals which span a total one hundred and eighty - seven days? How can the king can throw such a banquets and leave nothing in reserve?

(Both guests reach for the wine vessels and cups laid beside their couches.)

Guest 1

His wealth is really the wealth of other kings. That's the reason for the varieties of wealth that he has produced. It had been accumulating for a number of decades in Babylon and Persia before he got his hands on it.

(Their cups are taken from their hands before they can drink by a dignified figure in purple robes. Guest 1 turns towards the audience.)

Guest 1

He can't be serious. He warned us not to come to this party. For that I can respect him, but taking away our ability to choose to get so drunk that we can't choose is not something that I am willing to forgive

(Guest 1 turns back to the dignified figure.)

Guest 1

Taking our wine Mordechai? Isn't it enough that you begged us not to come because of the reveling in sin which is taking place here? Must you prevent us from enjoying the king's hospitality?

Mordechai

This so-called hospitality is something that the two of you should consider disgusting. It should feel sharp like a blade to even think of this as being real. Just being here should cause both you to be ashamed of yourselves!

(Guest 2 turns towards the audience.)

Guest 2

He has such a double standard. He is a royal official who enjoys great status and yet he tells everyone else not to enjoy themselves. He really has to lighten up and drink something.

(Guest 2 turns back towards Mordechai.)

You say this and yet you wear the robes of a minister of the king's judiciary court.

Mordechai

Does your self-indulgences do your people any good? Will the denial of your people save you should our enemies rise up to destroy us?

(Mordechai walks away with his head bowed in shame.)

(Guest 2 turns towards the audience.)

Guest 2

His self-righteousness will cost him. We will live as proper Persians even if he won't. Now where are the replacement cups again?

(Guest 2 turns back towards Guest 1.)

Guest 2

You think that you can handle even a drop of the king's wine? Knowing you the moment that you smell it you will fall asleep.

(Guest 1 raises an eyebrow.)

Guest 1

At least I'm not so miserly that I water down my guest's wine.

(They rise from the couches, secondary wine cups in hand, and walk to the table of exotic roasted meats. Enter an angel with a drawn sword. The Angel turns towards the audience.)

Angel

They are united in their actions. They willingly come to this party which celebrates the loss of their connection to the Master of the Universe. If they would listen to the warnings that they have received, then no punishment would be necessary. Their leaders do not lead and therefore they are the first upon whom the punishment will be unleashed.

(The angel turns back towards the two guests.)

Angel

Both of you deserve to be put to death by the sword. I only have permission to harm the one that rejected Mordechai's warning with all of his heart and soul.

(They don't see or hear the angel and they walk onwards. The angel raises his sword, but it suddenly grows heavy in his hand and he is forced to lower the weapon.)

Angel

Does this man have a merit that can save him from death?

(A heavenly voice booms from the heavens, but only the angel and the audience hear it.)

Heavenly voice

The time has arrived for my nation to be punished, but I will not punish them in a supernatural way. Instead I will use the sinner who is my servant's servant to punish them.

(The angel exits.)

**End Scene I**