

A New Kind of Queen

Mordecai: There once was a beautiful queen. But she had a secret. She was Jewish, and worshipped the One True God. I know, because that's how I raised her after her own parents died. But the king didn't know, and that was a good thing. I had told her not to tell, because so many people thought we were different or weird, and I didn't want her to be in danger. But then one day everything changed.

(He falls to his knees and sprinkles dust on his head. Esther and her attendants watch from the palace.)

Laleh: What is he doing?

Esther: It's how our people – I mean some people – show that they're grieving. But people who are mourning aren't allowed in the palace. Hathach! Go see what's wrong!

(Hathach goes to Mordecai.)

Hathach: What happened? Are you alright?

Mordecai: No, and no one I love is either. The king just made a new law. His right-hand-man, Haman, was jealous of me – so jealous he wants to kill not just me, but all of the Jewish people. He offered the king money, and the king just signed a law saying he's allowed to!

Hathach: I – I don't know what to say.

Mordecai: Tell the queen she's got to go to the king and get him to change his mind!

Hathach: The queen? Why would she help people the king has already condemned to death?

Mordecai: Because she *is* one of us. Her real name is Hadassah. She just says it's Esther so no one will know. Tell her to remember how I raised her –

Hathach: *You* raised her?

Mordecai: Oh Hathach, please don't tell anyone! Just tell her to remember who the One True God says she is.

(Mina addresses the audience as he returns to the palace.)

Mina: So he came, and told her all about the king's new law.

Esther: No! That can't be! He – he loves me.

Hathach: Your husband doesn't even know who you really are. He can't love you the way you need.

Esther: Not him! The Lord. How could he let this happen again?

Laleh: Again? You've never been a queen before.

Esther: Not me! I'm talking about my people!

Mina: Your people? Are you – you're one of them?

Laleh: Wait, she's what? I mean, your Majesty, you're who?

Mina: Shh! Don't embarrass her! She's Jewish.

Laleh: Ohhhhhh! Wait, what?

Esther: God let us be slaves in Egypt. Then when they finally got to a new land, God let others attack them again and again. Then our grandfathers were taken away from our homeland and brought here! And now they're going to kill us all?

Mina: From what I hear, God let Moses lead your people out of Egypt. And he let Gideon and Samson and Deborah rescue you from your attackers. Now, the people who took you from your homeland have been conquered, and our people conquered the people who conquered them. But you're still here.

Esther: But it never seems to end!

Mina: Human beings never stop fighting God and rejecting him. You think they'd treat his people any different?

Esther: I'm just so tired of it. What could God possibly be doing?

Laleh: Maybe – maybe *you're* what he's doing.

Esther: Me?

Laleh: You're the queen. Maybe this is why your God brought you here.

Hathach: Yes. Mordecai says go to your husband, and tell him –

Esther: Tell him what? That *I'm* one of the people he's trying to kill? Tell Mordecai he doesn't understand! I can't just barge in without the king's permission. That's against the law, and the penalty is death!

(Hathach returns to Mordecai as she says this.)

Mordecai: Even for the queen?

Hathach: Even for the queen.

Mordecai: Harsh.

Hathach: Yeah.

Mordecai: She'll think I don't care. She'll look back at how I was like a father to her, and she'll feel like I betrayed her. But tell her this:

(Hathach returns to Esther and speaks Mordecai's words.)

Hathach: Moses had a decision to make, too. He could go on pretending to be an Egyptian, and live like a prince, or he could go and be part of what God was doing.

Mordecai: Abraham had a decision to make, too. He could keep his family safe or give God his only son, like God asked. And when he gave, God gave him his son back, and made the sacrifice in his place.

Hathach: Mordecai also said to say, "God keeps his promises. He will rescue his people. You just have to decide if you're going to be part of it, or if you'll choose to be left out."

Mordecai: You want God to care about people. How do you know *you're* not how he wants to do it?

Esther: Alright. Ask all of our people to pray for me. I'll face the king on their behalf. And if I die ... well, then, I'll die.

(Esther exits to see the king and Mordecai prays, as the attendants narrate.)

Hathach: She didn't die.

Mina: She managed to get the king in a good mood --

Laleh: Did I mention how good her cinnamon rolls are?

Mina: – and he did change his mind.

Hathach: Haman, who started this whole mess, got into big trouble ... the kind of trouble that ends in "dead." And all of the Jewish people were saved.

(Esther runs in during this line and embraces Mordecai.)

Laleh: The whole kingdom celebrated.

Mordecai: And then I went and wrote it all down. Because no one here had ever seen a king or queen give up their splendor to be part of a condemned people. Or face death to plead for their people's lives. But they need to know.

Because the God who sacrifices in our place keeps his promises. And when he keeps his promise to Abraham, that the whole world will be blessed through someone from his family, I want them to be ready.

Esther: Even with what they tried to do. Because that's the kind of king *we* serve.