HAMAN

Adapted by

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Based on the Book of Esther in the Bible

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11/27/2024 (v2)
12/14/2024 (v2.1)

OVER BLACK - One big SIGH.

TITLE: 483 BC. Susa, the capital of Persia. During the reign of Xerxes I...

EXT. COURTYARD - SUNSET

CLOSE ON HAMAN's (40's) stoic face. Aside from some pudge, there's a regal look about him... a touch of gray at his temples, a strong silhouette.

A calm, confident VOICE speaks up. Haman as narrator is full of bravado and strength.

HAMAN (V.O.)
My name is Haman.

He lifts his chin, looking down his nose at--

COURT OFFICIALS crowded in a courtyard. Most are on their knees, eyes wide.

INT. KING'S COURT, SUSA, PERSIA - DAY

TITLE: WEEKS EARLIER

Pure Persian decadence. Xerxes lounges on the throne. His queen, Esther, stands at his side. Close to her, a man, barely noticeable, stands amongst the crowd. [This is MORDECAI... he pops up more later.]

HAMAN (V.O.)
I had slaved many years in the palace court.

Xerxes waves a hand. The CAMERA searches for someone and finally finds... Haman. His eyes are wide, mouth open in surprise.

HAMAN (V.O.)
So I wasn't surprised when Xerxes, possessed of the gods, took notice of me.

Haman practically disappears in a streak as he races to stand next to Xerxes. A servant drapes a golden mantle over his shoulders.

HAMAN (V.O.)
I was given a seat of honor higher than that of all other nobles.

As the King raises a hand, everyone present bows. Haman's eyes light up.

EXT. KING'S GATE - LATER

Haman, his golden mantle glinting in the sunlight, struts from the King's Gate into the CROWDS.

Facing one side of the road, he raises a hand in the same gesture as the King. They immediately drop to one knee.

Haman smiles broadly. Delicious.

He turns and makes the same gesture to the rest of the crowd.

They drop to one knee, REVEALING one man still standing. MORDECAI (50's) doesn't seem particularly defiant or smug. He just... stands there.

Haman's face bulges, a vein popping in his forehead. He waves his arm a little, like "don't you see this."

A NECKLACE shines as Mordecai shifts his stance. Light glares off it, reflected directly in Haman's eyes. It's practically blinding.

CLOSE ON a gold Star of David.

Haman stands stock still, lips pursed, eyes wide with anger. A RANDOM PERSON slides in the frame to whisper in his ear.

RANDOM PERSON
pss, psst, psss JEW *pss, psst, psss* Only bows to GOD *psst, pss*

Haman and Mordecai continue their staring contest. A tumbleweed rolls by.

HAMAN (V.O.)
In that moment, I knew. The gods had seen me and granted me this honor...

A sketchy VISION grows in Haman's head... an entire CROWD in silhouette *not* kneeling. He pleads, stomps, and wails, throwing a tantrum.

HAMAN (V.O.)
...so I could avenge my people. Generations ago, Jews had slaughtered them!
(MORE)

HAMAN (V.O.) (CONT'D)
And now I would take back the honor ripped from the Amalekites!

WHIP PAN TO

INT. KING'S COURT - NEXT DAY

Haman WHISPERS in Xerxes ear. Forming above their heads is the same vision, but instead of Haman in a tantrum, it's Xerxes.

HAMAN
pss, psst, psss Remember Egypt.
pss, psst Remember Babylon.
psst, psss JEWS REVOLT! *pss, psst, psss*.

Xerxes eyes narrow and his hand comes into frame, waving his SIGNET RING at Haman. Haman's eyes light up.

HAMAN (V.O.)
A King's decree could not be undone. Even by the King himself. If they wouldn't bow... they'd die!

CLOSE ON dice tumbling SLO-MO along the floor. They land on 5 and 5.

WHIP DOWN TO a CLOSE UP of a document that reads "KILL ALL THE JEWS... in 10 months." THUNK. The SIGNET RING smashes into a hot wax seal.

EXT. KING'S GATE - LATER

A HAND holds the decree. It's Mordecai. He wails with angst, tears at his clothes, and falls to the ground.

WHIP ZOOM OUT

INT. KING'S COURT - CONTINUOUS

...through the window to Haman and Xerxes as they clink glasses. Haman's mantle glints in the light as they peer through a window where WAILING SILHOUETTES cry out and flail throughout the land.

HAMAN (V.O.)
I'd saved Persia. I'd restored honor to my people.

Haman glances down, focusing on Mordecai. He’s still on his knees, covered in dirt, wailing.

HAMAN (V.O.)
I was certain Mordecai would now bow at my feet.

As Haman pours Xerxes another drink, Queen Esther watches in the background.

HAMAN (V.O.)
The king honored me.

A servant hands her a paper and as she opens it, a translucent Mordecai leans in.

MORDECAI
pss, pssst, psss Help! *pss, psst*

A single tear falls before she collects herself and moves forward to Xerxes and Haman.

HAMAN (V.O.)
Even the Queen honored me!

A GIANT PLATTER rises from the bottom of the frame, almost like it’s being lifted by its own delicious aroma.

WHIP ZOOM OUT. Haman, Xerxes, and Esther sit at a table overflowing with delicious food. Haman eats like a pig and daintily dabs the corners of his grotesque mouth.

Esther grants him a dainty, bashful nod. Haman sits up straighter and grins, juice dripping down his chin.

EXT. KING'S GATE - LATER

Haman swaggers along the path, obviously pudgy and practically bursting from his feast.

HAMAN (V.O.)
She even insisted I come back! Another feast would be held in my honor.

In now a practiced motion, he raises his hand. Everyone bows.

A piggish grin spreads on his face.

HAMAN (V.O.)
But...

But someone... Mordecai! slowly stands.

HAMAN (V.O.)
That man...

Haman starts to go angry red... but with a STOMACH GURGLE, he turns green. He looks like he might vomit.

And he does. All over his own shoes.

INT. BLACK VOID - LATER

Haman slumps in a dark void. Shadowy figures swirling around him, whispering in his ear.

HAMAN (V.O.)
I was chosen. I had been honored and lifted up... and still... this Jew thought so much of himself...
(pause)
He should be lifted up.

In a vision, a RED LIGHT highlights the silhouette of a GALLOWS. A man is lifted higher and higher as he struggles... and finally goes limp.

Haman sits up, once again regal and confident.

HAMAN (V.O.)
For such a task, I needed the permission of the king himself. I set off knowing the King would honor his servant once again...

EXT. COURTYARD - DAY

In fast forward, servants build a ridiculously tall, even rickety, GALLOWS.

INT. KING'S COURT - LATER

Haman zips into the court, sinking into a low bow at the feet of Xerxes.

Just as he looks up and opens his mouth to speak, Xerxes turns, a BOOK in his hand titled “CHRONICLES.” His lips move, but only Haman’s narration comes through.

HAMAN (V.O.)
But before I could say anything, the King asked how *I* would honor a servant!

Haman's lips start to move and visions fill the air around him. A royal GARMENT. A HORSE with a royal CROWN. And a SERVANT that leads a parade through the people. Mordecai, star struck, bows to him. Finally.

HAMAN (V.O.)
It was a strange turn. It made me think... perhaps I could request enough public honors that Mordecai would finally see my glory. Maybe a gallows would be unnecessary...

With a big grin, Xerxes pulls Mordecai from off-screen and points to him. Haman's visions all burst. Xerxes points to a PICTURE in the book he's been holding.

With a GULP, Haman looks IN THE BOOK and sees a PITCURE of Mordecai holding two men with knives in their hands in front of the King.

Haman's jaw drops. A SERVANT leans in and-

SERVANT
pss, psst, psss Long ago... *pss, psst* Stopped assassination attempt! *psst, pss* HERO! *pssss, psst*

EXT. KING'S GATE - LATER

Haman, miserable, leads a royally robed Mordecai around on a royal horse.

HAMAN (V.O.)
I had fallen into a trap. I'd considered mercy. But now I understood. There could be no mercy for this man. Or his people.

As Haman sinks even lower...

HAMAN (V.O.)
I held my head high...

INT. KING'S COURT - LATER

HAMAN (V.O.)
...as I entered the King’s Court. The King and Queen were waiting once again to honor me.

Xerxes and Esther lounge at the table filled with food. Haman plops down in his seat unceremoniously. With a sulk, he less enthusiastically digs in.

DISSOLVE TO

INT. KING’S COURT - SUNSET

There’s a noticeable dent in the food. Haman seems more relaxed and once again pleased with himself.

And then Esther stands. CLOSE ON her lips moving, a tear slipping down her cheek and... a Star of David NECKLACE.

HAMAN (V.O.)
I had been through so much already. And then the Queen revealed herself... a traitor!

Haman freezes mid-bite, eyes wide. Fruit juice dribbles down his chin.

CLOSE ON the decree. Another tear down the Queen’s cheek.

Xerxes shakes, red creeping up his face. One word forms on his lips. “WHO?!”

WHIP ZOOM OUT following Esther’s pointing finger straight to Haman.

HAMAN (V.O.)
I had to be strong. Even as it seemed things were crumbling around me... I knew. I would be honored again.

Xerxes storms out and Haman shuffles quickly toward the Queen on his knees. His blubbering and pawing makes her stumble and fall. Snot drips from his nose and tears stream down his face.

The door bursts open. Xerxes gets a shade redder as heat lines rise off him.

It really looks like Haman was trying to do something inappropriate with Esther.

Xerxes, frozen with rage, yells.

But a SERVANT pops up beside him and points.

WHIP PAN TO

...the window. In SILHOUETTE, there's Haman's gallows.

EXT. KING'S COURT - SUNSET

CLOSE ON Haman's face, matching the opening shot. Head held high.

WHIP ZOOM OUT

A noose wraps around his neck. Abruptly, he starts blubbering.

As he narrates, the COURT OFFICIALS stare at him. But it's not fear. It's not awe. It's pity.

HAMAN (V.O.)
They might kill me. But no one could overturn the decree. Mordecai. The Queen. All Jews would die. And I would always be known as a savior. My honor would be eternal.

Mordecai steps out from crowd.

HAMAN (V.O.)
My name is Haman. And I will be remembered. My name will be exalt--

In SILHOUETTE, he's hoisted high.

INT. KING'S COURT - DAY

QUICK CUTS--

A new EDICT gets the official seal: "Jews can fight back!"

Two silhouetted groups draw swords with a SHING. One side turns to run. The other group overcomes and consumes them.

A LIGHT spikes the CAMERA. It's the glare off Haman's mantle... now worn by Mordecai. He stands next to Xerxes on his dais, Esther at his side.

CUT TO

CLOSE ON a book. It reads: “Esther and Mordecai ensured Jews would live and become a cherished people under Artexerxes.”

A PAGE turns. The title of the story reads: “The Book of Esther.”

The BOOK closes. Light glints off the gold inlay title: The Holy Bible.

CUT TO BLACK.

THE END.