



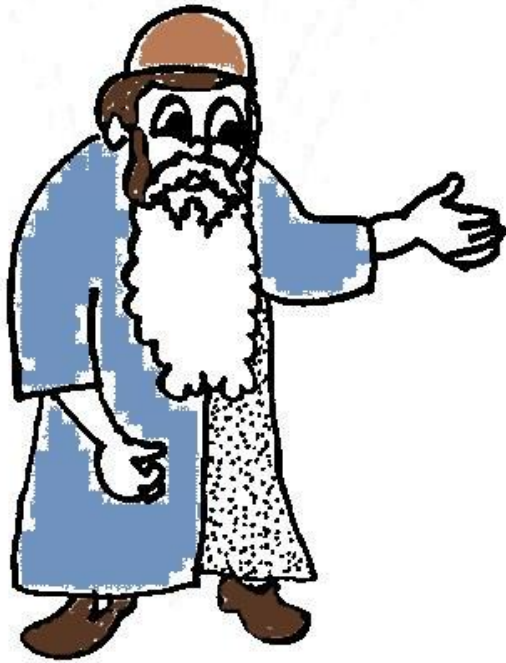
A long time ago in a country called Persia, in a city called Shushan, there lived a king by the name of **Ahashverosh** [Ahhh-haaash-verosh! Bless you!] King **Ahashverosh** [Ahhh-haaash-verosh! Bless you!] had a wife named **Vashti** [Yaaaaaay, Vashti!]. One night, when the king had a party at the palace, he commanded Queen **Vashti** [Yaaaaaay, Vashti!] to sing and dance for his guests.



Queen **Vashti** [Yaaaaaay, Vashti!] didn't take orders from anyone, even her husband the king. She put her hands on her hips and said, "I don't *think* so!" That made King **Ahashverosh** [Ahhh-haaash-verosh! Bless you!] very angry! He shook his finger at her and cried, "You, you, you... disobedient wife! How dare you ignore the wishes of the king?! You are banished from my court!" **Vashti** [Yaaaaaay, Vashti!] gasped and swept from the room with a swish of her skirts.



Over the next few weeks, King **Ahashverosh** [*Ahhh-haaash-verosh! Bless you!*] was very lonely. He missed Queen **Vashti** [*Yaaaaaay, Vashti!*], although he would never admit it to anyone. He called for his advisor, **Haman** [*Boo!*], and told him that he wanted to find a new wife. It was decided that there would be a beauty pageant and that King **Ahashverosh** [*Ahhh-haaash-verosh! Bless you!*] would choose his wife from among the contestants.

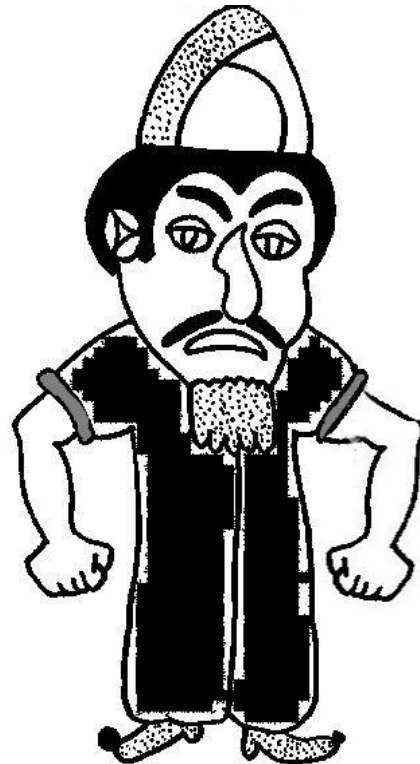


The news about the pageant spread throughout the land, and it came to the attention of a Jewish man named **Mordechai** [*Mordy, Mordy, he's our guy!*] who had a beautiful niece named **Esther** [*Go, Esther! Go Esther!*]. It occurred to **Mordechai** [*Mordy, Mordy, he's our guy!*] that his niece **Esther** [*Go, Esther! Go Esther!*] might win the eye of King **Ahashverosh** [*Ahhh-haaash-verosh! Bless you!*], and become the new queen!





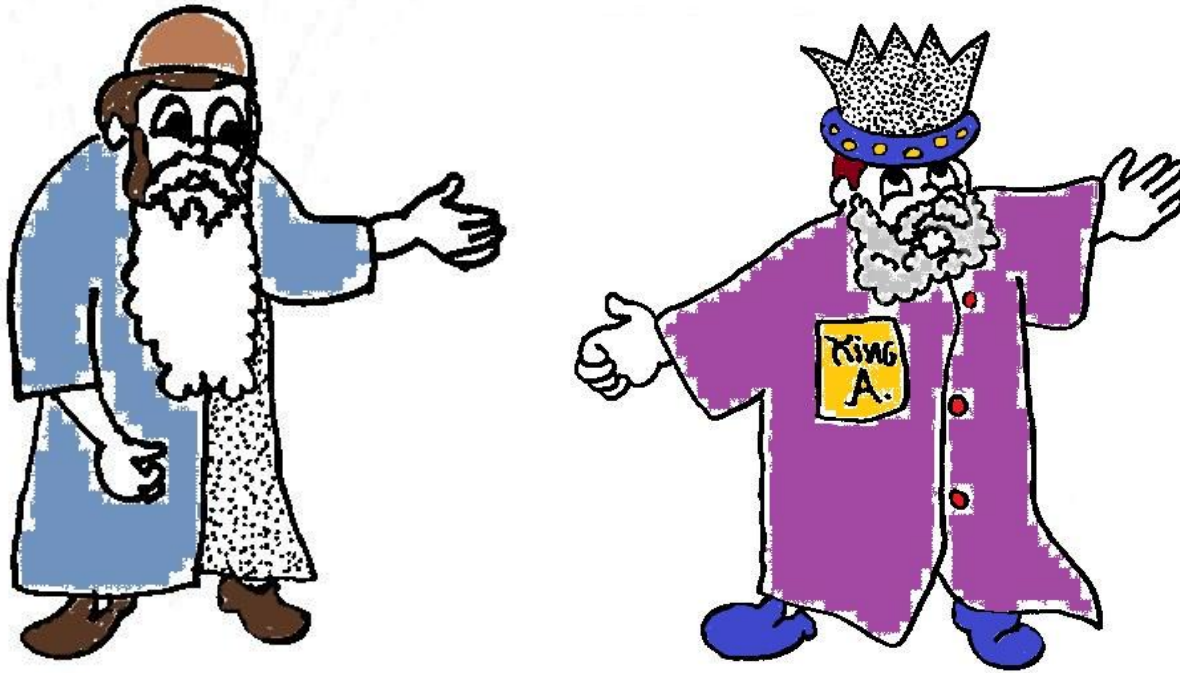
Meanwhile, the king had decreed that everyone in kingdom should bow down before his trusted advisor **Haman** [Boo!]. Most of the citizens of Shushan did what he commanded, but **Mordechai** [Mordy, Mordy, he's our guy!] and the rest of the Jews refused, saying they would only bow before God. **Haman** [Boo!] was furious when he saw that the Jews would not show their respect by bowing down to him. He threatened to kick the Jews out of Shushan on the 13th of Adar if they did not comply.



Mordechai [Mordy, Mordy, he's our guy!] went to the palace to tell **Esther** [Go, Esther! Go Esther!] about **Haman's** threat [Boo!]. On his way into the palace, he overheard two guards planning to hurt King **Ahashverosh** [Ahhh-haaash-verosh! Bless you!], and he hurried into the palace to reveal the evil plot, thus saving the king's life.



When the king heard about **Mordechai**'s loyalty [*Mordy, Mordy, he's our guy!*], he summoned **Haman** [*Boo!*] and told him he wanted to reward a very loyal subject. **Haman** [*Boo!*] thought that the king was talking about him, so he suggested a lavish reward of gold and diamonds and the honor of riding the king's favorite horse through the streets of the city. "Perfect!" cried King **Ahashverosh** [*Ahhh-haaash-verosh! Bless you!*], and declared that **Mordechai** [*Mordy, Mordy, he's our guy!*] would be thus rewarded. **Haman** [*Boo!*] turned purple with rage!



Meanwhile, the 13th of Adar was approaching! **Mordechai** [*Mordy, Mordy, he's our guy!*] told **Esther** [*Go, Esther! Go Esther!*] that it was time she told the king about **Haman's** plot [*Boo!*]. **Esther** [*Go, Esther! Go Esther!*] was very afraid to approach the king, because she remembered what had happened to Queen **Vashti** [*Yaaaaaay, Vashti!*] when she made the king angry.



Swallowing her fear, she entered the king's chamber and said, "Dear husband, I have some terrible news to tell you. Someone is threatening the Jews of Shushan! That includes **Mordechai** [*Mordy, Mordy, he's our guy!*]... and me! I am Jewish too."



King **Ahashverosh** [*Ahhh-haaash-verosh! Bless you!*] was outraged to hear about a plot against his loyal subject, **Mordechai** [*Mordy, Mordy, he's our guy!*], not to mention his beautiful new bride, **Esther** [*Go, Esther! Go Esther!*] He called **Haman** [*Boo!*] to his side and said, "You must do something about this terrible thing I have just heard!" and urged **Esther** [*Go, Esther! Go Esther!*] to repeat her news.





Esther [*Go, Esther! Go Esther!*] looked straight at **Haman** [*Boo!*] and summoned up all her courage and said, "You wicked, wicked man! I've told the king about your plan to hurt the Jews, including me!"

"**Haman** [*Boo! Hiss!*]" the king roared, "How dare you threaten my subjects?! How dare you threaten my queen?! You're FIRED! Leave Shushan and don't you dare show your wicked face here ever again!"



The End

