

Impurim

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It all started when word spread that King Achashverosh was looking for a new queen. The details about what happened to Vashti, the old queen, were a little vague. Some said she'd been killed. Others swore she'd been banished, or ran away. A few people insisted that she'd never existed in the first place, and that the search was going to result in yet another imaginary queen. Achashverosh was known to be something of an odd bird, so that wouldn't have been much of a surprise.

I didn't care one way or the other. Being the queen sounded like entirely too much work, and I wanted nothing to do with it. Besides, my Uncle Mordechai being the head rabbi would surely complicate things. But it wasn't up to me.

Maidens such as myself were brought in from across Persia's one hundred and twenty-seven provinces, whether we wanted to or not. At least I didn't have too far to travel, already living near the palace in the capital city of Susa. I felt terribly sorry for the thousands of girls brought in from the outer reaches of Persia, only to be sent back empty-handed.

Short trip or not, I still resented the palace eunuch when he showed up on my doorstep. Before I was taken away, Uncle Mordy pulled me aside.

"Esther," he whispered, "it would be for the best not to reveal that you're my niece. In fact, if they don't already know, you shouldn't mention that you're a Jew at all."

"Why not?" I replied, looking back at the eunuch waiting patiently outside the door. He was small, with hair which hung like a mop over his eyes. He couldn't

have been more than fourteen or fifteen years old, if that. I had no idea they started them that young. I'd never given it much thought at all. "Uncle Mordechai, you're always saying we should be proud of who we are."

"You're right," Mordy said, "I am, and we should be. But you're like Jonah going into the belly of the big fish, and you must be careful."

"Oh," I said, turning back to Mordy. "I didn't know the big fish hated the Jews. We just can't catch a break, can we?"

He gave me a look. You know, *that* look. "All right, all right," I said, raising my hands. "I won't tell them."

"Good," said Mordy, his countenance brightening as much as it ever did. We hugged. "May G-d be with you, Esther. I'll try to check up on you when I can."

With that, I left my home. As we walked to the palace, the eunuch introduced himself as Harbona. "I can help you win," he said.

"I don't want to win," I replied.

"Yes, you do," Harbona said urgently. "Trust me, you do not want to lose this contest. Bad things will happen." Harbona paused. "Speaking of bad things, do you know what happened to Vashti, the former queen?"

I shook my head.

Harbona said, "As you may know, King Achashverosh recently threw a six month party for his subjects."

"Yes," I said. "We didn't go, actually. My uncle—well, we didn't go."

Harbona continued. "Queen Vashti was busy with her own end of things, at the women's banquet, away from the drunken revelry of the men—"

"What were they doing?" I asked. "The women, I mean? At their party?"

"Different kinds of revelry," replied Harbona. "So Achashverosh summoned Vashti. He was very drunk—or, as he likes to say, 'merry with wine'—and wanted to show her off to his guests, as naked as G-d made her, to dazzle them with her beauty and show what a lucky King he was. Vashti refused. Depending on who you ask, she was either feeling contrary or she had a physical reason that she didn't want to be seen. I've heard whispers in the palace corridors that Achashverosh was unclean, that he picked up something from a girl in an outer province, and passed it on to Vashti. He's the jealous type, and would have assumed she was sneaking around behind his back. If I were a gambler, I'd put my money on that story.

"Whatever the reason, her refusal made Achashverosh angry. Not only did she disobey him, she did it in front of all his friends and advisers. He probably would have gotten over it soon enough, since his attention span is limited at best, but his ministers insisted that he make an example out of her. If word spread that the Queen had disobeyed the King, women everywhere might start disobeying *their* husbands, and then where would we be?"

I said nothing.

"Exactly," said Harbona. "He had Vashti put to death. A public execution of the Queen was not an option, even a Queen as 'wicked' as she, so he had her taken outside of Susa where the deed could be done without witnesses. He felt the example would still be set, without having the royalty impugned. Of course,

you're proof that the example *wasn't* set due to the secrecy, but that's King's logic for you.

"Anyway, Achashverosh sent her out with his most trusted eunuchs. There was a scuffle when they tried to murder Vashti, and one of the eunuchs, Zethar, was killed. Vashti was stronger than anyone realized, no doubt as a result of her 'wickedness.'" He paused. "Only Harbona lived to tell the tale."

"You?" I asked. "You were one of them?"

Harbona sighed. "A lot of people didn't trust me from the start, you know "I'm a descendant of Nebuchadnezzar, and even though nobody in Achashverosh's court cares about your people or the destruction of your Temple, they still used it as an excuse to look at me askance."

There was something going on that I just wasn't grasping. "My people? How did you know?"

Harbona laughed bitterly. "Really, the Nebuchadnezzar thing is blown out of proportion. I consider myself to be more of a student of Jezebel. Now, *that's* a woman who was misunderstood."

Suddenly, everything clicked. I stopped and grasped Harbona's arm, turning him to face me. I studied the face closely, considered the feel of the flesh under my fingers, what I could see of the shape of the body under the clothes—

"*Vashti?*"

Harbona—Vashti—nodded and smiled. "You figured it out quickly. Good. You're going to have to think on your feet a lot in the months and years ahead. If you make it in, that is, and I'm going to see that you do."

I was flabbergasted. "But, surely the king will recognize his wife, and can tell that you aren't really Harbona?"

"He hasn't yet. Achey isn't especially observant. Besides, just because Harbona and Zethar served him didn't mean they were his friends. They were his slaves, beneath him, and he made sure they never looked in his eyes, nor him in theirs. For that matter, he never paid much attention to me above my neck, and I'm small enough that I can hide what's below easily enough."

"Where is Harbona now?" I asked. "Did you kill him?"

"No," Vashti immediately replied, "but Zethar *is* dead. I didn't want to kill him, but it was either him or me. Harbona may have been loyal to Achey, but he never had a choice. I gave him the choice to be free. He took it." Vashti's smile faded. "Your uncle was right, you know. It's best not to let them know you're a Jew." Seeing the look on my face, she added, "I couldn't hear what the two of you were saying, but it wasn't too difficult to figure out."

"No," I replied weakly, my head dropping. "I suppose it wasn't." This was all so overwhelming.

"Trust me," Vashti said. She put her hand on my chin and raised my eyes to hers. Her touch sent a shock through me, as though her fingertips contained lightning. "We're on a mission from G-d."

For someone he was going to mostly ignore anyway, Achey took his own sweet time choosing his new Queen. Eleven months passed before he came close to being ready, eleven months of relentless training and anointing of this and oiling

of that. As she promised, Vash kept close by, telling me everything she knew about what Achey looked for in a woman. The more she told me, the less I liked him. But my feelings about him were not the point.

I was brought before him, and it all worked—my pose, the way I arched my eyebrows, all of Vash's instructions. Achey favored me, and became the new Queen. He gave a banquet in my honor to the royalty and servants alike, celebrating my ascendancy.

Newly crowned Queen or not, I did not dare ask to invite Uncle Mordy to the feast. He'd taken to lurking around the palace gates, hoping to hear some news of me. I ventured out to speak to him whenever I could.

One day, Mordy overheard the eunuchs guarding the gate plotting to kill Achey. Not that Mordy realized that's what he was hearing; indeed, he was somewhat confused by it. "What does it mean, Esther, to 'put wormwood in his wine?'"

I wouldn't have known myself if Vash hadn't made a passing reference to wormwood once. "It means they're plotting to kill Achey," I said. I began to hurry back into the palace, then turned back and said, "And you've just saved his life." Seeing the look on Mordy's face, I added, "It's a good thing."

The would-be poisoners were caught and executed, and Mordy was written up in Achey's Book of Chronicles. It's a good thing, too, since Achey soon forgot about Mordy's lifesaving deed. He didn't retain things very well.

Then, Haman arrived.

Few of Achey's decisions were especially bright, but appointing Haman as Prime Minister was one of the worst. If he'd *only* had a head as big as all of Persia or *only* been a raging Jew-hater, it would have been bad enough. Put the two of them together, and he was very, very dangerous.

The first thing Haman did was ask Achey to order everyone to bow before him. (Before Haman, that is. Everybody already bowed before Achey.) Achey agreed, and everyone complied.

Everyone except Mordy, that is. It was known that he had a bad neck and back, and bowing wasn't physically possible for him. He came as close as his body would allow during service and prayer, and he believed G-d understood that he was doing his best.

Haman, on the other hand, took great offense. That it was a Jew evidently refusing to bow made it all the worse. Naturally, he complained to Achey.

I paced back and forth in my chamber, fully expecting Haman to have Mordechai executed. What could I do to stop it? Would Achey listen to me, if he even deigned to see me?

The door opened slightly, and Vash stuck her head in.

"What?" I demanded. "What's happened?"

"Mordechai is not going to be executed," Vash said, stepping inside and shutting the door behind her. "Haman thinks bigger than that."

"Meaning *what*?" I asked impatiently. Vash was often vague. It was part of her charm, but sometimes it could be maddening.

"Meaning he's going to execute *all* the Jews in Persia, and take their goods as plunder. Achey even gave Haman his signet ring to make it an irrevocable royal decree." She stepped closer and placed her hand on my cheek. I usually

enjoyed the feel of her flesh, but now I hardly even noticed. "You've gone pale, dear."

"But," I stammered, "he can't do that—"

"Yes, he can," snapped Vash. She took a deep breath and dropped her hand. "I'm sorry, Esther, but you need to understand that as Prime Minister, that's *exactly* the kind of thing Haman can do. He was just looking for a reason. I'm surprised it took him as long as it did. For whatever it's worth, Haman bribed Achey with ten thousand pieces of silver which he stole out of the king's coffers. If that helps."

It didn't help. I sat down on the edge of my bed. More thinking aloud than actually asking a question, I said, "Because they don't know I'm a Jew, I'll be spared? Is that how it'll work?" My stomach began to feel queasy, and I put my hand to my mouth. Maybe this was why my Uncle told me to pretend to be a gentile, because he knew a pogrom was coming. My mind reeled at the implications. What right did I have to live?

Vash sat down and put her arm around my shoulders. Her embrace was warm and reassuring. At that moment, it felt as though nothing else could ever comfort me again. "Even if they knew," she said, "they wouldn't be bursting through your door too soon. Nothing's going to happen until Adar. Haman's something of a gambler, and when I suggested in passing that he draw lots to choose the date, he couldn't resist. Of course, it could have ended up being tomorrow, but I guess we got lucky. So to speak."

I stood up. "I have to tell Mordy."

"Yes, though I think you'll find he already knows."

"He probably already broken out the sackcloth and ashes," I murmured to myself.

Vash raised an eyebrow. "Pardon?"

“Never mind,” I said.

“Anyway,” Vash said, “news of this sort spreads quickly. Haman would want the Jews to know of their impending doom, to let them twist in the wind. They can't just *die*. He has to know they've suffered in anticipation.”

“Right,” I sneered, walking to the door. “Because we haven't suffered enough as it is.”

“Something like that,” she replied sadly. “What are you going to do after you tell your Uncle?”

I looked back at Vash. “I wish I knew.”

Vash was right. Mordy knew, and he was taking it hard. I tried to convince him that the sackcloth and ashes weren't necessary, that it was like admitting defeat. As usual, he wouldn't listen, nor would he accept the clothes I brought him.

In spite of his miserable appearance, Mordy was not entirely defeatist. “You have to talk to King Achashverosh, convince him not to go through with this.”

“It's not as easy as that,” I said. “He's in one of his hermit moods. Anyone who approaches him without being summoned may be killed. Yes, even me. If he cared that much about his Queen, then Vash would still be alive.” As soon as the words were out of my mouth, I laughed involuntarily, then coughed to hide the laugh. Fortunately, Mordy didn't notice.

“Esther, your life is at risk along with mine and everyone else's. Your secret can't last forever, and being in the palace won't save you if the worst happens. For all we know, this is why G-d chose you to be the new Queen.”

I sighed. "You have a point. All right, I'll speak to him. I'm going to need your help, though."

"What can I do?" Mordy asked.

Not sure what words were going to come out of my mouth, I said, "Tell all the Jews in the city to fast and repent for the next three days. On the third day, I'll go before Achey."

"Achey?" Mordy sounded confused.

"Sorry. Achashverosh. Achey's what Vash—" I coughed again. "It's a long story. Anyway, I'll try to talk to him, and whatever happens, happens."

Mordy nodded and said, "May G-d be with you." With that, he turned and left.

Now all I needed to do was save my people.

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It hit me late on the second day of fasting. *Food*. Of course! Vash once said that the true measure of a woman's power over a man is how much he likes her cooking. She insisted that whatever influence Jezebel may have had over Ahab was a result of her fantastic dolma--she marinated the grape leaves in a secret concoction passed down through generations of Sidonian woman. I'm wasn't sure how much I believed that particular detail, but otherwise, it made sense.

I spent most of the third day preparing a banquet. There was no shortage of servants, but I did as much of it myself as I could. It mattered to me, whether Achey knew the difference or not. I'd done very little actual work since becoming the Queen. If the unthinkable happened, I needed to know that I'd done *something*, that I'd fought the good fight, that I'd gotten my fingernails dirty, even if it was with lamb meat and hummus.

Afterwards, I got dressed and made up with help from Vash. She knew better than anyone what he liked, and was even able to find some of her old jewelry in the storerooms. If there was a particular pair of earrings which turned him on, so much the better.

I entered the inner court. This was it. I took as deep a breath as my corset would allow, and stepped into the King's Hall.

When Achey saw me, he smiled. Good start. He raised his golden scepter. Even better, as it meant I could approach him. Unfortunately, protocol also demanded that I touch the top of the scepter. Sometimes I wondered why he didn't just pull down his trousers and be done with it.

I walked slowly and deliberately to the throne. I placed my hand on the top of the scepter, then rang my fingers up and down it slowly, gripping it ever so slightly. I smiled the way Vash showed me. It wasn't quite the same as the smile she'd taught me for the contest; if I'd smiled like that back then, I probably would have been disqualified and executed as a shiksa. This time, however, it sent exactly the right message. Not a *true* message, perhaps, but the necessary one.

"What can I do for you, Esther?" Achey asked. "Name it, and it's yours. Would you like some provinces, perhaps? I could easily give you a few."

I almost blurted out *no, but I'd really appreciate it if you didn't slaughter my people*. I caught myself in time and said, "Just your presence at a banquet this evening, my liege. You, and your most trusted adviser. I refer, of course, to Haman."

Achashverosh stood. "Then I shall have Haman summoned, and—"

Before Achey could finish his sentence, Haman appeared at his side as if out of nowhere. I swear, he hadn't been in the room before. "I'm here, sire."

"Oh!" said Achey. "Good. To the banquet, then."

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Vash didn't actually know Jezebel's dolma recipe, but Achey and Haman were more than pleased with the private feast. Haman was practically glowing to have been invited. I'm not entirely sure why, since he knows as well as anyone that I have no real power. It could just be because he's a middle-aged man and I'm a pretty young girl. That's all it takes.

Harbona was the server. It was comforting to have Vash in the room, even if she was often in the shadows.

Achey was once again "merry with wine" when he asked the inevitable. "So, Esther, just what is it you want? Please, tell me. And I was serious about the provinces. Take half. I'll even give you some of the good ones." He laughed at his own joke, and Haman added, "Right, the provinces without Jews." Achey laughed even harder, and Haman's already smug expression increased a tenfold.

I was about to ask the big question, to plea for clemency, but I was suddenly filled the certainty that I needed to wait a little longer. Maybe it was Haman's comment, or maybe it was something else. I replied, "All I ask is your presence tomorrow night for another feast, dear. Then, I might have a request or two." I paused to let that sink in through Achey's alcoholic haze, then turned to Haman. "And you too, of course. The King's right hand."

"Tomorrow night, then!" Achey said. Haman simply nodded. He looked like his heart was going to burst with joy. Mine felt like it wanted to shrivel up.

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I was rudely awakened the next morning by Vash, standing over my bed. "Get up, Esther." She sounded like she was barely containing a fit of giggles. "Come on, you have to see this."

She led me to my window overlooking the city square. A man was being led around on horseback, wearing royal robes and a crown. I couldn't quite figure out who it was, but it looked like—no, that can't be right—

"Yes," Vash laughed. "That's Mordechai."

I couldn't believe what I was seeing. "Is that *Haman* leading the horse? What's going on?"

"Achey couldn't sleep last night," Vash said. "He ordered me to read to him from the Book of Chronicles. He didn't say *which* part, so naturally I read about your uncle saving his life. Achey asked if Mordechai had ever been compensated or honored, and I told him the truth.

"Just then, Haman came in. He looked bloodthirsty, like a dog about to dig into a warm carcass. Before Haman could speak, Achey asked him for the best way to treat a man the King wants to honor. Haman being Haman, he immediately assumed Achey was referring to *him*, so he described the royal treatment now playing out below us." Vash snickered. "Achey said, 'Find Mordechai the Jew, and do those very things to him!' Oh, the look on Haman's face...you have never seen someone more flustered. It was brilliant. I wish I could have a portrait of him looking like that.

"Haman started ranting about how Mordechai never bows down to him even though he's the King's right hand, and that he and his sons built a gallows to hang Mordechai—"

My disbelief turned to outright terror, and I tore myself away from the window. "He's going to hang Uncle Mordy? Why didn't you tell me that to begin with?"

"Because he's not going to," Vash said. "At least not yet. Achey ignored Haman's protests, and ordered him to do as he was told. Mordy will be safe until at least tonight. But perhaps not for long after."

"That settles it," I said. "Tonight, the deception ends."

Haman was late to the second banquet, and in a foul mood to boot. Achey was unhappy with both Haman's attitude and his tardiness. Perfect. I was going to need all the leverage I could get.

As Vash refilled Achey's wine for the eighth time that evening, I stood up from the table. "My liege, I would now like to make my request."

"Good!" Achey said, beaming. "It's the provinces, right? You've definitely earned them. I can give you—"

"No, sir," I said. I walked to the couch and draped myself across it. "Pardon my interruption, but I don't want land. Rather, I'm concerned with the welfare of the people living on it. A great number of your subjects are due to be exterminated on the thirteenth of Adar, including myself, for I am one of them." So far, so good. Of course, Kings need to believe that everything is about *them*, so I added, "If we were just going to be sold into slavery I wouldn't say anything, but the loss of so much life in your kingdom would surely be tragic to you."

Achey slammed down his cup. "You're damn right it would be! What wicked soul is behind this?"

I pointed at Haman. "Him."

Haman was pointing already back at me, baffled. "She's...a...*Jew*? She's a *Jew*!"

Achashverosh roared in anger and overturned the table. I tensed for a moment. *Who* was he angry at, exactly? Me, or Haman?

The king turned to Haman and roared, "You'll pay for this!" With that, he stormed out into the palace garden.

Haman over to me, pleading for his life. Vash emerged from the shadows just long enough to extend a foot, and Haman tumbled onto the couch . Having him so close made my skin crawl.

Achey came back from his garden foray; he'd been gone just long enough to stomp some flowers. His anger grew upon seeing Haman on the couch, even in such an awkward and clearly unintentional position. "You would assault my queen? Worse, you would do it in my presence, in my own *home*?"

Without having to be asked, Vash and two eunuchs covered the struggling Haman's face with a sack. They knew were this was going. "My liege," Vash said helpfully, "Haman did say he and his sons built a gallows for Mordechai—the man who saved your life."

"Take him there, and hang him on that!"

"Yes, sir," Vash said. She shot me a look which I couldn't quite read. I think it was one of victory.

Victory is a relative thing.

To make up for the whole "ordering the death of my people" business, Achey gave us Haman's house, and Uncle Mordy became the King's new Prime Minister. A nice gesture, but there was still the problem of the impending death of my people. Royal edicts can not be revoked, which Vash describes as "the tendency of Kings to make rocks so heavy they can't lift them." Instead, he told Mordy to write a decree allowing the Jews to rise up and defend themselves, and Achey would make the decree royal and equally irrevocable with his ring.

Women are not allowed to join in the writing process, Queens or otherwise.

The decree was issued, unseen by me, and it had the desired effect of inspiring the Jews to prepare to defend themselves. It also had the puzzling effect of Gentiles converting to Judaism out of fear. Fear of *what*? The pogrom was against the Jews, after all. Except for the King's forces, saddled with the sorry task of mass murder, what did anyone else have to worry about?

Finally, the thirteenth of Adar arrived, Haman's lot-chosen day. Achey was fond of saying that the best defense is a good offense, and the Jews of Persia seemed to take it to heart. Not only did they slay those who had been ordered to kill them, they also smote many others, common people who were not in the military. Hundreds were dying in Susa alone, and Achey wasn't lifting a finger. Something about this felt very wrong.

I went into the library and looked at a copy of the decree. It was unclear on a few points. There was a brief mention of "armed forces," but otherwise it could easily be interpreted to mean "kill anyone who *might* present a threat now or in the future," soldier or citizen. And that's just how it was being carried out: anyone who'd ever given my people a dirty look was ripe for slaughter. They were also allowed to plunder their enemy's goods, but that seemed like a minor detail. Even if women were allowed to write decrees, Mordy would have kept me out of this one.

I entered the King's Court, shocked. Upon seeing me, Achey said, "Haman's tens sons, who helped him build the gallows intended for Mordechai, have been killed. Would you like their bodies hung in the city square, or in front of their home?"

I stopped dead in my tracks. This was too much. Haman may have been an evil man, but *they* didn't deserve to die for *his* sins, for obeying their father. For all I knew, Haman didn't even tell them *who* he intended to hang. Granted, Haman

was never one to keep his hatred to himself, and he probably passed it on to his sons over the years.

I glanced over at Vash, in her usual place in the shadows. There was nothing she could do to help, but it was good to know she was there, to draw from her strength.

"Neither," I said.

"Neither? Where *do* you want them hung?"

Uh-oh. "In truth, my liege, I don't want anything to be done to their bodies."

"Nothing?" Achey replied in disbelief. "Have you already forgotten what Haman did, the threat he presented to you and your people?"

"Of course I haven't forgotten," I snapped, harsher than I should have. More softly, I continued, "I'll never forget what he tried to do. But he failed, and there's no need to desecrate the bodies of his children."

"You misunderstand," Achey growled. "I wish to do this for you. Are you denying me?"

I closed my eyes tightly, feeling them grow watery. Painful emotions assaulted me, regret and terror and an overwhelming desire to be somewhere else. To be *someone* else. I opened my eyes, and a tear rolled down my right cheek. "No, my liege. I would never do such a thing. Please, hang their bodies in front of their home."

"Excellent!" Achey said, looking happy. Downright magnanimous, in fact. Achey summoned Vash from out of the shadows and said, "See to it."

The look Vash gave me before she left was not one of victory. She looked as heartsick as I felt.

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By the fourteenth, seventy-five thousand people had been slaughtered throughout the provinces, all by Jews. Word had it that every last one of them was an enemy, a Jew-hater deserving to die, no question, not a single innocent life lost, no not one.

Mordechai was thrilled. He was especially proud that there was no plundering, even though it had been expressly permitted in the royal decree. Our people simply killed tens of thousands of their enemies, but they didn't *rob* them. To Uncle Mordy, that was a sign of true morality.

Meanwhile, I lying down was in my chamber, wishing I could disappear. My people had prevailed, had survived an attempt to exterminate us—not for the first time, and probably not for the last—but at what price? And why did *I* have to be in the middle of it?

Vash was sitting next to the bed, dabbing at my forehead with a wet cloth. "I guess it didn't go quite the way we hoped," she said.

"Didn't go quite the way we hoped," I repeated. "When you aren't being vague, Vash, you're indulging in your gift for understatement."

"Thank you," she said. "I'll take that as a compliment. But I think what you need to consider is that it may not have been up to us, that the way we hoped it would go was never the point."

"I don't follow," I said.

"Weren't there times when you weren't sure *why* you did something? You just did it without thinking about it?"

I propped myself up on my elbow. "Now that you mention it, there were." I thought for a moment. "Like when I told Uncle Mordy that we needed to fast. Or

when I asked for the second banquet with Achey and Haman. I'm not sure why I said those things. They just...came to me."

"Right," Vash said, nodding. "Or when I stepped forward and tripped Haman. I wasn't thinking that I wanted to trip him; I just felt compelled to put my foot out."

I said, "When we met, you said we were on a mission from G-d. I thought you were just being poetic."

"At the time, I wasn't entirely sure what I meant," she replied. "But I suspect I may have been right. What's important now is that you don't feel guilty. You've done good, played your part, and you're not responsible for the actions of others."

"When I last saw Uncle Mordy," I said, "he was writing it in the Book of Chronicles, proclaiming this to be a day of celebration for future generations. He said my name will be forever associated with the events of the last two days, with the Purim."

"History is written by the winners," Vash said, "and you *are* the winner, thank G-d. Is it such a bad thing to be remembered as the savior of your people?"

I sighed. "I suppose not. I'm just afraid that my own story will never be told."

Without saying a word, Vash got up and left the room. She returned with parchment and a stylus.

"Then tell it," she said.

So I did.



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