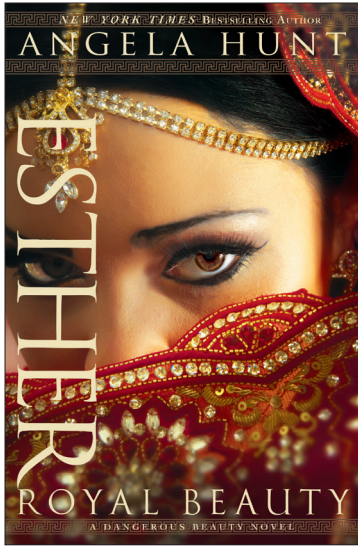




## QUESTIONS & ANSWERS WITH ANGELA HUNT



### **Esther: Royal Beauty**

A DANGEROUS BEAUTY NOVEL  
by Angela Hunt

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### **1. I'm sure you hear this question a lot, but since your novel about Esther contains stories not usually included in the tale, how much of your story is fact and how much fiction?**

Since I'm not much for creating *ex nihilo*, nearly all of the major events in *Esther: Royal Beauty* come either from Scripture, Jewish tradition, or the historian Herodotus's report on the Persians, written after Alexander the Great conquered them in 331 BC. Herodotus may have relied on hearsay, but his accounts are certainly fascinating.

### **2. You have given Mordecai a wife and Esther a fiancé, but Scripture mentions neither. Why did you feel free to create these characters?**

Scripture nearly always gives us unadorned accounts, but we can rely on tradition and common sense to fill in some details. Since a duty of Jewish men was to marry and have children, it's safe to assume that Mordecai did have a wife at some point. And for the same reason, we can assume that Esther was betrothed to some young man from among her people.

### **3. Harbonah is a peripheral character in the biblical account, yet you have placed him center stage and made him a principal narrator. Why did you choose him?**

For two reasons: First, I needed a point-of-view character to be able to report on happenings Esther would have no knowledge of. Using Harbonah as a viewpoint character allowed me to have "eyes" in the palace before she was taken to the harem. Second, I was fascinated by the true account of little boys being given to the king, castrated, and used in royal service. History tells us that five hundred boys arrived at the palace each year to be made into eunuchs. Since they were numerous enough to virtually control the king's household, I wanted someone to tell their story.

### **4. I had always been under the impression that Esther was part of a royal beauty pageant in which the winner was chosen to be queen, yet you paint quite a different picture. Why?**

I doubt any woman today would want to be part of the regimen Esther had to endure. In exchange for daily beauty treatments and life in the palace, these young women had to surrender their freedom and become the king's sexual slave—and not just any king, but one who was temperamental and deadly. And beauty is so subjective. I'm convinced that Esther was no more beautiful than many of the other girls, but she had some indefinable quality that attracted Xerxes. So I asked myself: What personality trait could she exhibit that none of the other women was likely to? My answer was self-deprecating humor.

### **5. In the beginning of your story, Esther is more fascinated by worldly Persia than by the God of her fathers. Why did you give her that mind-set?**

Again, two reasons: First, I think it's logical. Mordecai had chosen not to return to Jerusalem, though he could have if he were of a more pious nature. He was a successful businessman, and he chose to remain in Persia and worship God as he went about his business. Second, I look at Christian young people around me—the world entices them. It's attractive and it's persuasive. All Christians today face the lure of the world and all it offers, and we have to find our place in it while keeping our focus on spiritual things. It's a challenge to be in the world and not of it. I believe Esther faced the same challenge.