

Esther-Day: A Beatles Purim Spiel

by A.M. Matte

Characters:

Narrators, Molly and Desmond

Queen Vashti In The Sky

King Ahasuargeant Pepper

Nowhere (Ha)man, the King's Prime Minister

Esther, a very modern young woman

Mordechai, Esther's Cousin

Note: Pauses are written into the text after each mention of Haman, in order to allow time for noisemakers.

The set can be covered in Beatles paraphernalia, or be reminiscent of the 1960s.

Curtain.

The Narrators are on stage, in the Beatles' signature hairstyles.

Narrator Molly

Shalom everyone and come together to hear the story of Purim. It took place in Persia a long and winding road ago.

Narrator Desmond

So sit back and let the evening go; we hope you will enjoy the show. In the beautiful kingdom of Shushan ruled a king who spent eight days a week having fun.

Enter Vashti In The Sky and Ahasuargeant Pepper.

Narrator Molly

A queen named Vashti In The Sky was his royal wife. As the story goes, the king saw her standing there and they were wed shortly after. He loved her, yeah, yeah, yeah, and she said the same. That is, until he commanded Queen Vashti In The Sky to twist and shout for royal men of the land.

Vashti In The Sky

There is no way, man, that I'm going to your party as anything other than a guest. I'm your wife, a *queen*, not your servant. I won't dance for you and support a decrepit patriarchy, no way.

Narrator Desmond

Vashti In The Sky, perhaps one of the first feminists in recorded history, refused the King's demand. Making a bold statement that women were to be treated with dignity.

Vashti In The Sky

To the tune of the Beatles' *Yellow Submarine*

In the town where I was born
Lived a girl who became queen
And she lived a sheltered life
In the land of Shushan green
But the king was not so fun
He was dumb and sometimes mean
So the queen, she gave a wave,
For a much needed change of scene

I'd much rather be giving the vaccine
Than be his hot queen, you know what I mean
I'd much rather be giving the vaccine
Than be his hot queen, you know what I mean

And so I'll join the front lines
That has always been my dream
I will help all those in need
Matanot l'evyonim

I'd much rather be giving the vaccine
Than be his hot queen, you know what I mean
I'd much rather be giving the vaccine
Than be his hot queen, you know what I mean

Vashti In The Sky and Ahasuargeant Pepper exit.

Narrator Desmond

Vashti In The Sky was banished - away she went, past Strawberry Fields, beyond the Norwegian Wood, farther than the Isle of Wight, and across the universe, out of Shushan to take care of all the lonely people.

Narrator Molly

Meanwhile, from the palace, an announcement went out throughout the land. Given that his bird had flown, the king was searching for a new queen, to be chosen in an unusual way: a beauty competition. Who said all you need is love?

Narrator Desmond

All the maidens of the land were forced to appear, from here, there and everywhere. One came through the bathroom window.

Narrator Molly

Another came from Penny Lane.

Narrator Desmond

Is that across the street from Abbey Road?

Narrator Molly

No, from Blue Jay Way. Another maiden came from back in the USSR, and yet another was a paperback writer. The final contestant came from downtown Shushan, a girl with the sun in her eyes, a woman who understands, an on-trend chick, accompanied by her cousin Mordechai.

Enter Esther and Mordechai.

Mordechai

I know it, my dear, with your grace and your charm, you will blow them away. You have everything a king could want, and more. Just...maybe don't tell him that we are Jewish. Do you promise not to tell?

Esther

I'll keep it under wraps if that's what it takes to become Queen. It's the next step in my plan to become world-famous. I'll enter the contest, and I'll go viral. Even if I don't win the crown, I'll sure get more sponsors.

Enter Nowhere (Ha)Man, in a three-cornered hat.

Mordechai

Oh, you'll win. You're more popular than—gee willickers, would you look at that hat!

Mordechai and Esther stare at Nowhere (Ha)Man, walking around like he owns the place.

Esther

There's a choice. Who is that?

Narrator Desmond

Baby, he's a rich man.

Narrator Molly

He's the taxman.

Narrator Desmond

He is the walrus.

Narrator Molly

He's a real Nowhere (Ha)Man (pause).

Nowhere (Ha)Man

Bow down to me now, bow down, come together over me and bow down. I am an important figure, the King's right-hand man — I control everything (*stage whisper*) even the king! Bow down!

Esther

Oy.

(*Turning to Mordechai.*)

Ok, game face on. Stay close, ok? I'm going to win this, and I need you. To, you know, occasionally hold my purse.

Enter Ahasuargeant Pepper.

Narrator Molly

The contest was held — the entire kingdom poised to see the outcome, and Esther, of course, swept the competition away.

Esther

To the tune of the Beatles' *Drive My Car*

Ask a woman what she wants to be
I say « Baby, can't you see
I want to be famous, star of Tik Tok screen,
In the meantime I can be a queen. »

Baby I will wear your crown
I surely won't let you down
Baby I will wear your crown
And maybe I'll love you.

King tells a woman that his prospects are good
I say « Baby, it's understood
We will go viral, it's all very fine
Your likes will soon be as high as mine. »

Baby I will wear your crown
I surely won't let you down
Baby I will wear your crown
And maybe I'll love you.

Tik Tok'm Tik Tok yeah
Tik Tok'm Tik Tok yeah

Narrator Desmond

So Ahasuargeant Pepper chose Esther, and she was now queen. There was something in the way she moved; she had significant status and power. But, she still had to

obey the king's rules, such as never to go to him unless summoned, under penalty of death. I know, crazy, man.

Esther and Ahasuargeant Pepper exit, with Nowhere (Ha)Man close behind.

Narrator Molly

Even crazier was when, shortly after his cousin entered the palace as queen, Mordechai came across two guards plotting to assassinate King Ahasuargeant Pepper!

Narrator Desmond

Mordechai wasted no time in exposing the plot, thereby saving the king. This exploit was recorded in an official book, sealed away in the annals of the kingdom.

Mordechai exits, as Ahasuargeant Pepper enters, miming being sleepy.

Narrator Molly

Mordechai's mitzvah could have gone unnoticed by the king, but one night, when he should have been sleeping like a log, Ahasuargeant Pepper demanded a bedtime story.

Ahasuargeant Pepper

Golden slumbers do not fill my eyes. Read to me from my favourite story — the King's Chronicles!

Narrator Desmond

Ahasuargeant Pepper heard of Mordechai's loyalty in the Book of Good Deeds and he wanted to recognize this impressive citizen.

Ahasuargeant Pepper

Who is this Mordechai who saved me from the brink by foiling the guards' ploy? I must reward him - Nowhere (Ha)Man, (pause)!

Enter Nowhere (Ha)Man.

Ahasuargeant Pepper

A question to you: How can the king honour a brave man, who has saved my kingdom through heroic deeds that have not before been properly recognized?

Nowhere (Ha)Man

(Aside.)

Well, this hero he's honouring must surely be me; it's about time!

(To Ahasuargeant Pepper.)

I think, my dear King, no reward is too great. Shower him with diamonds from the sky and fabulous clothing and let him ride your horse throughout this fair city!

To the tune of the Beatles' *I Want To Hold Your Hand*

Oh, yeah, I'll tell you somethin'

I think you'll understand
That he deserves somethin'
The hero of the land
The hero of the land
The hero of the land
Oh, please, say to me
You'll let me be this man
That he will be free
To lord and to command
And sit by your right hand
As hero of the land

And then on a tall
Horse he happens to ride
Covered in jewels to the point
He can't hide
He can't hide
He can't hide
Yeah, you give that somethin'
All to this hero man
He can't help but jump in
And in this honour stand
To be your right-hand man
As hero of the land

As hero of the land!

Ahasuargeant Pepper

Perfect. Make it so, dear Nowhere (Ha)Man (pause), my right-hand man. Bring forth Mordechai the Jew! Instruct my tailors, my jewelers, my groomers to spare no expense to honour the man who saved the king!

Enter Mordechai. Ahasuargeant Pepper shakes his hand and pats him on the back while Narrator Desmond speaks.

Narrator Desmond

Nowhere (Ha)Man (pause) was astounded, speechless; did he gently weep? No! He went helter-skelter and felt his anger spread and explode out of him. To make up for this slight of the king's, the cruel, crusty guy kept bellowing at the top of his lungs:

Ahasuargeant Pepper exits.

Nowhere (Ha)Man

(To Mordechai.)

Bow down, bow down *now* I command! Or you will have to answer to me. I am the law in this land.

Mordechai

I, Mordechai, refuse to obey - I bow only to G-D. I will not bow down to someone of your ilk, especially not in *that* hat.

Mordechai exits.

Narrator Molly

Nowhere (Ha)Man's (pause) would not turn his back on the insult.

Nowhere (Ha)Man

You'll regret this, you peon! I'll get you or my name's not Nowhere (Ha)Man! (pause) The Jew, Mordechai, has infected my thoughts and now I can't stop until I eliminate him and everyone he holds dear. I'll draw lots, and on the day decided by fate, all the Jews of Persia shall die!

Narrator Desmond

Into his three-cornered hat Nowhere (Ha)Man (pause) did cast all of the dates. And out came the thirteenth of Adar.

Nowhere (Ha)Man

Make ready the gallows! Adar is nigh.

Nowhere (Ha)Man exits.

Narrator Molly

Soon, the news spread throughout the land that an edict from the palace condemned all Jews to death. Esther and Mordechai were beside themselves -- and each other -- to figure out what could be done.

Enter Mordechai and Esther.

Mordechai

Oy. Yesterday, all my troubles seemed so far away. Now it looks as though they're here to stay.

Esther

What will we do?

Mordechai

We have two alternatives. Give up or carry on. You must tell the King about this heinous plot of Nowhere (Ha)Man's (pause).

Esther

Cousin, this is a big gamble. You say you want a revolution, well, you know: we all want to save the world; *tikkun olam*. But, what about my followers, if this doesn't work? I can't approach Ahasuargeant Pepper without his permission, it'll be the end of me: he'd delete my Tik Tok and Insta accounts!

Mordechai

If that happens, you'll just have to settle for Twitter. But you got this. Use your brains and your charm and your funniest meme to defeat Nowhere (Ha)Man (pause) and prevent his atrocious crime.

Mordechai retreats to a corner of the stage while Ahasuargeant Pepper enters across the stage from Esther, who makes her way to him as Narrator Molly speaks.

Narrator Molly

So, Esther planned a party, a very particular banquet, serving tangerine trees, marmalade skies, savoy truffles, marshmallow and honey pies, and glass onions. And she marched towards the king to invite him to this party.

Narrator Desmond

Although shocked to see her, the King's heart went boom and he crossed the room to his queen.

Esther and Ahasuargeant Pepper meet centre stage.

Ahasuargeant Pepper

What a pleasure to see you, my queen.

Esther

I'm pleased you're pleased. After all, I've come un-summoned to your side. Would you do me the honour of joining me at a banquet tonight? You can bring Nowhere (Ha)Man (pause).

Enter Nowhere (Ha)Man.

Narrator Molly

The two men were delighted to attend the banquet, where they enjoyed creme tangerines, Montelimar nougat, and coffee desserts.

Narrator Desmond

The banquet was so successful that Esther invited them once more the very next night, where the king and Nowhere (Ha)Man (pause) gorged themselves all over again.

Esther

Turn off your mind, relax, and float downstream, gentlemen.

Narrator Molly

Which they did. Meanwhile, Esther sat on her rug, biding her time and drinking her wine, until the king asked her if there was anything he could do for her, in return for her generous hospitality.

Narrator Desmond

Risking her life, Esther told him the story of Nowhere (Ha)Man's (pause) evil plan to exterminate the Jews.

Esther

My king, listen, do you want to know a secret? Your prime minister is planning to kill all the Jews. That means Mordechai, and all of his kin, which includes me. I am Jewish, too, and if you let him pursue this plan, he will kill all of my people...and me, as well. Please, spare us, don't let me down!

Ahasuargeant Pepper

Never! My dear wife, I cannot and will not let this happen. I will save you and spare the Jews, today!

Nowhere (Ha)Man slips out during the king's song.

Ahasuargeant Pepper

To the tune of the Beatles' Hey Jude.

Hey Jews, don't be afraid
Take a sad song and make it better
Remember that Esther is on your side
And so am I, to make it better

Hey Jews, please don't be sad
You were made to make the world better
Remember, I've let her into my heart
So I can start, to make it better

And anytime you feel the fear, hey Jews, don't tear
Or carry the world upon your shoulders
For well you know that it's a fool who tries to kill
And I'll make his world a little colder

Hey Jews, it won't be bad
Take a sad song and make it better
Remember, I've let her under my skin
So we begin to make it better

Better better better better better better, oh.

Na na na nananana, nannana, hey Jews...

Na na na nananana, nannana, hey Jews...

Narrator Molly

King Ahasuargeant Pepper beckoned his Number Two under the pretense of asking him advice. Nowhere (Ha)Man (pause), of course, slunk right in.

Enter Nowhere (Ha)Man.

Ahasuargeant Pepper

Ah, just the man we are looking for. Esther, dear Esther, tell Nowhere (Ha)Man (pause) what's up.

Esther

(To Nowhere (Ha)Man.)

You wicked, wicked man...I want to tell you, so when you're hung up you will know why! How dare you oppress and exterminate an entire people? How dare you claim to be loyal to the king and yet plot to destroy the queen? Yes, kill *me* whom the King did choose. You jumped the gun: I, too, am Jewish, so not only are you genocidal, you are regicidal!

Ahasuargeant Pepper

Yes, Nowhere (Ha)Man (pause)...I was unable to see you for who you really are. It took me so long to find out, but I found out: You're like a bad virus that spread in this land. I've got to get you out of my life! I hereby decree that the Jews have the right to defend themselves and that you are the one who will pay: I sentence you to the gallows you built. You get a one-way ticket out of here: On the gallows you'll swing on the 13th of Adar!

Nowhere (Ha)Man

What? No! We can work it out, we can work it out!

Ahasuargeant Pepper

Sorry, man, let it be.

Ahasuargeant Pepper marches Nowhere (Ha)Man off stage.

Mordechai

A historic day, I do declare!

Esther

We have to let the entire kingdom know! I'll post it on my socials, and we'll all take a selfie so our followers know that they're free of the Nowhere (Ha)Man (pause)!

Narrator Desmond

And that brings our tale to a close. You're such a lovely audience that we'd like to take you home with us, but obladi, oblada, life goes on in Shushan. I don't really want to stop the show, but I thought you might like to know that the moral of the story is to honour G-D and all people wherever you go. To stand and speak up for what is right.

Narrator Molly

Because, in the end, the love you take is equal to the love you make. And so to all, we say: Chag Sameach, Laila Tov, good night!

Curtain.

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