

PURIM SPIEL

SESAME SEED STREET SHOWDOWN

A.M. Matte

Characters in order of appearance:

COUNT VON COUNT, narrator

COOKIE MONSTER, neighbourhood watch president

HAMAN THE GROUCH, neighbourhood watch vice-president, looks like Oscar the Grouch

ESTHER, new neighbour

BIG MORD, Esther's cousin, looks like Big Bird

BERT and ERNIE, neighbours

OTHER NEIGHBOURS

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

The stage is set as a residential street. Neighbours are milling around being nice to each other.

COUNT VON COUNT: *(With a Transylvanian accent.)* Girls and boys, ladies and gentlemen, welcome to our neighbourhood. We're glad you came to visit Sesame Seed Street in Shushan. I'm going to tell you a story – but you will have to help me. *(Eerily jovial laugh.)* Ah-ah-ah-ah. This is the story of Purim, brought to you today by the letters Pay, Resh and Mem, and by the number Three. Let's all count to three together : Ehad, Shtayim, Shalosh - One... Two... Three... Wonderful, ah-ah-ah.

In our neighbourhood of Shushan, most of us are either fuzzy, feathery, or furry. The King of Sesame Seed Street is named Ahashuerus, but he loves cookies so much – and he's so furry – we all just call him King Cookie Monster. He has been running the neighbourhood for the longest time, but lately, he's been having some troubles. His wife, Vashti, got really mad at him when they had a fight about what she was going to wear to a party – he didn't want her to wear anything at all! So she moved away from here to live in a condominium. This means King Cookie Monster is left to plan the neighbourhood watch safety drills and run the bake sales *without a helper to call his own!!*

COOKIE MONSTER: *(With a growl-y voice.)* Oh no, I have to plan a bake sale without anyone's help to get people to make cookies and buy cookies. What am I going to do? Maybe my trusty, crusty neighbourhood watch vice-president has a trick up his sleeve to help me out. Hey, Haman the Grouch *(pause for groggers)* I need your help! *(Enter HAMAN THE GROUCH in a triangular trashcan costume.)*

HAMAN THE GROUCH: Oh, what is it now, King Cookie ?

COOKIE MONSTER: Because Vashti has left us, I have no one to help me promote our bake sale and other neighbourhood events. People might begin to move away if I can't find someone to replace her soon. What do you suggest I do?

HAMAN THE GROUCH: Oh well. I guess I have no choice. I'll help and be your spokesperson.

COOKIE MONSTER: You? Hmmm, is that really a good idea? I don't think you're quite the kind of person who will have everyone in a good mood, helping out, Haman the Grouch (*pause for groggers*). What do you kids think? Do you have any other better ideas?

HAMAN THE GROUCH: Humpf. (*Makes nasty face at audience.*) I suppose you could hold a contest all over the country, and invite all the furriest and featheriest people to compete for the spokesperson position.

COOKIE MONSTER: That's an excellent idea, Haman the Grouch (*pause for groggers*)! Let's do that right now!

COUNT VON COUNT: The new neighbours in town were gathered together, every last feathered, fuzzied and furried one of them. (*March/parade of kids in costumes can happen here.*) So many new neighbours...Ah-ah-ah. But one neighbour stood out, because she had to fur, no feathers and no fuzz! Her name was Hadassah and she'd just moved in to the neighbourhood with her cousin Big Mord.

ESTHER: Oh, I'm so excited! My dreams might finally all become true! I've always wanted to get close to a king!

BIG MORD: Yes, sweetie, but remember not to let the neighbourhood know that you're Jewish. Keep it a secret – change your name to something more Sesame Seed-y and less Jewish. Like... Elmo, or Grover.

ESTHER: Hmmm. I guess you're right, Big Mord. Hmmm... I know! How about Esther? Isn't that a great name?

BIG MORD: It's perfect. Now, go get 'em, kid!

COUNT VON COUNT: So off Hadassah – I mean Esther – went to learn all about her new position. Being Queen for the neighbourhood means talking to everyone, finding out what their concerns and ideas are, appearing on television

during neighbourhood events *and* having access to as many cookies as you want.

COOKIE MONSTER: Cookies! Lots of cookies, yum yum yum.....

ESTHER:

Sunny Days (*To the tune of the Sesame Street Theme Song*)

Sunny days
Keeping my fears away
On my way to my favorite dream
Can you tell me how to get,
How to get to be Shushan's Queen?

I've come to stay
Everything's a-okay
Family, neighbours, friends:
I want to be seen
Can you tell me how to get,
How to get to be Shushan's Queen?
How to get to be Shushan's Queen?
How to get to be Shushan's Queen?

COUNT VON COUNT: Ah-ah-ah. Even though she was the only candidate without fur, fuzz or feathers, she made it as far as the final interview.

COOKIE MONSTER and ESTHER are in the neighbourhood watch office.

COOKIE MONSTER: Welcome to Sesame Seed Street. Tell me why you want to be my new helper in running this place?

ESTHER: There is so much I want to do with my life, but I've always dreamed of doing something *meaningful*, that will be remembered years from now, so that my story would be told at a great big party every year on a national holiday... So I hope to start by helping you keep the neighbourhood clean and safe and well fed.

COOKIE MONSTER: Well put, thank you! Next question: Do you think you can work with a neighbourhood full of people with feathers, fuzzies and furs like us?

ESTHER: Even if I don't have any fur and feathers myself, I understand what it's like to be different. Oh boy, do I ever! I would be sure to listen to your instructions

and your advice, make sure I become friendly with ALL our neighbours and know the rules and regulations necessary to building a better neighbourhood.

COOKIE MONSTER: Terrific! If you get the job, what would you do on your days off from work?

ESTHER: I would just stay at home, listening to Klezmer music, eating rugelah and matzo ball soup all day long.

COOKIE MONSTER: Sounds delicious! Final question: If you were a cookie, what kind of cookie would you be?

ESTHER: Well, I admit that I have a weakness for cookies, so do I *have* to choose just one flavour? Oatmeal raisin? Chocolate chip? Mandelbrot? Gingerbread?

COOKIE MONSTER: Really? Those are all *my* favourites, too! Wow, you sound perfect! What's your name?

ESTHER: It's, um, Esther...

COOKIE MONSTER: Esther? That's a beautiful name! You're hired! (*To HAMAN THE GROUCH.*) Hey, Haman the Grouch! (*pause for groggers*) Come meet my new Queen: Esther.

HAMAN THE GROUCH: If I *have* to. (*Reluctantly.*) Welcome. Congratulations.

COUNT VON COUNT: And that's how Esther became Sesame Seed Street's Queen. But there was trouble brewing. Two nogoodniks – let's count them together: one, two! Ah-ah-ah. As I was saying, two nogoodniks, Bert and Ernie, were hanging around on the sidewalk. Luckily, Big Mord was walking by.

ERNIE: Hey, uh, Bert?

BERT: Yes, Ernie?

ERNIE: Look at these matches I found.

BIG MORD: Uh-oh. I'd better stick around, be invisible and listen to this.

ERNIE: I'm feeling a little cold. Maybe we could build a fire here on the sidewalk. A big fire.

BERT: I dunno, Ernie, maybe you should wear a hat and mittens, instead.

ERNIE: I'd rather see what happens when I light all these matches.

BERT: Well, okay, Ernie. This could be great. This could turn into something really big!

BIG MORD: Hey, what are you two up to?

COUNT VON COUNT: Two! One, two! Ah-ah-ah.

BIG MORD: You fellows are making a lot of trouble. Matches aren't toys. Only adults should have matches. Give them to me!

BERT: Of course. Ernie, give Big Mord the matches.

ERNIE: Okay, Bert.

BIG MORD: Thank you.

ERNIE: Let's go have a nice, warm bath with rubber duckie instead!

(BERT and ERNIE exit. BIG MORD goes to see COOKIE MONSTER.)

BIG MORD: ...and so I stopped them just before they struck a match.

COOKIE MONSTER: Thank you, Big Mord. It's a valuable lesson: no playing with matches. The entire neighbourhood could have burnt down! We could have lost our homes and everything we have! I owe you a great debt.

BIG MORD: It's my pleasure. I'm always glad to help.

BIG MORD exits and COOKIE MONSTER ponders how to reward him for saving the neighbourhood.

COUNT VON COUNT: Since Big Mord saved Sesame Seed Street from being burnt down, King Cookie Monster was very grateful. He wanted to show Big Mord his appreciation, but not being very bright, with no imagination, he asked his neighbourhood watch vice-president's help for a good reward for Big Mord.

COOKIE MONSTER: Haman the Grouch (*pause for groggers*), I was wondering something. If I wanted to show someone how much I appreciated his contribution to our neighbourhood, what could I do to really thank him?

HAMAN THE GROUCH: (*Aside.*) Finally, all my days of working for this dummy are paying off. (*To COOKIE MONSTER.*) I guess you could organize a big parade through the neighbourhood, go up and down Sesame Seed Street four or five times—

COUNT VON COUNT: Five! Count with me, kids: One... two... three... four... five... ah-ah-ah.

HAMAN THE GROUCH: Sha!!! You could make sure the entire neighbourhood comes out and that the parade gets on the evening news and into all the megillas.

COOKIE MONSTER: Gosh, that's a terrific idea, Haman the Grouch (*pause for groggers*)! Well, I know it'll be in good hands if you take care of this. I'm putting you in charge of the parade for BIG MORD! Thanks, buddy, you're a pal! I'm going to go and write a speech.

COOKIE MONSTER exits.

HAMAN THE GROUCH: WHAT?! Not that I care but, after everything I've done for him, he's thanking that Jew who moved into our neighbourhood? It's not fair! They move into a neighbourhood, make friends, build new houses, open shops... It's not fair at all. I've been living here all this time, made it as far as vice-president of the neighbourhood watch, but I'll never get to be president at this rate. A parade for Big Mord. Phooey. Well, I'm not going to let them get away with this, no sir-ree. I'm going to come up with a plan to get rid of all the Jews in the neighbourhood, all the Jews in the country. They'll all have to move away and I'll be able to get elected president of the neighbourhood watch. So there.

Being Mean (*To the tune of Joe Raposo's Being Green*)

It's not that easy being mean;
Having to spend each day as rotten as can be.
When I think I could be nicer being kind, or happy or good...
or something not so grouchy as me.

It's not easy being mean.
Keeping up appearances makes your face freeze into a frown.
And people tend to avoid you 'cause you're
not helping out or being nice to other people;
a general mensch.

But mean's my trademark, you see.
Don't want to be cool or friendly-like.
My heart is not big like an ocean, or important like a mountain,
or tall like a tree.

When mean is all there is to be
It could make you wonder why, but why wonder why?
Wonder, I am mean and it'll do fine, it's destiny.
And I think it's all that I can be.

COUNT VON COUNT: So Haman the Grouch (*pause for groggers*) went ahead with his mean plan. Big Mord was frantic. He rushed over to Esther and asked her to intervene for the Jews' sake.

BIG MORD: He's up to no good, that Haman the Grouch (*pause for groggers*)! You need to tell King Cookie what's happening, or else we'll all be in a lot of trouble and won't have anywhere to live.

ESTHER: Big Mord, I can't bother Cookie Monster now: he's writing his next big speech! *No one* can bother him when he's writing a speech; it's his meditation time! I'll be fired if I go in there.

BIG MORD: Look, Esther, this is a matter of life and death. If Haman the Grouch (*pause for groggers*) is allowed to go ahead with this, all Jews will be kicked out of the neighbourhood! We can't let that happen. You have to do something! Besides, Cookie Monster loves you: you're his best helper by far.

ESTHER: Alright, Big Mord, I'll go see Cookie Monster. But if I'm not back in twenty minutes, it's because I've met with a crumbling disaster.

ESTHER goes to see COOKIE MONSTER. BIG MORD exits.

ESTHER: Ahem, Cookie Monster? I'm so sorry to bother you, but...

COOKIE MONSTER: Lovely Esther! Hey, *you're* no bother at all. What's up?

ESTHER: Well, I just wanted to let you know that your neighbourhood watch vice-president is planning to get rid of all the Jewish people in the neighbourhood. And that's not good for anyone, and especially not good for me because... I'm Jewish, too. My real name is Hadassah. Esther is just a name I came up with to fit in better.

COOKIE MONSTER: Wait a minute. You're saying that Haman the Grouch (*pause for groggers*) was going to evict people off of Sesame Seed Street? That's awful! We can't let him get away with that! That's not the kind of neighbourhood I want! In my neighbourhood, everyone is welcome. What are we going to do?

ESTHER: Well, I had an idea that would get rid of Haman the Grouch (*pause for groggers*) for good.

COOKIE MONSTER: Oh? I'm all ears. No, wait, I no have any ears. Talk to me anyway. (*ESTHER whispers her plan to COOKIE MONSTER, who grins and nods.*) That sounds great. Not only are you lovely, but you're clever, too! And you

know what else? Whether Esther or Hadassah, both are a great names, because you're great, too.

COOKIE MONSTER and ESTHER hug and COOKIE MONSTER exits.

COUNT VON COUNT: With Cookie Monster's support, Esther put her plan into action. She wanted to trick Haman the Grouch (*pause for groggers*) into a false sense of security, and then expose him as the horrible mean monster he really was.

ESTHER: Ahem, hello Haman the Grouch, sir (*pause for groggers*)... I have a message for you from our good King Cookie. At our neighbourhood bake sale today, he would like *you* to be his spokesperson for the event.

HAMAN THE GROUCH: (*Happy, but not wanting to show it.*) Really?! Oh, well, if I have to, I guess I will.

ESTHER: Good, I'm glad. Well, since our neighbours will be arriving in just a few minutes, I suggest you get ready.

The stage is set for a bake sale. There are cookies with their bakers ready for a competition.

COOKIE MONSTER: Fair neighbours of Sesame Seed Street and beyond. Welcome to our bake sale! Make sure you try all of the goodies baked with love for all of you and don't miss our cookie contest, my very faaaaaa-vourite event! And now, please welcome our neighbourhood spokesperson: Haman the Grouch (*pause for groggers*)!

HAMAN THE GROUCH: Afternoon, everyone. It's, um, *nice* to see so many of you here. I now declare this bake sale open.

COOKIE MONSTER: (*Clapping.*) Thank you, thank you, Haman the Grouch. (*pause for groggers*) And now, a word from our cookie contest sponsor!

BIG MORD enters, dressed in a snazzy outfit. HAMAN THE GROUCH is surprised, but keeps a straight face.

BIG MORD: Hello everyone! As a big Big Mord thank you for your lovely welcome to the neighbourhood, I am proud to sponsor this competition. All of the ingredients I donated are 100% kosher and 100% delicious. I hope you enjoy the recipes of our contestants. Back to you, Cookie Monster.

COOKIE MONSTER: Here's the part I love the best! Everyone, I know that, usually, it's me who judges the cookies in the competition. But this time, I am

giving our spokesperson and neighbourhood watch vice-president the honour. Take it away, Haman the Grouch! *(pause for groggers)*

HAMAN THE GROUCH: *What?! I have to eat cookies?*

BIG MORD: *Without kvetching!*

HAMAN THE GROUCH begins to taste the cookies. But there are so many that he is eventually unable to continue and abandons the judging.

HAMAN THE GROUCH: *(Very pained and sick.) Ugh! Too...many...cookies... Sugar...overload...! Oooooohhhh...! (Pointing at BIG MORD and ESTHER.) This is all your fault. The neighbourhood was fine until you came in. Why couldn't you just move away?*

HAMAN THE GROUCH drops his cookie and collapses. COOKIE MONSTER comes to him and helps him up.

COOKIE MONSTER: Well, everyone, what do you think? It seems our judge is unable to fulfil his duties. *And he has been even grouchier than usual and not friendly and welcoming at all.*

ESTHER: What do you think, everyone, should HAMAN THE GROUCH *(pause for groggers)* be the one to move out of the neighbourhood? Swing your groggers if you think so! *(pause for groggers)*

COOKIE MONSTER: Well, that's that, then. Pack your things, Haman the Grouch, *(pause for groggers)* you are kicked out of our neighbourhood.

HAMAN THE GROUCH leaves, defeated.

COOKIE MONSTER: Now, let's get back to serious business: there is a cookie contest to judge! *(COOKIE MONSTER tastes all the cookies, noisily tasting and crunching.)* Yum, mmmmm, nummers! These are delicious! These, too! Oh, and these! ...Oh? What's this? I've never seen a cookie shaped like this, before... *(He picks up a hamentashen and tastes it.)* Oh, that's something new! I've never tasted this kind of cookie before... Well, I've found it, neighbours, this bake sale's winner of the cookie competition is...wait. Who baked these?

ESTHER: I did.

COOKIE MONSTER: You can *bake*, too? How wonderful! Well, I declare you the winner of the cookie competition, with your strangely tasty triangular-shaped cookies! I'm so glad you moved to Sesame Seed Street. Cookies for everyone!

COOKIE MONSTER sings while distributing cookies to others on stage, including COUNT VON COUNT.

My New Neighbour (To the tune of Jeffrey Moss' Rubber Duckie)

My new neighbour, you're the one,
You make bake sales lots of fun,
My new neighbour, I'm awfully fond of you;

Woo woo be doo

My new neighbour, joy of joys,
Share my cookies, share my toys!
My new neighbour, you're my very best friend, it's true!

Doo doo doo doo, doo doo

Fuzz, feather or fur,
Or even if you don't have any
You're looking for new friends
Now you find you've got many!

Rub-a-dub-your-tummy!

My new neighbour, you're so fine
And I'm lucky that you're mine
My new neighbour, I'm awfully fond of you.

Fuzz, feather or fur,
Or even if you don't have any
You're looking for new friends
Now you find you've got many!

My new neighbour, you're so fine
And I'm lucky that you're mine
My new neighbour, I'm awfully fond of -
My new neighbour, I'd like a whole pond of -
My new neighbour I'm awfully fond of you!

Doo doo, be doo

COUNT VON COUNT: And that, kids and adults, and all our neighbourhood friends, brings my story to an end. Today's story of Purim was brought to you by the letters Pay, Resh and Mem, and by the number Three. One, two, three! Ah-ah-ah. We're very glad you came to stay a while on our street. There isn't much

else to do now except... Let's count YOU! Ah-ah-ah. One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight... *(And so on to a fade.)*

Curtain.

With thanks to Patsy Royer.

If you use this script, please consider making a chai-level donation, as 100% of the proceeds go to Temple Israel, Ottawa, Canada.

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A.M. Matte Toronto, Ontario

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