

Shushan Drag Race : A Purim Spiel

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Characters:

Narrator

AhashRUveRUsh (Ru), flamboyant, affable king of Persia

Queen Vashti, royal spouse who will have none of it

Haman, insufferable advisor to the king

Esther, new top queen of the land

Mordechedna, Esther's cousin, inspired by Dame Edna Everage

Setting:

An ostentatious palace in Shushan, Persia, that borrows its look from the RuPaul's Drag Race werk room. Mirrors and lights everywhere, with wigs, gorgeous fabric and jewels artfully arranged throughout.

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

NARRATOR is on stage throughout the spiel.

Shushan, Persia; springtime. NARRATOR, RU and HAMAN are on stage.

NARRATOR

Boker Tov, everyone, you all look fabulous! Start your engines: our Purim spiel Extravaganza is about to begin!

Long ago, in a far away land called Persia, lived a fabulous king named AhashRUveRUsh. We'll call him Ru or RUveRUsh for short. He lived and worked in a palace in his capital city of Shushan, surrounded by advisors, counsellors and personnel of all kinds. Dignitaries from neighbouring lands loved to visit Shushan. They were essentially stans of the king.

RU

I mean, who can blame them. Look at me: I. Own. Everything.

NARRATOR

In the palace, RUveRUsh kept makeup artists, wig stylists, costume designers, choreographers, songwriters, back-up dancers, manicurists, and his reigning queen. Vashti was a champion singer and dancer as well as the best [enter actor's unusual skill here¹] in the land. RUveRUsh loved to display his queen's skills when other connoisseurs were around. So, one day, he summoned Vashti to perform her signature veil dance.

RU

(Clapping hands twice.)

Bring back my queen. Vashti?

VASHTI responds from backstage.

VASHTI

What.

RU

I've summoned. You come.

VASHTI enters stage.

RU

Dance and [unusual skill] for us; it's been too long.

VASHTI

(With a shrug.)

I've been busy.

RU

Doing what?

VASHTI

Writing a tell-all memoir about my time here since I won the crown in that poorly-lit competition.

RU

We've upgraded the lighting since then!

¹ juggling? walking on stilts? accounting? Actor's/Director's choice.

VASHTI

And I'm upgrading, too. Hashtag glow up. I won't dance for you.

RU

Of course you will.

NARRATOR

Oh snap, I feel a song coming on!

VASHTI

Hallelloo!

(To the tune of ABBA's Waterloo.)

My, my, you seem to think that I am just a minion.
No way! So I will meet my destiny in quite a different way.
I will pursue my own wealth,
And take care of my mental health!

Hallelloo! I'm not the queen you are looking for.
Hallelloo! I will be leaving forevermore!
Hallelloo! I can escape, so I'm choosing to;
Hallelloo! The world is where I am racing to.
Woah woah woah woah Hallelloo!
Why have one crown when you can have two?

My, my, the universe is my next competition.
Oh yeah, and now it seems my only chance is leaving you behind.
And now that I've learned to refuse,
I feel that I win and you lose!

Hallelloo! I'm not the queen you are looking for.
Hallelloo! I will be leaving forevermore!
Hallelloo! I can escape, so I'm choosing to;
Hallelloo! The world is where I am racing to.
Woah woah woah woah Hallelloo!
Why have one crown when you can have two?
Hallelloo!
Why have one crown when you can have two?

VASHTI

I'm too big for Shushan, now. Bye-eee!

RU

You can't just sashay away!

VASHTI

Watch me. *(Walking backwards toward the exit.)* Miss Vashti, Miss Vashti, Miss Vaaaashti...!

VASHTI exits stage. HAMAN consoles RU.

NARRATOR

In this fair kingdom lived also the Jews, who could practice their faith and, more importantly, eat their favourite foods: Challah, Matzah Ball soup, kugel, kefte and couscous...but the villain Haman (pause) hated this group. He was also RUveRUsh's bestie and top advisor. He recommended the king hold another season of his famous drag queen competition to identify the top queen to marry.

This attracted people from across the land, all wanting to win the race and the crown of Shushan. Among them, Mordechedna and their cousin, from downtown Shushan itself.

Enter MORDECHEDNA and ESTHER, on the opposite end of the stage from RU and HAMAN.

MORDECHEDNA

(As they put finishing touches to Esther's makeup.)

You will slay the competition, Hadassah. Just keep on werking it, sissy that walk and tear the house down boots, my possum, and you will be the next reigning queen!

ESTHER

I've been a closet queen all my life.

MORDECHEDNA

It's time to bust out! If you don't, / will. I could see the king being intrigued by my aesthetic.

ESTHER

Ok, ok, let's not get delusional.

MORDECHEDNA

Come on, you can do this.

ESTHER

I dunno.

MORDECHEDNA

I cannot believe you can't see it, possum. Where's the confidence I know is in you? After all, if you can't love yourself, how the hell are you going to love somebody else?

ESTHER

Oh! Wow, Mordechedna, that's clever. Did you come up with that yourself?

MORDECHEDNA

(Looks around, then fibs.)

Yes. Yes, I did.

ESTHER

Well, you're right. I can do this. I've been practicing my design and sewing skills, I'm a lip sync assassin, nothing can stop me.

MORDECHEDNA

Yaass, queen! But, there's one thing that has to stay *in* the closet: don't tell anyone you're Jewish.

ESTHER

Got it, I won't cluck it up.

MORDECHEDNA

In fact, you need a drag name, Hadassah. How about Bagels N. Lox?

ESTHER

Too Jewish. I was thinking Esther Sandman.

MORDECHEDNA

Sandman? Too Jewish, too.

ESTHER

Just « Esther », then.

MORDECHAI

Like « Cher ». I love it. Now, let them have it!

MORDECHEDNA moves to the side and leaves ESTHER centre stage where she competes in the drag race. HAMAN and RU watch her compete in the final lip sync. The actor who played VASHTI can play another top contender.

RU

Citizens and stans of the land, this is it. After weeks of gruelling work, of toots and boots, the suspense is almost over. Start your engines, and may the best drag queen—win!

NARRATOR

After weeks of mini and maxi challenges, of snatched waists and thirsty wigs, of epic lip syncs and eleganza balls, it all came down to the final runway. Esther knew the crown was hers, if she could just convince the judges' panel and the judge supreme: Ru the king.

ESTHER

Take A Chance On Me

(To the tune of ABBA's Take A Chance On Me)

Yes, if you don't mind, I'm the first in line
You can surely see; take a chance on me
And you need me, this I know, so keep me around
They'll all have no place to go when I snatch the crown.

You were all alone when your pretty bird had flown
But don't you worry, take a chance on me
I have done my very best and you can't deny
That you put me to the test and I shantayed high

Take a chance on me, take a chance on me

I'm top at dancing, premium singing
No one does it better

Want some unveiling, something revealing?
We'll do it together

'Cause you know I got
The correct head for the crown
And I've slayed the whole palace down
I'm magic!
You want to give the air
That the competition's fair
But I think you know,
The others can go...

Yes, if you don't mind, I'm the first in line
You can surely see; take a chance on me
And you need me, this I know, so keep me around
They'll all have no place to go when I snatch the crown.

You were all alone when your pretty bird had flown
But don't you worry, take a chance on me
I have done my very best and you can't deny
That you put me to the test and I shantayed high

Take a chance on me, take a chance on me

I'm a designer, a merchandiser
No one does it better
Want some unveiling, something revealing?
We'll do it together

Let me tell you now
My brand is strong enough
To last when things are rough
It's magic!
Why don't we stop wasting time
And start our new life sublime
So I think you know,
The others can go...

Yes, if you don't mind, I'm the first in line
You can surely see; take a chance on me

And you need me, this I know, so keep me around
They'll all have no place to go when I snatch the crown.

You were all alone when your pretty bird had flown
But don't you worry, take a chance on me
I have done my very best and you can't deny
That you put me to the test and I shantayed high

Ba ba ba ba baa ba ba ba ba ba ba
Take a chance on me
Put that crown on me!
I have done my very best and you can't deny
That you put me to the test and I shantayed high

Ba ba ba ba baa ba ba ba ba ba ba
Take a chance on me
Put that crown on me!
I have done my very best and you can't deny
That you put me to the test and I shantayed high

Fade

RU

As if there were any doubt, the crown goes to...

HAMAN

The person we will announce after these messages: As Top Judge, Advisor and Minister of the land, I just want to reiterate that all who pass by me, whether in the palace or in the city, must bow down in deference to my fabulousness.

NARRATOR

We know, we know, thanks for the PSA. Now, who won the race?

RU

The crown goes to...?

HAMAN

Esther!

RU, HAMAN and the NARRATOR applaud. MORDECHEDNA is clapping, whistling, and cheering.

NARRATOR

Condragulations!

ESTHER

(To MORDECHEDNA.)

Thank you, fairy dragmother!

(To RU.)

Thank you, Ru!

RU hands ESTHER a sceptre and crown.

RU

Now, prance, my queen, prance!

RU and ESTHER parade across the stage together.

NARRATOR

The king and queen went on a tour of the realm for their honeymoon, feeling the fantasy and releasing a single from their new joint album at each new stop. The only shadow was the rule that only the *king* could summon family, friends and servants. No one could approach the king without his express invitation, under penalty of death. At the time, it seemed like a small price to pay for a crown, and Esther accepted and followed the rule.

RU and ESTHER exit stage.

Upon their return to the capital city, things settled into an agreeable routine: Esther writing new hit songs and designing merch, Ru counting all his money. Meanwhile, Haman (pause) remained his insufferable self, and Mordechedna would have none of it.

HAMAN and MORDECHEDNA pass each other on stage and MORDECHEDNA nods politely at HAMAN. HAMAN is offended and calls out to MORDECHEDNA.

HAMAN

Ahem, perhaps you didn't see me, but now that you have, prostrate yourself!

MORDECHEDNA

Prostate myself?! Who do you think I am?

HAMAN

I have no desire to know. All that matters is that I am supreme advisor to the king, a Prime Minister, and all who encounter me, such as lowly personages with questionable fashion sense like you, must bow.

MORDECHEDNA

The shade of it all! I'm going to nope right out of that one.

HAMAN

Bow, I say!

MORDECHEDNA

No, I say!

NARRATOR

(To MORDECHEDNA.)

Maybe just do it; looks like this could get serious.

MORDECHEDNA

Why? I don't know her — I'm Jewish and I only bow to G-d.

MORDECHEDNA exits stage with an exaggerated eye roll and a confident flounce.

HAMAN

For this insult, I swear I will get even one day, you *booger!*

HAMAN exits stage.

NARRATOR

Days and nights of fabulous parties and extravagant eleganza in the palace often had King Ru suffering from hangovers and insomnia.

(RU enters stage.)

On these occasions, he sought solace in spilling tea, looking up hot make-up tips, planning music videos and reading bedtimes stories that starred: him.

RU

Oh, pit crew! *(No one shows up.)* Pit crew! ...Pit crew? Hmmm. *(The king looks around and sees the NARRATOR.)* You'll do. Come, I'm sleepy and need a bedtime story. Read from my royal chronicles.

NARRATOR

(Flipping a large book open.)

On a nefarious day, two guards hatched a plot to assassinate the king. This was no lip sync assassination, not a fashion slaying. This was a real, raging regicide of ruthless proportions. Yet the plotters were unaware of a secret twist: someone had stealthily overheard their plans and thwarted them! Modechedna ensured that the king's life was spared and the treacherous villains were disposed of promptly.

RU

That was terrifying! You call that a bedtime story? I didn't know how it was going to end! ...Who was it who saved the king and the land, again?

NARRATOR

Mordechedna, the queen's kin.

RU

Hmmm... *(RU waves the NARRATOR back.)* Haman! *(pause)*

HAMAN enters stage.

RU

I just had the book of my reign read to me.

HAMAN

Why?

RU

Because reading is...what?

RU and HAMAN

...fundamental!

RU

It was a reminder that I owe someone a great debt. Haman *(pause)*, how should I reward a person who served loyal realness to the royal?

HAMAN

(Aside.)

Finally! A challenge I can win!

(To RU.)

I recommend that person be draped in the king's robes, and paraded through the city on the king's horse, while proclaiming: « This is what is done for whom the king delights to honour! »

HAMAN

(Sung as an aside; RU isn't paying attention.)

Honey, Honey, Honey

(To the tune of ABBA's Money, Money, Money)

Counsel all night and judge all day
Just to watch other people play
Ain't it sad?
While they all sing and strut and prance
Chained to a desk, I have no chance
Makes me mad!

I don't dream, I have a plan
That's why I'm a wealthy man
But I'd sometimes give it all
To fool around and have a ball

Honey, honey, honey, must be funny,
In a drag queen's world.
Honey, honey, honey, always sunny,
In a drag queen's world.
Aha—————a
All the voguing I'd do
If I were like Lady Bunny
In a drag queen's world.

The king would recognize my skill
And in his royal robes I will
Be well clad.
Eyebrows on fleek and sickening
High on my horse both queen and king

I'm so glad!

My face beat for all to stan
I'll parade all through Shushan
Bedecked in jewels, forget the rules,
I own ev'rything, bow down, fools!

Honey, honey, honey, down on one knee,
In my drag queen's world.
Honey, honey, honey, raining money,
In my drag queen's world.
Aha—————a
All the slaying I'll do
I am fierce realness all stunny
In my drag queen's world.

Honey, honey, honey, down on one knee,
In my drag queen's world.
Honey, honey, honey, always sunny,
In my drag queen's world.
Aha—————a
All the slaying I'll do
I am fierce realness all stunny
In my drag queen's world.
In my drag queen's world!

RU

(Thrilled.)

I can picture it! Robes, horses, parading, oh my! It all sounds fabulous. Do that for Mordechedna, who saved me from a plot to end my life and illustrious reign.

RU exits, leaving a seething HAMAN on stage.

HAMAN

I'm going to get you, Mordechedna, I'm going to crush you. And not just you. I'm going to crush all your people. You don't want to bow? You get to strut around like you're more important than me? You think you'll get away with that? Think again.

NARRATOR

Haman (pause), evil thoughts brewing, then called upon fate to project manage his scheme. He drew lots and determined that his massacre would occur on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar.

HAMAN

Ha-ha! This is the day that the Jews of Persia shall die! All I need is the king's sign-off.

RU returns to the stage and HAMAN accosts him, a scroll or paper in hand.

HAMAN

Hey, Ru, I have a little, teeny-weeny, minuscule, infinitesimal thing for you to sign.

RU

Sure, what is it.

HAMAN

So, there's a few people in the kingdom who haven't been obeying *your* decree to bow to me, and I thought, hey, not cool, they should obey what the king says, right?

RU

Of course!

HAMAN

So I thought I'd get rid of the problem for you, so here's a tiny, little document, if it please the king, that lets it be decreed that the Jews of Shushan be destroyed. I'll sweeten the pot and will pay 10,000 talents of silver into the hands of those who have charge of the king's business, that they may put it into the king's treasuries.

RU

Sounds like a perfectly sound and reasonable reaction to a minor slight. Go for it.

RU signs the paper and he and HAMAN, gleeful, exit stage.

NARRATOR

Soon, all of Shushan had heard about the edict. A dark cloud loomed upon the horizon and Mordechedna was distraught.

MORDECHEDNA and ESTHER enter stage from opposite sides.

MORDECHEDNA

Thank goodness, there you are. We need to kiki.

ESTHER

What is it?

MORDECHEDNA

S.O.S.

(To the tune of ABBA's S.O.S.)

Where do you hang these days, you were so hard to find.
We need you back with us, you must fight for our kind.
Whatever happened to you, love, I wish I understood.
You must come back to us, where you can do some good.

Now that you're near me, darling,
Please do hear me: S.O.S.
These times are dangerous
So please do save us, S.O.S.

It's Haman: he will kill all the Jews of Shushan;
If we're gone, the world will struggle to carry on.

The Man has sealed our fate, he'll send Jews to their deaths.
You must plead with the king and fight to your last breath.
You must reveal the truth, and hope he understands:
We won't cower in fear and won't bow to Haman.

The hour draws near, he hates us
All so clearly, S.O.S.
Only way to cheer me, darling,
Is to hear me, S.O.S.

Please do try, so that I keep calm and carry on.
Show the world who you are, where the lines should be drawn.

Now that you're near me, darling,
Please do hear me, S.O.S.
These times are dangerous
So please do save us, S.O.S.

If we're gone, the world will struggle to carry on.
Show us all who you are, where the lines should be drawn.

If we're gone, the world will struggle to carry on.
Show us all who you are, where the lines should be drawn.

ESTHER

I'll do it. I've got a plan. Leave it to me.

MORDECHEDNA

Come through, my possum!

ESTHER and MORDECHEDNA exit stage.

NARRATOR

While Esther knew that anyone who approached the king without first being summoned was killed – unless the king was in the mood to extend his sceptre and spare their life — Esther took the chance and went center stage. This was Esther's biggest, most dangerous challenge; she couldn't just lip sync for her life to get out of it. Approaching her husband without permission could be the last thing she would ever do.

And yet, upon seeing her in the courtyard, Ru was taken by her charisma, uniqueness, nerve and talent, and beckoned her closer, offering her anything she asked for, up to half his kingdom. Esther demurred and instead invited Ru and Haman (pause) to a private party that evening.

ESTHER enters stage with bowls of Tic-Tacs.

NARRATOR

Esther not only organized a feast, she threw a ball. RUveRUsh and Haman (pause) were thrilled.

RU and HAMAN enter, thrilled. They each take a few Tic-Tacs.

NARRATOR

They ate and drank and sang and danced and enjoyed themselves thoroughly. When Ru asked what Esther wanted in return, she was ready.

ESTHER

No tea, no shade, I just ask for the pleasure of your company again tomorrow.

NARRATOR

The king and his advisor were gagged. They accepted immediately and returned the next day for the final episode grand finale of this story. And let me tell you, Esther *turned* the party.

ESTHER, RU and HAMAN are eating Tic-Tacs. MORDECHEDNA is also in attendance, just hovering at the back of the stage.

ESTHER

I'm so glad you all accepted to join me again for this banquet. It is so lovely to have my chosen family here with me. (*ESTHER smiles happily at MORDECHEDNA and RU.*) I could do this all week.

RU

Me, too!

HAMAN nods, while trying to eat Tic-Tacs with chopsticks.

ESTHER

But, sadly, things are not all as they seem. (*ESTHER turns briskly toward HAMAN.*) Haman (pause), you are crusty and busted and we clocked you for who you are from the start: a sad, envious booger.

MORDECHEDNA pops onto centre stage.

MORDECHEDNA

And genocidal maniac, don't forget genocidal maniac.

ESTHER

Right. Ru, you have been tricked into having to get rid of your top queen.

RU

What?

ESTHER

(*To RU.*)

You love me? You love what I bring to this franchise?

RU

Of course! You're my queen, baby!

ESTHER

But you signed an edict to kill me.

RU

Oh, the *shade*. I would never.

ESTHER

You would and did.

MORDECHEDNA

Yes, let them have it!

NARRATOR

It was time for Esther to spill the tea and beg for mercy on behalf of her people.

ESTHER

(To RU.)

You allowed Haman (pause) to plan to hang my cousin on way overcompensating gallows and to exterminate all the Jews of Shushan. I'm Jewish, so you'll have to exterminate me, too.

HAMAN slowly puts down his Tic-Tac bowl and starts to slink away.

RU

You're Jewish? You don't *look* Jewish.

MORDECHEDNA

We get that all the time.

ESTHER

And it's not the point. Ru, you offered me up to half your kingdom. But there are more important things than land and riches. I'll settle for nothing less than life: mine and my people's. Please!

RU

Of course, granted!

MORDECHEDNA

And, Haman? (pause)

HAMAN stops in his tracks and slowly turns around.

HAMAN

I hear you all like tea — I'm just...going to...get...some...?

RU

Something smells fishy around here...

MORDECHEDNA

(Pleased and preening.)

Oh, thank you!

RU

Haman! (pause) You dared plot against the Queen in my own palace?

HAMAN

I didn't mean to, I just really wanted this one *(points to MORDECHEDNA)* to bow!

RU

I can't believe I was caught up in all this. *(To MORDECHEDNA.)* Shantay you stay. You are my next Prime Minister.

MORDECHEDNA

I would have settled for Miss Congeniality, but I'll take Prime Minister! I hope I last longer than the last one.

RU

(To HAMAN.)

And *you!* Sashay away. Forever!

ESTHER

(To HAMAN.)

Bye, Felicia!

NARRATOR

As Haman (pause) was dragged off, Ru decreed that Haman (pause) would be hanged on his own gallows...giving a whole new meaning to death drop.

The news of the great salvation of the Jews spread like lightning to the remotest corners of the Persian Empire, and the Jews were treated with respect. The fourteenth day of Adar was consecrated as the festival of Purim, to commemorate Esther's story, the great miracle of the Jewish people's salvation, and the downfall of the wicked Haman (pause).

As we near the end of our tale, there's only one thing left to say:
Let the music play!

NARRATOR invites the audience to join in for the final song.

ALL

Purim Queen

(To the tune of ABBA's Dancing Queen)

You can dance, you can jive
Thank you for saving our lives
Ooooh, watch her whirl, watch her preen
Digging the Purim Queen

Just when we thought we were brought low
And that we had no place to go
It made all of us sick
But you got thinking
To defend us to the king
Ev'rybody could see that guy
Ego massive and riding high
Extermination's his schtick
Count'ring the divine
Things looked more than askance
And then you took the chance

You are our Purim Queen
Reigning sweet
Stopped the death machine
Purim Queen

Relegate Haman to the latrine, oh yeah
Serving glam, we say Bam!
Thank you for saving our lives
Ooh, you're our girl
So serene:
Esther the Purim queen

You're a winner, you slayed Haman
Left him hanging and now he's gone
Looking out for your people
Standing with the Jews
And all with elegance
And now you get the chance

To be our Purim queen
Reigning sweet
Stopped the death machine
Purim queen
Winning the race in a limousine, oh yeah
Glamazon, party's on
Having the time of our lives
Ooooh, watch us whirl, watch us preen
Digging the Purim queen
Esther the Purim queen!

The NARRATOR joins and organizes the other characters, including HAMAN, for the final bow.

Curtain.

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

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