

H-Pop Haman Hunters - A Purim Spiel

A.M. Matte

Characters:

Narrator, the one who guides the story

Ahashuerush, President of the Board of Shushan Studios and its singing competitions

Vashti, Shushan Studios' top-grossing pop star

Esther, an up-and-coming star

Mordechai, Esther's uncle and manager

Haman, the CEO of Shushan Studios, and also a demon

Bigthan and **Teresh**, plotting roadies/demons

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 Studios, Persia; springtime. The stage is half royal court, half neon K-pop stage.

Narrator

Lailah Tov, fans of H-Pop, you all look fabulous! Thanks for joining us in Shushan Studios tonight. As you know, we are here for the latest show by studio pop star, Vashti! And here to introduce her: Studio President Ahashuerush!

Enter Ahashuerush.

Ahashuerush

Welcome, welcome fans, I know you're all eager to hear Vashti's latest single. It's new, it's hot, it features our star in only the thinnest of veils—here she is: our H-Pop super star, Vashti!

Vashti enters fully adorned in a sleeping bag.

Ahashuerush

Gasp.

What is *this*?

Ahashuerush scrambles to grab a grape juice pouch from his pocket, which he guzzles in order to calm down.

Vashti

What? I'm the peak of fashion. You common people just don't understand avant-garde trends.

Ahashuerus

And you don't understand clear instructions.

Vashti

Oh, I understand, I just don't obey.

Ahashuerus splutters in indignation.

Vashti

To the tune of Huntr/x's *How It's Done* Chorus

I'm walking out like a lullaby
Hear that door slamming in your mind
Better sit down for the show
'Cause I'm gonna show you
That I'm done, done, done

Vashti don't miss
She is done, done, done
Vashti will quit
Yeah, she's done, done, done
Run, run, run from the town
I'm done bein' tied down
Dropped mic, my final sound
Vashti shows this: how it's done, done, done

Vashti mimes a mic drop. (Don't actually drop a mic. They are expensive.)

Ahashuerus

You're fired. You can't sing for Shushan Studios anymore. And I'll make sure you can't sing for anyone else anymore either! *(He takes a swig of his grape juice.)*

Vashti

Good. I could use a break. Just, spend my days in a comfy robe, relaxing, eating snacks on my couch. A real, long staycation. Shalom, all!

Exit Vashti.

Narrator

The President is temporarily satisfied to be rid of a troublesome, disobedient star, but then he realizes that he no longer has a main moneymaker and has to replace her, fast. He does what he always does and organizes a singing competition, overseen by the CEO of Shushan Studios: Haman (pause).

Ahashuerus

Haman! (pause) Get in here, we need a new singing competition immediately!

Narrator

Now, Haman (pause) is in total control of Shushan Studios. Ahashuerush is the President of the Board, essentially the King, but CEO Haman (pause) is the ruthless leader of the Studios, terrorizing and ordering people around. The music world trembles when he roars.

Enter Haman with a roar. Ahashuerush is startled.

Haman

Rargh! I'm here, Prez. Let's get to it.

Ahashuerus

To Narrator.

Yikes, you're not kidding, there's something about him; he's scary. *(He takes a swig of grape juice.)* But, efficient! Haman (pause), Vashti is no longer with us. We need a new star.

Haman

On it.

Narrator

Within a week, all the singers in Persia come to Shushan Studios for the competition. Among the contestants is a young Jewish artist, Esther, with her Manager-Uncle, Mordechai.

Enter Esther and Mordechai. Esther is wearing the latest in H-pop fashion, her hair is a long purple braid and she has large star of David necklace at her throat.

Esther

I am so nervous!

Mordechai

It's ok, we can handle this, we are not having a nervous breakdown. Visualise there are not hundreds of other contestants here, singing and sounding really amazing.

Esther

Mayday, mayday, Mordy. There *are* hundreds of other contestants here, singing and sounding really amazing.

Mordechai

And yet, I know you can out-sing them all!

Esther

I was born for this.

Esther

To the tune of Huntr/x's *Golden*

I am an imposter alone
Happiness is just out of reach

Given the throne, I wouldn't know how to believe
I am the queen that I'm meant to be
I live two lives, try to play both sides
Fighting to find my own place
I'm Solomon's child split in two, it's wild
Dichotomy's all the rage, endlessly on stage

I'm still hidin', while I'm shinin'
Like I'm born to be
I'm dreamin' hard, I came so far
Hard to believe

And still Akoom-koom-koom
I'll seize the moment
Like the sun I will be golden
Be a star, hide my star, ken ken

Ohh-ohhh
Akoom-koom-koom
With my voice and
Sing on a tightrope forever
Gonna be, gonna be golden

Oh, I'll keep hidin', while I'm shinin'
Like I'm born to be
Oh, and one day, no fears, no lies
And I will be set free—

Ahashuerush cannot help himself and interrupts the song.

Ahashuerush

If that's not a voice that's full of potential, I don't know what is! She's our winner!

Haman

There are, like, 67 other contestants to see...

Narrator

With the viral up-and-down hand gesture.

Six, seven!

Haman

To Narrator.

Really? In the big 2026?

Narrator

Sorry.

Ahashuerush

There could be millions more; I know a winner when I hear one. *She's* our next star. Crown her, on the top of her deliciously purple hair—purple like grape juice! (*He takes a swig of grape juice.*)

Haman

Drily.

Congratulations.

Narrator

Bowing to Esther and Mordechai.

It's an honour to share the stage with you.

Esther

Bowing.

Oh no, the honour is ours.

Ahashuerush

Bowing.

It's ours.

Esther and Mordechai

Bowing even lower.

Ours.

Narrator and Ahashuerush

Bowing even lower.

Ours.

Ahashuerush

Ouch, my back!

Haman, who has not bowed at all, tends to Ahashuerush.

Mordechai

Whispering to Esther.

Remember, though, cover up that you're Jewish. Hide it.

Esther

I *know*, did you not hear what I was singing??

Mordechai

I did. And also, nobody should know that we're related.

Esther zips up her costume to hide her star of David necklace. Esther and Mordechai exit.

Narrator

President Ahashuerush and his new pop star go on a tour of the realm, releasing a single from the new Shushan Studios album at each stop. The one shadow is the rule that only the President can summon family, friends and staff. No one can approach him without his express invitation, under penalty of being fired and banished from the studios forever. In exchange for fame and fortune, it seems to Esther like a small price to pay for a contract at the top pop music studio in the land, and she accepts and follows the rule.

Ahashuerush is lounging around, scrolling on a magical tablet. He tosses an umpteenth juice pouch onto the floor. Bigthan and Teresh, roadies by day, low-level demons by night, emerge from the back to tidy up the pile of juice detritus. Ahashuerush does not see them and keeps making a mess.

Bigthan

The president never notices anything. He's too busy watching dance challenges.

Teresh

That's it. Tonight, during the encore, we strike. One pouch. One push. Boom—no more king of the studio.

They laugh demonically. Enter Mordechai, dressed like a roadie but clearly a seasoned demon hunter. He overhears Bigthan and Teresh's plot.

Bigthan and Teresh

To the tune of Huntr/x's *Takedown Chorus*

I don't think he's ready for our takedown

Break him into pieces in a world of pain, so he feels the shame

Yeah, it's a takedown

As demons, we have feelings, we don't deserve this, it's so obvious (Oh-oh)

I'ma gear up and take you down
Woah-oh-oh, da-da-da, down
It's a takedown
Woah-oh-oh, da-da-da, down
I'ma take him down
Woah-oh-oh, da-da-da, down
It's a takedown
Woah-oh-oh, da-da-da, down (Take it down)

During Bigthan and Teresh's song, the roadie-demons sing and dance so energetically that a particular juice pouch they hold falls to the ground. Mordechai sees the juice pouch as Bigthan and Teresh exit.

Mordechai

Oh, the President's juice! He loves these so much, I should get this back to him. Wait, what?

Mordechai peels off the grape juice label.

Mordechai

Poison? Oh no! They are trying to poison the President of Shushan Studios! That wasn't just stage banter. That's a regicide plot. I've got to warn security!

Enter Haman. Mordechai rushes past Haman and bumps into his shoulder.

Haman

Hey, watch yourself!

Mordechai

What?

Haman

And bow in my presence.

Mordechai

No, thank you.

Haman

Excuse me?

Mordechai

I'll bow out of respect, not out of oppression. An important distinction. Anyway, I have an emergency, see you, CEO Haman! (pause)

Mordechai exits, and Haman roars as he exits in the other direction.

Narrator

For a time, Mordechai's mitzvah goes unnoticed by the President of the studio, but one night, stricken by stress-driven insomnia, Ahashuerush turns to one of his favourite pastimes.

Ahashuerush enters.

Ahashuerush

I can't sleep; I'll give my audiobook of Kings of H-Pop a listen.

Narrator

(Interpreting an ASMR version of the audiobook.)

In the studio corridors, where costumes' sleeves brush soundstage curtains and platinum albums cling to the walls, two voices murmur in the dark. *(whispered, overlapping)* Bigthan... Teresh... *(tiny click of a door latch)* plotting, plotting—words sliding like blades. *(slow breath out)* They think no one hears them. *(pause)* But—*(gentle tap, tap, tap on the microphone)* —Mordechai is listening. *(lower, closer)* He hears everything. *(breath catches)* He leans in— *(heartbeat sound, soft)* —and the danger shivers through him. *(quick whisper)* The juice is poison, the juice is poison *(liquid drips)* The message travels— *(inhale)* — until it reaches security. *(sudden stillness)* Scrolls unfurl. *(paper sound, slow)* Names are spoken. *(sharp intake)* Bigthan. Teresh. *(exhale)* Justice falls— *(soft thud, distant)* —and the studio exhales with relief. *(warm whisper)* Remember this moment. The moment Mordechai saved our King of H-Pop.

Ahashuerush

What? How did I not know about this? Someone must have missed posting it on our socials. I've got to rectify this immediately. Haman! *(pause)*

Enter Haman.

Haman

Yes, Prez?

Ahashuerush

I've been remiss in my duties. What can be done for someone I wish to honour?

Haman

To Narrator.

Finally! The recognition I deserve.

To Ahashuerush.

Best thing is a photoshoot—dressed in the latest fashion, with the best lighting display and then a runway down the main street next to Shushan Studios—with a final public display and parade on horseback! Livestreamed on socials, saying “This is how the

company honours the one they delight in.” Yeah, I would— I mean, the *honoured* would love that.

Ahashuerush

That’s why you’re the CEO; what a great idea, Haman (pause)! Do that for Manager Mordechai. He deserves it for saving me from an insidious plot that would have had me canceled—permanently!

Ahashuerush exits.

Haman

(Seething)

I’m going to get you, Mordechai, I’m going to feast on your soul. And not just yours. I’m going to feast on the souls of 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.

Haman

To the tune of Saja Boys’ *Soda Pop* excerpt

Don’t want to bow then, yeah, I need you to be strung up
Cut from the competition, won’t even sing backup
Got a feeling that I am ‘bout to feed, ‘bout to feast and
I hunger, ravenous, ev’ry soul makes me want more, yeah

Souls are like snacks and I pack ‘em all in
Take a big slurp, want another slurp, yeah
Middle of the night I’m feasting, feasting, feasting
And by Adar, I’m gorging, gorging, gorging
I am excelling in my villain role (life goal)
Planning to fill this gaping hole

All you had to do was one tiny thing
Bow down deeply, kissing my demon ring,
‘cause I need you to fear me;
I’m empty, you feed me
So refreshing—
Feast on souls till they drop

It’s all I can think of
All the souls I drink up
I’m not gonna stop
I’m never gonna stop.

Bow down to your idol
Demon genocidal

I'm not gonna stop
I'm never gonna stop.

It's all I can think of
All the souls I drink up
I'm not gonna stop
I'm never gonna stop.

Bow down to your idol
Demon genocidal
I'm not gonna stop
I'm never gonna stop.

Narrator

Haman (pause), demonic thoughts brewing, then calls upon fate to project manage his scheme. He draws lots and determines that his all souls feast will occur on the thirteenth day of the twelfth month, Adar.

Haman

Ha-ha! This is the day that the Jewish souls will belong to me! All I need is the president's sign-off.

Ahashuerush returns to the stage and Haman accosts him, a tablet in hand.

Haman

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

Ahashuerush

Sure, hand it over. *(He glances at the document.)* Oh, that is very small print.

Haman

Yeah, yeah, no big deal, just some regular business, you know, like granting permissions for access to free software online, no big deal, no big deal at all, just sign or tap to accept.

Ahashuerush signs and he and Haman exit.

Narrator

Through his studio connections, Mordechai hears about the plot of Haman (pause) to target and destroy Jewish souls. He rushes to Esther to enlist her help.

Mordechai and Esther enter stage.

Mordechai

President Ahashuerush has signed a new set of rules and regulations to eliminate Jews from the competitions. What he doesn't realize is that this decree will get rid of all Jews permanently and forever.

Esther

The President? *My* President? I mean, I joined the studio pretty quickly, but I thought I knew him and this place better than this. How is this possible? How could he?

Mordechai

It's the work of Haman (pause). He wrote this decree then got President of the Board Ahashuerush to sign it.

Esther

Then there's no hope.

Mordechai

There's always hope.

Esther

Not anymore.

Mordechai

That's the funny thing about hope, nobody else gets to decide if you feel it. That choice belongs to you.

Esther

I have choice? *I* have *choice*? All my life, choices have been made for me. Even being here, *you* got me here. I didn't choose this. And now that I'm here and used to the fame and fortune, the President wants me and my people *eliminated*?

Mordechai

Well, that's the thing. I don't think he wants us eliminated.

Esther

No?

Mordechai

Ok, I don't think the President wants *you* eliminated. He loves you. And that's why it was God's will that you would be crowned Queen of the ultimate competition.

Esther

See? No choice.

Mordechai

But now you can *choose* to save your people. No one but you can do it. You can fix this.

Esther

I'm supposed to fix the world?

Mordechai

Yes! Tikkun Olam, yes.

Esther

How?

Mordechai

You go to the Board's penthouse office and ask the President to reverse the decree. Once he sees you, he won't be able to say no.

Esther

You want me just to waltz—or should I say, pop—up there to see the President, who summarily fires anyone who approaches him un-summoned? Great plan. Some choice.

Mordechai

It's yours to make. I hope you make the righteous one.

Narrator

Esther, being our heroine, chooses to save the Jewish people. She prepares herself to accost the President, hopeful that she will prevail.

Esther

Heels, nails, blade, mascara, fit check for my revenge era. I'll keep my voice unwavering until I defeat those who would harm my people. I can do this.

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

Narrator

So, Esther plans a party, a very particular banquet, serving fishcake soup (Eomukguk), stuffed pancake (Hotteok), prawn crackers (Saeukkang), rice cakes (Tteokbokki), noodles and kimchi. And she marches to Ahashuerush to invite him to this party. Although shocked to see her suddenly in his penthouse office, the President's eyes pop corn when he sees his top pop star.

Esther and Ahashuerush meet centre stage.

Ahashuerush

What a pleasure to see you!

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 CEO Haman (pause).

Enter Haman.

Narrator

The two men are delighted to attend the banquet, where they enjoy many culinary delights washed down with copious amounts of grape juice and soda pop. The party goes so well that Esther invites them to come again the next day, to offer up a full ramyeon bar. The President and the CEO of Shushan Studios are only too happy to return and carboload all over again.

Esther

Now's the time. Time to be golden.

Mordechai

For all of us!

Narrator

Esther stands to make an announcement just when Shushan Studios' President and CEO's mouths are full. This way, she knows she won't be interrupted.

Esther

I wanted to thank you for the opportunity to join you here at Shushan Studios and show my talent to the world. I am proud to be part of the legacy of H-Pop. But there are some who do not want me to succeed.

Ahashuerush

Spit take.

What?? Why?? Who??

Esther

Pointing at Haman.

This guy. He wants to kill me! Yes, me, the queen of H-Pop, because in addition to my sensational voice and extraordinary stage presence, I am also Jewish.

Mordechai

Talk about a triple threat!

Ahashuerush

A pop star who's Jewish? Funny, you don't *look* Jewish.

Esther

Nu, some of us are redheads, some of us are purpleheads—Jews come in all shapes, sizes and colours.

Haman tries to slink away, but Mordechai blocks his way.

Ahashuerush

What's this about making a killing? Do we have a new song to produce? Should I book the choreographer, back-up singers and dancers? When's the release?

Esther

No, not like that. Your CEO, Haman (pause), wants to get rid of me—and everyone like me, all the Jews, including staff and fans—just because his ego can't handle seeing us prosper.

Haman

Pointing at Mordechai

He didn't bow! It *bugged* me.

Ahashuerus

This is not how I run a studio, Haman (pause)! On the one hand, getting rid of a top-grossing star and her manager, not to mention thousands of fans, is just bad business. On the other hand, talk about grievous escalation of authoritarianism and just plain racism; that's bad humanity.

Haman

Humanity? *Humanity?? (He roars.)* This is what I think of your crummy humanity: You are insufferable! Always complaining, always « I'm bored », « I'm hungry », « I'm tired », « I have rights »; always wanting more: more comfort, more riches, more, more! You never accept responsibility for your faults, and you blame *me* for all the world's ills? *(He roars again.)*

Mordechai

Not *all* the world's ills, just this planned genocide in particular.

Haman

See? Complain, complain, complain. I've had it! *(He roars again.)*

Haman transforms into a hideous demon. Though it doesn't take much given how hideous a person he already is.

Ahashuerush

Whoa, you're a demon?

Haman

King of Demons, and I will feast on all your souls! *(He burps.)* Once I've digested this ramyeon a bit more...

Mordechai

With a power-hungry, rage-y antisemite, we had to obey the rule of law, but a full-blown *demon*? That's it.

Mordechai whips out two swords and tosses one to Esther. They both attack Haman the demon and slay him.

Ahashuerush

Wow! Quadruple threat! I wish I'd filmed that for our next music video release.

Narrator

Despite having no footage of the actual demon slaying, the news of the great salvation of the Jews spreads to the remotest corners of Shushan Studios and all the land, and the Jews are treated with respect. The fourteenth day of Adar is 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, demonic Haman (pause).

And because the Jews survive yet again, they have light, joy, happiness, gladness and honour. *Kein tih yeh lanu...*

All

May it be true for us!

Fade to black.

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