

# *Here's Looking at you, Esther*

by Larry Smith

a Purim play

## Cast of characters

**King**

**Sam**

**Mordecai**

**Esther**

**Bigthan**

**Teresh**

**Police**

**Vashti**

**Vashti's friend**

**Haman**

**Miss Chaldea**

**Miss Babylon**

(At the opening of the play, we see a big sign on the wall: “**KING’s The place for Root Beer**”. The stage has several root beer bottles scatted about. Sam and King sit in their chairs onstage. Sam has a keyboard (music, not computer). Vashti and her friend are under their table. Vashti has her tiara. Bigthan and Teresh sit on their bench stage left. Mordecai, Esther, Haman, Miss Chaldea, Miss Babylon, Police all sit in the front row, stage left. Haman has two sheets of paper, which he will give to Bigthan and Teresh later.)

**Production Note:** you’ll want to use **As Time Goes By** for the opening music-- you can download a version of **As Time Goes By** from one of the many **Casablanca** web sites.

(The opening music starts, which Sam pretends to play on the keyboard. When the music ends, Sam and King drink root beer.)

**King:** Oh, I’m sooo miserable. I miss her soooo much. Why did Vashti leave me, Sam?

**Sam:** Don’t you remember, boss? You dumped her! Boss, you got to stop drinking so much root beer. It’s affecting your memory. Surely you remember-- you told Vashti to get out!

**King:** No, I don’t remember-- and don’t call me Shirley!

**Sam:** Sorry, boss.

**King:** Tell me the story again, Sam. Why did I break up with Vashti?

**Sam:** Boss, I remember it like it was yesterday. In fact, it was yesterday! I was sitting right here, and you were sitting, let’s see... oh yeah, right there!

FLASHBACK SCENE (hold up a sign that says “flashback scene”)

(Vashti and her friend climb up to sit at the table. They play cards)

**Vashti:** Got any threes?

**Friend:** Go fish! (Vashti picks up a card)  
Got any sevens? (Vashti hands over a card)

**Vashti:** I never have any luck at this game. I probably shouldn't be playing cards right now anyway-- the king wants me to always be ready to serve him. (she throws down her cards)

**Friend:** You know, Vashti, I've been meaning to talk you about that... Um, this is hard to say.... What I'm trying to tell you is this-- that husband of yours treats you like a slave! And **Lincoln freed** the slaves!

**Vashti:** WHO?

**Friend:** Oh, right... um... MOSES freed the slaves. Listen, Vashti-- it's a shame the way the king treats you-- why don't you stand up to him sometime? Don't let him order you around! Tell him off, tell him no!

**Vashti:** You think so? (her friend nods) Well, maybe....

**King (to Sam):** Go get Vashti, Sam. I want to show her off to all of my friends.

**Sam:** Boss, you know I never leave this piano!

**King:** Oh yeah-- Bigthan! Teresh!

(Bigthan and Teresh run forward to stand next to the stage, pushing each other to try to be first)

**King:** You two go get Vashti!

**Bigthan and Teresh (speaking together):** Where is she, king?

(Sam and King roll their eyes and point to Vashti)

**Bigthan and Teresh (speaking together):** Oh yeah. (to Vashti)  
The king desires your presence.

**Vashti:** A present! What-- is it his birthday? I'm busy-- tell him I've got to wash my hair or something. Now get out of here already.

(Bigthan and Teresh return to their seats)

**King:** I heard that-- and I've never been so insulted! Leave the palace at once! You are no longer the queen!

**Friend:** Big deal. Come on, Vashti, let's go to Starbuck's for a Latte. (Vashti and her friend exit and sit in the front row, stage right)

(flashback ends)

**Sam:** That's it boss-- she's gone. I think you need to move on-- why don't you find yourself another queen?

**King:** Oh, Sam, why would a girl want to marry me?

**Sam:** I don't know, boss-- all the diamonds and servants, the threat of death if she refuses-- these things mean a lot to a girl. Look around-- I'll bet any of the girls in here would agree to be your queen. Why don't you pick one?

**King:** Hey, that's a good idea, Sam. Bigthan! Teresh! Have all the women brought before me!

( Bigthan and Teresh stand in front of the stage, and use root beer bottles for microphones)

**Teresh:** We're live from the palace at Shushan, where the royal beauty pageant is about to begin. What's the prize here, Bigthan?

**Bigthan:** Well, Teresh, I believe that the winner gets to be the new Queen! How about that! Here comes the first contestant.

(Miss Chaldea walks up and down the center aisle)

**Teresh:** This is Miss Chaldea.

**Miss Chaldea:** I play the harp and the tenor saxophone, and I like root beer!

**Bigthan:** How about a song for us, Miss Chaldea?

(Miss Chaldea plays her harp and sings a horrible song about root beer)

(the audience applauds and Miss Chaldea sits back down. Miss Babylon walks up and down the center aisle.)

**Bigthan:** Next we have Miss Babylon.

**Miss Babylon:** For my talent competition later, I will re-enact **the creation of the universe** using finger puppets! And, I'll have you know that I drink seven bottles of root beer every day!

(more applause, Miss Babylon sits down)

**King:** Enough, already! (Bigthan and Teresh sit back down).

Oh, I don't know, Sam-- none of them seem right to me. Look, why don't we just play cards for a while? What was that game Vashti was playing in the flashback scene?

**Sam:** Oh that was just a little game I taught her-- called "Go fish". But you don't really want to do that, Boss. You should...

**King** (interrupting): Play it, Sam. You played it with her, you can play it with me. If she can learn it, so can I. Play it, Sam.

(Sam starts to deal the cards, as Esther and Mordecai enter, walking up the center aisle, stopping near the stage. Sam and King stop, and the King looks at Esther in awe)

**King:** Sam! Look at her! She's the most beautiful woman in the world. Ohhhh! She's with that man-- she's already taken, Sam! I'm sooo depressed. Why did she have to walk in here and make me miserable, Sam? (he puts his head down)

**Sam:** I dunno, boss.

**King:** Of all the root beer joints in all the towns in all the world, she walks into mine.

**Sam:** Boss! Look up! Surely you notice the way she's looking at you!

**King:** Don't call me Shirley!

**Esther** (to Mordecai): Uncle Mordecai, look-- there's the king. He looks kind of pathetic close up. Cute though, like a lost puppy dog.

**Mordecai:** You were always a sucker for the lost puppy dogs. You think you can get his attention, Esther?

**Esther:** Can I get his attention? Uncle Mordecai, before the next Shabbat your niece will be the queen of this dusty old country. And then just let our enemies try to harm us!

**Mordecai:** My, my. What have I done? Esther-- I'm not sure I should have told you that the king might be looking for a new wife.

**Esther:** Oh, Uncle Mordecai! Don't be so old-fashioned! It is 563 B.C.E., you know. You act like we just rode in on a dinosaur.  
(Esther walks up onto the stage to meet the King.) Hi there, Mr. King, how about drinking a root beer with me?

**King:** I'd love to, but, but-- what about your husband?

**Esther:** My husband! That's a hoot! He's not my husband! My name's Esther, and I'm very pleased to make your acquaintance, Mr. King. Now how about that root beer?....

### *A week later*

(At the opening of this scene, Sam and King are in their usual places. Esther sits at the table with King. Mordecai sits at the other table. Haman enters , and stands below the stage at the top of the center aisle)

**Haman** (to audience): Look at that pretty little scene-- the new Queen Esther with her adoring husband the king, and that piano player, and that other man, whoever he is. Well I don't like it, not one bit. In case you were wondering--my name is... HAMAN. What's that dreadful racket? I said I'm HAMAN. You're a noisy bunch, that's the truth of it. Well, if you must know, I mean to be in charge around here, and so I have to get rid of those two advisors over there. Then I'll get to drink root beer right next to the King, and I'll get to make a lot of powerful decisions. And then everyone will have to bow down to me! To HAMAN! My goodness, can't you keep quiet for even a minute? Well, how will I get rid of those two idiots? Hmmmm. .... I've got an idea...

(She scribbles on some paper, and Bigthan and Teresh walk over to her. All three face the audience as they speak).

**Bigthan:** Hi there Haman. What do you have there?

**Haman:** Oh, I don't think you two would be interested. It's just a new play I'm writing. It will probably be the hit of the next summer festival, and I do need two actors to star in it , but you wouldn't be interested...

**Teresh:** Oh yes we would, please let us read the parts!

**HAMAN:** Well, I guess it wouldn't hurt to let you audition . here-- it's called "MURDER at KING's". You read the part of advisor #1 and you read advisor #2. Nice and loud. (Haman hands them each a piece of paper.)

**Bigthan:** I think this afternoon would be a good time to kill him.

(the king starts to pay attention)

**Teresh:** Yes-- he has been drinking root beer all day, and he can hardly think any more.

**Bigthan:** And the way he keeps staring into the Queen's eyes-- he'll never notice when we sneak up behind him and hit him over the head with root beer bottles!

**King:** Root beer bottles! Why there's a 10 cent deposit on those bottles! Sam, arrest those two!

**Sam:** They'll have to come over here , boss-- you know the rules.

**King:** Oh all right-- Haman! You arrest them! Throw them in the dungeon, and come back here and drink a root beer with me, would you?

**HAMAN:** Why yes, King, I'd love to! (to the audience) And so you see, I always have my way! (laughs like a maniac and leads them away to the front row- stage right)

**King:** Well, Sam, we seem to be out of root beer. I don't suppose... No, I guess not. I'll go get some more. Be right back.

(King leaves-- goes to the front row stage right to pick up a six pack of root beer. King waits for a while before returning).

**Mordecai:** Well, my daring niece, all that you promised has come true. I must admit though, I'm a little nervous about that fellow named Haman. What's that noise? Sounds like a plague of locusts!

**Esther:** Shhh.... Here she comes.

(Haman returns, and walks up onto the stage to talk to Mordecai and Esther)

**Haman:** I just met the King on his way down to the market, and he issued this royal decree-- “ **I, being the King, do hereby proclaim that all shall bow down in reverence to my new chief advisor, Haman!**” There you have it. (Haman points to Mordecai)  
Let's start with you.

**Mordecai:** I am a Jew, and I only bow down to God. You are just a person, and a rude, ugly one at that, and there is no reason why I should bow down to you.

**Haman:** Well, we'll see about that, won't we. Here comes the King.

(The King returns to his seat holding a six pack of root beer.)

**King:** More root beer! The next round is on me!

**Haman:** King, I issued your royal decree, and this man here would not bow down. He says it's because he's Jewish. I say if Jews will not follow the royal decree, then they all should die!

**King:** Well, I don't know, that sounds a bit harsh... perhaps I could say "No root beer for a week!"

**Haman:** King, if you let this strange people, these Jews, ignore your royal orders, it would be like....well.. I don't know what, but it wouldn't be good. They must die!

**King:** Very well, Haman. If you think it would be best. Take him away.

**Mordecai** (quietly to Esther): You must save the Jews!

**Esther** (quietly to Mordecai): Don't worry uncle!

(Haman leaves with Mordecai, takes him to the front row, stage right.)

**Esther:** King! King! My life is in danger!

**King:** Oh no! I don't want to lose two queens in a week! Tell me who threatens you, and I will put that person to death!

(Haman slowly walks back, and stands in front of the audience, facing the audience.)

**Esther:** That person will come walking in here any second. Look, there she/he is!

**King:** Haman! I don't understand!

**Esther:** You see, King, I too am a Jew! Haman wants me put to death!

**King:** Then Haman must die! I will take care of it, Queen Esther.

**Oh, Haman!** (Haman turns to look at King) -- would you bring that man back here -- I think it's time for an execution!

**Haman:** Why, certainly, King! With pleasure! (He leaves again)

**Esther:** King, this is a quite a day! On our Jewish calendar, it the 14th day of Adar. This is the day that the sorrow of the Jews of Persia has turned to great joy. The Jews will celebrate this day as the holiday of Purim. Oh, here come Haman and Mordecai.

(Haman returns with Mordecai, they stand up on stage)

**King:** Today I execute a hateful person. A person who has no respect for fellow human beings. A person who dared to share a root beer at my table, and then disgrace the good name of "King's". Bring me the ritual root beer bottle.

(A big bottle is brought to the King. He moves toward Mordecai, then turns and hits Haman on the head. Haman stumbles down the steps, then falls right in front of the audience. A police officer comes in and stands by the body. The police officer looks at the King. The king is still holding the root beer bottle)

**King:** Haman has been killed (pause and look around at everybody)... Round up the usual suspects.

(Haman is dragged offstage, quickly. Police officer exits)

**Mordecai:** (wait until Haman has been dragged offstage)  
Well, King, you've just executed Haman and you helped Queen Esther save the Jews. What are you going to do now?

**King:** I'm going to Disney World! Let's go, Esther! (he exits)

(Esther follows King down the steps, then turns and runs back to Mordecai)

**Esther:** Oh, Uncle Mordecai! How can I leave you?

**Mordecai:** Esther, you're going to Disney World with the King.

**Esther:** I don't understand. What about you?

**Mordecai:** I'm staying here with Sam.

**Esther:** But, Uncle Mordecai, no, I, I...

**Mordecai:** You've got to listen to me. Do you have any idea what you'd have to look forward to if you stayed here? Nine chances out of ten we'd both wind up playing "go fish" and drinking root beer all night. Isn't that true, Sam?

**Sam:** I'm afraid I would insist.

**Esther:** You're only saying this to make me go.

**Mordecai:** I'm saying it because it's true. Inside we both know you belong with the King. You're part of him, the thing that keeps him going. If he leaves and you're not with him, you'll regret it. Maybe not today, maybe not tomorrow, but soon, and for the rest of your life.

(Esther and Mordecai hug. Esther goes down the steps and walks to center below the stage. She looks back one more time.)

**Mordecai:** Here's looking at you, Esther.

(she leaves, and Mordecai sits down in King's chair)

**Sam:** Mordecai, deal the cards.

**Mordecai:** Pass me a root beer.

**Sam:** Got any Queens?

(they both laugh loudly)

**Mordecai:** Sam, I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship.

(The theme music starts, and **everyone** comes up to the stage for a curtain call.)