

## **Esther on the Roof**

By Aaron Eime, CMJ Israel

### ***Scene 1***

***Overture Fiddler on the Roof, Mordechai enters carrying his yoke, buckets of milk.***

**Mordechai:** Good Evening Ladies and Gentlemen, welcome to the humble village of Anatevka, which everyone thinks is somewhere in the Ukraine but it's actually here in Persia. We Jews have been here since Nebuchadnezzar. Which is a long time ... a long time away from our Land, from Jerusalem and from our Temple. You might think we would forget ... but how can we forget Jerusalem? With hats on our heads and fringes on our clothes it helps ... it helps us remember. Remember our Tradition!

***Song Overture - Tradition (Esther and her sisters enter)***

**Mordechai:** My name is Mordechai. (Cheer) I am not here alone, oh no not alone, let me introduce to you my family. This is my cousin Esther (Cheer), and her sisters Rivka, Hava and Shulamit. We are a poor people and this is our poor town and here comes our poor Rabbi.

**Rabbi:** Wealth is not everything Mordechai (Cheer) .. Wealth can be a Curse!

**Mordechai:** Perhaps, but may I be struck with this Curse and may I never recover.

**Rabbi:** You might be a simple milkman Mordechai (Cheer) but you are the milkman for the Czar himself. Its a big advancement for a Jew.

**Mordechai:** Oh yes, King David would be so proud.

**Esther:** Rabbi, is there a blessing for the Czar?

**Rabbi:** Oh Esther (Cheer), of course there is, there is a blessing for everything. (Thinks for a minute) May the Lord bless and keep the Czar .. far away from us as possible. Why do you ask about the Czar?

**Esther:** Because Rabbi, I think I see him coming.

***(Czar Xerxes and Haman enter the Scene. Overture: Ra Ra Rusputin)***

**Mordechai:** Yes, that is indeed the Czar. Czar Xerxes they call him. King of all Persia. And he is always in the presence of his henchman, the Captain of the Cossak Intelligence, Haman (Boo). I think it's time for us to be somewhere else. (Mordechai, Esther, Rabbi etc leave)

**Xerxes:** Ah Haman (boo) my good Captain, do I not rule one of the greatest Empires ever?

**Haman:** Yes your Grace, it's magnificent, all 127 provinces of it.

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**Xerxes:** Yes, 127 provinces stretching from India to Ethiopia, and I rule over it all. You know what is the best thing about my Kingdom Haman? (boo)

**Haman:** No your Grace, what is the greatest thing in your Kingdom?

**Xerxes:** The milk.

**Haman:** Milk your Grace?

**Xerxes:** Yes, the finest milk in the world. White gold, right here in Persia. And I think I just saw my milkman here a minute ago.

**Haman:** You mean Mordechai (Cheer) the milkman? Yes, he seems to have gone your Grace.

**Xerxes:** Then summon Vashti, wife of the Czar. Have that beautiful creature get a glass of milk, Haman (Boo). I thirst!

*(Vashti appears Overture of Some Persian Epic)*

**Vashti:** Well my husband dearest, why have you summoned me? This had better be good.

**Xerxes:** Vashti, Queen of Persia, I desire the nectar of the cow, the drop of the bovine, the stuff of legend, fetch me a glass of milk!

**Vashti:** What? Milk? Are your arms painted on? I'm the Queen of Persia. I am descended from Nebuchadnezzar himself. I'm not your milkmaid!

**Xerxes:** You are my wife. You have to do what I say. That's in the rules.

**Vashti:** Rules? Those rules are all in your head, right up there with the voices.

**Xerxes:** I command you to bring me a glass of milk!

**Vashti:** I will not be humiliated. No!

**Xerxes:** I don't understand. You know the other day she left a sticky label on the fridge saying 'It's not working and I've gone to stay with my mother'. But when I opened the fridge the light came on, the milk was cold. What is she talking about? Haman (Boo) advise me. What am I to do? Vashti won't get me any milk!

**Haman:** If word gets out about this, there is no telling what damage to society this will cause. We will have complete civil disobedience, we will have gender confusion, gender equality, wage

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equality. By Gilgamesh we will have to share bathrooms and do some of the cooking. Chaos I tell you! Send her away your Grace!

**Xerxes:** Vashti, I divorce you and banish you from Persia!

**Vashti:** Ha, the only thing this divorce proves, is that Mother was right in the first place.

*(Vashti leaves. Overture: Some Persian Epic)*

**Haman:** Well, at least we saved civilization your Grace. It was a close one. We are going to need to find you a new wife though. Every King needs his Queen, and every Czar needs his ... er .. well whatever.

**Xerxes:** How do we do that Haman? (Boo) How do I find a wife? It's been a while and I can't remember how I found the last one? The difference between me and a calendar is that a calendar has dates, I don't!

**Haman:** What we need your Grace, is a Matchmaker!

**Xerxes:** A Matchmaker, excellent. Now Haman (Boo) ... get me glass of milk.

*(Xerxes and Haman leave, Scene Change, Fiddler Overture)*

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### *Scene 2*

#### *Esther and the Girls, Overture All the Single Ladies*

**Rivka:** Have you heard Esther (Cheer), the Czar is looking for a new Wife?

**Hava:** Don't try and get our hopes up Rivka. What chance do we have to find good husbands, we are just poor Jewish girls.

**Shulamit:** But the Matchmaker is going around, she is looking at all the young girls in Persia.

**Rivka:** And they have to make a match for you first Esther (Cheer) before they can make one for me.

**Shulamit:** The Matchmaker might bring us someone Wonderful

**Hava:** Or Interesting

**Rivka:** Or Important

**Esther:** The Good Book says, He who finds a wife finds favour with the Lord.

**Shulamit:** What about us girls? What do we find?

*(Esther and Girls sing a few verses of Match Maker.)*

### *Scene 2 continues*

#### *Getting Ready for the Sabbath, Mordechai, Esther, Rivka, Hava and Shulamit*

**Mordechai:** Ok Esther (Cheer), let's get ready, the Sabbath is coming. And tonight we have a special guest. Yental the Matchmaker. (Gather around a table)

**Esther and all Girls:** Ohhhhhhh

**Yental:** Oh Mordechai (Cheer), you have such lovely cousins. (Thick New York Accent) Such gems from Heaven.

**Mordechai:** Gems .. Yes .. as the Good Book says .. er .. I don't know what the Good Book says about Gems. Will you be able to find them a Match, Matchmaker?

**Yental:** Of course Mordechai (Cheer), I'm very good at this. You worry too much. When we make a good match we will have to have a proper Jewish Wedding, you'll see.

**Mordechai:** Which type of wedding? Orthodox, Conservative or Reform?

**Esther:** What's the difference?

**Mordechai:** In an Orthodox wedding the mother of the bride might be pregnant.

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**Rivka:** But in a Conservative wedding the bride might be pregnant.

**Yental:** And in a reform wedding, the Rabbi .. SHE might be pregnant!

**Shulamit:** Now for the Sabbath

*(Esther lights candles, Sabbath Song Video Projection)*

**Yental:** Don't worry Mordechai (Cheer). I'll make all the arrangements after the Sabbath, you'll see. When Xerxes sees Esther (Cheer) it'll be love at first sight, you'll see. I'm never wrong. I'm very humble, everyone should be, but I'm never wrong.

*Everyone leaves, Scene Change, Overture Fiddler on the Roof*

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**Scene 3**  
***Xerxes and Esther Ball***

***Xerxes and Haman enter - Overture Ra Ra Rasputin***

**Xerxes:** Haman (Boo), what a great idea to have a beauty pageant, all the girls of Persia are here.

**Haman:** Thank you your Grace, a pleasure to serve I am sure.

**Xerxes:** (Looks out at the crowd of people watching the play) Haman (Boo) Are you sure they're all women?

**Haman:** Why do you ask, your Grace?

**Xerxes:** Well ... Some of them look like Eunuchs. Only women you say?

**Haman:** Absolutely your Grace, only the best in Persia.

**(Esther, Sisters, Matchmaker enter, Overture All the Single Ladies, Walk like an Egyptian Gangnam Style Korean, Belly Dancer)**

**Xerxes:** I am not sure what to do Haman (Boo). Women are such a mystery, what do I do?

**Mordechai:** Your Grace, these are my cousins .. this is mine ... this is mine ... this is mine ... this is also my mine .. (bumps into Yental) .. this is not mine.

**Xerxes:** Mordechai (Cheer) my favourite milkman.

**Yental:** Your Grace, may I present the lovely Esther (Cheer)

**Esther:** Your Grace.

**Yental:** All women are Mysterious your Grace, that's what makes them attractive .. it is the Mystery. Don't worry you have a lot to offer a girl ... you're ... well you're ... you're the Czar. Dance together and you will see that Mystery for yourself.

***Xerxes and Esther dance to Overture - Mystery Girl. During overture Tirzah/Halel/Tahel dance around with large hearts, all leave***

***Scene change - Overture Fiddler on the Roof***

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### *Scene 4*

#### *Plot to kill Xerxes Overture Dramatic Music*

**Socialist Assassin #1:** Down with the Czar, death to the Monarch. Freedom to the People.

**Socialist Assassin #2:** I hate this country. I want to move to a land where people are equal and free.

**Socialist Assassin #1:** Where the State owns everything and does everything for us, where we take what other people earn and give it other people who don't.

**Socialist Assassin #2:** That's called stealing.

**Socialist Assassin #1:** Shh, don't complicate matters.

**Socialist Assassin #2:** We could move to Venezuela? (thinks about it) .. naaah!

**Socialist Assassin #1:** Yeah, I hate the Czar. That Capitalist monster. We want Socialism and Communism for all .. right here in Persia.

**Socialist Assassin #2:** What has the Czar ever done for us eh?

**Socialist Assassin #1:** The aqueduct?

**Socialist Assassin #2:** That was the Romans. I ask again, what has the Czar ever done for us?

**Socialist Assassin #1:** Exploitation of the workers, employer greed, they steal everything.

**Socialist Assassin #2:** Yes, once Socialism is in control theft will not be a problem.

**Socialist Assassin #2:** No, there will be nothing left to steal, we will have taken it all!

**Socialist Assassin #1:** What is the difference between Socialism and Capitalism?

**Socialist Assassin #2:** Capitalism is the exploitation of man by man, with Socialism it's the other way around.

**Socialist Assassin #1:** The Czar likes Milk very much, let's poison his personal supply. (Adds poison to bucket of Milk, the Assassins move to one side) Then we can take over!

**Mordechai:** (Enters and smells the air) What a great wedding, they look so happy. The Lord does work in Mysterious ways. What do you know the Matchmaker did it. Say ... What's that strange smell? (Sees the Milk) Hmm, this Milk is curdled ... wait ... even worse ... poison! What's going on?

**Socialist Assassin #2:** Foiled, it's Mordechai (Cheer) the meddling milkman, you'll pay for this.

**Mordechai:** I am warning you. I know ... Jew-Jitsu! (Everyone assumes martial arts pose) Ah,

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I see that your style is good, but you lack discipline!

*(Overture - Kung Fu Fighting Mordechai defeats the Assassin)*

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### *Scene 5*

#### *Haman meets Mordechai*

**Mordechai:** Well that takes care of them, the Czar is safe. Socialists ... always trying to take other peoples stuff. Where do they think they are? A Kibbutz? Hey that's not a bad idea! Oh great, here comes that Cossak Haman (boo) ... you know I don't think he likes me very much.

**Haman:** Ah there you are Mordechai (Cheer), you know .. I don't like you very much.

**Mordechai:** See he doesn't like me very much. And what did I do to deserve such a great honour?

**Haman:** You and your people refuse to bow down and pay me homage when I pass. Complete disrespect!

**Mordechai:** No disrespect Haman (Boo), but our Tradition tells us only to bow to Heaven.

**Haman:** You don't like me either do you Mordechai (Cheer)?

**Mordechai:** Like you Haman (Boo)? Well I wouldn't go out and choose curtains or anything, but I don't dislike you.

**Haman:** Your people have been rebellious ever since Shadrach, Meshach and .. the other guy .. refused to bow to Nebuchadnezzar's Statue. I won't stand for it.

**Mordechai:** Then sit down.

**Haman:** I won't sit down!

**Mordechai:** Then stand up.

**Haman:** I won't stand up .. wait .. your making fun of me!

**Mordechai:** You know he might be on to me.

**Haman:** I've had it with your people. If it was up to me I'd send you all to Siberia, to the Gulag .. no even better .. I'd start a pogrom. Yes that's what I'll do. I'll finish you Jews once and for all. (Haman leaves)

**Mordechai:** How did we get into this mess? What are you bored up there in Heaven? That you need to send us trouble constantly. If you were going to send the Messiah, now might be a good time you know!

*(Mordechai leaves Overture Fiddler on the Roof)*

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### ***Scene 6***

#### ***Haman and wife Zeresh Overture Imperial Death March***

**Haman:** Zeresh, wife I am in need of your counsel. Come and attend me.

**Zeresh:** How was your day my husband Haman (Boo), Chief of Cossack Intelligence?

**Haman:** Zeresh, it was terrible, worst day ever.

**Zeresh:** What happened? Did you run out of people to extort, orphans to jail, lepers to kick around or innocent seal puppies to club?

**Haman:** No, that's all fine, plenty of seal puppies .... it's that Mordechai (Cheer), he and all his people show us Persians no respect. They show ME no respect!

**Zeresh:** Don't take it so personally Haman (Boo), there is no need to overreact.

**Haman:** Overreact? Zeresh, if they disrespect me that means they disrespect you.

**Zeresh:** What! They disrespect ME, those evil people. Do something Haman (Boo). What is your plan?

**Haman:** A pogrom, a big one, all over the Empire. We will rid the Earth of the Jewish People.

**Zeresh:** And Mordechai (Cheer), what of him? He's the one you want.

**Haman:** What do you suggest?

**Zeresh:** Build Gallows, 75 feet high, and during the pogrom have your people hang him.  
Haman: 75 feet, that's a long drop. I like it.

**Zeresh:** Everyone will see, everyone will know of what it means to cross Haman (Boo). Have you chosen a day for the pogrom?

**Haman:** No not yet, let's do that now.

**Zeresh:** In the usual way, the custom of the Persians?

**Haman:** (Fans out a set of Cards) Choose a card, any card .. nope don't show me.

**Zeresh:** It's the 13th of Adar.

**Haman:** Sounds good, nice ring to it. Now to tell the Czar.

**Zeresh:** You won't have to wait long, here he comes now.

***(Xerxes enters to Overture Ra Ra Rasputin.)***

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**Xerxes:** Ah I love that song, it makes me feel ... well .. Russian.

**Haman:** Your Grace, I have some terrible news., it concerns the Empire.

**Xerxes:** What? I hate bad news! Are the back end of cows contributing to Global Warming? Has the Milk supply gone bad? What is it Haman (Boo)?

**Haman:** No the cows are fine, but there are a people in your Empire who are thinking of switching to a non-Dairy substitute.

**Xerxes:** That would ruin the Milk Industry! Who would do such a thing?

**Haman:** One word for you your Grace .. Kosher!

**Xerxes:** What is to be done Haman (Boo)?

**Haman:** Issue a decree for a royal pogrom against the Jewish People, across the whole Empire, a pogrom on the 13th of Adar.

**Xerxes:** In the words of a famous starship captain .. make it so.

*(All leaves Overture Fiddler on the Roof)*

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### *Scene 7*

#### *Mordechai and Esther and her sisters Overture All the Single Ladies*

**Mordechai:** Esther (Cheer) ... Esther (Cheer).

**Esther:** What is it cousin Mordechai (Cheer)?

**Mordechai:** I'm trying to say something important Esther (Cheer) .. but its hard with all this cheering going on. This is very serious. Very Serious. There is a pogrom planned by Haman (Boo) a nasty plot to destroy all the Jews of Persia.

**Esther:** That's terrible, oh Mordechai (Cheer) what are we to do?

**Mordechai:** You will have to go to the Czar.

**Esther:** Mordechai (Cheer), you know I can not go to Czar without first an invitation, it is against the law, if I go in without one I might be sent to Siberia, or to the Gulag.

**Rivka:** The only exception is if he extends out his golden sceptre.

**Hava:** That means he will spare your life.

**Esther:** It's been nearly 30 days since the Czar invited me to him.

**Shulamit:** Huh! Talk about a boring husband.

**Mordechai:** Esther (Cheer) do not think that you will be spared the coming pogrom. You too will share our fate. Should you do nothing I tell you help will come from another place, but who knows .. perhaps you have come to this position for such a time as this.

**Esther:** You are right Mordechai (Cheer), I will do this thing, go fast and pray, I will go to the Czar, even though it is against the law, and if I perish I perish.

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### **Scene 8**

#### ***Xerxes cannot sleep, enters to Overture Ra Ra Rasputin***

**Xerxes:** Midnight and I'm still awake. I keep worrying about my precious milk supply. What can I do? Oh I know, I shall read the Royal History, nothing more boring than my own personal history. Might even put me to sleep. (Starts reading Book). Now let me see ... woke up .. shower .. shave .. put on socks .. blue .. wow this is gripping stuff. Tour of the Royal Milk Factory, thats more like it .. saw varieties of full cream, almond milk, hazelnut, vitamin D enhanced and skim milk. Skim Milk .. who would dare desecrate such a perfect drink and call it Skim? Insolence I tell you .. hello what's this .. saved from a poison attempt of Socialist Assassins by Mordechai (Cheer). You know I had completely forgot about that. I really should give that guy a reward. But how should I reward him? You know I really don't know, I'm just not good at doing good things. I shall ask Haman (Boo) .. he always knows what's a good thing to do. Haman (Boo)! Your Czar needs you.

**Haman:** Yes oh toast of the Zodiac, how may I be of service?

**Xerxes:** Ah there you are Haman (Boo), there is a man in my Empire whom I desire to honour more than any other. This Man has done me a great service and I needs reward him. How should I do this thing?

**Haman:** (To the audience) Wow, he must be talking about me. I'm mean who else right? Who else has done him service like me? I'm really too humble you know, I'm actually much greater than I think I am. He must be talking about me?

**Haman:** Your Grace, this must really be a special man.

**Xerxes:** Absolutely.

**Haman:** Who needs real honouring.

**Xerxes:** Yes he does.

**Haman:** Almost like a King.

**Xerxes:** Lets not get carried away too much Haman (Boo). What should be done for the man whom the Czar seeks to honour?

**Haman:** You should put on me .. I mean him .. the royal cloak and parade him through the streets so all the people can see me .. I mean him, whom the Czar delights to reward.

**Xerxes:** That sounds awesome, good plan ... you didn't think about this before did you?

**Haman:** Oh no your Grace, it just came to me.

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**Xerxes:** Then do all that you have said .. for .. for .. Mordechai (Cheer) the Milkman!

**Haman:** What? Er .. I mean .. what .. actually .. oh at once your Grace.

*Mordechai comes in Overture Fiddler of the Roof, Haman does the milkrounds with the yoke while Mordechai wears the Royal Cloak.*

**Haman:** (Despondent) Make way for Mordechai (Cheer) the man whom the Czar wishes to honour. Make way for Mordechai (Cheer).

**Mordechai:** How did this happen? Messiah would have been nice, but this is good too. Almost makes me feel like a Rich Man.

*Overture If I was a Rich Man.*

*All leave Overture Fiddler on the Roof*

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### ***Scene 9***

#### ***Xerxes enters Overture Ra Ra Rasputin***

**Xerxes:** How was the Milk Delivery Haman (Boo)?

**Haman:** As expected, throughly unenjoyable. Your Grace, here comes Queen Esther (Cheer) .. and she comes uninvited. What should be done to Queen Esther (Cheer) ... who comes to the Czar uninvited?

***(Prompt Sign on Cardboard Ohhhhhhhh)***

**Xerxes:** (Ponders ... and extends Sceptre) ... oh I couldn't hurt my beautiful Esther (Cheer).

**Esther:** Thank you your Grace.

**Xerxes:** How can I help you Esther (Cheer), what would you like? Ask and it shall be yours, up to half my Kingdom ... wow I really did just say that!

**Esther:** If it pleases your Grace, I would like to invite you and Haman (Boo) to a banquet I am preparing tomorrow.

**Xerxes:** A banquet, sounds good.

**Haman:** Sounds deliscious.

**Xerxes:** We will be there, my Queen Esther (Cheer)

***(Overture Fiddler on the Roof)***

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### ***Scene 10***

#### ***Esther and Mordechai, Xerxes and Haman***

**Esther:** This is it cousin Mordechai (Cheer), our one chance to save our people.

**Mordechai:** I'm sure you'll do fine Esther (Cheer), just speak the truth and the truth shall set us free ... hmm, something Biblical about that.

**Xerxes:** Delightful banquet my Queen, lovely milkshakes .. my favourite, chocolate milk laced with vanilla and hint of pistachio.

**Esther:** I'm glad that it pleases your Grace.

**Xerxes:** What do you think Haman (Boo)?

**Haman:** As your Grace says, delightful banquet.

**Xerxes:** Now my Queen, what is it you desire, name it, up to half my Kingdom .. wow, I really said that again!

**Esther:** My noble Czar and lord husband, if it please you to grant me my life .. for there is an unjust plot to destroy my people and me along with them.

**Xerxes:** Someone dares to kill my Queen. Outrageous, who is this plotter? Unmask the villain.

**Esther:** There is the adversary and villain, Haman (boo) ... for I am Ester (cheer) of the Jewish people and Mordechai (cheer) the milkman is my cousin of the tribe of Benjamin.

**Haman:** What? I didn't know she was Jewish! This is terrible.

**Mordechai:** No, this is great!

**Xerxes:** This its complicated!

**Esther:** It's not complicated, Haman (Boo) has tricked you into ordering a pogrom against the Jewish People. And that will include me, your Queen.

**Xerxes:** Haman (Boo)!

**Mordechai:** Doesn't look good for you my friend.

**Xerxes:** Haman (Boo) what are you still doing here?

**Haman:** Just hanging around until the end.

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**Xerxes:** Hanging around indeed, I see some 75 foot Gallows with your name on it, take him away. Anything else we need to do before we call it an end?

**Mordechai:** God does indeed work in Mysterious ways, His hand .. though not always so easily seen is still there .. always. A day of darkness has been turned to light, sadness into joy, a time of despair into a season of gift given and generosity. And so we will decree an everlasting Festival for the Jewish People, to celebrate redemption, from now on and every year we will gather for the Feast of Purim.

***The End***

***Overture Fiddler on the Roof***