

## **Purim Goes to the Movies by Shira Danan, 2012**

### **Chapter 1** *Private detective:*

Megillah Jones here, private ayin. Last night I was sitting in my office, debating if I should replace my horizontal blinds with a nice blackout curtain, when this broad walks in. A real looker. Said her name was Vashti. Sounded like something out of the Bible.

She was wearing a red dress, but it looked gray in the black-and-white lighting I have in my office. Said she had a problem. Real big problem with a real big guy named Ahashuerus. You don't have to be a genius to know she meant the one they call "the king."

The king rules over 127 countries, but the dame wasn't there to complain about imperialism. Asked the skirt what I could do to help. She sat down in this brown leather chair I got in my office, back to the wall like she didn't trust me, or anyone.

"It's the dancing, Jones. I can't do it anymore," she said.

Seems this egg she's been seein' threw a big shindig, a party for everyone. Guess he tipped back a few too many vodka gimmels and got lit. Then he wanted his wife, this Vashti with the gams, to put on a show for his friends.

"If I refuse, he'll banish me," she said.

Banishment? That's worse than a stint in the big house. But it was obvious this Vashti wasn't some chippy who would dance for a butter and egg man.

I told her she'd come to the wrong place. She didn't need a shamus, she needed a shyster. But as long as she was here, there was one thing I could offer: the chance to scam out with some dignity. We're headed for the Amalfi Coast this afternoon. Case closed.

## Chapter 2

*Esther:*

You guys are my best friends. Do you know what I mean? You are totally my best friends. So that's why I'm sharing some pretty big news with you...I'm the new queen of Persia!

Squeal! I know! It's totally exciting! It all just happened so fast. One minute I was an aspiring fashion designer slash teacher who had lived my entire life in a Jewish enclave sheltered from the outside world by my overprotective Uncle Mordecai, and the next minute, I'm Queen Esther of the whole Persia!

I still can't believe this is happening to me! When I first arrived at the competition for the new queen, I wasn't so sure about Ahashuerus. I found him arrogant, condescending, and not even that cute. Then I thought maybe we should just be friends. But by the time I got to the front of the line, he'd totally won me over! I'm so into his whole "I'm the king or whatever" thing.

I'm thinking of wearing this green shirt the first time we hang out—you know, the one with the beads? OMG montage of me picking out an outfit, right?

Anyway, the weirdest thing happened. My Uncle Mordechai seriously is so overprotective. He was like hanging around outside the palace gates and he overheard two of the kings' servants—Bigthan and Teresh (seriously, *I* would change my name)—anyway, they were plotting to kill my hubby! So Mordechai told me, and I like singlehandedly saved the king's life. It made into the record books and everything. Things are just going really well for me. Okay, I'm totally just talking about myself, aren't I? How are your goats?

### Chapter 3

*Haman as cowboy:*

Not from around these parts, are you, partner?

See, everyone who comes into *my* town plays by my rules. And my rules say if you want to get into the saloon, you have to bow down to me, Haman. These parts would be lawless if folks didn't do as I said. Some folks have to go through the mill but they all come around in the end. 'Cept this one maverick. Mordechai. Go on, that's your cue to boo, isn't it? Okay, fine, I'll say it *Haman*. (*Once everyone starts booing*) No, Mordechai! Mordechai!

Mordechai wouldn't bow down to me. Said he'd only bow down to the big man upstairs. I flashed him my badge, but there comes a time when you have to shoot or give up the gun. Asked the right questions of the right people and found out this Mordechai was a Jew.

I was wonderin' what a Jew is, too. Turns out they're these people who live among us but follow their own customs, like riding bareback, drinking sugary wine instead of whiskey, and using this six-pointed star for branding.

So I decided it was Haman's job to do away with all the Jews for good. I'm not usually much of a gambler, but in this case I made an exception. Dice landed on the 13<sup>th</sup> of Adar, and that wife wrangler Ahashuerus didn't object to the plan. Even gave me his signet ring so I could seal the decree and send it by messenger to the far corners of the kingdom.

I got no choice but to do away with that Mordechai. After all, Shushan ain't big enough for the both of us.

## Chapter 4

*Filmmaker holds up a sign that says "Occupy Shushan Day 28. Mordechai of Shushan."*

**Mordechai:** Hi. My name is Mordechai of Shushan. I'm a protestor here at Occupy Shushan. Why are we protesting? Well, there are a lot of reasons. Some of us are out here because we object to Ahashuerus's decree that he's going to kill all the Jews. Others are upset about rising unemployment. That guy over there thinks dolphins should be treated like people. Uh, we chose to camp out right here across the street from the palace so that Haman has to see us on his way into work. He can't deny that what he does affects us little people. They tried to kick us out, but we're staying right here in Mishloach Manot Park for as long as we need to.

*Filmmaker holds up a sign that says "Occupy Shushan Day 35. Queen Esther."*

**Esther:** Hello. My name is Queen Esther. Yes, that's my Uncle Mordechai out there with the protestors. No, I don't mind that he's out there. Frankly, the whole protest thing seems kind of disorganized to me. Mordechai was saying something about how the whole point of the Occupy Shushan movement was that it was a cacophony of voices and its strength was in its very diversity, or something. I don't know. I wasn't really paying attention once he told me all the Jews were going to be killed and I had to save them. I mean, I totally agree with the protestors that that's wrong, it's just not really my thing to get killed by the king by coming before him without an invitation. But what choice do I have? I told Mordechai to organize a good old-fashioned three-day hunger strike, and after that, I'll go before the king. And if I perish, I perish. Actually, that would make a really good poster.

## Chapter 5

Play “Fig Leaf Rag,” which you can download here (or stream)

(<http://incompetech.com/m/c/royalty-free/index.html?keywords=031>) for free! You will need Esther, Haman, Ahashuerus, Mordechai (Esther or Ahashuerus can double), and Zeresh (Esther or Ahashuerus can double) and someone to hold up the signs.

**SIGN 1: Esther fasted for three days, and then she went before the king.**

*Esther knocks on a door.*

**SIGN 2: Esther was nervous.**

*Esther looks nervous, bites her nails exaggeratedly.*

**SIGN 3: But the king was happy to see her, if you know what we mean.**

*The king smiles and raises his scepter to her.*

**SIGN 4: “What do you desire? Up to half my kingdom it shall be yours.”**

*King holds out his hands like he’s asking a question.*

**SIGN 5: Esther was nervous.**

*Esther looks nervous, bites her nails exaggeratedly.*

**SIGN 6: Perhaps dinner would set the mood? “Bring that friend of yours. Haman.”**

*Esther motions like she’s holding a bowl in one hand and eating out of it with the other.*

**SIGN 7: She prepared a beautiful banquet.**

*Esther, Haman and Ahashuerus all sit down together.*

**SIGN 8: “Chocolate mousse?”**

*King licks a finger, and smiles.*

**SIGN 9: “What do you desire? Up to half my kingdom it shall be yours.”**

*King holds out his hands like he’s asking a question.*

**SIGN 10: Esther was nervous.**

*Esther looks nervous, bites her nails exaggeratedly.*

**SIGN 11: Perhaps another banquet would set the mood?**

*Esther motions like she's holding a bowl in one hand and eating out of it with the other.*

**SIGN 12: This was getting ridiculous. But they agreed to meet the following day.**

*The king and Haman roll their eyes. Ahashuerus and Esther exit.*

*Haman is walking along smiling, sees Mordechai, who holds sign that says: **"We are the 99%. Also, stop Haman from killing all the Jews."***

**SIGN 13: It didn't matter how much power Haman had if Mordechai would not bow down.**

*Haman shakes his fist angrily.*

**SIGN 14: Haman's wife Zeresh wasn't one to beat about the bush. She suggested Haman build gallows for Mordechai.**

*Zeresh enters and makes a hanging gesture to Haman. She points at Mordechai.*

**SIGN 15: The End!**

*Haman and Zeresh laugh (silently and evilly) together.*

**SIGN 16: ...of Chapter 5.**

*Haman and Zeresh stop laughing.*

## Chapter 6

*Ahashuerus as Woody Allen:*

There's an old joke. Two women are at a Purim shpiel and one of them says. Boy, the hamentaschen at this party are really terrible. And the other one says, I know, and there aren't enough for seconds. That's how I feel about life. It's full of suffering and loneliness and misery—at least, I assume it is for people who aren't the king—and then it's all over much too quickly.

I start thinking like this when I can't sleep, which happens a lot. I think my thread count is too high. So I asked the servant to come and read me my record book. Hearing the record book read aloud helps me relax, like lying down on my therapist's couch with a beautiful woman.

Actually, the record book didn't work this time. Instead, it just made me more stressed out, especially when I heard that Mordechai had never been rewarded for saving my life from those bullies Bigthan and Teresh.

So in the morning, I asked my most trusted advisor, Haman, what did he think would be the best way to reward someone who had done a service to the king?  
*(Embarrassed)* Not that kind of service. I can't talk about that on the bimah.

Haman said if it was a reward for him, he'd want a ticker tape parade, a rent-controlled apartment in Manhattan, and a nice chocolate babka from Zabar's. So I told him to get those things for Mordechai. Well, everything but the rent-controlled apartment. I'm not a miracle worker, as any woman I've ever been with could tell you. But I found him a nice, affordable place in Queens, only a 45-minute walk from the subway.

Haman didn't look too happy about leading Mordechai's parade, but it's hard for me to sympathize with him because, frankly, I think he's a little bit of an anti-Semite.



## Chapter 7

*Esther as Poirot (or any movie detective—think the end of Clue):*

Ahashuerus, Haman. Thank you for joining me tonight. You may be wondering why I called you here today for this banquet. This is a delicate case. Perhaps the most delicate case I've ever seen in my career.

Ahashuerus, you asked me what you could give me—up to half your kingdom. Well, I'm here to tell you tonight that what I desire is nothing less than my own life! Yes, that's right, my life has been threatened. But by whom?

Was it Vashti—whose jealousy of her ex-husband's new wife became so venomous that she began to contemplate murder? Or was it the uncle, Mordechai—whose avuncular kindness became fatal obsession? Could it be the ghosts of Bigthan and Teresh, plotting from beyond the grave to destroy the king and his queen? Was it the quiet reader of the king's record book, who sought to make a name for himself by killing the kingdom's beloved queen? Was it Ahashuerus himself, whose well-known tendency to sleepwalk has led to more than one knife pressed against the neck of his sweetheart?

Or was it—actually, I think that's everyone. But no, it was none of these. Only one man had both motive and access to the king's signet ring to make his murderous dreams come true. *(She points at Haman.)* Haman!

Yes, it was Haman, the thuggish advisor. Haman who convinced the king of his need to kill the Jews. Including me, for I am a Jew! Haman who drew lots to determine the date on which they would die. Haman who used the king's signet ring to issue the edict. Haman, Haman, Haman!

My king, I know you're still processing what is surely a painful realization. But might I suggest we hang him on the very gallows he built for Mordechai? Yes, Haman. Haman is the one I mean. Haman.

## Chapter 8, 9, and 10

*Esther and Ahashuerus are crouched down miming as if shooting from behind a  
barricade.*

**Esther**

*(yelling, as if over the sounds of war)*

Ahashuerus, there's something you need to know.

**Ahashuerus**

Let me guess: Mordechai's your uncle.

**Esther**

How'd you guess?

**Ahashuerus**

Something in the way you both stand up for what you believe in. And you look  
like him.

**Announcer**

This Adar...the Jews of Persia will fight the royal forces...

*Esther exits. Mordechai is talking to Ahashuerus.*

**Mordechai**

What do you mean you can't undo a royal decree?

**Ahashuerus**

Listen, I don't make the rules.

**Mordechai**

Yes, you do. You're the king. That's the whole point. Here, just give me your  
signet ring.

*Ahashuerus tosses his ring to Mordechai. They both watch it fall. Then they make noises like an explosion happened and fall to the ground. Ahashuerus exits.*

**Narrator**

In a world where ears are triangular...

**Mordechai**

*(stands, as if addressing a crowd)*

If we can't stop the royal forces from attacking, at least we can fight back! We

Jews must defend ourselves!

**Narrator**

And poppy seed is a reasonable hamentaschen filling...

*(Mordechai exits, Esther enters.)*

**Esther**

Blech. These taste like pockets.

**Narrator**

Many will die.

*(Esther exits, Ahashuerus enters.)*

**Ahashuerus**

We'll need to hang all 10 sons of Haman: Parshandatha, Dalphon, Aspatha, Poratha, Adalia, Aridatha, Parmashta, Arisai, Aridai, and Vaizatha. Boy, there sure are

*lots* of them.

**Narrator**

But in the end, the Jews will emerge victorious.

*(Ahashuerus exits. Esther enters, lies on ground clutching belly as if she's been shot. Mordechai stands over her.)*

**Esther**

Mordechai, if I don't make it, just know this: I love you *lots*!

**Mordechai**

Argh! Bad puns only make me angrier with Haman!

**Narrator**

And out of the ashes, a holiday will emerge.

*(Esther, Mordechai and Ahashuerus stand side by side.)*

**Mordechai**

From now on, the day that Haman wanted to kill all the Jews will instead be a day of feasting and celebration. They tried to kill us. They failed. Let's eat!

**Narrator**

You could say, they had *lots* to celebrate.

**Mordechai**

Seriously, stop.

THE END!