

Scene 3: The Pick a Queen Contest

NOTE: Esther comes in Page 2, but the opening is a lot of fun and sets up what the King has been dealing with. Much of this is gone from the play's short version.

(SET: In the throne room, the king is on his throne)

(Narrating)

Mordi: So Esther took part in the "pick a queen competition."

(Play theme music from the Dating Game or Where Have All the Good Girls Gone.)

(droning)

Servant #4: OK, move along, move along. Everyone gets a chance to audition to be Queen. *(3 to 5 women, including Esther, get in line).*
Next! *(first woman advances)*

(King is bored out of his tree. Bach #353 will do a lot of physical contortions in her presentation, may use a nasal voice.)

King: Bachelorette #353, where did you grow up?

Bach #353: Ummm ... Grow up? Well, it was in a city...Something with a B. I think. . . Barcelona? Burbank? Babylon? Yeah that was it, Babylon. We had goats and sheep and those horses with the humpity things . .

King: Camels?

Bach #353: Yeah, that's it, camels. You're smart. They could sure drink a lot of water.

King: Next! *(Bach #354 advances, Bach #353 sulks off)*
Bachelorette #354, where did you grow up?

(Done Valley Girl style, may be ad libbed, work on the cadence)

Bach #354: Well, like, you know, my folks had a little house just outside the city. It wasn't much, ya know, what with 20 rooms and servants and the like. You know there was never enough stuff, like I only had 55 dresses and 22 dolls -- that were kind of pretty. The dresses, I mean, cause the dolls - well, they were pretty too. *(King nods off to sleep.. may starts to snore)* And, see my dad used to say how pretty my eyes looked and called me his little princess, so I really think I'm good for the job, cause, ya know being queen is kinda like, being a grown up princess, like . . . *(king awakens and may interrupt, snorting)*

King: Next! (*servants take back #354 offstage still talking to the servants*)
Eye -- yi -- yi, can't we get a nice, unspoiled girl? Where have all the good girls gone?

(*Note: This is supposed to be the worst folk or country song of all time. Which is a pretty tough standard. Consider doing with tie-died shirts and/or Bob Dylan tee-shirt. Another option -- Willie Nelson wig. May be sung off-key.*)

Where Have all the Good Girls Gone?

Minstrel: Where have all the good girls gone?
Wish I could go and get me one.
It's so tough 'cuz most guys are dumb.
She says she wants another.

Where have all the good girls gone?
She says I went and done her wrong.
I gave her flowers, wrote her a song.
'Bout how she's like my
(darl'n, super-duper, really keen,
taught me to keep my navel clean)
mother.

(*Sarcastic*)

King: I can't imagine why she wasn't impressed. (*Shakes head.*)
That's enough minstrel.

SET: *The throne must have pillows on it or nearby.*

(*Side stage, outside the door; Hegai will be helping Esther with her gown/hair.*)
(*Spotlight on Esther/Hegai.*)

Hegai: Are you ready, princess?

Esther: Hegai, I'm not royalty. I'm just a little girl in a pretty dress.
Who's in way over her head.
Oh, Hegai, the last queen was what? The great-granddaughter of
Nebuchadnezzar. He conquered the world . . . I'm a nobody . . . and she was . . .

Hegai: . . . Spoiled. Cruel. Vain. No, *you're* the real Princess.
Esther, your name means "Star" and I believe you're destined to be one. Did you know most of the girls in the harem are praying for you? We all want a compassionate queen. Esther, you have won over the court, now you must win over the king.

Esther: But I'm so nervous.

Hegai: Say a prayer. . take a deep breath . . smile . . be yourself. And remember, he's still just a man . . . wearing a funny hat.

(She looks at him like she's trying to hold in a chuckle.)

I Never Felt Like This Before

(1)

I've spent a year preparing,
with oils and perfumes.
Still I find I tremble,
as I enter his room.

What sort of man will I find?
Will he be harsh?
Could he be kind?

(Hegai)

You must understand,
underneath he's still a man.
Let him find the girl behind the gown --
(together)
One chance to find the man behind the crown.

(Esther)

I never felt like this before --
Scared and so hopeful, as I open the door!
I'll never get another chance, I know.
God . . help me, hear I go.

King: *(Under his breath.)* Another day, another bimbo. *(May substitute: "Ditzy blond".)*
(Dismissively.) Come in.

(She enters.)

(curtsies or bows)

Esther: Thank you, your majesty.

King: What's your name?

(nervously)

Esther: Esther, your majesty.

(He smirks.)

King: Don't be scared, miss. Now, let me guess, your parents were rich?

Esther: My parents died when I was young.

King: I'm . . . I'm sorry.

Esther: Well, my cousin raised me. (*proudly*) He's a great man.

(For the below, think Julie Andrews, as Maria, talking to Captain Van Trapp about all the problems in the household. Much of the below is designed as "playful banter." The King is to be slightly bemused and increasingly intrigued. Esther should be a bit flirtatious. She is, after all, a young, attractive woman, and she's in it to win.)

King: I see. Now, why should you be queen?

Esther: I'm not really sure I should. . . . I'm not a princess, in spite of what they say. And I want to know so much. I've been pestering the eunuchs all year. I ask entirely too many questions. I want to know everything.

King: Everything?

Esther: Well, almost everything. I've learned about decorum and diplomacy and . . . umm . . . other stuff.

King: What would you wish to know from me?

(Esther bites her tongue.)

King: Come, come. What do you want to know?

Esther: Well, when you take that crown off, does your hair stick out –
(King looks thunderstruck, but interested.)
-- does it look stupid?

King: Are you calling me stupid?

Esther: Of course not, your majesty.

King: I think I should either throw you out or throw something at you. Well, alright, I hereby grant you the right to take off my crown and see for yourself.

(Esther tentatively steps forward. She goes behind the king and lifts the crown and puts it beside the throne. As she touches him his/their body/bodies vibrate(s) -- they both feel something. Then she bends down and kisses his head.)

Esther: I'm afraid his highness suffers from "hat hair".

(He smirks/chuckles. She soothes his hair with her hand. He warms to her touch. He may put his hand upon hers. The next sentence is quietly said.)

King: Indeed --

(She goes to his side.)

Esther: It's better than cat hair. *(He chuckles some more.)*
That does a nasty number on black dresses.

King: Uh, huh. I'll try not to wear one of those. *(Regally)* Now, what else would you, my princess, care to ask? Up to half my kingdom --

Esther: -- Really?!?

King: Of course not -- it's an expression. Politics 101 -- "promises you don't intend to keep."

Esther: OK. Well, Ummm . . . How do you relay messages to the troops? How does "concentration of power" work? And how do you get your army to do a flanking maneuver?

King: Whoa! I said one question! You understand military strategy?

(Musical Interlude starts -- adjust as appropriate.)

Esther: I don't understand, that's why I asked.
(Proudly) But my side usually wins in the harem pillow fights.

King: So, you do fight. *(Intrigued.)* How would you fight me?

Esther: Well, the best strategy with such a wise and strong opponent is to sue for peace. *(He smiles smugly and/or nods)* But, you've shown you're right *(or left)* handed. *(King raises an eyebrow)* So, attacking from that side is probably better. *(King nods)* Or, use the statues to hide behind and deflect attacks.

King: Well, you needn't worry. You won't have to fight me. *(He reaches for a pillow.)*

Esther: *(She bows.)* Thank you, your majesty.

(He throws a pillow at her, gets up to grab another pillow and moves behind the throne. She may laugh and retreats to the couch where she grabs a pillow to hurl

at him.)

Cheater! *(She giggles)*

King: Lesson number one! Use the element of surprise

(For the next 30-45 seconds they have a pillow fight -- generally throwing pillows rather than smacking each other. Laughing together. Words may be ad libbed depending upon who hits who and how rehearsals went.

Consider using flashing strobe lights to give the appearance to accentuate the comic feel. The music will change from the main theme.

ATTACK #1: To *The William Tell Overture* --

King: *(after it plays a little and in Operatic voice): ATTACK!!!!*

(King attacks with exaggerated high stepping/almost running in place motion -- Esther hits him a number of times as he comes. You may also stage children in the front row to throw pillows at him, too.)

The King *(Turning): THE OTHER WAY!* *(King having fun; Esther laughing, intrigued)*

ESTHER: (Attacking/Dancing to portions of the Tchaikovsky's Nutcracker, The King throws pillows, they generally miss as Esther turns in time with the music; the King stands in disgust - - Esther hits him with pillow and then dances back to music).

They retreat to themselves, behind pillars, breathing deeply. Music returns to main theme of song -- they look in the general direction of the each other, longingly. They are singing to themselves.)

(King)

I've spent my life surrounded by men, like me.
Never show your weakness -- that's how we're taught to be.
What sort of girl is this?
With brains and beauty *(may be spoken)* can they coexist?

(King looks bewildered or shrugs like this is a new idea)

(Esther)

I've spent my life protected
within a social shell --
culture and tradition
girls aren't expected to excel.

What sort of man did I find?

He can be gentle.

He can be kind.

(King)

Can she see the man I long to be?

Look beyond the crown?

To the real me?

(Esther)

Now I understand,

maybe this was all God's plan!

(King/Esther)

Can she/he hear my heart pound?

(together)

One chance to find (Esther) the man behind the crown.

(King) the girl who deserves the crown.

(Esther/King)

I never felt like this before --

How quickly you have opened my heart's door!

(Esther)

(King)

Oh, what shoulders, piercing eyes,

Oh, what rich lips, hazel eyes,

Can't believe I'm mesmerized.

Can't believe I'm mesmerized.

(Short Interlude. Music fades.)

(During the interlude the king will sneak go around back and come up on Esther, she will advance realize what he is doing and go back so he can "capture" her, he comes from behind, while she looks forward, he smacks her over the head with the pillow.

Esther chuckles. She puts her back-hand to her forehead in a feigned melodramatic fall.)

King: Got' cha!

Esther: Alas, my King, I am hit. I'm dying. I should have sued for peace!

(She turns and falls into his arms.)

King: Lesson number 2: a successful flanking action.

Esther: I stand in awe of your military prowess.

(They both chuckle. Music starts to build.)

King: You let me capture you, didn't you?

(Smugly.)

Esther: I'll never tell.

(Sung)

(King/Esther)

I never felt like this before --

How quickly you've opened my heart's door!

Never thought it could be like this.

King (spoken quietly): Be my queen!

(King/Esther)

So we'll seal it with a kiss.

(They kiss. Lights fade.)