

JUDY MACCABEE

A Comedy with a Girl Hero!

by Susan Horowitz

JUDY MACCABEE

ACTORS: 7-8 Performers (with doubling), 3 Females, 3 or 4 Males (with doubling), 1 (Teddy bear) is either gender or a puppet.

Judy: girl (teens-20's), feisty, street smart, witty

- Judy is sometimes disguised as David

Bathsheba: girl (teens-20's), pretty, flirtatious, headstrong

Maid: woman (30's-50's), proper, humorously cynical

Jonathan: boy (teens-20's), sensitive, intellectual, brave

Achilles: boy (teens-20's), handsome, flirtatious

General Apollonios: man (30's-50's), egotistical, vain madman*

Judah Maccabee: man (30's-50's), strong, intelligent leader*

- General Apollonios and Judah Maccabee can double

Teddly (a bear): non-speaking role, either gender

(Teddly can be a costumed actor or puppet. The audience can guess what Teddly pantomimes)

One Act, 8 Scenes, Unit Set: Scenes can be suggested by lighting or some characters freezing or stepping back while others move. Large set pieces (street stall), small props (slingshot, scroll), and sound effects are minimal and can be indicated by dialogue, signs, and/or pantomime.

Length: Flexible. The script is 60 minutes. With the addition of songs, the length can be extended.

Place/Time: Jerusalem, Judea, 165 BC/BCE (Birth of Christ/Before the Common Era). Judea was a colony in the Hellenistic Empire (hence the Biblical and Greek names). Judah Maccabee and General Apollonios are inspired by historical characters. The Maccabee revolt and rekindling the sacred flame in the Temple are the origin of the Jewish festival of Hanukkah. The rest is comedy!

SCENE 1: JERUSALEM, 165 BC/BCE
A Street Stall with a sign “Jesse and Son”
The word “Son” is crossed out. Written above it is “Judy.”
JUDY is sleeping in front of the stall.

JUDY

(SHE is reluctantly pulled awake by TEDDLY, her pet bear)

What do you want, Teddly Bear?...

(She rubs her tummy)

You’re rubbing your tummy?...You’re always hungry...

(She is poked by Teddly)

Stop poking me!... Cut it out!...I was up all night worrying about father! He promised to come back. But where is he?...Okay, I know you can’t talk, so act out the words...You’re tugging at your ear...

(She tugs her ear)

which means...it sounds like something. Okay, what does it sound like?...You’re licking your lips...

(She licks her lips)

it sounds like...

(She pretends to taste something delicious)

Honey!...What word sounds like honey?...Bunny?...Sunny?...No?...You’re rubbing your paws together...

(She rubs her hands together)

Money?...Money!...which means...

(She looks at the audience, delighted)

Customers! We’re open! Don’t go anywhere!

(She does a rhyming sales pitch to the audience.)

I got music for your psalms of praise and calendars for holidays. Take a load off from your toil; take a bath with perfumed oil. Wanna gamble? Play a game? Let’s try slingshots - test your aim. Bet your shekels – that means cash. I got bottles here to smash! Now for something finger-lickin’, try my home made, crispy chicken!

(She pretends to eat a drumstick. She looks at it in disgust – then shrugs and recovers brightly.)

It’s not burnt, it’s crispy!...More sauce!

(She dumps sauce on the burnt chicken and pretends it’s delicious)

Don’t make fun of my chicken. Father usually does the cooking, but now that he’s in the Maccabee army...well I’m doing the best I can. I’m sure my customers...my hungry customers...

(to the audience)

– that means you! Don’t pay any attention to Teddly. He’s just a bear, what does he know about cooking?...I’ll tell you a secret

(She whispers)

The chicken is kosher. I know it’s illegal to sell kosher chicken ever since General Apollonios passed the laws against kosher food here in Judea...

(She offers the audience some chicken.)

What? You don't like my chicken?..You're not hungry?

(She is momentarily downcast, but quickly recovers.)

I know! You want fashion! Designer labels at discount prices! Our rags – I mean our designer fashions are imported from...uh...everywhere!

(She steps back, swings her arms wide and accidentally hits JONATHAN, who has entered behind her. They are attracted but try to hide it.)

JUDY

I didn't mean to...

JONATHAN

No problem. You just got...carried away.

JUDY

Did I hurt you?

JONATHAN

Not at all. I wish all our Maccabee soldiers had your enthusiasm.

JUDY

Are you a Maccabee?

JONATHAN

Of course. All patriotic boys are in the Maccabee army. Besides, Judah Maccabee is my uncle.

JUDY

You mean the great Judah Maccabee - our leader? Really!?

JONATHAN

Really. Hey, I'm Jonathan.

JUDY

I'm Judy, daughter of Jesse.

JONATHAN

I'm looking for Jesse. Where is he?

JUDY

I don't know. He didn't come home last night. You've got to find him!

JONATHAN

What does he look like?

JUDY

He looks like...well, me. I mean if I was...my brother.

JONATHAN

All right. I'll try to think of you as...your brother.

JUDY

Good. Uh... why are you looking for my father?

JONATHAN

I have to give him this scroll with directions to the Maccabee hideout.

JUDY

You can give it to me.

JONATHAN

No, I can't.

JUDY

Why not?

JONATHAN

The directions are written down. Most girls don't know how to read.

JUDY

I'm not most girls.

JONATHAN

Can you read?

JUDY

Not exactly. There was no money to send me to school. But I can figure it out from the pictures. Look, there's a hammer, symbol of the Maccabees.

JONATHAN

You need more than pictures. You need reading. I have to leave.

JUDY

Why?

JONATHAN

Because I don't talk to girls.

JUDY

Why?

JONATHAN

Uncle Judah says it's distracting.

JUDY

You think I'm distracting?

JONATHAN

Girls in general are distracting. Therefore, I don't talk to them.

JUDY

Hmm. I just figured something out.

JONATHAN

What?

JUDY

You do talk to girls.

JONATHAN

No I don't. Not most girls. Anyway, I have to look for your father.

JUDY

I'll go with you.

JONATHAN

No, it's too dangerous. You wait here. I'll be back.

(He leaves. JUDY looks after him. He turns back. They smile at each other, then he rushes off.)

BATHSHEBA, a beautiful girl, well dressed and veiled, enters with her MAID.
BATHSHEBA drops her veil. The MAID fastens it back.)

MAID

That will be enough of that, my lady.

BATHSHEBA

But Jerusalem is so hot. My veil makes it even hotter.

MAID

It's your blood that's overheated. What you need is a bath.

BATHSHEBA

Like Bathsheba in the Bible?

MAID

What do you know about Bathsheba?

BATHSHEBA

Only what I read. The Bible says that King David watched Bathsheba taking a bath.

MAID

Teaching girls to read is a mistake – especially girls like you. But Judah has modern ideas, and he insisted. I also told Judah to change your name when he adopted you. What kind of girl is named Bathsheba?

BATHSHEBA

A clean girl. And what could be cleaner than perfumed bath oil?

MAID

What's wrong with plain soap?

BATHSHEBA

It doesn't remind me that I'm a girl.

MAID

A girl who wants reminding winds up with something she can't forget.

BATHSHEBA

How would you know?

MAID

Never mind. Judah is fighting a war. He won't give you the money.

BATHSHEBA

Who needs money? We'll buy on credit.

MAID

And who's going to be fool enough to give you credit?

BATHSHEBA

A man... named Jesse –with a street stall that sells perfumed bath oil. You wait here.

(BATHSHEBA goes to JUDY. Her MAID watches them.)

JUDY

Can I help you?

BATHSHEBA

And who might you be?

JUDY

I might be the Queen of Sheba, if I had camels and a royal boyfriend. I'd rather have the camels. Since I don't, call me Judy. What do I call you?

BATHSHEBA

“Your Ladyship.” Is there anyone else connected to this street stall?
(JUDY points to TEDDLY.)

A bear?

JUDY

You can call him “Your Bearship.”

BATHSHEBA

Where is the owner?

JUDY

You’re looking at her.

BATHSHEBA

The sign on your stall says “Jesse.”

JUDY

I’m Judy, Jesse’s daughter. He put me in charge.

BATHSHEBA

Where is he?

JUDY

Away.

BATHSHEBA

When do you expect him back?

JUDY

Did you come here to shop or ask questions?

BATHSHEBA

To shop, though I doubt you have anything I’d want...unless...what’s that little bottle?

JUDY

(holding up the bottle)
Expensive.

BATHSHEBA

How much?

JUDY

Perfumed bath oil is impossible to get these days. General Apollonios is making all the vendors pay a luxury tax.

BATHSHEBA

How did you get it?

JUDY

None of your business. It costs ten shekels.

BATHSHEBA

I'll give you five.

JUDY

I don't think so.

(JUDY sniffs the bottle – the scent is delicious. BATHSHEBA looks at it longingly.)

JUDY

Lucky I saved it for her ladyship. It's the last bottle in the market.

BATHSHEBA

Six shekels. That's my final offer.

JUDY

Eight.

BATHSHEBA

Seven.

JUDY

Deal.

(BATHSHEBA takes the bottle.)

Cash.

BATHSHEBA

I don't carry cash.

JUDY

What?

BATHSHEBA

All the finer shops take credit.

JUDY

(snatching the bottle)

Then shop there.

BATHSHEBA

Have you ever heard of Judah Maccabee?

JUDY

So?

BATHSHEBA

He's my guardian. Giving me bath oil is your patriotic duty to Judah Maccabee.

JUDY

Maccabee means hero, not perfume for pampered princesses. You don't have cash, so run along. I'm busy.

BATHSHEBA

Busy? I can see you're just swamped with customers.

JUDY

Just one swamp plant – a skunk cabbage....

(SHE sniffs and makes a face.)

Who needs perfumed bath oil.

(BATHSHEBA raises her hand to smack JUDY, who puts up her fists – ready for a street fight. The MAID steps in between them.)

MAID

My lady! Are you brawling in the street with a common street girl?

BATHSHEBA

Of course not.

(BATHSHEBA sniffs haughtily and walks away with her maid.)

(GENERAL APOLLONIUS and ACHILLES, a handsome soldier, who notices BATHSHEBA, enter behind them.)

JUDY

Street girl? I've got more class in my little finger than you have in...

(TEDDLY looks behind JUDY and mimes a salute.)

Teddly, what are you doing?

(JUDY mimes a salute)

A salute?...Enemy soldiers!

(SHE hurries away with Teddly.)

APOLLONIUS

Not much of a crowd.

ACHILLES

That's because they're dazzled by your glory. They don't dare to look directly at the sun.

APOLLONIOS

Good point, Achilles. However, comparing myself to the sun god Apollo might seem...

ACHILLES

Fitting - based on your name, General Apollonios.

APOLLONIOS

I never compare myself to Apollo.

ACHILLES

That's because you're humble - great, but humble.

APOLLONIOS

I'm more like Zeus – the bull of heaven.

ACHILLES

Ruler of the other gods - as you are ruler of Judea.

APOLLONIOS

For now. For as a bull may leap a fence in search of broader pastures, so will I use Judea as a launching pad to my empire...not for my own glory, but for the glory of father Zeus.

ACHILLES

Divine Zeus is the father of us all.

APOLLONIOS

Like any father, he has a favorite son... who honors his father by enforcing his decrees. What do the Hebrews say about my laws against kosher food?

ACHILLES

There's a little grumbling, sir.

APOLLONIOS

Grumbling? I bend over backward trying to lift them out of their ignorance. Didn't I put that fabulous sculpture of Zeus, bull of heaven, in their Temple? But all they do is gripe about taxes. Culture does not come cheap. You know what I think?

ACHILLES

Yes, sir, I mean, no sir.

APOLLONIOS

I think the people are secretly on our side. They're just brainwashed by fanatics like Judah Maccabee.

ACHILLES

He's no match for you, sir. He doesn't belong in the same...

APOLLONIOS

Territory. Judea may be small...but it's mine.

ACHILLES

Yes, sir.

(clicks heels together and stumbles)

APOLLONIOS

Achilles, what is the matter with your heels?

ACHILLES

A weakness from infancy, Sir.

APOLLONIOS

Zeus does not tolerate weakness.

ACHILLES

Zeus is a god, sir. We are only human.

APOLLONIOS

Some of us....Achilles, some of us. Announce my presence.

ACHILLES

(clicks heels together and stumbles)

Ladies and gentlemen...

APOLLONIOS

That's enough.

(to the audience)

It has come to my attention that you are uncivilized. For that, you must be punished. For refusing to pay taxes, I cut off your left hand.

ACHILLES

Sir, do our laws permit...?

APOLLONIOS

I am the law here. For selling kosher food, I cut off your right hand.

ACHILLES

What if they've already lost their left hand for not paying taxes?

APOLLONIOS

They'll learn not to eat with their hands.