

Different from All Other Nights

By Anne Ratchat

For 2-8 Players

Playtime: About an hour

“Passover is a time of reflection,” Mom says eagerly, her Haggadah open to the title page in hands. “Our ancestors were slaves, and suffered, and were refugees traveling in the desert for 40 years. In this glad time of Passover, we must also be solemn as we are thankful for their sacrifices so that we can have our luxuries of eggs and matzah and pascal lamb.”

Dad lounges in his chair with one too many cushions, sipping on wine. “It says Festival.” So, in the same manner as every year, the introductory debate ends and the Seder begins.

Children always have a way of making the Passover Seder special for themselves. As the adults have their festival, new games get made amongst the younger generation from the paradox of being told this night is theirs yet being too young to participate fully. All the parents are at least a bit tipsy, being on a minimum of their third glass of wine that night, and there are a bunch of long traditions that are boring when you are not interested in philosophy. And what kid is into philosophy? The conversation the adults are talking about are also boring as the uncle makes his annual toast “Rye bread.” Having next to no idea what is happening at the table, the kids sneak away, not so stealthily, to the living room to do something better.

Your family’s childhood tradition is a little bit special, the annual Passover play, written and performed in one night with no limitation, just a pure expression of creativity. It is always an interpretation, varying each year in seriousness and accuracy, of the story of the ten plagues and the subsequent exodus, ending right as the Jews leave. What was started as a way to keep the kids and their goyim friends entertained by passing on what the kids had learned in Sunday School has become a highlight of the Seder, as no one ever knows what to expect.

Before you write your play, work together to figure out who your characters are and how they are all related. Who is of the family and who is a guest? How old are you now? How many years have you been doing this? How versed are you in the story of Passover? The answers need not be the same for everyone.

Craft a play of the following story. This is yours to figure out the exact details. Do you want to make a noir interpretation and shoot nerf bullets all over the room? Do you want to make it an interpretive dance with original music? Do you keep it simple for the people who aren’t familiar but, as the simple son, are so willing to learn?

The play must cover

- Moses asking Pharaoh to let the Jews go and being rejected, only to warn of what is to come
- The Plague of Blood - The Nile turns to Blood. No one can drink the water or use it for anything they need.
- The Plague of Frogs - Frogs pile in everywhere. EVERYWHERE. And then die.
- The Plague of Gnats - Dust becomes gnats.

- The Plague of Flies - Flies play the Egyptians but not the Jews. With request from Pharaoh, Moses eventually breaks this plague with a sacrifice, not seen on screen.
- The Plague of Livestock - Egyptian livestock die.
- The Plague of Boils - Boils are cursed upon the land. God hardens the heart of Pharaoh so that he doesn't acquiesce just yet.
- The Plague of Hail - Hail and thunder get called in and damage half of the grain.
- The Plague of Locusts - Locusts arrive and destroy the rest of the crop. Pharaoh asks Moses for help again and yet again, has his heart hardened.
- The Plague of Darkness - Egypt is plagued with darkness. Pharaoh says he will kill Moses if he sees him again and Moses promises he will never be seen again.
- The Plague of the Firstborn - Jews prep their homes by painting lamb's blood on their door frames to protect from the next plague. In one night, all the firstborn sons of the land of Egypt are killed. The Jews are unharmed.
- Pharaoh telling the Jews to go

Optional:

- Pharaoh changing his mind.
- God splitting the Nile for Jews to cross and then closing it on the Egyptians for the Jew's protection.

Explore creating a play as a child would. You never quite know what you are doing. Are you doing this for how it'll appear to other people or is it simply stuff you find fun to do? This is a personal tradition so you are the only judge of if what you are doing is good or bad. Only overthink the play if you find joy in doing so. This is a festival, after all. Everything should be indulgent.

As is the modern tendency, the seder might be in a digital format. That is totally fine. Just as we are finding ways to make our shared traditions digital and accessible, we find ways to make our personal ones shine as well. Maybe you'll do an online script reading. Tiktok is also an option. Don't worry about what we don't have and make the most of what we do.

Conclude by performing your play. Audience is optional.