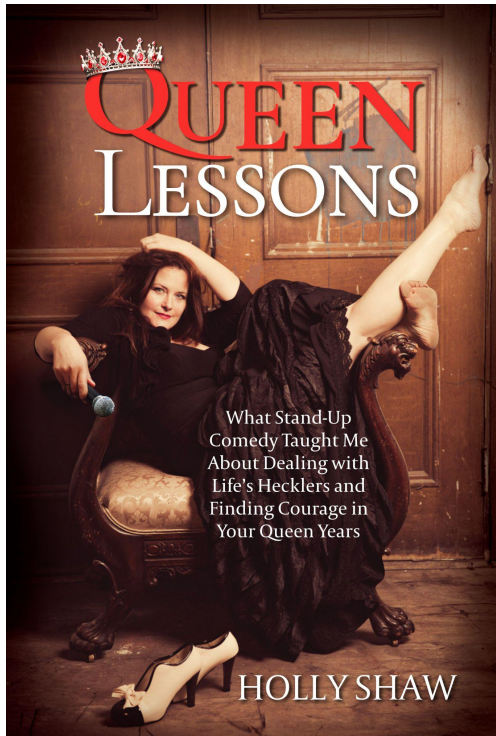


Synopsis



Queen Lessons Synopsis

Queen Lessons: What Stand-Up Comedy Taught Me About Dealing with Life's Hecklers and Finding Courage in Your Queen Years
by Holly Shaw

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At an age when some women feel like they have to begin to cover themselves up, Holly Shaw, a performance coach and hypnotherapist, did the opposite, taking the stage as a stand-up comedian. In this book, teetering between memoir and self-help, Shaw invites readers into her world, chronicling her experiences from the wild world of comedy that have shaped her from a “nice” girl into a shameless comedian, and extracts the wisdom from them into lessons for other women entering their “queen years.”

Main Points

The Premise: Your Soul Is Secretly Evolving

Holly realizes stand-up comedy has changed her as a person and is sharing these lessons in this book. This is the framework for all the hilarious stories and events the reader is about to encounter: whatever we choose to do in life doesn't really matter because your soul is secretly evolving in the background, taking the growth from tough experiences and nudging you towards activities to help you grow.

The Setup: A Comedian, A Wise Woman and Earthquake Woman Walk Into a Bar

The reader is introduced to the three main archetypes that Holly has identified as helpful in her queen years and has invited them to have a voice in this book. The Comedian representing the levity needed to go through perimenopause, the Wise Woman who knows what's needed and Earthquake Woman representing the rage that burns inside any woman experiencing the injustices of the world.

The Queen Years:

Queen years is defined as the time between fertility and old age when a woman has been known to step into her full creative and intellectual power. Holly explores the layers of meaning behind perimenopause

and explores the difference between herself as a young “Nice Girl” and now, as a shameless stand-up comedian. Stories from the stage and from her younger years compare and contrast these differences.

The Power of Attention

Attention is a major running theme throughout the book - as a performer Shaw naturally seeks it out and as a woman getting older it is also declining. Shaw articulates the different ways we learn to relate to attention: as a foolish romance game, as a weapon of dominance and manipulation, and finally as a method for manifestation. Shaw ultimately chooses to find the silver lining in the wane of attention with the queen years as she remarks, “As you disappear from the world at large, you finally appear fully to yourself.”

Shaw also introduces the idea of Contortions - ways we contort ourselves in order to get attention or whatever we desire in life - and highlights commonly known contortions throughout the book. Shaw shares hilarious examples from her own early life: pretending to be French to catfish boys at the mall and hyperventilating to get attention are examples of contortions.

Desire: Finding Your Point of View

Unfulfilled dreams and desires often come to the forefront in mid-life when we question what we have accomplished (or not) and look to the second half of our life. Shaw introspects on her own grappling with her ambition and advocates for an honest look at what we really desire because otherwise as she puts it, “Our desires, if left unattended, will haunt us.” The queen years are a good time to begin catching ourselves in the act, giving voice to fire inside, and recognizing what we stand for. “You are not responsible for anyone’s comfort. You are only responsible for the narrative of your fabulous, wicked, fruitful life.”

Five Muscles of Stand Up Comedy Courage:

Shaw identifies five different muscles of courage she’s developed through stand-up:

- Boldness: Asking for the Gig
- Persistence: Popping the Room or Eating It
- Shamelessness: Working the Crowd
- Honesty: Killing It
- Loyalty: Staying True to Yourself

She tells stories of using all of these five muscles at once to deal with hecklers and get her out of tight spots: confronting a man at the Cheeseboard, being able to stomach comedy contests and staring down a violent heckler at an open mic. Shaw asserts that courage is transmittable to the audience: “I’m out there on stage night after night horrifying my ancestors. But in my mind I’m healing them. Venting the generational shame and releasing the built-up people pleaser in all of us, women especially.”