

Not in Our Town
 By Claudia I. Haas
 e-mail: claudiahaas12@gmail.com
 website: www.claudiahaas.com

SETTING: Billings, Montana
 TIME: December 1993
 SET: Area staging of different homes in Billings

SYNOPSIS: The tale of the beginnings of the “Not in our Town” movement.

SYNOPSIS: When a brick is thrown through a young boy’s window because of a menorah decal, the boys parents are told to take the decal down to keep their family safe. That doesn’t sit well with the townspeople and in a short period of time, the townspeople figure out a way to quietly combat “hate.”

RUNNING TIME: 60 minutes (with music and strictly visual scenes)

ZOOM POSSIBILITIES: Because the play relies on sound, this play is easily adaptable to Zoom. The visual of hanging the menorahs in windows would be poignant if they occurred at the same time in all the Zoom windows.

SPECIAL SOUND EFFECTS: The sound of crashing glass

OPTIONAL NOTES ON SOUND: Music is encouraged as long
 as it is in Public Domain or permission is granted (separate
 from the playwright) The cast could sing stanzas or choruses
 a cappella. I encourage Chanukah music although most current
 Chanukah songs are not in public domain. Some suggested songs:
 THE DREIDEL SONG
 LET THERE BE PEACE ON EARTH
 O COME, O COME EMMANUAL (advent hymn)
 DONA NOBIS PACEM
 PEACE LIKE A RIVER
 CHRISTMAS HYMNS

NOTE: This is a true story. I have fictionalized the people involved but they are all based on actually people, true events. Even the Skinhead and the story of his transformation are true.

All rights reserved

Not in Our Town

CAST OF CHARACTERS:* 11-15 (3 female, 3 male, 5 male or female);
 *Optional scenes use 4 “extras” – 2 males, 2 females so:
 with extras: 4 female, 5 male, 6 male or female)
 Additional extras possible

Billings, Montana is not especially diverse. But the story of the “Not in our Town” movement is so feel free to use diversity as much as possible. That said, the SKINHEAD needs to be white and CAROLINE should be a person of color.

1. SKINHEAD (male; Caucasian) 20-30; a witness
2. ANNA (f) 16-18; conscientious, receives an unwanted crash course in “hate”
3. MEL (m/f) 19-20: college student, home for the holidays; pragmatic
4. ALEX (m): 16-18 Anna’s boyfriend, child of a pastor but not a “Holy-Roller”
5. SUSAN (f) 20’s young mom; Jewish; also use in Chanukah scenes

Sunday School Teachers with Anna

6. KELLY (m/f); 16-18 gung ho for – anything; likes to stir the pot
7. JORDAN (m/f) 16-18; frightened
8. CASEY (m/f) 16-18; list-maker
9. CAROLINE (f; poc) 17-20; member of African Baptist Church; a helper
10. TOM (m) 21-24; new on police force
11. TAYLOR (m /f) 19-23; college intern for local newspaper

*Optional Chorus: 2 males and 2 females – more are possible

JOSH (male) young “innocent” used as the “boy with the racist literature,” the “first night of Chanukah scene,” the montage of menorahs scene; end scene

LOUISE (female); parent used in the first night of Chanukah scene, menorah-montage scene and end scene

BILL (male); parent used in the first night of Chanukah scene, menorah montage scene and end scene

CARRIE (female); young girl used in first night of Chanukah scene, menorah montage scene and end scene

or

If not desiring a chorus: double from the existing cast

or

If not desiring a chorus: cut some of the scenes (there are no lines; it’s all visual)

**You may also add a choir – of children or adults separate from the cast.

Not in Our Town

PROLOGUE – Saturday night, December 4, 1993

Optional: In black out we hear the opening and chorus of *The Dreidel Song*.

SKINHEAD

Welcome to the Festival of Lights. A menorah. The Star of David. A brick.

(We hear the horrible sound of shattering glass.)

Happy Chanukah!

(ANNA enters. We may hear two young children.)

ANNA

What was that? *Is anybody there?* (Beat.) You guys! Stay in the TV room! I'll be right back - no! Just stay in there! Stay away from the window! (Beat.) I know. Let's ... make a fort. Would you like that? Take off all the sofa cushions – and we'll build – a tent. And ... make believe we're outside camping. (Beat.) Your mom and dad should be home soon. (Beat.) I hope.

(ANNA exits. Police sirens.)

SCENE 1 – Sunday Morning, December 5, 1993

(We are in ANNA'S living room. It is morning. ANNA is sitting wrapped in a blanket. MEL enters.)

MEL

Thought you'd be in church.

ANNA

Dad said I could skip church. I don't know how you got out of it.

MEL

I had "the talk" with him. About how college kids need their Sunday morning sleep... and don't always go to church. (Beat.) You okay?

ANNA

I miss Mom. Dad tried. He sat with me and tried to comfort me. But you know Dad.

MEL

Not Mom.

ANNA

No. He kept saying how wonderful it is that nobody got hurt.

MEL

True.

ANNA

I keep hearing the breaking glass. I see the shards all over Eli's bed.

MEL

Did you speak to the police?

ANNA

Duh!

MEL

Just making conversation.

ANNA

I wasn't helpful. I was downstairs with the kids. Didn't see a thing. Just heard it. I'm still hearing it.

MEL

Want to talk? (Silence.) Want me stay here and not talk?

ANNA

I should go to bed.

MEL

And I should go to a coffee shop. Physics 2 is going to be a bear. I need to get a jumpstart on it. What is a particle? What is a wave? When is a particle a wave? I can't study here. It's too quiet.

(Doorbell rings. MEL answers it.)

MEL

It's Alex!

(ALEX enters.)

ANNA

Oh crap.

ALEX

I love it when people are happy to see me.

ANNA
It's not that – I forgot.

(ALEX joins ANNA – as close as possible.)

MEL
I'm feeling the "third wheel blues." See you tonight.

ANNA
See ya.

(MEL exits.)

ANNA
Shouldn't you be in church? I'm pretty sure that the pastor's children are required to be there.

ALEX
(Putting his arm around her - looking for a kiss.)
Went to the early-bird service so that I could keep my breakfast-Christmas-shopping date with my girlfriend.

ANNA
(Definitely stopping the kiss.)
Don't. I'm – really tired. Been up all night. I should go to bed.

ALEX
How lucky your pillow is.

ANNA
Alex...

ALEX
I heard what happened. It was the talk of the 8 a.m. coffee hour. Want to talk?

ANNA
No.

(We see ANNA lead ALEX to the door and a short good-bye. Side-by-side, we also see a young boy (JOSH) tries to hand the SKINHEAD some racist literature. SKINHEAD shakes his head "no." WHEN ALEX leaves, ANNA exits to go to sleep and the SKINHEAD comes forward.)

SKINHEAD

That kid is a go-getter. He is one of the better recruits. We try to get them before their teens. You can really mold them to your ways. I can advise but I can't get involved. I'm being watched - all the time. It's too bad. Because I'm really good at this.

(He flashes a newspaper.)

The news of the brick spread quickly. Yeah, the police are running around taking statements. But there's nothing they can do. I know when to stay invisible. Nobody sees me. They only see the brick.

It's a sport. Can you hit it spot-on and shatter the entire window? Bonus points for that. Can you make sure the brick makes it deep into the room? That takes skill. Too many people just dent the house. You'd be surprised at how many bricks don't make it inside the house. But man! What a thing of beauty when it lands perfectly. The noise – the initial burst of the glass splintering – it proclaims a job well done. And the funny thing is – even if there are witnesses – nobody going to talk. Nobody will come forward. Once you scare people, you're home free.

(As SKINHEAD exits, we see TOM go to a home.
SUSAN answers.)

SUSAN

Yes, Officer? What can I do for you? I'd bring you in but the baby's asleep. And she is so not a sleeper.

TOM

I noticed you have a decal of the Star of David in the window. I don't know if you heard about the incident last night/

SUSAN

/I heard.

TOM

In light of the recent event, you may want to take the decal down. To stay safe.

SUSAN

Chanukah is on Wednesday. Should I also hide the menorah?

TOM

You should consider placing it where no one can see it.

SUSAN

Chanukah is the one time of the year where we are asked to light the way for others.

TOM
You have a baby.

SUSAN
Do you have a Christmas tree?

TOM
Yes.

SUSAN
And a wreath?

TOM
I'm picking it up tonight.

SUSAN
What would you say if the police asked you to hide the tree and not buy a wreath?
(It's uncomfortable.)

You wouldn't like it.

TOM
No, I wouldn't. But in light of the recent event/

SUSAN
I should pretend to be Christian. Maybe I should get a tree!

TOM
Not pretend to be Christian... just ...

SUSAN
Pretend to not be Jewish. I appreciate you taking the time to warn me. I understand that you cannot keep my family safe. Rest assured, I will do everything in my power to keep my baby safe. But I am not sure hiding is the answer. I think a lot of us are tired of living in shadows.

(SUSAN returns to her home and TOM exits.
We are back at ANNA'S home. It is later in the
afternoon. The doorbell rings. ANNA answers.
TAYLOR enters.)

TAYLOR
Thanks for seeing me on such short notice.

ANNA

It's a good time. Everyone's gone doing Christmas stuff. Although I really don't have much information.

TAYLOR

You were there.

ANNA

Hiding in the TV room with the kids.

TAYLOR

I'm looking for the human-interest angle: how the kids reacted, how you're doing. What's next?

ANNA

There's no "next." It's in the hands of the police now.

TAYLOR

Do we leave this incident to slowly fade from view and sing "fa la la la la" until the next time?

ANNA

What do you want from me?

TAYLOR

A story. I tried speaking with members of the Temple to see if someone in their hierarchy would denounce the incident. But they'd rather remain quiet. They're afraid if they speak out, there will be more incidents.

ANNA

You can't blame them.

TAYLOR

I think if everyone stays quiet, the incidents will escalate and someone could get hurt.

ANNA

So... you want a story from me to prevent people from getting hurt. That's a nice way to twist an arm.

(Beat.)

TAYLOR

Everyone's saying that.

ANNA

It's not just me. I have the Feuers to consider. Their privacy. They may not want me bringing their family into the spotlight.

TAYLOR
We don't have to talk about them.

ANNA
There's no story without them.

TAYLOR
How are you doing?

ANNA
Have you ever heard glass shatter? Not a small Christmas ornament or a hand mirror – but a large piece of window glass?

TAYLOR
No.

(TAYLOR takes out a notebook and starts to write.)

ANNA
It's violent. More than that – it's ...vicious. And when you hear it, you feel as if the shards are burning through every inch of you. And the sound won't go away. The shards continue to pierce and twist and turn inside of you with no end in sight.

(During this exchange TAYLOR stops writing and just listens. There's a moment of silence and then the lights fade to black.)

(In blackout we hear the next verse and chorus of *The Dreidl Song*.
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9m6jrfYHIU>)

SCENE 2 – Monday, December 6, dinner time

Lights up on ANNA who has her school books out and is drawing. ALEX has his books out but he is just watching ANNA.

ALEX
Done? Want to watch *A Carlie Brown Christmas* and see who knows most of the dialogue?

ANNA
No, I'm not done and you always win. I never remember what Schroeder says.

ALEX

What class gave you an art project? Because I know you're not taking art.

ANNA

It's not exactly/

ALEX

/it's wrong. The ninth candle needs to be higher or lower. It's usually higher.

ANNA

It does look unbalanced. Weird though – having nine candles for eight nights.

ALEX

It's the shamash candle. It lights the first candle and stays lit to help out in case a candle blows out.

ANNA

How do you/

ALEX

/World Religion class. I learned a lot of things I didn't think I needed to know until now.

(ANNA erases and re-sketches part of her drawing.)
ALEX puts his hand on hers.)

ALEX

Give it a rest.

ANNA

I love how you think there's a choice involved. I can't turn off my mind.

ALEX

I'm trying, you know – to be the helper candle. (Beat.) Take a break. We could watch TV, bake cookies – you were always “Miss Christmas.”

ANNA

That was my mom.

ALEX

First Christmas without her.

ANNA

Yes.

ALEX

Let me hold you ...

ANNA
Not in the mood ... for anything.

ALEX
Let it go. No one got hurt.

ANNA
But they could have! Jeez, you're just like my dad! I keep wondering what would have happened if I put the kids to bed when I was supposed to instead of deciding of letting them watch one more cartoon. They were being so cute and sweet, I thought – what's a half hour more?

ALEX
And that was a good thing.

ANNA
Luck! Suppose Eli was in his bed/

ALEX
/but he wasn't!//

ANNA
But he could have been! And that's all I think about!

ALEX
So let's talk about it.

ANNA
I don't want to! That's all anyone wants to do is talk – which does absolutely *nothing!*

(ALEX gathers up his books.)

ALEX
So do something!

ANNA
What?

ALEX
I don't know. You're the one whining.

ANNA
I'm not/

ALEX

/Whining and moaning how hard last night was for you but you don't want to talk about it or do anything. I know you're going through stuff and I just – give me a call when you want to work through it. Because I don't like being your punching bag.

ANNA

Sorry I'm not "Miss Christmas" for you right now!

ALEX

That's not what I'm asking. I just want to be let into your world.

(Silence. ALEX throws his coat over shoulder and quickly exits almost bumping into MEL who enters.)

MEL

Sorry!

ALEX

Me, too.

(ALEX is gone.)

MEL

Now *that* is a good example of a particle *and* a wave! He moved into a straight line right into me and bounced off. Definitely particle behavior. But the dust surrounding his exit – well that was a wave.

ANNA

You're certifiable.

MEL

Anyone who takes a physics class is. (Beat.) You and Alex okay?

ANNA

Who knows? There's chili on the stove.

MEL

No Dad?

ANNA

He's at a special meeting of the Human Rights Society. They're planning on denouncing the people who threw a brick through the Feuers window. They'll offer up some strongly-worded announcement to show they care.

(MEL picks up a prop from the home – perhaps a

candlestick and uses it as a microphone.)

MEL

“Our hearts are heavy that there are those among us who choose violence. As members of the Human Rights Society, we *strongly* condemn the actions of those who sent a misguided Chanukah message.”

ANNA

Something like that. I don't know why they bother. Anytime a world leader denounces a terrorist, it seems to empower them.

MEL

That's a wave. Although the physics books would not necessarily classify it as such.

ANNA

You're brain-dead.

MEL

Probably.

ANNA

I wish I was. Mine won't stop.

MEL

Here read this. It'll stop you cold.

ANNA

(Paging through a textbook.)

Do you – for real – understand this?

MEL

The scary thing is – sometimes I do. But usually I don't and I want to know what happens to my brain when I do – so that I could train my brain to stay on that wave. They don't call it “brain waves” for nothing. (Beat.) The menorah's pretty good. Love candles. Light is a wave and a particle.

ANNA

A menorah is not physics.

MEL

Everything's physics. A brick through a window – that's a particle. Or a million particles... if you want to get picky. It moves in a straight line and bounces off of things. But in this case because the brick is indeed a million things. It doesn't bounce off windows. It smashes them. So I just disproved me own theory.

ANNA

I have a headache.

MEL

The message from the particle/brick – that’s a wave. A wave is spread out. It doesn’t bounce off of stuff but it can come together with other waves and just get huge.

ANNA

So the haters threw a particle and created a wave?

MEL

Every shard of glass has the energy from being hit. The sound you keep hearing –

ANNA

That’s the message.

MEL

That’s the wave.

LIGHTS FADE TO BLACK

(In Blackout we hear the first verse of *In the Bleak Midwinter*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KDdwJMNEjBs>
)

SCENE 3 – Tuesday December 7

AT RISE MEL and ANNA are with CAROLINE in MEL’S and ANNA’S home.

ANNA

I remember when Dad painted over the slurs at the Baptist church! But there are no slurs to paint over. Just bricks through windows.

CAROLINE

They also formed a human chain when the skinheads surrounded the church. Lots of phony-ass-brave guys were surprised to find themselves surrounded.

ANNA

Nobody’s surrounding the temple. The situation is different.

MEL

So the solution needs to be different.

ANNA

Agreed. I just don't know what combats bricks.

CAROLINE

What attracted the bricks?

ANNA

The decal of the menorah.

CAROLINE

Bingo.

ANNA

The menorah lost that match.

MEL

Remember when I talked about the wave cresting and fanning out/

ANNA

/No! We're not going there. This is bricks and mortar. Not some esoteric wave nobody can see.

MEL

What I didn't say is that there can be two different waves and they can cancel each other out – one wave can destroy another wave.

CAROLINE

What are you talking about?

MEL

It made sense to me last night at 3 a.m. The menorah gives off good waves. It lights the way for others. If we had menorahs everywhere –

CAROLINE

We could create a "menorah-chain" and send a message to our racist friends.

ANNA

If only there was a menorah shop in Billings we could go to.

MEL

All we need are the decals.

ANNA

I don't think Ace Hardware carries them.

CAROLINE

If only we knew someone who could draw one.

ANNA

You two have been talking behind my back. So, what if I did draw a menorah – even ten of them – then what? Hang them up in the temple and invite the bricks to visit?

CAROLINE

Hang them in shops? In churches? I don't know.

ANNA

That's dangerous. (Beat.) Although it reminds me of what the King of Denmark did when the Nazis invaded Denmark. He wore the Jewish star. I guess he figured, "What are the Nazis going to do? Arrest the king?" Soon everyone was wearing the Jewish star.

CAROLINE

That's a sweet story. It never happened.

ANNA

It happened!

CAROLINE

The Nazis pretty much left the Jews alone in Denmark. They told the Royal Family they could make-believe-govern as long as they allowed the Nazis to occupy them. They never made the Jews wear stars.

ANNA

But – the story is everywhere.

CAROLINE

So are libraries. I look up every story from history knowing full well it's written by the winners or those who look at the past with rose-colored glasses. There are lots of "feel-good" stories out there that never happened.

ANNA

I really love that story.

CAROLINE

The truth is better than the story. When the Nazis did decide to round-up the Jews, the Danes hid their Jewish friends. Even though if they were caught, they would have been executed. So pretty scary stuff. The fishermen mobilized and managed to carry thousands of families to safety in Sweden. Very few Danish Jews perished in the Holocaust. Compared to that scenario, we have it easy. Just a bunch of illiterate skinheads.

ANNA

With bricks. (Beat.) Which scares me.

MEL

You wanted something to do.

ANNA

I wanted something safe to do. Which is my luxury. Because right now no one is going after me. What would Mom do?

MEL

Put a menorah in our window.

CAROLINE

Now *that* would invite bricks.

ANNA

She would do that, wouldn't she?

(*Let There be Peace on Earth* is heard as CAROLINE says her goodbyes and exits and the lights fade to black.
https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=0_DxNpW1kHQ

Scene 4 – Wednesday, December 8
 1st Night of Chanukah

Lights up on a montage of a family (or families) lighting a menorah in front of a window. The first candle is being lit.

In the background we hear a Chanukah song. Or feel free if your license allows this, to start the Chanukah prayer used for the first night only. (Some schools and theatres are not allowed to use any prayer on stage, The prayer is simplified. Feel free to look it up and use it all.)

*OPTIONAL

BILL

Praised are You, Ruler of the universe,
 Who has given us life and sustained us and enabled us to reach this season.

A parent (LOUISE) looks up and notes the window.
 The parent then either closes a curtain or removes

the menorah from sight. The music and/or prayer abruptly ends.

The SKINHEAD enters. He carries a letter and a photo of a baby.

SKINHEAD

I was just sent this. Look at those eyes. All innocence. I don't hear much from my brother. Our lives went in – different directions. Different choices I guess.

I don't remember making a choice. I didn't decide to hate anyone. I come from a lineage of proud Klan members. Summers were spent at my grandfather's farm with all these – passionate people. It was like a secret club. What kid doesn't love a secret club? Minorities and gays are bringing us down. Jews have all the money. And – they had horns - definitely devils.

There are “secret clubs” everywhere. They have always been my safe place. I walked the town. For blocks, you can see our literature sitting prettily in the windshield of cars and trucks. Everything neatly placed. It's amazing to be part of an operation that is so covert. It makes me feel untouchable... unreachable. I love being under everyone's radar. It's a thrill.

Scene 5 – Thursday, December 9
2nd night of Chanukah

(Lights up at ANNA'S home.
There will be a meeting. The SKINHEAD is off to the side. Just watching.)

Optional: In the background is a family huddled around a menorah. 2 candles plus the shamash candle are lit.)

(ANNA and MEL are prepping for a meeting.)

ANNA

So many can't come. But wouldn't you know it, Casey's coming.

MEL

Casey goes to everything.

ANNA

To complain.

(The doorbell rings.)

That's my cue to exit.

MEL

Stay!

ANNA

This is your baby.

MEL

I don't know what to do.

ANNA

Answer the door.

MEL

(MEL exits as ANNA answers the door.
KELLY enters.)

KELLY

So what's this "Emergency Meeting of Sunday School Teachers" thing? And why isn't Pastor Daniel doing this?

ANNA

Thanks, Lee. – because Pastor Dan thought/

(Doorbell rings. CAROLINE enters.)

CAROLINE

Hi Anna. I thought I'd come by for support.

ANNA

Thank you thank you thank you...

(CASEY enters.)

CASEY

Do we have nametags or something? I always see nametags at meetings.

ANNA

Oh! Well – I think we know everyone.

CASEY

I don't know her.

CAROLINE

Caroline Williams. Nice to meet you.

CASEY

Casey McCloud. Same.

ANNA

Casey teaches the younger ones.

CASEY

I'm patient.

ANNA

And really good at finger games. Caroline heads up the youth programs at the Baptist church.

(JORDAN enters.)

JORDAN

Oh. Good. I was worried I'd be the only one to show up.

(TAYLOR enters.)

TAYLOR

Thanks for invite.

ANNA

Maybe you'll get your story.

TAYLOR

We'll see.

ANNA

We all seem to be here. Shall we start?

CASEY

Introductions, please. I like to know how I am speaking to.

KELLY

That's a waste/

(Doorbell rings.)

CASEY

Whoever you are, you're late.

(ANNA brings in SUSAN.)

ANNA

Thanks for coming Mrs. Miller. Tom said you might stop by.

SUSAN

Susan, please. Mrs. Miller in my mother-in-law.

CASEY

Introductions!

ANNA

/I'm Anna. I work with grades 7-8. And I – called this meeting.

CASEY

You don't have to shout. Hi, Casey. Grades 1-3.

KELLY

Kelly, Grades 4-6.

JORDAN

Also grades 7-8.

CAROLINE

Caroline. I do youth programming for the Baptist Church.

TAYLOR

Taylor Reese. I work for the paper.

JORDAN

Really? Are we going to be in the paper? I would have dressed better.

TAYLOR

We'll see.

SUSAN

I'm Susan Miller. I don't teach Sunday School. I do celebrate Chanukah.

(TOM enters.)

TOM

The door was open so I let myself in. You should keep your door locked.

ANNA

Thanks for coming. Everyone – this is Tom. He's a friend of the family and a police officer.

JORDAN

Whoa – I guess there is an emergency.

TOM

No jumping to conclusions. First – yes, I am a police officer. But I am here as a friend of Anna’s family. Nothing I say is sanctioned by the police. I am here on my own. Clear?

CASEY

Not really. Because we don’t even know why we’re here let alone you.

TOM

I’m here to discuss the influx of racist literature/

KELLY

/and bricks/

TOM

Yes. The unfortunate events that are happening in Billings. They’re increasing at an alarming rate.

SUSAN

Car windows parked at the temple are smashed. And the temple’s been vandalized.

CASEY

Shouldn’t you be having this meeting at the temple?

SUSAN

We did. The consensus is if we do nothing, they perpetrators will get bored and leave. All will magically disappear and goodness will prevail.

KELLY

A Christmas miracle!

TOM

But history tells us there will be no Christmas miracle. Or Chanukah miracle. And we should respond. As a police officer, we’ve increased our presence on the street especially after dark. When we surround the temple, the perps go miles away and distribute hate literature elsewhere. We try to watch them. They are definitely watching us.

TAYLOR

I’d like to speak with you about that. Who exactly are you watching?

TOM

Another time. I’m off to work after this.

KELLY

Just taking a giant leap here, but if nobody at the temple cares, what are we doing here?

SUSAN

Don't leap too far. That bit about nobody caring? Jury's not in.

KELLY

Just getting the chain of events clear.

CAROLINE

Try listening. Anna and I spoke/

CASEY

Ohh! A *secret* meeting.

CAROLINE

A *discussion!*

JORDAN

About what? *Why are we here?*

CASEY

I was hoping for Christmas cookies.

ANNA (Jumping in.)

Listen! I had an idea and ran it by Tom who seemed to think it was worthy. Since we work with kids and their families. I'd like to invite the parents into a class for a special session where we all work together to create something that's a bit uncommon for our class.

JORDAN

It's advent. We're pretty packed with activities as it is.

KELLY

I'm curious why your idea needs a police officer attached to it.

CASEY

Shouldn't Pastor Dan be here? It's his Sunday school. And you have an "in" with him.

CAROLINE

To get back on track, when the Baptist Church was the target of these lovely terrorists, you all came through for us. You even put yourselves in danger by forming that chain around the skinheads. Now, we're ready in turn to support you.

JORDAN

I'm sorry. Danger? How does danger fit in?

ANNA

(Throwing the “idea” out as fast as she can.)

I am asking you all to have your students draw menorahs this Sunday. And then take them home and tape the drawing into your window.

(Silence. They freeze.)

SKINHEAD

Silence is next to godliness, isn't it? I count on it. It's my armor. We do everything silently. And our victims – they help us by staying silent, too.

(The family draped around the menorah exits. The SKINHEAD freezes. The meeting comes alive. ALEX slips in the doorway.)

ANNA

I spoke with Pastor Dan. He wants to know your opinion.

KELLY

That's refreshing.

CASEY

Can't we just draw Jewish stars and tell them a Bible story?

CAROLINE

And tuck them all in with cookies and milk?

JORDAN

Nothing wrong with that.

SUSAN

That doesn't solve anything!

JORDAN

How does putting a menorah in my window solve anything? It just puts me in danger.

SUSAN

It's solidarity with me and every Jewish family in Billings. It's a way to come together.

KELLY

It's a way to keep the glass factory in business for the winter.

CASEY

Can't we come together over a seder or something?

SUSAN

That's Passover.

CASEY

I teach little kids. You are putting little kids in harm's way.

ANNA

Little kids are already in harm's way. Eli's five! Just a baby! And it happened to him!

JORDAN

But not to us!

KELLY

What does that mean?

JORDAN

You're asking us to be a target when we're not a target! We're not Jewish!

KELLY

Jesus was Jewish!

(Beat.)

CAROLINE

We're asking you to support your neighbors.

TOM

Asking. Not demanding. That's an important difference. I thought it was foolhardy when Anna told me her idea. In fact, I thought everyone should play it safe and keep their menorahs out of sight. While it is absolutely dangerous to do what Anna asks, in a sense it is dangerous not to. It's giving control to the wrong people. It's bowing down to these outsiders who have no stake in our town except to wreak havoc.

ANNA

That's why I want the families involved. Nothing will be forced on them. Each family can make their own decision. But I'd like to give them ... an opportunity to participate.

JORDAN

Or the opportunity to have a brick hurled into their window.

KELLY

I'm cool with all of this. But nothing can happen until Pastor Dan approves.

ALEX

He does.

(ALL look at ALEX. Some murmuring.)

ALEX

And he acknowledged the danger. He wants it strictly voluntary. He's putting something in the bulletin for the parents. Whether or not they participate is up to them. No judgments. And you can abstain. I'd like to give him an idea of who will be teaching this on Sunday. We can fill in with substitutes.

KELLY

I'm in.

CASEY

Can I think about it?

ALEX

Yes, but I need to know by the morning.

CAROLINE

Doing it at my church.

ANNA

And me.

JORDAN

Abstain.

TOM

I need to get to work. I really appreciate your willingness to discuss this. I'm going to ask the Chief about extra patrols – although we have already increased our presence on the street.

(Beat.)

I love walking around Billings during the holidays. All those Christmas lights and Santas on the roof falling in chimneys. I even love old Blair's home with the Winnie-the-Pooh characters surrounding Homer Simpson. Who knew Pooh Bear could be so menacing? But you know what was missing tonight? Menorahs. Everyone is taking them down. It's the second night of Chanukah and there are no menorahs in any windows. Hoping to see some on Sunday.

(TOM exits.)

ANNA

So ... does anyone want a Christmas cookie?

KELLY

I'm good. Freeze them. This has been one of the more interesting church meetings I've been to. I'll give you that. See you all.

(And murmurs of goodbyes as KELLY, CASEY and JORDAN leave.)

ANNA

What do you think?

SUSAN

It doesn't matter what I think. It matters what happens next. We shall see. I appreciate that this is even in the works. Good night.

(SUSAN exits.)

CAROLINE

It's going to be a challenge. I'm on to my next meeting. Meanwhile, there's someone you need to talk to. (Waving.) Hey Alex!

ALEX

Caroline. Good to see you. And thank you.

CAROLINE

No problem.

(CAROLINE and exits)

TAYLOR

Tonight was – illuminating.

ANNA

Did you get your story?

TAYLOR

I'm going to wait a bit. The story is still happening.

(TAYLOR exits. ANNA and ALEX just look at each other.)

ALEX

You should lock your door.

ANNA

So I've been told.

(They just look at each other.)

ALEX

Dad told me what was going on. Not sure I agree with any of this. Is this to make you feel good?

ANNA

What?

ALEX

That – you’re doing something. Or are you still trying to please your mother?

ANNA

Is there anything wrong with that?

ALEX

I didn’t mean/

ANNA

/you had better go.

(ALEX exits. We hear a merry Christmas carol from elsewhere. Perhaps a choir practicing at church. We see the SKINHEAD listening.)

SKINHEAD

I love Christmas carols. My brother and I sang in a children’s choir in church. He was always going flat. I have the better voice. I love *Angels We Have Heard on High*. That “Gloria” part always gets to me. Maybe my niece will sing in a choir one day. Maybe I’ll teach her the “Gloria” part.

OPTIONAL: Scene 5-1/2

Music plays. Way in the background, away from windows, a menorah is being lit for the 3rd night of Chanukah.

BILL (for the 3rd candle)

Praised are You,
Ruler of the universe,
Who made us holy through your commandments and commanded us
To kindle the Chanukah lights.

(Music. SUSAN brings her menorah forward and lights it for the 4th night of Chanukah.)

SUSAN (for the 4th candle)

Praised are You,
Ruler of the Universe,
Who performed wondrous deeds for our ancestors
In those ancient days of this season.

Lights Out. Just the lit menorahs linger for a moment.

SCENE 6 – Sunday, December 12
5th day of Chanukah

Lights up on ANNA’S home. She is dressed for church and putting on her coat. MEL comes down also ready for church.

Church bells may peal.

ANNA

You’re going to church?

MEL

Wouldn’t miss it for the world.

ANNA

It’s “do or die” you know. Either I created a wave or I didn’t.

MEL

It would be absolutely perfect if your classes were packed and your idea took wing.

ANNA

But.

MEL

But even if it doesn’t – even if there’s just a handful/

ANNA

/or no one/

MEL

/or no one, you still did something.

ANNA

I guess. I’d rather succeed. Mel, do you think I am doing this for Mom?

MEL

So what if you were? It would be a fitting Christmas present for her. So.... onward Christian soldiers?

ANNA

Marching off to war?

MEL

I hope not.

(THEY exit for church and as the church bells continue to peal, the SKINHEAD steps forward.)

SKINHEAD

I decided to go to church. I like quiet time. Not that church services are particularly quiet with babies crying and bored people coughing. But sitting anonymously in a group reminds me of my time in jail. A conversation for another time. The church bells are calling. I want to see what happens with this “menorah” idea.

(The SKINHEAD sits. HE is in church. We hear the music or a choir singing *O come o come Emmanuel*. Just one verse. Lights change. The service is over.)

It’s pretty quiet for Sunday school. Usually, the halls are rocking with the noise of a few hundred children. Not today. But listen – it’s funny what you can hear in the quiet. Even from outside I can detect the sound of hundreds of crayons and markers squeaking against paper.

(We hear children tentatively singing *The Dreidel Song*. Quietly.)

I can’t make that song out. Must be a new one.

(You may have extras come running out with their menorahs. Or we may see just the paper menorahs on screens – being flown into the air like paper airplanes. Or high above their heads like kites. Or floating through the air as they catch them – just kids playing.)

(We hear one kid sing a bit of *The Dreidel Song*.)

Cute song. I would have liked it as a kid.

(Kids sing *The Dreidl Song* with some “la-la-la’s” interspersed where they don’t remember the lyrics.

It morphs into *Jingle Bells*. First with the “correct” lyrics and then – kids being kids – morphs into the “Santa Smells” or “Batman smells” lyrics.)

SKINHEAD (cont’d)

I sang that song, too.

There’s a lot of innocence running around after Sunday School. It makes one ... (beat) ... it doesn’t matter what it does. It’s impossible to save. You can’t spread innocence. Only protect it. I saw a few parents dump the menorah drawings into a garbage bin. I decided to save those.

(We see him retrieve a few drawings. HE exits.)

Lights fade to black.

Scene 7 – Sunday night, December 12
5th night of Chanukah

We see windows. Or the cast interspersed around the stage with a drawing of the menorah covering their face

Silent Night is heard.

There is hesitation in some. Determination in others. One or two decide not hang it up. Another may hang it up and then take it down.

Family members may hug each other. Someone may rip one.

Somewhere visible, we see TOM with a true menorah. He lights five candles.

All step away. If using zoom, the windows are covered with menorahs with a few empty spaces. Otherwise, hang them around the stage as creatively as you can.

We see ANNA. MEL and if using extras – their DAD can be in the background or in separate windows. ANNA hangs up the menorah.)

Merry Christmas, Mom.

ANNA

(All remains quiet except for *Silent Night*. When the hymn ends, everything is silence.)

And then the brick.

And the shattering glass.

Scene 8 – Monday morning, December 13
(Tonight is 6th night of Chanukah)

Phone (landline!) rings. Lights up on ANNA running to answer it as she downs a breakfast bar and puts on her jacket and backpack.

ANNA

Hello? (Beat.) Oh no! I'm so sorry.

(MEL enters and looks at ANNA. MELS in comfy clothes – clearly not going anywhere.)

ANNA

It's Caroline. (Beat.) All right. Will do. (Beat.) I said I'd be careful! See you soon.

(ANNA hangs up.)

ANNA (cont'd)

A rock was thrown into her dad's car window. There was a note attached. It said, "Jew lover."

MEL

Is everyone all right?

ANNA

Yes. She said that "Jew-lover" was pretty accurate but "people-lover" would be more succinct. He just called to tell me to be careful walking to school. It's still dark out.

MEL

I'd give you a lift but –

ANNA

You don't have a car.

MEL

Dad wants me home anyway. I'm supposed to guard the house.

ANNA

And if something happens?

MEL

Don't worry. I'll cower under the bed. The radio said that shots were fired into the Church.

ANNA

I didn't mean/

MEL

/Not your fault. This was a collective decision.

ANNA

How bad is this going to get?

(The lights fade on ANNA and MEL and come up on the SKINHEAD.)

SKINHEAD

Pretty bad. You have at least twenty people just aching for targets. And now – they're at least one hundred of them. In the literature it says, "We will do anything necessary – no matter how unpleasant to secure "white space" for us. Unpleasant? That's code for "violent."