

Not in Our Town  
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SETTING: Small town/city, USA (actual “event” was in Billings, MT in 1993)

TIME: December, today

SET: Area staging of different homes in “Smalltown”

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)

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.

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## Not in Our Town

CAST OF CHARACTERS:\* 11-15 (3 female, 3 male, 5 male or female);  
Additional extras possible

1. SKINHEAD (male; Caucasian) 20's; a witness
2. ANNA (f) 16; conscientious, receives an unwanted crash course in "hate"
3. MEL (m/f) 18: college student, home for the holidays; pragmatic
4. ALEX (m): 16 Anna's boyfriend, child of a pastor but not overtly religious
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; African-American) 17-18; member of African Baptist Church; a helper
  
10. TOM (m) 21-24; new on police force
11. TAYLOR (m /f) 18-21; college intern for local newspaper

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

Not in Our Town

PROLOGUE – Saturday night, December 4

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! What to do ... 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

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

ANNA  
No.

ALEX  
Want to not talk?

ANNA  
Want to sleep.

ALEX  
You're breaking our date.

ANNA  
Sorry.

ALEX  
Call you later.

ANNA

Thanks.

(We see ANNA lead ALEX to the door and a short good-bye. During this, SKINHEAD comes forward.)

SKINHEAD

(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. Everyone knows when to stay invisible. Nobody saw a thing. They only heard 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 even 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's 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 hiding is not 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 for now, they want to leave it to the police to do their jobs.

ANNA

Sounds sensible.

TAYLOR

I think if everyone stays quiet, the incidents will escalate and someone will 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 it's going to get worse. Are you afraid?



ANNA

It's not about 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.)

(Optional: In blackout we may hear chorus a chorus sing some of *The Dreidel Song*.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=X9m6jrfYH1U>)

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 Charlie 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

The extra is the shamash candle. It lights the first candle and stays lit to help out in case a candle blows out. It's sort of a "helper" candle.

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. (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 ...

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 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 Feuer's 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. I 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 my 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 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.

ANNA

Remember when Dad painted over the slurs at the Baptist church? But there are no slurs to paint over. Just a broken window.

MEL

Way to change the subject.

ANNA

Hear me out. They also formed a human chain when the skinheads surrounded the church. Lots of phony-macho guys were surprised to find themselves surrounded.

MEL

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

ANNA

So the solution needs to be different. What can fight a brick?

MEL

Start from the beginning. What first attracted the brick?

ANNA

The decal of the menorah.

MEL

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. The menorah gives off good waves. It lights the way for others. If we had menorahs everywhere – 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.

MEL

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?

MEL

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

ANNA

She would do that, wouldn't she?

(Optional: *Let There be Peace on Earth* could be heard as the lights fade to black.)

Scene 4 – Wednesday, December 8  
1<sup>st</sup> Night of Chanukah

Lights up on SUSAN lighting a menorah in front of a window. The first candle is being lit.

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

SKINHEAD

I just received a Christmas card. Look at those eyes. All innocence. Her name is Grace. My brother says she smiles at everyone. I usually don't hear much from my brother. Our lives went in – different directions. He never took any interest in my family's – “extra curriculars.” So my brother's estranged from everyone. But he still sent me this. I'm an uncle. She sure is cute. I wonder what my brother would do if someone threw a brick through her window. Everyone here is having meetings and not doing anything. I'd do something. I'd be looking to get back at anyone who hurt little Grace. I'd be furious.

It's funny. I don't remember making a choice to be part of my family's activities. 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 were my safe place. A place where I mattered. I used to walk the towns we targeted. I'd see our literature sitting prettily in the windshield of cars and trucks. Everything neatly placed. It was amazing to be part of an operation that is so covert. It made me feel untouchable... unreachable. I loved being under everyone's radar. I'm not going to lie. It was a thrill. And sometimes, I miss it.

Scene 5 – Thursday, December 9  
2<sup>nd</sup> night of Chanukah

(Lights up at ANNA'S home.



There will be a meeting. The SKINHEAD is off to the side. Just watching.)

(ANNA and MEL are prepping for a meeting.)

ANNA

Tom is coming. I'm going to run my idea by him to see how dangerous it is. And Taylor will be here in case he/she wants to publicize it.

(The doorbell rings.)

MEL

That's my cue to exit.

ANNA

Stay!

MEL

This is your baby.

ANNA

I don't know what to do.

(Doorbell rings again.)

MEL

I'd start by answering the door.

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

ANNA

Thanks for coming.

(TAYLOR and CASEY will enter.)

TOM

Remember, I'm just here as a friend. Nothing I say is sanctioned by the police. Clear?

TAYLOR

The door was open.

CASEY

Nothing's clear. I don't even know why I'm here.

(And the others will enter.)

TOM

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

KELLY

/and bricks/

TOM

Yes. The unfortunate events that are happening in our town. They're increasing at an alarming rate.

SUSAN

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

CASEY

So much for "goodwill towards men." We need 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

Not yet at liberty to say.

KELLY

So, what are we hear to talk about – that we can actually talk about?

CAROLINE

I think the meeting started, Anna. Shall we? Anna and I already spoke/

CASEY

Already spoke ... 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're all Sunday School teachers and we all 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 counted on it. It was my armor. I did everything silently. And my victims – they helped me 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 did speak with Pastor Dan. He wants to know your opinion.

KELLY

That's refreshing. Because I definitely have an opinion.

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 town 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?

(Silence.)

KELLY

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

CASEY

I'll take a few cookies for the road.

(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 you are trying. 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

- you should 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. Is that a surprise? 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 little Grace will sing in a choir one day. Maybe I'll teach her the "Gloria" part. (Beat.) If I ever meet her.

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. (Beat.) A conversation for another time. The church bells are calling. I want to see what happens with this “menorah” idea. It’s original. It’s the opposite of what I would do – but it could pack a punch, you know?

(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.)

SKINHEAD (cont’d)

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

(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 chorus of a carol.)

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

(Kids sing *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) ... wish you could keep it. Wrap it up and give boxes of "innocence" instead of "things." But it's not possible. You can't spread innocence like grass seed. Only protect it. I saw a few parents dump the menorah drawings into a garbage bin. I took a look.

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

Lights fade to black.

Scene 7 – Sunday night, December 12  
5<sup>th</sup> 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. 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.)

ANNA

Merry Christmas, Mom.

(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

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. MEL is 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.)

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. She 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 to -

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 – there are maybe fifty 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.”

(Sound of glass breaking. Police sirens. The SKINHEAD comes forward.)

SKINHEAD

Back when I was a kid, there was this “operation” in my old group called the Wolf Pack. Kids would be sent out in packs to harass and sometimes beat – you know – anyone who wasn’t us. If we thought you were gay or Jewish or had a different skin color, we were lying in wait for you. That’s what’s starting to happen here. Kids hiding between cars, in bushes – armed with bricks and bats – just waiting. I keep thinking about those little kids clutching their menorah drawings. I have the ones I dug out of the trash. Some were pretty good – others looked like sticks in a sand bucket. When I was six, I probably would have drawn a likeness of the candles. By the time I was eight, I would have made the candles look like devil fingers. At age 6, I was an innocent. By eight, I was a small wolf following my pack.

What will these kids remember from this holiday? Will they remember the menorahs or the broken windows? Because the memories are important. Remembering a menorah is remembering a guiding light. Remembering shattered glass is remembering fear. And fear can scar you.

How are these kids any different from my Wolf Pack? And my little, smiley niece? What would she do at age eight? Would she draw a menorah or join a Wolf Pack? Sometimes you make a choice before you know what a choice is. There’ll be a Pack out tonight looking for any menorahs that are left. They’ll find them. After midnight.

(PROJECTION or WINDOW: Menorah lit for the sixth night of Chanukah.

(As SKINHEAD exits, we hear *It Came Upon a Midnight Clear* or similar hymn. Lights fade to black.)

Scene 9 – Tuesday, December 14  
7<sup>th</sup> night of Chanukah.

(We may see Susan lighting the menorah.)

While this is going on, SKINHEAD enters.

SKINHEAD

I had a lot of time to think in Solitary. When I'm alone with my mind, my mind is never silent. A guard told me, "They're so lucky they got you. They never get anyone for these crimes."

I was protected by silence for a long time. And I protected others by doing the same. They assigned a lawyer to me. A black guy – African-American, you know? That was the first black guy I ever spoke to – well – had a conversation with. I hated him and he knew it. Yet he did his job and treated me with respect. Which totally threw me. Why would he do that? The day I was released – I served very little time – I was thrown into community service here in Billings.

On "Release Day," my lawyer comes to me and says, "Jimmy, I know I'm not going to change you But I just want you to know that I wish you well. I mean that."

And he was gone. Why would he care? Nothing made sense. My past? My present? I was nowhere. I'm picking up garbage on the highways and going to anger management classes. I turn off my brain for both of those. I went to the temple. I wanted to see Jewish people up close and personal. I needed to see those horns for myself. I used to think maybe those funny little hats – yarmulkes? covered them. I looked at everyone leaving. Nobody had a horn. Since I've been here, I've been watching everything from the sidelines. There's stuff I know and stuff I thought I knew. Today, I'm thinking about the stuff I do know. About the innocents. And the guilty. I know a lot of stuff. The planning. The mindset. What is cowardly and what is brave. Who are innocents. Who are the guilty.

It's the seventh night of Chanukah. In eleven days, it will be Christmas Day. And I am watching a story unfold that has nothing to do with any holiday – any holy day. You know what I'd really like for Christmas? I'd like to shake hands with my brother. I'd like to see Grace. I'd like to hold the next generation in my arms. I'd like ... I'd love to have her smile at me. I'd like to preserve that innocence and keep her away from the pack. Safeguard her from the wolves.

(TOM and TAYLOR appear. They are waiting. The SKINHEAD approaches them and they exit together.)

Lights up in ANNA'S home. ANNA and MEL are doing homework. Maybe eating a frozen dinner. They could have Christmas music playing.

ANNA

*Where is Dad tonight?*

MEL

Something about planning a joint Seder-Easter celebration.

ANNA

That's not till spring. I think he's avoiding being home.

MEL

Firsts are hard for everyone. This house is filled with Mom's Christmas. She's everywhere but here. (Beat.) I hear it gets easier.

ANNA

I don't want it to get easier. I'm afraid of forgetting...

MEL

You won't.

ANNA

Mel?

(There is a moment. Maybe tears. Maybe a hug. If zoom, hands reaching across the screen to each other.)

ANNA

I want her cookies.

MEL

Bake them.

ANNA

(Beat.) They won't be as good as hers. (Beat.) And we probably don't have the ingredients.

MEL

I picked up ingredients on the way home. So...

ANNA

Can I lick the bowl?

MEL  
Raw eggs.

ANNA  
I'm learning to live dangerously.

(The doorbell rings.)

MEL  
See who it is before you answer it.

ANNA  
Who's there?

TAYLOR (O.S.)  
Taylor. I brought you something. A mark-up of tomorrow's paper.

ANNA  
You finally got your story.

TAYLOR  
I'm still waiting for the ending.

MEL  
Church has Sunday School Meeting. Children draw menorahs. Families put menorahs in windows. Windows get smashed in. That's the ending to your story.

TAYLOR  
Maybe. Or maybe there will be a different story. Look inside.

(ANNA takes out a mimeographed copy of a menorah.)

TAYLOR (cont'd)  
Old Johnson figured if a church could get one hundred menorahs in the windows of our town, imagine what could happen if we got a thousand up. There's one in every newspaper. Every citizen who reads the paper gets one.

ANNA  
This doesn't mean anyone will put them up.

TAYLOR  
It's a numbers game. I'm betting on our neighbors.

MEL

So what happens next –

TAYLOR

*That* will be the ending of my story. I don't know if it will be a "feel-good-for-Christmas-fuzzy" end or a sad one. The citizens will write it.

MEL

Windows will still get smashed.

TAYLOR

Definitely.

MEL

So the same ending as now.

TAYLOR

There could be a few twists. Have a good evening.

(TAYLOR exits as the lights fade to black.)

Scene 10 – Wednesday, December 15  
Will be the 8<sup>th</sup> night of Chanukah

Lights up on citizens opening their papers and discovering the Menorah insert. Music should underscore. Use as many citizens as possible.

Creatively cover the stage with menorahs or use one giant one.

On this menorah-covered stage, ANNA enters into her home.

ANNA

Hello? Anyone home?

(MEL rushes in.)

MEL

Don't take off your coat! We're going downtown.

ANNA

I heard there was a parade or something.



MEL

No parade – but yeah – “something.” Something big. You know the billboard with “Peace on Earth” that was covered in bullet holes? Now, it’s plastered with menorahs next to Christmas trees.

(With a projection we may see the billboard – large as life.)

MEL (cont’d)

And signs that say, “Not in Our Town” and “Peace” and “No Hate!” and all sorts of touchy-feel-good stuff that’s supposed to represent the holidays.

(As MEL describes the scene we start seeing people appear with exactly those signs.)

MEL (cont’d)

We’re going. Dad’s taking off from work. *There’s a wave!*

(As MEL and ANNA exit, music underscores – and more and people appear – with signs or without. Maybe with menorah drawings. Dreidels and Santas and anything that brings together the two holidays. When everyone is gathered, MEL and ANNA enter. ANNA spies CAROLINE.)

ANNA

Hi, Caroline.

CAROLINE

Isn’t this amazing?

ANNA

Totally. I’m trying to find my dad.

CAROLINE

Good luck finding anyone. Although everyone is here. I even saw the Feuers with Eli and Isaac.

MEL

Someone told me one thousand menorahs went up today.

CAROLINE

I heard six thousand.

ANNA

Who can count?

MEL

And how many more will be up tonight?

(We see TAYLOR.)

TAYLOR

I'm betting on ten thousand.

MEL

And how many windows broken?

TAYLOR

They can't get to them all. There's too many. It's too risky for them to hunt them all down.

ANNA

Something is happening here.

TAYLOR

Don't be fooled. It's not over.

ANNA

But we made a wave. We sent a message.

TAYLOR

And we will continue to send it. That's my story.

(ANNA sees ALEX who waves. They come together.)

ALEX

I can be a jerk sometimes.

ANNA

Yeah, you can.

ALEX

Not every time. But sometimes.

ANNA

Me, too.

ALEX

Look what you did...

ANNA

Look what everyone did. If your dad hadn't agreed... if people didn't put up the menorahs – it would be a whole other story.

ALEX

I didn't agree with those decisions.

ANNA

It doesn't matter.

ALEX

To me. It matters to me. I play by the rules and never call anyone out if they don't.

ANNA

We can talk ... later. Right now, I need to find my dad.

ALEX

I saw him by the newspaper office. Come on.

(THEY go elsewhere. In a corner, a few children are gathering – playing – snowballs? Hopscotch? Jump rope? A physical activity. The SKINHEAD steps forward. Music to something like *Peace Like a River* is heard. It will build. After the SKINHEAD speaks, a choral version could be heard. Or a chorus could sing it. Or the cast could sing it.)

SKINHEAD

I've been talking to the police. And the newspaper. I'm giving them some insight as to how the groups organize. How they carry out their assignments. How they manufacture hate. (Beat.) See them?

(HE points to a group of kids. We don't have to see them.)

That's Eli. And that's Carrie. I met them at the newspaper office. Their innocence isn't forever. But their memory bank is. So, a feel-good ending? Don't count on rainbows and unicorns draping the sky. The violence isn't over. Sure, it'll die down. The current perpetrators will move on. They won't catch anybody. But the people took a stand. They broke their silence. Just as I did. Silence. It can be a real killer. And I'm not silent anymore.

(*Peace Like a River* starts. TOM approaches the SKINHEAD with a 'peace' sign and the two of them join the demonstration.)

End of Play

