

## SCENE FIVE

*The Billings Town Hall. Chief Inman stands at a podium facing the audience. The other players in the scene are either seated strategically among the members of the audience, or they can be seated on the stage.*

CHIEF INMAN: Thank you, everyone, for coming. We all know why we're here. But before we start I'd like to introduce Rabbi Samuel Cohon from Congregation Beth Aaron. He's new in town. Not many of you know him. And I've asked him to say a few words.

RABBI COHON (*stands up*): Thank you. As Chief Inman said, I'm the new rabbi at Congregation Beth Aaron. Actually, I'm a student rabbi. I fly down from the Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati a couple of times a month. I'm really just getting to know Billings. I've ... I've been asking wiser men (*stops and laughs nervously*) I mean wiser *people* than I, what should be done about these acts of hate. There seems to be no clear-cut answer. So, for right now, I'm going to follow one of the most important lessons of the Torah – and just listen and learn. Thank you.

CHIEF INMAN: Thank *you*, Rabbi Cohon. (*to general audience*) Now I know some people are saying that what's been happening in town is the Jews' problem ... or the Blacks' problem, or the Native Americans' problem. But I say it's *our* problem.

Most of you know that I left Billings for a few years and moved to Portland, Oregon, to become the Assistant Chief of Police. Well, not long before I moved back, a group of skinheads moved into Portland.

The good people in that community hated everything the skinheads stood for, but they kept debating and talking and couldn't decide what to do. Then, one night, a young African man from Ethiopia was walking down a street not far from the university where he was an exchange student. A group of skinheads saw him. They were riding in an old truck, looking for a black man. When they spied the student walking alone, they got out of the truck, surrounded him, and beat him until he could no longer speak or move or, finally, breathe.

*Then* Portland went into action. There were big protests and marches, but it was too late. A man had died ... for no other reason than the color of his

skin. That was one of the things that made me move back to Billings. I thought nothing like that would happen here. But now, like Portland, we have skinheads, vandalism and the threat of serious violence. And the question is: What are we going to do about it? Reverend Freeman, tell us what's been happening to your African American congregation.

REVEREND FREEMAN: A group of troublemakers has been coming to our church on Sundays, before our service starts. They sit together and glare at us and try to intimidate us as we pray. We try to ignore them, but they still keep coming.

CHIEF INMAN: It's frustrating for the police because our hands are tied. It's not illegal to enter a church ... Reverend Torney, I see your hand raised.

REVEREND TORNEY: I just want to tell my friend, Reverend Freeman, that if we can't stop these people from coming into your church, we can make sure that the congregation doesn't have to face them alone. *No one* should have to face haters and bullies alone. So the members of my church would like to come and worship *with* you. May we?

REVEREND FREEMAN (*shouting from his seat*): You bet you can!

*People applaud. Reverend Torney sits down.*

MRS. FASTHORSE (*standing from her place in the audience*): My name is Rebecca Fasthorse. One night, when my family was asleep, these hooligans painted mean, frightening things all over the outside of our house. And neighbors of mine – some mixed race families – have been getting threatening phone calls that *their* houses will be next.

CHIEF INMAN: So far, there have been at least a half dozen houses vandalized. And it's getting worse.

*Mrs. Fasthorse sits down.*

TOWN RESIDENT BOB MAXWELL (*stands*): Hi. Bob Maxwell here, head of the painters' union. Mrs. Fasthorse, a lot of us heard what happened to you and the other families, and the painters' union wants to

volunteer to paint over every message of hate on your house – or anywhere else – for free. And we’ll keep on doing it as long as we have to!

*Applause.*

CHIEF INMAN: Thank you, Bob. (*He gestures to the woman sitting next to him, and speaks to the audience.*) Now our neighbor, Mrs. Margaret MacDonald would like to speak. (*He turns towards her and teasingly adds:*) I would just ask that you keep it brief.

MRS. MACDONALD (*gives him a look, and then walks up to the podium and addresses the audience*): Hello. As most of you know, I’m the director of the Montana Association of Churches. All this has made me remember a legend my parents told me when I was a child. The story goes that during World War II, when the Germans conquered Denmark, the Nazi Commandant demanded that King Christian order all the country’s Jews to wear yellow stars on their clothing. This had been done in every other country the Nazis had conquered, and soon afterwards the Jews were taken away and never heard from again. But Denmark was different. King Christian refused to cooperate with the Nazis, even though he was told that he and the rest of the Danes would be severely punished if they disobeyed.

(*Someone calls out from the audience*): I know that story. Didn’t the King ride out of the palace on horseback, wearing a yellow star?

MRS. MACDONALD: That’s right.

(*Someone else calls out*): And didn’t Danes all over the country start wearing the stars, too ... to support the Jews?

MRS. MACDONALD: Yes, that’s the legend. Actually, it didn’t happen quite that way. But, what *did* happen is even better.

**Song – “We Are Denmark”<sup>\*</sup>** (optional)

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<sup>\*</sup> Go to Appendices D and E, pages 84 and 85, for alternate, non-musical versions of the story of Denmark.

MRS. MACDONALD:

The invasion happened overnight. On the morning of April 9th, 1940 the Danes awoke to find themselves captives.

COMMANDANT WERNER BEST (*through a bullhorn*):

People of Denmark, you are now occupied by the Third Reich.

MRS. MACDONALD:

THEY WERE A LITTLE COUNTRY, PEACEFUL AND POLITE.  
INVADED BY THEIR NEIGHBOR, THEY WERE NOT PREPARED TO  
FIGHT.

KING CHRISTIAN SAID IT STRAIGHT:

KING CHRISTIAN (REV. KEITH TORNEY):

FOR NOW WE MUST COOPERATE.

MRS. MACDONALD:

AND SO A NATION OF FISHERMEN AND FARMS  
LAID DOWN ITS ARMS.

KING CHRISTIAN:

WE ARE DENMARK.  
WE'RE GENEROUS AND WARM  
AND WAR IS NOT OUR NORM,  
THOUGH LONG AGO—  
WE WERE VIKINGS,  
WITH BATTLE-AX AND BOW.  
BUT THAT WAS LONG AGO.  
NOW OUR BELOVED DENMARK  
HAS BEEN BROUGHT LOW.

COMMANDANT BEST (*to Duckwitz*):

I like these Danes. They're realistic.

GEORG DUCKWITZ:

That's true, Kammandant.

COMMANDANT BEST:

No silly heroics.

MRS. MACDONALD:

But then the Danes started to get in touch with their Viking roots.  
SOON AN UNDERGROUND RESISTANCE BEGAN TO STIR.  
EVERY DANE BECAME A SPY OR A SABOTEUR.  
THE GERMANS WERE ANGRY, BUT SCARED.

COMMANDANT BEST:

A STATE OF EMERGENCY IS NOW DECLARED!

KING CHRISTIAN (*leading chorus of Danes*):

WE ARE DENMARK.  
WE'RE USED TO BEING FREE.  
NO FOREIGN INFANTRY  
CAN BREAK OUR WILL.  
THOUGH WE'RE CAPTIVES.  
BELOW OUR SHACKLED WRIST  
THERE'S STILL A HEALTHY FIST.  
AND IN THE FACE OF TYRANTS  
(*shouted*) WE RESIST!

COMMANDANT BEST (*to Duckwitz*):

Now we stop treating this country like it's special. It's time to round up the Jews.

GEORG DUCKWITZ (*alarmed*):

Round up the Jews? But that was never decided.

COMMANDANT BEST:

Duckwitz, you're my friend so I'll confide in you. But don't breathe a word.  
IT HAPPENS NEXT FRIDAY ...

GEORG DUCKWITZ (*after a beat, to Rabbi Melchior*):

IT HAPPENS NEXT FRIDAY.

COMMANDANT BEST:

THE FIRST NIGHT OF ROSH HASHANA...

GEORG DUCKWITZ (*TO RABBI MELCHIOR*):

THE FIRST NIGHT OF ROSH HASHANA...

RABBI MELCHIOR:  
ROSH HASHANA!?

COMMANDANT BEST:  
THE JEWS WILL ALL BE HOME.

GEORG DUCKWITZ:  
THEY SAY YOU'LL ALL BE HOME.

RABBI MELCHIOR:  
We *will* be at home.

COMMANDANT BEST:  
AT 10 P.M. THE TROOPS ARRIVE.

GEORG DUCKWITZ:  
AT 10 P.M. THE TROOPS ARRIVE.

RABBI MELCHIOR (*to his congregation, from the pulpit*):  
AT 10 PM THE TROOPS ARRIVE.

ALL THREE:  
TWO LARGE SHIPS WAIT IN COPENHAGEN HARBOR  
TO TRANSPORT THEM/YOU/US TO THE CAMPS.

RABBI MELCHIOR:  
By tomorrow night we must all be in hiding.

PAPA:  
But who will risk hiding us?

MRS. MACDONALD:  
IT TOOK THE DANES ONLY HOURS TO SPREAD THE NEWS.

WOMAN/MAN:  
We'll take the phonebook and call every Jewish name in it.

MRS. MACDONALD:  
EVERY HOSPITAL AND CHURCH WAS USED TO HIDE THE JEWS.

LITTLE GIRL:  
Mama, what's happening?

MAMA:  
We're being taken to Sweden.

PAPA:  
Sweden is neutral.

BOY:  
We'll be safe there?

MAMA:  
Yes, dear.

MRS. MACDONALD:  
THE DANES USED EVERY TRICK THEY COULD FIND.

*(European siren SFX)*

BOY *(to Little Girl)*:  
They won't think of looking for us in an *ambulance*.

MRS. MACDONALD:  
PSYCHOLOGY AND MONEY COMBINED.

PAPA *(holding up money to a German soldier)*:  
Could you point the way to Gilleleje?

SOLDIER *(taking the money)*:  
I wouldn't go that way, unless you want soldiers on your vacation.

PAPA:  
Tak.\*

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\*  
"Tak" means "thanks" in Danish.

MRS. MACDONALD:

Sweden was a mere three miles by sea. But the Germans had mined the waters.  
As the Jews made their way to coastal villages the plea went out.

KING CHRISTIAN:

Boats. We need boats!

*(During the next chorus, cast members assemble a boat from benches, planks, etc.  
A captain shepherds the family aboard the boat.)*

KING CHRISTIAN:

THIS IS DENMARK,  
WHERE THE SIMPLE FACT REMAINS  
THAT ALL OF US ARE DANES,  
CHRISTIAN AND JEW.

ALL:

THIS IS DENMARK,  
WHERE WE CARE ABOUT WHAT'S RIGHT,  
EVEN IN THE DARKEST NIGHT.  
AND IN THE FACE OF EVIL  
WE WILL FIGHT!

CAPTAIN:

You need to be under the planking, in case we're stopped by a German patrol  
boat.

*(A siren whoops. There is a tense moment when a searchlight falls on the  
Captain's face.)*

LITTLE GIRL:

Mommy, my leg is asleep.

MAMA:

Shhhh.

BOY:

Is that a German boat?

PAPA:

I don't know. Quiet.

*(A civilian in black turtleneck appears, with a flashlight.)*

SWEDISH CIVILIAN:

You're in Swedish waters now. I'll guide you through the mine field. Welcome to Sweden.

MRS. MACDONALD:

Within a matter of weeks almost every Jew in Denmark was smuggled out under the noses of the German High Command.

COMMANDANT BEST:

This is outrageous! I want them *found!*

MRS. MACDONALD:

The hero was the Danish people, who refused to stand by, watching the persecution of their neighbors.

ALL:

WE ARE DENMARK,  
WHERE A CRIME AGAINST THE SMALL  
IS A CRIME AGAINST US ALL.  
AND IN THE FACE OF GOODNESS  
EVIL WILL FALL!

MRS. MACDONALD: Now it's our turn. Some of the Jewish families in town have been advised to take down their menorahs, for their own safety. How would we feel if we were told to take down our Christmas trees, because celebrating Christmas had become too dangerous in Billings. I say they shouldn't have to take their menorahs down, we should all be putting them up, to show our solidarity, like the Danes!

*Various "town residents" situated in the audience begin to clap and yell out their agreement. "Yes – she's right!" "That's a great story!" "I agree!," etc.*

TOWN RESIDENT (*jumps up from his or her seat*): Just hold on. That was a very nice story, Margi. Very inspiring. But this is not Denmark. You cannot compare the misguided troublemakers we've been dealing with to the Nazis! It's important that we not overreact.

COUNCILWOMAN MULLEN (*jumps up*): I agree! Most of you know who I am; city councilwoman Joanna Mullen. I think it's important that I point out, here, that this is a *police matter*. It is the responsibility of Chief Inman and his department to keep law and order. In this community we *do not* take police matters into our own hands. There's no telling what we'll be getting ourselves into.

TOWN RESIDENT (*standing from his or her seat in the audience*): Yes! With more menorahs in town there'll be more smashed windows and more violence. That's not what we want!

CHIEF INMAN (*pointing to Keith Torney*): Reverend Torney?

REV. TORNEY: Look. I'm not a violent man. I don't want anyone to get hurt. But that's exactly why we need to take a stand. Because if we don't, things will keep getting worse. I keep thinking about a Native American word, "ondinok." It means the goodness of the soul. The Iroquois believe that there's goodness in each of us – but it's crucial that we find a way to express it. I think Margi is showing us that way.

RABBI COHON (*stands up*): I agree. And I keep thinking about a Yiddish word, "chutzpah." It means ... well, it means a lot of things ... but it mostly means having incredible audacity – real guts. Frankly, I think that expressing that goodness, right now, is going to take some chutzpah.

MRS. MACDONALD: That's it!! That's what we need!! Ch-utzpah! (*she says it with a "ch" sound*)

RABBI COHON: Chutzpah. (*pronounces it correctly, of course*)

MRS. MACDONALD: Ch-utzpah? (*wrong again*)

RABBI COHON: Chutzpah.

MRS. MACDONALD: Ch-utzpah? (*wrong*)

RABBI COHON: Chutzpah. Ch. Ch. (makes the sound)

MRS. MACDONALD *mangles the sound pretty badly and ends up having a coughing fit.*

RABBI COHON: Oy!

TOWN RESIDENT: I still think ...

*Suddenly, there is the sound of a window shattering, the lights go out and there is momentary silence. Then voices are raised in anger and confusion, and we hear screams.*

CHIEF INMAN: Everyone away from the window! Be careful of the shattered glass!

VOICE: Is anyone hurt?

VOICE: Quick – see if they’re still out there!

COUNCILWOMAN MULLEN: This is what happens when we try to stir things up! We’re just asking for trouble!

*Blackout.*