

*Paper Candles: How Courage and Goodness Triumphed
in an American Town*

SCENE SEVEN

A school lunchroom. Isaac and Teresa are having lunch.

TERESA: I heard what happened at the town hall. Mom and Dad were there.

ISAAC: Things are even worse than you think.

TERESA: Whatd'ya mean?

ISAAC: Nothing. It's just ... It's not fair ...

TERESA: I know. None of this is fair!

ISAAC: Yeah, I know ... It's crazy. There are all these skinheads who hate me who don't even know me. (*he's silent for a moment or two, and then blurts out*) Do you ever think about ... you know ... that I'm Jewish?

TERESA: Nah. You ever think about me being Christian?

ISAAC (*shakes his head*): Uh-uh. But being Christian doesn't matter ... No one's throwing rocks through *your* window.

TERESA (*angrily*): I'm so mad at those creeps! If I knew who they were I'd...I'd...well, I don't know what I'd do. But I'd make them sorry.

ISAAC (*sarcastically*): Yeah, right. You just don't *get* it, Teresa! Those people are *dangerous*! Look what happened last night!

TERESA: That's why we have to *do* something.

ISAAC (*heatedly*): How do you know, so much? I don't want you to do something stupid. You'd get in trouble ... or hurt ... or ... or something else.

TERESA: But Isaac...

ISAAC: I *mean* it.

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A voice offstage: Isaac, we need you over here.

ISAAC (*reluctantly leaves*): I have to go. We'll talk later. (*He walks away, then turns around.*) Just remember what I said.

Teresa stares after him. The audience then becomes aware of two children who have apparently been listening to Isaac and Teresa, and snickering. When Isaac leaves, they walk towards Teresa.

CHILD #1 (*with an attitude*): Hey, Teresa.

TERESA (*preoccupied*): Hey Andy¹.

CHILD #2 (*tauntingly*): So how's your friend?

TERESA (*still preoccupied*): Not great.

CHILD #1 (*sarcastically*): Poor Isaac and his poor little *menorah*. *His little cow manure-ah.*

They laugh.

TERESA (*looks up and says sharply*): Stop it!

CHILD #2: Oh, lighten up, what's the big deal? O.K., so maybe they shouldn'ta thrown the rock. But face it, he's *weird*.

TERESA: Weird? What are you talking about?

CHILD #2: I'm saying he's weird – with his “cow manure-ah” and his Jewish stars...

CHILD #1 (*chimes in*): And a show off, too, with all those “A”s. If I wanted to, I could get an “A”. I could get a *dozen* “A”s.

CHILD #2 (*rolls his or her eyes and snickers*): Sure you could...

CHILD #1 (*indignant*): Well I *could*. But Mrs. Brody's always holding *his* stuff up.

CHILD #2: Yeah, it's like he's better than us. Well, he's *not*. He's not even as *good* as us. My uncle says Jews and Blacks – they always bring trouble.

¹ *May be played by a male or female.*

TERESA (*she jumps up from her seat*): That's crazy.

CHILD #2: How do *you* know? Maybe he *did* do something. My uncle says those people do stuff.

TERESA (*getting angrier*): What do you mean, "stuff"?

CHILD #2: Just, you know, stuff. Like Black people do in their church...Maybe skinheads go there to find out what's going on. What's so bad about that? My uncle says people are making *way* too much of a fuss.

TERESA: You know what, Andy? Your uncle's a jerk!

CHILD #2: You're a jerk! My uncle's not the only one who thinks that. Maybe those skinheads have more friends in town than you think. And they're gonna be watching for those cow manure-ahs – and they're *not* gonna like it.

TERESA: Are you trying to scare me?

CHILD #2: Just saying, you better be careful who your friends are.

TERESA: And so should you!

Song – If I Wanted

Child 1:

**Just look at her go off
She thinks she's so smart**

Child 2:

**She's such a big show off
Always acting the part
Of a goodie goodie, teacher's pet**

Child 1:

**Little Miss Perfect, what'd'ya bet
If I wanted I could be a whiz kid too**

Child 2 (*spoken*):

So could I. But she and that Isaac she likes so much are always messing things up for the rest of us. It's always *their* stories that get read out loud. And *their* stuff gets

hung on the board.

Child 1 (*spoken*):

Yeah, and the other kids are always picking *them* to be team captains and all that, but I'm just as good...know what, I'm *better* and I could prove it!

Child 2:

If they didn't always wave their hands in the air
The teacher would call on me
I'd come up with the answer – it just isn't fair
I'd be top of the class, you'd see

Child 1:

If there weren't so much homework, I'd get it all done
If they asked the right questions, I'd be number one
If the other kids knew what a winner I'd be
When they needed a leader, they'd only ask me

Child 2:

If I wanted to I know I could get nothing but A's

Child 1:

If I wanted I could be on top in so many ways

Together:

If everyone would stop their messing 'round with me
There's absolutely nothing I couldn't be

Child 2 (*spoken*):

It's just like my uncle said...that Isaac and his kind, and all those *other* kids – you know, the ones who aren't like *us*. They think they should get all the attention!

Child 1 (*spoken*):

Yeah!

Child 2:

If I wanted I could be a model of perfection

Child 1:

If you want a kid who's cool
I should be your first selection

Child 2:
I could be good

Child 1:
I could be great

Together:
I could be what you would call first rate

Child 2 (*mockingly*):
Watch your manners, look at minerahs
Everyone's making a fuss

Child 1:
And the thing that drives me crazy is

Together:
They're not like us

[Note: for a non-musical version this song can be deleted]

Blackout.