

25. The Deal

Marvin Skrupskelis, a middle-aged man mistaken for a union organizer, sought an unexpected meeting with Isaac Moskowitz at the Blitz Theater in Philadelphia. Despite initial reluctance, Isaac agreed to meet Marv and embarked on a discussion during a car ride down Broad Street. Marv, revealing himself to be a cobbler from a working-class background, initiated a dialogue about a pressing issue indirectly related to Isaac's connections and influence in the city.

The conversation swiftly dived into complex entanglements involving a local powerbroker named Gus Plitzka, who was engaged in illicit dealings and exploitation, particularly with regard to the local water supply in Pottstown. Plitzka, owing significant debts to a shady character named Nig Rosen, appeared vulnerable to manipulation, prompting Marv to suggest leveraging this vulnerability to attain justice for a previous, unnamed grievance involving Chona.

Isaac, while initially dismissive of the potential to correct injustices through direct confrontation or legal channels, was intrigued by the connection to Chona, suggesting a more personal stake in the matter. Despite a shared history and the evident moral compass driving Marv, the conversation transitioned into a pragmatic discussion on how best to navigate the local political and criminal landscape to achieve their ends without drawing undue attention or causing public scandal.

The chapter culminates in a covert plan orchestrated by Isaac, requiring the assistance of union men to undertake a daring act—to "snatch" a key individual connected to Chona's legacy from a mental institution during a routine supply drop-off. This plan, while audacious, highlights the depths of Isaac's commitment to preserving Chona's memory and influence, leveraging both his resources and the solidarity within the unionized Jewish community, particularly those working on the railroad.

Throughout the exchange, Marv's and Isaac's conversation reflects a dense weave of personal loyalty, cultural ties, and the shadows of past deeds, showcasing a narrative rich in underworld dealings, community politics, and the pursuit of justice—or perhaps recompense—within the murky ethical boundaries of their environment.