

# 10. The Skrup Shoe

In Chapter 10, titled "The Skrup Shoe," we follow Earl Roberts, known as Doc, a man from Pottstown who becomes entangled in local rumors regarding a Jewish woman, Chona, allegedly hiding a Negro child from the state. Doc learns this from his distant cousin, Carl Boydkins, who works for the state welfare office. Both families share a mythical lineage that boasts a connection to the Mayflower, which in reality is a fabricated story rooted in the life of Ed Bole, an English sailor in the late 18th century. Bole's tumultuous life leads to his descendants, the Roberts and Boydkins families, living prosperously on neighboring farms next to the Manatawny Creek.

The chapter details the significant social and economic transformations before and after the Great Crash of 1929. The Roberts family manages to sell their property before the crash, but the Boydkins family suffers as factories pollute their land and disrupt their way of life. The narrative reflects on Doc's childhood and his insecurities, particularly regarding his left foot affected by polio, which leads to his embarrassment and avoids social interactions with girls.

Doc's complicated feelings toward Chona surface as he recalls his high school days where he tried to date her but was left humiliated after she rejected him. He later visits Norman Skrupskelis, the town's renowned shoemaker, to have a new shoe made for his cleft foot. Norman's brusque manner leaves a lasting impression on Doc, prompting years of resentment that continues even after Norman's death and the transition of the family business to his sons.

As Doc matures and becomes a doctor, he grapples with the demographic changes in Pottstown, reflecting his bigotry as immigrants from various backgrounds settle in the area. His disconnection from his once-familiar hometown exacerbates his disdain for perceived encroachment by "outsiders" and culminates in his involvement with the Knights of Pottstown, who align with the Ku Klux Klan's ideologies.

Ultimately, Chapter 10 sees Doc reluctantly agreeing to visit Chona concerning the child's situation, filled with complex feelings about their shared past and cultural differences. This chapter sets the stage for exploring themes of identity, social change, and the complexities of human relationships against a backdrop of deep-seated prejudice.