

14. Differing Weights and Measures

In the chapter "Differing Weights and Measures" from *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store*, we meet Fatty, who is the proprietor of "Fatty's Jook," situated at the end of Pigs Alley, Chicken Hill. The establishment, alive with customers at 2 a.m., presents a stark contrast to Fatty's troubled demeanor as he contemplates a significant problem inside—Nate Timblin, who is alone at a table, drinking heavily. Fatty, troubled by Nate's actions, reflects on how Nate's growing intoxication could lead to trouble. Rusty, a friend, joins Fatty outside as they discuss Nate's drinking problem, hinting at the potential chaos it could unleash.

Fatty recalls a series of unfortunate events triggered by his reckless friends, resulting in his damaged lip and lost tooth. These led him to seek help and a fix in Philadelphia, but upon arrival, he discovers his cousin Gene is in distress after a disastrous accident involving a horse-pulled water pumper. Gene, once a thriving business owner, is incapacitated following the calamity, leaving his wife to run the dry-cleaning business while Fatty reluctantly steps in to help.

As Fatty runs Gene's laundry, he realizes he has a knack for managing multiple ventures, but he is still haunted by memories of Nate's dangerous past—a past that seems to resurface as he interacts with the man who is well-known in the community for his fierce reputation. Nate's demeanor shifts, and Fatty becomes increasingly anxious as he tries to navigate a delicate situation without sparking Nate's violent tendencies.

The chapter culminates as Fatty and Rusty help an inebriated Nate home, reflecting on Nate's quietly menacing presence. In a moment of chilling recognition, Fatty realizes that Nate's calm demeanor conceals a powerful rage, leading him to a decision; he must figure out a way to keep trouble at bay, emphasizing the urgency of helping Nate before things escalate. They discuss a cryptic statement from Nate about "differing weights and measures," hinting at the deeper implications of fairness and justice that resonate throughout their lives as they confront their turbulent realities. The chapter closes with Fatty determined to save Nate from himself and the authorities, alluding to the potential repercussions that loom on the horizon.