

16. The Visit

Chona lay comatose in a private hospital room, courtesy of a wealthy theater owner from Philadelphia who sought exclusivity, much to the irritation of the nurses. These staff members eyed Chona and her nursemaid with suspicion, as they were not accustomed to such patients on their floor—particularly not with a mix of wealthy Jews and numerous Negroes visiting. For four days, Chona remained unresponsive, albeit Addie sensed a flicker of life within her. She confided this feeling to Moshe when he arrived with Nate, both of whom looked exhausted after performing "Hamlet" with a Yiddish theater troupe.

As Moshe sat quietly by Chona's bedside, Addie observed her friend's recurrent mumblings in the morning, reminiscent of a prayer or hymn from her Jewish faith. After some cautious conversation outside the room, Addie and Nate discussed the woeful situation surrounding Doc Roberts, who was under scrutiny for alleged misconduct but was backed by the hospital's white staff. Nate discouraged Addie from breaking her silence about what she saw, insisting it was "white folks' business."

The conversation shifted to Nate's son, Dodo, who had been placed in a facility far from their reach. Addie pushed for action, believing they should seek help from Moshe or even Reverend Spriggs, but Nate was dubious of their effectiveness. With Addie's insistence and emotional support, she urged Nate to visit Dodo, suggesting he pick up some supplies for their son. As they shared their burdens amidst the stark realities of racial injustice and personal anguish, Nate felt the pressure of uncertainty and anger. Yet, Addie's comforting presence reminded him of their enduring bond, even as he struggled to confront the system that kept them down. Ultimately, Nate hesitated but committed to thinking about his visit to Dodo, indicating a glimmer of hope amidst their turmoil.