

## 2. A Bad Sign

In the chapter titled "A Bad Sign," the narrative begins forty-seven years prior to the discovery of a skeleton on Chicken Hill with Moshe Ludlow, a Jewish theater manager in Pottstown, Pennsylvania. One Monday in February, Moshe reflects on his remarkable experiences in his small All-American Dance Hall and Theater, particularly a memorable concert featuring Mickey Katz, a famous klezmer musician. Despite harsh weather conditions, he successfully drew an enthusiastic crowd.

The chapter sketches Moshe's efforts to entertain his diverse audience, including a mix of Jewish communities from various backgrounds, as they gathered for Katz's performance. The excitement surrounding the event is palpable, yet rife with complications. Miscommunications with congregations and poorly translated flyers result in chaos regarding ticket sales, leaving Moshe financially strapped as he endeavors to save his failing theater.

Amidst his troubles, Moshe finds solace in a friendship with Chona, the daughter of a local rabbi who is physically challenged. Chona inspires Moshe, and through their shared studies of Hebrew texts, a bond forms, leading to Moshe proposing marriage. Their union represents a turning point in Moshe's life.

After the wedding, motivated by love and renewed hope, Moshe successfully rediscovers his footing in the community. With proper marketing this time, Katz's concert exceeds expectations, transforming into a joyous celebration of Jewish culture filled with music and laughter. The event culminates in the theater being packed to capacity, generating excitement and revenue, thereby rescuing Moshe's financial woes.

As the festivities wind down, Moshe encounters the mysterious Hasidic dancer from the concert, who quickly departs without revealing his name. In the last moments, a sudden explosion from Chicken Hill raises alarm, signaling potential trouble ahead, leaving Moshe pondering the significance of this "bad sign." This chapter intertwines themes of resilience, cultural celebration, and the unpredictable nature of fate.