

25. The Deal

In Chapter 25, titled "The Deal," the narrative unfolds in Philadelphia at the Blitz Theater, where a blonde secretary mistakes Marvin Skrupskelis for a union man. Marvin, a middle-aged Jewish man in overalls, is indeed seeking Mr. Isaac Moskowitz without an appointment, leading to a first impression of brusqueness. When Moskowitz meets him, he briskly engages Marvin, revealing a tense but functional relationship between the two.

As they drive through Broad Street in Isaac's heavy Packard, they exchange banter. Marvin's demeanor is condescendingly audacious, joking about Romanian theater owners and their obscure knowledge, while Isaac remains pragmatic and serious throughout the dialogue. The conversation further delves into community politics, where Marvin expresses concerns regarding Moshe, Isaac's cousin, indicating a connection to the struggles within their shared cultural context.

Marvin discusses Gus Plitzka, a figure in Pottstown who wields considerable power, handling local governance and engaging in shady dealings. The tension escalates as Marvin implies that Plitzka might be vulnerable due to his questionable access to water supplies—a vulnerability that Marvin sees as a leverage point against Plitzka's influence, thus linking this to a broader narrative of justice and survival for their community.

Isaac, however, appears unenthusiastic about direct confrontation and prefers to navigate these issues quietly. He acknowledges the complexity of community ties and the pitfalls of involving authorities. Marvin's request for help is met with skepticism, yet both men are entwined in a narrative of loyalty and survival common within their Jewish heritage.

The chapter culminates with a specific request from Isaac: he needs two union men to assist in a covert operation involving the release of a child from the Pennhurst institution. Despite the underlying tension, their camaraderie reveals the essence of their negotiations—balancing principle with practicality in a challenging environment. They conclude with an understanding that both men must operate within the community's intricacies while hinting at deeper, unresolved tensions related to their past, family, and identity .