

3. Twelve

In the chapter titled "Twelve" from "Heaven & Earth Grocery Store," Moshe, buoyed by recent successes and his marriage, interacts with Nate, who is dismantling the theater's facade. Their conversation reveals deep-seated struggles in the community, particularly the diminished opportunities for Black patrons seeking entertainment. Moshe, inspired by Nate's experiences, contemplates opening the theater to Black performers, despite apprehensions voiced by his wife, Chona.

Chona embodies a spirited American character, blending joy with a refusal to accept societal limitations, advocating inclusivity. She dismisses any concerns about racial reactions, emphasizing the value of everyone's money. Encouraged by Chona's optimism, Moshe organizes a performance by Chick Webb, attracting a lively audience of Pottstown's Black residents, signaling both a cultural transformation and personal prosperity. The concert marks a turning point, with the previously subdued patrons embracing the music and dancing exuberantly, underscoring their social exclusion in town.

As the theater flourishes, the escalating backlash from rival theater owners emerges, laced with racism. Moshe faces various accusations and fines but cleverly navigates these challenges through bribery and shrewd business deals. This success allows him to buy his theater outright and expand, improving his family's standard of living.

Chona's love for her community is portrayed as she remains dedicated to the grocery store, valuing her neighbors. As the Jewish community shifts out of Chicken Hill, Moshe impulsively pushes for relocation to a more affluent area, believing it will yield better financial returns. However, Chona stands firm, drawing on her emotional ties to the community and her past, refusing to abandon their roots.

Simultaneously, Moshe wrestles with superstitions linked to his visions of "Moses" and finds himself conflicted between his traditions and new American ideals, unaware that meaningful connections and shared roots may outweigh purely financial aspirations. As Chona's health deteriorates unexpectedly, Moshe's fears resurface, reflecting on the consequences of their life choices and the community's collective bond.