

4. Dodo

In this chapter, we are introduced to Addie Timblin, an elderly black woman who anxiously awaits her husband Nate outside their home in Chicken Hill, Pottstown. Inside, a meeting of the Pottstown Association of Negro Men unfolds, where the men engage in card games and gossip rather than addressing serious community issues. Their discussions reveal the struggles faced by the black community for better jobs and infrastructure.

As the conversation shifts to a woman named Miss Chona, who is dying, Addie expresses her disbelief in the necessity of traditional death customs proposed by Snooks, a self-proclaimed reverend. The men joke and banter about religion and cultural superstitions, but Addie remains skeptical of their frivolous antics, reflecting on the hypocrisy of the men who owe Miss Chona money but pretend to care for her.

Meanwhile, Nate arrives, and tensions rise as Addie informs him about Dodo, a deaf twelve-year-old boy who has reportedly gone missing. The community's concern deepens as it becomes clear that Dodo might have ridden a freight train to Philadelphia. When Addie reveals that the boys who found him had no means to call for help, Nate's frustration mounts.

Annoyed by the men's idle chatter at the meeting and their dismissive attitude towards real issues, Addie steps outside. She then worries over Dodo's safety and implies the men's inaction could lead to dire consequences. Nate, resolute, decides to search for Dodo.

The narrative shifts to Nate's search, illustrating his deep connection to the land and the people of Chicken Hill. He finds Dodo by the creek, where the boy is trying to build something with rocks. Their interaction reveals Dodo's innocence and his struggles with loss, as he presents a note regarding his deceased mother. Nate comforts Dodo, affirming the boy's worth and resilience while dismissing the significance of the note. The chapter encapsulates the challenges faced by the black community, the resilience of its members, and the sometimes humorous, yet heavy, dynamics of their relationships.