

## 5. The Stranger

In the early hours of the morning, Moshe is awakened by a knocking at the door while he sits beside his ill wife Chona, who is resting in bed. His anxiety about her health is palpable but is disrupted when Addie informs him of a visitor — a man who has bought Mr. Fabicelli's bakery. She describes him as wanting to discuss "hollers," a term Moshe mishears as odd.

Frustrated by the disturbance, Moshe urges Addie to send the man away, yet she insists he is persistent and has visited multiple times. Moshe wrestles with his feelings of helplessness, reminiscing about how Chona and Addie have always taken care of him, leaving him unaccustomed to the role of decision-maker. His hesitation manifests as he contemplates what he would do if Chona were to wake while he's downstairs.

He decides to confront the man, who turns out to be small and stout, adorned with a thin mustache and impish eyes. Their initial interaction is combative, as Moshe firmly tells the man to leave, but the stranger insists he's in need of flour for making challah bread. The situation escalates physically when Moshe attempts to close the door, but the man holds it open. As tensions rise, Moshe feels an overwhelming sense of fatigue and helplessness, possibly wishing for backup from friends or family.

The stranger persists, revealing his identity as a dancer and boldly claiming that Moshe had suggested he should attend a dance. As the man insists on taking flour, Moshe attempts to turn the conversation to what he considers his pride — his wife's health. The stranger eventually extends an offer of friendship, affirming that he has found a wife, causing Moshe to divert to the lack of concern he has for the man's personal pursuits amidst his own struggles.

As Moshe recalls their first encounter at his theater, he recognizes the dancer as Malachi, bringing back warm memories of their shared history. This sets the stage for a potential connection and rebuilding of camaraderie rooted in shared experiences and the cultural ties of their Jewish heritage .