

6. Challah

Chona's recovery from fever was gradual but encouraging. After a week, she began to regain her abilities, and with support from Addie, she expressed a strong desire to return to the store. Moshe was elated at her progress, crediting Malachi, a baker from the theater, for his daily delivery of challah, which he believed was instrumental in her healing.

Malachi, wearing his usual tattered outfit, delivered his bread proudly. Despite Moshe's dislike for challah, preferring typical white bread and sandwiches, he felt an inexplicable charm towards Malachi and accepted the bread, though his attempt to taste it ended in disgust. He managed to compliment Malachi to avoid upsetting him and discreetly discarded the bread to a dog that had troubled him in the past. Surprisingly, after this incident, the dog stopped bothering him.

Moshe noted that despite Malachi's lack of baking finesse and chaotic lifestyle, he had a unique charm and enthusiasm that brought light into Moshe's life. As they spent time together, Moshe realized they shared a bond forged through their similar immigrant experiences.

With few friends left in Chicken Hill, Moshe valued his friendship with Malachi, contrasting it with his relationship with Nate, a Black man, where societal barriers lingered. Moshe felt proud to be American, despite the struggles minorities faced in finding acceptance. He gifted Malachi a mezuzah pendant, signifying welcome, but Malachi insisted it be given to Chona instead, reveling in his Jewish roots and practices.

Their discussions often led to differing views about tradition and modern American life. Malachi, while proud of his past, struggled with his new reality and often expressed disdain for American ways. He offered thoughts on religion, emphasizing intention over formality, while failing to fully reveal details about his own life's context, creating a divide Moshe found intriguing yet frustrating.

Malachi's bakery, however, struggled. Despite his efforts and self-teaching, he produced subpar baked goods. This reality forced Moshe to confront the failure of Malachi's business, culminating in their conversations about baking, tradition, and the intertwined journeys of immigrants navigating their new lives in America. As Malachi decided to close his bakery, revealing the need for change, he left an impression on Moshe that lingered long after their paths diverged .