

Epilogue: The Call Out

In the epilogue of *The Heaven & Earth Grocery Store*, the Koffler brothers, Hirshel and Yigel, find themselves adjusting to their new life in America. As Jewish refugees from Austria, their fresh start is marked by their work as brakemen on the Pennsylvania Railroad's freight train, the Tanker Toad, which transports coal from Berwyn to the Pennhurst hospital. The year is 1936, and on Memorial Day weekend, they encounter a perplexing scene. A tall, lanky African American man holds a crying child in their freight car. The brothers, still adjusting to their unfamiliar surroundings—new language, new foods, and the industrial setting—find this moment strange and out of place.

Under the direction of their union boss, Uri Guzinski, the Koffler brothers are instructed not to engage with the man but to escort him and the child to Berwyn. Once they arrive at the freight yard, two well-dressed African Americans meet them, accepting the child and handing over an envelope with forty dollars and a note for free shoes. This gesture, while surprising, reveals a sense of community and support that transcends barriers of race and culture. The brothers, still new to the complex social networks of their environment, are left to ponder the meaning of the exchange. This moment is a reflection of the kindness and solidarity that exists in unexpected places and how people from different backgrounds can come together to offer support. The gesture not only speaks to the direct kindness of the men who handed the brothers the envelope but also to the broader network of solidarity and community within which these connections were made.

The narrative then takes a poignant turn, focusing on Dodo, the young boy from the train, and his new life in Charleston, South Carolina. Taken in by Nate Love, Dodo is given the opportunity to escape the torment of Pennhurst, finding a new path away from the horrors of his past. Nate Love helps Dodo grow into adulthood, teaching him

the skills of farming and community life. As time passes, Dodo begins to forget the trauma of his early years, finding comfort in the stability and warmth of his new life. Nate, who has made peace with the fact that he will never see Addie again, embodies a deep sense of hope for Dodo's future. Despite the loss and sorrow that weighs on his heart, Nate's encouragement fuels Dodo's personal growth. Nate's role in Dodo's life reflects the power of second chances, even in the wake of great loss.

As Dodo matures into a man, marries, and has children of his own, he builds a legacy in the South. Yet, despite the joy of his new family, he is haunted by a memory of the woman with shining hair, the one who offered him kindness when he was at his lowest. This memory, though fading over time, represents the pivotal moment in Dodo's life when love and care allowed him to rebuild. Eventually, Dodo adopts the name Nate Love II, continuing the legacy of his mentor and father figure. As Dodo reaches the end of his life, he reflects on his journey, filled with both joy and sorrow. In his final moments, he speaks the words, "Thank you, Monkey Pants," leaving behind a cryptic message that suggests a lasting bond formed with the woman who helped him. These words encapsulate the enduring nature of human connections, emphasizing how the kindness we experience can resonate throughout our lives, even as time and distance try to diminish its impact. Through Dodo's journey, readers are reminded of the powerful, unspoken ties that bind people together across generations, offering a glimpse into the emotional depth of shared experiences and the legacies we leave behind.