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In this chapter of "The Catcher in the Rye," Holden Caulfield recounts a late-night cab ride in New York City, characterized by a haunting silence and an overwhelming sense of loneliness. The cab, an old and unpleasant one, brings him to reflect on the lack of companionship around him, despite it being a Saturday night. Holden's mind drifts to his younger sister, Phoebe, whom he wishes he could talk to.

During the ride, he engages the cab driver, Horwitz, in a conversation about the ducks in Central Park. This query sparks a somewhat tense dialogue, as Horwitz appears irritated by Holden's questions about the ducks' winter migration. Despite the conversation's tone fluctuating between inquisitive and confrontational, it reveals Holden's underlying concerns about change and stability in his life.

After arriving at Ernie's, a bustling nightclub, Holden observes the crowd, mostly comprised of pretentious college students and snobbish patrons. Ernie, the piano player, entertains the audience with an overly showy performance, prompting Holden's disdain for the superficiality he perceives in the applause that follows. The environment fuels his feelings of alienation, leading him to feel increasingly out of place.

Seated at a cramped table, Holden eavesdrops on the conversations around him, finding them both dull and irritating. On one side is a couple engaging in mundane football talk, while on the other, a self-important Ivy League student tells a horrific story about a friend's suicide attempt, all while trying to impress his date. Feeling disconnected and self-conscious, Holden attempts to reach out to Ernie for company but finds his efforts thwarted.

His night takes a turn when he runs into Lillian Simmons, a girl who previously dated his brother D.B. Their encounter is shallow and insincere, filled with forced pleasantries and empty banter. Ultimately, Holden's discomfort leads him to leave the nightclub early, illustrating his ongoing struggle with alienation and the superficiality he sees in the world around him.