

Chapter 22

In this chapter, the narrative presents a vivid and playful perspective of a baby buffalo at the Elmwood Park Zoo, which inadvertently sets up the context for an encounter with a young boy named Jeffrey Magee. The baby buffalo experiences daily life at the zoo, enjoying mother's milk and getting familiarized with a peculiar creature—Jeffrey—who begins to appear in its environment. Each morning unfolds with the buffalo anticipating the sight of Jeffrey, who, unlike its mother, offers carrots. Their interactions consist of nuzzling, but one day, Jeffrey falls and falls silent, prompting a concerned old man to come across the scene.

The old man is startled to find the injured boy near the buffalo pen and quickly takes action, lifting Jeffrey into his pickup truck. Although he knows he should seek medical help, the old man instinctively drives back to the band shell, where he carefully lays Jeffrey in a storage room filled with baseball equipment. He takes off his jacket to cover Jeffrey, who is breathing but barely conscious. The touching moment unfolds as old man Grayson experiences the gentle, yet unfamiliar sensations of caring for a child. Jeffrey regains some awareness and asks where he is, leading to a brief introduction between the two.

As Grayson prepares some food for Jeffrey, they engage in conversation. Jeffrey shares how he got his scrapes from hiding in the woods, which was a response to some "Wds." Asking for a favor, Jeffrey requests Grayson to get him some butterscotch Krimpets, expressing a childlike enthusiasm despite his situation. In a moment of curiosity, Grayson asks Jeffrey about his living arrangements, learning that he is displaced and used to live on Sycamore Street. The exchange reveals their bond deepening as they share a laugh over Jeffrey's buffalo-like smell, leading Grayson to humorously relent and agree to fetch the requested Krimpets. This chapter serves as a pivotal moment of connection between the two characters amid their respective struggles.