

Chapter Twenty-six

In Chapter Twenty-Six of "The Chocolate War," Jerry finds himself unexpectedly making a phone call that spirals into an uncomfortable and enlightening encounter. He's captivated by a voice he believes belongs to Ellen Barrett, the girl he often sees at the bus stop. His excitement quickly turns to jealousy when she inquires about a "Danny," making Jerry feel like an outsider in the conversation. Although he's drawn to her, he fumbles to explain who he is, only to be met with skepticism and a hint of mockery from her.

Feeling frustrated and rejected, Jerry grapples with his emotions as he wishes to convey his admiration but recognizes the absurdity of calling her based solely on a smile. When Ellen expresses annoyance and accuses him of trying to prank her, he decides to hang up, the ringing in his ears filled with the harsh word "crap," which shatters his idealized image of her. This encounter leads Jerry to reflect on his actions regarding the chocolate sale. He acknowledges the risk he took by refusing to sell them despite the pressures from Archie Costello and The Vigils, realizing this defiance fills him with a sense of exhilaration.

Despite the disappointment of the phone call, there's a liberation in his conviction. Jerry feels buoyant, as if he's burned his bridges and for the first time, he embraces the chaos of his choices. Upon returning home, he seeks solace in the kitchen with ice cream, affirming his name and stance against selling chocolates aloud to the empty apartment. His declaration resonates deeply within him, symbolizing a newfound strength and resolve amid his struggles and the turmoil surrounding him, encapsulating a pivotal moment of self-assertion.