

Chapter Twenty-three

In Chapter 23 of "The Chocolate War," Jerry and Goober are making their way to the bus stop on a Wednesday, a day without football practice. Jerry is excited because he hopes to see a girl named Ellen Barrett, who he finds beautiful and has smiled at him previously. However, Goober, unexpectedly serious, announces that he is quitting the football team, which confuses Jerry, as he believed Goober enjoyed the sport.

As they run to the bus stop, Goober struggles to explain his decision, hesitant to discuss the underlying connection to recent events. Their conversation shifts to Brother Eugene, who has supposedly gone on sick leave after the destruction of Room Nineteen, which deeply impacted both the boys but more so Goober, who reflects on the cruelty he witnessed and endured at school.

Jerry, trying to understand and keep pace with their conversation, questions Goober about the connection between Eugene's departure and his quitting football. Goober struggles to articulate his feelings, sensing something is fundamentally wrong at their school. He mentions "evil" and "the Vigils," referencing a group that has contributed to the toxic atmosphere. Despite Jerry's attempts to downplay the seriousness of their situation, Goober insists that the experiences they have gone through, including the emotional toll of these school incidents, are not merely games.

They share a silent moment, both grappling with the weight of their feelings. Goober ultimately asks Jerry to sell the chocolates, a symbol of the pressures they face at Trinity, while Jerry suggests Goober reconsider playing football. Goober adamantly refuses any involvement with the school activities, indicating a desire to distance himself from the toxicity. Their conversation encapsulates a broader struggle against the injustices they face, culminating in a moment of shared sadness as they leave for the bus stop, where they arrive only to find that Ellen is not there—further emphasizing their sense of loss and isolation.