

Chapter Twenty-two

In Chapter Twenty-Two of "The Chocolate War," Brian Cochran is consumed with anxiety over the alarming drop in sales for the chocolate sale fundraiser, with yesterday marking the sharpest decline yet. His dread primarily revolves around Brother Leon, the moody and unpredictable teacher who serves as a constant source of pressure for Brian, especially considering Leon's previous criticism of his work. The task of presenting the sales totals looms over him like a dark cloud.

Despite Brian's attempts to remain steady, he feels a surge of triumph in delivering the bad news to Leon, who has been dismissive of him in the past. Leon arrives to hear the figures, his presence overwhelming and intimidating. Brian informs him that the sales figures have fallen below the previous year's totals, which significantly complicates their current quota.

Leon's sharp response—questioning Brian's mathematical skills—ignites Brian's frustration, but he suppresses any inclination to retaliate. The tense atmosphere thickens as Leon insists that Brian read off the sales figures. Brian begins by listing the names of students who met or exceeded their quotas, initially enjoying the control over the pacing of his report. However, as he progresses through the list, each drop in numbers becomes increasingly uncomfortable, culminating in the revelation that one student, Renault, sold nothing at all.

Leon uses this moment to make an ominous claim about the overall decline in sales, attributing it to what he calls a "disease" of apathy afflicting the students, suggesting Renault as the "carrier" of this malaise. The chapter captures Brian's internal turmoil as he realizes Leon's intent to scapegoat Renault for the sales decline, leading to a chilling representation of power dynamics and manipulation within the school environment. The unsettling atmosphere and Leon's fixation on Renault underscore the burgeoning conflict that has been seeded throughout the narrative.