

# Chapter 12

Chapter 12 of *The Chocolate War* is filled with a palpable sense of tension during football practice, as Coach's rising frustration with the freshmen's performance becomes increasingly evident. His voice, strained and hoarse from constant shouting, adds weight to the atmosphere, signaling just how far the freshmen fall short of his expectations. Jerry, battered from previous plays and mentally exhausted, does his best to shake off his injuries, focusing on getting through the practice. As he takes his place behind Adamo, the center, Jerry knows that the coach set up the scrimmage to test the freshmen against varsity players, but the results have been far from impressive. This failure, in turn, has intensified the coach's anger, further dampening the morale of the team. Without a moment to catch their breath, the coach immediately calls the next play, adding to the sense of urgency and disappointment. This lack of cohesion in the team is becoming evident, and the tension in the room grows as the coach pushes them forward, seemingly unconcerned with their exhaustion or lack of progress.

The next play is set up specifically to challenge Carter, a dominant varsity player, creating an opportunity for the younger athletes to be tested in real game conditions, even if the chances of succeeding are slim. This tradition, where younger players face off against established stars, is meant to give them valuable experience, but it often highlights just how outmatched they are. Jerry cannot forget the sting of his previous encounter with Carter, when he had been easily tackled, his pride wounded by the sheer strength of the varsity player. The memory of that moment lingers, serving as a painful reminder of how far Jerry still has to go to prove himself on the field. However, rather than succumbing to the humiliation, Jerry channels his determination into focusing on doing better this time around. He clings to the hope that success is just within reach, if only he can execute the next play perfectly and finally start proving his

worth to both himself and his teammates. The weight of his past mistakes drives him forward, even as the pressure mounts.

As the next play begins, Jerry's mind sharpens with a renewed sense of purpose. He calls the play with a firm voice, hoping to shake off the lingering nervousness and channel his frustration into action. His eyes scan the field and land on Goober downfield, a symbol of hope and teamwork that keeps Jerry focused on the goal. With a mix of determination and anxiety, Jerry dodges a series of obstacles in his path, concentrating fully on delivering a perfect pass to Goober. The throw is clean and accurate, and Goober catches it with precision, scoring a crucial point for the team. The moment is brief but significant, as Jerry feels a rush of elation sweep over him. For a fleeting instant, the tension in the air lifts, and the team erupts in cheers. Even Coach, though stern in his usual demeanor, offers rare praise to Jerry, acknowledging the success in the midst of a challenging practice. This moment of positive reinforcement, though small, carries significant weight in a space where criticism is more common than praise. It marks a temporary victory for Jerry, reinforcing the idea that despite the challenges, persistence can lead to moments of success.

Yet, as practice winds down and Jerry's brief joy from the play lingers, a new source of tension emerges. As he heads to his locker, exhausted but somewhat uplifted by the praise, he notices a letter taped to the door. With a sense of dread, he opens the letter, revealing that it is a summons from The Vigils, indicating another assignment awaits him. This letter, appearing just after his success on the field, brings Jerry back to the harsh reality of his life outside of sports. The contrast between the momentary triumph on the football field and the looming threat of the Vigils is stark. It underscores the constant balancing act Jerry must maintain between pursuing personal growth and facing the manipulative forces that seem to control his life at school. The letter is a stark reminder that Jerry's actions, both on the field and in his personal life, are constantly being shaped by external pressures. It leaves him questioning what's next—will he be able to continue his resistance, or will he be forced to submit to the demands placed on him? The tension between his fleeting success in football and the ongoing manipulation by The Vigils highlights the emotional complexity of Jerry's

journey, leaving him uncertain about his future choices.

