

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 of *The Chocolate War* delves into Kevin Chartier's struggles as he faces the disappointing reality of the chocolate sale fundraiser. After visiting seven houses with no success, Kevin becomes disheartened and frustrated, realizing the challenge ahead of him. In an attempt to alleviate his feelings of failure, he calls his friend Danny Arcangelo, but Danny has little better luck, managing to sell only one box to his diabetic aunt. The two friends laugh about their shared difficulties but also turn their attention to Renault, a freshman who has refused to participate in the sale altogether. Kevin begins to admire Renault's courage, feeling conflicted and wondering if the freshman's rejection of the chocolate sale is the right course of action after all.

As their conversation continues, Kevin and Danny begin to explore the deeper issue at hand: the pressure placed on them by both the school and the Vigils, a powerful group within their student body. Kevin, particularly worried about the Vigils' potential consequences, wonders how they will deal with Renault's defiance. The Vigils' influence makes it clear that those who rebel against the school's expectations, such as Renault, will likely face severe backlash. This idea becomes even more apparent when Howie Anderson, a well-regarded student, announces his refusal to sell chocolates as well. Howie's decision is made on principle, not personal reasons, and his bold move encourages Kevin to reconsider his own position. Richy Rondell, another student, supports Howie's decision and suggests they meet to declare their collective refusal of the chocolate sale, signaling the start of a wider student resistance.

This shift toward collective action reflects a growing awareness among the students of the systemic control they are under. Kevin begins to see the chocolate sale not as a simple fundraiser but as a tool of the Vigils and the school administration to impose

control on the student body. As students like Howie, Richy, and Renault take a stand, they begin to question the authority of the Vigils, a group that has manipulated students for far too long. This new awareness starts to spread, and Kevin starts to understand that their resistance is not just about refusing to sell chocolates but about reclaiming their autonomy and resisting the broader culture of control within the school.

The narrative then shifts to Archie Costello, a member of the Vigils, as he waits for Obie in the gym. Archie is keenly aware of the growing resistance and the implications of Renault's refusal to comply with the chocolate sale. Obie shares the news that Renault's defiance is becoming a serious issue, with some students believing it is a direct challenge to the Vigils' authority. Archie realizes the potential threat Renault poses to the Vigils, and the growing resistance among the students becomes even more evident. Despite some students still following the mandate to sell chocolates, the number of those questioning the task is steadily increasing. This division among the student body creates an atmosphere of uncertainty, and Archie's response to the situation will determine how the Vigils maintain control over the school.

Archie, always calculating, takes the time to think about the best course of action. Renault's refusal is a direct challenge to the Vigils' power, and Archie understands that this must be dealt with carefully. He begins to consider how best to confront Renault, knowing that his rebellion could influence other students to follow suit. Archie also realizes that the Vigils are already connected to Renault's resistance, as it was the Vigils who initially assigned him the task of selling chocolates. This complicates the situation, and Archie begins to form a plan to address Renault's actions while maintaining control. As the chapter concludes, the atmosphere is filled with tension as Archie prepares to take decisive action against Renault, fully aware of the consequences that could follow.

In this chapter, the central theme of power and resistance comes to the forefront. Renault's defiance, along with the growing support from other students, signals a turning point in the narrative. The Vigils' power is being questioned, and the students' collective resistance begins to shape the course of events. This chapter sets the stage for a larger confrontation, where the stakes are higher, and the students' defiance could have lasting consequences for the school's power structure.

