

Chapter 24

Chapter 24 of *The Chocolate War* delves deeper into the mounting tension between Archie and Brother Leon as the latter urgently calls Archie to address the failing chocolate sale. With the sale already more than halfway through, Brother Leon is increasingly frantic, as he realizes that half of the chocolates remain unsold, despite their aggressive push for sales. This troubling development pushes Leon into a state of panic, as he recognizes the financial consequences of the fundraiser's failure. Although Archie initially responds with a sense of defensiveness, questioning the true extent of the problem, he listens as Leon intensifies the conversation, making it clear that this crisis is significant. Leon accuses Archie of failing to be effective in motivating the students to sell, though, as always, Archie maintains a calm composure, almost relishing the pressure as he acknowledges Leon's relentless demeanor. This exchange reveals a deeper conflict, not just over the failing fundraiser but also over the power dynamics between the two, with Archie's ability to maintain control of the situation and his own ego at stake.

Earlier in the day, Archie had received information from Brian Cochran, Leon's bookkeeper, which served as a precursor to the growing financial issues that Leon was facing. Brian overheard a heated conversation between Leon and Brother Jacques, during which Jacques criticized Leon for mismanaging the school's finances and taking unnecessary financial risks. Specifically, Leon had used questionable funds to pay for twenty thousand boxes of chocolates, which now seemed to be part of the unfolding disaster. This information raises red flags about Leon's ability to handle not only the chocolate sale but also the broader financial stability of the school. The mention of such financial mismanagement introduces a new layer to the stakes of the situation, revealing that the failure of the chocolate sale might not just be a minor setback but a much more serious issue that could have lasting repercussions. For Archie, who is

already grappling with the fallout of the sale, this financial problem intensifies his concern, though he tries to keep his focus on finding a way to make the sale succeed.

As the conversation with Brother Leon progresses, Leon increasingly directs the blame towards Archie for the failure to secure the students' participation, especially Jerry Renault's defiance in not selling chocolates. Leon insists that Archie's failure to handle Renault properly has contributed to the situation, thus creating a division between them. Archie, however, remains unfazed and attempts to shift the focus, pointing out that the real problem lies with the exhaustion and dissatisfaction of the students. He suggests that the recurring chocolate sales have worn the students down and made them less willing to comply with the demands. However, Leon is far from convinced, growing more frustrated and demanding that Archie act quickly to resolve the situation, especially with Renault, whose defiance has become symbolic of a larger rebellion. The pressure on Archie grows as he tries to navigate the tensions, attempting to maintain control over the situation while keeping his own standing intact. The stakes escalate when Leon makes it clear that if the sale continues to fail, not only will Archie face the consequences, but the entire Vigils group could also suffer. This statement underscores the high stakes and sets the stage for the mounting tension that will unfold in the coming chapters. As Leon ends the call abruptly, Archie is left to contemplate his next steps, knowing that his ability to maintain control over the Vigils, the school, and the chocolate sale will be tested in ways he had not anticipated. This chapter emphasizes the complex web of power, influence, and manipulation that Archie navigates, setting the tone for the conflict that will unfold as he tries to steer the situation back in his favor.