

Chapter 37

Chapter 37 of *The Chocolate War* takes a tense and unsettling turn as Goober arrives at the school stadium, where he finds the atmosphere thick with chaos and tension. He had spent days in bed, torn between the guilt he felt and his hesitancy to witness Jerry's imminent humiliation in a fight against Janza. Despite his internal struggles and the disapproval from his parents, Goober reluctantly heads to the stadium, unsure of what to expect. As he enters, the scene before him feels foreign and overwhelming, with familiar faces now seeming distant and hostile. This sense of alienation deepens Goober's emotional turmoil, as he must confront the harsh reality of what is happening at his school.

As the fight begins, the atmosphere becomes charged with energy, the crowd eagerly awaiting the clash between Jerry and Janza. Carter, the one orchestrating the spectacle, explains the unsettling and unfair rules, heightening the sense of dread and anticipation in the air. The audience's excitement grows, pushing the fighters to act under intense pressure. Jerry, caught between his desire to avoid violence and the overwhelming expectations of his peers, hesitates in his actions. When he finally throws a punch, it is weak and barely grazes Janza, leading to a chorus of boos from the crowd. This moment of failure deepens Jerry's sense of isolation and conflict, as he faces the consequences of his reluctance and the harsh judgment from his peers.

The violence escalates as Janza retaliates with a brutal punch, knocking Jerry backward and forcing him to reassess his position. Despite the pain, Jerry gathers himself, waiting for an opportunity to strike back. When the moment arrives, he lands a solid hit on Janza, briefly surprising himself with the strength and adrenaline that surge through him. This moment of empowerment, however fleeting, allows Jerry to feel a temporary sense of control over the situation. It represents a shift in his mindset, showing that, despite his hesitance, Jerry is still capable of standing up for himself.

when provoked. But as the fight continues, the sense of control quickly fades, replaced by the growing violence around him.

Carter escalates the situation further by instructing Janza to deliver an illegal blow—a punch intended to incapacitate Jerry. The crowd, unaware of the violation, continues to cheer as Janza delivers brutal blows, each one landing with increasing force. Goober, horrified by the unfolding violence, begins to realize the crowd's true intentions: they are not here to watch a fight, but to see bloodshed. The audience's excitement and bloodlust feed into the chaos, turning the event into a spectacle of violence. Goober's growing sense of disgust and his recognition of the crowd's dark desires add another layer of moral complexity to the situation. He understands that the fight, manipulated by those in control, is less about justice and more about satisfying the crowd's thirst for violence.

The climax of the fight arrives as Jerry, now severely injured, collapses under the barrage of punches. In a surreal turn of events, the lights suddenly go out just as Jerry falls, plunging the stadium into complete darkness. This moment of darkness symbolizes the emotional and moral blindness that has overtaken the crowd and the situation as a whole. The sudden blackout adds to the overwhelming sense of dread, highlighting the deeper moral decay at play. As Obie watches the violence unfold, he is filled with a sense of disgust, realizing the full extent of what is happening. He looks up and notices Brother Leon overseeing the situation, suggesting that the violence may have been orchestrated or encouraged by those in power. Meanwhile, Archie moves through the chaos, dealing with the aftermath of the power failure and the ensuing panic. The final moments of the chapter leave readers with a deep sense of foreboding, showing how the manipulative forces at play have led to an irreversible and tragic outcome.