

Chapter summaries of.....

The Pigman by Paul Zindel



Chapter 1

John relates how he hates school, and used pull pranks at school such as putting firecrackers in the bathroom. He says that now that he is a sophomore, he has "given up that kid stuff," except for writing on desks. According to John, Lorraine has had a "miserable look on her face ever since the Pigman died," but she has started to become livelier and more opinionated since they started working on the memorial. He and Lorraine had a disagreement about his use of curse words in the memorial, but reached a compromise when he agreed to represent curses like this: @#\$% or 3@#\$% for "the raunchiest curse you can think of." He says he has to go because Lorraine is "panting to get at the typewriter."



Chapter 2

Lorraine, who narrates this chapter, gives us further insight into John's character. She thinks the only reason he gets away with so much bad behavior is that he is so handsome. Lorraine mentions that she and John both "have families you wouldn't believe." She reflects that teachers may have personal lives that are invisible to students. Who knows what kind of a life Miss Reillen ("the Cricket") has? When she once dropped off some papers at Miss Stewart's, another teacher's, house, she was shocked to see Miss Stewart's sick mother in a bed in the living room. "Who would want to marry a woman that keeps her sick mother in a bed in the middle of the living room?" asks Lorraine. She relates some of her mother's cruel remarks ("You're not a pretty girl, Lorraine") and mentions John's father's alcoholism. She says that John's father doesn't drink anymore because he developed "sclerosis of the liver," but John does. John distorts the truth and tells outright lies, Lorraine says. He will say anything in class to get a laugh. Lorraine says that the difference between them is that she has compassion. John has some compassion, but it is hidden deep inside of him. Lorraine relates how she and John become friends: he sat next to her on the school bus one day and started laughing. She got angry and asked him to stop, "because people will think I'm sitting with a lunatic." "I am a lunatic," he replied, and soon they were both laughing.



Chapter 3

John comments that Lorraine remembers the big words, and he remembers the action, which makes sense since she wants to be a writer and he wants to be an actor. John starts to relate how he and Lorraine met the Pigman. Sometimes they used to get together after school with two classmates that John calls "amoebae". Their names are Dennis Kobin and Norton Kelly, they make prank phone calls to strangers. They have to do this at Dennis's or Norton's house, since Lorraine's mother won't

let her have friends over, and his father ("*whom I warmly refer to as Bore*") has put a lock on the phone to prevent John from using it. John filled the keyhole with airplane glue, so now no one can use it. The idea of the "telephone marathon" was to randomly pick out a stranger's name from the phone book, with eyes closed, call that person, and try to keep him or her on the phone as long as possible. John says that he wasn't good at the telephone marathon, because he would always burst out laughing. Dennis holds the record: 2 hours and 26 minutes. John points out that, although Lorraine blames him for "all the other things," it was Lorraine who picked out Mr. Pignati's number. He would have died anyway, John concludes. "*You can't really say we murdered him. Not murdered him.*"



Chapter 4

Lorraine begins by saying that John did not emphasize enough how very disturbed Dennis and Norton are. Norton, especially, "*has eyes like a mean mouse*," and is a social outcast. Everyone calls him "The Marshmallow Kid," because he got caught stealing a bag of marshmallows from the grocery store. Lorraine continues the story of how they met the Pigman. One day, playing the telephone marathon game, Lorraine cheats by peeking through her fingers and choosing a street address in her neighborhood. This is Mr. Pignati's number. He stays on the phone with her for a long time, telling corny jokes, such as: "*What is the best get-well card to get? Four aces!*" It is clear to Lorraine that he is very lonely. Lorraine tells him that she is collecting money for "the L and J Fund" (i.e., Lorraine and John Fund), and Mr. Pignati readily agrees to contribute \$10. Lorraine and John say they will come the next day to pick up the check.



Chapter 5

John relates how the next day, Lorraine feels guilty and doesn't want to go to Mr. Pignati's, but John convinces her to go. John hides their errand from Norton, knowing that Norton will try to steal or extort money from Mr. Pignati. A retired electrician, Mr. Pignati lives alone in an untidy house. He greets John and Lorraine at the door with a big smile, and does not seem surprised that the charity workers he is expecting are teenagers. He offers them some wine and, when they go into the kitchen, John says that Mr. Pignati's smile seems to strange that he and Lorraine are "*scared stiff*" that he might be "*a psycho with an electric carving knife who'd dismember our bodies and wouldn't get caught until our teeth clogged up the sewer or something like that.*" He tells his guests that his wife is on an extended trip to California and asks them to go to the zoo with him the next day. He writes a check for \$10, made out to cash. Before they leave, he shows them his large collection of pigs made of glass, clay, and marble, in all colors and sizes. He says that he and his wife started the collection before they were married, when he gave her a pig to remind her of him: "*Pig. Pignati. Do you get it?*"



Chapter 6

Lorraine relates how she argued with John that he should not cash the check, and they should not go to the zoo with Mr. Pignati. We finally meet Lorraine's mother in this chapter; Lorraine relates that her father left the family fifteen years earlier. When she got home, her mother began to grill her about where she was, and Lorraine lied and said that she was at drama club. The next day, when they



meet Mr. Pignati at the zoo, Lorraine thinks she sees three omens of doom: an antagonistic peanut-vender, an aggressive peacock that backs her against a wall, and a creepy child who is supposed to be looking at the bats in the bat house, but is actually looking through the glass at the people. Mr. Pignati introduces them to a large baboon, Bobo, whom he calls "*his best friend*." He feeds Bobo peanuts and talks to him as if Bobo were a child. John and a gorilla start making gorilla-noises at each other, and soon Lorraine and Mr. Pignati join in. This is the first of their wacky adventures.

Chapter 7

John relates that he and Lorraine ran into Dennis and Norton on their way to Mr. Pignati's after school, and that, to avoid telling Dennis and Norton where they were going, they ended up drinking beer with them at Masterson's tomb, a secluded part of the local cemetery. At dinner, John argues with his father about his career goal of becoming an actor. John's father calls him a "jackass," and repeatedly tells John that he should work with him. John's father "*has a seat on the Coffee Exchange*". This means that he has a stressful job buying and selling large amounts of coffee on the world market. John and his father have an argument about John's desire to "be individualistic," and his lack of interest in a business career. When John and Lorraine finally get to Mr. Pignati's, it is evening, and John is struck by how happy he is to see them. John's parents, he reflects, have never been glad to see him. Mr. Pignati invites them to explore the house and make themselves at home. Lorraine finds a picture of a young girl in a confirmation dress, and Mr. Pignati tells them that it's a picture of his wife, Conchetta. Later, John finds a bill for Conchetta Pignati's funeral.



Chapter 8

Lorraine relates how John told her about his discovery that Conchetta Pignati is dead, not in California. At home that night, Lorraine has a conversation with her mother about her mother's job as a home-care nurse for dying cancer patients. Lorraine's mother tells Lorraine about how her current patient keeps trying to touch her inappropriately. The next day, John and Lorraine meet Mr. Pignati at the Staten Island Ferry House, and take the ferry to Manhattan. Then they take the subway to Beekman's department store. At the subway station, Lorraine sees a woman talking to herself, saying "Death is coming," and Lorraine interprets this as another bad omen. At Beekman's gourmet food department, Mr. Pignati enthusiastically buys unusual items such as frogs' legs, tiger's milk, and chocolate-covered ants. He and Conchetta used to love shopping for food and cooking together. On the way to the toy department, they walk through the women's underwear department, and Mr. Pignati asks Lorraine if she would like anything. She gets stockings, intending to give them to her mother. The clerk is surprised when Lorraine insists that she needs a size eleven. In the pet department, they find three monkeys in a cage "hugging each other like crazy," and Mr. Pignati stops to talk to them for half an hour. They all buy roller skates, and Lorraine and John wear them out of the store, enjoying this moment of freedom. Lorraine concludes the chapter by reflecting that they must have looked like the "three funny little monkeys" they saw earlier.



Chapter 9

John begins the chapter with a newspaper clipping of an advice column. A mother writes to "Dear Alice" saying that she thinks it is normal for her five-year-old son to play with dolls, but her husband disagrees. John explains that he cut out the column because it reminded him of Norton, who used to play with dolls when he was younger. Kids used to tease him about it, so Norton "went berserk" around the age of ten, and tried to act like a tough guy. John has nothing but contempt for Norton: "*He is so low on the scale of human evolution he belongs back in the age of the Cro-Magnon man.*" In high school, Norton started shoplifting, and his stealing has gotten worse. John says that Norton is completely mentally unbalanced, "*the type of guy who could grow up to become a killer.*" Norton asks John if there is anything worth stealing at Mr. Pignati's house, and threatens that he and Dennis may try to break into the house. John thinks: "*I knew I'd kill Norton if he tried to hurt the old man.*"



Chapter 10

Lorraine begins the chapter by relating how her mother's suspicion of men stems from the end of her marriage to Lorraine's father. When she was pregnant with Lorraine, her doctor called to tell her that Lorraine's father had "some kind of disease" and that she should "*not let him touch her.*" Lorraine's parents got a legal separation immediately, so Lorraine has never known her father. When Lorraine and John go to Mr. Pignati's that day, he is feeling sad because Bobo wouldn't eat and is getting old. Lorraine remembers the woman in the subway saying "*Death is coming.*" John and Lorraine feel guilty for the way they met Mr. Pignati – lying to him by saying that they were charity workers and taking his money. They confess that they are not charity workers, but Mr. Pignati hardly seems to be listening. He begins to talk about his wife and how much he misses her, and then breaks down crying, finally saying: "*She's dead.*" When John unknowingly eats some chocolate-covered ants, they all laugh, and Mr. Pignati proposes a psychological game. He tells a story involving five characters: a husband, a wife, the wife's lover, a boatman, and an assassin. Mr. Pignati tells a story that ends with the adulterous wife being killed by the assassin. Lorraine and John write down the order in which each character is most responsible. This order is supposed to reveal which of five qualities (fun, love, sex, money, magic) is most important to the respondent. John's list: magic, sex, money, fun, love. Lorraine's list: magic, love, fun, sex, money. Lorraine reflects that these lists are accurate. The three of them start playing tag with their roller skates on. While Mr. Pignati is chasing John up the stairs, he has a heart attack, and goes to the hospital in an ambulance.



Chapter 11

The police and an ambulance come to take Mr. Pignati to the hospital, and John and Lorraine tell them that they are Mr. Pignati's children. Lorraine blames John for Mr. Pignati's heart attack, telling him he shouldn't have started up the stairs with Mr. Pignati following. Telling the hospital staff they are his children, they visit Mr. Pignati in the hospital. That evening, Lorraine makes dinner at Mr. Pignati's house, and she and John dress up in old evening clothes they find in a closet. John and Lorraine kiss for the first time. They drink a toast "to the Pigman."

Chapter 12

Lorraine begins the chapter by telling us about another conversation with her mother about how the men her mother cares for can't keep their hands to themselves. Lorraine and John call the hospital and find out that Mr. Pignati will not be home until Saturday at the earliest. Lorraine relates a nightmare she had about the pig room having a coffin in it. She says she should have known this dream was an omen of death. On Friday night, John decides to invite "*a few friends over for drinks.*" Lorraine thinks this is a bad idea, but cannot stop him.



Chapter 13

Lorraine calls her mother to say that she is at a friend's house doing homework. The party quickly gets out of hand and turns into a crazy bash with about forty people and a band. The guests spill drinks, drop cigarettes on rugs, and try on Conchetta's clothes, tearing them. Norton, who has not been invited, arrives. John catches him trying to steal an oscilloscope, and they fight. John, wearing roller skates, gets knocked down, and Norton goes to the pig room, where he begins breaking the pigs, looking for money. Outraged, John punches Norton several times, and Norton knocks him down again. John drunkenly wonders why the band has stopped playing, and hears Lorraine saying: "*The Pigsaw's here!*" John sees Mr. Pignati looking down at him, and then passes out.



Chapter 14

John is still unconscious. He and Lorraine are taken home in a police car. When Lorraine and the police arrive at Lorraine's, her mother slaps her several times and is very angry that Lorraine lied to her. Lorraine's mother starts to cry, Lorraine tells her about their friendship with Mr. Pignati. The next day, Lorraine and John meet outside, and John tells Lorraine that his father said that he will have to see a psychiatrist. They agree that John's father will forget about it in a day or two. They call Mr. Pignati to apologize and offer to help clean up. Mr. Pignati says that he has already cleaned up most of the mess. They suggest meeting at the zoo and, when Mr. Pignati gets there, they notice how frail and weak he is. Bobo's cage is empty, and the attendant says that he is dead. Mr. Pignati starts to shake and collapses.



Chapter 15

Lorraine has to leave the scene, to avoid trouble with her mother, but John stays with Mr. Pignati's body. He reflects on the sadness of life, and how he thinks that Lorraine doesn't understand him: "*Didn't she know how sick to my stomach it made me feel to know it's possible to end your life with only a baboon to talk to?*" After the ambulance takes Mr. Pignati's body away, John finds Lorraine near the zoo entrance. She strikes out at him, yelling, "*We murdered him!*" Lorraine calms down, and John reflects that they and Mr. Pignati had each trespassed onto each other's territory. John concludes that there is no one else to blame anymore.

