

THE PIGMAN: THE SIXTEENTH CHAPTER

What John said was true. We had trespassed. We had meddled in things that weren't ours to meddle in. When I looked back on the whole thing, I realized I hadn't just felt one thing; I had felt three very different emotions after that incident in the monkey house.

First, I felt anger. I was angry at myself, at John, and Mr. Pignati. Why did he have to die? Why did John and I even get involved in this? "We murdered him!" I had said. I blamed us. But then I thought; why did Mr. Pignati even reach out to us? He shouldn't have gotten involved. The whole thing should have ended after we'd picked up our money from him. I needed something or someone to blame everything on; but there was no one, only us. That's why I felt angry.

Then I felt sadness. Mr. Pignati was just a lonely old man; a man with no friends, no family, just a monkey. And then he had John and me. Two pathetic excuses for friends. Mr. Pignati was dead, and we were the reason. So I sat, and I cried, unsure of the future.

As I sat on that bench crying, John took my hand. It felt like someone had punched me in the gut. John was here for me. He always had been, but I'd been blind from seeing that. Gratitude was the third emotion I felt. For John, for being beside me, for gripping my hand then and there. John had cared for me, *and* for Mr. Pignati. I also want to thank Mr. Pignati. He had given John and me the greatest gifts. First, he gave us friendship; real friendship. The kind where if someone tried to hurt the other, you knew you'd kill him. He also gave us the realization that we needed each other. We had no one else. Just like Bobo and Mr. Pignati. When Bobo died, Mr. Pignati had to be with him.

I wanted someone else to blame. Someone to take all the guilt and grief off my shoulders, but there was only us. John and Lorraine. We would have to continue our lives with this memory. But no, we would not continue as though it never happened. We would never forget this. It changed us. *He* changed us. I realized I'd loved Mr. Pignati. I also loved, and still love, John. I love him in a way that I would never let him go. So, as I thought of all this, I gripped John's hand as tightly as I could, because it was the only precious thing left in this world that I was able to hold on to.

By Lizzie Schneeman

Grade 8

A NEW HOME, SOME NEW FRIENDS

No one likes moving, leaving a place that they really love. I loved my home on Jefferson. It wasn't the house I was going to miss; it was the people around it. They had become my family, and I felt like I was never going to see them again. I felt alone in the world, sitting in the smelly, old shed in the backyard of my new home on Stonebridge. Everyone I knew lived on Jefferson. Even my best friend had lived only a few blocks away. Here I had no friends. I felt all alone.

But then I heard playful shouts coming from over the fence. I hurried outside and peeked through a crack in the wobbly, old wooden fence. I saw a lively foursome scootering up and down a cracked driveway. There were two boys and two girls who looked about my age. Maybe I would have some friends after all.

The taller girl spotted me. A smile spread across her face. "Hi!" she exclaimed excitedly. She waved. "Wanna play with us?"

I nodded, thankful that she had been kind enough to ask me. It would be nice to have something to do. I bolted to my garage and dug through the pile of our bikes and helmets until I pulled out my scooter. I zoomed around the block to the driveway.

I soon learned that two of the kids were twins that were my age and were in my grade at school. They lived only a few houses away from my own. Soon, we were all great friends, and I had made another sort of family here, just like the one on Jefferson.

Today, when I think back on how lonely I had felt when I left my friends and moved, I realize that a house isn't a home until you fill it with friends. Because it is people, not houses, that contribute to the feeling of a home.

By Eliza Harris Grade 7

