

A View to a Death



1. What happens in the chapter?

The events in this chapter take place on the same day, in the evening. When Simon wakes after his fit he climbs the mountain; his mood is gloomy after his meeting with the pig's head, but he repeats his earlier words: "What else is there to do?" He climbs to where Ralph saw the beast and finds it is the rotting body of the airman. He frees the body, loosening the strings of the parachute that held it down and made it move with the wind. Simon sees the boys on the beach below and goes down in the dark to tell them the truth about the beast: that it is quite harmless.

Ralph and Piggy realise the rest of the boys have left to join Jack's feast. The temptation of meat is too great and they join them. Jack behaves like a king or god, giving orders that are obeyed immediately: "Jack, painted and garlanded, sat there like an idol." The word "garlanded" means that Jack had flowers around his neck, like an idol who is worshipped.

Ralph and Piggy are given meat and then Jack asks who is going to join his tribe. Ralph and Jack confront each other over who is the chief. The approaching storm makes Ralph's talk of shelters attractive to the boys, but Jack distracts them from their fear of thunder and lightning by starting the "Kill the pig" dance. The boys become a mindless, frenzied (crazy) mob as Simon, exhausted, crawls into the circle, trying to tell them his news, and is mistaken (or seen as a substitute) for the beast. The hysterical boys have become like a mob of wild animals and Simon is beaten and torn to death by the "tearing of teeth and claws". The next morning his small body is washed gently out to sea. (The boys do not really have claws, but the word suggests their animal-like behaviour.) During a storm that same evening the body of the airman is blown off the face of the mountain and lands on the beach. This frightens the boys, who run away into the darkness.



This chapter, which tells of Simon's death, forms the climax of the novel and is the turning point.

After this point the situation deteriorates quickly and there is open war between Jack and the other boys.