

Lord of the Flies

Novel Summary

Chapter I [Nuclear] War necessitates the evacuation of a group of British school boys ranging in age from about 5 years old to about 12 or 13. The plane crashes on a remote uninhabited island, leaving the pilot presumed dead and the plane dragged out to sea. As the first boys, Ralph and Piggy, appear on the scene, they realize that there are likely no adults anywhere around. A group of 15-30 boys finally gathers to the sound of "the conch", and elect Ralph leader.

Chapter II The boys need shelter, food, and fire, and all the boys are assigned or volunteered for the various duties. Some of them perform their duties impeccably, while others slack off. The "Littluns" begin to show fear of an unknown "beastie" and often have nightmares. Ralph insists they need fire for a rescue signal, and Jack recruits his choir members to hunt for meat. Piggy's glasses (specs) are taken from him and used as a means of starting the fire.

Chapter III Jack spends all his time running off hunting for meat, instead of keeping the fire going, as he has volunteered himself and the choir to do. Ralph begins to complain to him that he is not doing his duty, and that he and Simon are the only ones really committed to building shelters for everyone. They argue about this and Jack's obsession with finding meat, and the antagonism between them becomes evident. For the first time, Simon goes off by himself into the forest.

Chapter IV Life has become routine, and as the Littluns play together on the beach, Roger and Maurice come by and knock down their sandcastles and create trouble. Meanwhile, Ralph spots a ship far off on the horizon and realizes that the signal fire has gone out, infuriating him. Jack doesn't seem to care because he is so excited that he and his hunters have killed a pig. It becomes clear that the boys are beginning to reject Piggy, seemingly just because he is fat and an easy target for them to pick on.

Chapter V A long assembly is held to "put things straight." Ralph wants to be sure that everyone understands, "We've got to make smoke up there—or die." He talks about how things seem to be breaking up, and what the problems are and how to solve them. As the assembly ends, there is an atmosphere of dissention, yet also present are the excitement of the boys dancing around and the sounds of mock hunting, hysterical laughter and real terror coming from the beach.

Chapter VI The boys are eager for some kind of sign from adults, and as they sleep the sign appears, unnoticed by anyone. Sam & Eric (the twins known as Samneric) are given the job of keeping the fire going up on the mountain-top. As they tend to their duty, they notice the "thing" up on the mountain and mistake it for the beast. They describe what they saw to the assembly, and the Biguns decide to go on a beast hunt, leaving Piggy behind to care for the Littluns. Ralph and Jack go to explore and on their return, some of the boys are busy "rolling rocks," which angers Ralph. They should have been making smoke for the signal.

Chapter VII Ralph realizes how filthy everyone is becoming; it bothers him, but he has begun to see it as normal. A group of boys go hunting and Ralph sticks the boar with his spear. He wants to be sure that all of them are aware he has wounded the pig, a sign of his masculinity and true leadership. Soon, they are all playing a "game" of surrounding Robert, making believe he is the pig. As the chanting becomes louder, the game gets out of hand, and as Robert screams and struggles in the frenzy, the boys stab and hurt him. Later, Ralph, Jack, and Roger go up the mountain looking for the beast. Jack, who goes off on his own, returns to the other two, talking of a "bulging thing" up on the mountain. Together, they head up the mountain to find it.

Chapter VIII Jack tries to get everyone to oust Ralph and vote him as leader. When they don't, he is humiliated, gets mad, and goes off by himself, telling everyone that if they want to hunt when he does, they can come along. Ultimately some of the boys join him and they go off hunting together, returning with the prize of a sow who was mother to several piglets. They cut off her head and placed it on a "stick sharpened at both ends" as an offering to the beast. (This is the Lord of the Flies, aptly named because the flies are attracted to it; it symbolizes the allure or attraction of evil.) Jack invites anyone who is interested to a feast that night, hoping to influence them to join his tribe. Most of them go over to his side, because it is fun hunting and being savages and they will have meat. Simon "speaks" to the Lord of the Flies, and it tells him that the beast is really "a part of you."

Chapter IX Jack has now become chief of the tribe, leading by intimidation and fear. Simon goes up to the mountain-top and discovers that the beast is really a dead man in a parachute. He hurries down to tell the others and as he arrives, they "mistake" him for the beast and beat him to his death. As his body is carried out to sea, a thunderstorm ensues and the driving winds carry "the beast" out to sea, as well.

Chapter X Samneric, Ralph, and Piggy talk about Simon's death and justify it to themselves by saying that they weren't really there, that they had left early, that it was dark, that there was rain and thunder and lightning, that they were scared, there was that dance, that it was an accident.... Jack has Wilfred tied up and later beats him for reasons the reader never knows. Ralph, Piggy, Sam and Eric are now on their own, and when they return to the shelter for the night, they let the fire go out and go to sleep, later waking to the sounds of invasion. Jack and his boys steal Piggy's specs and the fire.

Chapter XI Without his glasses, Piggy is totally handicapped and they can't start a fire, so they decide to go and confront Jack. They have words and within minutes, Roger rolls a rock down the mountain, killing the blinded Piggy and smashing the conch. The twins are taken hostage and Jack's boys poke and prod them with spears to show their power. Ralph crashes through the foliage and is hidden by the forest.

Chapter XII Ralph knows that the boys will never leave him alone, so he must stay away at all costs. He stealthily approaches their camp, where the twins are on guard duty; they warn him that Jack is planning to "do him [in]." He spends the night near their camp so he can see what they are doing, and in the early morning, leaves in fear. The tribe sets off to surround Ralph, setting the island on fire and cordoning him off. Just as they are about to trap him, a Navy officer appears at his feet, and he realizes that rescue has finally arrived. He breaks down and begins to sob, soon joined by several of the others.