

Cry of the Hunters



1. What happens in the chapter?

The events in this chapter occur a short time later and the next morning. The last chapter contains the resolution of the novel, with the arrival of the English naval officer bringing rescue and an end to the conflict between Ralph and Jack and his tribe.

Ralph, bruised and cut by Jack's spear, hides in the forest. He decides to go back to Jack's beach. Moving through the forest he finds the pig's skull, hideous on its stick. "A sick fear and rage swept him" and, grabbing the stick, he knocks it to the ground. At the Castle Rock he sees that the guards are Samneric. He manages to talk to them and they warn him that he will be hunted down the next day. Shame and fear make it difficult for them to answer Ralph's question about what the tribe plans to do to Ralph, but eventually the twins admit: "They're going to do you (kill you)." They give him some meat and tell him to leave quickly. Ralph tells them he will hide in the thicket (a clump of bushes or trees) nearby.

The next morning the hunt begins. Ralph hears a twin answering Jack and realises that Samneric have given away his hiding place. Two large rocks are pushed over on to the thicket. A "savage" comes close to him and Ralph stabs him with the stick that had held the pig's skull. Then Jack sets fire to the forest to smoke Ralph out. Ralph meets another "savage" and stabs him too.

Then he runs, "with the swiftness of fear" through the burning forest, with the tribe chasing after him. He wishes he had time to think about his choices: should he climb a tree (and be trapped) or try to burst through the line of "savages" (but where would he go?). He misses Piggy, who could "talk sense" and advise him, and the "dignity" of the conch that made possible "solemn assembly for debate".

While he is hiding a "savage" sees him in the undergrowth. He screams and hits the "savage", then flees as the others come after him. In the meantime the fire is spreading quickly. He stumbles, falls and rolls on to the beach. He looks up to see a British naval officer who, from his cutter (a type of boat), saw the island on fire.

The officer looks at the filthy, wounded, boy who tells him two boys have been killed. (It seems that Ralph has forgotten the third, the littlun with the birth mark.) The officer looks at the group of painted "littlun boys" and another "littlun boy" with red hair and spectacles at his waist. He is surprised that British boys have not managed better.

Ralph weeps bitterly "for the end of innocence, the darkness of man's heart, and the fall through the air of the true, wise friend called Piggy". Rescue has come at last.