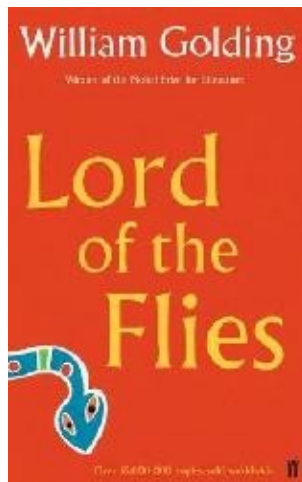


After the Island

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What happens to Jack and Ralph once they escape the island? This story is set after 'Lord of the Flies'.



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'Lord of the Flies' - Extra Chapter

Ralph looked out the window of his classroom, not quite focusing on his maths class. The teacher was explaining how to find the area of a square. *Like we'll ever need this,* he thought, *They should teach us something worthwhile.* Ralph's ordeal on the island still haunted him especially his final encounter with Jack. Ralph hadn't seen Jack since they'd left the island since Jack had tried to kill him. What would have happened to him if the officer hadn't arrived at that very moment? He shuddered at the thought. Ralph turned back to his maths book, trying to focus on the questions before him. *Question one,* he read, *If Jenny has a square patch of land with a side length of 5m, how many meters of fence does Jenny need to enclose the patch of land?* Ralph began working away at the questions, finding them more difficult than they should be, his thoughts drifting back to the island. His mind seemed incapable of thinking of anything else over the past few weeks since his return to civilisation. Everything related back to the island somehow. Every piece of fruit he ate, every rock he saw, every look he got from people, the stars in the sky and even his own family. Everything reminded him of the island in some way. He was glad to be home, but nothing could make him forget the horrors of the island.

Ralph gave up on his maths questions, and instead turned to face the window again, and immersed himself in his thoughts. He watched the playground across the street, letting his thoughts wander. Eventually they brought him back to his encounter with Mira Dorn. Ralph wasn't sure what Mira *was* exactly, other than a person that he was supposed to talk to about what happened on the island.

So Ralph, she'd begun on their first encounter, how are you? Ralph blinked. When he'd been told that he was going to see Mira for the first time, and that he could tell her about what had happened, he hadn't expected her to be like this; she looked quite young, about 25 years old, and had short, auburn hair that framed her hazel eyes, and she wore a simple, pale blue blouse with matching summer shoes and a pair of slim, black jeans. Her appearance startled him. He'd expected someone completely different older, really. He blinked again, and then opened his mouth to speak.

I'm okay he said, quietly.

You're okay? Cause if I were you, I wouldn't be okay. He blinked again. Her off-hand, casual manner was making him feel both at ease and uncomfortable. He wasn't sure whether he liked her or not, and proceeded with silence. A minute or so of awkward silence passed before Mira spoke again. You know, we can talk about something else if you like, she said softly. Do you like comic books? Ralph nodded, never taking his eyes off her. He'd become more vigilant since the island. He began to run his hand over the soft fabric of the small, tan couch he was sitting on, finding the action of it soothing. His eyes darted over the room, taking in the large, glass windows set on one side of the room, facing towards the city. Opposite the windows sat a row of bookshelves, all overflowing with books. Ralph tried to make out the titles, but could only read a few here and there. He noticed she had a rather large tower of comic books on the floor next to her shelves. Ralph looked back up at Mira, and said Yes, I do like comic books. Mira smiled, not just with her mouth, but with her eyes too, and began asking Ralph about Batman and Robin. Ralph visibly relaxed, and launched himself into conversation with Mira.

After the Island

The school bell rang for the end of the day, and Ralph was startled back into the present. He tore his eyes away from the window, packed up his maths books, shoved them into his bag and sped out of the room before anyone could say a word. He wasn't sure where he was going, but his feet led the way. He walked out of the school building, crossed the street, walked towards the playground and flung himself on the grass. Ralph waited on the grass, looking up at the perfectly blue sky, watching the clouds pass by. He sat there for about ten minutes before getting up to go to his next meeting with Mira.

As soon as he walked in the door, the wonderful smell of orange juice filled his nose. He noticed that Mira had set out two glasses and a pitcher of orange juice on the coffee-coloured table.

“Hello, Mira,” he called out, awaiting her candid reply.

“Hello Ralph,” she called back, before emerging from another room. Her appearance startled him each time he saw her. It wasn't that she was unattractive. On the contrary, Ralph thought she was beautiful.

“So, what would you like to talk about today?” she asked in her friendly, casual tone.

“I think I want to talk about the island today,” he said, softly – barely loud enough for Mira to hear. She looked at him with those sparkling eyes that made him want to hug her, and said “Okay,” before sitting down on the faded sunset-orange armchair, opposite the tan couch that Ralph had come to think of as his own. Ralph took his seat on the couch, and looked at Mira, waiting for her to say something – then he realised that she was doing the same, and so he began talking. “The island was, well, I don't know how to describe it. It was all we had, and it was terrifying, but it was also wonderful, in a way. At first, everything went smoothly – we were just a bunch of kids having fun on the beach. But then it got worse. Eating nothing but fruit all day, having nowhere to sleep – these things got to us. So we tried making up some rules and building shelters and doing things, but it just didn't work. I mean, it worked for a while, but things got out of hand.” Ralph paused, pouring himself a glass of orange juice. He sipped at it, and then downed half the glass. His hands started trembling, just a little, but he put his glass down so Mira wouldn't notice. She did.

“Are you okay to continue?” she asked, not wanting to press him into talking. Ralph nodded in response. He closed his eyes, slowly counted to four, then opened them and continued to talk.

“The littluns were scared of a beast. One of them had had a nightmare about a monster roaming the island and brought it up at our next assembly.”

“Assembly?” Mira asked, slightly cocking her head to the side in confusion.

“They voted me chief, and I held these assemblies – meetings – where we would discuss things or make new rules and decide things,” he explained patiently.

“Ah. I see,” and she did. “Please, keep going.”

“As I said, one of the littluns brought it up at assembly and Jack butted in, saying that there *was* a monster on the island, before anyone else – before I – could deny it. Naturally, when the littluns heard him say that there was a monster on the island, they all believed him. I think that eventually, we all believed him to some degree.” At this, Ralph began fidgeting with his fingers, unable to keep completely still. A tear spilled down his cheek. He didn't wipe it away, or even take notice of it. He just let the tears fall, one by one, silently down his cheeks. Mira wasn't sure what to do. She looked away, letting him have a tiny bit more privacy.

After the Island

“That’s why he was killed. They thought he was the beast,” he whispered. The sound of his voice jerked her head around back in his direction.

“Who was killed, Ralph?” she whispered back. “Who was killed?”

“They killed Simon. Jack and the Hunters killed Simon,” he whispered again. Mira was about to say something, but then he whispered, “and they almost killed me, too.” The tears wouldn’t stop running down his face, and Mira enveloped him in a hug, holding on tight and making sure he knew he was safe now. A minute or so passed before Mira pulled away. She looked him straight in the eyes, wiped a tear off his cheek, and asked if he was okay. The only reply she got was a slow nod. Ralph got up, grabbed his bag and made his way toward the door. Mira gave him another quick hug, and then he left. “That poor boy,” she thought, “I’d be a mess if I was in his place.”

Ralph made his way home, inhaling the fresh air and enjoying the sunshine that was playing on his face. He’d finally accepted Simon’s death – *murder*, in his mind – and it felt good. He was glad that he had Mira to talk to. He felt like she really listened, and she really cared. Soon enough, Ralph was standing outside his house. He slipped past the side of the house, in between the fence and the wall, and through to the back garden. He dumped his bag on the ground next to the only tree they had in the garden. He began climbing it, as far as he could go. The top of the tree was one of his favourite places to go and think. He started playing his usual game of “What if?” – *what if we didn’t believe in the beast? What if the signal fire hadn’t gone out that first time? Would Piggy and Simon still be alive? What if we didn’t split camps? What if Jack never held that feast?* – around and around in his mind. Finally, when it got too much, he started climbing down and made his way into the house.

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Jack Merridew found himself in the – he supposed it was an office – of Mira Hadley. He was pretty sure she was a psychologist, and was told that he was supposed to talk to her about the island.

“Hello, Jack,” she said as she sat down in the armchair, opposite Jack. Jack looked around, not trusting Mira. He thought she was too friendly, too smiley and too, well, nice. He looked at the ceiling, the floor, the bookshelves, and the city view from the window – anywhere but at Mira. After he’d explored every corner of the room, he turned and looked at Mira for the first time – *properly* looked at her. He was surprised at how soft her eyes looked, and how trusting she seemed to be. “Come off it, Jack,” he thought, “she’s just trying to get you to talk. She wants you to tell her about Simon. Like that’ll happen.” Jack sat there in stony silence, refusing to say a word. “Would you like some orange juice, Jack?” she asked. He nodded in reply. “At least he’s acknowledged my existence,” she thought as she got up to get the orange juice. While she was gone, Jack used the opportunity to keep looking around the room for anything that might let him know more about Mira and why she was doing this. “Why does she care about what happened on the island?” Jack kept asking himself this question, unable to find an answer. Mira came back with the orange juice, and Jack found himself watching her. As she poured the orange juice, her eyes flickered over to Jack, then back to the orange juice. She wasn’t sure how to go about getting Jack to talk. She was convinced that he didn’t intend to talk about the island, much less what happened to Simon. As soon as she handed him the glass of orange juice and sat down, much to her surprise, Jack began to talk.

After the Island

“Look, I don’t know why you’re doing this. Why should you care about what happened while I was on the island? I don’t want to be here, but I’m being forced to. I don’t see why you need to know about the island, but I’ll tell you about it on one condition.”

“What’s that?” asked Mira, quite curious.

“That as soon as I tell you everything, I leave here and don’t ever come back,” he asserted. Mira nodded in response.

“So Jack, where do we begin?” she asked, eager but wary of hearing about the island. Jack hesitated for a moment, not entirely convinced he was doing the right thing, but started talking anyway.

“When we crashed on the island, none of us knew where we were. We were stuck on an island with people we barely knew, and there was no way of getting off.” He explained the whole ordeal very animatedly, but distant, in a way. By the time Jack had reached the end of his story, Mira was horrified and appalled at how awful life on the island could be.

Jack got up and walked out the door without looking back. That was the last Mira ever saw of him.

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