



## CHAPTER 5

[www.bbc.co.uk/cones](http://www.bbc.co.uk/cones)

Duror goes to tell the cone-gatherers that they are to be beaters on the deer-drive Lady Runcie-Campbell has organised for her brother

Duror was silent. His triumph had become a handful of withered leaves. When he had seen the ladder, he had thought how gratifying it would be to deliver the deadly message to them in the eyrie where they fancied themselves safe. He had not anticipated this lightheadedness, this heaving of the stationary tree, this treachery of nature, this sickening of his very will to hate. He had never dreamed that he would not be able to do once only what the hunchback did several times a day. It seemed to him that he must therefore be far more ill and decayed than he had thought. He was like a tree still straight, still showing green leaves; but underground death was creeping along the roots...

...Duror had reached the ladder, but his confidence did not revive. As soon as he touched earth he staggered and had to sink down on his knees, unable to stand up against the weight of a burden of misery as crushing as the tree itself.