night. From dusk onwards they searched me out, buzzed in on me and ate me alive. There was no hiding-place. My nights were one long torture, and in the morning I would scratch myself raw in places. Some of the bites, particularly on my legs, had now swelled up and become suppurating red sores. I found relief from them only by dunking myself often in the cool of the sea.

I tried sleeping in another cave, deeper and darker, but it smelled dreadful. Once I had discovered it was full of bats, I left at once. Wherever I slept the mosquitoes found me out soon enough. It got so that I dreaded the coming of every night. I cried out aloud in my misery as I swiped and flailed at them. I longed for the mornings, for the cool of the sea and the cool of the wind on my hilltop.

Here I would spend the greater part of my day, sitting on the very summit, looking out to sea and hoping, sometimes even praying too, for the sight of a ship. I would close my eyes tight shut and pray for as long as I could, and then open them again. Every time I did it, I really felt, really believed, there was a chance my prayers would be answered, that this time I would open my eyes and see the Peggy Sue sailing back to rescue me, but always the great wide ocean was empty, the line of the horizon quite uninterrupted. I was always disappointed of course, often dejected, but not yet completely despondent, not in those early weeks.

I had severe problems, too, with sunburn. I had learned rather late that I should keep all my clothes on all the time, and I made myself a hat to keep the sun off my face and my neck. It was very broad and Chinese-looking, made of palm leaves, the edges folded into one another. I was quite pleased with my handiwork.

Sunburn, I discovered, was a discomfort I could help to prevent, and that seawater could soothe. At noon I would go down the hill to shelter in my cave from the burning heat of the afternoon sun, and then afterwards I would go swimming. This was the moment Stella longed for each day. I spent long hours throwing a stick for her. She loved it and, to be truthful, so did I. It was the highlight of our day. We’d stop only when the darkness came down – it always came down surprisingly quickly too – and drove us back once more to our cave, back to my nightly battle with my bloodsucking tormentors.