marooned on an island in the middle of nowhere, very probably with a madman for company, and a bunch of howling monkeys (at least one orang-utan amongst them) – and God knows what else might be hidden in the forest – and millions of mosquitoes that would eat me alive every night. I knew only one thing. I had to get away. But how? How was I ever going to get off the island unless I could attract the attention of some passing ship? I could be here for the rest of my life. The thought didn’t bear dwelling on.

I wondered how long the old man had been on the island, and what might have brought him here in the first place. Who was he? And who was he, anyway, to tell me what I could and could not do? And why had he put out my fire?

I curled up in my cave, closed my eyes and just wished myself back home, or back on the Peggy Sue with my mother and father. Such wonderful dreaming almost lulled me to sleep, but the mosquitoes and the howling from the forest soon dragged me back to consciousness, to face once again all the appalling implications of my wretched predicament.

It came to me suddenly that I had seen the old man’s face somewhere before. I had no idea how that could be. As I lay there pondering this, I felt the piece of glass in my pocket pressing into my hip. My spirits were suddenly lifted. I still had my fireglass. I would build my fire again, but this time somewhere he wouldn’t discover it. I would wait for a ship to come, and until then I would survive. The old man had survived in this place. If he could, I could. And I could do it alone too. I didn’t need him.

I felt hungry again and thirsty, too. Tomorrow I would go into the forest and find food for myself. I would find water. Somehow or other I would catch fish too. I was good at fishing. If I could catch them in the reservoir back home and off the Peggy Sue, then I could catch them here.

I spent that night cursing the hordes of whirring insects that were homing in on me, and the chattering forest that would not be silent, that would not let me be. I kept seeing the reservoir in my mind’s eye, and my mother laughing in her skipper’s cap. I felt tears coming and tried not to think of her. I thought of the old man. I was still trying to remember what he had said his name was when I fell asleep.