and fruit and water the old man was bringing us.

I had searched my end of the island for fresh water, but could find none. I thought often of trespassing into the old man’s part of the forest to look for it, but I dared not. For the most part, I kept close to the forest tracks.

It wasn’t only the old man’s laws nor the howling of the monkeys – which I came to understand as a warning – that prevented me from venturing into his side of the island, it was the orang-utan, too. He had seemed placid enough, but I had no idea how he or his friends might react if they found me in their territory. I kept wondering too what other creatures might lurk unseen, waiting to ambush me in the dark damp of the forest. If the constant jungle talk was anything to go by, the place was crawling with all sorts of dreadful creatures.

Just the thought of the orang-utan and the terrors of the unknown in the forest were quite enough to deter me, enough to stifle both my curiosity and my courage. So I kept largely to my beach, my cave and the forest track up to my hilltop.

From high on my hill I did catch distant glimpses of the old man. Often in the mornings I would see him spear-fishing in the shallows, sometimes alone, but often accompanied by a group of orang-utans, who sat on the beach and watched him, fourteen or fifteen of them I counted once. Occasionally he would be carrying one of the young ones on his back. When he moved amongst them, it seemed almost as if he was one of them.

Time and again I tried to stay awake until the old man came with the food at night, but I never managed it. I never even heard him, not once. But every morning the water would be there, the fish too (it often tasted smoky these days, which I liked better). The fruit would not always be the same. Much of it was strangely scented, and not at all to my liking. I ate it anyway. Besides bananas and coconut and berries, he would leave me breadfruit or jackfruit (at the time, of course, I had no idea what they were). I ate everything, but not so greedily now. I would try to save some of the fruit for an evening meal. But I could never bring myself to save the red bananas, they were just too delicious not to eat all at once.

My recurring nightmare was the mosquitoes at