



LITCRAFT

KENSZUKÉ'S KINGDOM

BOOK 1 - EXTRACTS

English Literature
and Creative Writing

Lancaster
University





Kensuke's Kingdom

SUMMARY OF RESOURCES

Copy of MAP

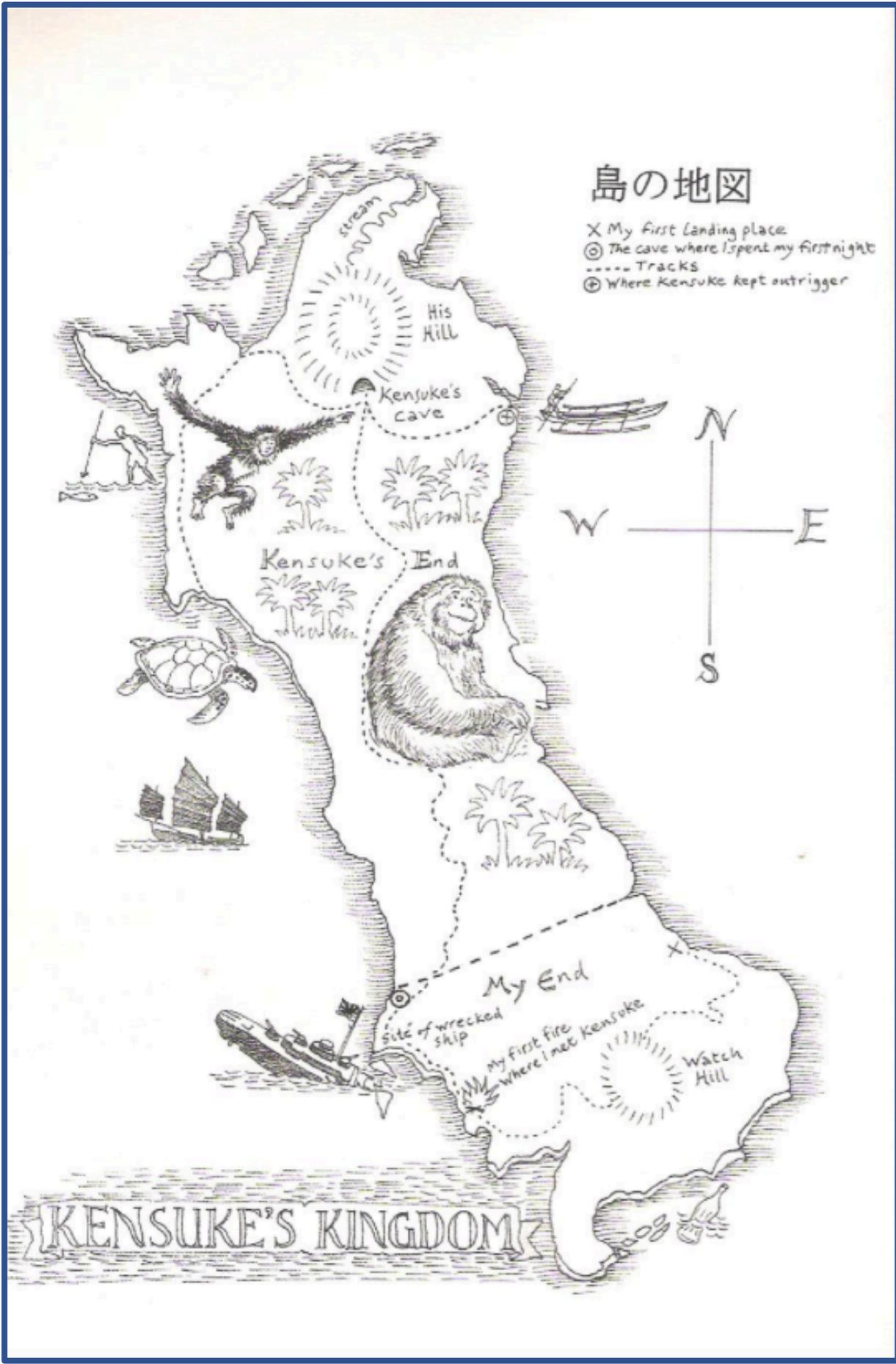
**EXTRACTS FOR USE:
IN SCHOOLS (Comprehension)
IN LIBRARIES (Pre-reading task)**

SUMMARY:

Michael and his parents set off on the “Peggy Sue” for a trip of a lifetime. However, he and the ship’s dog (Stella) are washed overboard at night and find themselves on an island. Michael receives food and water at first from an unknown hand, then warnings from a strange Japanese man who also lives on the island, Kensuke. After various adventures and miscommunications they come to know each other and exchange their stories. In the end Kensuke helps Michael to be rescued but only on condition that he does not reveal his own existence for ten years.

CHAPTERS (for whole class reading) and EXTRACTS (for shorter sessions/ libraries) in relation to In-Game Tasks

Chapter 1	Peggy Sue		
Chapter 2	Water water everywhere		
Chapter 3	Ship’s Log		
*Chapter 4	Gibbons and Ghosts	EXTRACT: p.49-54.	In-game task: FINDING
*Chapter 5	I, Kensuke	EXTRACT: p.71-72	In-game task: MAKING
Chapter 6	Abunail		
*Chapter 7	All that silence said	EXTRACT: p.108-109	In-game task: A DAY IN THE LIFE
*Chapter 8	Everyone dead	EXTRACT: p.127-130	In-game task: MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE
*Chapter 9	Night of the turtles	EXTRACT: p.141-44; 152-154	In-game task: SAVING
*Chapter 10:	Killer men come	EXTRACT p. 155-161	In-game task: ESCAPE
Postscript			



島の地図

- X My first Landing place
- ⊙ The cave where I spent my first night
- Tracks
- ⊕ Where Kensuke kept outrigger

KENSUKE'S KINGDOM

SHORT PASSAGES FOR COMPREHENSION WORK OR DISCUSSION AS HIGHLIGHTED IN THE EXTRACTS.

LIBRARIANS: Use as shortest possible way in if needed; or use to stimulate discussion ahead of the in-game task and a fuller reading of the longer extract.

FINDING

Sea. Sea. Sea. Nothing but sea on all sides. I was on an island. I was alone. The island looked perhaps two or three miles in length, no more. It was shaped a bit like an elongated peanut, but longer at one end than the other. There was a long swathe of brilliant white beach on both sides of the island, and at the far end another hill, the slopes steeper and more thickly wooded, but not so high as mine. With the exception of these twin peaks the entire island seemed to be covered with forest. So far as I could see there was no sign of any human life. Even then, as I stood there, that first morning, filled with apprehension at the terrifying implications of my dreadful situation, I remember thinking how wonderful it was, a green jewel of an island framed in white, the sea all about it a silken shimmering blue. Strangely, perhaps comforted somehow by the extraordinary beauty of the place, I was not at all down-hearted. On the contrary – I felt strangely elated. I was alive. Stella Artois was alive. We had survived.

- What are Michael's two strongest feelings in this passage? What two words sum these up?
 - Identify three geographical features of the island.
 - What kind of landscape is this?
-

MAKING

I could see at once that he was very agitated, his chin trembling, his heavily hooded eyes accusing and angry. "*Dameda! Dameda!*" he screeched at me. This whole body was shaking with fury. I backed away as he scuttled up the beach towards me, gesticulating wildly with his stick, and haranguing me as he came. Ancient and skeletal he may have been, but he was moving fast, running almost. "*Dameda! Dameda!*" I had no idea what he was saying. It sounded Chinese or Japanese, maybe.

I was about to turn and run when Stella, who, strangely, had not barked at him at all, suddenly left my side and went bounding off towards him. Her hackles were not up. She was not growling. To my astonishment she greeted him like a long lost friend.

He was no more than a few feet away from me when he stopped. We stood looking at each other in silence for a few moments. He was leaning on his stick, trying to catch his breath. "Americajin? Americajin? American? *Eikokujin*? British?"

"Yes," I said, relieved to have understood something at last. "English, I'm English."

- This is the first time that Michael and Kensuke meet face to face. How would you describe their encounter?
- What tells you how Kensuke is feeling? Pick out three words that make this clear.
- Why do Stella and Michael react so differently?

A DAY IN THE LIFE OF . . . MICHAEL

Our life together was always busy, and regular as clockwork. Up at dawn and down the track a little way to bathe in the stream where it tumbled cold and fresh out of the hillside into a great cauldron of smooth rocks. We would wash our sheets and clothes here, too (he'd made me my own kimono by now), slapping and pounding them on the rocks, before hanging them out to dry on the branch of a nearby tree. Breakfast was a thick pulpy fruit juice which seemed different every day, and bananas or coconut. I never tired of bananas, but very soon became sick of coconut. The mornings were spent either fishing in the shallows or fruit gathering in the forest. Sometimes, after a storm, we scoured the beach for more of his painting shells – only the biggest and flattest would do – or for flotsam to join the stack of wood at the back of the cave. There were two stacks, one clearly for firewood, the other, I supposed, reserved for his woodwork. Then it was home to the cave house for a lunch of raw fish (always delicious) and usually breadfruit (always bland and difficult to swallow). A short nap after lunch for both of us and then he would settle down at his table to paint. As I watched I became so engrossed that the failing light of evening always came too soon for me. We would cook a fish soup over the fire. Everything went in, heads and tails, a dozen different herbs – Kensuke wasted nothing – and there were always red bananas afterwards, all I could eat. I never went hungry. When supper was over we would sit together at the mouth of the cave and watch the last of the sun drop into the sea. Then, without a word, he'd stand up. We would bow solemnly to one another, and he would unroll his sleeping mat and leave me to mine.

- Work through the passage and pull out the main events of the day in order. Now write these down in a list with the rough times that they might happen.
 - How is it different from your day? What strikes you most about it?
-

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

I could steal the boat I thought. I could row away, I could light a fire again. But I knew even as I thought it that I could not do it. How could I ever leave Kensuke now, after all he had done for me? How could I betray his trust? I tried to put the whole idea out of my mind, and I really believe I would have too. But the very next morning, I found the plastic Coke bottle washed up on the beach, and after that the idea of escape came back and haunted me day and night, and would not leave me be.

For some days, I kept the Coke bottle buried under the sand, whilst I wrestled with my conscience or, rather, justified what I wanted to do. It wouldn't really be a betrayal, not as such, I told myself. Even if the bottle was found no one would know where to come to, they'd just know I was alive. I made up my mind I would do it, and do it as soon as I could.

- How does Michael feel in this passage?
- What does it mean to say "I wrestled with my conscience"?
- Why does Michael need to send the message in the bottle?

SAVING

When dawn came and the birds came down to scavenge, we were there to drive them off. Stella chased and barked after them, and we ran at them, shrieking, waving, hurling stones. We were not entirely successful, but most of the turtles made it down into the sea. But even here they were still not entirely safe. In spite of all our desperate efforts a few were plucked up out of the water by the birds and carried off.

By noon it was all over. Kensuke was tired as we stood ankle deep in the water watching the very last of them swim away. He put his arm on my shoulder. "They very small turtles, Micasan, but they very brave. They braver than me. They do not know what they find out there, what happen to them; but they go anyway. Very brave. Maybe they teach me good lesson. I make up my mind. When one day ship come, and we light fire, and they find us, then I go. Like turtles I go. I go with you. I go home to Japan. Maybe I find Kimi. Maybe I find Michiya. I find truth. I go with you, Micasan."

- Why does Kensuke think that the turtles are brave?
 - Why does Kensuke say that the turtles "teach me good lesson"?
 - What truth is he expecting or fearing to find when he goes home to Japan?
-

ESCAPE!

He stood up, put his hands on my shoulders, and looked me deep in the eyes. "You listen to me very good now, Micasan," he said. "I am too old for that new world you tell me about. It is very exciting world, but it is not my world. My world was Japan, long time ago. And now my world is here. I think about it for long time. If Kimi is alive, if Michiya is alive, then they think I am dead long time ago. I would be like ghost coming home. I am not same person. They not same either. And, besides, I have family here, orang-utan family. Maybe killer men come again. Who look after them then? No, I stay on my island. This is my place. This Kensuke's Kingdom. Emperor must stay in his Kingdom, look after his people. Emperor does not run away. Not honourable thing to do."

I could see there was no point in pleading or arguing or protesting. He put his forehead against mine and let me cry. "You go now," he went on, "but before you go, you promise three things. First, you paint every day of your life, so one day you be great artist like Hokusai. Second, you think of me sometime, often maybe, when you are home in England. When you look up at full moon, you think of me, and I do same for you. That way we never forget each other. Last thing you promise and very important for me. Very important you say nothing of this, nothing of me. You come here alone. You alone here in this place, you understand? I not here. After ten years, you say what you like. All that left of me then is bones. It not matter any more then. I want no one come looking for me. I stay here. I live life in peace. No people. People come, no peace. You understand? You keep secret for me, Mica? You promise?"

"I promise," I said.

- Do you think Kensuke makes the right decision? Why? Why not?
- What does Michael's response tell you about his character?
- What three things does Kensuke ask Michael to promise? What does each promise do?

-- FULL PASSAGES --

FINDING

Chapter 4 Gibbons and Ghosts EXTRACT: p.49-54.

I was woken by a howling, like the howling of a gale through the masts. I looked about me. There were no masts above me, there were no sails. No movement under me either, no breath of wind. Stella Artois was barking, but some way off. I was not on a boat at all, but lying stretched out on sand. The howling became a screaming, a fearful crescendo of screeching that died away in its own echoes.

I sat up. I was on a beach, a broad white sweep of sand, with trees growing thick and lush behind me right down to the beach. Then I saw Stella prancing about in the shallows. I called her and she came bounding up out of the sea to greet me, her tail circling wildly. When all the leaping and licking and hugging were done, I struggled to my feet.

I was weak all over. I looked all about me. The wide blue sea was as empty as the cloudless sky above. No *Peggy Sue*. No boat. Nothing. No one. I called again and again for my mother and my father. I called until the tears came and I could call no more, until I knew there was no point. I stood there for some time trying to work out how I had got here, how it was that I'd survived. I had such confused memories, of being picked up, of being on board the *Peggy Sue*. But I knew now I couldn't have been. I must have dreamed it, dreamed the whole thing. I must have clung to my football and kept myself afloat until I was washed up. I thought of my football then, but it was nowhere to be seen. . . .

From where I now stood I could see that the forest grew more sparsely up the side of a great hill some way inland, and it occurred to me then that if I could reach the bare rocky outcrop at the summit, I would be able to see further out to sea. Or perhaps there'd be some house or farm further inland, or maybe a road, and I could find someone to help. But if I left the beach and they came back looking for me, what then? I decided I would have to take that chance.

I set off at a run, Stella Artois at my heels, and soon found myself in the cooling shade of the forest. I discovered a narrow track going uphill, in the right direction, I thought. So I followed it, only slowing to a walk when the hill became too steep. The forest was alive with creatures. Birds cackled and screeched high above me, and always the howling wailed and wafted through the trees, but more distantly now. . .

What had seemed at first to be a short hike now felt more like a great expedition into the interior. We emerged exhausted from the trees, clambered laboriously up a rocky scree and stood at long last on the peak.

The sun was blazing down. I had not really felt the burning heat of it until then. I scanned the horizon. If there was a sail somewhere out there in the haze, I could not see it. And then it came to me that even if I were to see a sail, what could I do? I couldn't light a fire. I had no matches. I knew about cavemen rubbing sticks together, but I had never tried it. I looked all round me now.

Sea. Sea. Sea. Nothing but sea on all sides. I was on an island. I was alone.

The island looked perhaps two or three miles in length, no more. It was shaped a bit like an elongated peanut, but longer at one end than the other. There was a long swathe of brilliant white beach on both sides of the island, and at the far end another hill, the slopes steeper and more thickly wooded, but not so high as mine. With the exception of these twin peaks the entire island seemed to be covered with forest. So far as I could see there was no sign of any human life. Even then, as I stood there, that first morning, filled with apprehension at the terrifying implications of my dreadful situation, I remember thinking how wonderful it was, a green jewel of an island framed in white, the sea all about it a silken shimmering blue. Strangely, perhaps comforted somehow by the extraordinary beauty of the place, I was not at all down-hearted. On the contrary – I felt strangely elated. I was alive. Stella Artois was alive. We had survived.

MAKING

Chapter 5 I, Kensuke

EXTRACT: p.71-72

He was diminutive, no taller than me, and as old a man as I had ever seen. He wore nothing but a pair of tattered breeches bunched at the waist, and there was a large knife in his belt. He was thin, too. In places – under his arms, round his neck and his midriff – his copper brown skin lay in folds about him, almost as if he'd shrunk inside it. What little hair he had on his head and his chin was long and wispy and white.

I could see at once that he was very agitated, his chin trembling, his heavily hooded eyes accusing and angry. "Dameda! Dameda!" he screeched at me. This whole body was shaking with fury. I backed away as he scuttled up the beach towards me, gesticulating wildly with his stick, and haranguing me as he came. Ancient and skeletal he may have been, but he was moving fast, running almost. "Dameda! Dameda!" I had no idea what he was saying. It sounded Chinese or Japanese, maybe.

I was about to turn and run when Stella, who, strangely, had not barked at him at all, suddenly left my side and went bounding off towards him. Her hackles were not up. She was not growling. To my astonishment she greeted him like a long lost friend.

He was no more than a few feet away from me when he stopped. We stood looking at each other in silence for a few moments. He was leaning on his stick, trying to catch his breath. "Americajin? Americajin? American? *Eikokujin*? British?"

"Yes," I said, relieved to have understood something at last. "English, I'm English."

It seemed a struggle for him to get the words out. "No good. Fire, no good. You understand? No fire." He seemed less angry now.

"But my mother, my father, they might see it, see the smoke." It was plain he didn't understand me. So I pointed out to sea, by way of explanation. "Out there. They're out there. They'll see the fire. They'll come and fetch me."

Instantly he became aggressive again. "Dameda!" he shrieked, waving his stick at me. "No fire!" I thought for a moment he was going to attack me, but he did not. Instead he began to rake through the sand at my feet with his stick. He was drawing the outline of something, jabbering incomprehensibly all the time. It looked like some kind of a fruit at first, a nut perhaps, a peanut. Now I understood. It was a map of the island. When it was done he fell on his knees beside it, and piled up mounds of sand, one at each end – the two hills. Then, very deliberately, he etched out a straight line, top to bottom, cutting the smaller end of the island off from the larger one.

"You, boy. You here," he said, pointing back towards my cave at the end of the beach. "You." And he stabbed his finger in the mound of sand that was my hill. Then across the whole of the sand map he began to write something. The lettering was not letters at all, but symbols – all kinds of ticks and pyramids and crosses and horizontal lines and slashes and squiggles – and he wrote it all backwards, in columns, from right to left.

He sat back on his haunches and tapped his chest. "Kensuke. I, Kensuke. My island." And he brought his hand down sharply like a chopper, separating the island in two. "I, Kensuke. Here. You, boy. Here." I was already in no doubt as to what he meant. Suddenly he was on his feet again waving me away with his stick. "Go, boy. No fire. *Dameda*. No fire. You understand?"

I did not argue, but walked away at once. When, after a while, I dared to look back, he was kneeling down beside what was left of my fire, and scooping still more sand on to it. Stella had stayed with him. I whistled for her. She came, but not at once. I could see she was reluctant to leave him. She was behaving very oddly. Stella Artois had never taken kindly to strangers, never. I felt disappointed in her, a bit betrayed, even.

When I next looked back, the fire was not smoking at all. It had been completely smothered, and the old man was nowhere to be seen.

A DAY IN THE LIFE

Chapter 7 All that silence said EXTRACT: p.108-109

Our life together was always busy, and regular as clockwork. Up at dawn and down the track a little way to bathe in the stream where it tumbled cold and fresh out of the hillside into a great cauldron of smooth rocks. We would wash our sheets and clothes here, too (he'd made me my own kimono by now), slapping and pounding them on the rocks, before hanging them out to dry on the branch of a nearby tree. Breakfast was a thick pulpy fruit juice which seemed different every day, and bananas or coconut. I never tired of bananas, but very soon became sick of coconut. The mornings were spent either fishing in the shallows or fruit gathering in the forest. Sometimes, after a storm, we scoured the beach for more of his painting shells – only the biggest and flattest would do – or for flotsam to join the stack of wood at the back of the cave. There were two stacks, one clearly for firewood, the other, I supposed, reserved for his woodwork. Then it was home to the cave house for a lunch of raw fish (always delicious) and usually breadfruit (always bland and difficult to swallow). A short nap after lunch for both of us and then he would settle down at his table to paint. As I watched I became so engrossed that the failing light of evening always came too soon for me. We would cook a fish soup over the fire. Everything went in, heads and tails, a dozen different herbs – Kensuke wasted nothing – and there were always red bananas afterwards, all I could eat. I never went hungry. When supper was over we would sit together at the mouth of the cave and watch the last of the sun drop into the sea. Then, without a word, he'd stand up. We would bow solemnly to one another, and he would unroll his sleeping mat and leave me to mine.

MESSAGE IN A BOTTLE

Chapter 8 Everyone dead

EXTRACT: p.127-130

But I had another family too. I thought of the last time I had been out in a boat, of my mother and my father and how they must be grieving for me every day, every night. By now they must surely believe I was drowned, that there was no chance I could be alive. But I wasn't drowned. I was alive. Somehow I had to let them know it. As I struggled to bring the outrigger back to the island that afternoon, I was filled with a sudden powerful longing to see them again, to be with them. I could steal the boat I thought. I could row away, I could light a fire again. But I knew even as I thought it that I could not do it. How could I ever leave Kensuke now, after all he had done for me? How could I betray his trust? I tried to put the whole idea out of my mind, and I really believe I would have too. But the very next morning, I found the plastic Coke bottle washed up on the beach, and after that the idea of escape came back and haunted me day and night, and would not leave me be.

For some days, I kept the Coke bottle buried under the sand, whilst I wrestled with my conscience or, rather, justified what I wanted to do. It wouldn't really be a betrayal, not as such, I told myself. Even if the bottle was found no one would know where to come to, they'd just know I was alive. I made up my mind I would do it, and do it as soon as I could.

Kensuke had gone off octopus fishing. I had stayed behind to finish a shell painting – or so I had told him. I found an old sheet at the bottom of one of his chests and tore away a small corner of it. Then I knelt down at the table, stretched it out and painted my message on it in octopus ink:

To: The *Peggy Sue*, Fareham, England.

Dear Mum and Dad,

I am alive. I am well. I live on an island. I do not know where. Come and find me.

Love, Michael

I waited until it was dry, then I rolled it up, dug my Coke bottle out of the sand, slipped in my message and screwed the bottle up tight. I made quite sure Kensuke was still intent on his fishing, and set off. I ran the entire length of the island keeping always to the forest, so that there was no chance Kensuke could see where I was going or what I was up to. The gibbons howled their accusations at me all the way, the entire forest cackling and screeching its condemnation. I just hoped Stella would not bark back at them, would not betray where I was. Fortunately she didn't.

At last I reached the rocks under Watch Hill. I leaped from rock to rock until I was standing right at the very end of the island, the waves washing over my feet. I looked round me. Stella was the only witness. I hurled the bottle as far out to sea as I possibly could. Then I stood and watched it as it bobbed away and out to sea. It was on its way.

I didn't touch my fish soup that night. Kensuke thought I was ill. I could hardly talk to him. I couldn't look him in the eye. I lay all night in deep torment, racked by my guilt, yet at the same time still hoping against hope that my bottle would be picked up.

Kensuke and I were at our painting the next afternoon when Stella came padding into the cave. She had the Coke bottle in her mouth. She dropped it and looked up at me, panting and pleased with herself.

Kensuke laughed and reached down to pick it up. I think he was about to hand it to me when he noticed there was something inside it. By the way he looked at me I was quite sure he knew at once what it was.

SAVING

Chapter 9 Night of the turtles EXTRACT: p.141-44; 152-154

I thought it was a crab at first. It wasn't. It was a minuscule turtle, tinier than a terrapin, clambering out of a hole in the sand and then beetling off down the beach towards the sea. Then another, and another, and further down the beach dozens of them, hundreds I could see now, maybe thousands, all scuttling across the moonlit sand into the sea. Everywhere the beach was alive with them. Stella was nosing at one, so I warned her off. She yawned and looked innocently up at the moon.

I saw that one of them was on its back at the bottom of the hole, legs kicking frantically. Kensuke reached down, picked it up gently and set it on its feet in the sand. "You go to sea, little turtle," he said. "You live there now. You soon be big fine turtle, and then one day you come back and see me maybe." He sat back on his haunches to watch him scuttle off. "You know what they do, Mica. Mother turtles, they lay eggs in this place. Then, one night-time every year, always when moon is high, little turtles are born. Long way to go to sea. Very many die. So always I stay. I help them. I chase birds away, so they not eat baby turtles. Many years from now, when turtles are big, they come back. They lay eggs again. True story, Micasan."

All night long we kept our vigil over the mass birth, as the infant turtles made their run for it. We patrolled together, reaching into every hole we found to see if there were any left, stuck or stranded. We found several too weak to make the journey, and carried them down into the sea ourselves. The sea seemed to revive them. Away they went, no swimming lessons needed. We turned dozens the right way up and shepherded them safely into the sea.

When dawn came and the birds came down to scavenge, we were there to drive them off. Stella chased and barked after them, and we ran at them, shrieking, waving, hurling stones. We were not entirely successful, but most of the turtles made it down into the sea. But even here they were still not entirely safe. In spite of all our desperate efforts a few were plucked up out of the water by the birds and carried off.

By noon it was all over. Kensuke was tired as we stood ankle deep in the water watching the very last of them swim away. He put his arm on my shoulder. "They very small turtles, Micasan, but they very brave. They braver than me. They do not know what they find out there, what happen to them; but they go anyway. Very brave. Maybe they teach me good lesson. I make up my mind. When one day ship come, and we light fire, and they find us, then I go. Like turtles I go. I go with you. I go home to Japan. Maybe I find Kimi. Maybe I find Michiya. I find truth. I go with you, Micasan."

* * *

As I reached the cave I heard the first shots ring out. Every bird, every bat in the forest lifted off so that the screeching sky was black with them. We gathered the orang-utans together at the back of the cave and huddled there in the darkness with them, as the shooting went on and on.

Of all of them, Tomodachi was the most agitated. But they all needed constant comfort and reassurance from Kensuke. All through this dreadful nightmare Kensuke sang to them softly.

The hunters were nearer, ever nearer, shooting and shouting. I closed my eyes. I prayed. The orang-utans whimpered aloud as if they were singing along with Kensuke. All this while Stella lay at my feet, a permanent growl in her throat. I held on to the ruff of her neck, just in case. The young orang-utans burrowed their heads into me wherever they could, under my arms, under my knees, and clung on.

The shots cracked so close now, splitting the air and echoing round the cave. There were distant yells of triumph. I knew only too well what this must mean.

After that the hunt moved away. We could hear no more voices, just the occasional shot. And then nothing. The forest had fallen silent. We stayed where we were for hours. I wanted to

venture out to see if they had gone, but Kensuke would not let me. He sang all the time, and the orang-utans stayed huddled around us, until we heard the sound of the outboard motor starting up. Even then Kensuke still made me wait a while longer. When at last we did emerge, the junk was already well out to sea.

We searched the island for Kikanbo, sang for him, called for him, but there was no sign of him. Kensuke was in deep despair. He was inconsolable. He went off on his own and I let him go. I came across him shortly after, kneeling over the bodies of two dead gibbons, both mothers. He was not crying, but he had been. His eyes were filled with hurt and bewilderment. We dug away a hole in the soft earth on the edge of the forest and buried them. There were no words in me left to speak, and Kensuke had no songs left to sing.

We were making our sorrowful way back home along the beach when it happened. Kikanbo ambushed us. He came charging out of the trees, scattering sand at us and then climbed up Kensuke's leg and wrapped himself round his neck. It was such a good moment, a great moment.

ESCAPE

Chapter 10: Killer men come EXTRACT p. 155-161

"Micasan," he breathed, and he was pointing out to sea with his stick. There was something out there, something white, but too defined, too shaped, to be a cloud.

We had left the binoculars behind. With Stella yapping at me all the way, I raced back along the beach and up the track to the cave house, grabbed the binoculars and made for the top of the hill. A sail! Two sails. Two white sails. I bounded down the hillside, back into the cave and pulled out a lighted stick from the fire. By the time I reached the beacon Kensuke was already there. He took the binoculars from me and looked for himself.

"Can I light it?" I asked. "Can I?"

"All right, Micasan," he said. "All right."

I thrust the lighted stick deep into the beacon, in amongst the dry leaves and twigs at its core. It lit almost instantly and very soon flames were roaring up into the wood, licking out at us as the wind took them. We backed away at the sudden heat of it. I was disappointed there were so many flames. I wanted smoke, not flames. I wanted towering clouds of smoke.

"Do not worry, Micasan," Kensuke said. "They see this for sure. You see."

We took turns with the binoculars. Still the yacht had not turned. They had not seen it. The smoke was beginning to billow up into the sky. Desperately I threw more and more wood onto the fire, until it was a roaring inferno of flame and dense smoke.

I had thrown on almost the very last of the wood we had collected, when Kensuke said suddenly, "Micasan, it is coming. I think the boat is coming."

He handed me the binoculars. The yacht was turning. It was very definitely turning, but I couldn't make out whether it was towards us or away from us. "I don't know," I said. "I'm not sure."

He took the binoculars off me. "I tell you, Micasan, it come this way. They see us. I am very sure. It come to our island."

Moments later, as the wind filled the sails, I knew he was right. We hugged each other there on the hilltop beside the blazing beacon. I leaped up and down like a wild thing, and Stella went mad with me. Every time I looked through the binoculars now, the yacht was coming in closer.

"She's a big yacht," I said. "I can't see her flag. Dark blue hull, like the *Peggy Sue*." Only then, as I said it out loud, did I begin to hope that it could possibly be her. Gradually hope turned to belief, and belief to certainty. I saw a blue cap, my mother's cap. It was them! It was them! "Kensuke," I cried, still looking through the binoculars, "Kensuke, it's the *Peggy Sue*. It is. They've come back for me. They've come back." But Kensuke did not reply. When I looked round, I discovered he was not there.

I found him sitting at the mouth of the cave house, with my football in his lap. He looked up at me, and I knew already from the look in his eyes what he was going to tell me.

He stood up, put his hands on my shoulders, and looked me deep in the eyes. "You listen to me very good now, Micasan," he said. "I am too old for that new world you tell me about. It is very exciting world, but it is not my world. My world was Japan, long time ago. And now my world is here. I think about it for long time. If Kimi is alive, if Michiya is alive, then they think I am dead long time ago. I would be like ghost coming home. I am not same person. They not same either. And, besides, I have family here, orang-utan family. Maybe killer men come again. Who look after them then? No, I stay on my island. This is my place. This Kensuke's Kingdom. Emperor must stay in his Kingdom, look after his people. Emperor does not run away. Not honourable thing to do."

I could see there was no point in pleading or arguing or protesting. He put his forehead against mine and let me cry. "You go now," he went on, "but before you go, you promise three things. First, you paint every day of your life, so one day you be great artist like Hokusai. Second, you think of me sometime, often maybe, when you are home in England. When you look up at full moon, you think of me, and I do same for you. That way we never forget each other. Last thing you promise and very important for me. Very important you say nothing of this, nothing of

me. You come here alone. You alone here in this place, you understand? I not here. After ten years, you say what you like. All that left of me then is bones. It not matter any more then. I want no one come looking for me. I stay here. I live life in peace. No people. People come, no peace. You understand? You keep secret for me, Mica? You promise?"

"I promise," I said.

He smiled and gave me my football. "You take football. You very good at football, but you very much better painter. You go now." And with his arm round my shoulder he took me outside. "You go," he said. I walked away only a little way and turned round. He was still standing at the mouth of the cave. "You go now please." And he bowed to me. I bowed back. "Sayonara, Micasan', he said. "It has been honour to know you, great honour of my life." I hadn't the voice to reply.

Blinded with tears I ran off down the track. Stella didn't come at once, but by the time I reached the edge of the forest she had caught up with me. She raced out on to the beach barking at the *Peggy Sue*, but I stayed where I was hidden in the shadow of the trees and cried out all my tears. I watched the *Peggy Sue* come sailing in. It was indeed my mother and my father onboard. They had seen Stella by now and were calling to her. She was barking her silly head off. I saw the anchor go down.

"Goodbye, Kensuke," I whispered. I took a deep breath and ran out on to the sand waving and yelling.

I splashed out into the shallows to meet them. My mother just cried and hugged me till I thought I'd break. She kept saying over and over again, "Didn't I tell you we'd find him? Didn't I tell you?"

The first words my father said were, "Hello, monkey face."