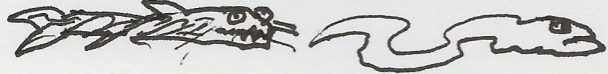
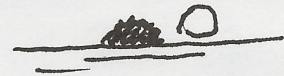
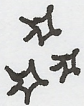


Dear young person,

My name is Michele and when I was the same age as you, about nine or ten, I had an adventure on a coral island. It was during the school holidays that few English families got together to spend a couple of days living wild on a deserted island off the coast of Malaya. The island had no electricity or buildings, just wooden shelters where we slept, a stream for fresh water, and many coconut trees. The white beach was full of gorgeous shells and the sea teemed with tropical fish. It was an amazing place for snorkelling and exploring.



One afternoon an English boy of around 15 found a leaky old rowing boat and suggested that we go fishing together. While the adults were busy on the beach, I cast fishing lines over the side and he rowed out to sea. We caught weird ugly fish that squirmed around our ankles like snakes. I sat with my knees up in case they bit me. The pale, quiet boy pulled hard on the oars, determined to get as far as possible from the island. Soon I began to feel hungry and worried. It was late. Mum and dad would be wondering where I was. I didn't want him think that I was just a weedy little girl, but I wanted us to turn around and go back. It was already too late. The big tropical sun was already slipping behind the horizon and darkness fell down on us like a blanket. The island disappeared from sight. We were lost in the ocean in a leaky rowing boat full or sea monsters.. I began to cry. The boy was scared too. To please me, he threw the wriggling creatures back in the sea and began to talk.



His name was John and he was angry with everyone. especially with his father and his father's new girlfriend, who didn't like him. He hated his boarding school in England and felt abandoned and unwanted. I listened and said nothing. I felt sorry for him, but also for myself. What if our boat were to sink? The water was already past our ankles.

We drifted aimlessly under the stars for many hours until at last the silence was broken by the sound of an engine. A fishing boat loomed out of the blackness with bright lights on its bows. I shouted and waved desperately until their searchlight found us. The angry fishermen shouted at us but I didn't care. It was such a relief! They took us back to the island where mum and dad were waiting.

John's dad was furious with him, but perhaps it made him realise how desperately unhappy his son felt. I hope they forgave eachother and learned to get along. As for me, I ran into the arms of my loving mum and dad and felt very grateful to be alive. I never saw that boy again but I often wonder about him.

I hope you enjoyed reading my letter, and look forward to hearing your comments and seeing your shadow puppets.

Michele

