

# Tales

**SAMPLE**

# From The

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**The Heart Of The Forest:  
A Sumatran Orangutan Story**

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# The Heart Of The Forest: A Sumatran Orangutan Story

By Neil Harwood

## The Shining Hill

My name is Budi. I am a male Sumatran orangutan and I live among the trees in the Great Forest. I am fourteen years old. Although I am still young, my childhood is coming to an end. Soon I will be fully grown: an adult.

It is not just me that is changing. I sense that something else is coming. I cannot tell what it is. For now it is just over the horizon, out of sight. But every day it is getting closer, and there is nothing I can do to stop it.

I am perched high up in a tree, taking in the sights and sounds of the Great Forest. I listen out for the grunts and whoops of other orangutans.

There aren't many of us on the Shining Hill, this part of the Great Forest. We Sumatran orangutans are not a common species. My mother lives close by and I see her most days. My father likes to wander through the forest, and I see him several times a year. This is the way of orangutans. Occasionally, other adults pass through. Some stay a while before moving on, and thrill the youngsters with stories of their travels.

From further off in the forest, I hear my friend Dini laughing. She is the same age as me, and although she thinks she is all grown up now, we still play together whenever we can.

I have enjoyed a wonderful childhood here, spoiled only by one thing. Or, I should say, by one orangutan.

His name is Gilang. He is the ruler of the Shining Hill. He is the biggest orangutan in the area, and a mighty warrior. I shudder at the thought of him. His fearsome face is widened by fleshy ridges that show he is a dominant male. He has a flowing, orange beard. He

is powerfully built under his long fur, and is strong and fast. Legend has it that he once fought a tiger, although nowadays all he seems to do is roar at either Dini or me.

Gilang is Dini's father, and he dislikes seeing us playing together. They live in an area of the Shining Hill known as the Green Rocks. Whenever he catches me there he threatens me and chases me away. I always flee. Although I am almost fully grown, I am still no match for Gilang.

I will go down to see Dini later in the day, if Gilang isn't there. For now I am content just to make my way slowly through the trees in search of food. I have long, powerful arms, and strong hands and feet. I love climbing and swinging and jumping through the trees. I rarely walk on the ground.

Orangutans are big creatures and have nothing to fear from most of the other animals in the forest. However, I must always keep an eye out for leopards and dholes. Tigers were once our main enemy, but there aren't many of them left now. I have never seen one, and I have wandered further than most orangutans my age.

I look out over the valley. The trees are swaying in the breeze, and for a while I just sit and watch the never-ending sea of green. The forest stretches to the horizon in every direction. I have wandered across all of the Shining Hill and one day will venture further into the forest. Sometimes I feel that something is calling me away. I have heard talk of a great lake that stretches as far as the eye can see. I hope that one day I will see it for myself.

I spend the day roaming the hill in search of food. My favourite food is fruit, and today I am lucky; I find plenty, and will not be going to bed hungry. I make my way to the Green Rocks, looking forward to seeing Dini.

Suddenly there is a loud whooping, and I hear something large and powerful clambering through the foliage towards me. A huge—and very angry—orangutan bursts out from the trees. It is Gilang! I have had too much to eat and was complacent; I had forgotten to watch out for him. I have never seen him this mad. He has a terrible look on his face as he leaps forward and tries to grab me. I jump wildly out of his reach, praying that there is a

branch or vine that I can grab to stop myself falling.

Thankfully there is, and I propel myself away from the huge orangutan as fast as I can. Gilang gives chase, and we jump and swing through the trees. The branches creak and groan as we pass. Large clumps of foliage crash down onto the distant forest floor.

End of sample.

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