



Kesi



Kesi is a Swahili name and it means: child, born in difficult times. It sounds crazy to give an orangutan a Swahili name, after all this is an African name, but please read her story first. You will find out her chosen name is not that strange.

It was already later in the evening and pitch dark when the dogs in the garden around Lone's house suddenly started to bark loudly. Eko, the paramedic of the Nyaru Menteng Rehabilitation Project, entered the house via the back door. He had just come back from a rescue near the palm oil plantations in the centre of Kalimantan. He carried a small package of material and he gave it to Lone, project manager of Nyaru Menteng. Inside there was a tiny little orangutan, with a face as a little mouse. It was a little orangutan girl and her first teeth were starting to break through. She was approximately 3 months old at that moment. Her eyes wide open, intelligently looking into the world, trying to find out what was happening around her.

Suddenly Lone looked at me with eyes that gave me the shivers. She showed me the little orangutan's left arm: she didn't have a hand anymore, only a stump. I had goose bumps all over my body and I had to look the other way, because in front of my eyes I could see what might have happened:

Kesi holding on to her skinny mother, situated in danger, heading for the gardens of the people searching for food, because there is no food anymore in the few trees left of the once dense forest she grew up in. The mother is walking on the ground, too weak to climb and then suddenly, people running after the mother and the child trying to catch up with her. Machettes, knives, coming from

everywhere. They try to kill the mother, and the little baby, who is holding on so tightly loses her hand as one raises his machette. The pain must have been horrible and terrifying. People bring the little one home, maybe with the intention to sell her on the black market if they can get a good price for a baby orangutan with one hand cut off.

After our first shock we had a better look at her. It was also very difficult for her to open her left foot. We found a big scar on her left foot. My imagination was not that unrealistic. The long knife that cut off her hand also damaged her foot. Was her mother already dead when this happened? But here is Kesi with one hand missing and one foot damaged and we wonder if she will ever be able to climb in the trees. Hopefully her foot will open itself; if this is the case there may be a chance she can learn to climb.

Kesi has a tiny little face, like a mouse. It seems she has already forgotten the pain. She smiles so happily when she lies in her little basket and you tickle her belly. But I, I didn't forget the pain. Every time I look at her I feel those goose bumps again and I feel ashamed that I belong to the same species as the people who did this to her.

Kesi: child born in difficult times. Right now the orangutans are having difficult times, not only difficult times of drought and hunger, but also difficult times having to live under the dominance of humankind. Humans rule the world, they destroy without the readiness to share - they want it all.

Kesi. I promise you: we are going to do everything to make sure that your children and those of all the other 'people of the forest' will never have to be burdened with such a name.