

## Forests and Conspiracies

Although Rochester previously begins to acclimate to the island, through his journey through the forest the readers see the seed of distrust planted in him blossom as it further alienates him from the island. Ultimately this excerpt clarifies the conspiracy that had previously lurked at the back of Rochester's mind, that being sent to island was an attempt to weaken, control, and embarrass him by not only his family, but the natives and his wife.

As Rochester angrily meanders down a path on the honeymoon estate, he stumbles upon an old property of a priest. While he had previously held a dislike and distrust for the island, feeling alienated by its strong scents and wild features, he had attempted to acclimate, trying to be a good husband and perhaps even attempting to love Antoinette. Yet, following the letter, the island suddenly transforms into a place of danger for him; the forest has now become “hostile,” (rhys, 94) and the overgrown trees and “creepers” seem to attempt to engulf and trap him. As he walks, he no longer feels like an explorer but rather lost, as there is “nothing but the trees and the green light under the trees.” Furthermore, the trees later become the “enemy trees,” (rhys, 95) and unlike Antoinette, who gains safety from the spontaneity of nature, he feels “lost and afraid.” This unveils a colonial instinct, his preference for civilization, for order and subtleties. He doesn't feel safe, not because of monsters that may come from the dark, but because of the forest itself. Rochester is afraid of the lack of control the forest imposes, not only physically or geographically but also mentally. In this forest, he no longer feels supported by the society that uplifts him as a rich white male. Instead, he must submit to the forces of nature, which place him as an equal

not only from a gender standpoint but a racial one too. This terror impacts him in the future as he's driven by it as he attempts to blame and control his wife, eventually leading to her madness.

As he stumbles upon the ruins of the minister's house, he calms down. This may be partly due to the house serving as a geographical island, a sign of civilization amidst the wild forest, but it may also have colonial implications, as it is the home of a minister. "Paved like the French roads," he says to Baptiste. Yet even this calming effect is described with a negative light, almost mind-controlling, as it stops him from "thinking and planning." The combination of the religious background of the plaza and the orange in the back signals that it may relate to the biblical story of Adam and Eve. As Rochester plays the role of Adam, it's unclear at which point in the story this passage correlates. While our 'Eve' is back at the estate, it's not wrong to assume she may have already eaten and been 'corrupted' by the apple of knowledge, sending Adam to the same fate (in this case, an orange). While Rochester is not a complete reflection, this scene perpetuates the idea of the woman attempting to control the man, with the interpretation that Eve was controlled by corrupted forces and attempted to spread that corruption to Adam. This parallels how Rochester is beginning to turn on Antoinette after receiving the letter from Daniel Cosway. Furthermore, Rochester's experience in the forest at night serves as a turning point; he gives up on attempting to understand and give the forest—and by extension, giving Antoinette a chance. From now on, everything he sees serves to aid the conspiracy he has already established in his mind.