

## THE ISLAND

### 1. Creation

#### Evening

Swollen from the non-stop torrential rains of the spring, the river pushes its muddy waves with a roar. The sky rumbles. Occasionally the clouds are lit by a lightening, followed by a thunder and then the rain pours with renewed force. The thunder shakes the ground, making the honeysuckle branches tremble. The wind and the rain bend the slender rushes and reeds along the marshy banks, obliging them to dance to their whimsical rhythms.

The heavy, murky river meanders dragging along whole trees it has uprooted, objects that are hard to identify, a drowned, bloated dog among them.

From time to time shooting can be heard from one or the other side of the river. These are short machine-gun rounds, but in the falling dusk the tracers fly over the laurel and gooseberry bushes.

A strange thing happens in the middle of the river: an uprooted tree with wide branches gets jammed. It stops the floating scrubs, crooked branches and tree stumps, creating a dam that is fast covered by stones and sand that are carried by the current ...

### 2. Discovery

#### Morning

Dawn. The rain has stopped. The river, the copse and the swamp are wrapped in a thick, milky fog. When the sun rises, the wind drives the fog down the river.

The sun gets out from behind the tattered clouds, looks at the world and gathers strength, dispersing the remaining shreds of clouds.

The river is calmer now. The blue sky, the distant, snow-capped mountain peaks and the river banks with eucalyptus, rushes and laurel bushes are reflected in its ripple-free, mirror surface.

With screeching sounds the stunned gulls circle the newly-born island, whose still wet surface glistens in the sun rays like the back of a whale. Finally, one of them finds the courage to land and immediately others follow suit ...

### 3. Amber Cigarette Holder

#### The Same Time

Suddenly the gulls flee in fright. A boat approaches the island. An old man gets out and drags the flat-bottomed boat onto the ground. He is old but apparently is still quite strong. He is well-built and moves with youthful agility. He scares bulge-eyed frogs that jump into the water with a loud thump.

The old man looks around, then walks along the bank, circles the island and when he comes back to his boat, he stoops, scoops the silt, examines it with his fingers and smells it.

Shooting can be heard from the river bank. The old man lifts his head and stares in that direction. He cannot see anything but the machine-guns keep firing. It is unclear who is shooting or why.

With a grim face, the old man stares at the opposite bank, then he takes off his coat, drops it in the boat, rolls the sleeves of his shirt, kneels on one knee and begins to dig the ground with his bare hand.

He keeps digging, unhurriedly, throwing handfuls of sand by the hole which is gradually getting deeper, while the pile of wet sand by its side is getting higher. And all the while the firing can be heard, sometimes louder, sometimes subsiding only to resume with renewed force.

An object comes out with the next scoop. The old man cleans it with his thumb. It is an amber cigarette holder. He puts it into his pocket and resumes digging.

When the hole is an arm-deep, he looks contentedly at the work done. He rinses his hand in water, puts his coat on, sits on the stern and pulls the amber holder from his pocket.

For some time he busied himself with cleaning and drying it with the hem of his coat. Then he blows into it and takes a better look at it. The cigarette holder shows old teeth marks. Finally, the old man takes a package of cigarettes without filter from his pocket, draws one and inserts it into the holder. He lights it and begins to smoke with a blissful expression.

The shooting has stopped. The surrounding nature is quiet as if waiting for something to happen.

The sun has moved towards west, preparing to set. From a distance, barking and belated rooster crowing can be heard from the village.

Suddenly, the island is shaken by a powerful explosion. The old man sees the flames that rise above the copse on the other side of the river. The deafening sound is followed by renewed machine-gun rounds.

The old man looks at the opposite bank. His face is expressionless while he smokes. Then he flicks the cigarette butt, eyes the amber holder once more before putting it into his pocket.

With the prolonged firing in the background, the old man looks around contentedly at the island. When the noise subsides, he gets to his feet, drags the boat into the river, gets inside and pushes it away from the bank with the pole ...

#### 4. The Settler

##### Morning

The river looks tame. The ground is dry because, though the spring sun is hiding behind the clouds, its warm breath can be definitely felt.

A cuckoo can be heard from the opposite bank and the frogs are louder than ever.

The old man's boat appears on the river. It is loaded with wooden poles and timber. When he reaches the bank, he gets out, takes a stake from the boat and drives it into the ground with a sledgehammer. He ties his boat to the stake.

Then he sets to the task of unloading the boat: he puts the toolbox on the ground but carries the poles and longer timber pieces to the centre of the island.

The old man works unhurriedly and systematically. As the sun reaches the zenith, he feels hot and takes off his coat, hangs it on the stake and sits down.

For some time he remains inert, looking at the reeds on the marshy bank across the river, then he draws a package of cigarette, a lighter and the amber holder from his pocket.

A wagtail perches nearby. The old man doesn't move for fear of scaring the bird. Having watched him for some time, the wagtail hops to the ground and begins looking for food. The old man smiles.

His cigarette has burned to the end so he is obliged to scrape it out of the holder with a matchstick. He scrutinizes the amber holder once again before putting it away in his pocket.

The wagtail flies away when the old man gets to his feet.

He makes a rectangle from the timber, drives the poles in the corners, then takes a spade and begins to dig a hole.

He works unhurriedly, pushing the blade into the ground and helping himself with his knee when emptying the spade. Soon he finishes with the first hole and sets to work on the rest. With time he digs four holes ...

Now the old man needs some stones but as they are scarce on the island, he has to circle it. He collects the stones in his leather apron lap. After a while there are sizeable stone piles at all four holes.

He lifts one pole, drags it closer to the hole and slowly ends it sliding inside. Then he brings a plummet from his toolbox, aligns the pole and secures it with stones. He flattens the ground with a short-handled wooden tool checks again if the pole is vertical. He does the same for all four poles.

By now the sun has moved westwards and there is no shooting.