



The Island

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Sold: Catalan, English, French,
Italian, Korean, Spanish (Spain).

In the morning the people of the island found a man sitting on the shore, there where fate and the ocean

currents had set him down on his frail raft in the night. When he saw them coming towards him, he stood

up.

He was not like them.

They stared at him. They wondered. About why he had come here. About what he wanted. About what to do.

One suggested that it might be best if he were put back on his raft and sent away without delay, to where

he had come from. "And anyway, he wouldn't like it here, so far away from his own kind".

But the fisherman knew how it was out there: "It would be his death, and I wouldn't want that on my conscience," he said. "We have to take him in".

So they took the man in.

They lead him to a disused goat pen at the uninhabited end of the island. They indicated to him that he was

to remain there and that he could use what straw there was to make himself comfortable.

And then they secured the gate and went back to their business and life on the island returned to what it

had always been.

Then, one morning, he appeared in town.

A commotion broke out. The men grabbed him roughly and shouted at him. But he was only trying to get

them to understand that he hadn't eaten for many days, that he was hungry and if they could not perhaps

give him something to eat.

2

"He is right", said the fisherman, "we can't just ignore him, now that he is here."

This caused alarm.

"But we can't feed just anybody who comes our way," argued the grocer. "We would soon be starving

ourselves if we did that!"

The fisherman suggested that someone, the innkeeper perhaps who surely could do with some help in the

kitchen, hire the man so that he might earn his keep. "And", he added, lowering his voice, "he would be

happy with far less pay than what one of us would ask".

"But nobody would want to eat my food with him in my kitchen!" protested the innkeeper, "why don't you

hire him yourself?"

But the fisherman's boat would only hold one person.

The carpenter, recalling the poorly crafted raft, doubted the man's skills with hammer and saw.

The carrier took exception with the man's slim frame; he needed someone who could carry weights.

And the priest regretted deeply but the man's voice simply wouldn't fit in with his Sunday choir.

"Then we will have to take turns, all of us, to care for him", said the fisherman. "Remember: we took him

in; even though he is not one of us, we are responsible for him".

The innkeeper finally consented to let the man have the leftovers he would otherwise throw to the pigs. So

they took the man back to the pen. They strengthened the gate so that in future he should cause no more

disturbances.

But now the man's presence troubled the people. They hadn't asked for him, but he was here. Their act of

kindness had not been the end but merely a beginning. They had taken him onto their island and now they

found him in their lives. He was in their days and sometimes even in their nights, when dreams of him

disturbed their sleep. Men frowned and muttered under their breaths. Women stayed in their kitchens and

mothers warned their children not to go near the goat pen.

And the schoolmaster was lecturing about savages and their customs

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"He eats with his hands", reported the innkeeper. "And he eats bones."

"He will come and eat you if you don't eat your soup!" a mother warned her child.

3

"The children are scared of him", lamented the schoolmaster that evening at the inn.

"I am sure he would murder us all if he could," suspected the sergeant.

"Foreigner Spreads Fear In Town", said the paper in big black letters.

The people grew restless. Some thought that things were getting out of hand. Others demanded that something be done before it was too late. Things were bad enough as they were. One could not be expected

to worry about the wellbeing of others. The man did not belong here. He was a foreigner. He had to go.

And they went to the goat pen,

Grabbed the man,

marched him to his raft

and pushed him out into the waves.

And then they set fire to the fisherman's boat because it had been him who made them take in the man.

Some actually shared the fisherman's opinion, but the others were louder. And they didn't want to eat fish

ever again from the same sea that had brought them this much calamity. And they built a great wall that ran

all around the island with watch towers from which they could search the sea for signs of rafts and shoot

down passing terns and cormorants so that nobody out there would be able to find out about their island.