

The Island

By Marcin Wojdyna

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The Island

I used to believe civilisation ran because people like me made decisions.

Vision. Strategy. Leadership. All those words we said in rooms with air conditioning strong enough to stun livestock. All those panels about growth that never mentioned where it came from or who paid for it.

For a long time, people nodded along. Then, slowly, they stopped.

They got tired of watching wealth pool upward while the world around them thinned out. Tired of being told there was no money for schools, hospitals, housing, or heat while men like me spoke about efficiency from behind glass. Tired of being managed by people who had never done anything that required them to use their hands.

The strikes came first. Then refusals. When the fires started, the entire systems simply stopped responding to us.

When the streets filled, it wasn't dramatic. No banners with slogans clever enough to trademark. Just people deciding they were done pretending this arrangement was inevitable.

I did not stay to negotiate. I ran for the helicopter.

It lifted from my penthouse roof while the city below peeled open like something rotten. I say "we escaped", but really I mean "I", because the others followed me instinctively, as if money came with transferable skills.

They came because they were like me.

CEOs. Investors. A former minister who had turned regret into consulting fees. A tech founder whose product never worked but whose confidence did. Men who had once described themselves as essential.

They arrived from panic rooms and private airstrips, from yachts that untied themselves in the night. They arrived carrying nothing useful. No tools. No food. Just documents and watches and the expectation that someone else would handle the rest.

They came because this was our Plan B.

An island I bought years earlier. A hedge against “instability”. A joke I’d made at a dinner once. “My own country,” I’d said, and everyone laughed because they thought I was kidding.

We landed on a beach that had no interest in our titles. I had expected a villa. Or staff. Or at least a sign with my name on it. But I never built anything. Why would I? I never thought I’d need it.

The pilot refused to stay. “You won’t last a week,” he said.

I laughed, because I thought he was joking.

He was not joking. He was also leaving.

The helicopter shrank into the sky and suddenly the world was very large and we were very small and no one was clapping for us anymore.

The first evening, we stood waiting for someone to take charge. No one did, so we formed a circle. That always worked in boardrooms. Everyone looks serious. No one looks responsible.

“We’ll need food,” someone announced, as if unveiling a breakthrough.

Someone else pointed at the trees. “Coconuts.”

None of us knew how to get one down. One man kicked the trunk. Another threw a sandal. A third suggested hiring someone, then stopped speaking.

By morning, thirst had made us irritable. We found a stream and argued about whether brown water was safe. Brown meant minerals, someone insisted. Brown meant danger, someone else said. I proposed a vote. Democracy was no help.

By day three, the island hadn’t turned on us. It had simply stopped ignoring us.

I kept waiting to feel capable. To feel like the man who once told governments what to do. Instead, I felt hollow in a way I could not use.

We built a shelter. It collapsed in under a minute. No wind. No rain. It simply realised who had built it and gave up.

On day five, hunger made us honest. Not brave. Just honest.

We looked at each other and finally understood that none of us had ever done a single practical thing in our lives. We were the sort of men who paid others to open jars for us.

That was when the crab appeared.

He moved sideways, slow and deliberate, one claw larger than the other, shell cracked and dulled by work. He paused, looked at us, and did not hurry.

The crab assessed us the way experienced labour does. Quickly. Accurately. With disappointment that did not bother to disguise itself.

Then he continued on his way.

No warning. No lesson. No respect.

By day ten, I understood something I had spent decades avoiding. Power is not a trait. It is a service others agree to provide. When they stop providing it, you stop possessing it.

When the first man died, it was not cinematic. He folded downward and stayed that way. We gave a speech because speeches were the only thing we knew how to make.

By the second death, we did not speak. It felt performative. Everything we had ever done felt performative.

We were shrinking.

Somewhere beyond the water, the world continued.

Power grids stayed on. Food moved. Children were taught. Streets were cleaned. People organised themselves, slowly at first, then with relief. They discovered something we had spent years insisting was impossible.

They never needed us.

It just took them longer than it should have to realise it.

I am writing this on the back of a charter agreement I never signed, using a stone that barely scratches the paper. It is the last document I will ever sign. It is the last *anything* I will ever sign.

No rescue came. Not because no one could reach us. Because no one needed to.

The island did not kill us.

It simply stopped pretending we mattered.

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