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To Those Who Haven't Visited My Island

Those who haven't visited my island... paint postcard coloured beaches and Pixar blue skies with the brushes of their imagination.

Those who haven't visited my island... expect beaming, bubbly heads atop painted bodies kissing the island's head at night and day.

Those who haven't visited my island... imagine that my island offers them an escape from harsh reality as a night of sleep offers from a long day of work.

Those who haven't *lived* on my island don't think that "little" islands like mine can have big problems like theirs.

Somewhere between the anticipation of cerulean blue waters making love to sandy white shores... the people who haven't lived on my island forget that where people exist, problems do as well and that the allure of the aqua skies is not enough to erase this reality.

Those who've never been to my island ask
"What's so great about my "little" island?"

And of course, anyone could pour oceans of answers.

One could say it is our colorful culture;
One could say it is our dance and dress and delicacies;
One could say it is the bouquet of our boisterous laughs and our beckoning grins which are benevolent gifts of unblemished bliss...

These are all beautifully scripted answers, each deserving to swim to the end of the question.

But the funny thing about me living on an island is that I never learned to swim...
So, as everyone makes these beautiful but prescribed strokes to the horizon...
With one dive, I immediately touch the ocean bed.

With only one dive, I reach the ocean bed.

The people who've never heard of my island...ask me what's so great about my "little" island.

I answer from the ocean's bed.

The greatness of my island is its littleness.
Or rather, its perceived littleness

I call it...

The paradox of the "little" island.

It giggles me to see the raised eyebrows I get with this answer.

But once you've touched the ocean bed, swimming in line with everyone else becomes less about distance and more about depth.

And my little island, though it floats on the irises of the waters, is made deeper by its paradox: The paradox of the "little" island.

For both the people who live and don't live on my island...

Mere mention of an island regardless of true denotation,

Is a piece of land embraced gently by the welcoming waves of the ocean

But detached from this fairytale description,

Those who live on my island firsthand know the dangers posed to the reefs of our economy and society and country.

We are an island but we are a country. And Derek Walcott from my country said '*We are either a nobody or a nation*'. And like me, nations too sometimes don't take easily to swimming. So sometimes my nation...my country...my island thrashes in the waters.

Those who live on my island

Have watched young fish like me either been disowned from homes or abandon homes disheartened by our economic restraints... And these young fish have been devoured by the ravenous sharks of the bigger seas.

Those who live on my island

Have watched young fish like me become hypnotized by the glimmering glow of the foreign TV... And these young fish have chosen to be young Columbuses and, in his imitation, have lost themselves.

Those who live on my island

Have watched young talented fish like me swim, swim, swim till caught in a net because of lack of opportunity... And because of lack of opportunity, few of these young fish are able to make it free from the net so so much talent is caught in a net of unfair reality.

However,

I who live on my island

Know that the littleness of my island is its greatness because although we thrash, we never drown.

I who live on my island

Understand that we fight together bonded by the shallows we've all witnessed that has generated the desire to swim by both depth and horizons.

I who live on my island

Love my island because there is so much talent within one polyp square inch than there could be within one state square inch of larger '*unislands*'

I who live on my island

Understand that because we are so small, we are so big.

I who live on my island

Realizes that the smallest gets amplified not merely by its achievements but by its effort and tenacity and perseverance

Therefore,

Those who do not live on my island

Need to stop inserting the word 'little' before island.