

Jina Ortiz

SIX POEMS ABOUT THE LITTLE ISLAND OF MINE



I. *Exile*

My hut of warmth,
summers and winter's rain
that soaked my Sunday's best to a wet mess.
I remember the *platano* smell of your *conuco*,
how I lost myself in your jungle of roots.

II. *Yolas*

People hop these *yolas* for a dream;
I dream of days of no hunger,
no time to look at the sun
or else the guards of land will catch you.
I see, they cannot see who I am
under the ark of starvation,
sun deprivation has cruised through the seas
I left behind you.

III. *The Trip*

It was my milk that sustained you
through the Mona; this tore waves
and banged tears into darkness, until there
was nothing left of me, my breasts became
no more. I screamed no more; I have nothing
else to give, but death on this boat.

IV. *Hurricane*

Mauve, move the colors of the sky
'cause I can't see the ocean.
Where did it all go?
The rainforest, the cattle, my people,
all gone and taken away by the Hurricane.

I felt the pain when I left
you standing on our pink, lavender-shaded porch,
carrying our child on my back,
I prayed all the way to the end
of the ocean that met my mother's wailing
joy to see me and him alive.

V. *My Visa*

This all happened because I was dreaming of a visa;
one that would carry me on the other side of the ocean.

This ocean blinding blue with stripes of green amebas
and cellulous creatures roamed beneath my feet,

looking for a way out of the streams of life.
Not going anywhere made the bravest of fish

swim up stream every spring to find
their beloved little ones lie dead at the bottom

of this green swampy mess we called sea.
Oh, my Mirror Sea on the Caribbean forefront

hotel, *El Mirage*, the one that sits under a canopy
of *anânas* with the yellow tint of its sweet juice.

Missing your embrace under a tropical sun
bleaching and tanning visitors to another island.

VI. *The New Island*

This new place called *Nueva Yol*
was another funny name for a big apple.
I chose it because my *compadre* lived
here before me. He said it was heaven;

air-conditioned streets, dollars shellacked
in 22 karat gold bracelets brought from
Bombay, it was a funny little island—
this big apple. Everyone dressed in blue
with ties and button down jackets, all framed
by tall buildings called skyscrapers my *compadre*
told me before.

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