

### **Thursday, April 3: A Part of Us**

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[https://open.spotify.com/track/6JnRckXHdcU3Zm7tELF3pi?si=TXBFnGhTQf-iwk\\_pp3egXQ](https://open.spotify.com/track/6JnRckXHdcU3Zm7tELF3pi?si=TXBFnGhTQf-iwk_pp3egXQ)

“Jesus began to cry.” - John 11:35 (CEB)

We took our seats in the small, dimly lit, theater with plenty of time before the show started and yet all the actors were on stage. They tidied props, shoveled sand, chatted with one another, cooked... literally cooked on stage. As the audience settled in around this small island community we were invited into their village. Fully immersed in all our senses, the audience barely noticed when the show truly began. We fell in love with the peasant community of an island where rivers run deep, and the sea sparkles. On this Island, the poorest of peasants labor and – and the wealthy eat. The peasants, eternally at the mercy of the wind and sea, pray constantly to Azaka, mother of the earth; Agwé, god of water; Érzulie, goddess of love; and Papa Gé, demon of death. The peasant community does not have much, but they have each other and their rich tradition of dancing and storytelling. Together, using what they have around them for costumes and props, the village tells one of their youngest their oldest story through song and dance.

*Once On This Island* tells the story of a little orphan girl named Ti Moune. Ti Moune is discovered high in a tree after a terrible flood destroyed her community. Two unsuspecting people who were unsure of their ability to care for her, but who had faith that the gods had a bigger plan, took her in. When Ti Moune grows up, she begins to wonder why the gods spared her life. Hearing her longing, the gods agree to answer her prayers and send her on a journey.

The soundtrack to *Once On This Island* tells the story so beautifully without needing to see the show or hear the very minimal dialogue. I encourage you to listen to it. Ti Moune’s story, however, does not have a happy ending. Spoiler alert: she dies. Ti Moune sacrifices herself for the one she loves. She chooses death so that her beloved can have life. The song *A Part Of Us* is the melody of grief her village cries for her.

The lyrics share that Ti Moune’s gods *began to cry* tears of compassion for her. Each god walks alongside Ti Moune through her death; she is never alone. Her village celebrates that her story does not end with her death but the gods transformed her into a tree! If you keep listening to the next track, Ti Moune’s tree, symbolic of her story, breaks the separation between the poor and the wealthy and frees the next generation from the forces that kept her from her beloved.

Someone’s return to dust can leave us feeling rather dusty ourselves; our voices pained with grief like those who mourn Ti Moune. But, her gods and our God are not indifferent to our pain. Ti Moune was never promised a happy ending or a journey without pain and suffering. Every step of the way, however, her gods are with her. Ti Moune’s gods, and our God, are at work in our stories; walking with us, crying with us, guiding, and listening. When we struggle, when light is scarce, when people

die, God is present and at work. Through the work of God's almighty grace, like Ti Moune, we are blessed and transformed.

May we remember and trust that God accompanies us on the journey and is always transforming us. May we also be inspired by Ti Moune to live a life of faith and courage that will leave a legacy worth telling and retelling.