

Self vs Rogue Island

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Put your hands up, says the island. I look around but it is still just me and the island. I meekly raise my hands a little, slightly higher than before—*is that enough? All the way up, you little nitwit*. This foul-mouthed island is nothing like the ones in the ads. It's also unfair to call me little, when I am a perfectly average-sized human, and a deserted island of any size has an unfair advantage. I also have questions about why the island gets to have the first word, when it is me, the human, I am the human and thus the linguistically equipped one here, I should be first to speak, first to set the terms, and yet look at me, meekly standing here with my hands in the air like a fool. I am unwilling to acknowledge my fear of the island, the very real fact that it could easily swallow me whole, should it lose its temper or blow a fuse. Since my hands are up in the air anyway, I decide to recalibrate it into a stretch, and I reach higher into the air with the tips of my fingers. I can make myself appear larger, as if the island were a bear. *And then what*, sneers the island, as if it can read my mind—it did read my mind. I understand now that island linguistics obeys a logic of its own. I feel foolish for any iota of linguistic superiority I had earlier fancied possessing. Still, in a desperate attempt to try something, anything, I invite it to join me in an eating contest. The island responds with a belch and knocks me off my feet.

This is a fortunate turn of events. Now that I have been removed from the upright position, new alternatives become available. Instead of getting back up, which would return me to the original situation, I could feign an inability to get up. I could play dead. I could become dead. Or, I could slither away quietly like a snake. I do not believe that I would escape the island's notice, but I am willing to try anything. I could slither my way to that hole over there, into which I could climb down, and from there I could continue the conversation. From the safe haven of a hole in its soil, I could turn the tables and ask questions of the island: who are you and what are you doing here. Why are you so angry what the fuck. Where did everyone else go. How can it possibly be that you and I are the only ones. Where are the multitudes, the vagabonds, the emissaries, the rescuers. Where are the apologies. Where are the exits. Where are the preachers, where are the poets, where are the elders, I'd like to have a word.