One of Shakespeare’s last plays, *The Tempest* mixes the stuff of fairy tales—magic, monsters, and spirits—with real human drama in a tale of revenge and forgiveness, cruelty and mercy, loss and reunion. This Core Classics volume presents a shortened version of Shakespeare’s play, with background information and helpful notes.

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The Tempest

by

William Shakespeare
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INTRODUCTION

William Shakespeare, widely regarded as the greatest poet and playwright who ever lived, wrote his plays in England four centuries ago—that’s four hundred years. And yet today in the United States, more theaters put on plays by Shakespeare than by any other playwright.

Why? Because of the stories Shakespeare tells, the characters he created, and his magnificent way with words—some of the most beautiful, profound, and sometimes hilarious words you will ever hear.

Shakespeare wrote at least thirty-seven plays. He sometimes acted in them himself. In his lifetime, Shakespeare’s plays were enjoyed by people from all walks of life—from butchers and blacksmiths and shopkeepers to Queen Elizabeth herself, and after her King James, for whom The Tempest was first performed in 1611.

The Tempest is a late work in Shakespeare’s career, the last play he wrote on his own. Some scholars think the central character of the
play—Prospero, whose magical powers enable him to create great illusions—is in some ways Shakespeare’s depiction of himself. If so, the portrait is not flattering. Prospero is complex—he sometimes uses his power in ways that are not admirable. He can be harsh, bad-tempered, impatient, obsessive, and controlling. He is also capable of extraordinary generosity of spirit.

At first, Prospero, who has been cruelly betrayed, is filled with rage and set on revenge. His fury and power give rise to the tempest, the great storm, that opens the play—a storm so powerful and violent that it causes a shipwreck. Shakespeare’s stage directions call for “a tempestuous noise of thunder and lightning.” The script includes the cries of desperate men who think their next breath will be their last.

It is, without a doubt, a dramatic way to begin a play. If this were a present-day movie, there would be hyper-realistic computer-generated crashing waves with subsonic rumbles of IMAX thunder shaking the viewers in their seats. But how do you create a storm onstage, in a theater with live actors? Some big theaters today have elaborate
sound and lighting systems, but nothing like that was available in 1611. In Shakespeare’s day, they created thunder by rattling a big sheet of thin metal, called a thunder sheet. They used fireworks for lightning. And the audience loved it.

Lacking the means for high-tech special effects, how would you create a powerful storm onstage? That is one of the challenges—and delights—of *The Tempest*. The play excites both theater-makers and audience members alike by inspiring their imaginations to embrace possibilities beyond straightforward realism.

In one recent production in a small theater, the storm was created purely through music, and the shipwreck powerfully evoked by the movements of the actors behind a large sheet of thin, clear plastic (the kind used to cover floors in rooms being painted, and easy to buy from any hardware store). In this show, the plastic sheet was held by two actors costumed as “spirits.” They shook the plastic so that it rippled in the light. They moved the rippling sheet upward from the floor till it reached above the actors’ heads. The effect, while not realistic, was very effective—you could easily imagine the actors being lost beneath the waves.
This kind of appeal to the imagination is central to a play that features, as its main character, a magician, one who specializes in creating illusions. The magician, Prospero, is not a showman who pulls a rabbit out of a hat, but someone who has learned to channel mysterious powers.

In the play, Prospero’s magic is associated with certain objects—a robe, a staff, and especially his books. Through long study of his books of magic, Prospero has gained great power. His power, unlike that of a superhero, is not within himself. Instead, he has the ability to get the spirits on the enchanted island where he lives to do as he commands. These spirits can fill the air with thunder and lightning, stir up raging waves in the seas, vanish at will, and take many forms. One moment they may appear as lovely singing goddesses. Later they might transform into fierce howling dogs, or even into a winged monster.

While Prospero controls these powerful spirits, they sometimes resist him, especially the airy spirit Ariel. Ariel serves Prospero out of gratitude—an evil witch had imprisoned Ariel in a tree trunk, and Prospero freed the spirit from captivity. But Ariel,
while grateful, longs for complete freedom. When Ariel protests, Prospero responds with threats of punishment. In the end, not only does Prospero free Ariel, but Ariel, in a way, frees Prospero, when this thing of air, this spirit, shows him the need for human forgiveness.

Another character in the play also serves Prospero—not with magic powers, however, but with manual labor, and not at all willingly. This is Caliban, who lived on the island before Prospero arrived there. His mother was that same witch—now dead—who had imprisoned Ariel.

While Ariel is an airy spirit, Caliban is described as a thing of earth. He is also called a “monster.” Caliban is not literally a monster, though the many insulting descriptions of him make one thing clear—he is unlike anyone else in the play. The other characters see Caliban as strange and different, as something other. And, as is often the case, the one seen as different, as the “other,” is treated badly.

Caliban tells us that at first Prospero and his daughter, Miranda, treated him kindly, and taught him their language. In return, he showed them where to find fresh water and other resources on
the island. But then Caliban, though not a monster, committed a monstrous act—he tried to attack Miranda—and everything changed. Prospero’s kindness turned to fury. He made Caliban his slave. He forced him to gather firewood and do other hard chores. And Caliban obeys because he fears the physical pain inflicted by the invisible spirits at the magician’s command.

In Prospero’s enslavement of Caliban, the play hints at changes in Shakespeare’s world at the time he wrote *The Tempest*. During this time, European explorers were setting sail and finding new lands—new to them, at least. In many cases, the Europeans seized the lands they found, and mistreated or enslaved the native inhabitants.

In Shakespeare’s time, those who saw *The Tempest* would not have found fault with Prospero for his treatment of Caliban—for, on a small scale, Prospero was doing what Europeans presumed it was their right to do: taking land from, and imposing their will on, people they saw as other, as different and inferior. From our twenty-first century perspective, while we may understand Prospero’s desire to protect his daughter and punish
Caliban, we cannot sympathize with a punishment as inhumane as enslavement.

It’s not just that we can’t sympathize with Prospero in his treatment of Caliban; indeed, Shakespeare goes further and at times makes us sympathize with Caliban—he makes us feel with, and feel for, the other. Just when we are laughing at Caliban, Shakespeare catches us off guard by giving him some extraordinary lines of poetry that make us see beyond his strange appearance and foolish behavior. When Caliban speaks of his home, the magical isle where he lives, he speaks beautifully in words that reveal in this “monster” some very human depths of feeling and heights of wonder.

_The Tempest_ mixes the stuff of fairy tales—magic, monsters, spirits, witches—with real human emotions and conflicts. The mistreatment of the “other”; the angry resistance to being controlled; the thirst for power; the burden of guilt at knowing we have done something wrong; the desire for revenge; the difficulty of forgiveness; the sorrow of losing a loved one; the joy of reunion; the love of parent for child, and child for parent—these and other very human, very real matters are continuous with the
magical and fantastical elements of the play.

In this book we present a shortened version of Shakespeare’s play that can be performed in under ninety minutes. While condensed, with some words changed and some lines moved, this version of *The Tempest* remains true to Shakespeare, generally using the original language. The book provides helpful background information on Shakespeare’s theatre and poetry. And, to help prepare you for both enjoying and understanding the play, we first present *The Tempest* in the form of a brief story, following the long tradition of introducing young people to Shakespeare by re-telling his plays as stories.

Shakespeare didn’t write his plays for silent reading from a book. He wrote them to be seen and heard. *The Tempest* will come to life when you gather with classmates, friends, or family members to read it aloud, or, even better, to act it out. You don’t need fancy costumes or high-tech special effects, just curiosity and imagination. And remember the advice of one of Shakespeare’s greatest characters, Hamlet, who says that you only need to “speak the speech” naturally, letting the words help you express the emotions.
A collection of Shakespeare's plays, known as the First Folio, was published in 1623.
SHAKESPEARE AND THE GLOBE

In 1564 William Shakespeare was born in England, in the town of Stratford-upon-Avon, about ninety miles northwest of the great bustling city of London. Shakespeare is sometimes called the “Bard of Avon.” (Bard is another word for poet.)

In Shakespeare’s time, well-off boys attended school. Girls stayed home. Young Will probably spent long hours learning Latin, Greek, the Bible, and English history. It seems Will didn’t enjoy school much: in one of his plays, he described “the whining schoolboy, with his satchel . . . creeping like [a] snail unwillingly to school.”

There’s a lot about Shakespeare’s life we don’t know. Over the years scholars have examined the available evidence — there’s not much of it — and have tried to put together a picture of the playwright’s life. We do know that eighteen-year-old William married twenty-six-year-old Anne Hathaway in 1582. Over the next few years, Anne gave birth to their daughter Susanna, followed by twins, a daughter named Judith, and a son named Hamnet.
Shakespeare did not linger very long in Stratford-upon-Avon. By 1592, Shakespeare was in London and establishing a reputation as a playwright, actor, and poet.

When Shakespeare wrote his plays, England was ruled by Queen Elizabeth I and later by King James I. Elizabeth was a powerful and intelligent leader, and very popular with the English people. The arts thrived during the reign of Queen Elizabeth. She filled her court with poets, playwrights, and musicians.

Many of Shakespeare’s plays were performed in the Globe Theatre, which was built in 1599 on the south bank of the Thames River in London. The Globe was a wooden, circular building with an open courtyard in the middle. The theater could hold up to 2,500 people.

At the Globe, people who didn’t have much money could pay a penny to stand in the courtyard and watch the play; they were called the groundlings. Richer people could buy seats in the galleries, which were along three sides of the theater and were covered by a roof to protect the audience from the sun or a sudden rain. Performances were given only in daylight and only in good weather.
In Shakespeare’s time, only men acted on stage. No women were allowed to be actors! The women’s parts were played by young boys who still had high voices and no beards.
In 1613, a cannon fired as part of a performance of Shakespeare’s play titled *Henry VIII* set fire to the Globe’s thatched roof, and the theater burned to the ground. In the 1990s the theater was rebuilt very near its original location. So, if you visit London today, you can still see a Shakespeare play at the new Globe Theatre.
From the First Folio, the collection of Shakespeare's plays published in 1623, this is the first page of The Tempest.
Prospero, the Duke of Milan, was a learned and studious man, who lived among his books. He left the management of his dukedom to his brother Antonio, whom he trusted completely—but not wisely, for Antonio himself wished to be Duke.

To gain his ends, Antonio would have killed his brother, but he dared not, for Prospero was greatly loved by the people of Milan. However, with the help of Prospero’s great enemy, Alonso, King of Naples, Antonio managed to take over the dukedom with all its honor, power, and riches. As for Prospero, he was
taken out to sea, and when far away from land, forced into a leaky little boat with no mast or sail. With him was his little daughter, Miranda, not yet three years old. And so they were left to perish in an open boat on the sea.

But one honest courtier was true to Prospero. This worthy old man, whose name was Gonzalo, saw to it that supplies were secretly placed in the boat—some food, fresh water, clothes, and what Prospero valued most of all, his precious books.

The merciful waves cast the boat upon an island, and Prospero and his little one landed in safety. This was an enchanted island, which for years had been under the spell of an evil witch, Sycorax, who had imprisoned the good spirits of the island in the trunks of trees. She died shortly before Prospero was cast on those shores, and the spirits remained locked in their prisons.

During the years in which he had allowed his brother to manage the affairs of Milan, Prospero had devoted himself almost entirely to the study of magic, and he had learned much. Now, on
the island, he used his magic arts to free the imprisoned spirits. But he kept some obedient to his will. One in particular, called Ariel, an airy but powerful spirit, served Prospero faithfully—though sometimes grudgingly, as Ariel by nature longed to be free as the wind.

On this enchanted island, Prospero found one human form: a strange, young, wild creature called Caliban, son of the dead witch Sycorax. Prospero took him home and treated him kindly, and, with Miranda, taught him to speak. But something of his witch-mother’s wickedness seemed to live on in some part of Caliban. When Caliban tried to harm Miranda, Prospero’s kindness turned to fury. He used his magic to punish Caliban, and forced him to work as a slave, to fetch firewood and do other hard work, with spirits always ready to torment him if he neglected his duties.

As the years passed, Miranda, tutored by her father, grew into a young woman. Then it chanced that a ship came near the island. Among the passengers were Antonio, Prospero’s treacherous brother;
On this enchanted island, Prospero found one human form: a strange, young, wild creature called Caliban.
Alonso, the King of Naples, who had helped Antonio overthrow Prospero; Sebastian, brother to Alonso; Ferdinand, the King’s son; honest old Gonzalo, who had helped Prospero survive; Stephano, the King’s drunken butler; and Trinculo, the King’s jester. The ship was on a voyage back to Italy from northern Africa, where Alonso had taken his daughter to be joined in marriage to an African king.

Knowing that the ship was near, Prospero gripped his magic staff and, through the powers of the spirit called Ariel, he raised a great tempest, a storm so furious that even the bravest sailors on board gave themselves up for lost. As the thunder boomed and massive waves crashed onto the decks, Prince Ferdinand leaped into the sea. His father cried out in grief, thinking his son was drowned.

But Ariel brought the young Prince safe ashore; and the King and his followers, although they were washed overboard, were landed unhurt in different parts of the island. And the good ship herself, which they all thought had been wrecked, lay at anchor in a hidden harbor where
A Story

Ariel had brought her, with its crew under a spell, unharmed. Such wonders could Prospero and his spirits perform.

While the tempest was still raging, Miranda saw the ship tossed by the seas. Filled with pity for the people on board, she pleaded with her father to calm the furious storm he had raised.

“There’s no harm done,” he assured her, for he had always intended to save the ship and everyone on it.

Then, knowing the moment had finally come, Prospero sat his daughter down to tell her what she had never heard before—the story of his life and hers, of how he was not only her father but also the rightful Duke of Milan, and she a princess. He told her how he had caused this storm in order that his enemies, Antonio and Alonso, might be delivered into his hands.

Telling her this, but no more, he charmed her into sleep, for Ariel was at hand, and Prospero had tasks for the spirit to perform. Ariel, who longed for his complete freedom, grumbled when he heard there was more work to do. But Prospero, driven by great urgency to proceed with his plan,
flared into a temper and threateningly reminded Ariel of all the sufferings he had undergone when Sycorax ruled the land, and of the gratitude he owed to the one who had made those sufferings end. Ariel ceased to complain, and promised to do whatever Prospero might command.

“Do so,” said Prospero, “and in two days I will discharge thee.”

Then, as Miranda stirred from her sleep, Prospero sent Ariel in search of Prince Ferdinand. Ariel, quick as thought, found Ferdinand, and, invisible, hovered near him, singing,

*Come unto these yellow sands*
*And then take hands . . .*

Ariel led the spellbound prince into the presence of Miranda, while Prospero stood aside, out of sight. Then, all happened as Prospero desired. For his daughter, ever since she could first remember, had seen no other people besides her father and Caliban. And now, seeing Ferdinand, Miranda looked on the youthful prince with wonder in her eyes and love in her heart.

“I might call him,” she said, “a thing divine, for nothing natural I ever saw so noble!”
Ferdinand, beholding her with surprise and delight, wondered if she might be a goddess of the island. Scarcely had they exchanged half a dozen sentences before he promised to make her his queen, if she were willing.

Prospero, though secretly delighted to see his plan taking shape so readily, worried that love so easily won might be too little valued. So, pretending to be in great anger, he accused Ferdinand of being a spy sent to the island to do harm. “No,” said Ferdinand, and drew his sword. But instantly Prospero charmed him so that he stood like a statue, still as stone; and Miranda, who knew her father’s power, begged him to have mercy on the young man. But Prospero ignored her pleas and put Ferdinand to work, making him carry many heavy logs and pile them up.

Ferdinand patiently obeyed—for indeed he had no choice—but he felt his labor lightened by the affectionate attention of Miranda. “If you will sit down,” said Miranda to the Prince, “I will carry your logs the while.” He would not let her. In truth, the work of log-carrying went on very slowly, for they began a conversation, and he
“If you will sit down,” said Miranda to the Prince, “I will carry your logs the while.”
A Story

could not keep from proclaiming his love, and she, hearing it, rejoiced and promised to be his wife.

Then Prospero, glad at heart, gave his consent to their marriage. “All thy vexations were but my trials of thy love,” he explained to Ferdinand. Then, joining their hands, “Sit then and talk with her,” he said; “she is thine own.”

In the meantime, in another part of the island, Antonio—he who had overthrown his brother, Prospero—was urging Sebastian to murder his brother, Alonso, the King of Naples; for then, said Antonio, with Prince Ferdinand being dead (or so they thought), Sebastian would succeed to the throne upon Alonso’s death. With their swords raised and ready to strike the sleeping King and the good old man Gonzalo as well, they were about to carry out their wicked purpose when Ariel woke the sleepers just in time.

Dark deeds were also being plotted elsewhere on the island. But the plotters were foolish men who found false courage in a barrel of wine, which had been found by Stephano, the drunken butler to King Alonso. Stephano shared his plentiful supply

\begin{itemize}
\item \textit{vexations}: things that irritate and trouble you
\item \textit{trials}: tests
\end{itemize}
with the King’s jester, Trinculo, and with the “monster” they encountered on the shore, Caliban. In his drunkenness, Caliban **vowed** never again to work for Prospero but instead promised to serve Stephano, whom he urged to kill Prospero, marry Miranda, and take over the island. Ariel, however, overheard them and quickly warned Prospero of their plot.

Ariel returned to King Alonso and his company. The King, exhausted from searching for his son, sat in grief, trying to accept the fact that his son must be drowned. As old Gonzalo tried to comfort the King, Sebastian whispered to Antonio his determination to carry out the murder they had planned.

Suddenly strange music filled the air, and spirits appeared and set before them a banquet of delicious foods. Their hunger overcoming their fear, the men were just about to eat when, with thunder and lightning, Ariel appeared in the form of a harpy, a horrible winged monster, and the feast vanished. Then, to their amazement and horror, the harpy spoke in a terrible voice, reminding them of their cruelty in driving Prospero from his
Stephano shared his plentiful supply of wine with Caliban.
Ariel appeared in the form of a harpy, a horrible winged monster.
dukedom and leaving him and his infant daughter to perish in the sea. For these wrongs, cried the harpy, did they now suffer—and then it vanished.

King Alonso stumbled away, overwhelmed with guilt and nearly mad with grief. Meanwhile, not far away, his son, quite alive and well, sat with his beloved wife-to-be, dazzled by a magical entertainment that Prospero had conjured to celebrate their upcoming wedding. While spirits magically appeared to bless the young couple, and other spirits danced to delight them, Ariel was sent to gather the King and his company and bring them to Prospero.

As his project neared completion, Prospero seemed filled with an almost fierce exultation when Ariel returned to report that his enemies were gathered nearby, trembling and afraid. Ariel then mentioned the good old lord, Gonzalo, whom the spirit had left weeping, tears running down his white beard. Then Ariel—an airy spirit, far removed from human cares—said that, if he were human, he would pity these men in their suffering.

The spirit’s simple words seemed somehow
to calm the **vengeful** fury in Prospero’s heart. “Bring them **hither**, Ariel,” said Prospero; “for if you, who are but a spirit, feel for their distress, shall not I, who am a human being like themselves, have **compassion** on them? Bring them quickly.”

Prospero then determined to give up his magic. He made a vow to break his staff and plunge his book of spells deep to the bottom of the sea.

As heavenly music sounded in the air, Ariel led in the King and his company. They saw Prospero, who appeared to them in the garments he had worn as the Duke of Milan. Their grief and terror were lifted when Prospero forgave them. He embraced old Gonzalo with gratitude; then, turning to his treacherous brother, Antonio, he firmly demanded the return of his dukedom.

King Alonso, who seemed sorriest of them all for his past crimes, felt great sorrow for the loss of his son, Ferdinand. But Prospero drew back a curtain and revealed Ferdinand and Miranda playing at chess. Great was Alonso’s joy to greet his beloved son again, exceeded only by his
Great was Alonso’s joy to greet his beloved son again.
joy when he heard that the young woman with Ferdinand was Prospero’s daughter, and that the young folks were soon to be married.

Then Ariel led in the bumbling drunkards who had plotted against Prospero. King Alonso was greatly surprised to see his butler and jester, and even more astonished at the wild and shaggy appearance of Caliban. Fearing punishment and feeling shame for his foolishness, Caliban promised to change his ways.

So all ended happily. The ship was safe in the harbor, and next day they would all set sail for Naples, where Ferdinand and Miranda were to be married.

Before leaving the island, Prospero kept his promise and made Ariel free as air. And, in a different way, Prospero himself was free, for when his bitterest foes who had done him deadly wrong lay at his mercy, he took no vengeance on them, but nobly forgave them.
Prospero kept his promise and made Ariel free as air.
William Shakespeare’s

The Tempest

Abridged and adapted for young readers and actors

This version of The Tempest generally uses Shakespeare’s original language, with a few words changed and a few lines moved. It has been shortened to make it practical for production in middle school and up. It can also be enjoyed as a readers’ theater performance. Estimated performance time is under 90 minutes.

Most of the stage directions [the notes in brackets, like this] are not Shakespeare’s but have been specially written for this condensed version of the play. In describing movements or facial expressions or tones of voice, the stage directions suggest—not require—how this play might be performed. The stage directions are provided mainly to emphasize that the play is not just the words on the page but most of all a performance on a stage—or in a classroom or any appropriate space.

To Shakespeare’s cast of characters, this script adds three Spirits to help guide the audience through the play. They sometimes take part in the action of the play.

The script is printed on the left-hand pages, with some words underlined. On the right-hand pages you will find definitions of the underlined words, as well as occasional explanatory notes. Some of these notes refer you to a section at the end of this book called “Think About Performance,” where you will find questions and ideas about staging the play.
A Note on Prose and Poetry in Shakespeare

As you read through the script of *The Tempest*, you will notice that Shakespeare wrote some lines as prose and some as poetry. What’s the difference?

**Lines in Prose**

Prose is everyday language, the language we usually speak and write. In Shakespeare’s plays, everyday characters usually speak in prose.

For example, in the following passage, Trinculo, a jester, speaks in prose as he worries aloud about an approaching thunderstorm:

> Here’s neither bush nor shrub to bear off any weather at all, and another storm brewing. If it should thunder as it did before, I know not where to hide my head.

**Lines in Poetry**

Most of the characters in *The Tempest* speak in poetry. Many of these characters are people of high social position, such as Prospero, once Duke of Milan, or Alonso, the King of Naples. When characters speak in poetry, their words are broken into separate lines, and each new line begins with a capital letter. For example, look at these lines spoken by Miranda to her
father, Prospero, as she expresses her distress over a
shipwreck she has just witnessed:

If by your art, my dearest father, you have
Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them.
O, I have suffered with those that I saw
Suffer! A brave vessel, dashed all to pieces.

Those lines are poetry, even though they don’t rhyme. Also, notice that while there is a break between the third and fourth lines, there is no comma or other punctuation mark—so, in speaking those lines, you would not pause between them, but just keep going, like this: “O, I have suffered with those that I saw suffer!”

**Blank Verse**

Shakespeare usually writes a kind of unrhymed poetry called blank verse. A standard line of blank verse has ten syllables. Count the number of syllables in the first two lines below, in which Prospero speaks to Miranda.

I have done nothing but in care of thee,
Of thee, my dear one, thee, my daughter, who
Art ignorant of what thou art. . . .
Sometimes the ten-syllable line is shared by two speakers, as in this exchange between Prospero and Ariel:

**PROSPERO**
What is’t thou canst demand?

**ARIEL**
My liberty.

The ten-syllable blank verse line flows straight through from Prospero’s question to Ariel’s reply, giving a sense of urgency:

What is’t thou canst demand? / My liberty.

**Feeling the Rhythm**

As you read the lines of blank verse aloud, you will feel a rhythm in them—usually, a regular beat, like a heartbeat, with an unstressed syllable followed by a stressed syllable, like this: *da DUM / da DUM / da DUM / da DUM / da DUM.*

Let’s look again at those lines spoken by Prospero, and notice the pattern of unstressed and stressed syllables. (The stressed syllables are in **bold** type.)

I have done **nothing but** in **care** of **thee,**
Of **thee,** my **dear** one, **thee,** my **daughter,** who
Art **ignorant** of **what** thou **art. . . .**
In speaking Shakespeare’s poetry, while you should be aware of the rhythm, you should not artificially emphasize the stressed syllables—that would make the lines sound “sing-songy.” Instead, just feel the rhythm and speak the words naturally.

In *The Tempest* Shakespeare builds on the regular pattern of blank verse but he is not locked down by it. Very often, he varies slightly from the pattern—for example, by adding syllables, or changing the rhythm—in order to create a variety of emotions and rhythms in the speech of his characters.

THREE VISIONS OF MIRANDA AND PROSPERO

**Above:** From an outdoor production in 2009, with Akiya Henry as Miranda and Joseph Mydell as Prospero.

**At right, above:** From a 2010 movie with Helen Mirren as Prospero and Felicity Jones as Miranda.

**At right, below:** From a 2011 production at the Theatre Royal Haymarket in London, with Ralph Fiennes as Prospero and Elisabeth Hopper as Miranda.
CHARACTERS IN THE PLAY

PROSPERO (/pros•puh•roh/), once the Duke of Milan (/mill•un/), now living on a mostly uninhabited island
MIRANDA, his daughter

ANTONIO, Prospero’s brother, who has betrayed Prospero and taken his place as Duke
ALONSO (/uh•lahn•zoh/), King of Naples
SEBASTIAN, his brother
FERDINAND, a prince, King Alonso’s son
GONZALO, an honest old advisor to King Alonso, and a friend to Prospero

STEPHANO (/steh•fuh•noh/), a drunken butler to King Alonso
TRINCULO (/trink•kyu•loh/), a jester in King Alonso’s court

CALIBAN, a wild inhabitant of the island, son of the witch Sycorax
ARIEL, an airy spirit who serves Prospero

THREE SPIRITS, who guide us through the play
WATER SPIRITS, as dancers

BOATSWAIN (/boh•sun/), sailor in charge of the ship’s sails
CAPTAIN of the ship
SAILORS (optional non-speaking parts)
ARIEL
AS IMAGINED BY AN
ILLUSTRATOR AROUND THE
YEAR 1850.

ARIEL AS IMAGINED BY THE
ILLUSTRATOR OF THIS BOOK.
This prologue, which is not in the play by Shakespeare, is provided here as a way to help tell the story to those new to it.

Upstage, there is a small table; on it lies a very thick, very old book. (If lighting allows, there may be a pale light focused on the table and book, with all else in darkness. Then lights come up gradually as the action begins.)

Enter CALIBAN—he is dirty and wild-looking, perhaps covered with scraps of animal skins, twigs, and shells. He looks around, fearful and suspicious. He sniffs the air, scowls—nothing appeals to him. He continues to snoop around—then he sees the book. He freezes. Does he dare approach it? He does—but very cautiously, nervously looking around, fearing he might get caught.

Enter three SPIRITS. They are invisible to CALIBAN. Just as CALIBAN nears the book, SPIRIT 1 whistles. Startled, CALIBAN looks around but sees nothing. As CALIBAN stares, SPIRITS 2 and 3 sneak up and poke him. CALIBAN leaps in fear. All three SPIRITS laugh. Then they surround CALIBAN, like three points of a triangle.

SPIRIT 2 makes a buzzing noise. Alarmed, CALIBAN turns quickly to the noise but sees nothing. SPIRIT 3 makes a hissing noise. Again, CALIBAN turns quickly but sees nothing.
CALIBAN as imagined by an illustrator around the year 1850.

CALIBAN as imagined by the illustrator of this book.
The three SPIRITS make their noises as they creep toward CALIBAN. He stands, frozen in fear, looking quickly back and forth.

The three SPIRITS pounce on CALIBAN, tickling and pinching him.

CALIBAN runs off, screaming. The three SPIRITS laugh with glee.

SPIRIT 1
Invisibility really has its advantages.

SPIRIT 2 [pointing to where CALIBAN exited]
Especially for getting rid of uninvited guests!

SPIRIT 3 [pointing at an audience member]
Hey what about them? Who let them in?

SPIRIT 3 moves toward the audience making pinching gestures, fingers opening and closing like crab claws.

SPIRIT 1
Wait, stop!

SPIRIT 2
You can’t pinch them!

SPIRIT 3
Why not? They look so pinchable.
invisibility: state in which a person cannot be seen

uninvited: someone who has not been asked to be there
SPIRIT 1
Because they’re our guests! Our invited guests.

SPIRIT 3 [puzzled]
Our guests?

SPIRIT 2 [duh]
For the show.

SPIRIT 3 [frantic]
The show?! Oh-my-gosh, are we on already? How do I look? How’s my hair? [Sniffs underarms.]

SPIRIT 2
Um, hello—they can’t see you. We’re invisible—remember?

SPIRIT 1
You know, I think it’s time we let them know we’re here.

[Together, all three SPIRITS make the same gesture to make themselves visible to the audience.]

SPIRIT 1 [to the audience]
Welcome to you all!

SPIRIT 2
We three Spirits are here to help tell the story—

SPIRIT 3
—the story of William Shakespeare’s . . .
ALL THREE SPIRITS
The Tempest!

SPIRIT 1
You should know that we Spirits have magical powers, and . . .

SPIRIT 3 [interrupting with excitement, speaking to an audience member]
Ooo, yeah, did you see how I was invisible?

SPIRIT 2 [drily]
How could they see that you were invisible?

SPIRIT 1
As I was saying, we Spirits have magical powers.

SPIRIT 3 [to the audience]
But so do you!

SPIRIT 2
That’s right. Each and every one of you has the power of imagination.

SPIRIT 1
So, *imagine*, if you will, that you are here with us on an island in the sea.

SPIRIT 2 [pointing up]
Do you see those dark clouds swirling overhead? And feel the wind picking up?
SPIRIT 3 [holding a large drawing of an old sailing ship for the audience to see, moving it up and down, as though the ship is being rocked by huge waves]
Ooo, I feel sorry for anyone on this ship.

PROSPERO enters, wearing his magical robe and carrying his staff. He goes to the table with the book. The SPIRITS back away in awe. PROSPERO puts a hand on the book, bows his head, concentrates, then lifts his staff—there is a tremendous clap of thunder.

As all three SPIRITS exit in haste, MIRANDA enters, running to her father’s side. MIRANDA and PROSPERO watch the action that follows, apart from it.
PROSPERO: I CAN HERE DISARM THEE WITH THIS STICK,
AND MAKE THY WEAPON DROP.

ACT I
ACT 1

SCENE I.
ON A SHIP AT SEA DURING A RAGING TEMPEST.¹

[Enter SAILORS,* the ship’s CAPTAIN, and a BOATSWAIN.]

CAPTAIN [trying to be heard above the storm]
Boatswain!

BOATSWAIN
Here, sir!

CAPTAIN
Speak to the sailors! Quickly, or we run ourselves aground!

[He exits.]

BOATSWAIN [to the sailors]
Hey, my hearties! Take in the topsail! Cheerily, my hearties!
[looking up and shaking his fist at the sky]
Blow till thou burst, wind!

[Enter ALONSO, SEBASTIAN, ANTONIO, FERDINAND, GONZALO, STEPHANO, and TRINCULO.]**
① **See Think About Performance: Special Effects (page 248).**

* The sailors can appear onstage in non-speaking roles. Or they can be left for the audience to imagine—in which case, the Boatswain can direct his words directly to the audience, as though they are part of the ship’s crew.

**Boatswain** [pronounced *BOH*-sun]: a sailor in charge of the ship’s sails

**When these actors enter, how might they move to show that they are on a boat being tossed by the waves?**
ALONSO
Good boatswain, where’s the captain?

BOATSWAIN
I pray you, keep below.

ANTONIO
Where is the captain, boatswain?

BOATSWAIN
Keep your cabins! You do assist the storm.

GONZALO
Nay, be patient.

BOATSWAIN
When the sea is! Hence. To your cabins! Trouble us not.

GONZALO
Yet remember whom thou hast aboard.*

BOATSWAIN
None that I more love than myself. What cares these waves for the name of king? Out of our way, I say! [to the sailors] Cheerily, good hearties! Down with the topmast! Lower, lower!

[From offstage come fearful cries of distress.]

A plague upon this howling! They are louder than the weather.
**pray you:** urgently ask you; beg you

**keep:** stay in

**hence:** go away

* Gonzalo is reminding the Boatswain that the ship’s passengers include important people such as Alonso, the King of Naples.

**A plague upon...**: an expression meaning, “A curse upon...”
SEBASTIAN
A plague on your throat, you bawling, uncharitable dog!

BOATSWAIN
What do you here? Have you a mind to sink?

ANTONIO
Hang, cur! We are less afraid to be drowned than thou art.

BOATSWAIN [to ANTONIO and SEBASTIAN]
You work, then!
[to the sailors]
Lay her a-hold, a-hold! Set her off to sea again!

STEPHANO and TRINCULO [holding onto each other, wailing like frightened children]
All lost! All lost!

[Thunder and lightning. The three SPIRITS appear, apart from the action, looking on and holding the drawing of the sailing ship. The following lines are spoken quickly one after the other, almost overlapping:]

FERDINAND
To prayers, to prayers!

STEPHANO and TRINCULO
Mercy on us!
What do you here?: What are you doing here [on the ship’s deck rather than in your cabin]?

cur: a mean mongrel dog
thou art: old form of “you are”
GONZALO
Farewell, my wife and children!

ALONSO [to SEBASTIAN]
Farewell, brother!

ANTONIO [bitterly]
Let’s all sink with the King.

SEBASTIAN [only concerned about himself]
Let’s take leave of him.

STEPHANO and TRINCULO [In a panic; they are thrown apart, one to one side, one to the other.]
We split! We split!

[The SPIRITS rip apart the drawing of the ship. Then they exit.]

GONZALO
The wills above be done! But I would fain die a dry death.

[A crash of thunder—then, sudden silence. All freeze* in postures of drowning and despair.]
**We split!** Our ship is breaking apart!

**would fain:** would be pleased to or would be willing to

* In a play, to *freeze* is to suddenly become motionless.  
[Note that in the original script, the actors exit the stage.]
SCENE II. ON THE ISLAND.

[PROSPERO and MIRANDA step forth from where they have been watching the shipwreck.]

MIRANDA [greatly upset by what she has seen]
If by your art, my dearest father, you have Put the wild waters in this roar, allay them. O, I have suffered with those that I saw Suffer! A brave vessel, dashed all to pieces. Poor souls, they perished!

PROSPERO
Be collected;
No more amazement. Tell your piteous heart There’s no harm done.

MIRANDA
O, woe the day!

PROSPERO
No harm!
I have done nothing but in care of thee, [suddenly more gentle] Of thee, my dear one, thee, my daughter, who Art ignorant of what thou art, naught knowing Of whence I am, nor that I am more better Than Prospero, no greater than thy father.*

MIRANDA
More to know did never meddle with my thoughts.

PROSPERO [removing his magician’s robe]
Sit down, for thou must now know further.
your art: Prospero’s magical powers
allay: put at rest; make calm

perished: died in a violent way

collected: calm
piteous: compassionate; sympathetic and caring

woe the day: what a day full of sorrow

thee: old form of “you”

Art ignorant of what thou art: is ignorant of what you are
naught: nothing
of whence I am: where I came from

* Prospero is telling Miranda that she knows nothing about her past, nor does she know where he came from. She knows him as nothing greater than her father.

meddle: show interest in or interfere
MIRANDA
You have often begun to tell me what
I am, but stopped, concluding, “Stay: not yet.”

PROSPERO
The hour’s now come.
Obey and be attentive. Canst* thou remember
A time before we came unto this isle?
I do not think thou canst, for then thou wast not
Yet three years old.

MIRANDA
Sir, I can. ’Tis far off,
And rather like a dream. Did I not have
Four or five women once that tended me?

PROSPERO
Thou hadst, and more, Miranda. What seest thou else
In the dark backward and abysm of time?
Dost thou remember how thou camest here?

MIRANDA
Sir, that I do not.

PROSPERO
Twelve years since, Miranda, twelve years since,
Thy father was the Duke of Milan and
A prince of power.

MIRANDA
Sir, are not you my father?
stay: wait

* Shakespeare’s language uses some old forms of verbs that go with “thee” and “thou” (which are old forms of “you”). Your ear will recognize our modern-day verbs in these old forms, including canst (can), wast (was), heard’st (heard), saw’st (saw), hadst (had), dost (do), seest (see), and camest (came).

isle: island

’tis: it is

tended: cared for; looked after

What seest thou else: What else do you see

abysm: a form of abyss, a hole or gap so deep it cannot be measured

since: ago

Milan: a city in northern Italy, usually pronounced mih-LAN, but in Shakespeare’s play pronounced MILL-un
PROSPERO
Aye, thy father, who was Duke of Milan,
And thou his only heir, a princess.

MIRANDA
O the heavens!
What foul play had we that we came from thence?*

PROSPERO
By foul play, as thou say’st, were we heaved thence.

[As PROSPERO speaks, each of the shipwrecked figures, when named, rises and stands with a neutral expression, as though caught in a spell—which they are.]

My brother and thy uncle, called Antonio—
[ANTONIO rises.]
O, that a brother should
Be so perfidious!—he whom next thyself
Of all the world I loved, and to him put
The manage of my state. For at that time,
I, thus neglecting worldly ends, all dedicated
To study and the bettering of my mind—
The government I cast upon my brother
And to my state grew stranger, being lost
And rapt in secret studies.** Thy false uncle—
Dost thou attend me?

MIRANDA
Sir, most heedfully.
** Act 1, Scene 2 **

** aye ** [pronounced “eye”]: yes  
** heir **: a person who inherits something upon the death of another person

** foul play **: illegal or dishonest action  
** thence **: from that place

* Miranda is asking: What evil things were done to us that drove us away from that place? [from the city of Milan, where Prospero ruled as the Duke]

** heaved **: pulled or dragged

** perfidious **: not able to be trusted; deceptive  
** manage of my state **: management of the government  
** worldly ends **: practical matters

** Prospero explains that because he was so thoroughly wrapped up in his “secret studies,” he let his brother Antonio take over the governing of Milan.

** rapt **: completely absorbed in or fascinated by  
** secret studies **: studies done in secret; or, studies of secret subjects, such as the mysteries of magic  
** attend **: pay attention to

** heedfully **: with full attention
PROSPERO
I pray thee, mark me.
By being so retired, in my false brother
I waked an evil nature—for being thus lorded,
He did believe he was indeed the duke—
Dost thou hear?

MIRANDA
Your tale, sir, would cure deafness.

PROSPERO
Me, poor man, my library
Was dukedom large enough. Antonio,
He thinks me now incapable, and so
Confederates with the King of Naples,
[ALONSO rises.]
An enemy to me inveterate,
And with his traitorous brother, Sebastian.
[SEBASTIAN rises.]

MIRANDA
O the heavens!

PROSPERO
Alas, poor Milan!
Thy false uncle did pay them tribute; whereon,
One midnight, to a treacherous army
Did Antonio open the gates of Milan,
And in the dead of darkness hurried thence
Me and thy crying self.*
pray thee: ask you; urge you
mark me: pay careful attention to me
retired: withdrawn; private and apart
being thus lorded: given such power and authority
Dost thou hear?: Do you hear?

confederates: unites; joins as an ally

inveterate: having been for a long time
traitorous: having the character of a traitor, someone disloyal who betrays a cause or country

alas: an expression of sadness
tribute: payment (from one ruler to another)
whereon: an old word meaning, on which; upon which event
treachery: disloyal; traitorous

* As Prospero explains it, his brother, Antonio, made an agreement with Prospero's long-time enemy, Alonso, the king of Naples, and the king's brother, Sebastian. In exchange for money and loyalty, King Alonso agreed to make Antonio the Duke of Milan by sending an army to invade Milan and overthrow Prospero. In the dark of night, Antonio himself opened the city gates to the invaders, who forced Prospero and Miranda—at the time, a crying baby—to leave the city.
MIRANDA
Alack, for pity!
I, not remembering how I cried out then,
Will cry it o’er again. Wherefore did they not
That hour destroy us?

PROSPERO
Dear, they dared not,
So dear the love my people bore me, set
A mark so bloody on the business. But,
In few, they hurried us aboard a bark,
Bore us some leagues to sea, where they prepared
A rotten carcass of a boat; the very rats
Instinctively had quit it. There they hoist us,
To cry to the sea that roared to us, to sigh
To the winds.

MIRANDA
Alack, what trouble was I then to you!

PROSPERO
O, a cherubin thou wast. Thou didst smile,
Infused with a fortitude from heaven.

MIRANDA
How came we ashore?

PROSPERO
By providence divine.
Some food we had and some fresh water that
A noble Neapolitan, Gonzalo,
**Act 1, Scene 2**

alack: an expression of sadness or dismay

o’er: over
wherefore: for what reason

in few: in short; in a few words
bark: boat
bore: carried
leagues: A league is an old measure of distance, about a few miles.
carcass: the remains of an old structure (such as a building, boat, or vehicle); the body of a dead animal
quit: left behind
hoist: lifted

cherubin: a cherub; an angel
infused: filled
fortitude: courage in the face of danger or great challenges

providence divine: God’s care and protection

Neapolitan: a person from the city of Naples
[GONZALO rises.]
Out of his charity did give us, with
Rich garments, linens, stuffs and necessaries,
Which since have helped us much; and, in his
gentleness,
Knowing I loved my books, he furnished me
From mine own library with volumes that
I prize above my dukedom.

[He looks at the shipwrecked figures and gestures with
his staff—all silently exit, as though sleepwalking:
FERDINAND leaves in one direction, STEPHANO and
TRINCULO in another, the others—ALONSO, GONZALO,
SEBASTIAN, and ANTONIO—in yet another.* As they
exit, PROSPERO continues to MIRANDA:]

Sit still and hear the last of our sea-sorrow.
Here in this island we arrived, and here
Have I, thy schoolmaster, made thee more profit
Than other princesses that have more time
For vainer hours and tutors not so careful.

MIRANDA
Heaven thank you for’t! And now, I pray you, sir,
For still ’tis beating in my mind, your reason
For raising this sea-storm?

PROSPERO
Know thus far forth.
By accident most strange, bountiful fortune
Hath mine enemies brought to this shore—
* The actors exit in different directions because, as you will soon see, they end up on different parts of the island.

made thee more profit: done you more good

vainer hours: more careless and unserious time

thus far forth: this much; to this extent
bountiful fortune: generous good luck
But here cease more questions.  
[He waves his hand over MIRANDA’s eyes.]  
Thou art inclined to sleep.  

[MIRANDA falls asleep. PROSPERO picks up his robe and puts it on. Then he lifts his staff and calls to the air.]  

Come away, servant, come. I am ready now.  
Approach, my Ariel, come.  

[Enter ARIEL.]²  

ARIEL  
All hail, great master; grave sir, hail! I come  
To answer thy best pleasure, be’t to fly,  
To swim, to dive into the fire, or ride  
On the curled clouds, to thy strong bidding task  
Ariel and all his quality.  

PROSPERO  
Hast thou, spirit,  
Performed to point the tempest that I bade thee?  

ARIEL  
To every article.  
I boarded the King’s ship; now on the beak,  
Now on the deck, in every cabin  
I flamed amazement. Sometimes I’d divide,  
And burn in many places; on the topmast,  
The yards and bowsprit, would I flame distinctly,  
Then meet and join.
② SEE Think About Performance: Costuming (page 248).

All hail: an old expression of greeting
grave: important
To answer thy best pleasure: To fulfill your greatest wish
be’t: be it [whether it be]
bidding: ordering someone to do something
task: assign work to
all his quality: The meaning of this phrase is uncertain. Some scholars think it means “all his skills.” Some think it refers to “all those like Ariel”—other spirits who assist Ariel in his magical work.
to point: precisely; exactly
bade: ordered

To every article: To the last detail.
beak: the bow; the front end of a ship

yards: the bars from which the ship’s sails are hung
bowsprit: a pole extending from the ship’s bow, for holding the lower edge of a sail
distinctly: in separate places
PROSPERO
My brave spirit!

ARIEL
Not a soul but felt a fever of the mad.
All but mariners plunged in the foaming Brine and quit the vessel.

PROSPERO
Why that’s my spirit!
But are they, Ariel, safe?

ARIEL
Not a hair perished.
In troops I have dispersed them ‘bout the isle.
And as thou bad’st me, the King’s son, Ferdinand,
Have I landed by himself, whom I left
Sitting and sighing, his arms in this sad knot.

[ARIEL crosses his arms and makes a sad face.]

PROSPERO
How hast thou disposed of the King’s ship?

ARIEL
Safely in harbor is the King’s ship,
The mariners all under hatches stowed,
Who with a charm I have left asleep.

PROSPERO
Ariel, thy charge
Exactly is performed. But there’s more work.
**Act 1, Scene 2**

- **a fever of the mad**: a feverish feeling of madness
- **mariners**: sailors
- **brine**: salt water

- **dispersed**: spread (them) out
- **bad’st** [a single syllable pronounced with long “a” sound]: ordered

- **disposed of**: dealt with

- **hatches**: openings in the deck of a ship that lead to the cabins below
- **charm**: magic spell

- **charge**: duty; task
ARIEL [not pleased]
Is there more toil?
Let me remember thee what thou hast promised.

PROSPERO
How now? Moody?
What is’t thou canst demand?

ARIEL
My liberty.

PROSPERO
Before the time be out?* No more!

ARIEL
I prithee,
Remember I have done thee worthy service;
Told thee no lies, made thee no mistakings, served
Without or grudge or grumblings.

PROSPERO
Dost thou forget
From what a torment I did free thee?

ARIEL
No.

PROSPERO
Hast thou forgot the foul witch Sycorax?
Hast thou forgot her?
Act 1, Scene 2

toil: work
remember: remind

How now?: An expression with various meanings, here asking: What’s the meaning of this?

* Ariel has agreed to serve Prospero for a certain period of time, which has not yet run out. The following lines in the play explain this agreement.

No more!: Say no more. Speak no further about it.

prithee: pray thee; ask you

torment: severe suffering

Sycorax: pronounced SICK-oh-rax
ARIEL
No, sir.

PROSPERO
Thou hast! Thou wast her servant, a spirit
Too delicate to act her abhorred commands—
For which she did confine thee
Into a cloven pine, within which rift
Imprisoned thou didst painfully remain
A dozen years, within which time she died
And left thee there. Is not this true?

ARIEL
Ay, sir.

PROSPERO
Then did this island know no human shape—
Save for the whelp that she did litter here—

ARIEL
Yes, Caliban, her son.

PROSPERO
—that dull thing
Whom now I keep in service. Thou best know’st
What torment I did find thee in; thy groans
Did make wolves howl and penetrate the breasts
Of ever angry bears. It was mine art,
When I arrived and heard thee, that made gape
The pine and let thee out.
abhorred: hated; despised

cloven: split; divided

rift: a crack or split in something

save for: except for

whelp: a young animal, such as a pup or cub

litter: give birth to (usually said of animals)

torment: great suffering

mine art: my powers of magic

gape: open wide
ARIEL
I thank thee, master.

PROSPERO
If thou more murmur’st, I will rend an oak
And peg thee in his knotty entrails till
Thou hast howled away twelve winters.

ARIEL
Pardon, master; I will do as you command.

PROSPERO
Do so, and after two days
I will discharge thee.

ARIEL
That’s my noble master!
What shall I do? Say what, what shall I do?

PROSPERO
Go make thyself like a nymph of the sea;
Be subject to no sight but thine and mine,
Invisible to every eyeball else.

[MIRANDA stirs.]

My clever Ariel, hark in thine ear. [He whispers to Ariel.]

ARIEL
My lord, it shall be done!

[Exit ARIEL.]
rend: tear apart
entrails: inner parts; guts

discharge thee: set you free

nymph: in mythology, a nature spirit in the form of a beautiful young girl

hark: pay close attention
PROSPERO [to MIRANDA]
Awake, dear heart, awake! Thou hast slept well. Awake!

MIRANDA
The strangeness of your story put
Heaviness in me.

PROSPERO
Shake it off. Come on,
We’ll visit Caliban, my slave, who never
Yields us kind answer.

MIRANDA
’Tis a villain, sir,
I do not love to look on.

PROSPERO
But, as ‘tis,
We cannot miss him: he does make our fire,
Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices
That profit us. Caliban! Thou earth, thou! speak.

CALIBAN [within]*
There’s wood enough within.

PROSPERO
Come forth, I say! There’s other business for thee.
Come, thou tortoise! When?

[Enter CALIBAN.]
yields us kind answer: gives us a kind word

miss: do without
serves in offices: performs duties
profit us: do us good; are useful to us
Thou earth: You low thing of earth [Note that Caliban is described as a thing of earth, in contrast to Ariel, who is associated with air and water.]

* The stage direction “within” means that the speaker is not on the main stage but in some other space, such as in an imagined room next door, or, in this case, perhaps in the cave where Caliban lives. In some productions, Caliban speaks from under the stage, and enters through a trap door in the stage floor.
CALIBAN
A wicked dew blister you all over!
This island’s mine, by Sycorax my mother,
Which thou takest from me! When thou cam’st first,
Thou strok’st me and made much of me, wouldst give me
Water with berries in’t, and teach me how
To name the bigger light, and how the less,
That burn by day and night. And then I loved thee
And showed thee all the qualities o’ the isle,
The fresh springs, brine pits, barren place and fertile.
Cursed be I that did so! All the charms
Of Sycorax—toads, beetles, bats—light on you!

PROSPERO
Thou most lying slave,
I have used thee with humane care and lodged thee
In mine own cell, till thou didst seek to harm
My only child.

MIRANDA
Thou know’st I pitied thee,
Took pains to make thee speak, taught thee each hour
One thing or other. When thou didst not know
Thine own meaning, I endowed thy purposes
With words that made them known.

PROSPERO
Though thou didst learn,
Thou hadst that in thee which good natures
Could not abide to be with; therefore wast thou
Deservedly confined into this rock,
Who hadst deserved more than a prison.
 strok’st: stroked (petted)

 qualities o’: best features of
 brine pits: wells or springs of very salty water (which can be collected and then left to evaporate, leaving behind salt)
 charms: magic spells

 humane: kind and merciful
 cell: a small, humble place to live [As used here, cell does not mean a place of imprisonment. On this island, Prospero’s cell was likely a cave.]

 endowed thy purposes: supplied your intentions

 abide: tolerate; bear; stand
 confined into this rock: locked up in this cave
CALIBAN
You taught me language; and my profit on’t
Is, I know how to curse. The red plague rid you
For learning me your language!

PROSPERO
Hag-seed, hence! Fetch us in fuel.
If thou neglect’st my command, I’ll make thee roar
That beasts shall tremble at thy din.

CALIBAN [aside]*
I must obey; his art is of such power—

PROSPERO
Hence!**

[Exit CALIBAN. Re-enter ARIEL, invisible, with music,
leading FERDINAND.***]

ARIEL [singing]
Come unto these yellow sands,
And then take hands.
Hark hark, I hear
The strain of strutting chanticleer
Cry cock a doodle dow.

FERDINAND
Where should this music be? In the air or the earth?
[The music fades away.]
It sounds no more. Sitting on a bank,
Weeping again the King my father’s wreck,
my profit on’t: the good I got from it
rid you: get rid of you (in other words, destroy or kill you)

hag-seed: child of a witch
fuel: wood for the fire
din: a loud, long noise

* In a play, when an actor speaks an aside, the lines are heard by the audience but it is understood that the other actors do not hear them.

** See the Introduction to this book for a discussion of Prospero’s enslavement and harsh treatment of Caliban.

*** As for music, Ariel can play an instrument, or the music can come from offstage, as though from a magical source. Also, when Ferdinand enters, he remains distant from Prospero and Miranda and does not notice them, though they see him.

strain: a part of a piece of music
chanticleer: a rooster

Where should this music be?: Where is this music coming from? What is its source?
on a bank: by the water
weeping again: once more crying about
This music crept by me upon the waters
With its sweet air. Thence I have followed it,
Or it hath drawn me rather. But ’tis gone.
No, it begins again.

ARIEL [singing]

Full fathom five thy father lies;
Of his bones are coral made;
Those are pearls that were his eyes,
Nothing of him that doth fade
But doth suffer a sea-change
Into something rich and strange.
Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell.*

SPIRITS [singing offstage]

Ding-dong, ding-dong.

ARIEL

Hark! now I hear them.

SPIRITS [singing offstage]

Ding-dong dell.

PROSPERO [to MIRANDA]

Advance, and say what thou seest yonder.

MIRANDA [seeing FERDINAND]

What is’t? A spirit?
Lord, how it looks about! Believe me, sir,
It carries a brave form. But ’tis a spirit.
thence: from that place

fathom five: a depth of about 30 feet (a fathom is six feet)

suffer a sea-change: undergo a complete transformation
knell: the sound of a bell rung for a funeral

* Ferdinand thinks that his father, King Alonso, has drowned in the shipwreck. Ariel’s song describes what will happen over time to the King’s body underwater—his bones will turn to coral, his eyes to pearls, and everything about him will be transformed into something “rich and strange.”

hark: listen

advance: come forward
yonder: over there

brave form: handsome shape
PROSPERO
No, child; it eats and sleeps and hath such senses
As we have such. This gallant which thou seest
Was in the wreck. He hath lost his fellows
And strays to find them; and, but he’s something stained
With grief, thou mightst call him a goodly person.

MIRANDA
I might call him a thing divine,
For nothing natural I ever saw so noble.

[MIRANDA approaches FERDINAND.]

PROSPERO [aside]
It goes on, I see, as my soul prompts it.
[to Ariel] Spirit, fine spirit! I’ll free thee
Within two days for this.

FERDINAND [seeing MIRANDA but not PROSPERO]
Most sure, the goddess
On whom these airs attend! Grant my prayer,
To know if you do live upon this island;
And that you will some good instruction give
How I may bear me here. My prime request,
Which I do last pronounce, is—O, you wonder!—
If you be maid or no?

MIRANDA
No wonder, sir;
But certainly a maid.
gallant [here pronounced GAL-unt]: fine-looking gentleman

but he’s something stained / With grief: except that his looks are marked by deep sadness

goodly: attractive; admirable

divine: like a god or spirit

as my soul prompts it: just as I have hoped and planned

On whom these airs attend: For whom this music is played

maid: a human girl (as opposed to a goddess); also, an unmarried woman
FERDINAND
My language! Heavens!
[suddenly struck by a sad thought]
I am foremost of those that speak this speech,
Were I but home in Naples.

PROSPERO [stepping forth]
How? Foremost?
What wert thou if the King of Naples heard thee?

FERDINAND
I wonder to hear thee speak of Naples.
Myself am Naples, who with mine eyes beheld
The King my father wrecked.

MIRANDA
Alack, for mercy!

FERDINAND
Yes, faith, and all his lords.

PROSPERO [aside]
At the first sight they have changed eyes.
Delicate Ariel, I’ll set thee free for this.
[to FERDINAND, sternly] A word, good sir;
I fear you have said what is not so. A word.

MIRANDA
Why speaks my father so ungently? This
Is the third man that e’er I saw, the first
That e’er I sighed for.
foremost: highest in importance or social position (because Ferdinand—thinking that his father, the King, has drowned—now thinks of himself as the King of Naples)

Myself am Naples: I am now King of Naples

faith: When used as it is in this sentence, “faith” is an expression of emphasis, like saying “indeed.”

have changed eyes: have fallen in love at first sight

e’er: ever
FERDINAND
O, I'll make you the Queen of Naples!

PROSPERO
Soft, sir! One word more.

[aside] They are both in either's powers, but this swift business
I must uneasy make, lest too light winning
Make the prize light.*

[to FERDINAND] One word more; I charge thee
That thou attend me. Thou hast put thyself
Upon this island as a spy, to win it
From me, the lord on’t.

FERDINAND
No, as I am a man.

MIRANDA
There’s nothing ill can dwell in such a temple.**

PROSPERO
[to FERDINAND] Follow me.
[to MIRANDA] Speak not you for him; he’s a traitor.
[to FERDINAND] Come,
I’ll manacle thy neck and feet together.
Sea-water shalt thou drink; thy food shall be
Withered roots and husks. Follow.

FERDINAND
No. I will resist till mine enemy has more power.
Act 1, Scene 2

Soft: An expression that can have various meanings, including: Silence; Hold on; Enough. Here, Prospero means, “Now hold on just a minute!”

uneasy: difficult

* Prospero hoped that Miranda and Ferdinand would fall in love quickly—but not too quickly, because, he says, love so easily won might be too little valued. So he decides to create difficulties that Ferdinand must overcome.

charge: command
attend me: pay attention to me
on’t: on it

ill: bad; evil

** The “temple” that Miranda refers to is Ferdinand’s outward form. She is saying that nothing bad could live within someone who looks so good.

traitor: a person who betrays another person, a country, or a principle
manacle: chain together

withered: dried up
husks: the dry outer coverings of some seeds or fruits
[He draws his sword. With a wave of his staff, PROSPERO freezes FERDINAND still as a statue.]

MIRANDA
O dear father,
Make not too rash a trial of him, for
He's gentle and not fearful.

PROSPERO
Put thy sword up, traitor,
For I can here disarm thee with this stick
And make thy weapon drop.

MIRANDA [running to her father and clutching his robe]
Beseech you, father.

PROSPERO
Hence! Hang not on my garments.

MIRANDA
Sir, have pity.

PROSPERO
Hush.
Thou think’st there is no more such shapes as he,
Having seen but him and Caliban. Foolish girl,
To the most of men this is a Caliban
And they to him are angels.*
rash: hasty; hotheaded
not fearful: not a threat; not something to cause fear

this stick: Prospero’s magic staff

Beseech you: I beg you

hence: go away
garments: clothing

* To Miranda—who finds Ferdinand very handsome—Prospero says that compared to Ferdinand, most men look like angels, while Ferdinand is no better-looking than Caliban.
MIRANDA
My affections
Are then most humble; I have no ambition
To see a goodlier man.

PROSPERO [to Ferdinand]
Come on, obey.

FERDINAND
My spirits, as in a dream, are all bound up.
Yet this man’s threats are but light to me,
Might I but through my prison once a day
Behold this maid.

PROSPERO
[aside] It works. Thou hast done well, fine Ariel!
[to FERDINAND] Come on. Follow me.
[to ARIEL] Hark what thou else shalt do.
[He whispers to ARIEL.]

MIRANDA [to FERDINAND]
Be of comfort;
My father’s of a better nature, sir,
Than he appears by speech.

PROSPERO [to ARIEL]
Thou shalt be free
As mountain winds—till then, exactly do
All points of my command.
Act 1, Scene 2

humble: simple

light: of little weight or importance; easy to bear
ARIEL
To the syllable.

[Exit.]

PROSPERO
[to FERDINAND] Come, follow.
[to MIRANDA] Speak not for him.

[As they exit—PROSPERO magically leading FERDINAND, with MIRANDA following anxiously—the three SPIRITS enter and address the audience.]

SPIRIT 2 [looking at where PROSPERO exited]
Remind me not to get on his bad side.

SPIRIT 3
Does he have a good side?

SPIRIT 1
Come on, you two, we’ve got a story to tell.

SPIRIT 3
Oh, right! Once upon a time . . .

SPIRIT 2 [quickly interrupting]
Not that story!

SPIRIT 1 [to the audience]
Imagine that we’re now on another part of the island.
SPIRIT 2
And here we find some of the survivors of the shipwreck.

[Enter ALONSO, SEBASTIAN, ANTONIO, and GONZALO. In the following lines, whenever a SPIRIT names a character, that character steps forth.]

SPIRIT 3
There’s Alonso, the King of Naples, who’s very sad because he thinks he has lost his son in the shipwreck.

[ALONSO sighs and moves to one side of the stage.]

SPIRIT 1
And there’s the King’s brother, Sebastian.

[SEBASTIAN sneers at the audience and moves to the opposite side of the stage.]

SPIRIT 2
And there’s Antonio, who betrayed his own brother, Prospero.

[ANTONIO sneers at the audience and moves to the side of the stage with SEBASTIAN.]

SPIRIT 3
And there’s the good old counselor, Gonzalo, who is trying to cheer up the sad King.

[The SPIRITS exit.]
sneer: smile or speak in a mocking or sarcastic way

counselor: adviser
ACT II
GONZALO: Now, good angels preserve the king!
ACT 2

SCENE I. ANOTHER PART OF THE ISLAND.

GONZALO [to ALONSO]
Beseech you, sir, be merry; you have cause,
So have we all, of joy, for our escape
Is much beyond our loss. Good sir, weigh
Our sorrow with our comfort.

ALONSO
Prithee, peace.

SEBASTIAN [to ANTONIO]*
He receives comfort like cold porridge.

ANTONIO [to SEBASTIAN]
The counselor will not give up on him.

GONZALO [to ALONSO]
The air breathes upon us here most sweetly.

SEBASTIAN
As if it had lungs, and rotten ones.

ANTONIO
Or as ’twere perfumed by a swamp.
Prithee, peace: Please, be quiet

* In this scene, Sebastian and Antonio exchange remarks that meanly make fun of Gonzalo as he tries to comfort the King.
GONZALO
Here is everything advantageous to life.

ANTONIO
True, save means to live.

SEBASTIAN
Of that there’s none, or little.

GONZALO
How lush the grass looks! How green!

ANTONIO
He misses not much.

SEBASTIAN
No; he doth but mistake the truth totally.

GONZALO
But the rarity of it is—which is indeed almost beyond belief—

SEBASTIAN
As many rarities are.

GONZALO
That our garments, being drenched in the sea, hold their freshness and gloss, seeming rather new-dyed than stained with salt water.
advantageous: favorable; helpful

save: except for
ANTONIO
If but one of his pockets could speak, would it not say he lies?

SEBASTIAN
I think he will carry this island home in his pocket and give it his son for an apple.

GONZALO
Methinks our garments are now as fresh as when we put them on first in Africa, at the marriage of your fair daughter Claribel to the King of Tunis.

SEBASTIAN [bitterly]
’Twas a sweet marriage, and we prosper well in our return.*

ANTONIO
What impossible matter will he make easy next?

GONZALO
Is not, sir, my doublet as fresh as the first day I wore it? I mean, when I wore it at your daughter’s marriage.

ALONSO
You cram these words into mine ears. I wish I had never married my daughter there!
For coming thence, my son is lost.

GONZALO
Sir, he may live;
I doubt not he came alive to land.
Methinks: I think

Tunis: a city in northern Africa

* Sebastian speaks with heavy irony here, because he means the opposite of what he says. In their return journey from Africa, they have not “prospered well” but instead have been shipwrecked.

doublet: a short, close-fitting jacket, with or without sleeves (worn in Shakespeare’s time)

thence: from that place
ALONSO
No, no, he’s gone.

SEBASTIAN [to ALONSO]
Sir, you may thank yourself for this great loss,
That would not bless our Europe with your daughter,
But rather wed her in far Africa,
Where she is banished from your eye.

ALONSO
Prithee, peace.

SEBASTIAN
We have lost your son, I fear, forever.
The fault’s your own.

ALONSO
So is the greatest of the loss.

GONZALO
My lord Sebastian,
The truth you speak doth lack some gentleness.
You rub the sore when you should bring the plaster.

SEBASTIAN
Very well.

GONZALO [to ALONSO]
If I were king of this island, my lord, what would I do?
banished: sent away

plaster: bandage

Very well: Here means “So what?”
SEBASTIAN
Avoid being drunk for lack of wine.

GONZALO*
In the commonwealth, no kind of business
Would I allow; no riches, poverty;
No man used in service to another.
All things in common nature should produce
Without sweat or endeavor. Treason, felony,
Sword, spear, knife, gun, or need of any weapon,
Would I not have; but nature should bring forth,
Of its own kind, all plenty, all abundance,
To feed my innocent people.
I would with such perfection govern, sir,
To excel the Golden Age.

SEBASTIAN [sarcastically]
God save his majesty!

ANTONIO [sarcastically]
Long live Gonzalo!

[Enter ARIEL, invisible.]

GONZALO [to ALONSO]
And—do you mark me, sir?

ALONSO
Prithee, no more.
Thou dost talk nothing to me.
* Gonzalo here describes his vision of an ideal society.

**commonwealth**: the nation

**in common**: to be shared by all

**endeavor**: hard effort; struggle

**the Golden Age**: in mythology, a time when the world was perfect

**do you mark me?**: are you listening to me?
[SEBASTIAN and ANTONIO laugh meanly at GONZALO.]

GONZALO
These gentlemen are of such nimble lung that they laugh at nothing.

ANTONIO
’Twas you we laughed at.

[Ariel casts a spell on GONZALO.]*

GONZALO [yawning, lying down]
Will you laugh me asleep—for I am very heavy.

[He sleeps.]

ALONSO
What, so soon asleep?
I wish mine eyes would shut up my thoughts.

[Ariel casts a spell on ALONSO.]

I find they are inclined to do so.

[He lies down.]

ANTONIO [to ALONSO]
We two, my lord,
Will guard your person while you take your rest,
And watch your safety.
nimble: quick and lively

* Ariel can use a gesture to cast a spell, or might use a musical instrument, such as a recorder, to play music that makes the men fall asleep.

We two: Sebastian and I
ALONSO
Thank you. Wondrous heavy . . .

[He sleeps.]

[Exit ARIEL.]

SEBASTIAN
What a strange drowsiness possesses them!

ANTONIO
It is the quality of the climate.

SEBASTIAN
Why doth it not our eyelids sink? I find
Myself not disposed to sleep.

ANTONIO
Nor I; my spirits are nimble.
But, noble Sebastian, thou let’st thy fortune
Sleep—die, rather—whiles thou art awake.*
O, worthy Sebastian, what shouldst thou be if—
No more.** —Yet methinks I see it in thy face,
What thou shouldst be.

SEBASTIAN
Prithee, say on.

ANTONIO
My strong imagination sees a crown
Dropping upon thy head.
**Antonio is saying that Sebastian is letting an opportunity pass by.**

***Antonio begins to say something but cuts himself off quickly—which (as he intends) makes Sebastian more curious to hear it.***

**drowsiness:** sleepiness, tiredness
SEBASTIAN
What! Art thou waking?

ANTONIO
Do you not hear me speak?

SEBASTIAN
I do, and surely
It is a sleepy language that thou speak’st.

ANTONIO
I am more serious than my custom. You
Must be so too, and heed me. Thus, sir:
[pointing to the sleeping GONZALO]
Although this lord of weak remembrance
Professes to persuade the King his son’s alive,
’Tis as impossible that he’s undrowned
As he that sleeps here swims.

SEBASTIAN
I have no hope
That he’s undrowned.

ANTONIO
O, out of that “no hope”
What great hope have you! Will you grant with me
That Ferdinand is drowned?

SEBASTIAN
He’s gone.
Art thou waking?: Are you awake?

than my custom: than I usually am
heed: pay attention to

of weak remembrance: whose memory is growing weak
professes: speaks in order to convince doubters
ALONSO
Then let Sebastian wake!

SEBASTIAN
What stuff is this?

ANTONIO
There be other men that can rule Naples
As well as he that sleeps. What a sleep were this
For your advancement! Do you understand me?

SEBASTIAN
Methinks I do. I do remember that
You did supplant your brother Prospero.

ANTONIO
True:
And look how well my garments sit upon me.

[Re-enter ARIEL, invisible.]

SEBASTIAN
But for your conscience?

ANTONIO
Ay, sir, where lies that? Here lies your brother,
No better than the earth he lies upon,
Whom I, with this obedient steel,* three inches of it,
Can lay to bed for ever; whiles you, doing thus,
[He makes a stabbing gesture at GONZALO.]
Might this ancient morsel put forever
To the perpetual wink.
What stuff is this?: What are you saying?

advancement: development; understanding

supplant: take the place of

conscience: sense of right and wrong

* Here Antonio would touch the sword or dagger at his side.

the perpetual wink: the closing of his eyes forever
SEBASTIAN
As thou got’st Milan, 
I’ll come by Naples. Draw thy sword!

ANTONIO
Draw together!

[As they raise their blades over the sleepers, ARIEL freezes them in mid-motion.]

ARIEL [to GONZALO]
My master through his art foresees the danger 
That you, his friend, are in, and sends me forth.

[Singing in GONZALO’S ear:]

While you here do snoring lie, 
Open-eyed conspiracy  
His time doth take.

[Still singing, moving to ALONSO:]

If of life you keep a care, 
Shake off slumber, and beware.  
Awake, awake!

[GONZALO and ALONSO wake and see SEBASTIAN and ANTONIO with blades drawn.]

GONZALO
Now, good angels preserve the king!
Draw: pull out (a weapon)

conspiracy: a secret plan by a group to do something

beware: watch out for danger

preserve the king: keep the king safe from danger
ALONSO
Why, how now? Why are you drawn?

SEBASTIAN [quickly lowering his sword, awkwardly making something up]
While we stood here securing your repose, 
Even now we heard a hollow burst of bellowing . . .
Like bulls . . . or rather, lions! Did’t not wake you?
It struck mine ear most terribly.

ALONSO
I heard nothing.

ANTONIO
O, ’twas a din to fright a monster’s ear.
Sure, ’twas the roar of a whole herd of lions.

ALONSO
Heard you this, Gonzalo?

GONZALO
Upon mine honor, sir, I heard a humming, 
And that a strange one too, which did awake me.
’Tis best we stand upon our guard,
Or that we quit this place.

ALONSO
Lead off this ground, and let’s make further search
For my poor son.
**Act 2, Scene 1**

*Why are you drawn?:* Why have you drawn your swords?

*securing your repose:* protecting you while you rested  
*bellowing:* loud roaring
GONZALO
Heavens keep him from these beasts!
For sure he is on the island.

ALONSO
Lead away.

[They exit.]

ARIEL
Prospero, my lord, shall know what I have done;
So, King, go safely on to seek thy son.

[ARIEL exits.]

SCENE II. ANOTHER PART OF THE ISLAND.

[Enter the three SPIRITS, who speak to the audience.]

SPIRIT 1
Come with us now to another part of the island,
where you will meet two other survivors of the shipwreck.

SPIRIT 2
There’s Trinculo, the King’s jester.

[Enter TRINCULO, who notices the audience, does something silly, and then quickly exits.]*
**jester:** a man at the king’s court who “played the fool;” he did and said things to make others laugh

* The actor playing Trinculo can decide what do upon entering. Perhaps he or she makes a silly face, or turns a somersault—whatever is in character as a jester, whose job is to make the King laugh.
SPIRIT 2
And there’s Stephano,* the King’s butler.

[Enter STEPHANO, walking unsteadily, with a bottle.]

SPIRIT 3 [pulling out a copy of The Tempest (the book) and opening to a page near the beginning]
Wait, right here in the Cast List, it says “drunken butler.”

[STEPHANO belches loudly, and exits.]

SPIRIT 2 [disgusted]
Oh, that’s just lovely.

SPIRIT 3
Not exactly a role model, is he?

SPIRIT 1 [to his fellow SPIRITS]
Time to vanish—look, Caliban is coming!

[Together, they make a gesture to turn invisible, and then step aside while remaining onstage.]

[Enter CALIBAN, wearing a long, loose cloak,** and carrying firewood. There is a sound of thunder. CALIBAN puts down the wood.]

CALIBAN [shaking his fist]
All the infections that the sun sucks up
From bogs, fens, flats, on Prospero fall and make him
By inchmeal a disease!
Act 2, Scene 2

* The accent is on the first syllable: *STEPH-ano.*

**butler:** servant

**vanish:** disappear

* In performance, a blanket draped over Caliban’s shoulders can take the place of the cloak—it just needs to be big enough to cover Caliban and one other person later in the scene.

**bogs, fens, flats:** all kinds of marshy, swampy ground

**by inchmeal:** inch by inch
[The three SPIRITS, making their sounds—whistling, buzzing, hissing—make one quick circle around CALIBAN and then exit.]

His spirits hear me,
And yet I needs must curse. But they’ll not pinch me,
Pitch me in the mud, nor lead me in the dark
Out of my way, unless he bid ’em. But
For every trifl are they set upon me:
Sometime like apes that scowl and chatter at me
And after bite me, then like hedgehogs which
Lie tumbling in my barefoot way and mount
Their quills at my footfall. Sometime am I
All wound with adders who with cloven tongues
Do hiss me into madness.

[Enter TRINCULO.]

Lo, now, lo!
Here comes a spirit of his, to torment me
For bringing wood in slowly. I’ll fall flat;
Perchance he will not mind me.

[CALIBAN lies down and covers himself with his cloak;
his legs and arms partly stick out.]
I needs must: I have to; I can’t help but

bid: command
trifle: little thing

quills: the sharp spines of a hedgehog
adders: poisonous snakes
cloven: split in two

lo: an expression, as in “lo and behold,” meaning, look;
take notice

perchance: perhaps
mind: notice
TRINCULO
Here’s neither bush nor shrub to bear off any weather at all, and another storm brewing. If it should thunder as it did before, I know not where to hide my head. [looking upward] Yonder black cloud, yond huge one, cannot choose but fall by pailfuls. [He sees CALIBAN.]
What have we here? A man or a fish? Dead or alive? [He sniffs.] A fish—he smells like a fish; a very ancient and fish-like smell. [He looks more closely.] A strange fish! Legged like a man and his fins like arms! I do now let loose my opinion, this is no fish, but an islander that hath lately suffered by a thunderbolt. [thunder]
Alas, the storm is come again! My best way is to creep under his covering. There is no other shelter hereabouts; misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows. I will here shroud till the dregs of the storm be past.

[TRINCULO crawls under the cloak, his head at CALIBAN’S feet. Both pairs of legs stick out from under the cloak, and CALIBAN’S head is partly visible.]

[Enter STEPHANO, singing, a bottle in his hand.]

STEPHANO
I shall no more to sea, to sea,
Here shall I die ashore—
misery acquaints a man with strange bedfellows: suffering causes a person to become familiar with strange companions

shroud: hide or take cover
dregs: remains
This is a very scurvy tune to sing at a man’s funeral.
Well, here’s my comfort. 
[He drinks, and then sings.]

    What shall we do with a drunken sailor?
    What shall we do with a drunken sailor?—

[He hiccups loudly.]

CALIBAN
Do not torment me! Oh!

STEPHANO
What, have we devils here? I have not ‘scape[d] drowning to be afeard now of your—[he counts]—four legs.

CALIBAN [visibly trembling]
The spirit torments me! Oh!

STEPHANO
This is some monster of the isle, with four legs, who hath got, as I take it, an ague. Where the devil should he learn our language?

CALIBAN
Do not torment me, prithee; I’ll bring my wood home faster.
scurvy: a slang term meaning, worthless; lousy [Scurvy is a disease caused by a lack of vitamin C, which sailors with a poor diet suffered from in Shakespeare’s time.]

’scape: escaped
afeard: afraid

ague: an illness with fever and shivering
STEPHANO
I will give him some relief; he shall taste of my bottle. [He is struck by a sudden money-making idea.]
If I can recover him and keep him tame and get him to Naples, I will not charge too much for him! Come, open your mouth. [He pours from the bottle into CALIBAN’S mouth.] This will shake your shaking, I can tell you.

TRINCULO
I should know that voice—but he is drowned, and these are devils! Oh, defend me!

STEPHANO
Four legs and two voices—a most delicate monster! Come, I will pour some in thy other mouth.

TRINCULO
Stephano!

STEPHANO
Doth thy other mouth call me? Mercy, mercy! This is a devil, and no monster!

TRINCULO
Stephano? If thou be’st Stephano, speak to me, for I am Trinculo—be not afeard—thy good friend Trinculo!
STEPHANO
If thou be’st Trinculo, come forth. I’ll pull thee by the lesser legs. [He pulls him out from under the cloak.] Thou art very Trinculo indeed! How cam’st thou from this moon-calf?

TRINCULO
I took him to be killed with a thunderstroke. But art thou not drowned, Stephano? Is the storm overblown? I hid me under the dead moon-calf’s covering for fear of the storm. And art thou living, Stephano? [He grabs STEPHANO and twirls him around in joy.] O Stephano, two Neapolitans ’scaped!

STEPHANO [feeling queasy]
Prithee, do not turn me about; my stomach is not constant.

CALIBAN [aside]
These be fine things, if they be not spirits. That’s a brave god and bears celestial liquor. I will kneel to him.

STEPHANO [to TRINCULO]
How didst thou ’scape? I escaped upon a barrel of wine, which the sailors heaved o’erboard—by this bottle, I swear. [He drinks, then hands the bottle to TRINCULO.] Swear then how thou escapedst.

TRINCULO
Swum ashore, man, like a duck; I can swim like a duck, I’ll be sworn. [He drinks.]
**Act 2, Scene 2**

*moon-calf:* foolish monster

*Neopolitans:* citizens of Naples

*queasy:* feeling sick

*celestial:* heavenly
STEPHANO
Though thou canst swim like a duck, thou art made like a goose.

TRINCULO [holding up the bottle]
O Stephano, hast any more of this?

STEPHANO
The whole barrel, man!

CALIBAN [groveling at STEPHANO’S feet]
I’ll swear upon that bottle to be thy true subject, for the liquor is not earthly.

STEPHANO
How now, moon-calf! How does thine ague?

CALIBAN
Hast thou not dropped from heaven?

STEPHANO
Out of the moon, I do assure thee. I was the man in the moon, when time was.

CALIBAN
I have seen thee in her, and I do adore thee!

STEPHANO
Come, swear to that. [He offers the bottle to CALIBAN, who drinks.]
groveling: kneeling down in front of someone, asking for help or forgiveness

when time was: once long ago; once upon a time
TRINCULO
The man in the moon! A most poor credulous monster!

CALIBAN [to STEPHANO]
I’ll show thee every fertile inch of th’ island, and I will kiss thy foot, and swear myself thy subject.

STEPHANO
Come on, then; down, and swear.

TRINCULO
I shall laugh myself to death at this puppy-headed monster.

CALIBAN [kneeling before STEPHANO]
I’ll show thee the best springs; I’ll pluck thee berries; I’ll fish for thee, and get thee wood enough. A plague upon the tyrant that I serve! I’ll bear him no more sticks, but follow thee, Thou wondrous man.

TRINCULO
The poor monster’s in drink! A most ridiculous monster, to make a wonder of a poor drunkard!

CALIBAN
I prithee, let me bring thee where crabs grow, And I with my long nails will dig thee pignuts, Show thee a jay’s nest and instruct thee how To snare the nimble marmoset; I’ll bring thee To clustering filberts, and sometimes I’ll get thee Young mussels from the rocks. Wilt thou go with me?
credulous: gullible; easily fooled

tyrant: cruel ruler

in drink: drunk

pignuts: edible, nutty-tasting roots

marmoset: a small monkey
filberts: hazelnuts
mussels: shellfish that can be eaten
STEPHANO
I prithee now, lead the way without any more talking. Trinculo, the King and all our company else being drowned, we will inherit here!

CALIBAN [singing drunkenly]
Farewell, master; farewell, farewell!*  

TRINCULO
A howling monster, a drunken monster!

CALIBAN [drunkenly]
No more dams I’ll make for fish,  
Nor fetch in firing at requiring;  
Nor scrape trenchers, nor wash dish!  
Ban, Ban, Ca-caliban  
Has a new master, get a new man!

STEPHANO
O brave monster, lead the way!

[All exit, singing and dancing.]*
Act 2, Scene 2

**inherit:** be left with

* Caliban is saying goodbye to his old master, Prospero, as he has now sworn to serve Stephano.

**firing:** firewood; fuel for a fire  
**trenchers:** wooden platters

* In performance, you may wish to take a brief intermission at this point.
STEPHANO: Take thou that! As you like this, tell me I lie another time!
ACT 3

[The three SPIRITS enter and address the audience.]

SPIRIT 1
Come with us now to a place on the island near Prospero’s cell—that’s the cave that Prospero and Miranda live in.

[Enter FERDINAND, carrying a log. He puts it down, wipes his brow.]

SPIRIT 2
Here we find young Ferdinand—son to the King of Naples—doing the work Prospero has forced him to do.

[Ferdinand exits to get another log.]

SPIRIT 3
Even though the work is hard, Ferdinand doesn’t mind, because his thoughts are full of Miranda.

[Sighs deeply.]

[The SPIRITS exit.]
brow: forehead
SCENE I. NEAR PROSPERO’S CELL.

[Enter FERDINAND, carrying another log.]

FERDINAND
I am, in my condition, a prince; yea,
I do think a king, though I would not so!
This my mean task would be heavy to me,
But the mistress which I serve
Makes my labors pleasures. O, she is
Ten times more gentle than her father’s crabbed,
And he’s composed of harshness. I must remove
Some thousands of these logs and pile them up.
My sweet mistress weeps when she sees me work,
But these sweet thoughts do refresh my labors.

[Enter MIRANDA. Also enter PROSPERO, at a distance,
watching them, but unseen by FERDINAND and
MIRANDA.]

MIRANDA
Alas, now, pray you,
Work not so hard. I would the lightning had
Burnt up those logs that you are compelled to pile!
Pray, set it down and rest you. My father
Is hard at study; pray now, rest yourself;
He’s safe for these three hours.

FERDINAND
O most dear mistress,
The sun will set before I shall complete
What I must strive to do.
mean: humble [As a prince, Ferdinand would have servants to do most manual labor for him.]

crabbed: crabby; bad-tempered

compelled: forced

He’s safe: He’s safely in his study (where he will not see us)

strive: try
MIRANDA
If you’ll sit down,
I’ll bear your logs the while. Pray, give me that;
I’ll carry it to the pile.

FERDINAND
No, precious creature;
I had rather crack my sinews, break my back,
Than you should such dishonor undergo,
While I sit lazy by.

MIRANDA
You look wearily.

FERDINAND
No, noble mistress; ’tis fresh morning with me
When you are by at night. I do beseech you—
What is your name?

MIRANDA
Miranda. —O my father,
I have broke your hest to say so!* 

FERDINAND
Admired Miranda!
Indeed the top of admiration! You, O you,
So perfect and so peerless, are created
Of every creature’s best!

MIRANDA
I do not know.
crack my sinews: injure my muscles

hest: behest, which means, command; order

* As soon as she says her name, Miranda realizes that she has gone against her father’s command not to tell her name to Ferdinand.

peerless: having no equal
More that I may call men than you, good friend,
And my dear father; but I would not wish
Any companion in the world but you.

FERDINAND
Miranda, hear my soul speak:
The very instant that I saw you, did
My heart fly to your service; for your sake
Am I this patient log-man.

MIRANDA [simply]
Do you love me?

FERDINAND
O heaven, O earth, bear witness to this sound!
Beyond all limit of what else in the world—
[He shouts it to the sky.]
I do love, prize, honor you!

MIRANDA
I am a fool
To weep at what I am glad of.

PROSPERO [aside]
Fair encounter of two most rare affections!
Heavens rain grace on them.

FERDINAND
Wherefore weep you?
companion: partner

wherefore: for what reason; why
MIRANDA
At mine unworthiness.
I am your wife, if you will marry me.

FERDINAND
Ay, with willing heart. Here’s my hand.

MIRANDA
And mine, with my heart in’t. And now farewell
Till half an hour hence.

FERDINAND [giddily]
A thousand thousand!

[FERDINAND and MIRANDA exit separately.]

PROSPERO
So glad of this as they I cannot be,
Though nothing else could bring me greater joy.
I’ll to my book,
For yet ere suppertime must I perform
Much pertinent business.

[PROSPERO exits. The three SPIRITS enter. SPIRIT 3 is sobbing into a handkerchief. He blows his nose loudly.]

SPIRIT 1 [comforting SPIRIT 3]
There, there, it’s all fine.

SPIRIT 3
I can’t help it; I love a love story.
**A thousand thousand:** A million (fond farewells)

**ere:** before
[He sobs again and embraces SPIRIT 1 in a big, awkward hug.]

SPIRIT 2 [speaking as he gently nudges his fellow SPIRITS offstage]
Meanwhile, let’s catch up with Caliban and his new “friends”—if that’s the right word.

[They exit.]

SCENE II. ANOTHER PART OF THE ISLAND.

[Enter CALIBAN, STEPHANO, and TRINCULO—all a bit woozy. There is much passing back and forth of a bottle during this scene.]

STEPHANO
When the barrel is empty, we will drink water, not a drop before. Servant-monster, drink to me.

TRINCULO
They say there’s but five upon this isle.* We are three of them; if th’ other two be brained like us, the state totters.

STEPHANO
Drink, servant-monster. By this light, thou shalt be my lieutenant. Moon-calf, speak, if thou be’st a good moon-calf.
* Trinculo’s reference to “five upon this isle” suggests that Caliban has told him about Prospero and Miranda living on the island.

**brained like us:** as woozy-headed as we are

**the state totters:** this place is in bad shape

**lieutenant:** aide; assistant
CALIBAN
How does thy honor? Let me lick thy shoe. [pointing to TRINCULO] I’ll not serve him; he’s not valiant.

TRINCULO
Thou liest, most ignorant monster. Wilt thou tell a monstrous lie, being but half a fish and half a monster?

CALIBAN
Lo, how he mocks me! [to STEPHANO] Bite him to death, I prithee.

STEPHANO
Trinculo, keep a good tongue in your head. The poor monster’s my subject and he shall not suffer indignity.

CALIBAN
I thank my noble lord. Wilt thou be pleased to hearken once again to what I asked thee?

STEPHANO
Kneel and repeat it; I will stand, and so shall Trinculo.

[Enter ARIEL, invisible.]

CALIBAN [kneeling]
As I told thee before, I am subject to a tyrant, A sorcerer, that by his cunning hath Cheated me of the island.
valiant: courageous

indignity: humiliating treatment

hearken: listen

sorcerer: magician; wizard
cunning: trickiness
ARIEL [speaking in TRINCULO’S voice]*
Thou liest.

CALIBAN [leaping up]
Thou liest, thou jesting monkey, thou!
I do not lie.

STEPHANO
Trinculo, if you trouble him any more, by this hand [raising his fist], I will supplant some of your teeth.

TRINCULO
Why, I said nothing.

STEPHANO
Mum, then, and no more. [to CALIBAN] Proceed.

CALIBAN
I say, by sorcery he got this isle;
From me he got it. I’ll yield him thee asleep,
Where thou mayst knock a nail into his head.

ARIEL [speaking in TRINCULO’S voice]
Thou liest, thou canst not.

CALIBAN
[to TRINCULO] Thou scurvy patch!
[to STEPHANO] I do beseech thy greatness,
give him blows
And take his bottle from him.
* In performance, if Ariel speaks over Trinculo’s shoulder, the audience understands that Ariel is speaking in Trinculo’s voice. (Trinculo of course does not notice the invisible Ariel.)

**mum:** be silent

**yield:** provide

**scurvy patch:** an insult that means something like “worthless fool”

**blows:** sudden hard hits
STEPHANO
Trinculo, interrupt the monster one word further, and by this hand I’ll make a stockfish of thee.

TRINCULO

STEPHANO
Didst thou not say he lied?

ARIEL [speaking in TRINCULO’S voice]
Thou liest.

STEPHANO
Do I so? Take thou that! [He hits TRINCULO.]* As you like this, tell me I lie another time!

TRINCULO
I did not say you lie! A plague on your bottle, and on your monster, too!

CALIBAN
Ha, ha, ha!

STEPHANO
[to CALIBAN ] Now, forward with your tale. [to TRINCULO] Prithee, stand farther off. [TRINCULO slouches away but stays onstage.] [to CALIBAN ] Come, proceed.
Act 3, Scene 2

stockfish: dried fish

* In performance, actors know how to hit without hurting. In general, the person hitting makes little to no actual contact, while the person being hit convinces the audience by the way in which he or she reacts.
CALIBAN
Why, as I told thee, ’tis a custom with him,
In th’ afternoon to sleep. There thou mayst brain him,
Having first seized his books, or with a log
Batter his skull, or paunch him with a stake,
Or cut his throat with thy knife. Remember
First to possess his books, for without them
He hath not one spirit to command.
They all do hate him as rootedly as I.
Burn but his books!
And then, most deeply to consider is
The beauty of his daughter.

STEPHANO
Is it so fine a lass?

CALIBAN
Ay, lord, I warrant.

STEPHANO
Monster, I will kill this man. His daughter and I will
be king and queen, and Trinculo and thyself shall be
royalty. Dost thou like the plot, Trinculo?

TRINCULO [sulking]
Excellent.

STEPHANO
Give me thy hand. I am sorry I beat thee; but, while
thou livest, keep a good tongue in thy head.
paunch: stab in the belly

rootedly: firmly; strongly

I warrant: I assure you; I tell you truly
CALIBAN
Within this half hour will he be asleep.
Wilt thou destroy him then?

STEPHANO
Ay, on mine honor.

ARIEL [aside]
This will I tell my master.

CALIBAN
Thou mak’st me merry. Will you sing the song
You taught me but a while ago?

STEPHANO
At thy request, monster, I will do any reason. Come
on, Trinculo, let us sing.

[He opens his mouth but before he can start the song,
Ariel calls forth magical music.*]

CALIBAN
That’s not the tune.

STEPHANO
What is this song?

TRINCULO
This is some melody played by the picture of Nobody.
* Ariel can play the music, or the music can come from offstage at Ariel's command.
STEPHANO
If thou beest a man, show thyself! If thou beest a devil, do what you will!

TRINCULO
O, forgive me my sins!

STEPHANO
Mercy upon us!

CALIBAN
Art thou afeard?

STEPHANO [terrified]
No, monster, not I.

CALIBAN
Be not afeard. The isle is full of noises, Sounds and sweet airs that give delight and hurt not. Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments Will hum about mine ears, and sometime voices That, if I then had waked after long sleep, Will make me sleep again; [full of wonder] and then, in dreaming, The clouds methought would open and show riches Ready to drop upon me that, when I waked, I cried to dream again.③

STEPHANO
This will prove a brave kingdom to me, where I shall have my music for nothing.
Act 3, Scene 2

airs: tunes; melodies

I cried to dream again: I cried because I wished to be back in the dream again

SEE Think About Performance: Language and Character (page 249).

for nothing: for free
CALIBAN
When Prospero is destroyed.

STEPHANO
That shall be by and by.

[ARIEL leads them away, following the music.]

TRINCULO
The sound is going away.

STEPHANO
Lead, monster; we’ll follow!

[All exit as the music fades.]

[The three SPIRITS enter and address the audience.]

SPIRIT 1
So, Caliban and his friends—

SPIRIT 3
Idiot friends—

SPIRIT 1
—are off to do their dirty work.

SPIRIT 2
Fortunately, Ariel—

SPIRIT 3
My hero!
by and by: soon
SPIRIT 2
Ariel is off to warn Prospero.

SPIRIT 1
We now move from one group of nasty schemers to another. Let’s see what’s happening with Antonio and Sebastian.

SPIRIT 2
Last time we saw them, they were ready to do away with King Alonso and his good old adviser, Gonzalo.

SPIRIT 3
Pay attention, folks, because we have a major part in this scene coming up! I’m so excited!

[They exit.]

SCENE III. ANOTHER PART OF THE ISLAND.

[Enter ALONSO and GONZALO, exhausted, followed by ANTONIO and SEBASTIAN.]

GONZALO
I can go no further; my old bones ache. By your patience, sir, I needs must rest me.

ALONSO
Old lord, I cannot blame thee. Sit down and rest. Here I will put off my hope. He is drowned Whom thus we stray to find. Well, let him go.
ANTONIO [aside to SEBASTIAN]
I am right glad that he’s so out of hope. Do not, for one setback, give up the purpose That you resolved to effect.

SEBASTIAN [aside to ANTONIO]
The next advantage Will we take thoroughly.

ANTONIO
Let it be tonight.

SEBASTIAN
I say, tonight. No more.

[Solemn and strange music comes out of nowhere.]

ALONSO
What harmony is this? My good friends, hark!

GONZALO
Marvelous sweet music!

[Enter PROSPERO above and behind, invisible. Enter the three SPIRITS, fantastically costumed, carrying platters of delicious food—fruits, pastries, etc., a banquet for the hungry survivors of the shipwreck.* The SPIRITS make motions that invite the men to eat. Leaving behind the food, they depart, and the music fades away.]

ALONSO
Give us kind keepers, heavens! What were these?
for: because of

* The banquet can also be carried in on a small table, already laid out with food.

keepers: protectors; guardians
SEBASTIAN
Now I will believe there are unicorns
In Arabia.

ANTONIO
I’ll be sworn ’tis true.

GONZALO
If in Naples I should report this now,
Who would believe me?

ANTONIO
They vanished strangely.

SEBASTIAN
Will’lt please you taste of what is here?

ALONSO
Not I.

GONZALO
Faith, sir, you need not fear.
For surely these are people of the island—
Who, though they are of monstrous shape, yet note,
Their manners are more gentle than many—
Nay, almost any—of our human kind.

PROSPERO [aside]
Honest lord,
Thou hast said well, for some of you there present
Are worse than devils.
ALONSO
I will stand to and feed,
Although my last; no matter, since I feel
The best is past.
[inviting the others to join him]
Brother, my lord the Duke—

[He is cut off by a sudden crash of thunder and lightning. Enter ARIEL, like a harpy. Enter the three SPIRITS, who, with terrible screeching noises, quickly remove the banquet and exit.]*

ARIEL [in a terrifying voice]
You are three men of sin,
That the never-satisfied sea
Hath belched up on this island
Where man doth not inhabit—
You 'mongst men being most unfit to live,
I have made you mad!

[ALONSO, SEBASTIAN, and ANTONIO draw their swords.]

You fools! I and my fellows
Are ministers of Fate, invulnerable.
Your swords are now too massy for your strengths
And will not be uplifted.
[The men’s arms drop, pulling their swords down.]
But remember
That you three from Milan did supplant good
Prospero; exposed unto the sea,
Him and his innocent child—for which foul deed
The powers, not forgetting,** thee of thy son,
* In mythology, a harpy is a monstrous creature with a woman’s head and the wings and claws of a bird of prey, like a giant vulture. The harpy is associated with vengeance and punishment of wrongdoers. When the three Spirits enter here, they might wear masks with beaks to associate them with Ariel-as-harpy.

‘mongst: among

invulnerable: impossible to attack
massy: heavy

supplant: forcefully take the place of

** Ariel is saying that the higher powers have not forgotten how Prospero was wronged.
Alonso, they have bereft, and do pronounce by me
Lingering perdition!

[ARIEL vanishes in thunder, leaving them stunned.]

PROSPERO
Bravely the figure of this harpy hast thou
Performed, my Ariel; a grace it had, devouring.
My high charms work,
And these mine enemies are all knit up
In their distractions. They now are in my power;
And in these fits I leave them, while I visit
Young Ferdinand, who they suppose is drowned.④

[Exit.]

SEBASTIAN [staggering up]
Come one fiend at a time, I’ll fight their legions o’er.

ANTONIO
I’ll be at thy side.

[SEBASTIAN and ANTONIO exit together.]

GONZALO [to ALONSO, who is still stunned]
In the name of all that’s holy, sir, why stand you
In this strange stare?

ALONSO
O, it is monstrous, monstrous!
The winds did sing it to me, and the thunder,
Deep and dreadful, did pronounce the name of
Prospero. It did roar forth my offense—
**Act 3, Scene 3**

*they*: the “powers” that Ariel mentioned earlier  
*bereft*: deprived  
*lingering perdition*: long-lasting punishment

**knit up / In their distractions**: entangled in their mad visions

SEE Think About Performance: Character and Motivation (page 249).

*fiend*: evil spirit

*offense*: crime
Therefore my son in the ooze is bedded. 
I’ll seek him, and with him there lie mudded.*

[Exit, following SEBASTIAN and ANTONIO.]

GONZALO
Alas, he is desperate. His great guilt,
Like poison now begins to bite the spirit.
I’ll follow and hinder him from what this
Madness may provoke him to.

[Exit, following ALONSO.]

[Enter the three SPIRITS.]

SPIRIT 1
And so our good old friend Gonzalo is hurrying off to 
keep King Alonso from doing anything desperate.

SPIRIT 2
The King blames himself for his son’s death. But we 
know that his son is very much alive.

SPIRIT 3
Let’s check in on Ferdinand and Miranda, and see 
what our starry-eyed young couple are up to.

[Exit.]
ooze: soft mud

* Alonso’s speech shows he feels great guilt. He heard the thunder proclaim his crimes (his offense) against Prospero—and because of these wrongs, his son (so Alonso thinks) lies dead under the mud at the ocean’s bottom. In his grief, Alonso says he will join his son there.

hinder: prevent
PROSPERO: Spirit, we must prepare to meet with Caliban.
ACT 4

SCENE I. BEFORE PROSPERO’S CELL.

[Enter FERDINAND followed by MIRANDA chasing him; laughing, she chases him back and forth, till they stop to catch their breath. He takes her hands. Enter PROSPERO; FERDINAND immediately drops her hands.]

PROSPERO [to FERDINAND—reassuring him]
All thy vexations
Were but my trials of thy love, and thou
Hast strongly stood the test. O Ferdinand,
Thou shalt find she will outrun all praise
And make it halt behind her.

FERDINAND
I do believe it,
As I hope for quiet days and long life
With such love as ’tis now.

PROSPERO
Fairly spoke. [He joins their hands.]
Sit then and talk with her; she is thine own.

[FERDINAND and MIRANDA sit and mime a conversation. PROSPERO steps aside and calls out:]

Ariel! My industrious servant, Ariel!
vexations: things that irritate and trouble you
trials: tests

halt: stop

mime: to show action and emotion by using gestures, movements, and expressions, but no words

industrious: hard-working
[Enter ARIEL.]

ARIO
Master, here I am.

PROSPERO
Thou and thy spirit fellows your last service*
Did worthily perform, and I must use you
In such another trick; for I must
Bestow upon the eyes of this young couple
Some vanity of mine art. It is my promise,
And they expect it from me.

ARIO
Presently?

PROSPERO
Ay, with a twink.

ARIO
Before you can say “come” and “go”!
[ARIO turns to leave, then quickly turns back to
PROSPERO.]
Do you love me, master? No?

PROSPERO
Dearly, my delicate Ariel.
* This “last service” refers to the spirits who brought in the banquet and Ariel’s appearance as the harpy.

**bestow upon:** to present as a gift

**vanity:** trifle; an unimportant thing

**presently:** soon

**with a twink:** in the twinkling of an eye; quick as a wink
[ARIEL exits in a flash. PROSPERO turns back to FERDINAND and MIRANDA. FERDINAND is whispering something in her ear, their heads close together—is FERDINAND is about to kiss MIRANDA. PROSPERO places a firm grip on FERDINAND’s shoulder.]

PROSPERO
Look thou be true. Do not give dalliance Too much the rein.*

FERDINAND [on his best behavior]
I assure you, sir.

PROSPERO
Well.—
Now come, my Ariel! Appear and pertly! [to FERDINAND and MIRANDA]
No talk; all eyes—be silent.

[Music—a pageant begins, to celebrate the upcoming wedding of FERDINAND and MIRANDA. Enter ARIEL, masked, leading the three SPIRITS,** festively costumed as three goddesses from ancient mythology.]

ARIEL [gesturing toward the three goddesses]
Of their society, be not afraid,
But greet their deity:
Juno, queen of the gods;
[SPIRIT 1 steps forth as Juno, then steps to one side.]
Ceres, goddess of the earth and harvest;
[SPIRIT 2 steps forth as Ceres, then steps to the other side.]
**dalliance**: casual flirting

**rein**: a strap used to guide a horse while riding (To “give the rein” is to let the horse run freely.)

* Prospero is warning Ferdinand not to treat his relationship with Miranda lightly.

**pertly**: in a lively way

**pageant**: a play or performance, sometimes made up of scenes from history or old legends

**diety**: gods or goddesses

**In this version, the three Spirits are assigned to play the goddesses, but other actors may play these parts.**
And Iris, goddess of the rainbow and messenger of the gods.
[SPIRIT 3 steps forth as Iris.]

[ARIEL exits.]

IRIS
Ceres, most bounteous lady!
The queen of the sky,
Whose messenger am I,
Bids thee leave these,
Thy rich fields of barley, oats, and peas—
And come to this grassy place
To sport with her sovereign grace.

CERES [joining ISIS]
Hail, many-colored messenger.
Why hath thy queen
Summoned me hither
To this short-grassed green?

IRIS
A contract of true love to celebrate.

CERES [seeing JUNO approaching]
Great Juno comes, highest queen of state!

JUNO [to CERES]
How does my bounteous sister? Go with me,
To bless this pair, that they may prosperous be.
bounteous: generous

sovereign: royal

hither: to this place

highest queen of state: the most majestic queen

prosperous: successful
[JUNO and CERES approach FERDINAND and MIRANDA.]

JUNO [singing]
Honor, riches, marriage-blessing,
Long continuance, and increasing,
Hourly joys be still upon you!
Juno sings her blessings on you.

CERES [singing]
Spring come to you at the farthest
In the very end of harvest!*  
Scarcity and want shall shun you;
Ceres' blessing is upon you.

FERDINAND
This is a most majestic vision.  
May I be bold to think these spirits?

PROSPERO
Spirits, which by mine art
I have from their confines called to enact
My present fancies.

FERDINAND
Let me live here ever.  
So rare a wondered father and a wife
Makes this place paradise.
still: always

*Ceres wishes that spring may come as soon as the harvest is over.

want: poverty
shun: avoid; stay away from

fancies: imaginings

wondered: able to perform wonders
IRIS [calling out]
You spirits of the wandering brooks,
With grassy crowns and harmless looks,
To this green land
Juno does command,
Come, and true love celebrate!
Come! Be not too late.

[Music. Enter the Water Spirits; they dance. As the dance
nears its end, PROSPERO stands up suddenly. The music
and dancing abruptly stop. There is a strange, hollow,
and confused noise;* the dancers vanish.]

PROSPERO [upset]
I had forgot that foul conspiracy
Of the beast Caliban and his confederates
Against my life. The minute of their plot
Is almost come.
[to the SPIRITS (as JUNO, CERES, and IRIS)]
Well done. Away; no more!

[SPIRITS exit.]

FERDINAND [to MIRANDA]
This is strange. Your father’s in some passion
That works him strongly.

MIRANDA
Never till this day
Saw I him touched with anger so distempered.
Shakespeare calls for this “strange, hollow, and confused noise,” but offers no specific explanation of what it means or where it comes from. The noise (however you choose to create it) seems to suggest Prospero’s suddenly upset emotional state, which breaks the harmony of the music and dance.

**passion:** state of intense emotion

**distempered:** troubled
PROSPERO [to FERDINAND]
You do look, my son,
As if you were dismayed. Be cheerful, sir.
Our revels now are ended. These our actors,
As I foretold you, were all spirits and
Are melted into air, into thin air;
And, like the baseless fabric of this vision,
The cloud-capped towers, the gorgeous palaces,
The solemn temples, the great globe itself,
Yea, all which it inherit, shall dissolve
And, like this insubstantial pageant faded,
Leave not a rack behind. We are such stuff
As dreams are made on, and our little life
Is rounded with a sleep. —Sir, I am vexed.
Bear with my weakness; my old brain is troubled.
If you be pleased, retire into my cell
And there repose. A turn or two I’ll walk,
To still my beating mind.⑤

FERDINAND and MIRANDA
We wish you peace.

[They exit.]

PROSPERO
Come with a thought! Ariel, come!

[Enter ARIEL.]

ARIEL
Thy thoughts I cleave to. What’s thy pleasure?
dismayed: discouraged; afraid
revels: lively entertainment
foretold you: told you earlier

baseless: not grounded in reality
this vision: the magical show just performed for Ferdinand and Miranda
all which it inherit: all who shall inherit it; all who shall ever live in the world
insubstantial: without substance; unreal; imaginary
rack: Shakespeare uses an old meaning of the word, referring to streaks of cloud or mist driven by the wind
on: here means “of”
vexed: worried; annoyed; upset
retire into: go off into
repose: rest
still: calm down

SEE Think About Performance: Meaning in Poetry (page 250).

cleave to: hold tightly to
PROSPERO
Spirit, we must prepare to meet with Caliban.

ARIEL
Ay, my commander.
I thought to have told thee of it, but I feared
Lest I might anger thee.

PROSPERO
Say again, where didst thou leave these varlets?

ARIEL
I told you, sir, they were red-hot with drinking,
So full of valor that they struck the air
For breathing in their face. I charmed their ears
That calf-like they followed through toothed briers
And pricking thorns, which entered their frail shins.
I left them in the filthy pool beyond,
There dancing up to the chins, that the foul lake
O’erstunk their feet.

PROSPERO
This was well done, my bird.
Thy shape invisible retain thou still.
The finery in my house, go bring it hither,
As bait to catch these thieves.

ARIEL
I go, I go.
varlets: dishonest men; good-for-nothings

valor: courage (though Ariel is being sarcastic here)

shins: part of the legs below the knees

o’erstunk: overstunk—an unusual word that, as used here, seems to mean that the filthy water smelled even worse than the feet of the men that Ariel left in it

finery: fancy clothing
[Exit.]

PROSPERO
[As he speaks, he attaches a cord (that has been prepared in advance), like a clothesline, for what comes next.]
A born devil, this Caliban, on whose nature
Nurture can never stick,* on whom my pains,
Humanely taken, all, all lost, quite lost.
And, as with age his body uglier grows,
So his mind cankers. I will plague them all,
Even to roaring.**

[Re-enter ARIEL, with several items of fancy clothing, colorful scarves, etc.]

Come, hang them on this line.

[ARIEL quickly drapes the items over the line, and then PROSPERO and ARIEL withdraw. Enter CALIBAN, STEPHANO, and TRINCULO, looking very messy and dirty.]

CALIBAN [tiptoeing and whispering loudly]
Pray you, tread softly, that the blind mole may not
Hear a foot fall. We now are near his cell.

STEPHANO
Monster, your fairy*** has done little better than
played us for fools.

TRINCULO [with great sadness]
Ay, but to lose our bottles in the pool!
* Prospero is saying that Caliban’s nature—the personality he was born with—cannot be changed by nurture, by how he was raised, cared for, and educated.

cankers: becomes infected
plague: torment; cause pain to

** Prospero is saying that he will make them hurt so much that they roar in pain.

tread: walk

*** Stephano’s reference to “your fairy” suggests that Caliban has told him about Ariel.
STEPHANO
There is not only disgrace and dishonor in that, monster, but an infinite loss.

CALIBAN
Prithee, my king, be quiet. Seest thou here;
This is the mouth of the cell. No noise, and enter.
Do that good mischief which may make this island
Thine own forever, and I, thy Caliban,
For aye thy foot-licker.

STEPHANO
I do begin to have bloody thoughts.

TRINCULO [seeing the finery hanging on the line]
O King Stephano! O worthy Stephano! Look what a wardrobe is here for thee!

CALIBAN
Let it alone, thou fool; it is but trash.

TRINCULO
O ho, monster. [He puts on a gown.] O King Stephano!

STEPHANO [sternly]
Put off that gown, Trinculo; by this hand, I’ll have that gown.

TRINCULO [giving him the gown]
Thy grace shall have it.
infinite: huge; immeasurable

mouth of the cell: entrance to Prospero’s dwelling

for aye: forever
CALIBAN
Let it alone
And do the murder first. If he awake,
From toe to crown he’ll fill our skins with pinches!

STEPHANO
Be you quiet, monster. We shall not go unrewarded
while I am king of this country.

CALIBAN
I will have none of it. We shall lose our time,
And all be turned to barnacles, or to apes!

[Unseen, PROSPERO enters, wearing his magic robe and
carrying his staff, with ARIEL, who brings PROSPERO’S
book of magic spells.]

STEPHANO
Monster, help to bear this away, or I’ll turn you out of
my kingdom. Carry this.

[He piles clothes on CALIBAN.]

TRINCULO [piling more]
And this.

STEPHANO [piling more]
Ay, and this.
crown: the top of the head

barnacles: as used here means geese

bear: carry
[PROSPERO waves his staff. Enter the three SPIRITS as fierce dogs.* Barking, they chase the three men. Exit CALIBAN, STEPHANO, and TRINCULO, with the SPIRITS snapping at their heels.]

PROSPERO
Go, my goblins!
Grind their joints with dry convulsions.

[From offstage come cries of pain.]

ARIEL
Hark, they roar!

PROSPERO
Let them be hunted soundly. At this hour
Lie at my mercy all mine enemies.
Shortly shall all my labors end, and thou
Shalt have the air at freedom.*
* Simple masks can be used to turn the Spirits into fierce dogs.

**convulsions:** painful cramps

* Prospero is telling Ariel that he will soon release him from service and let him fly to freedom.
ACT V
PROSPERO: THERE STAND, FOR YOU ARE SPELL-STopped.
ACT 5

SCENE I. BEFORE PROSPERO’S CELL.*

PROSPERO
Now does my project gather to a head.
My charms crack not; my spirits obey.
How’s the day?

ARIEL
On the sixth hour, at which time, my lord,
You said our work should cease.

PROSPERO
I did say so,
When first I raised the tempest. Say, my spirit,
How fares the King and his followers?

ARIEL
Confined together
Just as you left them; all prisoners, sir.
They cannot budge till your release. The King,
His brother, and yours, abide all three distracted,
And him you termed, sir, “The good old lord
Gonzalo,”
His tears run down his beard like winter’s drops.
Your charm so strongly works
That, if you now beheld them, your affections
Would become tender.
* The scene does not change as Act V begins. In some productions, Prospero and Ariel exit at the end of Act IV and then return to begin Act V. In this version, the action continues without a break between the acts.

**gather to a head:** near completion  
**crack not:** have not broken (In other words, his magic has worked.)  
**How’s the day?:** What time is it?  
**On the sixth hour:** nearing six o’clock

**abide:** remain  
**distracted:** near madness
PROSPERO [thoughtfully]
Dost thou think so, spirit?

ARIOEL
Mine would, sir, were I human.

PROSPERO [coming to a new understanding]
And mine shall.
Hast thou, which art but air, a touch, a feeling
Of their afflictions, and shall not myself,
One of their kind, be kindlier moved than thou?*
Though with their high wrongs I am struck to the quick,
Yet with my nobler reason 'gainst my fury
Do I take part. The rarer action is
In virtue than in vengeance.**
Go release them, Ariel.
My charms I’ll break; their senses I’ll restore,
And they shall be themselves.

ARIOEL
I’ll fetch them, sir.

[Exit.]

[PROSPERO turns to the audience. Something has changed—he is not happy but it is as though a great burden has been lifted from his shoulders, or a knot inside him finally untied. He picks up his book of magic. As he uses his staff to trace a large circle on the ground, he speaks to the magical spirits of the isle:]
Act 5, Scene 1

afflictions: pain and suffering

* Prospero is saying that if Ariel—an airy spirit—can sympathize with the men’s pain and suffering, shouldn’t he, as a fellow human being, feel even greater sympathy?

** Prospero is saying: Though their crimes hurt me deeply, I will use my better human qualities to control my anger. It is better, though it rarely happens, to show mercy than try to get revenge.
PROSPERO*
Ye elves of hills, brooks, standing lakes, and groves,
By whose aid I have bedimmed the noontide sun,
Called forth the mutinous winds,
And 'twixt the green sea and the azured vault
Set roaring war; to the dread rattling thunder
Have I given fire,
And by the roots plucked up the pine and cedar,
By my so mighty art.

[With his staff in one hand and book in the other, he comes to a difficult decision:]

But this rough magic I here abjure.
And when I have called forth some heavenly music,
I’ll break my staff,
Bury it certain fathoms in the earth,
And deeper than did ever plummet sound**
I’ll drown my book.***

[He sets aside the staff and book, then waves his hand; quiet, solemn music begins.]

[Re-enter ARIEL with ALONSO, GONZALO, SEBASTIAN and ANTONIO; the men stand in the circle drawn by PROSPERO.]

PROSPERO
There stand, for you are spell-stopped.

[They stand still, under a spell. ARIEL exits. PROSPERO speaks to each man:]
Act 5, Scene 1

* This speech is part of one of the most famous soliloquies in all of Shakespeare’s plays. A soliloquy is a speech in which the actor thinks aloud. The actor does not talk to another person but instead speaks his or her innermost thoughts.

‘twixt: betwixt, an old form of “between”
azured: a bright blue color
vault: the sky (literally, a high, arched roof)
dread: greatly feared

abjure: give up; reject; renounce

** To sound (as used here) is to measure the depth of water, which can be done by use of a plummet, a heavy weight at the end of a line that you drop and let sink.

*** Prospero has used his powers to hurt those who hurt him—but now, he gives up “this rough magic,” and decides to break his magical staff, and to throw his cherished book of magical spells into the sea.
[to GONZALO]
O good Gonzalo,
My true preserver, and a loyal sir.
[to ALONSO]
Most cruelly
Didst thou, Alonso, use me and my daughter.
Thy brother was a furtherer in the act.
[to SEBASTIAN]
Thou art pinched for it now, Sebastian.
[to ANTONIO]
Flesh and blood—you, brother mine, unnatural,
Who, with Sebastian, would here have killed
your King—
I do forgive thee.

[The men slowly begin to regain their senses.]

The charm dissolves apace. I will myself
Appear as I was before in Milan.

[ARIEL, anticipating PROSPERO’s need, enters with the
robe he wore as Duke of Milan. PROSPERO speaks as
ARIEL helps him out of one robe and into the other.]

Ariel, spirit, thou shalt ere long be free.
To the King’s ship, and presently, I prithee.

ARIEL
I drink the air before me, and return
Before your pulse twice beats.
Act 5, Scene 1

**furtherer**: helper

**pinched**: punished

**apace**: quickly

**presently**: right away
[ARIEL exits, taking PROSPERO’s magic robe offstage. The men snap awake.]

**GONZALO**
Some heavenly power guide us out of this fearful country!

**PROSPERO** [to ALONSO]
Behold, sir King, The wrongèd Duke of Milan, Prospero!

[ALONSO can’t believe his eyes. PROSPERO reassures him:]

To thee and thy company I bid
A hearty welcome.

**ALONSO** [with uncertainty]
Whether thou be’st he or no,
Or some enchanted trifle to abuse me,
I know not.
[with a newfound sense of clarity]
The affliction of my mind amends, with which,
I fear, a madness held me.
[He bows to PROSPERO.]
Thy dukedom I resign and do entreat
Thou pardon me my wrongs. But how should
Prospero
Be living and be here?

**PROSPERO** [to GONZALO]
First, noble friend,
wrongèd: pronounced as two syllables: wrong-ed

affliction: suffering; disease
amends: gets better
entreat: beg; plead
Let me embrace thine age.

[He hugs GONZALO.]

Welcome, my friends all.

[aside to SEBASTIAN and ANTONIO]

But you, my brace of lords, were I so minded,
I here could prove you traitors.
At this time I will tell no tales.

SEBASTIAN [to ANTONIO]
The devil speaks in him!

PROSPERO
No. —

[to ANTONIO]
For you, most wicked sir, I do forgive
Thy rankest fault, all of them, and require
My dukedom of thee.⁶

ALONSO
If thou be’st Prospero,
Say how thou hast met us here,
Where three hours since, wrecked upon this shore,
I have lost my dear son Ferdinand.

PROSPERO
I am woe for’t, sir, for I have the like loss.

ALONSO
You the like loss?
brace of: a pair; two things of the same kind
prove you traitors: prove that you are traitors

rankest: worst; most awful

woe for’t: deeply sad for it
the like loss: a similar loss

SEE Think About Performance: Action Without Words (page 251).
PROSPERO
I have lost my daughter.*

ALONSO
A daughter?
O heavens, that they were living both in Naples,
The king and queen there!
When did you lose your daughter?

PROSPERO
In this last tempest. —No more yet of this.
[He takes ALONSO’S arm and guides him to the entrance
to his cave, which is covered by a cloth.]
Welcome, sir; 
This cell’s my court. Pray you, look in.
My dukedom since you have given me again,
I will repay you with as good a thing.

[PROSPERO pulls back the cloth to reveal FERDINAND
and MIRANDA playing at chess.]

MIRANDA [playfully, to FERDINAND, who has just
captured one of her chess pieces]
Sweet lord, you play me false.

FERDINAND
No, my dearest love,
I would not for the world.

ALONSO [afraid to believe what he sees]
If this prove a vision of the island,
One dear son shall I twice lose.
* When Prospero says “I have lost my daughter,” Alonso thinks that Prospero’s daughter has died, but Prospero means that he has “lost” his daughter to her soon-to-be-husband, Ferdinand.

**given me again:** returned to me
FERDINAND [seeing his father]
Though the seas threaten, they are merciful;
I have cursed them without cause.

[He rushes to the King and kneels before him.]

ALONSO [raising his son up and embracing him]
Now all the blessings
Of a glad father compass thee about!

MIRANDA [coming forth, amazed at seeing so many people]
O, wonder!
How many goodly creatures are there here!
How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world
That has such people in’t!

PROSPERO
’Tis new to thee.*

ALONSO [to FERDINAND]
What is this maid with whom thou wast at play?
Is she the goddess that hath brought us thus together?

FERDINAND [speaking as he leads MIRANDA to his father]
Sir, she is mortal;
But by immortal Providence she’s mine.
She is daughter to this famous Duke of Milan.
* ‘Tis new to thee—how does Prospero say these words? The actor playing Prospero must make a choice. One actor might say the words skeptically, as though to say, “It might seem wonderful to you now but just wait.” Another actor might be motivated by the mood of the play at this moment—a moment of merciful forgiveness and joyful reunions—and say the words gently and affectionately, as though Prospero, recognizing the awe and wonder that Miranda must feel, is himself moved to a moment of wonder.
ALONSO
I am hers. [He kneels before her.]
But, O, how oddly will it sound that I
Must ask my child forgiveness!

PROSPERO
There, sir, stop.
Let us not burden our remembrance with
A heaviness that’s gone.

GONZALO:
I have inly wept;
Look down, you gods,
And on this couple drop a blessed crown!

ALONSO
I say “amen,” Gonzalo.

GONZALO
O, rejoice
Beyond a common joy, and set it down
With gold on lasting pillars: In one voyage
Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis;
And Ferdinand, her brother, found a wife
Where he himself was lost; Prospero his dukedom
In a poor isle; and all of us ourselves
When no man was his own.

ALONSO [to FERDINAND and MIRANDA]
Give me your hands, that I may wish you joy!
inly wept: been crying inside

blessèd: pronounced as two syllables: bless-ed

Claribel: King Alonso’s daughter

no man was his own: when no one was his true self, or in control of himself
GONZALO
Be it so! Amen!

[Re-enter ARIEL, invisible, leading the BOATSWAIN and CAPTAIN in amazement. GONZALO sees them and says to ALONSO:]

O, look, sir, look, sir! Here is more of us. What is the news?

CAPTAIN
The best news is, that we have safely found Our King and company.

BOATSWAIN
The next, our ship, Which but three hours since we witnessed split, Is tight and fit and bravely rigged as when We first put out to sea.

ARIEL [aside to PROSPERO]
Was’t well done?

PROSPERO [aside to ARIEL]
Bravely, my Ariel. Now, spirit, Set Caliban and his companions free; Untie the spell.
next: next-best news
[Exit ARIEL. PROSPERO speaks to ALONSO:]

How fares my gracious sir?
There are yet missing of your company
Some few odd lads that you remember not.

[Re-enter ARIEL, invisible, with STEPHANO and TRINCULO in their stolen clothing, followed by CALIBAN.]

CALIBAN [looking around in fear]
O, these be brave spirits indeed!

STEPHANO
Courage, bully-monster, courage!

PROSPERO
These three have robbed me; and this demi-devil
Had plotted with them to take my life.
[to ALONSO]
Two of these fellows you must surely know—
[Looking at CALIBAN, PROSPERO speaks thoughtfully:]
This thing of darkness I acknowledge mine.*

CALIBAN
I shall be pinched to death.

ALONSO
Is not this Stephano, my drunken butler?

SEBASTIAN
He is drunk now. Why, how now, Stephano?
[He gives him a hearty whack on the back.]
Act 5, Scene 1

How fares . . . ?: How (are you) doing?

demi-devil: half-devil (referring to Caliban)

* “Thing of darkness” refers to Caliban’s inner condition—in Prospero’s view, Caliban is morally and intellectually in darkness. When Prospero says, “I acknowledge [him] mine,” there is more than one meaning. On the surface, Prospero is saying, “He is my servant.” On a deeper level, however, Prospero seems to be acknowledging that he bears some responsibility for making Caliban what he is.

how now: how’s it going
**STEPHANO** [groaning]
O, touch me not. I am not Stephano, but a cramp.

**TRINCULO** [whining to SEBASTIAN and ALONSO]
I have been in such a pickle since I saw you last!

**ALONSO** [staring at CALIBAN]
This is a strange thing as e’er I looked on.

**PROSPERO** [to CALIBAN]
Go, sirrah, to my cell.
Take with you your companions,
As you look to have my pardon.

**CALIBAN**
Ay, that I will; and I’ll be wise hereafter
And seek for grace. What a thrice-double dolt
Was I to worship this dull fool!

[CALIBAN, STEPHANO, and TRINCULO exit.]

**PROSPERO** [to ALONSO]
Sir, I invite your highness and your train
To my poor cell, where you shall take your rest
For this one night; and in the morn
I’ll bring you to your ship, and so to Naples,
Where I have hope to see the nuptial
Of these our dear-belovèd.

**ALONSO**
I long to hear the story of your life,
Which must take the ear strangely.
sirrah (pronounced *SIHR-uh*): a term used to address a man or boy who is younger or lower in status than the speaker

dolt: a stupid person

your train: your followers

nuptial: wedding
belovèd: pronounced as three syllables: *be-lov-ed*
PROSPERO [speaking as he ushers all into his cell and draws the cloth over the opening]
I’ll tell you all, and promise you calm seas.
[He turns to ARIEL. This is very difficult for PROSPERO, but he knows what he must do.]
My Ariel—to the elements
Be free, and fare thou well!

ARIEL [singing with joy]
On the bat’s back I do fly
After summer merrily.
Merrily, merrily shall I live now
Under the blossom that hangs on the bough!

[Exit ARIEL.]

PROSPERO
Why, that’s my dainty Ariel!
I shall miss thee.

[He picks up his staff and book, and then carries them to a far edge of the stage, where he places them down gently. He walks back to center stage, tired but at peace.]

So. —

[He calls out to those onstage:]

Please you, draw near.

[All other actors enter and line up with PROSPERO.]
Please you: If you would, please
EPILOGUE*

[spoken directly to the audience]

PROSPERO
Now my charms are all o’erthrown,
And what strength I have’s mine own,
Which is most faint. Now, ’tis true,
We must be here confined by you,
Or find our freedom.

SPIRIT 1
Let us not dwell
In this bare island by your spell.

SPIRIT 2
As you from crimes would pardoned be,
Let your indulgence set us free.

SPIRIT 3
And so release us from our bands
With the help of your good hands.**

[All actors join hands and bow as one.]
Epilogue

* Shakespeare ends many of his plays with an *epilogue*, a speech after the main action of the play has ended. Usually in a Shakespearean epilogue, the main character, in a lighthearted way, asks the audience members to forgive any faults in the performance, and invites them to show their appreciation by applauding. In *The Tempest*, Shakespeare has Prospero alone speak the epilogue. In this version of *The Tempest*, we offer a shortened version of the epilogue, spoken by Prospero and the three Spirits. The speech, here divided among four actors, needs to flow smoothly from one speaker to the next.

**indulgence**: The word is used here in an older sense, meaning: forgiveness; compassion; mercy

**bands**: bonds; ties that hold

** In asking for “the help of your good hands,” the actor is (in a humorous way) asking the audience to clap their hands.
THINK ABOUT PERFORMANCE

Questions and Ideas About Staging the Play

① Special Effects (see page 55)
The play opens with a furious storm at sea. Shakespeare’s language helps the audience imagine the storm and shipwreck. What special effects can you add to help create a storm onstage, or in a classroom? What resources are available?

Simple effects can be effective. For example, to suggest the stormy seas, two of the Spirits can wave a long piece of blue cloth, one holding each end.

What are other creative ways that you can create a storm using only your bodies and commonly available objects? Remember, if you create sound effects, it is still very important that the audience be able to hear the actors speak.

② Costuming (see page 75)
Ariel is described by Shakespeare as “an airy spirit.” In your imagination, what does an airy spirit look like? How would you costume the actor playing Ariel? What kind of fabrics would you use? What colors? Would you add any special touches, such as feathers, or facial makeup?
③ Language and Character (see page 175)
You can learn about characters through the words that Shakespeare gives them to speak, and through what other characters say about them.
What do other characters say about Caliban? In Act I, Scene 2, Prospero and Miranda called him a liar and a villain, and Prospero treats him harshly. Stephano and Trinculo call him “monster.”
What does Caliban himself say? Sometimes he speaks meanly to Prospero and Miranda, sometimes he says foolish things when under the influence of Stephano’s wine, and sometimes he expresses violent intentions against Prospero. But in his speech about how “the isle is full of noises,” Shakespeare also gives Caliban some of the most beautiful lines of poetry in the play. This “monster,” it seems, has tender feelings.
At times Caliban can be driven by hate and fury, and at other times he is full of childlike wonder. Shakespeare makes him more than a one-dimensional bad guy, and that is what makes him so interesting.

④ Character and Motivation (see page 187)
At this point in the play, what do you think Prospero wants? What is he trying to achieve? Is he driven mostly by a desire to get back at and punish those who wronged him? What else motivates him?
Prospero has used his magic—his “high charms”—to bring his enemies into his power. Through Ariel, he has terrified the men who wronged him, and
threatened them with terrible punishments.

Do you sympathize with Prospero’s actions toward his enemies? How do you feel when someone has hurt or insulted or betrayed you?

What do you think Prospero will do to the men who wronged him?

Meaning in Poetry (see page 205)

The speech that begins “Our revels now are ended” is one of the most famous in all of Shakespeare’s plays. What does this beautiful poetry mean? In the theater, the poetry lasts only as long as the actor is speaking the lines; audience members have no time to pause and study the meaning. The audience relies on the actor to convey the meaning—so the actor, long before going onstage, must put in the time to study the speech and understand what he is saying and why he is saying it.

One way to prepare for delivering a challenging speech like this is to rewrite the poetry in your own words. True, that takes the poetry out of the poetry! But it prepares you to speak the poetry with understanding and commitment. Here is one way this famous speech might be paraphrased:

“The entertainment is over. As I told you before, the actors were all spirits. They have vanished into thin air. They are like this illusion that had no basis in reality. Like towers topped with clouds, or beautiful palaces, or majestic temples—indeed, like the whole world
itself, and all who will ever live on it, they shall dissolve. And like these imaginary scenes that have faded away, they will leave not even a wisp of cloud behind. We are made of the stuff of dreams, and our brief life goes from a sleep before birth to the sleep of death.”

What’s the central point of all that? In a short, simple sentence, it might be something like, “Nothing lasts forever,” or, “Everything fades away.” (But there’s no music or magic in the simple statement; the music and magic are in the poetry.)

Now, ask why you—as Prospero—are saying these words. When Prospero begins the speech, his goal seems to be to reassure Ferdinand. But as Prospero goes on, his goal seems to change from cheering up Ferdinand to reflecting on life. Where in the speech does that change seem to occur? As your goal changes, what would change as you speak the speech—in your tone, your body, your movement?

These are some of the things you might consider as you prepare to speak the speech. Once you understand what you’re saying and why you’re saying it, you’re well on the way to helping the audience understand the meaning and enjoy the poetry.

6 Action Without Words (see page 229)

Prospero forgives Antonio and demands back the dukedom. How does Antonio respond? At this critical point in the play, Shakespeare gives Antonio no lines to speak. He says nothing, but what does he do?
Even when silent, an actor must be engaged in the scene. In this moment, the actor playing Antonio (along with the play’s director) must choose what to do. Here are some possibilities—which makes most sense to you?

a. Antonio is overcome by guilt and kneels down at Prospero’s feet, sobbing.

b. Antonio might be wearing some symbol of the authority of the Duke of Milan, such as a medallion on a gold necklace—which, at this moment, he removes and gives to Prospero to show that the dukedom has been restored to its rightful ruler.

c. With a sneer on his face, Antonio coolly turns away from Prospero and maintains a defiant silence.

Those are a few among many possible choices—and whatever the choice, it needs to be consistent with the character the actor has created. Remember: Even when not speaking words, actors must understand what motivates them, make choices, and be engaged in the scene.
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