

# *PROSPERO'S CHILD*

OR

## *IT, AS IF IT MATTERED*

### **PREFACE**

Shakespeare's final masterpiece *The Tempest* is universally received as dramatic and ethical triumph : astonishing characters, dazzling stage-effects, forgiveness and the realization of better selves.

Though it presents an other-world, where there is mastery of nature and of non-human beings through magic, it is rare for the conceptual implications of these choices to be explored. The concept of *magic* hovers within the matrix containing *work* and *pleasure*, or *required* tasks, and *desired* tasks. What would be a kind/human amount of work the magician can expect others to do for him? Though the magician doesn't have to work, what pleasure is left to him/her?

The following play asks these questions of Shakespeare's play, by using both his characters and some I have devised.

The original and alternative introduction follows. It can be ignored.

# FIRST INTRODUCTION

## *Thinking about Coming & Becoming*

Not only miserable terrorists, but all of us – bored school-kids, aching labourers, despondent teachers, harassed parents, ageing patients, impatient idealists – daydream about a better-place, paradise even. Freud, when pressed, said that this side of paradise, ‘better’ would be no better than ordinary unhappiness in the necessities - (sexualised) love and (creative) work. Unlike impatient adolescents, he declined to paint endless bliss, but he was optimistic about when the process of learning might begin, making an eternal hero of this little 18-month baby.

*The child had a wooden reel with a piece of string tied round it. He would hold the reel by the string and very skilfully throw it over the edge of his curtained cot, so that it disappeared into it, at the same time uttering his expressive ‘o-o-o-o’ meaning ‘fort’ [gone]. He then pulled the reel out of the cot again by the string and hailed its reappearance with a joyful ‘da’ [‘there’].*

He interpreted this as the child learning, then playing-with, “*the renunciation of instinctual satisfaction he had made in allowing his mother to go away without protesting.*”

It wasn’t at the first reading, but a later one, that I was struck by his phrase for this moment of human development & maturation - “*great cultural achievement.*” One could but wonder what succeeding moments would earn this highest compliment. In a dark mood, one imagines, or even recalls, a mad-mother like Myra Hindley or Lady Macbeth, bursting in, taking the reel, shouting “Shut up!” and throwing it in the fire. In such nurseries are domestic & political tyrants made.

Similarly, it wasn’t at the first performance of *The Tempest* that I attended but one in a ladies’ college garden thirty years later, that I was struck by Prospero’s child’s attainment of what I would call a great cultural achievement, when Miranda says “*It would become me*”.

I became intrigued by this moment and this phrase : how Shakespeare leads up to it, and what he does with it, how he has his characters respond to its presence. Two other tiny phrases seemed germinal – “*correspondent to command*” and “*stripes may move*”. From these ten words my play was spun, questioning what Shakespeare does in his experimental island, and how critics have written about it.

I would not be mad enough to attempt to be Shakespearean : I wouldn’t even dare to be Stoppardian. Having written in essay-form on the play, I was interested in attempting another mode – the playful. It is not a psychoanalytic drama. (I append brief notes on staging and give some references.)

# The Cast

EARTH	CREATURES
<p> <b>Prospero</b> – Duke of Milan  <b>Miranda</b> – his daughter  <b>Antonio</b> – his brother  <b>Caliban</b> – his slave    <b>Alonso</b> – King of Naples  <b>Sebastian</b> – his brother  <b>Ferdinand</b> - his son  <b>Gonzalo</b> – Court counsellor         </p>	<p> <b>Master</b> – of Alonso's ship  <b>Bosun</b>  <b>Cairo</b> )  <b>Comsett</b> ) Sailors  <b>Shelvin</b> )  <b>Dromeo</b> )  <b>Unnamed</b> )    <b>Voltah</b> - thinker  <b>Alice</b> - thinker  <b>WS</b> - dramatist  <b>Luc &amp; Jymt</b> - twin youths         </p>
UNDER-SEA	CREATURES
<p> <b>Decolore</b> - Judge  <b>Meuta</b> - Senior Counsel  <b>Fixity</b> - Junior Counsel  <b>Clyp</b> - attendant to Fixity         </p>	<p> <b>Sea Nymphs</b>  <b>Sea Angels</b> </p>

# Act 1

## Scene 1 : Under-Sea Chamber- Office

*Upstage, there is a lace curtain, ceiling height, across stage.*

*A greenish-light behind this indicates sea-water.*

*Centre-stage, is a varnished-wood doric column, ceiling height.*

*There are two chairs and a table.*

*( Fixity, an under-sea counsellor enters. He looks round and shouts )*

**Fixity** He's not here. You told me he was here.  
*( Clyp, his attendant, runs in ).*  
So, show me where!

**Clyp** He was here, just before I came to call you.

**Fixity** What do they want?

**Clyp** I don't know. They simply said – by the next bell.

*( A ship's bell sounds )*

**Fixity** Well it won't be that one. Tell them.  
*( Clyp runs out. Fixity walks, peers, squints into audience)*  
If I had the magic eye, I'd rip him out.  
*(Shouts) Wait, I'll explain.*  
*(Exits)*

*( The head of Meuta, another under-sea counsellor, appears - very large - projected on the curtain. He smiles, vanishes, reappears)*

**Meuta** Good day!  
*(Offstage, returning steps are heard)*  
They're coming, must go. Au revoir. Ciao. Tootle Pip!  
*(Meuta vanishes. Fixity & Clyp enter)*

**Clyp** He was here.

**Fixity** I don't doubt it.

**Clyp** Shall I fetch Maestra Decolore?

**Fixity** There's no need. You're new here. I'm afraid that's the way.

**Clyp** Decolore's?

**Fixity** No, our friend Meuta. He is here. I know he is here. I can smell him.

**Clyp** Where?

**Fixity** He knows I know he is here.  
*(He gets chair and a large-format newspaper : sits, head hidden in the paper)*

**Clyp** Won't they be angry? Can't you go alone?

**Fixity** We were both called for. So both must go. And if we can't both go, I won't go alone, to be upbraided for two. Be so good as to bring me some wine, and three glasses Clyp – at a clip. Sorry.

*( Clyp exits. Fixity reads aloud )*

“Unseasonal calm in Aegean. Thames turns yellow from sewage.”  
*(To himself)* I won't go there for my holidays.

*(Meuta's face appears projected on the paper facing audience. He smiles & puts a finger to his lips.)*  
So, Cairo , again.  
*( Clyp enters with wine.)*

**Clyp** Holidays?  
*(He pours wine and gives to Fixity)*

**Fixity** Most pleasures are only a different kind of work. Mercifully some aren't. Pour yourself a glass. It's going to be a long day.

**Clyp** Are you sure? Won't your partner be angry?

**Fixity** You answer to me, not Meuta.  
*( Clyp pours wine, gulps it down and puts down glass)*  
It deserves a moment on the lips, but at least you didn't spill any. That's gratitude enough. You will have heard, anyway you're hearing it now, I can't stand mess and chaos. Order and predictability are my best friends : my clothes, my papers, everything is labeled, folded, always findable. Fixity by name...

**Clyp** No woman then? No servant I mean.

**Fixity** I trust neither.

*(Clyp moves forward & sees Meuta, and is shocked.)*

**Clyp** Your paper is bewitched, Fixity - it's moving!

**Fixity** Nonsense. *(He folds the paper carefully and stretches out his hand.)* There's no new crease in this paper, and this hand is as steady as the pole star. And will be stiller after the second glass.

**Clyp** At once. *(He pours and gives.)* The next bell is near. I don't want to be dismissed on my first day.

**Fixity** It will end right now if you don't stop whining, and have some more wine with me.

**Clyp** *(Drinks)* The wine is as sweet as your wit. I am persuaded.

**Fixity** What can I do? I was assigned the same chambers as Meuta. We must shift, if not mend. The first thing you must know about this work is that there are no crises. Everyone you meet will be rushing about as if their house is on fire, or their fleet is sinking, or the hangman has hurt his thumb and the torturer's horse has piles. That's just your day. When the screaming begins, every third bell, I sit down. He disappears.

**Clyp** Why? Is he afraid?

**Fixity** Quite the opposite. He likes to make a dramatic entrance. But I know all his tricks now. Some are quite impressive. Most are as lame as a clipped lobster.  
*(A bell sounds)*

**Clyp** The wine's not working for me. I'll be seeing it again before supper.

**Fixity** Pour me another and tell them, we're on our way.

*(Clyp does and exits. Fixity re-opens his newspaper. It expands like an air bag, bursts to reveal Meuta sitting on Fixity's lap. Meuta takes Fixity's glass.)*

**Meuta** A bolder wine than I'd have guessed. Such confidence in such plain clothes.

**Fixity** I knew indifference would draw you out. You can't bear the world not looking for you.

**Meuta** I'm worth seeing. Your mirror cracks in despair as you approach.

**Fixity** You know of course that Decolore has been calling for three bells.

**Meuta** What does she want?

**Fixity** I thought you were with her at the first bell.

**Meuta** I was. But I flagged long before the second. Something about hauling the sea-horses for high-tide. She's the master of the essential detail which tragically fails to persuade or even stay in memory. I, on the other hand, am the master of the inessential detail, an incongruity of dress or speech, an affront to received standards of sense of beauty, which will seemingly slip notice, and then creep out onto your pillow to keep you awake with puzzled amazement or should that be amazed puzzlement, perhaps both.

**Fixity** Prison's a fine place as any to practice fascination. She will think you mean to show her contempt.

**Meuta** I would not disturb my breakfast with such exertion as contempt. Disregard, the want of regard, I can manage, and here it is, manifest as larkily as the skylark. Oh No! a crease.  
*(He bends down behind Fixity's chair)*

*(Enter Clyp)*

**Clyp** You must come now with all haste.

**Meuta** *(He rises and strides too close to Clyp)*

And you must be introduced properly. Is that glistening on your upper-lip a film of sweet sweat? Have you run so passionately on my behalf? I must assist the drying.

**Fixity** Clyp, my new clerk. Meuta, You've already exposed him to Decolore's vexation twice.

**Clyp** Honoured. I hope also to be of service to you.

**Meuta** Humility and trust having leapt the first hurdle, ceremonies can be suspended. Did you like the wine?

**Clyp** The best I've ever been given. Too good.

**Meuta** That should prove to you no harm will come to you under our wing – even if we fight among ourselves. I like your face, and the way your lower back arches, I like even more. Oh see how he blushes Fixity!

**Fixity** He is young.

**Meuta** The time for experiment. What has he been doing?

**Fixity** Studying.

**Clyp** Seven years.

**Meuta** That's hardly education.

**Clyp** I've read your commentaries.

**Meuta** A little better but –

**Clyp** They're great : especially Volume 2. I hope there may time to talk about –

**Meuta** Have you ever been one of four flames in a cocklebed?

**Fixity** For goodness sake!

**Meuta** No the darker side. I will stop. Your frown mars an already crumbling countenance, like singeing shot-silk. And don't sulk. We can't all be lovelies. But you know it's your face that's my morning star. One! Two! Three! *(A bell sounds)* Four!

**Fixity** I'm not moving till you're at the door.

**Meuta** Then take another sip. I must dress. I can't meet a disappointed face without a glittering front. You know Clyp, I have the best wardrobe in the world. That is not only a fact empirical, it is a fact logical. Being any shape imaginable, I can wear any material - of any matter - from gossamer to iron, of any size or colour.

**Clyp** I have trouble with white.

**Meuta** The mark of a dandy. White is hardest to wear without looking like a baby. I'll be ready before Fixity takes his next sip.  
*(Meuta seems to throw up ash, lights flicker, flash.  
 He is revealed in a Gainsborough's blue-boy suit.)*  
 Let us answer Decolore's call.

*(Suddenly, there is a loud explosive sound of a splash. )*

Now my exits are being trumped.

*(They turn and see, behind the curtain, a large open book fluttering down through the water outside the sea chamber. )*

**Fixity** Bloody catalogues!

*(There is another explosive splash. Several books come down. )*

**Clyp** Is there a storm?

**Fixity** Not according to the weather-girls.  
*(Another splash! A cloth bundle falls above. They track its fall)*

**Meuta** Well, that's not a book.

**Clyp** It's unraveling. A man's robe. It was wrapping something.

**Meuta** A red and white bundle, no bigger than a book, but not a book.  
Clyp, get help and fetch everything in.

**Clyp** *(To self)* Four flames. *(Exits)*

**Fixity** You're such a child. The ocean is the last toilet of the world.  
*(We see, through the curtain, Clyp and a sea-nymph swimming, catching the books and gathering the robe and bundle)*  
Everything falls here. We've seen it fall. There's nothing new.

**Meuta** Therefore, my jaded friend, curiosity about the familiar is the only proof of life.

*Clyp and the sea-nymph drag onto the stage a trunk of books, - it is dry - and then exit. The sea-nymph returns with the robe. It is clean & dry. Meuta takes it.)*

**Fixity** Your lucky day. Soiled clothes for free.

**Meuta** It is stitched with gold. *(Clyp enters with bundle)* Who can be throwing away such precious things?

**Clyp** Shall I unfold?

**Fixity** If you'd be so kind. Don't be alarmed, nothing explodes down here.

*(Clyp begins unwrapping the white strips of linen)*

**Fixity** Look his hands are turning red!

*(A baby is revealed.)*

**Meuta** A sorrow surpassing all.

**Fixity** Is it dead?

**Clyp** Its tongue has been cut out. So much blood from so tiny a mouth.  
But I think it is alive, somehow suspended, even now refusing to  
enter the underworld.

**Fixity** For all my mocking of importance, and that's his dark star pulling,  
this is tragic beyond speech.

**Meuta** Let us seek Decolore's advice.

*(All exit)*

## Act 1 : Scene 2

### A Sailing Ship's Deck

*The curtain and the column from the previous scene are re-arranged to stand for a ship's mast and a sail. Two-thirds up the column is a platform with half-door panels.*

*Miranda, Prospero's daughter, drags on-stage Ferdinand, her fiancé. She points to the mast.*

**Miranda** He's really going to do it. Stop him!

*(Prospero becomes visible climbing onto the platform. Then he bends out of sight )*

**Ferdinand** I fear he is too determined to be swayed by mere youth.

**Miranda** Then fetch your father. They are brothers now and that's not without meaning.

**Ferdinand** It's a new and brittle cement. Full frail fraternity cast you on that island.

**Miranda** Your father was never a wolf like my uncle. Fetch him, I beg you.

**Ferdinand** For you, all and instantly. Try your daughterly cooing and command.  
*(Exits)*

**Miranda** Why did I marry, let him press me to a forest sacrament? How could we spouse it with grace in cold caves and humid cabins? I should have seen my father tucked into his old bed first. His mind is breaking. Where is written the remedy? Who knows it?  
*(To Prospero)* How blows the wind my Lord. Surely Milan the morrow.

**Prospero** *(He stands)* You are bound to a better lord, and must 'lord' me no more. 'Father' will delight me enough.

**Miranda** Then dearest Father, what warm breeze blows through your heart as we approach your rightful dukedom.

**Prospero** One that gently draws me to my grave, and I happily assist. I am ripe to fall.

**Miranda**            *(She runs to the mast)* I will catch you.

**Prospero**            You mistake me good child. I am not of a self-slaughtering disposition. Grace with holy oil knocks on Time's door : but unlike the too-eager host, wet-lipped-keen to embrace a friend, I won't open before the knocking begins.

**Miranda**            I will be sentinel at that door.

**Prospero**            Your linnet hands are too tiny to gather-in the dry, crumbling, wood of this breaking frame. And besides, they will soon be nesting the moist green bones of my grandson. Fear not, I will be beside you as he is blessed at the great altar where you were named for a wonder.

**Miranda**            I long to see what has been for so long only a watery picture of memory. Will you not come down and give me your fatherly blessing this day too.

**Prospero**            The instant this last burden is dispatched.

*(Prospero bends out of sight. Ferdinand & Alonso enter.)*

**Alonso**              Be assured my child. Where is your father?

**Miranda**            *(She points up.)* My heart is breaking. He still speaks of burdens. Our escape and my marriage, his throne returned and the city visible tomorrow, seem to mean nothing to him. I don't know what ancient, undisclosed barbs still pierce his heart.

*(Prospero stands, sees all and nods).*

**Prospero**            Attend all powers, kings and lovers, and observe this mighty self-disempowering. First, the black!  
*(He throws a large black volume upstage. He silently counts on his fingers a few seconds, then there is a huge splash. The ship rocks and a film of water comes upon the three. Miranda coughs.)*

**Alonso**              Son, look to my new daughter. What manner of new ordinance was that!  
*(Miranda recovers)*

**Miranda**            He means to do what I had long hoped was only the last smoke of melancholy that would burn out in the bright dawn of his triumphant return.

**Alonso** Has he much like munitions up there? It troubled me how few weapons he had on the island. Pistol and cannon rule the old nations.

**Miranda** He had other powers then, his books. I can't imagine him trusting mere metal or powder.

**Ferdinand** Be calm my bride. I will be your dauphin-dolphin.

**Alonso** Indeed! I will try to board him.  
*(He goes to the mast)*  
Brother, what means this new show?

**Prospero** Good morrow, good morrow and a thousand more morrows all-honoured father to the son of my once-daughter.

**Alonso** And brother : this title burnishes best as we enter our Autumn.

**Prospero** Then brother, we will soon see a familiar harbour.

**Alonso** Not if the boat is troubled as just then. My thin hairs have already passed through two tones of grey. They will fall entire with another storm.

**Prospero** Be not afraid. You know my pageants are brief. A bolted horse will tire. There'll be no more harpies.  
*(He bends out of sight but his voice is heard)*  
The Red. Read, over-read, now over Red!  
*(He throws. There is a splash, and red flames are seen. The boat rocks and is instantly still.)*

**Miranda** Are you secure father? Shall I be your fastening?

**Ferdinand** Shall I come up my Lord? It shames me that my young limbs should stand idly below as you are at such labours.

**Alonso** What kind of magical powder was in what you called Red? With such an engine, you'd be King of Italy within the first home moon.

**Prospero** Sift the Blues. Sky and sea. I have done sailing & flying. Hence, I will turn turtle.  
*(He throws again.)*

**Alonso** All brace! For pity brother!

*(They all crouch and embrace. Nothing happens.  
Gonzalo, a counsellor, & the ship's Master enter)*

**Gonzalo** Are we under attack? From whom? Where is Lord Prospero? Find him : tell him we have need of his magic, else we drown within sight of our castles.  
*(The Master crosses the stage)*

**Alonso** For shame, contain your self! You are more womanish than this girlchild. And you'd govern with such perfection!

**Master** *(To offstage)* Remain below Bosun! *(To Alonso)* Neither enemy ships nor storm clouds to be seen. It must be more of the old Duke's entertainments. I'll tell the quiverers below to save their prayers. *(He exits)*

**Alonso** Have you your manly breath again?

**Gonzalo** I can see the good Duke. I am at peace.

**Alonso** Then tell me, you who knew him at his most desperate, that dozen years ago, what is he doing now and what might be the sequel. You have secret knowledge of his moods.

**Prospero** The Green. Disincarnadine.  
*(There is a splash and explosion. The boat doesn't rock but the whole stage is bathed in green light. Sebastian, brother to Alonso, and Antonio, brother to Prospero, enter)*

**Antonio** Have we gone under?

**Gonzalo** *(The green smoke clears. Bright day again)*  
No young bucks. You will have more prancing time to spoil.

**Ferdinand** Come below my swan to be cloaked.

**Miranda** I will not leave the deck without my father.

**Gonzalo** *(To Self)* How wet garments do become her young liquid frame. She might be a sea-nymph.  
*(To Alonso)* My Lord, you will recall at the final meal on the island, Prospero resolved to destroy his books, to unlearn all.

**Prospero** The Yellow.  
*(He throws. Everyone cowers. Nothing happens.)*  
The yellow.

**Gonzalo** He was most anxious to have that on his flight.

**Alonso** How will it fall?

**Ferdinand** "I'll drown my books?" Yes I heard him say that. But I never thought of it as this performance.

**Gonzalo** I cannot divine the falling sequence. I don't know the meaning of this prism.

**Sebastian** Old men must have meanings, many meanings. There is no meaning, no truth other than his mind's still jangled. It was jangled when he wouldn't leave his library, and it is jangled as he tries to destroy it.

**Miranda** You relish his frailty too much good Uncle, if it be frailty indeed: but still more mendable than your own.

**Antonio** Ho! Ho! You should have married a mizzen-spark like her.

**Sebastian** Naples minor. Your forest-fluff blows a little true freely. Tell her, the city ladies will not so lenient as I on this rough deck.

**Alonso** Cease such childplay! Gonzalo, how many more books?

**Gonzalo** Time has wiped from this old brain all but a sketch of the collection. It can't be many more. His cell Works I never saw. It depends on his absoluteness.

**Alonso** Absolution?

**Gonzalo** No, my lord. My tongue is as furred as my brain. Absoluteness, his sense of completeness.

**Antonio** *(He saunters to the mast)*  
How fare you brother? How shall we be guided, if you unknow yourself so absolutely? But I will assist on land if not now. I am always happy to burn books. What are they good for? Sometimes kindling!

**Prospero** I will never not-know your voice : an alarm since our nursery. I am comforted that you can't manage pretence. Friends, I am on my way.  
*(He bends out of sight and throws)*  
The White. Letters shall not be known. Not even a word.  
*(A blinding white light fills the stage, making the cast invisible)*

**Alonso** Is that holy scripture?

**Gonzalo** Only if you believe. I once dreamed of such a realm.

**Alonso** I am neither apostate nor infidel.

**Antonio** Listen you Gods! I have endowed thirty chapels and will thirty more if I live.  
*(Ordinary light is restored)*

**Alonso** Mercy! He descends.

**Ferdinand** How must it feel to see one's schoolroom erased? How will you live without these companions?.

**Miranda** These magical volumes were never open to my eyes. They stood sentinel upon a higher shelf. He wrote in them and then locked them, carrying the keys in his cloak. A son might have been shown. My picture books were far below.

**Alonso** He has cast his robe. And now tears at his shirt. Avert your eyes daughter. Better still, take her hence Ferdinand. Leave us all.  
*( All exit. Prospero comes towards Alonso)*

Brother, self-baptised to naked ignorance, you are welcome home.  
*(The stage turns black: there is, thunder and lightening. In perfect black, a baby is heard crying.)*

## End of Act 1

## Act 2

### Scene 1

*As the smoke clears, and while the scene changes, a lute and female voices are heard : these two lines are sung a few times.*

**“Some people, they like to go out dancing  
And other peoples, they have to work.”**

*Finally, revealed is another chamber of the Sea : a Garden-Foyer to reception rooms. The central column, is now a tree and positioned up-centre-stage. Various sailors, at a sex-party offstage, are heard.*

*(Enter Master & Bosun in white gowns. A sea-nymph as waitress, stands upstage)*

**Master** I need air.

**Bosun** After you with the drinkless drink. I've swallowed more liquid these forty-eight hours than in my four & twenty years.

**Offstage-Sailor-A** Forty-eight!

**Master** There is nothing quite like nothing. Come fill me soft sea-breezes, comfort me better than wine.

**Bosun** I must have taken in three pints of storm water, then an unlucky seven swimming to shore, twenty flagons at Prospero's party before we left the island. I don't know how the old man came to have such a store of wine and beer. He must have had the knack of turning water into wine. Perhaps he is the second coming.

**Offstage-Sailor-B** Oh God! Eleven!

**Master** Don't mock the Lord. Remember where you are.

**Bosun** Where am I? Are we in heaven? Who is the Lord here. This time, when the ship went down, there was no gulping of water. Suddenly we were in these chambers led by unearthly creatures to a feast fit for princes. Us! Sea dogs!

**Master** The earth is the Lord's footstool and the sea is -

**Bosun** I don't recall this after-life described in those Sunday sermons a score years ago.

**Master** I heard Sebastian, the Duke's brother, tell that on the island a feast was laid out for them, and the moment they moved to eat, flying monsters tormented them. Let's proceed with caution and humility.

**Bosun** Don't mock the Lords. That's really the only instruction for the likes of us, wherever we are. Well I say we are out of such kingdoms now : and even if we're not, I've had enough of bowing. Never again will I be correspondent to such commanders.

**Offstage-Sailors** Thirty-six!.Twenty-two! Forty-seven!

*(There is cheering and clapping and laughter. Another sea-nymph enters with trolley with clothes As she enters the lute song is heard again.*

Some people, they like to go out dancing  
And other peoples, they have to work,

*Then a sailors' chorus shouting*  
Just watch me now!

**Sea-Nymph** Gentlemen, I bring you your native clothes. Not exactly the ones you were wearing, and merely beaten on the rocks. These are exact copies of them, as on the day you bought them, before the wedding voyage. No stubborn stain lingers in the creases.

**Bosun** I can smell Parma violets from here. And I can see the cambric folded like a pillow and my leather-chaps buffed to a new-saddle smooth. Master, are we not the new Princes now?

**Offstage-Sailor-C** Sixty-six!

**Sea-nymph** Your companions call. The music restarts soon. I'll lead you in.

**Master** We are most grateful for our clothes.

**Bosun** Yes. And we will see you at the revels.  
*(Sea-Nymph exits)*

**Master** I'll help you with your boots, if you'll help me with mine.

*(They take trolley and exit. Scrappy music is heard off stage. Enter Cairo and Comsett, two Sailors, one with guitar, other with flagon)*

**Comsett** *(He strums & sings while Cairo drinks )*

“Fear no more the heat o’ th’ Sun,  
Nor the furious Winter’s rages,  
Thou thy worldly task hast done,  
Home art gone, and tane thy wages.”

*(He speaks)*

For the first time since I joined, and I was on board aged seven,  
I’ve been paid properly.

**Cairo** For fuck’s sake, sing or drink, don’t talk

**Comsett** *(He sings a descant on ‘Worldly task’, ‘home’, ‘wages’. He addresses the Sea-nymph)*

My stepmother sold me into slavery. I was seven. Then it’s been one endless worldly task. Me mam died having me: and my dad, like getting a new pig to stick, gets this brick-faced cunt. She’d gelded him in the first fortnight. He wasn’t going to stop her throwing me out of me own home. She’d have fucked the gang-master to take me.

**Cairo** Poor fucking Joseph!

**Comsett** No home, and no chance of school. I’ve stood twenty years in the scullery.

**Cairo** And not made one fucking decent meal in all that time. We’d sick your dinners overboard, and the poor dolphins would sick them back on deck. They weren’t singing your praises.

**Comsett** You ungrateful bastard. I’d like to see you make a soufflé in a storm.

**Cairo** You’re right. Shit with chips is better than no shit at all.

**Comsett** I’m going to ram this guitar so far up your arse, you’ll be able to tune it with your teeth.

**Cairo** Come Cairo and have a swig and plug your shit-hole.

*(Cairo goes to Comsett and embraces him : they drink.)*

You’re my hero you know. I’d have been a deader in that first storm, if you hadn’t pulled me on deck. Still don’t know where we are, but I’m past caring. The air is warm and the beer is cold.

**Offstage-Sailors**            Seventy seven!

**Comsett**                    You don't much care for that kind of plugging do you?

**Cairo**                        I've done my time pumping in the pink aqueduct.

**Comsett**                    And ten thousand miles in the tunnel of mud!

**Cairo**                        That was winked at by my lot. It was this *(He points to the flagon)* that I had to wait a lifetime for.

**Comsett**                    Was it worth it?

**Cairo**                        How can you compare the waters of paradise?

**Offstage-Sailors**            Seventy Eight!

**Cairo**                        They've got time on their side. I'm fucked by sleep. Sing me a lullaby.

*(They go upstage, and sit under the tree. Comsett descants again and Cairo falls asleep. Then Comsett falls asleep. Enter Master and Bosun. Master is in his clean uniform. Bosun, as before, in white gown with a turban)*

**Bosun**                      You are such an arse-licker!

**Master**                      No! I'm proud of this uniform. I earned it : twisted my young shoulder-blades pulling at frozen ropes in Greenland, and then twisted my guts to half their length by the Cape. I read and read and fixed the tides of all the known seas, even those I'd never see myself.

**Bosun**                      Some as never saw books: but learned by looking at the compass of the globe, and of the men who pomp in it. I know the tides too, and have commanded too when Masters needed sleep, but I've never wanted the feather, lanyard and stripes.

**Master**                      You're a good Bosun – the best, I won't deny.

**Bosun**                      And I'd stand under you more willingly than under any other.

**Master**                      Will you never wear your sea-ribbons again?

**Bosun** For all our chafing, I know you'd keep me within three ribs of your heart, but I also know you long to have a Prince closer. You pine for that world. All those distinctions are dust to me now, Sir this, Lord that, titles made of the air from the mouths of men who are more helpless in a storm than the ship's cat. At least the cat never threatened to kill you when you were trying to save its life.

**Master** It never made it.

**Bosun** All we have passed through this month, and we might be as dead as the cat now, and you still dream of being dubbed, you crawling bastard.

**Master** Do you deny I deserve honours?

**Bosun** Not even here, full fathom five. I honour you, but you dishonour me, by scorning it. You don't know your own worth or mine. Like the complete dunce in the old joke

**Master** What joke?

**Bosun** I know you know it, but here's your mirror again. The hottest day of the year, Sirocco knifing through the mountains. A tinker is limping down a rutted country lane. Fucking parched. He sees a wounded wood-sprite. Yes, removes the thorn from its paw and is granted two wishes.

**Master** Not three!

**Bosun** "For the first" he says "make me a magical flagon of the coldest finest ale, so that as I drain the last drop it instantly fills again." He's barely finished speaking and the flagon is in his hand. As he wipes his lips after the first flagon-full, he turns to the sprite and says "I'll have another of these".

**Master** Ha Ha! And the homily? Kingship can't buy you love?

**Bosun** That's a truth too, but not the one I was pointing to.

**Master** What is it Sir philosopher!

**Bosun** The tinker can't think. We laugh at the man who can't imagine two pleasures, can't imagine one new one. But aren't most people like that, desperately chasing yesterday's itch.

**Master** Kingship can buy you love actually!

**Bosun** What have your men got next door utterly free?

**Master** Who knows how long we'll be here. We were only on that island six hours.

**Bosun** So better to be careful, plan only to go back to the old life?

**Master** We can't jump the past and we can't live in dreams.

**Bosun** If you can't dare in your own dreams, you truly are a coward. Your men have got more spunk than you.

**Master** Half of them are criminals pressed on board to escape prison.

**Bosun** But it was them pulling the ropes both times, as the ship went down: not the idle fucking princes. They're the salt of the earth.

*(Comsett & Cairo awake, still drunk)*

**Master** Oh look seasoning awakes! Time for me to go to school.

**Bosun** Who's ahead lads?

**Cairo** *(They stagger downstage)*  
Bosun! We thought you'd turned into a Puritan.

**Bosun** The Master may be of the Brethren but I'm an inland man – Kent.

**Comsett** You said it Bosun, you're a Kent alright. No yuralrigh!

**Cairo** Your quota is still there, waiting. And yours Master. Not been touched.

**Bosun** Any time I want, I know. So who's on top?

**Cairo** When I left, and when it was I don't know: when I left, it was Fat Dromeo –

**Comsett** Dromeo Dromeo wherefart thou farting Dromeo!

**Bosun** Shagger Shelvin's disgraced his name then?

**Comsett** Well you know.  
(*He sings*)  
“Long and thin goes right in,  
And doesn’t please the ladies  
Short and thick, does the trick  
And gets all the babies.”

Who’d want to sit on a needle?

**Cairo** A kebab. I’d love a kebab in Carthage again.

**Comsett** To tell you the truth, the beer is fucking tops, but who’d want 99 virgins – boys or girls. Who wants purity when you can have danger: nailing scabby skanks and then outrunning their oily panders to save your pennies? Desire acquaints a man with strange bedfellows, and not just in bed.

**Bosun** So, you can teach a new dog old tricks!

**Cairo** Bitches! Never satisfied.

**Comsett** Actually you can’t. After your pork-sword has hacked off the hymen, it grows again overnight, ready for the next day’s rutting. So one of them told me. “I’ll always be your virgin.” She can take a pounding from a thousand logs and still grip tighter than a viper,

**Bosun** Do you stick with the same 99?

**Cairo** I’m not sure.

**Bosun** Can you swap?

**Cairo** They look the same.

**Master** 99 sisters! Imagine!

**Cairo** No they look like the woman you want them to look like, moment to moment. You know when you’re on top, tilted like a seal, looking down, and you suddenly think I wish she was, she was, was anything...let’s say, a negro redhead with green eyes, there she is. Not only is thought free, you can cash it in flesh!

**Bosun** I don’t understand. What are they made of?

**Cairo** Our dreams! You’ll see.

**Bosun** Do they like it?

**Comsett**       Who cares! They're my wages.

**Master**        Can you ask for boys? Or a mix, and at the same time?

**Comsett**        I don't know! I've only done one shift. You're the Master. What are you fucking asking me for? Stop dribbling and get inside, and get inside?

**Bosun**         Like in the Garden of Eden, too many questions, and not enough woodwork.

**Cairo**         Woodwork! Nice one Bosun. Come on Comsett, let's show Shagger who's the Daddy. I'll race you through the forties.

*(Comsett and Cairo exit)*

## Act 2 : Scene 2

*The same foyer.*

*(Enter Prospero and Alonso, their court-clothes now ragged.)*

**Prospero** Master?

**Master** My Lord?

**Bosun** *(He remains apart)* Here we go again! The correspondents in conversation.

**Prospero** Can it be you?

**Alonso** Who is this man, in summer parade uniform?

**Prospero** Don't you recognise him? He is the Master of your ship.

**Bosun** *(Aside to Master)*  
How loved you are Master! I'm sure he can name all his dogs and horses though.

**Alonso** I never saw him before this moment. Gonzalo took care of directions on deck, who to whip and how often.

**Prospero** My farewell party on the island?

**Alonso** I could not tear my eyes from the faces of my son and your daughter.

**Bosun** *(Aside to Master)*  
He only tried to save your life – twice! And that of your fancy children. Why should you try to put a face to a deed?

**Alonso** And they are lost again. Why are we saved? My son, my son, where is my son.

**Prospero** Finding this man is surely a great sign.

**Bosun** *(Aside to Master)* I can hear gongs!

**Prospero** We are most glad to see you Master Seaman. How long we have been drowning without drowning I can't tell. Every few steps the sea-chambers change, so we don't know how long we have been walking in this labyrinth. You, I see have found a better harbour here.

**Alonso** Where is everybody else?

**Master** I fear your ship has split for eternity. That it was mended after the first storm was a miracle. I fear its splinters will never be re-knitted even with magical tar and twine. Your cabins crumbling like chalk were what I last saw as I went down.

**Prospero** I know nothing of the moment the waters closed over me.

**Alonso** Why did you choose ignorance, and a false ignorance at that, drowning your books? You can't erase that easily what you've learned so determinedly. A wise man elects to be a fool. It is against nature. And we are all punished.

**Prospero** I knew too much, it was killing my better self.

**Alonso** And now you have us your companions in death.

**Bosun** *(Aside to Master)* How daily do cowards die.

**Master** I don't know where I am. We all fell into the sea, screaming and swallowing salt-water until our heads might burst, and then suddenly my Bosun and I were in this chamber, breathing. But where it was and in what relation to all the others chambers and seas, and where our shipmates were, I didn't know till just now.

**Prospero** You seem to have found the baths and markets of this realm, its tailors and pomanders.

**Alonso** So we are not dead. Though better we were. Bereft, in rags, and a mouth as dry as inland dunes.

**Bosun** *(Aside to Master)* Without a throne stapled to their arse, kings are lemmings.

**Master** My scriptures told me resurrection was a grace in the air of heaven. Here must be a kind of purgatory. We have not met the Lords of this realm, but their servants are a kind of watery angel. I would not offend them or their gods.

**Bosun** (To Prospero) He'd kiss a throned rat's arse, if there might be a medal or ribbon for him.

**Prospero** Who is this fellow, more cynical than Diogenes, yet swaddled like a Turk.

**Bosun** I was a poor Moor studying Machiavel in Milan.

**Master** A feeble jest my Lord. He can't resist, but he means no harm. (To Alonso) Sir, your Bosun.

**Alonso** It's too late to own him. All I loved is lost. I am in a world saved for strangers.

**Bosun** You slight me, without cause. Enlightened Alonso, did we not latterly dine in your palace? And after the hunt, with falcons, I recall we received the Nuncio. He too remarked upon my turban, calling us to the Council of his Holiness, the latter being vexed that a mere Caliph wore more gold in his slippers.

**Alonso** Don't mistake these rags. I can fashion a whip from such shreds: and stripes may move, if recollection of rank will not. I've lashed the skin from bolder men than you.

**Bosun** There Master - doesn't breeding tell in an instant. It peeps through the most frayed silk. Gold wire can't contain it. Cross any man who's worn a crown or been in its orbit, and he'll have you on a rope from the first tree for not kissing his foot.

**Alonso** He's got our children hostage: sold them into slavery to these so called sea-angels, devils I'd say. That's why he is so bold. Name your price monster. Take my crown, take my life – give me my children.

**Bosun** Your crown is worth less than the rags you're wearing.

**Prospero** Let us not raise a third storm with all these hot words.

**Master** Be assured we haven't sold your children. For we haven't seen them since the ship broke.

**Prospero** Master, in good Christian charity, tell us all you know : especially why there should be such difference between us two couples who were once on the same ship.

**Bosun** Here's a conundrum for you Master, and the bookless Prosper. You'll wish you'd not drowned them before night falls. Do you understand the question Master?

**Master** For pity's sake, leave your mocking. These men might be childless widowers.

**Bosun** I'll be pliant. So - why should there have been such difference between us on the ship?

**Prospero** That wasn't the question Sir Trickster.

**Bosun** So you'd tease me with a dubbing!

**Master** I don't know the answer to either. A man can wear out a good and serviceable word by desperate use : but the only word I can find is dream. See it helps you nothing. The word is shredded in an instant trying to hold all the meaning we'd have it communicate. We are rough, unfinished men, some would say uncouth, fit only for -

**Bosun** *(Interrupting)* You fucking eternal slave!

**Master** Listen Bosun! I'm trying to compare, describe justly. We were rough subjects above, in your pryncedoms, but here we have been treated like princes, as we have often dreamt of princes being treated, for we didn't before now come within a dozen miles of any court or palace. And yet the chambers of these sea-people are so full of wonders, it diminishes all my dreams. You too would be amazed.

**Alonso** Why should you be treated so much better than us, your betters?

**Bosun** Justice, perhaps. Belated but here, quick now, here now, for always – we hope.

**Prospero** It is most unusual.

**Bosun** What books you must have swallowed to be so apt in your observation. Not usual indeed.

**Alonso** Are all the crew here?

**Master** Yes.

**Alonso** Every man –

**Bosun** Jack, yes, and all the other names you never condescended below decks to learn. All of them are in clean clothes, wine and meat and virgin flesh at a moment's call. And what is more, every scar, every knotted muscle, every badly knitted fracture, gotten at the mast, these thirty years, is smoothed away. They prance & roar like young lions.

**Alonso** I faint on these buckling pins.

**Prospero** Then what has happened to us and why?

**Master** A higher power must tell.

**Bosun** See how he colours. You've touched his vanity. He thought he'd out-Fausted Faust by drowning his magic books.

**Prospero** Fear not Alonso. It is probably just a matter of time, before we are as well honoured as our men.

**Bosun** For a getter-ridder you can't stop speaking of ownership.

**Alonso** These sea-nymphs they speak of will bring us water and wine and clean clothes : and our children.

**Prospero** Miranda and Ferdinand

**Alonso** They will hear us speak their names, and we shall hear the sacred word 'father'.

**Prospero** We are not men of sin. We have been sinned against out of all measure.

**Alonso** And we have endured with patience and humility.

**Prospero** If this is a place of judgement and mercy, all will be well.  
*(Enter sea-angels with clothes trolley)*

**Alonso** All-knowing Prospero - you were right.

**Bosun** Kings' Justice!

**Prospero** Welcome!  
*(There is a smoke bomb. The stage goes smoky & dark)*

**Alonso** They've tricked us. It is Hell. God save us!

## Act 2 : Scene 3

*Another sea-chamber. The central column looks like the mast, but it is a look-out tower.*

*As the smoke clears, we see at the foot of the tower a coil of barbed wire, and a pile of flails with strange threads. A sea-angel with an eye glass stands on the tower platform. The Master and Bosun are rubbing their eyes, when enter Meuta & Fixity disguised in hooded military capes and Prospero & Alonso, now blindfolded, in yellow shell-suits, a log chained to each of their backs.*

*The audience is not to know the military men are Meuta & Fixity until the end of the scene.*

**Meuta & Fixity**        Down murderers!  
*(Prospero & Alonso fall and crouch, face to the ground, hands behind them.)*

**Fixity**            The poor little baby is dead. Did you kill the baby?

**Meuta**            Who killed the baby?  
*(He bends down near their ears)* Dost thou attend me?  
I said - Who killed the fucking baby?  
*(Prospero & Alonso try to raise their heads to speak)*  
Keep your fucking heads down you murdering scum!

**Master**          We know these men. They're royalty.

**Meuta**            They're shit in the pan now! Who the fuck are you? I don't care who you fucking are. Sergeant, see them on their way.

**Alonso**          It's true. We are royalty. I'll show you my seal & chain.  
*(He tries to lift his head to get his chain)*

**Meuta**            Stay face to the ground or I'll ram the fucking seal down your fucking throat, strangle you with the chain, and then rip your fucking head off. I don't need to see no kingly seal to know cunts who destroy babies.

**Bosun**          Whoever you are, they are who they say they are.

**Fixity**            *(He beckons Master & Bosun downstage)*  
Don't look back. Who'd have thought your mate Shagger would have lost the first round to Dromeo.

**Bosun** How do you know Shagger?

**Fixity** We know everything, and your mother's maiden name.

**Master** He's a foundling.

**Bosun** You found my mother. Can I see her?

**Fixity** She's dead. Say your prayers and get back to the party.

**Master** Will they be alright? The one on the right saved our lives in a storm.

**Fixity** If only he hadn't caused it! Tell Shagger to be less balsamic with his tongue.  
*(Master & Bosun exit. He turns to Meuta)*  
 Have they confessed?

**Meuta** They're still blubbing. Is it too early for the parasol?

**Fixity** Give them a chance. Perhaps they'll confess.

**Meuta** Not going civvy-soft on me are you Sergeant?

**Prospero** For the love of mercy, let us speak, identify ourselves.

**Meuta** I know who you are you dirty, murdering child-fiddlers.

**Prospero** I swear by all I know, I don't know what you're talking about.

**Meuta** Thou attends not! I'm a patient man, known for patience, aren't I sergeant, known for patience. So I've been patient.  
*(He gestures to the wings. Clyp enters, playing a small harp. Meuta walks round the prisoners singing)*

This is the hand, the hand that waits.  
 And this is the hand, the hand that waits.  
 And this is the hand.

**Fixity** Save yourselves, tell the truth.

**Alonso** Have mercy on us!

**Meuta** *(He stops singing)*  
 Who said that?  
*(He motions Clyp out)*

**Fixity**            The fat one.

**Alonso**            It was me Lord.

**Meuta**             I'm not a fucking Lord.

**Fixity**             He's a citizen, like me.

**Meuta**             I recognised his voice from a moment ago. So you can identify yourself?

**Alonso**            In an instant. I will be correspondent to command.

**Meuta**             I don't want a fucking letter from you. Listen dead man crouching, and tell me who this is.

*(He snaps his fingers, and Alonso's voice, from the previous scene, is heard coming from afar towards them, making the threat:*

"Don't mistake these rags. I can fashion a whip from such shreds: and stripes may move, if recollection of rank will not. I've lashed the skin from bolder men than you."

So will my stripes move you?

**Prospero**          I could do that sound-wave once.

**Alonso**            It's me. The man insulted me.

**Prospero**          A servant.

**Meuta**             One who serves, not one who is served. So we shall serve you. Shall we move you? Dost thou hear? Sergeant, entertain them a moment .  
*(He exits)*

**Fixity**             Are you both fathers? Tell me. He's gone for a while. I'll help.

**Prospero**          I'm father to Miranda and he to a son & heir Ferdinand.

**Alonso**            Are they alive?

**Fixity**             Which of you is the father of the dead baby?

**Prospero**          We didn't know there was a baby. There was none on the island.

**Fixity** A beautiful child, dark-olive skin, red lips, golden hair.

**Alonso** There were none on the ship unless the crew smuggled one aboard.

**Fixity** You're not making it easy for me.

**Prospero** Who is the mother?

**Fixity** You tell me. He'll be back soon, with the parasol.

**Alonso** We have money?

**Fixity** You have what!

**Alonso** I have money on land.

**Prospero** He's a king.

**Fixity** He's a broken man.

**Meuta** *(Enters) We'll break him some more.  
Turn, sit and watch. Both of you. Not fucking yesterday!  
(Alonso & Prospero turn and sit-up. Fixity undoes the blindfolds.  
Meuta produces a crystal goblet with wine)  
Some wine first. Head back, open mouth.  
(As he approaches, he swirls the glass, the liquid turns to gold  
coins. He pours them into Alonso's mouth. He spits them out )  
Have a look! They're your coins, with your head.*

**Fixity** What's money! But don't waste it now.

**Meuta** *(He goes to the tower and picks up a flail.)  
Do you remember how we made these Sergeant?*

**Fixity** At the sea-farm.

**Meuta** Yes, Central Logging One.  
*(He brushes the strands lightly across their faces.)  
Do you know what these are made of?  
(They shake their heads)  
Milanese velvet did you say? No, something far more tender.  
Achilles tendons : a hundred per flail.  
(Alonso retches)*

You're probably thinking we snapped them like barbarians. But you'd be wrong. We had them shifting logs day and night until their brains boiled and they were pissing blood & could barely fucking walk. They would cut their own heel-strings to get some time in the prison hospital.

- Fixity** It's true. The bravest thing they ever did. But our surgeons had them back on the farm the next day!
- Meuta** The most touching thing was the group protest : twenty-nine at the same shift.  
( *He cracks the flail. It sounds like a gun. He turns to Prospero*)  
Are you the Daddy?  
(*He turns to Alonso and cracks the flail*)  
Are you the Daddy?
- Alonso** Please don't kill us.
- Prospero** I don't fear death.
- Meuta** But you wouldn't want to see your daughter die in agony.
- Prospero** You have Miranda?
- Meuta** Or even whimpering shitters like him. Where's the father?
- Alonso** I don't know.
- Fixity** Blade?
- Alonso** Oh God no!
- Meuta** (*Goes behind him*)  
Which is your favourite backbone?
- Alonso** I don't know.
- Meuta** I didn't think you would. Having only a string of jellied squares.
- Fixity** Mine is 11. It's good to know these things about oneself.
- Meuta** I could pull it with one crack. Not only would you never walk again, you'd be locked-down like a turtle for ever.
- Fixity** So you see it is important that you try to cooperate. Think - who got the baby? (*To Meuta*) Parasol Lieutenant?

**Meuta** Yes, Sergeant, thank you. He's very considerate. It is rather close.  
(Exit Fixity)  
Do you not find it close Prospero?

**Prospero** Might we have some water?

**Meuta** That's rather difficult under the sea. Didn't you offer your prisoner sea-water?  
(Enter Fixity with a tiny metal parasol)

**Fixity** This is called the ED2. It's not much use at giving shade. But it's a beautiful little engine. We tease it up the servant's entrance of the troublemaker - and don't forget we have your children – and when their next drop of shit drop falls on the fan, which is made of gold blades, it jams open. The lads call it a work of fart.  
(Alonso screams and faints)

**Meuta** I thought a king would be better used to torture. We haven't touched you yet.

**Prospero** There are torturing words.

**Meuta** And silences. And best of all torture by hope.

**Alonso** (He comes to.) Tell them Prospero!

**Prospero** Tell them what?

**Alonso** Everything! That you're the father. Fourteen years away from your wife is a long time. I forgive you if Miranda's married.

**Fixity** You're lying.  
(Alonso collapses.)

**Prospero** His mind's gone. You can't torture the truth.

**Meuta** Finally a true word. Fetch the trolleys and take them in.  
(Fixity exits)

**Prospero** Where are the children?

**Meuta**

We don't do deals. We've got all we want.

*(Fixity comes with sea angels and trolleys. Alonso & Prospero carried off by them. Meuta and Fixity remove military capes to reveal themselves from Act 1)*

You know that's one of the few things that looks good on you.

**Fixity**

I'll wear for it ever.

*(He starts to take it off , as they both exit)*

## Act 3

### Scene 1

*The White Lounge (under-sea) Chamber. It is an executive lounge - chairs, discreet buffet & wine table & attendant sea-nymphs upstage. At centre-stage there is a white piano.*

*Caliban, in a white suit & hat, is playing & singing. Antonio & Sebastian, each with a glass of wine in hand, are in a slow waltz with each other. Miranda is pacing.*

**Caliban**           *(Sings)*

“You will search babe at any cost.  
But how long babe can you search for what’s not lost.  
Everybody will help you,  
Someone people are very kind  
But if I can save you any time,  
Come on give it to me :  
I’ll keep it with mine.”

**Sebastian**       *(He stops)* What’s the it?

**Antonio**           *(Drinking)* I can’t find words for this wine without being quite disgusting : us dressed like Capuchins.

**Sebastian**       Oh do try.

**Antonio**           You know that house we visited in Carthage.

**Sebastian**       Where we bought those two girls, not much older than your niece.  
Oh yes! When, for two extra coins, the younger expressed gold  
your mouth.

*(He tilts his head back with his mouth open)*

That was the sweetest juice I had ever tasted until now.

**Antonio**           Your glass is almost empty.

*(He looks at the sea nymphs. They smile. The glass fills)*

How do they do that – from over there. That’s the kind of servant  
you want. You’d only need one.

*(He shouts to Caliban)*

Caliban, monkey-boy, enough of your mimicry, let’s have some of  
your jungle music.

**Caliban**           I am commanded.

*(He changes to a Calypso tune)*

**Miranda**            *(comes over)* My lord, what keeps your nephew with news of my father?

**Sebastian**        Don't fret child. He knows how lucky he is to have you and that as well as living through two drownings.

**Miranda**            How can I think myself lucky with my two fathers missing?.

**Antonio**            In us you have two fighting uncles.  
*(She returns to solitary pacing)*  
He doesn't deserve her.

**Sebastian**        We'd show her what for. There's not a single stain in this room.

**Antonio**            Except us!

**Sebastian**        I wouldn't have chosen this white suit but, like the wine, it's perfect. What luck! What's luck?

**Antonio**            What lucky people, like us, are born to keep. Accidents most strange that prove bountiful Fortune wears us as a pendant at her embonpoint, making us masters of Fate. Here comes the luck of youth!  
*(Ferdinand, Sebastian's nephew & Miranda's fiancé, enters)*

**Ferdinand**        Your father is alive.

**Miranda**            Oh merciful heavens!  
*(Runs to Ferdinand)*

**Ferdinand**        *(He raises his hand to block her)*  
But he is dead to me.  
*( He takes off ring & throws it at her feet)*  
And so are you.  
*Miranda faints)*  
  
*(She faints)*

**Ferdinand**        Uncles, your leave.  
*(Exits)*

**Antonio**            I'd call that bad luck : gain your father, lose your husband.

**Sebastian**        Depends. Worse things happen at sea - apparently.

**Antonio** Is she dead?

**Sebastian** I doubt it. Caliban, bring back Ferdinand.  
*(Caliban exits. Sebastian turns to sea-nymphs)*  
Ladies, your assistance.  
*(Sea nymphs come forward. One blows on Miranda, who awakes. Antonio brings chair.)*

**Ferdinand** *(Offstage, shouting )* I won't marry that whore.  
*(Caliban drags him in)*

**Antonio** The shy bridegroom.

**Sebastian** Nephew, compose yourself. You must be surer of truths truer than truth, to have insulted a little girl like this.

**Ferdinand** Ask her about her dead baby.  
  
*(Curtain)*

## Act 3 : Scene 2

Chamber as in Act 1 : Scene 1. At centre-right, a dais, 12 foot square, and one foot high. It is covered with a cloth.

*(Enter Decolore. She steps on the dais, and dances a few steps.)*

**Decolore** Men may come, and men may go, but the art-school dance goes on forever. I was at that dance. I wore, I wore, I wore their admiration. Attend!

*(Enter Meuta & Fixity)*

Good work on the arrest. Parasol still works a storm. Its mere mention plunging the imaginer into a fever of the mad and tricks of desperation.!

**Meuta** Why did they want Prospero brought in?

**Fixity** Down, brought down.

**Decolore** He was holding things up: worse, taking them back.

**Fixity** Back?

**Decolore** Backwards. Feudal. You like adverbial precision?

**Fixity** Mostly.

**Decolore** Steady tiger.

**Meuta** Where are they being held?

**Decolore** Chamber 3. The arraignment is in 5.

**Fixity** Full fathom.

**Meuta** Polynesia. It gets quite hot in there. I pity the poor bastards taking that on.

**Decolore** That'll be you two. So that's some pity saved. You can toss for sides, but either should be a gambol.

**Fixity** Have they already decided to hang him?

**Decolore** Gambol as in frolic.

**Fixity** Oh!

**Meuta** What are their chances?

**Decolore** We'll see what they've got to say. Is Fixity practiced in scene and screen?

**Meuta** We'll do one more before we go in.

**Decolore** Fixity, no showboating. One of you is bad enough.  
*(She exits)*

**Meuta** You've chosen the scene?

**Fixity** Yes.

*(He goes over to the dais. In one showboating gesture he removes the cloth and flings it in the wings. The dais is revealed as a chessboard. He shouts to the wings.)*  
Curtain call ladies.

*(Enter two sea-nymphs, as the young Miranda (nine) and young Caliban (twelve). They are both wearing Lincoln green, and carry small cloth bags. They step onto the dais, different halves and open their bags. Miranda puts on a black smock and Caliban a white. Miranda places her two dolls at a corner square.)*

**Miranda** *( She hops and skips from her side to his first line)*  
If I reach there, I become a queen?

**Caliban** Yes.

**Miranda** *(She kneels and pulls from the edge of the dais, a toy crown and puts it on.)*  
Queen Miranda!

**Caliban** Being a queen becomes you

**Miranda** *(She offers Caliban her regal arm, and takes him to her first line)*  
And if you reach my precious line, you become a king?

**Caliban** *(He reaches down and puts on queen's crown)*  
No I too become a queen.

**Miranda** Ha Ha! Which would become you less. Why don't you become a king?

**Caliban** It is a rule of this game, and we are perched in the realm of this game.

**Miranda** Who makes the rules?

**Caliban** Men and women, very old men and women, a long time ago.

**Miranda** Well, they've had a long turn. One day I shall be a queen, and it won't be a game. Then I will make the rules, and when you reach the line you will be king.

**Caliban** *(He sits at the edge of the dais facing the audience)*  
Come sit by me my queen.  
*(She gets her dolls and sits by him)*  
Why princess must you be a queen?

**Miranda** I'm special.

**Caiban** I won't argue.  
*(He takes her dolls and places them on a first line)*  
More special than Tricky and Silio?

**Miranda** No! They're toys. They can't really do anything. They can't talk, any more than a fish or a bird or a raindrop. I know what you're thinking and you can tell me. We're different and proper people. *(She starts taking off black smock)* I'm tired of costumes. *(She produces a quince from her Lincoln green dress.)* Would you like some fruit?

**Meuta** *(He raises his arm)*  
That's fine.

**Fixity** I've got more.

**Meuta** *(He nods to the sea-nymphs)* Bravo!  
*(They exit)*  
Cocktails?

**Fixity** That was the next scene. How did you guess!  
*(They exit)*

## Act 3 : Scene 3

*Party foyer as before. The party noises are a bit less obtrusive.*

*(Shagger-Shelvin limps on. He tries to walk off the difficulty. Then he sits downstage. He looks round, then he looks down into his pants. Bosun enters from upstage)*

**Bosun** Missing some yards from your main-mast Shagger?

**Shelvin** *(He gets up instantly.)* Ha! It feels like it's shrunk more than when you fall in the Arctic Sea.

**Bosun** Can't stand the heat?

**Shelvin** It doesn't stop.

**Bosun** That's endless pleasure for you. It's, well – endless.

**Shelvin** It doesn't stop and it doesn't change. I stopped for a tea-break.

**Bosun** Dromeo was fastest again yesterday.

**Shelvin** He's so fucking thick, he doesn't realise it's not really a competition. They're all loving it.

**Bosun** Perhaps they don't believe it'll last.

**Shelvin** I've had enough. I don't know what's come over me.

**Bosun** I'll pass on that.

**Shelvin** It wasn't a feed. How are you Bosun?

**Bosun** I've been baffled from the start. I can't stop thinking, when it's the last thing you ought to do in there.

**Shelvin** Same here, though without half your brains.

**Bosun** What's got me beat is that I don't know what I want anymore. I'm not even sure I ever did. Up there, you knew what you wanted because you didn't have it. So you dreamed about it, year after year, from twelve for the rest of your life.

**Shelvin** A filthy pillow - the poor man's heaven.

**Bosun** Then there's also the fact that you can be surprised by real desire. You thought you knew exactly what you really wanted. You liked several women for several virtues - this tint of hair, that arc of jubbies, a catch in her voice - and you imagined one composite beauty : and then, someone else comes along, whom you see isn't a tenth of your dream-doll, and she turns all your dreams into wet clay.

**Shelvin** Don't we all want everything?

**Bosun** No more than the baby that tries to eat its own toes.

**Shelvin** Some lucky bastards, like princes, are just born into it – succession, use of service, warm toilets...

**Bosun** You wouldn't think it, but even kings and queens have their unbearable dreams.

**Shelvin** There's a pain I'd like to have had, instead of mine.

**Bosun** Well you've got it now. We all have. Here, there is absolutely no possibility of surprise – desires you didn't know you have. Who'd have thought disappointment was so necessary to happiness?

**Shelvin** Yes, the strangest thing has happened. I long to be refused, to be frustrated. All those nights beating one's pillow after being rejected and refused by a boy on deck or a girl on land, and then suddenly laughing out loud into the dark, just so glad that there was another day to try, and the pleasure of trying.

**Bosun** Yes, even be frightened of desires that won't lie down, and fill one's night with sleepless shame.

**Shelvin** Crikey Bosun, I'm glad I've only half your brain, if the other half is trying to bang them as you shouldn't, in ways as you shouldn't.

**Bosun** We've all got desires we daren't admit for madness.

**Shelvin** The other thing eating away at me is them nymphs. One of the things that I want is for them to be happy,

**Bosun** We can't know how they feel. Pretty much like all women!

**Shelvin** I know you're not really bitter that way.

**Bosun** Yes, it's killing me to think that they're being punished. Who are we to get such gorgeous creatures? How can my pleasure be theirs? It's like that old joke.

**Shelvin** I never get your jokes.

**Bosun** The Papal Nuncio has been sent by the Big Man to try and get the Spanish on side. El Signor says, "Only if you show me Fat Henry getting his just deserts in Hell." The Nuncio is authorised to take Toro to the pit. When they get there, they see the old & bloated, scabby & syphilitic, Protestant king bouncing on top of the naked, gorgeous Queen of Sheba. El Toro is shocked and says "And that is hell for Henry VIII".  
"No!" smiles the Nuncio, "that's hell for the Queen of Sheba."

**Shelvin** Ha! Ha! What makes a woman good in bed? Being there! But what if she's not all there.  
(Enter Sea nymph)

**Bosun** She's here now

**Sea Nymph** Come on big-boy 32-55 are waiting.

**Shelvin** Tell them, a minute, if you would be so kind..  
(Sea Nymph goes)  
If I don't want to go now, is it work? I don't want ever to go again if it's work for anyone.

**Bosun** God knows what it is for them.

**Shelvin** They're so pure, one feels like dirt. But here goes.  
(Enter Fixity)

**Fixity** Hold it seaman. The party's over. You've been called.

**Bosun** Be careful what you wish for Shelvin.

**Shelvin** To Naples or Portsmouth?

**Fixity** To court.

**Bosun** Carthage?

**Fixity** No our court. Judgement!

**Shelvin** We've done nothing wrong. We haven't taken anything we weren't given.

**Fixity** I didn't say you were the accused. You and your ship-mates, are invited to be a kind of jury at an arraignment. We'd like your help. You are not commanded to attend and may, if you choose, return to your deserved revels.

**Bosun** Us? What of the kings and princes and court-folk?

**Fixity** They're the people you'll be judging.

**Shelvin** What! Our masters above? Truly the world is upside down here.

**Bosun** There's a new purpose Shelvin to top Dromio's numbers. Which way up are you going to leave the world?

**Shelvin** It's the best thing that's ever happened to me.

**Fixity** Better than 99 virgins, and an ever-filling flagon of beer.

**Shelvin** You'd be surprised. *(He sings)* Some people like to go out dancing. But watch me work now!

*(All exit)*

## Act 3 : Scene 4

*The White Lounge Chamber.*

*Sebastian & Antonio trying to revive Miranda, Ferdinand pacing. Caliban at the piano.*

**Caliban**           *(He plays 'Here comes the Bride' . Everybody freezes. He stops.)*  
Oh pardon me. It seems the bride has already come - and gone,  
up the duff.

**Miranda**           Is the child dead?

**Ferdinand**        Oh she's good, no - brilliant, at acting innocent. How heartless,  
inhuman. Your father's books were found, and beside them,  
wrapped in his robe, a baby.

**Miranda**           I had a baby brother?

**Ferdinand**        What a face! I suppose it might have been called your brother as  
well. But I don't know if it was a boy or girl, only that it was dead.

**Miranda**           Unlucky child.  
*(weeps)*

**Ferdinand**        You must be the mother.

**Miranda**           I am nonesuch

**Ferdinand**        We're not sure of the father, yet.

**Caliban**           Hurrah! My boys can swim, like their gran!

*(He dances. They look at him in horror. He stops and sits.)*

**Ferdinand**        Is it him, with his beastly dimensions, and desires beyond human  
temperance?

**Miranda**           I'm a virgin, barely brought to her flowers.

**Ferdinand**        Bare enough to have borne enough.

**Caliban**           And I'm almost her first brother, so it's right I have primogeniture,  
and my member would slay yours in an instant in a cock-fight,  
pretty-boy.

**Miranda** He boasts and lies as only the rejected suitor can. Test me. Call the Gods to test my hymen. Call Hymen again.

**Ferdinand** I've had enough of your island magic. You can prove anything you want. A place where time slips back and forth at will : maidenheads fall, babies quicken and then, should you change your mind, your womb's lock reappears and you can even find tears for a child that means no more to you than a new slipper.

**Caliban** Quite the natural philosopher, with talk of time and cause. Consider this plain geometry. One island, one maid, and three other creatures – only two with cocks.

**Ferdinand** The fourth?

**Caliban** Ariel, the eunuch lackey of her father. A child by him would just be wind.

**Ferdinand** It would have been as fantastical a horror as told by the pagans or by the Patriarchs of Lot, if her father had fathered this child on her.

**Caliban** So?

**Ferdinand** You were the first to fish in her pool. I am persuaded.

**Caliban** I wasn't the first. Only the first to seed the pool.

**Ferdinand** Oh horror. And that explains your presence on the boat. You and he shared a sick secret that only company would keep bound.

**Miranda** How quick men are to embrace news of absolute humiliation, for the comfort of rage.

**Caliban** Why is my child dead?

**Miranda** And as quick to embroider any fantasy that makes them look like Zeus. You have no child, well no child by me. Perhaps that child is yours by your dead mother.

**Caliban** *(He moves to attack her)* Whore!

**Ferdinand** Here comes the officer.  
*(Caliban stops. Clyp enters)*

**Miranda** My gowns are without stain. I'll stake my life on my virginity. And it is mine.

**Ferdinand** You may have to. They want a life for that baby's.

**Clyp** Come.  
(*All exit*)

## Act 3 : Scene 5

*Party Foyer*

*Sailors, in sailors' tunic & bell-bottoms - enter from Party Chamber carrying Dromeo and flacons and singing to pipes. They parade him and sing.*

**Sailors**            "There were nine and ninety virgins  
In the chambers of the blessed.  
After Dromeo came a knocking  
There were nine and ninety less."

*(They extemporise verses)*

**Comsett**            Who'd be a king up there, when down here he might spend his  
seed like a sailor.

**Dromeo**            Now let's play at being judges.

*(To Tubular Bells jig, sailors dance downstage, then upstage to behind the central tree. As they come forward they are now in black suits. Thy walk soberly off stage.)*

## Act 3 : Scene 6

*The Court Arraignment Chamber*

*The central column has a witness-platform six-feet from the ground : in which Gonzalo is stood. Downstage Right, the counsel table & chair : Decolore is seated, Fixity standing. Opposite a bench on which four sailors are seated: including Comsett & Dromio ).*

*Enter Master & Bosun & Shelvin & Antonio & Sebastian: they stand by sailors..*

**Decolore** So, in summary, Prospero will be called before us to answer the three grave charges of Twokking, Cating and Infanticide.

**Master** *(To Bosun)* What is cating?

**Bosun** We wouldn't have missed the start, if you hadn't been putting on your medals. Your master's stripes and chevrons will move no one here.

**Decolore** We will begin by allowing defence counsel to make an opening statement.

**Gonzalo** No!

**Fixity** *(To Decolore)* One moment.  
*(To Gonzalo)* The procedure is that you advise me and I speak for your friend.

**Gonzalo** I am beholden for the offer but I feel both my rank – and this is no slight to your position & privilege in these proceedings – and my long acquaintance with my Master's new kinsman, the accused Duke, make me a more fitting advocate.

**Fixity** Your personal connection to the accused is not doubted. It must be obvious to you that this is partly why you have been allowed to survive to be here.

**Gonzalo** Allowed? Do you little clerk have the name of magistrate or master of fate to do such allowing?

**Fixity** Your robes and ribbons make you too easily forget that you are not at home in your country park but in a strange realm, of stranger practices with which I, as a denizen of uncountable years, am better acquainted.

**Gonzalo** Nor do I deny your provenance, and all the knowledge accruing, though your unlined face might belie it, but I feel the hour calls me.

**Fixity** Having subtly advised you of the impropriety, in fact rank foolishness, of your self-advancement, I withdraw.

**Decolore** Fixity, we wait.

**Fixity** Maestra, Gonzalo has elected himself to speak, and I have deferred.

**Decolore** *(To Gonzalo)* Caution having failed, proceed.

**Gonzalo** Mmm yes! I remember it well, the historical crux. An awful time. But as they say, silver linings for the fortunate. Gold in fact. I had just been made a CME, Companion to the Milanese Empire, a most unlooked for, but deeply cherished honour for me, a butcher's son.

**Fixity** Thin ice.

**Decolore** Your advancement is neither interesting in itself nor germane.

**Bosun** Learn Master, your fellow-climber stumbles.

**Comsett** Look lads it's Fat-boy : the swanking bastard who nearly got us all killed in the storm. How's it hanging now bandy-legs?  
*(All the sailors whistle & hoot)*

**Decolore** Appreciative though we are of your presence, interrupting as it does your deserved pleasures, and acknowledging a perhaps justified resentment expressed in your delightfully vigorous demotic, we remind you that this is not a tavern. Both of you may consider this a last warning for mis-speaking.  
*(The sailors mumble apologies, sit at attention)*

**Gonzalo** Your pardon! I will speak serviceable hessian. Prospero, once absolute Milan, stands in the ante-chamber, a colossus toppled by gnawing mice.

**Decolore** Do you mock us?

**Fixity** He speaks of pre-history.

**Gonzalo** I knew him from pale-limbed youth. No I won't say I was an Aristotle to his Alexander for he had more ambition to be the philosopher than the conqueror, or at most a conqueror of realms of abstraction. Even when he was married, he would linger late, crouched among his books, as other men count & burnish their jewels, deaf to the hours. So he was an easy ladybird for his determined brother to flick from the chair of state. When I put into his boat of exile, some few of his most necessary books, I feared we would never talk of statecraft again. Seasons passed.

**Decolare** You served the new Duke, the usurping brother to this apprentice-Aristotle, and gained even more badges & cloaks?

**Gonzalo** As my King's ambassador. I was obliged. *(He nods to Sebastian)*

**Decolare** A tricky word. Continue.

**Gonzalo** After a wondrous Afric marriage, in the ancient ruins of our ancient kinsmen of Carthage, a tempest blew us from our course home. We feared it was our moment of absolution, but somehow we found ourselves exactly as ourselves on the magical island demesne of the lost Duke Prospero. When we finally met, he explained that our terrors on the ship and then on land were a chastening & instructive prelude to reconciliation. The nature of justice was ever his study : and as he ruled Milan with great justice, so his island was a model of fairness. It was fitting that his usurping brother returned his dukedom with good grace. We looked to re-see our native land, and watch our final sunsets in peace, disturbed only by the laughter of our grandchildren. *(He chokes)*

**Decolare** Water or time?

**Gonzalo** Not water. I am recovered. But it seemed the Gods wished to instruct us further. So a second tempest, unmade by Prospero, and beyond his swallowing, brought us to you. The wisdom of God surpasses our guesses at justice, and bends us to acceptance if not understanding. Until the indictment spoke it clear, I had heard rumours of a dead child. This is more baffling than the clamouring storm. You've seen his daughter, like him, chaste and bookish. Let such proofs echo long after my silence.

**Fixity** I believe we are complete.

**Master** *(To Bosun)* For my part, such dignified sorrow, melts forgiveness out of me.

**Bosun** (To Master) He had us when we were down. And if true proofs of piety were cloaks, his could not cover an unshelled beetle.

**Fixity** Hessian trimmed with richer threads, Maestra, but I hope it will suffice.

**Decolore** Thank you Signor Gonzalo. If I might ask a few questions. Have you ever calved a foal or lamb?

**Gonzalo** (surprised) Why, no!

**Decolore** Not one?

**Gonzalo** Affairs of state, and then my own studies, have kept me an in-house man. I had in my employ husbandmen, whose great-grandfather's had known each field, orchard and stallion, and taught well their sons.

**Decolore** But on such an estate as yours, Nile-fertile, unblemished by long heath or brown furze, in all the years you were garnering honours, there was no doubt a swelling of herds – of sheep, cows and Barbary roans.

**Gonzalo** I was most blessed with fecundity.

**Dromeo** Fec what ? Why can he talk like that?

**Decolore** Were there ever occasions when the mother or calf was in danger? You hear the tumult of your husbandmen called in the middle of the night. A long labour – a prize mare struggling with the calf in breach.

**Dromeo** At this pace, we're going to be here all night. My chicks'll be chucking.

**Gonzalo** I thought it was a dead human baby that was being investigated.

**Fixity** You would show your diplomacy better by answering not anticipating.

**Gonzalo** I lost two exceptional beasts this way, but more were saved. I trusted my husbandman.

**Decolore** In such a crisis, with life on the brink, not to mention loss of earnings, did you ever enter the stable and berate them.

**Gonzalo** Why would I do that?

**Bosun** *(To Master & Sailors)* What a player? He's roped him.

**Master** What? I can't see.

**Decolare** Because you were a better man than him?

**Gonzalo** I am that by the King's grace. But of course I didn't. For two reasons : firstly it was a matter of life & death : secondly I did not have the knowledge or experience of that kind of task.

**Decolare** You knew your Virgil and Sydney?

**Gonzalo** Neither mere rank nor beautiful poetry about horsemanship & husbandry will not tell you how far to ease your arm into a mare's womb to release a breach. It would be a greater shame for my shameful ignorance to disturb work being done as well as it can be done.

**Decolare** Fixity, a word.  
*(Fixity goes over and they confer)*

**Bosun** He's hung himself.

**Master** Who? I don't know what you mean.

**Bosun** The tempest. In the middle of the tempest, as we were trying to save the ship, he was lording it as much as the young heirs, threatened to hang us on land.

**Decolare** A rare but necessary humility in extremis. It goes without saying, I presume, that you have always kept this counsel.

**Gonzalo** In all estates, conditions and continents.

**Bosun** Liar.  
*(There is a tumult)*

**Sebastian** You're right there Bosun! He doth but mistake the truth totally.

**Master** For pity's sake Bosun, don't cause us trouble here.

**Decolare** As for the others, this first mis-speaking is indulged, Bosun. At the next, your punishment will be beyond endurance.

*(Bosun is about to speak, when the Master clamps his hand over his mouth and drags him aside)*

**Master** *(To Bosun)* I know you're telling the truth lad. But this is a master's court: and not a mere ships' master's. There's no remedy. We can't show the past on a magical screen here in this room, and say - Look, this is exactly how it was.

**Decolore** Finally, we entreat your assistance, as a great scholar, in connection with the puzzle of the monogram on the swaddling linen.  
*(He passes a cloth to Gonzalo)*

**Sebastian** *(To Antonio)* It's a mercy your niece is excused attendance.

**Gonzalo** I had one time, some skill in codes. What horrors are folded in this white cloth! Have they found the body yet?

**Fixity** The code - CTUF?

**Gonzalo** If not an island infant – then perhaps Calabria, Tuscany, Umbria, Firenze – but why these?

**Antonio** He's no idea but will never say. Anyone can guess wildly. The - Father - Understand - Caliban.

**Sebastian** Then Miranda's truly F-U-C-T.

**Decolore** The cloth, if you please.  
*(Fixity takes it from Gonzalo and passes it to Decolore)*

The sun has set. We pause. Officers, everyone to their proper confines until tomorrow & judgement. Thank you all.

*(All stand, Decolore leaves. Others begin to leave)*

**Bosun** If you can't show the past in the present, then it's all a charade: tomorrow too.

**Comsett** *(He kisses Bosun)*  
Don't take it to heart Bosun. It's all lies and chance. Come back to the party. I swear your virgins are going rusty for want of some your seed-oil. I hate to see the beautiful unemployed.

**Bosun** Your honest friendship is a better balm. Go, give Dromeo a run tonight. Later, I too will approach a virgin.  
*(All exit)*

# Act 4

## Scene 1

*A small chamber : one chair, one blanket, one chamber pot. Immaculate.  
A ceiling-high curtain across centre-stage.*

*Miranda in green silk-dress, green slippers, and green twigs in her hair.  
She is staring at the curtain. Bosun enters unseen from downstage. He pauses  
and watches her.*

**Miranda**            *(Without turning)* So you are one of the new masters here.

**Bosun**            I am not a master of any kind. With time and tuition, I might have become a ship's master like my friend. But here I've no ambition : certainly none for mere power over others. You were a princess, are a princess.

**Miranda**            *(She turns. He is awed by her beauty)*  
I was the daughter of a duke without a dukedom. I was to be the princess of the son of a king, so a mere duke's daughter like me would have had to give me precedence.

**Bosun**            You speak bitterly as if you won't be?

**Miranda**            It did fascinate me a little that others, scores of them, grown men & women, would have to bow, bend and scrape to me as a King's son's wife. Then he, jumping to the thought that I'd already been jumped on, been bent, bowed and scraped by a nimbler man, he cast me aside.

**Bosun**            The empty cradle!

**Miranda**            Moses drowned, and me in exile, now called to court. Do you know the charge?

**Bosun**            I know only that I was asked to accompany you to the court.

**Miranda**            You were not ordered?

**Bosun**            This is the strangest realm, so unlike the other, where almost every third word was a command, insult or threat. I was asked, most civilly, to be beside you, so that you would not feel alone.

**Miranda** Why would I feel alone? My father will surely be there.

**Bosun** He will be there, but not quite there.

**Miranda** What do you mean?

**Bosun** He's a changed man.

**Miranda** I've learned the bitter lesson of how men change. A father is a constant.

**Bosun** You won't be able to speak to him, or be able to be embraced by him.

**Miranda** Barbarians!

**Bosun** I'm here also to save you from your anger.

**Miranda** So am I fucked?

**Bosun** (*Chokes*)

**Miranda** Shame on you Bosun! Bragging that you were only three seas from getting your mastership : and a word, as common as salt among sailors, has you gagging like a - well, like a girl.

**Bosun** Queens of the dockside charge by the hour to pour sweet filth into one's ears after a long voyage. Some say it's better than actually locking flesh. But such words in the mouth of a princess are a shocking as hearing a whore vow amendment.

**Miranda** I hope you still have enough grace not to mock even a whore's contrition. Now that you are recovered, tell me do you think I am F- U – C –T, in both senses.

**Bosun** I do have enough grace not to speak beyond knowledge. I don't know you well enough to judge.

**Miranda** I know you don't know me. I'm asking you to think.

**Bosun** All my life, men and women of power have judged me in an instant, scorned me from my rough clothes or tar on my hands. I will not, even at your exact request, conclude after 3 minutes.

**Miranda** Women have been wooed to chapel or raped & left in the forest in less time.

**Bosun** I won't be pressed to guessing or gossip.

**Miranda** Then I shan't press. But Bosun, what do you know that is worth knowing and tellable in good faith?

**Bosun** Knots!

**Miranda** Indeed! I will not! I know not, I shall not!

**Bosun** I will show you what holds the world together. On my first day on a ship, I was still a child, the Master produced two pieces of rope like these.

*(He pulls from inside his coat, two pieces of white rope)*

He showed me thirteen knots, and told me to practise them until I could do them in the dark, even when dog-tired. For the storm might come on a moonless night, and as the masts split into floating splinters, these are the last links to hope of life.

*(He gestures to her to hold out her hands. As he ties her hands with his eyes closed, he recites knot names.)*  
Bowline, clove, rolling hitch, sheep-bend, splice...

**Miranda** And I have learned, even sacred knots can be untied.  
*(She slips it and throws the ropes at his face.)*

**Bosun** *(He opens his eyes)* It's not one I would have undone.  
*(He blushes, recovers)*  
I have seen cables thicker than elephant's legs & know how to lash those. But I envy most the spider, with his sunrise mesh of inimitable connecting. Oh to have had the chance to study! I would have learned how to bind torn blood vessels, the very nerves of broken men. The knot at our navel, though snapped, links us all, of court and galley, and to our first parents.

**Miranda** I fear the cruellest knot is being coiled for my only parent.

**Bosun** That's why we shouted *Liar* at the so called counsellor Gonzalo.

**Miranda** Uncle Gonzalo?

**Bosun** In the middle of that first tempest as we tried to secure the ship, he got in the way and then mocked us with the hangman's knot. We'll see how good his gallows jokes are when he stands on the platform. But first it is the King of Naples. (*she winces*) Fear not – Ferdinand is not admitted.

**Miranda** (She repeats slowly) "The very nerves of broken men."  
Bosun, I am Miranda. Your mother surely gave you a gentler name before the Master baptized you Bosun. In what world, wide or weft, would I blessed to be told it.

**Bosun** In this sea-chamber Miranda, my mother's Sclerian speaks to you, believing that in a coming spring tide, you too will make a perfect new mother.  
(*A bell sounds*)  
We are called. Come.  
(*They stand as curtain opens*)

## Act 4 : Scene 2

*The Court Chamber bathed in bright light*

*Decolore and Fixity are at the table. Some sailors on the bench.*

**Fixity** This won't take too long Maestra.

**Decolore** It's for your passing-out.

**Fixity** *(To Miranda and Bosun)* Please wait there.  
*(To offstage)* Bring him in.  
*(Sea-Nymph brings in Alonso, in full Kingly attire. He is far too-steady. Fixity cautions Miranda and Alonso to remain out of Alonso's eye-line)*

**Bosun** I've seen many a broken prisoner walk in that stately fashion.

*(Alonso sits in the witness box, he surveys the scene)*

**Fixity** Do you know where you are sir?

**Alonso** It's the brightest morning I've ever seen. You look familiar.

**Fixity** Do you know where you were sir before this morning?

**Alonso** Among the blind and blinded. Weren't you very kind to me?  
You shall have a king's ransom.

**Fixity** Are you a good traveler? Do you like journeys, long and short, but especially long, the shift from place to place, from a warm sun to a cold rain and back again, seeing men & women of different colours and tongues, visiting their monuments, comparing them with your own, testing their embrace and more.

**Alonso** It is not advisable for a King to travel to like a merchant or a scholar, leaving his throne empty. I send ambassadors to travel and to learn tongues. And if I suspect a double tongue, I will cut both. Nine of ten courtiers dream of regency, and suggest long voyages, every other moon, to the moon, if they could.

**Fixity** Your new brother Prospero sailed only to his library, but still fell.

**Alonso** Another reason to avoid libraries. There is nothing to learn there. Everyone seeks pleasure, everyone has a price, and everyone understands pain. Those are the facts of life. Caesars express that and that alone in all their actions.

**Fixity** You have studied the Caesars.

**Alonso** Better, I have tested it, proven it in the belly and on the neck, home and abroad: abroad is better.

**Fixity** A brother-king must turn a blind-eye to others torturing in his domain.

**Alonso** He knows it is no mystery. What is kingship but making a temporary truce with a second in order to plunder a third. That is the basic pattern on the tile. I learned to walk the mosaic without stubbing the ally of the hour.

**Decolore** *(To Fixity)* You're drifting!

**Miranda** *(To Bosun)* What's happened to the King's voice?

**Bosun** *(To Miranda)* He's more than correspondent to command : he's broken, and gone over to them, all-self entire : a perfect parrot of the catechism here.

**Fixity** Enumerate the principal types of torture.

**Alonso** The first is the threat to the prisoner's body. The second is to his soul, but for some this is not a concern. Another terror is threat to the body of someone the prisoner cherishes. Finally there is torture by hope of freedom.

**Fixity** What succeeds best?

**Alonso** Ignorance of place of custody and ignorance of charge.

**Fixity** How so?

**Alonso** Take the prisoner to a place, a somewhere that is nowhere, an island, a jungle, under-ground. Tell him he is a long way from home, even if you build your prison-cell below his own house. Tell him nothing and wait. He will tell you everything he knows or go mad or both.

**Fixity** The Kingship manual calls this policy what?

**Alonso** Rendition. It's quite ordinary in our world.

**Fixity** Do you know why your new-brother Prospero did it to you?

**Miranda** *(She steps into his eyeline)*  
No it wasn't like that!

**Alonso** *(He turns to her)* It's always like that my child.  
*(To Fixity)* Primarily for revenge on his brother Antonio. To have the last laugh. The rest of us were just collateral damage.

**Fixity** How bad was Antonio?

**Alonso** He broke the rule of inheritance. But just as prisoners must try to escape, so regents and younger sons must, absolutely must, try to take the crown. It's a law of power. Antonio was a good ruler. He didn't give me any trouble, that's why I invited him to our wedding in Carthage.

**Fixity** Perhaps that's why you had to be in that storm he raised.

**Alonso** When I thought the storm was a flash of Nature and misfortune, I was distressed but philosophical, well as much I'd get. But then when he told me he'd got up the storm out of his books, I was for the first time impressed by books. And, naturally terrified : for a man who has hit you that hard once, will almost certainly hit you again, no matter what he says. The marriage was a human shield, as most court marriages are.

*(Miranda wobbles, Bosun steadies her)*

**Fixity** Do all kings admit such bitter truths?

**Alonso** Not to their wives or confessors, but to their pillows - every single night.

**Fixity** You no longer fear us?

**Alonso** I don't know who you are, and where I am: but I concede that you are masters of mere kings like me, and of earthly magicians. There may be other Gods, ready even now, to render you to a different chamber, but what is that to me?

**Fixity** Call his son!  
*(Alonso is looking at her as Ferdinand enters, and sees both)*  
*He crosses to the witness box. Bosun is more shocked than Miranda.)*

**Bosun** I did not expect this. I've failed you already.

**Ferdinand** *(He points to Miranda)* I am humiliated. She is a whore. *(sobs)*

**Alonso** No she's not. You've had a lucky life. It's time to grow up.

**Miranda** The truth. Torture works.  
*(She makes a knot-twist motion with her hands and smiles at the Bosun.)*

**Decolore** Congratulations Fixity. Thank you all.  
*(Exit all.)*

## Act 4 : Scene 3

*Party Foyer.*

*Sea-Angels enter, carrying in barrels of beer and cross the stage to the party-chamber offstage. Comsett enters from Party. Master enters from opposite.*

**Comsett** Is the Bosun back yet?

**Master** He's with a woman.

**Comsett** Not with any of them lovelies as is inside there. I'm up to 43 today, and it's only the third bell.

**Master** A normal woman.

**Comsett** What would he want one of them for, or even a temperate nymph?

**Master** You're too young to know.

**Comsett** He's my age.

**Master** Alright – you're too fucking stupid.

**Comsett** Where do brains get you? I heard that fat-boy Gonzalo is going to be sliced like salami and fried in his own lard.

**Master** It wasn't a fair trial.

**Comsett** He's had more than his share of fairness and luck, and passed on fuck all.

*(Enter Sea nymph with number 44)*

**Sea Nymph-44** I've spread the new silk sheets. The beer is cold. Come.

**Comsett** Here's hoping. See how I am hounded. It's a great life if you harden.

*(Sea nymph & he exit to party)*

**Master** Oh, to have his stupidity - and him.  
*(Exit other way)*

## Act 4 : Scene 4

*Court Chamber*

*The witness-box on the column is gone. There is a chair at the bottom of the column. Decolore and Meuta at the counsel table. Shelvin & Dromeo standing alone at the Sailor's Bench. .*

- Meuta** Thank you Sailors.  
*(Shelvin & Dromeo sit)*  
Come.  
*(Enter Bosun and Miranda)*
- Decolore** Please sit down Miranda.  
*(Bosun leads her to the chair.)*  
Two true witnesses are as good as a thousand.
- Bosun** Be yourself and don't blink. Here's my best comforter.  
*(He gives her two one-foot golden cords. She takes them and sits. He moves to the Sailor's bench.)*
- Miranda** Is my father well?
- Meuta** He's as well as he should be.
- Miranda** That tells me nothing.
- Decolore** You do well to recall that we do not have to tell you anything. Your father has no power here. And you have even less.
- Miranda** I have enough to decide my small life. Do your worst!
- Decolore** Meuta only ever does his best : his worst failing.
- Meuta** We're here to find out about *it*?
- Miranda** Regarding that calumny, I will say only this, and only once. I am a virgin. I no longer say it as a virtue, but as a mere fact.
- Meuta** That's not it at all. That's not what I meant at all.
- Miranda** What! You believe me?. You knew all along?
- Meuta** Your virginity wasn't it.
- Dromeo** What's going on mate? I'm out of my depth already.

**Decolore** The bends of argument. Wait quietly, please.

**Miranda** What am I accused of, if not that worst crime, incestuous infanticide? My marriage is in ruins.  
*(Bosun's head drops and lifts slowly)*  
 I might be an orphan.

**Decolore** Proceed Meuta

**Meuta** Enumerate your toys at age six.

**Miranda** *(She swells to explode, clenches her fists, feels ropes and recomposes herself to absolute compliance.)*  
 I had two dolls.

**Meuta** Go on.

**Miranda** By then I was on the island. I didn't know where it was. I still don't.  
 I -

**Meuta** *(interrupting)* We're not asking for a geography lesson. We know where it was. The toys.

**Miranda** I knew it as my home. One doll was given to me by my mother: the other, my father made.

**Meuta** Both little girls?

**Miranda** If I may! No. Tricksy, Trice, Beatrice had been my great grandmother's and came down the generations to me, on loan until my own daughter was born. She was made of ivory, with jewels for eyes, and dressed in silk and lace. Silio was made of cypress and plane, breeches of dolphin-skin and a coat of banana leaf that I changed each year.

**Meuta** Silvio?

**Miranda** No Silio. My father named it. Later I was told that it was my father's bitter joke about our condition exilio, exile. But until then I thought it just mean silly & naughty

**Shelvin** Poor kid! I think I had more toys than that – not with jewels though.  
*(To Meuta)* Sorry.

**Miranda** At times, I had them as brother and sister. I knew my father had a brother, and that my mother had had a sister. These became my brother and sister.

**Meuta** You had no sister or brother of flesh and blood?

**Miranda** No, and on the island, us alone, never seemed like to have.

**Meuta** What of Caliban?

**Miranda** Too great a breach in nature, my father said.

**Meuta** We'll leave him a while. Continue with the dolls.

**Miranda** *(She explodes)* What's going on! Sorry Sclepian. I've heard Uncle Gonzalo's to be tortured & killed. I know my father, if he is still alive, is next to be arraigned for the dead baby that even my ex-fiancé thinks is mine. And you bastards torment me with questions about my dolls.

**Decolare** *(He steps forward. Bosun also steps forward & catches his eye. Decolare nods)*

**Bosun** Miranda.  
*(She looks at him. He interlocks his fingers. She looks down, She raises her hands which have a cat's cradle made from his ropes. She smiles)*

**Miranda** I am sorry. What was the last question. Oh yes, the history of my dolls. Well sometimes I would have Silly be a servant to Tricky. She would throw her silver slipper and make him fetch it. Or, because she really was the naughty one, she would make him steal candied-fruit that my father had expressively forbidden me to take, and she'd give it to me. When he caught me, I'd blame Silio. They fought a lot, but both were always on my pillow.

**Meuta** You imagined they would marry and have two children of their own.

**Decolare** *(He coughs)* Leading!

**Meuta** Sorry. It's spoken now.

**Miranda** I knew something of nature at seven, of tadpoles, and flies, and baby-birds. So yes, I did imagine them pairing, sailing away, having magical babies which would sprout wings and carry me beyond the moon to planets of adventure. I remember the afternoon I took the clothes off both of them, and could not stop staring at the top of their legs. Not even one hole. I knew something was wrong, but I also knew I could not ask my father.

**Meuta** You were surrounded by books.

**Miranda** I could read. But most were in Latin & Greek which I could not read.

**Meuta** Had not been taught?

**Miranda** Not yet. I had my own simple ones with pictures to teach Caliban.

**Meuta** After teaching Tricksy and Silly.

**Miranda** *(She takes a deep breath)* A little more successfully.

**Meuta** A good student?

**Miranda** Curious – the necessary quality in childhood & youth: but it was my curiosity that betrayed him. One afternoon, both of us were sick of the lesson, I of teaching, him of learning.

**Meuta** Do you recall the matter?

**Miranda** The exile from Paradise. Suddenly we were both aflame at the thought of their shame at their nakedness. We were hunched over the huge book. We flipped to the previous drawing and this time squinted hard at the tiny coil between Adam’s legs. He said, “I’ll show you mine, if you show me yours”. My eyes were so hungry to know, I didn’t even think if the ‘if’ meant he should go first. I stood up and lifted my dress. At that moment my father burst in. Caliban nearly fell back into the fire.

**Meuta** You feared for him?

**Miranda** Yes. My father might have slaughtered him, in those very secret parts. I felt as much to blame and said so. But my father would not believe I was not his flawless girl-child.

**Meuta** What saved Caliban?

**Miranda** Our need for fire and water.  
*(Comsett & Dromeo explode in laughter. Bosun shakes his head.)*

**Comsett** Suffering Christ! Wood & water! How fucking cheap is that! Sorry Maestra.

**Decolore** It is an unprecedented low in shameful inertia and rank hypocritical opportunism. Need Miranda?

**Miranda** Being a child, I barely had to lift my spoon or wash my skirts. But this is what my father said exact :  
 “We cannot miss him. He does make our fire,  
 Fetch in our wood, and serves in offices  
 That profit us”

*(Suddenly the stage is full of different voices singing:  
 “Fire and wood and profit” (Bosun etc look round to see where the voices can be coming from. Comsett & Dromeo join in the chorus)*

**Decolore** Meuta! Decorum!

**Meuta** I am cautioned Maestra. The tape got jammed. Clyp’s new.  
*(He raises his hand . The singing stops)*  
 Couldn’t you get your dolls to fetch the wood & water, just like they got the candied fruit?

**Miranda** Ha! Ha! A little lawyer’s joke.

**Meuta** It’s more than that. What of Ariel?

**Miranda** My father’s doll! And a better one than mine. Ariel could move himself and things. It didn’t make sense to me. I love my father. But I quickly learned that he doesn’t really invite discussion, even when he is saying the words of invitation. Other people’s views annoy him.

**Meuta** A Roman philosopher!  
*(Decolore laughs)*

**Miranda** Did I make a joke? As I said, I didn’t get many Latin books.

**Meuta** Please continue. How was Caliban made safe for you?

**Miranda** He told me himself. My father had locked a double metal hoop with barbs around his waterworks.

**Meuta** Waterworks?

**Miranda** You know what I mean! I felt safe, but no safer. I’d felt safe before. This solution satisfied my father. He added that it also prevented the unfair punishment of my having to be veiled in sunlight.

**Meuta** So years went by. Thousands of the same-day : Caliban fetched the wood and water, you played with your dolls, and your father read his books.

**Miranda** He taught me things, and I read a little. But yes.

**Meuta** And Caliban and you?

**Miranda** An uneasy calm. I felt bad. And sometimes I took it out on him.

**Meuta** But you forgot about between-leg matters?

**Miranda** Yes.

**Meuta** Until the tempest brought new legs?

**Miranda** No, before that. When my first nest came down. Blood running down my legs, cramps worse than after eating poisoned fish. He told me I had now become a woman.

**Meuta** My sympathies. For your pain, not for womanhood. The tempest was ordered long after, and into your yard came the velvet stride of Prince Ferdinand.

**Miranda** You know the recent events.

**Meuta** Indeed, but not quite all the responses to them.

**Decolore** The sun has begun to set.

**Meuta** What was my opening question, not the baby-herring?

**Miranda** Your quizzes be damned and –

**Bosun** Sunset Miranda.

**Miranda** I'm sorry. I've forgotten, if you'd kindly refresh my memory.

**Meuta** What was it?

**Miranda** What it, when?

**Meuta** On the island. The it.

**Miranda** You do not assist your case by pointless repetition, scraping around in the mind of a tired and distracted girl.

**Meuta** Then we will take you back there: back to your younger fresher self of yesterday.

**Shelvin** *(He claps in amazement)* Bosun, this will be the very wonder you wished for when Gonzalo was lying through his gold-rotted teeth.

**Miranda** To go back in time, to re-see a scene in which one played a part, hear one's words now as if then. You're threatening me with an impossibility!

**Meuta** If you are innocent, there is no threat. After a dozen years as a magician's daughter and three days in this realm of wonders, I'd have thought you'd be more careful about declaring what we can't do.

*(In front of her a double-sided screen drops down to about six feet above her head. One side is visible to her, the other to the others on stage and to the audience. On the screen is shown a forest clearing into which a man is carrying a three year old child and a trunk. The child has a doll. Miranda faints. Bosun steps forward but is halted by Decolore, who motions to a sea-angel, who steps forward and sings into her mouth. Miranda revives.)*

**Miranda** Our memories and our hopes are poisoned & enslaved by such devilish devices. It is a coward's world of proof.

**Meuta** We don't need devils. Do not rush to scorn. The It-scene is yet to come. Watch and listen.  
*(On the screen appears Miranda watching Ferdinand moving logs & as in . Act 3 Scene 1 of "The Tempest")*

### **MIRANDA**

Alas, now, pray you,  
Work not so hard: I would the lightning had  
Burnt up those logs that you are enjoin'd to pile!  
Pray, set it down and rest you: when this burns,  
'Twill weep for having wearied 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 discharge  
What I must strive to do. I must remove  
Some thousands of these logs and pile them up

**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 dishonour undergo,  
While I sit lazy by.

**MIRANDA**

It would become me  
As well as it does you: and I should do it  
With much more ease; for my good will is to it,  
And yours it is against.

*(The screen reveals Prospero hidden, speaking unknowingly to the camera)*

**PROSPERO**

Poor worm, thou art infected!  
This visitation shows it

**Miranda** *(She covers her face)* So, my father was watching all the time, like God in the Garden. I feel naked. And your devices are wickeder than his.

**Meuta** You can no longer bravely or tricksily hide in imperfect recall. So on that morning after the tempest what did you realise would become you?

**Miranda** His task!

**Meuta** Continue.

**Miranda** The log-task, to get the logs.

**Meuta** Ah yes, the log task. The one that was so difficult for your mighty father, he who could command demi-puppets like Ariel – what were the words -  
 “twixt the green sea and the azured vault  
 Set roaring war :to the dread rattling thunder  
 Have I given fire, and rifted Jove’s stout oak  
 With his own bolt”

- that he overlooked what he judged to be your attempted rape to keep the rapist in employ. But I thought Caliban had got the logs that day.

**Miranda** He had. My father commanded the young Prince to move them.

**Meuta** Why?

**Miranda** He was to move them from one side of the yard to the other and then back again. A pointless task. Why? The pleasure of mastery and control of the humiliated. Rather like your questions going round and round.

**Decolore** There is a dead baby.

**Miranda** (*Drops her head*) Not that scene I beg you.

**Meuta** Returning to the one you’ve seen, and were a player in, you saw the log-task wasn’t a pleasure for the prince, the creature to whom you had been instantly attracted.

**Miranda** He could do it. He ought not to have had to?

**Meuta** Who is to say? Caliban had to, because you and your father had to have wood. Neither of you helped him.

**Miranda** It was his punishment, my father punishing him - unfairly.

**Meuta** For the third and final time what was it?

**Miranda** The task that no one wanted to do, but someone had to do.

**Meuta** In short?

**Miranda** Work! *It was work. (She explodes )* All-right ! Cursed work!

**Decolore** Sailor?

**Shelvin** Not here Miranda, not for us, it’s all fucking play, pardon my French, as you had it there. Now I am here in good grace.

**Meuta** So finally we establish it was work. The supplementary question is - How would work become you?

**Miranda** For the duration I became a log-worker, and he rested, I'd be rescuing him from the misery of work, doing a task he didn't want to do.

**Meuta** You never rescued Caliban, who was forced to work. So the first pretty-face and a big codpiece and you become moral.

**Miranda** Does personal desire poison all kindness?

**Meuta** Not all. But partiality might dilute the wine. An ascription is not a thing of a moment, becoming or being a worker is not a costume for half-an-hour's wooing. The sailors on the ship that your father broke and sank and mended again, they were workers – pressed by poverty and the profit of others. Like your stringer, Sclepian.

*(Bosun blushes)*

**Meuta** The prince declined your offer in a lavish, courtly way. And you watched him, alternately licking & biting your hot dry lip.

**Miranda** All the while I was thinking if I could get one of my father's magic books, I could get the logs to move.

**Meuta** Or get Silio, their wooden cousin, to do it.

**Miranda** Even that, though I didn't think it!

**Meuta** But did you never wonder why, with your father having those magic books that could fetch water out of the clouds and lift wooden ships up to the clouds, Caliban or anyone had to work. Or seeing that there was no work in Eden, your island could have been a second Eden. The highest states becoming humans are to learn, to teach, to create and to play, alone & with others. Some might add to praise the Gods. Other necessary tasks interrupt these blessed states. No one wants to work. It's not the task but the interruption of self-becoming. Ask Ariel. Ask Silio, if you find the spell. Ask your father why he despaired of books?

**Miranda** As a child, I once saw a wren about to be snatched by a hawk. I ran forward screaming, shielding the wren and shooing the hawk. But on a different day, I looked up and was enraptured by the majesty of the hawk. As it swooped down with such strength and grace upon a baby wren, what I most wanted was to see a clean plucking, like taking a rose without shaking the dew. I thought who am I to disturb Nature?

**Meuta** You'd pluck the rose for your hair. And what of Humankind?

**Miranda** I have learned the difference since that scene, but it is not an easy distinction to keep in mind, to think about or to live the truth of. The earth may once have been paradise, but it's nothing such now. It is the most becoming grace to rescue another from slavery & to share work.

**Decolore** Indeed! And you do better than the bumbling philosopher of seventy years, Gonzalo, imagining utopia. Miranda your wages are freedom. Bosun take her to the antechamber.

*((All exit except Miranda & Bosun. She comes over to him. She has tied his ropes so that it is a single strand with two bangle-sized loops, one at each end. She has already placed one on her wrist, She offers another to Bosun. He puts out his hand. She puts the loop on and they exit.))*

# Act 5

## Scene 1

*Dressing Room of the Virgins (Sea-Nymphs)*

*Dressing tables & stools. Several mirrors positioned to make room appear to be used by many. Singing is heard filling the stage..*

“ I believe in magic.  
Why? Because it is so quick.  
I don't need power when I'm hypnotized”

*Enter three 'virgins' Feroncle, Aklaya, Maig : in white, black, brown body stocking : each has a white-linen full-head cover over their face & carries a mask of a beautiful young man or woman.*

**Feroncl**            A soft day's night for you – again.

**Aklaya**            I hear he's pining for that for Duke's young daughter. No tits on her at all.

**Maig**                Suits me girlfriend.

**Aklaya**            How are you getting on with the so-called Shagger-Shelvin?

**Feroncl**            He's a tryer alright. But more for the boys. Not that way Maig. Showing his daily knock-offs to the men, singing “*Who's the daddy!*” But not as bad as Dromeo I've heard.

**Maig**                Sometimes they want to know your name. It's quite touching in a way. Oh what a shame about that baby. At least you're not suspected Aklaya.

**Feroncl**            Meaow!

**Aklaya**            We've not long Fixity told me. Our shift ends with this ship. There's only one arraignment left. Duke Smartart.

**Maig**                Are the sailors staying down?

**Feroncl** Hard to say. But you know how it is. None of these roarers last a week, before crying for their mothers and the village girl who rejected them.

**Aklaya** Yes, they all dream for years of endlessly fucking themselves senseless with the nymphomaniac of their drunken jokes. But when she arrives with 98 of her kind, they soon start moaning it's just another factory.

**Maig** At least it's not ours. We're barely there.

**Feroncl** I bumped into Clyp. Miranda and your Bosun are definitely going back up to land. With a bagfull of pearls from Decolore, they'll be able to open a hospital to develop suturing. Each to her dreams.

**Maig** That's nice. She's had no luck with men, what with a mad dad and a wet dandy.

**Aklaya** It seems I'm the spare tail at this party. Do you want me to do your last bell Feroncl? Early night, read in bed?

**Feroncl** I could do both, but it would break their little balls. Thanks.

*(A bell sounds)*

**Maig** Two more. Masks on. Split shifts are no laughing matter.  
*(They put on the masks – they look wonderful - and exit laughing.)*

## Act 5 : Scene 2

*Court Chamber*

*There is no witness-stand on the pillar. There is a screen by the counsel table. Upstage centre, Decolore is sat on a chair legs stretched, eyes closed. Fixity is walking round her, reading aloud.*

**Fixity** "Once he was in Siena, and saw, by chance in an apothecary's a book he'd longed to have. Not being able to take it, he began to read it there. And though a tournament and music and dancing and crowds of onlookers swept by, there was no one who saw him stir or once lift his eyes from the book, from midday to evening, by when he had mastered it. He remarked later that he had heard nothing."

**Decolore** So that's our man, deaf to the common carnival. For the first time I'm impressed.

**Fixity** It is impressive. But it's not him. It's a poorer man from down the Milan road. Dante.  
*(He shuffles some papers)* This is him.  
"being so reputed in dignity, and for the liberal arts without a parallel.. my library was dukedom large enough... So dear the love my people bore me -"

**Decolore** *(Interrupting)* Enough! His own words, I presume?

**Fixity** I'm afraid so. Report of virtue is always better. Bragging to your kid is so lame.

**Decolore** A brittle brain. This shouldn't take long. Call them all.

**Fixity** Meuta!

*(Meuta enters with Caliban )*

**Meuta** Behind this subtle screen you will see & hear all, yet be unseen. But you will not speak.

**Caliban** You will see division.

**Fixity** *(Stamps foot and the Centre-stage trap-door in front of column opens. A throne-like chair rises with Prospero seated and restrained.)*

**Prospero** So I am to be instructed – here – by you!

**Decolore** How reassuring that the torture that shattered Alonso, has not marked you.  
*(Fixity steps to him and whispers)*  
 Perhaps not. Fixity here, who is being trained, tells me it's just a broken man's bravado.

**Prospero** I too have had familiars. They're as pliant as river reeds, and as prone to rot.

**Decolore** Your fate is set, but your daughter's depends on your truth. Casuistry and insolence will only harm her.

**Prospero** I've learned nothing so far. I know what it is to take a child hostage.

**Decolore** Ferdinand, indeed! We are not as brutal as you, having a father & a son think each other dead, letting them despair and despair. Miranda lives and hopes for love.

**Prospero** I am grateful. Fixity?

**Fixity** How many of your children were baptised by Cardinal Federico Borromeo?

**Prospero** All my children were baptised. All the holy water fell only on Miranda.

**Fixity** From the good Cardinal's hand?

**Prospero** Borromeo? I don't know the name. Is he here?

**Fixity** Was the dead child baptised by him?

**Prospero** So, it starts again. Was he on the ship? I am lost.

**Decolore** Established. Move on.

**Fixity** They say that for a man, whether a peasant or a King, not having a son is like the wound of a lopped limb that will throb for ever. Did you feel envy as you saw drunken wretches in your city gutters being tenderly hauled home by a good son.

**Prospero** I felt sorrow but not envy.

**Fixity** Your only daughter would be as a son?

**Prospero** My vessel. Philosophers see students not gowns.

**Fixity** Vessel? Discussant eventually, one would hope. You sought guidance?

**Prospero** Guidance - for what?

**Fixity** Surely all fathers need example & guidance : Lord Grey, Lord Pizan...

**Prospero** The remaining two of your three wise men, but all unknown to me.

**Fixity** You're lying. No one can be so ignorant.

**Decolore** This is your last warning – both of you. We will accept the preference to not-answer the following questions: though only temporarily, for later we will vigorously examine the refusal. But any pretence at ignorance or forgetting will be a dagger to your child's breast.

**Fixity** Some names, please. That of your revered teacher?

**Prospero** Prefer not.

**Fixity** Your three favourite authors, the books that Gonzalo placed in your boat of exile, knowing you'd rather these than medicine?

**Prospero** Not.

**Fixity** The indispensable interlocutor in your dukedom : the man or woman whom you thought of while reading or writing, sometimes gagging in your impatience to hear what he thought of your thoughts: and more valuable than an army of flatterers.

**Prospero** Not.

**Fixity** Your discussant on the island?

**Prospero** Not.

**Fixity** The discussant remaining in Milan that you dreamed of on the boat home yesterday, even as you destroyed your colouring books?

**Prospero** Not.

**Fixity** Of the library you drowned, which book was the most dangerous to you ?

**Prospero** Not.

**Decolore** Move on.

**Fixity** I was going to ask why he drowned them.

**Decolore** Those who begin by burning books end by burning people. You were perverse even in your perversions, drowning people and then books.

**Prospero** Not.

**Decolore** It wasn't a question. Continue.

**Fixity** We have established that you subjected your enemies to what we would call an ordinary rendition and tortured them: taking them from their place of safety to a place of absolute unfamiliarity and making them believe the next moment was either death or unbearable pain, physical & mental.

**Prospero** You have not established the facts to my satisfaction. It seems you delight in the dramatic tableau as much as I did.

**Fixity** An iron man, still trying to walk on water. You tried to see into the future, but never saw this chamber coming. Surely you've heard we can not only see into the past, we can show it in the present.

**Prospero** Ha! A lie to terrify.

**Decolore** If I may : of all the truths about oneself that disturb sleep, the hardest to bear is knowing what one must do when one knows in the core of one's being that one has been shown to be wrong or cowardly or both. How much easier to wake and burn and drown the evidence, men & books.

**Prospero** I did what was necessary.

**Fixity** Revenge is mandatory in some nations, even the victim is punished if he declines to pursue it. In Christianity it is otherwise. Are you a Nazarene or an apostate?

**Prospero** Not.

**Fixity** You called up pagan entities to terrify your enemies, and also to celebrate your child's betrothal. Consort with such spirits being forbidden by Rome, we can assume the question answered.

**Prospero** They were creatures of extraordinary beauty and grace and power: it was a triumph to have them accept my invocation.

**Fixity** You speak with the rapture of a proselytizer.

**Prospero** Not - I should have said.

**Decolore** R & R.

**Fixity** Understood.

**Dicolore** You will answer the following questions fully or you will your daughter's intestines come out of her mouth an inch for every refusal.

*(The double-sided screen drops down, visible to both Prospero and audience. On it appears a video of the earlier scene of Miranda & Caliban playing on the chessboard dais. Prospero's chair rises a few feet up the column but he still can't see Caliban. )*

**Prospero** My God! What kind of magic mirror is that!

**Fixity** We have outmagicked you with our bauble, so think on. Can you kiss someone who isn't there?

**Prospero** What? No more than my daughter trapped in this mirror, or locked as she is now in your secret chambers. It's an impossibility. I could try, as I might try to kiss the sky or my own shoulder blades or the corpse of my mother, her soul flown, but I would fail.

**Fixity** A compliantly full answer.

**Prospero** I might blow a kiss as young lovers do, but unless my beloved chose to catch it, it remained undelivered and died in the air. You can't make a promise of a threat, for who would accept such a promise. Nor can my dead father forgive me now.

**Fixity** Your scholasticity returns. Yet you were persuaded to forgive someone who wasn't there.

*(On the silent screen appears Antonio on the throne in Milan as Duke, as Gonzalo brings in Alonso & Sebastian, with wine.)*

**Prospero** My viper-brother Antonio!

**Fixity** To revenge whom you raised the tempest. There was a blown kiss of death.

**Prospero** I.. It... It makes me speechless thinking about him.

**Fixity** You manipulate Nature brilliantly and then direct the wrecked courtiers with aplomb. Antonio shows how absolutely incongruous he remains about deposing and near murdering you : encouraging Sebastian to imitate his coup. He was the least cowed or impressed by your tricks with pagan spirits.

**Prospero** I knew deep down I had failed with him.

**Fixity** So you flung at him, an almost menacing kiss of forgiveness, and demanded threateningly the crown of reparation.  
*(Fixity raises his hand)*  
Clyp.

*(The silent screen shows Sebastian, his back to the camera, pissing all over Prospero's library in Milan. Prospero's voice from the forgiveness scene of 'The Tempest' fills the stage)*

"For you, most wicked sir,  
Unnatural though thou art....  
Whom to call brother  
Would even infect my mouth, I do forgive  
Thy rank fault; all of them; and require  
My dukedom of thee, which perforce, I know,  
Thou must restore."

Only the contrite pleader for forgiveness is to be, can logically be, forgiven : only his free offer of reparation can complete reconciliation. Anything else is a charade of politics & religion. The pagans knew this long ago. Surely you had their books in your library. Look.

*(On the screen, another sea-chamber in which Antonio has the crown of Milan and Sebastian that of Naples – both drinking and laughing.)*

**Prospero** There was no reconciliation.  
*(He buckles)*  
All my schemes are become burning coals the Gods have stuffed  
back into in my mouth.

**Fixity** We come now to the most serious charge.

**Prospero** Your balances baffle me. What weighs heavier than these proofs  
of my title as torturer & hypocrite and the second loss of my crown.

**Fixity** With you there is a worse. The dead child.

**Prospero** *(To Decolore)* Have mercy! You have tricked me to utter confusion  
& self-disgrace. I don't know what you mean by the dead child.

**Decolore** You will see yourself at the murder scene. But first.  
*(Looks offstage. A sea nymph runs on with glass)*  
Please take some wine.

**Meuta** *(Prospero drinks. Meuta turns to Caliban)*  
Decolore was my mentor. Fixity is my protege.

**Caliban** After Miranda, I'd rather you three than him.

**Meuta** Are you ready?

**Caliban** Oh yes! *(He looks up at the screen)* The image changes.  
  
*(On the screen the same Log Scene from The Tempest as above.  
But it is played silently fast forward until ... :*

### **FERDINAND**

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

### **MIRANDA**

It would become me  
As well as it does you: and I should do it  
With much more ease; for my good will is to it,  
And yours it is against.

*(The screen reveals Prospero hidden, speaking unknowingly to the camera)*

**PROSPERO**

Poor worm, thou art infected!  
This visitation shows it.

*(The last image on the screen is of the crib, with the letters CFTU.*

*Prospero chair rises so he becomes invisible to the audience until the video-screen rises up above him.)*

- Prospero** So, as in the Eden of the Chaldeans, there is neither hiding nor forgetting from the recording eye of your God. Just as I watched them, you were watching me.
- Decolore** For pity's sake, do not ask who was or is watching us! I hope that as you watched just now, you saw when your dagger fell.
- Fixity** Alone in your study in Milan, wife and infant in another part of the ducal palace, and the ministers of state in a third, what were you becoming?
- Prospero** Becoming?
- Fixity** You were a Duke – a being which I'm sure you can define – but what were you hoping to become as you sat almost hidden among stacks of books and rolls of manuscripts, scratching a pen.
- Prospero** I was bettering my mind, trying to understand the art of life.
- (Caliban snorting laughs. Prospero is startled. Fixity coughs to cover)*
- Fixity** While not-being a Duke?
- Prospero** I remained a Duke.
- Fixity** In name only. You ignored the tasks of a Duke.
- Prospero** I had little desire for what a Duke is required to do: spend hours dressing in ceremonial robes to meet dull or devious ambassadors to exchange small trifles and affirm loyalties, to deploy troops and appoint bishops and judges, and to threaten those hesitant to comply with my commands. It was killing me. Who'd want to do that?

- Fixity**            Thousands, millions: that, rather than breaking rocks to build palaces, or hoeing the earth to sow corn, or hacking forests for logs to warm exiled Dukes.
- Prospero**        Truly it is written by the Gods - work is a curse.
- Fixity**            If you believe in a curse. So, you would be the hero of humankind and lift that curse?
- Prospero**        As you demand honesty, I must confess that that pure light particular – to diminish or erase entirely work for all forever – never flickered in my ducal, scholarly ambitions.
- Fixity**            But the freer care of your new state on the island brought it to flame.
- Prospero**        I had my young daughter's care.
- Fixity**            So only coals of resentment and bitterness ever smoldered in your brain from Milan to the Bermooths? And this daughter, of a schoolmaster-duke no less, for all your boasts of being the best tutor in Christendom and beyond, makes only one interesting remark in her entire life.
- Prospero**        Now –
- Decolare**        *(He interrupts) Now!*
- Fixity**            Ready
- Caliban**        Yes  
*(The furniture-screen is slid back & Caliban and Meuta are visible to all)*

Stepfather-Prospero, for sure we can't jump our own time, neither to sit by Aeneas or Sappho or Aristotle, nor the great men and women still unseeded. The laws and customs of our time bind us from without, and more firmly from within : our bounded minds repeat – this man shall have gold, that woman shall have jewels, some shall have books besides, and others only work. But with a birth of a child, a new world rises on the horizon, and one's mind quakes with new possibilities. A man might think – All that is good in the world is as fit for my daughter as for my son, as fit for my servants as for me, though twenty generations past, and I for thirty years, have pronounced the contrary.

- Fixity**            The men he mocked for wisdom, if you please.
- Prospero**        Most comparisons, like metaphors, can't take the strain: but if you must diminish me more.
- Caliban**           You are a master of subordinating by essence. We've just heard you call your brother unnatural. So I guess I was lucky to be merely a thing of darkness, whatever that means. Lord Grey found for his child Jane, Roger Ascham, probably the greatest tutor after Aristotle. Barely a summer older than Miranda, she was, at 16, one of great Greek scholars of her time : a far greater achievement than her doomed tenancy of the throne of England. Across the Apennines, Signor Doctor Pizan taught his Venetian daughter so well, she became, long before your grandfather, the first woman to earn her living by her writings.
- Prospero**        The good Cardinal had no daughters I hope.
- Caliban**           Federico Borromeo, being the shepherd spiritual, all citizens were his children. He founded the first public library in Milan, the second in all Europe. I didn't get inside your cellular library.
- Prospero**        You know why!
- Caliban**           But I had read more than your entire library when Maestra Decolare gave me the assignment to play the native.
- Prospero**        *(He is profoundly shocked)*  
To play the native. You were a plant on the island?  
I have been known to my inmost soul – absolutely uncovered.
- Decolare**        You were the first truman show after Eden!
- Caliban**           If I may refute his calumny?
- Fixity**            In brief.
- Caliban**           Had I dishonoured his daughter Miranda, let us say, beyond the handkerchief line, or even looked as if I might, he'd have killed me instantly, and got Ariel to get the logs in, or even – heavens gasp – got them himself.
- Dicolore**        As we have said, but must repeat, Prospero, it is a shame, almost equal the murder, this trumped-up judicial slavery. Thank you Caliban.
- Fixity**            Then magician, what is magic?

- Prospero** *(He jolts and recomposes himself)*  
These turns of inquisition are your torturing witchcraft.
- Fixity** What is luck?
- Decolore** Have a care if you are tempted to be witty.
- Prospero** Show-tricks aside, magic is the means to perform work faster than mortal grasp, ideally in an instant.
- Fixity** Only work? So the magician is superfluous in paradise?
- Prospero** No one wants magic in their pleasures. They'd rather the opposite, to prevent the pleasure from ending, whether a kiss, or a canto, or a cup or a compliment.
- Fixity** What is the word for that?
- Prospero** It's not 'luck', which is only the chance-force disrupting or enhancing the reasonable effort at necessary work.
- Fixity** Are magicians lucky?
- Prospero** In finding the books or their teacher  
*(He nods to Decolore)*
- Fixity** Had you taken back to Milan your magic books – those found and those you wrote - you would have alleviated so much merciless work for your subjects: all those thousand-thousands of logs that must be gathered for the winter hearth or to make fire to make cannon-balls.
- Prospero** I'd have been playing God.
- Fixity** Your favourite role, or rather only pastime.
- Prospero** I saw a danger to the state in a sated citizenry, even a citizenry who wanted to do a bit of work, rather than a monstrous amount.
- Fixity** Yes what if those you told must work for you by destiny, suddenly understood that such work doesn't become them, and that they'd rather do your ducal-work. So you drowned the books – such letters should not be known, seen or spoken?

**Prospero** Any discussion of shared work would soon lead to mutiny. I had to, for all of us.

**Fixity** Well, for all like you, such ideas had to be strangled at birth. So before the worm bit you, you killed the child.

**Prospero** A casuistry beyond the Jesuitical. You have me in a maze.

**Fixity** C.F. T.U.

**Prospero** If it only it were Greek.

**Fixity** It was before your eyes on the screen.

**Decolore** *(She steps forward)*  
It's too late! He's guilty and his obstinacy, whether guile or genuine, is no longer a matter of interest. Despatch!

**Prospero** This rough justice is too quick.

**Fixity** Magic you might say! Sorry Master.

**Decolore** Allowed. You've passed. To the platform.  
*(Prospero's chair begins to rise up the platform. He breaks down.)*

**Prospero** Yes, It was me. I killed the child. But I was only following orders. I could only say what I was given to say. How could I speak? He made me.

**Meuta** We knew that all along.

**Caliban** A surprising lack of dignity in someone who boasted that now his every third thought was of the grave.  
*(Very quickly, when the chair reaches the platform, a rope falls round Prospero's neck, he drops into the column, there is a loud explosion and smoke and darkness. The curtain falls.)*

## Act 5 : Scene 3

*Milan Library, informal lounge. The central column is still wide: but three-quarter height to ceiling. On top is a statue of Federico Borromeo, the name visible to the audience. Leather chairs and table.*

*Alice, an elderly modern scholar, enters. Her clothes and manner must give a hint of her being Decolore. She sprawls over chair reading the paper. A bell sounds. Voltah, another elderly scholar, hinting at Meuta, enters.*

**Voltah** I hope it's not for real Alice.

**Alice** A test.

*(The bell stops. Enter on roller-skates, Luc, a youth, wearing a green dress (like Miranda's), a metal cap with embedded flashing lights and sun-glasses. He turns a circle.)*

**Luc** Is my twin-brother here?

**Voltah** Is he wearing a dress?

**Luc** I hope not, for I'd never find him then - I'm blind.  
*(He skates out)*

**Voltah** The whole of this library and all my lectures are in that tin cap.  
*(He shakes his head)*

**Alice** I prefer reading. Listen to this Voltah. *(She reads)*  
'Attempted rape in rape field'

**Voltah** A field for rape. So Carthage is come again. I'd always hoped it might, though I never believed it possible.

**Alice** It is a tragic pun: all too common nowadays. The story will make you weep.  
"Like many desperate East Anglian farmers, Josh Jackson of Sheringham had been tempted by gang-masters to take on some illegal Latvians. During the rape harvest, Pyotr Danacek brutally forced himself on Tim Jackson, the farmer's 12 year-old son. The boy is resting at home."

**Voltah** Poor child, he'll never walk easily again.

**Alice** Mere pity and horror won't do when you hear the reason for the father's decision not to prosecute.  
"I'm a lease farmer to a wild & pitiless absentee landlord. My only hope of clearing the interest on last year's debts is to get the rape in to market quickly, while the price is high. Not only is no-one better at harvesting than Pyotr, he is like an uncle to most of the gang, and would have them all off my land and out the county before I could get my van into gear."

**Voltah** That's justice.

**Alice** No it's drama.  
*(Enter Jymt, like Luc, but not wearing a dress)*

**Jymt** I'm Jymt. Has my brother been? I've got his medication.

**Alice** Why aren't you wearing a dress too?

**Jymt** I was first. He said last it.

**Voltah** Your brother?

**Jymt** No – the makeup artist.  
*(He exits)*

**Alice** Drama 101!

**Voltah** As if it matters! So do you think Prospero was lying, or that he really was only following orders?

**Alice** Someone was lying.

**Voltah** The fact of the rendition.

**Alice** That's just ordinary life, well politics. What's extraordinary is the fuss people today have made over the Americans and the British for ten years, forgetting fifty like – Van Diemen, Andaman, wolf-to-man...

**Voltah** "The current amazement that the things we are experiencing are 'still' possible in the twentieth century is not philosophical. This amazement is not the beginning of knowledge--unless it is the knowledge that the view of history which gives rise to it is untenable."

**Alice** The philosophy of history - there's a religion. A violent, tormenting God, who somehow fathers a gentle redeeming son: there's another. Both fighting endlessly for go-faster stripes.

**Voltah** You're not squeamish. "Sometimes violence is necessary in a discussion to open something that has been closed." The possibility, if not necessity, of the good slap, the kind torturer.

**Alice** I'm also saying that pacifists forget too easily how many membranes of our being can be attacked without the torturer's hand landing on one's skin : the slammed door, the deafening silence of the stubborn and incontinent, the barking sophistry of the obtuse.

**Voltah** Perhaps life was simpler with actual demons, rather than the hidden hand or the unconscious.

*(The bell rings and gradually gets get louder)*

I thought you said it was test.

*(The lights flicker and there is a flash. A door at the foot of the column opens. Prospero steps out. He steps forward and in one turn and flourish, he removes his hooded robe to reveal a man in a suit with the Droeshout ruff and bald head – Shakespeare!)*

**WS** Of course he was lying, and following orders. He was following my orders to lie. Even about the baby.

**Alice** Have you come to save him for literary criticism?  
*(She points him to a chair.)*

**WS** Thank you. But I must stand to say this. It's easy to gloss other men's tortures from the warmth of a soft chair. What do you know?

**Voltah** I know that until our bodies turn part metal, all humans will feel pain as their ancestors did.

**WS** That's not enough. I know what it is to know of torture in the bloodline –

**Alice** *(She interrupts)*  
You were tortured?

- WS** No! Thank the Gods. I knew it by indirection, not on my skin, but on the skin of my mother's kinsmen, close enough to burn into my memory. In 1583, when I was not yet twenty, Edward Arden & John Somerville were arrested & tortured on the rack and executed. I would make myself sick imagining Uncle Edward waiting for the second blow of the chisel, knowing that the first had smashed through his knee-cap. A widow in his generation was forced, with stories of the heretic's short fire, to change her faith three times in as many years.
- Voltah** Indeed, you knew of what you wrote when you had Prospero threaten Caliban - I'll rack thee...make thee roar.
- Alice** After such knowledge, what can such a man as your uncle, or this woman, witness?
- WS** *(He declaims, imitating Voltah)*
- "There is no document of civilization which is not at the same time a document of barbarism. And just as such a document is not free of barbarism, barbarism taints also the manner in which it was transmitted from one owner to another."
- Voltah** I was about to say that about your play.
- WS** I know, for we all must speak delightful rhetorical half-truths. My foot can be my tutor : so, as practical footballer managers say - We must kick on! You speak Alice of the possibility of good force.
- Voltah** That's a blind alley. I had a different question. After the rendition, and its casual secret judgement, who is to gather the logs for the short fire, and the water to put it out after justice has been done?
- WS** Whoever wants to live or to get on.
- Voltah** What kind of task is that : whom does it become?
- WS** The King's work, God's work, the priest's work, the prole's work.
- Alice** Done by terrified or greedy men & women.

- Voltah** And by you, as your good spirit Ariel, making the noise of death. Here's his cousin writing from the other eastern forest.
- "Who'd want to be in Poland in the summer, let alone when the icy wind cuts your nose. I am the luckiest man in the battalion. I have one task, during the selection for death. When the prisoners begin to screech and scream, I have to fret the camp geese until their screeching drowns out the human noise. Then I go fishing."*
- WS** I always wanted to work with animals.
- Alice** Lucky you're human then.
- WS** Uncle Edward wouldn't have heard the geese. They'd pierced his eardrums for not hearing the word of the Lord from the right book. When my mother told me this, I listened hard. This was my world. A few streets from my lodging, my hero Kydd was damn near done for by the Chamberlain's instruction. He never walked straight again. And I never forgot these lessons.
- Voltah** But you did, and you forgot you did. You dimmed your bile, and put on a show.
- WS** I wanted to keep my fingernails & kneecaps and smile straight. That's why I wouldn't name the books.  
*(He looks round)* Well this simmering advocacy is all frightfully clever but shouldn't something happen now.  
*(He goes upstage and claps)* Now.
- (Downstage Luc and Jymt skate on from opposite wings, each carries one of the golden cords given by Bosun to Miranda. They dance recognition & delight to Bolero. They are about to go to WS saying 'Father' but Alice stops them.)*
- Alice** It's too early for such climaxes, drama queens. Off you go!
- WS** Yes, I called them before I came! But there has to be a poetical flow of incident, not merely the sludge of argument.
- Alice** What if the incidents drown even the tiny voice of allowed argument : the trick of introducing a dangerous thought and then suffocating it with philosophical frippery, magic, some nice songs & the marriage of thwarted young lovers.  
*(She moves to the table)*

- WS** A play is not a sermon. Besides, I wrote constantly about politics.
- Voltah** No you didn't! You chose history over politics.
- WS** What!
- Alice** History plays!
- WS** They're full of politics.
- Voltah** No they're not. Political power is attained by seizing the means of sustenance and development: and it is maintained by persuading or forcing others to believe in the three foundational myths : firstly, of scarcity: secondly, of hierarchies of entitlement to health, education, work & creativity based on gender, race, nation, birth-class & creed ; and thirdly, of the necessity of arbitrary controls of bodily pleasures. Some rulers invoke the will of deities to justify their practices. Protest is only genuinely political when it risks health & freedom, even life, to challenge these myths and threatens the power of those who use them: Spartacus, Wat Tyler, Tyndall –
- WS** You can't use so many dull words in a speech in a play.
- Alice** *(She presses a button on the table, the audience can see a light embedded in the table flicker)*  
101 compared to 477
- WS** 477 - a better drama course? You should have done that!
- Alice** The number of words in Voltah's speech against the number you use in the Salic law speech in Henry V : that over-poetic, though not sexy, dossier to justify war with France.
- Votlah** Bravo !
- Alice** Richard Ketly, Fauconberg and Foix, Davy Gam ,Charles Delabreth... No! I am sick of naming dead aristocrats.
- WS** At least Salic was poetry.
- Voltah** But to what end.
- WS** It was satirical.

- Alice** Ha! No one quotes its jokes! No one quotes it, period!
- Voltah** Maestro, let us cease sniping. You always knew about power and pretence, even when you pretended you didn't. Then at the end of your life, the shame of pretense was unbearable. You imagine an island, an elsewhere, and an exceptional man, like you, of worldly and transcendent learning & knowledge, with nothing to do but to think about how to live with all creatures, and to teach his daughter, la vita nuova.
- Alice** You chose a girl, perhaps because you had two girls. All those ordinary questions. How can work be shared so that everyone has the chance to study and to create? How do work and study become a human soul? Might everyone, including a poor glover's granddaughter, contribute to a discussion on how to create the good city?
- WS** Questions even Gabriel struggles with.
- Volta** But surely the essence of a good life is to struggle with them, rather than to conclude there's no place like throne!
- WS** I was not writing a sermon. The echo of my uncle's screams held my pen from writing anything apostate or seditious.
- Alice** But a nobler part of you was fighting to speak : it chose the corollary of the lynchpin of the feared trinity – power, work, justice. Your muse chose magic : and he who speaks of magicians must speak of workers. You approached it directly a couple of times in this play, and then your nerve failed you. One time setting up your supposed deputy philosopher Gonzalo: so that his utopian babbling is shredded in an instant by a couple of jaded court-boys. But far, far worse, you failed your own daughter when you misdirected & mangled Miranda's thought, the child of her brain. You ripped its tongue out.
- Voltah** Her statement to fancy-pants Ferdinand, was full of love, but was also replete with all these necessary questions.
- WS** Which statement?

- Voltah*** Now you tease us. There you were, nauseous with success, almost Roman in your longing for death, suddenly aware of the coupling of the next generation, who might make a brave new world for grandchildren you didn't imagine or desire to see. "It would become me" you had her say, and then you had her father come bursting in, ignoring all those questions. Your proxy child suddenly terrified you. Your writerly courage failed you absolutely.
- Alice*** I lament the 477 words you might have produced, poetry or prose, in which, instead of your voyeuristic patriarch Prospero observing – to the audience! - "Poor worm thou art infected", he enters, waves his staff, and produces a table at which Caliban and Ariel are already sat, and says "Welcome all to the realm of mensality, at which all may speak & question freely. So my well-tutored child - How would it become you? And knowing this about work, how shall this society flourish today, and in Milan tomorrow?"
- Voltah*** We are but fictions. Even at this late hour, show the grace of revelation to the audience.
- WS*** I couldn't have retired to my brave new world of New Place in sunny Stratford, if I'd left that tempest of words howling at The Globe. In a mist, I know not how, such a mistake as I have often seen in a play, I had fathered upon my own creation TFCU – the forward child understanding.

**THE END**

## REFERENCES

In addition to the major thematic phrases identified in the play above & in the grid below, many other phrases from Shakespeare's *The Tempest*, are used, but not referenced below. A (recent) reading of it will probably have them leaping out of memory : with, I hope, an understanding of why I placed them there & pleasure.

PAGE	ACT SCN	QUOTATION / ALLUSION	SOURCE/COMMENT
		<b>THE TEN GERMINAL WORDS</b>  It would become me .... correspondent to command stripes may move	<b>The Tempest</b>  3.1 - 28 1.2 - 297 1.2 - 345
2	-	Fort-Da baby	Freud : Beyond the Pleasure Principle. (1920)
17	2.1	Some people like to go out dancing, And other peoples they have to work. Just watch me now!	Lou Reed : Sweet Jane (1965)
19	2.1	Fear no more the heat of the sun...	Cymbeline : 4.2
21	2.1	Wood-Sprite joke	Anon
23	2.1	Long & thin ... (song)	Anon
33	2.2	Sea-Farm heel-strings flail	The details of this self-mutilation by prisoners is taken from the account of Eastham Prison Farm, in the 1930s, by P. Schneider : Bonnie & Clyde (2009).
36	3.1	You search babe... I'll keep it with mine	Bob Dylan : I'll Keep it With Mine (1964)
44	3.3	Papal Nuncio joke	Anon – I heard it after the death of Franco. It had him atop Gina Lollobrigida.
49	3.5	Nine & ninety virgins	Anon – originally from Inverness

73	4.4	A pointless task	When Nillson, the serial-killer, was a boy, his father would make him move piles of bricks from one side of the garden to another and back.
76	5.1	I believe in magic...	A. Lee : The Red Telephone (1967)
78	5.2	Once he was in Siena	Boccaccio : Life of Dante
81	5.2	Those who begin by burning books	Heine (1823)
87	5.2	trueman show	The 1998 film of this title, brilliantly uses the Eden trope : where a powerful, though here not divine or supernatural group, create a world to test/use one man.
91	5.3	The current amazement...untenable	Benjamin.W : Theses on History : Number VIII
92	5.3	Sometimes violence is necessary...	Alice Cherki (colleague of Fanon) (from memory)
93	5.3	There is no document....another	Benjamin.W : Theses on History : Number VII
93	5.3	Who'd want to be in Poland...	This is from the testimony of a German soldier at the death camp Sobibor: in Lanzmann's film. (from memory)
95	5.3	Salic Law	Henry V : 1.1
96	5.3	Sir Richard Ketly ....	Henry V : 4.8
96	5.3	In a mist....play	Webster : The Duchess of Malfi. 5.5.

96	5.3	TFCU ...the forward child...	<p><b>As You Like It : 3.3 : Touchstone</b></p> <p><b>“ When a man’s verses cannot be understood, nor a man’s good wit seconded with the forward child understanding, it strikes a man more dead than a great reckoning in a little room.”</b></p> <p><b>This strange, sublime metaphor for human understanding, with its invocation of Marlowe’s murder, will I hope extenuate the McGuffin plot element of the baby.</b></p>
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## A NOTE ON STAGING

I’ve intended to give enough direction for a plausible staging of the text. In the spirit of *The Tempest* I have put in a certain amount of stage show & effects – smoke, noises, songs, dancing.

My preferences would be for little furniture on stage, and that lighting & curtains – main & across-centre-stage - are used well.

Shakespeare was fascinated by stage technology. He famously directs :  
*“Juno’s chariot appears suspended above the stage”* [4.1 – 75]

I hope it is understood that my use of the video screens is not a glib technical steal from the cinema for the stage: but it is the moment the 17C earth-creatures see the power of transcendent beings who can play with time, and record & reshow all a human has done. The ancients imagined this in some dim future. In our CCTV saturated world we know it is here now forever : able to record every failure of instinctual renunciation – eg last summer : the mature woman who, walking down the street, suddenly coaxed a cat and dropped it into a deep rubbish bin.

Just watch me now!