

Have You Seen Caliban?

by C.P. Stancich

Characters:

PROSPERO: The restored Duke of Milan; old and crotchety.

ANTONIO: His brother, usurping, now much-vexed ex-duke; middle aged

ALONSO: Antonio's son: a youth.

FREDO: a landlord

TRINCULO: Prospero's manservant

PAOLO: Servant to Ursula—a man with an mysterious past.

URSULA: A wronged noblewoman and sorceress

ANGELICA: Ursula's niece.

MARIA: A landlady, Fredo's wife.

ARIAL: A spirit of some power.

The set [The Hare" inn at Monterossa]

There is a solid hedge or stone fence, far up, running the length of the stage. There is a covered gate at the center of the hedge, and another, left. Stone benches sit along the hedge, left and right of the center gate. There is a table with chairs, down right. There is a decorative well, down left.

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Great Stage Publishing
11702-B Grant Rd. #602
Cypress, TX 77429
www.greatstagepublishing.com
greatstage@comcast.net

Have You Seen Caliban?

Act I, Scene 1

Scene: Milan

Time: Night, late Sixteenth or early Seventeenth Century

At Curtain: *The stage is dark, except from two yellow pools of light, down left and down right, approximating torch or lantern light. The strains of a lute or mandolin drift from off stage.*

(Enter ALONZO, right. He pauses in the light, right, and peers across the stage then across the audience.)

ALONZO

(Nervously, in a loud whisper.)

Father? Father!

(The music intensifies slightly, and a light shines aloft, off stage right. There is laughter off stage, causing ALONZO to turn and look aloft, off, right.)

ALONZO

(Blowing out an anxious breath.)

Oh, I wasn't made for clandestine meetings. *(Turns left and calls, whispering.)* Father!

(The laughter sounds again, and ALONZO turns toward it. He hesitates, perturbed, then moves off, muttering.)

ALONZO

Meet me in the courtyard, son...urgent business, son...fate of the dukedom at stake. He's too old for sneaking around, the palace like a lover. He's probably gotten lost!

(Exit ALONSO, right. There is a call of surprise, off left, followed by a gentle splash and groan of disgust.)

ANTONIO
(Off, left.)

Alonzo?

(Enter ALONZO, right. He stops in the light, right.)

ALONZO
Father?

(Enter ANTONIO, left. He stops in the light, left.)

ALONZO
That is you, isn't it?

ANTONIO
Of course it's me! Though it's a wonder I'm still certain of that. I got lost coming out here in the dark.

ALONZO
(Whispering, aside.)
Yes, I thought you might.

ANTONIO
(Whispering.)
What!

ALONZO
(Enlarging his whisper slightly.)
I said it's a dark night. Luciano wandered out onto the terrace, but I think he's gone away now.

ANTONIO
Good. I don't want anyone to overhear.

ALONZO
No. I gathered that. What is it, father? I thought you had sworn off palace intrigues.

ANTONIO
Ha! This is Italy. Since when do you avoid intrigue by swearing it off?

ALONZO
I only meant--

ANTONIO

You're just a boy. What do you know of intrigues? You don't even show any interest.

ALONZO

I know, but—

ANTONIO

Why, when I was your age, I'd already thought about supplanting my brother. I admit it wasn't a well developed thought. As I recall, it involved slandering my own mother to call his legitimacy into question. But at least I was thinking about it.

ALONZO

(Uncomfortable, mildly bored.)

You've told me this before.

ANTONIO

(Feeling the momentum of his story.)

Fortunately, father died suddenly and I had no time to act on the impulse. But I didn't forget. I watched the time, and waited.

ALONZO

You got to know the workings of the state.

ANTONIO

(Oblivious.)

I got to know the workings of the state, and made myself familiar to the men of power in Milan.

ALONZO

And you made yourself important in your brother's affairs.

ANTONIO

I made myself important to Prospero's affairs. Well, that was easy, what with his diffidence and his books on the arcane arts, and then his loves. He needed someone to run the place for him, and I made sure I was able and trustworthy.

ALONZO

That's the key.

ANTONIO

Because that's the key...*(Rouses himself.)* What?

ALONZO

Nothing.

ANTONIO

What are you mumbling about? I've forgotten what I was going to say, now.

ALONZO

Being trustworthy and efficient is the key.

ANTONIO

Ah! Yes. I was ten years younger than Prospero. There was no need to hurry. And indeed, there didn't seem to be any need at all, since he didn't marry. I was next in line, and there was no call to jeopardize my position. I could afford to be sure. So I became his chancellor and right hand man. "Brother," I would say, "let me deal with that for you. Why trouble yourself when you have the great mysteries of the occult beckoning you." And so he studied his sorcery, and I became the one everyone came to. And when I had come to be seen by everyone—including Prospero—as the real domestic authority, I turned my talents to cultivating powerful friends outside the country.

ALONZO

(Losing patience.)

I know! You went on embassies to Naples and made yourself agreeable to King Alonso, my namesake, and pals with his brother.

ANTONIO

Exactly! And it was a good thing I did, because Prospero surprised us all by falling in love and marrying. And he had an heir...Miranda.

ALONZO

(Sighing.)

Father, I know all this. You decided you had to act, so you did a deal with the king to depose Uncle Prospero. You had him trussed up, taken off shore with poor little Miranda, and cast adrift.

ANTONIO

(With relish.)

I was magnificent!

ALONZO

And where did it get you. You betrayed your brother, cast him away to die at sea, and sold your country into bondage to Naples. And for all that, Prospero was restored, you were shamed and deposed, and Miranda was married to the king's son.

ANTONIO

(Bridling.)

What did it get me! It got me a dozen years as Duke of Milan! And I'll tell you this, there wasn't a man of substance who didn't think me an improvement, doesn't secretly wish it was still me! And I was working on getting rid of Naples' control when Prospero conjured up that damned storm.

ALONZO

You always say that, father. You like to blame his magic and his great tempest, but what really irks you is that he forgave you. All your great machinations, your high intrigues...they didn't even warrant exile on some rock in the Mediterranean! It's only been what? Ten years? And you're

running the country for him again, just like before. Only now he's the one with the powerful allies. His son-in-law's the King of Naples!

ANTONIO

(Biting on his rage.)

You really know how to hurt an usurper, don't you!

(There is laughter off stage and the lute music comes up briefly. ALONSO and ANTONIO cringe, and look off, right. They continue in lower tones.)

ANTONIO

Well yes, you have read me well. Though at the time I thought myself the luckiest felon in the world. And I've been jealous of you, getting all his fond looks, being his surrogate son while I was sent off to manage the estates for months at a time.

(There is another laugh from off stage. The music slowly recedes.)

ANTONIO

Come over here, will you.

(ALONSO joins ANTONIO.)

ALONZO

I don't understand why you weren't grateful for that. He could have hated me. I had the cushy childhood while his daughter lived in a cave on some island with only her father and some smelly monster for company. And he never tried to get between me and you.

ANTONIO

Can't you see that it is well within the human capacity to be grateful and jealous at the same time? Life is full of paradoxes like that...even, I imagine, outside late Renaissance Italy. And so today, once more, I minister the state for him. Here I am...holding things together, while he goes off on his holiday, or his quest or whatever it is that's sent him off into the country with one servant and no word to anyone. And yet I will do anything to protect him.

ALONZO

You mean your chances of getting the dukedom back. That is your concern, isn't it? I mean, with Ferdinand and Miranda in Naples, you hope to succeed.

ANTONIO

Don't split hairs. I'm concerned with the family, and Prospero is the family. And it's not for me. I've too many enemies here now. It's for you. Your pretty cousin Miranda's favorite and the apple of your Uncle's eye.

ALONZO

(Squirming.)

For me.

ANTONIO

You poor boy. You don't even know if you want it. You are more like his son than mine. You have a better nature, but you are reluctant and too fond of books. Well, I daresay you'll do the job if it comes to you. And you don't have an ambitious younger brother to threaten you. With you the danger comes from outside. (*Looks furtively left and right.*) That's what we need to talk about.

ALONZO

(*Looking at Antonio's feet.*)

Good god...your feet are soaking.

ANTONIO

What! Oh, that. I stepped into the fountain.

ALONZO

You'll catch cold.

ANTONIO

It's nothing, it's a warm night.

ALONZO

But you don't want to risk an illness, not now.

ANTONIO

Why not now, especially?

ALONZO

Because it's the dawn of the Seventeenth Century and medicine hasn't advanced as fast as architecture, art and music.

ANTONIO

(*Rolling his eye.*)

Very droll. Where did you here that?

ALONZO

Stephano.

ANTONIO

Stephano! I should have known. I ought to have him flogged.

ALONZO

Father, he's been dead six months.

ANTONIO

And it's only because of that that I have stayed the lash. I have never thought it fair that the dead get away with all sorts of mischief. I don't know why we were saddled with that drunken butler. He

belonged to the King of Naples, and in Naples he should have stayed. Now..where was I?

ALONZO

Threats from the outside? Something to do with Uncle Prospero taking himself off to the country without so much as a by-your-leave.

ANTONIO

Yes...threats. I hope you see them that way. This unfortunate history of me supplanting Prospero with Naples' help, etcetera, provides an excuse for certain parties to intervene.

ALONZO

And with you implicated, Ferdinand and Miranda would do nothing on your behalf.

ANTONIO

(Impressed.)

Ah, there is a little of your father in you. Yes, we need Naples.

ALONZO

What about uncle? He's not in any danger, is he?

ANTONIO

He might be, if people knew he'd gone naked into the countryside. Fortunately, his disappearance has only just begun to work on the imaginations of the more dangerous Milanese. And even if anyone decided to speed up the intrigue by doing him a mischief, they don't know where he is.

ALONZO

But you do?

ANTONIO

My agent found him. He brought me word this afternoon.

ALONZO

Where is he?

ANTONIO

A little place called Monterossa. He's taken up residence at an inn. He appears to be incognito, though the host may know who he is.. Anyway, Trinculo is attending him, so we can rest assured it won't be a secret for long.

ALONZO

Trinculo! That's an odd traveling companion for uncle to choose. What's he doing out there? Just sitting?

ANTONIO

My agent picked up his trail by coming across an anecdote about an old man who stopped in several towns, inquiring about a monster.

(There is a pause. ALONZO looks nervously at ANTONIO, who nods.)

ALONZO

Caliban?

ANTONIO

Caliban.

ALONZO

Oh.

ANTONIO

Exactly. Why he frets about that miserable creature I'll never know. I don't know why he didn't leave him on that island in the first place!

ALONZO

There's something in it. Miranda always said there was something unfinished when her father talked of Caliban. And then he escaped. I only saw him the once, when I was twelve. Do you remember the escape?

ANTONIO

Mmm. I was up-country, but I got the alert. My brother mobilized the entire guard and spread panic from here to Austria. Caliban just disappeared. You'd think if nothing else someone would have smelled him.

ALONZO

But what's it been? Seven, eight years?

ANTONIO

Something like.

ALONZO

We'd have heard about it if he was around. He either took himself off to the top of a mountain, or he died.

ANTONIO

(Rolling his eyes.)

That is just like Prospero, to carry unfinished business with that monstrosity, do nothing about it while the creature is in captivity, wait seven years and then go chasing down a cold trail!

ALONZO

(Thoughtfully.)

Yes...it does sound like uncle, now that you put it like that.

ANTONIO

What's that mean?

ALONZO

Nothing...it's just he's such a deep fellow, you'd think he's sounded out all his depths...after what he's been through.

ANTONIO

Yes, well, as a pragmatist, I freely admit I have no idea what you mean. He called me deep, once...when I cast him adrift. A pair of deep brothers...but sailing very different oceans.

ALONZO

You know...I saw him being very crotchety in his library just before he left...about a fortnight ago. I think he was looking for some of his books.

ANTONIO

Well he would look for books in a library. (*Catches his meaning.*) Oh...you mean those books.

ALONZO

I thought he left them on that island...when he swore off magic.

ANTONIO

He did. But he only had the books old Gonzalo let him take. There were plenty left in the library. But he wasn't happy, you say?

ALONZO

Grumbling and cross. But I will bet you he was looking for spells. Maybe he found one, and divined the name of Monte...that place.

ANTONIO

Monterossa. (*Cocking his head, suspicious.*) So...he's pining after Caliban, and he's pining after his sorcery. All the more reason he has to be found.

ALONZO

All the more reason?

ANTONIO

To find out what he's up to. It's a good excuse, if nothing else. Well, he's left me de facto regent. On purely state grounds we have to know what his intentions are. And as his family, we have to know what he's up to. You tell him that when you see him.

ALONZO

Me?

ANTONIO

Of course, you. Why do you think I asked you to meet me out here? You have to make sure he's

all right...as a concerned nephew. You're the one he trusts. You're the only one he trusts. More to the point, you're the only one he trusts who I trust to get out there and find out what's going on, how long he plans to stay, and explain why he ought not to be gallivanting around like he's your age.

ALONZO

(Squirming, looking down.)

But father, I had plans of my own. I was going to Padua.

ANTONIO

Padua!

ALONZO

Yes, Padua. Remember? I was promised...by both my loving father and uncle, that I might spend some time at the university.

ANTONIO

Promise? He offered to pay your expenses so I said I didn't mind. I made no promise.

ALONZO

(Under his breath.)

No, you're too clever for that.

ANTONIO

I heard that.

ALONZO

I want to go to Padua. It's not just the university. I want to get away...see other places...have adventures. All sorts of things happen in Padua. Why there's a story about a young man who went there, fell in love with a beautiful maid, and changed places with his servant to woo her. *(Squints, trying to recollect.)* Only there was something else in the way. She had a beast of an elder sister, and the father wouldn't let the younger wed until the elder had a husband.

ANTONIO

That doesn't sound like an adventure; it sounds like a farce. Look, Monterossa isn't Padua, I admit. But it is away. It's a mission for your father and your city. And I would think you, of all people, would be curious about what he's up to. Not to mention concerned? For an old man out on his own...who showed you more kindness than he had reason to?

ALONZO

(Sighing.)

You're very good in an argument.

ANTONIO

And I didn't have to go to Padua and study rhetoric, either.

ALONZO

I can go to Padua after?

ANTONIO

Of course. Uh...you might get a letter from him...allotting the gold for that purpose? Well there! That's a perfect excuse for seeking him out.

ALONZO

He'll see through it in an instant.

ANTONIO

Yes, but he will appreciate the gesture. Meet my agent at the stables before dawn. He'll and guide you. I'll give you a letter to take. *(Looks aloft, off, right.)* Now, we should get out of here. We've probably been overheard already...and my legs are getting cold.

ALONZO

We'll come on then.

(ALONZO starts off, right, then pauses and looks back. ANTONIO stays behind.)

ANTONIO

No, I'll go this way. We shouldn't be seen going in together.

(Exit ANTONIO, left.)

ALONZO

We'll be careful not to fall in the—

(ANTONIO give a call of surprise and disgust. There is a splash, louder than before.)

ALONZO

Fountain.

(ALONZO throws his hands in the air and exits, right, giggling. Lights down.)

Act I, Scene 2

Scene: The garden of *The Hare* in Monterossa.

Time: Morning, two days later.

At Curtain: *The lights come up on TRINCULO, setting a place at table. There are summer noises (birds and cicadas) off stage. TRINCULO removes a trencher, cup and cutlery from a tray, and arranges it on the table.*

(Enter MARIA, right, carrying a jug. She places the jug on the table, hesitates by TRINCULO, who seems not to notice her. She turns, disappointed, to leave. TRINCULO grabs at her rear end and she shrieks, giggles, and runs off, right.)

TRINCULO
(Aside.)

There is something to be said for the charms of the country, and indeed for any change in scenery. All right, I was more comfortable at the palazzo in Milan. My bed was bigger...and oftener more crowded than it is here. I was not, then, the only one waiting on my poor duke, and did not have to be always on call. And yet he makes little demand of me here, taking his time to meditate or study, or rail. And as for the prospects of bed, well, one may surfeit on a good thing, or lose the keen edge of the pursuit by plentiful hunts. All and all, I can take Monterossa with as good a will—or as ill a will, depending on my humor—as I can Milan. I can take what comes as well as any displaced Neapolitan.

(Enter MARIA with a basket, right. She exchanges leers with TRINCULO, and giggles.)

MARIA
What are you up to, out here, Trinculo?

(TRINCULO puts a finger to his lips, motioning her close. As he speaks, he makes another grab for her.)

TRINCULO
You!

(MARIA bolts away, shrieking and giggling.)

MARIA
I don't think I should believe a thing you say. But then maybe I have driven you out of your wits. Didn't I hear you talking to yourself just now?

TRINCULO
Perhaps you did. And the purest nothing it was, too. I was just commenting on the life of the valet, and how I seem to get along all right where ever I go. But I do remember to lament my lot in front of others, so

they never take me for a happy or a lucky fellow.

MARIA

Oh, but you are a lucky fellow. And your life has been full of excitement. You served the King of Naples himself. And you've journeyed all the way to Africa.

TRINCULO

(Puffing up.)

Well...true...Tunis, actually...for the wedding of the king's daughter to the ruler there.

MARIA

And you were shipwrecked and only escaped by a miracle...oh...and your prodigious feats of swimming.

TRINCULO

(Laughing politely, with pride.)

Oh please...a trifle. It couldn't have been more than a league or two. And the island...not worth mentioning.

MARIA

Not worth mentioning! Full of monsters and strange spirits. Oh, I mean it, you made the hairs on the back of my neck stand up when you told that story last night. I promise you, I had trouble dropping off. And Freddy, too.

TRINCULO

Well...I suppose it was pretty exciting. Of course you get used to pomp and adventure when you are on expedition with a king.

MARIA

Oh, I can imagine. But I'm sure life hasn't gotten dull in the duke's service.

(TRINCULO freezes.)

TRINCULO

Duke's service? What duke is that?

MARIA

Why the old man, your master. The Duke of Milan.

(MARIA turns to leave, right.)

TRINCULO

(Feigning mirth.)

Duke of Milan! Oh how charming. Who told you that?

(Exit MARIA, giggling.)

MARIA

You did!

(TRINCULO slowly builds a face of absolute agony. He loses his strength and gropes for the table, easing himself to a seat.)

TRINCULO

Oooh! Trinculo! You fool! That was supposed to be a secret! Why will you go trying to impress people? *(Buries his head in his hands, then recovers, finding hope.)* Maybe I only told her.

(FREDO appears at the center gate, pausing.)

FREDO

Morning, Trinculo.

TRINCULO

(With a sigh.)

Morning, Fredo.

FREDO

Duke not stirring yet?

(Exit FREDO. TRINCULO buries his head in his hands.)

TRINCULO

Oh...shit! Why do you drink, Trinculo? Has it ever been anything but trouble to you? You can't blame it on poor Stephano any more. You are a fool of your own accord, this time.

(Enter ANGELICA, left, with basket. She moves swiftly across the stage.)

ANGELICA

Who's master? Good morning, Trinculo.

TRINCULO

Good morning, my vision of heaven. My master.

(Exit ANGELICA, right.)

ANGELICA

Oh, you mean the Duke?

(TRINCULO let's his head fall heavily on the table.)

TRINCULO

The hostess knows...the innkeeper knows...the neighbor knows. *(Sits up.)* Well, maybe I can stop it there. As long as Prospero doesn't know that they know--

PROSPERO

(Off stage, loud and angry.)

Trinculo!

(TRINCULO closes his eyes, rises, and crosses himself. He exits at the center gate. Enter FREDO at the left gate, bearing a rake. He advances toward the table, eyeing the contents of the basket. As he is about to

reach for it, MARIA shouts at him.)

MARIA
(Off stage.)

Fredo! That's for our guest!

(FREDO pulls back his hand, and, whistling, begins a retreat to the center gate, raking for appearance sake.)

FREDO
Anything you say...love of my life.

(Exit FREDO, center. Enter ANGELICA, her basket now full with bread, followed by MARIA, right.)

MARIA
And how's your aunt today? How's her back?

ANGELICA
Much better. I think if she feels better, she plans to come over herself...and thank you for sending over Lucetta. I wish we could find a servant...besides Paolo.

MARIA
Well, the people around here, they are superstitious. What can you expect in a small town. They say your aunt, she divines things. Maybe worse...maybe she has the easy way with the evil eye. They are afraid.

ANGELICA
You're not. Fredo's not.

MARIA
Well we keep an inn. We can't afford to close our minds as quickly as the others. So...we know your aunt...maybe she's a wise woman, maybe she's a witch...who can say? But she's a good woman; that much we can see. You tell Donna Ursula not to trouble herself if her back isn't fit.

ANGELICA
Oh, I can't stop her if her mind's made up. And she does need to get out of the house for a while.

MARIA
And how's Paolo? What's the old rascal been up to lately?

ANGELICA
Oh...you know...just being a clown. To tell you the truth, he's a little unsettling at times. But he's absolutely devoted to her, isn't he?

MARIA
Oh yes. He's devoted to three things, that Paolo: wine, singing bouts with Fredo, and Donna Ursula. And she's fond of him.

ANGELICA
Treats him like one of the family.

MARIA

Well, he is. Part of the household...one of the family, what's the difference? You're not jealous, I hope.

ANGELICA

No, no. But I was an outsider when aunt sent for me last year. Aunt was very kind and Paolo has always been kind.

(MARIA considers a moment, then shakes her head.)

MARIA

Maybe it's just that they're comfortable together. He's her faithful servant. Been with her ever since she came here. Your aunt, she's a real lady. I'm proud to have her my neighbor. *(Sidles up close.)* Which reminds me. Do you know who our guest turned out to be?

ANGELICA

Which guest?

MARIA

Trinculo's boss.

ANGELICA

The Duke of Milan?

MARIA

(Gasping in surprise.)

What! How did you know? That Trinculo!

ANGELICA

No. It wasn't him.

MARIA

Well who then?

ANGELICA

(Smiling.)

Aunt Ursula.

MARIA

No! How could she know!

ANGELICA

I don't know...but she said something not long after he arrived. Said that your new guest was definitely incognito and she thought he was the Duke of Milan.

MARIA

(Cocks her head.)

You don't think she saw it, do you? You know...that she cast for it!

ANGELICA

(Laughing.)

I don't know. Probably. However she does it, she does tend to know things before she ought to. Of course I've been dying to find out if she was right. And if she was right, what has he come here for.

MARIA

He says, to rest, and think. He was tired when they came. Trinculo says he's on a mission or a quest, but that doesn't mean anything because he don't know what the quest is. Sometimes he thinks the old man's mad.

ANGELICA

What better excuse for madness than the life he's had?

MARIA

A busy life...even for a duke. And that he should come here...so quietly! Though I suppose it won't stay quiet...now that Trinculo has spilled the beans.

ANGELICA

Need it go any further?

MARIA

Well...he said it in front of Lucetta, Fredo and myself. Now Lucetta is not to be trusted at all, and I have been prey to temptations of gossip...good gossip...and this is good gossip. And as for Fredo, he's more likely to forget he isn't supposed to talk about it, than he is to forget about it. It's news, of course. He'll want to tell people because he has the Duke of Milan at his inn. Still, I would not like to make him uncomfortable. I make no promises, but I will keep as quiet as I can.

(Enter TRINCULO, center.)

TRINCULO

Ah, the two visions of Monterossa! Can a poor city fellow see two such beauties as these and not fall upon his knees and thank god. And but for the fact that my breeches are clean and the ground is not, and for that fact that god and you two beauties see through my flatteries, I would indeed fall at your feet.

MARIA

Well I may see through it, but that don't mean I mind. Your master's all right, then. I heard him call.

TRINCULO

He wanted his slippers, only, thank the lord. *(Turning to Angelica.)* Now, chaste blossom of this garden, how is your lady? Is she better? I thought to call again, but I was afraid she was not well.

ANGELICA

She's much repaired, and hopes to take a walk today. She enjoyed your visit very much, and of course longs to meet your Lord.

TRINCULO

(Wincing.)

Ah...yes...touching my lord. Uh...it seems I said more than I should have about...his identity.

(MARIA nods.)

TRINCULO

Yes...mmm. Well, I would appreciate it if you don't let it go beyond the household...and I would like not to bother him with such a revelation...for obvious reasons.

MARIA

We can but try, master Trinculo. *(She presses in, close.)* But you in turn must tell us something of his life. There are a lot of good stories told about him, and we will want to know what's true and what isn't.

ANGELICA

And why he's come here.

TRINCULO

Ladies, sweet ladies. I will willingly tell you what I know of his life...and it is full of stories. But as to why he came here...truly, I cannot say.

ANGELICA

No? But surely, as his servant...the companion of his travels...

TRINCULO

I am companion of his travels, yes, but not of his counsel. All I have to go on are some clues. I was never good with clues. My friend Stephano told me more than once that I didn't have a clue.

ANGELICA

Well, my aunt is a very learned women. Maybe she can help.

TRINCULO

(Dwelling on thoughts of Stephano.)

What? Oh...perhaps. But to tell the truth, I prefer the anticipation to the revelation. The revelation of one of Prospero's purposes usually means something large and unsettling...like a shipwreck, or being beaten by invisible nymphs.

MARIA

Nymphs! *(Crosses herself.)*

ANGELICA

So he is...was a sorcerer.

TRINCULO

Ladies. *(Smiles, teasing.)* When we have leisure, I will tell you what I know of that. Just help me keep him from finding out what you've found out.

MARIA

I don't think you can do it.

TRINCULO

Probably not. But then, if I can gain a little time, maybe I will think of something...plausible to tell him.

ANGELICA

Well, I won't betray you.

MARIA

Nor I. Mind you, I don't know about Lucetta and Fredo. You know what gossip is like.

TRINCULO

Hostess, as if I had been married to it all my life. I was years in the courts of Naples and Milan...where gossip does not flow...it floods. But enough of that. *(Takes up Angelica's hand and kisses it.)* Commend me to your aunt...and to Paolo.

ANGELICA

Well then...

(Exit ANGELICA.)

MARIA

Goodbye.

TRINCULO

(Looking hungrily after.)

Until then...bellissima. *(Wistfully.)* Easy, Trinculo. She is a prize for a prince. She deserves one...and one clever enough to find her up here.

(MARIA grunts in disapproval.)

TRINCULO

Whereas I, world-traveled though I may be, am wholly unworthy, even for the attentions of buxom country hostess!

(TRINCULO lunges after MARIA, who squeals with glee and escapes, leading him on a chase around the table. FREDO appears at the gate, left.)

FREDO

Here! What's going on, Trinculo?

TRINCULO

(Still chasing.)

Ravishing your wife!

FREDO

(Unconcerned.)

Oh. Right.

(Exit FREDO. MARIA rolls her eyes, then dodges TRINCULO, giggling.)

MARIA

Wait! Fredo! Help!

FREDO

(Off stage.)

It ain't you who needs the help, light of my life.

MARIA

(Shrieking again.)

Fredo! Trinculo!

(FREDO appears that the center gate as TRINCULO catches MARIA.)

TRINCULO

Aha! The prize!

FREDO

A prize indeed.

(TRINCULO freezes, letting go of MARIA, who falls with a thud.)

FREDO

(Thoughtfully.)

I thought so myself, near two score year ago. And I regard her so still. So much so, that I will not stand in her way. Nor yours. It would be useless to resist, you being the duke's man, and her being in the habit of getting whatever she wants.

TRINCULO

A loving husband!

FREDO

A divorce is out of the question, of course, but I won't stand in the way of the rest of it. If you are prepared to put up with her little quirks...and her very large temper, I can only say, good luck with her.

MARIA

Well thank you very much!

FREDO

Well, how could I compete, my dear?

(FREDO comes through the gate and puts an arm around TRINCULO's shoulder.)

FREDO

She's a big feeder, sir, though I think you've seen what a good worker she is. And very organized. She runs this place, and she runs me; and I think you'll agree both me and this house are in good working order. It's just her temper you want to watch out for.

MARIA

Fredo!

FREDO

I usually run along to the brew house, or to the root cellar, when she's in one of her rages. Occasionally I take myself off to the next village, just to be on the safe side. I don't suppose you have a root cellar in the palace.

MARIA

(With increased consternation.)

FREDO!

FREDO

Once I took sanctuary at the Monastery of Castello Svarza.

(MARIA picks herself up.)

TRINCULO

At Castello Svarza.

FREDO

Just temporarily.

MARIA

And he may have to again!

TRINCULO

(Considering.)

Mmm. Well, if it's all the same to you...I think...what we had in mind was just fooling around right here and now.

FREDO

Here and now?

TRINCULO

Yes. I hadn't really thought about it beyond that, and, well, you know, it seems a bit complicated, what with root cellars and monasteries and the like. So...if it's all the same to you...

FREDO

In the garden?

TRINCULO

(Looking briefly to Maria.)

Well...yes.

FREDO

Nope.

TRINCULO

Ah. Oh well.

FREDO

No...a momentary dalliance...here...in the garden...that has no...romance to it. And it's not good for my business reputation.

(FREDO clamps a heavy hand on TRINCULO's shoulder as he attempts to leave.)

TRINCULO

Yes...well, you have a point.

FREDO

In fact, I'm afraid that such a suggestion forces me, as a husband and business man, to throttle the life out of you.

PROSPERO

(Of stage.)

Trinculo, damn you!

TRINCULO

(Wrenching away.)

Oh good, my master sounds like he wants to kill me.

FREDO

Fair enough. I'll give way to his highness this once.

(Exit TRINCULO, center, hastily.)

MARIA

He was just having a little joke.

FREDO

And so was I, my dear.

(FREDO puts an arm around MARIA.)

MARIA

It's only his way.

FREDO

I know. And I like him for it. But if he will have fun at my expense sometimes, then it is only right I should have it at his.

MARIA

(Leaning close.)

Angelica says Donna Ursula is certain it is Milan. And she is in the habit of being right.

FREDO

Is she certain? Well, good, my dear.

MARIA

But if it is Milan...why has he come? What's he doing abroad with no...*(searches for the word.)* ...followers? Has he been booted out? Is he in fear for his life? Wouldn't we have heard something?

FREDO

Yes, even here we would have heard something. And our friend Trinculo would be more upset at spilling the beans.

MARIA

Well what then?

FREDO

(Shrugs.)

I don't know, unless it is what he says. "I have come to your hills to study and meditate," he said to me.

MARIA

I don't know what he wants with the hills. He's taken over this garden and doesn't seem to want to go anywhere else.

FREDO

For which he pays well. And since he could command, I am content.

MARIA

Don't you want to know? A duke has come here, Fredo...and that duke! Aren't you curious to know what has brought him?

FREDO

Sure. But why do I need to worry about it. I have you, my tireless ferret. And there is Donna Ursula, with her secret ways of knowing. Just don't upset him. Whatever reason he's come here, he should be treated rightly.

MARIA

Rightly? Rightly for a prince? Rightly for a common traveler? When he went into the tap room that night and tried to talk with the customers...that didn't work. Everyone was uncomfortable. And what's more, he knew it didn't work. But what did he expect? Villagers don't take easily to strangers. And then he asks those strange questions.

FREDO

What questions?

MARIA

Eh? Oh, freaks and monsters.

FREDO

Ah. Yeah, he did that with me.

MARIA

What?

FREDO

Asked me if there were ever any strange beasts seen in the hills. He is a learned man. Curiosities like that would interest him. I couldn't come up with any freaks or anything. So I tried ghosts. He wasn't interested.

(Enter TRINCULO, center gate. He sees Fredo and hesitates just inside the gate.)

MARIA

What did your master want? Is he coming out for his breakfast.

TRINCULO

Nope. Breakfast inside today.

MARIA

I thought you said...he said, out here?

TRINCULO

I...he did. He's very cross and changeable today.

FREDO

Nothing wrong, I hope.

TRINCULO

There is. There must be. Or why have we come here?

FREDO

I mean...wrong today.

(TRINCULO advances to the table. He and MARIA begin gathering up the breakfast things.)

TRINCULO

He has reached a thing he calls a metaphysical impasse.

MARIA

What on earth's that mean?

TRINCULO

It means he's cross and changeable.

MARIA

He's an old man.

FREDO

He's the duke.

TRINCULO

He's an old duke. And he is Prospero besides.

PROSPERO

(Off stage, shouting.)

Trinculo!

(MARIA and TRINCULO are startled.)

TRINCULO

And now he wants his breakfast...in his room.

MARIA

Well he must have what he wants.

(MARIA hands TRINCULO the breakfast things she has collected.)

TRINCULO

In his breakfasts, he must. But if he could get what he is here for...whatever it is, I think he wouldn't mind about the breakfast.

MARIA

Well...you take him this and I'll fetch up his porridge. Tell him it's on the way.

(Exit MARIA, right.)

TRINCULO

And a thousand other promises to keep me from a box of the ears.

FREDO

I remember that he proclaimed his forgiveness for his brother...and the King of Naples, and even for you and you friend.

PROSPERO

(Off stage, shouting.)

Am I to starve!

(TRINCULO starts off, center.)

FREDO

What did he have to forgive you and Stephano for?

TRINCULO

(Hurrying off.)

Oh, nothing, really. I think we were trying to murder him and rape his daughter. But it was a long time ago. Excuse me.

(Exit TRINCULO, center, in haste.)

FREDO

(Looks incredulously toward the audience.)

And to think when I was a boy I had an idea to enter service for a noble family. How long would I have lasted in a place were even the servants plot rapes and murders?

(Exit FREDO, right. There is a pause. Enter PAOLO, leading ALONZO, through the gate, left.)

ALONZO

I thank you...uh...what was your name?

PAOLO

Paolo, sir.

ALONZO

Paolo. I thank you for showing me the way, and for your kindness at the villa.

PAOLO

Nothing more than civility, sir. I could see you were in what my lady calls a quandary. You had a face all pruned up with uncertainties.

(PAOLO makes a face to approximate. ALONZO laughs politely.)

ALONZO

Well, I want to be sure of my welcome here. It is much more convenient to approach this inn by a round-about way.

PAOLO

Trying to avoid the old man who's come as a guest, are you?

ALONZO

(Shocked and unbalanced.)

How on earth did you know--

PAOLO

(Laughing with glee.)

I didn't! My lady, she knew, bless her. She called down to me from above and said "Paolo, here comes a young man dressed like a lord. Belike he is come about the duke, and don't want to be known too easily.

ALONZO

She saw all that? At a glance? From a distance?

PAOLO

Oh, she may see from a distance, but it's never just a glance. She's the wisest woman there is. Nay, the wisest person...the wisest creature!

ALONZO

Wisest creature?

PAOLO

Wiser than the wisest creatures there are.

ALONZO

(Hesitant to be drawn in.)

Wisest creatures there are? Is not man among these?

PAOLO

(Sadly.)

Not often, sir, in my experience.

ALONZO

What are they, then?

PAOLO

Oh, the civet cat, the minah bird, and the common cur. You would know how?

ALONZO

(Tempted but leery.)

Will it make me wiser, or will I just groan?

PAOLO

I have groaned sometimes, and was wise thereafter.

ALONZO

Come then: the civet cat, the minah and the cur.

PAOLO

The civet cat or skunk, is wise because he has distilled an answer to every threat, intrusion or insult that man or beast can offer. *(Turns and displays like a skunk.)* No one can argue with such an answer. It comes from the most base part of the animal, and yet it commands attention, acknowledgement and action.

ALONZO

I grant you that it does.

PAOLO

The minah bird, because though it sits a prisoner in its cage, it hears all and waits upon its revenges. And at the least convenient time, it comes forth with every vulgarity, folly and indiscretion of its keeper. Mocking him with his own words.

ALONZO

(Conceding a smile.)

Very well...and your common cur.

PAOLO

Ah...the vexed and faithful dog. Man's best friend. He takes our kicks, our curses, our commands, he lives on scraps, he works until he drops. How many times will he patiently succumb when his master pretends to throw the stick but really doesn't. And yet your cur knows that at the end of the day, he can get his own back on his so-called best friend...man. For a man may kick him and curse him and work him and neglect him and tease him. But a man cannot lay before the hearth of an evening and lick his own privates! Here the man can only envy, and the cur is supreme.

ALONZO

(Groaning and laughing.)

Man, these creatures are not wise, but in rudeness.

PAOLO

Your worship is to blame if you don't like my answer.

ALONZO

Me?

PAOLO

For entreating a speech on wisdom from a rude fellow like me.

ALONZO

Hmm. You were wise enough to trick me into entreating you. I was in haste to see my uncle. You would

make a passable fool at court.

PAOLO

All men pass for fools now and again.

ALONZO

(Looking off, right.)

But not with your flair. Is that the inn?

PAOLO

Aye, sir. And this little garden...this is his garden. Your uncle's I mean. At least it's kept private for him whenever he is in it. We use it for traffic when he's absent.

ALONZO

Yes, well, I'm glad he's not about. I would like to know how he is before I come upon him without warning. Is Trinculo about?

PAOLO

Good old Trinculo! He is always about. I will convey you to the host or hostess, and they will help you to the man without the knowledge of the master. It's just this way.

ANGELICA

(Off stage.)

Paolo!

PAOLO

Ah, my mistress. *(Calls.)* Here, mistress.

(Enter ANGELICA, left. She stops at the gate. ALONZO looks upon her, and instantly begins to fall in love.)

ANGELICA

(Cross.)

Paolo! My lady wishes to come down stairs! Where have you been?

PAOLO

On my lady's business, I swear. She bid me help this gentleman.

(ANGELICA sees ALONZO and shrinks back.)

ANGELICA

Oh, dear, sir. I did not see you there. Forgive me.

ALONZO

(Hesitating, rapt.)

What? Oh...no...it is I...I mean...I am to blame.

ANGELICA

To blame? What for?

(ALONZO is dumbfounded. PAOLO sidles up to him and speaks softly.)

PAOLO

For chatting with Paolo.

ALONZO

For chatting with Paolo.

(ANGELICA recognizes ALONZO's infatuation, and has a moment of pride before she begins to fall in love with him.)

ANGELICA

I would not wish you to reproach yourself, sir. And I would not for anything take away your guide, but that my aunt needs him.

PAOLO

And when my lady calls, I must go.

ALONZO

Can I help?

PAOLO

No sir. These rough arms are what she needs...to help her down the stairs. The heavens be praised and she continues to get better, she may soon come down unassisted.

ANGELICA

She will get better.

PAOLO

(Nodding off, right.)

Sir, take yonder path to the kitchen and ask for Maria or Fredo. Don't worry about your horse and luggage. I will keep them both well until you have sorted things out...whether you are here in secret or not.

(ALONZO, trading dreamy stares with ANGELICA, rouses himself with some difficulty.)

ALONZO

Eh? Oh...yes...that is good of you. And please, convey my thanks to your lady. Tell her I long to meet her and thank her in person.

(PAOLO joins ANGELICA at the gate, left.)

PAOLO

I will, sir.

(PAOLO tries to leave, but finds ANGELICA blocking his path, her smiling gaze fixed on ALONZO.)

PAOLO

Mistress?

(ANGELICA does not hear.)

PAOLO
(Snapping.)

Angelica!

(ANGELICA and ALONZO jump. She shakes herself and acknowledges PAOLO, who holds the gate open for her.)

PAOLO
Your aunt?

ANGELICA
(Embarrassed, attentive.)

Yes...we must go.

(ANGELICA gives ALONZO a smile, then an embarrassed nod, and exits, left.)

PAOLO
Send for your luggage any time.

ALONZO
I'll come myself.

(PAOLO looks at ALONZO, then turns off to look after ANGELICA.)

PAOLO
I guess you will. Farewell, young sir.

(Exit PAOLO.)

ALONZO
(In serene amazement.)

Oh dear! I'm...winded. She's taken my breath away. And more. *(Turns to gaze after her.)* I suddenly forget all other business. It's strange. I know why I was sent, and know my own business is to do this task as soon as I can and then run off to Padua. But at the same time I think, who is my father? What uncle have I? Can there be such a place called Padua? She is enough reason to be here, and enough reason to let the thought of Padua drift away into nothing. *(Shakes himself.)* No. I do have business. I am my father's son and agent. I have his commission to be devious and Uncle's disposition to be studious. I do not know what love is and have never sought to know. *(Turns right and crosses the stage.)* I must find the host, and get the lie of the land. *(Halts. Looks back.)* And yet... *(Retreats to center stage.)* Can this be love? Is this how Ferdinand was when he looked on Miranda? Have I borrowed the eyes Lucentio used when he first looked on Bianca? Is this their distraction? When they had a moment to pause did they feel so...nauseous.

(Enter TRINCULO, pausing at the center gate.)

TRINCULO
(Furtively.)

Lord Alonzo!

(ALONZO jumps, causing TRINCULO to jump.)

ALONZO

Oh, Trinculo I...

(TRINCULO hushes him with a finger to his lips.)

TRINCULO

Your uncle's up above, and might see you from the casement.

(TRINCULO motions ALONZO right along the hedge. They sit on the bench.)

TRINCULO

I can guess why you're here. But the duke is in such a temper this morning that I would hold back your arrival for a better time.

ALONZO

Even in a good mood, he won't be happy that I followed him, not even in a good mood. *(Looks off, right.)* But I am glad I came, that not withstanding.

TRINCULO

Your father sent you?

ALONZO

Yes. He's worried, you know...about-

TRINCULO

Yeah...about everything. To tell the truth, I was hoping he would send someone. I'm very glad its you. I don't like being on my own...with him.

ALONZO

Why? He's not gone round the bend?

TRINCULO

No! *(Pauses to consider.)* Well, if he has, he's not completely around it...not so far I can't see him. *(Makes a face.)* So that means he isn't all the way 'round the bend...or else I'm following him around. How do I look, sir? Am I crazy!

ALONZO

(Smiling.)

No crazier than usual. So he must be more or less himself.

TRINCULO

More or less less than more, if you get my meaning.

ALONZO

Hardly at all.

TRINCULO

He isn't mad, but he is changed. There's a melancholy about him at all times. And there's something he wants that he can't get.

ALONZO

Yes...that is what we thought. And has there been no clue to this thing? Not in all this time?

TRINCULO

No. I tell myself it will come out in its own good time, no matter what I do to rush it...or hide from it for that matter.

ALONZO

Maybe. But now my father demands to know...so I can't just wait. *(Remembers Angelica and looks off left.)* Although since I arrived I find I am not in such a hurry.

(TRINCULO stands.)

TRINCULO

I will introduce you to the host. Where's your horse and luggage?

(ALONZO stands.)

ALONZO

At the house of Donna Ursula. A fellow named Paolo has them in charge. There's no hurry.

TRINCULO

Ah, you've met Paolo, the jolly swine. Come on, it's this way.

(EXIT TRINCULO, right. ALONZO pauses to look off left, then follows. Lights down.)

Act I Scene 3

Time: *That afternoon.*

At curtain: *PROSPERO sits at the right end of the table, facing left. There are two or three thick books spread before him. ARIAL sits curled up and attentive on the bench, left, watching Prospero. PROSPERO reads, then pauses to rub his eyes.*

PROSPERO

And I said I was old ten years ago. That was another foolish thing. Well, old duke, no one can say your weren't noble, forgiving all your enemies and recovering what was yours. You were so noble, you dazzled everyone, and none saw the folly you committed...even yourself.

(PROSPERO resumes reading. Enter TRINCULO, right, bearing a tray, pitcher and cup. Silently and with care he approaches the table and waits, until PROSPERO stops his reading, and distractedly looks up at him.)

TRINCULO

Your wine, lord.

PROSPERO

You astound me. *(Looks back to the book.)* That's the first time today you've managed to anticipate your master.

TRINCULO

I have not been myself today...and with respect, I'm not the only one.

PROSPERO

(Looking up.)

That is true. I claim the privilege of an old man and a prince to be out of temper when I will. Don't expect an apology.

TRINCULO

I don't expect an apology. I am grateful that you acknowledge it. Should I pour?

(PROSPERO nods. TRINCULO pours.)

PROSPERO

Very well. It's acknowledged. I had a bad morning...to which you contributed.

TRINCULO

And I acknowledge it.

PROSPERO

Well, good, that's settled. We have played the pageant. The old fool and the middle-aged clown have acknowledged their faults, and made peace. The world can go forward again.

TRINCULO

And I apologize for spilling the beans about who you are.

PROSPERO

Yes, well, I did not suppose you could keep that secret long. You did well enough. And, as we have seen, news was bound to get out sooner or later. Or discovery was bound to invade. Antonio is no fool. And he was wise enough to send that lad.

TRINCULO

About Lord Alonzo--

PROSPERO

What about him.

TRINCULO

Can I tell him you know?

PROSPERO

Certainly not. Let him hide a while longer, and then let him force himself to reveal his presence personally. It will be good for him.

TRINCULO

He's caught between the pair of you: the formidable politician and the awesome man of learning.

PROSPERO

(Considers and nods.)

It will still be good for him.

TRINCULO

What if he tells me to tell you?

PROSPERO

Tell him he already told you not to tell me. Plead confusion. Isn't that what you usually do when you want to get out of doing something? Then you run off and try to get Stephano to do it for you.

TRINCULO

(Darkening.)

I can't do that any more.

PROSPERO

(Squinting.)

No...Stephano is dead.

TRINCULO

I know, lord.

PROSPERO

But you take every opportunity to remind me of it, as if I haven't done something. He was mourned, wasn't he? He had all rights, and a decent burial? Or do you in some way imply that I am to blame.

TRINCULO

(Hastily.)

No, Your Grace!

PROSPERO

The man debauched his way through my court as he did at Naples. It's a wonder he lasted so long. And don't look to me for your exile from home. I didn't do that. So if you are bitter about the loss of a friend—who led you into mischief more than once—direct it elsewhere.

TRINCULO

(Softly.)

It is as you say. But he was my friend, and I miss him. As you say, I'm bent toward mischief. If I was bound to be led into it one way or another, I thought it safe to have it done by Stephano. I knew him. There was no harm in him.

PROSPERO

(Derisive laugh.)

He did try to murder me.

TRINCULO

(Rolls his eyes.)

He was drunk...we were all drunk. And he was led to it by Caliban. And as for going through with it...*(Trails off, shaking his head.)*

PROSPERO

Go on.

TRINCULO

(Hesitant.)

There was nothing like the wickedness in either of us...or the ability. And I think that you knew that, all along.

PROSPERO

Did I?

TRINCULO

You set a trap for us...and baited it. Like you did with your brother and the King. Only...*(Considers.)* We were nothing. The trap wasn't for us. It was for Caliban. Wasn't it?

PROSPERO

It was a lesson for him...and you. *(Laughs.)* I was at the zenith of my powers when I called for that tempest.

(ARIAL uncurls and sits up at the mention of the tempest.)

PROSPERO

I cast a spell that commanded the elements, the spirits, a fleet of ships. My net encompassed everyone from kings and dukes to fools and monsters.

ARIAL

(With mild bitterness.)

You had help.

(The others cannot hear ARIAL.)

TRINCULO

Yeah, well, I'm sorry I didn't see more of it. I was drunk for the performance and passed out for the explanations and hung over for the aftermath. I was all the way to Milan before I understood what had happened and what it meant to me. Not that I really understand to this day.

PROSPERO

Yes, well, you're too late to try to understand it all now. It would take half a lifetime's study, a dozen years on a desert island, and rancor running fifty fathoms deep. Now be off with you. You've got my mind warmed up nicely now, but I want to use it in study, not on disputing the past with you.

TRINCULO

(Under his breath.)

I thought this was all about the past.

PROSPERO

What!

TRINCULO

I said I thought this was about the past. Oh, sir! Won't you please tell me what this is all about?

PROSPERO

That is another explanation that requires a lifetime to apprehend. And the question is impertinent.

TRINCULO

But I don't know what to do. I would like to help, if I can. It gives me no joy to see you unhappy.

PROSPERO

Thank you. But you have done what I require...more or less.

TRINCULO

Is it about Caliban? Is it about regaining your powers?

PROSPERO

(Sighing.)

Trinculo, you are my servant—in some small way, my companion. That is as much as you can be.

TRINCULO

Well will you tell Alonzo?

PROSPERO

(Attempting to read again.)

I doubt it.

TRINCULO
(Sighs.)

Well, then I have to be content.

PROSPERO

It would help.

TRINCULO

At least I have asked. Which is more courageous than I have been.

PROSPERO

Very commendable.

TRINCULO

I'll leave you, then, sir.

PROSPERO

Also commendable.

TRINCULO
(Checking the sun, aloft.)

It's gotten very hot. You should have your sun hat.

PROSPERO

I'm fine.

TRINCULO

At the moment, but if you stay like this, you will be uncomfortable...or worse. And then who will hear it.

PROSPERO

I tell you I don't want it!

TRINCULO

I'll fetch it.

(PROSPERO, frustrated, gives a whining sigh, looks up from his book, then looks down again.)

PROSPERO

Well, fetch it then.

(Exit TRINCULO, center. PROSPERO reads briefly, then gives up with a sigh.)

PROSPERO
(Softly.)

Arial.

(ARIAL perks up, then stands.)

PROSPERO

Arial, if I could find you, my chief minister, this would be an easy task. But I cannot find the spell to call. And you, being free, would probably not answer. I put you to some hard tasks before. You did them, but you did not like them.

(ARIAL approaches PROSPERO cautiously. As PROSPERO fails to notice, ARIAL leaves caution for curiosity, comes close and examines PROSPERO as an object.)

PROSPERO

You were like Trinculo...no, like Caliban in the grumbling. But you were exquisite in the performance. You were half my art. You did so much. But now I need you more than ever. This great sorcerer is just an old man, now. I need a kindly spirit.

ARIAL

Yes...you are old. I did think you were an old creature when you pulled me from Sycorax's prison and made me yours, but that was twenty mortal years ago. Now you are old. They say you are still imposing to your own kind. But how different you are to me.

PROSPERO

Not that you were ever a kindly spirit.

ARIAL

I was true.

PROSPERO

I do not know what you were like when free. But I would guess you had no more compassion than a hurricane shows to a drop of rain. Kindness was never in your nature.

ARIAL

It was never in yours, until the end.

PROSPERO

And yet you could understand kindness. You had that capacity. But I wonder, if I could command enough power to call to you...would you come?

ARIAL

I am here, old man.

PROSPERO

Would curiosity prompt you? Or would you be afraid I would make you fast to my will once again?

ARIAL

I would come...being well advised how you broke your staff and gave up your magic gown.

PROSPERO

And if you came, would you hear my entreaty.

ARIAL

Thou needs must entreat. Where is that power to command? I thought you were so mighty that you could not give up all of your power. Some of it must stay about you. But I am here, and you cannot hear or see me.

PROSPERO

But why should I talk to empty air? I must be studious. I think I am close to a breakthrough.

(PROSPERO goes back to his reading.)

ARIAL

Not so close that you can command me. I am beyond your apprehension now. And I know the reason you have left your precious city. I know what you seek, and I know where it is to be found, and how got. Poor Prospero!

(Enter FREDO, through the center gate. He looks at Prospero, and gives a curious look to the audience.)

ARIAL

Here's one who might be kind.

PROSPERO

(Crossly, looking up.)

Yes?

FREDO

Oh.

PROSPERO

Oh?

FREDO

Eh?

PROSPERO

And you wanted?

FREDO

Eh?

PROSPERO

You came in for something, thinking you wouldn't disturb me.

FREDO

(Considers.)

Oh! I've got what you asked me for!

(FREDO steps outside the gate, and returns with a large staff. PROSPERO sees the staff and rises.)

ARIAL

What's this? Calling up the accoutrements of sorcery!

FREDO

I hope it's all right. I wasn't sure I understood you.

PROSPERO
(Reaching out.)

Well it looks imposing, certainly.

(FREDO hands PROSPERO the staff, and PROSPERO judges its weight.)

PROSPERO

Substantial.

(PROSPERO tests the staff in a variety of wizard poses.)

PROSPERO

Yes. It's plain, but it's the right weight. It's funny. I never thought about it before. But there is something cosmetic about it, isn't there?

FREDO

'fraid I don't get you, sir.

PROSPERO

Well...this is a magician's device--a focus for his will and a receptacle of his stored power. But it's also a prop. I mean in the theatrical sense.

(PROSPERO waits for FREDO to understand, but FREDO doesn't.)

PROSPERO

I mean...I look the part...more than I did, anyway.

FREDO

Ah...yes sir.

PROSPERO

And of course I can be the stern sorcerer...or someone ancient and biblical painted by a Florentine. *(Assumes an aged and holy pose.)* And of course, a rough and ready bandit with a quarterstaff.

(PROSPERO lifts the staff up to strike a menacing pose, is overcome by the weight of the staff, begins to fall off balance, and has to be rescued by FREDO.)

FREDO

Easy, Your Grace!

PROSPERO

Well...perhaps not a highwayman. Yes, my host, I like it well, and thank you.

FREDO

No trouble, sir. It is green, sir. I couldn't find anything seasoned today. I'll keep looking.

PROSPERO
(Tests the staff again.)

Oh don't bother. Well...if you run across anything. Does green wood matter? I mean, I suppose magicians

can be green, too. Though I suppose I'm green with mold, rather than green with youth.

(PROSPERO poses with the staff again, holding his free hand aloft, closing his eyes and moving his lips. ARIAL ducks downstage of the table, and FREDO dives to the ground. PROSPERO finishes, then sees FREDO.)

PROSPERO

Did you lose something?

(FREDO looks up cautiously, then picks himself up.)

FREDO

Oh. I thought you might be...you know...about to shoot...or fling, or whatever it is you...uh...you know.

PROSPERO

Oh? *(Laughs with comprehension.)* Ah! No. It's only a pole.

FREDO

Oh, good. Because, you know, if you were to do magic, well then I'd really like to...you know...be somewhere else.

PROSPERO

Well, don't let me detain you. And thank you very much again.

FREDO

Happy to oblige, Your Grace.

(FREDO bows, then exits with haste, center. ARIAL remains crouching, and turns to the audience.)

ARIAL

I don't care if it is green, or if he's forgotten all. I don't like the look of him with a staff in his hand.

(PROSPERO tries the staff once more. ARIAL cautiously emerges.)

PROSPERO

Well, this is quite a change. I feel something mysterious... familiar.

ARIAL

If he raises it again, I can always fly away.

PROSPERO

Yes, I am pleased. *(Laughs at himself.)* Oh, Trinculo. Now you've gone away, you're missing me in a good mood. Rarer...a sportive mood.

TRINCULO

(Off, right.)

I'm right here.

(PROSPERO turns as TRINCULO--wearing a broad-brimmed hat and carrying a second--and MARIA enter right.)

PROSPERO

What are you doing? Skulking? Eavesdropping?

TRINCULO

Shrubbery dropping, maybe. I was only there a minute...trying to figure out if you were at a convenient spot for an interruption.

PROSPERO

Convenient enough. But look...*(shows the staff.)* I am armed.

TRINCULO

Oh...watch out Maria. Now that he's got his wizard stick, he's liable to turn you into a hostess and me into a servant.

MARIA

(Initially afraid.)

Oh dear. *(Suddenly confused.)* What?

PROSPERO

Not so, my skeptical valet. I feel a new vitality about me suddenly.

TRINCULO

Well, if a crutch can make you feel young, there must be magic in the air.

(MARIA gives a loud shriek, startling the others. The shriek turns into loud, declarative laughter, causing PROSPERO and TRINCULO to turn to her, expectantly. MARIA sees them and collects herself.)

MARIA

(To Trinculo, scoldingly.)

Me into a hostess and you into a servant!

(PROSPERO and TRINCULO acknowledge with a polite but leery nod, then turn once more for conference; they are halted by MARIA's next discovery.)

MARIA

Because I already am a hostess...and he's a servant.

PROSPERO

Yes...I considered laughing myself. *(Changing the subject.)* Uh...your husband was here a moment ago. He cut me this fine staff.

MARIA

Yeah, he's a handy fellow.

(PROSPERO nods furtively to TRINCULO to get rid of MARIA.)

TRINCULO

Well. We don't want to disturb you.

PROSPERO

Yes, I don't dare fritter, feeling so industrious.

(TRINCULO hand the second hat to PROSPERO.)

TRINCULO

Let's be off, mistress.

(MARIA turns. TRINCULO follows close behind and gooses her. MARIA shrieks, giggles and runs off, right, leaving TRINCULO shaking his head and fingering his ears.)

PROSPERO

She's certainly very...

TRINCULO

Loud.

PROSPERO

Yes...that was the word I had in mind.

TRINCULO

Did you want her sent off because you needed me, or did you want both of us to be gone?

PROSPERO

Mmm. Oh, no...off with you. Take your ease while you can. Go and distract my nephew. What's he up to?

TRINCULO

He's sitting at an open window, dazed with a fixed grin. I wonder if he left some love behind in Milan.

PROSPERO

Alonzo? That would be unlooked for. Off with you.

(TRINCULO turns to go, then checks himself, turns and points.)

TRINCULO

Wear the hat.

PROSPERO

Oh...aye.

(TRINCULO waits until PROSPERO has donned the hat, then exits, right. PROSPERO looks up at the brim, then checks his stance with the staff.)

PROSPERO

A bit rustic for cutting an occult figure...but still...

(PROSPERO tries another pose, closing his eyes, aiming toward the gate left. Enter PAOLO at the left gate. He gives a bleat and crouches in the open gateway.)

PAOLO

Oh mercy, master!

ARIAL

Another clown!

(ARIAL moves quickly to PAOLO, standing very close.)

PROSPERO

I didn't see you there, man. Take no notice of me.

(PAOLO stands, hesitates, then points at PROSPERO and laughs.)

PAOLO

Take no notice of you! That's funny. I am pursued by a stick, and I run into a stick. I will be lucky not to be beaten.

PROSPERO

Beaten? Who would want to beat you, man? Your name's Paolo, isn't it?

PAOLO

Aye, your worship.

PROSPERO

Well who would want to beat you?

PAOLO

Most folk...sooner or later...every now and then. Not all the time, of course...but most often when they are provided with a pole or rod. And there you are, sir, and my mistress coming up behind with her stick...

PROSPERO

Your mistress.

(ARIAL tousles PAOLO's hair. PAOLO looks up as if for rain.)

PAOLO

What? Yes, my lady. The one you asked about.

URSULA

(Off stage.)

Who are you talking to, Paolo?

(ARIAL draws away to the corner, up left. PAOLO turns to the gate.)

PROSPERO

I understood she was not well.

PAOLO

She is grand! *(To Ursula.)* It is the old signor, lady.

(PAOLO exit, left.)

URSULA
(Off stage.)

Really? I did not expect him to be out.

PROSPERO

Nor I, you.

(Enter URSULA, walking stick in hand, followed by PAOLO, left.)

URSULA

Ah, the mysterious lord in residence.

PROSPERO

And the mysterious lady from across the way.

(PROSPERO and URSULA exchange bows. PAOLO, impressed, attempts a low bow of his own.)

URSULA

I know that you know my man, Paolo.

PROSPERO

And your pretty niece, the aptly-named Angelica.

URSULA
(Nodding.)

Praise indeed from a city lord. *(Looks sideways at PAOLO.)* Go to the footpath and wait. I will call. I won't be long.

(PAOLO exits, left.)

URSULA

I am testing my legs. I only got out of the house on the promise that I would not over-tire myself.

PROSPERO

Yes, I heard of your complaint.

URSULA

My back. A strain. I am prone to them. I should claim them as marks of age, but for vanity.

PROSPERO

Yes. I usually play to my vanity...unless I am too cross to indulge it. *(Motions to the table.)*
Will you sit?

URSULA

Thank you, no. I should keep this first excursion brief.

PROSPERO

Are you sure? I have some refreshment, and can easily send for another cup.

(PROSPERO turns toward the table. As he does so, URSULA raises her stick and waves it in his direction.)

PROSPERO shudders, struck with a spell.)

URSULA

Thank you, but I really mustn't stay. I fear I am becoming...tired.

PROSPERO

(Wearily.)

Yes. Yes, I confess to a fatigue and giddiness myself. *(Stadies himself with the staff.)* Must have played too much with my new toy. *(Waves his staff.)*

URSULA

Well, now we have met. Perhaps I will call tomorrow.

PROSPERO

(Increasingly tired.)

Yes...yes, I would like that.

URSULA

Well then I won't detain you. Until tomorrow.

PROSPERO

Yes, until then.

(Exit URSULA, left. PROSPERO looks after her, holding a pose until she leaves. Then he slouches and turns.)

PROSPERO

What's come over me? I feel as though I'd marched twenty miles.

(He weakens again, then moves off, right, exiting with labored urgency. URSULA reappears at the gate, left, and watches him.)

PROSPERO

Trinculo!

(URSULA steps through the gate, looking after. She gives a long look.)

URSULA

So susceptible! *(Shakes her head.)* And insensible to it. *(Straightens, speaks to ARIAL without looking.)* Well?

(ARIAL scurries forward respectfully, facing Ursula.)

ARIAL

(Submissively, anxious to please.)

I have watched, mistress. These three days I have watched.

URSULA

And not come back to report!

ARIAL

Forgive me, mistress. I have watched, as you commanded.

URSULA

And what have you seen? Does he have any idea you are here?

ARIAL

None. He spoke to me.

URSULA

Spoke! To you?

ARIAL

Yes...but far off, as if calling to the island where I served him...calling to the island as he keeps it in his mind. But he does not see, hear or feel me.

URSULA

(Giving a slow laugh.)

Oh, Prospero...great magus...mighty duke. Have you left it too long? Have you gone naked of your magic so long that you cannot see your chief minister of old, or recognize a simple spell of weariness when it touches you?

ARIAL

He's much changed, mistress.

URSULA

And is trying to change back again. Well...we shall see what we shall see.

ARIAL

What shall I do to him? Shall I work upon him? He studies his spells but casts few. And he has a staff.

URSULA

(Laughing.)

Of green wood! No, my spirit. I have other employment for you...in Milan. Go back to my chamber, and we will speak.

(Ariel bows quickly, and leaves, left.)

URSULA

Now Prospero...we shall see who you are, and what you have come for. And we will see if you even know what that is.

(Lights down.)