

The Tempest abbreviated

Act 4, Scene 1

Father to Son

Situation: Stephano and Trinculo, aides to Alonso, having had plenty to drink, undertake a plan along with Caliban to kill Prospero. Since for Prospero “’tis a custom with him i’ th’ afternoon to sleep,” they plan to sneak up on him some afternoon and to “knock a nail into his head.” But to their misfortune, Ariel had overheard them. While this plot is unfolding, Prospero offers his prospective son-in-law some thoughts on life and death, Ariel and his spirits having just performed an entertaining show for the small audience.

PROSPERO: I had forgot that foul conspiracy of the beast Caliban and his confederates against my life.

The spirits vanish.

FERDINAND TO MIRANDA: This is strange. Your father’s in some passion that works him strongly.

MIRANDA: Never till this day saw I him touched with anger, so distempered.

Prospero to Ferdinand

You look disturbed, my son, as if you were
Dismayed. Our revels now have ended, sir.
These our actors were all spirits and are
Melted into air, into thin air, and
Like a foundationless structure are far
From the gorgeous palaces and the land
Itself. Yet, all that we inhabit will
Dissolve, leaving this faded pageant still,
Not a wisp of cloud left behind. We are
Such fabric that dreams are made of and our
Little life here is ended with a far
Off sleep. Ferdinand, my old brain is sour,
Troubled with my weakness. Be not disturbed
With my unstill mind that appears perturbed.

FERDINAND AND MIRANDA: We wish your peace.

They exit. Ariel enters.

PROSPERO: Come with a thought. I thank thee, Ariel. Come.

ARIEL: Thy thoughts I cleave to. What’s thy pleasure?

PROSPERO: We must prepare to meet with Caliban.