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The Tempest (Short Story)

Shakespeare

Prospero, the Duke of Milan, was a learned and curious man who loved nothing more than reading books. He entrusted the management of his duchy to his brother Antonio, in whom he had full trust. But that trust was poorly rewarded, for Antonio wanted to become the Duke himself. In order to achieve that goal, he might have even killed his brother, but luckily he loved people too much to do such a terrible thing.

Antonio managed to seize the duchy with the help of Alonso, the King of Naples, who was a great enemy of Prospero. They took Prospero away, far out to sea, and forced him to board a small boat without a rudder. And they were so cruel as to also put his 3-year-old daughter, Miranda, in the boat with him. They hated Prospero and his daughter so much that they left them to their fate at sea.

But one of the courtiers was very loyal to his master Prospero. It was impossible to rescue the Duke from his enemies, but something could be done to help him. This loyal courtier was named Gonzalo. He secretly put some fresh water, provisions, and clothes in the boat, as well as some books. Prospero was very pleased with this.

The boat washed up on an island, and Prospero and his little daughter arrived safely on shore. Now, this island had been enchanted for years by the witch Sycorax. She had locked all the good spirits on the island in the trunks of trees. She died shortly before Prospero arrived on the island, but the spirits, of whom Ariel was the head, were still trapped in the tree trunks.



In the years when he didn't have to deal with the affairs of Milan, Prospero had studied the art of magic and had become a great wizard. So, with his magic, he freed the imprisoned spirits, but they had to obey him. They did so and were even better subjects than his people in Milan had been. He treated the spirits kindly and made wise decisions for them. But he had to be stricter with Caliban, the deformed son of the evil old witch. This son was mean and brutal and had no manners.

One day, years later, when Miranda had grown up into a beautiful and kind girl,

Antonio and Alonso, together with his brother Sebastian and his son Ferdinand, sailed by Prospero's island. Prospero wanted revenge on them and caused a great storm with his magic. The storm was so fierce that all the sailors on board thought they were lost. The ship did indeed sink, but the crew, who had jumped into the sea, were saved. Ariel, the head of the good spirits on the island, had taken care of this. Such wonders could only be performed by Prospero and his spirits.

While the storm raged, Prospero showed his daughter the ship and told her that it was manned by living people like them. Out of compassion for them, she begged him to calm the storm. Then her father told her that she really didn't need to be afraid because he planned to save everyone.

After his story was finished, Prospero put her to sleep with a spell, for Ariel was nearby, and he had work for him to do. Ariel, who longed for his freedom, grumbled that there was so much work to be done. But then Prospero reminded him threateningly of all the misery that there was when the witch Sycorax ruled the land. He also reminded him that he owed gratitude to his master. Then Ariel stopped complaining and promised to obey Prospero's orders faithfully.

"Do as I tell you," said Prospero, "and within two days, you'll be a free spirit."



Then he asked Ariel to take the form of a water nymph and told her to go and search for a young prince. And Ariel, invisible to Ferdinand, stood beside him and sang softly:

"Come unto these yellow sands, And then take hands: Courtsied when you have and kiss'd, The wild waves whist, Foot it featly here and there; And, sweet sprites, the burthen bear."

And Ferdinand followed the magical singing, as the song changed into solemn words that brought sorrow to his heart and tears to his eyes. They sounded like this:

"Full fathom five thy father lies; Of his bones are coral made; Those are pearls that were his eyes: Nothing of him that doth fade But doth suffer a sea-change Into something rich and strange. Sea-nymphs hourly ring his knell: Ding-dong. Hark! now I hear them,—ding-dong, bell."

And thus singing, Ariel led the enchanted prince to Prospero and Miranda. And behold, everything happened as Prospero wished. For Miranda, who saw another human for the first time, looked at him with awe in her eyes and with fervent love for the youthful prince. She had never seen anyone else in her life than her

father.

"I would say he were a god, If he did not resemble humanity so closely."

And Ferdinand, delighted with her beauty, exclaimed: "She is as beautiful as a goddess!"

The passion she aroused in him, he could not hide. And after they had talked for a while, he swore to make her his queen if she wished. But Prospero, although secretly very pleased, pretended to be angry with Ferdinand.

"You come here as a spy," he said to Ferdinand. "I will tie your neck and feet together, and you shall feed on sweet water mussels, withered roots, and seawater to drink. Now follow me."

"No," said Ferdinand and drew his sword. But at that moment, Prospero enchanted him, and he stood there, still as a stone statue. Miranda anxiously begged her father for mercy for her lover. But her father refused and forced Ferdinand to follow him to his cell. There he set the prince to work and made him chop and stack thousands of heavy logs. Ferdinand obediently obeyed and thought that his toiling was well rewarded because now he might be together with his dear Miranda.

He did not allow her to pity him because he had to work so hard, but he could not hide his love for her and asked her to marry him. When she heard this, she was overjoyed and promised to become his wife.



Prospero then released him from his tasks, and happy at heart, he gave his permission for the wedding.

"Take her as your wife," he said, "she is yours."

Meanwhile, Antonio and Sebastian, on another part of the island, plotted to murder Alonso, the King of Naples. They did this because they thought Ferdinand was dead, and they believed that Sebastian would become the heir to the throne after Alonso's death. And they would carry out their evil deed while their victim slept, but fortunately, Ariel had just awakened him in time.

Then Ariel tricked the men with some of his magic. They became fearful and wanted to repent for their sins.

Prospero was determined to use his magic for one last time. "And then," he said, "I will break my staff in half and throw my magic book into the water."

So he let heavenly music sound in the air and appeared to them as the Duke of Milan. Because they had repented, he granted them forgiveness and told them the story of his life from the moment they had cruelly delivered him and his little daughter to the mercy of wind and waves.

Alonso, who seemed to regret his past crimes the most, lamented the loss of his heir. But Prospero suddenly drew aside a curtain and showed them Ferdinand and Miranda. Great was Alonso's joy to greet his beloved son again! When he heard that the beautiful lady with whom Ferdinand was together was Prospero's daughter, and that the young people would marry, he said:

"Give me your hands, and let joy embrace the sorrow in your hearts."

So everything ended happily and well. The ship was safe in the harbor, and the next day they all set sail for Naples, where Ferdinand and Miranda would marry. Ariel gave them calm seas and favorable winds, and there were many people at the wedding.

Then Prospero, after many years of absence, returned to his own duchy, where he was welcomed with great joy by his loyal subjects. He no longer practiced magic, but he had a happy life, not only because he had regained his duchy and subjects, but especially because when his worst enemies had done him deadly wrong and were at his mercy, he had not taken revenge on them but had forgiven them.

As for Ariel, Prospero made him as free as the air, so he could wander where he wanted and sing his sweet song with a light heart.



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