

Background. Prospero, the rightful Duke of Milan, was overthrown by his brother Antonio, who – assisted by the King of Naples – then set him adrift at sea, in a boat with his little daughter Miranda. Prospero and the girl owe their survival to Gonzalo, the King’s advisor. Out of compassion for the exiles, Gonzalo had stocked the boat with sufficient food and Prospero’s books. Presumed dead by all, Prospero and Miranda finally found refuge on an unknown island, which Prospero subjugated with the use of magic.

ACT 1

About twelve years later. Just off Prospero’s island, a ship runs into a sudden, severe storm and capsizes; the crew and passengers, among them Antonio, the King of Naples and Gonzalo, miraculously reach the shore safely. Miranda suspects that her father used his magic powers to raise the tempest and shows great concern and compassion for the occupants of the ship. Prospero reassures her: none of the survivors would come to harm. She cannot remember her early childhood, and so he tells her for the first time about Milan, her early life, and the intrigues of his enemies. Deeply saddened by what she has heard, Miranda falls asleep. Prospero summons Ariel, the spirit who serves him, and commands her to watch over the life and well-being of the survivors. Now Caliban approaches Prospero; he is the son of the witch Sycorax, who used to own the island. Caliban accuses Prospero of ingratitude and makes it clear that he would like to take Miranda as his wife and the future mother of his offspring. Filled with disgust, Prospero rejects Caliban and threatens him.

In the meantime, the King’s son, Ferdinand, who was separated from his fellow travellers but has also reached the safety of the island, comes upon Miranda. Against the will of Prospero, the two young people fall in love. Blinded by his desire for revenge, Prospero sees Ferdinand only as the son of his enemy, and for the first time in her life Miranda goes against her father’s wishes.

ACT 2

The shipwreck survivors are amazed at the island and their rescue. Only the King worries about his son Ferdinand, who is nowhere to be found. Attempts to console the King fail, particularly because the invisible Ariel skilfully stirs up an argument between Antonio and Sebastian, and then between Antonio and the courtiers.

When Caliban joins the survivors for the purpose of inciting them against Prospero, they mock him and give him brandy, which makes him drunk. The party decides to go looking for Ferdinand, and only Stefano and Trinculo follow Caliban.

Prospero eventually realizes that he cannot dispel the mutual love between Ferdinand and Miranda, and that he has lost his power over his own daughter.

ACT 3

Caliban, Stefano and Trinculo – all three drunk – set out to find Prospero with the intent of killing him. Stefano and Caliban both dream of ruling the island and of their future together with Miranda. Meanwhile the desperate King, convinced that Ferdinand is dead, appoints his advisor Gonzalo as his successor instead of his brother Sebastian. When the King and his court fall into a deep sleep a short while later, Antonio and Sebastian decide to murder the King and Gonzalo. However, their plan is thwarted by Ariel, who awakens the sleeping courtiers in good time. Ariel then admonishes the King and Antonio for sending Prospero and Miranda to an apparently certain death twelve years earlier. Meanwhile Prospero has come to accept Ferdinand and Miranda's love; indeed he even asks for Miranda's forgiveness. Miranda once again expresses her aversion to the murderous Caliban. When Ariel, deeply touched, mentions the grief of the King of Naples and Gonzalo, who are still mourning for Ferdinand, Prospero decides to forgive his enemies and forget the past. When the party wandering on the island appears before him, he restores Ferdinand to his father, renounces his magic arts, and sets the spirits free. In anticipation of the wedding of Ferdinand and Miranda, all leave the island aboard the repaired ship. Only Caliban is left alone on the island.

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