

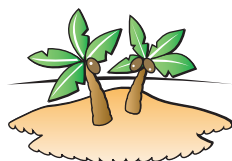
Shakespeare



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The Tempest

Chapter One



A Magic Island

A wild storm raged at sea. Winds whipped the waves into mountains. The thunder and lightning seemed to single out a sailing ship, to seize it and hurl it towards the rocks.

Sailors shouted to each other above the crashing fury of the tempest. Frightened passengers clung to splitting timbers. A king and prince knelt in prayer as the ship broke up. The sailors' desperate cries rose above the howling gale. "Mercy on us! Farewell my wife and children!"

Beyond the rocks and the sinking ship lay an island. A magical place full of strange music, with sandy coves and hidden caves, fresh springs and lush green grass.

Somebody had been watching from the island as the boat was dashed to pieces. Prospero, master magician, his white hair streaming in the wind, surveyed the scene from his kingdom.

His gentle daughter Miranda looked on in horror and then ran to her father. He was wearing his magician's cloak. "Father, what have you done?"

His words were reassuring. "Nobody has been harmed. Everything I have done is for your sake. It is time you knew the truth." He laid aside his glittering cloak and took her hand.

"Twelve years ago I was the Duke of Milan. You were a princess, heir to the kingdom."

"What foul play took it from us?" asked Miranda.

"My own brother Antonio stole our dukedom. How could a brother be so treacherous? I loved my books – they were dukedom enough for me – so I had asked Antonio to run the country. But he began to believe he was the duke by right. Like ivy choking a great tree, he slowly sucked all my power from me.

"He conspired with the King of Naples to get rid of me. And so it was that in the dead of darkness, soldiers abducted us, and set us adrift in an open boat. If it hadn't been for the kindness of one nobleman, Gonzalo, we would have perished. He had hidden clothes, food and water in the boat – and my precious books of magic. By some miracle, we landed on this island. And here we have lived together in our simple cell."

Miranda listened in amazement to this strange tale. Was it connected in some way to the storm she had just witnessed?

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“Fate has sent my enemies to this shore. Now is the time for my revenge.” Prospero took up his magic staff, put on his cloak and laid his hand on Miranda’s forehead.

“Your eyes are feeling heavy ... now you must sleep.”

In a moment, she was unconscious.

