

## My Tempest: Or How to Materialise a Myth

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'...' indicates when the character pauses to search for thoughts or takes a natural pause in speaking.

*Dramatis Personae*

**Caliban:** *a woman in her late twenties.*

*An Island. Now.*

### Caliban

When I woke screaming under the dark moon,  
He brought me berries with water;  
He made a cat's cradle of seaweed,  
To rock me to sleep;  
He taught me the language of quasars and black holes and took me on his back.  
Summoning the vapours of volcanoes for my childhood fevers,  
Tsunamis he conjured with his magic staff,  
Unfurled their size like globes,  
As Miranda and I beheld them spent  
Towards the Afrik coast.  
"I create our gods and spirits" he taught,  
"Through them I harness my power."  
To the rocks and waves he spoke,  
As the trees answered back,  
While I eaves-dropped on their colloquy,  
And heard the truth rustle through their roots:  
"Are not the gods and spirits real?"

...

That was when he told me.  
That he had saved me from traffickers.  
That a girl like me could not imagine the horrors,  
From which he had spared me,  
What devils men and women could be,  
And how many of my kind had been washed up upon beaches,  
Starved over mountain passes,  
Crowded into tents,  
Kidnapped by gangs,  
"So be grateful."  
Gratitude, he said, meant know that there are lines,

Never to be crossed.  
He told me never to leave this side of the Isle,  
For on the other side,  
There was a forest;  
That there lurked traffickers,  
And a wicked witch called Sycorax,  
Who sold young women for gold,  
To those who promised a better life,  
In the West.  
And when I dreamt at night of this witch,  
And saw her twirling robes,  
And spindle legs,

The world crushing me,  
The world falling in on me,  
Crib'd, cabined, confined,  
Gratitude, he said  
Would cure my mental health challenges.  
That carrying wood and cleaning grates and washing his magician's alchemical flasks on  
Zero-hour contracts,  
Was the best NLP.  
That cooking their food and washing their feet and ironing Miranda's mermaid's coats,  
That cleaning, sorting, planting, chopping, cooking until my hands were chewed into  
claws, That all this  
Unpaid overtime with no holiday pay nor sickness benefits,  
That all this,  
Would save me  
From over-thinking.

...  
And know that it was in Miranda's blood to  
Write, compose, sing, create,  
And to do courses in  
Shur Ecuadorian Shamanism,  
Mindfulness,  
Manifestation,  
Magic,  
With a naturalness which could not be mine.  
That there is always dignity in work,  
Even if it means my feet stabbed by the needles of rock pools,  
My hands burned by the stings of scorpions,  
All because he loves his barbecue surprise,  
Whilst he insisted that I should be vegan.  
And that I should never compare myself to others

Meaning, Miranda.

That I should always say “I am enough” and neurologically speaking,  
For he, Prospero, had been the victim of his brother Antonio’s jealousy,  
And exiled with his books and instruments of magic,  
Floating on the Abyss,  
Until he found our home  
This Isle,  
He, Prospero, would tolerate no jealousy.

...

Which is when I rescued Miranda’s sketch book from the waves.

...

Smudgy charcoal.

Trees,

Trees.

From the other side.

....

She had crossed over  
To sketch them?  
That forbidden place,  
Of trees and Sycorax,  
Of traffickers in search of produce  
For the markets of Libya and Nigeria and London?

...

Had they not kidnapped ... Miranda? ...

I traced her path,  
The days she wandered off,  
Always returning untouched,  
From that forbidden place,  
Forbid to me,  
Trees.

Across the smudged sketch book,

My finger traced

In her amateur lines,

Something of my own:

Onyx,

Barnacled hair,

Dragon’s teeth for arms and legs

Decked in the Moorish dress

Of mermaid’s shawls,

Sycorax?

Sycorax friend or foe?

...

I do have some friends.  
Rocks, sea spray, snakes and beetles,  
Cockroaches, rats and lizards,  
And I conjure them to a meeting,  
For information, and I say: "You know?"  
And in concert they say:  
"Go."  
"But I'd die" I whisper back,  
"Go or you will die," they say.  
Then on raven's wings  
To the forest beyond,  
To its edge of cool and discord,  
To its heart of green and blood.  
Terror and longing.  
Sycorax, I whisper,  
Sycorax, I call.  
Sycorax, here I am.  
Come and take me, bleed me,  
Sycorax, I am yours.  
...  
Birds gather in arches that make a black rimmed heart in the red sky,  
Sycorax.  
Sycorax, I hear the trees whisper.  
Sycorax, I hear the birds sing.  
In your blood,  
Sycorax you know,  
You have known her all your life,  
In the murmur between waves,  
Like the language lovers use,  
You know  
And never dared to speak  
Sycorax,  
For she is everywhere yet nowhere,  
Not corporeal  
But within you.  
...  
He had killed her.  
Prospero.  
Matricide.  
Murderer.  
....  
I stay in the trees and feed on beetles and the world's last clean seaweed,

I touch the trees and hear their spells,  
For he had killed his rival  
And she is my blood.  
“Think it and it shall be” I heard Prospero mutter from his manuscripts, He taught me his  
language,  
And my profit in’t,  
Is to manifest this magic world of mine.  
...  
Then in my mind’s eye I see the storm, the waves, the force of hurricanes for days and  
days,  
This way the hurricanes come:  
Upon the rocks crash pirate ships and a plane with the CIA,  
A Russian oligarch lost in a helicopter,  
With his ear I’ll do and do,  
Until these trees transport my thoughts,  
As the CIA seize Prospero and the terror-struck Miranda.  
...  
This Isle is Mine.  
....  
Turtles, ravens and a visiting Whale,  
The Shark who has lived for 500 years,  
Have all told me,  
That Prospero works for Monsanto  
And that Miranda is in PR.  
...  
And I Caliban,  
Queen of this Isle,  
Will guard my Mother’s limbs and sacred lineaments,  
Her birds, beetles and lizards all,  
Her brood of dragons  
And cauldron of winds,  
I will guard them to the Death,  
And here, I will practice this my craft  
To Mastery.  
For when the loggers come,  
I shall meet them with such storms,  
There ne’re will human creature walk this place, This Isle is Mine by Sycorax my Mother,  
My Isle,  
My Earth,  
My Tempests.