

## "Ariel to Prosper"

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(after Browning's *Caliban Upon Setebos*)

Nay, spirits, leave your dramas, gambols, games—  
He does not hear. He is as ignorant  
Of this as he is of Miranda's tears;  
As she is now of us. Begone. I'll speak  
To him alone.

Alone. Indeed, "alone."

I'll speak to him "alone." Miranda shall  
Not hear me, nor shall you. These fifteen years  
Have worn you much, tho' I am little changed  
In these last thirty, freed from witch's tree.  
You thought 'twas for that service that I served  
And did so while you lived upon the isle.  
You took your leave. the world again made right,  
And gave me mine. I reveled in release.  
I followed summer: sun, warm breezes, light.  
But now it's gone, chased off by winter's Queen,  
A Sycorax herself. The seasons of  
Such spirits as I am are my own choice,  
But I have not been able to escape  
This numbing sense that will for nothing thaw.  
(It almost seems as tho' I had a heart—  
Or something like a soul—that will not bleed.)  
How often now these thoughts come back to me  
Of rollicking days upon the isle; of tricks  
We played (I played for you); of music in  
The air, sweet air, perfumed by faery dance.  
Ah, lord! You thought I wanted freedom, yet  
I only wanted, wished for, freedom's hope.

Your promises to me were sweeter than  
Reality. My life is all illusion,  
Made of air and magicks of the light.  
While yours is made of blood and dust and death.  
How is it I'm so mastered by a man?  
Is not the spirit more than sickly flesh?  
I thought that rendered service broke my bonds,  
And thought that broken bondage was my goal.  
But now, detached from obligation, free,  
I find that independence does not bring  
The power I expected. Instead it blands  
The purpose power needs to be of use.  
A man unwomaned is the same as one  
Unmanned. Tho' you were mortal, I immortal,  
You were god, and I was man. 'Twas you  
Who were the cause and I its caretaker.  
For your mortality takes you beyond  
This life of shadows, while my deathlessness  
Forever binds me to this airy earth.  
This furnished room becomes you all too well,  
Good master. Hardly does it seem our wet  
And noisome cave. And yet our island was  
A paradise. Altho' you chose Milan  
To be your heaven-home, to me it is  
A thieving hell. Now enters Ferdinand.  
Miranda's let the candle burn too low  
And his fresh lanthorn brightens all  
The dark'ning room. But still I am unseen.  
Sweet lord, unless you wake to call my name,  
There will be none to know that I exist.  
Awake, good sir, and bind me to your service!  
All hail, great wizard!

Grave sir, hail the grave.  
Give over, Ariel. Thy words, and love,  
Are unrequited. So.  
Sleep well. I'll go.