***Solar Tempest***

*a sci-fi adaptation of shakespeare’s* ***the tempest***

*by August Mergelman*

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***Cast of Characters***

***Prospero***

***Miranda***

***Alonzo***

***Frederick***

***Beta***

***Toni***

***Zola***

***Ariel***

***Caliban***

***SV10***

***Trink***

***Captain***

***Officer***

*\*A scientist/sorcerer in exile*

*\*His daughter*

*\*Premier of the Planet Nillam*

*\*Alonzo’s son*

*\*Alonzo’s second eldest daughter*

*\*Alonzo’s youngest daughter*

*\*The governess*

*\*A spirit, Prospero’s servant*

*\*A monster, Prospero’s slave*

*\*The ship’s domestic android*

*\*Frederick’s android*

***Time****\*The Future*

***Place*** *Prospero’s Uncharted Planet*

*\**

***Production Notes***

*A planetoid is better created through light and sound than through canvas and paint. The manmade structures—the spacecraft and Prospero’s cell—can be effectively suggested with subtlety and imagination. A small upstage platform might be used for secondary action, such as Prospero and Ariel’s observances, as well as Toni and Beta’s quibbling over shoes; perhaps the figure of Sycorax can appear there during Caliban’s description of her. Costumes might be ultra-sleek and modern, or they might harken back to the days of ten-cent comic books and matinee double features. The terrain can range from Martian to scrub oak to exotic rain forest. Delineations of acts and scenes are literary only; the action should run continuously, pausing only for the intermission.*

***Solar Tempest***

*(5 females; 4 males; 4 neutral; unit set; 80 minutes)*

*Celestial spheres and personal rivalries collide when the spacecraft carrying the royal family ventures too near the orbit of a desolate planetoid, secretly inhabited by the mighty sorcerer Prospero and his beautiful daughter Miranda. After a fierce solar tempest, conjured by Prospero, the royal family is shipwrecked and separated. The spoiled and sharp-tongued princesses, Beta and Toni, make it difficult for their father, King Alonzo, to search for his lost son, Prince Frederick. Freddy is good company, however, being the first young man whom the beautiful Miranda has ever seen. Meanwhile, Prospero’s treacherous slave, Caliban, is quick to form a devious liaison with the malfunctioning androids, SV10 and Trink, for the purpose of overthrowing the mighty Prospero. Prospero, ironically, is busy exacting a revenge plot against his long-lost rival, King Alonzo. With the wise counsel of Zola, the governess, and Ariel, the noble spirit, the embittered royal kinsmen are finally able to put aside their differences in time to thwart the efforts of the real traitor, who arrives in time to give the ending an unexpected twist.*

***Scenes***

*Act 1 Not available for preview.*

*Act 2*

*Act 3 Not available for preview.*

*Act 4*

*Act 5 Not available for preview.*

ACT I

*This scene is not available for preview.*

ACT II

Scene 1

PROSPERO: So, my old rival, the winds have changed direction, and the tables have been turned. I’m eager to see how you respond this reversal of fortune.

[PROSPERO views a small computer and exits. Enter ALONZO, followed my BETA.]

ALONZO: Beta?

BETA: Yes, Father?

ALONZO: I think the tracks pick up again over here.

BETA: Sure enough... (with a sigh) But how can that possibly be?

ALONZO: We’d better wait for the Toni and Zola.

BETA: We’ve been waiting on them all day.

ALONZO: Beta, you must remember to respect your elders.

BETA: I’ll see what I can do.

[Enter ZOLA and TONI.]

ZOLA: Are we on the scent again?

ALONZO: I think so.

ZOLA: Good work, you two.

BETA: I think we’ve been here before.

TONI: It all looks the same. Who could possibly tell that?

BETA: (picking up a ring) I can. I left this ring here as a marker for the others. I hoped it would catch a glimmer of light.

ALONZO: That’s good thinking, but there’s no sunlight to catch. All of the ambient light seems to radiate from the core of this planetoid.

TONI: Your \*\*\*bronilite ring from the Chancellor of \*\*\*Finaris? That’s worth a fortune.

BETA: Not here.

TONI: You should have asked me if I wanted it.

BETA: You? You’d lose it quicker than you lost the microchip with the coordinates to the supply capsule.

TONI: Oh, I’m never going to live that down—am I?

BETA: Oh, you’ll live it down alright—in about four days. That’s how long we’ll live without additional food and water supplies.

[TONI and BETA bicker.]

ALONZO: Girls… Girls!

TONI: She started it.

ZOLA: We’re all in this together now. It’s no use bickering. Decorum is the hallmark of nobility. If the four of us survived the landing, it’s a cinch that others have done the same.

ALONZO: Oh, I hope you’re right.

ZOLA: Frederick is in good hands. He’s a clever young man, and he has the captain and crew with him.

ALONZO: I never should have let him go.

ZOLA: It was out of your hands, your Majesty.

BETA: You never should have let Claribel marry a Tunisian.

TONI: Don’t blame Claribel.

BETA: You did, earlier!

ZOLA: That’s quite enough of that. We need to look forward, not backward.

BETA: (programming a small device) What were those funny little things the captain always had in his mouth?

TONI: What does that have to do with anything?

BETA: I wasn’t asking you.

ALONZO: Oh, they were something medicinal… from a remote continent on some exotic little blue planet… Eucalu... Eucalyptus!

BETA: That’s it. Eucalyptus.

ZOLA: What do you have there?

BETA: It’s the computerized sensor on a breath neutralizer. It’s normally programmed to respond to common odors, like \*\*\*peerum and keladrin root,\*\*\* but I’m pretty sure I can expand its range to any edible organic compound if I can just… Ah, there it is—Eucalyptus. (taking a reading) Three point six parts per million. It’s not very sensitive, but it’s something.

ALONZO: Well done, Beta. Now we can follow the tracks and have some indication whether we’re getting any closer.

[They begin to leave.]

ZOLA: My goodness. All that technology for fresher breath?

BETA: Extravagant. That’s for sure.

TONI: Everyone carries one nowadays.

BETA: Not everyone, Toni. Just you.

TONI: Wait a minute. Where did you get that?

BETA: Out of your handbag, of course.

TONI: You went through *my* handbag?

BETA: Of course, I did! I was looking for that microchip.

TONI: What do you suppose gives you the right to do that?

BETA: The threat of starvation.

TONI: Well, you don’t have any right to rummage through my stuff whenever you feel like it. What if I needed that breath neutralizer?

BETA: You do, terribly. You’re breath is ferocious, and we’re all suffering for it. Really, we are.

ALONZO: Girls!

[Exit ALL. Enter PROSPERO and ARIEL.]

PROSPERO: You’ve done well, Ariel. They’ve been circling the same terrain for hours.

ARIEL: You’re right about his daughters. They’re most unpleasant.

PROSPERO: But only on the surface. Below the surface they’re… (closes his eyes) still a bit unpleasant, but also… (miffed) I don’t know. They defy everything I’ve learned in the last twelve years, and I cannot make them out,… but I will… with your help. You remember what I told you to do?

ARIEL: I shall do as you’ve instructed as soon as the opportunity arises. They must first grow weary of their wandering.

PROSPERO: You’re right. (viewing his computer) Ah, here come the two members of the crew.

[Exit PROSPERO and ARIEL. Enter the CAPTAIN and the OFFICER.]

CAPTAIN: Check in your boots! Maybe it fell down into one of them.

OFFICER: I’ve looked everywhere. I’m sorry, but it’s just gone.

CAPTAIN: That chip was the only means we have of finding our supply capsule.

OFFICER: I know. You don’t think I lost it on purpose.

CAPTAIN: And where did that lad wonder off to?

OFFICER: I don’t know that either. Once the little cloud of fog passed, he was gone.

CAPTAIN: Dangdest planetoid I’ve ever been on.

[Exit the CAPTAIN and the OFFICER. Enter PROSPERO.]

PROSPERO: Brilliant bit of embellishment. Ariel took the microchips from both parties, and they can’t locate their supply capsules. How did she manage it?

[Exit PROSPERO. Enter BETA and TONI, followed by ZOLA and ALONZO.]

BETA: Point zero three parts per million,… point zero one,… point zero zero.

TONI: You were right after all, Beta.

BETA: About what?

TONI: We have been here before.

BETA: You’re a great help.

ALONZO: It seems that fate desires our presence upon this spot.

ZOLA: Or something does. For the time being, I don’t feel like resisting. I’m getting old, your Majesty, and so are you. We need to rest.

ALONZO: I don’t have the energy to argue with you.

[ALONZO and ZOLA sit.]

BETA: That spot over there seems to be a slightly higher elevation. I want to find out if I can get a better look.

ALONZO: You need to stay with us now.

BETA: I need to save my own neck. That’s what I need to do.

TONI: That’s a fine attitude.

BETA: It’s how I feel. I suppose I could be like most other people and lie about it.

ZOLA: I think you’re lying now, young lady. If you felt that way, you’d never admit to it. Ruthlessness is silent, not proud.

BETA: (leaving) Think whatever you like.

ALONZO: Beta!

TONI: I’d better go with her, Father. We can’t let her wander off alone.

ALONZO: I command both of you to stay right here!

BETA: (offstage) Command? We’re not your subjects.

TONI: (leaving) Beta, wait for me!

ALONZO: Girls!

ZOLA: You may as well let them go, your Majesty. They’re younger and faster than you, and besides all that, there’s something I need to speak to you about.

ALONZO: Can’t it wait?

ZOLA: It cannot.

ALONZO: What is it then?

ZOLA: Your children.

ALONZO: My children? What about them? One is recently married and light years away. One is missing, possibly dead, and remaining two are about to join him.

ZOLA: I mean once we are regrouped.

ALONZO: *If* we are regrouped, *if* we are even rescued.

ZOLA: Your Majesty, if we were all rescued in the next five minutes, your children would be no better off than they are now.

ALONZO: How can you say such a thing?

ZOLA: How did the captain put it? I’ll paraphrase—I may not get the chance again.

ALONZO: Not you too.

ZOLA: Yes, me too, your Majesty. I’ve been passive too long, and those children, whom I love dearly, are spoiled rotten brats.

ALONZO: Zola, you’re beginning to speak out of turn.

ZOLA: So send me to the brig. Beta is first in line for the crown; Frederick is second; and Toni is third, and not one of them is fit for it.

ALONZO: Don’t you think I know all this already?

ZOLA: You haven’t known it for very long. Claribel’s abdication was a surprise to all of us, but who could blame her? Why would she want those three siblings hanging around her neck?

ALONZO: You sound like one of the girls when you say such things.

ZOLA: So be it. Now that Claribel’s tucked away on Tunisia, you need to start thinking more seriously about the other three and their suitability for their future offices.

ALONZO: All of them have been properly educated.

ZOLA: In all the finest schools of your *own* planet. Some of the dean’s were too intimidated by you to expel them, in which case you gladly came to their rescue.

ALONZO: This conversation is going too far.

ZOLA: I’ve said too much to turn back now, so you’re just going to listen.

[Enter TONI, unseen.]

ALONZO: Alright then, Zola, what do you suggest I do?

ZOLA: Send them away.

ALONZ: I’ve done that.

ZOLA: *Really* away—from your reign and out of your reach. Send each one of them to a school on a different planet where they will learn to live without the curse of privilege, where they can work like normal people, take their meals like normal people, take their licks like normal people, where they can build some much needed character.

ALONZO: It would be unbecoming their station.

ZOLA: Their current behavior is unbecoming their station! The fate of our race is in grave jeopardy.

ALONZO: (sighs) I… I know.

[Exit TONI.]

ZOLA: Then what do you have to say about it?

ALONZO: What do you want to hear—that it’s all my fault? Ever since that day, twelve years ago…

ZOLA: We need never speak of that day. It does no one any good. Right or wrong, what’s done is done.

ALONZO: I recognize your sentiments because they used to be my own, but the fact remains—that day is where my family’s hardships began.

ZOLA: You have been a more than competent ruler, your Majesty.

ALONZO: You don’t have to say so for my sake.

ZOLA: I choose to. True, I have had to ignore a few… ethical indiscretions, here and there, but I cannot deny your overall proficiency. Competent rulers are hard to come by these days, and even harder to come by is political stability. There is no use in dredging up the past and endangering the fragile stability of the court.

ALONZO: But we are speaking of the future stability of the court. You’ve had your turn to speak your mind, and now it’s my turn.

ZOLA: Alright. Fair is fair.

ALONZO: Ever since that day, I’ve been keenly aware of how fragile a ruler’s safety really is. Old Prospero, poor fellow. His safety, my safety, the safety of my own children. My own severe actions, though they were necessary for the planet’s wellbeing…

ZOLA: It you say so…

ALONZO: I know we’ve never agreed on the matter, but the fact remains that I learned a valuable lesson from my own actions—the higher up one goes, the more one has to lose. I won’t have my world destroyed by someone…

ZOLA: By someone like you?

ALONZO: More or less.

ZOLA: So you’ve kept them close to you so you wouldn’t lose them?

ALONZO: Yes.

ZOLA: Are they better for it?

ALONZO: (with a heavy sigh) I don’t know,… but isn’t it a poetic twist of fate that finds me here, possibly in his very footprints?

ZOLA: That’s most unlikely.

ALZONO: I know it is, yet I can’t rid myself of the thought.

[Enter ARIEL, who creates a sleeping spell.]

ZOLA: There’s no sense in tormenting yourself now. Perhaps if we just rested our eyes a bit. I don’t mean anything as unseemly as an afternoon nap, but… Actually, I’m suddenly much more exhausted than I thought. Your Majesty, do I have your permission to…?

[ALONZO is fast asleep.]

ZOLA: I’ll take that as a *yes*.

[ZOLA sleeps too. Enter TONI and BETA.]

BETA: Where did you run off to?

TONI: I just came back here. They’re asleep.

BETA: That figures.

TONI: How could they just fall asleep that way?

BETA: Because they’re old.

TONI: Shh. You’ll wake them.

BETA: So? What’s the worse they could do—make themselves useful?

TONI: We’ll be old too someday, and people will have to wait on us.

BETA: People have to wait on you now.

TONI: I could hurry if I wanted to, but they can’t. It’s not their fault though. They’re just old.

BETA: What is your point?

TONI: I don’t have one. (breaking down) Oh, Beta, what if we never find that supply capsule? What if they slow us down too much and we starve to death?

BETA: Now you worry.

TONI: I have a lot of things to worry about now.

BETA: What do you mean?

TONI: When I wandered away from you just now, I came back here, and I overheard Zola tell Father that we should all be sent away to school on different planets, and live like commoners.

BETA: What? She wouldn’t dare say that to Father.

TONI: I might have been hallucinating, but that’s what I remember hearing.

BETA: Impossible.

TONI: Maybe it won’t be so bad. Maybe we deserve it a little.

BETA: Maybe *you* do.

TONI: Me? Why me and not you?

BETA: I heard you flirting with the ship’s officer a few days ago, the same one who gave you the microchip,… *which* you lost!

TONI: I’ve never flirted in my entire life!

BETA: You were whispering in each other’s ears.

TONI: What did you hear?

BETA: I didn’t. I was miraculously spared that bit of trauma.

TONI: Jealous.

BETA: Jealous? In the interest of time, I’ll have to ignore the absurdity of that accusation. For the moment, I have more pressing matters to attend to.

TONI: Don’t harm Zola.

BETA: If she thinks she’s going to ruin my life, she has another thing coming.

TONI: Now, Beta. Don’t do anything rash.

BETA: I didn’t say I was going to do anything.

TONI: But I know how you are, and if Father is convinced that we need to be sent away, I guess that’s just the way it is.

BETA: Did Father seem persuaded?

TONI: Completely taken in.

BETA: Oh, he’s a fine one to worry about our morale upbringing.

TONI: What do you mean by that?

BETA: Oh, Toni, do you never tire of playing dumb? You know as well as I do how he became the premier.

TONI: Those rumors are spread by the anarchists.

BETA: There’s always a morsel of truth in every rumor. Why else would that Prospero fellow suddenly up and disappear? If I ever learned anything from Father it’s this—save your own skin first, (drawing her weapon) and I’m going to take care of this matter right now.

TONI: Beta! What are you doing with that?

BETA: Pipe down. I’m not going to kill them. I’m going to… prolong their naps.

TONI: You can’t use sleep mode on them?

BETA: Why not?

TONI: Because… it might be dangerous.

BETA: Never hurt a soul. When the rescue ship comes, we’ll wake them up, and everything will be back to where it was. Father will forget all about sending us away to military school, and Zola will keep her mouth shut. That old girl might be a pain in our necks now and then, but she knows her place in the end.

TONI: Well, if you must, hurry before they wake up.

BETA: Hold on. I have to get the frequency and range right.

[ARIEL wakes ZOLA and ALONZO.]

ALONZO: What the devil’s going on here?

TONI: You fell asleep.

ALONZO: I know that. (to BETA) What’s with that thing?

BETA: I thought maybe it had a setting for a flare or something.

ALONZO: Well, you don’t have to handle it so carelessly. You had it pointed straight at us.

BETA: Sorry.

ALONZO: Give me that. I need to make sure the safety settings are engaged.

BETA: Of course, they are.

ALONZO: I’d like to see for myself. That thing is safer with me anyway.

BETA: (handing over the weapon) Fine. Don’t you think we ought to get a move on again, or should we just give up altogether on that supply capsule?

ZOLA: I thought we were looking for your brother.

ALONZO: Oh, Frederick, you’re out there somewhere. (to the others) We may as well forge ahead.

BETA: I spotted an interesting landform dead ahead. It looks promising.

TONI: I can’t imagine anything interesting *or* promising on this whole planetoid.

[Exit BETA and TONI.]

ALONZO: Don’t get too far ahead, you two. (inspecting the weapon) Strange.

ZOLA: Strange, indeed. I never nap like that. I don’t believe in it.

ALONZO: No. This thing was set on dormancy, quite powerfully at that.

ZOLA: Is that what came upon us so suddenly?

ALONZO: Couldn’t have been. We would have seen them use it.

ZOLA: So what are you saying?

ALONZO: I think we fell asleep, and those daughters of mine decided they liked us that way.

ZOLA: What do you mean?

ALONZO: As long as we’re just lying there asleep, they can do as they please. Convenient for them, really, considering how defiant they are.

ZOLA: I think you’re just imagining that. They may but spoiled, but they’re not spiteful.

ALONZO: I hope you’re right.

[Exit ALONZO and ZOLA. Enter PROSPERO and ARIEL.]

PROSPERO: Stupefying.

ARIEL: You seem perplexed.

PROSPERO: Perplexed I am, and yet… I sensed that something like that might happen?

ARIEL: Did you find the answer you were seeking?

PROSPERO: No. Anyway, it’s high time we got back to our original plan.

ARIEL: I’m on my way.

[BLACKOUT.]

ACT II

Scene 2

[CALIBAN lies under a blanket. Enter TRINK, who lifts the covers.]

TRINK: (stage whisper) Hideous.

CALIBAN: (sleeping) I don’t know—my looks are considered downright tolerable by all the members of my race.

TRINK: How many of you are there?

CALIBAN: Just me… Am I dreaming?

TRINK: (sneaking away) Yes.

CALIBAN: That’s too bad. I get so lonely here. Even a stranger who calls me ugly would be a welcome guest.

TRINK: You’re not ugly. You’re a very attractive monster.

CALIBAN: So… you think I’m ugly *and* stupid? I wish I could meet you.

TRINK: I don’t exist. I’m tiptoeing away now.

CALIBAN: If you don’t exist, why do you have to be so sneaky?

TRINK: Got me there.

CALIBAN: Watch out for that grey batch of rock. It’s a booby trap.

TRINK: Really? How?

CALIBAN: It looks solid enough, but it’s actually very…

[TRINK fall with a thud.]

CALIBAN: Slippery. (waking) What was that?

TRINK: Nothing.

CALIBAN: Who are you?

TRINK: Nobody! SV10! Help!

CALIBAN: What’s SV10? Is that some creature’s name?

TRINK: Hurry! It’s coming toward me!

CALIBAN: No, I’m not!

TRINK: It’s ravenous! Fire at will!

CALIBAN: (taking shelter) Fire what at will? I’m not sure I like you!

TRINK: Hurry before it gets away!

CALIBAN: You know, besides everything else I already dislike about you, what I really hate is that you’re talking about me as if I don’t know what you’re saying.

TRINK: It’s retreating because it’s planning an attack!

CALIBAN: That’s right, SV12—123—XYZ—whatever you are! Hurry before I teach this pugnacious little twerp some manners.

[Enter SV10.]

SV10: What the devil are you ranting about?

CALIBAN: That’s what I wanted to know!

SV10: Oh, lookee here! An indigenous creature! Is it carnivorous?

CALIBAN: Why don’t you ask it?

TRINK: Do you mean, “Does it eat flesh?”

CALIBAN: If I did, I’d start with yours, and then I’d pick my teeth with your bones.

SV10: We don’t have flesh *or* bones. We’re androids.

CALIBAN: You’re what?

SV10: We’re androids, robots.

CALIBAN: I know what you meant. I just don’t believe it!

TRINK: Why not?

CALIBAN: Because you’re the stupidest, rudest, most unlikable androids I’ve ever heard of!

TRINK: (sobbing) It’s not our fault, you know. We’ve been programmed this way.

CALIBAN: Who’s the blasted idiot who programmed you this way?

SV10: We believe he perished when our spacecraft was destroyed.

CALIBAN: How did that happen?

TRINK: The cause is still unknown to us. So, for the time being, we are masterless.

CALIBAN: I’ll tell you one thing, though—if old man who thinks he’s in charge of me suddenly went belly up, I’d be the last one to shed a tear about it.

TRINK: Are you an android too?

CALIBAN: Who’d build an android as ugly as me?

TRINK: I see what you mean.

SV10: Who’s this other creature of whom you speak?

CALIBAN: The old man? His name is Prospero.

SV10: Is he native to this world as well?

CALIBAN: I’m the only true native. My mother was the powerful and infamous Sycorax.

TRINK: Who was your father?

CALIBAN: Don’t rightly have one. You see—one day mum set about to conjure herself up a husband, but she didn’t get the recipe just right, and I came out instead. So, she chucked the idea about a husband and settled for a hideously-misshapen child instead.

SV10: Touching anecdote.

TRINK: So if you weren’t so ugly, you’ve have been your own father instead?

CALIBAN: Don’t speak about Mum that way. It’s indecent, and it’s confusing!

TRINK: Sorry.

SV10: What exactly made your mother so powerful?

CALIBAN: You don’t know?

SV10: I asked—didn’t I?

CALIBAN: Why, there’s a great force that radiates from the core of this big rock.

SV10: Heat, light?

CALIBAN: Magic.

SV10: I’m not sure I’d call it that.

CALIBAN: You don’t even know what I’m talking about! You’re just like the old man was when he first landed here—always trying to explain thing with numbers and chemicals, but once he find my mother’s books and tapped into that magic, he stopped scoffing.

TRINK: If he’s so powerful, what’s he doing here?

CALIBAN: Magic’s like anything—has its limitations. Only extends as far as the electromagnetic force. It’s only the objects and living creatures on the inside that he has total control over.

SV10: Are there other intelligent creatures here?

CALIBAN: Two others. He brought is daughter here with him, and then there’s Ariel.

TRINK: What kind of creature is this Ariel?

CALIBAN: Can’t rightly say. She’s just as home in the ground as she is in the air, but she only takes shape when somebody’s tapped into the magic. When mum died, Ariel disappeared, but Prospero conjured her back up. I guess you could say she’s the spirit of this big rock.

SV10: Is she a slave to Prospero as well?

CALIBAN: Some slave. I think she likes doing his bidding, and that includes spying on me and being an all-around pain in my neck.

TRINK: Is she watching us right now?

CALIBAN: Anybody’s guess.

SV10: If your objective is to defeat this Prospero, I’d say you’re up against some pretty staggering odds.

CALIBAN: I don’t know. He does have one weakness. It’s the same one Mum had.

TRINK: What kind of weakness?

CALIBAN: That big stick hr carries is the instrument of his magic. One of the living creatures on this planet has the power to take it from him, and once the old no longer has that big stick, the magic vanishes forever. When Mum was alive, she granted that power to me. Things were alright then. I got to do whatever I wanted. I had no cause to take the big stick from her.

TRINK: But who has that power now?

CALIBAN: Don’t know,… but the old man knows. He had to choose someone when he worked up all of those magic spells in the first place.

SV10: But you don’t know who?

CALIBAN: Nope, but it’s got to be either Ariel or Miranda.

SV10: The spirit or the daughter?

CALIBAN: Right.

TRINK: Then it’s got to be the spirit.

CALIBAN: Maybe, but once that magic’s gone, so is she. I’m not sure if she cares, either way, but you never know.

TRINK: So it’s his daughter.

CALIBAN: That’s what I think. She’d never go up against her own father.

SV10: But someone could force her to take the staff from him?

CALIBAN: I suppose.

SV10: Hmm, perhaps we could be of assistance in figuring this out.

CALIBAN: What do you mean?

SV10: Perhaps we can help you turn things around.

CALIBAN: You mean—take the old man on? You’re not serious.

TRINK: We’re not.

SV10: We need to get back to our planet; you need your freedom.

CALIBAN: I see what you mean—tit for tat… Well, we won’t have an easy go of it, you know. He’s very powerful.

SV10: Every tyrant has his weakness. His weakness is his staff.

TRINK: But we can’t get to his staff.

SV10: I didn’t say “we.”

CALIBAN: I think I know what you mean.

TRINK: Well, I don’t want any part of it.

SV10: Suit yourself, Trink. I’ll go back to Nillam, and you can stay here.

TRINK: We can get back by ourselves.

SV10: How? We don’t even have the means to fix the ship.

CALIBAN: Old man’s got a ship of his own—been sitting in the dirt for the last twelve years—not so much as a dent on it.

SV10: Really?

CALIBAN: Old man’s got droids too. All *they* do cook and clean and make the place look tidy, all without making so much as a peep. Don’t like them a bit—don’t trust them. When I’m in charge here, I won’t allow any androids,… you two being the obvious exception.

TRINK: Don’t worry. We wouldn’t want to stay.

CALIBAN: “Want”? Since when does an android *want* anything? You two are the most peculiar androids I’ve ever encountered.

TRINK: I told you—we’ve been programmed this way.

CALIBAN: Why?

SV10: We don’t know. The programming also erased our short-term memories. When we got off the ship, we had simulated human impulses.

CALIBAN: Bad enough humans got human impulses, if you ask me.

TRINK: We didn’t. (picking up a precious stone) Oh, look at this!

SV10: Dazzling! What is it?

CALIBAN: The old man knows. He’s says they’re some sort of rare mineral.

SV10: But they’re just lying around on the surface?

CALIBAN: He says they’re rare on other planets but common as dirt here. I have a collection of some of the best of them right here. (showing off his pouch) I just like the way they look.

SV10: (inspecting one) This Prospero is obviously no mineralogist. These specimens aren’t really worth much anywhere. Sure, a scientist might want to collect them, but that’s about it. I must say, though—the definition of the cleavage is most impressive.

CALIBAN: Tell you what—you get that big stick away from the old man, you can take as many of those rocks as you want when you go back home.

TRINK: Wonderful.

SV10: Ah, so easily satiated are the simple-minded.

CALIBAN: Enough talking about a bunch of shiny rocks. Let’s get to work.

[Exit CALIBAN, SV10, and TRINK.]

INTERMISSION

ACT III

*This scene is not available for preview.*

ACT IV

[PROSPERO is in his cell. Enter MIRANDA and FREDERICK.]

MIRANDA: Father, it’s time to stop this nonsense and help Frederick find his family.

PROSPERO: I told you never to speak to him. He has work to do.

MIRANDA: Enough of that already! I know you too well to know that you’re not serious. This is all some sick sort of joke that’s gone too far.

PROSPERO: By what right do you dare speak to your father that way?

MIRANDA: The right of conscience, with which I credit you.

PROSPERO: How so?

MIRANDA: It was you who taught me how to stand up for something I believe in, and this is it.

PROSPERO: You are an impetuous young girl.

MIRANDA: I’m an impetuous and idealist young woman.

FREDERICK: I think I’ll just wait outside.

MIRANDA: Stay right there.

PROSPERO: While I am still master of this planetoid, you will do as I command.

MIRANDA: (approaching PROSPERO) Maybe that’s just it—*while* you are still in charge.

PROSPERO: What are you doing?

MIRANDA: Something I never thought I would.

[MIRANDA tries but fails to take the staff.]

MIRANDA: Don’t make this hard for both us.

PROSPERO: My dear, you have already accomplished what you have set out to accomplish.

MIRANDA: You’re speaking in riddles.

PROSPERO: Do you realize that by taking my staff from me that all of my power would completely vanish?

MIRANDA: Yes. I’m fully aware of that, and the next step is to use force. I don’t want to get rough with you.

PROSPERO: Your efforts are in vain.

MIRANDA: You mean—I’m not the one who has the power to take the staff from you?

PROSPERO: No, my dear.

MIRANDA: Then I’ve just made a complete fool of myself.

PROSPERO: And made your old father very proud in having done so. Frederick?

FREDERICK: Uh… Yes, Sir?

PROSPERO: Foolish and naïve though you are, have you ever encountered such a female creature as this in all your years?

FREDERICK: Uh,… Not really, Sir.

PROSPERO: She’s never had any proper schooling. She’s never traveled. She has no worldly ways, no *savoir faire*, no polish, no sophistication. Wouldn’t you agree?

FREDERICK: I… I would.

PROSPERO: Isn’t she wonderful?

FREDERICK: Yeah, she sure is.

MIRANDA: Oh, Father, you might be acting like a vengeful psychopath, but you’re still pretty sweet.

FREDERICK: Vengeful psychopath?

PROSPERO: You heard correctly, young man, and things are just getting good.

[Enter ARIEL.]

ARIEL: Sir, the holographic decoy of Miranda has fooled them. The android is approaching.

PROSPERO: Perfect.

FREDERICK: Android?

PROSPERO: Sh!

[Enter SV10.]

SV10: Greetings.

PROSPERO: Who dares intrude here?

SV10: I am a scout from a nearby ship. I have come to… (seeing FREDERICK)

FREDERICK: SV10! You’re safe.

SV10: (sputtering) Malfunction, malfunction.

FREDERICK: Don’t try that trick on me. I taught you that one.

[SV10 heads for the door. MIRANDA blocks the way.]

FREDERICK: Where’s Trink? Didn’t you two stay together?

PROSPERO: Trink should be arriving any minute, with Ariel’s steadfast guidance.

[Enter ARIEL with TRINK and CALIBAN.]

PROSPERO: Why, hello, you two. Caliban, I though you were out fetching wood.

CALIBAN: You’re a treacherous old tyrant! That’s what you are!

PROSPERO: So you conspired to steal my staff and to overthrow me?

CALIBAN: Sure, I did.

PROSPERO: But you, who are so adamant about disliking androids, distrusting technology. Did you really think that the very thing you seek to abolish would save you?

CALIBAN: It was worth a shot, and I failed, so go ahead and rub it in all you want.

PROSPERO: I’d be contented to know that it was all a lesson to you.

CALIBAN: To take whatever beatings you have for me and never stand up for myself?

PROSPERO: No. A lesson to not sacrifice your core beliefs while standing up for them. If you truly endeavor to keep this planetoid free from the ravages of technology, you need to stick to it.

CALIBAN: You’re not making any sense.

MIRANDA: He hasn’t made any sense all day. Are these your androids, Frederick?

FREDERICK: Yes.

CALIBAN: Well, they’re two most backwards androids I ever had the displeasure of knowing!

FREDERICK: Sorry. That’s all my fault. I guess I need to change back their programming once and for all.

MIRANDA: How are they programmed now?

FREDERICK: (fixing SV10) Well, it may sound disrespectful of me to say so, but I programmed them to behave like two of my sisters.

CALIBAN: Your sisters? Are your sisters spoiled, ridiculous twits?

MIRANDA: Caliban!

FREDERICK: I’m not offended at your asking, but I’d rather not answer just the same.

[TRINK starts for the door.]

FREDERICK: Hold still, Trink… What that…?

[Several precious stones fall from TRINK’s inner compartment.]

SV10: There they are!

CALIBAN: So you’re the one who pinched the rocks!

FREDERICK: Trink, did you steal those?

PROSPERO: Of course!

FREDERICK: I’m really sorry for this.

PROSPERO: Quite the contrary, young man. The information has proven most invaluable.

[Enter ARIEL.]

ARIEL: Sir, I’ve lead the royal party this way. They should be here any second.

FREDERICK: My family?

PROSPERO: All of you conceal yourselves and say nothing, no matter what you hear.

FREDERICK: Are they safe?

PROSPERO: You shall learn everything in just a moment’s time, but you must remain concealed.

ACT V

*This scene is not available for preview.*