
The Tempest

I

Come as you will, but I came home
Driven by *The Tempest*; you may come,
With banner or the beat of drum;
You may come with laughing friends,
Or tired, alone; you may come
In triumph, many kings have come
And queens and ladies with their lords,
To lay their lilies in this place,
Where others, known for wit and song,
Have left their laurel; you may come,
Remembering how your young love wept
With Montague long ago and Capulet.

II

I came home driven by *The Tempest*;
That was after the wedding-feast;
'Twas a sweet marriage, we are told;
And she a paragon . . . *who is now queen,*
And the rarest that e'er came there;
We know little of *the king's fair daughter*
Claribel; her father was Alonso,
King of Naples, her brother, Ferdinand,

And we read later, *in one voyage*
Did Claribel her husband find at Tunis:

Claribel was outside all of this,
The Tempest came after they left her;
Read for yourself, *Dramatis Personae*.

III

Read for yourself, *Dramatis Personae*,
Alonso, Sebastian, Prospero,
Antonio, Ferdinand, Gonzalo,
Adrian, Francisco, Caliban
(Whom some call Pan),
Trinculo, Stephano, Miranda,
Ariel, Iris, Ceres, Juno;

These are the players, chiefly,
Caliban, a savage and deformed slave,
Ariel, an airy Spirit, Miranda,
The magician's lovely daughter,
The magician—ah indeed, I had forgot
Boatswain, Mariners, Nymphs and Reapers,

And among these, are other
Spirits attending on Prospero.

IV

Read through again, *Dramatis Personae*;
She is not there at all, but Claribel,
Claribel, the birds shrill, Claribel,
Claribel echoes from this rainbow-shell,
I stooped just now to gather from the sand;

Where? From an island somewhere . . .
Some say the *Sea-Adventure* set out,
(In May, 1609, to be exact)
For the new colony, Virginia;

Some say the *Sea-Adventure* ran aground
On the Bermudas; but all on board
Were saved, built new ships
And sailed on, a year later;

It is all written in an old pamphlet,
Did he read of her there, Claribel?

V

The flagship, the *Sea-Adventure*
Was one of nine ships; it bore
Sir Thomas Gates and Sir George Somers;
So the poet read, some say
Of the five hundred colonists;
(O the wind, the spray,
The birds wheeling out of the mist,
The strange birds, whistling from strange trees,
Bermuda); there was more than one pamphlet,
(The newspaper of his day),
He searched them all;
Gates, Somers—who were they?

Englishmen like himself, who felt the lure
Of the sea-ways—here we are in London—
A new court festival, a masque?
Elizabeth, our princess, is to wed
The Elector Palatine—who's that?
Frederick, I think. And where's the place—
Bohemia? I don't think so,
But anyhow it doesn't matter,
A foreign fellow is to wed our princess,
The grand-daughter of Scotland's Mary;
Occasion—compliment—another play!

VI

That was yesterday or day before yesterday;
To-day (April 23, 1945, to be exact),

We stand together; it always rains
On Shakespeare's Day, the townsfolk say,
But to-day, there is soft mist only . . .

Slowly, there are so many of us,
We pass through the churchyard gate,
And pausing wait and read old names
On the stones under our feet;
Look—there's a Lucy—O, the hunter's heart,
The hunter's stealth,
But listen to this,
He's caught at last—who?
John Shakespeare's lad—up to no good—
Sir Thomas Lucy caught him at it—
Poaching—(O feet of wind,
O soul of fire, so Lucy caught you
Stalking deer?)—poaching?

VII

He stole everything,
There isn't an original plot
In the whole lot of his plays;
They're scattered everywhere, hotchpotch;
A little success with the old Queen?

Well, yes—by patching up
Other men's plots and filling in
With odds and ends he called his own,
But now—he's gone back home,

And time he went;
He couldn't compete with the new wits,
New fashions—that last, he called *The Tempest*,
Was taken out of the news-sheet,
Stale news at that and best forgot,

The *Sea-Adventure* and that lot,
Gates, Somers—who are they anyway?