

## Caliban in After-Life

*... this thing of darkness I  
Acknowledge mine.*

Prospero, what hollow art  
makes human humane?  
Excepting one, I can accept  
the other. Neither a  
deity nor its dog sits  
court upon a question of  
this sort. So answer,  
Sorcerer. Conqueror,  
I wait.

Wordless as I was when you  
washed up heaving brine, in  
ignorance of pity I  
pitied you, thin thing  
the salt had scoured. Dry,  
you wept then slept the ocean out  
of mind. When it returned,  
I nested you, laid you in  
my lair.

So was it there,  
sequestered, out of thirst  
your tongue put forth my first-  
heard word?

*Water*

What sun could sear,  
what sea-roar will erase  
its acid from my ear?

Your daughter's laughter  
as I played the pup,  
lapping berries from her open  
fist? — that, Master, was the best  
relish I had had since Mother's milk.  
And last. For it, too, found a word  
in your dread lexicon:  
*lubricious*. Admonished,  
Miranda wandered off. The dog  
days ceased. All moon  
I went on wanting.

Prospero, before you  
the lagoon wombed me. Reedy light  
sifted me, in dreams I lay  
unnamed, alluvial sprite.  
Beside the tidepools I'd  
bask in the unasked  
unconscious Question,  
fathomless in spite  
of worlds turned upwards underhand—  
that now turn all against me: my  
face at every surface  
surfeits on its own, grown  
overmonstrous, even  
my moon half-man.  
My bellow crawls through cliffs,  
outchoirs the sea's echo:  
CALIBAN CANIBAL  
I gnaw myself, I know.

If you can hear me, Master,  
mustered music on this crust  
of land, this isle  
I'll always lie alien on now,  
float home, my sometime father,  
some grain of grace to scour  
my skull of ill, its misery,  
my memory. One ounce  
of the old art, Alchemist, one  
phial's drop to prosper o-  
blivion  
in Caliban  
in language languishing.

You drowned your book and sailed.  
Your chief achieve remains  
my curse: You worded me;  
I can't recant my life.

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