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SIX EPILOGUES FOR CALIBAN

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1. They left in the boat with sails made of wishings. Yes, they left and they left me here. And the isle was mine again, sweet airs and sweet water. I tore at the books in the water, and ground them into the sand where the little fishes came and nibbled their spines like bones. His stick he'd broken, but it came ashore, and with dried seagrasses and rocks I made a fire and pounded the ashes into paste. I wore the paste and devoured it, and when the rain took it back to the sea, I had his power, and the isle was mine even more. Mine for revenging, and peopling, this is mine.

2. We put him in a cage; I'd made it of stout wood and a last bit of magic, and we transported him forthwith to Milan, where he ran rough and violent among the court. Neither my brother nor I could keep him tame in those halls. He became animal. After some months we sold him to a passing caravan.

3. A learned doctor of Venezia took him after we had reached land. He had a menagerie, or a hospital, or some-such, and off they went, the carriage and its cargo, the creature rocking as if it was at sea. From the doctor we heard not a word for many months, until news reached that he had never returned home. Gossip among the fishwives and gondola-men, however, holds tales of a new creature, half-man, half-fish, that lives in the canals of that city, stealing cats and fruits and liquor from the land.

4. I was the master's superior servant, neither crawling on earth nor flapping fish-like in the dirty tidepools. And it was that creature's mother who so imprisoned me, I could not let him remain. I let him find the remains of the master's good cellar, and let him drink himself into a stupor. That yonder twisted tree on the promontory, leaking toxic sap and reaching for the ocean? Tis he, still drunk, and I am the master of all here now.

5. The duke's servant? Why, I did see him once impersonate a fish, and very clever he was, too, with the great sucking in of air as if he had gills. Not at all a tidy sort, a bit mad perhaps, not always won't to wear clothes.

6. The spirit and I must share this isle; the dukes have quitted it for always. We bide our time, we wait for others to come, or for one of us to depart. I wait in the earth, the mage's own caves, full of feathers for quills and spilt ink and alembics now dusted brown and spilled of their ichors; Ariel waits I know not where. The clouds, perhaps, the tips of birds' wings or piney trees. It is a truce, but no easy one. Day and night I search for the master's drowned philosophies; I set the alembics upright, chew leaves and mix them with the water. I draw magics from the sea where he had hoped to drown them, and wait, and wait.