Ariel is the chief spirit of the island and controls the other spirits. Prospero found him imprisoned in a pine tree where he had been left by a witch called Sycorax, who died before Prospero arrived. In return for being freed from the tree, Ariel now serves Prospero and carries out his magical orders. Prospero promises Ariel that if he does everything he is asked to, he will be set free. At the end of the play, when Prospero has achieved everything he wanted with Ariel’s help, he says goodbye to Ariel and sets him free.

Facts we learn about Ariel at the start of the play:

* Ariel has the power to create storms.
* Ariel was imprisoned in a tree by Sycorax until Prospero freed him.
* No other character in the play can see Ariel apart from Prospero.
* Ariel is loyal to Prospero but is also keen to have his freedom.

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