

## Chapter 1: Locating connections

SEASHORE – [The title is reminiscent the setting of the play]

Monday, January 7, 2013.

Felix brushes his teeth. Then he brushes his other teeth, the false ones, and slides them into his mouth. Despite the layer of pink adhesive he's applied, they don't fit very well; perhaps his mouth is shrinking. He smiles: the illusion of a smile. Pretence, fakery, but who's to know?

Once he would have called his dentist and made an appointment, and the luxurious faux-leather chair would have been his, the concerned face smelling of mint mouthwash, the skilled hands wielding gleaming instruments. Ah yes, I see the problem. No worries, we'll get that fixed for you. Like taking his car in for a tuneup. He might even have been graced with music on the earphones and a semi-knockout pill.

But he can't afford such professional adjustments now. His dental care is low-rent, so he's at the mercy of his unreliable teeth. Too bad, because that's all he needs for his upcoming finale: a denture meltdown. Our revelth now have ended. Theeth our actorth ... Should that happen, his humiliation would be total; at the thought of it even his lungs blush. If the words are not perfect, the pitch exact, the modulation delicately adjusted, the spell fails. People start to shift in their seats, and cough, and go home at intermission. It's like death.

"Mi-my-mo-moo," he tells the toothpaste-speckled mirror over the kitchen sink. He lowers his eyebrows, juts out his chin. Then he grins: the grin of a cornered chimpanzee, part anger, part threat, part dejection.

How he has fallen. How deflated. How reduced. Cobbling together this bare existence, living in a hovel, ignored in a forgotten backwater; whereas Tony, that self-promoting, posturing little shit, gallivants about with the grandees, and swills champagne, and gobbles caviar and larks' tongues and suckling pigs, and attends galas, and basks in the adoration of his entourage, his flunkies, his toadies ... Once the toadies of Felix.

It rankles. It festers. It brews vengefulness. If only ... Enough. Shoulders straight, he orders his gray reflection. Suck it up. He knows without looking that he's developing a paunch. Maybe he should get a truss.

Never mind! Reef in the stomach! There's work to be done, there are plots to be plotted, there are scams to be scammed, there are villains to be misled! Tip of the tongue, top of the teeth. Testing the tempestuous teapot. She sells seashells by the seashore.

There. Not a syllable fluffed.

He can still do it. He'll pull it off, despite all obstacles. Charm the pants off them at first, not that he'd relish the resulting sight. Wow them with wonder, as he says to his actors. Let's make magic! And let's shove it down the throat of that devious, twisted bastard, Tony.

The idea of performance continues in the first chapter with illusion as central in the novel as it is in the play.

- Explain the significance of each of the underlined phrases in reference to *The Tempest*
- The first paragraph refers to illusion, pretence and fakery. How significant are these three aspects in the play?
- 'How he has fallen. How deflated. How reduced.' Compare the different downfalls of Prospero and Felix When Felix grins he reveals 'part anger, part threat, part dejection'. How similar or different is this to Prospero?
- How has Atwood begun reimagining *The Tempest*?