

ANYTHING'S DREAM

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Third Draft

The Lowest Part of Anything's Dream; or the
Clue With Which We Wind Up Thread; Adapted
from *A Midsummer Night's Dream* by one
william shopkeeper by macaw wellman under
the Power of Certain *Nefarious* Elves; further
material has been hammer'd out of shape from
the works of Saul Kripke, Bachelard, Ortega Y
Gasset, and of course the shadow playing *Wall*,
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and Ad Infinitum. *ANYTHING'S DREAM* has
been commisioned by Certain Other Nefarious
Elves from Muhlenberg college.

[**DANBY**]: We hear an awful noise. An axe upon wood? Wood upon head? Upon something roughly the size and shape and wisdom of a croquet ball. A match lights, quickly goes out. For the briefest of instants we catch sight, off to one side, of an awful creature. A Frilled Lizard dressed as a little girl in her Sunday School best. All around us is the panorama of a painting. A circular painting lighted from above and beyond our ken. We are a little weirded out because. Because we are surrounded by the painting. [Francis Danby's "Scene from *A Midsummer Night's Dream*.] Resemblance is not the business of painting (and theater?). In composition one thing is as important as another. In and for itself. Things happen as they happen. What is lovely, is lovely only when it appears.

Pause. Silence. Pause. We see a large shape approach, a hell-mouth proscenium theater. A crowd of people or creatures are pushing the thing. Pushing slowly and muttering among themselves. We witness a tide of creatures pouring out. Spirits great and not so great and small and, well, insignificant. Demons that can stop rivers and turn the stars backward. St Elmo's Fire. Lares, larvae, genii, fauns, satires, wood nymphs, foliots (what's a foliot?), fairies, Robin Goodfellows, trolls. Puck, who leads men astray. Cobolds and getuli "who are clothed after the metal- men and will many times imitate their work". It is known that the devil, being a slender incomprehensible spirit, can easily insinuate and wind himself into human bodies. So watch your lower parts. Your lower parts are more vulnerable than the lower parts of the dragon.

We see only the myriad tangle shadow of pointed ears. All this is enacted slowly, quietly, as in a house of moth. A padded chamber of moth wings, cobwebs and fur lined teacups. We shall call these, collectively, the Tribe of Danby.

We hear a match off to one side, and for the briefest instant catch sight of the French teacher who trembles and attempts to speak but is unable. Flash, she is gone. Tilt. The plays stops, begins again after much murmuring and occasional glimpses of ears, tails and claws. Glimpses of fur. Moving fur.

Pause. Silence. Pause.

We hear a sound behind us. Murmurs stop. I am Puck. I am invisible. Now I am visible. This is a play about rules because we all, all of us who inhabit the deep woods, are aware we live on the edge of what's underneath. The rules for dwelling here. Dwelling on the edge

of what's underneath are complex. Hard to master. Unspeakable. Unsayable. And there are plenty of them. Pause silence pause. A rule is a something someone follows in order to do what they are doing when they are doing what they are doing and doing what they are doing correctly. A rule sure is something. A rule is something to eat.

French conjugation chorus. Back to the beginning. The beginning starts with the trembling French teacher who narrates the story. Because she is trembling so she cannot speak. Because she cannot speak someone must speak for her. Someone else. Someone else narrates the story of the eating of _____. The eating of Josephine. An ugly sound, as of someone (someone else?) being throttled. (And eaten?) This goes on for a time. Tilt.

Back to the beginning. Someone other than someone else narrates for the trembling French teacher, the story of the eating of _____. Er, Josephine, I mean. Josephine? Josephine. We had just begun irregular verbs or perhaps the difference between the dream (*reve*) and the reverie. I heard a terrible cracking sound and then. Screams from the terrified students. A consternation of flash lights. Alas, Josephine was no more. Only her blood-splattered mary janes (a kind of shoe). Nicole there had almost entirely eaten her . Eaten her up. As if Josephine were something to eat. A croissant or a pear or a plump chicken. O too horrible to contemplate. I do not know what must be done. Nightmarish images dance before my eyes. I am fallen in a dark uneven way, and now when I look outside to the rolling hills of Sockdolager County. The landscape no longer seems familiar. Those

rolling hills seem to me, instead of a harmless picture of landscape, horrible folds of the dragons's tail. A tail much longer than it ought. A tail, one might say, of inordinate length.

Now she flees. Chased off apparently by an intense jackerie of elves. Another tide of terrible creatures. This one the Tribe of Doyle. We notice for the first time tripping-devils, spitting-devils (an American genus) and face-making ones. Random walkers and evilish singularities. Chicken-footed unknowables, upper parts hooded and masked. All a roiling formless blotch of soap froth. A soap froth all demon and devilbus. A soap froth composed of elf, a soap froth decidedly all demon and devilbus. All rush. Wriggle and. Scamper about without a particular sense of destination. As before all is muffled. A quiet commotion. Our eye follows them out of the hell-mouth. Fork-fang. Hell-mouth of Faery.

Something is nested within someone else but what is it? Now we can see more clearly what is the case. What *is* the case? The elves are not pursuing the poor French teacher, but are fleeing from something. But are fleeing from a diabolical shape lurking just behind the hell-mouth proscenium, which has somehow been reversed in a moment of theatrical alchemy to reveal a back stage *trompe l'oeil*. The horrid, pointy-eared children of night are fleeing *from* a creature even more terrible. We see only the hem of the creature's school girl dress and mary janes. It is as if. Not only is something nested within something, but we keep waking up from the horror of one picture to the even greater terror of the next. It is as if all there is is one damn thing followed by another damn thing. Chorus ceases.

Nicole the Frilled Lizard. I am the one the fairies left behind when they took my other half away. My name is Nicole. Her name is not Nicole. And I am nineteen years old and a freshman at Muhlenberg College. I don't mind too much being a frilled lizard only. Only what do I tell my parents? My boyfriend? Like, who wants a frilled lizard for a girlfriend?

The Flizzard song. You see, my other, the other who who I am supposed to be. The one who feels my pain for me. Ouch. Supposedly. The one whose pain I supposedly feel. According to the rule of skewed vocabularies. French chorus once more. Wanted to get an A in French. On her own she knew she'd never hack it. So.

From the shadows. In order to secure an A in Professor X's notorious French class, I sold my soul to a certain gentleman. Puck appears and takes credit with an elfish and disturbing bow. There is something about the. There is something disturbing about the length of his tail. I sold my soul to a certain gentleman in the Ivory Room of the old Astor Hotel located across the park in a remote and forbidding district of Allentown, PA. A chorus of elves pass along each to each, a small object, apparently of great worth. Nicole's other who. What's this? A hazelnut. Take this hazelnut and go to a place deep deep deep in the forest. Go until you find the man who lives in the forest. When you find this man give him the hazelnut and he will thank you. Thank you he will say, and you will make your request. Pray, what is this man's name? This man's name is Mad Daddy and once you have given Mad Daddy the hazelnut he will tap you once lightly, oh so lightly on the head, with his axe.

She looks at us askance. Pause silence pause.
Tap ever so lightly and. And now you will
know all the rules of the French language. All
of `em. (I want something to eat).

We behold the strangeness of the forest. An
immense wooden place. A place made mad by
too much wood and wet leaves and other
horrible. Things. He and she horribles. Tree
horribles. Hedges and poison ivory. Creepy
wet wet green things.

Pause.

Silence.

Pause.

Barely and quietly whispered. Put the hazelnut
in a box and go. Just go. Go away song. Go
away. Wait. Go I said. Wait. This is for you.
Go away. This is for you. What is it? A
hazelnut. A what? A hazelnut. In a nice little
box. Don't need a hazelnut. But I was told.
Don't need a hazelnut. Already have the
hazelnut a frilled lizard gave me. A frilled
lizard? Nice little box though. A nice little box.
A nice little box? Tell me which can hold more
things, a closed box or an open one? Why?
Why what difference does it make? He goes
away. Why?

Shadows. Stillness. We hear the hell-mouth
proscenium being wheeled about again.
Muffled commands. Muttering. Complaints. A
throng of more elves enter singing. This is the
Tribe of Dadd. They sing the monster song.
Ah yi Ah yi Ah yi. Bim bam bum, etc. When
playing the monster it is important to
remember. ? One does not play the monster,
one *is* the monster. A terrifying dance of

pointed ears. Enter the entire elfish nation pronking, squeaking (muffled), making wattles, doing the crested idiot, the lowing natural, and staring at selected members of the audience in an arrogant and shameless fashion. All those the ghoul of poetical inspiration has maddened and denied a local habitation and a name. Pause. Silence. Pause. We keep waking up from the terror of one picture to the horror of the next. Remember: All this is enacted quietly, as in the house of moth.

[**DOYLE**]: We hear an awful crack. As of an axe upon something obdurate and unyielding. Something like a human head. We see a pattern. The Frizzard's alter ego is running about in a figure-eight, carrying some kind of light-source. A mystery box of cold and diabolical luminescence. She speaks a one-word sentence in the Finnish language: *Juoksentilisinkohan*. Which means: I wonder if I should run around without a particular destination. But no none of the elves has a clue. All that is revealed is ... is a ... Deep lack. A bleak lack of deep. Deep. Deep structural rules– the grid– Great Pan is dead. All do the dance of the death of Great Pan. Great Pan is dead, and night is upon us. They do the dance of the night that is upon us. We are inhabited by phantoms who take us over, take us over despite ourselves, take us over in our sleep. Sleepth. Slip. Slup. Slupth.

We see a crowd of creatures, visible from the waist down only.

Great Pan is dead, but we are not. For there are creatures, real creatures, who dwell

beneath us. Not pleasing archetypes or metaphors engendered by our merely human wishful thinking. No. No no no. I mean real creatures. Lots of us. Real creatures lacking only a local habitation and a name.

She steps forward. The Alter Ego. Silence pause silence. Such a pretty girl. Such an ugly hat. She yawns. For the repose of sleep does not belong to us. To what I once was. A human being girl, like, of the garden variety. No. No no no. The repose of sleep does not belong to us; it is not the possession of our being. Sleep opens within us an inn for phantoms. (Like, when we are asleep we are vulnerable to attack. Vulnerable to be eaten by monsters of the night. Id things. Bears. Werewolves. Giant flightless birds.)

Sleep is a night tunnel connecting us to the vast, deserted conservatory where. A tunnel from which Puck strides forth: In his book Servius and Fortune, Dumézil writes: "Thus covered with praises, Indra began to grow".

Silence.

Pause.

Silence.

Something begins to grow. Something that is nested within something else begins to grow.

To keep up her bravery, the Alter Ego begins to sing her song about the rules of the French language. All join in, as the rules of the French language are happy rules. Because the French language is the language of love. The language of love? Precisely. Something is nested within something else, but what is it? They. Who are they? We see only the

shadows, far off, of pointed ears. Tall dark pointed ears. In the distance as they approach. Our little theater, perhaps, is on wheels. Yes, on wheels, and it is us who is approaching them. We are willy-nilly creeping along. Creeping along on a creaking wagon. On a giant allegorical wagon that is entering the dark-frame hell-mouth once more, ladies. Once more, gents, and this ain't no lame ass excuse for a show. This am the Luna Park of the mind. This are the hot patootsie. More monsters enters. Monsters arrayed in gold and ebony and arranged in moving polygons. Monsters once more singing their song. Ah yi Ah yi Ah yi. Bim bam bum, etc. When playing the monster (you idiot!) it is important to remember one does not play the monster, one *is* the monster. Someone wants to sing about getting around in hell, but doesn't know the words. One damn thing after another; that's all there is; one damn thing after another. All around us now the ghouls of failed poetical inspiration. All those maddened by highschool and things worse. A hideous dance of the dead high school. More creatures. Ah yi Ah yi Ah yi. The PTA and. And? And the mob theatrical of Man Theandrical. The whole vulgar swarm of pitchmen, PA's, and the intellectually impaired. Failed actors and actresses, go fers and has beens and go betweens and retired jockeys. Middle level managers and tenured faculty. All those time and the imagination have passed by and deposited in the dumpster of history. And out there the others

They

They, the Great Elf, the Lesser Elf, and the other elves of various proportion. Theseus has been tied up with the string he used to escape from the labernath. Labyrinth. Labernath. Oaf elf. We wicked elves have tied him up in

his own darn string. He looks like a pile of dead leaves. He thrashes about. He thrashes about because he is tormented by nightmares. Nightmares of all the monsters he has murdered on his way to fame and fortune.

Of all the monsters he has murdered, and in some cases misrepresented, our Puck here is the Lord Protector. Did we approach them or. Did they approach us? As we approach the forest goes away. That is the rule of the forest. Forest and city are two things essentially deep and this depth is fatally condemned to become a surface if it wants to be wound up like thread on the spool (bottom) of visibility.

Here comes my messenger. How now, Mad spirit? What night rules now about this haunted grove? A forest is an island. This island is full of voices. Whispering voices. The wandering lovers and those they sought have turned into melancholy whispers. Whispers whispering. Whispered pledges and exclamations of desire and delight. They have lost their names. The rules of nomenclature. The rules of the upper world. All are gone. Misrule reigns, only the rules of misrule are a little unclear. Even to us.

For

there is no absolute clarity hereabouts anymore, as the woods have told me in their whispers (Puck). No, comrade Elf, anything can be born from a union of two vocabularies when one follows the reveries of the speaking being. All things, substances and stars must

obey the prestige of their names. Then the lovers must surely have fallen in love with the wrong person. They do not follow the rule of love correctly. What is a rule? A rule is that which one must follow in order to do a thing correctly. Nonsense, if I follow a rabbit that does not mean that I know what I am doing. A rule is something to eat. A rule is not something to eat. A rule *is too* something to eat.

Glaring eyes.
Horripilation.

Something is skewed.

We all live on the edge of what's underneath. Don't distract me. Our beautiful changeling girl has been acting strange. She has bopped Hippolyta on the head, and now the poor dear wants to return to Brazil, Who is from where? I always get confused. Which is which? Given the sleep of reason in these parts it is hard to say. Maybe Mad Daddy knows. Who? The man who lives in the Forest. The man who. Every time someone would approach he would get up and go. That man. Maybe we should capture him and force him to do something so as to reveal the deep. Deep. Deep structure governing all the rules. Misrules you mean. Idiot. Elfish dolt. Foliot (what's a foliot?) Larva. Larva? Looks like a bug. Looks like the north end of something wiggling her hundred legged way south. You'll break the bough. Bough break. Ho. Hoo. Ho ho. [For now we see they are all sitting perched on boughs of a giant tree. This is Richard Doyle "The Fairy Tree".

Ungag Theseus and see what he says. Mad Daddy has misunderstood the play. Who? Moon's a platinum blond who has her nesting

rights higher than us. Who has her nest in the woods. Who has her nest high in the trees. Her face's on fire. I shall tell what my childhood was like.

Gag him. Fool. He knows nothing but stale mythology.

I know what the play's about. About? About? About? Who the hell is she? Whispers in his ear. One to the next till all the boughs rise and lower as the weight of knowing shifts his (her) weight from place to place. From point A to point B, say. She's the new changeling from someplace in Pennsylvania.

?

! From where? Skip it.

So the facts are these. Theseus has been tied up with the thread he used to escape from the labernath. Labyrinth. From the labernath. No the play begins with the trembling French teacher and the story of the eating of Josephine by the. By that horrid girl in her frilled lizard form.

Hippolyta. The play has already begun and the play has already not begun with. I want to go back to Brazil, among others of my kind. For I was cruelly kidnaped by this idiot (Theseus). And I was cruelly kidnaped by him (Theseus). Then by you. Puck has over thrown Oberon and Titania, and in so doing revealed himself as the dragon Mad Daddy dreamt of. The dragon whose rear part, commonly referred to as "tail". A tail, in short. Was too too terribly long. Constituted a tail of inordinate length.

What does she think we are? Idiots? A doubt is shared. Each to himself, in silence. Hippolyta. But I did not kidnap you. Oberon did, and others among the great elves. But now the lesser elves have overturned proper order in the pretty pastorate of Faery. Well, all I know is that, like, I am having a pretty hard time being a changeling. I am the changeling, not you. Are you calling me the replica? I am the one taken, you are the lesser thing left in my place. I am the original. You are the replica. If I am the replica the replica is not a replica but a superior repetition. Ha! A pathetic devolution. Nay! A triumph of the evolutionary principle as ... as some wise men imagined it to be in Queen Victoria's time. A fall from a high estate. You are the parody, I am the original. If you are the original the original is a grotesque parody of something higher. Clearer. Brighter. More removed from what is low and grotesque and subterranean. Type, antitype (I always get these confused), thesis, antithesis.

An arboreal pause. A pause with a tail of inordinate length.

Puck we are not so concerned about that part of the play. We are never quite sure who is who in the better class of Shakespearean fol-de-rol because the characters all talk funny and have Greekish names. The whole thing causes my head to split like a cracked nut. Like a cracked hazelnut (Theseus).

So we know all the doubled parts are played by one. This means you had better pack your bags. Don't get me started again. We know the main story is of the double changeling (and her changeling double) who endeavors to return from the world she finds herself lost in,

to the one from which she has been, so to speak, plucked. And it follows from this that there are certain rules to be followed in enacting the *chiasmus*, this capital X of double repatriation. And that such transformations may only be accomplished through divine (infernal) agency. And that after the restoration, according to rule, divine order is achieved and. And at the marriage of all three couples (all throw not such nice glances at the speaker of this). Three? I see only two. Points at the dead-locked changeling duo, far from being a couple. At the marriage or (perhaps I mean) beheading of Theseus a bad play is to be enacted during which a discussion of rules occurs among the philosophically inclined shadows.

But how

?

...

No one seems to know.

In the forest you see there are lots of nasty little theaters. Only you have to know where to find them. And that is not so easy. And this is my story, the story of how I gave away not only my soul (who needs a soul anyhow? Quite a few important people get along very nicely thank you without one. Indeed, it may be more of an impediment to sure and rapid advancement to be burdened by such an antiquated thing, but no. Silence.) No. No no. I had given away my *nature*, which very much resembles the soul, but is altogether a different thing.

Tripping devils and spitting-devils appear. You are not of the forest. We are. We know what nature is. You

don't.

Ah. Er. Ah. Reprise of the French language song.

We notice or. Better, try *not* to notice that all the boughs of the fairy tree upon which the various elves are arrayed are actually folds of the tail of the dragon. A tail of, as by this time goes without saying, is. Is a tail of inordinate length.

This being said. They present the play. Pause silence. pause. Only. Only nothing happens, er.

They present the play. An embarrassed (and embarrassing) pause. Can it be that these creatures are unable to present the play? Another pause, more argumentative and full of unspoken conflict, in which the various creatures attempt with some awkwardness, given the arboreal nature of their local habitation, to confer.

Ahem. They present the play. They, the Great Elf, the lesser Elf and other elves of diverse proportion.

Something strange happens.

All drop out of character, as if the picture of the world had been cracked open. They consider this idea.

They look anxiously at the tied and bound Theseus, but no. He has not been beheaded, although we do notice something a bit odd.

By Protector Puck's knee there now stands a demented, gibbering Fairy-Feller with an axe. He stands there. He remembers to stop gibbering so that all may admire the magnificence and gibbosity of his dementia. All do this. Pause.

Silence.

Pause.

The Frizzard steps forth. They do not present the play. They present Bottom's Dream, the only part of the play that they understand. She's shoved aside. We are presenting tonight Bottom's Dream, the only part of the play that interests us. Squabble over a piece of food. A dead bird or delectable vole or mousling.

They present Bottoms Dream the only part of the play that interests them. They, the Great Elf, the Lesser Elf and all the hideous and vulgar and. And plebeian less than Lesser elves. Elves of various and insignificant proportion, only.

Only they do not know what a "bottom" is, since all things in the darkness of the woods and of the state of nature are *au fond* bottomless. This is the story of the Changeling Girl. And the story of Puck and the revolutionary power of his potion which has gone to all heads but his own. And the story of his most excellent speech. And the story of the man. The man called by some Mad Daddy. The man who lives in the middle of the forest.

And the story of Wall. Pause.

Silence. Pause

Puck's tail becomes a very slow and ghostly conga line.

[**DADD**]: Blackout. We hear voices in the dark. Not very nice voices. Strange lights and shapes. Pause.

Silence. Pause.

We do not believe what you have been saying, you changeling, you. Why should we believe you? We have our doubts. Yes it is true. We.... We do not ... do not know what a "bottom" is. But we do not think you do either. If I show you Bottom? We do not believe you are capable of showing us anything. The changelings light twin candles. Okay okay. They snap fingers twice and far far away we see Mad Daddy approach. The one who is to play Bottom. As he approaches, quietly, the two changelings. We were more than one in our trial life (*la vie essayee*). In our *primitive*. Only through the accounts of others have we come to know our unity. On the thread of our history as told by others, year by year, we have ended up resembling ourselves. We gather all our beings' radiance around the central unity of our name. Nicole. The demons confer in the dark. The man draweth nigh.

He stops. Returns to one of the puddles of

light through which he has passed. Ahem. We perceive a faint tremor. A faint tremor of fangs clacking. A tremor of clacking eyeteeth. A tremor of pointed ears. An almost imperceptible vibration of terrible tails and three-toed claws. On the 28th of August 1843, while under the power of Osiris, I stabbed to death a devil in the form of my father, whereupon I fled to France, and was apprehended there after once more attempting to rid this pleasant ball of earth of one more devil whereupon I was sent to Bedlam where I was confined for the remaining 42 years of my life.

I was frequently given opium and worked slowly on my picture, "The Fairy-Feller's Master Stroke", of which this moment is a partial and incomplete. Replica. I shall play Bottom, as this dream is my dream.

Puck. No need for opium here. Everything is a drug for the man who lives on the other side. Mad Daddy replies. The power of men's imagination is more powerful than all other drugs. Puck, how about if Obergammerau and Titanium play Pyramus and Thisbe. We will play the lion, jointly. Okay okay. Only who will play Wall? A man steps forth from the shadows. I am Ludwig Wittgenstein and I shall be enacting Wall, as the one who was to play that part one _____. One Josephine, has had a very serious accident. Puck. Fine fine. Let us, then, enact this three dimensional play in a forest that is the two-dimensional replica of the picture once painted by the mad man who sits just there. A mere social dot in the one-dimensional nest of his dementia. Who just sits there enacting nothing. The entire apparatus must be rotated from time to time in four-dimensional space. And if we participate in the enactment, are we to understand, that we will each be restored to

our proper world wheresoever each may properly reside? Pause.

Silence. Maybe. Pause. 'Sup to Mad Daddy. The picture is his picture. Okay okay. Let's begin the play. Only. Only what is the play called? The play is called. Called.

Ah.

Er.

The play shall be called Bottoms' Dream. Stop. Why? What's wrong? We do not understand what you are saying when you say "Bottom". Do you not remember? We have just finished telling you. Telling you in English and Finnish. Telling you that we do not know what a *Bottom* is, since all things in the forest are, *au fond*, bottomless. We do not believe you know what you are doing when you say what you say. We are beginning to have doubts. Serious doubts.

Okay. Okay They confer. The elves look about themselves and are bored and becoming irksome. Okay. Okay. The play shall be called. Called "The Lowest Part of Anything's Dream; or the Clue With Which We Wind Up Thread". The elves confer. One of the most slow-witted of these. Well, what's a 'clue'? A clue is like a spool. Like a spool? Yeah, like a spool. Like a spool or the same thing as a spool? They confer, realizing the gravity of the situation. The same thing as a spool. Elves grumble, but are quietened by Puck.

Puck. Let the theatrical machine open to reveal the play. The Fairy-Feller bops Theseus on the head, and the wondrous world of the play is revealed. Clouds and red velvet plush. Putti and an ornamental dragon with a tail of inordinate length. At the sight of this Mad Daddy rises to his feet with an astonished

gasp.

The changeling duet snaps fingers, and Titania and Oberon take the stage as Pyramus and Thisbe. As Pyramus and Thisbe they confer. One changeling. What's wrong? This floor is filthy. And there's a dangerous nail-head here. Who's the Equity Deputy? The Fairy-Feller strides manfully out to the spot. He and the shadows examine the offending nail-head. The Fairy-Feller lays down his axe, and hammers the nail-head with his shoe till it is once more flush to the floor. Pause. The briefest of brief Equity breaks. The other changeling, looking at her watch. Okay okay. We're back. Waits for actors. Elves to return. Okay. Okay, places. An equity pause. Oh, Pyramus. Oh, Pyramus, my love. Oh Thisbe. Oh, Thisbe, true heart. Hey, where's the Wall? Wall? Wall, where are you? Wall has been sitting to one side quietly reading his book. Yeah? Wall, you have to go on and stand between Pyramus and Thisbe. Pause. Why? Because you are playing the part of Wall. The Wall has the task of standing in between the thwarted lovers. Another equity pause. Why? If the lovers are thwarted why is wall even necessary? Probably it is the case that one of the lovers does not know how to tell the other that he no longer loves her. No. No no no. The rule of the play is that the wall is what comes between them. And as you must surely know a rule is that which one must follow in order to do a thing correctly. Dimmest Elf. I thought a rule was something to eat. Another elbows him. Okay, if that's what you want. Wall goes over and stands between. Yet another equity pause. Oh, Pyramus. Oh, Pyramus, my love. Oh, Thisbe. Oh, Thisbe, true heart.... Wall. Perhaps all human needs cannot be met. Perhaps we cannot live forever. Perhaps we cannot all....

Wall, yours is not a speaking part. Your rule is that you are a mute, dumb. Wall. A wall-type wall. A wall. A solid thing. Okay okay. But if I am a solid thing how do Pyramus and Thisbe talk through me? It does not seem believable to me that two lovers would try to express their love by talking through a wall. Haven't you read the Shakespeare version?

An anti-theatrical pause.

No, I find his images unconvincing. I can never rid myself of the suspicion that praising him has been the conventional thing to do.

Silence.

Shakespeare's similes are in the ordinary sense, bad. So if they are all the same good—and I don't know whether they are or not, they must be a law unto themselves. Perhaps they have the ring of truth, and this gives them plausibility. I don't know.

Another anti-theatrical silence.

My *failure* to understand him could then be explained by my inability to read him *easily*. That is, as one views a splendid piece of scenery.

General exasperation. Look, Wall, the lovers talk through the wall because there is a hole. A hole in the wall. Now you are telling me there is a hole in the wall. That is correct now we are telling you there is a hole in the wall. Look, my contract clearly stipulates that I am to play "Wall". There is nothing in this contract about playing both a wall and a hole in the wall. This violates a basic rule of things namely that a thing cannot both be and not be. The truth consists of everything that is the

case. The changelings confer. Elves grumble quietly and begin, singly, in pairs, and in small groups, to absent themselves from this felicity. The creatures begin to retreat deeper into the forest where such things cannot be.

Silence. Pause. Pause.

Okay. Have it your way. I shall play the hole in the wall. You shall play Wall. The Frilled Lizard shall play the lion all by herself.

What kind of hole are you? Are you an immaterial object or a superficial discontinuity? What possible difference does it make?

Puck. Does the practice determine each rule throughout the whole of your Anything's Dream?

Theseus. All that is needed to legitimize assertions that something means something is that there be roughly specifiable circumstances under which they are legitimately assertable, and that the game of asserting under such conditions has a role in our lives.

Wall, agreeing. We may speak without "justification" (*Rechtfertigung*); but not wrongfully (*zu unricht*). Changeling. Sometimes when *she* has a pain, it is *I* who feels it. This strikes me a deeply unfair. Hippolyta. One person in isolation cannot be said to be following or not following a rule. That's what they said to me when I was taken to Bedlam. Or is that what I said to them? Forty-two years in the bin has taken a toll on my poor wits.

Puck. Community means following common rules; insanity means following no rule. Like

the narrative of this crazy dream. The two girls rage (in silence) and thrash about on the floor. Realizing the spectacle they are making, they cut it short, and tidy themselves up. Wall. That's right. Agreement. Shared forms of life. If a lion could talk we would not know what it were saying.

Changelings ROAR.

Mad Daddy. Play's over! They play has just begun. When the lion roars, the play is over. Puck. But what? What does the play mean? Shadows settle in for the post-play discussion. What this play is all about is the deep deep deep structure of all rules. The dimmest elf. And what in the name of peaseblossom is that? Mad Daddy. A) The dragon's tail is always longer than it looks. B) There are more things in a closed box than in an open one. C) Great Pan is dead. Now the Greater Elves begin to retreat, as stealthily as possible.

But what about us? How are we to be restored to our respective domains? Pause.

Silence. Pause.

Mad Daddy reasons. If this play follows according to rule (and it must, mustn't it, being a play *qua* play?), order must already have been restored. One does not enact a bad play, even in the deepest of forests unless such a restoration has already come to pass. Puck. I would only suggest the problem may reside in your inappropriate observance of proper dress code. Puzzlement. If you two exchange costumes all will be as it was, or as it should seem. Or the other way around. Whichever. Where are you going? Wall is going somewhere.

Wall. *Juoksentilisinkohan*. Exit. Pause.

What. What did he say?

He spoke the appendix to these proceedings. And the appendix is. If these rules be difficult to fathom, to get to the bottom of. Consider the words of the wisest of all languages. The Finnish. Because the Finnish is to the bottom as the Bottom is to the finish. Elves. *Juoksentilisinkohan!* Which means?

Which means, I wonder if I should run around a little without a particular destination. The changeling duet do so, arm in arm, and disappear into the

night.

Puck. Now is time the crack open the hazelnut. Theseus shudders in terror.

The Fairy-Feller raises his axe.

Blackout.
A loud crack.

Lights up on scene as the cast enacts the complex *mise en scene* of Richard Dadd's painting, "The Fairy-Feller's Master Stroke", while he watches, off to one side, sitting on Wall's former stool. All sing a slow reprise of the French language song.

Pause.

Silence.

All go out leaving only the smallest, dimmest elf. He looks around and, quaveringly, sings

his own song.

Silence.

He glares and the audience, cursing under his breath and farting. One single demon knows more than all of you.

He goes out.

End of play.

Appendix A: Elfish *Songs* and Demonic *Lilts*

1) The Flizzard *Song*

Somebody nobody who? A wicked
metaphysician has
made a monkey out of me.

Somebody nobody who

All alone in the forest
I have been banished
vanished vanished vanished

Somebody nobody who

Look at me I am a frilled lizard
pretty girl become a frilled lizard
all on account of , well,
who knows?

—

All on account of well know knows?
Somebody nobody who

2) *Lilt*: On Rules

A rule is something
someone follows to do
what they are doing
when they are doing
what they are doing
correctly.

A rule is something to eat.

3) *Song*: The Rules of the French Language

Remember: The most important rule of the French (spoken):

Whatever is too silly to be spoken
whatever is too silly to
too silly to be spoken
too too silly
to be spoken
to be spoken is too silly too silly
is NOT
is NOT
is NOT
too silly to be sung (so sing it!)
too silly to be spoken is not
too silly to be sung
too silly to be sung (so just sing it!)

4) The Hazelnut *Lilt*

So. I put the hazelnut in
the box and did as I was told.
All around were eyes and strange cries.
Did as I was told; for I was bold.

When you eat lunch with a devil
you must use a very long spoon.
The same holds true of elves.
Don't expect me back too soon.

I said to my friends at college
Every time I approach the mad man
of the woods he would get up and go.
He would just get up and go.

For the rule of the woods seems to be

when you come too close just go.

—

That is also the rule of selling your soul.
When you come too close just go.

That is the rule of coming closer.
That is the rule of selling your soul.

The closer you come the further it is.
Rule are holes with a lot of ways in;

And no way out (spoken).

5) *Lilt*: X and Y and the Arrow

X in case of Fire, please,
O please use the stairs
unless otherwise instructed;
O Y oh Y, unless otherwise
instructed, if these be obstructed
But in all cases, please, the rule
is: Follow the Arrow, follow
the Arrow even if it lead
far, far afield of your aim.

—

Follow the Arrow Follow the Arrow
(For the Arrow leads, inevitably,
from X to Y {especially in case of
fire [and with utmost certainty
in cases of fire from below]}). Oh ...

Oh?

Is that all you can muster?

Oh, like oh.

6) The Getting Around in Hell *Song*

Roll, roll, roll yourself up
up into the roundest kind of ball.
This is a round, round song
about getting around in hell.

Roll, roll, roll yourself up,
up into the roundest ball;
this is round round song
about getting around in hell

Because hell is all around.

Hell is the place where having a ball
is a helluva

—

Is a helluva is a helluva

—

helluva what
helluva what
forgot what
forgot what I was saying
forgot what I was saying
forgot because I was staying
forever forever wound up in a ball
in hell forever wound up
forever wound up in a ball
in hell hell

7) *Song* of the Dimmest Elf

Someone has to be last;
has to, just has to;
someone has to be last;
has to, just has to.

Someone has to be best, but
someone has to be dimmest;
and All we amount to,
even the best, when,

in the fullness of time
we come to our final rest,
is dust.

—

Someone has to be last, etc.