

THE DEMON TWIN

OVERTURE

One of the most tragic / stories of human de / formity is that of / Edward Mordake, said to / have been heir to one of / the noblest peerages / in England. He never / claimed the title. He was / a man of fine attain / ments, a profound scholar / and musician of rare / ability. His fig / ure was remark able / for its grace, and his face / That is to say, his nat / ural face--was that of / an Antinous. But up / on the back of his head / was another face, that / of a beautiful girl, / 'lovely as a dream, ug / ly as a devil.'

She would often sneer, e / ven if Mordake whisper / ed something to himself / or remained silent, hid / den in musical scores / or poring over mem / oirs. His "devil twin," as / he called the second face, / "never sleeps, but talks to / me forever of such / things as they speak of on / ly in hell."

A Peer's quarters in Victorian England. Suspended from the ceiling down to stage eye height is the frame for a picture mirror. (maybe actually a movable projection surface that can be used in multiple ways) A crest with a two-headed lion bearing a shield is mounted on the rear wall.

As EDVARD sings, he is locked intently on the Crest. Throughout the scene, we hear a low snarling of vocoder lion.

EDVARD

Panthera Leo.
Central device of the Mordake Crest.

Many crests depict Panthera Leo:
clawing, prowling,
leaping, snarling, Panthera Leo.

Panthera Leo, Man's construct
of wishful mirrors.

The vocoder snarling grows louder.

Quiet!

* STRENGTH: see Panthera Leo's
association with Herakles.

MORDAKE

* VIRILITY: see Panthera Leo's
harem of golden lionesses.

* NOBILITY: see Panthera Leo's
gilded mane crowning his face.

All which combine to represent
ideal man. The father's face.

*EDVARD finds himself before the mirror. As he stands there, his face begins to
morph. He shakes his head vigorously and it stabilizes.*

In the face of Paradiso,
one must imagine Inferno.
Hell, I think, is a head
that misreads our every deed.

The vocoder snarling grows louder.

Silence!

FACT: I have been to the menagerie
and I have wondered at Man, that he
should rise above the animal rabble
like the tower of Babel.

Nimrud, a hunter, slayer of fauna,
betrayed by the slaving maw.
The Other mouth brought him low.

Yet, Man can triumph still.
Redraft his fate. Quell
the babble that roars for his soul.

The vocoder snarling grows louder.

Quiet!

A head is Hell, and torment
is the whispered twisting of every deed.

The Other mouth brings us low.
Man will triumph still.

MORDAKE

Redraft fate. Silence
the mouth that roars for his soul.

BRIGIT

Us brings us low.
The Other is a twisted mouth!
Hell ahead, and torment.

EDVARD

Silence!

BRIGIT

Man's will is hunger.
And I am hollow.
Hollow! Hollow!
Won't you feed me?

EDVARD

Will you be still!
Will you be still!

BRIGIT

I will still be!
Always here.

EDVARD

Not after tonight.

BRIGIT

Tonight will become tomorrow,
and soon yesterday.
The same! The same!

EDVARD

Not after tonight.

BRIGIT

You say that each night!
You hunger for it.

EDVARD

Devil, it isn't hunger.
It's pure! It's pure!

There is a knock and a prerecorded voice of a manservant.

MORDAKE

MANSERVANT

Supper, sir.
Your food. It's near evening.
I have brought your supper, sir.

Mordake, sir?
To whom are you speaking?
Have I missed a visitor?

EDVARD

No, no visitor.
I am simply reciting
a play!

MANSERVANT

Sir, you are sure?

EDVARD

Sure? Of course I am sure.
Leave my supper! I am merely reading.

MANSERVANT

Very well, sir.

The vocoder growling grows louder

BRIGIT

The food! Fetch it now!
Are you not hungry yet?

EDVARD

Silence!

*As EDVARD sings, the stage fills with images of demons
(1) a Medieval demon (2) Iblis (3) Lucifer (4) Tlaltecuhli.*

Exorcism has been practiced
by men of the West
and Orientals of the East.
The learned clergyman
and the canny shaman
have long cast demons
out the flesh of man.

MORDAKE

*As EDVARD sings, he produces a sword, and begins to slay the demons one by one.
The blood runs all over the stage.*

Demons are distortions
of Man. Flawed creations.
Man can only seek perfection
once free of the demons.

BRIGIT

I am no demon.

EDVARD

You are a devil!

The Mordake Crest has a shield device
borne by Panthera Leo; a motif
from Christendom. The checky field,
silver for purity, black for—

BRIGIT

The lion has two heads.

EDVARD reaches up and scratches off the backward facing head.

EDVARD

Black for misfortune!

BRIGIT

Go get our supper!
Why make me suffer?

EDVARD

You can't eat.

BRIGIT

Why won't you let me have a tiny taste?

EDVARD

You can't eat.

BRIGIT

I seem to recall you claiming:
“Nobility.” It's ignoble
to treat me this way! Let me out:
I'll look at it. Just look!

MORDAKE

EDVARD

I suppose there's no harm.

EDVARD begins to undo the BRIGIT's covering.

BRIGIT

Please hurry, brother. Hurry!

As EDVARD loosens the last clasp on the covering he steps carefully into the hall. We hear this from offstage. EDVARD wants them to speak in hushed tones, BRIGIT in her initial excitement speaks more loudly.

EDVARD

Steak and chicken!
Lamb and pheasant!
Such delights on your plates!

EDVARD

Quiet.

BRIGIT

Dear, greedy Edvard!
Still full from breakfasting?

EDVARD

Sister!

BRIGIT

You've eaten so much.
Poor, poor Edvard.
You've eaten so much.

EDVARD

You lie!

BRIGIT

(screams)
You monster!

At this commotion, the MANSERVANT comes running (still offstage).

MANSERVANT

Mordake, sir. I heard a scream—!

EDVARD

Don't look at me!

MORDAKE

MANSERVANT

Oh my God—
a monster!

BRIGIT

He's seen you, Edvard!
What will you do?!

There is a clattering of dishes and the sound of a whip and then a struggle. EDVARD wounds the MANSERVANT and stumbles back into the room holding the scourge and trying to cover BRIGIT.

EDVARD

What have I done?
Devil! What have you done?

BRIGIT

What have I done? Edvard!
What have YOU done.
You murdered that man!

EDVARD

It was you! You guided
my hand. Is he alive?

BRIGIT

Is he alive?

Oh, mighty Panthera Leo!
Strength and virility!
Roooooar!!!

EDVARD

This is the fault of my affliction!
A cure will make everything right.
The doctor must come soon!

BRIGIT

Of course, he must!
What will he say?

EDVARD

Man must triumph, demon!

MORDAKE

Exorcism has been practiced
by men of the West—

BRIGIT

Murder has been practiced, too!
Practiced to perfection.

EDVARD

Silence!
I'm no murderer! I'm a man
in the thrall of a demon.
The Other mouth brought me low.

But Man shall be victorious!

What did the doctor tell me before?
Theological, phrenological, surgical.
These are the roads that lead to a cure.

EDVARD finds himself before the mirror.

Paradiso is a head
with one voice, glad
and divine; speaking
only truths, singing
only truths, glad and divine.

EDVARD's face becomes lined with phrenological demarcations.

The head is crown to the soul
and must reflect its perfection.
I suffer from a great affliction
thus am marked by this distortion.
I can be made pure. The doctor says it's so.

I'm a man in the thrall of a demon.
I'm a man in the thrall of a demon.

The snarling gets louder.

EDVARD

Quiet!

The demon can be exorcised,

MORDAKE

but not by prayer alone!
The doctor undoes what has been done.

The head is crown to the soul
and must reflect its perfection.
The doctor undoes what has been done.

BRIGIT

Call your doctor, see what he'll do
when he finds your servant hacked near in two.
Maybe the sawbones can heal him, too.

EDVARD

The doctor undoes what has been done!
He is a master philosopher, healer, a genius.

EDVARD runs to the window and throws it open and calls out:

Doctor! Doctor! You promised a cure!
Godspeed—

BRIGIT

—just ignore what you find by the door.

EDVARD ignores BRIGIT as he begins making himself more presentable. He attempts to brush off the blood. It doesn't come off, still he looks rather satisfied and sits. He then runs back to his window.

EDVARD

The doctor is here!
He promised a cure!

BRIGIT

I hear him at your chamber door!

EDVARD

Come in, doctor!

EDVARD sits at the desk and picks up the DOCTOR puppet. EDVARD makes the DOCTOR's voice; he is clearly playing both roles.

DOCTOR

Good day, Edvard, sir.

EDVARD

And to you, good doctor.

MORDAKE

Have you found a cure?

DOCTOR

Your affliction mars your
spirit, mind and your body.

Your cure, a trinity of purity.

Theological, phrenological, surgical.

EDVARD

Theological, phrenological, surgical?
Spirit, mind and body.

DOCTOR

You must pray, Edvard.

EDVARD kneels.

BRIGIT

Spirit, mind and body, Doctor?
Did you mind the body in the hallway?
The body Eddie turned into a spirit?

EDVARD

Sister!

EDVARD slams the DOCTOR puppet back to the table.

BRIGIT

You killed us all, mighty lion!
You remember what you have done?

EDVARD

I've done nothing! It was you!
Just as before, corrupting maw:
at the Tower and in this hall!

Must all my nights be so beset,
when may I rest?

BRIGIT

Once there was a boy
who ate his family.

He began with his sister,

MORDAKE

while still in their mother—

EDVARD

Quiet!

BRIGIT

He said to her in a low whisper,
Sister, I have a secret.
Sister, I have a secret.

EDVARD

You will be silent!

BRIGIT

When she came near to hear it
he bit off her ear and ate it!

That was your breakfast, Edvard.
All those years ago!
Are you still full, Edvard?
Inferno for murderers!

EDVARD

Oh, you will speak of Hell again!

BRIGIT

You killed me before I could be baptized.
I've seen Hell with my own eyes!
Sinners caught on fiery hooks,
No water for thirst, no food for hunger
and more devils than stars in the night—

EDVARD

Stars in the night, this time, sister?
I thought it was “more devils than birds
in the sky.” Or “more devils than sand
in the desert.”

BRIGIT

Shut up, Edvard!

EDVARD (LAUGHING)

MORDAKE

Or my favorite: “More devils than apes
in the Congo.” Your poetry improves with every tirade.

Come, it’s sunset.

*EDVARD moves a chair so that it faces away from the window. He undoes the clasps
on his “hood.”*

BRIGIT

It’s beautiful.

EDVARD

You always say that.

BRIGIT

Was Mother beautiful?

EDVARD

You know I never saw her!

BRIGIT

You’re sure, you’ve never
seen a portrait of her?

EDVARD

Father destroyed them.
I’ve told you before.

BRIGIT

Edvard. Am I beautiful?

EDVARD

Sister...

BRIGIT

I must look like Mother,
I’m the daughter.
I should look like her.

EDVARD

Brigit.

BRIGIT

Face me toward the mirror,

MORDAKE

I want to see Mother.

EDVARD doesn't move.

BRIGIT

Go to the mirror, Edvard,
we can see Mother!
And I'll bet you look like Father!

EDVARD

No! I look nothing like him!
He was a gilded lion.
You've made me a monster.
Someone too shameful to look upon.

BRIGIT

Edvard!

EDVARD

How dare you claim to look like my Mother!
She was an angel! You devil!
Devil! Know what you've done to her!
Do you know what you did to your Mother?!

BRIGIT

Edvard!

EDVARD

Look upon your Father!

EDVARD stands up and walks over to the image of the Crest. He turns so that BRIGIT faces it and he faces the audience.

EDVARD

That is your Father! Panthera Leo!
Tearing and Roaring!
That is your Father!
Don't you remember!
He locked me in here,
you made me a monster!

MORDAKE

BRIGIT

You shouldn't have done those things—
Father died, you're a monster!
Father was undone
by what you have done.

EDVARD

Then best we be undone
just like him.

EDVARD sweeps all the objects from the table with his arm.

BRIGIT

What are you doing?

Brother, what are you doing?

Setting the table? Are you hungry at last?

EDVARD picks up the bloody knife.

BRIGIT

Oh, poor, poor Eddie.
There are no servants left to slaughter.

EDVARD studies the leather handle of the scourge.

BRIGIT

I know! You could lash
the devil from your flesh!
Whip! Whip! Whip!

EDVARD places the scourge on the table.

BRIGIT

Edvard! Say something!
Talk to me! God damn you.
You've taken everything.
Don't take your voice from me.
Please...

EDVARD

We will be undone, sister.
There's only one way.
What did the Doctor say?

MORDAKE

Theological, phrenological, surgical.

BRIGIT

There was no Doctor,
no more games!
You've killed your man!
Now you'll murder us both.

EDVARD

You're already dead, oh my demon,
and I must be reborn.
Father was right to put me here,
in this house. This house
is like a box. This is where
I've belonged. I finally under-
stand what Father wanted me
to learn.

EDVARD opens the lid of the Victrola box. Music wafts from it. He pulls out a dollhouse and places it on the table.

EDVARD

You say I take.
Here sister, is a gift.
It's what father gave to me.
It's a house for his daughter.

BRIGIT

A gift from father?
A gift for his daughter?
You took it from me!
Thieves get their hands lopped off
and tossed to feed the dogs.
And murderers get the noose.
Their faces eaten by the crows
that light upon their shoulder bones.

As BRIGIT continues, EDVARD lays the dagger and scourge down at the table. EDVARD pulls out large medical books. He takes a large image of the "phrenological head" and tacks it to the mirror frame. He grabs a large pitcher of water and prays over it.

BRIGIT

The slaving maw that brings you low

MORDAKE

is the gory mouth of the dog and crow.

EDVARD

Theological, phrenological, surgical—
Theological, phrenological, surgical—

EDVARD raises the knife.

BRIGIT

Edvard, please. Don't.

EDVARD

Brigit, sister:

EDVARD turns toward the sunset, revealing the face to the audience for the first time.

I'm looking at the sunset.
You are right.
It is beautiful.

BRIGIT

Once there was a boy
who ate his family.

He started with his sister,
while still in the mother.

He said to her in a low whisper,
Sister, I have a secret.

When she came near to hear it
he bit off her ear and ate it.

EDVARD takes the scourge handle and places it lengthwise in his mouth. He bites down on it.

BRIGIT

And when she tried to scream
he bit off her throat.

EDVARD stares intently at the phrenological image.

When she tried to fight,
he bit off her arms.

MORDAKE

He begins to cut very slowly across his hairline, starting at his left ear. Blood begins to come down his face. He is in great pain as he does this. Almost every inch that he cuts, he pours water on the spot.

BRIGIT

When she turned away,
he bit off her spine.
And when she tried to run,
he bit off her legs.

And when she was no more
than a bodyless face,
“Why?” was all that she could say.
And he swallowed her face, whole.

When he finished his twin,
he began on his mother.
He had such a hunger
he ate her while he was in.

When he finished his mama
he began on his father
but pa was much larger
so it took him much longer!

EDVARD doesn't appear to stop. He lets the scourge handle drop from his mouth and continues to cut, perhaps even more urgently.

EDVARD

Father, you taught me
to cut off the shame.
Even when the shame
is your own flesh.

We can be perfect
remove our blame,
slice of the blame
like wicked flesh.

BRIGIT

Do you hear the corridor, full of crows?
The corridor is full of crows, Edvard.

MORDAKE

A murder of them. A murder.

EDVARD continues to cut, the spotlight begins to dim.

EDVARD

I've got the Devil on the run!
I am nearly free!

cut to darkness.

We hear the audio of a couple just after giving birth—it's the mid-19th century. A male baby cries and the first-time parents, British and affluent speak to a doctor.

EDVARD'S MOTHER

I want to see him
I want to see my baby
I want my baby
I want to hold him

Why can't I see him
Why can't I hold him
What has happened
I don't feel anything

Why can't I see him
I want to hold him
Tell me what has happened
Show me my son!

A single spot instantly lights EDVARD who sits at the table, his face is covered in blood which drips from his chin onto the table. He stares directly at the audience. There is blood all over the dollhouse and dim eyes peer out from the windows. Edvard sings toward the dollhouse occasionally.

EDVARD

My sister, my devil:
I've sundered foul Inferno
from Paradiso,
and now I hear the calls
of the hungry crows.

I hear your crows
in the bloody halls
of this house.
I hear the dinner bell.

MORDAKE

I sit at the table.

I have had my fill of you.
My sister, my devil:
I've had my fill.
What is left for the crows.
What is left but me?

I hunger for nothing,
My head is still
I hunger for nothing
of Heaven nor Hell.

EDVARD begins to stand up, slowly. He is getting weaker as the blood pours from his head. He pulls the crest down and looks at it.

Panthera Leo.
Often associated with the sun.
The golden mane.

He drops the crest to the floor. He shambles over to the window and looks outside.

The sun. Beautiful.
And the moon. The same
sky. Sunset. The sky, so
red. All that blood
in the same sky. Oh—!

EDVARD takes the chair and brings it to face the mirror. He sets his hand upon the dollhouse, stroking it tenderly but with growing absence. In the chair, facing away from the audience, EDVARD exposes his head to the audience, the back of his skull is bleeding as though the skin has been removed.

So many voices—

Images of BRIGIT then the family bleed from it. The blood and images begin to mix and flow over the Mordake family crest.

Thirsty—

EDVARD slumps slowly into his chair. The snarling gets louder. Then gets quiet, almost imperceptible as the stage goes dark.