

SOME THINGS CEASE TO BE WHILE OTHERS STILL ARE

**A LECTURE
or
A MEMORY**

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*"Only man dies. The animal perishes. It has death neither ahead of itself or behind it."
-Martin Heidegger*

PERSONS + CREATURES

Voice of the White Horse

Kings

Knut

Alfred

Harold

Rollo

The ghost of William the Conqueror

Mathilde

Various beasts at the windows: birds and dogs, a horse, and all the mice in Tilgland

NOTE

This can be performed by puppets or actors, but if it is performed by actors they should take as their expressive ideal the puppet. That is, a being with only one or two moving parts and a wooden head that is nonetheless possibly quite beautiful and even the object of both sympathy and fear. It's a play made out of simple elements, it asks for a treatment where things are things, mystery is thinglike, and everything is on the surface. Insofar as there are kings of England, they are pre-Domesday and more Norse in temperament than anything else.

SETTINGS

(1) A banquet hall in Tilgland. The hall is filled with anathemata (hanging from the ceiling, in the most ancient sense of the word) capable of disappearing two by two (or so) when their cue "cease to be" is called and even when the cue ceases to be called.

(2) the roof of the banquet hall

(3) A field of flowers in a high heathery heath sort of way.

SCENE ONE

Overlooking a banquet hall in Tilgland

Elegant and formal opening music

VOICE

Kings of England never learned anything.
Kings of England never learned anything.
Nothing but to let it hang there.
Repeat for a very long time.

Kings of England in Tilgland
Will love you if you let them.
and mushroom like a field of mushrooms
like a mushroom: easy words.
Be happy be easy with this.

One is not the Kings of England
They are all the Kings of England

That's the love of the Kings of England.
That's a love you won't renounce.

SCENE TWO

A banquet hall in Tilgland

ALFRED

Friends
fellow kings of England
The monsters of our imaginations
have unfortunately manifest
and are at the gate.

Animals are banished from this place.
On that you have my deepest assurances.
Rollo Alfred Harold Knut

KNUT

No.

HAROLD

Quiet, Knut

ALFRED

Quiet, Harold

HAROLD

Quiet, Alfred

VOICE

Some things cease to be while others still are.

ROLLO

Love suffers from understanding
and leaves, then no longer is, it ceases to be.

HAROLD sings

Love is a dog, which is banished
Love is a horse, which is banished
Love is a mole, which is banished

MATHILDE

Love is a dog, which is banished
Love is a horse, which is banished
Love is a mole, which is banished

the noise of dogs at the gates.

KINGS OF ENGLAND:

Banished!

disappearance of all dogs.
a sudden elegiac sound
while everyone mourns the banishment of dogs.

SCENE THREE

light on a tree outside the hall

VOICE

Kings of England should die well.
And never suffer explanation.
nor manifest more than what's worth.

this is all new.
to recognize what problems are left
it can follow no preset form
if there is prediction now
it is a false one

MATHILDE sings

Love is a hole, which is vanished
Love is a hole, which is vanished
Love is a mole, which is banished

SCENE FOUR

A banquet hall in Tilgland

KNUT:

I will be Edward

HAROLD

No I will be Edward

ALFRED

We can all be Edward, there are enough.

VOICE

Everyone is Edward.

ROLLO

Some of us may even have to double.

HAROLD

We have given up on standing

We cannot give up on Edward.

VOICE

Some things cease to be while others still are.

ALFRED

We have given up on standing

but we have not and could not ever give up on Edward.

VOICE

Some things cease to be while others still are.

ALFRED

Alright Edwards: why was the horse put there?

HAROLD

The horse was always there.

ROLLO

No, the horse was always there only in the lesser sense of always.

ALFRED

Right. So why was the horse put there?

KNUT

The horse was put there for a purpose, but the purpose got the better of the horse.

ALFRED

Good. And what is the horse to Edwards?

ROLLO

To Edwards, the horse is not a horse.

ALFRED

Good, the horse is not a horse. What is it then?

HAROLD

The horse is not really a horse it is the figure of a horse, and so if anything an expression of mastery over horses or purposes.

ALFRED

Good, the horse is not a horse then and most importantly what does it not do?

KNUT

It does not do literature or prophecy.

ALFRED

Good. It means nothing. And why does it mean nothing?

KNUT

Because it says nothing.

ALFRED

Yes, because it says nothing. It says nothing because it cannot say anything. And yet the horse must stay. Why must the horse stay?

KNUT

Because it was already there.

ALFRED

No. Why must the horse stay, Rollo?

ROLLO

Because if it was made to leave it might come back?

ALFRED

Yes. It might come back.

ROLLO

And the return of a horse; what if it wasn't authorized?

KNUT

What if it wasn't authored?

ALFRED

Impossible. Exactly.

ROLLO

For the love of Edwards we must be sure this never happens.

ALFRED

Good. Yes. Why?

HAROLD

Because animals are banished.

ALFRED

Good Harold. Yes. Why? Because animals are banished.

HAROLD

Oh.

ROLLO

Have you seen the horse?

ALFRED

Of course I've seen the horse.

KNUT

Have you seen the horse?

HAROLD

I saw it on my way down from York.

ROLLO

Nothing good came of it then.

HAROLD

No. Nothing good came of it.

THE GHOST OF WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR appears and sings

GHOST OF WILLIAM

Loving is falling down.

Loving is falling down

Loving is falling down, down,

Loving is like a crown

Loving is like a ghost

*Loving is like a ghost
Loving is like a ghost, ghost
Loving will kill the host*

*Loving is falling down.
Loving is falling down.
Loving is falling down
Killing yourself as a noun
Killing yourself as a noun*

VOICE

Some things cease to be while other still are.

SCENE FIVE

The sky above Tilgland, wires, cables, mechanics of the place all visible

VOICE

Always there is the noise of destruction and trucks
Music plays out of grey holes
Dogs are strewn across the beds
Red berries thump each other in the breeze
while across the way the tree leaves do it better.
A blue van is still, clearing the air for
indiscernible instructions in an empty warehouse.
And wooden slats move laterally under your nose.
What time is it? What is that beeping?
What is that dark spot on the wall?
What is that constant grinding sound?
Who is walking with his head turned to the side?
Long shadows because the time keeps changing.
The food went rotten
while the water shivered in its glass.
and fingers move tap tap tap
like moles in the dark, which are banished.
What could have become of all your sympathy?
What could have destroyed it whole cloth?
And where is the whole cloth district in a town
where dwelling rams merchants out of the way
and climbs skyward at great expense?
The dog is strewn across the furniture.
Breathing and much like an anvil that breathes.
Snoring and much like a sudden coincidence:
two doors open, two doors close
engines start and beep and shuttle off
down the street and into the vortex.

Where is the party?
Where is the one point?
This is the culmination of what has been up to now—
many stranded, always beeping.
The door is opening: noises sing open.

SCENE SIX

Looking down from the roof of the banquet hall, Mathilde gazes out beyond the gates of the enclosure. She throws a piece of meat over the wall. Sound of two beasts tearing each other apart. It begins to rain. A mushroom grows and overshadows the wall, so that it becomes a natural umbrella for Mathilde.

SCENE SEVEN

A banquet hall in Tilgland

HAROLD

Fellow kings. I am ready to make my speech.

Eloquence could never belong to animals. How could it? They sleep through so many hours of the day. Yet for many years I thought it was so. I discerned a set of signs in the behavior of animals. I was sympathetic. I saw prophecy in their appearance. I saw intent in their acts. And what is more, I considered myself able to *read* them, and this special literacy I took to be kingship.

I was in York. I said, let it be known. Harold Godwinson has been spoken to by the speech of beasts. Harold Godwinson, by right of kingship, is able to read the creatures as cosmical weathervanes.

All that was groundless. My interpretations were disastrous. I have been considering this since I came to Tilgland: I renounce all animal counsel.

ALFRED

Hear hear.

ROLLO + KNUT

Hear hear.

HAROLD

Never again to read the appearance of the beast.

ROLLO + KNUT

Hear hear.

HAROLD

No faith. No trust. No eye. No ear.

ALFRED

Hear hear.

At the windows, the faces of many dogs look in questioningly.

HAROLD

I'm ready to hear the lecture now.

ALFRED

Good, Harold. So are we all, I think. Good.

Harold was a total failure of a king. The worst sort of king. He kept a flimsy watch, reading signs into anything, into everything at hand. At a loss for systems, he makes an astrology of the military arts, and strategizes based on the appearance of birds. He wants to feel things out, to sense it. But he cannot reproduce victory from one to the next, from York to Hastings; made king in December, he's dead by October.

Fine beginnings end disastrously. He governs by appearances. His literacy is losing. A false action, a fraudulent idea spun out while the shield wall breaks. And in rotten French tones under a broken wall, all of Hastings heard it: "Now I have taken hold of England." Your opponent enters with a nose full of sand, and still he defeats you.

Inglority, inglority. Inglority kings. So what if an owl appears three times? So what if a tree looks like another one? There is nothing to be read; there is nothing to be said.

ROLLO + KNUT

Hear hear.

HAROLD

Hear hear.

SCENE EIGHT

A garden in Tilgland

Mathilde sits outside with an elaborate chart, checking positions of various landmarks as the stars appear. A dog comes to her and sits by her side. It starts barking. She looks up, and Halley's comet passes overhead. She pets the dog and adds the comets passing to her chart, which also involves taking a reading of the air temperature, her own temperature, and a pitch off a tuning fork.

SCENE NINE

Next to a window on the side of a building in Tilgland

VOICE

Window lights window.
Whistles lower and lower.
But how many kings of England can be named?

Bad faith is parceled and sent round to everyone.
Discreet notification is sent round too.
As is heartbreak, as is joy.
As are terrible diseases;
this is no problem.

Nothing stops beeping, it only disappears
out of time with itself.
Didn't you sense it there?
Didn't you think about it?
Don't think on bombers
or machines that break sound waves
Don't make fake birds
Don't stare across the way
into lighted windows that light windows
curtained windows.

Criticize what you can't hear.

And swinging endlessly, groundlessly, underneath?
The rounded noise of cars. They tunnel.
and if you could make that sound?
and reproduce it?
No: replication ended its days
early in the series
due to poor attendance
due to poor intentions
and on on and on
and on and on
and on on and on
never the same word twice.

Through the window

ALFRED

no. no.

ROLLO

no

HAROLD

no.

KNUT

no. no... no.

ALFRED

no

KNUT

no.

no.

HAROLD

no

ALFRED

no

HAROLD

no

KNUT

no

no

no

ROLLO

no

ALFRED

no

ROLLO

no

ALFRED + ROLLO + HAROLD

no

no

HAROLD

no

KNUT

no

HAROLD

no

ALFRED

no. no.

ROLLO

no

ALFRED + ROLLO

no

HAROLD + KNUT

no. no.

KNUT

no.

HAROLD

no.

KNUT

no

HAROLD

no.

no.

KNUT + ROLLO

no. no no no.

ALFRED

no

KNUT

oh

ALFRED + ROLLO

no

HAROLD + KNUT

no. no.

ALFRED + ROLLO

no

HAROLD + KNUT

no. no.

ALFRED + ROLLO

no

HAROLD + KNUT

no. no.

ALFRED + ROLLO

no

HAROLD + KNUT

no. no.

ALFRED + ROLLO

no

HAROLD + KNUT

no. no.

ROLLO

No.

KNUT

Oh--

ALFRED

No. No.

KNUT

Oh I think I--

HAROLD

No.

HAROLD + ROLLO

No. No. No.

KNUT

I think I feel sick.

ALFRED

Don't think!

ROLLO + HAROLD

No.

No.

No.

ALFRED + ROLLO + HAROLD

No.

No.

No.

KNUT

I think I feel sick.

ALFRED + ROLLO + HAROLD

No.

No.

No.

ALFRED

Don't think!

ROLLO

No.

HAROLD

I think I feel sick too.

ROLLO

Yes. Yes. Yes.

ROLLO

No.

ALFRED + ROLLO

No.

KNUT

Oh--

Knut doubles over in pain. Knut gives birth to a monster of his imagination. It is hairy and strange. It makes a terrible noise and smashes out of the room, breaking the window. Mathilde comes to the window and reads a letter.

MATHILDE

Dear Kings of England.

It is so dark and I can barely keep my eyes open.

and every noise makes me think you are in the room

are you near, is anyone near?

Something should appear

in some forgotten corner.

Noises mushroom and threaten.

No eyes are open for this.

But ears are unshuttable.

They criss cross there to here here to there:

ghosts crackling wood and prop planes landing

go bump into the valley at night.

Noises are natural. Natural is always.

Always is false. False natures.

SCENE TEN

on the roof of the banquet hall

HAROLD appears dressed as a woman. Halley's comet slowly moves back into the sky and pauses over his head. He speaks to the comet.

HAROLD

I concede that it's only chalk dust I can really get behind.

Or more exactly, a horse on the side of the hill
a chalk horse
I think if I were to go on living I would tend that shrine
er
a white chalk horse
for we are all made of dust, etcetera.
the lady who tends the horse- the penitent- knows this

I know this.

I have been counseled to look upon all this without sadness
and cautioned on all the vainglory and so on.
the moon is chalk when it passes and the comet is chalk
passing in the other direction
some kind of silent motion
or kind of pointless motion
or rather motion is fundamentally pointless

hey look, a bird.

the comet tilts as if to change focus

I concede that chalk dust finally has to be the book
or something like "no fate or organizing hand"
er
the book of life
that sounds stupid

a sprinkle of stars-- a shooting star shower

no signs
even comets are made of chalk dust and so are not signs

the comet tilts as if to question this

even comets are made of chalk dust and are not signs

the comet leaves slowly, abashed

SCENE ELEVEN

*A banquet hall in Tilgland
Mathilde performs for the kings*

**MATHILDE holding a bouquet of lettuce and other greens,
sings, accompanied by a horse and a tree.**

*When at last I gathered
all that I could find
I put it all together
and made a heap of what's mine.*

*A heap of all I could find
I lay down inside
On all that I could find
I lay down to die.*

*When it had been gathered
I looked at what I had found
I twirled the sticks together
and fire spread over the ground*

*All things alive
must now lay down and die
All things alive
lay you down and die*

*All the beasts around me
They lay down and died
When the creatures found me
Cold from out to inside.*

*All things that are mine
Must now lay down and die
All things that are mine
Lay you down and die.*

*The world is not unkind
The world's not full of spite
When I lay me down
I'll have you at my side*

*Nothing falls from time
Nothing falls from line
So I lay my body on
A heap of all that's mine*

*And when the weeds had overgrown
My body and my pride*

*The squirrel took all I lay upon
The squirrel said now it's mine.*

*The squirrel lay down and died
The tree looked on and cried
The mole from far inside
He lay down and died.*

*They all lay down and died
They all lay down and died
If you lay down beside me
We may last the night.*

*They all lay down and died
They all lay down and died
The world is not unkind
The world's not full of spite*

VOICE

we cannot do what we try to do
we cannot try but just must do
we cannot do what is in mind
we cannot mind what we do
we cannot think ahead to what will be done
we should not think back on anything that was done
we cannot do what we try to do
we cannot try but just must do

ALFRED

planning will be stopped dead in its tracks.

KINGS of ENGLAND

Hear hear!

VOICE

kings of England don't do anything
kings of England won't do anything
kings of England won't try anything
kings of England only ending.
kings of England listening.
unpublished, unpublic.
unapproached, unreminded
kings of England all are ending.

engines engine by turning
alarms transgress the sacred space of bonnets and hoods
the sound waves the rattle of trucks the failure of alarms
every day alarms do nothing
who will take notice?

will you refuse and renounce them?
and noise noises daily
noises hours every day.
we must start ignoring noises
we must start ignoring creatures
we must start ignoring beasts
we must begin what is proper
we must begin what is proper
we must begin what is right to do
we must enter into agreement.
we must stop this now.

KINGS OF ENGLAND
RENOUNCE!

HAROLD
I forsake animals

KINGS OF ENGLAND
Renounce!

HAROLD
I am through with animals

KINGS OF ENGLAND
Renounce!

HAROLD
I deny animals

KINGS OF ENGLAND
Renounce!

HAROLD
I renounce animals.

VOICE
Some things cease to be while others still are.

KINGS OF ENGLAND
RENOUNCE!

HAROLD
I forsake animals

KINGS OF ENGLAND
Renounce!

HAROLD

I reject all animals

VOICE

Some things cease to be while others still are.

KINGS OF ENGLAND

Renounce!

HAROLD

I deny animals

KINGS OF ENGLAND

Renounce!

HAROLD

I am deaf to animals.

KINGS OF ENGLAND

RENOUNCE!

HAROLD

I abandon animals

VOICE

Some things cease to be while others still are.

KINGS OF ENGLAND

Renounce!

HAROLD

I denounce all animals

KINGS OF ENGLAND

Renounce!

HAROLD

I refuse animals

KINGS OF ENGLAND

Renounce!

HAROLD

I am blind to animals.

KINGS OF ENGLAND

RENOUNCE!

HAROLD

I forsake all animals

VOICE

Some things cease to be while others still are.

KINGS OF ENGLAND

Renounce!

HAROLD

I forget all animals

KINGS OF ENGLAND

Renounce!

HAROLD

I ignore all animals

KINGS OF ENGLAND

Renounce!

HAROLD

I relinquish animals.

KINGS OF ENGLAND

RENOUNCE!

VOICE

Some things cease to be while others still are.

HAROLD

I forsake animals

KINGS OF ENGLAND

Renounce!

HAROLD

I abandon animals

KINGS OF ENGLAND

Renounce!

HAROLD

I forget all animals. I have forgotten them already.

VOICE

Some things cease to be while others still are.

KINGS OF ENGLAND

Renounce!

HAROLD

I renounce animals.

KINGS OF ENGLAND

RENOUNCE!

HAROLD

I disown animals

KINGS OF ENGLAND

Renounce!

HAROLD

I am through with animals

KINGS OF ENGLAND

Renounce!

HAROLD

I deny all animals

KINGS OF ENGLAND

Renounce!

HAROLD

I renounce beasts.

I renounce all creatures

I renounce creatures.

I renounce all beasts.

This renunciation takes a terrible toll on HAROLD. THE GHOST OF WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR appears. He trips and falls on his face. He lays on the ground squealing with laughter while HAROLD cries. It gets worse and worse. The laughter increases in the same measure as the sadness. The other kings are ashamed. They leave the room. MATHILDE comes in and helps HAROLD up and takes him from the room too.

GHOST OF WILLIAM THE CONQUERER

Ha!

Ha!

Haw!

Haw!

GHOST OF WILLIAM THE CONQUEROR disappears happily.

SCENE TWELVE

Meanwhile, out on the heath, ROLLO, ALFRED and KNUT are walking in circles in murmuring discussion.

When they see that MATHILDE has brought HAROLD out, they come towards him. They shiver in the cold. They sit together. HAROLD is a broken king. Stars twinkle and disappear, twinkle and disappear. The sun rises. Birds start to fly in clusters, breaking off and circling. The circling becomes regular with an almost driving intensity to the swoop closest to the kings. The Kings stare on in wonder but gradually start to feel very sick and begin to groan as it gets worse. The rhythm of the circling and their groans start to correspond. The birds are attacking them magically from a distance. It is getting stronger and stronger. It is getting violent. Once they realize what's happening, Kings scramble for the hall. It is almost too late. Some of their guts might already be hanging out.

SCENE THIRTEEN

Mathilde is inside, half asleep, waiting for the kings. As they come in she gives each of them each tea made of clover and nettles. They are all every uncomfortable with their guts hanging out. They take seats around the hall and MATHILDE comes round to each with extra pillows to prop them up. They're groaning in pain, slowly dying, and speaking weakly.

ROLLO

Let us have what?

ALFRED

No.

HAROLD, KNUT

No.

ROLLO

Let us have what.

MATHILDE who has sat down nearby nods off to sleep. KNUT points this out to the other kings. They continue speaking weakly.

ALFRED

Friends.

fellow kings of England.

It is time we addressed the plants.

ROLLO + HAROLD

Hear hear.

ALFRED

Knut, have you prepared the lists

KNUT

no. yes.

ALFRED

Knut?

KNUT

Yes.

ROLLO

Have you prepared them in the old pronunciation?

KNUT

Yes. No. The new.

ALFRED

Knut has prepared the lists in the new pronunciation. Let us learn from these examples

KNUT

A partial list of plant life in a state of grave error:

grasses variety long spiky and golden

grasses variety intermixed with clover

 clover variety round

 clover variety triangular

 also some with white markings of either shape

 also some with reddish dots at center

 all intermixed with grasses in state of grave error

also grasses of golden color with white edging and particularly sharp

grasses of reddish lavender known to grow well in the north

grasses with and without the scent of fresh cut grass

and grasses emitting shrieks when properly blown on

several flowering grasses including with small white flowers and generally on hills

chalk grass and snod grass.

grass for thatching that's properly hay.

grass for mixing with mud

grasses long growing near and around rocks

Harold erupts with a prolonged but muted groan of abdominal agony. Alfred speaks when he is done.

ALFRED

The plants are in a state of grave error. Why are the plants in error?

ROLLO

For being grasses to begin with

ALFRED

No. Harold. Why are the plants in error

HAROLD

for wanting to be alive

ALFRED

yes. for wanting to be alive.

KNUT

and for multiplying

ALFRED

yes Knut. The plants are wrong to multiply.

HAROLD

and any man's glory is no better than a pretty piece of grass

KNUT emits a sharp groan of abdominal pain

ALFRED

but less in error. why is it less in error?

ROLLO

because we are bigger

ALFRED

no. why are we less in error, Knut

KNUT

because we can choose to renounce

ALFRED

yes. the plant can do nothing but try to keep living, but we can choose to give it up.

KNUT emits a longer groan.

VOICE

Kings of England never learned anything.

Kings of England never learned anything.

Kings of England lie down quietly

Kings of England never lay down before

Not like this

Not like this

Look to freedom
Look to Tilgland
Here in Tilgland
Far from Tilgland
Only Tilgland

Kings of England all are hearing
Kings of England all are hearing
Kings of England listen quietly
Kings of England never heard anything before.

MATHILDE wakes up. She goes to the door and lets a dog in.

KNUT *groaning still*
if we had stuck to Danish, would this have been a problem?

SCENE FOURTEEN

Sudden silvery light on the exterior of the hall. the interior goes dark.

VOICE

horns clear the way.
can't do that
dogs walk away
can't do that
trucks go left to right
can't do that
disappearance went unseen
can't do that
the exact time of day went unmarked
can't do that
the other side went undiscovered
can't do that
there is no time of day or night
can't do that
there is nothing to recall

you will take advice out of grey holes
certainty and scientism and wait and see
will speak to you
they will seem right
they will seem right but will be wrong.

the dog barks at the lamp
what appears to the dog
will not appear to you

Kings of England never heard anything
everything is science when it ceases to be
and silence, maybe, maybe so.

noise noises in the night
birds bird in the street, on the roof, the roof roofs
in the day, all the time, time times.
sounds stop, they replace each other indiscernibly.
we could be happy enough like this.

what is a car to another car?
what is a song to another song?
what is it to you when I am gone?

The kings are revealed in a special formation and Mathilde gives each of them a kiss on the cheek tenderly and just so. By Tilgland magic, there are now many Mathildes: she has taken many of herself out of a pine chest, and now each one holds the hand of a king and does a circle dance. The kings can't dance much it is mostly Mathildes doing the dancing by circling and switching and giving a kiss on the cheek, just so. Music will be playing for this dance: "Vexations" by Eric Satie. Mathildes also dance in a circle with each other, a great variety of stepping dance.

At the end of the dance, Mathilde rings a bell and puts the other Mathildes on the floor next to the kings, so that when the kings lay down and die they have something to lay down upon. Then Mathilde rings a chime and the kings prepare to speak the Four Choruses of Kings of England in Tilgland. Because dying is the only time the kings of England speak the Four Choruses of Kings of England in Tilgland, they should be given recitation books to read from.

ALFRED

The Four Choruses of the Kings of England in Tilgland

KINGS

I. (one)

What and when prepares the question?
What and when happens
by thinking ahead.

Solo:

What hasn't been
won't be thought.

Chorus:

There is nothing stranger than what is coming

There is nothing stranger than what cannot be thought.
Yet we will move:

expellation by exhalation

To another room or no room at all.

I am going without bitterness

and without the comforting magic of everyone

II. (two)

Solo:

I knew a story once

about a horse and the appearance of great birds.

It told of retributive apocalypse.

But I know that disappearance comes to all alike.

Chorus:

What happens to horses

also happens to birds--

these stupid things we never let go of

cannot come with us now.

III. (three)

Solo 1:

How could I speak benevolence

and the good will of kings?

For there is no way to exit

but badly and wrathfully,

recorded in the tapestries of others.

So speak:

Solo 2:

"you are an asshole.

you have

holes in your neck

and have stolen everything that was mine"

Chorus:

Little Edward needs to wake up.

He needs to wake up.

He needs your wealth

and your good will.

I authorize all of it

I authoritate and falsify all of it

IV. (four)

Who could say I have not been loving or gracious or grand?

Who could say I have not been a dignified York

A nose full of sand

For one as for all

Kings move in unison
and go out in batches.

Solo:

What is beyond?

Chorus:

Tilgland is beyond,
but beyond Tilgland, what is?

Kings are almost dead now. MATHILDE tends to each one, helping them into a resting place on top of their other Mathildes. She wipes the crust that forms on their lips and squeezes water from sponges into their mouth. The monster of Knut's imagination appears and curls up with him. HAROLD begins to cry like a mouse that's dying. MATHILDE comes to stand by HAROLD and he stops. MATHILDE doesn't know if it's the sound of despair or a call to convene all mice in retributive apocalypse. Neither does HAROLD. Neither do all mice. All the mice in Tilgland poke their heads into the hall, and gradually come closer and closer to HAROLD. All mice start to cry like mice that are dying. This lasts for a full--count it, full--minute and is extremely spooky, not like a din, rather, very carefully done.

MATHILDE says sharply

hsst. mice. shht. shush it.

Mice shush. Mathilde lights a candle.

MATHILDE

I'm going to sing you a song.

Howling of dogs.

ALFRED weakly

...banished..

MATHILDE

hhsst. shush Alfred.

There is a scratching at the door, and Mathilde opens it, to let in the rest of the animals, including many dogs and a horse. Mathilde sings them all to sleep. This is the end of the kings of England. In fact they should die in the middle of the song. The time of death should not be marked or even noticed.

MATHILDE singing

The earth is but a body
and every body has to die.
The sun was here to warm it,
and to illuminate its life.

But as with every body
this one too has passed its time
The sun will not return here
This is the end, this is the time,
and as you feel
the world is cooling,
remember all that's come and gone,
for when this night
moves to its ending
It will never find a dawn
So the world is passing on.

VOICE

some things cease to be while others still are

Howling of mice.

End of play.