

'The War of Error'
by Ian Fraser

Ian Fraser
Dramatist Guild Member

SYNOPSIS

The story is set in an alternative 'Fairyland' - where torture is routine, the Kings Men are terrorizing the population, there's a curfew in place, fears over being labeled 'unpatriotic' and being put on the 'no-pie' lists - rumors spreading rapidly of an invasion by the neighboring Troll nation, and the growing likelihood of a 'War of Error'. Revolution is in the air...

The Queen of Fairyland messes up a magic spell, causing a cheerfully vile Demon to be summoned from Hell, to claim her soul. The Queen sends her daughter, on an overland journey to escape from the Demon – chaperoned by an unwilling civil rights lawyer.
And now the story really starts...

NOTE:

The following is to be done by an unknown number of persons - anywhere from as few as 8 - 10, up to 20 or more.

The piece itself is a homage to Theatre – using a variety of forms overlaid onto a traditional 'Pantomime' structure.

There are many characters. However, the main, more or less consistent lead characters are as follows

CHARACTERS

Princess Daisy	<i>A cringingly over entitled accidental heroine.</i>
Quilp	<i>An accidental hero and civil rights lawyer.</i>
The Demon	<i>A rather vile and modern creature from Hell</i>
The Demon-Woman	<i>The same character, but played by a woman.</i>

plus

ASSORTED (DOUBLED UP) CHARACTERS, PLAYED BY VARIOUS CAST.

King , Queen, and assorted Courtiers, Peasants, Cooks, Guards, soldiers, Heralds, Priests, Monks, Entertainers, Bad Jugglers, Trolls, Bats, Wizards, Dwarves, Tree's, Monsters, Demons, Richard Nixon, Fake Audience Members etc)

DARKNESS.

A BELL IS RUNG, AND A SPOT COMES UP ON A HERALD:

HERALD

Hear ye! Hear ye! All those persons having
business with this production, gather close, and get on with it!
Hear ye! Hear ye!

SPOT GOES OUT.

LIGHT COMES UP.

TWO PEASANTS STAND CONTEMPLATIVELY, WATCHING SOMETHING IN THE SKY ABOVE
THEM. (WHATEVER IT IS, IT'S BIG ENOUGH TO BLOCK THE SUNLIGHT. THE STAGE LIGHTS
FLICKER WHEN THE FLYING "THING" SWOOPS LOW OVERHEAD.

WE HEAR THE SOUND EFFECT OF A LOUD 'WHOOSH' AT EACH FLICKER

PEASANT ONE

The dragons look amazing in the sunset, at this time of year.

PEASANT TWO

Yeah.

PEASANT ONE

My dad used to tell me about
the bad old days, the frightening times when
the dragons would swoop down and-

PEASANT TWO

-Heard it. Heard it before.

PEASANT ONE

... Bitch.

THEY PAUSE AND KEEP WATCHING. MORE 'WHOOSHES' AND HALF SECOND BLACKOUTS.

PEASANT ONE

It's amazing how they can poo and fly at the same time-

TWO LOOKS AT HIM CURIOUSLY.

PEASANT ONE

What? I just find it interesting-

PEASANT TWO

Ew.

PEASANT ONE

Well, it's more interesting
than you and your royal family fetish-

PEASANT TWO

-Shut up-

PEASANT ONE

"The Princess did this, the Queen did that".

PEASANT TWO

Well the Royal family's exciting-

PEASANT ONE

Warts are exciting,
but I don't hang pictures of them up on my wall-

PEASANT TWO (THINKS)

Are you calling the King and Queen 'warts'??

PEASANT ONE

No!

PEASANT TWO

You were!

PEASANT ONE

I think the Princess is er.. wonderful- (*rolls his eyes*)

PEASANT TWO

Yeah?

PEASANT ONE

Yeah!

THERE'S AN INCOHERENT SHOUT FROM THE BACK OF THE AUDITORIUM. THEY PEER.

PEASANT ONE

Ooh, bunch of the Kings Men over there...

PEASANT TWO

Calling them 'warts'. You sound like you've been hanging
around with golliwogs-

PEASANT TWO

So?

PEASANT ONE

So? Dork. The golliwogs're cruising for a bruising
if you know what I mean. This isn't the time to get labelled unpatriotic.

PEASANT TWO

I'm not-

PEASANT ONE

It won't make no difference, when the time comes
for knocking on peoples doors in the middle of the night.
You want to be added to the no-pie list?

PEASANT TWO

No!

PEASANT ONE

If you get added to the no-pie list, that's it. No pie. Ever!
Doesn't matter if it's a mistake, once you're on it, you're
screwed.

THEY AND WE HEAR DISTANT SHOUTS AND CRASHES.

PEASANT ONE

Oy. What's that?

PEASANT TWO

I think its golliwog's window's being broken-

THEY AND WE HEAR WHISTLES FROM OFFSTAGE, FOLLOWED BY SHOUTS.

KINGS MAN(IN AUDITORIUM)

You golliwogs don't listen, do you?

GOLLIWOG (IN AUDITORIUM)

Don't taze me, bro! Oww!

PEASANT ONE

Maybe going shopping isn't such a bad idea-

KINGS MAN ONE (APPROACHING THE STAGE)

Resisting arrest are you?

PEASANT TWO

Come on-

PEASANT ONE AND TWO EXIT HURRIEDLY, KINGSMAN ONE MOVES ON STAGE WITH A STRUGGLING GOLLIWOG, IN A WIG-

KINGS MAN ONE

No use struggling towel head!

Keep still or I'll brain you - pardon the overstatement-

KINGS MAN ONE DRAGS GOLLIWOG UP ONSTAGE AND SHOVES HIM. HE FALLS ON STAGE. THE KINGS MAN 'SEES' THE AUDIENCE.

KINGS MAN ONE (TO AUDIENCE)

What are you doing sitting there? The King signed an official proclamation at oh eight hundred this morning saying a state of emergency was now in force, and no-

KINGS MAN TWO STROLLS ON

KINGS MAN ONE (CONT)

-more than four people may be together at any one time-

KINGS MAN TWO

Are you sure it's four?

KINGS MAN ONE

What?

THE GOLLIWOG UNSEEN, CRAWLS OFFSTAGE.

KINGS MAN TWO

You sure it's four? I thought it said "seven"-

KINGS MAN ONE

Four!

KINGS MAN TWO

It looked like seven on the order – I thought it might've been the European way

of writing seven, you know, with the little line going through it-

KINGS MAN ONE

You're a moron, shut up! Hey - where's he gone??

KINGS MAN TWO (looks)

Oops.

KINGS MAN ONE

Oops?

(TO AUDIENCE You people disperse! I better not see you again!

(TO KINGS MAN TWO) Schmuck.

KINGS MAN TWO

I'm really sorry-

KINGS MAN ONE

No, don't say anything-

THEY EXIT – THE HERALD, AND QUEEN AND WIZARD ENTER.

HERALD (STRIKES A POSE AND ANNOUNCES)

The Palace!! The Queen of Fairyland
and her Wizard!

WIZARD

Must he do that, your Majesty?

QUEEN (TO HERALD)

Piss off.

HERALD (EXITING)

Just doing my job, your Majesty-

QUEEN

(sighs) So, Wizard - you have prepared
a super-duper spell for me? Something with sparks
and loud bangs and small furry creatures erupting from nowhere,
to entertain me in these long evenings - especially now that network television
is so crap?

WIZARD

-Quite so your Majesty, Here is the spell, and the pamphlet
with easy-to-read instructions attached-

QUEEN

Wizard Prang, you are simply wonderful - I just
don't know what I'd do without you-

LIGHT OUT. SPOT UP ON HERALD

HERALD

Elsewhere in the castle, two Cooks
were having a minor disagreement-

LIGHT UP ON TWO COOKS (WITH CHEF HATS ON)

CHEF ONE

That is disgusting!

CHEF TWO

No it isn't!

CHEF ONE

Yes it is! You just can't put that sort of stuff into food and expect to get away with it!

CHEF TWO

The food is fine!

CHEF ONE

If there's no flour you just can't use ground up straw covered in honey! People will notice!

CHEF TWO

No they won't! It looks fine-

CHEF ONE (points)

What're those?

CHEF TWO

Um, custard pies-

CHEF ONE (LOOKS)

Chopped up straw covered with honey-?

CHEF TWO

For the pastry, yeah.

CHEF ONE

And the custard? What did you use?

CHEF TWO

Ants.

CHEF ONE

What?

CHEF TWO

Ants.

CHEF ONE

ANTS!!

CHEF TWO

Yeah - they're all over the place-

CHEF ONE

You can't feed insects to the Royal Family!!

CHEF TWO

I'm not gonna be the one to march in and say "Sorry but due to your not running the country properly, we're out of food.

CHEF ONE

I didn't think of that-

CHEF TWO

Here, try a pie-

CHEF ONE

Ew! No.

CHEF TWO

They're not bad.

CHEF ONE

And, what are those, drumsticks?

CHEF TWO

Er, no - they are very crunchy though-

CHEF ONE

What are they?

CHEF TWO

Fried grasshoppers in honey, want one?

CHEF ONE

Good grief-

CHEF TWO

They're very crunchy-

CHEF ONE

Yes, you said-

CHEF TWO (*blissfully unaware and stupid*)

It's amazing what you can do with Nature-

CHEF ONE

Okay, let's go put the food in the dining hall early, before anyone gets there, then go hide in the cellars-

CHEF TWO (OUTRAGED)

Hide?

CHEF ONE

Trust me. That way we might live.

THEY EXIT - AS THE HERALD ENTERS AND TAKES UP POSITION WITH AN 'ANNOUNCING POSE'. THE KING AND HIS SENIOR TORTURER, MACBETH ENTER. (NATURALLY, EACH TIME THIS TORTURERS NAME IS MENTIONED - SOMETHING 'HAPPENS').

HERALD (*strikes a pose and announces*)

Elsewhere in the Castle, the King discusses matters

with his senior torturer-

KING (TO HERALD)

Don't you think this habit of announcing each scene can only become more irritating as time goes by?

HERALD

Oh no your Majesty! It's a necessary device to impart useful information to the audience-

KING

But surely they can work it out for themselves?

HERALD

Oh certainly sir, certainly - but it is a long standing tradition, both in Theatre, and Royal Courts, such as this one-

KING

Hmm, tradition-

HERALD

Sire?

KING

Oh – nothing-

HERALD

Thought you was about to burst into song-

KING

Ah no. It's been done. Well we can't fiddle about with tradition, What do you think, Macbeth?

FX OF A CAT ABRUPTLY YOWLING, FOLLOWED BY

OFFSTAGE VOICE

Ow, damn!

THOSE ON STAGE GLANCE OFF QUICKLY, BUT MACBETH - A DROOLING CHEERFUL HUNCHBACK KIND OF TORTURER, DOESNT NOTICE- THE KING REPEATS HIMSELF

KING

Macbeth?

FX OF A COW MOO-ING (BEHIND THE AUDIENCE)

VOICE (IN AUDITORIUM)

Get that cow out of here!!

MACBETH

Well your Majesty, I think as long as the Herald is only used for the first few scenes, to establish the fundamentals of the plot and concept, then I think its permissible. Alternatively, we could always grab him and spin him on the wheel until centrifugal forces build up and make his stomach ooze out of his bottom-?

HE WAITS WITH A HOPEFUL EXPRESSION

KING
Ummm. No.

THE HERALD BREATHES A SILENT SIGH OF RELIEF.

MACBETH
Oh, sorry-

KING
No it's all right -
(TO HERALD) You can leave now-

HERALD
Yes sire, thank you sir-

HE EXITS
THERE IS A BRIEF PAUSE. MACBETH DOES A LITTLE DANCE, AND JIGGLES HIS BELLS.

KING
So, Macbeth?

A TOURIST STROLLS ON STAGE AND BEGIN TAKING PICTURES WITH A FLASHBULB CAMERA, CAUSING SHOUTS AND YELLS FROM OFFSTAGE. ANOTHER CAST MEMBER ENTERS, AND PULLS HIM OFF.

MACBETH
Your Majesty?

KING
Torture.

MACBETH (BOBBING UP AND DOWN HAPPILY)
Good idea yer Majesty! What kind of depraved, sadistic entertainment would the Royal orb care to gaze upon today?

KING
Do we still have those pixies?

MACBETH
'Fraid not sir-

KING
-Oh-

MACBETH
Pulled apart by wild dogs, last Wednesday, as I recall-

KING
-Ah-

MACBETH
-Rather small dogs actually. What about um -
what about a nice drowning?

KING

Na-

MACBETH
Branding?

KING
No I haven't had supper yet-

MACBETH
Oh, well um - we could always spin someone
on the wheel until-

KING
-Yes, their stomachs come out of- I remember that one-

MACBETH
It's terrifically visual..?

KING
Naa

MACBETH
Stabbing?

KING
Na-

MACBETH
Strangling?

KING
Na-

MACBETH
Poison? Always good for a laugh-

KING
Takes too long-

MACBETH
Cage full of hungry rats, placed on someone's stomach-?

KING
No I think I'm in the mood for something more traditional. Flogging!

MACBETH
Oh lovely suggestion, sire!
Simple, neat and easy. I'm sorry your Majesty-

KING
Oh it's all right, it's nice to hear the full menu -
even if I'm not going to eat everything. *(laughs)*

MACBETH BLINKS, PUZZLED, THEN CLICKS HIS FINGERS, OTHER HOODED TORTURERS ENTER WITH A CHAIR AND POPCORN. THE KING SITS. MACBETH TAKES THE POPCORN FROM THE OTHERS, WHO EXIT.

KING (*wiping his eyes*)
Oh dear. I crack myself up.

MACBETH
Popcorn, sire?

KING (TAKES IT)
Thank you-

MACBETH
-Something to nibble at while the entertainments being prepared-

HE CALLS TO CAST MEMBER PLACED BEHIND THE AUDIENCE-

MACBETH
Rastus?

RASTUS (IN AUDIENCE)
Yes Master?

MACBETH
Strap one of the non combatant prisoners helping us
with our inquiries. into the machine-

RASTUS
Yabba dabba doo!

MACBETH AND THE KING BLINK. THE KING DECIDES TO IGNORE THAT.

KING
What's this "machine" business?

MACBETH
This device will revolutionise non torture based 'forceful interrogation
techniques' as we know it, sire. It's an automatic whipping machine-

KING
Ah!

MACBETH
Yes sir! Just strap them in, press a button and
you can hew the hide off a heretic, gorily gash a golliwog
down to the bone, without even working up a sweat, your Holiness.

KING
Wonderful!

RASTUS
Ready!

MACBETH
Thank you -