

THE NORTHMEN

4 OCTOBER, 1993
DRAFT 1
THIS DRAFT BY
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FROM A STORY BY
RANDALL MCCORMICK

"Injuns, I don't see any Injuns around here--
Just a bunch of goddamn farmers--"

Geronimo--Commenting on the other Apaches upon
finally coming into the Reservation

"Death can't be so bad--because no Marine
has ever come back to bitch about it."

Old U.S.M.C. proverb

PROLOGUE: (HOW THIS STORY CAME TO BE TOLD--
CONCERNING THE CONFESSION OF
HAROLDE THE JUST)

TITLE: IN THE YEAR OF OUR LORD, 1038

A DARK CASTLE--At dusk, high on a crag overlooking the sea. Fires burn to mark the place for passing ships. There is little or no activity, the day is at an end.

NARRATOR (V.O.)
I, Harolde Bloodaxe, Earl of Northumbria
do set these words to page that they may
be a true account of my life and reign--

DISSOLVE TO:

CANDLE-LIT CATHEDRAL--THE EARL--An aging warlord in his sixties, grey and weathered, kneels before an ABBOT recieving Benediction.

HAROLDE (V.O.)
I have ruled this land through bounty
and famine, through war and pestilence
and little enough of peace. But I say
before God the Almighty--

DISSOLVE TO:

THE EARL, HAROLDE--Alone in his darkened chamber--only the light of a candle. He wears the rough cloth of a lay Benedictine. He writes in a huge text with quill and ink.

HAROLDE (V.O.) (CONT'D)
--That I have always ruled by law and
justice--And my people have not gone
hungry. I have striven to always walk
in God's path to seek His light, to keep
His Faith.

He looks up--puzzled, weathered.

HAROLDE (CONT'D)
No--that is not exactly so--There was
a time long ago--only a year--the year
of the End of the World. For that year
I was a Viking.

DISSOLVE TO:

I: (CONCERNING THE VISIT OF THE NORTHMEN AND
HOW THE MONKS OF SAINT BENEDICT BECAME LIKE
BIRDS IN THE TREES)

A TREE LINED RIVER--Somewhere in the north of England. It is early morning, a stillness hangs on the water with a wispy fog.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

A BOY--Eight or nine years old, makes his way through the thick foliage and willows that overhang the bank. He carries a small toy boat.

TITLE: Near the Village of Sheppy,
England--Fall 999 A.D.
Three months before the
End of the World.

THE BOY--Crouches by the foggy water and lets the boat out onto the river's current. It drifts quickly away, unwinding a length of twine, which pulls taut.

CLOSE BOAT--With the river going under, so that it looks like it is truly making its way on a mighty sea.

CLOSE BOY--He gazes and unwraps a cloth--in it a piece of old bread that he chews on. He sings to himself.

BOY
As I sat on the river's bank,
on Yule's Day in the morning
I saw a ship come sailing by--

Suddenly he looks up--senses something--

RIVER FOG--A shadow emerges in the fog--huge serpentine--and becomes the head of a great fanged serpent emerging silently to become the dragon prow of a great Viking Longship, moving on the current. Another dragon head emerges and the two black shapes glide past the boy like medieval monsters, which indeed they are. The oars are trimmed and brightly colored shields line the gunwales. Silver glinting steel helmets and DARK BEARDED FACES stare back at the boy. On the prow of the rear ship, a HUGE MAN steps forth wearing a skull-like steel mask. He raises a bow and points the arrow towards us. This is GUNNAR, and behind him, another FIERCE APPARITION, wearing a steel helm with a golden falcon atop it, stands in a cloak of wolfskin--and a raven is at his shoulder. This is ERIK, who looks at the Boy and to Gunnar, who draws the bow string.

BOY--He gasps, trying to cry out--but before he can utter a sound, the twang of the bow cuts the morning silence. Birds erupt from the trees--the crows and magpies cawing.

BOAT--TWOCK! The arrow neatly transfixes the wooden toy--the Boy lets go of the twine, and the little impaled boat drifts along with the huge black ones.

ERIK--GUNNAR--Smile at the Boy, and Gunnar curtsies and they laugh. In an instant the fog covers them, and it is as if they never were.

CUT TO:

BOY--Scrambling up the bank, through the weeds, running for all he's worth.

CUT TO:

VILLAGE--The Boy standing before his ELDERS as MEN and WOMEN crowd around. WOMEN cry and scream. A FEW MEN rush to their huts.

ELDER

What color did they bear?

BOY

Black--the ships were black.

MAN

Black as Hell--the wolves of Hell.

BOY

--And they had silver helmets.

He touches his head.

BOY (CONT'D)

--And golden birds--

ELDER

It is the beginning of the end, the Trial of God. It has been foretold--We are but the sheep to be slaughtered. We are not without sin--

BOY

They killed my little boat--

ELDER

We are not without sin.

CUT TO:

RIVER BANK--Further away and later. A BISHOP stands before a pyre where a MAN burns at the stake. The man in robes of black screams horribly at the end of his ordeal--and curls up into the crackle of the flames. The Bishop incants in Latin and throws a few chops of holy water on the roaring pyre. All around are HUGE ARMED MEN, some on black horses, all bearing crosses on their shields. The men are dressed in mail shirts and crude conical helmets--nowhere near as fine as the Viking's. These men have the look of brutality common in police of all ages. They are beefy, well fed and cruel. The Bishop nods and TWO MORE BLACK ROBED CHURCHMEN, Monks by their appearance, are brought forward by the guards.

CAGES--Of steel, like bird cages but just large enough to surround a man, are opened like clam shells. The two monks are stood up--one crying, the other looking on stoically. They are shut and locked in the cages, their arms and legs protrude. Ropes are slung over a thick oak branch that sticks out over the water. The cages are brought upright. A mail-clad KNIGHT rides up to them on his enormous war horse. This is HEDRICK. The monks are young and one cries piteously. The other has strong eyes that stare straight ahead.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HEDRICK

Listen to him wail--he must have
much to atone for.

BISHOP GALLYON--A balding old vulture, comes up--looks
into the stoic monk's face.

BISHOP

It is not too late my Child.

The monk spits into the Bishop's face.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

Blasphemy! Blasphemy! You will
rot and the crows will feast. Let
their feast be long.

They are hauled up into the tree and swung over the river.

BISHOP (CONT'D)

Contemplate your wretched end--
Blasphemer.

He shouts invocations in Latin.

HEDRICK

Let us take leave--There is still
much of the Lord's work to be done
on this day.

BISHOP

We will leave them--unguarded.

HEDRICK

Even a fool will not tamper with
the work of God.

They help the Bishop and his ATTENDANTS into a wagon, and
the company moves off clanking and grunting.

CUT TO:

CROWS--Circling the tree, the river--cawing and swooping.

CLOSE MONK--THE STRONG ONE--He is HAROLDE, and he watches
the crows, while his companion GODWINE's sobbing gasps
carry over the water. It is later now and the shadows of
afternoon are falling. The noise of the river and
Godwine's whining are displaced by a different sound, a
rhythmic slapping of water. Both Monks look down to see
the two dragon ships below moving towards them. The tide
is turning and they must now row. The Northmen pass
beneath the monks hanging in their cages. Even Godwine is
silent--only the crows call.

CLOSE ERIK--GUNNAR--OTHERS--They stare up at the sight of
the two Monks, protruding through steel cages hung in a
tree. It does not surprise them as Vikings are used to
strange lands and odd customs. Another huge, grey bearded
warrior, THORGRIM, rushes up to the prow.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THORGRIM
Look Erik--birds in a cage.

GUNNAR
Black birds.

Erik smiles and speaks to the monks as they glide under.

ERIK
I have a black bird too.
He nods to his raven who ruffles his wings.

ERIK (CONT'D)
But he is free.

THORGRIM
Priests, they are Priests.

GUNNAR
Why would they put Priests in
a cage?

ERIK
Perhaps they have had too much
wine.

THORGRIM
--And they call us cruel--Goodbye
Priests--Perhaps we will see you
next season.

The boat rows away.

ERIK
Perhaps not.

CUT TO:

VILLAGE OF MALDON--Seen from the overlooking hill. The village burns. The Monastery gives off a deep glow from within. Screams can be heard floating across the wind--women and children crying--the faint clash of steel and even laughter. Farm animals broken from their pens scatter about. Thick smoke curls up into the afternoon sky. The village is being raped, pillaged, and burned in that order. ARMED KNIGHTS ride up in the foreground.

KNIGHT
Danes!

A WOMAN runs screaming towards them from the far distance.

WOMAN
Help us! In the name of God--
Please help us!

OTHER KNIGHT
Perhaps this is what comes from
hoarding grain. It is a lesson
taught.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KNIGHT
And what of the Northmen?

OTHER KNIGHT
There are too few of us.

KNIGHT
Agreed.

ANOTHER KNIGHT
Then let them have their play and
we shall soon have ours.

They turn and ride off.

CUT TO:

THE DRAGON SHIPS--Withdrawing--the oars slapping fast--
racing with the current. The decks are strewn with loot,
pigs, sheep, and geese that clatter about. The men are
calm, a FEW bind bloody wounds--ANOTHER holds a YOUNG GIRL
by the hair. SEVERAL YOUNG WOMEN in torn garments crouch
near the stern.

RIVERBANK--A larger GROUP OF ARMED MEN ride through the
oaks, light glinting off their weapons and mail coats.

CUT TO:

THE MONKS--Hanging in their cages as the two dragon ships
slip towards them. Behind, is a red glow which was
Maldon.

GODWINE
The blood wolves have eaten and
the Lady has loosed her hounds--
The sky is red with the Hell fire
and it is still three months to
the End.

HAROLDE
I do not think it is to be any
concern of ours.

CUT TO:

VIKING SHIPS--ERIK--Stands at the helm of the closest
boat, obviously the leader of the raid. Thorgrim sits
forward pounding out the rythmn for the oars with the flat
of his axe on a shield.

THORGRIM
The birds still do not sing.

ERIK
We can use such birds Sverri!
Climb the mast and fetch them
to me.

SVERRI--A YOUNG VIKING--With black hair, leaps from his
oar and shimmies up the mast.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERIK (CONT'D)
Tell Grunssen that I have lost
an oar and need another--

THORGRIM (yelling to other boat)
We have lost an oar--

The other boat pulls ahead, as Erik steers his under the
overhanging tree.

CLOSE HAROLDE--GODWINE--As the mast sweeps gracefully to
them. They look down at the deck below crowded with loot,
animals, and the ranked faces of pagan savages staring up
at them. Suddenly Sverri glides by smiling in their
faces. Looking at the Crows--he raises a slaughter
knife--

SVERRI
Sorry Crows.

CRASH! Both cages fall to the deck below--with a scream
of agony from under Godwine.

THORGRIM (to Sverri)
You fool--he killed the fat Merchant--
Be careful.

A HEAVY, BEARDED VIKING, ODD, axes through the chains
holding Harolde's cage and pulls it off him--while ANOTHER
does the same for Godwine. Indeed, Godwine has fallen on
a MERCHANT, who spasms and gurgles with his neck broken.
Odd is a short but powerful man of cruel proportions, and
pulls Harolde across the deck to an empty bench. Harolde
resists. Odd bear-slaps him to the deck then picks him up
without emotion.

ODD
Sit here.

HAROLDE
Kill me first!

ODD
Kill you later.

He shoves him onto the bench--pulls the oar up and slams
it across his chest.

ERIK
He is worth a couple of marks
at Kaupang--be gentle.

Odd grabs Godwine--who screams out in pain.

GODWINE
My arm!

HAROLDE
He's hurt--he cannot row!

Odd throws him down.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ODD
Kill him? Or you row.

He steps on Godwine's arm, who screams. Harolde rows.

ERIK (shouts)
He has a brave tongue that one.

THORGRIM (shouts back)
Maybe we should cut it out to look
at it.

ERIK
But then he would have nothing
to say.

Erik hands the rudder over to a HUGE BLACK MOOR dressed in
Viking garb. This is MAHFOUD, the ship's navigator.

ERIK (CONT'D)
Stay close to this bank--the tide
has turned and the current strong--

He walks over to Harolde looking him up and down.

ERIK (CONT'D)
What are you, a Crow?

HAROLDE
I am a man of Faith.

ERIK
You do not row well for a man, but
then again you are wearing a dress.

Thorgrim walks over to the women who are huddled by the
mast, and pulls SEVERAL away until he finds the one he
wants. SHE is red-haired, well shaped and healthy--but
shakes with fear and is sobbing.

THORGRIM
She is upset.

SVERRI
Perhaps it is her first voyage.

He feels her body for its firmness, she cries out.

THORGRIM
There, there now--You do not think
you have been chosen for your virtue?

They laugh.

HAROLDE
Beast--Pagan beast--animal of Hell!

Thorgrim walks over and touches his sword hilt.

THORGRIM
I do not think he is worth two marks
and he rows poorly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERIK

One of the monks is mine and he
rows well enough.

Thorgrim looks at Erik.

THORGRIM

You would fight for him?

ERIK

I would fight because I enjoy it.
Besides if I did not kill one of
you now and then--you would forget
who is Chieftain.

Thorgrim puts his sword away--goes back to the prow.

SVERRI

Snatched from the Crows,
and saved from Thorgrim's war blade.
Baldur's smile must surely beam
upon the brainless.
(to Harolde)
That's you.

They all laugh and show appreciation for Sverri's poetry.
Even Thorgrim smiles.

GUNNAR

Look!

They turn to see RIDERS silhouetted on a ridge moving at a
fast pace keeping even with the boats. Erik crouches down
to Harolde.

ERIK

Who is master here?

HAROLDE

The Lord is long dead, but the shire
is ruled by the Lady Alurea.

ERIK

A woman? The land here is ruled by
a woman.

HAROLDE

Perhaps you shall meet her.

ERIK

Good, I have been looking for a wife--
Are those her's?

He points to the Riders.

HAROLDE

Yes.

ERIK

Why do they follow us?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUNNAR (rowing)
Perhaps they have never seen real
fighting men before.

SVERRI
Such fine ones at that.

ERIK
Maybe they are impressed by our
Moor. Mahfoud, show them the color
of your skin.

He takes the tiller, while Mahfoud turns and pulls down
his pants, baring his ass at the Riders.

MAHFOUD
What did they do?

ERIK
They were not impressed.

HAROLDE
They mean to meet you at the river's
mouth and there you shall die--

SVERRI
Will the woman be with them?

HAROLDE
I hope you all die and take many
of them with you--I hope you meet
the Lady Alurea too. It is soon to
be the end of the world and the Lord
is already at work.

ERIK
And what of you Priest?

HAROLDE
You'd do me a favor to slay me.

ERIK
I will owe no favor to a Crow in
a dress. You will live as long
as I do Priest.

He stands to the gunwale.

ERIK (CONT'D)
Grunssen! Werner! There is going
to be some lively fighting at the
river's mouth.

GRUNSSSEN comes to his gunwale.

GRUNSSSEN.
Good--

He holds up his sword.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GRUNSSSEN (CONT'D)

My Child is lonely and needs to
be kissed.

THORGRIM

We need a few spears--We left some
of ours in Saxon fat.

ORDERS ARE GIVEN--SEVERAL MEN--Stand and hurl spears that
whistle in and thud into the shield and mast. The Women
scream.

VIKING

Trade for an axe--

ERIK

They need an axe.

Gunnar hands one to Erik who steps up and hurls in side-
arm. It wheels glittering through the air and thuds into
the other ship's mast. All the Vikings voice approval.

HAROLDE

That will not help you Pagan.
The end is near.

ERIK

Let us discuss that later when
we have ale.

HAROLDE

They have fire--Greek fire.

ERIK

I have seen fire in many lands--
most recently in this one--What
is so special about the Greek kind?

HAROLDE

You shall see--the end is near.

ERIK

Listen to me Thrall, and listen
well.

He slaps him on the shoulder, almost knocking him from the
bench.

ERIK (CONT'D)

--We are Kings, each of us, and
this is our horse.

He points his spear at the ship's deck.

ERIK (CONT'D)

We call her "Strider"--and that
water of the rivers and seas--
our domain. We take what we want
from ANY man. Because we are
Vikings.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GUNNAR
Save your Saxon fairie tales for
the children.

ERIK
--And keep rowing.

CUT TO:

II: (CONCERNING THE BATTLE OF THE RIVER MOUTH AND HOW
THE LADY ALUREA GOT BACK HER GOLD AND HOW HAROLDE
GOT HIS NAME)

RIVER MOUTH--The sea beyond--but here the river narrows
with rock outcroppings. The two Viking ships come around
the bend to face three barges loaded with MEN-AT-ARMS.
Beyond these, an iron chain has been stretched across the
narrows--and the rocks are covered with BOWMEN and MOUNTED
KNIGHTS. On a promontory, an open tent has been erected
and colors fly.

TENT--Under which sit various NOBLES and the LADY
ALUREA, a darkly attractive woman in her forties with
flaming red hair and cold gray eyes. Next to her sits
Hedrick, her Regent.

ALUREA
Only two and they are so small--
hardly an evening's sport.

HEDRICK
They are renowned for their ferocity
but it shouldn't take long.

ALUREA
Oh no--Make it last as long as you
can.

CUT TO:

THE STRIDER--The ships pause before the barricade--rowing
backwards to stay against the current and tide. The
Vikings put on helmets--ready spears and grappling hooks.
They seem quite happy as if this were an unexpected bonus.
Harolde's oar clatters against the others. Thorgrim grabs
it, and pulls him away taking his place.

THORGRIM
Get out of the way Thrall--Make
yourself useful with the women.
This is a place for war-men.

Harolde gets up and points up on the hill--turns to Erik.

HAROLDE
The Lady Alurea--

He points.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLDE (CONT'D)

Perhaps you can make your proposal.

ERIK

First I must show her my kind and thoughtful nature.

He draws his sword--puts on his helmet. A CRIER stands atop the rocks.

CRIER (shouts)

Who are you--Swine?

ERIK (shouts)

Swine? --Yes we have swine.

He points his sword to the pigs running about between the rowers. They all laugh.

GRUNSEN (shouts)

We are simple seafarers--Come from Norway!

ERIK

We've come a-Viking--To burn your villages--Roast your hogs and rape your women!

GRUNSEN

We wanted the gold from your churches but we found little.

ERIK

You must be a poor people--And few of your women are worth fucking!

CRIER

Who is your King?

ERIK

We are free Vikings--And all are equal--We bow the neck to no one.

CRIER

You are an offense to God for what you've done!

GRUNSEN

Our God, Thor, he is offended that we've done so little.

HEDRICK

Prepare to go to Hell Norse beasts!

ERIK

We've never been there before--I hear it is warm.

GRUNSEN

Good--because we come from a cold land.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERIK

Fill your hands! Raise the war
shields!

The men row forward, hard--the ships surge forward with the current. Erik pounds out a rythmn on his shield. Before them, the barges are rowed towards them. ARCHERS stand and fire. Soon the water between the closing ships appears odd--like the sea during a heavy rain. As this draws nearer, it is not rain, but arrow fall.

ERIK (CONT'D)

Shields up.

The Vikings raise their oars and shields at a practiced angle. Arrows rain down, glance off the shields, few stick in.

THE CAPTIVES--Are not protected and arrows stick all around them. A YOUNG GIRL screams as one pierces her leg, another two transfix her through the head and neck. She falls. Godwine screams as an arrow pierces his hand--he turns--three more stick through his back. He stands and calls out prayers in Latin as Harolde grabs him. A VIKING pushes them both to the deck as he stands and fires his bow with incredible speed. Erik winds a rope around a twisting spear--an arrow glances off his helmet, another sticks in his shield. Mahfoud crouches at the helm behind a large Roman style metal covered shield.

CLOSE HAROLDE--He looks up at Sverri who rows strongly--arrows thudding around him. Godwine rolls over gagging his death rattle and is still--another arrow thuds into him.

GUNNAR

His luck has turned.

SVERRI

But not ours--Thank you Thor.

ERIK

Gunnar! Thorolf, Egil--To the bow!
Odd, Karli--Take up spears! Archers--
stern!

He hurls his twisting spear--Harolde's head snaps around following in flight to:

A SAXON--Is impaled with ANOTHER at the bow of the first barge. The two men wriggle on the spear and fall into the water.

ERIK--Laughs--two at once! ANOTHER VIKING laughs but is cut short by an arrow through his mouth. He falls heavily to the deck.

STRIDER--Smashes into the barge pushing it aside.

OARS--Snap off--splinters stick through hands and arms.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Vikings hurl grappling hooks--pull--a MAN'S LEG is trapped, skewered--he is pulled with the barge towards them.

VIKINGS--Stand and hurl spears with such force that they splinter through the Saxon shields striking them to their OWNERS. Now they are in axe range. Odd is first, cleaving a shield in half and taking an arm with it.

THORGRIM--Can't contain himself and jumps into the Saxon barge howling and laughing. He hews about--wood, brains, and pieces of meat fly--MEN go down. Two other Vikings, Thorolf and Egil, jump in after him and together they wade into the Saxons like wolves using a style of fighting that involves individual skill with great teamwork. One chops a MAN in the leg, moves on to engage ANOTHER as the fallen man is impaled on the second Viking's sword as the third man shields the second--etc., etc.. It is a brutal animal ferocity perfected to a martial art, and it characterizes the Norse fighting technique--and allows them to face odds that otherwise would be overwhelming.

STRIDER--At the same time--SAXONS are pouring over the bow of the Strider, MANY falling impaled on spears or being run through the face and neck with long arrows. The VIKING ARCHERS fire point blank with heavy steel tipped shafts that often pierce shields and go through most armor. In this way, even though the Saxons swarm forward, the Norsemen retreat hacking and hewing, taking a terrible toll.

SVERRI'S AXE--Comes down on a SAXON shoulder, splitting it with a crack. Sverri withdraws it, sidesteps ANOTHER who is impaled on Odd's spear. Sverri backstrokes into ANOTHER SAXON'S side--withdraws the bloody blade and kisses it.

CAPTIVES--At the mast--two women--Thorgrim's favorite and a DARK HAIREED MAID. They crawl towards the Saxons.

SAXON

Kill them all--the Bitches too!

Spears are hurled--running through the dark one--and piercing the red-head's dress to the gunwale. Harolde sees this and grabs the girl by the hair, pulling her behind the mast, tearing off most of her simple garment.

VIKING

Thorgrim! --Your new wife is pleasing to my eyes.

ODD

Thorgrim is busy.

The VIKING leans down towards Harolde and the girl, and catches a spear through the shoulders and neck. He gags, and drops his shield and axe which clatter onto Harold--and he falls across them. More arrows whip by and thud. Harolde grabs the bloody axe, hacks at the halyard rope--

(CONTINUED)

the boom and sail come crashing down, mostly onto the Saxons, dividing them from the Vikings who have formed a shield wall at the stern. The Saxons hack through the striped sail and try to disentangle themselves. Harolde scampers back pulling the girl. Suddenly a large hand pulls him up and the girl with him--Erik.

ERIK
Your God must be with you
Priest.

He holds the girl for a second.

ERIK (CONT'D)
And Thorgrim will be pleased.

A low moaning wail starts--it emits from Odd and Gunnar. Their eyes roll back and they shake in a trance of ecstasy and violence.

SVERRI
Berserk!

ERIK
Let the Berserkers lead!

GUNNAR
Odin! --Odin!

They charge in a supernatural flurry of strength and skill followed by the others--stabbing and hacking down those trying to get through the sails and rigging. Again, the wolf pack image as Erik and the others follow up killing and covering in perfect teamwork. A howl rises as one, as the Northmen reclaim their ship. Blood pulses from the neck wound of a SAXON, and splatters across Harolde, who crouches with his axe. A helmet with a head in it bounces at his feet--hands, arms and shields fall to the deck followed by kicking bodies spewing slippery blood. The Saxons fall back.

CUT TO:

BARGE--Thorgrim and his pack have hewn their way to some curious fire pots and a bellows. The Saxons try and turn a crude trunk-like nozzle towards them but Thorgrim hacks it away along with their hands, while Egil and Thorolf push the blazing pot over. Hot naptha spews flaming across the deck--MEN scream and fry in their mail shirts--OTHERS jump over. The fury spreads quickly with a fierce roar--Saxons abandon the fight and jump for their lives, only to disappear or sink quickly in their heavy armor. Black smoke gasses out across everything and even Thorgrim and his wolves are forced to retreat. They leap over at the bow of Strider and thus catch the remaining Saxons from behind. Thorolf splits a MAN'S back and kicks him aside, ducking as Thorgrim's axe whistles over his head to smack into ANOTHER'S face. Egil crouches and runs a SAXON through the groin under his mail--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERIK--LEADING NOW--With his sword--cuts his way to them, wounding THREE MORE and throwing them to the pack, and splitting a FOURTH ONE'S helmet with a great clang. A spear is thrust into his side from a WOUNDED WARRIOR on the deck. Enraged, he pulls it out with one hand and drives it down through its owner. The Berserkers rush past--one of them actually biting his enemy's neck.

THE STRIDER--Drifts away from the fiercely burning barge--trailing red. The other longship is similarly engaged with the other barges.

CUT TO:

ALUREA--Sitting under her tent leaning forward--breathing in shallow gasps of rising sexual excitement. Men's screams and the sound of fire and steel drift up from below--smoke hangs in the air--Warriors drown in the stained river.

ALUREA
They're getting away!

HEDRICK
The chain, My Lady--the chain--

ALUREA
Burn them! Burn them all!

Hedrick steps over to ANOTHER KNIGHT who waves a flag.

ARCHERS--Dip their arrow tips in pitch.

CATAPULTS--BALLISTAS--Are loaded with large glass balls filled with thick liquid.

HEDRICK
Now!

The siege engines fire with a crude snapping wooden noise. The balls arch down toward the two barges tangled with the longships. The devices are pulled back and loaded as others are fired. The balls fall all around the vessels--some find their marks, shattering on the decks.

STRIDER--Erik and the others look up from quickly binding wounds to see the silvery balls arc towards them through the air. They fall short.

GUNNAR
What kind of black magic--

HAROLDE
The Greek Fire! Get out of here!
Now!

They all turn to look at him--crouched back against the stern gunwale holding a bloody axe. Thorgrim laughs as do the others--it is some sight to see--the deck strewn with dead, wounded, and pieces of the aforementioned, and a Priest crouching in his black robe with a battle axe.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE (CONT'D)
We must row!

ERIK
Now he wants to row.

SVERRI
And let them see our backs.

EGIL
We are not finished with them.

MAHOUD
What is your name Priest?

HAROLDE
I am Brother Harolde.

ERIK
Brother Bloodaxe!

Harolde looks at the axe and drops it.

HAROLDE
You are mad--You are the curse
of God.

ERIK
We have fun though don't we?

He turns.

ERIK (CONT'D)
Oars out!

He picks up a body and slings it over

ERIK (CONT'D)
This is a longship--not a burying
mound.

CUT TO:

ALUREA--Stands up--steps to the edge of the cliff, her hand on her breast. Hedrick signals--the archers light the arrows--lean out over the battle below, and fire on Grunnsen's ship and the two barges.

SHATTERED GLASS--And the thick liquid splattered on the deck--arrows thunk into the wood--one of them, then another ignite the fluid, which bursts into white hot flame with explosive force.

MORE GLASS BALLS--Raining down upon the hapless vessels from another barrage.

LONGSHIP--BARGES--The whole thing erupts in sparking detonating flame and thick black smoke. MEN scream and run about on fire--OTHERS try to get out of the way. More glass balls hit. The MEN-AT-ARMS are now close enough to

(CONTINUED)

throw them from the rocks. Both Norsemen and Saxons fry together. MEN leap into the water only to come up still burning! OTHERS try to quench the flames with water to no avail. A VIKING stands screaming with his hair on fire.

CUT TO:

ERIK--Stares at the conflagration.

ERIK
Row! Ready oars!

The crew straightens the oars.

ERIK (CONT'D)
Pull!

He ties his shirt around himself to stop the bleeding from the deep wound in his side. Thorgrim throws the last of the dead over. They look up to see a glass ball sail over--another falls short--they are bracketed. Two more smash to pieces near the bow--splattering the liquid about.

ERIK (CONT'D)
Pull!

Harolde sits next to Sverri at his bench.

SVERRI
Watch me! --Like this.

Harolde follows his movements as best he can. Arrows start to whistle towards them--but the longship is gathering speed and the range is great. A flame arrow sticks in the mast--another in the side--a third in the stern deck. The Vikings quickly pulls these out, and throw them without breaking stride.

CUT TO:

ALUREA--She is delighted and satisfied almost trying to suppress her orgiastic release.

ALUREA
Yes--This is what I wanted. This will show everyone--Yes--But the other ship! You must get them all!

HEDRICK
There is nowhere for them to go--
You wanted it to the last--Sit down
My Lady and enjoy this at your leisure.

But she is too carried away.

CUT TO:

THE CHAIN--Hanging low across the mouth of the river. Archers run up on the rocks to get a good position as the Strider rushes toward the obstacle. The current of tide is with them and the Strider really moves.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERIK--Sits at an oar as does Thorgrim--all row save Mahfoud and the red-haired girl who stares in wide eyed innocence at the whole thing and crosses herself.

CHAIN--Raised a little higher by a great iron wheel at the water's edge manned by SIX STRONG MEN.

HEDRICK (shouts)
Lower it! --Too high and it will only
take their mast!

They lower it as the Strider comes on--the Vikings yelling a cadence in unison.

ARROW--Thuds into the bow igniting the naptha. It bursts into flame, lighting up the dragon as it bears down on the chain. The first row of oarsmen is forced to move back--the dragon raises slightly--the chain rushing towards us.

ERIK (rowing).
Ship oars! Stern all!

The oars are shipped, the Vikings rush to the stern leaping over the benches--the prow dragon lifts as the chain is closing.

STRIDER--THE LIFTING BOW--As the men rush to the stern--the bow scrapes the chain down and goes over--a screeching of metal on wood. The chain is drawn tight as it reaches amidships.

ERIK
Bow all!

THORGRIM
Move you fools!

They all rush to the flaming bow--arrows whistle by--and stick into the stern, which now starts to lift as the mid point is past. There is more screeching and the stern rises, as the Strider slips into the sea and slides over the chain.

ERIK
To oars!

They rush to their benches oblivious of the flames.

CUT TO:

ALUREA--Standing at the cliff's edge watching the Strider pull out of harm's way--biting her finger.

HEDRICK--Walks up the steep trail. Down below his men are fishing survivors from the water.

HEDRICK
My Lady.

She looks down, he points to THREE BURLY MEN-AT-ARMS who are binding a wet Grunssen with thick leather straps.

(CONTINUED)

HEDRICK (CONT'D)
He was their leader--their Chieftain.

She walks down the trail--

ALUREA
Bring him to me.

They carry him--trussed up so he cannot move. She looks him over.

ALUREA (CONT'D)
Stand him straight.

She looks him up and down.

ALUREA (CONT'D)
So large--Tell me pagan--How would you like to die at the hand of a woman.

GRUNSSSEN
It would be most unlucky--but at least you are comely.

ALUREA
You won't get into Valhalla that way.

GRUNSSSEN
There are other things I have done in my life that the Valkyries will remember.

A MAN AT ARMS comes up holding gold candle pieces, a chalice and a cross.

KNIGHT
We found one of them clinging to these--

OTHER KNIGHT
Pagan thieves--took them from the sacristy.

GRUNSSSEN
We had hoped for so much more, but I guess my luck has changed.

Hedrick takes a candlestick and swats Grunssen across the face with it.

HEDRICK
Profaner! Defiler!

ALUREA
Enough! Bring him to the Point--Prepare a fire and bellows.

She points to the Knight holding the chalice and cross.

CONTINUED

ALUREA (CONT'D)
Bring these too.

CUT TO:

STRIDER--Staying just out of range of the siege engines and bows. The fire in her prow has been extinguished by smothering it with cloaks and furs. Mahfoud stands at the stern rudder, while half the Vikings row to keep the ship in place. Erik, Thorgrim and Gunnar finish stomping out the last embers.

ERIK
Now I have seen fire of the Greek kind.

GUNNAR
I wish not to see it again.

Harolde stands at the mast.

HAROLDE
The fires of damnation burn even fiercer--and longer.

Thorgrim stands and starts towards him.

ERIK
Thorgrim! He saved your new wife.
They laugh. Thorgrim looks sheepish.

THORGRIM
Thank you Brother Bloodaxe.

MAHFOUD
Look!

They turn to see a PARTY OF KNIGHTS escorting Lady Alurea to the tip of the Point. A PROCESSION follows, in which the bound prisoners are led to where a small fire burns fiercely on a ledge overlooking the crashing sea. It is almost dark, and the whole thing has a dark religious air to it.

CRIER
Northmen! Come closer Northmen--
Your brothers need to bid you farewell.

The Vikings go to their oars. Erik stands in the prow with Thorgrim.

CRIER (CONT'D)
Come closer--We shall not harm you--
You have the protection of our Mistress the Lady Alurea.

Erik turns to Harolde.

ERIK
Come here Priest.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He does.

ERIK (CONT'D)
Can she be trusted?

HAROLDE
Have you learned nothing?

ERIK
We are Vikings and we do not care--
Go closer.

HAROLDE
Even the Lord cannot advise a fool.

They roll in closer--as they do, Hedrick's men take the prisoners to the edge, stand them bound and push them over into the waves below, crashing on sharp rocks. They flounder--gasps and are soon gone--all except Grunssen who is brought to the fire.

CLOSE FIRE--Pumped by crude bellows to an intense heat, a steel pot glows red. Into this is thrown the chalice--the candlesticks have already been melted down. The MAN stirring hesitates with the cross.

ALUREA
Go ahead--it has been tainted--

He drops it in.

ALUREA (CONT'D) (shouts)
Northmen--Forgive me--My rushed
hospitality--But I did not know
you were coming to visit.

ERIK (shouts)
We will expect better next time.

ALUREA
Your brother said that you seek gold?

ERIK
We will go where the people are
prosperous--It is our mistake.

ALUREA
I think you should have something
for having traveled so far--

She turns to Hedrick.

ALUREA (CONT'D)
Bring him.

They bring Grunssen to her--kneel him down, hold his head.
ONE of them produces an iron funnel.

ALUREA (CONT'D)
You wanted gold--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She motions--TWO HUGE MEN raise the red hot pot on smoking wooden staves.

ALUREA (CONT'D)
Open his mouth.

GRUNSSSEN
There is no need.

He turns and bellows.

GRUNSSSEN (CONT'D)
I come from a cold place--All my
life I have frozen in the wind.
Perhaps I need a drink of hot broth!

He opens his mouth--yells--

GRUNSSSEN
ODIN!!

They tip the pot and pour the molten gold down his throat. It splatters smoking across his face. His body spasms--twitching--kicking and then goes rigid. They continue to pour until the pot is empty.

CLOSE VIKINGS--They look on--Harolde stares in horror but the others are strangely calm.

THORGRIM
His luck changed again.

ERIK
Surely he will go straight to
Valhalla.

Harolde turns and looks at them with even more astonishment.

CLOSE ALUREA--A cruel smile on her face--and a hint of carnality. Grunssen's stiff body pours smoke from his mouth, nose and chest. They let it go and it thuds on the rocks.

ALUREA
Now, get my gold back!

STRIDER--Turning away under oars.

ERIK (shouts)
Perhaps I will be back in the spring
to bed you

ALUREA (shouts)
My bed is warm Northman--I will wait
for you.

The Strider raises a tattered sail and heaves over the swell towards the open sea and a dark sunset.

CUT TO:

III: (HOW ERIK WAS HEALED, AND HOW HAROLDE
THE BENEDICTINE SWAM IN THE NORTH SEA)

NEXT MORNING--STRIDER--On the high seas--a storm is
building in the distance, the sky a deep red. The Strider
slips over the large black swells.

DECK--Sverri and Odd sew the torn sail while a half-crew
row. The others are asleep except for Thorgrim's girl who
is wretching over the side.

THORGRIM

Soon you'll be better--there--there--

ODD

Maybe not.

THORGRIM

Shut-up.

Mahfoud prods Erik who is asleep at the stern.

MAHFOUD

Wake--wake--I am tired now--

Nothing.

MAHFOUD

He does not stir--One of you do it--
I do not like to displease him.

Gunnar shakes himself awake and comes back with Egil.
They prod Erik--he groans, and turns up a sickly face.

EGIL

Perhaps he is dreaming of the red
Bitch's offer--Look his side is
covered in Saxon blood.

GUNNAR

So is his sword arm--

THORGRIM

That is why he is called Erik the
Red you fools.

Harolde crawls over.

EGIL

Yes--he is dreaming of her white
breasts.

HAROLDE

No--he is bleeding to death.

Others come over.

THOROLF

What do we do?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THORGRIM
Carve runes.

The others agree--Thorolf takes out his knife, goes to Erik--pulls away his cloak.

THORGRIM (CONT'D)
Not on him you oaf! --On wood!

THOROLF
You call me an oaf!

THORGRIM
I will split you to your crotch
if you do not like it.

HAROLDE
Good--I'm glad you are so quick to
temper--Take out your sword.

They stare at him.

HAROLDE (CONT'D)
Carve runes or each other--He will
be dead without proper care.

Mahfoud steps over.

MAHFOUD
You know this Christian?

He turns to the others.

MAHFOUD (CONT'D)
Their Priests are good with wounds--
it is known.

HAROLDE
I am a Benedictine--All of us are
taught to heal--as sacred duty. Even
the enemies of God.

He looks into Mahfoud's face.

HAROLD (CONT'D)
Even Satan himself.

THORGRIM
Carve runes--Do not trust a Christian
He will sprinkle the water--then Erik
will die.

MAHFOUD
He was right about the Greek flames.

GUNNAR
Three things can never be trusted--
a coiled snake, a bride's bedtalk,
and the word of a Christian.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

MAHFOUD

Who made you Chieftain? After Erik,
we are all equals.

He looks around--they all acknowledge.

GUNNAR

If he dies--I kill the Priest.

MAHFOUD

If he dies--We will all kill him.

CUT TO:

LATER--HAROLDE'S HANDS--Carefully cleans Erik's wound with
salt water from a pail held by Thorgrim's girl. She is
shaky and spills some.

HAROLDE

If you cannot help--then do what
you must my Child.

She hands the pail to Mahfoud and goes to the side.

MAHFOUD

How many men have you healed Brother
Bloodaxe?

HAROLDE

Thirty or more sheep--twenty or more
pigs--no men--a horse or two--some
died--

VIKINGS--They are all watching--Odd is carving a wolf.
Gunnar sharpens an axe.

ERIK--Covered in furs and blankets--sweating--the ship is
pitching more violently, the wind rising. Mahfoud looks
down from the helm. Harolde sits next to Erik.

MAHFOUD

He will live?

HAROLDE

He is in God's hands.

MAHFOUD

So are you.

CUT TO:

NIGHT--STORM--Raging--the Strider is tossed about in sleet
and wind. The sail is down and the crew huddles around
the mast--save Mahfoud and Thorgrim who man the helm.
Harolde crouches over Erik, who looks pale.

THORGRIM

Does he still live?

HAROLDE

He lives.

(CONTINUED)

THORGRIM--

Egil--Odd--bind him here at my feet
and bind his sword to his hands.

They come back shakily and set to the task.

ERIK--Bound to the keel below the helm--Mahfoud holding
the rudder for all he's worth--water coming over the bow--
the others bailing frantically. Thorgrim's girl is bound
to the mast. Gunnar motions to Thorgrim.

GUNNAR

The Priest--it is time for the
Priest.

THORGRIM

Yes--

CUT TO:

HAROLDE--Being tied clumsily with a thick rope amidst all
the chaos. He is brought to the stern where the rope is
attached.

HAROLDE (to Mahfoud)

Why? Why are you doing this?

MAHFOUD

It is thought that to throw a
Christian Priest over will calm
the seas.

HAROLDE

You're going to let them?

MAHFOUD

Perhaps it will help.

STERN--Harolde is thrown unceremoniously into the North
Sea. He drags behind the ship--his arms free trying to
keep his head above water.

DISSOLVE TO:

DAWN--The storm has broken. The Strider dips and pitches
on huge black swells but the wind is dying. The light of
a new day streams through the clouds.

HAROLDE--Dragging frozen and all but dead. He is hauled
in.

CUT TO:

HAROLDE--Wrapped in furs and blankets, he is being fed hot
gruel and rubbed by the Vikings, who are now very
attentive and concerned. He is still not conscious.

CLOSE HAROLDE--His eyes open. He turns his head to see
Erik, wrapped up in like manner smiling at him, while
Mahfoud feeds him roast pig.

(CONTINUED)

MAHFOUD

You are strong Priest and that
is all that matters here. Your
God is strong in these waters too.

THORGRIM

Yes he is a good Priest--the best
I have ever seen. He calmed the
sea and saved my Gertrude.

He pulls the red-haired girl to his side. She is feeling
much better and clearly likes Thorgrim now.

THORGRIM (CONT'D)

--And his power is strong on Erik.

SVERRI

Perhaps you will find us some rich
churches filled with fat merchants,
smiling girls, and heavy gold.

THORGRIM

Maybe we will not sell you after
all.

Erik leaps up--looks into Harolde's eyes.

ERIK

Why did you not die in the water?

GUNNAR

The sea likes you.

MAHFOUD

Have you been in the waters before?

HAROLDE

Only to bathe--Something I'm sure
you would know little about.

ERIK

Why did you not die?

HAROLDE

I wanted to die--I closed my eyes
and I saw the light of the Saints.
I imagined a great Cathedral and
the sounds of harps and organs--the
descent of heavenly angels and a
glowing warmth rushed through me--
And then--

ERIK

Then?

HAROLDE

I knew the Devil was tempting me. I
shook myself awake, spit out the water
and resolved to live and teach the
gospel among the Danes!

They all look at each other. Indeed this is some Priest.

DISSOLVE TO:

IV: (A THEOLOGICAL DISCUSSION AND HOW THE VIKINGS
RETURNED TO THEIR FAMILIES)

BARREN ISLAND--Somewhere in the North Sea. Strider is beached in a glassy inlet. Bonfires burn on the strand. At the top of a grassy hill, the crew has gathered.

STONE--Man-sized, raised and planted. On this Sverri pounds a chisel with the flat of his axe. He has been carving words upon the stone and finished, he stands and begins to recite:

SVERRI

Odin, make room at the table in
Valhalla for these fierce men who
we have sent you--Gudman, Alsi,
Karli, Grim, Grunnsen--

HAROLDE--Off to the side under a windswept tree. He has fashioned a cross of driftwood, which he sinks into the sandy soil.

HAROLDE

Brother Godwine, who was true to
his Faith in all things and a girl
I don't even know the name of. Accept
these souls dear Lord for they were
innocent--

He crosses himself.

NIGHT--BONFIRE--Harolde sits away from the others looking through the flames. He shivers--hands reach down and place a heavy fur over him. He looks up.

ERIK

You will freeze that way.

HAROLDE

Would it concern you?

ERIK

You healed me.

HAROLDE

My God healed you.

ERIK

I am just trying to return the
favor.

HAROLDE

I'll let Him know.

Erik sits down with a cup of ale--offers it to Harolde.

ERIK

It's good Priest--English.

He doesn't take it--Erik drinks.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERIK (CONT'D)
Why were they hanging you up in
a tree?

HAROLDE
It's a long story.

ERIK
Well--will you tell it?

HAROLDE
No.

Silence--Harolde doesn't respond to anything.

ERIK
Are you thinking of home?

HAROLDE
I have no home.

ERIK
I didn't think so.

Harolde turns at that. Erik smiles, he sees more than he
lets on. Harolde returns the smile, as he realizes he's
underestimated this man.

ERIK (CONT'D)
If you were free--what path would
you take?

HAROLDE
The one God chooses for me--and He
chooses well.

ERIK
They say this God of yours died
hung up on a sycamore tree, or an
elm, without a fight.

HAROLDE
He died for us--even you. He did
not resist that. That is why we
believe in submission and forgiveness.

ERIK
You believe that? --We believe in
honor and loyalty.

HAROLDE
We teach humility not pride.

ERIK
We teach pride--not arrogance!

HAROLDE
--And murder and rape--

ERIK
All men rape--one way or another--
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

ERIK (CONTINUED)

it is our weakness--but let me tell you about murder. King Sven Forkbeard of Denmark--He let himself be baptised a Christian some years ago. It was said your Bishops paid well in gold for this baptism, and now King Sven goes about merrily butchering all his subjects who will not do likewise even without the gold.

He turns to Harolde urgently.

ERIK (CONT'D)

He burned a house with my wife and a youngest son in it! He cut off my brother's hands and feet--and his tongue from his mouth--All this in the name of the Cross. I know your God, if he enjoys such work, then he is no different than mine.

HAROLDE

Then you believe in nothing.

ERIK

I believe in all of them--your Christ, Mahfoud's Allah--Odin, Thor, Freya-- But let me tell you something Priest. None of them listen when you whine. They enjoy it.

HAROLDE

Like I said--you believe in nothing. Without belief you cannot have Faith, and Faith is strength.

ERIK

What makes you think so?

HAROLDE

I have seen seven Priests much like myself, young, their lives to live-- burned to death at the stake. They screamed and whined--as you say, but their last word was to God! That is strength Viking--That is Faith and you can never understand!

Erik flexes his right arm--makes a fist.

ERIK

This I understand--This has never failed me. And this too--all men die, so at least die well. I will not go quietly. Sigurd the Volsung died laughing.

He means it--he turns back to the fire--the others have gathered around and listened. They comment to each other. Finally he turns to Harolde.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERIK (CONT'D)

I was going to sell you at Kaupang Priest, but I seldom get to argue with an intelligent man--so I'm keeping you as my Thrall, Brother Bloodaxe. Can you forgive me?

Harolde glares at him.

ERIK (CONT'D)

By the way, have you forgiven those who hung you up in that tree?

All the others laugh.

HAROLDE

No. But I will.

ERIK

Maybe--maybe not Brother Bloodaxe.

NORWEGIAN COAST--FJORDS--Snow laces the upper reaches of the mountains which sweep down to the flat, grey sea--shimmering like mercury where the sun breaks through the fog banks. The steep sided fjords are long and narrow. Settlements are confined to ledges and small plains at their heads.

VILLAGE OF GOKSTAD--A small fishing and farming village nestled at the base of one such fjord.

HALFWAY UP A SLOPE--A YOUNG WOMAN--On her hands and knees, digging up turnips, notices something out to sea, squints to see better. She is a raw, blonde beauty of twenty three, SIGRID. Suddenly she cries out, starts sprinting down the slope towards the village, spade in hand--screaming and shouting to the other people digging in the fields. She's as gracefully athletic as any of the Viking men we've seen.

STRIDER--ANGLE TOWARDS SEA--A speck on the ocean, heading towards Gokstad.

THE CREW--Ragged, hungry young men line the gunwales, hooting and hollering. Many fight back tears.

ERIK (sternly)

No crying! When we left Gokstad some of you were still boys. Show the homefolk we come back as MEN--all of us.

GOKSTAD HARBOR--A COUPLE HUNDRED VILLAGERS--Crowd around the waterfront, barely containing their excitement as the ship approaches the strand. They wear furs, woolen jackets, cloth leggings and seal-skin boots. All the men carry weapons on their hips or over their backs. Some try to hold back the crowd, to give the crew room as:

STRIDER--Rides up onto the sand. Her crewmen, dressed now in full battle gear, clamber over the sides, splash into the knee deep water. Some pass down wounded mates, some are limping. All doing their best to look like warriors, like men.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VILLAGERS--As the crewmen wade towards them--MOTHERS and WIVES weeping, FATHERS biting their lips--and then, all discipline goes to hell and:

CREWMEN--VILLAGERS--Rush to meet each other, the Viking raiders just boys again, running to their family's arms. The two groups dissolve into a happy throng, hugging, laughing as they move away from the water.

ERIK--As he slowly wades towards the beach, his expression darkens. He's noticed the many families that remain standing at the shoreline, scanning the horizon in vain for a sign of the missing second ship. He's deeply affected and feeling shamed. Suddenly his name is called out--he turns. A fine looking strong BOY of sixteen runs up to him and throws his arms around him. Three wolfhounds dash up and jump all over them. Erik has tear rolling down his face.

ERIK
Leif! --Leif!

LEIF
Father!

The girl Sigrid comes up to them.

SIGRID
I'm glad you're alive.

ERIK
--My beloved sister does not bring
me ale?

SIGRID (stern)
Father wants to see you.

She pulls Erik and his son through the crowd that includes Thorgrim introducing Gertrude to his PARENTS, and Odd, the Berserker, picking up his frail little MOTHER and holding her over his head.

AN OLD VIKING CHIEFTAIN--Standing on the hill looking down as Erik, Sigrid and Leif approach. This is TOSTIG, the family patriarch. He is smaller than Erik, solidly built, grey and weathered, having seen dark and brutal years. He has one eye, the other closed by a scar. Erik, who bows to nothing, is deferential in Tostig's presence.

TOSTIG
Just one ship.

Erik looks away says nothing--looks back at Tostig.

TOSTIG (CONT'D') (yells)
Unload the spoils! Take them to the
mound!

He turns to Erik.

TOSTIG (CONT'D)
You tell them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Erik turns to the assembled crowd.

ERIK

Do not look for another ship--it
will not come.

The families of the missing men stare at him.

HAROLDE--Stares at the whole thing and can't help but feel
for their plight. He grits his teeth--stiffens his resolve--
He looks at the unfamiliar Norwegian wooden houses--turf
roofed, scattered about more substantial structures.

ERIK

Leif--take the Thrall--he is mine.

Leif comes and puts a stout rope around Harolde, who does not
resist. He is led off--the wolfhounds growl at him. He
notices Sigrid looking him over, whispering to the other
women. A Thrall? CHILDREN run up and poke at him with
sticks--a pebble bounces off his head. Leif waves the
children aside with a slaughter knife.

MOUND--Six feet high--twenty or thirty feet across--flattened
stones in a semi-circle. Tostig seats himself in the center
with Erik while others assemble.

ERIK

Where is Mother?

TOSTIG

She has forsaken the old ways. She
chooses the new god.

ERIK

Christian?

TOSTIG

In a fashion--I wish to speak no
more of it.

ERIK

You let my mother become Christian!

TOSTIG

You lost a ship and I still call you
Son--Since when have you or anyone
controlled the minds of women?

The other stones are taken up by VETERAN WARRIORS(the village
"Elders") as the booty is piled and divided in the center,
while all the villagers look on. Ale is passed around.
Three great stone totems carved with runic inscriptions tower
above the crowd. A VIKING, dressed black, lights a fire in a
cavity in each of them. The crewmen down the ale eagerly
watching the division of the loot.

HAROLDE--Is brought to one of the totems and held there.

SIGRID--Leans over to Erik.

(CONTINUED)

SIGRID

Since when do Gokstaders take
Thralls?

ERIK (harsh)

We take what we have to. I lost a
man. I needed his back at an oar.

SIGRID

His back? --He wears a dress.

TOSTIG--Shouts emotionally from the mound:

TOSTIG (shouts)

Great Thor in Valhalla! For bringing
our warriors home today, all praise
to you!

Grateful, joyous answering shouts of "Thor! Thor!" from the families of the survivors, as they raise their cups of ale in toast. Erik doesn't toast with the others--he's in a grim mood. Amidst the revelry, a red-eyed WIDOW of twenty four, with a bawling infant in her arms, shouts bitterly toward Tostig.

WIDOW

Praise Thor!
(eyeing Erik)
And maybe you can forget our
husbands and brothers.

She breaks down, sobbing. Other angry voices, the families of the missing men, rise to echo the Widow's bitterness.

GUNNAR

We fought hard! The odds were heavy
against us. Our luck was bad.

ERIK (cutting him off)

No! Luck had nothing to do with it!
The fault was mine--
(glancing towards Harolde)
Arrogance!

Harolde stares back at Erik. In spite of himself, he's finding himself drawn into this Viking drama.

ERIK (CONT'D)

If I could die to bring your fathers
and brothers and sons back--
(glances at Tostig)
--or wipe clean the dishonor I've
brought to my family's name, I would
give myself this instant to Odin.
(pauses, defeated)
I turn over my share of the spoils
to the families of the dead.

He descends and pushes his way through the crowd. Tostig gazes after his Erik walks off, sharing his anguish and humiliation. The crowd is subdued.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOSTIG (to crewmen)
I ask the rest of you survivors, if
you're willing, turn over a portion
of your shares to the bereaved to
see them through the winter. We stick
together, as a village--or perish one
by one.

The crewmen, one by one, begin carrying booty to the families
of the missing.

SIGRID (calling)
What about the Thrall?

Villagers turn toward her voice, crane necks to see. A buzz
as many notice Harolde for the first time.

TOSTIG
We'll take him to the Yule feast in
Kaupang with the rest of the spoils.
Until then, he's our Thrall.

Tostig walks away, turns.

TOSTIG
Erik!

He turns, looks sheepishly at his father.

TOSTIG (CONT'D)
You have not seen your mother.

ERIK
Why did she not come to greet me?

TOSTIG
She wasn't sure it would be you
who returned.

They go off together.

TOSTIG
Leif--take the Thrall and cleanse
him in the stream, he probably stinks.

HAROLDE (to himself)
You think it is I who would stink?

LEIF
What is it Thrall?

HAROLDE
Cleanliness is close to Godliness.

LEIF
Your God is always clean?

HAROLDE
He is pure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEIF
--And he doesn't squat to relieve
himself or belch or fart?

HAROLDE
No--

LEIF
Does he sweat?

HAROLDE
No.

LEIF
Then he doesn't work very hard.

HAROLDE
Toil is beneath His magnificence.

LEIF
Then he is just like Odin who is
lazy and deceived the earth giants
into building Valhalla for him. He
said he would give them Freya but
he lied.

HAROLDE
My God does not lie--What is Freya?

LEIF
The goddess of youth, beauty and grace.
Loki, the earth giant wanted her--
all men do. He was a fool for youth
and beauty--so he built Valhalla but
Odin lied. How could even Odin speak
for a woman anyway. No man can.

HAROLDE
What happened?

They reach the stream--ice cold.

LEIF
It has not been decided, but it is
said there will be a war between the
gods and the earth giants. It is
called Ragnarok.

HAROLDE
The end of the world?

LEIF
Yes--Get in--Take off your dress.

HAROLDE
A Priest does not shed his robe.

Leif kicks him brutally into the stream without a second
thought.

(CONTINUED)

LEIF

It is just as well--Perhaps your dress stinks too.

Harolde flops around outraged.

LEIF (CONT'D)

Use the sand to wash--Ragnarok--it is the end of the world but it is said that the world will start again--clean. Like you will be.

CUT TO:

V: (TOSTIG GIVES FATHERLY COUNSEL TO HIS SON.
HAROLDE LEARNS THE LESSONS OF THE SOIL AND
EATS A HEARTY MEAL)

HUT--On the side of a slope going down to the Fjord. It is surrounded by flowers, and would never be known for Tostig's house save the skull of a wolf over the door.

TOSTIG

Before we go in.

Erik turns.

ERIK

Yes father--

Tostig smashes him across the face with his walking staff. Then beats him about the head and shoulders brutally. Erik rolls in the dirt trying to escape, but the old man is expert in the use of weapons. He smashes him again and again--kicks him hard in the ribs. Finally he stands there winded, while Erik looks up at him.

TOSTIG

You lost a ship--Now get up.

He does.

TOSTIG (CONT'D)

Straighten yourself--Do you want your mother to see you this way?

Erik pulls himself together, brushes himself off--wipes blood from his mouth. Tostig goes tentatively to the door.

TOSTIG (CONT'D)

Asa? Asa my little flower--Your son has returned from the sea.

The door opens and a small hearty woman with sparkling eyes stands there. She wears a cross.

ASA

My son! You've come back--Oh my son!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

She throws her arms around him. Tears stream down her cheeks. Erik snuffles too.

ASA (CONT'D)
I prayed to the new God and He
answered me. He is a strong God--
Even this far north.

She looks at him.

ASA (CONT'D)
Are you whole?

ERIK
Yes Mother?

ASA
Did you bring me some gold?

CUT TO:

DAWN--GOKSTAD--The village is waking up from its sleep. As they emerge from their houses, MEN head down to the fishing boats, WOMEN to the fields. Around the village: A BLACKSMITH fires up his forge, getting ready to repair the raider's damaged weapons. An intricate and beautiful Norse pattern of intertwined animals is being woven on a loom. A WOMAN pushes the shuttlecock through the loom. FISHERMEN (former crewmen) row through the icy waters, singing a Norwegian shanty, and cast their nets wide--

ERIK'S LONGHOUSE--CHILDREN'S ROOM--HAROLDE--Is still sound asleep on a tiny, straw filled mattress. Suddenly his blanket is ripped off. He's dragged out of bed by Leif--and looks up to see Sigrid's tall female form standing over him.

LEIF
Are you dead?

HAROLDE
I--I was tired.

SIGRID
So you sleep and fatten while the
rest of us work?

He gets up quickly.

HAROLDE
I am sorry, but I am no stranger
to work.

Leif has a heavy white cape, long shirt and trousers for him.

HAROLDE (CONT'D)
What are these?

SIGRID
Thrall's garment--

HAROLDE
I wear the black robe.

(CONTINUED)

SIGRID

Not here--here you are a Thrall
first.

Harolde pushes Leif aside.

HAROLDE

It is my Faith.

SIGRID

Leif--Go get some Berserkers and
dress him.

Leif starts to go.

HAROLDE

No--it will not be necessary.

He takes the clothing--waits for Sigrid to leave--she
doesn't.

HAROLDE (CONT'D)

What are you waiting for?

SIGRID

For you to take off your dress.

Leif seems bored and perplexed. It is almost fully eight--
the day is wasting. Harolde glances at Sigrid and pulls off
his robe and stands naked. She leans in, looks him over.

SIGRID (CONT'D)

You look like a man--You even have
shoulders.

He puts on his pants and shirt.

HAROLDE

I said I am no stranger to work.

SIGRID

That we shall see.

CUT TO:

A COW--Being milked vigorously by Harolde--Leif looks on
bored, sharpening his slaughter knife. The cow moos.

LEIF

She likes you.

Harolde looks up.

HAROLDE

Your sister?

LEIF

No, the cow.

CUT TO:

HAROLDE AT BEACH--Sitting with WOMEN deftly tying knots in an old fishing net. The women look him over--they are somewhat fascinated.

WOMAN

Where did you learn that Thrall?

HAROLDE

In the service of God.

She shrugs.

HAROLDE (CONT'D)

Did you know that the end of the world is soon to be? That you will burn in eternal fire?

OTHER WOMAN

What else can you do?

HAROLDE

There is still the chance to save yourselves.

WOMAN

Can you make a horseshoe? Tan a hide? Make butter?

HAROLDE

I can make butter.

OTHER WOMAN

Can you do other things a man can do?

HAROLDE

I cannot kill, rape or burn if that's what you mean.

OTHER WOMAN

Pity--for you are pleasant to look upon.

ANOTHER WOMAN

Yes, and her man did not come back. It will be a cold winter.

HAROLDE

It will be the last winter--the end is near.

WOMAN

Have you ever laid with a woman?

HAROLDE

I am a monk of Christ, I have taken vows--

WOMAN

Our men take vows, but that does not stop them.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE

Because they are awash in sin and depravity. There is something more. There is a chance at salvation. Our Lord understands a sinner because he is infinite in his mercy.

SIGRID

And you are infinite in your prattle.

He turns to see her standing with her hands on her shapely hips.

SIGRID (CONT'D)

Shirking honest toil seems to be your greatest gift.

Leif stands behind her with a crude spade.

SIGRID (CONT'D)

Take him to dig up turnips since women's work seems to distract him.

Leif is bored--this is not what a Viking teenager should be doing.

SIGRID (CONT'D)

--And watch him carefully.

LEIF

Where would he go sister? How many turnips do you want?

She goes back towards the longhouse.

SIGRID

I'll tell you when to stop.

HAROLDE (calling after her)

I put my trust in your feminine moderation and kindness.

She ignores him.

DUSK--FIELD--HAROLDE--Is on his hands and knees, digging through the rocky soil. He's dirty and sweaty and tired. Something in the distance catches Haroldde's eye--high on a cliff face on the other side of the fjord, a couple of small figures can be seen moving--Gunnar and Sverri gathering tern eggs. Haroldde watches in amazement.

LEIF

Don't worry Thrall, you won't have to do that. You'd never be able. When I become a blood brother, I will.

Harolde glances at Leif. The boy is serious.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE

With my blessing. And take your
sister with you.
(resumes digging turnips)
Don't tell me these miserable things
are your major crop?

Leif exhales derisively. Plucks a stone from the hard, dry
earth, holds it up.

LEIF

THESE are our major crop.

There are giggles from the OTHER KIDS, as Leif whips the
stone away. Harolde gazes at the boy for a moment, then
looks around thoughtfully at the barren fields surrounding
the village--then looks at the cliffs.

HAROLDE

So this is why you raid?

LEIF

We raid, Thrall, because we LIKE
to raid.

He smiles. Spirit and pride bristle from the boy. Harolde
answers with a dry smile of his own, returns to his digging.

CUT TO:

STEAMING DISHES OF MEAT AND FISH--Carried to a huge thick
table by Asa and set before Erik. The rest of the family
come over and sit on benches. Potatoes and steaming
vegetables are brought along with flagons of ale.

HAROLDE--Sits chained to a post in the far corner of Tostig's
hall.

SIGRID--Looks over at him but pays him little mention--Erik
takes a choice piece of meat.

ERIK

Thrall?

Harolde doesn't answer.

ERIK (CONT'D)

Are you hungry Thrall--? Do you
like the smell of my mother's cooking?
Leif--go get him.

Leif gets up.

SIGRID

You have a Thrall sit at our table?

ERIK

This Christ-Priest saved my life.

ASA

I had dreams--I saw you on a ship's
bench bleeding into the wood.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERIK
Your dream was true.

Leif brings Harolde over.

ERIK (CONT'D)
Sit down Brother Bloodaxe

Asa loads a steaming plate for him.

HAROLDE
I thank you kind soul for your
generosity. You are a Christian
Woman?

ASA
It is the true religion but do not
waste your breath on these men.
Though my son may understand when
he is older and wiser.

Harolde gobbles down the meat.

HAROLDE
It is good--and tender.

ASA
It is horse.

He chews more slowly.

HAROLDE
--And the fish?

ASA
Whale--It is my son's favorite.

SIGRID
If you do not find it toothsome
Thrall, you can eat bread.

TOSTIG
He likes it fine--
(to Harolde)
She is smart of temper like her
mother.

ASA (to Harolde)
Tell us of the story of the betrayal
and the suffering on the tree and the
crown of spikes.

ERIK
Perhaps we should eat first--Then
he will tell you of the end of the
world.

ASA
End of the world?

(CONTINUED)

LEIF

The only end for me will be when I
sail off the edge.

ERIK

Whatever, it will wait--Pass the
whale.

DISSOLVE TO:

LATER--ERIK--TOSTIG--Sprawled about drinking ale. Sigrid
stays at the table looking scornfully at Harolde who sits on
the floor.

SIGRID

You will not drink?

HAROLDE

There are others in my Order who
would drink but I do not accept
the temptation.

TOSTIG

What a bleak and barren life Thrall--
You are better off with us. We had
a Moor for a Thrall in this village,
and he knows the stars. They would
not let him drink ale either.

HAROLDE

I have met him.

TOSTIG

He earned his freedom taking me to
win a fortune in silver from the
Irish, and now he drinks ale like
a Viking.

HAROLDE

Then his Faith was weak.

TOSTIG

He guided me to a pile of silver
seldom seen. Henceforth I have
remained at home because I am
growing stiff of limb and my son
can win me prizes.

SIGRID (to Tostig).

Fool! You think the stiffness in
your back is from your voyages? It
is from idling before a fire all
winter where your legs are in my way.

She turns to Asa.

SIGRID (CONT'D)

What are men coming to nowadays?

ASA

Yes. My own great uncle Sven Rat
Nose fell like a hero fighting the
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASA (CONT'D)

Wends three years after drinking
every one under the table at his
youngest grandson's wedding! I
am tired of hearing complaints from
a man who is willing to die on his
back in the straw, like a cow.

She picks up some dishes and leaves.

ASA (CONT'D)

Next year you go with your son
and let me have the summer without
bother.

She is gone.

TOSTIG

If their female ancestors had tongues like
theirs--No wonder Sven Rat Nose preferred
to die with the Wends.

Erik smiles.

ERIK

I was worried about Mother being
a Christian--but she is still herself.

He looks over to Harolde.

HAROLDE

What will you do with me?

ERIK

Don't worry Englishman--We'll
trade you at the Yule feast to
someone who truly appreciates you,
like a Turk or a Gaut. Then you'll
see what hard work is.

He leans back, belches and starts to snore.

DISSOLVE TO:

VI: (HOW HAROLDE LEARNED TO CHOP WOOD AND WHAT
HAPPENED WHEN HE TOOK A SAUNA BATH AND
ROLLED IN THE SNOW.)

SNOW--Falling gently from a grey sky. It is early winter and
the Fjord is steel blue, and geese fly overhead crackling
softly. Harolde, bundled in furs, digs the last of the
turnips from the steep barren hillside, while it turns white.
Beside him, stands Leif on horseback with a spear. Harolde
roots in the ground like an animal. His hair has grown long
and he has a beard. His hands are wrapped in fragments of
cloth, he is filthy and tired looking, but he works
industriously. Below them, the village is closed up against
the coming snow, and smoke pours from chimneys, where it is
warm.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE
There are no more.

LEIF
I'm sure I could find some. These
will be the last of the winter Thrall.

He roots some more.

HAROLDE
I cannot feel my hands any longer.

LEIF
Is it warm and soft where you come
from?

HAROLDE
All men come from a place warm and
soft.

LEIF
Not Vikings--Get up Thrall--We go
and cut wood and you will tell me
of the world you have seen.

CUT TO:

WOODPILE--HAROLDE--Holds the stump. Leif readies the huge
axe. He starts to swing.

LEIF
Now!

Harolde pulls his hand away--the log starts to fall, but
Leif's blow is perfect and halves the log.

LEIF
Again.

He gets another log.

HAROLDE
Why have me hold them--You could
prop them up with--

LEIF
It is important to swing close to a
man with the blade. The stroke is
sweetened by the nearness of flesh,
and there will be a time when I must
stroke close to my brothers.

HAROLDE
Then it is for war--like all you do.

LEIF
War is fought to be won Thrall, and
my brothers fight close and each
depends upon the other to swing
true. Have you ever heard tales of
the warriors called Romans?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harolde looks up--stands.

HAROLDE

Of course--the Romans nailed my Lord
to his cross--Rome is the holiest
shrine in all Christendom.

LEIF

Have you ever been there?

HAROLDE

No--I have never been far from
where your father found me. I am
a simple monk of Saint Benedict.

LEIF

This place of the Romans--this Rome--
it is white and covered in gold?

HAROLDE

I do not know.

LEIF

I will go there someday--I will
see more of the world than other
men--These Romans--They were great
warriors?

HAROLDE

I suppose YOU would say that.

LEIF

--And they conquered all before them--
until your god came. They fought
close--like brothers.

HAROLDE

How did you know of this?

LEIF

Mahfoud told me and others at great
feasts. It is written. Some day I
shall learn to read.

HAROLDE

I can teach you.

LEIF

You?

HAROLDE

Yes--but what can you teach me?

LEIF

Here.

He hands him the axe. Harolde takes it clumsily.

LEIF (CONT'D)

I will not hold the wood until you
are good.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE
You would trust me?

LEIF
Teach me to read of the Romans
and I will teach you to cut wood
like a Viking.

CUT TO:

VILLAGE--LEIF--Rides while Harolde carries the turnips and
drags the wood. Erik steps out of the long house with Sverri
and Gunnar.

SVERRI
The ground is hard when the white
breath of winter speaks from a woman's
heart.

GUNNAR
Are you cold Englishman?

HAROLDE
Yes.

ERIK
Good, you can take the wood to
my sister and her friends--up
there.

He points to a low hut up the hillside where smoke issues
forth.

ERIK (CONT'D)
You can warm yourself there.

GUNNAR
You will leave him alone with them?

ERIK
He is a Christ-Priest. Your Faith
is strong eh Brother Bloodaxe?

HAROLDE
My Faith is strong.

CUT TO:

HAROLDE--Knocking on the door of the hut. The door opens and
there is Sigrid wrapped in a cloth and nothing else. Steam
pours out. It is a sauna.

SIGRID
Hurry up--don't stand about--
Bring it in.

She opens the door and Harolde enters to find SEVERAL WOMEN
laying on benches nude. They see him and cover themselves.

SIGRID (CONT'D)
You are shy before a Christ-
Priest?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOMAN

Only my husband can look upon
me now.

SIGRID

But this is not a man--

OTHER WOMAN

He is a Thrall but he is still
a man.

They put on robes, but not too hurriedly and with no
inhibition.

SIGRID

Stoke the fire Thrall. I know
you can do that.

The two girls slip by him. He tries not to take glimpses of
their flesh, but cannot help himself.

SIGRID (CONT'D)

You are leaving?

WOMAN

I must go to my husband.

They look back as they leave but the door soon shuts.
Harolde builds up the fire around the stones.

SIGRID

Take off your garments fool--You
will stink this place with your
filth.

He seems embarrassed but removes the heavy furs.

SIGRID (CONT'D)

Your shirt too--that smells worst
of all.

He pulls it over his head.

HAROLDE

Why have you no husband?

SIGRID

My husband went to Kiev to serve
Prince Yaroslav and there he died
in battle.

He turns and is aghast to see her laying down upon the bench
naked. He has only seen paintings and statues of naked
women before, and even these he was told to be wary of. But
Sigrid is sleek and lithe--her form languid, suggesting
subtle movement even when still. Her back arches, and a hint
of her soft breast is revealed beneath her long blonde hair.

SIGRID (CONT'D)

Take the birch twigs.

She points to a besom of birch branches. He does.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIGRID (CONT'D)
Now--water--in the pail.

She points, revealing more.

He cannot take his eyes from her and she knows it.

SIGRID (CONT'D)
Put it on the stones.

He does--it hisses--steam clouds up.

SIGRID (CONT'D)
More.

He does again.

SIGRID (CONT'D)
Wave the steam onto me--with the
birch.

He moves it feebly.

SIGRID (CONT'D)
Do not hesitate--the steam will soon
be gone.

He moves more--

SIGRID (CONT'D)
Onto me--touch the birch to my back.

He does--it leaves rivulets of water on her sweat shiny skin.

SIGRID (CONT'D)
Do it harder--

He hesitates.

SIGRID (CONT'D)
Do it!

He does--running the branch up her thighs and buttocks onto
her back.

SIGRID (CONT'D)
Again--with the steam.

She is breathing harder. So is he. She moves, letting her
knee drop over the edge of the bench.

SIGRID (CONT'D)
Now strike with the birch.

He again can't move.

SIGRID (CONT'D)
Strike!

He does--lightly--again--water runs down her limbs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

SIGRID (CONT'D)

Come here!

He does--she grabs the birch and pulls him to her--turning over and taking him down to her--she kisses him deeply--his eyes wide. His hands are on her--hers on him, their breathing loud. Can these be his hands, his body? It is completely beyond his control--his will. He pulls himself up, breaks the kiss. She pulls him down again. He falls into it--but his eyes go wide again. He uses all his strength and hurls himself off the bench--rolling across the floor. She gasps. He grabs the pale of water and throws it on his crotch, then staggers for the door. He fumbles for the bar, he hears her laugh.

SNOW--He rolls in the snow--pulling it up, packing it between his legs. Finally he looks up to see her standing over him in the doorway wrapped again. He stops.

HAROLDE

You are the Devil.

SIGRID

How strong is your Faith now, Christ-Priest? Perhaps you need to confess.

She closes the door leaving him half naked in the snow.

CUT TO:

DUSK--TOSTIG'S LONGHOUSE--A cold wind blows. Harolde staggers up--his upper body still naked. He did not dare retrieve his clothes. Leif is feeding horses.

LEIF

Eh Thrall--too long in the sauna?
Did you roll in the creek? It makes
you feel good all over. I'll bet
you've never been so healthy before--
Get a shirt--there is wood to cut.

Harolde goes into the hut at the side of the longhouse. Inside, Asa is preparing waterfowl for the evening meal.

ASA

What are you doing without your
shirt Brother--You will catch cold
and die.

Leif walks in.

ASA (CONT'D)

Is this the way you treat a good
Priest of God?

LEIF

He was in the sauna too long--

ASA

You do not know how to care for
anything. You are lazy and dream
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASA (CONT'D)
as good Priests freeze while you
think of yourself.

She gives Harolde a good thick wool shirt.

HAROLDE
Thank you good Lady.

ASA
I am roasting geese--with berries
inside--you will eat your share.

She leaves.

LEIF
It is best not to question her,
otherwise our eating fare suffers
and the ale is sour.

CUT TO:

VII: (CONCERNING STRENGTH AND THE VOYAGE TO KAUPANG)

NIGHT--LONGHOUSE--The Viking family is asleep--Tostig passed out in a chair with his wolfhounds--Leif on a pile of skins before the coals. Harolde is awake in a darkened corner. He looks around--gets up carefully--goes towards the door--looks into another room. Asa sleeps covered up, but a shaft of moonlight falls across Sigrid's face and naked shoulders. Her hair is draped across her pillow, golden in the light--her eyes closed and her mouth parted. Harolde whispers a prayer in Latin and crosses himself--opens the door.

CUT TO:

HORSE--He leads the largest shaggy mount from the stable and carefully puts back a crude railing. When he is sufficiently far from the longhouse--he grabs the horse's long mane and swings up onto his back clumsily. The horse trots about beyond his control. He does all he can to stay on. The horse turns and starts back to the stable.

HAROLDE
No--You fool--Do you want to be
supper tomorrow!

He swats at the horse--gets it turned and it starts to trot away towards the fjord, slipping in the light snow.

DOORWAY--Of Tostig's house. A foot, bare--then another, tough and knarled. The feet follow Harolde's tracks in the snow.

SEE THEM GO TOWARDS--The stable--a whistle.

WULFHOUNDS--MASTIFFS--Burst from the door--sniff the ground, follow the tracks, breaking into a run.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE--Trotting as best he can towards the steep cliffs over the black and silvery water. The sound of dogs baying suddenly rings through the cold night air. He tries to urge his mount on, but the horse hearing the dogs needs no encouragement--it breaks into a rough gallop. Harolde holds on for his life.

THE PACK OF HOUNDS--Coursing across the snow with Harolde in the distance. They howl with the lust of the hunt and the full moon. They are gaining quickly on the horse.

HAROLDE--Totally out of control dashes towards the cliffs and bounces off the horse, landing heavily in the snow. The dogs are coming fast. He scrambles to his feet and rushes to the edge of a drop to the water. The hounds, snarling are almost on him. Another whistle. The dogs fan out around--snarling and snapping. The mastiffs follow. Harolde turns to them--then to the water--crosses himself again and hurls himself from the ledge. He hits a rock below and bounces out and splashes into the water about thirty feet below.

CLIFF--The dogs stand at the edge wagging their tails in the moonlight as Erik appears in a long night shirt and night hat. He looks down--sees:

HAROLDE--Struggling and splashing and going under.

ERIK--Whistles differently--motions--the shaggy mastiffs rush down the slightest of trails and leap into the water.

HAROLDE--Being retrieved like a goose. His shirt held in the mouths of two mastiffs, while a third growls at the others. He is pulled from the water by Erik as the dogs sit and shake off. Erik stands over him, barefooted in his nightclothes, with a sword glinting in the moonlight.

ERIK

I suppose any man would try to gain
his freedom--But never try it again.
--Especially when I am sleeping.

Harolde breaks down crying, sobbing.

ERIK (CONT'D)

Stop that someone will hear.

Harolde can't control himself--gags on his sobs.

ERIK (CONT'D)

I am ashamed for you--Even you--Get
up!

He pulls him up. They start back.

ERIK (CONT'D)

Why did you try to drown?

HAROLDE

I did not want you to take me.

ERIK

Strange.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE

But I failed--I've failed in all things. What would you know of that?

ERIK

Don't be so selfish. Brother Bloodaxe-- I once lost a ship.

CUT TO:

TOSTIG'S HOUSE--Erik returns--they all wait wrapped up by the door.

ASA

Why did he run away?

TOSTIG

Perhaps he did not like your cooking.

ASA

He is cold and shivering.

ERIK

Of course he is Mother--he is wet. He tried to drown himself rather than be taken alive. Then he cries like a woman.

LEIF

Like a woman?

SIGRID

He is not like a woman. He is strong.

They look at her--she goes inside.

ERIK

I think so too--but he is strange.

CUT TO:

THE FJORD--WINTER--The steep hills covered in snow. The sound of hammers and sawing echo across the water. On the beach, the Strider has been pulled up and Viking men work on the hull. Women inspect ropes and sails. Smoke travels straight up into a windless pale sky.

LOG--Being held--a figure raises an axe and swings--the hand moves away--the log halved. Harolde looks up at Leif from a stacking of kindling. Leif shoulders his axe and looks up the steep white slope, hearing something. He sees:

TWO DISTANT FIGURES--Skiing down the steep face. From this distance, it is smooth and fluid though the technique is ancient. They turn by dropping the outside knee--separating the long board-like skis and using a single cross pole to drag in the snow. It is called the "Telemark" technique, and when done well, is quite beautiful. The figures glide down towards the village in long linked arcs, and it can be seen that they carry burdens on their backs.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

LEIF
It is the hunters.

HAROLDE
Can you do that?

LEIF
What ski? Every boy can ski--How
would you travel the hills otherwise?
There is nothing here I cannot do--
Nothing I haven't seen. But next
summer I will see the real world.
Next summer I go a-Viking.

Harolde watches the skiers as they approach.

HAROLDE
Like a bird--such is freedom. I do
not know, for I have never been free.

He gets another log.

LEIF
I will always be free.

HAROLDE
Well, I suppose there is grace in
it, I will give you that.

LEIF
All men want grace--like Loki the
earth giant. That is why women cast
spells on us.

The skiers glide by. It is Sverri and Odd.

SVERRI
Tell your Grandfather that Erik
killed a bear--He looked in its
eyes.

LEIF
Then he will have to sleep outside
tonight.

He turns to Harolde.

LEIF (CONT'D)
When a man kills a bear and sees
his eyes, he takes the bear's spirit
for his own.

He swings the axe--cleaves the log.

LEIF (CONT'D)
It is best that he not be around
people for awhile.

He steps to Harolde--hands him the axe.

LEIF (CONT'D)
Now you--I am tired of this.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harolde takes the axe apprehensively--picks up a small log--puts it on the block. Leif steps over with another, and holds it up on the block.

LEIF (CONT'D)

Let's see you strike close.

Harolde looks at him--at the axe

HAROLDE

I am not sure of myself.

LEIF

I think you are sure enough.

HAROLDE

You--you are my friend I couldn't--

LEIF

It would be easy if I were an enemy.
Cut the wood Thrall.

Harolde hefts the axe--concentrates and swings smoothly. Leif moves his hand just in time and the axe chips off the side of the log.

LEIF (CONT'D)

You're nervous--swing true.

He puts the log back up. Harolde looks at him--the cold air and the blue fjord seem to fill his eyes and run down into his soul. He raises slowly and swings. The stroke is perfect and Leif is holding half the log. He never moved his hand. Harolde gasps.

LEIF

The blade sings as it passes and
the War-Man's heart is calm.

HAROLDE

I am still not sure--of--myself.

CUT TO:

STRIDER--Is being loaded with the loot from the summer raid. Erik and Mahfoud stand at the helm as the Vikings board. Also coming along are Sigrid, Tostig, Asa and SEVERAL OTHER WOMEN. Leif inspects his oar, and Harolde weighted with burdens staggers aboard.

ERIK

Say goodbye to Gokstad Brother
Bloodaxe--Have you enjoyed your
stay?

HAROLDE

It has been a source of knowledge.

MANY WOMEN have come down to the beach. They call to Harolde.

(CONTINUED)

WOMAN

Goodbye Brother Harolde--We shall miss you.

WOMAN 2

Say a prayer for us Thrall.

WOMAN

Do not forget us.

ERIK

You seem to have made a few conversions.

HAROLDE

We will conquer you through your women--for they still have kindness.

ERIK

But they are not meek--

Harolde looks at Sigrid.

HAROLDE

No--they are not meek.

SIGRID

You have not tried to convert me Thrall. Why not?

HAROLDE

Because I fear you, Good Lady.

Erik laughs as does Tostig.

Tostig

That is for an Englishman. Here men do not fear women.

ASA

Yes--listen to HIM.

ERIK

To oars! The Yule pork is being served in King Olaf's Hall!

They scramble about--the sail is raised.

STRIDER--Sailing serenely past the mouth of the fjord.

DISSOLVE TO:

DUSK--HOWLING GALE--STRIDER--Making headway through sheets of grey sleet and snow on huge black waves.

SIGRID--ASA--OTHER WOMEN--Huddled by the mast surrounded by the men while the ship rides out the tempest. Harolde crouches, freezing, with the women. He looks at the stern, and sees Erik and Mahfoud conferring on navigational matters.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE

To go on is madness. Surely there
is some shelter on the coast?

ASA

Neither my husband nor my son ever
had weather-luck.

HAROLDE

Then why do they proceed?

SIGRID

They will miss the serving of the
Yule pork.

DISSOLVE TO:

FOG--STRIDER--Covered in ice--its sail furled as the crew
row. Leif stands at the bow below the dragon-head staring
resolutely ahead. Harolde shivers by a fire before the mast.
Tostig sees him looking at Leif's imposing image.

TOSTIG

HE has the sea luck. We will not
founder on the teeth of stones.

DISSOLVE TO:

VIII: (CONCERNING THE CRISIS AT KAUPANG AND HOW
HAROLDE ENDEARED HIMSELF TO THE KING OF NORWAY)

KAUPANG--Norway's major trading port, still a small village,
save the great halls and longhouses on the bluff surrounded
by stockade, palisade and moat--the seat of Olaf Trygvasson,
King of Norway.

DOCK--As Strider puts in, her oars encrusted with white, her
dragon-head bearing long icicles like teeth, her shields
cloaked in frost. A GROUP OF FUR CLAD MEN come down to the
dock, as Tostig stands and stretches while the others
disembark.

VIKING

Who approaches the King of Norway
with no shield of peace on his
masthead?

TOSTIG

I do not own a shield of peace and
have never looked upon such, but I
come to celebrate the Yule with my
friend and King.

OTHER VIKING

And why do you not remove your dragon-
head when the trolls of the land dislike
them?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERIK
We care little for the likes of
trolls and do not bow to any weather.

Erik is wrapped in a red cape.

ERIK (CONT'D)
We hear the Danegeld is soon to be
passed among those who earned it.

VIKING
Then you must be Bue Digre, Strybjorn
or Erik Tostigsson--the Red.

At that point, a black robed PRIEST OF CHRIST, older and
heavier than Harolde runs down to the dock hysterically.

PRIEST
Leeches! Leeches! I must have
leeches! Is there no merciful soul
who can give the King blood leeches--
fresh and strong?

TOSTIG
Why, he is a Christ-Priest!

VIKING
Of course, King Olaf has taken the
new god.

PRIEST
Our leeches in the castle have fallen
sick and grown weak--He must have
leeches when his tooth aches!

ERIK
King Olaf descended himself from
Odin--How can he bind himself to
any other god?

PRIEST
In the Name of the Father, the Son
and the Holy Ghost is there anyone
here who has leeches? It is Christmas
Day--and the King's tooth aches!

TOSTIG
All his life Aesir granted him luck--
What can he want with the Christian's
god?

OTHER VIKING
Some say it has kept his back from
stiffness, and that he is now able
to pay more attention to his many
women.

ERIK
The new god has great effect on
women.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harolde steps forth in front of the fat Priest.

HAROLDE

My Brother, I am a Benedictine Monk
brought here by foul circumstances.

PRIEST

What is your name Brother?

HAROLDE

I am Brother Harolde of Maldon.

LEIF

We call him Bloodaxe.

SIGRID

--And he is our Thrall.

PRIEST

A miracle! I am Mathias from the
Diocese of Bremen--This is truly a
miracle! God's angels have turned
to us in our hour of need! This
is better than leeches--Come quickly
for with pain he grows more dangerous!

TOSTIG

I did not intend to stay here in
the wind.

ERIK

Take us to your bath house first--
for we are cold.

SVERRI

Mulled ale for the frozen man--
And mulled ale for the weary:
For mulled ale is the body's friend,
And makes the sick heart merry.

DISSOLVE TO:

THE LONGHOUSE OF KING OLAF--A great long hallway covered in
Viking tapestries. At the end is a chamber, Brother Mathias
and a BISHOP named BRUNNER escort Harolde and the others into
this room--the King's bedchamber, where KING OLAF reclines on
his bed. He is half seated, and TWO COMELY WOMEN sit at his
feet where they hold brassiers of coals with which they warm
his toes by rubbing. King Olaf, himself a huge man, is
bearded and of magnificent physique with a great proud jaw
and intense blue eyes. But despite his physical prowess, he
is disheveled as if from drink. When he sees the group
enter, he sits up suddenly and the women at his feet are
almost kicked over--but they quickly compose themselves.

BRUNNER

Royal King we have brought you solace--
A Brother Christian--A man of God--
lost on the seas--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLAF
Tostig! Erik! Thank Odin you have
come, for my Priests tell me the world
will end in a week.

BRUNNER
Christ will appear and judge all men.
Before this happens, all heathens
will do well to be baptized.

OLAF
Seven days--and my tooth aches--
Have you and your men come to be
baptized?

TOSTIG
No, we came for our share of the
Danegeld.

MATHIAS
Silver will be no use in Hell.

ERIK
I have heard enough of this talk--
Is King Sven Forkbeard here?

OLAF
There is blood between you?

ERIK
The blood of my wife and child.

OLAF
There must be no fighting in my
house during the festival. I have
promised my Priests.

BRUNNER
This is a dark land but you are all
in sight of His judgement.

OLAF
I know you will find it tedious to
keep the peace--But Christ will tolerate
no strife on His birthday or until the
new year or the end of the world--
Whatever it is.

He winces in pain.

MATHIAS
A miracle My Lord--

OLAF
Now what is this miracle young man?

MATHIAS
Why it is Brother Harolde who is
a Benedictine.

(CONTINUED)

OLAF

What does that matter?

MATHIAS

He was cast up from the sea and
Benedictines are great healers.
He knows the cure for tooth ache.

OLAF

What? Speak quickly Boy!

HAROLDE

It is quite simple. Saint Gregory's
prescription is the most efficacious
Juice of sloe, boar's gall, saltpeter
and bull's blood--all mixed with holy
water in which some sacred relic has
been washed. Have you such a relic?

BRUNNER

We have the bones of martyrs that the
King burned in his youth.

HAROLDE

How old are they?

OLAF

I was very young when I burned the
first.

HAROLDE

Good--Get them.

OLAF

It had better be sweet Young
Priest or I'll have Hallbjorn
and Amskell split you with axes.

CUT TO:

POT--Steaming with the mixture. Harolde stirs it over a
fire.

HAROLDE

Some say frog's blood is better
but it is hard to find this time
of year.

OLAF

The bull's blood is fresh--It will
do will it not?

He gasps in pain and kicks his feet out--the women go flying.
One, a raven haired temptress, lands at Erik's feet--where he
sits on a bench with Mahfoud behind him. She looks up at
Erik.

ERIK

She has the second sight!

(CONTINUED)

She stares at Erik.

MAHFOUD
How can you tell?

ERIK
By the beauty of her gaze.

GIRL
Look what this beauty has brought
me.

ERIK
Where are you from?

She turns away. Olaf is concerned with his tooth and brew.

HAROLDE
You must hold it in your mouth
while the Psalms are sung. It is
rich with the strength of Saints.

Mahfoud leans down and says something in a foreign tongue to
the dark girl. She answers.

ERIK
What did you say--? What is this
tongue?

MAHFOUD
It is Hebrew--She is a Jewess.

ERIK
Where did you speak with Jews?

MAHFOUD
In Andalusia My Chieftain.

ERIK
What does it matter--Find out where
she is from.

He speaks again.

OLAF
Keep that heathen from speaking
in Satan's tongues to my women--
I'll have him split with a blade!

HAROLDE
It is time, O King--Sit upright--
Three more spoonfuls--and you need
not swallow them.

Harolde administers the potion.

MATHIAS
Salve vincla reis,
Profer lumen caecis,
Malla nostra pelle,
Bona cuncta posce!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

King Olaf turns purple, but does not spit it out until the verses are sung.

Then Harolde gives him another spoonful. This time as Mathias starts the verses, King Olaf goes rigid and starts to twitch.

HAROLDE

Hosanna!

His spasms increase until the verses are finished. He opens his mouth and the gruel spills down his beard.

MATHIAS

Is it better Your Majesty?

He shakes some more, then goes limp. They lean in close-- including the women. Erik and Tostig stand. Suddenly Olaf's eyes open wide.

OLAF (bellowing)

ALE!

Ale is quickly brought, and the tankard tipped by the other woman, a shapely blonde Wendish bitch. He drinks long and follows with a deep and resonate belch.

BRUNNER

Your ache My King?

OLAF

Gone--

(to Harolde)

Your potion is sour but it is strong
and strength is what matters around
here. Whose Priest is this?

ERIK

He is mine, My King.

OLAF

Perhaps I will buy him from you.

ERIK

I do not wish to sell him.

Olaf glares at him.

OLAF

We will discuss it later, after the
world ends.

(bellows)

More ale!

He is given another tankard and finishes it, and promptly falls back in his bed snoring. The GROOM OF THE BEDCHAMBER gets up and rushes out into the hall.

GROOM

The King of Norway sleeps! The King
of Norway sleeps!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Erik leans down to the dark-haired Jewess.

ERIK
I have seen your kind before, but
never so fair.

He leaves with the others.

GROOM
The King of Norway sleeps!

DISSOLVE TO:

IX: (CONCERNING THE END OF THE WORLD)

TITLE: DECEMBER 31, 999 A.D.

NIGHT--THE GREAT HALL OF OLAF--Is filled to capacity. All the great Norse Clans and Tribes have gathered as usual to drink and celebrate the New Year. But tonight, there is the added attraction of the world ending.

OLAF'S TABLE--At the head of the Hall--great tables on either side stretch down to fire pits, on which hogs and veals are roasting. What is particularly unusual, is that many of the MEN have brought their WOMEN and OLDEST SONS--even some DAUGHTERS to take part in the festivities--or go to Hell together. King Olaf is well into his cups, and sits on a huge stone chair with FIVE or SIX of his WIVES and CONCUBINES in attendance--warming his feet, filling his cup, massaging his fingers. At his table sit his JARLS(Earls), and to the side is an empty table saved for King Sven Forkbeard of Denmark. In front are set several low tables manned by PRIESTS who are reading psalms and baptizing VIKINGS from large buckets of holy water. These pails are not to be confused with the great cauldrons that hold ale and mead, which are placed everywhere--but in the confusion of this special evening, not a few VIKINGS are baptized in these brews.

ERIK--TOSTIG--HAROLDE--STRIDER'S CREW--Sit at a table to the side looking across at the Kings. Sigrid and Asa sit with the other women at the end of their table. A DRUNKEN BERSERKER gazes at Sigrid and staggers away--ANOTHER TALL BLONDE WARRIOR kneels before her.

WARRIOR
I've been with sword and spear,
slippery with bright blood
where kites wheeled over the dead.
How well we Men of Forkbeard clashed!
Red flames ate up men's roofs,
Raging we killed and killed--

TOSTIG
Save your breath!

He stops--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOSTIG (CONT'D)

Go and sit with the King of the Danes--
We shall meet someday with Sword on
Sword--And then she shall hear your
verse!

SIGRID

We can drink together when blood has
decided. You are pleasant to my eyes.

The Warrior nods to her--glares at Tostig, and stalks back to
Forkbeard's table. Harolde glares at him and looks at Erik.

HAROLDE

She encouraged him.

ERIK

Why not, she is a woman and has a
woman's needs.

HAROLDE

But they are your enemies.

ERIK

I thought all men were brothers,
Bloodaxe. What does it matter--the
world ends in a few hours--Drink
Thrall?

He offers a tankard.

HAROLDE

Why not--

He stares at Sigrid and drinks.

CUT TO:

KING'S TABLE--Bishop Brunner finishes his ale and stands
to speak--no one pays attention--instead all eyes fall upon a
GROUP OF STATELY VIKINGS entering down the Hall. It is KING
SVEN FORKBEARD--a solid man of dark complexion surrounded by
his retinue of JARL THORKELL THE TALL, DYRE AKESSON, and the
dreaded SIGTRYGG SKULLSPLITTER. They seat themselves under a
cross.

CLOSE ERIK--He leans over to Tostig.

ERIK

If we go to Hell--We can settle
matters there.

TOSTIG

At least there--We will not be
governed by Priests.

(to Harolde)

A man can drink and fight in Hell
can he not?

HAROLDE

As long as you burn for it.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

King Sven's eyes rest on Erik and he stands.

KING SVEN

I see there are those present who
have not accepted the true Faith.
There is still time to be baptized
Erik Tostigsson!

Tostig stands.

TOSTIG

And I suppose you would have my
son kiss your ring?

KING SVEN

It would suffice.

Sigtrygg stands.

SIGTRYGG

You will do what the King of the
Danes bids if he is to ask!

Erik stands.

ERIK

Where we come from, a man's authority
does not extend beyond the reach of
his sword arm!

At this Olaf stands--bellows:

OLAF

Enough! Quiet!

The GROOMS blow huge bull's horns.

OLAF

My Bishop wishes to speak.

He sits.

OLAF (CONT'D)

Speak Bishop.

BRUNNER

The Peace of Christ and King Olaf
reigns. No edged weapons are to
be used for anything but the cutting
of meat. Death caused by ale tankards,
meat bones, wooden platters or ladles
will be regarded as murder and sacrilege.

Olaf stands and pushes the old Bishop aside.

OLAF

Any murderers will be weighed with
stones and dropped in deep water!
This is a house of Christ! Bring
me the statue!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TWO GROOMS bring a stone statue of Thor before the King. ANOTHER hands him an enormous ceremonial hammer(Thor's hammer). With this Olaf, despite his having consumed a good deal of strong ale, deftly turns and smashes the god to pieces.

BRUNNER

No false gods--No craven images.

OLAF

That is my wish--Let us eat the pork.

GROOM

Bring in the pork!

Brunner kneels and starts saying Grace in Latin, but no one notices because a PROCESSION enters bearing no less than forty acorn fed hogs--roasted on spits. YOUNG BOYS slice off chunks as they go--and place hams, heads, and slabs of side meat on tables. There is an appreciative roar from the crowd, and the sound of many knives. OTHER BOYS wheel in even more vats of good ale, and behind this--whole beeves are seen being made ready.

HAROLDE--Stares up as a huge steaming ham is placed before him. It is moved to Tostig, who stands wielding a slaughter knife and passes portions to his family and crew. TWO BOYS stop before Harolde and Erik with a cauldron and ladle.

HAROLDE

What is it?

ASA

Ox--You think a King would serve less?

Harolde's plate is filled like everyone else's.

ERIK

It has thyme in it.

At that point the blonde handsome Warrior approaches with a platter on which is a tongue. He stands before Sigrid and places it in front of her.

WARRIOR

Bull's tongue--only served at a King's table--But your beauty can only be appreciated by a King's War-Man.

TOSTIG

What is your name Boy?

WARRIOR

Vagn Summerbird. I sail with King Sven and I want this woman.

TOSTIG

Go back to your table you are spoiling my appetite.

(CONTINUED)

SUMMERBIRD

I will fight you for her.

TOSTIG

Bring your father and brothers when
you make such boasts.

SUMMERBIRD

My father is Sigtrygg Skullsplitter
and slaughter, war and plague put meat
on my bones.

TOSTIG

Tell your father to find a better
way for you to die.

He turns and stalks back to his table where King Sven and the
others glare over their pork chops.

HAROLDE

Why does the King of the Danes dine
here and not in his own land?

ERIK

Because he is Olaf's cousin and our
King is prone to excess. He hopes
that he will succumb to the ale sickness.

TOSTIG

It is his wish to be near Olaf's
Treasure if this should occur. He
is a greedy man--even for a King.

Harolde looks over at Sigrid who is radiant and chews on a
piece of the tongue. She looks back at him with something
unsaid.

CUT TO:

GROOM OF THE MEAD HALL--Blows the bull's horn. JARL HAAKON--
a resplendent Viking--heir to Olaf's throne stands.

HAAKON

It has been decided that the time
is come to divide the Danegeld. As
the world is expected to end soon,
it would be better that those who've
earned it should enter the Halls of
Heaven richer.

A great roar of approval.

CUT TO:

SCALE--A huge pile of coined silver and gold.

HAAKON

All this my Brothers is the gift
of King Ethelred of England. He
wishes nothing in return save that
you visit him no longer.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

VIKING

Then this is the Peace of Ethelred
as well. Too much peace and I will
die like a woman!

Olaf stands waving his tankard.

OLAF

What do you care, for the world will
end in an hour and so will you. Sit
down!

He does. Olaf stands over the silver smiling--

DISSOLVE TO:

THE SCALES--A portion for each Chieftain and his clan. Dyre
Akesson and his retinue receive theirs, among which is
Summerbird and Skullsplitter. When they take their silver
back to their table, King Sven smiles and glares at Tostig.

GROOM

The House of Thane Tostig--Erik
Tostigsson the Red.

They walk up accompanied by Sverri, Thorgrim and Odd. The
scales are weighted with silver and gold.

CLOSE MAHFOUD--Who leans over to Leif and Harolde.

MAHFOUD

It is the same!

LEIF

Outrage!

HAROLDE

What is it?

CLOSE TOSTIG--He looks at the treasure, then to King Olaf.

TOSTIG

You and I fought the Jomsvikings
in Jorendfjord--My son earned his
name there and you would have me
take the same as those that fattened
all summer like pigs?

King Sven stands with Dyre Akesson.

SVEN

These men voyaged to Aquitaine. They
were not idle.

ERIK

The Danegeld is paid to Vikings who
have shed English blood. Not those
who dally with the Frankish boys!

TOSTIG

The silver is for those who've
earned it!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Skullsplitter stands.

SKULLSPLITTER

Yes, I've heard you lose ships to an English wench. Is that how you earned it!

Quiet in the Hall.

ERIK

My father and I will respect the peace of King Olaf. At least until the world ends.

OLAF

What would you think fair Tostig?

Tostig draws his sword. A gasp from the crowd. He looks around around, then throws it on the scale. Erik does likewise. Finally Thorgrim adds his.

TOSTIG

Balance it--Woe to the vanquished.

Olaf smiles. He laughs.

OLAF

Do it Groom! I have Jarls so eloquent--even if you are a heathen wolf.

TOSTIG

I have always been your wolf.

They embrace each other. Olaf is deeply moved and well drunk--tears pour from his eyes.

CUT TO:

BISHOP BRUNNER--Quaffing ale like the strongest Northman and he has a good reason: for he looks at the Silesian clock that stands behind. The Hour of Judgement is almost upon them. Brother Mathias points to the delicate instrument. Bishop Brunner refills his tankard.

OLAF

I have never seen you with such a thirst.

BRUNNER

My throat is parched.

OLAF

Perhaps even you need courage to face God's judgement--Perhaps you most of all.

BRUNNER

Do you not fear?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLAF
Fear my good Bishop is not something
owned by a King, let alone the King
of Norway. I've faced gods before.

He turns to his groom.

OLAF (CONT'D)
Ale--and where is my Gotlander
bitch?

He looks about him--sees a PETITE BLONDE--doe-like eyes.

OLAF (CONT'D)
Come my sweet little eel and slip
up on my lap. I should like to
enter the Kingdom of Glory with
my head on your breast.

He picks her up as if she were a doll--she giggles and sighs
and he kisses her rudely. He leans back tipping over the
barrel of ale and the other women scatter. He doesn't
notice.

BRUNNER
No--Do not do that here--It is
improper.

Olaf thrashes around--snarling.

OLAF
In my Hall I do as I please!

He composes himself, starts to nuzzle the girl again.

OLAF (CONT'D)
When we get to God's Hall I will
let Him decide my behavior.

CUT TO:

ERIK--Sees the Jewess with the others, who were scattered
from the throne. He slips down the bench.

ERIK
You--dark one.

She sees him.

ERIK
Sit with me and share my cup. What
is your name?

She looks around to see if the King notices. He is
preoccupied.

WOMAN
I--I am Kyah but I serve the King.

ERIK
Just for a while--the world will be
over soon.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

WOMAN

The world will end for some but
not all.

She moves away shyly. Erik thinks about this--turns and
grabs Harolde who is looking at the Bishop, Mathias and the
clock like everyone else.

ERIK

Brother Bloodaxe--the woman!

HAROLDE

What woman?

ERIK

The King's wench--who has the second
sight--She just told me the world will
not end for everybody.

HAROLDE (drinks)

You believe her? I have other beliefs--
I have Faith.

ERIK

Maybe your Faith is wrong--it has
happened before.

Harolde for the first time with the help of the ale,
considers this. He looks at Sigrid, who looks from him to
the strong handsome giant--who would kill them all. He looks
at Erik--puts his hands on his shoulder.

HAROLDE

Who knows?

He looks urgently at Erik with the earnestness of a drunk.

HAROLDE

But did she say who? What does
it matter if she did not say?

ERIK

It will be luck. It always is. Now
there is nothing to fear.

CUT TO:

THE CLOCK--The hand reaching midnight.

BISHOP BRUNNER--His face white--he is dizzy, he vomits.

BROTHER MATHIAS--He sees Bishop Brunner's head fall in his
hands.

MATHIAS

The Hour is at hand! Father! The
Hour!

THE CLOCK--The bells chime.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE HALL--Total silence--the face of every Viking, Gaut, Turkoman, Mongol--whatever--straining to hear the chimes--looking to the sky--waiting for the heavens to fall through the great roof. A few women cry out--they are silenced by their men. Several Chieftains straighten themselves on their drinking benches--their men do likewise. Bring it on.

THE CLOCK--Finishes its tolling. A heavy silence persists.

ERIK--Looks to Kyah who sits at Olaf's feet with the others. The hint of a smile crosses her face, as it does his.

OLAF--Kissing his little Gotlander messily. He looks up at the silence. Looks around the room--then to the clock. It has passed the hour. He looks to Bishop Brunner.

OLAF

Bishop!

GROOM

He has the ale sickness.

Olaf picks him up by the scruff of his cowl. Brunner awakens--dizzy.

OLAF

The Hour has past. We are still here!

Brunner stands shakily.

BRUNNER

It is the Beginning of the End. It is the last year. Anytime God will decide.

He holds his mouth--gags.

OLAF

Take him to his bed.

STRONG MEN carry him away.

OLAF (CONT'D)

You heard what my Bishop said. The End could come at any time this year. So let the feast continue--and be merry.

He falls back into his throne almost crushing the girl while the entire Hall breaks into howls, war whoops and raucous laughter.

CROWD

Ale! Mead! More pork! Praise Odin! Praise Christ! Praise Thor!

HALL--Breaks into pandemonium. Men grab meat or women--whichever is at hand. Fist fights break out for sheer joy. Men embrace each other or each other's wives--A New Year Celebration--some sing, others shout poetry, others wretch.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLOSE ERIK--He moves from his bench towards Olaf's throne and Kyah--she blushes and slips away into the crowd. He looks around, but can't see her.

SUMMERBIRD--He strides across the center space to Sigrid. Tostig is hugging Leif and Asa--and doesn't see. Harolde does. Sigrid looks up at him. Summerbird grabs her and pulls her up--kisses her rudely. She likes it, but pulls away. Then he grabs at her garments tearing them from her shoulder, while his other hand pulls up her skirts. She resists such boldness. Suddenly he is struck soundly with a ham. It dazes him but does little damage. He turns to see Harolde, standing, holding the shank of pork in both hands.

SUMMERBIRD

You!

HAROLDE

Unhand that woman!

SUMMERBIRD

A Thrall! Whose Thrall strikes Vagn, son of Sygtrygg Skullsplitter!

SIGRID

My Thrall!

Tostig steps in front, takes his daughter in a stern grip.

TOSTIG

He is our Thrall.

SUMMERBIRD

He struck me.

Tostig backhands him to the floor.

TOSTIG

So did I.

Suddenly Skullsplitter himself is there--hand on sword hilt.

SKULLSPLITTER

You will fight with a Thrall at your side Old Man?

ERIK (O.S.)

No!

They turn and see Erik the Red.

ERIK (CONT'D)

He will fight with his son at his side.

HAROLD

It is my fault--Let them shed my blood.

(CONTINUED)

ERIK (not looking at him)
It is your fault--But it is my sister
and more than you know--It is our fight.

HAROLDE
But--

ERIK
Turn the other cheek Christ-Priest.
This is a Viking's work!

CUT TO:

KING OLAF--Standing with some difficulty before the assembled
Hall and the four belligerents.

OLAF
Insults have been exchanged--
He ponders.

OLAF (CONT'D)
--And no doubt that they will settle
this matter themselves as soon as they
are out of my sight. --And the girl
Sigrid is well worth it--though I cannot
say much for the Thrall.

Harolde frowns--as do Erik and Tostig.

OLAF (CONT'D)
So since it has been a long Yuletide
feast--Why should we not have pleasant
diversion from our drinking? My Priests
have the ale sickness and I cannot imagine
Christ Himself would not enjoy a test of
skill.

He seems pleased with himself--turns to his Grooms.

OLAF (CONT'D)
Have the combat ring made ready by the
stables--And well lit with fires and
torches!

Erik steps forward--holds up his hand.

ERIK
Royal King, I cannot be party to such
a contest.

Great consternation and milling about.

OLAF
Explain yourself? You sounded bold
a few minutes ago.

ERIK
It is not the fight--it is the cold.
Much mumbling--what can Erik the Red be getting at?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUE:

ERIK (CONT'D)

All my life I have enjoyed frail health and to go from a hot room and heavy drinking into the Northern night would rack me with coughs for the rest of winter. My mother would never let me do it.

Asa steps forward.

ASA

It is true, I would never permit it. --So therefore King Olaf, let them fight before your table where we women can also enjoy it and you can sit at your leisure.

Olaf sits down considering deeply--these are matters of Church and State, and they are delicate.

OLAF

I can see that men have grown soft nowadays. When I was young, I did not consider my health--but I must admit I would prefer to remain in my own chair. And since it matches fathers and sons--all we are missing are the ghosts who shall be here presently. The Peace of Christ still reigns--Let the fight begin!

CUT TO:

SYGTRYGG SKULLSPLITTER--Hurls himself and his shield, smashing into Tostig's, driving him back. He is much younger and stronger than Tostig, but the old wolf is a wily one--and hooks his shield with his own using Sygtrygg's force to spin him around. They crash into King Sven's table and a blow at Skullsplitter's head chops down before King Forkbeard, as Dyre Akesson screams to his champion. The man moves his head in time, but leaves his ear on the table. Akesson picks it up and shows it to King Sven. The two combatants crash back into the hall to be replaced by Erik and Summerbird, who wheel by, crashing shields and slicing at each other's limbs. Erik slices at Summerbird's feet, and he jumps upon the King of Denmark's table, spilling food and mead. Vagn, hacks at Erik's head, glancing the blow off his shoulder. Erik counters, splitting a part of Vagn's shield, but with superior height, Vagn hacks again through Erik's defense--grazing his head and splattering blood across his eyes. Erik ducks down and kicks the table over from under him, bringing Vagn crashing down.

CLOSE KING OLAF--Howling with glee--slopping ale and bashing his girl on the back. The spilled ale spills down the throne to his feet where Kyah watches, her hand over her mouth--her green eyes wide.

CLOSE SKULLSPLITTER--Delivers a terrific stroke--that misses as Tostig rolls out of the way.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLOSE ASA--LEIF--Gasping in excitement, biting her fingers passionately. Leif steadies her.

CLOSE ERIK--Strikes at Vagn Summerbird, driving him back behind a bench, which vacates as Erik splits the table with a mighty blow.

CLOSE SIGRID--She grabs Harbolde's arm. He looks at her in surprise, and back at the fight awestruck. His hand grasps hers.

CROWD--Howls--and proffer up silver coins, pushing them into the hands of Mahfoud, who is banking the bets.

THORGRIM--GERTRUDE--Hugging each other and screaming.

THE COMBATANTS--Fight before the great fire--Skullsplitter hacks a veal from its ropes--swings it into Tostig's shield and charges, driving Tostig back to the center of the hall.

ERIK--Sees his father--swings a blow at Vagn and ducks three counter strokes, backing up to the center where his father trades blows.

TOSTIG--ERIK--Framed full against the King, the fire, the crowd, fighting back to back.

ERIK

Like we always wanted!

TOSTIG

I never thought we'd have the chance!

ERIK

Now?

TOSTIG

Now!

Erik ducks a hooking blow from Vagn Summerbird--turning and dropping with it--pivoting so that his father comes around his back, and slashes out where Vagn's shield doesn't cover him, sinking his blade across Summerbird's spine! Meanwhile, Erik continues the move in perfect unison, slicing under Skullsplitter's shield into his hip. Vagn screams and goes down, dead before he hits the floor. Skullsplitter screams out--drops his shield--spits!

SKULLSPLITTER

Ayee! --The Red Man has killed me!

He staggers towards King Olaf--raises his sword and Erik backhands across his neck. His head rolls down his arm and splashes into the butt of ale at Olaf's feet.

CLOSE--ERIK--His eyes to Kyah.

CLOSE KYAH--Blood spatters across her as the body falls--her gasp to Erik.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KING OLAF--Stands--throws his hands in the air--thunderous cheering.

ASA--SIGRID--HAROLDE--Screaming in joy. Even Harolde cannot contain himself, and wonders why he is allowing himself such pagan excess. He holds Sigrid's arm.

ERIK--TOSTIG--Bloodied and sweating--look at each other.

TOSTIG
Good work Son.

ERIK
Thank you Father.

Erik looks at the butt of ale with something bobbing in it. King Olaf looks at it too.

ERIK (CONT'D)
Never lose your head over ale!

CROWD--Screaming--collecting bets--Mahfoud pocketing a great amount.

CROWD
Erik the Red! Erik Tostigsson!
Tostig Silver-hair!

Leif stands with Asa, tall and proud, as Vikings shake his hand and slap him on the back.

CUT TO:

KING SVEN--And his men growl amongst each other, and speak under their breaths. Dyre Akesson and several others seem to take orders from the King of the Danes--and leave. Erik glances over at them, and they glare at him. King Olaf embraces Tostig and they laugh--and he doesn't notice Kyah beaming at Erik. Erik's face is swathed in blood and Tostig too is leaking.

OLAF
It has been a fine New Year's
and seldom have I seen such good
fighting. Come to my rooms where
my women will bind your wounds.

He ushers them along.

OLAF (CONT'D)
I must take my leave to see how
my Priests fare and tend to my
wives.

He leaves.

CUT TO:

X: (CONCERNING THE KHAZAR WOMAN AND HER STORY AND
HOW ERIK TOOK HIS TREASURE FROM THE KING)

TOSTIG--Laying in a bed--bound up and drinking hot gruel--Asa
sitting at his side.

TOSTIG
I could get used to being treated
in this manner.

ASA
I am sure you could. But you are
not a King and have always preferred
to avoid a man's work.

TOSTIG
But I have been wounded.

ASA
You have been hurt worse cleaning
fish. Let us get out of here.

Erik sits, having his hair combed by Kyah, while Leif and
Harolde look over a text with Brother Mathias.

ERIK
Are there still lice in my scalp?

KYAH
Yes.

ERIK
Good, then I will live--lice leave
a man who is soon to perish.

KYAH
It is what I was told as a girl.

ERIK
What were you like as a girl?

KYAH
I was the most beautiful of all the
people of my tribe.

Harolde looks up.

HAROLDE
--And what Tribe was that?

KYAH
We were a Tribe of Khazars until
the Emperor Basil grew tired of
our raiding.

ERIK
Raiding? --Your people were raiders?
I thought they were Jews.

HAROLDE
Emperor Basil--of Byzantium?

(CONTINUED)

TOSTIG

Of Miklagaard--the center of the world. I served in his axe-bearing guard when I was a young Viking.

ASA

Oh shut-up--No-one wants to hear that again.

LEIF

Miklagaard--someday I will sail there--

ERIK

Go on Kyah--tell us your story.

KYAH

I was to be married to a handsome young man of the horse. But we were put to slaughter by the Emperor's armies. All the men were blinded--only one out of a hundred were left with one eye to lead the others.

ASA

What befell you?

KYAH

I was comely to look upon, so I was given as a gift to Prince Yaraslov of Kiev. He had many other Kazar women and didn't need my favors, so he gave me to Bjorn of the Precious Stones for the use of a fine bow. He however needed favor with Brian Boru, High King of Ireland, and so there I went.

ERIK

Brian Boru! What was he like?

KYAH

He did not notice me for he favored his drink, and offered me to Olaf King of Norway whose fancy I struck. That is how I came to be here.

ASA

It is a long story--

LEIF

You have seen much.

KYAH

--And look what my beauty has brought me. I sit at his cold feet often in the stench of his urine and listen to him fart. Seldom do I see the sun.

ERIK

Does he favor you?

(CONTINUED)

KYAH

Not any longer--he does not even know my name, though he knows the names of his swords and horses.

ERIK

He has a great sword named Cloud-Wind.

KYAH

See, even you know the names of his swords.

ERIK

Then I shall take you from him and I doubt if he will know.

KYAH

I think that would be unwise for he would surely have you killed.

ASA

Pay him no mention, girl. He was called Erik the Braggart when he was young.

ERIK

What of the Thrall--Even he was willing to die for my sister. True Thrall? What say you to that?

HAROLDE

I say that you are more ruled by your heart than you would make others think.

He ponders.

HAROLDE (CONT'D)

--And--I suppose it is the same for me.

ASA

Enough talk of stealing a King's woman.

(to Erik)

You are a fool.

(to Harolde)

and you are in a fool's shadow.

They smile.

CUT TO:

DAWN--THE NORTHERN SUN--A cold crisp day--the docks of Kaupang are coming to life. Several fine longships have caught the early winds and their striped sails dot the gray horizon.

STRIDER--At dock with the crew making her ready. Asa and Gertrude are helped aboard carrying cloth bags of horn

(CONTINUED)

buttons and colored twines. Sigrid carries furs, and Harolde is weighted down with them. Tostig and Odd examine the rigging, chipping off ice--while Thorgrim, Leif and the others ready the oars and clean the ice from the sail. Erik walks with Mahfoud down the dock carrying an enormous leather trunk on their shoulders. They come aboard carefully, and put the trunk down slowly by the mast.

TOSTIG
What is that?

ERIK
My treasure.

MAHFOUD
The gambling was spirited and our luck of course was good.

TOSTIG
Luck? It was like stealing meat from a blind dog.

They look up as they hear the bull's horns. Olaf and his RETINUE ride down to them on great shaggy horses. MEN follow bearing his standard(two ravens on a field of scarlet).

TOSTIG (CONT'D)
It is the King--perhaps you have spoken soon about luck.

Olaf rides his horse right up to Strider, and his MEN hold his mount as he boards Strider with much flourish.

OLAF
Tostig, Erik--Sit with me.

He walks over to the mast. Looks about for a place to sit.

OLAF (CONT'D)
I honor you thus in public to show evidence of the friendship I bear you.

He sits on the trunk--it sags in the center.

OLAF (CONT'D)
Do you not have ale aboard this vessel?

Sigrid opens a cask and scoops out a wooden cupful.

TOSTIG
We were not expecting a royal farewell.

She brings it to Olaf

OLAF
For my friends and subjects too--
I do not drink alone.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Gertrude assists her.

OLAF (CONT'D)
Your daughter may inspire much fire
in men, but I think she is slow of
wit--

Sigrid glares at him--even Harolde looks over.

OLAF (CONT'D)
--Probably better that way. You know
ale always tastes best at sea. I
myself am putting forth soon to spread
the Gospel with my sword.

He looks up at them and drinks.

TOSTIG
Where do you sail Royal King?

OLAF
To Sweden--to teach the Swedes a
lesson. I could use men like you--
but I can only use Christian men.

ERIK
We are free Vikings--We pray to the
gods of our choosing!

OLAF (turns to Harolde)
What say you Thrall--You seem to be
outspoken.

HAROLDE
I say they are free Vikings, My
Lord.

OLAF
--And you do not try and convert
them?

HAROLDE
No My Lord--they are heathen to the
bone, and will surely go to hellfire--
but they will probably take many who
are so deserving with them.

Olaf drinks again--the trunk collapses farther.

OLAF
Well spoken Thrall--I see he is
loyal and loyalty is a virtue that
ranks with strength. But surely you
do not intend to put to sea with a
Priest?

ERIK
I have sailed with him before.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OLAF

The sea trolls do not favor Christ-
Priests--I would throw him over
headforemost if you encounter a storm.

He finishes his ale--gets up--hands the cup to Tostig.

OLAF (CONT'D)

I came here--that no man may suppose
enmity to exist between us.

He steps onto the dock.

OLAF (CONT'D)

I am a patient man--even for a King--
but there is an end to it.

ERIK

We will consider it Sire. Be sure
to come visit us when you wish to hunt
the wild oxen.

Olaf stops

OLAF

The wild oxen have vanished.

ERIK

Then perhaps when they return.

He lifts his cup.

ERIK (CONT'D)

Skoal, Royal King.

He drinks.

CUT TO:

STRIDER--At sea before a good wind. The day is clear and the
white mountains of the Norwegian coast look stark in the
winter light.

CLOSE HAROLDE--Sits by the mast. Erik looks over the stern
and back apprehensively.

ERIK

I think we are far enough.

TOSTIG

From what?

ERIK

From him.

He goes toward the mast.

ERIK (CONT'D)

Open the trunk Bloodaxe. Let my
treasure be seen by the gulls.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

Harolde opens the crushed trunk and gasps. Kyah sticks her head up coughing for breath.

KYAH
I am almost dead.

Erik lifts her out.

ERIK
You are so pale--be not fearful,
he is far away now.

Asa, Tostig, and Sigrid rush over, followed by members of the crew.

SVERRI
That is the King's woman!

ERIK
It was the King's woman.

GUNNAR
You made no mention of this!

ERIK
It does not concern you--Take care
of your ship's business.

He hesitates.

ERIK (CONT'D)
Would you like something that does
concern you?

He goes back to his duties.

ASA
You have outlawed us.

TOSTIG
In all of Norway--You have earned
Olaf's wrath. Wherever we shall go,
we shall find ourselves outlaws.

ASA
Is this the only woman that could
interest you?

ERIK
How many mothers have sons so bold
as to obtain their brides in this
manner?

SIGRID
He is right. His heart is strong--
I thought I would never see him
again this way. Besides King Olaf
is a pig, and no friend of this house.

ERIK
She has the second sight. She can
tell us the future. What luck for
a man to have.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOSTIG

What luck.

ASA

Better than mine--Go ahead woman,
tell us what you see, but I will
know if it is true.

Kyah has recomposed herself somewhat, though she looks the
worse for her ordeal.

KYAH

You have nothing to fear from King
Olaf.

TOSTIG

Oh--Why not Jewess?

KYAH

Because he is soon to die at Svolder,
and the land will be at war.

THORGRIM

And how will we fare in this war?

Kyah looks down--back up.

KYAH

The war is not yours--You will be
in a different land.

GUNNAR

Who will lead us?

She stands up--walks a step or two shakily past Erik and
points to Leif.

KYAH

He will.

Erik looks at her.

ERIK

My son--Leif Eriksson?

KYAH

You will be great--But he will be
greater.

TOSTIG

Why did you steal a woman who would
tell you this?

ASA

My grandson will be greater? I am
beginning to think you made a good
choice my boy.

She puts her hand on his shoulder and goes to Kyah.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASA (CONT'D)
Come my daughter--You must eat.

KYAH
But I am sick.

ASA
Do not be so fragile.

CUT TO:

XI: (CONCERNING THE DISLOYALTY OF THE GOKSTADERS
AND HOW THE HOUSE OF THANE TOSTIG BECAME OUTLAW)

MAST--LEIF--Has climbed the mast as they row into the Gokstad Fjord.

ERIK
Where is it? What do you see?

LEIF
I see smoke Father. Smoke hangs in the air!

ERIK
Is it not mist?

LEIF
It is black.

GOKSTAD--From a distance--sure enough, one of the structures smolders, and it is clear some others have been burned.

STRIDER--The crew now row fiercely--Harolde among them rowing like a Viking. Even Erik and Tostig man an oar. Mahfoud steers and the women look from the prow.

GOKSTAD--DOCK--As the Strider pulls up--a crowd is waiting. They look dark and grim, but it does not appear a battle has taken place.

ASA
My house! The house where I was born!

TOSTIG
What happened?

He gets off--jumps onto the dock--runs up a ways and stops. Erik follows slowly looking at the people--stout Viking stock but down and withdrawn.

TOSTIG (CONT'D)
Who did this?

No one answers. Tostig pulls his sword.

OLD VIKING
Do not draw your blade on your own village!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOSTIG

Who burned my house--my docks--
my smoke-shed and fishery.

WOMAN

The Danes.

ERIK

Danes?

OTHER VIKING

They came in the night--They asked
only what was the house of Tostig.

ERIK

And you did not fight?

ANOTHER VIKING

I fight raiders--but I do not fight
the King of the Danes!

STILL ANOTHER

Not for you Erik Tostigsson.

ANOTHER WOMAN

You lost our men--good men--Who do
I have now?

OLD VIKING

It is you that have offended the King
of the Danes, not us.

OTHER VIKING

They said you owe them blood.

WOMAN

It is yours to pay.

TOSTIG

Never have I seen such shame visited
upon a village. No one opposed them?

OLD VIKING

No--and no one will. They will come
back and you will be gone.

ERIK

Who says such?

OLD VIKING

We have been waiting for you. Now
we will meet on the mound and have
a Thing and it will be decided.

TOSTIG

Let me hear the voices at the Thing
and I will abide.

DISSOLVE TO:

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE--Watching the villagers circled around the great stones. Tostig, Erik and Leif stand with the Old Viking in the center. Sigrid stands next to Harolde.

OLD VIKING
Hallbjorn?

HALLBJORN stands out--holds out his hand.

HALLBJORN
Outlaw!

OLD VIKING
Krak?

KRAK does likewise. Harolde looks to Sigrid.

HAROLDE
Perhaps the woman was right. The world has ended--for some.

SIGRID
But not for all--in our belief--
the world ends and there is a great
battle. The Twilight of the Gods--
all are slain. Ragnorok--
(pause)
But from the blood of heroes a new
tree is nurtured and a new world
begins. Even for you.

He looks at her.

HAROLDE
My world?

OLD VIKING CHIEFTAIN--He slaps his hands together.

OLD VIKING
Outlaw! All have spoken. Every
hand is against you Tostig Silverhair,
Erik Tostigsson and Leif Eriksson.
Your life is forfeited and any man
may slay you.

ERIK
Let the boldest try.

OLD VIKING
You are denied fire, water and the
rule of the Law. You are outside
the Law from this time on.

VIKING
What say you Old Man?

Tostig cannot believe it--these people were his neighbors,
his friends, his relatives.

TOSTIG
Never have I seen such shame. I
bid you take up the Christ God for
(MORE)

(CONTINUED)

TOSTIG (CONT'D)
there is no room for you in Valhalla.
Is this what comes of us? We who
worked and fought, fucked, drank,
laughed--bore children, turned the
land. My parents and their's before
them died here! You will turn us
away?

Sigrid steps out.

SIGRID
Who would want to stay? Those of
us who still have hearts--let us
depart.

Erik steps forward.

ERIK
Who sails with Strider? Who sails
with Erik the Red?

Thorgrim pulls his wife.

THORGRIM
I do.

ODD
--And I.

SVERRI
I suppose.

THORVAL
Why not?

Gunnar and several other don't move.

ERIK
Gunnar?

GUNNAR
Seek your own luck.

ERIK
And you Thrall?

Harolde stands.

HAROLDE
I have no choice--I am not free.

ERIK
Then I free you now Brother Bloodaxe.

HAROLDE
Free--I am free?

ERIK
Yes--by the Law.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE

Then I am free to come with you.
And my name is Harolde.

ERIK

Harolde Bloodaxe.

ASA

To hell with the rest of you!

CUT TO:

STRIDER--Leaving the Fjord into a darkening winter sky.

CUT TO:

ERIK--Standing at the prow with Leif. They look upon rows of clouds and a setting sun. They are wrapped well for it is mid winter. A chill wind fills Strider's sail, and the crew huddles with the women under furs near the mast, where a small fire warms them. Harolde comes forward with a steaming bowl of porridge, hands it to the lonely father and son.

HAROLDE

Your father said it was time for
you to eat.

Erik turns, takes the bowl.

ERIK

Leif tells me you know how to
chop wood.

HAROLDE

Yes--and I am teaching him to
read Latin.

ERIK

Are there other things you know,
now that you have renounced your
Faith?

HAROLDE

I have not renounced my Faith.

ERIK

But you question it.

HAROLDE

Why do you think so?

ERIK

My sister.

Harolde looks down--then back.

HAROLDE

I have been true to my vows.

Erik doesn't look at him.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE (CONT'D)
No--no--that is a lie.

Erik turns.

ERIK
Join the others Leif--make yourself
warm--It will be long and cold before
we round the Skaw.

Leif wants to stay, but knows better.

ERIK (CONT'D)
Explain yourself Harolde Bloodaxe.
Have you lain with her?

HAROLDE
No--but I desire it.

ERIK
Any man would.

HAROLDE
I am not any man, I am a Brother of
the Benedictine Order.

ERIK
Are you? I think your world ended
in King Olaf's mead hall. Perhaps
like myself, you are ruled by your
heart--more than you would like to
show.

Harolde turns and leaves--goes a few steps and stops. He
knows Erik is watching him. He turns around.

HAROLDE
I killed two men on New Year's eve.
Not with my hand but I killed them
just the same. You were only the
weapon.

ERIK
I thought it a good night's sport.

HAROLDE
You have evoked King Sven's wrath--
He burned your house for what I
caused--

ERIK
Nonsense! I would leap at any chance
to strike at the King of the Danes
and he knows this! Now the King of
Norway hates me too--You think all
this is your doing?

HAROLDE
Whatever you say, I killed those men.

ERIK
So what if you did?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE

Then it is my fight and my hands are
soiled in blood. I could not measure
up to my vows.

ERIK

What do you want me to do--give you
my sister?

HAROLDE

Yes--in time--but something else
first.

ERIK

Speak.

HAROLDE

Teach me war.

CUT TO:

XII: (HOW THE STRYDER FOUND SHELTER AND HAROLDE
TOLD THE STORY OF THE ROMAN GOLD. HOW GLAD
ULF'S SONS JOINED THEM)

DAWN--INLET--STRIDER--Puts into a frosted crystal inlet where
a great wooden stockade, along with wood and stone houses,
rise from the dark pines. It is still early, and MEN with
torches come down to the beach to see the ship. They are
armed.

CLOSE ERIK--He jumps over into the cold water with Sverri,
Thorgrim and Odd. They pull Strider towards shore oblivious
of the huge shaggy men who come down to them with shield, bow
and spear.

MAN

Who are you and where do you sail
from? What is this ship called?

ERIK

I seek Glad Ulf the Shipman.

MAN

He is my father.

ERIK

Yes--for it is told he has sons
without number--and wives to match.

MAN

This is true--but his many sons
make raiders pay who would steal
his oxen.

ERIK

The shield of peace--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He points.

ERIK (CONT'D)
I come in friendship for I first
went forth a Viking to Iberia at
your father's oar.

MAN
Who shall I say seeks his hospitality?

ERIK
No less than Erik Tostigsson the Red.

CUT TO:

GREAT HALL--DARK--Hung with furs and lit by a huge fire
around which the whole of the Strider party warm themselves.
An ox turns before the blaze on a spit. In a huge fur
covered chair sits GLAD ULF THE SHIPMAN, old and shrunken,
wrinkled. Around him are STOUT MEN, heavy with hardened
muscles and long beards. Their hair is bright blonde and
Glad Ulf's is white.

GLAD ULF
Your son stole King Olaf's woman
and then you killed King Sven's
champion?

TOSTIG
It was not in that order.

ERIK
The world was supposed to end.

GLAD ULF
Which woman is it--that one?

He points to Asa.

ERIK
No--here.

He points to Kyah.

GLAD ULF
She is not my type, too thin. I
myself have stolen many women but
not from Kings. When is the world
ending?

ERIK
It never happened.

GLAD ULF
Oh.

TOSTIG
We are outlawed in all the land.

GLAD ULF
Not here. Here my sons and I decide
the Law. To hell with King Bluetooth.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOSTIG
King Bluetooth died years ago.

GLAD ULF
Oh--To hell with him anyway--Where
do you go?

TOSTIG
We do not know.

GLAD ULF
Then where have you been? Tell me
a story. You have a teller of tales
with you?

ERIK
Sverri--Sing of the Battle of
Jorensfjord.

HAROLDE
No--

They all look at him.

HAROLDE (CONT'D)
I can tell a better story--one you've
not heard. One of gold and Kings and
evil women and the spirits of damnation.
There was once a King--His name was
Duncan and he had won the land of the
Umbrians back from the Danes.

Everyone crowds in at the mention of the Danes.

DISSOLVE TO:

FLASHBACK--A SAXON WARLORD--Mounted overlooking a tempestuous
sea.

HAROLDE (V.O.)
He was a father to his subjects.

PEASANTS--Planting the soil, turning it with the plow--crops
being harvested--a village celebrating the Festival of the
Solstice.

HAROLDE (V.O.)
Under his rule, the land grew fertile
and all things multiplied. It was a
time of plenty and the land was rich.

MONTAGE--A WOMAN being held in the darkness of a stone room
by dark cowed NUNS--she screams out twisting in the pain of
childbirth. A NUN crosses herself, and ANOTHER crosses the
woman before closing her dead eyes.

HAROLDE (V.O.)
But his fate was to prove unhappy.
His wife died bearing his son.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

THE INFANT--Carried by PRIESTS and presented to the King in his lonely Great-Hall--The King has little interest in the child, instead he watches as an IRISH GIRL dances before his table. She twists and stretches seductively with a snake-like grace. The King's eyes are alight and he drinks his ale without his gaze leaving her. As she turns close to him, we see it is the Lady Alurea at a young age. Her hands caress his hair, move away, come back--he pulls her to him.

HAROLDE (V.O.)

She was a slave girl from Munster,
but she made him forget--

He makes love to her in his darkly curtained bed. He is lost in passion and she seems so too, but her eyes are cold.

HAROLDE (V.O.)

He was tired from war and could
not see what others knew.

LADY ALUREA--Now the wife of King Duncan, walks with her SERVANTS. Swarthy SAXON KNIGHTS whisper in her ear.

HAROLDE (V.O.)

She saw only the gold.

She passes through the doorway into a room where walls are covered with Roman artifacts--eagles, standards, symbols of state and objects of art, all of gold, ivory, ebony, amber.

CUT TO:

ERIK--TOSTIG--They grab at Harolde.

TOSTIG

Gold! What gold!

ERIK

I think I have heard of this
treasure.

HAROLDE

It was the treasure of the Romans--
left for untold time. The treasure
of the Umbrians. With it, the King
had built a great fortress and
Cathedral.

DISSOLVE TO:

A CASTLE ON CRAG--Overlooking the crag. The castle in which our story began.

HAROLDE (V.O.)

He built them to protect his subjects
from the wrath of the Northmen and to
thank his God.

ERIK (V.O.)

And to protect his treasure.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE (V.O.)

That too--the gold of the Romans.

ALUREA--Sitting at a dinner watching her husband eat--looking cold and distant. He gnaws on a roast, and sloshes it down with wine.

HAROLDE (V.O.)

Where she came from, they were adept in the black arts--spells, poisons, curses.

She gets up and begins her dance. She sways and glides in front of her husband. He stares dumbly, becoming aroused. Suddenly his face pales. He stands grasping his throat. He begins to convulse--foam pours from his mouth. His STEWARDS rush to him but his KNIGHTS just look on. She never stops her dance. A black cowed BISHOP looks sharply to her knowingly, but her face is impassive as her lithe body sways. Duncan falls forward. An ABBOT--a Benedictine, sees her and looks to the Bishop--they don't see him--he rushes from the room.

HAROLDE (V.O.)

Duncan was dead but his son lived!

NIGHT--ABBOT--A MONK--Rushes down a passageway bearing the infant son. They crawl into a wagon, full of manure, and a THIRD MONK covers them, sheltering the baby.

WAGON--Passes out the gate as SAXON KNIGHTS ride in.

BENEDICTINE MONASTERY AT MALDON--ABBOT--Walks down a hall into a room where children are kept. There are at least FIVE INFANTS and some OLDER CHILDREN, all in need of care, being tended to by the BROTHERS.

HAROLDE (V.O.)

The young King--the rightful heir to the throne of North Umbria was just another orphan.

FIELD--YOUNG NOVITIATES--Work in the fields wearing the black robes.

ABBAY--NOVITIATES--Older, in their teens--praying at High Mass--singing a Gregorian chant--cleaning the floor--copying sacred texts--tending to animals or children. All the young novitiates look somewhat the same in their simple robes.

HAROLDE (V.O.)

He was just another orphan--just a Brother of the Benedictine Order--pledged to the service of our Lord. No one knew who he was, save the Abbot who never told. So the young Prince ceased to exist.

HUTS BURNING--VILLAGERS--Put to flight by SAXON THUGS.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE (V.O.)
But outside the walk of the Abbey--
Darkness fell upon the land.

YOUNG GIRLS are prodded by the spears of the KNIGHTS, and forced to run in front of their horses until they fall from exhaustion. A mail clad SAXON beats an OLD WOMAN with a war hammer--a goose in his other hand.

A LITTLE GIRL--Cries by the side of the road, her pet goat run through with an arrow's shaft--as laughing HORSEMEN canter by, with falcons at their wrists.

ALUREA--Sits on a splendid mount watching the wolf hounds chase a MAN down.

ALUREA--Looks up into a tree where men and women have been hanged.

ALUREA--Sitting alone in the treasure room. A darkly handsome KNIGHT softly enters and puts his hand in her hair. She takes his fingers in her own, without looking up at him--coldly resolute.

FIELD--BROTHERS OF BENEDICT--Young, strong, digging a ditch to irrigate a field. Some have their robe's pulled down and tied around bare chests. One is Harolde, and he is hardened like smooth stone.

HAROLDE (V.O.)
The Brothers grew well and stout,
and hard work gave them dignity
and bound them to each other and
their Faith.

CUT TO:

A KING--Resplendent in his Saxon armor, with his RETINUE OF HOUSE-CARLS, rides his war horse across the moat into the castle.

HAROLDE (V.O.)
Then came the day when Ethelred
became High King of all the English.
And he came to the castle on the crag.

CATHEDRAL--PRIESTS--BISHOPS--Make much ceremony of ETHELRED, a porcine man of cruel features.

HAROLDE (V.O.)
--And though he was feted, honored,
and sanctified--he was not content.
For like all Kings, he was greedy
for land.

KING ETHELRED--Scowling at Lady Alurea, speaking harshly and waving his scepter. She cries and falls upon her knees, looking up at him helpless and seductive.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE (V.O.)
He laid claim to the castle, and
all its subjects on the basis that
Duncan had sired a son who still lived!

All of her wiles are wasted on Ethelred as he fancies one of
his PAGES, who smiles at the King and down upon the prostrate
woman.

HAROLDE (V.O.)
Since Ethelred preferred the company
of men--especially young ones--he
proclaimed that a King would reign
over the Umbrians.

Ethelred leaves with his retinue.

HAROLDE (V.O.)
--And he would find him!

RIDERS--Armed and dark, thunder through the forest and emerge
before the monastery. The monk, who had helped save the
infant--now old, rides with them.

HAROLDE (V.O.)
The good Abbot was betrayed--

ABBOT--Tied to a torture wheel--is turned upside down.
Alurea's THUGS, led by Hedrick, place a two man saw between
his legs.

CLOSE ABBOT--Screaming as blood pools under his head--the
feet of the man can be seen swaying with the saw.

HAROLDE (V.O.)
He never spoke--and he took his
secret to Our Lord Almighty--

MONKS--Tied to stakes--fires being lit.

HAROLDE (V.O.)
Seven were burned at the stake--They
knew not who was the King--but their
last cries were to God because their
Faith was that strong.

DISSOLVE TO:

HAROLDE--Exhausted--spent--he tries to pull himself together.
The Vikings are silent.

HAROLDE (clears throat)
The others were sent to Heaven in
different ways--all of them as cruel--
But one survived.

ERIK
Perhaps the ravens carried him away--

HAROLDE
Perhaps the wolves.

(CONTINUED)

TOSTIG

The one who lived--He would be
rightful King?

HAROLDE

No one knows--But then again--Why
not?

ERIK

If he were to return--the gold
would be his.

GLAD ULF

Tell me the part about her dance
again--I was aroused.

ASA

What of the gold--does that not
arouse you Old Man?

GLAD ULF

I am too old for gold--but I still
like to see young girls dance
gracefully.

LEIF

When do we go?

ERIK

Go? Where?

LEIF

To North Umbria to the castle on
the crag. To the gold of the Romans.

THORGRIM

It would take many ships--many men.
These Saxons are not fat and soft.

SIGRID (knowing)

--And we would have to find that
monk--the one who lived. He would
have to take us there. Could we
find him?

HAROLDE

I even knew him once. I think we
could find him.

SVERRI

But such a raid would be much--even
for Olaf King of the Norse.

GLAD ULF

Olaf is dead.

TOSTIG

What?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GLAD ULF

A ship put in here only days ago.
He was slaughtered by the Swedes
at Svolder. He should've never
taken the new god.

They all turn and look at Kyah.

TOSTIG

I am sorry if I doubted you.

ERIK

What say you now?

KYAH

Things are not clear to me now.

GLAD ULF

Was she the woman that was King
Sven's.

ERIK

King Olaf's.

GLAD ULF

But he is dead--to hell with him
too.

THORGRIM

It is pointless to think of the gold
for we are poor outlaws--And that is
a land where Christ is strong.

Suddenly Tostig stands up.

TOSTIG

Christ is strong! That is how we
shall trick them. Remember it is
still the year of the End of the
World.

ASA

Make sense you old fool.

TOSTIG

I have a plan.

DISSOLVE TO:

FOREST--Snow covered--in a small clearing Erik and Harolde
work with axes. Erik has made a mark on a tree and he
thrusts with his sword--moves his shield and Harolde strikes
with his axe.

ERIK

The stroke was clear as water but
anyone would have known its voyage.

HAROLDE

What about a sword?

(CONTINUED)

ERIK

Too late for a sword. You have to be fed your first meal from one. Let's try it again, but this time strike when my shield covers the mark.

HAROLDE

I will catch you.

ERIK

No you won't.

They do the maneuver--Harolde swings early and catches the edge of Erik's shield and pins it to the tree.

HAROLDE

I caught you!

ERIK

But you killed your foe. That is how it is done.

CUT TO:

HAROLDE--MONTAGE--Throwing a twisting spear--over and over. Finally he is hitting the mark on a stump. Erik moves him back--he throws with all his might--the spear doesn't reach the stump. Again and again. Finally Erik rolls a log down a snowy slope. The entire crew throw spears at it--including Harolde. They mostly find their mark. They clap him on the back and congratulate him along with Leif. Sigrid watches silently from the shadows.

ERIK--Walking back to the fortress with a roe deer over his shoulder. He sees Glad Ulf looking up at the sky, tying knots in a sail's rigging.

GLAD ULF

The storms have passed for now.

ERIK

Then it is time for us to go.

GLAD ULF

You are my guests--You may stay as long as you please.

ERIK

Do not try to fool me Old Man.

GLAD ULF

All right--I am tired of feeding you. It is enough to feed my sons--and I have heard all your tales.

ERIK

I need good fighting men--I have empty oar locks.

GLAD ULF

How many?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ERIK

Seven.

GLAD ULF

I have too many for me to take care of. Take not the oldest or the youngest, just seven and start with Strykar. He will tell you the names of his brothers.

He looks up to the sky.

GLAD ULF (CONT'D)

They will share the gold?

ERIK

As is appropriate--

GLAD ULF

What will you pay me now?

ERIK

I will pay you in silver. English Danegeld silver.

GLAD ULF

You cannot go in search of gold without having some silver.

CUT TO:

STRYKAR--HIS SIX BROTHERS--All Berserkers--huge, wooly--young and dangerous, but of good temperament. They stand before the Strider which is being loaded. The father looks them over.

TOSTIG

Say goodbye--we will miss the wind.

GLAD ULF

Bring me the woman who can see things to come.

TOSTIG

Erik--Bring your woman.

Erik walks over to the gunwale with Kyah.

GLAD ULF

What is their fortune?

Kyah looks at them--then lowers her gaze.

GLAD ULF (CONT'D)

Speak woman.

KYAH

I do not want to.

MAHFOUD

Go ahead speak--a man cannot avoid his fate.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KYAH
Three will die.

The brothers look at each other, then at the old man. He looks at them tenderly--remembering each as a child.

GLAD ULF
Will the others return?

KYAH
No--but they will win fame and gold.

The brother's spirits lift and they look at each other again, wondering who will die.

GLAD ULF
Go my Sons.

They board Strider--take up oars.

GLAD ULF (CONT'D)
But mind you they've never been to sea before.

ERIK
The sea does a man good.

CUT TO:

XIII: (HOW THEY SAILED TO ENGLAND AND WHAT HAPPENED THERE. HOW THE VIKINGS CAME TO BE BAPTIZED)

STRIDER--Pitching on the great slate-grey swells of a winter storm--her sail full against a heavy wind.

STRYKAR--HIS BROTHERS--At their benches sick as death--vomiting over the side--green. Harolde walks by eating roast pork--offers some to the women. Kyah, being a Jewess and not fond of sea weather, turns it down. Sigrid, Asa and Gertrude enjoy theirs.

STRYKAR
Woman!

They look over.

STRYKAR (CONT'D) (points to Kyah)
You.

She nods.

STRYKAR (CONT'D)
How soon do we die?

CUT TO:

NIGHT--ENGLISH COAST--STRIDER--Looms into the moonlight gliding on a glass smooth surface--the faintest sound of her oars slapping occasionally. Her dragon-prow cuts through wisps of fog.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLOSE MAHFOUD--Looking at the stars and the coastline. Erik stands next to him.

ERIK
Damn the moon.

MAHFOUD
It is time--Maybe our luck will hold.

SMALL BOAT--A skiff--put over the side. Harolde climbs into it--followed by Gertrude and Thorgrim. Sigrid climbs over.

ERIK
Sister!

SIGRID
I'm going with him.

Harolde looks up--takes her hand, helps her in. They can barely fit in the little skiff.

TOSTIG
Good luck.

ERIK
Bloodaxe! You have more than my sister's life in your hands. You have all of ours too.

HAROLDE
Then I shall cherish them as my own.

Thorgrim pushes away. The oars stroke and Strider glides away into the night--the fog. The slap of Thorgrim's paddle is soon the only sound as the little skiff approaches the dark shore.

BEACH--They haul the skiff up onto the beach and into the trees.

THORGRIM
We should cover it with saplings so it will furnish us an escape if--

HAROLDE
There is no escape.

They look at him.

HAROLDE (CONT'D)
Let us drag it to a clearing and cut it with our axes and make a warm fire.

THORGRIM
But someone will see.

CUT TO:

FIRE--What's left of the boat keeps them warm. Sigrid leans against Harolde. Gertrude sleeps on Thorgrim's shoulder. Harolde's eyes move, he hears something--Thorgrim's hand slips to his axe. Sigrid senses they are alert--leans her head up.

HAROLDE

Be still.

She is, though her eyes are sharp. Something moves in the shadows--more movement. Harolde sits up slowly as does Thorgrim--Gertrude wakes. All around the fire, large roughly dressed MEN stand with scythes, axes, truncheons. They are dressed in skins and crudely weaved wool--peasants.

HAROLDE (CONT'D)

Do you wish to warm yourselves?

MAN

We thought you were Friesians or Northmen--We kill strangers on this coast.

HAROLDE

It would not be so easy. Come into the light--We've been waiting for you most of the night.

CUT TO:

DAWN--CASTLE ON THE CRAG--The sea stretches away to the west, dark still--but a ship's sail is lit by the morning sun. The sail is striped red and white--a Viking! There is much commotion as MEN cry out and run about.

CRIER

Northmen! Northmen!

CASTLE GATE--Lowers and MEN-AT-ARMS(House Carls) rush out in chain mail with spear and sword. They are followed by the Household Cavalry--the same armored thugs we saw in the beginning.

BONFIRES--Are started on the cliff--torches gleam from the castle walls. Archers take up positions, and siege engines are rolled out with wagons filled with the deadly glass balls of Greek fire.

HEDRICK--Rides forth from the draw-bridge resplendent in iron and chain, and wearing an ornate Saxon headdress. At his side his CHIEF LIEUTENANT--HENSIG, points to the ship which sails boldly towards them.

HENSIG

He has the shield of peace on his mast.

HEDRICK

Do you trust a Viking?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

BATTLEMENTS--The old Bishop, Gallyon, rushes out with several of his BLACK COWLED PRIESTS to find Lady Alurea already looking down upon the scene.

GALLYON
Who are they My Lady?

ALUREA.
It is my Northman--Come to warm
my bed.

CUT TO:

STRIDER--Below the crag which bristles with fire and steel. Erik stands at the prow unarmed. Tostig is laid out on center deck in an open coffin, with Asa weeping at his side.

ERIK
Help us! Give us aid. Be merciful--
the wrath of God has befallen us. We
are lost.

CRIER
What do you want Northman?

ERIK
The End of the World--It has come
for us--The new God has struck down
my brothers and my father lays dead.
We have no country--no Chieftain.

HEDRICK
Did the other wolves cast you from
your den?

Much laughter.

ERIK
We are outlawed--The world has taken
the new God. We are sinners but He
is known for his forgiveness. Take
us in and let us be baptized--for
the End is soon.

HEDRICK
You are right about that Viking.

He raises his hand.

CLOSE ALUREA--

ALUREA
No!
(to Bishop Gallyon)
It would be of great benefit for the
people to know that Northmen such as
these came to us on their knees.

GALLYON
Of course My Lady--God loves a sinner,
and His might must be displayed.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ALUREA
Talk Northman!

STRIDER--All the crew are downtrodden and sickly looking--
none are armed. Leif coughs.

ERIK
Say the words for my father, that is
all I ask. Let us be passed through
the waters, then we will do whatever
is your bidding.

HEDRICK
Why did you come here?

ERIK
Because you are strong and the Christ-
God is strong here. I am told you have
a House of God in which we can wash.

HEDRICK
You can never be cleansed.

ALUREA
Let him pass--they are not armed and
they are pitiful.

HEDRICK
Yes My Lady.

CLOSE ALUREA--She turns to Gallyon.

ALUREA
I will receive this Northman myself
when you have scourged him of all vice
and filth. As for the others I feel
they can never be clean.

GALLYON
My Lady?

ALUREA
After you drive out their devils--
then they must be purified in fire.

Gallyon smiles.

GALLYON
At least their souls will be saved
even if we can do nothing for their
bodies.

ALUREA
Have all your clergy assemble in the
Cathedral--Let us conduct this ceremony
swiftly.

GALLYON
Of course My Lady.

CUT TO:

ERIK--LEIF--OTHER VIKINGS--Bearing the closed coffin of Tostig up the steep hill to the castle. Asa follows weeping and sobbing, pulling at her hair. A PRIEST leads them carrying burning incense that leaves a thick trail of smoke to mask their foulness and smell. All along the trail, ARMED MEN glare down at them--SOME spit.

HOUSE CARL

You don't look so big now Viking.

SAXON THUG

We will teach you the lesson of the soil.

SVERRI

Please have mercy--We want only mercy.

ODD.

Do you have bread--I have not eaten for weeks--I am dying.

THOROLF

Will this new God forgive us?

CUT TO:

COUNTRY VILLAGE--Poor sod huts and crude wagons--conditions far worse than those of the Norse. People are crowded around. Sigrid and Gertrude are held by WOMEN, while Harolde and Thorgrim are placed in a wagon with their hands bowed.

MAN

Wait--Do you see him?

Harolde looks out at the man.

ANOTHER

He is the monk from the Abbey at Maldon.

STILL ANOTHER

I know him, he is Brother Harolde.

ELDER

Brother Harolde is dead--eaten by crows.

HAROLDE

Then I am a ghost!

They let go of him. He stands.

HAROLDE (CONT'D)

I know you Grenwulf and you Aethel-- How are your daughters--Do they sniffle from croup this winter? What about you Woman? Did I not pull your cow from the mud--Did you not feed me porridge for it?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OTHER MAN

The End is near--The dead are coming
to walk upon the land.

HAROLDE

Yes--the End is here! But I am not
dead. I live! I live as I have never
lived--A free man!

WOMAN

But they killed you.

OTHER GIRL

You were a Man of the Cloth!

HAROLDE

They didn't kill me. God intervened
and He put me in the hands of the
Northmen!

Much agitation.

HAROLDE (CONT'D)

That is right--I have preached the
Gospel to the Norse! --And I have
come back. Why? Who could do such
a thing. Only one whose destiny was
tied to yours.

He turns to the girl.

HAROLDE (CONT'D)

Yes--I was a Man of the Cloth--But
I failed as a servant of God though
my love for Him is even greater. I
am not a Man of the Cloth--just a man.

ELDER

Why have you come here?

HAROLDE

Because I come to claim my birthright.
Who else would God have spared? I am
just a man, but a man who will be King!

CUT TO:

XIV: (CONCERNING RESURRECTION, WAR AND PURGING
WITH FIRE. HOW HAROLDE EARNED HIS NAME
AND PERFORMED AN EXORCISM)

CATHEDRAL--Huge imposing structure of stone and ornately
carved wood and marble. It is almost as high as the Keep, a
cylindrical tower at the high point between the walls.
SOLDIERS of the Queen herd WORKERS, ARTISANS, and HANDMAIDENS
into the Cathedral.

ARMED THUG

Come see the power of our God and
how He wields it for our Lady.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

OTHER THUG

Show respect--Leave something for
the Abbot--a coin--a pig--

ANOTHER BULLY

Our Lady has brought the Northmen
to the foot of God's altar--Hurry
along.

CUT TO:

INTERIOR--CATHEDRAL--The coffin placed before the altar--the
Vikings on their knees, and behind them, a row of House Carls
and some of the UNWASHED MULTITUDE.

BLACK ROBED PRIESTS are everywhere, but these Priests are not
wearing rough cloth like Harolde and his brethren--and they
are adorned with heavy gold crosses. Moreover, they are
corrupt and effete, and do not embody the hardness of the
Benedictine Order. They are clearly the servants of Alurea
and her Knights. Erik stands humbly and goes to the coffin
as monks sing a Gregorian chant.

GALLYON

What are you doing heathen?

ERIK

I was going to open the coffin so
that father could receive your
Benediction.

GALLYON

How long has he been dead? How did
he pass?

ERIK

He had the plague as so many of us
had. But the cold has kept him
from ripening.

GALLYON

Leave it closed--Let him have his
dignity. My Benediction will suffice
and then you must take him away.

ERIK

Move him?

GALLYON

Lest his Devils return.

Erik nods in agreement.

CUT TO:

HAROLDE--ANOTHER VILLAGE--Now standing in the cart unbound,
as are the others.

HAROLDE

You know this girl!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He points to Gertrude.

HAROLDE (CONT'D)
Do you not trust her?

WOMAN
But she's been raped by a Norse!
He's put a heathen spell on her.

GERTRUDE
When my husband took me--I cried--
But in pleasure not in pain. Any
spells that have been cast are mine!

THORGRIM
If I came here to go a-Viking, there
would be many widows to join my own.

PEASANT CHIEF
You expect us to trust the Norse--What
if we succeed--What should they do to
us then?

HAROLDE
If you are strong--and throw off your
chains--What will a few Vikings matter--

Thorgrim gives him a look.

HAROLDE (CONT'D)
They are free--as you shall soon be--
They live by the Law--which applies
to all men the same!

PEASANT
And if you are King?

HAROLDE
I live by the Law!

CUT TO:

CASTLE COURTYARD--Stakes are being prepared--kindling piled
around them--crosses erected. The Knights supervise,
enjoying the possibility of an afternoon's entertainment.

CUT TO:

ALTAR--BISHOP GALLYON stands before the penitents.

GALLYON
Dost thou renounce Satan?

VIKINGS
I renounce.

GALLYON
--And all his work?

VIKINGS
I renounce.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GALLYON
--And all his pomps?

VIKINGS
I renounce.

CLOSE ERIK--He shouts out his expurgation with enthusiasm, but Kyah has trouble and swallows--Mahfoud seems to be muttering to himself. Erik urges the others on.

GALLYON
Dost thou believe in Jesus Christ,
God Almighty, the Father, Son, and
Holy Ghost?

VIKINGS
I believe!

CUT TO:

WOLVES--Kept in iron barred caves under the Keep. A high wall of stone, including a pit with scattered bones and hides, extends from the caves. A House Carl walks on the wall with a FOOTMAN.

HOUSE CARL
When have they last been fed?

The footman jumps down--dangles his legs over the pit. The wolves snarl and snap.

FOOTMAN
Not for a while Govnor'.

CUT TO:

BISHOP GALLYON--Snarling like the wolves.

GALLYON
We beseech Thee O God to have mercy
upon Thy servants these heathen Danes!

CLOSE ERIK--

ERIK (under breath)
Norse.

CLOSE GALLYON--

GALLYON
Drive from them blindness of heart,
all lust of the flesh! Loosen the
bonds of Satan! Open to them O Lord
the door of Thy Truth!

CLOSE COFFIN--It moves! Shakes--thumps--the cover bulges and splinters!

GALLYON--His mouth opens--

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

GALLYON (CONT'D)
The dead are rising!

The coffin shatters--wood flies!

GALLYON (CONT'D)
Help me O Lord!

It smashes open and up sits Tostig. He looks straight at the Bishop who screams. Tostig backhands an axe, it turns through the air once and cleaves into the Bishop's chest. With his other hand, he grabs the coffin side and leaps fully armed to the floor, as deft and dashing as any young athlete. He scoops up weapons and throws them to the Vikings--Erik--Sverri, Odd, Thorolf. The Brothers Strykar turn on the ARMED MEN behind them, grappling them to the ground. Before they can wrest their weapons away, a House Carl runs one through with a spear. Odd charges amongst them wielding an axe. Blood and metal fly.

CLOSE ERIK--He cuts a man's throat with a slaughter knife. His sword still unsheathed, he sees Tostig cleaving down the Priests! Erik hands the knife to Kyah.

ERIK
Hold this--And stay by my side!

Tostig howls with joy hacking down the Priests until his axe sticks. Then he takes a spear and engages a House Carl, running him through and sticking him to the altar. Asa rushes to the coffin and throws him his sword.

CLOSE ERIK--His blade drawn, he cleaves a MAN through the helm--ducking ANOTHER and slashing into his spine.

TOSTIG
My pretty blade grows jealous when
she sees her daughter dance naked!

He draws and hacks the spear from a man and smashes his jaw with his pommel. He then runs headlong into the crowd slashing and hewing. Sverri disarms an ARCHER, pulls him back and strangles him on his own bowstring. Odd rips the spear from a MAN--skewers him through and then pinions a Priest with him.

ARCHERS--Rush in and take up position. They fire--running one of the Brothers through the head and neck--the others duck the volley into the pews. An arrow ricochets and sticks in Christ's leg. The Berserkers, Brothers and the rest of the crew charge the Archers, led by Tostig--Asa trying to keep up.

CLOSE KYAH--Trying to stay by Erik's side--she looks horrified as a MAN tumbles headlong onto the chancel, grabbing his neck as blood slaps across the holy chalice. She turns to see Thorval smashing down a man with a heavy gold cross.

ERIK
Kill them all!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

KYAH

But what of the innocents?

Erik turns for a second.

ERIK

None here are innocent!

CUT TO:

COURTYARD--Consternation as Priests and servants pour from the Cathedral in panic. They are trampled and swept aside by the men-at-arms and Knights who are equally anxious to depart. A YOUNG PAGE in gaudy dress runs foremost.

PAGE

The Vikings! The Vikings are loose!

CUT TO:

ALUREA--In the treasure room high in the Keep's tower. She has been taking meditation with her gold. The noise from the outside is a rude interruption that just will not pass. She shakes herself and goes out on the battlement. Hedrick rushes to follow from an adjoining bedchamber, dressed in a woman's nightgown. Alurea stands on the turret edge looking down upon the chaos. The wind blows her thin garments around her. She sees her soldiers fighting at the doorway, hears the screams. CAPTAINS are trying to assemble ARCHERS and SPEAR-MEN to counter-attack. Hedrick doesn't come out far enough to show himself.

HEDRICK

What has happened My Lady?

ALUREA

The Northmen! They are sacking my Cathedral!

She turns to see him.

ALUREA (CONT'D)

Arm yourself fool!

CUT TO:

COURTYARD--The Vikings have killed or expelled all the Saxon's from the Cathedral. A line prepares to charge in from the outside with spear and axe. Suddenly Tostig and the Brothers Strykar burst forth using pieces of pew and captured or dead Saxons and Priests as shields. They rush out with a roar.

TOSTIG

Odin!

--And slam into the Saxon line--hacking and cleaving. It serves to blunt the attack, kill a few and sow consternation.

TOSTIG (CONT'D)

Withdraw! Withdraw!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

The Vikings pull back with oiled coordination--Tostig going last. He chops into a shield--his sword sticks--before Asa can hand him another, he is delt a blow to the head with a mace. He goes down, she dives upon him wielding an axe, but it is quickly stripped from her. Erik starts out with Odd.

ASA

No! I am with him! Bar the door!

Erik withdraws, never arguing with his mother. The House Carls and footmen pull a dazed Tostig to his feet and carry him away with Asa.

CUT TO:

ALUREA--In formed chain-mail with Hedrick at her side, this time dressed appropriately. Hensig and others stand ready for her orders.

HENSIG

They have slain the Bishop and many of the congregation. They have archers at the windows.

ALUREA

They are hell-beasts and must be purged with fire.

HEDRICK

But the Cathedral--

ALUREA

It is defiled by Satan--It can be rebuilt. Men did it once--Men will do it again. But this now must be purified!

HENSIG

It is stone.

ALUREA

Then get wood and straw--Get it from the peasants. Yes it is stone--but so is an oven.

She looks over at Tostig and Asa bound to a stake.

HENSIG

Their Chieftain and his bitch.

ALUREA

The devil himself.

She walks over to them.

ALUREA (CONT'D)

What would you think if I burned out this woman's eyes with heated copper coins?

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

TOSTIG

I would say you lack imagination.

ASA

Yes--Have you ever heard of the Red Eagle? Where a man's lungs are torn out of his ribs and left to flap like wings?

TOSTIG

Don't waste your breath she has no understanding.

ALUREA

Feed him alive to the wolves--in front of the others. Let his own kind have their way with him.

Asa spits on her.

ALUREA (CONT'D)

Let her join him.

Asa turns to Tostig.

ASA

Good--You old fool--You're not going to Valhalla without ME!

CUT TO:

ODD--Looking out of one of the clear panes in the stained glass windows. He has a bow and an axe to break it when the time arises. Behind, the Vikings pile benches and pews against the door.

ODD

Erik!

Erik rushes over with Sverri and Mahfoud.

ERIK

Another brother is dead but all the rest are in good spirits.

MAHFOUD

Strykar--your brother is dead.

STRYKAR

That means only one more left to die--then they will regret it.

Erik climbs up on the window--Sverri smashes out some panes of another one.

ERIK

What is it?

ODD

Look.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

He looks down upon the pit with its high walls. A CROWD OF ARMED MEN have gathered near the Keep--dragging along the prisoners.

ERIK
Father! Mother!

He smashes out part of the beautiful colored pattern.

MAHFOUD
It is a wolf pit!

Before Erik can react, his parents are unceremoniously kicked off the wall and fall heavily in the pit.

ERIK
Give me a bow--Do not give them
the pleasure of watching.

Sverri draws his and fires.

CUT TO:

WALL--A KNIGHT is taken straight through the face and falls into the pit kicking. Another arrow bounces off Hensig's chain mail hauberk. Still another finds its mark in the arm of a PAGE who screams hideously. All the others duck back and put up shields.

PIT--TOSTIG--Pulls himself to his feet untying his bonds, and then dutifully goes to Asa and unties her--helping her gently to her knees.

TOSTIG
Did they bruise you my little
flower?

Asa gets her breath.

ASA
It is as nothing--Remember it is I
who have born your children.

TOSTIG
Yes and such fine ones at that.

They turn to the noise of the cave gates being cranked up--the wolves pawing and snarling, drooling.

TOSTIG (CONT'D)
It has been good--Wife--

He takes her hand. The cages raise, the wolves leap out.

CLOSE TOSTIG--He howls--

WOLVES--They stop! They sense something--fear? A kindred spirit? A leader? Whatever, they stop--their tails down, several lie down panting expectantly.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

ASA--TOSTIG--They stare for a minute. Tostig howls again.

ERIK--Howls from the window--all the Vikings howl.

WOLVES--They begin howling.

TOSTIG--ASA--He breaks into a great joyous laugh, she does too. They embrace.

SAXONS--Rush--their shields forward. Behind them Hedrick screams.

HEDRICK

Archers!

The shields drop and THIRTY ARCHERS fire--the range is short, the arrows whip by at tremendous velocity.

ASA--TOSTIG--Stuck together by many arrows--like a pin cushion--they fall. The wolves snarl, sensing blood and rush in.

ERIK--Looks at it--hearing the wolves tear his parents to pieces. He turns slowly.

ERIK

You have seen a death that only
the great poets will sing of. Let
each of us measure up to it!

A cheer from all.

CUT TO:

CASTLE--GATE--The drawbridge lowered--MAILED CAVALRY escort wagons filled with wood and straw--PEASANTS carry more flammable burdens. They are whipped on by the mounted warriors. A great crowd of DIRTY PEOPLE gathers beyond the moat.

PEASANT

The Northmen are in the Cathedral.

OTHER PEASANT

They are going to burn it.

ANOTHER

Our King built that Cathedral. He
built it for God.

A WARRIOR rides up to them.

WARRIOR

What are you looking at dogs? You
stay here and we will show you lazy
bastards what real work is.

ANOTHER rides in with a whip--lashing out at them.

CUT TO:

SIEGE ENGINES--Brought up to the Cathedral--they fire--the glass balls sail cleanly through the air smashing on the stone. One goes through a great stained glass window taking all the artistry with it.

CHANCEL--The ball breaks below the altar and the liquid splatters up over bodies and debris--dangerously close to the candles.

ERIK
The candles!

Leif blows them out--and wipes the blood from his sword. Another ball crashes through.

CUT TO:

COURTYARD--The wagons are brought up to the door and MEN unload them.

THUG
Put it there--up tight against it.

ANOTHER SOLDIER
Be quick you stupid pigs or you'll burn with it.

CAPTAIN
We'll show them what hell is.

He turns to be confronted by a man not moving.

CAPTAIN (CONT'D)
What're you standing about for knave?

The man is Harolde and with deliberate almost balletic beauty, he draws a wood axe from behind--swings with his body in perfect harmony, and cleaves through the Captain's upraised arm and down through this helmet.

CROWD--No one says anything--everyone is frozen for a moment in shock, even Harolde. Then a MAN AT ARMS lunges at him with a spear only to be tripped by ANOTHER PEASANT--and scythed. Suddenly MEN burst out of the straw bearing rusty swords, axes, scythes, cudgels. OTHERS take up lengths of wood. They all scream in long held anger. Their greatest effect is surprise--some of their blows glance off shields and chain mail. Spears are thrown, bows fired--both sides are caught and pinioned. A vicious chaos is fomented.

CLOSE HAROLDE--He cleaves a MAN off his horse--grabs his shield from him. He sees Thorgrim burst from a wagon near the gate. Thorgrim, instantly in a Berserker rage, splits the shield of the nearest KNIGHT, taking his arms. He wheels around, throws his axe into the back of ANOTHER. Harolde grabs a spear and sets himself--throws--

WHIP! FOLLOW SPEAR--To see it impale a FOOTMAN closing on Thorgrim's back. A KNIGHT rides to the chain where TWO FOOTMEN are attempting to raise the drawbridge.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

CLOSE HAROLDE--He sees them.

HAROLDE
To the bridge! The bridge!

An arrow slivers through his shield, he leans down, grabs his axe and charges the bridge.

CUT TO:

OUTSIDE--Other side of the moat. The warriors hear the commotion--turn--a MAN grabs the whip, pulls--throwing the horseman off balance--ANOTHER leaps on him. MEN and WOMEN attack the other warrior grabbing him, pulling him and his horse down. Again weapons appear from nowhere, hoes, truncheons, crude pikes, hooks and bills--pitchforks! A great cry erupts from the crowd as they rush to the drawbridge that is being raised.

BRIDGE--A short violent encounter--the men-at-arms, House Carls, Knights fight bitterly--and back down the farmers and peasants. Thorgrim alone fights through, taking a spear thrust through the leg, but pulling the Knight from his horse. A FOOTMAN stands over him with a scramasax about to plunge it, when he is hewed down through the midriff by Harolde, splattering blood over Thorgrim.

THORGRIM
Spring rain Brother Harolde!

He then strangles the Knight on the ground breaking his neck.

HAROLDE--Sees the man at the wheel. He goes at him, hacks into the warrior's shield. The man contorts in fear.

FOOTMAN
Please--mercy!

He leaves his shield and runs. Harolde takes up his axe and clangs through the chain. The bridge comes crashing down!

CUT TO:

CATHEDRAL DOOR--Crashes open. There stands Erik the Red in hooded Viking helmet, sword bathed in red. He howls and comes bursting forth followed by the other Vikings all howling like wolves. They slaughter the confused soldiers in front of them--pick up their shields and weapons. They group together crouched, growling and laughing as the Saxon infantry tries to organize themselves. Suddenly a roar from the bridge as a huge crowd of peasants burst through the gate bearing their crude vicious weapons.

HEDRICK
Archers! Right!

The shield wall opens and the archers fire into the oncoming crowd.

CLOSE HAROLDE--He sees it.

(CONTINUED)

HAROLDE

Down!

He drops as an arrow skims his head sticking into a BOY behind. They all drop.

VIKINGS--They charge screaming and howling into the flank of the shield wall.

HEDRICK

Pikes! Left! --Archers!

But the Vikings are close--another Berserker brother is skewered on a lance. The shields collide. Erik, Odd and Sverri fight in their wolf pack style cutting into the line, slaying and maiming and never stopping.

CLOSE STRYKAR--Holds his brother, a broken shaft through him. He gargles blood.

BROTHER

I am the last--I see the Valkyries.

He coughs and shakes in death. Strykar stands.

STRYKAR

Brothers--We cannot die!

They howl the Berserker scream and rip into the line pulling shields down, biting, stabbing--breaking. One of them loses some fingers--slaps the blood in his foe's eyes and strikes him down.

HAROLDE--He stands--looking around seeing many stuck with arrow shafts.

HAROLDE

Though our numbers are weaker--Let
our hearts be bolder! Death to the
tyrants!

He charges full into the wall hacking through with his axe--pulling himself over, clawing--screaming. The others follow swarming on.

HENSIG--Mounted on a war horse leads a score of Knights in a counter charge--spearing at the peasants and Vikings. Hedrick waves them on from behind on his white steed surrounded by ARMED MONKS. The charge batters men down from both sides--the war horses kick and bite--spattering blood and bone.

ERIK--Hurls himself upon a HORSEMAN taking him and the mount down, hacking and slashing. Odd cleaves a RIDER from the back with his axe. Strykar is run through both legs with a spear. He reaches down, breaks the shaft and pulls out the ends and staggers on--going down. Leif pulls a horse down by the neck--swings wildly on it as the RIDER flails at him with a mace--it wraps around his strong arm and he pulls the KNIGHT off and cleaves him with his sword.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HENSIG--Charges through. Harolde sees him. Hensig whirls his spear around and thrusts it through Harolde's side. He grabs at it but Hensig withdraws it, and is going to strike again when a shield is thrust in front of Harolde--the spear sticks. Two strong hands grasp the shaft--and pull it with the rider from the horse. Hensig looks up to see Thorgrim who whirls the lance around and runs it through him--transfixing him on the shaft. Then he picks him up over his head--over the battle for all to see--as Hensig screams his death agony. He holds him this way and then plunges the lance and body through a SAXON and shield--and plunges the whole thing into the ground.

THORGRIM

Odin!

CLOSE HEDRICK--He sees this and wheels his horse around and gallops to the Keep, scattering PRIESTS and LACKEYS.

CROWD--The peasants keep pouring in, overwhelming the House Carls, footmen, archers. The ranks are broken--a retreat to the Keep becomes a rout and slaughter.

CATHEDRAL DOOR--Kyah binding Strykar's legs while two of the other brothers hold fingerless hands or no hand at all.

STRYKAR

You said we wouldn't die.

KYAH

Yes but I said nothing of being maimed--
Where is your other brother?

BROTHER

Enjoying himself. All in all we have
not had such good fighting since men
took the new god.

CUT TO:

HEDRICK--Rides up to the door of the keep--rushes to it. It closes and the bar falls.

HEDRICK

No! No! Let me in!

ALUREA (O.S.)

Show your mettle Saxon. Defend your
Lady.

HEDRICK

No--No!

He turns as he senses people rushing to him. Harolde!
Followed by Erik, Sverri, and Leif. He gasps--his hands
against the door.

LEIF

Kill him Father.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE

No--he is mine.

Harolde has lost his axe and carries a sword.

HAROLDE (CONT'D)

Do you remember me My Lord? I, a poor monk of Saint Benedict? Surely you remember the monks of Saint Benedict?

ERIK

Watch him.

He draws his sword--swings a vicious blow at Harolde who is holding his side--the blade knicks his shoulder--a cross stroke takes the sword from Harolde's hand. He comes down two handed and Harolde rolls out of the way as the sword severs a log on a wood pile.

ERIK (CONT'D)

You make a poor blade-man. Let me show how she can sing.

LEIF

No--

He steps in front of Erik, throws an axe that whips into the door. Harolde scrambles for it--pulls it out.

HAROLDE

Now!

He advances with confidence--Hedrick swings, he catches it--turns the blade so it snaps from Hedrick's hand--strokes him against the wall with the handle and swings, fully burying the blade from shoulder to chest. He lets go and Hedrick falls with a gurgling sound.

HAROLDE (CONT'D)

Father--My vengeance is yours!

CROWD--Surges around the Keep--peasants and Vikings both awash in blood and victory. An effort is made to ram the door with a log but the archers in the tower harass them. Finally SOME PEASANTS come up with huge iron grappling hooks which are fixed to crude knotted twine. They attempt to throw them, but this clearly is not in their experience.

ODD

Here--Let me help you with that.

He smiles at the BIG ENGLISH YEOMAN who doesn't quite know how to react.

ODD (CONT'D)

You hold the rope.

SVERRI

He's good Brothers--He's done this before.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

They laugh.

GRAPPLES--Sail through the air and catch on the turrets. Archers and men-at-arms try to unseat them but are kept away by a hail of arrows.

ERIK--Is first up one of the ropes--followed by Leif. Odd takes another rope--and is about to start up when Harolde pushes through.

HAROLDE

This is my concern.

ODD (shrugs)

Then you go first.

He does--the Vikings shrug and follow. The rope is handed to Thorgrim.

THORGRIM

I'm too old--and a little too big--
I'll wait 'till someone opens the
door and invites me in.

MAHFOUD

I think I'll do likewise.

CUT TO:

ERIK--Swinging up and over to a window slip--an ARCHER leans out to fire--Erik wings across and knocks the MAN out of the window and goes in.

HALLWAY--Erik lands rolling as ARCHERS fire at him. One arrow finds his hip. Nevertheless he cuts a MAN down at his ankles--and rolls into ANOTHER, impaling him on the blade. An AXEMAN swings at him, narrowly missing his head. He draws back to swing again when a hand stays his stroke. He turns around to face Harolde who runs him through with a slaughter knife. Odd comes through another window--there is much clattering and heavy blows and a scream or two. Erik gets to his feet but can't walk, let alone climb the steep stairs--he falls as Harolde goes up. Erik motions for Leif to follow.

CUT TO:

TREASURE ROOM--Alurea lays seductively amongst the gold oblivious to what is going on outside. She has shed her armor and is a tempting sight. She mutters incantations--conjuring up spells and ancient protection from the black arts. In her hand she clutches a jeweled stiletto. A shadow falls across her. She looks up and sees Harolde.

HAROLDE

I am HE who you knew would someday
come. Judgement, Witch!

ALUREA

You were a servant of God. Truly
you must find it in your heart to
have mercy.

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE
Mercy is for the living--not devils.

ALUREA
Forgive them for they know not what
they do.

He grabs her by the hair--pulls her to her feet--pushes her
over to the window where the light falls on her eyes--the
bloody slaughter knife at her throat.

HAROLDE
You are not one of God's creatures.
Renounce Him!

She doesn't know what to do.

HAROLDE (CONT'D)
Renounce Christ! Do it and I shall
let you live in darkness.

ALUREA (spitting)
I care nothing for your God--God of
the meek--Ba! The strong shall inherit
the earth--that is what you know in your
heart. The rest is true blasphemy. Kill
me--I do not care. If I cannot be strong
then why be at all. I renounce Christ,
the Father, Son, and the Holy Ghost!
Damn you all!

HAROLDE
Then live in hell.

He plunges the knife in below her heart, withdraws it. She
gasps in almost sexual passion and smoke comes from her mouth
and nostrils. She staggers to the window and falls from the
tower shrieking all the way down.

WINDOW--Harolde stands in the window. He drops the knife.
He turns and sees Leif who has been watching.

HAROLDE
You saw this Boy?

LEIF
All of it.

HAROLDE
Then tell the tale when you
are old.

DISSOLVE TO:

XV: (CONCERNING THE MARRIAGE OF THE EARL OF
NORTHUMBRIA AND THE COMING OF SPRING)

FLOWERS--Of springtime covering the muddy fields. A rebirth
as always. By the beach, the multitude gather for a wedding
ceremony, for a wedding is an affirmation. The ceremony

(CONTINUED)

marries Harolde Bloodaxe, Earl of Northumbria, under King Ethelred(High King of Britain), and Sigrid of Tostig, whom we know comes from noble breeding.

HAROLDE--SIGRID--MONTAGE--Exchange vows covered in garlands of flowers in a ceremony that harkens back to Celtic Britain. Only the Druids have been replaced by MONKS and a new ABBOT from the Diocese of Canterbury. Traditional flute and harp drift on the sound of a breeze with that of the gulls. Attending the festivities are the Vikings, now healed and dressed in local finery. On the distant beach is the Strider. Surrounding all, to keep order, are the Earl's MEN-AT-ARMS, and HOUSE CARLS in chain mail.

CLOSE HAROLDE--He drinks from the horn of plenty with his bride. Erik watches.

HAROLDE
Now it is your turn.

Erik drinks deeply--hands the horn to Kyah.

ERIK
Enough for now. You know ale tastes best at sea.

HAROLDE
Stay another day Brother.

ERIK
That would lead to another and another--soon I would be a farmer.

He looks out at Leif who stands with SEVERAL YOUNG SAXON GIRLS, but he is looking out to sea.

ERIK (CONT'D)
He is anxious not to miss the tide.

HAROLDE
And where--of all the world will you go?

ERIK
Perhaps to Miklagaard to make the Emperor hide trembling at the sight of our terrible navies. Perhaps to the land of the Rus where the Bulgars have hidden their gold. Maybe Africa where we shall ride on the backs of the great beasts--or the place called Rome.

HAROLDE
Where will you go?

ERIK
Where a man can be free. But keep your gate lit by fires and watchers on your coast, for when it is dark with no moon I may come a-Viking!

(CONTINUED)

CONTINUED:

HAROLDE
You do and I'll hang you in a tree!
Brother.

ERIK
Brother.

They embrace.

DISSOLVE TO:

HAROLDE--SIGRID--Standing at the base of a huge cliff. The waves white at its foot. A strong wind blows Harolde's crimson cape, and tugs at Sigrid's dress of white and gold. They look out upon a spring sun setting and a churning sea. A red and white sail marks the Strider sailing away.

HAROLDE (V.O.)
They sailed West as the sun does set.
First to a place called Ice-Land--Then
further to a place called Green. And
it is said that the boy Leif Eriksson
voyaged farther still--perhaps to the
edge of the world.

The End