

ERIK THE VIKING - Terry Jones -----

Blackness. Flames begin to lick upwards from the bottom of the screen. Suddenly all hell breaks loose. Screaming, yelling. Black figures flash across the foreground, with the flames still burning behind. There follows a confusion of burning, raping, killing and looting - we don't clearly see what's going on. Suddenly we cut to the interior of a hut. The door is in the process of being broken down. The camera pans onto the close-up face of an attractive girl who is staring in horrified fascination at the door. Her arms are white with fresh dough and flour. Suddenly the door bursts open and a wild-looking Viking leaps into the hut. He holds a sword. He looks around wildly and then his eyes come to rest on the girl. This Viking, I'm afraid, is Erik. We are about to see him in the worst possible light so be prepared. The girl, whose name is Helga, cowers, and looks terrified but resolute. Erik glances round. Then slowly he advances on the girl, forcing her back onto a chest. Erik holds his sword to Helga's throat with his right hand, while his left hand searches to find the thongs holding up his trousers. He is clearly having difficulties trying to hold his heavy sword to Helga's throat at the same time as undoing his trousers. He fumbles and lowers his sword for a moment.

HELGA

Have you done this sort of thing before?

ERIK

Me? Of course! I've been looting and pillaging up and down the coast.

HELGA

(looking sceptical)

Looting and pillaging, eh?

ERIK

(on the defensive)

Yes.

HELGA

What about the raping?

ERIK

Shut up.

HELGA

It's obvious you haven't raped anyone in your life.

ERIK

Sh!

He covers her mouth with his free hand, and looks round to make sure no one's heard. Then he carries on trying to undo his trousers, but he is now somewhat more than half-hearted about it. Helga watches suspiciously.

HELGA

Do you LIKE women?

Erik is clearly shocked and stung by the insinuation. He stops.

ERIK

Of course I like women... I LOVE 'em.

HELGA

(pointing out the obvious)

You don't love ME.

ERIK

No... right... this is RAPE... Mark you, I'm not saying I couldn't get to like you... in fact... well, to be quite honest, I prefer it when there's some sort of mutual feeling between two people...

HELGA

What - rape?

ERIK

No. It isn't rape then, is it?

HELGA

Oh, get it over with.

ERIK

(hesitates again)

I don't suppose... no...

HELGA

What?

ERIK

I don't suppose you... you DO like me at all?

HELGA

What d'you expect? You come in here, burn my village, kill my family and try to rape me...

This is too much for Erik. We withers under the irony.

ERIK

I'll kill you if you say anything about this to anyone.

HELGA

(puzzled)

About raping me?

ERIK

About NOT raping you...

HELGA

You DON'T like it, do you?

ERIK

Well it just seems a little bit crude, that's all.

HELGA

What about the killing and looting? That's just as crude, isn't it?

ERIK

Oh well - you've GOT to do them.

HELGA

Why? Why have you got to go round killing and looting?

ERIK

To pay for the next expedition, of course.

HELGA

But that's a circular argument! If the only reason for going on an expedition is the killing and looting and the only reason for the killing and looting is to pay for the next expedition, they cancel each other out.

ERIK

Oh! Stop talking as if we were married!

HELGA

Well you started it.

ERIK

I just said I didn't feel like raping you.

HELGA

And I was just saying that rape is no MORE pointless or crude than all the killing and looting that goes on. Erik vents of his frustration on the already shattered door.

ERIK

Scream.

HELGA

Ah.

ERIK

Louder.

HELGA

Aaagh! Rape!

ERIK

(he'd forgotten about that)

Oh, thanks

Two more Vikings burst in with eyes blazing. They have the very unfortunate names of Ernest and Jennifer, but it doesn't really matter, for reasons which will become obvious very quickly. They are also slightly drunk.

ERNEST

Rape?

JENNIFER

Where?

Jennifer the Viking sways and leans against a door post. The marauder's eyes come to rest on Erik and Helga who are standing, fully clothed, about six feet apart. They look slightly puzzled.

HELGA

He raped me standing up.

There is a pause. Erik looks up at Helga. Why has she saved his face by telling this lie? Jennifer the Viking turns to Erik.

JENNIFER

You finished, then?

ERIK

Oh... yes... I suppose so...

ERNEST

Right! Me first!

JENNIFER

No! I asked!

Ernest leaps on top of Helga and pins her to the ground. Jennifer joins in. Erik looks stunned for a moment. Then he suddenly leaps to Helga's defence.

ERIK

Leave her alone!

He pulls Jennifer off, but Jennifer fights back. Erik forces Jennifer back until he falls into the kneading trough. They fight in the dough for some moments, until Erik runs Jennifer through. The dough is stained red, and the film is rid of such an inappropriately named Viking once and for all.

Erik then turns his attention on Ernest who is still on top of Helga. Without a moment's hesitation, Erik runs him through the back. Ernest screams. So does Helga. Erik turns white, and pulls out his sword. Ernest falls over into a heap with his co-misnomer, and Erik kneels beside Helga to find a bloodstain under her breast where he has inadvertently run her through. She is clearly not long for this world.

HELGA

Thanks for saving me from a fate worse than death.

ERIK

I didn't mean to!

HELGA

(gasping for breath)

Oh, that's all right then... it's the thought... that counts...

Erik cradles her head and tries helplessly to staunch the blood.

ERIK

You told them I raped you - why?

HELGA

(dying)

I dunno... you looked so... so vulnerable...

ERIK

Why should you care?

HELGA

(dying)

Why... should YOU care?

ERIK

Tell me your name?

Helga looks up at him, but dies in his arms, without ever saying her name.

ERIK

Tell me... what IS it...?

Erik realizes she has gone. He gazes at her for some time. He looks around at the two dead bodies beside them. Then he listens to the sound of raping and slaughter continuing on the outside. Screams and bloodthirsty shouts echo alongside the roar of flames and the cries of animals. The camera tracks into a big close-up on Erik.

Superimpose the title: ERIK THE VIKING:

Second title: TIM ROBBINS.

Mix through to wide shot of the burning village. Figures running here and there. Superimpose the rest of the opening titles. By the last of the opening titles the last of the flames are dying down.

Cut to a close-up of a very loud-looking Viking screaming into the camera, as he hurls an axe. This Viking's name is Thorfinn Skull-Splitter. The axe thuds into the wall a few inches away from the face of a frightened girl, Unn, who is pinned to the wall with her braids spread out. The Vikings are hurling axes at her a la Kirk Douglas in THE VIKINGS.

Several Vikings sitting at ale-bench, laugh in a rather unpleasant way. Erik, however, frowns. He is sitting at a table on a dais, next to his grandfather, the chief of the village. His grandfather almost chokes with merriment. Erik's mother glances at him with some hostility. Meanwhile the drunken Thorfinn has just lifted the totally legless Ivar the Boneless up off the floor and presses an axe into his hand. A tremor of nervousness ripples round the females in the Mead Hall. Ivar is clearly in no condition to throw anything, except, perhaps, the contents of his stomach. Unn winces. Finally, amidst much giggling, Ivar throws wildly, and the axe smashes into a jug being carried by one of the serving girls. The menfolk erupt into drunken hysterics at this. The women clearly feel that the occasion is getting out of hand. But before any of them can work up enough courage to intervene, Thorfinn Skull-Splitter has thrust an axe into

the hands of the even more plastered Sven the Berserk. Now Sven is not the Viking to let a little matter like not being able to see straight stop him heaving the axe at a young maiden. He takes the axe and whirls it wildly over his head. Even the other drunken Vikings realize this could be dangerous, and they cower behind the table. Sven lets go of the axe. Unn shuts her eyes prepared for the worst. There is a dull thud and a grunt and then a whoop of mirth. Unn opens her eyes to find that the axe has come to rest in the back of a totally stupefied Viking who merely slumps forward onto the table he is sitting at. On the opposite side sits Harald Missionary, a rather seedy cleric who has long since given up trying to convert the pagans and found solace in their mead. He thinks about intervening, but decides that it's a bit late really and that he might as well finish off his ale-cup instead. GRIMHILD HOUSEWIFE (his only admirer) refills it for him. At this moment, however, the axe-throwers have run out of axes, so, as they go to retrieve the ones they've thrown, Harald Missionary salves his conscience by lurching across to the unfortunate Unn. He pokes his dog-eared bible under her nose.

HARALD

If you were thinking of converting, my dear, this would be an IDEAL opportunity...

UNN

Not now!

HARALD

(who is used to rebuffs)

No, of course not...

(he hesitates)

You might not get another chance, you know...

UNN

Go away.

At this moment another axe thuds into the wall, speeding up Harald's desire to get back to the ale-bench.

HARALD

Yes, of course... I'll pray for you anyway, my dear...

Suddenly an axe shatters a large earthenware vessel.

HARALD

Yes.. That's what I'll do...

Harald scuttles back to the ale-bench as fast as he can. Erik meanwhile, stares in astonishment as, for a fleeting moment, he sees Helga, the girl he accidentally killed, standing there with her braids spread out in place of Unn. He shakes his head and the vision passes. In the meantime, however, Ivar's mum (perhaps the toughest lady in the village) has decided that enough is enough.

IVAR'S MUM

Let her go!

THORFINN

Why?

VIKINGS

Yes, why?

SVEN THE BERSERK

Why should we let er go?

THORFINN

We haven't hit a single braid yet!

The Vikings all guffaw. Ivar's mum has had enough. She throws the contents of a jug of ale over Thorfinn. He is shocked, but after the first shock he grins evilly, because now he's been given carte blanche to do the thing he enjoys doing most. Without another thought he throws a vicious right hook at Ivar's mum and lays her out cold. Erik reacts with disgust. His grandad, however, gives a whoop of glee.

GRANDAD

Whoah! Heee! That showed her!

Meanwhile a little shrivelled old man is jumping up and down.

INGEMUND THE OLD

Hey! He hit my wife!

Ingemund starts to go for Thorfinn, but Thorhild beats him to it. She grabs one of the long-handled cooking griddles from the fires and swings it at Thorfinn. Thorfinn, however, ducks, and the red-hot griddle hits Sven the Berserk, who is standing with his back to Thorfinn. Sven screams and goes berserk, turning round and hitting Thorfinn who is now standing upright again.

INGEMUND THE OLD

Leave him alone.

Ingemund hits Sven. Thangbrand hits Ingemund and a general fight breaks out. Erik's granddad clearly considers this the highlights of the evening, but Erik looks at it in disgust and at his granddad in despair. Eventually he gets up and walk out of the Mead Hall. His granddad notices and frowns. He knows something's wrong with his grandson but hasn't a clue what it could be. Erik's mother frowns and nods to his granddad. Granddad gets up and fights his way through the melee to follow Erik out of the Hall. The snow lies thick over the village as Erik's grandfather joins his grandson beside the little quay. Erik is staring broodily into the night.

GRANDFATHER

What's the matter, son?

Erik doesn't reply. His grandfather glances back at the Mead Hall, whence the sound of the fight drift across the snow.

GRANDFATHER

We're missing all the fun...

ERIK

What's it all about?

GRANDFATHER

What?

ERIK

We toil and labour, we loot and pillage, rape and kill... and yet...

GRANDFATHER

You talking piffle, son?

ERIK

Where does it all get us, Grandpa?

GRANDFATHER

Who have you been talking to?

ERIK

I met this girl...

GRANDFATHER

It's always the women that start the trouble.

ERIK

She got me thinking...

GRANDFATHER

So? What'd you do to her?

Erik stops in his tracks - as if brought up short by the horror of what he has done.

ERIK

I... I... KILLED her...

GRANDFATHER

That's my boy!

Erik's grandfather gives him a paternal hug. Erik looks at him and thinks about the generation gap. Cut to feet running in the snow. It is day.

ERIK

Freya!

Erik looks around him and calls out again.

ERIK

Freya!

Erik runs into the distance - a small figure against the dramatic wintry landscape.

Cut to a remote, barren mountainside. Erik climbs up into shot, and continues climbing until he reaches a cave. He enters it. As his eyes get used to the dark he can make out a few signs of life: a cooking pot on a fire, a straw bed, a pile of rune-sticks.

ERIK

Freya? Freya?

There is a bundle of rags behind Erik. A head rises from it. This is Freya.

FREYA

Ah... Erik... Erik the "Viking"...

It is not clear whether her words are not a little mocking.

FREYA

Now what CAN you want with me, Erik the "Viking"?

ERIK

I shouldn't have come.

FREYA

They will make fun of you for listening to an old woman's stories?

Erik doesn't reply. Freya watches him craftily.

FREYA

Young men are only interested in fighting and killing.

Erik looks up at her sharply. It is as if she has read his mind.

ERIK

But has it always been like that, Freya? From the beginning of time?

Freya doesn't reply. Instead she walks to the mouth of the cave. Erik follows her. They look out at the grey, desolate landscape. Nothing but arctic wastes, snow and desolation. Above them the black clouds boil ceaselessly.

FREYA

What do you see, Erik?

ERIK

I see the world.

FREYA

Is it night or day, Erik?

ERIK

It is day, of course, Freya.

FREYA

Is it summer or winter, Erik?

Erik looks round at the snowy wastes and then back at Freya, puzzled.

ERIK

The winter is past, thank goodness, Freya. It is summer.

Freya puts her face close to Erik's and peers into his eyes.

FREYA

Have you ever seen the sun, Erik?

ERIK

The sun is up beyond the clouds - where it always is.

FREYA

But have you ever seen it? Think back...

ERIK

Of course not... but... when I was a child.... I remember a dream.... it was as if the whole sky was blue...

FREYA

The sky WAS blue, Erik... once.

Erik looks at her.

FREYA

The Old Stories tell of an age that would come such as this - when Fenrir the Wolf would swallow the sun, and a Great Winter would settle upon the world. It was to be an axe age, a sword age, a storm age, when brother would turn against brother, and men would fight each other until the world would finally be destroyed.

Erik looks out across the bleak and gloomy landscape and the black, boiling clouds in the sky.

ERIK

(almost to himself)

Then... this is the Age of Ragnarok?

Freya turns to go back into the cave.

ERIK

Wait, Freya!

Erik re-enters the cave.

ERIK

Is there nothing men can do?

FREYA

The Gods are asleep, Erik.

ERIK

I will go and wake them up!

Freya turns and looks at him. She clearly enjoys his earnest enthusiasm, but is afraid he doesn't know what he is talking about.

ERIK

Tell me what I must do, Freya!

Freya thinks for some moments. Then she speaks.

FREYA

Erik... Far out in the midst of the Western Ocean there is a land... men call it Hy-Brasil. There you will find a horn that is called Resounding. You must take the Horn Resounding, and three times you must blow it. The first note will take you to Asgaard. The second will awaken the Gods, and the third note will bring you home. But remember... once you are in the spell of the Horn, hatred will destroy you.

Erik turns to go and then hesitates.

ERIK

And will the dead ever return, Freya?

FREYA

That I cannot tell you.

Cut to a big close-up of a head being banged on the ground. It is Thorfinn Skull-Splitter's. The person doing the banging is an enraged Sven the Berserk. Suddenly Erik pushes his way through the crowd and separates them. There is general disgruntlement all round, and murmurs of: "Who does he think he is?"

ERIK'S GRANDDAD

What are you doing, Erik? Thorfinn just said SVEN'S GRANDFATHER died of old age.

INGEMUND THE OLD

They must fight to the death.

THORFINN SKULL-SPLITTER

That's right! Sven must kill me.

OTHERS

Yes. Stay out of this. What's it to do with you?

(etc)

Sven grinds his teeth and struggles to get at Thorfinn, but Erik still keeps them apart.

ERIK

Aren't you afraid of death, Thorfinn Skull-Splitter?

Thorfinn shrugs.

THORFINN

Not death by the sword! It means I shall drink in Valhalla with the great warriors.

Cut away To Harald Missionary engaged in his usual business of chatting up any available female.

HARALD MISSIONARY

You don't still believe in all that Valhalla stuff, do you?

THORHILD THE FEMALE

Go away.

HARALD

Fine... right... just checking.

He moves off.

ERIK

And you, Sven, aren't you afraid of crossing the Rainbow Bridge to Asgaard?

SVEN

I will join my grandfather there.

THORFINN

He's not in Valhalla! He died of old age!

SVEN

You liar!

They start trying to kill each other again, and crash through a fence into the pig-sty. Pigs squeal and run in all directions.

ERIK

Stop it!

OTHERS

Leave them alone! Keep out of it, Erik!

The others pull Erik away.

GRANDAD

There's only one way to settle it.

EVERYONE

Yes!

THORFINN

He MUST kill me!

EVERYONE

Yes! That's right!

(etc)

Sven struggles again to oblige, and they both topple into the duck pond. Erik dives back to keep them apart.

ERIK

There is another way.

GRANDAD

Who gets killed?

ERIK

Nobody gets killed.

THORFINN

Oh, well...

He starts attacking Sven again. Erik decides there is only one way to make his point. He lets fly with his fists and lays both the antagonists out for a moment.

ERIK

But it will be dangerous. Maybe none of us will return.

SNORRI THE MISERABLE

Ah well, that's much more sensible than just Thorfinn getting killed. Shall we all go and pack now?

SVEN

What are you talking about, Erik?

ERIK

What if we could find Bi-Frost the Rainbow Bridge?

This causes a sensation amongst everyone watching, on the lines of "You can't do that" and so on. They scoff at Erik.

THORFINN

(in disbelief)

FIND the Rainbow Bridge?

ERIK

Find it... AND cross it!

Super-sensation amongst everyone - except for Harald Missionary who shakes his head sadly.

HARALD

Look! You can't find somewhere that doesn't exist.

GRANDAD

(to Harald)

Shut up!

Harald shrugs.

SVEN

Only the dead reach Asgaard, Erik.

ERIK

What's the matter? Are you afraid to try?

Thorfinn and Sven are put on the defensive.

THORFINN

Of course we're not afraid to try, but...

Erik rounds on Thorfinn, sensing he had the advantage.

ERIK

"But" what?

THORFINN

But...

ERIK

What?

Thorfinn's mental powers find it hard to articulate any proposition on such a vast metaphysical concept. Sven comes to his rescue.

SVEN

Nobody's ever crossed the Rainbow Bridge to Asgaard.

ERIK

We'd be the first!

SNORRI

You mean we'd be dead?

ERIK

No! We'd be the first living men to set foot in the Halls of the Gods.

Pause. Uncomfortable shifting.

SVEN

But HOW?

ERIK

I don't know - but I'm not afraid to try.

THORFINN

Well I'M certainly not, either.

SVEN

Neither am I.

ERIK

Then you'll come.

HARALD

But there isn't such a place as... Look...

THORFINN & SVEN

Shut up!

ERIK

What d'you say?

SVEN

Well... I'm game.

THORFINN

Me too.

Erik grins. He has persuaded them against their will.

GRANDAD

Aren't you going to go on fighting?

SVEN & THORFINN

No.

OTHERS

Oh...

There is general disappointment all around.

IVAR THE BONELESS

Oh, go on...

GRANDAD

Just have a bit of a fight.

INGEMUND THE OLD

I'LL fight someone.

GRANDAD

You're too old.

INGEMUND THE OLD

No, I ain't.

Cut to an adze striking timber. The Viking's ship, GOLDEN DRAGON, is being repaired and fitted out for a JOURNEY. Erik is there, directing operations. The camera tracks through all the activity and finally comes to rest on Keitel Blacksmith. He is a magnificent mountain of a man in an Arnold Schwarzeneggerish sort of way. He hammers a sword, and sparks fly, but his eyes keep returning to the preparations for the voyage. Clearly something is worrying him. His assistant, Loki, sidles up to him.

LOKI

Wish you were going too?

Keitel grunts angrily and plunges the sword into cold water. Steam and bubbles.

LOKI

But you CAN'T because you're too busy.

Keitel pulls the sword out of the water and tests it. It slices like as razor, Loki watches.

LOKI

Ooh, that's a good one! You could charge Halfdan fifteen for that one.

KEITEL

Yes, it is good. But I told him ten.

LOKI

You could charge him what you like.

Loki takes the sword from Keitel and stacks it alongside a lot more freshly made swords.

LOKI

You just can't make enough swords and spears and knives and daggers to satisfy the demand. You could charge Halfdan twenty and he'd pay it.

KEITEL

(shocked)

Oh, I couldn't do that! The Blacksmith's Code says...

LOKI

Yes yes... of course.... the "Blacksmith's Code"...

Keitel goes back to his forge and pulls out a fresh dollop of white-hot ore. Loki comes up behind him.

LOKI

If this IS the Age of Ragnarok, Keitel Blacksmith, it is GOOD to us.

KEITEL

(banging with his hammer)

Can't make enough swords!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

KEITEL

Can't make enough axe-heads!

Bang! Bang! Bang!

LOKI

But, Keitel, if Erik ever finds the Horn Resounding... if he ever crosses Bi-Frost, the Rainbow Bridge... if he ever wakens the gods..

Keitel stops smiting the metal on his forge. He stares into space.

KEITEL

They chase Fenrir the Wolf from the sky...

LOKI

The Age of Ragnarok ends...

KEITEL

The bottom falls out of the sword business!

LOKI

It's not just YOUR livelihood that's at stake but your son's, and the livelihood of ALL blacksmiths.

KEITEL

(this touches a nerve in his muscular mind)

My brother blacksmiths!

LOKI

That's right.

KEITEL

The Blacksmith's Code says I must...

LOKI

Honour and protect all blacksmiths.

KEITEL

(as if reciting his oath)

Together we stand!

LOKI

You can't let Erik do THAT.

Loki smiles. He has Keitel playing into his hands, although Keitel doesn't realize it. Fade. Cut to some days later. The expedition is set to leave. Thorfinn Skull-Splitter taking leave of his mum and dad.

THORFINN'S MUM

And you've got BOTH axes?

THORFINN

Yes, Mother.

THORFINN'S MUM

And something to sharpen them with?

THORFINN

Yes, Mum.

THORFINN'S MUM

And don't forget: never let your enemy get behind you.

THORFINN

No, Mother.

THORFINN'S MUM

And keep your sword greased.

THORFINN

Yes, Mother. Goodbye, Dad.

THORFINN'S DAD

And don't forget to was - you know - ALL over.

THORFINN

No, Dad.

THORFINN'S MUM

And if you have to kill somebody, KILL them! Don't stop to think about it.

THORFINN

(mildly)

I never do...

Cut to Sven the Berserk who is also being lectured. The lecture is coming from his father - Ulf the Maddeningly Calm.

SVEN'S FATHER

(sotto voce)

It's a tradition.

SVEN

I know, Dad.

SVEN'S FATHER

I was a Berserk for King Harald Fairhair...

SVEN

You went berserk...

SVEN'S FATHER

I went berserk in every battle I ever fought for King Harald...

SVEN

So did your father...

SVEN'S FATHER

So did my father and his father before him.

SVEN

But it's a responsibility...

SVEN'S FATHER

But it's a responsibility being a Berserk.

SVEN

I must only let the red rage...

SVEN'S FATHER

You must only let the red rage take hold of you in the thick of battle.

SVEN

(losing his temper)

I KNOW! I'VE HEARD IT ALL I THOUSAND TIMES!

A sudden silence falls, as all the village turns to stare nervously at Sven. He goes berserk and demolishes a nearby hut with his head. Ulf the Maddeningly Calm shakes his head.

SVEN'S FATHER

No no... you'll never make a Berserk. If you let it out now you'll have nothing left for battle...

IVAR'S MUM

Besides... it's dangerous.

SVEN'S FATHER

(gloomily)

It's the end of a family tradition.

In another corner of the village Leif the Lucky is standing with his pregnant girlfriend.

GIRL

Bye, Leif.

LEIF

Bye... sorry...

GIRL

Yeah... well...

LEIF

You will wait?

GIRL

What d'you expect me to do?

She takes a bracelet off her arm and gives it to Leif.

GIRL

Wear this for luck.

Leif looks at it.

LEIF

That's why they call me... Leif the Lucky.

GIRL

Please.

Cut to Harald Missionary dumping a bag on board the ship.
GRIMHILD HOUSEWIFE

is helping him. Snorri looks at him in surprise.

SNORRI

YOU coming? You don't even believe in Asgaard.

HARALD

I thought I might do a bit of business on the way.

SNORRI

You're wasting your time.

HARALD

Listen. I've been in this dump for sixteen years and I haven't made a single convert...

SNORRI

There was Thorbjorn Vifilsson's wife. You converted HER.

HARALD

Thorbjorn Vifilsson's wife became a Buddhist, not a Christian.

SNORRI

Same thing, isn't it?

HARALD

No, it is NOT.

Meanwhile in another part of the village, Loki is strapping a large consignment of swords onto a pony. He glances round and then sneaks surreptitiously out of the village, over the barren hills of Norway, under the boiling black skies of Ragnarok. Back at the quayside, GOLDEN DRAGON is ready for the journey. Erik addresses the villagers.

ERIK

Well... we'll be off now...

Erik's grandad waits for some time before he realizes that Erik isn't intending to say anything else.

GRANDAD

You need to say a bit more than that!

ERIK

Oh... er... yes...

The faces of the village-folk turn towards him. There are many moist eyes. Erik's mother starts to cry.

ERIK

Oh, there, Mum...

(he turns and addresses everyone)

Don't be sad.... You all know why we're going, so don't grieve. Maybe untold dangers do lie ahead of us, and some of you may well be looking at the one you love for the last time...

Someone bursts out sobbing. Erik desperately tries to rally their spirits.

ERIK

But don't grieve! Even though the Hordes of Muspel tear us limb from limb... or the Fire Giants burn each and every one of us to a cinder...

More crying.

ERIK

...though we may be swallowed by the Dragon of the North Sea or fall off the Edge of the World... don't cry.

More crying.

ERIK

No! Don't cry....

By this time most of the village is blubbering profusely. Cut to Harald Missionary. He has his arm round his weeping girlfriend.

HARALD MISSIONARY

Sh... There... it's all fantasy, there's no Dragon of the North Sea, no Edge of the World...

GRIMHILD HOUSEWIFE

That's what YOU say.

ERIK

(aside to his Grandad)

What's the matter with them?

GRANDAD

Just say something cheerful.

ERIK

Oh... right!

(He can't think of anything)

Well.... CHEERS everybody!

Erik smiles broadly and waves. The entire village stares back at him with tears in their eyes, and biting their lips. Suddenly one mother can't hold it back any more.

THORFINN'S MUM

Don't go!

Another mother rushes out and grabs Ivar the Boneless.

IVAR'S MUM

My son! I don't want you to go!

IVAR

I don't want to go, either...

ERIK

Oh gods! Please, everybody! Keep calm! It's not certain ALL of us are going to die... and in any case we may not die HIDEOUS deaths...

More renewed sobbing. Grandad's eyes go heavenwards.

GRANDAD

(to Erik)

I think we should go...

ERIK

Right.

(he turns for a last salute)

Farewell... for the last time... may the gods prevent...

GRANDAD

No, don't say anything else!

Suddenly Keitel Blacksmith steps forward. His muscles ripple. His handsome face radiates heroism and manliness.

KEITEL

Wait, Erik!

ERIK

Keitel Blacksmith?

They stop and turn.

KEITEL

You can't go without me. Who will repair your swords and mend your shields?

Renewed sobs from the women.

WOMEN

Oh, no! Ah, lackaday! Not HIM too!

ERIK

What's the matter now?

UNN

If Keitel Blacksmith goes with you...

THORHILD

We'll have no one to do the things he did for us.

THORKATLA THE INDISCRETE

OR sharpen our knives and make our pans.

An awkward silence. The others all turn on her and frown - a bit of shin-kicking goes on. It's clear that Keitel is popular amongst the womenfolk. Erik doesn't notice.

ERIK

You will have Keitel's assistant, Loki, to do all that.

WOMEN

Loki? Eurrgh!

ERIK

What's wrong with Loki? He's become very good at blacksmithing.

WOMEN

Yes... but...

THORKATLA

He's so small and...

The others all shush her up. More shin-kicking.

THORHILD

(innocently)

Oh, yes... we've got Loki... That's true...

Cut to Loki leading his pony across a bleak landscape. He eventually stops and looks ahead. There stands a gibbet with two corpses dangling from it. He is nearing his destination. Cut back to Erik and his men getting into GOLDEN DRAGON. Erik notices Thorfinn and Sven quarrelling over Leif the Lucky.

ERIK

Hey, you two! What's going on?

SVEN

I was sitting there.

LEIF

No, you weren't.

THORFINN

Leif's sitting here. I need a bit of luck.

LEIF

See.

SVEN

Look, I bagged it last week.

ERIK

It doesn't matter WHERE you sit!

SVEN

Yes it does! We could be at sea for months.

ERIK

Well, what difference does it make where you're SITTING?

SVEN

I don't want to have to sit next to Snorri all that time.

Sven nods towards Snorri the Miserable - an Eeyore of a Viking if ever there were one.

SNORRI

Thank you VERY much indeed.

ERIK

Now stop it!

SNORRI

It's SO nice to feel wanted.

ERIK

Leif, you sit there. Even, you sit there. Harald, you'd better sit over there...

SNORRI

Trust me to get the missionary.

Suddenly Erik notices Sven's father climbing aboard.

ERIK

What are YOU doing here?

SVEN'S DAD

You may need a real Berserk.

SVEN

I AM one, Dad!

ERIK

We haven't got a spare place.

IVAR

He can have my place. I don't want to go anyway.

ERIK

Well, you ARE!

KEITEL

Bjorn's not. He could have Bjorn's place.

ERIK

What's the matter with Bjorn?

THORFINN

Nothing... Halfdan the Black chopped his hand off last night.

ERIK

HE was lucky...

(to Sven's dad)

Sit there.

SNORRI

You can't have Sven's father sitting next to Sven. They'll argue the whole time.

ERIK

That's true.

(to Sven)

YOU'D better sit there.

(to Sven's dad)

You there, and Ornulf there.

SNORRI

Now you've got all the big ones on one side.

Erik looks around. It is true that all the tall burly ones are on one side.

ERIK

All right, you go there. You here...

Sven's dad and Ornulf swap places.

SVEN'S DAD

Ohh! I wanted to sit next to Leif.

ERIK

Shut up. You there. You there and you there.

Ivar and Ornulf swap places. Erik surveys this re-arrangement.

ERIK

That's better.

SNORRI

Now you've got all the ones with beards on one side and all the moustaches on the other.

This is true. Erik thinks some moments and then:

ERIK

It doesn't matter.

They start to haul the sail up. Ropes are released. The boat rocks. Suddenly a voice cuts through the crowd. It is Erik's mother.

ERIK'S MUM

Wait! Wait! Wait!

ERIK

What is it?

(he is clearly a little embarrassed)

ERIK'S MUM

Here, son.

She tries to hand Erik what looks unmistakably like a pillow. Erik is dumbfounded.

ERIK'S MUM

Your father always made sure he could rest his head at night.

Erik is mortified. The others snigger, though not without some sympathy for Erik. They've ALL been embarrassed by their mums at one time or another.

ERIK

I can't take THAT on a voyage!

ERIK'S MUM

It was your father's!

Erik will find it hard to refuse now. But he hesitates.

ERIK'S MUM

It was the pillow HE took with him. He said it once saved his life.

Erik reluctantly takes the precious object. His mother kisses him. Everyone has fallen silent now. The relatives stand helpless on the shore as GOLDEN DRAGON starts to drift away from them. The Vikings sit in their places, hands on the oars looking back at their loved ones. Erik stands at the prow of GOLDEN DRAGON. For a moment he thinks he sees the girl he killed, standing, white in death, the spear-wound still fresh. Erik raises his hand in a half-goodbye. We cut back to the loved ones, now the girl is no longer there. They too half-raise their hands. Erik suddenly turns and gives a shout:

ERIK

Huuup!

The oars go up and then into the water, and GOLDEN DRAGON commences her voyage. Cut back to GOLDEN DRAGON at sea. Snorri is feeling queasy and gazing gloomily at the receding coastline of Norway. Thangbrand is sitting near him and feeling equally queasy.

SNORRI

Have a good look... that's the last we'll see of old Norway.

Snorri is desperately trying to control his insides.

SNORRI

Goodbye home... goodbye family... goodbye loved ones...

(he starts to throw up)

Goodbye lunch...

THANGBRAND

Oh! Shut up.

Harald Missionary puts his arm around Snorri.

HARALD

You know, my son, our lord said...

SNORRI

YOUR lord.

HARALD

Quite... MY lord... said: "The Prayer of Faith shall have the sick."

SNORRI

I hope the Dragon of the North Sea gets YOU AND your lord.

Harald Missionary gives him a condescending smile and a weary shake of the head. He knows the Dragon of the North Sea does not exist.

HARALD

Darkness and ignorance...

Meanwhile Ivar the Boneless and Sven the Berserk are both suffering from the effects of the sea.

SVEN

(keeping a wave of nausea down)

It's not so bad when you're rowing.

THORFINN SKULL-SPLITTER

That's right

Thorfinn gobs onto the whetstone with which he is sharpening his axe. Sven can control himself no longer. He rushes for the side.

SVEN THE BERSERK

I want to die.

This sets off Ivar.

IVAR THE BONELESS

Uh oh!

He leaps up and pukes over the side. Mass puking breaks out all over the boat. Keitel Blacksmith looks around at his preoccupied shipmates, and it slowly dawns upon him that this might be the moment to try a little sabotage. He goes to the ship's lodestone, which is hanging from the mast. Keitel glances around. No one is looking, but this sort of covert behaviour goes against his normally sunny and open disposition.

KEITEL

(to himself)

The Blacksmith's Code...

He steels himself, takes down the lodestone, snaps out the piece of metal in the base and throws it over the side. Keitel hangs it up again on the mast.

THORFINN

Are you all right?

IVAR

No, I'm not.

THORFINN

You don't need to feel bad about being sea-sick, you know.

IVAR

How can you help feeling bad when you're sea-sick?

THORFINN

I mean many of the greatest sailors were.

Pause.

IVAR

I know. I know.

THORFINN

Olaf Tryggvason used to throw up on every single voyage... the whole time... non-stop... puke... puke... puke.

IVAR

Look! I don't feel BAD about it. I just feel ILL.

Thorfinn pauses and waits for a wave of nausea to creep up on Ivar.

THORFINN

He used to puke in his sleep.

IVAR

Bastard.

He throws up. Meanwhile Erik is in the stern, gazing out behind them.

ERIK

Thorfinn... look over there.

Thorfinn leaves Ivar and joins Erik. On the horizon a sinister sail is following them. Thorfinn grins with evil pleasure. He scents a fight. Erik turns to the crew.

ERIK

Break out the oars!

Thorfinn's smile disappears and he spins round to confront Erik.

THORFINN

What are you talking about?

ERIK

(to his reluctant crew)

Come on, move it!

Most of the men are being sea-sick.

MORD FIDDLE

We've only just started cooking lunch.

The crew glance at Mord Fiddle and then throw up again.

ERIK

Move it!

Reluctantly the crew take up their rowing positions. Thorfinn buttonholes Erik (except of course that he doesn't have any buttonholes).

THORFINN

It's Halfdan the Black!

ERIK

I know. Snorri! Get your oar out!

Snorri is sitting in position but without his oar. Keitel has meanwhile joined them. He, too, stares at the horizon. He is a little puzzled by this turn of events. Loki has said nothing about Halfdan coming after them.

KEITEL

(uneasily)

Do you suppose he wants to stop us waking the Gods?

Erik looks at Keitel with a certain amount of contempt. Keitel is not renowned even amongst these Vikings for his brain-power.

ERIK

What do you think?

KEITEL

But how could he know... unless...

Keitel stops in mid-sentence as he realizes it must be Loki's doing.

THORFINN

(scornfully)

So are you going to run away from him, Erik?

Erik turns to Thorfinn.

ERIK

Row, Thorfinn Skull-Splitter.

Thorfinn hesitates.

ERIK

And you, Keitel Blacksmith.

KEITEL

But...

Keitel shrugs and turns to take up his rowing position. He is still a little confused by this turn of events. Erik confronts Thorfinn.

ERIK

I gave an order. Or didn't you hear?

There is something about Erik's manner that carries an authority that Thorfinn cannot argue with.

ERIK

Come on, Ivar.

Erik manhandles Ivar over to his drum and thrusts his drumsticks into his hands. Halfdan's ship is twice the size of Erik's and, as Erik is only too well aware, consequently travels at twice the speed. There is no real chance of them escaping, unless... Erik suddenly catches sight of a thick bank of mist in the distance, and steers his ship towards it.

IVAR

(still feeling ill)

I want to die...

(then, suddenly catching sight of Halfdan's ship behind him)

No, I don't!

ERIK

Row! Row! Row!

Ivar tries to get into the new rhythm, but has a bit of difficulty. As Halfdan's ship gains on them inexorably, GOLDEN DRAGON glides into the sea mist. There is a tremendous roll of thunder very close. All the Vikings look scared. Erik, however, grins.

ERIK

Row! Row! Row!

He doubles the speed. The drum beats faster.

SVEN'S DAD

(shouts out angrily)

We can't keep this up!

Erik grins and then leans on the steering oar. GOLDEN DRAGON curves around to its left. Then Erik lays his hand on Ivar's drum and silences it.

ERIK

Oars up!

The Vikings ship their oars and sit there in the mist listening to beating of Halfdan's drum getting closer and closer. At the final moment, however, Halfdan swings his ship in the opposite direction from Erik's and the sound of his drum disappears into the mist. Erik's men breathe a sigh of relief... even Keitel Blacksmith... Fade. Fade up some time later. GOLDEN DRAGON is still drifting in the mist. Erik has his fish-lodestone and is trying the direction, but the lodestone is just swinging round uselessly. After trying a few times, Erik gives up and throws the lodestone away into the boat. The men peer into the thick mist; they are lost. Suddenly Erik sees something ahead.

ERIK

The Gates of the World...

MORD FIDDLE

What?

GOLDEN DRAGON silently guides between two weird islands.

ERIK

We have passed through the Gates of the World

(he looks around at the other)

No we are in the Unknown...

GOLDEN DRAGON drifts on and the mist gets thicker. There is a crash of thunder. Then a series of flashes lights up the mist around them. The Vikings are uneasy, sensing a storm brewing. Suddenly Erik points above them. The others look up too. They all gasp.

ERIK

(hardly daring to breathe)

So THAT is what the sun looks like!

Above them hangs a luminous yellow globe, its light just breaking through the mist.

VIKING

(to each other)

The sun! It's the sun! Look!

SVEN'S DAD

(in wonderment)

I never thought I should live to see the sun again.

HARALD MISSIONARY

Where?

The Vikings all gaze up above them in awe. Harald looks from one to the other and then tries to follow their eyelines. He clearly can't see it. Magic music fills the air. Suddenly the "sun" swoops off to one side and starts swaying from one side to another.

ERIK

Should the sun do that?

HARALD MISSIONARY

What are you looking at?

ERIK

Look out!

VIKINGS

Ah!

The Vikings scream and flatten themselves against the sides of the boat, as the "sun" suddenly lurches down on them out of the sky, revealing for the first time that it is NOT the sun at all but a strange monster with a long neck that disappears off into the mist and a glowing globe for a head, and huge chomping jaws. The Vikings are, understandably, terrified.

VIKINGS

It's not the sun! It's not the sun!

HARALD MISSIONARY

What is it?

SNORRI

It's the Dragon of the North Sea!

HARALD MISSIONARY

(knowingly)

Ah! THAT'S why I can't see it.

As the Dragon of the North Sea rises up again, however, its jaw apparently drops off and falls to the deck, and lands on Snorri.

SNORRI

Aaah!

Keitel nervously picks it up and holds it up for everyone to see. It is a strand of sea-weed. The Vikings are non-plussed. They look back at their now jawless monster. Harald Missionary picks up the sea-weed.

HARALD

Some dragon! Ooh!

He tosses it back amongst his terrified companions. Suddenly there is an incredibly loud clap of thunder and flames shoot out of the mist.

SVEN

Look out!

As... unbelievably... a huge monstrous visage looms out of the mist... It is a creature from the nethermost depths of the ocean... and the incandescent globe is no more than a sprouting on the end of its nose! More fire shoots out from its nostrils and sends all the Vikings (and even Harald Missionary) diving for the deck. Then the monstrous head disappears back into the mist as quickly as it came, taking its light with it... The Vikings are paralysed with fear for one brief moment.

ERIK

Row! ROW!

They all scramble for the oars in a determined hysteria. Ivar the drummer, in his panic, has set a ridiculously fast rate and nobody can keep up with it.

ERIK

Slower! Nobody can row at that speed!

IVAR

(hoarsely)

Sorry.

HARALD

What's all the panic about?

SVEN'S DAD

(in a panic, shouting back over his shoulder)

The Dragon...

Harald gives a patronising smile.

HARALD

Children afraid of the dark...

Suddenly there is another roar, and flames shoot out of the mist and across the deck of GOLDEN DRAGON. One man, Ornof Fishdriver, who hasn't had much to say so far, is set on fire. Another, Bjarni Jerusalem-Farer, who has and will have even less to say than Ornof Fishdriver, leaps out of the way of the flames and falls over the side.

THORFINN

Man over board!

Thorfinn starts trying to fish him out. Ivar has started to panic and is beating the drum too fast.

ERIK

Slower! In... Out...

IVAR

Sorry!

SVEN

(his eyes showing their whites)

We're being attacked! KILL! Kill! Kill!

SVEN'S DAD

Not now, Sven...

SVEN

I must KILL! Kill!

SVEN'S DAD

It's no good going berserk against a dragon!

Sven's dad slaps him around the face. There is another roar from the monster. Erik turns to Ivar.

ERIK

Faster!

IVAR

Make your mind up.

Suddenly the Dragon's head appears out of the mists above them once again. There is panic amongst the Vikings as some start to row faster than others. Screams.

ERIK

Keep up the strike!

The Dragon's jaws open. Flame licks out, and down the centre of the vessel. There are screams as the Vikings leap out of the way. Sven goes berserk again.

SVEN

KILL! KILL!

SVEN'S DAD

Stop it!

The Dragon's eyes dilate and its jaws open. The men throw themselves to the deck as if expecting more fire. But instead the creature's fangs crash into the wood of the stern of GOLDEN DRAGON.

ERIK

ROW!

SVEN

DEATH!

SVEN'S DAD

Shut UP!

ERIK

Row!

Erik looks around at his terror-stricken crew. He realizes this is an important moment. It is up to him to save the situation. Suddenly an idea occurs to him, as he catches sight of the pillow that his mother gave him.

ERIK

Keep rowing!

Erik dashes to his sea-chest under the mast and pulls out the pillow.

THORFINN

Erik! Row! What are you doing?

ERIK

(holding up the pillow)

It saved my father!

Erik starts to shin up the mast.

SNORRI

Barmy.

Sven's dad is desperately holding Sven back.

SVEN'S DAD

HOLD it! HOLD it in!

SVEN

DEATH TO DRAGONS!

ERIK

Row!

SNORRI

Has anyone told him we've got a dragon eating our boat?

Erik has reached the top of the mast and is now right up with the incandescent globe on the end of the long stalk that grows onto the monster's nose. He grabs hold of it and swings across onto the monster's nose. At his moment Sven breaks free of his dad and throws himself onto one of the Dragon's teeth.

SVEN

Red mist!

He bangs his head against the monstrous denture. Sven's dad looks heavenward in despair. Cut to Harald Missionary who is offering his bible to the petrifies Vikings in the prow.

HARALD

It's at time like this that you'll find this book MOST useful, you know...

Keitel takes the bible from him and hits him over the head with it.

KEITEL

Row! You idiot!

The monster's eyes dilate wildly as they try to focus on the tiny figure of Erik on its snout. Erik shoves the pillow up one of the Dragon's nostrils. Snorri watches Erik incredulously. He shakes his head.

SNORRI

His father went crazy too... Used to take forty winks in the middle of a battle...

Thorfinn frowns - he has a glimmering of an idea of what Erik is doing. Erik now plunges his sword through the pillow in the Dragon's nostril, and feathers immediately fly into the air.

ERIK

Now... take a deep breath.

The Dragon goes cross-eyed, trying to see what's going on on its snout.

ERIK

Go on! Breathe in, you cod-brain!

Meanwhile the Dragon's tongue suddenly licks out around its tooth. Sven instantly slices through it with his sword. The bright blood spurts, like bursting a sausage. The Dragon gives an agonized roar and a sharp intake of breath. The feathers that have leaked out from the pillow are instantly sucked inside and the whole pillow disappears right up the Dragon's nose. For a moment everyone holds their breath. The Dragon's eye dilate wildly. Then it wrinkles its snout. Then it starts what is unmistakably a sneeze.

THE DRAGON OF THE NORTH SEA

Ah... ah... ah...

ERIK

Hold TIGHT!

THE DRAGON OF THE NORTH SEA

Ah... ah... ah...

Erik leaps back across the mast.

THE DRAGON OF THE NORTH SEA

CHOO!!

A hurricane of wind and feathers blasts out of the Dragon's nostrils and hits all the Vikings at once. Everyone is disgusted by the Dragon's breath.

SNORRI

Urgh! What's it been eating?

But the blast has already catapulted the boat into the sky, and it hurtles through the clouds, leaving the Dragon of the North Sea far behind. They all look up at Erik and cheer. Shot of Erik. He doesn't look too happy. Neither does Ivar the Boneless, because he too has just noticed that they are now flying and the ocean is several thousand feet below them. Ivar screams. The other all rush to the side to look too.

ERIK

No! No! Get back!

Unfortunately they all rush to the SAME side and the boat tips over with far more instability than when it is in the water. Leif and Thangbrand are catapulted down into the sea. We watch them descend into tiny dots and tiny unheard splashes below.

THORFINN

Who was that?

SNORRI

Leif the Lucky.

Others are almost falling out. There is renewed panic.

ERIK

Get back!

Poor Erik is still up the mast but has been dislodged and is now hanging on by his hands, dangling over the open sea. Some of the men - Thorfinn and Sven the Berserk amongst them - are hauling themselves up the almost vertical slope of the deck, trying to redress the balance. Meanwhile Keitel Blacksmith is dangling by one hand.

KEITEL

I can't hold on! I can't hold on!

Sven worms his way along the edge - at great peril to himself - and grabs Keitel's wrist just as his fingers slip.

KEITEL

Aaagh!

SVEN

Got you!

Keitel looks up in Sven's eyes. He is totally at Sven's mercy. What thoughts are going through his mind? How is he going to betray Sven in future if he is rescued? Guilt suddenly overwhelms him.

KEITEL

Let me go, Sven.

SVEN

What are you talking about?

KEITEL

I'm not worth risking your life for.

SVEN

I've got you, Keitel Blacksmith. If you go... I go too...

KEITEL

For your own sake... For the others... I...

SVEN

Hang on...

The boat begins to right itself just as Erik finally can't hold on any more, and he plummets, straight into the ship, and through the bottom up to his waist. His legs dangle. At the same moment the prow of the boat tips and suddenly they are plummeting down towards the ocean. They hit the water with an almighty splash. Erik is thrown clear of the hull by the force of the water now cascading up through the hole he has made.

SNORRI

First we're flying - now we're sinking!

ERIK

Well, come on!

He whisks off his helmet and starts bailing. All follow suit. Night falls. Some time later. The Vikings are still bailing out, but the water is up to their thighs.

IVAR THE BONELESS

Who are we fooling? It's hopeless!

Ivar flings down the helmet with which he's been bailing. The others look at each other. They are reconciled to the fact that they are going to drown.

HARALD MISSIONARY

(hopelessly)

Let's sing something!

SNORRI

Anyone know any good drowning songs?

The suggestion falls flat.

ERIK

Listen! Maybe we won't get to Hy-Brasil! Maybe we won't find the Horn Resounding... but at least we've tried... and at least we shall have died like men.

SNORRI

Like fish.

SVEN

Shut up.

THORFINN

(raising his sword)

Erik's right! We'll all meet in Valhalla.

IVAR

I don'T want to die!

HARALD MISSIONARY

Isn't there ANYBODY who'd like to be christened before we go down?

Silence. A distinct lack of enthusiasm.

HARALD

It can't do you any HARM...

SVEN'S DAD

What do we have to do?

HARALD

Nothing... I just immerse you in water...

THORFINN AND OTHERS

Get lost...

The ship creaks and starts to go under. Erik picks his up his sword. The others follow suit.

ERIK

Don't let me drown, Thorfinn!

Water starts to pour over the sides of the boat. Erik and Thorfinn raise their swords to each other.

THORFINN

Till we meet in Valhalla.

They all prepare to run each other through. The boat sinks rapidly.

IVAR THE BONELESS

I'm too young! Oh Odin! Not me! Please not me! Perhaps I'd rather drown...

HARALD MISSIONARY

I do WISH you'd let me convert you.

Then Erik pauses in his attempt to kill Thorfinn and looks around. The ship has sunk, but the prow and the stern posts are still sticking up out of the water, and the Vikings themselves are only up to their chests.

ERIK

How deep IS the ocean?

THORFINN

Very deep... usually...

The realization gradually dawns on the Vikings that they're not going to sink any more.

ERIK

Wait! Nobody kill anybody!

Fade. Fade up on the sun shining down from a blue sky. The Vikings have fallen asleep where we last saw them - up to their necks in water. Gradually the warmth of the sun coaxes them awake - Thorfinn is the first to look up and see the brilliant shining orb in the sky.

THORFINN

What is it?

IVAR THE BONELESS

(he panics and turns)

It's the Dragon again!

ERIK

No.. no, it isn't...

Ivar has turned and is staring at something else.

ERIK

Look, the sky is blue...

SVEN'S DAD

The sun! That's it!

Ivar, meanwhile, is recovering from the amazement that has immobilized him. He taps Erik on the shoulder. Erik turns and he, too, gasps.

ERIK

Look!

They all turn to see they are standing in the shallow waters of a natural harbour. Above nestle the white walls of a beautiful city set in a green and pleasant land.

VIKINGS

Yeaaaah!

The Vikings wade ashore, enchanted by the paradise they see before them. All at once Thorfinn spies something. He draws his sword and they all approach with caution to find that under a weeping willow tree lies the most beautiful girl. She is raven-haired, scantily dressed and fast asleep. The Vikings approach her with trepidation, their swords and axes drawn. They glance around uneasily.

SNORRI

(whispers)

She's got no clothes on!

THORFINN

It's disgusting.

ERIK

Get her weapons.

Sven kneels quietly beside the girl. She stirs. Sven freezes. The others look around fearfully.

SVEN

(whispers)

She hasn't got any.

ERIK

(incredulous)

She MUST have a knife or something...

But they look. She hasn't.

THORFINN

What kind of place IS this?

IVAR THE BONELESS

P... p...perhaps they've got weapons we haven't even dreamed of...

Suddenly the girl stirs again in her sleep. The Vikings retreat several paces and grip their weapons, and glance around as if expecting an ambush.

THORFINN

Let's hack her to pieces.

ERIK

No.

KEITEL

Well, what else do we do?

ERIK

How about making friends?

SVEN

(with disgust)

"FRIENDS"?

VIKINGS

Eurrgh!

ERIK

What's wrong with making friends?

THORFINN

You don't go through all the hardships of an ocean voyage to make "friends".

SVEN

We can make "friends" at home...

This conversation has woken the girl, Aud.

AUD

Welcome!

The Vikings react with terror, take a step back and raise their swords and axes.

ERIK

WHAT did you say?

AUD

I said welcome.

ERIK

(suspiciously)

WELCOME?

AUD

Well, of course. We always welcome friends.

The Vikings look at each other and at their swords. They don't think they look that much like friends themselves.

ERIK

How d'you KNOW we're "friends"?

AUD

Well, EVERYONE is friends here on Hy-Brasil.

SVEN

Hy-Brasil?

ERIK

Is THIS Hy-Brasil?

AUD

Well, of course.

The Vikings erupt into an impromptu dance of joy, hugging each other and waving their swords in the air.

AUD

Please! Please! What are those?

ERIK

What are what?

AUD

Those things in your hands.

ERIK

These? What are THESE? They're swords.

Aud instantly recoils with terror.

AUD

Oh no! NO! Out them down! PUT THEM DOWN!

The Vikings gradually cease their mock battles and turn to look at Aud with incredulity.

ERIK

What's the matter?

AUD

PLEASE! You don't know what you're doing!

ERIK

What?

AUD

Put them down!

(To Erik)

PLEASE make them put them down.

THORFINN

Why?

OTHERS

Yes, why?

AUD

WHY?

ERIK

Yes.

AUD

But surely you know...?

VIKINGS

Er... n... no...

ERIK

Know what?

Cut to big close-up of King Arnulf.

KING ARNULF

The wonderful blessing under which we live here on Hy-Brasil!

The king beams. The Vikings shift uneasily. They look out of place and extremely scruffy in the midst of the scantily dressed courtiers of Hy-Brasil. Aud sits beside her father the King.

ERIK

No... we don't...

KING ARNULF

The Gods decreed that if ever sword spills human blood upon these shores, the whole of Hy-Brasil will sink beneath the waves.

King Arnulf beams rapturously at the Vikings, expecting them to be overjoyed. Instead they are horrified.

THORFINN

That's terrible!

ERIK

You mean if just ONE PERSON gets killed?

KING ARNULF

Yes!

(He thinks: isn't it wonderful?)

The Vikings look at each other, feeling they haven't quite understood.

THORFINN

You mean... you can't kill ANYBODY?

KING ARNULF

Right! Isn't it wonderful?

The Vikings are non-plussed.

THORFINN

What? Not being able to kill anybody?

KING ARNULF

(bemused)

Well, of course.

ERIK

(interested)

How?

KING ARNULF

(explaining the obvious)

Well... for a start... er... there's no killing...

ERIK

Well, OBVIOUSLY there's no killing.

KING ARNULF

Well...

(isn't it great?)

THORFINN

But how d'you take revenge?

KEITEL

(guiltily)

How do you punish people?

IVAR

How do you DEFEND yourselves?

KING ARNULF

(getting a little irritated)

We don't have to. We're all terribly
nice to each other. Aren't we?

COURT

Yes!

Aud catches Erik's eye and gives him a dangerously slow wink. A
pause of disbelief from the Vikings.

SVEN

ALL the time?

KING ARNULF

Well, of course! We HAVE to be.

He turns and conducts the courtiers, who chant in unison:

COURT

"Being nice to each other is what it's all about."

KING ARNULF

(rising as if to sing)

You see?

We're terribly nice to each other

We're friendly bold and free.

We never say anything nasty

'Cause we dare not...

COURT

(almost SINGING)

No sirreeeee!

They hold the note while King Arnulf looks anxiously at the Vikings.

KING ARNULF

Would you like us o sing to you?

ERIK

That's very kind of you, but we're in rather a hurry...

We're...

King Arnulf claps and the court stop singing.

KING ARNULF

What's the matter, don't you WANT to hear our singing?

ERIK

Oh... well, yes, of course; it's just we're looking for the

Horn Resounding and -

KING ARNULF

You don't think our singing's going to be good enough for you?

ERIK

Oh, no no no! It's just the Horn Resounding is...

KING ARNULF

A lot of people like our singing.

ERIK

I'm sure it's lovely.

KING ARNULF

But you don't want to hear it.

ERIK

(changing tack)

No... no...

(he looks at the others)

We'd love to hear it.

Wouldn't we?

VIKINGS

Oh... yes.

KING ARNULF

Well, you'll have to ask us REALLY nicely.

ERIK

(realizing he has to be diplomatic)

Er... well... we... we... would be

TERRIBLY grateful if you... all... would sing for us.

KING ARNULF

You're just saying that.

SVEN

Well, of course he is!

SVEN'S DAD

Sh!

They restrain Sven.

ERIK

Of course we're not; we'd genuinely like to hear you sing.

KING ARNULF

REALLY?

ERIK

Really.

KING ARNULF

And you're not just saying it because you think we want you to?

Erik swallows hard.

ERIK

No.

(He bites the lie)

KING ARNULF

Right! Summon the musicians! We'll do the one that goes "TUM-

TUM-TUM-TUM-TI-TUM-TUM"

COURT

(disappointed)

Oh...

CHAMBERLAIN

REALLY?

KING ARNULF

(apologetically to Vikings)

It isn't the one we're BEST at.

CHAMBERLAIN

Couldn't we do the one that goes "TI-TUM-TI-TUM-TI-TUM"?

The rest of the court look hopeful.

KING ARNULF

(whispering)

Not when we've got guests.

VOICE FROM COURT

How about the one that goes "TI-TUM-TI-TUM-TI-TUM-TI-TI-TUM"?

KING ARNULF

Don't be silly.

CHAMBERLAIN

That was a stupid suggestion.

VOICE

Sorry! I just thought they might like to hear something that we can do.

ANOTHER

Yes! At least we know that one.

YET ANOTHER VOICE

Nobody knows the "TUM-TUM-TUM-TUM-TI-TUM-TUM" one.

REST OF COURT

No! Right! I agree!

ODD MAN OUT

I do!

REST OF COURT

Sh!

ANOTHER VOICE

It's too difficult!

CHAMBERLAIN

Sh!

KING ARNULF

All right. We'll do the one that goes "TI-TUM-TI-TUM-TI-TUM-TI-TI-TUM". Ah! The musicians!

The musicians are huge, unshaven, have broken noses and tattoos, and are covered in black oil - like mechanics. Their instruments are like heavy industrial machinery, pushed in large vats of black oil that drip all over the show.

KING ARNULF

Right... Oh dear...

(he glances across at the Vikings)

I'm sure

you're not going to like this...

Erik and the others smile reassuringly. There is a lot of coughing. The King raises his baton and then brings it down, humming to himself as he does so. There is a most awful din; caterwauling, crashing and banging, whining, screaming... The Vikings look at each other, trying to pick out some tune, but it's impossible. Ivar the Boneless can't stop himself bursting out into giggles and this eventually spreads to the other Vikings. King Arnulf notices and bangs the throne for silence. Gradually the din stops. King Arnulf sinks down in despair.

KING ARNULF

(tragically)

We're just not a very musical nation...

ERIK

No, no... It was very... er, nice.

KING ARNULF

Now I want you to be ABSOLUTELY, totally, genuinely honest with me. Did you really, truly, honestly like it?

Erik thinks for some moments and then decides to make a clean breast of it.

ERIK

No.

KING ARNULF

(goes hysterically)

They didn't like it! Oh God! I want to die!

The whole court looks as if it's about to commit mass HARA-KIRI, while the musicians look rather dangerous. Erik takes the moment to get down to business.

ERIK

Your Majesty! We come from a world where there IS no music. where men live and die by the axe and by the sword...

KING ARNULF

Well, how d'you think I feel?

ERIK

The Gods are asleep, King Arnulf.

KING ARNULF

YOU try to be nice to people, when they're rude about your singing...

Erik feels he is making a mess of all this diplomacy.

ERIK

We must find the Horn Resounding!

The King glares at Erik.

ERIK

Is is HERE in Hy-Brasil?

King Arnulf thinks for a moment and then speaks.

KING ARNULF

I'll tell you what...

ERIK

Yes?

King Arnulf hesitates - he bites his lip and then takes the plunge.

KING ARNULF

We'll do the one that goes "TUM-TUM-TUM-TUM-TI-TUM-TUM".

Perhaps you'll like that better.

Erik gives up. A lot of throat clearing. Aud, the King's daughter, gives Erik another dangerously slow wink. The terrible "music" starts up, shattering the calm of the beautiful city. Fade. Fade up on GOLDEN DRAGON now afloat once more, riding at anchor in the bay. Ivar is standing on guard in it. Suddenly he sees something that makes him gabe in horror. We don't find out what it is, however, because we immediately Cut to Erik. He is deeply in love. He is also in bed with the King's nubile daughter, Aud.

AUD

Have you ever felt like this about anyone else?

ERIK

What... you mean "got into bed with" them?

AUD

No, of course not, silly - I mean FELT like this about the?

ERIK

You mean... you HAVE got into bed with somebody else?

AUD

No, I mean have you ever felt that for the first time in your life you'd met somebody you could believe in with your whole heart... someone whose goals suddenly seem to be YOUR goals... whose dreams seem to be YOUR dreams?

ERIK

HAVE you ever been to bed with anyone else?

AUD

What does that matter? But you've... you've... FELT like this before...

ERIK

It was different...

AUD

(just for a moment it is Helga speaking)

What was she like?

ERIK

Oh... oh, I didn't know her very well...

AUD

But you LOVED her all the same...

ERIK

We never went to bed together.

AUD

Why do you go on about that? What does it matter?

ERIK

You've been to bed with somebody else, haven't you?

AUD

I've never LOVED anybody!

ERIK

I'VE never been to bed with anybody!

Suddenly there is a banging on the door.

KING ARNULF

(v/o)

Open up! I know you're in there!

AUD

Ah! It's my father!

KING ARNULF (v/o)

Open up! I know you're in there!

Suddenly the note from Ivar's horn rings out across from the bay. Erik rushes to the window and looks out to see what Ivar saw previously: a black ship approaching on the horizon.

ERIK

Oh, no! Halfdan!

There is more banging on the bedroom door.

KING ARNULF (v/o)

Aud! You've got someone in there again, haven't you?

Erik gives her a sharp look.

AUD

Quick! Throw this over you!

She throws a shabby bit of cloth over Erik and at that moment the door bursts open, and King Arnulf enters.

KING ARNULF

Right! Where is he?

AUD

Who, Father?

KING ARNULF

Who? Who? Whoever you've got in here of course!

AUD

There IS no one.

The King starts prowling round the chamber. Erik stands there, naked and petrified, with the cloak hanging over his head, just where it landed.

KING ARNULF

I can SMELL one of those strangers... That's who it is, isn't it?

Aud keeps mum.

KING ARNULF

This is the fifth one this week.

Before he can stop himself, Erik blurts out:

ERIK

Fifth...

Aud motions him to be quiet, but it's too late. The King spins round to see who she is signalling to. The King appears to be looking straight at Erik. Erik can hardly bear the suspense.

KING ARNULF

Well... where is he?

AUD

There's nobody here, Father. Look for yourself.

King Arnulf looks around the chamber carefully. He looks straight through Erik as if he weren't there. Suddenly the King strides over to Erik and Erik instinctively cowers out of the way. The King walks straight over to a very small cupboard no more than a foot high, flings the door of it open, and starts throwing clothes around the room.

AUD

He wouldn't be a midget, Father!

The King turns on her.

KING ARNULF

Ah! So you admit there IS someone!

AUD

You're losing your temper!

KING

(becoming instantly pleasant)

Of course I'm not. I never lose my temper...

Ivar's horn sounds again. A shadow passes over King Arnulf's face.

KING ARNULF

Oh dear... more visitors!

He strides to the window and sees Halfdan's ship. As he does so, Erik has to leap out of the way, inadvertently knocking a chest. The King spins round and addresses the chest.

KING ARNULF

Come out... come out like a man... I know you're in there...

King Arnulf flings the chest open, revealing nothing but clothes. He is baffled. He reluctantly starts to leave.

AUD

(gently)

It's all in your own mind, Father... It's YOU who imagine that I'm always up here with some man or other....

KING ARNULF

I don't know how you do it, Aud... I sometimes think you've got some of your mother's magic...

He suddenly spies a small trinket-box and looks in that. But he doesn't find any strange man in it.

AUD

There is no magic, Father... My mother had no magic...

KING ARNULF

She did, I tell you! She could blind me as easily as the night the day.

AUD

It's your fantasy...

KING ARNULF

But one day I'll catch you... Like I caught her...

He leaves. Aud closes the door. Erik throws the cloak off and starts getting dressed.

AUD

The Cloak Invisible. It was my mother's parting gift.

ERIK

"The fifth one this week"!

AUD

Oh, for goodness' sake!

ERIK

And I thought you said it was something special...

Aud runs to his side and puts her arms around him.

AUD

That's just what I was trying to tell you. You ARE...

ERIK

Five this week; how many the week before?

AUD

You're as bad as my father.

ERIK

And the week before that?

ERIK

Erik...!

(she is really sincere)

I want to help you get to

Asgaard.

Erik is torn. He doesn't know whether to believe her or not. Ivar's horn sounds for a third time. Erik races to the window. He looks out. Halfdan's ship is even closer.

ERIK

We mustn't let him land!

AUD

Who?

ERIK

Halfdan the Black.

AUD

But, Erik...

But Erik is off out of the door.

AUD

No. Wait! My father will be -

There is a thump and a yell as Erik is set upon by the King's two musicians.

KING ARNULF

I might have known it was you!

MUSICIAN 1

(pinning Erik's arms behind him)

I'm not hurting you, am I?

ERIK

What?

MUSICIAN 2

You WILL tell us if we hurt you?

They start to march Erik through the palace.

ERIK

Let me go!

Erik struggles.

KING ARNULF

(to musicians)

Careful!

(to Erik)

They're not supposed to hurt you.

ERIK

You've got to let me go!

MUSICIAN 2

Oh no! We can hold onto you - just so long we don't squeeze too hard or bump you.

In the distance we hear the horn again.

ERIK

Halfdan the Black's here!

They have reached a cell. The musicians starts to chain Erik up.

KING ARNULF

It's all part of our safety regulations. You see if someone were to get hurt they might get angry and then... well...

ERIK

They'll be more than "hurt" if Halfdan the Black lands! Ow!

MUSICIAN

Ooh! I'm terribly sorry.

KING ARNULF

Who is Halfdan the Black?

ERIK

He's trying to stop us waking the Gods.

KING ARNULF

Why?

ERIK

Because that's how he makes his money, by war and plunder!

KING ARNULF

Don't talk nonsense.

ERIK

He wants to kill US!

KING ARNULF

Not when we explain about the Great Blessing.

ERIK

You don't know Halfdan the Black.

KING ARNULF

I know that the Great Blessing has kept the peace for a thousand years, and will keep it for the next thousand.

The horn sounds again. Erik is about to argue this point when Thorfinn suddenly bursts in.

THORFINN

Erik!

MUSICIAN 2

We're not hurting him!

MUSICIAN 1

(to Erik)

Are we?

ERIK

Just let me go!

THORFINN

Halfdan the Black's here!

ERIK

I know!

THORFINN

(to the King)

He wants to KILL us.

They both look at King Arnulf. The King thinks.

ERIK

You don't want him to kill us ON Hy-Brasil! Do you?

The King thinks some more. The horn sounds once more. Cut to GOLDEN DRAGON. Erik and the Vikings are scrambling into their war gear. They glance nervously over to where Halfdan the Black's ship is riding on the waves.

THORFINN

I feel strange.

Erik looks at Thorfinn, shocked.

IVAR THE BONELESS

(his throat dry)

Sort of wobbly and excited?

THORFINN

Sort of...

IVAR

That's fear.

SVEN

But Thorfinn doesn't know the meaning of fear.

THORFINN

Is it sort of... like a sinking feeling in your stomach?

IVAR

That's it!

ERIK

But. You're not even afraid of DEATH, Thorfinn!

THORFINN

I know. I know.

SVEN'S DAD

It's magic.

ERIK

What "magic"?

SVEN'S DAD

I've heard stories of a magic that strikes fear into the heart
so you cannot fight.

SVEN

(deadly serious)

Yes... I can feel it.

IVAR THE BONELESS

(eagerly)

I always feel like this!

Suddenly Halfdan's ship rises up out of the water , and revealing
the secret of its hidden power. Under the water-line is another
line of oars! The Vikings are dumbfounded. Ivar drops trembling to
his knees. The rest go white. Thorfinn draws his sword. Erik realizes
his men are rapidly talking themselves into a blue funk.

ERIK

It's not magic! It's just a trick!

THORFINN

(turning on him angrily)

Don't you FEEL it?

Erik looks around at his paralysed crew. He realizes he is the only
one who can save the situation.

ERIK

Very well! If they're using magic - we'll use magic of our own!

He leaps out of GOLDEN DRAGON and races up to the shore towards the city of Hy-Brasil. Erik races into the Forum and gazes up at the high walls of the Palace. Without a thought he produces two daggers and plunges them into the stonework. Then he hauls himself up the sheer cliff of wall up to Aud's bedchamber fist over fist. It is, indeed, a prodigious feat. He arrives at Aud's window exhausted. Aud, who has appeared at the window, looks at him curiously.

AUD

Why didn't you come up by the stairs?

Erik looks around and notices for the first time the magnificent flights of stairs leading up to the top of Aud's tower.

ERIK

(rather miffed)

Just give me a hand.

AUD

I mean, you could have killed yourself.

Erik clammers into Aud's room.

ERIK

Where's the Cloak Invisible?

AUD

Why?

Erik looks around and is suddenly suspicious.

ERIK

I can't see it!

(Indignation suddenly seizes him)

Have you got

another man in here?

Erik starts feeling the air as if expecting to find an invisible body.

AUD

It's in the chest.

Erik races over and grabs the cloak.

AUD

No!

ERIK

I'll bring it back.

AUD

Erik. You don't understand.

ERIK

No. It's YOU who doesn't understand, Aud. Halfdan has come to kill and destroy. We brought him here. We must stop him.

AUD

(pointing at the cloak)

But you don't realize....

ERIK

Goodbye, Aud...

Erik leaps out of the window. For a moment Aud is surprised and then alarmed as she realizes he's jumped out of the window, which is some forty feet off the ground.

AUD

Erik!

She rushes to the window in time to see Erik parachuting down, holding the four corners of the cloak. Erik lands safely and waves with the cloak.

ERIK

And thanks for the Cloak Invisible!

AUD

No! WAIT! ERIK! The Cloak! The Cloak Invisible! It only seems to work on my father!

But Erik cannot hear her. He is already racing back to his ship. Back on GOLDEN DRAGON, Thorfinn is taking "Being Scared" lessons from Ivar the Boneless.

THORFINN

And a sort of slightly sick feeling?

IVAR

That's it! AND you keep wanting to go to the lavatory.

THORFINN

Oh, yes! I hadn't noticed that!

SNORRI

Oh, shut up, you two. You're making us ALL nervous.

Erik leaps into GOLDEN DRAGON brandishing the Cloak Invisible.

ERIK

So Halfdan the Black's using magic, is he? Well, I have a magic to match his!

(he holds up the Cloak Invisible)

KEITEL

What is it?

SNORRI

A magic dishcloth.

ERIK

To the oars!

THORFINN

D'you think I've got time to go behind that bush?

Ivar starts to drum and the Vikings begin to row. GOLDEN DRAGON heads out of the harbour. Cut to Halfdan the Black flanked by his advisers, Gisli Oddsson and Eilif the Mongul. He gives a nod and Eilif bangs his staff of office on the deck, as a signal for the galley slaves to speed up. Down in the galley, the slave master (a diminutive Japanese)

stalks down the decks lashing the sweat-streaked galley slaves and cursing them in incomprehensible Japanese. Fortunately (or perhaps unfortunately)

a translation appears in subtitles.

SLAVE-DRIVER

(subtitled)

Row! You incomprehensible, horizontal-eyed, Western trouser-wearers! Eurgh! You all look the same to me! How I despise your lack of subtlety and your joined-up writing! You, who have never committed ritual suicide in your lives!

SLAVE

(whispering to his neighbour)

You know, I don't think it would be so bad, if we knew what he was saying...

SLAVE-DRIVER

SILENCE! Unceremonious rice-pudding eaters! How I abominate your milk-drinking and your lack of ancestor-worship and your failure to eat your lunch out of little boxes!

Meanwhile the Vikings are growing increasingly uneasy as they row towards Halfdan.

SVEN'S DAD

What "magic" have you brought, Erik?

ERIK

You'll see!

At this point, back on the Black Ship, Halfdan gives another nod and Eilif raps out yet another command with his staff. This time the prow of the Black Ship opens up like a pair of jaws. The Vikings see it and panic.

IVAR THE BONELESS

I've done it!

THORFINN

Oh, yes...

(he has too!)

Halfdan nods again and another order is rapped out. This time a harpoon is fired from the prow. It thuds into GOLDEN DRAGON and two of Halfdan's dog-soldiers start to winch the line in. The two ships are hauled closer and closer. The Vikings panic even more. Erik holds up the Cloak Invisible and grins round at his men, knowing he is going to surprise them.

ERIK

Here! Here is the magic from the King's daughter!

Erik's men watch, half sceptical and half hopeful. Erik enjoys the moment of suspense. Then he throws the Cloak Invisible over his head and shoulders and grins round at his men triumphantly, imagining he has vanished from their sight.

ERIK

There! I have become the wind!

The Vikings look at him, rather puzzled. Only Harald seems to be impressed.

HARALD

How did he do that?

SVEN'S DAD

Do what?

HARALD

Vanish into thin air?

SVEN'S DAD

He hasn't.

HARALD

Well, where is he then?

Harald looks around. He is the only one who can't see Erik.

SVEN'S DAD

He's THERE!

At this point Halfdan's ship suddenly bites into the side of GOLDEN DRAGON. Erik leaps onto the side of GOLDEN DRAGON and swings across onto Halfdan's ship. The Vikings react to the horror of Halfdan's ship biting into GOLDEN DRAGON and to Erik's blithe leap onto the enemy boat. Erik lands on the deck of Halfdan's ship, and grins at the ferocious skull-helmeted dog-soldiers.

ERIK

Ooh! Scary! Scary! Don't we look mean?

Two dog-soldiers look at each other, totally non-plussed. Erik grimaces at Halfdan's men, and does a little pirouette to show them all that he's invisible from every angle.

ERIK

You can't see me! But I can see you!

He breaks into a little dance. Halfdan glares at his advisers.

HALFDAN

What's going on?

GISLI ODDSSON

That's Erik.

HALFDAN

Well, why isn't he scared of us?

Erik, meanwhile approaches one of the dog-soldiers and makes silly faces at him.

ERIK

Boo!

The dog-soldier topples overboard. The galley slaves watch another dog-soldier fall into the hold amongst them and lie there stunned. His sword falls onto the deck between the slaves. One of the slaves throws down his oar, and picks up the dog-soldier's sword. The slave-master suddenly appears. Once again he speaks immaculate Japanese.

SLAVE-MASTER

(subtitled)

Hey! What's going on? Your big-breasted women give me

no pleasure with their warmed-up fish and... Urgh!

The slave-master strides down the ship to flay the offending slave, but another slave trips him up and in a twinkling of an eye four others have leapt on the slave-master (despite their chains)

and are extracting his keys.

HALFDAN

What's the matter? Haven't you seen anyone fight before?

DOG-SOLDIER 1

No.

DOG-SOLDIER 2

They're usually too scared of us.

HALFDAN

KILL him!

Erik, still thinking he's invisible, is running amongst the dog-soldiers, having fun. He runs one dog-soldier through and kicks another overboard, then he runs past a few more, right up to Halfdan himself. He whisks the Cloak Invisible off his head for an instant.

ERIK

(thinking he's revealing himself)

Here I am!

Then he turns and is off. Halfdan turns to his aides.

HALFDAN

What?

Back on GOLDEN DRAGON, the Vikings' disbelief has turned to admiration.

SVEN'S DAD

There! THAT'S a true Berserk.

SVEN

I'm just building up to it, Dad.

Sven starts banging his head on the side of the boat.

SNORRI

He's gone batty!

THORFINN

No! The fear's gone!

Halfdan grabs a sword off one of his dead dog-soldiers and thrusts it into the unwilling hands of his military adviser, Eilif.

HALFDAN

Fight, damn you! Fight!

Cut back to GOLDEN DRAGON. Now Sven leaps across onto Halfdan's ship followed by Ivar, yelling. Snorri looks back at Keitel.

SNORRI

Well! Come on!

KEITEL

I... I...

Keitel is thinking: "Maybe I should let Halfdan win" but he knows he can't let a thing like that happen, now he is faced with the reality of it. The companionship of the voyage has brought them all too close for that.

KEITEL

(under his breath)

Hang the Blacksmith's Code!

Keitel leaps to his feet and joins in the attack. Erik, meanwhile, is swinging across the deck from a rope.

ERIK

I am the air! I am the wind!

Keitel and Thorfinn are now fighting side by side.

THORFINN

This is life, eh?

Keitel grins and strikes out. Ivar turns on Eilif who has reluctantly joined the fray. Maybe he's singled Ivar out as the most harmless. Ivar suddenly realizes he's only armed with drumsticks. Eilif smiles evilly.

IVAR

Ooh... er...

Eilif's sword slices through Ivar's drumsticks. Ivar turns to run, but is stopped by a dog-soldier. Eilif takes the opportunity to run him through from behind.

IVAR

(as he dies)

Ouch.

Erik sees Ivar's demise.

ERIK

Ivar!

Erik leaps to take revenge. He jumps into the galley-pit and out again a la Douglas Fairbanks in THE THIEF OF BAGHDAD and dispatches Eilif with a single thrust. Sven and his dad are fighting surrounded by dog- soldiers.

SVEN'S DAD

Well, go on! Go berserk!

SVEN

GIVE US A CHANCE, Dad!

Snorri appears from behind.

SNORRI

(to Sven's dad)

What about you? Why don't YOU go berserk?

SVEN'S DAD

I got to keep my eye on HIM...

Sven's dad looks uneasy. He is surrounded and, as a seasoned campaigner, knows they haven't much chance. Halfdan smiles to himself. The battle is going his way. Thorfinn meanwhile is fighting two dog- soldiers but is attacked from behind by a third.

SVEN

Look out! Thorfinn!

But it's too late. Thorfinn is run through the back. Sven goes berserk and kills all three dog-soldiers. Sven's dad looks on, proud of his son for the first time. Maybe their relationship will never be the same again. Now Snorri sees something that cheers him up. SLaves are coming up from below to join the battle. They are armed with oars and swords. They join the fray, knocking dog-soldiers overboard with their oars. The dog-soldier are suddenly outnumbered. Halfdan's smile fades, and he looks around for an escape route. The tide of battle has now turned dramatically as dog-soldier after dog-

soldier is tossed over the side or laid low by the combination of Vikings and slaves. Halfdan and Gisli slip into a lifeboat and sneak off. The rats are leaving the sinking ship. Back on the deck, all the dog-soldiers are dead or overboard. The slaves and Vikings are cheering and embracing each other. At the other end of the boat, Sven is cradling the dying Thorfinn in his arms. All around are jubilant slaves celebrating their freedom.

SVEN

Thorfinn! You can't die!

THORFINN

I'm not frightened... of anything...

SVEN

You'll see my grandfather in Valhalla!

THORFINN

(dying)

No... he's not... not... there...

SVEN

Tell him I'm coming!

Thorfinn dies. Sven holds him and a tear comes down his face. The danger has made comrades of the two rivals. Erik, however, is still fighting a last lone dog-soldier; but just as he is about to run him through the dog-soldier is stabbed in the back. He sinks to the floor, revealing another dog-soldier. Erik is outraged by this act of treachery and turns on the assassin.

DOG-SOLDIER

No! No" Wait! Please wait, Erik!

The dog-soldier pulls his mask off to reveal he is, in fact, Loki. Erik is totally non-plussed.

ERIK

LOKI! Where did YOU come from?

LOKI

Halfdan wanted to stop you waking the Gods... so... I disguised myself to sabotage their plans.

Erik has meanwhile been joined by the remaining comrades.

LOKI

To save YOU, Erik.

Erik is about to say "But how can you see me? I'm wearing the Cloak Invisible."

ERIK

But -

LOKI

It was my master Keitel's idea.

All eyes turn on Keitel who looks very uncomfortable.

LOKI

Wasn't it, Keitel?

KEITEL

Well... I... I thought...

Keitel is overcome by the power of Loki's will, but he is deeply ashamed of his complicity in Loki's deeds. Snorri gazes at Keitel with growing suspicion.

ERIK

But... How is it you can see me?

(he looks round)

You can all

see me?

LOKI

What d'you mean?

SNORRI AND OTHERS

Why shouldn't we see you?

HARALD

I can't see him.

ERIK

I'm wearing the Cloak Invisible....

Erik takes it off to demonstrate.

HARALD

Oh! There you are!

ERIK

(to the others)

You mean... you could see me all the time?

The Vikings look at each other, mystified.

SNORRI

Weren't we supposed to?

ERIK

Oh... I feel a little... oh...

Erik's knees give way and he faints onto the deck. Cut to King's Hall some time later. A victory celebration is in progress. It is a little bit like a Hampstead cocktail party, and the rough, battle-stained Vikings look rather out of place holding their little canapes. Suddenly the King claps for silence.

KING ARNULF

We are grateful to you, Erik, and to your men...

COURT

Yes, we are...

KING ARNULF

And there is only ONE way we can repay you... Musicians!

King Arnulf claps his hands. Erik rushes over to him, anxious to avoid another Hy-Brasilian concert.

ERIK

(hurriedly)

Well, we'd love to hear you sing again, but what we'd really appreciate would be if you could see your way to lending... not giving of course...

(continuing)... but just lending us the....

um... the, well, to be quite blunt... the Horn Resounding.

All the time Erik is talking the doors of the hall behind are opening and a vast lur or horn is carried in by six bearers. One or two of the Vikings have turned to look and are now standing speechless. King Arnulf beams at Erik.

KING ARNULF

It's yours.

Now Erik finally turns and looks at what everyone else is looking at. Erik's jaw drops. Everyone in the court beams at Erik, except Aud who is looking sad and disappointed.

ERIK

(when he can find his voice)

Is THAT it?

A cloud passes over King Arnulf's happy face.

KING ARNULF

Is there something the matter with it?

ERIK

Oh! No! No... of course not... it's just I hadn't expected it to be quite so big.

KING ARNULF

Well, it's not called the Horn Resounding for nothing.

(aside)

You DO know how to play the horn, don't you?

ERIK

Yes... oh, yes...

KING ARNULF

Then I expect you'll be leaving first thing in the morning.

The King manhandles Erik away from his daughter. Perhaps we have the feeling that she's isn't going to let Erik go as easily as that...Mix through to later that night. The Vikings are lying asleep on the Great Hall, beside the Horn Resounding. The camera closes in on Keitel. Suddenly a voice comes from the shadows:

VOICE

(whispering)

Keitel! Keitel Blacksmith!

Keitel opens his eyes and finds Loki close beside him.

LOKI

What's the matter, Keitel Blacksmith? Have you forgotten why you came on this voyage?

Keitel is silent.

LOKI

Are you going to let Erik wake the Gods?

KEITEL

How can we stop him now?

Loki looks around and then opens his hand in front of Keitel. In it is the mouthpiece from the Horn Resounding.

LOKI

Take this and throw it from the cliff heights. They'll never make the Horn Resounding sound without it.

Keitel frowns. Then an obvious thought limps across his muscular mind.

KEITEL

But why me? Why don't you do it?

Somebody stirs.

LOKI

Sh! Hurry!

KEITEL

YOU do it!

LOKI

You'll be able to throw it further than I could.

Keitel thinks. This is true.

LOKI

It must go far out to sea.

Loki presses the mouthpiece on Keitel. Keitel takes it, but reluctantly. Another Viking stirs.

LOKI

Surely you haven't forgotten the Blacksmith's Oath?

Keitel is about to reply and say he's been having second thoughts about it, but somehow he can't. Loki has such power over him.

KEITEL

I...

Suddenly another Viking stirs, and Loki hisses at him.

LOKI

Hurry!

Loki pretend to go back to sleep. Keitel (feeling a bit lumbered) thinks about his task and hesitates... Who knows? Perhaps he is about to stand firm, but Loki plays his trump card.

LOKI

(without opening his eyes)

Or I might have to tell Erik why you really came on this voyage.

Keitel is caught. He closes his eyes in resignation and then reluctantly starts to make his way out of the Hall. As he gets to the doors he trips over Snorri, who wakes. The mouthpiece falls a few feet away.

SNORRI

Who's that?

KEITEL

It's me. I'm just going to water the dragon...

(he gives a false laugh)

SNORRI

Oh...

Snorri notices the silver mouthpiece on the floor, but he pretends he hasn't.

SNORRI

Oh... clumsy idiot.

Snorri pretends to go back to sleep, but he opens one eye and watches Keitel Blacksmith recover the mouthpiece, and then follows Keitel out. Loki gets up too. He follows to keep an eye on Snorri. Cut to Aud on the shore, gazing moodily out to sea. She is brooding in Erik's imminent departure. Suddenly a stone falls from above; she looks up and sees a figure appear on the cliff above. Hurriedly she withdraws into the shadows. Keitel Blacksmith appears on the cliff-top. In his hands he holds the mouthpiece of the Horn Resounding. e examines it, turning over in his mind whether he is doing the right thing or not. then he decides he must.

KEITEL

(to himself)

My fellow blacksmiths.

He prepares to throw it.

SNORRI

Keitel!

Keitel jumps out of his skin.

KEITEL

What?

SNORRI

What are you doing, Keitel Blacksmith?

KEITEL

Get away, Snorri.

SNORRI

What have you got there?

Snorri advances towards Keitel. Keitel backs away, dangerously near to the edge of the cliff. His boot slips and he jerks himself forward. At the same time Snorri makes a grab for the mouthpiece. A scuffle ensues, during which the mouthpiece of the Horn Resounding is dropped. It bounces off the cliff and falls down to the shore below. Aud steps out of the shadow and picks it up. She frowns and looks up, and then screams, as she sees the men fighting.

AUD

No!

But it's too late. Snorri goes white, gives a hideous gasp... and sinks slowly to his knees - revealing Loki standing behind him with a bloody knife. As Keitel and Loki watch Snorri die, a drop of blood from the knife falls to the ground. The moment it lands, there is a deep subterranean groan, and the earth begins to tremble violently. Keitel and Loki look around in alarm.

KEITEL

Oh Gods! What have we done?

Back in the King's Hall, Sven, Sven's dad and Harald are wide awake, but for the moment paralysed, as bits of masonry crash around them. The cheerful figure of King Arnulf appears at the top of a stairway. He raises his hands.

KING ARNULF

Stay calm! This is NOT happening.

The King then hurries out of a door at the top of the staircase.

SVEN'S DAD

What did he say?

ERIK

Look out!

The doors of the Great Hall burst open and a wall of water crashes through, knocking the Vikings off their feet. There is little doubt that the whole of Hy-Brasil is sinking see a street go down, a statue sink and then we Cut to a close-up of King Arnulf. He is standing at the top of the Forum steps addressing a crowd of anxious citizens. They are keeping surprisingly good order considering they are already standing ankle-deep in water, and the whole town is rapidly sinking around them.

KING ARNULF

Now, I know what some of you must be thinking... the day has come.... we're all going down, etc. etc. But let's get away from the fantasy and look at the FACTS. FACT ONE - The threat of total destruction has kept the peace for one thousand years. FACT TWO - The chances of it failing now are therefore one in three hundred and sixty-five thousand. FACT THREE...

By this time the water is up to people's knees, and several have crowded onto the lower steps to avoid getting wet.

KING ARNULF

FACT THREE - Our safety regulations are the most rigorous in the world. We are all nice to each other, we never rub each other up the wrong way or contradict each other, do we?

CROWD

No.

Rumble. The buildings sink and masonry falls.

CITIZEN

We... er... do seem to be going down quite fast, Your Majesty - not trying to contradict you, course.

KING ARNULF

No, of course you're not, citizen. But let's stick to the facts. There has NEVER been a safer, more certain way of keeping the peace. So whatever's happening, you can rest assured, Hy-Brasil is NOT sinking. Repeat, NOT sinking.

We cut to an unfortunate Hy-Brasilian who looks out of a window to see if it's raining, but is immersed before he can find out. The citizens in the Forum, however, are reassured by the King's words - even though they are now up to their waists in water. One of them steps forward.

ANOTHER CITIZEN

May I just make a point in support of what King Arnulf's just said?

KING ARNULF

We'd be delighted - wouldn't we?

CITIZENS

Yes, we'd certainly like to hear what one of us has got to say...

Erik, Sven, Sven's dad and Harald struggle out of the Great Hall, carrying their belongings and the Horn Resounding, while the citizen is still speaking most articulately in support of the King. They are ALMOST in a panic.

ERIK

What are you all doing?

CITIZEN AT THE BACK

(cheerfully)

It's all right. It's not happening.

ERIK

(urgently)

The place is sinking!

CITIZEN AT THE BACK

Yes... I thought it was too, but the King's just pointed out that it can't be.

CITIZEN

(still speaking in support of the King)

...and, of course, we mustn't forget King Arnulf's EXCELLENT eye for flower-arranging.

There is a smattering of applause. A few people pull their robes up out of the wet. Erik leaps onto a wall and shouts to the crowd.

ERIK

Save yourselves! Hy-Brasil... is sinking.

There are a lot of knowing smiles amongst the citizens.

CITIZEN FROM MIDDLE

Look, you don't know our safety regulations.

KING ARNULF

It can't happen.

ERIK

But it IS! Look!

KING ARNULF

(ignoring Erik)

The important thing is not to panic.

CITIZENS

Quite... yes... we understand....

KING ARNULF

I've already appointed the Chancellor as Chairman of a committee to find out exactly what IS going on, and meantime I suggest we have a sing-song!

CITIZENS

Good idea!

ANOTHER

Can we do the one that goes "TUM-TI-TUM-TI-TUM-TI-TUM"?

Erik looks around in despair. Meanwhile in another street someone is struggling in the floodwater.

LOKI

I can't swim! I can't swim!

KEITEL

Relax!

LOKI

I'm drowning! Help!

Loki grabs Keitel round the neck.

KEITEL

Let go!

But Keitel is pulled under. He re-emerges spluttering.

KEITEL

Urrgh! Argh! Let go, you idiot!

LOKI

Help!

KEITEL

You'll drown us bo...

But they go under again. At this point Erik, Sven, Sven's dad and Harald swim round the corner, pushing the Horn Resounding. They see the figures disappearing under the water.

KEITEL

Help!

LOKI

Help!

Erik, Sven and Co. swim as fast as they can to rescue the drowning pair. They struggle to overpower the panic-stricken Loki, but he puts up a manic fight. Unexpectedly, Harald Missionary suddenly unleashes a vicious right hook and lays Loki out cold. There is a moment's stunned silence that is no unmingled with indignation.

SVEN

(with hurt surprise)

You hit him!

HARALD

Well, it's what you're supposed to do... isn't it?

SVEN'S DAD

Look!

They look up as GOLDEN DRAGON sails around a corner of the street, piloted by Aud. As the Vikings scramble aboard, the sound of the "sing-song" reaches a particularly noisy and discordant climax attract their attention. Back in what was the Forum, a crowd of unconcerned-looking citizens is sitting on the last roof and just coming to the end of another appalling song.

CITIZENS

...Te...Tum!

KING

You know, I think we're getting better.

CITIZEN 1

(with genuine interest)

How can you tell?

KING

(a bit stumped)

Er...

AUD

Father!

The King looks up.

KING ARNULF

It's all right! It isn't happening!

AUD

But, Father, it IS!

ERIK

Get on board!

CITIZEN 2

No THANKS!

CITIZEN 3

Who do you think YOU are?

CITIZEN 1

Panic-monger!

The roof is now sinking rapidly, though the citizens appear as unperturbed as ever.

CITIZEN

Leave us alone!

SVEN

Yeah. Leave 'em alone.

AUD

It's sinking! Hy-Brasil is sinking!

KING ARNULF

Well, my dear, I think you'll find it's all a question of what you want to believe in.... I have slightly more experience of these matters than you...

Unfortunately, at this point, the entire gathering of citizens, the King and the Forum Temple disappear below the waves.

AUD

Father!

(tears spring to her eyes)

Harald Missionary has put his arm around Aud in a fatherly way.

HARALD MISSIONARY

There, my child... It's at times like this that this book can be a great help...

Erik shoos him away.

HARALD MISSIONARY

(with his usual promptness)

Right!

GOLDEN DRAGON spins alone in the wide ocean. Fade. Fade up some time later. They are all gathered in front of the Horn Resounding.

ERIK

(to himself)

We must blow the first note... the note that will take us to Asgaard...

SVEN

(nervously and with awe in his voice)

Over the Edge of the World.

The other men look up at the Horn Resounding, and begin to feel a bit nervous.

ERIK

We are going where only the dead have been before...

Erik takes a deep breath and then puts his lips to the Horn Resounding. He blows. There is a splutter, and one or two of the Vikings titter amongst themselves. He has another go. But again, all he produces is a pathetic spluttering.

SVEN

(not unkindly in his manner)

Uh! Here! Give it to me!

Sven pushes Erik aside. Sven blow... he becomes redder and redder. But all he produces is a splutter. He gets a bit angry.

SVEN

Thor's blood!

Sven's dad looks heavenwards.

SVEN'S DAD

You're not using the right technique.

Sven's dad tries to take it over.

SVEN

No! I'm doing it!

They start to struggle.

SVEN

(getting angry)

You're always telling me... TELLING me!

Erik tries to separate them.

ERIK

Sven!

SVEN

(to his dad)

Let me do something for myself for a change!

Suddenly Aud comes forward.

AUD

No! Don't quarrel!

Sven and his dad stop fighting, surprised by the vehement in her voice.

AUD

We'll never get where we want to go if we fight.

Aud crosses to the Horn and inserts the mouthpiece. Loki glances at Keitel. He hadn't bargained for this!

LOKI

Er... don't blow it! You never know WHAT might happen...

AUD

It has not spoken for a thousand years... You must bring it to life with a kiss...

She puts her lips to the mouthpiece and just touches it with them... almost a kiss... then... very gently... she begins to blow... a soft... slight note can just be heard... Aud takes her mouth away from the mouthpiece... and the soft note goes on... reverberating... A sweet note... a magic note... the Vikings stand stock-still, enchanted by the sound... and the sound all the time is getting louder and the Horn begins to vibrate with the note. As the volume increases the GOLDEN DRAGON itself begins to reverberate with the sound. Rings of ripples begin to radiate out from the boat across the calm water. The note grows louder and louder, and the Vikings, who at first were laughing and cheering at Aud's success, begin to get rather alarmed. Louder and louder gets the note and the Horn shakes and the boat vibrates. Things start to be shaken loose, and fall onto the deck. Ropes uncoil and run loose. A heavy block suddenly crashes down to the deck, crowning

Harald and laying him out flat. Louder and louder grows the note, and the Vikings have to stop their ears for the pain. The water around the ship becomes more and more agitated. And then another sound is heard. It is the thunder of water in the distance like a million distant waterfalls. And suddenly they notice the sea is running like a river - all in one direction... sweeping the ship forward with incredible momentum. In no time they are engulfed in a mist, still travelling at a rate of knots. Almost at once appointed rock looms out of the mist ahead of them. Erik flings himself at the steering oar, and everyone is thrown about as the ship veers wildly and just misses the rock, only to see another looming up ahead of them. The ship veers again, as a third rock looms ahead. This time Sven has grabbed a coil of rope, and as they pass the third rock, he throws it like a lasso over the rock. Loki and Keitel leap to grab the rope just as the rope goes taut and the ship comes to a lurching stop, anchored by the rope, but still swaying and buffeted in the racing waters. Those on board shout to each other, soaked to the skin. It is difficult to make out what they are shouting.

LOKI

Help!

AUD

What are you doing?

LOKI

What d'you think? Help! Somebody help us!

SVEN

Shut up!

LOKI

(pointing at Aud)

She wants to kill us!

KEITEL

She wants to take us over the Edge of the World!

AUD

You want to get to Asgaard, don't you?

LOKI

How do we know this is the way?

ERIK

(shouting)

We blew the Horn Resounding.

LOKI

(screaming and pointing an accusing finger at Aud)

SHE blew the Horn

Resounding.

KEITEL

(shouting)

Don't you see, Erik! She wants revenge!

ERIK

What are you talking about?

LOKI

(to Keitel)

Shut up!

KEITEL

She knows it was our fault!

LOKI

Keep your mouth shut, Keitel!

KEITEL

No! It's YOU, Loki! I should never have listened to you!

Loki looks around desperately.

LOKI

You've lost your mind.

KEITEL

We came to stop you waking the Gods, Erik! But I didn't want anyone to get hurt!

LOKI

You fool!

Suddenly Loki produces his stiletto and leaps onto Keitel, stabbing at him.

LOKI

I should have got rid of you long ago!

KEITEL

Like you got rid of Snorri!

Erik tries to separate them.

AUD

No! No! We are in the spell of the Horn! Hatred will destroy us.

ERIK

That's right!

For a split second Erik is distracted. He looks across at Aud and for a moment he sees Freya standing there.

FREYA

Once you are in the spell of the Horn, hatred will destroy you...

Then it is Aud once more. But in that split second Loki has stabbed Erik.

ERIK

Arrgh!

Erik staggers back clutching his arm. Keitel gives a roar of rage, and picks Loki up bodily and hurls him out of the boat into the maelstrom. The other Vikings look on aghast. Keitel turns on them

KEITEL

He killed Snorri! He caused the land of Hy-Brasil to sink! SHE knew!

AUD

I didn't know!

KEITEL

Now she wants to send us over the Edge of the World!

AUD

How else d'you think we're going to get to Asgaard?

The Vikings look at each other amidst the roaring waters and the thick spray. Erik holds his bleeding arm and looks at Aud. Should he trust her or not? Suddenly he turns on the others.

ERIK

(shouting above the din)

Do YOU know the way to Asgaard, Keitel Blacksmith?

Keitel shakes his head.

ERIK

Do YOU know the way to Asgaard, Sven?

Sven shakes his head.

ERIK

There is one road before us, and that leads over the Edge of the World.

Harald sits up as he returns to consciousness.

HARALD

There IS no Edge of the World.

Sven's dad bonks him again. Erik takes the rope and begins paying it out. With grim faces the Vikings turn and face towards the roaring of the waters, as Erik edge the ship further into the mist. The noise is deafening. It would be almost impossible to hear any voice above it. The faces of the Vikings betray their fear as they find themselves emerging from out of the mist at the Edge of

the World. They gape as they find themselves confronted by a Waterfall of Seas - stretching on either side of them - as far as the eye can see - water falling and plunging over the lip of the world. And in front of them - the blue sky continues on down and down until it shades into blackness strewn with stars beneath their feet... Sven, Sven's dad and Keitel edge to the prow and gasp.

AUD

No! Don't look over the Edge!

Erik lets out a little more rope, until the ship is protruding over the edge. Sven, his dad and Keitel peer over the side, and stare down into the abyss. They gasp. From above we see the prow of GOLDEN DRAGON and the backs of the Vikings' heads in plain view against a backdrop of stars below them.

ERIK

Let me see!

Aud holds him back.

AUD

No. Don't look... The abyss will suck away your strength.

ERIK

I MUST look! Keitel! Hold this!

Erik turns to see Sven and Keitel trembling... They hold onto the sides of the ship but their legs can barely support them.

SVEN

There is nothing we can do...

SVEN'S DAD

Helpless...

Keitel start to laugh.

KEITEL

Ha ha... I believed Loki... I believed I had a duty to blacksmiths! Ha ha ha!

Keitel laughs a little hysterically. Aud turns urgently to Erik.

AUD

YOU still want to go to Asgaard?

ERIK

Of course.

AUD

Do you believe I love you?

ERIK

I... but I...

AUD

You don't have to love me. Just: do you believe I love YOU?

ERIK

Yes - I believe you do.

AUD

Then let go!

Erik hesitates, then he decides to believe in Aud. He throws the rope away. At once the ship shoots off over the Edge of the World into space... Everything seems to slow down, as the longship drops down and down... the ship twists slowly as it drops... round and round. The Vikings gaze about them in wonder, as they find their ship if falling in silence amongst the stars. Harald comes to once again.

HARALD

I'm still seeing stars.

Keitel looks round at him.

KEITEL

We're ALL seeing stars.

HARALD

No! I was hit on the head.

The longship falls and falls through the star-strewn space until it softly lands in a white wilderness. On the deck the Vikings are huddles up, covered with rime-frost. It seems as if they have been lying there half-frozen for some time. Perhaps the entire adventure has all been a dream, and they have been stuck in the Arctic pack-ice the whole time. The hallucinations of men near to death. Aud tries to wake Erik.

AUD

Don't sleep... wake... Look!

Erik opens his eyes and, for an instant, he sees Helga. He blinks and realizes it is Aud who is calling him back to consciousness. Suddenly coloured lights begin to play to his face.

ERIK

Bi-Frost... The Rainbow Bridge.

Above them the Aurora Borealis stretches up, magnificent and awesome in the sky. Erik makes his way through the other Vikings.

ERIK

Wake up!

The others slowly begin to rouse themselves from their icy slumber and sit up, awed by the sight.

KEITEL

(whispering)

Are we dead?

VIKINGS

The Rainbow Bridge.

They all peer up at the ever-changing colours of the Aurora Borealis, hanging in the sky above them like organ-pipes. But something is happening. The lights begin to fade to reveal a magical city on a mountain. The Vikings realize that this is journey's end.... they have reached Asgaard... the City of the Gods. The Vikings all catch their breaths and gaze in awe.

ERIK

Asgaard!

HARALD MISSIONARY

Where?

SVEN'S DAD

Up there, you fathead.

HARALD MISSIONARY

Up WHERE?

Harald look round quizzically at the others. It is clear that he can see nothing.

ERIK

Look! It's real.

Harald looks around at the others.

HARALD

Hallucinations are real.

It's no use; Harald can see nothing. The Vikings, transfixed by the sight of their fabled home of the Gods, rise to their feet. Aud whispers to Erik.

AUD

The second note.

ERIK

The second not to wake the Gods...

Erik kneels in front of the Horn.

AUD

Gently...

Erik blows... a soft gentle note... He takes his mouth away, and smiles at Aud. Once again the Horn starts to vibrate and the

note gets louder... the ship starts to vibrate... louder and louder... The whole landscape starts to vibrate... louder and louder grows the not until even the stars in the sky are vibrating and then a magical thing starts to happen... The note fades as one by one the shimmering stars start to fall out of the night sky... they fall like silver snow... until the ship... the Vikings... Asgaard... the whole landscape is covered in sparkling dust... then in the ensuing silence the first light begins to glow in the Halls of Asgaard... then another... and another... Erik stares as is bewitched and slowly begins to climb out of GOLDEN DRAGON.... but Aud tries to pull him back.

AUD

Erik! You've done what you came to do!

ERIK

Not quite...

Aud looks at him.

AUD

Blow the third note! The note to take us home!

ERIK

There is something I must ask the Gods...

AUD

No living man has ever set foot in the Halls of Asgaard... The Gods will never let you return.

Erik looks at her... for a moment... But he knows he has no choice.

SVEN

I came to find my grandfather.

ERIK

I have to go...

AUD

Then I shall come too.

ERIK

(stares at her)

No... no..

AUD

I don'T want to live WITHOUT you.

ERIK

But, Aud... I... I came to find someone...

Aud is about to say "Her?", but she bites the word back and looks down at the ground.

ERIK

I'm sorry, Aud... I really am.

Aud kisses Erik, who then turns and climbs out of GOLDEN DRAGON and sets off across the ice. Sven follows.

SVEN'S DAD

Wait for me! I'll be dead soon anyway...

KEITEL

You can't go without me!

They follow. Even Harald Missionary starts to follow.

HARALD

Where are they all going?

AUD

Aren't you afraid?

HARALD

Oh... There's nothing for ME to be afraid OF.

Harald smiles and sets off after the others. Aud follows. The stars have fallen to form a shining, winding pathway up to the City of the Gods. This is what the Vikings head for. Between them and the

Citadel strange huge forms rise up. The Vikings approach and find the vast skeletons of the slain giants. The Vikings are but tiny gnat-sized figures wending their way between the vast figures. They climb the stairway-path of stars, up the winding road and eventually find themselves outside the massive doors of Asgaard.

ERIK

Valhalla...

Sven turns on Harald.

SVEN

There! It's real! It's solid! Now do you believe us?

He pats the wall of Valhalla - the Great Hall. Harald reaches out, but his hand goes right through the wall.

HARALD

There isn't anything.

Harald Missionary walks straight through the wall and disappears from sight. The Vikings gasp, and run up to feel the point where he disappeared. The door is perfectly solid to them, and they jump out of their skins as Harald suddenly reappears again.

HARALD

You're having me on, aren't you?

ERIK

It's Valhalla - where the warriors slain in battle go.

AUD

It doesn't exist for him.

SVEN'S DAD

He's just a cynic.

At this moment there is a creak and the great doors mysteriously swing open. As if mesmerized, the Vikings enter the Halls of Asgaard. The door slams behind them. They spin round, but the doors have vanished... No man has ever entered the Halls of Asgaard and left alive... Erik slowly starts to cross the vast floor looking around

him as he does so. One by one the other Vikings follow. After a while Erik stops.

ERIK

Listen!

The Vikings listen. They hear the sound of children laughing and shouting. Erik and his men follow through the columns towards a pool of light. The scene that greets their eyes is not at all what they had been prepared for. Valhalla is not full of the warriors slain in battle, quaffing mead on the ale-bench and reliving old battles - it is, instead full of children romping, laughing, shouting, quarrelling and playing games... chess, fencing... dice... tag, etc., around a wide hearth fire. Women are cooking and doing other housewifely things... weaving, making bread, etc. It is a thoroughly domestic scene. Suddenly one of them turns at Erik. It is Helga, whom Erik accidentally killed in Scene One. She is once again kneading dough. She has a red stain under her breast.

HELGA

Oh good! It's Mr Wonderful!

Erik leaps to her side.

ERIK

I've come to take you back to the land of the living.

HELGA

What a stupid idea.

ERIK

(mortally hurt)

Why?

HELGA

What's the point of being dead in the land of the living?

ERIK

I'll ask the Gods to give you life again!

Helga looks at Erik very sceptically. She obviously thinks he doesn't know what he's talking about. Aud reacts. Erik takes Helga's hand - and gets covered in dough.

HELGA

Have you tried to ask the God for anything?

ERIK

Well... no...

HARALD MISSIONARY

Who is he talking to?

AUD

Sh!

HELGA

Odin!

One of the children, throwing pennies against the wall, looks round.

CHILD ODIN

I'm busy.

The Vikings are recovering from their surprise.

VIKINGS

Odin?

HELGA

(getting back to her kneating)

He's busy.

ERIK

Is THAT Odin?

HELGA

You'll have to wait till he's finished his game.

ERIK

(shouting across)

Odin!

Odin leaves his game and saunters towards Erik.

ERIK

We have come from the world of Midgard...

The child whom Odin is playing with points his hammer at the ground near Erik and a lightning bolt zaps into it. Erik jumps.

CHILD-THOR

Clear off.

ODIN

No, wait, Thor.

ERIK

You must help us.

ODIN

We don't HAVE to help anybody.

ERIK

Fenrir the Wolf covers the sun - men fight and kill each other the whole time.

ODIN

Why should WE care?

ERIK

Because... you're... you're the Gods....

ODIN

So?

ERIK

Bring the Age of Ragnarok to an end and stop all this fighting and bloodshed. Harald looks around at the Vikings in increasing desperation.

HARALD

This is ridiculous.

VIKINGS

Sh!

HARALD

Right!

The other Child-Gods have stopped playing around now and are watching Erik and Odin.

ODIN

Erik the Viking! The things you seek are not in our power. We don't make men love each other or hate each other.

ERIK

But you're the Gods!

ODIN

Look... Erik...

Odin whistles. The other children look over their shoulders. From out of the darkness of the perimeter of the Hall, shadows emerge... shadows that, as they shuffle and stumble into the light, reveal themselves to be the heroes that the Vikings had expected to find in Valhalla. But they are not hale and hearty giants quaffing mead and reliving their great battles... they are, in fact, a sorry lot... the slain-in-battle still bearing the hideous deformities of their fatal wounds. Most have a sword or an axe buried in some part of their anatomy. One has been cleft in twain... The Vikings react to this grisly gathering as more and more of them emerge from the shadows. They gasp as they notice Snorri, Ivar, Thorfinn, Loki and Leif the Lucky.

ERIK

Snorri! Ivar!

HARALD

Here we are standing on a bare mountain top talking to thin air.

We notice that Harald's cloak is being blown about as if he were indeed on a bare mountain top. The other's cloaks are still. Sven's dad is gazing across at one horribly mutilated specimen.

SVEN'S DAD

Dad!

KEITEL

(disbelievingly)

How can you tell?

SVEN'S DAD

I'll never forget him! The BASTARD!

Sven reacts. Sven's dad starts to go berserk.

SVEN'S DAD

He drove me mad!

SVEN

Easy, Dad!

SVEN'S DAD

All his "you'll never be a Berserk if you lose your temper"...

SVEN

Dad!

SVEN'S DAD

I hate you! I hate you!

Sven's dad collapses against Sven and Sven comforts him, understandingly. A figure emerges from the throng of dead. It is Thorfinn. Sven looks up at him.

THORFINN

You won, Sven.

LOKI

What right have YOU to try and stop men fighting, Erik the Viking? There is glory in battle. There are riches to be made and won...

KEITEL

Made by YOU, Loki!

LOKI

By YOU - Keitel Blacksmith! Don't you know, Erik, that is why he went with you? Ragnarok was good for his business...

KEITEL

It's not my business any more!

Suddenly there is a howl... a bitter howl that echoes above and around the Halls of Asgaard and that gets more distant and more distant. Everyone (including the dead heroes and the Gods) freezes and looks up, listening. Perhaps we cut away to the boiling sky as it resolves itself into the shape of a wolf that snarls and slinks away. Odin turns to Erik as the howling recedes.

ODIN

Fenrir the Wolf has gone, Erik. But will men cease fighting each other? THAT is not in our power...

Odin starts to laugh. All the other children start to laugh... so do the dead heroes. Erik and his men look round uneasily.

ERIK

I have one more request before we return...

Erik turns towards Helga, who is still standing at her trough of dough with her arms up to her elbows in flour. Aud watches Erik with sadness in her heart.

ODIN

Return? You have set your foot in the Halls of Asgaard, Erik.

You cannot return.

Aud looks round to see how the others react. It is as she had feared. Erik pales. The blood drains from the other's faces. Aud whispers something to Harald. Harald looks at her blankly.

AUD

(whispering)

PLEASE!

HARALD

But you're all imagining this... whatever it is.

AUD

(earnestly)

You're the only one who can. PLEASE.

Harald look around at the dumbfounded Vikings. Then he shrugs and wanders off, disappearing through the closed doors of Valhalla.

ERIK

You mean... we must stay here forever?

As he says this Erik's eyes turn again towards Helga. He is clearly thinking at least there are compensations... Odin, however, is laughing again.

ODIN

Stay HERE? Ha ha! This is Valhalla. This is reserved for those slain-in-battle.

HORRIBLY SLAIN WARRIOR

(grinning cheerfully)

Yeah! We're the LUCKY ones!

A HORRIBLY SLAIN FRIEND OF HIS

Yeah. It's much better than dying of old age.

The ghastly and dismembered dead warriors all chortle no end at the dismay written on the face of Erik and his men. At the same time there is a grinding, winching sound. All those around the hearth-place fall back as a vast grating is winched up from out of the flames. The Vikings look at each other.

ODIN

For YOU there is only the Pit of Hel!

As Odin says this there is a roaring sound and the flames and smoke are suddenly reversed and as the roaring increases the flames are sucked down altogether to reveal the black Pit of Hel itself. And now the Pit is sucking the Vikings into it... their hair blows... they try to withstand the force that is drawing them towards the abyss... The Gods look on in some amusement. But some of the dead are concerned.

SVEN'S GRANDFATHER

Son! My son!

SVEN'S DAD

Get lost!

SVEN

Dad! Grandfather!

Sven tries to reconcile his father and grandfather, but it's no use. He is sucked towards the Pit.

VIKINGS

Help!

ERIK

(to Helga)

I tried to save you!

HELGA

Why should you care?

ERIK

I don't know! I just did!

Erik can no longer withstand the force that is sucking him down to the Pit of Hel. Suddenly, however, Snorri has leapt from the ranks of the dead. He grabs Erik and tries to stop him sliding towards the Pit of Hel. But it's no good.

ERIK

No! Let go, Snorri!

SNORRI

I've got you!

ERIK

You'll be sucked down too!

SNORRI

No! Arrgh!

Meanwhile, Ivar and Thorfinn and Leif the Lucky have also leapt forward to save their comrades. They put up a fantastic struggle but remorselessly they are all sucked down.

VIKINGS

Aagh!

The Vikings clutch at the stone floor, their fingers trace blood as they try to cling on... but to no avail. The first are already toppling into the Pit.

VIKINGS

Noooh!

VIKINGS

Ah!

And the rest - including Aud - soon follow. The mouth of the Pit of Hel, through which the Vikings are now tumbling higgledy-piggledy, is a round white disc set in the unutterable blackness of the pit. However, as the Vikings free-fall slowly towards camera, they are lit up by a faint, reddish glow from below. They are staring, wild-eyed and screaming as they fall. As they fall, Erik manages to smash

his axe into the side of the Pit. Thorfinn grabs his leg and holds onto Sven's foot. Leif clutches at Sven's belt. Sven's dad hangs onto Sven's foot. Ivar clutches Thorfinn's foot. Erik clutches Ivar's leg and Aud clutches Erik's. They dangle like this for some seconds, and look fearfully beneath them. Then they can see the Infernal Regions of flame and molten lava... somehow suggesting the face of a huge and sinister creature. No wonder they're scared out of their wits. Meanwhile, Odin and Thor appear at the top of the Pit and look down with mild amusement. Thor casually points his hammer and a streak of lightning zaps Erik's axe. It instantly glows red hot. Erik screams. Suddenly we hear a new sound - a long, high, sweet note.

AUD

Listen! LISTEN! The third note!

But it's no good. Erik has to let go of the red-hot axe. Everyone screams as they start to plunge down towards the Pit of Hel. Cut to GOLDEN DRAGON. Harald Missionary is blowing the Horn Resounding.

HARALD MISSIONARY

(to himself)

I want to go home... Oooh!

Suddenly GOLDEN DRAGON, the Horn Resounding and Harald Missionary shoot up into the air and disappear from sight. Cut back to the Pit of Hel. The Vikings are looking down as they fall - they are still scared but gradually start laughing... laughing as they fall down and down and down until they fall out of sight. We are left with a blackness and just the white disc of the mouth of the Pit of Hel above, until the disc changes magically into the moon. There is a series of splashes. The note begins to fade and the camera slowly pans down to reveal the Vikings all fallen into the duck pond back at Ravensfjord. They are laughing and whooping and splashing each other.

ERIK

I don't believe it... Ha ha ha! It brought us HOME!

LEIF

But who BLEW it?

IVAR

Oh! Who cares? We're HOME!

THORFINN

Mum! Dad!

SVEN

We're back!

Sven embraces his father and dances him around with joy.

ALL

Yo hoo! We're here! We're...

Suddenly the joy drains from their faces and they each gape in horror. What is it they see? We cut to see that out of the huts the women and children and old men are emerging - but they are anything but happy. In fact they are all bound and gagged. Behind them emerge the sinister figures of Halfdan the Black, Gisli and maybe half a dozen armed men. Halfdan and his cronies no longer look sleek and self-assured. They are haggard and desperate. Their faces are streaked with dirt and sweat, and their clothes are torn and soiled. They have clearly been going through a lean time, since Ragnarok ended, and have descended on the village for revenge and for whatever plunder they can find. They have a few sackfuls of booty with them. They herd the women, children and old men into a pathetic huddle in the middle of the village. Halfdan is spitting evil and hatred.

HALFDAN

Throw down your weapons - or we shoot the children first.

Erik hesitates... The others look at him. What choice have they? Reluctantly, Erik throws his weapons into the pond. The others follow suit. Halfdan watches. His men stand around him in a tight group with their backs to each other.

HALFDAN

Good... Good... Right, now we'll just shoot the children anyway...

Erik is paralysed. What can they do? Half Halfdan's men are aiming their crossbows at Erik and his comrades, and half are aiming at the women and children. They raise the crossbows to shoot. Their fingers tighten on the triggers. Suddenly there is a scream from above.

HARALD

Look out below!

Everyone looks up and, amazingly, out of the sky falls GOLDEN DRAGON and lands fair and square on top of Halfdan and his gang, squashing them flat. Harald Missionary staggers blearily from the wreckage.

GRIMHILD HOUSEWIFE

Harald!

She rushes to Harald, while the Vikings rush to release their loved ones. Great celebrations all round.

IVAR

Look!

They all turn and see the sun rising. The villagers gasp in wonder. They've never seen the sun before. Erik looks around and sees Thorfinn and Sven with their arms round each other. Aud looks up as Erik smiles at her and holds her to him. Then they all turn and gaze at the spectacle of the sun returning to the world.