

FADE IN:

**TEXT:**

**"A thousand years ago the vikings plundered Europe and fought amongst themselves. In their world a man's worth was determined by three things... his strength... his wealth... and his luck."**

EXT. SKY ABOVE THE COAST OF DENMARK - DAY - CLOSE ON

A FLOCK OF RAVENS, cawing excitedly, as they fly through the sky...

THEIR POV -

In the calm blue sea far below two huge fleets of viking drakkars (dragonships) face off, about to engage in a major sea battle...

**"972. The Jutland coast. Kings Sven of Denmark and Tryggva of Norway prepare to settle their differences, once and for all."**

The ravens SWOOP down towards the ships.

CUT TO:

EXT. OCEAN - CONTINUOUS - CLOSE ON

A FIERCE DRAGONHEAD... WIDEN TO REVEAL that it is the carved wooden war prow of the Danish flagship, cutting through the water...

KING SVEN, forkbearded and cold eyed, stands in its prow... CAMERA WIDENS FURTHER to reveal a long ATTACK LINE of Danish dragonships, oars churning... racing toward...

The smaller NORWEGIAN FLEET, which has lashed itself tightly together side to side, creating a long floating fortress of ships, their dragon prows facing the oncoming enemy... ZOOM into the center of that fortress, onto the deck of THE LONG SERPENT, the hundred oared Norwegian flagship. Men scurry about, preparing for battle... as KING TRYGGVA, in his battle gear, strides amongst them, cheerfully encouraging them for the onslaught to come.

Forward in the prow, a Norwegian CAPTAIN ranks his battle hardened men tightly together, overlapping their shields, creating a stout defensive shieldwall.

CAPTAIN

Close it up! Close it up! No gaps!

In their midst THORVALD MAGNUSSON (20) readies himself. He is a quiet young warrior from Iceland, a farmboy really; too poor to own a helmet and armor, he wears a padded sheepskin jacket for protection and carries only spear, shield, and a SCRAM (scramasax) a long single edged knife worn across the back of the belt.

This is his first battle. He is excited and scared to death, as he watches... the line of Danish ships churning toward them, closing, taking *forever*... The anxiety of waiting is too much...

Urine runs down his leg. Thorvald feels humiliated.

OLEG, a tough old battle scarred mercenary standing next to him, sees what's happened, grunts...

OLEG

First time?

Thorvald nods.

OLEG (CONT'D)

Where you from?

THORVALD

Iceland.

OLEG

Farmboy, huh?

Thorvald nods.

OLEG (CONT'D)

Me, too... Long time ago. All I wanted was to get rich, go home, and buy my own farm... and here I am.

(laughs, then sees something)

Oh hell...

The Danish ships are pulling together, forming into a dense wedge... aimed *right at them*...

Their captain addresses them.

CAPTAIN

Steady! They're coming after the king. If they kill him, this fight's over! We stop them here... OR WE DIE!

Thorvald and the others loudly CHEER and BANG THEIR SHIELDS.

King Tryggva stands at the dragon's tail in the stern of the ship, his elite guard forming up in a protective shield wall around him.

Now Thorvald can clearly see... blonde, mangy warriors, cramming the prows of the advancing Danish ships. Armed with huge axes and wearing only animal skins or nothing at all, they *howl* and gnash their teeth like psychotic animals.

OLEG  
(to Thorvald)  
Shit. Berserkers.

These are BERSERKERS, elite squadrons of suicidal warriors, worked up (and doped up) into a homicidal frenzy that they believe makes them invincible. The kamikaze of their day, they get their power by "becoming" animals (wolves and bears) and are greatly feared.

Thorvald grasps the THOR'S HAMMER dangling around his neck and mutters a prayer.

THORVALD  
Thor... lend me your strength...

He hears a *caw*... looks up and sees...

THE RAVENS, circling in the air above the ship, waiting for their feast...

Suddenly, a thousand arrows are unleashed from the Danish ships...

OLEG  
Here we go!

The arrows soar up into the sky, forming a cloud that grows in density as it arcs down toward...

The Long Serpent's prow...

CAPTAIN  
SHIELDS!

As one, the men raise their shields over the heads...

Thorvald and the others crouch together in the shade created by the oaken roof... A beat... and then hundreds of arrows *THUMP* into the their shields like deadly rain. Men cry out as a few find a gap and reach their target...

Thorvald feels a thump and sees, the tip of a razor sharp arrow, piercing through his shield, inches from his eye.

Another man screams, his foot pinned to the deck by a shaft...

Now the Danes are very close, as a volley of HURLED STONES AND SPEARS rains down, impacting heavily on Thorvald and his comrades...

Two "bearded" drakkars (with iron bladed prows) CRASH IN, SLICING into the spaces on either side of the Long Serpent, cutting through the lines that bind her to her sister ships...

The Long Serpent SHUDDERS as the the hulls of the ships collide and grind against each other, and Thorvald suddenly finds himself face to face with a mass of HOWLING BERSERKERS, who leap fearlessly from their ship...

But the defenders dig in, holding their shields before them like a wall, pushing the frenzied Danes back, some of whom fall between the ships into the sea... or are horribly crushed between the grinding hulls.

Thorvald's heart pumps as he PUSHES his shield against the white bodied mass that surges against him--it's more like a rugby game than a battle--he HEAD BUTTS an ugly face that tries to climb over the shield wall... and BITES the fingers of a hand that grabs onto his shield...

The Danes throw planks between the ships, creating a bridge. The Norwegians shove them back, or kill any who try to cross, but there are just too many of them...

The berserkers break through and pour onto the Serpent, howling and swinging their axes like demons. Thorvald sees... Oleg's skull SPLIT OPEN by an axe... as their shieldwall is broken and the battle turns to CHAOS, a mass of fighting, screaming, dying men, engaged in a horrific free for all...

Thorvald fights for his life, KILLING a man with his spear... but before he can retract it A HUGE BERSERKER, wearing only a bear skin, GRABS him--and hoists him into the air.

THORVALD'S POV -

As the man, roaring like a bear, opens his mouth, revealing a mouth full of beast-like SHARPENED TEETH.

He yanks back Thorvald's head, about to bite out his throat, but the bear man suddenly grunts and looks surprised... and we see...

THORVALD'S HAND, grasping the handle of his scram, its blade sunk into his heart. The berserker slumps back, dead.

Thorvald retracts the blade, leaps to his feet, sees...

The last of King Tryggva's men clustered around him in the stern, fighting desperately...

Attacked again, Thorvald slips in blood and falls backward, tumbling into the pit of a rowing bench...

HIS POV -

The battle, seen from below, a nightmarish vision of tangled bodies and legs as men slaughter each other...

Thorvald slips down under the seats and crawls on his belly along the hull, past dripping blood and grappling feet--like crawling through hell... He sees...

A DEAD RAVEN, skewered by an arrow...

And keeps crawling... toward the stern...

Where King Tryggva SWINGS his sword, as the Danes press forward, desperate to be the first to capture or kill him. Only two or three of his bodyguard are still alive.

Suddenly A STONE FLIES out from the Danes, striking Tryggva's helmet and knocking him to his knees, momentarily senseless.

As the last of his defenders are cut down, Tryggva looks up, dazed, and sees...

HIS POV -

A young man steps in front of him protectively... Thorvald, armed only with his bloody scram...

Victory in their grasp, the Danes LAUGH at this farmboy with his knife... A berserker rushes him, swinging his huge axe... but Thorvald sidesteps and neatly dispatches him with a slash of his scram.

The Danes stop laughing... and rush him en masse... but packed tightly together they have no room to wield their spears and axes--Thorvald's scram is the perfect weapon--he fights like a badger, slashing and stabbing, wounding and killing a dozen of them.

The Danes pull back, freaked-out... Who is this guy?

Thorvald HOWLS and PLUNGES INTO THEIR MIDST again, slashing, killing... but one of them grabs his arm--another seizes his head--another his leg. The enraged Danes are about to tear him to pieces...

When a SWORD BLADE CHOPS into them, driving them back...

It's King Tryggva.

He grabs Thorvald and hauls him back to the dragon's tail, where they stand shoulder to shoulder... as the furious Danes prepare to finish them off...

But *WAR CRIES* suddenly fill the air... as Norwegians from the other ships *BREAK THROUGH*, charging across the deck, coming to the rescue of their king...

The Danes fall back... as the Norwegians drive their enemies over the side or back onto their own ships...

Suddenly surrounded by friends, *TRYGGVA AND THORVALD* realize they're going to live... and burst into hysterical laughter.

TRYGGVA

What is your name?

THORVALD

(out of breath)

Thorvald... son... of... Magnus.

TRYGGVA

Thorvald Magnusson... you are a lucky man... and so am I!  
(embraces him)

CUT TO:

THE SAME - LATER

The battle is over... *BUCKETS OF SEAWATER* are splashed on the deck, washing off the blood... as King Tryggva, Thorvald at his side, addresses his victorious warriors...

TRYGGVA

Sven has lost his ships...  
(holds up Sven's sword)  
His sword... and his head!

The Norsemen cheer and laugh as we see *SVEN'S DECAPITATED HEAD* hoisted up on a spear.

TRYGGVA (CONT'D)

We have all earned this victory...  
but we owe it... to one man!

Tryggva turns to Thorvald... and offers him Sven's sword... This is a *HUGE* honor.

TRYGGVA (CONT'D)

Wield this for me, Thorvald Magnusson.

Thorvald humbly accepts the sword... but, as the Norwegians loudly cheer him, Thorvald senses another presence, looks up, and sees...

A RAVEN, perched on the dragon's head, eying him... a dismembered finger in its beak.

Thorvald watches as the bird flies off with its prize...

CUT TO:

AERIAL SEQUENCE

FLYING LOW like a seabird over the surging waves of the North Atlantic... we approach...

A VAST GREEN ISLAND, dominated by a snow covered volcano.

**TEXT:**

**"Iceland... 25 years later."**

We hear A *FIERCE WAR CRY*...

CUT TO:

EXT. GRASSY FIELD - DAY - CLOSE ON

A ROUND VIKING SHIELD, CHARGES toward the camera... wielded by... a BOY of ten, who thrusts his practice spear at...

THORVALD, now in his mid forties. Armed only with an ornately carved wooden baton, he easily deflects his attacker's thrusts...

As the other LITTLE BOYS look on... and LITTLE GIRLS lounge in the grass, chatting and watching the boys.

THORVALD

Watch your head!

Thorvald BOPS the boy's skull, sending him sprawling on the ground, moaning. Pain is part of this lesson... The little girls giggle.

THORVALD (CONT'D)

Helgi!

HELGI (7), a ferocious little bruiser with an unruly mass of blonde hair, attacks. For a moment he gives Thorvald a run for his money, swinging wildly with his axe, RAMMING him with his shield...

THORVALD (CONT'D)

Good!

Helgi tries his ramming move again, but Thorvald yanks his shield aside, and stabs him in the guts with his baton, knocking the wind out of him.

THORVALD (CONT'D)

More brain--less brawn!  
(to the next boy)  
Skuli!

SKULI, a quiet, sensitive fifteen year old, stands waiting his turn. He attacks, but his heart clearly isn't in it. He stays tight behind his shield, thrusting his spear from a distance.

The boys and girls watch, unimpressed. Skuli just hasn't got the stuff.

Thorvald grabs the shaft and pulls it hard, yanking it right out of his hands and sending Skuli sprawling... The other kids laugh.

Moments later, Thorvald crouches in their midst as they all listen intently...

THORVALD (CONT'D)

A brave man does not fear death,  
anymore than he feared his own birth,  
because he knows that everything  
that is born must die... Only honor  
lives forever.

HELGI

Our souls live forever!

THORVALD

Who told you that?

LITTLE GIRLS

Brother Geoffrey!

And we notice the crucifixes dangling around the kids' necks. The old silver Thor's hammer still hangs around Thorvald's.

THORVALD

Nobody lives forever! Not even the  
gods... and Brother Geoffrey's god  
was nailed like meat to a cross!

LITTLE GIRL

Because he sacrificed himself for  
our sins!

The other children agree.

THORVALD

Thor would have leapt down from the  
that cross, RIPPED it from the ground,  
and BEATEN HIS ENEMIES TO DEATH WITH  
IT!

The kids go silent, afraid of their chief's famous anger.

THORVALD (CONT'D)

(calms down)

But enough religion... Let's go eat!

The kids cheer and sprint away... Skuli stays behind, sitting on the grass, humiliated. Thorvald crouches beside him.

SKULI

Maybe I'm just a farmer... not a warrior.

THORVALD

A man... must be both.

(beat)

Where spears flock and ravens feast...

Heroes rise when expected least...

(hand on his shoulder)

Come on.

CUT TO:

EXT. THORVALD'S FARM - MOMENTS LATER

Thorvald crosses the crest of a hill and stops to gaze at... his pride and joy...

HIS FARM, beautiful and prosperous, set on the green shores of a spectacular fjord. Cattle graze. Smoke drifts up from the sod walled buildings...

He never tires of this view...

Moments later CAMERA TRACKS him ambling through the busy rural scene, amiably greeting all the free farmers and servants he passes. He is their godi, their chieftain... and they love him.

GUNNAR, the smithy, hammers at his forge.

THORVALD

How's your mama's foot?

GUNNAR

Better.

THORVALD

Good!

CUT TO:

EXT. CHAPEL - MOMENTS LATER

Thorvald approaches... a tiny sod built Christian chapel. He's about to enter, as BROTHER GEOFFREY, a likeable young missionary monk, emerges.

BROTHER GEOFFREY  
(sees the hammer around  
Thorvald's neck,  
smiles)

You know, brother... Thor may be  
your hammer... but God is your shield.

THORVALD  
(smiles)

You know, brother, it the old days I  
would have burned your abbey, ravaged  
your nuns, and toasted your feet in  
the fire until you told me where the  
gold was hidden.

BROTHER GEOFFREY  
And if I didn't tell you?

THORVALD  
Oh...  
(pats his cheek  
affectionately)  
You'd have told me.  
(goes inside)

CUT TO:

INT. THE CHAPEL - CONTINUOUS

SIGRID, Thorvald's wife, (early forties) kneels in prayer at the tiny altar, decorated with a BYZANTINE ICON OF JESUS (a gift from her son). Thorvald sneaks up behind her... and wraps his arms around her.

THORVALD  
The troll...  
(kisses her neck)  
Is hungry...

SIGRID  
The troll is in a church.

THORVALD  
(kissing her)  
The troll... has done worse things  
in churches.

SIGRID  
Thorvald!

He wrestles her playfully down... kissing and tickling her... as she laughs... and submits...

THE ICON seems to watch as we hear the sounds of lovemaking.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE CHAPEL - LATER

Thorvald, looking very satisfied with himself, steps out... and saunters past Brother Geoffrey.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE FIELDS - DAY

A farm horse strains... as Thorvald forces the blade of a plow through the rocky soil. He pries up a big stone and tosses it, then groans, stretches out his aching back... He's getting too old for this.

Suddenly he hears *horse's feet*... and sees...

Someone approaching, riding hard across the fields on a small Icelandic pony. Thorvald waits, as the rider pulls up and drops off the horse. He is NIALL (30) Irish, formerly Thorvald's slave, now a freeman and his right hand man.

THORVALD

I thought I told you to find those strays!

NIALL

Found 'em.

THORVALD

Where?

NIALL

Near the hot pools, right where I said they'd be.

THORVALD

Hum!

NIALL

You don't know everything.  
(holds up a beer pot,  
grins)  
Brought you some lunch.

CUT TO:

THE SAME - A LITTLE LATER - CLOSE ON

The beer pot lies empty on its side... as Thorvald and Niall lie in the warm afternoon sunshine, settling down for a snooze. Thorvald takes off his shirt... and we see that he is covered with scars from a lifetime of battles.

NIALL

Do you miss it?

THORVALD

Hmm?

NIALL

The fighting.

THORVALD

Twenty years I served the king.  
That was enough... My son will win  
me glory now.

NIALL

I thought you vikings all longed to  
die in battle?

THORVALD

We just tell the Irish that... to  
scare them.

NIALL

Just take your shirt off. That's  
scary enough.

They close their eyes and snooze.

CUT TO:

EXT. THE FARM - LATER

Thorvald approaches... the longhouse. The locals have all gathered outside. Something's up, and their downcast looks tell Thorvald it's bad news. He strides toward them.

THORVALD

What is it? What's happened?

None of them can bare to meet his gaze or tell him... THORA (17), his beautiful daughter, moves to him, her face streaming with tears. BRAND, her boyfriend, stands behind her.

THORA

(devastated)

Papa!

Thorvald *knows* what it is... and rushes into the house.

CUT TO

INT. LONGHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Thorvald enters and sees... grim faced men, including Gunnar, and KETIL (70, an old school viking), waiting for him. Sigrid sits at the table, numb with shock and grief, a small bundle of personal goods--a ring, a comb, a dagger, a lock of hair--spread out on the table before her. Gunnar, moves to Thorvald.

GUNNAR

My chief, heavy news from the east...  
Your son, Einar, has fallen, fighting  
in the Emperor's guard.

Thorvald's expression turns to stone. He pushes past Gunnar and staggers wordlessly into...

CUT TO:

THE BEDCLOSET - CONTINUOUS

A small private chamber for the master of the house and his wife (The rest of the household sleeps on benches around the main hall). Thorvald rams the latch shut and drops onto the bed...

Moments later, he lies on his back, staring into nothingness.

CUT BACK TO:

LONGHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

The women in the house comfort Sigrid, who rips her clothes in grief.

SIGRID

All my sons... all my boys... Ragnar,  
dead in his cradle... Helvi, swallowed  
by the sea... Now Einar... my baby...  
cold in his grave on the other side  
of the world.

She WAILS and rips her clothes... as the women weep.

CUT TO:

THE SAME - DAY

Grief still hangs in the hall, but life goes on. Children play happily on the floor. Food is prepared on the fire. The door to the bedcloset is still shut tight.

BRINDA (19), a slave, presses her ear to the door, but hears nothing.

An OLDER WOMAN confides in Sigrid, sitting by the fire.

OLDER WOMAN  
Mistress, it's been two days.

SIGRID  
Leave him be.

CUT TO:

BEDCLOSET - NIGHT

Thorvald still lies on the bed, his face sunken with grief and rage...

CUT TO:

LONGHOUSE - THE NEXT DAY

The women go about their business... but they're all totally aware of...

Thora, gently knocking at the door of the bedcloset.

THORA  
Papa?... Papa?

No answer from within... Thora turns and sees... her mother standing there, holding out a long knitting needle. Thora understands, takes the needle... slides it in the crack in the door near the latch.

CUT TO:

BEDCLOSET - CONTINUOUS

THE NEEDLE pokes in... unlatches the door...

Thorvald lies motionless on the bed, staring... as Thora enters... and lies down next to him. He doesn't react.

THORA  
Papa... I want to die, too. Let me die here with you... and the gods will see... how cruel they've been.

Pleased by the idea, Thorvald puts his arm around her, and they lie together... waiting to die.

THORA (CONT'D)

It seems a shame though... You'll never meet your grandsons... I had their names all picked out...

(beat)

Ragnar... Helvi... and Einar.

Thorvald looks at his daughter, as his heart finally breaks, and he lets go, giving himself over to anguish and grief.

CUT BACK TO:

LONGHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Just outside the closet, Sigrid and the other women listen at the door, relieved to finally hear... *Thorvald bellowing, crying his heart out.*

CUT TO:

EXT. FIELD - DAY - MONTHS LATER

The field that Thorvald planted is now filled with wheat, flowing in the wind...

CUT TO:

EXT. PROMONTORY - CONTINUOUS

The wind blows hard off the sea, as Thorvald, his hair and beard grown out ragged and long in mourning, stands alone on the high cliffs overlooking the fjord...

NIALL (O.S.)

The harvest is in...

Niall, just arrived, stands behind him.

NIALL (CONT'D)

We could use your help.

But Thorvald doesn't respond. Niall turns to go, but suddenly they hear...

A *CLANGING ALARM* from the farm below...

Thorvald looks down into the fjord and sees...

THREE DRAGONSHIPS cutting through the water, heading straight for the farm...

CUT TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE/FARM - CONTINUOUS - VARIOUS SHOTS

As Thorvald and Niall RACE down the steep sides of the hill...

FARMERS in the fields, hear the alarm, throw aside their tools and run for the farm...

Women grab the children and herd them together...

Men snatch up their shields and weapons...

The three ships, oars churning, race across the fjord... their dragon prows aimed at the farm.

Thorvald runs to the longhouse... as Sigrid emerges... carrying his sword and armor. She is a viking's wife.

Gunnar, Ketil, and a group of men, already armed, jog toward Thorvald... as Niall helps him on with his byrnie (mail shirt).

THORVALD

Three drakkars!

FARMER

Is it a raid?

THORVALD

Looks like it!

GUNNAR

Who are they?

THORVALD

No idea!

CUT TO:

EXT. BEACH - MOMENTS LATER

The men, obviously well drilled, form up a tight, defensive shield wall on the beach...

The women, many armed as well or readying piles of rocks to hurl, watch from the hillside above, keeping tight control of the excited children.

Thorvald, fully armed, stands in front of the men, watching... the dragonships closing.

THORVALD

If they've come for our women and children...

(draws his sword)

MAKE THEM PAY!

The men ROAR with approval and BANG their weapons against their shields...

The women and children watch, excited and terrified...

Helgi can barely contain himself--his mother ties him with a rope to hold him back.

Thorvald, his spirits revived, faces the oncoming ships, a grim smile on his face. He's faced death so many times, it's an old friend.

Niall puts an arrow in his bow.

The drakkars keep coming, rowing at full speed...

The men wait, psyching themselves up for a fight...

The women watch... and pray.

Thorvald doesn't move a muscle...

Finally, just a few yards from the beach, the ships draw in their oars... as the boats RUSH straight into shore, beaching themselves deeply into the sand...

The men brace for an onslaught...

Niall draws his bow...

Thorvald doesn't move...

The women watch and pray...

A YOUNG VIKING LEAPS from the prow of the largest ship... Geared with the finest weapons and armor, he struts onto the beach as if he owned it.

YOUNG VIKING

Well... I see that you're ready for us!

Thorvald just stares at him. The young man pulls off his helmet, revealing a plaited blonde mane and killer handsome face.

YOUNG VIKING (CONT'D)

Don't you recognize me, Thorvald Magnusson?

THORVALD

No.

YOUNG VIKING

I have come... to claim my rightful  
vengeance!

A tense reaction from the shieldwall. Spears and axes, ready.

YOUNG VIKING (CONT'D)

Twenty years ago... you were a guest  
in my father's hall. You were the  
king's champion, and I was mightily  
impressed with you, so I snipped a  
lock of your beard for luck... but  
you grabbed me by the neck, called  
me "a little brat"... and tossed me  
into the sea!

Now Thorvald remembers him.

THORVALD

Kol?... Earl Hakon's little boy?

Kol grins, pleased by the recognition... Thorvald strides  
right up to him.

THORVALD (CONT'D)

You're still a little brat!

KOL

(grinning)

I am.

The two men laugh and embrace... The defenders and their  
women relax... Helgi groans with disappointment.

Moments later, Kol's vikings disembark their ship... swarmed  
by the locals and their children... The "raid" has turned  
into an impromptu party... Thorvald and Kol walk arm in arm.

THORVALD

Look at you, all grown up. How's  
your father?

KOL

Dead three years.

THORVALD

Sorry to hear it. He was a great  
man... So you're the earl now?

KOL

(nods)

Hmm.

THORVALD

Good for you! What are you doing here?

KOL

We've been raiding along the Irish coast... Took some fine slaves...

We see downcast, frightened IRISH CAPTIVES being unloaded from the ship...

NIALL sees the captives... and his heart goes out to them. He's been there.

THORVALD AND KOL -

KOL (CONT'D)

But the market for thralls is bad back home. I thought you might help me trade them for woolens and ivory.

THORVALD

(interested)

Hmm... We'll talk business tomorrow... Tonight, we feast!

They walk together... but Kol stops in his tracks as his eyes fall on...

Thora.

CUT TO:

INT. LONGHOUSE - NIGHT

The feast is in full swing. The long fire blazes--the room is packed. Everyone from the community, rich and poor, old and young, has been invited. All wear their best clothes and jewelry.

Local farmers have been paired off with their viking guests... and each shares an ale horn...

Arm wrestling, laughing, flirting, bragging...

Two men sit engrossed in a game of *tafl* (a board game, like chess).

The ladies all sit at their own table together, drinking, laughing... and sizing up the men.

Thorvald, bathed, shaved, wearing his finest, and looking like his old self again, sits at the high seat, sharing a great silver drinking horn with Kol... Being with this young man reminds him of being with his sons.

Thora arrives with a pitcher of ale... and fills it...

Kol's eyes roam up and down her... making her very uncomfortable... She's about to turn away, but he reaches out and grasps one of her long dangling braids, which he fondles... and sniffs.

KOL

Ummmm.

THORA hates this, but smiles, polite...

BRAND, her boyfriend, watching intently from a low status table at the end of the hall. He starts to rise, but his father's hand presses down on his shoulder, keeping him in his seat.

Thorvald and Sigrid flash a concerned parental glance to each other across the noisy room.

KOL (CONT'D)

(still holding the  
braid)

Perhaps... I'll keep this.

He stares at Thora, waiting to see what she'll do...

Thora keeps her cool, then SNATCHES a knife from the table.

Thorvald and Sigrid jump, not sure what she's up to...

But Kol doesn't flinch...

Thora puts the knife to her braid, about to slice it off...

THORA

It is yours.

He smiles... and releases the braid before she cuts it.

KOL

I'll have all... or nothing.

THORA

Nothing it is then.

She turns and walks back to the women's table... as Kol watches, eyes fixed to her... Thora sits down next to her mother, then smiles warmly at Brand... who smiles back, reassured.

KOL watches, unfazed. He loves a challenge.

THORVALD  
(changing the subject)  
So... Olaf is king now.

Kol nods.

THORVALD (CONT'D)  
How does he rule?

KOL  
Like his father...  
(holds up his fist)  
With this.

THORVALD  
We have no kings here.

KOL  
It seems to me, Thorvald Magnusson...  
that you are king.  
(drinks to him)

CUT TO:

INT. BARN - CONTINUOUS

We hear the *raucous sounds* of the feast in the longhouse, as the Irish captives huddle together in the dark...

Suddenly, the door is unlocked and pulled open...

The captives, especially the women, react, afraid...

As Niall enters, carrying a torch, followed by a couple of servants, carrying platters and pitchers. This scene is spoken in Gaelic and subtitled.

NIALL  
Don't be frightened. I've brought  
you something.

The captives watch, amazed, as the platters are set down and uncovered, revealing mounds of herring, seal, and beef.

NIALL (CONT'D)  
Dig in... Dig in. There's plenty  
for everybody.

They hungrily cluster around the food. Most of them have never eaten this well in their lives... Niall fills wooden cups with beer.

CAPTIVES  
Thank you, brother... God bless you,  
brother...

(MORE)

CAPTIVES (CONT'D)  
(etc.)

NIALL  
(passing out the beer)  
This will keep your courage up...  
There you go.

They eat and drink, famished... as a pretty REDHEADED GIRL  
(20) studies Niall.

REDHEADED GIRL  
Are you a slave?

NIALL  
I was... like you, stolen from my  
people when I was young... but I  
worked hard, bought my own freedom,  
and now...  
(indicates his fine  
clothes)  
I'm rich...  
(to all of them)  
So you see, it may not be so bad for  
all of you. Just work hard, don't  
steal too much... and be careful  
when they're drunk. They're bastards  
in their dragonships, but at home,  
they're not a bad lot. No worse  
than the English.

YOUNG MALE CAPTIVE  
What about escape?

NIALL  
It's a long swim home, brother.  
(to the redhead)  
What's your name, darling?

CINNIA  
Cinnia.

NIALL  
My granny's name.

They smile.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE HALL - MOMENTS LATER

Guests stagger out... puke their guts out... then stagger  
back inside for more.

CUT BACK TO:

THE FEAST - CONTINUOUS

Everybody's drunk... The tafl players are still at it...  
Brother Geoffrey, also stewed, does his pitch with Thorvald,  
while Kol listens in.

THORVALD

So you say there is only one God.  
(holds up his finger)  
One?

BROTHER GEOFFREY

Yes.

THORVALD

And he made all this?

BROTHER GEOFFREY

Yes.

THORVALD

And he made your Jesus?

BROTHER GEOFFREY

He did.

THORVALD

Well... maybe he made Odin and Thor  
and Freya, too.

BROTHER GEOFFREY

No.

THORVALD

Who made them?

BROTHER GEOFFREY

The Devil.

THORVALD

Well who made the Devil?

BROTHER GEOFFREY

God.

THORVALD

(shoves Brother  
Geoffrey away)

Makes no sense.

Kol grins, points to the crucifix around his own neck.

KOL

Just wear one of these... and forget  
it.

Ketil stands and raises his horn.

KETIL

I ask you all to RAISE YOUR HORNS...  
TO THE FINEST MAN IN THE HALL!

Everything stops. Toasts are a serious business.

KETIL (CONT'D)

The champion who cut down Danes like  
wheat at Jutland!

The farmers and locals cheer and pound the table...

KETIL (CONT'D)

As brave a warrior... as noble a  
chief... as loyal a friend... as  
strong a farmer... and as lucky a  
man as woman ever bore... our  
illustrious host... THORVALD  
MAGNUSSON!

The locals go WILD, shouting and pounding. Thorvald affects  
to take it modestly... but he *loves* it.

Thora whistles, cheers, pounds for her father...

Even Sigrid quietly enjoys her husband's glory.

GRIM, a tough looking viking, and Kol's right hand man,  
stands, drinking horn in hand.

GRIM

I give you THE FINEST MAN IN THE  
HALL!... a man who never forgets his  
friends... and *always* remembers his  
enemies...

Kol's men are on their feet, fists pumping and cheering.

GRIM (CONT'D)

A man who gives wealth... and takes  
it! A slayer of men... and of *women*!  
The FINEST SWORDSMAN in all of  
Norseland... EARL KOL HAKONSON!

Kol's men rock the rafters... Gunnar stands.

GUNNAR

And I give you THE FINEST SWORD  
CHOPPER IN ALL OF ICELAND... THORVALD  
MAGNUSSON!

The hall ERUPTS as the two factions shout at and shove each other... It's all in good fun... but right on the cusp of going too far.

Thorvald and Kol eyeball each other... smile... stand... and calmly draw their swords.

Now the hall goes WILD... Sigrid rolls her eyes. Boys will be boys... Tables and benches are pushed aside, making a clear dueling space in the center of the hall.

Thorvald and Kol, armed only with their swords, face each other, smiling... The crowd quiets down. This will be a good show... Thora carries a horn full of ale into the center of the circle.

KOL, eyes fixed on her...

As she gives him a frosty look, turns on her heel, and goes to her father.

THORA

Slay him, Papa.

The locals roar their approval, as Thorvald takes the horn...

Brinda, the slave girl, sees her chance and takes a brimming horn to Kol. Kol takes the horn, grabs her ass, and pulls her into a full mouthed kiss. Brinda squeals, ready for more, but Kol shoves her away, then he and Thorvald...

CHUG DOWN their horns... Kol *BELCHES* loudly...

But Thorvald's *COUNTER BELCH* is positively Thor-like.

The locals go nuts... then quiet down as Thorvald and Kol take their fighting stances.

THORVALD

Winner draws first blood?

KOL

Or water.

THORVALD, puzzled by that remark... but before he can figure it out...

Kol ATTACKS... He's a *brilliant* swordsman, a samurai of his day, light and quick, coming in high and low, his blade effortlessly whirling, feinting, slashing...

Thrown off balance, Thorvald barely parries, as he's driven back against a table, banging into it... almost knocking it over. He's out of shape.

Sigrid cringes... Her good dinnerware is in jeopardy.

Kol struts cockily back to the center of the circle, his eyes glued to Thora...

She meets his gaze... but his intensity is scary.

Thorvald jumps back in, attacking fiercely, sword swinging... It's as if he's is a heavyweight boxer, and Kol is a karate fighter. Thorvald has the power... Kol has the moves.

Kol cockily parries and sidesteps Thorvald's blows, dancing, preening, showing off...

But the tip of Thorvald's blade suddenly SLICES open the breast of Kol's shirt.

Kol's men wince. The crowd silences... as Kol tears open the rip, exposing... white skin.

THORVALD

Lucky.

KOL

Always!

Kol attacks again... but now there's no more showboating or fooling around... The two men spar intensely, swords slashing, sparks flying from the clanging iron... as they probe each other for weakness and advantage.

Children squeal, dogs scurry, and the crowd pulls back as the ringing blades slash too close... Helgi gets yanked clear by his mother.

SIGRID, fed up... This is too dangerous...

Thorvald swings his sword... Kol jumps clear... and the blade TOTALS a tabletop full of crockery.

Sigrid's on her feet.

SIGRID

Outside! Take this OUTSIDE!

The other women back her up as they all SHOO the men out the door...

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE - CONTINUOUS

The crowd spills out of the longhouse, following the duel.

Now Thorvald and Kol have room to open up, swinging their swords freely... as the fighting gets more serious... They're still sparring, just looking for an opportunity to draw blood... but a careless move could be fatal...

The fighting moves down toward the water... as Thorvald, twice Kol's age, begins to tire... Kol sees it... and presses his advantage, unleashing a whirlwind of blows... He's an *amazing* swordsman.

The crowd follows as Thorvald gets forced ungracefully backward, onto...

THE WHARF... This is what Kol had planned all along.

Thorvald is pushed back to the very edge... He almost tumbles in... but regains his balance, just in time to find...

THE TIP of Kol's sword, pressing into his chest... Now Thorvald understands what Kol meant by "water".

Kol smiles, savoring his revenge, as he presses his sword point forward...

And Thorvald falls backward... SPLASHING into the freezing water... as Kol's men cheer wildly.

Thorvald's head bursts out of the water. Kol offers his hand and pulls Thorvald out... A moment later, laughing, arms around each other in friendship, Thorvald and Kol head back to the house.

CUT BACK TO:

INT. THE LONGHOUSE - LATER

The feast is winding down... Brother Geoffrey kisses and fondles a chubby farm girl's breast... Servants clean up as guests bed down or pass out on benches around the hall... The tafl players are still at it.

Thorvald and Kol, wrapped in polar bear skin robes, sit by the fire, quietly sharing a final horn of ale.

KOL

The world has changed... You and I are the last of the old breed, who took what they wanted with this...

(holds up his fist)

And this.

(points to his head)

Now kings and bishops are dividing the spoils... and we must sit like dogs under their table.

THORVALD

All things change and pass away.

KOL

But perhaps... we could last one more generation.

THORVALD, listening

KOL (CONT'D)

My grandmother had Odin's eye, and she foretold that I would not marry until I had seen a Valkyrie... I have seen her tonight... Thorvald Magnusson, I ask you, most respectfully, to give me your daughter Thora as my wife... to bear my sons... and your grandsons.

THORVALD

(caught by surprise)

My Lord... you do me great honor.

KOL

(pleased)

Then we'll negotiate the terms.

THORVALD

I... Well, I must first discuss this with Thora and her mother.

KOL

In my house, such things are decided by men.

THORVALD

You must live in your house. I must live in mine.

CUT TO:

INT. THORVALD AND SIGRID'S BEDCLOSET - MORNING

Thora, Sigrid, and Thorvald in the midst of a huge family row.

THORA

But Brand and I are promised to each other!

THORVALD

Thora, Brand is a fine boy, but he owns nothing!

THORA

Except my heart!

THORVALD

Kol is an earl, with extensive holdings.

THORA

And I will be one of them!

THORVALD

At least spend some time with him. Get to know him--

THORA

I already do!

THORVALD

(losing his temper)

You judge him too quickly!

THORA

(losing her's)

And you're too quick to give me away!

(kneels next to Sigrid)

Mother... you married for love.

Don't condemn me to unhappiness...

(puts her head in

Sigrid's lap)

Please.

SIGRID

(strokes her hair)

We have only one child left. She stays home with us... and will marry the man of her choice.

THORVALD

If I could just give him some hope--

THORA

There is none.

SIGRID

Thank him... and decline.

Case closed. Thorvald groans, pained. This is going to be tough.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE LONGHOUSE - LATER

Thorvald, in a rotten mood, strides out... Niall catches up with him, walks alongside.

NIALL  
(excited)  
Just the man I wanted to see... I  
need to borrow some silver. You  
know I'm good for it.

THORVALD  
(stops, glares at him)  
To buy what?

NIALL  
Not what... Who.

THORVALD  
We'll speak of this tomorrow.

NIALL  
But--

THORVALD  
(angrily, walking  
away)  
Tomorrow!

CUT TO:

EXT. THE WHARF - A MOMENT LATER

Kol and Grim supervise the refitting of their ships...  
Thorvald approaches, looks at Kol. Grim realizes something's  
up, moves away.

THORVALD  
(after a moment)  
I must... most regretfully... decline  
your offer of marriage.

Kol stares at him, shocked.

THORVALD (CONT'D)  
It is not my daughter's desire.

KOL  
There's someone else? That boy?

Thorvald nods.

KOL (CONT'D)  
(incredulous)  
He's... a farmer.

THORVALD  
As am I.

KOL

Women know what they want *after* you  
give it to them.

THORVALD

Maybe so... but her heart is set.

Kol turns away, controlling his rage, but just barely.

KOL

Then... she is not the one.

THORVALD

No.

(after a moment)

Hey... let's get drunk... but tonight,  
like Odin...

(hand on his shoulder)

We drink only wine.

CUT TO:

EXT. BONFIRE - NIGHT

Thorvald and Kol, roaring drunk, stand by a blazing bonfire.  
Thorvald refills their wine cups from a pitcher. They each  
spill a little onto the ground.

THORVALD

Thank you, Odin!

KOL

Thanks for nothing, you one eyed old  
prick!

THORVALD

(slurring his words)

Hey... have you ever had... an African  
woman?

KOL

Um-um.

THORVALD

Skin like ebony... and their  
bottoms... Ummm!... You shouldn't  
get married... until you've tried  
one.

KOL

Or two!

They laugh and drink. Thorvald drains his cup...

But Kol secretly pours the contents of his on the ground, then holds out the empty for more.

CUT TO:

INT. THORVALD AND SIGRID'S BEDCLOSET - LATER THAT NIGHT

Sigrid waits up. The door slides open and Thorvald weaves in, barely able to stand.

SIGRID  
How did he take it?

THORVALD  
Like... a man.

He collapses on the bed, passed out cold. Sigrid affectionately pats his butt.

SIGRID  
Well done, husband... well done.  
(undresses him)

CUT TO:

INT. LONGHOUSE - JUST BEFORE DAWN

Householders and guests lie on their benches, sound asleep...

As the door opens and Kol and Grim enter silently... then move through the room, waking their men, who rise, pick up their gear and noiselessly leave the hall.

Suddenly, Kol sees...

Brinda, standing in her white night shift, staring at him, wondering what he's up to.

Kol winks at her, puts his finger to his lips, moves to her, takes her in his arms, and kisses her fully on the mouth. Brinda submits, thrilled... then gives a short cry and tries to push away, but he holds her close, muffling her cry with his mouth...

As we see the point of his scam pierce through her heart and out of her back. Blood quickly drenches her white shift...

As he gently lets her quivering body slip to the floor...

CUT TO:

INT. THORA'S BEDCLOSET - CONTINUOUS

CLOSE ON THORA, sleeping... as we hear the door slide open... A beat later, a hand CLAMPS over her mouth. Her eyes pop open... KOL MOVES INTO THE SHOT and whispers in her ear.

KOL

Make a sound... and I'll kill them  
all.

Thora stays silent, as Grim, using years of experience taking slaves, quickly binds her up.

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE LONGHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Kol, Grim and the others lead Thora, gagged and bound, out the door... and head for...

Their ships... bobbing in the early morning chop. His men are already waiting at their oars, ready to sail.

Brother Geoffrey, still groggy with sleep, shuffles to the chapel for his morning prayers. He sees the men and approaches, unsuspecting...

BROTHER GEOFFREY

You boys are up early.

Smiling, Kol goes to greet him...

Moments later, a raven caws, as a sleepy eyed FARM GIRL, bucket in hand, staggers toward the paddock to milk the cows... She stubs her toe on something... cusses... looks down... and sees...

BROTHER GEOFFREY'S DECAPITATED HEAD, staring up at her from the ground.

She lets out with a BLOODCURDLING SCREAM!

CUT TO:

INT. LONGHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Everyone WAKES LIKE A SHOT!

CUT TO:

INT. BEDCLOSET - CONTINUOUS

Sigrid sits up... but Thorvald is still out cold.

SIGRID  
Thorvald...  
(pounds on him)  
THORVALD!

We hear more *screams and cries* from the main room.

CUT BACK TO:

LONGHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Sigrid rushes in and sees... the men, grabbing their shoes and weapons... the women, wailing over Brinda's murdered body. Niall, short sword in hand, runs up.

NIALL  
They're gone, Mistress. All of them!

Suspecting the worst, Sigrid rushes into...

CUT TO:

THORA'S BEDCLOSET - CONTINUOUS

She sees... her daughter's empty bed.

CUT TO:

THORVALD AND SIGRID'S BEDCLOSET - A MOMENT LATER

Sigrid pounds and shakes Thorvald, who is still too drunk to come to.

SIGRID  
THORVALD! THORVALD!

Niall brings in a pitcher of icy water and dumps it on Thorvald's face. Thorvald sits up, sputtering.

SIGRID (CONT'D)  
(shaking him)  
He's stolen her!

THORVALD  
Huh?

SIGRID  
HE'S STOLEN OUR DAUGHTER!

Thorvald finally gets it, rolls out of bed, staggers a few feet... and PUKES his guts out.

SIGRID, furious, disgusted...

CUT TO:

EXT. OUTSIDE THE LONGHOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

Still in his puke stained nightshirt and armed with an axe, Thorvald runs out the door, followed by Niall and the men of the house...

Thorvald running, sees...

THEIR DOGS, murdered.

They race down to the wharf and see...

Nothing. The ships are gone... and all their little boats have been sunk.

CUT TO:

EXT. HILLSIDE - MOMENTS LATER

Thorvald scrambles up the side of the hill like a mountain goat... Niall and the others struggling to keep up with him.

CUT TO:

EXT. PROMONTORY - A MOMENT LATER

Thorvald reaches the top, looks down and sees...

Kol's three drakkars, oars pulling hard, gliding out of the fjord, escaping into the open sea...

There's no way to stop them.

Thorvald HOWLS IN ANGUISH!

A moment later Niall and the others, out of breath, reach the top and see...

Thorvald, on his knees... violently beating his head against the stones.

Niall goes to him... gently stops him.

NIALL

That's enough, brother... that's enough... You're going to need that head.

**END OF SAMPLE**