

Act III
Scene 5

The Port of Bruges, Flanders 1051

(A ship stands nearby as GODWIN confers with SVEN, OSGOT,
and TOSTIG, GYTHA holds a baby in her arms)

GODWIN

I hear the cursed Archbishop Robert
Pursues us all in anger. He hath ta'en
A ship and looks to find us hither.

SVEN

Ha! And then what? Chastise us? He'll scold and taunt
And rail and fleer until his face be purple,
But he hath no authority o'er us.

GODWIN

Nor did he there, but weaseled his foul way
Into the poor king's feeble heart and mind.

SVEN

If he shows up here, I'll cut off his balls.

OSGOT

I doubt he has em, though his breath be foul,
But torture would be fitting – we could just -

SVEN

Stuff them in his mouth before we slit his throat.
Or we could hang him in his precious pallium!

GYTHA

Enough! Ye talk as youthful rabble rogues
Without any reason or tact or finesse.

OSGOT

That's not our way, specially with French fops.

GYTHA

I'm not too fond of him either, as yet
I hold him responsible for this fair mess.
But think, respect that I not fancy this
Disgusting talk of playful violence!

OSGOT

The least the foul wretch deserves. If he come
Here looking for trouble, he will find it.

SVEN

He and the rest of his kind. Fit to die.

Who doth care if he's a vicar of Christ?

GODWIN

All Christendom. Have you not learned a thing
From all your blasphemous activities?
Ye must needs think, before ye ope thy maw!

SVEN

I think. In battle I thrive, none best me.

GODWIN

Aye, you respond well on your feet. You thrive
Because survival instincts take over
You possess strength in the present moment,
But you do not think ahead or filter
Your thoughts before you speak or act so rash.

SVEN

Rash? You doth spout the weak King's rhetoric!

GYTHA

Let's move beyond these current vain squabbles.
I hold the babe who's life doth prove the point
Your father's making. Tis time we moved on.
Let's look to present situations now.

GODWIN

The talk with Baldwin went well. He agreed
To Tostig's marriage to his daughter Judith.

TOSTIG

I long to set the day when we shall wed.
I hear she's strong of mind and shrewd of heart.

GYTHA

It ties us now to a foreign power
And gives us clout in our strife with Edward.

SVEN

You spend too much effort to bandy spots
On womanly spinning of linen shifts!
Forget felt political marriages,
I say you build a fleet and ram a rod
Up Edward's bloody bunghole until he -

GODWIN

Enough! Sven, this is why you fail at chess.
You have no shred of patience or planning.
Strategy eludes your mind which thinks blood
And butcheries and rapes and pillages
Are proper ends to all situations!
You think I have no plan to build a fleet?

This marriage that you so scoff at, is how
We build a fleet, reinstate our lands
And titles, and give credence to our cause.
Thus I possess respect both there and here
For tact and planning and my stern resolve
To do what's just and right. I'll put that king
In check and dominate England once more.
Turn thy life around and you'll do the same.
Shun irrational irreligious ways.
Otherwise you're a foul blot on mankind.
A social pariah that all do loath.

SVEN

You twit me still with all my sins. But why?
Can it not be that I am a walking
Disappointment to my great family?

GODWIN

Your mind is quick, your spirit is vibrant,
You are my eldest son. I crave success
For you. But, time and time again, you fail.
You let your temper guide your rash actions.
And just when I think you will grow and change
Revert thee back to thy former habits.
E'en here and now thy mother holds thy whelp
Of sin while you talk of mutilating
England's Archbishop of Canterbury.

SVEN

I see it. I feel it. And I repent.

GODWIN

You've said before that you repent.

SVEN

Hear me out!

I see that I have brought disgrace to you
And I repent me of it. Edgiva
Did learn me her Christian ways. So behold:
My pennance will be to discard my boots.
Take them, brother, as blessed wedding gift
I have no further need of them.

TOSTIG

What means this act big brother? They are yours.

GYTHA

You've gone insane, my son. You've lost your wits.

SVEN

Nay, I possess a clarity of purpose
I never did before. I see it all!

I must atone for all my sins. One act
Will make all right; I'll walk in my barefeet
To Jerusalem! A holy pilgrimage!

(The baby in GYTHA's arms cries)

My son! Oh, my son, you will grow to boast
That your father walked to Jerusalem
And back in his barefeet and it pleased God.

TOSTIG

You will be missed. How long will you be gone?

SVEN

Nay, I'll not be missed. The weak king spares me
For father's sake, but I cannot set one
Single foot on English soil, but the other
Is banished: on off, on off, I'm dizzy
From fish flopping, sea to shore, sea to shore.
At any meeting of the Witan none
Look me in the eye nor heed my words, but
Throw names like nun-raper, cousin-killer,
E'en here among my loved ones, it's poor Sven
Has lost his wits or son you act too rash.
No one will miss me. This I needs must do.
I've given myself to the lord Jesus Christ.
My very pennace will absolve my sins.

GYTHA

Well, son, I see you are resolved. The fire
In thine eye, tells me you will follow through
With this. I will take it upon myself
To raise this child to manhood. The blessed babe
Will never want once we've regained our homes.

GODWIN

This bold, yet risky resolve becomes thee.
For those who ask for you, we will tell them
Of your holy pilgrimage. Send us word
When you're safely in the holy city.
Our prayers will accompany thee along
The treacherous journey. Take care, my son.

SVEN

Ne'er fret for me father. Jesus protects
Me, takes my hand and whispers in my heart.
Farewell mother. Rear well my son for God.

(SVEN exits barefoot)

GYTHA

What sudden change is now upon him.

His eyes do shine with light, before darkness.

TOSTIG

Thanks for the boots, brother! I will fill them!

GODWIN

Be careful, Tostig what pledges you make.

For now let's on to Baldwin's court and make

Preparations for this coming nuptial.

Exeunt