

FUMBLEWINTER

A Shortish Play

Estimated running time: 30 minutes.

SUMMARY

In the Age of Settlement, over the previous fifty years or so, the population of this geologically-rich, but resource-poor island (about the size of Oregon) has grown from one, to nearly 10,000 people, who are scattered across the land, and dispersed into a multitude of self-appointed, and pretty shitty, kingdoms. Once per year, the leaders come together to discuss the impending apocalypse, foretold in the Sagas and evidenced around them, but they're too distracted with witch hunts and the latest gadgets, to get much done.

CHARACTERS

KING/PRIESTS

EINARR
ÞÓRÐUR
FINNBOGA
HÁVARÐUR
SNØRRI
DUSTIN

ICELAND

930 A.D.

Note: The writer has no attachment whatsoever to gender. Likewise, the writer encourages creative teams to think beyond Nordic "Iceland" and explore casting decisions that do not reflect color lines.

And for comedy's sake, directors are asked to focus on Size and Shape, especially in casting the KING/PRIESTS, noting that as has been writ since the days of Aristotle: Short/Tall, Big/Small is just *funny*. Rather, go for the cheap laughs.

For costumes, don't go for expensive period authenticity. Be broad. Have fun.

Regarding formatting: Sometimes the writer uses { } to denote a place for some convivial improvisation. Actors are generally quick-witted people, and the writer hopes they'll enjoy stretching out. And other times, the writer uses a | to show two or more characters speaking at the same time.

The play should be taken at a good clip.

Act One
At the All-Thing

In a rift valley, at the crest of the Mid-Atlantic Ridge and the boundary between the North American tectonic and the Eurasian Plates. This crustal extension, deepened by the forces of erosion, continually spreads apart at the surface. EINARR holds a remote, ready to lead a PowerPoint presentation. A nearby table is laden with a tray of mini muffins and coffee, {which the self-appointed KING/PRIESTS help themselves to throughout.}

As the scene opens, a ruckus is heard as the KING/PRIESTS enter. They wear capes made from IKEA faux-fur rugs, and each have attitudes and quirks, subtly reminiscent of Snow White's Seven Dwarves. Most are on their phones, except SNØRRI, who carries a wooden dragon head, that he whittles.

EINARR

Okay, Fiske. Have you got the right dongle now? I'm sorry, I really thought this projector would take a standard HDMI cable. Did anyone bring a DVI splitter from his village?

The KING/PRIESTS murmur their disapproval.

DUSTIN

I have one. [*Handing the cable to FISKE, who plugs it in.*] It's the latest standard.

ÞÓRÐUR

We're living and working in entirely new ways, and technological change is both a cause and an effect of this. Have you *seen* the latest comb?

HÁVARÐUR

You and your symbols of status and aspiration!

ÞÓRÐUR

We're more than just raiders, we're artists! Look at this!

He pulls a hair comb made from bone from his pocket. The KING/PRIESTS gasp in astonishment.

EINARR

Thank you, Þórður — We all take our personal grooming seriously.

SNØRRI

I made something I call “Tweezers.”

FINNBOGA

And I know a man in my village, shaves his face, with a sharp-edged knife! He calls it a ‘Razor’ — Can you believe it? Takes the hair clean off!

SNØRRI

Every morning I scoop out my own earwax with a spoon!

EINARR

So, if we could please gather —

DUSTIN

Fellas? I think we should all —

SNØRRI

I love my ear spoon! It’s important to me. They can bury me with it!

HÁVARÐUR

The problem is this forced product replacement — The policy of planning or designing a product with an artificially limited useful life, so it will become unfashionable or no longer functional after a certain period of time.

DUSTIN

But how else would you generate long-term sales volume?

SNØRRI

I’m just a little uncomfortable with the heightening emotion, and —

ÞÓRÐUR

I’m really happy with my comb! It has amazing functions. Really great. Huge. And yes, next year I’ll buy the new one, or I’ll trade a few goats for it — I dunno yet. I’m gonna see how I feel.

EINARR

I’d like to ask that we agree to decouple any feedback from this negativity?

HÁVARÐUR

It’s just the quality is cheapened, over time. Don’t you see that? I mean, we’ve accepted that cellphone conversations just sound like crap, but you would have to have grown up with landlines to know that!

ÞÓRÐUR

I can *SnapChat*. I can *FaceTime*. I use Slack for effective asynchronous communication! Do you even know what Slack stands for? It's a 'Searchable Log of All Communication and Knowledge.'

SNØRRI

Land line. Land line? *Land line*.

EINARR

I'm able to be most creative, when I feel safe — When the trust channels are open.

DUSTIN

The popular messaging service is designed to replace traditional office email and increase productivity, but it can also be fun to the point of distraction.

HÁVARÐUR

But we *also* use Google docs, and just real-time discussion. I mean, it can't contain all human knowledge, because we regularly ask questions like "How do I program a conference call?" and "Who left their Tupperware in the breakroom microwave?" — It can't know everything! — Only Odin can do that!

ÞÓRÐUR

We've been over this! The various of deities, beings, and heroes derived from numerous sources from both before and after the pagan period, are gone. We're *Christians* now.

HÁVARÐUR

Well, tell that to Snørri, because he's still carving dragons on everything.

Everyone looks at Snørri, who shows off his dragon head.

ÞÓRÐUR

Your hammer-wielding, humanity-protecting thunder-god Thor, is gone. The one-eyed, raven-flanked Odin, who craftily pursued knowledge throughout the worlds — Who gave us words and letters — Yeah, he's gone. And the beautiful sorceress, the feathered cloaked goddess Freyja — who rides to battle to choose among the slain — she's dead to us, too.

HÁVARÐUR

But my man and I prayed to the skiing goddess Skade, just last week! Bid her good fortune in our bow hunting, and she provided. We feasted on two gerbils that day!

ÞÓRÐUR

Fine! Whatever! Offer your sacrifices to Njord, who may calm both sea and fire and grant wealth and land, or to Freyr, whose weather and farming associations bring peace and

pleasure to humanity — Some people are so slow to adapt. I can't even get you to return a text!

HÁVARÐUR

One of my gods keeps apples that grant eternal youthfulness! Another has nine moms, and can hear grass grow! And my phone is for emergencies only – or if I need to Yelp good tacos!

ÞÓRÐUR

Frost giants! Fire giants! Mountain giants!

FINNBOGA

Every year with you two, it's the same thing!

DUSTIN

It's really hard to let go of the idea that the earth was formed from a primeval being who was born from venom that dripped from the ice waves at the yawning void at the beginning of the world.

EINARR| ÞÓRÐUR|SNØRRI

Committee members are called together for meetings by the Chair, acting either on a decision made by the committee or on the Chair's authority. | Elevating my visibility at work is essential if I want my career to evolve and grow. I work hard and have great ideas to contribute—I should be making an impact and getting the recognition I deserve. | *(Making his wooden dragon head "talk" like a puppet — Using his free hand to "fight" the dragon.)* Fáfnir the dragon, initially the son of King Hreidmar of the dwarves, is said to have been cursed at some point by a magical ring crafted by a magician dwarf which turned him into a dragon. Ahhhhhhhhhh! Fight, fight, fight!

FINNBOGA

Oh my god, when is lunch?

EINARR

Where a committee decides to combine its meeting with another committee's — each committee is convened separately by its Chair!

DUSTIN

When the world was new, in a power-filled emptiness, the first being birthed a male and female from the pits of his arms, and his legs together begat a six-headed being. The gods made the earth from his flesh, from his blood the ocean, from his bones the hills, from his hair the trees, from his brains the clouds, from his skull the heavens, and from his eyebrows the middle realm in which mankind lives.

SNØRRI

Eyebrows.

EINARR

Um, so, it looks like we've got the tech worked out — we're ready to begin.

HÁVARÐUR

How can you justify the epistemological crisis our society seems to be in?

ÞÓRÐUR

Have you seen the abyss in the far north?

HÁVARÐUR

What does that have to do with anything?

ÞÓRÐUR

Now is to be told what lies opposite Greenland, out from the bay.

HÁVARÐUR

Who cares? – You've never seen it, anyway!

DUSTIN

There are so strong frosts that it is not habitable, so far as one knows.

ÞÓRÐUR | DUSTIN | FINNBOGA

South from thence is Helluland, which is called Skrellingsland; from thence it is not far to Vinland the Good, which some think goes out from Africa; between Vinland and Greenland is Ginnungagap, which flows from the sea called Mare oceanum, and surrounds the whole earth | The Yawning Void ... which faced toward the northern quarter, became filled with heaviness, and masses of ice and rime, and from within, drizzling rain and gusts; but the southern part of the Yawning Void was lighted by those sparks and glowing masses which flew out of Múspellheim | That same pattern is repeated with every meeting that this chair moderates! It would be easy to blame the inefficiency purely on his incompetence — could be he's just bad at conducting a meeting. But what puzzles me is that several (*referring to audience members*), but not all, of our colleagues tolerate — or even embrace — this practice! They seem to enjoy the collegiality and the relaxed social nature of the meetings. It is as if they had no other work to do, or no other opportunities to socialize with their colleagues —

DUSTIN

So-called planned obsolescence is the working of the competitive and technological forces in a free society—forces that lead to ever-improving goods and services!

HÁVARÐUR

It's the deliberate introduction of a flaw, a weakness, a scheduled stop, a technical limitation, incompatibility or other obstacles for repair —

EINARR

I'm sorry, the Wi-Fi up here is so dodgy, but I think we've got it ironed out.

ÞÓRÐUR

(Looking at his phone.) I only have, like, one bar.

EINARR

I'm sorry, our router is being run on donkey power, and it's just not that reliable.

HÁVARÐUR

At least a donkey is durable. It's not like a piece of shit CD Player that breaks after a month.

EINARR

Technology, amirite?

HÁVARÐUR

Products that are designed to stop working within two or three years of their purchase was a waste of energy and resources and generated pollution!

EINARR

But let's all focus on why we're here —

An airplay display of EINARR's laptop desktop, open to an Iron Age porn site, flashes on the projector screen. {The Vikings react.}

EINARR

Fiske! That is so embarrassing!

EINARR's invisible slave tries to get the screen to go away. We see his cursor moving around. He clicks away the porn site, but behind it is a video of an Iron Age woman, seductively removing her socks.

FINNBOGA

I hope you have a good firewall.

ÞÓRÐUR

I got infected with malware last year, had to take the whole machine in.

SNØRRI

Tell me when she's gone!

EINARR

Great, well, we've prepared something sort of special, it's kind of new, interactive. So, if you are male, or identify as male, and if you're a property owner, like, for example, I own Bergunn here, if you have a wife that you keep, or a girlfriend, you know, you're invited to get out your phones, terrific. And um, Fiske is gonna put the hashtag up.

The hashtag "All-Thing" appears on the projected screen.

EINARR (CON'T)

So, if you're on Twitter, you know, feel free, any of you, to provide input. We just want to emphasize that end-to-end transparency.

The KING/PRIESTS make a display of raising their phones. Finnboga tweets to the hashtag, and a tweeted message, with a profile picture etcetera, that appears in real time in a new window on the screen behind them:

Finnboga the Learned

@realFinnboga

... The concept of global warming was created by the Chinese in order to make U.S. manufacturing non-competitive. #All-Thing

EINARR

Okay, thanks, so Finnboga's gotten us off to a good start, but I'd just like to circle back to the agenda.

Another tweet appears.

Hávarður of Ísafjörður

@ Hávarður

@Einarrthebrave @Finnboga: We should be focused on magnificently clean and healthy air and not distracted by the expensive hoax that is global warming. #All-Thing

EINARR

Great! Okay — So, if we could maybe have the first slide?

Fiske puts a slide up that bounces, flips. It reads:

Shared Leadership: Goals and Outcomes

Another tweet:

Glúmr Eyjólfsson

@ Glúmr7537

@ Hávarður @Einarrthebrave @Finnboga: Wow, its snowing in Israel and on the pyramids of Egypt. Are we still wasting billions on the global warming con? MAKE U.S. COMPETITIVE! #All-Thing #CornHole

EINARR

I just want to point out that ‘Its’ is possessive, whereas It’s, with an apostrophe, is a contraction of “It is.” But let’s get back on track.

Another tweet:

Þórður Þórðarson

@ÞórðurBloodaxe:

Just out – the POLAR ICE CAPS are at an all time high, the POLAR BEAR population has never been stronger. Where the hell is global warming? #All-Thing

EINARR

Okay, so, is there anyone else in the crowd that would like to speak?

Another tweet.

Audience McAudience Face

@TherealAudience

@ThisAll-ThingSucks



#All-Thing #CornHole #UnlikelyAnimalFriends

EINARR

That’s really not helpful.

FINNBOGA

I just got back from Africa. I heard a lady say there are people dying. Let me tell you where people are dying, is in Africa, because of the lack of energy they have there.

HÁVARÐUR

Not this again?

FINNBOGA

It's gonna take fossil fuels to push power out into those villages in Africa, where a young girl told me to my face, 'One of the reasons that electricity is so important to me is not going to have to try to read by the light of the fire, but also —

HÁVARÐUR

Here we go —

FINNBOGA

But also, from the standpoint of sexual assault. When the lights are on, when you have light that shines —

He turns on the flashlight on his phone, all are impressed.

FINNBOGA (CON'T)

The righteousness, if you will, on those types of acts.

EINARR

Maybe it's time for the breakout session? So, if everyone could pair up. Try to work with someone you don't see much of from day to day.

{The KING/PRIESTS disperse throughout the audience, adlibbing their interactions. They partner with men.}

EINARR

Great — Everyone have a partner? Okay, now, if you don't have a partner, or if you don't have testicles, then just sit quietly. So, next, please choose who's going to go first.

During the following speech, EINARR stifles a sneeze, {and the KING/PRIESTS offer him verbal advice for his probable seasonal allergies.}

EINARR

Real leadership is a choice, not a rank. The problem is trust, and cooperation. I can't say to you, "Trust me," and you automatically do. I can't say, "Go cooperate," and you magically will. No, trust and cooperation are feelings, not actions. But if we create the right environment, then trust and cooperation will flow naturally as a reaction. Now, Partner one, please take a full minute and describe a time when you felt emotionally unsafe.

An online stopwatch appears on the projected screen, winding down 60 seconds.

{The King/Priests launch into stories of their own invention, which can change at every performance, except for Snørri, who consistently engaged an audience member in a wordless game of Rock, Paper, Scissors.}

EINARR chimes a Tibetan singing bowl.

{One of the King/Priests is heard openly sobbing. This is a different actor at each performance, whose improvised monologue works its way to total emotional dissolve.}

EINARR

Really good sharing, guys. Doesn't that feel freeing?

A neighbor to the weeping King/Priest goes to him, rubbing his back. {This is different at each performance, whoever's nearest the dissolving KING/PRIEST.}

KING/PRIEST

We just have to hold space for this — to let ourselves be real.

EINARR

Super work, *amigos*. Now, if you want, you can exchange contact information with your new friend here at the All-Thing, you know, maybe send each other a little emoji, like that one with the hand, painting the nails, or like, a little bottle of wine — To remind each other, it's okay to take time for self-care!

KING/PRIEST

I mean, I can't look after anyone else's needs if I don't look after my own.

EINARR

That's right — It's the oxygen mask. When it drops down, you have to put it over your own face first!

{Using their phones, the KING/PRIESTS get their audience members to exchange contact info, as ÞÓRDUR unobtrusively organizes a group selfie with his section.}

EINARR speaks over them, blowing his nose.

EINARR

My nose! My hay fever! You know — I can't stand it. But I'd just like to offer a verbal reminder of our norms and agreements, you know, about social media. So, it's fine to follow up with texts and maybe a cute gif of a robot dancing or a cat with laser beams coming out of its eyes — I mean, TGIF! — But, um, Snørri, hey, I don't want to single you out, but —

Everyone focuses on one of the SNØRRI, who has his phone down his pants.

EINARR (CON'T)

A gentle reminder that sending pictures of your junk is just not cool.

The would-be offender pulls his phone out of his pants.

Another Tweet is projected:

@Þórður

[Attached real-time photo from this performance of the play, with this audience] with the tagline #All-Thing #Feelings #TrustFalls #ManBox

EINARR

Okay, well, I want to recognize you for sharing, but —

As Þórður turns back to his new audience friends, he plunks down with one and merrily begins choosing snapchat filters, like ears and snouts, to add to the photo, showing the audience member his choices. Snørri comes forward, and approaches the projected tweet, dumbfounded to see the image of the people in the audience and those same people in the audience.

DUSTIN

I think a lot about electric cars. [Turns to another KING/PRIEST] Do you think about electric cars?

EINARR

So, if we could please regroup —

He sees a KING/PRIEST flirting with an audience member.

EINARR CON'T

And let's leave the women alone for now.

DUSTIN

My mentality is that of a samurai. I would rather commit seppuku than fail.

EINARR

Dustin, we have a place later on the agenda for *new business*.

DUSTIN

We're gonna go down and chase it up!

The KING/PRIESTS improvise little gestures to their new audience friends, for “call me”, fist-bumping, etc. and then reassemble onstage, {all except FINNBOGA, who settles in for a nap on the floor at the back of the house.}

GLÚMR

He goes into his brain, and then he’s in another world!

ÞÓRÐUR

Dustin, are you in your noggin again?

DUSTIN

(Increasingly overwhelmed.) The lit's light-- Uh, the light's lit.

HÁVARÐUR

Designing a new rocket or something?

DUSTIN

If there was a way that I could not eat, so I could work more, I would not eat.

{All the KING/PRIESTS are horrified.}

DUSTIN (CON'T)

I wish there was a way to get nutrients without sitting down for a meal!

EINARR

I just don’t think we’re ready for a big ‘rebranding’ right now.

HÁVARÐUR

Jesus, Dustin. We’re all still getting used to *skis*.

{The KING/PRIESTS share their agreement.}

ÞÓRÐUR

I ski for recreation and transportation purposes.

HÁVARÐUR

I once tried snowshoeing, and it was just too hard.

DUSTIN

If you can walk, you can snowshoe.

HÁVARÐUR

Nope!

DUSTIN

No other object can be as simple and efficient at the same time!

EINARR

No one is arguing with you, Dustin. No need to get defensive.

ÞÓRÐUR

I do appreciate the ability to hunt, trap, move around —

GLÚMR

And communicate, discover — survive.

ÞÓRÐUR

Why, with a good set of snowshoes, you could walk to Alaska.

SNØRRI

What is Alaska?

ÞÓRÐUR

The most primitive snowshoes have allowed the migration of peoples towards the American Continent through the Bering Strait.

HÁVARÐUR

But, I just don't want to do that. I mean, have you rented a pair? You know, it sounds fun, right? Oh, I'll walk around in the snow! But it's just such a pain in the ass. Fuck. So, no, I'm not interested. We have our boats and our sails and our fucking brooches and our combs and our compasses — which utilize crystals to identify the position of the sun even after sunset or even on overcast days. Overcast days, Dustin!

EINARR

Um, we should regroup —

ÞÓRÐUR

We're active on four continents simultaneously, but we never give ourselves permission to celebrate our success.

FINNBOGA

He's right. We don't take time for retrospective —

DUSTIN

You're all going to die in a flaming hole.

EINARR

I really would appreciate it if we could de-escalate the anger. Maybe use some "I feel" statements?

SNØRRI

I feel horny!

HÁVARÐUR

This is who we are. And it's working so far — It's worked since the world was new. And we're gonna keep doing things the way we always have.

DUSTIN

Some people don't like change.

HÁVARÐUR

All in favor of a normative culture shift?

SNØRRI raises his hand.

DUSTIN

I actually think the odds of a Mars colony are pretty good. At this point, I am certain there's a way. I'm certain that it's possible.

EINARR

Well, I'd like to put a pin in that idea for now and revisit it, perhaps after we've heard from more voices. Just not Bergunn. (*Looks around the room.*) Or any of you here, you don't own property and, or people.

The KING/PRIESTS stroke their weapons, as they single out, and speak directly to individual men in the audience.

HÁVARÐUR

The feminist agenda is not about equal rights for women. It is about a socialist, anti-family political movement that encourages women to leave their husbands, kill their children, practice witchcraft, destroy capitalism, and become lesbians.

ÞÓRÐUR

Feminism was established to allow unattractive women easier access to the mainstream.

FINNBOGA

I listen to feminists and all these radical gals -- most of them are failures. They've blown it. Some of them have been married, but they married some Casper Milquetoast who asked permission to go to the bathroom. These women just need a man in the house. That's all they need. Most of the feminists need a man to tell them what time of day it is and to lead them home.

DUSTIN

My family thinks the Russians will assassinate me.

EINARR

So, we've set up a live chat — Fiske, if you could please get that rolling?

SNØRRI

I want to buy Hávarður's daughter, Magnhild!

HÁVARÐUR

My daughter is not for sale!

SNØRRI

But I wish to control her sexual activity and/or reproduction, as a means of forming socioeconomic alliances between us.

ÞÓRÐUR

That's kind of sweet.

HÁVARÐUR

A fine bunch of water lilies you turned out to be.

ÞÓRÐUR

(Pointing at a female audience member.) Einarr, your thrall pokes fun. She should watch herself.

HÁVARÐUR| ÞÓRÐUR

Three degrees? That's nothing! That's like it's 70 degrees one day, and then the next it's 73, so you don't need a cardigan. | I believe in clean air. Immaculate air.... But I don't believe in climate change.

DUSTIN

(Addressing a female audience member.) Stupid girl, to stay within 3.6 degrees, global carbon pollution would have to begin coming down in the next decade!

The KING/PRIESTS all laugh.

HÁVARÐUR

What women refer to as micro aggressions, the rest of us sane adults call life.

ÞÓRÐUR

They think that every single thing in the world is, or should be, about them.

HÁVARÐUR

Having a vagina encourages breathless levels of narcissism, solipsism and just plain delusion.

SNØRRI

Vagina!

DUSTIN

Women have the same reasoning and coping abilities as toddlers. No thanks!

SNØRRI

Cunt! Tail! Socket! Trench, lap, clicket-gate, token, oven, beard, mill, purse, pudding, dock, quiver, gulf, saddle, fort, pit, altar of Venus, low country, touch-hole, burrow, breach, placket, hey-nonny-no, Cecily Bumtrinket, chapel of ease, whim-wham, fishpond, dish, engine, chink, furrow, muff, stewpot, you-know-what, toy, mumble-peg, flapdoodle, carnal trap, twit-twot, aphrodisiacal tennis court, mousetrap, sluice, spunk-box, pleasure-boat, man trap, cock lane, vacuum, snatch, grummet, mangle, cat's meat, mossy cave, fud, fong, kid-shitter, vajiggle-jaggle, sushi taco.

The KING/PRIESTS let out great cheers.

FINNBOGA

Women are ruled by their emotions, are incapable of recovering from trauma and are just generally hysterical nitwits unprepared to confront reality.

EINARR

So, we're really getting off topic.

SNØRRI

I know your daughter Magnhild is the ideal woman —

Magnhild's FaceBook profile appears on the screen.

HÁVARÐUR

A wedding? God — All that planning.

FINNBOGA

And by *boat*?

ÞÓRÐUR

Back to the old country, announce the engagement, try to do the calendaring —

DUSTIN

Maybe use something like Google Calendar, or maybe Evite?

ÞÓRÐUR

Sure, for the more casual events, like the after-wedding brunch, but people still expect a printed invitation —

HÁVARÐUR | ÞÓRÐUR | SNØRRI | DUSTIN

I don't understand why anyone wants to do a whole brunch after the wedding? Can you recall when this became the expectation? | Then sail back here, walk three hundred miles

through the snow to even let people know about the rehearsal dinner, and — | Then there's the catering, the flowers, the centerpieces, you have to think about the reception space, maybe get creative with string lights — | And you have to choose the venue, cake tastings, it's just a lot to coordinate.

ÞÓRÐUR

I read that for rustic camp weddings, s'mores stations are on point this year.

SNØRRI

And everybody has those chalkboard signs — I love those!

DUSTIN

I went to a wedding last summer that had life-size Jenga *and* Connect Four.

HÁVARÐUR

I'm not paying for lounge seating — That whole hay bales with the camp blanket? I'd have to bring straw here from fucking Norway, because the only thing green that grows in this fucking fucked up place is fucking lichen. So — fucking forget it. People can sit on the rocks.

SNØRRI

Natural wood table settings? Enamelware?

DUSTIN

Oh — Maybe the bride can arrive in a canoe?

SNØRRI

Ribbons can add a bit of whimsy — And garlands are having a major moment.

ÞÓRÐUR

Not to put a pin in the balloon, but everyone has to get the day off, or call in sick — Not us Jarls, but the blacksmiths, jewelers, bead-makers, antler-workers — and that presents problems.

The KING/PRIESTS shake their heads in dismay.

SNØRRI

Maybe the wedding could be over a three-day weekend?

ÞÓRÐUR

That is nice, for people coming in from out of town.

EINARR

I'd just like to point out that we should agree to extend this portion of the meeting?

HÁVARÐUR

And as Father of the Bride, I'd like to see anybody make me wash, if I don't wanna!

SNØRRI

Hávarður. Um... dad. While I don't love your daughter, I fully expect she will be chaste before marriage — and faithful within.

HÁVARÐUR

Hah! Women! A fine kettle of fish.

EINARR

This discussion might bump some other items to the parking lot —

SNØRRI

(Speaking aloud, as he sends a tweet.) I want to give a heads up to the women! You have the right to cook and clean. Today is Sunday and the playoffs *our* on! I suggest you stop your bitching during this time.

His tweet arrives on the projector screen:

I want my first daughter to be a girl



ÞÓRÐUR

(Tweeting.) Get rid of some of these crazy regulations that Obamacare puts in... such as a 62-year-old male having to have pregnancy insurance!

His tweet arrives on the projector screen:

My sister is pregnant   I can't

wait to see if ima be a auntie or

uncle 

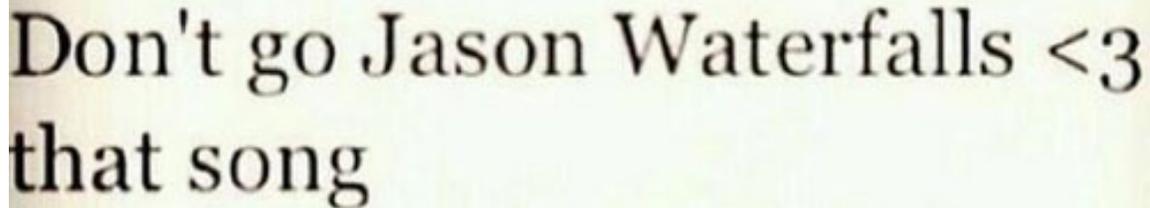
EINARR

OK, we're getting off course, as this discussion is not directly related to our meeting objectives. In the interest of everyone's time, we need to move forward.

DUSTIN

(Tweeting.) Well, of course women must earn less than men because they are weaker, they are smaller, they are less intelligent, they must earn less, that's all.

His tweet arrives on the projector screen:



Don't go Jason Waterfalls <3
that song

EINARR

Okay, well done, and that's a great segue to our next agenda item.

HÁVARÐUR

(Tweeting.) I understand that they feel like that is their body. I feel like it is a separate — what I call them is, is you're a "host." And you know when you enter into a relationship you're going to be that host and so, you know, if you pre-know that then take all precautions and don't get pregnant. So that's where I'm at. I'm like, hey, your body is your body and be responsible with it. But after you're irresponsible then don't claim, well, I can just go and do this with another body, when you're the host and you invited that in.

His tweet arrives on the projector screen:



what's the name of the boat in
the titanic?

EINARR

Can we take a minute to get clear on the purpose and topics for the meeting to make sure we accomplish what we need?

HÁVARÐUR

If businesses are forced to pay women the same as male earnings, that means they will have to reduce the pay for the men they employ, simple economics. If that happens, then men will have an even more difficult time earning enough to support their families, which will mean more Mothers will be forced to leave the home — where they may prefer to be — to join the workforce to make up the difference. And as even more women thus enter the workforce that creates more competition for jobs — even men's jobs — and puts further downward pressure on the pay for all jobs, meaning more and more Mothers will be forced into the workforce. And that is bad for families and thus for all of society.

SNØRRI

(Singing.) I'd like to dance and tap my feet / But they won't keep in rhythm. / You see, I washed 'em both today / And I can't do nothin' with 'em!

HÁVARÐUR

Ha! Mush. Pretty soon she'll be tying your beard up in pink ribbons and spraying you down with that stuff called, uh, perfoom.

ÞÓRÐUR

She's a marketable commodity! — And her father sets her bride-price.

HÁVARÐUR

She has the value of 489 yards of homespun cloth!

SNØRRI

She's not worth more than eight ounces of silver!

ÞÓRÐUR

Maybe six.

HÁVARÐUR

In a pig's eye!

DUSTIN

(To Hávarður.) Don't you see? With this transaction, you'll be assured of powerful support at the Thing.

SNØRRI

What say you? *(He offers Hávarður his hand.)* Shall this beauty serve to guarantee the reconciliation between our feuding families?

EINARR

(To a female audience member.) You're not allowed to speak!

HÁVARÐUR

She's wicked!

ÞÓRÐUR

She's bad!

SNØRRI

She's mighty mean!

HÁVARÐUR

She's an old witch! — And I'm warnin' ya, if the gods find her here, they'll swoop down and wreak vengeance upon us!

SNØRRI

Oh, we'll be quite comfortable down here, in, uh, in, uh? —

KING/PRIESTS

Silence!

HÁVARÐUR

She's full of black magic!

ÞÓRÐUR

She can even make herself invisible.

SNØRRI

Is there any decaf? I just can't handle caffeine this late in the day —

HÁVARÐUR

She don't belong here — no-how!

ÞÓRÐUR

(*To SNØRRI*) Have you thought this through? I mean, there's never much time for courtship, where you could evaluate your comparability.

DUSTIN

Boy, you don't know what it's like. The missus and me never get a minute together anymore.

ÞÓRÐUR

It's all about the kids, and their extracurricular activities.

HÁVARÐUR

And that list of household chores — I mean, I'd love to have just one Saturday where I didn't have to go to run errands.

DUSTIN

It's sink or swim within the bounds of wedlock, for you, Snørri.

HÁVARÐUR

Can we get the slave to smile for us today?

DUSTIN

Will the woman's protest be over in time to cook dinner?

EINARR

I want to be sure we use our time wisely, so I will capture this as an open item and ensure we have enough time allocated in our next meeting to resolve. So, let's move on.

SNØRRI

Let's work on hanging in together in a collaborative manner, guys.

EINARR

Thank you, Snørri, for that support.

HÁVARÐUR

The truth is, even in our modern-day, there is a place for gender roles. I simply wouldn't feel comfortable hiring a full-time male babysitter or driving down the street, seeing a group of women carrying heavy steel pillars to a work site.

{Much affirmation from the KING/PRIESTS.}

EINARR

Right, totally. This might be a good time to recite the laws.

ÞÓRÐUR|EINARR

I feel like we should focus on the Bride Price — And this thrall here has raised an issue for me, too, that feels important, which is recognizing that if a slave in your household is a witch, how do you fill out the necessary paperwork in order to burn her to death?| *(Quietly soothing himself, rubbing his ear repetitively, he speaks his mantra.)* Listen, validate, redirect. Listen, validate, redirect. Listen, validate, redirect.

HÁVARÐUR

(At a female audience member.) She has the devil's marks! Look at her moles!

ÞÓRÐUR

By these spots, we may see the grand delusions and impostures of Satan by which he works upon men and women in these Latter times of the world —

DUSTIN

What sins so heinous! What crimes so grievous —

ÞÓRÐUR

Whoa, time out. *(He gestures a 'T'.)* If I could just hit pause? know, I'm sorry, I feel like a broken record, but this comes up again and again. Every *Thing*, we're like, "How do we dispose of unwanted witches?" and every time, I have to go to the index, and look it up, and —

DUSTIN

I think that's covered in the Policies and Procedures Manual.

SNØRRI

What's a broken record?

HÁVARÐUR

It's a simile.

DUSTIN

Referring to a person's constant and annoying repetition of a particular statement or opinion.

ÞÓRÐUR | HÁVARÐUR | DUSTIN

He's not going to understand a figure of speech involving the comparison of one thing with another thing of a different kind | Snørri, it's used to make a description more emphatic or vivid, like "*as brave as a lion, crazy like a fox.*" | I always confuse simile and metaphor, but who doesn't?

SNØRRI

No, like, what's a record?

ÞÓRÐUR | HÁVARÐUR | DUSTIN

Oh my god, Snørri, they were the best. It's an LP — that stands for 'long-playing.' Doesn't it? | You know, a record you played them on a turntable. The sound was *great*. | A common configuration was to have the album led off by the second and third singles, followed by a ballad. The *first* single would lead off side two.

HÁVARÐUR

And the quality — There's just no comparison to digital.

All the KING/PRIESTS agree.

HÁVARÐUR (CON'T)

I saved up from my paper route for, like, a year to buy my first record. Beach Boys — Surfer Girl. That Brian Wilson was just not recognized for his artistry in his time — some say he was forced into a commercialism that crushed his creative soul.

ÞÓRÐUR

Does anyone remember which one of us is the Acting Witchfinder General?

DUSTIN

I think there's a reference to clarifying the roles around 'Witchfinder General' in the minutes from the last meeting.

ÞÓRÐUR

Okay, ladies, as you know, we have laws against witches and conivration.

DUSTIN

Einarr, I know we had slated this for later in the meeting, but it feels like an organic time to begin discussing some notes and observations for the discovery of witches.

EINARR

Okay, fine. You and Hávarður were going to do a share out?

DUSTIN

After our last Thing, we sent around a Google survey the group — To gauge priorities. Could you go to the shared Google drive?

FISKE fiddles around with opening the document, making it full screen, zooming in, etc., as the Vikings make small talk. The document heading reads: “Sustainability: Identifying and Prosecuting Witches,” with an attached SWOT analysis template:



DUSTIN| HÁVARÐUR

Being very useful for the times, wherein the devil reigns and prevails over the foul creatures, in drawing them to the crying sin of witchcraft, they will be burned and their children, burned, lest they confess. | Be it enacted by the King our Sovereign Lord; the Lords Spiritual and Temporal and the Commons in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same.

DUSTIN

(*To the audience.*) So, we’re hoping for some input from the group, if you could all contribute ideas, we’d like to build out a model for the future of Witch Finding.

HÁVARÐUR

What your goals are, what you’re going to do to meet those goals, what’s in your way? And —

DUSTIN

And we want to know what you’re going to do to take care of yourself.

HÁVARÐUR

It’s just important to acknowledge that “Me time.”

DUSTIN

(*To female audience member.*) You might want to keep a journal or something —

SNØRRI

Maybe a ‘gratitude jar’ — I have a mason jar, and each day I try to write down something I appreciate, and put it in there.

DUSTIN

That might be something for you to try, while you’re rotting in prison: Record your own sins and God’s mercies.

SNØRRI

I just love mason jars. They are so practical — And just so cute. Have you tried making one of those layered salads in one? I saw that on Instagram.

ÞÓRÐUR

Um, we’re kind of in the weeds, so I’m going to circle back to my initial question. Say you need the details on the burning of a witch — or a marriage contract, or whatever. Do you call the help desk? Because the online guide is super buggy — It’s just a twitchy motherfucker. I don’t know what else to say. What is this? 1995? Is the internet brand new? That navigation is totally counterintuitive.

DUSTIN | HÁVARÐUR | SNØRRI

We worked *really hard* to develop out an interface that would feel good and would meet your needs. | I think it’s just hard for you, because you’re used to using a Mac, and then switching over to the windows operating system is — | I like it — I think it has a good search engine. Just don’t bother with the Table of Contents or the index, you know, go right to “Women’s Rights” and you should find what you need. | {Talks about salad.}

SNØRRI

And *seven-layer* salad includes a colorful combination of *seven layers* of ingredients: iceberg lettuce, tomatoes, cucumbers, onions, sweet peas, hard boiled eggs, sharp cheddar cheese, and bacon pieces.

EINARR

Alright! That’s it! Let’s try to keep this car *on the road*.

DUSTIN

Einarr is right! The recitation of The Laws is the only way to come to an account of anything! Can we just get there? Fuck!

EINARR

And then after that, there’s soup.

KING/PRIESTS

Ahh, soup! Hooray!

EINARR

Okay, you women really need to work on the skill of active listening. —

ÞÓRÐUR

She's mad!

HÁVARÐUR

She's jealous of you!

DUSTIN

She'll stop at nothing!

EINARR

Okay, guys, let's throw this into fifth gear and just try to get through the recitation of the laws before we break for lunch?

{The KING/PRIESTS discuss the merits of various kinds of soup.} Snørri raises his hand.

EINARR (CON'T)

Yes, Snørri? What is it?

SNØRRI

We're all just wondering if there's one kind of soup, or if it's more of a soup 'bar' — With those little crackers? You know, the little ones? What are those called?

EINARR

I don't know! Fiske, is it a soup bar? What? Okay. Um, we have chicken noodle — and a chili — Now that one has beef, and for those of you who are vegan, there's a carrot ginger.

HÁVARÐUR

Vikings can't be vegan!

ÞÓRÐUR | SNØRRI | HÁVARÐUR | DUSTIN

You want us to reject the commodity status of animals? Fuck you! | I've been on an elimination diet for a while now — And it's really improving my gut flora. | What am I, some hermit? One day you force me to stop eating meat, dairy and eggs — and the next day, you'll tell me to be celibate! | Maybe the real issue is the name — Instead of "Vegan" I propose we say, "*neo-vegetarian*."

EINARR

I think we just wanted to provide options.

SNØRRI

Are any of the soups gluten free?

EINARR

Now, *where* is Finnboga the Learned?

The KING/PRIESTS look out into the audience.

EINARR

Goddamn it!

{The KING/PRIESTS ask the audience to wake FINNBOGA, and he joins them.}

The KING/PRIESTS assemble in a line, SNØRRI lagging behind. They raise their hands to their hearts.

KING/PRIESTS

(Speaking deliberately in unison.) Whereas, the devil resides at the edge of the world, in an icy abyss, where unclean spirits behold and embrace him as they wander through the wilderness, begetting a savage, stunted, foul and puny race, scarcely human, and having no language save one which bears but slight resemblance to human speech, we rescue the immortal soul of the witch, by freeing her innocence with fire, lest she join the devil in a lake of frozen blood and guilt for all eternity.

EINARR

Terrific work, you guys. Coming together and praying as a unit is one of the biggest ways we can build encouragement and sustain the daily fight that we all face.

He tweets:

"Peace I leave with you;my peace I give you.Not as the world gives do I give to you.Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid."John 14:27

KING/PRIESTS

And for the better restraining the said offences, and more severe punishing the same, be it further Enacted by the Authority aforesaid; That if any person of persons, after the said Feast the Archangel next coming, shall use, practice, or exercise any invocation or conjuration of an evil and wicked spirit: or shall consult, covenant with, entertain, employ, feed, or reward any evil and wicked spirit, to or for any intent or purpose; or take up any dead man, woman, or child, out of his, her, or their grave, or any other place where the dead body rest; or the skin, bone, or any other part of any dead person, to be employed, or used in any manner of sorcery, charm, enchantment, whereby any person shall be Killed, Destroyed, Wasted, Consumed, Pined, or Lamed, in His or Her body, or

any part thereof; that then every such Offender, or Offenders, their aiders, abettors, and Councilors, being of any of the said offences duly and lawfully Convicted and Attainted, shall suffer pains of death as a Felon or Felons, and shall lose the privilege and benefit of Clergy and Sanctuary. And whereas the consent of the woman is definitely not required for marriage, she is vested, like a goat or a pig or a sheep, to her father, or guardian responsible, for her interests during wedding negotiations —

SNØRRI

— Talks.

HÁVARÐUR

I'm pretty sure we used the word 'negotiations'.

DUSTIN

I thought it was 'deliberations'?

ÞÓRÐUR

I like mediation — Or, maybe 'dialogue'? — That has a more inclusive vibe.

EINARR

Look, let's take a step back.

SNØRRI takes a big step backwards.

HÁVARÐUR

A negotiation is an action or process of transferring ownership. That's the word we will use!

DUSTIN

The word derives from the Latin *negotatio* —

SNØRRI

What's Latin?

EINARR

(At a female audience member.) I've warned you once already.

SNØRRI

She speaks of our genius —

EINARR

I'd like to schedule a meeting, before we burn you alive, where we can unpack some of these issues.

ÞÓRÐUR

See, how she looks first to her father, then her brother if the father is deceased, or other male relative in the absence of both father and brother —

FINNBOGA

It's really so much pressure.

ÞÓRÐUR

When do I get to let down?

SNØRRI

I'd like to make a proposed addendum?

EINARR

We were about to move into subgroups —

SNØRRI

It's something that's come up recently in a subcommittee of my local Thing: So, if a woman's brothers sought maliciously to keep her from marrying, so as to retain her labor on their farms, could that woman marry the third suitor that her brothers turned down?

EINARR

All in favor of adopting Snørri's —

ÞÓRÐUR

I told you about that in the Circle of Safety, Snørri!

EINARR

Oh, I feel strange.

ÞÓRÐUR

And further, to the intent that all manner of practice, use or exercise of Witchcraft, Enchantment, Charmed, or Sorcery, should be from henceforth utterly avoided, abolished, and taken away: Be it Enacted by the Authority of this present Parliament, that if any person or persons, shall from and after the said Feast of St. Michael the Archangel next coming, take upon him or them, by Witchcraft, Enchantment, Charmed, or Sorcery, to tell or declare in what place any Treasure of Gold or Silver should or might be found or had in the earth, or other secret places; or where goods, or things lost, or stolen, should be found or become, or to the intent to provoke any person to unlawful love, or whereby any Cattle, or Goods of any person shall be destroyed, wasted, or impaired; or to hurt or destroy any person in his or her body, although the same be not effected and done, that then all and every such person or persons so offending, and being thereof lawfully convicted, shall for the said offence suffer imprisonment by the space of one whole year, without bailed or mainprise — an undertaking given to a magistrate or court that even without having an accused in custody one will be liable for the appearance of the accused on a fixed day to defend any and all

charges to be brought against him — and once in every quarter of the said year, shall in some Market-Town, upon the Market day, or at any such time as any faire shall be kept there, stand openly upon the Pillory by the space of six hours, and there shall openly confess his or her error and offence.

SNØRRI

(Singing.) I chased a polecat up a tree / Way out upon a limb / And when he got the best of me / I got the worst of him.

Darkness.

END OF PLAY.