

(**EVELYN** and **NICK** enter. They put up a flipboard and arrange the acting area. **EVELYN** flips back the top sheet to reveal *MACBETH* written on the next sheet. **CELIA** enters)

CELIA Sorry, I'm late. Why does that say the Scottish Play?

EVELYN It's what we're doing.

CELIA You said Twelfth Night.

EVELYN Touring for twelve nights.

CELIA It was a noisy party. Don't worry. I'll be line perfect, sort of. (*Notices the audience*) Are we having an open rehearsal?

EVELYN You can go now. But come back on the twenty-third when we do the performance.

NICK That's today.

EVELYN Oh. We'd better do a quick tech.

NICK We're waiting for Godot.

EVELYN I'll read in.

CELIA I said one rehearsal wasn't enough, even for me.

EVELYN It's a tight budget. (*A phone rings*) Phones off, please.

NICK It's your phone.

EVELYN Excuse me a mo. Yes? Potters Bar? Tomorrow? If the traffic's not too heavy? (*Rings off*) Godot can't make it today.

NICK What are we going to do?

EVELYN Don't panic. Hampshire's history will inspire us.

CELIA Stuff happened here?

EVELYN This is where England was born. I'll explain from the beginning.

(*Flip the next page, which reads 480 MAYBE*)

NICK Maybe?

EVELYN This is the dark ages. There's a maybe with everything. The Romans have left. The Britons hired Saxons to protect them. But the Saxons have revolted.

NICK Maybe.

EVELYN That one's not a maybe. The Britons are fighting back. Their leader may be Arthur.

CELIA That's good enough for me.
(Strikes pose as king)

NICK Why can't I be king?

EVELYN That's what Cerdic is thinking. He's Count of the Saxon Shore.

NICK Important.

EVELYN You're in command of Portchester.

ARTHUR Not exactly Premier League.

CERDIC At least I kept my Saxons loyal. If I were king we'd all be one people.

JUTE A vision I can make reality. My card.

CERDIC Jutes R Us.

JUTE We much more reliable than Saxons. I mean, who has heard of the Jutish revolt?

CERDIC British, Saxon, Jute living together in harmony. You've a buyer. Seize Winchester.

ARTHUR No way.

CERDIC I've got it, so there.

ARTHUR You're not keeping it.

CERDIC Says who?
(They start their chants)

ARTHUR When the Brits go marching in.

CERDIC Play up Cerdic, Cerdic play up.

CELIA Hang on. Who's playing my army?

EVELYN I'll double.

CERDIC /
ARTHUR Charge!

*(ARTHUR and CERDIC continue their chants while
EVELYN fights himself. He stops, exhausted)*

CERDIC Who won?

EVELYN I don't know. It's the dark ages.

ARTHUR If it's any clue, I rout the Saxons ten years later.

CERDIC Yeah, but I keep Winchester.

ARTHUR Says who?

CERDIC It's the capital of Wessex - my kingdom.

ARTHUR Maybe.

CERDIC King Alfred was my descendant and there's no maybe
about him fighting the Danes.

(Flip over to the next page which reads 878)

Danes, Danes
(The Quartermaster's Store)

ALL There are Danes, Danes,
bashing people's brains
In our land, in our land.
There are Danes, Danes
bashing people's brains
In Alfred's royal land.
My eyes are dim, I cannot see.
A Danish axe has toppled me.
A Danish axe has toppled me.

HOST Welcome to The Great Wessex Bake Off. Last year it
was battle to hold territory week. Now only two
bakers are left. Guthrum the Dane and Alfred of
Wessex. Their challenge is to make a kingdom. I'll
be looking for good order, not too soft, not too
hard, and a distinctive flavour.

GUTHRUM It's not something I've made before, but a Viking can hack anything.

ALFRED This is big. It's a challenge. But Cerdic did it.

HOST Welcome, Bakers. On your marks, get set, bake.

GUTHRUM I'm adapting a traditional Danish recipe based on rapid movement, longships and slaughter.

HOST Guthrum's Nordic style kingdom has a filling of pillage enthused with fire and blood.

GUTHRUM Plus my surprise ingredient.

HOST What's that?

GUTHRUM Surprise.

ALFRED I'm giving the family recipe a contemporary slant.

HOST Alfred's kingdom has a base of fortified towns and a navy. Not at all traditional. Some original flavourings too.

ALFRED An English translation of Boethius's The Consolation of Philosophy.

HOST Interesting.

GUTHRUM Nothing like a double bladed war axe for chopping. Cuts heads off neatly.

HOST Bakers, you have one hour left.

GUTHRUM Slip it into the saga to cook.

ALFRED I wish they'd invent kitchen timers. I can never get the baking right.

(They let the cakes bake)

GUTHRUM We won the Battle of Basing, so Hampshire's lucky for me.

ALFRED Holidays for churls could be the icing on the cake.

(They take out their cakes)

GUTHRUM Look's good. Just as I like it.

ALFRED Uhm. Maybe if I scrape off the burnt bits.

HOST Bakers, your time is up. Step away from your kingdoms. The Bakers will now face judgement. Alfred - a little bit singed, wouldn't you say? But it looks like a kingdom, tastes like a kingdom. I'm getting a flavour of justice and learning. The hint of culture makes it very moreish. Guthrum - a firm base of small farmers, but the top's a bit runny isn't it?

GUTHRUM It's the blood.

HOST There's certainly a strong bold flavour, but I feel the caraway struggles against the gore. Not your best I'd say. And the star kingdom maker is... Alfred. Guthrum, time for you to leave us.

ALFRED That was just the start of our fightback. My son, Edward and his sister Ethelfled pushed the Danes out of Mercia.

EDWARD And my son, Athelstan, made himself king of all England. My other son, Edmund -

CELIA That's enough. Ordinary people had lives as well you know. Like you get in Jane Austen. She's from Hampshire too.

EVELYN Anglo-Saxon history doesn't have a love interest.

CELIA It does now. The story of King Edgar and the Lady Elfrida as told by Jane Austen.

(Flip page to show 964)

EDGAR Tell me, Ethelwold, is it not a truth universally acknowledged that a single man in possession of a kingdom must be in want of a wife?

ETHELWOLD There are many at our assemblies with beauty to attract, Your Majesty.

EDGAR I find where there is beauty there is little elegance; where elegance, little amiability; where amiability a lack of judgement and wit.

ETHELWOLD I have heard Lady Elfrida is the perfect representation of all you seek.