

# **Niels Ebbesen**

By Kaj Munk

Translated from the Danish by Arence Lund, with Dave Carley

Translation

December 2006

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Translation © 2006 Arenalund and Dave Carley

Note: the following script is a straight translation of Kaj Munk's play *Niels Ebbesen*. Arenalund and Dave Carley have also done a translation/adaptation of *Niels Ebbesen*; it too is available for performance.

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### **Production history**

*Niels Ebbesen* was first performed in Stockholm, Sweden, by the Svenska Dramatikeres Studio, on September 14, 1943. The Danish premiere was at The Royal Theatre in Copenhagen, on September 1, 1945. It was directed by Holger Gabrielsen. The original cast was:

Grev Gerhard – Poul Reumert  
Vitinghofen – Mogens Wieth  
Niels Ebbesen – Svend Methling  
Gertrud Ebbesen – Anna Borg  
Ruth – Ingeborg Brams  
Ebbe – Henning Kronstam  
The sister – Birgit Conradsen  
Ove Haase – John Price  
Niels Bugge – Martin Hansen  
Father Lorents – Johannes Meyer  
Troels – Valdemar Moller  
Claus – Palle Huld  
Jesper – Preben Neergaard  
The Woman – Ellen Gottschalk

The Singer – Marius Jacobsen  
 The Bishop – George Leicht  
 General von Dobelin – Preben Leerdorff Rye  
 Steinisch – Aage Winther-Jorgensen  
 Kunz – Frode Jorgensen  
 Franz – Kjeld Noak-Jensen  
 The Jailer – Einar Milling  
 A Servant – Gabriel Morch

Music: Knudage Riisager  
 Musical Director: Johan Hye-Knudsen  
 Choreography: Borge Ralov  
 Set design: Poul Kanneworff, working with Axel Bruun  
 Costumes: Ove Christian Pedersen

*Niels Ebbesen* was banned by the Danish collaborationist government of Thorvald Stauning in 1942. However, by that time, over 15,000 copies had already been discreetly published by Nyt Nordisk Forlag. Out of this print run, some 3,000 copies were seized by the Nazis but the rest circulated throughout the country. Kaj Munk also traveled throughout Denmark performing *Niels Ebbesen*; he conducted his one-man show so often during 1942 that his wife Lise worried for his health.

Kaj Munk dedicated *Niels Ebbesen* to “Our Young Soldiers of April Ninth”, in recognition of the valour of the young Danish soldiers along the border with Germany who attempted to resist the invasion on April 9, 1940.

*Niels Ebbesen* was also produced in English for the British Broadcasting Corporation, and aired on the BBC Home Service on Sunday, June 13, 1943. The translator was Rodney Gallop. It was adapted for radio by E.E. Lloyd and produced by Barbara Burnham.

## **Kaj Munk**

Kaj Harald Leininger Munk (January 13, 1898 - January 4, 1944) was a Lutheran pastor known for his cultural engagement and his martyrdom during World War II. From 1924 to his assassination in 1944, Munk was the vicar of Vedersø in Western Jutland, an isolated corner of Denmark. Pastor Munk also wrote plays, conducting a hugely successful career in theatre from his Jutland outpost. Very early in the 1930s, Munk began to see a pattern of Hitler’s treatment of the Jews (and Mussolini’s war crimes in Ethiopia) and quickly turned into an outspoken and relentless opponent of fascism. His 1938 play *Han sidder ved Smeltediglen* (‘He Sits By The Melting Pot’) and 1942’s *Niels Ebbesen* were fierce attacks on both anti-Semitism and Nazism.

Munk also spoke out against the Occupation from his own pulpit and was arrested on the evening of January 4, 1944, when the Gestapo arrived at his isolated manse at around 8:00 p.m. Despite the entreaties and efforts of his family, Munk was whisked away by car

at around 8:30 p.m. His killers arrived in the Danish town of Aarhus at 2:00 a.m. on January 5; taking into account the driving time between Horbylunde (where his body was found) and Aarhus, Munk was assassinated sometime around midnight on January 4, 1944.

Kaj Munk left a widow, Lise (Jorgensen) and five children: Yrsa, Helge, Arne, Solvej and Mogens.

For further information on Kaj Munk, contact the Kaj Munk Forskningscentret at the University of Aalborg. E-mail is [kmf@hum.aau.dk](mailto:kmf@hum.aau.dk) Website: [www.kajmunk.hum.aau.dk](http://www.kajmunk.hum.aau.dk)

### **Niels Ebbesen, the historical figure** (From Wikipedia)

Niels Ebbesen, who died November 2, 1340, was a Danish squire and national hero, known for his killing of Count Gerhard III.

Little is known of Ebbesen's background. He seems to have belonged to the Jutland gentry. Like many other of his class he probably supported the Holstein occupants during the years of chaos but later on he turned against them and, when Count Gerhard campaigned in Jutland 1340, Ebbesen supported the Jutland guerrillas. On the night of April 1st he and some of his warriors infiltrated the Count's headquarter in Randers, entered his bedroom, killed him together with some of his men, and managed to escape. During the following rebellion Niels Ebbesen played a main role in the resistance but he was killed the same year during a fight against the Germans. A ballad dealing with the killing of Count Gerhard by Ebbesen is translated in Alexander Gray's *Historical Ballads of Denmark* (Edinburgh University Press, 1958).

Traditionally Niels Ebbesen has been regarded as one of the great heroes of Danish medieval history, the "tyrant slayer" whose action meant the beginning of the liberation of Denmark. Yet some also disapproved of his act, regarding it as simple murder. This has not prevented both contemporary ballads and later romantic Danish poetry (and Kaj Munk in his 1942 stage play) from praising him as a freedom fighter. A statue representing him was erected 1882 in Randers.

### **Arene Lund (Translator)**

Arene Lund was born in London in 1958 and educated in England and Denmark. After receiving her M.A. in Journalism, she helped start up the first private radio station in Denmark, Avisradio. She also started up Denmark's first private TV station, Kanal 2, and currently works at the national network, TV2, which she also assisted in establishing. In addition to producing documentaries, she works in TV2's news department, covering politics, the judicial system, cultural events and theology. In 1992 she produced a documentary on her grandfather, Kaj Munk, entitled *With the Sword of the Word*. Arene Lund is currently chairman of the board of the family company, Kaj Munks Forfatterretigheder Aps, which administers the literary rights to Munk's work.

**Dave Carley (Translator)**

Dave Carley is a Canadian playwright based in Toronto. His stage and radio plays have been performed and broadcast around the world. He has also worked for many years as a radio script editor at the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. Dave's website is [www.davecarley.com](http://www.davecarley.com)

**Acknowledgments:**

The translators would like to acknowledge the cherished assistance of Yrsa Lund. Financial assistance has been received from The Shaw Festival, Niagara-on-the-Lake, Jackie Maxwell artistic director; and the Toronto Arts Council. Information on the original production was contributed by Lilo Skaarup M.A., research librarian at the Royal Theatre in Copenhagen.

**Dedication:**

To Our Young Soldiers of April Ninth

## **Niels Ebbesen**

By Kaj Munk

Translated by Arenalund, with Dave Carley

### Characters (in order of appearance)

RUTH Ebbesen – daughter of Niels and Gertrude. Age 15.  
 Niels BUGGE – a young Danish nobleman. Age 20.  
 Niels EBBESEN – a Jutland landowner. Age 35  
 EBBE – his son. Age 8  
 GERTRUDE Ebbesen – Ebbesen’s wife, and sister of Ove Haase. Age 35.  
 Father LORENTS – the local priest. Age 40  
 Ove HAASE – brother of Gertrude. A collaborator with Count Gerhard. Age 40.  
 VITINGHOFEN – a Holstein nobleman. Age 20.  
 TROELS – an older peasant. Age 60.  
 Various FARMHANDS – male and female, mostly young.  
 The choir LEADER – a harvest-time singer; one of the farmhands (Act II)  
 SISTER – a younger child of Niels and Gertrude. Age 6.  
 SIDSEL – the nanny of Ebbe and Sister. Age 20.  
 MESSENGER – Act II. Age 20.  
 Count GERHARD - Holstein nobleman and warrior. Age 50.  
 Stretcher BEARERS.  
 STEINISCH – Vitinghofen’s guard  
 FRANZ – Vitinghofen’s guard  
 KUNZ – Vitinghofen’s guard  
 SERVANT – Gerhard’s servant  
 Gerhard’s PRIESTS  
 General VON DOBELIN  
 The BISHOP  
 The JAILER  
 CLAUS – one of Ebbesen’s supporters  
 JESPER – one of Ebbesen’s supporters  
 FARMWIFE

### Setting:

In and around Norreris, Niels Ebbesen’s estate in Denmark. Also, both inside and outside Count Gerhard’s chambers at Silkeborg.

### Time:

1340 – Summer to late Summer

## Niels Ebbesen

### Act One

*The meadow in front of Norreris. It is evening. RUTH is washing clothes in the brook. From the nearby meadow comes the sound of children's laughter and shouting, as they complete a "project" of draining water from a marshy area. RUTH sings as she works.*

RUTH: All the busy waves  
All the fresh winds  
Run off with my thoughts  
Carry them away and find him  
Form a circle around him  
Do not let him go  
Before you have brought him  
Back to me!

*(BUGGE appears, riding over the stream.)*

BUGGE: Hello Ruth. Goodbye Ruth.

RUTH: Niels Bugge! I thought you'd gone already!

BUGGE: Without saying goodbye to you?

RUTH: Father said you left this morning.

BUGGE: So I had. Your father disagreed with me.

RUTH: I doubt that. It isn't in Father's nature to disagree with people.

BUGGE: All right, so I disagreed with him.

RUTH: And now you've returned – to make it up with him?

BUGGE: I haven't come to make anything up with anybody. Niels Ebbesen and I are not on speaking terms until he sees certain things the same way I do. But we shouldn't be discussing this. I'm returning home to Hald. I have a long and bitter ride ahead of me. It would be less long and less bitter if I could believe it was only your father I'd disagreed with.

RUTH: I'm not sure – what do you mean – Oh look! I've dropped mother's sweater in the brook. Now I'll be scolded by her – and it was your fault.

BUGGE: Ruth, there's one thing I'd like you to give me as a present, should my return be delayed.

RUTH: What's that?

BUGGE: It's something I'll take good care of. It'll stick with me always. When I ride out I'll take it with me. When I sleep at night it'll share my pillow. Please give it to me.

RUTH: Well, if it's something I can spare, then...

BUGGE: It's definitely something you can spare. Can't you guess what it is?

RUTH: No – how could I?

BUGGE: It's a kiss.

RUTH: Oh, I haven't brought any kisses with me to the brook. I didn't think I'd need any here.

BUGGE: But it would give what I have the least of – and what I now have the greatest need of – patience. So – can I have it?

RUTH: I don't give kisses to people I'm not in love with.

BUGGE: Does that mean...

RUTH: Yes. It does not. Oh, you don't understand. I mean... No I don't mean... You are so stupid, Niels! You're so stupid!

*(RUTH exits, leaving NIELS BUGGE staring after her in amazement. Suddenly she runs back in.)*

*(Furious.)* But you can have it another time!

*(RUTH exits again.)*

BUGGE: Damn! They can teach you the art of war. But the art of love you have to learn yourself. And it's much more difficult!

*(BUGGE catches sight of EBBESEN approaching, and hurries off. EBBESEN arrives, working a bit on his "scarecrow". His son, EBBE, enters.)*

EBBE: Father, may I borrow your spade?



EBBESEN: Of course.

EBBE: Have you seen what we've done? The little ones have helped too.

EBBESEN: I've noticed you've been busy. You've drained the little swamp in the east field.

*(RUTH has returned, and continues to work on the laundry.)*

EBBE: It wasn't that small!

EBBESEN: No – no – it was quite large, you're right, for small folk.

EBBE: May we have some grain to sow in it, once it's completely drained?

EBBESEN: Yes, yes. And it makes me very happy you've expanded the farm.

EBBE: *(Leaving; speaking to children, off.)* Did you hear that?! We may do some planting!

*(GERTRUDE enters.)*

GERTRUDE: It's taking you forever to do the washing today. Let me do it. Go get the clothesline instead.

RUTH: Yes mother. *(Exits.)*

EBBESEN: Gertrude, is it really necessary for you to work so hard?

GERTRUDE: We can hardly afford to hire another girl.

EBBESEN: But if my guess is correct, you need to be taking good care of yourself right now. It's certainly not the time for a new wife here at the farm – is it – mother?

GERTRUDE: What is it you're wasting your afternoon on – and right in the middle of the harvest. Are you playing with dolls?

EBBESEN: Actually, yes. Don't you think they are pretty? No, I'll tell you what they're for – the wolf has broken into the fields again, in broad daylight – and killed a couple of sheep.

GERTRUDE: Where was the dog!?

EBBESEN: Oh, the dog was there all right. When the wolves arrived, he probably wagged his tail and when they left, no doubt he ate the leftovers.

GERTRUDE: That stupid mutt – I hope you destroyed it.

EBBESEN: The dog – no! It's so good-natured, and it wants to live too, after all.

GERTRUDE: I see.

EBBESEN: So that's why I'm making these

GERTRUDE: And you think what – that they'll frighten the wolves? The wolves will laugh at those. Why don't you order the farmhands to shoot the damn things – instead of entertaining them? But, of course, wolves are such pretty creatures and they only want to live too, after all.

*(RUTH returns.)*

You took forever getting that! You can hang the clothes by yourself! *(Calling, off.)* Children! Children! You have to come home, get washed up and go to bed.

*(GERTRUDE exits. RUTH is upset by GERTRUDE's rebuke and is struggling to hang up the clothesline.)*

EBBESEN: Is father's big girl too little? *(Helps her.)* So the clothes have to be hung up overnight.

RUTH: They'll be dry by tomorrow.

EBBESEN: Perhaps. But the clouds are jagged and piling up in the west – that could mean rain.

RUTH: Then I'll get scolded for that tomorrow too.

EBBESEN: I'll tell you a secret. I think you'll be getting a little brother or sister soon. That might explain why mother's been – a little

RUTH: - But

EBBESEN: - But what.

RUTH: Mother hasn't been herself other times, as well.

EBBESEN: True, but

RUTH: - You really don't know what is the matter with her?

EBBESEN: Is there something the matter? Is there something you know that I don't

RUTH: - I thought you knew. I think it started the other day

EBBESEN: What day?

RUTH: The day Niels Bugge came here.

EBBESEN: Really? You think that's it?

RUTH: Father – what – what did he actually want?

EBBESEN: Something from me that I can't give. No, that can't be the problem with your mother. I don't believe it could be that. But Ruth, if there's something upsetting your mother and she isn't confiding in us, all we can do is leave her alone and act as usual around her – and wait for the day she needs us.

RUTH: Did you and Niels disagree a lot?

EBBESEN: Young blood must be allowed to boil. The rest of us have seen a bit more of life.

RUTH: So you're not angry with him?

EBBESEN: Why would you think that?

RUTH: Do you think it'll be much longer before we see him again? I mean – for mother's sake. She likes him so much.

EBBESEN: Don't worry! As soon as the harvest is done he'll return. But I can't help you any more – I have my own work to finish before night time.

*(RUTH continues to hang up clothes; humming, then singing.)*

You've inherited your father's singing voice. You sing like a bird.

RUTH: What kind of bird?

- EBBESEN: A crow.
- RUTH: Oh – father! I’m mad at you now! Well, take this. Those scarecrows – they won’t frighten the wolves. They don’t even have heads!
- EBBESEN: Do you need a head for that?
- RUTH: Give me the coal. I’ll draw a face. But what kind. Ah – I know. Don’t look. When I’m finished I’ll call you. Do you really think I sing so badly?
- EBBESEN: I was only teasing you. You don’t have a great voice – but it is very sweet.
- RUTH: I love singing. Any kind of singing. Most of all, bird songs. When they begin in the spring – do you know why they’re singing?
- EBBESEN: No.
- RUTH: Do you want to know?
- EBBESEN: Sure.
- RUTH: It’s the male that sings. The female sits sweating on the eggs and nothing ever happens, the eggs might as well be dead! But then the male starts singing and keeps on and on and on – and no shell can resist –soon the shells crack and the little ones burst out. That’s how it happens! All right – I’m finished.
- (RUTH shows EBBESEN her handiwork. She has drawn the image of Count GERHARD.)*
- Don’t you think he will scare off the wolves!
- EBBESEN: What the – *(Laughs.)* Of all the crazy – but you’ve never even seen him.
- RUTH: Yes I did - the night he rode past!
- EBBESEN: Just that glimpse – and then you can draw him so accurately?! No thieves will dare go into my fens again.
- RUTH: Shh – here comes mother.

EBBESEN: Gertrude – you must see this

RUTH: I don't think she'll like it – father, no!

*(GERTRUDE has entered. RUTH leaves.)*

GERTRUDE: What is it?

EBBESEN: Look – isn't it well done? And the child has never had lessons!

GERTRUDE: *(Barely looking at it.)* Niels, who do you want to make tenant of the west farm?

EBBESEN: All five hands want it. I was going to ask your advice today.

RUTH: *(Shouting, off.)* Father Lorents is here!

EBBESEN: Oh lord, the priest. I'm coming!

GERTRUDE: He's probably in his usual state of – what on earth?!

LORENTS: *(Arrives on a sow.)* Stop my horse, whooah, stop in the name of all the devils, whooah horsey, there, there. Father's little darling pig, dear flabby, obese piggy, sweet quivering teat, stop, you most holy animal of Denmark, symbol of our people, you living monument to gluttony, you incarnation of fertility, you triumph of femininity, am I really sitting here? Where's the stirrup? Help – ohhhh – *(Falls off.)* I was on top and now I've fallen. The Good Lord created a miracle. It was a horse I was riding but he changed it to a pig to honour me. But if Christ can ride an ass into Jerusalem, I can ride a pig to Norreris.

EBBESEN: My wife is present, Father.

LORENTS: Gertrude – I'm sorry – I didn't see – I am so sorry, so very sorry, so extremely sorry, I beg your forgiveness. OK? No, I see I'm not getting it – my errand here at the estate this blessed day

GERTRUDE: - Your errand, Father Lorents, is to follow me to our special guest room with the bed of fresh straw.

LORENTS: Excuse me, Mrs. Gertrude – but why should I go to bed here in your barn in the middle of the night?

GERTRUDE: Because you have to sleep it off. Now come on. *(Exits.)*

- LORENTS: With all due respect for your Mrs. Niels, Mr. Gertrude – I don't go to bed with the lambs. Unless it's a certain kind of lamb. At least give me a – a tankard of beer. "There was a Knight Niels Bugge". Do you know – have you heard what I said to the Bugger, when he wanted to gore Count Gerhard – may he rot forever in hell. "War!" I said. "Bugge, I'm with you. War is a very practical thing. Towns will be burned down – but we can build new ones. People will get killed, but we will make new ones. So Bugge – you deliver the timber to the towns and I will deliver the *(Laughs.)* The Bugger didn't even crack a smile.
- EBBESEN: That's enough drunken talk, please.
- LORENTS: But I look on the Count as you do. He's a competent man, he knows what he wants. You can't say that about everybody. And he accomplishes it. He is certainly a man for us. Just because his face looks like the Devil's own arse...
- HAASE: *(Stepping in behind him.)* Who's he talking about?
- (EBBESEN smiles at HAASE – but LORENTS does not recognize him.)*
- LORENTS: Who were we talking about? Uh – actually nobody. Isn't that right, Mr. Niels? We were enjoying the view. Such a lovely evening. I was telling a story about the Devil in the nut who visited the blacksmith who – do you know that one?
- HAASE: Even if I didn't I wouldn't want to hear it from you.
- LORENTS: We weren't talking about the Count – if you're one of the Count's men. Whether this is Denmark or Holstein, what do I care? I belong in the Kingdom of Heaven.
- HAASE: I will lodge a complaint with the bishop over you.
- LORENTS: Good sir – I see you are a friend of the Count. I have great respect for the Count. I once had the pleasure of preaching for him.
- EBBESEN: Father - the bed my wife mentioned?
- LORENTS: Yes, I need it. Right. Gentlemen: I bid you good night, a very good night, a good good night *(Exits.)*
- EBBESEN: Poor wretch. Lorents is a good fellow at the bottom. But there's too much beer at the top. So. Brother in law – welcome, and once

again, welcome. I said, to Gertrude just the other morning – “Do you think Ove Haase is really so busy he’s forgotten you’re his only sister?” Please – come to the house. We’ll slaughter some chickens. What are you looking at?

HAASE: What is that?

EBBESEN: Isn’t it amazing? Ruth sketched it. With just a bit of charcoal. And the girl has never had lessons! I didn’t expect any of us to have special talents – but she has a gift.

HAASE: Sometimes, Niels, I wonder if you are as stupid as you seem – or just very cunning.

EBBESEN: What do you mean?

HAASE: Next you’ll be telling me you’re going to place this “art” in your fields.

EBBESEN: Yes, of course – why not?

HAASE: Don’t you know who the master of this country is?

EBBESEN: Master, master – I’m not used to having any master.

HAASE: Get used to it. Count Gerhard has just left Holstein with ten thousand horsemen.

EBBESEN: He’s always leaving and going somewhere.

HAASE: Listen to me, Niels! I’m talking to you as a Danish man, Danish all the way from the nail of my big toe to the centre of my soul. You know as well as I do what we’ve been through these past few years! King Christopher’s government was one of bottomless incompetence! Remember that night I came to you – we sat here in this very spot, you agreed with me that the King should be driven away.

EBBESEN: No, you remember it wrong. I agreed with a lot of what you said. But when you mentioned plans for getting help from a foreign power...

HAASE: Foreign power! How foreign is Holstein to Denmark? Count Gerhard helped us. We got rid of Christopher the Incompetent, though we paid for it in blood...

- EBBESEN: By God, that's true. I used my sword that one night – and I don't ever want to use it again.
- HAASE: Nothing in this world ever comes free. And the state of things around here got better – look how you've profited! But what did Count Gerhard get out of it? Not much. And now that fool Niels Bugge struts around and crows against Gerhard at every manor. Our unhappy, divided and once again impoverished country is again heading straight for the abyss. Count Gerhard wouldn't be the man he is if he didn't prevent that. He's riding now up through Jutland at the head of his horsemen – who all have modern equipment. Resistance is futile. The person who against all reason attempts the hopeless will be trampled into the dust by forty thousand hooves. But the person who immediately supports him will receive his grace.
- EBBESEN: So?
- HAASE: So! I expect a grand and happy time for Denmark. Order, strength, prosperity, honourable cooperation in establishing a great empire. I don't expect it – I know it. Because I know the man. I've placed my hand in his iron grip – I've seen the fire in the darkness of his eyes. Gerhard is invincible. He will conquer everything. Because he is the new age.
- EBBESEN: And you've come to me to make me say: I too will side with this "new age".
- HAASE: Yes. Your estate is not large, your family not huge – you never step forward yet for some reason people still ask, "What does Niels Ebbesen think?" That's why I've come to you first – and you know what the answer is that you owe to both yourself and your country.
- EBBESEN: Two evenings ago I walked over the meadows with Niels Bugge and he explained to me that I should support him – also for the sake of the country. Do you know what I answered him?
- HAASE: I can probably guess.
- EBBESEN: I said, "Niels – listen – those are my children playing by the brook. And over there, my hands are harvesting the first corn of the year. On the other side we can see down through the valley – there are the homes of my tenants. Their children are also playing by the brook, and they are also out harvesting the first corn. So, Niels, war can mean many things, some of them having to do with honour, greatness and creating a new age but it also means one



thing for certain: my tenants and I will have our arms and legs chopped off and will never walk behind a plough again. Our homes will be burned down. Our women and children will have to flee into the woods and hide among the wolves, hoping that they are more human than the humans. You are young and think I'm a coward and a traitor. You may say it. But I shun anything to do with war, as long as I can. Preach for me until Doomsday, give me all the good reasons! I have only one answer: I will keep out of it!"

HAASE: You are so short-sighted! You talk about preserving homes – but that can only happen in one way – by having a strong government in Denmark!

EBBESEN: And so – to get this firm government in order to preserve homes, we have to destroy the homes first? Ove, I may be bad at arithmetic, but that just doesn't add up.

HAASE: Then I will have to do it another way.

EBBESEN: No, please – no more arguments. I've talked for much longer than I'm used to, and I need a tankard of beer. Please, come to the house.

HAASE: There's no keeping out of it any longer, Niels. I'm not leaving this estate until I get a clear answer from you. Are you with him – or against him? After everything I've just told you, the choice shouldn't be difficult.

*(GERTRUDE has entered by this point. She has clearly overheard some of the preceding. The men have not yet noticed her.)*

GERTRUDE: *(To herself.)* True enough. The choice should be easy.

EBBESEN: I don't go to church often; I am not a religious man. But I did hear something smart said there once: He who lives by the sword shall die by it.

HAASE: That's no answer.

EBBESEN: I don't have any better.

GERTRUDE: Then I'll answer for my husband.

HAASE: *(Seeing her for the first time.)* No, sister, I'm not asking you. I know your mind and I can tell you're all set to pull up the

drawbridge. But you're being a hypocrite. Nobody was more critical of King Christopher than you.

GERTRUDE: Christopher was bad – but at least he was Danish.

HAASE: Oh, Danish this, Danish that. Would you rather be ruled by an idiot so long as he's Danish than by a true ruler even though he was born just a foot on the other side of the border?

GERTRUDE: Yes, Ove, yes. I'd rather live poor and Danish than rich and a slave to foreigners.

HAASE: Are her words yours, too?

GERTRUDE: When I heard you'd come, I made a bed for you. But you shall never sleep in a bed in my house again. We have a dog that wags its tail at the wolves and eats the carrion they leave – it can lie in the bed instead of you.

HAASE: Woman's will, man's hell. I can't help you. Vitinghofen! Vitinghofen! Where the –

*(EBBE enters, holding VITINGHOFEN's hand.)*

EBBE: Father, mother! We have a wonderful, funny visitor!

*(VITINGHOFEN bows chivalrously to GERTRUDE and EBBESEN.)*

HAASE: This is Vitinghofen, a noble from Holstein. He's young but also very tactful, and he's trained in peace as well as war. He would like to stay for a while on your estate. To learn about Danish farming.

*(EBBESEN gasps.)*

GERTRUDE: How dare you! We are to be guarded!? We're to be prisoners on our own estate!?

*(Off, approaching, sound of FARMHANDS singing.)*

HAASE: Vitinghofen comes highly recommended by Count Gerhard himself. Ah – listen – here come some of your hands home from their long day in the fields. What good singers they are!

*(Men and girls walk in singing a harvest song. When they see the noble visitors they become bashful.)*

Listen, my tenants, hands. There are some traitorous noblemen who want to rebel against their rightful master. To save you any unpleasantness should these traitors attack you to get your weapons, it has been decided that all cross-bows, arrows, spears, swords, battle-axes – all tools of war whatever the kind – must be given up to Mr. Vitinghofen here. He'll be staying at the manor house.

FARMHANDS: (Voice general dismay voiced, worries about facing the wolves with no weapons etc.)

TROELS: Is this with your consent, master?

EBBESEN: We must expect hard times. I believe that we can hold on to this, hold on to our own, without weapons. Perhaps better, without them. So let it happen. Let us obey. And continue to go about our work and our business. We will be fine.

GERTRUDE: *(To herself.)* Who can be “fine” – in the grave?

## Act Two

*The meadows at Norreris. Dusk. There is singing, laughter, music. Torches glow brightly.*

FARMHANDS: *(Singing.)* Then we weave the cloth  
Then we fold it up  
Weave the cloth, fold it up  
Let the shuttle go...

*(EBBESEN has been watching the dance from a bench. He rises to speak.)*

EBBESEN: Yes, we have indeed had a good harvest this year. And though these times are not for feasting, Gertrude and I still thought that we should thank you for all your hard work.

TROELS: A cheer for the Master and Mistress! Long live Mr. Niels and Mrs. Gertrude!

*(There are cheers and food is brought out. A cask is opened. Father LORENTS grabs a young girl and swings her around to general laughter.)*

LORENTS: *(Sings.)* Now we've had enough of the fat schmaus  
Now the young long for the woods, the woods  
The belly is not all!  
We have other vital parts!

*(The audience roars – with perhaps EBBESEN and GERTRUDE looking on a bit disapprovingly. But LORENTS is encouraged by the crowd, and continues.)*

If you long for heavenly lust  
Lose your way at a maiden's breast  
The road to God's golden heaven  
Is only found by getting lost.

It rises proudly and falls quickly  
Make use of the short night of Midsummer  
So you can rest with satisfaction  
In the arms of wood shavings.

*(LORENTS seems to find this funny, but the young people are now making a chain and waltzing together. The choir LEADER sings:)*

LEADER: Hello, January, February, March and April  
May, June and July, August – no rest!  
September, October, November,  
December – only haste.  
Yes, the year dances through our field  
To the music of the wind and to the song of the waves,  
And the hands skip around the neck of the girls  
And follow the merry waltz.

See, here comes winter stumbling  
With a vengeance, with a vengeance,  
Snow is drifting, drifting, drifting  
Around all the straw-thatched homes.  
In the barn the flail is dancing  
And Christmas bursts out under the radiance of frosty stars,  
And the hands jump around the neck of the girls  
To the waltz of Twelfth Night.

But the spring! It blasts out of the traces of winter

And shines in competition with a shower of hail.  
 It jingles, it whirs, it quivers  
 Whistling and warbling and cackling.  
 And the waves awake and break in time  
 To this global relentless power.  
 The virtue that – however dear – was never for sale  
 Yields to a tickle on its neck.

The glow of the morning and tag in the evening,  
 The sheen of the sea, the glow-worm in the thicket  
 It shines, it shines, it shines  
 The shortest night of Midsummer.  
 To the forest dance she wears a Midsummer garland  
 And is no more herself, but his.  
 From the tip of her toe to the veins in her neck  
 The maiden blood is waltzing.

We grab the scythe and whet it,  
 It grasps the grain in sweeping drifts,  
 It curtsies and sways and sensuously  
 Turns into its embrace.  
 Listen to the rustling in the top of the trees!  
 See leaves and dust whirling down, whirling up!  
 It rattles and boils in the throat of the storm  
 For the year in the waltz of death.

When the dance has ended and the notes stopped  
 And quiet we lie in the bed we were given,  
 My Elsa, my Elsa, my Elsa,  
 Come visit me in my grave.  
 We embrace in life and lust  
 And fly to the stars forever dancing.  
 There I dance with kisses on your mouth and neck  
 Our last most wonderful waltz.

*(With the last, the farmhands dance out into the woods,  
 followed by LORENTS. EBBESEN is along with  
 GERTRUDE.)*

EBBESEN: Why don't we go into the forest as well?

GERTRUDE: We're too old for that!

EBBESEN: Nonsense! As long as the cradle hasn't been stowed away in the attic, we're young enough. I'm so happy tonight, Gertrude – happy about the good harvest, happy the war has detoured around us,

happy you agreed to this celebration. Aren't you even a little happy?

GERTRUDE: Yes, I am. Yes. But at the same time, it's as if I can never get in a happy mood again.

EBBESEN: Do you remember the good old days when you really loved me – you pulled my ears like this upwards.

GERTRUDE: It was like this!

EBBESEN: Yes! *(Laughs.)* I suppose it was to make me grow. But now – you never pull them.

GERTRUDE: I've given up hope of seeing you grow larger.

EBBESEN: There's not enough of me as it is?

GERTRUDE: Yes, there is. We'll say there is. Oh - here he comes. Let's go and pretend like the others that this is a lovely forest with no wolves in it.

*(EBBESEN and GERTRUDE exit. VITINGHOFEN enters, whistling a fragment of a sad ballad. EBBE and his SISTER run into the moonlight, wearing pajamas.)*

VITINGHOFEN: Why are you running about at nighttime! You'll catch a cold!

EBBE: Nanny Sidsel has joined the others at the spring!

SISTER: There was no one to mind us!

EBBE: Sing us one of your brave ballads.

SISTER: Or tell us a story, please!

VITINGHOFEN: You are both crazy.

*(VITINGHOFEN picks the delighted children up and places them on his knees.)*

*(Sings)* The princess sat in the castle on high  
By the gate a dragon lay.  
She longed for freedom, she longed for freedom  
For years as well as days.  
Many wanted to free her

One threatened a long time,  
 One tried the Lord's Prayer  
 Another tried a bribe.  
 But look, the soldier, one, two, three,  
 He risked his skin  
 And saved the little princess  
 With his good sword.

And now you must both get to bed. I'm the horse galloping with  
 the soldier and the princess. Let me see if you can sit as proudly as  
 a soldier. Now run home.

*(VITINGHOFEN crashes into RUTH and their nanny,  
 SIDSEL, who tows the children off. VITINGHOFEN blocks  
 RUTH from leaving.)*

Maiden Ruth – why hasn't your hand found mine during the dance  
 – even once?

*(RUTH tries to dodge around him.)*

Why do you always avoid me? Is it your mother?

RUTH: Why are you here? With us?

VITINGHOFEN: It's an order – I can say nothing against it. But my appearance here  
 – if you have anything to complain about, please tell me!

RUTH: I want you to let me go.

VITINGHOFEN: You know, that's the worst thing you can ask of me? You should  
 know how lonely I am – and how I need to talk to somebody – to  
 you.

RUTH: But you – you're our enemy – Mr. Vitinghofen?

VITINGHOFEN: Yes, I suppose I am. Your enemy. But could I also be your friend?

RUTH: I – I don't understand how.

VITINGHOFEN: By God, I mean, life isn't so boringly simple, is it? It's true that  
 I'm your enemy, but I'm also something else, the opposite. Do you  
 understand?

*(VITINGHOFEN grabs RUTH's arm. She slaps him.)*

Do – do you hit me? (*Gets self under control.*) Why – why do you hit me? Well, that is all right. The other cheek as well. Go on.

RUTH: You grabbed me so hard. I just meant – you must let me go.

VITINGHOFEN: Fair enough, I'll let you go.

*(RUTH stays.)*

Do you know that was the first time you've given me your hand? What a way to do it.

RUTH: Did it hurt?

VITINGHOFEN: It was I who behaved wrongly. I apologize. But I was afraid you'd leave. And I have to talk with you. Remember: I'm a soldier. A soldier can't be passive. A soldier's life is deeds.

RUTH: Deeds! My father – I – all of us at Norreris – we hate war.

VITINGHOFEN: The greatest victories a soldier wins are not those he wins in battle. Maybe he doesn't even like war! He's young, he's happy, he's in love, he wants to live – but perhaps by tomorrow he will be dead and cold?!

RUTH: No, you won't be.

VITINGHOFEN: Who knows? It is written in the stars. Look how they smile down at us.

RUTH: Do they? I don't know. Tonight, I'm afraid of them.

VITINGHOFEN: Afraid of the stars – no. Can't you hear what they're whispering: when they shine on us? Then we are not German or Danish anymore – we're just two humans, two souls of flesh and blood.

RUTH: I hear them. And when the stars fade and the sun shines tomorrow, we're German and Danish again.

VITINGHOFEN: The soldier can't afford to think of tomorrow. His life is all about achievement. He can only think of the present – that now life is wonderful, that now the stars are shining, that now there is a little hand in his – a boy's hand and yet it's a girl's, the loveliest girl he knows.

RUTH: We must not do this! It isn't right – and I'm so terribly afraid!



VITINGHOFEN: You shouldn't be. Or rather – yes, you should. Because when you know that I love you, when you know that we love each other, yes, that's worth being a little afraid of, isn't it.

RUTH: No – you mustn't kiss me. Not – yet.

VITINGHOFEN: I agree, I mustn't. And therefore I shall. Just your eyes. No more than your eyes. Now you can see me. And your ear-lobes, those I just have to be allowed to – kiss – the most loveable small ear-lobes. That's it. Now you can only hear me. But no, not your mouth. Not the mouth at all. But the tip of the nose, yes. Can you smell me now? And then your two small, boyish hands. I shall kiss feeling into them, and kiss them again till they feel nothing but me.

RUTH: Let me go. Let me go! Do you hear me – let me go!

VITINGHOFEN: I'll let you. But lastly – just one lightning kiss on the mouth, no, right on your mouth. From now on the whole world tastes of me. Now I have conquered you – all your five senses. All of you. Why are you trembling, little girl? You aren't afraid any more, are you? No – you're also happy, aren't you?

RUTH: I don't know. Maybe being afraid is the same as being happy?

VITINGHOFEN: I think so – lovely little girl.

*(VITINGHOFEN takes RUTH's hand and leads her off. EBBESEN steps out of the shadows and sees them departing. GERTRUDE appears.)*

GERTRUDE: Who was that?

EBBESEN: Who was who?

GERTRUDE: I thought it was our friendly German visitor with some hussy. That there'd be a girl here among our hands with no honour! I'll look into this and take care of her tomorrow.

*(MESSENGER enters.)*

MESSENGER: Is Niels Ebbesen here?

EBBESEN: I am Niels Ebbesen.

MESSENGER: I come from Count Gerhard. He's on his way to your estate.

EBBESEN: Here? The Count's coming here?

MESSENGER: With five hundred horsemen. Where is Herr von Vitinghofen?

EBBESEN: Gertrude – where are you going?

GERTRUDE: *(Moving off a bit.)* You'll see.

MESSENGER: I asked about Vitinghofen?

EBBESEN: I have no idea where he is.

*(A horn blares, off.)*

Who's sounding the horn?

GERTRUDE: *(Moving back in.)* I am.

EBBESEN: Why!?

GERTRUDE: I'm calling the hands. They'll be here right away. Niels – why haven't you repaired the drawbridge!?

EBBESEN: Because even if it was working it wouldn't be used.

*(VITINGHOFEN dashes in.)*

VITINGHOFEN: What's going on!

GERTRUDE: Where were you – who were you with?

MESSENGER: At last! Mister Vitinghofen, sir, come here, quickly!

GERTRUDE: Niels – I've hidden your broadsword. Shall I get it?

EBBESEN: No.

GERTRUDE: If you won't, I will.

*(FARMHANDS are arriving.)*

People! Count Gerhard is coming with five hundred horsemen. Get everything that can be used as weapons: pitchforks, scythes, axes – and stand here with us. All married women – go home. The girls shall stay with us in the scullery.

EBBESEN: What do you want our poor people to do! Why do you want blood on your hands! Stop blowing that horn! These pitiful weapons against the Count's armoured horsemen!? Good friends, we can do nothing against a fully-equipped army. I beg you: put those things away.

GERTRUDE: Don't do it.

TROELS: *(To FARMHANDS.)* Mr. Niels and Mrs. Gertrude have been a good master and mistress to us, given food to our children, medicine to our sick, and paid us what our work was worth. I don't think anyone here will stand by idly if something happens to them.

FARMHANDS: (Cheers and "hear hear".)

FARMHAND: Down with the Bald one!

FARMHANDS: (Cheers and Yes! Down with the Bald One! Etc.)

VITINGHOFEN: If I may quietly mention

GERTRUDE: - Be quiet.

VITINGHOFEN: But I want to say that

*(GERTRUDE makes a sign and the farmhands approach with pitchforks.)*

As you wish – I'll be silent.

EBBESEN: Then in God's name, let what will happen come to pass.

*(The tramp of horses is heard, torches appear. The farmhands watch GERTRUDE, who stands unyielding. And then, four men stagger in with a man on a stretcher, to everyone's astonishment.)*

VITINGHOFEN: May I speak now? The reason the Count arrives here in the middle of the night is because he suddenly became ill while traveling. Internal bleeding.

HAASE: *(Arriving with the stretcher.)* The Count is unconscious. The Count is dying. Get him a bed and some peace and quiet!

FARMHANDS: Dying/A bed? The Bald One is dying!

*(GERTRUDE is wavering in her obstruction.)*

EBBESEN: Thank God that – thank you good men, thank you my hands. I am happy we were spared what I'm so bitterly against. Count Gerhard shall have all the care we can give. I'm not personally able to take care of him. I'll leave Norreris immediately, and go with Gertrude and the children to an outlying farm. I ask you, brother in law, to consider Norreris as your own – so long as the Count is ill. And get him the necessary care. Everyone – go home, quietly.

### Act Three

*A gloomy room in an outlying farmhouse. The children – EBBE and SISTER - are playing. GERTRUDE and RUTH are doing needlework.*

EBBE: ...But you see, I don't pay any attention to that. I jab my spurs into the side of my snorting stallion of war and drive it forward until it foams.

SISTER: What happens next?

EBBE: Then everyone can see I'm just as fine a knight as Herr Vitinghofen.

*(At the mention of VITINGHOFEN, GERTRUDE will register disgust and RUTH also exits.)*

I gather all the proud knights around me – because now it is a matter of conquering the whole earth.

EBBESEN: *(Entering and hearing the last of this.)* And when you've finished conquering the whole earth – what then?

EBBE: Are *you* here?

EBBESEN: I'd much rather conquer the bog witch and take the bog from her. I'd till the whole stretch and build a lot of small farms and have people happy at work – where it is now dead and swampy.

EBBE: Well, we got tired of digging peat ditches. But we can play with the bricks – come on, sister, let's go to our room.

EBBESEN: Ebbe! Understand boy, when I speak to you, you will speak nicely to me. Remember that.

*(EBBESEN slaps EBBE, who looks defiantly at him, and leaves.)*

I long to return to Norreris – the hands have begun to sow there.

GERTRUDE: Yes.

EBBESEN: *(Picking up on her rudeness.)* Ah “yes”. Yes.

*(GERTRUDE collects her needlework and leaves.)*

*(Alone.)* Well, I suppose it’s time for bed.

*(RUTH returns for her needlework and looks about to leave again.)*

Ruth! Wait a moment!

RUTH: Yes father – no. No, no I can’t.

*(RUTH starts to leave, in defiance of her father, but then relents.)*

Did you want something?

EBBESEN: Are you still thinking about him?

RUTH: Thinking of – whom? No.

EBBESEN: Would you still like to marry him?

RUTH: Why do you ask? It’s not something you can ask me

EBBESEN: If I at least knew you’d be happy with him – though there are others I’d prefer. But I don’t believe you can be happy.

RUTH: Happiness! Oh, father – if one really loves another, does it matter if they aren’t born in the same country?

EBBESEN: *(Sits for a moment, then bursts out violently.)* What do you want your sons to be!? Men behind the plough – or men who go out to murder!

RUTH: Father!

- EBBESEN: *(Already sheepish about his outburst.)* You'll get your permission, Ruth. I'll speak to mother.
- RUTH: I don't want permission. And don't speak to mother. I don't want to – oh, I don't know what I want. We're like fish caught in nets, aren't we. What would speaking to mother accomplish? Do you see how she's changed? She walks around glaring at both you and me. She demands something of us we haven't been born to and don't have the ability for... She wants you to be some kind of hero and I'm supposed to give up everything and become a saint and a martyr. And what is she? She's cross, she's angry
- EBBESEN: - That's enough. I will not hear another bad word about mother. Go and fetch her. Go.
- (RUTH exits. EBBESEN paces. GERTRUDE returns by herself, holding a potted plant she's been tending.)*
- GERTRUDE: This sounds serious. You want to speak with me?
- EBBESEN: Gertrude – look how well the rose in you is growing. It promises a shower of roses this summer, even though it has been moved to the wrong place.
- (GERTRUDE throws the plant to the floor.)*
- What are you doing!
- GERTRUDE: I've just heard that Skanderborg has surrendered without a fight!
- EBBESEN: Skanderborg?
- GERTRUDE: We Danes are so cowardly now that, even though the Count is lying ill up in our manor house, we still fear the name of this half-dead man so much his troops can conquer the country using only promises and threats. *(Kicks the flower.)* My roses shall not bear flowers for the Germans. And this child – this child in me – sometimes I feel like doing the same to it. Why should I bear children for foreigners?
- EBBESEN: *(Grabs her by the arm.)* Sit down. Calm yourself. I demand it. Have I failed you that much, that you should be so disgusted with me? If I have, then I ask your forgiveness.
- GERTRUDE: You haven't failed me. It is I – it is my own fault. I know it well. You can't help the fact you aren't the man I made you up to be. I

was so much in love – with your curly hair, your ruddy face, your strength... I thought you were a ... I didn't know you were... You weren't very talkative and when you were silent I thought it was because you were planning great deeds

EBBESEN: - And not just the improvement of a species of pig. I understand I've disappointed you, Gertrude. It's not pleasant for me to hear – but I suppose it's worse for you.

GERTRUDE: Let's stop talking about this. It's ridiculous to sigh about one's own destiny at the same time the country's on its death bed.

EBBESEN: But is it?

GERTRUDE: I got a letter from Niels Bugge's mother yesterday. Mostly it was about her fruit trees and hens. But there was a postscript: 'My son is still of good heart despite the Count's improvement. But in the night I hear Niels through the wall and he is groaning, "We'll never be rid of them. We'll never be rid of them."'

EBBESEN: I'm sorry to hear this – very sorry. But Niels Bugge hasn't learned toughness from life yet. And he's wrong.

GERTRUDE: On what basis do you say that?

EBBESEN: This year, as never before, we noticed the larks singing.

GERTRUDE: So - you think the larks will sing the Germans out of the country?

EBBESEN: Yes, I think the larks shall sing and the farmers shall plow the Germans out of Denmark I believe it and God help me to keep on believing it.

GERTRUDE: Niels I could – oh! How can you be so... And here, right before your eyes, you must see how the Germans, with their new tactics of chivalry and jest, are being admitted to places one would never have thought possible! They don't even need brutality! Our own children are weakening from their poison!

EBBESEN: Shh – someone's coming – I hear footsteps –

GERTRUDE: Let them come.

LORENTS: (*Enters.*) Ahhh, light and warmth. The night is slimy and raw.

GERTRUDE: What is wrong – are you ill?

LORENTS: Yes, I am. I'm suffering from the only illness that can bite me – it bites seldom but when it does it eats me all the way to the spine.

EBBESEN: What illness is that?

LORENTS: Being sober.

GERTRUDE: Of course. *(Exiting.)* I'll send in a tankard of warm medicine.

LORENTS: If you can send it, I can drink it – be sure of that.

EBBESEN: You really do look miserable.

LORENTS: Wait – when the beer is down I'll be up again. Well, my friend. The large cuckoo has flown from your little nest today!

EBBESEN: What are you saying?

LORENTS: You haven't heard? Vitinghofen hasn't been here yet?

EBBESEN: The Count has left Norreris?

*(RUTH enters and will place the beer in front of LORENTS and leave immediately.)*

LORENTS: Wait a moment. Let me warm myself a bit. I can't speak. My throat is frozen stiff, I swear. Ahhh. The beer. Here it comes. Now you shall hear novum ex Africa. Narrator refero.

*(RUTH has exited by now.)*

You see, the day before yesterday, immediately after I said Mass for him

EBBESEN: - Mass?

LORENTS: Oh yes – he's as God-fearing as the devil. Don't laugh! All the great criminals are. They have such a load of crime that no human back can carry it. So they get themselves a God to unload it to. Cheers.

EBBESEN: Would you please get to the point and tell me what's happened!



- LORENTS: Happened? Nothing. Only that if at this moment you offered me the whole of Denmark for a dollar, I'd answer – I'll give you ten cents. And I'd still have paid too much.
- EBBESEN: Where is the Count now?
- LORENTS: At Randers, my dear man, and feeling so frisky that next week he's going to continue the campaign he was forced to interrupt. Denmark will be divided – one half will be a heap of smoking ashes and the other half will be kissing his rear end.
- EBBESEN: But I heard that a lot of his mercenaries ran off while he was ill!
- LORENTS: He has no problem raising troops.
- EBBESEN: How! Who!?
- LORENTS: For starters – the men at Norreris. All those capable of bearing arms have been ordered to Randers. A plant has apparently fallen on your floor.
- EBBESEN: To Randers? My people? What for?
- LORENTS: If he can get roast chicken and strawberries this early in the year I expect he'll be serving them that. He's such a gracious and hospitable person – what do you think!?
- EBBESEN: This is terrible.
- LORENTS: "Terrible". Just thank your God *you* don't have to go to Randers.
- EBBESEN: Yes, that's one bright spot. But my people – does he really think he can enlist them? Make them fight against their own people? No.
- LORENTS: What are you going to do?
- EBBESEN: (*Rising to leave.*) I have to go to Norreris and talk to the hands.
- LORENTS: I strongly advise against it.
- EBBESEN: Why!
- LORENTS: They are very angry with you.
- EBBESEN: Angry? With me?

- LORENTS: You had them put down their weapons.
- EBBESEN: What did they need them for? To get themselves cut down with no advantage to anybody?
- LORENTS: And now they are going to Randers to get cut down for the advantage of the Count.
- EBBESEN: But what do they say! What're they going to do?
- LORENTS: I've been with them, and I've tried to console them. They don't dare do anything but obey. They know that only a few of them will come back, and those that do will return without limbs, faces, without a soul. Wrecks and wolves are the future of this country. Oh, these are fine times we live in – fine times. At least things are happening. One never gets bored.
- EBBESEN: What kind of man are you? How can you sit there by the fire and take pleasure in all this misery?
- LORENTS: You don't like that I dribble a little slime on you. Do you think you're the better man? God made you to be an iron gauntlet – but you've turned yourself into a woollen mitten. All your talk about peace. You've been so peace-seeking that I've often thought: this man has angel feathers in his brain. And now look – with all your caution you've betrayed all the things you wanted to protect – and brought us to exactly the place you most wanted to avoid.
- EBBESEN: Surely you're not suggesting *I* could have defeated Count Gerhard!
- LORENTS: No, but you could've set an example. When one man rebels, more will follow. And finally all rebel. You could have let Gerhard advance to Ribe and take it with heavy losses, then go on to Kolding and take that, and fight his way to Skanderborg, set siege to Aarhus and take it bloodily by storm, drag himself to Randers, take that too... By then he'd have been bled to death, finished, you could have shoveled earth on him. Not you, but your example – it could have defeated that devil. But you didn't and that is why I spit on you.
- EBBESEN: Do you have the right to spit?
- LORENTS: What do you know of me? Do you think I have one waking hour where I don't spit on myself? That I haven't wished I'd taken this black fool's dress off a long time ago and instead put some honest armour? I was a young priest when Gerhard first came through

Jutland. Wherever he passed, children lay dead of starvation and abandonment, women were trampled by his horses, there was crying and cursing and crippled men. And all these sacrifices were in vain. The evil went from victory to victory. And I had to go around with the Host and words of consolation about God's love. God! Love! I was young and vulnerable – how was I to bear it? Satan wasn't only in all the fire and murdering. He hid in the beer barrel and came pouring out in a stream of peace and forgetfulness. The other priests looked down their noses at me, the bishop threatened me – these pure servants of truth who fawned on the Evil One with their "Your Grace", "Your Grace!" Speaking with two tongues. And when I stood in front of the altar I feared for the right side of the God I'd only seen from the wrong side – feared in my sinfulness and the degradation of my church.

One evening I turned around – and who did I see in my village church? There he sat in the front pew. Gerhard. And suddenly God's spirit filled me. At the altar I stood up straight as I could on my shaky legs and with my beery belly. I felt that now, at this moment, I the drunkard, I alone could be worthiest of all the priests in Denmark to stand in God's house. I stood there and thundered out all God's curses on him who with lies and blood exalts himself and persecutes the humble, and makes himself God. I shook my clenched fists at him and cried: "Eternal damnation to the mocker who has turned away from God!"

Then I stumbled behind the altar and waited, trembling. But strong in spirit. Happy. My life had found a purpose. For this one half hour I – who been conceived in dirty lust, born by greedy poverty, educated in intellectual nonsense and dragged through foulness and torment – I had purpose. I heard his steps. He didn't send his men for me – he was doing me the honour of coming for me himself. A smile hovered on my lips. Then he stood there, with his smouldering eyes on me and said, "You speak well. It was quite edifying to hear the truth spoken without restraint." Then he nodded and went away.

So great is the lie that it can afford to pat truth on the shoulder and let it babble away.

EBBESEN: And then what?

LORENTS: Then nothing. Then beer and women again.

EBBESEN: But you say that you once saw us resist. And that you still only saw the Devil around you.

LORENTS: Then he was in wolf's fur. Now I see him in sheep's clothing. Just as magnificently irresistible. A toast to the Devil!

EBBESEN: But you spoke to Gerhard! You spoke to him – but did you speak properly?!

LORENTS: Obviously not. Because I used my tongue. And there's only one tongue whose language he understands. And that's the sword's. And it's too late now. God help us, it is for all eternity too late.

EBBESEN: I don't think...

LORENTS: What?

EBBESEN: I don't think I'll let my people go to Randers.

LORENTS: Oh – won't you. Where will you let them go, then?

EBBESEN: I'll – I'll go myself.

LORENTS: You?

EBBESEN: I will try to talk to him.

*(LORENTS bursts into laughter.)*

And if you're right – if he doesn't understand, then...

LORENTS: *(Laughter dying on his lips.)* What. What then? Man – what are you thinking? You don't think you're going to –

EBBESEN: Yes.

LORENTS: You can't do that sort of thing today! That belongs in the Old Testament or – or Viking legends! And how will you do it? He'd never receive you – you'd never get near him armed. Before you decide this, I beg you to consider

EBBESEN: - I have decided it.

LORENTS: *(Pause.)* Very well then.

EBBESEN: One waits and waits for the fruit of the tree to fall on its own. When Gerhard became ill I hoped... but one can't go on waiting

for ever and ever. I'll have to shake the tree. What is this – is my house haunted?

*(The door has opened and like a train of shadows his farmhands come in from the dark. A few women have come, as well. They stand in silence.)*

TROELS: Mr. Niels – we just wanted to – we have just come to say

*(There are some sobs, and then one of the farmhands steps forward.)*

FARMHAND: Goodbye Master.

EBBESEN: Men – listen to me. Go home and stay in your houses tonight. I am riding to the Count myself.

FARMHAND: To the Count?

TROELS: Master?

FARMHAND: Alone?

TROELS: Has he sent for you?

EBBESEN: No Troels, I will be coming uninvited.

FARMHAND: Then we will follow you.

EBBESEN: No. No!

FARMHAND: All of us will follow the Master.

TROELS: But we have no weapons.

LORENTS: No weapons! What are you talking about, Troels! Do you remember the hatch behind the altar in the Foldeby church?

TROELS: Yes – it's where you hide your beer.

LORENTS: True – but behind the beer barrels you'll find all the weapons you want.

FARMHANDS: Hurray/Arms/Hurray for Lorents/Hurray for good Lorents/

*(GERTRUDE enters.)*

GERTRUDE: What is all this commotion about?

EBBESEN: Go inside Gertrude. Go. This is no place for a woman.

*(GERTRUDE hesitates.)*

GO! Go!

*(GERTRUDE – completely shocked – does as she is told.)*

Only those who agree with the purpose of this trip may come.

TROELS: Everybody who wants to go with the Master, step forward.

*(All the men step forward.)*

EBBESEN: As you wish. Good. Let's ride. We'll meet at the church in Foldeby.

*(The visitors quickly leave.)*

LORENTS: Niels, I want to come.

EBBESEN: No.

LORENTS: You have to let me.

EBBESEN: I need you to stay here. You must think of something to say to Gertrude. She mustn't know where I'm going – before it's unavoidable. And if anything happens to me, you must say goodbye to her and tell her that from the first time I saw her till the last, I loved her. And you also must give the children a kiss from me, and tell them that their father did it for – well, say for the sake of Denmark. That must excuse me if what I do is wrong. And you must say goodbye to the stream and the meadows, the cattle with their pious eyes, the horses with their pious noses and all – well, that's enough. Just say goodbye to everything for me.

LORENTS: Are you afraid?

EBBESEN: Yes.

LORENTS: Of dying?

EBBESEN: That, as well. And afraid that what I am doing is wrong. And afraid I will fail doing it. Yes, I am afraid.

LORENTS: *(Almost apologetically.)* I have the Host with me.

EBBESEN: What is the meaning of Communion?

LORENTS: I don't know. Nobody knows. It's a secret; let's say it is Christ visiting our hearts.

EBBESEN: Christ was not a man of violence.

LORENT: No, He suffered and held his peace. But then he comes as a judge with the sword of righteousness in his hand.

EBBESEN: When.

LORENTS: Whenever the cup is full.

EBBESEN: Does he wield the sword himself?

LORENTS: No.

EBBESEN: Who does?

LORENTS: He to whom He gives it.

EBBESEN: And who is that?

LORENTS: No man is free from sin. But He gives it to the simple and pure of heart.

EBBESEN: Do you believe in Holy Communion, Lorents?

LORENTS: I believe in drink and women. What's that got to do with it?

EBBESEN: I'm sorry – I shouldn't have asked. Forgive me, Father Lorents – forgive me all my sins: those I have committed and those which I will commit. Give me the Host in silence.

*(EBBESEN kneels and LORENTS gives him the Host.)*

LORENTS: Are you still afraid, Niels?

EBBESEN: No, now I can do what I must. Live well.

*(EBBESSEN exits. LORENTS paces, tearing off his priest's robes and eventually throwing himself to the floor.)*

LORENTS: Damn it! Damn! Holy Mother of God, be with him where he has gone. Jesus, be with him when it counts

*(VITINGHOFEN has entered and has observed some of this. He is accompanied by three guards: STEINISCH, FRANZ and KUNZ.)*

VITINGHOFEN: *(Sarcastically.)* I'm sorry, reverend father, to disturb you in your prayers. I thought it was you who just rode past me in the darkness without answering my call. It must have been Master Niels. Where was he going at this hour of night – and in such a hurry?

LORENTS: *(Stammers.)*

VITINGHOFEN: Quickly! This is serious!

LORENTS: Shh – keep your voice down. I'll tell you, but Mrs. Gertrude mustn't know.

VITINGHOFEN: Niels Ebbesen doesn't blow his nose without confessing it to his wife first. Where is he going? Has he gone to Niels Bugge?

LORENTS: Can you keep a secret?

VITINGHOFEN: Hurry up!

LORENTS: Well you see – you see, he is riding towards Silkeborg, riding south, yes, south. He has – who would believe this, but I have always said, appearances are deceiving. In Silkeborg our paragon of virtue and our perfect husband Niels Ebbesen, has four children and a mistress who is expecting *(Gestures)* number five tonight.

VITINGHOFEN: You're lying, Father, and for that you will pay. This is not some pub – it's a battlefield. Steinisch – go and guard the house! Don't let anyone enter. Franz, Kunz – tie him up. Put the screws on!

*(STEINISCH exits. FRANZ and KUNZ throw LORENTS to the floor and apply thumbscrews.)*

LORENTS: Tie me up! Are you crazy! I'm a priest!

VITINGHOFEN: So, Father Lorents – where is Niels Ebbesen going?



LORENTS: I can't concentrate with these things on my hand!

VITINGHOFEN: Turn them hard – and fast!

*(LORENTS cries out in pain.)*

Well?

LORENTS: I don't know.

VITINGHOFEN: Again.

*(LORENTS is in worse pain.)*

Now?

LORENTS: I told you – I don't know.

VITINGHOFEN: Once more – turn it twice!

LORENTS: Noo!

VITINGHOFEN: Now do you remember?

LORENTS: No, no – I say to you, I don't know.

VITINGHOFEN: Do you swear to God you don't know?

LORENTS: I swear!

VITINGHOFEN: That you don't know.

LORENTS: That I don't know.

*(LORENTS passes out.)*

KUNZ: He's passed out, sir.

VITINGHOFEN: Throw some water on him. We have to get the truth out!

*(They throw water on LORENTS. He revives a bit.)*

Turn the screws again.

LORENTS: *(Shrieking in pain.)* I don't know – I don't know – I don't know.

*(RUTH enters and flies at the soldiers.)*

- RUTH: What is going on! Father Lorents! Father Lorents!
- VITINGHOFEN: Release him.
- RUTH: You – you who I have adored. You told me that the life of a warrior is deeds and achievements!
- VITINGHOFEN: You don't understand. The Count's life might be at stake. In war there are different rules than peacetime.
- RUTH: I thought you were a hero – now I see you are a monster's assistant.
- VITINGHOFEN: We're off – we'll try for Randers. If I can catch him before he gets there – then...
- (VITINGHOFEN, KUNZ and FRANZ exit. RUTH bends over to comfort LORENTS, and kisses his tortured hands.)*
- RUTH: Father Lorents. Poor Father.
- LORENTS: Did you see that He was here?
- RUTH: Yes, but now he's gone – far away. You have nothing to fear any longer
- LORENTS: - This was the second time in my life, in my miserable, pathetic life. Oh, what a joy and an honour.

## Act Four

*Count Gerhard's chambers. Late at night.*

- SERVANT: *(Enters.)* Master!

*(GERHARD groans.)*

It is time for Mass, my Lord.

- GERHARD: Yes. Yes. I am awake. *(Sits up in his nightshirt.)* It was late before I fell asleep. All those horses' hooves in the street - after I'd gotten used to rural peace. I want the noise investigated.

*(SERVANT helps GERHARD to dress. As he does, an altar is carried in by priests, with knights following. Among these are Ove HAASE, and GENERAL (of the Cavalry) von Dobelin. GERHARD kneels on the floor and one of the priests sings a verse in Latin. And then the altar is carried out again. The assemblage all seem eager to leave as well, but GERHARD stops the GENERAL, HAASE and the BISHOP.)*

Didn't he leave out parts of the prayer?

- BISHOP: No, Your Grace, we kept precisely to the prescribed ritual.
- GERHARD: It seemed short to me. One mustn't cheat God. Everyone else – but not God. Von Dobelin?
- GENERAL: Your Grace?
- GERHARD: I heard horses' hooves in the street after midnight – and a woman screaming. Look into it.
- GENERAL: It shall be done, Your Grace.
- GERHARD: Gallows.
- GENERAL: Yes, Your Grace.
- GERHARD: I demand quiet.
- GENERAL: Naturally, Your Grace.
- HAASE: Has the change of air done Your Grace good?
- GERHARD: I'm quite recovered now. My dear men, no one thought that would be the case. Except me. I had not finished my work - so I knew I wouldn't die. And what is my work? I will tell you. To found an empire based on loving kindness, justice and peace. I am the apostle of kindness, justice and peace because I make an end to everything that doesn't work. I am a man of justice, for I award victory to the strong. I am peace itself, for peace is only possible where one man rules and others obey him dumbly and blindly.
- (The men all bow. The JAILER enters.)*
- JAILER: Shall I bring the prisoner in, Your Grace?

- GERHARD: Yes. Gentlemen, I am having Niels Bugge brought in. We gave him safe conduct here – and he came. Such stupidity is unpardonable. I have decided his fate. General von Döbelin – will you tell him?
- GENERAL: An honour, Your Grace.
- HAASE: “Decided his fate”? Does that mean – you will? You intend to
- GERHARD: - Yes.
- HAASE: But, Your Grace – he is one of Denmark’s most distinguished young men!
- GERHARD: That’s precisely why. This race of weaklings doesn’t dare oppose me openly. They lie low and turn their backs on me. I’ll teach them manners. If I break one neck – thousands more will bend.
- HAASE: But Your Grace –
- (Silence - HAASE has gone too far.)*
- GERHARD: Ove Haase: you can read his sentence to him.
- HAASE: I?
- GERHARD: Yes. It will be at dawn. He can have a priest. Nothing more is needed. You can give me proof of your devotion, Haase.
- HAASE: As Your Grace commands.
- (BUGGE is led in by the JAILER.)*
- HAASE: Niels Bugge, I have been ordered to tell you that if you have anything to say to His Grace you may convey it through me.
- BUGGE: I came here trusting your promise of safe conduct. I have nothing to say to you as long as my hands are chained.
- HAASE: Defiant words won’t help you. Your attitude has had serious consequences for our people and our country. You have spread poison against the man who is our only saviour. The death you sought to bring on him will instead be meted out to you, in accordance with the law.
- BUGGE: Death? What do you mean – death?

HAASE: I have been ordered to tell you – that it has been decided – at dawn

BUGGE: - Will you – will you - Your Grace, no! You gave me safe conduct here. I am young. I have a life ahead of me – you can't take that away from me. Remember how young I am – I haven't had time to live!

HAASE: There will be a priest to hear your confession.

BUGGE: Confession!?! What do I have to confess? Yes, my sin and that of my people – that we believed too trustingly and that we hesitated too long. If circumstances had been different I would be standing here with a weapon in my hand, instead of in chains.

*(GERHARD gestures to dismiss him.)*

Ove Haase – you're related to Niels Ebbesen. There is one who I'd like to send a greeting to. *(Reconsiders.)* No wait, not a greeting through you. You are enjoying the country's shame. You have become great by its misfortune. There is the stench of rotting flesh around you – soon you'll be gnawing on my corpse as well.

GERHARD: Take him away.

BUGGE: No need to use force. I know how to die if need be. It is just so sad – I feel it not only as my death but my whole people's death. No – no. I will believe in a miracle I couldn't serve my country with my life. Maybe I can serve it with my death.

*(BUGGE exits, followed by GENERAL von Döbelin.  
Sounds from outside will rise under the GERHARD:)*

GERHARD: This is what makes me strong! Man must live on the blood of man! I feel young again. I feel the blood welling through my veins, new waves of strength filling my heart and soul. Great new deeds rise before me. Conquest after conquest. The world shall struggle and quake in blood and tears until at last it lies in my hands, quiet and obedient. What is that commotion in the street?

EBBESEN: *(From below.)* A horseman with a message for your Grace.

GERHARD: Who is it?

EBBESEN: *(Disguising his voice, lest HAASE recognize it.)* I bring news! Your Grace's troops have taken Ribe, and all of Kolding is in flames!

GERHARD: Good news! Invite that good man to come in.

*(GENERAL exits.)*

If it continues like this we shall take Sweden before harvest. This is good! This is very good!

*(Niels EBBESEN enters, with two men.)*

Who are you?

EBBESEN: I am Niels Ebbesen. They wouldn't let me in – forgive me for using trickery to gain admittance.

GERHARD: Well well. So you're Niels Ebbesen. I know what you've come for. To beg your people's freedom. Well, here's my answer. They shall be placed in the most dangerous posts. Not one of them shall come home alive. But you shall live to see it, and for that torment alone I won't send you to the gallows.

EBBESEN: Count, you can string up thieves and rogues but

GERHARD: - I am not used to being interrupted. Ebbesen, to my mind, you are typical of your people. You are obsessed with the same miserable conviction that the world turns of its own accord. You want to win through evasion, by staying out of things. You keep your mind on small things, not on great. No people in the world could be more different from me and what I stand for. Oh, you were worth something once, but it would be ridiculous to think that that would entitle you to hold those lands of which you've shown yourselves unworthy for so long. Can you give me one example of a Danish act of daring? You belong to the past, and God has entrusted to me the task of digging your grave.

EBBESEN: By what right do you, a foreigner, judge our people?

GERHARD: By right of having defeated you. Right is on the victor's side.

EBBESEN: Very well, since you asked for some bold deed...

GERHARD: And that's what you've come to show me? Oh, this is rich. Yes, I saw when you came in how your guilty conscience and your little

sheep's eyes squinted over to the head of my bed, where you saw my sword was kept. I, Count Gerhard of Holstein, in whom God dwells – and you, Niels Ebbesen, thought you would kill me. You make me laugh. Well, here I am, unarmed, still in my nightshirt. *(Knowing that the way to his sword is blocked by HAASE, PRIESTS and others:)* And there is my sword. Take it then, take it, take it and show us your great deed of daring.

EBBESEN: *(Draws his own sword.)* I don't need to borrow. I have my own.

GERHARD: What's this! Haven't I forbidden...? An armed man in my presence. Remove him!

HAASE: Niels, get out of here.

EBBESEN: Don't meddle in our affairs, Ove. We are related, you and I.

HAASE: *(Takes GERHARD's sword and attacks EBBESEN.)* But he is my Master.

EBBESEN: Then go the way of your Master.

*(EBBESEN cuts HAASE down.)*

Come here, my men – now it must happen.

PRIESTS etc. There are more of them! To arms! Hurry!

*(PRIESTS et. al. flee the room.)*

GERHARD: *(Trying to pull the sword from the dead HAASE, without success.)* Niels Ebbesen – you won't make your case like that. You'll be broken on the wheel.

*(EBBESEN advances on him.)*

Don't look at me with those wolf's eyes. Matters can be arranged. Bugge can arbitrate between us. Remember, I am a stranger, ill and defenseless. By what right...

EBBESEN: *(Raises sword.)* Right is on the victor's side

*(VITINGHOFEN dashes in.)*

VITINGHOFEN: I am coming, Your Grace! Hold out! I am here!

GERHARD: Vitinghofen! Thank God. Cut him down. Cut him down!

*(EBBESEN's men kill VITINGHOFEN.)*

Ebbesen – I will leave Denmark tomorrow.

EBBESEN: No – you're leaving Denmark now.

*(EBBESEN cuts down GERHARD.)*

JESPER: Master, they are sounding the drums.

CLAUS: The stairs are still free.

EBBESEN: Yes, yes. I'm coming. I'm coming. *(Exits.)*

*(GERHARD has been left alone.)*

GERHARD: It was just a scratch. It doesn't matter. Thank you, Lord. I knew you were protecting me. Why is it getting so dark? Why isn't anybody helping me? Not alone in the dark. Help! Help! Just a scratch. Ha! The fool – he thought he could get rid of me, whom none can kill. I am the eternal – eternal as the darkness... the darkness... darkness.

## Act Five

*Growing light. A road near GERHARD's headquarters. Voices and horse's hooves are heard, offstage.*

VOICES: *(Offstage)* The Danes are after us! Run! Run! / But there are only a few of them/ There are thousands/ Run/

*(As the noise quietens, the light comes up on RUTH, GERTRUDE and LORENTS.)*

RUTH: Mother, let's sit for a moment and rest. You can't walk any further.

GERTRUDE: What do I matter? The worse it is for me, the better. I want to go on. I have to find him.

LORENTS: We have no idea where we are. We may be getting further away from him. Let's wait till there's more light.



- GERTRUDE: I've waited all my life – I can't wait any longer. We must find his body before they dishonour it.
- RUTH: Be quiet, mother – I can't bear to hear you say that. Father isn't dead – you don't know that.
- GERTRUDE: He and a handful of farmers against the Count and his army? It's madness! And it's my fault. I plagued and provoked him. If only I can find his body and beg its forgiveness.
- RUTH: He isn't dead – he can't be. And if Vitinghofen got there – if it was he who's done it, then I'll lose my mind from sorrow and shame.
- LORENTS: Stop all this crying – Niels Ebbesen is not dead.
- GERTRUDE: What do you know of this?
- LORENTS: And even if he is, then you should strangle your sorrow in pride. He fell on the field of honour.
- GERTRUDE: Empty phrases.
- LORENTS: How do you want me to comfort you? You yourself always said
- GERTRUDE: - I don't know any longer what I've "always said". I only know that there's nothing in the world I wouldn't give to have him with me again.
- LORENTS: Would you give Denmark?
- GERTRUDE: Don't ask me that.
- LORENTS: But if he managed to do that deed at the cost of his life – would you have it undone?
- GERTRUDE: You mustn't ask me that. I'm ashamed of myself. Have I failed you in life, Niels – do I now also fail you in death? For it is right what you have done. And could one die again, and if you'd asked me, "Gertrude, should I ride?" I would answer, "Yes, Niels, you should ride." And then I would put my arms around you to stop you from going.
- RUTH: What shall we do, Father Lorents? Mother can't hold herself up any longer.

LORENTS: What shall we do? What can I do with these? (*Holds up damaged hands.*) There's a house over there – lean against me, Gertrude.

RUTH: Mother, hold on to me, I shall be strong. Oh Lord, Mighty God, let Vitinghofen be dead. But not father. I am torn to pieces, Father Lorents, torn to pieces.

LORENTS: Your sorrow's none of my concern. You're young, you'll get married some day and call your first son Niels – but your poor mother...

*(RUTH and GERTRUDE have exited. EBBESEN enters, deathly tired. He draws his sword and looks at it, then tries to wipe the blood off it, on to the grass.)*

Niels? Is it a vision? Are you really alive? What happened – you – gave up?

EBBESEN: His blood was as red as my own.

LORENTS: Whose blood was red? You did it? He's dead? The Bald One is dead? Gertrude! Ruth! Everyone! Come hear the news! The Bald One is no more! Denmark is free of him – Denmark is free!

*(GERTRUDE and RUTH have rushed back in. Other people will begin gathering, including a FARMWIFE from the nearby house.)*

GERTRUDE: Niels! Niels, is it really you? Is this your living hand in mine?

RUTH: - Father! Father – is it true? Did you do it?

EBBESEN: Yes, I have done it. There is blood on my honest sword. There is a stain on my shield and on Denmark's.

GERTRUDE: You're alive! I have you back!

LORENTS: Listen, Niels. I don't understand – oh by God – yes I do – you've had nothing to eat or drink. Here, take this, drink. Hey! (*To the FARMWIFE.*) Do you have any food?

FARMWIFE: Just two loaves of bread for my children. But if it is true that you have killed The Bald One, then you will get one of them.

LORENTS: Did you hear that, Niels? Are you beginning to understand – you've done a deed that puts you on first name terms with

Absalom himself. Yet you're sitting there as if all the sins of the world are on your back.

EBBESEN: I struck him down without a fight.

LORENTS: May God punish you for your sinful sense of justice. Struck him down with a fight, indeed. We're at war! A war he brought into our country. There's not a crime he hasn't committed against us. His sentence was pronounced from above. You just carried it out. If you regret that, then find comfort that today there is joy in Heaven because there is one less Devil on earth.

*(The FARMWIFE has brought EBBESEN bread. The awed onlookers are pointing at EBBESEN. BUGGE enters.)*

BUGGE: Ruth – look at your father! He has saved my life! He's saved our people! Listen, people of Jutland! Now the way lies open before us – it's a bloody and stony way, but now we have the courage to follow it. You have struck down our enemy, Niels Ebbesen, but more than that, you've given us back our courage! So lead us now, and through the centuries, so that whenever Denmark sinks, you can come and raise us up again.

VOICES: Yes/Show us the way/Lead us/However hard it is, we're with you

EBBESEN: Fellow countrymen! Some day there'll come a great day of peace when we and our neighbours will live side by side in fellowship. Therefore both our peoples must continue. And therefore I promise you – I won't return to my plough and my children

*(EBBESEN stops at this and looks at GERTRUDE. She puts her hand to her heart, smiles at him and nods.)*

GERTRUDE: Yes, Niels.

EBBESEN: I won't rest until we have driven all those who seek our destruction back over the border or under the earth, whichever they choose. For free we must be to live.

TROELS: Denmark will thank God to eternity for this day. He will reward you. We can't.

EBBESEN: *(Embraces GERTRUDE.)* I have had enough reward, Troels, the best one of all – my children can grow up to be Danes.

**The End.**

