

Scene 4

(On an easel, to one side of the main stage, sits a large Viking shield. Pinned to the shield by a dagger is a sign ‘Focus Group Meeting’, written in blood! A semi-circle of stools and/or benches is arranged centre-stage.)

Narrator #1 So, with more great footage captured and some more artefacts ‘borrowed’, Jill, Fred and Alexa were on the move again.

Narrator #2 Leaving Ancient Egypt far behind, they arrived back in Britain, in the year 930. This was the settlement at York, now occupied by the Vikings and re-named Jorvik.

Narrator #3 In their very first raid on Britain in 793, the Vikings had looted the monastery on the holy island of Lindisfarne, stealing treasures, murdering many monks and enslaving the rest.

Narrator #4 In the following century, from their homes in Scandinavia, they had made repeated raids and invasions, until they ruled a large part of Britain which was named Danelaw. They had a fearsome reputation!

(Jill, Fred and Alexa enter and stand to one side.)

Alexa Welcome to Viking Britain!

Jill Wow! The Vikings! They have a fearsome reputation.

Alexa Indeed they do, and here they come! Cameras at the ready!

(Jill and Fred hold up their phones. The Vikings enter and occupy the semi-circle of stools. Some of them ‘grrrr’ and growl!)

Ingrid Thank you everybody. If you could just pipe down with the grrrr-ing and growling, we can start this session of our focus group. Ragnar, please! You’re especially growly this morning!

Ragnar Oh, give it a rest Ingrid. We’re Vikings – it’s what we do! We’re vicious warriors, we pillage, we loot, we murder! Back me up here, Sven.

Sven He’s right, Ingrid. Where do you think I acquired the name Sven Spine-Stretcher from? The last poor Saxon who crossed me, *(miming a stretch)* his feet ended up in one village and his head in another! Grrrr!

Björn And they don’t call me Björn Blood-Beard for nothing, you know! I mean, come on Ingrid, the very name Viking comes from the Scandinavian word ‘vik’, meaning pirate! We’ve got an image to uphold!

Ingrid Which is the very reason for forming this focus group! Since we’ve settled in Britain and more-or-less squashed all Saxon revolts, it’s time to change that image. I know you agree with me, Gertrude, don’t you?

Gertrude I certainly do. Unless we do something soon, we’ll forever go down in history as foul-tempered, blood-thirsty, crude, uncultured and scruffy delinquents. We’re better than that, surely?

- Astrid** That’s a bit rich coming from you! Gertrude Gut-Slicer was your name back in Denmark! The most savage of all us Shield Maidens!
- Ingrid** Ahem! I beg your pardon, Astrid? Shield Maidens? Care to enlighten me?
- Astrid** Gertrude and I were part of a female warrior group called the Shield Maidens, feared throughout Europe! We cracked a few skulls in our day!
- Sven** It’s true! We always felt a bit more confident going into battle alongside the Shield Maidens. They put most of us blokes to shame!
- Ingrid** I’m absolutely speechless! Here am I, trying to promote a softer, friendlier image of our people, only to find out that the women like to tear it up as much as the men! *(Freya raises her hand)* Yes, Freya?
- Freya** Well, how come the sign you made *(pointing at the sign)* is pinned to a shield, with a dagger and written in blood? That hardly says ‘soft’ or ‘friendly’, does it?
- Ingrid** Err, yes, I made the mistake of asking Magnus here...Magnus Monk-Mauler...to set up the meeting area. I should have known better. At least it’s spelled correctly.
- Magnus** Don’t sound so surprised! I’m not illiterate! In fact, in my spare time I’m a poet. I hope one day that my work will be read by future generations, who will realise what a sensitive and civilised bunch we really were.
- Ingrid** Well done Magnus. Maybe you’d like to read us one of your poems?
- Magnus** I’d be delighted! Here’s a little something I actually wrote back in 922, when we’d just invaded that place in Ireland...oh, what was it called...? Ah yes, Limerick. *(clearing throat)* Here goes....
There once was a Viking called Lars,
Whose beard was a little bit sparse,
But we’re told he was blessed
With much hair on his chest,
And a few luscious tufts on his...
- Ingrid** *(interrupting)* AH, YES! Thank you Magnus! Not quite what I was expecting, but it’s certainly an improvement on murder and pillage! Now, perhaps ...*(sniffing)*...hang on, what is that awful smell?
- Stefan** Ah, sorry. That’s me. I just can’t seem to stop the old feet getting a bit whiffy. I guess Stefan Stink-Foot is a name I’m never going to get rid of.
- Ragnar** Well, listen old pal, me and a few of the lads have started going every Saturday to Freya’s new beauty parlour. We get our hair washed and brushed and our beards plaited. You can have a bath there too!
- Freya** Yeah, come along Stefan. We’ll sort you out. It’s a little-known fact that us Vikings love to look and smell nice, but maybe it’s something we should start letting more people know about.

- Ingrid** Now we’re talking! Brilliant! This is just what we need. Any more ideas to give us a better reputation?
- Gertrude** Weaving? *(touching the shawl she’s wearing)* Look at this shawl I made. I bet if we start marketing things like this, we’ll soon become known for our skills with the loom rather than with the axe.
- Ingrid** Excellent! I can feel our history being rewritten as we speak. What next?
- Björn** Well, how about showing off what skilled artists and craftsmen we are. *(showing an ornate brooch and bracelet he is wearing)* Look at the sort of thing I’ve been knocking up in my workshop in the evenings. Pretty, isn’t it?
- Ingrid** It certainly is, Björn! Come on gang, what else have we got?
- Freya** Well, how about we show people that we have a sense of humour?
- All** How?
- Freya** *(taking out two horns and holding them to her head)* Horns on our helmets! What do you think? They’re fun, aren’t they! They show that we don’t take life too seriously. If we wear these, people won’t be so scared of us.
- (They all think for a second, then fall about in fits of laughter, all saying things like ‘How ridiculous!’, ‘That will never catch on!’, ‘We’ll look like cows!’, ‘What a daft idea!’)*
- Ingrid** Nice try, Freya, but I think that’s going a bit far. The idea is we want people to like us, but we still want them to respect us. I think we’ll put a pin in that one for the time being. Anything else before we finish?
- Stefan** Errr, well there’s music. Being able to bang out a nice tune is always a good way of showing sensitivity. *(taking some sheets of parchment from inside his cloak and handing them around)* And it just so happens that I’m a bit of an amateur singer/songwriter myself. Here, take one each and join in...just a little ditty that might help everyone look at us in a new light....

Song **When You’re A Viking**

*Track 6 - vocal demo
Track 27 - backing track
Lyrics p34*

(As the song finishes, the Vikings hold a pose. Jill and Fred rush over and stand in the middle of the group. They hold up their phones for a selfie!)

Jill Say cheese, everyone!

*(The Vikings are paralysed in surprise as the selfies are taken. Fred grabs the shield, they dash back to Alexa and, as they touch her hand, we hear the **vortex** sound effect (track 28). Jill and Fred’s ‘Whoaaaaaaaaa’ again ends on the final ‘ping’ of the sound effect and they exit.)*

Ragnar *(as if coming out of a trance)* Did you see that? Were they Saxons?!

Astrid They weren’t like any Saxons I’ve seen before!

Sven Whatever they were, I reckon they need taking down a peg or two!

Björn Well, what are we waiting for?! Grrrrrrrr.

(All but Ingrid flex their muscles, give a loud ‘Grrrrr’ and exit after Jill and Fred. Ingrid is alone.)

Ingrid *(calling after them)* Errr, guys! Didn’t we decide that maybe violence wasn’t reallyoh, whatever! *(flexing and running off)* Grrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrrr!

*(The **intro music** then plays (**track 29**) and the stage is made ready for the next scene.)*

.....end of script sample.....