

life. In Nidaros I escaped unharmed from the Baglers¹ when they set fire to the town and slew so many of our men, while King Inge himself only saved his life with difficulty by climbing on to his ship by the anchor cable.

Margrete. You had a hard bringing-up.

Haakon (looking at her fixedly). Something tells me now that you might have made it less hard for me.

Margrete. I?

Haakon. You might have been such a good foster-sister to me all the years we were growing up together.

Margrete. But things fell out otherwise.

Haakon. Yes—things fell out otherwise. We used to sit looking at each other, each in our own corner, but we seldom spoke. (*Impatiently.*) Why is he so long? (*IVAR BODDE enters, bringing writing materials.*) At last! Give me the things. (*Sits down at the table and writes. Presently SKULE comes in, followed by DAGFINN, BISHOP NICHOLAS and VEGARD VÆRADAL. HAAKON looks up and lays down his pen.*) My lord earl, do you know what I am writing here? (*SKULE goes nearer to him.*) It is to my mother. I thank her for all her goodness to me, and kiss her a thousand times—in my letter, you understand. She shall be sent eastwards, to the province of Borga, where she shall live in full royal state.

Skule. Do you not mean to keep her here in your palace?

Haakon. She is too dear to me, my lord. A king must have none about him that are too dear to him; he must act with free hands, and stand alone—he must never be led nor tempted. There is so much to be mended in Norway. (*Resumes his writing.*)

Vegard Væradal (in a low tone, to BISHOP NICHOLAS). That was my advice about the Queen Mother.

Bishop Nicholas. I recognised your hand in it at once.

Vegard Væradal. But one good turn deserves another, you know.

Bishop Nicholas. Wait. I keep my promises.

Haakon (giving a parchment to IVAR BODDE). Fold

¹ The followers of Bishop Nicholas. The name was derived from the Latin *baculus*, the bishop's pastoral staff.