

PLAY EIGHT- THE BUILDING OF NOAH'S ARK

(The Shipwrights)

DEUS

First when I wrought this world so wide,

Wood and wind and waters *wan,

(*grey-blue)

Heaven and hell was not to hide,

With herbs and grass thus I began.

In endless bliss to be and bide,

And to my likeness made I man,

Lord and sire on *ilke a side

(*every)

Of all middle-earth I made him then.

A woman also with him wrought I,

All in law to lead their life.

I bade them wax and multiply

To fulfil this world, without-en strife.

*Sithen has men wrought so woefully

(*since then)

And sin is now reigning so rife,

That me repents and rues *forthi

(*therefore)

That ever I made either man or wife.

But since they make me to repent

My work I wrought so well and true,

Without-en cease will not assent

But ever is bound more *bale to brew.

(*torment)

But for their sins they shall be *shent

(*destroyed)

And *fordone wholly, hide and hue.

(*undone)

Of them shall no more be meant,

But work this work I will all new.

All new I will this world be wrought
 And waste away that *wonnys therein; (*dwells, lives)
 A flood above them shall be brought
 To (de)stroy middle-earth, both more and *min. (*less)
 But Noah alone, leave shall it not,
 To all be sunken for their sin;
 He and his sons, thus is my thought,
 And with their wives away shall *wynne. (*escape, but sense of
 success/winning)
 Noah, my servant, *sad and clean, (*sombre, sober)
 For thou art stable in *stead and stall, (*home and stable- i.e. everywhere)
 I will thou work, without-en wane,
 A work to save thyself withal.

NOE

O, mercy Lord, what may this mean?

DEUS

I am thy God of great and small
 Is coming to tell thee of thy *teyn (*pain, fate)
 And what *ferly shall after fall. (*marvel)

NOE

Ah, Lord, I *lowe thee loud and still (*laud, love, praise)
 That unto me, wretch unworthy,
 Thus with thy word, as is thy will,
 Likes to appear thus *propryly. (*personally)

DEUS

Noah, as I bid thee, do fulfil.
 A ship I will have wrought in *hie; (*haste)

*All if thou can little skill,

(*i.e. Even if you have little skill)

Take it in hand, for help shall I.

NOE

Ah, worthy Lord, would thou take heed,

I am full old and out of *qwarte,

(*health)

That me *liste do no day's deed

(*desires)

But if great *mystir me got.

(*need)

DEUS

Begin my work behoves thee need,

And thou will pass from pains smart;

I shall thee succour and thee *speed

(*help, hasten)

And give thee *hele in head and heart.

(*health)

I see such ire among mankind

That of their works I will take *wreke,

(*reckoning, vengeance)

They shall be sunken for their sin;

Therefore a ship I will thou make.

Thou and thy sons shall be therein,

They shall be saved for thy sake.

Therefore go boldly and begin

Thy measures and thy marks to take.

NOE

Ah, Lorde, thy will shall ever be wrought

Us counsel gives of *ilka clerk,

(*each)

But first of shipcraft can I right nought;

Of their making have I no mark.

DEUS

Noah, I bid thee heartily have no thought:

I shall thee *wish in all thy work, (*guide)

And even to it till end be wrought;

Therefore to me take heed and hark.

Take high trees and hew them clean,

All be square and not of *skwyn, (*askew)

Make them of boards and wands between,

Thus *thrivingly and not over thin. (*skilfully)

Look that the seams be subtly *seyn (*sealed)

And nailed well that they not twin.

Thus I devise *ilk deal **bedeyne; (*each) (**together)

Therefore do forth, and leave thy din.

Three hundred cubits it shall be long

And fifty broad, all for thy bliss,

The height of thirty cubits strong,

Look *lely that thou think on this. (*surely, diligently)

Thus give I thee *grathly ere I **gang (*quickly, skilfully) (**go)

Thy measures that thou do not miss.

Look now that thou work not wrong;

Thus *wittely since I thee **wish. (*intelligently) (**direct)

NOE

Ah, blissful Lord, that all may *beylde, (*defend, shield)

I thank thee heartily both ever and *ay, (*ever)

Five hundred winters I am of eld,

Methink the years as yesterday.

Full weak I was and all unwieldy.

My weariness is went away,
To work this work here in this field
All be myself I will *assay. (*attempt)

To hew this board I will begin,
But first I will *lygge on my line. (*lay)
Now *bud it be all in like thin(ness), (*must)
So that it neither twine nor twin. (i.e. separate or warp)
Thus shall I join it with a *gynn, (*engine, tool)
And *sadly set it with *cement fine; (*firmly, tightly)
Thus shall I work it both more and *min (*less)
Through teaching of God, master mine.

...*LINE MISSING*...

More subtly can no man sew:
It shall be clinked ever *ilka **dele, (*each) (**part)
With nails that are both noble and new;
Thus shall I fast(en) it fast to *feele. (*feel, or possibly 'fellow')
Take here a rivet and there a *rove, (*i.e. roving- twisted fabric)
With the *bow there now work I well. (*ship's bow)
This work I warrant both good and true.

Full true it is who will take (at)tent,
But fast my force begins to fold;
A hundred winters away is went
Since I began this work, full *grathely told, (*quickly)
And in such *travail for to be bent (*hard labour)
Is hard to him that is thus old.
But he that to me this messages sent,
He will be my *beylde, thus am I bowed. (*shield, comfort)

DEUS

Noah, this work is near an end

And wrought right as I warned thee,

But yet in manner it must be mend;

Therefore this lesson learn at me.

For diverse beasts therein must *lende

(*live)

And fowls also in their *degree,

(*appropriate place)

And for that they shall not same blend,

Diverse *stages must there be.

(*platforms, levels)

And when that it is ordained so

With diverse stalls and stages *sere,

(*separate)

Of *ilka kind thou shall take two,

(*each, every)

Both male and female *fare in **fere.

(*travel) (**fellowship)

Thy wife, thy sons, with thee shall go,

And their three wives, withouten *were:

(*doubt, wavering)

Their eight bodies withouten more

Shall thus be saved in this manner.

Therefore to my bidding be *bayne:

(*bound, obedient)

'Til all be harboured haste thee fast

After the seventh day shall it rain

'Til forty days be fully past.

Take with thee gear, such as may *gayne,

(*protect, be needed)

To man and beast their lives to last.

I shall thee succour for certain

'Til all thy care away be cast.

NOE

Ah, Lord, that *ilka **mis may mend,
I *lowe thy *lare, both loud and still;
I thank thee both with heart and hand
That me will help from anger's hill.

(*each, every) (**misery)

About this work now must me wend
With beasts and fowls my ship to fill.

(*love, laud, praise) (*law, teachings)

He that to me this craft has *kenned,
He *wish us with his worthy will.

(*known, taught)

(*directs)