

MIDSOMMAR

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1 **EXT. WOODS - HÄLSINGLAND - DAY** 1

Hälsingland, North Sweden. We cycle through a series of beautifully composed midday landscapes. None of them feature people or human habitation.

A spare Swedish lullaby plays over this quiet montage. This is the song of the Hårgas. When it concludes, we CUT HARD TO:

2 **EXT. HOUSE - MINNESOTA - NIGHT** 2

A beautiful suburban home, bathed in vivid moonlight. The neighborhood is very quiet.

3 **INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT** 3

A MAN and WOMAN (early sixties) lay asleep in bed. They are extremely still.

The PHONE rings. The Man and Woman do not stir. After a few rings, the ANSWERING MACHINE takes it.

 ANSWERING MACHINE (V.O.)
 Hello. You've reached --

 MAN & WOMAN (V.O.)
 -- the Ardor residence.

 ANSWERING MACHINE (V.O.)
 Please leave your message at the tone. When you're finished with your message, press pound.

BEEP. Enter the voice of a YOUNG WOMAN:

 YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)
 Hey mom and dad, it's Dani. Sorry I'm calling so late. I'm just checking in to make sure everyone's okay. I got kind of a scary email from Terri and it sounded like you guys were having some sort of conflict? Anyway, I just got a little worried, so call me when you can, and if there's anything I can do, just please know that I'm here. Okay. All right. I love you.

4 **INT. BEDROOM - BROOKLYN, NY - NIGHT** 4

The young woman lowers the cell from her ear. This is DANI (25), a beautiful but delicate brunette. She hangs up, and turns to her laptop. An EMAIL from Terri Ardor, titled "dear dani," is displayed. It reads:

i cant anymore - everything's black - mom and dad are coming too. goodbye.

Dani stares at this, anxiety rising. She picks up her phone, hesitates, and then calls Christian.

Four rings. CHRISTIAN (25) answers. *The rest of this scene will be shot in a VERY TIGHT CLOSE-UP of Dani.*

 CHRISTIAN (V.O.)
 Hi...!

Dani affects a care-free tone:

DANI
Hey baby. What you up to?

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)
Oh, just smoked some resin at Mark's
and now we're getting pizza.

DANI
Oh nice.

In the b.g., we hear a young man repeating "hi Dani, hi Dani,
hi Dani..."

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)
Yeah - he's saying hi right now,
over and over.

DANI
Hi Mark!

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)
(off-phone)
"Hi Mark."

DANI
So I was just calling to see if you
were still wanting to get together.

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)
Oh - did we talk about doing
something tonight?

DANI
I mean, not concretely. I was just
seeing.

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)
(ambivalent)
Uh, well - okay. Yeah. I should be
able to swing by.

DANI
All right...!

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)
Yeah. Okay... How's the
sister situation?

DANI
Well. I've now sent her three
emails and still no response... I'm
starting to get a little nervous.

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)
I'm sure it's fine.

DANI
Yeah. Probably. I hope so.

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)
She does this every other day,
Dani. And only because you let her.

DANI
Well, I don't LET her. She's
bipolar.

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)
I know, but you do, though,
babe. You go straight to
crisis mode.

DANI
Well - but she's my *sister*. And even you
admit this last email was different...

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)
Okay, but *is* it, though? It's still
another clear ploy for attention -
just like every *other* panic attack
she's given you.

Dani looks like she wants to argue with this. She stifles it.

DANI
Okay. Yeah. You're right. You are right.

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)
The more you respond, the more she's
encouraged to keep this crap up.

DANI
No, I *do* know you're right. I just
needed to be reminded. Thank you.
I'm really lucky to have you.

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)
Me too.

DANI (CONT'D)
I love you.

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)
...So do I.

DANI
Okay. See you later?

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)
Yup.

DANI
Okay. "Bye Mark!"

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)
"Bye Mark."

DANI
All right. Love you. Bye.

Dani hangs up. Her eyes are wide with insecurity.

5

INT. KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

5

Dani stands in the kitchen, mid-phone conversation.
FRAUGHT. She paces when she's not speaking.

DANI
It's just in his tone - you can hear it.
It's like he's trying to work up the
nerve to say something and I just keep
staving it off.

GIRLFRIEND (V.O.)
So *don't* stave him off. Be direct!
Confront him!

DANI
 Well - what if I scared him?
 I'm always roping him into my
 family crap...
 I'm always *leaning* on him! I
 tell him everything!
 I even called him today *in*
tears because my sister sent
 me another scary email. What
 if I'm scaring him off?

GIRLFRIEND (V.O.)

Oh - *how* do you rope him in?
 That's what he's there for!

GIRLFRIEND (V.O.)
 What did your sister write?

DANI
 Oh - *just some ominous bullshit!* She
does it all the time! It's torture, and
 I've been completely leaning on him for
 support! What if I overwhelmed him and
 now he thinks I have too much baggage?

Dani opens a prescription bottle of ATIVAN. She pops one.

GIRLFRIEND (V.O.)
 Well, if that's the case, then good
 riddance! Right?

DANI
 No! Not if I went too far! What if I
 leaned too heavily?

Dani has returned to her laptop.

GIRLFRIEND (V.O.)
 You didn't! He should *be* there when
 you need him.

Dani begins hastily composing an EMAIL to her sister Terri.

DANI
 But what if I need him too
often? If it becomes a chore?

GIRLFRIEND (V.O.)
 Then he's not the right guy.
 Because it shouldn't ever be
 a chore. Would it be a chore
 if he leaned on you?

Dani breaks from writing to respond:

DANI
 But he never asks for *anything* from
 me! I've never even seen him cry!
 So I'm the *only* one leaning!

GIRLFRIEND (V.O.)
 Or the only one opening up! The
 only one making yourself
vulnerable. That's intimacy.

As the friend says that, Dani finishes typing. Her email reads:
 "PLEASE write me back, Terri. You can't just write me something
 like that and then disappear. I'm worried sick and I think my
 boyfriend is breaking up with me and I'm freaking out. Please
 write back. Please."

Dani's phone beeps with an INCOMING CALL. It's an UNKNOWN NUMBER.

INT. PIZZA PARLOR - NEW YORK, NY - NIGHT

A grubby pizza parlor. Outside the window looms a purple NYU sign.

CHRISTIAN, very handsome and fit, sits at a booth. Beside him are his friends MARK (26, droll, shaggy hair), JOSH (27, a skinny, sometimes snobbish academic), and PELLE (26), a nice-looking Swedish exchange student. Pelle doodles on his napkin (drawing the flowers on the table).

Mark is currently lecturing a despondent Christian.

MARK

Dude: you need to stop sitting on the fence with this.

CHRISTIAN

But what if I end up regretting it a week later, and then I can't get her back?

MARK

You don't want her back!

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

I *might*!

MARK

So then you can bitch to *us* for that week about how much you regret it, and we'll be like "Dude: you've been wanting out of this absurd relationship for the last year," and you'll be like "oh shit, that's right" and then you can find some new chick who actually likes sex and who *doesn't* drag you through a million hoops a day.

Christian is thinking about this. Extremely conflicted.

JOSH

Do you think a masochistic part of you is playing *this* drama out to distract you from the work you *actually* need to be doing?

CHRISTIAN

(prepared to be offended)

And what work do I *actually* need to do, Josh?

JOSH

Uhhh - your *prospectus* maybe? I dunno. Your *PhD*...?

Christian *clearly* doesn't want to be told his priorities by Josh. Before he can snap back, an attractive WAITRESS (early 20s) brings over the check.

WAITRESS

Whenever you guys are ready.

PELLE

(with Swedish accent)

Thank you.

She SMILES -- at Christian.

WAITRESS

Thank you.

She HOLDS the smile with Christian and walks bashfully off. Mark definitely caught that.

MARK
Dude. You could be getting that girl pregnant right now.

PELLE
And don't forget all the Swedish women you can impregnate in June.

MARK (CONT'D)
Yeah, dude - don't forget all the Swedish milkmaids.

Christian's PHONE rings. He checks. It's DANI. He deflates.

MARK (CONT'D)
Who is that?

Christian doesn't respond.

MARK (CONT'D)
That's not her again? Seriously?

Christian lets the call go.

MARK (CONT'D)
That's ridiculous, dude. She needs a therapist.

CHRISTIAN
She has one.

MARK
So she should call *him!* That's insane, dude. She's using you.

The phone starts ringing again. Christian checks it. "*Dani again.*"

MARK (CONT'D)
Oh my God.

Christian answers. He rises from the booth to get some privacy.

CHRISTIAN
Hello?

On the other end: an extended, agonized MOAN.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
Dani?

DANI (V.O.)
(distantly)
...no, no, no, no, no, no, no...

CHRISTIAN
Sweetheart? What's going on?

But now there's only heavy, frightening CRYING on the other end. It's a deep, horrible cry. One of pure animal grief.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
(now scared)
What's happening, baby? Please talk to me.

The crying has curdled into a sustained WAIL OF ANGUISH.

7 **INT. GARAGE - MINNESOTA - NIGHT** 7

The house from the beginning (scene 2).

Two CARS are parked. Their engines hum quietly. A FIREFIGHTER opens one car's door and turns OFF the ignition.

We now reveal that the end of a GARDENING HOSE has been taped to one car's EXHAUST PIPE. A second hose has been taped to the other car's exhaust pipe. Both hoses TRAIL out of the garage and INTO the house...

8 **INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS** 8

One gardening hose leads to a BEDROOM DOOR. The door is now open, but the end of the hose has been TAPED to the bottom...

9 **INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS** 9

The bedroom of the sleeping MAN and WOMAN (in their 60s, from the beginning). It is very clear now that they are DEAD.

Two police officers survey the room.

HARD CUTS to the man and woman being ZIPPED UP into body bags.

10 **INT. TERRI'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME** 10

TERRI (24), Dani's sister, sits on the floor of her bedroom, beside her desk. The end of the other gardening hose has been DUCT-TAPED TO HER MOUTH. A mess of vomit has dried around the edges of the hastily applied tape.

On Terri's desk: her LAPTOP. It is open to the EMAIL THREAD between her and Dani. In the bottom right corner of the screen: "*3 New Messages from Dani Ardor.*"

11 **EXT. STREET - BROOKLYN, NY - NIGHT** 11

Dreamy snowfall in Brooklyn.

Christian, bundled up in layers, RUNS down the street. He's approaching DANI'S BUILDING, but even as he rushes, he's not going as fast as he possibly could. *There's an ambivalence in his stride.*

He enters the front door of Dani's building.

12 **INT. DANI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT** 12

Wide on the LIVING ROOM. We're centered on the COUCH, where Christian sits. Dani has crumbled there, her head shaking violently against Christian's lap as she WEEPS. Behind them: a WINDOW showcases snowfall against the dark night.

Dani's sobs are possessed of a profound despair. It's so intense that it looks painful - dangerous even.

We are pushing in on this, toward them. Christian's eyes are wide with worry. A worry that goes beyond Dani's well-being. He stares into space, imagining a future that he's being chained to. He looks TRAPPED.

We continue pushing toward them until we have pushed PAST them. The window behind them FILLS our frame.

Through the window - HEAVY SNOW raging in a black vacuum. We hold on this as our **OPENING CREDITS ROLL**, accompanied by intense, groaning score.

After the credits, we SLAM CUT TO:

DAYLIGHT. We are still looking out the window, but it's now late afternoon. LATE SPRING.

13

INT. DANI'S BEDROOM - LATE AFTERNOON - 6 MONTHS LATER

13

Dani lies on her bed, fully clothed. Her eyes are numb as she stares at the wall.

A KNOCK at the door. A well-dressed Christian pops his head in. He's grown a beard since we last saw him.

CHRISTIAN

Hey babers. How we feeling?

DANI

(looking to him)

Hey.

(sitting up)

I'm up.

CHRISTIAN

DANI (CONT'D)

I'm just going to that party for like 45 minutes. You should keep sleeping.

Oh - I'll come with you...!

CHRISTIAN

(hesitates)

You sure you got enough rest?

DANI

I wasn't sleeping anyway.

Christian pauses briefly, as if this clashes with his plans.

CHRISTIAN

Okay, great! Well, I was gonna leave in like three minutes, so I'll just be at the door.

DANI

Okay. I'll just get dressed.

Christian nods for a little too long, then "smiles" and leaves the room. Dani rises. Stands for a moment. *Heavy.*

14

INT. APARTMENT - EVENING

14

A PARTY in a brownstone full of circulating twenty-somethings.

Dani stands with Christian, who chats with Josh, Mark (holding two beers), Pelle, and a stoned HIPSTER GUY (26).

HIPSTER GUY

I'm fucking *dreading* the summer. Stuck in *Boulder* while my dad watches *Law & Order* all day.

MARK
Yeah, man - I have to visit *my* parents
in shit-ass Tucson after we all get back.

*

Dani squints with curiosity. Christian suddenly looks nervous.

HIPSTER GUY
Oh - you guys are going somewhere?

JOSH
To Sweden!

PELLE
Hälsingland.

MARK
Mr. Pelle's invited us for an authentic
hippie midsummer at his yodeling farm.

Dani has PAUSED. She hadn't heard this before.

DANI
...Oh yeah?

Dani turns to Christian, who now looks semi-panicked.

CHRISTIAN
I mean, yeah, we were thinking about
maybe - we were talking about it.

DANI
For when?

Dani feigns casualness as she looks inquiringly to the guys.

JOSH
...Mid June to late July?

MARK
In two weeks.

CHRISTIAN
I mean, if we even go. I probably
won't. We were just *talking* about it.

Mark, Josh and Pelle stand awkwardly, confused. Christian clearly hasn't been honest with Dani.

15 **INT. SUBWAY (MOVING) - NIGHT**

15

Christian and Dani ride the L train back home.

Christian stands, gripping the rail. Dani sits to his side. Her eyes are BUSY with nagging, paranoid thoughts. Christian, very tense, looks down at her from the corner of his eye.

Dani looks up at Christian uncertainly. Christian forces a casual "hey" smile. She "smiles" back.

16 **INT. CHRISTIAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT**

16

Christian's apartment is choked with cultural artifacts (pieces acquired in China, South America, Africa, etc.).

The door opens. Christian and Dani enter. Christian goes to his laptop and turns it on. Dani stays by the door, still preoccupied. Christian looks to her.

CHRISTIAN
Are you okay?

Dani looks at him, hesitant to start a fight. Christian gives her an impatient look: "Yes? No?"

DANI
I mean - yeah. I'm okay. That was just...very weird.

CHRISTIAN
(playing dumb)
What was?

Dani looks at him: "Seriously?" Christian widens his eyes: "What was weird?"

DANI
The...Sweden! I had no idea.

CHRISTIAN
Well - what do you mean? I told you I wanted to go.

DANI
Okay, *fine*, but I didn't know you were going.

CHRISTIAN
Well, I just decided today. I wasn't *keeping* it from you.

DANI
You already have a ticket!

Beat. Christian now looks cornered.

CHRISTIAN
(shrugs)
I'm sorry.

Christian looks extremely defensive. He has LOCKED DOWN. Dani sees this, gathers herself, and tries to explain:

DANI
It's just -- imagine if we were at a party and someone asks "what are you doing this summer," and *my* friends say: "*oh*, we're all going to Alaska for three months, we're leaving in *two weeks*," and imagine that was the *first* you'd ever heard of it!

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

(correcting)
A month and a half.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
Okay: I *told* you I wanted to go to Sweden.

DANI
You told me it would be "*cool* to go."

CHRISTIAN
Yeah! And then I got the opportunity to go and I decided to *do* it.

DANI (CONT'D)
I have no *problem* with you going! I just wish you'd involve me!

CHRISTIAN
Well, I just apologized, Dani.

DANI
 You didn't apologize, you said -
 (shrugs)
 - "sorry." Which sounds more like
 "too bad."

Beat. Christian's eyes are now very cold.

CHRISTIAN
 Maybe I should just go home.

DANI
 ...I'm just trying to understand.

CHRISTIAN
 And I tried apologizing.

DANI
 I don't need an apology. I just
 wanna talk about it.

Pause.

CHRISTIAN
 I think I should just prob'ly go home.

Dani looks helpless.

DANI
 I'm not trying to attack you.

CHRISTIAN
 Well, it feels like that.

DANI
 Well...I'm sorry! I *am* sorry. I
 just got confused.

Christian's eyes, looking down, haven't begun to thaw. Dani,
 now desperate to reverse the mood, sits on the couch. She
 beckons him.

DANI (CONT'D)
 Come on: Sit with me. I'm sorry. That
 just felt weird, that's all. I think
 going to Sweden could be really great
 for you. That sounds amazing. Are you
 going for your thesis?

CHRISTIAN
 (quietly)
 I don't know what my thesis is.

DANI
 (brightly)
 I know! It could be inspiring! Right?

CHRISTIAN
 (still looking down)
 ...I think I'm just gonna leave.

Dani's eyes start to well intensely with TEARS.

DANI
 Please. I'm sorry. I didn't mean to
 overreact. Please.

Christian SOFTENS when he sees that she's crying. Still distant, he sits with her.

CHRISTIAN
Okay - shhh. It's okay. I'm sorry, too. All right?

DANI
I get paranoid. I'm sorry. I'm going through all this stuff and I've been dealing with all this panic and I just - overreacted. I'm not trying to put pressure or accuse you of anything. I just got crazy for a second. I didn't mean to project.

Christian strokes her hair.

CHRISTIAN
It's okay. I'm sorry, too. It's okay.

Beat.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
(uncertainly)
I was gonna ask you to come *with* me.

Pause. Dani looks at him.

DANI
What do you mean?

CHRISTIAN
...What I just said.

DANI
To Sweden?

Christian nods a stiff "yes."

DANI (CONT'D)
You don't *want* me to.

CHRISTIAN
I just *asked* you.

DANI (CONT'D)
After I broke down crying!

CHRISTIAN
Well...you ruined the surprise.

Dani searches Christian's eyes. They aren't especially warm.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
I wanted it to be romantic.

17

INT. MARK & JOSH'S APARTMENT - DAY

17

Mark & Josh's apartment is essentially a stoner's den crossed with a serious anthropologist's home. Ironic posters (a portrait of Ronald Reagan, etc.) are countered by a huge poster of James George Frazer. There are stacks of books in every corner.

Christian, Mark, Pelle and Josh sit in the living room, smoking from a bong. Josh holds a book by Johannes Bureus (titled *Adalruna*) and Pelle is drawing in his notepad.

JOSH
Are the Swedes sensitive about their
history of Nazi collaboration?

PELLE
Are you sensitive about Hiroshima?
Or slavery? Or the trail of tears?

JOSH
(deadpan)
Yes.

Christian looks extremely preoccupied. His foot pumps involuntarily. He receives a TEXT.

CHRISTIAN
(anxiously)
Hey guys, it's Dani - she's coming up.

MARK
...Okay.

JOSH
(re: weed and bong)
Should we clear all this?

CHRISTIAN
No no, it doesn't matter. But uh -
listen...

Christian goes to buzz her in.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
...just so you guys know: she's not
gonna actually come, but I invited her
on the trip. Just to not make it weird.

A moment of silence. Pelle sits especially frozen.

MARK
You invited her?

CHRISTIAN
Yeah, but she's not coming.

JOSH
She doesn't want to?

CHRISTIAN
(measuredly)
No: I "invited" her and she "accepted,"
but she's not gonna actually come.

Mark and Josh just stare at him.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
You guys *know* what she's dealing with!

MARK
No, we know. I just didn't
realize. It's totally fine if
she joins.

JOSH
Yeah, dude, nobody minds.

A KNOCK at the door. Christian goes to answer it, but before he does, he reasserts:

CHRISTIAN
Okay, so just: you guys *told* me to
invite her and you *know* that she's
coming. Agreed?

They don't respond. Christian now OPENS the door to DANI. She enters with an almost apologetic smile on her face.

DANI
Hey.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
Hi baby.

(to the room)
Hey guys!

JOSH/MARK/PELLE
Hey!

DANI
How's it going?

MARK
Just chillin'.

DANI
Nice.

A brief, awkward pause.

JOSH
So, Sweden....!

DANI
Yeah!

PELLE
You're coming, right?

DANI
I think so....! If it's not completely
destroying your guys' male bonding
plans.

MARK/JOSH/PELLE
Nope. / Not at all.

CHRISTIAN
Oh, shut the fuck up.

Dani smiles bashfully. Mark abruptly addresses Christian:

MARK
Hey man, can I get you to look at
that paragraph real quick?

CHRISTIAN
(confused pause)
Sure. Yeah. Okay.
(to Dani)
Right back.

Christian kisses Dani, and leaves the room with Mark. Dani looks to the ROOM. Josh has returned to his book. Pelle, alone on the couch, warmly gestures for Dani to join him. She obliges.

DANI
Hey Pelle.

PELLE
Hi Dani.

She notices that Pelle has been composing a DRAWING in his notepad. It's a drawing of the room.

DANI
Ooh, that's a nice drawing.

PELLE
Oh, thanks, yeah, I'm trying to be
a naturalist.

Pelle closes the drawing pad. Gives Dani his full attention.

DANI
How've you been?

PELLE
Pretty good! Survived finals. You?

DANI
Uh, well - didn't quite finish! But they're giving me a break this year...

PELLE (CONT'D)
(realizing)
Oh, right. God. Of course.

Dani makes an embarrassed "bleh" face.

DANI
How did you like the anthropology department?

PELLE
It's good! I just can't seem to choose if I hate academia or not. Unlike *this one*.
("this one" being Josh)
You're doing psychiatry?

DANI
Psychology. Yeah. That's how you know I'm nuts.

PELLE
Also that funny look in your eye.

Dani LAUGHS, a bit unnaturally. An awkward moment.

PELLE (CONT'D)
So! You're coming to Hälsingland!

DANI
Yeah! I can't wait. Christian says you've got a special thing in the woods planned?

PELLE
Oh yeah - a sort of crazy, nine-day festival we're doing...

DANI
Do you do that every midsummer?

PELLE
Uh - well...not quite like this one.

DANI
(mock-scandalized)
Ooh. What makes *this* guy different?

PELLE
Well, "this guy" happens only once every ninety years. So it'll be a first and a last for everybody.

Pelle raises his eyebrows, mock-menacing.

DANI
...Christian says you're from a really small community?

PELLE
Oh yes - tiny. Very sort of...
("what's the word?")
Incestuous? Incestual?

DANI
Depends on which of those you mean.

PELLE
Oh - *ha!* No: we're just very secluded...

Pelle pulls up a PHOTO on his phone. Shows it to Dani. It features a lush, impossibly green field. Young men and women stand about - all dressed like hippies in white.

DANI
Oh wow! Flower children.

PELLE (CONT'D)
Big time! We do our own
thing, love our astrology...

DANI
What's your sign?

PELLE
Taurus! You?

DANI
Cancer!

PELLE
Ooh, yes, I do see that. Your birthday?

DANI
July seven.

Pelle makes an "Ah" face. A thoughtful pause before he asserts:

PELLE
You know, I think it's actually very
good you're coming.

DANI
Oh yeah? For who?

PELLE
For you! *And* for my family. I think
you'll be very...

Pelle weaves his fingers together, signifying a tight-knit connection. Dani smiles. Pelle PAUSES again, and his tone now CHANGES. He leans forward, *sensitively*:

PELLE (CONT'D)
You know...I never had the chance to
tell you, but I was really so very
sorry to hear about - your loss...

DANI
Oh...!

PELLE (CONT'D)
...and what happened.
I can't even fathom. I mean,
I lost my parents, too, so I
have *some* idea, but...

Dani looks cornered. TEARS have welled up in her eyes.

PELLE (CONT'D)
Oh, no. Sorry to bring it up!

DANI
 No, I mean - thank you. I just...
 I'm sorry.
 (stands up suddenly)
 I'll be right back. Bathroom. Thank you.

Dani rushes off. Pelle watches her with blank eyes.

Dani, stifling tears, enters the BATHROOM.

18 **INT. AIRPLANE LAVATORY (IN FLIGHT) - DAY - 2 WEEKS LATER** 18

Dani has entered an airplane's lavatory, stifling an oncoming deluge. After shutting the door behind her, she BREAKS DOWN in a fit of violent SOBS.

19 **INT. AIRPLANE (IN FLIGHT) - MINUTES LATER** 19

We are WIDE, looking down the length of the plane. We track forward, drifting over the heads of passengers.

In the b.g., Dani exits the lavatory and returns to her seat. Christian is seated beside her at the window. We have arrived at a PROFILE CU of them (the window in the b.g.).

Christian takes Dani's hand and smiles at her. It's clear she's been crying, but she hides it behind a determinedly casual "all is well" expression.

Christian goes along with the pretending, and looks out the WINDOW. We have begun a slow ZOOM past them, toward the window. The window soon FILLS the frame. We are flying over beautiful terrain. We have entered SWEDEN.

20 **INT. STOCKHOLM AIRPORT - DAY** 20

Dani, Christian, Josh, Mark and Pelle stand at a CUSTOMS DESK.

A CUSTOMS OFFICER looks over their passports.

CUSTOMS OFFICER
 Purpose of your trip?

PELLE
 Visiting my home in Hälsingland.

CUSTOMS OFFICER
 All of you?

They all say "yes." Christian, meanwhile, is desperately searching his backpack for his passport.

The Customs Officer scrutinizes Dani's passport.

CUSTOMS OFFICER (CONT'D)
 Happy birthday tomorrow.

DANI
 Oh - thank you.

Christian, distracted from that, FINDS his passport.

21 **INT. RENTAL MINIVAN (MOVING) - DAY** 21

Our group, now in a rental minivan, drives through Stockholm traffic. Pelle is at the wheel.

Mark sits passenger, holding a film theory book. In the back: Dani, Christian and Josh. Josh is reading the *Poetic Edda*.

They pass a group of BEAUTIFUL BLONDE WOMEN.

MARK
 (to Christian)
 Oh my God, dude, the women here...!

Christian, aware of Dani, gives a self-conscious half-nod. Dani happily pretends to ignore this.

MARK (CONT'D)
 What is it that makes them hotter?

CHRISTIAN
 The Vikings grabbed all the best ones and dragged them over.

*

*

JOSH
 Makes a pretty good case for rape, from a nationalist point of view.

Dani WINCES at that one. They have now pulled onto the FREEWAY - leaving Stockholm.

DANI
 How far are we driving?

PELLE
 Four hours, about.

MARK
 (exasperated)
 Oh my God.

Dani notices a book on Josh's lap: *The Secret Nazi Language of the Uthark*. Its cover is a runic pattern.

DANI
 Why are you reading that?

JOSH
 Ha. Ask Pelle.

PELLE
 (accepting the cue)
 We're taught the runic alphabet in my village. Josh just carries that around to annoy me.

DANI
 (to Josh)
 What are you doing your thesis on, again?

JOSH
 Uhhhh - *Well!* My focus is actually on European midsummer traditions. Which was actually sorta the *impetus* behind this whole trip.

DANI
 (to Christian)
 That's similar to what *you're* thinking of doing - right, baby? For *your* thesis?

CHRISTIAN
 (tensely)
 Well, I don't know quite *what* I'm doing.
 (MORE)

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
(As you know.) But I'm thinking about
rooting it in *something* Scandinavian.

DANI
See that, Pelle? You've managed to
brainwash all your friends.

PELLE
Josh was already brainwashed when I
found him.

JOSH
(re: Pelle's acknowledgement)
Thank you.

DISSOLVE TO:

22

TWO HOURS LATER

22

Pelle is still driving. Everyone is silent and zoning out as
the radio plays an old Swedish folk tune. *

Mark suddenly notices a DEAD BOAR on the side of the road. *

MARK
That's the second of those I've seen.

PELLE
Yeah, they're a huge problem out
here. Everybody hunts them.

MARK
You ever gone boar huntin'?

PELLE
Yep!

MARK
Is it fun?

PELLE
...It's cathartic and then it's sad.

Beat. They drive past another dead boar, also in a field.

JOSH
They're allowed to just leave them?

Mark alights on something ahead.

MARK
...the fuck?

Everyone looks up. In the distance, about 300 feet off the
road, is an OAK TREE with SEVERAL BOAR CARCASSES HANGING FROM
ITS BRANCHES.

CHRISTIAN
What is that?

DANI
Oh my God.

JOSH
Wait: slow down. Can you pull over
to it?

DANI
Why??

JOSH (CONT'D)
Please, Pelle.

Pelle reluctantly slows down. He veers off the road and idles to a STOP beside the tree. Josh marvels at it.

23

EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

23

The back door opens and Josh emerges from the car. Everyone else filters out behind him.

Josh approaches the tree, stunned. A cacophony of buzzing FLIES.

JOSH
(to Pelle)
Do you know what this is?

PELLE
No idea.

Josh has pulled out his CELL PHONE. He starts to take photographs of the tree from every possible angle.

DANI
This is horrible.

MARK
(to Pelle)
Is this how you people hunt out here?

CHRISTIAN
It looks almost ritualistic.

JOSH
It looks *absolutely* ritualistic!
(takes more photos)
This is fucking amazing.

Dani looks extremely disturbed. She swipes away flies. Christian pulls out his phone to take a single wide shot of the tree.

PELLE
Okay, let's go. We still have a lot of driving.

DANI
Fantastic. Thank you.

Everyone returns to the car. Except for Josh, who continues his ecstatic photo-taking.

24

INT. RENTAL MINIVAN (MOVING) - DAY

24

Pelle is still driving. Christian sleeps in the back. Everyone looks notably more tired. It's been a long drive.

They pass a sign announcing (in Swedish) that they have arrived in **Hälsingland**.

PELLE
Entering Hälsingland!

Everyone looks up.

MARK
Are we getting high right when we get there?

TEN MINUTES LATER

Pelle idles up to a LARGE GRASSY MEADOW. It's lush, impossibly green - magical. About fifty YOUNG PEOPLE (teens to twenties) lounge about. Tents and camping equipment abound. Many of the women are dressed in traditional white dresses and don floral garland crowns. Some of the men look like 19th century farmers.

PELLE
Look, guys! New friends.

Pelle parks the minivan in the field.

25

EXT. MEADOW - CONTINUOUS

25

They all emerge, yawning and stretching. Dani is mesmerized. Pelle WAVES to a bunch of people on the grass. They clearly know each other well. Pelle gestures for our group to follow him as he approaches a crowd of GIRLS.

GIRLS
Pelle!!

We cut WIDE as Pelle happily introduces everyone.

Then, across the field, a Chubby Blonde Guy (25) calls out to Pelle. This is INGEMAR.

INGEMAR
(in Swedish)
Holy shit! Pelle!!

Pelle turns to Ingemar. His face LIGHTS UP, and he runs over to him. Dani, Christian, Mark and Josh follow.

INGEMAR (CONT'D)
(in Swedish)
Happy St. John's!

Pelle laughs. They hug.

INGEMAR (CONT'D)
(in Swedish)
Christ - you're so skinny! Where'd
the rest of you go?

PELLE
(in Swedish)
Looks like you got it.

INGEMAR (CONT'D)
(in Swedish)
What the fuck? I look fatter?

PELLE
Here: English. These are my great
friends - Josh, Christian, Mark,
Dani: meet my brother Ingemar. Best
friend since we were babies.

INGEMAR
(recounting)
Josh, Christian, Mark...Dani?
(confirmed)
Awesome! And say hello to *my* friends,
Simon and Connie from London.

He gestures to an attractive British couple, CONNIE (24, skinny) and SIMON (26, spectacled, tattooed).

INGEMAR (CONT'D)
 Simon and Connie, this is Pelle
 and...all the names I just
 remembered two seconds ago.

SIMON Hey.
 CONNIE Hello.

INGEMAR
 Perfect timing, by the way:
 Ingemar pulls out a bag of MAGIC MUSHROOMS. Hands them to Pelle.

INGEMAR (CONT'D)
 We just took these five minutes ago.
 Haven't even started coming up yet.

MARK
 (overjoyed)
 Ohhh shit.

Mark grabs the bag from Pelle and studies the contents.

PELLE (to the group)
 Do you guys wanna take it
 now? Or should we settle in
 first?
 MARK (CONT'D)
 Fuck it. Let's just take 'em.

DANI
 (to Christian)
 I think I might need to find my
 footing first.

CHRISTIAN
 Yeah. Of course.
 (quietly)
 And you know you don't need to take
 them. If you're feeling unsure.

DANI
 No, I just need to get settled.

CHRISTIAN
 Okay. Well. I'll wait for
 you.
 DANI (CONT'D)
 No - go ahead!

CHRISTIAN
 No, I'll wait. We'll come up together.

Josh and Mark and Pelle have pulled their mushrooms from the
 bag. They look to Christian, ready to go.

PELLE
 Ready?

CHRISTIAN
 I'm waiting for Dani. You guys go on.

MARK
 Dude. We can't come up at different
 times. They'll be totally separate trips.

CHRISTIAN
 Then you can wait for us.

Mark looks frustrated - *angry* even.

DANI
You know what? That's okay. I'm ready.

CHRISTIAN
Baby. Don't feel rushed.

DANI
I don't. I'm ready.

MARK
(false concern)
You sure?

DANI (CONT'D)
(bluntly)
Yeah, Mark, thanks.

INGEMAR
They made mushroom tea if you
prefer against the taste.

DANI
(considers)
Okay. Yeah. I'll have that. Thank
you - Ingmar?

Ingemar smiles confirmation and goes to fetch her a mug of tea.

CHRISTIAN
Don't let *Mark* pressure you.
Of all people.

DANI (CONT'D)
He's not. It'll get too
complicated otherwise. It's
fine.

Ingemar hands Dani her TEA.

PELLE
(to Dani)
Ready?

Dani, now holding the tea, nods yes.

PELLE (CONT'D)
Okay. Here we go. Think happy thoughts!

They eat their shrooms. Dani hesitates before SIPPING the tea.

CHRISTIAN
You okay?

DANI
Yeah. It's good. I'm excited.

CHRISTIAN
(still concerned)
Cool. Me too.

MINUTES LATER

Dani sits on the grass with Christian and Pelle. Mark is off to the side, stabbing at an ANT COLONY with a stick. Josh paces nearby. His stomach TURNS audibly.

JOSH
Uggghhh, I really don't feel good.

Josh hunches over to RETCH.

MARK
Don't puke, dude. Keep it down.

CHRISTIAN
(to Dani)
How are you feeling?

DANI
A little like I have food poisoning.

PELLE
Technically you do. It'll go
away soon.

CHRISTIAN
And you can throw it up if
you need to.

JUMP CUT to Dani VOMITING into a bush. Christian stands near her.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
That's good, baby. It's okay. Throw it
up.

Dani rises to take a breath.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
Does that feel better?

PELLE
Don't worry - you had it down long
enough. You're still gonna trip.

MINUTES LATER

The group sits on the grass together. The sun is still shining.

CHRISTIAN
What time is it?

PELLE
Ten at night.

Mark sits up, alarmed.

MARK
What do you mean?!

PELLE
What do you mean?

MARK
That doesn't feel right.

PELLE
Why? It's the midnight sun.

MARK (CONT'D)
It doesn't *feel* like ten. I
don't like that! It feels
wrong.

A YOUNG MAN approaches.

CHRISTIAN
Oh fuck. It's a new person.

MARK
What? I don't *want* new
people.

PELLE
No - new people are good!

CHRISTIAN
I can walk, too.

DANI (CONT'D)
No no. Sorry. I'm gonna...

Dani starts to walk off, a terrible feeling rising in her.

JOSH
Is she mad at us?

MARK
I don't *like* how she did that.

Dani continues to walk. She's starting to think very bad thoughts.

DANI
(to herself)
No, that's not good. No. No.

She then stumbles onto a group of TEENAGERS - all wearing flower garlands. They sit in a circle, passing around a homemade POTION of some sort. They all look at Dani...and then BURST OUT LAUGHING.

Dani turns stiffly around, tears welling.

DANI (CONT'D)
No, no, no, no...

Dani tensely speed-walks away. Her surroundings are THROBBING visibly (and more intensely than before).

INGEMAR calls out to Dani.

INGEMAR
Hey! Dani!

Dani freezes. Terrified, she looks in his direction. He waves her over. He's sitting with a group of happy twenty-somethings.

Dani warily approaches.

INGEMAR (CONT'D)
How are you feeling? Everyone: this is Pelle's friend, Dani.

Everyone says hi.

DANI
They were laughing at me over there.

INGEMAR
What? No, I'm *sure* they weren't. They probably just wanted you to laugh *with* them.

But Ingemar's face was MUTATING as he said that.

DANI
(terrified, forcing a smile)
Okay. Sorry. Never mind. Thank you.

Dani turns around and walks stiffly off.

DANI (CONT'D)
(trying to turn it around)
It's okay. It's not that. You're okay. It's *drugs*.

She continues toward a sturdy wooden OUTHOUSE. She hastily enters.

26 **INT. OUTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

26

The interior of the outhouse is illuminated by CANDLE-LIGHT. It's very clean. Dani stands here for a moment.

DANI
This is a coffin.
(immediately reprimanding herself)
Hey! *No it's not.*

Dani sees a MIRROR on the wall. She looks at it. Hard.

DANI (CONT'D)
Fuck you. Stop it.

Suddenly her skin seems to take on a translucent quality. Her veins become faintly visible. Beneath her cheeks, it looks like organic gears are turning.

DANI SQUEEZES HER EYES SHUT. She takes a moment, trying to will that vision away.

DANI (CONT'D)
Don't look in the mirror. It's not your face.
(saying that again, under scrutiny)
"It's not your face."

After a long moment, Dani OPENS her eyes again. When they open, TEN ADDITIONAL EYES open simultaneously - all over her face. *Like spider eyes.*

Dani SCREAMS and FLEES the outhouse...

27 **EXT. OUTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

27

Dani runs frantically across the field, desperately wiping off her face (as if to wipe off the extra eyes). We CHASE AFTER HER before CUTTING TO:

28 **EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME**

28

Christian, Josh, Mark and Pelle are still lying in the same spot. They've hit the peak of their trip. Twilight is coming.

In the b.g., a group has finished setting up LARGE SPEAKERS.

CHRISTIAN
Where did she go?

MARK
It's okay.

JOSH
(looking at his hands)
Why the fuck do we have fingerprints?

Christian STANDS, panic starting to build.

CHRISTIAN
Dani's gone. We need to find Dani.

JOSH
I don't *feel* like standing.

MARK
Yeah - I don't wanna move.

CHRISTIAN
Hey! Dani's our friend!

MARK
She isn't *all* of our friend.

CHRISTIAN	MARK (CONT'D)
What? Yes she is. That's not nice! Why aren't you ever nice?!	(scared by this)
You're being <i>mean</i> !	<i>What? I am nice.</i>
	(tearing up)
	I'm <i>not</i> being mean!

Droning techno begins to THROB from the speakers in the b.g. With every bass punch, the surrounding environment THUMPS visibly.

CHRISTIAN
Dani's our *friend*. And she's *sad*.

MARK
But that makes *me* sad!
(suddenly angry)
And she's *NOT* our friend! She's barely *YOUR* friend! You only invited her because you're too scared to be *honest* with her!

Christian pauses, FURIOUS, and then:

CHRISTIAN
Her family is *dead*, Mark! Do you get that? They all *died*!

MARK	CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
(suddenly terrified)	
Why are you saying that?	Because they are! They're <i>dead</i> !

MARK	JOSH
Why???	(insistent)
	<i>HEY! NO!</i> We need to connect back to the <i>good</i> things! This is getting bad! Everything's alive right now.

CHRISTIAN	MARK
But that's just so it can die later.	(getting sucked into darkness)
	Oh God...!

PELLE
But then it gets reborn! Death is just shit fertilizing crops. Everything gets recycled and made new again.

Silence. Everyone looks at Pelle, catching up to what he just said. Christian STOMPS OFF.

MARK
Wait! Christian! We need to stay together!

29

EXT. WOODS - SAME TIME

29

Dani paces in the woods. Muffled techno drones in the distance.

DANI
Hello?!... HELLO??!!
(redirecting her thoughts)
It's almost your birthday. Fuck.
(MORE)

DANI (CONT'D)
 What time is it?
 (then, PAUSES)
 You were almost born... You're a baby.

This gets to Dani. She now looks around the woods, fearfully. Like a lost child.

DANI (CONT'D)
 MOMMY?!... DADDY?!...
 (silently to herself)
 Mommy daddy mommy daddy...
 (panicked now)
 CHRISTIAN?!

No answer.

DANI (CONT'D)
 No...no.... You're alone.

Then it HITS Dani. Her eyes well intensely with tears. This idea is now horribly significant.

DANI (CONT'D)
 (a revelation)
 You're alone.

Dani sees a DEAD RABBIT. Its innards are splayed.

Dani warily approaches. Magnetized but repulsed. As she nears, the FEAR rises in her. She gets close enough to finally see...

The rabbit is being devoured by ANTS.

Dani looks mortified, but her eyes are glued. She LEANS IN to look closer, but then -- she sees ANTS on her arm. (Whether they're there or not is unclear.)

Dani SCREAMS. She violently SLAPS at her arm. She then swipes at her other arm, and starts slapping at her NECK and FACE, as if she were engulfed in ants. (She's not.)

Dani looks down. The earth seems to now be a PULSATING CARPET OF ANTS.

Dani SCREAMS and RUNS for her life. As she sprints:

CHRISTIAN (O.S.)
 Dani!

Dani FREEZES, eyes crazed.

DANI
 ...Christian?!
 CHRISTIAN (O.S.) (CONT'D)
 Dani!!

Dani searches desperately for his voice. She FINDS him standing at a CLEARING. She runs for him, crying.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
 Where the hell did you go?!

They EMBRACE. She hugs him. SQUEEZES him.

DANI
 I got lost.
 CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
 Let's go back to the group.

DANI
 (still squeezing)
 Christian. Nothing means anything.

CHRISTIAN
 What?

DANI
 (looking at him)
 Nothing *means* anything! We're just
alone.
 (tearing up)
 And I felt this presence - like God
 but *not* God - and it was *telling* me
 this and it was *laughing* at me.

CHRISTIAN
 You heard laughing?

DANI (CONT'D)
 I *felt* it laughing! I figured
 it out, that nothing means
 anything and we're born alone
 and we *die* alone, and it was
 getting *pleasure* from that.

Christian is getting SCARED. He takes Dani's ARM -

CHRISTIAN
 Okay: no. We're going back to the friends.

- and starts leading her away.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
 You're having a bad trip, and you're
thinking you're alone because you went
 off and you *made* yourself alone. You
 just got *scared*.

He's now PULLING Dani, aggressively.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
 (not even looking at her)
 You have *me*. Everything's *connected*.
 We're all *one*. Those are the *good*
 things you're *supposed* to think about
 when you trip. We're all unified. Fuck.

Christian has been leading her out of the woods. They emerge
 onto the FIELD, where the droning techno is now very present
 (and making the visible surroundings THROB to its beat).

We track alongside Dani and Christian as they walk uneasily
 through the grass - past groups of happy, tripping strangers.

Christian's eyes are glued tensely to the ground, combating dark
 thoughts. Dani looks less frightened now than disconnected.

They arrive at Josh, Mark and Pelle, who are now accompanied
 by CONNIE, SIMON, INGEMAR and a BLONDE SWEDISH GUY (20s).

BLONDE SWEDISH GUY
 Hey hey!

MARK
 Where were you?

PELLE
 How are you, Dani?

CHRISTIAN
(insistent)
We're fine. She's fine. Just took a
little walk.

CONNIE
(very high)
Are you feeling it?!

DANI
(to Pelle)
I wanna sleep. How can I sleep?

HOURS LATER

CLOSE-UP OF DANI'S SLEEPING FACE.

In the distance: a faint, barely discernible melody. It sounds like a flute.

A HAND reaches into frame to nudge Dani. She stirs awake.

CHRISTIAN (O.C.)
It's time to get up.

DANI
...how long was I asleep?

Dani sits up. It's still BRIGHT outside. The visual surroundings are no longer morphing. Mark and Pelle and Josh are standing. Christian is crouched beside her.

DANI (CONT'D)
Did it get dark at all?

PELLE
For a couple hours. Not completely.

Then something occurs to Dani:

DANI
Is it tomorrow?

CHRISTIAN
...It's today.

Dani looks at Christian, whose expression is blank. She SINKS with quiet disappointment. (He forgot her birthday.) Christian helps Dani up. She wobbles.

DANI
Where are we going?

PELLE
Where we came for.

Everyone from the meadow CRUNCHES through the woods. Our group is at the end of the queue (carrying their bags). As they walk, the MELODY is growing clearer and louder. It's a happy tune.

The group's footing is unsteady. Dani, especially, keeps stumbling over her own feet. She grips Christian's wrist.

MARK

The come-down on these mushrooms is *really* intense.

Dani notices a few disparate FLOWERS sprouting up from the ground. As she walks, the flowers continue to accumulate. Soon she's walking down a controlled, narrow TRAIL of wild yellow flowers - all leading toward a CLEARING.

MARK (CONT'D)

Okay: am I still tripping or is there a lot that people aren't acknowledging right now?

The group finally arrives at the clearing. It opens to another FIELD, beyond which is a **SMALL VILLAGE**. The melody is being played by a floutist, a fiddler and a key harpist. The scene is UTOPIC.

JOSH

(mesmerized)

This is the place?

PELLE

(slightly tongue-in-cheek)

The tranquil and majestic Hårga.

They continue toward it, approaching a Hålsingegård (a farm). About a HUNDRED PEOPLE stand on the grass, waiting. They are dressed like Amish people, but less formal. They appear to be a WELCOMING COMMITTEE.

CHRISTIAN

(to Pelle)

You know all these people?

PELLE

These are my family!

31

EXT. HÅRGA FARMSTEAD - CONTINUOUS

31

They arrive at the FARMSTEAD. At the center is one particularly LARGE building in the shape of a barn; this is the MAIN HOUSE. Surrounding this are several houses, a horse stable, a temple, and different gardens. The windows and doorways are all adorned in ST. JOHN'S WORT (flowers with bright yellow petals and golden stamens). Beyond the farmstead are vast fields of CROPS.

Most of the arriving crowd is embraced *ecstatically* by the welcoming committee. They hug and kiss and squeal with excitement. It appears to be something of a REUNION. Pelle, in particular, is bombarded with affection.

Josh, Mark, Christian and Dani stand awkwardly through this.

Josh and Christian notice a towering MAYPOLE. Immense in height and width, it is entangled in lush green shrubbery and marked by a wealth of symbols (some runic, some more esoteric, all colorful). At the top of the pole is a TRIANGLE, beneath which hang two RINGS. *

Pelle brings a beautiful, blonde woman over to the group. This is DAGNY (25). She wears a white dress with intricate embroidery (featuring a pentagon and distinct Pagan runes).

PELLE
 (in Swedish)
 Dagny - this is Dani, Christian,
 Josh, Mark.
 (in English, to the guys)
 This is my sister Dagny. Born on the
 same exact week as me.

DAGNY
 Välkommen till Hårga!

DANI
 (attempting Swedish)
 Tack!

JOSH/CHRISTIAN
 Thank you!

Dagny smiles and walks off.

An older man, ODD (50s), approaches. He is wearing a dress.
 Pelle lights up at the sight of him.

PELLE
 Father Odd!

ODD
 Little Pelle!

They embrace. There is a moment where they rest their foreheads
 together. **(Note: throughout the film, the Hårgas will communicate
 little things through subtly modulated expressions and gestures.
 These are their AFFECTS, a language known only to them.)**

ODD (CONT'D)
 (in Swedish)
 How is the pilgrimage?

PELLE
 (in Swedish)
 Wonderful. Amazing.
 (in English)
 These are my friends - Christian,
 Mark, Josh, Dani...

Odd shakes their hands as Pelle introduces them.

ODD
 Hello, hello...yes, hello, welcome.
 (to Dani)
 Welcome home!

He HUGS Dani.

DANI
 (amused, but slightly
 weirded out)
 Thank you.

ODD
 We are very happy to have you! Pelle
 has an immaculate sense for people.

Pelle smiles.

DANI
 I love what you're wearing.

ODD
 Oh - my frock? Quite girly, no? Ha!
 (explains)

(MORE)

ODD (CONT'D)

We do this as a tribute: Because of nature's, em, hermaphrodite-ick - sorry - her-ma-phro-DI-TIC qualities - (sighs relief at getting the word out) - the men do like women and visa versa.

JOSH

Like the cult of Aphroditus!
(then, remembering)
I think the sakhis saints do the same thing, too - in Brajbhoomi?

If Odd is annoyed by this, he hides it well. He shines a tight-lipped SMILE at Josh.

ODD

So! We're your hosts! Yes? So whatever you need, you tell us and we'll do everything to accommodate! Today is all festivities, yet tomorrow the *official* ceremonies begin. So have yourselves ready! It's a sincere pleasure to have you, and you are Welcome-Welcome-Welcome. So enjoy!

They all say thanks and Odd walks happily away.

MARK

Nice guy.

The music suddenly gets LOUDER. Percussion is introduced, and the music swells to become a regal melody.

Everyone's attention moves to TEN GIRLS (different ages - from 7 to 13), all dressed in identical white dresses. They hold FLORAL GARLAND CROWNS (made of mugwort and vervain) and sprigs of LARKSPUR. They are walking single-file towards a PLATFORM...

Sitting on the platform are TEN OLD MEN AND WOMEN (60s to early 70s). These are the ELDERS. They wear severe or neutral expressions, and are dressed in finely embroidered linen. *

The girls march onto the platform. They each stop before one of the seated elders. Upon a cue, they simultaneously lay the crowns onto the elders' heads. They then hand the elders the larkspur sprigs. After this, the girls return bashfully to the crowd.

One of the elders - a sturdy old woman (70) - rises to address the crowd. The music drops out. She is beautiful, composed, elegant. This is SIV, the matriarch.

SIV

(in Swedish)

Happy midsummer, all!

As she speaks, several children - all wearing outfits to distinguish them as waiters - pass out shot glasses of AQUAVIT.*

SIV (CONT'D)

Ni är så oerhört välkomna hit. Till oss. Vi vill att ni är med och firar Midsommar med oss. Ni får boende, mat och vara en del av det som är den största festen här hos oss i Hårga. Faktiskt den största på nästan hundra år.

She notices the non-Swedish speakers. *

SIV (CONT'D) *
 Forgive me - I'm excluding the ones who
 aren't of Swedish tongue. Welcome to
 Hårga, and happy midsummer! I believe
 it is the hottest and brightest that
 we've had in at least a decade, and
 this is our biggest party in almost a
 century! So - wow, yah?

JOSH/DANI/CHRISTIAN/CONNIE
 (as if solicited)
 Yeah. Wow.

Siv smiles, and proceeds to wrap it up.

SIV
 All right, my fellow merrymakers.
 Without any further blathering -
 let's raise our glasses -

Everyone raises their aquavit. *

SIV (CONT'D)
 - and let our Nine-Day Feast begin!
 (announcing)
Skål!

EVERYONE
 Skål!!

The crowd drinks. Everyone CHEERS. Including our group. The
 MUSIC begins again.

On one side of the platform: A young GIRL, also wearing an *
 embroidered white dress, walks up with a JUNIPER BOUGH in *
 each hand. She is accompanied by a TEENAGE BOY, who holds two *
 FLAMING TORCHES. Meanwhile, two of the ELDERLY MEN (72) have *
 risen from their seats. *

Siv now speaks in English, presumably for our group's benefit. *
 (As she does this, the young girl and teen boy hand the elderly *
 men a juniper bough and flaming stick.) *

SIV
 And now, in keeping with tradition:
 Hjalmar and Josef will make three *
 trips. If they make it back with the *
 flame intact, our vintage will be
 abundant this year! On the other hand,
 if it burns out - that will be an omen
 of bad luck and we will know to
 prepare.

Josh turns to Pelle.

JOSH
 What does "bad luck" mean?

PELLE
 Usually that the cattle will get sick.

Siv yells something in Swedish to the air. *

JOSH
 (to Pelle)
 What did she just say?

*
 *
 *

PELLE
 Told any lingering spirits to go
 back to the dead.

*
 *
 *

The two elderly men, now BLINDFOLDED, begin to run around the Main House, holding up their flaming sticks. (Everyone watches, rapt.) They pick up the pace to finish their first cycle around the house. They then begins circling it again.

*
 *
 *
 *

JOSH
 (to Pelle)
 Can I takes photos?

PELLE
 Discretely.

The men finish their second cycle around the house, and immediately begin a *third*. The community seems to be holding its collective breath. The men FINISH the third run-around, but...one man's flame has been EXTINGUISHED.

*
 *
 *
 *

A man in the audience, ISAK (50s), lets out a GASP when he sees this. Everyone else sinks audibly with disappointment.

*

The men, having finished, remove their blindfold. The elder with the extinguished torch DEFLATES. Siv gestures sadly to the crowd: "*There we have it.*"

*
 *
 *

Isak looks absolutely devastated. Christian notices.

*

CHRISTIAN
 (to Pelle)
 Is he okay?

PELLE
 The cattle are his responsibility.

*

Isak's eyes stare off, unblinking. Heartbroken. He looks to the CATTLE HOUSE, eyes filling with tears.

*

MARK
 (to Pelle and Christian)
 How do you think he'd react if I just
 put my finger in his butt right now?

Continuing the ritual, Siv takes the torches from the men and walks to a healthy FIRE in a pit. She deposits the sticks into the fire.

*
 *

SIV
 (in Swedish)
 This high my fire, but no
 higher, no hotter!

PELLE
 (translating)
 Uh - this high is my fire,
 but not higher or hotter.
 (explaining)
 It's to keep the fire from
 growing out of control.

Josh WRITES this down in his notebook. Christian WATCHES Josh, slightly perturbed.

Siv now accepts a BOWL OF BEER from one of the children. She drinks a healthy gulp, and then throws the rest into the fire. Everyone now APPLAUDS. *This seems to be the end of the ritual.*

A group of TEENAGERS (all dressed in bright, formal garb) emerge from a kitchen. They carry PLATES OF FOOD (lamb and blood pudding) and BEER. They begin by serving the elders.

Dani sees that one of the teens is carrying an ornate platter featuring a LAMB'S SKULL (brain exposed) and a LAMB'S HEART. The platter is bordered by a dense spiral of INTESTINES. This is laid onto the center of a table that has been painstakingly decorated with local flowers.

PELLE (CONT'D)
That's a tradition. They just
killed that lamb today.

The servers now move to our group, which has settled onto the grass. They are handed plates and beers.

<p>DANI (to Pelle) Can we help at all?</p>	<p>PELLE (CONT'D) No no. You're the guests. Let yourself be spoiled.</p>
--	---

One boy, RUBEN (15), walks up to Dani. He is severely mentally handicapped and his hands are palsied. He's dressed in gorgeous linen. *

<p>RUBEN (with difficulty) Hey hey!</p>	<p>DANI (warmly) Hello!</p>
---	-------------------------------------

Ruben walks off. As he ambles aimlessly, people reach out to lovingly TOUCH him - as if in reverence.

PELLE
You just met Ruben.

DANI
Ruben is lovely.

The teens finish serving. They now sit with plates of their own.

Mark has already started eating. Josh NUDGES him. Nobody else has begun. Mark bashfully sets down his fork.

Silence.

Siv, the matriarch, looks to a PLUMP ELDER (60s) sitting beside her. He stands, takes a moment, and then speaks loudly in Swedish, as if in PRAYER.

PELLE
(whispering to Josh and Christian)
He's giving thanks.

<p>JOSH For the food?</p>	<p>PELLE (CONT'D) Yes. And the weather, and the crops...</p>
-------------------------------	--

The Plump Man finishes his speech, and then announces:

PLUMP MAN
Låt oss äta!

Everyone digs in.

CHRISTIAN
Who was he praying to?

PELLE
Uh - well, that wasn't really
"praying." But he was just
addressing the...everything. The
harmony and the balance.

*
*
*

JOSH
Can you translate what was said?

PELLE
...I can get an exact
translation later.

CHRISTIAN
(jumping in)
Yeah, please, that would be
amazing.

JOSH
(eyes now burning on Christian)
...Yes, Pelle, thank you.

Christian looks at Josh. A CHARGED moment. They start eating.

32 **INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT**

32

A beautiful, curly-haired BLONDE GIRL (16) stands before a mirror, anxiously fussing with her hair. She clearly needs it to look perfect. This is MAJA.

33 **EXT. HÅRGA FARMSTEAD - MINUTES LATER**

33

Maja emerges from the MAIN HOUSE. All the younger Hårgans have joined hands to form a train of people. They run and dance in a wide circle, singing a variation of *Visa i midsommartid*. The MAYPOLE stands at the center of their circle.

Maja timidly watches the dance, smiling. Her eyes trail off to find our group. She alights on CHRISTIAN, instantly smitten. *It almost looks like she recognizes him.*

One of the dancing boys suddenly GRABS Maja's hand. He PULLS her into the train. She LAUGHS as she joins.

MEANWHILE: Our group is still sitting in the same place (along with Connie and Ingemar). They watch the passing dancers with fascination.

PELLE
You guys should join!

DANI
I'm too scared.

SIMON approaches, carrying two beers. He momentarily gets caught in the crossfire of a group of YOUNG BOYS CHASING EACH OTHER. He finally reaches Connie, and hands her a beer.

SIMON
Alright?

CONNIE
Ta.

Simon sits.

SIMON
(re: the boys)
What are they playing?

PELLE
"Skin the fool!"

SIMON
(sarcastic)
Ah. Precious.

Dani notices Ingemar STARING at Simon and Connie. He looks resentful. He finally averts his eyes and forces a smile.

MAJA, in the dancing train, is about to pass the group. She summons the nerve to gently KICK Christian's back. Christian looks up to see Maja passing by. She SMILES bashfully at him. He confusedly smiles back.

Dani notices Christian smiling, but doesn't see Maja (who has already turned away).

Christian RISES, suddenly feeling bold.

CHRISTIAN
(to Pelle)
How can I join the...?
PELLE
You're American. Just jam yourself in there.

Christian uneasily JUMPS IN. He joins hands with two girls. Josh rises to follow Christian. Dani's eyes follow them.

Pelle takes this opportunity to turn covertly to Dani:

PELLE (CONT'D)
Hey: very quick:

He hands her a folded up DRAWING.

PELLE (CONT'D)
Happy birthday.

Dani, surprised, opens the paper. It's a drawing of her FACE (donned with an extremely lush floral crown). The style is simple, but her likeness is captured beautifully.

*
*
*

DANI
Oh - my gosh. Pelle!

PELLE
It's just something I do for birthdays. Maybe it's not appropriate?

DANI (CONT'D)
Oh my God, not at all! It's wonderful. Thank you, Pelle. I'm so touched.

PELLE
Anyway. Just between us.

DANI
Yeah, well - don't worry. Christian forgot.

Pelle PAUSES, surprised. He doesn't know what to say.

DANI (CONT'D)
 (immediately regretting)
 Or - I forgot to remind him. It
 doesn't matter. Thank you so much
 for this, Pelle. It's beautiful.

She folds the drawing back up.

34

EXT. HÅRGA FIELD - MINUTES LATER

34

The dance is over, although separate groups are still dancing
 and playing in the b.g.

Pelle is now leading our group on a TOUR. (Ingemar, Connie and
 Simon have joined along.) We track alongside.

JOSH
 How do you guys support this place?

PELLE
 Lumbering, wheat,
 vegetables...

INGEMAR
 Water power plant.

They pass a CIRCLE OF CHILDREN, accompanied by a TEACHER (60s). *
 They're carving RUNIC SYMBOLS into smooth, well-sanded STONES.

PELLE
 Schooltime over here.

CHRISTIAN
 Carving runes?

The Teacher looks up and smiles confirmation.

PELLE
 (to Dani)
 Then they put it under their pillow
 and dream about its meaning.

Dani makes an "ooh" face. Josh makes a NOTE of this.

Christian sees that they're now passing an old RUNESTONE (on
 their other side). It stands erect in an untended field.

CHRISTIAN
 Oh man - there's a serious
 one.

JOSH
 Oh shit!

CHRISTIAN
 Which alphabet is that from?

JOSH
 (quick to answer)
 Looks like the Elder Futhark.
 (to Pelle)
 Right? Or is that medieval?

INGEMAR
 That's actually the younger Futhark.

Josh nods "Ah, right" - visibly pained to be wrong.

CONNIE
 (to Christian and Dani)
 So, how long've you two been together?

DANI
Oh, jeez...almost three years now!

CHRISTIAN
(gently correcting)
Uhhh, well...two and half.

DANI
...You're joking. It'll be three in fifteen days.

Christian thinks about that, and grudgingly concedes.

CHRISTIAN
Okay, no, that *is* true.
(off Dani's look)
It is! You're absolutely right.

He makes a "sowwy" face, kisses her incredulous cheek, and changes the subject by asking Simon, Connie and Ingemar:

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
How did you guys all meet?

They look at each other. "Who answers?"

INGEMAR
Well...we were all working on the same farm, and funny enough: *I* was dating Connie when Simon and me first became pals.

Simon's eyes narrow.

CONNIE
(correcting)
Well - we'd been on a date. Which I wasn't even actually aware that it was a date.

INGEMAR
(backtracking jovially)
Right, no, I meant that Connie and me had just become friends - we decided to be friends - and that was just before Connie and *Simon* started dating. And *now they're engaged!*

DANI
Oh wow. Congratulations.

INGEMAR (CONT'D)
Which is amazing. Yes. Congratulations.

Simon and Connie look uncomfortable. They smile "thank you."

SIMON
(to Dani)
We've actually asked Ingemar to officiate the wedding.

DANI
(excited)
You did?!

SIMON
Nope.

Everybody LAUGHS - including Ingemar.

PELLE
(announcing)
And now...behold!

They have all arrived at a SMALL TREE.

PELLE (CONT'D)
My tree.

CHRISTIAN
Why *your* tree?

PELLE
When someone's born, we plant a tree for that person and they grow up together. This one's mine.

DANI
That's so beautiful.

JOSH
(pen and paper ready)
Is there a specific name for that practice?

Christian points out a SMALL HOUSE which stands isolated in a large field. It has been painted a vivid yellow.

CHRISTIAN
What about *that* house?

PELLE
Ah, that's like a sacred temple. No one's allowed in there.

CHRISTIAN
Looks like it was just built.

Changing the subject, Pelle motions toward the MAIN HOUSE.

PELLE
This is where we sleep!

He leads them toward it. Meanwhile, Ingemar leads Simon and Connie in another direction.

INGEMAR
Here: come see *my* tree!

On our group's way to the Main House, they pass a CAGED BEAR.

MARK
So we're just gonna ignore the bear, then.

PELLE
(acknowledging, deadpan)
That's a bear.

35

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

35

Josh leads our group through the two-storied interior of the huge, barn-shaped house. There is a large, square HOLE in the floor of the second story (so both stories are visible to each other). On both floors, the walls are lined with BEDS. The center of the bottom story is bare, like a dance floor. A MAP TO THE COSMOS has been painted on the floor, featuring sacred lines connecting notable stars.

Pelle points out four small beds.

PELLE
These'll be yours.

Mark throws his bag onto one of them.

The group marvels at the walls, which are covered in INTRICATE MURALS. Runic letters abound. The CEILING is especially impressive. It's painted to tell an epic story in hundreds of sequenced panels. At the center of the ceiling is a painting of the SUN. *All stories lead to this (or do they come from this?).*

CHRISTIAN
Who all sleeps in here?

PELLE
All the younger ones. Until we turn thirty-two. Then we move to the houses.

JOSH
Why thirty-two?

Josh has pulled out his MOLESKIN NOTEPAD, ready to write down Pelle's answer. Christian (almost in response) pulls out his phone, ready to type. Pelle PAUSES at this. He then explains, gesturing to a MURAL that dramatizes the following:

PELLE
We think of life like the seasons. You are a child until you're 16, and that is the Spring. At some point we all do our Pilgrimage, and that's between 17 and 32. That's Summer. *Then*, from 33 to 52, you're of working age: Fall. And finally from 53 to 72, you become a mentor.

JOSH
Winter.

Josh and Christian have written all this down - their eyes intermittently piercing each other.

DANI
What happens when you turn 72, then?

Pelle makes a comical THROAT SLASH gesture. Dani laughs, and begins to walk off.

MARK
Not a lot of privacy. What do you do when you wanna jerk off?

Now that Dani is away, Pelle crosses quietly to Christian. *He covertly ushers him aside.*

Dani has found a wall of twelve FRAMED PHOTOGRAPHS. They all feature a different young woman dressed in ceremonial garb. In each photo, the woman is richly adorned in summer flowers and wears an impressive FLORAL CROWN. These photos have been taken annually for the last dozen years.

Dani looks over to notice Pelle WHISPERING to Christian, who now looks extremely GUILTY. She interrupts by bluntly asking:

DANI
Who are *these* of?

PELLE

Oh - those are our May Queens. You'll actually be here for that.

JOSH

Who are the "May Queens"?

PELLE

Every midsummer we do the dance of the Hårgas. All the younger women compete and the winner gets crowned.

Outside we hear:

ODD (O.S.)

(announcing, in Swedish)

Movie in twenty minutes! Field five!

36

EXT. FARMSTEAD - SAME TIME

36

Several Hårgans set up chairs on the grass. A 16MM FILM PROJECTOR is wheeled in to face a large PROJECTOR SCREEN.

Dani stands on the grass, under a now-overcast sky. An ominous RUMBLING in the distance. She closes her eyes, breathes deeply - practicing mindfulness.

She is suddenly distracted by a baby's CRYING. Dani looks off to see in the distance...

SEVERAL HÅRGANS are gathered around an OAK TREE. The VILLAGE DOCTOR (50) is crouched, cradling a CRYING BABY. He directs a doting WOMAN (50s) to pour some fresh dew (from a vial) into the baby's mouth.

Dani appeals to a nearby HÅRGAN MAN (30s):

DANI

Excuse me? Can I ask if you know what's happening over there?

HÅRGAN MAN

(looking over)

Ah. Poor little Einar has the, em - where the bones are bad?

DANI

Oh no. Rickets?

*

The man shrugs "*sorry, I don't know.*"

The Doctor is now passing the baby through a WIDE CLEFT in the tree. The baby is received on the other side by the doting woman.

DANI (CONT'D)

Do you know what they're doing?

HÅRGAN MAN

Old cure. Three times through the Oak.

The woman hands the baby to the Doctor again, and he passes the child back through the cleft. Again, the woman hands the child to the Doctor, and the baby is passed through one last time.

HÅRGAN MAN (CONT'D)
 Now the healths of the baby and the
 tree are - together.

On "together," he illustratively hooks two fingers.

DANI
 Like a - sympathetic connection?

*

The man shrugs, confused. They SMILE at each other and the man walks off. Dani continues watching the ceremony, until--

CHRISTIAN appears behind her, holding a SOCKERKAKA (sponge cake). A lit candle protrudes from it. He approaches carefully...

*

*

CHRISTIAN
 (singing)
Happy birthday to you -

Dani turns, mortified.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
 (singing)
*Happy birthday to you,
 Happy birthday dear Dani (I love you)...
 Happy birthday to you.*

She doesn't blow out the candle.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
 You thought I forgot, didn't you?

Dani just glares at him.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
 You're not surprised?

Dani doesn't soften. He finally RELENTS with a guilty smile:

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
 Okay - I'm sorry. I'm *really* sorry. I
 thought it was tomorrow because of
 the sun. It's impossible to tell.

He kisses her. She doesn't kiss back. He keeps kissing.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)	DANI
Happy birthday, happy	Fine. It's fine.
birthday, I'm sorry.	I'm not upset.
- You <i>should</i> be.	- <i>I know I should!</i>

He kisses her again, tenderly. She grudgingly kisses back.

CHRISTIAN
 Happy birthday, mouse.

*

She forces a tight smile and BLOWS OUT the candle.

MEANWHILE: WOMEN fill the baby's tree's cleft with MUD and CLAY. *They pack it tight.* Then the MEN tie a ROPE around the tree. They draw it as TIGHTLY as possible.

*

Everyone has gathered to either sit in chairs or on the grass. They all face the PROJECTOR SCREEN.

Dani, Christian, Mark, Josh and Pelle sit crossed-legged in the front. The PLUMP ELDER stands before the screen to announce:

PLUMP ELDER
And now, for tradition and for fun: a
work of antique escapism -
(aside, to our group)
- and an annual mood-setter, made by
one of our own lost Hårgans!

The Plump Elder joins the audience, and the projector starts to RATTLE. Before the film starts, Christian WHISPERS to Dani:

CHRISTIAN
Happy birthday.

ON THE PROJECTOR SCREEN: A *SILENT COLOR FILM* begins. It is weathered and grainy. The film seems to have been made in the late 1960s or early '70s (shot on a Bolex camera). The **TITLE** appears (in Swedish): **A Midsummer Romance**

The film opens on a beautiful *BLONDE GIRL* (15) walking through a field with her friends. They pause to admire a *GANG OF BOYS*. The girl fixes on one *BLONDE BOY* (15). It's love at first sight.

The group of girls walks over to the boys. They talk.

INTERTITLE (in Swedish): -"Hello lads! Happy midsummer to you."
- "Why thank you, girls! And a happy midsummer to you."

One of the girls looks mischievously to her friends, and then puts an idea to the boys.

INTERTITLE (in Swedish): -"Why don't you lads come to our house for lunch tomorrow? We will prepare a feast and you can be our special guests!"

The boys look to each other and nod. They agree.

The *NEXT SCENE* depicts the girls gathering *FLOWERS* from a lush *MEADOW*. They pick these flowers with their left hand as they walk backwards. We cycle through *NINE CLOSE-UPS OF DIFFERENT FLOWERS BEING PICKED*.

INTERTITLE (in Swedish): Nine Flowers Picked (don't forget the *Orpine!*), and Nine Fences Jumped.

The girls jump over a series of *SMALL FENCES*. This is done nine times.

The *NEXT SCENE* reveals the blonde *GIRL* in her bedroom. She puts the nine flowers under her *PILLOW*, and then lies down in bed. She closes her eyes to *SLEEP*.

INTERTITLE (in Swedish): With the nine flowers under her pillow, she will now dream of the boy she is to marry.

The blonde girl has fallen asleep, and a CLOUDY DREAM BUBBLE appears beside her head. Inside the bubble, we are given a scene in which the blonde girl is MARRYING the blonde boy. He lifts her BRIDE'S VEIL to kiss her.

The NEXT MORNING the girl wakes up. She wears a wicked smile.

LATER THAT DAY, the GIRLS are gathered in the KITCHEN. They are cooking. The BOYS all arrive in the living room. Our blonde girl says "hello" to the boy of her dreams.

INTERTITLE (in Swedish): "Hello! Can I bring you some coffee while you wait for your pancake?"

The boy nods excitedly. The girl goes off to the kitchen.

In the KITCHEN, the girl takes a CUP OF COFFEE and sets it on the floor. She then crouches over the coffee.

INTERTITLE (in Swedish): Three droplets of menstrual blood for the spell to take effect.

Three drops of blood DRIP from between the girl's legs. They LAND in the coffee.

IN THE AUDIENCE, Dani and Mark WINCE at this. Christian and Josh (along with the surrounding Hårgans) are delighted.

ON THE PROJECTOR SCREEN: The girl brings the coffee to the boy. She smiles mischievously as he takes a SIP.

In the KITCHEN, the girl now props her leg up onto a chair. She takes a pair of SCISSORS and snips between her legs. She pulls a few STRANDS OF PUBIC HAIR from her groin.

The girl CHOPS UP the pubic hair into fine pieces. She then sprinkles them into a BOWL OF PANCAKE BATTER. The batter is then poured onto a burning skillet.

INTERTITLE (in Swedish): Hair from the vulva will complete the spell.

The girl hands the boy his PANCAKE. He eats the pancake, and then looks up at the girl. SPIRALS appear in his eyes. Spellbound, he moves toward her, like a love-stricken zombie.

INTERTITLE (in Swedish): Voilà! The spell was a success.

The boy and girl KISS in Close-Up. We pull out from the CU to reveal that the girl is now PREGNANT with a grossly distended belly. They are surrounded by a huge and adoring CROWD, all wearing identical clothing.

Fade to white. **THE END.**

The audience applauds politely. MAJA, however, looks ENTRANCED.

Mark and Dani wear inscrutable grins. (Slightly charmed, mostly disturbed.) Josh and Christian are BUZZING.

The windows have been boarded up for the night. Sunlight peeks from the edges.

People are climbing into their beds. There are TWO BABY CRIBS in the corner, stationed near the beds of women in their twenties. Both bedframes are made of severe-looking iron and metal. *

Dani, noticing this, turns to Pelle. *

DANI *

Pretty serious-looking cribs. *

PELLE

For the iron. Keeps away the "invisibles." So the babies don't get "changed." *

Pelle smiles sardonically, knowing how it sounds.

DANI

How real is that stuff for you guys?

PELLE

(deflecting)
Ah, who knows?

Dani smiles. She looks over to Christian, whose eyes are GLUED TENSELY to Josh's notepad as he scrawls "*Iron. Babies changed. 'Invisibles.'*" Christian looks threatened. *

Pelle has already climbed into bed.

PELLE (CONT'D)

All right - beauty rest! Tomorrow's a big day.

JOSH

And what's tomorrow?

PELLE

(mysterious)
First of the big ceremonies.

JOSH

So you're just gonna be weird and cryptic? *

Pelle PAUSES, then takes Josh's notepad. He writes "*Ättestupan*" and hands it back.

Josh happens to know that word. His eyes WIDEN. "*Are you serious?*" Pelle smiles mischievously.

CHRISTIAN

What's that? What's *Ättestupan*?

Pelle gestures for Christian to keep his voice down. Christian pulls out his phone and types "*Atestupan*" into a search engine. But there's no internet connection.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Fuck.
(to Josh and Pelle)
What's *Ättestupan*?

Josh smugly climbs into bed. This has made Dani nervous.

DANI
 (to Josh)
 Is it scary?

Josh teasingly raises his eyebrows: "You'll see."

39 **INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - "NIGHT"** 39

Everyone is asleep. Silence, save for the baby's CRYING.

Dani lies AWAKE. Beside her: Christian sleeping soundly. To her other side: Mark SNORING.

Dani shifts her weight. She looks over at the wall mural, and notices an ILLUSTRATION of a HAPPY MAN OPENING HIS WRIST WITH A SPECIAL KNIFE. He is surrounded by smiling friends, and above him, a smiling SUN. Dani looks unnerved, but her attention is suddenly DRAWN AWAY by the SOUND of...

A teenaged BOY and GIRL (clearly new lovers) sneak quietly out of their beds. Giggling. They tip-toe out of the house, careful to make no noise.

Dani stares at this. Heavy.

40 **EXT. FIELD - MORNING** 40

A GOAT-SHAPED STRAW FIGURE. It's the size of an actual goat and notably well-crafted.

An AXE comes down to swiftly LOP OFF ITS HEAD.

Then another AXE comes down to STRIKE its body in HALF.

We cut WIDE to reveal that it's being chopped into clean pieces by three MEN in ceremonial garb. Onlookers abound.

41 **EXT. CROP FIELD - MORNING** 41

Farmers BURY different pieces of the chopped-up straw goat into FOUR CORNERS of a flourishing grain field.

AT THE FIELD'S CENTER: A man pours a bowl of LAMB'S BLOOD into a carefully hollowed HOLE in the earth. After this, the STRAW GOAT'S HEAD is dropped in. The hole is then covered up with SOIL.

42 **EXT. FIELD - MORNING** 42

Near the Main House, several men are setting up DINING TABLES on the grass. They are laying them out to form a pattern.

In one FIELD, a group of WOMEN collect the morning DEW (in small vials) from the leaves and grass. They throw a SHEET over the wet grass. It absorbs the dew, and they WRING it out into a pail. *

We PAN AWAY from this to yet another FIELD, where a large GROUP has assembled for what appears to be some sort of DANCE CLASS. They stand in rows of ten. DANI, JOSH, MARK, PELLE and CHRISTIAN are among them. *

At the head of the class is a THIN ELDER (60s) with an impressive physique. In demonstration, he lifts his arm and waves it fluidly, rhythmically, EMOTIONALLY, back and forth. *

The class IMITATES him. They strive to perfectly match his movements and emotions.

THIN ELDER

Don't just copy me. Feel me.

The class continues to mimic his movements. Mark, Josh and Christian are looking quite graceless. DANI, however, matches the Elder's movements with surprising sensitivity. Pelle notices this.

The Elder stops. So does everyone else. The Elder swiftly affects a DIFFERENT POSTURE. (This time he goes to his tip-toes, one hand curled at his abdomen and the other arm draped mournfully around his head.)

The class now imitates *this*. The Hårgas are impressive in their poise and precision, and Dani is fitting right in. (Josh and Christian - not so much.) Once everybody finds *this* position, the Elder fluidly contorts his body to assume another.

A sleepy Mark has stopped trying altogether. He looks over to a woman beside him. He smiles at her, but her gaze remains FIXED SERIOUSLY AHEAD. *For the Hårgas, this is a spiritual practice.*

A PRETTY BRUNETTE (25) to Mark's side says:

PRETTY BRUNETTE

(in Swedish)

Try.

MARK

What?

PRETTY BRUNETTE

(in Swedish, smiling)

Try.

Mark smiles, not understanding. He's SMITTEN. He half-attempts to join in, only to immediately give up again.

43

EXT. FARMSTEAD - ONE HOUR LATER

43

The dining tables have been set up to form a wide CIRCLE. Inside the circle, at the center, is a ROUND YELLOW TABLE (representing the sun). There are no seats for this table.

Half of the community is already standing at the surrounding tables. The other half is arriving now. Plates of food have already been placed. No one sits.

Our group (minus Dani) arrives at one of the tables. They gaze around, trying to understand the etiquette. They notice that a few lingering GIRLS walk backwards through a neighboring field, picking FLOWERS.

DANI now appears with a bouquet of HANDPICKED FLOWERS. She happily presents Christian with the bouquet.

CHRISTIAN

What?! For me?

*

DANI

Ja!

*

CHRISTIAN
 (accepting them with strained
 appreciation)
 ...Tack så mycket.

*
 *

He kisses her cheek.

Now that everyone is stationed at the tables, a BOY runs off to officially summon the guests of honor...

After a moment, TWO ELDERLY MEN (72), both wearing ornate golden dresses, enter the scene. (*We will recognize them as the Elderly Men who ran around the Main House three times with the flaming torches.*) They stand with alert posture, maintaining an awareness of their bodies as they walk. They arrive at TWO LARGE WOODEN CHAIRS, situated at a beautifully decorated table with fine silverware and golden plates. (Every other table seats at least five people, but this table has been reserved solely for these two.)

*
 *
 *

Josh mouths to Pelle: "Are those the ones?" Pelle smiles.

The two men SIT. This prompts everyone else to sit.

Mark picks up his fork, only to notice that no one else has begun eating. Everyone waits patiently. Total SILENCE, save for the baby who is still crying.

Finally, the two men pick up their silverware and begin to eat. Now everyone starts eating.

Josh is scrutinizing every detail. Christian scrutinizes Josh.

MID-MEAL

MAJA feverishly carves a small RUNE STONE in her lap. She is hunched over to conceal her progress from curious eyes.

The two elderly men are receiving *lots* of attention.

Near Dani, a BLONDE WOMAN (30s) cradles the CRYING BABY.

DANI
 (inquiring)
 Is your baby okay?

BLONDE WOMAN
 Oh, she *will* be. She has a bone problem. She is not "mine," though.

DANI
 Oh, I'm sorry...!

BLONDE WOMAN (CONT'D)
 No no - her birth mother is on pilgrimage. It helps them to detach. The babies are raised here by everyone.

Dani smiles at this idea. Josh and Christian are also taken by this. Josh SEES Christian's excitement, and quietly HARDENS.

BLONDE WOMAN (CONT'D)
 (to Dani)
 How is your family like?

DANI
 Mine? Oh no, mine are...not here anymore.

Christian suddenly looks nervous about this exchange.

BLONDE WOMAN
 "Not here"?

DANI
 (now embarrassed)
 Ha. Unfortunately not. It's okay...

BLONDE WOMAN
 Not *any*?

The Blonde Woman has TEARS in her eyes. She looks sincerely affected by this.

DANI
 (reacting)
 Oh God, no, I'm sorry. I shouldn't have said. We're enjoying our food.

BLONDE WOMAN
 (now worried for Dani)
 Am I making you sad to ask?

DANI
 No no. I just shouldn't have mentioned it.

BLONDE WOMAN
 Please know we can talk if you like. Please. I am *happy* to talk.

DANI (CONT'D)
 (uncomfortable)
 Okay, thank you. Sorry. I feel silly. Thank you.
 (to Christian)
 Sorry.

Christian shrugs: "Don't apologize to *me*."

SIV, a table over, has been avidly watching this exchange.

MINUTES LATER

Everyone has finished eating. Another HUSH falls awkwardly over the procession. Silence, save for the wailing baby.

Mark, half-asleep, confusedly looks around. He sees the Pretty Brunette SMILING at him. Caught off guard, he BLUSHES and smiles back (a little too eagerly). *

One of the two elderly men STANDS. Clears his throat. Closes his eyes. After a moment, he begins to SING a wordless, choral song.

Everyone watches, rapt and emotional.

At the appropriate time, the OTHER MAN begins to sing along, softly and awkwardly at first. Soon he rises, singing with greater projection. When the song comes to a finish, SIV stands to RAISE her glass. This prompts everyone else to stand. They all raise their aquavit. *

A long silence. Siv finally DRINKS. So does everyone else. The MUSICIANS begin to play their handmade instruments, and EIGHT MIDDLE-AGED MEN break into two groups. They walk to either of the elderly men's chairs, HOIST them up, and start CARRYING THEM OFF. *

The congregation follows behind as the elevated men are carried up a hill. Our group JOINS them, confused. Mark lags behind.

MARK
 (to the group)
 I think I'm gonna take a nap.
 Jetlag and the shrooms...

Mark heads back toward the Main House. Dani, Christian, Josh and Pelle proceed to follow the community.

44

EXT. HILL - MINUTES LATER

44

Everyone happily follows the elderly men of honor (still carried on hoisted thrones). They follow a narrow TRAIL OF FLOWERS up a hill.

There is a FORK in the trail, leading either *to the left and downward* or continuing *straight ahead and upward*.

The elderly men are carried straight ahead, continuing to ascend the rising hill. The following procession BRANCHES OFF to veer left. They continue down a slope that leads to a **BEACH**.

Our group, squinting with curiosity, begins following the procession toward the beach. But Pelle slows down.

PELLE
 Okay - actually: let's stop a moment.

He holds them back.

PELLE (CONT'D)
 I need to warn you before we go down...
 (to Dani now)
 ...because you might not want to.

DANI
 Is this gonna be something weird?

PELLE
 Uhhh - it might *seem* very weird, but it's a great honor for them.

DANI
 ...Is this the thing you mentioned last night?

JOSH
 (smiling)
 Attestupan.

PELLE
 We're about to perform a centuries-old rite that is very important to us and very beautiful, but also - very far from anything you have in America.

DANI
 (suddenly nervous)
 ...Do I not want to do this?

PELLE
 Well - that's what I'm saying. You're *invited* to. I just...
 (pauses)
 You remember I explained the winter stage of a man's life goes from 53 to 72? Well, *this* is what happens when 72 is reached.

*

DANI
Okay. And what is "this"?

Pelle pauses, considering his words. Dani grows more nervous.

DANI (CONT'D)
What is Ättestupan?

Josh can't suppress a smile - anticipating Pelle's answer.

45

EXT. BEACH - MINUTES LATER

45

The community has gathered on the rocky beach. Tall CLIFFS loom imposingly. The baby cries in the b.g.

Our group stands to the side, along with Simon, Connie and Ingemar. Christian turns to DANI, who looks extremely uneasy.

CHRISTIAN
Are you sure you can handle this?

Dani doesn't know the answer to this.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
Maybe you should go back to the main house? It's not too late.

Dani starts to wrestle with this, but then:

DANI
No. I need to try.

A HORN sounds. All eyes go to...

SIV, the Matriarch, holds a LEATHER-BOUND BOOK whose cover is marked by runic letters. In Swedish, she formally addresses the congregation - like a priest to a parish - before opening the book. Its scripture is written in runes and unknown hieroglyphs (the AFFECT language).

*

JOSH
(to Pelle, whispering)
What's that book?

Christian leans in to hear the answer:

PELLE
Rubi Radr. Our scripture.

JOSH
Can I possibly read that?

PELLE
You would not be able.

Siv, eyes on the page, surprises our group by beginning to SING a wordless hymn. It's beautiful, yet feels improvised, as if inspired (on the spot) by emotions provoked by the text.

*
*
*

46

EXT. CLIFF - SAME TIME

46

The two elderly men have been carried to the top of a CLIFF overlooking the beach. Their chairs are SET DOWN near the precipice. They are placed beside freshly carved (and impressively sized) RUNE STONES.

The elders rise from their seats. They are each handed a CEREMONIAL BLADE. They stoically drag the blade across their palms, DRAWING BLOOD.

The men rub their palms together, making their hands nice and bloody. They press their palms onto their rune stones, both leaving TWO BLOODY HAND-PRINTS.

EXT. BEACH - SAME TIME

Everyone looks up at the cliff's peak. Dani is SWEATING BEADS now, her breathing erratic.

Finally, the TWO ELDERLY MEN appear at the edge.

Rapt silence.

One of the elderly men ANNOUNCES something loudly in Swedish.

JOSH
(to Pelle)
What did he say?

But Pelle ignores Josh. His eyes are glued to the men. Josh redirects his attention to the cliff-top.

Dani BRACES herself. Her TEETH begin to chatter. She GRABS Christian's arm, and then --

The elderly man LEAPS OFF THE PRECIPICE. Connie and Simon SCREAM. The man plummets 200 feet to LAND FATALLY on the jagged rocks below. Upon impact, a FLOCK OF BIRDS ALIGHTS from a tree.

Our group is shocked into horrified silence. *Dani looks like she's been knocked out of her body.* The birds fly over Dani's head, and a sudden rush courses through her.

The OTHER ELDERLY MAN - *the one whose torch burnt out before circling the house three times* - now steps up to the precipice. He also announces something in Swedish. *
*

SIMON
(panicking)
What's happening? Is he gonna jump, too? No--

The man LAUNCHES HIMSELF OFF THE CLIFF. Connie GASPS. The man plummets straight down, landing not only ON HIS FEET, but also on the fresh corpse of his friend. This softens the blow, preventing the fall from killing him. The man, all broken bones now, WAILS in horrible pain.

The community grumbles with concern. Everyone turns to THREE MEN, each the oldest of their respective generations (the youths, the laborers, and the mentors). They understand what they must do.

SIMON (CONT'D)
Why did that just happen? We need to call an ambulance.

INGEMAR
It's okay.

SIMON (CONT'D)
What's okay?! CALL AN AMBULANCE! Everybody's just watching!

The PLUMP ELDER approaches the three men with a CUDGEL. This is a long-handled club with a pointed block of wood at the end. The cudgel is handed over to the MENTOR.

Dani watches, overwhelmed, as the three men (now armed with the cudgel) stalk over to the dying man. The dying man moans pathetically, in too much pain to scream.

From DANI'S POV: The men have arrived at the dying elder's feet. The mentor RAISES the cudgel, and brutally swings it down onto the old man's HEAD. This isn't a fatal blow. The man raises the cudgel again, and this time he STRIKES the elder with enough force to silence him.

The mentor hands the cudgel to the LABORER. He raises the cudgel and brings it down onto the old man's crown. The elder's leg goes into pathetic SPASMS. Blood gurgling. The laborer BLUDGEONS him once more. He goes limp, probably dead.

The YOUTH is now handed the cudgel. He delivers two brutal swings to the old man's head. The mentor gently takes the cudgel away from the youth, and they all return to the community. The mentor hands the Plump Elder the cudgel, and everyone stands in respectful, contemplative silence.

Dani is GRIPPING Christian's arm. She is completely shell-shocked. Christian turns to Josh; they exchange "holy shit" looks. More EXCITED than troubled.

Siv bounds over to Connie and Simon, who are in a panic. *Dani trembles, powder-white. Traumatized.*

SIV	INGEMAR
Ingemar! Did you not warn them?	I'm sorry, grandmother Siv! I kind of warned them.

SIMON
Nobody did anything! Everyone just watched that!

SIV	SIMON (CONT'D)
Oh my, poor things--	<i>You're all just standing calmly around!!</i>

Siv lays an empathic hand on Simon and Connie's shoulder.

SIV
Oh, mercy - please: You should have been warned *better*. What you just saw is a long, long, long observed custom. Those two men has just reached end of the Hårga life-cycle. *

Siv now looks into DANI'S eyes, but Dani is in a daze. She seems to have been knocked into a dissociative state.

SIV (CONT'D)
It is a great joy for them, you must realize. And when I do so, it will be a great joy for me. *

(back to Simon and Connie)
We view life as a circle. Okay? A *re-cycle*. One thing falls and another rises. The first man who jumped: his name was Olof. Yes? *

Siv points to a PREGNANT WOMAN:

SIV (CONT'D)

That baby, who is not yet born, will inherit this name. He will be Olof. And if it is a girl, she will take the name of our last fallen lady, which was Dagmar.

*

*

Dani gazes at Siv, who has taken on a strange ETHEREAL GLOW (like an angel).

SIV (CONT'D)

But instead of growing old and getting sick and dying in pain and shame and fear, we'll give our life - as a gesture. Yes? A gift. And we will leave this chapter with dignity and gratitude. Before it can spoil.

Siv releases Simon and Connie, who are no less fraught. Siv now addresses the whole group.

SIV (CONT'D)

It does no good to die kicking and screaming and lashing back at the inevitable. It corrupts the soul.

INGEMAR

(to Simon and Connie)

I'm sorry I did not warn you better.

48

EXT. FIELD - DAY

48

Everyone is walking back from the beach. JOSH rushes feverishly toward the Main House. Christian's eyes are trained on him as he moves to Dani, who looks destroyed.

CHRISTIAN

You okay, baby?

DANI

(branching off)

I need to not be here right now.

CHRISTIAN

Okay. Good idea. You walk. I'll find you in a second - okay?

Dani walks off, addled. Christian ACCELERATES to follow Josh.

49

EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

49

Dani's walk speeds into a SPRINT. Once out of sight, she stops at a tree, now HYPERVENTILATING. She tries to steady her breath, but it's too erratic. She breaks down into violent SOBS. These are interrupted by a shrill RETCH.

50

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - SAME TIME

50

Josh anxiously goes through his backpack to find his LAPTOP. He sits on the mattress as the computer boots up.

Christian enters awkwardly - eyes on Josh. He appears to be summoning the courage to say something.

CHRISTIAN

Hey dude...

JOSH

Hey!
(excitedly)
Holy fuck, right?

CHRISTIAN
Holy fuck. Incredible.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Incredible!

Christian works up the nerve:

CHRISTIAN
So listen: I've been wanting to ask you,
or tell you, or just - *mention* to you
something I've been thinking about...

Josh looks up. He DARKENS with concern.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
I've just been *thinking*, and I've
decided...I really think I wanna do my
thesis *here*. On the Hårgas.

Josh doesn't react. Christian nervously continues:

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
And I wanted to tell you *first*, so that
it didn't seem like I *wasn't* telling you.

JOSH
I feel like I can't tell if you're joking.

Christian doesn't respond. Josh becomes incredulous.

JOSH (CONT'D)
Oh my God. I honestly can't even...
(barely containing his rage)
You know I'm out here doing my thesis,
on *midsummer*. That's why I'm *here*.

CHRISTIAN
Yeah, but not on *this* community.

Josh's eyes BURN on Christian.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
What?

JOSH
...You knew I was gonna want to do this.

CHRISTIAN
How would I know that?
Did you even know that before
I just told you?

JOSH (CONT'D)
Oh my God, Christian, of
course you did!

JOSH (CONT'D)
You think I don't know what you're
doing? It's actually kind of *outrageously*
unsubtle. The fact that you're being
this *bald* about it. It's impressive.
It is. I'm honestly impressed.

CHRISTIAN
What the *fuck*?

JOSH

Oh, yeah - "What the fuck."

(seething)

This is what I've been working towards and you know it. That's why you looked so guilty when you brought it up. Because you know - you know - that what you're doing is unethical and leechy and lazy and frankly kind of *sad--*

CHRISTIAN

Okay, wow, fuck you--

JOSH (CONT'D)

No dude, not fuck me! Find your own subject - or your own *passion*. Because I'm *actually* invested in this. It's not some glorified hobby that I'm casually dipping my feet into.

CHRISTIAN

Oh my God! You are *so* arrogant! In case you forgot, we're *both* earning the same degree--

*

JOSH

But we're not doing it in the same way, Christian. Okay? I have to hold your hand through everything. You didn't even know how to use *J-Stor* before I taught you, and you're a fucking *grad* student. I mean, why are you even *in* academia? You don't care! Which is *fine*! That's *your* prerogative! Just don't appropriate my *actual* work for your new shortcut!

This cuts Christian like a knife. His eyes are flaring with RAGE. But he stifles it. Determined to remain collected, he concludes:

CHRISTIAN

I wanna do my thesis here. If you want to as well, I'd be happy to discuss collaborating. If not, I guess we'll have two separate theses on the Hårgas.

Christian leaves.

Josh sits motionless.

51

EXT. FARMSTEAD - CONTINUOUS

51

Christian emerges from the Main House, extremely tense. A very pale SIMON smokes a joint near the door, looking very ill. He notices Christian's demeanor...

SIMON

You traumatized too, mate?

CHRISTIAN

(still fuming)

What? Oh. Yeah...

SIMON

(offering joint)

You want some? It's laced with hydrocodone.

Christian notices in the FIELD: a group of WOMEN collecting Linum usitatissimum (FLAX), which is in abundance. Among thme he sees MAJA, working with her friend ULLA (28). They laugh as they work. *
*
*

Christian gestures "excuse me" to Simon, and approaches Maja.

CHRISTIAN
Hey. Hi. Sorry to bother you...

Maja looks up - not understanding. She looks almost panicked.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
I'm Christian.

Ulla insert herself:

YOUNG WOMAN
Hello. I am Ulla. She is Maja.

CHRISTIAN
Hi Ulla. Maja. I was wondering if I could ask, uh -
(pulls out pen and paper)
- how many of those Attestupans you guys have seen performed.

ULLA
Every time one reaches age.

CHRISTIAN
Okay...
ULLA (CONT'D)
So lots.

CHRISTIAN
Right. Okay. And you don't have like, a typical mourning period? For grieving?

ULLA
We grieve *and* celebrate.

Maja has been staring at Christian, love-stricken. He is aware of it, but tries to ignore.

ULLA (CONT'D)
We must go now and keep working.

CHRISTIAN
Okay. No problem. Thank you. I might find you to ask more later?

Ulla smiles "okay" and walks off with Maja. They wave goodbye.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
Goodbye.
(to Maja)
'Bye Maja.

Maja smiles timidly and waves again.

In the b.g., Josh stands at the Main House's door, STARING.

Dani sits cross-legged near the river. Her eyes are closed. She's trying to meditate, but her breathing is still unstable.

Christian appears behind her.

CHRISTIAN
Hey.

Dani's eyes open with a start. She turns to him.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
How we doing?

DANI
I can't stop fucking shaking and my
teeth keep chattering.

CHRISTIAN	DANI (CONT'D)
I can imagine. Today was a lot.	I feel like the neck on my skin is getting tighter. Like I'm <i>choking</i> .

Dani pulls at her neck. Christian puts a hand on her shoulder.

CHRISTIAN
You okay, baby?

DANI
(looking up at him)
Are you just not at all disturbed by what happened?

CHRISTIAN
I mean, of course, it was *shocking*. But I'm also trying to keep an open mind.

Dani just stares at him.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
It's - *cultural*. We put our elderly in nursing homes. I'm sure they find that disturbing.

Dani EYES him, disturbed by his nonchalance. She then sees...

In the b.g., a congregation of WOMEN are migrating off together.

DAGNY, whom we met earlier, splits from the group to RUN over to Dani and Christian.

DAGNY
Dani! Do you like to join us?

DANI
Why? What's happening?

DAGNY
A special ceremony - for the womans.
(to Christian)
The mans are joining for a -
meditate. At the houses.

Dani looks to Christian, fraught. He gives her a "go ahead" look.

Dani looks over to the flock of women and sees an equally unnerved CONNIE.

MOMENTS LATER

Dani uneasily joins Connie in the migrating crowd of women. They're approaching a RIVER, which seems to GLOW in the distance.

DANI
Did they tell you what this is?

CONNIE
(shakes head)
Someone better not be jumping off another fucking cliff.

Dani pulls again at her neck - *still feeling claustrophobic in her own skin.*

53

EXT. FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

53

All the men are seated in a mass circle for a GROUP MEDITATION (which hasn't yet begun). Isolated in the center of the circle is an Elder. He is the MEDITATION LEADER. (Outside the circle, a GROUP OF MEN decorate a TREE that has been pulled from the earth. They adorn it in various FLOWERS and HANDMADE ORNAMENTS.) *

Christian joins Mark in the circle.

CHRISTIAN
Nice nap?

Mark, eyes elsewhere, leans over to WHISPER:

MARK
That girl over there keeps chatting me up, but she speaks like zero English.

Mark is pointing to the PRETTY BRUNETTE from earlier.

CHRISTIAN
Oh yeah. She's cute.

MARK (CONT'D)
Right? She keeps eyeing me.

Christian pauses, and then:

CHRISTIAN
(can't help himself)
Don't you kinda hate Josh?

54

EXT. WATER WELL - SAME TIME

54

Pelle stands by the well, drawing up water. Josh appears.

JOSH
Hey. Can I talk to you?

PELLE
Sure. But we're being called for the meditation--

JOSH (CONT'D)
Has Christian come to you yet?

PELLE
...About what?

JOSH
(quickly)
Okay - so listen: And you can obviously say "no," but point-blank: I wanna do my thesis here. On this.

PELLE
Oh *which?* The nine-day feast?

JOSH
Or - *yes*, but no: On *you* guys. On the Hårgas. And I told Christian this already, and now I think he's trying to pretend that it was *his* idea, so if he comes to you--

PELLE (CONT'D)
Okay, well...
Well, no, hey, wait a minute: I seriously doubt the elders will approve of *anything* being written. They're extremely protective.

JOSH
Yeah, of course, and I wouldn't do anything without their approval or permission.

PELLE (CONT'D)
Yeah, but - they won't approve, Josh. The only reason we've survived at *all* is because we operate in total isolation.

JOSH
Right: So I can just use aliases for everything!

PELLE
Then what would be the *point*? You couldn't even get it peer reviewed! (before Josh can argue) Christian *did* already ask me this, by the way. I told him the exact same thing I'm telling you.

JOSH
...I thought you just said he hadn't talked to you.

PELLE
(annoyed)
Fuck, look: I'll ask the elders. Okay? But if it's approved, you either *both* do it together or you fight it out between yourselves.

Pelle puts his hands up to signify "*That's it.*" He walks off toward the MEDITATION CIRCLE.

55

EXT. FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

55

Pelle walks to an Elder near the back of the circle. He WHISPERS in his ear. As this happens, Josh hovers in the distance. He WATCHES Pelle's interaction, in suspense.

Christian, still sitting in the circle, SEES Josh staring at Pelle. Christian becomes instantly PARANOID. He RISES.

CHRISTIAN
(to Mark)
I'm gonna - take a leak.

Christian walks off towards a wall of BUSHES. Josh sees this, hesitates, and then warily FOLLOWS. He keeps a healthy distance. (Pelle's EYES are now on *both* of them.)

Once Christian is hidden by foliage, he sneakily RUNS off. He pursues the crowd of women, who are off in the distance.

MEANWHILE, Mark looks helpless in the meditation circle.

MEDITATION LEADER
(in Swedish)
We begin now. Close your eyes.

56

EXT. RIVER - SAME TIME

56

The women arrive at the river. Hundreds of LANTERNS have been set up around the water to resemble a FIERY NECKLACE. In the river's center, NINE BURNING TORCHES protrude from a BUOY atop the water.

The women have stopped at a spot near the river. Everyone stands seriously about. Siv walks up to a mystified Dani and Connie.

SIV
Do you admire the Brísingamen?

CONNIE
The lanterns?

SIV
Glädje's necklace made by the fairies.
We give it now to her mother, Kärlek, as
praise for creating our sun.

Dani and Connie don't understand, nor do they inquire further. Siv laughs, seeing their confusion.

SIV (CONT'D)
Think of it like theatre. Strictly
presentational. Yes?

Dani placates her by nodding. Siv smiles and directs their attention to the CENTER of the congregation.

One of the female elders - a LARGE WOMAN (60s) with sturdy legs - holds the sacred book *Rubi Radr*. She takes a moment as everyone quiets down. She then reads a passage (in Swedish) out loud. She reads with clarity and authority. After she has finished...

A GROUP OF NINE WOMEN (three in their 20s, three in their 30s/40s, and three in their 50s/60s) all DISROBE. They are now NUDE.

A woman begins playing the KEY-HARP. After the tune is established, three women begin to SING. It is a WORDLESS choral song - comprised only of expressive/abstract sounds that evoke a range of feelings and tell a strictly emotional story.

As this is sung, the nude women walk to the RIVER. They descend into the water and swim towards the center. The song continues.

The nude women arrive at the burning buoy. They wait for the song to reach a bridge, and then they each draw a FLAMING TORCH from the buoy. Holding up their torches, the nude women now step carefully onto what must be underwater planks. They are still up to their necks in water. As the song crescendos, they slowly walk up the planks (each of which move in separate directions) to emerge from the water.

SIV (CONT'D)
(explaining to Dani)
The women represents the sun. The sea
gave *birth* to the sun, so they're like -
(MORE)

SIV (CONT'D)
(gestures "rising up")
- from the womb.

Dani and Connie watch. It is hypnotic.

Christian, having just caught up, WATCHES this ritual from behind a tree. Josh, a good distance behind Christian, also watches. Transfixed.

The women all arrive onto the shore at the same time. They rest their torches, and the song comes to an end.

Siv looks to a young RED-HAIRED WOMAN (30s), who runs off to now fetch the men.

57

EXT. FARMSTEAD - MOMENTS LATER

57

The Red-Haired Woman gives a signal to ODD. Odd then gestures to the MEN handling the decorated tree. They all LIFT the tree, and one man strikes a BELL. This ROUSES the men from their meditation.

MEDITATION LEADER
(in Swedish)
Now we stop.

Odd addresses the meditators.

ODD
Okay everyone! Let us form a
procession. Following the tree.

Everybody rises, still coming out of their collective trance. They queue up to follow the decorated tree.

58

EXT. RIVER - MOMENTS LATER

58

The men carrying the tree ARRIVE at the river, joining the women. The nude women are now dressed.

Christian awkwardly joins the crowd. As does Josh.

After a moment, the Large Woman announces to the river:

LARGE WOMAN
(in Swedish)
In thanks and praise, Great Goddess, we
bestow upon you this modest gift.

Music is played as the men HOIST up the lavish tree, run it towards the river, and HURL it into the water. The river gulps the tree down. *

A horn bellows.

A THIN MAN (40s) steps out to announce, quite theatrically:

THIN MAN
(in Swedish)
Oh no! Did you hear that rumbling?
I think she is still hungry.

LARGE WOMAN
(in Swedish)
I heard no rumbling.
(to the crowd)
Did any of you?

Grumblings all around. The consensus is "no."

THIN MAN
(in Swedish)
Ah, well - I suppose it could have
been my own belly.

Some polite laughter among the congregation.

THIN MAN (CONT'D)
(in Swedish)
But I do not wish to risk offending
our generous Mother.

LARGE WOMAN
(in Swedish)
Nor do I. Yet we have already given our
finest jewels and most fruitful tree.
What else could we possibly offer?

Then a YOUNG BOY (10) is heard among the crowd.

YOUNG BOY (O.S.)
You can use me!

The crowd OPENS UP to reveal the young boy. He is adorned in the same jewels and flowers as the tree. His costume is an *imitation* of the tree's. He is clearly reciting lines (with less confidence than the Thin Man and Large Woman).

LARGE WOMAN
(in Swedish)
You, young Ame, wish to offer your
life to our beloved Goddess?

YOUNG BOY
(in Swedish)
If She will have it.

THIN MAN
(in Swedish)
How brave you are, little Ame!

YOUNG BOY
(in Swedish)
Brave? What is brave in going home?

Horns are played as the Young Boy steps forward to stand before the men who tossed the tree. They reluctantly lift the boy up and carry him to the river.

Dani starts to PANIC.

DANI
(to Siv)
No. What's happening?

Siv SMILES.

The boy is taken to the edge of the river, and the men begin to SWING him back and forth. *They are preparing to launch him into the water.*

DANI (CONT'D)
NO!!!

This mingles with other protestations from the crowd:

HÅRGAN #1
(in Swedish)
No! Don't!

HÅRGAN #2
(in Swedish)
Leave him be! He has shown
his bravery!

The crowd erupts into a CACOPHONY OF STAGED PROTEST. The men stop swinging the boy. After sufficient heckling, the men RELEASE the boy. He then runs to SIV, bashfully burying his face into her dress. She pats his head with pride.

Everyone APPLAUDS. The performance seems to be over. Dani looks completely disoriented.

Connie, who has now been joined by Simon, turns to Siv.

CONNIE
So, is this like a Wiccan thing?

SIV
(confused at first)
Wicca? Oh my dear no! This is about
reciprocity.

CONNIE
Okay...
SIV (CONT'D)
Strictly presentational.

Connie looks skeptical. Dani still looks crazed. She turns to find CHRISTIAN, who (in contrast) looks very amused.

59

EXT. FIELD - MINUTES LATER

59

Dani has pulled Christian to a secluded spot. She is very high-strung. In the b.g., the Hårgas' WATER POWER PLANT is visible.

DANI
Please Christian - we need to leave.
This is feeling really wrong.

CHRISTIAN
Okay: look: I know it's weird. That's
because it's alien. We haven't ever
been *exposed* to anything like this.

DANI
No, Christian: this is pagan
nature worship. This is
completely backwards. We
shouldn't be here.
CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
We just need to acclimate--

DANI
I don't *want* to acclimate! I want to leave.

CHRISTIAN
Baby, I *cannot* leave right now. Period.
I'm doing my thesis on these guys--

DANI
What? Since when?!

CHRISTIAN
Since I decided! Today. Which you *know*
has been a nightmare for me to figure
out. And I made the mistake of telling
Josh and now he's *competing* with me--

DANI
So let him *have* it if he
wants it! We shouldn't *be*
here, Christian.

But why *have* they invited us?
And why did *Pelle*?!

DANI
And why would he trust *you*, of all
people? You're opportunistic
anthropology students.

CHRISTIAN
Maybe *because* we're
anthropologists. Maybe they
want someone to document
this.

CHRISTIAN
(stubborn)
Not necessarily.

Dani HESITATES, seeing that she's getting nowhere.

DANI
I want to leave.

CHRISTIAN
Then you can leave. I invited you to
come, and I don't regret that, but
I'm here for a reason.

Beat. Christian's eyes are ice cold.

DANI
...Do you not love me anymore?

CHRISTIAN
(momentarily stunned)
What does *that* have to do with this?

DANI
(almost to herself)
This is the devaluation phase. We've
been in it for a long time now. Next
comes the discard.

CHRISTIAN
Oh fuck - can you maybe spare our
relationship the psychology 101?

*

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

No, hey - have you even *seen*
what's happening here?! This
level of tradition? And
nobody *knows* about it,
nobody's *written* on it - and
they've invited us to be *part*
of it! Can't you see what a
privilege that is?!

Because Pelle did!
Because he trusts us!

DANI (CONT'D)

Oh my God, are you *blind*?
They're performing pagan
rituals out here! People are
jumping off cliffs. They
depend on nobody knowing
about this!

DANI
No - this has been happening for a long time! You've been pulling away... And *I*'ve been in denial.

*
*

CHRISTIAN
(finished)
Oh, *please* babe - give yourself some credit. Looks to me like you've got it *all* figured out.

Christian turns and STORMS away.

DANI
Oh my -- you're gonna walk away now??

As he leaves, she cries out:

DANI (CONT'D)
You're just gonna leave me like this?!

60 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - "NIGHT"

60

People are laying boards over the windows, bringing the Main House into darkness.

Dani enters with sunken eyes. Christian's already in bed. Staring at him, Dani walks to JOSH. (She is pulling at her neck again.)

DANI
Do you have a sleeping pill?

JOSH
Sure. Uh...

Josh fishes a PILL out of his bag.

JOSH (CONT'D) DANI
They're intense, though. You might wanna cut it in half. I just need to sleep.

She swallows it whole.

61 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - "NIGHT"

61

Silence. Everyone is asleep, including Dani.

There is RUSTLING heard off-screen. Dani WAKES. She sits up to see...

Christian's bed is now EMPTY. So is Mark's bed. And Josh's.

Concerned, Dani looks to the DOOR. Mark, Josh, Pelle and Christian are quietly tip-toeing out of the house. They GIGGLE. Christian is the last to exit.

Confused, Dani climbs out of bed. She rushes to the door.

Dani looks OUTSIDE to see that the group is now inside the RENTAL MINIVAN, which is IDLING off. Pelle drives, LAUGHING. Christian, in the back seat, looks out the back window. HE SMILES GIDDILY AT DANI as they drive away.

Dani watches this in utter horror.

The diminishing car's TAILPIPE belches thick black smoke.

Dani opens her mouth in anguish. An impossible amount of BLACK SMOKE (the same color as that from the tailpipe) escapes her lungs, FILLING the frame, and then--

We SLAM to a HARSH **INSERT** of the GORED FACE of the second Elder who jumped off the cliff. He GASPS wretchedly.

We then PUNCH OUT, *wider*, to reveal that the dashed bodies on the rocks are DANI'S PARENTS and her SISTER. We then CUT TO:

62 **INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - "NIGHT"** 62

Dani is ASLEEP in bed. The last scene was a DREAM. Her eyelids twitch as she continues to suffer the nightmare.

We pan away from Dani to reveal that MAJA, several beds over, is AWAKE. She anxiously fingers a freshly carved RUNE STONE. Her eyes are GLUED to Christian, who is fast asleep.

Maja climbs out of bed and tip-toes to Christian's bed. She crouches to SLIDE the rune stone under his mattress. She then runs nervously back to her bed.

JOSH, whom we now reveal to be awake, has been watching this.

63 **INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - MORNING** 63

All of the beds are now empty, and morning activity is heard outside. Dani, however, is still asleep.

64 **EXT. MEADOW - NEXT MORNING** 64

Pelle plants vegetables in the garden.

Josh, accompanied by Mark, approaches Pelle. *Watching this, Christian lingers in the b.g.*

JOSH
Hey man. Any word?

Pelle looks up to see Josh. He SIGHS and rises.

PELLE
They said you can do it as long as you *absolutely* don't use names and the location is never even *hinted* at. *And they're gonna have you sign an agreement to that.*

JOSH (CONT'D)
(nodding, excited)
Okay. Wow. Okay.

Josh can't contain his glee.

PELLE
And you split it with Christian. Because *he* came to me first.

JOSH
Well, that's -- We'll figure that out.

Mark notices in the distance: One MAN has climbed to the top of a TREE to fetch a strange, FLOWERING PINECONE from the tip of a branch. At the base of the tree is a crowd of observing men.

MARK
What are *they* doing?

*
*

*

JOSH
Gathering...charms.

The climbing man CUTS the cone with a golden blade. The men
CHEER.

JOSH (CONT'D)
(to Pelle)
Here: can I ask you something?

Josh pulls Maja's RUNE STONE out of his pocket.

JOSH (CONT'D)
I found this under Christian's bed.
Do you know what this is?

PELLE
(looking over it)
Love rune. It casts a love spell.

CHRISTIAN walks over. Josh CONCEALS the rune.

CHRISTIAN
What's going on?

PELLE
The elders said you can do your
thesis as long as you don't use
actual names or location.

CHRISTIAN
Holy shit. That's incredible.
Thank you so much.

PELLE (CONT'D)
You're splitting it with
Josh.

CHRISTIAN
(as if Josh isn't there)
I already told him that's totally
fine with me.

Pelle notices Christian glancing over at Maja.

PELLE
I think my sister Maja has taken a
liking to you.

CHRISTIAN
Yeah. I think I noticed.

In the b.g., a COW and a LAMB are being led across the field
by different Hårgans.

PELLE
(raising eyebrows)
You know, she just got her byxmyndig.

CHRISTIAN
Ha. What's that?

PELLE
It means -
(smiling at the silly expression)
- "pants license"? When you turn
fifteen, you're allowed to have sex.

*
*
*
*

*

MARK
(pointing)
How 'bout that one? Is *she* licensed?

Mark is pointing out the BRUNETTE that he has a crush on.

PELLE
(laughs)
Inga? Oh yes.

Pelle is SUMMONED by a few men struggling to carry equipment. He goes off to help them.

At the same time, Mark catches the brunette, INGA, looking at him again. He suddenly feels COMPELLED to do something. He starts marching in the direction of the climbing men.

CHRISTIAN
Mark?

65 **INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - MORNING** 65

Dani stirs awake. Extremely groggy.

DANI
(as if still dreaming)
Christian?

66 **EXT. FARMSTEAD - SAME TIME** 66

Mark has arrived at an OAK TREE with a particularly large PINECONE (also bearing a flower) at the top. Its base has been tied with rope. Mark begins to CLIMB it. *

CHRISTIAN
Wait, dude. Maybe hold off.

MARK
I'm gonna "gather a charm." *

Josh and Christian look uneasy as Mark quickly scales the Oak. As he climbs past a few branches, a BEARDED MAN (40s) is heard off-screen:

BEARDED MAN (O.S.)
NEJ!!!

Mark FREEZES. The Bearded Man runs over. This is ULF.

ULF
(in Swedish)
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! GET OFF! GET DOWN!

Mark, now standing motionless on a branch, looks stupefied. The branch suddenly SNAPS beneath his feet, and he comes TUMBLING to the ground. He lands HARD on his ass.

Ulf desperately picks up the BROKEN BRANCH. He then notices that the tree's mud-plugged CLEFT (wrapped in rope) has BROKEN OPEN.

ULF (CONT'D)
(in Swedish)
Oh no no no... What have you done?

People have started gathering around. He appeals to them:

ULF (CONT'D)
 (in Swedish)
 Can we put it back on? Can we...?

MARK
 What's wrong? What did I do?

Pelle has run over.

PELLE
What happened?

ULF
 (in Swedish, heartbroken)
 Your American friend. He desecrated
 my tree.

PELLE
 (gasps, in Swedish)
 I'm so sorry, Father Ulf! He
 didn't know.

MARK
 What happened? What did I do?

PELLE
 You climbed his tree.

MARK
 His tree? So what? I'm sorry.

ULF
 (suddenly enraged)
 "So what?!"

MARK
 What?! I didn't know!

Ulf is clearly in a fury. He STIFLES it, but his eyes are frighteningly wide.

PELLE
 Here, Mark: let's just...

Pelle leads Mark away.

MARK
 What the *fuck*? How is it *his* tree?
 What's even *happening*?

PELLE
 That tree cured him of pneumonia
 when he was a baby.

MARK
 What? *How*?! No it didn't.

PELLE (CONT'D)
He believes it did. And now
 his health and his life are
 tied to that tree. If *it* gets
 hurt, *he* gets hurt.

Mark looks over to Ulf, who has collapsed into TEARS. The Thin Elder speaks soothingly to him.

THIN ELDER
 (in Swedish)
 We can reattach the branch.
 It's a minor wound. Barely
 anything.

ULF
 (in Swedish)
What about the cleft?

Mark calms down.

MARK
Well - fuck. I *am* sorry. I still don't
understand what I *did*... Do I apologize?

PELLE
Apologize later.

The Pretty Brunette, INGA, has walked up.

MARK
Oh shit. Hi.

INGA
(to Pelle, in Swedish)
Tell him it's okay. He didn't
know. I will talk to father
Ulf.

She SMILES at Mark and walks off.

PELLE
(explaining)
She said to tell you it's okay and that
she'll explain to him your mistake.

MARK
(overjoyed)
Seriously? What else did she say?

Christian sees DANI in the distance, woozily looking for him.
He walks over to her, affecting pleasantness.

CHRISTIAN
Hey!

DANI
(seeing him)
Oh!

CHRISTIAN
You get some good sleep?

They arrive at each other. He gives her a peck.

DANI
I'm sorry about last night.

CHRISTIAN
...How you feeling?

DANI
(pause, emotional)
I don't want us to be fighting, Christian.

CHRISTIAN
Well - *me neither*.

Christian looks like he wants to say more. Dani waits for it.
Finally, Christian thinks better of it.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
Are you feeling less nervous today?

Dani pauses uncertainly at this.

HORNS bellow in the b.g. A ceremony is beginning somewhere, and
all the Hårgans are presently migrating over a hill. PELLE,
standing at a distance, is waving Dani and Christian over.

ECU of a BABY BULL'S HIND LEGS, tied together with rope. The rope is PULLED SWIFTLY UP.

ECU of a LAMB'S HIND LEGS, also tied together. The rope is yanked up.

ECU of a BABY HORSE'S HIND LEGS, also tied. The rope pulls UP.

We now cut to a WIDE SHOT of the top of a HILL. NINE ANIMALS (lamb, goat, dog, baby horse, baby bull, baby cow, pig, rabbit, and three tied-together chickens) have been STRUNG UPSIDE-DOWN. They are all alive. Each of them is separated by about five feet.

The THIN ELDER stands to the side of the line-up. On the other side is SIV.

The entire community has congregated at the bottom of the hill. Dani looks very nervous. She turns to Pelle, who already looks concerned for her.

DANI

Do I want to stay for this?

PELLE

...Maybe you should not.

Dani looks to Christian. He looks very excited. She turns back to the top of the hill, anxious.

Siv speaks exultantly to the air (in Swedish). When she finishes, STEADY PERCUSSION BEGINS. The Thin Elder strikes a different POSE (physically and emotionally) with every percussive hit.

The RED-HAIRED WOMAN, reading from the holy book *Rubi Radr*, begins to SING. As we've heard before, it is a WORDLESS choral song.

Nine YOUNG MEN, each holding a blade, walk up to the animals. Simultaneously, they all SLIT THE ANIMALS' THROATS. The animals THRASH wildly as BLOOD drains from their necks. (The song has degraded into anguished snarls and cries.)

That does it. Dani STORMS OFF. Christian is too awe-stricken to care. Josh, meanwhile, is taking covert PHOTOS with his phone.

Beneath each animal, a narrow CHANNEL has been pre-carved into the earth. Each channel winds and loops to eventually converge, thus forming a MASSIVE RUNIC SYMBOL (symbolizing fertility). The blood pours from each animal to run down the separate canals. Soon, the blood has co-mingled to fill the carefully-engineered runic sculpture. It's horrible and beautiful.

Josh and Christian, briefly joined in their excitement, trade looks of amazement. Mark looks mystified.

MARK

This is fuckin' weird, no?

Pelle now goes after Dani, who is speed-walking away.

In the b.g., Simon can be heard saying:

SIMON (O.S.)

What the fuck did you bring us to?

Christian looks over at this. SIMON, who looks very scared, is confronting a grinning Ingemar.

SIMON (CONT'D)
(to Ingemar, aggressively)
Why are you smiling, mate?

68 EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME

68

Dani speed-walks (with intermittent running) toward the Main House in the distance. Pelle follows her, glancing over his shoulder to view more of the ceremony.

69 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

69

Dani enters the Main House, eyes crazed. She goes to her bed and begins hastily packing her bag. Her breathing is erratic and she's pulling at her neck again (as if to loosen the skin).

Pelle enters.

PELLE
Dani?

Dani looks up, teeth chattering with anxiety.

DANI
I'm really sorry, Pelle.
Thank you for inviting me,
but I really need to go. Can
someone maybe drive me?

PELLE (CONT'D)

I did warn you this time. I know it looks extreme, but we only do this once every ninety years. It's - what's the word...?

DANI
I understand that it's momentous.

PELLE
(that was the word)
Right! Exactly!

DANI
(snapping)
*I don't know why we're here,
Pelle! I don't know why you
invited us!*

PELLE (CONT'D)

Okay: Here: Sit down.
Please.

He sits Dani down. He plants himself beside her, taking her hands.

PELLE (CONT'D)
I invited my friends because this is a once-in-a-lifetime *thing* and I wanted to *share* it. Especially with my friends who I *knew* would appreciate it, because I *am* proud of this place.

DANI
But I'm *not* an anthropologist. I *don't* have the foundation to understand this.

PELLE
And yet I was the *most* excited for you to come.

Pelle has pulled a special POUCH from his pocket. He draws something out. *

PELLE (CONT'D) *

Here: smell this.

He places a homemade sachet (containing a SPECIAL HERB) under her nose. *

DANI

What is it?

PELLE

It calms you down.

She pauses before smelling it.

PELLE (CONT'D)

Go on. Inhale. I will, too.

Demonstrating, he INHALES the herb deeply. He puts it back to her nose, and she does the same. She's still trembling.

PELLE (CONT'D)

Isn't that nice?... I know what you're going through, Dani.

DANI

What am I going through? I'm scared. I can't breathe.

PELLE (CONT'D)

You're going through a lot.

PELLE (CONT'D)

I know you are, and I'm gonna say something now, because *my* birth parents are both gone, too--

DANI

What?!

(crying now)

That's not what I'm *talking* about!

PELLE

I know, and that's fine, but please... My birth-parents *both* died when I was a little boy. They burned up in a fire, and I became - technically - an orphan. So believe me when I say I know what that is, because I *do* . Yet *my* difference is: I didn't get a *chance* to feel lost. Because I *had* a family - here - where everyone embraced me and swept me up and I was raised by a community that doesn't distinguish between what is *theirs* and what is *not* theirs. That's what *you* were sacrificed to. But *I* - have always felt... *held* . By a *family* . A *real* family. Which everyone deserves. And *you* deserve.

Dani looks down at Pelle's hands GRIPPING hers.

DANI

Christian could walk in.

PELLE
He's what I'm talking about. And he's my
 good *friend* and I *like* him... But do you
 feel HELD by him, Dani? Does he feel
 like a HOME to you?

His eyes are locked intensely on Dani's. She doesn't turn away.

PELLE (CONT'D)
 My pilgrimage has been fun. New York is
fun... But I also find it terrifying how
 people live. As if it's necessary and
 even *good* to be lost and drifting...and
 I haven't spent *one* night over there
 that I haven't *longed* to be back
 here...in the lap of the Hårgas.

Dani looks almost hypnotized as she looks into Pelle's eyes.

PELLE (CONT'D)
 Stay, Dani. Please. It will be good...
 And I swear we're all finished
 sacrificing animals.

Dani gives a weak half-laugh. She relents. She sits up
 straight and wipes her eyes, regaining composure.

PELLE (CONT'D)
 Good.

Pelle stands up.

DANI
 You're a very empathic person, do
 you know that?

PELLE
 Well, our first language here is
 strictly emotion-based. So I could
 just be using that to manipulate you.

Dani pauses at this. Pelle sticks his TONGUE out, teasing.
 Dani SMILES, relieved.

PELLE (CONT'D)
 You are very vulnerable, though.
 And I mean that in a great way.
 It's very rare. It's beautiful.

Dani is touched, but tries to hide it.

DANI
 (re: the herb)
 Can I smell that again?

70

EXT. HILL - SAME TIME

70

The ceremony has ended. Groups are now setting up TABLES for
 lunch. As usual, they're being laid out in a particular pattern.

Simon and Connie stand frozen, traumatized. Simon is visibly
 DISTRAUGHT. He stares up at the top of the HILL, where the
 dangling, blood-drained animals are now being cut down.

SIMON
 Are we *eating* those animals?

INGEMAR
Not those ones.

SIMON (CONT'D)
And why not?

INGEMAR
(seeing the aggression)
...Because they weren't killed for that.

SIMON
So what were they killed for? So we
could watch that shit and clap?

Ingemar smiles. This infuriates Simon.

SIMON (CONT'D)
What the fuck is that smile,
mate? Get it off.

CONNIE
(trying to calm him)
Simon...

This has drawn attention. People are now looking over.

INGEMAR
(gesturing)
We can talk about this over
here.

SIMON
Why didn't we talk about it
before you took us here?

Ingemar gently touches Simon's arm to lead him away.

SIMON (CONT'D)
(pulling back his arm)
Don't sort me out, mate!

The PLUMP ELDER speaks up.

PLUMP ELDER
What's offending you, son?

SIMON
What's offending me? Besides the fact
I just saw something I can't ever
unsee, I'm offended that you're
teaching impressionable kids to
sacrifice living, innocent animals -
including a fucking defenseless dog--

One middle-aged WOMAN (50s) speaks up.

WOMAN
We sacrificed defenseless animals
yesterday, too! To fill *your* belly!

PLUMP ELDER
Why are we using "sacrifice" like
it's a dirty word?

SIMON
Because it's fucking
medieval!

WOMAN
*Why are you swearing?! We're
not swearing!*

The Plump Elder gestures to the Woman to calm down.

PLUMP ELDER
(to Simon)
You'll find that sacrifice is
essential in *any* relationship. Let's
put it in *your* terms--

SIMON
You don't *know* my terms!

PLUMP ELDER
(continuing, louder)
Say you find yourself entangled with
a lover who can't put *your* needs
before her own.

CONNIE
What's *that* supposed to mean?!

PLUMP ELDER
(to Connie now)
Say you learn that your partner can't
part with even a *fraction* of his own
comfort to give you what you *need*. And
show that you're *appreciated*.
(to both of them now)
Wouldn't you start to resent this
person? Wouldn't your *own* performance
begin to lack, knowing *they're* not
pulling *their* weight? Wouldn't you want
to *punish* that person for taking you
for granted?
(to Simon)
Sacrifice is *proof*. And without it,
no union can last.

Beat. Simon pops the bubble:

SIMON
Alright. Thank you for that. And now
we've seen two people kill themselves
and nine animals get bled to death,
so I think we're leaving.

PLUMP ELDER
I'll happily drive you to the station.

SIMON
Lovely. Thank you.
(to Connie)
Let's go. We're getting our things.

PLUMP ELDER
(gesturing)
I do need your help jumping the
truck, if you'll be so kind.

Simon pauses.

SIMON
(to Connie)
Go pack our stuff. I'll pick you up
out front in -
(to the Plump Elder)
- what, five minutes?

PLUMP ELDER
Fine.

Connie doesn't want to go alone. She hesitates and then walks quickly off. We TRACK alongside Connie, following her away.

As Connie speed-walks, PANIC rises in her. She looks back a few times, making sure that she's not being followed.

She arrives at the MAIN HOUSE. Dani and Josh are standing outside. They watch her storm past.

DANI
Are you okay, Connie?

CONNIE
(not stopping)
Yeah. Sorry. We're actually leaving.

71 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS 71

Connie rushes to her bed. She starts throwing her things into her suitcase.

72 EXT. THE MAIN HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER 72

Connie stops outside the door, gripping her and Simon's bags. She turns to Dani as she waits for Simon.

CONNIE
(anxious)
It was really lovely meeting you, Dani.

DANI
Yeah, it was lovely meeting you, too.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
Sorry to just leave like this. Simon's coming with the car.

DANI
I understand. I might be right behind you.

CONNIE
(on overdrive)
Simon went mental. Christ. I feel sick.
(then)
We exchanged emails an' all that, yeah?

DANI
No. We didn't.

CONNIE
Oh. I'm Connie-dot-Brahms at AOL.com.

DANI
Connie-dot-Brahms. I'll write you.

CONNIE (CONT'D)
Yeah. Lovely. Sorry to just leave like this.

ODD comes running up.

ODD
Connie! Simon told me to tell you...
(arrives)
Jan drove him to the train station. After Simon gets dropped off, he's sending the truck straight back for you -

CONNIE
What?

ODD (CONT'D)
- and you'll meet him there.

CONNIE
No. Why would he go without me? He wouldn't do that.

ODD

The truck only had room for two.

CONNIE

What does *that* mean? That's not real. Why wouldn't he tell me?

ODD

Today's only train leaves in ninety minutes. It takes forty-five minutes to drive there and back. They didn't want to waste time.

CONNIE

So I could have sat on his lap!

ODD

Simon mentioned that, too. We don't break traffic laws.

Connie looks to Dani, incredulous.

CONNIE

(to Odd)

They just left without me, just now?

ODD

There wasn't room in the truck. Yet it *is* coming right back. For *you*.

Connie shakes her head, not buying it. She WALKS OFF, on a mission to find out more. Odd turns to Dani:

ODD (CONT'D)

Lunch has been called.

73

EXT. FIELD - DAY

73

Lunch time. Everyone is seated at the tables (which are connected to form a HELIX shape).

ULF, still panicked over the damage done to "his tree," is consulting a BESPECTACLED ELDER. *

ULF

(in Swedish)

It feels like a tingling. Like a numbness in my arm.

The Elder presses his arm. MARK watches this, very nervous. *

Farther down the table, CHRISTIAN sits beside a HAPPY MAN (30s). Christian takes NOTES as he asks questions. Two HÅRGA women listen in, smiling. *Christian's eyes keep straying to JOSH, who is also questioning people. They are now RACING to gather info.*

CHRISTIAN

How are roles or jobs assigned?

HAPPY MAN

Well - that's based on traits we show as children. For example:

(points to the bespectacled elder)

He was assigned "to protect," so he did *his* pilgrimage as doctor. *

*
*

Christian quickly writes this down as DANI arrives at the table. She sits next to Christian.

CHRISTIAN
Hey. You okay?

DANI
...Simon left without Connie.

CHRISTIAN
(faux concern)
Really? That's so shitty.

Christian bluntly returns his attention to the Happy Man. Dani PAUSES, disturbed by Christian's indifference. *For the first time, she actually looks scared of him.*

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
(to Happy Man)
Is incest ever a problem?

HAPPY MAN
Ha! Well...the bloodlines are very well preserved, so - the elders must approve mates.

Christian is taking feverish notes. Dani watches him with a new kind of SCRUTINY; a new kind of distrust. As Christian writes, he GLANCES over at:

JOSH, who is now interrogating an uncomfortable BALD MAN (40s).

JOSH
What about the holy text? Ruby Radr?

BALD MAN
Um...I cannot answer this for you.
You might ask a elder.

74 **EXT. FIELD - DAY**

74

Lunch is over. Josh is now interrogating the Thin Elder on the grass.

THIN ELDER
I don't understand: You want to see it?

JOSH
I wouldn't even touch.

THIN ELDER (CONT'D)
It's written in our *Affect* language. You would not be able to read it...

76 **EXT. FARMSTEAD - DAY**

76

Dani walks idly around, thinking about her exchange with Pelle (and about Simon leaving Connie). She holds the folded DRAWING that Pelle gave her for her birthday. As the gears turn in her head, her attention falls on...

A large **KITCHEN** in one of the houses. A group of WOMEN (all ages) collaborate to prepare dinner. One SMALL WOMAN (40s) sees Dani and waves her over. Dani pauses and then approaches.

SMALL WOMAN
Would you like to help join us?

DANI
Sure! But actually - have you seen Simon?

SMALL WOMAN
Oh, yes, he was driven to the station. Did you not say goodbye?

DANI
No. I didn't. But that's okay...
(mind still racing)
What are we making?

SMALL WOMAN
Meat tarts!

Dani smiles "ooh!" and joins the women. She's handed an apron. Another Woman says something to Dani in Swedish.

SMALL WOMAN (CONT'D)
(translating)
She says you're so beautiful.

DANI
Oh! *She's* so beautiful!

Meanwhile, MAJA is preparing a tray of unbaked MEAT PIES. One of the pies is clearly very special. She distinguishes this one by laying a special BASIL LEAF on top.

EXT. FARMSTEAD - SAME TIME

SIV stands among labouring men, staring at the KITCHEN WINDOW. She watches Dani.

75

INT. TEMPLE - SAME TIME

75

The HOLY TEMPLE. Josh stands near the altar with the Thin Elder, who has pulled the *Rubi Radr* from an elevated pedestal. He shows Josh the text (written in the graphic Affect language - a combination of runes and abstract hand paintings).

THIN ELDER
We describe it like "emotional sheet music."

JOSH
What does it say?

THIN ELDER
Well...each runic letter represents one of the 16 affects, which are graded from most holy to most unholy. This here is about Grief. You can see at the end, however, we have blank pages?

Indeed the last half of the book is BLANK.

THIN ELDER (CONT'D)
This is because the *Rubi Radr* is a constant work in progress. Always evolving.

JOSH
And who decides what's added?

THIN ELDER
Well - this iteration is being written by Ruben.

The Thin Elder points to RUBEN, the mentally disabled boy, who is playing outside.

JOSH
Wait. The...disabled?

THIN ELDER
Since birth. He draws and the Elders interpret.

He shows Josh the first pages. They are marked by a BABY'S HANDPRINTS - all in different colors of paint. (Below the drawings are runic interpretations.)

THIN ELDER (CONT'D)
Ruben is unclouded by normal cognition. It makes him open for the source.

JOSH
So...what happens when Ruben dies? Do you just wait until a new baby isn't "clouded"?

THIN ELDER
Ruben was a product of inbreeding. All of our Oracles have been deliberate products of inbreeding.

Josh's jaw hangs. He hides his amazement.

JOSH
Can I possibly take a photograph?

THIN ELDER
(suddenly alarmed)
What? No. Absolutely not.

The Elder CLOSES the book.

JOSH
Okay. Sorry.

THIN ELDER (CONT'D)
Absolutely not.

A TENSE beat. Broken suddenly by:

SCREAMING, outside. They TURN.

CONNIE (O.S.)
SIMON!! SIMON!!

*
*
*
*

78

EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME

78

CONNIE, panicked and crying, backs away from three encroaching Hårgans (all 30s). They approach her carefully, trying to calm her down. Connie desperately appeals to CHRISTIAN and MARK:

CONNIE
Please! I'm begging you! I saw them pulling Simon! I swear I saw them!

HÅRGAN MAN #1
He was driven to town an hour ago. We all *watched* them drive off.

CONNIE
I'm not *talking* to you!!
(to Christian)
Please. You have to believe me.
(MORE)

CONNIE (CONT'D)
I saw them dragging Simon through
the woods. He was unconscious.

CHRISTIAN
Where?

CONNIE
(pointing)
Back there. Near the river. Please.

CHRISTIAN	CONNIE (CONT'D)
Can you show us?	(crying)
(to the Hårgans)	Please.
Can she show us?	

HÅRGAN MAN #1
Of course. Just please -
(to Connie)
- calm down. I promise it's not
what you think you saw.

HÅRGAN MAN #2	CONNIE
(impatient)	
And the truck is already back for you, by the way! You can leave.	<i>I'M NOT GOING WITHOUT SIMON!</i>

79

EXT. WOODS - MINUTES LATER

79

Connie desperately leads the group (Christian, Mark, and the two Hårgans) into the woods. She keeps her eyes locked on Christian, as if begging him to believe her.

CONNIE
It was right back here! I swear to
God. Right over there! They were
dragging him by the arms and he wasn't
moving and his head was bleeding!

HÅRGAN MAN #1	CONNIE (CONT'D)
So why didn't you try to stop them? Or follow them?	I couldn't even <i>breathe!</i>
-So where did they go?	-They went behind the bushes. I ran back for help.
	(to Christian)
	I wanted to find someone!

CHRISTIAN
Which direction were they going?

CONNIE
(indicating)
That way! They rushed behind the
bushes when they saw me.

HÅRGAN MAN #1	CONNIE (CONT'D)
(placating)	
Okay: I can tell you're saying the truth. Let's all go in the direction you saw them. If he's here, we'll find him.	<i>They'd have already hid him by now! You're lying!!</i>

The Hårgan Man wears a false smile, but his eyes BUZZ.

CHRISTIAN
(interjecting)
I'll go. Okay? They went in that
direction? I'll go looking.

CONNIE
I'm coming, too.

CHRISTIAN
Great. You and Mark go together.
Okay, Mark? We'll cover more ground.

Mark nods.

CONNIE
(re: Hårgan Men)
I don't want *them*.

CHRISTIAN
They'll go away.
(to Hårgan men)
Right? Thanks guys. Sorry.

The Hårgan men concede. They begin walking off.

HÅRGAN MAN #1
I hope you find him.

HÅRGAN MAN #2
And the truck is waiting for
you when you finally choose
to leave.

80

EXT. WOODS - MINUTES LATER

80

Christian walks alone through the woods, half-heartedly
searching. He suddenly stumbles upon a vague trail of DRIED
BLOOD, streaked across the grass. Christian PAUSES at this. Tree
limbs groan in the wind.

Christian looks up, left and right. Nobody's around.

MINUTES LATER

Christian sees MARK in the distance. He walks over.

CHRISTIAN
Where's Connie?

MARK
She got freaked out and ran back. I
dunno.

CHRISTIAN
(skeptically)
She went off alone?

MARK
She's fucking nuts, dude. So are
the rest of these people. The whole
fuckin' place is crazy.

They arrive at each other.

MARK (CONT'D)
Did you find anything?

CHRISTIAN
Not really.

MARK

...I do really wanna fuck that brunette.

81 **EXT. FIELD - DAY**

81

Christian and Mark return from the woods. They approach the two Hårgan men, who are now laying a dense CIRCLE OF ROCKS around the ominous, yellow SACRED HOUSE (which we saw earlier, isolated in the field).

CHRISTIAN

Did Connie come back here?

HÅRGAN MAN #1

(looking up)

Uh - yes. Her boyfriend called our landline from the station and they talked on the phone. Then she begged our pardon and Jan drove her to the station.

Christian squints with burgeoning suspicion.

CHRISTIAN

Okay. Huh. I guess that's a relief.

HÅRGAN MAN #1

For *her* it was. We already saw him leave the first time.

In the b.g., a Hårgan BOY (13) runs from one group to another, announcing:

BOY

(in Swedish)

Supper is ready! ... They're calling supper!

82 **EXT. HILL - DAY**

82

At the base of the hill, the dining tables are now set in the pattern of a STAR. Everyone is seated, save for some stragglers.

Christian, Dani, Josh and Mark sit at a table. Pelle is seated a few seats away. Dani glances over at him. He smiles warmly and looks away. Dani's eyes LINGER on him.

The SERVERS are laying plates in front of everyone. One especially COY-LOOKING SERVER sets a plate in front of CHRISTIAN. It features the special meat pie with the BASIL LEAF on top.

CHRISTIAN

Thanks.

Dani turns to Christian.

DANI

Do you know what happened with Connie?

CHRISTIAN

She supposedly got driven to the station.

DANI

Why do you think Simon would leave without her?

Christian shrugs.

DANI (CONT'D)
I could see you possibly doing that.

CHRISTIAN
...The fuck does *that* mean?

DANI
(pause)
Never mind.

Christian stares at Dani. Surprised at the uncharacteristic defiance.

Meanwhile, Mark has noticed ULF staring at him from a distance. Ulf has murder in his eyes.

MARK
(to Josh)
Fuck. Somebody's still sore about "his tree."

Josh looks up to see Ulf, whose eyes really are trained on Mark.

JOSH
Yikes.

MARK
Is he gonna kill me?

Josh, preoccupied, turns to Christian. He asks, faux-casually:

JOSH
Did you learn anything about the *Rubi Radr*?

CHRISTIAN
(mock-delighted)
Oh, what? You wanna collaborate now?

Josh ignores this and moves on to his food.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
I know that one elder showed you through it...

JOSH
(abruptly)
Yeah, barely. Never mind. Sorry I brought it up.

Christian seethes. He takes a BITE of his tart. As he chews, he catches something on his tongue. He turns away from Dani, and pulls a PUBIC HAIR from his mouth. His eyes widen with alarm.

MARK
(seeing this)
Oh my God, dude. What the fuck?

DANI
(inquiring)
What is it?

Christian turns to Dani.

CHRISTIAN
Just a piece of bone.

DANI CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
 Ew. Yeah. It's okay.

Mark leans in to whisper to Christian:

MARK CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
 Was that a fucking pube? Shhh! Calm down.

Christian sits "casually" back into his chair. He tucks the pubic hair into his pocket. He looks around to finally ALIGHT on Maja. She is smiling at him. Dani catches this.

Christian self-consciously breaks the gaze, taking a sip of his drink (a pink-tinted MEAD). He then PAUSES, realizing what he might be drinking (namely, menstrual blood). Paranoid, he sets the drink back down. *

Mark notices that ULF is still staring him down.

MARK
 Jesus. He's still lookin' at me. I don't like this.

Josh looks tensely at his NOTES. He stares at a line that reads: Affects -- *runic combinations, "emotional sheet music"*

INGA, the pretty brunette, sneaks up behind Mark. She whispers in his ear.

INGA
 You will come with me?

Mark turns to her, startled. He smiles widely.

MARK
 What?

INGA
 You will come? I show you.

MARK
 Uhhh... Oh-kay.

INGA MARK (CONT'D)
 Yes? Yeah. Okay. Sure. Great.

Mark rises from his seat.

MARK (CONT'D)
 (to his friends)
 I'll be back, I guess? She's gonna show me...

Mark looks very excited as he walks off with Inga. She takes his hand and leads him toward the woods.

DANI
 Somebody for everybody, I guess.

Josh is so immersed in his thoughts, he didn't even notice Mark being lured away.

Everybody is climbing into bed. Josh's eyes, however, are BUSY. He's thinking intently about something.

Dani sneaks up on him.

DANI
Hey, can I steal another sleeping
pill? Only half this time.

JOSH
Oh. Yeah. Okay.

Josh fetches her a pill. She takes it and moves to her bed.
Josh crawls stiffly into *his* bed. He's still wearing his SHOES.

84 **INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - LATER** 84

Everyone is asleep, except for JOSH, who looks as tense as
before. He sits up, scanning the room to make sure nobody is
awake. He then climbs quietly out of bed. He creeps to the
door and silently exits.

85 **EXT. THE MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS** 85

Josh rushes across the grass. It's now darkest twilight. He
hustles to the TEMPLE, glancing nervously about.

86 **INT. TEMPLE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS** 86

Josh passes the dark foyer to enter through the Temple Doors...

87 **INT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS** 87

Josh sneaks into the Temple. He creeps over to the pedestal
featuring the holy book *RUBI RADR*. He pulls out his phone,
turns on the FLASHLIGHT, and begins taking silent PHOTOS -
page by page - of *Rubi Radr's* text.

While he anxiously photographs, Josh keeps glancing up at the
Temple DOORS, making sure he's still alone. He has photographed
about fifteen pages when he hears the front door CREAK open.

Josh FREEZES. He looks up. Through the Temple's open doors, he
sees SOMEONE standing in the dark foyer. The person is barely
visible in the dimness. After some scrutiny, Josh makes it out
to be MARK. He is standing motionless.

JOSH
(relieved, whispering)
Holy fuck. *Mark?*

But Mark doesn't move or speak.

JOSH (CONT'D)
(whispering)
What the fuck are you doing? Close the
door! We're not supposed to be here.

Mark still doesn't move. Despite how hard it is to see, one
can tell that his body looks BULKIER than usual. And his face
seems somewhat SWOLLEN.

Josh looks unsettled. He starts moving toward the door.

JOSH (CONT'D)
(whispering)
Mark? Hello? What the fu--?

MARK steps forward. It is now bright enough to see... This isn't Mark. It's a LARGER MAN, and he's WEARING MARK'S SKIN (which is stretched uneasily over the man's bulkier features). Upon closer inspection, one might identify these features as belonging to ULF.

Before the full horror of this revelation can register on Josh's face, he is STRUCK against the HEAD by a bludgeoning FORCE (a block of wood wielded by an off-screen Hårgan). Josh collapses to make a sustained, involuntary GROANING noise.

A quiet moment as "Mark," eyes invisible behind the skin mask, stares down at Josh's twitching body.

Josh's body is swiftly DRAGGED out of frame.

88 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - MORNING

88

Outside, the ROOSTER crows.

People stir awake in their beds. Josh's bed is EMPTY. As is Mark's.

89 EXT. FARMSTEAD - MORNING

89

Breakfast time. Dani, Christian and Pelle look quizzically around.

DANI
Could Mark still be off with that girl?

PELLE
I wouldn't be surprised.

DANI
Then what about Josh?

CHRISTIAN
I'm honestly not too concerned.

The Plump Elder stands up. A hush falls cleanly over the scene.

PLUMP ELDER
We have something regretful to announce. This morning the third book of *Rubi Radr* was found missing from the south house. We are not hoping to point fingers, yet we ask kindly that whoever took it, please return it to its original place. You can leave it in the south house, which will be left unguarded and unwatched. Nobody need know it was you. If it is not returned by tonight, other actions will be taken. Thank you.

He sits down and everyone uneasily resumes eating.

CHRISTIAN
(under his breath)
Fuck.
(to Dani and Pelle)
Which of you is surprised?

LATER

Breakfast has ended. People leave their tables, carrying their empty plates.

Christian, Dani and Pelle stand up to see the THIN ELDER and the PLUMP ELDER walking toward them. Our group anticipates the following question:

THIN ELDER
Where is your friend Josh?

CHRISTIAN
I know. We have no idea.

THIN ELDER
He and your other friend go disappearing on the same day. You see how it looks.

CHRISTIAN
Yes, obviously, but I swear to you - we are *completely* in the dark on this. We are every bit as confused as you are.

DANI
(not sure whether to say it)
We *did* see Mark go off with one of the girls last night.

PLUMP ELDER
What girl?

PELLE
Inga.

The Plump Elder thinks about this. Christian interjects:

CHRISTIAN
But Mark wouldn't have done this. *Josh*, though: he came to bed with us, and when we woke up, he was gone. And if he *did* take that book, I just pray you understand: we do not identify as *friends* of his, or collaborators, or *anything*. I certainly don't *vouch* for him and we'd be so embarrassed to be connected to this in *any* way.

Beat. The Thin Elder relents.

THIN ELDER
...Let's just hope it gets returned.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
Yes. I hope that very much.

PELLE
I feel responsible.

THIN ELDER
Well - you and Odd can go looking for them. Maybe you can redeem this.

Pelle nods, walks to Odd, and they proceed toward the truck.

The Plump Elder turns to Dani and Christian.

PLUMP ELDER
(to Dani)
You'll be going with the women for the day's activity.
(to Christian)
And Siv asks to see you in her house.

CHRISTIAN
(nervous)
Why?

The Elder doesn't have the answer.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
...Which one is hers?

The Elder points to a SMALL WHITE HOUSE across the field. Christian nods "okay" and starts toward it. As he walks, he hears:

PELLE (O.S.)
Grandfather Sten!

ODD (O.S.)
The truck is gone!

PLUMP ELDER (O.S.)
What?!

Christian turns to see a distraught Pelle and Odd.

ODD
They took the truck.

Pelle stares daggers at Christian, and then turns back to Odd. Christian, very uneasy now, proceeds to the small white house...

90

EXT. FIELD - DAY

90

ECU of a BRIGHT YELLOW-GREEN PASTE. It's being MASHED vigorously in a bowl. The paste is made of ground-up flowers.

A fat SCOOP of the paste is dropped into a LARGE JUG OF SPRING WATER (perched on a table). The paste is STIRRED into the water.

A queue of WOMEN (between 16 and 35) has formed behind the table. One by one, the women accept a CUP of the water. They drink it (sometimes after nervous hesitation). In the b.g. is the MAYPOLE.

Dani has joined the line. The BLONDE WOMAN (whom she befriended earlier) is in front of her.

DANI
Do you know what we're doing?

BLONDE WOMAN
Oh yes. This is the big one.

The Blonde Woman smiles mischievously. Dani smiles skeptically back. They arrive at the "water" table. Both are handed a cup.

DANI
It's just water?

BLONDE WOMAN
Not *just*. It is for the competition.

The Blonde Woman gulps hers down, and then gestures "You now." Dani pauses, and then knocks it back.

BLONDE WOMAN (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Uh-oh.

She LAUGHS and HUGS Dani.

BLONDE WOMAN (CONT'D)
Here we go!

Dani looks very nervous.

91 **LATER**

91

Three CIRCLES OF WOMEN have formed around the Maypole. The inside circle (of about 8 women) is surrounded by the middle circle (about 15 women), which is surrounded by the largest, outside circle (about 22 women).

The men, children and older women have gathered on the grass to watch. The LARGE WOMAN stands with musicians (fiddler, key-harpist, and floutist).

Dani stands in the middle circle. All the neighboring women look very excited.

Dani looks down at the earth. At first everything looks normal, but then she notices...GRASS has begun to sprout from her shoes.

Dani looks up. *Fuck*. She's tripping.

The LARGE WOMAN speaks up.

LARGE WOMAN
(in Swedish)
It was here, long ago, that the Black One lured the youths of Hårga to the grass and seduced them into dance. Once they began, they could not stop, and they danced themselves to death. Now, in life-holding defiance of the Black One, we dance until we fall. And she who survives last will be crowned for her stamina.

The Large Woman CLAPS her hands ONCE. The musicians play a long, sustained NOTE. All of the women join hands and slowly dip to a cross-legged BOW. The musical note dies. A brief moment of SILENCE, and then...THE MUSIC BEGINS! (It is the song of Hårgas.)

The women begin to DANCE. The inside circle dances to the right. The middle circle to the left. The outside circle to the right.

Dani stumbles as she finds her way into the dance. Once she hits her stride, she smiles. The Blonde Woman looks back at her and LAUGHS good-naturedly. Dani laughs back!

92 **INT. SMALL WHITE HOUSE - SAME TIME**

92

Christian sits in a small wooden chair in the empty LIVING ROOM. The walls are completely covered in RUNIC MURAL ART.

Christian lingers on a particularly striking ILLUSTRATION (painted in the wall's center) in which a BEAR is being BURNED ALIVE before several onlookers.

A door opens to reveal SIV.

SIV
Please. Come in.

Christian rises to follow Siv into the other room...

A spare room. Two chairs face each other in the center. Siv takes a seat in one of them.

SIV
Please. Sit.

Christian obliges.

Siv's posture is perfect. Christian self-consciously corrects *his* posture. A long silence, and then:

CHRISTIAN
I just need to say, I have no idea where Josh went, and I can swear to that on my mother's life.

SIV
How do you feel about Maja?

Christian pauses.

CHRISTIAN
About Maja?

Siv's lack of response says "yes."

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
How do I feel about her *how*?

SIV
You have been approved to mate with her. You're an ideal astrological match and she has fallen in love with you.

CHRISTIAN
We haven't even spoken.

SIV
She fell in love with you before you came. Pelle showed her a photo.

CHRISTIAN
(pause)
I have someone here with me. I'm with Dani.

SIV
Dani will not know. I am not proposing marriage. You wouldn't be approved for that.

CHRISTIAN
So...you're asking me to what?

SIV
I'm asking you if you care to mate with Maja. It is a one-night offer.

CHRISTIAN
...She's very beautiful.

SIV
She *is* very beautiful.

CHRISTIAN
I think I ate one of her pubic hairs.

SIV
That sounds probably right.

Beat. Christian doesn't know what to say.

SIV (CONT'D)
From an academic perspective, it
would also serve as a unique
glimpse into our sexual rites.

CHRISTIAN
Can I not have a unique glimpse
without participating?

Siv smiles at the silly question.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
Can I think about it?

SIV
You can think about it here.
Tonight is the time of alignment.
Then it's done.

A long, conflicted pause.

CHRISTIAN
I don't think I can.

SIV
Okay. Is that your answer?

Christian hesitates. He's very torn.

94 **EXT. SMALL WHITE HOUSE - MINUTES LATER**

94

Christian emerges from the house in a daze. We track back with him. His eyes are fraught as he wrestles with the moral quandary. But as he continues to walk/think, a vague SMILE sneaks onto his face.

Christian looks forward to see the DANCE COMPETITION in the distance. He's walking toward it.

95 **EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME**

95

Dani is still engaged in the dance. It's a dizzying spectacle, and the mounting hallucinations are clearly taking their toll on the dancers.

The music STOPS abruptly, and everyone FREEZES.

LARGE WOMAN
(in Swedish)
Around!

Everybody turns around to face the OPPOSITE DIRECTION. They switch hands, and the music RESUMES. They now dance in the opposite direction.

One woman STUMBLES to her knees, laughing. She is now disqualified. She walks off to sit on the grass and watch.

Another WOMAN pulls out of the circle to RETCH nearby. She is also disqualified.

Dani, who was having fun, is suddenly disturbed by the retching sound. She feels sick for a second.

DANI
(thoughts turning)
Josh...?

The Blonde Woman turns happily to Dani.

BLONDE WOMAN
Don't slip!

Dani looks to her.

BLONDE WOMAN (CONT'D)
Can you holding on?!

Dani gets a second wind. She's back.

Maja, who is dancing in the outside circle, sees CHRISTIAN arriving. He joins the onlookers.

Maja *decisively* feigns COLLAPSE, opting out of the dance. She stumbles over to the onlookers, affecting dizziness. She glances over at Christian, smiling at him. He SMILES back. She coyly sits a few people over. *The electricity between them is palpable.*

The music STOPS abruptly again. All the dancers turn around, switching hands. As the music starts again, one woman TOPPLES to her side, bringing down two of her neighbors. She and one other laugh; the third woman is furious.

LATER

Many of the women have now been disqualified. Dani is still in the running! She seems determined to stay alert and compete.

The music CEASES. The women STOP. Their attention is turned to a field where NINE SMALL FENCES extend one after the other.

LARGE WOMAN
(in Swedish)
Nine fences jumped clean! Three ladies at a time!

BLONDE WOMAN
(to Dani, translating)
Now we are jumping the nine fences.
We go three and then three.

DANI
(confused, semi-alarmed)
What?

BLONDE WOMAN
Just watch first.

The Large Woman CLAPS once. Three women - including the Blonde Woman - walk up to form a row. Standing side-by-side, they face the nine fences.

The fiddler suddenly WAILS on his fiddle, creating an intense treble. The women all RUN forwrd.

They JUMP over each fence and run to the next. One woman's foot catches the third fence and she FALLS to the grass. Another woman collapses over the fifth fence. The Blonde Woman makes it to the end. She happily returns, still eligible.

Another three women go. Again, only one makes it to the end.

Next up, two women line up. DANI is urged forward to join them. She looks to the women beside her. They SMILE at her. Their smiles stretch wider (and more fluidly) than normal. The edges of their mouths elongate up their cheeks.

The fiddle suddenly TREBLES. The women RUN.

DANI JUMPS OVER THE FIRST FENCE. She gasps, suddenly filled with confidence. She runs to the next fence and CLEARS it. She runs faster now, to the third fence. Clears it. The fourth fence - clears it! The woman to Dani's left suddenly BIFFS it, falling on her face. Unshaken, Dani clears the *fifth* fence, and then the *sixth*, and then the *seventh*, and the *eighth*...

Dani makes it to the final (and tallest) fence. She leaps high. Her foot ALMOST connects with the top of the fence, but it PASSES OVER! She lands on her feet, triumphant. She glows with excitement.

The other woman also made it. She walks up to Dani, HUGS her and gives her an encouraging PECK on the lips.

Dani turns to the onlookers. She sees CHRISTIAN. He isn't paying attention. He claps absent-mindedly.

Dani's expression CURDLES. She walks back to the maypole. Her trip is turning BAD again.

More women have lined up to jump the fences. The fiddle SHRIEKS, and they run.

Christian's eyes go to Dani. She's staring at him. Taken aback, he gives her a smile. She doesn't smile back. *She's very much in the grip of the psychedelics now.*

Dani's HANDS are taken by women on either side of her. Confused, she looks around to see that she is now part of a more modest circle surrounding the maypole. Only SEVEN women remain. The music STARTS and they commence dancing.

MEANWHILE, Christian sits among the onlookers. He's sneaking obsessive glances at Maja. Suddenly, he notices ULLA (whom he met earlier) walking toward him. She arrives at his feet, holding out the CUP of the flower-spiked water.

ULLA

For you.

CHRISTIAN

What is it?

ULLA

Spring water with special properties.

CHRISTIAN

(skeptical)

What's it do?

ULLA
Breaks down your defenses and opens
you for the influence.

CHRISTIAN
...I'm worried I'll have a bad trip.

Christian looks back to Maja. She's now looking directly at him. Her eyes are languid, confident. She doesn't break the gaze.

Christian turns to Ulla, and accepts the water. He sips it. Sips it again. KNOCKS it back.

Settling into the idea that he's now going to hallucinate, Christian looks back to the MAYPOLE. The women are still dancing in a circle.

IN THE DANCING CIRCLE, Dani's eyes betray a rising panic.

One SKINNY WOMAN says, as provocation:

SKINNY WOMAN
(in Swedish)
If we stop, will everything keep
spinning?

A SHORT WOMAN replies:

SHORT WOMAN
(laughing, in Swedish)
What if we looked down and there
were centipedes everywhere?

The Short Woman laughs, and then looks down. As imagined, she sees the ground as a squirming BLANKET OF CENTIPEDES. She SCREAMS in horror, desperately FLEEING the circle. Another woman has looked down to see the same thing. She SCREAMS too, and runs off.

Dani looks down, panicked and confused. It's just the earth beneath her feet.

DANI
There's nothing there.

Dani looks up. She laughs with relief, still confused.

BLONDE WOMAN
(smiling)
That's right! Hold on to your brain!

Now there are only five women dancing.

TIME-LAPSE. The shadows of the dancing women crawl across the grass, moving in accordance with the drifting sun. Two women FALL (to be disqualified) over the course of this time lapse.

Now, only Dani and two other women are in the running. One of these is the Blonde Woman. The other is a good-natured Plump Woman. They each dance separately, no longer holding hands. The Plump Woman's legs are clearly less stable than Dani's or the Blonde Woman's, and she is tired and stumbling.

Competition has been growing in Dani. She's so close to winning that she can now taste it.

The Blonde Woman turns happily to Dani.

BLONDE WOMAN (CONT'D)
 (in Swedish)
 Are you tired?!

Dani, still dancing:

DANI
 I don't speak Swedish!

BLONDE WOMAN
 (not understanding)
 What?!

Dani repeats herself, but it comes out as:

DANI
 Aewobeemeewish!

The Blonde Woman, understanding, responds:

BLONDE WOMAN
 Waweroobeeny!

DANI
 (somehow understanding)
 Aewabeeny-sa-aewonnerstabloo!

They are speaking complete gibberish, but they understand each other perfectly. Dani is amazed.

DANI (CONT'D)
 (excitedly remarking on this)
 Weerabbleeishcobleraymib!

The Blonde Woman nods manically, agreeing with this.

BLONDE WOMAN
 Blorishcobleraymib-wonnerstablee!

The Plump Woman suddenly TRIPS over one foot to fall CRASHING to the ground. The Blonde Woman (still facing Dani) TRIPS over the Plump Woman. She COLLAPSES, laughing merrily on the way down.

Dani dances past the fallen women. She doesn't immediately realize that she's just won the competition. She still looks determined as she continues dancing manically around the maypole.

Cheering women rush over to congratulate Dani, but she KEEPS DANCING in the circle, afraid that it's a trick.

The women tug excitedly at Dani's arms. They embrace her. Dani decelerates, but does not cease dancing. Finally, enough women have enfolded her. Her dancing feet slow to a confused halt.

LARGE WOMAN
 (in Swedish)
 We have our May Queen!!

The LARGE WOMAN approaches with an immense, gorgeously crafted GARLAND CROWN. She lays it on Dani's head.

DANI
 (hallucinating)
 It's over?

LARGE WOMAN
You are our May Queen.

DANI
(confused)
Why? *Me?*

LARGE WOMAN
You!

DANI
(suddenly scared)
What do you mean?!

ROSE PETALS are fired out of small air cannons by children. The petals rain down on Dani and the surrounding Hårgans.

Dani, severely disoriented, is led aside by several women. One woman wraps her in a sort of scarf (composed only of greenery and flora), and then she is directed to stand before a gorgeous view of the field. Her distracted attention is pointed to a MAN holding a large, old FILM CAMERA. He takes Dani's PHOTOGRAPH.

Dani looks for Christian, who stands among the Hårgans with a baffled expression. Dani alights on him.

DANI (CONT'D)
What's happening?!

But Christian doesn't understand it himself. He shakes his head to say "*I don't know!*"

DANI (CONT'D)
(pleadingly, to the
surrounding women)
What does this mean? What do I have
to do?

The women answer with hugs, warm smiles, and kisses on the cheek. Their faces morph subtly (a product of the psychedelics). Among the people who kiss her are her MOTHER and FATHER and SISTER (Terri). She looks back for them, but they have disappeared. A figment of her imagination?

Caught in the hallucination, Dani falls into a traumatized daze. PELLE breaks the spell by giving Dani an enthusiastic hug.

PELLE
Holy cow, you won! May Queen!

He gives her a blunt KISS on the lips. Before she can react, Pelle is replaced by two new women, also kissing and hugging her.

Dani is then led to a ROUND WOODEN PLANK (painted gold and shaped like a cartoon SUN) with eight long, protruding handles. She is directed to STAND on it.

BLONDE WOMAN
Careful!

The handles are gripped by eight men, and Dani is swiftly HOISTED UP. She almost falls, but doesn't. She is elevated five feet above the ground as the crowd erupts into mirthful SONG.

The song persists as Dani, still on her pedestal, is carried across the field. All eyes are on her. Everyone follows her.

DANI
 (searching)
 Christian?!

But Christian has lagged to the back of the crowd. He looks extremely conflicted. His eyes move to Maja, whose eyes are TRAINED on him. She smiles widely, but her eyes are faded.

Christian slows to a stop as the procession continues. Ulla runs back to fetch him. She takes his hand and pulls him back toward the crowd.

Meanwhile, Dani's confusion and fear is beginning to subside. She looks down at the procession to see that these people are indeed celebrating her. A few women even persist in throwing rose petals up at her.

Dani, now calm, looks down to see that her FEET and LEGS have assumed the GOLD color of the plank (like a chameleon).

The crowd arrives at today's DINING AREA. In a LUSH FIELD, the tables are all queued up to form a long, straight line. At the head of the table is a HUGE CHAIR (more like a throne) adorned in lush greenery and bright flora.

Dani's pedestal is set down. Members of the crowd step aside to create a PATH for Dani's trajectory (toward the throne). Dani takes a moment before stepping *decisively* onto the GRASS.

When Dani's FOOT touches the grass, small SUMMER FLOWERS magically SPROUT UP around her foot. Her next step is the same. Flowers emerge, impossibly, from the soil. She continues to walk forward, having now assumed a more self-possessed posture. Confidence is rising in her, and with every step, more flowers sprout up. She's leaving a beautiful trail of wild flowers in her wake.

Dani STOPS at the throne. Everyone now finds their way to *their* seats, but no one sits. They look to her. She looks momentarily confused, but then understands. She SITS. Now everyone may sit.

Dani admires her green throne. The greenery/flora subtly SWELLS and DEFLATES (as we saw before, with the mushroom trip).

SERVERS appear with plates. Dani is the first person to receive food and drink. Her tableware is much finer than the rest.

Before long, everyone has food in front of them. They sit with their hands on their laps, present. They WAIT for Dani.

Dani picks up her FORK. She looks back to the rest of the table. They all look back at her with patience. She then looks down and PIERCES her food with the fork. (The sound of the piercing is heightened.) Dani takes a BITE. Now everyone may begin eating.

Dani looks down the length of the extended table. She alights on CHRISTIAN, who isn't eating. He looks very disturbed, clearly suffering a bad trip. He looks in Dani's direction. They LOCK EYES, but communicate nothing to each other. They are both lost in confusion, but they don't share in this. If anything, they look SCARED of each other.

This moment is broken by a SERVER arriving at Dani's side. He presents her with a baby SALT HERRING. The community sees this and laughs, knowing what's in store.

DANI (CONT'D)
 For what?

The PLUMP ELDER explains:

PLUMP ELDER
 You must eat it whole, but the tail
 going first.

DANI
 (sincerely frightened)
 What? I can't. That's too big.

PLUMP ELDER
 (chuckle)
 No no - you must try.

Christian, tripping heavily, turns to a LARGE MAN to his side.

CHRISTIAN
 How much is happening right now?

Inexplicably, the Large Man CLAPS in Christian's face. This sends Christian on an intense downward spiral.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
 (almost inaudible)
Why did you do that?

The Large Man's attention is now on Dani, whose head is tilted back as she tries to eat the herring whole (tail first). The Plump Elder holds it above her, feeding it into her mouth.

Dani takes half of the herring into her mouth, starts to chew, and then coughs out the rest. This elicits ecstatic APPLAUSE. Dani, unnerved at first, lets out a childlike LAUGH.

PLUMP ELDER
 A word from the May Queen!

BLONDE WOMAN	DIFFERENT HARGANS
Yes! Speech!	Speech!

LARGE WOMAN
 Stand! Stand!

Dani is urged to stand up. She does so, clearly hallucinating intensely. The silence hangs heavily.

DANI
 ...I don't know if this is real, or
 what's happening - but...thank you.

Dani lets this hang, and then sits back down. Brief, awkward pause, and then:

THIN ELDER
 To the May Queen!
 (raises his aquavit)
Skål!!

*

EVERYONE
 Skål!!

Everyone drinks to that. One Hårgan Woman turns to Dani to excitedly says:

HÅRGAN WOMAN
 You are the family now! Yes?

Dani nods, unsure. The woman nods manically.

HÅRGAN WOMAN (CONT'D)
Yes! Yes! You are the family!

The Woman rubs Dani's arm, smiling warmly (and aggressively).

PELLE, we reveal, is composing a drawing of Dani in her throne.

Christian's expression is SOUR. He turns to notice that MAJA is looking at him. Taken aback, Christian's expression slowly SOFTENS (in a slack-jawed, lust-stricken way). Maja is clearly "in heat." Holding Christian's gaze, she RISES from her seat (as if in slow-motion) and begins to walk sensually off. Christian watches her go. She passes SIV, whose eyes are also trained on Christian.

Maja continues toward the TEMPLE, glancing back at Christian to confirm that he's still watching her. DANI notices this, despite the fact that everyone is competing for her attention.

Dani looks to Christian. He stares dumbly at the table, lost in conflict.

MINUTES LATER

Everyone is finished. Siv RISES. All eyes go respectfully to her.

SIV
Now it is traditional for the May
Queen to bless our crops and
livestock. And after the luck you just
inherited from that salt herring, we
should all be doubly encouraged.

Polite laughter all around.

Siv gestures in the direction of a CARRIAGE, just beyond the tables. Its roof sports THREE UNLIT TORCHES.

Three GIRLS scatter flowers to create a PATH between Dani and the carriage. Dani RISES. *Everyone else stands up, too.*

DANI
Can Christian come with me?

SIV
No. The Queen must ride alone.

Dani pauses to accept this. She steps onto the floral path and approaches the carriage. On the way, one MAN (dressed in lady's clothing) offers her a LONG, FLAMING STICK. Dani accepts it. The man motions to the carriage's unlit torches.

Dani walks to the carriage, extends the stick's flame toward the torches, and sets them each AFIRE.

The man takes the stick back from Dani, and gestures for her to enter the carriage. A TRADITIONALLY DRESSED MAN stands beside the carriage door. He hands Dani a VIAL OF HOLY SPRING WATER, and offers Dani his hand (for support) as she contemplates entering.

TRADITIONALLY DRESSED MAN
Your majesty.

Dani accepts his supportive hand as she climbs into the carriage.

96 **INT. CARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS** 96

Dani takes a seat.

Outside, several YOUNG WOMEN (including the RED-HAIRED WOMAN) have gathered in front of the carriage. They each take hold of RODS, prepared to pull the carriage.

A few other women have gathered to the sides of the carriage. They hold juniper boughs and unlit torches. One girl goes around, IGNITING their torches.

97 **EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME** 97

Most of the community remains standing at the dining tables. They WATCH as the women pull the carriage away.

Christian watches, too. Guilt-ridden. He looks to SIV. She looks unblinkingly back.

98 **INT. CARRIAGE (MOVING) - MOMENTS LATER** 98

Dani looks out the window as the carriage is pulled through the WHEAT FIELDS. The accompanying women WAVE their torches about, casting away dark spirits.

99 **EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME** 99

A GIRL begins scattering flowers to create a NEW PATH. This is between Christian and the TEMPLE. All eyes are now on him.

Christian, frozen for a moment, RISES. He takes one abrupt step forward, and then continues warily toward the Temple.

100 **INT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS** 100

Christian enters the foyer of the temple. The temple doors are closed. A BEARDED MAN IN A DRESS stands in waiting. He hands Christian a WHITE GOWN.

BEARDED MAN IN DRESS

Put this.

The man gestures to a MODESTY PANEL in the corner (behind which Christian can disrobe).

101 **EXT. WHEAT FIELD - SAME TIME** 101

The women pulling the carriage have slowed to a STOP. Dani is directed by the Red-Haired Woman to step out. She is handed a flaming torch, and led to a small HOLE in the ground.

Dani is handed a sack of GRAIN, a raw STEAK, and an EGG. She is directed to pour the grain into the hole, which she does, and then to drop the steak over the grain. She does this, too. She is then instructed to crack the egg and pour its contents into the hole.

The Red-Haired Woman now affects perfect posture. Dani instinctively mimics this.

RED-HAIRED WOMAN

Repeat now after me.

Dani and the Red-Haired Woman are looking directly into each other's eyes. The Red-Haired Woman begins to SING very slowly, enunciating very carefully, and Dani SINGS ALONG (quite well):

RED-HAIRED WOMAN (CONT'D)
Vakna upp, vakna upp, både åker och äng
Nu har du sovit länge i din säng
Nu är det över med snö och med regn
Nu har sommarnatten kommit.

The Red-Haired Woman is impressed. As are the onlooking young women.

The hole is COVERED UP with soil.

102

INT. TEMPLE - FOYER - SAME TIME

102

Christian has changed into the WHITE GOWN. He steps nervously out from behind the modesty panel.

CHRISTIAN

What now?

The Bearded Man in the Dress holds up a STONE POT. He lifts off the lid to release a WAVE OF STEAM.

BEARDED MAN IN DRESS

Breathe in.

CHRISTIAN

What does it do?

BEARDED MAN IN DRESS

For your vitality.

Christian BREATHES IN the vapors. His eyes begin to cloud. He EXHALES heavily. He's already feeling the effects. His breathing becomes shallow.

The Bearded Man now OPENS THE DOORS to the temple.

103

INT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

103

It is dark, save for several burning candles. *

In the center of the room, lying on a bed of freshly cut birch twigs and WILD FLOWERS, is MAJA. She is NUDE, lying on her back, legs together. *

Several OLDER WOMEN, mostly in their 30s and 40s (a few in their 50s and 60s), stand at the back of the room. They are also NUDE. *

Christian is too stoned to react. He regards the room as he would a dreamscape.

Ceremonial MUSIC begins. A few women, reading from the *Rubi Radr*, SING in the Hårgas' wordless, groaning, microtonal tradition.

One Woman steps up to draw Christian's gown OFF of his shoulders. He is fluidly DISROBED. Now standing naked (and erect), he is directed towards Maja, who waits nervously.

Christian seems to LEVITATE half-an-inch off the ground and then FLOATS gently across the room (clearly a product of the escalating hallucination). As he approaches Maja, the singing intensifies. Maja's LEGS timidly PART. Christian, now standing at her feet, looks down at her. Her eyes are closed as she waits to be taken.

104 **EXT. CATTLE HOUSE - SAME TIME** 104

The sun is less intense now. It is nearing twilight.

The carriage has pulled up to the cattle house. Dani, holding a torch, proceeds to bless the livestock (according to the Red-Haired Woman's instructions).

105 **INT. TEMPLE - SAME TIME** 105

Christian has descended to his knees. He sits between Maja's legs, preparing himself. He looks extremely intoxicated.

Maja's eyes are squeezed shut as she anticipates what's coming. Christian awkwardly leans down to gently KISS her lips. Without opening her eyes, she kisses back - slowly, sensually. The singing rises and falls (out of harmony) with trembling impatience.

Christian gently presses himself into Maja. Her mouth opens in anticipation. He ENTERS her. Overwhelmed, Maja digs her nails into his back. Her eyes well with tears. Christian looks unsettled, but he continues...

Christian is now MAKING LOVE to Maja, very slowly - almost robotically. She lies motionless, mouth agape. She doesn't move a muscle, nor does she make a sound, but her expression is one of total, paralyzed ECSTASY. The singing has now HARMONIZED.

The Older Women watch this with rapt attention. They are clearly aroused. The lovemaking is dreamily slow. The singing rises steadily. Delayed percussion accompanies each heavy, lagging THRUST.

Maja looks back at one of the WOMEN (50s). The woman smiles tenderly at her. This would be touching if it weren't so weird. Maja offers the woman her HAND, and the woman supportively takes it into her hands. The woman lovingly presses her CHEEK against Maja's open palm, CARESSING her face.

106 **EXT. FARMSTEAD - MOMENTS LATER** 106

The carriage has returned to the farmstead. Dani steps uneasily out of the wagon, still under the warping influence of the hallucinogen. The SINGING is heard faintly from the Temple.

RED-HAIRED WOMAN
We shall go now to Siv's house.

DANI
What's there?

RED-HAIRED WOMAN
It is a special meeting, only for the Queens. She will bless you.

The distant singing persists. Dani looks to the Temple. She seems DRAWN to it.

DANI
What about there?

RED-HAIRED WOMAN
Not for us.

Dani, attracted by the singing, takes a few steps toward the Temple. The young women look very concerned. The Red-Haired Woman steps up to STAND IN DANI'S WAY.

RED-HAIRED WOMAN (CONT'D)
I think you should not.

DANI
...Why?

The Red-Headed Woman is not convincing when she says:

RED-HAIRED WOMAN
It is a ceremony for the men.

Dani is now very suspicious. Her expression begs "*What is it really?*" The Red-Haired Woman's expression says that it's something that would hurt Dani. The woman's expression pleads: "*Don't go inside. For your own sake.*"

Dani's eyes NARROW with paranoia. Now she *must* enter. She PUSHES ahead. The women remain where they are, very worried.

107 **INT. TEMPLE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS** 107

Dani enters the foyer of the temple. Beyond the closed doors, the singing has reached an operatic intensity.

Dani takes a moment to gather herself, and then she bends down to peer through the door's KEYHOLE.

Through the keyhole, Dani sees Christian's BACK as he "makes love" to Maja. The surrounding women have fallen deeper into their trance. Dani's eyes go WIDE with horror.

Stunned, Dani backs away from the keyhole. She suddenly doubles over and RETCHES. She rushes out of the temple.

108 **EXT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS** 108

Dani runs outside. She VOMITS onto the grass. She's in a state of shock. Her breathing is shallow and she looks anxiously around, as if confused as to her whereabouts.

The young women rush over to Dani. They surround her, touching her, rubbing her. Dani CAN'T BREATHE. She's panicking.

The Red-Haired Woman directs the women to LEAD Dani to the Main House. They all hurriedly guide her in that direction.

109 **INT. MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS** 109

The young women usher Dani to her bed. They sit her down, gathering intimately around her. Dani struggles increasingly to breathe.

The Red-Haired Woman HOLDS Dani's FACE in her hands. She locks eyes with Dani and affects DEEP BREATHING. Dani's eyes, unwilling to settle at first, gradually become FIXED to the Woman's. The Woman continues to affect deep, measured breathing. Dani struggles to follow her. Her breathing trembles to meet the Red-Haired Woman's example.

Finally, Dani BREAKS DOWN into tears. Everything she's bottled up, all the emotions that she's labored to stifle - it all comes BURSTING out. She falls into deep, anguished SOBS.

Still locked onto Dani's gaze, the Red-Haired Woman *also* breaks down. She SOBS DEEPLY along with Dani. *They are sympathetically connected.* It's remarkable, and very unsettling.

The surrounding women have also started CRYING, although not as intensely as the Woman who has fixed herself to Dani. The crying is infectious, and the deeper they go, the greater the outpour.

It has become a circle of hysterical, weeping women. They moan and scream and cry. It's positively TRIBAL.

110

INT. TEMPLE - SAME TIME

110

The ceremony has nearly reached its apogee. The singing has peaked, and Christian is thrusting faster and harder than before. Maja, eyes still closed, is in a state of absolute EUPHORIA.

Christian suddenly looks ill. He begins to slow down.

MAJA
(in Swedish)
No. Don't stop.

Christian looks like he's going to be sick.

One of the OLD WOMEN (60s) crouches behind Christian. She PUSHES on his buttocks, urging him to thrust faster. She keeps pushing and pushing until Christian's thrusts have gained in force.

MAJA (CONT'D)
(in Swedish)
Yes. Yes. Fill me.

Christian continues to push until he finally CLIMAXES. The Old Woman releases him, and backs away.

The singing DIES out.

Christian, motionless for a long moment, pulls out of Maja and sits on the ground. He looks slightly traumatized. Maja looks as euphoric as ever. She hugs her knees to her chest, and gently rocks herself back and forth.

MAJA (CONT'D)
(in Swedish, to the women)
I can feel it! I feel his life
inside me!

Christian looks back to the OLD WOMAN who was just pushing his buttocks. She smiles toothlessly at him. He's *definitely* going to be sick. He STANDS suddenly, taking in the room with growing repulsion. He turns to amble dizzily out of the temple.

111

EXT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

111

Christian exits. He looks around, increasingly disoriented. He looks down to see the fresh puddle of Dani's VOMIT. This triggers him to retch. He moves desperately away from the vomit.

Standing at a distance, several isolated Hårgans watch Christian stumbling about. Christian tries to ignore them. He walks toward the MAIN HOUSE, but as he approaches, he hears the CHORUS OF CRYING (coming from Dani and the young women), and he immediately changes his trajectory.

Christian is now walking toward a HORSE STABLE.

As he passes the stable, he peers inside to notice that the TRUCK (which was supposedly stolen) is parked inside. Christian's eyes buzz with suspicion.

Very aware that he's being watched, Christian continues onward. He arrives at a SMALL HOUSE. He opens the door to reveal that it's a CHICKEN COOP.

112

INT. CHICKEN COOP - CONTINUOUS

112

Christian enters. He shuts the door behind him. Chickens flap stupidly about.

Christian tries to regain his composure. As he tries to sober himself up, a barely audible MOANING is heard. He looks up, startled, to SEE...

Across the room, JOSH has been chained to a fence. He is shirtless, his eyes are half-open, and the SKIN of Josh's upper abdomen has been stretched OPEN to expose his LIVER and the corners of his ribs. If it weren't for his faint moans, it would be difficult to discern whether he was alive.

The gnarled edges of Josh's wound have been covered in bird feed. It's clear that the birds have been at it. In fact, one chicken is currently (and feebly) trying to flap its way up to Josh's open wound, and one CROW is perched to Josh's side.

Frozen in horror, Christian stares unblinkingly.

CHRISTIAN

Josh?

Christian's eyes fill intensely with TEARS. He starts toward Josh. As he arrives near him, he begins to repeat:

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Jo--

Josh's eyes BURST open and he GASPS wretchedly for air. He is thrown into violent, gurgling convulsions.

Terrified, Christian turns around to see...

SIMON'S CORPSE, hanging upside-down. His bare feet have been SHOD with IRON HORSESHOES, and he hangs dangling by the HEELS (rope, secured at the ceiling, has been tied between the tendon and the bone).

Christian's face is locked in an expression of utter horror. He turns to RUN, only to bump into ODD, whose face is painted WHITE. Odd blows a handful of BROWN POWDER in Christian's face. Christian can't help but BREATHE IT IN. He coughs out a lungful of the mysterious dust.

Stunned for a moment, Christian stumbles back. He tries to move his legs, but they are suddenly FROZEN. Now immobile, Christian drunkenly COLLAPSES. He writhes into panic, unable to move. His eyes are LOCKED OPEN.

He sees a gathering of Hårgans outside the door. Among them is PELLE. Christian looks pleadingly at Pelle. Pelle looks away with shame.

Odd leans down. With his fingers, he CLOSES one of Christian's EYELIDS. He then CLOSES the other. As this lid shuts, we GO TO **BLACK**.

HOLD ON BLACK. After a beat, we sharply cut to:

A TIGHT CLOSE-UP of Christian's sleeping face. His lip is slightly contorted, and his chin is chapped with dried saliva. A HAND enters frame to gently SLAP Christian awake. His eyelids do not open on their own.

The hand's fingers PRY OPEN Christian's EYELIDS. His lip remains contorted. He tries to speak, but it's nothing but vowels.

HÅRGAN MAN (O.C.)

You cannot speak. You cannot move.

We cut WIDE to reveal that Christian sits limply on the grass, propped up against a pole. He faces an immense THRONE, made of jagged sticks and enveloping greenery. DANI sits in this throne, dressed in a beautiful white dress (covered in intricate embroidery). Her face is painted WHITE. Her lips painted BLACK. Her impressive FLORAL GARLAND CROWN is comprised of the nine special flowers and herbs. To either side of her, the ELDERS are all seated in a row. (Also, RUBEN has a special seat, whose platform is covered in COTTON, to resemble CLOUDS.)

Dani seems to have detached from reality completely. Her eyes are somewhere far away.

The entire community is gathered behind Christian. Among them, MAJA stands happily, wearing vivid red lipstick. *

Siv has risen to announce.

SIV

On this, the day of our deity of purification, we gather to give special thanks to our beloved Sun. As an offering to our great Father, we will today surrender nine human lives.

Christian's eyes flare with terror. Dani's expression is blank.

SIV (CONT'D)

As Hårga takes, so Hårga gives. Thus, for every newblood sacrificed, we will dedicate one of our own. That is: four newbloods, four Hårgans, and one to be chosen by our Queen. Nine in all, to die and be reborn in the great and just Cycle.

Siv turns to the PLUMP ELDER. He rises to continue the speech.

PLUMP ELDER

The four newbloods have already been supplied. As for our end, we have two already dedicated -

The Plump Elder gestures to the CORPSES of the two elders who jumped to their death. These bodies are proudly DISPLAYED near the back of the crowd.

PLUMP ELDER (CONT'D)

- and two who have volunteered.
(projecting to the crowd)
Ingemar? Ulf?

INGEMAR and ULF take one step forward. Ulf looks nervous. Ingemar looks overjoyed.

PLUMP ELDER (CONT'D)
 You have brought outside offerings,
 thus volunteering your own bodies. You
 will today be joined in harmony with
 Everything.

(to Pelle)
 And to Pelle, who has brought us new
 blood and our new Queen: you are today
 honored for your unclouded intuition. *

Pelle, wearing a TWIG CROWN, smiles sadly.

The Plump Elder continues:

PLUMP ELDER (CONT'D)
 And now, for the ninth offering, it
 is traditional that our Queen, in all
 her fairness and wisdom, shall choose
 between a pre-selected newblood and a
 specially ordained Hårgan...

The Plump Elder turns to a Man standing beside a large BALL
 CAGE (as generally used in bingo). The cage holds about a
 hundred WOODEN BALLS (the size of ping-pong balls) with a
 different RUNIC NAME carved into each.

The Man rotates the ball cage, which then dispenses a single
 BALL. The man holds up the ball and reads the name aloud:

BALL MAN
 Dag.

PLUMP ELDER
 Honorable Dag! Please step forward.

DAG, a man in his late 50s, looks like he just won the
 lottery. He takes a step forward, beaming with pride.

PLUMP ELDER (CONT'D)
 And Christian Hughes...

The Plump Elder acknowledges Christian, whose eyes are locked
 wide.

PLUMP ELDER (CONT'D)
 (to Dani)
 These are your candidates for the
 ninth and final offering. We
 patiently await your verdict.

Christian tries to scream, but this only results in muffled
 moans. His eyes BEG Dani for mercy. Her eyes are GLASS.

The community waits as Dani makes her silent deliberation.

Dani's EYES settle fixedly on CHRISTIAN. A wave of intense
 EMOTION suddenly animates Dani's face. Sadness, anger, love,
 heartbreak... These feelings are finally wrestled down, and her
 expression becomes BLANK again. Her EYES, still trained on
 Christian, have HARDENED. They narrow pointedly to suggest that
 she's made her decision. The Plump Elder understands.

PLUMP ELDER (CONT'D)
 (to the crowd)
 The honor has been bestowed on
 Christian Hughes, our ninth and most
 sacred offering!

Christian's muffled screams now become hysterical. Dani's gaze remains steely and absent.

114 **EXT. FIELD - EVENING**

114

CU of a WHEEL rolling across the grass. Tracking alongside this, we tilt up to reveal that it belongs to a WHEELBARROW. Lying in the wheelbarrow is CONNIE'S CORPSE. It is soaking wet and its flesh is grossly distended (from being left underwater). She is wearing the same outfit (of greenery and jewels) that was used earlier for the sacrificial tree (which was fed to the river).

Continuing to track alongside the wheelbarrow (which is pushed by a young male Hårgan), we pull back to EXPAND OUR VIEW. We reveal that the Hårgan is carting Connie's corpse toward the yellow-painted SACRED HOUSE, which was previously off-limits. It stands in the center of an open field. Its door is now OPEN.

We settle on a static wide of this until a NEW CART is pushed into frame. We now follow this cart, keeping it centered in frame. This cart holds MARK'S "CORPSE." In fact, it is just his hollowed out SKIN - stuffed with straw and hay.

Peripherally, other bodies are being carted toward the house.

We continue to track ahead, following Mark's cart INTO the SACRED HOUSE...

115 **INT. SACRED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS**

115

The interior is completely adorned in greenery. An impossibly lush mausoleum. In the center is a PLATFORM made of hay.

Connie's corpse is rested in one corner. Mark's is placed in the next corner. Simon's body is placed in between them.

In the following corner is the corpse of one of the ELDERLY MEN who jumped off the cliff. He is surrounded by his most precious belongings (jewelry, books, etc.). His SON (40s) is overseeing the removal of one of his father's EYEBALLS by the DOCTOR.

The doctor has effectively drawn the corpse's eyeball from its socket. He hands the eyeball to the son.

The doctor then moves to the body of the *other* elderly man who leapt to his death. He is also surrounded by his most prized possessions. The doctor now proceeds to remove *his* eyeball.

116 **EXT. FIELD - DAY**

116

The son of the fallen elder has walked to a small HOLE in the earth. He lays his father's EYEBALL in the hole, and covers it with soil.

117 **INT. BOOK-BINDING ROOM - SAME TIME**

117

A room that is typically used for book-binding. Its walls are lined with collector's editions of books.

A DEAD BEAR (seen earlier, alive and caged) lies on the island table. A deep INCISION has been drawn from the animal's neck to its groin. Two Hårgan Labourers pull out the bear's INNARDS. After scooping out the majority of its guts, they pile the waste into a bucket.

Then, with the assistance of two well-built Hårgan men, the Labourers endeavor to lift CHRISTIAN'S paralyzed body.

Christian is fitted into the bear's hollowed out carcass. They start by inserting his limp legs into the bear's legs.

118

INT. SACRED HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

118

Christian has been secured into the giant bear carcass. The incision (from its groin to its neck) has been SEWN UP. The bear's JAW has been removed, creating a gaping HOLE (down to its upper chest) through which Christian's FACE is visible.

Five Hårgan labourers plant the bear carcass in the CENTER of the hay platform. There is a pole against which its back is rested. Christian is still unable to move or speak. His muffled screams persist.

A man dressed as "Víoarr" (god of vengeance) stands before Christian. He holds the *Rubi Radr* in his hands.

VÍOARR

(in Swedish)

Mighty and dreadful beast. With you, we purge our most unholy affects. We banish you now to the deepest recesses, where you may reflect on your wickedness.

Ingemar and Ulf are now strapped to the walls. They are also surrounded by their most prized belongings. The Doctor stands before Ulf. He pours a thick, sappy LIQUID into Ulf's mouth.

DOCTOR

(in Swedish)

Drink from the yew tree. Feel no fear.

The doctor moves to Ingemar, who smiles widely. The doctor pours the liquid into his mouth as well.

DOCTOR (CONT'D)

(in Swedish)

Drink from the yew tree. Feel no pain.

In the b.g., Josh's corpse has also been placed.

The doctor leaves the house. Now, THREE HÅRGAN MEN enter with FLAMING TORCHES. Music begins outside, including the wordless, microtonal SINGING we've come to recognize.

The men approach Christian, whose "screaming" has become horribly frenzied.

The men move to different sides of the hay platform. They form a TRIANGLE. Simultaneously, they touch their torches to the hay - igniting a FIRE.

119

EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME

119

The torch-men exit the house. Inside, the fire has begun to spread along the platform.

The music rises as the fire picks up. The SINGING, which wavers in trembling anticipation, has not yet found harmony.

Dani watches this with dissociated eyes. She stands tensely in the field, eyes locked on the fire. Behind her, all of Hårga is enraptured.

120

INT. SACRED HOUSE - SAME TIME

120

The fire has grown considerably. Inside the bear, Christian is now being steam-boiled in the animal's fluids.

The bear's FUR begins to catch fire. Before long, the whole animal is swallowed in the blaze. Christian's wretched face becomes invisible behind the flames.

Ulf and Ingemar (still smiling) watch this with detached fascination.

The fire has now spread to other piles of hay. It has begun to crawl up the walls of the house.

Ulf is suddenly consumed by flames. He SCREAMS!

121

EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME

121

Ulf's screams are heard from the Sacred House. Suddenly, every member of the Hårgan community (who is *not* singing) begins to SCREAM as well. Feeling Ulf's pain, they emit a horrible chorus of wails. When Ulf's screams die down, so do theirs.

Meanwhile, Ruben has been given paper to PAINT on. Two elders encourage him.

DANI, watching the burning house with fraught eyes, is suddenly met with a wave of conflicting emotions. Her expression curdles into one of sheer HORROR and DISGUST. Then it becomes one of deep SORROW and SHAME. Her eyes well with tears. The singing has now HARMONIZED and has risen to an insane, operatic pitch.

We cut to an immense WIDE. Dani's back is in the f.g. and the burning house is in the b.g. Overcome, Dani buries her face in her hands. Breaking into gentle sobs, she begins to walk aimlessly to the side. We TRACK alongside her, keeping her centered. She is circling the house, pulling at her hair and face in increasing anguish. She is WEEPING now, and the house (ever-present in the b.g.) has become ENGULFED in the raging flames.

Dani begins MOANING and SCREAMING. Her howls almost harmonize with the singing in the b.g. The fire ROARS and CRACKLES in the distance. It's apocalyptic.

Soon it's uncertain whether Dani is crying or LAUGHING. Her legs become weak and she collapses to her knees. Four Hårgans (one of them being Pelle) run into the scene, carrying a LARGE CHAIR - Dani's throne.

The Hårgans lift Dani by the arms and SEAT her in the throne. They then HOIST the chair into the air.

On the upward LIFT, we cut to a tight CLOSE-UP of Dani's face. She is being carried forward. Her expression, which begins as one of great distress, slowly starts to TURN. Her agony subsides into sudden CONFUSION. *What's happening? Where am I? I'm on this chair, being carried!* Her expression goes from FEAR to EXCITEMENT to CONFUSION again. She suddenly lets out an abrupt LAUGH (which we can't hear over the music and the now-deafening FIRE). Dani is now being taken over by an invading sense of pride and contentment. This soon evolves into a manic exhilaration. Dani BEAMS. She has been embraced by a new family. She is Queen. She is not alone.

*

A SMILE finally breaks onto Dani's face. She has surrendered to a joy known only by the insane. She has lost herself completely, and she is finally free. It is horrible and it is beautiful.

CUT TO **BLACK**