

MIDSOMMAR

Written by

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CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

Hi...!

Dani affects a care-free tone:

DANI

Hey sweetie. 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,
babes. You go straight to
crisis mode.

DANI
Well - what if I scared him?
I'm always roping him into my
family crap...
I'm always *leaning* on him!
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!

Dani swallow one of the pills.

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 returns the prescription bottle. The label reads ATIVAN.

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.
Please write back. Please.*"

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

6

INT. PIZZA PARLOR - NEW YORK, NY - NIGHT

6

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, who begins with his face in his arms (on the table).

MARK

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

CHRISTIAN

But what if I end up regretting it 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 day about how much you regret it, and we'll remind you AGAIN that you've been wanting *out* of this stupid relationship for the last year, 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 takes a break from reading his dog-eared copy of *Primitive Mentality* (by Lucien Lévy-Bruhl) to ask:

JOSH

Do you think a masochistic part of you might be playing out *this* drama 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

(quietly, almost to himself)
Your *prospectus* maybe? 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

MARK (CONT'D)

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

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.

6 CONTINUED:

6

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.

12 CONTINUED:

12

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. 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 shit-ass *Boulder* while my
dad watches *Law & Order* all day.

PELLE

(to Mark)

You have to work at your mom's shop
when we all get back from our trip,
right?

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. LYFT CAR (MOVING) - NIGHT**

15

Dani sits in the back seat of a Lyft car. Christian sits in the front passenger seat.

Dani's eyes are BUSY with nagging, paranoid thoughts. Christian, very tense, turns to look back at Dani. He forces a casual "hey" smile. Ambivalent, she "smiles" back.

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

16

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 China 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)
Sweden. 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 think to tell 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
want to talk about it.

Pause.

CHRISTIAN
I think I should just probably 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 is wrestling with something, and then:

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

(uncertainly)

I was gonna ask you to come *with* me.

Pause. Dani looks at him. He looks very tense.

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.

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 posters of James George Frazer and Claude Lévi-Strauss. 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 the trail of tears?
Or slavery?

JOSH (CONT'D)
I am, yes.
Yep.
Uhhh - what do you think?

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

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

...Okay.

MARK

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	CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
Hey.	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	CHRISTIAN
Nope. / Not at all.	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	PELLE
Hey 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 beautiful drawing.

PELLE

Oh, thank you! 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 yes - a sort of crazy, nine-day festival we're doing...

DANI

Do you do that every midsummer?

PELLE

Uh - well...this specific one 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!

PELLE (CONT'D)

Yeah...we do our own thing.

DANI

Looks like a Swedish hippie
 renaissance fair.
 (noticing another photo)
 Who's this one?

Dani is pointing out a photo of a YOUNG WOMAN (20s) in an impressive flower dress. (*We will later discover her to be Ulla.*)

PELLE

Ooh - that's last year's May
 Queen!

DANI

Beautiful.

A thoughtful pause before he asserts:

PELLE

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

DANI

(cheekily)
 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.

17 CONTINUED:

17

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. *The captain announces this in Swedish over the intercom.*

20 ***OMITTED***

20

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 (who reads the *Poetic Edda*).

They pass a group of BEAUTIFUL BLONDE WOMEN.

MARK
(to Christian)
Holy God, 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?

JOSH
The Vikings grabbed all the best
babes from other countries and
dragged them over.

They have now pulled onto the FREEWAY - leaving Stockholm.

21 CONTINUED:

21

DANI
How far are we driving?

PELLE
Four hours, about.

MARK
(exasperated)
Oh my God.

21A INT. FREEWAY RENTAL MINIVAN (MOVING) - LATER - DAY

21A

Dani's phone VIBRATES, waking her up. She checks it...

DANI'S PHONE: A friend has just posted on her Facebook page
"Happy early birthday! Hope tomorrow is the best one yet!"

Dani doesn't react. She looks to the side to notice 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
(realizing what she's
talking about)
Oh! 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 basically the *impetus* behind this whole trip. I'm doing Germany and England after this.

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

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

21A CONTINUED:

21A

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

DISSOLVE TO:

22 *OMITTED*

22

23 *OMITTED*

23

24 **EXT. ROAD - TWO HOURS LATER**

24

Pelle drives under an anti-immigration BANNER (in Swedish) before passing a sign announcing that they have arrived in **Hälsingland**.

PELLE
 Entering Hälsingland!

25 **EXT. MEADOW - CONTINUOUS**

25

The minivan idles up to a LARGE GRASSY MEADOW. It's lush, impossibly green, magical. About twenty YOUNG PEOPLE (teens to twenties) lounge about. Tents and camping equipment abound. A few of the women are dressed in traditional white dresses and don floral garland crowns. A couple of the men look like 19th century farmers, although most are dressed in modern clothes.

The minivan parks at the head of the field. Our group emerges, yawning and stretching. Dani is mesmerized. Pelle WAVES to a group of young people picnicking on the grass. They clearly know each other well.

GIRLS
 Pelle!!

Pelle gestures for our group to follow him as he approaches the picnickers. Pelle explains as they walk:

PELLE
 These are all younger people from my village. Everyone's returning from their trips outside.

Pelle arrives at the group and receives a flood of hugs. Everyone introduces themselves.

Then, across the field, a merry 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)
 Glad Heliga Johannes Döparens dag!

Pelle laughs. They hug.

INGEMAR (CONT'D)
 Fan vad spinkig du är! Vart har
 resten av dig tagit vägen?

PELLE
 Ser ut som att du fått det..

INGEMAR (CONT'D)
 Va? Tycker du att jag blivit
 fet?

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 learned
 two seconds back.

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
 back. 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?

25

CONTINUED:

25

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.

25A

EXT. MEADOW - MINUTES LATER

25A

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.

25B

EXT. MEADOW BUSH

25B

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.

25C

EXT. LARGE GRASSY MEADOW - MINUTES LATER

25C

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

CHRISTIAN
What time is it?

PELLE
Nine PM.

MARK
(suddenly alarmed)
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 nine. 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!

A happy Young Man walks past. This is VALENTIN.

VALENTIN
Hey hey!

The group mumbles hello.

MARK
I wanna lay down.

Mark lies down.

MARK (CONT'D)
Oh my God. Lay down. Guys. It's so nice.

Everyone lies down. Except for Josh and Dani. *For the rest of the scene, our focus is on DANI - even as everyone else speaks.*

MARK (CONT'D)
Lie down, Josh.

Josh doesn't. Stubborn.

PELLE
Can you feel the energy come up from the earth?
(then, noticing)
And look: the trees, too - they're breathing!

Dani looks up. The trees *do* seem to be breathing - visibly swelling and deflating with psychedelic life. They LOOM IMPOSINGLY over Dani. They GROAN in the wind, their branches leaning (almost *reaching*) down.

25C

CONTINUED:

25C

Pelle, marveling at his surroundings, continues:

PELLE (CONT'D)
Nature just knows *instinctually*
how to stay in harmony! Everything
mechanically doing its part.

MARK
(emotional)
You guys are my family.

The word "*family*" HITS Dani.

MARK (CONT'D)
I really *mean* that. You're like my
real actual *Family*.

Dani RISES to her knees, suddenly overwhelmed. Christian looks to her. She looks to him. He SMILES, but there's something *false* about it.

Dani looks SCARED now. This scares Christian.

CHRISTIAN
Dani? Don't look like that.

Dani STANDS, panic mounting. Her eyes look crazed.

DANI
I'm sorry. I'm gonna walk.

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 mirthful YOUTHS - all wearing flower garlands. They sit in a circle as a YOUNG WOMAN (20s) plays guitar and sings *Så Lunka Vi Så Småningom* in a silly voice (to the laughter of the others). They all suddenly see Dani, the guitarist stops playing, and then...they all BURST OUT LAUGHING.

Dani turns stiffly away, tears welling.

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

Dani tensely speed-walks away, looking down at the ground. Her surroundings are THROBBING visibly (and more intensely than before).

INGEMAR calls out to Dani.

INGEMAR
Hey! Dani!

Dani freezes. Terrified, she looks up in his direction. He waves her over. He's standing with a few youths at a picnic table. *Behind them, Connie is tending to Simon, who looks ill.*

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 and SHUTS the door.

INT. OUTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The interior of the outhouse is pitch-dark. We hear Dani fumbling for a box of MATCHES. After rummaging, she STRIKES one match, and for the moment of the SPARK, we vaguely see TERRI (Dani's sister, duct tape over her mouth) in the dark behind Dani. When the light settles, that image disappears.

The outhouse, now illuminated by candle-light, is very clean and cramped. 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.

26 CONTINUED:

26

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
 What? Yes she is. That's not
 nice! Why aren't you ever
 nice?!
 You're being *mean!*

MARK (CONT'D)
 (scared by this)
What? I am nice.
 (tearing up)
 I'm *not* 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!

(MORE)

MARK (CONT'D)
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!

MARK
(suddenly terrified)
Why are you saying that?

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
Because they are! They're
dead!

Why???

MARK

JOSH
(insistent)
HEY! NO! We need to connect
back to the *good* things! This
is getting bad! Everything's
alive right *now*.

CHRISTIAN
But that's just so it can die
later.

MARK
(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!

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

DANI
Hello?!... HELLO??!!
(redirecting her thoughts)
It's almost your birthday. Fuck.
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...
(absolutely 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 *showing* 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 all alone, and it was getting *pleasure* from that.

Christian is getting SCARED.

CHRISTIAN

Okay, just - calm down--

DANI

Oh my God what the fuck is that?!

Dani is now pointing to a BIG TREE in the BG. SEVERAL BOAR CARCASSES HANG FROM ITS BRANCHES. Christian sees it, but instantly turns away - denying it.

CHRISTIAN

(firmly)

No.

He takes Dani's ARM -

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Fuck. Stop it. That wasn't real. We're going back to the friends. Fuck.

- 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. 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 the BLONDE SWEDISH GUITARIST (20s), who is still holding her guitar.

BLONDE SWEDISH GUITARIST

Hej hej!

MARK

Where were you?

PELLE

How are you, Dani?

CHRISTIAN

(insistent)

We're fine. She's fine. Just took a little walk.

29

CONTINUED:

29

JOSH
(excitedly)
Did you see the trees with the dead
boars hanging?!

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

29A **EXT. LARGE GRASSY MEADOW - WOODS - HOURS LATER**

29A

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
I mean...from yesterday's
perspective.

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.

30 **EXT. WOODS - DAY**

30

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 hypnotic tune.

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

MARK

(starting to take large,
paranoid steps)
Does Sweden have ticks?

CHRISTIAN

Sweden has a tick *problem*.

MARK

What? No they don't. Do they
really?

PELLE

It actually *is* a big problem. Last
summer a record number of people
got tick-borne encephalitis.

MARK

What the fuck? Are you
serious?

JOSH

(teasing)
Both my grandparents died
from ticks. Hit the floor
screaming.

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 (O.S.)

Okay, well, I *actually* have an
uncle with Lyme and believe me:
it's not worth the pleasant picnic
in the countryside.

The group finally arrives at the clearing. It opens to
another FIELD, beyond which is a **SMALL VILLAGE...**

It is a vast Hälsingegård (a farm). About a HUNDRED PEOPLE
stand on the grass, waiting. They are dressed like farmers
from a Swedish fairy tale. They appear to be a WELCOMING
COMMITTEE. The melody, we now see, is being played by three
floutists. A bundle of SPEAKERS (aimed upwards) amplifies
this.

At the center of the farm 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 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. (Many of the
arriving youths have ornamented robes/costumes thrown over
them by the older people.)

JOSH
(mesmerized)
This is the place?

PELLE
(slightly tongue-in-cheek)
The tranquil and majestic Hårga.

Josh, Mark, Christian and Dani stand awkwardly through this. Some children walk up to them, to hand them wild strawberries on sticks. Others step up to take their bags. Josh, meanwhile, is manically taking photos with his smartphone.

CHRISTIAN
(to Pelle)
You know all these people?

PELLE
These are my family!

MARK (O.S.)
You know, dude, if you'd warned me that this place was lousy with ticks, I could've at least brought tweezers and like a spray.

In the distance is a towering MAYPOLE. Immense in height and width, it is entangled in lush green shrubbery and marked by a wealth of symbols. At the top of the pole is a TRIANGLE, beneath which hang two RINGS.

While some of the welcoming committee take bags from our group, Pelle brings a beautiful young woman over. This is DAGNY (25). She wears a white dress with intricate embroidery (featuring distinct Pagan runes).

PELLE
Dagny - det här är 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
Fader Odd!

ODD
Lille 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)

Hur är det på pilgrimsfärden?

PELLE

Underbart, Fantastiskt.

(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)

We do this as a tribute: In respect of Ymir and because of nature's, em...

(blushes at bad English)

hermaphrodite?...qualities...?

JOSH

Oh wow, that's like the cult of Aphroditus.

(then, remembering)

I think the sakhis saints do the same thing, too - in Brajbhoomi?

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

ODD

So! We're your hosts, yes?! So whatever you need, you just say so and we will accommodate! Today is all festivities, yet tomorrow the *official* ceremonies begin, 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 & BOYS (different ages - from 7 to 13), all dressed in identical white dresses and suits. 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 and boys march onto the platform. They each stop to the left of one of the seated elders. Upon a cue, they simultaneously lay the crowns onto the elders' heads. (*Two of the elders receive slightly larger crowns.*) They then hand the elders the larkspur sprigs. After this, the girls return bashfully to the crowd.

One of the elders - a sturdy older woman (60s) - rises to address the crowd. The music drops out. She is beautiful, composed, elegant. This is SIV, the spokeswoman.

SIV

Glad midsommar allihopa!

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

SIV (CONT'D)

Välkomna till bords. Vi har den värsta värmeböljan i mannaminne, vilket är passande. Som ni vet så är det här festen vi förberett oss för i 90 år.

She notices the non-Swedish speakers, who are just arriving at the back of the crowd. They receive shot glasses.

SIV (CONT'D)

Forgive me - I'm excluding the ones who aren't of Swedish tongue! Welcome to Hårga, and happy midsummer!

(MORE)

SIV (CONT'D)

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, yes?*

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 commence!

(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 ELDERS (72) have risen from their seats. These are YLVA and DAN. They are the elders with the larger crowns. They move off the stage.

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: Ylva and Dan will make three trips. If they return with the flame intact, our vintage will be abundant this year! Alternately, 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 to the air:

SIV
Tillbaka till döden, andar!

JOSH
(to Pelle)
What did she just say?

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

The two large-crowned elders, 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 take photos?

PELLE
(winks)
Discretely.

The elders finish their second cycle around the house, and immediately begin a *third*. The community seems to be holding its collective breath. The elders FINISH the third run-around to reveal that Ylva's fire is still burning, *but...*Dan'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 elders, 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's eyes are on him.

CHRISTIAN
(to Pelle)
He okay?

PELLE
Haha. 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 elders and walks to a healthy FIRE in a pit (this fire is *always* burning; never to be allowed to extinguish).

PELLE
(to Josh and Christian)
That fire hasn't burned out since
before I was born. It's all of our
jobs to keep it going.

31

CONTINUED:

31

Siv deposits the sticks into the fire.

SIV
Hit men into högre, lågorna
mina. Inte varmare!

PELLE (CONT'D)
(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, clapping silently. *This seems to
be the end of the ritual.*

31A

EXT. HÄRGA FARMSTEAD - MINUTES LATER

31A

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
That's a tradition. They just
killed that lamb today.

One server dumps a generous plate of food into the fire.

Other servers now move to our group, who are settling onto
the grass. They are handed plates and beers.

DANI
(to Pelle)
Can we help at all?

PELLE (CONT'D)
No no. You're the guests. Let
yourselves be spoiled.

One boy, RUBEN (15), walks up to Dani. He is severely
mentally handicapped and his face is horribly deformed. He's
dressed in gorgeous linen.

RUBEN
(with difficulty)
Hej hej!

DANI
(shocked)
Oh!

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

PELLE
You just met Ruben.

MARK (O.S.)
I'm sure he's got a great
personality.

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.

31A

CONTINUED:

31A

Silence.

Siv, the matriarch, looks to a jolly elder, STEN (60s), sitting beside her. He stands, takes a moment, and then SINGS a brief song to the air, as if in PRAYER.

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

JOSH
For the food?

PELLE (CONT'D)
Yes. *And the weather, and the crops...*

Sten finishes his song, and then announces:

STEN
Låt oss äta!

Everyone digs in.

CHRISTIAN
Was that praying?

PELLE
Uh - maybe not "praying." But he was just addressing the...everything. The harmony and the balance.

JOSH
Can you translate what was sung?

PELLE
...I can get a translation from *him* 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 - DAY

32

A beautiful, long-haired girl (16) stands before a mirror, anxiously fussing with her hair. She 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 long chain ("the long dance"). 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, being pulled suddenly into a HUMAN TUNNEL.

33A CONTINUED:

33A

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 BG.

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, linen, homeopathics...

INGEMAR

Water power plant.

They pass a CIRCLE OF CHILDREN, accompanied by a teacher (Dan). They're carving RUNIC SYMBOLS into smooth BONES.

PELLE

Schoovertime over here.

CHRISTIAN

Carving runes?

Dan takes a break from teaching to look up and smile confirmation.

PELLE

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

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 younger Futhark.
(to Pelle)
Right? Or is that medieval?

INGEMAR
That's actually the *Elder* 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 four years now!

CHRISTIAN
(gently correcting)
Three and a half.

DANI
(serious pause)
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 looks very confused.

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.

Christian points out a GIANT TRIANGULAR HOUSE which stands
 isolated in a large field. It has been painted a vivid
 yellow. (Two teen boys hang out beside it.)

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.

MARK
 (mock sinister tune)
 Ooooweeeyoooooh.

Changing the subject, Pelle motions toward the MAIN HOUSE.

PELLE
 Let me show you where we sleep!

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

INGEMAR
 Here: come see the Rotvälta!

Our group walks off into the BG, and as they go, Ingemar and
 his crew walk profile in the MG. We follow alongside them. On
 their way, they pass a CAGED BEAR (which our group is also
 passing with curiosity in the BG).

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

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

Connie sees a LONG CARPET that has been hung up (horizontally) on a clothesline in the FG. She approaches to check it out. Simon follows.

CONNIE
This is fucking cool.

Continuing the lateral track, we move slowly along it (having now become Connie's POV). In a series of seven panels, the carpet dramatizes the following...

1) A love-stricken girl in a server outfit (profile) stares longingly, with hearts for eyes, at a boy sitting frontal..
2) The girl in a large field, walking backwards as she gathers flowers. 3) **A dual-panel, first depicting:** The girl laying flowers under her pillow. **And then:** the girl asleep, dreaming about the boy. A dream bubble hovers over her head. Inside of it: the girl and the boy (with spiraling eyes) are kissing at their wedding. 4) The girl in the kitchen. She crouches over a coffee cup and drips menstrual blood into the cup. 5) **A triple panel, first depicting:** The girl snips off her pubic hairs, **then** a close-up of the pubic hair being snipped, **and then** the girl mixing the disparate hairs into pancake batter. 6) The girl handing the boy the pancake as he drinks the coffee. 7) The boy's face, spirals for eyes. 8) The boy kisses the girl, who is now pregnant in a wedding dress. They both have hearts for eyes.

SIMON (O.S.)
Wait. Is she dripping period blood into the drink?

CONNIE (O.S.)
How do you think I nailed you down?

We have passed the carpet to see our group arriving at the Main House in the BG.

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

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.

MARK
Holy shit!
(pointing out paintings)
Dick painting. Dick painting. Dick with a pussy in the middle. A pussy shitting out a dick.

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.

CHRISTIAN

Who all sleeps in here?

PELLE

All the younger ones. Until we turn thirty-six. Then we move to the laborer's house.

JOSH

Why thirty-six?

Josh has pulled out his 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 18, and that's the Spring. At some point we all do our Pilgrimage, and that's between 18 and 36. That is Summer. *Then*, from 36 to 54, you're of working age, which is Fall. And finally from 54 to 72, you become a mentor.

Josh and Christian have written all this down - their eyes intermittently piercing each other. (Josh finishes with "53-72 -- Mentor -- WINTER".)

DANI

What happens when you turn 72, then?

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

CHRISTIAN

Not a lot of privacy. What do you do when you need to jerk off?

MARK

Or give yourself an enema.

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

Dani has found a wall of many 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 still talking to Christian, who now has one hand behind his back. He looks extremely GUILTY. She interrupts by bluntly asking:

DANI

Are these the May Queens?

PELLE

Oh - that's right! You'll actually be here for that.

CHRISTIAN

Who are the "May Queens"?

PELLE

Every midsummer we have a dance competition and the winner gets crowned.

A PRETTY BRUNETTE (25) steps up to the door:

PRETTY BRUNETTE

(announcing)

Barnen tittar på Austin Powers om ni vill vara med? På fält fem.

She looks to Mark, SMILES bashfully and waves. She then leaves.

MARK

Wait a minute. Did you just see that?

Christian, hand behind his back, now sneaks over to Dani.

CHRISTIAN

Hey. Can I just pull you...?

Christian ushers her gently out of the front door. They move to the **Front Steps**. Beyond them, four women (all different ages) are gathered closely as they SING SOFTLY ("*heydihrudi...*") to a crying baby. Struck by this, Dani watches this for a second. As she does so, Christian produces a SOCKERKAKA (sponge cake) from behind his back. A candle protrudes.

DANI

(confused)

What?

CHRISTIAN

Happy birthday.

He struggles to light the candle with a bad lighter. He finally succeeds.

DANI

Where did that come from?

CHRISTIAN

I've been trying to find a time to surprise you all day.

Dani just looks at him with utter suspicion.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

What? You thought I forgot?

Christian finally RELENTS with a guilty smile:

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

I'm sorry. I'm *really* sorry. I didn't know it was tomorrow already. With the sun.

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

35 CONTINUED:

35

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
 Happy birthday, happy
 birthday, I'm sorry.
 - You *should* be.

DANI
 Fine. It's fine.
 I'm not upset.
 - *I know I should!*

He kisses her again, tenderly. She grudgingly kisses back.
The baby is still crying in the BG.

CHRISTIAN
 Happy birthday, mouse.

She forces a tight smile and BLOWS OUT the candle.

36 ***OMITTED***

36

37 ***OMITTED***

37

38 **EXT. VILLAGE - "NIGHT"**

38

A high angle wide of the village. Almost everyone, save for some stragglers, are inside. The sun is low, looking like evening (but we are past midnight).

38A **INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - SAME TIME**

38A

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

People are climbing into their beds. The baby is still CRYING, now in his CRIB, which is stationed near the beds of women in their twenties. The crib is made of severe-looking iron and metal. One woman lays a PAIR OF SCISSORS under the baby's mattress.

Dani, noticing this, looks inquiringly to Pelle.

PELLE
 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.

38A

CONTINUED:

38A

Bemused, Josh looks dead-eyed at Pelle. Waiting for more.

Pelle PAUSES, then takes Josh's notepad. He writes "Attestupan" 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 Attestupan?

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

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

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

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

DANI

(to Josh)
Is it scary?

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

MARK (O.S.)

Christian: do you wanna check my
scalp for ticks and then I can check
your scalp?

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

OMITTED

40

41

OMITTED

41

42

EXT. FIELD - MORNING

42

In an open 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 TRACK ACROSS this, finally panning away to find...several men are setting up DINING TABLES in the BG, the fire temple just beyond them. They are laying the tables out to form a runic pattern.

42

CONTINUED:

42

We continue panning past this to find a large GROUP that has assembled for what appears to be some sort of DANCE CLASS (we see them in a medium wide, gently pulling back). They stand in rows of ten. At the head of the class is YLVA, one of the elders who carried the torch around the house. In demonstration, she lifts her arm and waves it fluidly, rhythmically, EMOTIONALLY, back and forth. (This is accompanied by a Hårgan, OSKAR, who sings a wordless emotion-based song - not dissimilar to speaking in tongues. The dance is inspired by this song.) The class IMITATES the dancer. They strive to perfectly match her movements and emotions. (*Josh watches raptly in the BG.*)

Finally, we've pulled back far enough to reveal Dani's shoulder in the FG. She's watching the dance class, having just woken up. She then turns to look around, marvelling at the structure of the community around her. She SITS DOWN cross-legged, being mindful to soak it in.

43

EXT. FARMSTEAD - ONE HOUR LATER

43

The dining tables have been set up to form a RUNE (representing the "cultivation of art, soul and craft").

Half of the community is already standing at the 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.

MARK

Someone should tell those girls
that they're walking stupid.

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 by ringing a BELL at the end of a table.

After a moment, TWO ELDERS (72), both wearing ornate golden dresses, enter the scene. (*We will recognize them as Dan and Ylva, the elders who ran around the Main House 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 the head of 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.)

43

CONTINUED:

43

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

The two elders 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.

43A

EXT. FARMSTEAD - MID-MEAL

43A

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

The two elders are receiving *lots* of attention.

Next to Dani, a blonde woman, KARIN (20s), cradles the CRYING BABY. She rests her forehead against the baby's forehead and moans empathically. She notices Dani watching this, and she turns and SMILES.

DANI	KARIN
(catching herself)	
Oh, God, I'm sorry. I was gawking.	No no...

DANI
Is your baby okay?

KARIN
Oh, she *will* be. She has the, em
- rickets? Where the bones are
bad? She is not "mine," though.

DANI	BLONDE WOMAN
Oh, I'm sorry to presume!	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.

KARIN
(to Dani)
How is *your* family like?

DANI
Mine? Oh no, mine are...

Dani makes a comic throat-slashing gesture, recalling Pelle's; she then instantly feels guilty about it. *Christian suddenly looks nervous about this exchange.*

KARIN
Oh no! I'm so sorry. All of them?

Karin already has TEARS welling in her eyes. She looks sincerely affected by this.

43A CONTINUED:

43A

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

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

DANI
No, not at all! I just shouldn't have
mentioned it.

<p>BLONDE WOMAN Please know we can talk if you like. Please. I am <i>happy</i> to talk.</p>	<p>DANI (CONT'D) (uncomfortable) Okay, thank you. Sorry. I feel silly. Thank you. (to Christian) Sorry.</p>
---	--

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

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

43B **EXT. FARMSTEAD - MID MEAL - MINUTES LATER**

43B

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 (from earlier) SMILING at him. Caught off
guard, he BLUSHES and smiles back (a little too eagerly).

One of the two elders STANDS. This is YLVA. She clears her
throat. Closes her eyes. After a moment, Ylva begins to SING
a wordless, choral song.

Everyone watches, rapt and emotional.

At the appropriate time, the other man (DAN) begins to sing
along, softly and awkwardly at first. Soon he rises, singing
with greater projection.

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

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. Everyone is very calm. And present. Dani is
MOVED. She holds up her glass, feeling energy from the group.

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
elder's chairs, HOIST them up, and start CARRYING THEM OFF.

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

43A CONTINUED:

43A

MARK (CONT'D)
 (to the group)
 I'm gonna take a nap. My head feels
 like a sewage blimp.

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 elders 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*.

Ylva and Dan 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 the
 valley of a cliff.

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

PELLE
 Okay - actually:

He holds them back.

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

DANI
 Is this the thing you mentioned
 last night?

JOSH
 (smirking)
 Ättestupan.

PELLE
 We're about to perform a centuries-
 old ritual 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? 54 to 72?
 Well, *this* is what happens when 72
 gets reached.

DANI
 Okay. And what is "this"?

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

44 CONTINUED:

44

DANI (CONT'D)
What is Ättestupan?

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

45 **EXT. VALLEY - MINUTES LATER**

45

The community has gathered on the rocky valley. Tall CLIFFS loom imposingly. The baby cries in the BG.

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 holds a WOOD-BOUND BOOK whose cover is marked by runic letters. She opens it and reads in silence for a moment. 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 whispered answer:

PELLE
Rubi Radr. Our scripture.

JOSH
Can I read that?

PELLE
You would not be able.

CU of *Rubi Radr's* pages, as held open by Siv. They are indeed indecipherable to common eyes.

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 elders 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 and then stoically put out their hands. Specially ordained men then draw CEREMONIAL BLADES across their palms, DRAWING BLOOD.

46 CONTINUED:

46

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

45A **EXT. BEACH - SAME TIME**

45A

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

Finally, YLVA appear at the edge.

Rapt silence.

Ylva stands there for a long time.

Mesmerized, Josh steps slowly to the side (away from Dani and Christian) to get a better look. His eyes are glued to the cliff-top.

Ylva, having now summoned total confidence, assumes a GRAND POSE, twisting her arms and legs into a standing fetal position, and extending her neck/head into a glorious reach for the heavens. This pose represents a final statement.

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

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

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.

Disassociated, Dani turns to look at Connie and Simon, who are freaking out.

Then Christian points upward, redirecting Dani's dazed attention to the cliff-top. Dani's EYES scan back up to see...

DAN - *the elder whose torch burnt out before circling the house three times* - is now stepping up to the precipice. He also strikes a POSE, also reaching for the awesome, but his is slightly clumsier. He wobbles, but he holds the pose. While holding it, he turns to look down...at Dani.

SIMON

(panicking)

What's happening? Is he gonna jump, too? No--

Dan LAUNCHES HIMSELF OFF THE CLIFF, jumping vertically. Connie GASPS. Dan plummets straight down, but his left foot lands on the large rock that killed Ylva. This obliterates his leg and sends him falling brutally to his side. Dan, unfortunately not dead, 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!*

Sten 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 Dan. The dying man moans pathetically, in too much pain to scream.

From DANI'S POV: The men have arrived at Dan's feet. The mentor RAISES the cudgel, and brutally swings it down onto Dan's HEAD. This isn't a fatal blow. The man raises the cudgel again, and this time he STRIKES Dan 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. Dan goes limp, probably dead.

The YOUTH is now handed the cudgel. He delivers two brutal swings to Dan's head. The mentor gently takes the cudgel away from the youth, and they all return to the community. The mentor hands Sten 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! Did you not warn
them?

INGEMAR
I'm sorry, grandmother Siv! I
kind of warned them.

SIMON
*Nobody did anything! Everyone just
watched that!*

SIV
Oh my, poor things--

SIMON (CONT'D)
*You're all just standing
calmly around!!*

SIV
Oh, mercy - please--

Siv tries to lay an empathic hand on Simon and Connie's shoulder, but Simon RECOILS.

SIV (CONT'D)
You should have been warned
better. What you just saw is
a long, long, *long* observed
custom. Those two men have
just reached the end of their
life-cycle.

SIMON

Custom?!

45A CONTINUED:

45A

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

SIV
 You must understand it as a great joy for them. And when it is *my* turn, it will be great joy for me.
 (back to Simon and Connie)
 We view life like a circle. Yes? A *re-cycle*. One thing falls and another raises. The first lady who jumped: her name was Ylva. Yes?

Siv points to a PREGNANT WOMAN:

SIV (CONT'D)
 That baby, who is not yet born, will inherit this name and also be Ylva. And if it's a boy, he will take the name of Dan.

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

SIV (CONT'D)
 But instead of getting old and dying with shame and pain and *fear*, we give our life. As a *gesture*. Out of *gratefulness*. 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 lashing back at the inevitable. It corrupts the spirit.

INGEMAR
 (to Simon and Connie)
 I'm sorry I did not warn you better.

47 *OMITTED*

47

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, sweetie?

DANI
 (branching off)
 I need to not be here right now.

CHRISTIAN
 Okay. Good idea. I'll find you in a bit?

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

49 **EXT. FIELD - MOMENTS LATER** 49

Dani's walk speeds into a SPRINT. Once out of sight, she stops behind the triangular temple, 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.

49A **EXT. STAGE - SAME TIME** 49A

Two Hårgan men remove two stools from the stage (those belonging to Ylva and Dan) and rearrange the remaining stools. Mark watches.

In the BG, Josh arrives at the Main House and enters. Christian hastily approaches in the distance.

MARK
(to Josh's disappearing
back)
How was the thing?

50 **INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - SECONDS LATER** 50

Josh anxiously pulls his LAPTOP from his backpack. 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. He closes the door behind him.

CHRISTIAN
Hey dude...

JOSH
Hey!
(excitedly)
Holy shit, right?

CHRISTIAN JOSH (CONT'D)
Holy shit. Incredible. 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 Hårga.

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)
 (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 maintains an
 innocent demeanor.

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. 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 look so guilty right now.
 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! In case you forgot, Your
 Highness, 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 little 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!

(MORE)

50 CONTINUED:

50

JOSH (CONT'D)
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. Near the door, a very pale SIMON smokes a cigarette with Connie. Mark stands with them, stunned.

MARK
Wait, though: *for real?* The two old
ones? With the singing?

SIMON
I can't stay here four more
days, I'm sorry.

CONNIE
That's fine. I can't, either.

Mark turns to Christian:

MARK
Christian dude: of all the things
to let me sleep through!

Simon sees Christian's demeanor.

SIMON
We feel the same way, mate.

Fuming, Christian just acknowledges Simon with a tight-lipped smile. Looking out, he then notices in the FIELD: several men and women are decorating a TREE that has been pulled from the earth and is now elevated on its side. Among the decorators he sees MAJA, working with her friend ULLA (28). They laugh as they work.

Christian gestures "*excuse me*" to Simon, and approaches Maja. *As he walks toward her, he passes several other people working in the BG.*

CHRISTIAN
Excuse me? Hi. Sorry to bother
you...

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

MAJA
(not sure of the word)
Hello.

CHRISTIAN
I'm Christian.

Ulla insert herself:

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

CHRISTIAN
Hi Ulla. Maja. I, uh -- What are you guys doing?

ULLA
Decorating the tree!

Christian tries to ignore that Maja is staring at him with wide eyes. *Some of the working men also stare.*

CHRISTIAN
I was wondering, uh, if I could ask -
(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 what would be, like, a typical mourning period? For grieving?

ULLA
We grieve *and* celebrate.

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

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

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 goodbye again.

MAJA
(turning away)
Hello.

Christian smiles and turns. His smile evaporates, however, when he sees...

JOSH is standing near the stage, talking to PELLE.

JOSH

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

Well, no, hey, wait a minute: I
seriously doubt the elders will
approve of *anything* being written.
They're extremely protective..

JOSH

So I can just use aliases for
everything. Solved.

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
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.
But if it *is* 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.

51A **EXT. FIRE PIT - "EVENING"**

51A

The corpses of Ylva and Dan are carried (by Hårgan men) to
the everlasting fire pit. They are lowered carefully onto the
flames. Hårgans stand soberly about, respectful.

52 **EXT. MEADOW - "EVENING"**

52

Dani sits cross-legged near the lake. 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
I can imagine. Today was a lot.

DANI (CONT'D)
Feels like the neck on my *skin* is getting tighter. Like I'm *choking*.

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

CHRISTIAN
You gonna be okay?

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 abandon our elderly to 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 MEN and WOMEN (all holding lanterns) are migrating off together. At the front of the queue are men carrying the BEJEWELLED TREE (which we saw the men decorating earlier).

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

DAGNY
Hello! Do you like to joining us with a special ceremony?

DANI
Why? What's happening now?

DAGNY
Special.

DANI
(to Christian, whispering)
I can't do another thing.

Dani looks to the queue, fraught. Among the line-up is an equally unnerved CONNIE.

CHRISTIAN (O.S.)
It's okay. We can brave it together.

Dani (pulling again at her neck, *still feeling claustrophobic in her own skin*) and Christian uneasily join Connie among the migrating crowd. They're approaching a LAKE, which seems to GLOW in the distance.

DANI

Did they tell you what this is?

CONNIE

(shakes head)

Someone better not be launching off another fucking cliff.

Christian sees MARK behind them, and slows down to join him.

CHRISTIAN

Hey.

MARK

(whispering)

Dude. The Elvira girl behind us keeps giving me sex eyes, but she speaks like zero English.

Mark is talking about the PRETTY BRUNETTE from earlier. She walks behind them (a few bodies away). Christian turns to look.

MARK (CONT'D)

No, dude, I didn't say "look."
Don't fucking announce it.

Christian turns back.

MARK (CONT'D)

Anyway, I'm in love with her.

CHRISTIAN

(can't help himself)

Don't you fuckin' kinda *hate* Josh?

54 ***OMITTED***

54

55 ***OMITTED***

55

56 **EXT. LAKE - SAME TIME**

56

Everyone arrives at a lake. Trees at the shore have been decorated with lanterns, and torches glow at the opposite side of the water.

Siv walks up to a mystified Dani and Connie.

SIV

Do you admire the Brisinga-smycket?

CONNIE

The lanterns?

SIV

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

56

CONTINUED:

56

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

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

Dani placates her by nodding. Siv smiles.

HARD CUT TO:

56A

EXT. LAKE - MINUTES LATER

56A

A BELL is rung. Everyone's attention has gone to the front of the lake. *Dani looks extremely nervous.*

IRMA stands at the center of the shore. She SINGS a brief wordless song and then announces to the lake:

IRMA
Med tacksamhet och lovord, du ärade
gudinna, överlämnar vi denna
blygsamma gåva.

Music is played as the men HOIST up the lavishly decorated tree, run it towards the lake, and HURL it into the water. The lake gulps the tree down.

A HORN bellows.

A thin man, SVEN (40s), steps out to announce, quite theatrically:

SVEN
Åh nej! Hör ni mullrandet? Jag tror
hon ännu är hungrig.

IRMA
Jag hörde inget mullrande.
(to the crowd)
Gjorde någon av er?

Grumblings all around. The consensus is "no."

SVEN
Jaså, antar att det kan ha varit
min egen mage.

Some polite laughter among the congregation.

SVEN (CONT'D)
Men jag vill inte riskera att
förarga vår generösa Moder.

IRMA
Inte jag heller. Men vi har redan
skänkt bort våra finaste ägodelar
och mest fruktbara träd. Vad mer
kan vi möjligen erbjuda?

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

BROR (O.S.)
Vi kan använda mig!

The crowd OPENS UP to reveal Bror. 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 Sven and Irma).

IRMA
Du, unga Bror, önskar erbjuda ditt liv till vår älskade Gudinna?

BROR
Om hon vill ha det!

SVEN
Så modig du är, lilla Bror!

BROR
Modig? Vad är modigt med att resa hem?

Horns are played as Bror steps forward to stand before the men who tossed the tree. They reluctantly strap WEIGHTS to the boy's ankles and arms. They then lift the boy up and carry him to the lake.

Dani starts to PANIC.

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

Siv SMILES.

The boy is taken to the edge of the lake, 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
Nej, sluta!

HÅRGAN #2
Låt honom vara! Han har visat sitt mod!

The crowd erupts into a CACOPHONY OF STAGED PROTEST ("*No! Release him!*"). 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 turns to Siv.

56A CONTINUED:

56A

CONNIE
So, is this just like a Wiccan
thing??

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

Connie, wild eyed, looks unsatisfied.

SIV (CONT'D)
Strictly presentational.

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

57	*OMITTED*	57
58	*OMITTED*	58
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

No - this has been happening for a long time! You've been pulling away. And *I've* been in denial.

CHRISTIAN

(finished)

Oh, *please* - give yourself some credit, babe. Looks to me like you've got it *all* figured out.

Christian turns to walk away, but then he STOPS. He turns back to Dani, suddenly furious.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

Actually, you know what? I'm just gonna say something. When you casually gift me a bouquet of impromptu flowers, all *I* wonder is how and when I'm supposed to pay that *back*.

DANI

(genuinely baffled)

What? What flowers?!

(suddenly remembers)

At *lunch??* I grabbed those on a *whim!*

CHRISTIAN

Oh yeah?
You have no ulterior motives?
On the day after your birthday? When I didn't get you flowers?? Everything you give me is like a reminder that I didn't get you something!

DANI (CONT'D)

Yes!

What *motives* would I have?

DANI (CONT'D)

(incredulous)

Are you serious?

CHRISTIAN

Yeah, fine - *see?* Play the wounded party again. You're just this self-denying altruist and I'm a paranoid dick. You don't have a conniving bone in your body!

DANI

And what is it that you imagine I'm *conniving?*

CHRISTIAN

You *are*, Dani! I feel like I'm being locked into your *debt* every time you do something "*just because.*" 'Cause it's never just because.

DANI (CONT'D)

I don't do *anything* to "keep you in my *debt*!" I'm just trying to be kind to you!

CHRISTIAN

Fine, great - so never mind. You're right. I'm the asshole.

DANI

Nobody's the asshole!

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)

No, I *clearly* am! You selflessly give me flowers and I feel trapped. Fuck. I'm supposed to be *WORKING* here!

Christian turns and STORMS away.

DANI

Oh my God. You're gonna walk away now??

As he leaves, she cries out:

DANI (CONT'D)

You're just gonna leave me like this?!

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - "NIGHT"

People are closing the shutters, 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)

They're intense, though. You might wanna cut it in half.

DANI

I just need to sleep.

She swallows it whole.

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - "NIGHT"

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, SMILING. Christian, in the back seat, looks down at his lap, ignoring Dani. MARK ROUNDS TO THE BACK WINDOW, SMILING GIDDILY AT DANI as they drive away.

Dani watches this in utter horror.

61 CONTINUED:

61

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. *Poking out from under her pillow are seven different flowers.*

JOSH, whom we now reveal to be awake, has been watching this.

63 **INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - NEXT MORNING**

63

All of the beds are now empty, and morning activity is heard outside. Dani, however, is still asleep.

63A **EXT. FIRE PIT - MORNING**

63A

The corpses of the elders (Ylva and Dan) are no longer visible in the fire. Two Hårgan MEN reach underneath the fire pit to pull out a TRAY (stationed below the pit). This catches all of the fire's ASHES, which fall through small holes in the pit.

64 **EXT. BOOKBINDING HOUSE - MORNING**

64

In the BG, the men from the last scene carry the ash tray over to a massive ROTVÄLTA (a fallen tree whose root system is exposed). The earth around the rotvälta is particularly ASHEN. The men ceremoniously scatter the ashes across the pale, chalky ground.

We pull back from this to reveal PELLE tending to the garden.

MARK (O.S.)
Nice garden, fag!

Pelle turns to see Mark and Josh approaching. ***In the deep MG, between Mark/Josh and Pelle, are two ceremonially dressed men, surrounded by onlookers. They finish a ceremonial song before CHOPPING a straw goat into three sections, celebrated by silent clapping.*** Josh walks past it, filming it with his phone.

Pelle SIGHS and rises. *Behind him, Sven is walking in the MG, getting in the zone for the upcoming ceremony.*

JOSH

Hey man. Any word?

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 you'll have to 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: WOMEN picking flowers. Among them: INGA. She is laughing with her friends.

JOSH (CONT'D)

(to Pelle)

Here: can I ask you something?

MARK

I'm gonna take a leak.

Mark walks off. *We see Inga noticing him as he goes.* (Beyond her, ULF - one of the straw goat choppers - has walked up to a hole in the earth. He kneels down to lay the straw goat head into the hole. He then sprinkles different herbs into it and starts filling the hole back up with dirt.) Josh pulls Maja's RUNE BONE out of his pocket.

JOSH

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 has appeared in the BG, taking a few photos of Ulf (who is now pouring lamb's blood onto the hole). Christian now starts toward us. *As he approaches, SEVERAL ANIMALS are led across the field (by specially dressed Hårgans) just behind him.* 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
Oh. Yeah. I think I noticed.

Ulf, in the BG, has now taken to praying silently (standing upright with his eyes closed).

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.

In the BG, Ulf has noticed something horrible.

BEARDED MAN (O.S.)
NEJ!!!

Christian and Pelle and Josh FREEZE. Behind them, ULF is running toward the Rotvälta (where the recently deceased elders' ashes were scattered). They all turn to it...

MARK is standing behind the fallen tree, urinating. *His two juice cups are resting on top of the giant fallen tree.* When he sees Ulf, his urine stream CEASES.

ULF
VAD GÖR DU? STOPP! BORT DÄRIFRÅN!

Mark, looking stupefied, is FROZEN.

ULF (CONT'D)
Stoppa undan din vidriga kuk. Hur
vågar du!

Mark zips back up, utterly confounded. He steps out from behind the tree, but is still standing on the ashes.

ULF (CONT'D)
STICK FÖR FAN! STICK!

Not understanding, Mark hesitantly steps away, leaving the ashen area.

ULF (CONT'D)
Det här är våra förfäder! Du pissar på våra förfäder!

People have started gathering around.

MARK
What's wrong? What did I do?

Pelle (and Christian and Josh) have run over.

PELLE
What happened?

ULF
Din lilla Amerikanska vän här, har pissat på Rotvältan!

PELLE
(gasps)
Jag är så ledsen Fader Ulf!
Han visste ju inte.

MARK
What happened? What did I do?

PELLE
You were peeing on the ancestral tree.

MARK
The tree? So what? I'm sorry. "SO WHAT?!"

ULF

MARK
What?! I didn't know!

Ulf is in a fury. He STIFLES it, but his eyes are frighteningly wide.

PELLE
Here, Mark: let's just...

Pelle leads Mark away. Christian joins.

MARK
What the fuck? It was a dead tree.
What's even happening?

PELLE
All of our dead are tied to that tree.

MARK
But *it's* dead. It's a dead fucking tree. I didn't realize it was special. I just had to pee. -- Well, no, of course not.

PELLE (CONT'D)
I know, but it's important to us. It's okay. We know you didn't know. You wouldn't pee on a gravestone, right?

Mark looks over to Ulf, who has collapsed into furious TEARS. ARNE, a sturdy Elder, speaks soothingly to him.

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 (Mark's crush), named INGA, walks up.

MARK

Oh shit. Hi.

INGA

(to Pelle)

Säg till honom att det ordnar sig. Han fattar inte. Jag ska prata med Fader 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 now 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. *In the BG, the other goat-chopper is standing and silently praying. About twenty other Hargans stand about in the distance, staring shocked at the scene with Ulf and Mark.*

DANI

What's happening there?

CHRISTIAN

Mark's just completely retarded.

Dani thinks to ask more, but instead:

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 BG. The surrounding Hårgans cease working and everyone, including Dani and Christian, look off in the same direction.

65

OMITTED

65

66

OMITTED

66

67

EXT. ANIMAL SACRIFICE HILL - DAY

67

CU of a COW'S HEAD being pushed through a hole in a PILLORY. We ZOOM OUT of this to find that the pillory has additional holes (extending beyond both sides of the cow's), and additional animals' heads are being pushed through them.

We eventually zoom out wide enough to reveal that this pillory, perched at the top of a HILL, has secured the heads of NINE ANIMALS (one sheep, two goats, two dogs, a baby horse, a cow, and two pigs).

Sven stands to the side of the line-up. On the other side are Siv, Dagny and Hanna.

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

I don't want to be here, right?

PELLE

(brief pause)

Yes. You don't want to be here.

Dani looks to Christian. He looks very excited. She turns back to the top of the hill, anxious.

Siv sings one very extended note to the air. When she finishes, SILENCE. And then...STEADY PERCUSSION BEGINS. Sven strikes a different POSE (physically and emotionally) with every percussive hit as Siv, Dagny and Hanna begin to SING. As we've heard before, it is a WORDLESS choral song. *The rest of the congregation sings along in whispers.*

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 recording a covert VIDEO 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 THREE MASSIVE RUNIC SYMBOLS. 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

Is this weird or is this not weird?

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?

Dani walks past SIMON, who looks very scared in the BG. He is confronting a grinning Ingemar.

SIMON (CONT'D)

(to Ingemar, aggressively)

Why are you smiling, mate?

Dani speed-walks away from the site (with intermittent running), going for the Main House. Pelle follows her, glancing over his shoulder to view more of the ceremony.

68

OMITTED

68

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

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 homemade sachet (containing a SPECIAL HERB) from his pocket. He places a under her nose.

PELLE (CONT'D)
 Here: smell this.

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 going to 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 bicker over 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.

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 super 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?

PELLE
 (holding it out)
 You can have it.

EXT. ANIMAL SACRIFICE HILL - SAME TIME

The ceremony has ended.

Simon and Connie stand frozen, traumatized. Simon is visibly DISTRAUGHT. He stares up at the top of the HILL, where the blood-drained animals are now being taken from the pillory.

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!

STEN speaks up.

STEN
 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 innocent animals - *including* a fucking defenseless dog--

IRMA speaks up.

IRMA

We sacrificed defenseless animals yesterday, too! To fill *your* belly!

STEN

Why are we using "sacrifice" like it's a dirty word?

SIMON

Because it's fucking medieval!

IRMA

Why are you swearing?! We're not swearing!

Sten gestures to Irma to calm down.

STEN

(to Simon)

Are you even aware you're in your body right now?

(then)

Sacrifice is essential in *any* relationship. Let's put it in *your* terms--

SIMON

What are *my* terms? You don't *know* my terms--

STEN

(continuing, louder)

Say you're entangled with a lover who can't put *your* needs before her own.

CONNIE

What does *that* mean?!

STEN

(to Connie now)

Say 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 resent them? Wouldn't you start to neglect them yourself? Maybe you'd even want to *punish* them for taking you for granted.

(to Simon)

Sacrifice is *proof*. And without it, I'm sorry, but 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.

STEN

I'll happily drive you to the station.

SIMON

Lovely. Thank you.
(to Connie)
Let's go. We're getting our things.

STEN

(gesturing)
I do need your help jumping the truck, if you'll be so kind.

SIMON

You need *my* help specifically?

STEV

Who am I driving?

Simon pauses.

SIMON

(to Connie)
Go pack our stuff. I'll pick you up out front in -
(to Sten)
- five minutes?

STEN

Very 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.

70A

EXT. MAIN HOUSE

70A

She arrives at the **MAIN HOUSE**. Dani and Pelle are standing outside. They watch her storm past.

DANI

Are you okay, Connie?

CONNIE

(not stopping)
Yeah. Sorry. We're actually leaving.

We stay outside with Dani and Pelle in a wide. Before long, ODD comes running up.

ODD

Connie!

Connie steps out. She lugs her bags and Simon's bags.

ODD (CONT'D)

Simon told me to tell you...
(catching his breath)
Jan drove him to the train station.
(MORE)

70A CONTINUED:

70A

ODD (CONT'D)

After Simon gets dropped off, he's sending the truck straight back for you -

CONNIE ODD (CONT'D)
What? - 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 true. Why wouldn't he tell me?

ODD
 Today's only train leaves in ninety minutes. It takes thirty-five minutes to drive there and back. They didn't want to waste time.

CONNIE
 So I could've sat on his lap!

ODD
 Simon said that, too. Yet 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 in a bit!

71 *OMITTED* 71

72 *OMITTED* 72

73 **EXT. FIELD - DAY** 73

Mark, standing in the shadow of the kitchen-side, peers cautiously around the corner. He's listening to (and trying to catch a glimpse of) ULF, who cries into the shoulder of MATS (late 60s), a handsome elder. *He's still devastated over the desecrated Rotvälta.*

MATS
 Jag vet. Det är obegripligt. Men han förstod inte vad han gjorde.

Beyond this, Christian is interviewing VALENTIN (20s). 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?

VALENTIN
That's based on traits we show as kids. For example:
(points to Mats)
He was assigned "to protect," so he made *his* pilgrimage as doctor.

Christian quickly writes this down. DANI walks up to him.

CHRISTIAN
Hey. You okay?

DANI
...Simon left without Connie.

CHRISTIAN
(faux concern)
Really? That's so shitty.

Christian bluntly returns his attention to Valentin.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
(to Happy Man)
Actually - what about coupling? Is incest ever a problem?

Dani PAUSES, disturbed by Christian's indifference. *For the first time, she actually looks scared of him.*

VALENTIN
Ha! Well, the bloodlines are very well preserved, so the elders must approve mates. Cousins can sometimes mate, but we do respect the incest taboo, so...we often need to invite outside peoples.

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 something, and then does a double take ("*what the hell?*"). Dani also looks...

JOSH is being led to Ruben's temple by ARNE...

Christian stares at this, wild-eyed. Dani walks disdainfully away from him.

OMITTED

OMITTED

EXT. FARMSTEAD - MINUTES LATER

Dani walks idly around, thinking about her exchange with Pelle (and about Simon leaving Connie). She holds the herb pouch that Pelle gave to her. 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 woman, **ULRIKA** (30s), sees Dani and waves her over. Dani pauses and then approaches.

ULRIKA
Would you like to help join us?

DANI
Sure!

She steps up.

DANI (CONT'D)
Do you know...have you seen Simon?

ULRIKA
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?

ULRIKA
Meat tarts!

Dani smiles "ooh!" and joins the women. She's handed an apron. Another Woman says something to Dani in Swedish.

ULRIKA (CONT'D)
(translating)
Hon säger att du är så vacker.

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.

76A **EXT. FARMSTEAD - SAME TIME**

76A

SIV stands among labouring men, staring at the **KITCHEN WINDOW**. She watches Dani. *Behind her, the maypole is being transported from its original placement.*

77 **INT. TEMPLE - SAME TIME**

77

The **HOLY TEMPLE**. Josh stands near the altar with Arne, 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). *The walls of the temple are lined with thousands of books that look like variations on the Rubi Radr.*

ARNE
We describe it like "emotional sheet music."

JOSH
What does it say?

ARNE
Well...each runic letter stands for one of the 16 Affects, which are graded from most holy to most unholy. This one is about Grief.

(MORE)

ARNE (CONT'D)

You can see at the end, however, we have blank pages?

Indeed the last half of the book is BLANK.

ARNE (CONT'D)

This is because the *Rubi Radr* is a forever work in progress. Forever evolving. We have many hundreds of these.

JOSH

And who decides what's added?

ARNE

Well - this iteration is being written by Ruben.

Arne points to RUBEN, the deformed boy, who is playing outside.

JOSH

(confused)

The...disabled?

ARNE

Since birth. He draws and the Elders interpret.

He shows Josh the first pages. They are marked by HANDPRINTS - all in different colors of paint. (Below the drawings are illustrative interpretations.)

ARNE (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"?

ARNE

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?

ARNE

(suddenly alarmed)

What? No. Absolutely not.

Arne CLOSES the book.

JOSH

Okay. Sorry.

ARNE (CONT'D)

Absolutely not.

A TENSE beat. Broken suddenly by a very DISTANT SCREAM, too far away to discern whether it's made by a man or animal.

77A **INT. KITCHEN - EVENING**

77A

Five seconds earlier. Dani is taking pies out of the oven, but then the same distant scream from the last scene makes her HALT.

78 ***OMITTED***

78

79 ***OMITTED***

79

80 ***OMITTED***

80

81 **EXT. FIRE TEMPLE - EVENING**

81

Five seconds earlier. Mark, who was just approaching the triangular temple, freezes to investigate the distance scream. It is followed by nothing.

His attention now returns to the temple, where a group of young women are entering and exiting. The women entering carry large floral ornaments; the ones exiting are fetching new ornaments from a pile.

Mark keeps his distance, but continues to warily approach. INGA emerges from the house, but when she sees him, she pauses and hesitantly waves hello.

MARK
(to himself)
Fuck, yep, that's her.

Embarrassed, Mark gives a half-wave, then instinctively turns away, as if to change course.

MARK (CONT'D)
Fuck.

He then forces himself to turn back. Still looking at him, Inga has returned to work, having picked up a big piece of floral ornamentation. She turns her back to him as she re-enters the temple.

Behind Mark, the young boy BROR runs from one group to another, announcing:

BROR (O.S.)
Maten är klar! ... Det är dags för mat!

82 **EXT. FIELD - EVENING**

82

The dining tables are now set in a runic pattern (symbolism TBD). Everyone is seated.

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
Has anyone seen Connie?

CHRISTIAN
I think Mark did earlier.

MARK
Yeah, I'm pretty sure I noticed her trying out for the sprinting olympics.

DANI
What? Where?

JARL, a happy Hårgan, inserts himself. (Valentin, beside him, smiles and nods in agreement through this.)

JARL
Sorry, but I can say what happened. Her boyfriend called the landline from the train station and calmed Connie down. Then she begged our pardon and I drove her to meet him.

A brief pause as everyone considers this.

CHRISTIAN
Okay, well, that's a relief.

DANI
Why would Simon would leave without her?

CHRISTIAN
I'm sure it was just miscommunication.

DANI
(after a moment)
I could see you possibly doing that.

CHRISTIAN
...The hell does *that* mean?

DANI
.....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 "the ancestral tree."

Josh looks up to see Ulf, whose eyes really are trained on Mark.

JOSH
Yikes.

82

CONTINUED:

82

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
Yes? MARK (CONT'D)
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 everyone, I guess.

Josh is so immersed in his thoughts, he didn't even notice Mark being lured away.

83 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - "NIGHT"

83

Everybody is climbing into bed. Josh's eyes, however, are BUSY. He's thinking intensely 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.

89

EXT. FARMSTEAD - MORNING

89

Breakfast time. The tables are shaped to form the "stability" pattern. Dani, Christian and Pelle look quizzically around. The community is dressed in more colorful clothes than usual.

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.

Sten stands up. A hush falls cleanly over the scene.

STEN
We have something regretful to announce. This morning the nineteenth book of *Rubi Radr* was found missing from the temple. 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 temple, 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?

89A

EXT. FARMSTEAD - LATER

89A

Breakfast has ended. Christian, Dani and Pelle deposit their dirty dishes at the washing station, only to turn around and see ARNE and STEN walking toward them. Our group anticipates the following question:

ARNE
Where is your friend Josh?

CHRISTIAN
I know. We have no idea.

ARNE
He and your other friend disappear 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.

STEN
 What girl?

PELLE
 Inga.

Sten thinks about this. *Irma has joined.* Christian interjects:

CHRISTIAN
 But Mark wouldn't have done this.
Josh, however: 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. ARNE relents.

ARNE
 ...Let's just hope it gets
 returned.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
 Yes. I hope that very much.

PELLE
 I feel responsible.

ARNE
 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.

Sten turns to Dani and Christian.

STEN
 (to Dani)
 You'll be going with the women for
 the day's activity.

Karin is standing behind Sten, ready to take Dani. She steps forward to hand Dani a special summer dress.

STEN (CONT'D)
 (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:

89

CONTINUED:

89

PELLE (O.S.)
Grandfather Sten!

ODD (O.S.)
The truck is gone!

STEN (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 GLASS JUG OF SPRING WATER (perched on a table). The paste is STIRRED into the water.

A queue of WOMEN (between 16 and 45) 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 BG is the MAYPOLE.

Dani has joined the line. KARIN (whom she befriended earlier) is in front of her.

DANI
Everybody knows what this is?

KARIN
Oh yes. This is the big one.

Karin smiles mischievously. Dani smiles skeptically back. They arrive at the "water" table. Both are handed a cup.

DANI
It's just water?

KARIN
Not *just*. It is for the competition.

Karin gulps hers down, and then gestures "You now." Dani pauses, and then knocks it back. (*Ulla and Maja watch closely in the BG.*)

KARIN (CONT'D)
(smiling)
Uh-oh!

She LAUGHS and HUGS Dani.

KARIN (CONT'D)
Here we go!

Dani looks very nervous.

91

EXT. FIELD - MAYPOLE 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. IRMA 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.

IRMA speaks up.

IRMA

Det var här, för länge sedan, som
den Mörke lurade Hårgas ung- dom ut
i gräset och förförde dem in i
dans. När de väl börjat kunde de
inte sluta, och de dansade sig till
döds. Nu, i livsbejakande trots mot
den Mörke, dansar vi tills vi
stupar. Hon som står ensam kvar på
slutet, kommer att krönas för sin
uthållighet.

Irma 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 the Hårgas.)

The women begin to DANCE. The inside circle dances in a chain to the left. The middle circle to the right. The outside circle to the left.

Dani stumbles as she finds her way into the dance. Once she hits her stride, she smiles. Karin looks back at her and LAUGHS good-naturedly. Dani laughs back!

92

INT. SMALL WHITE HOUSE - SMALL ROOM - SIV'S 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...

93

**INT. SMALL WHITE HOUSE - LARGER ROOM - SIV'S HOUSE -
CONTINUOUS**

93

A spare room. Two stools in the center. Siv takes a seat in one of them. It becomes clear that Christian is also to sit. He 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. Siv is stone. She gives him nothing.

CHRISTIAN

About Maja?

Siv just waits.

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 fixed her hopes on you.

CHRISTIAN

We haven't even really spoken.

SIV

She fixed on 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.

Pause.

CHRISTIAN (CONT'D)
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 provide 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 right here.
Tonight is the time of alignment.
Then it's done.

A long, conflicted pause.

CHRISTIAN
I don't think I can.

SIV
(pause)
Is that your answer?

Christian hesitates. He's very torn.

EXT. SMALL WHITE HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

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 ahead to see the DANCE COMPETITION in the distance. He's walking toward it.

EXT. FIELD - MAYPOLE - SAME TIME

Dani is still engaged in dance, although it's now the tree-penis 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.

IRMA
Vänd!

Everybody runs to find new positions. Karin pulls Dani to a new spot. The music now RESUMES and they all begin a new dance, WEAVING IN AND OUT.

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...?

Karin turns happily to Dani.

KARIN
Don't slip!

Dani looks to her.

KARIN (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.

Many of the women have now been disqualified. Dani is still in the running! She seems determined to stay alert and compete. There are TEN remaining women; five run in one direction and the other five run in the opposite direction, weaving around each other.

Irma opens her arms swiftly and the musicians CEASE playing. The dancing women STOP, and two of them collide. They fall to the ground.

IRMA
Åtta!

The onlookers CLAP SILENTLY.

Karin turns to Dani, gives her a big HUG and KISSES HER ON THE LIPS. Dani, startled, turns self-consciously to the "clapping" onlookers. She sees CHRISTIAN. He isn't paying attention. Feeling Dani's gaze, his eyes go to her. She stares blankly. Taken aback, he gives her a SMILE. She doesn't smile back. *She's very much in the grip of the psychedelics now.*

95 CONTINUED:

95

Dani's HANDS are taken by women on either side of her. The music STARTS and they commence dancing.

95B OMITTED

95B

95C **EXT. FIELD - MAYPOLE - MEANWHILE**

95C

Christian sits among the onlookers. He is chilled by his last encounter with Dani. 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.

95D **EXT. FIELD - MAYPOLE - IN THE DANCING CIRCLE**

95D

Dani's eyes betray rising panic.

One woman (MAJVOR) says, as provocation:

MAJVOR

Om vi stannar nu, kommer allt
fortsätta snurra (runt)?

ULRIKA, the small woman we met earlier, replies:

ULRIKA

(laughing)
Tänk om vi skulle titta ner och det
var tusenfotingar överallt?

Ulrika 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.

95D CONTINUED:

95D

Another woman has looked down to see the same thing. She also SCREAMS, 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.

KARIN
(smiling)
That's right! Hold on to your
brain!

CUT HARD TO:

95Da **INSERT:** INGA'S FACE SLAMMING INTO POLE AFTER RUSHING TOWARD IT WITH ASCENDING ARMS. 95Da

INSERT: WOMAN SPRAYING VOMIT INTO THE AIR.

95E **EXT. FIELD - MAYPOLE**

95E

Now, only Dani and two other women are in the running. One of these is Karin. The other is a good-natured brunette. They each dance separately, no longer holding hands. The brunette's legs are clearly less stable than Dani's or Karin'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.

Karin turns happily to Dani.

KARIN
Är du trött?

Dani, still dancing:

DANI
I don't speak Swedish!

KARIN
(not understanding)
What?!

Dani repeats herself, but it comes out as:

DANI
Aewobeemeewish!

Karin, understanding, responds:

KARIN
Waweroobeeny!

DANI
(somehow understanding)
Aewabeeny-sa-aewonnerstabloo!

They are speaking complete gibberish, but they understand each other perfectly. Dani is amazed.

95E CONTINUED:

95E

DANI (CONT'D)
 (excitedly remarking on
 this)
 Weerabbleeishcobleraymib!

Karin nods manically, agreeing with this.

KARIN
 Blorishcobleraymib-wonnerstablee!

The Plump Woman suddenly TRIPS over one foot to fall CRASHING to the ground. Karin (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.

95F **EXT. FIELD - MAYPOLE - MINUTES LATER**

95F

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.

IRMA
 Vi har (fått) vår Majdrottning!!

IRMA approaches with an immense, gorgeously crafted GARLAND CROWN. She lays it on Dani's head.

DANI
 (hallucinating)
 It's over?

IRMA
 You are our May Queen.

DANI
 (confused)
 Why? Me?

IRMA
 You!

DANI
 (suddenly scared)
 What do you mean?!

ROSE PETALS are thrown by children. *

Dani, severely disoriented, is led aside by several women. One woman wraps her in a sort of gown (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, passionate 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 six long, protruding handles. She is directed to STAND on it.

KARIN
 Careful!

The handles are gripped by six 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.

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 tabletops are made of MIRRORS, and they 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.

Looking down at her food, Dani suddenly catches her reflection in the tabletop mirror. *Her face looks wrong*. She quickly LOOKS AWAY.

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 SALT HERRING. The community sees this and laughs, knowing what's in store.

DANI

For what?

STEN explains:

STEN

You must eat it whole, but the tail going first.

DANI

(sincerely frightened)
What? I can't. That's too big.

STEN

(chuckle)
No no - you must try.

Christian, tripping heavily, turns to a LARGE MAN to his side.

CHRISTIAN

How much is happening right now?

95G CONTINUED:

95G

Dani looks to Christian. He stares dumbly at the table, lost in conflict.

95H **EXT. FIELD - DINING AREA - MINUTES LATER**

95H

Everyone is finished (although there's a smaller number of women at the table now). 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.

Laughter all around.

Siv gestures in the direction of a CARRIAGE, just beyond the tables. Its back sports TWO UNLIT TORCHES. Several girls (six to pull the carriage and six to accompany it) surround it.

*
*

One GIRL scatters 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, Hanna offers her a LONG, FLAMING STICK. Dani accepts it. Hanna 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.

Hanna 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 HANNA) 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. Two - one on either side - hold juniper boughs and unlit torches. They IGNITE their torches by the fire of the carriage torches.

*
*
*97 **EXT. DINING AREA - SAME TIME**

97

Most of the community remains standing at the dining tables. They WATCH as the women pull the carriage away.

97 CONTINUED: 97

Christian watches, too. Guilt-ridden. He then looks to the temple. A GIRL has begun scattering flowers to create a NEW PATH. This is between Christian and the TEMPLE. *

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 and cast away dark spirits. *

99 **EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME** 99

The girl finishes the flower path, ending at Christian's feet. 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 and muffled humming is heard from within. MATS, dressed in ceremonial dress, stands in waiting. He hands Christian a WHITE GOWN. *

MATS
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 Hanna to step out. Hanna holds the flaming torch over a small HOLE in the ground. Dani is instructed to hold the torch by its handle (just above where Hanna grips it). Hanna now affects perfect posture. Dani instinctively mimics this. *

Three women - each holding a sack of GRAIN, a raw STEAK, and an EGG - approach the hole. One pours grain into the hole, the other drops the steak over the grain, and the last woman cracks the egg into it. The hole is then COVERED UP with soil. *

HANNA
Repeat now after me.

Dani and Hanna are looking directly into each other's eyes. Hanna begins to SING very slowly, enunciating very carefully, and Dani SINGS ALONG (quite well). They circle the hole with the torch held in the center. The surrounding women dance. *

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?

Mats now turns to a MAN WITH HAIR COVERING HIS FACE (looking like the back of a head). He hands Mats a STONE POT. Mats now turns to raise the pot toward Christian's face. Christian looks very unnerved by the man whose face is covered in hair. *

102

CONTINUED:

102

MATS

Breathe in.

Mats lifts off the lid to release a WAVE OF STEAM. Christian looks to Mats, wary.

MATS (CONT'D)

For your vitality.

Reluctantly, Christian BREATHES IN the vapors and his eyes begin to cloud over. He EXHALES heavily (coughing the last bit out). He's already feeling the effects. His breathing becomes shallow and his legs start to wobble.

The Man Whose Hair Envelops His Face now OPENS THE DOORS to the temple. Quiet humming is heard from inside.

103

INT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

103

It is dark, save for several burning candles.

In the center of the room, lying on a lush 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 (some in their 50s and 60s), stand at the back of the room. They are also NUDE. The humming comes from them.

Christian is too stoned to react. He regards the room as he would a dreamscape.

The humming starts to build as the women SING in the Hårgas' wordless, groaning, microtonal tradition.

Maja tilts her head and her eyes move toward the front door...at Christian.

One Woman now steps up to draw Christian's gown OFF of his shoulders. He is fluidly DISROBED. Now standing naked, he is directed towards Maja, who waits nervously.

Christian seems to LEVITATE six inches 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, approaching swiftly, looks down at her. Her eyes are closed as she waits to be taken. *The singing rises to an operatic pitch.*

104

EXT. CATTLE HOUSE - SAME TIME

104

The sun is less intense now. It is nearing twilight.

The carriage rests near the barn. Dani, holding a torch, proceeds to bless the livestock. Hanna sings.

*

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. It is ULRIKA. She smiles tenderly at her. This would be touching if it weren't so weird. Maja offers Ulrika her HAND, and Ulrika supportively takes it into her hands. Ulrika lovingly presses her CHEEK against Maja's open palm, CARESSING her face.

Maja MOANS. The women all MOAN in sympathy. (They have taken to rubbing their breasts.) *

In the far corner, we reveal, Ruben is finger-painting on the pages of the Rubi Radr. He is inspired.

EXT. FARMSTEAD - MOMENTS LATER

The carriage has returned to the farmstead. Dani steps uneasily out of the wagon, still under the warping influence of the hallucinogen. The SINGING/MOANING is heard faintly from the Temple.

HANNA

We shall go now to Siv's house.

DANI

What's there?

HANNA

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?

HANNA

Not for us.

Dani, attracted/worried by the singing/moaning, takes a few steps toward the Temple. The young women look very concerned. Hanna steps up to STAND IN DANI'S WAY.

HANNA (CONT'D)

I think you should not.

DANI

...Why?

Hanna is not convincing when she says:

HANNA

It is a ceremony for the men.

106

CONTINUED:

106

Dani is now very suspicious. Her expression begs "What is it really?" Hanna's expression says that it's something that would hurt Dani. Hanna'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/moaning 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. They are all HOLDING THEIR BREASTS. With every one of Christian's thrusts, the women PUMP THEIR BREASTS WITH THEIR HANDS - moaning in tandem with Maya. 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.

Hanna 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.

Hanna 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 Hanna's. Hanna continues to affect deep, measured breathing. Dani struggles to follow her. Her breathing trembles to meet Hanna'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, Hanna *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 Hanna, who has absolutely 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. She moans in ecstasy, and the room has filled with a cacophony of sympathetic moans.

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/moaning 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 the baby!

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 - BOOK BINDING - CHICKEN COOP - CONTINUOUS

111

Christian exits the temple. 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 the BOOK BINDING HOUSE.

As he nears the house, he sees that the TRUCK (which was supposedly stolen) is now parked beside it. Christian's eyes buzz with suspicion.

He then looks downward...at a GARDEN in front of the book binding house. It is in the shape of a CIRCLE. And at the heart of that circle...a FOOT, its sole facing skyward, protrudes from the soil. A symbol has been painted onto the sole. (It is Josh's foot.)

111 CONTINUED:

111

Christian's eyes are wild with terror. He rigidly turns around, his heart pounding, panic taking hold.

CHRISTIAN

(to himself, in denial)

That's not that. That wasn't...

He walks off hurriedly toward 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. But as he tries to steady his breath, he SEES...

Across the room, SIMON - naked - is suspended midair. His arms are outstretched, his body faced downwards, and it looks like he's flying. (In fact, he's being held up by flora-decorated ropes.) His BACK HAS BEEN OPENED UP, his RIBS SEPARATED FROM HIS SPINE (reaching outward like claws) and his **LUNGS HAVE BEEN PULLED UP TO LOOK LIKE OUTSPREAD WINGS**. It appears that his bloody "wings" have also been covered in bird feed. *In fact, one chicken is currently standing on his back, pecking at a rib.*

Frozen in horror, Christian stares unblinkingly.

CHRISTIAN

Josh?

Christian's eyes fill intensely with TEARS. He starts toward Simon, whose lung-wings are subtly SWELLING and DEFLATING. He's still breathing.

Driven by morbid compulsion, Christian crouches under Simon to make sure that it's Simon's face, and he confirms that it is, BUT...

His EYES HAVE BEEN REMOVED and the sockets have been stuffed with BRILLIANTLY COLORED FLOWERS.

Terrified, Christian turns - as if to run from this nightmare - but he SLAMS into...

ODD, who is wearing a garland crown. 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:

113

EXT. STAGE - NEXT DAY

113

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.

ULLA (O.C.)

You cannot speak. You cannot move.

*

We cut WIDE to reveal that Christian sits limply in a wheelchair. He faces the crowd. Behind him, on the stage, is an immense THRONE made of glorious flowers. DANI sits in this throne, dressed in a **MASSIVE FLORAL DRESS** that looks like a grossly distended pile of blossoming flowers. Her GIANT FLORAL GARLAND CROWN is comprised of the nine special flowers and herbs. To either side of her, the ELDERS are all standing upright. (Also, RUBEN has a special seat, whose platform is covered in COTTON, resembling 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.

When it's clear that she has everyone's total attention, SIV SPEAKS:

SIV

On this, the day of our deity of purification, we gather to give special thanks to our treasured Sun. As an offering to our 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 also 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 Cycle.

Siv is done. Sten now continues the speech.

STEN

The four newbloods have already been supplied. As for our end, we have two already dedicated -

Sten gestures to two elderly CORPSES (one male and one female) proudly DISPLAYED near the back of the crowd. They stand upright, and their bottom halves (legs, hips) have been replaced by TREE STUMPS and their arms have been replaced by dense TREE BRANCHES. Their branch-arms are positioned to strike symbolic poses. The female's head is tilted back as GNARLED TWIGS jut violently from her mouth (as if they grew out of her stomach).

The top of the male's head is opened up (as if having bloomed) with an overgrowth of twigs sprouted out (as if they had grown in his brain and then broken through); twigs also emerge from his ears.

STEN (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.

STEN (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 VERY LARGE GARLAND CROWN, smiles serenely.

Sten continues:

STEN (CONT'D)
 And now, for the ninth offering, it
 is traditional that our fair Queen
 shall choose between a pre-selected
 newblood and a specially ordained
 Hårgan...

Sten turns to an Elder standing beside a large BALL CAGE (as generally used in bingo) at the end of the platform. 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.

STEN
 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.

STEN (CONT'D)
 And Christian Hughes.

A Hårgan man now wheels Christian, whose eyes are locked wide, away from the base of the stage. He positions Christian beside Dag to also be facing the stage. Christian is shocked at the sight of Dani.

STEN (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.

113

CONTINUED:

113

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. Sten understands.

STEN (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. He has turned blue in the face. 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 lake).

Continuing to track alongside the wheelbarrow (which is pushed by a young male HARGAN), we pull back to EXPAND OUR VIEW. We reveal that the HARGAN is carting Connie's corpse toward the yellow-painted TRIANGULAR TEMPLE, 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. Atop his head is a jester's hat.

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 against one wall.

Mark's is seated against the opposite wall.

Beyond them, to either side, are the TWO ELDER TREE-CORPSES that were standing upright in the crowd. The male body is surrounded by his most precious belongings (jewelry, books, etc.). The dead female elder is also surrounded by her most prized possessions.

Beyond them, at the far end of the temple, is...

JOSH'S BODY, which is covered in dirt and soil. His eyes and nostrils are clogged with earth. His face is locked into a gagged scream, his mouth utterly stuffed with paper (from the Rubi Radr). Stacks of books rest on his lap (and atop those, his smartphone stands on its side, facing outward). And beside Josh...

115 CONTINUED:

115

SIMON'S CORPSE. He is now in the same dress as the rest of the corpses, but the eyes are still replaced by bright flowers.

116 **EXT. BOOKBINDING HOUSE - SAME TIME**

116

We are PUSHING TOWARD the bookbinding house, whose doors are open. To the side of it, Ulf and Ingemar are being embraced passionately by several members of the community.

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

Humming and music has started very quietly outside.

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. Its back rests against a hay pile. Christian is still unable to move or speak. His muffled screams persist.

A man dressed as "Vídorr" (god of vengeance) stands before Christian. He holds the *Rubi Radr* in his hands.

VÍDORR

(in Swedish)

Mighty and dreadful beast. With you, we purge our most unholy Affekts. We banish you now to the deepest recesses, where you may reflect on your wickedness.

Ingemar and Ulf are now seated on haystacks. They are also surrounded by their most prized belongings. Mats stands before Ingemar, who smiles widely. He pours a thick, sappy LIQUID into Ingemar's mouth.

MATS

(in Swedish)

Drink from the yew tree. Feel no fear.

Mats moves to Ulf. He pours the liquid into his mouth as well.

MATS (CONT'D)

(in Swedish)

Drink from the yew tree. Feel no pain.

118 CONTINUED:

118

Mats leaves the house. Now, THREE HÅRGAN MEN enter with FLAMING TORCHES. The music begins to rise 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. (For some, this smile might recall the photo of Dani in her parent's bedroom at the beginning of the film.) 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.

FADE TO BLACK.