MIDSOMMAR

Written by

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

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

EXT. HOUSE - MINNESOTA - NIGHT

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

INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

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

The PHONE rings. The Man and Woman do not stir. After a few rings, the ANSWERING MACHINE takes it. (Next to the answering machine is a photo of a family: the man and woman standing happily with their two teenaged daughters.)

ANSWERING MACHINE (V.O.)

Hello. You’ve reached --

MAN & WOMAN (V.O.)

-- the Ardor residence.

ANSWERING MACHINE (V.O.)

Please leave your message at the tone. When you’re finished with your message, press pound.

BEEP. Enter the voice of a YOUNG WOMAN:

YOUNG WOMAN (V.O.)

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

Beside their bed is a PHOTO of one of the daughters. She wears a beaming smile.

INT. APARTMENT LIVING ROOM - BROOKLYN, NY - NIGHT

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

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

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

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

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.
CONTINUED:

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

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

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

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

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

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

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)                   DANI (CONT’D)
Me too.                            I love you.

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

DANI
Okay. See you later?

Yup.

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)
Okay. “Bye Mark!”

“Bye Mark.”

DANI
All right. Love you. Bye.

Dani hangs up. Her eyes are wide with insecurity.

INT. KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

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

DANI
It’s just in his tone - you can hear it. It’s like he’s trying to work up the nerve to say something.

GIRLFRIEND (V.O.)
So be direct! Confront him!

Dani has opened a cabinet to pull out a pill bottle.
CONTINUED:

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?

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.
INT. PIZZA PARLOR - NEW YORK, NY - NIGHT

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

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

Mark is currently lecturing a despondent Christian, 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! 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

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.


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.
CONTINUED:

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

The crying has curdled into a sustained WAIL OF ANGUISH.

INT. GARAGE - MINNESOTA - NIGHT  
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...

INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS  
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...

INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS  
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.

INT. TERRI’S BEDROOM - SAME TIME  
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 Arдо.”

EXT. STREET - BROOKLYN, NY - NIGHT  
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.

INT. DANI’S APARTMENT - NIGHT  
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.
CONTINUED:

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.

INT. DANIEL’S BEDROOM — LATE AFTERNOON — 6 MONTHS LATER

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
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.

INT. APARTMENT — EVENING

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                  PELLE
To Sweden!             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                  MARK
...Mid June to late July?       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.

INT. LYFT CAR (MOVING) – NIGHT

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.

INT. DANIEL’S APARTMENT – NIGHT

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
    (correcting)
    Sweden. A month and a half.

    DANI
    Okay: I told you I wanted to go to Sweden.

    CHRISTIAN
    You told me it would be “cool to go.”

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

    CHRISTIAN
    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 wanna 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.
CONTINUED:

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.

INT. MARK & JOSH’S APARTMENT - DAY

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? I am, yes. Or the trail of tears? Yes. Or slavery? 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.

**MARK**
(re: weed and bong)
...Okay. Should we clear all this?

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.
CONTINUED:

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 (to the room) Hey.

CHRISTIAN (CONT’D) Hi baby.

JOSH/MARK/PELLE Hey!

DANI (to the room) Hey guys!

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 Hey Pelle. PELLE Hi Dani.

She notices that Pelle has been composing a DRAWING in his notepad. It’s a drawing of the room.
DANI
Ooh, that’s a 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... (realizing)

PELLE
Oh, right. God. Of course.

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
...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.
CONTINUED:

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.

INT. AIRPLANE LAVATORY (IN FLIGHT) – DAY – 2 WEEKS LATER

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.

INT. AIRPLANE (IN FLIGHT) – MINUTES LATER

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.

*OMITTED*

INT. RENTAL MINIVAN (MOVING) – DAY

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.
DANI
How far are we driving?

PELLE
Four hours, about.

MARK
(exasperated)
Oh my God.

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

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.
CONTINUED:

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

DISSOLVE TO:

*OMITTED*

*OMITTED*

EXT. ROAD – TWO HOURS LATER

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

PELLE
Entering Hälsingland!

EXT. MEADOW – CONTINUOUS

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.
CONTINUED:

DANI
No, I just need to get settled.

CHRISTIAN
Okay. Well. I’ll wait for you. No – go ahead!

DANI (CONT’D)

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 (CONT’D)

(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. He’s not. It’ll get too complicated otherwise. It’s fine.

Of all people.

DANI (CONT’D)

Ingemar hands Dani her TEA.

PELLE
(to Dani)
Ready?
CONTINUED:

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.

EXT. MEADOW – MINUTES LATER

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

JOSH
Uggghhh, I really don’t feel good.

Josh hunches over to RETCH.

MARK
Don’t puke, dude. Keep it down.

CHRISTIAN
(to Dani)
How are you feeling?

DANI
A little like I have food poisoning.

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

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

EXT. MEADOW BUSH

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.

EXT. LARGE GRASSY MEADOW – MINUTES LATER

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 IMPOISINGLY over Dani. They GROAN in the wind, their branches leaning (almost reaching) down.
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 Sá Lunka Vi Sá Smâningom 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)

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.
CONTINUED:

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...

EXT. OUTHOUSE – CONTINUOUS

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:

EXT. FIELD – SAME TIME

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. (looking at his hands)
Mark
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. Yeah – I don’t wanna move.

CHRISTIAN
Hey! Dani’s our friend!

MARK
She isn’t all of our friend.

CHRISTIAN
MARK (CONT’D)
What? Yes she is. That’s not nice! Why aren’t you ever nice?!
You’re being mean!

(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? (insistent)

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

MARK
Why???

JOSH
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!

EXT. WOODS - SAME TIME

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...
(absolutey panicked now)
CHRISTIAN?!

No answer.

DANI (CONT’D)
No...no.... You’re alone.
CONTINUED:

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 (O.S.) (CONT’D)
...Christian?!    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    CHRISTIAN (CONT’D)
I got lost.    Let’s go back to the group.

    DANI
    (still squeezing)

    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
PELLE
Where were you? How are you, Dani?

CHRISTIAN
(insistent)
We’re fine. She’s fine. Just took a little walk.
CONTINUED:

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

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

EXT. LARGE GRASSY MEADOW - WOODS - HOURS LATER

CLOSE-UP OF DANI’S SLEEPING FACE.

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

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

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

DANI  
...how long was I asleep?

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

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

PELLE  
For a couple hours. Not completely.

Then something occurs to Dani:

DANI  
Is it tomorrow?

CHRISTIAN  
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.

EXT. WOODS - DAY

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? (teasing)

JOSH
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...

EXT. HÅRGA FARMSTEAD - CONTINUOUS

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 squal 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 Härga, and happy midsummer!

(MORE)
CONTINUED:

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.
CONTINUED:

Siv deposits the sticks into the fire.

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

PELLE (CONT'D)
(translation)
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.

EXT. HÄRGA FARMSTEAD - MINUTES LATER

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.
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31A CONTINUED:

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 PELLE (CONT’D)
For the food? 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 CHRISTIAN
...I can get a translation (jumping in)
from him later. 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

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

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.
EXT. HÅRGA FARMSTEAD - MEANWHILE

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

PELLE
You guys should join!

DANI
I’m too scared.

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

SIMON
Alright?

CONNIE
Ta.

Simon sits.

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

PELLE
“Skin the fool!”

CONNIE
Skin the fool?

SIMON
(sarcastic)
Precious.

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

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

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

Christian RISES, suddenly feeling bold.

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

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

Pelle takes this opportunity to turn covertly to Dani:

PELLE (CONT’D)
Hey: very quick:

He hands her a folded up DRAWING.

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

DANI
Oh - my gosh. Pelle!

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

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

PELLE
Anyway. Just between us.

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

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

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

She folds the drawing back up.

EXT. HÅRGA FIELD - MINUTES LATER

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... Water power plant.

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

PELLE
Schooltime 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
 seriou spause)
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)
Ooooweeeyoooh.

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

CHRISTIAN (CONT’D)  DANI
Happy birthday, happy    Fine. It’s fine.
birthday, I’m sorry.    I’m not upset.
- You should be.    - 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.

*OMITTED*

*OMITTED*

EXT. VILLAGE – “NIGHT”

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).

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE – SAME TIME

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.
CONTINUED:

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

Pelle PAUSES, then takes Josh’s notepad. He writes “Attestapan” 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 Attestapan?

Pelle gestures for Christian to keep his voice down. Christian pulls out his phone and types “Attestapan” into a search engine. But there’s no internet connection.

CHRISTIAN (CONT’D)
Fuck.
(to Josh and Pelle)
What’s Attestapan?

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?

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - “NIGHT”

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.

*OMITTED*

*OMITTED*

EXT. FIELD - MORNING

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.
CONTINUED:

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.

EXT. FARMSTEAD – ONE HOUR LATER

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.)
CONTINUED:

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.

EXT. FARMSTEAD – MID-MEAL

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

The two 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
  (catching herself)
  Oh, God, I’m sorry. I was gawking.

KARIN
  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
  Oh, I’m sorry to presume!

BLONDE WOMAN
  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.
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.

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

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

Christian shrugs: “Don’t apologize to me.”

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

EXT. FARMSTEAD - MID MEAL - MINUTES LATER

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

Mark, half-asleep, confusedly looks around. He sees the Pretty Brunette (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.
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.

EXT. HILL – MINUTES LATER

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.
CONTINUED:

DANI (CONT’D)

What is Ättstepan?

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

EXT. VALLEY - MINUTES LATER

The community has gathered on the rocky valley. Tall CLIFFS loom impossibly. 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.

EXT. CLIFF - SAME TIME

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.
CONTINUED:

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.

EXT. BEACH - SAME TIME

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.
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.

*OMITTED*

EXT. FIELD - DAY

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.
EXT. FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

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.

EXT. STAGE - SAME TIME

Two Hârgan 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?

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - SECONDS LATER

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
Holy shit. Incredible. JOSH (CONT'D)
Incredible!

Christian works up the nerve:

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

Josh looks up. He DARKENS with concern.

CHRISTIAN (CONT’D)
I’ve just been thinking, and I’ve decided...I really think I wanna do my thesis here. On Hârga.

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? Oh my God, Christian, of course you did! Did you even know that before? I just told you?

**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)
CONTINUED:

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 Hàrgas.

Christian leaves.

Josh sits motionless.

EXT. FARMSTEAD - CONTINUOUS

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...
CONTINUED:

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.

EXT. FIRE PIT - “EVENING”

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.

EXT. MEADOW - “EVENING”

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?

*OMITTED*

*OMITTED*

EXT. LAKE – SAME TIME

Everyone arrives at a lake. Trees at the short 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.
CONTINUED:

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:

EXT. LAKE - MINUTES LATER

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 möjlig ben erbjudas?

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.
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.

*OMITTED*

*OMITTED*

EXT. FIELD - MINUTES LATER

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. We just need to acclimate--

DANI
I don’t want to acclimate! I want to leave.

CHRISTIAN
Baby, I cannot leave right now. Period. I’m doing my thesis on these guys--

DANI
What? Since when?!

CHRISTIAN
Since I decided! Today. Which you know has been a nightmare for me to figure out. And I made the mistake of telling Josh and now he’s competing with me--
DANI
So let him have it if he wants it! We shouldn’t be here, Christian.

CHRISTIAN (CONT’D)
No, hey – have you even seen what’s happening here?! This level of tradition? And nobody knows about it, nobody’s written on it – and they’ve invited us to be part of it! Can’t you see what a privilege that is?!

Because Pelle did!

But why have they invited us?

And why did Pelle?!

DANI
And why would he trust you, of all people? You’re opportunistic anthropology students.

CHRISTIAN
Maybe because we’re anthropologists. Maybe they want someone to document this.

DANI (CONT’D)
Oh my God, are you blind? They’re performing pagan rituals! People are jumping off cliffs. They depend on nobody knowing about this!

CHRISTIAN
(stubborn)
Not necessarily.

Dani HESITATES, seeing that she’s getting nowhere.

DANI
I want to leave.

CHRISTIAN
Then you can leave. I invited you to come, and I don’t regret that, but I’m here for a reason.

Beat. Christian’s eyes are ice cold.

DANI
...Do you not love me anymore?

CHRISTIAN
(momentarily stunned)
What does that have to do with this?

DANI
(almost to herself)
This is the devaluation phase. We’ve been in it for a long time now. Next comes the discard.

CHRISTIAN
Oh fuck – can we maybe spare our relationship your textbook psychology keywords?
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 (CONT’D)
Oh yeah? Yes!
You have no ulterior motives? What motives would I have?
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)
(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 (CONT’D)
You are, Dani! I feel like I'm being locked into your debt every time you do something “just because.” I don't do anything to “keep you in my debt”! I’m just trying to be kind to you!
Continued:

**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. 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.
CONTINUED:
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:

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - “NIGHT”

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.

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - NEXT MORNING

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

EXT. FIRE PIT - MORNING

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.

EXT. BOOKBINDING HOUSE - MORNING

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 Hârgans) 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. 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 Rotvålta (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.
CONTINUED:

ULF (CONT’D)
STICK FÖR FAN! STICK!

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

ULF (CONT’D)
Det här är våra föräder! Du pissar på våra föräder!

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) MARK
Jag är så leden Fader Ulf!
Han visste ju inte. What happened? What did I do?

PELLE
You were peeing on the ancestral tree.

MARK ULF
The tree? So what? I’m sorry. “SO WHAT?!”

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 PELLE (CONT’D)
But it’s dead. It’s a dead fucking tree. I didn’t I know, but it’s important to realize it was special. I us. It’s okay. We know you just had to pee. -- Well, no, of course not.
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 Hârgans cease working and everyone, including Dani and Christian, look off in the same direction.

*OMITTED*

*OMITTED*

EXT. ANIMAL SACRIFICE HILL - DAY

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.)
CONTINUED:

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.

*OMITTED*

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE – MINUTES LATER

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!
CONTINUED:

DANI
(snapping)
I don’t know why we’re here,
Pelle! I don’t know why you
invited us! 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)
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 Härgas.

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.

Good.

PELLE (CONT’D)
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. 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. Simon...

This has drawn attention. People are now looking over.

INGEMAR
(gesturing)
We can talk about this over here. 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.

EXT. MAIN HOUSE

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)
CONTINUED:

    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!

*OMITTED*

*OMITTED*

EXT. FIELD – DAY

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 “oooh!” 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.

**EXT. FARMSTEAD — SAME TIME**

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

**INT. TEMPLE — SAME TIME**

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)

Arne CLOSES the book.

JOSH
ARNE (CONT’D)
Okay. Sorry. 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.
**INT. KITCHEN - EVENING**

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

**EXT. FIRE TEMPLE - EVENING**

Five seconds earlier. Mark, who was just approaching the triangular temple, freezes to investigate the distant 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!

**EXT. FIELD - EVENING**

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.
MARK
Is he gonna kill me?

Josh, preoccupied, turns to Christian. He asks, faux-casually:

JOSH
Did you learn anything about the
Rubi Radr?

CHRISTIAN
(mock-delighted)
Oh, what? You wanna collaborate now?

Josh ignores this and moves on to his food.

CHRISTIAN (CONT’D)
I know that one elder gave you a glimpse.

JOSH
(abruptly, ending it)
Thank you. Sorry I brought it up.

Christian seethes. He takes a BITE of his tart. As he chews, he catches something on his tongue, and pulls a PUBIC HAIR from his mouth. His eyes widen with alarm.

MARK
(seeing this)
Oh my God, dude. What the fuck?

DANI
(inquiring)
What is it?

MARK
Was that a fucking pube?

DANI (CONT’D)
Ew.

CHRISTIAN
It’s just a hair.

MARK
Yeah. A pubic hair.

CHRISTIAN
(embarrassed)
Shhh! Calm down.

MARK (CONT’D)
Why are you embarrassed?

CHRISTIAN
They’re the ones handing out hair pies.

Christian tenses up, embarrassed by Mark. He then notices: MAJA is looking at him. Dani catches this.

Christian self-consciously breaks the gaze, taking a sip of his drink (a pink-tinted MEAD in a crystal glass).

Mark notices that ULF is still staring him down.

MARK (CONT’D)
Jesus. He’s still lookin’ at me.

Josh looks tensely at his NOTES. He stares at a line that reads: Affects -- runic combinations, “emotional sheet music”, followed by different examples of the affect hieroglyphics.
CONTINUED:

INGA, the pretty brunette, sneaks up behind Mark. She whispers in his ear.

    INGA
    You will come with me?

Mark turns to her, startled. He smiles widely.

    MARK
    What?

    INGA
    You will come? I show you.

    MARK
    Uhhh... Oh-kay.

    INGA

Mark 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.

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - “NIGHT”

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.

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - LATER

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.

EXT. THE MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

Josh rushes across the grass. It’s now darkest twilight. He hustles to the TEMPLE, glancing nervously about.
INT. RUBEN’S TEMPLE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

Josh passes the dark foyer to enter through the Temple Doors...

INT. RUBEN’S TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

Josh sneaks into the Temple. Ruben is asleep by the door.

Josh creeps past him to approach the pedestal featuring the holy book RUBI RADR. He pulls out his phone, turns on the FLASHLIGHT, and begins taking silent PHOTOS - page by page - of Rubi Radr’s text.

While he anxiously photographs, Josh keeps glancing up at the Temple DOORS, making sure he’s still alone. He has photographed about fifteen pages when he hears the front door CREAK open.

Josh FREEZES. He looks up. Through the Temple’s open doors, he sees SOMEONE standing in the dark foyer. The person is barely visible in the dimness. After some scrutiny, Josh makes it out to be MARK. He is standing motionless.

JOSH
(relieved, whispering)
What the fuck. Mark?

But Mark doesn’t move or speak.

JOSH (CONT’D)
(whispering)
The fuck are you doing? Close the door! We’re not supposed to be here.

Mark still doesn’t move. Despite how hard it is to see, one can tell that his body looks BULKIER than usual. And his face seems somewhat SWOLLEN.

Josh looks unsettled. He starts moving toward the door.

JOSH (CONT’D)
(whispering)
Mark? Hello? What the fu--?

MARK steps forward. It is now bright enough to see... This isn’t Mark. It’s a LARGER MAN, and he’s WEARING MARK’S SKIN (which is stretched uneasily over the man’s bulkier features). Upon closer inspection, one might identify these features (and the blue eyes) as belonging to ULF.

Before the full horror of this revelation can register on Josh’s face, he is STRUCK against the HEAD by a bludgeoning FORCE (the end of a cudgel wielded by an off-screen Hárgan). Josh collapses to make a sustained, involuntary GROANING noise.

A quiet moment as “Mark,” eyes invisible behind the skin mask, stares down at Josh’s twitching body.

Josh’s body is swiftly DRAGGED out of frame.

INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - MORNING

Outside, the ROOSTER crows.

People stir awake in their beds. Josh’s bed is EMPTY. As is Mark’s.
EXT. FARMSTEAD - MORNING

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?

EXT. FARMSTEAD - LATER

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:
CONTINUED:

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...

EXT. FIELD - DAY

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.
EXT. FIELD - MAYPOLE LATER

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

Irmä 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!

INT. SMALL WHITE HOUSE - SMALL ROOM - SIV’S HOUSE - SAME TIME

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...
INT. SMALL WHITE HOUSE - LARGER ROOM - SIV’S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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!
CONTINUED:

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.

EXT. FIELD - MAYPOLE - LATER

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
Atta!

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.
CONTINUED:

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

OMITTED

EXT. FIELD - MAYPOLE - MEANWHILE

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.

EXT. FIELD - MAYPOLE - IN THE DANCING CIRCLE

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.
CONTINUED:

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:

INSERT: INGA’S FACE SLAMMING INTO POLE AFTER RUSHING TOWARD IT WITH ASCENDING ARMS.

INSERT: WOMAN SPRAYING VOMIT INTO THE AIR.

EXT. FIELD - MAYPOLE

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.
DANI (CONT’D)
(excitedly remarking on this)
Weerableeishcobleraymib!

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.

EXT. FIELD - MAYPOLE - MINUTES LATER

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).

**EXT. FIELD - DINING AREA - LATER**

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?
Inexplicably, the Large Man CLAPS in Christian’s face. This sends Christian on an intense downward spiral.

CHRISTIAN (CONT’D)  
(almost inaudible)  
Why did you do that?

The Large Man’s attention is now on Dani, whose head is tilted back as she tries to eat the herring whole (tail first). Sten holds it above her, feeding it into her mouth.

Dani takes half of the herring into her mouth, starts to chew, and then coughs out the rest. This elicits ecstatic APPLAUSE. Dani, unnerved at first, lets out a childlike LAUGH.

STEN  
A word from the May Queen!

BLONDE WOMAN              DIFFERENT HARGANS  
Yes! Speech!                Speech!

IRMA  
Stand! Stand!

Dani is urged to stand up. She does so, clearly hallucinating intensely. The silence hangs heavily.

DANI  
...I don’t know if this is real, or what’s happening, but - thank you.

Dani lets this hang. A brief awkward pause, and then:

ARNE  
To the May Queen!  
(raises his aquavit)  
Skål!!

EVERYONE  
Skål!!

Everyone drinks to that. One Hårgan Woman turns to Dani (who’s sitting back down) to excitedly say:

HÅRGAN WOMAN  
You are the family now! Yes?

Dani nods, unsure. The woman nods manically.

HÅRGAN WOMAN (CONT’D)  
Yes! Yes! You are the family!

The Woman rubs Dani’s arm, smiling warmly (and aggressively).

PELLE, we reveal, is composing a drawing of Dani in her throne.

Christian’s expression is SOUR. He turns to notice that MAJA is looking at him. Taken aback, Christian’s expression slowly SOFTENS (in a slack-jawed, lust-stricken way). Maja is clearly “in heat.” Holding Christian’s gaze, she RISES from her seat (as if in slow-motion) and begins to walk sensually off. Christian watches her go. She passes SIV, whose eyes are also trained on Christian.

Maja continues toward the TEMPLE, glancing back at Christian to confirm that he’s still watching her. DANI notices this, despite the fact that everyone is competing for her attention.
Dani looks to Christian. He stares dumbly at the table, lost in conflict.

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

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 APIRE.

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.

**INT. CARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS**

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.

**EXT. DINING AREA - SAME TIME**

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

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.

INT. CARRIAGE (MOVING) - MOMENTS LATER

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.

EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME

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.

INT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

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).

EXT. WHEAT FIELD - SAME TIME

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.

INT. TEMPLE - FOYER - SAME TIME

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.
CONTINUED:

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.

INT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

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 Hârgas’ 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.

EXT. CATTLE HOUSE - SAME TIME

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.

INT. TEMPLE - SAME TIME

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 welter 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.
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.

INT. TEMPLE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

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.

EXT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

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.

INT. MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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 sympathetic 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.
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INT. TEMPLE - SAME TIME

The ceremony has nearly reached its apoee. 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.

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EXT. TEMPLE - BOOK BINDING - CHICKEN COOP - CONTINUOUS

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.)
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.

INT. CHICKEN COOP - CONTINUOUS

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 withers 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:
EXT. STAGE - NEXT DAY

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 newblossom and a specially ordained Hârgan...

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 Hârgan 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.
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.

EXT. FIELD - EVENING

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 Hárgan), we pull back to EXPAND OUR VIEW. We reveal that the Hárgan 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...

INT. SACRED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

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...
CONTINUED:

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.

EXT. BOOKBINDING HOUSE - SAME TIME

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.

INT. BOOK-BINDING ROOM - SAME TIME

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 Hârgan 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 Hârgan 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.

INT. SACRED HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

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 Hârgan 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 Rubl Radr in his hands.

VÍDÖRR
   (in Swedish)
   Mighty and dreadful beast. With you, we purge our most unholy Äffekts. 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.
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.

**EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME**

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.

**INT. SACRED HOUSE - SAME TIME**

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!

**EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME**

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 Hârgans (one of them being Pelle) run into the scene, carrying a LARGE CHAIR - Dani’s throne.

The Hârgans 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.