

MIDSOMMAR

Written by

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Based on, If Any

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1.

1 EXT. WOODS - HALSINGLAND - DAY

1

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

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

2 EXT. HOUSE - MINNESOTA - NIGHT

2

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

3 INT. BEDROOM - NIGHT

3

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

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

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

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

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

BEEP. Enter the voice of a YOUNG WOMAN:

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

4 INT. BEDROOM - BROOKLYN, NY - NIGHT

4

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

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

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

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

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

Hi...!

Dani affects a care-free tone:

DANI

Hey baby. What you up to?

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

Oh, just smoked some resin at
Mark's and now we're getting pizza.

DANI

Oh nice.

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

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

Yeah - he's saying hi right now,
over and over.

DANI

Hi Mark!

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

(off-phone)

"Hi Mark."

DANI

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

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

Oh - did we talk about doing
something tonight?

DANI

I mean, not concretely. I was just
seeing.

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

(ambivalent)

Uh, well - okay. Yeah. I should be able to swing by.

DANI

All right...!

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

Yeah. Okay... How's the sister situation?

DANI

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

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

I'm sure it's fine.

DANI

Yeah. Probably. I hope so.

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

She does this every other day, Dani. And only because you let her.

DANI

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

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

I know, but you do, though, babe. You go straight to crisis mode.

DANI

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

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

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

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

DANI

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

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

The more you respond, the more
she's encouraged to keep this crap
up.

DANI

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

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

Me too.

DANI

I love you.

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

...So do I.

DANI

Okay. See you later?

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

Yup.

DANI

Okay. "Bye Mark!"

CHRISTIAN (V.O.)

"Bye Mark."

DANI

All right. Love you. Bye.

Dani hangs up. Her eyes are wide with insecurity.

5 INT. KITCHEN - MINUTES LATER

5

Dani stands in the kitchen, mid-phone conversation.

FRAUGHT. She paces when she's not speaking.

DANI

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

GIRLFRIEND (V.O.)

So don't stave him off. Be direct!
Confront him!

GIRLFRIEND (V.O.)

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

DANI

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

GIRLFRIEND (V.O.)

What did your sister write?

DANI

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

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

GIRLFRIEND (V.O.)

Well, if that's the case, then good riddance! Right?

DANI

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

Dani has returned to her laptop.

GIRLFRIEND (V.O.)

You didn't! He should be there when you need him.

Dani begins hastily composing an EMAIL to her sister Terri.

DANI

GIRLFRIEND (V.O.)

But what if I need him too often? If it becomes a chore? Then he's not the right guy. Because it shouldn't ever be a chore. Would it be a chore if he leaned on you?

Dani breaks from writing to respond:

DANI

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

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

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

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

6 INT. PIZZA PARLOR - NEW YORK - NIGHT

6

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

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

Mark is currently lecturing a despondent Christian.

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

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

MARK
You don't want her back!

CHRISTIAN
I might!

MARK

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

Christian is thinking about this. Extremely conflicted.

JOSH

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

CHRISTIAN

(prepared to be offended)

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

JOSH

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

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

WAITRESS

Whenever you guys are ready.

PELLE

(with Swedish accent)

Thank you.

She SMILES -- at Christian.

WAITRESS

Thank you.

She HOLDS the smile with Christian and walks bashfully off.

Mark definitely caught that.

MARK

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

PELLE

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

MARK

Yeah, dude - don't forget all the Swedish milkmaids.

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

MARK

Who is that?

Christian doesn't respond.

MARK

That's not her again? Seriously?

Christian lets the call go.

MARK

That's ridiculous, dude. She needs a therapist.

CHRISTIAN

She has one.

MARK

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

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

MARK

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

Dani?

DANI (V.O.)

(distantly)

...no, no, no, no, no, no, no...

CHRISTIAN

Sweetheart? What's going on?

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

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

The crying has curdled into a sustained WAIL OF ANGUISH.

7 INT. GARAGE - MINNESOTA - NIGHT

7

The house from the beginning (scene 2).

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

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

8 INT. HALLWAY - CONTINUOUS

8

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

9 INT. BEDROOM - CONTINUOUS

9

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

Two police officers survey the room.

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

10 INT. TERRI'S BEDROOM - SAME TIME

10

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

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

11 EXT. STREET - BROOKLYN - NIGHT

11

Dreamy snowfall in Brooklyn.

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

He enters the front door of Dani's building.

12 INT. DANI'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

12

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

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

We are pushing in on this, toward them. Christian's eyes are wide with worry. A worry that goes beyond Dani's well-being.

He stares into space, imagining a future that he's being chained to. He looks TRAPPED.

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

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

After the credits, we

SLAM CUT TO:

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

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

13

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

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

CHRISTIAN

Hey babers. How we feeling?

DANI

(looking to him)

Hey.

(sitting up)
I'm up.

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

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

CHRISTIAN
(hesitates)
You sure you got enough rest?

DANI
I wasn't sleeping anyway.

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

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

DANI
Okay. I'll just get dressed.

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

14 INT. APARTMENT - EVENING

14

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

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

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

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

Dani squints with curiosity. Christian suddenly looks nervous.

HIPSTER GUY
Oh - you guys are going somewhere?

JOSH
To Sweden!

PELLE
Hälsingland.

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

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

DANI
...Oh yeah?

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

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

DANI
For when?

Dani feigns casualness as she looks inquiringly to the guys.

JOSH
...Mid June to late July?

MARK
In two weeks.

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

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

15 INT. SUBWAY - MOVING - NIGHT

15

Christian and Dani ride the L train back home.

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

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

16 INT. CHRISTIAN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

16

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

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

CHRISTIAN

Are you okay?

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

DANI

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

CHRISTIAN

(playing dumb)

What was?

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

DANI

The...Sweden! I had no idea.

CHRISTIAN

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

DANI

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

CHRISTIAN

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

DANI

You already have a ticket!

Beat. Christian now looks cornered.

CHRISTIAN

(shrugs)

I'm sorry.

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

DANI

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

CHRISTIAN

(correcting)

A month and a half.

CHRISTIAN

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

DANI

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

CHRISTIAN

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

DANI

I have no problem with you going! I just wish you'd involve me!

CHRISTIAN

Well, I just apologized, Dani.

DANI

You didn't apologize, you said -

(shrugs)

- "sorry." Which sounds more like "too bad."

Beat. Christian's eyes are now very cold.

CHRISTIAN

Maybe I should just go home.

DANI

...I'm just trying to understand.

CHRISTIAN

And I tried apologizing.

DANI

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

Pause.

CHRISTIAN

I think I should just prob'ly go home.

Dani looks helpless.

DANI

I'm not trying to attack you.

CHRISTIAN

Well, it feels like that.

DANI

Well -- I'm sorry! I am sorry. I just got confused.

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

DANI

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

CHRISTIAN

(quietly)

I don't know what my thesis is.

DANI

(brightly)

I know! It could be inspiring!
Right?

CHRISTIAN

(still looking down)

-- I think I'm just gonna leave.

Dani's eyes start to well intensely with TEARS.

DANI

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

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

CHRISTIAN

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

DANI

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

Christian strokes her hair.

CHRISTIAN

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

Beat.

CHRISTIAN

(uncertainly)

I was gonna ask you to come with me.

Pause. Dani looks at him.

DANI

What do you mean?

CHRISTIAN

-- What I just said.

DANI

To Sweden?

Christian nods a stiff "yes."

DANI

You don't want me to.

CHRISTIAN

I just asked you.

DANI

After I broke down crying!

CHRISTIAN

Well...you ruined the surprise.

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

CHRISTIAN
I wanted it to be romantic.

17 INT. MARK & JOSH'S APARTMENT - DAY

17

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

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

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

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

JOSH
(deadpan)
Yes.

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

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

MARK
...Okay.

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

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

Christian goes to buzz her in.

CHRISTIAN

...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
You guys know what she's dealing with!

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

JOSH
Yeah, dude, nobody minds.

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

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

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

DANI
Hey.
(to the room)
Hey guys!

CHRISTIAN
Hi baby.

JOSH/MARK/PELLE

Hey!

DANI

How's it going?

MARK

Just chillin'.

DANI

Nice.

A brief, awkward pause.

JOSH

So, Sweden--!

DANI

Yeah!

PELLE

You're coming, right?

DANI

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

MARK/JOSH/PELLE

Nope. / Not at all.

CHRISTIAN

Oh, shut the fuck up.

Dani smiles bashfully. Mark abruptly addresses Christian:

MARK

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

CHRISTIAN

(confused pause)

Sure. Yeah. Okay.

(to Dani)

Right back.

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

DANI

Hey Pelle.

PELLE

Hi Dani.

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

DANI

Ooh, that's a nice drawing.

PELLE

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

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

DANI

How've you been?

PELLE

Pretty good! Survived finals. You?

DANI

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

PELLE

(realizing)

Oh, right. God. Of course.

Dani makes an embarrassed "bleh" face.

DANI

How did you like the anthropology department?

PELLE

It's good! I just can't seem to choose if I hate academia or not. Unlike this one.

("this one" being Josh)

You're doing psychiatry?

DANI

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

PELLE

Also that funny look in your eye.

Dani LAUGHS, a bit unnaturally. An awkward moment.

PELLE

So! You're coming to Helsingland!

DANI

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

PELLE

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

DANI

Do you do that every midsummer?

PELLE

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

DANI

(mock-scandalized)

Ooh. What makes this guy different?

PELLE

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

Pelle raises his eyebrows, mock-menacing.

DANI

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

PELLE

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

DANI

Depends on which of those you mean.

PELLE

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

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

DANI

Oh wow! Flower children.

PELLE

Big time! We do our own
thing, love our astrology...

DANI

What's your sign?

PELLE

Taurus! You?

DANI

Cancer!

PELLE

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

DANI

July seven.

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

PELLE

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

DANI

Oh yeah? For who?

PELLE

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

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

PELLE

You know...I never had the chance
to tell you, but I was really so
very sorry to hear about - your
loss...

DANI

Oh...!

PELLE

...and what happened. I can't even
fathom. I mean, I lost my parents,
too, so I have some idea, but...

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

PELLE

Oh, no. Sorry to bring it up!

DANI

No, I mean - thank you. I just...
I'm sorry.

(stands up suddenly)
I'll be right back. Bathroom. Thank
you.

Dani rushes off. Pelle watches her with blank eyes.

Dani, stifling tears, enters the BATHROOM.

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

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

19 INT. AIRPLANE - IN FLIGHT - MINUTES LATER 19

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

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

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

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

20 INT. STOCKHOLM AIRPORT - DAY 20

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

A CUSTOMS OFFICER looks over their passports.

CUSTOMS OFFICER
Purpose of your trip?

PELLE
Visiting my home in Hälsingland.

CUSTOMS OFFICER
All of you?

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

The Customs Officer scrutinizes Dani's passport.

CUSTOMS OFFICER
Happy birthday tomorrow.

DANI
Oh - thank you.

Christian, distracted from that, FINDS his passport.

21 INT. RENTAL MINIVAN - MOVING - DAY

21

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

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

They pass a group of BEAUTIFUL BLONDE WOMEN.

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

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

MARK
What is it that makes them hotter?

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

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

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

DANI
How far are we driving?

PELLE
Four hours, about.

MARK
(exasperated)
Oh my God.

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

DANI
Why are you reading that?

JOSH
Ha. Ask Pelle.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PELLE
Josh was already brainwashed when I found him.

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

DISSOLVE TO:

TWO HOURS LATER

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

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

MARK

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

PELLE

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

MARK

You ever gone boar huntin'?

PELLE

Yep!

MARK

Is it fun?

PELLE

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

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

JOSH

They're allowed to just leave them?

Mark alights on something ahead.

MARK

...the fuck?

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

CHRISTIAN

What is that?

DANI

Oh my God.

JOSH

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

DANI

Why??

JOSH

Please, Pelle.

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

22 EXT. ROAD - CONTINUOUS

22

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

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

JOSH

(to Pelle)

Do you know what this is?

PELLE

No idea.

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

DANI

This is horrible.

MARK

(to Pelle)

Is this how you people hunt out here?

CHRISTIAN

It looks almost ritualistic.

JOSH

It looks absolutely ritualistic!

(takes more photos)

This is fucking amazing.

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

PELLE

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

DANI

Fantastic. Thank you.

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

23 INT. RENTAL MINIVAN - MOVING - DAY

23

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

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

PELLE
Entering Hälsingland!

Everyone looks up.

MARK
Are we getting high right when we
get there?

TEN MINUTES LATER

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

PELLE
Look, guys! New friends.

Pelle parks the minivan in the field.

24 EXT. MEADOW - CONTINUOUS

24

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

GIRLS
Pelle!!

We cut WIDE as Pelle happily introduces everyone.

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

INGEMAR
(in Swedish)
Holy shit! Pelle!!

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

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

Pelle laughs. They hug.

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

PELLE
(in Swedish)
Looks like you got it.

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

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

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

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

INGEMAR
Simon and Connie, this is Pelle and...all the names I just remembered two seconds ago.

SIMON
Hey.

CONNIE
Hello.

INGEMAR
Perfect timing, by the way:

Ingemar pulls out a bag of MAGIC MUSHROOMS. Hands them to Pelle.

INGEMAR

We just took these five minutes ago. Haven't even started coming up yet.

MARK

(overjoyed)

Ohhh shit.

Mark grabs the bag from Pelle and studies the contents.

PELLE

MARK

(to the group)

Do you guys wanna take it now? Or should we settle in first?

Fuck it. Let's just take 'em.

DANI

(to Christian)

I think I might need to find my footing first.

CHRISTIAN

Yeah. Of course.

(quietly)

And you know you don't need to take them. If you're feeling unsure.

DANI

No, I just need to get settled.

CHRISTIAN

Okay. Well. I'll wait for you.

DANI

No - go ahead!

CHRISTIAN

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

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

PELLE

Ready?

CHRISTIAN

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

MARK

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

CHRISTIAN

Then you can wait for us.

Mark looks frustrated - angry even.

DANI

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

CHRISTIAN

Baby. Don't feel rushed.

DANI

I don't. I'm ready.

MARK

(false concern)

You sure?

DANI

(bluntly)

Yeah, Mark, thanks.

INGEMAR

They made mushroom tea if you prefer against the taste.

DANI

(considers)

Okay. Yeah. I'll have that. Thank you - Ingmar?

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

CHRISTIAN

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

DANI

He's not. It'll get too complicated otherwise. It's fine.

Ingemar hands Dani her TEA.

PELLE

(to Dani)
Ready?

Dani, now holding the tea, nods yes.

PELLE
Okay. Here we go. Think happy thoughts!

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

CHRISTIAN
You okay?

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

CHRISTIAN
(still concerned)
Cool. Me too.

MINUTES LATER

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

JOSH
Uggghhh, I really don't feel good.

Josh hunches over to RETCH.

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

CHRISTIAN
(to Dani)
How are you feeling?

DANI
A little like I have food poisoning.

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

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

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

CHRISTIAN

That's good, baby. It's okay. Throw it up.

Dani rises to take a breath.

CHRISTIAN

Does that feel better?

PELLE

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

MINUTES LATER

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

CHRISTIAN

What time is it?

PELLE

Ten at night.

Mark sits up, alarmed.

MARK

What do you mean?!

PELLE

What do you mean?

MARK

That doesn't feel right.

PELLE

Why? It's the midnight sun.

MARK

It doesn't feel like ten. I don't like that! It feels wrong.

A YOUNG MAN approaches.

CHRISTIAN

Oh fuck. It's a new person.

MARK

What? I don't want new people.

PELLE

No - new people are good!

The Young Man walks past.

YOUNG MAN

Hey hey!

The group mumbles hello.

MARK

I wanna lay down.

Mark lies down.

MARK

Oh my God. Lay down. Guys. It's so nice.

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

MARK

Lie down, Josh.

Josh doesn't. Stubborn.

PELLE

Can you feel the energy come up from the earth?

CHRISTIAN

Yeah, like a - pulsing. Oh my God, they are. And the grass!

PELLE

And so are the trees. They're breathing.

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

Pelle, marveling at his surroundings, sits up:

PELLE

Nature just knows instinctually how to stay in harmony! It's mechanical. Everything doing its part.

MARK

(emotional)

You guys are my family.

The word "family" HITS Dani.

MARK

I really mean that. You're like my real actual Family.

Dani SITS UP, 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

No no. Sorry. I'm gonna...

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

JOSH

Is she mad at us?

MARK

I don't like how she did that.

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

DANI

(to herself)

No, that's not good. No. No.

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

Dani turns stiffly around, tears welling.

DANI

No, no, no, no --

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

INGEMAR calls out to Dani.

INGEMAR

Hey! Dani!

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

Dani warily approaches.

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

Everyone says hi.

DANI
They were laughing at me over there.

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

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

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

Dani turns around and walks stiffly off.

DANI
(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.

25 INT. OUTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

25

The interior of the outhouse is illuminated by CANDLE-LIGHT.

It's very clean. Dani stands here for a moment.

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

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

DANI
Fuck you. Stop it.

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

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

DANI
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...

26 EXT. OUTHOUSE - CONTINUOUS

26

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:

27 EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME

27

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

MARK
It's okay.

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

Christian STANDS, panic starting to build.

CHRISTIAN

Dani's gone. We need to find Dani.

JOSH
I don't feel like standing.

MARK
Yeah - I don't wanna move.

CHRISTIAN
Hey! Dani's our friend!

MARK
She isn't all of our friend.

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

MARK
(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! You only
invited her because you're too
scared to be honest with her!

Christian pauses, FURIOUS, and then:

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

MARK
(suddenly terrified)
Why are you saying that?

CHRISTIAN
Because they are! They're dead!

MARK

Why???

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

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

MARK
 (getting sucked into
 darkness)
 Oh God...!

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

MARK
 Wait! Christian! We need to stay
 together!

28 EXT. WOODS - SAME TIME

28

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

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

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

CHRISTIAN?!

No answer.

DANI
No...no.... You're alone.

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

DANI
(a revelation)
You're alone.

Dani sees a DEAD RABBIT. Its innards are splayed.

Dani warily approaches. Magnetized but repulsed. As she nears, the FEAR rises in her. She gets close enough to finally see... The rabbit is being devoured by ANTS.

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

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

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

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

CHRISTIAN (O.S.)
Dani!

Dani FREEZES, eyes crazed.

DANI
...Christian?!

CHRISTIAN (O.S.)
Dani!!

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

CHRISTIAN
Where the hell did you go?!

They EMBRACE. She hugs him. SQUEEZES him.

DANI
I got lost.

CHRISTIAN
Let's go back to the group.

DANI
 (still squeezing)
 Christian. Nothing means anything.

CHRISTIAN
 What?

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

CHRISTIAN
 You heard laughing?

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

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

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

- and starts leading her away.

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

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

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

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

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

BLONDE SWEDISH GUY

Hey hey!

MARK

Where were you?

PELLE

How are you, Dani?

CHRISTIAN

(insistent)

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

CONNIE

(very high)

Are you feeling it?!

DANI

(to Pelle)

I wanna sleep. How can I sleep?

HOURS LATER

CLOSE-UP OF DANI'S SLEEPING FACE.

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

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

CHRISTIAN (O.C.)

It's time to get up.

DANI

...how long was I asleep?

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

DANI

Did it get dark at all?

PELLE
For a couple hours. Not completely.

Then something occurs to Dani:

DANI
Is it tomorrow?

CHRISTIAN
...It's today.

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

DANI
Where are we going?

PELLE
Where we came from.

29 EXT. WOODS - DAY

29

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

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

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

Dani notices a few disparate FLOWERS sprouting up from the ground. As she walks, the flowers continue to accumulate.

Soon she's walking down a controlled, narrow TRAIL of wild yellow flowers - all leading toward a CLEARING.

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

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

JOSH
(mesmerized)

This is the place?

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

They continue toward it, approaching a Hälsingegård (a farm).

About a HUNDRED PEOPLE stand on the grass, waiting. They are dressed like Amish people, but less formal. They appear to be a WELCOMING COMMITTEE.

CHRISTIAN
(to Pelle)
You know all these people?

PELLE
These are my family!

30 EXT. HÅRGA FARMSTEAD - CONTINUOUS

30

They arrive at the FARMSTEAD. At the center is one particularly LARGE building in the shape of a barn; this is the MAIN HOUSE.

Surrounding this are several houses, a horse stable, a temple, and different gardens. The windows and doorways are all adorned in ST. JOHN'S WORT (flowers with bright yellow petals and golden stamens). Beyond the farmstead are vast fields of CROPS.

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

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

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

Pelle brings a beautiful, blonde woman over to the group.

This is DAGNY (25). She wears a white dress with intricate embroidery (featuring a pentagon and distinct Pagan runes).

PELLE
(in Swedish)

Dagny - this is Dani, Christian,
Josh, Mark.

(in English, to the guys)
This is my sister Dagny. Born on
the same exact week as me.

DAGNY
Välkommen till Hårga!

DANI
(attempting Swedish)
Tack!

JOSH/CHRISTIAN
Thank you!

Dagny smiles and walks off.

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

PELLE
Father Odd!

ODD
Little Pelle!

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

ODD
(in Swedish)
How is the pilgrimage?

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

Odd shakes their hands as Pelle introduces them.

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

He HUGS Dani.

DANI

(amused, but slightly
weirded out)
Thank you.

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

Pelle smiles.

DANI
I love what you're wearing.

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

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

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

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

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

They all say thanks and Odd walks happily away.

MARK
Nice guy.

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

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

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

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

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

SIV
(in Swedish)
Happy midsummer, all!

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

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

She notices the non-Swedish speakers.

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

JOSH/DANI/CHRISTIAN/CONNIE
(as if solicited)

Yeah. Wow.

Siv smiles, and proceeds to wrap it up.

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

Everyone raises their aquavit.

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

EVERYONE
Skål!!

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

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

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

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

Josh turns to Pelle.

JOSH
What does "bad luck" mean?

PELLE
Usually that the cattle will get sick.

Siv yells something in Swedish to the air.

JOSH

(to Pelle)
What did she just say?

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

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

JOSH
(to Pelle)
Can I takes photos?

PELLE
Discretely.

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

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

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

Isak looks absolutely devastated. Christian notices.

CHRISTIAN
(to Pelle)
Is he okay?

PELLE
The cattle are his responsibility.

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

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

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

SIV

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

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

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

Siv now accepts a BOWL OF BEER from one of the children. She drinks a healthy gulp, and then throws the rest into the fire.

Everyone now APPLAUDS. This seems to be the end of the ritual.

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

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

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

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

DANI
(to Pelle)
Can we help at all?

PELLE
No no. You're the guests. Let
yourself be spoiled.

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

RUBEN
(with difficulty)
Hey hey!

DANI
 (warmly)
 Hello!

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

PELLE
 You just met Ruben.

DANI
 Ruben is lovely.

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

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

Silence.

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

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

JOSH
 For the food?

PELLE
 Yes. And the weather, and the crops...

The Plump Man finishes his speech, and then announces:

PLUMP MAN
 Låt oss äta!

Everyone digs in.

CHRISTIAN
 Who was he praying to?

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

JOSH

Can you translate what was said?

PELLE

...I can get an exact translation
later.

CHRISTIAN

(jumping in)

Yeah, please, that would be
amazing.

JOSH

(eyes now burning on
Christian)

...Yes, Pelle, thank you.

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

31 INT. BATHROOM - NIGHT

31

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

32 EXT. HÅRGA FARMSTEAD - MINUTES LATER

32

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

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

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

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

PELLE

You guys should join!

DANI

I'm too scared.

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

SIMON

Alright?

CONNIE

Ta.

Simon sits.

SIMON

(re: the boys)

What are they playing?

PELLE

"Skin the fool!"

SIMON

(sarcastic)

Ah. Precious.

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

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

He confusedly smiles back.

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

Christian RISES, suddenly feeling bold.

CHRISTIAN

(to Pelle)

How can I join the...?

PELLE

You're American. Just jam yourself
in there.

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

Pelle takes this opportunity to turn covertly to Dani:

PELLE

Hey: very quick:

He hands her a folded up DRAWING.

PELLE

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

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

DANI
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
(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.

33 EXT. HÅRGA FIELD - MINUTES LATER

33

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

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

JOSH
How do you guys support this place?

PELLE
Lumbering, wheat, vegetables...

INGEMAR
Water power plant.

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

PELLE
Schooltime over here.

CHRISTIAN
Carving runes?

The Teacher looks up and smiles confirmation.

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

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

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

CHRISTIAN
Oh man - there's a serious one.

JOSH
Oh shit!

CHRISTIAN
Which alphabet is that from?

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

INGEMAR
That's actually the younger
Futhark.

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

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

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

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

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

Christian thinks about that, and grudgingly concedes.

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

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

CHRISTIAN
How did you guys all meet?

They look at each other. "Who answers?"

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

Simon's eyes narrow.

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

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

DANI
Oh wow. Congratulations.

INGEMAR
Which is amazing. Yes.
Congratulations.

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

SIMON
(to Dani)

We've actually asked Ingemar to
officiate the wedding.

DANI
(excited)
You did?!

SIMON
Nope.

Everybody LAUGHS - including Ingemar.

PELLE
(announcing)
And now...behold!

They have all arrived at a SMALL TREE.

PELLE
My tree.

CHRISTIAN
Why your tree?

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

DANI
That's so beautiful.

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

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

CHRISTIAN
What about that house?

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

CHRISTIAN
Looks like it was just built.

Changing the subject, Pelle motions toward the MAIN HOUSE.

PELLE
This is where we sleep!

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

INGEMAR
Here: come see my tree!

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

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

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

34 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

34

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

Pelle points out four small beds.

PELLE
These'll be yours.

Mark throws his bag onto one of them.

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

CHRISTIAN
Who all sleeps in here?

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

JOSH
Why thirty-two?

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

PELLE

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

JOSH

Winter.

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

DANI

What happens when you turn 72,
then?

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

MARK

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

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

Dani has found a wall of twelve FRAMED PHOTOGRAPHS. They all feature a different young woman dressed in ceremonial garb.

In each photo, the woman is richly adorned in summer flowers and wears an impressive FLORAL CROWN. These photos have been taken annually for the last dozen years.

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

DANI

Who are these of?

PELLE

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

JOSH

Who are the "May Queens"?

PELLE

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

Outside we hear:

ODD (O.S.)
(announcing, in Swedish)
Movie in twenty minutes! Field
five!

35 EXT. FARMSTEAD - SAME TIME

35

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

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

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

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

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

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

HÅRGAN MAN
(looking over)
Ah. Poor little Einar has the, em -
where the bones are bad?

DANI
Oh no. Rickets?

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

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

DANI
Do you know what they're doing?

HÅRGAN MAN
 Old cure. Three times through the
 Oak.

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

HÅRGAN MAN
 Now the healths of the baby and the
 tree are - together.

On "together," he illustratively hooks two fingers.

DANI
 Like a - sympathetic connection?

The man shrugs, confused. They SMILE at each other and the man walks off. Dani continues watching the ceremony, until-- CHRISTIAN appears behind her, holding a SOCKERKAKA (sponge cake). A lit candle protrudes from it. He approaches carefully...

CHRISTIAN
 (singing)
 Happy birthday to you -

Dani turns, mortified.

CHRISTIAN
 (singing)
 Happy birthday to you, Happy
 birthday dear Dani
 (I love you)
 ... Happy birthday to you.

She doesn't blow out the candle.

CHRISTIAN
 You thought I forgot, didn't you?

Dani just glares at him.

CHRISTIAN
 You're not surprised?

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

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

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

CHRISTIAN

Happy birthday, happy birthday, I'm
sorry. - You should be.

DANI

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

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

CHRISTIAN

Happy birthday, mouse.

She forces a tight smile and BLOWS OUT the candle.

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

36 INT. FARMSTEAD - LATER

36

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

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

PLUMP ELDER

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

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

CHRISTIAN

Happy birthday.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Fade to white. THE END.

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

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

37 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - NIGHT

37

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

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

Dani, noticing this, turns to Pelle.

DANI
Pretty serious-looking cribs.

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

Pelle smiles sardonically, knowing how it sounds.

DANI
How real is that stuff for you
guys?

PELLE
(deflecting)
Ah, who knows?

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

Pelle has already climbed into bed.

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

JOSH
And what's tomorrow?

PELLE
(mysterious)

First of the big ceremonies.

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

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

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

CHRISTIAN
What's that? What's Ättestupan?

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

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

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

DANI
(to Josh)
Is it scary?

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

38 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - NIGHT

38

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.

39 EXT. FIELD - MORNING

39

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

An AXE comes down to swiftly LOP OFF ITS HEAD.

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

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

40 EXT. CROP FIELD - MORNING

40

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

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

41 EXT. FIELD - MORNING

41

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

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

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

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

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

THIN ELDER
Don't just copy me. Feel me.

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

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

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

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

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

PRETTY BRUNETTE
(in Swedish)
Try.

MARK
What?

PRETTY BRUNETTE
(in Swedish, smiling)
Try.

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

42 EXT. FARMSTEAD - ONE HOUR LATER

42

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

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

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

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

CHRISTIAN
What?! For me?

DANI

Ja!

CHRISTIAN

(accepting them with
strained appreciation)

...Tack så mycket.

He kisses her cheek.

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

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

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

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

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

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

Josh is scrutinizing every detail. Christian scrutinizes Josh.

MID-MEAL

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

The two elderly men are receiving lots of attention.

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

DANI

(inquiring)

Is your baby okay?

BLONDE WOMAN

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

DANI

Oh, I'm sorry...!

BLONDE WOMAN

No no - her birth mother is on pilgrimage. It helps them to detach. The babies are raised here by everyone.

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

BLONDE WOMAN

(to Dani)

How is your family like?

DANI

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

Christian suddenly looks nervous about this exchange.

BLONDE WOMAN

"Not here"?

DANI

(now embarrassed)

Ha. Unfortunately not. It's okay...

BLONDE WOMAN

Not any?

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

DANI

(reacting)

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

BLONDE WOMAN

(now worried for Dani)

Am I making you sad to ask?

DANI

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

BLONDE WOMAN

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

DANI

(uncomfortable)
 Okay, thank you. Sorry. I feel
 silly. Thank you.
 (to Christian)
 Sorry.

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

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

MINUTES LATER

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

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

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

Everyone watches, rapt and emotional.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

PELLE

Okay - actually: let's stop a moment.

He holds them back.

PELLE

I need to warn you before we go down...

(to Dani now)

...because you might not want to.

DANI

Is this gonna be something weird?

PELLE

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

DANI

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

JOSH

(smiling)

Ättestupan.

PELLE

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

DANI

(suddenly nervous)

...Do I not want to do this?

PELLE

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

DANI
 Okay. And what is "this"?

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

DANI
 What is Ättestupan?

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

44 EXT. BEACH - MINUTES LATER

44

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

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

CHRISTIAN
 Are you sure you can handle this?

Dani doesn't know the answer to this.

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

Dani starts to wrestle with this, but then:

DANI
 No. I need to try.

A HORN sounds. All eyes go to...

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

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

Christian leans in to hear the answer:

PELLE
Rubi Radr. Our scripture.

JOSH
Can I possibly read that?

PELLE
You would not be able.

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

45 EXT. CLIFF - SAME TIME

45

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

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

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

46 EXT. BEACH - SAME TIME

46

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

Finally, the TWO ELDERLY MEN appear at the edge.

Rapt silence.

One of the elderly men ANNOUNCES something loudly in Swedish.

JOSH
(to Pelle)
What did he say?

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SIMON
Why did that just happen? We need
to call an ambulance.

INGEMAR
It's okay.

SIMON
What's okay?! CALL AN AMBULANCE!
Everybody's just watching!

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

SIV

Ingemar! 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

You're all just standing calmly around!!

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

SIV

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

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

SIV

It is a great joy for them, you must realize. And when I do so, it will be a great joy for me.

(back to Simon and Connie)

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

Siv points to a PREGNANT WOMAN:

SIV

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

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

SIV

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

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

SIV

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

INGEMAR

(to Simon and Connie)

I'm sorry I did not warn you better.

47 EXT. FIELD - DAY

47

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

CHRISTIAN

You okay, baby?

DANI

(branching off)

I need to not be here right now.

CHRISTIAN

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

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

48 EXT. WOODS - MOMENTS LATER

48

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

49 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - SAME TIME

49

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

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

CHRISTIAN

Hey dude...

JOSH

Hey!

(excitedly)

Holy fuck, right?

CHRISTIAN

Holy fuck. Incredible.

JOSH

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

I've just been thinking, and I've decided...I really think I wanna do my thesis here. On the Hårgas.

Josh doesn't react. Christian nervously continues:

CHRISTIAN

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

Oh my God. I honestly can't even...
(barely containing his
rage)

You know I'm out here doing my
thesis, on midsummer. That's why
I'm here.

CHRISTIAN

Yeah, but not on this community.

Josh's eyes BURN on Christian.

CHRISTIAN

What?

JOSH

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

CHRISTIAN

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

JOSH

Oh my God, Christian, of course you
did!

JOSH

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

CHRISTIAN

What the fuck?

JOSH

Oh, yeah - "What the fuck."
(seething)

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

CHRISTIAN

Okay, wow, fuck you--

JOSH

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

CHRISTIAN

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

JOSH

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

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

CHRISTIAN

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

Christian leaves.

Josh sits motionless.

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

SIMON
You traumatized too, mate?

CHRISTIAN
(still fuming)
What? Oh. Yeah...

SIMON
(offering joint)
You want some? It's laced with hydrocodone.

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

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

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

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

CHRISTIAN
I'm Christian.

Ulla inserts herself:

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

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

ULLA
Every time one reaches age.

CHRISTIAN
Okay...

ULLA
So lots.

CHRISTIAN

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

ULLA
We grieve and celebrate.

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

ULLA
We must go now and keep working.

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

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

CHRISTIAN
Goodbye.
(to Maja)
'Bye Maja.

Maja smiles timidly and waves again.

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

51 EXT. MEADOW - EVENING

51

Dani sits cross-legged near the river. Her eyes are closed.

She's trying to meditate, but her breathing is still unstable.

Christian appears behind her.

CHRISTIAN
Hey.

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

CHRISTIAN
How we doing?

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

CHRISTIAN
I can imagine. Today was a lot.

DANI

I feel 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 okay, baby?

DANI

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

CHRISTIAN

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

Dani just stares at him.

CHRISTIAN

It's - cultural. We put our elderly
in nursing homes. I'm sure they
find that disturbing.

Dani EYES him, disturbed by his nonchalance. She then sees...
In the b.g., a congregation of WOMEN are migrating off
together.

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

DAGNY

Dani! Do you like to join us?

DANI

Why? What's happening?

DAGNY

A special ceremony - for the
womans.

(to Christian)

The mans are joining for a -
meditate. At the houses.

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

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

MOMENTS LATER

Dani uneasily joins Connie in the migrating crowd of women.

They're approaching a RIVER, which seems to GLOW in the distance.

DANI
Did they tell you what this is?

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

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

52 EXT. FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

52

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

They adorn it in various FLOWERS and HANDMADE ORNAMENTS.) Christian joins Mark in the circle.

CHRISTIAN
Nice nap?

Mark, eyes elsewhere, leans over to WHISPER:

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

Mark is pointing to the PRETTY BRUNETTE from earlier.

CHRISTIAN
Oh yeah. She's cute.

MARK
Right? She keeps eyeing me.

Christian pauses, and then:

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

53 EXT. WATER WELL - SAME TIME

53

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

JOSH
Hey. Can I talk to you? PELLE

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

JOSH
Has Christian come to you yet?

PELLE
...About what?

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

PELLE
Oh which? The nine-day feast?

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

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

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

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

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

PELLE

Then what would be the point? You
couldn't even get it peer reviewed!

(before Josh can argue)

Christian did already ask me this,
by the way. I told him the exact
same thing I'm telling you.

JOSH

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

PELLE

(annoyed)

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

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

54 EXT. FIELD - MOMENTS LATER

54

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

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

CHRISTIAN

(to Mark)

I'm gonna - take a leak.

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

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

MEANWHILE, Mark looks helpless in the meditation circle.

MEDITATION LEADER

(in Swedish)

We begin now. Close your eyes.

55 EXT. RIVER - SAME TIME

55

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

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

SIV
Do you admire the Brisingamen?

CONNIE
The lanterns?

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

Dani and Connie don't understand, nor do they inquire further.

Siv laughs, seeing their confusion.

SIV
Think of it like theatre. Strictly presentational. Yes?

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

One of the female elders - a LARGE WOMAN (60s) with sturdy legs - holds the sacred book Rubi Radr. She takes a moment as everyone quiets down. She then reads a passage (in Swedish) out loud. She reads with clarity and authority. After she has finished... A GROUP OF NINE WOMEN (three in their 20s, three in their 30s/ 40s, and three in their 50s/60s) all DISROBE. They are now NUDE.

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

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

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

SIV
 (explaining to Dani)
 The women represents the sun. The sea gave birth to the sun, so they're like -
 (gestures "rising up")
 - from the womb.

Dani and Connie watch. It is hypnotic.

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

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

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

56 EXT. FARMSTEAD - MOMENTS LATER

56

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

MEDITATION LEADER
 (in Swedish)
 Now we stop.

Odd addresses the meditators.

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

Everybody rises, still coming out of their collective trance.

They queue up to follow the decorated tree.

57 EXT. RIVER - MOMENTS LATER

57

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

Christian awkwardly joins the crowd. As does Josh.

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

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

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

A horn bellows.

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

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

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

Grumblings all around. The consensus is "no."

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

Some polite laughter among the congregation.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Dani starts to PANIC.

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

Siv SMILES.

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

DANI
NO!!!

This mingles with other protestations from the crowd:

HÅRGAN #1
(in Swedish)
No! Don't!

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

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

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

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

CONNIE
So, is this like a Wiccan thing?

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

CONNIE
Okay...

SIV
Strictly presentational.

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

58 EXT. FIELD - MINUTES LATER

58

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

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

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

DANI
No, Christian: this is pagan nature worship. This is completely backwards. We shouldn't be here.

CHRISTIAN
We just need to acclimate--

DANI

I don't want to acclimate! I want to leave.

CHRISTIAN

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

DANI

What? Since when?!

CHRISTIAN

Since I decided! Today. Which you know has been a nightmare for me to figure out. And I made the mistake of telling Josh and now he's competing with me--

DANI

So let him have it if he wants it! We shouldn't be here, Christian. But why have they invited us? And why did Pelle?!

CHRISTIAN

No, hey - have you even seen what's happening here?! This level of tradition? And nobody knows about it, nobody's written on it - and they've invited us to be part of it! Can't you see what a privilege that is?! Because Pelle did! Because he trusts us!

DANI

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

CHRISTIAN

(stubborn)

Not necessarily.

Dani HESITATES, seeing that she's getting nowhere.

DANI

I want to leave.

CHRISTIAN

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

Beat. Christian's eyes are ice cold.

DANI

...Do you not love me anymore?

CHRISTIAN

(momentarily stunned)

What does that have to do with
this?

DANI

(almost to herself)

This is the devaluation phase.
We've been in it for a long time
now. Next comes the discard.

CHRISTIAN

Oh fuck - can you maybe spare our
relationship the psychology 101?

DANI

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

CHRISTIAN

(finished)

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

Christian turns and STORMS away.

DANI

Oh my -- you're gonna walk away
now??

As he leaves, she cries out:

DANI

You're just gonna leave me like
this?!

59 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - NIGHT

59

People are laying boards over the windows, bringing the Main House into darkness.

Dani enters with sunken eyes. Christian's already in bed. Staring at him, Dani walks to JOSH. (She is pulling at her neck again.)

DANI

Do you have a sleeping pill?

JOSH

Sure. Uh...

Josh fishes a PILL out of his bag.

JOSH

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

DANI

I just need to sleep.

She swallows it whole.

60 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - NIGHT

60

Silence. Everyone is asleep, including Dani.

There is RUSTLING heard off-screen. Dani WAKES. She sits up to see...

Christian's bed is now EMPTY. So is Mark's bed. And Josh's.

Concerned, Dani looks to the DOOR. Mark, Josh, Pelle and Christian are quietly tip-toeing out of the house. They GIGGLE. Christian is the last to exit.

Confused, Dani climbs out of bed. She rushes to the door.

Dani looks OUTSIDE to see that the group is now inside the RENTAL MINIVAN, which is IDLING off. Pelle drives, LAUGHING. Christian, in the back seat, looks out the back window. HE SMILES GIDDILY AT DANI as they drive away.

Dani watches this in utter horror.

The diminishing car's TAILPIPE belches thick black smoke.

Dani opens her mouth in anguish. An impossible amount of BLACK SMOKE (the same color as that from the tailpipe) escapes her lungs, FILLING the frame, and then--

We SLAM to a HARSH INSERT of the GORED FACE of the second Elder who jumped off the cliff. He GASPS wretchedly.

We then PUNCH OUT, wider, to reveal that the dashed bodies on the rocks are DANI'S PARENTS and her SISTER. We then CUT TO:

61 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - NIGHT

61

Dani is ASLEEP in bed. The last scene was a DREAM. Her eyelids twitch as she continues to suffer the nightmare.

We pan away from Dani to reveal that MAJA, several beds over, is AWAKE. She anxiously fingers a freshly carved RUNE STONE. Her eyes are GLUED to Christian, who is fast asleep.

Maja climbs out of bed and tip-toes to Christian's bed. She crouches to SLIDE the rune stone under his mattress. She then runs nervously back to her bed.

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

62 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - MORNING

62

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

63 EXT. MEADOW - NEXT MORNING

63

Pelle plants vegetables in the garden.

Josh, accompanied by Mark, approaches Pelle. Watching this, Christian lingers in the b.g.

JOSH

Hey man. Any word?

Pelle looks up to see Josh. He SIGHS and rises.

PELLE

They said you can do it as long as you absolutely don't use names and the location is never even hinted at. And they're gonna have you sign an agreement to that.

JOSH

(nodding, excited)

Okay. Wow. Okay.

Josh can't contain his glee.

PELLE

And you split it with Christian.
Because he came to me first.

JOSH

Well, that's -- We'll figure that out.

Mark notices in the distance: One MAN has climbed to the top of a TREE to fetch a strange, FLOWERING PINECONE from the tip of a branch. At the base of the tree is a crowd of observing men.

MARK
What are they doing?

JOSH
Gathering...charms.

The climbing man CUTS the cone with a golden blade. The men CHEER.

JOSH
(to Pelle)
Here: can I ask you something?

Josh pulls Maja's RUNE STONE 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 walks over. Josh CONCEALS the rune.

CHRISTIAN
What's going on?

PELLE
The elders said you can do your thesis as long as you don't use actual names or location.

CHRISTIAN
Holy shit. That's incredible. Thank you so much.

PELLE
You're splitting it with Josh.

CHRISTIAN
(as if Josh isn't there)
I already told him that's totally fine with me.

Pelle notices Christian glancing over at Maja.

PELLE
I think my sister Maja has taken a liking to you.

CHRISTIAN
Yeah. I think I noticed.

In the b.g., a COW and a LAMB are being led across the field by different Hårgans.

PELLE
 (raising eyebrows)
 You know, she just got her
 byxmyndig.

CHRISTIAN
 Ha. What's that?

PELLE
 It means -
 (smiling at the silly
 expression)
 - "pants license"? When you turn
 fifteen, you're allowed to have
 sex.

MARK
 (pointing)
 How 'bout that one? Is she
 licensed?

Mark is pointing out the BRUNETTE that he has a crush on.

PELLE
 (laughs)
 Inga? Oh yes.

Pelle is SUMMONED by a few men struggling to carry equipment.

He goes off to help them.

At the same time, Mark catches the brunette, INGA, looking at him again. He suddenly feels COMPELLED to do something. He starts marching in the direction of the climbing men.

CHRISTIAN
 Mark?

64 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - MORNING

64

Dani stirs awake. Extremely groggy.

DANI
 (as if still dreaming)
 Christian?

65 EXT. FARMSTEAD - SAME TIME

65

Mark has arrived at an OAK TREE with a particularly large PINECONE (also bearing a flower) at the top. Its base has been tied with rope. Mark begins to CLIMB it.

CHRISTIAN
Wait, dude. Maybe hold off.

MARK
I'm gonna "gather a charm."

Josh and Christian look uneasy as Mark quickly scales the Oak. As he climbs past a few branches, a BEARDED MAN (40s) is heard off-screen:

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

Mark FREEZES. The Bearded Man runs over. This is ULF.

ULF
(in Swedish)
WHAT ARE YOU DOING?! GET OFF! GET
DOWN!

Mark, now standing motionless on a branch, looks stupefied. The branch suddenly SNAPS beneath his feet, and he comes TUMBLING to the ground. He lands HARD on his ass.

Ulf desperately picks up the BROKEN BRANCH. He then notices that the tree's mud-plugged CLEFT (wrapped in rope) has BROKEN OPEN.

ULF
(in Swedish)
Oh no no no... What have you done?

People have started gathering around. He appeals to them:

ULF
(in Swedish)
Can we put it back on? Can we...?

MARK
What's wrong? What did I do?

Pelle has run over.

PELLE
What happened?

ULF
(in Swedish, heartbroken)
Your American friend. He desecrated
my tree.

PELLE

(gasps, in Swedish)

I'm so sorry, Father Ulf! He didn't know.

MARK

What happened? What did I do?

PELLE

You climbed his tree.

MARK

His tree? So what? I'm sorry.

ULF

(suddenly enraged)

"So what?!"

MARK

What?! I didn't know!

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

PELLE

Here, Mark: let's just...

Pelle leads Mark away.

MARK

What the fuck? How is it his tree?
What's even happening?

PELLE

That tree cured him of pneumonia
when he was a baby.

MARK

What? How?! No it didn't.

PELLE

He believes it did. And now
his health and his life are tied to
that tree. If it gets hurt, he gets
hurt.

Mark looks over to Ulf, who has collapsed into TEARS. The Thin Elder speaks soothingly to him.

THIN ELDER

(in Swedish)

We can reattach the branch. It's a
minor wound. Barely anything.

ULF
(in Swedish)
What about the cleft?

Mark calms down.

MARK
Well - fuck. I am sorry. I still
don't understand what I did... Do I
apologize?

PELLE
Apologize later.

The Pretty Brunette, INGA, has walked up.

MARK
Oh shit. Hi.

INGA
(to Pelle, in Swedish)
Tell him it's okay. He didn't know.
I will talk to father Ulf.

She SMILES at Mark and walks off.

PELLE
(explaining)
She said to tell you it's okay and
that she'll explain to him your
mistake.

MARK
(overjoyed)
Seriously? What else did she say?

Christian sees DANI in the distance, woozily looking for him.
He walks over to her, affecting pleasantness.

CHRISTIAN
Hey!

DANI
(seeing him)
Oh!

CHRISTIAN
You get some good sleep?

They arrive at each other. He gives her a peck.

DANI
I'm sorry about last night.

CHRISTIAN

...How you feeling?

DANI

(pause, emotional)

I don't want us to be fighting,
Christian.

CHRISTIAN

Well - me neither.

Christian looks like he wants to say more. Dani waits for it. Finally, Christian thinks better of it.

CHRISTIAN

Are you feeling less nervous today?

Dani pauses uncertainly at this.

HORNS bellow in the b.g. A ceremony is beginning somewhere, and all the Hårgans are presently migrating over a hill. PELLE, standing at a distance, is waving Dani and Christian over.

66 EXT. HILL - DAY

66

ECU of a BABY BULL'S HIND LEGS, tied together with rope. The rope is PULLED SWIFTLY UP.

ECU of a LAMB'S HIND LEGS, also tied together. The rope is yanked up.

ECU of a BABY HORSE'S HIND LEGS, also tied. The rope pulls UP.

We now cut to a WIDE SHOT of the top of a HILL. NINE ANIMALS (lamb, goat, dog, baby horse, baby bull, baby cow, pig, rabbit, and three tied-together chickens) have been STRUNG UPSIDE-DOWN.

They are all alive. Each of them is separated by about five feet.

The THIN ELDER stands to the side of the line-up. On the other side is SIV.

The entire community has congregated at the bottom of the hill. Dani looks very nervous. She turns to Pelle, who already looks concerned for her.

DANI

Do I want to stay for this?

PELLE
...Maybe you should not.

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

Siv speaks exultantly to the air (in Swedish). When she finishes, STEADY PERCUSSION BEGINS. The Thin Elder strikes a different POSE (physically and emotionally) with every percussive hit.

The RED-HAIRED WOMAN, reading from the holy book Rubi Radr, begins to SING. As we've heard before, it is a WORDLESS choral song.

Nine YOUNG MEN, each holding a blade, walk up to the animals.

Simultaneously, they all SLIT THE ANIMALS' THROATS. The animals THRASH wildly as BLOOD drains from their necks. (The song has degraded into anguished snarls and cries.)

That does it. Dani STORMS OFF. Christian is too awe-stricken to care. Josh, meanwhile, is taking covert PHOTOS with his phone.

Beneath each animal, a narrow CHANNEL has been pre-carved into the earth. Each channel winds and loops to eventually converge, thus forming a MASSIVE RUNIC SYMBOL (symbolizing fertility). The blood pours from each animal to run down the separate canals.

Soon, the blood has co-mingled to fill the carefully-engineered runic sculpture. It's horrible and beautiful.

Josh and Christian, briefly joined in their excitement, trade looks of amazement. Mark looks mystified.

MARK
This is fuckin' weird, no?

Pelle now goes after Dani, who is speed-walking away.

In the b.g., Simon can be heard saying:

SIMON (O.S.)
What the fuck did you bring us to?

Christian looks over at this. SIMON, who looks very scared, is confronting a grinning Ingemar.

SIMON
(to Ingemar,
aggressively)
Why are you smiling, mate?

67 EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME

67

Dani speed-walks (with intermittent running) toward the Main House in the distance. Pelle follows her, glancing over his shoulder to view more of the ceremony.

68 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

68

Dani enters the Main House, eyes crazed. She goes to her bed and begins hastily packing her bag. Her breathing is erratic and she's pulling at her neck again (as if to loosen the skin).

Pelle enters.

PELLE

Dani?

Dani looks up, teeth chattering with anxiety.

DANI

I'm really sorry, Pelle. Thank you for inviting me, but I really need to go. Can someone maybe drive me?

PELLE

I did warn you this time. I know it looks extreme, but we only do this once every ninety years. It's - what's the word...?

DANI

I understand that it's momentous.

PELLE

(that was the word)

Right! Exactly!

DANI

(snapping)

I don't know why we're here, Pelle!
I don't know why you invited us!

PELLE

Okay: Here: Sit down. Please.

He sits Dani down. He plants himself beside her, taking her hands.

PELLE

I invited my friends because this is a once-in-a-lifetime thing and I wanted to share it. Especially with my friends who I knew would appreciate it, because I am proud of this place.

DANI

But I'm not an anthropologist. I don't have the foundation to understand this.

PELLE

And yet I was the most excited for you to come.

Pelle has pulled a special POUCH from his pocket. He draws something out.

PELLE

Here: smell this.

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

DANI

What is it?

PELLE

It calms you down.

She pauses before smelling it.

PELLE

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

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

You're going through a lot.

PELLE

I know you are, and I'm gonna say something now, because my birth parents are both gone, too--

DANI

What?!

(crying now)

That's not what I'm talking about!

PELLE

I know, and that's fine, but please... My birth-parents both died when I was a little boy. They burned up in a fire, and I became - technically - an orphan. So believe me when I say I know what that is, because I do. Yet my difference is: I didn't get a chance to feel lost. Because I had a family - here - where everyone embraced me and swept me up and I was raised by a community that doesn't distinguish between what is theirs and what is not theirs. That's what you were sacrificed to. But I - have always felt...held. By a family. A real family. Which everyone deserves. And you deserve.

Dani looks down at Pelle's hands GRIPPING hers.

DANI

Christian could walk in.

PELLE

He's what I'm talking about. And he's my good friend and I like him... But do you feel HELD by him, Dani? Does he feel like a HOME to you?

His eyes are locked intensely on Dani's. She doesn't turn away.

PELLE

My pilgrimage has been fun. New York is fun... But I also find it terrifying how people live. As if it's necessary and even good to be lost and drifting...and I haven't spent one night over there that I haven't longed to be back here...in the lap of the Hårgas.

Dani looks almost hypnotized as she looks into Pelle's eyes.

PELLE

Stay, Dani. Please. It will be good... And I swear we're all finished sacrificing animals.

Dani gives a weak half-laugh. She relents. She sits up straight and wipes her eyes, regaining composure.

PELLE

Good.

Pelle stands up.

DANI

You're a very empathic person, do you know that?

PELLE

Well, our first language here is strictly emotion-based. So I could just be using that to manipulate you.

Dani pauses at this. Pelle sticks his TONGUE out, teasing.

Dani SMILES, relieved.

PELLE

You are very vulnerable, though. And I mean that in a great way. It's very rare. It's beautiful.

Dani is touched, but tries to hide it.

DANI

(re: the herb)

Can I smell that again?

69 EXT. HILL - SAME TIME

69

The ceremony has ended. Groups are now setting up TABLES for lunch. As usual, they're being laid out in a particular pattern.

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

SIMON

Are we eating those animals?

INGEMAR

Not those ones.

SIMON

And why not?

INGEMAR

(seeing the aggression)

...Because they weren't killed for
that.

SIMON

So what were they killed for? So we
could watch that shit and clap?

Ingemar smiles. This infuriates Simon.

SIMON (CONT'D)

What the fuck is that smile, mate?
Get it off.

CONNIE

(trying to calm him)

Simon...

This has drawn attention. People are now looking over.

INGEMAR

(gesturing)

We can talk about this over here.

SIMON

Why didn't we talk about it before
you took us here?

Ingemar gently touches Simon's arm to lead him away.

SIMON

(pulling back his arm)

Don't sort me out, mate!

The PLUMP ELDER speaks up.

PLUMP ELDER

What's offending you, son?

SIMON

What's offending me? Besides the
fact I just saw something I can't
ever unsee, I'm offended that
you're teaching impressionable kids
to sacrifice living, innocent
animals - including a fucking
defenseless dog--

One middle-aged WOMAN (50s) speaks up.

WOMAN

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

PLUMP ELDER

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

SIMON

Because it's fucking medieval!

WOMAN

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

PLUMP ELDER

(to Simon)

You'll find that sacrifice is
essential in any relationship.
Let's put it in your terms--

SIMON

You don't know my terms!

PLUMP ELDER

(continuing, louder)

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

CONNIE

What's that supposed to mean?!

PLUMP ELDER

(to Connie now)

Say you learn that your partner
can't part with even a fraction of
his own comfort to give you what
you need. And show that you're
appreciated.

(to both of them now)

Wouldn't you start to resent this
person? Wouldn't your own
performance begin to lack, knowing
they're not pulling their weight?
Wouldn't you want to punish that
person for taking you for granted?

(to Simon)

Sacrifice is proof. And without it,
no union can last.

Beat. Simon pops the bubble:

SIMON

Alright. Thank you for that. And now we've seen two people kill themselves and nine animals get bled to death, so I think we're leaving.

PLUMP ELDER
I'll happily drive you to the station.

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

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

Simon pauses.

SIMON
(to Connie)
Go pack our stuff. I'll pick you up out front in -
(to the Plump Elder)
- what, five minutes?

PLUMP ELDER
Fine.

Connie doesn't want to go alone. She hesitates and then walks quickly off. We TRACK alongside Connie, following her away.

As Connie speed-walks, PANIC rises in her. She looks back a few times, making sure that she's not being followed.

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

DANI
Are you okay, Connie?

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

Connie rushes to her bed. She starts throwing her things into her suitcase.

71 EXT. THE MAIN HOUSE - MOMENTS LATER

71

Connie stops outside the door, gripping her and Simon's bags. She turns to Dani as she waits for Simon.

CONNIE

(anxious)

It was really lovely meeting you,
Dani.

DANI

Yeah, it was lovely meeting you,
too.

CONNIE

Sorry to just leave like this.
Simon's coming with the car.

DANI

I understand. I might be right
behind you.

CONNIE

(on overdrive)

Simon went mental. Christ. I feel
sick.

(then)

We exchanged emails an' all that,
yeah?

DANI

No. We didn't.

CONNIE

Oh. I'm Connie-dot-Brahms at
AOL.com.

DANI

Connie-dot-Brahms. I'll write you.

CONNIE

Yeah. Lovely. Sorry to just leave
like this.

ODD comes running up.

ODD

Connie! Simon told me to tell
you...

(arrives)

Jan drove him to the train station.
After Simon gets dropped off, he's
sending the truck straight back for
you -

CONNIE

What?

ODD

- and you'll meet him there.

CONNIE

No. Why would he go without me? He wouldn't do that.

ODD

The truck only had room for two.

CONNIE

What does that mean? That's not real. Why wouldn't he tell me?

ODD

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

CONNIE

So I could have sat on his lap!

ODD

Simon mentioned that, too. We don't break traffic laws.

Connie looks to Dani, incredulous.

CONNIE

(to Odd)

They just left without me, just now?

ODD

There wasn't room in the truck. Yet it is coming right back. For you.

Connie shakes her head, not buying it. She WALKS OFF, on a mission to find out more. Odd turns to Dani:

ODD

Lunch has been called.

Lunch time. Everyone is seated at the tables (which are connected to form a HELIX shape).

ULF, still panicked over the damage done to "his tree," is consulting a BESPECTACLED ELDER.

ULF
(in Swedish)
It feels like a tingling. Like a
numbness in my arm.

The Elder presses his arm. MARK watches this, very nervous. Farther down the table, CHRISTIAN sits beside a HAPPY MAN (30s).

Christian takes NOTES as he asks questions. Two Hårga women listen in, smiling. Christian's eyes keep straying to JOSH, who is also questioning people. They are now RACING to gather info.

CHRISTIAN
How are roles or jobs assigned?

HAPPY MAN
Well - that's based on traits we
show as children. For example:
(points to the
bespectacled elder)
He was assigned "to protect," so he
did his pilgrimage as doctor.

Christian quickly writes this down as DANI arrives at the table. She sits next to Christian.

CHRISTIAN
Hey. You okay?

DANI
...Simon left without Connie.

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

Christian bluntly returns his attention to the Happy Man. Dani PAUSES, disturbed by Christian's indifference. For the first time, she actually looks scared of him.

CHRISTIAN
(to Happy Man)
Is incest ever a problem?

HAPPY MAN
Ha! Well...the bloodlines are very
well preserved, so - the elders
must approve mates.

Christian is taking feverish notes. Dani watches him with a new kind of SCRUTINY; a new kind of distrust. As Christian writes, he GLANCES over at:

JOSH, who is now interrogating an uncomfortable BALD MAN (40s).

JOSH
What about the holy text? Ruby
Radr?

BALD MAN
Um...I cannot answer this for you.
You might ask a elder.

73 EXT. FIELD - DAY

73

Lunch is over. Josh is now interrogating the Thin Elder on the grass.

THIN ELDER
I don't understand: You want to see it?

JOSH
I wouldn't even touch.

THIN ELDER
It's written in our Affect language. You would not be able to read it...

74 EXT. FARMSTEAD - DAY

74

Dani walks idly around, thinking about her exchange with Pelle (and about Simon leaving Connie). She holds the folded DRAWING that Pelle gave her for her birthday. As the gears turn in her head, her attention falls on...

A large KITCHEN in one of the houses. A group of WOMEN (all ages) collaborate to prepare dinner. One SMALL WOMAN (40s) sees Dani and waves her over. Dani pauses and then approaches.

SMALL WOMAN
Would you like to help join us?

DANI
Sure! But actually - have you seen Simon?

SMALL WOMAN

Oh, yes, he was driven to the station. Did you not say goodbye?

DANI
No. I didn't. But that's okay...
(mind still racing)
What are we making?

SMALL WOMAN
Meat tarts!

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

SMALL WOMAN
(translating)
She says you're so beautiful.

DANI
Oh! She's so beautiful!

Meanwhile, MAJA is preparing a tray of unbaked MEAT PIES. One of the pies is clearly very special. She distinguishes this one by laying a special BASIL LEAF on top.

75 EXT. FARMSTEAD - SAME TIME

75

SIV stands among labouring men, staring at the KITCHEN WINDOW. She watches Dani.

76 INT. TEMPLE - SAME TIME

76

The HOLY TEMPLE. Josh stands near the altar with the Thin Elder, who has pulled the Rubi Radr from an elevated pedestal.

He shows Josh the text (written in the graphic Affect language - a combination of runes and abstract hand paintings).

THIN ELDER
We describe it like "emotional sheet music."

JOSH
What does it say?

THIN ELDER

Well...each runic letter represents one of the 16 affects, which are graded from most holy to most unholy. This here is about Grief. You can see at the end, however, we have blank pages?

Indeed the last half of the book is BLANK.

THIN ELDER

This is because the Rubi Radr is a constant work in progress. Always evolving.

JOSH

And who decides what's added?

THIN ELDER

Well - this iteration is being written by Ruben.

The Thin Elder points to RUBEN, the mentally disabled boy, who is playing outside.

JOSH

Wait. The...disabled?

THIN ELDER

Since birth. He draws and the Elders interpret.

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

THIN ELDER

Ruben is unclouded by normal cognition. It makes him open for the source.

JOSH

So...what happens when Ruben dies? Do you just wait until a new baby isn't "clouded"?

THIN ELDER

Ruben was a product of inbreeding. All of our Oracles have been deliberate products of inbreeding.

Josh's jaw hangs. He hides his amazement.

JOSH

Can I possibly take a photograph?

THIN ELDER
 (suddenly alarmed)
 What? No. Absolutely not.

The Elder CLOSES the book.

JOSH
 Okay. Sorry.

THIN ELDER
 Absolutely not.

A TENSE beat. Broken suddenly by:

SCREAMING, outside. They TURN.

CONNIE (O.S.)
 SIMON!! SIMON!!

77 EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME

77

CONNIE, panicked and crying, backs away from three encroaching Hårgans (all 30s). They approach her carefully, trying to calm her down. Connie desperately appeals to CHRISTIAN and MARK:

CONNIE
 Please! I'm begging you! I saw them pulling Simon! I swear I saw them!

HÅRGAN MAN #1
 He was driven to town an hour ago.
 We all watched them drive off.

CONNIE
 I'm not talking to you!!
 (to Christian)
 Please. You have to believe me.

CONNIE
 I saw them dragging Simon through the woods. He was unconscious.

CHRISTIAN
 Where?

CONNIE
 (pointing)
 Back there. Near the river. Please.

CHRISTIAN
 Can you show us?
 (to the Hårgans)

Can she show us?

CONNIE
(crying)
Please.

HÅRGAN MAN #1
Of course. Just please -
(to Connie)
- calm down. I promise it's not
what you think you saw.

HÅRGAN MAN #2
(impatient)
And the truck is already back for
you, by the way! You can leave.

CONNIE
I'M NOT GOING WITHOUT SIMON!

78 EXT. WOODS - MINUTES LATER

78

Connie desperately leads the group (Christian, Mark, and the two Hårgans) into the woods. She keeps her eyes locked on Christian, as if begging him to believe her.

CONNIE
It was right back here! I swear to
God. Right over there! They were
dragging him by the arms and he
wasn't moving and his head was
bleeding!

HÅRGAN MAN #1
So why didn't you try to stop them?
Or follow them? -So where did they
go?

CONNIE
I couldn't even breathe! -They went
behind the bushes. I ran back for
help.
(to Christian)
I wanted to find someone!

CHRISTIAN
Which direction were they going?

CONNIE
(indicating)
That way! They rushed behind the
bushes when they saw me.

HÅRGAN MAN #1

(placating)

Okay: I can tell you're saying the truth. Let's all go in the direction you saw them. If he's here, we'll find him.

CONNIE

They'd have already hid him by now!
You're lying!!

The Hårgan Man wears a false smile, but his eyes BUZZ.

CHRISTIAN

(interjecting)

I'll go. Okay? They went in that direction? I'll go looking.

CONNIE

I'm coming, too.

CHRISTIAN

Great. You and Mark go together.
Okay, Mark? We'll cover more ground.

Mark nods.

CONNIE

(re: Hårgan Men)

I don't want them.

CHRISTIAN

They'll go away.

(to Hårgan men)

Right? Thanks guys. Sorry.

The Hårgan men concede. They begin walking off.

HÅRGAN MAN #1

I hope you find him.

HÅRGAN MAN #2

And the truck is waiting for you
when you finally choose to leave.

Christian walks alone through the woods, half-heartedly searching. He suddenly stumbles upon a vague trail of DRIED BLOOD, streaked across the grass. Christian PAUSES at this. Tree limbs groan in the wind.

Christian looks up, left and right. Nobody's around.

MINUTES LATER

Christian sees MARK in the distance. He walks over.

CHRISTIAN
Where's Connie?

MARK
She got freaked out and ran back. I dunno.

CHRISTIAN
(skeptically)
She went off alone?

MARK
She's fucking nuts, dude. So are the rest of these people. The whole fuckin' place is crazy.

They arrive at each other.

MARK
Did you find anything?

CHRISTIAN
Not really.

MARK
...I do really wanna fuck that brunette.

80 EXT. FIELD - DAY

80

Christian and Mark return from the woods. They approach the two Hårgan men, who are now laying a dense CIRCLE OF ROCKS around the ominous, yellow SACRED HOUSE (which we saw earlier, isolated in the field).

CHRISTIAN
Did Connie come back here?

HÅRGAN MAN #1
(looking up)
Uh - yes. Her boyfriend called our landline from the station and they talked on the phone. Then she begged our pardon and Jan drove her to the station.

Christian squints with burgeoning suspicion.

CHRISTIAN

Okay. Huh. I guess that's a relief.

HÅRGAN MAN #1

For her it was. We already saw him
leave the first time.

In the b.g., a Hårgan BOY (13) runs from one group to another, announcing:

BOY

(in Swedish)

Supper is ready! ... They're
calling supper!

81 EXT. HILL - DAY

81

At the base of the hill, the dining tables are now set in the pattern of a STAR. Everyone is seated, save for some stragglers.

Christian, Dani, Josh and Mark sit at a table. Pelle is seated a few seats away. Dani glances over at him. He smiles warmly and looks away. Dani's eyes LINGER on him.

The SERVERS are laying plates in front of everyone. One especially COY-LOOKING SERVER sets a plate in front of CHRISTIAN.

It features the special meat pie with the BASIL LEAF on top.

CHRISTIAN

Thanks.

Dani turns to Christian.

DANI

Do you know what happened with
Connie?

CHRISTIAN

She supposedly got driven to the
station.

DANI

Why do you think Simon would leave
without her?

Christian shrugs.

DANI

I could see you possibly doing
that.

CHRISTIAN
...The fuck does that mean?

DANI
(pause)
Never mind.

Christian stares at Dani. Surprised at the uncharacteristic defiance.

Meanwhile, Mark has noticed ULF staring at him from a distance.

Ulf has murder in his eyes.

MARK
(to Josh)
Fuck. Somebody's still sore about
"his tree."

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

JOSH
Yikes.

MARK
Is he gonna kill me?

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

JOSH
Did you learn anything about the
Rubi Radr?

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

Josh ignores this and moves on to his food.

CHRISTIAN
I know that one elder showed you
through it...

JOSH
(abruptly)
Yeah, barely. Never mind. Sorry I
brought it up.

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

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

DANI
(inquiring)
What is it?

Christian turns to Dani.

CHRISTIAN
Just a piece of bone.

DANI
Ew.

CHRISTIAN
Yeah. It's okay.

Mark leans in to whisper to Christian:

MARK
Was that a fucking pube?

CHRISTIAN
Shhh! Calm down.

Christian sits "casually" back into his chair. He tucks the pubic hair into his pocket. He looks around to finally ALIGHT on Maja. She is smiling at him. Dani catches this.

Christian self-consciously breaks the gaze, taking a sip of his drink (a pink-tinted MEAD). He then PAUSES, realizing what he might be drinking (namely, menstrual blood). Paranoid, he sets the drink back down.

Mark notices that ULF is still staring him down.

MARK
Jesus. He's still lookin' at me. I
don't like this.

Josh looks tensely at his NOTES. He stares at a line that reads: Affects -- runic combinations, "emotional sheet music" INGA, the pretty brunette, sneaks up behind Mark. She whispers in his ear.

INGA
You will come with me?

Mark turns to her, startled. He smiles widely.

MARK

What?

INGA

You will come? I show you.

MARK

Uhhh... Oh-kay.

INGA

Yes?

MARK

Yeah. Okay. Sure. Great.

Mark rises from his seat.

MARK

(to his friends)

I'll be back, I guess? She's gonna
show me...

Mark looks very excited as he walks off with Inga. She takes his hand and leads him toward the woods.

DANI

Somebody for everybody, I guess.

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

82 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - NIGHT

82

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.

83 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - LATER

83

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.

84 EXT. THE MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

84

Josh rushes across the grass. It's now darkest twilight. He hustles to the TEMPLE, glancing nervously about.

85 INT. TEMPLE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

85

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

86 INT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

86

Josh sneaks into the Temple. He creeps over to the pedestal featuring the holy book RUBI RADR. He pulls out his phone, turns on the FLASHLIGHT, and begins taking silent PHOTOS - page by page - of Rubi Radr's text.

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

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

JOSH
(relieved, whispering)
Holy fuck. Mark?

But Mark doesn't move or speak.

JOSH
(whispering)
What the fuck are you doing? Close
the door! We're not supposed to be
here.

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

Josh looks unsettled. He starts moving toward the door.

JOSH
 (whispering)
 Mark? Hello? What the fu--?

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

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

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

Josh's body is swiftly DRAGGED out of frame.

87 INT. THE MAIN HOUSE - MORNING

87

Outside, the ROOSTER crows.

People stir awake in their beds. Josh's bed is EMPTY. As is Mark's.

88 EXT. FARMSTEAD - MORNING

88

Breakfast time. Dani, Christian and Pelle look quizzically around.

DANI
 Could Mark still be off with that girl?

PELLE
 I wouldn't be surprised.

DANI
 Then what about Josh?

CHRISTIAN
 I'm honestly not too concerned.

The Plump Elder stands up. A hush falls cleanly over the scene.

PLUMP ELDER

We have something regretful to announce. This morning the third book of Rubi Radr was found missing from the south house. We are not hoping to point fingers, yet we ask kindly that whoever took it, please return it to its original place. You can leave it in the south house, which will be left unguarded and unwatched. Nobody need know it was you. If it is not returned by tonight, other actions will be taken. Thank you.

He sits down and everyone uneasily resumes eating.

CHRISTIAN
(under his breath)
Fuck.
(to Dani and Pelle)
Which of you is surprised?

LATER

Breakfast has ended. People leave their tables, carrying their empty plates.

Christian, Dani and Pelle stand up to see the THIN ELDER and the PLUMP ELDER walking toward them. Our group anticipates the following question:

THIN ELDER
Where is your friend Josh?

CHRISTIAN
I know. We have no idea.

THIN ELDER
He and your other friend go disappearing on the same day. You see how it looks.

CHRISTIAN
Yes, obviously, but I swear to you - we are completely in the dark on this. We are every bit as confused as you are.

DANI
(not sure whether to say it)
We did see Mark go off with one of the girls last night.

PLUMP ELDER

What girl?

PELLE

Inga.

The Plump Elder thinks about this. Christian interjects:

CHRISTIAN

But Mark wouldn't have done this.
 Josh, though: he came to bed with
 us, and when we woke up, he was
 gone. And if he did take that book,
 I just pray you understand: we do
 not identify as friends of his, or
 collaborators, or anything. I
 certainly don't vouch for him and
 we'd be so embarrassed to be
 connected to this in any way.

Beat. The Thin Elder relents.

THIN ELDER

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

CHRISTIAN

Yes. I hope that very much.

PELLE

I feel responsible.

THIN ELDER

Well - you and Odd can go looking
 for them. Maybe you can redeem
 this.

Pelle nods, walks to Odd, and they proceed toward the truck.

The Plump Elder turns to Dani and Christian.

PLUMP ELDER

(to Dani)

You'll be going with the women for
 the day's activity.

(to Christian)

And Siv asks to see you in her
 house.

CHRISTIAN

(nervous)

Why?

The Elder doesn't have the answer.

CHRISTIAN
...Which one is hers?

The Elder points to a SMALL WHITE HOUSE across the field.

Christian nods "okay" and starts toward it. As he walks, he hears:

PELLE (O.S.)
Grandfather Sten!

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

PLUMP ELDER (O.S.)
What?!

Christian turns to see a distraught Pelle and Odd.

ODD
They took the truck.

Pelle stares daggers at Christian, and then turns back to Odd.

Christian, very uneasy now, proceeds to the small white house...

89 EXT. FIELD - DAY

89

ECU of a BRIGHT YELLOW-GREEN PASTE. It's being MASHED vigorously in a bowl. The paste is made of ground-up flowers.

A fat SCOOP of the paste is dropped into a LARGE JUG OF SPRING WATER (perched on a table). The paste is STIRRED into the water.

A queue of WOMEN (between 16 and 35) has formed behind the table.

One by one, the women accept a CUP of the water. They drink it (sometimes after nervous hesitation). In the b.g. is the MAYPOLE.

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

DANI
Do you know what we're doing?

BLONDE WOMAN
Oh yes. This is the big one.

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

DANI
It's just water?

BLONDE WOMAN
Not just. It is for the competition.

The Blonde Woman gulps hers down, and then gestures "You now." Dani pauses, and then knocks it back.

BLONDE WOMAN
(smiling)
Uh-oh.

She LAUGHS and HUGS Dani.

BLONDE WOMAN
Here we go!

Dani looks very nervous.

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. The LARGE WOMAN stands with musicians (fiddler, key-harpist, and floutist).

Dani stands in the middle circle. All the neighboring women look very excited.

Dani looks down at the earth. At first everything looks normal, but then she notices...GRASS has begun to sprout from her shoes.

Dani looks up. Fuck. She's tripping.

The LARGE WOMAN speaks up.

LARGE WOMAN
(in Swedish)

It was here, long ago, that the Black One lured the youths of Hårga to the grass and seduced them into dance. Once they began, they could not stop, and they danced themselves to death. Now, in life-holding defiance of the Black One, we dance until we fall. And she who survives last will be crowned for her stamina.

The Large Woman CLAPS her hands ONCE. The musicians play a long, sustained NOTE. All of the women join hands and slowly dip to a cross-legged BOW. The musical note dies. A brief moment of SILENCE, and then...THE MUSIC BEGINS! (It is the song of Hårgas.) The women begin to DANCE. The inside circle dances to the right.

The middle circle to the left. The outside circle to the right.

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

90 INT. SMALL WHITE HOUSE - SAME TIME

90

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.

91 INT. SMALL ROOM - CONTINUOUS

91

A spare room. Two chairs face each other in the center. Siv takes a seat in one of them.

SIV
Please. Sit.

Christian obliges.

Siv's posture is perfect. Christian self-consciously corrects his posture. A long silence, and then:

CHRISTIAN

I just need to say, I have no idea where Josh went, and I can swear to that on my mother's life.

SIV

How do you feel about Maja?

Christian pauses.

CHRISTIAN

About Maja?

Siv's lack of response says "yes."

CHRISTIAN

How do I feel about her how?

SIV

You have been approved to mate with her. You're an ideal astrological match and she has fallen in love with you.

CHRISTIAN

We haven't even spoken.

SIV

She fell in love with you before you came. Pelle showed her a photo.

CHRISTIAN

(pause)

I have someone here with me. I'm with Dani.

SIV

Dani will not know. I am not proposing marriage. You wouldn't be approved for that.

CHRISTIAN

So...you're asking me to what?

SIV

I'm asking you if you care to mate with Maja. It is a one-night offer.

CHRISTIAN

...She's very beautiful.

SIV
She is very beautiful.

CHRISTIAN
I think I ate one of her pubic hairs.

SIV
That sounds probably right.

Beat. Christian doesn't know what to say.

SIV
From an academic perspective, it would also serve as a unique glimpse into our sexual rites.

CHRISTIAN
Can I not have a unique glimpse without participating?

Siv smiles at the silly question.

CHRISTIAN
Can I think about it?

SIV
You can think about it here.
Tonight is the time of alignment.
Then it's done.

A long, conflicted pause.

CHRISTIAN
I don't think I can.

SIV
Okay. Is that your answer?

Christian hesitates. He's very torn.

92 EXT. SMALL WHITE HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

92

Christian emerges from the house in a daze. We track back with him. His eyes are fraught as he wrestles with the moral quandary. But as he continues to walk/think, a vague SMILE sneaks onto his face.

Christian looks forward to see the DANCE COMPETITION in the distance. He's walking toward it.

93 EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME

93

Dani is still engaged in the dance. It's a dizzying spectacle, and the mounting hallucinations are clearly taking their toll on the dancers.

The music STOPS abruptly, and everyone FREEZES.

LARGE WOMAN
(in Swedish)
Around!

Everybody turns around to face the OPPOSITE DIRECTION. They switch hands, and the music RESUMES. They now dance in the opposite direction.

One woman STUMBLES to her knees, laughing. She is now disqualified. She walks off to sit on the grass and watch.

Another WOMAN pulls out of the circle to RETCH nearby. She is also disqualified.

Dani, who was having fun, is suddenly disturbed by the retching sound. She feels sick for a second.

DANI
(thoughts turning)
Josh...?

The Blonde Woman turns happily to Dani.

BLONDE WOMAN
Don't slip!

Dani looks to her.

BLONDE WOMAN
Can you holding on?!

Dani gets a second wind. She's back.

Maja, who is dancing in the outside circle, sees CHRISTIAN arriving. He joins the onlookers.

Maja decisively feigns COLLAPSE, opting out of the dance. She stumbles over to the onlookers, affecting dizziness. She glances over at Christian, smiling at him. He SMILES back. She coyly sits a few people over. The electricity between them is palpable.

The music STOPS abruptly again. All the dancers turn around, switching hands. As the music starts again, one woman TOPPLES to her side, bringing down two of her neighbors. She and one other laugh; the third woman is furious.

LATER

Many of the women have now been disqualified. Dani is still in the running! She seems determined to stay alert and compete.

The music CEASES. The women STOP. Their attention is turned to a field where NINE SMALL FENCES extend one after the other.

LARGE WOMAN
(in Swedish)
Nine fences jumped clean! Three ladies at a time!

BLONDE WOMAN
(to Dani, translating)
Now we are jumping the nine fences.
We go three and then three.

DANI
(confused, semi-alarmed)
What?

BLONDE WOMAN
Just watch first.

The Large Woman CLAPS once. Three women - including the Blonde Woman - walk up to form a row. Standing side-by-side, they face the nine fences.

The fiddler suddenly WAILS on his fiddle, creating an intense treble. The women all RUN forwrd.

They JUMP over each fence and run to the next. One woman's foot catches the third fence and she FALLS to the grass.

Another women collapses over the fifth fence. The Blonde Woman makes it to the end. She happily returns, still eligible.

Another three women go. Again, only one makes it to the end.

Next up, two women line up. DANI is urged forward to join them. She looks to the women beside her. They SMILE at her.

Their smiles stretch wider (and more fluidly) than normal.

The edges of their mouths elongate up their cheeks.

The fiddle suddenly TREBLES. The women RUN.

DANI JUMPS OVER THE FIRST FENCE. She gasps, suddenly filled with confidence. She runs to the next fence and CLEARS it. She runs faster now, to the third fence. Clears it. The fourth fence - clears it! The woman to Dani's left suddenly BIFFS it, falling on her face. Unshaken, Dani clears the fifth fence, and then the sixth, and then the seventh, and the eighth... Dani makes it to the final (and tallest) fence. She leaps high. Her foot ALMOST connects with the top of the fence, but it PASSES OVER! She lands on her feet, triumphant. She glows with excitement.

The other woman also made it. She walks up to Dani, HUGS her and gives her an encouraging PECK on the lips.

Dani turns to the onlookers. She sees CHRISTIAN. He isn't paying attention. He claps absent-mindedly.

Dani's expression CURDLES. She walks back to the maypole. Her trip is turning BAD again.

More women have lined up to jump the fences. The fiddle SHRIEKS, and they run.

Christian's eyes go to Dani. She's staring at him. Taken aback, he gives her a smile. She doesn't smile back. She's very much in the grip of the psychedelics now.

Dani's HANDS are taken by women on either side of her.

Confused, she looks around to see that she is now part of a more modest circle surrounding the maypole. Only SEVEN women remain. The music STARTS and they commence dancing.

MEANWHILE, Christian sits among the onlookers. He's sneaking obsessive glances at Maja. Suddenly, he notices ULLA (whom he met earlier) walking toward him. She arrives at his feet, holding out the CUP of the flower-spiked water.

ULLA
For you.

CHRISTIAN
What is it?

ULLA
Spring water with special properties.

CHRISTIAN
(skeptical)
What's it do?

ULLA

Breaks down your defenses and opens
you for the influence.

CHRISTIAN
...I'm worried I'll have a bad
trip.

Christian looks back to Maja. She's now looking directly at him.

Her eyes are languid, confident. She doesn't break the gaze.

Christian turns to Ulla, and accepts the water. He sips it.

Sips it again. KNOCKS it back.

Settling into the idea that he's now going to hallucinate, Christian looks back to the MAYPOLE. The women are still dancing in a circle.

IN THE DANCING CIRCLE, Dani's eyes betray a rising panic.

One SKINNY WOMAN says, as provocation:

SKINNY WOMAN
(in Swedish)
If we stop, will everything keep
spinning?

A SHORT WOMAN replies:

SHORT WOMAN
(laughing, in Swedish)
What if we looked down and there
were centipedes everywhere?

The Short Woman laughs, and then looks down. As imagined, she sees the ground as a squirming BLANKET OF CENTIPEDES. She SCREAMS in horror, desperately FLEEING the circle. Another woman has looked down to see the same thing. She SCREAMS too, and runs off.

Dani looks down, panicked and confused. It's just the earth beneath her feet.

DANI
There's nothing there.

Dani looks up. She laughs with relief, still confused.

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

Now there are only five women dancing.

TIME-LAPSE. The shadows of the dancing women crawl across the grass, moving in accordance with the drifting sun. Two women FALL (to be disqualified) over the course of this time lapse.

Now, only Dani and two other women are in the running. One of these is the Blonde Woman. The other is a good-natured Plump Woman. They each dance separately, no longer holding hands.

The Plump Woman's legs are clearly less stable than Dani's or the Blonde Woman's, and she is tired and stumbling.

Competition has been growing in Dani. She's so close to winning that she can now taste it.

The Blonde Woman turns happily to Dani.

BLONDE WOMAN
(in Swedish)
Are you tired?!

Dani, still dancing:

DANI
I don't speak Swedish!

BLONDE WOMAN
(not understanding)
What?!

Dani repeats herself, but it comes out as:

DANI
Aewobeeemeewish!

The Blonde Woman, understanding, responds:

BLONDE WOMAN
Waweroobeeny!

DANI
(somehow understanding)
Aewabeeny-sa-aewonnerstabloo!

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

DANI
(excitedly remarking on
this)
Weerabbleeishcobleraymib!

The Blonde Woman nods manically, agreeing with this.

BLONDE WOMAN
Blorishcobleraymib-wonnerstablee!

The Plump Woman suddenly TRIPS over one foot to fall CRASHING to the ground. The Blonde Woman (still facing Dani) TRIPS over the Plump Woman. She COLLAPSES, laughing merrily on the way down.

Dani dances past the fallen women. She doesn't immediately realize that she's just won the competition. She still looks determined as she continues dancing manically around the maypole.

Cheering women rush over to congratulate Dani, but she KEEPS DANCING in the circle, afraid that it's a trick.

The women tug excitedly at Dani's arms. They embrace her. Dani decelerates, but does not cease dancing. Finally, enough women have enfolded her. Her dancing feet slow to a confused halt.

LARGE WOMAN
(in Swedish)
We have our May Queen!!

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

DANI
(hallucinating)
It's over?

LARGE WOMAN
You are our May Queen.

DANI
(confused)
Why? Me?

LARGE WOMAN
You!

DANI
(suddenly scared)
What do you mean?!

ROSE PETALS are fired out of small air cannons by children.

The petals rain down on Dani and the surrounding Hårgans.

Dani, severely disoriented, is led aside by several women. One woman wraps her in a sort of scarf (composed only of greenery and flora), and then she is directed to stand before a gorgeous view of the field. Her distracted attention is pointed to a MAN holding a large, old FILM CAMERA. He takes Dani's PHOTOGRAPH.

Dani looks for Christian, who stands among the Hårgans with a baffled expression. Dani alights on him.

DANI
What's happening?!

But Christian doesn't understand it himself. He shakes his head to say "I don't know!"

DANI
(pleadingly, to the
surrounding women)
What does this mean? What do I have
to do?

The women answer with hugs, warm smiles, and kisses on the cheek. Their faces morph subtly (a product of the psychedelics).

Among the people who kiss her are her MOTHER and FATHER and SISTER (Terri). She looks back for them, but they have disappeared. A figment of her imagination?

Caught in the hallucination, Dani falls into a traumatized daze.

PELLE breaks the spell by giving Dani an enthusiastic hug.

PELLE
Holy cow, you won! May Queen!

He gives her a blunt KISS on the lips. Before she can react, Pelle is replaced by two new women, also kissing and hugging her.

Dani is then led to a ROUND WOODEN PLANK (painted gold and shaped like a cartoon SUN) with eight long, protruding handles. She is directed to STAND on it.

BLONDE WOMAN
Careful!

The handles are gripped by eight men, and Dani is swiftly HOISTED UP. She almost falls, but doesn't. She is elevated five feet above the ground as the crowd erupts into mirthful SONG.

The song persists as Dani, still on her pedestal, is carried across the field. All eyes are on her. Everyone follows her.

DANI
(searching)
Christian?!

But Christian has lagged to the back of the crowd. He looks extremely conflicted. His eyes move to Maja, whose eyes are TRAINED on him. She smiles widely, but her eyes are faded.

Christian slows to a stop as the procession continues. Ulla runs back to fetch him. She takes his hand and pulls him back toward the crowd.

Meanwhile, Dani's confusion and fear is beginning to subside.

She looks down at the procession to see that these people are indeed celebrating her. A few women even persist in throwing rose petals up at her.

Dani, now calm, looks down to see that her FEET and LEGS have assumed the GOLD color of the plank (like a chameleon).

The crowd arrives at today's DINING AREA. In a LUSH FIELD, the tables are all queued up to form a long, straight line.

At the head of the table is a HUGE CHAIR (more like a throne) adorned in lush greenery and bright flora.

Dani's pedestal is set down. Members of the crowd step aside to create a PATH for Dani's trajectory (toward the throne). Dani takes a moment before stepping decisively onto the GRASS.

When Dani's FOOT touches the grass, small SUMMER FLOWERS magically SPROUT UP around her foot. Her next step is the same. Flowers emerge, impossibly, from the soil. She continues to walk forward, having now assumed a more self-possessed posture. Confidence is rising in her, and with every step, more flowers sprout up. She's leaving a beautiful trail of wild flowers in her wake.

Dani STOPS at the throne. Everyone now finds their way to their seats, but no one sits. They look to her. She looks momentarily confused, but then understands. She SITS. Now everyone may sit.

Dani admires her green throne. The greenery/flora subtly SWELLS and DEFLATES (as we saw before, with the mushroom trip).

SERVERS appear with plates. Dani is the first person to receive food and drink. Her tableware is much finer than the rest.

Before long, everyone has food in front of them. They sit with their hands on their laps, present. They WAIT for Dani.

Dani picks up her FORK. She looks back to the rest of the table.

They all look back at her with patience. She then looks down and PIERCES her food with the fork. (The sound of the piercing is heightened.) Dani takes a BITE. Now everyone may begin eating.

Dani looks down the length of the extended table. She alights on CHRISTIAN, who isn't eating. He looks very disturbed, clearly suffering a bad trip. He looks in Dani's direction.

They LOCK EYES, but communicate nothing to each other. They are both lost in confusion, but they don't share in this. If anything, they look SCARED of each other.

This moment is broken by a SERVER arriving at Dani's side. He presents her with a baby SALT HERRING. The community sees this and laughs, knowing what's in store.

DANI
For what?

The PLUMP ELDER explains:

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

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

PLUMP ELDER
(chuckle)
No no - you must try.

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

CHRISTIAN
How much is happening right now?

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

CHRISTIAN

(almost inaudible)
Why did you do that?

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

Dani takes half of the herring into her mouth, starts to chew, and then coughs out the rest. This elicits ecstatic APPLAUSE.

Dani, unnerved at first, lets out a childlike LAUGH.

PLUMP ELDER
A word from the May Queen!

BLONDE WOMAN
Yes! Speech!

DIFFERENT HARGANS
Speech!

LARGE WOMAN
Stand! Stand!

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

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

Dani lets this hang, and then sits back down. Brief, awkward pause, and then:

THIN ELDER
To the May Queen!
(raises his aquavit)
Skål!!

EVERYONE
Skål!!

Everyone drinks to that. One Hårgan Woman turns to Dani to excitedly says:

HÅRGAN WOMAN
You are the family now! Yes?

Dani nods, unsure. The woman nods manically.

HÅRGAN WOMAN
Yes! Yes! You are the family!

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

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

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

Maja continues toward the TEMPLE, glancing back at Christian to confirm that he's still watching her. DANI notices this, despite the fact that everyone is competing for her attention.

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

MINUTES LATER

Everyone is finished. Siv RISES. All eyes go respectfully to her.

SIV

Now it is traditional for the May Queen to bless our crops and livestock. And after the luck you just inherited from that salt herring, we should all be doubly encouraged.

Polite laughter all around.

Siv gestures in the direction of a CARRIAGE, just beyond the tables. Its roof sports THREE UNLIT TORCHES.

Three GIRLS scatter flowers to create a PATH between Dani and the carriage. Dani RISES. Everyone else stands up, too.

DANI

Can Christian come with me?

SIV

No. The Queen must ride alone.

Dani pauses to accept this. She steps onto the floral path and approaches the carriage. On the way, one MAN (dressed in lady's clothing) offers her a LONG, FLAMING STICK. Dani accepts it. The man motions to the carriage's unlit torches.

Dani walks to the carriage, extends the stick's flame toward the torches, and sets them each AFIRE.

The man takes the stick back from Dani, and gestures for her to enter the carriage. A TRADITIONALLY DRESSED MAN stands beside the carriage door. He hands Dani a VIAL OF HOLY SPRING WATER, and offers Dani his hand (for support) as she contemplates entering.

TRADITIONALLY DRESSED MAN
Your majesty.

Dani accepts his supportive hand as she climbs into the carriage.

94 INT. CARRIAGE - CONTINUOUS

94

Dani takes a seat.

Outside, several YOUNG WOMEN (including the RED-HAIRED WOMAN) have gathered in front of the carriage. They each take hold of RODS, prepared to pull the carriage.

A few other women have gathered to the sides of the carriage.

They hold juniper boughs and unlit torches. One girl goes around, IGNITING their torches.

95 EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME

95

Most of the community remains standing at the dining tables.

They WATCH as the women pull the carriage away.

Christian watches, too. Guilt-ridden. He looks to SIV. She looks unblinkingly back.

96 INT. CARRIAGE - MOVING - MOMENTS LATER

96

Dani looks out the window as the carriage is pulled through the WHEAT FIELDS. The accompanying women WAVE their torches about, casting away dark spirits.

97 EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME

97

A GIRL begins scattering flowers to create a NEW PATH. This is between Christian and the TEMPLE. All eyes are now on him.

Christian, frozen for a moment, RISES. He takes one abrupt step forward, and then continues warily toward the Temple.

98 INT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

98

Christian enters the foyer of the temple. The temple doors are closed. A BEARDED MAN IN A DRESS stands in waiting. He hands Christian a WHITE GOWN.

BEARDED MAN IN DRESS

Put this.

The man gestures to a MODESTY PANEL in the corner (behind which Christian can disrobe).

99 EXT. WHEAT FIELD - SAME TIME

99

The women pulling the carriage have slowed to a STOP. Dani is directed by the Red-Haired Woman to step out. She is handed a flaming torch, and led to a small HOLE in the ground.

Dani is handed a sack of GRAIN, a raw STEAK, and an EGG. She is directed to pour the grain into the hole, which she does, and then to drop the steak over the grain. She does this, too. She is then instructed to crack the egg and pour its contents into the hole.

The Red-Haired Woman now affects perfect posture. Dani instinctively mimics this.

RED-HAIRED WOMAN

Repeat now after me.

Dani and the Red-Haired Woman are looking directly into each other's eyes. The Red-Haired Woman begins to SING very slowly, enunciating very carefully, and Dani SINGS ALONG (quite well):

RED-HAIRED WOMAN

Vakna upp, vakna upp, både åker och
äng Nu har du sovit länge i din
säng Nu är det över med snö och med
regn Nu har sommarnatten kommit.

The Red-Haired Woman is impressed. As are the onlooking young women.

The hole is COVERED UP with soil.

100 INT. TEMPLE - FOYER - SAME TIME

100

Christian has changed into the WHITE GOWN. He steps nervously out from behind the modesty panel.

CHRISTIAN

What now?

The Bearded Man in the Dress holds up a STONE POT. He lifts off the lid to release a WAVE OF STEAM.

BEARDED MAN IN DRESS
Breathe in.

CHRISTIAN
What does it do?

BEARDED MAN IN DRESS
For your vitality.

Christian BREATHES IN the vapors. His eyes begin to cloud. He EXHALES heavily. He's already feeling the effects. His breathing becomes shallow.

The Bearded Man now OPENS THE DOORS to the temple.

101 INT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

101

It is dark, save for several burning candles.

In the center of the room, lying on a bed of freshly cut birch twigs and WILD FLOWERS, is MAJA. She is NUDE, lying on her back, legs together.

Several OLDER WOMEN, mostly in their 30s and 40s (a few in their 50s and 60s), stand at the back of the room. They are also NUDE.

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

Ceremonial MUSIC begins. A few women, reading from the Rubi Radr, SING in the Hårgas' wordless, groaning, microtonal tradition.

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

Christian seems to LEVITATE half-an-inch off the ground and then FLOATS gently across the room (clearly a product of the escalating hallucination). As he approaches Maja, the singing intensifies. Maja's LEGS timidly PART. Christian, now standing at her feet, looks down at her. Her eyes are closed as she waits to be taken.

102 EXT. CATTLE HOUSE - SAME TIME

102

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

The carriage has pulled up to the cattle house. Dani, holding a torch, proceeds to bless the livestock (according to the Red-Haired Woman's instructions).

103 INT. TEMPLE - SAME TIME

103

Christian has descended to his knees. He sits between Maja's legs, preparing himself. He looks extremely intoxicated.

Maja's eyes are squeezed shut as she anticipates what's coming.

Christian awkwardly leans down to gently KISS her lips. Without opening her eyes, she kisses back - slowly, sensually. The singing rises and falls (out of harmony) with trembling impatience.

Christian gently presses himself into Maja. Her mouth opens in anticipation. He ENTERS her. Overwhelmed, Maja digs her nails into his back. Her eyes well with tears. Christian looks unsettled, but he continues...

Christian is now MAKING LOVE to Maja, very slowly - almost robotically. She lies motionless, mouth agape. She doesn't move a muscle, nor does she make a sound, but her expression is one of total, paralyzed ECSTASY. The singing has now HARMONIZED.

The Older Women watch this with rapt attention. They are clearly aroused. The lovemaking is dreamily slow. The singing rises steadily. Delayed percussion accompanies each heavy, lagging THRUST.

Maja looks back at one of the WOMEN (50s). The woman smiles tenderly at her. This would be touching if it weren't so weird.

Maja offers the woman her HAND, and the woman supportively takes it into her hands. The woman lovingly presses her CHEEK against Maja's open palm, CARESSING her face.

104 EXT. FARMSTEAD - MOMENTS LATER

104

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

RED-HAIRED WOMAN

We shall go now to Siv's house.

DANI
What's there?

RED-HAIRED WOMAN
It is a special meeting, only for
the Queens. She will bless you.

The distant singing persists. Dani looks to the Temple. She seems DRAWN to it.

DANI
What about there?

RED-HAIRED WOMAN
Not for us.

Dani, attracted by the singing, takes a few steps toward the Temple. The young women look very concerned. The Red-Haired Woman steps up to STAND IN DANI'S WAY.

RED-HAIRED WOMAN
I think you should not.

DANI
...Why?

The Red-Headed Woman is not convincing when she says:

RED-HAIRED WOMAN
It is a ceremony for the men.

Dani is now very suspicious. Her expression begs "What is it really?" The Red-Haired Woman's expression says that it's something that would hurt Dani. The woman's expression pleads: "Don't go inside. For your own sake." Dani's eyes NARROW with paranoia. Now she must enter. She PUSHES ahead. The women remain where they are, very worried.

105 INT. TEMPLE - FOYER - CONTINUOUS

105

Dani enters the foyer of the temple. Beyond the closed doors, the singing has reached an operatic intensity.

Dani takes a moment to gather herself, and then she bends down to peer through the door's KEYHOLE.

Through the keyhole, Dani sees Christian's BACK as he "makes love" to Maja. The surrounding women have fallen deeper into their trance. Dani's eyes go WIDE with horror.

Stunned, Dani backs away from the keyhole. She suddenly doubles over and RETCHES. She rushes out of the temple.

106 EXT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

106

Dani runs outside. She VOMITS onto the grass. She's in a state of shock. Her breathing is shallow and she looks anxiously around, as if confused as to her whereabouts.

The young women rush over to Dani. They surround her, touching her, rubbing her. Dani CAN'T BREATHE. She's panicking.

The Red-Haired Woman directs the women to LEAD Dani to the Main House. They all hurriedly guide her in that direction.

107 INT. MAIN HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

107

The young women usher Dani to her bed. They sit her down, gathering intimately around her. Dani struggles increasingly to breathe.

The Red-Haired Woman HOLDS Dani's FACE in her hands. She locks eyes with Dani and affects DEEP BREATHING. Dani's eyes, unwilling to settle at first, gradually become FIXED to the Woman's. The Woman continues to affect deep, measured breathing. Dani struggles to follow her. Her breathing trembles to meet the Red-Haired Woman's example.

Finally, Dani BREAKS DOWN into tears. Everything she's bottled up, all the emotions that she's labored to stifle - it all comes BURSTING out. She falls into deep, anguished SOBS.

Still locked onto Dani's gaze, the Red-Haired Woman also breaks down. She SOBS DEEPLY along with Dani. They are sympathetically connected. It's remarkable, and very unsettling.

The surrounding women have also started CRYING, although not as intensely as the Woman who has fixed herself to Dani. The crying is infectious, and the deeper they go, the greater the outpour.

It has become a circle of hysterical, weeping women. They moan and scream and cry. It's positively TRIBAL.

108 INT. TEMPLE - SAME TIME

108

The ceremony has nearly reached its apogee. The singing has peaked, and Christian is thrusting faster and harder than before.

Maja, eyes still closed, is in a state of absolute EUPHORIA.

Christian suddenly looks ill. He begins to slow down.

MAJA
(in Swedish)
No. Don't stop.

Christian looks like he's going to be sick.

One of the OLD WOMEN (60s) crouches behind Christian. She PUSHES on his buttocks, urging him to thrust faster. She keeps pushing and pushing until Christian's thrusts have gained in force.

MAJA
(in Swedish)
Yes. Yes. Fill me.

Christian continues to push until he finally CLIMAXES. The Old Woman releases him, and backs away.

The singing DIES out.

Christian, motionless for a long moment, pulls out of Maja and sits on the ground. He looks slightly traumatized. Maja looks as euphoric as ever. She hugs her knees to her chest, and gently rocks herself back and forth.

MAJA
(in Swedish, to the
women)
I can feel it! I feel his life
inside me!

Christian looks back to the OLD WOMAN who was just pushing his buttocks. She smiles toothlessly at him. He's definitely going to be sick. He STANDS suddenly, taking in the room with growing repulsion. He turns to amble dizzily out of the temple.

109 EXT. TEMPLE - CONTINUOUS

109

Christian exits. He looks around, increasingly disoriented. He looks down to see the fresh puddle of Dani's VOMIT. This triggers him to retch. He moves desperately away from the vomit.

Standing at a distance, several isolated Hårgans watch Christian stumbling about. Christian tries to ignore them. He walks toward the MAIN HOUSE, but as he approaches, he hears the CHORUS OF CRYING (coming from Dani and the young women), and he immediately changes his trajectory.

Christian is now walking toward a HORSE STABLE.

As he passes the stable, he peers inside to notice that the TRUCK (which was supposedly stolen) is parked inside.

Christian's eyes buzz with suspicion.

Very aware that he's being watched, Christian continues onward. He arrives at a SMALL HOUSE. He opens the door to reveal that it's a CHICKEN COOP.

110 INT. CHICKEN COOP - CONTINUOUS

110

Christian enters. He shuts the door behind him. Chickens flap stupidly about.

Christian tries to regain his composure. As he tries to sober himself up, a barely audible MOANING is heard. He looks up, startled, to SEE...

Across the room, JOSH has been chained to a fence. He is shirtless, his eyes are half-open, and the SKIN of Josh's upper abdomen has been stretched OPEN to expose his LIVER and the corners of his ribs. If it weren't for his faint moans, it would be difficult to discern whether he was alive.

The gnarled edges of Josh's wound have been covered in bird feed. It's clear that the birds have been at it. In fact, one chicken is currently (and feebly) trying to flap its way up to Josh's open wound, and one CROW is perched to Josh's side.

Frozen in horror, Christian stares unblinkingly.

CHRISTIAN

Josh?

Christian's eyes fill intensely with TEARS. He starts toward Josh. As he arrives near him, he begins to repeat:

CHRISTIAN

Jo--

Josh's eyes BURST open and he GASPS wretchedly for air. He is thrown into violent, gurgling convulsions.

Terrified, Christian turns around to see... SIMON'S CORPSE, hanging upside-down. His bare feet have been SHOD with IRON HORSESHOES, and he hangs dangling by the HEELS (rope, secured at the ceiling, has been tied between the tendon and the bone).

Christian's face is locked in an expression of utter horror. He turns to RUN, only to bump into ODD, whose face is painted WHITE. Odd blows a handful of BROWN POWDER in Christian's face.

Christian can't help but BREATHE IT IN. He coughs out a lungful of the mysterious dust.

Stunned for a moment, Christian stumbles back. He tries to move his legs, but they are suddenly FROZEN. Now immobile, Christian drunkenly COLLAPSES. He writhes into panic, unable to move. His eyes are LOCKED OPEN.

He sees a gathering of Hårgans outside the door. Among them is PELLE. Christian looks pleadingly at Pelle. Pelle looks away with shame.

Odd leans down. With his fingers, he CLOSES one of Christian's EYELIDS. He then CLOSES the other. As this lid shuts, we GO TO BLACK.

HOLD ON BLACK. After a beat, we sharply cut to:

111 EXT. FIELD - NEXT DAY

111

A TIGHT CLOSE-UP of Christian's sleeping face. His lip is slightly contorted, and his chin is chapped with dried saliva. A HAND enters frame to gently SLAP Christian awake.

His eyelids do not open on their own.

The hand's fingers PRY OPEN Christian's EYELIDS. His lip remains contorted. He tries to speak, but it's nothing but vowels.

HÅRGAN MAN (O.C.)
You cannot speak. You cannot move.

We cut WIDE to reveal that Christian sits limply on the grass, propped up against a pole. He faces an immense THRONE, made of jagged sticks and enveloping greenery. DANI sits in this throne, dressed in a beautiful white dress (covered in intricate embroidery). Her face is painted WHITE. Her lips painted BLACK. Her impressive FLORAL GARLAND CROWN is comprised of the nine special flowers and herbs. To either side of her, the ELDERS are all seated in a row. (Also, RUBEN has a special seat, whose platform is covered in COTTON, to resemble CLOUDS.) Dani seems to have detached from reality completely. Her eyes are somewhere far away.

The entire community is gathered behind Christian. Among them, MAJA stands happily, wearing vivid red lipstick.

Siv has risen to announce.

SIV

On this, the day of our deity of purification, we gather to give special thanks to our beloved Sun. As an offering to our great Father, we will today surrender nine human lives.

Christian's eyes flare with terror. Dani's expression is blank.

SIV

As Hårga takes, so Hårga gives. Thus, for every newblood sacrificed, we will dedicate one of our own. That is: four newbloods, four Hårgans, and one to be chosen by our Queen. Nine in all, to die and be reborn in the great and just Cycle.

Siv turns to the PLUMP ELDER. He rises to continue the speech.

PLUMP ELDER

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

The Plump Elder gestures to the CORPSES of the two elders who jumped to their death. These bodies are proudly DISPLAYED near the back of the crowd.

PLUMP ELDER

- and two who have volunteered.
(projecting to the crowd)
Ingemar? Ulf?

INGEMAR and ULF take one step forward. Ulf looks nervous.

Ingemar looks overjoyed.

PLUMP ELDER

You have brought outside offerings, thus volunteering your own bodies. You will today be joined in harmony with Everything.
(to Pelle)
And to Pelle, who has brought us new blood and our new Queen: you are today honored for your unclouded intuition.

Pelle, wearing a TWIG CROWN, smiles sadly.

The Plump Elder continues:

PLUMP ELDER
And now, for the ninth offering, it
is traditional that our Queen, in
all her fairness and wisdom, shall
choose between a pre-selected
newblood and a specially ordained
Hårgan...

The Plump Elder turns to a Man standing beside a large BALL CAGE (as generally used in bingo). The cage holds about a hundred WOODEN BALLS (the size of ping-pong balls) with a different RUNIC NAME carved into each.

The Man rotates the ball cage, which then dispenses a single BALL. The man holds up the ball and reads the name aloud:

BALL MAN
Dag.

PLUMP ELDER
Honorable Dag! Please step forward.

DAG, a man in his late 50s, looks like he just won the lottery. He takes a step forward, beaming with pride.

PLUMP ELDER
And Christian Hughes...

The Plump Elder acknowledges Christian, whose eyes are locked wide.

PLUMP ELDER
(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 HARDED. They narrow pointedly to suggest that she's made her decision. The Plump Elder understands.

PLUMP ELDER
(to the crowd)

The honor has been bestowed on Christian Hughes, our ninth and most sacred offering!

Christian's muffled screams now become hysterical. Dani's gaze remains steely and absent.

112 EXT. FIELD - EVENING

112

CU of a WHEEL rolling across the grass. Tracking alongside this, we tilt up to reveal that it belongs to a WHEELBARROW. Lying in the wheelbarrow is CONNIE'S CORPSE. It is soaking wet and its flesh is grossly distended (from being left underwater). She is wearing the same outfit (of greenery and jewels) that was used earlier for the sacrificial tree (which was fed to the river).

Continuing to track alongside the wheelbarrow (which is pushed by a young male Hårgan), we pull back to EXPAND OUR VIEW. We reveal that the Hårgan is carting Connie's corpse toward the yellow-painted SACRED HOUSE, which was previously off-limits.

It stands in the center of an open field. Its door is now OPEN.

We settle on a static wide of this until a NEW CART is pushed into frame. We now follow this cart, keeping it centered in frame. This cart holds MARK'S "CORPSE." In fact, it is just his hollowed out SKIN - stuffed with straw and hay.

Peripherally, other bodies are being carted toward the house.

We continue to track ahead, following Mark's cart INTO the SACRED HOUSE...

113 INT. SACRED HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

113

The interior is completely adorned in greenery. An impossibly lush mausoleum. In the center is a PLATFORM made of hay.

Connie's corpse is rested in one corner. Mark's is placed in the next corner. Simon's body is placed in between them.

In the following corner is the corpse of one of the ELDERLY MEN who jumped off the cliff. He is surrounded by his most precious belongings (jewelry, books, etc.). His SON (40s) is overseeing the removal of one of his father's EYEBALLS by the DOCTOR.

The doctor has effectively drawn the corpse's eyeball from its socket. He hands the eyeball to the son.

The doctor then moves to the body of the other elderly man who leapt to his death. He is also surrounded by his most prized possessions. The doctor now proceeds to remove his eyeball.

114 EXT. FIELD - DAY

114

The son of the fallen elder has walked to a small HOLE in the earth. He lays his father's EYEBALL in the hole, and covers it with soil.

115 INT. BOOK-BINDING ROOM - SAME TIME

115

A room that is typically used for book-binding. Its walls are lined with collector's editions of books.

A DEAD BEAR (seen earlier, alive and caged) lies on the island table. A deep INCISION has been drawn from the animal's neck to its groin. Two Hårgan Labourers pull out the bear's INNARDS.

After scooping out the majority of its guts, they pile the waste into a bucket.

Then, with the assistance of two well-built Hårgan men, the Labourers endeavor to lift CHRISTIAN's paralyzed body.

Christian is fitted into the bear's hollowed out carcass.

They start by inserting his limp legs into the bear's legs.

116 INT. SACRED HOUSE - MINUTES LATER

116

Christian has been secured into the giant bear carcass. The incision (from its groin to its neck) has been SEWN UP. The bear's JAW has been removed, creating a gaping HOLE (down to its upper chest) through which Christian's FACE is visible.

Five Hårgan labourers plant the bear carcass in the CENTER of the hay platform. There is a pole against which its back is rested. Christian is still unable to move or speak. His muffled screams persist.

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

VÍOARR
(in Swedish)

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

Ingemar and Ulf are now strapped to the walls. They are also surrounded by their most prized belongings. The Doctor stands before Ulf. He pours a thick, sappy LIQUID into Ulf's mouth.

DOCTOR
(in Swedish)
Drink from the yew tree. Feel no fear.

The doctor moves to Ingemar, who smiles widely. The doctor pours the liquid into his mouth as well.

DOCTOR
(in Swedish)
Drink from the yew tree. Feel no pain.

In the b.g., Josh's corpse has also been placed.

The doctor leaves the house. Now, THREE HÅRGAN MEN enter with FLAMING TORCHES. Music begins outside, including the wordless, microtonal SINGING we've come to recognize.

The men approach Christian, whose "screaming" has become horribly frenzied.

The men move to different sides of the hay platform. They form a TRIANGLE. Simultaneously, they touch their torches to the hay - igniting a FIRE.

117 EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME

117

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.

118 INT. SACRED HOUSE - SAME TIME

118

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!

119 EXT. FIELD - SAME TIME

119

Ulf's screams are heard from the Sacred House. Suddenly, every member of the Hårgan community (who is not singing) begins to SCREAM as well. Feeling Ulf's pain, they emit a horrible chorus of wails. When Ulf's screams die down, so do theirs.

Meanwhile, Ruben has been given paper to PAINT on. Two elders encourage him.

DANI, watching the burning house with fraught eyes, is suddenly met with a wave of conflicting emotions. Her expression curdles into one of sheer HORROR and DISGUST. Then it becomes one of deep SORROW and SHAME. Her eyes well with tears. The singing has now HARMONIZED and has risen to an insane, operatic pitch.

We cut to an immense WIDE. Dani's back is in the f.g. and the burning house is in the b.g. Overcome, Dani buries her face in her hands. Breaking into gentle sobs, she begins to walk aimlessly to the side. We TRACK alongside her, keeping her centered. She is circling the house, pulling at her hair and face in increasing anguish. She is WEEPING now, and the house (ever-present in the b.g.) has become ENGULFED in the raging flames.

Dani begins MOANING and SCREAMING. Her howls almost harmonize with the singing in the b.g. The fire ROARS and CRACKLES in the distance. It's apocalyptic.

Soon it's uncertain whether Dani is crying or LAUGHING. Her legs become weak and she collapses to her knees. Four Hårgans (one of them being Pelle) run into the scene, carrying a LARGE CHAIR - Dani's throne.

The Hårgans lift Dani by the arms and SEAT her in the throne.

They then HOIST the chair into the air.

On the upward LIFT, we cut to a tight CLOSE-UP of Dani's face.

She is being carried forward. Her expression, which begins as one of great distress, slowly starts to TURN. Her agony subsides into sudden CONFUSION. What's happening? Where am I?

I'm on this chair, being carried! Her expression goes from FEAR to EXCITEMENT to CONFUSION again. She suddenly lets out an abrupt LAUGH (which we can't hear over the music and the now-deafening FIRE). Dani is now being taken over by an invading sense of pride and contentment. This soon evolves into a manic exhilaration. Dani BEAMS. She has been embraced by a new family. She is Queen. She is not alone.

A SMILE finally breaks onto Dani's face. She has surrendered to a joy known only by the insane. She has lost herself completely, and she is finally free. It is horrible and it is beautiful.

CUT TO BLACK