

Hidden World by Amos Keppler

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I am terrified by this dark thing
That sleeps in me;
All day I feel its soft, feathery turnings,
its malignity.

-Sylvia Plath, Elm

A torn curtain hangs from a branch, blowing in the wind. There are no houses, no buildings anywhere.

Almost half the roof is gone from the ravaged, old house. The white paint is gone from most of the walls. A tree is growing at the top of the stairs. Torn curtains are blowing in the wind, through broken windows. Doors are open. Inside furniture and carpets are wet and dirty.

A hand panning against a stone wall. Waves beating against the shore. Clouds racing across the sky. An aerial view of the city, of cars in line, line, line, slowing down to a crawl. Wrecks along the highway, in streets, of humans, of machines. Poison spills running down river, floating through, destroying Life. Images of a world turned completely bonkers.

Two straight trees in the forest.

INT. THEATER SCENE - NIGHT

Freya sits on her ass on the stage close to the audience, crossing her legs in front of her.

Torches are lit close to her, lit far from her. Mist is behind her, it's in front of her. Her face *is* in light, in shadow.

She is smiling. Eyes are huge, wide and weird.

FREYA

(speaking in a low, deep voice)

Picture Reality as a wall. Reach out your hands
to both sides, as *far* as you can, and you might,
you just might touch it. And the wall may
crumble.

She sits there, with a look of immense concentration written on her face.

And she reaches out with her hands.

EXT. FOREST - DAY

Five people walk a path through the forest. It's foggy, it's smoke and light from the fire.

A larger group of people moves through the forest, bare feet and legs move over the forest
bed. Torches burn and flicker in the twilight.

Five people by the two trees in the forest. It's a clear, bright day.

A group of people, carrying torches, moves up a slope, towards a height under a small rock.

Thick smoke rises in the night air. Fires are lit and flames lick naked skin.

The sun is still rising, slightly covered by clouds, in the clear, bright, cloudy day.

They sweat heavily, breathe heavily, as they walk up a steep slope.

BURT

(gasping for breath)

How much further?

LISBETH

(breathing almost as hard, shouting in joy)

It's *far!* Isn't that the point, Burt?

The five of them walk and stumble, run and fall and crawl up the steep slope.

The other girl in the group shakes her head.

FREYA

The sweat just keeps coming, through the headband and all. I thought we were supposed to sweat less as the journey progressed?

Ted falls in front of Burt. Burt stumbles into him, and they both hit the ground.

John runs ahead, turning around, mocking them.

JOHN

This is it, my fellow savages. Just one more steep slope, a bit of climbing and we're there.

They stumble down the hilltop, slowly regaining strength after the strenuous climb.

They see the height and the mountain plateau, where there are even more trees, another forest, at the other side of the valley. The fog doesn't let up, not even in the middle of the day.

The wet air makes them sweat even more.

The five climb. They rush the final steps to the mountain wall. Sweat keeps flooding their eyes, and makes it that much harder to climb, to find uneven spots in the rock where they can put feet and hands. Lisbeth reaches for the edge, misses and is about to fall when Ted grabs her. She sends him a grateful look.

John stands in front of the two straight trees forming a gate.

JOHN

(speaking loud, dramatically)

Ladies and Gentlemen, I give you the
Maelstrom of Madness, the Gate to Freedom.

Laughter. Strained. Four pairs of eyes burn at their friend.

FREYA

(slightly mocking)

A place so ordinary, John, the boastful one. You
make us walk for hours, to exhaust ourselves for
the gods' sake, to watch a pair of geriatric trees
grow a few more millimeters.

JOHN

(insisting)

But isn't madness truly the road to Freedom?
And you know, both my grandparents and others
their age, get a strange look in their eyes, when

telling the stories. After all, trees have been
worshipped since time immemorial.

An open hand, a closed fist. Ted is repeating the movements time and again and time again.

On the mountaintop close by, a while later, stand Ted and Lisbeth. They're observing the
small fire down below in the forest.

TED

Does this meaningless act really have any
significance, beyond humanity's perceived view
of existence as a duality?

Lisbeth doesn't say anything. She isn't really listening, but stands there, staring at the air.

TED

Isn't the ordinary really the true road to
madness?

They return to the height, the fire. Darkness is about to fall.

ANOTHER LISBETH

(dressed differently. She's alike, but different)

So weird, language. Darkness doesn't fall, it...
grows. Grows out of thin air.

TED

Did you say something?

LISBETH

No, nothing.

TED

But somebody did say something... didn't they?

The smoke rises to the treetops, where darkness slowly falls. The thousand images of the shifting fire dance on the trees surrounding them.

FREYA

(hugging the tree)

Embrace the tree. Feel the sap boiling in its
veins.

And they hear her wild, carefree laughter.

EXT. ELSEWHERE - DAY

A forest path leads to two trees, growing a step apart. Beyond is mist. Just concentrations of wet smoke in white and gray, floating in the strange air, pulling toward each other. There is a gathering of people clad in skins and having strange hairdos.

ABKASHA

(to her tribe)

I can feel it, the mists of Time and Shadow.

There is a gate here, to The Shadow World.

INT. BEDROOM - DAWN

VOICE

I don't know how to explain it. I'm in bed, on my back, with my eyes half closed, observing more than participating. Room seems to disappear... no, *dissolve* around me. I'm standing rigid, before a thin veil. I can't tell its size, its fabric, nothing more, in fact, than that it's *there!* My hands, or not, something that's me, are fumbling at it. A part of it is cast aside and I can see beyond it. But there's nothing there. I try to walk, but no matter how much I struggle I can't go any further.

INT. LIVING ROOM - EVENING

There is the table. There is Ted's face. Aside from that there is only the brown, indistinct darkness.

TED

(excited? calm? indifferent?)

It's the same dream I had. I had that dream last night. Or... once, whenever it was.

The fireplace is sparking. The Fire sparks in the fireplace.

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

The four of them sit around the table. Talking, not really eating, not really talking.

BURT

Nothing really happened on that trip, did it? Oh, it was fun, as long as it lasted, or it could have been, I guess...

LISBETH

If not for that creepy forest ranger guy, boy was he *creep - y!*

A Flash, a gust of dark.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

FOREST RANGER

You can't have a fire. Don't you kids know it's illegal to make fires here?

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

The trader restaurant on the corner.

LISBETH

... and the quarter figures aren't in yet, but they say it will be our best term yet.

BURT

Congratulations, skilled Lisbeth. You've worked so long for this. I guess the older guys in the board have stopped pinching your butt, too, at this point, eh?

LISBETH

(jokingly)

Yeah, sometimes I despair and wonder if it is all *worth* it, you know what I mean... But that is one, tangible result, isn't it...

BURT

(hardly audible)

Not here, please, it's like swearing in church.

TED

(sarcastic)

Yeah, your esteemed colleagues may not enjoy being served the truth. Not even once.

Lisbeth pushes her body tight to his, stroking her chin to his.

LISBETH

I know it's bullshit, okay. I just need to pretend it makes sense once in a while. We all do, don't we.

He nods, even if he isn't sure.

TED

(voice full of regret)

I'm sorry, you don't need my recriminations on top of everything else.

LISBETH

(half whispering)

It's okay... okay.

A guy from the neighbor table leans on his chair, leaning in their direction.

GUY

(cheerful)

Wasn't that crazy chick friend of yours supposed to meet you here? It's been months since we all last saw her, and we sort of *miss* her, you know.

TED

I'm sure you do...

GUY

What was that, I didn't quite hear you...

TED

I'm sure you do.

GUY

What was that, I didn't quite hear you?

TED

I'm sure you do!

There is something in Ted's eyes, or something, somewhere that is making the man at the neighboring table pale and retracting his position.

They see Freya walk towards them on the street outside and wave to her. She doesn't wave back, her movements are stiff, robot-like, not the way they know her at all.

Then she enters the room. They, all four of them know something is wrong, they know it in their hearts, immediately.

FREYA

(In a monotone, «slow» voice)

I SAW THE END AND I SAW THE
BEGINNING AND IT'S ALL THE SAME

VOICE

The people and circumstances may vary, but it
all stays the same.

FREYA

They call it the Rot Race. The question is, as ever, who'll sink and who will swim... and it's foul beyond imagining.

LISBETH

(automatically)

The *Rat* Race. Say, Freya, are you okay, honey?

FREYA

Yes, yes, it's all about success or not, and nothing more. I'm Abkasha and I *know*

TED

What happened, Freya?

She looks at him, not looking at him, with blank eyes deep in her skull, pulled by pale skin.

TED

Damn it, Abkasha, what happened.

She hears him, now. Abkasha hears him.

ABKASHA

(in a shaky, dreamy voice)

I stood on a tall mountain and I saw the world crumble to dust before my eyes. All Life rotting

on the vine. I SAW THE END AND I SAW THE
BEGINNING AND IT'S ALL THE SAME

Two uniformed cops enter the restaurant.

COP

Is she okay? She doesn't look quite *alright*, if
you know what I mean... Shall I call the hospital?

TED

NO Hospital. She'll be okay. It will be okay,
just give her room to breathe, okay?

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

FOREST RANGER

(leering)

You can't have a fire. Don't you kids know it's
ILL - EG - AL to make a fire here... Yes, good
kids shouldn't make aaaany fires if you ask me.
Do ya get my drift, ya tiny, tiny PUNKS?

FREYA

(in a thin, thin voice)

You... hate the forest?

FOREST RANGER

What did ya say?

FREYA

You... hate the forest, don't you... you w-want to burn it, you want it to burn down?

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

TED

(staring)

You're the forest ranger, aren't you, you're all the same?

The room changes, without changing. It stays the same, but *Changed* in inexplicable ways.

COP

I don't know what you're talking about. You're not gonna weird out on me, all of ya, are ya? Let me tell ya something. I would get that chick of yours here under some sort of *control*, if I were ya, before someone else does it for ya. Proper TREAT - MENT may be the only recourse for people like her.

AND WHAT DO YOU MEAN BY USING A PHRASE LIKE «PEOPLE LIKE HER»?
ARE YOU REALLY AS STUPID AS YOU LOOK, YOU DAMN PIG?

There is no reaction. Ted looks around, with thick sweat suddenly tingling his brows. And something dawns on him. Nobody has heard anything. The yelling being only in his mind. Ted freezes, feeling Lisbeth's hand in his, slowly melting, slowly «pulling himself together».

INT. RESTROOM - DAY

LISBETH

(good humored)

There *is* something we can do, isn't there, to seek and perhaps to find... an answer of sorts? We all want answers, right?

FREYA

(subdued)

Perhaps, there is. I used to do stuff like that, used to *dabble*, but I stopped. It... scared me.

LISBETH

(stroking her shoulder, comforting her)

But you're still dabbling, without really wanting to. Whether it's... real or whether it's only you, you need to confront it, don't let it rule you.

FREYA

Yes, yes, you're right.

TED

(showing up in the door, the girls look at him incredulously, but strangely unaffected)

We all need to do it, whatever it is.

They're looking at each other. And looking again. And looking again.

INT. MELANIE'S APARTMENT - EARLY EVENING

MELANIE and Lisbeth have a conversation.

Lisbeth looks into the hall mirror. She is about to leave.

LISBETH

So you're not coming?

MELANIE

I just don't think our beliefs need demonstrations, that's all. And, I might add, I'm looking out for you. I don't think those people, Ted and Freya especially are good for you.

LISBETH

(not looking at the other)

Perhaps it needs curiosity?

There is no response from Melanie. She just stares intensively at Lisbeth, making her uncomfortable.

MELANIE

What about you? Are you going?

There is no response from Lisbeth. She looks into the mirror, studying her plain clothes, touching the sleeves of her jacket. An uncomfortable silence is descending on the room.

INT. HOUSE - EVENING

Ted waits, pacing back and forth, in his house by the forest. Tammy, the cat paces around his legs, seemingly just as nervous. Ted crouches slightly, scratching the back of her ears. She instantly starts purring.

TED

(mumbling)

What a devious young cat you are, Tammy.

He sighs, looking for the tenth time out the window. His pacing slows down, about to stop when the lights from a car illuminates his vision.

He holds the door open for the four of them, bowing eloquently.

TED

May I take your coat, sirs, yours, Madams?

Freya giggles, kissing him lightly on the cheek.

LISBETH

(bending down with a huge smile in her face)

Hi, Tammy.

Tammy knocks her head against the outstretched hand.

Five people sit in a living room. Plain, ordinary. Room, people. A livingroom, five people holding hands around a table.

LISBETH

(snickering)

It feels... awkward, doesn't it? I didn't know it would be this difficult.

ABKASHA

Concentrate, *focus*, give in to yourself.

They're sitting there, with their eyes closed, holding hands. Bodies are rigid, unrelaxed.

FREYA

(shaky)

I was on my way to the restaurant, meeting you. Walking down the street, when... when the colors shifted, shifted to green, and then to gray. And then the vision c-came.

They sit there, with their eyes closed, holding hands. Bodies are rigid, unrelaxed.

JOHN

(good humored, admittedly)

It's kinda strange, after a while I do get this undeniable urge to open my eyes... to see if there is someone *there*, or if you all have turned into demons or something...

Laughter. A bit nervous, but hearty, nonetheless.

JOHN

This isn't really leading to anything, you know.

Can we put out the lights or something?

FREYA/ABKASHA

(hesitatingly)

I don't know...

LISBETH

(jumping up from her chair, mischievously)

Let's DO it!

She walks around the house, turning off all the lights, one by one. First in the other rooms, then in the living room. Pausing a bit, giving them a flashing, demonic smile, before «hitting» the last «switch».

And it turns Dark.

They hear her fumble her way back to her seat. Then it goes quiet, and they can hear each other breathing. And they can feel the hands they're holding. And they imagine, in just the smallest bit of time, that they can see them, too. (They can, in flashes. Flashes of gray.)

LISBETH

I CAN see you. If not with my eyes, than with my mind. Now, that' Strange. And sooo Great!

EXT/INT. FLASHES - NIGHT AND DAY

Not very intense, but There.

INT. LIVING ROOM - NIGHT

Seconds are slooowly stretching into minutes.

BURT

This is stupid. At least that would be what most people would say, if they saw us now. A completely meaningless act, wasting time.

JOHN

If they «saw» us...

JOHN

It's completely dark, you know. There's no electric light that we can see, this close to the forest. If we went outside and walked over the hill we might see the lights from the city in the

clouds, but here it's Dark. Blindfolds wouldn't
have done it, but this... does.

TED

Take in the dark, breathe it in, breathe out
what's inside.

BURT

(ironically)

The Shaman, the Witch speaks.

LISBETH

hush sssjjj

LISBETH

As the ceremonial master I command you all...
to empty your minds, to feel the Night.

Minutes go by as they're sitting there waiting.

LISBETH

SPIRITS OF EARTH AND SKY, I
COMMAND THEE TO APPEAR!

More silence.

Freya does break the silence first, giggling first, then breaking out in a wholesale laughter. She stops after a while, after a lamp has been lit, looking as if she wants to cry.

They're going to bed early, frustrated, without really having any idea why.

INT. HOUSE - BREAKFAST AT DAWN

Lisbeth is making herself a sandwich. No butter, no fat, only vegetables, tomatoes, onions, and such. John looks at it all with disdain in his entire expression.

LISBETH

Yeah, just keep looking at me, that way. You wouldn't if you had to worry about keeping your weight down every second of the day.

Before things can get ugly, Ted intervenes.

TED

Guys, what about last night? Any thoughts?

FREYA

(shrinking from any possible touch)

I blew it, I know that. I'm the one who, of all of us, should be most interested in this, of making something out of it. And there are times when I do feel there is something to it. And then I seem to reach an impasse, a block, and it all falls apart.

I laugh at myself, at us, at our pathetic attempt to make sense of an insane reality.

TED

For what's it worth, I don't think you «blew it» more than any one of us, or all of us together. There seem to be some constants in the doing of... of Magick, some necessities needed to bring about whatever result desired. Concentration... or letting go of concentration, is one, but that is mostly incidental. Our problem is first and foremost that we don't believe in it, believe that we can get it done. We should stop dabbling, and get on with it, but we're just a bunch of ridiculous amateurs...

BURT

(suddenly)

Dreamtime?

They're looking incredulous at him.

BURT

Aborigines in Australia and some other primitives do believe we're participating in Dreamtime, drifting through an insane world, where nothing of consequences ever matter.

LISBETH

I've read about that. Every night, every time they're sleeping, they're visiting this Dream World of theirs, acting upon any desire, any whim they may have, they may get. It's supposed to be very... liberating.

BURT

(eagerly)

That's one interpretation, but there's another. According to that one, we're living in the Dream World right now, and the other world, the one we're «visiting» when we're «asleep», *that's the real world.*

ABKASHA

(turned «completely» around from just the other minute)

(cocky, dangerous, confident, shrugging)

Or both views are probably wrong. After all, we humans are, fortunately, doomed to always have a fallible view on Existence.

As it often is with these occasions, they would discontinue prematurely, unsatisfactory. Ted is walking his friends, his confidantes, his... siblings out in the hall.

TED

I have participated in parties where everything has been *very* close to... to *taking off*, but didn't. This was, even if not much happened, closer than most, I think. Perhaps not because of what happened or not happened in itself, but because the attempt in itself is «worth» something.

FREYA

(giggling)

It didn't really... amount to anything, but it was fun anyway. I felt outside myself, and I... heard myself talking, if you know what I mean... I still do!

BURT

You've always been extremely fond of hearing your own voice.

FREYA

Oh, you...

And that could've been it, as Freya is struggling with the hurt and sense of betrayal she feels, laughing it off, attacking Burt with slight hits on his shoulder.

Reality... pauses, holding its breath, as the air before the storm.

Lisbeth lifts and lowers her hand, a poised finger, to get their attention.

LISBETH

Guys...

They look at her, mildly interested, baffled by the intensity in her eyes

LISBETH

Why don't we have a... party, you know, a
Witchnight? We've talked about it often enough,
haven't we? Without talking about it, that is...
Invite a lot of people and hoping beyond hope
that most of them will show.

TED

(declamatory)

«A night for Witches, for potential, potential
proverbial Witches...

TED

I like it!

JOHN

That might be it, you know. Perhaps we've...
approached, attacked our quandary from
completely the wrong end. Perhaps we need to
create the Magick before we can use it.

FREYA

(kissing him on the mouth, with dark lights in her eyes)

Yes, because we do need this, don't we, all of
us...

TED

It's well over a month until April 30th, the
traditional Beltane Night. For some reason I've
always pictured this as a starting point for
something like this.

FREYA

It is an ancient Night.

They part. To meet again.

He sees them drive off. He combs his hair with his hands, walking back into the artificially
lit livingroom. Alone again.

EXT. CITY - MORNING

Cars, buildings, queues, smoke and poison, hungry mouths of coffins big and small.

INT. CITY OFFICE - DAY

Ted is at work, wearing a suit, shirt and tie, hating every minute of it.

A colleague, Frank, enters, the room. His attire, his being, is impeccable from head to foot.

FRANK

A bit late today, are we, my good idle Ted?

TED

(dryly, with an edge, *looking* at Frank)

No, *We* are not late, Frank, not late at all.

FRANK

(«pulling back»)

Hey, don't pick on me, I just don't think your repeated lack of performance will get you any favors with the brass, that's all. Say... what happened to you anyway?

He has noticed the little scratch on the other's forehead. That figures...

Ted can still see it before his inner eye. He has always been good at that.

EXT. HIGHWAY - DAY

He never saw the driver, but it looked, it felt like, to all intents and purposes, that whoever it was, did attempt to ram into him.

It happened in an intersection. The car wasn't there. Then it was, and passed him, with centimeters to spare. He remembered swerving frantically, stopping halfway off the road. He didn't notice the blood before he went to the bathroom to «fix up».

INT. OFFICE - DAY

TED

I almost crashed.

FRANK

That's... horrible.

Ted is waiting.

FRANK

Well, that's modern traffic for you, one can
never relax a moment.

Ted is waiting.

FRANK

(hesitating)

Did... you have one of your... parties, last night?

TED

(indefinitely patient...)

Yes, Frank, we did.

FRANK

Then it's not strange that your concentration is...
off. Not strange at all I'd say. What will you do if
our superiors find out? They will, sooooooner or
later, you know.

TED

Frank?

FRANK

Yes?

TED

That you're choosing to limit yourselves to a completely boring, ordinary *existence* isn't really my problem. Some of us are a bit brighter than that!

Five seconds, ten later, Frank is gone, vanished into thin air, as if he was never there. An extremely satisfying moment. So satisfying, so futile.

INT. RESTROOM - DAY

The restroom again. Ted is tumbling inside it.

TED

Restroom... What a completely ridiculous name.

Ted stares at himself in the mirror.

TED

(to himself)

Touching Reality...

And he's reaching out, stretching his hands to both sides.

TED

(mumbling)

Down to my knees in pain

VOICE

(and echo)

Down to my knees in pain.

INT. ROOM - Memory.

There are people around him. And Shadows. There are ever Shadows.

TED

(down on his knees, a raised fist, shouting)

I, I, swear by me, *by the entirety of my being*, to
never change, to always continue to change, to
never adapt, to always adapt, to never allow any
man, nor any creature there may be, to be my
Master.

EXT. CITY - DAY

VOICE

Down to my knees in pain.

He walks the streets aimlessly the entire day, almost like a penance.

The scene shifts, and shifts again. It turns green, it turns gray.

It turns dark.

TED

(to random people passing by)

Can't you see the complete falsehood of it all?

They hurry on, looking at him with a deep frown of worry on their forehead.

He sits in a room. It's dark, but not completely dark. There's the mist, the shadow in gray.

TED

There's no one here, but I am talking to
somebody, at least I think so.

He reaches for something in the dark. His hand returns with a cup of smoking fluid.

TED

I don't know if I got home really or how I got
home... if I did. I was supposedly driving back,
even if I wasn't certain the car was in the garage
until I actually walked back and looked... I see it
with my own eyes, the next morning I do.

INT. COMPUTER ROOM - EVENING

VOICE

He has always felt strange, a strange ambiguity, using a computer. It's a tool, certainly, like all technology, but also a sort of dream machine, where one might project one's fears, one's hopes, one's desire.

TED

(sitting in front of his computer, speaking on the phone)

Yeah, I'm sort of turning advertising on its head... I got this idea, this... compulsion of an idea to the witchnight we talked about. I just had to do it!

Yes, I did get the smoke-machine.

He calls all four of them, talking for hours, spilling it all, with an intensity that is both frightening and exhilarating to him.

TED

Yeah, we should hold an initial ceremony, a sort of preparation, the five of us... By the full moon? The 15th? We need to prepare ourselves, you know, totally inexperienced as we are. I feel it's like learning to walk all over again.

TED

Yes, to walk... and Fly!

EXT/INT. VARIETY OF PLACES - DAY AND NIGHT

It starts then. They make invitations. Both through mail and through public forums like telephone poles and church doors. And the Internet...

They sit around a table in Lisbeth's apartment in the city.

LISBETH

We won't give away any names, phone numbers or home address. Just the time and place of the pick up. It will cause trouble, be certain of that, but this way they'll have no one to point their finger at.

FREYA

(smiling)

You're correct, it will cause quite a... stir. I've participated in such fun before, and we found out a lot of things afterwards then, valuable to us in advance, certainly valuable now. The law may easily stop a public gathering, and it will be a public gathering if we're not issuing invitations to all our... guests.

BURT

(apprehensive)

It feels strange, doesn't it? Like we're planning
sedition or something?

TED

(with a demonic glee)

Perhaps we are!

EXT/INT. SMALL SHOP IN THE CITY - DAY

Lisbeth walks to the counter with a sweet smile on her face. She's alone.

LISBETH

I need five simple costumes with a hood and
cloak.

We're five people who have been designing
ourselves different tasks for a *party*...

The woman behind the counter looks at her with a worried look on her face, but proceeds to
find and sell the clothes.

LISBETH

These are fine, simple and non-expensive. Just
what we were looking for. Thanks.

The woman behind the counter says nothing. Lisbeth leaves.

EXT/INT. GAS STATION/GROCERY - EVENING

After buying food supplies, they fill two ten liters cans with gasoline.

TED

(loud to other customers)

It's a beautiful night, isn't it?

He doesn't receive a verbal reply. Instead he gets the one he expected. The two people hurrying out of the shop, away from him.

He walks outside. The man and woman have already started their car and they quickly drive off.

BURT

What did you do to them?

TED

I shared my happiness with them.

EXT. WILD GARDEN - NIGHT AND FULL MOON

They walk from the house in the forest, the short walk, into the Night. There is a garden, with a lawn, but the forest is close by. The moon's silver rays cast shadows through the trees, over the lawn, on the black clad people. There is no obvious preparation beyond the absolutely practical. They brought their hot dogs, their wine and themselves, and a lot of dry logs and twigs.

Ted carries one extra plastic bag. He empties the contents on the ground and picks it up.

TED

VOILA, one home made pentacle maker.

It is basically two twigs, connected by a rope.

TED

The rope is two meters across. That should make a Pentacle with a diameter of four meters.

Observe.

He pushes one of the twigs into the ground, walking a few steps to stretch the rope, bows down, and starts rotating around the created center, drawing the circle on the ground. Then he pushes five more twigs into the ground on various places on the circumference of the circle, with about the same distance from each other. He ties a string around one of them and stretches it from twig to twig, until the string has formed a Pentagram, a pentagram, a five-point star, within the circle, together forming a pentacle. Gasoline treated to burn rather than explode, is poured on the string, on the circle surrounding it. One last line to the heap of logs and twigs and sticks at the other end of the lawn.

The five of them pull back, removing (with a wicked, devil may care smile) the empty gasoline cans. And then they place themselves within the circle, by the center of the Pentacle.

LISBETH

(loud)

We're consecrating this place, giving it a soul. Ours. This is our Place of Power, our Aerie, where we'll make our Magick, where we'll start our Journey on the Winding Road, towards knowledge, towards Understanding. Towards Magick, towards... Life.

Ted lights a match and let it fall from his fingers, to the gasoline stained string below. And the flames rise, and the fire ignites the night air, and they feel the heat surrounding them. And they fear that the center where they have placed themselves is too small. They're stretching out their arms to the side and they are not burned. And they see again the line of fire run to the awaiting potential fire, suddenly, seemingly so far away now.

The potential is realized and fire seems to burn the very sky.

Afterwards they're grilling hot dogs and drinking red wine. Ecstasy is still there in their eyes, but mellowed, laid back. And they dance and they burn. The burning being visible in their eyes, their every move.

FREYA

(turning and turning and turning)

Witchnight is coming. The thirtieth of April, as it is measured on Earth, according to western, christian timeframe.

ALL

WITCHNIGHT IS COMING. THE NIGHT OF THE WITCH, THE NIGHT OF CHANGE. I LOOK SO MUCH FORWARD TO IT. I LOOK FORWARD TO IT *SO*. LET IT COME, LET IT *BE*.

EXT. DAYS - FLASHES OF ILLUSION

They see the clouds. They dance and they see. Time... flies. Clouds soar across the sky. Waves crush the fragile shore. The river reaches the sea. Suddenly it's time, suddenly the night is there. Here... with them.

It rains the entire week. Large droplets, heavy droplets. Almost torrential rain.

Early afternoon, the clouds part and a hot sun starts baking the ground and air and the beasts walking on and through it.

EXT. NIGHT - INTO THE WILD GARDEN

John and Lisbeth wait on the bus stop, clad in their hoods and cloaks, carrying torches.

People *look* at them. Both the other passengers on the bus and the prospective guests they've come here to gather. «Ordinary» passengers, leaving the bus at the stop, hurry on their way. Some cast angry stares. Some just hurry.

The guests gather silently, in apprehension and anticipation.

JOHN

(in a low pitched, put on, voice)

Welcome! We've come here to gather you, to lead you on your first, hesitating steps into the Other World.

And the two of them start walking, with a trail of oozing smoke behind them. And the others follow. Eagerness, accompanied by a nervous snickering.

LISBETH

(in a light, formal, slightly ironic speech)

Did any of you good people have any problems finding this Crossroads?

GIRL

(slightly euphoric)

Not really. It was a real riot asking the people behind the information desk at the bus station for directions, though. They looked *real* funny...

The ice is not broken, but that first, initial conversation does volumes for their sense of... belonging. They do gather, around each other.

A car roars in the distance, in the north. Lisbeth and John look at each other. They see a flock of four people walking towards them from the south. John stops, holding up a hand, signaling for the others to stop.

JOHN

(sharply, calmly)

There's a bit of trouble ahead. Don't worry, we're handling it.

Lisbeth starts handing out small pieces of paper, neatly folded, in sharp controlled motions.

A police car stops right behind them. From the opposite side, a group of four uniformed cops are approaching. The four in the car join them. Blinding flashlights are directed at the small group of night people.

Lisbeth takes one step forward, making them stop in their tracks.

LISBETH

(challenging)

What is your purpose of being here, of
disturbing us like this?

COP

(ironically, in a cruel voice)

What are you talking about, we're just passing
by and we don't need no stiiinking reason
anyway.

OTHER COP

(officious)

We've reason to believe you've planned an
illegal, public gathering in this vicinity.

JOHN

(smiling under the hood)

You're wrong on both counts, sheriff... This is a
party depending on *invitation* only, held on
private land.

Then he proceeds to handing the nearest cop one of his remaining notes.

The cop is looking at it, using his flashlight.

THE CHILDREN OF THE MIDNIGHT FIRE
ARE INVITING YOU
TO
WITCHNIGHT

ON THE PROPERTY OF TED CARTLAND
ON THE EVENING OF APRIL 30TH
NO ONE WITHOUT AN INVITATION
WILL BE ACCEPTED ON THE PREMISES

LISBETH

(sarcastic, to the uniformed people)

Yeah, that includes you... You're not welcome.

If you should attempt to enter the premises, there will be charges filed. You better be damn sure of yourself, to disturb our peace.

There's a short silence.

COP

Okay, guys, we're leaving.

They leave. One by one, withdrawing as a group, backing off with silent snarls and looks filled with hatred.

The car drives off with the tires screeching against the road. The four on foot disappear around a curve 50 meters ahead. A car starts and that sound of its engine is slowly fading, as they're driving south.

JOHN

Is it me, or do you have a feeling that this isn't the end of it?

LISBETH

It's you.

JOHN

Thank you, I feel so much better now.

Rewards of laughter from the Gathering.

LISBETH

It's never the end, but I think we're rid of them for the time being, perhaps even for the remainder of the Night.

JOHN

Okay, people, let's continue on the path we had set out on, before we were so rudely interrupted.

Laughter, lifting their spirits.

They take off from the main road. No more tarmac, no more roadlights. They walk down a slope of a road. Up again, passing a few houses, meeting a few people. John, obviously knowing some of them, greets them cheerfully. Some actually return the greeting, somewhat somber...

One right turn, two left turns and they discover the house by the end of a long stretch, just by the edge of the forest. At first they can't quite make out what they see in one of its windows, but after a few more steps, a few hundred, they start to get the idea.

An entity, clad in cloak and hood, observe them from a window. They can see «it» clearly in the skillfully arranged light. A skull is placed on something they can't see on the right.

Torches burn both outside and inside the illuminating light. They can see a demonic face, free of human traits and they can feel their skin crawl. And the crawling skin is visible in their entire demeanor.

Suddenly he stands at the top of the concrete stairs, greeting them, a masked human being, removing his mask. They're not sure if that makes him any less demonic.

HOODED MAN

Welcome fair beings, to this night of travails and pleasures, of petrification and phenomenon. We'll do our best for you to enjoy yourself. You will do your best.

A cat greets them, too, either by rubbing itself against their feet or being visible, a silhouette against a light, a torch. Oozing torches illuminate the place, shadowing it. The shadows are long, deep.

People start arriving in numbers. Some gathered from bus stops. Others, knowing the way, arriving in cars. One car, though, never drives through the green metal gate, but is parked outside. No one gets out and no one inside is ever seen.

GIRL

(admittedly)

They are creepy.

BOY

They're probably using that mountain to spy on us, too

TED

They are! Don't worry about it. They will not be able to see what we're doing, behind all the trees.

The last group to arrive is greeted by Ted in the door. He doesn't wear his mask and the hood is pulled back. Melanie arrives, leading a strangely clothed bunch of entities.

TED

Welcome, good people, may I take thy coat, Madame?

She gasps in amazement, as he gives her a predatory kiss on the side of the neck.

There's not a single electric light lit in the entire house. The food, an entire pig and assortments is roasted and prepared over fires outside in the garden.

The house is virtually empty. No tables, no chairs, no furniture to speak of. Everybody is standing, in their costumes and their masks. Even the windows are... removed.

TED

(taking a bow)

Yes, I plan to redecorate...

They can see straight out in the garden. Sometimes they think there is glass in the windows sometimes not. The fireplace glows with a strange luminance. There is smoke in the room, but they have no trouble breathing. On the contrary. They can smell the incense in the air and are strangely revitalized. Already.

A female Witch approaches them from the garden, seemingly growing out of the Night, illuminating the air around her. She wears her cloak. The hood is pulled back. They suspect she's nude under the embracing cloak, but they can't be sure. Her hair is pulled back, and her face painted white. She has black and red stripes, markings on her face. She stops under the window. It is as if she's very close, very far away.

WITCH

Hello, I am a Witch. You know me, you know me not. I'm Freya, but I'm also Abkasha. She is my Shadow, the other part of me, speaking to me from the darkness between the stars.

ABKASHA

It's Midnight, we've entered The Hour of The Dead. It's time to feast! On food and wine and Blood.

A wave with her hand, an arm in Shadow. The long table suddenly appears from nowhere. The deep part of the garden is lit, of color in Fire shades. Another table appears a bit to the left.

They walk out the door, out the window, floating to the feast below. The people gathered are about 30 in number. It's difficult to know the exact number, since everything seems to shift once in a while, making it hard on the obsessive observer.

While people walk around, looking for chairs Abkasha approaches a boy, interchangeable with the rest, perhaps noticing the slight look to the left, the nervous glance at his chest.

ABKASHA

(cold)

What is thy name, boy?

BOY

Clay

She grabs his shirt like a predator, tearing it apart, pulling out the microphone and gear inside, throwing it into the closest fire. In a dust of smoke, it's Gone!

CLAY

(protesting)

HEY, that expensive stuff...

ABKASHA

(staring hard at him)

I do not doubt that. You guys spare no expenses,
right?

He tenses, expecting everybody to jump him, reading condemnation and disgust in every face.

Nothing happens.

ABKASHA

Come, Clay, join us, enjoy thy Life.

And after a short hesitation, he sits, keeping his ears and eyes open. All the senses normally so much use to him... totally useless in this horrible, shifting reality.

It is a hot night, much too hot to be April 30th at this latitude. The ground has dried well under the hot sunlight, during the day. The clouds cover most of the sky now, but they are light clouds, with no chance of rain.

LISBETH

(thinking out loud, forming the words with her lips)

A perfect Night.

TED

(simultaneously)

A perfect Night!

They all choir. The guests glance curiously and nervously at their hosts and hostesses, their eyes filled with mischief, turning to keep up with the garden's swirling mists and lights... and shadows.

Freya procures pieces of cloths from a bag, holding it up, offering it to the assembly. Some guests accept it, others do not. Lisbeth grabs one, bringing it to Melanie. It is a hood, a tight hood.

LISBETH

(eagerly)

You should try it on, and see if it works for you. It is really something. You sit there. Everything is pitch black. All your other senses are working overtime, and then suddenly... VOILA, everything works better than ever before.

MELANIE

(uncertain)

I don't know...

Lisbeth puts the hood on her, pulls it down her head. Melanie stiffens in her seat, then she goes limp.

LISBETH

Can you feel it? Can you hear the whispers in
the Night?

ABKASHA

It's a bit tight, but don't worry about it. It may
make you squirm at first, but then I guarantee
you'll feel your pounding pulse, your beating
heart. The ghosts in the air.

Can one see such things? I don't know, but I
know it can be sensed, and thus have a
quantifiable existence.

Food and wine are placed on the table. They can all hear it, those who sit there with the tight
hood pulled over their head. There is a slight opening for the mouth, that's all. Otherwise
everything is pitch black.

VOICE

Tasty flesh, wine like blood.

Creating a murmur visible among them all.

TED

(standing up - they can all hear him, *see* him do so)

Picture a path, leading into a forest. The dark is thickening with every step you take.

A VOICE FROM THE FOREST

FEEL THE ILLUMINATION OF THE PATH

And they eat, and they drink.

BURT

The taste is enhanced, somehow... isn't it?

MELANIE

(laughing)

It's the best I've ever tasted.

Taking a HUGE bite.

A piano, somewhere, and a guitar, and a drum.

GIRL

(giggling, somewhat solemnly)

It feels weird. I hear drums, seemingly rising from the *Earth* itself. Electronic music, too.

Perhaps electronic, but it sounds «natural».

Dinner, food and wine, are devoured, has been devoured, the night is yet young. The Night begins.

LISBETH

I'm going to tell you about Witchnight now...

She draws back, she stands still, saying nothing, waiting a bit, until everybody's attention is focused on her.

LISBETH

This is an ancient night. A dangerous night, where we're drifting away from everything we've known. Older than the church, older than christianity, than all the present, known religions and views. The more modern names are Beltane or *Valpurgis Nacht*, one of the four great annual witch sabbaths. According to legend it's a night where borders between the known and unknown world are weakened and sometimes erased. There is a Shadow World close to the day world we know. A mirror image, mystical, wonderful, exciting and terrifying. Yes, we know this world intimately.

Hoods are pulled off heads. Images once more flood their eyes.

CLAY

(weakly)

Everything is changed, isn't it? It didn't really
look like this... before... did it?

GIRL

(giggling)

I do believe the trees are closer, or that there are
more of them. Everything seems so much... I
don't know... bigger... closer. You didn't have
anything in our food, did you?

Ted stands before them with the skull in his hand.

TED

Hello, I am a Witch. You know me, you know
me not. I'm Ted, but I'm also Anubis. He is my
Shadow, the other part of me, speaking to me
from the darkness between the stars.

He turns, rotates one single time. Everybody gasp out loud as they discover that his face has
turned into a skull.

ANUBIS

Welcome, I am your host.

I am Anubis... The Mystery of Death.

And I am Mysteriam, The Secret of Life.

He holds the skull in his flat hand, stretched above his head.

ANUBIS

Is this what you fear? This trifle, this sleep
before dawn? Is it any wonder we're wandering
through the day as ghosts of a Human Being?
Man shuffles through this landscape of despair
and humiliation. A pale broken figure. Into the
twilight.

You've come here, seeking Life. And you've
found it, rising deep within your own well.

Lie down now... and *listen!*

And they are, closing their eyes. The ground is soft and dry, warming them, as the fires do.
Blankets embrace their bodies.

JOHN

Were the blankets there a second ago? Are they
here now, or are you just imagining them,
imagining all of this? Is any of this happening?
Has anything, anything at all truly happened to
you, before this moment? Are you born now, into
Life?

TED

I, your Guide will not be accompanying you on
your Journey. I will be Guiding you, pushing you

forward, bringing you back. Between that it is up to yourself.

The ground warms you. It won't burn you. The burning comes from within, from your own heated furnaces of passion. We are creatures of passion.

Picture a path, leading into a forest. The dark thickens with every step you take.

The path goes down, into a dark hole of nothing. Picture an opening closed. Imagine it opening. Light it with your Fire, walk through it, The Gate of Fire. Go back, go forward, through Mists of Time and Shadow.

I'm counting to 15 and you're going on your Journey, traveling to far lands. One, two, three...

MELANIE

(crying out)

My mask. Did you remove my mask?

They're all twisting and turning, before resting their body on the soft ground, the green blanket. All while low music is playing somewhere in the dark.

TED

... thirteen, fourteen, fifteen.

Except for the music, there's only silence for a long time. But Ted turns and looks around him all the time. He doesn't speak, but he moves his lips and utters words.

VOICE

I can feel you...

FREYA

I can feel it, I can feel The Other World, what is
Hidden!

MELANIE

(moaning)

Me, too, me, too.

JOHN

(laughing)

I can see the Dance, the Maelstrom of Madness.

There is silence, everlasting. Ted stands there, while the others lie on the ground, unmovable. He moves occasionally, silently, careful not to disturb the peace. He looks around, a bit apprehensive, more than excited at the surrounding darkness. There is a draft, a silent choir of whispers in the air. Everybody is accounted for, there on the ground. He can yet see shadows move among the trees, and even close to him. He is alone. Everyone on the ground is gone. They are visible, but Gone. He sees glimpses of them among the trees, and also in places far away. Lisbeth smiles to him. He sees Abkasha in a primitive outfit by the Gate of Madness, speaking, but he can't hear what she is saying.

Ted is preparing, preparing for the process of bringing them back. He starts humming, in a low, atonal voice, dancing around them, turning and turning, until he slowly stops.

TED

It is time. I, your Guide bring you back, back from the shadow lands. I bid you to return from your Journey. Fifteen, fourteen, thirteen...

And for a long time nothing happens. Then, finally they start moving. Eyelids slide open. They rise. Clay holds up his hands. Eyes are huge.

CLAY

Like taking a cold shower, but I'm not wet.

Everybody moves around, independently of each other, while contemplating their Journey.

LISBETH

I'm Awake! Far more now, than ever before.

The Party, the Celebration moves on, slowly gaining momentum on its own. «The End» by The Doors is played.

JOHN

(grinning)

It's almost obligatory. We'll probably keep playing it on all the upcoming witchnights....

The Dance, the Dance of Life begins.

There's alcohol, there's heavy drinking, but is it really needed?

JOHN

(sitting down, observing the empty glass)

It's burning up inside of me. I've always felt
ridiculous saying that before. Now, it feels right.

FREYA

We are burning! The biggest intoxication,
wildness comes from within.

COME

She stands above him, holding out her hand, dragging him off, pulling him into the Dance.
And it is at this point they start losing touch with reality. Memory is lost, Life is gained.
They kiss. Lips touch, bodies touch. People run off left and right. The music stops. Silence
returns to the wild garden. The forest hums.

ABKASHA

(standing a bit away for a moment)

Stretch your arms, stretch your mind, and stretch
yourself.

And they do.

They can hear the silence and the humming. They can.

VOICE

(the hoarse voice of the skull)

And the blood gave up its secrets.

EXT. GARDEN - MORNING

Ted wakes up in his bed. He opens his eyes. There's no confusion in them, only the steady stare.

Is it in the bedroom or in the garden? He stands in the garden with other early bloomers, while still sleeping in his bed, while still celebrating Life in the night.

TED

(excited beyond words)

That was FANTASTIC! I don't think I slept more than two hours, perhaps hardly that, and I feel better than I've EVER done in my entire Life.

Everything is swirling in my head, but there's no confusion.

Everything looks normal now, even prosaic, in the light of day. It doesn't matter. The tables are clearly visible all the time (or almost all the time). Chairs are hurled across the lawn.

It doesn't matter. The memory of Night is still vivid in the mind.

EXT. WILD GARDEN - NIGHT

(Dancing, fire lit shadows in the light of day).

EXT. GARDEN - MORNING

Most people have already left. But those remaining are staying and help cleaning everything up, carrying the four parts of the long table back to the basement. Garden chairs in the garage. Cleaned up chairs and table back in the living room. The enormous dish washing.

People leave, waving bye bye.

TED

They'll never forget *this*. It has changed their lives forever.

JOHN

True! But will they wish to remember?

EXT. STORM - DAY AND NIGHT

The Storm rages outside. Ted sits inside the house, while Nature howls outside, while wind ravages mankind and nature alike.

He talks in his cellular phone.

TED

No, there's No Way I can possibly come to work, unless we could send a chopper for me... You can't? No chopper can fly in this weather? Oh, that's too bad a chopper can't even move outside in this weather. Well, you see, that's true for everything. Have anyone else shown up? Not even Frank, eh... Well, there you have it. No one else lives in the building you see...

Red lights flash on bridges. No cars can cross them, any of them. Somewhere in the forest trees break like dry matches. In the city bricks fly through the air, hitting cars, houses and windows. People inside scream hysterically as they run from the room, while it's reduced to rubble behind them.

Traffic signs and thick poles are twisted into unrecognizable «art». Entire streets are flooded and turned into seabed. White wisps of seawater are washing walls normally five, six meters above normal sea level. Roads on the coastline are washed away.

The Storm lasts for quite some time, much longer than most violent storms ever do. But eventually it is quieting, the sea retreats, and a semblance of normality is returned to the stricken area. Cars are slowly, painfully refilling the wet, sand-covered streets. Electricity is turned back on.

INT. MELANIES APARTMENT - DAY

Lisbeth is packing. Melanie looks at her apprehensively.

MELANIE

You're certain everything is alright?

LISBETH

(assuring)

Everything is okay. The carpenters did their work on the place last week. Everything else was done yesterday. I could have moved back last night.

MELANIE

And Ted and the others, will you return to them,
too.

LISBETH

(surprised)

I've never left them, why do you ask such a
ridiculous thing?

MELANIE

(hesitatingly)

We've missed you at the meetings lately. Why
do you go to *their* coven instead of ours?

LISBETH

Well, I didn't realize that there was a
competition, but... when you mention it, our
meetings, as they were, felt, in perspective, quite
boring compared to Witchnight. It was so
exciting, wasn't it? I can hardly wait until next
time!

MELANIE

(timid)

It was like the Storm, all-consuming... and
dangerous.

LISBETH

(even more excited)

Now that you mention it... There are really similarities. Even if the Storm was frightening, it was in a way... exciting, too.

MELANIE

What about your work? You used to love it.

LISBETH

It just doesn't seem all that exciting anymore...

She opens the door with one hand, turns and walks away.

EXT. STREETS - DAY

Ted waits for her outside. They embrace, kissing each other on the lips, kissing hard and long. The handle of the bag slides out of her grip. She let go of it. And she doesn't hear the sound when the bag hits the hard ground.

They keep standing tight, while looking into each other's eyes.

LISBETH

The word «WOW» is on my lips just now, but it doesn't seem quite... sufficient.

TED

It doesn't, does it?

LISBETH

Everything is felt that much stronger now.

TED

(smiling a wild smile)

Yes, even strong isn't strong enough anymore.

They sit by a table, in a restaurant, waiting to be served the food.

LISBETH

I just had the... strangest conversation with Melanie. It didn't occur to me at the time, but she sounded like she resented the whole experience on the 30th. When I think about it, it's obvious that she was, that she is. I find that absolutely bizarre. She was the one who brought me into her Coven.

TED

I think «her» is the key word here...

LISBETH

(taking his hand)

I think you're right, but it would never have occurred to me before. There in the apartment, it was as if I saw straight through her, saw what she was truly about, for the first time. Everything is turned upside down, or turned from upside down

to the right side. I can see people and situations much more clearly. Even work isn't really interesting anymore. I'm just going through the motions. There was a time not long ago, when I enjoyed every second of it. Or thought I did.

TED

With me it's somewhat the opposite. I've never enjoyed my steady employment. I've always felt it was something I was sliding into, without any free will involved. And I've hated every second of it.

They eat, occasionally slow, deliberate.

LISBETH

Food... such an underestimated pastime... I can feel it, you know. Or at least I imagine that I do. Every grain of salt, every natural flavor adding to my pleasure, every added chemical of pollution decreasing it.

TED

All our senses, all the millions of them, are awakening.

LISBETH

We are awakening.

They bend over the table, towards the other, kissing, embracing, unbalancing the table. Dishes, forks, knives, food and drinks are gloriously decorating the carpet, and they're not noticing it, noticing any of it.

EXT. CITY STREETS - NIGHT

They walk the city streets. It's a wonder they're not bumping into something or being run down by a car. Or by busy city people hurrying from place to place.

Lisbeth looks at her watch.

LISBETH

(smiling)

We're late, are we not...

TED

Definitely! Don't worry about it!

They ring the bell outside John's flat somewhat late. There's no replay.

LISBETH

Not that late. Definitely not!

Just the first few seconds has passed of their sudden impatience, when they observe John, Freya and Burt cross the street just a short distance away.

JOHN

(shouting)

Sorry, good people, we got a bit carried away.

LISBETH

(shouting happily back)

That's okay, so were we.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Lisbeth wrinkles her brow.

LISBETH

Did we meet Clay earlier this evening?

TED

(firmly)

Yes! At least... I think we did.

EXT. CITY STREETS - EVENING

Lisbeth and Ted are having a conversation with Clay.

CLAY

I'm no longer with the Intelligence.

LISBETH

That's great, Clay! I'm happy for you.

INT. JOHN'S APARTMENT - EVENING

FREYA

Everything has changed, hasn't it? Everything is different, isn't it?

BURT/LISBET/TED/JOHN

Yes!

There was a break while they took in the mood, the excitement they still felt.

JOHN

To us.

BURT

What do you mean?

John walks to the cabinet in the corner, retrieving a bottle and a glass, pouring glasses of wine, giving one to each of them.

JOHN

Have you noticed something peculiar about how most of the participants of Witchnight have behaved afterwards?

BURT

They do seem to deny it on some level.

FREYA

«In the beginning fear created the gods».

TED

They are scared. Of themselves, of the World, of everything.

JOHN

Oh, there's no lack of praise and excitement when we're talking about the Night itself. It's when the conversation is entering into the further implications, when we're talking about repeating the success, they're retreating into themselves, back to the safety of their ordered society.

FREYA

Everyone gathered here does want to proceed, moving on, right?

VOICES

(without hesitation, without thought

YES

Everybody say «Yes», thinking a bit, without thinking.

LISBETH

More so than anything I've ever wanted.

ABKASHA

Everybody said «Yes», right? Thinking a bit, not thinking.

VOICE

(a voice in the nothing, in the Twilight):

«And the night ended, and the Night began».

EXT. ELSEWHERE - DAY/TWILIGHT

ABKASHA

The Shadow is real. Everything else is Illusion.

And wisps of mist dance, and there's no sun, and the light is from everywhere.

VOICE

«And it is said by the Ancients, in their scroll of voice, of rainbow, that when enough Human Beings awaken from their Nightmare, the world will end».

INT. OFFICE - DAY

The phone rings. Ted sits there, doing nothing. The phone rings and he grabs it absentminded.

TED

Yes?

VOICE

(a hoarse, put on voice)

Thou shall not SUFFER a Witch to LIVE!

Connection is broken immediately afterwards. He sits there, staring at the receiver for a moment, before putting it back on. Shrugging.

EXT. CITY STREETS - EVENING

The wind blows and the streets stinks of garbage, of exhaust and the sickening scent of perfume.

Lisbeth touches his forehead, stroking it tenderly.

LISBETH

Has anyone actually threatened you?

TED

(with a haunted look)

No!

The «incidents» are escalating, though. Just a few phone calls at first, then letters and messages through the Internet.

LISBETH

Then why

TED

Because it's only the beginning, that's why.

They won't stop because we won't stop.

Lisbeth turns away a moment, before turning back.

LISBETH

We won't, will we?

She smiles, a smile slowly broadening to insane proportions.

It's summer and hot, very hot. She's rubbing her own neck absentmindedly. The palm gets wet immediately. She unbuttons two buttons at the top of her blouse.

LISBETH

It was more than a little crazy... wasn't it?

TED

(kissing her fiercely)

Witchnight, yesterday, today, tomorrow...

He starts touching her. She smiles some more, touching him, kissing him. He touches her breasts, pinching her nipples. Her eyes widens as she suddenly moans in need, a shockingly loud sound. He stops, suddenly uncertain. They look around them, at the people hurrying by on their way. She goes for his groin then, touching his cock, and it turns hard, hard, hard in her hand. They look around again, not at the people, but just looking.

There's a lamppost close to them, placed on a corner between two busy streets. She leans her back on it, beckoning him to join her. He does so. They start fumbling with each other's belt. And suddenly, shockingly so, they're standing half naked in the middle of the street. He grabs her hips, turning her around, pushing her hard against the lamppost. She grabs it with both her shaking hands and holds on for dear life. He places himself behind her, tight to her body. And then...

And then they're *doing* it, doing it in the middle of the street, leaning towards a lamppost. One push, two, and they're rocking up and down. Their faces lit up like fire, like shadow.

They're not interrupted, but they can hear the background noises of snarls and condemnation from the passing crowd.

The surroundings seem to blink out, dissolve for moments at the time, like a picture on TV without sufficient signal to keep broadcasting. The ground is shaking under their feet.

Lisbeth tries to speak several times, until she can, shockingly loud.

LISBETH

I can feel the earth move. *I can!* I CAN FEEL

THE EARTH MOVE

Her head falls forward, hitting the post. His head falls on hers. They lean on the lamppost, rocking up and down, as shakes of lust make reason fade in their eyes, as the surroundings dissolve around them into mist and Shadow.

FADING OUT

INT. BED - NIGHT

FADING IN

They're in the big bed in Ted's house. The bed is all they can see, their entire experience. Ted is on his back. Lisbeth rides him, and her movements are a wave going up and down, up and down.

And then there are the shadows, on the edge of their view, of the bed, before everything is dark. They, on the bed, are the fire. They can see, in their fever, a few short lengths on either side, then there are the shadows, then nothing.

LISBETH

(mumbling, gasping)

I can feel them, *feel* them here, with us.

FADING OUT

INT. KITCHEN - MORNING

FADING IN

And it's day again. Lisbeth stands nude before the mirror, pushing her back against the wall. Eyes are wild, hair is in complete disorder.

Ted stands nude in the hall. They look at each other without hiding their interests, hiding anything. Her sex is wet. His is still half rigid.

LISBETH

I don't really feel naked. In fact I feel less naked
then I've been in my entire life.

TED

Me, too.

LISBETH

I could feel it, you know, the ground moving
under our feet...

They're looking out the window. John, Freya and Burt are heading down the road, towards the house, towards them. Kissing and touching Lisbeth and Ted stumble out in the hall, opening the door to greet them. Lisbeth greets Burt with the kiss on the mouth and undresses him there on the spot. John and Freya start undressing themselves, after just a short hesitation.

FREYA

(mumbling, shouting, mumbling, chanting)

Sex and Magick

FADING OUT

INT. BED - NIGHT

FADING IN

The short day once more gives way to Night. The five of them move on the bed, in tight, fiery embraces.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The five of them run nude through the forest. The summer night is never completely dark.

INT. BED - NIGHT

Abkasha is on all fours in the bed. She takes John's cock in her mouth as Ted is fucking her from behind. Burt and Lisbeth move under her, as she's moving on top of them.

EXT. WATER - NIGHT

They swim in the twilight, the summer twilight, illuminated by the rays of the full moon.
Shouts and loud cries of delight fill the night air.

They float on their back in the middle of the water, with as much distance as possible to all
the four stretches of land far away.

BURT

(slightly worried, on the verge of panic)

Am I imagining things, or is the house, the land
around us... disappearing?

They take a look, and it certainly looks that way. Fog and nothingness seem to close off their
vision to the different options of shore.

Burt makes a few, hesitant strokes towards land, but is halted by Freya's soft, insistent touch.

BURT

B-but we might have to stay out here forever.

FREYA

Relax. Enjoy it.

She pulls him with her, as she floats on her back to Ted's waiting embrace. He holds her up
while Burt enters her with his waistline below water and fucks her with sudden, hard thrusts.

ABKASHA

(in a hollow, throaty voice)

We are Forever.

EXT. IN AND AROUND TED CARTLAND'S PROPERTY - DAYTIME

Lisbeth stretches in bed, slowly sliding out of it, as the others are waking up, happy and content. The men's spent cocks are dangling between their thighs. She stretches, as they sunbath in the garden, as they swim nude in broad daylight, as they walk around nude with impunity for all to see. Even if there is a considerable distance to the nearest neighbor, they can easily be seen... by those who want to.

Freya dances a few steps away. The drowsy, sensual look still prevalent in her eyes. She seems fresh, different, transformed.

FREYA

The wind blows all the time, now. Can you sense it, how it's slowly, seemingly gaining strength, building momentum?

EXT. BY THE FIRE - NIGHTTIME

They sit by the fire, cooling down, enjoying the peace.

BURT

It's so silent, that one can be tempted to believe there's nothing out there.

LISBETH

There's nothing beyond the fire. There's no one in the whole world but us.

They turn and except for the fire illuminating them and the ground in shades of orange and red, there is only darkness.

BURT

The house is probably there, where we think it is, about 50 meters away, but we can't be truly certain, can we?

A howl penetrates the night then. Burt jumps in his track.

BURT

What the HELL was that?

TED

It's the fucking cat, making her markers known to some unlucky bastard wandering too close,

The loud, hellish wail suddenly stops, as if somehow someone cuts it off.

BURT

Seems like she met another really tough bastard this time...

They sit in silence, for a while, without speaking.

JOHN

Scientists theorize that there is something in the Universe called dense or dark matter, something far more... energized than ordinary matter. A substantial part of the universe that can't be measured except by the effect it has on the visible and the measurable.

TED

I wish they would be honest just for once and call it Unknown Matter...

JOHN

But the point is, if there is something to it. That they, for once, have stumbled on a «greater truth», one well known to the ancients... What if what we're perceiving as the shadow, a mere pale casting on the ground, an inferior image of our body, is the real world, the real us, and... this is the pale shadow in the moonlight?

LISBETH

(giggling)

I have heard about it. Some scientists are joking about it, and say that since we really know so little about Existence, it can be completely different from what we're imagining and currently perceiving it to be. That it just as well

could be comprised of giants moving among the tiny stars and stardust, as oblivious to it, as we would be to dust we're breathing in and out.

FREYA

(nodding eagerly)

There is a Storm coming, something born out of Spirit, making that born of wind seem like nothing.

BURT

Oh, I doubt there's anything profound really. The world is too big for something truly to affect it.

TED

But haven't you noticed? There aren't just the storms, not merely the unseemly weather, but sudden, unlit fires, testy animals and... and...

FREYA

Holes in the very fabric of reality. Can't you see it, staring at empty air, how it's empty no more?

Burt stares sullenly at them.

LISBETH

(suddenly)

Have we eaten today? Can any of you remember actually having eaten?

BURT

(irritated)

Of course we have eaten...

BURT

(after prolonged silence)

Haven't we?

TED

(relaxed)

I do happen to have filled up the refrigerator before all this. Call it instinct or whatever you want. The fact remains. We have a wide selection of food and drinks at our disposal.

There is applause, as he's standing up, as they join him. He catches glimpses of shiny faces, exalted expressions as they're all leaving the fire, to move within the confines of the house. They bring torches and are on their way.

BURT

Do you guys feel like we're being watched?

ABKASHA

There is something out there, waiting for us.

BURT

I feel it, you know. I feel it all the time. It's looking at us and it's making my skin crawl.

JOHN

(putting a hand on the other man's shoulder)

There's only one way we may deal with it, my man...

He's pausing just a bit.

JOHN

Only one way we may deal with it... and that is to stare back.

BURT

What did we do on Witchnight? What really happened?

JOHN

I remember some of it, but so much happened. It's impossible to recall everything.

LISBETH

I don't know. None of us do. I don't know what I did and how I did it, either. But the force is

growing and we will inevitably gain better control, a better understanding... of it.

She hesitates.

Ted grabs her hand softly, comfortingly.

TED

Lisbeth...

LISBETH

I remember feeling a bit down because it was all more or less parlor tricks, ways for us to create the mood, the setting. The smoke, the speakers placed around among the trees and all. But...then I saw John, and I realized that none of us was operating the controls. I saw the shadow in the mist, and I looked closer at it, and it had my face, and that the garden, the very place had changed. No one had moved the lights. And certainly no one had planted new trees. It was the same place, but at the same time we were also another place, similar, but different. And now I feel it all the time. Something is... moving inside of me, undeniably. Am I making any sense?

They listen to her words, and she is, too, and they see, re-experience Witchnight once more, in flashes and prolonged moments, seconds. Hooded figures walk out of the shadows, towards them, joining with them, as they dance, as they smile. And there are pain and screams. And then the dance continues, that much more potent, more powerful.

And they return to the quiet moment by the campfire they left only seconds earlier.

FREYA

What is it, John?

JOHN

(straining)

Can't you feel it? We touched something. We did it... whatever we did. *We did it!*

And slowly, painfully, they start smiling.

They're obviously in high spirits as they walk the short distance through the garden. It's evident in everybody's eyes and faces, and body language, as they're looking at each other.

LISBETH

TAMMY, TAMMY, WHERE ARE YOU
GIRL? COME FORTH AND GET YOUR JUST
REWARD.

The house slowly becomes visible for their eyes. They walk up the stone stairs, to the main entrance.

The black cat is nailed to the door. One nail for each paw. One punctuating its heart. It's dead. Its tongue hangs out of its open mouth.

And on the wall there's a written message.

Bright red paint on green house paint underneath, covering most of the wall:

Thou shall not
suffer a Witch
to live

They stand there, frozen on the spot, for a long time.

Someone is screaming somewhere. They hear it, but can't see the person doing it. It echoes through the forest, and the many gray buildings of the city.

INT. POLICE STATION - DAYTIME

Ted and Lisbeth are having a conversation with the desk sergeant. He looks completely indifferent to their plight.

TED

I'm telling you. We had a visit from two
detectives last night, Lieutenants Gallagher and
Knowles.

DESK SERGEANT

Nothing has been filed.

Ted leaves copies of their own photos from yesterday, including those of the detectives, a
look of utter disgust clearly conveyed to the desk sergeant.

The look of pain as he glimpses the representation of Tammy's unkind fate is more than
evident. Lisbeth touches his arm in an attempt to comfort him.

EXT. STREETS - DAYTIME

Frustration, anger and fear evident in their every move, they leave the police station.

TED

(flamboyantly, cocky)

Well, we can't really say it was unexpected.

LISBETH

No, that wasn't unexpected.

He turns towards her, noticing the pale skin, covered in cold sweat.

LISBETH

John is right. We did touch something. And now
we pay the price. I feel it like a ball stuck in my

throat, something inside, something malevolent
moving inside me. Can't you feel it? The world is
rejecting us, casting us *out*.

He stares at her with worry in his eyes.

They walk down the street, wandering aimlessly. There is movement all around them, but it doesn't seem to touch them. They hear it then, the flapping of wings. A man rushes out of an alley with a pained and scared look on his face. He stares at the ground as he walks away with quick steps, but they can still see his eyes. Their feet move, as they head for the alley, and there, just where the long dark street begins, they stop.

There are a lot of dead birds on the ground, a lot of other birds in the air. They hack away at the dead birds, and blood dances in the air, feathers dance, kept afloat by the flapping wings. The birds' eyes are all the same, dead like fish eyes, the sight of them enhanced to insane proportions in the humans' eyes. It's a horrible, beyond horrible sight.

The two of them crouch there, supporting each other not to fall. Vomit flows from their mouths, and it keeps doing so, until they stand there totally empty and drained, and the blood and tears flow from their eyes in equal measure.

INT. OUTSIDE/INSIDE LISBETH'S APARTMENT - DAYTIME

Days have passed. Perhaps one, perhaps many. They can't tell. Clouds rush across the sky.

Lisbeth is visibly straining while climbing the stairs. She's sweating, but there's more than that. Her tie is loose. Her appearance is far from her usual flawless execution. The shirt has wrinkles and she has black bags under her eyes.

Ted sits at the top of the stairs, waiting for her. He wears something resembling hippy-clothes and the smile is in place at the corner of his mouth. But the black bags under his eyes are as pronounced as her own, and his flaky appearance no better.

LISBETH

You, too, huh?

TED

You, too, huh?

TED

(shrugging)

It's no big deal. I've wanted to quit on my own for a long while.

LISBETH

(laughing loud and strained)

You sound like someone who has quit smoking.

She looks down, not at him, while fumbling for the keys in her purse.

LISBETH

(subdued)

It really made Reality come crashing down on us.

He doesn't comment on her words, except by silence.

She opens the door. The door to her apartment swings open.

In flashes she hears police sirens, sees red and blue lights, even if there were none. Not last night.

There was only one, single car. She hears Ted' voice.

EXT. BY TED'S HOUSE - NIGHTTIME

TED

(speaking on the phone)

No, detective, I want you to see this. I insist that
you do.

He arrived two hours later, a trench coat clad Lieutenant with his female partner.

COP

I'm Lieutenant Edgar Gallagher. This is my
partner Sarah Fowles. What seems to be the
trouble here?

They showed them. The cat hung where someone had left it the moment that someone killed
it. No one had touched it.

TED

I'm a practicing Witch, Lieutenant, we all are.

BURT

(clearly close to hysteria)

Speak for yourself.

TED

(to the cops)

I presume this constitutes a valid threat...

GALLAGHER

That depends. We do have other things to do
then chasing people pissed off at people flying
around on broomsticks.

JOHN

(unusually agitated)

What's that supposed to mean? Would you
rather have helped the perpetrators this time
around, Lieutenant?

FREYA

(stiff, unmoving, uncertain)

Do we... know you?

He didn't bother with a reply to any of them. He photographed the stuff, then nodded to them and the two cops left.

TED

We have done our own photographing.

Fowles had, when the car drove off, not uttered a single word.

EXT. THE CITYSCAPE - TWILIGHT

A shadow figure levitates high above the ground. The city below is disintegrating, bathing in the figure's terrible energies. There's no hesitation, no mercy, as it destroys the city below, as it moves on to the next and the next... as civilization itself is dying beneath its heel.

An echo, gaining strength and reality.

INT. LISBETH'S APARTMENT - DAYTIME

Lisbeth heads directly for the bathroom and throws up almost immediately. She doesn't reach the toilet quite in time and a lot of the half digested food is dropped on the floor. A look of panic in her eyes, she reaches for the pregnancy test bottle.

Ted stands in the doorway. She freezes, looking at him in despair.

TED

I've thrown up several times today. The others, too. I called you all day, but didn't get any reply from you.

LISBETH

(enraged, frightened)

Don't you see what's happened, Ted? We've have been cast out of the world. Something has entered us. First it took Freya, and then through her, the rest of us. We've sought too hard and too far.

She takes a shower, pouring water on the body, scrubbing it, scrubbing it, scrubbing it.

Afterwards she's very particular in her choosing of clothes. She takes her time. And when she's through, she's like transformed.

TED

You look like a Gypsy.

She rotates her body one single time before him.

LISBETH

(coquettishly)

Thank you, good sir.

She walks to him, turning hesitant the last few steps. They embrace, visibly shaking.

LISBETH

Poor Tammy. She was so... so loving, so roguish.

He nods absentmindedly, eyes like open wounds.

TED

(stroking her head)

The stuff with the cat was bad, but we'll get through it. We will not give the bastards the satisfaction of it getting to us.

She stiffens in his arms.

LISBETH

It isn't the cat, you *know* that.

He stiffens, too.

LISBETH

(looking up at him, as he's looking away)

You did dream, didn't you?

TED

(speaking strained, hesitantly)

I don't think dream, dreams are the... the correct word for it...

Reality fades around them.

EXT. ELSEWHERE - DAYTIME

There is mist, there is ground, and more.

THE VOICE ELSEWHERE

VISIONS. Prophetic, invasive visions of carnage and destruction, one single, powerful image of a shadow figure floating above the ground, of cities, civilization utterly vanquished.

INT. TED'S BATHROOM - TWILIGHT

He stands before the mirror, shaking. Eyes are swollen. He turns towards the toilet. It's full of half digested food. He throws up again. And again and again, until there is nothing more to throw up. He stays there on his knees, with his head into the bowl.

INT. LISBETH'S APARTMENT - DAYTIME

He kisses her, drowning in her, drowning of desperate need.

She shakes him off. Despair is visible in her expression.

LISBETH

No, Ted. No.

TED

But why...

His outstretched hand is falling, falling down.

LISBETH

Don't you get it? I've been violated, we all have.

Dammit, Ted, I feel like I have been r-raped.

That stops him and he leaves her, there, on the spot. She is alone. She sits down then, right on the spot, on the floor. Despairing, heart-wrenching sobs rise from the broken figure.

EXT. STREETS - DAYTIME

She wanders aimlessly through the city. Her face is dry. The make up is meticulously done, a bit overdone perhaps. She meticulously walks on green light, staying on red light. Even when there are no cars, when other people rush across the street, she stays, waiting for the green light.

She doesn't have any goal. She sits on a bench in the park for a while, before moving on, wandering aimlessly through the city.

In a display window for a television shop there are a lot of displayed TV-monitors. Picture and sound are on. She can easily hear what is said.

TV-LADY

Bad weather and other natural disasters continue to worsen on a planetary scale. Reports are pouring in worldwide about floods, storms, earthquakes and volcanic eruptions said to be the worst in recorded human history. Scientists are baffled over why this is happening now, but says that natural variations can account for a lot of...

She returns to the park, sits on the same bench. She looks at her watch. It shows her nothing, except fog and... nothing.

EXT. PARK - TWILIGHT

Freya joins her, quietly. Her eyes are swollen, too. She is also sweating. Neither one of them speaks for a while.

LISBETH

The visions are like sparks behind the eyes.
Closing the eyes is completely *useless*. They're not coming all the time, but they can come at any time, unbidden, unavoidable.

FREYA

I've had it like that for weeks. I've had it since early childhood, but it's growing, intensifying.
The queasiness, the sickness, that's new, though.

Lisbeth turns towards her, then.

LISBETH

You... you've had it since early childhood?
Why haven't you ever said anything?

Freya shifts uncomfortably on the bench.

LISBETH

(stroking the palm of her hand over her forehead)

I have had it since early childhood, too.
I remember that I did want to talk about it. But mother got so strange then. And during the

following night, I dreamed horrible dreams, of myself being burned as a w-witch during the middle ages. Hell, I can even remember Ted telling me something similar. He was at least attempting to do so, but I cut him off, as others did to me. How could I... forget this? Now, it's like a floodgate being opened, being opened wide.

ABKASHA

I can see The Abyss. I realize now that I've always been able to see it, but never so clearly, never such a detailed texture.

Lisbeth is frozen in place, there on the bench.

LISBETH

There isn't only one life. Jesus, I can see them, like strings on an eternal chain.

FREYA

You know... If we *are* being... violated, it isn't just us, but the boys, too, in equal measure.

She takes Lisbeth's hand.

LISBETH

But I can't...

LISBETH

(exalted)

I *can* feel them. I can even... see them, see where they are. Ted is where I left him. He stands by the window, looking out. Burt has closed himself off in his apartment. He's low on food. He needs to go and buy some dinner, but he's putting it off. And John, being John, is at a disco. He doesn't think much, doesn't do much, except dancing.

FREYA

Very good, you might yet become a decent witch, yet...

LISBETH

(almost enraged)

So you don't think that's what's happening then? How can it not be? How is it *possible* to feel like... this, without it being bad?

FREYA

(despairing)

I don't know, okay... I don't know. I do think there's someone... something... s-stalking us, but

that's just one side of it. I'm... I'm convinced
we're... Changing, changing inside, and Change
will always bring pain.

They're both naked in their eyes as they look at each other.

A police car stops right by them, by way of screaming brakes. Two cops rush out. It's the
cop they have met frequently the last few weeks... and impossibly enough, the forest ranger.

WELL-KNOWN COP

Please come with us.

They grab the two women on the bench, dragging them off, without further explanation.

LISBETH

What is this? What are you *doing*?

FOREST RANGER COP

You don't speak. You come with us, without
protest... or you'll be *sorry*.

Whimpering they relent, and don't protest the rough treatment, as they are being led away,
being pushed into the back of the exhaust-breathing monster of a car. Lisbeth pukes the
instant the cop pushes at the gas pedal, making the car move, covering herself and most of the
seat.

WELL-KNOWN COP

You're seriously messed up, aren't ya? You
poor thing.

Lisbeth starts crying then. Huge, heart-breaking sobs. And the world is fading around her.

INT. POLICESTATION - TWILIGHT

It is an interrogation-room. Lisbeth sits there alone, in one of two chairs. The other one is at the other side of the simple table. There are sounds outside, muted, distant. The room isn't really that hot, but she is sweating, to the point of her hair being wet and sticky. She blinks and detectives Gallagher and Knowles are in the room with her. Knowles sits, Gallagher stands. He leans over her, leering like a clown in a circus, like a skull without flesh. She can see it, shrinking from him in horror.

Knowles puts a glass of water in front of her. She grabs it with both hands, lifting it to her lips and drinks greedily.

KNOWLES

(sympathetic)

You get to clean up okay?

Lisbeth nods, sniffing.

KNOWLES

Good.

KNOWLES

(after a distinctive break)

You don't look okay, though. In fact you look downright sick.

LISBETH

(sniffing)

I'm okay. It's just a bit of nausea, that's all.

Look, what's this about? Do I need a lawyer or what?

GALLAGHER

(leering)

Why do you think you do? You don't happen to have anything to hide, now, do you?

Knowles holds up a hand, stopping Gallagher from continuing, stopping Lisbeth from replying, softening her angry stare.

Knowles nods to Gallagher. He nods, too. He opens a briefcase, pulling a pile of papers from it, giving it to Knowles. She selects a few photos from the pile, and puts one in front of Lisbeth. Lisbeth stares at it blindly for a long time, before looking at Knowles again.

KNOWLES

I know. Makes cold run down your spine, doesn't it?

It is a photograph of a man being nailed to a wall. His entire midsection is cut open.

LISBETH

(incredulously, fearfully)

P-paul?

In another room Freya sits shaking, under the two policemen's scrutinizing glare.

FREYA

(to the forest ranger)

So what are you doing here, anyway?

FOREST RANGER

I have changed jobs. Nothing to it. I felt my...
services were more needed at the metropolitan
police. These are troubling times, young lady, and
you better watch yourself.

Lisbeth's eyes are as glued to the photograph. The man is dead, dead and white, bled empty.
On the wall behind him is drawn a pentacle.

KNOWLES

I see you know this man. We suspected as much.

Lisbeth nods numbly.

KNOWLES

He was in fact present at your «party» on the
thirtieth the previous month, wasn't he?

Lisbeth nods again, mute and pale, seeing him around the fire, seeing her friend gutted like a fish. Nothing remaining but skin and bones, an empty shell.

GALLAGHER

We found the cat's hair on all of you. On your clothes and in your hair. Everywhere on you.

LISBETH

(incredulously)

Of course you did. We have all been petting her regularly for years.

KNOWLES

(softly)

You're suffering from memory lapses, aren't you, Lisbeth?

LISBETH

No, I'm not. Absolutely not.

INT. LISBETH'S APARTMENT - EVENING

Lisbeth and Ted are in bed, snuggling relaxed, and in an over the top good mood.

LISBETH

Last night was *wild*. I can't even remember half of what happened...

INT. POLICESTATION - TWILIGHT

GALLAGHER

First you did the try-out on the cat. Then you graduated to heavier stuff.

Lisbeth looks at him like she doesn't see him at all.

LISBETH

That's... preposterous, and absolutely wrong. You hear me. Wrong! And cruel. Cruel beyond imagining. Where do you people *get off*?

There is silence. They scrutinize her. She glares back at them, even if her lower lip is shaking.

KNOWLES

(formally)

That will be all for now, Miss Rowan. We will keep in touch.

Freya is waiting for her outside, patiently sitting in Lotus position on a bench, slowly opening her eyes, standing up with a strained look in her eyes.

FREYA

They're just attempting to soften us up. I have gone through that shit for years. Don't worry about it.

LISBETH

(exasperated)

But *why?*

FREYA

(smiling softly)

I've told you before, honey. There doesn't have to be a reason. They get their kicks doing it.

EXT. PARK/THE CITY - TWILIGHT

The two of them end up in the park again. It doesn't seem that much darker than during their visit earlier in the day. It's still twilight.

They sit there, shaking, shaking hard.

LISBETH

I want to get a grip. *I want to!*

FREYA

We've all had our moments of doubt and pain. It's time to embrace them, not run away.

Lisbeth nods. Slowly she's nodding, concentration written in her face, as she slowly stop shaking.

She lifts her hand, slowly, her hand turning to mist and shadow.

Two pair of eyes widen, in amazement, in fear.

FREYA

Do it again. *Please.*

And Lisbeth, the Witch Does. It takes hardly any effort at all. It is as if her entire hand is disappearing into air, but remains visible.

They rise, slowly smiling as they stretch their bodies, stretching their arms. Their hands pan the air. And in the air there are wisps of smoke, of shadow.

They embrace each other, shaking violently in their tracks.

Eventually they head back to her apartment. Freya joins her. Not a word is spoken, but they are still communicating, with hands and movements, and facial expressions.

Melanie walks towards them. The smile is in place, as she's approaching them, as they have almost reached the apartment. She embraces Lisbeth, comforting her.

MELANIE

I heard.

LISBETH

You... heard?

MELANIE

I most certainly did, and thought I should offer my sympathies and humble help. I want you to move back in, back to the Coven.

LISBETH

(smiling)

Thank you, but no.

If you had come earlier today, I might actually have taken you up on it, your offer, I mean. But now I'm more convinced than ever that it is a bad idea.

MELANIE

(quickly)

Why don't you come home with me for a visit then? Say hello to the girls and all?

Lisbeth looks up at her apartment. She can't see Ted in the window, but she can still see him moving around inside.

LISBETH

Thank you, we would love to come home with you for a visit.

FREYA

(smiling)

We would. Thank you.

MELANIE

(looking hesitantly at Freya)

... okay.

So the two of them start walking and Melanie trips in their tracks.

INT. MELANIE'S APARTMENT - EVENING

They walk in through the door, pass by the bedrooms and proceeds to the great hall.

Melanie's apartment is big. It covers an entire floor of an old office building, rebuilt to fit her needs.

Inside the great hall they meet other members of her «coven». There are seven of them present, five girls and two boys.

LISBETH

(waving)

Hi, everyone

Obviously cheerful.

One girl and one boy come forward to greet her. The others hold back.

GIRL

Greetings, Sister, are you here to stay?

LISBETH

(shaking her head)

No, I can't stay. I've moved so much lately and
we stood still so long here.

The mood darkened visibly, in all the faces before her.

BOY

(pleasantly)

Why don't you tell us about it?

MELANIE

(cutting in)

Yes, why don't you.

VOICE (in Freya's head)

She's a piece of art, isn't she...

Freya stares at Lisbeth, wide-eyed.

Lisbeth dances to one table, the one by the huge window. Through that window the city can be seen. She jumps up at the table, pausing a bit, looking at them all, before sitting down in the Lotus position, her legs crossed, her knees pointing ninety degrees to each side.

She looks at the floor below her, at four, no five small balls of different color. Suddenly she's giggling like a little girl, before her face calms once more, reaching almost an impassive state.

LISBETH

I can see so much, you know... I can still not see everything and don't think I ever will, but everything is so much clearer now.

She rocks back and forth on the table, while humming to a song.

LISBETH

I can see us all. I can see us among the stars, sleeping by a fire. We look very much like us, but aren't quite like us. We're us, but different.

I can see us all. Me, Abkasha, Edward, Bertram and John. And there are others.

There is an existence beyond this one, and it is vast beyond imagining.

There is a wind, coming from no window, no open doors (all the doors and windows are closed tight).

LISBETH

I can see Ted leaving my apartment. I can see Bertram leaving his apartment. His steps are very astute, very determined. John is at a disco. I think the electricity is gone, but there is still light.

ONE GIRL

(giggling)

Do you know the name of the old disco?

Someone is hushing her up.

LISBETH

No, for some reason that is hidden for me.

LISBETH (the other Lisbeth)

You shouldn't expect miracles, Rachel.

RACHEL

How do you know my name? We've never met
before. How?

LISBETH

I know *everything*...

BOY

(to Rachel)

Stupid cow. Can't you see through such an
obvious ruse?

Melanie takes a step forward. She's suddenly pale, with black shadows crossing her face.

MELANIE

So why is it that you are chosen to this honor?

Are ya really such a special girl, are ya?

Lisbeth freezes in shock, then, but only for a moment.

LISBETH

I don't know. Perhaps because I'm *open*.

Nobody has chosen me, though, I've chosen myself. This much I know. I've opened up, not so much to outside forces as to the forces within myself. That is what a Witch does; bringing what's on the inside to the outside.

Freya turns her head to the door. It's open. She turns her attention to the windows. They are open. Every door, all the way out, every window in the entire building, all the floodgates there are, are open.

LISBETH

Red ball.

MELANIE

What...

The red ball on the floor starts rolling, back and forth, back and forth.

LISBETH

Green ball.

The green ball on the floor suddenly moves by itself, seemingly playing with the red.

Lisbeth pans her open palmed hands in the air, closing them into fists, then choosing a third option and a fourth and a fifth and a sixth... She brings them together... and they start glowing. The air itself, in their immediate vicinity shimmers in a weird glow. The five balls on the floor, both the red, green, yellow, blue and black are vanishing... into thin air. And into thin air they reappear, between the hands of the Witch, hands with fingers stretched like claws.

And then it is as if the entire creature that is Lisbeth changes, as if she turns to Shadow. There is a collective gasp, as the dark figure starts speaking, as its hollow voice thunders in their ears.

LISBETH

«Human beings are deep wells of energy,
immense reservoirs of force, the force of Life
determined to subdue matter».

The balls disappear. The shimmer in the air dies. The balls reappear on the floor on the spot they had previously existed.

It is over. For now.

LISBETH (the other Lisbeth)

(the hollow voice)

What you just saw was just something
comparable with a parlor trick, a minor outward
manifestation of a much greater force.

The room is silent.

FREYA

(cheerfully)

There will be another Witchnight in the Wild Garden tomorrow night. There will be Magick and there will be Life. Everybody present is cordially invited.

Most of them are gathering around her and especially Lisbeth. And when the two of them leave shortly afterwards, Melanie stands there with her fists closed, everybody filing by her. Until she is alone in the room and she sinks to the floor, where she remains.

EXT. VISIONS OF THE WITCH - EVENING

Freya sits on the coach in Lisbeth's apartment with Lisbeth and the others. In flashes of fire she sees Ted, John and Burt. They're all bringing guests. They, too.

BURT

(approaching two girls with an insane grin)

Hi, girls...

They should be scared or at least worried, but they're not.

BURT

I would just like to tell you that you're cordially invited to an occult evening tomorrow night.

There is knocking on the door. Lisbeth and Freya go to it, opening it. Outside are Ted, John and Burt, accompanied by giggling boys and girls, of dancing shadows.

Lisbeth looks at Ted, at his pale and drawn, but happy face. Slowly she starts smiling herself, going to him, kissing him on the lips, embracing him.

EXT. WALK OF THE WITCH - EVENING

She finds herself outside at night, walking the familiar streets. She is alone. There are no people outside tonight. But she can hear steps, the sound of shoes against the tarmac. She can hear it clearly. Her feet start moving faster. She sees it as she looks down for a moment, before turning her head, and looking back towards the dark alley she just exited. And as she starts running, starts fleeing she sees it, sees the creature stalking her. It is a human being, strangely disjointed, puss and rot seemingly flowing freely from the body, the features unrecognizable.

She runs. The city shakes around her. She runs as she has never run before, but the pursuer is gaining on her, slowly but surely. In flashes she sees herself and her friends out by the Gate of Madness at dawn. They all look different, even though they are the same. But everybody looks so wild, dressed in skin, waving weapons like savages on a hunt, like she is, like she does herself. She takes a wrong turn into a dark alley, and there is nowhere left to run. There are only smooth walls everywhere. The stalker comes at her with a nail in one hand and a huge butcher knife in another, leering and with a tongue hanging from the mouth like a panting dog. She pushes herself against the wall, exhausted and frozen in fear. She can feel her own heart beating, beating, feel the blood boiling in her veins. And as the monster charges she raises a hand in front of her, and it is as if a giant, invisible hand grabs the monster and pulls it into the air, shaking it apart, until nothing but rags and bones remains. She is able to look at herself from outside, see the giant, human-like Shadow she has become. One towering over the buildings, towering over the city itself, exalting and terrifying. Pale lighting and mist emanate from her, dissolving the buildings in front of her to nothing.

And then she wakes up screaming.

EXT. STREETS - DAYTIME

Lisbeth and Ted sit on a green bench in the park. There are sounds from the city around them, but muted, distant.

They walk up the marble stairs to the museum.

INT. MUSEUM - DAYTIME

They can't remember actually entering the building, but the walk through it is fairly clear. A sign, an exhibition glares at them.

THE MARCH OF CIVILIZATION

They are fervently looking around, to see if more people see the river of blood flowing from the sign, bathing the wall, the floor, but everybody is just nodding and enjoying themselves, seemingly enjoying themselves.

LISBETH

I can hear it, hear the march, the pain, the
blood, the horror.

He cocks his head, and he can hear it, too.

They pass the Greek exhibition, the Roman, the German, The American. A man stands on a plain somewhere, with a scalp in his hands, a tiny dark-haired scalp, that of a child.

MAN

It's the egg that becomes lice. ONLY A DEAD
INDIAN IS A GOOD INDIAN.

LISBETH

I can hear the choir, the cries from the marching
soldiers as they're subduing everything in their
path subduing the land itself. And the closer to
the present we come their cry is growing louder
and louder, until their cry is all we can hear.

I can see myself poisoned beyond recovery,
more dead than alive, stumbling through a
landscape of ruins and garbage. I have walked for
days but there is no green in sight, only this gray,
endless wasteland.

Ted had, at some point started to move his lips, synchronized with hers, and during the last
few sentences he speaks as much, if not more than she does.

Knowles stands there, right in front of them, suddenly, shockingly.

KNOWLES

You don't *know* what's going on, do you? You
don't have the faintest idea.

As if in a daze they follow her to the library section. A slight, almost unseen wave of her
hand, and they follow her.

They sit there, in the deep, pleasant chairs. She places drawings on the table in front of them, images turning their blood cold.

KNOWLES

These are the police drawings made from dreams. Dreams related by members of the Cult of the Phoenix... A cult of witches, mass murderers exposed five years ago. Their modus operandi was the nailing of people to the wall, gutting them like pigs are gutted, exactly the way your friend Paul was killed. They were all executed, roasted in the chair for their horrible crimes. But now... But now someone seems to have picked up on their cue... whatever that is.

The two of them look in horror at the images. Black and white drawings that seems to come to life, gain color, texture and life, like a movie. What they see is the creature from their dreams, the destroyer, the destroyer of worlds.

KNOWLES

Know that I have been investigating psychic phenomena for decades. I know more then you have forgotten, know what disasters may come out of a bit of dabbling.

LISBETH

(weakly)

Then, why didn't you *say* something?

KNOWLES

(pleasantly)

You know as well as I do that you don't speak openly about such things. Not without being burned. The important thing is that I can help you, help you to free yourself from the demonic forces ravaging you.

Doubt riddles the youths, visibly. Knowles smiles encouragingly, taking Ted's arm. His entire body turns rigid then. Lisbeth sees something then. She sees a tiny worm crawl from Knowles' ear.

TED

Get AWAY from me.

He is shaking, and the entire museum seems to shake, too. He pulls his arm free. Knowles staggers backwards, as if being pushed.

The Lieutenant is still smiling. Lisbeth shudders, as she can spot the hiss behind the pleasant exterior.

KNOWLES

Be reasonable.

LISBETH

That's what people like you always say to people like us, isn't it? Is slavery, is willful destruction reasonable? I don't think so. You don't have any power over us. Not anymore.

TED

But our power, on the other hand is growing, so you beware. We *are* Power.

KNOWLES

(hissing)

You'll burn in Hell. You'll all burn in Hell.

And she turns and leaves. And it is as if she is turning transparent as she walks away, as if she is becoming one with the building itself.

Ted clutches his arm, as pain is ravaging his face, as he is slowly once more able to move his arm.

TED

(mumbling)

I know her. I *know* her.

They stumble towards the exit. The short walk seems to last an eternity. Lisbeth looks up at the ceiling with a glaring, haunted look in her face.

LISBETH

This place makes me sick.

INT. CAFÉ - DAYTIME

The Café on the corner is quiet. There is music or a facsimile thereof, but it doesn't touch them. They are alone in the room. There were people there. Now, they're gone.

LISBETH

She is... trustworthy when you first meet her.

She reminds me of you, you know...

TED

(ironically)

Thank you.

Indignant she gives him a jolt in the ribs, so hard it makes him gasp.

LISBETH

You want to... to obey her, obey her slightest whim... Then... suddenly it was as if a fog was lifted from my mind, and I could see her for what she is... whatever that is. I have a picture in my mind, of us being led away with a silly grin dominating our face, and we believe everything she sells us, and she's destroying us bit by bit, until there is nothing left.

TED

It is as if a vast, new reality of an Abyss has
opened up below us.

LISBETH

Things are happening so fast, so furious. It is as
if the world may change from one second to the
next...

TED

I know what you mean...

They're looking at each other. Every doubt they ever had is visible in their features.

LISBETH

And it's *great*.

She kisses Ted hungrily on the lips.

And he relaxes, looking at her with a somewhat peaceful look in his eyes.

TED

We are more now, more than we have ever been.

LISBETH

And this is just the beginning.

And they walk into night, fading into shadows. And the streets give way to forest. And then
they stop. They are There.

INT. TED'S LIVING ROOM - NIGHTTIME

BURT

What did we do on Witchnight? What happened?

JOHN

I don't know, Burt, my boy. I remember some of it, but so much happened. It's impossible to recall everything.

LISBETH

I don't know. None of us do. I don't know what I did and how I did it, either. But the force, the Power is growing and we will inevitably gain better control, a better understanding... of it.

EXT. VISIONS OF THE WITCH - DARKNESS

A forest path leads to two straight trees, growing a meter apart. Beyond the road and the trees, there isn't really much to see. In addition to the darkness, only dots of white and gray.

VOICE

I can see it - The Gate of Madness.

INT. A TABLE, FIVE PERSONS - DARKNESS

Things have changed. The room is different. The room is hardly there anymore. It's hardly more than a table and five people.

And an indistinct, deep brown darkness.

CUT TO BEDROOM - DAWN

TED

I don't know how to explain it. I'm in bed, on my back, with my eyes half closed, observing more than participating. Room seems to disappear... no, *dissolve* around me. I'm standing rigid, before a thin veil. I can't tell its size, its fabric, nothing more, in fact, that it's *there!* My hands, or not, something that's me, are fumbling at it. A part of it is cast aside and I can see beyond it. But there's nothing there. I try to walk, but no matter how much I struggle I can't go any further.

INT. A TABLE, FIVE PERSONS - DARKNESS

TED

Maybe something... more is needed. Maybe walking isn't sufficient. We might need to move... without moving?

JOHN

(excited)

That was the same dream I had tonight. Or...
whenever.

There are flashes of fire... and the dreams begin.

The fireplace is sparking. It's sparking in the fireplace.

CUT TO: ROOM - DARKNESS

There are shadows. They see themselves in mirrors (of sorts) and there are shadows.

TED

I'm in a dark room. It's... difficult, but I can see myself stand before a hidden light. I stand turned, I can only see my back. In a room four people sit around a table formed as a pentagram. Or... is that five? I'm not among them. It isn't clear to me where I am. I'm there certain of just one thing and one thing only: That I'm There.

INT. A TABLE, FIVE PERSONS - DARKNESS

The fireplace gives them heat, a shelter from the Storm outside. There is rain thundering at the window. Otherwise the room is empty. The light from the fire seems to come from everywhere at once.

FREYA

(in joy and despair)

I can feel the surrealism and unreality
surrounding me, thoughts of Doom and
destruction and Renewal.

She's breathing, breathing, breathing, as sweat pours down her forehead.

LISBETH

We all dreamed the same dream.

Freya and John give their nods eagerly, Burt mumbling and withdrawn.

Freya looks at them all, pressingly, worried.

FREYA

We all have come here to *try*, right?

Everybody nods, eagerly, hesitatingly.

Ted puts the cups, goblets on the table, one by one. He puts a knife before each.

Bottles of wine are opened in a frenzy of movement. There is a loud pop when the corks are removed. Ted places one bottle at the center of the pentagram and smiles diabolically.

Everybody stands up. For a moment it seems like John isn't there, but then he is.

JOHN

There's something I'm really wondering
about... I can't actually recall who first told about
the dream. Some say it's me. Others say it's Ted.

Others again claim Freya did it. Who was it really?

BURT

Wasn't it...

He shakes his head.

BURT

(laughing)

Something's going on here, knock on wood.

They all take a closer look at the table. Nothing happens. Slowly they start smiling.

TED

Good.

He fills the cups. A white, sparkling wine appears before their eyes. He picks up the blade before him. The others do the same. They hold one hand over the cup. A slight hesitation, one decisive, fast incision on the meat-packed side of the hand, an insignificant pain. One, two, three seconds and drops of blood fall into the wine.

Everybody is given a band-aid. They put it on. The red is sinking to the bottom of the cup. It doesn't mix with the present fluid, until they're putting their fingers in it and start stirring.

One moment it seems like Freya isn't there. Then she is, eagerly grabbing the goblets.

FREYA

(in solemn cheerfulness)

The Blood of the Gods

They lift their cup to match the level of their faces.

TED

Dreams belong to the night.

EVERYBODY

DREAMS BELONG TO THE NIGHT

The cups meet at the center. They're brought to hot lips and emptied, emptied to the last drop.

LISBETH

(with cheeks exposing a pleasant warmth)

You know, it's funny... I'm certain we've done
this before.

BURT

(red on the nose)

You have probably done something resembling
it. Or you're imagining it. They say déjà vu is
merely a delay between the left and the right half
of the brain.

LISBETH

No, Burt, you don't *understand*. Done *this*. Here
and now.

VOICE OF LISBETH (the other Lisbeth)

*Yes, knock your heads against the wall not a
wall, till you get it right.*

TED

Yes, I *understand*.

A deep thunder from a drum, from the Earth itself below, the soft grass and the hard stamped
mould. Walls, floor and roof dissolve around them. The table, in a burst of fire, transforms to
a giant campfire. Strands of Shadow, of Night and Fire, seeking them. They see it. They sense
the heat in the face.

EXT. FIELD BY RUIN - NIGHT

A burst of wind, a flash of fire, and they're on the field by the ruin, dancing. Wild dance,
boiling blood.

There are more people here, both seen and unseen. They can see the ghosts, too, straining
their eyes.

As the music at the end calms them down and they're swaying to it, waving their hands in
the ember air, reality, too, is once more slowly solidifying.

VOICE OF ABKASHA

We've come here, a host of Strangers, this night,
where the division between the known and hidden

world is paper thin, come to break through the
veil.

Lisbeth touches Freya's shoulder.

LISBETH

(appraisingly)

That sounded great.

FREYA

(wondering)

I don't know if I really said that, but I know that
I could have.

They're all gathering around the fire. The five of them, the additional ten from the city.
Dilated pupils, vibrating noses, open mouths are taking it all in.

TED

(raising a fist to his face)

One thing is becoming increasingly clear, a
conviction deeper than rain: This world is *Wrong*.
We can all feel that, in our bones. It's about time
we're doing this... doing everything.

The night is quiet. They've turned off the music, but they can yet hear it.

LISBETH

So many lives, and I can remember ever more.

TED

There is ever, ever more.

He stands in front of her, dipping the thumb and index finger in a bowl, in a red fluid.

TED

I'm drawing the symbol of Eternity on your
brow and above your... buffet.

She starts undressing then, laughing encouragingly to him, and the others, too, around her. He paints one Ankh, the ancient symbol of immortality, on her brow and one around her navel. Then he tears off his own rags in fierce, impatient moves. They're all painting each other in rushed, flashing moments.

There is a thundering voice from nothingness. It's not scary to them, not anymore.

WE DANCE THE DANCE OF LIFE. WE'RE HUNTERS, WE'RE NOMADS. WE SEEK
THE FRESH AND UNKNOWN. WHAT ELSE IS THERE TO SEEK?

They gather by the pentacle, a five-point star, inside a circle, prepared earlier in the evening.

TED

(a rough voice giving voice to the air)

I am the Beast. I give myself Power to rise from the sea, the molten sea. I give myself Power: not just for a thousand days, not merely one thousand years... But Forever.

RACHEL

(singing)

Sex-Magick, sex-magick, I'm so horny, so horny, I can't wait, I'll wait patiently for the fast and fury.

Laughter, feeling so good, being so good, written in their faces, the movement of the bodies.

Abkasha, the priestess, the Witch, is the first to step into the pentacle.

FREYA

I can see us as giants, sleeping by a campfire among the stars. I can see the Gate of Madness and I can see the small mountain above. It isn't us and yet it *is*.

Anubis the Ritemaster, the Witch is the first to step inside the pentacle.

TED

Dream a Dream deep enough, and it becomes real.

And Freya appears by his side.

Ted, Freya, John, Lisbeth and Burt place themselves inside the pentacle, sitting down in each of the five points.

Outside the circle sit the others, holding hands, sending the cup from hand to hand, mouth to mouth, swaying in the shadow twilight. The torches tied to poles well above the ground burn on all sides, but they seem so far away.

ANUBIS (the other Ted with the beard)

Time is shooting crooked. The only reason we see it as straight, is that we're currently in the habit of preferring it that way.

Listen, listen now, to the edge of the Night, to the beating of your own hearts. Picture yourself walking on a path through the forest. It goes deeper and deeper, as you go deeper. As you finally feel the pain, the joy ravaging you.

The ones outside the circle sway, back and forth, back and forth, as they sing, as their singing is growing louder. Words, symbols are drawn in the air, the very fabric of reality. Anubis' hands glow then, shockingly, the glow quickly spreading to the rest of his body.

Many of the words spoken are unintelligible, a humming in the background, insistently, threatening, enticing. There are screams of desperation, of fear and delight, and triumph.

BURT

(wild eyed)

A pattern initially meaningless, is making us see the big picture. Our *Hunger* gives meaningless to the meaning that isn't there. *He he!*

They're all yawning, growing tired, growing tired in body, astute in Mind. Their astute eyes are visible confirmations to each other.

Humming, there is Humming. There is no sound and no one is moving their lips. Humming is rising from the ground with the mists.

LISBETH

I am your Guide tonight, leading you to the foreign beaches, the vast unknown.

As I count down from five to Zero, the Journey begins. The body grows heavier and so much lighter. It becomes yours once more.

RACHEL

I can see it all, just before my eyes.

Ted is on the ground tonight, seeing everything from a different perspective.

LISBETH

FIVE... FOUR... THREE... TWO... ONE...

And then she strikes the match, and the last word is drowned in the roar of fire, as the pentacle is lit. Flames stretch to the heavens, engulfing the five inside the circle. Someone screams. Mist rises from the ground, white and gray and shadow.

Sweat pours from wide-open pores. The five sit there with fire on all sides. They breathe in and out, out and in, breathing heavily. They're stretching arms. The ones outside are stretching bodies, twisting and turning there on the ground.

Ted lays still and suddenly his body starts twisting in cramps. He *screams* in pain. The ground shakes.

He is in a room. There are others around him, other strangers, sitting in a circle. Ravens flap their wings, and their squeak is echoing throughout the place. And then he is out in Space, between the planets, between the stars, between the galaxies, and even they turn tiny below him.

MAN

(holding hands pressed against the ears)

It's to no *avail*. The Earth itself is shaking. I
can't take it.

And he runs away.

Ted's knuckles are white as he's twisting his hands. His body is still once more. A gasp rises from the assembly, as he turns... transparent, and starts disappearing. The others, too. The Fire keeps burning.

VOICE OF TED

*There is something there ahead. Not a door, but
a gate.*

EXT. ELSEWHERE - DAY/TWILIGHT

ABKASHA

I've never before seen a landscape so detailed,
the texture so rich.

John stands on a road. There is no visible gate. The road continues into the mists.

FEMALE VOICE

We're wandering through the mists of time and
existence.

JOHN

(wondering)

Is that you, Freya?

Freya enters the mists. She turns and looks back, a short eternity. She's smiling.

Freya stands on a road. There is no gate. The road continues into the mists. A man appears
before her. She sees him, as she last saw him; as a nailed, slain sacrifice.

FREYA

Paul, is that you?

PAUL

Don't worry, I'm fine. I'm going and all will be
good, good, good.

And he rises in the fog, the dark fog. And his legs start burning. In seconds the fire is engulfing his body. And he is Gone.

Tears flow from the girl's eyes, turning to mist, turning to fire.

EXT. FOREST - NIGHT

The forest is empty, but there is movement, there is Life.

VOICE OF TED

I can hear the sounds of the Night. I can feel the trembling of the Earth. Like ghosts we're approaching it, to be ghosts no more.

EXT. FIELDS – NIGHT

The Ritemaster is rising, rising inside the burning Pentacle, the Wretched Palace. He walks across the burning boundaries, to its center. The other four follow him. The flames are still flames, but they don't burn. Ethereal they stretch and fondle the human specters.

Outside the ring awaits an unknown number of Strangers. Unknown until the Litany has been completed.

Both the people inside and outside the ring are like shadows. The flames are not illuminating them. It is as if the fire isn't there at all.

RITEMASTER

Look at the sky

The moon is in the east

The sun is in the west

Pinpricks of light called stars

Are visible to the naked eye

Sky is dark around the sun

Blue around the moon

Minute differences disappear

Enhanced inside a ring of fire

Day and night are One

ABKASHA

Time may repeat itself, like a loop never ending.

THE RITEMASTER

(turning to what may be west)

I turn to the horizon in the west

I turn unafraid towards

What's different, what's unknown

Shrouded in mists of time and shadows

The Season of The Witch is here

Let the wind blow

Rachel steps forward, an eager smile on her face.

THE GREETING ENTERING

(Ted and sometimes Lisbeth, both voices fading in and out)

Enter the circle with respect, but unafraid

If you want to turn away, now is the time

Walk through the Gate of Fire

And it's forever closed, you're forever free

The prospective Witch enters the circle. A wave of a hand, a silent cry... And the fire and smoke envelop her. She's not burned, she's not harmed.

RACHEL

I enter the circle with respect, but unafraid

I don't turn away, this is the time

I walk through the Gate of Fire

It's forever closed, I'm forever free

The Ritemaster is turning and turning. For each new verse another person enters the Circle, until they're all there.

The fire embraces them all, and they're burning, and they're fading. And suddenly there is nothing remaining, not even embers on the ground. The field is visible, but it's dark.

EXT. STREETS/ROAD/SHADOWWALK - DAY/TWILIGHT

A hysteric voice somewhere, crying out for release. There's unrest, real unrest, as people are almost running from spot to spot, in the Chaos surrounding them.

FRANK

(kneeling on the ground, frantic with despair)

The world is about to END!

A smile, a grin, a poised look.

TED

You say that as if it is a bad thing!

He/she/they levitate above the ground, in mists, in ruins. They see forests of broken trees, rotten, dead trees in a city street.

BURT

I... understand.

JOHN

(as they have never seen him before)

We jestingly call ourselves witches, because we seek our inner spring, humanity's ancient contact with nature.

EXT. GATE OF MADNESS - NIGHT

The five of them awaken by a forest path at night. Wet, oozing torches, five of them burn bright around them. They wake up with their eyes open.

They're arriving.

VOICE IN THE WILDERNESS

All times are now. 200 years ago... 10000... it's just a way of saying we don't *want* timelessness, we don't want Freedom.

The five of them sit around the campfire. They have thrown up some more, their skin pale and wet, but the good feeling visible in their faces doesn't disappear. They can see the ring of light created by the moving flames. Beyond that there is only a wall of darkness. They're eagerly partaking in a conversation.

LISBETH

(dreamingly)

A fox walked to me and sniffed me out. It
wasn't afraid. I wasn't afraid.

FREYA

I was the wolf hunting in a deep forest. For the
first time in my life I know myself.

BURT

Isn't that weird?

They look at him, look closer. The open expression in his face, his entire body language,
is... *transforming* him. They see him as he was before and the way he is *now*.

BURT

For all we know we may be the only humans in
the entire, fucking world. At this moment the rest
of the world does indeed seem like a dream to
me. This is reality, all the other crap the illusion.

The owl howls in agreement. And then they can hear the wolf, its wild elegy making the cold
run down their spine.

TED

(thoughtful)

I thought all the wolves were gone from this
area.

LISBETH

(delighted)

They were.

FREYA

(nervously)

We should move on.

Exchanging glances they nod and after just a few moments of gathering their belongings
they're on their way again.

JOHN

Not much left, is there?

TED

No, but we don't have that far left to go either.

JOHN

Are we really having this conversation?

LISBETH

It's great, isn't it?

They smile and nod.

They move closer to each other then, in joy, but are interrupted, as they're about to touch, to embrace.

Freya freezes solid where she stands, then. They, too, look at the forest. They can hear movement, can hear branches break.

FREYA

Something is coming. *Something* is blocking our path...

BURT

Some... thing...?

Four... creatures emerge into their view, blocking their path. Creatures both easily and hardly recognizable. It's the forest ranger, the city cop, Melanie and... Clay. They're shimmering and oozing, like they're burning, but there's no fire. Their skin is a dark, unhealthy blue. And they look menacing beyond words.

FREYA

They're demons.

LISBETH

No, that description isn't quite fitting, but it will do.

Clay laughs. A shrilled, insane sound.

TED

You're a part of this, Clay? You... killed the cat,
didn't you?

The insane glee is more than a sufficient answer.

TED

For Gaia's sake, man, *why?*

CLAY

You showed me another world... showed me
how it could be. You fucked me up.

He's pale. He's unnaturally pale. His eyes, his face, are more swollen, more bloated than
anything they've ever seen, certainly far worse than they ever were.

BURT

Whatever you're doing, you must stop it. Don't
you know you're destroying the world?

COP

(laughing wickedly)

We... are destroying the world?

FOREST RANGER

They don't know, do they?

MELANIE

How delightful...

CLAY

(sinking to his knees)

It's wrong, it's ALL... wrong.

And then he's fading from their eyes, as if he never existed.

And as he's reduced to puss and bones and nothing, the shock freezes all the five wanderers.

Lisbeth stands rigid, fear written in her face, moving hands, moving lips.

LISBETH

Red ball... Red twig.

And the twig by her right foot begins to glow, to burn.

Suddenly Melanie stands right in front of her, giving her a stinging slap in her face. Lisbeth falls backwards. Her hands ooze and twist before her eyes and she's screaming in horror.

Melanie grabs her throat, lifting her up with one hand, in one incredible show of strength.

MELANIE THE DEMON

(softly)

You'll just fade into nothingness, as if you have never existed. Beg for mercy and I may grant it.

LISBETH

(crying)

P-please.

And she starts to disintegrate before their eyes, while Melanie seem to be... *growing*, gaining strength and texture.

Freya throws herself at her, with all the fierceness she possesses, clawing desperately at Melanie's essence, to no avail. Melanie shrugs her off, as if she is nothing. Melanie is in uniform, an amalgam of all the uniforms that ever were. An american flag, a german nazi flag and countless others. And they can hear the voices, the many voices of the uniform.

MELANIE THE DEMON

Schnell, schnell.

MELANIE

(pleased)

Soon now, Very soon.

She looks at the others, triumphantly...

She doesn't look at Lisbeth.

Lisbeth's hands start glowing and the fingers turn to claws, and with a shriek of anger, a lifetime of Rage, she charges, attacks the other, and like knives her claws tear through the creature in front of her. There's no blood, no flesh, no bowels, merely a cry of united rage, a look of utter disbelief from the other, and then nothing. Melanie has vanished, as if she never was. Lisbeth remains, shaking; her eyes wide and hard like glass, burning like glass never can.

Freya confronts the forest ranger.

FREYA

I know who you are.

And he vanishes in the night air.

John looks at the cop.

And the cop is fading away

Ted gathers his stuff, even some of their stuff.

BURT

(gasping)

What the HELL was that? What is
HAPPENING?

TED

We must hurry.

They start running, swinging their torches as they run. The torches burn brighter. They don't seem to be in danger of being put out. The dark fire burns the night and the five people rushing through it.

The five climb, climb through the night with their torch in one hand. Shaking hands keep searching for handles, for cracks in the rock, as they slowly ascend the mountain, slowly find their way up.

EXT. THE GATE OF MADNESS - NIGHT

They reach the plateau. There's a small rock there, hovering over them. Beyond that is the deep, deep forest. They gather all the twigs and dry branches they can get. As they gasp for breath, gulping in fresh air, they light the fire. Dark and bright flames illuminates the surroundings.

All five of them sit down, straight there on the ground.

BURT

We must all be going mad.

He's laughing his heart out.

FREYA

(whispering loud and nervously)

I don't know what happened, but I can feel so much more, now. Everything is changing, turning fluid around us.

LISBETH

(calmly, but shivering)

Who was he, Freya? Who was the forest ranger?
You two have just recently met, but you seem to
have a connection.

FREYA

I... don't know, but he seems so very familiar. I
see him... every time I look at myself in the
mirror.

And they're all frozen, as if her very words hurt them.

Lieutenant Edgar Gallagher and partner Sarah Fowles walk out of the forest, the deep forest. There is something almost profoundly normal about the scene. The two are not sweaty. They are impeccably dressed and groomed. Hair is done, and doesn't seem to have been damaged by what must have been a long and strenuous journey through the wilderness.

GALLAGHER

(in a shrill tone)

What has transpired here?

TED

(immediately deliberately patronizing)

Has anything transpired here?

GALLAGHER

We heard someone was murdered.

ABKASHA

From whom did you hear that, Lieutenant? We
have heard no such thing.

There is no bird life anymore, no singing, something abundant before the two latest arrivals.

JOHN

Man, I'm chilled to the bones.

FREYA

You see behind the illusion, we all are, truly, for
the first time in our lives.

They, all five of them, as one person, look at the approaching policemen. The Lieutenants
stop, just outside the circle of light of shadow.

TED

We see the destruction, we see its servants.

GALLAGHER

You're all nutty as fruit loops. I'm gonna take
you in and see that you're put away for life.

Fowles puts a hand on his shoulder. She's smiling, as John and Burt hear her speak for the
first time.

FOWLES

No need to be hasty here, is there? These young men and women have just misunderstood a bit, have they not?

BURT

I wouldn't bet on it, lady.

She says nothing, only looks at him.

BURT

What the hell are you talking about, anyway?

FOWLES

I'm talking about the experience I've gained after fifteen years of investigating paranormal crimes. I'm talking about you upsetting the natural order, endangering everybody.

They stare at her, thunderstruck.

FOWLES

Yes, you. You know about the approaching disaster. Yes, I know you do.

She's smiling to them, an intense, comforting smile.

FOWLES

What you have failed to realize, however, is your crucial participation in that disaster... Don't you see? You've put in motion forces far beyond your comprehension and it must stop, before it's too late.

They look, stare at each other

TED

We're doing it? But... how is that possible?

JOHN

I don't know... But we've all felt *something*, haven't we; felt the power raging inside?

Freya twists her hands like a nervous old lady.

FREYA

What can we do about it?

They look at Fowles again.

FOWLES

There is something that can be done. If you'll accept my aid, there is still time to turn the tide.

They look at each other, with the first signs of devastation in their eyes.

TED

(painfully)

I suppose we...

The others are not nodding, but they're looking at the ground.

GALLAGHER

(triumphantly drawing his gun)

That's right, you're coming with us.

JOHN

(drawing in the air)

What...

The very air seems to condense, to change under his breath.

Gallagher gasps in fear and fires his gun. The bullets never reach John, but are disintegrating in flames.

Or just simply disintegrating in the air in front of John. He doesn't move his hands. His eyes glow in a terrible ruby light.

LISBETH

TED, remember the museum. Never forget.

And during the next seconds they see history unfold, see history march, louder and louder, and then suddenly fading, until there is nothing there, but the scowling woman in front of them.

TED

I... remember. How could I have ever forgotten?

Fowles screams in frustration and rage to Gallagher.

FOWLES

You... IDIOT

She touches him and he goes up in flames before their eyes, the horrible scream echoing endlessly through the forest.

Freya tramples the ground in triumph. The very Earth shakes beneath their feet.

FREYA

The veil is thrown *aside*.

TED

(crying out)

A wall NO MORE

JOHN

I'm still not sure what I did, it was instinct more than anything else... but I can *feel* the power coursing through me.

And when they look at Fowles once more, there's anger and determination in their eyes.

FOWLES

(foaming and frowning)

You're *demons*, out to destroy our world.

TED

I *know* her. I've seen her on the edge of my vision and in the mirror.

They see her filled with pollution, flesh rotting from exposure to chemicals, eyes exposing a spirit disintegrating. They see her as she is.

TED

We're destroying the illusion, nothing more.

FOWLES

It's been so long, so very long.

She's *growing* as she looks at him with hatred in her eyes.

TED

Centuries, millennia, what does it matter? It's
great.

He's growing, too, as the light is retracting, as there's nothing keeping her away anymore.

FOWLES

(throwing herself at him)

NO

He meets her with equal force. Hands clutch each other. Bodies are pushed beyond
endurance. He glows in fire, in shadow, one short second, pushing her backwards.

She falls two, three steps backwards. He stays put. She bleeds from her mouth. She's not
fading.

FOWLES

Damn you, you think you've won, do you... but
you'll never win.

TED

(smiling ironically)

Win?

FOWLES

There's one thing you haven't counted on...

Her features start *changing* then, flowing like water. The others gasp. Ted takes one step back. Fowles is getting more muscled and her face is that of a man. Ted looks at his own face, looks at himself, shock and horror exposing itself in his eyes.

FOWLES

I've seen into the Abyss.

Ted stumbles a bit. Fowles smiles. Ted shakes his head in denial, forming «no, no no» with his lips. But he is slowly straightening himself. Fowles' smile falters.

TED

I'm looking at you.

Fowles' smile is still confident.

TED

I accept you.

FOWLES

(freezing on his spot)

What?

TED

(stretching out his arms to the sides)

I accept you. You're a part of me. We are One.

FOWLES

Come on, you can't mean that. Nobody can be
that foolish...

TED

One...

FOWLES/CARTLAND

I'll gut you like a piig.

ANUBIS

(WITH A MIGHTY ROAR, SHAKING THE EARTH)

ONE!

And the Earth shakes. The ground is dissolving itself around them.

Fowles stumbles. He/she looks down at herself, himself. The legs aren't there anymore.

They're just not there.

FOWLES

NOOOOOOOOOOOO

Fowles screams then, in a terrible rage, before disappearing like dew before the sun. Ted starts screaming in that same instant, shrinking to normal size and sinking to his knees on the forest bed.

He's already standing up as the others rush in to help him.

TED

(sweating)

I'm okay. In fact I'm more okay now, than I've
been in a long, long time.

I can feel her, feel him inside. I am Whole.

And his hands scratches the air, and he's making huge holes in it. They're staring as if
transfixed at the pattern revealing itself. The fire starts growing, consuming the very ground
they're standing on. Freya floats effortlessly twenty centimeters above the rock.

They see it, and it does shock them, but just for a second.

LISBETH

We met ourselves. Clay was...

BURT

My counterpart, I know.

FREYA

(calling to them)

We can stay here as gods or we can live the Life
we've been born to Live, lift the heavy, light lids
covering our eyes, our perception.

Images form in the air before them, of castles and throne rooms and dungeons.

They glimpse themselves as kings and queens, as Masters, and shudder at the thought.

And they grab her hands.

LISBETH

Come let's do it. We can do anything we desire.

And they Dance, hand in hand, body against body, inside the ring of fire revealing itself.
And they sing. And their song, first merely humming, transforms into words and purpose.

SONG

«The Human being is like an iceberg, we see
only a tiny part of it».

Strings of Night and Fire start growing out of them, tight as weed and suddenly five giants
stand there looking down on the small forest, the small bush.

They're back inside the pentacle, standing close to the others. And there are more people,
standing in the shadows outside the circle.

Factories spewing poison fall, fall down. Prison walls dissolve around the inmates and they
look up startled. Buildings, cities crumble to dust. Even nature itself is crumbling.

ANUBIS

(in a force-filled loud voice)

We're emerging from the chrysalis, insects no
more.

And the world is disintegrating around them. A shredded curtain hangs from a branch,
blowing in the wind.

The five of them walk into the mist, five shadows, joined by many others.

And then everything dissolves itself into nothing, even the world of mist and shadow.

Another flash of fire and everything is gone.

EXT. GATE OF MADNESS - DAWN

The color of rust and blood around them. They breathe, long, deep gasps of pleasure. He sees the burned sticks used for the torches the night before, see them left on the ground. His eyes clear.

He looks up at Abkasha, her being seemingly distant and regal, closer than ever. With a glowing sensuality threatening to smother him.

Distant, almost subconsciously he touches, notices his own beard. So much is different, so much remains the same.

TED

Abkasha?

ABKASHA

Yes, Edward, yes, Anubis, you want to ask me something?

EDWARD

Were they... real, all the other people on the other world?

She smiles, self-consciously, slightly sarcastic. *Alive!*

ABKASHA

Real?

EDWARD

(irritated)

Come on, you know what I mean.

ABKASHA

(more solemn)

Reality does not fit into our narrow perception of it. We should never allow ourselves to forget that.

The others are awakening too, not merely being awake. All of the five, and also others.

RACHEL

A tribe from many tribes, until the end of Time.

There are differences in clothing and jewelry signifying that. The tribe is once more uniting, knitting itself. They embrace, locking eyes. Someone is crying. Burt (*Bertram*) doesn't look so good, but most are crying in joy and relief. Watching each other, taking «stock» of themselves with wonder in their eyes.

BURT

We didn't sleep, but dreamed still.

JOHN

I'd say we woke up... still dreaming.

BERTRAM

No more picking up food in a store. From now on we have to work our butts off for it, for it all.

LISBETH

(crying out)

How can you say that, Bertram? How can you use that *tone*? Life is not easy, and it will never be, but now we have our self-respect, our dignity, ourselves as Human Beings.

Abkasha is facing them, hands on her hips, the naked skin just above the loincloth.

ABKASHA

Ready, people? Thou art shaken. Thou hast visited The Abyss and returned to tell the tale. Ready to feel the boiling blood in thy veins, the strength in thy limbs, the smell of the Hunt?

JOHN

Yes, by the spirits, more now than I ever was.

EDWARD

(irritated)

Abkasha, tell me this: Why do we talk like we do, I mean, we speak pretty fluent English, don't we?

ABKASHA

(making no fuss about it)

That's not you talking, but «you» as you were
this short night. You're a bit stuck, it happens
sometimes. You've left a bit of yourself back
there. It happens. There's an ancient saying:
«Even in a second there's an eternity».

She smiles, a dangerous grin.

ABKASHA

This is the way we've always talked...

They fetch their weapons, picking them up with awe painted on their faces.

JOHN

An odd collection of what we have *dreamed*,
isn't it? But not a single really... complex one.
Now, *that* would've been weird indeed...

They're going on their way.

GIRL

My whole body... tingles.

JOHN

(ironically, joyfully)

It's the fresh air, baby. And Life. Dreamtime
may be okay, but it can't compare to this.

ABKASHA

It's time to face the day. Face to face. Dreams
belong to the night.

The Endless Path, a Nature virtually untouched my Human Beings, reveal, re-reveal itself to them. Just around the corner is the wilderness. They're leaving the Gate of Madness without looking back. Ever. The place already forgotten, like a half remembered dream.

Edward sees a branch in one tree ahead, sees a shredded curtain hanging from it, blowing in the wind. He looks at the others. They don't look in the direction he's looking, not even Bertram. Edward takes another look at the branch, at the shredded curtain. As he watches it, it fades away.

Edward shudders a bit thinking about Bertram, looking at him with a bit of fear, of worry, but not that much. Not enough to spoil the beauty of the day, the Life they Live, visible in their very demeanor, their every movement, as they're moving into the broad valley below.

«Are we and everything we see
a dream within a dream»?

Edgar Allan Poe