

BERSERKER

Written by

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DREAM - HAMUND RELIVES A BATTLE

Hamund's furred, black-clawed hands dip in and out of his vision as he sprints across a chaotic melee on all fours like a dog or a tiger, the whole world dyed in shades of red.

Before him, foreign warriors in demonic armor clash with tall, broad-chested men with broadswords and battle axes. Their eyes glow a white-hot blue in the red world.

He crushes a demonic warrior's face with a single swipe of his furred, clawed hand, tilts his head back, and roars at a blood-red moon: a monstrous roar unlike any animal's.

Warriors on both sides recoil in terror.

Hamund sprints to the next fight, tackles a warrior to the bloody ground, bites into the warrior's neck and strips the muscles and viscera with his teeth.

The warrior gurgles and screams as his blood sprays.

The meat pulls away from the bone with a final snap. Hamund chews once, twice; the wet sound fills his ears.

A warrior charges and sticks a spear in Hamund's side.

Hamund snaps the spear, leaps on the warrior, and digs his claws into the warrior's chest. Bones crack and snap.

War cry from his left. Hamund turns just as the demon's long-handled blade descends on his face.

EXT. GEORG'S FARM - NIGHT

HAMUND, 20s, a strong young man only in a pair of trousers, awakens in a daze, kneeling in the grass.

Blood around his mouth glistens black in the moonlight.

Anxious cattle low nearby. Hamund gapes at the eviscerated cow in the grass before him.

GEORG (O.S.)
Who's out there?

Hamund jumps to his feet.

Up the hill, Georg, 40s, a lanky farmer, creeps from his farmhouse with a pitchfork and lantern in hand.

GEORG (CONT'D)
I'll have your head.

Georg watches Hamund sprint into the woods.

GEORG (CONT'D)
Who goes there?

Georg stomps down the hill with his brother, Klaus, 40s, a tall, strong-backed man, in tow and shines his lantern on the eviscerated cow and its splayed entrails.

EXT. BARREN FOREST - NIGHT

Hamund jumps over rocks and dodges branches as he sprints through the trees and crushes dry leaves underfoot.

EXT. HAMUND'S FARM - NIGHT

SVANHILD, 20's, a statuesque woman in a shawl and night clothes, stands outside the farmhouse. Her long, dark hair blows in the wind as she scans the dark.

Hamund emerges from the forest and marches up the hill.

SVANHILD
Again, Hamund? Where did you go?

Hamund averts his eyes in shame.

SVANHILD (CONT'D)
You're covered in blood. Did you--

HAMUND
It was a cow. Georg's.

SVANHILDE
By the gods. Maybe he didn't see you. Maybe he'll blame wolves.

HAMUND
He saw me.

SVANHILD
Gods, what is happening? Years of nothing and now this?

The farmhouse door opens, and their son, IVAR, 6, peeks out.

IVAR
Ma, what's going on?

SVANHILD
Nothing, Ivar. Go back to bed.

IVAR
Why is Da dirty?

HAMUND
Did you not hear your mother?

Ivar backs into the house. Svanhild withers Hamund with a glare. Hamund hangs his head. She softens and embraces him.

SVANHILDE
Come. We must clean you.

EXT. HAMUND'S FARM - DAY

Hamund's longhouse and cattle barn sit inside a circle of low fencing that also encloses a small, tilled field.

Goats, sheep, and small cows mill about the yard.

Svanhild and their daughter, METTELIL, 5, both in apron dresses, kneel by a goat and milk it into a bucket.

They smile and giggle as they both tug the udders.

Hamund and Ivar, in vests and trousers, stand in a field of tall grass. Ivar holds a scythe too big for him.

HAMUND
Give it a try. Shoulders and hips.

Ivar swings the scythe, cuts some grass, and plants the scythe blade in the dirt. He looks to Hamund for a reaction.

HAMUND (CONT'D)
Good work. Soon, the grass will
fall over on its own out of fear.

IVAR
Does it fall over for you, Da?

HAMUND
No, I'm not as strong as you'll be.

Hamund gazes down the hill. Four people trudge up from the nearby village nestled in the valley.

Georg and Klaus follow MOTHER SIDSEL, an elderly woman in a white robe and ORMAR, a tall man well past middle age.

HAMUND (CONT'D)
Ivar, go help your sister with the
goats. Don't wander off.

Ivar runs off. He passes Svanhild, already on her way to Hamund. Hamund and Svanhild walk to meet the visitors.

SVANHILD

Mother Sidsel, Ormar--always nice
to have the elders visit.

MOTHER SIDSEL

Hello, Svanhild. How are you? How
are the children?

Klaus, Georg, and Ormar eye Hamund. Hamund glances at the knife and hatchet tucked into Georg and Klaus's belt sashes.

SVANHILD

Growing fast. Would you like to
come inside? We have fresh milk.

MOTHER SIDSEL

I cannot. Svanhild, concerns have
been rising in the village.

SVANHILD

What kind of concerns?

MOTHER SIDSEL

Some have heard noises nightly.

ORMAR

Noises unlike bear or wolf.
Terrible noises. Some catch
glimpses. Some say "monster."

MOTHER SIDSEL

It's only natural that their
suspicions should cast a shadow
over you and yours, and last night--

KLAUS

Last night, this thing you call a
husband killed my brother's cow.

MOTHER SIDSEL

Silence, Klaus. It's the elders who
will see to your grievance.

Klaus sets his jaw and steps back.

MOTHER SIDSEL (CONT'D)

Georg claims he saw Hamund flee his
farm last night. What say you?

SVANHILD

I say that Georg sees what he wants to. He's long feared my husband, and I suspect it colors his memory.

GEORG

Feared?

SVANHILD

The truth is that there are wolves and bears in these woods. A desperate one may have dared his farm for food.

MOTHER SIDSEL

Then where was Hamund last night?

Svanhild hesitates.

ORMAR

Answer, girl.

HAMUND

Mother, Svanhild only seeks to protect me, but I must be honest.

MOTHER SIDSEL

Go on.

HAMUND

I woke in Georg's field last night.

MOTHER SIDSEL

Did you kill his cow?

HAMUND

I know only that I awoke with it at my feet, already dead.

KLAUS

The monster can't remember. He can't control his urge to kill.

GEORG

You can't let him live near us.

HAMUND

I confess because I want you to know that I am honest, and that I submit to the judgement of the village like everyone else.

ORMAR

Has this happened before?

HAMUND

I never awoke before a corpse, but
I have woken in strange places
after strange dreams.

MOTHER SIDSEL

What kind of dreams?

HAMUND

Dreams of the war, of hunger, of
anger. It felt much like when the
change would come over me.

MOTHER SIDSEL

It would seem the matter is clear.
Hamund, I also accuse you of
killing Georg's cow.

Klaus and Georg smile at grim Hamund.

MOTHER SIDSEL (CONT'D)

You must pay him weregild.

KLAUS

Weregild.

GEORG

He should be run from the village.

MOTHER SIDSEL

So that you can absorb his farm?
Pick your cow, Georg, and be quick.

Georg fumes, but he marches toward the pen.

SVANHILD

I'll help him.

Svanhild follows.

MOTHER SIDSEL

You should go as well, Klaus. I
wish to speak with Hamund.

Klaus leaves. Sidsel steps close to Hamund

MOTHER SIDSEL (CONT'D)

You believe you changed? Without
henbane or the violence of war?

Hamund nods.

ORMAR

It may be that the beast cannot
live without it, without war.

MOTHER SIDSEL

This change, are you aware? Did you
have control while you fought?

HAMUND

Yes, Mother. In the war, I did.

MOTHER SIDSEL

And last night?

Hamund hesitates, but then shakes his head.

ORMAR

Not good, Mother.

MOTHER SIDSEL

Seems the elders will have much to
discuss. I pray for you, that this
new bane not sway too many minds.

Georg opens the pen and examines the few cows. Svanhild folds
her arms outside. Klaus leans against the fence.

GEORG

Strange that a smart girl like you
would risk so much with that boy.

SVANHILD

We were promised long ago.

GEORG

Most would call that childhood
fancy, nothing more.

He straightens from examining a cow's flank and meets
Svanhild at the fence.

GEORG (CONT'D)

Instead, you carried a torch for
him the whole time he was gone.

SVANHILD

Should I have done like Cecilie?
Had children with an older man?

She leans over the fence to get in Georg's face.

SVANHILD (CONT'D)

Perhaps you have one in mind?

GEORG
You and the mother sure like to
mistake my concern for greed.

He returns to the cows. Ivar peeks around the longhouse.

KLAUS
That boy who left didn't come back,
girl. He's changed.

SVANHILD
Not in the ways that matter.

Ivar goes to his mother.

IVAR
Ma, why is he looking at our cows?

Svanhild picks him up.

SVANHILD
Sweet child, what are you doing
here? Look after your sister.

IVAR
Why are these people here?

SVANHILD
We're giving them one of our cows.

IVAR
Why?

Svanhild hesitates.

GEORG
A beast took one. Your parents are
helping me with another.

IVAR
But I like them. Me and Mettelil
gave them names.

SVANHILD
I know, sweetie.

GEORG
What's this one called?

IVAR
That's Sidsel.

Klaus and Georg share a chuckle.

GEORG
A fine name for a cow.

Klaus moseys over to Svanhild and claps Ivar on the back.

KLAUS
Brilliant, boy. Brilliant. I wonder
how much of your father is in you.

SVANHILD
Which beast will you take?

GEORG
I think Sidsel will do just fine.

LATER

Hamund and Svanhild watch as the delegation marches down the hill and go their separate ways.

Ormar and Klaus lead the cow toward their farm. Sidsel and Ormar walk toward the village.

ORMAR
Do you still believe him safe after
all that was said today?

MOTHER SIDSEL
I believe he is our burden to bear.

ORMAR
The war's left our village with
only elderly, women, and children.
We can't permit such a threat.

MOTHER SIDSEL
Some would say we owe those who
kept our lands safe.

ORMAR
That was wartime, and I doubt that
such witchery was even necessary.

MOTHER SIDSEL
Easy to say now that the foreign
devils have been driven back.

ORMAR
So, what? He just has your favor no
matter how dangerous he becomes?

Sidsel stops and confronts Ormar.

MOTHER SIDSEL

Would you ask if your son returned
burdened by the witches' magic?
Would you call to drive him out?

ORMAR

If that's what the village decided.
I would go with him, like I expect
Hamund's family to go with him.

MOTHER SIDSEL

Well, the village has made no such
decision. Until then, we treat him
like anyone else.

Sidsel continues down the hill.

SVANHILD

What can we do, Hamund? If it keeps
getting worse--

HAMUND

I know.

SVANHILD

Your mind still wander to the past?

HAMUND

Yes. I resist it during the day,
but in my dreams--

Svanhild takes his hand.

HAMUND (CONT'D)

Maybe I really should--

SVANHILD

Let's see what the kids are doing.

Svanhild leads Hamund round the house. Ivar leads a goat to
feed and Mettelil sits in the dirt.

SVANHILD (CONT'D)

Ooh, Mettelil, not in the dirt. Try
to keep your dress clean.

Svanhild picks Mettelil up.

HAMUND

Just about done, Ivar?

IVAR

Yes, papa.

HAMUND

Well done.

Mettelil scratches her wrist red.

SVANHILD

What's wrong, sweeting?

METTELIL

It itches.

Svanhild examines the area.

SVANHILD

Ooh, looks like a bug bite. Did you see what got you?

Mettelil shakes her head.

SVANHILD (CONT'D)

It'll be better tomorrow.

IVAR

Did they take a cow?

HAMUND

Afraid so, son.

IVAR

Why don't they take a cow from someone else?

SVANHILD

Hey, who wants to take a break?
I've heard papa's stomach growling.

A smile worms its way onto Hamund's face. He rubs his belly.

HAMUND

Oh, yes. Been getting hungry.

SVANHILD

Uh oh.

Ivar grows a giddy grin and backs away.

METTELIL

Mama, put me down. Put me down.

Svanhild sets her daughter down.

HAMUND

Think I'm hungry for my favorite meal: little boys and girls.

Hamund imitates growls and barks as he chases the children who scream and giggle as they flee around the farm.

HAMUND (CONT'D)
Grr, maybe some mama meat, too.

SVANHILD
Oh, no, no, no, no.

She flees. The children laugh and play.

EXT. ISOLATED FARM - DAY

A hanged man swings from a tree as over a dozen armed highwaymen in furs or gambesons pack their satchels and polish off a pig roasted over a fire.

Other, smaller bodies lay stacked behind a shed. Beghel, 20s, tattooed and shaven, stares at the farmhouse.

BANDIT #1
Beghel, meats are salted and doled.

BEGHEL
And the salt?

BANDIT #1
Kal is carrying it. We're just waiting for the order.

BEGHEL
We'll leave when Jarpulf is done saying goodbye to the daughter.

BANDIT #1
We won't bring her?

BEGHEL
She'd just slow us down.

BANDIT #1
But we could keep her until we find another. Prepare, like with meat.

BEGHEL
A point to make to the man himself, if you want to go in there.

Bandit #1 eyes the house but walks away.

INT. ISOLATED FARM - DAY

Jarpulf, 30s, a hard-muscled warrior covered in old tattoos, grunts with every rutting thrust, bracing his weight on the table with one hand and clutching a seax in the other.

JARPULF
Oh, yeah. That's good.

The young woman on the table under Jarpulf fights to contain her cries and tears as she looks anywhere but at his face.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
What a sweet taste. Shh. Almost there. Look at me. Look at me.

He turns the woman's head with the edge of his blade.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
There you go. Let me see those eyes, look right in those eyes.

His grunts and thrusts intensify.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Good girl. All the sugar and meat and fine mead in all the world.

Jarpulf covers the girl's mouth and sets the point of his seax against her chest.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Hush. Almost there. Almost there.

His body tenses, and he moans.

The seax sinks into the woman's chest. Her next cry gurgles, and she drifts away while Jarpulf gazes into her eyes.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Ahh, yes. Fly, fly. We reached such heights together.

He sighs.

EXT. ISOLATED FARM - DAY

More than a dozen bandits mill about, bags packed, fire doused. Jarpulf bursts out of the farmhouse.

JARPULF
We have life by the throat or what?

The bandits holler.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
This place is spent. Time for new
lands and new pleasures.

BANDIT #1
Burn the place?

JARPULF
And give some fyrd a smoke signal
where they can pick up our trail?

Jarpulf approaches Bandit #1 and draws two lines on the
bandit's face with the blood on his fingers.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
The gods will test us in combat in
time. No need to tempt them.

The bandits chuckle.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Especially when we're having so
much fun.

The bandits holler.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Onward, to the next feast.

The bandits beat their chests in time and march.

INT. HAMUND'S FARM - NIGHT

A single fat lamp lights the corner of the longhouse where
Mettelil lays in bed. Light rain taps the roof.

Svanhild touches a damp cloth to Mettelil's sweaty forehead,
takes a cup from Ivar, and tips it to her lips.

SVANHILD
Have a sip, sweetie. Please try.

Hamund stands on the edge of the light. Svanhild lifts
Mettelil's wrist to show the white welt there.

SVANHILD (CONT'D)
I think it was this. It keeps
getting worse.

HAMUND
A bite.

He glares down at Ivar.

HAMUND (CONT'D)
Didn't I tell you to watch out for
her? What were you doing?

SVANHILD
Hamund, stop.

Hamund grabs Ivar by his shirt. Ivar trembles.

HAMUND
How many times do I have to teach
you discipline?

Svanhild stands from the bed and pulls Hamund off Ivar.

SVANHILD
Stop it. He can't see every bug.
You know who you sound like?

She puts her fists on her hips. Hamund deflates.

SVANHILD (CONT'D)
Brenyn will need to know it was a
bug. Go get her.

She shoves the lamp into Hamund's hands.

EXT. HAMUND'S FARM - NIGHT

Hamund steps out into the drizzle and walks down the hill,
toward the lights of the village.

Halfway down the hill, a growl catches Hamund's attention.

The eyes of two wolves glint in the dark. Hamund's eyes
flash. The wolves whimper and retreat into the woods.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Hamund marches past candlelit windows. A passing villager
avoids eyes contact with him and hurries on.

Hamund reaches a dark house and knocks on the door.

HAMUND
Mother, are you there? It's urgent.

He tries to peer inside and knocks on the door again.

HAMUND (CONT'D)
 Mother. Mother, we are in need of
 your magics.

Cecilie, 20's, a slight, young, blonde woman, approaches.

CECILIE
 Hamund? Hamund, that is you. Don't
 see you in the village often.

HAMUND
 Cecilie, hello. Sorry, I can't
 talk. Does the mother sleep?

CECILIE
 She's in the longhouse most nights.
 Come, I'll take you.

They walk together.

CECILIE (CONT'D)
 You look good. I envied Svanhild
 when you returned from the war.

HAMUND
 Does Kaulf know you wander so?

CECILIE
 I like Kaulf. I thank him for my
 boys. I just wish more young men
 had returned.

They share a smile.

INT. LONGHOUSE - NIGHT

Most of the village's residents fill the hall.

Benches and kegs line the length of the building. Klaus,
 Georg, and a few mates laugh over mugs.

GEORG
 And the god says, "Sure, I once
 rutted with a horse. I thought you
 may be my daughter."

The men laugh. Klaus glances at the door, and his laughs die.

KLAUS
 You gotta be bloody kidding me.

Cecilie leads Hamund and points down the hall. Klaus stands.

GEORG
Maybe not the best time, brother.

KLAUS
What better time than with everyone
here? Are you afraid?

Klaus steps in Hamund's path.

KLAUS (CONT'D)
You've nerve showing your face.

HAMUND
I'll be gone again soon. I just
need the herbalist.

Hamund tries to pass, but Klaus shoves him back.

CECILIE
Klaus, leave him alone.

KLAUS
Shut your mouth, girl. No one wants
you here, Hamund.

The crowd goes quiet and gawks.

KLAUS (CONT'D)
You all heard, right? This animal
gutted my brother's cow. Wasn't
even awake for it.

Hamund stares Klaus down.

KLAUS (CONT'D)
He can't control the monster, and
he lives within walking distance.

VILLAGER #1
Sit down, you noisy toad.

VILLAGER #2
He's right. Would we let a bear
live among us?

KLAUS
Must he kill one of your beasts for
you to see? One of your children?

Hamund peers past Klaus. BRENYN, a hard, elderly woman in a
hooded gray robe, sits at a bench and watches.

HAMUND

Mother Brenyn, I need your help. My daughter's ill. She's been bitten.

Klaus grabs Hamund's shirt.

HAMUND (CONT'D)

Get your damned hands off me.

Klaus's friends stand.

KLAUS

He should be run out along with his fool wife and his demon children.

Hamund punches Klaus. Klaus wrestles with him. Hamund catches the back of Klaus's head and slams his face into a tabletop.

One of Klaus's friends jumps in. Hamund pushes him back and lays him out with one punch.

Klaus swings at Hamund. Hamund catches his arm, twists it, and pins him to the bench. Klaus's friends converge.

HAMUND

Stay back, or I take his arm.

Hamund growls in Klaus's ear.

HAMUND (CONT'D)

Long have you dogged my hearth.
Count your blessings, or I will
devour your coward's heart.

The pink veins in Hamund's sclera turn black.

BRENNYN (O.S)

Enough of this. Release him.

Brenyn stands in the hall like stern, implacable statue.

BRENNYN (CONT'D)

This is a discussion for the
elders' circle, not a mead hall.

Hamund releases Klaus.

BRENNYN (CONT'D)

Klaus, you've had enough. Go home.

She turns to Hamund.

BRENNYN (CONT'D)
And you: control your temper. Your
daughter's ill? Then come with me.

She leaves without a backward glance. Hamund and Klaus
exchange dark stares before Hamund leaves.

EXT. HAMUND'S FARM - NIGHT

Brennyn and Hamund trudge up the hill. Hamund carries a
handled basket while Brennyn holds the lit lantern.

BRENNYN
Good the rain didn't last. Can't
imagine mounting this hill if the
grass were--

Brennyn slips, and Hamund helps her keep her feet. She laughs.

BRENNYN (CONT'D)
Well, there it is. You know, you're
quite the topic of discussion now.

HAMUND
Yes, mother.

BRENNYN
Your display today will not earn
you any friends.

HAMUND
He insulted my children.

BRENNYN
An offense to be sure, but you
tread on thin ice. Walk softly.

HAMUND
In the past, the people who saw me
walk soft took it as invitation.

BRENNYN
That was the past. You can't drag
it around with you.

Brennyn stops and catches her breath.

BRENNYN (CONT'D)
I knew your father, what he was
like. Seems he gave you more than
his eyes. Tell me: Do you control
the beast, or does it control you?

Hamund hangs his head.

BRENNYN (CONT'D)
I see. We all have much to consider
then, you most of all.

INT. HAMUND'S FARM - NIGHT

Brennyn stands from Mettelil's bedside and faces her family.

BRENNYN
The fever is just a reaction. She's
young and strong. She'll be fine.
The marshmallow will help keep her
comfortable until it passes.

SVANHILD
Thank you, mother.

BRENNYN
Glad to help. Have a good night,
Hamund clan.

Ivar crawls up and lies next to his sister.

BRENNYN (CONT'D)
Hamund, do try to let no one rile
you up anymore.

She exits.

SVANHILD
What's that mean? What happened?

HAMUND
No, it's nothing.

SVANHILD
Not nothing. What did you do?

HAMUND
I didn't do anything. That fool,
Klaus, should have shut his mouth.

SVANHILD
Did you hurt him?

HAMUND
He'll be fine. I should have ripped
his head off.

SVANHILD
Stop.

HAMUND

Maybe he'd finally regret being a
bully on his way to Hel.

SVANHILD

You only made it worse.

HAMUND

He needs to be taught a lesson.

Svanhild puts her hands on her hips.

SVANHILD

I said, stop. Please.

METTELIL

Mama?

Svanhild goes to her.

SVANHILD

Yes, I'm here, sweeting.

METTELIL

I had a bad dream.

SVANHILD

Oh, it's okay. I'm right here.

She crawls into the bed. Mettelil reaches for Hamund.

METTELIL

Da? Can I sleep with you?

SVANHILD

Of course, sweetheart.

Hamund crawls into the bed next to Ivar, gives his kids a
little squeeze, and pets Mettelil's hair.

Hamund and Svanhild share a loving gaze.

INT. LONGHOUSE - NIGHT

Klaus, Georg, and one last friend sit in awkward silence at
their bench. Klaus stews over his mug.

KLAUS

Bastard.

GEORG

He'll get what's coming to him. The
elders see the danger.

KLAUS

These cowards won't do anything
until it's too late.

One of the drunks looks back at Klaus. Klaus stares the man down. The drunk goes back to his drink.

KLAUS (CONT'D)

All our courage died in the war,
and all we got back was a monster.

FRIEND

He'd be gone already if it weren't
for the bleeding hearts.

KLAUS

It's up to us.

GEORG

What?

KLAUS

We gotta run him out of town. His
whole damn family.

GEORG

Calm yourself.

KLAUS

I will not. You didn't see what I
saw. You didn't see his eyes: the
evil growing there.

Klaus leans in and whispers.

KLAUS (CONT'D)

We must do something, make sure he
knows he's no safer with us than us
with him.

GEORG

You mean to provoke him?

KLAUS

He need not know it was us, just
that we'll never stop.

INT./EXT. DEEP FOREST - NIGHT

Jarpulf's bandits sit, eat, and laugh around campfires.

A bandit spills another's drink, and the two brawl while the others watch and laugh.

Jarpulf kneels, shirtless, away from the group with a towel draped over his head and inhales the fumes from a boiling pot over a small fire.

His eyes dilate. He claws both hands across his hairy chest as ragged breaths escape clenched teeth.

JARPULF
Stars in the gods' eyes. Show me
your singing secret.

Beghel approaches and squints at the steaming black liquid.

BEGHEL
You're breathing the brew?

Jarpulf grins like a wolf.

JARPULF
Running out. It's not bad. You
should try it.

BEGHEL
Maybe when we find more.

He sighs as the sounds of the row outside intensify.

BEGHEL (CONT'D)
Already they grow restless.

JARPULF
Of course. They're not soft women.
They need mead, meat, and war.

He takes a long sniff of the fumes.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
We're made to hunger. It can drive
one mad. Even you, Behgel.

BEGHEL
Sure that's not the henbane?

JARPULF
I hunger deeper. Without a taste,
no telling how mad I'll become.

BEGHEL
I think I could live without a war.

JARPULF
Truly?

BEGHEL

Mm, if there had been something to
come home to.

JARPULF

I'll always miss it. The way my
heart beat. BOOM. BOOM.

He gazes into the black liquid.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

Rare few knew a greater bliss: a
hunger satiated under a red moon.
We need only our next meal.

BEGHEL

That's why I came. We saw lights
and smoke in the valley ahead.

JARPULF

A village?

Beghel nods.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

Then tomorrow could be a good day.

INT, HAMUND'S FARM - NIGHT

Hamund stirs in bed. Disparate voices and sounds of battle
echo. Swords clash. Shouts.

VOICE #1 (V.O.)

Maybe you want to fight me? Rank's
no issue here.

Hamund growls.

VOICE #2

What will you do about it, coward?

KLAUS (V.O.)

...him and his demon-spawn.

Hamund's hand tightens into a fist. The flesh underneath his
skin roils and shifts. Someone hocks and spits.

VOICE #3

Get the hell out.

Hamund bares pointed, inhuman teeth. Ivar stirs in his sleep,
makes a little noise, and holds his father tighter.

Hamund wakes mid-snarl, his sclera veins, black, and snaps out of it. His breathing normalizes. Ivar snuggles him.

Hamund cradles Ivar's head, kisses him, and closes his eyes.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Georg strikes flint and lights Klaus's torch.

Klaus holds it aloft with the others, leads the way from the village, and marches up the hill.

FRIEND

I don't think this is a good idea.
It's like poking a bear, isn't it?

Klaus rounds on him.

KLAUS

Are you afraid? Does your cowardice
get the better of you?

Klaus grabs him by the throat.

KLAUS (CONT'D)

If you're too chicken-hearted to
light a fire, what good are you?

The friend knocks his hand away.

KLAUS (CONT'D)

Ah ha. That's more like it. We
can't be weak. The village is at
stake. Are you weak?

FRIEND

No.

KLAUS

Good. Let's go.

They continue their march up the hill.

EXT. HAMUND'S FARM - CONTINUOUS

Only crickets chirp as the men approach. Hamund's animals sleep around the yard. The stable stands empty.

Klaus puts a finger to his lips. They open the fence and sneak past the animals.

Once in range, Klaus throws his torch. It lands near the edge of the stable's thatch roof.

FRIEND
Great, let's go.

GEORG
Shhhh.

KLAUS
Gotta make sure it catches. Roof's wet. Throw yours to be sure.

The friend steps up, shaky, and cocks his arm back.

KLAUS (CONT'D)
Do it.

The friend throws his torch. It lands on the roof, closer to the house. The men watch, and the flame catches.

Klaus smiles as the flames spread.

FRIEND
Alright, let's go.

KLAUS
Yeah, yeah.

They all turn to leave. Georg makes a profane gesture at the house, and his face goes slack.

The corner of the house nearest the stable catches fire.

GEORG
Wait. Wait, wait.

The others turn.

FRIEND
Oh, gods.

GEORG
What do we do? What do we do?

FRIEND
We must help.

KLAUS
Wait.

FRIEND
We have to warn them.

KLAUS
And expose ourselves?

GEORG
They have kids, Klaus. We don't
want to torch the house.

KLAUS
But we did. Give them a chance to
wake up on their own.

INT./EXT. HAMUND'S FARM - CONTINUOUS

Orange light plays over Hamund's face as he snuffles and
snorts in his sleep. A snort jerks him awake.

Flames dance in the corner. He shakes Svanhild.

HAMUND
Svanhild, wake up. Wake up,
quickly. Kids, wake up.

His family wakes and gape at the flames.

HAMUND (CONT'D)
Fire. Don't panic. Get clothes, get
whatever you can carry.

Svanhild throws clothes and kitchenware into the childrens'
arms. Hamund opens the doored window and peers out.

Flames engulf the stable. Shapes stand in the yard.

Klaus meets Hamund's eyes and freezes. Hamund's eyes widen in
rage, his breath quickens, and his hand tightens on the sill.

Svanhild runs over with some belongings.

SVANHILD
How are the animals?

She gapes at Klaus and the others.

HAMUND
Cowards. Bastards.

Svanhild urges Hamund back and closes the window.

SVANHILD
Forget them. Save what we can.

HAMUND
Get off me.

Hamund shoves her to the floor and glares down at her with blackening eyes. He growls through inhuman teeth.

HAMUND (CONT'D)
I'll kill them. Kill them.

SVANHILD
Awake? Awake?

Hamund shakes. He grunts and strains like some creature crawls up his throat. His voice deepens.

Svanhild gathers the kids in her arms and runs to the door.

SVANHILD (CONT'D)
Unlock it. Quickly. Quickly.

METTELIL
What about da?

Ivar shunts the bolt. Svanhild kicks the door open and flees. Outside, she hesitates in the yard and meets the men's eyes.

SVANHILD
I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

She flees down the hill.

Inside, Hamund growls, clenches his sharp teeth, and roars. A blood-red pall falls over the world.

Muscles stretch and tendons snap as Hamund's arms grow and lengthen along with his hands and fingers.

Thick, black claws grow. His ribs morph. New hairs sprout.

He tries to scream. The expression of murderous rage remains the only constant as his face twists.

Svanhild flees toward the village.

METTELIL
What about da?

SVANHILD
Don't look, children. Don't look.

GEORG
They're out. Let's go.

FRIEND
What about Hamund?

Klaus watches the house, frozen. A rumbling growl sounds over the roaring flames. An instant of calm.

A monstrous, furred horror explodes out of the house.

Hamund charges the men, their eyes hot blue against the reds and blacks of the world in his eyes.

Klaus screams as Hamund descends on him.

INT. SIDSEL'S HUT - NIGHT

Mother Sidsel sleeps in her bed. Shouts grow outside.

VILLAGER #1
Fire.

VILLAGER #3
Get the water.

VILLAGER #4
Up the hill.

Her tired eyes slide open, and she jolts awake.

EXT. SIDSEL'S HUT - NIGHT

Sidsel peeks out the front door in her shift. Villagers run this way and that and shout about the fire.

She looks up the hill. Hamund's farm blazes.

EXT. HAMUND'S FARM - NIGHT

A man with buckets of water and other, younger villagers pass Sidsel as she hobbles up the hill.

She reaches the top to find gawkers and pushes through.

MOTHER SIDSEL
What are you all doing? Will no one
help? Are they trapped? Has anyone
seen the family?

She emerges from the crowd and stops dead.

The silhouetted figure of a tall, lithe monster stands against the wall of flame, not quite ape or bear.

The monster's eyes reflect the light of the fire before it shrinks back down to a human. Hamund falls to his knees.

Sidsel steps over an arm, and past Klaus's head, ripped off.

MOTHER SIDSEL (CONT'D)
Smithy, it's time. Hurry.

SMITHY, 50's, a broad, bearded, gray man, nods and runs off.
Sidsel approaches Hamund.

MOTHER SIDSEL (CONT'D)
Hamund? Hamund, can you hear me?

Hamund's eyes glaze over. He drools. Sidsel strokes his hair.

SIDSEL
It's going to be okay, Hamund. It's
going to be okay. Shh, sh, sh.

All blurs and fades to black.

DREAM - YOUNG HAMUND IN HIS BOYHOOD HOME

Darkness. Hamund's Ma screams. A blow lands. Clothing tears.

MA (O.S.)
No. No.

YOUNG HAMUND, 15, descends the open stairs from the
longhouse's loft, wide-eyed and entranced by the scene.

DA (O.S.)
If you're not getting it from me,
you're getting it from somebody.

Hamund's DA, 30s, an imposing, disheveled man in a shirt and
pants, wrestles his MA, 30s, a slim woman in a shift, and
pins her to the dining table.

Ma's torn shift hangs loose from her shoulders and hiked up
around her hips as she fights Da off.

Da's trousers lay around his ankles.

DA (CONT'D)
Who is it? Who is it, whore?

Da slaps Ma.

DA (CONT'D)
Think a wife gets to say no? If I
want it, I'll take it.

He tears Ma's shift further and winds up again.

YOUNG HAMUND

Da?

DA

Get back upstairs.

YOUNG HAMUND

Are you hurting her?

DA

Get.

YOUNG HAMUND

Ma?

DA

What did I say, boy? Whore. He gets that from you.

He hits Ma.

YOUNG HAMUND

Stop.

Da gapes at Young Hamund. Violent anger twists the boy's face. Da pulls up his trousers and ties them.

DA

Look at this. How many times must I teach you discipline?

Da advances on Young Hamund, and the boy's face slackens with fear. Ma cowers and tries to cover herself.

DA (CONT'D)

Want to step up to me?

Da shoves Young Hamund, and the boy flails to find a grip before he steadies himself.

DA (CONT'D)

Was that a swing?

He slaps Young Hamund. Young Hamund covers his head and face.

YOUNG HAMUND

No.

Da slaps Young Hamund's guard a couple more times.

DA

What are you going to do? Eh? Eh?

Young Hamund lowers his guard, teary-eyed, but with all the murderous hate returned.

DA (O.S.) (CONT'D)
Oh, you don't want to look at me
like that, boy.

The horrible face of the berserker looms behind Da.

Human eyes sizzle in a dark-furred face with a turned-up nose and rending teeth--a horrific amalgamation of ape and bear.

DA (CONT'D)
Mama's lil milk-drinker gonna cry?

Da's face slackens. He turns to face the creature and gasps as the beast's jaw opens on his head.

Blood sprays across Young Hamund's face.

INT. VILLAGE CELL - DAY

Hamund jolts awake and grunts in pain. He kneels inside a squat, doorless kennel of iron bars inside an old shack.

A large, heavy, iron restraining device chained to an eyebolt in the floor encapsulates his wrists and hands. He tugs it.

The door to the shack opens, and KAULF, a tall, spry, bearded man, pokes his head in, starts, and shuts the door.

HAMUND
Kaulf. Wha-- Kaulf. Kaulf, wait.

Hamund tugs on the chain. The door opens, and Svanhild rushes in ahead of Mother Sidsel and Ormar.

SVANHILD
Hamund.

HAMUND
You're okay. Where are the kids?

SVANHILD
They're fine. Cecilie's watching them. Are you alright?

HAMUND
Think I'm about to find out.

MOTHER SIDSEL
Do you know where you are?

HAMUND
Looks like the farrier's old shack.

MOTHER SIDSEL
You recognize it?

HAMUND
He make this, too?

Hamund jingles the restraint.

MOTHER SIDSEL
Yes. A precaution. Do you remember
last night?

Hamund nods.

MOTHER SIDSEL (CONT'D)
Tell me what happened from the
beginning. Svanhild, stay quiet.

HAMUND
I woke up to my home aflame, looked
outside. Klaus lit the place.

ORMAR
Did you see him light it?

HAMUND
He was outside with his buddies and
torches. Who else?

MOTHER SIDSEL
We want only what you saw and did.
What happened next?

HAMUND
Don't you know?

MOTHER SIDSEL
Did you get angry? Quite angry?

Hamund glances at Svanhild.

MOTHER SIDSEL (CONT'D)
Look only at me. Is that what it
took? Is that all it took?

HAMUND
He tried to kill my family.

MOTHER SIDSEL

We did find torches in your stable.
Your story also matches your
wife's, so do not fear.

ORMAR

Do fear, I say. Many saw what you
do this time. Everyone saw.

The elders start to leave.

HAMUND

Where are you going?

MOTHER SIDSEL

Back to the moot. It's already
started. I only paused it to learn
what I could from you.

HAMUND

Any plans to feed me? I'm starving.

ORMAR

Did you not have enough last night?

HAMUND

It doesn't do that. It doesn't eat--

ORMAR

The people it kills?

MOTHER SIDSEL

It? You speak as if it's not you. I
thought you had control.

HAMUND

It's not that simple.

MOTHER SIDSEL

Then speak simply. Quickly now.

HAMUND

I control it like I might control a
runaway cart. I can pull it, but--

MOTHER SIDSEL

Concerning.

ORMAR

Damning.

SVANHILD

Mother, you will try to protect
him, won't you?

MOTHER SIDSEL

Perhaps.

She holds the cage and squats close to Hamund.

MOTHER SIDSEL (CONT'D)

In you resides a father and a monster. The question to answer now is "Which one is stronger?"

ORMAR

I hope your answer is different from your father's.

MOTHER SIDSEL

I'll arrange for food. Come, Svanhild. Your voice is needed.

Hamund watches them go and slumps against the bars.

PRE-LAP - Two dozen voices compete

INT. LONGHOUSE - DAY

VILLAGER #2

He should be run out of town.

Villagers fill the longhouse.

Many of them try to shout over one another. Sidsel, Ormar, Brenyn, and two other elders sit at the head of the room.

Svanhild and Cecilie sit next to each other at a bench.

MOTHER SIDSEL

Order. We will have order.

The noise dissipates.

MOTHER SIDSEL (CONT'D)

I did not share my story so you could bray like cattle. We are here to discuss, calmly.

BRENYN

Who would speak before the hall?

Villager #2 stands.

VILLAGER #2

Why talk? Three men are dead. His whole family should be exiled.

MOTHER SIDSEL

His family is not the topic of this moot. Even if exile we decide, his family need not share the fate.

OTTAR, 40's, a gruff farmer with a wild beard, stands.

OTTAR

He'll not leave while they remain.

SVANHILD

We will go where my husband goes.
Have no fear of that.

VILLAGER #2

Good. The matter's finished. Exile.

Some villagers vocalize agreement.

MOTHER SIDSEL

And for what cause? Arson in the night entitled Hamund to holmgang.

ORMAR

Holmgang?

OTTAR

He ripped them apart.

VILLAGER #2

Have you even found all the pieces?

BRENNYN

The method of the vengeance has never been a matter of law before concerning the holmgang.

OTTAR

Those were good men.

SVANHILD

You want him exiled for what he is, not what he did.

CECILIE

You're just afraid.

The room erupts in anger. The villager's friends hold him.

MOTHER SIDSEL

I want order here. There will be no reprisals in this moot.

The room settles.

MOTHER SIDSEL (CONT'D)
 Cecilie, if you cannot watch your
 tongue, go home to your needlework.

Some chuckle. Cecilie blushes and sits.

ORMAR
 After years of peace, the change is
 taking Hamund in his sleep.

OTTAR
 He gutted Georg's cow in his sleep.
 Now he's done the same to Georg.

VILLAGE #2
 Is your plan to simply hope it
 isn't one of you who doesn't
 survive his next nap?

A grim quiet falls over the crowd.

SVANHILD
 Hamund can get better. He needs
 support, not exile.

BRENNYN
 One could argue, Svanhild, that it
 would be like sleeping with a
 snake. Deadly, however gentle.

SVANHILD
 He gave so much for us. We have our
 homes because of men like him.

VILLAGER #2
 I'm not responsible for what he is.

CECILIE
 Yes you are.

Cecilie stands. The room hushes. Sidsel rolls her eyes.

CECILIE (CONT'D)
 We all are. When the foreign devils
 attacked, did you volunteer? We
 heard stories of lost ground from
 every visitor.

EXT. VILLAGE - SAME

Kaulf tends his vegetable garden while Mettelil and Ivar play
 with his two sons and chase each other around the yard.

CECILIE (V.O.)
Those stories changed to tales of
witches and monsters, and we didn't
say a word because they came
alongside tales of victory.

Kaulf squints toward a copse beyond the edge of the village.
Jarpulf's bandits march across the prairie.

CECILIE (V.O.)
Hamund gave all for that victory,
We were only too happy to never see
an army marching on our village.

KAULF
Boys? Boys, get inside.

Jarpulf approaches Kaulf with a smile.

INT. LONGHOUSE - SAME

CECILIE
Many weren't so lucky, and they
would be proud to have their savior
in their village.

Cecilie sits.

VILLAGER #2
Let them have him, then.

He plops onto his seat.

BRENNYN
I believe we have heard the
arguments. I call for a vote.

ORMAR
Agreed.

The other elders nod.

MOTHER SIDSEL
All in favor of exiling Hamund from
the village?

Ormar and the other two elders raise their hands. Svanhild
hangs her head. Cecilie comforts her.

MOTHER SIDSEL (CONT'D)
All opposed.

She and Brenyn raise their hands.

MOTHER SIDSEL (CONT'D)
Then the motion passes. Hamund must
be exiled from our village.

Villager #2, Ottar, and Ormar smile.

MOTHER SIDSEL (CONT'D)
The arsonists' families will pay
weregild to replenish his supplies,
I will then cart them to the edge--

Jarpulf enters and moseys up the hall in his furs and weapons
and eyes the people as a dozen bandits file in after him.

JARPULF
Well, well, well. I was wondering
why the village looked so empty.
Someone getting married?

He claps a man on the back and grabs a chicken leg.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Life's short. You must find
happiness where you can.

MOTHER SIDSEL
What is this? Who are you?

JARPULF
Oh, just a man, mother, wandering
the land, sampling its delicacies.

His gaze lingers on fair, doe-eyed Cecilie as he passes.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
We are veterans looking for work.

MOTHER SIDSEL
We have no work for you here.

Jarpulf leans his hands on the head table.

JARPULF
Do you speak for this community?

MOTHER SIDSEL
We all do. We are the elders.

Jarpulf scans the crowd.

JARPULF
Yes, elders among elders, I see.
Lose your boys in the war?

No answer.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
It's fate, then. You need strapping
young men like us for protection.

ORMAR
We don't need protection.

Jarpulf sinks his seax into the table.

JARPULF
You sure? Never know what kind of
blackguards might wander the woods.

The outlaws chuckle.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
We'll make a deal. Provide us with
mead and meat, and in exchange,
we'll make sure nothing happens to
your little village.

He shouts for the hall to hear.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
With us, you'll never need fear
banditry. A great deal, yes?

MOTHER SIDSEL
Agreed.

Jarpulf smiles at her.

ORMAR
Mother--

MOTHER SIDSEL
You wish only room and board for
your protection? We are grateful.
We are honored to have you.

She stands.

MOTHER SIDSEL (CONT'D)
This meeting is dismissed, that we
may have a feast for our friends.

ORMAR
You heard her. Everyone, go now.
Return with at least one chicken
from your households for the feast.
Grains and vegetables, too.

JARPFUL

And I want a man in every household
while they do. We'll get to know
our new benefactors.

The villagers all stand and file out.

JARPULF

You are wise, mother. Rare that
anyone sees the value in our
services so quickly.

MOTHER SIDSEL

I wish to only hire you for the one
night. Then you must go.

JARPULF

Why don't we just see if one night
is all you need.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Cecilie and Svanhild march home with two leering bandits.

CECILIE

What are we doing?

SVANHILD

What we're told. All we can do.

CECILIE

But, Svanhild, these men are--

SVANHILD

Shush.

They open the pen that surrounds Kaulf's home, and Svanhild
grabs the first chicken she can reach.

SVANHILD (CONT'D)

There. Nice and plump. Good stock.

BANDIT #1

What about inside?

SVANHILD

Inside, lord?

BANDIT #1

Yeah. Could be you'd have more to
offer inside.

CECILIE
No. Nothing fit for a feast inside.

BANDIT #1 steps close enough to smell.

BANDIT #1
I want to see.

INT. KAULF'S HOME - DAY

A stone hearth, benches, beds, and plentiful furs stock
Kaulf's modest domain.

Kaulf himself watches the children play with carved dolls and
animals on the floor.

The girls and bandits enter. Kaulf stands.

KAULF
What's happening?

BANDIT #1
Ah. So the man of the house is
minding the children, eh? Do you
sew as well?

The bandits guffaw, and Cecilie goes to Kaulf's side.

CECILIE
They wanted to see if there's any
more we could offer--for the feast.

KAULF
Feast?

CECILIE
Yes, darling. To thank them for
their protection.

METTELIL
Ma, who are they?

Svanhild picks her up.

SVANHILD
They're just visitors, sweeting.
Just visitors.

BANDIT #1
Quite the brood you have here, man.
Do you bed both these women?

KAULF
You wi--

SVANHILD
Yes.

She holds Kaulf's arm.

SVANHILD (CONT'D)
We all live here, as a family.

The bandits laugh.

BANDIT #1
Some men have all the luck, eh? Got
a mountainous prick your pants?

SVANHILD
He has many qualities.

The bandit cuts his laughter short and takes a silver
necklace off the mantle.

BANDIT #1
Ah. I see you do have more to offer
for our protection.

CECILIE
That's mine. It's- it's very
precious to me.

BANDIT #1
Ah, precious to me, too, girl.

KAULF
You should leave it.

BANDIT #1
Is that right?

CECILIE
No. No, you can have it.

KAULF
Cecilie.

CECILIE
He can have it.

BANDIT #1 gets in Kaulf's face.

BANDIT #1
More to say?

Svanhild's grip turns white on Kaulf's arm.

KAULF

No.

BANDIT #1

Good. I want to see all the silver
in this house.

EXT. FORGE - DAY

Smithy leads Beghel and another bandit to his home. A forge
and bellows stand in a shed nearby.

BEGHEL

A forge. You're the blacksmith?

SMITHY

I shoe cattle, mostly.

BEGHEL

Can you sharpen steel?

SMITHY

Yes.

BEGHEL

We may have use for you, then.

HAMUND (O.S.)

Hey!

Hamund's voice sounds from the distant hut. Smithy stiffens.

SMITHY

I'd be honored.

BEGHEL

And what can you contribute for
your village's protection? Have you
ever been paid in silver?

HAMUND (O.S.)

Hey!

SMITHY

I- I may have silver. It's in the
house. Follow me. I'll get it.

HAMUND (O.S.)

Isn't anyone bringing food?

BEGHEL
What is that?

He spies the shack nestled in the back.

BEGHEL (CONT'D)
What's in that shack back there?

SMITHY
Nothing.

BEGHEL
Nothing? Then why do you not use
the wood for fire?

HAMUND (O.S.)
Please!

BEGHEL
Open it.

INT. VILLAGE CELL - DAY

Hamund slumps in the cage. The door opens.

HAMUND
Someone's supposed to bring me--

Beghel enters, Smithy and the other bandit not far behind.
Hamund eyes Beghel's weapon and leather armor.

BEGHEL
You have a prisoner. Keeping him
for your amusement?

SMITHY
He's the village's prisoner.

BEGHEL
And you tried to hide him. Why?

SMITHY
I didn't think he was import--

Beghel backhands Smithy and bloodies him. The other bandit
hits Smithy in the stomach and on the back. Smithy collapses.

HAMUND
Hey, stop.

Hamund clenches his teeth and recoils in pain. He struggles
to control his breathing and calm.

BEGHEL

Huh.

INT. LONGHOUSE - DAY

Mother Sidsel stands before Jarpulf at the head of the hall.

Where the elder's head table once stood stands a single chair in which the bandit sits and spins his blade on the tip.

MOTHER SIDSEL

Your warriors exceed their orders.
They're looting silver from homes.

JARPULF

What? Really? Well, that's not what
I told them at all.

MOTHER SIDSEL

Yes. Well, perhaps you could
consider it payment for leaving.

JARPULF

Oh no, mother. I'll mention it at
the feast, set them straight. No
more problems.

Beghel enters the longhouse.

BEGHEL

Jarpulf, there's something I think
you should see.

INT. VILLAGE CELL - DAY

Late day sunlight pours into the shack as Jarpulf opens the door and enters with Sidsel and Beghel in tow.

JARPULF

So, it's true. A man in a cage.
Have you been a bad dog?

Hamund glowers at Jarpulf's grin.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

Come, man. What was your crime?

Hamund glances at Sidsel, who gives no sign.

HAMUND

I killed three men.

JARPULF
Oh, for fun?

HAMUND
They burned my house down.

JARPULF
You treat that as a crime, mother?

Sidsel hangs her head.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Your scars: were you in the war?

Hamund nods.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
You're my kind of man. You should
be out here, doing your good work.

Hamund glances at Sidsel again, who examines her shoes.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Where's the key for these shackles?

Sidsel proffers a simple key from her dress. She finally
looks Hamund in the eye. Jarpulf takes the key.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
What say you? Want to play outside?

HAMUND
No.

JARPULF
No?

HAMUND
I'm not your kind of man. The
elders say when I leave this cage.

JARPULF
What kind of animal are you?

He tosses the key.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Rot, then. Mother, how's that feast
you promised coming along?

MOTHER SIDSEL
It's prepared.

JARPULF
Sounds delicious. I can't wait.

Jarpulf eyes Hamund as he and Beghel leave. Sidsel picks up the key, glances at Hamund, and follows.

INT. LONGHOUSE - NIGHT

All the benches in the longhouse stand pushed together to make one, long table, and the bandits eat together like a family, with raucous laughter and talking.

Some play drinking or knife games while women from the village serve and bus.

Jarpulf sits at the table's head with Beghel on his right.

BEGHEL
Don't like this: us all together.

JARPULF
Ehh, well, your caution is why I keep you around.

BEGHEL
We've never occupied an entire village before. They could overwhelm us in force.

Jarpulf titters.

JARPULF
Overwhelm us? These people?

He watches Cecilie place more plates.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Not these people. They've only known this peaceful life. Look in their eyes.

Cecilie passes on her way to the kitchens and catches him staring. Her eyes widen, and he grins.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
They'll give us whatever we want.

Fresh bread cracks like bone in his hands.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Put the word out. No killings or rapes unless I say so.
(MORE)

JARPULF (CONT'D)

There's much value in this village.
We need only be patient.

Cecilie passes into the back kitchen and stacks more plates for a villager to wash. Svanhild overstuffs a food plate.

CECILIE

What are you doing?

SVANHILD

Hamund hasn't eaten all day. I'm bringing him food.

CECILIE

But the elders are having their meeting now.

SVANHILD

What a coincidence.

She pushes out the back door. Cecilie purses her lips.

INT. VILLAGE CELL - NIGHT

Svanhild pushes the into the shack, and Hamund perks up.

HAMUND

Svanhild.

Svanhild shushes him and sets the plate outside the cage. She holds a turkey leg through the bars, and Hamund takes a bite.

HAMUND (CONT'D)

What's happening out there? Who are those men?

SVANHILD

Dangerous types. They came into town and offered us protection.

HAMUND

Highwaymen. Have they hurt anyone?

Svanhild shakes her head.

HAMUND (CONT'D)

They will. You have to get word out to the Jarl and raise a fyrd.

The door opens, and Sidsel enters, followed by other elders.

MOTHER SIDSEL

That is what we are here to discuss, young Hamund. Svanhild, why are you here?

SVANHILD

For food. He hasn't eaten all day.

MOTHER SIDSEL

Now? Fine. Your task is accomplished. You may leave.

Svanhild stays.

MOTHER SIDSEL (CONT'D)

I thought not. Hamund, our village has not seen a lord's man since they came for soldiers years ago.

BRENNYN

And that fiend, Jarpulf, has men watching the village.

SIDSEL

We must handle this ourselves. It is possible that they will simply leave once they've had their fun.

ORMAR

These men are brigands. Best we can hope is that they wait to rape and slaughter while we're still useful.

HAMUND

For once, Elder Ormar and I agree.

ORMAR

Should have poisoned their drink.

BRENNYN

An imprecise tactic. Many would survive, and they'd be angry.

ORMAR

Wish the war hadn't taken so many.

BRENNYN

Must I be the one to say it?

She eyes Hamund.

HAMUND

There is a reason you're having this talk here, yes?

ORMAR

I won't allow it. He's not in control of the beast. Once it's done with the bandits, it could come for us.

SVANHILD

Hamund wouldn't let that happen.

MOTHER SIDSEL

And if it's not his choice?

None answer.

BRENNY

I agree that we should not resort to unleashing him yet, if at all.

HAMUND

Mother, they did not come here as guests, but as plunderers.

MOTHER SIDSEL

We should not condemn them to a fate at your hands when they have not harmed us.

HAMUND

Moth--

MOTHER SIDSEL

Hamund, you wish to be a part of our village, yes? To submit to our will and follow our laws like anyone else? This is our decision.

SVANHILD

I don't want Hamund to give into the creature any more than you, but is it wise to wait and see?

MOTHER SIDSEL

In any case, child. We are prepared to accept the consequences.

ORMAR

Perhaps we could sour the milk. Convince these men our village isn't worth the trouble.

MOTHER SIDSEL

And how?

ORMAR

Put a weapon in every hand. Make a show of force.

HAMUND

That won't scare these men. They have little to lose. They'll relish a chance for death in combat.

BRENNYN

And where would these weapons come from? They will wonder why the smithy suddenly forges thirty axes.

SIDSEL

It would seem we've lived too long in peace. We're unprepared.

ORMAR

Are we to simply bide our time?

SIDSEL

It would seem so, for now. We must rely on the gods to deliver us.

Hamund eats more of the food offered by Svanhild.

SIDSEL (CONT'D)

We should adjourn before they get suspicious. We have our plan.

HAMUND

Can I at least sit unshackled? I'm already in a cage.

BRENNYN

In truth, I don't think the cage would hold if the change took you. It's the shackles that contain the beast. They must remain.

SIDSEL

Good night, Hamund. Try to rest. Svanhild, don't linger.

The elders file out.

HAMUND

How are the children?

SVANHILD

They're fine. They're scared, and they want to see their father. I feel much the same.

HAMUND

I have to stay this course. I must prove to the elders that I'm more than an animal and can live here.

SVANHILD

Hamund, you should know: before the bandits came...

HAMUND

What?

SVANHILD

Uh, Kaulf and Cecilie have been taking really good care of us.

HAMUND

Well, that's good. I'll have to pay it back someday.

SVANHILD

Yeah. Here, have more. I need to get back before too long.

Hamund obliges. Svanhild tries to keep guilt off her face.

INT. LONGHOUSE - NIGHT

The bandits lay strewn about the hall, passed out from drink.

EXT. VILLAGE/INT. VILLAGE CELL - INTERCUT

Jarpulf kneels in the grass with his boiling pot over an open fire and inhales the steam of henbane.

Hamund kneels in his cell, forced into the same position by the shackles, and takes a meditative breath.

Jarpulf sighs, elated, and bares his teeth.

Hamund's face tightens.

A monstrous growl rings in his ears, sounds of battle, swords clash, shouts, a monstrous roar, the splash of blood.

Hamund shakes his head to fight the thoughts.

Jarpulf smiles and drags his nails across his chest.

Hamund whimpers and slumps against the cell.

INT. OTTAR'S HOUSE - DAY

A new dawn rises over the village.

Ottar lays in bed with his wife in their modest dwelling and snuggles her as the animals low and cluck outside.

Bandits kick Ottar's front door open, and the couple wake.

BANDIT #2

Up, you lazy slugs. It's a bright new day.

OTTAR

What's the meaning of this?

A bandit hits him in the face and drags him out of bed by his hair while his wife screams.

OTTAR (CONT'D)

You bastards!

The bandits hit him a few more times and drag him outside.

BANDIT #2

Sun's out. Time for work. Get dressed, woman.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

The bandits shove Ottar to the dirt. More pull villagers from their homes on either side: men, women, and children.

BANDIT #2

Get to work. I want these animals milked and fed. The sheep need shearing. Then get started on widening this cropland.

OTTAR

Who do you think you are?

BANDIT #2

The voice of the gods, and they say "work."

He boots Ottar to the ground, and the bandits kick him.

INT. LONGHOUSE - DAY

Ottar stands, bruised and filthy, with Sidsel at his side, before Jarpulf, who sits in his plain chair.

OTTAR

And they worked us all day. If we slowed, they beat us. We saw them herd villagers to the forest.

MOTHER SIDSEL

This comes with reports that you've commissioned work from the woodworkers and smithy?

JARPULF

Of course. It's all for the greater good. You don't want my men to have dull weapons, do you?

He stands from his throne and saunters down to the woman.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

And the woodwork, well, this chair is hardly fitting for my new station as the captain of the town guard, is it? Not very comfortable.

SIDSEL

They say you won't pay them.

JARPULF

They should be grateful for a chance to contribute to their village's protection.

SIDSEL

And the people in the woods?

JARPULF

To get more wood. Unless your people want my men sleeping in their homes?

SIDSEL

You mean for us to build houses?

JARPULF

Yes, and greater farms, as well. They're to increase food production. We have many mouths to feed, after all.

OTTAR

Bastard. You think us your slaves?

Ottar stomps toward Jarpulf.

Jarpulf draws his seax and holds it to Ottar's chest.

JARPULF
Easy, man. Wouldn't want to lose
your village's protection.

OTTAR
I'm not afraid of you.

JARPULF
Good. I'm not your enemy. I'm your
best friend. Remember that. Get
some rest. Tomorrow's another day.

Sidsel places a hand on Ottar's shoulder. Ottar leaves.

SIDSEL
You are not invited to stay.

JARPULF
I weary of your mule-headed words.

SIDSEL
Leave tonight.

JARPULF
I have no time for your prattling.
My men tell me an elder in your
village stores herbs and magics.

Sidsel nods.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
I wish for you to introduce us.

INT. BRENNYN'S HOUSE - DAY

Mother Brenyn sits at a counter in the front room and mashes
herbs in a mortar.

Cupboards line the walls alongside drawings of plants, and a
wicker chair sits in the corner.

Jarpulf and Sidsel enter.

JARPULF
(unknown language;
subtitled)
You say this is the volva?

Brenyn starts. Jarpulf grins at her.

SIDSEL
What?

JARPULF
Oh, nothing, dear. You've done very well. You may go now.

SIDSEL
I'd rather stay.

JARPULF
But I said "go."

Sidsel acquiesces. Brenyn sets her tools aside.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
So, you are volva.

Brenyn fetches a cup from a low cupboard.

BRENNYN
Not I. I only know a few herbs and remedies passed to me by my mother.

JARPULF
But you understand their language.

BRENNYN
You would be surprised what you learn by the time you reach my age. I'm surprised you know the tongue-- a brute like you.

Brenyn pours water from a pitcher.

JARPULF
Oh, I'm sure. Fear not, mother, I only wish for information.

BRENNYN
Oh?

JARPULF
Yes. I want you to tell me all you know about berserkers.

Brenyn pulls a wide, flat box of herbs from a low cupboard.

BRENNYN
Berserkers? Those monsters used during the war? Whatever for?

JARPULF
I want to know how you made them. I want to know how you turned men into such beasts.

Brenyn grabs pinches of two powders, rubs them between her fingers, and drops the mixture into her cup.

BRENNYN

I wish I knew secrets like that.
The volva were killed. The lords
didn't care for their devilry.

Jarpulf slaps the counter.

JARPULF

Don't play with me, witch. I know
about henbane and the red world.

BRENNYN

Please calm, my lord. Henbane is
poisonous. It would make you see
monsters, not become one.

She stirs the glass.

JARPULF

You test my patience. Will only
pain loosen your tongue?

BRENNYN

Oh, please, lord. Calm yourself. No
need for pain. Would like a tonic?

JARPULF

I would be a fool to drink any
mixture from you.

BRENNYN

It's harmless, I assure you. Clears
the mind and calms the nerves. See.

Brenyn chugs half the glass and offers Jarpulf the rest.

JARPULF

I want what you know. Tell me, or I
will lock the children of this
village in your house and burn it.

BRENNYN

Suit yourself.

Brenyn finishes the glass.

BRENNYN (CONT'D)

Here's what I know: few survived
the ritual to affect the change.
The lords gave the volva hundreds
of boys before they had enough.

JARPULF
What was this ritual?

BRENNYN
Why do you want to be a berserker?
Is it power you seek?

She gazes into Jarpulf's hungry eyes.

BRENNYN (CONT'D)
I see. You have a thirst you can't
slake, so you seek a bigger mouth
with sharper teeth.

Brennyn eases into the wicker chair.

JARPULF
I seek a pure existence. I seek to
sink my teeth into this world and
taste it as only they can.

BRENNYN
You mistake their viciousness for
revelry. The curse won't avail you.

JARPULF
I accept the trial.

BRENNYN
You want the creature to test you?
Fear not. I expect one will.

Brennyn's eyelids droop. Jarpulf shakes her.

JARPULF
Witch? Witch?

He grabs the cup, sniffs it, and tosses it.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
What did you do?

BRENNYN
(unknown language;
subtitled)
The berserker possesses. It cannot
be possessed.

She breathes her last. Jarpulf shakes with rage.

EXT. VILLAGE - SAME

Villagers toil and port wood under the bandits' watch.

Ormar, dirty from the work, approaches Sidsel as she paces outside Brenyn's home.

ORMAR
Sidsel, are you seeing this?

SIDSEL
Yes.

ORMAR
They want weapons.

SIDSEL
Yes, and food and homes. I'm aware.

ORMAR
But the weapons. We worried they'd wonder why we're smithing axes.

SIDSEL
But now we have an excuse.

JARPULF (O.S.)
Bloody witch!

Sidsel and Ormar hurry to Brenyn's home, followed by Beghel.

EXT. BRENNYN'S HOUSE - CONTINUOUS

The elders and Beghel burst in. Brenyn lies on the floor, wicker chair tossed. Sidsel checks her.

JARPULF
Oh, don't look at me like that. The witch did it to herself. Poison.

He kicks the cup. Sidsel sniffs it.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Get villagers and bury her. Beghel, search this place. Show me if you find any seeds or anything strange.

Sidsel glances at a loose board in the corner.

SIDSEL
What are you looking for? What do you want from us?

JARPULF
Go.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Ottar stabs his shovel into the dirt of a half-dug grave and wipes tears from his eyes.

Sidsel and Ormar watch as he and two others add a shrouded Brenyn to the valley's meager graveyard.

OTTAR

Mother, what is this? Is this a funeral? Where is everyone?

SIDSEL

I'm sorry, Ottar. They're working.

OTTAR

Will you still do nothing?

SIDSEL

Have patience, Ottar. We are doing all we can.

OTTAR

And all you can do is appease these bandits? First that monster and now this? Another of us is slain.

ORMAR

Brenyn died by her own hand. It wasn't the... visitors.

OTTAR

Under what duress? Mother, please, won't you do something?

Sidsel stands in repose a moment.

SIDSEL

Brenyn was loved by all. She cured our sick, she delivered our babies. She talked to the plants and soothed our people.

Ottar digs the whole with fresh anger and vigor.

SIDSEL (CONT'D)

She was not born here and held many secrets, but she was one of us. I'll miss, you, Brenyn. We all will. Find peace with your gods.

Sidsel and Ormar walk away. Ottar pummels the ground.

INT. OTTAR'S HOUSE - DAY

Ottar's wife, tired, sets a table for two and turns a short spit in their hearth before she stands and knuckles her back.

Ottar enters and stands just inside, dirty and despondent.

His wife embraces him, and he cringes through fresh tears. He falls into a chair, and his wife comforts him.

His gaze falls on a knife on the table.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

Jarpulf paces through the village with Sidsel in tow.

JARPULF

Your people should be proud,
mother. So much progress.

Ottar exits his home and marches toward the group.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

The harvest will be bountiful, and
my men will be thankful. Yes, I
think our arrangement will benefit
us both for a long time.

Beghel approaches with a cloth-covered jar.

BEGHEL

Jarpulf, we found this.

He hands the jar to Jarpulf. Jarpulf turns his back on Ottar and removes the cloth. Black seeds rest inside.

JARPULF

Ahh, quite a find. Good work,
Beghel. What else?

BEGHEL

We found books of notes, but
they're in a strange language.

JARPULF

I shall have a look at them.

Sidsel peeks into the jar.

SIDSEL

Henbane seeds? Why those?

JARPULF
Know about them, do you? Perhaps
the herbalist shared a secret or
two with you before her passing.

Ottar nears Jarpulf and draws the kitchen knife.

BEGHEL
Jarpulf!

Ottar stabs, and the blade sinks into Jarpulf's side, but the
outlaw catches Ottar's hand before it sinks deep.

Jarpulf headbutts Ottar, and Ottar falls. Bandits converge.

JARPULF
Stop.

They do. Jarpulf moseys to prone Ottar and pulls the knife
out. Ottar's nose bleeds. The villagers pause their tasks.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
You again, little man? Have not the
heart to face me but with a
coward's blade in the back?

He tosses the knife down at Ottar's side.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Have it your way, then. Kill me.

Ottar hesitates.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Pick it up. I'm unarmed. You want
to save your village? Come on.

Ottar scoots away.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
I can strangle you with your hands
empty, or you can take the knife.
I'd be in my rights by any law.

Ottar takes the knife and stands.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
There you go. One with a spine and
some heart? Come on.

Ottar slashes a couple times at Jarpulf's belly, and Jarpulf
dodges back. Jarpulf whoops, cajoles, and laughs.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

There you go.

Ottar stabs. Jarpulf catches the wrist and grabs the back of Ottar's neck. He twists the blade and aims it at Ottar.

Ottar strains against Jarpulf as the knife nears.

The whole village watches. Svanhild and Cecilie gape with baskets in their hands. Ottar's wife stares in horror.

She runs over, but Svanhild catches her and holds her back.

SVANHILD

No. No.

Jarpulf bullies Ottar back against a hut wall and pushes until the knife sinks into Ottar's throat.

Ottar dies with a gurgle, wide-eyed. His wife wails.

Jarpulf drops Ottar's corpse and faces the crowd.

JARPULF

When will you understand? I am here
for your protection. I am the only
man standing between this village
and the wrath of gods.

Sidsel hangs her head. Cecile embraces the children.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

When you breathe on another morn,
it is because of me. Learn that,
and spare your village ruin.

Jarpulf limps toward the longhouse.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

With me.

Beghel and a couple bandits follow him into the longhouse.

INT. SIDSEL'S HOUSE - NIGHT

The elders, along with Svanhild, Kaulf, and Cecile, sit before Sidsel's hearth and argue as it drizzles outside.

ORMAR

We stick to the plan. Make weapons
and scare them off.

KAULF

We should have let Hamund handle them before this.

ORMAR

That thing would kill us all.

CECILIE

He's only one man, however strong. What if he can't do it alone?

KAULF

You want a show of force? Hamund is a show of force.

ORMAR

I won't risk it.

CECILIE

Hamund is still Hamund. He won't let us come to harm.

SIDSEL

Okay. Okay. Quiet. Everyone quiet.

CECILIE

Does he even know what's happened?

SIDSEL

Cecilie, shut up. We don't want to draw attention. Svanhild, you've been strangely silent.

SVANHILD

I don't know what to say. I trust Hamund, but I fear the monster. I fear that, if he surrenders to it, I may lose him to it.

CECILIE

Does he even know what's happened out here? Does he know about the labor and-and Ottar?

SVANHILD

He only asks me about the children. He awaits the elders' word.

KAULF

He's not concerned with these talks because he knows how they will end. He knows we will call on him.

CECILIE

I agree. Why don't we release him
now, fight or no? He's on our side.

A pound on the door. Everyone quiets. Sidsel cracks the door
open. Beghel stands outside in the drizzle.

BEGHEL

Jarpulf wants you, now.

SIDSEL

Of course, I'll just--

BEGHEL

Now.

SIDSEL

Of course.

She draws her shawl closer and follows Beghel out.

CECILIE

What's happening?

KAULF

Nothing good. We should go home.

EXT. LONGHOUSE - NIGHT

Sidsel follows Beghel past a group of bandits who hoist
Ottar's body on a noose and hang it from a tree branch.

INT. LONGHOUSE - DAY

Sidsel enters. Jarpulf sits at the end of the longhall in a
new, ornate chair that could pass for a throne.

He's shirtless, bandage wrapped around his ribs,

JARPULF

Mother Sidsel. You do not have so
great a control over this village
as I once believed.

MOTHER SIDSEL

The attack was regrettable--

JARPULF

It is unacceptable. If you cannot
control the rabble, then that
responsibility will fall to me. I
demand reparation.

MOTHER SIDSEL
What would you have me do?

Jarpulf stands and thuds down each step to the lower floor.

JARPULF
There is a girl I saw: fair,
delicate. Bring her to me.

MOTHER SIDSEL
Bring her? A fair maiden. For...

JARPULF
Her offering will sate my desire
for retribution. You know the girl.

MOTHER SIDSEL
I-I can't--

JARPULF
Would you rather bleed and hang
every villager from their own tree?

He grabs Sidsel's cheeks.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
One of my hungers will be satisfied
today, woman. Choose which.

INT. KAULF'S HOME - NIGHT

A knock. Kaulf answers. Sidsel shivers in the rain.

Cecilie and Svanhild stand from playing with the kids and
hover nearby to listen.

KAULF
Mother?

SIDSEL
I've come to ask Cecilie to
accompany me to the longhouse.

KAULF
For what?

MOTHER SIDSEL
Jarpulf, he wants to see her.

KAULF
For. What?

MOTHER SIDSEL

Cecilie. I must ask you to do a service, to appease their leader, lest he take his rage out on the entire village.

SVANHILD

By the gods.

KAULF

You are not asking this. Mother, you are not.

CECILIE

Mother? What is this?

MOTHER SIDSEL

Cecilie, I do not ask it lightly.

KAULF

Enough of this.

Kaulf grabs a coat from by the door and ties it on.

CECILIE

What are you doing?

KAULF

Stay here.

He pushes past Sidsel. Cecilie grabs a shawl

SVANHILD

Cecilie, don't.

CECILIE

Svanhild, stay with the children.

Cecilie hurries out. Sidsel lets the door close and follows.

SVANHILD

Cecilie.

Svanhild runs her hands through her hair and paces. The children gather behind her.

IVAR

Ma. What's happening? Is it Da?

SVANHILD

No, sweeting. Go back and play. It's gonna be okay. It'll be okay.

INT. LONGHOUSE - NIGHT

Kaulf bursts in.

KAULF

Bastard. Who do you think you are?

Jarpulf stands in the middle of the room and grins.

KAULF (CONT'D)

Think you can demand my wife?

Cecilie and Sidsel enter. Cecilie hurries after him.

Once in range, Kaulf belts Jarpulf across the face.

CECILIE

No.

KAULF

Come on, you bastard. Think you're so tough? Give me a blade. I'll bleed you, man-to-man.

CECILIE

Kaulf, stop. It's fine.

KAULF

Fine? You know what you're saying?

Jarpulf grins with red teeth.

JARPULF

Got some backbone, do you? I can't wait to see it.

Jarpulf punches Kaulf, and Kaulf stumbles into a table. The two grapple and lock into a match of strength.

Sidsel watches, frozen to the floor. The men trade blows.

Kaulf knocks Jarpulf's arm down and clocks the bandit so hard, the man tumbles on the short stairs before his throne.

CECILIE

Kaulf, stop. It isn't worth it.

KAULF

Not worth it? What could be more worth it? I'm drawing a line. Here. He keeps taking because we keep giving. No more.

Kaulf stiffens.

CECILIE

Kaulf?

Kaulf staggers into a table with a seax in his back.

JARPULF

Hand it to you. You can fight.

Cecilie screams. Kaulf lunges and clutches Jarpulf's throat.

Jarpulf headbutts Kaulf and shoves him against a table. Kaulf weakens and slumps. Cecilie weeps and tugs on Kaulf's body.

Cecilie screams and flails as Jarpulf pulls her off her dying husband by her hair and pins her to the tabletop.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

No better time to take a woman than
right killing her man.

Cecilie struggles like a wild animal.

Jarpulf smashes Cecilie's head against the table, splits her brow, hikes up her dress, and loosens his trousers.

Sidsel covers her mouth, frozen in place. Cecilie flinches and cries with the first thrust.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

How's that feel? Ever had a real
man in you before?

Cecilie weeps, far away, as her body jolts. She keeps her eyes on Kaulf as the light leaves him.

Jarpulf brushes the hair out of her face.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

That's right. Look.

His grunts intensify. Sidsel flees the building.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

Keep looking. Keep looking.

His body tenses, and he moans.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

Ohh, that was good. Oh, very sweet.

He pets Cecilie's hair. She clenches her teeth.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Sidsel hurries through the pouring rain.

INT. ORMAR'S HOME - NIGHT

Ormar opens his door in his small clothes. Sidsel, soaked, shivers outside.

ORMAR

Mother?

SIDSEL

Spread the word, quietly. Tell the people they have until morning.

ORMAR

Wha--

SIDSEL

Tell them to spend time with their children, and when it happens, to make themselves as small and unthreatening as they can.

Sidsel leaves.

ORMAR

Mother, what are you saying? What happened? Sidsel.

INT. BRENYN'S HOME - NIGHT

Brenyn's cupboards sit open and ransacked, with much of their contents spilled on the floor.

Sidsel enters with a spade and levers open a floorboard. Inside rests a journal and a jar covered by cloth.

Sidsel takes the contents.

INT. KAULF'S HOME - NIGHT

Svanhild holds the children and gives Mettelil a kiss.

INT. OTTAR'S HOME

Ottar's wife sits slumped over their dining table with a shirt pressed to her nose and weeps.

INT. SIDSEL'S HOME - NIGHT

Sidsel, with the book opened to a diagram on the floor, hangs a pot over her hearth. She checks the book, uncovers the jar, and spoons globs of a black sludge into the cooking pot.

INT. VILLAGE CELL - NIGHT

Hamund meditates in his cell.

EXT. VILLAGE - DAY

The villagers toil in the fields and farms under a clear sky.

Svanhild carries chopped wood home with the four children each carrying logs behind her like ducklings.

Sidsel exits her home with a fire-cooked chicken on a plate next to a covered cup and marches across the village.

Apprehension grows on the faces of each villager. Svanhild hurries the kids home.

Jarpulf, Beghel, and a small retinue of bandits sit at a bench placed outside the longhouse and eat.

A despondent Cecilie sits next to Jarpulf. Jarpulf stretches.

JARPULF

Ahh. Another fine day. I'm thinking about a hunt. Anyone? A hunt?

The other bandits nod as they lounge with cups in hand.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

This governing business is getting old. A hunt would get the blood pumping, eh?

He follows Cecilie's gaze to the seax at his belt. He tilts her chin to meet his eyes.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

You still have two children. Remember when you look at that.

Sidsel nears the far end of the village, and a bandit breaks off from his duties to meet her.

BANDIT #1

Halt, woman. What's the food for?

SIDSEL
For the prisoner.

BANDIT #1
He needs a whole chicken?

SIDSEL
He only gets a meal a day.

The bandit tears a leg off the bird and takes a bite. He waves her along.

BANDIT #1
Wait.

The bandit pulls the cover off the cup and takes a swig, but he retches and sets it back down, his teeth black.

BANDIT #1 (CONT'D)
By the damned gods, what is that?

SIDSEL
Part of the prisoner's penance.

BANDITS
Disgusting. Didn't know you provincials could be so cruel. Why did you let me drink it? Go on.

Sidseel curtseys and continues.

JARPULF
Get the bows and boar spears and meet back here.

The bandits nod and leave. Jarpulf grabs Cecilie.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
You're coming, too, my sweet.

He leads her away.

INT. VILLAGE CELL - DAY

Hamund, placid, kneels with the irons on his hands. Sidseel enters, sets the tray down, and kneels.

HAMUND
Good morning, mother.

SIDSEL
Good morning, Hamund. How are you?

HAMUND
You know? I think I'm doing fine.

SIDSEL
Truly?

HAMUND
Yes, somehow. I have lots of time
to think. It's simple in here. Last
night, I slept untroubled.

SIDSEL
No dreams?

HAMUND
It's strange. There were. I saw my
father like usual, but...

SIDSEL
Go on.

HAMUND
We were hunting in the woods. I
startled a deer, and he wanted to
hurt me, but I stood up to him.

SIDSEL
You dream about your father often?

HAMUND
I've only been safe when the
monster came, but the monster
didn't appear. I did it alone.

Sidsel caresses the cup of black liquid.

HAMUND (CONT'D)
I only wish I'd done the same while
he lived. I may have had fewer
troubled nights since.

EXT. VILLAGE - SAME

Bandit #1 watches an old man struggle to haul lumber toward a
house the villagers build.

BANDIT #1
Faster, old man.

The man falls. Sweat beads on his face. Svanhild runs to him.

BANDIT #1 (CONT'D)
Oh, get up, you fool.

SVANHILD
He needs water.

BANDIT #1
What he needs is a good--

The bandit blinks and shakes his head. His breathing grows heavy. The dirt under his feet swims like a slow river.

He tries to find footing but falls. Another bandit runs over.

BANDIT #2
Hey, what's wrong? Hey.

His next sentence sounds only like a deep, bass warble. Dark clouds gather above, swirl, and churn.

INT. VILLAGE CELL - SAME

Sidseal tears the other leg off the chicken and offers it.

SIDSEAL
Would you like to eat?

HAMUND
Mother, you didn't come here to
feed me or talk. What do you want?

SIDSEAL
I've come to ask you to rid us of
this plague on our village.

She puts the cup in the cell. Hamund shrinks from it.

HAMUND
What's changed? Is my family safe?

SIDSEAL
They are. Others are not.

She unlocks the shackles with the key in her robes.

SIDSEAL (CONT'D)
I see now. I must draw a line.

EXT. VILLAGE - SAME

Bandit #1 trembles on and stares into the maelstrom above.

BANDIT #2
What is this? What'd you do to him?

SVANHILD
Nothing, my lord. I swear.

BANDIT #2
Is this some trick?

SVANHILD
No. Please, lord, we did nothing.

Bandit #1's pupils and irises shrink to a dot, leaving large fields of white. A black sludge dribbles from his mouth.

The sky splits open. Bandit #1 blubbers and weeps.

BANDIT #2 draws his knife.

BANDIT #2
Fix this, or I start guttin'
everyone near me.

Bandit #1 screams. Above, an angry, bearded god made of cloud with sunlight for eyes reaches down to claim him.

INT. VILLAGE CELL - SAME

HAMUND
Who did they hurt?

SIDSEL
Ottar, Brenyn, Kaulf. Cecilie--

Hamund sinks with each name.

HAMUND
Cecilie is dead?

SIDSEL
No, they--That monster, he--

HAMUND
It's always the pure who suffer for
our mistakes.

He grabs the cup.

SIDSEL
I won't order it, but I beg. Punish
them. Punish them all.

HAMUND
First, we must have an agreement.

SIDSEL
What do you wish?

HAMUND
I want everyone to help rebuild my
farm and no more talk of exile.

SIDSEL
Is there more?

HAMUND
No, mother. That's all I've ever
wanted. My family and I are members
of this community.

SIDSEL
I agree.

Hamund takes a breath and brings the cup almost to his lips.

HAMUND
This brew will bring a strong
change. Should you not leave?

SIDSEL
No. If I invite a greater doom on
this village, let me be the first
to pay the price.

Hamund eyes her as he chugs the brew to the bottom.

He shudders and tries to control his breathing to no avail.
Each breath becomes a snarl.

The veins in Hamund's neck distend as his eyes blacken.

He roars through clenched teeth, and the blood-red pall of
the berserker descends over the world.

EXT. VILLAGE - SAME

Bandit #2 holds Bandit #1 down as the man shakes.

BANDIT #2
Stay with me, man. Someone help.
Get him medicine.

SVANHILD
You killed our herbalist.

A crash sounds from Smithy's shack, and a growl rumbles
throughout the village.

Each villager drops their tools and kneels, heads down.

BANDIT #2

What are you doing? What are you
doing? What is this?

Bandit #2 pulls Svanhild's head back by her hair. She squeezes her eyes shut. Another growl rumbles from the shack.

The bandit releases her and draws his axe. All the bandits converge and creep toward the shack, weapons ready.

Still a distance from the shack, Bandit #2 squints into a gap between the boards in the shack's door.

A single human eye riddled with black veins stares back.

Hamund, more bear than man, shatters the door as he crashes through and sinks his claws into the man's neck.

He rips the bandit's head off and roars at the low, red moon in his red world and towers over the bandits, head in hand.

A bandit charges in with his axe, but Hamund catches the handle strike and claws him across the face.

More bandits charge. Hamund throws the head at one and stabs his claws into the belly of the next, uses the man to block an axe, and rips his claws out to spill the man's guts.

A bandit cuts him with a seax from behind. Hamund roars. Svanhild opens her eyes.

Hamund grabs the bandit and throws him at another.

Sidsel hobbles out of the abandoned shack. Hamund swipes half a man's face off with a spray of blood.

Sidsel cringes away but forces her eyes back.

Hamund snaps a bandit's leg at the knee. Another bandit flops down next to a trembling villager with his throat open.

An axe and a sword carve into Hamund's skin. Hamund sends a man rag-dolling through the air.

Another man, he folds backward and breaks him.

A cut to the back of Hamund's ankle drops him to a knee.

A bandit swings his axe overhand. Hamund catches it and bites the man's wrist open.

He takes the axe, parries the next strike, hacks the attacker open, throws the axe into a bandit's face, catches a stabbing seax, takes it, and stabs its owner.

A Bandit slips in the bloody mud, and Hamund slashes his face. Another bandit stabs Hamund in the shoulder.

Hamund stumbles into an empty cart with the grip still sticking out of him.

SVANHILD

Hamund.

Hamund swipes blindly to ward off attack, tired and sluggish.

The bandits close in. Hamund grabs the cart and hoists it overhead. The bandits flee, and Hamund crushes one.

Jarpulf bursts from the longhouse with Cecilie on a leash. He stands in stunned awe.

Hamund hooks his claws in a man's jaw and rips his head off.

Cecilie grins at Jarpulf the way he grins at his victims. With Jarpulf transfixed, she reaches for his belt.

Beghel runs up, and Cecile pulls her hand back. The other bandits gather around with boar spears.

BEGHEL

By the gods. A demon.

JARPULF

It lives. Here. The prisoner.

Jarpulf strays forward, and Beghel pulls him back.

BEGHEL

We have to leave.

BANDIT #3

He have to fight. We can kill it.
It's tired.

The bandits surge forward.

JARPULF

No. We can't. We can't.

Hamund holds a bandit's wrist and digs his claws in until the man drops his blade.

He rips a chunk from the man's side. The man falls and crawls through the mud.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
 Look at it. How it moves. The
 carnage. The power. A hunger to
 swallow the world.

Hamund sinks his claws into the bandit's back, grabs the
 man's ribs, and wrenches them out through his back.

Svanhild squeezes her eyes shut as the blood sprays her.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
 We leave.

BANDIT #3
 The thing--

JARPULF
 For now. This is the best thing to
 ever happen to us.

CECILIE
 Hamu--

Jarpulf pulls the leash and strangles the call.

JARPULF
 We'll return, later.

The bandits leave with Cecilie.

Hamund steps over Bandit #1, still half-mad on the ground and
 leers down at him.

Hamund appears as a bear with pitch-black fur and stars for
 eyes. Blood oozes out of its mouth.

The bandit chokes and lies still, his eyes frozen in horror.

Hamund growls. A bandit leaves a trail of blood as he scoots
 away through the mud.

Hamund rips the man's throat out with his teeth.

He roars up at the angry sky and the bloody moon and paces in
 search of another target. The village stays still and silent.

Hamund finds Ottar hung from the tree, and with a snarl, rips
 the branch off with a tug on the rope.

He sniffs at the air, sniffs and sniffs until he follows the
 scent to Villager #2 and tilts the kneeling man's head back.

Villager #2 keeps his eyes shut.

VILLAGER #2
 Oh, gods. Protect and watch over
 me. Take me into your embrace.

QUICK FLASHBACK - VILLAGER #2 EYEBALLS HAMUND ALONGSIDE KLAUS
 AND GEORG IN THE LONGHOUSE

BACK TO SCENE

A growl grows in Hamund's throat. He shoves Villager #2 to
 the dirt and grabs the man's throat. The man blubbers.

Hamund traces a claw down the man's cheek and leaves and thin
 cut. He poises his claws over the man's eyes.

SVANHILD
 Hamund.

Svanhild stands in the street. Hamund abandons the villager,
 roars, and charges at her. He thunders between the buildings.
 Svanhild sets her feet and puts her hands on her hips.

Hamund stops just short. He chuffs, uncertain. He roars in
 her face. Svanhild looks him in the eye, jaw set.

SVANHILD (CONT'D)
 What are you looking at? I wasn't
 talking to you.

Hamund shrinks back. Something inside him cracks.

He staggers and falls to all fours. His bones crack, his
 limbs shrink, and the fur snows on the ground.

The red world retreats, and the moon fades away. The clear,
 sunny morning returns to Hamund's eyes.

Hamund kneels, in a daze. Svanhild embraces him.

SVANHILD (CONT'D)
 It's okay. You did it. It's over.

Ormar runs up with a club, Svanhild screams, and he whacks
 Hamund over the head. The world goes dark.

DREAM - YOUNG HAMUND IN HIS BOYHOOD HOME

Darkness. Hamund's Ma grunts and whimpers as she struggles.

MA (V.O.)
 No.

DA (V.O.)
If I want it, I'll take it.

DA (V.O.)
You don't want to look at me like
that, boy.

DA (V.O.)
Mama's lil milk-drinker gonna cry?

Young Hamund shakes his mind free of fog and rubs his eyes.
He stands on the ground floor of the longhouse.

The details remain unfocused and ephemeral, but his Da exists
in sharp focus. Da pull Hamund close by his shirt collar.

DA
You answer when I talk to you, boy.

Young Hamund knocks Da's hand away and gets in his face.

YOUNG HAMUND
No. No more. I won't let you...
hurt... her...

Where his father stood, the berserker leers down instead. It
grabs Young Hamund by the shirt just as his father did.

Young Hamund trembles. The berserker opens its mouth for a
bite, and the darkness inside its mouth consumes the dream.

INT. VILLAGE CELL - DAY

Hamund wakes with a jerk and strains against the shackles.

He kneels in what's left of the cage. Its twisted bars stand
bent and torn like trampled grass.

Sidsel sits in a plain chair before the cage.

SIDSEL
You snarl in your sleep.

HAMUND
What's the meaning of this?

Sidsel lowers her eyes. Hamund fights against his shackles.

HAMUND (CONT'D)
Sidsel, answer me. We had a deal--

Hamund recoils in pain, groans, and whimpers.

SIDSEL
Does it truly take so little now to
affect the change?

HAMUND
Get me out of this.

Sidsel says nothing. Hamund sinks back on his haunches.

HAMUND (CONT'D)
I did what you wanted.

SIDSEL
I'm sorry. Not in my wildest dream
could I have grasped the reality--

She swallows hard and wipes away tears.

SIDSEL (CONT'D)
That thing: it was a mistake. The
volva-- Everyone's seen it, now.
Everyone agrees.

HAMUND
So, what, mother? Will you just
keep me in here like a blade in
your closet?

SIDSEL
I won't allow that thing out again.
If there's even the smallest chance
it's not under control...

HAMUND
You can't hold me forever, but you
won't let me free. Is it a darker
fate you have in store for me?

SIDSEL
Everyone agreed.

Hamund lunges, and the chain rings as the heavy eyebolt in
the floor catches him short.

Hamund grits his teeth through the pain as his sclera veins
blacken. Blood dribbles from the shackles.

SIDSEL (CONT'D)
Please. Your family--

HAMUND
My family?

SIDSEL
They're part of this community.
We'll take care of them.

HAMUND
When I'm dead and buried?

Hamund strains against the shackles. Sidsel stands.

HAMUND (CONT'D)
You promised me. I'm not a weapon.
You can't throw me away. I'm a man.

SIDSEL
I only do what I think is right.

Sidsel opens the door. Hamund's family stands outside.

SIDSEL (CONT'D)
Enjoy the time you have not in
anger. For once, not in anger.

Sidsel leaves. Hamund's family enters alongside two villagers
armed with spears.

HAMUND
Hey. There's my little warriors. I
missed you.

Svanhild sits, despondent, with Mettelil in her arms.

IVAR
Why do they keep you here, Da?

HAMUND
What has your mother told you?

IVAR
She said you work for the elders.

HAMUND
I suppose that's true, but I fear
we won't be see each other again.

Svanhild keeps a stiff lip while her eyes glisten.

IVAR
Why?

HAMUND
I can't stay anymore. I don't
belong here among these people.

IVAR

I don't understand.

HAMUND

You will, son, when you're older.
You see, everyone carries their
past with them. Some, that weight
becomes who they are. They become
like me, and they can't--

Hamund smiles.

HAMUND (CONT'D)

Hey, no tears now. We're together.
That's what matters. Have you had
fun at Aunt Cecilie's farm?

Ivar nods.

METTELIL

Their sow had a baby.

HAMUND

She did? That's good. What's the
baby's name?

METTELIL

Brenyn.

HAMUND

Oh, ho ho. Then a wiser pig there
will never be.

Hamund laughs with the kids.

Svanhild cracks a mile and wipes her tears.

EXT. VALLEY FOREST - DAY

Jarpulf's raiders pitch a small camp on the edge of the
forest where the valley slopes toward the open step.

The low sun shines through the trees as Beghel crosses the
camp toward Jarpulf, who gazes down into the open valley and
the distant village. Cecilie sits bound to a tree.

JARPULF.

The men are quiet.

BEGHEL

They wonder why we camp. They are
eager to leave this valley.

JARPULF

We stay.

BEGHEL

That creature. Was that a demon?

JARPULF

A berserker.

BEGHEL

Berserker? A war brute. I heard tales in the war, but I never--

JARPULF

No. Few who live have.

BEGHEL

How can the gods abide that beast?

JARPULF

The gods could not conceive of such a blasphemy. That is a work of man. The last sin of the desperate.

ANIMATIC - THE BIRTH OF THE BERSERKERS

--A foreign warrior in demon armor plants a flag on a hill strewn with bodies.

JARPULF (V.O.)

During the war, the foreign devils conquered land at will.

--Foreign warriors loom over a lord in his throne room as the man begs for this life.

JARPULF (V.O.)

Realms fell. Lords became beggars.

--A crier reads a proclamation before gathered townsfolk.

JARPULF (V.O.)

Afear'd, the lords beckoned any and all powers to reclaim their land.

--Hooded, white-robed women emerge from a dark forest.

JARPULF (V.O.)

Enter the Volva: witches.

--A Volva and a nobleman stand before each other and hold opposite ends of a parchment. Smoke wafts from the paper.

JARPULF (V.O.)
They offered the lords a dark pact.

--A frightened young man chained atop a candlelit altar
hyperventilates as he stares into the night sky.

JARPULF (V.O.)
They summoned magics from the
starless sky, and in our youngest,
strongest warriors, planted a seed.

--Volva around the altar chant to the sky. A tendril of dark
cloud reaches down and enters the young man's mouth.

JARPULF (V.O.)
From this seed, a creature grew,
born of hate, power, and hunger.

--A heartbeat pulses in the dark.

JARPULF (V.O.)
Hunger not for flesh but for death.

--A berserker in the red world bellows at the moon with a
foreign devil's body in one hand and a head in the other.

JARPULF (V.O.)
In battle, the berserker cares not
for friend or foe.

--Local and foreign warriors alike flee from a berserker who
rips a man's throat open with his teeth.

JARPULF (V.O.)
They tore and snapped, bathed the
battlefield in blood and drove
entire armies before them.

EXT. VALLEY FOREST - DAY

JARPULF
The foreign devils retreated, some
say from all war, for fear of the
horrors beyond their shores.

BEGHEL
Madness.

JARPULF
Power. Real power. The only power a
soldier's ever had--only greater.
War in flesh and fur and claw.

BEGHEL
You've seen this?

JARPULF
I've seen this.

FLASHBACK - JARPULF'S LAST BATTLE

Jarpulf gazes up a hillside on a bloody battlefield. The sun casts the shadow of a berserker on him as it rips through friendly warriors with dream-like slowness.

JARPULF (V.O.)
In my last and bloodiest battle.
They unleashed the berserker on a
different front than I, but I saw.

Warriors charge up the hill past Jarpulf as he stares in awe.

JARPULF (V.O.)
When it finished the enemy, it
started on us.

The berserker, silhouetted against the low sun holds a soldier by the neck. Two spears stick out from its back.

JARPULF (V.O.)
Only our mightiest brought it low,
and not without great cost.

The berserker rips the throat out of the man it holds. Blood sprays across Jarpulf's face.

JARPULF (V.O.)
It was beautiful. It drank deep of
battle, drank deep of life in a way
I only dreamed of.

The berserker, dead, lays pierced by eight spears on top of the hill, mouth frozen in an angry roar.

Jarpulf approaches it, transfixed.

BACK TO PRESENT DAY

JARPULF
Ever since, I've gathered rumor and
tale, hunting for its secret: the
secret of the berserker.

BEGHEL
If so mighty they were, then where
are they now?

JARPULF

Oh, the lords only know one reward
for good work like that. They
disposed of the berserkers with a
knife in the dark.

A runner, one of Jarpulf's men, sprints up valley.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

Whatever the Volva were promised,
they got the same: the earth that
buried the sin.

BEGHEL

Perhaps we should leave.

JARPULF

The berserker is our path to power--
to freedom. I won't let it go.

BEGHEL

We can't fight it.

JARPULF.

I've no intention of fighting him.

The runner reaches Jarpulf, winded.

JARPULF

What have you learned? Speak.

BANDIT #3

The creature--the prisoner's back
in the cell.

JARPULF

They locked him away?

Cecilie recoils as Jarpulf looms over her.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

The village's true treasure, ripe
for the taking. We'll march to the
village and make him ours.

CECILIE

You march to your death. He's
nothing like you.

JARPULF

Neither was I before my people
turned on me.

DREAM - HAMUND IN HIS BOYHOOD HOME

Fire crackles as Hamund awakens, fully-grown, in his boyhood bed. Fire engulfs the entire longhouse.

Hamund tosses the blanket aside and wanders downstairs.

HAMUND

Ma? Da? Are you here?

The ground floor sits empty of all but burning furniture. Hamund searches around in a panic.

He tries the front door, but it sticks. He tries to force it to no effect.

He turns to find Sidsel, pale, silent, with black voids in her eyes, and he recoils against the door.

Sidsel watches him. Hamund passes her, and she watches him.

Hamund bumps into Ormar: pale, silent, black-eyed.

More villagers appear in the same state every time he turns until they fill the longhouse.

HAMUND (CONT'D)

What are you doing here? What do you want from me?

The villagers just watch. A large, furry hand with hooked, black claws reaches from behind him caresses his cheek.

Hamund turns. The berserker towers over him.

HAMUND (CONT'D)

You. I don't want you. Leave me.

Hamund backs toward the door. The berserker snarls and advances on him.

HAMUND (CONT'D)

Stop. Stop. Leave me.

He tries to open the door: no effect. He flattens himself against it as the berserker steps close.

HAMUND (CONT'D)

Help me. Help me.

The villagers watch. The berserker cups Hamund's cheeks in its hands. Hamund squeezes his eyes shut.

The berserker tilts its head this way and that to examine every part of Hamund's face.

Hamund opens his eyes, and the berserker gazes into them.

INT. VILLAGE CELL - NIGHT

Hamund kneels, shackled to the floor behind the twisted bars and twitches in his sleep.

His eyes slide open: dazed, cold.

The door to the shack opens, and Ormar enters with the two villagers and their spears.

ORMAR

I'm sorry, Hamund. You knew there wasn't many ways this could end.

Hamund eyes them like meat.

ORMAR (CONT'D)

Well, I suppose the time for words has passed. Get ready.

The villagers aim their spears at Hamund's chest.

The shack door opens. Jarpulf and Beghel stand outside.

ORMAR (CONT'D)

By the gods.

Jarpulf draws a seax and howls with glee. The villager nearest the door brings his spear to bear.

Jarpulf swats the spear aside, stabs the villager, and slashes Ormar across the chest. Ormar wails and falls.

The other villager backs against the far wall and holds his spear before him.

Jarpulf grins and feints with the seax a couple times.

He flips the seax to grip it reverse, grabs the spear and sinks the tip of his blade into the old man, who gargles as Jarpulf slides the blade in inch by inch.

The man drops to the floor with the blade in his chest. Hamund watches the scene half-asleep.

Jarpulf catches his breath and sits before the cage.

JARPULF

Who'd have thought? In this place.

Hamund watches him.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

You've seen it, haven't you? The
red moon. The red world.

Hamund holds up the key, reaches through the bars, and
unlocks the shackles.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

Come. I want to show you something.
Will you come?

Hamund stands. Ormar groans and writhes on the floor.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

Come, old man. On your feet. We'll
have a grand time.

Jarpulf Ormar by the hair and drags the man with them.

INT. LONGHOUSE - NIGHT

Beghel leads the way in. Jarpulf follows dragging Ormar, and
Hamund enters last.

Every person in the village sits in a huddle on the floor
with the six remaining Bandits holding their blades to the
throats of women and children.

Svanhild sits aside in Jarpulf's throne, Ivar and Mettelil on
her lap, with a single guard, unthreatened.

Hamund reacts to the scene not at all. Many villagers tense
at the sight of Hamund with the outlaws.

IVAR

Dad.

Hamund glances at him. No recognition shows.

IVAR (CONT'D)

What's wrong with him, Ma?

SVANHILD

I don't know.

JARPULF

This, all of it, is my gift to you.

He drags Ormar to the center of the house and drops him.
Jarpulf's pipe smolders on a tabletop nearby.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Your family is safe. The villagers:
do with them what you will. Take
revenge, let them go. I care not.

He steps close to Hamund.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
But join us. What have these
villagers done but hate and fear
you--lock you away? Join us. You
and your family will live like
royalty--free, respected. Together,
we can pierce the secrets of the
berserker. In time, we will remake
the dark ritual and give the gift
to the worthy. Think of it: a cabal
of men with power and freedom to
overthrow any order and you a god
among them. We could rule--no
running, no begging for acceptance
from despots, just killing and
feasting while the lords of the
bygone age wait on us hand and
foot. We could drink deep of this
world, drink it to the very bottom.

Hamund stares him down with the impassivity of a man watching
a bug crawl across the dirt. Jarpulf swallows.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Do you still have loyalty to them?
You know what this man would do to
you with my blade and opportunity?

Jarpulf tosses his seax point-down in the floor before Ormar.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
I know. I saw it when I arrived.
Look at his face.

Ormar stows his hatred and averts his eyes to the floor.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
These people imprisoned you. I
offer you freedom--respect. When
you think about it, do you not see
even a little red?

Hamund eyes him.

HAMUND'S POV - Red washes the entire world. Jarpulf's eyes glow hot blue.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
This moment sits on a precipice.
I've been there before.

He moseys to his smoldering pipe.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
All it needs is a push.

Jarpulf blows through the pipe, and a stream of henbane smoke flows into Hamund's face. Hamund covers his eyes and coughs.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
The red world is the truth. Can you
see it? Can you see it?

Hamund growls. His fingernails turn black.

Ormar takes the seax, and Jarpulf jumps back. Ormar stabs at Hamund, and Hamund catches the blade in one hand.

The room holds its breath. Hamund uncovers his eyes and snarls at Ormar. Blood drips from his hand.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Yes. Yes. You see?

Worry grows on Sidsel's and Beghel's faces.

Ormar releases the seax and backs away.

Jarpulf speaks into Hamund's ear.

JARPULF (CONT'D)
Kill him. He hurt you. He tried to
drive you and your family out.

A low rumble grows in Hamund's throat, and he steps toward Ormar, blade still in hand.

SVANHILD (O.S.)
Don't do it.

Svanhild sets the kids down and steps from the throne.

SVANHILD (CONT'D)
Hamund, don't forget who you are.

Hamund closes his eyes, calms his breath, and drops the seax.

JARPULF

That bitch have a leash around your
neck? Are you dog or a warrior?

He picks up the seax and throws it at Svanhild. The impact of the blade rocks her.

The weapon sticks out of Svanhild's chest. A bloodstain grows in her dress. She collapses.

Inside the boyhood home of Hamund's mind, Hamund and the berserker, still in their embrace, howl in pain and rage.

Hamund shakes. His muscles ripple with the change.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

Yes. Yes.

Naked horror grows on Beghel's face.

Hamund claws Jarpulf, and the outlaw's face explodes in a spray of blood. He flops to the floor.

Hamund leaps on Jarpulf and sinks his claws into the bandit's shoulders. Hair sprouts in Hamund's skin. His teeth change.

Ivar and Mettelil gape as their father changes. Beghel leaps on Hamund and stabs him in the ribs with a seax.

Hamund swats him off, leaps and squeezes Beghel's head in his hands. The bandits leave their hostages and charge Hamund.

Jarpulf stands and staggers toward the throne. His teeth show through the gouge in his cheek.

Hamund roars. His arms tremble and swell. Beghel howls in pain, and the sound crescendos before his skull cracks. He gurgles on the blood that spurts from his eyes and mouth.

Hamund sighs as the change completes. The first bandit reaches Hamund, and dark blood sprays over the villagers.

Hamund breaks the next bandit's back over his knee.

The remaining bandits converge and cut and stab at Hamund.

Some villagers cringe away while others sit glued to the scene as the sounds of rending flesh and bloody cries ring throughout the hall.

Jarpulf lunges for the kids and grabs Ivar. Ivar calls out and draws the attention of the nearest villagers.

Jarpulf carries the shouting Ivar toward the kitchen.

A man stands from the group and grabs Ivar. Jarpulf stabs him in the throat with a knife and kicks into the backrooms.

Hamund growls as another seax sinks into his shoulder.

Hamund spins and slashes the attacker over and over. A woman screams as the blood sprays her.

EXT. LONGHOUSE - NIGHT

Jarpulf kicks his way out the back door and flees across the open valley toward the forest. Ivar kicks and screams.

INT. LONGHOUSE - NIGHT

Hamund, covered in blood and with two seaxes sticking out of him, slashes a bandit's throat open. Another bandit lies on the floor, twisted around at the waist.

The last bandit backs away as Hamund stalks toward him. The bandit cries and stabs overhand.

Hamund catches his wrist, kicks the bandit to the floor, steps on his chest, and rips the arm out at the shoulder.

Hamund roars in triumph. The villagers weep, retch, or hide their eyes. Sidsel shields Mettelil against her chest.

The berserker prowls up the hall and challenges everyone with his gaze. All avert their eyes or hide.

He stiffens, snorts, and scans the room. He growls and roars.

HAMUND

Where?

Only whimpers reply. Hamund kicks the throne across the room.

HAMUND (CONT'D)

Where?

A woman points toward the back rooms.

EXT. VALLEY FOREST - NIGHT

Cecilie bites at the rope that binds her wrists to the tree and spits out a few strands while she pulls against it.

Jarpulf runs up and throws Ivar to the ground.

CECILIE

Ivar.

Ivar sobs. Jarpulf kneels to cut Cecilie free from the tree.

JARPULF

Get up, we're leaving.

Jarpulf saws at the bonds and rubs his bloody shoulder.

CECILIE

Looks like you found your prize.
Was it as beautiful as you hoped?

Jarpulf holds the knife to her eye.

JARPULF

Shut your whore mouth before I cut
out your tongue.

Cecilie glances over his shoulder.

CECILIE

You still have Hel on your heels.

Hamund sprints up from the valley on all fours.

Ivar squeals as Jarpulf pulls him to the forest's edge and
holds the blade to the boy's throat.

JARPULF

Stop right there, or I bleed him.

Hamund slows not at all.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

I'll do it. I'll kill him.

Hamund ascends the slope. Jarpulf goes slack. The knife falls
to his side and he stares into the eyes of inevitability.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

Look, boy. Death comes. Pure,
certain as the gods' wrath.

Hamund leaps.

Jarpulf closes his eyes and holds Ivar up before him.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

Deliverance!

Silence fills the forest. Jarpulf holds his eyes closed.
Sweat beads down his bloody face.

Jarpulf opens his eyes to find Hamund stood before him. The berserker stares into Ivar's wide eyes, almost curious.

The gaze shifts to Jarpulf like a clap of thunder.

Jarpulf lowers Ivar to the ground, and Ivar steps aside.

Jarpulf searches Hamund's black-webbed eyes.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

She still has you. It wasn't
supposed to be like this. You could
have been free.

Hamund slashes Jarpulf's stomach open. Betrayal and terror freezes on Jarpulf's face as he sinks to the ground.

HAMUND

We are now.

Hamund breaks Cecilie's bonds and offers her his hand. Cecilie hesitates but takes it.

IVAR

Dad?

Hamund picks Ivar up and marches down the hill with Cecilie.

Jarpulf gurgles and writhes as his blood pools in the grass.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

The lane through the village stands empty as Hamund sets Ivar down in front of Cecilie's home.

CECILIE

When will you change back?

HAMUND

I must go now.

IVAR

Go?

HAMUND

I'm sorry.

CECILIE

You don't have to go.

HAMUND

I must. If I can stop this curse
with me, I will. I won't pass it on
to my children.

CECILIE

The berserker? I thought it was a
ritual. Can you pass on...

HAMUND

Not that, the curse my father had,
passed on from his father, that he
passed on to me. It stops here.

Cecilie slides her fingers through the fur on Hamund's chest.

CECILIE

You'll be okay, together. I can't
replace Svanhild, but you wouldn't
be alone. We could...

She closes her eyes as the beast kisses her on her forehead.

HAMUND

Take care of my children, Cecilie.
Raise them to be gentle and kind,
like you. Goodbye.

He runs for the woods.

IVAR

Da?

Cecilie holds Ivar as he tries to follow. He fights and
cries, but Cecilie smothers him with a hug.

CECILIE

It's okay. It's going to be okay.

Ivar wails and reaches for his father as Cecilie coos to him.

INT. SIDSEL'S HOME - NIGHT

Sidsel sits at the table in her dark kitchen and ruminates
over a mug of mead.

A tear rolls down her cheek, and she takes a drink. A small
noise gives her pause mid-gulp. She lowers the mug.

SIDSEL

Are you here to kill me?

HAMUND (O.S.)
You should have listened.

SIDSEL
It's over. Can you still not arrest
that darkness in you?

HAMUND (O.S.)
I wish I could.

Hamund reaches for Sidsel's neck, and a claw graces her skin.

SIDSEL
It's for the best.

Hamund hesitates.

SIDSEL (CONT'D)
I can't live with the horrors. I
feel so empty. Isn't there a lesson
to learn? Was it worth anything?

The claws retreat.

SIDSEL (CONT'D)
What are you doing?

HAMUND (O.S.)
Seems you've been gifted a far
worse affliction than death.

SIDSEL
What?

HAMUND (O.S.)
Insight.

SIDSEL
Hamund? Hamund?

She turns. Her kitchen sits empty.

She buries her face in her hands.

EXT. VALLEY FOREST - NIGHT

Jarpulf worms across the ground and holds his guts in.

Two pairs of glowing eyes appear in the dark between the
trees. Jarpulf whimpers and tries to crawl away.

The wolves approach and sniff at Jarpulf. He whimpers.

Hamund ascends the hill. The wolves back off.

JARPULF

Help me.

Hamund grabs Jarpulf's foot and drags him toward the woods.

JARPULF (CONT'D)

No. No.

Jarpulf tears at the grass as he disappears into the shadows.

The wolves follow.

EXT. VILLAGE - NIGHT

Svanhild's body rests in a burial shroud atop a high funeral pyre on the edge of the village.

The entire village gathers around. Cecilie consoles Ivar and Mettelil alongside her two sons.

Ormar, still bandaged across his chest, sets the pyre ablaze and steps back to Mother Sidsel as the flames climb.

Mettelil cries, and Cecilie holds her tighter.

ORMAR

The pyre is too high. It doesn't
befit her station.

SIDSEL

She protected this village.

ORMAR

There will be talk, unrest. This
isn't done. The gods--

SIDSEL

The gods left this village long
ago. A new power watches it now.

Sidsel glances at the tree line.

SIDSEL (CONT'D)

Pray we can live our lives in the
manner it mandates.

Firelight reflects in three pairs of eyes in the dark. Sidsel straightens her back and dutifully observes the pyre.